

Variability in AS results for individual schools and colleges: 2014 to 2016



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Key points

- As expected, there was more variability in individual school and college AS results at grade A between 2015 and 2016 than between 2014 and 2015.
- However, increases in the mean (average) year-on-year difference in the percentage of students achieving a grade A between 2015/2016 and 2014/2015 were generally small, indicating that year-on-year results in these reformed AS subjects have remained relatively stable.
- Even when there are no changes to qualifications, individual schools and colleges will see variation in their year-on-year results: this is normal.

AS results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland have been relatively stable in recent years, with only very small changes in the overall percentages of students achieving grade A. But we know that individual schools and colleges may see variation in the proportion of their students achieving particular grades from one year to the next. This can be due to many different factors, including differences in the mix of the students entered for particular subjects, different teaching approaches, changes in teaching staff or teaching time, and changes to qualifications.

This summer, new AS qualifications in 13 subjects¹ are being awarded in England for the first time. These new AS qualifications do not count towards students' A level grades. We have analysed the year-on-year variation in the percentage of students achieving grade A in these 13 subjects from 2014 to 2016, using the summer results published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)². We have looked only at schools and colleges with 20 or more students in a subject in both years: smaller cohorts are likely to be less stable and to show more variation.

We have plotted the variation seen in each of several hundred schools and colleges. Each bar in the graphs represents the number of schools and colleges with a particular level of variation, measured in intervals of 2.5 percentage points. For example, the bar to the left

¹ Art & design, biology, business, chemistry, computing, economics, English language, English language and literature, English literature, history, physics, psychology, sociology

² See <http://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels>

of the zero represents schools that had a drop of up to 2.5 percentage points and the bar to the right of the zero represents schools that had an increase of up to 2.5 percentage points. The higher the peaks in the middle, the greater the stability from one year to the next.³ We have also looked at the variation for students in Year 12 only (17-year-old students).⁴ Since Year 12 students make up most of the AS entry, it is not surprising that the pattern of variation is similar. The graphs presented below show the year-on-year variation for all students on the left and for Year 12 on the right (in blue).

As expected, overall, there was more variability between 2015 and 2016 than 2014 and 2015. However, increases in the mean (average) year-on-year difference in the percentage of students achieving a grade A between 2015/2016 and 2014/2015 were generally small, indicating that year-on-year results in these AS subjects have remained relatively stable. In some subjects (art and design, physics, psychology, and sociology) results were more stable between 2015 and 2016 than 2014 and 2015. The exception to this is computing where the mean year-on-year difference for all students was -0.2 in 2014/15 and 3.4 in 2015/16. We would expect this subject to be less stable than the others as the number of schools and colleges included in the analysis is much smaller than for the other subjects.

Entries to the new AS qualifications have dropped by about 20% compared to 2015⁵; as a result the number of schools and colleges included in the 2015/2016 analysis is much lower than the number included in the 2014/2015 analysis. We have analysed year-on-year changes in entry patterns for the 13 subjects being awarded for the first time this summer in order to investigate whether schools and colleges that entered students for AS in 2015 reduced their entry in 2016 or did not enter any students at all. We found that the percentage of schools and colleges who entered at least one student in summer 2015 but entered no students in summer 2016 in each subject was as follows: art and design: 32%, biology: 22%, business studies: 29%, chemistry: 22%, computing: 33%, economics: 31%, English literature: 32%, history: 29%, physics: 23%, psychology: 22%, sociology: 23%.

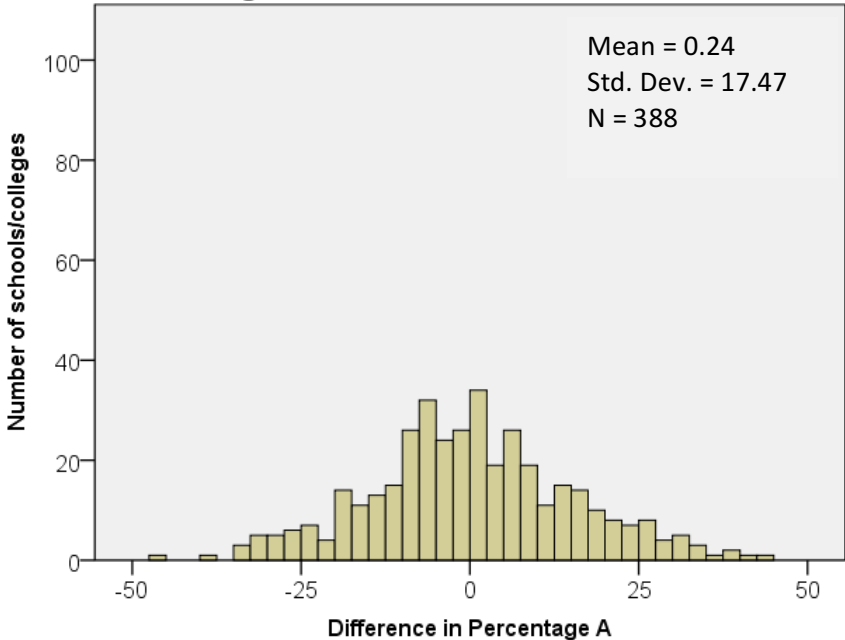
³ Note that, although the same scales are used for the y axis on each of the graphs within a subject, the scales do vary between subjects

⁴ Note that the number of schools/colleges is slightly lower in the Year 12 only graphs, because we have only included schools and colleges with 20 or more Year 12 students

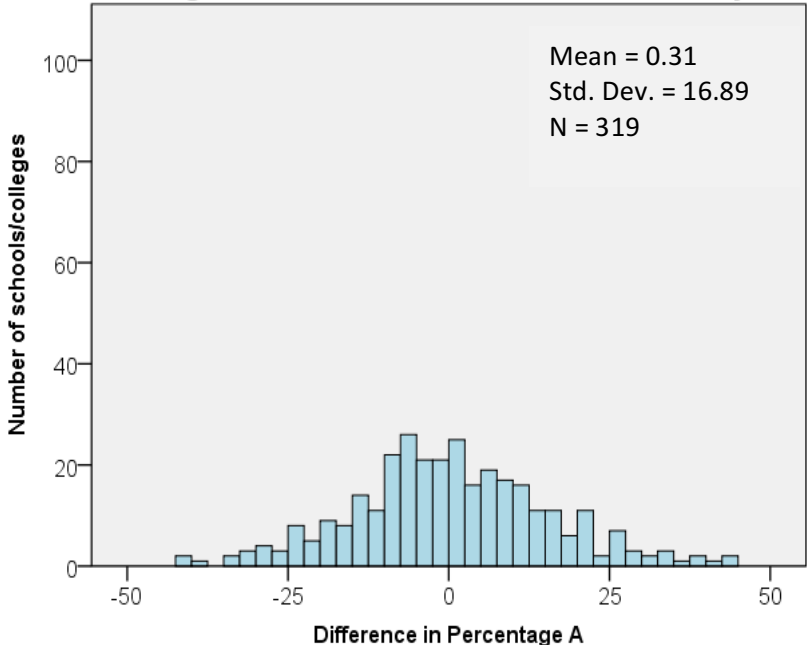
⁵ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/summer-2016-exam-entries-gcses-level-1-2-certificates-as-and-a-levels-in-england>

AS art and design

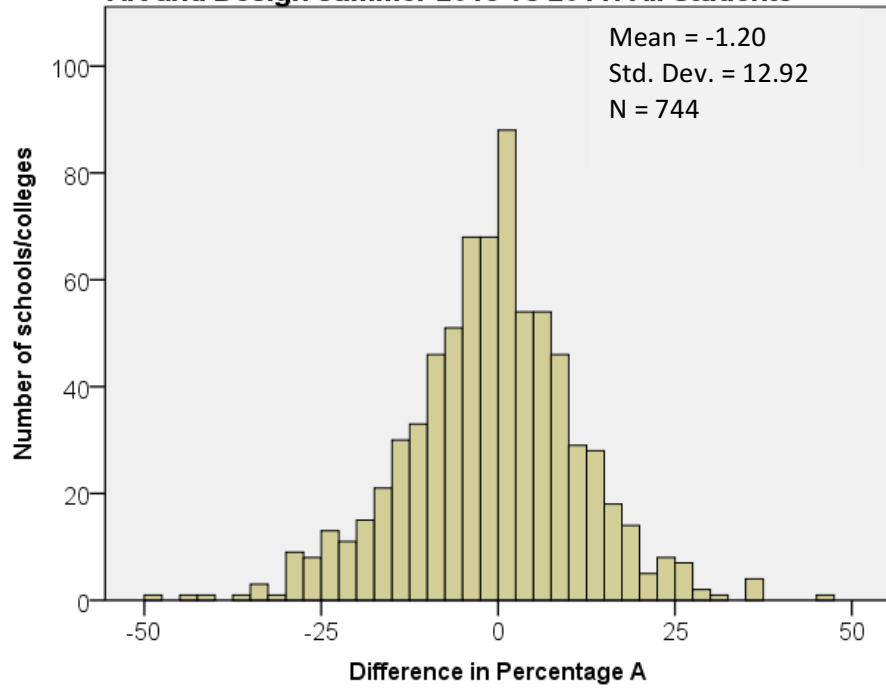
Art & Design summer 2016 vs 2015: All Students



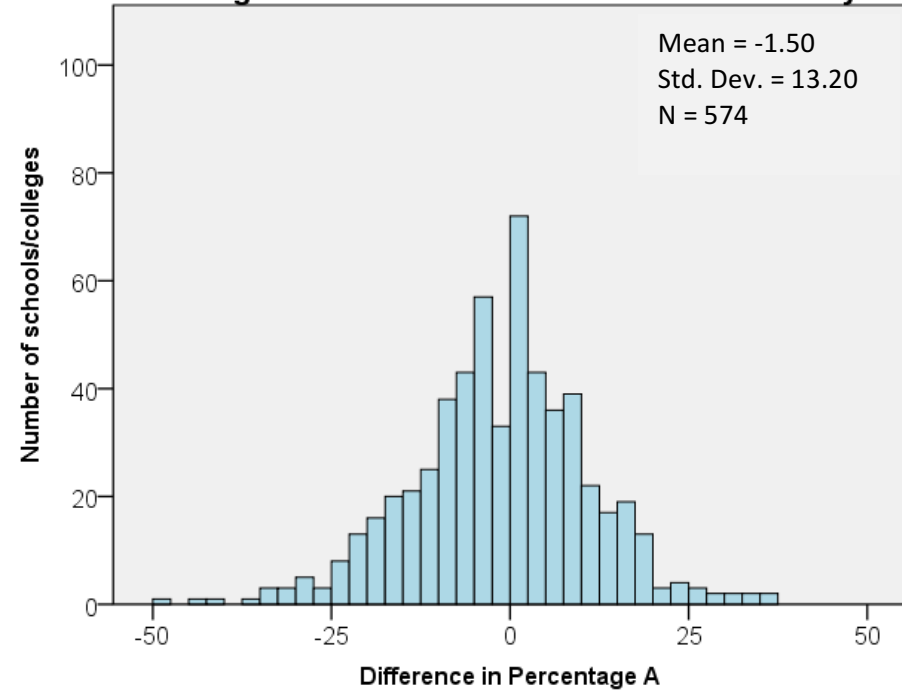
Art & Design summer 2016 vs 2015: Yr 12 students only



