

Introducing a new Tariff - Proposal

UCAS

Technical briefing document

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Executive summary

We are seeking feedback on our proposals for the introduction of a new UCAS Tariff. The Tariff is a qualifications comparison tool which is used to support admissions to higher education (HE) and as a means for comparing qualifications held on entry to HE for management information purposes.

In 2012 UCAS completed a review looking at what information universities and colleges, students, and schools and advisers need about qualifications to facilitate selection for admission to HE. The review identified a number of issues, including concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of the Tariff:

- the Tariff cannot accommodate Access qualifications or Apprenticeship Frameworks because it is based on an A level benchmark and geared towards academic qualifications. A large number of recognised vocational qualifications cannot be allocated Tariff points
- there are concerns about the relative allocation of points to certain qualifications, such as the AS, and that the methodology means that points allocated are heavily influenced by qualification size
- the inclusion of new qualifications in the Tariff is determined by Awarding Organisations who pay to have their qualifications evaluated and points allocated. This means that some qualifications which are likely to be valuable for progression to HE are not currently included
- the Tariff is expensive and complex to administer.

In addition, significant reform of qualifications is now underway across the UK. The Tariff cannot easily accommodate the changes planned to benchmark qualifications such as the A level and AS. Any divergence in the nature and/or standard of these qualifications between England, Wales and Northern Ireland would be difficult to manage within the current Tariff framework.

At the same time, many Higher Education Providers (HEPs) are planning to expand their recruitment of other EU and international students. There is increasing demand from the HE sector for international qualifications to be included in the Tariff.

In the UK there is a continuing shift from academic to vocational and applied qualifications at Level 3/SCQF Level 6¹. The Tariff needs to reflect these changes.

We have developed a new Tariff which we believe addresses these challenges. This is part of our wider portfolio of qualification information services, which also include Qualification

¹ In all instances references to Level 3 encapsulate Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Level 6 plus the Advanced Higher in Scotland.

Information Profiles (QIPs), the first sets of which were published in 2013, and better information for students on understanding Tariff point entry requirements and offers.

A new UCAS Tariff

The new Tariff is based on a size multiplied by grade calculation.

- Qualifications will be allocated to one of four size bands based on their guided learning hours or notional learning hours (GLH/NLH).
- Qualifications will also be allocated to one of 12 grade bands. These bands cover Level 3/SCQF Level 6.
- The size band and grade band of a qualification are multiplied together to calculate the number of Tariff points.

The new Tariff addresses the concerns with the existing Tariff and provides a solution which can accommodate future change. The new Tariff:

- can be applied to the full range of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications which means that many more vocational qualifications can now be included, supporting widening access and participation
- enables EU and other non-UK qualifications to be allocated Tariff points
- can accommodate the qualification reforms which are underway in the UK and other future changes
- reflects the needs of the HE sector, with universities and colleges deciding which new qualifications should be included
- is simpler, more transparent, and less expensive to administer than the current version.

The new Tariff has been developed in partnership with representatives from the HE sector and is the result of an extensive programme of modelling, testing and evaluation which looked at a number of different options. We have also worked closely with qualification regulators and representatives from the secondary education sector. Our testing has evaluated the potential impacts of the new Tariff on students, individual qualifications, admissions practice and university league tables. Taking account of all of the evidence from these assessments we believe that the proposed solution is the one which best meets the needs of students and HEPs.

Introducing a new Tariff

We recognise that introducing a new Tariff will require schools and colleges, HEPs and HE sector bodies, amongst others, to make changes to their systems and processes in order to switch over from the current Tariff to a new version. We also recognise that the new Tariff may impact on curriculum planning in the secondary sector and that students need sufficient notice of the change to inform their Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualification choices.

In order to minimise disruption for users, we are proposing that all qualifications which currently attract Tariff points will transfer to the new Tariff. We have also sought to

minimise the changes in established relationships between qualifications i.e. the relative difference between qualifications in terms of old and new Tariff points. However, because Ofqual has stated that an AS is not equal in demand to an A level, we are proposing to reposition the AS level at 40% of an A level rather than 50% as under the current Tariff. This change will also affect qualifications which are benchmarked to the AS.

Tariff points are also used by HESA to measure qualifications held on entry to HE, information which is used by organisations as a component in national university league tables. As league tables use a variety of methodologies it is not feasible to determine the potential impacts of the new Tariff on national rankings. However, HESA has undertaken modelling to examine the impact of the new Tariff on the relative ranking of institutions based solely on average qualifications held on entry. This shows that a large majority of HEPs would see their relative ranking altered by no more than two places.

Implementation timeline

UCAS is proposing to introduce the new Tariff for the 2017 admissions cycle, to align with the implementation of major qualification reforms in the UK. Many new qualifications will be introduced for teaching from September 2015 and will be first awarded in June 2017. This timeline will ensure that prospective applicants to HE will have access to information about the points qualifications will attract under the new Tariff in 2014, at least a year in advance of commencing a two year programme of study. This also gives HEPs and other organisations 18 months to prepare for the transition and to make any changes necessary to internal systems, processes and information.

Impact of the new Tariff

UCAS has considered the potential impact of implementing the new Tariff on students and secondary curriculum planning. We have also tried to address potential impacts on the admissions process with HEPs. Our aim is to minimise the costs and disruption for users. Overall, our approach to developing the new Tariff has been to ensure minimum change in terms of established qualification relationships. However, a key change is that the AS is repositioned in the new Tariff in line with Ofqual's statement that it is not equal in demand to an A level. The value of the AS under the current Tariff has been a key criticism amongst HEPs.

Your feedback and next steps

We would like your feedback on the new Tariff proposals. We are asking all HEPs and UK secondary schools and colleges to complete a short questionnaire. We are also asking other stakeholders to send us their comments in writing.

The feedback exercise will run until 16 May 2014. We will share the findings with our Advisory Group and the UCAS Board in June and we expect to confirm the outcome by summer 2014. Assuming there are no substantive technical issues raised, the new Tariff points will also be published in summer 2014, for use from the 2017 entry cycle.

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1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out proposals for a new Tariff. It covers:

- the rationale for changing the Tariff
- the design principles underpinning the new Tariff
- the proposed Tariff
- an impact assessment on introducing the new Tariff
- the proposed implementation plan.

1.2 Appendices describe in more detail:

- **Appendix A:** membership of the New Qualifications Information Service (NQIS) Advisory Group (this is the project which has developed the new Tariff), and membership of the Tariff Advisory Group (which is responsible for advising UCAS on the allocation of points to qualifications under the current Tariff)
- **Appendix B:** the development and testing of the new Tariff
- **Appendix C:** information about the relative positioning of qualifications and a comparison of old and new points for benchmark qualifications
- **Appendix D:** applicant profiles comparing old and new Tariff point totals for different study programmes
- **Appendix E:** Frequently asked questions

1.3 A list of all Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications which currently attract Tariff points is provided as a separate document. This compares the current Tariff point allocations with the proposed new point allocations, together with an explanation about how the points have been calculated for each qualification.

1.4 The new Tariff has been developed in partnership with representatives from the HE and secondary education sectors and qualification regulators. The proposals outlined in this technical briefing are the result of an extensive programme of development and testing which has included:

- assessment of the impact of the new Tariff on students by qualifications held, level of attainment, country of domicile, gender and socio-economic background
- testing by eight universities of different Tariff options on admissions practice and provision of management information
- impact on provision of information to HESA and information supplied for use in university league tables.

1.5 We are seeking feedback on these proposals from admissions practitioners and planners in universities and colleges, and from secondary schools and colleges as providers of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications. Subject to the feedback received it is proposed that details of the new Tariff and the points for qualifications will be published in summer 2014 for first use in the 2017 admissions cycle.

2. The rationale for changing the Tariff

- 2.1 The Tariff was introduced in 2001 as a means to help learners make sensible application choices and to help HEPs consider less familiar qualifications and combinations of different qualifications when setting entry requirements and making offers. Under the current model, Awarding Organisations apply to UCAS to have their qualifications considered for inclusion in the Tariff. Typically, a large body of evidence and information is evaluated by UCAS and presented to a group of HE admissions professionals and experts, the Tariff Advisory Group (TAG) which advises UCAS about an allocation of Tariff points (current membership of TAG is at Appendix A). The process is complex and costly to administer.
- 2.2 In 2012 UCAS completed a review and national consultation exercise about access to information about qualifications to support selection for admissions to HE – the Qualifications Information Review. This included a review of the effectiveness of the UCAS Tariff which highlighted the following issues.
- 2.3 **The limitations of the current Tariff, including:**
 - concerns that the size of a qualification can exert a heavy influence on the number of points allocated
 - the lack of explicit recognition that some qualifications operate in different parts of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 e.g. the AS and A level
 - the inability to accommodate composite qualifications and some non-traditional and vocational qualifications
 - some lack of transparency about how points are allocated.
- 2.4 **Usage of the Tariff, including:**
 - the majority of HEPs prefer to use qualifications and grades for setting entry requirements and making offers rather than Tariff points. This enables them to articulate the specific requirements for their courses
 - where Tariff points are used to describe entry requirements and offers, this is often in combination with more specific qualifications and grades
 - the majority of HEPs use the Tariff as a tool for analytical, management information and performance indicator purposes, particularly for making returns to HESA about the qualifications held by students on entry to HE.
- 2.5 **Applicants' experience of the Tariff:**
 - applicants are confused about Tariff points, particularly Tariff point offers
 - there is evidence that some students focus on the number of points a qualification attracts rather than its suitability for progression to HE courses.

