

University of Bath Statement on Changes to Qualifications in Schools and Colleges in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland

The University has carefully considered the information available so far on qualifications reform and on changes to AS and A levels, amongst other qualifications. Bath is aware that changes to AS and A levels in England, alongside different qualifications frameworks in Wales and Northern Ireland, may present challenges for schools, colleges and Higher Education providers over the coming years. Bath anticipates variation in the ways different English schools and colleges plan for the changes and different patterns of study across Years 12 and 13. The University also acknowledges that whilst English students will be assessed on a linear basis, pupils in Wales and Northern Ireland will retain access to modular AS and A-level provision.

All students:

1. When considering applicants' qualifications, we take into account the context in which they have been studying and the educational opportunities that have been available to them. We receive some of this information directly from UCAS and national education bodies, but it helps us if schools and colleges can include any additional relevant information in the reference.

GCSEs:

2. We are aware that GCSEs in England are changing in the future, and that applicants from 2017 onwards may have GCSEs in Maths or English with new numeric grades (9-1) rather than letters (A*-G). **Our GCSE requirements using existing and revised gradings are published on our webpages.**
3. **The University's equivalences for new GCSEs are as follows: 7 for existing grade A, 6 for existing grade B and 4 for existing grade C.** Should external accreditors in the future require a minimum grade 5 we will adjust requirements for the affected courses.

AS levels:

4. Recognising that under the new system students may not have interim AS awards, and that the level of preparation students may have received will differ in the early years, **we will not consider a student's performance in AS awards under the new linear model when making admissions decisions.** Performance in legacy subjects may be considered, but to ensure equity for candidates sitting AS levels in Wales and Northern Ireland or in an International A level, we will not consider performance in subjects that have moved to a linear model in England, even if taken in a modular system. **Thus, students who have either not taken AS examinations or who have performed lower than anticipated will not be at a disadvantage.**
5. **Students without additional AS levels will not be at a specific disadvantage.** Additional study, in a variety of forms, can help pupils prepare for the demands of university. Students who are able to extend their three A levels by undertaking additional study, such as an additional A-level(s), AS level, or Extended Project Qualification, are encouraged to do so. Please see the 'Additional study' section below.

6. We expect and welcome schools providing interim assessments as part of a comprehensive academic reference but, where this is not present, we will not be requesting additional information from applicants about their performance in the AS year.
7. **We can reassure schools and colleges that we will continue to be able to identify and select highly academically able students.** Bath has always found AS grades helpful as part of an overall application, but we make our offers based on three A Levels and do not ask for an additional AS. Decisions are always based on a wide range of factors, including GCSE or equivalent attainment, predicted grades, relevant past experience, the strength of the personal statement and the evidence of achievement and potential provided in the academic reference.

A Levels:

8. **Typical offers for applicants with A Levels continue to be based on final performance in three A Level subjects.** We will continue to be mindful that students apply from a variety of school and college contexts, each offering their students access to a different range and number of subjects.
9. We are aware that A Level reforms in England do not apply in Wales and Northern Ireland or to International A Levels. **Students will not be advantaged or disadvantaged by the style of A Levels they take.**
10. Whilst linear A Levels are intended to be of the same standard as existing A Levels, we are aware that there may be some dips in performance as schools, colleges and students adapt to these new expectations. Our A Level entry requirements for 2017 are unchanged, but we will monitor attainment closely and take this into consideration when we have all the results. **There may be more flexibility for near-miss candidates taking linear A Levels during Confirmation than in previous years, but this is not guaranteed.**
11. **The University will require all applicants taking linear science A Levels to pass the separate practical endorsement,** regardless of specific relevance to their chosen degree course. The endorsement will be included as a formal requirement of offer for these students.

Additional study:

12. Whilst some departments have a positive preference for additional study, **we recognise that the opportunity for additional study via extra AS or A Levels may be reduced** due to more limited provision at schools and colleges. **We also recognise that schools and colleges are increasingly offering project-based qualifications** to enhance their A level curriculum.
13. a) Project qualifications provide excellent preparation for study at university-level due to the study skills and independent writing skills that they help develop. As such, **for the majority of courses, we will make an alternate offer of one grade below our typical offer for any students taking the following:**
 1. **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) at a grade A;**
 2. **Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives Short Course at grade M1;**
 3. **The Skills Challenge Certificate component of the Welsh Baccalaureate at grade B**

- 4. The International Baccalaureate Extended Essay component**, when studied separately alongside A Levels.

b) **This applies to all courses except for those in Mathematical Sciences and for Economics & Mathematics**, where we continue to make alternate offers based on STEP examinations (rather than project qualifications), which is a more pertinent assessment of mathematical ability and skill.

14. **The alternate offer will also be made to applicants with Cambridge Pre-Us and to those with A Levels combined with BTEC Subsidiary Diplomas or Pre-Us.** Students studying only BTEC qualifications will not receive an alternate offer. The IB Extended Essay is already captured by our standard offer for those applicants taking the IB Diploma, so does not require an alternate.
15. In all cases, **the Admissions Office may use additional study as part of its final selection process during the summer**, in the event that spaces are available for any candidates who have narrowly missed the terms of their offer.
16. **Student choices about whether to undertake additional study, in what form and how much, should rest primarily on their academic best interests.** Our admissions and outreach teams welcome enquiries from schools, colleges and students who would like advice on how best to meet our entry requirements.

Other qualifications commonly taken in the UK:

17. **The International Baccalaureate Diploma is viewed very positively**, with the breadth of study it offers providing excellent preparation for many of our degree courses. We have revised our IB requirements for entry in 2017 and beyond to reflect this and to better align with our A level offers: in many cases the overall points score has been decreased and requirements on Higher Level subjects have increased. We also recognise that an increasing number of candidates are studying elements of the IB Diploma alongside other academic qualifications, and welcome IB Higher Level Certificates when studied alongside A Levels or Cambridge Pre-Us. As the IB programme is intended to be seen as a single qualification, where applicants are solely studying from the IB curriculum we expect them to achieve the full Diploma.
18. **We welcome applications from BTEC or Cambridge Technical students** provided the content is suitable preparation for their chosen degree programme. For some programmes, BTEC/CTEC entry requirements will state additional A level requirements. We welcome enquiries about how any mix of qualifications may meet our more typical entry requirements if not already published on our webpages.
19. **We welcome reforms to vocational qualifications, such as BTECs.** Guidance from Ofqual is that the new BTEC qualifications, whilst different in various ways, are of the same standard as the old qualifications. As such, a student applying to Bath with an old specification BTEC will be viewed in the same way as a student applying with a new specification BTEC when we are making an admissions decision regarding their suitability for an offer. The standard of our BTEC offers is unchanged, regardless of which specification a student is covering. However, we may amend our unit-specific entry requirements in-line with amendments to

the units offered under the new specifications: these requirements will be published on our web pages shortly. At this time we do not make alternate offers incorporating project qualifications (see above) for applicants studying primarily BTEC/CTECs, however, we will keep this under review as the new specifications are introduced.

20. **We also welcome applications from students with Scottish qualifications.** We typically require students to achieve two Advanced Highers, in addition to five Highers. Schools, colleges and pupils are encouraged to consider a challenging and full load of studies for the final school year as this is the best preparation for a demanding university experience.
21. **We welcome applications from students with Access to HE Diplomas to almost all of our programmes.** It is particularly important that students with this qualification note the GCSE requirements of our courses now that GCSE equivalence has been removed from the Diploma.

University of Bath Admissions & Outreach
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