

Statistical Release

Summer AS and A level entries for England: Provisional Figures April 2014

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Key points

This release presents figures on the number of entries for AS and A levels submitted to exam boards ahead of the exams sat between May and June 2014. These figures are provisional. They represent the number of entries submitted by schools and colleges to awarding organisations by 21st April 2014.

The key findings for this release are:

- Overall entries for AS are up 3 per cent, while overall A level entries are down 3 per cent.
- Subjects with the largest increases at AS are computing (up 29 per cent to 29,000), geography (up 17 per cent to 51,000 and Spanish (up 16 per cent to 10,000). Entries for critical thinking, general studies and ICT decreased.
- Subjects with the largest increase at A level include computing (up 10 per cent to 4,000) and religious studies (up 5 per cent to 20,000). There have been large declines for general studies (down 24 per cent to 24,000) and physical education (down 13 per cent to 12,000).

Introduction

Ofqual regulates qualifications, exams and assessments in England, and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. Under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, one of our objectives is to improve public confidence in regulated qualifications and assessments by raising awareness and understanding of the qualifications that we regulate.

In this release, we present data on the number of entries for AS and A levels in England received by exam boards as at 21st April 2014 for the May to June exam series. Schools and colleges enter students with exam boards to sit exams in the summer and 'cash in' or complete the qualifications. The figures for entries change daily up to the day of exams. The figures presented here are the provisional figures as received by exam boards at 21st April 2014.

To help with interpretation of the content, a glossary of terms is available towards the end of this release, followed by the data tables in the appendix.

Key statistics

The total entry in England for all AS qualifications is up by 3 per cent, while the total entry for all A levels is down by 3 per cent. This is broadly in line with school census figures from the Department for Education (DfE) for January 2014,¹ which show an increase of 5 per cent in the number of Year 12 (AS) students in maintained and special schools and a decrease of less than 1 per cent in the number of Year 13 (A level) students.

AS makes up half the A level qualification, so many of the students taking AS this summer will go on to take A levels in summer 2015.

Students in England this summer were unable to take any AS or A2 units in January 2014 – they have to take all units in the summer exam series. This was expected to result in an increase of entry numbers this summer for individual units, as students had fewer or no opportunities to take those exams early, but it was not expected to affect the total number of entries for AS and A level qualifications, since most students already enter for the qualifications in the summer.

This is the first year that we have collected these data. In future we will be able to map the trends of these exam entries over a longer period of time to see how AS and A level entries and cohort changes interact.

The notable changes to AS and A level entry patterns in England are set out below. We have grouped subjects according to the categories used in August by the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) when they report results.

AS

The total entry for all AS qualifications in England increased by 3 per cent, but there were a number of subjects where the increases were much greater than this. For example: computing (up 29 per cent to over 10,000), English (up 9 per cent to 125,000), geography (up 17 per cent to 51,000), history (up 14 per cent to 75,000), political studies (up 12 per cent to 21,000), religious studies (up 12 per cent to 34,000) and Spanish (up 16 per cent to 10,000). Many of these increases reflect a trend in recent years towards more traditional subjects.

In contrast, critical thinking entries have declined by 32 per cent to 6,000, General studies entries are down 16 per cent to 49,000 and ICT entries are down 8 per cent

¹ www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2014

to 23,000. The decrease in ICT entries is likely to be partly explained by the increase in entries for computing.

For further information, see Table 1 (in the appendix).

A level

Unlike at AS, the total entry for all A levels in England has dropped by 3 per cent. In some cases, A level entry patterns match those at AS, but in many subjects they do not. For example, computing entries are up 10 per cent to 4,000 and religious studies entries are up 4 per cent to 20,000.

In a number of subjects where the AS entries have increased this summer, the A level entries have seen only small increases, or entries have dropped but by less than the average. For example, geography entries increased by 1 per cent to 29,000, history entries declined by 1 per cent to 47,000 and Spanish entries are up less than 1 per cent to 7,000.

