



Media release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 09.30 HOURS
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GCSE entry patterns impact results in Wales

Following the upward trend seen in last week's A level results, the proportion of students in Wales being awarded the top grades A* - A has increased; from 17.9% to 18.5% this year.

Despite the 8.9% decrease in entries, overall GCSE performance in Wales continues to remain relatively stable with 61.6% of students achieving grades A* - C across all subjects; compared to 62.8% in 2017.

This is the second year of reform for English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Mathematics – Numeracy, Welsh (1st) Language and Welsh Literature. Another 15 reformed subjects (taking total to 21) have their results this year, including a new Double Award in Science.

Mathematics

In Wales, students have the opportunity to take either GCSE Mathematics or GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy, with the majority taking the opportunity to study both subjects.

This summer's results show continued stability – with an increase of 0.3 percentage points in the proportion of students achieving grade A*-C in GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy; and an improvement in performance of female students by 0.4 percentage points.

Meanwhile, there has been a slight fall, of two percentage points, in the number of students being awarded grades A*-C for GCSE Mathematics.

However, for GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy, entries and outcomes are most appropriately reflected in the best outcome obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series. Figures 1 and 2 reflect the continued stability in entries and outcomes, when considered across the full academic year.

Figure 1: GCSE Mathematics – cumulative grade distributions for 16 year olds

	2016/17	2017/18
Grade		
A*	9.4%	9.3%
A	17.7%	18.5%
B	34.2%	35.7%
C	60.0%	60.4%
D	72.9%	74.8%
E	84.6%	84.8%
F	90.7%	90.0%
G	96.5%	96.1%
U	100.0%	100.0%
Entries	30812	29926

Figure 2: GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy – cumulative grade distributions for 16 year olds

	2016/17	2017/18
Grade		
A*	7.8%	7.6%
A	16.4%	16.7%
B	31.9%	34.0%
C	58.5%	59.6%
D	71.4%	74.0%
E	83.7%	85.7%
F	90.0%	91.2%
G	95.9%	96.2%
U	100.0%	100.0%
Entries	30683	29655

Stability in the separate sciences and new double award

For GCSE Biology, Chemistry and Physics there has been an increase in the number of entries of between 400 to 600 candidates, an upward trend that has continued year on year since 2015.

A* - C outcomes for GCSE Biology and Physics have fallen slightly (88% and 89.4%). However, A* - C outcomes for GCSE Chemistry have remained relatively stable (89.5%). This change in outcomes can be attributed to the change in entry patterns.

The proportion of students achieving A* grades for each of the separate science subjects has increased, with GCSE Biology increasing 1.6 percentage points to 17.4%, GCSE

Chemistry increasing 0.9 percentage points to 18.2%, and GCSE Physics increasing 1.5 percentage points to 18.4%.

This year was the first awarding of a new GCSE Science Double Award qualification, with 50.9% students in Wales achieving grades A*-C. The new Double Award qualification and the separate science qualifications are of the same academic standard, however, the separate science subjects continue to attract the highest proportion of the most able students.

English - English Literature outcomes stable, whilst English Language outcomes affected by last year's entry patterns

GCSE English Literature outcomes have fallen slightly to 77.3% of students achieving grades A*-C – compared to around 80.4% last year. This fall in outcome can be explained by the increase in entries by 15 year old students.

As widely expected, school entry patterns, where schools in Wales enter the most able students for GCSE English Language examinations early, has had a knock-on effect on overall performance in outcomes this summer, with 40.7% of students achieving grades A*-C.

For GCSE English Language, the A*- G outcomes are most appropriately reflected by looking at 16 year olds across the November and summer series which shows relative stability in both entries and outcomes when considered across the full academic year (please see Figure 3).

Figure 3: GCSE English Language – cumulative grade distributions for 16 year olds

	2016/17	2017/18
Grade		
A*	3.2%	3.2%
A	14.1%	13.3%
B	37.9%	34.3%
C	64.4%	63.3%
D	81.5%	81.4%
E	90.5%	90.8%
F	95.9%	96.1%
G	98.6%	98.7%
U	100.0%	100.0%
Entries	30792	30013

Welsh Language – stability for first language qualification; withdrawal of short course impacts second language outcomes

Results awarded to students for GCSE Welsh (1st) Language remain broadly similar to last year, with 71.2% achieving grade A*-C; compared to 72% in 2017. There has been a rise in students achieving A* - with 4.1% achieving the top grade, an increase of 0.4 percentage points on last year.

