

Reviews of marking

November 2017 GCSE exam series



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Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Number of reviews, grades challenged and grades changed.....	6
Grades subject to review	8
Grade changes.....	10
Raw mark changes.....	11
Percentage of component entries reviewed	12
Subject breakdown.....	14
English/English language.....	14
Mathematics.....	16
Discussion.....	18

Executive summary

- There were 3,710 individual qualification grades challenged for the November 2017 GCSE exam series, a decrease of 13% from November 2016 (4,240 grades challenged).
- Of the 3,710 grades that were challenged, 560 (15%) were changed following review, a decrease of 15% from November 2016 (655 grades changed).
- The decrease in the number of grades challenged and changed is largely due to a 20% reduction in the overall number of qualifications awarded in the November 2017 series compared to 2016.
- Due to the large differences in the number of qualifications awarded across years, it is best to compare the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged and changed when making comparisons over time.
- As can be seen in Figure 1, the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged and changed has remained relatively stable over the last three November series.

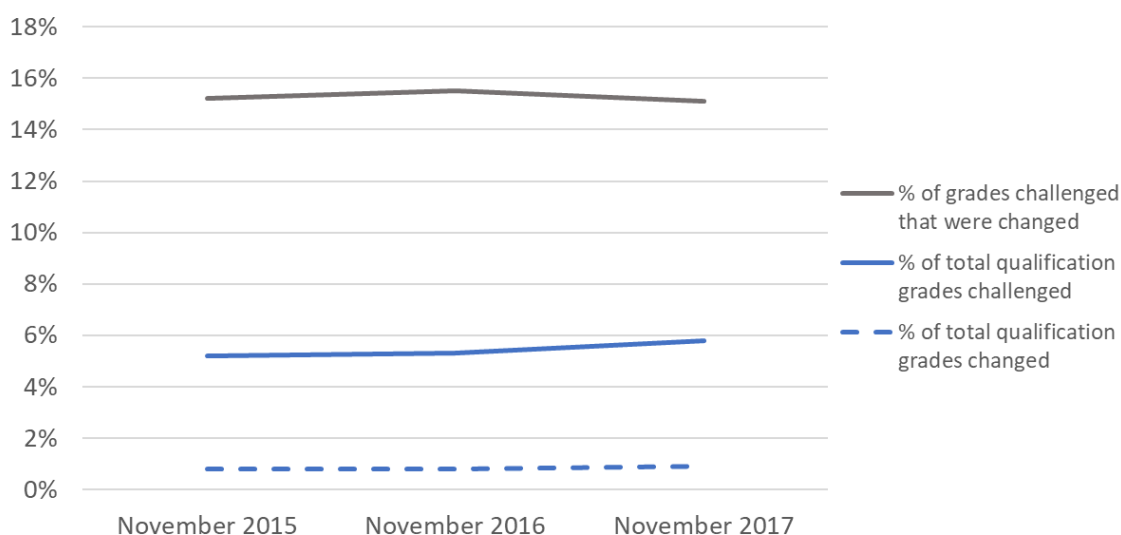


Figure 1. *Percentage of qualification grades challenged that were changed and the percentage of qualification grades awarded that were challenged and changed for the November series, 2015 to 2017.*

- There were 7,510 reviews of marking requested for the November 2017 GCSE exam series, an increase of 17% from November 2016 (6,420 reviews).
- The increase in the number of reviews requested is largely due to an increase in the number of reviews requested for English language qualifications; a result of increases in both the number of written exams taken in reformed qualifications and students certificating in this subject.

Introduction

Ofqual collects data on all reviews of marking, reviews of moderation and administrative error reviews (collectively referred to as ‘reviews’) requested for the summer exam series. Reviews are part of post-results services made available by exam boards offering GCSE, AS and A levels in England¹. These data are summarised in our [Reviews of Marking and Moderation](#) official statistical release. In order to give a fuller view, Ofqual is also now summarising review data for the November exam series. Only GCSEs are available in the November exam series, AS or A levels are not available. This report presents statistics on the number of reviews requested, the number of grades challenged and changed, the magnitude of raw mark and grade changes, original grades subject to review and the components with the highest percentage of entries reviewed for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 November GCSE exam series in England. This report focuses on reviews of marking (ie not reviews of moderation or administrative error reviews) as over 99% of reviews requested for the November exam series in the last 3 years have been reviews of marking (see Table 1). All figures in this report are rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is 1, 2, 3 or 4 it is represented as 0~.

Table 1. *Number of reviews requested for the November series, 2015 to 2017, by review type.*

Exam series	Administrative error reviews	Reviews of marking	Reviews of moderation	Total
November 2015	40	5,180	0	5,220
November 2016	55	6,420	0~	6,480
November 2017	70	7,510	0	7,580

Reviews of marking can be requested for each written assessment that a student has taken as part of a qualification. For example, if a qualification comprises two written assessments and one non-exam assessment then a review of marking can be requested for either one or both of the written assessments. Reviews of moderation can be requested for non-exam assessments. Often reviews of marking are requested for more than one assessment² taken as part of a qualification which is why the number of reviews requested is generally higher than the number of qualification grades challenged through review.

In 2016, Ofqual introduced new requirements for all reviews³. These state that during a review of marking, a reviewer should consider the marking of the original examiner

¹ AQA Education, Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations, Pearson Education Ltd., and WJEC-CBAC Ltd.

² These are referred to as units for modular qualifications and components for linear qualifications.

³ See the GCSE ([A* to G](#) and [9 to 1](#)) Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements.

to determine, in respect of each task in the assessment for which marks could have been awarded, and in respect of the assessment as a whole, whether the marking included any marking error(s). A full administrative error review is also conducted if this has not previously been requested for the assessment. For more information on the review process and for information on recent changes likely to affect review figures, please see the [Background Information document](#) accompanying the summer 2017 Reviews of Marking and Moderation official statistical release.

