

Statistical Release

Summer Exam Entries: GCSEs, Level 1/2 Certificates, AS and A Levels in England: Provisional Figures April 2016

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Key points

This release presents figures on the number of entries for GCSEs, Level 1/2 certificates, AS and A levels submitted to exam boards for the exams being sat between May and June 2016. These figures are provisional. They represent the number of entries submitted by schools and colleges to exam boards by 19 April 2016.

The key findings for this release are:

- The overall entry for GCSEs in England has increased by less than 1% from 4,916,000 in 2015 to 4,929,000 in 2016.
- The overall entry for students in Year 10 and below in England for GCSE has decreased by 13% from 344,000 to 300,000. There are a few notable exceptions to this such as business studies and physical education where the entry increased by 70% and 67%, respectively.
- The overall GCSE entry for post year 11 students in England has increased by 26% from 282,000 in 2015 to 355,000 in 2016.
- Overall entries for AS in England have decreased by 14%, while overall entries for A level have decreased by 2%.

Introduction

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

In this release, Ofqual presents data on the number of entries for GCSEs, Level 1/2 certificates (commonly known as international GCSEs), AS and A levels in England¹ received by exam boards² for the May to June 2016 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 can change daily up to the day of the exams. We collect provisional data at the point when it is reasonably complete, although final entry numbers may be slightly different from these. The figures presented here are the provisional figures as received by exam boards at 19 April 2016.

¹ The data tables for Wales and Northern Ireland are included in the list of tables for reference.

² The exam boards are AQA, CCEA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC and CIE.

Key statistics

GCSE and Level 1/2 certificates

The overall entry for GCSEs in England in summer 2016 remained stable with less than a 1% increase from 4,916,000 in summer 2015 to 4,929,000. Entry for Level 1/2 certificates (commonly known as international GCSE) in summer 2016 was up by 8% from 457,000 in summer 2015 to 493,000.

The subjects are grouped according to the categories that will be used in August 2016 by the Joint Council for Qualifications when they report results.

Early entry (Year 10 and below)

The overall number of GCSE entries from students in Year 10 and below in summer 2016 has decreased by 13% from 344,000 in summer 2015 to 300,000. This follows a 32% decrease in entries from students in Year 10 and below in summer 2015 compared to summer 2014.

Whilst the overall entries from students in Year 10 and below have decreased, there have been increases in entries from students in Year 10 and below in around a third of subjects in 2016, most notably business studies (up 70% to 3,000), computing (up 33% to 2,000), drama (up 23% to 2,000), economics (up 26% to 700), music (up 42% to 1,000); physical education (up 67% to 5,000), religious studies³ (up 32% to 41,000) and statistics (up 34% to 18,000).

Year 11 entries for EBacc subjects

GCSE entries for Year 11 students decreased in 2016 in English and English language, German and French (with decreases of 8%). Entries for Year 11 students increased in English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history, science, additional science and Spanish (with increases of between 2% and 22%). Entries from Year 11 students also increased in computing by 87% to 61,000, continuing the trend from summer 2015.

English and English language

For GCSE English and English language, the Year 11 entry decreased in summer 2016 by 8% to 335,000 and the Year 11 entry for Level 1/2 certificate (commonly known as international GCSE) English language increased by 2% to 191,000.

The post Year 11 entry for GCSE English and English language increased by 33% from 92,000 in 2015 to 123,000 in 2016. This trend was also seen in the post Year

³ Religious studies entries are for both the short and full course.

11 entries for Level 1/2 certificate (commonly known as international GCSE) English language which increased by 28% from 40,000 in 2015 to 51,000. This trend is likely to be a result of policies to encourage students who have not achieved at least a grade C to continue to study English and mathematics.

English literature

Overall entries for GCSE English literature have decreased by 8% to 372,000. This continues the trend observed in summer 2015, where entries decreased by 15% compared to summer 2014. The decrease in entries in 2016 is not observed across all year groups. The entries for Year 11 students increased slightly in 2016 to 368,000 from 362,000 in 2015 – an increase of 2% – whilst the entries for students in Year 10 and below and post Year 11 decreased by 98% and 6%, respectively.

The entry for Level 1/2 certificate (commonly known as international GCSE) English literature increased by 4% from 97,000 in summer 2015 to 101,000 in summer 2016. The entries for Year 11 students increased by 12% from 88,000 in summer 2015 to 99,000 in summer 2016.

