# Variability in A level results for schools and colleges 2017-2019

ofqual

# Key points

- In general, the level of variation in individual school and college results at A* and A is similar to previous years
- Differences between the average (mean) percentage of students achieving grades A* or A in 2018/2019 and in 2017/2018 were generally small, indicating that year-on-year results in the subjects analysed have remained relatively stable
- Even when there are no changes to qualifications, individual schools and colleges will see variation in their year-on-year results: this is normal

A level results in England have been relatively stable in recent years, with only small changes in the overall percentages of students achieving A* or A grades. However, we know that individual schools and colleges may see variation in the proportion of students achieving particular grades from one year to the next. This can be due to many different factors, including differences in the mix of the students entered for particular A levels, different teaching approaches, changes in teaching staff or teaching time, and changes to qualifications.

This summer, new A level qualifications in 19 subjects[1] are being awarded in England for the first time. Last summer, new A level qualifications in 12 subjects[2] were awarded in England for the first time. We have analysed the year-on-year variation in the percentage of students achieving grades A* or A in 17[3] of the reformed subjects. This includes maths, where the reformed A level was available last year after one year of study (note that the majority of entries last summer for maths were for the legacy specification). The first full cohort award for maths is this summer.

The evidence suggests that the variation at school/college level has been very similar to that seen in previous years. We have looked only at schools and colleges in England with 20 or more students in a subject in both years: smaller cohorts are likely to be less stable and to show more variation naturally, since each individual student can represent a large percentage of the cohort.

We have plotted the variation seen in each of several hundred schools and colleges. Each bar represents the number of schools and colleges with a particular level of variation, measured in intervals of 2.5 percentage points. For example, the two bars either side of zero represent schools that had either a drop of up to 2.5 percentage points or an increase of up to 2.5 percentage points. The higher

[1] Accounting, ancient history, classical civilisation, design and technology, electronics, environmental science, film studies, further maths, geology, government and politics, history of art, law, media studies, modern foreign languages (Chinese, Italian, Russian), music technology, philosophy, statistics.
[2] Ancient languages (Classical Greek, Latin), dance, drama and theatre, geography, maths, modern foreign languages (French, German, Spanish), music, physical education, religious studies. Reformed A level maths was available last year after one year of study but the first full cohort award is this summer.
[3] We have only included subjects that have at least 10,000 entries from at least 100 schools and colleges with at least 20 students in both 2018 and 2019 (when considering all candidates). Note that for religious studies there are fewer than 100 schools and colleges in 2019 when considering Year 13 students only.

the peaks in the middle, the greater the stability from one year to the next.[4] We have also looked at the variation for students in year 13 only (18-year-old students).[5] The graphs presented below show the year-on-year variation for all students on the left and for year 13 students on the right.

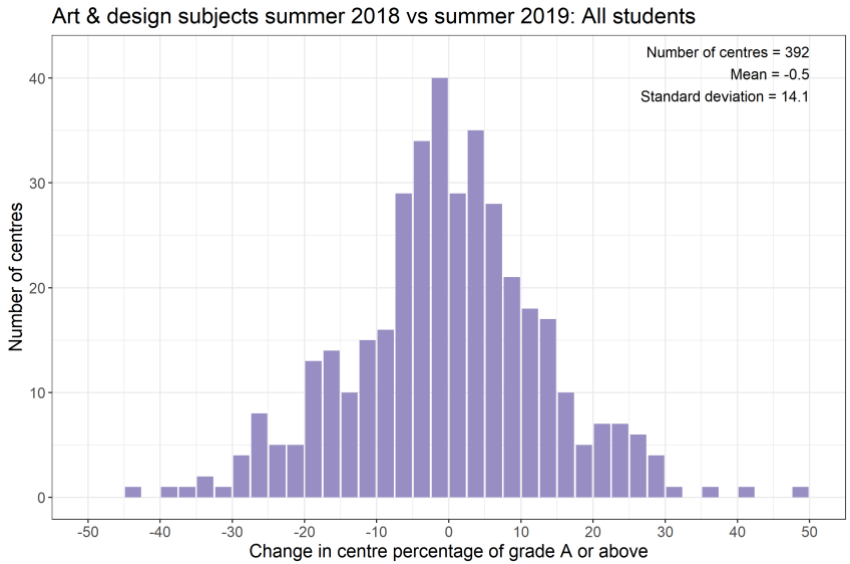
The graphs also show the year-on-year difference in the average (mean) percentage of students achieving grades A* or A across all schools and colleges, the associated standard deviation (SD), and the number of schools and colleges (number of centres) included in the analyses. If, for example, a 2018/2019 graph shows a mean difference of 1%, this means that on average schools and colleges included in the analyses have increased their percentage of candidates achieving an A* or A by 1% in 2019 compared to 2018.

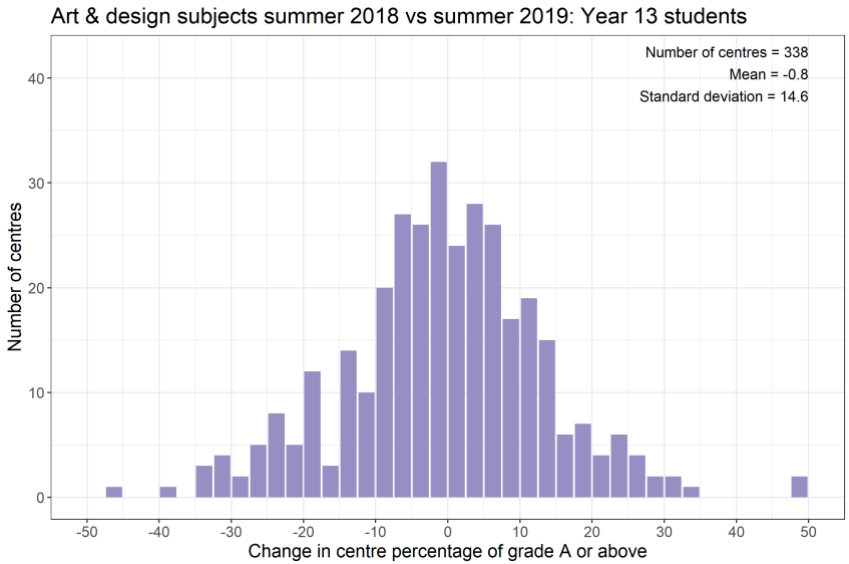
More centre variability graphs can be seen using our online application http://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk. Here the graphs are interactive such that users can explore centre variability:

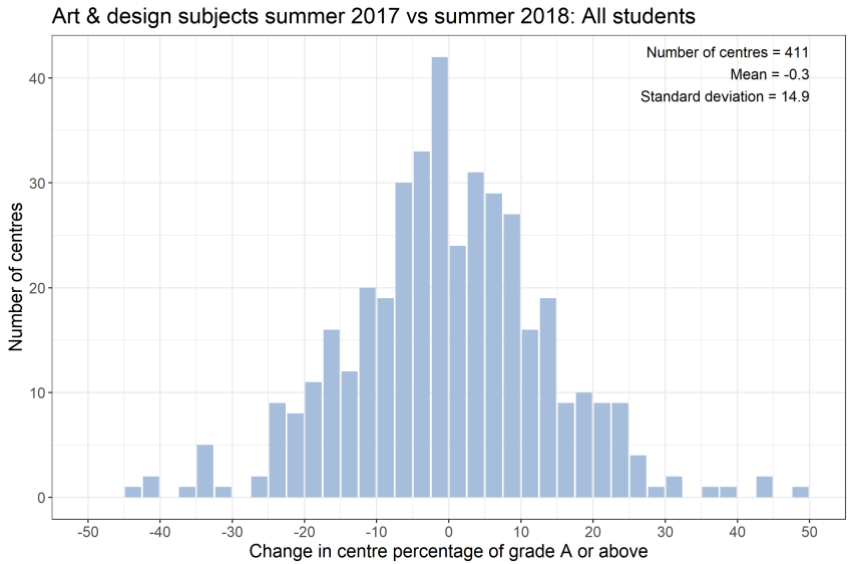
- within different subjects
- for various sizes of centres
- for only centres with stable (similar sized) cohorts from one year to the next

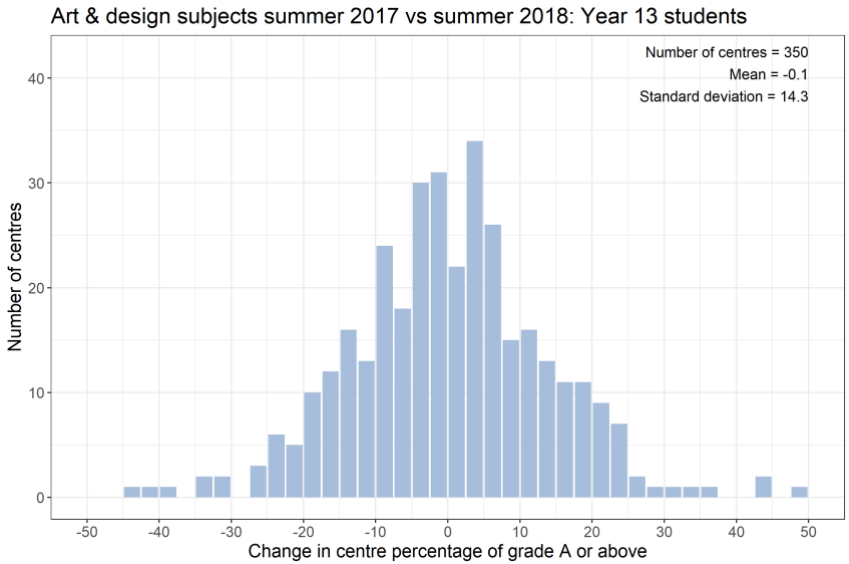
[4] Note that, although the same scales are used for the y axis on each of the graphs within a subject, the scales do vary **between** subjects.
[5] Note that the number of schools/colleges is slightly lower in the Year 13 only graphs, because we have only included schools and colleges with 20 or more year 13 students.

