

Special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2018 exam series

Annual

Published: 6 December 2018

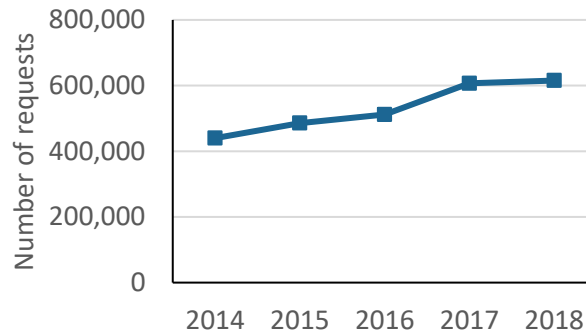
Coverage: England

Official Statistics

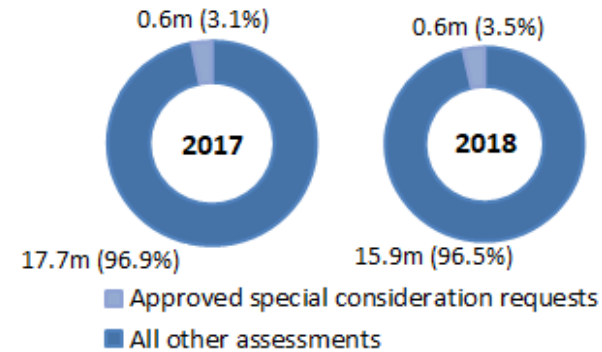
This report presents the number of special consideration requests for individual units/components within GCSEs, AS and A levels submitted by schools and colleges in England to exam boards for the exams sat in the summer 2018 exam series.

Number of special consideration requests

In total, there were 615,295 special consideration requests, up 1% from 2017.



Approved requests as a proportion of all assessments



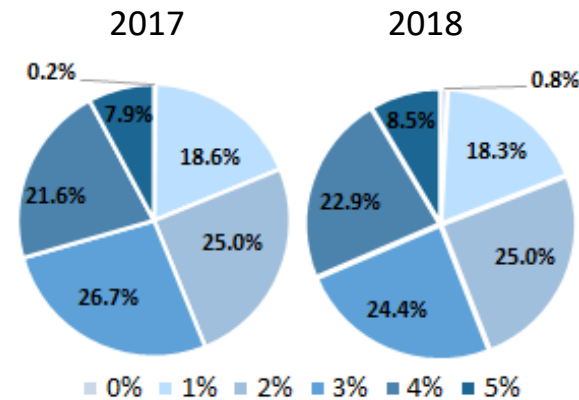
571,615 special considerations were approved in 2018, meaning there was an approved special consideration request for 3.5% of all assessments.

Requests approved

Almost all special consideration requests (93%) were approved, similar to last year.

93%

Distribution of mark adjustments



The most frequent mark adjustment in 2018 was 2% of the maximum mark, whereas last year it was 3%.

At a glance

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Comments and feedback are welcome.

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Special consideration

In this report, Ofqual presents the number of special consideration requests for GCSE, AS and A level examinations in England based on data received from exam boards for the summer 2018 exam series.

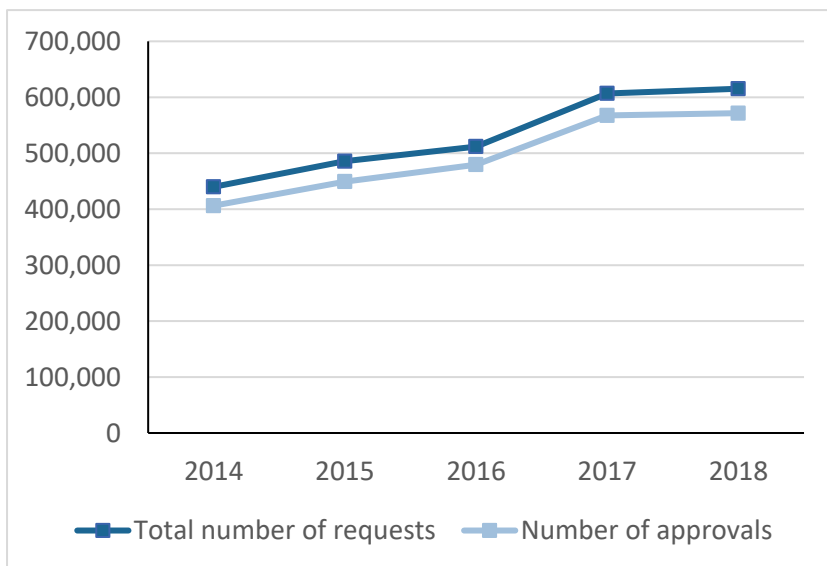
A special consideration request relates to a single request for a candidate sitting a specific unit or component in an exam series. We report here on special consideration given in the form of post-examination adjustments made to marks of candidates who might not have been able to demonstrate their ability in an assessment due to exceptional circumstances that could have had an impact on their performance. In other cases, special consideration takes the form of an adjustment to the way an assessment is taken. We report on that form of special consideration in our statistics on [access arrangements](#).

