



Entries and late entries

Background information accompanying the statistical release:

GCSE and A level Entries and late entries: 2017/18 (Northern Ireland)

Reporting Period: 2017/18 academic year

Publication Date: 29th November 2018

Information about the statistics

Purpose

This statistical release presents data on entries and late entries for GCSE, AS and A level exams during the 2017/18 academic year.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a membership organisation comprising seven providers of qualifications in the UK, including those awarding GCSEs and A levels. JCQ publishes deadlines by which entries should be made on behalf of the exam boards. If an entry is made after the deadline it is classed as late and may be subject to an additional charge.

Geographical coverage

This report presents data on entries, late entries and certifications for GCSEs, AS and A levels in Northern Ireland. Reports published in previous years by Ofqual included data for learners in England and Wales as well. Historical figures in this report reflect Northern Ireland only data and may therefore differ from previously published figures.

Description

Five exam boards offer GCSE and AS/A level qualifications in Northern Ireland

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC)

Schools and colleges are responsible for submitting entries to exam boards for GCSEs and A levels on behalf of their students. Students are entered separately for each unit or component that makes up a qualification¹. An entry, therefore, is counted as a student being put forward for an individual assessment, whereas certifications refer to the overall qualification. However, a small number of reformed GCSEs and A levels were taken in Northern Ireland which are linear in nature so entries for these are at qualification level rather than unit/component level. Reformed entries made up 3.1% of all GCSE entries and 8.5% of A level entries in 2017/18. A school or college submits entries to the relevant exam board on behalf of its students. Ofqual collect provisional data from exam boards at the point when it is reasonably complete, although final entry numbers may be slightly different from these.

¹ For linear specifications, units are referred to as components.

GCSEs and A levels have been undergoing major reform in England. Reformed A levels in England are different from the legacy qualifications (and the current CCEA qualifications) in that the results of the AS qualification do not count towards a student's final A level grade. As such, there is no requirement for students to enter the AS units in a given subject, even if they intend to study the full A level. The introduction of reformed AS and A level qualifications started to be phased in in 2016 in England.

The governments of Wales and Northern Ireland have retained the unitised structure of GCSEs, so schools and colleges in Wales and Northern Ireland still enter students for exams in the winter exam series in some subjects.

Data source

Awarding Organisations (AOs) submit data to Ofqual for GCSEs, AS and A levels they have awarded as well as entries and late entries in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, other UK regions and overseas.

Exam boards send data to Ofqual for each exam series. Any provider that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period is contacted to make sure the data are as complete as possible. For this release, Ofqual received data from all the exam boards.

Data was collected for AS and A level separately for the first time in 2016. Therefore, in this publication pre-2016 data are reported combined for AS and A level. From 2016 onwards where data is available, AS and A level numbers are reported separately within tables.

Limitations

There is potential for error in the information provided by exam boards, therefore CCEA Regulation do not guarantee that the information received is correct. CCEA Regulation and Ofqual compare the data over time and check for systematic issues. Summary data are sent back to exam boards for checking and confirmation.

Revisions

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

Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the [Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications](#) published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary. Ofqual continuously manages this process by:

- ensuring that data providers are clear about what is required of them – a process helped by ensuring that providers are fully consulted during the initial design phase and for any subsequent change
- reminding all providers (if appropriate) that, as a condition of them being regulated, all data must be completely accurate
- being alert to unexpected changes in the data submitted by comparing individual returns over time from the same provider
- actively challenging any unexpected results with the data providers, and
- having a proportionate data-auditing framework in place, allowing for auditing of providers' information collection, collation and delivery processes as necessary

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

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 0~ and 0 represents zero entries.

As a result of rounded figures, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in any tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

Status

These statistics are classified as Official Statistics.

Related publications

This release is part of an annual series. Previous releases were published by Ofqual [available here](#).

Glossary

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

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us at regulation@ccea.org.uk.