# A level art and design

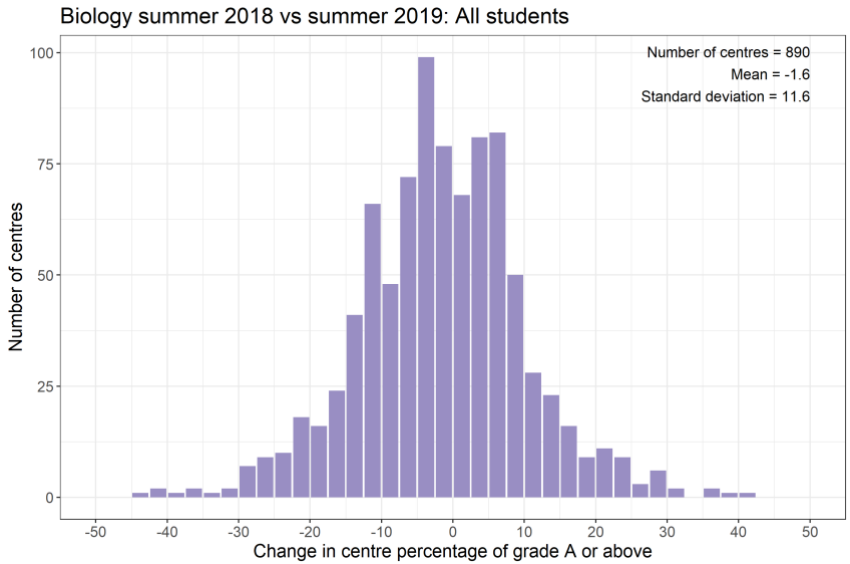


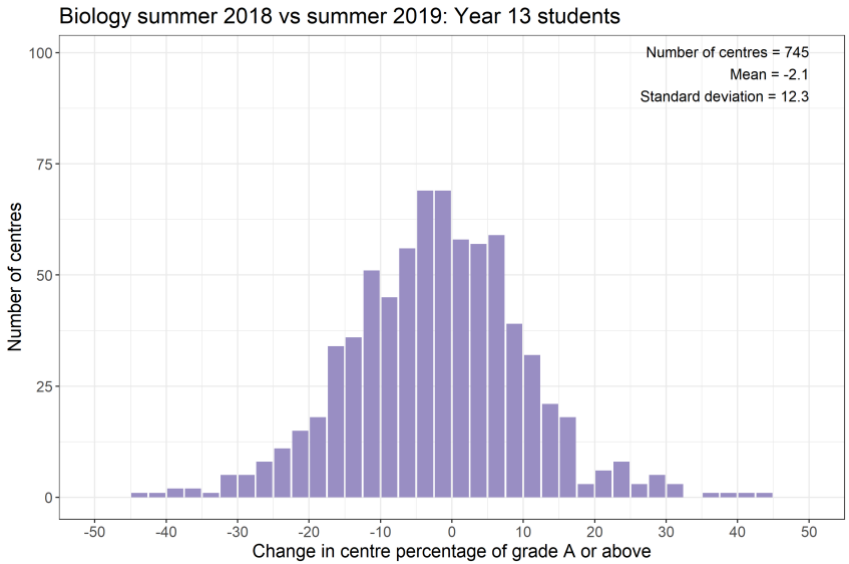



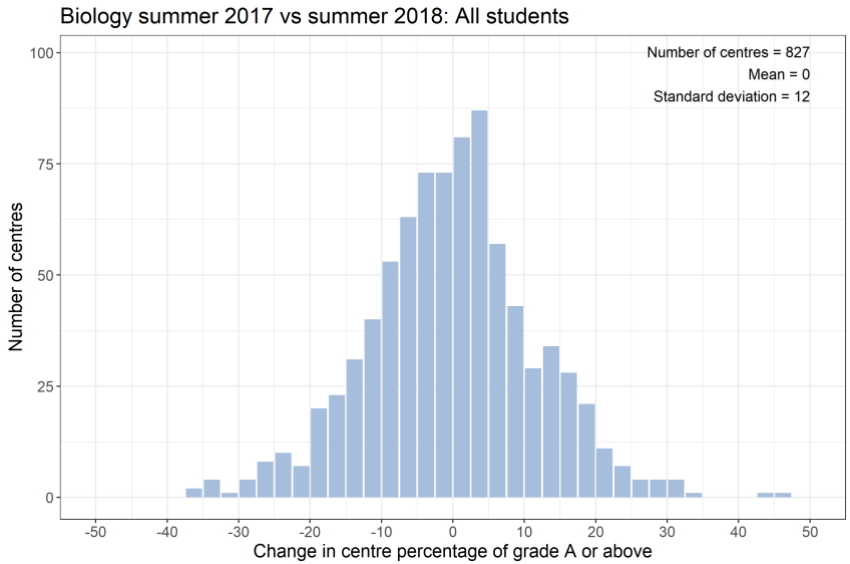



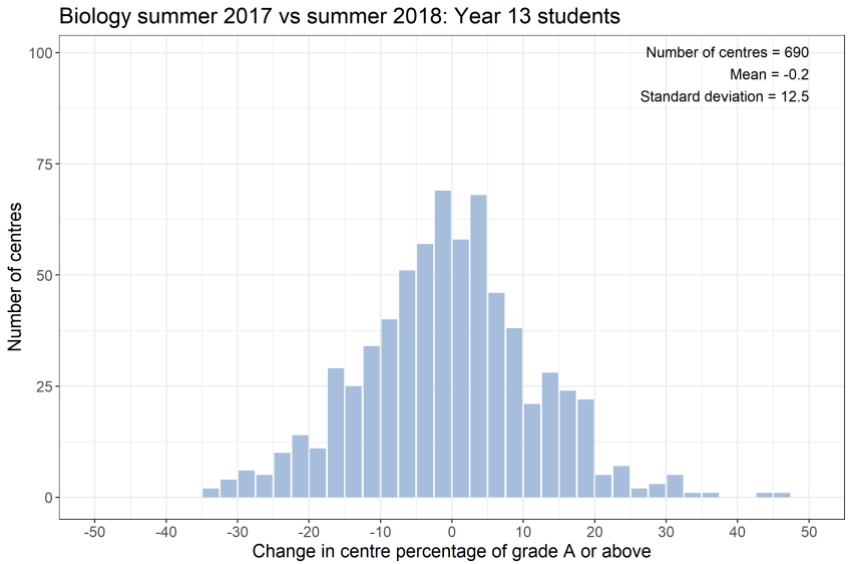



# A level biology

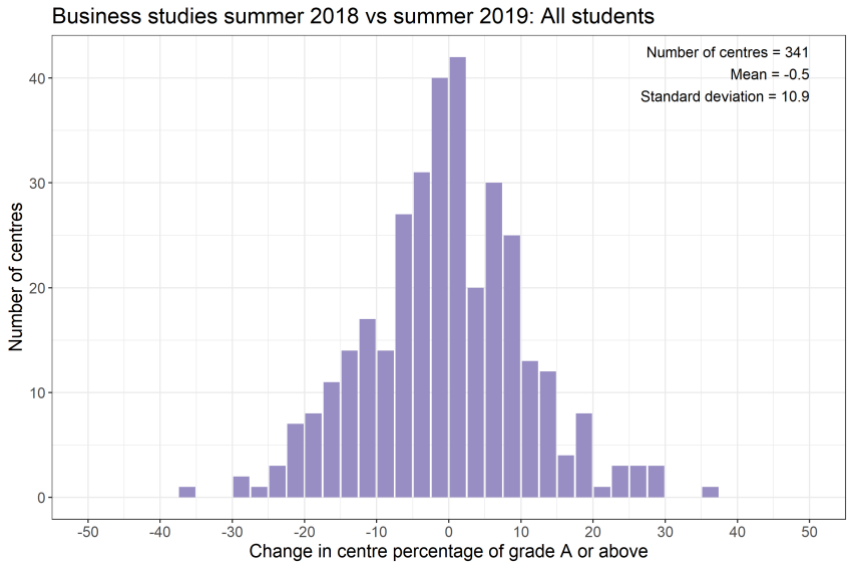


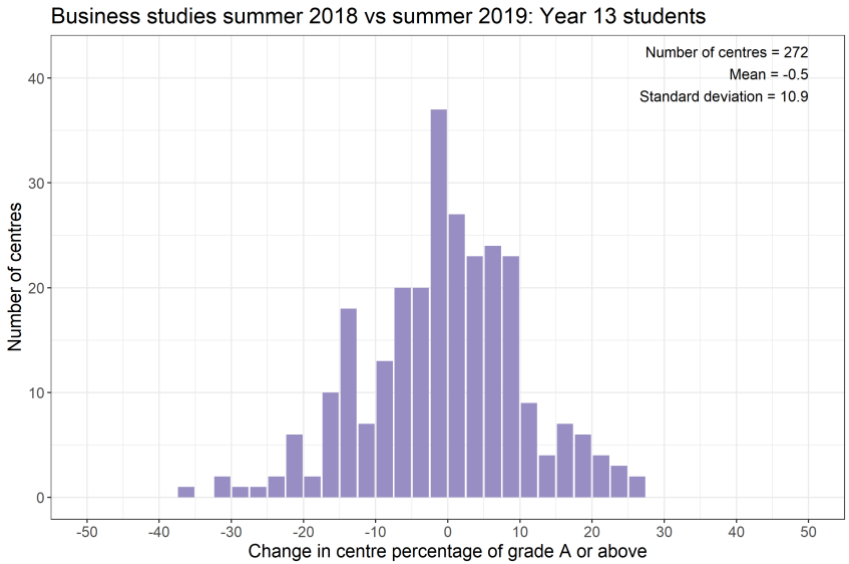



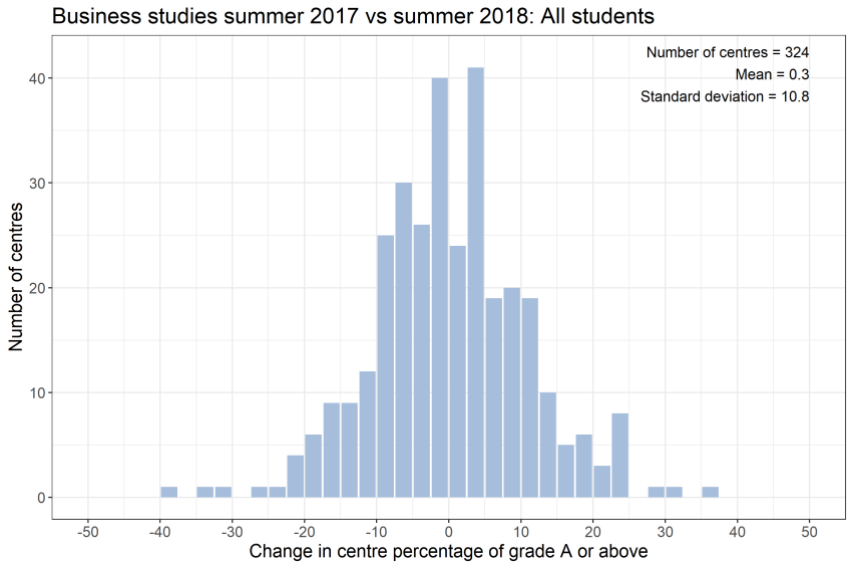



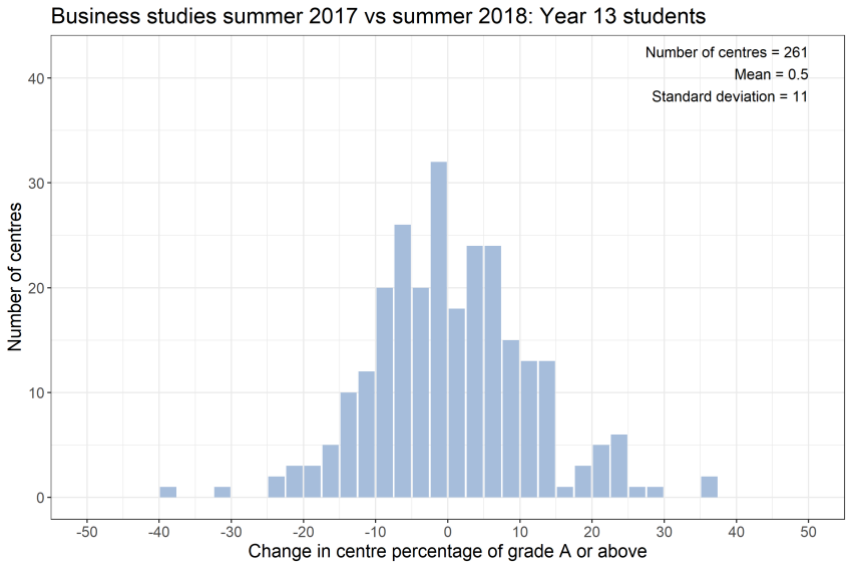



# A level business



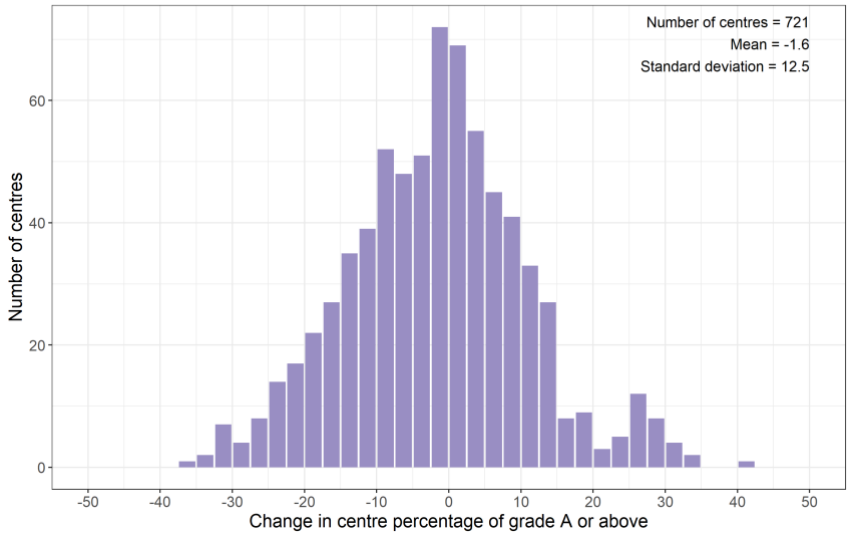



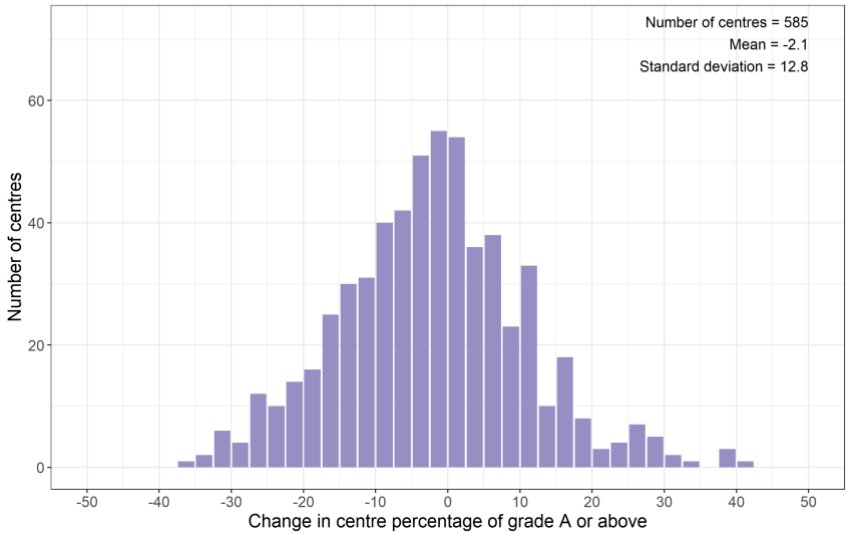



# A level chemistry

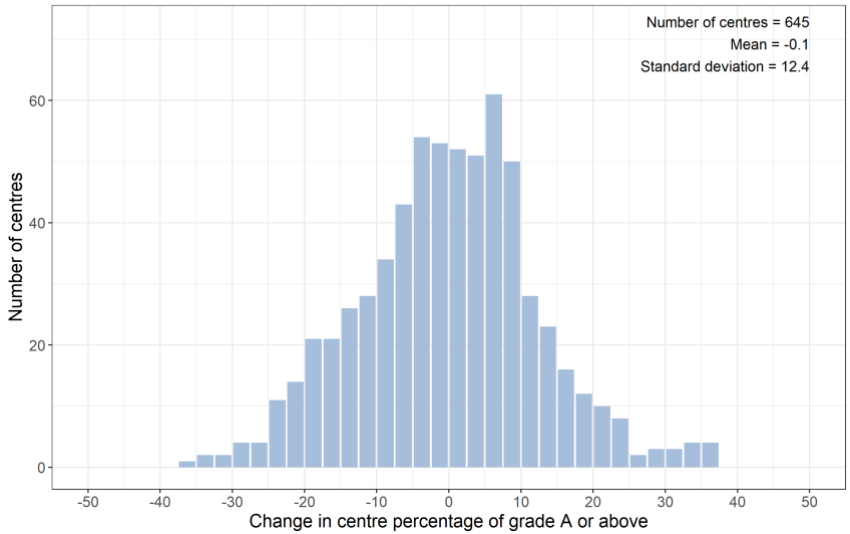
Chemistry summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