Requests for special consideration are made by schools and colleges usually after an assessment has taken place. An application for special consideration specifies which candidates and which units or components should be subject to special consideration. Applications for special consideration can be for an individual candidate, or for a group of candidates if a reason for special consideration covers all these candidates. Awarding organisations will not approve a request if they believe that the reasons given did not significantly affect the performance of the candidate or if the reasons for the special consideration request did not occur at the time of the assessment.

In this release, all figures are rounded to the nearest 5 to ensure confidentiality of data. AS figures have been reported along with A level. Further information on this release is available in the [background information](#) as well as [data tables](#) accompanying this report.

Special consideration requests

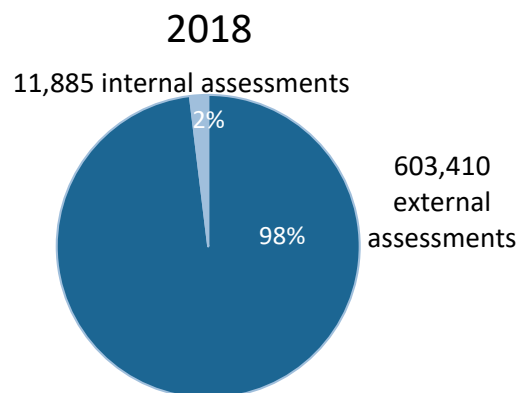
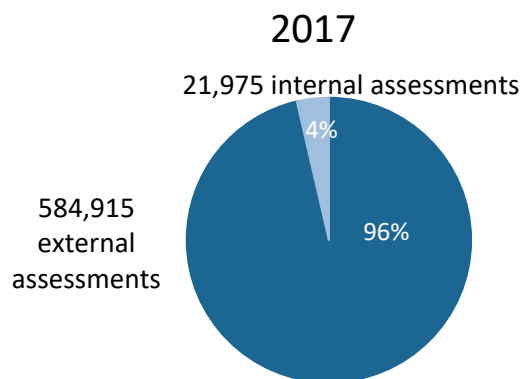
Numbers of requests made and approved have remained similar to last year



Special consideration requests	2017	2018	% change
Requests made	606,890	615,295	▲ 1%
Requests approved	567,575	571,615	▲ 1%

The number of requests has remained broadly similar to last year. However, the number of requests approved as a proportion of the total number of assessments taken has increased slightly (from 3.1% in 2017 to 3.5% in 2018).

