Variability in IGCSE® English and GCSE English/English language results for schools and colleges

Summer 2015 vs summer 2014

April 2016

Ofqual/16/5932

Key points

- Some variation in year-on-year results for individual schools and colleges is normal.
- In general, there is less variation when we look only at 16 year-old students (those in Year 11) and when we look at schools where the number of students each year is stable.
- There is slightly more year-on-year variation in IGCSE®, but the numbers are smaller and so it is not easy to compare directly with GCSE.

We have previously published analysis of the year-on-year variation in the proportion of students achieving A* -C in a number of GCSE subjects, including English and English language.[1] We know that individual schools and colleges will always see variation in the proportion of students achieving particular grades from one year to the next. This can be due to many different factors, including differences in the ability mix of the students, different teaching approaches, changes in teaching staff or teaching time, and changes to qualifications.

Following allegations from HMC and GSA that there was a "major problem" in the grading of CIE's IGCSE® First Language English (entry number 0500) in summer 2015, we have reviewed the data that we have and looked at school/college variability in the IGCSE® compared with variability in GCSE English and English language. CIE offer a specification with two different entry codes 0500 and 0522[2]. We only have data for students who entered 0522 but the assessments are the same and so there is no reason to think the patterns of variability in 0500 would be different from those presented here.

[1] See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/variability-in-gcse-results-2012-to-2015

[2] Both use the same assessments, students take the same papers and they have the same grade boundaries. The main difference between them is that 0522 includes speaking and listening in the overall grade whereas 0500 reports (optional) speaking and listening separately. UK entries for 0522 are far higher than for 0500 because only 0522 is approved by the Department for Education for use in maintained schools. In 2015, nearly 200,000 students took 0522, compared to 17,000 taking 0500.

For both the GCSE and the IGCSE® we have looked only at schools and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with 50 or more students in 2015 and 2014, for all students and also for year 11 students[3] only. We have also carried out additional analysis to look at schools/colleges where the entry numbers are stable; that is, where they have 50 or more students in 2015 and 2014 and where the change in entry numbers between is less than or equal to 10%.

In the graphs that follow, each bar represents the number of schools and colleges with a particular level of variation, measured in intervals of 2.5 percentage points. For example, the two bars either side of zero represent schools that had either a drop of up to 2.5 percentage points or 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. The mean on each graph is the average across all schools of the year-on-year difference for each individual school. The standard deviation (Std. Dev. on the graphs) is a measure of the spread of the variation – a lower standard deviation means there is less variation overall whereas a higher standard deviation means there is more variation.

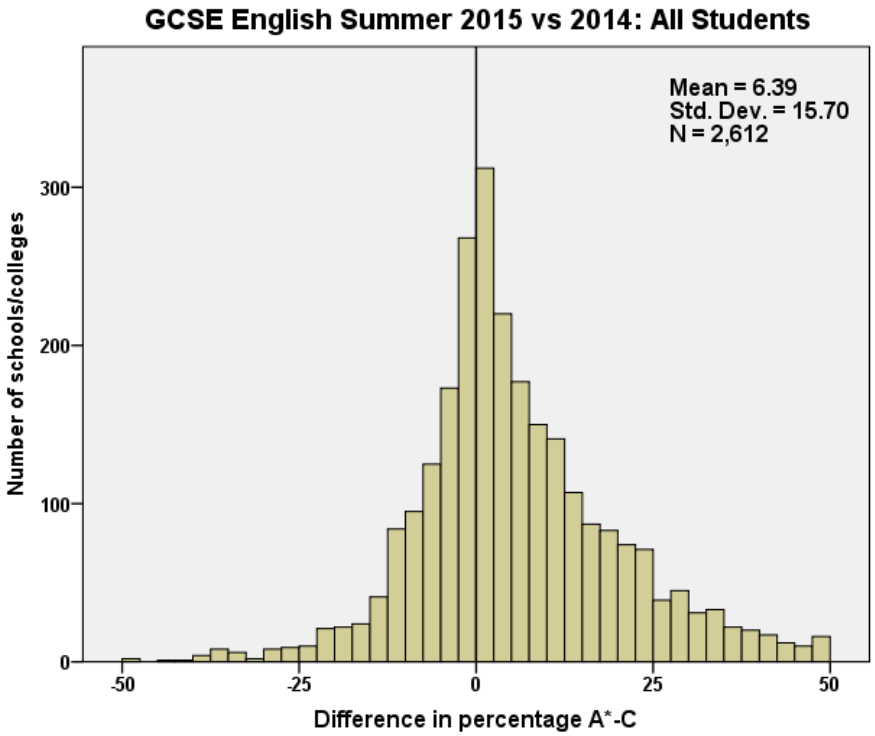
For ease of comparison we have used the same scale on the *y* axis for all graphs.

