

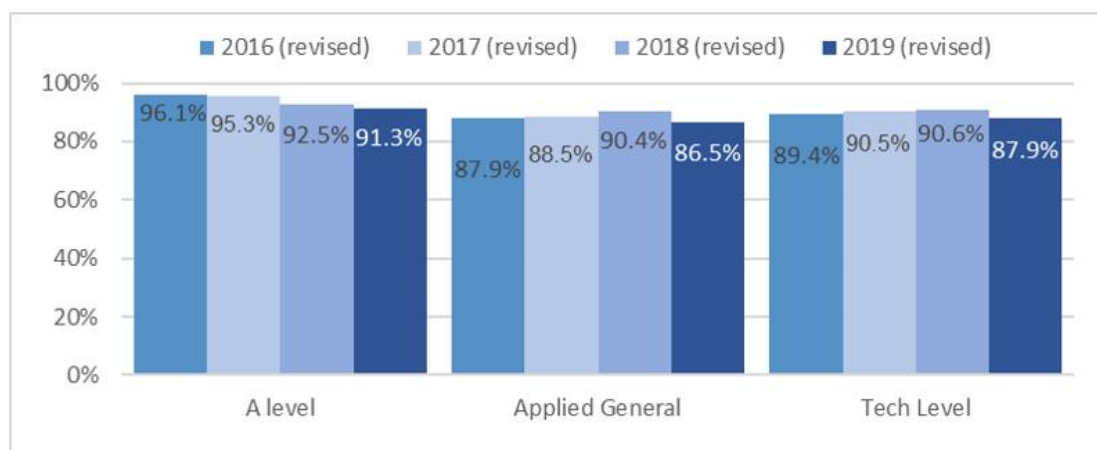


12 March 2020

Note on additional measures

This publication adds the retention, and completion and attainment measures to the [Revised A level and other 16 to 18 results in England, 2018/19](#).

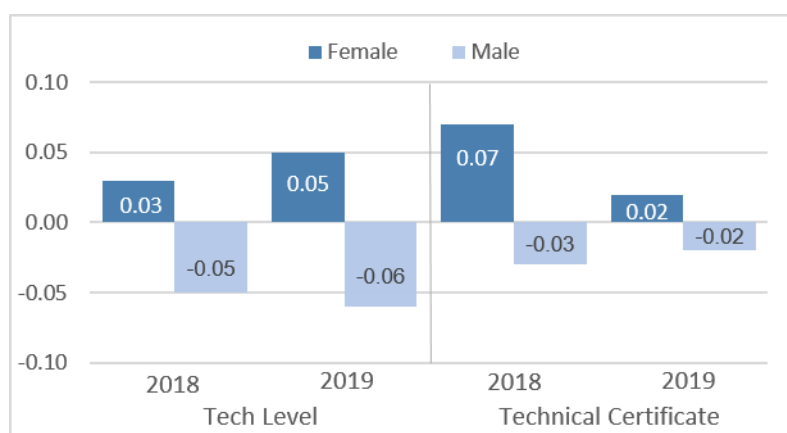
Retention rates remain highest for A level programmes, despite decreasing since 2016



Retention rates are highest for A level study programmes, as was the case for the previous three years. However, retention rates fell for all programmes, with a small decrease from 92.5% in 2018 to 91.3% in 2019 for A level programmes, and bigger decreases of 90.4% to 86.5% for Applied General and 90.6% to 87.9% for Tech Level programmes.

Similarly, the retention rate for Technical Certificate programmes fell from 88.3% in 2018 to 87.9% in 2019.

Completion and retention remains higher for females than males, and lower for disadvantaged students.



The completion and attainment measure was higher for females than males for both Tech Level programmes and Technical Certificate programmes, as in 2018. The large reduction in the difference between females and males in Technical Certificate programmes (from 0.10 in 2018 to 0.04 in 2019) may be linked to changing entry patterns caused by a substantial change to the list of approved qualifications. Disadvantaged students continue to have lower scores for both study programmes.

