

UCAS Tariff for HKDSE

Introduction

The first Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination will be administered in 2012 to assess the attainment of Secondary 6 students who have completed a full-time three-year senior secondary curriculum.

With the introduction of HKDSE, the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations (HKCEE) and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) will be phased out.

Both HKCEE and HKALE are widely recognized as reliable certification of students' academic achievements upon completion of their secondary schooling at the end of Secondary 5 and Secondary 7 respectively. The results of the examinations are also used by educational institutions and employers for reference in selection and recruitment.

In its endeavor to promote recognition of the new HKDSE for further studies overseas, the HKEAA has been working closely with renowned international agencies to conduct benchmarking studies of the standard of the HKDSE.

In 2009, a study was conducted in collaboration with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the UK to benchmark the standard of HKDSE with the GCE A Level. With the completion of the study, the HKDSE has been included in the UCAS Tariff. The inclusion of the HKDSE in the UCAS Tariff will allow comparison of standards between the HKDSE and other international qualifications such as the Advanced Placement Programme (AP) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) and hence facilitate the application for admission to UK universities.

➤ Grading scale of HKDSE

The HKDSE comprises three categories of subjects: the New Senior Secondary (NSS) subjects, Applied Learning subjects and Other Language subjects. The results of the NSS subject examinations will be reported in five levels (1 to 5), with Level 5 being the highest. Achievement below Level 1 will be designated as "unclassified". To ensure recognition and differentiation of outstanding candidates, Level 5** and Level 5* will be awarded to the highest-achieving Level 5 candidates and the next top Level 5 candidates respectively.

➤ **What is the UCAS Tariff?**

The UCAS Tariff is a points system developed and used by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) of the UK to indicate the standards of various qualifications recognised for applications to higher education institutions. With reference to the tariff points awarded, universities and higher education institutions in the UK are able to compare the different types of accredited qualifications available. Hence the tariff is used as a common scale for universities in the UK to develop admission policies of different courses and programmes.

Following a set of procedures, a team of experts from UCAS, universities and colleges work together and make collaborative professional judgment on how well specific qualifications help prepare students for higher education study. The expert group will recommend tariff points to each level of attainment accordingly for the approval of the UCAS Board.

For details about UCAS Tariff please refer to www.ucas.co.uk

➤ **Benchmarking study of HKDSE**

The study of HKDSE was based on the curriculum and assessment guides, the sample assessment materials and pilot scripts of candidates. Expert groups of UCAS for selected subjects were formed to study the standards of attainment at different HKDSE levels. UCAS tariff scores were then allocated to each level, indicating that the standard of the HKDSE is comparable to the GCE A Level for the purpose of applications to higher education institutions in the UK.

Results of the study

The UCAS Board approved tariff recommendations for 24 subjects of the HKDSE. An overall subject grade is awarded to 23 of the HKDSE subjects, except for Mathematics, which carries a unique structure comprising the compulsory part and the extended part.

Mathematics is one of the compulsory subjects for university admission in Hong Kong and students who intend to pursue further studies in Mathematics or related disciplines are expected to take a module in the more advanced Extended Part in addition to the Compulsory Part which covers fundamental concepts and knowledge of the subject. Their overall performance is indicated by combining the tariff points awarded to both the compulsory and extended parts.

The UCAS tariff value for HKDSE

UCAS Tariff points allocated to 23 HKDSE subjects, except Mathematics:

| Level | Tariff | Remarks |
|-------|--------|---|
| 5** | NA | To be allocated with further evidence after the first administration of the HKDSE examinations in 2012. |
| 5* | 130 | Between grades A and A* in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 5 | 120 | Comparable to grade A in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 4 | 80 | Comparable to Grade C in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 3 | 40 | Comparable to Grade E in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |

UCAS Tariff points allocated to Mathematics:

**The overall performance is indicated by the combined tariff points to both compulsory and extended parts.*

| Level | Compulsory Part | Extended Part | Remarks |
|-------|-----------------|---------------|--|
| 5** | NA | NA | To be allocated with further evidence after the first administration of the HKDSE examinations in 2012. |
| 5* | 60 | 70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 130 points (60+70) for 5* in both compulsory and extended parts – between grades A and A* in the 2010 GCE A Level examination 120 points (60+60) for 5* in the compulsory part and 5 in the extended part – comparable to grade A in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 5 | 45 | 60 | |
| 4 | 35 | 50 | |
| 3 | 25 | 40 | |

Comparing HKDSE with other international qualifications

For higher education institutions in the UK, the UCAS Tariff is a useful reference for understanding the standards of qualifications from different education systems. With reference to the tariff points assigned, applications for admission to UK universities can be assessed on a common scale.