The qualifications awarded in the November GCSE exam series in England have changed over the years reported and this should be borne in mind when making comparisons across years. Details of the qualifications awarded are given in Table 2. In England, typically only mathematics and English/English language qualifications have been awarded in the November series. Qualifications in these subjects have recently been reformed and English and English language qualifications have now been combined into a single English language qualification. In 2015 and 2016, Pearson, OCR and AQA offered linked pair mathematics qualifications (methods in mathematics and applications of mathematics) in the November series. These qualifications, along with other legacy mathematics, English and English language qualifications, were awarded for the last time in the summer 2017 exam series.

The reformed GCSE science suite⁴ will be awarded for the first time in summer 2018. All of the exam boards have offered one re-sit opportunity for legacy science qualifications⁵ during the 2017/18 academic year; AQA, Pearson and WJEC offered this in the January 2018 series and OCR offered science and additional science in the November 2017 series. This report therefore also includes reviews of marking requested for OCR's science and additional science qualifications taken in the November 2017 series.

Table 2. *GCSE qualifications awarded in the November series, 2015 to 2017.*

	2015	2016	2017
English legacy (A*-G)	✓	✓	
English language legacy (A*-G)	✓	✓	
English language reformed (9-1)			✓
Linked pair mathematics (A*-G)	✓	✓	
Mathematics legacy (A*-G)	✓	✓	
Mathematics reformed (9-1)			✓
Science (A*-G)			✓
Additional science (A*-G)			✓

⁴ Combined science, biology, chemistry and physics.

⁵ Additional science, science, biology, chemistry and physics.

Number of reviews, grades challenged and grades changed

Table 3 shows the number of reviews, grades challenged and grades changed for the last three November series. There were 7,510 reviews of marking requested for the November 2017 GCSE exam series, an increase of 17% from November 2016 (6,420 reviews). This is largely due to an increase in the number of reviews requested for English language qualifications; a result of increases in both the number of written exams taken in reformed qualifications and students certificating in this subject (see the [subject breakdown](#) section).

The 7,510 reviews of marking requested related to 3,710 individual qualification grades. The number of grades challenged has decreased by 13% compared to November 2016 (4,240 grades challenged). This is largely due to a 20% reduction in the overall number of qualifications awarded in the November 2017 series compared to 2016. Although there was an 18% increase in the number of English language qualifications awarded in November 2017, there was a 39% decrease in the number of mathematics qualifications awarded. Due to the large differences in the number of qualifications awarded across years, it is best to compare the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged when making comparisons over time. As can be seen in Figure 1, this has remained relatively stable over the last three November series.

Of the 3,710 grades that were challenged, 560 (15%) were changed following review. This equates to 0.9% of all grades awarded in the November 2017 series being changed following reviews of marking. As can be seen in Figure 1, the percentage of grades challenged that were changed has also remained fairly stable over time.

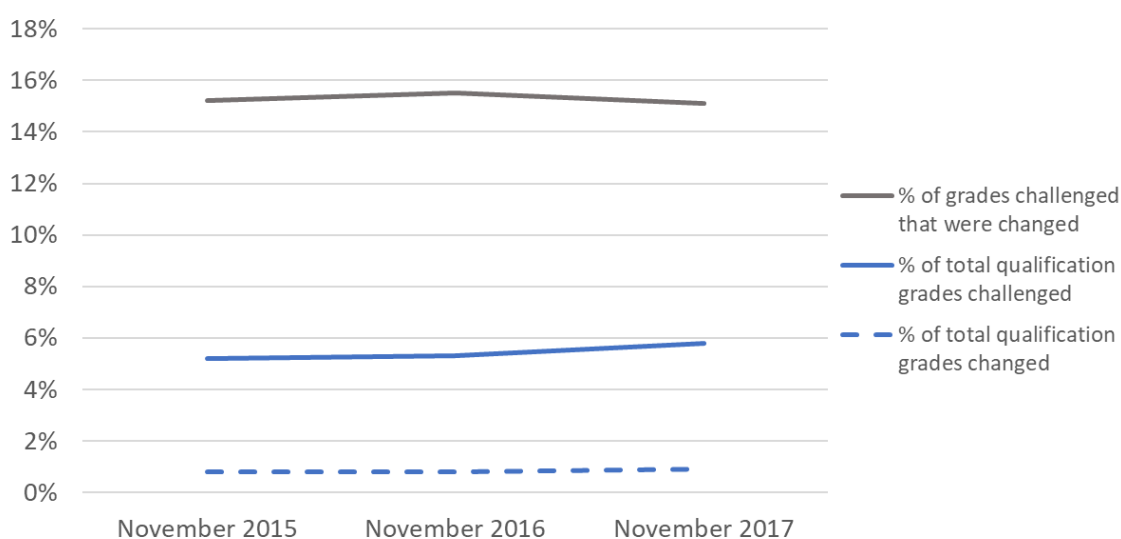


Figure 1. *Percentage of qualification grades challenged that were changed and the percentage of qualification grades awarded that were challenged and changed for the November series, 2015 to 2017.*

Exam boards set their own timescales within which they should complete reviews and report their outcomes. For reviews of marking this was 20 days in 2017 and 30 days in 2016 and 2015. The average time taken to complete reviews was longer in 2017 (8.4 days) compared to 2016 (4.4 days) and 2015 (4.5 days), but only slightly longer considering that examination boards have 20 calendar days in which to complete the review.

