



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

BACKGROUND, DOCUMENT

# Examination results: background, quality and methodology information

Quality information that accompanies the examination results report.

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# Contents

[Accessing the data electronically](#)

[Context](#)

[Data source](#)

[Definitions](#)

[Open Government Licence](#)

[Contact details](#)

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# Accessing the data electronically

The data behind the chart and tables in this release can be found on [StatsWales](#) (a free-to-use internet service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download tables). Data will be updated to accompany the final examination release in December. Select Key Stage 4 for GCSE and other Key Stage 4 data, and Advanced level and equivalent for A Level and other Key Stage 5 data.

## Context

## Related publications

The figures in this publication differ from those published by Awarding Organisations in August. The Awarding Organisations' figures related to the outcome of the individual subject areas for all candidates in Wales, England and Northern Ireland, regardless of their age. The figures published in this Statistical First Release focus on the overall performance of candidates in Year 11/aged 15 and those aged 17 taking these examinations in Wales only. These figures can be found on the [JCQ website](#).

Data for England, Northern Ireland and Scotland can be found in the links below. Note that the data produced by these administrations are based on pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, whereas we publish on the basis of pupils in Year 11. Following the changes to qualifications levels, equivalencies, discounting and rules around re-entry in England in 2014, data for England are no longer on a comparable basis – see also section 5.5. Comparisons cannot be made with Scotland because their examination system and qualifications are different.

For further information or advice on the constraints of international comparisons

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please email [school.stats@gov.wales](mailto:school.stats@gov.wales).

## England

[GCSE and Equivalent Results in England \(Department for Education\)](#)

[A-Level and other 16-18 Results in England \(Department for Education\)](#)

## Northern Ireland

[Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers \(Department of Education\)](#)

## Scotland

[School leaver attainment and initial destinations: statistics \(Scottish Government\)](#)

We also publish information on teacher assessments in core and non-core subjects at foundation phase and key stages 2 and 3, which can be found on the [statistics and research page](#).

## Data source

The statistics are collated from a number of awarding organisations over the summer. The following awarding organisations provided data for this release:

ABC Awards, Agored Cymru, AQA, ASDAN, Associated Board of the Royal

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Schools of Music (ABRSM), British Computer Society (BCS), British Safety Council (BSC), CACHE, City and Guilds, CCEA, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), C Skills, EMTA Awards Ltd (EAL), ILM, IMI Awards Ltd (IMIAL), LIBF, NCFE, National Open College Network (NOCN), OCR, Pearson (Edexcel/EDI), Prince's Trust, Rock School Ltd (RSL), Sports Leaders UK, VTCT, WJEC.

## Definitions

### Coverage

The statistics in this release cover all maintained schools in Wales. Only results for pupils who are in Year 11 and pupils aged 17 received from the awarding organisations listed above are included. Examinations taken at an earlier age are also included. Any examinations achieved before the pupil is in Year 11 will be held back and included in the school year in which the pupil enters Year 11. Note that the information in this release relates to all schools for Wales figures.

Only qualifications awarded up to the 31 August are included. New awards after that date, as well as any re-sits or re-marks after that date, are not included.

Up to 2005/06, the statistics include GCSEs, GCSE short course, GNVQs and NVQs only. From 2006/07, the statistics include all qualifications approved for pre-16 or 16 to 18 use in Wales. The introduction of the wider definition has meant the inclusion of a larger range of qualifications and thus an increase in the headline indicators of performance. [An explanation of the different types of qualifications can be found from the Gov.UK website.](#)

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## Discounting

An examination is discounted when a pupil achieves a higher grade or higher level qualification in the same subject group. If a qualification is discounted then it does not count towards the statistics published in this release, or in any other official statistics published by the Welsh Government. We discount similar qualifications within the following subject groups:

### Group 1

Entry level qualifications, GCSE short course, full GCSE, vocational double award GCSEs.

### Group 2

AS level, vocational double AS level, A level, vocational double A level, AS Vocational Certificate of Education, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education double award.

### Group 3

Free standing maths qualifications.

### Group 4

Key skills.