- 2.6 The review examined whether the Tariff should be withdrawn altogether. A number of HEPs argued strongly in favour of retaining a Tariff to enable them to specify entry requirements in a succinct way to attract students with a wide range of qualifications, and to help them make large numbers of decisions efficiently in a short space of time during Confirmation and Clearing. Some secondary education providers also wanted to retain a Tariff to support students taking non-standard combinations of qualifications.
- 2.7 The final report and recommendations from the Qualifications Information Review are at: <http://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/qir-findings-and-recommendations.pdf>

New Qualification Information Service (NQIS) Project

- 2.8 Following the review, UCAS established the NQIS project to take forward the recommendations. We have already:
- improved our information for students on understanding entry requirements and offers made using Tariff points
 - provided HEPs with good practice case studies on moving from using Tariff points to qualifications and grades to set entry requirements and make offers
 - published a series of Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs) which offer detailed information about qualifications, such as assessment approaches, to help admissions staff in considering students with vocational or non-UK qualifications.
- 2.9 The final stage of the project is the development of a new Tariff method to address the limitations identified with the current approach. This has been given added impetus by recently announced UK-wide qualification reforms, since the current Tariff cannot easily accommodate some of the changes planned. At the same time, many HEPs are planning to expand their international recruitment. There is increasing demand for international qualifications to be included in the Tariff.
- 2.10 In the UK there is a continuing shift from academic to vocational and applied qualifications at Level 3. The Tariff needs to reflect these changes.
- 2.11 The NQIS project has been fortunate in being able to utilise the expertise of an advisory group drawn from representatives from HEPs, the secondary education sector and HESA. The group has been fundamental to advising UCAS on the development, testing and evaluation of the proposed new Tariff. Membership of the group is at Appendix A. We have also been able to draw upon the expertise of the Tariff Advisory Group and qualification regulators in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

3. The new Tariff design principles

3.1 The starting point for developing a new Tariff was the construction of a set of design principles to ensure that the new method addresses the concerns identified with current Tariff, the anticipated qualification reforms and is sufficiently durable. The design principles are listed below.

- **Transparent** – have a simple design and a clear process for allocating Tariff points.
- **Meet stakeholders' needs** – be fit for purpose for those HEPs who use Tariff points for admission purposes and meet the needs of all HEPs who use the Tariff for management information purposes.
- **Cost effective** – the cost of administering a new points system should be lower than the current Tariff and proportionate to its likely use.
- **Comprehensive** – be able to accommodate all UK regulated Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications and non-UK qualifications.
- **Sustainable** – be robust enough to cope with qualification reforms across the UK and last for a minimum of ten years.
- **Flexible** – be sufficiently flexible to cope with the widest range of qualifications and easily accommodate any future changes to them.
- **Support fairness** – for the greatest number of applicants across the UK and support the widening participation agenda.

4. The proposed new Tariff

- 4.1 In designing our proposed approach we developed and tested five different Tariff model options with, for example, different grade bands and different approaches to positioning key qualifications. Each of these options has been evaluated using a variety of tests (undertaken variously by UCAS, HESA and the Fischer Education Ltd (FFT)²), including some or all of:
- assessment of mathematical rigour and alignment with the principles underpinning the current Tariff
 - assessment of the extent to which the model maintains appropriate relationships between qualifications in different frameworks
 - impacts on young applicants in terms of qualifications taken, level of attainment, domicile, sex and socio-economic background
 - impacts on admissions practice in universities and colleges
 - potential impacts on the HESA dataset which can be used in university league tables.
- 4.2 The NQIS Advisory and Tariff Advisory Groups considered the outputs from this modelling and testing and evaluated the extent to which these outputs aligned with the Tariff design principles. The option providing the best match is that outlined below. Further information about these options, the outcomes of the testing, and reasons why various options were rejected is at Appendix B.
- 4.3 The new Tariff is based on a size multiplied by grade calculation.
- Qualifications will be allocated to one of four size bands based on their guided learning hours or notional learning hours (GLH/NLH).
 - Qualifications will also be allocated to one of 12 grade bands. These bands cover Level 3/SCQF Level 6.
 - The size band and grade band of a qualification are multiplied together to calculate the number of Tariff points.
 - Size and grade information will be provided by accredited regulators of UK qualifications.
- 4.4 Detailed information about the rationale for selecting this option and the benefits it offers is described in Section 5. The paragraphs below describe how the size and grade bands will operate and how the new Tariff will be managed and administered.

Qualification size bands

- 4.5 The proposed Tariff uses four size bands as shown in Table 1. Four size bands are sufficient to differentiate between the range of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications based on guided learning hours (GLH) and notional learning hours (NLH) in Scotland, without over-emphasising the importance of size. Modelling demonstrates that more bands of

² FFT is a non-profit organisation backed by the Fischer Family Trust, a registered charity that supports a range of UK based education and health projects.

smaller bandwidth lead to fractured relationships across qualifications. This is considered to be unhelpful for a new Tariff designed to provide a broad indication of comparability.

Table 1: New Tariff size bands

Size band	GLH/NLH	Qualifications included	GLH/NLH
1	< 120	Free Standing Mathematics Qualifications	60
2	120-219	Extended Project Qualification	120
		IB Core	150
		AS	180
		IB Standard Certificates	200 ³
		BTEC Level 3 Certificates	180
3	220-319	Scottish Higher	240
4	320+	Scottish Advanced Higher	320
		A level	360
		IB Higher Certificates	360
		BTEC National Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma	360
		Pre-U Principal Subjects	380

4.6 The size boundaries have been designed to ensure that existing size relationships between qualifications are maintained. For example:

- the AS remains half the size of an A level
- Scottish Highers are allocated a band in between AS and A level
- Scottish Advanced Highers are allocated to the same band as A levels
- A levels, IB Higher Level and Pre-U Principal Subjects are regarded as being of comparable size.

4.7 The lack of an upper limit to band 4 means there is no advantage given to single award qualifications that are larger in size than A levels or Scottish Advanced Highers.

4.8 Composite qualifications are treated as a series of individual qualification components. For example, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Higher Level, IB Standard Level and IB Core within the International Baccalaureate Diploma, are individually allocated to a qualification size band.

4.9 For multiple graded and large awards such as BTEC or OCR extended awards, the qualifications are treated as a combination of single awards. For example, three x size band 4 qualifications. This enables easy comparison across qualifications and reflects HE admissions practice. The separate Qualifications List shows the calculations for all multiple and large awards.

³ The IB Standard Level has been allocated to size band 2, see the separate Qualification List for more details.

Qualification grade bands

4.10 A grade scale has been developed to cover Level 3/SCQF Level 6. It provides broad grade bands that all qualifications can be mapped to. The grade band scale is based on the following:

- regulation by UK regulators ensures that all Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications are Level 3/SCQF Level 6
- Level 3/SCQF Level 6 has to be finite. Level 3/SCQF Level 6 has therefore been defined as running from A* grade at A level to E grade at AS. Qualifications which are either much below grade E at AS or much above grade A* at A level will be classed as Level 2/SCQF Level 5 or Level 4/SCQF Level 7/8
- there are 12 grade bands, using a 3-14 point scale. The scale starts at 3 to provide a sufficient multiplier effect and avoid distortion of totals at the lower end of the scale. This 12 grade band scale enables key UK benchmark qualifications such as Scottish Highers and A levels to be effectively positioned in relation to each other. This flexibility was a key factor in recommending this option as the new Tariff.

4.11 The grade points of new qualifications added to the Tariff will be evenly distributed across the Level 3/SCQF Level 6 range unless there is evidence to suggest otherwise. For example, a qualification specification, accredited by regulators, may indicate that the qualification is very demanding and operates at the top end of the grade scale.

4.12 Table 2 shows the new Tariff grade bands using the AS and A levels as the qualifications most widely used for admission to HE. The table shows how the six A level grades overlap with the AS grades A, B, C and D. There are two key differences in the relative positioning of qualifications compared to the current Tariff:

- the AS is positioned at 40% of an A level rather than 50% at each grade point. This is based on a statement published by Ofqual that the AS is not as demanding as the A level⁴
- pass/fail qualifications will be positioned as equivalent to an A level grade C, except where there is evidence from the qualification specification that it should be aligned at a higher or lower grade point. This change has been discussed with the Federation of Awarding Bodies and qualification regulators and is in line with the approach recommended in the report *'Including all approved qualifications in school and college performance indicators, Phase one report, QCA, 2002'*.

