



THE BRITISH SCHOOL  
OF GUANGZHOU  
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

## An Essential Guide to 'A-Level'

### What are A-Levels?

The 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Level' or 'A-Level' for short, is a two-year academic programme for students typically aged between 16 and 18. Widely regarded as the 'gold standard' of pre-university qualifications, A-Level qualification is universally recognised as one of the best routes for preferential admission to any university worldwide, including world-class institutions in the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Europe and Asia.

### How is the A-Level programme structured?

In the last two years of school (called 'High School' in the USA or 'Sixth Form' in the UK), students usually choose three or four subjects to specialise in. Students then complete AS (Advanced Subsidiary) exams in most of their subjects at the end of the first year, followed by A2 exams at the end of the second year in all chosen subjects. Successful examination results for each subject lead to a full 'A-Level' qualification at the end of the two-year course. Further information on A-Level subject choices can be found in our 'A-Level Options Guide'.

### How are A-Levels graded?

A-Levels are graded on a scale from A\* (highest grade) to U (ungraded). All examinations are independently marked by external moderators and highly experienced examiners. Most AS and A2 exams are sat in May or June with results published the following August. It is important to note that to satisfy the academic requirements for entry into almost all university courses, good grades at A-Level (grades A\*- B) in only three relevant subjects are required.

### Why do students choose A-Levels?

A-Levels are unique in providing an unrivalled depth of study. After two years, students develop a deep understanding of subjects and have the ability to think and argue critically within them, something that is often only seen during the first year of university courses. This can help reduce the time needed to complete degree courses as it can allow students who achieve strong A-Level results to apply for up to one year of course credit when joining universities in the US, Australia or Canada.

*"The depth of knowledge displayed by the best A-Level students makes them prime targets for America's Ivy League universities." - Yale University, USA*

### How can students gain entry to our A-Level programme?

To access A-Level courses after the completion of IGCSE examinations, students need to achieve a minimum of five IGCSEs with grades A\*- C. For students that have not completed IGCSEs or have been studying a different curriculum, each application will be taken on merit, looking at general academic ability, previous school reports, pre-entry assessment results and other qualifications/talents the student may have.

### What support does the British School provide to students applying for university?

We have specially tasked teachers, tutors and a full time careers advisor to assist students with applications to their first choice universities, including Ivy League Schools in America, Oxbridge and Russell Group universities in the UK plus of course prestigious universities located through Asia and Europe. In addition to the traditional A-Level route, the British School of Guangzhou is also a certified SAT (Standard Attainment Tests) centre, allowing students applying to universities in the USA further advantages. The school is also connected to the 'Naviance' network, giving our students access to information on thousands of careers and global university choices, as well as providing extra support for those students preparing for SATs.

### How does A-Level study compare to the International Baccalaureate (IB)?

In terms of university recognition, A-Level certification is similar to receiving a high score in an IB Diploma. The three main advantages that the A-Level programme has over the IB programme are flexibility, depth of study and the ability to specialise.

- **Flexibility:** A-Level students are able to choose any combination of A-Level subjects. This provides flexibility to those students who wish to maintain breadth of curriculum or those that wish to specialise in an academic area of strength, such as Mathematics, the Sciences or English and Humanities.
- **Depth of Study:** As a result of focusing on only three to four subjects, students are able to gain greater depth of knowledge and understanding, which provides them with more comprehensive preparation if they choose to do a degree in a related subject. As an example, students graduating from A-Level receive 320 teaching hours per subject, whereas students graduating from the IB Programme receive 150 hours for standard level subjects.
- **Specialisation:** The A-Level programme allows students to specialise in areas of strength such as the Sciences, the Arts or Languages. It allows students to study subjects in which they have an interest and are likely to do well in. Conversely, the IB Diploma programme has compulsory subject groups that all students must choose from, which can be a disadvantage for some students.

### Do universities outside of the UK accept A-Levels?

Yes. All universities outside of the UK, such as those in US, Australia, Europe, Canada and Asia (including those in Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore), hold the A-Levels in extremely high regard recognising the commitment and achievement students show to gain certification. Graduates from The British School of Guangzhou regularly gain places at top universities in these countries.

### How have British School students performed in A-Level examinations recently?

The results from our last cohort of A-Level students were phenomenal and testament to our academic success and commitment to building a lifelong love of learning. Results are at least comparable and in most cases have proved better than students studying at the very top tier of international schools across the world. As an example, in 2016, 54% of exams taken by our students achieved an 'A' or 'A\*' grade (the UK average is 26%) and 55% of all students who graduated from The British School of Guangzhou in 2016, were offered placement at a university ranked in the world's top 50.



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