



Highlights, Summer Series 2019

26 September 2019

Figure 1: Percentage of centres that saw a change of 5 pp or less



Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Key Results

- Qualifications which saw a reduction in early entry saw more variation in centre results
- For GCSE English Language, 33.0% of centres saw a change of 5 percentage points (pp) or less (down from 45.1% of centres in 2017/18)

About this release

These experimental statistics provide information on the change in centre results for phase 1 approved GCSEs. They are provided to inform users of the variation seen in centre results and to gather feedback to help us determine the need for future releases. The data was sourced from awarding bodies and the Welsh Government.

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Statistician: Mark Hogan CStat 01633 373 253 statistics@qualificationswales.org
Media enquiries: Alan Morris 01633 373 216 comms@qualificationswales.org



INTRODUCTION

Qualifications Wales is the regulator of qualifications, other than degrees, and the qualifications system in Wales.

From summer 2018, we have collected and reported on data for Wales for general qualifications. Before summer 2018, data for Wales was collected and published by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator in England.

In this release, we present data on changes in results at the centre level.

Background

Feedback from stakeholders has highlighted to us the interest in results, and changes in results, for centres. 'Centres' could include all types of maintained schools and colleges in Wales, however as the data focuses on centres with at least twenty Year 11 learners in each year this will mostly be maintained schools. To ensure the comparisons are as valid as possible we present statistics here at the qualification level for approved phase 1 GCSEs. That is, the statistics below relate to a single qualification. Ofqual¹ have presented similar statistics for England but at the subject rather than qualification level. This is because in England multiple awarding bodies may offer qualifications in a subject, whereas approved GCSEs in Wales are currently only offered by WJEC.

Over recent years there have been substantial changes to entry practice for GCSEs in Wales, relating to the extent to which learners in Year 11 have sat GCSEs early and/or multiple times. To ensure the comparisons across Year groups here are as valid as possible the results have been calculated on a 'best-grade' basis. That means that if a learner was entered for a qualification in Year 10 and achieved a C and was then re-entered in Year 11 and achieved a D, the C grade is used. The statistics for each year are based on the Year 11 cohort in that year.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/variability-in-gcse-results-for-schools-and-colleges-2017-2019>

Methodology

Data from the Welsh Examination Database linked to the Pupil Level Annual School Census (WED/PLASC) is provided by the Welsh Government. This provides the historical data. Data provided by WJEC is used for the provisional data for the current year. Once the final results data for the current year is available this release will be updated.

Awarding body and WED/PLASC data was filtered to the approved phase 1 GCSEs of interest. This data was then subset to contain only those centres with at least twenty Year 11 learners in each academic year. This data for 'non-small' centres was then used to analyse the change in centre level results.

As these statistics are in percentages the volatility seen in centre results increases as the sample size (number of learners) in the centre decreases. For example, if a centre with only five learners last year and this year, had 60% of learners achieving at least a C last year, that centre could increase their results to 80% by getting one more learner to achieve at least a C. For a centre with 200 learners in each year with 60% achieving at least a C last year, to see the same improvement they would have to get forty additional learners to achieve at least a C. Therefore, the smaller a centre is the more sensitive and volatile the centre's results will be. To guard against misleading extreme results, we provide statistics only for centres which entered at least twenty Year 11 learners in each year that the approved phase 1 GCSE was awarded. In this release, we will refer to these simply as centres.

It is important to note that changes seen in centre results do not provide evidence of whether the qualification standard was correctly set or maintained. Standard setting and maintaining is done using the 'comparable outcomes' approach which is explained in detail on our website². These statistics are provided simply to allow stakeholders to put changes in centre level results into a wider context to aid meaningful interpretation.

In the tables below, the categories are such that the left endpoint is included but not the right. For example, a centre with a change of -20 pp exactly would be recorded in the 'Change between -20 pp and -15 pp' category. However a change of exactly -15 pp would not be included.

² <https://qualificationswales.org/media/4806/comparable-outcomes-approach.pdf>

School performance measures

The Welsh Government made an announcement³ on 16 October 2017 regarding new rules linked to GCSE entry. The Minister for Education announced that, from summer 2019, only a pupil's first grade achieved in a GCSE examination will count towards school performance measures. Previously the best grade achieved counted. Following this announcement there were substantial changes in entries and so the learner's best grade is used here to ensure a valid basis for comparison over time.

