



National Statistics

# Background Information for Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: January to March 2020

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## 1. Purpose

This release presents information on the number of certificates issued for regulated vocational and other qualifications during January to March 2020 (quarter 1, 2020) in England.

It does not include 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, and level of qualification.

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.

On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that exams in schools and colleges due to take place in summer 2020 would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). On 9 April we received a [direction](#) from the Secretary of State which set out how the Government expects vocational and technical qualifications, and general qualifications other than GCSE, AS and A levels, to be assessed and awarded in the coming weeks and months. This direction said that learners taking vocational and technical qualifications that are used for progression to and through employment, as well as further or higher education, should receive results where possible this summer, in order to allow them to progress to the next stage of their lives. For qualifications principally used for progression purposes, awarding organisations should issue calculated results to learners, where it is possible to do so, whilst ensuring that those awards are sufficiently valid and reliable. Where this is not possible, awarding organisations should adapt assessments or delivery models so that learners can sit assessments and complete their qualifications. Where qualifications directly signal occupational competence or function as a licence to practise, adaptation of the assessment or delivery model is the starting point. In cases where it would not be safe or meet employers' requirements to calculate results or adapt assessments or delivery models, there may be no option but for learners to wait until assessments can take place as normal again.

Ofqual conducted a consultation about proposals for exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020, and published an [extraordinary regulatory framework](#) on 22 May 2020.

## 2. Geographical coverage

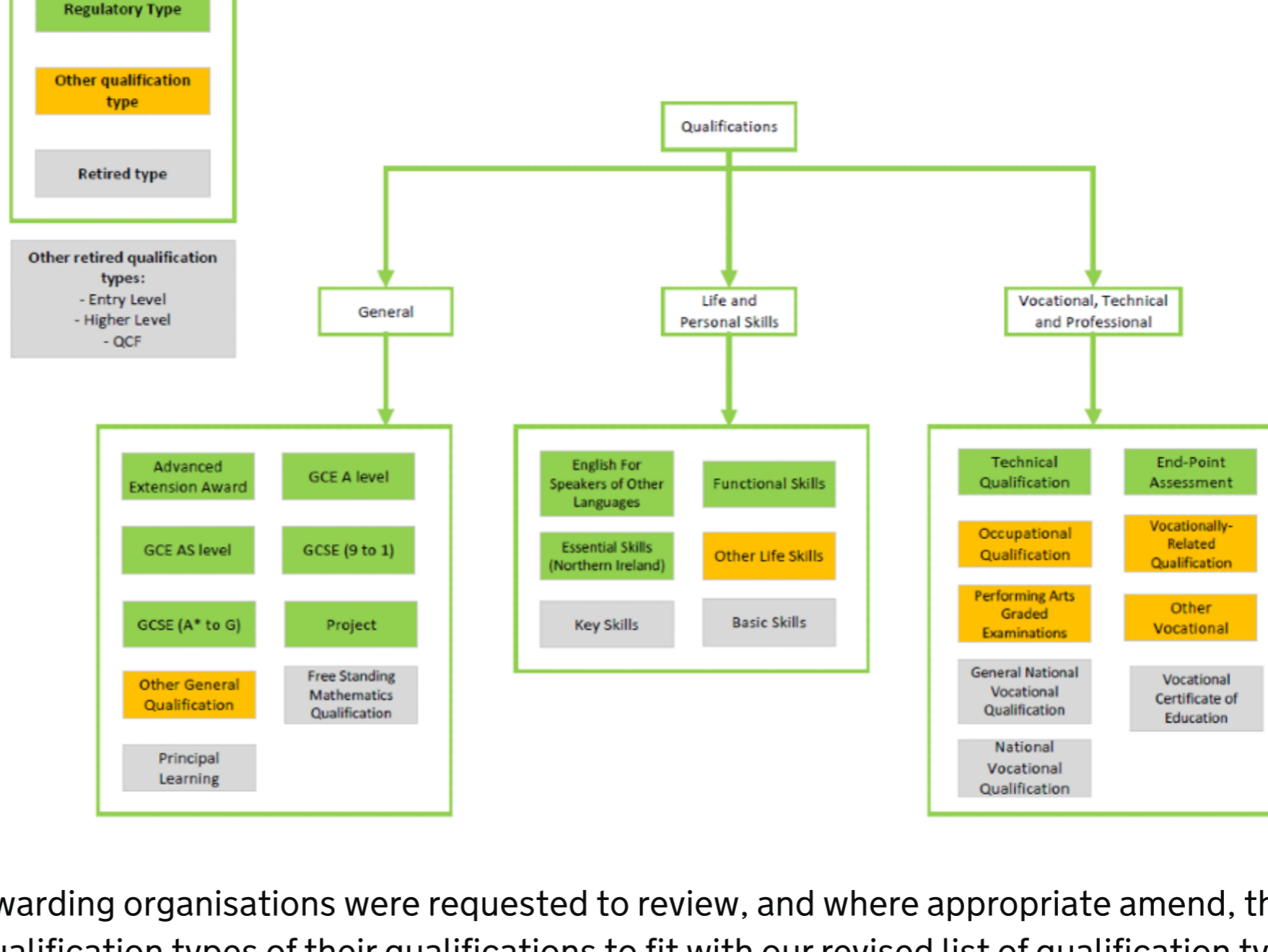
The data cover regulated qualifications in England.