Further information on the rationale for qualifications alignment is given in Appendix C.

⁴ <http://ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-types/a-levels/>

Table 2: New Tariff grade bands

Level 3/SCQF Level 6	A level grade	AS grades	New Tariff grade bands
	A*		14
			13
	A		12
			11
	B	A	10
			9
	C	B	8
			7
	D	C	6
		D	5
	E		4
		E	3

Academic demand

- 4.13 The proposed new Tariff reflects qualification demand by using the new Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualification grading scale. In contrast to the current Tariff, it does not involve measures of academic demand or expert group processes. This is because QIR feedback showed there was considerable disagreement about the interpretation of demand. To some this related to the development of academic skills and knowledge, whilst others were interested in the extent to which qualifications developed a broader range of skills that were highly relevant to their programmes. The Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs) are key sources of information in that they supplement the Tariff by providing clear and comprehensive information to help inform HEPs on qualification relevance. They can be accessed at: <http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/advisers-and-referees/guides-and-resources#qips>

Calculation of new Tariff points

- 4.14 The points allocated to each qualification are calculated by multiplying together size band and grade band. The separate Qualifications List provides a comparison of current and proposed new Tariff points for all qualifications currently on the Tariff. Appendix C provides comparison information for selected benchmark qualifications including the A level, AS, Extended Project Qualification, Scottish Advanced Highers and Scottish Highers, together with information about the rationale for the relative relationships between these qualifications and information about how international qualifications can be included in the Tariff. Appendix D gives a number of examples of applicant profiles comparing current and new Tariff point totals for students taking typical Level 3/SCQF Level 6 study programmes and reaching different levels of attainment.

4.15 The new Tariff also offers HEPs the opportunity to set limits on the total size of qualifications for which they are seeking to evaluate attainment, should they wish to do so. For example, the following combinations of qualifications each have an aggregate size band score of 12:

- three A levels (3 x size band 4)
- three Advanced Highers (3 x size band 4)
- three IB Higher Level (3 x size band 4)
- three Pre-U Principal Subjects (3 x size band 4)
- one Extended BTEC Diploma (3 x size band 4)
- two A levels + two AS (2 x size band 4 + 2 x size band 2)
- one OCR Cambridge Technical Diploma + one A level (2 x size band 4 + 1 x size band 4).

Management of the new Tariff

4.16 UCAS will administer the Tariff on a similar basis to the current model and will run an annual exercise to consider new qualifications for inclusion in the Tariff and to review feedback about how well the Tariff is operating. In a change from the current model, HEPs rather than Awarding Organisations will be asked to determine which new qualifications should be allocated Tariff points. UCAS does not propose charging Awarding Organisations for inclusion in the Tariff.

4.17 Based on feedback from the secondary sector and HEPs, UCAS will identify a list of qualifications for inclusion in the Tariff. If there is sufficient support from HEPs, points will be calculated and added to the published Tariff. Quality assurance and advice on less straightforward qualifications will be provided by the Tariff Advisory Group (TAG). The terms of reference and membership of the TAG will be reviewed to reflect this new approach. TAG may also wish to draw upon advice from schools and colleges and UK qualification regulators. Accountability for decisions on the allocation of points will continue to reside with UCAS.

4.18 UCAS will also encourage HEPs, schools and colleges to identify and share any issues or concerns about Tariff point allocations with TAG. This information will be shared with regulators and other stakeholders, such as Awarding Organisations to highlight and address any issues.

5. Impact assessment

- 5.1 Introducing a new Tariff points system will be challenging but will also offer significant benefits over and above the current system. This section of the briefing describes the work we have undertaken with the NQIS Advisory Group, HESA and the FFT to assess the impact of the new Tariff on students, HEPs, secondary education providers and other stakeholders and describe the benefits that these groups will accrue.

Impact on students

- 5.2 Invariably, introducing a more systemic Tariff model will lead to some changes in the relative differences between qualifications at some grades. Appendix D provides examples of applicant profiles comparing old and new Tariff point totals for students taking typical programmes and achieving various levels of attainment. This demonstrates a small benefit for students taking Scottish Highers compared to those taking A levels which is a consequence of more precise alignment between SQA qualifications and the A level and AS benchmarks. There is no impact on students taking BTEC Nationals as these retain alignment with A levels. The most significant change amongst common qualifications is the repositioning of the AS which will attract relatively fewer points. The introduction of a new Tariff is unlikely on its own to affect entry requirements or the offers that applicants receive.
- 5.3 Appendix B describes the modelling work undertaken to look at the impact of the proposed Tariff on young UK applicants. This suggests that of the Tariff options explored, the proposed new Tariff has the least impact on applicants in terms of sex, POLAR2⁵ and age. Analysis by domicile shows small benefits for Scottish students. It also shows small dis-benefits for Welsh students, but these are likely to be removed under the new Welsh Baccalaureate. Older students who already have their qualifications may find that there are some changes in the relative Tariff point value of their qualifications under the new model. We would expect HEPs to recognise and take account of when qualifications have been completed as part of good practice in admissions.
- 5.4 In addition, UCAS has considered the impact of the Tariff proposals on students with protected characteristics and anticipates no issues of concern. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken prior to introducing a new Tariff.
- 5.5 UCAS will offer information and advice about the new Tariff for prospective students on ucas.com and via social media channels from summer 2014.

⁵ Developed by HEFCE and classifies small areas across the UK into five groups according to their level of young people participation in HE. Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people and is ranked from quintile 1 (areas with the lowest young participation rates, considered as the most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 (highest young participation rates, considered most advantaged). POLAR2 is used in preference to the newer POLAR3 to avoid any distortion of entry rate trends associated with the boundaries to the more recent period used to define POLAR3.

Impact on secondary schools and colleges

- 5.6 Schools and colleges will need to update their information and advice for students choosing their Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications and those who are exploring progression opportunities and applying to HE. These changes will need to be made during the same period that secondary education is already handling qualification reforms and changes to accountability frameworks and recognise that this will entail additional resources. UCAS will support schools during the transition phase, for example by providing information which can be incorporated into local guidance.
- 5.7 Our engagement with schools and colleges has also identified some questions about potential impact of the new Tariff on curriculum planning, particularly in relation to the AS. We expect that schools and colleges will continue to select qualifications which offer the most appropriate experience and opportunities for their students and believe that our proposed implementation timetable gives sufficient time to enable these decisions to be made.

Impact on universities and colleges

- 5.8 Introducing the proposed Tariff will have a number of implications for HEPs. Whilst the new Tariff should not in itself affect entry requirements or offers per se, those institutions that use the Tariff to inform and set entry requirements will need to review and update their entry requirements in their prospectuses and websites at least a year in advance of the first entry cycle in 2017. Also, where institutions use the Tariff to make offers, offer libraries will need to be updated. As every HEP uses the Tariff for management information purposes, all will need to update their systems and processes. Whilst some changes to systems and communication material may be managed as part of business as usual updates, we realise that overall the effort required will be significant. UCAS will support HEPs as far as is practicable during the changeover period.
- 5.9 Changing the Tariff will also affect the information that institutions need to return to HESA about qualifications held by students entering HE. HESA will support universities and colleges during the introduction of the new Tariff by providing comparable data for old and new Tariff points during 2016, 2017 and 2018. Questions have also been asked about whether there should be a cap on the maximum number of qualifications or points in relation to the data that HESA collects on qualifications held on entry to HE. This is a matter for HESA and the relevant funding bodies.
- 5.10 A particular issue is how the use of the new Tariff to measure the strength of qualifications held on entry to HE could impact on national university league tables and guides. It is not possible to model this directly, as qualifications held on entry are only one component of league table measures, for example they account for approximately 10-15% on the most popular league tables. It is possible to model the impact on the relative ranking of HEPs based solely on average qualifications held on entry.

5.11 This modelling has been undertaken by HESA. As the new Tariff has a smaller numerical points range, average qualifications values are lower and more institutions will have similar or identical scores. This means that small movements in qualifications held on entry are likely to lead to larger moves in the relative ranking of HEPs compared to the current Tariff. It is also evident that changes in the points allocated to qualifications such as the AS and Scottish qualifications are likely to alter the relative ranking of institutions. The HESA modelling shows that a large majority of HEPs would see their relative ranking altered by no more than two places when based solely on average Tariff points held on entry to HE, with a number of Scottish institutions moving upwards. The relative shifts in position are primarily as a result of the realignment of Scottish qualifications and when modelling is undertaken excluding Scottish institutions other relative changes are small.

5.12 Further information about all of the modelling and testing undertaken is at Appendix B.

Benefits

5.13 Although the new Tariff has been designed to maintain consistency with the current Tariff and to minimise the disruption for users, the process of switching over to a new system will require considerable effort across the secondary education and HE sectors. It is important that the benefits to all users are clearly articulated.

Benefit 1 Transparency

The new Tariff is simple and transparent. It provides a clearer basis for calculating points than the current Tariff. Students, HEPs, secondary education providers and other stakeholders that use the Tariff will be able to see and understand how Tariff points have been calculated. This will also help those developing or reforming qualifications. Basing the new Tariff on information provided by qualification regulators ensures not only transparency but also robustness.

