Transition Year is a one-year bridging programme which enables students completing the Junior Cycle to approach the Senior Cycle with a greater degree of confidence and maturity. The effectiveness of the year partly depends on the goodwill, interest and enthusiasm which the students bring to it. For students who immediately recognise the challenge, the impact of the year is soon noticeable. For others, the maturing process does take place more slowly. For a few, the opportunity can be devalued by their lack of motivation.

Rockbrook’s TY Wider Horizons programme aims to help students take more control of their own learning, to interest them in future careers, and through the use of cumulative continuous assessment, to incentivise them to achieve. While covering many of the traditional subjects the programme presents these in a format which recognises their interdependence and which places emphasis on the development of key skills which stand to students in their future studies and careers.

The Wider Horizons programme will consist of five core modules:

◊ Communication
◊ The World of Business
◊ Art, culture and service to humanity
◊ Applied Human Sciences
◊ Global Studies

“To pass Transition Year each student must pass each of the core modules.

The Award will be made at three levels: Bronze Award; Silver Award (equivalent to a merit level) and Gold Award (distinction).

These Awards will be presented at a public ceremony in May each year. Full details of the credits system for these Awards are made available at the beginning of the year.”

Read on...

- How Wider Horizons differs
- New opportunities
- Additional costs
- How WH works
- Core Modules outline
Additional costs

There is an additional charge to cover direct costs associated with the delivery of externally provided modular courses, which will be levied at the time of the annual school fees. This additional fee is €580 for 2014/15. This fee includes some costs for the overnight adventure trip at the beginning of the first term. It also covers the external delivery costs for ECDL exam fees, TV/Video course, Radio Course, Karate, First Aid course, Driving Instruction, Cookery, as well as miscellaneous transport costs.

Costs associated with other calendar ‘out-of-school’ events (e.g. all theatre visits, Belfast trip, class retreat, admission to YSE) will be levied as these events arise. We seek to organise a wide range of relatively low-cost activities rather than a more limited, high-cost programme. This can help students be more conscious of the value of money. Events are spaced over the year, allowing students to put aside pocket money to pay for these as required.

Walking the Camino

The mid-term trip abroad in Spring 2015 (Walking the Camino) is not compulsory, but it is expected that students will wish to participate. Participation is conditional on a student’s positive contribution to the year. The early estimated cost is €560, but a lot will depend on flight and transport costs. Students should seek to pay for the trip in stages. Participation in school-run events at Halloween, Christmas and Easter will help some students offset the cost of this trip. Full details on this trip will be provided in late autumn.

Additional opportunities

Wider Horizons includes many new opportunities to learn. For example, to help them in future careers students will undergo aptitude and career oriented tests, have the opportunity of participating in work experience, and undertake to run various school events (e.g. Halloween and Christmas Shows, Orienteering Events for primary school, Clann Days, Open Days, managing school clubs).

Additional modular courses include a certifiable First Aid Course, TV Course, European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), Driving Instruction and Driver Safety Course, Cookery and Horticultural Skills.

Trips during the year will include visits to local cultural sites in Dublin, Wicklow and Meath; hikes; a trip to the West of Ireland and the major trip of the year, ‘Walking the Camino’ in the north of Spain.
Flexibility helps develop key skills

Wider Horizons encourages students to undertake work outside the classroom. This includes community work; helping younger students in the school; managing school clubs; plan school clann activities; getting involved in the Young Scientist.

Is Wider Horizons different than any other year?

Wider Horizons is an optional year, but we do recommend that all students give consideration to participating in it. Third-year students may apply and are accepted, following all necessary consultation with parents. Rockbrook wishes that those doing Transition Year enter into the year with a proper spirit, and with a keenness to make it work for them.

It is a non-exam year, and there will be very few formal examinations. Credits will be usually awarded for work handed up at different stages during the year (e.g. project work, reports on activities, completion of set tasks both inside and outside of school). Progress reports will go home four times each year.

It is not a homework-free year. More often than not the homework required will be in project format, although it will be up to each teacher to decide how to manage this aspect of student performance.

It is not an opportunity to take a year out nor is it a year where students can opt to attend or not attend school. Full attendance is required at all activities and there are no additional ‘free’ days available to TY students. It is important that parents support the school in ensuring full attendance.

Students may undertake major projects and present a portfolio of work as a means of obtaining additional credits. They may also be presented with valuable career advancing opportunities outside of school. Where such work requires them to be absent from school, the students’ parents and the school must agree on this in advance.

The TY Wider Horizons programme is outlined in this leaflet. Most outings will take place on Wednesdays. Students may be expected to fulfil community service opportunities outside of the school day. Having a project-oriented day each week can cause logistical problems. Wednesday is not a day off for students, and parents should not allow themselves to be misled in this regard. In Transition Year all students generally undertake to do everything, and it is expected that they do not opt out of any classes or events.

The school reserves the right to ask any student with ongoing difficulties or who is not approaching the year with the right spirit to move on to 5th Year.
How Wider Horizons Works

Wider Horizons consists of five core modules. To pass Transition Year a student must pass each of the Wider Horizons core modules. Each module will have 200 credits available. Having passed the five core modules a student who has received a minimum of 500 credits will receive a TY Bronze Award (pass standard). 700 credits will gain a Silver Award (merit) and 900 credits will gain a Gold Award (distinction). Additional credits may also be achieved for a major project work and for a student portfolio.

The five core modules are Communication, The World of Business, Art, culture and service to humanity, Applied Human Sciences and Global Studies.

Each core module contains a range of subjects and activities. Typically in a subject area or in an activity a student can gain from 10 to 60 credits, the number of credits usually depending on the duration of the subject/activity. The credits available will be awarded by the teacher overseeing the subject or activity. Teachers will make known at the beginning of the year how the credits may be gained in each subject/activity (e.g. whether for particular projects, essays, exams, participation etc.).

Additional to the credits available within each module (5 x 200 = 1000 credits), a student may receive up to 200 additional credits for additional work done on (a) special project and (b) portfolio. These credits will be available to help them top up the points gained in a particular module (perhaps to get them across the pass line), and to add to their overall score. Thus the maximum score a student can achieve is 1200 (with 900 credits securing a distinction). An example of a special project might be the work a student does for the YSE, or something special a student searches on his own or in a group (e.g. a successful Enterprise project over a couple of months). The portfolio option allows students to keep some of their best work and present it at the end of the year. See the blue text box for what is involved in each of the Core Modules.

Camino trip is often the highlight of the year, according to past TY students