

Policy on Linear A Level

The Cheadle College
Marple Sixth Form College

Statement from **The Cheadle College** (Centre no.10238) and the **Marple Sixth Form College** (Centre no. 14829) in relation to the impact of qualification reform on Level 3 provision affecting students who began two year courses in 2015.

The Cheadle College is an open access college of some 800 students of whom 80% study advanced level courses. The College serves the South and West areas of Stockport, including the less affluent parts of the borough, and also draws large numbers of students from other surrounding areas.

Marple Sixth Form College is an open access college of some 700 students of whom 90% study advanced level courses. The College serves the South and East areas of Stockport, including the less affluent parts of the borough, and also draws large numbers of students from other surrounding areas.

A level students starting in September 2015 were required to study 3 A Level subjects in the main. A small proportion of students with high average GCSE points scores (APS of 7 or above studied four subjects if they wished). Our view was that the vast majority of our students applying to university are given offers based on three full A levels, and as a consequence should concentrate their efforts on these subjects without the risk of dilution of effort across 4, especially given that the AS gained in the fourth subject has diminished in value in terms of UCAS points.

Our motto from the outset was 'three for your degree'. For many of the students who had high APS scores, but who did not wish to study a fourth subject in year 12, the Extended Project Qualification was a good substitute, providing stretch and challenge, as well as being valued by universities.

In order to prepare students for the perceived greater rigour of the new linear A levels teaching time allocated was increased marginally from 4 hours 20 minutes per subject to 4 hours 30 minutes. Given timetabling constraints this was also the case across the whole college and applied to modular AS a level subjects and BTEC courses.

We decided to enter all students for the AS linear exam in the summer of 2016. The main reasons for this were:

- The AS grade would be a useful measure of performance in an era of uncertainty.
- The AS grade would support predicted grades for HE entry
- The lack of sufficient exemplar material/past papers on which to base alternative end of year 12 mock exams, in turn which would provide reliable evidence to base a predicted grade upon.
- We therefore did not want to run the risk of potentially disadvantaging our students, especially at a time when guidance from HEP's regarding their approach to qualification reform was patchy.

Students were entered for the AS in all linear subjects apart from Chemistry and Art and Design subjects (Fine Art, Graphics, Photography). In the case of the former this was more due to issues regarding curriculum delivery which

may have disadvantaged our students in the AS exam rather than any philosophical premise. For the latter, there was no AS component.

We have decided **not** to enter students for AS exams in linear subjects for Summer 2017. This decision has been taken because:

- of the greater clarity provided by HEP's with regard to their approach to qualification reform,
- a better understanding of the challenges of linear specifications, and thereby our ability to prepare students
- The cost of exam entries in an era of post 16 funding cuts
- The opportunity to maximise teaching time in the summer term
- Challenges with co-teaching.

Our method of predicting grades for the 2015 cohort applying to university will not change dramatically. Clearly, consideration will be given to the achieved AS grade but other factors will play a part namely, academic performance over the year in 6 key assessments (formative assessments mirroring examination material), but also the student's target grade in relation to their GCSE average points score. As ever, decisions will be arrived at on a case by case basis.

The college is happy to be contacted by HEP's if there is a marked discrepancy between actual AS grade and the predicted grade, and every effort will be made to explain any such discrepancy in the main body of the reference.