



GCSE 2018 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 or reform 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 regards to key features of this year's outcomes.** Note that the provisional results are only for the summer series.

Regulator links:

England

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

Northern Ireland

<http://ccea.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>

GCSE, Entry level and Project Level 1 and 2 Results

This year is the second phase of the award of reformed GCSEs in England and Wales, with more subjects becoming available. Northern Ireland's reformed GCSEs are yet to be awarded (although some modules may be available this year, GCSE grades will not be issued for the reformed specifications until 2019). A significant change in England is the adoption of a 9 to 1 grade scale for

reformed GCSEs, with 9 being the highest grade. The grade scale in Wales and Northern Ireland remains unchanged (A*-G).

Regulators remain committed to anchoring standards of reformed and legacy qualifications at key grades within their respective jurisdictions. This means that all things being equal (i.e. 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 any comparisons with previous years 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 the divergence in grading systems extends to more subjects, the main tables only report the grades that are anchored to legacy outcomes. This change was introduced in 2017. These anchored 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 entry patterns.
- International GCSEs and unreformed GCSEs no longer count in the performance tables.
- Full time post-16 students in England must study English and/or mathematics if they have not already achieved at least a grade C/4 in either subject (those achieving 3/D must be enrolled on a GCSE course).
- In GCSE English language, English literature and mathematics, reformed specifications were be examined for the first time in 2017. These are graded 9 to 1 with 9 being the highest grade.
- This year, 20 phase 2 reformed subjects will be examined for the first time. These include art, geography, history, higher entry MFL subjects and sciences.
- Included in phase 2 is a new combined science double award GCSE. This replaces the single GCSE awards in science and additional science. The double award will be graded 9-9, 9-8, 8-8... 2-1, 1-1, U. In order to retain these outcomes in the main GCSE full course tables, we will report outcomes at key grades 7-7, 4-4 and 1-1 as 7, 4, and 1. The entries will be doubled to reflect the achievement of two grades in the subject.
- **It should be noted that comparison of outcomes in Science: Double Award should be compared with caution with outcomes in science and additional science in 2017. There are differences in the cohorts this year due to the choices that centres can make. You should make reference to the press notice in respect of this issue.**

Continuity in Northern Ireland

Grades for Northern Ireland's reformed GCSEs will not be issued until summer 2019. The specifications remain modular and therefore candidates can take examinations that contribute to their overall grade in earlier series. The models and overall awards will be awarded on a scale of A* to G. The new grade scale will be slightly different from the legacy grade scale, although this year's qualification results are not affected by the change.

There are, however, differences in Northern Ireland between the other jurisdictions and these are set out below.

Key system differences In Northern Ireland:

- In Northern Ireland the best outcome in a subject can be employed for school performance purposes, if a qualification is sat in several series.
- Although this is similar to the situation in Wales, early entries are not as common and have been reasonably stable over time.
- In Northern Ireland there is an open qualifications market which means that schools can choose to offer GCSEs graded 9 to 1 or GCSEs graded A* to G, or a combination of both.

Continuity with Reform in Wales

GCSE reform in Wales is following a similar schedule to that in England, with second phase subjects being awarded for the first time this summer. The reformed specifications in Wales are awarded on a grade scale of A*-G, which is the same grade scale as the legacy specifications in Wales. There is therefore more continuity with the legacy qualifications than in England.

There are however differences in Wales between the other jurisdictions and these are set out below.

Key system differences In Wales are noted below:

- GCSE mathematics numeracy is available. Candidates may take this or GCSE mathematics, and most take both.
- Changes to school performance measures have impacted on entries this summer.
- Best grade outcomes will be used for school performance measures for the year 11 cohort this summer (as they were for previous cohorts)
- In recent years there have been substantial numbers of year 11s entered for GCSEs early, and this is the case for the current year 11 cohort. Some early entrants will not have entered again this summer.
- First grade outcomes will be used for school performance measures in Wales for the current year 10 cohort (and subsequent cohorts) from 2019. This change to school performance measures has led to a big reduction in early entries for year 10s in Wales this summer.
- Overall year-on-year results comparisons based just on the summer series therefore need careful interpretation, both within Wales and across jurisdictions.
- Best grade data is provided in the data set for subjects substantially effected by early entry within the current year 11 cohort.
- Note that some centres may choose to offer 9 to 1 specifications. In Wales this will be confined to subjects in which no Wales-approved GCSE exists, or to non-maintained centres.

- Phase 2 subjects, examined for the first time this year, include art, geography, history, higher entry MFL subjects and sciences.
- Included in phase 2 is a new GCSE science double award. This replaces the single GCSE awards in science and additional science in Wales. The double award will be graded A*A*, A*A, AA.... FG, GG, U. In order to retain these outcomes in the main GCSE full course tables, we will report outcomes at key grades AA, CC, and GG as A, C, and G. The entries will be doubled to reflect the achievement of two grades in the subject.
- New applied GCSEs in science have also been introduced in Wales, which are available as a single award and a double award. These will also be awarded for the first time this year.
- **As for the results in England, comparison of outcomes in Science: Double Award should be compared with caution with outcomes in science and additional science in 2017. Both GCSE science double award and GCSE applied science double award are included in these categories. There are differences in cohort this year due to the choices that centres can make. You should make reference to the press notice in respect to this issue.**

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 constantly after this point, until results are released. For example, if late marks were received, results would be updated. Whilst provisional, we do not anticipate significant changes to outcomes or entries to occur once results are released.

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.