

FAQs on University Entrance Requirements

(updated in September 2010)

Q1) What is the guiding principle in deciding the university entrance requirements?

All universities support the development of a broad and balanced new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum. It is recognised that specification of entrance requirements for individual faculties/ departments by universities should encourage, as far as possible, a positive effect on student choice and school planning in the senior secondary curriculum. There is a consensus that less specification for individual faculties/ departments by universities will give schools flexibility in planning for senior secondary curriculum and allow students to choose electives according to their aptitude and interests. This would also help reduce the early streaming of students.

Q2) What would be the universities' minimum entrance requirements under the New Academic Structure (NAS)?

Most universities require 4 core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics & Liberal Studies) and 1 elective subject (specified/unspecified). Three institutions (HKU, HKUST and HKIEd) require 4 core subjects and 2 elective subjects unspecified or only one of the electives would be specified. Individual programmes may have additional requirements. For more details on the mode of specification, please refer to the Unified Announcement of University Entrance Requirements under the "334" Academic Structure. (334 Web Bulletin → Multiple Pathways for Students → University Entrance Requirements under the "334" Academic Structure → Unified Announcement of University Entrance Requirements under the "334" Academic Structure)

The 4 core subjects + 1(or 2) elective subject(s) are just the minimum requirements and do not guarantee entrance to a particular university or programme. Universities would conduct further selection on those applicants who satisfied the minimum requirements. The actual selection for admission would be on a competitive basis. The electives taken and the performance in each of the electives are likely to be factors to be considered by most of the university programmes.

Q3) *When will these entrance requirements be effective?*

The proposed entrance requirements will be effective starting from 2012 for students who take the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination. The current university entrance requirements will still apply to the last cohort of students taking the HKALE in 2012.

Q4) *As most universities require 4 core subjects and one elective subject as admission criteria, can students only take 4 core subjects and one elective subject under NSS?*

For students to have a broad and balanced education under NSS, it is recommended that they should take 4 core subjects and 2-3 electives. Moreover, the 4 core subjects and 1 elective subject are just the minimum admission criteria for most universities and **do not guarantee entrance** to a particular university or programme. During the actual selection process, the number of electives could be a factor considered by particular programmes.

Q5) *Would it be an advantage for students to take the 3rd elective? Whether additional merit would be counted for the 3rd elective by universities?*

The 4 core subjects and 1(or 2) elective subject(s) are just the minimum requirements and **do not guarantee entrance** to a particular university or programme. Universities would conduct further selection on those applicants who satisfied the minimum requirements. The actual selection for admission would be on a competitive basis, and the number of electives taken and the performance in each of the electives are likely to be factors to be considered by most of the university programmes.

Q6) *Under the NSS, what would be the choices of science subjects for students?*

The combination of the science subjects that students may take under the NSS academic structure is more flexible. Apart from Physics, Chemistry and Biology, the subjects of “Science” is offered in the Science Education Key Learning Area (KLA) so that students have space to take up elective subjects from other KLAs while taking one or more elective(s) from the Science Education KLA. “Science” operates in two modes. Mode I “Integrated Science” and Mode II “Combined

Science”.

Integrated Science is designed for students wishing to take up just one elective subject in the Science Education KLA. It aims at enhancing the science literacy of students who have diverse interests and aspirations and wish to be exposed to knowledge and understanding of different KLAs. The curriculum adopts an interdisciplinary thematic approach and encompasses concepts and understandings in Physics, Chemistry and Biology in contexts that bring out the relevance of science to everyday life.

Combined Science is designed for students wishing to take up just one elective subject in the Science Education KLA. It aims at providing a foundation of all essential science knowledge and skills for further study and work in various fields related to science. The curriculum of Combined Science consists of three parts: Biology, Chemistry and Physics and students can choose any two parts to form a basis of study. Students who have a great interest in science and intend to pursue their studies or work in this field may study one science subject (Biology, Chemistry or Physics) together with Combined Science which is composed of two parts that complement the specialised science subject e.g. Combined Science (Chemistry, Biology) + Physics.

Q7) If a student intends to study in the science related programmes (e.g. Medicine or Engineering), what subject combination should he/she take?

Science related programmes do not require more than two elective subjects in Science. A student can take 2 elective subjects from Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Combined Science. He/she can then study a 3rd elective from other Key Learning Areas (KLA) in order to broaden their studies, e.g. history, visual arts. Schools will plan their science subjects to allow students to take different combinations of electives in science KLA.

Q8) What should be done in schools to help students choose appropriate elective subjects?

At S4, a student could be offered opportunities to study 3-4 electives taken from different KLAs to find out more about their interest and abilities. For example, a student may study selected parts from all the three single-disciplined sciences

(Biology, Chemistry and Physics) within the lesson time of 2 elective subjects, one subject from Personal, Social & Humanities Education, one subject from Technology Education. At S5, students could make a decision on the subject choices. They normally choose 2-3 elective subjects.

Q9) *How would Integrated Science help prepare students for various post secondary pathways?*

A number of science related programmes would consider students with Integrated Science qualification. Choosing Integrated Science will provide students with more room to study subjects in other KLAs to meet their diverse needs and interests. The Integrated Science curriculum will enable students to cultivate and maintain an enthusiasm across a wide scientific spectrum, whilst retaining the option of going more deeply into a specific science discipline, or branching out into other subject areas.

