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Menu

Home ⌐ Education, training and skills ⌐ School curriculum ⌐ Secondary curriculum, key stage 3 and key stage 4 (GCSEs)
⌐ Key stage 3 and 4 exam marking, qualifications and results
⌐ Reviews of marking and moderation for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2025 exam series

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Official Statistics

Background information for reviews of marking and moderation for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2025 exam series

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Applies to England

Contents

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Purpose

This release presents data on reviews of marking, reviews of moderation and administrative error reviews for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications for the summer 2025 exam series in England. Data for previous years is also included for comparison.

Geographical coverage

This release presents data on the number of reviews requested in England. Four exam boards offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England:

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Cambridge OCR
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC)

Policy context

The review of marking process

Every year, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), a membership organisation of 8 awarding organisations, including the 4 exam boards in England offering GCSE, AS and A levels, publishes information and guidance for schools and colleges on the [post-results services](#) available for the relevant exam series. The [GCSE](#), and [AS and A level Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements](#) (the Conditions) published by Ofqual, outline the requirements for reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and administrative error reviews that exam boards must

follow for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications.

If a school or college or an individual student is concerned that an error has occurred when assessment material has been marked or moderated, the school or college can decide to seek a review from the exam board. Exam boards only accept review requests through schools and colleges, and not from students directly. Schools and colleges require consent from the student to request reviews of marking and administrative error reviews. Private students are the exception; the Conditions for GCSE and AS and A level require exam boards to accept review requests directly from private students.

A whole qualification (for example A level English literature) will comprise of several components, for example, one or more exams, and/or one or more non-exam assessment (NEA) components. Reviews are requested for each component individually and not for the qualification as a whole. If there is a review requested for any component associated with a qualification, the overall grade was 'challenged'. Reviews can be requested for multiple components that a student has taken for the same qualification. This is why the total number of grades challenged is always lower than the total number of reviews of marking. Reviews of moderation are different, as one review involves multiple students. However, the vast majority of reviews requested are reviews of marking and so, overall, the number of grades challenged is always lower than the number of reviews requested.

In some cases, multiple reviews are requested for the same component. For example, an administrative error review may be requested and then a review of marking. Where a component is made up of more than one part (known as sub-components) and a student must complete all sub-components to complete the component (for example, an exam with a multiple-choice element and a written element), a review can be made on an individual sub-component in some cases.

If the review shows that marking or administrative errors have been made and the student's mark is incorrect, the exam board is required to change the mark to correct the error. This can lead to a student's mark increasing or decreasing.

Mark changes in this release refer to changes to raw component marks. The raw component marks are the marks awarded to students on each component, prior to any scaling that might be applied. For some specifications and components, the raw marks are scaled to ensure that the overall qualification marks appropriately reflect the weighting of different components.

In some cases, mark changes affect the overall grade, which will then also be changed. For reviews of moderation, grades can only be confirmed or raised following review. Exam boards charge a fee if grades are not changed following review, or, for a review of moderation, if the original moderator marks are upheld.

Ofqual's Conditions for GCSE and AS and A level state that exam boards must set their own deadlines within which they should complete reviews and report the outcome for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications. They must do so within the timeframe of 'key dates' that Ofqual has prescribed. These dates provide a

common minimum window for schools and colleges and/or students and allow exam boards to set common dates if they wish, which they have so far all chosen to do. The dates the exam boards have chosen to set are detailed in the sections on each type of review below as outlined in the [Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines](#).

Each exam board offers 3 post-results services for reviewing exam papers and non-exam assessment:

- An administrative error review for an individual component ('Service 1')

- A review of marking for an individual component ('Service 2, priority and non-priority'); this service also includes an administrative error review

- A review of moderation of the school or college's internal assessment using the sample of students' work that was used in the initial moderation ('Service 3')

Under Ofqual rules, students must also be given the opportunity by an exam board to seek a review of the mark that their school or college determines for their non-exam assessment, prior to the mark being submitted to the exam board. Exam boards do not collect data on such reviews, and they are not included in this release.

Administrative error review of an individual student's script

The exam board checks the script to make sure that every question has been marked and the total number of marks awarded for that script is correctly added up and recorded. This year exam boards stipulated that schools and colleges must have requested this service by 25 September 2025. The deadline set by exam boards by which they must aim to notify schools and colleges about the outcomes of administrative error reviews is 10 calendar days from the date of receipt.

Review of marking for an individual component

A reviewer considers the marking of the original examiner to determine, in respect of each task in the component for which marks could have been awarded, whether there are any marking errors. The exam board also conducts a full administrative error review if this has not been previously requested for the component. Exam boards typically operate 2 priority levels:

- Priority – schools and colleges can request this if the student's place in further or higher education depends on the outcome of a review or if a quick response is desired. This year, exam boards stipulated that requests for a priority service 2 review must have been submitted by 21 August 2025.

- Non-priority – this year, exam boards stipulated that schools and colleges must have requested a non-priority review by 25 September 2025.

All exam boards offer priority reviews of marking for AS and A level. However, only Pearson currently offer this service for GCSE.

