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Research and analysis

GCSE, AS and A level: Autumn and November 2020 exam series

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Contents

1. Entries and certificates
2. Modified question paper requests
3. Special consideration in GCSE AS and A level
4. Malpractice for GCSE, AS and A level
5. User feedback

Print this page

This publication presents Ofqual's overview of entries, certificates, numbers of candidates, and numbers of centres with candidates taking exams in the autumn 2020 and November 2020 series.

We publish annual reports, which are a mandatory regulatory requirement comprising 8 providers of qualifications in the UK, including those awarding GCSEs and A levels. Our last report was in 2019. We did not publish a report for the 2020 exam series. If an entity is made after the deadline it is classed as late and may be subject to an additional charge.

1. Entries and certificates

This section presents data on entries and late entries, certificates, numbers of candidates, and numbers of centres with candidates taking exams in the autumn 2020 and November 2020 series.

The qualifications covered in this report are those in scope of the mandatory requirement for providers of qualifications in the UK, including those awarding GCSEs and A levels. Entries for GCSE, AS and A level in the autumn 2020 series were made in September. If an entry is made after the deadline it is classed as late and may be subject to an additional charge.

In November 2020, 81.9% of GCSE entries were late.

1.1 Total number of certificates and centres

Exam series	Qualification level	Certificates awarded	Candidates taking exams	Centres with candidates taking exams
Autumn 2020	A level	3,998	1,945	41,518
Autumn 2020	AS	1,920	49	2,670
Autumn 2020	GCSE	12,735	11,990	49,488
November 2020	GCSE	281,038	272,990	320,348

In autumn 2020, 5% of A level entries, 4.7% of AS entries and 5.7% of GCSE entries were late.

In November 2020, 8.9% of GCSE entries were late.

1.2 Total number of candidates and centres

Exam series	Qualification level	Candidates taking exams	Centres with candidates taking exams
Autumn 2020	A level	3,998	1,945
Autumn 2020	AS	1,920	49
Autumn 2020	GCSE	12,735	11,990
November 2020	GCSE	281,038	272,990

2. Modified question paper requests

2.1 Contextual information

Requests for modified question papers (QP) are made by schools and colleges in accordance with the JCQ guidance. Modified question papers are required, for example, a large of visual impairments and/or significant language comprehension disorders in order to allow them to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding.

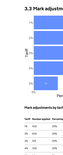
A request for a modified paper is made for each individual exam paper. Therefore, an individual candidate may use multiple modified papers in a large exam series.

2.2 Most common types of modified papers - autumn 2020

Most common types of modified papers - autumn 2020

Type	Total
Bespoke/other papers	90
19 point bold papers	30
Braille papers and braille papers with Braille maths	0
Modified language	0
Non-interactive electronic QPs	46
Tactile diagrams with print labels	0
Transcript of listening tests	0
Other formats	125
Total	291

2.3 Most common types of modified papers - November 2020



Most common types of modified papers - November 2020

Type	Total
Bespoke/other papers	230
19 point bold papers	270
Braille papers and braille papers with Braille maths	0
Modified language	0
Non-interactive electronic QPs	845
Tactile diagrams with print labels	16
Transcript of listening tests	0
Other formats	105
Total	1,466

A total of 250 modified papers were requested in autumn 2020 and 1,315 modified papers were requested in November 2020.

The most common type of modified paper requested in autumn 2020 was 19 point bold papers (18% papers). The most common type of modified paper requested in November 2020 was Non-interactive electronic QPs (58% papers).

3. Special consideration in GCSE AS and A level

3.1 Contextual information

The figures presented in this section include 2 categories of special consideration: marks awarded to candidates who are given a mark for an alternative assessment activity (mark proxy) for the assessment but disadvantaged in some way at the time of taking the assessment. Qualification awards are for candidates who were absent with good reason or who fell ill or died during one or more of the assessments. Further details are provided in the JCQ guidance.

This publication presents figures on 2 individual centre measures expressed as a percentage of the total number of candidates: 1. Number of candidates that were identified disadvantaged, ranging from 0% to 5%.

According to JCQ guidance, applications for special consideration can be made either on an individual or group basis. An individual application is made when a candidate or group can cover one or more components. However, there can also be cases where a group of candidates may be affected by an incident that affects all candidates in a centre (for example, during an exam). In these cases, a single group application can cover all candidates and the different components they were taking that were affected by the event.

Mark proxy are special consideration requests that can be included in a single application for a group of candidates affected by the same incident. Mark proxy allows a centre to make a mark proxy. Also, a single group application encompasses a number of mark proxies. Mark proxy is a special consideration application and it is not equal to the total number of special consideration requests (which can number of individual candidate and component level).

3.2 Number of requests submitted and percentage approved

Exam series	Qualification level	Number of requests	Number of approved requests	% approved
Autumn 2020	GCSE	1,945	1,920	99%
Autumn 2020	AS or A level	1,970	1,915	97%
November 2020	GCSE	1,545	3,491	93%

94% of requests for special consideration in A level and AS, and 95% of requests for special consideration in GCSE were approved in autumn 2020.

