

Special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2019 exam series

Annual

Published: 5 December 2019

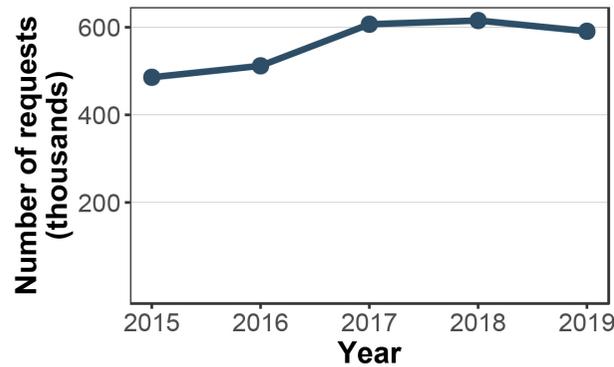
Coverage: England

Official Statistics

This report presents the number of special consideration requests for individual components within GCSEs, AS and A levels that were submitted by schools and colleges in England to exam boards for the exams sat in the summer 2019 exam series.

Number of special consideration requests

In total, there were 590,855 special consideration requests, down 4% from 2018.



Approved requests as a proportion of all assessments

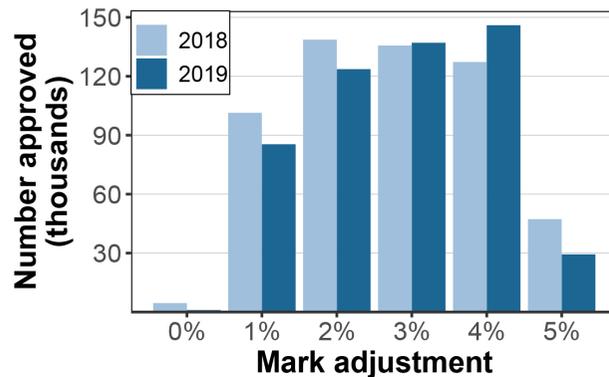


543,650 special considerations were approved in 2019, meaning there was an approved special consideration request for 3% of all assessments.

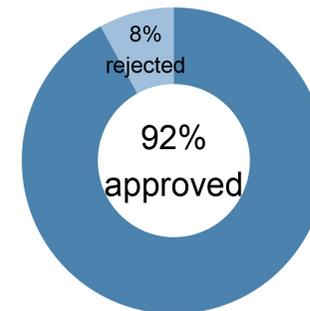
Note: Each icon represents 1%
 ■ Assessments with approved requests
 ■ All other assessments

Distribution of mark adjustments by tariff

The majority of mark adjustments were by 2%, 3% or 4%, as previously. They were fairly evenly spread among these tariffs.



Approved special consideration requests



The majority of special consideration requests (92%) were approved, similar to last year (93%).

At a glance

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Requests and approvals

Requests made decreased by 4% compared to last year

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Requests by subject

The highest number of requests came from mathematics, science and English

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Individual and group applications

The majority of requests (97%) were individual applications

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Mark adjustments and qualification awards

Most approved requests (78%) resulted in adjustments by 2%, 3% or 4%

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Head of profession: Vikas Dhawan

Email: data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk

Comments and feedback are welcome.

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Special consideration

In this report, Ofqual presents the number of special consideration requests for GCSE, AS and A level examinations in England based on data received from exam boards for the summer 2019 exam series.

