

Praise for *The A Level Mindset*

Oakes and Griffin have produced a remarkable resource that offers a significant guide to enhancing teaching and learning at A level, but with implications beyond years 12 and 13. The resource is firstly a very practical guide to support the 'how' of effective learning as well as the 'what'. As such it provides a necessary antidote to an approach based on managing information and develops a coherent strategy to empower students' understanding and help them become confident self-managing and self-aware learners. The second important point about this resource is that it provides a model that will stimulate professional dialogue around such approaches in primary schools and years 7 to 11. The materials will also serve as a very powerful preparation for studying in higher education and employment.

Oakes and Griffin are to be congratulated and thanked for a highly practical, relevant and supportive resource.

John West-Burnham, Professor of Educational Leadership, St Mary's University College

Anyone who has ever worked with young people recognises that helping them achieve success is a complicated affair – and simply telling them to study harder rarely has the desired effect. What is special about this book is that Oakes and Griffin haven't tried to reinvent the wheel but have searched through the work of some inspirational characters whose work has implications for coaching young people. They have gathered an impressive array of gems and then packaged them into a structure which is immensely useful. Their VESPA skeleton is powerful and offers an exciting array of practical tasks that can be used to help young people. This is not a one-size-fits-all book – not every activity suits every child – the authors recognise that this is a 'pick and mix' approach to coaching. If I were still head of a school that taught A levels I would immediately order a copy for all staff teaching in that area – if it didn't teach A levels, I would probably still buy the books: some of these activities are real gems and suitable for young people of a wide age range, so much so I think I might try some myself (and it is a long time since anyone has called me young!).

Dave Harris, Business Director, Independent Thinking Limited, author and consultant

At a time when too many of us lament the way A level teaching sometimes feels like a bit of a conveyor belt, here's a book designed to give responsibility for learning back to students. It's an ingenious compilation of techniques to manage our learning in these times of information overload and endless distractions. The book is more than a set of tips; it's an empowering and optimistic practical approach which will help students to become more reflective learners and better at managing their studies. I learnt a great deal from *The A Level Mindset* and would see it as an essential part of any sixth form programme.

Geoff Barton, Head Teacher, King Edward VI School

The A Level Mindset is a book that is steeped in hard won wisdom from school leaders who have clearly grappled with supporting students at this critical stage of their education. It is a book full of practical insights and it provides an excellent framework for teachers and school leaders to help students develop their working habits. This book provides ample solutions to support students' organisation, goal setting, and much more, helping to complement our development of their subject knowledge. The VESPA framework that informs the book is well supported by interesting scholarship and there are lots of real gems of teaching strategies that can be deployed in the classroom. The book is accessible, enjoyable and really got me thinking about my A level teaching.

Alex Quigley, teacher, Huntington School, author of *Teach Now! English*

This book is very obviously written by those who have had the experience (and pleasure) of working with sixth form students and the challenges that supporting them to achieve their potential brings!

The mindset approach, although based on research and theory, feels very real in the strategies and suggestions put forward. The practical and easy-to-follow strategies will support both the sixth form pastoral team, those involved in motivating the sometimes demotivated, with strategies such as the dashboard activity and 20 questions, and also the A level teacher looking for ways to strengthen resilience through practices such as The 3 R's of Habit.

I look forward to trying these techniques both in the classroom and also in more personal one-to-one intervention sessions. I strongly believe that this book will support the drive in any sixth form to raise achievement and also help develop a positive ethos which all staff can contribute to. A really positive and motivational tool for all heads of sixth form.

Caroline Lee, Head of Sixth Form and Assistant Head Teacher, Brighouse Sixth Form College

The awareness of attitude, mindset and mental toughness has risen to the top of the agenda in the world of education, particularly regarding their importance for student attainment and well-being. They make a crucial difference. However the challenge for teachers and pastoral staff is how to apply this effectively with their students.

Steve Oakes and Martin Griffin have created a first class and very practical guide to the application of these ideas in the classroom. Combining their practical experience (they have done it in the classroom themselves) and a good understanding of the theory behind their approaches, this book is a treasure trove of tools and techniques, easily adopted by teachers who want to make a difference.