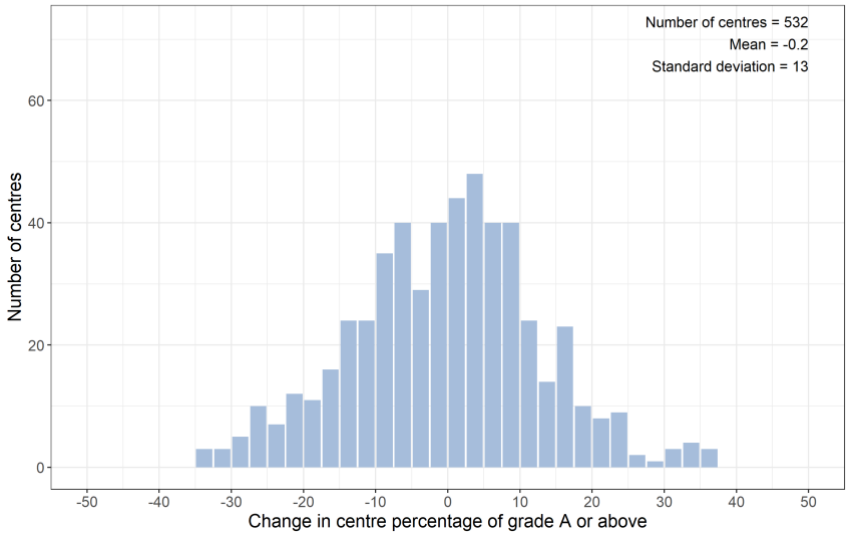

Chemistry summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students



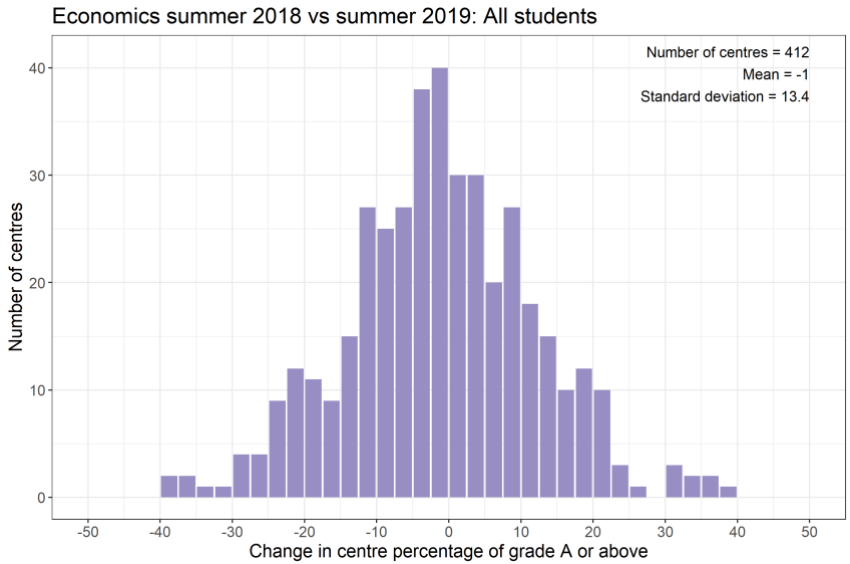

Chemistry summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

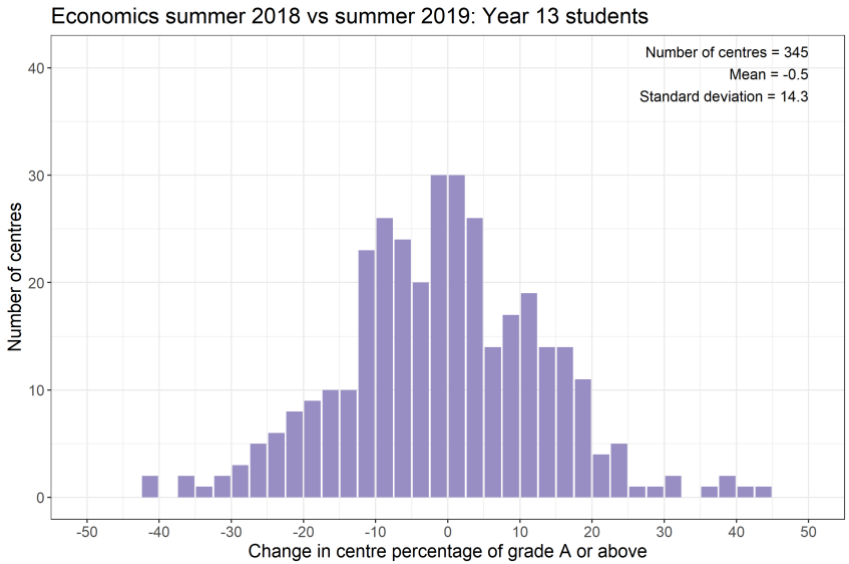


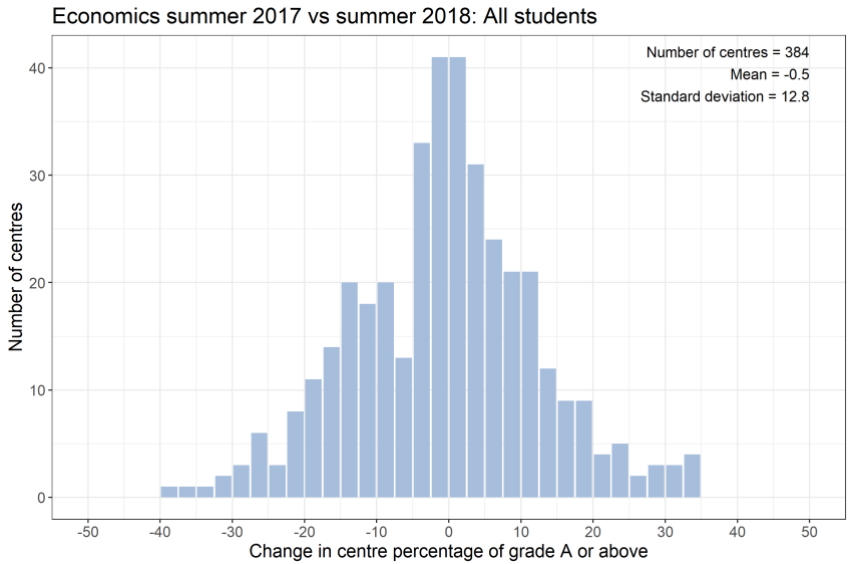

Chemistry summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

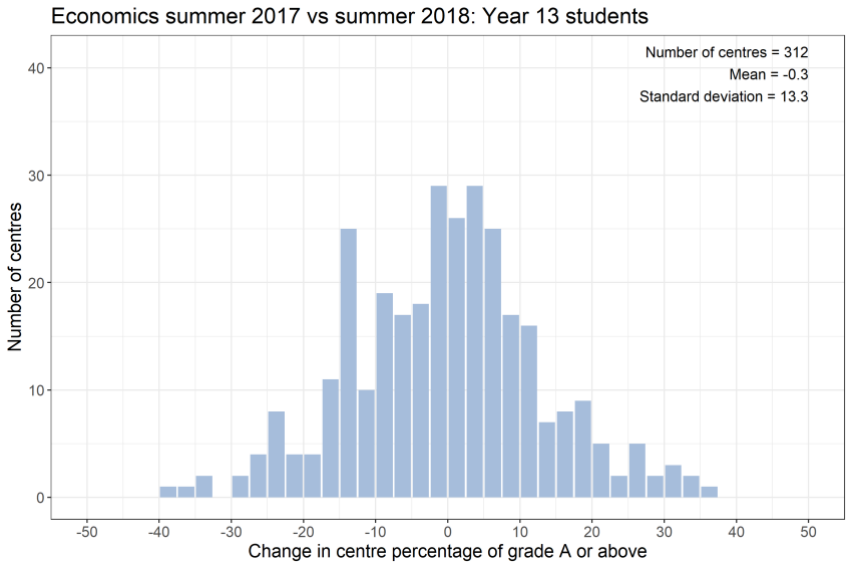


# A level economics



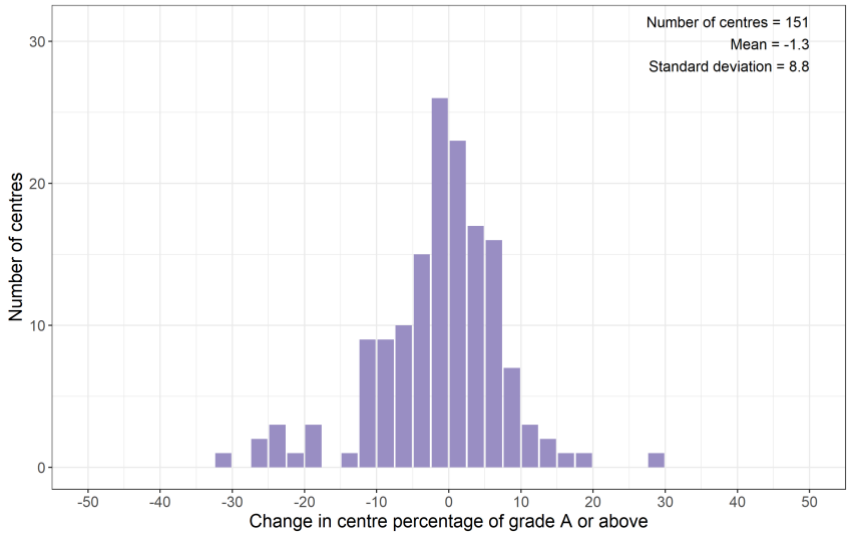



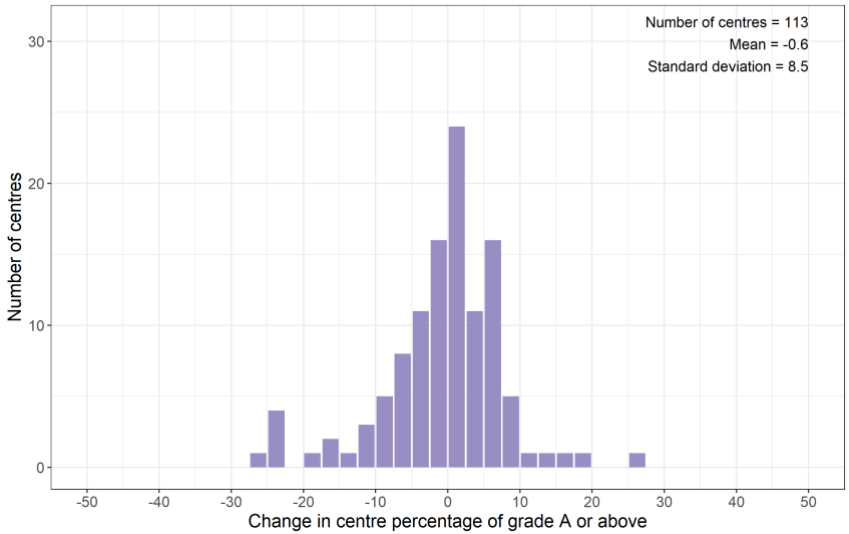



# A level English language

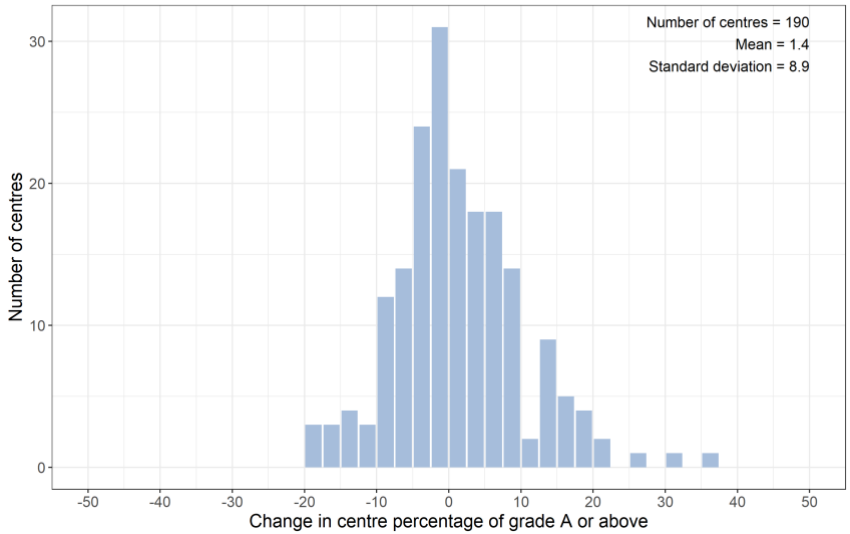
English language summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



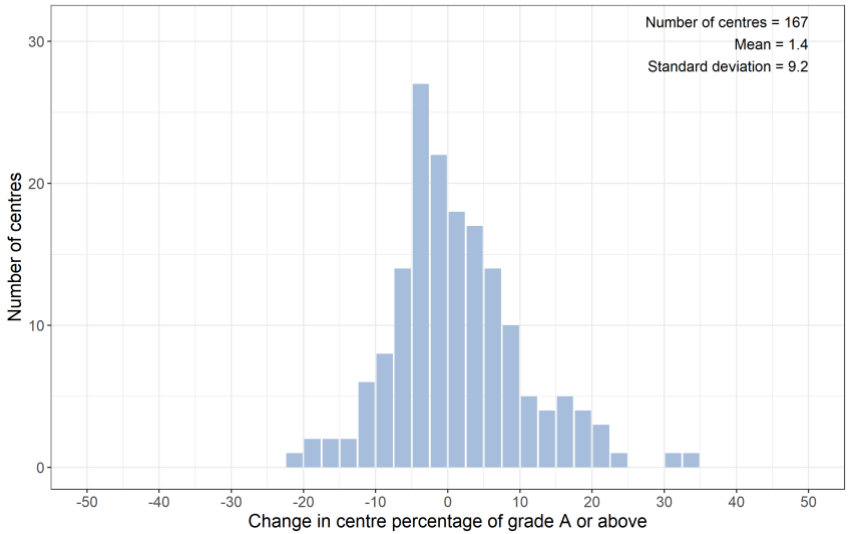

English language summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students