Subjects that have seen the largest falls in A level entries are critical thinking (down 43 per cent to just over 600), French (down 8 per cent to 9,000), general studies (down 24 per cent to 24,000), law (down 11 per cent to 11,000), physical education (down 13 per cent to 12,000) and political studies (down 9 per cent to 13,000 in contrast to the 12 per cent increase in A level entries).

For further information, see Table 4 in the appendix.

Background notes

In this release we present figures on the number of entries for AS and A levels submitted to exam boards ahead of the exams sat between May and June 2014. These figures are provisional. They represent the number of entries submitted by schools and colleges to exam boards by 21st April 2014.

Data source

The five exam boards that provide AS and A levels submit information to us about the number of entries for each qualification available in May to June 2014. The entries are for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, regardless of the age of the student and the type of school or college. This release shows the number of entries broken down by subject and country.

Limitations of data

Data are collected at an appropriate point when they are reasonably complete, in this case 21st April 2014. However, schools and colleges can continue to make late entries right up to the day of the exam, so the total entry numbers can change on a daily basis. We have agreed the date of 21st April with the exam boards as the date when the majority of entries will have been submitted.

We cannot guarantee that the number of entries sent to us is correct, although we do expect exam boards to send us correct data. The figures reported in this release reflect the entries submitted by exam boards at the time of data collection.

We carry out quality assurance procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data and challenge or question it where necessary. We may also defer publication if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Comparisons in this release are only made with entry figures from the same time the previous year. They do not represent the final entry figures for the qualifications. This is to ensure a like-for-like comparison.

Geographical coverage

In this release we present data on the number of entries for AS and A levels for the May to June 2014 exam series in England. In Tables 2, 3, 5 and 6, we publish entry figures for Northern Ireland and Wales for comparison. Similar statistics for Scotland are not published until after their exams.

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of entries for any qualification are not usually subject to revision, although we may revise subsequent releases to insert late data or to correct an error.

Completeness of the data

Exam boards send us entry data for all regulated qualifications classified as AS or A levels. We contact any exam board that has not returned a complete set of data within the collection period to make sure that the data are as complete as possible. For this release, we received data from all the exam boards that were in a position to award qualifications.

Rounding

To aid user interpretation, we have rounded all figures in the report to the nearest 1,000. Where the figures used in the commentary are less than 1,000, we have rounded to the nearest 100.

Users of these statistics

These statistics are of particular interest to Ofqual, the DfE and to exam boards. Ofqual and the exam boards use these statistics to inform understanding of the potential impact of entry patterns on the overall results.

Related statistics and publications

A number of other statistical releases and publications relate to this one, including:

- *Entries and Late Entries for GCSE and A Level: 2012/13 Academic Year*²
- *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2013*³
- *Annual Qualifications Market Report 2013*⁴
- *A Level and other Level 3 Results: Academic Year 2012 to 2013 (revised)*.⁵

² www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/entries-and-late-entries-for-gcse-and-a-level-201213-academic-year/all-versions

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2013

⁴ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2013-09-13-annual-qualifications-market-report-2013-main-report.pdf

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-level-and-other-level-3-results-england-2012-to-2013-revised

Useful information

The data behind these statistics are available on our website, along with the publication schedule for our next releases.⁶

Glossary of terms

A level – a qualification mainly taken by 18-year-old students, which is made up of AS units and more demanding A2 units.

AS – a qualification mainly taken by 17-year-old students, which is the first half of an A level.

Cash in – schools and colleges enter students who are completing a qualification with awarding organisations.

Level – qualifications are assigned a level from entry, then Level 1 through to Level 8. Descriptions of the levels are available in our *Glossary – Statistical Publications*.⁷

Regulated qualification – a qualification is said to be regulated after it has been accredited. An accredited qualification is one that has met the relevant criteria as set by the regulators of qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. On accreditation, a qualification will be issued with a Qualification Accreditation Number, and specific dates set for the period for which the qualification will be accredited.

⁶ www.ofqual.gov.uk/standards/statistics

⁷ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2010-11-26-statistics-glossary.pdf

Your feedback

We are conducting a rolling series of online surveys to help our statistical releases meet your needs.