Doug Strycharczyk, Managing Director, AQR

A thoroughly enjoyable book; *The A Level Mindset* has successfully integrated research and practice into an excellent user guide. It will be a valuable resource for students, teachers, parents and carers. The tools and techniques described are both workable and relevant.

Professor Peter Clough, Chair of Applied Psychology, Manchester Metropolitan University

The A Level Mindset

40 activities for
transforming
student
commitment,
motivation and
productivity

Steve Oakes and Martin Griffin



Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk

First published by
Crown House Publishing
Crown Buildings,
Bancyfelin,
Carmarthen,
Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.crownhouse.co.uk
and
Crown House Publishing Company LLC
6 Trowbridge Drive, Suite 5, Bethel, CT 06801, USA
www.crownhousepublishing.com

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

Print ISBN: 978-1-78583-024-2
Mobi ISBN: 978-1-78583-051-8
ePub ISBN: 978-1-78583-052-5
ePDF ISBN: 978-1-78583-053-2
LCCN 2015953353

Printed and bound in the UK by Bell & Bain Ltd, Thornliebank, Glasgow

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Introduction

When you enter a mindset, you enter a new world. In one world – the world of fixed traits – success is about proving you're smart or talented. Validating yourself. In the other – the world of changing qualities – it's about stretching yourself to learn something new. Developing yourself. Dweck (2007), p. 14

Our story starts maybe eight years ago, in a basement office.

We were studying that summer's A level results – suffering the final stages of the journey all of us go through. It's the one that starts with sleepless nights and anxiety dreams in late July, escalates to full-blown catastrophisation by early August and ends with the anti-climax of results day which, instead of triumph or abject disaster, offers the usual mixed bag of successes and disappointments.

Picking over the grades and preparing our analysis for the head teacher that year, one fact stood out above all others. There didn't seem to be a direct link between success at the end of Year 11 and success at A level. Looking back, this sounds both a counterintuitive and, at the same time, an entirely logical observation. But at the time it seemed a significant revelation. Surely, we conjectured, those students who succeeded at the end of Year 11 continued this pathway of success and succeeded again at the end of Year 13.

Instead – and we're sure you will have experienced this – something else happened: some students made giant strides between 16 and 18, leaping up from pretty modest results in Year 11 to outstanding results in Year 13. Others went from great performance at 16 to modest grades at the end of their A level courses. There were external factors to be considered, of course, but even when we took out those young people who had fought through traumatic times, we still had vast numbers of students who seemed to hit ceilings and others who made sudden breakthroughs.

Introduction

Ceiling Students and Breakthrough Students

We began the following academic year with a plan. (By which we mean a bunch of scribbled notes and a spreadsheet. We didn't get precise until much later.)

That autumn term we began to study what it was about the 'ceiling students' that made them stop progressing, and what it was about the 'breakthrough students' that made them suddenly improve. We undertook a variety of research to determine these factors. First, we identified two sample groups: a breakthrough group of students who were exceeding their target grade in the first term – this lot were seriously doing the business and getting great grades; and a ceiling group who were significantly underperforming having made a really slow start. The students of both groups were then given questionnaires, observed during lessons, had their previous academic performance evaluated, took part in focus groups and had basic data analysed. We looked at their GCSE point scores, the school they had attended to take their GCSEs, the proportion of portfolio-based level 2 qualifications, grades achieved in what we thought might be key subjects (e.g. English, maths, science), punctuality and attendance.

Here's the first point that leapt out to us: after studying the data and completing a detailed

content analysis, it became clear that there wasn't a link between GCSE performance and being a breakthrough student or, indeed, a ceiling student. *Past performance didn't seem to guarantee future performance.* One group wasn't full of high GCSE achievers with glittering trophy cabinets, the other with modest achievers. The ceiling group had its fair share of students who had done very well at GCSE. The breakthrough group was a mixed bag too. There were, in short, no specific cognitive weaknesses we could find that predetermined poor performance at A level. No issue with literacy or numeracy, for example; no pattern of poor performance in a particular subject.

