



GCE 2018: Notes for users of the JCQ results tables

These notes should be read before consulting the results tables as they put the results in a policy context and provide explanation for some year-on-year changes in reporting and outcomes. The notes do not, however, attempt to outline the detail of every policy that may influence results or entries. The relevant government and regulatory websites give a more extensive overview of system changes. **You should also refer to the JCQ press notice which has additional specific details with regard to key features of this year's outcomes.**

Regulator links:

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>

Northern Ireland

<http://cea.org.uk/regulation>

Wales

<http://qualificationswales.org>

Education Department links

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Northern Ireland

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/>

Wales

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>

GCE A Level, AS, AEA and Extended Project Results

AS and A levels in England, Northern Ireland and Wales are changing, which means that in subjects where the qualification has been reformed there will be different qualifications in each jurisdiction. The majority of entries this year are in reformed specifications.

For the reformed qualifications, the regulatory bodies in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will carry forward the standard of previous years. Grades awarded within a subject will no longer be

benchmarked across jurisdictions. Each regulator is committed to carrying forward the standards set in existing qualifications to the reformed ones, using well established principles and methods. Therefore, all other things being equal, a candidate taking a reformed qualification this year should get the same result as they would have received had they taken the legacy qualification. However, there are differences in content and assessment in the new qualifications and any comparisons with previous years should be made with caution.

JCQ tables include results for candidates of all ages from the summer examination series. They include results for candidates who are sitting their examinations for the first time as well as candidates who are resitting. The GCE Winter examination series is no longer available in any jurisdiction.

Interpreting the UK tables

Overall, GCE A level entries have not changed significantly, although some subjects are seeing changes in entry patterns. There is a variety of drivers for these changes, including GCSE subject choices. For example, in England, GCE computing is growing in entry most likely as a consequence of the growth of entry at GCSE and the planned withdrawal of the legacy ICT A level. Changes to GCSE performance measures may also affect GCSE subject choice, and in turn GCE subject choice.

With the decoupling of the GCE AS from the GCE A level in England, some centres and candidates have stopped taking AS qualifications. Therefore, AS entries are not stable and any year-on-year comparisons should be made with caution. Whilst entries from England make up a significant proportion of the UK entries, reforms in Wales and Northern Ireland may also lead to different choices with regard to AS entries and so should be treated with similar caution.

Further information on A and AS level reforms in each devolved jurisdiction can be found on the relevant regulators' and governmental websites.

GCE in England

Reform in England is being introduced in four phases:

- Phase 1 AS subjects were first examined in 2016. Phase 1 GCE A levels (in the same subjects as Phase 1 AS) were first examined last summer (2017).
- Phase 2 AS subjects were first examined last year (2017) with A levels in the same subjects this year (2018).
- Phase 3 AS examinations will be first examined this year (2018), with A levels in the same subjects in 2019. An exception to this is that the reformed A level mathematics qualification is available this summer and is likely to be taken by those students planning to take A level further mathematics next year.
- A levels in a number of small cohort languages will be first examined in 2020.

The major differences between the legacy GCEs and the reformed GCEs in England are:

- The AS element has been decoupled from GCE A level, so that AS marks no longer count towards to the A level.

- A levels are now linear which means that all papers in a subject must be sat in the same examination series.

The changes may result in some centres and candidates making different subject choices that will affect entries and results.

The JCQ tables for both AS and A level contain both first sitting and resitting candidates and therefore both reformed and legacy (where still available) GCE outcomes.

GCE in Northern Ireland

There is an open qualifications market in Northern Ireland, which means that schools can choose to offer AS / A levels which have been accredited in England, Northern Ireland or Wales. Consequently de-coupled linear and coupled modular AS and A levels will be available to schools in Northern Ireland. This year all GCE A level subjects offered by CCEA in Northern Ireland will have a new specification apart from mathematics.

- The GCE A levels offered by CCEA in Northern Ireland remain modular with the AS coupled to the A2.
- There has been a minor adjustment in emphasis with the AS contributing 40% (previously 50%) of marks towards the reformed A levels.

GCE in Wales

In Wales, as in England, there is a phased timetable of reformed qualifications.

- Phase 1 AS subjects were first examined in 2016. Phase 1 A levels (in the same subjects as Phase 1 AS) were first examined last summer (2017)).
- Phase 2 AS subjects were offered for the first time last year (2017), with A levels in the same subjects awarded for the first time this summer (2018).
- Phase 3 AS examinations will be first examined this year (2018), with A levels in the same subjects awarded for the first time in 2019. An exception to this is that the reformed A level mathematics qualification is available this summer and is likely to be taken by those students planning to take A level further mathematics next year.

The key features of the reformed GCEs in Wales are:

- New AS and A levels designed for Wales are only offered by WJEC. Where WJEC does not offer a subject, Qualifications Wales may designate the approval of a qualification designed for approval in another jurisdiction.
- A levels remain modular with combined results from AS and A2 units contributing to the final grade.
- There has been a minor adjustment in emphasis with the AS contributing 40% (previously 50%) of marks towards an A level.

Limitations

Comparisons between year-on-year outcomes are made more difficult during times of reform. The precise reasons for changes in centre and candidate entry behaviour may not be immediately clear. Even in cases where entry numbers look similar it is not necessarily the case that a similar cohort is taking a subject.

JCQ carries out quality assurance checks to ensure that the data received is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate.

The results tables are provisional. They are a snapshot of outcomes taken shortly before results are released. Results are updated after this point to include changes such as reviews of marking. Whilst provisional, we do not anticipate significant changes to outcomes to occur.

The tables should be read in conjunction with the press notices in the media section of the JCQ website. The press notices outline the context of year-on-year changes in results.