Mathematics

Overall entries for GCSE mathematics increased slightly to 719,000 in summer 2016 – an increase of 3%. This reverses the trend seen in 2015, when entries decreased slightly by 2%.

The entries for Year 11 students for GCSE mathematics decreased by 4% to 534,000 in 2016. There was also a decrease in entries from students in Year 10 and below from 12,000 in 2015 to 10,000 in 2016 – a decrease of 17%. The post Year 11 entries in GCSE mathematics have increased by 35% from 130,000 in 2015 to 175,000 in 2016. This is likely to reflect the requirement for students who have not attained at least a grade C in GCSE mathematics (or equivalent) to continue studying mathematics post 16.

Overall the entries for Level 1/2 certificate (commonly known as international GCSE) mathematics increased by 46% in 2016 to 58,000. Entries for Year 11 students increased from 37,000 in summer 2015 to 52,000. There has also been an increase in Level 1/2 certificate (commonly known as international GCSE) mathematics entries for post Year 11 students, rising from 2,000 in 2015 to 4,000 – an increase of 89%.

Sciences

The number of Year 11 students entering GCSEs in each of the separate sciences in 2016 increased. Biology is up 5% from 118,000 to 125,000, chemistry is up 6% from 119,000 to 127,000, and physics is up 5% from 121,000 to 127,000. This is in

contrast to 2015, where there was an 8% decrease in entries from Year 11 students in each of the three separate GCSE sciences.

The Year 11 entries for science and additional science have also increased in 2016 by 22% and 11%, respectively. This continues the trend seen in 2015. Conversely, the entries for GCSE further additional science from Year 11 students has decreased by 25% to 17,000 in 2016.

The entries for Year 11 students in Level 1/2 certificates (commonly known as international GCSE) separate sciences have decreased in 2016 (biology is down 2% to 12,000, chemistry is down 6% to 11,000, and physics is down 4% to 12,000). This reverses the trend seen in 2015 where the Year 11 entries increased by 83% for biology, 78% for chemistry, and 80% for physics.

Modern foreign languages – GCSE French, German and Spanish

Entries in GCSE modern foreign languages for Year 11 students decreased in French (by 8% to 129,000) and in German (by 8% to 46,000). Conversely, the Year 11 entries for GCSE Spanish increased by 3% to 83,000.

The entries for Year 11 students in Level 1/2 certificates in modern foreign languages continue to increase (French up 16% to 8,000, German up 25% to 4,000 and Spanish up 24% to 6,000).

Computing

The overall entries for GCSE computing increased by 84% in 2016 to 64,000. The entries for Year 11 students increased by 87% to 61,000 in 2016 from 33,000 in 2015. These increases continue the trend observed in 2015, when Year 11 entries increased by 110%.

Other GCSE subjects

Other GCSE subjects that have seen relatively significant changes in Year 11 entry from summer 2015 to summer 2016 are business and communications systems (down 25% to 9,000), citizenship⁴ (down 26% to 20,000), humanities (down 36% to 4,000), ICT (down 28% to 70,000), leisure and tourism (down 27% to 4,000), and statistics (down 21% to 21,000).

⁴ Citizenship entries are for both the short and full course.

AS and A level

Reformed AS specifications are available for the first time this summer in 13 subjects: art & design, biology, business, chemistry, computing, economics, English language, English language and literature, English literature, history, physics, psychology and sociology.

Reformed AS qualifications are different to the existing AS specifications in that the results of the reformed AS qualification do not count towards a student's final A level grade as they do now. As such, there is no requirement for students to enter the AS qualification in a given subject, even if they intend to study the full A level. It was expected that this would likely result in lower entries for the 13 AS subjects where reformed qualifications were available this year.

AS

Overall entries for all AS subjects fell by 14% from 1,331,000 in 2015 to 1,146,000 in summer 2016. This is in part because of the introduction of reformed AS specifications in the 13 subjects listed above. However, entries for all AS subjects fell with the exception of further mathematics (1% increase to 25,000), health and social care (5% increase to 9,000), political studies (8% increase to 23,000) and other modern languages (1% increase to 9,000).

Reformed AS

The total number of entries for the reformed AS specifications is 493,000, with 441,000 entries from Year 12 students. The total number of entries for reformed AS subjects (including the out-going AS specifications) is 600,000.