This ran counter to what some of our teachers were telling us, and from the kind of explanations of student performance we had heard in staffrooms across seven combined institutions over the last few years. Teachers would often explain underperformance cognitively. For example, the student was 'weak'. The student 'didn't get it'. The student 'wasn't thinking like a scientist' (or geographer or sociologist – take your pick). All-in-all, a reading of the situation that amounted to a world view best summarised by one teacher who many years ago had told us, 'In my subject, you've either got it or you haven't.'

Analysing the ceiling and breakthrough groups, it was instead the qualitative data

we had collected that gave us a series of patterns – the information about students’ habits, routines, attitudes and approaches to study. These seemed to be the factors which determined success. Paul Tough summarises it pretty neatly in the following observation: ‘Economists refer to these as non-cognitive skills, psychologists call them personality traits, and the rest of us sometimes think of them as character’ (Tough, 2013, p. 5).

At first, the specifics of character were hazy, at least to us. Detailed note taking seemed to be a factor, for example. Tidiness and organisation of learning resources seemed important too. Commitment to independent study was key, as was positivity, enthusiasm and having a goal. These all came through as characteristics and behaviours that breakthrough students had in spades and ceiling students didn’t. All of this, remember, regardless of their previous performance.

To begin with we had very few ideas about what to do with this information. Because the qualitative stuff comprised observations about behaviours, it was difficult to quantify, group or categorise – and even harder to address. So we started searching for people who had discovered similar problems and worked out how to solve them.

It turned out there were plenty – and their work pointed in the same direction.

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

There had been a huge amount of fascinating research over the previous twenty years or so, but we hadn’t spent an awful lot of time studying it. Any teacher or leader working long hours with limited opportunity to dig in to academic journals and papers can find it difficult to know where to begin.

If that’s you, we’ve chosen three major contributors who both reassured and fascinated us when we first started reading. We’ve arranged them chronologically below. They each offer, in their own fields, a clear, persuasive and interesting place to start. It’s worth outlining some of the key aspects of their theories as they underpin many different aspects of the A Level Mindset model and provided us with the evidence, confidence and motivation to develop our own intervention programme.

Clough et al. (2002)

Peter Clough and his team work only a few miles from us at Manchester Metropolitan University, so it’s fitting that we should begin with him. Clough’s research on mental toughness has been adapted primarily from the sporting world, but there is growing evidence to suggest that this model can be effectively applied to education (Clough and Strycharczyk, 2014). It’s something we have

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been lucky enough to discuss with him on a number of occasions in the recent past.

Clough makes a compelling case for mental toughness being at the heart of success and proposes a four factor model: challenge, commitment, confidence and control.

- » Challenge describes an individual's view of any type of challenge. Do they see challenge as an opportunity for development or a threat?
- » Commitment refers to stickability to a long-term goal.
- » Confidence has two components: confidence in one's own abilities and interpersonal confidence.
- » Control is also spilt into two components, emotional control and life control, and describes an individual's sense that they can regulate and influence the direction of their own life and govern their responses to intense emotion.

Clough argues that mental toughness is a malleable trait, and St Clair-Thompson et al. (2015) have shown that mentally tough students are more likely to achieve better grades, have better attendance and behaviours that demonstrate greater positivity.

In other words, it's the *study behaviours* that count. Of course, this struck a chord with us. Our own research from way back in those early days supported this view, and in the

intervening period it has gone on to support it over and again.

Dweck (2007)

Carol Dweck's name is regularly spoken of nowadays, so the chances are you will know something of her work. Back then, it was pretty new to us. If it is to you, here's the gist. Her research suggests that beliefs about ability and intelligence vary greatly, and that the beliefs adopted by a young person can have a significant impact on their achievement.

She argues that individuals hold a certain 'mindset' regarding their ability. At one end of the continuum are those who believe they have a 'fixed' mindset. These individuals suppose that their intelligence is fixed at a certain point and, as a result, avoid challenging situations because they fear failure. They withdraw effort during difficult tasks to protect their ego.

At the other end of the continuum are those with a 'growth' mindset. These individuals believe that intelligence is malleable and that if you work hard you can improve your level of ability. They put themselves in challenging situations and work their way through them, listening to feedback and acting on it. They view failure as an opportunity to grow and, as a result, behave in a very different way in a learning environment.

