

JUST C-GRADES TO

Universities drop entry requirements by 3 grades to fill places

By Eleanor Harding, Sarah Harris and Harry Howard

ELITE universities dropped their entry requirements for courses by up to three grades yesterday in a scramble to fill places.

At least five of the prestigious universities of the Russell Group advertised courses in clearing with reduced entry requirements.

They were Exeter, Liverpool, Warwick and York universities and Queen Mary University of London. In many cases they were dropping requirements from a string of A grades to B and even C grades.

Universities are dealing with a glut of places this year because of a drop in the number of 18-year-olds coinciding with the removal of a cap on the number of places.

Yesterday morning, early figures showed there had been a drop of 1 per cent in people accepted onto courses before clearing

'This will reduce the value of their degrees'

opened - 411,860 compared with 416,310 at the same point last year.

It meant that all through results day, even the country's top universities were having to compete to fill popular courses.

Experts criticised the move. Alan Smithers, professor of education at the University of Buckingham, said: 'Universities are showing signs of over-expansion and even some of the leading ones are dropping their entry requirements.'

'This will reduce the value of their degrees and may lead to people entering expensive courses only for them to find that they can't really cope, which would lead to higher drop-out rates.'

Clearing is the process by which students who do not have a university place - or have missed out on their place due to poor performance - can shop around for a new course. Many universities have their own clearing pages on their websites.

A Daily Mail audit yesterday found that many elite universities were listing entry requirements on their clearing pages which were lower than those originally on their course pages.

It showed Exeter had at least five such courses, including natural sciences, which appeared to have dropped grades from A*AA-AAB to just AAB. Geography dropped from AAA-ABB to AAB-ABB, and modern languages dropped from AAB-ABB to BCC.

The same was true at Liverpool, which had at least six courses appearing to drop their grades. Its requirements for history dropped from AAA-AAB to just BBC - a full three grades.

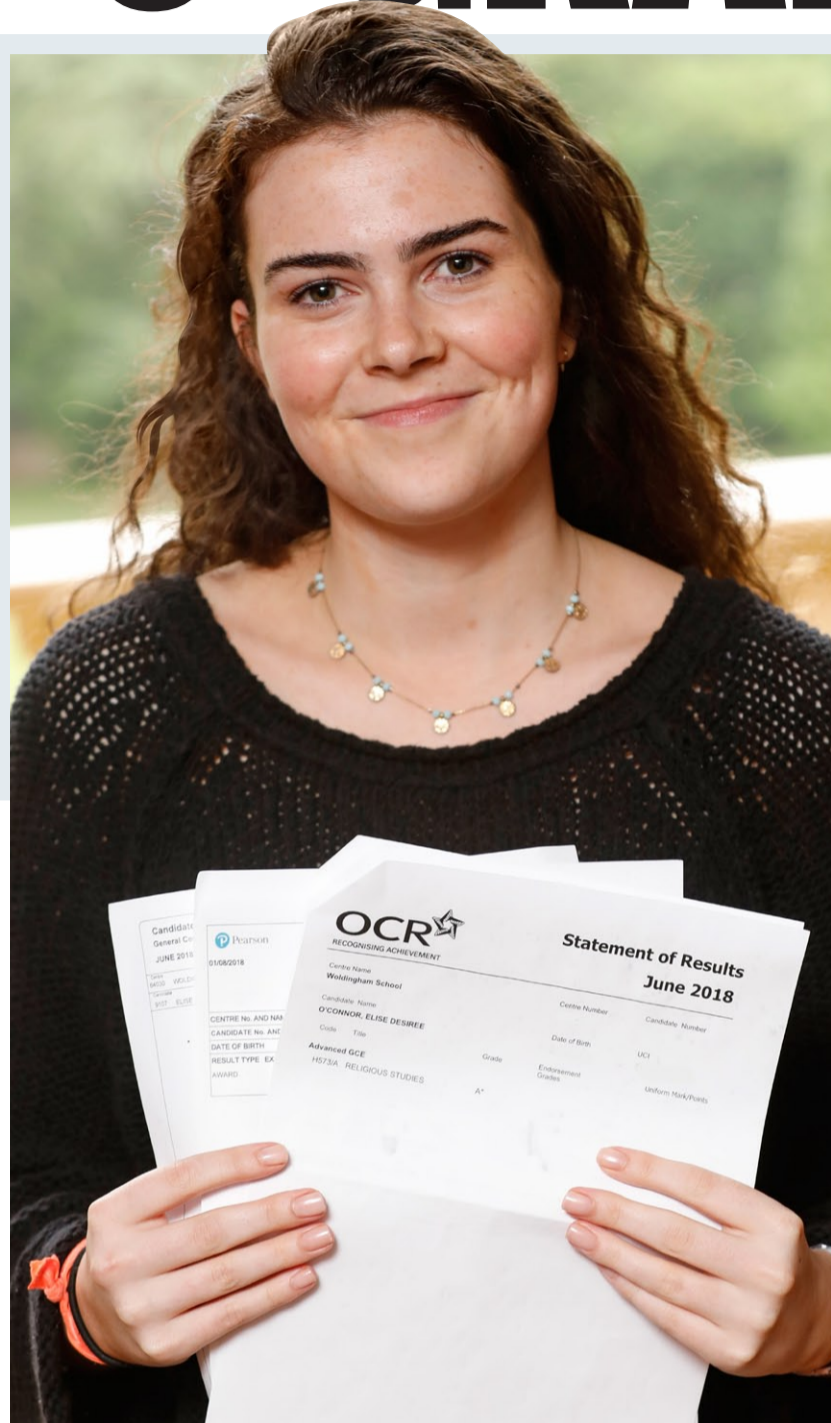
At Warwick, at least five courses dropped their grades, including history which lowered its requirements by two grades from AAA to ABB.