We would especially like to invite you to take part in the online survey for this release. It will take about ten minutes to complete. Your responses will remain entirely confidential in any reports we publish about the survey.

If you would like to take part in the survey, have any questions, or would prefer a paper or large-type copy, please contact us at: statistics@ofqual.gov.uk.

Appendix

Table 1	Provisional summer series AS entries for England 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014
Table 2	Provisional summer series AS entries for Northern Ireland 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014
Table 3	Provisional summer series AS entries for Wales 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014
Table 4	Provisional summer series A level entries for England 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014
Table 5	Provisional summer series A level entries for Northern Ireland 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014
Table 6	Provisional summer series A level entries for Wales 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

Table 1: Provisional summer series AS entries for England 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

AS Subject group *	AS entries in England		
	2014	2013	% change
Art & design subjects	61,336	62,235	-1.4%
Biology	96,926	97,163	-0.2%
Business studies	49,597	47,233	5.0%
Chemistry	82,050	81,183	1.1%
Classical subjects	8,762	8,730	0.4%
Communication studies	3,252	3,298	-1.4%
Computing	10,834	8,386	29.2%
Critical thinking	6,290	9,254	-32.0%
Design & technology	21,355	21,022	1.6%
Drama	16,604	16,355	1.5%
Economics	42,820	39,662	8.0%
Engineering	474	522	-9.2%
English	124,616	113,852	9.5%
French	16,082	16,057	0.2%
General studies	49,009	58,164	-15.7%
Geography	50,833	43,349	17.3%
German	6,792	6,663	1.9%
Health & social care	9,099	9,037	0.7%
History	74,741	65,304	14.5%
ICT	22,740	24,798	-8.3%
Irish	0	0	
Law	20,292	20,211	0.4%
Leisure	573	669	-14.3%
Mathematics	151,684	144,981	4.6%
Mathematics (further)	23,610	23,193	1.8%
Media / Film / TV studies	42,368	41,566	1.9%
Music	11,107	11,799	-5.9%
Performing / Expressive arts	5,395	5,710	-5.5%
Physical education	19,893	20,151	-1.3%
Physics	59,826	57,662	3.8%
Political studies	20,861	18,662	11.8%
Psychology	99,230	94,653	4.8%
Religious studies	33,732	30,180	11.8%
Science	3,254	3,060	6.3%
Sociology	53,207	49,546	7.4%
Spanish	10,293	8,903	15.6%
Travel & tourism	2,638	2,623	0.6%
Welsh	0	0	
Other modern languages	8,963	8,717	2.8%
Other sciences	5,805	5,831	-0.4%
All other subjects	23,604	24,706	-4.5%
Total	1,350,547	1,305,090	3.5%

* Subjects as applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications

Table 2: Provisional summer series AS entries for Northern Ireland 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

AS Subject group *	AS entries in Northern Ireland		
	2014	2013	% change
Art & design subjects	1,283	1,338	-4.1%
Biology	4,666	4,645	0.5%
Business studies	3,335	3,073	8.5%
Chemistry	3,267	2,961	10.3%
Classical subjects	152	123	23.6%
Communication studies	17	0	
Computing	226	174	29.9%
Critical thinking	15	16	-6.3%
Design & technology	1,409	1,339	5.2%
Drama	661	665	-0.6%
Economics	576	596	-3.4%
Engineering	20	36	-44.4%
English	2,931	2,931	0.0%
French	919	880	4.4%
General studies	1	0	
Geography	2,669	2,475	7.8%
German	185	204	-9.3%
Health & social care	2,280	2,172	5.0%
History	3,074	2,897	6.1%
ICT	3,950	3,722	6.1%
Irish	465	374	24.3%
Law	64	60	6.7%
Leisure	80	95	-15.8%
Mathematics	4,708	4,434	6.2%
Mathematics (further)	272	253	7.5%
Media / Film / TV studies	1,572	1,448	8.6%
Music	642	626	2.6%
Performing / Expressive arts	144	114	26.3%
Physical education	860	786	9.4%
Physics	2,679	2,598	3.1%
Political studies	1,279	1,196	6.9%
Psychology	959	900	6.6%
Religious studies	2,841	2,657	6.9%
Science	86	114	-24.6%
Sociology	1,301	1,242	4.8%
Spanish	768	648	18.5%
Travel & tourism	350	265	32.1%
Welsh	0	0	
Other modern languages	129	93	38.7%
Other sciences	115	74	55.4%
All other subjects	1,278	1,238	3.2%
Total	52,228	49,462	5.6%