English language summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

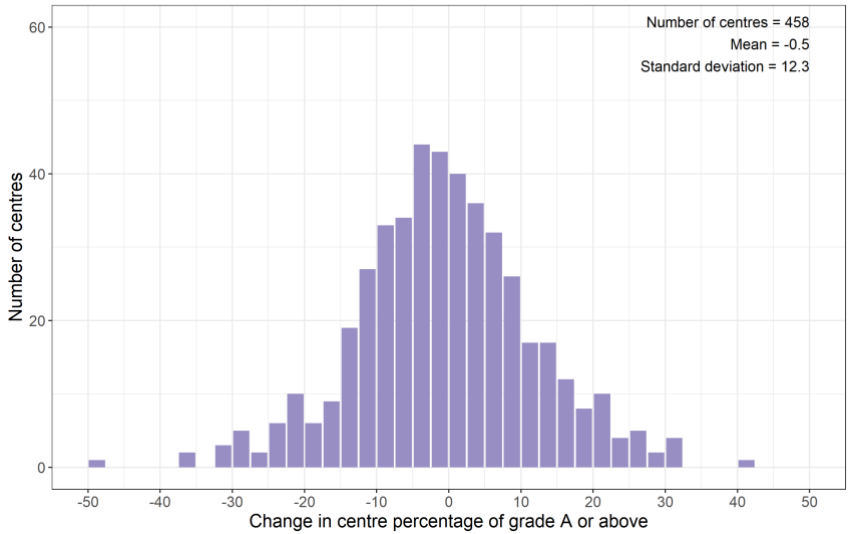



English language summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

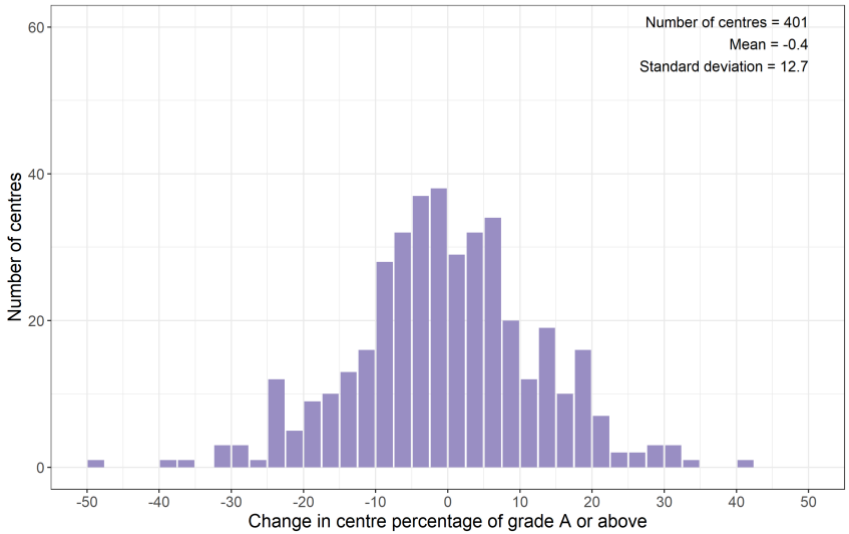


# A level English literature

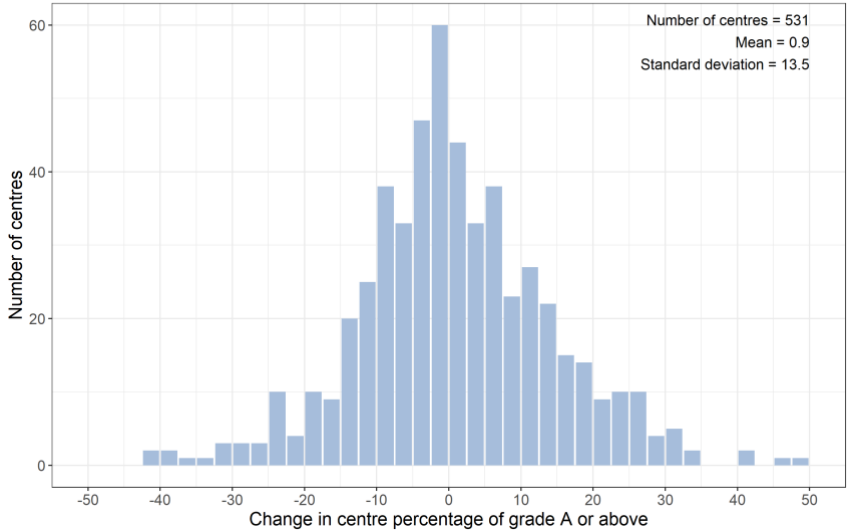
English literature summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



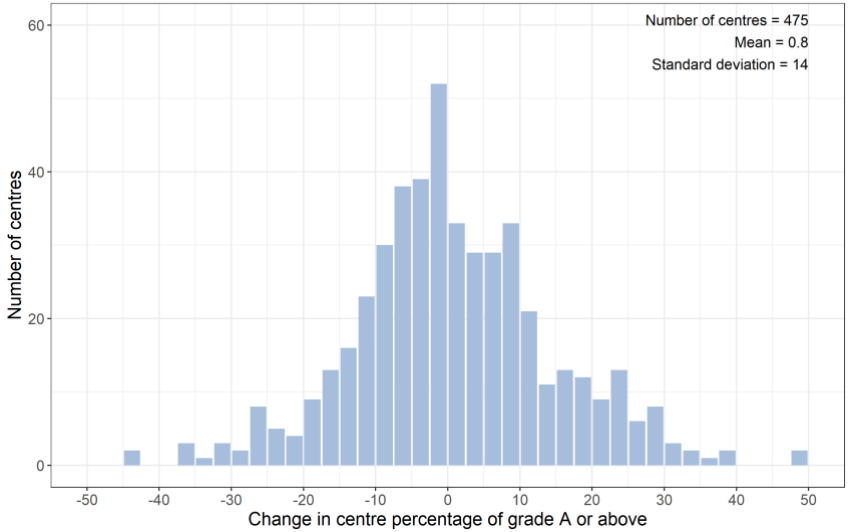

English literature summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students