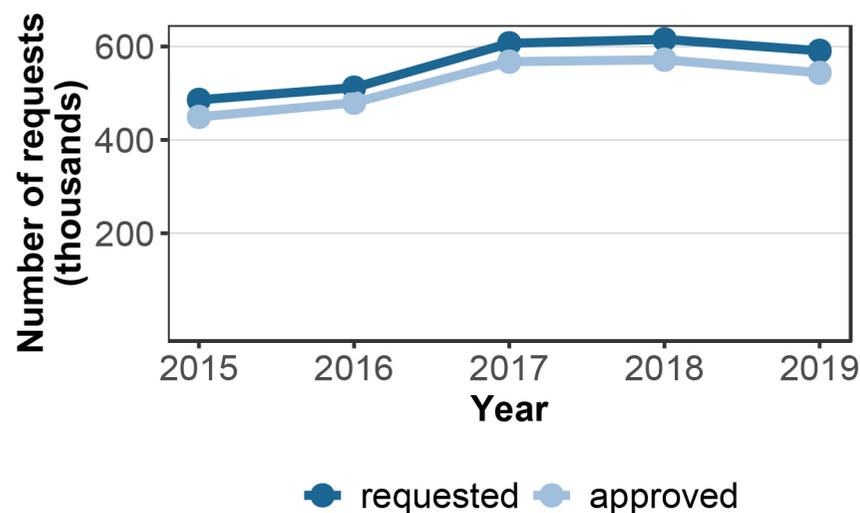
We report here on special consideration given in the form of post-examination adjustments made to marks of candidates who might not have been able to demonstrate their ability in an assessment due to exceptional circumstances that could have had an impact on their performance. For this type of special consideration, a request relates to a single request for a candidate sitting a specific component in an exam series. In other cases, special consideration takes the form of an adjustment to the way an assessment is taken. We report on that form of special consideration in our statistics on [access arrangements](#).

Requests for post-examination mark adjustments are made by schools and colleges usually after an assessment has taken place and applications specify which candidates and which components should be subject to special consideration. Applications can be for an individual candidate, or for a group of candidates if a reason for special consideration covers all these candidates. Awarding organisations will not approve a request if they believe that the reasons given did not significantly affect the performance of the candidate or if the reasons for the special consideration request did not have a significant impact at the time of the assessment.

In this release, all counts are rounded to the nearest 5 to ensure confidentiality of data. Figures for AS are reported along with A level. Further information on this release is available in [the background information as well as data tables](#) accompanying this report.

Special consideration requests

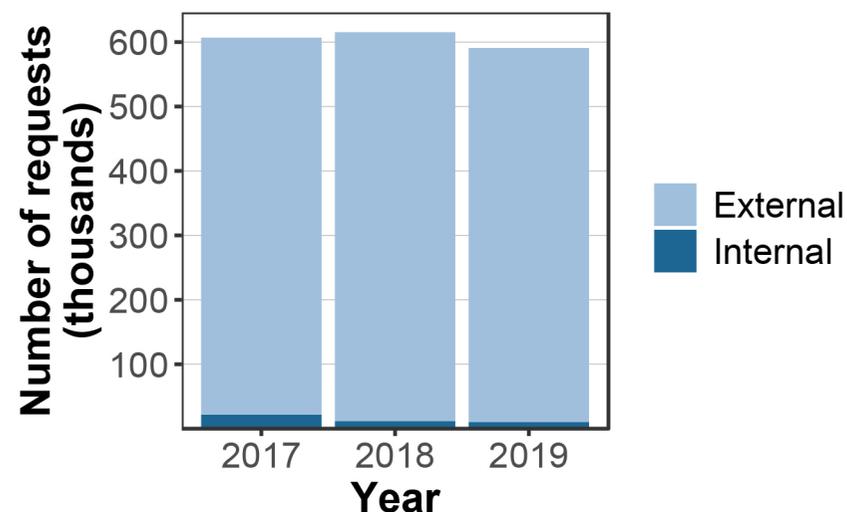
Number of requests made and approved has fallen slightly



Special Consideration requests	Level	2018	2019	% change
Requests made	A/AS Level	131,220	123,620	-6
	GCSE	484,150	467,235	-3
	Total	615,370	590,855	▼ -4
Requests approved	A/AS Level	124,045	114,525	-8
	GCSE	447,645	429,130	-4
	Total	571,690	543,650	▼ -5

The number of requests has decreased by 4% compared to last year, following several years of increases. The number of entries in 2019 fell by 2% compared to 2018.