* Subjects as applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications

Table 3: Provisional summer series AS entries for Wales 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

AS Subject group *	AS entries in Wales		
	2014	2013	% change
Art & design subjects	3,120	3,148	-0.9%
Biology	4,215	4,348	-3.1%
Business studies	1,877	1,794	4.6%
Chemistry	3,594	3,794	-5.3%
Classical subjects	188	170	10.6%
Communication studies	0	7	-100.0%
Computing	503	429	17.2%
Critical thinking	14	14	0.0%
Design & technology	1,122	1,196	-6.2%
Drama	826	804	2.7%
Economics	696	779	-10.7%
Engineering	25	25	0.0%
English	4,784	4,672	2.4%
French	743	743	0.0%
General studies	17	27	-37.0%
Geography	2,324	2,157	7.7%
German	193	195	-1.0%
Health & social care	899	806	11.5%
History	3,767	3,503	7.5%
ICT	1,922	1,856	3.6%
Irish	0	0	n/a
Law	983	1,111	-11.5%
Leisure	9	24	-62.5%
Mathematics	4,993	4,851	2.9%
Mathematics (further)	439	412	6.6%
Media / Film / TV studies	1,638	1,661	-1.4%
Music	720	767	-6.1%
Performing / Expressive arts	77	133	-42.1%
Physical education	1,160	970	19.6%
Physics	2,661	2,535	5.0%
Political studies	423	417	1.4%
Psychology	3,211	3,000	7.0%
Religious studies	2,448	2,165	13.1%
Science	417	304	37.2%
Sociology	2,032	1,953	4.0%
Spanish	300	265	13.2%
Travel & tourism	140	131	6.9%
Welsh	904	915	-1.2%
Other modern languages	245	256	-4.3%
Other sciences	498	445	11.9%
All other subjects	558	507	10.1%
Total	54,685	53,289	2.6%

* Subjects as applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications

Table 4: Provisional summer series A level entries for England 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

A level Subject group *	A level entries in England		
	2014	2013	% change
Art & design subjects	41,993	42,971	-2.3%
Biology	58,086	58,602	-0.9%
Business studies	28,220	29,117	-3.1%
Chemistry	49,131	48,480	1.3%
Classical subjects	6,402	6,254	2.4%
Communication studies	1,757	1,768	-0.6%
Computing	3,823	3,489	9.6%
Critical thinking	618	1,086	-43.1%
Design & technology	12,013	12,620	-4.8%
Drama	11,844	12,582	-5.9%
Economics	25,696	25,529	0.7%
Engineering	244	235	3.8%
English	79,957	84,249	-5.1%
French	9,405	10,274	-8.5%
General studies	24,304	31,936	-23.9%
Geography	29,490	29,166	1.1%
German	3,928	3,987	-1.5%
Health & social care	5,908	5,726	3.2%
History	46,855	47,125	-0.6%
ICT	12,942	14,446	-10.4%
Irish	0	1	-100.0%
Law	10,851	12,132	-10.6%
Leisure	413	255	62.0%
Mathematics	83,199	83,776	-0.7%
Mathematics (further)	13,898	13,609	2.1%
Media / Film / TV studies	26,459	27,609	-4.2%
Music	7,347	7,806	-5.9%
Performing / Expressive arts	3,549	3,868	-8.2%
Physical education	11,543	13,228	-12.7%
Physics	33,585	32,881	2.1%
Political studies	12,714	13,992	-9.1%
Psychology	52,791	54,297	-2.8%
Religious studies	20,228	19,361	4.5%
Science	1,541	1,565	-1.5%
Sociology	28,705	28,710	0.0%
Spanish	6,971	6,952	0.3%
Travel & tourism	1,606	1,307	22.9%
Welsh	0	0	
Other modern languages	8,515	8,842	-3.7%
Other sciences	3,133	3,163	-0.9%
All other subjects	10,735	9,896	8.5%
Total	790,399	812,892	-2.8%

