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National Statistics

Background information for Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: April to June 2021

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1. Purpose

This release presents information on the number of certificates issued for regulated vocational and other qualifications during April to June 2021 (quarter 2, 2021) in England.

It does not include GCSEs, AS and A levels, Advanced Extension Awards, End-Point Assessments, Extended Project Qualifications, and Principal learning qualifications. The number of certificates awarded for some of these qualifications can be found on the website of the <u>Joint Council for Qualifications</u>.

The numbers of certifications of apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs) are not included in this release. Ofqual collects data on certificates from awarding organisations. The organisations that conduct EPAs do not issue certificates for the completion of EPAs. Instead they request certificates on behalf of apprentices, which are issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency under Section A3 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Data tables accompanying this release show the number of awards broken down by awarding organisation, sector subject area, type of qualification, and level of qualification.

Comparisons in this release are mainly made with data from the same quarter of the previous year and the 12-month period up to the end of the same quarter of the previous year. This is because of seasonal changes in the number of certificates issued over the year.

On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that exams in schools and colleges due to take place in summer 2020 would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The Secretary of State for Education wrote to Ofqual on 9 April 2020 setting out how the government expected vocational and technical qualifications, and general qualifications other than GCSE, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Awards in maths to be assessed and awarded in summer 2020.

Following this direction from the Secretary of State for Education, Ofqual consulted on proposals for exceptional arrangements for VTQ grading and assessment in 2020, and published an <u>Extraordinary Regulatory Framework</u> (ERF) on 22 May 2020. The ERF put in place a framework to facilitate the issue of results in summer 2020 to learners taking vocational and technical qualifications in circumstances where normal assessments were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following further consultation, Ofqual published the <u>Extended Extraordinary</u> <u>Regulatory Framework</u> (EERF) on 12 October 2020. This framework follows on from the ERF by allowing awarding organisations to adapt their qualifications in 2020 and 2021 in recognition of the fact that, although assessments may take place after summer 2020, learners may have experienced disruption to teaching, learning and assessment because of the pandemic.

In January 2021, the government announced its decision to cancel examinations and assessments in schools and colleges in spring and summer 2021. Following this, Ofqual consulted on and published the Vocational and Technical Qualifications Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) on 24 March 2021. Like the ERF and EERF, the VCRF outlined the ways in which assessments could be adapted and how results should be determined. Where necessary and appropriate, awarding organisations were permitted to make adaptations to their qualifications and assessments. Some awarding organisations made changes to the delivery of their assessments, such as moving to online and remote assessment and invigilation. Other made changes to their assessment approach, for example, replacing observation of practical skills with professional discussion. For some qualifications, in particular licence to practise qualifications, adaptations were not appropriate and so practical assessments had to be delayed due to public health measures. From January 2021, in line with government policy, awarding organisations were permitted to issues results based on Teacher Assessed Grades at either qualification or unit level for qualifications used for progression to higher or further study, or into employment.

2. Geographical coverage

The data covers regulated qualifications in England.

3. Description

Ofqual regulates qualifications and assessments in England. This bulletin includes data on vocational and other qualifications awarded in England.

Regulated qualifications are classified into different qualification types. The qualification type classification is completed by the awarding organisations offering the qualifications. Qualification types provide information which complements that provided by the sector subject area characterisation. Qualification type categorisation can give an indication of a number of features, such as the nature of the qualification, the type of assessment, the qualification level and guided learning hours.

Ofqual revised the list of qualification types in consultation with awarding organisations in 2018. Qualifications are now classified into 3 categories: i) general, ii) life and personal skills, and iii) vocational, technical and professional. Table 1 gives a further breakdown of the new structure of qualification types. In the new structure, we removed qualification types that did not identify a coherent group of qualifications and also cut across other types or described a qualification using other information in the regulatory framework. We added types where necessary to cover the broadest range of qualifications that we regulate. No changes were made for those qualifications types where there are qualification specific regulatory requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, GCSEs, GCEs (AS and A levels), Functional Skills, and end-point assessments.

Table 1:

Advanced Extension Award	Regulatory type
GCE A level	Regulatory type
GCE AS level	Regulatory type
GCSE (9 to 1)	Regulatory type
GCSE (A* to G)	Regulatory type
Project	Regulatory type
Other General Qualification	Other qualification type
Free Standing Mathematics Qualification	Retired type
Principal learning	Retired type
English for Speakers of Other Languages	Regulatory type
Functional Skills	Regulatory type
Essential Skills (Northern Ireland)	Regulatory type
Other Life Skills	Other qualification type
Key Skills	Retired type
Basic Skills	Retired type
Technical Qualification	Regulatory type
End-Point Assessment	Regulatory type
Occupational Qualification	Other qualification type
Vocationally-Related Qualification	Other qualification type
Performing Arts Graded Examinations	Other qualification type
Other Vocational	Other qualification type
General National Vocational Qualification	Retired type
Vocational Certificate of Education	Retired type
National Vocational Qualification	Retired type
	GCE A level GCE AS level GCSE (9 to 1) GCSE (A* to G) Project Other General Qualification Principal learning English for Speakers of Other Languages Functional Skills Pother Life Skills (Northern Ireland) Other Life Skills Basic Skills Technical Qualification Occupational Qualification Vocationally-Related Qualification Other Vocational Qualification Other Vocational

In 2018, following consultation, the way qualifications were classified was revised. Awarding organisations were requested to review, and where appropriate amend, the qualification types of their qualifications to fit with our revised list of qualification types. These revised qualifications types have been available since 1 October 2018 and awarding organisations were given until 31 October 2018 to amend their qualification types. Some awarding organisations are still migrating their qualifications over to the new categories and so we may still report on old qualification types until this migration is complete.