Benefit 2 Meets the needs of the HE Sector

The current Tariff is a single numerical score that incorporates both the demand of a qualification and its overall size. It does not show the relationship between each of these components. This can make it challenging to make comparisons between different qualifications, particularly when comparing single qualifications to larger qualifications, such as the A level and International Baccalaureate Diploma. The simplicity and clarity of the new Tariff enables HEPs to focus on those aspects of a qualification that matter to them.

HEPs will determine which new qualifications are added to the Tariff each year to ensure that it includes qualifications which are considered to support progression to HE.

Benefit 3 Efficient and cost- effective

The new Tariff will be more efficient to administer than the current model. It does not have the onerous cost implications and protracted timescales associated with the current Tariff which involved extensive expert group reviews and lengthy reports.

Benefit 4
Comprehensive

The new Tariff can accommodate all UK and international qualification types. The 12 band grade scale enables a sufficient level of precision to position qualifications effectively in relation to each other. It can accommodate a wider range of UK qualifications than the current Tariff and be applied to the full range of vocational and academic qualifications.

Benefit 5
Sustainable and flexible

The new Tariff will be able to accommodate the significant qualification reforms taking place across the UK and also respond to future changes. The current Tariff could not, for example, accommodate a change resulting in AS qualifications having different values in different countries.

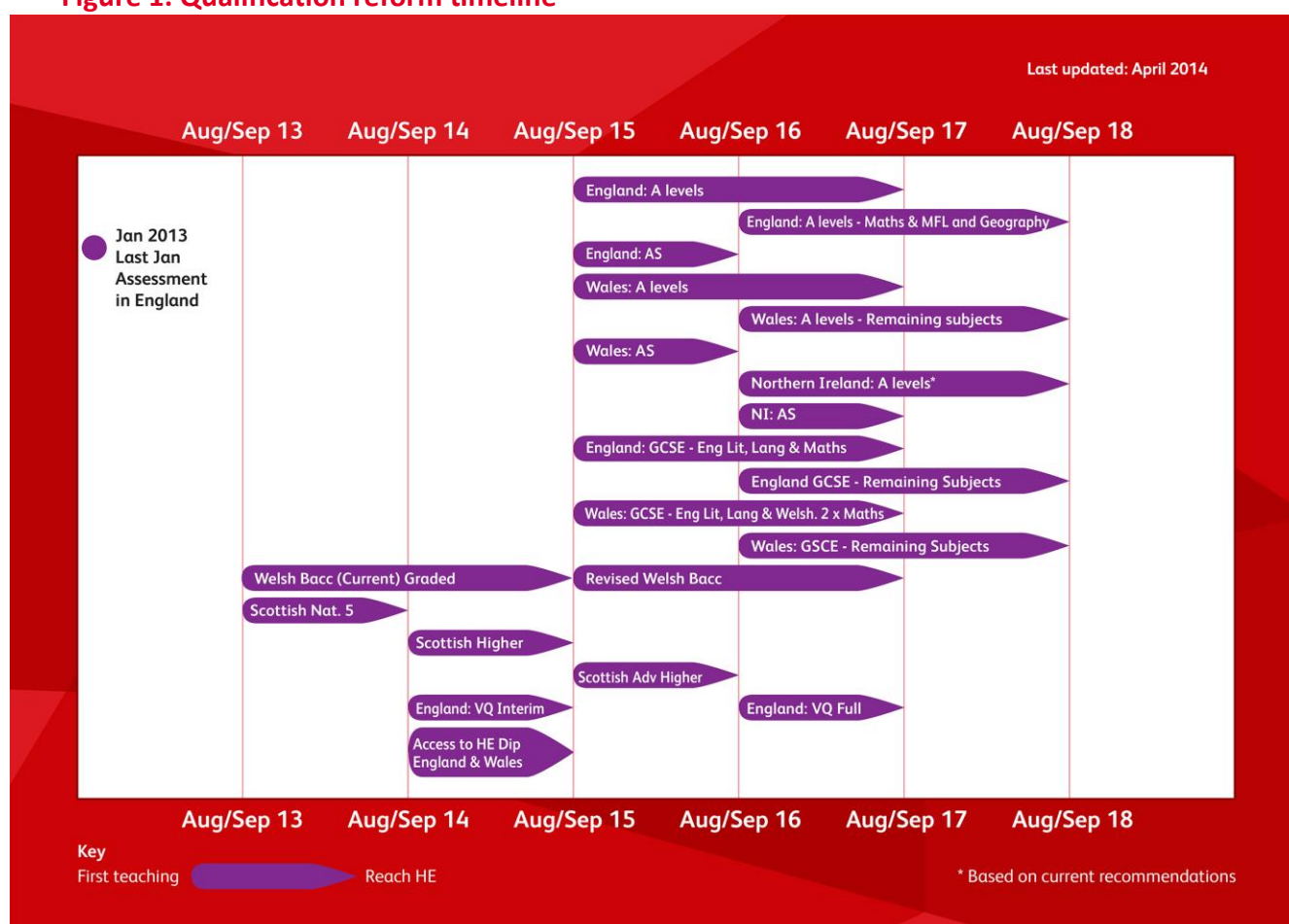
Benefit 6
Fair

The size and nature of a student's Level 3/SCQF Level 6 study programme is often a result of their school or college offer, rather than student choice. As the new Tariff can be applied to a much broader range of qualifications, particularly vocational qualifications, it helps to support progression and widening participation to a greater extent than the current Tariff. In addition, as there are no charges for Awarding Organisations, the new Tariff means that no qualifications will be excluded on the basis of the willingness, or ability, of Awarding Organisations to pay to be included.

6. Proposed implementation plan

- 6.1 Subject to feedback received, UCAS intends to publish new Tariff points for qualifications in summer 2014 for first use in applications for entry to HE in 2017. This aligns with the introduction of qualification reforms which will see many new qualifications being introduced for teaching from September 2015 and first awarded in June 2017, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Qualification reform timeline⁶



- 6.2 This timeline will ensure that prospective applicants to HE will have access to information about the points qualifications will attract under the new Tariff in 2014, at least a year in advance of commencing a two year programme of study. Students applying to enter HE in autumn 2017 would therefore be making applications from September 2016 within the new Tariff context.

⁶ In 2013 DfE announced that for vocational qualifications to count in school performance tables they must meet certain criteria. The reform of vocational qualifications in England takes place in two phases. The interim phase (for qualifications to count to performance tables in 2016) will require qualifications to adhere to a sub-section of the full requirements applicable for 2018.

- 6.3 The timeline also gives schools and colleges and HEPs 18 months to prepare for the switchover and to make changes to internal systems, processes, and information such as university and college prospectuses and websites. HESA will support the introduction of the new Tariff by providing comparable data for old and new Tariff points during 2016, 2017 and 2018.
- 6.4 UCAS will support the Tariff switchover through an extensive communication and engagement programme aimed at prospective students, teachers and advisers and HEPs.

7. Your feedback

- 7.1 We have worked closely with qualification regulators and representatives from across the education sector. We have developed a new Tariff that we believe addresses the issues and constraints we face with the current Tariff. The new Tariff will be fit for purpose as a metric for HEP management information needs and it can be used as an admissions tool by HEPs that choose to use it for that purpose. We now need your feedback to highlight whether the new Tariff raises any technical issues for your organisation.
- 7.2 Your feedback will be shared with the UCAS Board in June. We expect to produce a summary of the feedback we receive and we will report back to you during the summer of 2014 on the UCAS Board's decision.

APPENDICES

Introducing a new Tariff - Proposal
Technical briefing document

UCAS

- Appendix A:** Membership of the New Qualifications Information Service (NQIS) Advisory Group and Membership of the Tariff Advisory Group (TAG)
- Appendix B:** The development and testing of Tariff options
- Appendix C:** Information about the relative positioning of qualifications and a comparison of old and new points for benchmark qualifications
- Appendix D:** Applicant profiles comparing old and new Tariff point totals for different study programmes
- Appendix E:** Frequently asked questions

Appendix A: Membership of the New Qualifications Information Service (NQIS) Project Advisory Group and Membership of the Tariff Advisory Group (TAG)

New Qualifications Information Service (NQIS) Project Advisory Group

Name	Role	Establishment
Ian Bauckham	President of ASCL Headteacher of Bennett Memorial Diocesan School, Kent	Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
Peter Chetwynd	Admissions Support and Development Manager, SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)
Hywel Davies	Director, Recruitment and Admissions	Aberystwyth University
Nick Davy	Higher Education Policy Manager	Association of Colleges (AoC)
Sara Delaney	Admissions Manager	Manchester Metropolitan University
Annie Doyle	Admissions Manager - International	University of Sunderland
Martyn Edwards	Assistant Director, International Office	University of Nottingham
Andrew Horsman	Head of Data Management	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Steve McArdle	Head of Sixth Form	Durham Johnston Comprehensive School
Steven Minney	Representative for HELOA Senior Student Recruitment Officer Swansea University	Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA)
Beth Shotton	Director of UK Admissions	University of St Andrews
Paul Teulon (Chair)	Director of Admissions	King's College London
Ruth Wasson	Deputy Director of Student Administration & Registry	University of Ulster