Contents

1. Retention	3
<i>National retention rates, and retention by gender</i>	3
<i>Retention by disadvantaged status</i>	4
<i>Retention by institution type</i>	5
<i>Retained and assessed</i>	5
<i>Returned and retained for a second year</i>	5
2. Completion and attainment	6
<i>National completion and attainment score breakdown by gender</i>	6
<i>Completion and attainment score breakdown by disadvantaged status</i>	6
<i>Completion and attainment score breakdown by institution type</i>	7
3. Accompanying tables	9
4. Further information is available	9
5. National Statistics	11
6. Technical Information	11
7. Get in touch	11
<i>Media enquiries</i>	11
<i>Other enquiries/feedback</i>	11

About this release

The retention and the completion and attainment measures use information on student 16 to 18 learning aims from the Autumn School Census and Individualised Learner Record (ILR). The aims information was collected in October 2019 and made available for analysis in January 2020. Due to data availability, these measures are published in March 2020.

The statistics in this release are based on the same revised data extract used in the figures published in January 2020. The revised figures incorporate the small proportion of amendments that awarding organisations, schools or colleges and local authorities submitted to the department after August 2019; these amendments are included in the data for the retention measure, and for the completion and attainment measure.

Additional data available

A range of datasets are published alongside this document. These are detailed in the [‘Accompanying tables’](#) section.

1. Retention

The retention measure shows the percentage of students who completed their main study programme at a provider. A student's main study programme is also known as a core aim.

Students are included in the retention measure if they are:

- aged 16 to 18 and at the end of their 16 to 18 study.
- enrolled in an eligible study programme (see p43 of the [technical guide](#), and the [technical and vocational qualifications guidance](#)).

Students are counted as retained if they are recorded as having “completed the learning activities leading to the learning aim” in the school census or ILR.

The retention measure is calculated by dividing the total number of students retained, by the total number of students in scope for each of the five core aim cohorts: level 3 academic; A level; level 3 applied general; level 3 Tech Level; and level 2 technical certificate. Since the level 3 academic cohort is composed largely of the A level cohort, only data for the A level cohort is shown here. Data for the academic cohort can be found in the tables accompanying this document.

Alongside the headline retention measure there are two supporting retention measures:

- 1) Returned and retained for a second year: The percentage of level 3 students who return to the same provider and complete their programme of study in their second year.
- 2) Retained and assessed: The percentage of students who are retained to the end of their course and are assessed.

National retention rates, and retention by gender

In 2019 (2018/19 academic year), the number of students enrolled in A level programmes decreased by 7.4% compared to 2018 (down from 257,237 to 238,172). In contrast, the Applied General and Tech Level cohorts saw substantial increases of 79.0% (to 53,615) and 68.2% (to 20,382) respectively. The large decrease in the technical certificate cohort (down 81.2% to 7,745) is likely to have been due to reforms to the list of approved technical certificate qualifications. These patterns are in line with changes in the cohorts which were described in the [main publication text](#) in January.

The retention rate decreased across all programme types from 2018 to 2019, but most notably for the Applied General (90.4% to 86.5%) and Tech Level (90.6% to 87.9%) programmes ([Table 1a](#)).

Table 1a: Retention by study programme (Tables 16a and 16b)
England, 2019

	A Level programmes		Applied General programmes		Tech Level programmes		Technical Certificate programmes	
	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained
2018 (revised)	257,237	92.5	29,951	90.4	12,114	90.6	41,144	88.3
2019 (revised)	238,172	91.3	53,615	86.5	20,381	87.9	7,745	87.9

Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

As shown in [Table 1b](#), the decrease in retention rate was evenly distributed between the genders, with the exception of Technical Certificate programmes, where retention remained broadly stable for females (87.7% to 87.8%) but decreased slightly for males (88.7% to 87.9%).

Retention was higher for females than males across all programmes except Technical Certificates. The largest gender difference was in Tech Level programmes, where female retention was 88.8% and male retention was 86.7%.

Similarly, more female than male students enrolled in all programmes except Technical Certificates. Technical Certificate programmes saw a large decrease in the number of entries, but this was more substantial for males which went from 25,328 in 2018 to 15,816 in 2019, whereas female entries saw a smaller decrease. This may be linked to the substantial change to the list of approved qualifications. Females are now 44.1% of the entries for Technical Certificates whereas they were 38.4% in 2018.

