

Options@16 - Choosing A/AS/VA Levels

Choosing A/AS/VA Levels

Deciding whether to take A/AS/VA levels and which subjects to study is a complicated and important task. This leaflet will help you to consider some of the main issues.

So what are A/AS/VA levels?

'A' levels will normally be made up of four units except music and science will remain at six units. Two of the units will make up the Advanced Subsidiary ('AS' level) representing the first half of an advanced course. The second two units will be known as 'A2' – the second half of the advanced course.

The 'AS' is a qualification in its own right. A2 units represent the harder elements of the traditional 'A' level. A2 modules do not make up a qualification in their own right. However, when taken together with AS units they comprise a full 'A' level. They are graded on an A-E scale.

The majority of sixth forms and colleges of further education now offer a range of study programmes covering Advanced (A), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Vocational 'A' levels (VA) qualifications.

A/AS/VA levels are very different from GCSE's and not just because they are harder. You have to study and understand basic principles and theory, be able to analyse and comment upon what you study, and go into more detail than GCSE. Advanced level study will involve a lot of reading and essay writing for most subjects. Although highly regarded they do not in themselves qualify you for any specific career.

Why Take A/AS/VA levels?

Is this the right one for you? As a general guide you should aim for a good set of GCSE grades, passing with A-C grades in four at least, and preferably in five to eight subjects.

You should think carefully about what you are planning to do in the future. Will you want to go to a College or University? Would you prefer to look for a job after your A/AS/VA levels? You should take note that most Advanced level students continue into Higher Education. The job market for people immediately after 'A' levels has shrunk in recent years. You may find yourself in competition with school leavers. You need to check carefully – will 'A' levels be helpful for what you want to do?

How many AS/A2 levels?

Students will be encouraged to study four or five 'AS' levels in Year 12 then to continue their studies in three subjects in Year 13. Most people are likely to take four 'AS' levels in year 12, continuing with three A2 levels in Year 13. It is possible to take five 'AS' levels in Year 12, although you need to discuss this with your school or college. You may be able to start new 'AS' levels in Year 13; again, you need to discuss this with individual institutions.

The Extended project will be a separate qualification that 'A' level students may add to their study programme. Students will be able to carry out a project on a topic of their own choosing which may or may not be linked to their chosen 'A' level subject.

**Your college / school teacher and your Personal Adviser
will be able to help you look at how to pick subjects and how many.**

Which 'A' levels?

When you are choosing which subjects to study, there are four rules, which will help:

1. Choose subjects that you like – you are going to spend a lot of time during the next two years on 'A' level studies. That time is more likely to be happy and successful if you study subjects that you enjoy.
2. Choose subjects that you are good at - and have a good chance of succeeding in. If you are aiming at Higher Education, passes with good grades will give you more chance of finding a place.

Speak to your subject teacher at school about your ability in their subject.

Don't be fooled into thinking that some subjects are easier than others – they aren't.

3. Choose subjects that you need – some careers/courses are specific in their 'A' level subject requirements. This is especially true of science/technology related careers.

You should always check with your Personal Adviser as to the requirements.

You should never try to guess which subjects are necessary. Remember that if you choose the wrong combination of subjects you may not be able to enter your chosen degree/career.

4. Choose subjects that link together – you should try to choose at least two subjects which complement each other e.g. Maths and Physics: Biology and Chemistry: French and German.

If you are not sure about a combination of subjects ask your Personal Adviser.

If you wish to continue with a subject from GCSE to 'A' level you would usually be expected to have a GCSE pass at grade A-C in that subject. In some schools and colleges it may be possible to take certain subjects from scratch without having studied them at GCSE level e.g. psychology, sociology, politics, which may not have been available in Year 10 and 11.

'A' levels are available at school sixth forms, colleges of further education, and sixth form colleges.

You will need to check with each institution which subjects are available or seek further information from your Personal Adviser.

GCSE Requirements:

You may like to consider retaking some GCSE exams that have been narrowly failed. This may be necessary for the job or course that you are aiming for. Some courses/careers lay down very specific GCSE requirements e.g. teaching. It is advisable for all students to attempt to gain English and Maths GCSE exams if this is possible.