External and internal assessment requests

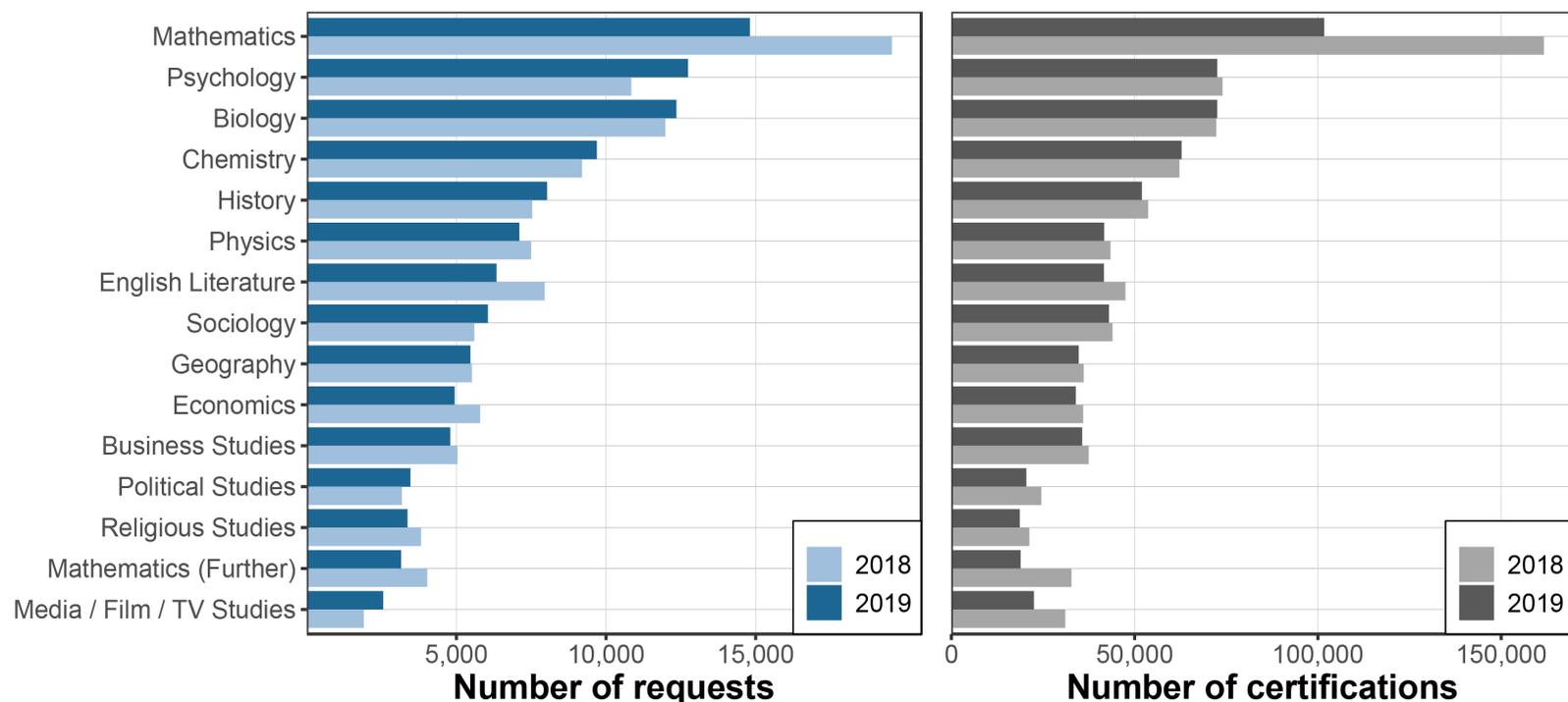


Requests relating to internal assessments (eg coursework) represent a small proportion of the total number of requests: in 2019, as in 2018, 98% of requests were for external assessments (580,495 requests) and 2% were for internal assessments (10,360 requests).

Note: The total number of requests also includes withdrawn requests, which for 2019 were around 1% of all requests.