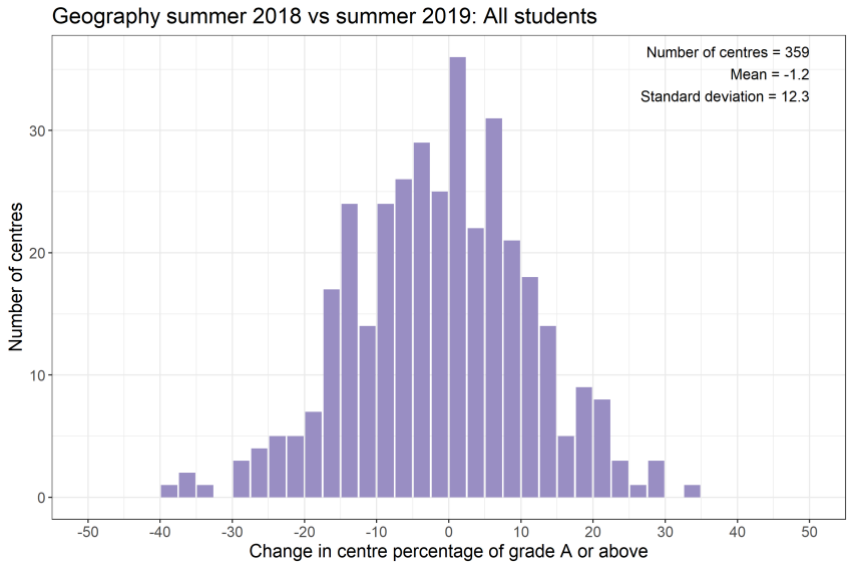

English literature summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

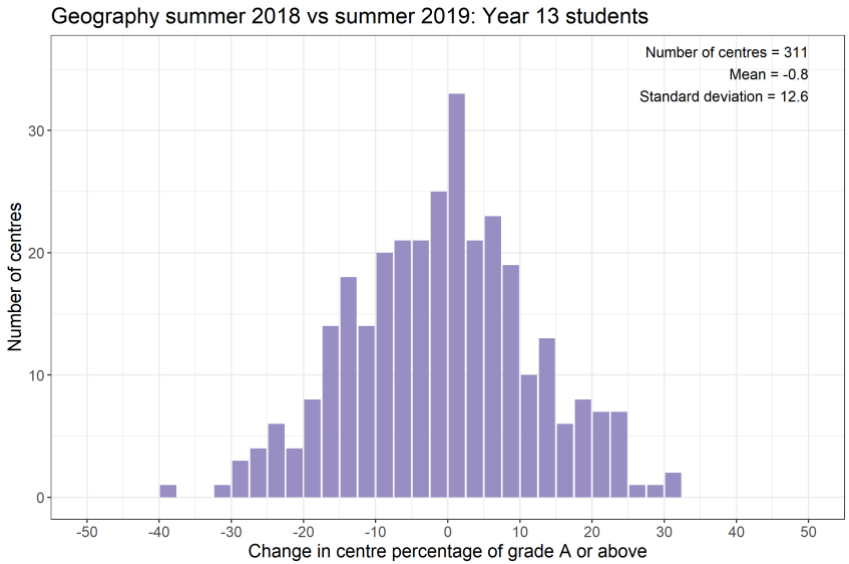


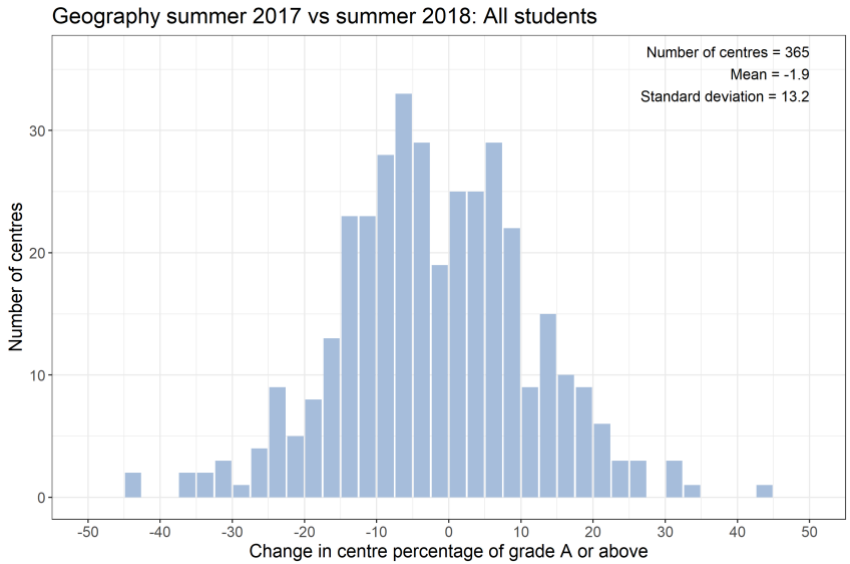

English literature summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

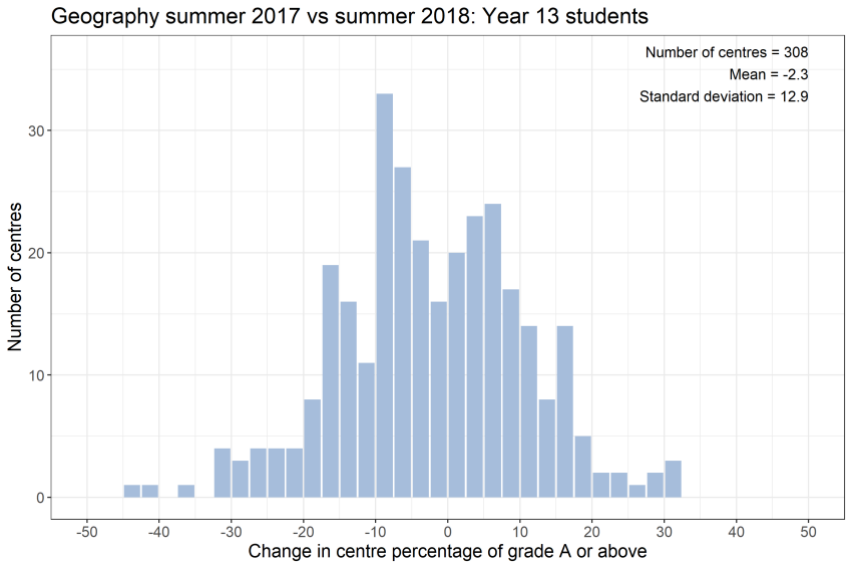


# A level geography



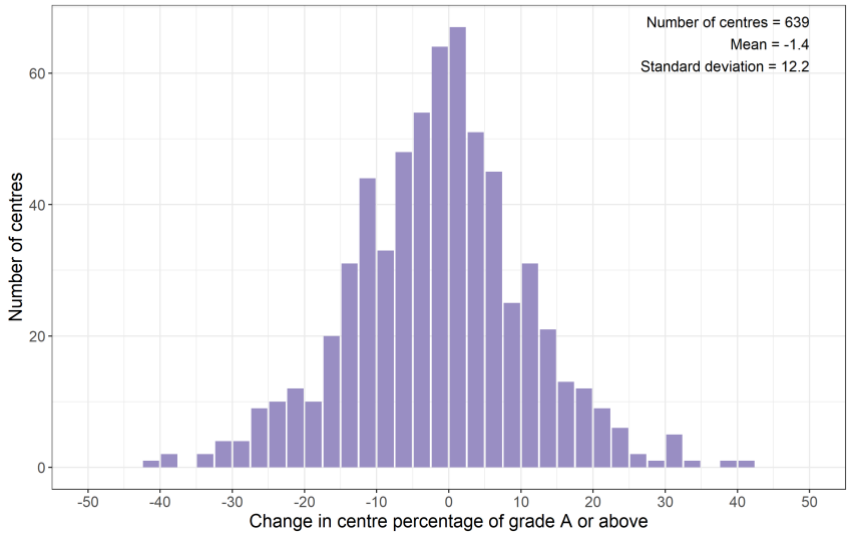



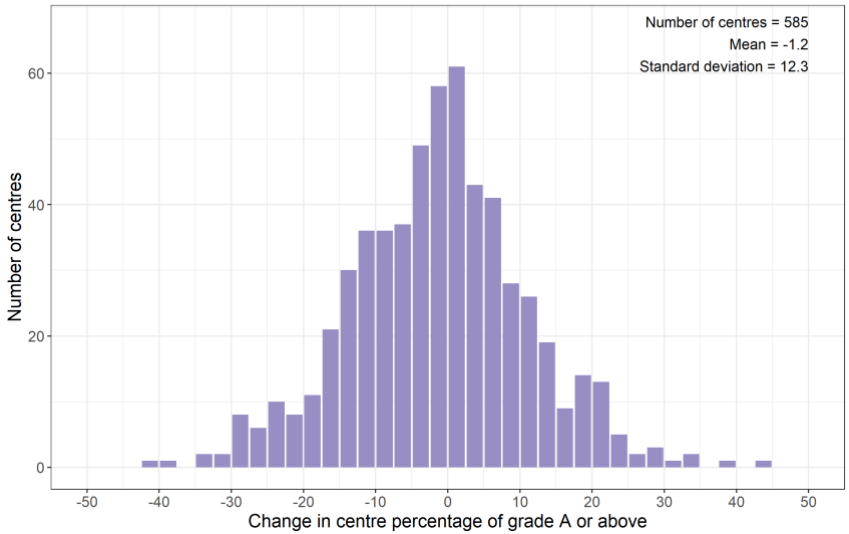



# A level history

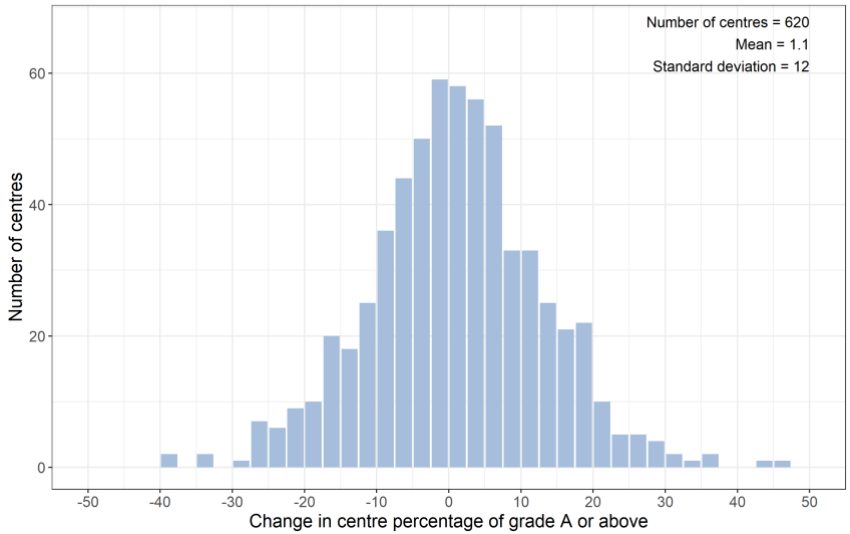
History summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



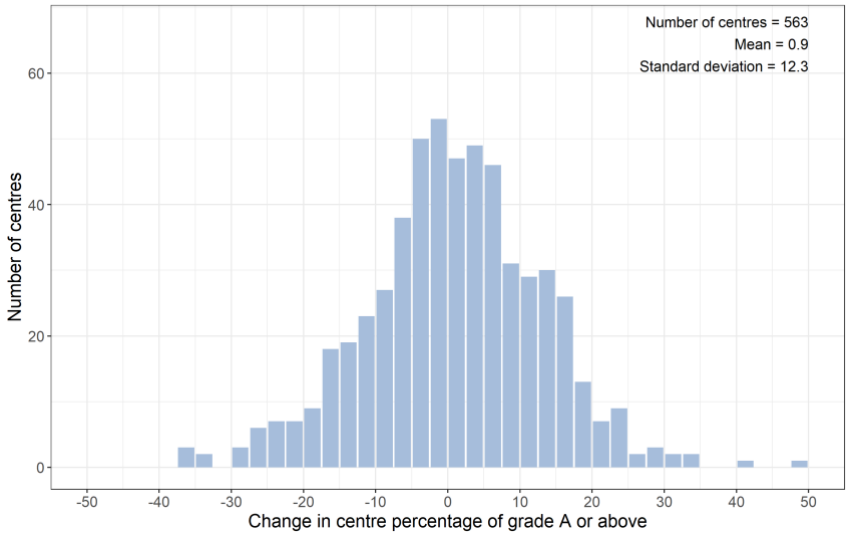

History summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students



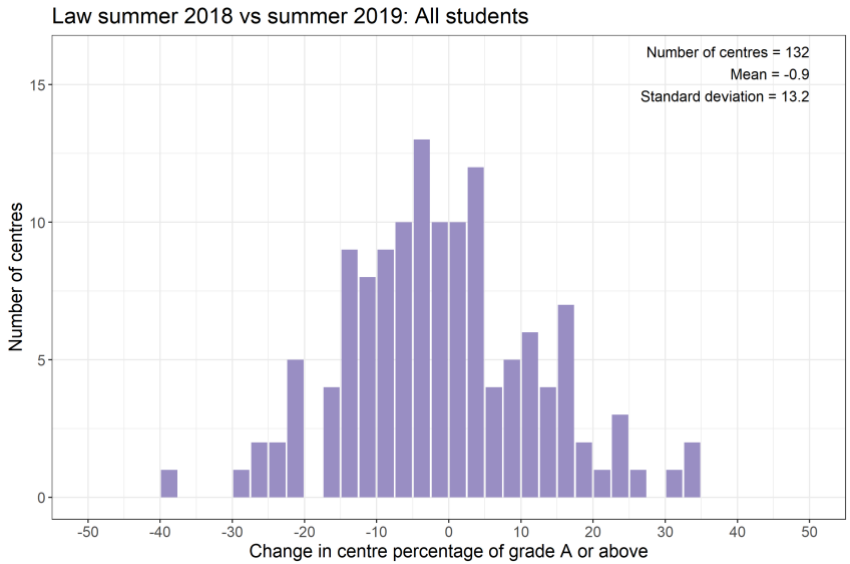

History summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

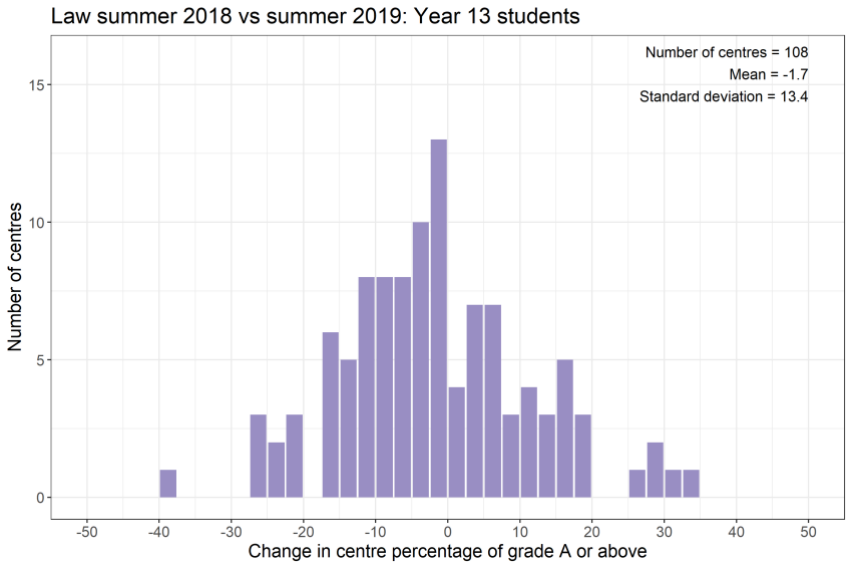


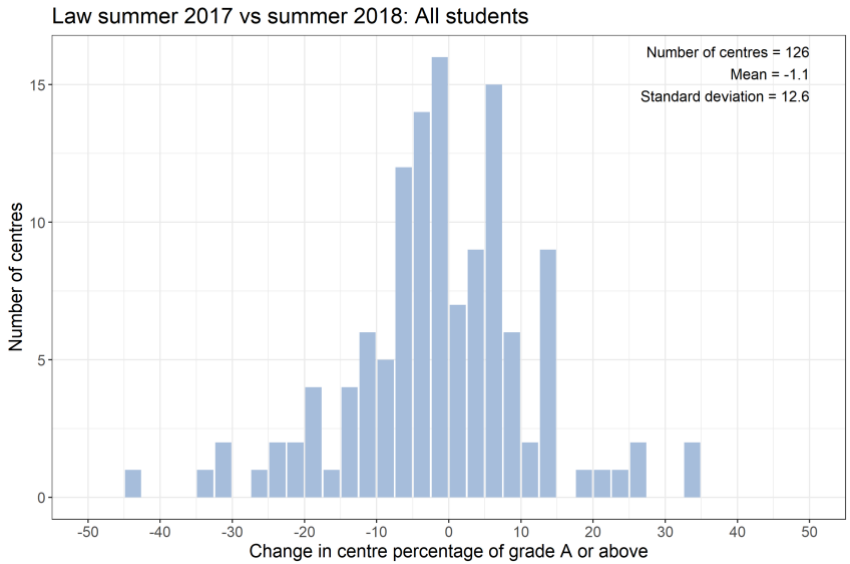

History summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

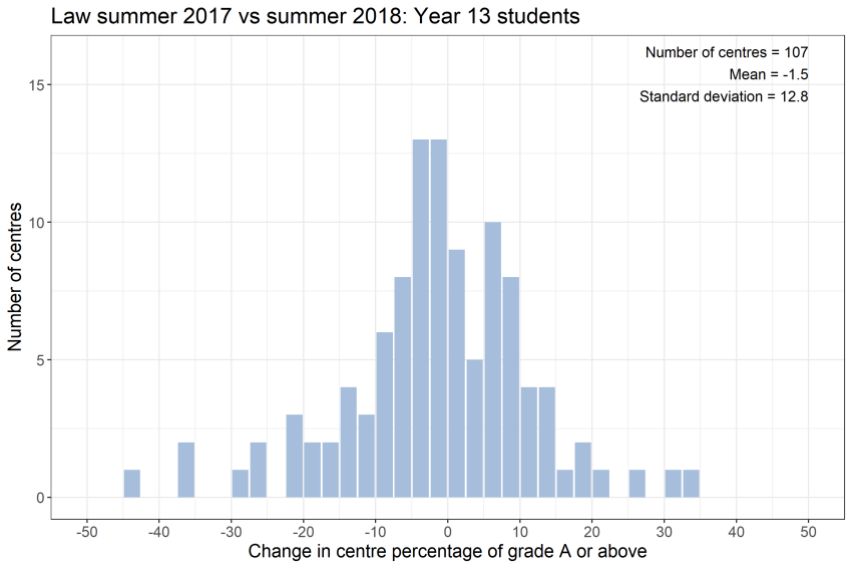


# A level law


Law summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students
Number of centres = 132
Mean = -0.9
Standard deviation = 13.2
Number of centres
Change in centre percentage of grade A or above

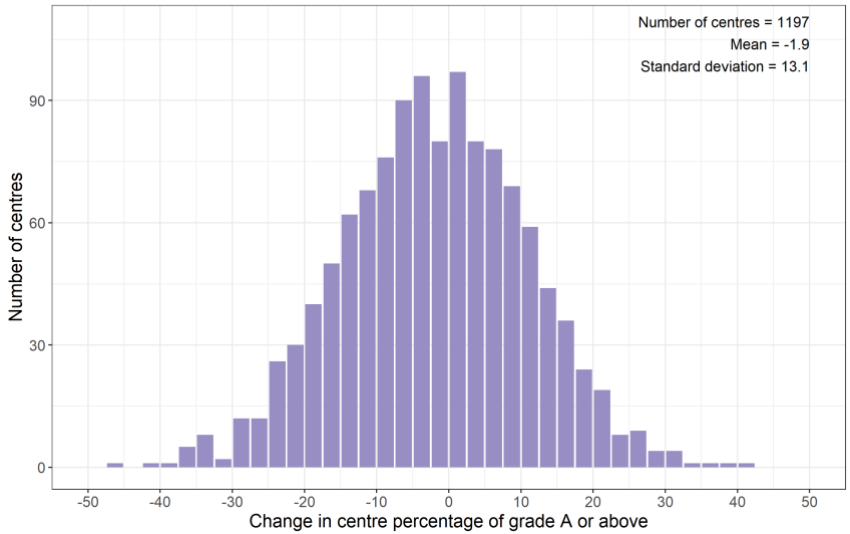

Law summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students
Number of centres = 108
Mean = -1.7
Standard deviation = 13.4
Number of centres
Change in centre percentage of grade A or above


Law summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students
Number of centres = 126
Mean = -1.1
Standard deviation = 12.6
Number of centres
Change in centre percentage of grade A or above

