

## INFORMATION FOR UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS OFFICERS

Banbridge Academy is an 11-18, co-educational, Local Education Authority controlled, selective grammar school, founded in 1786. The school has an enrolment of over 1,300 pupils, including approximately 200 pupils in each Sixth Form year group. The school's central aim is for everyone to be happy at school, known personally and cared for individually. Our emphasis is on nurturing the whole person and to that end, a rich diversity of artistic, dramatic, musical and sporting activities are on offer.

### General impact of Covid-19 on 2022 applicants

Like all schools in Northern Ireland, Banbridge Academy was closed for in-person teaching between March and April 2020 and again between January and April 2021. The current Upper Sixth year group has been most affected by this, missing the opportunity to sit public examinations both at GCSE and AS level. While the school adapted rapidly to delivering remote learning – particularly during 2021 – pupils still experienced significant disruption to learning and to the wider school experience.

### Qualification framework

In Sixth Form, pupils mostly take three A-levels, with a minority taking four, from a choice of 24 subjects. Most subjects at GCSE and A-level follow specifications from the Northern Ireland examination board (CCEA), though the school also offers a small number of subjects from other examination boards, some of which are linear at A-level. Decisions on which examination boards' specifications are followed are taken by Heads of Department.

Prior to the pandemic, CCEA awarded A-levels on the basis of a combined AS and A Level, two-year course. While the AS Level can be taken as a standalone qualification, it also comprises 40% of the overall A Level.

### Results

The table below shows a breakdown of the school's A-level results over the past three years:

Year	Overall % pass rate	% achieving 3 x A*-C
2018-19	99.8%	85.1%
2019-20	100%	91.6%
2020-21	99.6%	91.5%

Owing to the cancellation of external examinations, AS level grades awarded in 2021 took the form of Centre Determined Grades. These were determined, in accordance with examination boards' guidelines, including centre-based assessment of pupil performance, derived from a range of data collected throughout the 2020/21 academic year.

While it is anticipated that external examinations will be held in the 2022 summer term, the school contingency planning involves actively working to ensure a robust system of assessment is in place to ensure evidence-based and consistent data can be used to inform the production of centre determined grades, should they be required, in August 2022.

In considering GCSE results as part of any application, admissions officers will wish to bear in mind the arrangements put in place for awarding of GCSE qualifications in 2020.

### Post-18 destinations

Almost all pupils in this cohort will apply to university, with around 90% likely to take up a place following A-level results. Over 50% of pupils were awarded places in the two local universities in 2021 - Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University – with the rest taking up places at English and Scottish universities. A growing number of pupils each year are joining Higher Level Apprenticeship schemes.

### **UCAS predicted grades**

The school recognises UCAS advice that “A predicted grade is the grade of qualification an applicant’s school or college believes they’re likely to achieve in positive circumstances.”

Predicted grades are determined by subject teachers at the beginning of the Upper Sixth year. As most pupils take AS level examinations under CCEA specifications, which comprise 40% of the overall A-level, these grades are usually taken as a starting point in arriving at predicted grades. Where UMS marks suggest a pupil is close to a grade boundary, teacher’s professional judgement is important in determining whether the predicted A-level grade should match the AS level grade.

For 2022 applicants, who did not sit external AS level examinations, this approach has been followed, with teachers taking account of the unique circumstances this Upper Sixth cohort find themselves in.

### **Work experience**

Under normal circumstances, all pupils are given the opportunity to undertake three days’ work experience in February of their Lower Sixth year. Pupils in Upper Sixth were not able to avail of this due to coronavirus restrictions, though many sought experience through the many online opportunities which emerged last academic year. Those applying for competitive courses such as medicine and nursing found this especially challenging.

### **Co-curricular activities**

Pupils in Banbridge Academy have access to a wide range of co-curricular activities, including traditional sports and musical societies, but extending to many pupil-led organisations. In sixth form, pupils are encouraged to exercise leadership roles within extra-curricular organisations.

The school’s prefect system offers sixth form pupils the opportunity to take on areas of responsibility which contribute to the enhancement of the school community. Approximately 35% of pupils are appointed as Prefects in Upper Sixth. The prefect team is headed by a group of eight senior prefects including the Head Boy, Head Girl, and deputies.