³ <https://gov.wales/changes-early-entry-exams-announced-kirsty-williams>

STATISTICS

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Table 3 shows that 71.8% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least an A grade. This is down from 72.8% of centres in 2018. Table 4 shows that 33.0% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least a C grade. This is down from 45.1% of centres in 2018.

Table 3: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade A or above on a best-grade basis: English Language

	2018-2017	2019-2018(†)
Total number of centres	205	205
Decrease of -25 pp or more	0	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	0	0
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	0
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	5	10
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	30	30
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	70	70
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	80	75
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	15	15
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	*	5
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	0
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	0	0
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	*

(†) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Table 4: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade C or above on a best-grade basis: English Language

	2018-2017	2019-2018(†)
Total number of centres	205	205
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	5
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	10
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	5	15
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	20	35
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	40	40
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	50	40
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	40	30
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	20	20
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	15	5
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	5	*
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	*

(†) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

Table 5 shows that 49.6% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least an A grade. This is up from 44.6% of centres 2018.

Table 6 shows that 38.1% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least a C grade. This is down from 43.2% of centres in 2018.

Table 5: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade A or above on a best-grade basis: English Literature

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	140	140
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	*
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	5
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	*
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	10	10
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	15	20
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	30	40
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	30	30
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	25	15
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	10	5
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	5
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	*	*

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Table 6: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade C or above on a best-grade basis: English Literature

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	140	140
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	5
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	*
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	10
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	15	25
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	15	15
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	35	25
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	25	30
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	10	15
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	15	10
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	5	*
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	0
Increase of +25 pp or more	*	*

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

GCSE MATHEMATICS

Table 7 shows that 62.0% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least an A grade. This is down from 66.3% of centres 2018. Table 8 shows that 40.0% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least a C grade. This is down from 48.3% of centres in 2018.

Table 7: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade A or above on a best-grade basis: Mathematics

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	205	205
Decrease of -25 pp or more	0	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	0
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	0	*
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	5	5
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	20	35
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	65	60
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	70	65
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	35	25
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	*	5
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	*
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	*	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Table 8: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade C or above on a best-grade basis: Mathematics

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	205	205
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	*
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	5
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	10
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	10	25
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	30	45
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	45	45
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	55	35
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	35	25
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	20	10
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	5	*
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	*	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

GCSE MATHEMATICS – NUMERACY

Table 9 shows that 68.8% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least an A grade. This is down from 71.7% of centres 2018. Table 4 shows that 43.4% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least a C grade. This is down from 52.2% of centres in 2018.

Table 9: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade A or above on a best-grade basis: Mathematics – Numeracy

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	205	205
Decrease of -25 pp or more	0	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	0	0
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	0
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	*	10
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	15	30
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	85	75
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	65	65
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	30	20
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	5	*
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	0
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	0	0
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Table 10: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade C or above on a best-grade basis: Mathematics – Numeracy

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	205	205
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	0
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	10
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	*	20
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	30	55
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	50	50
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	60	35
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	35	20
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	20	10
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	5
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

GCSE WELSH LANGUAGE

Table 11 shows that 46.4% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least an A grade. This is down from 55.4% of centres 2018. Table 12 shows that 48.2% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least a C grade. This is down from 62.5% of centres in 2018.

Table 11: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade A or above on a best-grade basis: Welsh Language

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	55	55
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	*
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	*
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	*	*
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	5	10
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	15	10
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	15	15
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	10	10
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	*	5
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	0
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	0	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Table 12: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade C or above on a best-grade basis: Welsh Language

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	55	55
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	*
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	0	*
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	*
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	*	*
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	10	10
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	15	15
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	20	10
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	*	10
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	*	*
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	*
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	*	0
Increase of +25 pp or more	*	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

GCSE WELSH LITERATURE

Table 13 shows that 39.6% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least an A grade. This is down from 45.8% of centres 2018. Table 14 shows that 33.3% of centres saw a change of 5 pp or less in the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving at least a C grade. This is unchanged from 33.3% of centres in 2018.

