

10<sup>th</sup> August 2021

## AS/A Level grades awarded in a year unlike any other

Today, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publishes the 2021 national results for A and AS Levels.

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.

Partly reflecting demographic changes, this summer saw an increase in the number of A Level entries, bouncing back from a drop in 2020.

- Overall outcomes (England, Wales & NI) 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\* female students increased by 5.3pp and male students increased by 4.2pp
  - At A\*-A female students increased by 7.0pp and male students by 5.4pp
  - A Level maths female students overtook male students for the first time in the number of A\* grades achieved – with 29.1% getting an A\* compared with 28.5% of male students

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, training or employment.'*

-ends-

For media enquiries:

Maurice Richmond  
Communications Manager  
[maurice.richmond@jcq.org.uk](mailto:maurice.richmond@jcq.org.uk)  
Mob: 07399 870337

Twitter: [@JCQcic](https://twitter.com/JCQcic)

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.