## **Group 5**

The Award in Digital Applications (AiDA), the Certificate in Digital Applications (CiDA), the Extended Certificate in Digital Applications (CiDA+) and the Diploma in Digital Applications (DiDA).

## **Group 6**

NVQs.

## **Group 7**

BTECs and other qualifications.

## **Group 8**

The Welsh Baccalaureate.

## **Multiple Entry Changes**

From 2018/19, only the results of the first awarding of a complete qualification (including vocational qualifications) will count towards headline indicators.

This change encourages schools to enter learners when schools are confident they are ready to gain their best possible result. It does not prevent a learner resitting should a school or learner wish to attempt to improve their results, but the resit result would not count towards school headline indicators, even if the outcome is higher.

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## Changes in previous years

From 2015/16, we moved to reporting school performance on a Year 11 cohort basis rather than for pupils aged 15 at the start of the year. The Year 11 cohort is based on the number of pupils who were registered as being on roll in Year 11 in the school on the day of the school census.

Before 2015/16, data was based on mainstream schools, special schools, independent schools and PRU's (Pupil Referral Units). We did not include those pupils who were educated other than at school (EOTAS) who did not attend a PRU. This additional EOTAS data has been included in the matching process and is therefore included in our results from 2015/16.

In 2015/16, a limit to the contribution value of non-GCSE qualifications to headline indicators has been introduced. This means that any single level 1 or level 2 qualification will have a maximum equivalence value, in performance terms, of 2 GCSEs, applying to all figures.

The statistics in this release previously covered all maintained and independent schools in Wales. From 2015/16, independent schools have been removed from the Wales figures. This is due to fact that data are only collected on qualifications approved by the Welsh Government for use in schools. Independent schools can choose other qualifications which are not approved, such as iGCSEs, and these are not included in our figures. In addition, participation from independent schools in the school data checking exercises held during October to November tends to be low.

The 2021/22 and 2022/23 examination periods were transitional years, where relevant qualifications sat by Welsh pupils returned to written examination arrangements. This was not a complete return to pre-pandemic examination arrangements. To compensate for any disruption to the school timetable, pupils who sat exams in 2021/22 were given a wider choice of questions from the

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syllabus, with Qualifications Wales setting results at a national level broadly midway between 2018/19 (the last time examinations were sat) and 2020/21 outcomes. As we transition back to pre-pandemic assessment arrangements, some support remained in place for learners who sat exams in 2022/23. This support was in the form of advance information and a supportive approach to grading. In 2022/23 Qualifications Wales set the results at a national level broadly midway between 2018/19 and 2021/22 outcomes. In 2023/24 Qualifications Wales have returned to awarding results in line with pre-pandemic results, resulting in **a slight decrease from the 2022/23 results (see Qualification Wales for more details)**.

Pupils that were awarded a qualification during the 2019/20 and 2020/21 summer periods were awarded grades based on a centre determined or centre assessed grade model. Grades were determined by schools, based on their assessment of learners' work, using a range of evidence (including non-examination assessments, mock exams, and classwork).

## Key Stage 4 headline indicators

A new set of interim headline indicators have been introduced for 2018/19. The interim headline indicators are made up of five headline indicators, all based on points scores:

- Capped 9 score (Interim Measure Version)
- Literacy measure
- Numeracy measure
- Science measure
- Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure

## Capped 9 indicator (Interim Measure Version)

The Capped 9 score (Interim Measure Version) calculates the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual learners in the cohort, capped at a specified volume of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. As with the previous version of the Capped 9, the interim indicators version is capped at a total volume of nine GCSEs or equivalent qualifications (referred to as ‘slots’ throughout this document):

Three of the nine slots require the awards of specific subjects and qualifications to contribute any points towards the measure. These slots are each one GCSE in size, specifying requirements in Literacy, Numeracy and Science (GCSEs only) and taking the best grade achieved for each slot from the relevant qualifications.

The remaining six slots will reflect the points attached to each learner’s best remaining six qualifications (excluding those awards that are contributing towards the three subject-specific slots described above).