Table 3. *Number of reviews, grades challenged and grades changed for the November series, 2015 to 2017, by awarding organisation⁶.*

AO	Nov series	Reviews	Grades challenged	Grades changed	% of grades challenged that were changed	Quals awarded	% of total qualification grades challenged	% of total qualification grades changed	Average response time (days)
AQA	2015	1,515	1,335	320	23.9	19,395	6.9	1.6	4.3
	2016	2,245	1,910	430	22.4	26,875	7.1	1.6	3.6
	2017	4,950	2,560	365	14.2	31,615	8.1	1.2	10.1
OCR	2015	350	230	25	11.8	4,730	4.9	0.5	2.1
	2016	450	285	30	11.3	6,525	4.4	0.5	3.4
	2017	195	85	20	21.2	3,065	2.8	0.7	2.6
Pearson	2015	2,915	1,560	150	9.6	35,085	4.4	0.4	4.4
	2016	3,185	1,725	150	8.6	41,265	4.2	0.4	5.2
	2017	2,025	870	170	19.6	25,610	3.4	0.7	5.8
WJEC	2015	400	240	15	5.8	4,920	4.9	0.3	8.0
	2016	540	320	45	14.1	5,090	6.3	0.9	3.5
	2017	345	195	10	4.1	3,325	5.9	0.3	3.6
Total	2015	5,180	3,365	510	15.2	64,130	5.2	0.8	4.5
	2016	6,420	4,240	655	15.5	79,750	5.3	0.8	4.4
	2017	7,510	3,710	560	15.1	63,615	5.8	0.9	8.4

⁶ Data on the number of qualifications awarded for 2015 and 2016 were supplied to us by the exam boards as part of a regular data return. These data were not available for 2017 at the time of publication and so the figures presented are taken from each exam board's website. These figures also include certifications from students outside of England but the number of these students are very small.

Grades subject to review

Figures 2 and 3 and Tables 4 and 5 show the original qualification grades of students whose grades were subject to review. It is worth bearing in mind that only 10 GCSE A*-G grades were challenged for the November 2017 series but they are included in the figures and charts for completeness. For GCSE A* to G, the most commonly challenged grade for the last three November series was D. For GCSE 9 to 1, the most commonly challenged grade for the November 2017 series was 3. This is likely to reflect the importance of attaining a grade 4/C or above in mathematics and English/English language. Since August 2015, full time students who have not achieved a grade C/4 or above in GCSE (or Level 1/ Level 2 certificate) mathematics and English/English language must continue studying these subjects in order to be funded post-16.

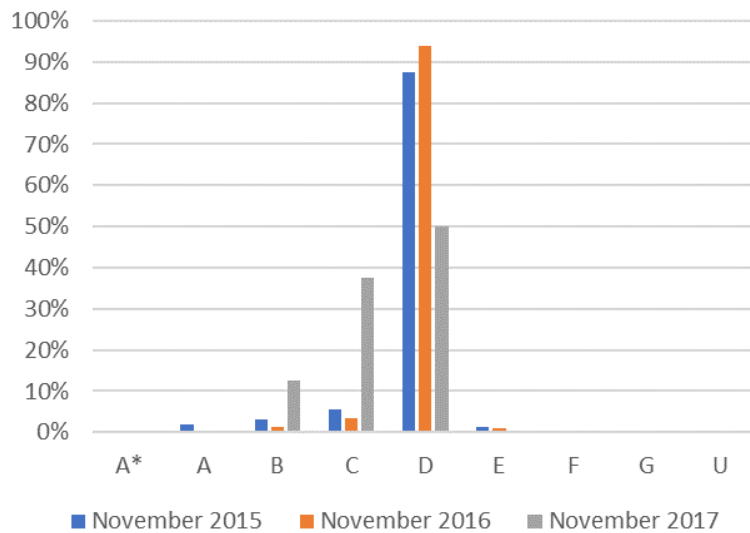


Figure 2. GCSE A* to G grades subject to review for the November series, 2015 to 2017.

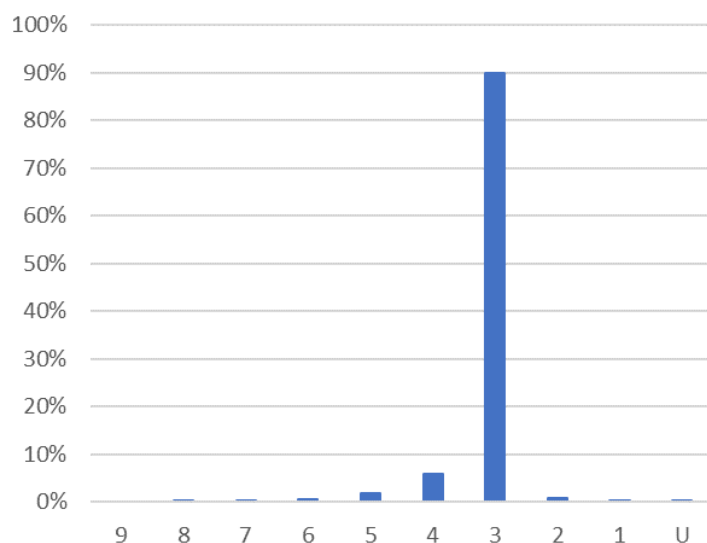


Figure 3. GCSE 9 to 1 grades subject to review for the November 2017 series.

Table 4. GCSE A* to G grades subject to review for the November series, 2015 to 2017.

Grade	November 2015		November 2016		November 2017	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
A*	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
A	60	1.8%	5	0.2%	0	0.0%
B	105	3.1%	50	1.2%	0~	12.5%
C	185	5.5%	140	3.3%	0~	37.5%
D	2,950	87.6%	3,980	93.9%	0~	50.0%
E	45	1.3%	40	0.9%	0	0.0%
F	5	0.2%	5	0.2%	0	0.0%
G	5	0.1%	10	0.2%	0	0.0%
U	10	0.3%	5	0.2%	0	0.0%
Total	3,365	100.0%	4,240	100.0%	10	100.0%

Table 5. GCSE 9 to 1 grades subject to review for the 2017 November series.

