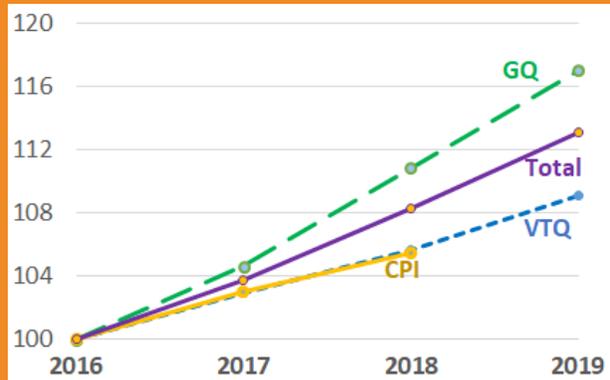


This initial report presents an analysis of changes to the published prices of regulated qualifications in England between 2017 and 2019. Price changes are calculated using representative baskets of qualifications which are explained overleaf. All indices began at 100 in 2016. Changes in weighted average prices are weighted by prior year volumes. Simple averages are the average of all qualification price changes, irrespective of the certificate volumes for each. The product diversity within the vocational & technical qualifications (VTQ) market makes a simple average price index less useful than for the more homogenous general qualifications (GQ) market, hence is not included in this report. Figures below are all weighted averages.

All qualifications



2018

4.3%

Index: 108.3

2019

4.5%

Index: 113.1

Vocational & Technical

2018

2.6%

Index: 105.6

2019

3.3%

Index: 109.1

High-volume sectors

Health & public services



2018

2.7%

2019

2.6%

Arts, media & publishing



2018

3.4%

2019

3.6%

Retail & enterprise



2018

-1.3%

2019

5.1%

Business, admin & law



2018

2.5%

2019

4.1%

GCSE, AS & A level

2018

5.9%

Index: 110.8

2019

5.6%

Index: 117.0

GCSEs

2018

5.7%

Index: 112.1

2019

5.4%

Index: 118.1

A levels

2018

4.4%

Index: 99.6

2019

5.8%

Index: 105.4

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Introduction

General Qualification (GQ) basket

The basket of GQs for QPI includes all GCSE, AS and A levels with 3,000 or more certificates in England in the year. The 168 individual qualifications monitored account for 94% of GCSE and 83% of AS & A level certificates. 2019 prices mean those applicable to the 2018/19 academic year, which covers November 2018 re-takes and the main summer 2019 examinations.

Vocational & Technical Qualification (VTQ) basket

The basket of VTQs for QPI covers a representative sample of 255 qualifications, selected using the following criteria:

1. All VTQs that, individually, account for more than 0.25% of all certificates funded by the UK government's Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This captures all of the high volume qualifications taken in England by learners who were funded by the UK government. For the 2019 QPI Report this threshold equates to 6,500 certificates.
2. All other VTQs where government-funded learners are being taught in more than 100 centres. This captures niche, but widespread, qualifications.
3. All other VTQs that are on performance tables and where certificates in England exceed 3,000 in the year.
4. All other VTQs not covered by categories 1, 2 and 3 where certificates in England exceed 10,000 in the year. This captures popular, often short course, qualifications that tend to be self- or employer-funded, rather than government-funded.
5. The top 4 qualifications, by certificate numbers, for all vocational subject areas (except academic sectors), at Entry to Level 2 and for Level 3 and above, unless they have already been captured. This ensures the QPI includes all vocational subject areas, even those with fewer learners.

While the qualifications selected represent just 3% of the circa 10,000 active VTQs regulated by Ofqual, they cover 36% of all the VTQ certificates issued and are representative of the full spectrum of vocational and technical subject areas.

2019 prices are usually those applicable to the 2019 calendar year, but where alternative pricing periods apply, 2019 prices will be taken to mean those applicable over the summer 2019 examination period, aligned with GQ.

The General Qualifications market

The GQ market is now at the end of a period of reform, which has seen considerable changes to qualifications and necessitated significant investment by exam boards.

GCSE reform

The reforms to GCSE subjects increased the amount of external assessment many subjects required, so shifting some of the burden of assessment from the school to the exam board.

AS reform

Prior to reform, AS units made up half the A level with the results counting towards the overall A level grade. The reformed AS and A level qualifications are now standalone qualifications, meaning exam boards now develop and deliver two independent qualifications.

A large reduction in the number of students taking reformed AS qualifications has occurred, with volumes falling by three-quarters, from over one million certificates in 2015/16 to below 250,000 in 2018/19.

