Statement on A-Level and GCSE reform and its interaction with admissions policy at St George’s, University of London

St George’s recognises that it is a challenging time for UK schools and colleges as they adapt to the new curriculum environment in England. We also appreciate that financial constraints on schools and colleges may impact on the delivery of the new post 16 curriculum. This briefing document aims to provide clear guidance to schools, colleges and students in relation to the types of qualifications needed for acceptance on to our degree programmes at St George’s in 2017 and beyond.

St George’s admissions policy strives to be fair and transparent, upholding the principals of opportunity and consistency for all. We are consistent in considering an applicant’s achievement within their educational context. In doing so, St George’s must also continue to ensure that our entry requirements are appropriate for the academic rigour of our programmes and for the students we seek to attract.

 **In Brief**

The range of academic and vocational qualifications offered in schools and colleges is being reviewed.

* Reforms to GCSEs and A levels will result in structurally different qualifications with the same name in different parts of the UK.
* The new subjects are being introduced gradually, with the first wave being taught from September 2015. Subjects that have not been reformed will no longer be available for teaching from September 2018
* St George’s will normally make a graded offer rather than use the UCAS tariff. This is so that the offer being made is explicitly clear to each applicant. The details below provide examples for most common qualifications.

Further information about the qualification reforms can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/your-qualification-our-regulation-gcse-as-and-a-level-reforms>

**AS/A level reforms**

From 2017, entry to our MBBS programme will require three A-level passes with a **minimum** **A grade** including Biology, Chemistry and another A level. We will not require an additional pass in an AS level. St George’s will not disadvantage applicants who have not had the opportunity to take AS levels at their school/college at the point of initial application and our standard policy will be to make offers on the basis of 3 A levels. Keep in mind that our MBBS programme is fiercely competitive and an offer of three A grades at A level is a minimum requirement.

If an applicant fails to meet the terms of their offer, an additional qualification, such as a fourth A level, AS level or the Extended Project Qualification, may be considered at this stage to determine the academic ability of the candidate.

For admission to all other courses we will require three A-level passes and may specify minimum grades in specific subjects, as we currently do.

We recommend that schools/colleges outline their policy on which qualifications they offer their students in the reference section of the UCAS form in order to provide a context for the applicant’s academic background.

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

St George’s will not include the EPQ in our standard offer in 2017, although we do strongly support this qualification and would encourage all applicants to consider taking the EPQ if it is offered at their school or college. St George’s would like to consider the flexibility of using the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in the future. We believe this qualification helps to prepare students for the independent style of learning that is required to succeed at university and allows students to study a particular area in greater depth, which may of course help them to explore their interest in a university subject not offered at post-16 level. This subject exploration could then be included in a personal statement. Through the EPQ, applicants are likely to develop skills that will contribute towards the fulfilment of the non-academic criteria that we are looking for in the medicine selection process. However, applicants who study at a school or college where the EPQ is not offered will not be disadvantaged in our admissions process.

St George’s does not intend to award greater merit to the English linear A level which will be taught for some subjects from September 2015 onwards (and thus be considered for university entry in 2017). However, we will review this position, if necessary, after the first round of delivery of the new A levels.

From 2015, revised science A levels in England (biology, chemistry and physics) will include a separate result for the practical element of the qualification. At present, up to 30% of the overall A-level grade is derived from assessment of the candidate’s practical skills. St George’s will ask for a pass in the practical element of the reformed science A levels for entry to our Science programmes.

Please note some courses do not accept “General Studies” as an A level – entry criteria detail will be provided at course level.

**AS grades**

We recognise that schools and colleges may offer a wide range of options in relation to AS level exams.St George’s will continue to maintain its position in that neither advantage, nor disadvantage will be given to students who present these qualifications at the time of application and therefore this should be a matter for the individual school or college. We will continue to compare AS and predicted grades in a similar manner to that described and the overall policy will be reviewed annually

**GCSE reforms**

From 2017 entry we expect to require a minimum achievement of grade 8 in three GCSEs and grade 7 in a further three GCSEs, including Biology and Chemistry or Double Science, Maths and English from applicants to our MBBS degree. . While GCSE performance is routinely considered in a holistic assessment of applications to all other courses, we do not currently specify achievement of a minimum number of passes at specific grades in GCSE qualifications, beyond minimum requirements in English and Mathematics, normally at current grade B or C. We expect to map these grades to the new grading scheme, treating grade C as equivalent to the new grade 4 or 5. We will soon publish specific GCSE requirements in our undergraduate prospectus for 2017 entry.

We will expect applicants to normally have achieved a minimum of 5 GCSE passes (A\*-C, or 9-4) to include Maths and English or equivalent.

In relation to GCSE reforms we can confirm our position in terms of equivalencies:

A\* = 8/9

A = 7

B = 6

C = 4

Please note that we currently require a grade C for English and Mathematics for all entrants and specific grades for some programmes if a subject is not offered at A level.

We will not require the English Baccalaureate for entry to our degree programmes but the choice of subjects studied at GCSE may be taken into account when considering an application.

We recognise the challenges for teachers and schools in delivering a new curriculum and would encourage you to explain any particular changes in school policy about the range of subjects and qualifications on offer in the applicant reference. We would also encourage you to continue to use the reference to explain any circumstances, whether academic or personal, which may have affected an individual applicant.

Making accurate predictions of A-level grades will be more challenging while the new curriculum is introduced in schools and colleges. We would ask you to make every effort to predict accurately, for example by making reference to an applicant’s performance in the end of year 12 examinations or by reflecting on the student’s overall progress from GCSE to A-level, as this will help us to make fair and informed decisions when offering places to applicants.

St George’s will continue to review this policy as the position for schools and colleges becomes clearer in this area.