



National Statistics

Trends in detail for Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: July to September 2020

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1. Many assessments were cancelled or delayed in summer 2020 due to the measures put in place in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The trends seen in this quarter may have been affected as a result.
2. The number of certificates awarded in 2020 quarter 3 was just over 1,989,000 certificates, a decrease of 14% compared to 2019 quarter 3. Restrictions due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may help explain some of this change. For example, there were a range of mitigations implemented across vocational and technical qualifications, depending on their primary purpose and in some cases carried on as normal if they were unaffected by the pandemic. The decrease in overall certifications seen in this quarter compared to the same quarter last year may be affected by the measures taken particularly if there was no alternative but to delay assessment based on a qualification signalling occupational competence or function as a licence to practice. The impact of centre closures and staff furlough is also likely to have affected the ability of awarding organisations to certificate as many learners as they would normally. However, this decrease may also reflect an overall trend in the decline of the number of certificates awarded in vocational qualifications since 2015.
3. In 2020 there was a 402% increase in the number of certificates awarded in quarter 3 compared to quarter 2. The corresponding percentage change in 2019 was 66%. This is likely to be due to the delay and cancellation of exams and assessments this spring/summer due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic resulting in a large decrease in the number of certificates awarded in quarter 2 2020 compared to the same quarter last year.
4. Quarter 3 2020 saw an increase in the number of certificates awarded for Functional Skills qualifications (22%) and Other General Qualifications (3%). Most qualification types, however, saw a decrease this quarter compared to 2019 quarter 3. This differs to quarter 2 where decreases were seen across nearly all qualification types.
5. There were decreases in the number of certificates awarded for most qualification levels: the largest changes were for Level 2 and Level 1 qualifications with a 27% and 36% decrease in certificates respectively. However, Level 1/2 qualifications increased by 59%. Again, this differs to quarter 2 where large decreases were seen across nearly all qualification levels, including Level 1/2.
6. There were notable decreases in the number of certificates awarded in quarter 3 this year compared to quarter 3 last year in most sector subject areas, with the largest decreases seen for Arts, Media and Publishing, Health, Public Services and Care and Preparation for Life and Work.
7. The qualification with the highest number of certificates in Q3 2020 was OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Creative iMedia, which had the fourth highest number of certificates in Q3 2019. This was followed by Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Award in Sport, which had the fifth highest number of certificates in Q3 2019.
8. The awarding organisation with the highest number of certificates issued in this quarter was Pearson, followed by City and Guilds and OCR. Over the whole year, Pearson had the highest number of certificates issued, followed by City and Guilds and NCFE.
9. In Q3 2020, Pearson saw a 24% increase in the number of certificates awarded compared to Q3 2019. City and Guilds saw a 15% decrease in certificates compared to Q3 2019 and OCR saw a 37% increase in certificates compared to Q3 2019.

Ofqual consulted on proposals for exceptional arrangements for VTQ grading and assessment in 2020, and published an [Extraordinary regulatory framework\(ERF\)](#) on 22 May 2020. The ERF put in place a framework to facilitate the issue of results in summer 2020 to learners taking vocational and technical qualifications in circumstances where normal assessments were disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Following further consultation, Ofqual published the [Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework on 12 October 2020](#). This framework follows on from the ERF by allowing awarding organisations to adapt their qualifications in 2020 and 2021 in recognition of the fact that, although assessments may take place after summer 2020, learners may have experienced disruption to teaching, learning and assessment because of the pandemic. This arrangement may affect the number of certificates awarded in the next quarter (quarter 4 2020).

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