In other words, the two types of student operate differently, study differently and think differently. Dweck's findings supported those early studies we had conducted and began to fill in some of the thinking for us.

Duckworth et al. (2007)

The work of Angela Lee Duckworth has gained significant traction since her 2013 TED talk, 'The Key to Success? Grit'. The talk has now been viewed over six million times and has promoted some interesting discussions within schools. The US Department of Education defines grit as, 'perseverance to accomplish long-term or higher-order goals in the face of challenges and setbacks, engaging the student's psychological resources, such as their academic mindsets, effortful control, and strategies and tactics' (2013: vii).

Duckworth argues that this non-cognitive trait, grit, is key to success and achievement in a number of fields, and is a stronger predictor of success than intelligence. In other words, she, like countless others, had blazed a trail for us.

Theory Into Practice

We ended that first year convinced that it was behaviours, habits and attitudes to study that were the strongest determinant of student success. Pulling apart the following year's

results, we were using fresh eyes.

Here were dedicated, motivated students with good study habits – and they were the ones with the really exciting outcomes. Here were others who, despite impressive performances in Year 11, had topped out – students who were demotivated, disorganised or too easily discouraged. The positive point was that all the research we had explored told us that these mindsets, habits and behaviours could be taught.

But we had a twofold problem:

1 Our studies had shown us that a very flexible, amorphous and shifting list of characteristics were linked with success: friendship groups, grit, positivity, organisation of notes, volume of exam papers completed under timed conditions, attitude. When we hit the books again and checked with the gurus, they also mentioned a range of different qualities, all described in different ways. The most often-cited ones seemed to be:

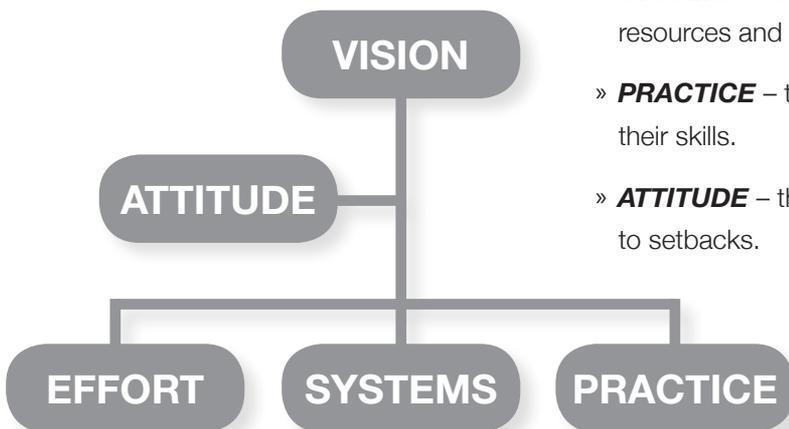
- » Perseverance, resilience and grit.
- » Confidence and optimism.
- » Motivation, drive and ambition.
- » Tolerance and respect.
- » Honesty, integrity and dignity.
- » Conscientiousness, curiosity and focus.

And with these lists came extensive research to show these traits have considerable links

Introduction

to academic success; Snyder et al. (2012) and Weber and Ruch (2012) are good places to start if you're interested, but what we were missing was consistency. We had to make a decision about what we wanted our students to be and do, and we had to find a quick and memorable way to express it – conscious as we were that we needed a solution that was significantly simpler than the problem.

2 Having established our list, we wanted to teach these skills and behaviours in a quick, engaging and easy way. We needed to get in among the students and change their ways of thinking, behaving and working. But we couldn't find any off-the-peg, easy-to-use learning resources we could hit them with. Nothing that helpfully made a student less critical of their weaknesses, for example; nothing that made students respond to challenge more positively. If it existed at all, no one was sharing.



The Solution: VESPA

It was in attacking these problems over the next few years that the VESPA system emerged. It wasn't the first system we developed (to begin with we had a really simple model that required three things of each learner, until we realised that it lacked subtlety), but it is the best we've come up with following years of working closely with students, trying and retrying to develop a clear model. We've cut through the noise surrounding character development and suggested five behaviours and characteristics that all students need to be successful.