The knowledge, thinking and problem-solving skills acquired in the curriculum will help students pursue further study in a wide range of academic and vocational/professional programmes in tertiary institutions, e.g. Business Administration, Environmental Science, Social Science, Law, Art, Nursing, Physiotherapy, and Sports Science.

Q10) *Since students are allowed to take Combined Science instead of three single-disciplined science subjects, how would universities tackle the problem of students with 'less' science training under NSS?*

Universities will design their new curriculum in such a manner to ensure students taking Combined Science or single-disciplined science subjects will all be able to benefit from their studies in the university. Universities can always make use of the extra year in their four-year programme to ensure students have sufficient foundation in the required subject discipline.

Q11) *The general entrance requirements of universities ask for 4 core subjects including Mathematics. Why are students required to study Mathematics?*

Broader mathematical literacy is an essential component for students to prepare their further study and/or work. It is undesirable to limit students' future

development and it is not advisable to stop students from learning Mathematics at the senior secondary level. Mathematics is therefore a core subject.

Students may only take the compulsory part in Mathematics which builds on the basic education and can be learnt by all students. For those students who would like to learn more Mathematics and study engineering, business, science, etc. in university, they could take one of the extended modules in Mathematics - Module 1 (Calculus and Statistics) or Module 2 (Algebra and Calculus).

Q12) Does a student need to study both extended modules in Mathematics if they want to study in certain science or engineering faculties?

Students are only allowed to study one of the two extended modules in Mathematics as there is substantial overlap. Faculties/programmes in universities generally require one of the extended modules in Mathematics, if needed.

Q13) Will Student Learning Profile (SLP) be considered in the university admission?

In the Unified Announcement of University Entrance Requirements under the 334 Academic Structure released in July 2006, the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions indicated that, in selecting students, they would consider taking into account a broader range of information, including student achievements in different areas. They will also provide students the opportunity to demonstrate that they possess the range of competencies and personal qualities that they need to benefit from undergraduate education. Heads of Universities Committee issued another joint message on 21 October 2008 that their institutions are already utilizing further different modes of information similar to the SLP at different stages of the admission process. They will continue to give broad support to the implementation of Other Learning Experiences and are ready to recognize SLPs as documents of good reference value. Practical arrangements will also be made to facilitate the use of the SLP as a reference document in the admission process from 2012.

Q14) Will different weighting be given to different electives by the universities in their selection?

The general entrance requirements are just minimum requirements that a student has

to fulfill before they could be considered for admission. While all students who have satisfied the entrance requirements are eligible for consideration, actual selection for admission to any programme would depend on the relative performance of students competing for admission to that programme in a particular year.

Q15) Will other languages (French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Hindi and Urdu) be recognised as unspecified subjects in university admission?

Most institutions will recognize other languages as extra / unspecified subjects in meeting the minimum entrance requirement in university admission. Details will be announced in due course.

Q16) Will institutions accept alternative Chinese Language qualifications (GCSE, IGCSE, GCE) for students fulfilling the specified circumstances?

Under the current system, as stated in the LegCo paper in Feb 2008, institutions have already confirmed their acceptance of alternative Chinese Language qualifications (GCSE, IGCSE, GCE) for students fulfilling the following specified circumstances. This will be continued under the new academic system:

- a) The student has learned Chinese Language for less than six years while receiving primary and secondary education. This caters specifically students who have a late start in the learning of Chinese Language (e.g. due to their settlement in Hong Kong well past the entry level) or who have been educated in Hong Kong sporadically; or
- b) The student has learned Chinese Language for six years or more in schools, but has been taught an adapted and simpler Chinese Language curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in our local schools.

Q17) Some NSS elective subjects may not be chosen by majority of students or offered widely by schools. How would that issue be dealt with?

All elective subjects are considered worthwhile choices for NSS students to develop their interests and potentials, and each subject is to form good combination with other subjects to provide students with a broad and balanced curriculum. Where some subjects have a low enrolment or there is a shortage of staff for teaching such

subject in schools (e.g. Physical Education, Design and Applied Technology, Music), the Diversity Learning Grant will be provided to facilitate collaboration among schools to offer networked classes for these NSS subjects.

Q18) Would there be any changes to the existing policy on universities' admission of non-local students (including those from Mainland) under the NAS?

The existing policy on admission of non-local students (including those from the Mainland) to enter Hong Kong for post-secondary programmes should not be affected by the NAS.

Since Hong Kong's NAS will better align with the education system of the Mainland, it is expected that Mainland students will no longer be required to take a year of preparatory study before they start their undergraduate study at the UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong under the NAS.

Q19) Would the existing arrangement of the Early Admissions Scheme (EAS) for Secondary Six Students, School Principal's Nominations, Self Recommendation Scheme, etc. be affected under the NAS?"

It is expected that the existing arrangements of School Principal's Nominations and Self Recommendation Scheme will continue under the NAS. Since the HKCEE and HKALE will be replaced by HKDSE under the NAS, the EAS for S6 students will no longer be applicable under the new system. The UGC-funded institutions will review their existing policies with a view to retaining good local students and attracting outstanding students from outside Hong Kong.

Q20) Would the students studying International Baccalaureate (IB) be affected under the NAS?

UGC-funded institutions will continue to accept IB students as non-JUPAS students under the NAS. It is expected that, in the context of the change to the NAS beginning in 2009, schools offering IB in Hong Kong will review the entrance points for students.