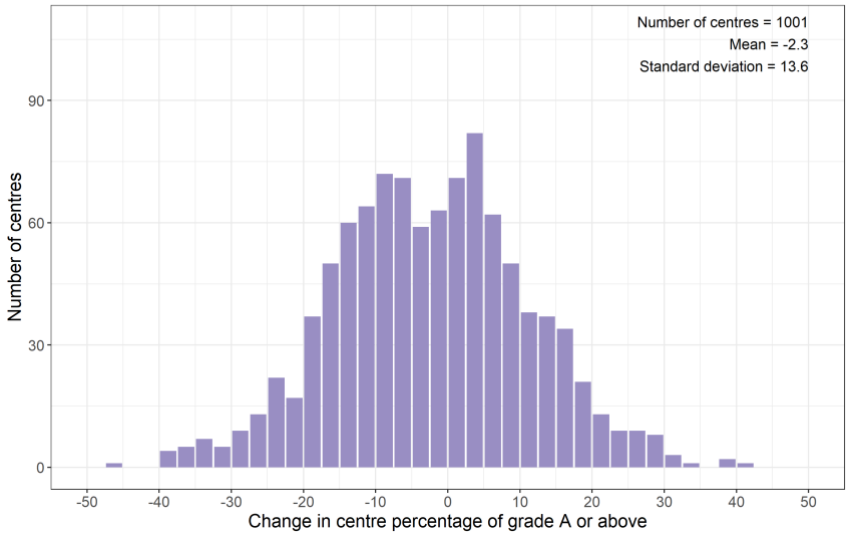

Law summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students
Number of centres = 107
Mean = -1.5
Standard deviation = 12.8
Number of centres
Change in centre percentage of grade A or above

# A level mathematics

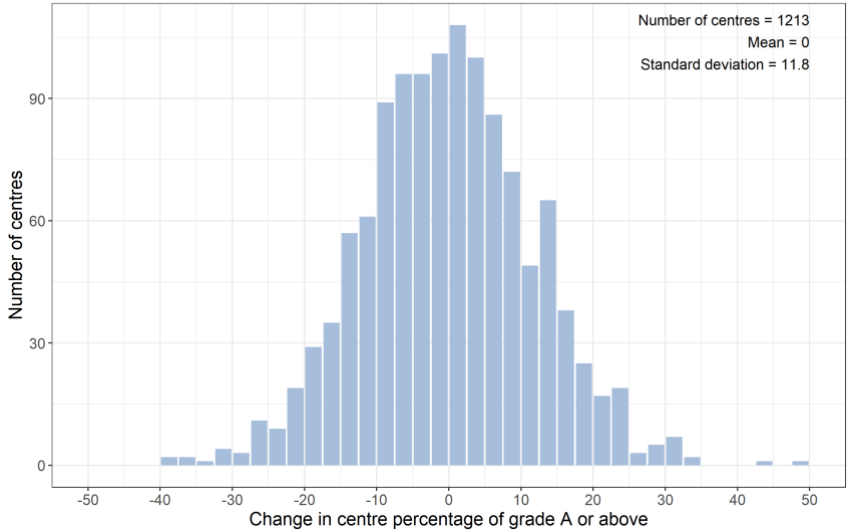
Mathematics summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



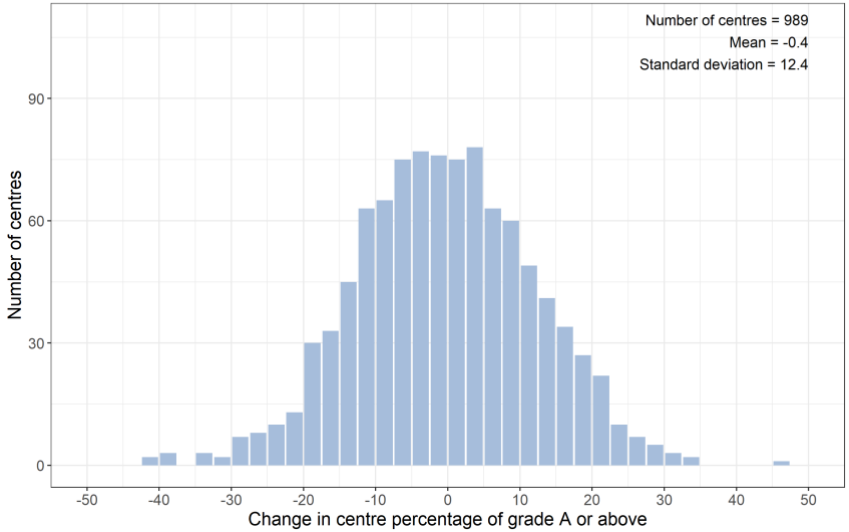

Mathematics summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students




Mathematics summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

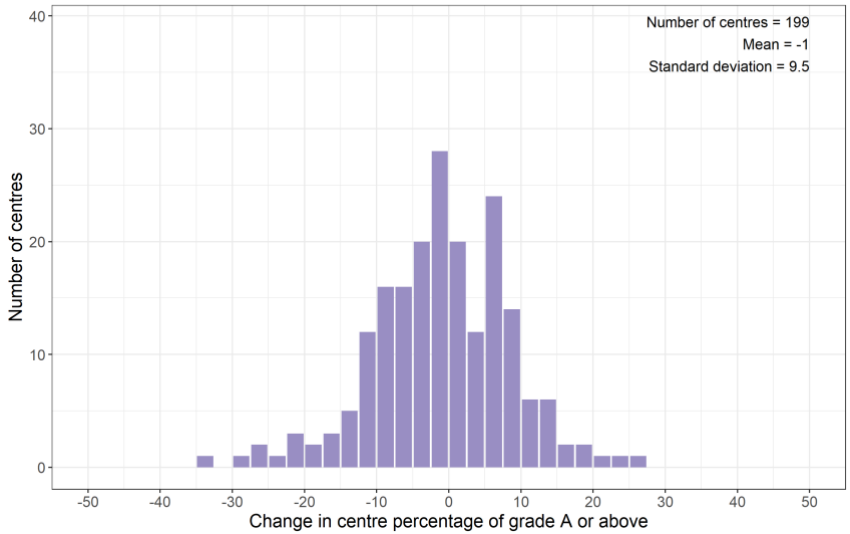



Mathematics summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

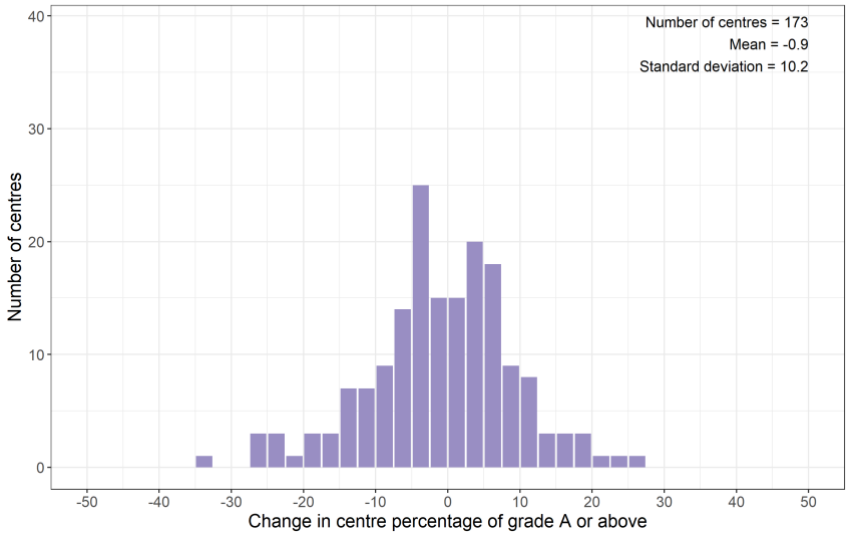


# A level media/film/tv studies

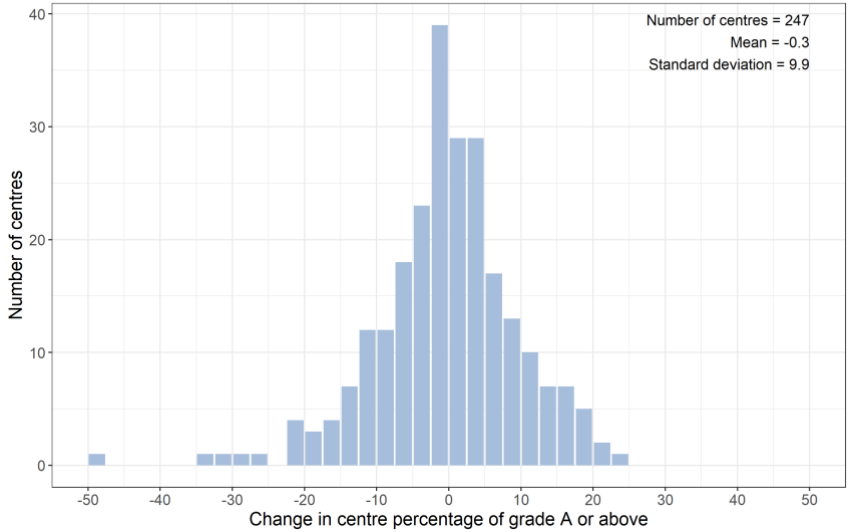
Media / film / tv studies summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



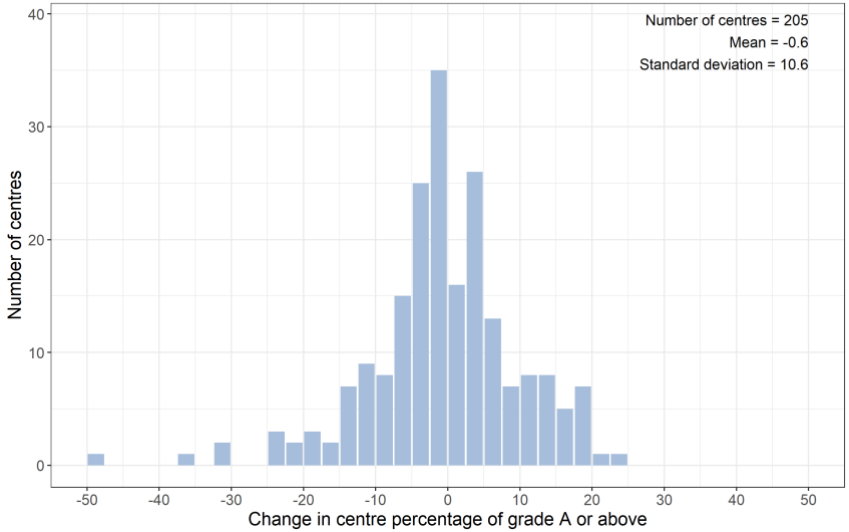

Media / film / tv studies summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students



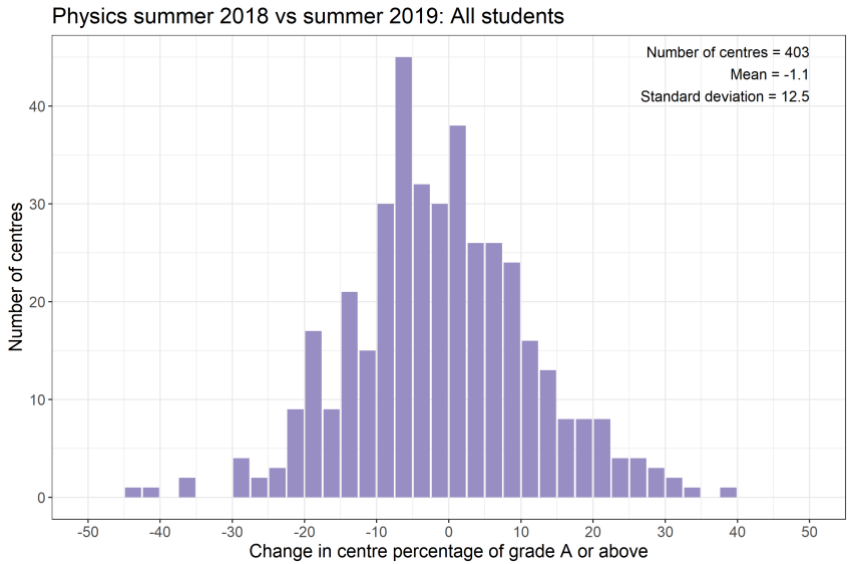

Media / film / tv studies summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

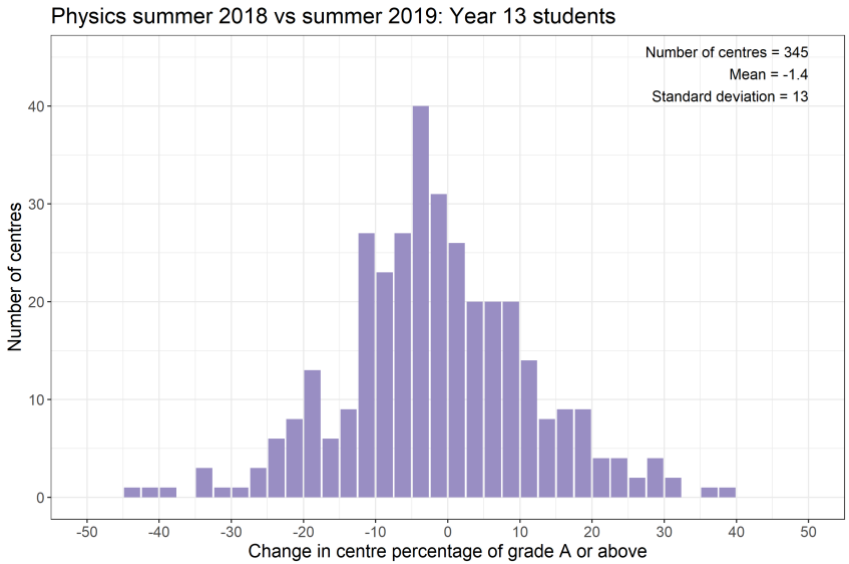


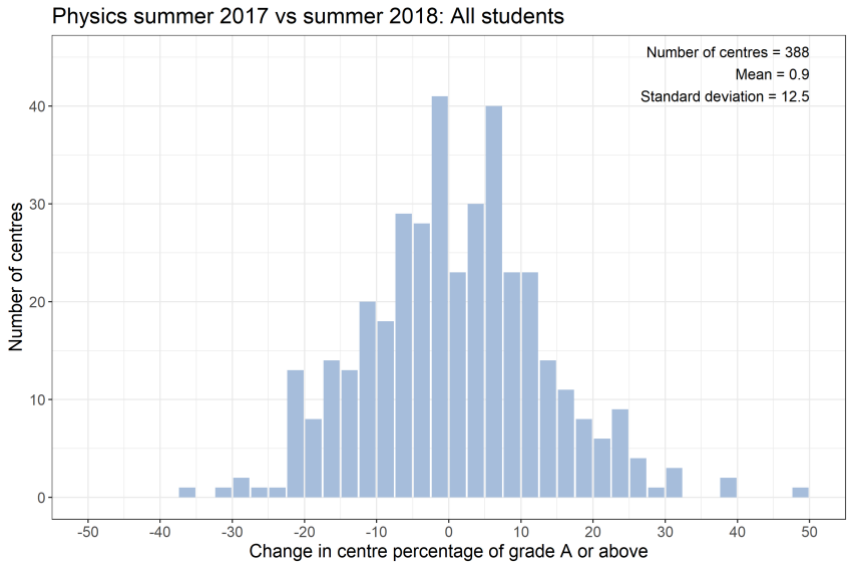

Media / film / tv studies summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

