

FAQs on University Entrance Requirements

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 "334" academic structure?

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. Lingnan University requires only 4 core subjects. Individual programmes may have additional requirements. For more details on the mode of specification, please refer to the table at Annex.

The 4 cores + 1(or 2) Xs 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.

Q3) When will these entrance requirements be effective?

The proposed entrance requirements will be effective starting from 2012/13 s.y. for students who completed the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination under the NSS academic structure. The current university entrance requirements will still apply to the last cohort of students taking the HKAL Examination 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 + 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 cores + 1(or 2) Xs 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.

Students are expected to take two to three Xs in addition to the 4 cores under the NSS. The Xs could be chosen from the 20 NSS electives and the Applied Learning (ApL) (formerly known as Career-oriented Studies). Students should consider their interests and aptitude in determining the number and choices of elective courses in order to have a balanced study.

Q6) What would be the level requirements for the core and elective subjects?

The level requirement will be considered by the institutions in the next phase of their planning for the 4 year undergraduate curriculum when more information is available to the institutions about the standards attached to different levels.

Q7) What would be the choices of science subjects provided for students under the NSS?

Under the NSS, students will have different science subject choices. In addition to the three single-disciplined science subjects: Physics, Chemistry and Biology, Integrated Science and Combined Science are introduced in the NSS curriculum. Integrated Science is designed for students who do

not wish to take any other science subject. It can provide students with a balanced exposure to all three learning areas of Science. Combined Science comprises three areas of content selected from the Biology, Chemistry and Physics curricula and students taking a Combined Science will take two parts to complement a discipline in which they intend to specialize. For example, a student taking Physics may take a Combined Science (Chemistry and Biology). Further guidance will be provided on the various ways in which the science electives could be taken. This choice would depend on the students' interest and potential post-secondary pathway. For example, students who might not be interested in taking a science related programme during their university studies but want exposure in science to support learning in business studies could opt for integrated science.

Q8) 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.

Q9) What should be done in schools to help students to choose appropriate elective subjects?

In SS1, 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 SS2, students could normally choose 2-3 electives. Schools are advised to make reference to Chapters 3 of the Curriculum & Assessment Guides for further advice.

Q10) How would Integrated Science help prepare students for various post secondary pathways?

A number of science related programmes would take 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 to 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.

Q11) Why do science programmes require more “specified” subjects? Does it mean that universities give weight to science subjects?

University programmes require specified subjects mainly to make sure that students would have the required foundation knowledge in these subjects to enable them to follow and benefit from their studies in the university.

To encourage a broadened knowledge base, faculties like Arts, Business, Social Sciences, Education, Law, etc. do not require students to study “specified” subjects. The non-specification of subject requirements means universities have recognized the quality of all the 24 NSS subject curricula which are internationally benchmarked and commended.

The specification of only one science subject (instead of more) is an improvement to facilitate students to study the 2nd and 3rd electives chosen from other KLAs such as PSHE, TE, AE, PE, etc. for more broad-based and balanced development of students. This will help remove the narrow streaming of “Arts” and “Science” under “334”.

Q12) 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.

Q13) 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 learning 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).

Q14) 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 any one of the extended modules in Mathematics. There are a few programmes specifying a particular extended module in Mathematics.

Q15) Will Student Learning Profile (SLP) be considered in the university admission?

Universities will consider taking into account in their selection a broader range of information of student achievements in different areas and provide students the opportunity to demonstrate that they possess the range of competencies and personal qualities that they will need to benefit from undergraduate education. Schools will assist students to develop the SLP to provide comprehensive information about students' performance in different areas and hence SLP has good reference value to universities.

Q16) Only one university has specified Applied Learning (ApL) (formerly known as Career-oriented Studies) in their entrance requirements. Does it imply that ApL is not recognized by universities?

Since only 1-2 electives are required for admission to universities, students

are encouraged to take an elective according to their interests which could include ApL. The purpose of studying a ApL is to broaden the students' learning and should not be seen merely for the purpose of university selection. ApL is currently on a piloting phase and in the process of seeking recognition to its qualifications. Since ApL is less developed at this stage than the 24 NSS subjects, it is reasonable that universities/departments will need to study the curriculum and assessment standards of ApL further. Universities will keep an open mind on the development and recognition of ApL. Further recognition may be given in the admission requirements of certain faculties/departments in universities when ApL is in full implementation under the NSS.

