



Strictly Embargoed until 09.30 HRS on Thursday 16th August 2018

Northern Ireland GCE results in 2018

- **Stable and strong performance from Northern Ireland students**
- **Males performed better than females at A* grade for the first time**
- **Shifts in subject choices**

Figures released on behalf of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ^{CIC}), show a stable performance from Northern Ireland students at A Level.

A level

Overall a continued stable performance by Northern Ireland students across all grades.

There was a small increase in those awarded the top grade, with 8.2% of entries receiving an A*, up 0.1 percentage points. The percentage of entries achieving A* - A remained unchanged at 30.4%. The overall A* - E pass rate decreased slightly by 0.1 percentage points to 98.2%.

For the first time since the grade A* was introduced, males performed better than females by 0.4 percentage points. The performance gap between females and males has also narrowed at the A* - A grades .

Entries for A Levels in Northern Ireland decreased this year by 5.8% and this is in line with population demographics.

The top five subject choices remain the same, with Mathematics continuing to be the most popular, closely followed by Biology, Religious Studies, English Literature and History.

Over one third of A Level entries in Northern Ireland are in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. There is a small increase in the overall proportion of STEM entries, up from 39.7% to 40.1% this year.

AS Level

Northern Ireland schools continue to offer the AS Level as part of the full A Level qualification. There is a 4% decline in AS Level entries in Northern Ireland and this is in-line with demographics. AS Level outcomes remain stable with 95.1% of candidates achieving A-E grade, an increase of 0.3 percentage points on the previous year.

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Notes to Editors

The statistics below represent the provisional Northern Ireland GCE results from five JCQ awarding organisations:

- AQA
- CCEA
- OCR
- Pearson
- WJEC

Table 1: Northern Ireland GCE A Level entries and provisional results:

	2018	2017	2016
Entries	29,004	30,684	31,828
%A*	8.2	8.1	7.7
%A*- A	30.4	30.4	29.5
%A* - E	98.2	98.3	98.2

In Northern Ireland 98.2% passed (grades A* – E), with 8.2% achieving a grade A* and 30.4% achieving grades A* - A.

Table 2: Five most popular subjects at GCE A level in N. Ireland

	OVERALL	MALES	FEMALES
1	Mathematics (10.2%)	Mathematics (13.7%)	Biology (10.8%)
2	Biology (9.5%)	Biology (7.9%)	Religious Studies (9.3%)
3	Religious Studies (7.0%)	Physics (7.1%)	English Literature (8.6%)
4	English Literature (6.4%)	History (6.4%)	Mathematics (7.4%)
5	History (6.0%)	Business Studies (6.2%)	Geography (5.7%)

Traditional subjects such as Mathematics, Biology, Religious Studies and English remain popular in Northern Ireland. The top five subjects have been consistent since 2010. In 2018 Business Studies replaces ICT in popularity with males, Geography replaces history for females.

Table 3: Gender comparisons

	NI 2018		NI 2017		2016	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
%A*	8.4	8.0	7.2	8.7	7.5	7.8
%A*- A	29.7	30.9	26.8	33.3	27.2	31.3
%A*- E	97.6	98.7	97.9	98.6	98.0	98.3

Males outperform females at A* by 0.4% for the first time since the A* grade was introduced. 0.4% at Grade A* (8.4% male, 8.0% female).

Females continue to outperform males across the rest of the grades but the differences are reducing:

1.2% at Grades A* - A (29.7% male, 30.9% female)

1.1% at Grades A* -E (97.6% male, 98.7% female).

Table 4: GCE AS Levels entries and provisional results

	2018	2017	2016
Entries	40,325	41,961	45,657
%A	27.3	27.7	27.3
%A - E	95.1	94.8	94.8

1. Detailed tabulations of the GCE AS and A-level, Applied GCE AS and A-level are published separately, also with the STRICT EMBARGO of 09.30 Thursday 16 August 2018 and will be available on the JCQ website from 09.30 on 16 August 2018– www.jcq.org.uk
2. A* was introduced in 2009 and first awarded in 2010. In order to get an A*, candidates have to get an A overall for their A level and score 90 per cent or more of the total A2 marks available. It is not awarded for AS or for individual units.
3. All awarding organisations are answerable to the regulatory authorities - Ofqual (England), Welsh Government (Wales) and CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland) – for examinations standards. The regulatory authorities monitor the awarding bodies' standards. In addition, the awarding organisations themselves conduct a number of comparability studies to compare standards. Maintaining standards within and across all qualifications in order to ensure fairness to all candidates is the paramount concern of the awarding bodies.
4. The JCQ comprises AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, Pearson, OCR, SQA and WJEC – the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK.
5. The JCQCIC is a membership organisation and enables member awarding bodies to act together in providing, where possible, common administrative arrangements for the schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications; and responding to proposals and initiatives in assessment and the curriculum.

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