Tariff Advisory Group (TAG)

Name	Role	Institution
Joanna Afrin-Black	Principal Officer Applicant Guidance	University of Central Lancashire
Hywel Davies	Director, Recruitment and Admissions	Aberystwyth University
Annie Doyle (Chair)	Admissions Manager (International)	University of Sunderland
Richard Emborg	Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions	Durham University
Stewart Harper	Head of Student Admissions	Leeds Metropolitan University
Samina Khan	Deputy Director for Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach	University of Oxford
Jo Ladwa	UK/EU Admissions Manager	Keele University
Chris Laity	Registrar	University of Glamorgan
Mary Lawrence	Director of Strategy & Recruitment	London South Bank University
Gurjit Nijjar	Assistant Registrar	University of Derby
Paul Sisterson	UCAS Admissions Manager	Newcastle College
John Slater	Director of Admissions	Canterbury Christ Church University
Amy Smith	Admissions Co-ordinator	Nottingham Trent University
Ian Sutherland	Admissions Manager	Herriot-Watt University

Appendix B: The development and testing of Tariff options

1. In developing a new Tariff model we have been keen to minimise the disruption for students, secondary education providers and universities and colleges, and have sought to maintain established relationships between Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications. Another key consideration has been the need to ensure that any change does not disadvantage particular groups of students or groups of universities and colleges.
2. We developed and tested five different Tariff model options with, for example, different grade bands and different approaches to positioning key qualifications. Each of these options has been evaluated using a variety of tests (undertaken variously by UCAS, HESA and Fischer Education Ltd (FFT), including some or all of:
 - assessment of mathematical rigour and alignment with the principles underpinning the current Tariff
 - assessment of the extent to which the model maintains appropriate relationships between qualifications in different frameworks
 - impact on young applicants in terms of qualifications taken, level of attainment, domicile, sex and socio-economic background
 - impact on admissions practice in universities and colleges
 - potential impact on the HESA dataset which can be used in university league tables.
3. The five options tested initially were:
 - **Option 1** – mirrored the existing Tariff, retaining all alignments.
 - **Option 2** – used eight grade bands with points 1-8 and size bands 1-4, with the AS repositioned lower than A level.
 - **Option 3** – used eight grade bands with points between 2-14 and size bands 1-4. It includes an adjusted AS.
 - **Option 4** – used 13 grade bands with points 2-14 and size bands 1-4. It applied grades at proportional, rather than standardised, intervals.
 - **Option 5** – used 12 grade bands with points 3-14 and size bands 1-4. It adjusted the AS to circa 40% of the A level. This is a modified option 3 where the AS alignment was felt to be too low, and adjusted upward. Grade band points moved to 3-14 to allow existing relationships to be retained at the upper levels and sufficient weighting at the lower end to avoid significant distortion.
4. Initial testing of these options reduced the number of suitable options down to two, option 3 and option 5. Option 1 was discounted because it perpetuates the concerns which exist with the current Tariff. Option 2 was discounted because the use of the restricted multipliers at the lower end of the grade range led to a distortion of relationships between lower grades and higher grades. Option 4 was also dropped because it could not be applied to a sufficiently broad range of qualifications.

5. Options 3 and 5 both use the same four size bands but have different grade band models. Table 3 shows the grade band differences between options 3 and 5 and the subsequent paragraphs describe the further testing in more detail.

Table 3: New Tariff options – illustrative grade bands

Level 3/SCQF Level 6	A level grade	AS grade	Option 3 grade bands	Option 5 grade bands
	A*		14	14
				13
	A		12	12
				11
	B	A	10	10
				9
	C	B	8	8
				7
	D	C	6	6
		D		5
	E		4	4
		E	3	3
			2	

Assessment of the mathematical rigour of the options and alignment with the mathematical principles underlying the current Tariff

6. UCAS commissioned independent testing from experts at the FFT. Using their matched student data, the FFT identified that options 3 and 5 offered the best solutions. These options provide the most balanced outcomes when evaluated in terms of the KS4 attainment and the Level 3/SCQF Level 6 ‘mix’ of qualifications held by each student. These options are considered to be easier to implement and more ‘future proofed’ than the current Tariff. The options also provide outcomes which were reasonably consistent across the types of qualifications tested and for students with different prior attainment and qualification mixes. The FFT data noted that differences between options 3 and 5 were small in terms of the point scores generated but it was felt that option 5, although slightly more complex, would provide more flexibility for accommodating new qualifications in the future.

Impact on students

7. Modelling work was carried out by UCAS to compare the impact of the options on students using our student data. This modelling explores the impact of the Tariff options on UK applicants aged 19 and under, when compared with the current Tariff. The method divides the population of applicants into ten equal decile groups. Those with the fewest points fall into decile 1 and those with the most points into decile 10. The analysis looked at the extent to which applicants moved between these bands under the different Tariff options.

8. The analysis of option 5 indicated that over 75% of applicants did not move decile band, and that almost 100% of the movement seen was limited to within one decile band. The movement was mainly attributable to the change in value of AS and qualifications aligned to it. Other options tested showed greater movement between deciles.
9. On the advice of the NQIS Project Advisory Group, including SPA, a number of widening participation issues were factored into the testing and modelling activities. The extent of change in terms of POLAR2 quintiles and by sex was reviewed using UCAS data. The results indicated no significant differences between groups in any of the models tested, but option 5 showed the greatest stability with around 75% of applicants unchanged in all groups.
10. In terms of student age, there were some differences between applicants aged 18 (the largest group), compared to those aged 19. Although in both cases the large majority of applicants' positions were unchanged, the proportion unchanged was highest in option 5 at around 74% for both ages. There were greater proportions of applicants moving down than up for those aged 18 and greater movement up than down for those aged 19. It is thought that the 18 year old cohort was likely to have been more affected by the impact of the repositioned AS, since they were more likely to hold these qualifications.
11. In terms of geographical differences, in all countries a majority of applicants did not move between deciles under option 5 and at least 98% of students moved two or fewer deciles. Table 4 below shows movement by country.

Table 4: Percentage of applicant movement by decile and by country

Decile movement	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
-4 to -10	0	0	0	0
-3	0	0	0	2
-2	0	1	0	11
-1	14	18	1	29
0	78	76	55	53
+1	7	4	44	5
+2 to +10	0	0	0	0

12. Table 4 shows that Scottish students are likely to benefit from the move to a new Tariff. They are largely unaffected by changes to AS qualifications and profit from the realignment of Scottish qualifications (see Appendix C). The largest downward movement relates to Welsh students. This is a consequence of treatment of the Welsh Baccalaureate which was aligned to A level grade B for modelling purposes and did not include Key and Essential Skills at level 2. When the redeveloped Welsh Baccalaureate is announced later in 2014 it is expected to be graded in the same way as an A level and be equal in size. Modelling on this basis is likely to bring Welsh students into closer alignment with English students.

Impact of Tariff options on admissions practice and management information requirements on HEPs

13. The impact on HEP admissions practice and management information requirements was reviewed by obtaining feedback from eight UK universities on the Tariff options. As a result of testing the Tariff options using their own data, feedback indicated that the most favoured options were 3 and 5 with respondents noting that these represented the best solution in terms of addressing the AS/A level issue whilst not overturning other established qualification relationships. Whilst some HEPs felt that option 3 was simpler as it only uses eight grade bands, the other advantages of option 5 were considered to outweigh this benefit.
14. Universities and colleges return data to HESA on the qualifications held by students on entry to HE using Tariff points as the measure. This return covers: first year, full-time, UK domiciled, first degree students under 21 years of age, excluding foundation year, holding Level 3 qualifications. In terms of international qualifications HESA statistics only include the International Baccalaureate and Irish Leaving Certificates. The data collection process will be unaffected by the introduction of a new Tariff and HESA has confirmed it is willing to support the introduction of a new Tariff by providing student frequency count data by Tariff points bands for the new Tariff alongside the current Tariff (within HEPs' HESA Student record check documentation reports) a year either side of the new Tariff implementation. For other users of data, HESA would support them as necessary in transitioning from the old to new methods, dependent upon the specific requirements of each user.

Potential impact on university league tables

15. HESA provides this dataset to third parties, including the Sunday Times/Times Good University Guide, the Guardian University Guide, and the Complete University Guide to compile national university league tables. These guides and league tables combine different types of information in order to provide a multi-dimensional view of each university. In these data sets there is usually a field relating to entry standards, which is where the Tariff data is used. This may be provided for use as a stand-alone figure, but may also be used as a component of an overall score.
16. Changes to UCAS Tariff points, where significant, could therefore potentially affect league table average Tariff totals and rankings, all other things being equal. Whilst the move to a new Tariff system is in itself largely unproblematic, changes which affect established relationships between qualifications or which disproportionately affect particular groups of students or institutions could have more impact.