Grade	N	%
9	0	0.0%
8	0~	0.1%
7	0~	0.1%
6	20	0.5%
5	70	1.8%
4	220	5.9%
3	3,330	90.0%
2	35	0.9%
1	10	0.3%
U	10	0.3%
Total	3,700	100.0%

Grade changes

Figure 4 and Table 6 show the magnitude of grade changes following review. In the majority of cases (85% of grades challenged), there was no grade change following reviews of marking for the November 2017 series. This was the case for the two preceding November series as well; the percentage of grades challenged resulting in no grade change has been stable at 85% over the last three years. When grades were changed following review they were changed by just one grade and, in the vast majority of cases, this was an increase of one grade rather than a decrease.

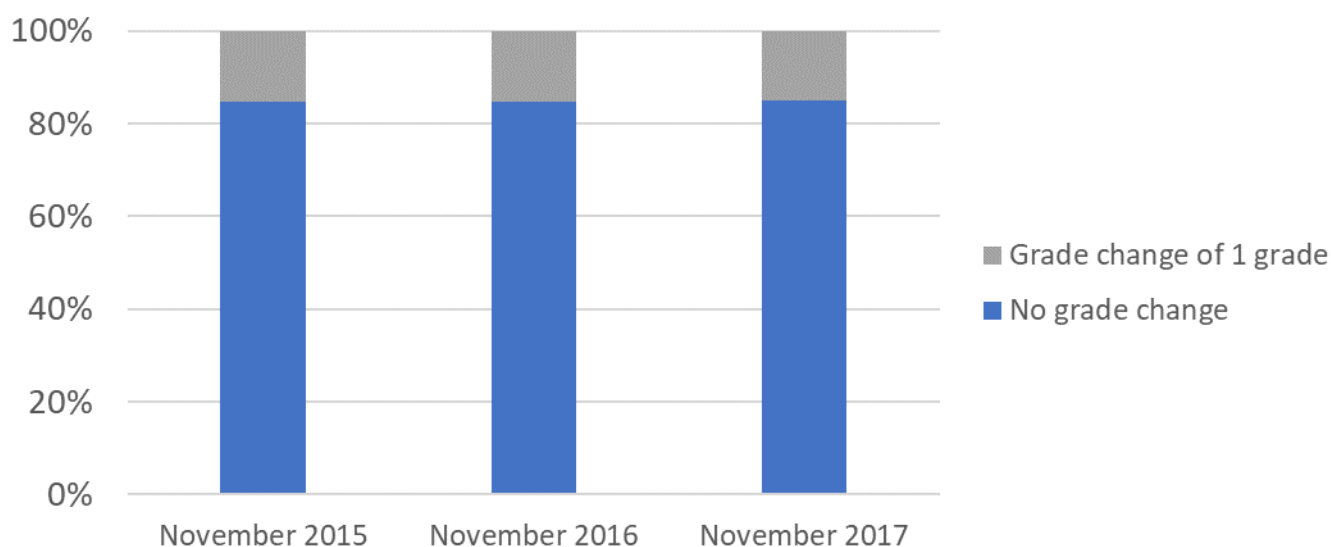


Figure 4. *Percentage of grades challenged resulting in no grade change or a grade change of 1 grade following review, November series, 2015 to 2017.*

Table 6. *Magnitude of grade changes following review, November series, 2015 to 2017.*

		Grade changes			
		-1	0	1	TBD
November 2015	N	0	2,850	510	0~
	%	0.0%	84.8%	15.2%	0.1%
November 2016	N	0~	3,585	655	0
	%	0.0%	84.5%	15.4%	0.0%
November 2017	N	0~	3,150	560	0
	%	0.0%	84.9%	15.0%	0.0%

Note. TBD = to be determined. At the time of data collection, the reviews relating to these grades had not been completed and so the magnitude of grade change was unknown.

Raw mark changes

The raw mark changes described in this section relate to the difference in the mark given to a single unit or component before and after review. Figure 5 and Table 7 shows the distribution of raw mark changes following review for the last three November series. Figure 5 shows that, for the last three November series, the majority of reviews resulted in no mark change. For the November 2017 series, 85% of all reviews resulted in a mark change of one mark or less and only 1% of reviews resulted in a mark change of 5 marks or more. When marks were changed, they were more likely to go up than down, with 60% of reviews for the November 2017 series resulting in an increase in marks. However, this is a decreasing trend as 67% of reviews for the November 2016 and 2015 series resulted in an increase in marks.

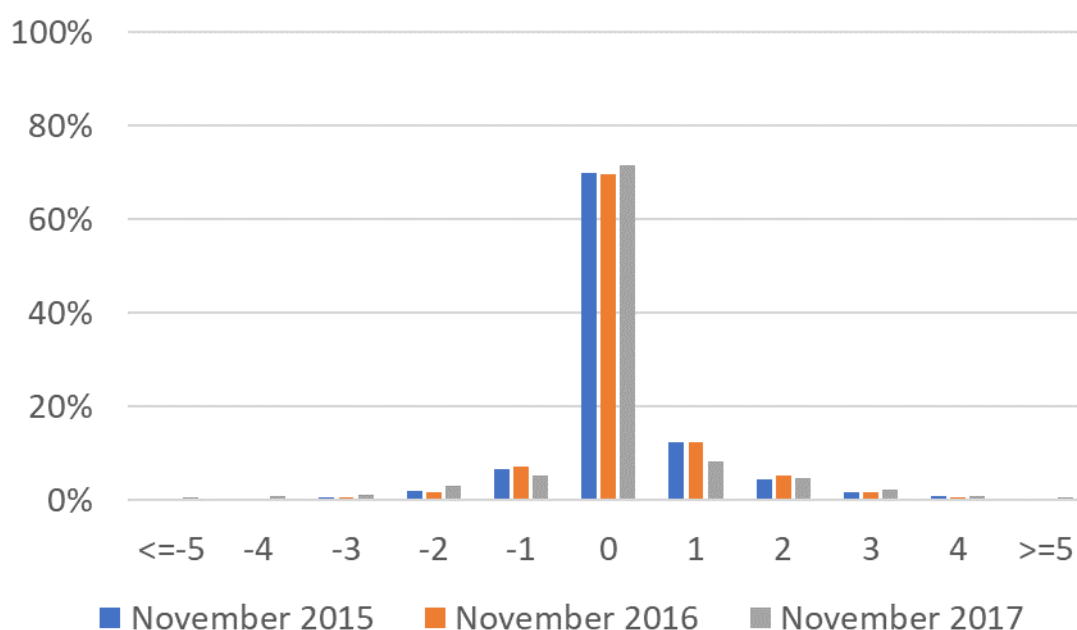


Figure 5. *Percentage of reviews resulting in each raw mark change value following review, November series, 2015 to 2017.*