External and internal assessment requests

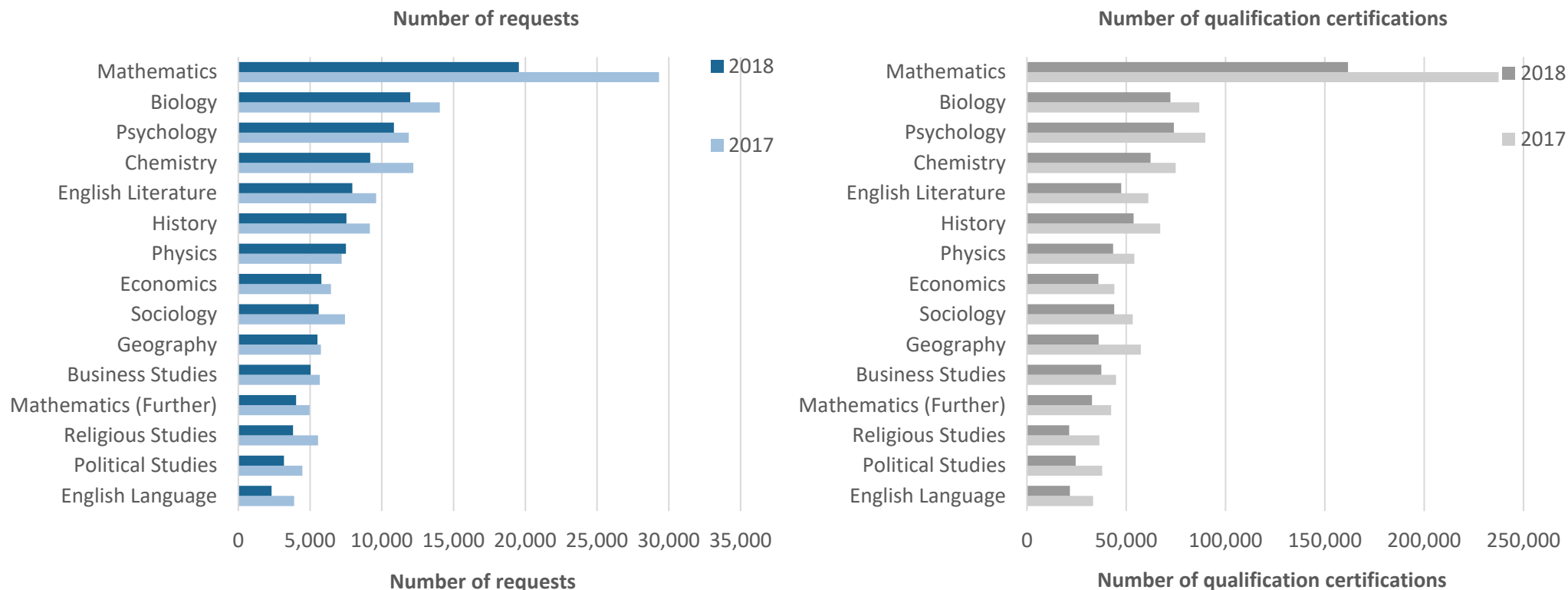


98% of requests in 2018 were for external assessments (603,410 requests) and 2% were for internal assessments (11,885 requests). The decline in internal assessments from last year (4%) is likely to be explained by there being fewer internal assessments in the reformed qualifications.

Note: The total number of requests also includes withdrawn requests, which for 2018 were around 1% of all requests.

Special consideration requests by subject

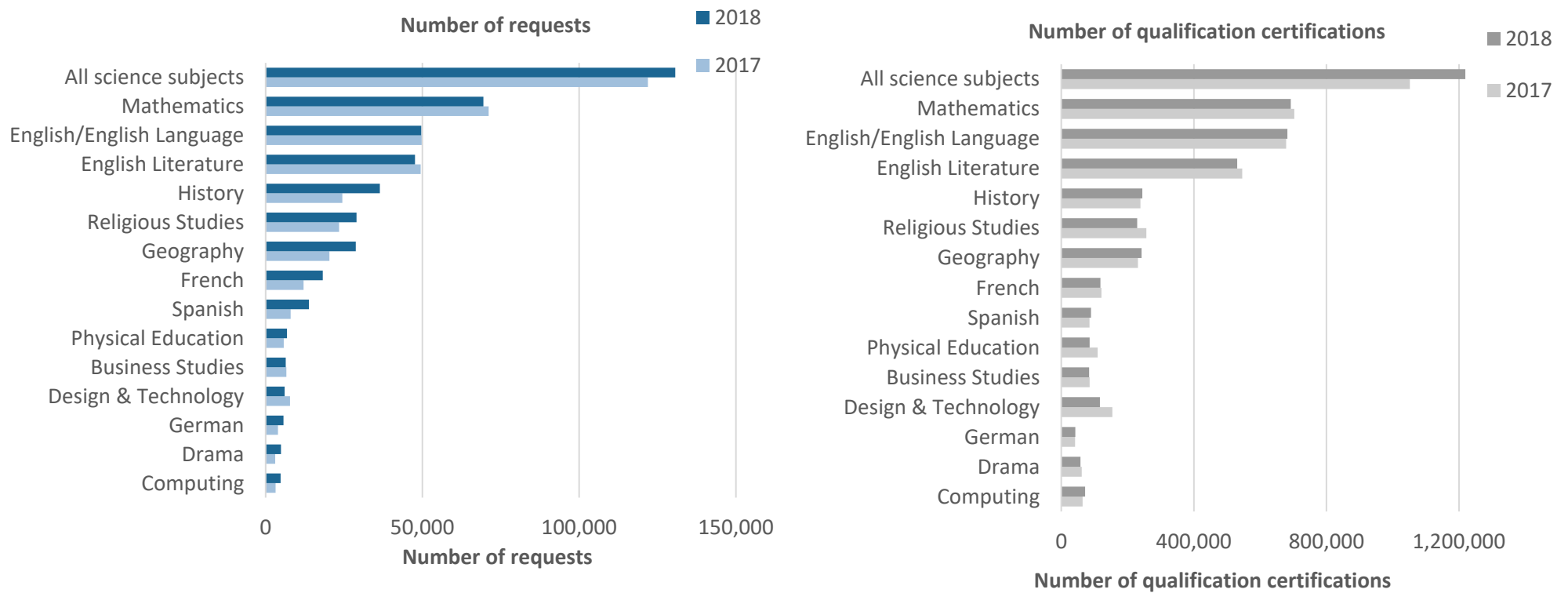
15 AS & A level subjects with the highest number of requests made in 2018 and their number of qualification certifications



