



Strictly Embargoed until 09.30 HRS on Thursday 17 August 2023

Northern Ireland A level results in 2023

- Today's results reflect the continuing journey to pre-pandemic grading.
- Results are higher than pre-pandemic years, lower than 2022.
- 37.5% of students achieved A*-A grades.
- Biology replaces Mathematics as top A level choice for first time in 9 years.

Today, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has published the 2023 Northern Ireland results for A and AS levels. This is the second-time students have undertaken summer exams marked and graded by exam boards since 2019.

The provisional figures show that 37.5% of students received a grade A or above, which reflect the continued return to pre-pandemic grading.

A level

The total number of A level examination entries in Northern Ireland has increased by 1.3% to 32,925 from 32,506 in 2022, which is in line with school-age population.

The provisional A level results in Northern Ireland show that 98.8% of students achieved A*-E grade. 37.5% of entries achieved A* - A grades, and 11.6% achieved a grade A*.

Biology has replaced Mathematics as the subject with the most entries, accounting for just under 1 in 10 entries.

Over one third of A level entries in Northern Ireland continue to be in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

AS level

AS level entries saw an increase of 11.3% from 35,328 in 2022 to 39,336.

In provisional AS outcomes 33.5% of students achieved grade A, with 97.5% achieving A-E grade.

ENDS

**Media enquiries to:**

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For information about the UK results, contact the JCQ^{CIC}'s press office on 020 7227 0671, or 07399 870337 or at 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

Notes to Editors

There is an open qualifications market in Northern Ireland, which means that schools can choose to offer A levels and AS levels from awarding organisations other than CCEA, provided these comply with the Department of Education requirements. This includes AQA, OCR, Pearson Edexcel and WJEC.

Summer 2023: Arrangements

Further information on the Summer 2023 assessment arrangements is available below:

CCEA

Northern Ireland is on a journey back to pre-pandemic awarding arrangements, and this is reflected in this year's summer 2023 awards. [CCEA](#) expects to return to pre-pandemic standards across all subjects by the summer of 2024.

Students were provided with high-level [Advance Information](#) for the majority of CCEA AS and A level summer 2023 examinations to recognise the disruption students may have faced.

[CCEA Summer 2023](#)

WJEC

[WJEC Summer 2023](#)

Regulators

CCEA Regulation - <https://ccea.org.uk/regulation/news/2022/october/ccea-announces-approach-awarding-grades-202223-academic-year>

Ofqual - www.gov.uk/ofqual

Qualifications Wales - <https://qualifications.wales/en/exam-arrangements-2022-23/>



A / AS level provisional results 2023

The statistics* below represent the provisional Northern Ireland GCE results from five JCQ awarding organisations: AQA, CCEA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC.

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

Table 1: Northern Ireland GCE A level entries and provisional results, compared to 2019

	2023*	2019*
Entries	32,925	31,332
%A*	11.6	8.0
%A* - A	37.5	29.4
%A* - E	98.8	98.4

Table 2: Northern Ireland GCE A level entries and provisional results, compared to 2022

In 2022, all Awarding Organisations implemented a significant package of support for students taking exams this summer to take account of the ongoing disruption from the pandemic.

	2023*	2022*
Entries	32,925	32,506
%A*	11.6	14.5
%A* - A	37.5	44.0
%A* - E	98.8	99.1

Table 3: Five most popular subjects at GCE A level in Northern Ireland

	OVERALL	MALES	FEMALES
1	Biology (9.8%)	Mathematics (12.1%)	Health & Social Care (SA) (11.7%)
2	Mathematics (8.9%)	Business Studies (9.1%)	Biology (10.7%)
3	Health & Social Care (SA) (8.0%)	Biology (8.5%)	Mathematics (6.8%)
4	Business Studies (6.8%)	History (8.0%)	Chemistry (6.2%)
5	History (6.4%)	Geography (7.7%)	English Literature (5.8%)

- Biology has replaced Mathematics as the subject with the most entries, accounting for just under 1 in 10 entries.
- GCE Geography is now in the top five subject choices for males.



Table 4: GCE AS levels entries and provisional results compared to 2019

	2023*	2019 *
Entries	39,336	41,803
%A	33.5	26.4
%A - E	97.5	95.7

Table 5: GCE AS levels entries and provisional results compared to 2022

	2023*	2022*
Entries	39,336	35,328
%A	33.5	38.8
%A - E	97.5	98.2

** Note – prior to 2021 Health and Social Care (Single Award and Double Award) outcomes were not included in the JCQ provisional data sheets. The 2019 outcomes have also been revised to include the Health & Social Care outcomes.*

Detailed tabulations of the GCE AS and A-level, Applied GCE AS and A-level are published separately, also with **the STRICT EMBARGO of 09.30 Thursday 17 August 2023** and will be available on the JCQ website from 09.30 on 17 August 2023 at www.jcq.org.uk

All awarding organisations are answerable to the regulatory authorities Ofqual (England), Qualifications Wales (Wales) and CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland) for examinations standards.

The regulatory authorities monitor the awarding bodies' standards. In addition, the awarding organisations themselves conduct a number of comparability studies to compare standards. Maintaining standards within and across all qualifications in order to ensure fairness to all candidates is the paramount concern of the awarding bodies.

The JCQ comprises AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, NCFE, OCR, Pearson, SQA and WJEC – the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK.

The JCQ^{CIC} is a membership organisation and 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 responding to proposals and initiatives in assessment and the curriculum.