Special consideration requests by subject

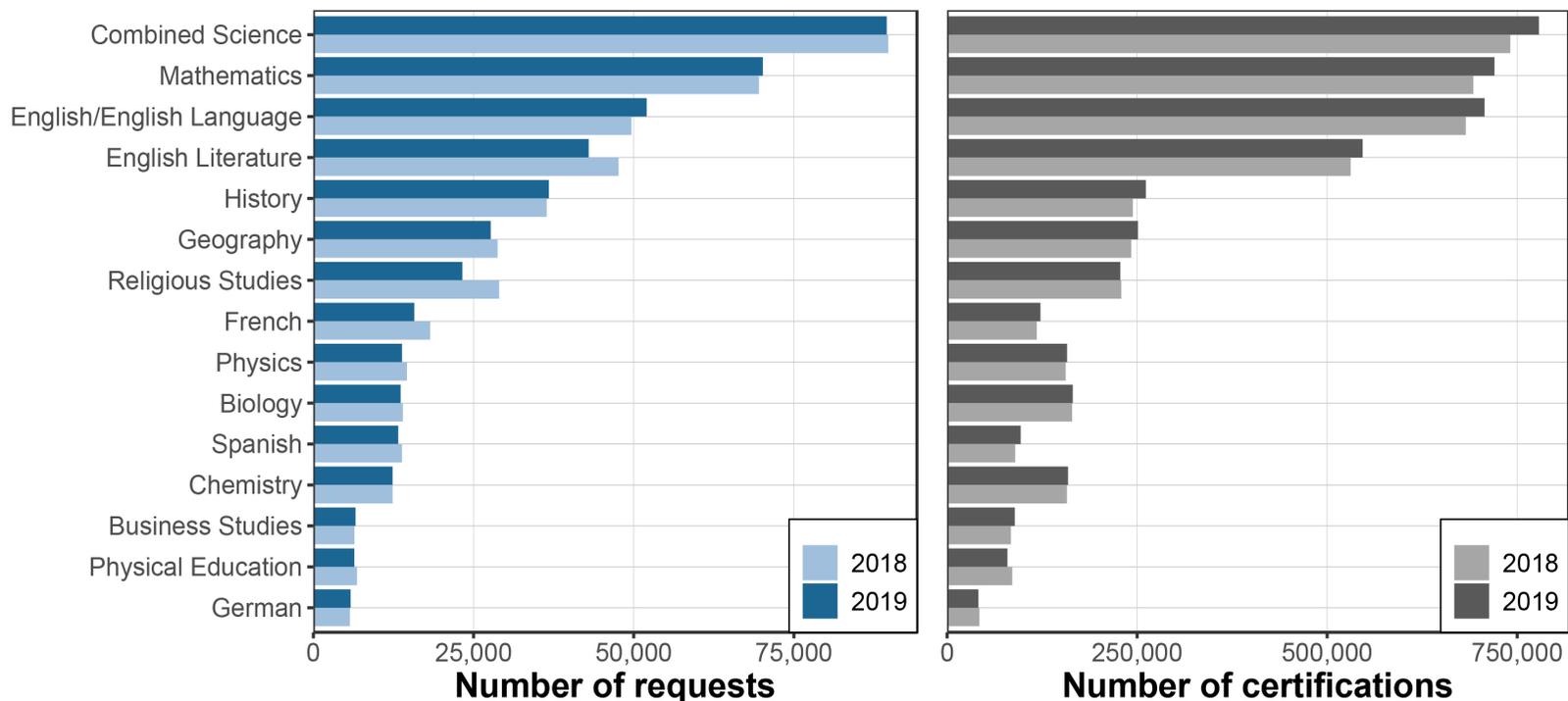
15 AS & A level subjects with the highest number of requests made in 2019 and their number of qualification certifications



Note: the chart on the left shows requests at component level (units prior to 2019) - data collected by Ofqual from exam boards - whereas the chart on the right represents qualification certifications as reported in the data published by JCQ. The qualification certification chart is given as context as no other meaningful benchmark is available for subject breakdown. It is expected that the number of special consideration requests will be related to the number of entries and the number of components for a particular subject, but different subjects comprise differing numbers of components. Additionally, caution may be needed when comparing with previous years due to the transition between legacy and reformed qualifications. Figures for all subjects can be found in the accompanying data tables.

For AS and A level, the greatest numbers of special consideration requests were made in subjects with the greatest numbers of qualification certifications (eg mathematics, psychology, etc). The decline in the number of requests for mathematics in comparison to last year could be explained by [the decline in AS entries for mathematics this year](#) (entries in AS mathematics fell by 76% this year whilst A-level entries in mathematics fell by 5%).

