



GCE 2019:

Notes for users of the JCQ results tables

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

GCE A Level, AS, AEA and Extended Project Results

The reform of AS and A levels in England, Northern Ireland and Wales is virtually complete with just a handful of lesser taught languages to be examined for the first time next year and a small number of resits for the legacy specifications remaining.

For the reformed qualifications, the regulatory bodies in England, Northern Ireland and Wales have carried forward the grade standards from previous years, using well established principles and methods. Therefore, all other things being equal, a candidate taking a reformed qualification should get the same grade as they would have received had they taken the legacy qualification.

JCQ tables include results for candidates of all ages from the summer examination series. They include results for candidates who are sitting their examinations for the first time as well as

candidates who are resitting. The GCE Winter examination series is no longer available in any jurisdiction.

Interpreting the UK tables

Overall, GCE A level entries have not changed significantly, although some subjects are seeing changes in entry patterns. There is a variety of drivers for these changes, including GCSE subject choices. For example, in England, GCE Computing is growing in entry, most likely as a consequence of the growth of entry at GCSE. GCSE performance measures may also affect GCSE subject choice, and in turn GCE subject choice. So whilst reform is largely complete, as ever, year-on-year comparisons should be made with caution.

Reformed GCE AS specifications were decoupled from the GCE A level in England. Entries have declined and this trend continues. Whilst entries from England make up a significant proportion of the UK entries, reforms in Wales and Northern Ireland may have led to different choices with regard to AS entries. Therefore, AS entries are not stable and any year-on-year comparisons should be made with caution.

Further information on A and AS level reforms in each devolved jurisdiction can be found on the relevant regulators' and governmental websites.

GCE in England

Reform in England is being introduced in four phases:

- Phase 1 AS subjects were first examined in 2016 with A levels in the same subjects in 2017.
- Phase 2 AS subjects were first examined in 2017 with A levels in the same subjects in 2018.
- Phase 3 AS examinations were first examined in 2018.
- Phase 3 A level examinations are available for the first time this year. An exception to this is that the reformed A level mathematics qualification was available last year.
- A levels in a number of lesser taught languages will be first examined in 2020.

The major differences between the legacy GCEs and the reformed GCEs in England are:

- The AS element has been decoupled from GCE A level, so that the AS no longer counts towards the A level.
- A levels are now linear which means that all papers in a subject must be sat in the same examination series.

The changes may result in some centres and candidates making different subject choices that will affect entries and results.

The JCQ tables for both AS and A level contain both first sitting and resitting candidates, and therefore both reformed and legacy (where still available) GCE outcomes.

Northern Ireland

There is an open qualifications market in Northern Ireland, which means that schools can choose to offer AS / A levels from their preferred awarding organisation. Consequently de-coupled linear and coupled modular AS and A levels are available to schools in Northern Ireland. Last year all GCE A level subjects offered by CCEA in Northern Ireland were new specifications apart from mathematics. This year a new mathematics specification will be awarded for the first time.

- The GCE A levels offered by CCEA in Northern Ireland remain modular with the AS coupled to the A2.
- There has been a minor adjustment in emphasis with the AS making up 40% (previously 50%) of the reformed A levels.

Wales

In Wales, as in England, there is a phased timetable of reformed qualifications.

- Phase 1 AS subjects were first examined in 2016 with A levels in the same subjects in 2017.
- Phase 2 AS subjects were first examined in 2017 with A levels in the same subjects in 2018.
- Phase 3 A level examinations will be available for the first time this year. An exception to this is that the reformed A level mathematics qualification was available last year, mainly for 17 year olds, who may be sitting A level further mathematics this year.
- The key features of the reformed GCEs in Wales are:
- New AS and A levels designed for Wales are only offered by WJEC. Where WJEC does not offer a subject, Qualifications Wales may designate a qualification designed for another jurisdiction.
- A Levels remain modular with results from AS and A2 units contributing to the final A level grade.
- There has been a minor adjustment in emphasis with the AS making up 40% (previously 50%) of the A level.

Population Statistics

The Office for National Statistics population estimates are published by actual age – not academic age – which is different. There are many ways that the number of people in an academic year group can be estimated, which will give slightly different results and are not directly comparable, but broadly these estimates show that there are around 2.9% fewer 18 year olds in the England population in 2019 than in 2018.

The UCAS definition for the UK includes Scotland, given its relevance for University entrants, however the JCQ definition includes England, Wales and NI only. Scotland is not included in the JCQ population estimates.

Limitations

Comparisons between year-on-year outcomes are made more difficult during times of reform. Whilst reform is largely complete, some changes will still be working through. 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. Results are updated after this point to include changes such as reviews of marking. Whilst provisional, we do not anticipate significant changes to outcomes to occur.

The tables should be read in conjunction with the press notice in the media section of the JCQ website. The press notice outlines the context of year-on-year changes in results.