

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Entries for GCSE, AS and A level summer 2020 exam series: provisional figures April 2020

Background information accompanying the
statistical release

June 2020

ofqual

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Information about the statistics

Purpose

This release provides information on the number of entries for GCSEs, AS and A levels (in the report and in the data tables) for the summer 2020 exam series. Entries data are collected at the same time every year, at a point when it should be reasonably complete, although final entry numbers may be slightly different from these. These figures are therefore provisional and represent entry information received by awarding organisations by 14 April 2020.

[JCQ had asked centres to finalise entries by 21 February 2020](#) and late entries were only permitted subject to circumstances where errors meant candidates were not entered or other exceptional circumstances. On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State announced that the summer 2020 exam series would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and that students due to sit the exams would be awarded a grade based on an assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead. Ofqual [published guidance on how GCSEs and A levels will be awarded following the cancellation of this year's exams](#), then conducted a consultation about proposals for exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020, which closed on 29 April 2020. Ofqual therefore requires exam boards to issue results only to those students who were entered for exams this year before the deadline of 21 February. We will, however, allow exam boards to exercise discretion where a compelling case can be made that a student would have been entered before the later 'late entries' deadline set by JCQ, including where centres withdrew entries in respect of students who they did not at the time believe would be eligible to receive a calculated grade.

Geographical coverage

The report presents data on the number of entries in England for the summer 2020 exam series.

Four exam boards offer GCSE and AS/A level qualifications in England:

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC/Eduqas)

Previously data were also collected on Level 1/Level 2 certificates which were regulated by Ofqual, offered by the above exam boards and Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE). Ofqual no longer regulates these qualifications and the data collection and publication have ceased this year.

Description

This release provides information on the number of entries broken down by subject and age of students based on school year groups. The figures given in the tables are from combined reformed and non-reformed qualifications, although this year almost all entries are for reformed qualifications.

Centres enter students at qualification level ahead of the summer examination series according to the course of study that they have followed.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) assigns a code to every qualification according to a category defined by JCQ which groups qualifications in subject groups. JCQ groupings are used in this release to filter and sort the data in the data tables. Some of these categories may not contain the same qualifications from year to year due to some subjects not being available after reforms. For instance, in 2017 GCSE Performing/Expressive arts included qualifications related to 'performing arts' and 'expressive arts' but from 2018 contains only 'dance' qualifications.

External influences

There are various factors which might have influenced the entries for GCSE, AS and A levels given in this release:

AS and A level

In reformed qualifications, AS and A level have been decoupled. This means that AS results do not count towards a student's A level grade as they did previously. This is likely to be the reason for the decline in AS entries since the introduction of reformed specifications.

The first phase of reformed qualifications [were made available for first teaching in 2015, with first awards of AS in 2016 and A level in 2017](#). Phase 1 reform subjects included mainly large entry subjects, including biology, chemistry, physics, English language, English literature and history. Phase 2 subjects were first awarded at A level in 2018 and included most large entry subjects including geography, French, German and Spanish. Phase 3 subjects including mathematics, further mathematics and classical subjects were first awarded at A level in 2019 (except mathematics which was first available in 2018 after one year of study).

GCSE

[Reformed GCSEs are graded on a 9 to 1 scale](#) (9 denoting the highest grade and 1 denoting the lowest grade). Legacy GCSEs are no longer available.

Reformed combined science replaces the previously available science and additional science GCSEs. Combined science is counted as two GCSEs in terms of [grading](#) and [weighting](#) in school accountability measures and is reported on a 17-point grade

scale from 9-9, 9-8, and so on to 1-1. Therefore entries are double counted in this report and associated data tables to reflect this.

For summer 2017 onwards, Level 1/Level 2 certificates no longer counted in school performance tables and therefore there was a continuing fall in the entries for these qualifications and a further shift in the cohort back to GCSEs.

[The English Baccalaureate \(EBacc\)](#) is a school accountability measure relating to attainment in core academic subjects. From 2018 the measure calculates a school's average point score for students taking reformed EBacc eligible GCSE subjects. This includes English literature, English language and mathematics, history or geography, a specified combination of science GCSEs and a language.

In 2016, the Progress 8 measure was introduced. It is a key school accountability measure that is based on students' progress from key stage 2 in eight GCSE subjects. [Progress 8 is made up of four elements:](#)

1. a double weighted mathematics element
2. a double weighted English element based on the highest point score in English language or English literature qualification
3. an element which includes the three highest point scores from EBacc qualifications
4. an element including three qualifications from the remaining EBacc subjects and/or other GCSEs or other qualifications included on the DfE approved list for performance tables

Since August 2015 full time students who have not achieved a grade 4 (prior to 2017 a grade C) or above in English language or English literature and mathematics GCSEs must continue studying these subjects in order to be funded post-16.

Data source

Awarding organisations submit data to Ofqual for GCSEs, AS and A levels they award for the summer examination series. Any provider that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period is contacted to make sure the data is as complete as possible.

Data have been collected at an appropriate point when entries are reasonably complete, in this case, by 14 April 2020. Ofqual agreed these dates with the awarding organisations as a point when the majority of entries would have been submitted. The data is collected at the same time each year to aid year-on-year comparisons.

Limitations

There is potential for error in the information provided by awarding organisations and Ofqual cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. Ofqual quality assures data as far as possible, performing a number of checks on the data eg checks for systematic issues and compares the data over time. Summary data are sent back to exam boards for checking and confirmation. However, it is still possible that some errors may remain undetected.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the [Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications](#) published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary. Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of provisional entries as at 14 April 2020 are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect any new categorisation of subjects.

Confidentiality and rounding

To ensure confidentiality of the accompanying data, all figures for the number of entries are rounded. In the accompanying data tables and commentary, the figures are rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is less than 5 (1 to 4), it is represented as 0~ and 0 represents zero values.

Total values of rows or columns are calculated using unrounded figures; the sum of rounded figures may differ from the total reported.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, except where smaller magnitudes are needed for meaningful interpretation. As a result of rounded figures, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

Status

These statistics are classified as Official Statistics.

Related publications

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please contact the respective regulators - [Qualifications Wales](#), [CCEA](#) and the [Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\)](#).

Useful links

- [report and data tables](#) accompanying this release
- [definitions](#) of important terms used in this release
- [policies and procedures](#) that Ofqual follow for production and release of its statistical releases

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us at data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk.



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