15 GCSE subjects with the highest number of requests made in 2019 and their number of qualification certifications



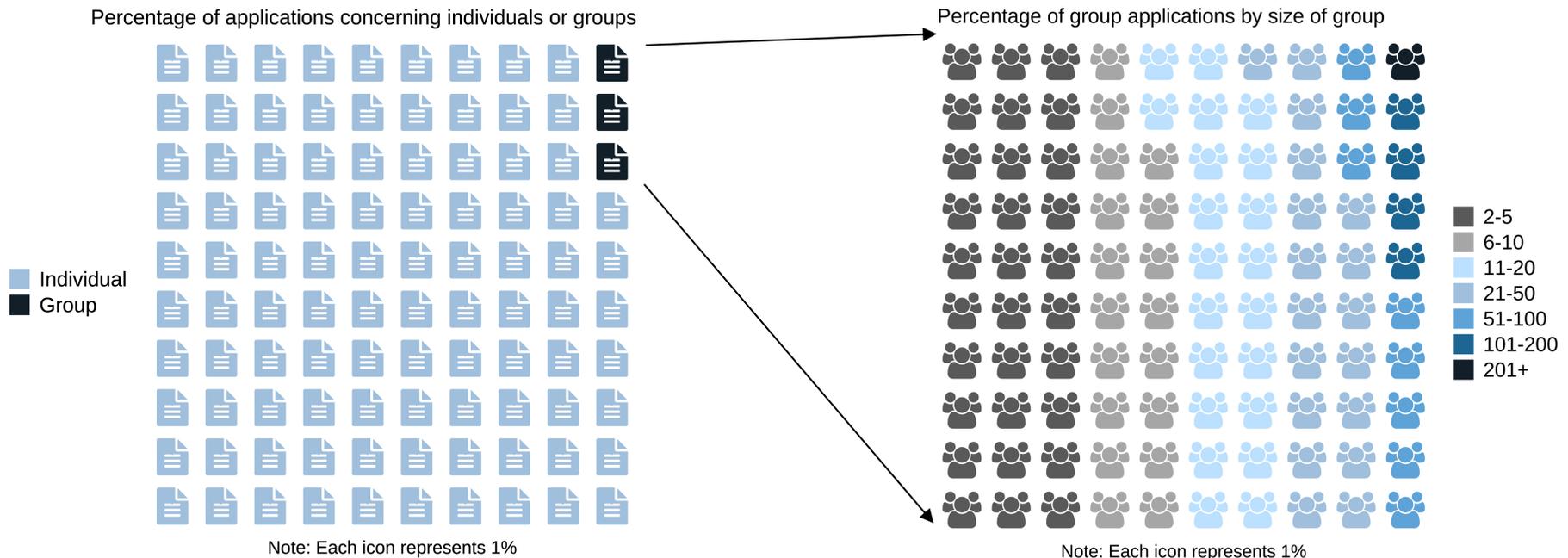
Note: the chart on the left shows requests at component level (units prior to 2019) - data collected by Ofqual from exam boards - whereas the chart on the right represents qualification certifications as reported in the data published by JCQ. The qualification certification chart is given as context as no other meaningful benchmark is available for subject breakdown. It is expected that the number of special consideration requests will be related to the number of entries and the number of components for a particular subject, but different subjects comprise differing numbers of components. Additionally, caution may be needed when comparing with previous years due to the transition between legacy and reformed qualifications. Also note that GCSE combined science, awarded for the first time in 2018, counts as two GCSE entries and is therefore counted twice in the number of certifications. Combined science also comprises 6 papers, compared to 2 or 3 respectively in English and mathematics, which likely explains the greater number of requests despite the similar numbers of entries in these subjects. Figures for all subjects can be found in the accompanying data tables.

Similar to A level, for GCSE the greatest numbers of special consideration requests were made in subjects with the greatest numbers of qualification certifications (combined science, mathematics, English language etc.).