Note: the chart on the left shows requests at unit level (collected by Ofqual from exam boards) whereas the chart on the right represents qualification certifications as reported in the data published by JCQ. The qualification certification charts are given as context as no other meaningful benchmark is available for subject breakdown. It is also worth noting that different subjects comprise differing numbers of units which may contribute towards the number of requests and caution may be needed when comparing with previous years due to transition between legacy and reformed qualifications. Figures for all subjects can be found in the accompanying data tables.

For AS and A level, the greatest numbers of special consideration requests were made in subjects with the greatest numbers of qualification certifications (eg mathematics, biology, etc). The decline in the number of requests for mathematics in comparison to last year could be explained by the [decline in AS entries for mathematics](#) this year.

15 GCSE subjects with the highest number of requests made in 2018 and their number of qualification certifications



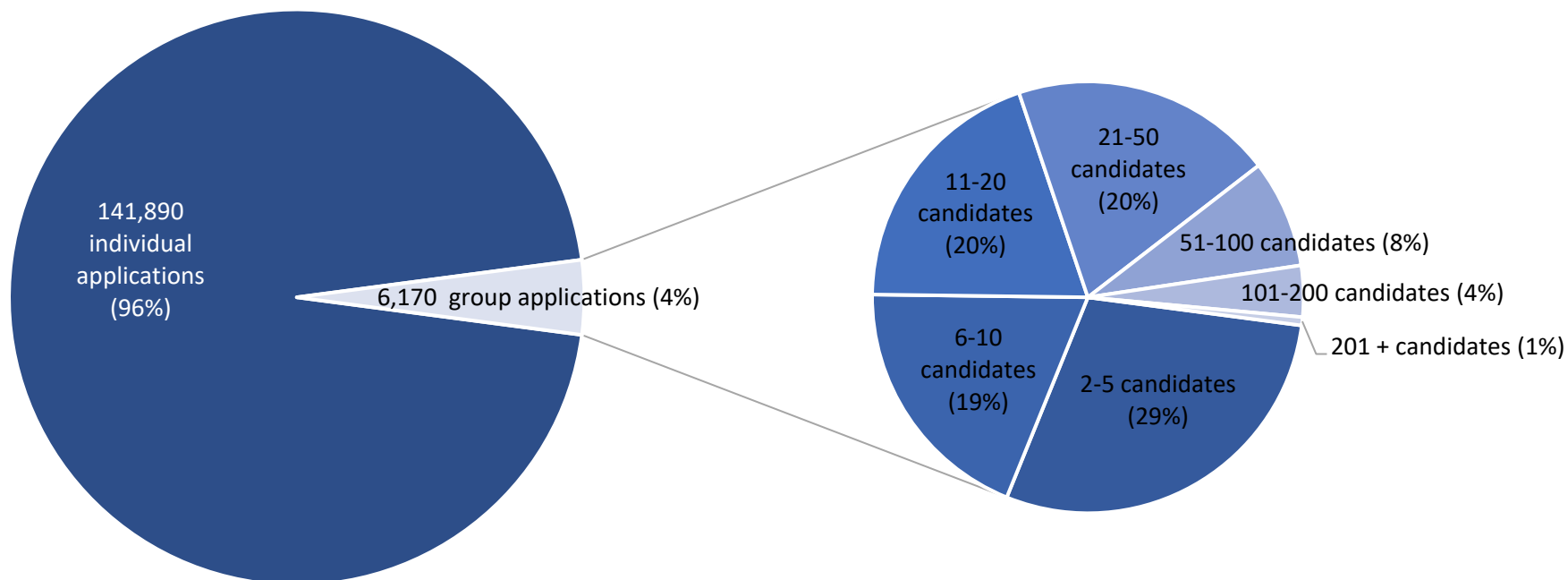
Note: the chart on the left shows requests at unit level (collected by Ofqual from exam boards) whereas the chart on the right represents qualification certifications as reported in the data published by [JCO](#). The qualification certification charts are given as context as no other meaningful benchmark is available for subject breakdown. It is also worth noting that different subjects comprise differing numbers of units which may contribute towards the number of requests and caution may be needed when comparing with previous years due to transition between legacy and reformed qualifications. Also note that due to miscategorisation of subjects by one exam board in 2017 data, we have grouped all the science GCSEs together to allow comparison between years. The figures for 'all science subjects' in 2017 therefore include science, additional science, further additional science, biology, chemistry and physics. For 2018 the figures for 'all science subjects' include combined science, biology, chemistry and physics. This explains why this subject area has the highest number of requests. Figures for all subjects can be found in the accompanying data tables.