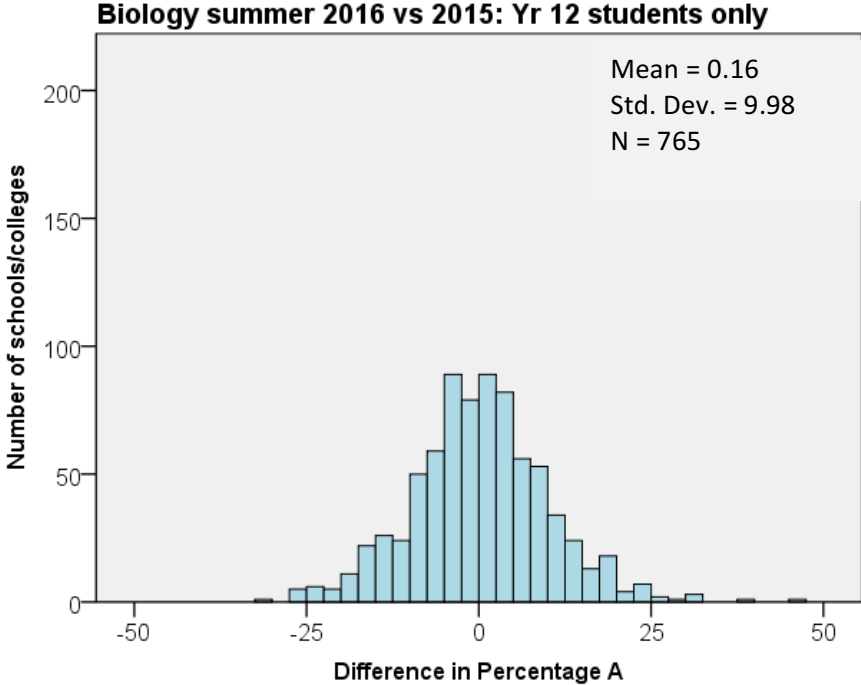
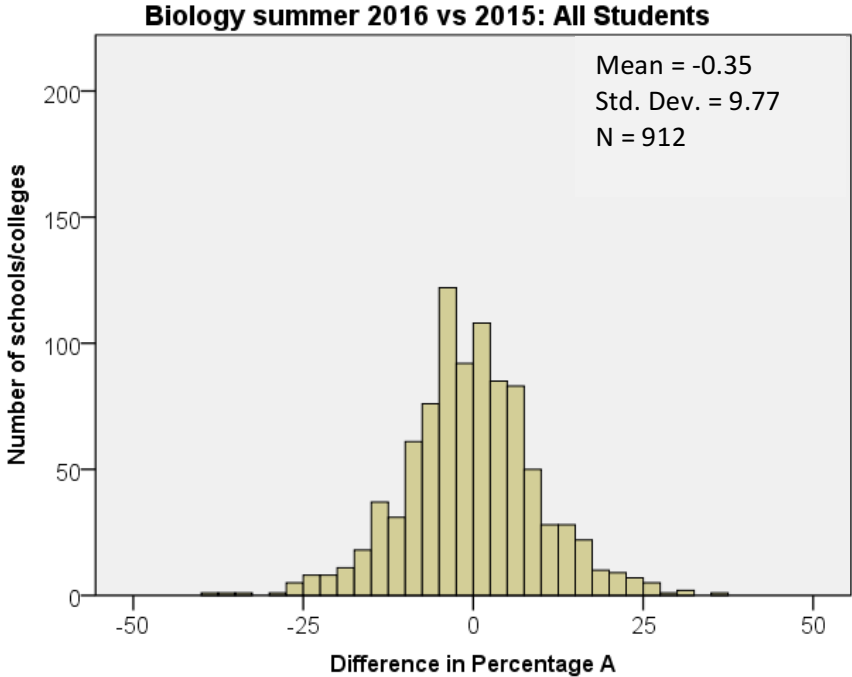
Art and Design summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



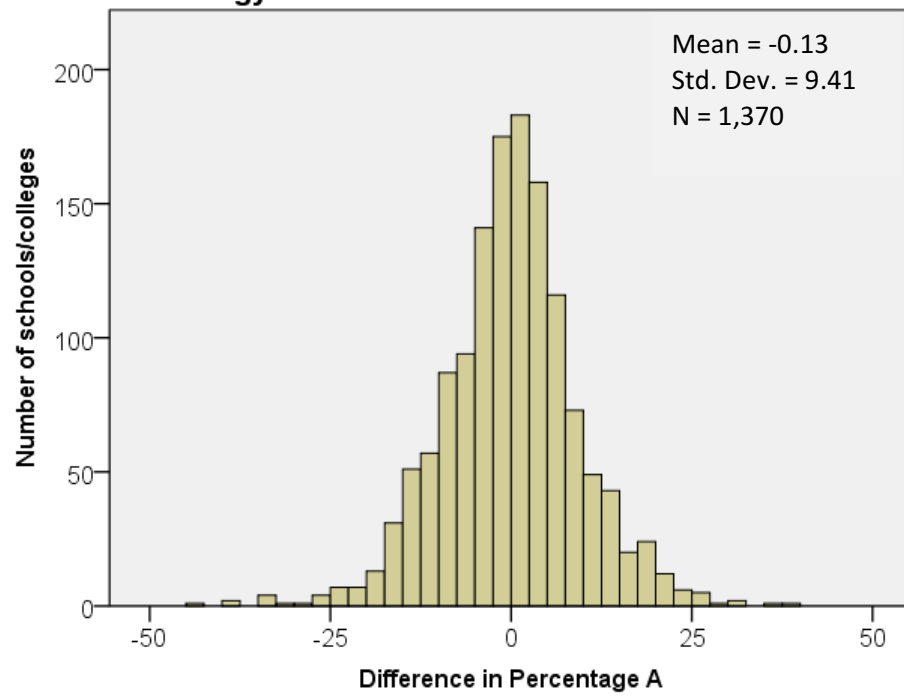
Art and Design summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