Table 1b: Number of students and retention rate by gender and core aim cohort (measures by characteristics CSV)
England, 2019

		A Level programmes		Applied General programmes		Tech Level programmes		Technical Certificate programmes	
		Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained
2018 (revised)	Females	142,182	92.8	16,080	90.6	6,941	91.4	15,816	87.7
	Males	115,055	92.1	13,871	90.2	5,173	89.5	25,328	88.7
2019 (revised)	Females	132,642	91.5	28,074	86.8	11,653	88.8	3,415	87.8
	Males	105,530	91.0	25,541	86.2	8,728	86.7	4,330	87.9

Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

Retention by disadvantaged status¹

As seen in [table 2](#), retention rates are lower for disadvantaged students compared to non-disadvantaged students across all study programmes, with differences ranging from 6.9 percentage points for A level programmes to 4.5 percentage points for Technical Certificate programmes, with the lowest rate being for disadvantaged students on Applied General programmes (83.0%). This is the same pattern as seen last year, but the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged has increased slightly.

Table 2: Retention by disadvantaged status and study programme (measures by characteristics CSV)
England, 2019

	A level programmes		Applied General programmes		Tech Level programmes		Technical Certificate programmes	
	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained
Disadvantaged students	38,123	85.5	13,851	83.0	5,254	84.5	2,689	84.9
Non-disadvantaged students	197,034	92.4	39,177	87.8	14,919	89.1	4,910	89.4
Unknown status	3,015	88.5	587	86.9	208	88.9	146	91.1
All State-funded students¹	238,172	91.3	53,615	86.5	20,381	87.9	7,745	87.9

Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

1. Covers state-funded mainstream schools and colleges.

¹¹ Students' disadvantaged status at the end of key stage 4 are used for 16 to 18 performance measures. More information about disadvantaged status can be found in the [main text](#) for this publication.

Retention by institution type

Care should be taken when comparing across institution types. This is due to significant differences in the number of students, their characteristics and the proportion in each study programme.

A level retention is highest for converter academies (93.5%). Converter academies also have high retention rates for Applied General programmes, Tech Level programmes and Technical Certificate programmes ([table 3](#)).

University technical colleges and Studio schools have the lowest retention rates for A level programmes (73.9% and 79.8% respectively) but have much better retention rates for Applied General programmes and Tech Level programmes.

Table 3: Retention by institution type (Tables 16a and 16b)
England, 2019.

Institution type	A level programmes		Applied General programmes		Tech Level programmes		Technical Certificate programmes	
	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained	Number of students	% of students retained
Local authority maintained mainstream schools	33,281	92.7	8,229	84.0	941	82.9	17	100.0
Sponsored academies	15,876	91.2	8,125	83.7	1,260	80.2	107	86.0
Converter academies	118,074	93.5	17,772	85.9	2,511	85.5	131	91.6
Free schools	1,410	92.1	77	85.7	32	78.1	0	.
Free schools (16-19)	2,745	91.5	231	94.8	41	78.0	2	100.0
University technical colleges	743	73.9	597	85.8	1,092	82.5	9	66.7
Studio schools	238	79.8	288	87.8	182	85.2	0	.
Sixth form colleges	42,213	87.2	3,639	88.7	616	88.0	28	82.1
Other FE sector colleges	23,217	85.7	14,580	89.6	13,690	89.9	7,451	87.9

Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

Retained and assessed

 (Tables 16a, 16b and measures by characteristics CSV)

This supporting measure shows the percentage of students who are retained to the end of their course and are assessed. This allows users of the performance tables to see whether students are effectively completing their studies and taking the assessments needed to gain qualifications. For further details, see p48 of the [technical guide](#).

A level students were retained and assessed to a greater extent (89.4%) than their Applied General (79.3%), Technical Level (75.7%) and Technical Certificate (55.9%) counterparts. Across all programmes, the retained and assessed measure is higher for female than for male students. These are broadly the same patterns as seen in 2018. The gender difference is greatest for Technical Certificate programmes (female, 68.7%; male, 45.9%) and smallest for A level programmes (female, 89.8%; male, 89.0%).

Returned and retained for a second year

 (Tables 16a and measures by characteristics CSV)

This supporting measure shows the percentage of level 3 students who return to the same provider for a second year of study and complete their programme of study in their second year. For further details, see p49 of the [technical guide](#).

