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Official Statistics

Background information for special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2025 exam series

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Applies to England

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Provide your feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. If you have any comments on this statistical release, or how to improve it to meet your needs, please complete our [short survey](#) or data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk.

Purpose

This release provides information on special consideration for GCSE, AS and A levels for the summer 2025 exam series. Special consideration is given as post-assessment mark adjustments. This applies when students cannot show their ability because of exceptional circumstances during the assessment or absence for reasons that meet [JCQ's eligibility criteria](#).

Post-assessment special consideration differs from special consideration in the form of access arrangements, which are adjustments that are made to the way an assessment is taken. We report on data for pre-agreed access arrangement in our [statistics on access arrangements](#).

Geographical coverage

This report presents data on special consideration requests made in England. Four exam boards currently offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England:

- AQA Education

- Cambridge OCR
- Pearson Education Ltd.
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd.

Description

The qualifications covered in this release are regulated by Ofqual and must meet [Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition](#) and other relevant regulations. These General Conditions state that “an exam board must have in place clear arrangements for special consideration to be given to learners in relation to qualifications which it makes available”.

Special consideration is any adjustment given to a student who has temporarily experienced an illness, injury, or other event outside of their control at the time of the assessment which significantly affects their ability to:

- take an assessment
- demonstrate what they can do in an assessment

The aim of the special consideration process is to reduce the impact of unexpected factors that are beyond the student's control occurring at the time of their assessment which could materially affect a student's ability to demonstrate their level of attainment or to participate in an assessment.

This report only includes special consideration given in the form of mark adjustments and qualification awards. Special consideration given in the form of an adjustment to the way an assessment is taken, is reported separately in our [statistics on access arrangements](#).

Special consideration applications for external and internal (non-exam) assessments are made by schools and colleges to exam boards. According to [JCQ guidelines](#), special consideration

applications can be made either on an individual or group basis. An individual application involves just one student but can relate to one or more assessment components. In cases where a group of students has been affected by the same issue (for example, a fire alarm during an exam), a group application can cover all students and any components affected by the issue.

A single special consideration request relates to an individual student and a specific component in an exam series. The number of applications for individuals and groups differs from the total number of special consideration requests as a single application can represent multiple requests.

[Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition](#) require that exam boards publish details on procedures for providing special consideration to students taking their qualifications, which must include how a candidate qualifies for special consideration and the forms of special consideration available. Ofqual does not prescribe the processes and procedures the exam boards use to make decisions about special consideration applications. This is because the circumstances of each application may be unique, and it is for exam boards to decide if and what special consideration should be given under the circumstances and apply it in a fair and consistent way.

There are 2 categories of post-assessment special consideration available:

1. Mark adjustments: a small number of extra marks for students whose exam performance is affected by temporary illness, injury, indisposition, or an unforeseen incident
2. Qualification award: awarding the qualification if the student was absent from an exam or formal assessment for reasons which meet [JCQ's eligibility criteria](#). A student must have completed at least one component to be eligible for this type of special consideration.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), a membership organisation of 8 awarding organisations, including the 4 exam

boards offering GCSE, AS and A levels in England, publishes [guidelines and procedures on special consideration](#).

Adjustments reported in this release may have been given to students who were present for an assessment but disadvantaged due to temporary injury, illness, or other unforeseen incident occurring immediately before or during the assessment period. JCQ's procedures allow for small adjustments to a student's mark – up to 5% of the maximum raw mark of a question paper.

[JCQ guidelines on special consideration](#) indicate mark adjustment tariffs between 1% and 5% for different circumstances

There is also a 0% tariff. This tariff is used in slightly different ways by each exam board. It may be used when an exam board approves the overall reason for the request, but not all instances the application covers. For example, the exam board may determine that a student for whom a special consideration application has been made should only receive it for those assessments taken within a given time period and not for assessments taken afterwards.

These adjustment tariffs provide a framework for accommodating various challenges that students may face during exams. Each application must be assessed on its merits, and the exam board's decision should be based on various relevant factors. These factors include the severity of the circumstances, the date of the exam in relation to the circumstances, and the nature of the assessment.

