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Official Statistics

# Background information for Provisional November 2020 exam entries: GCSEs

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## 1. Purpose

GCSE English language and mathematics are routinely available for assessment in an annual November exam series. This release presents figures on the number of entries submitted to exam boards for the exams being sat in November 2020. These figures are provisional and represent the number of entries submitted by schools and colleges to exam boards by 28 October 2020.

## 2. Geographical coverage

The report presents data on the number of entries in England.

## 3. Description

This release shows the number of entries broken down by subject and age of students based on school year group.

## 4. External influences

There are various factors which might have influenced the entries for the November GCSE series.

- In 2020 the summer exam series was cancelled in order to help limit the spread of coronavirus. Students ultimately [received the higher of a centre assessment grade and a calculated grade](#). Exceptionally, [all GCSE, AS and A level subjects were made available for an autumn series](#) in addition to English language and mathematics which are available (subject to requirements) every November. In addition to students who would normally be entitled to take GCSEs in English language and maths in November, students were able to enter the November 2020 series if they did not feel that the grade they received in the summer reflected their ability or if they were unable to receive a centre assessment grade. Students under 16 years of age on 31 August of the examination year have not been able to enter the November series since 2017, but – in line with other students - were able to do so in 2020 where they had entered for the summer series or where exam boards believed they had intended to.
- In 2017, GCSE English language and GCSE mathematics were reformed. These GCSEs are now graded on a [9 to 1 scale](#) (9 denoting the highest passing grade and 1 denoting the lowest passing grade).
- November 2017 was the first opportunity for students to re-sit exams for 9 to 1 GCSEs in English language and mathematics. Students were also able to re-sit these subjects in summer 2018, and in November or summer of subsequent years.
- Since August 2015 full time students who have not achieved a grade C or above – and from 2017 a grade 4 or above – in English language/English literature or mathematics, at GCSE or a Level 1/2 certificate in these subjects, must continue studying these subjects in order to meet [funding requirements post-16](#).

## 5. Data Source

Data have been collected at an appropriate point when entries are reasonably complete, in this case, by 28 October 2020. However, schools can continue to make late entries right up to the day of the exam, so the total entry numbers could change. Ofqual agreed these dates with the exam boards as the date when the majority of entries would have been submitted. We collect the data at the same point each year to aid year-on-year comparisons.

## 6. Limitations

There is potential for error in the information provided by exam boards, therefore Ofqual cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. However, Ofqual conducts various quality assurance checks outlined below.

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

## 8. Revisions

Once published, data are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect any new categorisation of subjects.

## 9. Confidentiality and rounding

To ensure confidentiality of the accompanying data, the figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. Values less than 5 (i.e. 1 to 4) are represented as 0- and 0 represents zero entries.

Total values of rows or columns are calculated using unrounded figures; the sum of rounded figures may differ from the total reported.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result of rounded figures, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

## 10. Status

These statistics are classified as official statistics.

## 11. Related publications

- [Entries for GCSE: autumn 2020 exam series.](#)
- [Entries for AS and A level: autumn 2020 exam series.](#)

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

- [Report 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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