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- > Secondary curriculum, key stage 3 and key stage 4 (GCSEs) > Key stage 3 and 4 exam marking, qualifications and results > Access arrangements for GCSE, AS and A Level: 2019 to 2020 academic year

ofqual

## Official Statistics **Background information: Access**

Arrangements for GCSE AS and A level, 2019 to 2020 academic year Published 17 December 2020

## Contents Information about the statistics

Print this page

1. Information about the statistics Useful links 3. Feedback 1.1 Purpose

## Access arrangements are approved before candidates take an assessment. This statistical release covers access arrangements approved in advance of exams in 2019/20, including the summer exams that were subsequently

cancelled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

1.2 Geographical coverage This report presents data on approved access arrangements in England. Reports published before the 2016/17 academic year included data for

this year's report reflect England-only data and may therefore differ from

learners in Wales and Northern Ireland as well. As such, historical figures in

papers in this release.

previously published figures. Five exam boards offered GCSE and GCE qualifications in England for the period covered in this publication:

 AQA Education (AQA) • Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), until 2015 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)

 WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC/Eduqas) 1.3 Description

Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)

Access arrangements granted for disabled candidates are known as reasonable adjustments (discussed further below). Access arrangements can also be granted for candidates who have experienced a temporary illness or injury, or some other event outside of the learner's control. These are known as special consideration. The same types of access arrangements might be used for both reasonable adjustment and special consideration

the time of the assessment. These post-examination adjustments are also called special consideration and are covered in a separate report on special

considerations. Please note that due to the cancellation of exams in 2020, there is no 2020 release of the special consideration report. If a student has a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010 – ie has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative

are required to take 'such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage' - such as providing modified question papers for candidates with visual impairments. Please note, the Equality Act 2010 does not apply to Northern Ireland. The equivalent act in Northern Ireland is the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO 2005).

The qualifications covered in this release are regulated by Ofqual, which publishes conditions that set out the requirements that the exam boards it regulates have to meet. These conditions state that 'An awarding organisation must, in accordance with Equalities Law, have in place clear

Ofqual does not prescribe what arrangements exam boards should provide, but requires all exam boards to have clear, published details about who standard arrangements that exam centres can request of boards and the relevant eligibility and evidential criteria.

The approval of some arrangements and some modified papers is delegated to schools or colleges where exam boards judge there is no advantage to be arrangement will receive approval for it. Individual candidates may require more than one arrangement (eg 25% extra time and a computer reader). Once granted, an arrangement for a disabled student will apply for up to 26

months, although applications based on temporary conditions will last for one exam series only. In 2019/2020 applications that had expired prior to, during or after the summer 2020 examination series were extended until the autumn 2020 examination series. Schools and colleges will consider the particular requirements of individual candidates and then follow the guidelines and arrangements of the exam boards. The evidence required to support an application will vary, depending on the reasons for the particular requirement and the types of arrangement requested. For example, where a request is made for a candidate to have 25% extra time because of a learning difficulty, JCQ requires that the impact of the candidate's difficulty is evidenced using standardised tests of their speed of reading, reading comprehension, writing and/or using cognitive processing measures.

1.4 Context

Access Arrangements Online system.

**Centre types** 

Academies;

Free Schools;

Sixth Form College;

Tertiary College:

years in the report and accompanying data tables. 1.5 Centre types Some figures in this year's report are broken down by centre type. Centre types have been collapsed under the categories below.

**Overall** 

category

Secondary non-

selective, non-

independent

Independent

Selective

FΕ

Sixth Form and

Other

applying to each exam board separately. JCQ sends Ofqual data on access arrangements from Access Arrangements Online. While other types of access arrangement can be requested, the data in this release only covers those granted through Access Arrangements Online (JCQ guidelines outline which types of arrangements need to be processed through this system). In addition, each exam board submits data to Ofqual in relation to the

1.7 Limitations The ability to extract detailed statistical information was not part of the scope for the original data recording system design in Access Arrangements Online. As a result, there are limitations in the data produced. For example, requests.

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 the new categorisation.

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please contact the respective regulators -

releases

3. Feedback

(COVID-19) pandemic)

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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otherwise stated

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Crime, justice and the law

Disabled people

**Driving and transport** 

**Benefits** 

Yes

**Employing people** Births, deaths, marriages and care **Environment and countryside** Housing and local services

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Services

Access arrangements are the provisions made for candidates, agreed before they take an assessment, to ensure that they can be validly assessed and are not unfairly disadvantaged due to a disability, temporary illness or injury. Access arrangements can be provided for any candidates taking exams or

non-exam assessments who meet the eligibility criteria.

This statistical release presents data on access arrangements approved for

modified papers produced for the summer exam series. However, due to the

cancellation of exams this year, there are no numbers to report on modified

GCSE, AS and A level exams during the 2019/20 academic year.

In previous releases of this report, we have reported on the number of

purposes. Access arrangements are distinct from post-examination adjustments to the marks of candidates who have not been able to demonstrate their ability in an assessment due to exceptional circumstances such as bereavement at

effect on their ability to do normal daily activities) they are entitled to reasonable adjustments, which exam boards administer through their access arrangements process. Exam boards have a duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments to assessments for disabled students who, because of their disability, would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage when demonstrating their skills, knowledge or understanding in an assessment. The Equality Act sets out that exam boards

levels. Ofqual does this by making the specifications set out in Specifications in relation to the reasonable adjustment of general qualifications. Our specifications only remove the duty on awarding organisations to make reasonable adjustments within the confines of those specifications. Where we have not made a relevant specification, awarding organisations remain under a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students.

