

Embargoed to 09:30 10th August 2021



Joint Council for
Qualifications ^{CIC}

PROVISIONAL RESULTS BRIEFING: GCE 2021

- Derek Richardson, JCQ Chair & Responsible Officer, Pearson
- Jill Duffy, CEO, OCR
- Ian Morgan, CEO, WJEC
- Kevin Phillips, Responsible Officer, AQA
- Simon Lebus, Chief Regulator, Ofqual
- Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator, Ofqual



1

Congratulations and a big thank you

Congratulations to all students
who worked hard in exceptional circumstances to complete assessments and assignments.

Their work formed the basis of their grades. Teachers' professional judgements were supported by our guidance and validated by our quality assurance.

Students can have confidence that these results will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education or employment.

Teachers, exams officers, heads of centre and their colleagues
have all worked exceptionally hard to decide grades this year and submit them, with the supporting evidence, in good time.

JCQ and the exam boards thank all those involved.



2

2

JCQ Results Briefing

1. Welcome and introductions – Derek Richardson, JCQ Chair
2. The 2021 context – Simon Lebus, Ofqual
3. Key highlights
4. Support, QA and appeals – Kevin Phillips
 - Resources and support, quality assurance and appeals
5. Results presentation – Jill Duffy & Ian Morgan
 - Population and Entries
 - A Level Outcomes
 - Outcomes by Gender
6. Ofqual analysis – Michelle Meadows, Ofqual
7. Q&A

There is an addendum in the slide deck summarising some subject outcomes



3

3

The 2021 context

Simon Lebus
Chief Regulator
Ofqual

ofqual

4

Key highlights

- Teachers did an excellent job in determining grades during a difficult year
- Teacher assessed grades, based on their students' work, supported by our guidance and validated by the quality assurance processes, can give students confidence in their results and will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education and careers.
- Geography entries saw the largest increase across all large-entry subjects, up 16.8% in 2021
 - Science entries were also in the top ten increases with: Biology +7.6%; Physics +7.4% and Chemistry +6.9%
- Overall outcomes increased at A* and A-A* (i.e. A and above):
 - A* increased by 4.8 percentage points (pp) from 2020
 - A*-A increased by 6.3pp in 2021 from 2020
 - Pass rates declined slightly by 0.2pp from 2020
- Female students performed better than male students:
 - At A*-A females increased by 7.0pp and males 5.4pp
 - With female A* increasing by 5.3pp compared to males at 4.2pp
- Ofqual equalities analysis shows stability overall
- Students have worked hard in a difficult year and will be able to progress to further study or employment with the grades awarded



5

5

Support for centres, students and parents

- **Guidance** on grading, centre policies, evidence, private candidates, SEN learners, special consideration, appeals
- **Templates** for centre policies, assessment records, grading checklists, appeals
- **Resources** with grade descriptors and guidance, worked examples, assessment materials and marking guidance for all subjects
- **Student and parent guides**
- **Links** to awarding bodies' sites across the UK are included in background briefing document



6

6

Quality assurance in Summer 2021

- The Quality Assurance (QA) framework supported schools and colleges to determine appropriate grades for both A Level and GCSE.
- Similar arrangements were followed in Wales and NI, but the following refers to the process in England.
 - QA within centres
 - Teachers worked together, with double sign-off, to determine appropriate grades;
 - Heads of Centres established Centre Policies to ensure processes aligned to government policy, and signed off on the results.
 - QA by exam boards
 - Initial contact – Support calls from exam boards to every centre;
 - Stage 1 – Review of all Centre Policies by exam boards coordinated by JCQ;
 - Stage 2 – Follow-up contact on Centre Policies;
 - Submission of student work used from every centre;
 - Stage 3 – Review of student work from 1 in 5 centres; discussion with centres and exam board specialists where required.