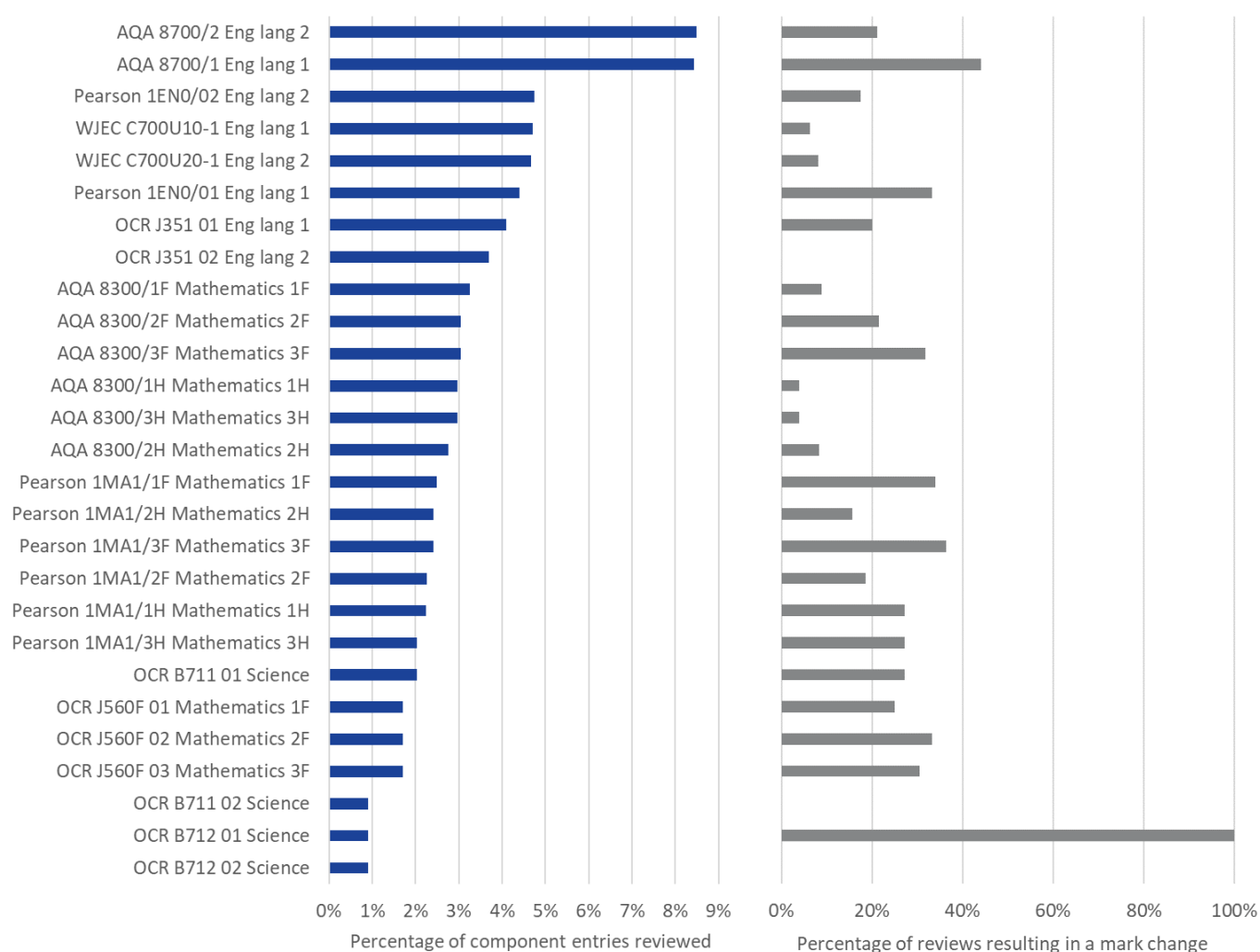
Table 7. *Magnitude of raw mark changes following review, November series, 2015 to 2017.*

		Raw mark change										
		<=-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	>=5
November 2015	N	5	20	30	110	350	3,620	645	235	95	45	15
	%	0.1%	0.4%	0.6%	2.2%	6.7%	69.9%	12.4%	4.6%	1.9%	0.9%	0.3%
November 2016	N	5	15	40	120	470	4,470	795	335	105	45	20
	%	0.1%	0.2%	0.6%	1.8%	7.3%	69.6%	12.4%	5.2%	1.7%	0.7%	0.3%
November 2017	N	45	60	100	235	400	5,385	620	365	180	65	55
	%	0.6%	0.8%	1.3%	3.2%	5.4%	71.7%	8.3%	4.9%	2.4%	0.8%	0.7%

Percentage of component entries reviewed

Figure 6 and Table 8 show the 27 components taken by more than 100 students in the November 2017 series, listed in order of the percentage of component entries subject to reviews of marking, from highest to lowest. Figure 6 shows the percentage of component entries reviewed and the percentage of reviews resulting in a mark change for these components. Table 8 shows the same information along with the number of reviews and number of component entries.