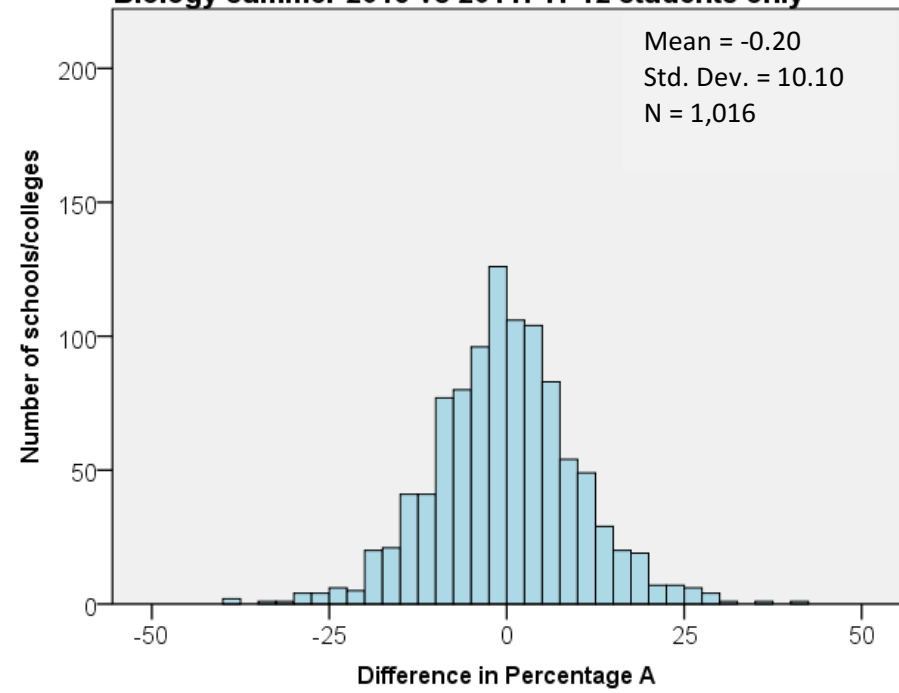
AS biology



Biology summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students

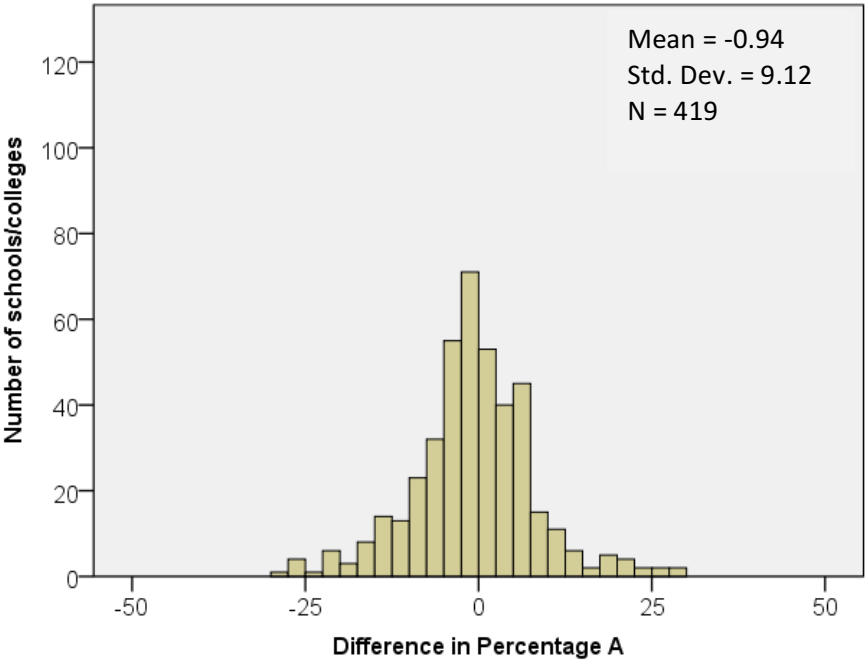


Biology summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only

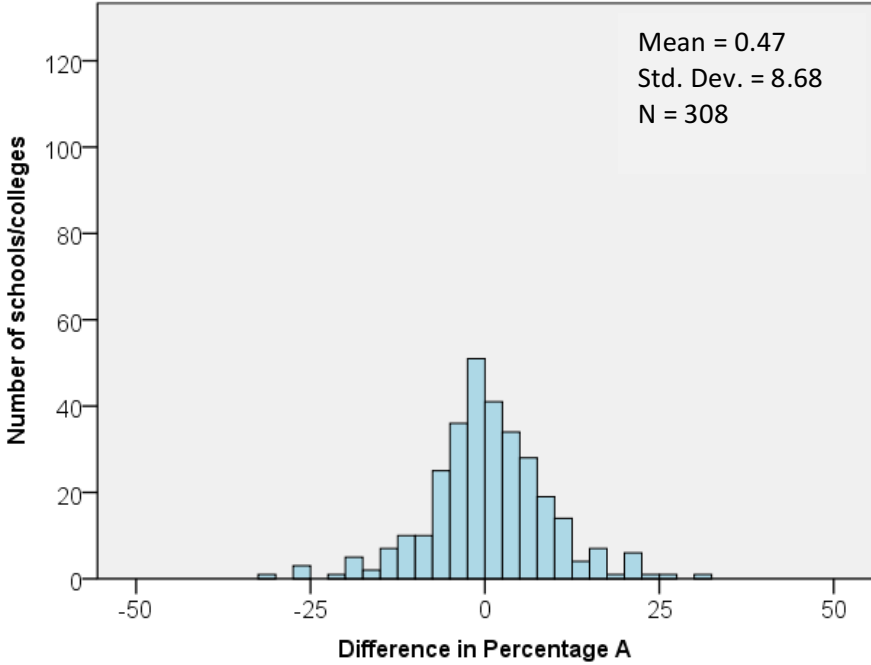


AS business studies

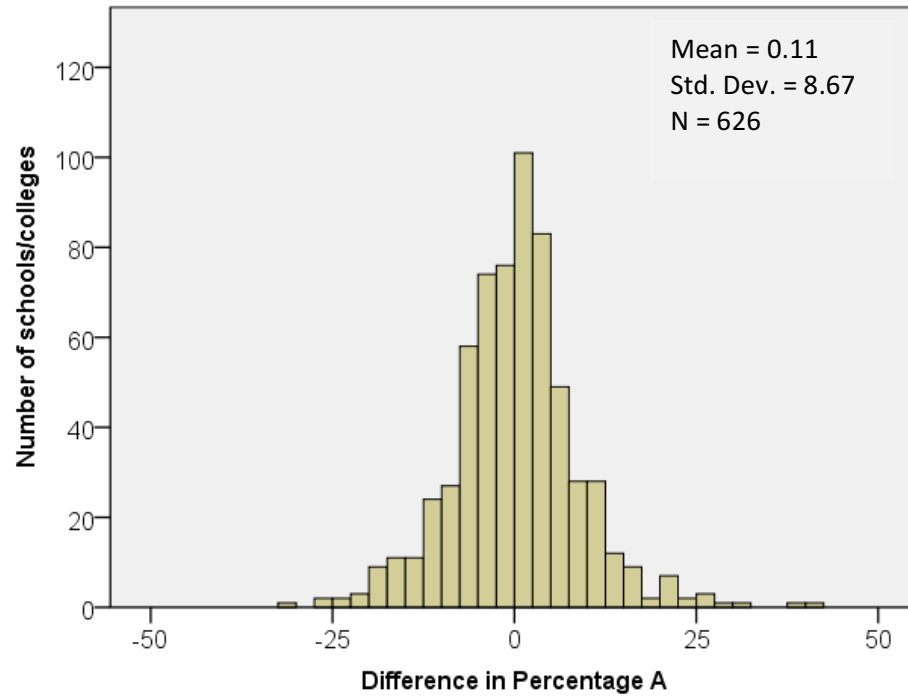
Business Studies summer 2016 vs 2015: All Students



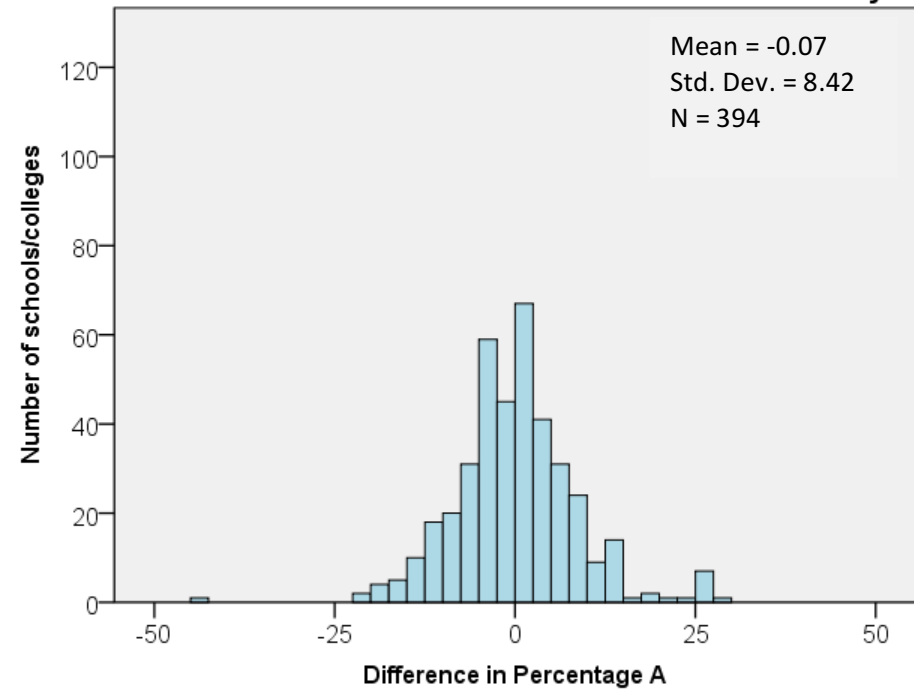
Business Studies summer 2016 vs 2015: Yr 12 students only



Business Studies summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students

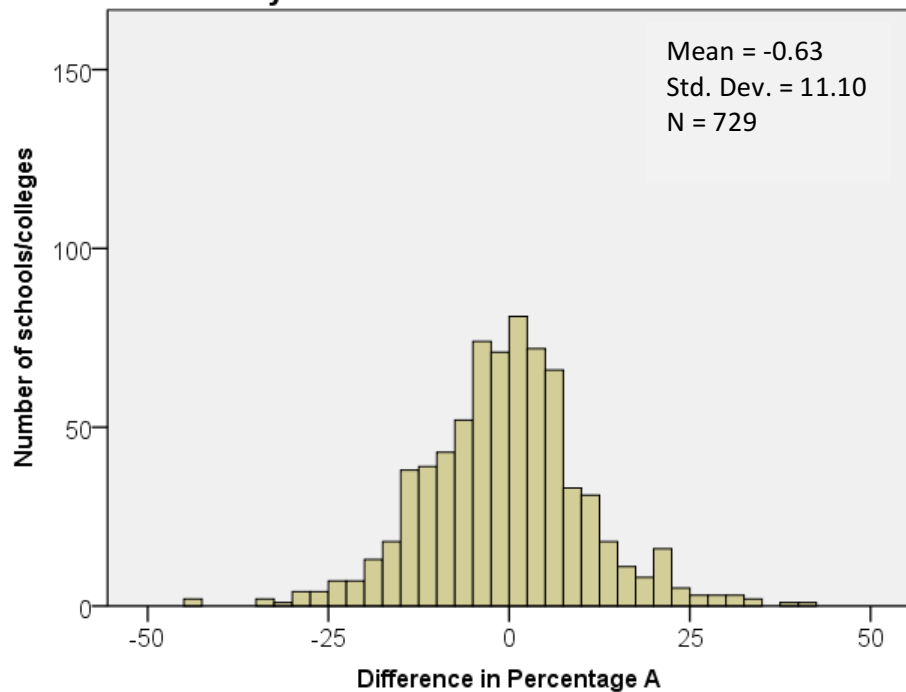


Business Studies summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only

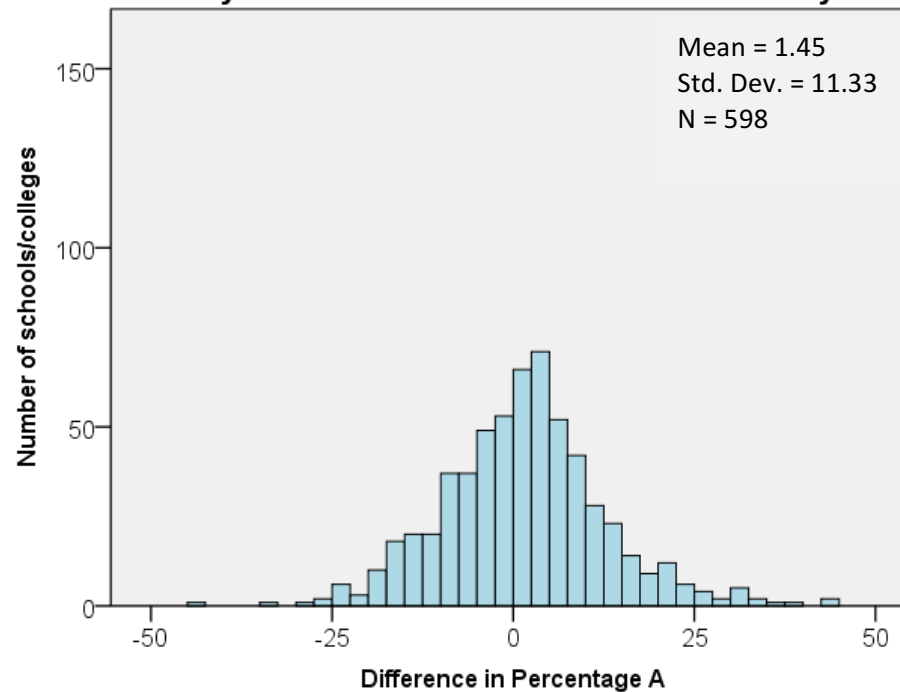


AS chemistry

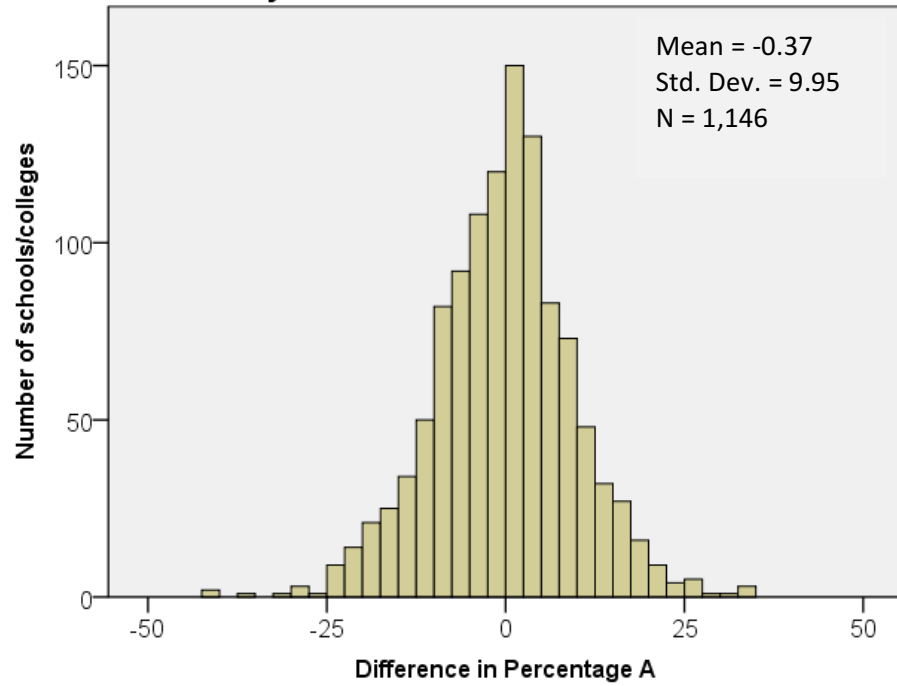
Chemistry summer 2016 vs 2015: All Students



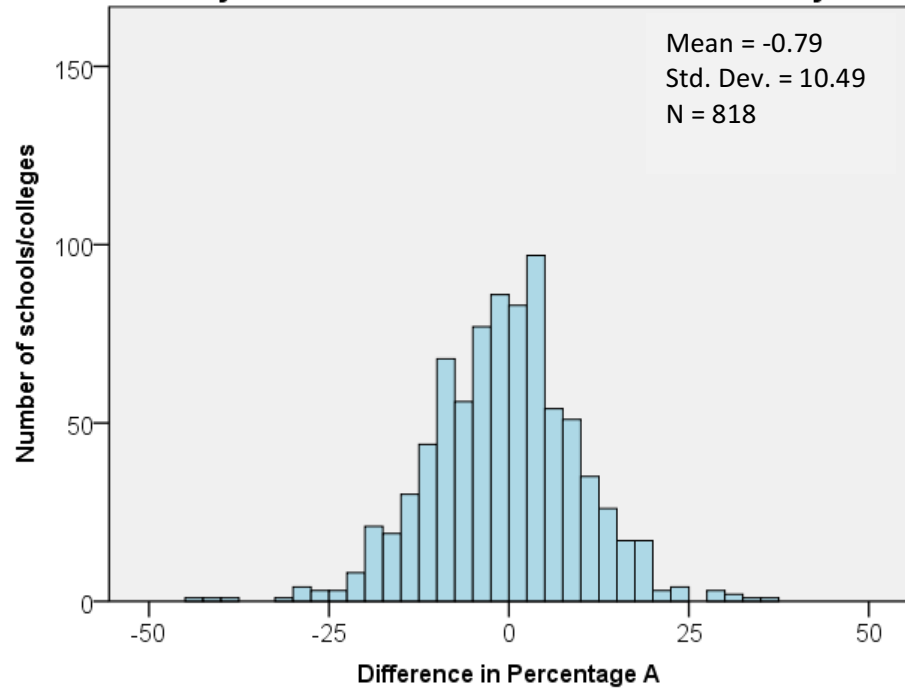
Chemistry summer 2016 vs 2015: Yr 12 students only