At York, four courses - history, biology, mathematics and English

all dropped two grades. At Queen Mary, mechanical engineering and aerospace engineering both dropped by three grades from AAB to BBC. Two other courses - history and English - dropped by two grades.

A spokesman for Warwick said: 'As a result of demographic changes and the decline in the number of 18-year-olds compared with 2017, the number of potential places available has increased.'

Queen Mary said: 'Like many universities, for high-potential candi-



5-star route to Cambridge

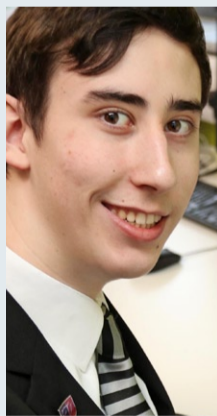
JACK Parkinson's clean sweep of five A* grades means he will now fulfil his dream of studying at Cambridge University.

The 18-year-old, from Thorne, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire, achieved top performance in mathematics, computer science and physics A-levels and the Extended Project Qualification. He was encouraged by

staff at Trinity Academy, Thorne, to apply for computer science at Cambridge and attended summer schools there. Jack said: 'They gave me a taste of life there and the people were really down to earth.'

'After the summer school, I decided I really wanted to go there.'

'I'm looking forward to being around people who have similar interests to me.'



Brain tumour teen to read theology

ELISE O'Connor gained A*s in English and Religious Studies A-levels and an A in history - having survived two brain tumour operations.

The 18-year-old student at Woldingham School, Woldingham, Surrey, will now read theology at Durham university.

Following her two operations, Elise has championed awareness of The Brain Tumour Charity, single-handedly spearheading a Crazy Hair Day. This has now become an annual tradition in the school calendar, raising thousands of pounds

for the charity. And it led to her being awarded her school's prize for initiative.

Elise said: 'This charity is important to me because in April 2014 I was diagnosed with a brain tumour.'

'Charities like this are important as they help individuals who are affected by brain tumours, including supporting their families.'

'I believe it is important to give back and I am grateful for the support I have received from my school and my dear friends.'

Place at Oxford for the son of refugees

EDI Rama, the son of Kosovan refugees, left his family in tears after gaining three A*s and winning a place at Oxford University.

The 18-year-old student at Newham Collegiate Sixth Form, East Ham, east London, will read maths at Corpus Christi college in September.

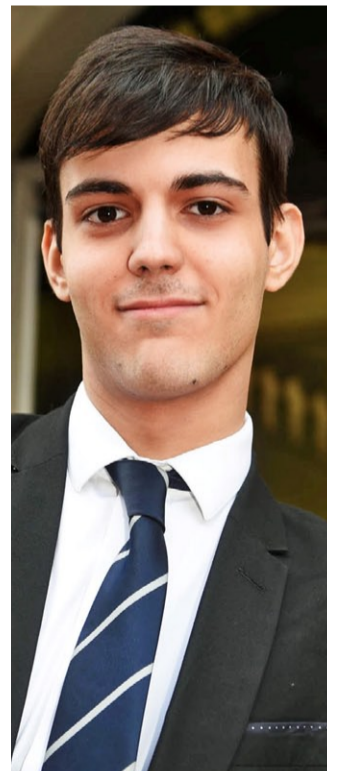
It is a far cry from the Balkan war zone his painter and decorator father, Arsim, 48, and receptionist mother Gezime, 42, escaped from in the mid-1990s.

They fled the ethnic violence that spiralled out of control as the former Yugoslavia broke apart.

His parents were the first people Edi (pictured) called after discovering he had scored top grades in his maths, further maths and chemistry A-levels.

He said: 'When I told them how well I had done they were both in tears.'

'It means so much to them that their son has done well in this country. They are so grateful for everything this country has given us. If they had



not left Kosovo and been caught up in the fighting, chances they would not have lived long enough to have children, let alone have one going to the best university in the world.'

lessons. The shocking trend was revealed by Partners in Excellence (PiXL) - the largest network of schools in England and Wales.

Sir John Rowling, its chairman, told the Times Educational Supplement that the school, which he declined to name, has seen A*-E grades dive from 74 per cent in 2017 to 14 per cent this year. Forty students received unconditional offers from universities this year.

The school at the base of Grenfell Tower has achieved outstanding results in the first A-levels sat

by its students. Safety concerns forced Kensington Aldridge Academy in north Kensington, London, to move to portable classrooms after the fire in June last year. Four of its pupils and one former pupil were among the 72 who died.

The comprehensive school opened in 2014 and its sixth form started two years later. Yesterday, in its first set of A-level results, 62 per cent were grades A* to B and the pass rate was 99.6 per cent.

Almost every pupil has secured a university place.