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**CONTACT** Eleanor Jubb  
[eleanor.jubb@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:eleanor.jubb@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

# A-LEVEL RESULTS AND UPDATE ON APPLICATIONS CYCLE 2016

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This briefing updates members on the outcomes of A-level results day, Thursday 18 August 2016, and initial data released by UCAS on the applications cycle on 18 August.

### Attachments and links:

- [UCAS clearing data](#)
- [JCQ A-level results](#)
- Annexe A: Clearing visualisation 2016 (18 August, 00:05)



## **INTRODUCTION**

This briefing provides an overview of the outcomes of A-level results day, and data released by UCAS on the applications cycle as at Thursday 18 August at 00:05. Please note that some of the increases on 2015 in applicants placed via UCAS will be a result of A-level results day being five days later this year.

## **UCAS HEADLINES**

### **Total applicants and applicant route:**

- 423,890 applicants have been accepted, compared with 412,080 at the same point last year. This is an increase of 2.9%.
- The number of applicants placed in their firm choice has increased by 1.8% (6,440). Those placed in their insurance choice have increased by 7.6% (2,250).
- The number of applicants placed in Clearing has increased by 27.3% to 7,190 applicants. At 00:05 on Thursday 18 August there were 254,770 unplaced applicants, 148,180 of whom were free to be placed.

### **Applicants by domicile and country of institution:**

- The number of applicants placed from all UK nations is up by 2.5% (9,000 applicants), while the number of EU placed applicants is up by 11.3% (2,720 applicants); non-EU placed applicants are stable (up by 130 applicants).
- There have been increases in the number of applicants placed at institutions in all four countries of the UK. The biggest increase is in applicants placed at Scottish institutions, up by 5.3% (2,130 applicants).
- The numbers placed at English institutions are up by 2.6% (9,010 applicants).

### **UK applicants by age, sex and background:**

- The number of young placed applicants is up by 2.2% (5,990 applicants) and the number of mature placed applicants (aged 20 and over) is up by 3.4% (3,070 applicants). The increase in mature applicants in particular may have been influenced by A-level results day being later this year.
- The number of placed 18-year-old applicants is up by 2.1% despite a 2.4% fall in the 18-year-old population.
- The 18-year-old entry rate has increased and is at record levels in all four UK nations.
- Entrants from the most disadvantaged areas, POLAR3 quintile 1, have increased by 2.4% (440 applicants), compared to a 2.0% (1,010 placed applicants) increase for entrants from quintile 5 (the

most advantaged areas).

- The entry rate for 18 year olds from POLAR3 quintile 1 has increased by 6.6%.
- The number of male placed applicants has increased by 2.3% (3,490 applicants) and the number of female placed applicants has increased by 2.7% (5,570 applicants).

### Applicants by subject group:

- Compared to 2015 and excluding combined subjects, ten subject groups have increased, six subject groups have decreased and four have remained stable.
- The biggest decrease has been in technologies, which also fell in 2015; it is down by 10.6% (190 applicants). Language subjects have also had large decreases, with both European and non-European languages down by 7.8% (260 applicants and 80 applicants respectively). In all three cases placed applicants in these subjects are now lower than in 2012.
- The biggest increases have been in Computer Sciences, up by 8.0% (1,490 applicants), subjects allied to medicine (up by 7.6% or 3,040 applicants, possibly boosted this year by the removal of bursaries for these courses in 2017), and law (up by 7.4% or 1,390 applicants).

## A-LEVEL RESULTS HEADLINES

### A-level results by grade:

- A-level entries fell by 1.7% (14,044 entries), less than the 3.1% fall in the 18-year-old population in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (this is larger than the overall decrease in the UK 18-year-old population).
- There was broad stability in the grades awarded, with the proportions awarded A\*-A at 25.8% (-0.1pp) and the proportions awarded A\*-C at 77.6% (+0.3pp).
- Male candidates remain more likely to get an A\*, with 8.5% of them doing so, compared to 7.7% of female candidates. But male candidates are less likely to get an A or B, so female candidates remain more likely to get top grades overall, with 54.5% getting A\*-B grades compared to 50.9% of male candidates.
- There are large differences in A-level result by English region, with 29.0% of entrants in the South East getting A\*-A grades compared to 22.1% in the North East.
- A\* grades awarded in modern foreign language subjects have increased following work by the awarding bodies. They are now up to 8.8% (+0.7pp) in French, 9.6% (+1.3pp) in German and 8.4% (+0.3pp) in Spanish.