The number of entries for reformed AS subjects (reformed and out-going specifications) from Year 12 students in 2016 was 22% lower compared to the previous specifications in 2015⁵. All of the reformed AS subjects saw lower entries for Year 12 students (between 10% and 32%) than for the previous specifications in 2015. Entries were expected to be lower now that a student's AS results do not count towards their final A level grade in the reformed specifications.

The largest decrease in Year 12 entries in the reformed AS subjects compared to 2015 was in English language and literature, where entries decreased by 32% to 10,000. The smallest decrease in entries compared to 2015 was in computing, where entries decreased by 10% to 9,000. The following table shows the entries for

⁵ All of the figures for Year 12 students include Year 12 entries for the out-going AS specifications in 2016. These make up less than 1% of the total Year 12 entries in the reformed AS subjects.

Year 12 students in all of the reformed AS subjects in 2016 (reformed and out-going specifications) compared to 2015.

Subject	2015 Year 12 entry	2016 Year 12 entry	% change 2015 to 2016
Art and design (not applied)	43,080	31,770	-26%
Biology	69,880	56,700	-19%
Business (not applied)	32,280	27,900	-14%
Chemistry	59,710	48,000	-20%
Computing	10,210	9,150	-10%
Economics	32,950	26,630	-19%
English language & literature	14,130	9,590	-32%
English language	26,140	19,860	-24%
English literature	52,800	37,770	-28%
History	59,000	42,030	-29%
Physics	45,120	36,390	-19%
Psychology	79,400	61,960	-22%
Sociology	42,890	35,960	-16%
Total	567,590	443,710	-22%

A level

The overall entry for A level in England fell by 2% between summer 2015 and summer 2016 from 802,000 in 2015 to 787,000 in 2016.

Subjects where there have been significant decreases at A level are critical thinking (down 50% to 100), general studies (down 35% to 12,000), leisure (down 15% to 300), performing or expressive arts (down 15% to 3,000) and ICT (down 10% to 10,000). The decrease in each of these subjects continues the trend observed in 2015.

The subject with the largest increase in entries was computing (up 15% to 6,000), continuing the trend observed in 2015. The subjects with the next largest increases in entries were religious studies (up 6% to 23,000), economics (up 5% to 28,000) and health and social care (up 5% to 6,000).

Glossary of terms

A level – a qualification mainly taken by 18-year-old students.

AS – a qualification mainly taken by 17-year-old students.

Cash in – schools and colleges enter students who are completing a qualification with exam boards.

GCSE – a qualification mainly taken by 16-year-old students. This is the main school-leaving qualification in England.

Level 1/2 certificates – a number of these are commonly known as international GCSEs and are currently included as such in DfE school performance tables.

Year 10 – the cohort of students who will become 15 years old by the end of the academic year.

Year 11 – the cohort of students who will become 16 years old by the end of the academic year.

Background notes

This document is produced in line with Ofqual's statistics policies and the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.⁶⁷

Data source

The exam boards that provide GCSEs, Level 1/2 certificates, AS and A levels have submitted information to Ofqual about the number of entries for each qualification available in May to June 2016. The entries are for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, regardless of the age of the student and the type of school or college. For GCSE and Level 1/2 certificates (commonly known as international GCSEs), this release shows the number of entries broken down by subject, country and age of students based on school year groups. For AS and A level, the release shows the number of entries broken down by subject and country.

Limitations of data

There is potential for error in the information provided by exam boards, therefore Ofqual cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. Ofqual compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues.

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publication and the Data Audit Framework to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary.⁸⁹ Ofqual continuously manages this process by:

- ensuring that data providers are clear about what is required of them – a process helped by ensuring that providers are fully consulted during the initial design and any subsequent change phases
- reminding all providers (if appropriate) that, as a condition of them being regulated, all data must be completely accurate

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofquals-statistics-policies-and-procedures

⁷ www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/382776/2014-09-30-data-audit-framework-statistical-information.pdf

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387637/2014-12-16-quality-assurance-framework-for-statistical_publications.pdf

- being alert to unexpected changes in the data submitted by comparing individual returns over time from the same provider
- actively challenging any unexpected results with the data providers
- having a proportionate data-auditing framework in place, allowing for auditing of providers' information collection, collation and delivery processes as necessary, using a wide range of tools from questionnaires to on-site process audits

Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Data have been collected at an appropriate point when they are reasonably complete, in this case 19 April 2016. However, schools can continue to make late entries right up to the day of the exam, so the total entry numbers will change almost on a daily basis. Ofqual agreed these dates with the exam boards as the date when the majority of entries would have been submitted.