Individual and group special consideration applications

According to [JCQ guidelines](#), applications for special consideration can be made either on an individual or group basis. An individual application involves just one candidate and can cover one or more components. However, there can also be cases where a group of learners has been affected by similar circumstances (e.g. a fire alarm during an exam), in which case a single group application can cover all candidates and the different components they were taking that were affected by the event.

Number of individual and group applications submitted



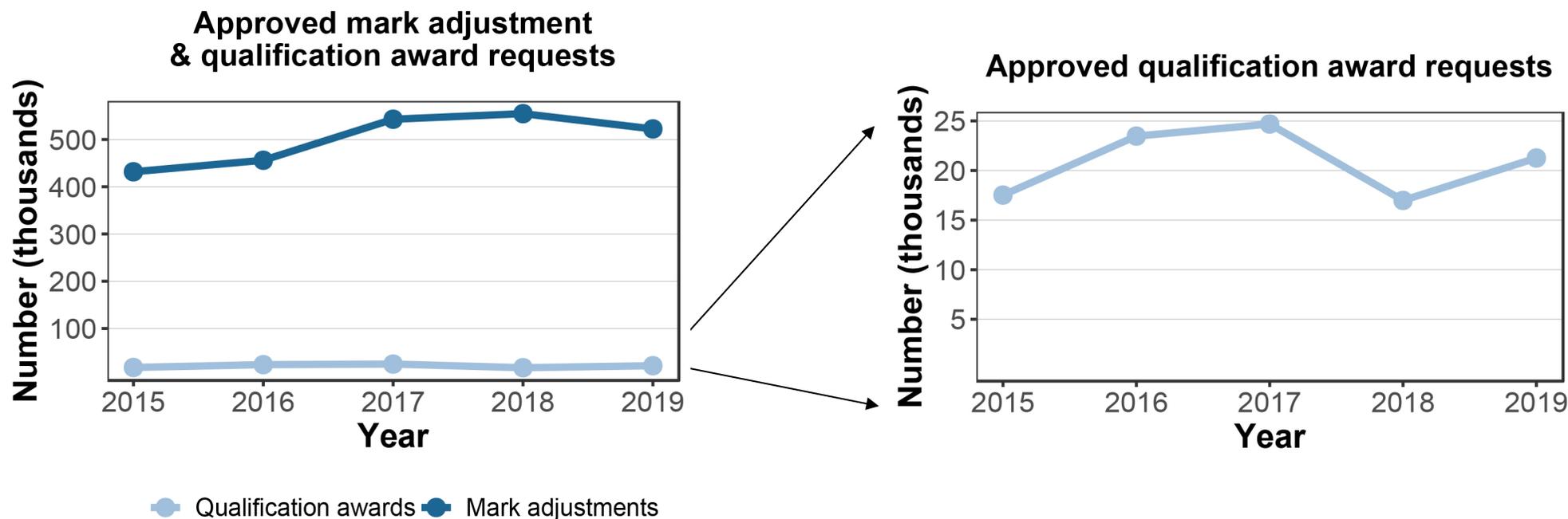
The chart on the left shows the percentage of applications relating to individuals or groups. The chart on the right gives a breakdown of how common groups containing different numbers of students are among group applications. For instance, in 30% of group applications there were between 2 and 5 candidates.

Note: More than one special consideration request can be included in a single application. One application for special consideration, whether for an individual or a group may relate to one or more components. Also, a single group application encompasses a number of candidates. Therefore, the sum of applications for individual and groups is not equal to the total number of special consideration requests (which are counted at individual candidate and component level).

Categories of special consideration

There are two categories of special consideration included in this report: mark adjustments and qualification awards. Mark adjustments are for candidates who were present for the assessment but disadvantaged in some way at the time of taking the assessment, whereas qualification awards are for candidates who were absent with good reason and so did not complete one or more of the assessments (see [JCQ guidelines](#) for further details).