7

7

Appeals

- Students who believe there is an error with their grade can appeal, first to their school or college and second to the exam board.
- There are a number of grounds on which a student can appeal including a review of whether the school or college's academic judgement was unreasonable.
- The process is designed to be as accessible as possible for students. They will only need to say what they believe went wrong and how they think it impacted their grade.
- Students can request a priority appeal if they have missed out on their firm offer for higher education. Exam boards will aim to complete these by the UCAS deadline of 8 September for students to meet the conditions of their offers for many higher education providers.
- Students' grades can go down, go up or stay the same as a result of both stages of the appeals process.



8

8

Population and Entries

- Overall **A Level entries up 5.1%** (down 2.5% in 2020)
- **18 year-old population (E, W & NI) up 0.9%** (down 3.2% in 2020)
- Overall AS entries down 14.9% (down 19.6% in 2020)
- 17 year-old population (E, W & NI) up by 2.4% (down 1.3% in 2020)
- In 2021, the number of candidates increased to 319,314, up from 303,035 in 2020, an increase of 5.3%
 - Average number of entries per candidate remained largely unchanged at 2.58 (2.59 in 2020)

ENTRIES	All		18 yr. olds	
	2021	% change	2021	% change
All A-Levels	824,718	+5.1	755,313	+6.3
All AS Levels	135,589	-14.9		



9

9

Top 10 increases in entries

- Mathematics remains the most popular single subject (11.8% of all entries)
 - Overall Mathematics entries increased by 3.6% to 97,690 from 94,264

Ranking	Subject	% change	2021 Number of entries	2020 Number of entries
1	Geography	16.8	35,268	30,203
2	Law	15.4	13,519	11,711
3	Computing	11.3	13,829	12,428
4	Psychology	9.2	71,235	65,263
5	Sociology	7.9	42,091	38,994
6	Biology	7.6	70,055	65,120
7	Physics	7.4	40,741	37,921
8	Chemistry	6.9	59,978	56,100
9	Economics	6.9	33,546	31,391
10	Business Studies	6.5	38,546	36,188



10

10

A Level Outcomes

- Grade outcomes saw an increase in 2021
- Pass rates are down 0.2pp[†] (those achieving A*-E) from 2020
- The proportion of candidates receiving an A* and A*-A has increased
 - A* increased by 4.8pp from 2020
 - A*-A increased by 6.3pp from 2020

	A* %		A*-A%		A*-C		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
All	19.1	14.3	44.8	38.5	88.5	88.0	99.5	99.7
pp Change between yrs	+4.8		+6.3		+0.5		-0.2	

[†]pp = percentage points



11

11

A Level Outcomes by Gender

- Female student entries accounted for 55.1% of all A Level entries in 2020, down from 55.5% in 2020
- Female student grades increased more than male student grades

	A* %		A*-A%		A*-C		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Males	18.4	14.2	42.1	36.7	85.9	85.6	99.3	99.7
pp change between yrs	+4.2		+5.4		+0.3		-0.4	
Females	19.7	14.4	46.9	39.9	90.7	89.9	99.6	99.8
pp change between yrs	+5.3		+7.0		+0.8		-0.2	



12

12

Ofqual analysis

Michelle Meadows

Executive Director, Strategy, Risk & Research
Ofqual

ofqual

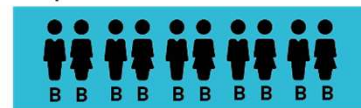
13

Equalities analysis – what do the differences mean?

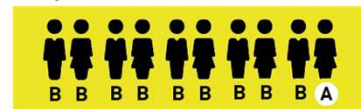
- Looks at the difference in mean (average) grade between two groups of students, from 2018 to 2021
- Interested in whether there are **change** in the gaps compared to previous years
- Generally we see stability over time; a small number where gaps have increased or decreased, often by around 1/10th of a grade on average.

What does a difference of 1/10th of a grade mean?

Group 1



Group 2



The difference in mean grade between the two groups is 0.1 (1/10th) of a grade

ofqual

14

Equalities analysis: student characteristics

- Generally, modelled gaps between different groups are stable from 2019 to 2021 (see equalities report)

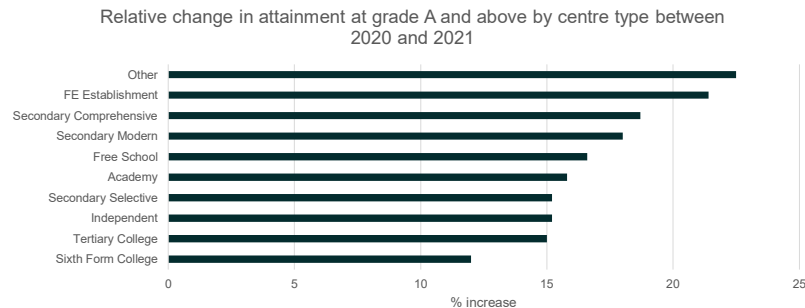
Characteristics	Findings
Ethnicity	Stable
Gender	Gap between males and females reversed: females now have slightly higher outcomes when controlling for prior attainment
Free school meal eligibility	Stable
Deprivation	Stable
Major language (EAL)	Stable
SEND	Gap between SEND and non-SEND reversed: non-SEND students now have slightly higher outcomes when controlling for prior attainment

Centre type – outcomes at grade A and above

- See results report for more detail

Centre type	Outcomes 2021	2021-2020 relative change	2021-2020 absolute change
Academy	41.9%	15.8%	5.7 ppt
FE Establishment	28.8%	21.4%	5.1 ppt
Free Schools	46.6%	16.6%	6.6 ppt
Independent	70.1%	15.2%	9.3 ppt
Other	51.1%	22.5%	9.4 ppt
Sec Comp or Middle	39.3%	18.7%	6.2 ppt
Secondary Modern	35.3%	18.0%	5.4 ppt
Secondary Selective	56.6%	15.2%	7.5 ppt
Sixth Form College	35.3%	12.0%	3.8 ppt
Tertiary College	34.5%	15.0%	4.5 ppt

Relative change in outcomes A and above



Other centres include colleges of higher education, university department, tutorial colleges, language schools, special schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), HM Young Offender Institutes (HMYOI), HM Prisons, training centres

Centre type – outcomes at grade C and above

■ See results report for more detail

Centre type	Outcomes 2021	2021-2020 relative change	2021-2020 absolute change
Academy	87.7%	0.7%	0.6 ppt
FE Establishment	81.0%	1.2%	1.0 ppt
Free Schools	88.8%	1.8%	1.6 ppt
Independent	96.4%	0.6%	0.6 ppt
Other	88.5%	2.2%	1.9 ppt
Sec Comp or Middle	86.7%	0.8%	0.7 ppt
Secondary Modern	83.6%	0.1%	0.1 ppt
Secondary Selective	92.2%	0.3%	0.3 ppt
Sixth Form College	85.0%	0.5%	0.4 ppt
Tertiary College	85.9%	-0.1%	-0.1 ppt

Key highlights

- Teachers did an excellent job in determining grades during a difficult year
- Teacher assessed grades, based on their students' work, supported by our guidance and validated by the quality assurance processes, can give students confidence in their results and will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education and careers.
- Geography entries saw the largest increase across all large-entry subjects, up 16.8% in 2021
 - Science entries were also in the top ten increases with: Biology +7.6%; Physics +7.4% and Chemistry +6.9%
- Overall outcomes increased at A* and A-A* (i.e. A and above):
 - A* increased by 4.8 percentage points (pp) from 2020
 - A*-A increased by 6.3pp in 2021 from 2020
 - Pass rates declined slightly by 0.2pp from 2020
- Female students performed better than male students:
 - At A*-A females increased by 7.0pp and males 5.4pp
 - With female A* increasing by 5.3pp compared to males at 4.2pp
- Ofqual equalities analysis shows stability overall
- Students have worked hard in a difficult year and will be able to progress to further study or employment with the grades awarded



19

19

Questions & Answers

Panel:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCQ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Derek Richardson, JCQ Chair & Pearson ○ Jill Duffy, OCR ○ Ian Morgan, WJEC ○ Kevin Phillips, AQA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofqual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simon Lebus, Chief Regulator ○ Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator |
|--|--|



20

20

Embargoed to 09:30 10th August 2021



Joint Council for
Qualifications ^{CIC}

PROVISIONAL RESULTS BRIEFING: GCE 2021

- Derek Richardson, JCQ Chair & Responsible Officer, Pearson
- Jill Duffy, CEO, OCR
- Ian Morgan, CEO, WJEC
- Kevin Phillips, Responsible Officer, AQA
- Simon Lebus, Chief Regulator, Ofqual
- Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator, Ofqual



21

08:15 10th August 2021 – Embargoed to 09:30



Joint Council for
Qualifications ^{CIC}

ADDENDUM: PROVISIONAL RESULTS BRIEFING GCE 2021 – ADDITIONAL SLIDES



22

AS Level Outcomes

- Entries declined by 14.9% overall to 135,589:
- National outcomes for AS Levels from TAGs saw an increase at grade A of 5.3pp, but declines at both A-C (-1.0pp) and at the pass grade of E and above (-1.4pp):
 - Females A grade increased by 6.4pp, compared to males at 3.8pp, and the decline in grades A-C and A-E (pass) were less pronounced for females than males.

	A %		A-C%		A-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
All	35.9	30.6	79.0	80.0	96.6	98.0
pp Change between yrs	+5.3		-1.0		-1.4	

*pp = percentage points

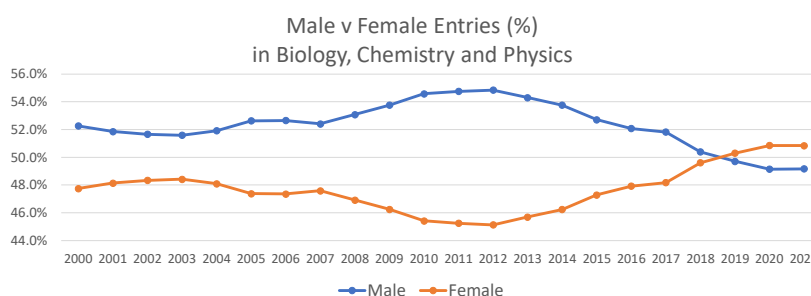


23

23

Entries in the Sciences

- Total science entries (biology, chemistry, physics) still account for over 20% of all A Level entries (20.7%).
- Female entries remained higher than male entries comprising 50.8% of science marginally down from 50.9% in 2020.
- Females entries constituted 63.7% of biology, 54.6% of chemistry and 23.2% of physics in 2021.
- Overall science entries increased by 7.3% over 2020 (biology +7.6%, chemistry +6.9%, Physics +7.4%).



24

24

Science Outcomes

- Pass rates were marginally down on 2020 in biology, chemistry and physics (E and above).
- At grade A*, Biology saw the largest increase of 5.1pp, compared with Chemistry 4.8pp and Physics 4.5pp.

	A* %		A*-A %		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Biology	18.4	13.3	45.1	37.5	99.5	99.7
pp Change between yrs	+5.1pp [†]		+7.6pp		-0.2pp	
Chemistry	19.6	14.8	48.6	42.9	99.3	99.7
pp Change between yrs	+4.8pp [†]		+5.7pp		-0.4pp	
Physics	21.9	17.4	46.8	41.9	99.3	99.6
pp Change between yrs	+4.5pp [†]		+4.9pp		-0.3pp	

[†]pp = percentage points



25

25

Mathematics

- Mathematics remains most popular single subject (11.8% of all entries).
- Overall entries increased by 3.6% to 97690, a further increase from 2020, which was up 2.5% to 94,264.
- Female A* grades (29.1%) outstripped the increase in male A* grades (28.5%), meaning females overtook male A* for the first time:
 - 18 year-old entries increased by 4.4% to 86,726.