A level students were more likely to return to and be retained by the same provider (84.6%), compared to Applied General (75.1%) and Technical Level (76.1%) programmes. Female A level and Applied General

students' returned and retained measure exceeded that of their male counterparts, while the opposite was true for Technical Level programmes. These patterns were also seen in 2018.

2. Completion and attainment

The completion and attainment measure compares the attainment of students who have taken Tech Level or Technical Certificate qualifications with the national average attainment for each qualification. It is expressed as a proportion of a grade above or below average. The completion and attainment score over all students will therefore always be zero.

Students are included in the completion and attainment measure if they are:

- aged 16 to 18 and at the end of their 16 to 18 study.
- enrolled in an eligible study programme (see p22 of the [technical guide](#), and the [technical and vocational qualifications guidance](#)).

Students are assigned a point score based on the grade that they achieved, with fails and withdrawals after the qualifying period given zero points. The scores for each qualification are aggregated to give a completion and attainment score, and further aggregated to give an overall completion and attainment score for a provider.

National completion and attainment score breakdown by gender

In 2019, females had higher completion and attainment scores than males for both Tech Levels and Technical Certificates, following the same pattern as seen in 2018 ([Table 4](#)). The difference in the number of qualifications studied follows the same pattern as that for number of students enrolled, shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 4: Completion and attainment score in Tech Level and Technical Certificate qualifications, for students entering these qualifications by gender (measures by characteristics CSV)

England, 2019

		Number of Tech Level qualifications studied	Completion and attainment score	Number of Technical Certificate qualifications studied	Completion and attainment score
2018 (revised)	Females	7,901	0.03	6,476	0.07
	Males	6,269	-0.05	12,849	-0.03
	All students¹	14,170	0.00	19,325	0.00
2019 (revised)	Females	12,590	0.05	3,670	0.02
	Males	10,043	-0.06	4,138	-0.02
	All students¹	22,633	0.00	7,808	0.00

Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

1. Covers state-funded mainstream schools and colleges.

Completion and attainment score breakdown by disadvantaged status²

Disadvantaged students represented 25.4% of the total number of Tech Level entries. A higher proportion of Technical Certificate entries were by disadvantaged students, at 33.5%. Completion and attainment scores were lower for disadvantaged students than non-disadvantaged students for both study

² Students' disadvantaged status at the end of key stage 4 are used for 16 to 18 performance measures. More information about disadvantaged status can be found in the [main text](#) for this publication.

programmes ([Table 5](#)). The disadvantaged proportion of the cohort and the difference in completion and attainment scores between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, are almost unchanged from last year.

Table 5: Completion and attainment score in Tech Level and Technical Certificate qualifications, for students entering these qualifications, by disadvantaged status (measures by characteristics CSV) England, 2019

	Number of Tech Level qualifications studied	Completion and attainment Score	Number of Technical Certificate qualifications studied	Completion and attainment Score
Disadvantaged students	5,759	-0.25	2,613	-0.10
Non-disadvantaged students	16,641	0.08	5,062	0.05
Unknown status	233	-0.07	133	0.14
All state-funded students¹	22,633	0.00	7,808	0.00

Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

1. Covers state-funded mainstream schools and colleges.

Completion and attainment score breakdown by institution type

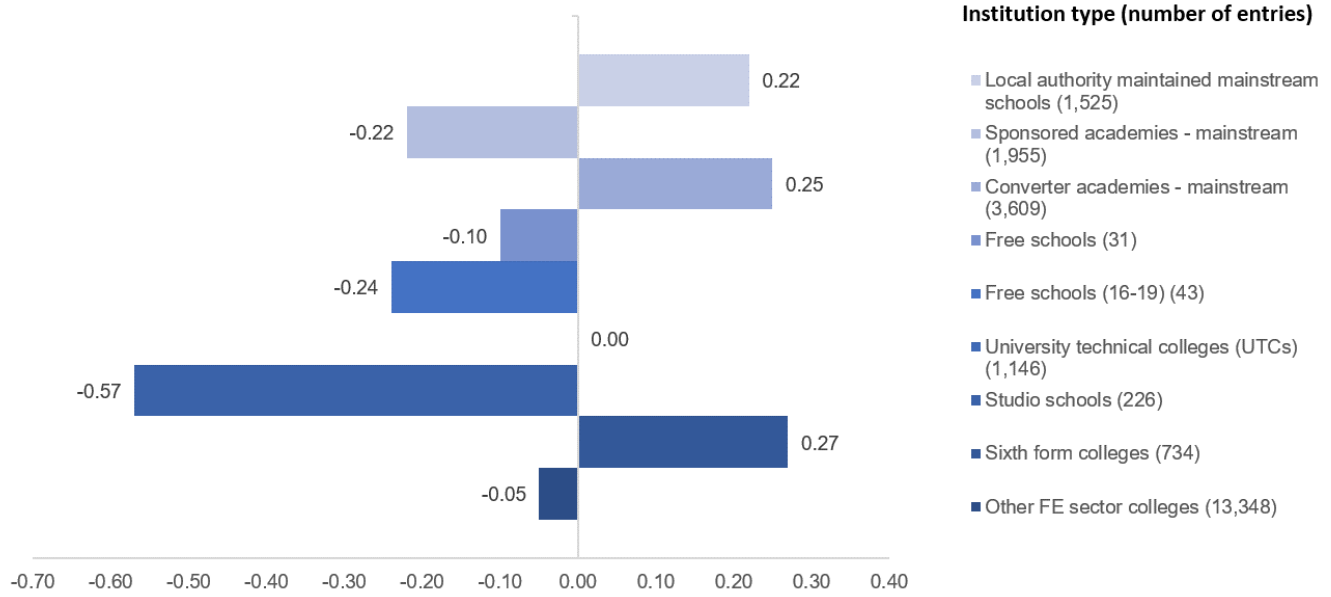
Care should be taken when comparing across institution types. This is due to significant differences in the number of students, their characteristics and the proportion in each study programme. In [figure 1](#) and [figure 2](#), cohort sizes are shown in parentheses.

Local authority maintained mainstream schools, mainstream converter academics and sixth form colleges all had good completion and attainment rates for Tech Levels (0.22, 0.25 and 0.27 respectively), whereas mainstream sponsored academies had a poorer rate of -0.22. Studio schools had the worst completion and attainment rate for Tech Levels, at -0.57.

For Technical Certificates, the low number of entries means low cohort numbers in most cases. The institutions with larger cohorts all had completion and attainment rates close to zero.

Figure 1: Completion and attainment score in Tech Level qualifications, by institution type (Table 17a)

