



## GCSE 2017 Notes for users of the JCQ results tables

These notes put the results in a policy context and provide explanation for some year-on-year changes in reporting and outcomes. The notes should be read before consulting the results tables. The notes do not, however, attempt to outline the detail of every policy that may influence results or entries in some way. For a more extensive overview of system changes, consult relevant regulatory and governmental websites. **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://ceea.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>

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## GCSE, Entry level and Project Level 1 and 2 Results

This year is the first phase of the award of reformed GCSEs in England and Wales. Northern Ireland's reformed GCSEs are yet to be awarded. A significant change in England is the introduction of a 9 to 1 grade scale for reformed GCSEs, with 9 being the highest grade. The grade set in Wales remains unchanged.

**Regulators are committed to anchoring standards of reformed and legacy qualifications at key grades, within their respective jurisdictions. This means that all things being equal (ie no other changes and a similar cohort profile) outcomes would be broadly similar. Current differences in grading systems, and other relevant factors, are set out in the text below.**

It should be noted that although anchoring is taking place, the reformed qualifications are different from legacy qualifications. There are differences in content, grading (in England) and assessment. This means that direct comparisons should be made with caution, particularly at centre level where there is likely to be more variability.

However, as JCQ is a UK-wide organisation we have had to consider how best to present UK-wide results in a meaningful way. As a divergence in grading systems will be observed for the first time this year and will extend to more subjects in future years, the main tables only report the grades (noted above) that are anchored to legacy outcomes. These outcomes are easier to compare to prior years than disaggregated outcomes from different grading systems.

### **System Differences in England**

- Progress 8, introduced in 2016, is a school performance measure which is expected to influence centre subject choice.
- EBacc achievement and entry continue to be measured in performance tables in England and will also influence subject choice.
- In England, only the first GCSE result in a subject counts in school performance tables, which influences sitting patterns.
- Full time post-16 students in England must study English or Mathematics to be eligible to receive funding if they have not already achieved grade C/4 in either subject (those achieving 3/D must be enrolled on a GCSE course).
- From 2017, Level 1/2 certificates (sometimes known as International GCSEs) will no longer contribute to school performance tables in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics. This has led to an increase in entries in all three GCSE subjects and may impact outcomes.
- In GCSE English Language, English Literature and Mathematics, reformed specifications will be examined for the first time in 2017. These are graded 9 to 1 with 9 being the highest grade.

### **Continuity in Wales and Northern Ireland**

At present both Wales and Northern Ireland continue with an A\* to G grade scale. Northern Ireland is introducing a third grade scale, where a C\* will be introduced which is equivalent to grade 5 in England and the A\* will be equivalent to grade 9. GCSEs using this scale will be awarded for the first time in 2019. However, there are differences:

- In Wales, GCSE Mathematics Numeracy is available. Candidates may take this or GCSE Mathematics, and many take both.
- In both Wales and Northern Ireland, the best outcome in a subject can be employed for school performance purposes. In Wales, in particular, we believe this has a significant impact upon series entries. For example, Wales had a large GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics Numeracy entry in November 2016.

- Comparisons between jurisdictions should therefore be made with caution, especially if just comparing the summer series. Full year data for these subjects in Wales can be found in the data set.
- Note that some centres may choose to offer 9 to 1 specifications. In Wales this will be confined to non-maintained centres, whilst in Northern Ireland there is an open qualifications market which means that schools will be offering GCSE graded 9 to 1 and GCSEs graded A\* to G.

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## **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. Note that in previous years provisional data for England included other jurisdictions (for example the Channel Islands) and this anomaly has been corrected this year.

The results tables are provisional. They are a snapshot of outcomes taken shortly before results are released. Results are updated constantly after this point, until results are released, to incorporate any late changes. Whilst provisional, we do not anticipate significant changes to outcomes or entries to occur once results are released.

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**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.**