For other international higher education sectors, the UCAS Tariff is also an important reference for selection of suitable students with required qualifications.

Tariff points awarded to major qualifications offered by different countries are shown in Annex 1.

Specific entry requirements

The inclusion of HKDSE in the UCAS Tariff system will greatly enhance understanding of the standard and value of the HKDSE for progression to undergraduate studies. HKDSE is also acceptable in lieu of GCE A Level for applications to UK universities through UCAS.

However, it is important to note that universities in different reputable higher education systems will set specific entry requirements for international students. Apart from the UK, the HKEAA will continue to promote recognition of the HKDSE at popular destinations for overseas study such as Australia, the US and Canada. The HKEAA will also contact higher education institutions in these countries and seek advance information about their admission policies in terms of UCAS Tariff. The information will be published on the HKEAA website www.hkeaa.edu.hk for easy reference.

Enquiries

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Tariff Points for HKDSE and Various International Awards

Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)

UCAS Tariff points allocated to 23 HKDSE subjects, except Mathematics:

| Level | Tariff | Remarks |
|-------|--------|---|
| 5** | NA | To be allocated with further evidence after the first administration of the HKDSE examinations in 2012. |
| 5* | 130 | Between grades A and A* in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 5 | 120 | Comparable to grade A in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 4 | 80 | Comparable to Grade C in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 3 | 40 | Comparable to Grade E in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |

UCAS Tariff points allocated to Mathematics:

**The overall performance is indicated by the combined tariff points to both compulsory and extended parts.*

| Level | Compulsory Part | Extended Part | Remarks |
|-------|-----------------|---------------|---|
| 5** | NA | NA | To be allocated with further evidence after the first administration of the HKDSE examinations in 2012. |
| 5* | 60 | 70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 130 points (60+70) for 5* in both compulsory and extended parts – between grade A and A* in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |
| 5 | 45 | 60 | |
| 4 | 35 | 50 | |
| 3 | 25 | 40 | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 points (60+60) for 5* in the compulsory part and 5 in the extended part – comparable to grade A in the 2010 GCE A Level examination |

Other International Awards

(1) Advanced Placement Programme – US & Canada

| Grade | UCAS Tariff Points |
|-------|--------------------|
| 5 | 120 |
| 4 | 90 |
| 3 | 60 |

(2) CIE Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

| Grade | UCAS Tariff Points |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| D1 | - |
| D2 | 145 |
| D3 | 130 |
| M1 | 115 |
| M2 | 101 |
| M3 | 87 |
| P1 | 73 |
| P2 | 59 |
| P3 | 45 |

(3) GCE Advanced & AS Levels (from 2010)

| AL Grade | UCAS Tariff Points | AS Grade | UCAS Tariff Points |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| A* | 140 | - | - |
| A | 120 | A | 60 |
| B | 100 | B | 50 |
| C | 80 | C | 40 |
| D | 60 | D | 30 |
| E | 40 | E | 20 |

(4) International Baccalaureate Certificate (Higher Level)

| Grade | UCAS Tariff Points |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| 7 | 130 |
| 6 | 110 |
| 5 | 80 |
| 4 | 50 |
| 3 | 20 |

(5) Scottish Advanced Highers & Scottish Highers (from 2010)

| Scottish Advanced Highers Grade | UCAS Tariff Points | Scottish Highers Grade | UCAS Tariff Points |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A | 130 | A | 80 |
| B | 110 | B | 65 |
| C | 90 | C | 50 |
| D | 72 | D | 36 |

Source: http://www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/