TABLE 1: GRADE OUTCOMES, 2012 TO 2016

Grade outcomes	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015 to 2016	
						% change	Difference
A*	68,084	64,657	68,372	69,761	67,733	-2.9%	1,998
A	161,160	159,091	148,418	150,583	148,097	-1.7%	2,486
B	224,073	226,300	220,125	228,851	226,747	-0.9%	2,104
C	206,837	206,733	202,615	208,434	206,666	-0.8%	1,767
D	128,411	125,060	123,403	125,060	122,159	-2.3%	2,901
E	56,018	52,747	54,197	51,896	49,366	-4.9%	2,560
U	17,236	16,164	16,676	16,164	15,897	-1.7%	267
<b>Total</b>	<b>861,819</b>	<b>850,752</b>	<b>833,807</b>	<b>850,749</b>	<b>836,665</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>	<b>14,044</b>

### A-level entries by subject:

- Maths and English remain the most popular subjects at A-level, though English has had a 5.4% (4,789 entries) decrease in entries this year. The top 10 subjects remain the same as in 2015.
- There have been large decreases in entries to performing arts subjects, with performing arts itself down by 15.3%, music down by 8.8%, and drama down by 6.4%. Of the three, only music fell in 2015.
- Entries to Biology, Chemistry and Physics have fallen slightly, by 1.6% as a group, but this is below the overall drop in A-level entrants.
- Entries to French (-6.4%), German (-4.2%) and Spanish (-2.7%) have all fallen by more than the overall drop in entries.
- Entries to General Studies have continued to fall, down by 35.0% (6,333 entries).

TABLE 2: MOST POPULAR SUBJECTS, NUMBER OF ENTRIES, 2012 TO 2016

Subject	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015 to 2016	
						% change	Difference
<b>Mathematics</b>	85,714	88,060	88,816	92,711	92,163	-0.6%	-548
<b>English</b>	89,638	89,442	85,336	89,499	84,710	-5.4%	-4,789
<b>Biology</b>	63,074	63,939	64,070	63,275	62,650	-1.0%	-625
<b>Psychology</b>	56,486	56,088	54,818	57,014	59,469	4.3%	2,445
<b>History</b>	51,652	52,149	52,131	55,848	54,731	-2.0%	-1,117
<b>Chemistry</b>	49,234	51,818	53,513	52,644	51,811	-1.6%	-833

<b>Art and design subjects</b>	46,483	44,069	44,922	44,864	43,242	-3.6%	-1,622
<b>Geography</b>	32,005	32,872	33,007	37,195	36,363	-2.2%	-832

TABLE3: SUBJECTS EXPERIENCING THE STRONGEST PERCENTAGE DECREASES IN ENTRY, 2015–16

Subject	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015 to 2016	
						% change	Difference
<b>General studies</b>	35,558	31,562	23,884	18,092	11,759	-35.0%	-6,333
<b>Performing/ expressive arts</b>	3,152	2,782	2,546	2,573	2,179	-15.3%	-394
<b>Music</b>	9,495	8,839	8,375	7,776	7,089	-8.8%	-687
<b>Drama</b>	15,139	13,864	13,080	13,226	12,373	-6.4%	-853
<b>French</b>	12,511	11,272	10,433	10,328	9,672	-6.4%	-656
<b>Physical education</b>	16,896	14,441	12,760	12,405	11,627	-6.3%	-778
<b>Design and technology</b>	17,015	15,641	13,691	13,240	12,477	-5.8%	-736
<b>English</b>	89,638	89,442	85,336	89,499	84,710	-5.4%	-4,789

## AS-LEVEL RESULT HEADLINES

- This year is the first year in which students have sat reformed, uncoupled AS-levels in thirteen subjects; grades in these subjects will no longer count towards A-level grades. There is therefore a mix in the exam specifications which AS entrants will have sat, with some sitting unreformed subjects, either first time or as a resit; some doing re-sits of the now reformed subjects, using the unreformed specification; and some sitting reformed, uncoupled AS levels.
- As expected given the reforms and the fall in the 17-year-old population (down by 1.5% in England, Wales and Northern Ireland), entries to AS levels fell by 13.7%.
- The proportions awarded A grades rose slightly to 21.3% (up by 1.1pp), with the proportion awarded A-C grades at 63.3% (up by 0.7pp).
- The proportions awarded A grades in the reformed subjects remained the same at 16.8%.
- There were variations in take-up of the reformed subjects. It appears that those subjects which students are unlikely to have taken at GCSE have had the lowest decreases, followed by science subjects which may lend themselves to a modular approach, with arts and humanities subjects

which students are likely to have studied at GCSE having the biggest decreases.