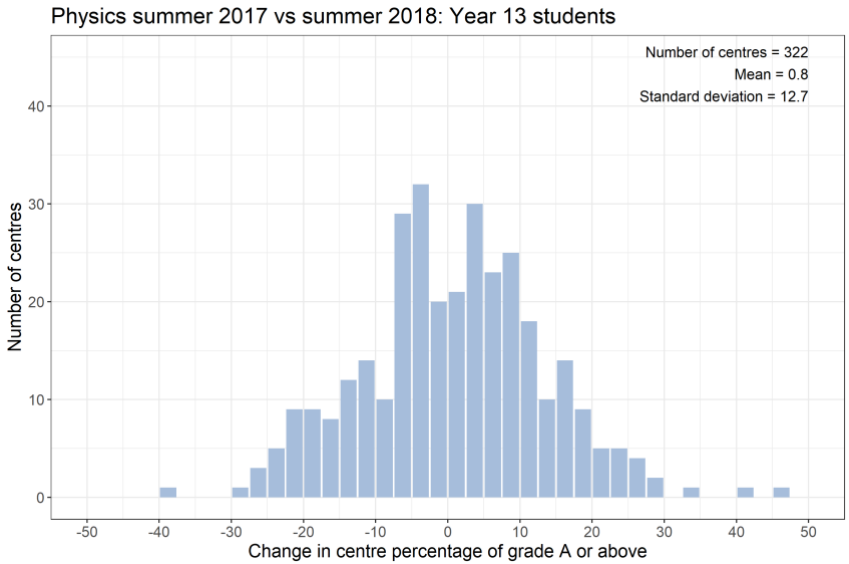


# A level physics

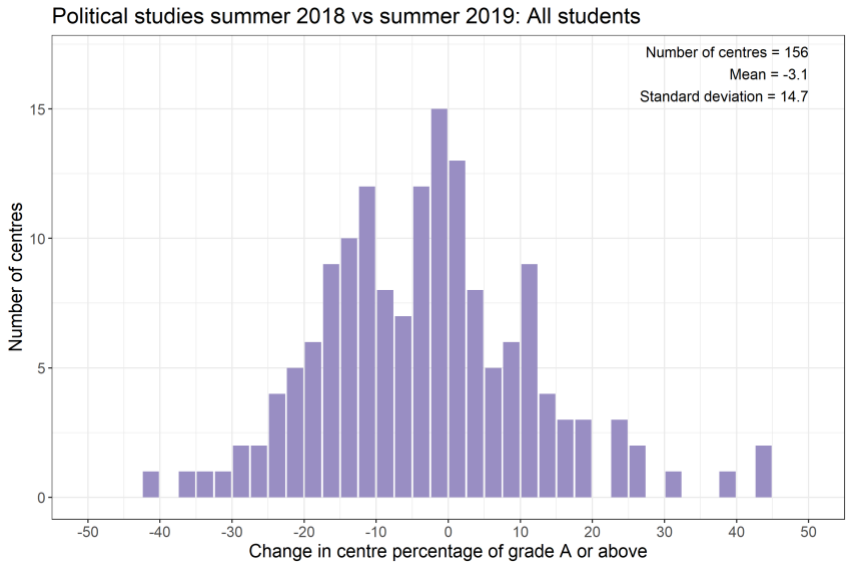


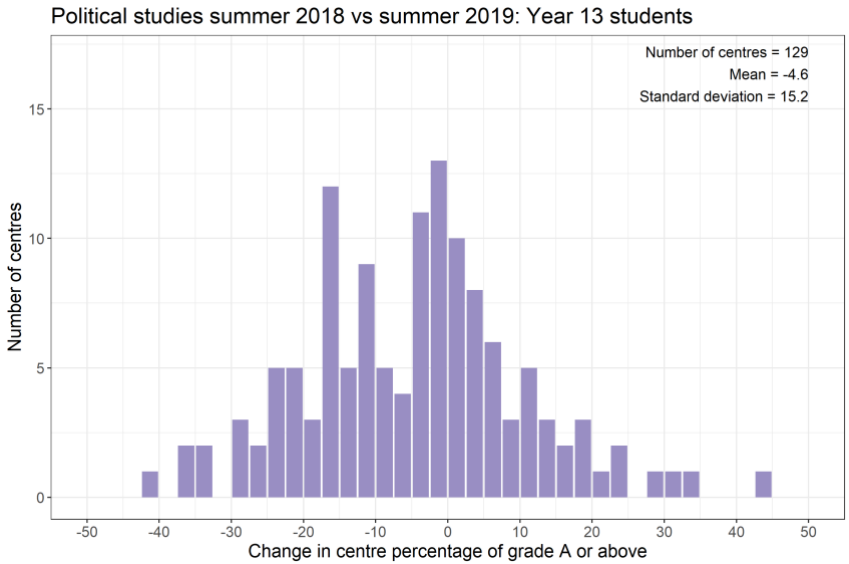



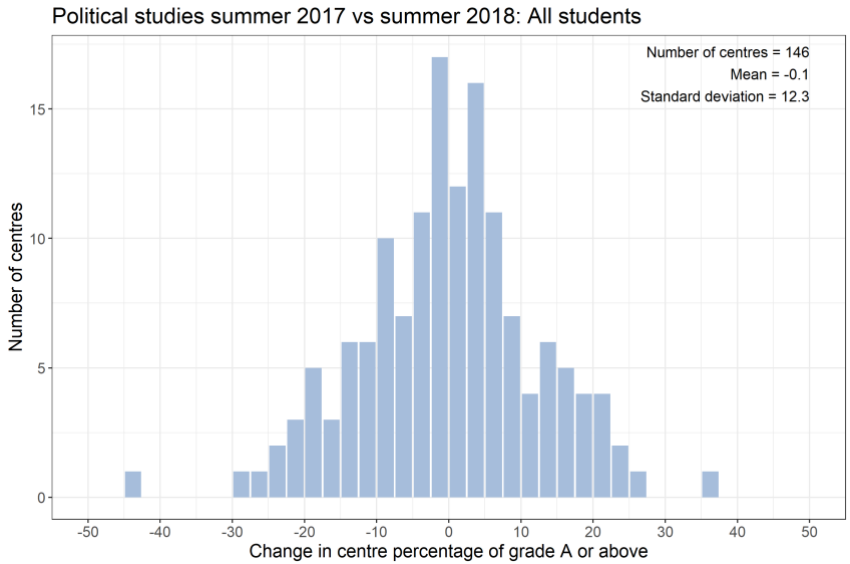



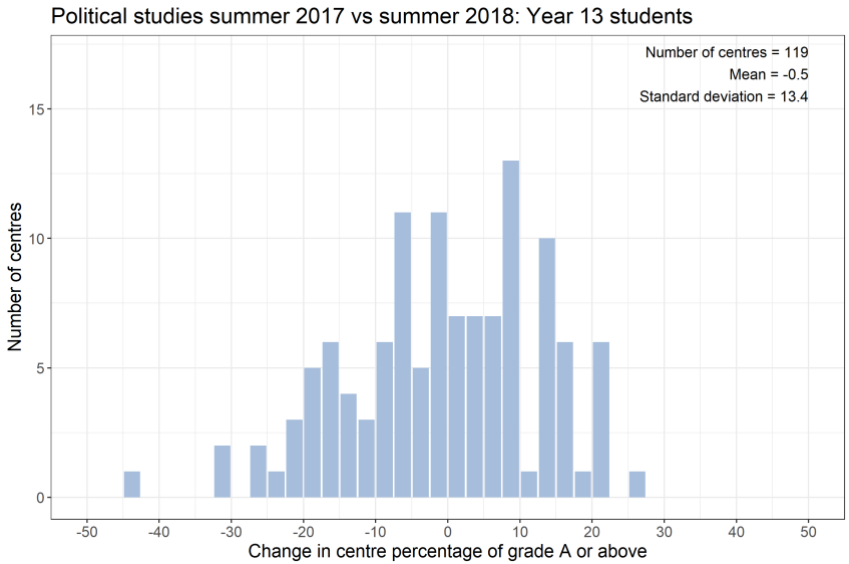



# A level political studies



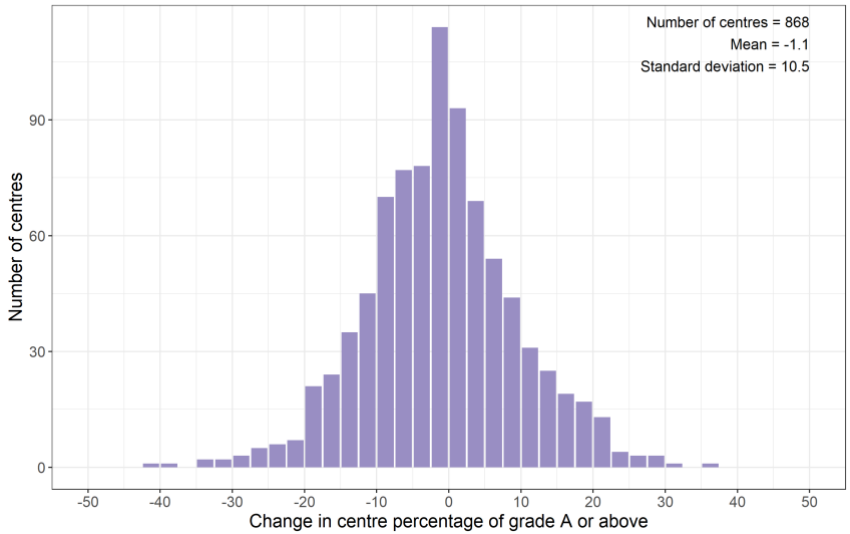



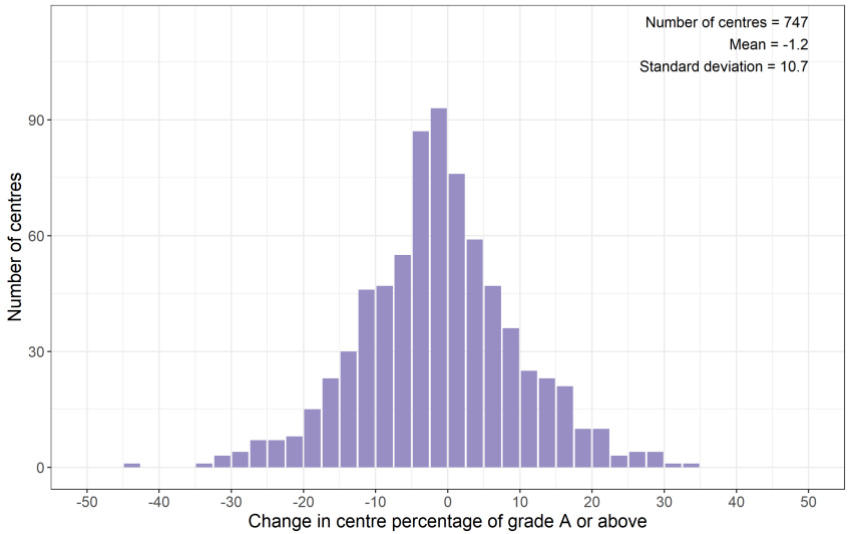



# A level psychology

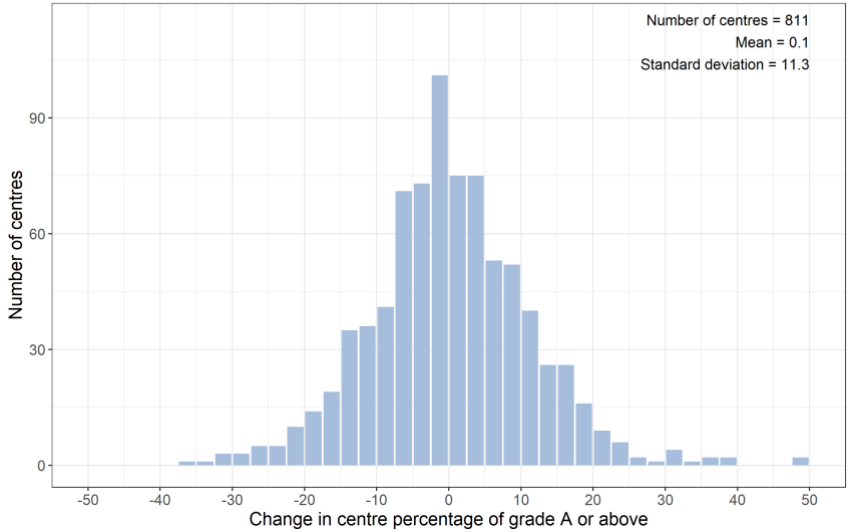
Psychology summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