17. Whilst it is not feasible to model the likely impacts on national league table rankings, it is possible to model the impact on the relative ranking of HEPs based solely on average qualifications held on entry. HESA has undertaken modelling of the impacts of Tariff option 5 on the data they supply for league tables covering 154 HEPs. The results are in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Analysis of HESA Data – summary of change across the UK

	Option 5 (Recommended option)
No change	27.3% (42 of 154)
Movement by no more than one place	53.2% (82 of 154)
Movement by no more than two places	72.7% (112 of 154)
Movement by no more than five places	90.3% (139 of 154)
Movement by more than five places	9.7% (15 out of 154)

18. The new Tariff has a smaller numerical range of points, which means that average values are lower. For example under the old Tariff the range of points held on entry to HE was between 214 and 610, a range of 396 points. For the new Tariff the range is 84 to 239 a range of 155 points. This small numerical range means that more institutions will have the same or very close average scores. This effect is seen most strongly amongst those HEPs with lower point scores. For example, splitting the 154 institutions in the sample into two, the 77 with fewer points have between them a range of 44 points (84-128 points) whilst the 77 HEPs with higher points have a range of 111 points (128-239 points). This means that relatively small movements in average Tariff point scores can produce larger moves in rank order in the new Tariff.
19. Other changes seen will be driven primarily by the change in the relative value of the AS and slight realignment of Scottish qualifications.
20. Based on this initial modelling the large majority of HEPs are likely to see their ranking altered by no more than two places within any league table based solely on average Tariff points held on entry. Average Tariff points are, however, only one aspect of the specification of overall league table results which may include additional characteristics such as financial spend, staff-student ratios, employability, classification of first degree and National Student Survey data.
21. The analysis of HESA data shows that the large majority of HEPs would see their relative ranking altered by no more than two places in any table based solely on average Tariff points held on entry to HE. The most significant change in this model is a relative upward movement of a number of Scottish institutions whose intake is primarily Scottish students. This drives the downward movement of institutions elsewhere in the UK. Modelling without the inclusion of Scottish HEPs delivers the outcome in Table 6.

Table 6: Analysis of HESA Data – summary of change in England, Northern Ireland and Wales

	Option 5 (Recommended option)
No change	61.5% (83 of 136)
Movement by no more than one place	88.2% (119 of 136)
Movement by no more than two places	94.1% (127 of 136)
Movement by no more than five places	99.3% (135 of 136)
Movement by more than five places	0.7% (1 of 136)

Conclusions

22. Taking all of the modelling and testing outcomes together we are recommending option 5 for the new Tariff. Whilst option 3 is attractive it does not provide as much flexibility for recognising key cross-UK qualification relationships and accommodating new qualifications as option 5. The wider range of grade bands in option 5 allows better accommodation of the range of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications as well as being able to effectively reposition the AS. This is particularly important for aligning qualifications from different frameworks, such as the NQF and SCQF, within the UK and international qualifications.
23. Option 5 does not appear to introduce significant changes for students in general, or for specific groups of students.
24. The changes proposed to the points allocated to AS and Scottish qualifications are likely to alter the relative UK ranking of institutions based solely on average qualifications held on entry irrespective of the Tariff option adopted. In option 5 the relative shifts in position are primarily as a result of the realignment of Scottish qualifications, and when this is accounted for, other relative changes are small. It is also important to emphasise that average Tariff points held on entry to HE are only one component of published league tables and are also likely to change as a consequence of qualification reforms.

Appendix C: Information about the relative positioning of qualifications and a comparison of old and new points

1. This Appendix explains the rationale for the proposed positioning of certain qualifications within the new Tariff and relative to each other. It also provides a summary comparison of old and new points for benchmark qualifications. A detailed comparison of old and new points for all qualifications currently in the Tariff is provided as a separate Qualifications List.

The A level and AS

2. Table 7 shows how new Tariff points have been calculated for A levels.

Table 7: New Tariff total points for A level grades

A level grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Grade band points	14	12	10	8	6	4
Size bands	4	4	4	4	4	4
Total new Tariff points (grade x size)	(4 x 14) = 56	48	40	32	24	16

3. Considerable effort has been invested in exploring the relationship between A levels and the AS. The AS qualification is half the size of an A level and therefore it is placed in size band 2 rather than size band 4. Ofqual is clear that it does not believe that the AS is as demanding as the A level. This view is based on the findings from the Impact Assessment on A level reforms commissioned by Ofqual and published in November 2012⁷. This assessment states that there is a 'broad consensus' that the AS does not represent the 50% of the full A level and that a 40:60 split was proposed by many respondents. The report refers to stakeholders' views that the A2 year contains more difficult topics and a greater synoptic element in many subjects. In addition, this reflects the comments received in response to the Qualifications Information Review that the AS is not equal in demand to an A level.
4. It is therefore proposed that the AS is positioned at approximately 40% of an A level at each grade point, to reflect that it was half the size of an A level but not equal in demand to an A level. Table 8 shows how the AS grades have been positioned against the A level to achieve this relationship.

⁷ <http://ofqual.gov.uk/documents/impact-assessment-of-A-level-reforms/> (copy to browser to access the URL)

Table 8: New Tariff points for the AS shown as a percentage of A level grades ⁸

Grade bands	Total new Tariff points per AS grade based on size X grade points									
	Total points AS grade A	% of A level at grade A	Total points AS grade B	% of A level at grade B	Total points AS grade C	% of A level at grade C	Total Points AS grade D	%of A level at grade D	Total points AS grade E	% of A level at grade E
14	28	58.3	28	70.0	28	87.5	28	116.7	28	175.0
13	26	54.2	26	65.0	26	81.3	26	108.3	26	162.5
12	24	50.0	24	60.0	24	75.0	24	100.0	24	150.0
11	22	45.8	22	55.0	22	68.8	22	91.7	22	137.5
10	20	41.7	20	50.0	20	62.5	20	83.3	20	125.0
9	18	37.5	18	45.0	18	56.3	18	75.0	18	112.5
8	16	33.3	16	40.0	16	50.0	16	66.7	16	100.0
7	14	29.2	14	35.0	14	43.8	14	58.3	14	87.5
6	12	25.0	12	30.0	12	37.5	12	50.0	12	75.0
5	10	20.8	10	25.0	10	31.3	10	41.7	10	62.5
4	8	16.7	8	20.0	8	25.0	8	33.3	8	50.0
3	6	12.5	6	15.0	6	18.8	6	25.0	6	37.5
2	4	8.3	4	10.0	4	12.5	4	16.7	4	25.0

5. Table 9 illustrates that the relationship between A levels and the AS under both the old and new Tariff point systems.

⁸ The new Tariff treats the AS as 40% of the full A level. However, due to the systematic calculation used it has not always been possible to have an exact alignment. In all occurrences we have aligned the AS as close to 40% as possible.

Table 9: New Tariff points for A level and AS

Qualifications	Current Tariff points	Points as % of A level grade A	New Tariff points	Points as % of A level grade A	Change
A level A*	140	116.7	56	116.7	Unchanged
A level A	120	100.0	48	100.0	
A level B	100	83.3	40	83.3	
A level C	80	66.7	32	66.7	
A level D	60	50.0	24	50.0	
A level E	40	33.3	16	33.3	
ASA	60	50.0	20	41.7	Reduction in points as a % of A level because of the repositioning of the AS
AS B	50	41.7	16	33.3	
AS C	40	33.3	12	25.0	
AS D	30	25.0	10	20.8	
AS E	20	16.7	6	12.5	

- A level is in size band 4
- A* is in uppermost grade band (14), hence A* attracts $4 \times 14 = 56$ points
- A-E grades are allocated to bands 12, 10, 8, 6 and 4
- AS is in size band 2
- AS grades are aligned to lower grade bands than A levels to reposition them at circa 40% of the A level
- AS A grade is aligned to same band as A level B grade (10), $2 \times 10 = 20$ points
- AS E grade is aligned to grade band 3 and attracts 6 points.

Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers

- The new Tariff provides the opportunity to align Scottish and English qualifications more accurately. Advanced Highers are placed in size band 4 and Highers in size band 3. Table 10 shows the positioning of Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers relative to the A level and AS. Scottish Highers were positioned above the AS because regulators confirmed that they are more difficult than the AS and they are suitable qualifications for entry into HE. Whilst the Scottish Advanced Highers and the Interdisciplinary Project of the Scottish Baccalaureate are at SCQF Level 7, which goes beyond Level 3/SCQF Level 6, they are included in the current Tariff list as they are qualifications usually undertaken by Scottish pupils in year 6 of secondary school.

Table 10: New Tariff grade points for A level, AS and Scottish Highers (SH) and Scottish Advanced Highers (SAH)

Grade points	A level	AS	Scottish Highers	Scottish Advanced Highers
14	A*			A
13				
12	A			B
11			A	
10	B	A		C
9			B	
8	C	B		D
7			C	
6	D	C		
5		D	D	
4	E			
3		E		

7. Table 11 provides a comparison of Scottish qualifications and the A level A grade under the old and new Tariff models. Scottish qualifications gain relatively more points under the new system.