The deadline set by exam boards by which they must aim to notify schools and colleges about the outcomes of reviews of marking is 20 calendar days for the non-priority service and 15 calendar days for the priority service from the date of receipt.

Review of moderation of the school or college's internal assessment using the sample of students' work

A review of moderation service is not available for individual students. It is requested by a school or college and undertaken on a sample of students' work that was originally marked by teachers at that school or college. The exam board reviews the initial moderation to make sure that the moderation was carried out correctly and in accordance with the marking criteria and/or if there were any errors made in any adjustments to the original marks as a result of the moderation. Marks must be corrected if an error is found in the judgements made by the original moderator or if there are any errors in any adjustments made to the original marks as a result of the moderation.

This year, exam boards stipulated that this service must have been requested by 25 September 2025. The deadline set by exam boards by which they must aim to notify schools and colleges about the outcomes of reviews of moderation is 35 calendar days from the moderator receiving the original sample of work from the school or college.

Appeals

If a school or college has requested a review but is still dissatisfied with the outcome, it can make an appeal to the exam board. There is also a final stage available through the Ofqual Examination Procedures Review Service.

This release does not cover appeals. Ofqual publishes statistical releases on appeals. Data on appeals for the 2024 to 2025 academic year will be published in Spring 2026.

External influences

There are various factors over time which might have influenced the trends reported within this release.

COVID-19

For summer 2022, exams and other formal assessments went ahead with some planned adaptations intended to recognise the disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and grading was at a midpoint between summer 2021 and 2019. The usual post-results services including reviews were available. For summer 2023, assessment arrangements largely returned to normal and results were broadly similar to summer 2019, reflecting a return to pre-pandemic grading. These changes to assessment and grading arrangements in recent years, may have had an effect on trends in reviews of marking and moderation.

Changes to the review of marking process

From summer 2022 onwards, Ofqual rules required exam boards to make marked GCSE scripts available to schools and colleges before their deadline for requesting a review of marking. This change was intended to increase the information that schools and colleges had to identify potential marking errors and inform their decision about whether to apply for a review of marking or moderation. This change could have affected the numbers of reviews of marking or moderation from summer 2022 onwards. Given the changes to assessment and grading arrangements in recent years, any comparisons should be treated with caution.

Data source

Data on reviews of marking and moderation used in this release was submitted to Ofqual by the exam boards. Only full-course GCSEs are included in addition to AS and A levels. Data for AS and A levels is presented jointly, unless otherwise specified.

In this release we also present the total number of grades awarded for AS and A level and GCSE, to provide context of grades challenged and changed. In this release the total number of grades awarded refers to all valid results issued on results days which include passing grades and Fails (U) and is also published in

our [statistics on summer qualification results in England](#).

In the total number of grades awarded, combined science grades have been double counted as these qualifications are the size of 2 GCSEs. Only full-course GCSEs are included in addition to AS and A levels. This data is supplied directly to Ofqual by awarding organisations prior to results days. When Ofqual receives the data, some results may not have been fully processed. For comparability, data for previous years reported in the accompanying data tables also represents this snapshot of provisional data prior to results days.

Outcomes representing the absence of a result (Q, X) are also issued on results days. The absence of a result can be due to ongoing malpractice investigations, students being absent from the assessment, or results being pending due to marks for one or more components not being available at the time of awarding (for example, due to a delay in moderation). These outcomes are not included in this release.

In this release we also provide, for context, the number of component entries for GCSE, AS, and A level for each exam series in England as published in [our statistics on entries and late entries](#). The number of component entries is used to approximate the number of components sat in the exam series, which is the total number of components for which reviews may be requested. Component entries include short course GCSEs as the data is aggregated in a way that means they cannot be removed.

Limitations

Reviews are conducted on individual components and so it is possible to request more than one review for a single qualification that a student has taken. It is therefore possible that, where more than one review has been requested for the same student and qualification, more than one service may have been requested.

For example, consider a student who has taken GCSE biology and whose school has decided to request a review for 2 components that the student has taken for this qualification. The school may decide to submit both components for a review of marking or they may decide to submit one component for an administrative error review and one component for a review of marking. Breaking down the number of grades challenged and changed by service becomes problematic when multiple review services are requested for the same student across multiple components within a qualification.

In the example given above, only one grade is challenged but 2 review services are requested. Counting the grade challenged in both administrative error review and review of marking figures would mean double counting, which would be misleading. Therefore, in the breakdown of reviews requested and grades challenged and changed by service, students who have had their grades challenged through more than one service have not been included in the grades

challenged and changed figures. These students are however included in all other figures reported and tables 16 and 17 in the data tables published along with the report include a breakdown of the number of grades challenged and changed through multiple services by exam board.

When a review of moderation is requested by a school or college, the exam boards provide Ofqual with data for all the students in the school or college who took the component, regardless of the outcome of the review.

Ofqual cannot guarantee that the data collected is correct, although we expect exam boards to send correct data. There are several validation and data check processes in place. Summary data is sent to exam boards for checking and confirmation. The figures reported in this release reflect the status of reviews at the data cut-off date: 10 November 2025.

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.

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. The publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

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

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

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