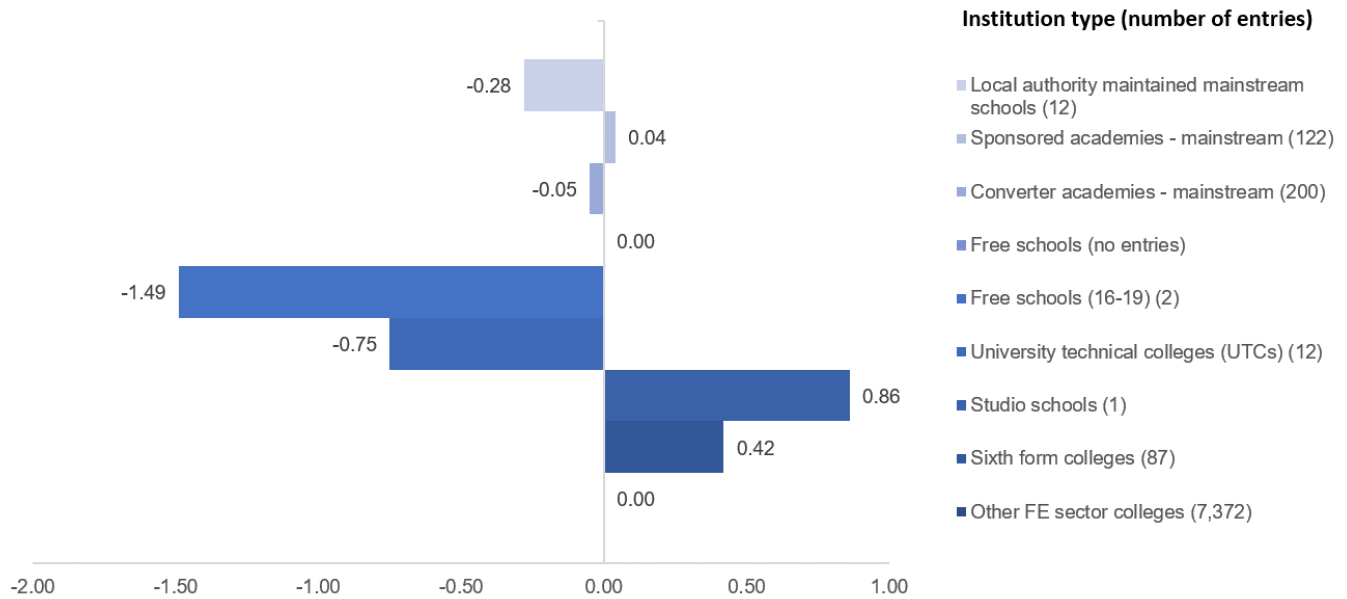
England, 2019



Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

Figure 2: Completion and attainment score in Technical Certificate qualifications, by institution type (Table 17b)

England, 2019



Source: 16 to 18 revised attainment data

3. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics [website](#).

National tables:

16a: Percentage of state-funded students at the end of 16 to 18 studies, who are retained to the end of their main level 3 study programme (core aim) at a provider, by institution type

16b: Percentage of state-funded students at the end of 16 to 18 studies, who are retained to the end of their main level 2 study programme (core aim) at a provider, by institution type

17a: Completion and attainment score in Tech Level qualifications, for students entering Tech Level qualifications and who are at the end of 16 to 18 studies, by institution type

17b: Completion and attainment score in Technical Certificate qualifications, for students entering Technical Certificate qualifications and who are at the end of 16 to 18 studies, by institution type

CSVs:

Performance Measures by Characteristics CSV

4. Further information is available

Performance tables	Data for institutions can found in the school and college performance tables . The 16 to 18 performance tables were updated with retention measure and completion and attainment measure for 2016/17 data in March 2018.
Key stage 4	GCSE and equivalent results for key stage 4 can be found at GOV.UK - Statistics: GCSEs (key stage 4) .
Key stage 2	Statistics on national curriculum assessments and review outcomes at key stage 2 (KS2), including measures of progress between KS1 and KS2, can be found at GOV.UK - Statistics: key stage 2 .
Key stage 1	Statistics on national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 and phonics screening check results can be found at GOV.UK - Statistics: key stage 1 .
Destination measures	Statistics on educational or employment destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 students can be found at GOV.UK - Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils .
Level 2 and 3 attainment at 16 to 18	Statistics on the attainment of young people aged 19, based on matched administrative data can be found at GOV.UK – Attainment at 19 years .
Level 1 and 2 attainment in English and maths at 16 to 18	Experimental statistics on level 1 and 2 English and maths by students aged 16 to 18 who failed to achieve A* to C by the end of key stage 4 can be found at GOV.UK - Attainment at 19 years . Note that this release has been discontinued.
Results for the rest of the UK	<p>The Welsh Assembly publishes the results of external examinations taken by pupils aged 15 or 17, available at: Welsh assembly statistics and research</p> <p>The Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) published AS and A level statistics, available at: Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI)</p> <p>The publication 'Summary statistics for attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living' is published by the Scottish Government and is available at: The Scottish Government website</p>

Information published by Ofqual

Exam boards use a combination of expert judgement and statistics to set grade boundaries. Ofqual monitors the maintenance of standards of each qualification over time so that they are fair for all students – between exam boards in a subject, as well as from year to year. Statistics involve predictions based on the cohort's prior attainment. For AS and A level, exam boards use predictions based on the cohort's prior attainment at GCSE. Further information on how grades are set for AS and A levels can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulating-gcses-as-and-a-levels-guide-for-schools-and-colleges/grading>.

Ofqual has also published information on variability in A levels for schools and colleges, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/variability-in-a-level-results-for-schools-2017-to-2019>.

5. National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

6. Technical Information

A quality and methodology information document accompanies this document. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality, and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed. More details can be found in the department's [technical guide](#).

7. Get in touch

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