External influences

There are various factors over time which might have influenced the number of special consideration requests made for GCSE, AS and A level assessments presented in this release:

1. The number of requests for each subject will be influenced by the number of components available. Specifications with a greater number of components are likely to receive higher volumes of special consideration requests.
2. In 2023, the Department for Education issued guidance on measures to minimise the impact of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in education settings. The JCQ also published [information for centres affected by RAAC](#), clarifying the circumstances under which students would be eligible for special consideration.
3. In summer 2023, AS, A level and the majority of GCSE qualifications returned to pre-pandemic arrangements. [Some changes to the special consideration procedures and the design of the exam timetable were maintained in summer 2023](#) which could influence the figures in this report. Additionally, the extended time intervals between exams, first introduced in 2022, [were largely preserved](#). This [decreased the likelihood that students would miss all exams](#) in a subject due to illness or another acceptable reason.
4. Summer 2022 saw the return of exams and assessments following disruption due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Students who were unable to attend exams due to following [UK Health Security Agency guidance](#) were considered to be absent for acceptable reasons. In 2023, [JCQ's eligibility criteria](#) for students who missed an exam removed specific requirements relating to COVID-19 symptoms, in line with updated advice from the [UK Health Security Agency](#) and the lifting of school-related COVID-19 rules.

Data source

The exam boards send Ofqual data on the number of requests for special consideration and their approvals. The data contains details of special consideration requests up to the data cut-off date provided in Ofqual's data reporting schedule.

Where the report presents data by qualification level, AS and A level has been combined in this release.

The number of withdrawn requests are included in the total number of requests. Withdrawn requests refer to instances where exam boards withdraw the original application if it was made in error, or where the application requires amendment by the centre, at which point it is treated as a new application.

In this report we also present the number of qualification results issued for each subject in AS and A level and GCSE, to provide context for the number of special consideration requests. These figures are taken from the data exam boards submit to Ofqual each summer that contains information on grades awarded to students in England. For GCSE, AS, and A level, the number of results issued reported here includes unclassified (U), or not awarded results (X and Q; for example if a student was absent). These results are included because students can still be eligible for special consideration in these cases. Within the number of qualification results issued, combined science grades have been double counted as these qualifications are the size of 2 GCSEs.

Only full-course GCSEs are included in the special consideration and qualification results figures, in addition to AS and A levels. In previous releases of these statistics, short-course GCSEs were also included but these have now been removed. This has meant that some historical figures have changed to a small degree compared to previous releases.

In this report we also provide, for context, the number of scripts and non-exam assessments marked for each exam series in England. Note that these figures do include the number of scripts marked for short course GCSEs as the data is aggregated in a way that means they cannot be removed. These figures are not available per subject as the data is aggregated at qualification level (GCSE, AS, A level).

In this publication, figures for the total number of scripts marked

also include non-exam assessments marked for all years reported. In previous publications, for the years 2022 to 2024, the total number of scripts marked did not include non-exam assessments. Therefore, figures in this release may differ from figures seen in previous publications.

Limitations

Ofqual expects exam boards to send correct data, although it cannot guarantee that the data sent is correct. Summary data is sent to exam boards for checking and confirmation. The figures reported for the summer 2025 series reflect the status of special considerations at the data cut-off date of 05 October 2025.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the [Quality Framework for Statistical Publications](#) published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary. We may defer publication if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Revisions

Once published, data is not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error.

Confidentiality and rounding

To ensure confidentiality of the published accompanying data, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is less than 5, it is represented as “fewer than 5” and 0 represents zero entries

Where individual rounded values have been presented in a table along with their sum total, this total may be slightly different to the sum of the individual rounded values. This is because the total has been calculated using the original unrounded values.

We also use unrounded values to derive percentages. Percentages are then rounded to one decimal place. Due to this rounding, percentages may not always add up to exactly 100%.

For more information, see our [Rounding policy for statistical publications](#).

Status

These statistics are classified as official statistics.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)](#). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly at data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

Related publications

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

- [statistics: GCSEs \(key stage 4\) collection](#)
- [statistics: 16 to 19 attainment collection](#)
- statistical Release: [Access arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level](#)

For other Ofqual statistical releases, see [Statistics at Ofqual](#).

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 \(SQA\)](#).

Useful links

- [report and data tables](#) accompanying this release
- [definitions of important terms](#) used in this release
- [policies and procedures](#) that Ofqual follow for production of statistical releases

Head of profession: Ben Cuff

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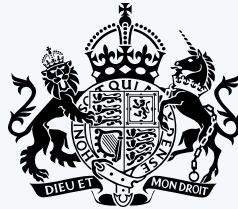
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