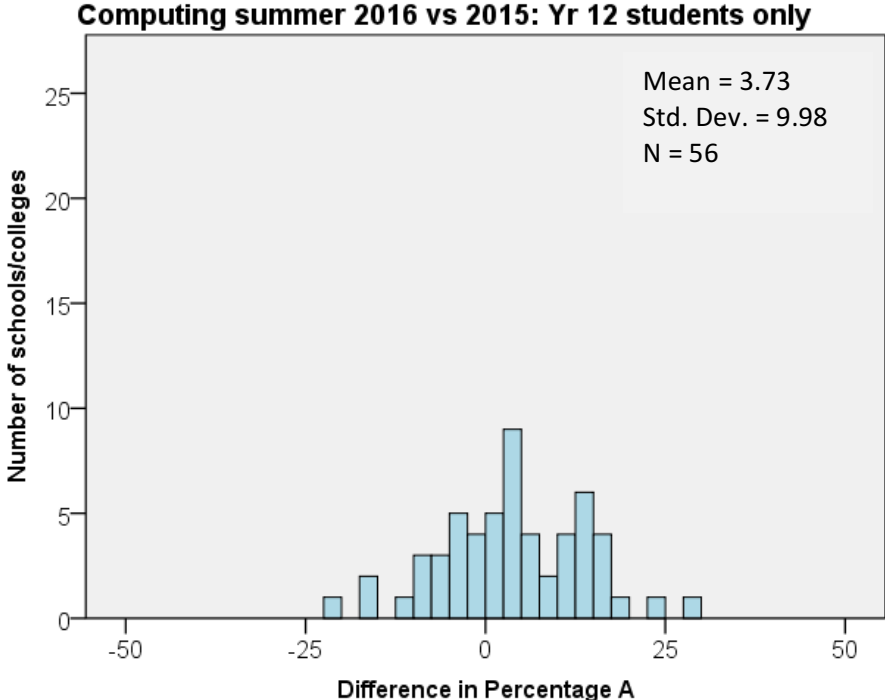
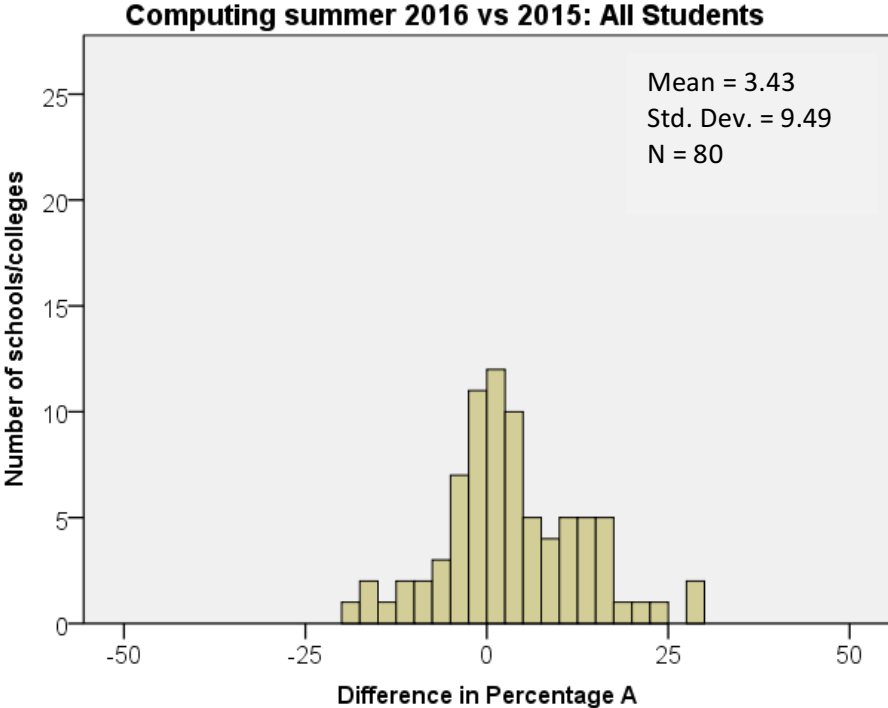
Chemistry summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



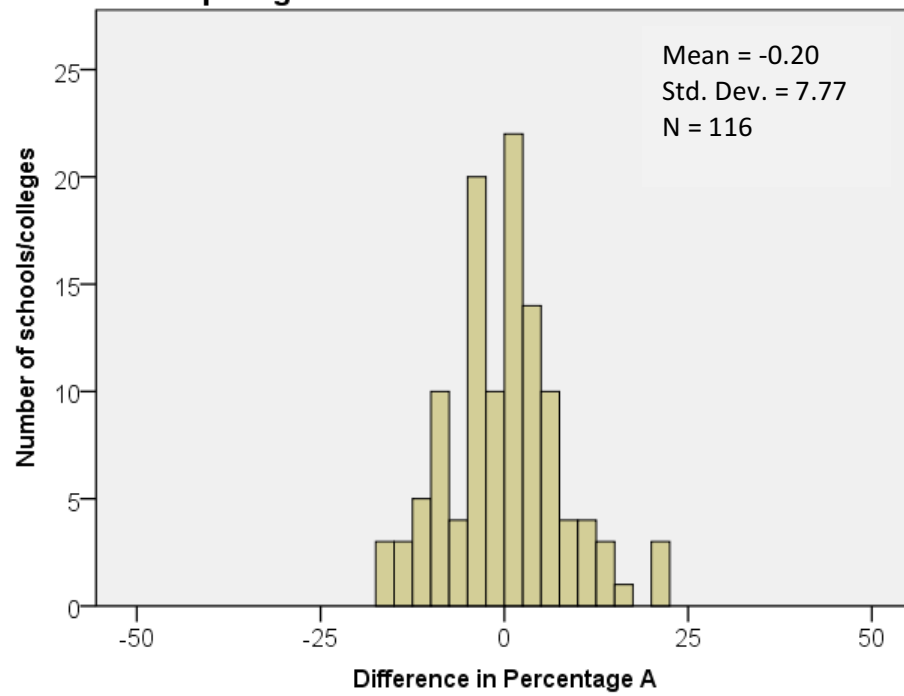
Chemistry summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



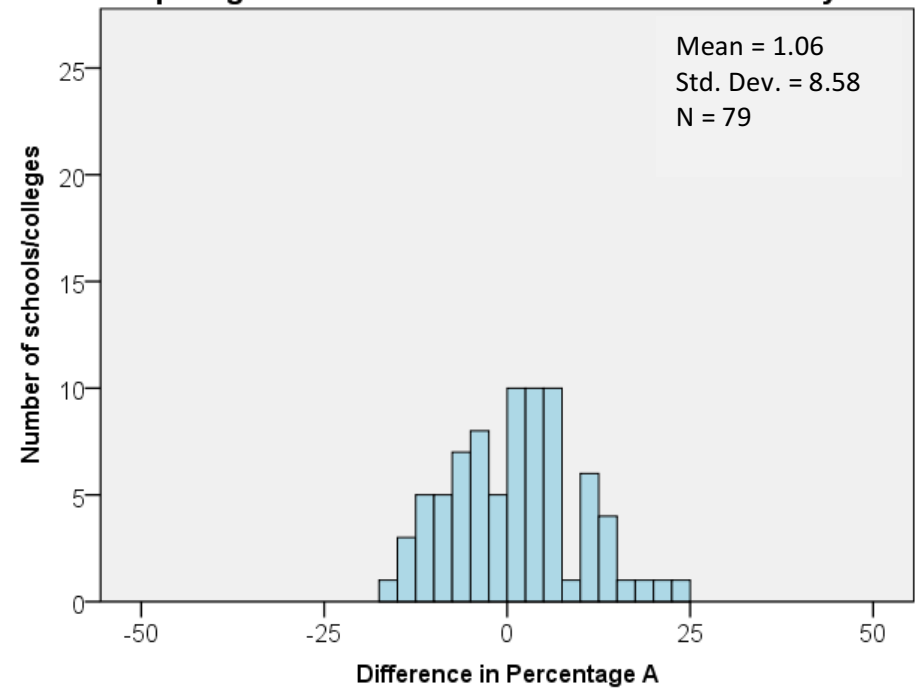
AS computing



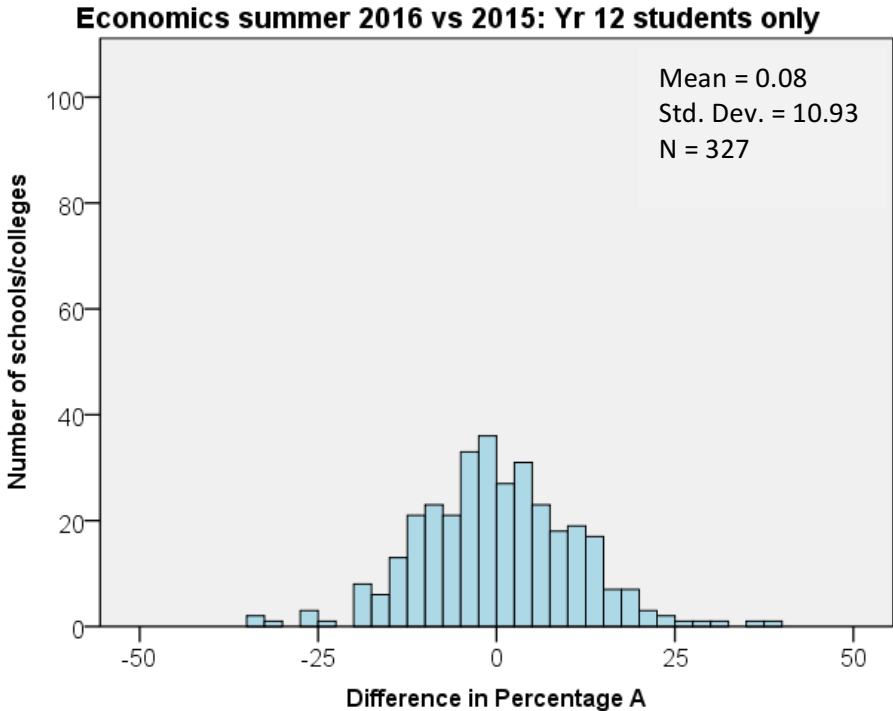
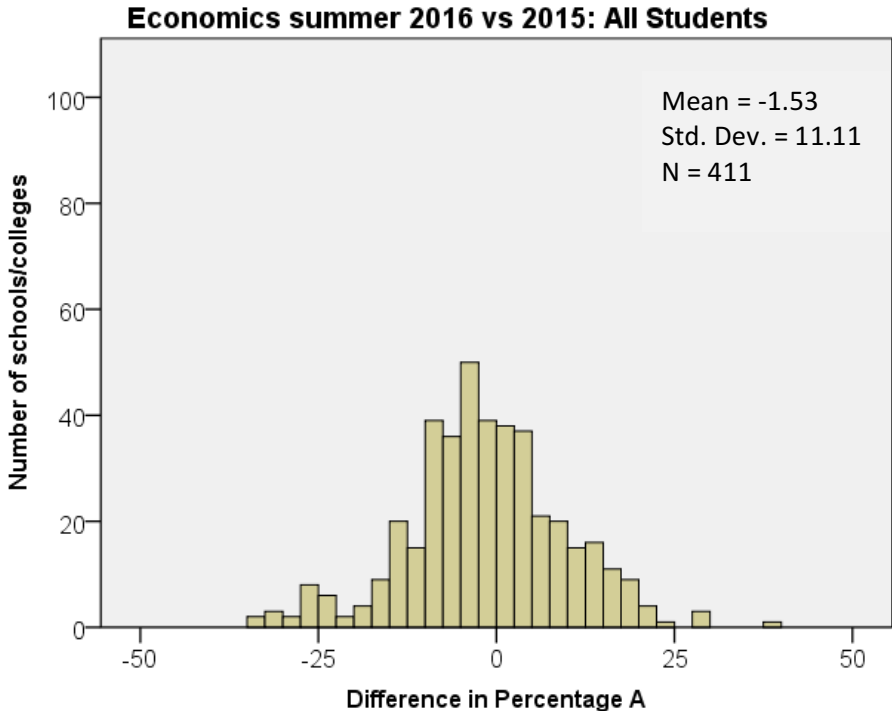
Computing summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