Table 11: New Tariff points for Scottish Advanced Highers and Scottish Higher Qualifications

Qualifications	Current Tariff points	Points as % of A level grade A	New Tariff points	Points as % of A level grade A	Difference(percentage points)
*SAH A	130	108.3	56	116.7	+8.4
*SAH B	110	91.7	48	100.0	+8.3
*SAH C	90	75.0	40	83.3	+8.3
*SAH D	72	60.0	32	66.7	+6.7
SH A	80	66.7	33	68.8	+2.1
SH B	65	54.2	27	56.3	+2.1
SH C	50	41.7	21	43.8	+2.1
SH D	36	30.0	15	31.3	+1.3

- SAHs are in size band 4
- SAH operates at the highest part of the grade scale (as Scottish Level 7) at 14, 12, 10, 8
- SH are in size band 3
- The new Tariff aligns SH to mid-points (as per current Tariff, this is a key benefit of the new Tariff over other options considered) – at 11, 9, 7, 5.

*Table 11 - new Tariff points for SAH grade A, B, C and D have been corrected from 52, 44, 36, 28 in the version published on 4 April. These points now match the Qualifications List.

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

8. The EPQ is placed in size band 2 and is considered to operate at the same level of demand as the A level. There is no change to the relative allocation of points under the old and new Tariff models. Table 12 shows the relationship between the EPQ and A grade at A level for the old and new systems.

Table 12: New Tariff points for Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

Qualifications	Current Tariff points	Points as % of A level grade A	New Tariff points	Points as % of A level grade A	Change
EPQ A*	70	58.3	28	58.3	Unchanged
EPQ A	60	50.0	24	50.0	
EPQ B	50	41.7	20	41.7	
EPQ C	40	33.3	16	33.3	
EPQ D	30	25.0	12	25.0	
EPQ E	20	16.7	8	16.7	

- EPQ is in size band 2
- Unlike AS, EPQ operates at same level as A level
- EPQ A* grade is allocated 28 points, i.e. half that of A level A* grade.

Welsh Baccalaureate

9. The core of the Welsh Baccalaureate is currently a Pass/Fail qualification and a Pass attracts 120 points. Grading is being introduced in the Welsh Baccalaureate for awards from 2015 and a substantially revised Welsh Baccalaureate is expected to be aligned in size to Band 4 (the same as the A level) and to be graded from A* - E. Given that these changes are underway, new Tariff points will be allocated to the Baccalaureate when accreditation information is available later in 2014.

BTEC Nationals

10. BTEC qualifications are regulated as graded Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications and there is no indication from the regulator that these qualifications only operate across part of the Level 3/SCQF Level 6, so it is proposed that points are allocated for the BTEC grades D, M and P as a three grade qualification across the Level 3/SCQF Level 6 range. In addition, it is proposed that the D* is aligned with the A* at A level. This reflects the view of the UCAS expert group and the regulated specification for this qualification. This means that there is no change in the relative Tariff point relationship between A levels and BTECs between the old and new Tariff models. Table 13 shows the relationship between BTEC Nationals and A grade at A level for the old and new systems using an average value across all grades.

Table 13: BTEC qualifications and proportion of change

Qualification	Average value as % of A grade at A level Current Tariff	Average value as % of A grade at A level New Tariff
GCE A level	75%	75%
BTEC Quals*	79.2%	79.2%

Note: *BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma used for calculation purposes.

International Baccalaureate Diploma

11. Each of the IB constituent qualifications are allocated points individually. These are shown in the separate Qualifications List. The Higher Level is placed in size band 4 and the Standard Level in size band 2. Higher and Standard qualifications have both been aligned to the A level for grade band purposes. The IB Core has been allocated to size band 2 based on the inclusion of the Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay. The Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) requirement is not included since it does not contribute to the overall score for the Core. This delivers a slight overall reduction in the relative number of Tariff points allocated to the IB in the new Tariff.
12. It should also be noted that whilst the Standard Level is accredited to 225 guided learning hours (GLH) it is only considered to be 150 GLH under the current Tariff. To minimise the disruption in relationships between qualifications in moving to a new Tariff, it is proposed that the Standard Level is treated as 200 GLH and allocated to size band 2.
13. Table 14 shows the relationship between the IB and A grade at A level for the old and new systems using an average value across all grades.

Table 14: International Baccalaureate and proportion of change

Qualification	Average value as % of A grade at A level Current Tariff	Average value as % of A grade at A level New Tariff
IB		
Standard level	19.4%	20.1%
Higher level	46.4%	51.2%
Core	52.1%	25%
(Average total points for the IB Diploma – 24-45)	(408.4%)	(389.5%)

Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

14. The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma requires students to achieve three Principal Subjects (or a combination of Principal Subject and A levels) plus Global Perspectives and Research (GPR). Under the new Tariff both Principal Subjects and GPR qualifications are allocated to size band 4 and their grades are distributed across the bands in the same way as each other. As under the current Tariff, Pre-U D1 and D2 are aligned to a similar level to A level A* grade and P3 is aligned to A level grade E (i.e. it does not overlap with AS E grade). One of the key benefits of the proposed new Tariff is that it provides additional grade bands to other options considered. This allows a more precise positioning of Pre-U qualifications between associated A level grades and greater differentiation between remaining grades.

International qualifications

15. One of the advantages of the new Tariff is that it could accommodate non-UK qualifications. As international student recruitment expands, HEPs have requested this functionality alongside the production of QIPs for international qualifications. As with UK qualifications, UCAS would run an annual exercise for HEPs to identify and prioritise international qualifications for inclusion in the Tariff. UCAS would use a similar process and would seek information on qualification size and grading from the relevant overseas qualification regulators. Advice would be sought from the Tariff Advisory Group and potentially UK qualification regulators to ensure appropriate positioning within the Level 3/SCQF Level 6 grade bands.

Appendix D: applicant profiles comparing old and new Tariff point totals for different study programmes

- Table 15 compares the Tariff points that would be accumulated under the old and new models for students taking standard programmes of study. The table uses the A level Tariff as the benchmark for comparison (column 1). All other programmes of study are compared to this to show relative changes in proportionate value. Each named applicant represents an individual programme of study.

Table 15: New Tariff points for example applicant profiles: standard programmes

		Benchmark 100%	Other comparable programmes of study			
		Dipak A Level AAA	Ben SQA Highers AAAAA	Susan AS AA + A level AA	David BTEC Nationals DDD	Armin ⁹ Pre-U PS D3D3 +GPR D3
High Tariff range	Current tariff points and % difference compared to A level score	360	400 (+11.1%)	360 (0.0%)	360 (0.0%)	386 (+7.2%)
	New points and % difference compared to A level score	144	165 (+14.6%)	136 (-5.6%)	144 (0.0%)	156 (+8.3%)
		James A Level BCC	Jack SQA Highers BBCCC	Leo AS BA+ A level CD	Milly BTEC Nationals DMM	Tracy Pre-U PS M3M3 +GPR M3
Mid Tariff range	Current tariff points and % difference compared to A level score	260	280 (+7.7%)	290 (+11.5%)	280 (+7.7%)	258 (-0.8%)
	New points and % difference compared to A level score	104	117 (+12.5%)	92 (-11.5)	112 (+7.7%)	108 (+3.8)
		Alex A Level DEE	John SQA Highers CCC	Joel AS CD+ A level EE	Max BTEC Nationals PPP	Julia Pre-U PS P3P3 + GPR P3
Low Tariff range	Current tariff points and % difference compared to A level score	140	150 (+7.1%)	150 (+7.1%)	120 (-14.3%)	134 (-4.3%)
	New points and % difference compared to A level score	56	63 (+12.5%)	54 (-3.6)	48 (-14.3%)	60 (+7.1%)

⁹ Please note a full Pre-U Diploma would require an additional Principal Subject.

2. **Scottish Highers:** Under the existing Tariff point system a high attaining student such as Ben who achieves 5 A grades in his SQA Highers receives 11.1% more Tariff points when compared to Dipak who achieves AAA in his A levels. Under the new Tariff this relative difference moves to 14.6%. This is because the grades of the Scottish Highers have been more precisely aligned between the A level and AS. The relative difference under the new Tariff for mid- and low attaining students taking SQA Highers is 12.5% compared to 7.7% and 7.1% respectively under the current Tariff.
3. **A levels and AS:** Students such as Susan, Leo and Joel who have completed 2 AS and 2 A levels will see an overall decrease in their Tariff point totals under the new model, primarily as a consequence of the repositioning of the AS relative to the A level.
4. **BTEC Nationals:** BTEC students David, Milly and Max see no change in their relative Tariff point totals as BTECs continue to be aligned with A levels.
5. **Pre-U:** Students such as Armin, Tracy and Julia would all see an increase in relative Tariff point totals compared to A level students under the new Tariff. This is a result of the flexibility within the new Tariff which enables qualification grades to be aligned in a more systematic way. For example, Armin's increase is the result of positioning the Pre-U at particular grade points as shown on the separate Qualification List. The upper grades of the Pre-U Principal Subject (PS) D1 and D2 are capped at 14 grade points and the Pre-U PS at grade P3 is at a higher level than grade E at A level in line with the current Tariff.
6. Table 16 provides a similar comparison for the IB in comparison to a large, A level programme comprising of 4 A levels, one AS and an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The table only shows mid- and high- attaining examples of large programmes because it would not be realistic to include such a large A level programme at low attainment levels or be possible to use this as a sensible reference point for comparison purposes.
7. Under the new Tariff, IB student Marie's overall total is worth slightly more under the new Tariff, whilst Paulo sees a small relative decrease as a result of the relative reduction in value of the IB Core which has been aligned to A level grades A, C, E and size band 2.

