

A-Levels questions

Are A Level qualifications only recognised by universities in the UK or are they accepted elsewhere?

A Level qualifications are recognised by many countries throughout the world. The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted at a meeting of national representatives in Lisbon on 8 - 11 April 1997. The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, otherwise known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, is the key legal instrument for recognition of qualifications across UNESCO's Europe and North America Region. In 2014, 55 countries signed the Convention and 53 ratified it. It aims to ensure that holders of a qualification from a signatory country can have that qualification recognised in another.

<https://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbon-recognition-convention.aspx>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisbon_Recognition_Convention

Every country is slightly different, for example, in Canada two AS subjects may be considered for an A level, and AS levels are considered equivalent to the Canadian senior secondary school qualification. The following website allows you to search the Country and specific institution to quickly determine if they accept A Level qualifications.

<http://recognition.cambridgeinternational.org/>

The following couple of websites also give you an idea of how points for A Level qualifications can contribute to the overall student results and how these can be used for entry into different courses. (Nuffic is the Dutch organisation for the internationalisation of education, Trinity College Dublin is the top University in the Republic of Ireland offering a full range of courses in English).

<https://www.tcd.ie/study/apply/admission-requirements/undergraduate/index.php>

<https://www.nuffic.nl/en/education-systems/united-kingdom/common-diplomas-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

What is the schedule for tests and exams during this school year?

Each examination board publishes the timetable on their website. Usually this is very accurate, however, they can make changes so it is important to check carefully.

Mougins School offers the following examination series:

- Pearson Edexcel has an examination session in January and May/June.
- Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) has an examination session in October/November for retakes and May/June for the main series.

The school publishes an exam timetable based on the school entries taking into account any clashes and “key times” which are defined by each exam board. This will be given to Form 11, 12 and 13 students before the Easter break.

2020 was an exceptional year in terms of examinations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is also having an affect on 2021 examinations. The school will keep students and parents informed of any changes as they become known.

With regards to previous exam results, please can you explain the procedure and deadlines for those students wishing to re-mark and or retake exams to try and improve their grades?

When exam results are released, if students are not happy with the mark, the first thing that they are asked to do is talk to their subject teacher to discuss the situation and seek their advice on the possibilities. Pearson Edexcel (“Post results services”) and CAIE (“Enquiries about results”) have different approaches to re-marks and retakes.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/post-results-services.html>

<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/exam-administration/cambridge-exams-officers-guide/phase-6-results-and-certificates/enquiries-about-results/>

Re-marking

Students may decide that they would like to get their exam re-marked. Please be aware that there are fees associated with re-marks that parents will be required to pay. Some of the possibilities for a re-mark are as follows:

- Clerical check - normally a very quick procedure that just checks that the marks have been added up correctly. Note, the student’s responses are not reviewed.
- Remark without report written - student responses are checked and remarked but no feedback is given.
- Remark with written report - student responses are checked and feedback is given about the outcome of the remark. This option is more expensive.

A re-mark can take up to two weeks thus it is very important to make the decision to re-mark quickly especially for Form 13 students. When results are released in August, students may need to go through clearing to find a University place, thus it is critical not to waste time.

If a student is still not happy with the re-mark, there are possibilities for an appeal (dependent on the exam board), but once again there are additional fees attached. Once the result of this has been determined, the result is final.

Please be aware that the mark can go up or down with a re-mark, which is a risk that will need to be taken and understood. It can often be expensive to go through the re-mark and appeals process. It may be more economical to retake the exam.

Retaking

Another option if a student is not happy with their results is to retake the exam in the next examination series. The timing of the next exam will depend on the subject and the examination board. In general, after the May/June session, the next session will be October/November for CAIE and January for some Pearson Edexcel courses. However, it is very important that this is checked carefully and discussed with the subject teacher and Examinations Officer.

As with the re-marks, a cost is associated with retaking exams that will need to be paid by the parents.

If a student decides they are going to retake an exam, they need to let the Examinations Officer know in writing, preferably by email. Students will be given a confirmation of entry form for the retake. It is their responsibility to check if the information on this form is correct. They will be informed of the exact date and time by the Examinations Officers. .

Please also confirm what the fees are associated with either of these options.

