

Employability & Careers Centre

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# International students: Presenting qualifications to employers

This leaflet is designed to help you explain your qualifications to employers. When you apply for jobs, employers will be interested in your achievement in your undergraduate degree or postgraduate course. However, many UK employers will also be interested in the qualifications you gained before starting your university course. So that they can better understand what you have achieved, they may want to know how the qualifications you gained in your home country compare to UK qualifications. In this leaflet you will find information on the UK education system, on UCAS points, and suggestions of different ways to present your qualifications to employers. There is also a table to give you an approximate indication of how qualifications from different countries compare to UK ones, and some information on sources of further help and information.

## The UK education system and common UK qualifications

The pre-university level UK qualifications that employers are most often interested in are AS & A Levels. These are academic based subjects and students usually study three or four subjects. The final examinations for these are usually taken at age 18. They are usually the last exams most UK students (Scotland has a slightly different system) sit before starting university. Employers may also be interested in the results of GCSEs, the qualifications studied prior to A Levels, usually at age 16. At GCSE level students usually study 9 or 10 subjects; sometimes more are taken. It is compulsory to study Maths, English Language and a Science subject.

For information, A Level stands for Advanced Level, and AS Level stand for Advanced Supplementary level. GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. However, you will probably not need to know this.

Some UK schools offer the International Baccalaureate, so you may find some employers are familiar with this qualification already.

## UCAS points

On some job advertisements you will see employers asking for candidates with a certain minimum number of UCAS points or UCAS Tariff points. The UCAS Tariff is a points system used to report achievement for entry to higher education (HE) in a numerical format. It establishes agreed comparability between different types of qualifications and provides comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement. It is used mainly by Universities to set entry standards for various courses – however, it is quite common for graduate recruiters to also take into account an applicant's UCAS tariff score when considering them for a job.

## Ways you can tell an employer about your qualifications

Some employers may require you to get an official translation of your results. These can be obtained from an organisation such as UK NARIC [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk), however a fee is payable for this information. It is worth checking if this is the only information an employer will accept. In many cases employers may accept other information about your qualifications:

- The graduate recruitment departments of larger, more established graduate recruiters may have a lot of experience in receiving applications. If you clearly state the type and level of qualifications you have obtained, they may be sufficiently familiar with overseas qualifications to establish how your achievement relates to their entry requirements.
- When asked for the specific number of UCAS points you have achieved, you could explain what the entry requirements for the course you're currently studying were. For example, if you are studying on a course which required 136 UCAS points for admission, then this will give the employer an indication of the level you achieved in your pre-university education. The admissions tutor in your department or your personal tutor may be able to tell you the UCAS points required for your course.
- When stating your qualifications on your CV or application form, try to make it as easy as possible for the employer to understand what they mean. If it is not clear from the title of the qualification, some explanation of what it is may be helpful – “final school leaving examinations” for example. It may also help to explain the marking scheme. The UK uses a numerical marking scheme, from A (high) to G (low) – the very highest marks are awarded an A\* grade. Other countries use different systems, so if you don't think it will be clear to the employer, add some explanation. You may want to state the percentage you achieved as well as your grade, or perhaps give information on where you ranked in your class – “2<sup>nd</sup> in my class of 30” for example – if this is relevant.

You might include these explanations or notes in the relevant section of your CV or application form. Alternatively you might include them in the ‘any other information section’ of an application form, or in any covering letter you send with your CV. You are welcome to bring your CV or application form to one of the Employability & Careers Centre's ‘Quick Query’ sessions to have it checked over by a Careers Adviser.

To help you know the qualifications that employers might be interested in, the table below gives an approximate indication of which qualifications from different countries equate to A/AS levels and GCSEs. Please note that these are **not exact comparisons**, and you should not attempt to use the data in the table below to produce an exact comparison between UK qualifications and your own. The countries listed are the 15 countries where most of our international students come from.

<b>UK/International Qualifications Comparison Table*</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>A/AS Levels</b>	<b>GCSEs</b>
China	Senior Secondary School Certificate	Lower Secondary School Diploma / Compulsory Education Certificate
Cyprus	Apolytirion of Lykeion	N/A
Greece	Apolytirion of Lykeio	Apolytirion of Gymnasio
India	Higher Secondary School Certificates - awarded on completion of Standard XII	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education - awarded on completion of Standard X
Iran	Pre-University Certificate	High School Diploma
Malaysia	UEC (Unified Examination Certificate) Senior Middle Level with an overall mark of at least 75% or STPM	SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia - Malaysia Certificate of Education)
Nigeria	University Matriculation Examination	WAEC Senior School Certificate
Pakistan	Higher Secondary Certificate	N/A
Poland	Swiadectwo Dojrzałości / Matura	Swiadectwo Ukonczenia Lyceum Ogólnokształcacego (Certificate of Completion of General Liceum)
Russia	Attestat o srednem obrazovanii - Certificate of Secondary Education at grade 11	N/A
Saudi Arabia	Many different qualifications	Tawjihyah (General Secondary Education Certificate)
South Korea	High School Diploma from Specialised High Schools	N/A
Sri Lanka	Sri Lankan General Certificate of Education (Advanced level)	Sri Lankan General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)
Taiwan	Joint University Entrance Examinations (JUEE)	Senior High School Leaving Certificate
Thailand	N/A	Maw 6 with a score of 50% or above

**\*Information compiled using information supplied by UK NARIC – please note however that these are NOT official UK NARIC comparisons or transcripts and should not be treated as such.**

## Further sources of help and information

You may also find the contact details below useful:

### **International Student Support (ISS)**

<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/currentstudents/visa/about/>

### **UK Council for International Student Affairs**

[www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk) includes information about visas, working during and after your studies and recognition of qualifications

**UK NARIC** (National Recognition Information Centre – recognition of qualifications)

[www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk)