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Accredited official statistics

Background information for vocational and other qualifications quarterly: October to December 2025

Published 5 March 2026

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.

About this release

This release presents information on the number of certificates issued for regulated vocational and other qualifications from October to December (quarter 4 2025) in England.

Comparisons in this release are made with data from the same quarter of the previous year and the 12-month period up to the end of the same quarter of the previous year. A five-year historical trend is also included.

The data tables in this release show the number of certificates issued broken down by qualification type, qualification level, sector subject area, and awarding organisation. The number of qualifications with certificates issued is also shown.

The cleaned and processed [vocational qualifications dataset](#) underlying this release is available separately. It contains the number of certificates issued in England by qualification for each quarter starting from quarter 1 2012 to present. This data can also be explored in our [interactive visualisation for Vocational and other qualifications over time](#).

Scope of the release

This release includes data on certificates issued in England for vocational and other qualifications regulated by Ofqual. All regulated qualifications can be found on [Ofqual's Register](#) of regulated qualifications. For each quarter, qualifications regulated in that quarter are included.

A certificate is included if the student took most of their assessments in England. This is based on the location of the school, college or assessment centre or based on the student's home address if the assessments were taken remotely.

This release does not include:

- GCSEs, AS and A levels, advanced extension awards and Extended Project Qualifications
- apprenticeship end-point assessments and Apprenticeship Assessment Qualifications
- T Levels

The number of certificates issued for GCSEs, AS and A levels, advanced extension awards and Extended Project Qualifications can be found in our [Annual qualifications market reports](#). For results issued for GCSEs, AS and A levels on summer results days, see our statistics on [summer qualification results in England](#), or statistics released by the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\)](#).

[Statistics on apprenticeships](#) are published by the Department for Education. For data on Ofqual-regulated end-point assessments, see our [statistics on apprenticeship end-point assessment outcomes](#).

T Level certificates are issued by the Department for Education. Ofqual only regulates the technical qualification within T Levels, which does not have a separate certificate. For overall T Level outcomes, see the [T Level results](#) published by the Department for Education. For outcomes of the technical qualification within T Levels, see our statistics on [summer qualification results in England](#) and our [interactive visualisation of T Level technical qualification outcomes](#).

Context

The qualifications covered in this release are regulated by Ofqual. Awarding organisations issuing certificates for regulated qualifications have to meet Ofqual's [General Conditions of Recognition](#). Terminology used in this release is related to the Conditions of Recognition and is explained below.

Qualifications

The qualifications Ofqual regulates are set out in the [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#). Even if Ofqual regulates an organisation, not all their offered qualifications might be regulated. For example, an awarding organisation could only have qualifications regulated that are of a particular level or type, or in a particular subject area. Regulated qualifications must comply with the Conditions of Recognition. For instance, they must be fit for purpose and have an objective that leads to a benefit for the student, such as progression to other qualifications or employment.

Ofqual maintains a [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#). The qualification title, level, sector subject area and awarding organisation offering the qualification are registered. Sometimes these details are updated: this might be to correct an error or to make updates when awarding organisations change, for example after a merger. Each qualification has a unique qualification number that identifies the qualification, even if other details change.

Awarding organisations

Awarding organisations refer to organisations recognised by Ofqual to develop, deliver and award qualifications. Awarding organisations are assigned unique Ofqual recognition numbers. They can change the legal entity which they are recognised under, for example as a result of a merger with another organisation, which results in a new Ofqual recognition number. In this report, figures are grouped by the awarding organisation's name as stated on Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#), rather than their recognition number. Where an organisation's legal entity has

changed but their name remains the same, they are reported as one awarding organisation. Figures reported by recognition number are available from the [statistical dataset](#) published each quarter.

Certificates

Awarding organisations issue certificates to students who have completed a regulated qualification.

Qualification levels

Regulated qualifications are assigned a level from [entry level through to level 8](#), broadly indicating the relative level of demand of the qualification. Levels are assigned on Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) by the awarding organisation with reference to [Ofqual's published level descriptors](#).

Sector subject areas

Sector subject area is a classification of qualifications into business sectors or subject areas maintained by Ofqual. There are 15 sector subject areas, which each include several second-tier sector subject areas. Sector subject areas are assigned on Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#), by the awarding organisation with reference to [Ofqual's published list of sector subject areas](#).

Qualification types

Regulated qualifications are classified into different qualification types.

Qualification types are classified into 3 broad categories:

- general
- life and personal skills

- vocational, technical and professional

Some qualification types are ‘regulatory types’ which means they are subject to specific additional regulatory requirements as well as the [General Conditions of Recognition](#) or other restrictions (such as subject or qualification level conditions). Other qualification types are subject only to the [General Conditions of Recognition](#). Qualification type category is selected by the awarding organisation for the purposes of transparency on Ofqual’s [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

Qualification types provide information which complements that provided by the sector subject area classification. The specific qualification type can indicate features such as the nature of the qualification, the type of assessment, the qualification level and guided learning hours.

