



Media release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 09.30 HOURS
THURSDAY, 17 AUGUST 2017**

Improvement in A level results in Wales

GCE A Level Results

The A level provisional results for Wales show an improvement overall with 8.3% of results being at grade A*, the best outcome in Wales since this grade was introduced, one percentage point higher than the previous best figure in 2015. The proportion of results awarded A* - A grades this year is 25.0%, which is 2.7 percentage points higher than the figure for 2016 and is similar to the outcomes during 2008 to 2010, which ranged between 24.1% and 25.0%. There are also improvements of 1.5 to 2.0 percentage points in results at grades B and C.

The total number of A level examination entries in Wales this year was 33,294, a reduction of 6.3% relative to 2016 which is a larger change than can be explained by the reduction in size of the 18-year old population group. The percentage of students achieving A* - E grades is 97.7%, marginally the best of the outcomes during the last decade, which have been in the range 97.1% to 97.6%.

For the first time in recent years, boys in Wales outperform girls at both grades A and A*, whilst at other grades girls continued to outperform boys, with 98.2% of subject entries by girls this year gaining A*- E grades, compared to 97.0% of entries by boys. The gap is widest at grade C, with girls 5.4 percentage points ahead of boys.

At grades A*-A, the performance of boys was marginally better than that of girls, with 25.1% of boys' results and 24.9% of girls' results being at grades A*-A, improving by 3.1 and 1.6 percentage points respectively from 2016. At grade A*, the small difference in favour of boys in previous years has become a difference of just over one percentage point in 2017, 8.9% for boys and 7.8% for girls. Differences in performances of boys and girls are strongly associated with subject choice, and therefore comparative conclusions cannot be drawn except within subjects.

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Results

There were 46,127 subject entries for AS in Wales this year, a decrease of just over 6% compared with 49,144 last year, being the second consecutive annual reduction of a similar size and larger than can be explained by a reduction in the size of the 17 year old age group population.

Grade A was achieved by 19.1% of all candidate subject entries in Wales this year, an improvement of just over one percentage point on the figure for 2016. The percentage achieving A - E grades also shows an improvement; 88.9% this year, compared to 88.3% last year.

19.3% of all subject entries by girls achieved an A grade and 91.1% gained A - E grades. The equivalent figures for boys were 19.0% at A grade and 86.0% at A - E grades. As with A levels, the gap was widest at the grade C, with girls outperforming boys by nearly eight percentage points. However, detailed comparative conclusions can be drawn only within individual subjects.

Trends in Subject Entries

In terms of entry patterns, there is a mixed picture at A level and AS. We have seen some growth in entries for Business, Mathematics and Political Science at A level in Wales. There has been a reduction in entries for a number of Facilitating Subjects at A level including Biology, English Literature, Geography and History.

We have seen growth in entries for Art & Design, Business and Media/Film Studies at AS in Wales. However, there has been substantial reduction in entries for Chemistry, English Literature, Geography, History, ICT and Religious Studies.

There has been a small increase in entries for Welsh 1st Language at AS. However there has been a reduction at A level. Entries for Welsh 2nd Language at A level have remained stable, but have dropped at AS.

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 17 August 2017 and will be available on WJEC's website from 09.30 on 17 August 2017 – 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 17 August 2017.

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 2017 are: Art & Design, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English Language, English Language & Literature, English Literature, History, Physics, Psychology, Sociology, Welsh 1st Language.

The AS subjects for which the awards made in 2017 are based on reformed specifications are, in addition to the above, Drama, French, Geography, German, Music, Physical Education, Religious Studies, Spanish and Welsh 2nd language.