The fees associated with each examination varies from year to year and from each examination board. It is not possible for a number of reasons to give an accurate estimate of the fees associated with retakes and re-marks. Please contact the Bursar for the exact fee if the situation arises.

As results come out during the summer holidays, it would be useful for parents to be informed ahead of time as to re-mark and retake options to avoid mid-summer panics when staff members are on holiday and not available.

The Examinations Officer, the Head of Secondary and/ or the Head of 6th Form have always been available on results days. They are either present at school or available via email.

Traditionally Elisabeth is back from holidays and is onsite, and numerous Sixth Form Teachers and Heads of Department come to school to receive the results and assist with any enquiries. Thus there has always been significant support for students in the past.

This arrangement will continue in the future. All students will have been given a code to access their results via Results Plus for Pearson Edexcel, or CAIE online. If they forget their password or are unable to access their results, they can email one of the Examination Officer's and they will assist them.

University questions

Who do parents contact with regards to orientation and university applications?

Traditionally Mougins School has assisted all students in applying to UK Universities through UCAS - the University and Colleges Admissions Service - and will continue to do so in the future.

In 2020/2021, the Sixth Form Team of teachers changed the system to give each student more focused and individualized support.

Each student is surveyed and asked about the field in which they intend to study. They are then paired with a Sixth Form Team teacher closest to this subject area. For example, if a student indicated that they were interested in studying Mathematics or Computer Science, the teacher on the team who teaches "STEM" subjects would become their mentor. The Sixth Form Team is made up of the Head of Sixth Form, the Form 12 and Form 13 Tutors and the Headteacher.

The mentor is responsible for meeting with the student to discuss their UK University choices, they will write their reference (taking into consideration input from the student's subject teachers), give feedback and support them writing their personal statement and will assist in completing the online application form. University applications submitted for other countries have traditionally been completed independently, but with the support of the school Sixth Form Team and Headteacher. Students have asked individual teachers in the past to write references or letters of recommendation, either as a tutor or a subject teacher.

It is very important to make very clear that the Sixth Form Team members are not career advisors and as such will not necessarily be able to answer all of the student's questions. In 2020/2021, SPW Careers, an International Careers Advisory service was employed specifically to support students with University applications and career questions. Their services and involvement with the school is evolving. Currently, they have been able to provide every Form 12 and Form 13 student with an individual interview to provide information about different courses and Universities globally that the students would like to know about. They are also providing ongoing support through an advice hotline.

It should also be mentioned that Brexit has had, and will continue to have an effect on our students as the fees which they will be required to pay for UK Universities have changed significantly, depending on their nationality. This situation is complex and is still being interpreted by individual Universities. The current situation is explained on the following site.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/studying-in-the-uk-guidance-for-eu-students>

Students and parents are encouraged to contact their respective embassies or consulates for further up to date information.

Which tests are required for entrance into universities in the USA, the UK, & other countries (SAT, TOEFL, IELTS etc)?

The TOEFL (“Test of English as a foreign language”) (or its equivalent the IELTS) is not required for our students as they must achieve a minimum English pass result in their IGCSEs to graduate. Most courses in the UK do not require an additional entrance exam (beyond A levels and GCSE’s), however it depends on the course. The following is a summary of some exams required, not only for the UK but for different countries:

The BMAT

The BMAT is the BioMedical Admissions Test. It’s required by some universities in the UK, and some in Europe and in Asia for those wanting to study Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry or Biomedical Science. The BMAT is a two-hour long test divided into three sections.

<https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/bmat/>

The UCAT (previously the UKCAT)

The UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude test) is used to assess students applying for Medicine or Dentistry at some universities in the UK. It tests various attributes that are considered to be beneficial for healthcare providers to have. Candidates can only take the test once, and are able to sit it in a variety of global locations.

The LNAT

The LNAT is the exam that may be required for students applying for an undergraduate law degree. The test is two and a quarter hours long and is made up of two sections. It can only be taken once, and it must be taken in the UCAS year in which the student is applying to university.

MAT

The MAT is a test administered in partnership with the University of Oxford for Maths and Computer Science students. Imperial College also requires the MAT for all of its undergraduate Mathematics applicants. The test lasts two hours and thirty minutes.