As part of the removal of the regulatory arrangements for the QCF in September 2015, the term 'QCF' has been removed from qualification titles. The only exception where 'QCF' may still be used in a qualification title is for Applied General and Technical Qualifications, where appropriate. This is to differentiate between pre-existing qualifications and those changed to meet government performance table requirements for first teaching from 2016.

As a result of the review of qualification types, we have seen higher numbers of qualifications, and related statistics, in qualification type categories into which qualifications have been moved. Similarly, we have seen decreases where qualifications have been moved out of qualification type categories. However, given the volume of movement between categories, it may be difficult to disentangle the particular source of the changes, both pre and post the revision to qualification type categories.

Table 2 provides examples of the changes we expected awarding organisations to make in 2018, where the left-hand column gives the old qualification types and the right-hand column gives the expected new categories for each of the old qualification types.

Table 2:

Current category	New category
Advanced Extension Award	No change
End-Point Assessment	No change

English For Speakers of Other Languages	No change
Entry Level	English For Speakers of Other Languages; Essential Skills (Northern Ireland); Other General;
	Other Life Skills
Free Standing Mathematics Qualification	Other General
Functional Skills	No change
GCE A level	No change
GCE AS level	No change
GCSE (9 to 1)	No change
GCSE (A* to G)	No change
Higher Level	Occupational Qualification;
	Vocationally-Related Qualification
Key Skills	No change
National Vocational Qualification	Occupational Qualification
Occupational Qualification	No change
Other General Qualification	English For Speakers of Other Languages;
	Essential Skills (Northern Ireland);
	Occupational Qualification; Other General Qualification;
	Other Life Skills;
	Other Vocational:
	Performing Arts Graded Examination;
	Vocationally-Related Qualification
Principal Learning	No change
Project	No change
QCF	English For Speakers of Other Languages;
	Essential Skills (Northern Ireland);
	Occupational Qualification;
	Performing Arts Graded Examination;
	Other Life Skills; Other Vocational:
	Vocationally-Related Qualification
Vocationally-Related Qualification	English For Speakers of Other Languages;
-	Occupational Qualification;
	Vocationally-Related Qualification;
	Other Vocational;

4. Data source

Information on qualifications (covering title, type, awarding organisation, sector subject area and level) is taken from <u>Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications</u>, which gives information on regulated qualifications and recognised awarding organisations in England (and Northern Ireland). Data on the number of certificates awarded are sent by awarding organisations to Ofqual.

5. Limitations

Data are collected at the earliest point available, which is the first day of the next reporting period. This reduces the time between the activity and reporting on the activity.

The main source of potential error is in the information provided by awarding organisations. Ofqual cannot guarantee the number of certificates submitted is correct and there may be systematic bias when the information is sent, although awarding organisations are expected to provide the correct data. Ofqual compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues, giving awarding organisations the opportunity to double-check the numbers provided. The figures reported in this release reflect the certificates issued by awarding organisations at the time of data collection.

6. Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the <u>Quality Assurance</u> <u>Framework for Statistical Publications</u> published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary. Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

7. Published data

The <u>data underlying these statistics</u> are published alongside this statistical release at 9:30am on the day of release.

8. Revisions

Once published, data on the number of certificates issued for any qualification are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. Qualifications may also be re-categorised to a different type, level, sector subject area or awarding organisation. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect the new categorisation.

9. Confidentiality and rounding

In accordance with Ofqual's <u>rounding policy</u>, figures less than 5 are represented as 0~. A 0 represents zero achievements. This is to ensure the data does not reveal an individual student.

In general, we use unrounded values to derive percentages. As a result of rounded figures, the percentages shown in charts/tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

10. Status

These statistics are classified as National Statistics.

11. Related publications

- <u>Further education and skills</u>: the quarterly Statistical First Release, published by the Department for Education, reports statistics about learner participation, outcomes and highest qualification held in the further education and skills sector.
- <u>A level and other 16 to 18 results</u>: statistics published by the Department for Education covering A level and other results for 16- to 18-year-olds.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency's <u>Individualised Learner Record</u> data and the Department for Education's <u>National Pupil Database (NPD)</u> provide data on graded qualifications and data broken down by region. The latter also provides data on progression between award, certificate and diploma, and number of registrations.

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please contact the respective regulators – <u>Qualifications Wales</u>, <u>CCEA</u> <u>Regulator</u> and the <u>Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)</u>.

12. Useful links

- <u>Report and data tables</u> accompanying this release
- <u>Definitions</u> of important terms used in this release
- <u>Policies and procedures</u> that Ofqual follows for production of statistical releases

13. Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us at <u>data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk</u>.

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Business and self-employed Childcare and parenting Citizenship and living in the UK	Environment and countryside Housing and local services	<u>Worldwide</u> <u>Services</u>
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