



Joint Committee Report

August 2017

GCSE results

Introduction

The aim of this report is to highlight the key changes which have affected the GCSE results this year. The report will also identify national level figures and subject data for Wales. This report is for information only.

GCSE All-Wales Summary 2017

A number of changes to performance measures and qualifications in Wales should be considered when interpreting headline figures. These are:

- new qualifications for Welsh and English Language and literature have been introduced
- new qualifications for mathematics and mathematics numeracy have been introduced – this means that pupils now sit two qualifications for mathematics (2 papers); and
- there has been an increase in the number of pupils entered early for these qualifications which will have impacted on grade boundaries and results.

Headlines

In comparison with summer 2016 results for **all** candidates:

the proportion achieving A* is unchanged at 6.1%

the proportion achieving A* and A is down by 1.5 percentage points to 17.9%

the proportion achieving A* to C is down by 3.8 percentage points to 62.8%

the proportion achieving A* to G is down by 1.8 percentage points to 96.9%

- A significant factor contributing to this fall is the considerable change in entry patterns, notably, a significant increase in the number of Year 10 entries and a significant number of Year 11 students achieving their maths qualifications in November.
- The growing trend in early entry means more students have taken exams early, 'banked' a result and not returned to sit the exam again this summer – many will be students who have achieved a Grade C or above that would otherwise appear in this summer's results. **As a consequence, reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from direct comparisons between results in summer 2017 and summer 2016, or direct comparisons between summer results across the UK.**

GCSE Mathematics

Due to the range of entry patterns, reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from the comparison between results in summer 2017 and summer 2016. Given the scale of

change between the old mathematics GCSE and the two new mathematics GCSEs, along with the multiple entry attempts available to students, detailed comparisons between previous years' results and this year's results are not possible.

In the table below the **best** outcomes for **16-year-old students this academic year compared to the 2015/2016 and 2014/2015 academic years** are shown as they provide the most consistent comparator:

	2014 / 2015 cumulative %	2015 / 2016 cumulative %	2016/2017 cumulative %	2016-2017 difference
A*	6.8	7.5	10.8	+3.3
A*-A	16.0	17.4	20.2	+2.8
A*-C	63.7	65.5	63.8	- 1.7
A*-G	97.9	98.7	98.0	- 0.7

GCSE English Language

Between 2016 and 2017 there has been a significant increase in the overall entries in **GCSE English Language** by 67%. This significant increase is affected by the number of Year 10 students entered this summer.

This year, pupils could only sit the new qualification in the summer series, so care needs to be taken when comparing this summer's data to data from previous years.

Given the significant shift in entry pattern for this qualification, reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from the comparison between all student results in summer 2017 and summer 2016. Therefore, we have used 16-year-old outcomes as the only consistent comparator.

Outcomes for **16-year-old students this year compared to the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 academic years** are shown in the table below:

	2014 / 2015 cumulative %	2015 / 2016 cumulative %	2016 / 2017 cumulative %	2016-2017 difference
A*	3.1	2.8	3.2	+0.4
A*-A	13.8	13.6	14.0	+0.4
A*-C	64.5	64.2	64.5	+0.3
A*-G	99.2	99.2	98.6	- 0.6

It is evident both nationally and regionally that many year 10 pupils have performed well at the Level 2 indicator. In many cases they are outperforming pupils in current year 11. There are a number of likely reasons for this.

- School adapted their Key Stage 3 Scheme of work so year 10 will have had an extra year of focused skills teaching
- The delay in release of the specification meant that schools were less well prepared to teach current year 11 effectively
- Teachers will have improved and developed their teaching style and year 10 pupils have had more time to benefit from this
- Year 10 pupils have had an additional 2 years national literacy tests and the LNF.

GCSE English Literature

Outcomes for **16-year-old students who have achieved a GCSE in English Literature (either sat in Year 10 or Year 11)**, are shown in the table below:

	2015 / 2016 cumulative %	2016 / 2017 cumulative %	2016-2017 difference
A*	4.3	4.1	- 0.2
A*-A	19.8	19.9	+0.1
A*-C	77.5	77.1	-0.4
A*-G	99.3	99.3	=

GCSE Welsh Language

As for **GCSE Welsh Language**, overall entries for GCSE Welsh Language have increased due to a significant increase in Year 10 entries. Given the significant shift in entry pattern for this qualification, reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from the comparison between all student results in summer 2017 and summer 2016.

Outcomes for **16-year-old students this year compared to 2015/2016 academic years** are shown in the table below:

	2015 / 2016 cumulative %	2016 / 2017 cumulative %	2016 / 2017 difference
A*	3.9	4.0	+0.1
A*-A	15.4	15.6	+0.2
A*-C	73.9	73.6	-0.3
A*-G	99.8	99.6	-0.2

GCSE Welsh Literature

Outcomes for **16-year-old students this year compared to 2015/2016** are shown in the table below:

	2015 / 2016 cumulative %	2016 / 2017 cumulative %	2016 / 2017 difference
A*	8.2	9.0	+0.8
A*-A	23.4	24.2	+0.8
A*-C	74.5	75.1	-0.6

A*-G	99.9	99.9	=
-------------	------	------	---

GCSE Science

The new **science GCSEs** will be awarded for the first time next year and are currently being studied by Year 10 students. This therefore means that the old GCSE Science which was historically taken by Year 10 students has seen a significant fall in overall entries this year of 78%. This significant change in entries means that comparisons cannot be made when interpreting results year on year. With such a major change, the results are also very different, with 34.8% of candidates gaining grades A*-C.

For Additional Science, there was a 26.2% increase in entries and a reduction in outcomes by 1.6 and 6.0 percentage points at A*-A and A*-C respectively (from 69.9% to 63.9% respectively for the latter).

For Biology, results at A* and A*-A are similar to 2016, with a reduction of 2.3 percentage points at A*-C. For Chemistry and Physics there have been falls in outcomes at grades A*-C, by 1.3 and 0.8 percentage points respectively and also at grades A* and A*-A for Physics.

Welsh (2nd) Language

Results have remained stable for the full course at A*-C, but have improved by 1.7 and 1.8 percentage points at grades A* and A*-A respectively. This year has seen a decrease of 2,000 in the overall entries for the short course (which are now 12,450), but an increase of 500 in the number of candidates aged 15. For these 5,100 younger candidates the outcomes are somewhat better (17.1% gaining grades A*-A and 61.9% gaining grades A*-C) than for the overall entry.

Modern Foreign Languages

Results are substantially improved for German, by 5.1, 11.9 and 8.3 percentage points at A*, A*-A and A*-C respectively, reversing a weakening in results at upper grades last year. Results for Spanish are very similar to the previous year, with small improvements at A*, A*-B and A*-C, but for French results are considerably lower at the top grades (e.g. at A*-A and A*-B by 2.5 and 3.7 percentage points, respectively). However, in each of these subjects, well over 70% of candidates continue to achieve grades A*-C.

24/8/17