STEP

The Sixth Term Examination Paper is a well-established mathematics examination designed to test candidates on questions that are similar in style to undergraduate mathematics. STEP is used by the University of Cambridge and the University of Warwick. Other universities sometimes ask candidates to take STEP as part of their offer – in such cases, the university can advise on which papers to take. There are also a number of candidates who sit STEP papers as a challenge.

Other Tests

In addition to these tests, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge often administer exams to candidates applying for certain courses at the time of interview. If you are applying to Oxbridge, it's important to ensure that you know what will be expected of you during the interview so that you can ensure you are sufficiently prepared.

More information can be found on the UCAS website:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests>

And also at the Cambridge website:

<https://www.admissionstesting.org/>

US Universities

Many colleges in the US base admissions decisions in part on the results of standardized tests called the ACT and the SAT tests. Juniors and seniors in US high schools usually take these tests to demonstrate their readiness for college level work.

In general, the ACT and the SAT tests attempt to measure college readiness and predict future academic success. But they do so in very different ways:

- The ACT test measures what a student already knows. It covers material that the student should have learned during high school.
- The SAT test is used more as a predictor of what a student is capable of learning. It deals with material that the student may NOT have learned in high school.

For this reason, some students do better on the ACT test—especially if they tend to struggle with standardized tests—and other students do better on the SAT test. Most colleges accept either test score, so many students take both exams to improve their chances of being admitted.

It is possible to take the SAT many times, but most students take the test 2 or 3 times. It is recommended to take the PSAT or a practice test in the sophomore year. This equates to

approximately Form 11 in the UK system. It is then recommended to plan ahead to take the official SAT in spring or winter of junior year. This equates to Form 12 in the UK system. This gives the opportunity to prepare and take the test again if the score obtained is not high enough. The scores are good for 5 years.

More information about SAT and ACT exams can be found here:

<https://blog.prepscholar.com/international-students-and-the-sat-act-guide>

It is important to note that due to Covid, University admission criteria has changed in some circumstances. This means that the SAT or ACT may not be required. More information can be found here and it is highly recommended that contact is made with the specific University of interest. The US does not have a common application process like UCAS thus individual Universities have different requirements.

<https://www.studyinternational.com/news/sat-international-students-2020/>

Where can these tests be taken?

The Cambridge website has a lot of information about the various UK admissions tests.

<https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/>

Many of the UK tests can be sat here at Mougins School. It is necessary to contact the Examinations Officers in September to discuss if it is possible and what dates the tests will be. Alternatively, details for where to find additional test centres can be found here:

<https://www.admissionstesting.org/find-a-centre/>

The following is an official website showing where registered SAT centres are located. Previously, the International School of Nice (ISN) and the Centre International de Valbonne (CIV) have also been examination centres.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/find-test-centers>

We are delighted with the sessions which have already started to help our children become more autonomous in their studies and proactive about their futures. Would it be possible to send a list of the topics which were covered in these sessions? Unfortunately, a lot of the students do not come home and relay all of the information to their parents so some people are a bit “out of the loop” and would be interested to know more.

This year, the 6th Form Team introduced a study skills program for all Form 12 students to assist them in their transition from IGCSE study to A-Level study. The following topics were covered.

Week 1:

An introduction as to what it means to be an A-Level student, the transition between IGCSE and A-Levels, expectations and requirements.

Week 2:

Specific study skills techniques - mind mapping

Week 3:

Specific study skills techniques - skimming and scanning.

Week 4:

Introduction to Bridge U - the University and Careers guidance platform

<https://bridge-u.com/>

Week 5:

Students completed the careers profiling, aptitude test and individual careers interview with the SPW Careers team.

Week 6:

Specific study skills techniques - metacognition. Students reflected on how they personally learnt best so they could implement these strategies in their personal study routines.

Week 7:

Students were directed to complete the "Strategy Advisor" task on Bridge U:

Step 1 - Collect your experiences

Step 2 - Identify Strategy Factors

Step 3 - Improve your Strategy

This task asked students to reflect on extra curricular activities that they have completed and the skills they have learnt. They can draw on these experiences and skills when applying to universities this time next year. The following article gives a plethora of suggestions on how

students can be researching different career paths, involving themselves in community projects, volunteering and seeking work experience opportunities.

