

Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: July to September 2017

Background information accompanying the
statistical release



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Information about the statistics

Purpose

This release presents information on the number of certificates issued for regulated vocational and other qualifications during July to September 2017 (quarter 3, 2017).

It does not include the Advanced Extension Award, GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications, project and principal learning. The number of certificates awarded for these qualifications can be found on the website of the [Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

Data tables accompanying this release show the number of awards broken down by awarding organisation, sector subject area, type of qualification, level of qualification and country.

Comparisons in this release are mainly made with data from the same quarter of the previous year and the 12-month period up to the end of the same quarter of the previous year. This is because of seasonal changes in the number of certificates issued over the year.

Geographical coverage

The data cover regulated qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

From the next quarter (Q4 2017) onwards, Ofqual will publish England only data. This is following a [transition arrangement](#) with Qualifications Wales (the regulator in Wales) and CCEA (the regulator in Northern Ireland) whereby the responsibility for publishing data for learners in Wales and Northern Ireland for the academic year 2017/18 and beyond has been passed to Qualifications Wales and CCEA respectively.

Description

Ofqual regulates qualifications and assessments in England. Until May 2016, it also regulated vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. This bulletin includes data on vocational and other qualifications awarded in England as well as data on qualifications taken in Wales and Northern Ireland collected on behalf of Qualifications Wales, the regulator in Wales, and CCEA, the regulator in Northern Ireland.

Regulated qualifications are classified into different qualification types with an associated 'level', which is indicative of the level of demand. The table below shows the current levels for each type of qualification and the relationship between them. Level 3 is at about the same level of demand, but not necessarily the same size, as

an A level, and Level 2 is at about the same level of demand as a GCSE at grade C or above.

On 1 October 2015, Ofqual withdrew the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) requirements. From that date, the QCF type has ceased to exist. However, for administrative reasons, until our new system was introduced in summer 2016, awarding organisations could still use the QCF type on the system for new qualifications when no other type was appropriate.

Qualification type	Current levels
Advanced Extension Award	Level 3
Basic skills	Entry Level, Levels 1 and 2
CVET	Levels 1 to 6
End-Point Assessment	Levels 2 to 7
English for speakers of other languages	Entry Level, Levels 1, 2 and 3
Entry Level	Entry
Essential skills Wales	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 3
Free-standing mathematics qualification	Levels 1, 2, 3
Functional skills	Entry Level, Levels 1 and 2
GCE A level	Level 3
GCE AS qualification	Level 3
GCSE (9 to 1)	Level 1/Level 2
GCSE	Level 1/Level 2
Higher Level	Levels 4 to 8
IVET	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 5
Key skills	Levels 1 to 4
NVQ	Levels 1 to 5
'Other general' qualification	Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3
Occupational qualification	Levels 1 to 4
Principal learning	Levels 1 to 3
Project	Levels 1 to 3
QCF	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8
Vocationally related qualification	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8
Welsh Baccalaureate	Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3

This release presents data on regulated vocational and other qualifications coloured blue in the table above. It does not include the rest of the qualifications given in the above on which data are published separately. Neither does it include university degrees, which Ofqual does not regulate.

Data source

Information on qualifications (covering title, type, awarding organisation, sector subject area and level) is taken from [Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications](#), which gives information on regulated qualifications and recognised awarding organisations in England and Northern Ireland. Data on approved or designated qualifications offered in Wales is available at [Qualifications in Wales \(QiW\) database](#).

Qualification types used to describe the nature of qualifications are used in the registers of both Qualifications Wales and Ofqual. However, there are some that are present only in the Qualifications Wales register and therefore only contain qualifications offered in Wales. These qualification types were incorporated into the Ofqual systems from July 2016 for the 2016 quarter 2 data collection.

Data on the number of certificates awarded are sent by awarding organisations to Ofqual.

Limitations

Data are collected at the earliest point available, which is the first day of the next reporting period. This reduces the time between the activity and reporting on the activity.

The main source of potential error is in the information provided by awarding organisations. Ofqual cannot guarantee the number of certificates submitted is correct and there may be systematic bias when the information is sent, although awarding organisations are expected to provide the correct data. Ofqual compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues. Summary data are then sent back to awarding organisations to be checked and confirmed. The figures reported in this release reflect the certificates issued by awarding organisations at the time of data collection.

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. 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 phase and for any subsequent change;
- reminding all providers (if appropriate) that, as a condition of them being regulated, all data must be completely accurate;

- 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; and
- having a proportionate data-auditing framework in place, allowing for auditing of providers' information collection, collation and delivery processes as necessary.

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

Published data

The [data underlying these statistics](#) are published alongside this statistical release at 9.30am on the day of release.

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of certificates issued for any qualification are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. Qualifications may also be recategorised to a different type, level, sector subject area or awarding organisation. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect the new categorisation.

In this release, previous years' figures from three awarding organisations (OCR, WJEC and OCN Northern Ireland) have been revised. The table of revisions, published alongside this publication, shows the changes for each country (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). The data set is not revised until the next publication is released. You can find the publication schedule for the next releases by [clicking here](#).

Confidentiality and rounding

In accordance with Ofqual's rounding policy, figures in the statistics and commentary for the number of certificates issued are rounded to the nearest 50 for ease of understanding. If the value is less than 25, it is represented as 0~. A 0 represents zero achievements. In general, we use unrounded values to derive percentages. As a result of rounded figures, the percentages shown in charts/tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

In the datasets published alongside this publication, the figures are rounded to the nearest 5 (values less than 5 are represented as 0~)¹. A 0 represents zero achievements. This is to ensure the data does not reveal an individual student.

¹ Prior to 2017 Q1, the values of 1 and 2 were denoted as 0~ and the values of 3 and 4 were rounded to 5. The rounding has now been simplified and made consistent with other releases by Ofqual.

Status

These statistics are classified as National Statistics. The presentation of these statistics was changed starting with the previous release (covering data for Q1 2017) based on the user consultation held by Ofqual in February and March 2017. Please [click here](#) for more details on the consultation and its outcome. After the changes these statistics have retained their National Statistics status (subject to ongoing conversations with the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#)).

Related publications

[Further education and skills](#): the quarterly Statistical First Release, published by the Department for Education, reports statistics about learner participation, outcomes and highest qualification held in the further education and skills sector.

[A level and other 16 to 18 results](#): statistics published by the Department for Education covering A level and other results for 16- to 18-year-olds.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency's [Individualised Learner Record](#) data and the Department for Education's [National Pupil Database \(NPD\)](#) provide data on graded qualifications and data broken down by region. The latter also provides data on progression between award, certificate and diploma, and number of registrations.

Glossary

Definitions of important terms used in this release are [available online](#).

Statistical policies

The policies and procedures that Ofqual follows for production and release of its statistical releases are available [here](#).

Useful links

The [report and data tables](#) accompanying this release are available separately.

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 statistics@ofqual.gov.uk.

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us at publications@ofqual.gov.uk if you have any specific accessibility requirements.



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