This differs from the previous version of the Capped 9 score, which had five specified slots: one for Welsh/English (language qualifications only from 2017), one for mathematics – numeracy, one for mathematics and two for science. This left only four slots open to local choice. The specified nature of the measure had led to a narrowing of the curriculum choices in some schools, which is not in the best interest of the individual learners. A breakdown of the interim Capped 9 score (Interim Measure Version) and an explanation of the method used to calculate this measure.

# Subject Performance Indicators (Literacy, Numeracy and Science)

In addition to being a core slot of the Capped 9 indicator (Interim Measure Version), Literacy, Numeracy and Science are also standalone performance indicators. They are each one GCSE in size.

Each of these indicators calculate the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the applicable GCSE qualifications awarded to a learner. These qualifications are listed below.

## Literacy

- GCSE English Language
- GCSE Welsh Language (first language only)
- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE Welsh Literature

## Numeracy

- GCSE Mathematics
- GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy

## Science

- GCSE Biology
- GCSE Chemistry
- GCSE Physics
- GCSE Science (Double Award)

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- GCSE Applied Science (Double Award)
- GCSE Applied Science (Single Award)

## The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate indicator

The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate indicator calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award:

- Foundation Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)
- National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)

## Rounding and symbols

In tables where figures have been rounded to the nearest final digit, there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total shown.

The following symbols have been used throughout the publication:

[n/a] - not available

[suppressed] - figure is less than 5 or is based on a figure less than 5.

## Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality,

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Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. It also covers specific issues relating to quality of 2016 data, and describes the quality management tool applied to this area of work.

## Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and officials in the Welsh Government
- members of the Senedd and the Senedd Research Service
- Estyn
- other government departments
- the research community
- regional education consortia, local authorities and schools
- students, academics and universities
- individual citizens, private companies and the media

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- monitoring education strategies such as Rewriting the Future and wider policy strategies such as the Tackling Poverty action plan
- general background and research
- inclusions in reports and briefings
- advice to Ministers
- the all-Wales education core data packs
- LA and school comparisons and benchmarks
- to inform the education policy decision-making process in Wales including school reorganisation
- to inform ESTYN during school inspections
- the education domain of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

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- to assist in research in educational attainment

## Accuracy

Schools and local authorities will have an opportunity to assess the provisional results for accuracy, and will supply amended information where applicable.

## Timeliness and punctuality

The data relates to all qualifications achieved between 1 September and 31 August of the academic year. The figures now include any exam re-grades, resits and missing qualifications where evidence was provided from schools within the allotted time period or was provided automatically by the awarding organisations.

## Accessibility and clarity

This Statistical First Release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on [StatsWales](#) (updated in December), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

School-level data is available through the My Local School website. This provisional data will not be added to My Local School but final data for the academic year will be added later in January.

## Comparability and coherence

Following the Wolf Review of Vocational Education in England, GCSE reform in

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England and other changes introduced by the Department for Education in England, data on Key Stage 4 attainment in England and Wales are no longer on a comparable basis. The main differences are:

- Data for England limits the size of vocational qualifications to a maximum of 1 GCSE. Since 2015/16, data for Wales limits the size of vocational qualifications to a maximum of 2 GCSEs, following the recommendation in the Review of Qualifications. Prior to this, there was no limit on the size of vocational qualifications, with many choices being equivalent in size to 4 GCSE's.
- Data for England only allow the first entry in any examination to count regardless of grade. The best grade is taken in Wales.
- England has changed the way they discount qualifications so that similar general and vocational qualifications cannot both count in their statistics. This restriction does not apply in Wales.

Information about GCSE reform in England as well as [The Wolf Review of Vocational Qualifications \(Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation & Skills\)](#) can be found on the Gov.UK website.

There is also more information about the Wolf Review of Vocational Education in the statistical release [GCSE and Equivalent Results in England 2013/14 \(Revised\) \(Department for Education\)](#). In Wales, the Review of Qualifications started from the academic year 2015/16. This means that the way we calculate our performance indicators will change. This will have an impact on comparability over time and will further limit our ability to compare educational attainment in Wales with the rest of the UK. See [review of qualifications](#) for more information.

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## Contact details

Statistician: Stephen Hughes

Email: [school.stats@gov.wales](mailto:school.stats@gov.wales)

Media: 0300 025 8099

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