TABLE 4: CHANGE IN 17-YEAR-OLD ENTRIES TO SUBJECTS WITH DECOUPLED REFORMED AS-LEVELS

<b>Subject</b>	<b>% change</b>
Art and design	-38.4%
English	-30.2%
History	-29.5%
Biology	-21.2%
Chemistry	-21.2%
Physics	-20.0%
Sociology	-16.2%
Psychology	-22.5%
Economics	-19.7%
Business studies	-14.8%
Computer science	-10.9%

Universities UK has issued a [press release](#) on the results so far from Clearing.

Annexe A contains UUK's [visualisation of the results so far](#) from Clearing, drawing on UCAS data. This will be updated regularly on our website until Friday 2 September.

## ANNEXE A: CLEARING VISUALISATION 2015 (18 AUGUST 2016)

Updated on 18, 19, 22, 26 August and 2 September.

### Cross-border applicant flows as of today

#### Key points

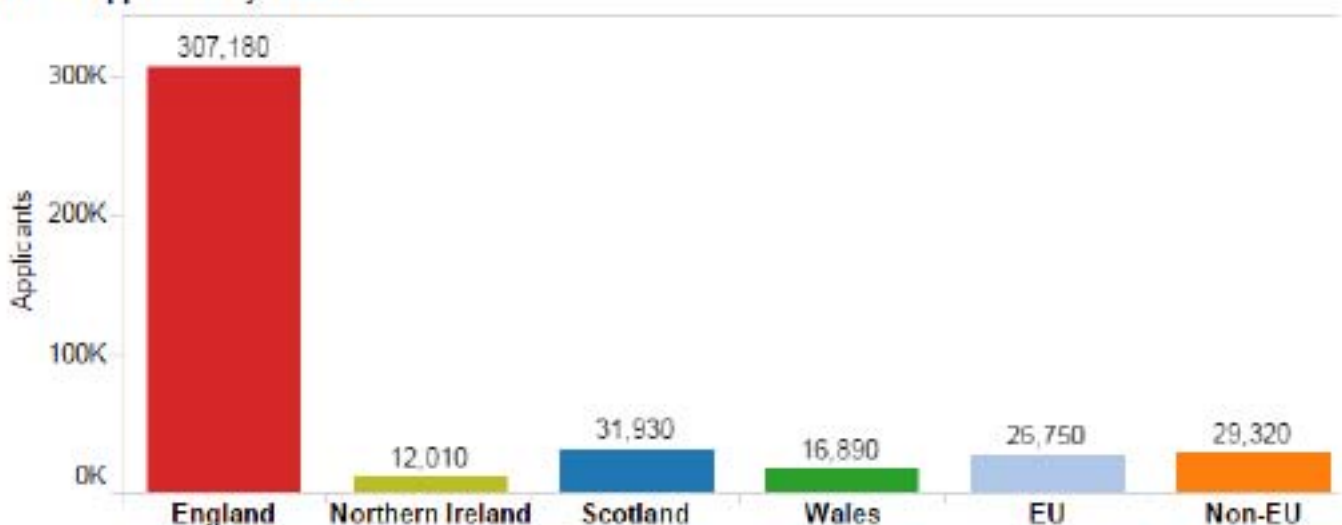
- The number of applicants placed from all UK nations has increased by 2.5% since 2015.
- There have been increases in the number of applicants placed at all four UK nations. The biggest increase is in applicants placed at Scottish institutions, up by 5.3%.
- The number of applicants placed at English institutions has increased by 3%.
- EU-domiciled acceptances are up by 11% across the UK and have risen at institutions in all UK nations.
- Non-EU-domiciled acceptances have remained stable (not all non-EU students will use UCAS).

Using the filter to the right of the trend lines will show the percentage change in placed applicants from the different domiciles in institutions in each UK country.