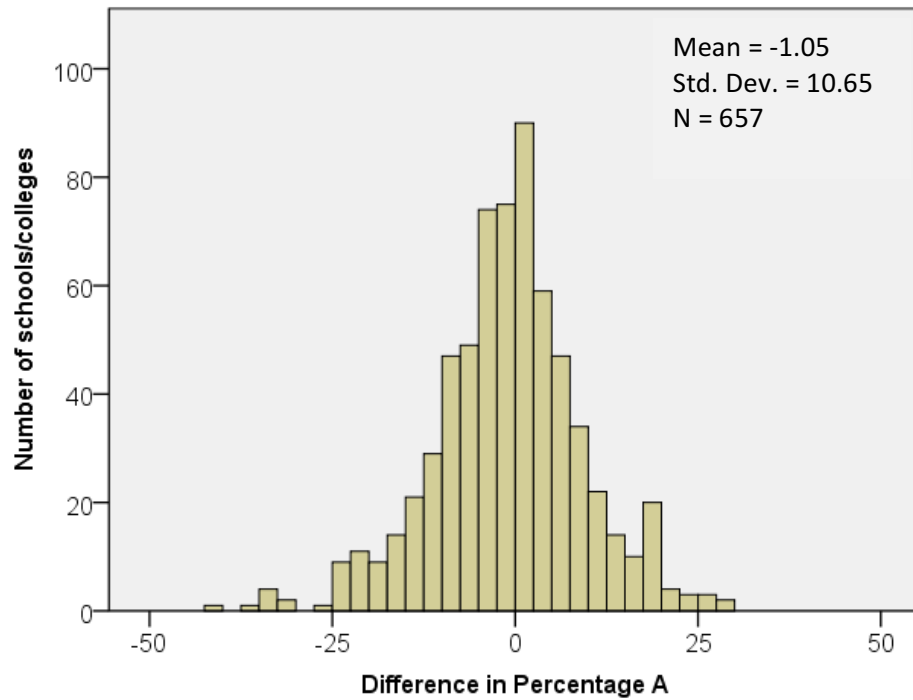
Computing summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



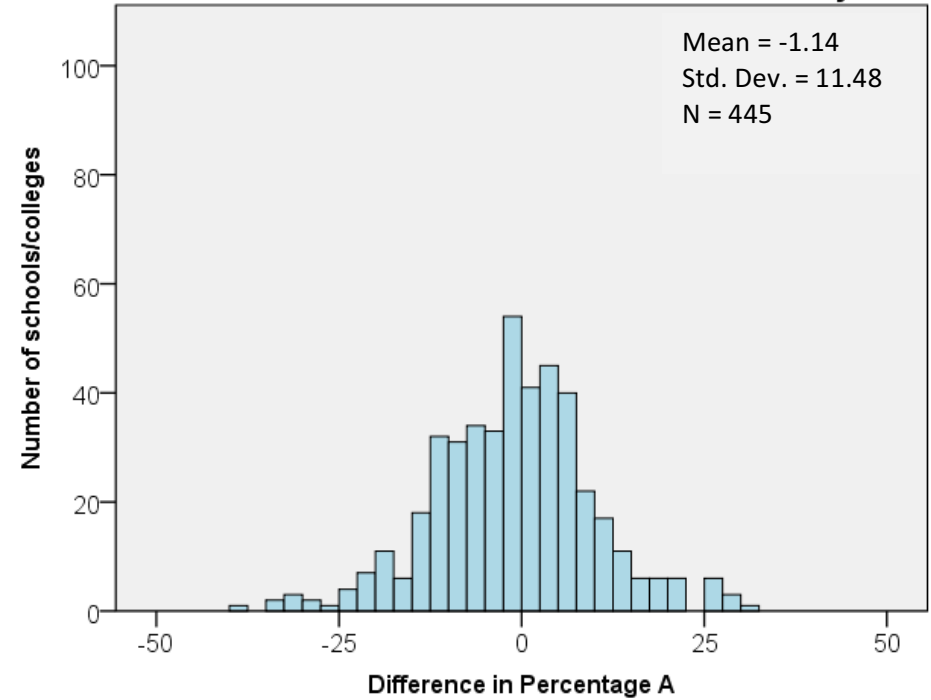
AS economics



Economics summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students

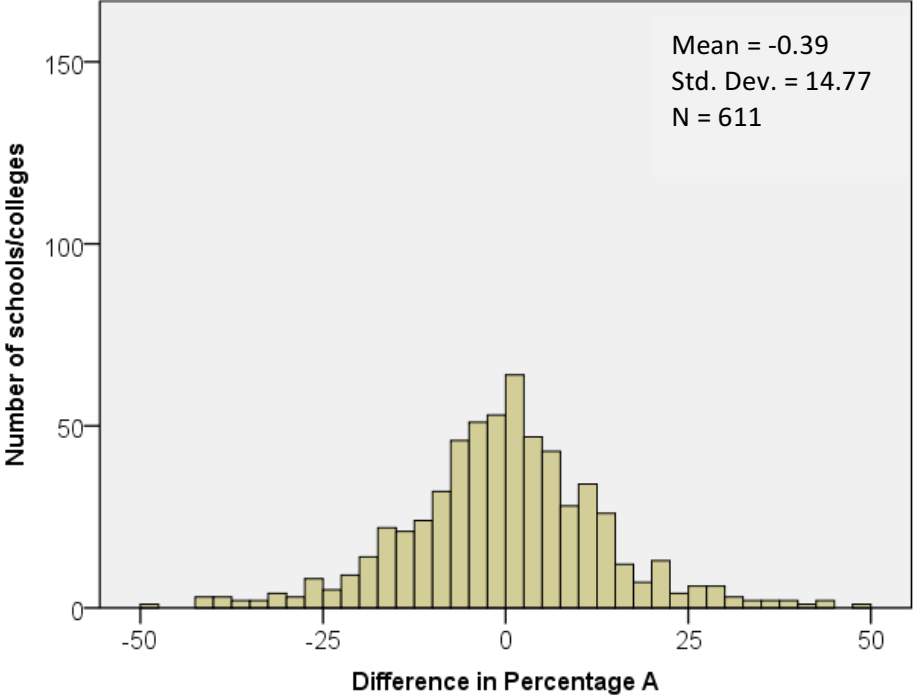


Economics summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only

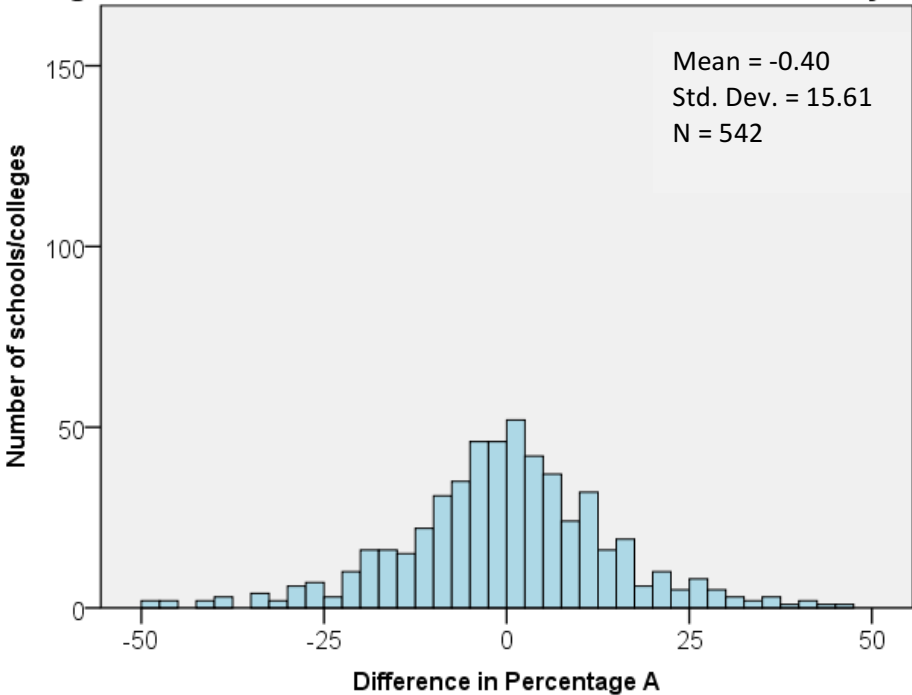


AS English literature

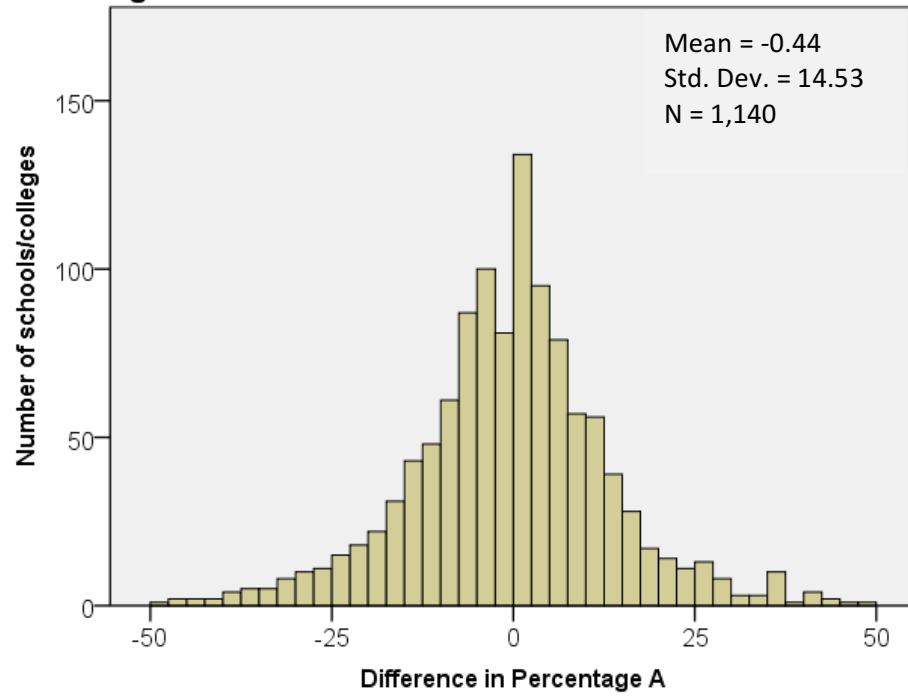
English Literature summer 2016 vs 2015: All Students