Table 1 gives a further breakdown of the structure of qualification types. As noted in the scope section above, not all qualification types listed here are reported in this release.

New Technical Occupation Qualifications and Alternative Academic Qualifications were introduced for first teaching in August 2025. Technical Occupation Qualifications are sometimes known as reformed Technical Qualifications. This is an overarching term for two different qualification types: Technical Occupational Entry and Technical Specialist. The term “reformed Technical Qualification” does not include Technical Qualifications that sit within the T Level programme.

Table 1: Qualification types and inclusion in this release

Broad qualification type	Specific qualification type	Status	Included in this release
General	Advanced extension award	Regulatory type	No
General	GCE A level	Regulatory type	No
General	GCE AS level	Regulatory type	No

General	GCSE (9 to 1)	Regulatory type	No
General	Project	Regulatory type	No
General	Other general qualification	Other qualification type	Yes
Life and personal skills	English for Speakers of Other Languages	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and personal skills	Functional Skills	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and personal skills	Digital Functional Skills qualifications	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and personal skills	Essential digital skills	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and personal skills	Other life skills	Other qualification type	Yes
Life and personal skills	Key skills	Retired type	Yes
Life and personal skills	Basic skills	Retired type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	Technical Qualification	Regulatory type	No
Vocational, technical and professional	End-point assessment	Other qualification type	No
Vocational, technical and professional	Occupational qualification	Other qualification type	Yes

Vocational, technical and professional	Vocationally-related qualification	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	Performing arts graded examinations	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	Other vocational qualification	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	National Vocational Qualification	Retired type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	Technical Occupational Qualification	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	Alternative Academic Qualification	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, technical and professional	Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification	Regulatory type	No

Other general factors affecting the trends

Around 10,000 qualifications are in scope of this release. The number of certificates issued is aggregated across qualifications in this release but even qualifications of the same level or the same type can be very different in their assessment and certification process. For some qualifications, assessments can be taken on demand; for others, assessments are taken in an assessment series in an academic year cycle. Some qualifications have minimal or no associated teaching, while others have a program of study that may span multiple years. For some qualifications, certificates are issued within just a few days of completion, while for other qualifications there can be a delay of several weeks.

The overall number of certificates issued is affected by the academic year cycle. It usually peaks in quarter 3 each year following results days for vocational qualifications taken in schools alongside GCSEs and A levels. The uptake of these qualifications is also affected by the Department for Education's [performance table qualification lists](#).

The number of certificates or qualifications with certificates issued does not directly reflect qualification funding. Qualifications remain in scope of this release if their funding status changes. Funding changes can affect the trends, but this can differ between qualifications.

The disruption due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021 affected trends from quarter 2 of 2020 onwards. Restrictions meant that fewer students completed qualifications and obtained certificates. In 2020 and 2021, alternative arrangements for assessments were put in place, which likely affected qualification outcomes. Further details on these arrangements are available in a [previous report](#). From 2022 onwards, exams and other formal assessments returned to pre-pandemic arrangements.

Our [vocational and other qualifications quarterly statistics](#) have been released since 2012 (see also [archived releases](#)). Long-term trends are affected by many factors, such as changes to the qualifications system, the market and changes in policy and regulation. For a brief overview, see our blog from 2022 on [Vocational and technical qualifications: what 10 years of data can tell us](#). See also context published by the Department for Education regarding [Qualifications Reform](#).

Data sources

Information on qualifications (title, type, awarding organisation, sector subject area and level) is taken from Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

The Register is a live database. Data for this release was extracted on 2 February 2026.

Data on the number of certificates issued was supplied to Ofqual by the awarding organisations. Every awarding organisation with regulated in-scope qualifications in the quarter is required to submit data. Data was submitted in line with our [Vocational quarterly: guide to the data submission process](#). Data for each quarter is submitted at the beginning of the next quarter according to Ofqual's [published reporting](#)

[schedule](#). For this quarter, the data cut off date was 31 December 2025.

The data Ofqual receives contains the number of certificates issued aggregated per qualification in the quarter.

The cleaned and processed [vocational qualifications dataset](#) underlying this release is available separately. It contains the number of certificates issued in England by qualification for each quarter starting from 2012 to present.

Revisions

Figures within this release are not usually subject to revision. If an error is discovered, it would be dealt with according to our [corrections and revisions policy for official statistics](#). The [vocational qualifications dataset](#) underlying this release, containing data from 2012 to the present, is sometimes subject to revisions. If there are revisions made this quarter to any previous quarters, they are shown in the table of revisions accompanying this release. Revisions can relate to awarding organisations resubmitting data for a previous quarter to correct an error or omission. Revisions can also be caused by qualifications changing in or out of scope of this release, due to a correction being made in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

Data quality and areas of uncertainty

Data quality

There may be errors in the data we receive from exam boards and as such Ofqual cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. Nevertheless, we do take appropriate steps to assess accuracy prior to publication.

The way we work with our data suppliers to promote data quality at source is described in our [statement on administrative data sources](#). We also carry out our own quality assurance procedures as explained in our [quality framework for statistical publications](#), to check 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.