## 3. Description

Ofqual regulates qualifications and assessments in England. This bulletin includes data on vocational and other qualifications awarded in England.

Regulated qualifications are classified into different qualification types. The qualification type classification is completed by the awarding organisations offering the qualifications. Qualification types provide information which complements that provided by the sector subject area characterisation. Qualification type categorisation can give an indication of a number of features, such as the nature of the qualification, the type of assessment, the qualification level and guided learning hours. In order to improve consistency in the way qualifications are classified, we have recently revised qualification types, as outlined in our letter to [awarding organisations](#), alongside [guidance](#) on how to classify qualifications.

Ofqual revised the list of qualification types in consultation with awarding organisations and the new structure of qualification types is given in figure 1. In the new structure, we have removed qualification types that did not identify a coherent group of qualifications and also cut across other types or described a qualification using other information in the regulatory framework. We have added types where necessary to cover the broadest range of qualifications that we regulate. No changes were made for those qualifications where there are qualification specific regulatory requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, GCSEs, GCEs, Functional Skills, and End-Point Assessments.



Awarding organisations were requested to review, and where appropriate amend, the qualification types of their qualifications to fit with our revised list of qualification types. These revised qualifications types have been available since 1 October 2018 and awarding organisations were given until 31 October 2018 to amend their qualification types. Some awarding organisations are still migrating their qualifications over to the new categories and so we may still report on old qualification types until this migration is complete.

As part of the removal of the regulatory arrangements for the QCF, the term 'QCF' is being removed from qualification titles. The only exception where 'QCF' may still be used in a qualification title is for Applied General and Technical Qualifications, where appropriate. This is to differentiate between pre-existing qualifications and those changed to meet government performance table requirements.

As a result of the review of qualification types, we are likely to see higher numbers of qualifications, and related statistics, in qualification type categories into which qualifications have been moved. Similarly, we are likely to see decreases where qualifications have been moved out of qualification type categories. However, given the volume of movement between categories, it may be difficult to disentangle the particular source of the changes, both pre and post the revision to qualification type categories.

The table below provides examples of the changes we might expect awarding organisations to make, where the left-hand column gives the old qualification types and the right-hand column gives the expected new categories for each of the old qualification types.

Current category	New category
Advanced Extension Award	No change
End-Point Assessment	No change
English For Speakers of Other Languages	No change
Entry Level	English For Speakers of Other Languages; Essential Skills (Northern Ireland); Other General; Other Life Skills
Free Standing Mathematics Qualification	Other General
Functional Skills	No change
GCE A level	No change
GCE AS level	No change
GCSE (9 to 1)	No change
GCSE (A* to G)	No change
Higher Level	Occupational Qualification; Vocationally-Related Qualification
Key Skills	No change
National Vocational Qualification	Occupational Qualification
Occupational Qualification	No change
Other General Qualification	English For Speakers of Other Languages; Essential Skills (Northern Ireland); Occupational Qualification; Other General Qualification; Other Life Skills; Other Vocational; Performing Arts Graded Examination; Vocationally-Related Qualification
Principal Learning	No change
Project	No change
QCF	English For Speakers of Other Languages; Essential Skills (Northern Ireland); Occupational Qualification; Performing Arts Graded Examination; Other Life Skills; Other Vocational; Vocationally-Related Qualification
Vocationally-Related Qualification	English For Speakers of Other Languages; Occupational Qualification; Vocationally-Related Qualification; Other Vocational; Other Life Skills

## 4. 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 the number of certificates awarded are sent by awarding organisations to Ofqual.

## 5. 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. The figures reported in this release reflect the certificates issued by awarding organisations at the time of data collection.

## 6. Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as outlined 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. Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

## 7. Published data

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

## 8. 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 re-categorised to a different type, level, sector subject area or awarding organisation. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect the new categorisation.

## 9. Confidentiality and rounding

In accordance with Ofqual's [rounding policy](#), figures less than 5 are represented as 0-. A 0 represents zero achievements. This is to ensure the data does not reveal an individual student.

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.

## 10. Status

These statistics are classified as National Statistics.

## 11. 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.

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please contact the respective regulators – [Qualifications Wales](#), [CCEA](#) and the [Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\)](#).

## 12. Useful links

- [Reports and data tables](#) accompanying this release
- [Definitions](#) of important terms used in this release
- [Policies and procedures](#) that Ofqual follows for production of statistical releases

## 13. 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 [data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk).

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