



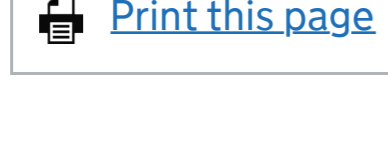
Official Statistics

# Background information for provisional entries for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2021 exam series

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## 1. Purpose

This release provides information on the number of entries for GCSEs, AS and A levels (in the report and in the data tables) for the summer 2021. Entries data are usually collected at the same time every year, at a point when it should be reasonably complete. However, in 2021, [centres were given an extension for private candidates of 26 April 2021](#). Final entry numbers may be slightly different from those presented here and the figures are therefore provisional given that they represent entry information received by awarding organisations by 28 April 2021.

On 4 January 2021, the Prime Minister announced that schools and colleges would again be closed to most students to help fight the spread of coronavirus and that exams would not take place as normal. On 25 February 2021, following consultation and a letter of direction from the Secretary of State, Ofqual published information setting out how grades would be determined for students entering for qualifications in summer 2021. JCQ had asked centres to finalise entries by 21 February 2021 (except private candidates) and late entries were only permitted where errors meant candidates were not entered or other exceptional circumstances. Ofqual requires exam boards to issue results only to those students who were entered for exams this year before the relevant deadline but boards are able to exercise discretion where a compelling case can be made that a student would have been entered before the later 'late entries' deadline set by JCQ.

## 2. Geographical coverage

The report presents data on the number of entries in England for the summer 2021 exam series. Four exam boards offer GCSE and AS/A level qualifications in England:

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC/Eduqas)

Previously data were also collected on Level 1/Level 2 certificates which were regulated by Ofqual, offered by the above exam boards and Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE). Ofqual no longer regulates these qualifications and the data collection and publication have now ceased.

## 3. Description

This release provides information on the number of entries broken down by subject and age of students based on school year groups. The figures given in the tables have previously combined reformed and non-reformed qualifications, although all 2021 entries are for reformed qualifications only.

Centres enter students at qualification level ahead of the summer series according to the course of study that they have followed.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) assigns a code to every qualification according to a category defined by JCQ which groups qualifications in subject groups. JCQ groupings are used in this release to filter and sort the data in the data tables. Some of these categories may not contain the same qualifications from year to year due to some subjects not being available after reforms. For instance, in 2017 GCSE Performing/Expressive arts included qualifications related to 'performing arts' and 'expressive arts' but from 2018 contains only 'dance' qualifications.

## 4. External influences

There are various factors which might have influenced the entries for GCSE, AS and A levels given in this release:

### 4.1 AS and A level

In reformed qualifications, AS and A level have been decoupled. This means that AS results do not count towards a student's A level grade as they did previously. This is likely to be the reason for the decline in AS entries since the introduction of reformed specifications. [Reformed qualifications were introduced in phases with first awards between 2016 and 2019](#).

### 4.2 GCSE

[Reformed GCSEs are graded on a 9 to 1 scale](#) (9 denoting the highest grade and 1 denoting the lowest grade). Legacy GCSEs are no longer available.

Reformed combined science replaces the previously available science and additional science GCSEs. Combined science is counted as two GCSEs in terms of [grading](#) and [weighting](#) in school accountability measures and is reported on a 17-point grade scale from 9-9, 9-8, and so on to 1-1. Therefore entries are double counted in this report and associated data tables to reflect this.

For summer 2017 onwards, Level 1/Level 2 certificates no longer counted in school performance tables and therefore there was a continuing fall in the entries for these qualifications and a further shift in the cohort back to GCSEs.

[The English Baccalaureate \(EBacc\)](#) is a school accountability measure relating to attainment in core academic subjects. From 2018 the measure calculates a school's average point score for students taking reformed EBacc eligible GCSE subjects. This includes English literature, English language and mathematics, history or geography, a specified combination of science GCSEs and a language.

## 5. Data source

Awarding organisations submit data to Ofqual for GCSEs, AS and A levels they award for the summer examination series. Any provider that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period is contacted to make sure the data is as complete as possible.

Data have been collected at an appropriate point when entries are reasonably complete, in this case, by 28 April 2021. Ofqual agreed these dates with the awarding organisations as a point when the majority of entries would have been submitted. The data is collected at the same time each year to aid year-on-year comparisons.

## 6. Limitations

There is potential for error in the information provided by awarding organisations and Ofqual cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. Ofqual quality assures data as far as possible, performing a number of checks on the data, for example checking for systematic issues and comparing the data over time. Summary data are sent back to exam boards for checking and confirmation. However, it is still possible that some errors may remain undetected.

## 7. Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the [Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications](#) 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.

## 8. Revisions

Once published, data on the number of provisional entries as at 28 April 2021 are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect any new categorisation of subjects.

## 9. Confidentiality and rounding

To ensure confidentiality of the accompanying data, all figures for the number of entries are rounded. In the accompanying data tables and commentary, the figures are rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is less than 5 (1 to 4), it is represented as 0- and 0 represents zero values.

Total values of rows or columns are calculated using unrounded figures; the sum of rounded figures may differ from the total reported.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, except where smaller figures are needed for meaningful interpretation. As a result of this rounding, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

## 10. Status

These statistics are classified as Official Statistics.

## 11. Related publications

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please contact the respective regulators - [Qualifications Wales, CCEA](#) and the [Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\)](#).

## 12. Useful links

- [report and data tables](#) accompanying this release
- [definitions of important terms](#) used in this release
- [policies and procedures that Ofqual follow](#) for production and release of its 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 [data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk).

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