Table 16: New Tariff points for example applicant profiles: large programmes

		Benchmark 100%	Large programmes (approx 1,800 – 1880 hours)
		Sophie A Level A*AAA + A at AS +A at EPQ	Marie¹⁰ IB HL766+ SL666 +C2 (39 IB points)
High range	Current tariff points and % difference compared to A level score	620	607 (-2.1%)
	New points and % difference compared to A level score	244	240 (-1.6%)
		Robin A Level BBCC +C at AS +C at EPQ	Paulo IB HL655+ SL555 +C1 (34 IB points)
Mid-range	Current tariff points and % difference compared to A level score	440	439 (-0.2%)
	New points and % difference compared to A level score	172	168 (-2.3%)

¹⁰ IB Diploma requires a programme of 1,880 hours. Here the Tariff points reflect the profile of constituent qualifications. The current Tariff allocates 589 points to IBD score of 39, regardless of grade profile and allocates 479 points to IBD score of 34.

Appendix E: Frequently asked questions

Why is UCAS proposing to change the Tariff?

There are limitations with the current Tariff. It cannot readily accommodate some vocational qualifications and it contains some anomalies in the relative relationships between qualifications. The method used is also weighted in favour of a qualification's size and the process is primarily Awarding Organisation-led and expensive to administer. These challenges, coupled with qualification reforms across the UK, and HEPs' desire for a Tariff that can accommodate international qualifications, are all drivers for change.

Why can't UCAS just update or improve the current Tariff?

The current Tariff is based on a complicated process which relies on expert technical groups spending a significant amount of time reviewing qualifications to form judgements about Tariff point allocations. The process is based on complex domains which are biased towards academic qualifications and use the A level as a benchmark. The changes planned to the A level and other qualification reforms will challenge the current approach and some potential changes, such as different approaches to the AS in different parts of the country, would be almost impossible to address within the current framework.

Changing the Tariff will be disruptive for HEPs, schools, colleges and students.

Is it worth it?

We have designed the new Tariff to minimise disruption for users as far as possible, but recognise that the process of switching over will require considerable effort across the secondary education and HE sectors. Based on our engagement with the secondary sector and universities and colleges we believe that the benefits for students in terms of widening participation, and the benefits for HEPs in terms of addressing issues with the current Tariff and supporting international recruitment, are worth it.

Does UCAS expect HEPs to use the new Tariff to set entry requirements and make offers?

Universities and colleges are free to use the Tariff or not in line with their admissions strategies and policies. Many prefer to use qualifications and grades for describing entry requirements and making offers. We do not expect institutions to change their current practice as a result of introducing a new Tariff.

Which HEPs use the Tariff for admissions purposes?

In general, institutions in Scotland and those elsewhere in the UK where competition for places is strong tend not to use the Tariff to support admissions. More information is available from institutions' own websites and on the UCAS course search tool at <http://search.ucas.com/>

Will the new Tariff affect the level of entry requirements or offers made?

Universities and colleges are responsible for deciding on minimum levels of attainment and entry requirements for their courses, as well as offer making. The introduction of a new Tariff should not in itself affect entry requirements or offers, but it may change how entry requirements and offers are described.

Will the new Tariff affect HEP reporting to HESA?

No. The data collection process will remain the same, i.e. UCAS will continue to provide universities and colleges with verified qualifications data relating to their placed applicants so that institutions can send these data onto HESA as part of their full Student Record. HESA will continue to make its own Tariff-based calculations before forwarding these data to HEFCE. HESA will support the change by providing data on the old and new Tariff points systems covering the period 2016-2018.

Will the new Tariff affect university league tables?

Our initial modelling suggests that only around a quarter of HEPs are likely to move more than two places with the introduction of the new Tariff. The largest movements were amongst Scottish institutions tending to recruit mainly Scottish students – they moved up the rankings as their students were relatively unaffected by the change in value of the AS and also benefited from the realignment of Scottish Highers and Advanced Higher.

The new Tariff uses a smaller range of points than the current Tariff, qualification values are lower and more institutions will have similar or identical scores. This means that small movements in qualifications held on entry can lead to larger moves in league table positioning than with the current Tariff.

Will UCAS be putting a cap on the qualifications from which points count towards admissions or league tables?

No. Admissions policies are a matter for individual universities and colleges and they decide which qualifications are suitable for progression to HE and the breadth and range of prior attainment required. The issue of whether there should be a maximum number of qualifications or points which would count towards the HESA data is a matter for HESA and HE funding bodies.

When will the new Tariff points be used for admissions?

UCAS plans to publish the new Tariff points in summer 2014 for use in the 2017 entry cycle.

Who decides which qualifications are allocated Tariff points?

As the Tariff is a tool to support admissions to HE, it is important the HE sector decides which new qualifications should be included in the Tariff. UCAS will gather feedback from admissions practitioners to identify and prioritise which qualifications should be included.

How are points calculated?

Points are calculated by multiplying together size band values by grade band values – information which comes from qualification regulators. There are four size bands and there are 12 grade bands ranging from the top of Level 3/SCQF Level 6, which is taken as A level grade A*, to the bottom of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 which is taken to be AS grade E.

Who decides how many points a qualification gets?

The decision about how many points a qualification gets rests with UCAS. For most qualifications UCAS will apply the standard size multiplied by grade calculation. Where this is unclear, we will use our Tariff Advisory Group and information available from qualification regulators to help us decide where a qualification should be placed.

Why are there four size bands?

Four size bands are a sufficient number to recognise the different qualification sizes that operate at Level 3/SCQF Level 6 without over-emphasising the importance of size and creating too many multipliers.

Who decides which size band a qualification is allocated to?

UCAS will use the information provided by regulators to decide which size band a qualification should be placed in. Where this is unclear we will use our Tariff Advisory Group and information available from qualification regulators to help us decide where a qualification should be placed.

Why are there 12 grade bands?

12 grade bands allow a proper reflection of difference across the breadth of Level 3/SCQF Level 6, but in keeping with the requirement that the new Tariff is simple and transparent, it is not so many that it leads to a spurious sense of accuracy. We looked at using eight and 12 grade bands but eight grade bands do not provide enough flexibility to position all Level 3/SCQF Level 6 qualifications effectively. 24 grade bands made the model more complex and led to substantially larger point allocations, which were not helpful.

Who decides which band grades are allocated to?

UCAS will use the information provided by regulators to decide which grade band a qualification should be placed in. It is expected that grades will be evenly distributed across Level 3/SCQF Level 6, unless there is evidence that the qualification applies only to part of the level. For qualifications where the range applies across to only part of the Level 3/SCQF Level 6 grade scale, grades will be distributed across this restricted range.

How does UCAS decide if a qualification spans the whole of Level 3/SCQF Level 6 or the upper or lower parts of the level?

We will use qualification specifications which are regulated and other sources of regulator judgement where this is available. Where no information exists we may either ask regulators to provide an opinion, or ask the Tariff Advisory Group to consider other sources of information. Regulators are keen to be part of the new process.

Why do some qualifications get fewer points under the new Tariff?

The new method is designed to be simple and transparent; it offers an indication of broad equivalence between qualifications based on size and grading information accredited by the regulators. The use of a relatively small number of size and grade bands results in smaller numbers of points overall. Additionally, based on advice from Ofqual the AS has been repositioned so that it is 40% of an A level rather than 50%.

Are UCAS Tariff points the same as Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) credit points or the Scottish Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool (SPBT) tariff points?

No. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) credit points are points allocated to qualifications based on their size – 10 learning hours is equal to 1 SCQF credit point. The tariff points used in the SPBT are provided for benchmarking purposes, as a means of comparing attainment within and between schools. They cover different types of

achievement and awards delivered in schools; any qualification that is SCQF Level 6 and credit-rated can be included in the SPBT tariff provided they meet criteria related to the aims of Curriculum for Excellence. They form part of a range of tools and measures that schools can use in considering their improvement plans. Neither the SPBT tariff scale nor the UCAS Tariff points should be viewed as a reflection of the value of the qualification to the individual learner.



Introducing a new Tariff Technical briefing document

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