

University of Aberdeen

Curriculum for Excellence Statement

1. Overview

The University of Aberdeen recognises the importance of Curriculum for Excellence and its aim to make learning more relevant to the modern world and to give young people the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to succeed in learning, life and work. The changes under Curriculum for Excellence have a direct relevance to study at the University of Aberdeen as a result of our own Curriculum Reform.

The purpose of our Curriculum Reform, having consulted extensively with employers, professional bodies, academics, the Government, current and prospective students, parents and teachers, has been to modernise the structure, content, delivery and flexibility of our degree programmes to allow Aberdeen graduates to leave the University both academically excellent and intellectually flexible and to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens.

The University acknowledges that the Curriculum for Excellence pathway, travelled from Nursery through to S6, has a number of key components and incorporates the student profile gained at the conclusion of P7 and S3. The University believes that in expanding the broad educational experience from S1 and S2 to encompass S1, S2 and S3, with specific subject choice later, at the end of S3 instead of S2, the Curriculum for Excellence provides a strong platform on which to build when students commence the Senior Phase across S4 to S6, effectively the start of the journey to obtain qualifications for entry to higher education. We understand that the design of the S1 to S3 curriculum should allow learners to specialise in preparation for qualifications and personal achievement gained across S4 to S6.

The University understands it cannot assume that there is a single model of when students are presented for Highers, or that learners necessarily all have the same opportunities to study for a full range of Highers in a single year. We note however that it is very much possible to study a subject at Higher level, even although no qualification in that subject is held at National 4 or National 5 level.

We remain committed to promoting a fair admissions policy to ensure we give equal consideration to candidates who apply on time and who possess the necessary knowledge and skills, irrespective of the route travelled through the Senior Phase, S4 to S6.

Our Entry Requirements are the minimum standards and subjects required for entry into our degree programmes, however achieving these does not guarantee entry - we have many more applicants than places, and most meet our minimum entrance requirements. Consequently, we may need to ask for more than the minimum. This might take the form of further academic qualifications, or better grades, and an applicant's academic profile will normally be the most significant factor in our decision making. Additionally, certain features of the personal statement and contextual data may help to strengthen an applicant's profile.

We are keen to encourage people from the widest possible range of backgrounds to participate in university studies, and we appreciate that not all applicants have the same opportunity to meet our standard entry requirements. For this reason, we take certain information into account when deciding on the exact grades we might require in any given case. An explanation of our Entry Requirements can be found for each degree area (in the entry requirements table) at: www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/find-a-degree.php

For applications to very competitive degrees such as Education, Law or Medicine, special attention is paid to the Personal Statement and the Referee's Statement.

Entry Requirements are expressed predominantly with reference to Highers. Where applicable we make reference to Foundation Apprenticeships. Whilst the University of Aberdeen recognises the value of Advanced Highers and the Scottish Baccalaureate with regard to the skills gained and preparedness for entry to University, they will not form part of our standard Level 1 Entry Requirements. The University acknowledges that many students remain at school until the conclusion of S6 and the benefits gained from doing so. We place no requirement on students to follow an S6 curriculum that is linked specifically to Advanced Highers only; our preference is that students select as full a programme of study as possible that is of interest to them, continues to present challenges and learning opportunities, and where appropriate, allows the student to contribute to the life of the school.

Where a student is in S6 and receives an unconditional offer of admission, we expect full and continued participation in the subjects declared within the UCAS application, particularly if their study involves Advanced Highers, as the self-directed learning and project-based work will have direct relevance to the University environment.

Where an offer of admission is conditional and an applicant has any query relating to the terms of the condition, or their ability to achieve the condition (for instance because the subjects being studied at school have changed following submission of the UCAS application), we would encourage them to contact our Admissions team immediately in order to clarify whether or not an amended offer need or can be made.

2. National 5/Standard Grade/Intermediate 2 Qualifications

The University of Aberdeen currently does not stipulate a minimum number of National 5/Standard Grade and/or Intermediate 2 qualifications. We do not use the overall number of National 5/Standard Grade/Intermediate 2 qualifications achieved to determine suitability.

There is a requirement to hold minimum qualifications in particular subjects, such as English and Maths, as detailed below.

The grade at National 5 is Grade C or above;

The grade at Intermediate 2 is Grade C or above.

The grade at Standard Grade is 3 or above. Please see the exception for Primary Education and Music Education.

National 5 Maths was previously known as Lifeskills Maths.

MA and Divinity

English for all degrees;

Maths or Applications of Maths for degrees involving Accountancy, Economics or Finance.