Our work suggests that students who are successful score highly in the following qualities:

- » **VISION** – they know what they want to achieve.
- » **EFFORT** – they put in many hours of proactive independent study.
- » **SYSTEMS** – they organise their learning resources and their time.
- » **PRACTICE** – they practise and develop their skills.
- » **ATTITUDE** – they respond constructively to setbacks.

These characteristics beat cognition hands down. We've found that ceiling students have significant gaps in one or more of these characteristics. And regardless of their academic success at 16, our studies show that these learners will hit the ceiling at A level if they don't address and strengthen those weaknesses. Conversely, students who score highly for the qualities above can and do make significant breakthroughs at A level, unlocking performance that far outstrips their target grades.

Students who are success seekers are not bluffed by setback, poor performance, failure or academic adversity. They take the lesson to be learnt and move on. Martin (2010), p. 22

The VESPA Activities

In the absence of anything else out there, we've spent a number of years working on a whole series of activities that help students to develop these five qualities in themselves. Huge numbers of people have contributed their thoughts, ideas, criticisms and reflections. There are too many to name here, but we would like to thank each and every one of them for their help. This model wouldn't be what it is without them.

The first five chapters of the book cover each element of the VESPA model, giving you a

series of resources to deliver under each of the headings.

The activities are designed to:

- » Raise awareness about the impact a quality/characteristic can have on potential success.
- » Encourage some personal reflection on the presence or absence of that quality in the student.
- » Engage the student in a task that develops their practice – a reflection, discussion, coaching conversation or experiment.

Each session is designed to take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Many of them are flexible; they can be delivered to an individual, small groups of students, a tutor group or a whole cohort. The tasks themselves are written with a student audience in mind, so take a less formal and looser approach to referencing studies and academic journals, but we give you the details in the introduction to each section or in the teacher's notes, where we also explain how we've used the activities and what impact they've had. We've included eight tasks under each heading, giving you a total of forty to start experimenting with.

This collection isn't exhaustive. We've chosen these activities because they are among the easiest to lead and have had the biggest impact.

Introduction

Using This Book

In the opening five chapters of the book, we take you through each element of the VESPA model. Each chapter follows a similar pattern: we'll introduce the element of the model and discuss some basic principles that we have discovered as we've worked with students. Many of these principles may seem self-evident but they took some time (and plenty of mistakes!) to become clear for us. Hopefully they can provide you with a shortcut to better intervention. After the basic principles, we provide teacher notes on the activities which follow. These emphasise, we hope, the flexibility of the resources but also describe the ways in which we have successfully used them. Feel free to adhere to these or ignore them – they're not precise recipes. You know your own students best.

Chapter 6 looks at how to use the VESPA model to coach students individually. One of the happy consequences of developing the VESPA model is that diagnosing student problems becomes a much speedier process. Conversations we may have found complex, challenging or circular in the past have become much easier to lead. Outcomes for individual students experiencing difficulties have become much more specific and measurable. We take you through how to use the model to interrogate issues with individual students and generate solutions.

Chapter 7 looks at the process of embedding the system across your organisation. In this chapter, we suggest some ways in which you might manage the cultural and systemic change necessary to get a team of tutors or teachers to embrace the ethos, the approach and the materials and resources associated with the A Level Mindset. The content of this chapter is drawn largely from our own practices and approaches. It is not fail-safe, of course – more an account of how you might raise awareness of the need for better character development systems and curricula, and begin the process of designing and embedding it with a team of staff.

Finally, we share ten thoughts that try to summarise the A Level Mindset. We hope these work equally well as a primer, a reminder of what it is we're collectively trying to achieve and how we can go about empowering our learners.

A Word About Our School

Context will be at the forefront of your mind as you read this, so here's the info: these tools have been developed at a comprehensive school sixth form of about 400 students. The entry requirements are five A*–C. We look for four B's – a B in each of the subjects the student wants to study. We have some students with hugely impressive GCSE results – for example, ten or eleven A* grades. We have others who come to us with some B's,

C's, D's and the odd E. All students begin four courses, and all students experience some version of the VESPA model.