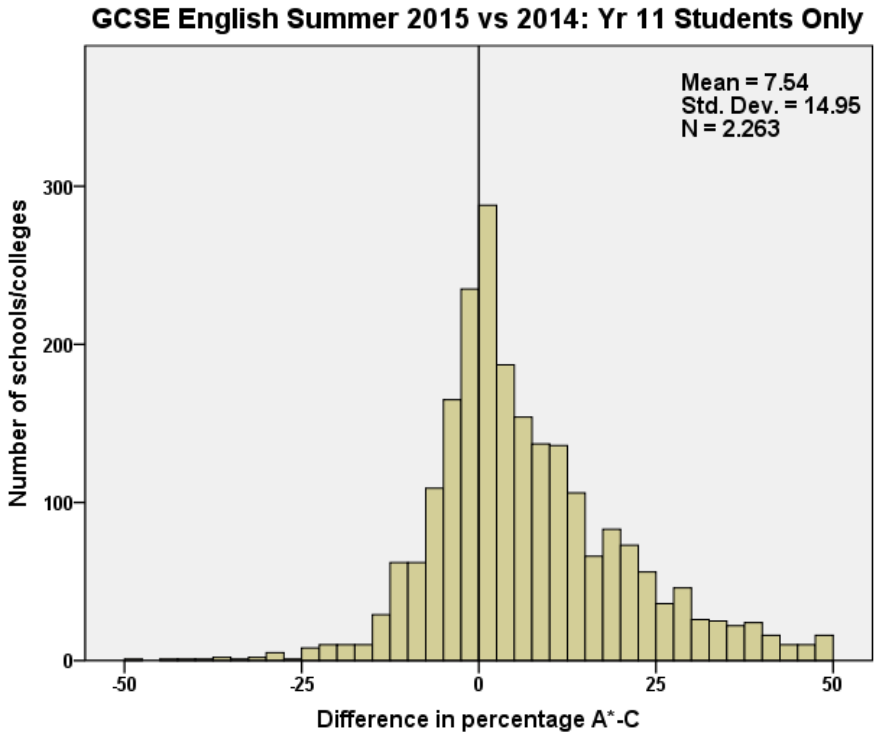
In these graphs the schools tend to be clustered around the middle, which means that most schools see very little year-on-year variation. At the edges of the graphs schools are seeing much greater variation (both increases and decreases in the proportion of students achieving A*-C).

[3] Note that the number of schools/colleges is slightly lower in the Year 11 only graphs, because we have only included schools and colleges with 50 or more Year 11 students

GCSE English/English language

The graphs below include schools and colleges with more than 50 candidates in both years. The graph on the right is year 11 students only, but the mean variation and the standard deviation are similar in both graphs.





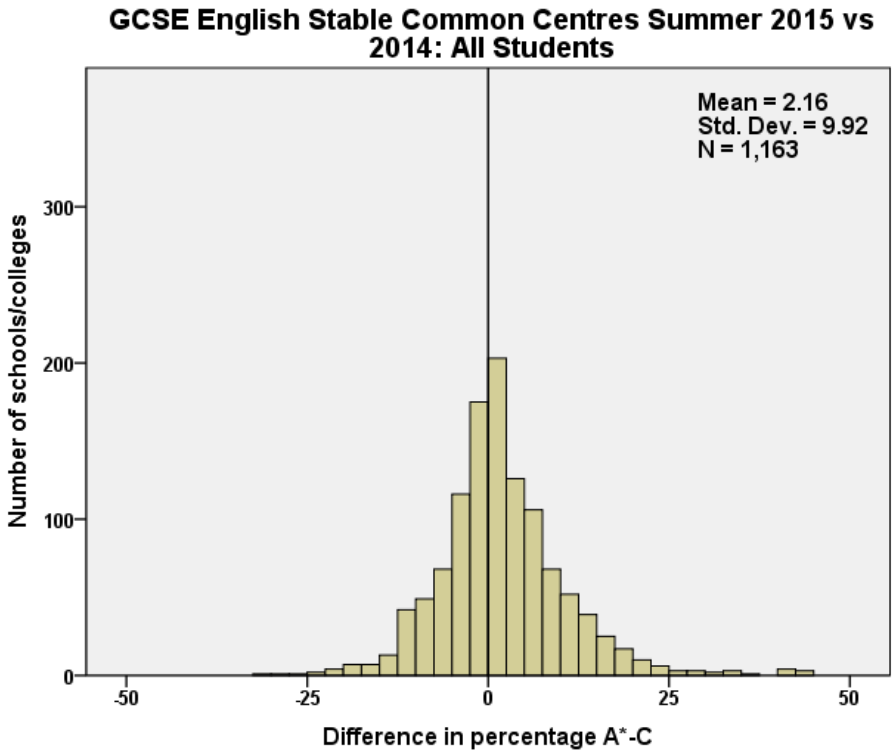
For the left-hand graph which included all students there were 905 schools where the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, 50 schools where the proportion did not change, and 1657 schools where the proportion was higher in 2015 than in 2014. For the graph on the right-hand side, the numbers are very similar, although the numbers are slightly smaller because there are slightly fewer schools which had 50 students in both years when we restricted the analysis to year 11 students

