



Media release
EMBARGOED UNTIL 09.30 HOURS
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A level and AS results show rise in top grades in Wales

GCE A Level Results

The A level provisional results for Wales show an improvement overall with 8.7% of grades awarded at A*, the best outcome in Wales since this grade was introduced, in 2010, 0.4 percentage point higher than the previous best figure in 2017.

The proportion of results awarded A* - A grades this year is 26.3%, which is 1.3 percentage points higher than the figure for 2017. There are also improvements of 1.9 and 1 percentage points in results at grades B and C.

Wales achieved the best results for A*, 0.7 percentage points higher than the UK. The proportion of candidates awarded A* - A was in line with the UK, 26.4%.

The total number of A level examination entries in Wales this year was 32,445, a reduction of 2.6% relative to 2017 continuing the decreasing A level entries since the summer of 2015, in line with the reduction in size of the 18-year old population. The percentage of students achieving A* - E grades is 97.4%, a small decrease when compared with 2017 (97.7%), but consistent in the range of the last decade (97.1% to 97.7%).

In Wales, males continue to outperform females at both grades A and A*, whilst at other grades females continued to outperform males, with 98.0% of subject entries by females this year gaining A* - E grades, compared to 96.7% of entries by males. The gap continues to be widest at grade C, with females 5.4 percentage points ahead of males.

At grades A* - A, the performance of males was marginally better than that of females, with 26.6% of males' results and 26.0% of females' results being at grades A* - A, improving by 1.5 and 1.1 percentage points respectively from 2017. Performance of male candidates at A* was again, marginally better than females, a 1.3 percentage point difference (9.4% for males and 8.1% for females).

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Results

There were 42,915 subject entries for AS in Wales this year, a decrease of 7.0% compared with 46,127 last year, being the third consecutive annual reduction in entries, which can be explained to an extent by the reduction in the size of the 17 year old age group.

20.4% of all grades awarded were A in Wales this year, an improvement of 1.3 percentage points on the figure for 2017. The percentage of candidates achieving A - E grades also shows an improvement; 90.0% this year, compared to 88.9% last year. This follows a trend of continued improved outcomes shown at AS.

21.0% of all grades achieved by females were an A, 91.9% were A - E. The equivalent figures for males were 19.6% at A grade and 87.7% at grades A - E. As with A levels, the gap was widest at grade C, with females 7.5 percentage points ahead of males.

Trends in Subject Entries

Entries at A level and AS continue to fluctuate. However, the relative changes in entries are small.

For A level we have seen an increase in entries for Business, with 296 additional entries. We have seen a reduction in entries for English Literature (-180), Geography (-197) and History (-173).

Entries for French (-20), German (-34) and Spanish (-22) have seen a small decrease. However overall outcomes have improved.

For AS entries, we have seen a downward pattern in all subjects, with the exception of Psychology where there has been an increase (+177).

Mathematics remains the most popular A level and AS subject with 3,950 and 4,767 entries respectively. Mathematics is part of the Phase 3 reforms which started teaching in 2017. Assessments for all other Phase 3 reformed subjects will not be available until 2019, but Mathematics has been offered in 2018 after just one year of study. This decision was taken to allow those highly able students who take Mathematics at 17 years old and Further Mathematics at 18 years old to do so.

There has been a small increase in entries for Welsh 1st Language at AS and A level. However, entries for Welsh 2nd Language has declined at both AS and A level. This reversed the trend seen in 2017, but reflects the year on year fluctuations in entries.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the results in Wales, contact:

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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

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 WJEC's website from 09.30 on 16 August 2018 – www.wjec.co.uk

Results 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. Results for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification are awarded by WJEC only.

The JCQ^{CIC} comprises AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, OCR, Pearson, SQA and WJEC – the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK

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.

The qualifications framework is common across Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Comprehensive data for entries and results on a country-by-country basis are provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications - www.jcq.org.uk - and may be accessed from 9:30 am on Thursday 16 August 2018.

All awarding organisations are answerable to the regulatory authorities - Ofqual (England), Qualifications Wales and CCEA (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.

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.

GCE Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

The A level examination is made up of two parts, the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and the A2. The AS and the A2 combined in a single subject constitute the A level.

The standard set for the AS is that expected at the end of the first year of a two year course. The AS covers the less demanding material in an A level course. The AS is not, therefore, of full Advanced level standard. In reformed qualifications approved by Qualifications Wales, the AS contributes 40% to the overall A level, whereas in the previous specifications the contribution was 50%.

During the second year of the course, students develop greater understanding of the subjects they are studying, and the A2 covers the more demanding material in the course.

The standards for both AS and A level awards in reformed qualifications have been carried forward from previous specifications using a “comparable outcomes” as approved by regulators.

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

Phase 1 (teaching began in September 2015)

Art and Design, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English Language, English Language and Literature, English Literature, History, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and Welsh First Language

Phase 2 (teaching began in September 2016)

Drama, French, Geography, German, Music, Physical Education, Religious Studies, Spanish and Welsh 2nd Language

Phase 3 (teaching began in September 2017)

Mathematics

The AS subjects for which the awards made in 2018 are based on reformed specifications are, in addition to the above, Design & Technology, Government & Politics, Media Studies, Mathematics, Further Mathematics and Law.