English language components rank higher than mathematics components in terms of the percentage of entries subject to review. This is likely to be due to English language assessments being more subjective in nature than mathematics assessments. The components with the highest percentage of reviews requested are not necessarily the components with the highest percentage of mark changes.



Note. Less than five reviews were requested for OCR B712 01 Science and these all resulted in a mark change.

Figure 6. Components with more than 100 entries ordered by the percentage of entries subject to reviews of marking for the November 2017 series.

Table 8. Components with more than 100 entries ordered by the percentage of entries subject to reviews of marking for the November 2017 series.

Exam Board	Unit Code	Unit Title	Number of reviews	Number of component entries	% of total entries reviewed	% of reviews resulting in a mark change
AQA	8700/2	English language paper 2	2,030	23,890	8.5	21.1
AQA	8700/1	English language paper 1	2,015	23,890	8.4	44.0
Pearson	1EN0/02	English language paper 2	205	4,315	4.8	17.6
WJEC	C700U10-1	English language paper 1	175	3,670	4.7	6.4
WJEC	C700U20-1	English language paper 2	170	3,670	4.7	8.2
Pearson	1EN0/01	English language paper 1	190	4,315	4.4	33.2
OCR	J351 01	English language paper 1	30	730	4.1	20.0
OCR	J351 02	English language paper 2	25	730	3.7	0.0
AQA	8300/1F	Mathematics paper 1 foundation	290	8,885	3.3	9.0
AQA	8300/2F	Mathematics paper 2 foundation	270	8,885	3.0	21.5
AQA	8300/3F	Mathematics paper 3 foundation	270	8,885	3.0	31.9
AQA	8300/1H	Mathematics paper 1 higher	25	875	3.0	3.9
AQA	8300/3H	Mathematics paper 3 higher	25	875	3.0	3.9
AQA	8300/2H	Mathematics paper 2 higher	25	875	2.8	8.3
Pearson	1MA1/1F	Mathematics paper 1 foundation	490	19,530	2.5	34.0
Pearson	1MA1/2H	Mathematics paper 2 higher	85	3,425	2.4	15.7
Pearson	1MA1/3F	Mathematics paper 3 foundation	470	19,530	2.4	36.4
Pearson	1MA1/2F	Mathematics paper 2 foundation	440	19,530	2.3	18.6
Pearson	1MA1/1H	Mathematics paper 1 higher	75	3,425	2.3	27.3
Pearson	1MA1/3H	Mathematics paper 3 higher	70	3,425	2.0	27.1
OCR	B711 01	Science modules B1, C1, P1	0~	110	2.0	27.1
OCR	J560F 01	Mathematics paper 1 foundation	35	2,115	1.7	25.0
OCR	J560F 02	Mathematics paper 2 foundation	35	2,115	1.7	33.3
OCR	J560F 03	Mathematics paper 3 foundation	35	2,115	1.7	30.6
OCR	B711 02	Science modules B1, C1, P1	0~	110	0.9	0.0
OCR	B712 01	Science modules B2, C2, P2	0~	110	0.9	100.0
OCR	B712 02	Science modules B2, C2, P2	0~	110	0.9	0.0

Subject breakdown

Table 9 shows the number of reviews, grades challenged and grades changed for the last three November series by subject. This table also shows the average absolute mark change following review. As above, raw mark changes relate to the difference in the mark given to a single unit or component before and after review. The absolute mark change is the mark change expressed as a positive value and the average is calculated using all absolute mark changes, including mark changes of zero. As so few science and additional science grades were challenged in the November 2017 series (see Table 9) and given that these qualifications were not available in previous series, this section focuses on English/English language and mathematics.

Table 9. *Number of reviews, grades challenged and grades changed for the November series, 2015 to 2017, by subject⁷.*

Subject	Nov series	Reviews	Grades challenged	Grades changed	% of grades challenged that were changed	Quals awarded	% of total qualification grades challenged	% of total qualification grades changed	Average absolute mark change
English/ English language	2015	1,740	1,585	320	20.2	20,600	7.7	1.6	0.8
	2016	2,305	2,100	455	21.6	25,530	8.2	1.8	0.8
	2017	4,840	2,670	365	13.8	30,245	8.8	1.2	0.7
Mathematics	2015	3,440	1,780	190	10.7	43,530	4.1	0.4	0.3
	2016	4,110	2,140	200	9.4	54,220	3.9	0.4	0.3
	2017	2,655	1,030	190	18.5	33,140	3.1	0.6	0.3
Additional science	2017	10	5	0	0.0	85	4.8	0.0	0.1
Science	2017	10	5	0~	25.0	145	2.7	0.7	0.3
Total	2015	5,180	3,365	510	15.2	64,130	5.2	0.8	0.5
	2016	6,420	4,240	655	15.5	79,750	5.3	0.8	0.5
	2017	7,510	3,710	560	15.1	63,615	5.8	0.9	0.6

English/English language

The increase in the number of reviews requested for English/English language in 2017 (4,840 reviews) compared to 2016 (2,305 reviews) is mainly due to both an increase in the number of qualifications awarded and structural changes to these qualifications following reform. Reformed English language GCSEs awarded in November 2017 comprise 2 exams whereas legacy English and English language qualifications awarded in 2015 and 2016 comprised only one. This means that double the amount of reviews of marking may be requested for reformed English language GCSEs compared to legacy English/English language GCSEs. Indeed,

⁷ Data on the number of qualifications awarded for 2015 and 2016 were supplied to us by the exam boards as part of a regular data return. These data were not available for 2017 at the time of publication and so the figures presented are taken from each exam board's website. These figures also include certifications from students outside of England but the number of these students are very small.

81% of the 2,670 English students whose grades were challenged through reviews of marking in November 2017 had both of their examined assessments reviewed.

Given the differences in qualification structure and number of qualifications awarded, it is best to compare the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged when making comparisons over time. As can be seen in Figure 7, the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged has remained fairly stable over time, rising by 1 percentage point since November 2015.