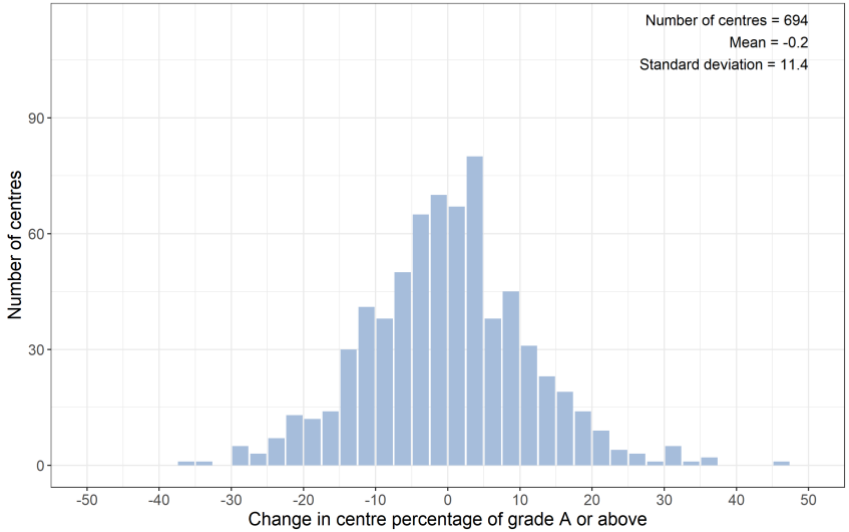

Psychology summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students




Psychology summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

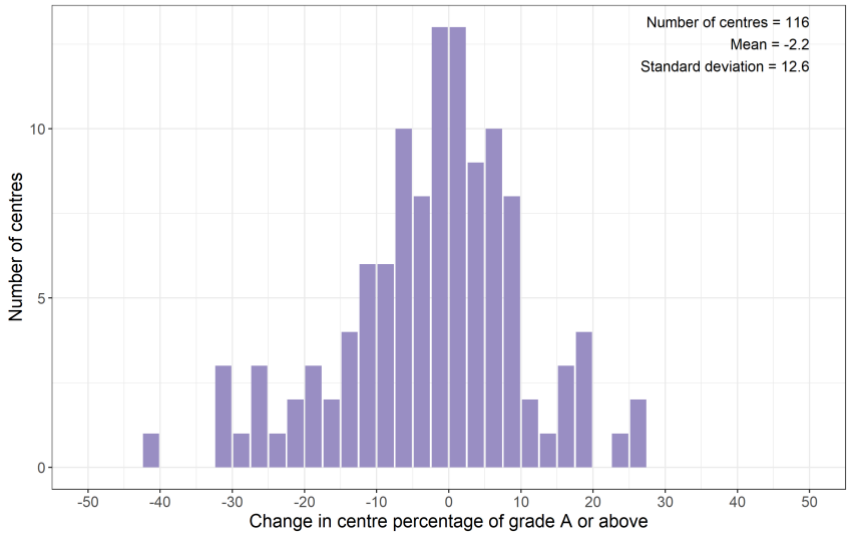



Psychology summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

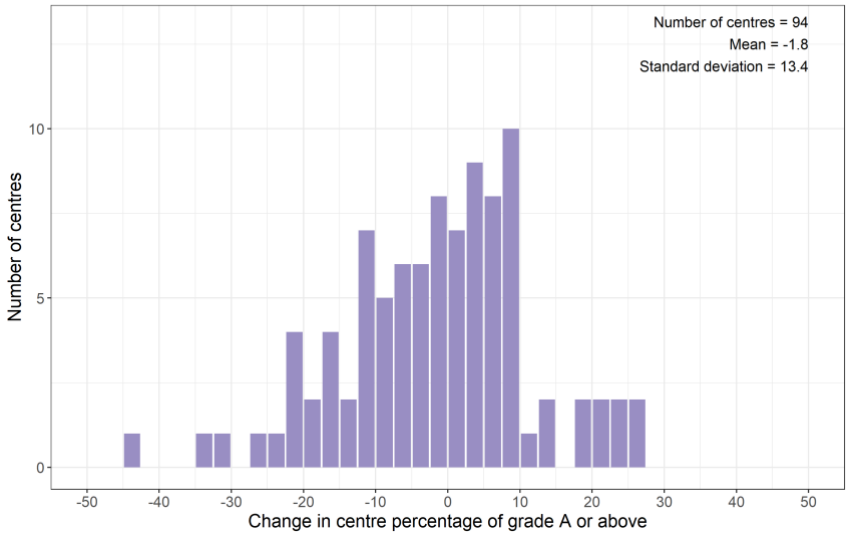


# A level religious studies

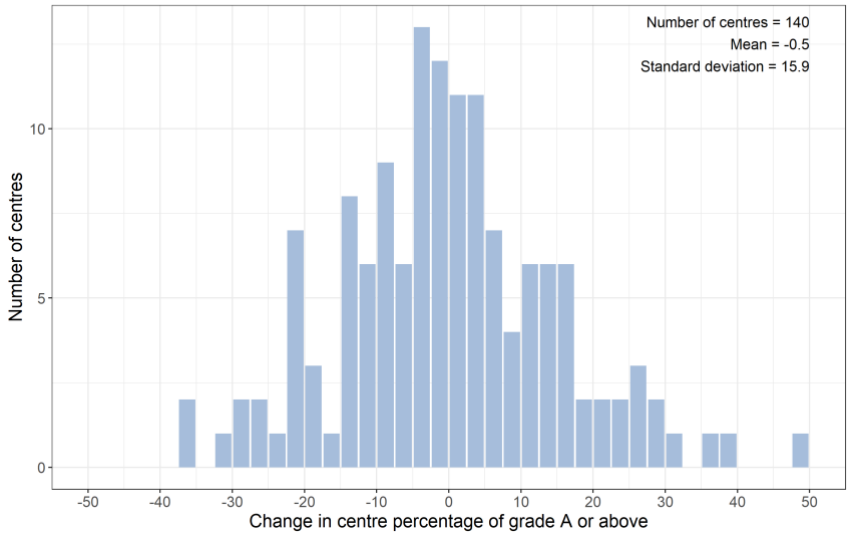
Religious studies summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



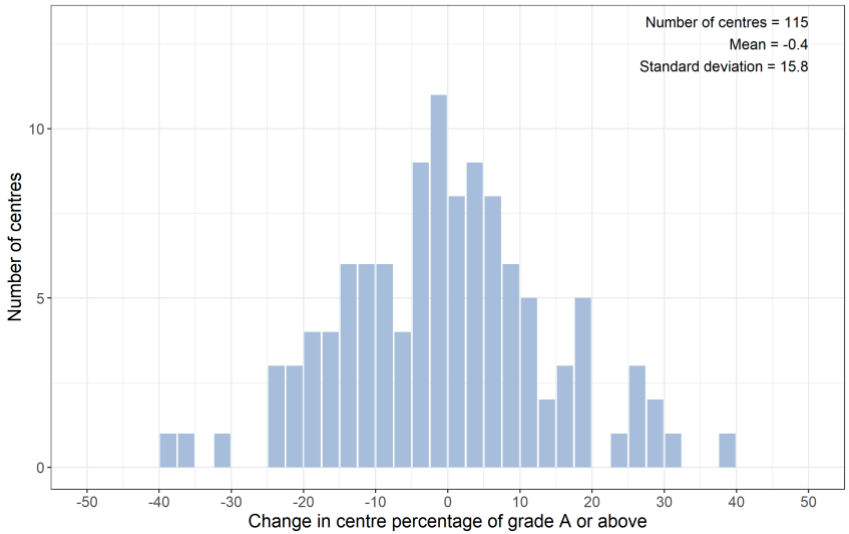

Religious studies summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students




Religious studies summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students

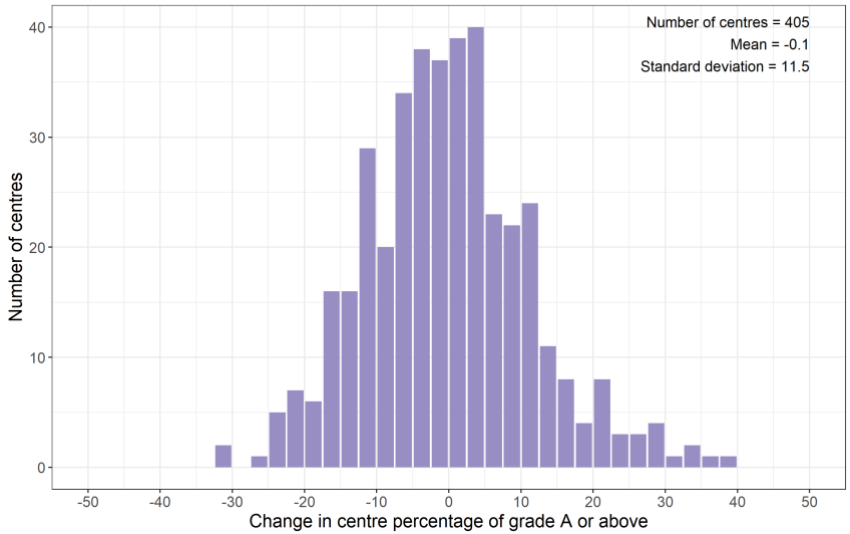



Religious studies summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students

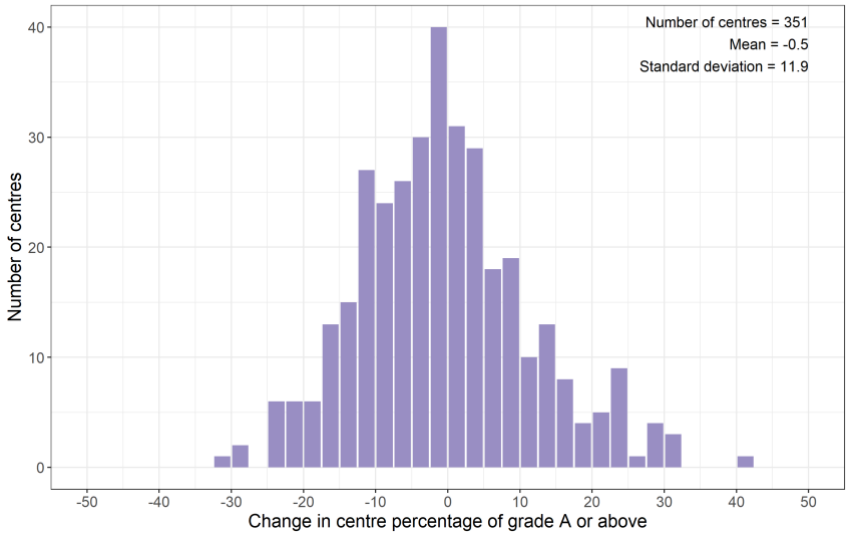


# A level sociology

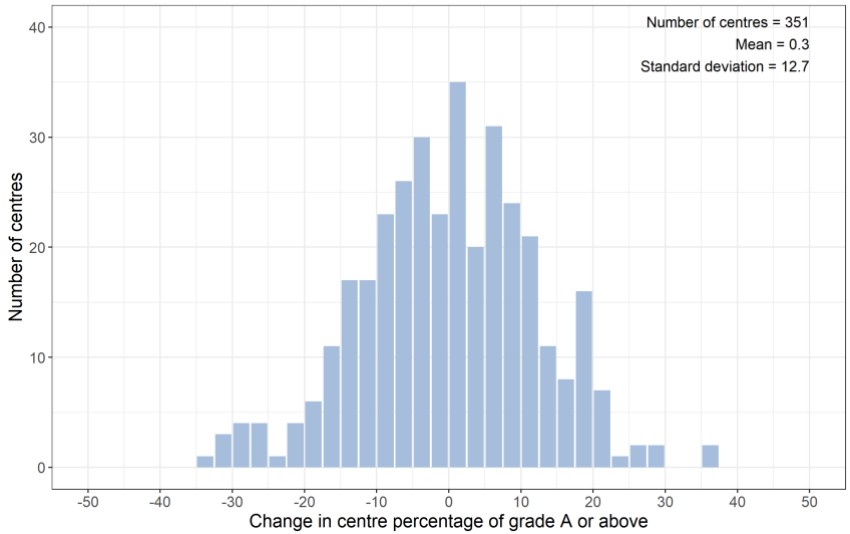
Sociology summer 2018 vs summer 2019: All students



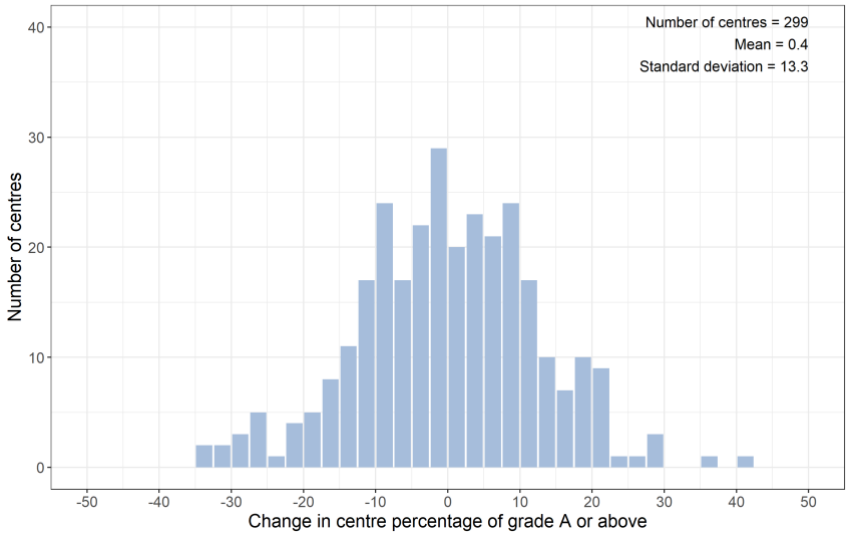

Sociology summer 2018 vs summer 2019: Year 13 students




Sociology summer 2017 vs summer 2018: All students




Sociology summer 2017 vs summer 2018: Year 13 students



Published by:

ofqual

Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

0300 303 3344
public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofqual

**August 2019**

**Ofqual/19/6528**