



# Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualifications Cambridge Advanced Nationals explained



January 2025 – Version 3

Academic study for students aged 16 and over



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**The post-16 landscape is changing and from September 2025 it will look significantly different. The government wants to create a new streamlined qualifications system for students aged 16 and over, aimed at supporting them to move into high-skilled jobs, either directly, or through progression into good quality higher education courses.**

Following a review of post-16 qualifications and below in 2022, the Department for Education (DfE):

- Proposed the removal of funding from 16–19 qualifications which overlapped with T Levels and academic qualifications where a subject is more suited to a technical qualification or there is already an associated A level.
- Introduced Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) – as alternatives to proposed de-funded qualifications
- Created 2 routes for students from 2025:
  - **Academic:** A Levels or a mixed curriculum of A Levels and AAQs
  - **Technical:** T Levels and approved technical qualifications

The DfE undertook a review of this post-16 qualification reform and published the outcomes in December 2024. The review was set up to determine which qualifications will be funded in England from 2025.

The review determined:

- All Level 3 qualifications at sizes 360 GLH and below in the subjects that overlap with T-Levels would be defunded along with any other qualifications that fall

into the Low or No enrolment category (fewer than 100 enrolments in the last 3 years).

- Large Level 3 qualifications would remain funded (720 and 1080 GLH) but be reviewed in the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR).
- Cycle 1 Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) including Cambridge Advanced Nationals were funded for first teaching in September 2025.
- Centres can teach any combinations of A Levels and AAQs.

For more information see our [Post-16 reform hubpage](#).





## Cambridge Advanced Nationals

Cambridge Advanced Nationals are our new Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualifications, available for first teaching in 2025. All our Level 3 150 GLH, 180 GLH (AS Level size) and 360 GLH (A Level size) Cambridge Advanced Nationals submitted in Cycle 1 are approved for funding and can be taken as a part of a post-16 programme of study.

### Who are Cambridge Advanced Nationals for?

Designed for students aged 16-19 years, our Level 3 Cambridge Advanced Nationals will complement existing A Level and post-16 study programmes.

Our qualifications provide students with the practical and essential skills and knowledge they need to better prepare themselves for entry into higher education.

### How do Cambridge Advanced Nationals fit into a Level 3 programme of study?

A key change the DfE announced is that they would not restrict the types of Level 3 qualifications centres and students can combine.

This means AAQs and A levels can be combined in any way as a part of a post-16 programme of study.

Possible combinations for qualifications:

- 1 x 360 GLH Cambridge Advanced National (AAQ) + 2 x A Levels
- 2 x 360 GLH Cambridge Advanced National (AAQ) + 1 x A Level
- 3 x 360 GLH Cambridge Advanced Nationals (AAQs)

### UCAS Tariff Points

Cambridge Advanced Nationals are worth UCAS Tariff points and our cycle 1 qualifications are on the UCAS Tariff points calculator.

[Calculate your UCAS Tariff points here:](#)

Certificate (150/180 GLH)	Extended Certificate (360 GLH)
D* – 28 points	D* – 56 points
D – 24 points	D – 48 points
M – 16 points	M – 32 points
P – 8 points	P – 16 points



## What subject Alternative Academic Qualifications are we developing?

Cambridge Advanced Nationals will be developed in two cycles.

We've developed the following cycle 1 subjects for first teaching in September 2025. All our cycle 1 Alternative Academic Qualifications have been approved for funding.

Cycle 1		
Subject	Size	First teach
Applied Science	180 and 360 GLH	September 2025
Computing: Application Development	150 and 360 GLH	September 2025
Engineering	180 and 360 GLH	September 2025
Health and Social Care	180 and 360 GLH	September 2025
Human Biology	180 and 360 GLH	September 2025
IT: Data Analytics	150 and 360 GLH	September 2025

Our intention is to develop Cambridge Advanced Nationals in the following subjects. The DfE have not yet announced a submission date for cycle 2 AAQs.

Cycle 2		
Subject	Size	First teach
Creative Media Production	180, 360 and 720 GLH	TBC
Sport, Exercise and Health	180, 360, 720 and 1080GLH	TBC
Enterprise and Innovation	180 and 360 GLH	TBC
Policing and Criminal Justice	180 and 360 GLH	TBC
Mental Health and Wellbeing	180 and 360 GLH	TBC
Marketing	180 and 360 GLH	TBC
Cyber Security and Digital Networking	180 and 360 GLH	TBC

## Why choose Cambridge Advanced Nationals?

With our new Cambridge Advanced Nationals we've taken everything you and your students love about our existing programme and made it even better.