* Subjects as applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications

Table 5: Provisional summer series A level entries for Northern Ireland 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

A level Subject group *	A level entries in Northern Ireland		
	2014	2013	% change
Art & design subjects	1,124	1,112	1.1%
Biology	3,163	3,362	-5.9%
Business studies	2,456	2,277	7.9%
Chemistry	1,853	1,927	-3.8%
Classical subjects	94	121	-22.3%
Communication studies	0	0	n/a
Computing	107	68	57.4%
Critical thinking	0	0	n/a
Design & technology	935	998	-6.3%
Drama	545	541	0.7%
Economics	387	388	-0.3%
Engineering	20	21	-4.8%
English	2,280	2,289	-0.4%
French	544	550	-1.1%
General studies	1	0	n/a
Geography	1,911	2,002	-4.5%
German	118	99	19.2%
Health & social care	1,984	1,814	9.4%
History	2,274	2,365	-3.8%
ICT	3,174	3,064	3.6%
Irish	316	310	1.9%
Law	46	39	17.9%
Leisure	84	59	42.4%
Mathematics	3,075	3,196	-3.8%
Mathematics (further)	194	177	9.6%
Media / Film / TV studies	1,155	1,091	5.9%
Music	480	493	-2.6%
Performing / Expressive arts	71	98	-27.6%
Physical education	585	640	-8.6%
Physics	1,555	1,579	-1.5%
Political studies	876	1,095	-20.0%
Psychology	544	602	-9.6%
Religious studies	2,280	2,530	-9.9%
Science	96	55	74.5%
Sociology	932	1,013	-8.0%
Spanish	436	514	-15.2%
Travel & tourism	208	90	131.1%
Welsh	0	0	n/a
Other modern languages	109	122	-10.7%
Other sciences	57	59	-3.4%
All other subjects	893	777	14.9%
Total	36,962	37,537	-1.5%

* Subjects as applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications

Table 6: Provisional summer series A level entries for Wales 2013/14, as at 21st April 2014

A level Subject group *	A level entries in Wales		
	2014	2013	% change
Art & design subjects	2,053	2,179	-5.8%
Biology	2,828	2,840	-0.4%
Business studies	1,138	1,166	-2.4%
Chemistry	2,532	2,360	7.3%
Classical subjects	126	126	0.0%
Communication studies	2	5	-60.0%
Computing	247	262	-5.7%
Critical thinking	0	1	-100.0%
Design & technology	734	789	-7.0%
Drama	667	762	-12.5%
Economics	533	492	8.3%
Engineering	14	14	0.0%
English	3,571	3,509	1.8%
French	467	478	-2.3%
General studies	0	0	
Geography	1,639	1,744	-6.0%
German	112	145	-22.8%
Health & social care	713	626	13.9%
History	3,062	2,865	6.9%
ICT	1,182	1,537	-23.1%
Irish	0	0	
Law	681	658	3.5%
Leisure	13	7	85.7%
Mathematics	3,794	3,784	0.3%
Mathematics (further)	444	433	2.5%
Media / Film / TV studies	1,257	1,215	3.5%
Music	550	555	-0.9%
Performing / Expressive arts	55	79	-30.4%
Physical education	650	694	-6.3%
Physics	1,565	1,559	0.4%
Political studies	319	322	-0.9%
Psychology	1,700	1,712	-0.7%
Religious studies	1,761	1,688	4.3%
Science	233	204	14.2%
Sociology	1,185	1,206	-1.7%
Spanish	170	218	-22.0%
Travel & tourism	123	88	39.8%
Welsh	692	758	-8.7%
Other modern languages	207	206	0.5%
Other sciences	302	340	-11.2%
All other subjects	237	202	17.3%
Total	37,558	37,828	-0.7%

* Subjects as applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications

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