

The UCAS Tariff Explained

When it's time for your young person to start searching for a university course, the entry requirements are a key consideration. Universities will often indicate a typical offer that they expect from applicants, either in the form of particular grades or a specific number of points.

If the university asks for points, then it's time to get to grips with the UCAS Tariff. If you understand how the points-based Tariff works, you can make sure that your son or daughter is applying for courses with attainable entry requirements.

Why have a Tariff?

The UCAS Tariff enables institutions to easily make offers to applicants with a wide range of academic or vocational qualifications. It isn't used by all institutions because some prefer the accuracy of making offers using grades. As a general rule, the Tariff has been accepted more widely by the new universities (former polytechnics awarded university status from 1992 onwards). According to UCAS, around one-third of all entry requirements make reference to the UCAS Tariff.

A new version of the Tariff was introduced for higher education courses starting from September 2017. The new system features a different numbering system which allows a wider range of qualifications to be included. As a result, the points awarded from 2017 are considerably lower than in the previous system, but there's no real change in the grades that students need to achieve, with some small exceptions.

Changes to points for AS levels

AS levels will now only be considered as 40% of an A level, when they were worth 50% previously. So students studying two A levels and two AS levels should take particular care, as their points will be lower than those with comparable grades from three A levels.

The points explained

Essentially, the Tariff gives points depending on the qualification and grade achieved. Students will gain points from A levels as follows:

- grade A* equates to 56 points
- grade A to 48 points
- grade B to 40 points
- grade C to 32 points
- grade D to 24 points
- grade E to 16 points.

For AS level qualifications, students will gain the following points on the Tariff:

- grade A equates to 20 points
- grade B to 16 points
- grade C to 12 points
- grade D to 10 points
- grade E to 6 points.

There is no A* grade at AS level.

Students studying a BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma will find that the points achieved from this qualification match those gained from a single A level, with a distinction* from BTEC providing 56 points, a merit 32 points and a pass 16 points.

Many more qualifications feature in the UCAS Tariff, including the International Baccalaureate Diploma, Cambridge Pre-U, Welsh Baccalaureate and Access to HE Diploma.

Are other qualifications accepted?

A wide variety of qualifications appear on the table but it is sometimes assumed that qualifications that don't appear on the Tariff are not accepted by universities: this isn't necessarily the case. If your son or daughter's qualification doesn't show up as part of the listed entry requirements, they should contact the university's admissions department to check.

What else is required?

In addition to the number of points required, the institution will also indicate the subjects needed and the type of qualification they will accept. For example, 128 points from A2 levels or BTEC National qualifications, including at least 40 points from a natural science or social science, but excluding general studies.

It's also worth remembering that getting a university place does not only depend on the grades or points achieved from A levels or equivalent qualifications. There may be additional requirements including specific GCSE grades and subjects, admissions tests or experience needed. Some students don't pay sufficient attention to the additional requirements and then waste one or more of their five choices.

Find out more about the UCAS Tariff and view the Tariff tables on the UCAS website at <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/ucas-undergraduate-tariff-points>

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