



## Media release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 09.30 HOURS  
THURSDAY, 24 AUGUST 2023**

### **Students perform well as grading continues return towards pre-pandemic standards**

Today, the Joint Council for Qualifications has published the 2023 Wales results for GCSEs, alongside the release of Level 1 and 2 vocational and technical qualifications (VTQ). This is the second time students have undertaken summer exams marked and graded by exam boards since 2019. Overall outcomes are higher than 2019 (at C/4 and above), but lower than in 2022 where additional measures were put in place.

Working closely with Qualifications Wales, WJEC has introduced measures to support the transition back to pre-pandemic standards. This has included advance information in relation to assessments to mitigate the disruption to teaching and learning caused by the pandemic. Qualifications Wales confirmed that results will broadly reflect a midway point between 2019 and 2022.

Comparisons to any previous years' results should be approached with caution due to the differing methods of assessments and circumstances.

### **Highlights:**

- 300,409 total entries - down by 3.4% on 2022
- A\*/9 – A/7 grades are down on last year, but still remain above pre-pandemic levels
- Chemistry replaces Biology in top ten most popular subject choices
- Business Studies sees continued growth with 4,455 entries (+31.9% from 2022, and +49.1% since 2019)
- Spanish rises in popularity, with entries up 11.7% to 1,475

### **This year's results compared with 2019 and 2022**

Overall results (at C/4 and above) have increased since 2019:

- A\*/9 - A/7 up by 3.3 percentage points (pp)
- A\*/9 – C/4 up by 2.1pp
- A\*/9 – G/1 down by 0.3pp

Overall results are lower than 2022, which reflect the gradual return towards pre-pandemic standards

- A\*/9 - A/7 down by 3.4pp
- A\*/9 - C/4 down by 3.7pp
- A\*/9 – G/1 down by 0.4pp

## GCSE overall performance

The GCSE results for Wales show that 21.7% of candidates have been awarded the top grades A\*/9- A/7, whilst 64.9% of candidates have been awarded a C/4 grade or above.

The total number of GCSE examination entries in Wales this year was 300,409, a decrease of 3.4% (10,663 entries) from 2022.

## Mathematics

In Wales, students have the opportunity to take either GCSE Mathematics or GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy, with the majority taking the opportunity to study both subjects.

This year's figures show that 15.2% of candidates achieved A\*/9 – A/7 grades for GCSE Mathematics, whilst 53.5% of candidates have been awarded a grade C/4 or above.

Meanwhile, 16.6% of candidates achieved A\*/9 – A/7 grades for GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy, whilst 55.4% of candidates have been awarded a grade C/4 or above.

For GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy, entries and outcomes are most appropriately reflected in the best outcome obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series.

*Figure 1: GCSE Mathematics – cumulative best grade all boards distributions for 16 year olds*

	2018/19	2022/23
<b>Grade</b>		
<b>A (7)</b>	18.7%	21.0%
<b>C (4)</b>	59.1%	61.2%
<b>G (1)</b>	95.5%	95.7%
<b>Entries</b>	30,704	32,466

*Figure 2: GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy – cumulative best grade distributions for 16 year olds*

	2018/19	2022/23
<b>Grade</b>		
<b>A (7)</b>	16.1%	18.9%
<b>C (4)</b>	58.1%	60.6%
<b>G (1)</b>	95.2%	95.7%
<b>Entries</b>	30,073	31,945

## English and English Literature

15.8% of all grades awarded to GCSE English Language candidates were A\*/9 – A/7 this year, whilst 60.7% of candidates achieved a grade C/4 or above.

For GCSE English Literature, 20.6% of candidates achieved grades A\*/9 – A/7, and 73.1% of candidates have been awarded a grade C/4 or above.

Similarly to GCSE Mathematics, for GCSE English and GCSE English Literature, entries and outcomes are most appropriately reflected in the best outcome obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series.

*Figure 3: GCSE English Language – cumulative best grade all boards distributions for 16 year olds*

	2018/19	2022/23
<b>Grade</b>		
<b>A (7)</b>	13.4%	17.4%
<b>C (4)</b>	59.6%	64.0%
<b>G (1)</b>	98.6%	97.9%
<b>Entries</b>	30,816	32,749

*Figure 4: GCSE English Literature – cumulative best grade all boards distributions for 16 year olds*

	2018/19	2022/23
<b>Grade</b>		
<b>A (7)</b>	20.3%	20.7%
<b>C (4)</b>	74.9%	72.4%
<b>G (1)</b>	98.6%	98.5%
<b>Entries</b>	24,889	29,297

## Welsh First Language and Welsh Second Language

17.3% of candidates achieved A\*/9 – A/7 grades in GCSE Welsh First Language, whilst 71.9% of candidates have been awarded a grade C/4 or above.

Meanwhile, 22.4% of GCSE Welsh Second Language candidates have achieved A\*/9 – A/7 grades, and 63.1% of candidates have been awarded a grade C/4 or above.

Entries and outcomes for GCSE Welsh (1<sup>st</sup>) Language are most appropriately reflected in the best outcome obtained by 16 year olds across the whole academic year. Figure 5 demonstrates relative stability in outcomes.

Figure 5: GCSE Welsh (1<sup>st</sup>) Language – cumulative best grade distributions for 16 year olds

	2018/19	2022/23
<b>Grade</b>		
<b>A (7)</b>	15.7%	18.0%
<b>C (4)</b>	73.7%	74.0%
<b>G (1)</b>	99.4%	98.4%
<b>Entries</b>	5,401	6,122

### Separate sciences and double award

The proportion of candidates achieving A\*/9 – A/7 in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics is 45.8%, 46.2% and 46.8%, respectively.

90.0% (Biology), 89.1% (Chemistry), and 91.0% (Physics) have achieved a grade C/4 or above.

For GCSE Science Double Award, 9.3% of candidates have been awarded A\*/9 – A/7 grades, and 52.5% of candidates have achieved a grade C/4 or above.

The Double Award qualification and the separate science qualifications are of the same academic standard, however, the separate science subjects continue to attract the highest proportion of the most able students.

Ian Morgan, Chair of JCQ Board of Directors, said:

*“On behalf of JCQ, I would like to congratulate all GCSE and vocational students on their achievements today. Their results reflect the effort and determination they've demonstrated throughout their studies, and we wish them well as they take their next steps into further education, training, and employment.”*

*“We would like to thank teachers, tutors, and exams officers working at schools across the country for their hard work, and continued support and commitment to ensuring the successful delivery of this year's exam series. We also want to recognise the contribution of parents and carers who have played a huge role in supporting students achieve today's results.”*

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the results in Wales, contact:

Jonathan Thomas, PR Manager, WJEC on 029 2026 5102 or [jonathan.thomas@wjec.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.thomas@wjec.co.uk).

For information about the UK results, contact JCQ<sup>CIC</sup>'s press office on 020 7227 0671, or 07905 683816 or at [pressoffice@jcq.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@jcq.org.uk)

Further statistical details on the results for the UK, Wales, England and Northern Ireland may be found at [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### General

1. Detailed tabulations of the GCSE Full Course, GCSE Short Course, GCSE Double Award, Entry Level Certification, Level 1 and Level 2 Project, are published separately, also with the STRICT EMBARGO of 09.30 Thursday 17 August 2023 and will be available on the JCQ CIC website from 09.30 on 24 August 2023 [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk).
2. These results are for qualifications taken by students across the UK but predominantly in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
3. All awarding organisations are answerable to the regulatory authorities - Ofqual (England), Qualifications Wales (Wales) and CCEA (Northern Ireland). The regulatory authorities monitor the standards of qualifications within their jurisdiction.
4. The JCQ CIC is a membership organisation, comprising AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, NCFE, OCR, Pearson, SQA and WJEC – the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK.
5. JCQ enables member awarding bodies to act together in providing, where possible, common administrative arrangements for the schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications, and to respond to proposals and initiatives in assessment and the curriculum.
6. Media contact: The JCQ's press office can be contacted on: 020 7227 0671/07399 870 337

### Data Analysis

- There is a small number of candidates, mainly from the independent sector, who sit the reformed GCSE 9-1 examinations. Their overall outcomes are included in the headline figures, however, their outcomes are not included in the subject analysis which is A\* - G only. Their data is available from the JCQ website [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk).

### Summer 2023: Approach to assessment and grading

*The information below relates to the following Qualifications Wales approved qualifications:*

- *WJEC GCSE, AS and A level qualifications*
- *Skills Challenge Certificates*
- *Level 2 and Level 3 Health and Social Care: Principles and Contexts*
- *Level 2 and Level 3 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development*

In September 2022, Qualifications Wales confirmed that approved qualifications would continue to be assessed via exams and non-examination assessments as normal, but with advance information to account for the disruption to teaching and learning.

WJEC published advance information in February 2023 for each qualification, which supported learners' revision.

In addition, WJEC supported schools and colleges through the provision of additional guidance, training and resources. Examples of this support is available from the [WJEC Summer 2023 website](#).

Qualifications Wales confirmed in September 2022 that for 2023, results will broadly reflect a midway point between 2022 and 2019. WJEC has worked to implement this policy directive as part of their awarding process.