Please note that for MA Computing degrees, Applications of Maths is not accepted.

Law

English

Science

English and Maths, plus either Chemistry or Physics.

National 5 Applications of Mathematics is not accepted.

Engineering

English

Primary Education

Maths - National 5 Maths or Applications of Mathematics or Standard Grade 2 or above.

Music Education

Maths - National 5 Maths or Applications of Mathematics or Standard Grade 2 or above.

Medicine

English and Maths. National 5 Applications of Mathematics is not accepted.

3. Academic requirements for Medicine for entry in September 2021, incorporating Curriculum for Excellence

Prospective medical students must demonstrate a clear commitment to medicine and have an understanding of what a doctor's job entails. Competition for places each year is extremely high and the number of places is controlled by the Scottish Government.

In addition to the UCAS application and the UCAT Admissions Test, an interview forms part of the selection process. Not all who apply are interviewed. In preparing an application for Medicine, students are advised to consult the extensive information found online at: www.abdn.ac.uk/smmsn/undergraduate/medicine/

- National 5 qualifications
 - English and Maths are required (currently Grade B minimum); Biology and Physics are recommended but not compulsory (Grade B minimum).
- Higher qualifications
 - Chemistry (Grade B minimum).
 - Two subjects are required from Biology/Human Biology, Maths (including Applications of Maths), Physics.
 - Two further Highers in most other subjects – applicants should check with the Medical Admissions office if clarification required.
 - These may be taken across the Senior Phase – S4 to S6
 - There is no requirement, and therefore no advantage given, to obtaining the three sciences required in one sitting.
 - Maths/Applications of Maths is regarded as a science.
 - If Higher Maths is Applications of Maths, National 5 Maths at Grade B must be achieved.
- Year 5 studies
 - AAAAB from five full academic courses to be taken at one sitting; from Highers and Advanced Highers. We require five programmes of study, to demonstrate breadth and volume, in order to cope with the academic demands and rigour of Medical School.
- Year 6 studies
 - The Admissions Committee will not normally consider applications to Medical School directly from Year 5.
 - Candidates who have achieved the Entrance Requirements, i.e. five full academic courses @ AAAAB or better in S5, may choose to continue their studies in S6 and are free to choose a programme of study which is of particular interest to them, noting:
 - That we expect candidates to engage fully with a S6 programme of study.
 - Higher Biology will prove useful.
 - Any offer of a place will be conditional on S6 results.

- An S6 programme of study which includes 3 full academic courses taken at Higher or Advanced Higher will gain a greater objective academic score.
- There is no absolute requirement to study Advanced Highers in S6.
- Candidates who have achieved the Entrance Requirements, i.e. five full academic courses @ AAAAB or better in S5, may choose to leave school and undertake paid employment or a Gap Year. Candidates would be expected to continue to develop their written application further during this time, preferably involving work of a caring nature or healthcare work. However it should be noted that the academic score (calculated as part of the overall admission score) includes scores from both S5 and S6 courses and that the majority of applicants do offer more than the minimum academic requirement.

Note:

Information will be required for those candidates who have achieved less than our minimum academic requirements or who are re-sitting their examinations to upgrade results, if there are very serious personal difficulties at the time of the first sitting.

Appropriate supporting documentation would be expected as above. To be considered, any serious personal difficulties experienced at the time of undertaking an examination must be declared at the time and validated immediately. Cases would be considered on an individual basis.

Additional information for MA/Divinity/Law/Science/Engineering:

- **S4 Highers**
Students who take a Higher or Highers in S4 will not be penalised; we regard Highers achieved in S4 and S5 as having been sat simultaneously.
- **Resit Highers**
Students choosing to resit a Higher in which they achieved a grade C or below in their first sitting, will normally be required to achieve an A grade at the second attempt. If the Higher at C was achieved in S4, the resit rule does not apply, even if the resit is not until S6.
- **Minimum number of Exams**
In at least one of the Senior Phase years – S4 or S5 or S6, there is an expectation that a **minimum** of three Highers or Advanced Higher subjects are studied and presented for examinations - this is to ensure that students are prepared for the academic rigour they will find at University.
- **Applications of Maths**
Where we indicate that we require Science or Mathematics subjects, the University of Aberdeen accepts Higher Applications of Maths. Where we indicate that we require Higher Mathematics, this cannot be substituted with Higher Applications of Maths.
- **Advanced Highers**
At the University of Aberdeen we do not double-count a Higher and Advanced Higher in the same subject, but we do consider that a B grade at Advanced higher is equivalent to an A grade at Higher.