

A Brief Explanation of Summer 2014 AS and A Level Results



This briefing is based on data published by JCQ on Thursday 14th August 2014, and is available at www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels/a-as-and-aea-results-summer-2014.

Key points

- Overall results this summer for AS and A level are very stable, with only small changes in the proportions achieving each grade.
- Changes in the subject choices at A level reflect an ongoing shift towards more traditional subjects.
- For each subject, variations in the proportion of students achieving each grade are likely to reflect shifts in entry patterns between subjects. To illustrate this we set out changes in entries over time.

Summary

For all students across the UK, the proportions getting the grades are as follows:

A level

- The proportion getting A* is up 0.6 percentage points to 8.2 per cent.
- The proportion getting A* and A is down 0.3 percentage points to 26.0 per cent.
- The proportion getting A*-E is down 0.1 percentage points to 98.0 per cent.

AS

- The proportion getting A is up 0.1 percentage points to 19.9 per cent.
- The proportion getting A-E is up 0.5 percentage points to 26.0 per cent.

At individual subject level, the changes in the proportions of students achieving each grade are likely to be due to shifts in entry patterns between subjects, as well as normal variation between years.

Shifts in entry patterns between subjects

Entry numbers themselves can be difficult to compare when the cohort gets smaller or larger. The table below shows what proportion of the overall entries each subject had in 2010 through to 2014. The subjects in this table comprise about half the total A level entries – 49.2 per cent in 2010 rising to 54.1 per cent in 2014.

Subject	% of the total A level entries				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
biology	6.8	7.2	7.3	7.5	7.7
chemistry	5.2	5.5	5.7	6.1	6.4
physics	3.6	3.8	4	4.2	4.4
maths	9.0	9.6	9.9	10.4	10.7
further maths	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
English	10.5	10.4	10.4	10.5	10.2
French	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.3
German	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5
Spanish	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
geography	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.9	4.0
history	5.8	5.9	6	6.1	6.3

The trend towards more ‘traditional’ subjects will affect the ability profile of these subjects, and is likely to be one of the reasons for the small changes in the proportion of students at each grade.

Very small fluctuations in results are unlikely to be meaningful and should be thought of as normal variation.

Our approach to AS and A levels in summer 2014

We have previously set out in detail our approach to summer 2014 awarding.¹ Our approach to summer 2014 AS and A levels has been to use predictions based on

¹ Available at www.ofqual.gov.uk/standards/summer-2014-exams

students' prior attainment at GCSE. We agreed with exam boards that if the students in summer 2014 entering for a particular A level subject are similar, in terms of GCSE attainment, to the students in 2013, then we would expect results to be similar. This approach serves to mitigate, as far as possible, the impact of changes to the A level, such as the removal of the January exam series, on the 2014 cohort of students. This is important since these students may be competing with students from 2013 for jobs and higher education places.