Areas of uncertainty

Information on qualifications (title, type, awarding organisation, sector subject area and level) from Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) is self-reported by awarding organisations and there may be errors. We rely on this information to identify the qualifications in scope of this release and group qualifications.

Awarding organisations supply the number of certificates issued aggregated per qualification per month in the quarter. We do not always know how exactly awarding organisations aggregate raw data and are not routinely notified if there is a change in systems or processes. When we become aware of any change that affects the data quality, we ask awarding organisations to correct any issues and if necessary, also revise affected data in previous quarters.

There are some known differences between qualifications in how certificates are assigned to quarters. Awarding organisations may use the date recorded for when the qualification was completed, when the result was awarded, when the result was issued to the student or when the certificate was issued. For most qualifications, these dates are all within a few days of each other. For some qualifications however, there can be a delay of several weeks between completion and certificates being issued; this applies to many qualifications on the Department for Education's [performance table qualification lists](#). We understand that for most of these qualifications the certificate is reported in the quarter in which the result was awarded or was issued to the student. However, for some of qualifications, including some reformed Tech Awards, certificates are instead reported in the quarter when the certificate was issued. For these qualifications, that means that even if results were issued on summer results days in August, the certificates are not reported until quarter 4. We are currently working on understanding user needs in this area and aim to improve how certificates are assigned to quarters.

Methodology

In this release, we present the number of certificates for the quarter and for the 12-

month period to the end of the quarter. A quarter is a 3-month period and a year is split into four quarters:

- Quarter 1: 1 January to 31 March
- Quarter 2: 1 April to 30 June
- Quarter 3: 1 July to 30 September
- Quarter 4: 1 October to 31 December

A 12-month to quarter end period is the 12 months up to and including the last month of the quarter. For quarter 4 2025 the 12 months are the period from 1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025. A 12-month to quarter end period always includes the current quarter and the three previous quarters.

This release includes quarterly comparisons and annual comparisons.

Quarterly comparisons are made between the current quarter and the same quarter of the previous year. This is a better comparison than with the previous quarter in the same year because there is a strong seasonal trend to when in the year certificates are issued.

Annual comparisons are made between the 12-month to quarter end period for the current quarter and the 12-month period for the same quarter of the previous year. For quarter 4 2025, the current 12-months are the period from 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2025 and the previous 12-months are the period from 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2024. Annual trends are less affected by seasonality.

For the total number of certificates, this release includes quarterly and annual comparisons for the past 5 years.

The release also includes rankings for the 50 qualifications with the most certificates issued in the current quarter, the 50 awarding organisations with the most certificates issued in the current quarter and the 50 awarding organisations with the most certificates issued in the 12-month to quarter end period for the current quarter. Ties are resolved by rank ordering alphabetically.

Appropriate use of the statistics

The number of certificates issued is not the same as the number of students completing qualifications. One student may receive multiple certificates. Not all

students registered for a qualification will receive a certificate as registered students might withdraw from the qualification or fail to meet the criteria for completion. This data also does not tell you about pass rates.

The calendar year quarters do not align with academic years. The academic year runs from 1 September to 31 August of the following year. The 12 months from quarter 4 to quarter 3 of the following year run from 1 October to 30 September of the following year.

Confidentiality and disclosure control

To ensure confidentiality and clarity of the accompanying data, all figures are rounded, as per our [rounding policy for statistical publications](#).

Certificate numbers are rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is less than 5 (1 to 4), it is represented as 'Fewer than 5'. True zero is denoted as '0'.

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 from unrounded values before being rounded.

We use unrounded values to derive percentages. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

Related statistics

See [Statistics at Ofqual](#) for links to our other statistical releases and interactive visualisations.

In particular, see our [Annual qualifications market report](#), which provides information on the qualifications market in England for the academic year and includes data on certificates for GCSEs, AS and A levels alongside vocational and other qualifications.

For quarterly certificate statistics for vocational and other qualifications for Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, see:

- [Vocational and Other Qualifications Bulletins CCEA](#)
- [Publications & Resources Qualifications Wales](#)
- [Qualifications Scotland Accreditation - Quarterly and Annual Statistics Reports](#)

Useful links

[Report and data tables](#) accompanying this release.

[Vocational qualifications dataset](#) that is underlying this release.

[Vocational and other qualifications over time](#) interactive visualisation of the dataset underlying this release.

[Definitions](#) of important terms used in this release.

[Policies and procedures](#) that Ofqual follows for production of statistical releases.

[Make a freedom of information \(FOI\) request](#) to access official information.

Official statistics designation

These statistics are classified as [accredited official statistics](#) (referred to as National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007). They have been independently reviewed by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)](#) in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Our statistical practice is regulated by the 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](#).

Contact details

Email: data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk

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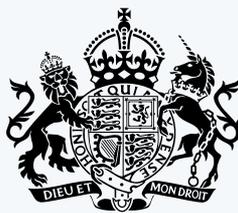
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