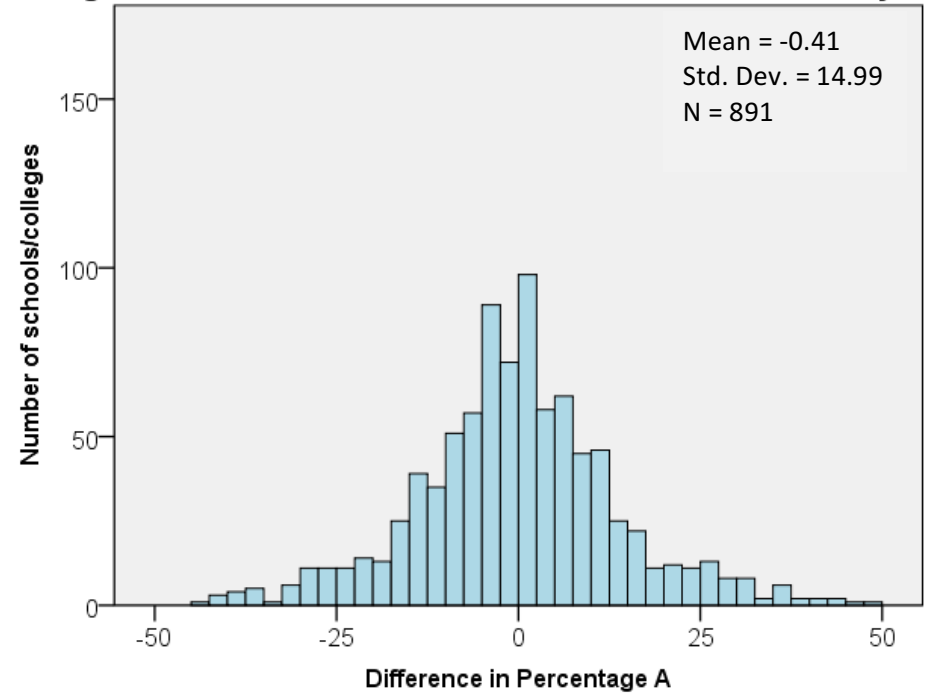
English Literature summer 2016 vs 2015: Yr 12 students only



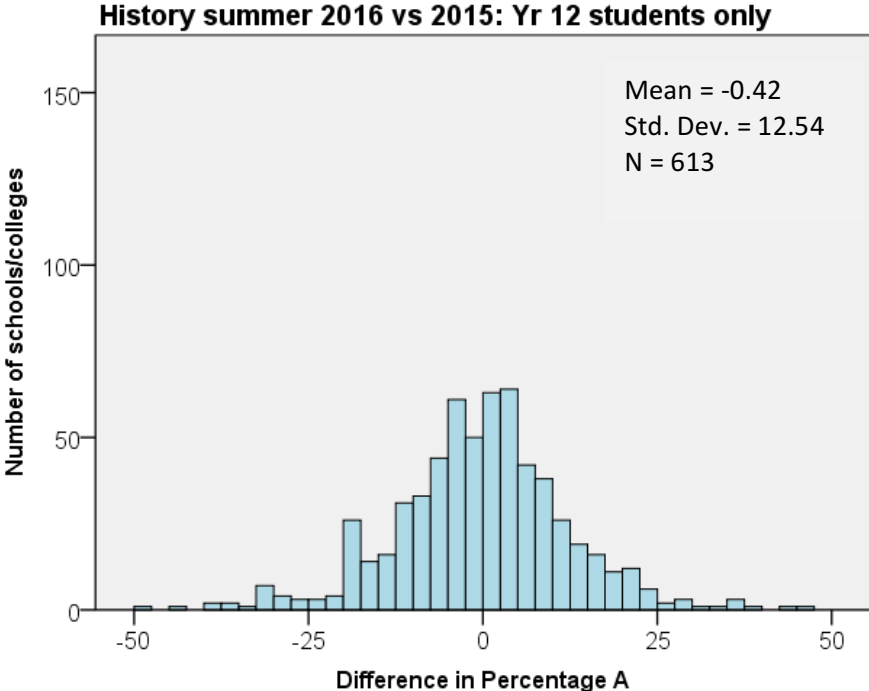
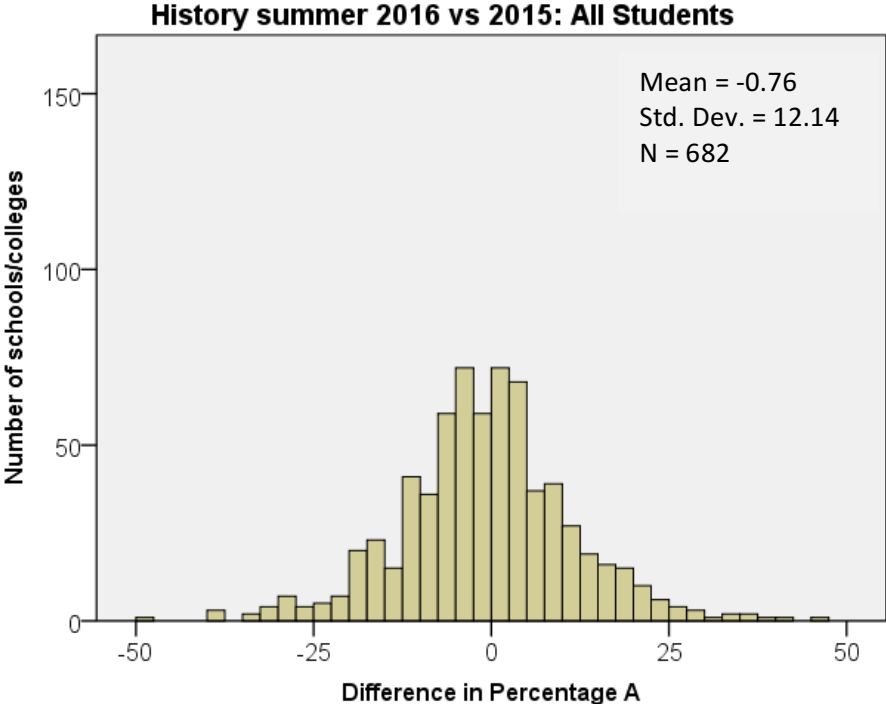
English Literature summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



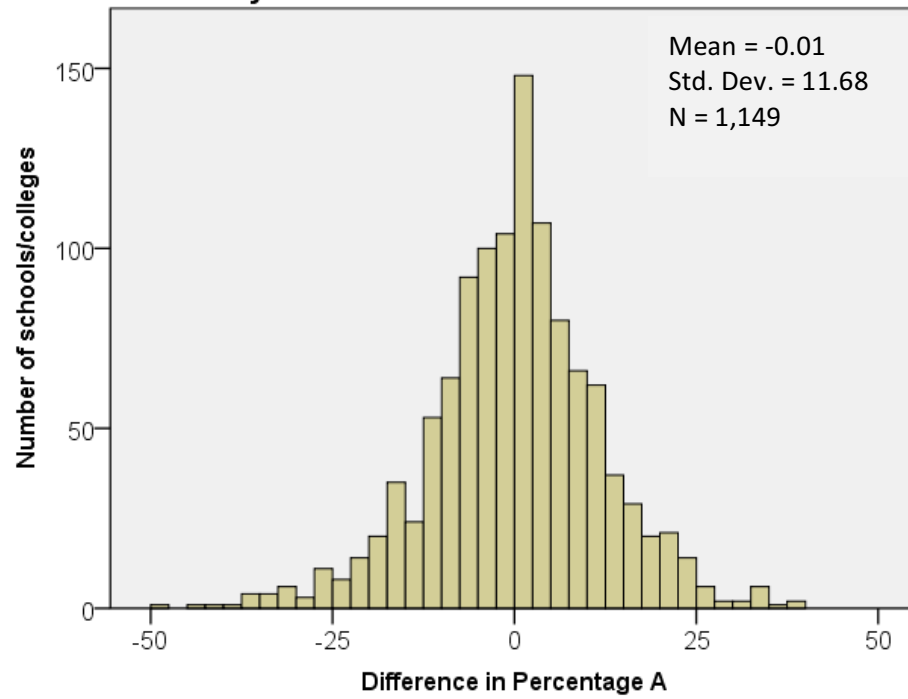
English Literature summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