**FULL  
COMPENSATION**

**TWO YEAR  
ASSIGNMENT  
LIFE SPAN**

**CLEAR AND  
GRANULAR  
ASSESSMENT**

**REAL-WORLD  
SCENARIOS**

**DESIGNED WITH  
TEACHERS AND  
UNIVERSITIES**

**COMPLEMENT  
A LEVELS**

**FOCUS ON THE  
APPLICATION  
OF KNOWLEDGE  
AND SKILLS**

**SUPPORT AND  
RESOURCES**

**MIXED  
CURRICULUM  
SUGGESTIONS**

**LARGER SIZES  
WHERE  
POSSIBLE**

**AUTHENTIC  
ASSESSMENT**

- **Full compensation grading:** Students are always rewarded for their demonstrated abilities – every single mark your students earn will directly contribute to their final grade. No mark will go to waste
- **No more hurdles:** Gone are the days of hurdle elements in units. If a student meets all but one Pass criterion and some Merit criteria, they won't face failure. Our approach compensates for performance at both the unit and qualification levels, ensuring fairness and encouragement for every student
- **Features teachers love and more:** Cambridge Advanced Nationals incorporate the popular features from our Cambridge Technicals, including visiting moderation, a blend of examination and coursework units, and we're keeping the well-recognised Pass, Merit, Distinction grade scale. Plus, you'll continue to benefit from our range of comprehensive support and resources
- **Pathways to university:** Designed in collaboration with teachers and universities, Cambridge Advanced Nationals equip students with a well-rounded skill set for today's undergraduate studies as part of a Level 3 programme of study
- **Complementary practical application:** Designed to be taken alongside A Levels, Cambridge Advanced Nationals seamlessly complement a mixed study programme while maintaining a strong focus on the practical application of skills and knowledge – a valuable enhancement to A Levels, enabling clear progression to university.

## Everything you need to start teaching

Embarking on the journey of teaching a new qualification may seem overwhelming at first, but rest assured, we are here to support you every step of the way. Whether it's getting started with teaching, planning your course, providing guidance for exams, or offering post-results services, we have a wealth of resources, and training to assist you at every stage.

Starting from September 2025, you will have access to everything you need to teach Cambridge Advanced Nationals, ensuring a smooth and successful experience, including:

- **Mapping and overview documents** that compare the new Alternative Academic Qualification – Cambridge Advanced Nationals specifications with existing Applied Generals to help you understand what's new and different about the new qualifications
- **Free teaching and assessment resources**, including overview curriculum planners and detailed schemes of work for every unit, teaching activities, Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and our test-building platform ExamBuilder to help you get going, plan your teaching and support you through delivery
- An **extensive professional development programme** to help you get the most from our qualifications, from making the choice to deliver Cambridge Advanced Nationals to preparing your students for assessment
- **Textbooks** We're working with Cambridge University Press and other publishers to provide you with textbooks and other resources for cycle 1 Cambridge Advanced Nationals before first teach in September 2025
- **Exceptional post-results services**, including results analysis through Active Results, and free on-demand Access to Scripts.

All our support will be instantly and easily accessible via Teach Cambridge, our online hub for teachers.



## Qualification overview – Applied Science

### Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Applied Science

Our Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Applied Science provides students with a theoretical knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of science, preparing them for progression to undergraduate study. It covers core topics of biology, physics and chemistry and will equip students with relevant industry skills through researching, planning and performing a range of different laboratory investigations.

There are 2 qualifications available in Applied Science. These are:

- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Applied Science (Certificate)
- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Applied Science (Extended Certificate)

The Extended Certificate qualification is the same size as an A Level. Students should take this alongside A Levels as part of their programme of study at Key Stage 5 to help them build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study and are relevant for progression to higher education.

Qualification	Specification code	Qualification number	Size	Mandatory units	Optional units	External assessment (Exam)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
Certificate	H051	610/3947/0	180 GLH	2	0	50%	50%
Extended Certificate	H151	610/3948/2	360 GLH	3	2	40%	60%

Unit number	Unit title	How is it assessed?	Mandatory or optional
F180	Fundamentals of science	External assessment	Mandatory
F181	Science in society	External assessment	Mandatory
F182	Investigating science	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F183	Analytical techniques in chemistry	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F184	Environmental studies	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F185	Forensic biology	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F186	Medical physics	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional

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Download [Sample Assessment Materials \(SAMs\)](#)

## Qualification overview – Human Biology

### Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Human Biology

Our Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Human Biology provides students with theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience of biology, that provides them with the understanding and skills that will help prepare them for progression to undergraduate study and are relevant to the medical science sector.

There are 2 qualifications available in Human Biology. These are:

- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Human Biology (Certificate)
- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Human Biology (Extended Certificate)

The Extended Certificate qualification is the same size as an A Level. Students should take this alongside A Levels as part of their programme of study at Key Stage 5 to help them build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study and are relevant for progression to higher education.

Qualification	Specification code	Qualification number	Size	Mandatory units	Optional units	External assessment (Exam)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
Certificate	H049	610/3945/7	180 GLH	3	0	40%	60%
Extended Certificate	H149	610/3946/9	360 GLH	4	2	40%	60%

Unit number	Unit title	How is it assessed?	Mandatory or optional
F170	Fundamentals of human biology	External assessment	Mandatory
F171	Health and disease	External assessment	Mandatory
F172	Genetics	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F173	Biomedical techniques	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F174	Nutrition and metabolism	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F175	Human reproduction	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F176	The brain	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F177	Drug development	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional

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## Qualification overview – Computing: Application Development

### Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Computing: Application Development

Our Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Computing: Application Development provides students with theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience of application development, equipping them with the understanding and skills that will help prepare them for progression to undergraduate study and are relevant to the ICT practitioners sector.