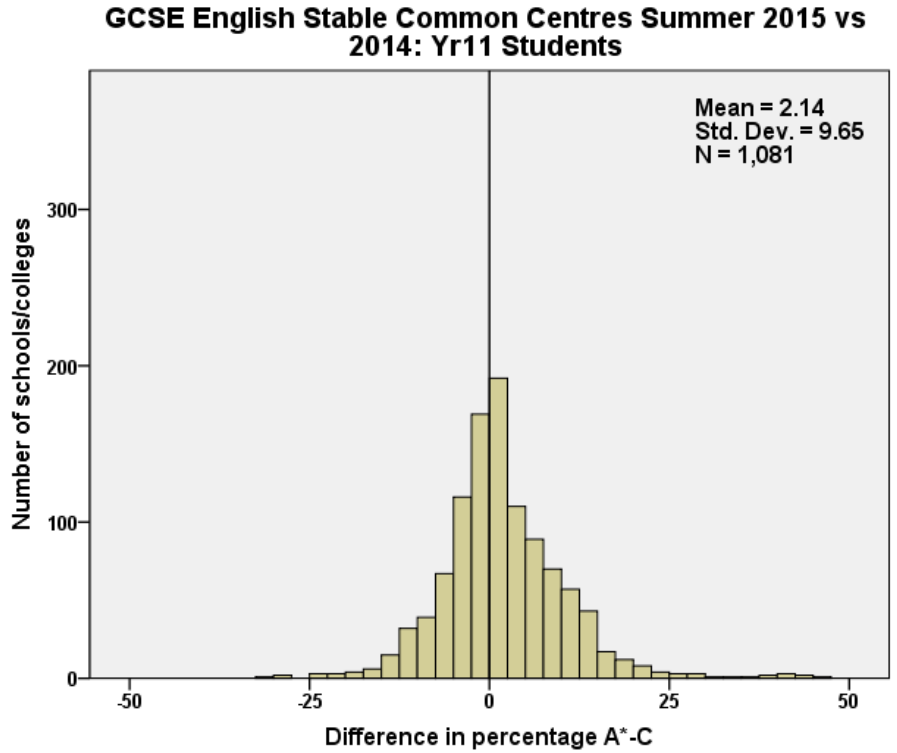
only. In 715 schools the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, there were 50 schools where the proportion did not change, and 1498 schools where the proportion in 2015 was higher than in 2014.

We know that in recent years schools have changed their approach to GCSE entries, in response to changes to the qualifications and changes to the performance table rules. We have looked therefore at the variation in 'stable' schools, ie those where their 2015 entry has changed by 10% or less compared to their entry in 2014. These analyses are shown on the next page.

The average variation is less when we look only at schools where the entry numbers are stable. This is not surprising since large changes in the entry numbers are likely to reflect the overall profile of the students entered. The standard deviation is also lower for these stable schools, so there is generally less variation.

