

Sixth-form programmes – the choice

Students entering the sixth form have a range of options as shown below. Most schools offer a combination. The Cambridge Pre-U is being withdrawn. The last entry is 2021 with last examinations in 2023 (last resit June 2024). We have therefore removed this qualification from the table.

	A level	International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma	BTEC	AQA Baccalaureate																																																																																																
Who is it for?	16 to 19 year olds	16 to 19 year olds	16 to 19 year olds	16 to 19 year olds																																																																																																
What can you study?	Most students study three or four A levels.	Six subjects (three at Higher Level and three at Standard Level). All students must study literature, a foreign language, a humanities subject, a natural science and mathematics.	Level 3 qualifications, Extended Certificate equivalent to 1 A level, Diploma to 2 A levels and Extended Diploma to 3 A levels. Certificate is equivalent to 1 AS level.	Three A level subjects in any academic discipline.																																																																																																
How does it work?	The linear A level was introduced with first examination in 2017. Students can take a freestanding AS level but it no longer forms part of the A level. The A level is assessed after two years of study.	Over two years, in addition to their six subjects, students complete a 4,000-word Extended Essay and a Theory of Knowledge course, and participate in the Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) programme. All exams are taken at the end of the second year of study, there are no modules. Conceived as a holistic integral programme bound by a clear philosophy.	BTECs are offered across 16 sectors and comprise core and optional units. The courses are assessed internally and externally and some modules can be retaken. Assignments can include exams, essays, research and investigative projects, and experiments and fieldwork.	In addition to their three A levels, students complete an Extended Project Qualification that aims to make them responsible for their own learning; achieve breadth through an AS level in Critical Thinking, Citizenship, General Studies, Science in society or World development; and undertake enrichment activities outside the curriculum such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.																																																																																																
What is it worth?	<p>The table below shows the UCAS tariff points awarded for the new (linear) A levels, with first examination in 2017.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Tariff points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A*</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>16</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Tariff points	A*	56	A	48	B	40	C	32	D	24	E	16	<p>The table below shows the UCAS tariff points awarded for the IB Certificate in Higher Level. Certificates in Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge also attract UCAS tariff points when the certificates have been taken individually.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Tariff points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>H7</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H6</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H5</td> <td>32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H4</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H3</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H2</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Tariff points	H7	56	H6	48	H5	32	H4	24	H3	12	H2	0	H1	0	<p>95% of universities accept BTECs, but acceptance may be course-dependent. Grading is from Distinction*, Distinction, Merit, Pass. UCAS points for double grades for Diplomas (and triple grades for Extended Diplomas) are calculated from the points for single grades.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Extended Certificate</th> <th>Tariff points</th> <th>Diploma</th> <th>Tariff points</th> <th>Extended Diploma</th> <th>Tariff points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>D*</td> <td>56</td> <td>D*D*</td> <td>112</td> <td>D*D*D*</td> <td>168</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>48</td> <td>D*D</td> <td>104</td> <td>D*D*D</td> <td>160</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>32</td> <td>DD</td> <td>96</td> <td>D*DD</td> <td>152</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>16</td> <td>DM</td> <td>80</td> <td>DDD</td> <td>144</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>MM</td> <td>64</td> <td>DDM</td> <td>128</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>MP</td> <td>48</td> <td>DMM</td> <td>112</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>PP</td> <td>32</td> <td>MMM</td> <td>96</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>MMP</td> <td>80</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>MPP</td> <td>64</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>PPP</td> <td>48</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Extended Certificate	Tariff points	Diploma	Tariff points	Extended Diploma	Tariff points	D*	56	D*D*	112	D*D*D*	168	D	48	D*D	104	D*D*D	160	M	32	DD	96	D*DD	152	P	16	DM	80	DDD	144			MM	64	DDM	128			MP	48	DMM	112			PP	32	MMM	96					MMP	80					MPP	64					PPP	48	Maximum 216 UCAS tariff points for three A* A levels, grade A* Extended Project (28 points) and a standalone AS level at grade A (20 points).
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Where can you study it?	Schools and FE colleges.	115 schools and colleges in the UK offer the IB Diploma.	Schools and colleges – some students study across two institutions or alongside employment or an apprenticeship.	UK schools which believe A levels are not, in themselves, sufficient preparation for university.																																																																																																
Comment	Still the best-known sixth-form qualification in the UK, and taken by the largest number of students as their means of entry into higher education. Some schools offer the Extended Project Qualification in addition to A levels.	Internationally recognised and valued. Heavier class-based workload than A levels and more independent learning. The percentage of candidates achieving the different grades has remained constant over the years.	BTECs are highly regarded, offering a well-proven route into employment, training and university. Modular assessment, focus on skills and opportunities for work experience make them an attractive complement to A levels as well as a very useful standalone qualification. They are becoming more popular in schools, usually alongside one or two A levels. Sports Science and Business Studies are popular.	AQA Baccalaureate is derived in large part from the spirit of the IB Diploma Programme: depth, some breadth, thinking and research skills, and extra-curricular experience.																																																																																																

To find out more, go to www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/tariff/new-tariff