A level reform

All A levels have been reformed based on updated content. For many subjects, there has been a reduction in the number of examined units assessed by the exam board.

General Qualifications analysis

GCSE price index

Simple average

2018

5.7%

2019

6.6%

Weighted average

2018

5.7%

Index: 112.1

2019

5.4%

Index: 118.1

Weighted average price

2018

£37.30

2019

£39.31

4,664,250 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

AS level price index

Simple average

2018

10.0%

2019

8.6%

Weighted average

2018

9.8%

Index: 115.8

2019

10.2%

Index: 127.6

Weighted average price

2018

£52.81

2019

£58.19

236,175 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

A level price index

Simple average

2018

4.0%

2019

6.4%

Weighted average

2018

4.4%

Index: 99.6

2019

5.8%

Index: 105.4

Weighted average price

2018

£92.44

2019

£97.76

732,720 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

The Vocational & Technical Qualifications market

Price changes within the far more complex and less homogenous VTQ market have varied widely. A sizeable proportion of these qualifications are paid for by learners or their employers. More than a third of the qualifications in the 2019 basket have seen no change in their prices from 2018.

Within the preparation for life & work sector, prices rose by 10% in 2018, with some prices remaining flat, while other providers increased some prices by more than 20%. For 2019, in contrast, this segment has seen price rises more in line with inflation, at just 2.4%.

The construction & planning sector, in 2018, saw flat prices across all 23 qualifications in the 2018 basket, from four different awarding organisations. For 2019, however, prices have begun to move again, with an overall 3.2% increase.

After falling by 1.3% in 2018, prices for qualifications in the retail & enterprise sector returned to an upward trajectory in 2019 with a 5.1% rise. Alongside engineering & manufacturing, these two sectors have seen the lowest cumulative price increases for the period 2016 to 2019 of just 5.7% in three years.

Most other sectors saw annual increases of below 3%, broadly in line with wider consumer price inflation.

Vocational and Technical, by sector-weighted averages



Preparation for life and work

All levels

2018

2019

10.2%

2.4%

Index: 114.4

Index: 117.2

1,472,150 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

12.8%

3.6%

1,377,578 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

2.9%

0.0%

92,572 certificates awarded in 2017/2018



Health and public services

All levels

2018

2019

2.7%

2.6%

Index: 104.5

Index: 107.2

1,135,300 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

2.4%

2.4%

482,588 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

3.0%

2.8%

652,712 certificates awarded in 2017/2018



Arts, media and publishing

All levels

2018

2019

3.4%

3.6%

Index: 105.9

Index: 109.7

735,305 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

3.4%

4.1%

569,326 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

3.5%

2.5%

165,979 certificates awarded in 2017/2018



Retail and enterprise

All levels

2018

2019

-1.3%

5.1%

Index: 100.6

Index: 105.7

407,385 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

-0.3%

5.2%

343,995 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

-8.5%

4.9%

63,390 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Vocational and Technical, by sector-weighted averages



Business, admin & law

All levels

2018

2019

2.5%

4.1%

Index: 104.9

Index: 109.2

429,625 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

2.0%

5.6%

206,442 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

2.8%

2.9%

223,183 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Information & comms technology

All levels

2018

2019

2.1%

2.7%

Index: 104.1

Index: 106.8

273,750 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

0.9%

2.2%

216,569 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

3.7%

3.3%

57,181 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Leisure, travel & tourism

All levels

2018

2019

3.1%

4.9%

Index: 105.8

Index: 111.0

344,620 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

2.1%

7.4%

250,255 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

3.8%

2.2%

94,365 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Engineering & manufacturing

All levels

2018

2019

1.6%

2.1%

Index: 103.6

Index: 105.7

297,845 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018

2019

1.8%

2.4%

219,536 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018

2019

1.5%

1.9%

78,309 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Vocational and Technical, by sector-weighted averages



Construction & planning

All levels

2018 2019



Index: 103.5 Index: 106.8

343,415 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Agriculture & animal care

All levels

2018 2019



Index: 105.0 Index: 106.2

87,800 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Education & training

All levels

2018 2019



Index: 96.2 Index: 97.5

86,060 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

All languages & academic subjects

All levels

2018 2019



Index: 107.8 Index: 111.5

225,175 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018 2019



277,311 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018 2019



62,443 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018 2019



19,358 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Entry to level 2

2018 2019



161,930 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018 2019



66,104 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018 2019



25,357 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018 2019



66,702 certificates awarded in 2017/2018

Level 3 and above

2018 2019



63,245 certificates awarded in 2017/2018



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