



# A Level and Higher Education Guidance

# How many A Level subjects should be taken?

Making Informed Choices for Sixth Form and Beyond.

Most students study four subjects in Year 12 and continue with three A Levels in Year 13, usually completing three full A Levels and one AS Level.

Some students may also choose to take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) alongside their A Levels. The EPQ is largely non-timetabled and allows independent exploration of a topic of personal interest.

A small number of highly able and well-organised students may continue with four full A Levels into Year 13, and in some cases add an EPQ or an additional AS Level. This option should be considered carefully.

Universities typically require three A Level grades. Taking too many subjects can reduce performance overall, so it is important to prioritise quality of results rather than quantity of subjects.

# Choosing the right A Level subjects

Selecting A Level subjects is one of the most important academic decisions students will make.

Subjects should be chosen based on:

- Genuine interest and motivation.
- Academic strengths and realistic ability.
- Future university or career plans.

Students will spend a significant amount of time studying each subject over two years. Enjoyment and engagement are therefore essential for long-term success.

Some university courses require specific A Level subjects. For example:

- Medicine and Veterinary Science require Chemistry, usually alongside Biology.
- Engineering and Physics require Mathematics and often Physics.

High-demand courses such as Medicine typically require very high grades (A–A\*) and strong GCSE results.

Many other degrees and careers, including Law, Business and Accountancy, do not require specific subjects. In these cases, universities and employers place greater value on strong academic performance, communication skills, numeracy, motivation and adaptability than on particular subject combinations.

# Achieving strong results

A Level grades range from:

- A\* to E at full A Level.
- A to E at AS Level.

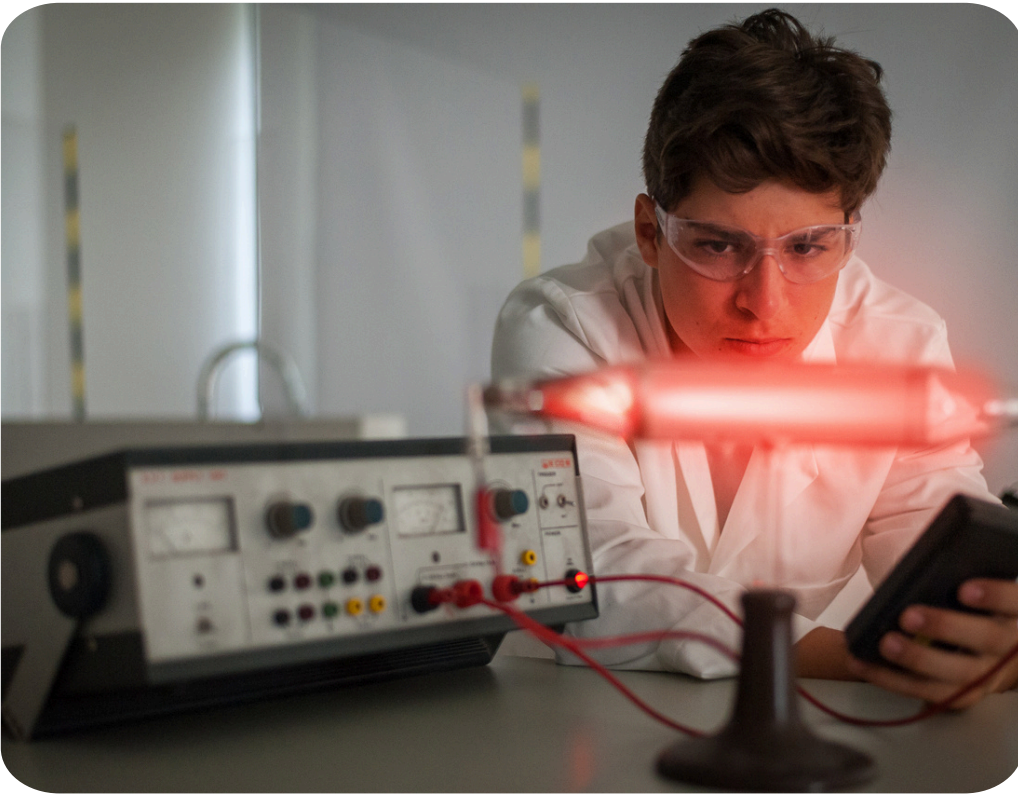
Achieving the highest possible grades is crucial, particularly for competitive universities and courses. This requires:

- Realistic subject choices.
- Sustained effort over two years.
- Effective organisation and independent stud.