The tables of data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland differ in that Northern Ireland students sit GCSEs and Level 1/2 Certificates (commonly known as international GCSEs) in Year 12 and A levels in Year 14. In England and Wales, these are Year 11 and 13 respectively. In addition, the point at which a student begins their education in Northern Ireland depends on their age as of 1 July, whereas in England and Wales, it is 1 September. Therefore, entries were collected for each year group based on age as of 30 June 2016 for Northern Ireland and 31 August 2016 for England and Wales. Users of this release should be aware of this when interpreting the figures.

Geographical coverage

This release presents data on the number of entries for GCSEs, Level 1/2 Certificates, AS and A levels for the May to June 2016 exam series in England. Tables 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12, present entry figures for Northern Ireland and Wales for comparison. However, this release does **not** include GCSEs, Level 1/2 Certificates, AS and A levels taken everywhere, including outside the UK.

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of provisional entries as at 19 April 2016 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 the new categorisation.¹⁰

Completeness of the data

Exam boards send Ofqual entry data for all regulated qualifications classified as GCSEs, Level 1/2 certificates, AS and A levels. Ofqual contacts any exam board that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period, to make sure the data are as complete as possible. For this release, Ofqual received data from all the exam boards that were in a position to award qualifications.

Rounding

In accordance with Ofqual's rounding policy,¹¹ all figures for the number of certificates issued are rounded. In the commentary, they are rounded to the nearest 1,000 to aid understanding. Where figures are less than 1,000, they have been rounded to the nearest 100. In the tables, the figures are rounded to the nearest 10. This is to ensure that the data does not reveal an individual candidate. Figures are rounded independently and may not sum to the total.

Users of these statistics

These statistics are of particular interest to Ofqual, recognised exam boards and the Department for Education. Ofqual uses these statistics to inform understanding of entry patterns on awarding outcomes. Exam boards use these statistics to help create predictions for exam outcomes.

Related statistics and publications

There are other statistical releases and publications that relate to this one:

- The statistical publication on Summer GCSE and IGCSE[®] entries for England: April 2015.¹²

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422198/2015-04-15-corrections-revisions-policy-for-official-statistics.pdf

¹¹ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422200/2015-04-15-rounding-policy.pdf

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/summer-2015-exam-entries-gcses-level-1-2-certificates-as-and-a-levels-in-england>

- The statistical publication on Summer AS and A level entries for England: April 2014.¹³

Useful information

A glossary of terms is available on page 8 to help you interpret this release.

You can find the publication schedule for the next releases on the Ofqual website.¹⁴

The Ofqual Register gives information on regulated qualifications and recognised awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.¹⁵

¹³

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141031163546/http://ofqual.gov.uk/documents/summer-level-entries-england-provisional-figures-april-2014/>

¹⁴ www.ofqual.gov.uk/standards/statistics

¹⁵ <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>

User feedback

Ofqual is running a rolling series of online surveys to make sure its statistical releases meet your needs.

Ofqual would like to invite you to take part in the online survey for this release.

<http://ofqual.Summer-GCSE-and-IGCSE-entries-for-England-v1.sgizmo.com/s3/>

It will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain entirely confidential in any reports published 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 Ofqual at: statistics@ofqual.gov.uk.

List of tables

The following tables¹⁶ are available in Excel together with this publication on our website – <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/summer-2016-exam-entries-gcse-level-1-2-certificates-as-and-a-levels-in-england>

Table 1	Provisional summer series GCSE entries for England as at 19 April, 2016
Table 2	Provisional summer series GCSE entries for Northern Ireland as at 19 April, 2016
Table 3	Provisional summer series GCSE entries for Wales as at 19 April, 2016
Table 4	Provisional summer series Level 1/2 Certificate entries for England as at 19 April, 2016
Table 5	Provisional summer series Level 1/2 Certificate entries for Northern Ireland as at 19 April, 2016
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Table 7	Provisional summer series AS entries for England as at 19 April, 2016
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Table 9	Provisional summer series AS entries for Wales as at as at 19 April, 2016
Table 10	Provisional summer series A level entries for England as at as at 19 April, 2016
Table 11	Provisional summer series A level entries for Northern Ireland as at 19 April, 2016
Table 12	Provisional summer series A level entries for Wales as at 19 April, 2016
Table 13	Provisional reformed AS entries for England as at 19 April, 2016

¹⁶ Please note that the % change given in the tables is based on un-rounded figures.

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