The change in entries for GCSE Welsh (1st) Language (from 6,422 to 4,848) can be attributed to the reduction in entries from 15 year olds.

Entries and outcomes for GCSE Welsh (1st) Language are most appropriately reflected in the best outcome obtained by 16 year olds across the whole academic year. Figure 4 demonstrates relative stability in outcomes.

Figure 4: GCSE Welsh (1st) Language – cumulative grade distributions for 16 year olds

	2016/17	2017/18
Grade		
A*	4.0%	4.1%
A	15.6%	14.8%
B	42.3%	40.9%
C	73.6%	74.0%
D	89.8%	89.2%
E	96.3%	95.7%
F	98.8%	98.4%
G	99.6%	99.5%
U	100.0%	100.0%
Entries	5381	5274

We have nearly seen a 2,500 increase in entries for GCSE Welsh (2nd) Language full course, and a decrease for GCSE Welsh (2nd) Language short course. This has affected overall student outcomes with 74.8% achieving grades A*-C in 2018, compared to 79.8% in 2017.

Welsh Literature – entries and outcomes broadly similar to last year

There has been an increase in the proportion of students being awarded grades A*-C for GCSE Welsh Literature. This year, 76% of students achieved A*-C, compared to 75.1% in 2017.

Despite there being fewer 16 year olds in this year's population, entry patterns for GCSE Welsh Literature remain very stable compared to last year with 3,304 students taking the examination this year, compared to 3,320 in 2017.

Modern Foreign Languages – entries continue to decline

As in recent years, there has been a decline in entries for French (3,519) and Spanish (1,107), whilst entries for German (759) remains stable.

The number of students awarded A*-C has remained relatively stable; with 77.6% students achieving A*-C for French, 81.9% for German, and 69.2% for Spanish – broadly similar to those seen last year.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the results in Wales, contact:

Jonathan Thomas, PR Manager, WJEC on 029 2026 5102 or jonathan.thomas@wjec.co.uk.

For information about the UK results, contact JCQ^{CIC}'s press office on 020 7227 0671, or 07905 683816 or at pressoffice@jcq.org.uk

Further statistical details on the results for the UK, Wales, England and Northern Ireland may be found at www.jcq.org.uk

NOTES FOR EDITORS

General

1. The data provided in the main body of this media release represent the aggregate information for Wales across all awarding organisations, and are provisional, in the sense that they represent the position at the time that results are issued.
2. These results are provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ^{CIC}), representing awarding organisations in the UK, and presented in Wales on behalf of JCQ^{CIC} by WJEC.
3. The qualifications framework is common across Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Comprehensive data for entries and results on a country-by country basis (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) are provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications – www.jcq.org.uk - and may be accessed from 9.30 am on Thursday 23 August 2018.
4. All awarding organisations are answerable to the qualification regulators – Qualifications Wales, Ofqual (England) and CCEA (Northern Ireland) – for examinations standards. The qualification regulators monitor the awarding organisations' 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.
5. In comparing the results of individual schools and colleges with any aggregate totals, it should be borne in mind that substantial variations are to be expected. A number of social, economic and educational factors have a bearing on the performance of pupils in examinations, of which the effectiveness of the school or college is only one.

Data Analysis

- There is a small number of candidates, mainly from the independent sector, who sit the reformed GCSE 9-1 examinations. Their overall outcomes are included in the headline figures, however, their outcomes are not included in the subject analysis which is A* - G only. Their data is available from the JCQ website www.jcq.org.uk.

GCSE Reform Timetable

The reformed GCSE qualifications for which awards were made in 2018 are:

- Phase 1 (teaching began in September 2015)
English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Mathematics - Numeracy, Welsh (1st) Language and Welsh Literature

- Phase 2 (teaching began in September 2016)
Art and Design, Biology, Chemistry, Drama, Food and Nutrition, French, Geography, German, Music, Science (Double Award), Applied Science (Single Award), Applied Science (Double Award), Spanish, Physical Education and Physics