At the time of writing, our Year 12 students have (as a year group) reached an ALPS grade 1 for five years on the trot. Our Year 13 students collectively score grade 2 and have done for five years (with one exception – a grade 1 a few years back. It's proved elusive since!). At the same time, we've seen rises, year on year, in high grades, A* grades, attendance and retention.

Not all of these things can be explained by the VESPA model, of course. Our students are relatively lucky: they have a hugely dedicated teaching staff, accomplished middle leaders and an impressive senior leadership team – all of these things count very much in their favour. Like any organisation, there are areas for improvement but, generally, the climate and culture is positive and aspirational.

But we did see a big jump in performance that has been consolidated since we introduced VESPA. It's quick, clear, easy to implement and we hope it could do the same for you.



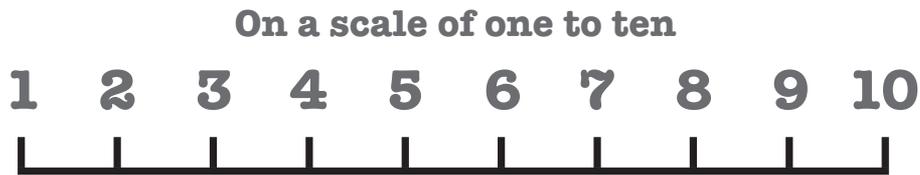
1. Vision Activity: Twenty Questions

It turns out that asking, 'What is your goal?' isn't a very good way of unlocking your vision. The question is abstract and slippery and answering it is often embarrassing and frightening. But there are questions that work. Some questions get an immediate response, 'Ah! I know the answer to that!' where others don't. The following questions have been tested over and over again with students and seem to be ones that are more likely to open up some positive thinking.

We can't promise these questions will work for you; all we know is that they've worked for others. Answer these questions with reference to study and work. Try your best to practise honest and fearless thinking – that means you answer without feeling stupid or embarrassed, and you say what you feel and think. Try to write all your answers down – it really helps.

- » If you could only take one subject what would it be, and why?
- » What lessons or elements of study do you find easy?
- » What do you do with your spare time?
- » Describe an interesting lesson you had recently. Why was it interesting?
- » What jobs do you avoid doing, and why?
- » When does time fly? What are you doing?
- » When does time seem to drag or stop? What are you doing?
- » What job would you do for free?
- » Who do you look up to?
- » What would you try if you knew you couldn't fail?
- » What puts a smile on your face?
- » If you had the afternoon off to work at home, which piece of work would you choose to do?
- » When you have a lot of homework, which subject do you do first?
- » Describe a homework task you have recently left until the last minute or not done at all. Why?
- » What do you get obsessed about?
- » When you're with your friends, what do you want to talk about?
- » What stresses you out?
- » If you had an hour off A level work and a laptop, what would you type into a search engine?
- » If you were given a small amount of money to start a company, what would it be?
- » List five words you associate with 'happiness'.

9. Effort Activity: The 1–10 Scale



Look back at the work you've done so far this term and think about the levels of effort you've put in to your studies. Use the scale above and the following guideline to choose your number:

- » **1:** Little or no effort.
- » **5:** Some effort – you're working quite hard.
- » **10:** High levels of effort – the hardest you've worked.

Be honest with yourself and choose your number.

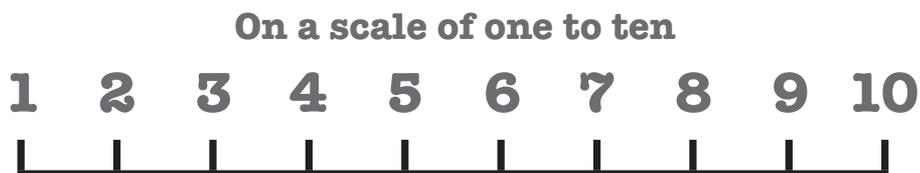
What Are Other Students Doing?