#### Placed applicants by country of institution



#### Placed applicants by domicile



The data used in this visualisation is being published by UCAS daily on week days from 18 August to 2 September 2016:

<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/daily-clearing-analysis-2016>

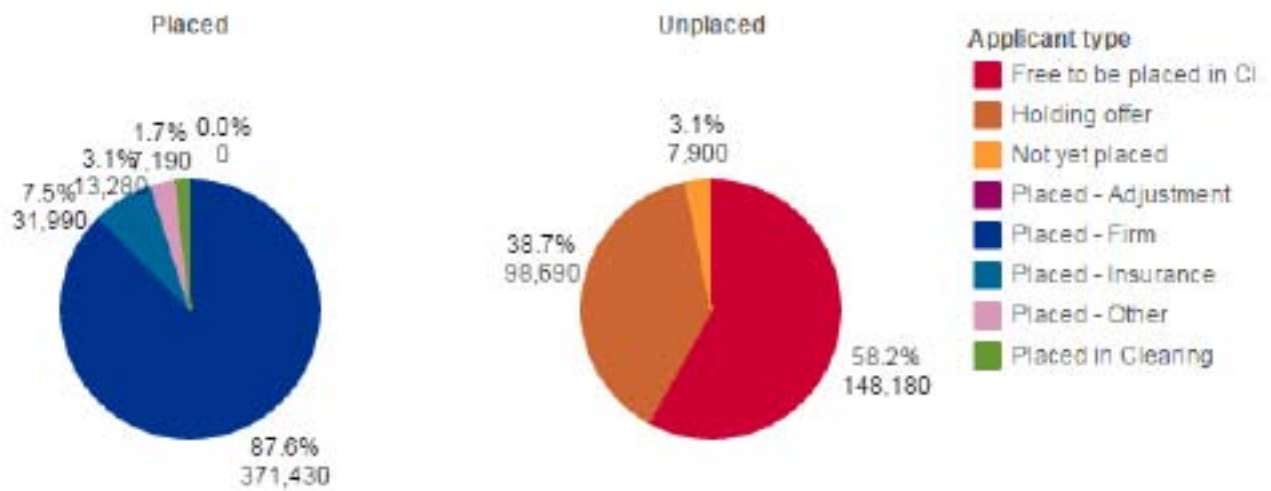
This page was last updated on 18 August 2016 at 10:00

**Placed and unplaced applicants today**

**Key points**

- At midnight on A-level results day 423,890 applicants had been placed, 7,190 in Clearing.
- The number of placed applicants is 3% higher than in 2015, a new record.
- Over 62% applicants had received a place by midnight of A-level results day.
- There are 254,770 unplaced applicants, 148,180 of whom are free to be placed in Clearing.

Placed or Unplaced?	Scheme	Applicants	Change since 2015	Difference since 2015	% of total applicants
		2016	2016	2016	2016
Placed	Both	7,190	27.3%	1,540	1.1%
	Main	416,700	2.5%	10,270	61.4%
Unplaced	Clearing	7,900	-8.4%	-540	1.2%
	Main	246,870	-4.0%	-10,230	36.4%
Grand Total		678,660	0.2%	1,040	100.0%



The data used in this visualisation is being published by UCAS daily on week days from 18 August to 2 September 2016. This page was last updated on 18 August 2015 at 10:10.  
<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas->