GCSE English/English language stable schools



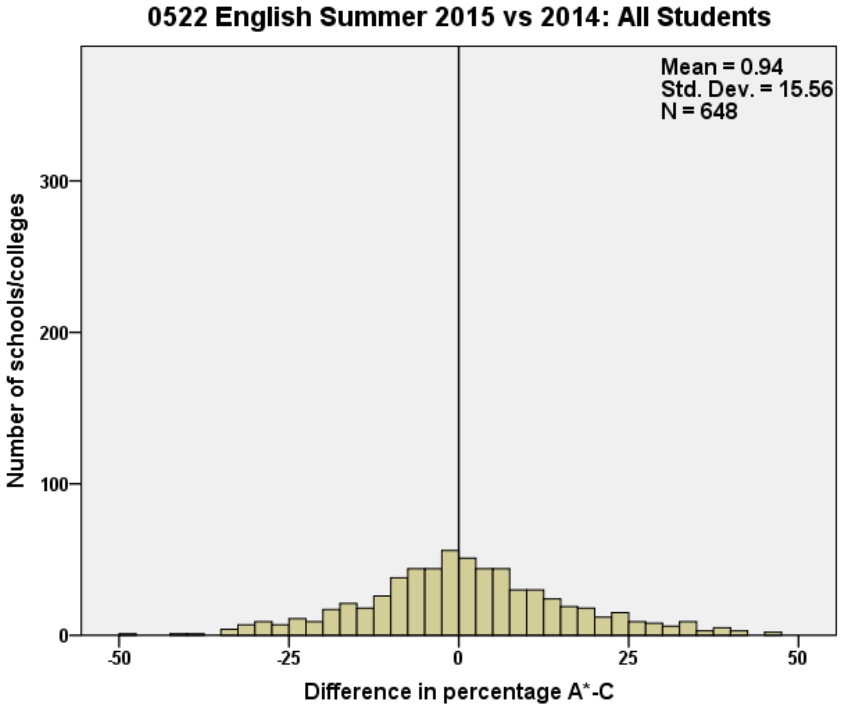


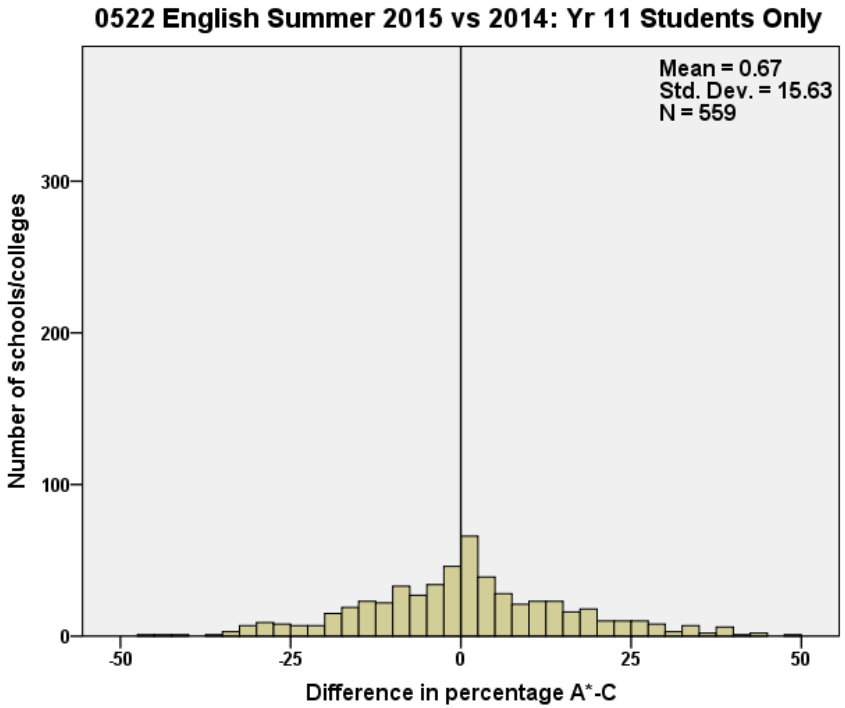
For the left-hand graph which included **all students** there were 486 schools where the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, 42 schools where the proportion did not change, and 635 schools where the proportion was higher in 2015 than in 2014.

For the graph on the right-hand side, which included **year 11 students** only, the numbers are very similar, although the overall numbers are slightly smaller because there are slightly fewer schools which had 50 students in both years when we restricted the analysis to year 11 students only. In 457 schools the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, there were 43 schools where the proportion did not change, and 581 schools where the proportion in 2015 was higher than in 2014.

IGCSE® First language English (0522)

The graphs below reproduce the GCSE analysis for IGCSE® schools with more than 50 students in 2015 and 2014. The overall numbers are smaller because the entry for IGCSE® is smaller than for the GCSEs in English language, but the patterns of variability are similar.