To support informed decision-making, students have access to Unifrog, an online platform linking A Level subject choices to university courses and future careers. Training is provided and use continues throughout Years 12 and 13.



# University applications: an overview



Typical timeline:

- Spring (Year 12): initial research into courses and universities.
- Summer: visiting universities and refining choices.
- September (Year 13): formal application process begins.

Most students apply to universities in the UK, but applications to Italy, Europe, the USA and other destinations are also supported through Unifrog and individual guidance.

Applications to UK universities are made through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service).

Key points:

- Students can apply to up to five courses.
- Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science have an earlier deadline (mid-October).
- All other UCAS applications are due by mid-January.
- It is not possible to apply to both Oxford and Cambridge.

Universities make conditional offers. Students then select:

- A first (firm) choice.
- A second (insurance) choice.

Some courses require interviews. Preparation and mock interviews are provided where necessary.

# Completing the UCAS application

Although the UCAS form is completed online, accuracy and care are essential.

## **Personal details**

Contact details must be kept up to date. Most communication from universities is by email, particularly during results periods.

## **Examination results**

Subjects must be entered accurately and in full (for example, English Literature, not just English). International qualifications should be listed exactly as taken; universities determine equivalence.

Providing false or misleading information can result in applications being withdrawn.



The Personal Statement allows students to demonstrate motivation, suitability and commitment to a chosen course. Your statement is split into responses for the following three questions.

## **Why do you want to study this course or subject?**

- **The Focus:** Your passion and motivation. This is your "hook" where you explain what sparked your interest and why you want to commit three or more years to this specific field.

## **How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?**

- **The Focus:** Academic readiness. Here, you highlight specific modules, projects, or skills from your current studies (like A-levels, BTECs, or T-levels) that directly relate to the degree you're applying for.

## **What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

- **The Focus:** Personal development and "super-curricular" activities. This is the place for work experience, volunteering, hobbies, or independent reading. Crucially, you must explain why these activities make you a better candidate for the course.

# Writing the

# Personal Statement



Plagiarism is strictly prohibited. UCAS uses detection software, and copied statements may lead to offers being withdrawn.

Unifrog is used to record experiences, develop ideas and draft the Personal Statement before transferring it to UCAS.



# Choosing courses and universities

Choosing the right course is as important as choosing the right university.

Students should consider:

- Course content and structure.
- Teaching methods.
- Assessment style.
- Staff-to-student ratio.
- Location, accommodation and costs.
- Graduate prospects.

Courses with the same title can differ significantly between universities. Unifrog allows detailed comparison and supports the creation of a realistic shortlist.



# Applying early: does it matter?

UCAS rules require universities to treat all applications submitted by the deadline equally.

In rare cases, highly competitive courses may fill places quickly. Applying early never disadvantages an applicant and may occasionally be beneficial for high-demand subjects.

# Further support and resources

Further information on:

- Careers.
- Higher education.
- Student finance.
- Employment, volunteering and gap years.

is available through the curated list of resources in the Appendix and, most importantly, through Unifrog, which provides the most up-to-date guidance.

## **University subjects and likely A Level entry requirements**

Based on a Russell Group survey. An updated version is available at:

<https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/degrees> .

The most up-to-date information, including likely grade requirements, is available on Unifrog and on individual university websites.

For more details see table on next page.

Degree subject	Essential A Levels	Useful A Levels
Accountancy	None	Mathematics
Aeronautical Engineering	Mathematics, Physics	-
Architecture	None	Art, Mathematics, Physics
Biochemistry	Chemistry, Biology	Mathematics, Further Mathematics
Biology	Biology, Chemistry	Mathematics, Physics
Biomedical Sciences	Two from Biology, Chemistry, Maths, Physics	Mathematics, Further Mathematics
Business Studies	None	Mathematics
Chemistry	Chemistry	Mathematics, Sciences
Drama	English	-
Economics	Mathematics	-
Engineering	Mathematics, Physics	-

Degree subject	Essential A Levels	Useful A Levels
English	English	History
French	French	-
Italian	Italian, French	-
History	History	-
Law	None	English, History, Politics
Mathematics	Mathematics	Further Mathematics
Mechanical Engineering	Mathematics, Physics	-
Medicine	Chemistry, Biology, Physics or Maths	-
Philosophy	None	Mathematics, English
Physics	Mathematics, Physics	-
Politics	None	Politics, English, History
Psychology	One from Biology, Maths, Physics, Chemistry	-



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