If you are uncertain about your choice of career:

Some people begin 'A' level courses without having a particular career in mind. This is perfectly acceptable providing you bear in mind the following points:

1. Choose subjects that allow for flexibility. Remember that your chosen 'A' levels will still dictate which degree courses are open to you.

Try to investigate what people usually do with the subjects in which you are interested. Your Personal Adviser will be able to help you with this.

2. Check carefully the exact entry requirements for courses that interest you.
3. Certain 'A' levels and degree courses may exempt you from taking some professional exams in the future e.g. banking. This is worth considering if you are having difficulty in choosing between subjects.
4. Some subjects may be less acceptable than others to employers, professional bodies and higher education institutions. For example, General Studies may not be acceptable to some Universities.

Alternatives to 'A' levels:

Before you finally decide on the 'A' level route, you should ensure that you have checked all the options. There may be other routes to achieving your long-term aims. For example, BTEC / Edexcel National Diploma qualifications in a specific vocational area are an alternative route into employment and Higher Education. BTEC / Edexcel National Diploma courses are available by full-time study at colleges and some sixth forms, and may be tied in with studying one or occasionally two 'A' levels or 'AS' levels.

In addition, Work Based training at level 3 can provide routes into employment with the possibility of progression to Higher Education; consider the Advanced Apprenticeship option.

Your Personal Adviser will be able to help you discuss your options further.

Helpful Reference Books:

- Which 'A' Levels ?
- Degree Course Offers.
- The 'Getting Into....' Course Guide

You may look at these books in Connexions centres.

Helpful Computer Packages:

- Careerscape.
- Kudos.
- Fast Tomato
- Higher Ideas

You may look at both computer packages in Connexions centres. They may also be available in your school/college.

Many universities and colleges will accept a combination of Advanced (AL), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Vocational 'A' levels (VA) to meet their course entry requirements.

Applicants should check directly with institutions for full details of any offers that they receive.

The following is a list of 'A' level and GCSE requirements or preferences for certain degree subjects and careers. It should be used as a general guide.

Please remember entry requirements for degree courses and careers are constantly changing.

Degree Subjects/Careers

Degree Subject	'A' Level and GCSE Requirements
Accountancy & Finance	Mathematics or unspecified (many institutions with "International" flavour courses require foreign languages).
Agriculture	Preferably two from the following: biology, chemistry, economics, environmental science, geography, mathematics, physics.
American Studies	English, english literature, languages, media studies, film studies, history, politics, or sociology sometimes preferred.
Archaeology	History, ancient Greek or Latin, Sciences an advantage for some institutions.
Architecture	Mathematics and/or physics often required or preferred. Art/design ability is necessary and will need to be demonstrated.
Art & Design	Usually preceded by a Foundation course, but some apply direct. ('A' level course to have included at least one art or design subject.)
Biochemistry	Chemistry, plus one from biology/human biology, environmental science, geography, geology, mathematics, physics, psychology, sports science.
Biology	Biology/human biology, plus one from environmental science, geography, geology, mathematics, physics, sports science and chemistry.
Botany	Biology and/or biology and chemistry plus at least one other science/mathematics subject. (can include psychology or geography)
Business Studies	No specific requirements. Some institutions ask for GCSE grade C in english and mathematics.
Chemistry	Chemistry plus another science (usually biology, mathematics, physics).
Computer Sciences	ICT, business or mathematics, science sometimes preferred. Some institutions also ask for GCSE grade B in mathematics.
Dentistry	Biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics

Economics	Some institutions ask for mathematics or economics. 'Good' GCSE english language and mathematics or statistics results.
Education	At least GCSE grade C in English, mathematics and science for those born after September 1st 1979. Two other subjects at grade C or above. 'A' level subjects: more than one National Curriculum core subject at 'A' level is desirable.
Engineering	Mathematics essential and physics or another Science subject. 1. Chemical Engineering: chemistry and mathematics, and possibly physics. 2. Civil Engineering: mathematics and/or physics. 3. Electrical Engineering: mathematics and physics.
English	Most institutions want English literature or both English literature and english language. One or two English literature degree courses prefer a "modern language" to GCSE level grades A-C.
Environmental Science	Biology, chemistry, geography, geology, mathematics or physics.
Geology	Biology, chemistry, geography, geology, maths and/or physics. Some institutions want maths GCSE at grade C or above.
Geography	Some institutions want english and maths GCSE at grade C or above. One or more science subjects may be required for BSc courses.
History	Most institutions want history or occasionally history and modern languages. Some institutions want english language GCSE at grade C.
Law	No specific subjects. Some institutions want english GCSE at grade C.
Leisure Management & Leisure Studies	No specific subjects.
Librarianship and Library Management	No specific subjects.
Mathematics	Most institutions want a high grade in mathematics. Some institutions also want further mathematics.