93% of requests for special consideration in GCSE were approved in November 2020.

3.3 Mark adjustments by tariff - autumn 2020

Mark adjustments by tariff - autumn 2020

Tariff	Number	Percentage of total number of tariffs applied
1%	420	20%
2%	420	20%
3%	420	20%
4%	210	10%
5%	30	1%

3.4 Mark adjustments by tariff - November 2020

Mark adjustments by tariff - November 2020

Tariff	Number	Percentage of total number of tariffs applied
1%	1,680	13%
2%	1,791	13%
3%	1,902	14%
4%	1,791	13%
5%	1,232	9%
6%	1,232	9%
7%	1,232	9%
8%	1,232	9%
9%	1,232	9%
10%	1,232	9%

3.5 Group and individual applications submitted

Number of candidates per application	Candidate Applications	A-E	N-R	T-U	X-Z	Q	W	Y-Z
Autumn 2020	1,945	49	52	22	21	0	0	0
November 2020	4,545	60	30	20	10	0	0	0

In autumn 2020 there were a total of 1,993 approved mark adjustment requests and 1,945 approved qualification awards were approved. In November 2020 there 4,680 adjustment requests and 3,561 approved qualification awards were approved.

4. Malpractice for GCSE, AS and A level

4.1 Contextual information

A breach of the exam boards' regulations that might undermine the integrity of an examination or assessment. Breaches of the rules may be committed by candidates (for example mobile phones) into the examination room, and Studies by school or college staff to comply with exam board instructions.

We require exam boards to have procedures in place to prevent, investigate and act in relation to malpractice by students, school or college staff or others involved in assessments. We publish GCSE, AS and A level malpractice guidance for awarding bodies and guidance on malpractice that set out procedures for dealing with suspected malpractice as well as definitions for the categories of malpractice listed within this section.

The data may or may not capture all cases of malpractice from the reporting period because these cases relate only to instances of reported malpractice where a penalty has been applied.

4.2 Student malpractice

Exam boards may impose sanctions and penalties on students found to have committed malpractice. The penalties for student malpractice vary depending on the type of offence. An individual student can be penalised more than once and by more than one exam board. Malpractice by students can be identified before, during or after assessment. A student may also receive one penalty for multiple offences.

4.3 Types of malpractice committed by students - autumn 2020

Offence type	Total Offences
Mobile phones	1
Inappropriate materials	0
Plagiarism	0
Other unauthorised materials	0
Other reasons	0

4.4 Types of malpractice committed by students - November 2020

Offence type	Total Offences
Disruptive behaviour	5
Inappropriate materials	0
Mobile phones	125
Plagiarism	0
Other unauthorised materials	10
Other reasons	10

4.5 Types of penalty issued to students, by penalty - autumn 2020

Penalty type	Total Penalties
Loss of aggregation or certificate/ superseding	5
Loss of marks	0
Warning	10

Penalties were issued to 25 students in autumn 2020 and 165 students in November 2020.

Penalties for student malpractice varied depending on the type of offence. The most common penalties were break, and could cover a range of individual circumstances.

4.6 Types of penalty issued to students, by penalty - November 2020

Penalty type	Total Penalties
Loss of aggregation or certificate/ superseding	20
Loss of marks	155
Warning	50

Penalties were issued to 25 students in autumn 2020 and 165 students in November 2020.

Penalties for student malpractice varied depending on the type of offence. The most common penalties were break, and could cover a range of individual circumstances.

4.7 Staff and school or college malpractice

Exam boards may impose penalties for malpractice committing an individual member of staff at a school or college, for example a teacher or an invigilator. Plans then are made to re-run the exam for a single offence.

Where there is evidence that malpractice is the result of a serious mismanagement failure, an exam board may apply sanctions against a whole department or a school or college (centre).

4.8 Types of staff and school or college malpractice - autumn 2020

Offence type	Staff offences	Centre offences
Breach of security	0	0
Failure to comply with regulations	0	0
Maladministration	0	0

4.9 Types of staff and school or college malpractice - November 2020

Offence type	Staff offences	Centre offences
Breach of security	0	0
Failure to comply with regulations	0	0
Maladministration	10	0

Note: Failure to comply with regulations refers to a failure to comply with regulations for access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, and/or special consideration.

4.10. Types of penalty issued to staff and schools or colleges - autumn 2020

Penalty type	Staff penalties	Centre penalties
Special conditions	0	0
Training	0	0
Written warning	10	0
Review and report	0	0

4.11 Types of penalty issued to staff and schools or colleges - November 2020

Penalty type	Staff penalties	Centre penalties
Special conditions	0	0
Training	0	0
Written warning	20	0
Review and report	0	0

Penalties were issued to 10 members of staff or school or college staff in autumn 2020 and 20 members of school or college staff November 2020.

Penalties were issued to been their five schools or colleges in autumn 2020 and fewer than five schools or colleges in November 2020.

5. User feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publication. Should you have any comments on this report and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us at data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk.

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