



## **GCSE 2020 Notes for users of the JCQ results tables**

These notes put the results in context and provide explanations for the extraordinary circumstances in which GCSE grades were awarded in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. An outline of this year's awarding process is provided below the regulator links. In light of these changes, this year's results are not directly comparable to previous years, but JCQ is publishing them for continuity and information purposes.

The notes should be read before consulting the results tables. The notes do not, however, attempt to outline the detail of every change that may influence results or entries in some way. For a more extensive overview of system changes, consult relevant regulatory and governmental websites. Note that the provisional results are only for the summer series and do not include results for qualifications awarded earlier in the academic year.

### **Regulator links:**

#### **England**

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

#### **Northern Ireland**

<https://ceea.org.uk/regulation>

#### **Wales**

<https://qualificationswales.org>

### **Education Department links:**

#### **England**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

#### **Northern Ireland**

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/>

#### **Wales**

<https://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>

In response to the Global COVID-19 pandemic, the Summer 2020 exam series was cancelled to help fight the spread of the virus. An initial process was put in place to award candidates with a calculated grade aiming to reflect the grade they would have been likely to achieve, in their overall qualification, had an exam gone ahead.

GCSE grades were to be awarded by exam boards this summer through a methodology set or agreed by the regulators. In England, Ofqual set the methodology for GCSE exam boards in consultation with them. In Wales and Northern Ireland, exam boards developed the methodologies used, which were agreed with the regulators in those jurisdictions.

However, following the earlier publication of A level results, English, Northern Ireland and Welsh Education Ministers opted to accept Centre Assessment Grades or the calculated grades, whichever was the higher.

### **GCSE Results**

Following ministerial decisions, mentioned above, JCQ delayed the publication of Summer 2020 GCSE results tables and published them, for the first time, on 10 September 2020.

As a reminder, the diagram on the following page gives an approximation of the relationship between the grades in the three jurisdictions' grade scales.

England 9 to 1	Northern Ireland A* to G(NI)	Wales A* to G
9	A*	A*
8		
7	A	A
6	B	B
5	C*	
4	C	C
3	D	D
2	E	E
1	F	F
	G	G
U	U	U

### System differences in England

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and suspension of the 2020 school performance tables, Progress 8 and EBacc achievement and entry would have been measured in performance tables in England and this would have influenced subject choice. Such subject choices would also apply to the choices made for the Summer 2020 examinations, even though the examinations did not take place.
- 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 that subject.
- This year all specifications are graded 9 to 1.
- The only exception to this is GCSE Combined Science (Double Award), which is 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 report outcomes at key grades 7-7, 4-4 and 1-1 as 7, 4, and 1. Each entry is doubled to reflect the achievement of *two* grades in the subject.

- This summer GCSEs in Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese and Turkish, are awarded on the 9 to 1 grade scale for the first time.

### **System differences in Northern Ireland**

Grades for CCEA's revised GCSEs have been issued this summer for the second time.

In Northern Ireland there is an open qualifications market which means that schools can choose to offer GCSEs graded A\*-G(NI), or 9 to 1 or a combination of both, provided these meet the Department of Education requirements.

CCEA provides a January series for GCSE English Language and GCSE Mathematics and a November and March series for GCSE Double and Single Award Science.

### **System differences in Wales**

GCSE reform in Wales followed a similar schedule to that in England. The reformed specifications in Wales are awarded on a grade scale of A\*-G, which is the same grade scale as the legacy qualifications in England and Northern Ireland.

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 alongside GCSE mathematics.
- GCSE mathematics, mathematics – numeracy, English language and Welsh language can be sat in November or in the summer.
- It should be noted that the November series in Wales is open to all candidates and is not just a resit series.
- Overall year-on-year results comparisons based just on the summer series therefore need careful interpretation, both within Wales and across jurisdictions.
- Note that a few 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.
- GCSE Combined Science (Double Award) is graded A\*A\*, A\*A, AA... FG, GG, U. In order to retain these outcomes in the main GCSE full course tables, we are reporting outcomes at key grades AA, CC, and GG as A, C, and G. Each entry is doubled to reflect the achievement of two grades in the subject.

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### **Limitations**

Comparisons between year-on-year outcomes are made more difficult during times of reform and major impacts such as the global pandemic of COVID-19. Whilst reform is complete, some changes are still 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 (or in 2020, where reviews of marking are not possible, appeals). Whilst provisional, we do not anticipate significant changes to outcomes to occur.

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**The tables should be read in conjunction with the press notices in the media section of the JCQ website.**