

A Levels



What are A Levels?

'A Level' stands for 'advanced level' and the clue is in the name! You study a small number of subjects in depth. They normally take two years to complete and are assessed mostly by exams at the end of the course.



They are graded A*-E with A* as the top grade plus U for 'Unclassified'.

A typical workload is 3 A Level subjects, or 2 subjects plus equivalent qualifications. However, this may depend on factors such as your GCSE grades so discuss it with the college or school.

A Levels can lead to a wide range of careers and university courses. If the study and assessment methods suit you, they can be good way to keep future options open.



Entry requirements

To study 3 A Levels you will probably need at least 5 or 6 GCSE Grades 9-4, including English (and sometimes Maths). To study 2 A Levels, you normally need at least 4 Grades 9-4. However, this is the minimum requirement, and you may need Grade 5 - 6 or higher in the subjects you want to study. If your qualifications are equivalent to GCSE, check before you apply.

What are AS Levels?

An AS Level is a separate qualification. Study lasts for one year and is broadly equivalent to the first year of an A Level. It has the same entry requirements as an A Level and is assessed in the same way. If you continue from AS to A Level, the AS result won't count towards your final grade.

There are only small number of AS Level subjects on offer in Sheffield – for details check on: www.sheffieldprogress.co.uk and on sixth form and college websites.

Combining A Levels with other qualifications

You can sometimes study a mix of A Levels and qualifications such as BTEC. This is acceptable for many higher education courses, but always check entry requirements if you're interested in a specific university or course.

Some students take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) alongside A Levels. This is normally a project that you research yourself and it can earn points to support a university application.

You may be able to do additional (sometimes called 'enrichment') activities, such as work experience, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award or volunteering. These will help to develop your skills and be useful for a CV or UCAS Personal Statement.





Choosing A Level subjects

There are three key things to consider:

1. What subjects do I enjoy?

You will be studying in much greater depth and you'll be expected to do your own research and reading, so it's important to be interested.

Some A Level subjects don't require any previous study. Find out as much as you can about them first, for example, A Level psychology normally requires Maths and often another science at GCSE grades 9-4.

2. What are my best subjects?

It's a big leap from GCSE to A Level so choose subjects where you feel confident of doing well. Talk to your teachers before you make your final choice.

3. What are my career ideas?

Certain university courses and careers require, or prefer, specific subjects. These courses are often in medicine, health care and STEM (science, technology, engineering and Maths). You can sometimes take an extra year at university if you don't have the right subjects, nevertheless take extra care if you're interested in any of these sectors.

However don't worry if you haven't got a clear career plan. A Levels leave plenty of options open and many higher education courses accept a range of subjects as long as the grades are right.

Check requirements on www.ucas.com and if you're still not sure about what you need, contact university admissions departments.

The website: www.informedchoices.ac.uk can help you explore where your subjects might lead.



Find out more

University websites and admissions staff

www.ucas.com

www.informedchoices.ac.uk

www.sheffieldprogress.co.uk

www.sheffieldfutures.org.uk

