

WHAT IS... AN 'A' LEVEL

AS and A levels - are sometimes called General Certificates of Education or Advanced levels and are normally studied after GCSEs. They are usually studied over two years.

Advanced level qualifications are subject-based qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. You can normally study three or more A levels over two years.

Typical A level subjects include: ones that can be studied at GCSE level: history, music, chemistry etc; variations on ones that can be studied at GCSE : e.g. you could choose between English literature, English language, or English literature and language; or you could take maths and further maths ;or subjects you've never had the chance to study before: e.g. law, philosophy, psychology etc

AS levels generally take one year to complete and A levels are studied across two years.

Most people take 4 AS subjects and then drop one of those subjects when they move into their second year which is called the A2 year.

All A levels have points called UCAS points attached to them. The higher the A level grade the higher the UCAS points. The A level that is dropped after the first year earns UCAS points at AS level. The other three subjects that are carried on into the second year do not carry the points from the first year (AS) with them

CHOOSING A LEVEL SUBJECTS

The most important things to think of when choosing your A levels are:

- > Looking at what you are likely to enjoy and be good at. If you enjoy a subject or have an ability in it already, you are more likely to do well.
- > Are there any particular subjects and/or grades you may need? If you have a particular career, job, or further study in mind, you may need to choose specific A levels in order to meet entry requirements.
- > How open you want to keep your future study and career choices?

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but they do get the points from the second year. AS levels are equal to 40% of an A level. UCAS points help you get into university. Each university will ask for a certain amount of UCAS points when you apply for a certain degree course.

If you're thinking about going to university, most higher education courses require specific A levels or combinations of A levels (or alternative level 3 qualifications).

If you're not sure what career or job you want to do, studying a selection of A levels can be a good way of keeping your options open.

HOW ARE A LEVELS GRADED?

The pass grades for A Levels are, from highest to lowest, A*, A, B, C, D and E. Those who do not reach the minimum standard required for a grade E get a grade U which means unclassified. There is no A* grade at AS level.

HOW MANY A LEVELS CAN I STUDY?

The number of A level exams taken by students can vary. A typical route is to study four subjects at AS level and then drop down to three at A2 level, although some students continue with their fourth subject. Three is usually the minimum number of A Levels required for university entrance, with some universities specifying the need for a fourth AS subject. There is no limit set on the number of A Levels anyone can study, and a number of students take five or more A Levels, if they're planning to apply to a competitive university (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge) or course (eg medicine, law), for example. Most universities' A level entry requirements boil down to three A level grades.

WHAT'S NEXT?

WHAT CAN YOU DO AFTER A LEVELS?

- > Continue on to university – A levels are the most common qualifications studied to get into higher education.
- > Keep your options open if you're unsure about what you want to do in the future.
- > Look for employment – they're valued by employers because they show a good level of education.
- > Go on to vocational or work-based qualifications, such as a higher apprenticeship.