Q17) 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.

Q18) Will the current HKAL results be counted under the “334”?

It is expected that students who have HKAL results can continue to be considered for admission to university under 334.

Q19) Would university continue to accept other languages as an alternative to Chinese Language under 334?

Universities would continue their current practice of accepting other languages as an alternative to Chinese Language under the new “334” structure. Some institutions will consider other languages only if an applicant has not taken Chinese Language. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) is fully aware of the importance of providing access to the learning of foreign languages in Hong Kong. School will be actively supported to offer other languages through the Diversity Learning Grant under the NSS. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) is in discussion with potential examination service providers on arrangements to provide recognized examinations for other languages.

Q20) 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 to develop the different interest and potentials of students, and each also forms good combination with other subjects for a broad and balanced student programme. Where some subjects have a low enrolment or there is a shortage of staff for teaching such subject in schools (e.g. Visual Arts, DAT, Music), the Diversity Learning Grant will be provided to facilitate collaboration among schools to offer networked class in these NSS subjects.

Q21) Will the last batch of HKALE candidates be give an opportunity to repeat the examination if their results are not satisfactory?

The HKEAA has undertaken to conduct the HKALE in certain subjects in 2013 for students who wish to repeat the examination. Examinations will be provided in certain subjects only if there is such a demand. EMB will actively encourage schools to offer classes for these students.

Q22) Would there be any changes to the existing policy on universities' admission of non-local students (including those from Mainland) under the new "334" academic structure?

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 "334".

On the other hand, since Hong Kong's "334" academic structure will align with the education system in 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 University Grants Committee-funded institutions in Hong Kong under the "334".

Q23) Would the existing arrangement of the Early Admissions Scheme (EAS), School Principal's Nominations, Self Recommendation Scheme, etc. be affected under "334"?

It is expected that the existing arrangements of School Principal's Nominations and Self Recommendation Scheme will continue under the "334". Since the HKCEE and HKAL will be replaced by HKDSE under "334", the EAS for S6 students will no longer be applicable under the new system. The University Grants Committee-funded institutions will review

their existing policies with a view to retaining good local students and attracting outstanding students from outside Hong Kong.

Q24) Would universities extend their undergraduate programmes for one-year under “334”?

In principle, the duration of most undergraduate programmes will be extended for one-year under “334”. For certain specific disciplines, the universities will discuss the need with relevant professional bodies before a decision is to be made.

Q25) Would the students studying International Baccalaureate (IB) be affected under “334”?

University Grants Committee-funded institutions will continue to accept IB students as non-JUPAS students under “334”. It is expected schools offering IB in Hong Kong will review the entrance points for students in the context of the change to 334 beginning in 2009.

Q26) Will the HKDSE be recognised by overseas universities for admission purposes?

The curricula of 24 NSS subjects are internationally benchmarked and commended. HKEAA has been working closely with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) to ensure international recognition by benchmarking Key Levels in the new HKDSE subjects to the British General Certificate of Education (GCE) grades. In addition, HKEAA will negotiate direct recognition of the new HKDSE with overseas universities.

Q2 Table on Mode of specification (X means elective)

| Institution | General Entrance Requirements* | Faculty/Programme Entrance requirements |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| • City University of Hong Kong | 4 cores + 1 X | 1 X defined from a list of subjects |
| • Hong Kong Baptist University | 4 cores + 1 X | 1 X (unspecified or specified) |
| • Lingnan University | 4 cores | |
| • The Chinese University of Hong Kong | 4 cores + 1 X | Most programmes require 1 unspecified X or 1 X specified from a group of subjects. Some programmes require 2 Xs (1 explicitly specified + 1 specified from a group of subjects or 2Xs specified from a group of subjects) |
| • The Hong Kong Institute of Education | 4 cores + 2 Xs | 2 unspecified Xs |
| • The Hong Kong Polytechnic University | 4 cores + 1 X | Preferred subjects only |
| • Hong Kong University of Science and Technology | 4 cores + 2 Xs | 1 unspecified X + 1 X specified from a group of subjects |
| • The University of Hong Kong | 4 cores + 2 Xs | Most programmes do not have specified requirement. Those programmes with specific requirements ask for one specified elective from a group of subjects. |

**Note: Individual programmes may have additional requirements*