There are 2 qualifications available in Computing: Application Development. These are:

- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Computing: Application Development (Certificate)
- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Computing: Application Development (Extended Certificate)

The Extended Certificate qualification is the same size as an A Level. Students should take this alongside A Levels as part of their programme of study at Key Stage 5 to help them build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study and are relevant for progression to higher education.

Qualification	Specification code	Qualification number	Size	Mandatory units	Optional units	External assessment (Exam)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
Certificate	H029	610/3974/3	150 GLH	2	0	50%	50%
Extended Certificate	H129	610/3975/5	360 GLH	3	2	40%	60%

Unit number	Unit title	How is it assessed?	Mandatory or optional
F160	Fundamentals of application development	External assessment	Mandatory
F161	Developing application software	External assessment	Mandatory
F162	Designing and communicating UX/UI solutions	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F163	Game development	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F164	Website development	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F165	Immersive technology solution development	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F166	Software development	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional

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## Qualification overview – IT: Data Analytics

### Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in IT: Data Analytics

Our Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in IT: Data Analytics provides students with theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience of information technology and data, that provides them with the understanding and skills that will help prepare them for progression to undergraduate study and are relevant to the information technology sector.

There are 2 qualifications available in IT: Data Analytics. These are:

- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in IT: Data Analytics (Certificate)
- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in IT: Data Analytics (Extended Certificate)

The Extended Certificate qualification is the same size as an A Level. Students should take this alongside A Levels as part of their programme of study at Key Stage 5 to help them build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study and are relevant for progression to higher education.

Qualification	Specification code	Qualification number	Size	Mandatory units	Optional units	External assessment (Exam)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
Certificate	H019	610/3996/2	150 GLH	2	0	50%	50%
Extended Certificate	H119	610/3997/4	360 GLH	3	2	40%	60%

Unit number	Unit title	How is it assessed?	Mandatory or optional
F200	Fundamentals of data analytics	External assessment	Mandatory
F201	Big data and machine learning	External assessment	Mandatory
F202	Spreadsheet data modelling	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F203	Relational database design	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F204	Data and the Internet of Everything (IoE)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F205	Data visualisation	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F206	Data and digital marketing	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional

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## Qualification overview – Engineering

### Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Engineering

Our Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Engineering provides students with theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience of engineering, equipping them with the understanding and skills that will help prepare them for progression to undergraduate study and are relevant to the engineering sector.

There are 2 qualifications available in Engineering. These are:

- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Engineering (Certificate)
- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Engineering (Extended Certificate)

The Extended Certificate qualification is the same size as an A Level. Students should take this alongside A Levels as part of their programme of study at Key Stage 5 to help them build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study and are relevant for progression to higher education.

Qualification	Specification code	Qualification number	Size	Mandatory units	Optional units	External assessment (Exam)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
Certificate	H027	610/3942/1	180 GLH	2	0	50%	50%
Extended Certificate	H127	610/3944/5	360 GLH	3	2	40%	60%

Unit number	Unit title	How is it assessed?	Mandatory or optional
F130	Principles of engineering	External assessment	Mandatory
F131	Materials science and technology	External assessment	Mandatory
F132	Engineering in practice	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F133	Computer Aided Design (CAD)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F134	Programmable electronics	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F135	Mechanical product design	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F136	Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F137	Electrical devices and circuits	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional

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## Qualification overview – Health and Social Care

### Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Health and Social Care

Our Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Health and Social Care provides students with theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience of health and social care, equipping them with the understanding and skills that will help prepare them for progression to undergraduate study and are relevant to the health and social care sector.

There are 2 qualifications available in Health and Social Care. These are:

- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Health and Social Care (Certificate)
- OCR Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification Cambridge Advanced National in Health and Social Care (Extended Certificate)

The Extended Certificate qualification is the same size as an A Level. Students should take this alongside A Levels as part of their programme of study at Key Stage 5 to help them build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study and are relevant for progression to higher education.

Qualification	Specification code	Qualification number	Size	Mandatory units	Optional units	External assessment (Exam)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
Certificate	H025	610/3985/8	180 GLH	3	0	40%	60%
Extended Certificate	H125	610/3986/X	360 GLH	4	2	40%	60%

Unit number	Unit title	How is it assessed?	Mandatory or optional
F090	Principles of health and social care	External assessment	Mandatory
F091	Anatomy and physiology for health and social care	External assessment	Mandatory
F092	Person-centred approach to care	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F093	Supporting people with mental health conditions	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Mandatory
F094	Supporting people with long term physiological conditions	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F095	Investigating public health	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F096	Supporting people in relation to sexual health, pregnancy and postnatal health	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional
F097	Supporting healthy nutrition and lifestyles	Non-exam assessment (NEA)	Optional

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