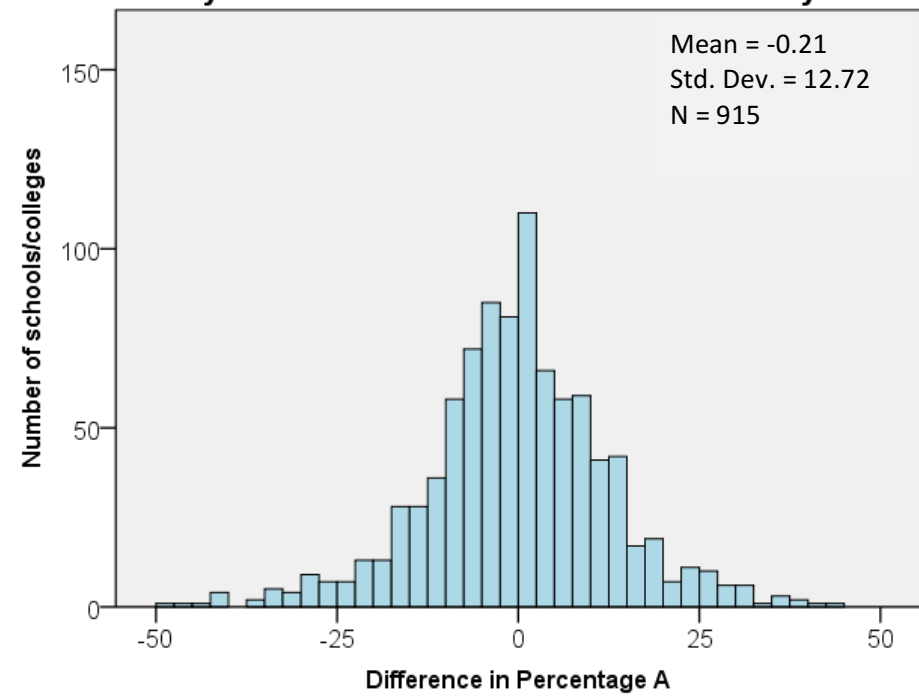
AS history



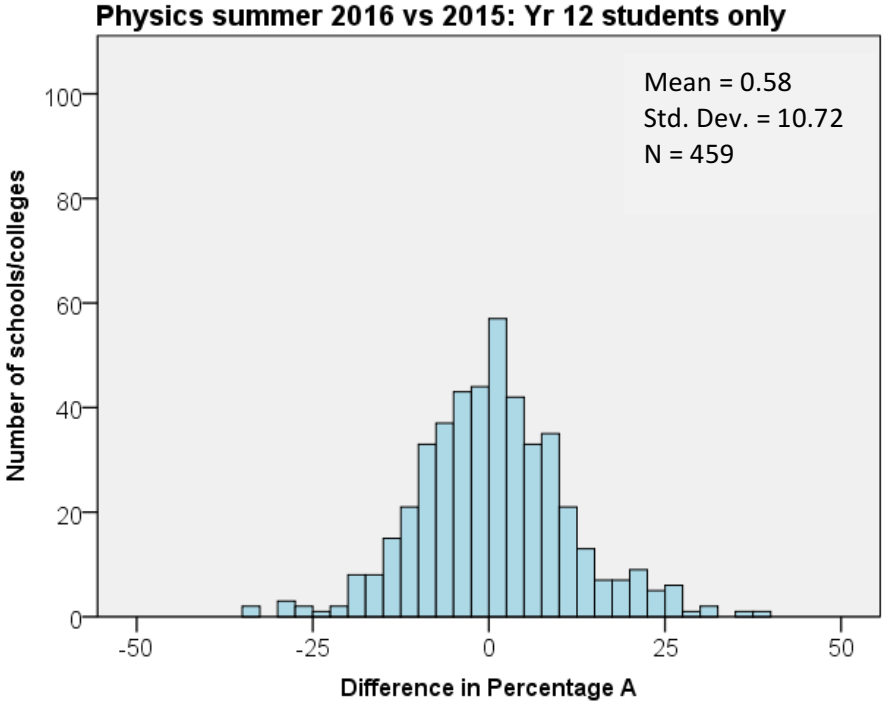
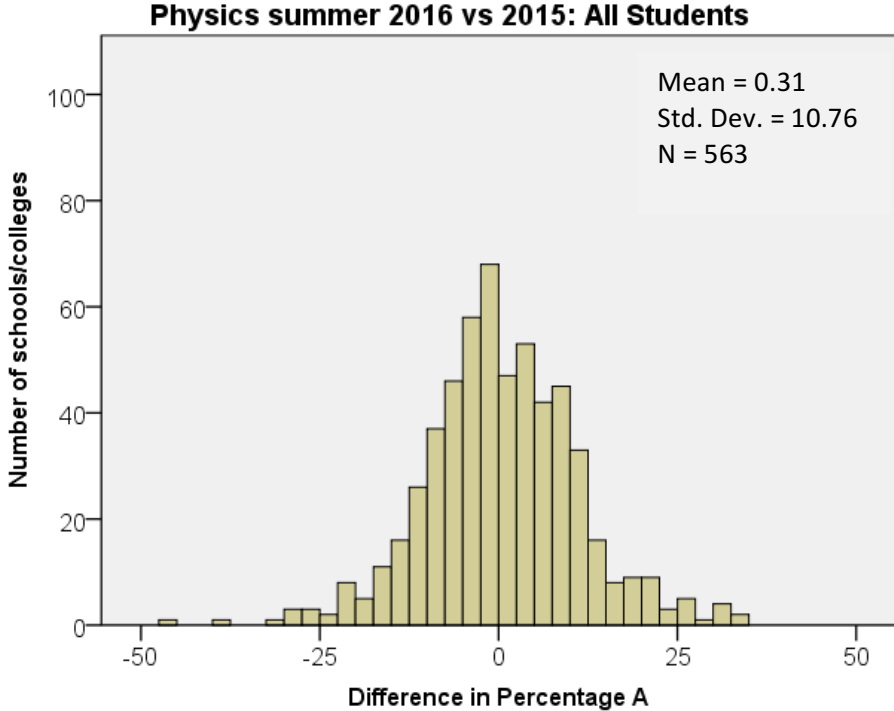
History summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



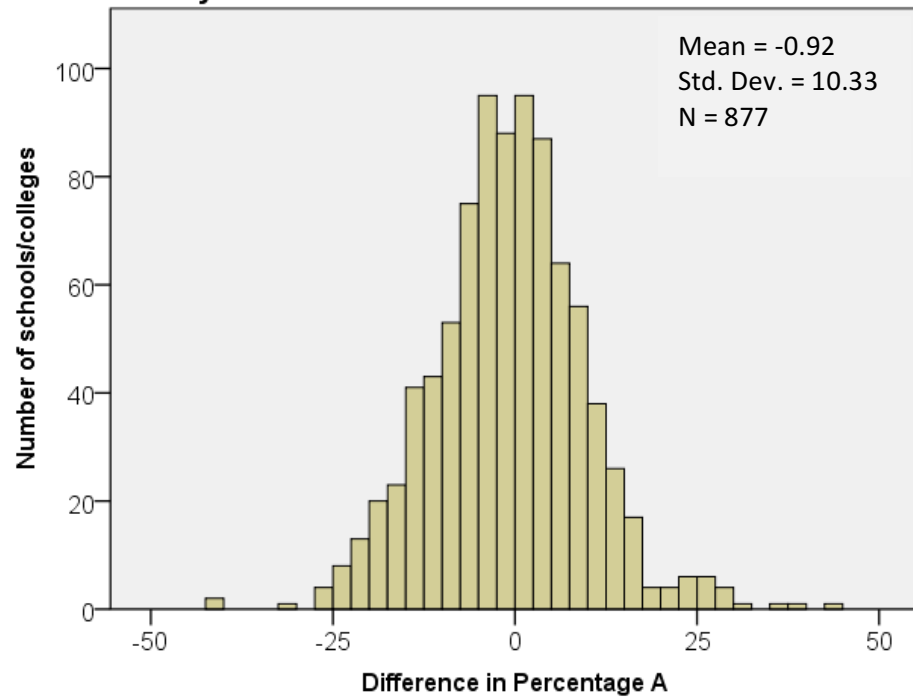
History summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



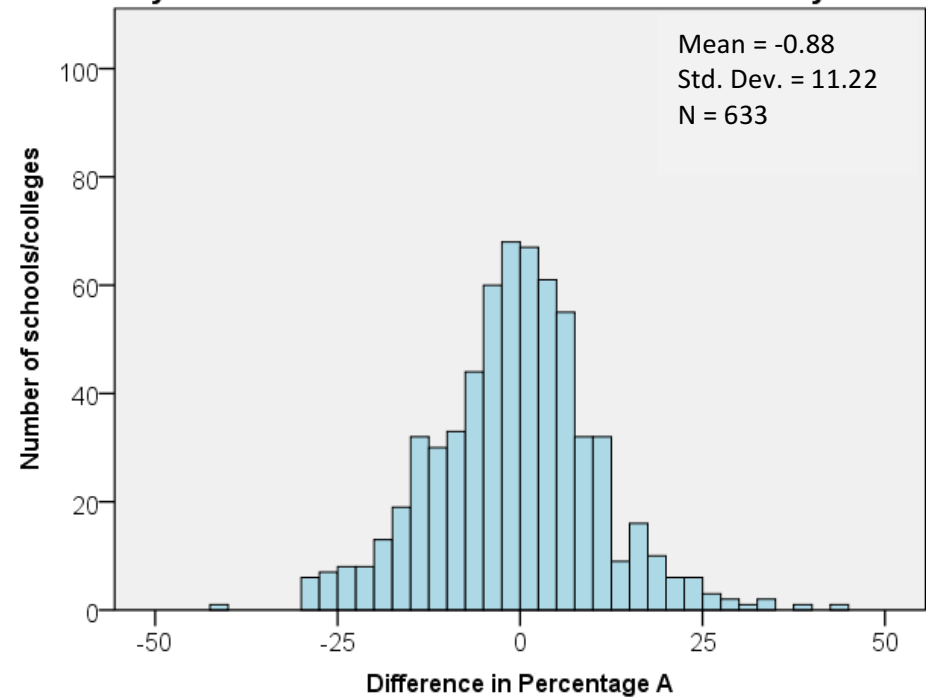
AS physics



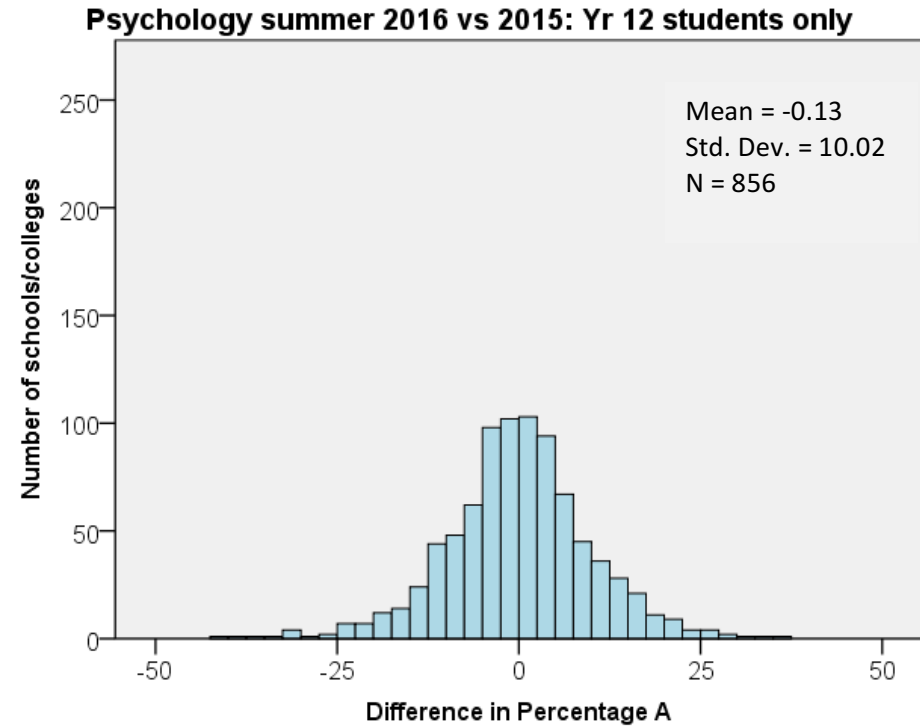
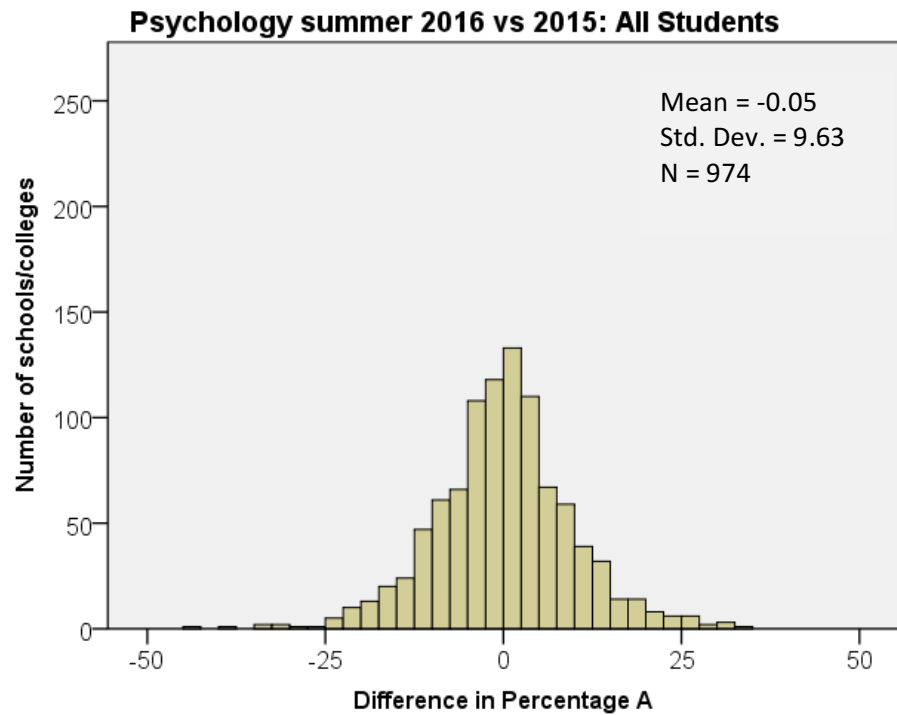
Physics summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



