



Official Statistics

Background information for annual qualifications market report: academic year 2024 to 2025

Published 19 March 2026

Applies to England

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Provide your feedback

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About this release

This annual statistical release provides information on the qualifications market in England for the academic year 2024 to 2025. For this report, because certificates are collected quarterly, the 2024 to 2025 academic year is considered to be the start of October 2024 until the end of September 2025. Data is presented on the number of qualifications available from Ofqual-regulated awarding organisations

and certificates awarded for these qualifications. Data for previous years is also presented for comparison purposes.

Scope of this release

This release presents data on regulated qualifications across GCSEs, AS, A levels, and vocational and other qualifications and taken by students in schools and colleges in England. This release also includes statistics on these qualifications taken by students outside of the UK, where those qualifications are also taken by students in England.

Please note that where this release refers to ‘vocational and other’ qualifications, this means all qualifications other than GCSE, AS, A level, apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs), Apprenticeships Assessment Qualifications and T Level Technical Qualifications (TQs).

Context

External influences

Interests of users of qualifications

A range of factors influences the development and take-up of qualifications. There is a complex and dynamic relationship between those providing qualifications (awarding organisations), purchasers who teach or deliver the qualifications (schools, colleges and training providers), students, and other users such as employers and further and higher education providers. Government reforms of qualifications, performance measures, public funding policies and other requirements all significantly impact on many of these relationships.

Users of qualifications respond to incentives, many of which are driven by government policy changes. Awarding organisations respond to market demand for their qualifications, market opportunities, and incentives to develop and deliver new qualifications to meet government policy requirements and to meet changing skills requirements.

In deciding which qualifications to offer, in addition to student needs and institutional priorities, schools and colleges are influenced by accountability measures and funding. Decisions are often balanced against practical delivery considerations such as teacher availability and student demand. Schools and colleges may be informed, advised and influenced by organisations in their networks, which can influence their choice of which qualifications to offer.

Employers are users and purchasers of many vocational and other qualifications and, therefore, have influence over market demand for qualifications, including which qualifications lead to securing and sustaining employment in their sectors. Employer demand for certain types or specific qualifications can influence which qualifications students choose to take. A range of factors influences employer demand, including policy changes, licence to practise requirements, sector development and other wider economic changes.

Students may opt to study qualifications that will best help them progress in work or in higher or further education, according to their interests. Sometimes these relationships are very direct, such as many licence to practise schemes which depend on gaining a regulated qualification.

Change influencing the market in England - GCSE, AS and A level qualifications

Accountability reform

Changes to performance measures are likely to continue shaping the uptake of some qualifications. As part of changes to the [secondary accountability system announced in 2013](#), [Progress 8](#) and [Attainment 8](#) became the [key measures of performance](#) for all state-funded secondary schools and colleges offering key stage 4 education in England from 2016. They replaced the 5+ A* to C including English and mathematics headline measure and expected progress measures.

Progress 8 was introduced in 2016 and aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. For English language and English literature, providing that both subjects are taken, the best score from these subjects is double weighted. The way that Progress 8 is calculated has encouraged uptake in the reformed English literature GCSE.

Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures, as well as the government's separate measure of students entering [English Baccalaureate \(EBacc\)](#) subjects, may also further encourage providers to focus on the delivery of EBacc subjects. This most likely explains very little [variation in proportions of uptake of EBacc versus non-EBacc subjects](#), given that the accountability measures count only a maximum of 3 non-EBacc GCSEs.

Please note, [performance measures were suspended for the academic year 2020 to 2021](#), as part of steps taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Performance measures for key stage 4 and post-16 qualifications returned for the academic year 2021 to 2022](#), with some adjustments.

Growth in alternative pathways

The expansion of vocational and technical qualifications and growing recognition of T Levels may influence some students' choices away from traditional GCSE, AS and A level qualifications route.

Change influencing the market in England - vocational and other qualifications

Performance tables

The effect of changes to [performance tables](#), first introduced for reporting in the

2017 to 2018 academic year continue to be seen. Information on the changed requirements can be found in the [technical guidance for awarding organisations](#).