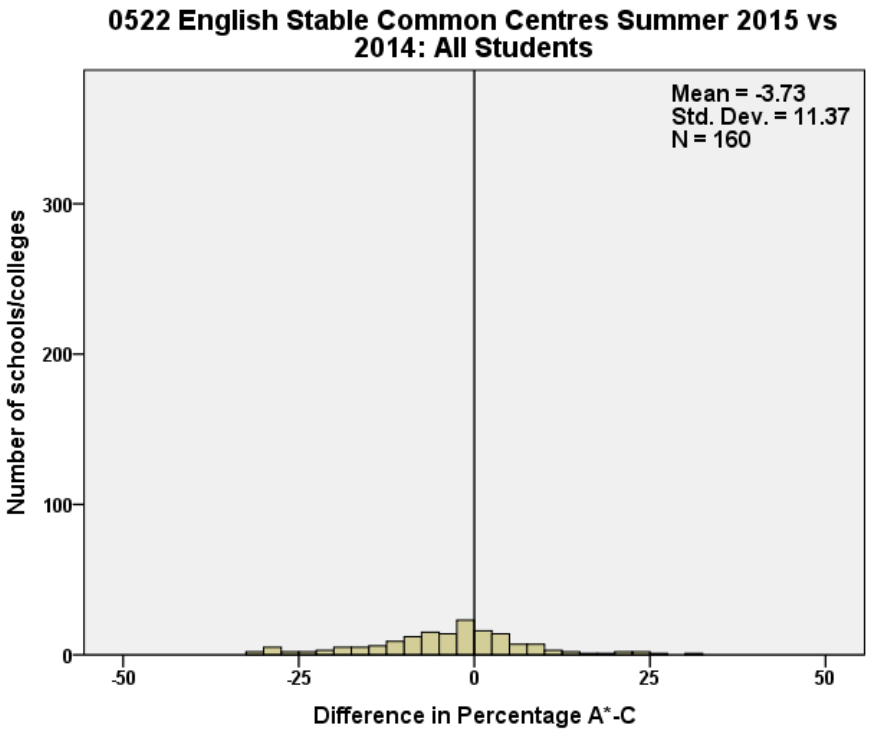


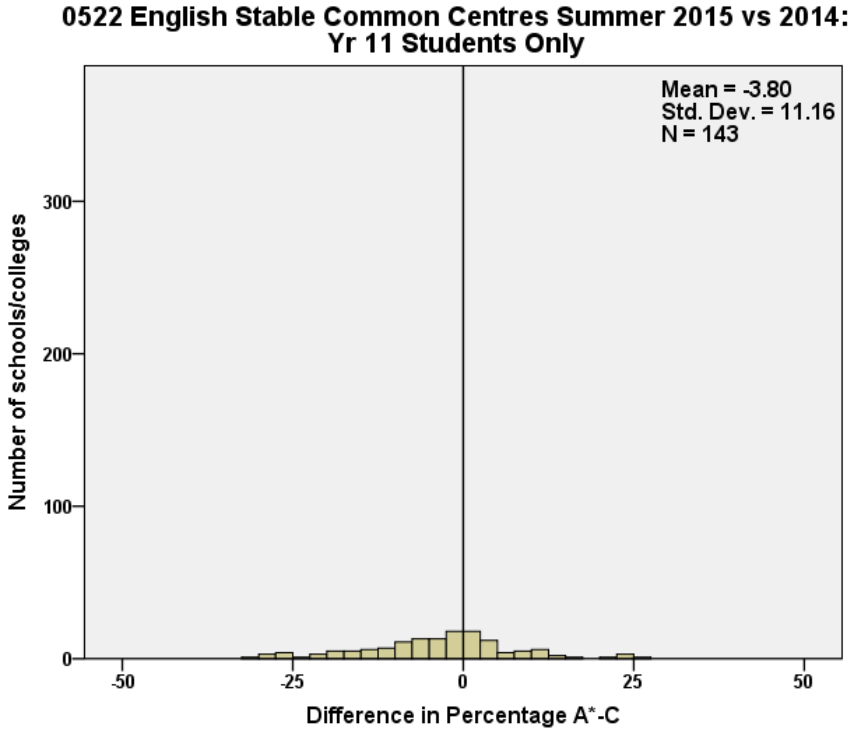


For the left-hand graph which included **all students** there were 316 schools where the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, 10 schools where the proportion did not change, and 322 schools where the proportion was higher in 2015 than in 2014.

For the graph on the right-hand side, which included **year 11 students** only, the numbers are very similar, although the overall numbers are slightly smaller because there are slightly fewer schools which had 50 students in both years when we restricted the analysis to year 11 students only. In 265 schools the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, there were 9 schools where the proportion did not change, and 285 schools where the proportion in 2015 was higher than in 2014.

IGCSE® First language English (0522) stable schools





For the left-hand graph which included **all students** there were 103 schools where the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, 7 schools where the proportion did not change, and 50 schools where the proportion was higher in 2015 than in 2014.

For the graph on the right-hand side, which included **year 11 students** only, the numbers are very similar, although the overall numbers are slightly smaller because there are slightly fewer schools which had 50 students in both years when we restricted the analysis to year 11 students only. In 90 schools the proportion of students achieving A*-C in 2015 was lower than in 2014, there were 6 schools where the proportion did not change, and 47 schools where the proportion in 2015 was higher than in 2014.