Education, the specified general qualifications include GCSE, AS and A

Section 96(7) of the Act gives the appropriate regulator – Ofqual in England

- the power to prohibit or limit the extent to which awarding organisations

must make or allow reasonable adjustments for specified general

qualifications. Following decisions taken by Secretary of State for

arrangements for making reasonable adjustments in relation to

set out how a learner can qualify for special consideration.

qualifies for these arrangements and what arrangements may be given. Exam boards choose to follow Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidelines in relation to the provision of these arrangements. JCQ is a membership organisation comprising the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK, and defines access arrangements as preexamination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal ways of working. JCQ publishes an annual document setting out the

qualifications which it makes available.' Awarding organisations must also

gained by candidates in relation to the knowledge, skills and understanding being tested, unless they need the arrangement (for example, the use of a word processor). The range of arrangements/modified papers for which schools or colleges must seek approval from exam boards has varied over time. The data in this release only cover those types of arrangements which are processed through JCQ's Access Arrangements Online system. Any candidate taking exams or non-exam assessments for GCSE, AS or A level qualifications who meets the eligibility criteria for an access

in Access Arrangements Online to reduce burden for centres. So as to allow for comparability of figures over time, these categories have been merged for all years in the report and accompanying data tables. From 1st September 2018, the coloured and enlarged paper category (included within the "other arrangements" category in the report) does not require an online application, therefore the numbers in this category have significantly decreased. From 1st September 2019 the two categories; practical assistant

for written papers and practical assistant for practical assessments, were

introduced to reduce bureaucracy for centres. In line with earlier practices

used to report such changes, the two categories have been merged for all

Secondary comprehensive or middle school/wide ability school;

students aged 16+ up to and including A Level and its equivalent.

Access Arrangements Online is JCQ's centralised system used by schools

and colleges to request access arrangements. It enables schools and

colleges to make one central application for each candidate rather than

number of requests that are referred directly to them for approval, and the

JCQ and the exam boards send data to Ofqual annually. Any provider that

There is potential for error in the information provided by exam boards and

JCQ. Ofqual compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the Quality

Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications published by Ofqual to

necessary. Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit

Once published, data on the number of requests are not usually subject to

rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is less than 5 (1 to 4), it is represented

Total values of rows or columns are calculated using unrounded figures; the

Most percentages are rounded to the nearest one decimal place. As a result

of rounded figures, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in

A number of other statistical releases and publications relate to this one:

• Statistics: GCSEs (key stage 4) collection: these statistics, published by

the Department for Education, cover students' achievements in GCSEs

• Statistics: 16 to 19 attainment collection: these statistics, published by

in England, including exam results and performance tables

and equivalent regulated qualifications in schools at the end of key stage

the Department for Education, cover the attainment of 16- to 19-year-olds

Statistical Release: Special Consideration in GCSE and A Level: summer

statistics on special consideration requests in GCSE and A level for the

cancellation of exams in summer 2020 in response to the coronavirus

Policies and procedures that Ofqual follows for production of statistical

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any

needs please contact us at <u>data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk</u>.

comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your

2019 Exam Series: this statistical release published by Ofqual gives

summer 2019 series (the 2020 release was cancelled due to the

as 0\~ and 0 represents zero access arrangements or modified papers.

sum of rounded figures may differ from the total reported.

tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

1.12 Related publications

These statistics are classified as Official Statistics.

ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where

with the data. Summary data are sent back to exam boards for checking and

number of candidates taking exams and the number of centres. A full

does not return a complete set of data within the collection period is

release, Ofqual received data from all the exam boards that were in a

contacted, to make sure the data are as complete as possible. For this

description of modified papers is published by <u>JCQ</u>.

position to award these qualifications.

Secondary selective school, e.g. grammar or technical

Institute (HMYOI), HM Prison, training centre.

Independent school including city training colleges (CTCs) - includes all

independent schools having some or all students of secondary school age.

Further education establishment - a centre which primarily provides education for

Other, e.g. special school, college of higher education, university department,

tutorial college, language school, pupil referral unit (PRU), HM Young Offender

Centres are also included in this category when the centre type is not known.

Secondary modern school/high school

merged into one single category of practical assistant. The change was

Ofqual has worked with JCQ on developing the data available from the

In September 2017, the reader and computer reader categories were merged

1.6 Data source

the figures reported to Ofqual are for the number of approvals in a given academic year but arrangements can last for 26 months, and there will be some candidates who require more than one access arrangement. In addition, the online system is not currently able to detect duplicate

1.8 Quality assurance

confirmation.

for purpose.

1.9 Revisions

1.10 Confidentiality and rounding To ensure confidentiality of the accompanying data, the figures have been

1.11 Status

4

Qualifications Wales, CCEA and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). 2. Useful links Report and data tables accompanying this release

<u>Definitions</u> of important terms used in this release

No

**Education and learning** 

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