

Statement on A level and GCSE reform in England and admissions to Aston University

At Aston we appreciate that schools and colleges face a challenging time over the next few years as they adapt to the new environment in England and plan their curriculum models from 2015, for 2017 entry to university. We also note that schools and colleges are facing financial constraints with regard to the post-16 curriculum.

Many schools and colleges will be looking to universities, such as Aston for information and guidance on this issue to ensure that their post-16 curriculum does not disadvantage students in their H.E. choices.

This briefing sheet aims to give an indication to schools, academies and colleges about Aston's admissions policy and typical entry requirements for 2017 entry and beyond. Aston is a popular choice and receives over 13,000 UCAS applicants each year for 2,500 places, of which around 80% receive offers. Our average entry grade in 2013-14 was BBB-ABB at A level and D*DD at BTEC.

A synopsis of the reforms is at: ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-reform/

A levels

- We encourage schools and colleges to continue to offer a range of A levels to their post-16 students. A levels are consistently the most popular entry route to university (including Aston) and are also valued by employers.
- We appreciate that some schools/colleges may not be able to offer four full A levels due to financial constraints so we are keen not to disadvantage these institutions/students.
- Aston **does not** expect students to take four or more full A levels to gain entry. As now we make offers based on the best three A levels taken. Students who have additional AS or A levels may show greater breadth in their studies and spread their risk across a wider range of subjects, for example if one of their A level grades is not as strong as expected.
- We recommend that schools/colleges briefly refer to their curriculum model on A levels, vocational qualifications and AS levels in the UCAS reference for 2017 entry, to give our admissions tutors additional context and help ensure fairness in considering candidates.
- We will continue to accept General Studies as a fourth A level. Many students across the UK have successfully gained places at competitive Universities as a result of taking General Studies, Critical Thinking or similar qualifications.
- Aston University does not have an overarching list of preferred A level subjects. Our undergraduate prospectus and website outlines specific subject requirements.

AS levels and grades

- We appreciate that there are potential challenges for schools and colleges with regard to whether AS levels are co-teachable in the proposed linear structure from 2015. We understand too that a range of options is available to schools and colleges in relation to whether certain AS level exams are completed/certified.
- Aston University will not discriminate against schools/colleges or students who have not taken or certified stand-alone AS levels in Year 12. If a school or college chooses to enter its students for AS levels then this should be stated on the UCAS form and in the UCAS reference. Students are

also welcome to take additional AS levels in Year 13 (if time and resources allow) to broaden their studies and increase UCAS tariff on entry.

- A strong Year 12 AS level performance in one or more subjects may motivate students, provide a positive angle to a UCAS application and back up any predicted grades. Schools/colleges who have not entered students for AS exams may wish to refer to internal assessments in the UCAS reference when making predicted grades. Students should be **positive** in their UCAS choices.

“Old” and “new” A levels during 2015-18

- Aston University will continue to make offers based on grades of BBC-AAA at A level, depending on the degree. We appreciate that some students may apply to University in 2016-18 with a mix of old and new style A/AS levels. We would not discriminate between different years/styles. We will try to be flexible on entry grades for Firm choice candidates, particularly if students achieve within one or two grades of their offer. We may also review our typical offers if average grades across England continue to fall as a result of curriculum changes.

Vocational Qualifications and mixes

- Aston will continue to accept students with relevant BTEC, Cambridge Technical and other vocational qualifications as well as a mix of A levels and BTEC/equivalent courses. For example, we will require students to achieve Distinction grades at BTEC. Aston also welcomes applications from **International Baccalaureate (IB) students** with typical offers ranging from 32-35 points.

Extended Project (EPQ) and similar qualifications

- At Aston we note that more students are applying to us with an EPQ qualification or similar independent learning opportunities alongside their A levels. We welcome the academic and research experience these can give students and the opportunity to link their A level subjects together. For example, some schools are planning a three A level plus EPQ curriculum model for 2015 and/or with an opportunity for an additional AS level in Y12/13. Aston will continue to take additional AS/EPQ qualifications into account at results confirmation and when making offers but they may not be part of the offer itself.

Core Mathematics Qualification/Studies

- Whilst we would not discriminate against students who do not/are unable to take a Core Maths course from 2015 we welcome the ethos behind this development. For example, students in social sciences, business, psychology, sciences and health sciences who are not taking A/AS level Maths may find the Core Maths element useful in preparing for university study where a working application of maths or statistics may be required.

GCSE reforms from 2015-2019

- Aston University will not require students to achieve the “EBacc” equivalent for entry in 2015-2019 but a breadth of subjects at grade C or above will continue to be required over the next few years. In 2017 and beyond we will view the new Grade 4 as being equivalent to a C grade and will require students to achieve at least the proposed new grade 5 “international standard” if the subject is relevant to our degree programme. For example GCSE Maths for degrees in Accounting, Economics and Computing.

Schools and colleges are welcome to get in touch with us with any queries or comments. Our Masterclass and subject enrichment programme will be available in 2015 and beyond to add value to pre-16 and post-16 curricula. We will also be running our annual Admissions Conference for Advisers and Teachers on 8th January 2015: www.aston.ac.uk/teachers

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