

12th August 2021

Student resilience shown as top GCSE grades rise by 2.7 percentage points

Today, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publishes the 2021 national results for GCSEs

The GCE A Level, AS and GCSE examinations in England were cancelled in an announcement by the UK government in January 2021. Teachers instead determined grades this summer, using a range of evidence that reflected the content their students had been taught. Similar approaches were also applied to other regulated qualifications delivered in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Schools and colleges worked tremendously hard throughout the year, while students showed remarkable resilience to achieve in a year where Covid impacted the education sector and individuals in different ways.

Exam boards supported schools and colleges through the provision of extensive assessment materials, guidance and training, and external quality assurance checks.

Given the approach to determining grades in 2021 has been different from any previous summer, the overall grade distribution in 2021 was always likely to look different from 2020 and years when exams took place. It is therefore difficult to draw comparisons with previous sets of results.

In the UK overall:

- Entries have increased by 0.9% from 2020 to 5.75m
 - Spanish continues to be the GCSE subject with the largest percentage growth (+4.7% from 2020)
 - Geography is the GCSE subject with the second largest percentage growth (+4.2% from 2020); it has the largest percentage growth at A level
- Overall outcomes increased at 7/A and 4/C (7/A and above, and 4/C and above):
 - 7/A increased by 2.7 percentage points (pp) from 2020
 - 4/C slightly increased by 0.8pp in 2021 from 2020
 - Pass rates (1/G grade and above) declined slightly by 0.6pp from 2020
- Female students performed better than male students:
 - Female students' 7/A grades increased by 3.2pp and male students by 2.2pp
 - Female students only marginally increased at 4/C by 0.4pp compared to male students who increased by 1.3pp

Dr Philip Wright, Director General of JCQ said:

NEWS RELEASE

'On behalf of JCQ and the exam boards, I would like to congratulate all students receiving their results today. The impact of Covid has undoubtedly provided a difficult chapter in their education journey and their resilience is to be applauded. We wish them all the best as they take their next steps in life.'

'We would also like to express our sincere thanks to teachers, exams officers, heads of centre and colleagues who have all worked exceptionally hard to determine grades this summer. Teachers used their professional judgement and submitted the grades and evidence in good time for us to check and award grades today. Their efforts will allow students to swiftly progress onto the next stages of their education or training.'

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About JCQ:

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a membership organisation comprising the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK.

Our members are: **AQA** (AQA Education Ltd), **CCEA** (Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment), **City & Guilds**, **NCFE**, **OCR** (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations), **Pearson**, **SQA** (Scottish Qualifications Authority), **WJEC**.

The JCQ is a membership organisation and enables member awarding bodies to act together in providing, where possible, common administrative arrangements for schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications; and responding to proposals and initiatives in assessment and the curriculum.

The JCQ is a not for profit Community Interest Company, limited by guarantee. It is funded by its members.