New technical awards were awarded for the first time in 2023 to 2024. From 2024, there were new rules about the design and structure of the qualifications. These changes were introduced so that students who take vocational and technical qualifications can be confident their results provide a reliable reflection of their abilities and are valuable in progressing their education and career. In many cases, the changes led to substantial differences in the design and delivery of the qualifications. For example:

- students are now required take their assessment by exam at the end of their course; this enables awarding organisations to consider the performance of the whole cohort when setting grade boundaries for these assessments, improving their ability to set and maintain standards
- the assessments by exam must be worth at least 40% of the marks available for the qualification
- changes to the design of some units: all units are marked and awarding organisations set grade boundaries after students have taken the assessment; awarding organisations consider the performance of students on the assessment tasks when setting these grade boundaries - in the past, some assessments were not marked and were graded using pre-set criteria

Many awarding organisations took the opportunity to update and refresh the content of these qualifications, and some chose to use a different grading scale for their new qualifications. Taken together, these changes represent a substantial change to the design and structure for many technical awards, with some qualifications changing more than others.

Funding changes for post 19-year-olds

The [funding rules](#) for an academic year for vocational qualifications aimed at students who are over 19 years of age may affect the number of certificates awarded in a given academic year. Recent initiatives such as [Adult Education Budget \(AEB\) Devolution](#) and [National Skills Fund](#) shape which qualifications are funded and prioritised. This in turn has the potential to affect both the volume and type of vocational and technical certifications awarded.

Functional Skills qualifications

From 1 September 2019, a [reformed suite of English and mathematics Functional Skills qualifications \(FSQs\)](#) have become available, which has likely affected the FSQs market and the number of certifications.

Whilst some Functional Skills qualifications in ICT were still certificating in 2024 to 2025, they are no longer available to new learners and have been replaced by Digital Functional Skills qualifications (DFSQs). DFSQs were first certificated against in 2023 to 2024 and are a separate qualification type only available at entry level and level 1. DFSQs place greater emphasis on the use of digital devices and developing digital skills to use in daily life as well as in the workplace or education setting.

The number of certificates awarded in FSQs, particularly in the 2020 to 2021 academic year may have been impacted by temporary flexibilities introduced by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in February 2020. Additionally, the number of students achieving GCSEs in English and mathematics by the age of 16 during the COVID-19 pandemic may also have affected FSQ entries and certifications.

Introduction of T Levels

T Levels, first available for teaching in September, are designed as the new technical route qualifications at level 3 and are offered in schools and colleges alongside A levels. They are intended to streamline the qualification landscape by replacing existing technical qualifications that cover similar content.

The first T Levels in construction, digital, and education and early years were available for teaching from September 2020 (certifying in 2022). This was followed by the roll-out of health and science T Levels in September 2021, and business and administration, engineering and manufacturing, and legal, finance, and accounting in September 2022. Agriculture, environmental, and animal care T Levels were introduced in September 2023. Animal care and management, craft and design, media, broadcast and production T Levels were introduced in September 2024. Marketing was introduced in September 2025. For more details on the phased roll-out of T Levels, please see the Department for Education's [T Level action plan](#).

The continued roll-out of T Levels is expected to further affect the number of certificates awarded for applied general and technical qualifications, as providers transition towards the new level 3 technical programmes.

Change influencing international exports by awarding organisations in England

Many awarding organisations offering general, vocational and other qualifications that are regulated by Ofqual also operate internationally. The international appeal of Ofqual-regulated qualifications is shaped by a combination of domestic policies, international agreements, and the evolving needs of global education and labour markets. Changes in any of these areas can influence the demand for, and recognition of, Ofqual-regulated qualifications outside the UK.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The figures reported in this release cover the period from the 2020 to 2021 academic year through to the 2024 to 2025 academic year. These figures were, therefore, likely affected by changes in public health restrictions and other interventions put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020.