The problem with making a judgement about your own levels of effort is that scales can be subjective. Here are some of the issues:

- » The numbers mean different things to different people.
- » Students tend to surround themselves with people who do either similar or less work than they do. This means they 'normalise' the amount of work they are doing, even feel good about it, because they can point to someone doing less than they are.
- » Students don't have a clear idea of what the hardest working students are doing.
- » No one can know what students are doing in other schools and colleges.

The answer is to get some concrete figures so the choice of number is a more accurate reflection of your levels of effort relative to other students.

Take another look at the 1–10 scale.



Look back at the work you've done so far this term and think about the amount of effort that you've put into your studies. Use the scale above and the following guidelines to choose your number:

- » **1:** 0–2 hours' independent study a week.
- » **5:** 10 hours' independent study a week.
- » **10:** 20 hours' independent study a week.

Be honest with yourself and choose your number.

We got these hourly figures by interviewing students, so we know that AS level students who end up with three A's tend to do twenty hours of independent study a week. Questionnaire results show that the twenty hours tend to be spread across four subjects and equates to about four or five hours per subject per week outside of class. When we do the same with A level students, top students (those aiming for three A's or A*'s) do about thirty hours of independent study per week.

What Can You Do?

First, reach 5/10. That means putting a timetable in place that takes you to ten hours of independent study per week. With your tutor, plan what that will look like and go with it for a period of time. Studies say it takes thirty days to establish a habit. Make ten hours a week your habit for a month.

Then, in consultation with your tutors or teachers, step it up gradually. Go for twelve hours next, then fourteen. If you're doing twenty hours a week by the spring of AS or A2, you're in a really good place.

During their combined 30 plus years of teaching and coaching, Steve Oakes and Martin Griffin have discovered something important. Those students who make real and sustained progress at A level aren't necessarily the ones with superb GCSEs. Some students leap from average results in Year 11 to outstanding results in Year 13. Others seem to hit a ceiling. But why?

It was while they were trying to answer this question that the **VESPA** system emerged. Steve and Martin have cut through the noise surrounding character development and identified five key behaviours and characteristics that all students need to be successful.

VISION – EFFORT – SYSTEMS – PRACTICE – ATTITUDE

These characteristics beat cognition hands down. In *The A Level Mindset*, Steve and Martin share the secrets of coaching students to develop these characteristics, adapting their behaviours and mindsets in order to realise their potential.

Discover 40 concrete, practical and applicable tools and activities that will supercharge learners' ambition, organisation, persistence and determination.

Oakes and Griffin are to be congratulated and thanked for a highly practical, relevant and supportive resource.

John West-Burnham, Professor of Educational Leadership, St Mary's University College

An impressive array of gems packaged into a structure which is immensely useful. The VESPA skeleton is powerful and offers an exciting array of practical tasks that can be used to help young people.

Dave Harris, Business Director, Independent Thinking Limited, author and consultant

This book is more than a set of tips; it's an empowering and optimistic practical approach which will help students to become more reflective learners and better at managing their studies.

Geoff Barton, Head Teacher, King Edward VI School

Accessible and enjoyable – really got me thinking about my A level teaching.

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Caroline Lee, Head of Sixth Form and Assistant Head Teacher, Brighouse Sixth Form College

The A Level Mindset has successfully integrated research and practice into an excellent user guide. It will be a valuable resource for students, teachers, parents and carers.

Professor Peter Clough, Chair of Applied Psychology, Manchester Metropolitan University

Steve Oakes is assistant director of sixth form at The Blue Coat School in Oldham, where he has worked with his *A Level Mindset* co-author, Martin Griffin, for the past eight years. For each of the last five years, progress measures have placed AS and A level students at The Blue Coat School in the top 10 per cent nationally. Together with Martin, Steve has developed and delivered an extensive range of consultancy courses; including work for both the London and Manchester Challenge Programme to improve sixth forms across the country.

Martin Griffin has 20 years' experience teaching post-16 students, and has been a head of faculty, assistant head teacher and deputy head teacher. He was the director of sixth form at The Blue Coat School, a twice Ofsted-outstanding comprehensive sixth form where student progress is among the top 10 per cent in the country. He works with schools and colleges to design and implement character development and mindset programmes.

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ISBN: 978-178583024-2



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