Similar to A level, for GCSE the greatest numbers of special consideration requests were made in subjects with the greatest numbers of qualification certifications (all science subjects, mathematics, English language etc.).

Individual and group special consideration applications

According to [JCQ guidelines](#), applications for special consideration can be made either on an individual or group basis. An individual application involves just one candidate and can cover one or more units. However, there can also be cases where a group of learners has been affected by similar circumstances (e.g. a fire alarm during an exam), in which case a single group application can cover all candidates and the different units they were taking that were affected by the event.

Number of individual and group applications submitted



The chart on the right shows the number of students included in a group application. For instance, in 29% of group applications, there were between 2 and 5 candidates.

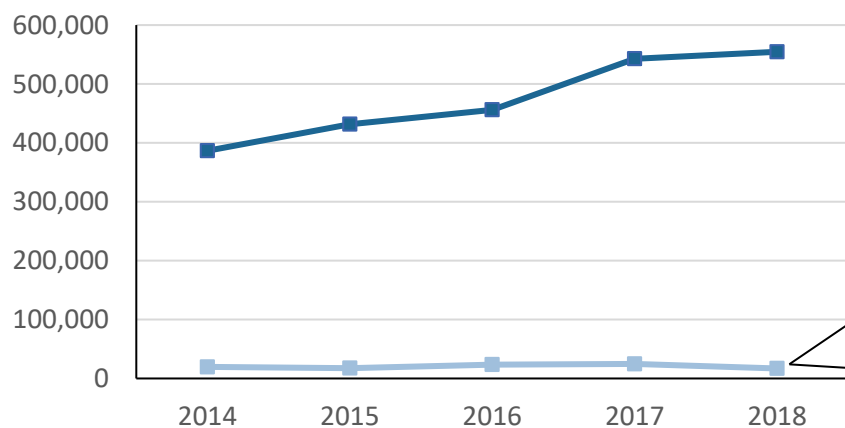
Note: More than one special consideration request can be included in a single application. One application for special consideration, whether for an individual or a group may relate to one or more units/components. Also, a single group application encompasses several candidates. Therefore, the sum of applications for individual and groups is not equal to the total number of special consideration requests (which are counted at individual candidate and component/unit).

Categories of special consideration

There are two categories of special consideration included in this report: mark adjustments and qualification awards. Mark adjustments are for candidates who were present for the assessment but disadvantaged in some way at the time of taking the assessment, whereas qualification awards are for candidates who were absent with good reason and so did not complete one or more of the assessments.