Many assessments used alternative arrangements in the 2020 to 2021 academic year because of ongoing disruption from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Exams and other formal assessments returned in the 2021 to 2022 academic year, with [some adaptations](#) intended to recognise the disruption to education caused by the pandemic. Likewise, in the academic year 2022 to 2023, AS, A level, and most GCSE exams and formal assessments [returned to pre-pandemic](#)

[arrangements](#) with some protection built into the grading process to recognise the disruption that students had faced.

For VTQs, adaptations to exams and other formal assessments that were put in place to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic, were no longer permitted as assessments [returned to pre-pandemic arrangements](#).

Post-16 education and skills reforms

The reporting period for this publication ends before the government announced its post-16 education and skills reforms in the [Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper](#) published in October 2025. These reforms outline the government’s plan to introduce changes across the post-16 system, including clearer and higher quality study routes, stronger alignment with employer and economic needs, and simplifying the qualifications landscape. As the government begins to put these reforms into practice, we anticipate them to drive major changes to post-16 qualifications and influence how new qualifications are developed and taken up.

Qualification type

Regulated qualifications are classified into different qualification types to describe the nature of qualification. Qualification types provide information which complements that provided by the sector subject area classification and can give an indication of a number of features, such as the type of assessment, the qualification level and guided learning hours.

Qualification types are classified into 3 broad categories:

1. General.
2. Life and personal skills.
3. Vocational, technical and professional.

Some qualification types are ‘regulatory types’ which means they are subject to the General Conditions of Recognition as well as specific additional regulatory requirements 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 offering the qualification for the purposes of transparency on [Ofqual's Register](#).

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

Table 1. Breakdown of the structure of qualification types

Broad qualification type	Specific qualification type	Status	Reported in this release
General	Advanced extension	Regulatory	Yes

	award	type	
General	GCE A level	Regulatory type	Yes
General	GCE AS level	Regulatory type	Yes
General	GCSE (9 to 1)	Regulatory type	Yes
General	Project	Regulatory type	Yes
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	Digital Functional Skills	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and Personal Skills	Essential Digital Skills	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and Personal Skills	Functional Skills	Regulatory type	Yes
Life and Personal Skills	Other Life Skills	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, Technical and Professional	Alternative Academic Qualifications	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, Technical and Professional	Apprenticeship Assessment 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	Performing arts graded	Other	Yes

and Professional	examinations	qualification type	
Vocational, Technical and Professional	Technical occupation qualifications	Regulatory type	Yes
Vocational, Technical and Professional	Technical qualification	Regulatory type	No
Vocational, Technical and Professional	Vocationally-related qualification	Other qualification type	Yes
Vocational, Technical and Professional	Other vocational qualification	Other qualification type	Yes

Please also note that new Digital Functional Skills Qualifications (DFSQs) were introduced for first teaching in August 2023 (certifying from October 2023). These replace Functional Skills Qualifications in Information and Communication Technology. DFSQs are available at entry level and level 1.

New Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs) and Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) were introduced for first teaching in August 2025. Technical Occupational Qualifications are sometimes known as reformed Technical Qualifications. This is an overarching term for 2 different qualification types: Technical Occupational Entry and Technical Specialist. The term “reformed technical qualification” does not include Technical Qualifications (TQs) that sit within the T Level programme.

Qualifications not covered in this release

T Level Technical Qualifications

Ofqual regulates the Technical Qualification that makes up part of an overall [T Level](#), which comprises the Occupational Specialism and core assessments. The Technical Qualification itself does not have a separate certificate. The Department for Education (DfE) issues T Level certificates after collecting information from both awarding organisations and providers. Since there is no standalone certificate for the Technical Qualification, it is not included in this report. For overall T Level outcomes, please refer to the [T Level results](#) published by the DfE. 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](#).

Apprenticeship-related qualifications

The number of qualifications and certifications for apprenticeship end-point

assessments (EPAs) and apprenticeship assessment qualifications are not included in this release. The awarding organisations that deliver EPAs and apprenticeship assessment qualifications do not issue certificates for the completion of the assessments. Instead, they request certificates on behalf of apprentices, which are issued by the DfE under Section A3 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. We report on volumes and outcomes of apprenticeship EPAs regulated by Ofqual [in a separate statistical publication](#). For information on the overall apprenticeships market, please see [DfE's report on apprenticeships and traineeships](#).