	A*%		A*-A%		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Mathematics	28.7	23.8	55.2	50.3	98.9	99.6
pp Change between yrs	+4.9pp [†]		+4.9pp		-0.7pp	
Male	28.5	24.1	53.5	49.1	98.7	99.5
Female	29.1	23.2	57.8	52.2	99.2	99.7

[†]pp = percentage points



26

26

English

- English Language entries declined by 3.4% and Literature by 4.6%, but Language & Literature entries marginally increased by 1.1%.
- Females constituted 72.3% of all English Language entries, 77.3% of Literature and 71.4% of Language & Literature.
- English Language A* grades increased by 2.7pp, Literature increased by 4.7pp and Language & Literature by 4.3pp.

	A* %		A*-A %		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
English						
Language	7.8	5.1	27.5	21.8	99.7	99.9
pp Change between yrs	+2.7pp		+5.7pp		-0.2pp	
Literature	19.6	14.9	44.0	37.7	99.8	99.9
pp Change between yrs	+4.7pp		+6.3pp		-0.1pp	
Lang. & Lit.	11.1	6.8	31.3	24.2	99.6	99.8
pp Change between yrs	+4.3pp		+7.1pp		-0.2pp	



27

27

Modern Foreign Languages

- French entries increased by 1.5% to 8,383, Spanish increased by 5.0% to 9,139, but German entries continued to decline, this year by 4.9% to 2,708.
- Some of the largest increases in A* grades were seen in MFL:
 - French A* grades increased by 6.3pp from 2020, with females constituting 71.4% of entries;
 - German A* grades increased by 11.2pp from 2020, with females constituting 61% of entries;
 - Spanish A* grades increased by 9.3pp from 2020.

	A* %		A*-A %		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
French						
French	26.7	20.4	60.3	54.4	99.8	99.9
pp change between yrs	+6.3pp		+5.9pp		-0.1pp	
German	34.6	23.4	67.7	58.7	100	100
pp change between yrs	+11.2pp		+9.0pp		0.0pp	
Spanish	31.0	21.7	63.2	54.3	99.9	100
pp change between yrs	+9.3pp		+8.9pp		-0.1pp	



28

28

Other Modern Languages

- Total entries in Other Modern Languages increased by 6.7% to 5256 following a significant decline of 40.6% seen from 2019 to 2020 (to 4,928).
- Chinese remains the most popular Other Modern Language despite declining by 18.9% to 1,312 (down from 1617).
- The next three largest languages were:
 - Russian – 730 up 17.6% from 621, nearly returning to entries seen in 2019;
 - Italian – 666 largely unchanged from 669;
 - Polish – 630 up 17.3%, from 621.
- Arabic saw the largest increase in entries increasing 54.9% to 615.

Other Modern Languages	A* %		A*-A %		A*-E%	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
All	50.6	31.3	82.1	73.8	99.7	99.4
pp Change between yrs	+19.3pp [†]		+8.3pp		+0.3pp	
Male	46.9	27.0	79.3	69.8	99.6	99.4
Female	53.4	34.6	84.2	76.8	99.7	99.4



29

29

Private candidates

- JCQ provided a searchable data base of centres who could take private candidates.
- Where exam centres had or could develop sufficient evidence from private candidates, they could be awarded grades.
- The autumn exam series provides an additional opportunity to for private students, if they couldn't get a grade or felt they could do better in exams.
- 1.1% of all A/AS Level candidates were private.

Year	# Private Candidates		# Total Candidates		# Total Entries	
	A Level	AS Level	A Level	AS Level	A Level	AS Level
2019	8,587	2,008	309,958	95,804	801,002	193,409
2020	3,365	258	302,164	77,481	784,959	159,315
2021	4,568	243	317,751	60,561	824,718	135,589



30

30

Number of students achieving all A* grades

Number of A levels taken	Number of students				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	2,511	2,570	2,980	2,973	4,888
2	443	507	496	1,046	2,051
3	2,718	2,664	3,007	7,774	12,945
4	1,184	1,310	1,190	2,734	3,863
5+	65	60	28	64	96
Total	6,921	7,111	7,701	14,591	23,843