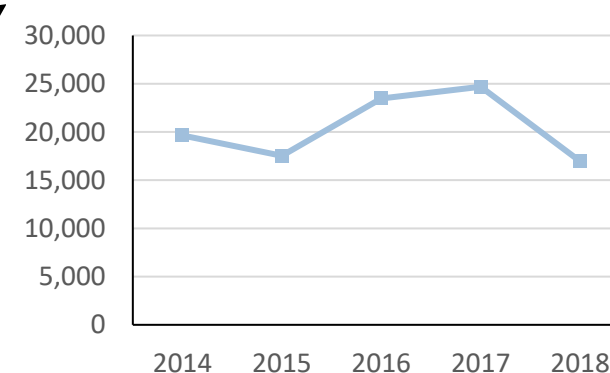
Almost all approved requests were for mark adjustments

Approved mark adjustment and qualification award requests



■ Mark adjustment requests ■ Qualification award requests

Approved qualification award requests



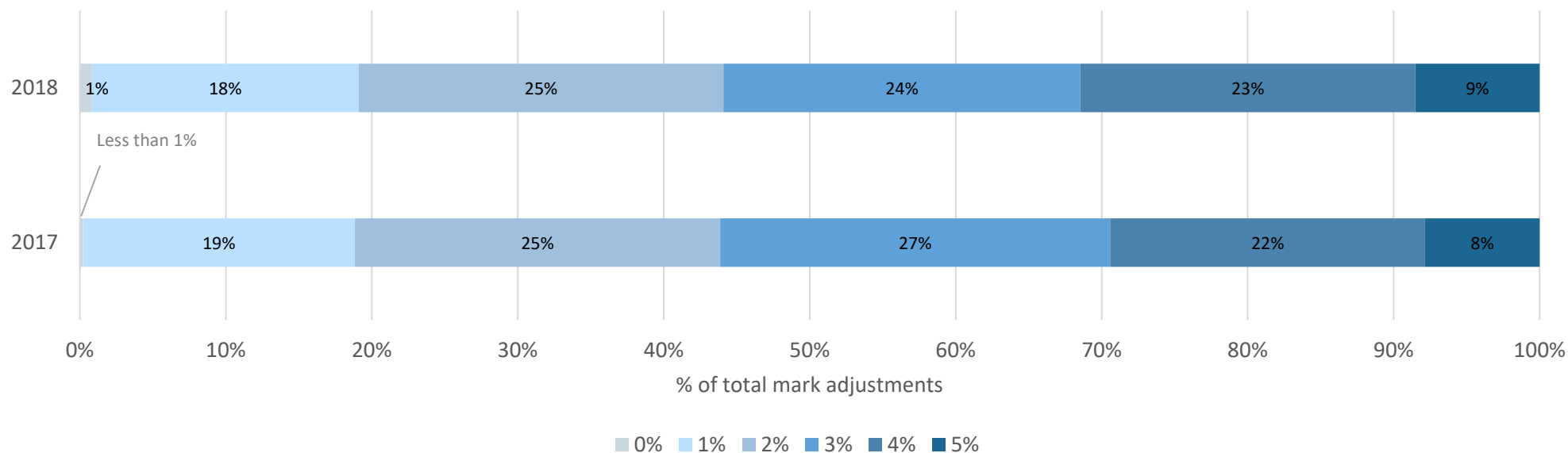
Approved mark adjustment requests have remained above 95% of the total approved requests and the rest were qualification awards (see [data table 3](#) for more information). The number of approved qualification award requests declined this year (from 24,685 to 16,960), despite the [changes that were made in summer 2017](#) to allow special consideration for students who had completed at least 25% of the assessment (previously the [minimum requirement was 40%](#)). This could be related to the reforms, as there are fewer subjects with coursework which means there are fewer opportunities to have completed the minimum amount of assessment required, when a candidate was absent for all of the exams.

Approved mark adjustments

The [guidelines published by JCQ](#) allow for percentage adjustments to the mark given for a candidate's work. The exam boards permit adjustments of up to 5% of the maximum mark of a question paper. This tariff is decided by the exam boards. If the application is reviewed but the addition of marks is considered inappropriate, exam boards may choose not to make any change to the candidate's mark (ie 0% adjustment).

The addition of 2% of the maximum mark was the most frequent mark adjustment made in 2018, closely followed by 3%. Mark adjustments of 0% were the least common (for more information on 0% adjustment see [background notes](#)).

The breakdown of mark adjustments made in 2017 and 2018





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