Data source

Regulated qualifications

Information on regulated qualifications (covering title, type, availability, awarding organisation, sector subject area and level) and recognised awarding organisations in England is taken from Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#), referred to as the Register in this release. This information is correct at the point in time in which the Register was extracted (10 February 2026).

Certification data for GCSEs, AS and A levels

All data on certifications of GCSEs, AS and A levels used within this release was supplied to Ofqual by the awarding organisations that offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England.

Data for the June 2023 exam series to June 2025 exam series was prepared and submitted in line with our [Awarding data collection specification](#). For the June 2025 exam series, certification data for GCSEs, AS and A levels was collected from awarding organisations in the summer and contains provisional information on certificates awarded to students in England. For the exam series from June 2023 to November 2024, certification data was collected from awarding organisations after the provisional data and contains updated information on certificates awarded to students in England.

Certification data for GCSEs, AS and A levels taken in England prior to June 2023 was collated and provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), on behalf of the regulated awarding organisations offering GCSEs, AS and A levels.

GCSE certificates cover full course and short course.

The data reported here is for students who were issued certificates and therefore does not include those who were unclassified or were absent.

Certification data for vocational and other qualifications

For vocational and other qualifications, 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](#).

The data Ofqual receives contains the number of certificates issued aggregated per qualification in the quarter and is also reported in our [quarterly statistical releases](#).

Please note, in this release 'vocational and other' qualifications include all regulated qualifications other than GCSEs, AS and A levels, apprenticeship assessment qualifications, apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs) and T Level Technical Qualifications.

ONS population projection

In this release, the size of the 16-year-old cohort is derived from [Office for National Statistics: Population projections](#). These projections use observed population data up to a defined base year (for example, mid-2022 for the 2022-based projections) and apply assumptions about future fertility, mortality, and migration trends.

Population totals for 16-year-olds were obtained by downloading the relevant ONS projection dataset for each year. For example, 2025 population projections are available in the 2022-based "ppp" (principal projection) file. In all cases, the total population for age 16 is calculated as the sum of the male and female entries for that age within the 'population' tab.

This marks a change from previous releases, which relied on ONS mid-year estimates based on actual population counts carried forward from each mid-year. Unlike those estimates, the projection-based approach incorporates demographic trends such as changes in fertility, mortality, and migration.

Data quality and areas of uncertainty

There is potential for error in the information provided by awarding organisations, therefore Ofqual cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. Ofqual compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues. Summary data is routinely sent back to exam boards for checking and confirmation.

We work with our data suppliers to promote data quality at source, as described in our [statement on administrative data sources](#). We also check and challenge the accuracy of the data using quality assurance procedures as explained in our [quality framework for statistical publications](#). Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

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.

Revisions

Once published, data in the report is not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. If an error is discovered, it would be dealt with according to our [corrections and revisions policy for official statistics](#).

Qualifications may also be re-categorised to a different type, level, sector subject area or awarding organisation. In some cases, data in subsequent releases may be amended to reflect the new categorisation. In subsequent releases, the data on availability of qualifications may also be updated in line with the information available in [Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) at the time of publication.

Confidentiality and disclosure control.

To ensure confidentiality and clarity of the accompanying data, all figures for certificates are rounded, as per our [rounding policy for statistical publications](#). Figures showing numbers of qualifications and awarding organisations are not rounded.

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'. This applies to reports as well as accompanying data tables.

In some instances, 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 rounded to one decimal place. Due to this rounding, percentages may not always add to up exactly 100%.

Related publications

This statistical release presents annual data. There will be some overlap between the figures in this release and those in Ofqual's [‘vocational and other qualifications quarterly’ publications](#).

A number of other statistical releases published by the Department for Education are related to this one, including:

- [statistics: GCSEs \(key stage 4\) collection](#)
- [statistics: 16 to 19 attainment collection](#)
- [statistics: further education and skills](#)

For related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please see the websites of 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 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 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](#).

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