Of the 2,670 English language grades that were challenged for the November 2017 series, 365 (14%) were changed following review. This equates to 1.2% of all English language grades awarded in the November 2017 series being changed following reviews of marking. As can be seen in Figure 7, the percentage of English/English language grades challenged that were changed decreased considerably in November 2017 (14%) compared to November 2016 (22%). This is likely to be due to the 19 percentage point increase in the number of reviews resulting in no mark change in November 2017 compared to 2016 (see Table 10). This increase may be the result of exam boards better implementing requirements for reviews of marking recently set by Ofqual, namely that marks must only be changed following review if an error occurred in the original marking⁸.

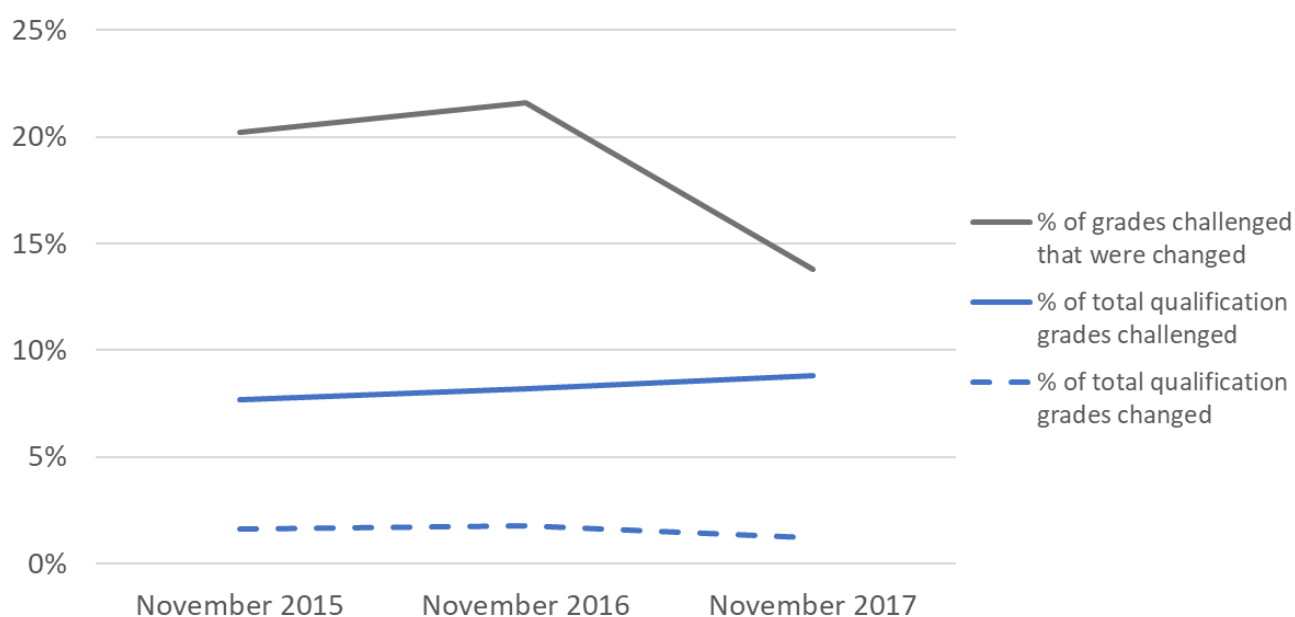


Figure 7. Percentage of English/ English language qualification grades challenged that were changed and the percentage of qualification grades awarded that were challenged and changed for the November series, 2015 to 2017.

⁸ See the GCSE ([A* to G](#) and [9 to 1](#)) and GCE ([legacy](#) and [reformed](#)) Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements for more information.

Table 10. *Magnitude of raw mark changes in English/English language components following review, November series, 2015 to 2017.*

		Raw mark change										
		<=-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	>=5
November 2015	N	5	15	25	60	130	905	325	160	70	30	10
	%	0.3%	0.9%	1.4%	3.6%	7.4%	51.9%	18.7%	9.3%	4.0%	1.8%	0.6%
November 2016	N	0~	10	30	65	220	1175	410	245	85	40	20
	%	0.2%	0.5%	1.3%	2.9%	9.6%	51.0%	17.7%	10.6%	3.7%	1.7%	0.8%
November 2017	N	45	60	90	200	240	3,395	270	275	155	60	55
	%	1.0%	1.3%	1.8%	4.1%	5.0%	70.1%	5.5%	5.6%	3.2%	1.2%	1.1%

Mathematics

The 35% decrease in the number of reviews requested for mathematics in 2017 (2,655 reviews) compared to 2016 (4,110 reviews) is mainly due to the 39% decrease in the number of mathematics qualifications awarded (54,220 in 2016 and 33,140 in 2017). Again, given the differences in the number of qualifications awarded, it is best to compare the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged when making comparisons over time. As can be seen in Figure 8, there was a slight decrease (0.8 percentage points) in the percentage of grades awarded that were challenged for the November 2017 series compared to 2016.

Of the 1,031 mathematics grades that were challenged for the November 2017 series, 191 (19%) were changed following review. This equates to 0.6% of all mathematics grades awarded in the November 2017 series being changed following reviews of marking. As can be seen in Figure 8, the percentage of mathematics grades challenged that were changed increased in November 2017 (19%) compared to November 2016 (9%). This is related to the 6 percentage point decrease in the number of reviews resulting in no mark change when comparing November 2016 and 2017 (see Table 11). This decrease in no mark change reviews may reflect differences in the nature of the questions included in reformed mathematics assessments compared with the legacy assessments.