Almost all approved requests were for mark adjustments



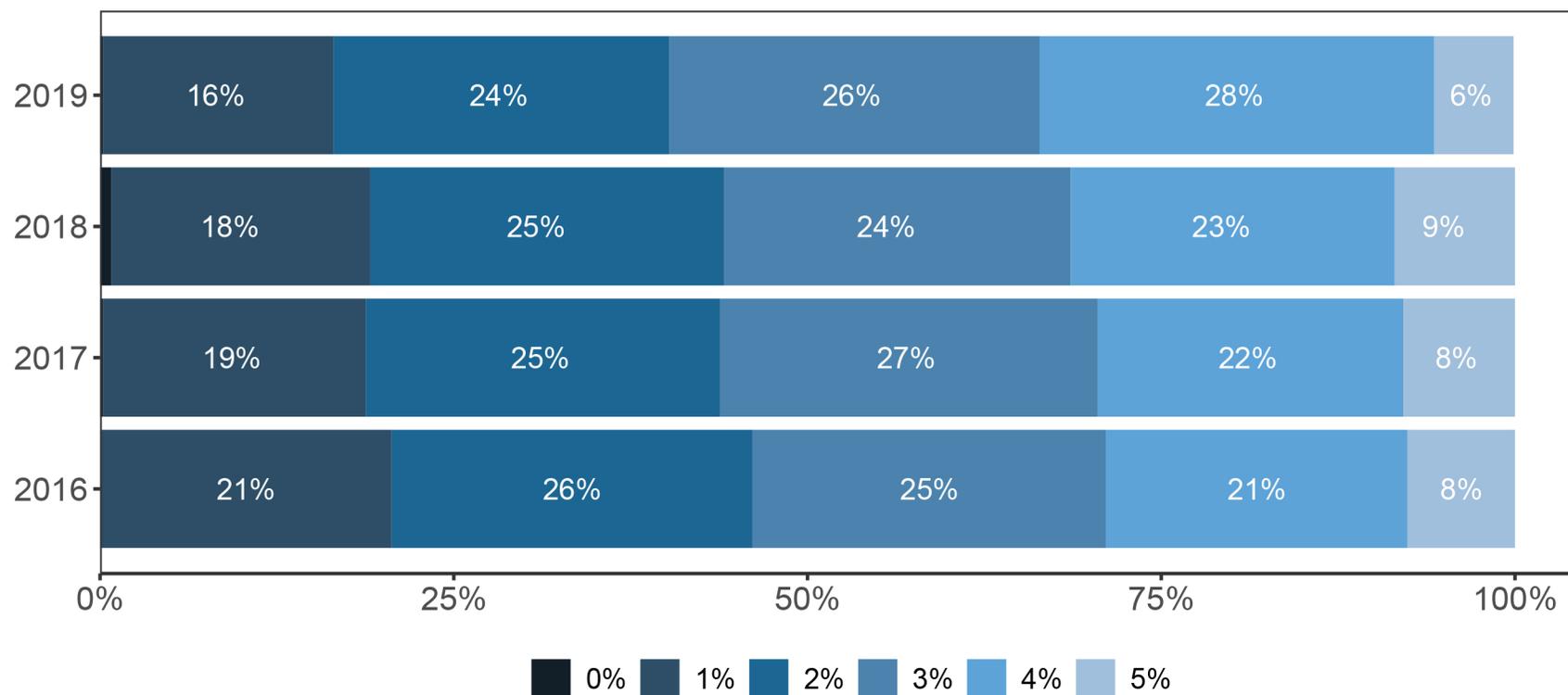
Approved mark adjustment requests have remained above 95% of the total approved requests. The remainder were for qualification awards (see data table 3 for more information). The number of approved qualification award requests increased this year (from 16,985 to 19,520).

Approved mark adjustments

The [guidelines published by JCQ](#) allow for percentage adjustments to the mark given for a candidate's work. The exam boards permit adjustments of up to 5% of the maximum mark of a question paper. This tariff is decided by each exam board.

The majority of mark adjustments (almost 4 out of every 5 adjustments - 78%) were by either 2%, 3% or 4% in 2019. A lower proportion of candidates received the highest tariff of 5% in 2019 than previously, but there was an increase in the combined proportion of 3% and 4% tariff adjustments (54% of all mark adjustment in 2019 compared to 47% of all mark adjustments in 2018). Mark adjustments of 0% were the least common.

Mark adjustments by tariff





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ofqual

Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

0300 303 3344
public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofqual

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