Media Studies	No specific subjects. Some institutions also want english GCSE at grade C.
Medicine	Chemistry and another science subject (either Biology, Mathematics or Physics). All courses also ask for UKCAT test (Clinical Aptitude Testing for Medical Students). The emphasis is on a very good GCSE background to include science, mathematics and english.
Modern Languages	French, German, Italian, Russian or Spanish. Some institutions ask for two languages.
Nursing	Biology. If Chemistry or physical science is not offered at A level, then a GCSE pass in chemistry. Some institutions accept psychology and sociology with biology.
Nutrition	Biology and chemistry or another science preferred. Some institutions also ask for a minimum of english and maths at GCSE level.
Occupational Therapy	Biology, human biology, psychology and sociology.
Optometry	Biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics.
Performing Arts	Dance, drama, english and theatre studies.
Pharmacy	Most institutions want chemistry and one other science from biology, maths or physics.
Physics	Physics and mathematics.
Physiotherapy	Most institutions want 2 life science subjects: eg. biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, sociology, sports studies. Plus GCSE biology, english language, mathematics and physics science at grade C or above.
Podiatry	One from Biology, human biology or sports studies.
Politics	No specific subjects. Some institutions ask for at least one social science or arts subject. Foreign languages may be required for courses with a language option.

Psychology	Most institutions don't specify subject. 'Science' psychology course may require a literate subject, eg english, history, geography, psychology. GCSE maths and english may also be required.
Social Work	No specified subject but experience (paid or voluntary) in social work setting required. GCSE English and mathematics usually required. Places are also subject to CRB clearance.
Sociology	No specified subjects. Most institutions want GCSEs in english and mathematics at grade C or above.
Sports Science and Sport Studies	Science or social science subjects (eg biology) may be required. Most institutions also want GCSE mathematics and english at grade C or above.
Statistics	Mathematics and further mathematics are usually required.
Theology	Ethics, philosophy, theology or religious studies are preferred subjects but not essential.
Veterinary Science	Biology, chemistry, mathematics and science subjects. Strong GCSE background including maths, english and physics or dual science (including physics)
Zoology	Biology and a second science at A level, preferably from chemistry, physics or mathematics.

For information on any of the above courses and to make an online application go to either:

East Riding & Hull Prospectus:
www.logonmoveon.co.uk

North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire Prospectus:
www.lincs2.co.uk

Please check with Colleges / Universities directly as course details and entry requirements may change.

Before making any final decision or if you need help to understand this leaflet, discuss all the options with your Personal Adviser.

Useful Addresses

Beverley Connexions Centre

3 North Bar Within
Beverley
HU17 8AP

 01482 862741

Bransholme Connexions Centre

76 Goodhart Road
North Point Shopping Centre
Bransholme
Hull
HU7 4EF

 01482 835780

Bridlington Connexions Centre

20 Blenheim Road
Bridlington
YO16 4LD

 01262 678943

Goole Connexions Centre

71-73 Boothferry Road
Goole
DN14 6BB

 01405 608810

Grimsby Connexions Centre

Queen Street
Grimsby
DN31 1JA


 01472 355303

Hessle Connexions Centre

1st Floor
Library Building
Southgate
Hessle
HU13 0SN

 01482 647127

Holderness Connexions Centre

To make an appointment to be seen in Hedon, Hornsea or Withernsea please call Beverley Connexions on  01482 862741 or your local Customer Service Centre.

Hull Connexions Centre

84-86 Paragon Street
Hull
HU1 3QA

 01482 223081

Pocklington Connexions Centre

Pocklington Youth Centre
25 New Street
Pocklington
YO42 2QA

 07824 486538

Scunthorpe Connexions Centre

60 Oswald Road
Scunthorpe
DN15 7PQ

 01724 282200

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