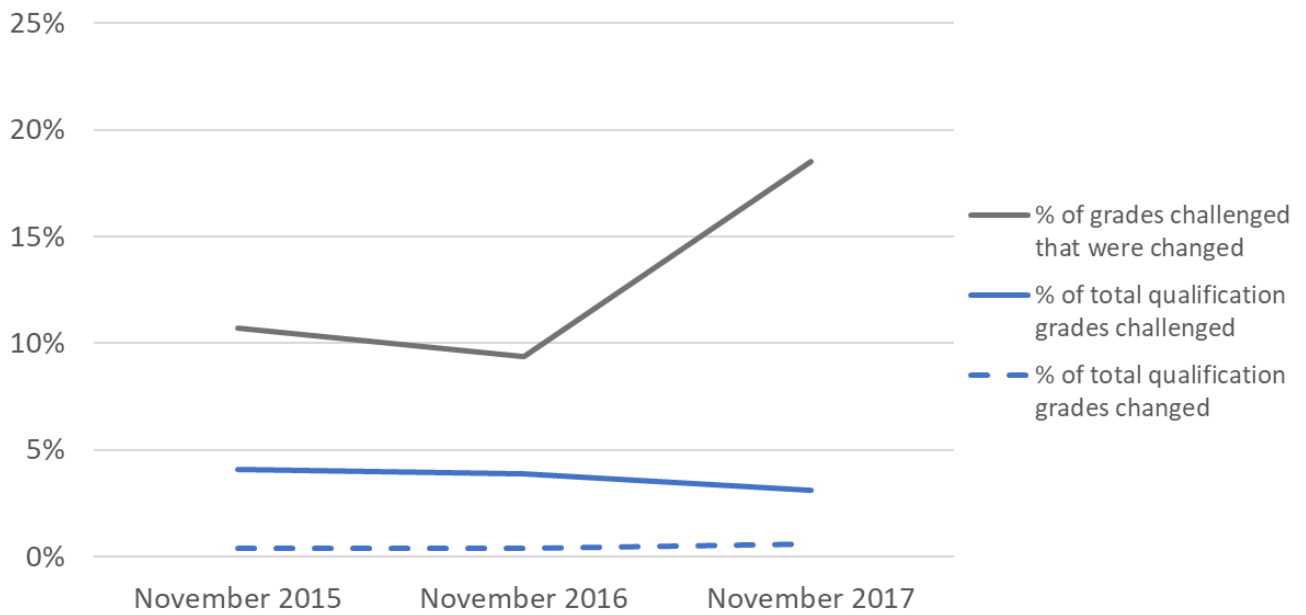


Figure 8. *Percentage of mathematics qualification grades challenged that were changed and the percentage of qualification grades awarded that were challenged and changed for the November series, 2015 to 2017.*

Table 11. *Magnitude of raw mark changes in mathematics components following review, November series, 2015 to 2017.*

		Raw mark change										
		<=-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	>=5
November 2015	N	0~	0~	5	50	220	2,720	320	75	25	15	5
	%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1.5%	6.4%	79.1%	9.2%	2.2%	0.8%	0.4%	0.1%
November 2016	N	0~	0~	10	50	245	3,295	390	90	20	5	0
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	1.3%	6.0%	80.1%	9.4%	2.2%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%
November 2017	N	0	0	10	40	160	1,975	350	95	20	0~	0
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	1.5%	6.1%	74.4%	13.2%	3.5%	0.8%	0.2%	0.0%

Discussion

This report presents statistics on reviews of marking requested for the last three November GCSE series in England (2015, 2016 and 2017). In England, typically only GCSE mathematics and English/English language qualifications have been awarded in the November series. However, in November 2017, some GCSE science and additional science qualifications were awarded by one exam board as a one-off resit opportunity before reformed science qualifications are first awarded in summer 2018. GCSE mathematics and English/English language qualifications have recently been reformed. Legacy qualifications in these subjects were awarded in the November 2015 and 2016 series and reformed qualifications were awarded in the November 2017 series.

Overall, the percentage of qualification grades awarded in the November series that were challenged through reviews of marking has remained fairly stable over time at around 5%. The percentage of qualification grades awarded that were changed has also remained stable over time at just under 1%. Over the last three November series, the majority of reviews of marking (around 70%) have resulted in no mark change and subsequently 85% of grades challenged were not changed following review. When grades were changed they all changed by just one grade and, in the vast majority of cases, increased rather than decreased.

Although the overall picture looks relatively stable, individual subject analyses indicate some differences compared to previous years. In English/English language, the percentage of grades challenged that were changed decreased from 22% in November 2016 to 14% in November 2017 while in mathematics, the percentage of grades challenged that were changed increased from 9% in November 2016 to 19% in November 2017. Unsurprisingly, analysis of raw mark changes showed a 19 percentage point increase in the number of English/English language reviews resulting in no mark change in November 2017 compared to 2016 and a 6 percentage point decrease in the number of mathematics reviews resulting in no mark change. In English/English language, these changes may reflect exam boards being more consistent in their implementation of requirements for reviews of marking recently set by Ofqual, namely that marks must only be changed following review if an error occurred in the original marking. In mathematics, the changes may reflect differences in the nature of the questions included in reformed mathematics assessments compared with the legacy assessments. There are some differences between exam boards. This may in part reflect access to scripts and that different boards have different facilities in place for centres. It is possible that where access to scripts is freely available, centres are more likely to make more informed choices (rather than more speculative choices) about which scripts to submit for a review of marking and that these are then more likely to result in mark changes.

The most commonly challenged grade for the November 2017 series was grade 3 and for the November 2016 and 2015 series was grade D. This is likely to reflect the

importance of attaining a grade 4/C or above in English/English language and mathematics as students not achieving these grades must continue studying these subjects in order to be funded post-16. The average time taken to complete reviews of marking was longer for the November 2017 series (8.4 days) compared to 2016 (4.4 days) and 2015 (4.5 days), but only slightly longer considering that examination boards have 20 calendar days in which to complete the review. English language components rank higher than mathematics components in terms of the percentage of entries subject to review and this is likely to be due to English language assessments being more subjective in nature than mathematics assessments.

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