



Strictly Embargoed until 09.30 HRS on Thursday 15th August 2019

Northern Ireland GCE results in 2019

- **A strong performance from Northern Ireland students, with small increases across all grades.**
- **Rise at A* driven by an increase in female performance.**
- **Participation in STEM and Languages declines slightly.**

Figures released, on behalf of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ^{CIC}), demonstrate continued high performance from Northern Ireland students at GCE.

A level

Overall the 2019 GCE A Level results show strong performances by Northern Ireland students.

There was a slight increase in those awarded the top grade, with 8.8% of entries receiving an A* Grade, up 0.6 percentage points from 2018. A* - A Grade increased 0.5 percentage points to 30.9%. The A* - E pass rate remained stable with a 0.1 percentage point increase to 98.3%.

The rise at the A* Grade has been mainly driven by an increase in female outcomes, up 1.2 percentage points. Grade A also increased by 1.4 percentage points for females. Male outcomes decreased slightly, with A* Grade down 0.1 percentage points and Grade A down 0.6 percentage points.

Entries for A Levels in Northern Ireland decreased by 2.3%, but this is broadly in line with the school-age population.

Participation in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and Languages (French, German, Irish and Spanish) has declined slightly.

STEM subjects continue to account for over one-third of A Level entries in Northern Ireland. There is a decrease of 0.5 percentage points in the overall proportion of STEM entries, from 40.1% in 2018 to 39.6% this year.

Overall language entries, as a proportion of the overall entry, has declined by 0.3 percentage points.

AS Level

Northern Ireland schools continue to offer the AS Level as part of the full A Level qualification.

There is a 5.6% decline in AS Level entries in Northern Ireland. This entry decline is greater than the change in demographics.

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Notes to Editors

The statistics below represent the provisional Northern Ireland GCE results from five JCQ awarding organisations: AQA, CCEA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC

Table 1: Northern Ireland GCE A Level entries and provisional results:

	2019	2018	2017
Entries	28,332	29,005	30,684
%A*	8.8	8.2	8.1
%A* - A	30.9	30.4	30.4
%A* - E	98.3	98.2	98.3

In Northern Ireland, 98.3% passed (grades A* – E), with 8.8% achieving a grade A* and 30.9% achieving grades A* - A.

Table 2: Five most popular subjects at GCE A level in N. Ireland

	OVERALL	MALES	FEMALES
1	Mathematics (10.2%)	Mathematics (13.2%)	Biology (10.5%)
2	Biology (9.1%)	Business Studies (8.1)	Religious Studies (8.7%)
3	Business Studies (6.8)	Biology (7.2%)	English Literature (8.5%)
4	Religious Studies (6.5%)	History (7.0%)	Mathematics (7.9%)
5	English Literature (6.1%)	Physics (6.5%)	Business Studies (5.9%)

Business Studies has entered the overall top five for the first time. It is now the third most popular subject overall and the second most popular subject for males. Business studies replaced Geography in the top five for females. Traditional subjects such as Mathematics, Biology, Religious Studies and English remain popular in Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Gender comparisons

	NI 2019		NI 2018		2017	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
%A*	8.3	9.2	8.4	8.0	7.2	8.7
%A* - A	29.1	32.3	29.7	30.9	26.8	33.3
%A* - E	97.9	98.6	97.6	98.7	97.9	98.6

Females outperform males at A* by 0.9% points and by 3.2% points at Grade A (29.1% male, 32.3% female). Females continue to outperform males across the rest of the grades.

Table 4: GCE AS Levels entries and provisional results

	2019	2018	2017
Entries	38,069	40,325	41,961
%A	27.3	27.3	27.7
%A - E	95.5	95.1	94.8

Detailed tabulations of the GCE AS and A-level, Applied GCE AS and A-level are published separately, also with **the STRICT EMBARGO of 09.30 Thursday 15 August 2019** and will be available on the JCQ website from 09.30 on 15 August 2019 www.jcq.org.uk

The A* Grade was introduced in 2009 and first awarded in 2010. To gain an A* Grade, candidates have to get an A Grade overall for their A level and score 90 per cent or more of the total A2 marks available. It is not awarded for AS or for individual units.

All awarding organisations are answerable to the regulatory authorities (Ofqual (England), Welsh Government (Wales) and CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland)) for examinations standards.

The regulatory authorities monitor the awarding bodies' standards. In addition, the awarding organisations themselves conduct a number of comparability studies to compare standards. Maintaining standards within and across all qualifications in order to ensure fairness to all candidates is the paramount concern of the awarding bodies.

The JCQ comprises AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, Pearson, OCR, SQA and WJEC – the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK.

The JCQCIC is a membership organisation and enables member awarding bodies to act together in providing, where possible, common administrative arrangements for the schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications; and responding to proposals and initiatives in assessment and the curriculum.

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