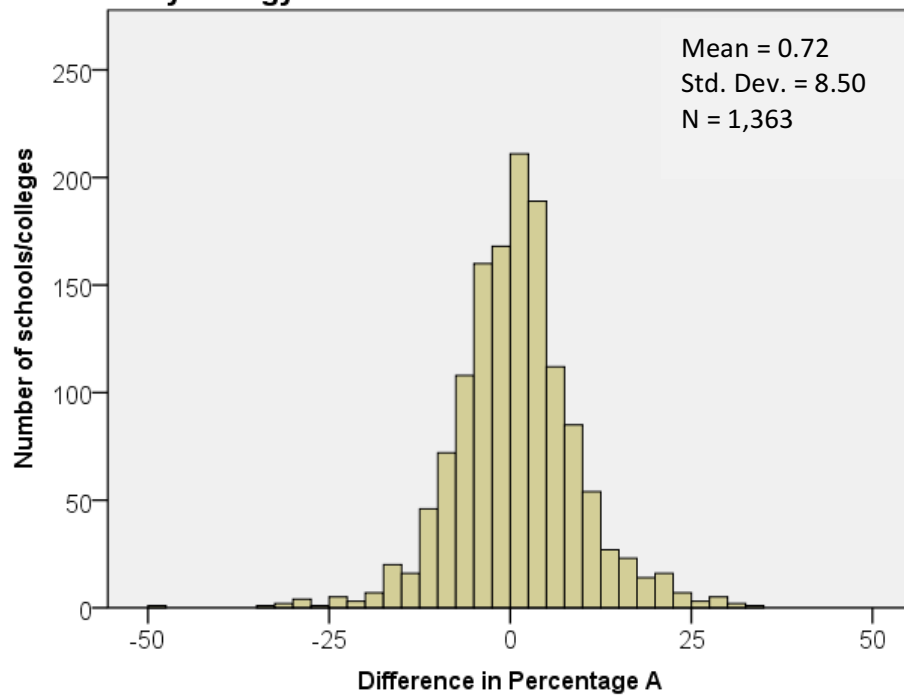
Physics summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



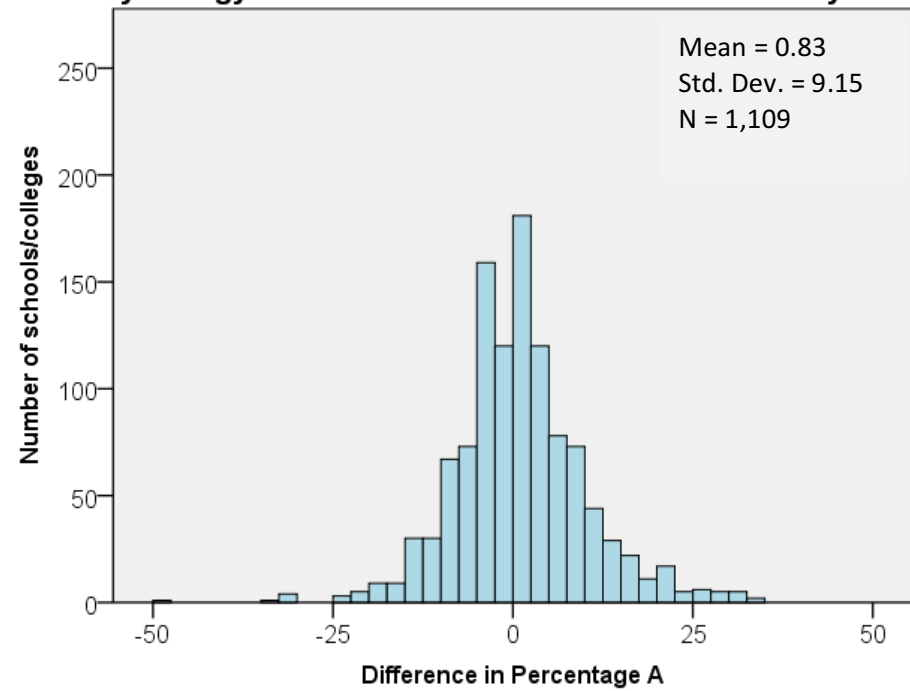
AS psychology



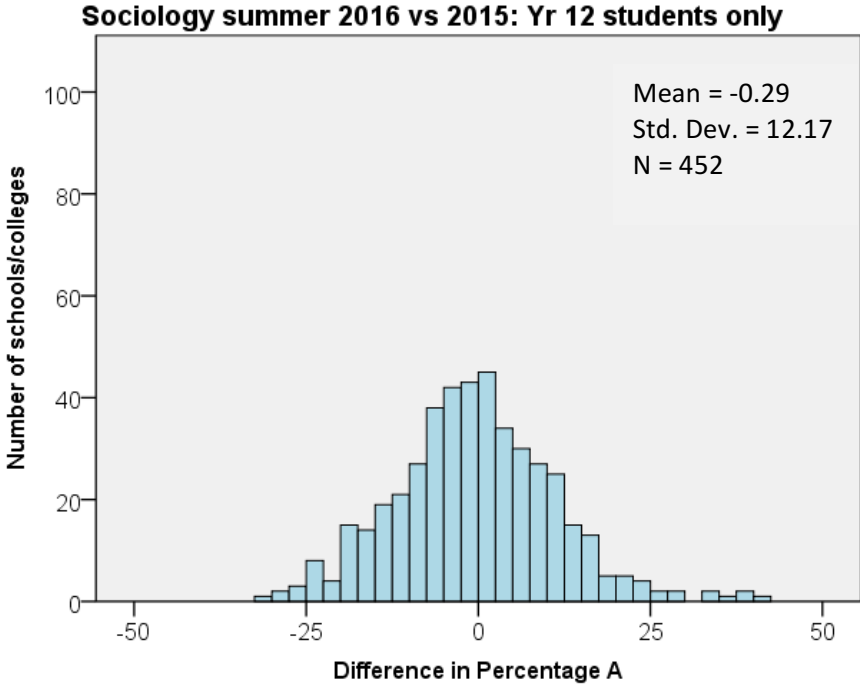
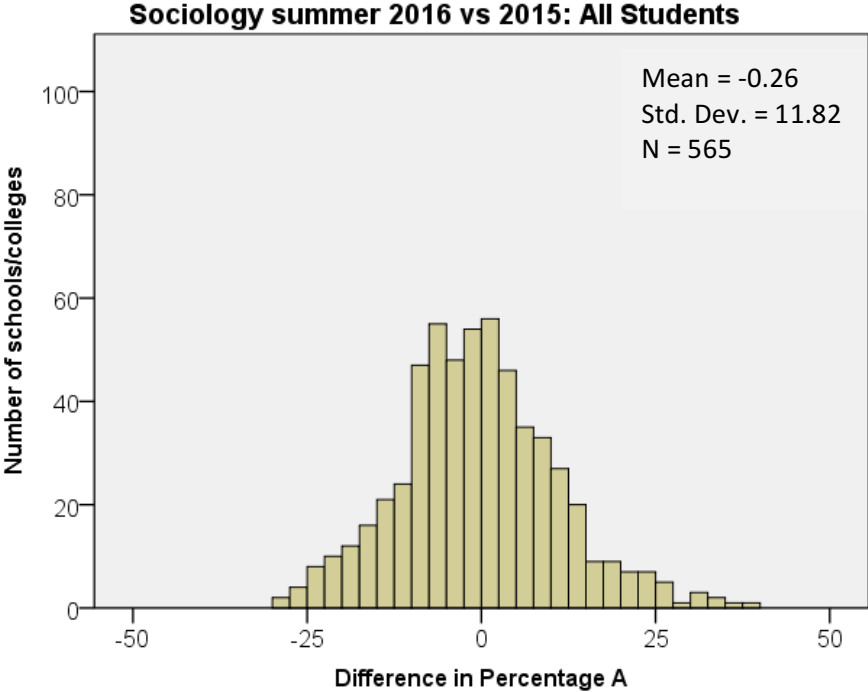
Psychology summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



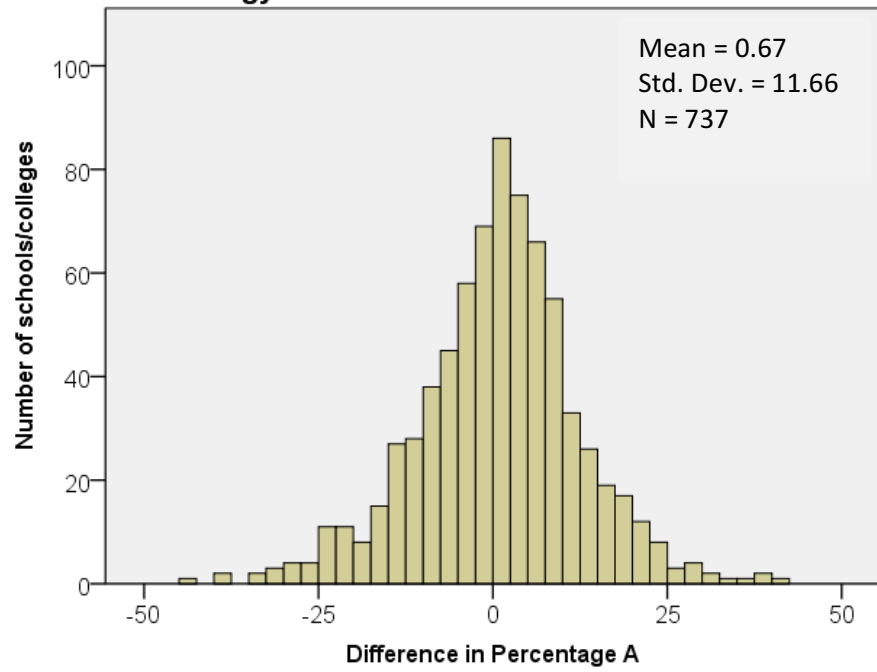
Psychology summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



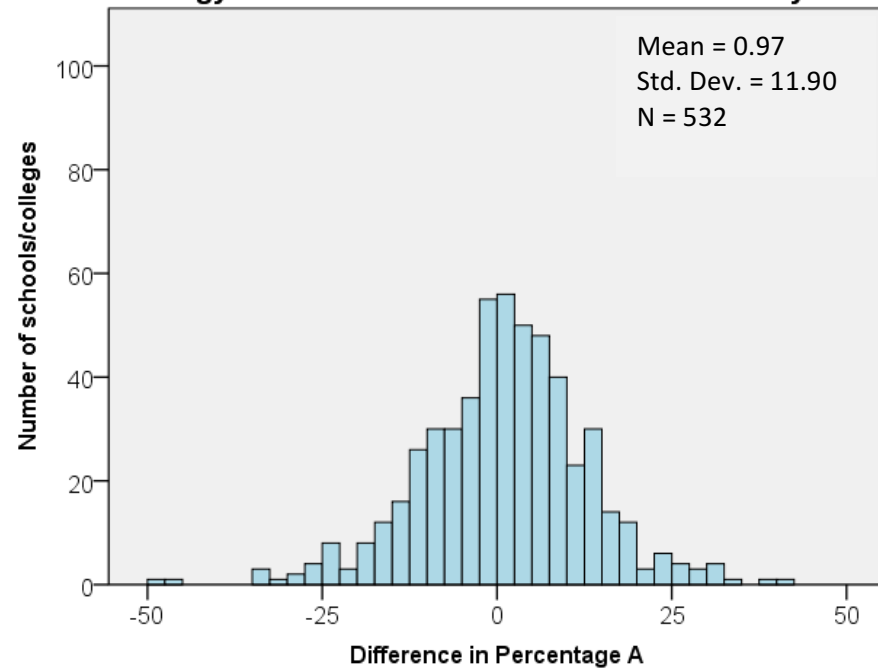
AS sociology



Sociology summer 2015 vs 2014: All Students



Sociology summer 2015 vs 2014: Yr 12 students only



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