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/school-and-college-liaison/getting-ready-for-university/gaining-experience-during-a-lockdown>

Week 8:

Exam techniques - students chose to attend either a mathematics/science session or an essay based session.

Can you please confirm which grades, from which terms will be submitted with university applications. Do all grades from this year count, or will it just be end of year exams? If there are any differences specific to certain programmes (such as medicine for example) please confirm as well.

The two types of assessment to be aware of are:

Internal assessments - these are examinations (including mock exams), assignments, handed-in pieces of work, performances, coursework etc that have been given by Mougins teachers. Internal assessments are used to determine report grades and can contribute to A-Level predicted grades.

External assessments - these are examinations that are administered by Pearson Edexcel or Cambridge (CAIE) e.g. IGCSE exams, AS exams and A-Level exams. These are taken during the official examination sessions in school. External examinations determine the grades which students will achieve for their universally recognised Certificated qualifications.

When applying to UK universities, only the External assessment grades are declared in the UCAS applications. The Internal assessment grades are not declared, however they can be used to determine a students' predicted grades. Predicted grades are used by students to apply to specific courses. Therefore, while Internal assessments are not declared, they are very important for students' predicted grades. Some countries however (eg. the US and the Netherlands) do require details of students' report grades which are determined by Internal assessments. Students can request an academic transcript made up of the grades students have received over the years in their school reports.

Can you please also confirm if IGCSE results are submitted with university applications?

IGCSE and GCSE examination results are submitted when applying to UK universities. All (I)GCSE results must be declared, even if students have not performed well.

Other countries will require different pieces of information so it is important to research the particular university of interest.

Do you have any information on how the unexpected (lower than expected for some) results due to the COVID changes to the GCSE exams last year affect admissions into university?

The distribution of IGCSE grades was affected by lockdown and the cancellation of official examinations. Students were given one of two grades:

- Centre Assessed Grade - teachers submitted student grades based on evidence that they had collected over the course. These were allocated fairly and were aspirational grades, taking into account the difficulties of isolation
- Exam board allocated grades - these were given by the exam boards and were based on the centre assessment grades and ranks submitted by teachers and by the historical data associated with the school.

Students were given the grade that was the highest out of the two options. Thus, it was very rare for students to be given a result that was lower than expected. By all accounts, Universities are going out of their way to ensure that students are not disadvantaged because of Covid and the effect that it has had on student learning.

The BridgeU site is incredibly helpful - thank you for signing our kids up to this. Parents would like to know where is the best source of information for university rankings - by country (i.e. top 10 universities in the UK), or by programme (i.e. top 10 universities for medical school). Would you know where we should suggest that they look?

The following wikipedia article gives information about how the world rankings are calculated and given different ratings.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QS_World_University_Rankings

The QS World Universities website provides a number of different ways to search and order universities. They provide the latest world rankings, UK rankings and it is possible to search based on the course.

<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2020>

<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/world-university-rankings/top-universities-uk-2020>

The following gives information about European universities.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-europe>

As we understand, the much awaited Duke of Edinburgh Award programme is unfortunately not going ahead.

At this stage the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme is not running at Mougins school due to COVID.

With this in mind, a lot of parents would like to encourage their children to give back to society in some way. It's difficult when you are under 18 to do this in France with a registered organisation, so we are wondering if the school is able to suggest some ways in which our children could get involved with some social work or volunteer work. Many people feel this really should be part of their education, and of course, we are all aware of how important it is to present a well-rounded CV with the university applications next year.

As part mentioned previously, Form 12 students have been directed to think about experiences they can get involved in during these challenging times. The website shared previously has many ideas about how and where to get involved online.

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/school-and-college-liaison/getting-ready-for-university/gaining-experience-during-a-lockdown>

Operation Wallacea also has a number of online work experience opportunities:

<https://www.opwall.com/schools/educational-benefits/work-experience/>

Senior students have also been given the opportunity to volunteer their free time to help in the Primary school in both English classes and French classes. This is a perfect opportunity for students to help others in our own community, while learning to manage their time effectively and uphold a position of responsibility.

The Sixth Form team are also looking to collaborate with parents in the community who may be able to provide opportunities for our students within their own businesses and organisations. The Sixth form team hopes to work closely with the PTA and our broader support network to help to develop this program.