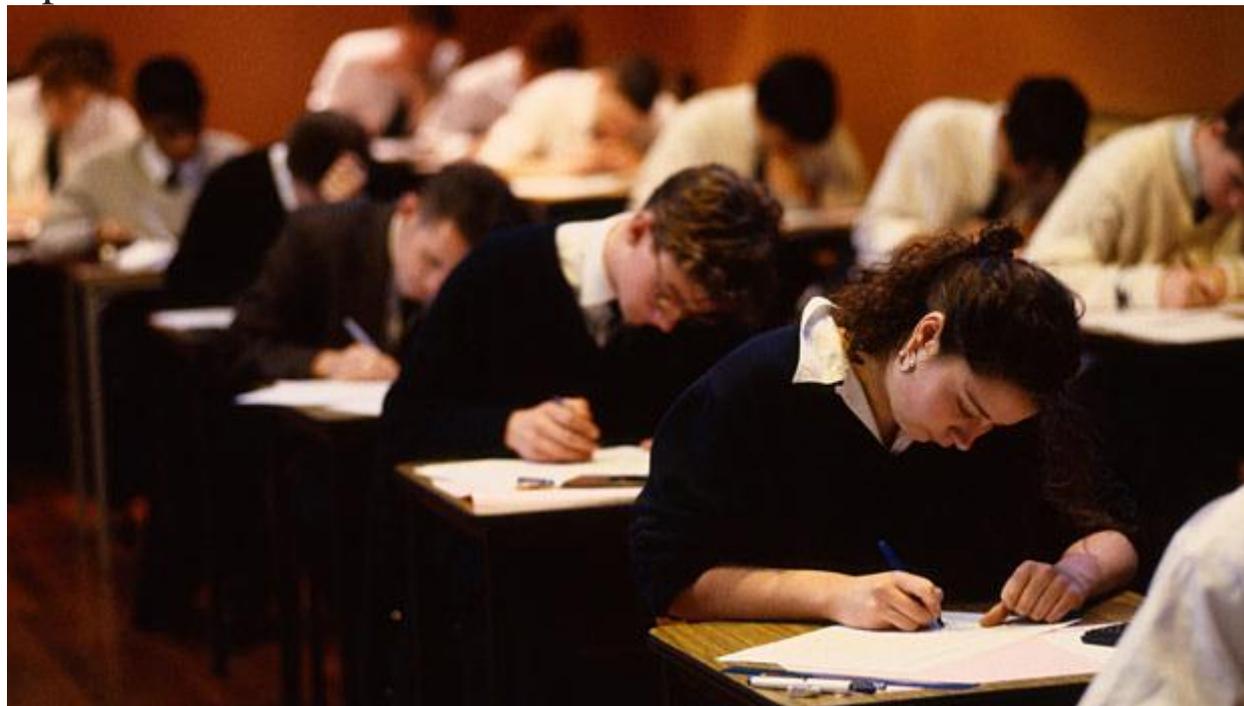


# Why your AS-level grades really matter

April 2015



There are lots of good reasons for putting the hard work in during your AS-level studies in Year 12. You'll thank yourself for it in Year 13 when the pressure of A2s really kicks in, plus those AS achievements will probably also have to be declared on your UCAS form.

Remember, every mark counts – so you might as well pick up as many as you can along the way in Year 12, because:

- they can make it much easier to achieve high grades in your A-levels overall
- university admissions tutors will see them on your UCAS form
- teachers will use them as a deciding factor in your predicted grades.

[SEARCH FOR COURSES BY PREDICTED GRADES](#): filters courses by A-level grades, Scottish Highers or UCAS points.

[A-LEVEL CHECKLISTS BY DEGREE SUBJECT](#): find out which A-levels you need for the degree you want to study.

## 1. AS exams are easier than A2s – make the most of it

While the move from GCSE to AS level will be a stretch, there's general agreement that most AS exams are easier than the ones you'll take a year later - ask any current A2 student!

But the AS side of your course – even though not as difficult - usually carries the same marks as your A2 exams. This applies to the overall potential maximum mark, as well as to the grade boundary marks.

It makes sense to 'bank' as many marks as possible at AS-level, putting yourself in a better position to achieve in Year 13 and avoiding the possibility of having to take resits (which

some universities might not look upon favourably). You'll have a clear idea of the marks you need to achieve in the year ahead in order to gain a particular grade overall. For example:

- With 181 marks at AS (a high A grade) in a four unit subject such as English or history, you could work out that you'd need at least 139 marks (a C grade) to achieve an A grade overall in your A-level
- With 271 marks at AS (a high A grade) in a six unit subject such as science or maths, you could work out that you'd need at least 209 marks at A2 (a C grade) to achieve an A overall in your A-level.

Looking for A\* at A-level?

The above doesn't apply if you're aiming for A\* grades at A-level. For this, you'll need to get 90% or above in your A2 exam, whatever your mark at AS.

## 2. Unis will also see your AS grades

You'll probably also have to [declare your AS grades on UCAS Apply](#) – and these may influence a university's decision to offer you a place or not. After all, your AS grades will be the most recent hard-and-fast, exam-based evidence an admission tutor will have to go on.

The grade for the AS-level you drop at the end of Year 12 will also be available for them to see – meaning that slacking off in a subject just because you're dropping it won't look good. If a special circumstance meant you weren't able to achieve your full AS potential, however, your teacher can mention this in the reference provided in your UCAS application.

Some schools, however, won't 'cash-in' your AS grades until later in the process. If this is the case in your school it's something a teacher can also include in their reference on your UCAS application.

## 3. Your results will shape your predicted A-level grades

Your teachers will set your predicted A-level grades with your AS results in mind. Given that A2 exams are more difficult, it's unreasonable to expect them to predict grades that are much higher. Find out what your predicted grades are before you make your final university course choices.

Before you've got your A-level predictions, match your actual achieved AS grades to the entry requirements of the universities you are interested in applying to. Be realistic and consider options with both slightly higher and lower grades to make sure you've got a good mix of courses to make your final choices from.

## Future changes

The current government in England is proposing to change A-level qualifications and this will affect students starting their A level programme (sixth form) in September 2015. For these students it seems that A-levels will have no exam (AS-level) taken at the end of year 12 and all exams will be taken at the end of year 13. Therefore this article is only relevant to students starting sixth form in September 2013 and 2014.