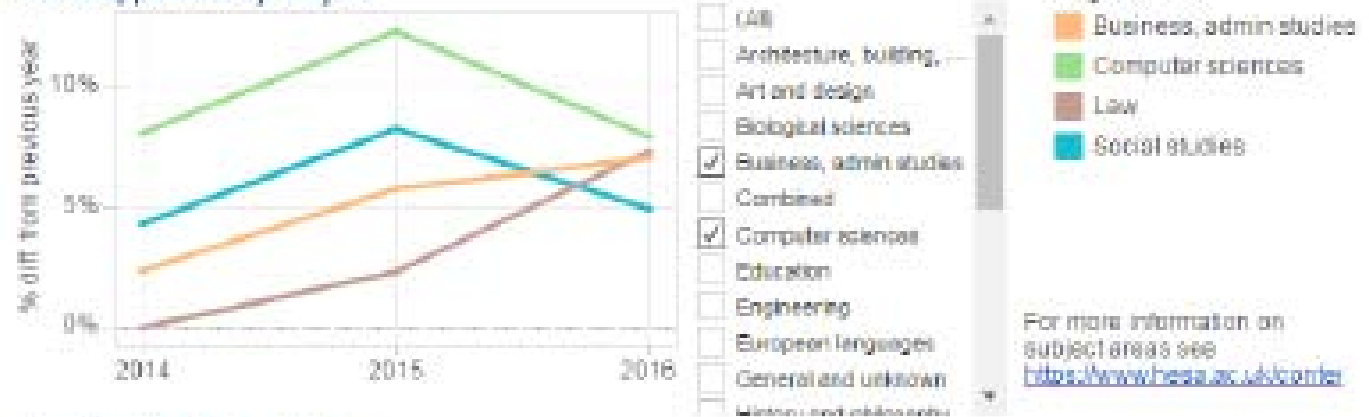


Placed applicants by subject today

Key points

- Around half of subjects have increased. The strongest increase between 2015 and 2016 was in Computer Sciences (up by 8%, with an additional 1,490 placed applicants).
- Other subjects with strong increases include subjects allied to medicine (also up by 8%), Law (up by 7%) and Business (also up by 7%)
- Many STEM subjects have also increased, with the number of applicants placed in Biology and Engineering degrees both up by 5%
- The biggest decreases have been in Technology degrees (down by 11%), and languages. Both European and non-European languages are down by 8%.

Placed applicants by subject



Placed applicants by subject

	Placed applicants	% Change since 2015	% of Total Applicants	
	2016	2016	2016	
Science-related subjects	Computer sciences	20,220	8.0%	5.2%
	Biological sciences	43,980	4.8%	11.3%
	Subjects allied to medicine	43,150	7.6%	11.1%
	Engineering	22,610	4.8%	5.8%
	Technologies	1,600	-10.6%	0.4%
	Veterinary science, agriculture	5,460	-4.7%	1.4%
	Physical sciences	16,400	-4.0%	4.2%
	Medicine and dentistry	7,680	-0.3%	2.0%
	Architecture, building, planning	6,670	1.7%	1.7%
	Mathematical sciences	7,080	3.4%	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>174,850</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>45.1%</b>	
Mass communications	11,380	4.8%	2.9%	
Social studies	36,480	4.0%	9.4%	

This page was last updated on 18 August 2016 at 10:15.

The data used in this visualisation is being published by UCAS daily on week days from 18 August to 2 September 2016:

<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/daily-clearing>

## Notes

### Glossary

**Applicants:** those applying for full-time undergraduate study through UCAS.

**Acceptances (also called placed applicants):** applicants who have met the conditions for their offers and received a place at an institution.

**Country of institution:** the UK country in which the higher education institution is located.

**Cross-border applicant flows:** the numbers of students with a permanent home in one country going to study in another country (e.g. students from England studying in Scotland, students from Scotland studying in Wales, etc.).

**Domicile:** an applicant's permanent country of residence.

**Entry rate:** proportion of the population accepted into higher education.

**Institution:** a higher education provider based in the UK.

**Mature:** applicants aged 20 and over.

**Placed:** an applicant who has met the conditions for their offer and received a place at an institution.

**Scheme:** refers to when applicants applied and were placed. If an applicant applied by 30 June and was placed by 16 July, they applied and were placed under the 'Main scheme'. If an applicant applied after 30 June and was placed after 16 July, they applied and were placed under 'Clearing'. Some applicants will have applied under the 'Main scheme' and been placed under 'Clearing' so are defined in the first table as coming under both schemes.

**Subject areas:** uses the JACS3 subject area classification system.  
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1787/281/>

**Unplaced:** applicants who have yet to receive an offer or who have not met the terms of their offer and so do not have a place at an institution.

**Young:** applicants aged 19 and under.

### Source and further information

- The data used in this visualisation is published daily on week days from 18 August to 2 September by UCAS, at <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/daily-clearing-analysis-2016>, and reflects the state of clearing as of 00:05 on that day. Universities UK is updating this visualisation with the published data on 18, 19, 22, 26 August and 2 September.

- UCAS data has been rounded to the nearest 10, so aggregated data might not always match.

For more Universities UK analysis and reports, visit <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/>