Table 13: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade A or above on a best-grade basis: Welsh Literature

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	50	50
Decrease of -25 pp or more	0	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	*	*
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	*
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	5	*
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	5	10
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	15	10
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	10	10
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	5	5
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	5	5
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	*	*
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	0	0
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	0

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

Table 14: Changes in proportion of Year 11 students achieving grade C or above on a best-grade basis: Welsh Literature

	2018-2017	2019-2018(+)
Total number of centres	50	50
Decrease of -25 pp or more	*	0
Change between -25 pp and -20 pp	0	0
Change between -20 pp and -15 pp	*	*
Change between -15 pp and -10 pp	*	10
Change between -10 pp and -5 pp	10	5
Change between -5 pp and -0 pp	5	5
Change between 0 pp and +5 pp	10	10
Change between +5 pp and +10 pp	5	5
Change between +10 pp and +15 pp	*	*
Change between +15 pp and +20 pp	5	5
Change between +20 pp and +25 pp	0	*
Increase of +25 pp or more	0	*

(+) Provisional

Source: WED/PLASC, Awarding Bodies

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Awarding Body

An organisation that develops qualifications, specifies and monitors assessments and issues awards to learners, formally recognising the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences), following an assessment and validation procedure. In other parts of the UK these are known as Awarding Organisations or Exam Boards.

GCSEs

General Certificates of Secondary Education are available in a wide range of subjects. GCSEs are the main Level 1 and Level 2 general qualifications at age 14-16 in Wales. They can be used as a basis for higher level study or training, or direct entry into employment.

Cash - in

Schools and colleges enter students who are completing a qualification and want to claim their final grade in that exam session.

Year 11

Students who are aged 16 by 31st August 2019.

Centre

A body undertaking the delivery of an assessment (and potentially other activities) to learners on behalf of an awarding body. Centres are typically educational institutions, training providers, or employers. In this release we have focused the analysis on only those maintained centres with at least twenty Year 11 learners in each year.

BACKGROUND NOTES

On 21 November 2017 the National Assembly for Wales approved the Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2017⁴ which named Qualifications Wales as one of the bodies that are in scope of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007⁵. Qualifications Wales operates in compliance with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics⁶ and has published this statistical release as Experimental Statistics.

Data Source

The data was sourced from awarding bodies and the Welsh Government Welsh Examinations Database and Pupil Level Annual School Census (WED/PLASC).

Limitations of data

There is potential error in the information provided by awarding bodies. Therefore, Qualifications Wales cannot guarantee that the information received is correct. Qualifications Wales compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues. Quality assurance procedures are carried out to ensure the accuracy of the data and challenge or question it, where necessary. Qualifications Wales continuously manages this process by:

- Ensuring that data providers are clear about what is required of them and are fully consulted during the initial design and any subsequent change phases;
- 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.

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

Geographical Coverage

This release presents data on the centre level results and change in result for approved GCSEs for centres located in Wales. This release does not include data for these qualifications taken outside of Wales.

⁴ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1142/pdfs/wsi_20171142_mi.pdf

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/contents>

⁶ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>

Revisions

The data for the most recent period is provisional and so once published, data on the centre level results and change in results is subject to revision. Also, subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or correct an error.

Completeness of the data

Awarding bodies send Qualifications Wales entry data for all approved qualifications classified as GCSE. Qualifications Wales contacts any awarding body that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period, to make sure the data is as complete as possible.

Rounding and Confidentiality

To protect confidentiality, and in accordance with Qualifications Wales's interim statistical outputs policy, all entry figures are rounded. In the commentary and tables, they are rounded to the nearest 5. Figures fewer than 5 but greater than 0 are replaced with a *. This is to ensure that data does not reveal an individual candidate. All percentages within the commentary are based on actual figures. Figures have been rounded independently and therefore may not sum to the total.

Users of these statistics

These statistics are likely to be of interest to Qualifications Wales, Ofqual, awarding bodies, local authorities, centres and the Welsh Government. We welcome feedback from users in order to gain a better understanding of who our users are over time.

Related statistics and publications

A number of statistical releases relate to this one, including:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/variability-in-gcse-results-for-schools-and-colleges-2017-2019>

Useful information

You can find information about future publications on the Welsh Government website⁷ and our website⁸. The QiW register⁹ gives information on approved and designated qualifications which are eligible for public funding in Wales.

Experimental Statistics

This statistical release makes available data from the most recent summer series exams. The data and analysis presented are badged as Experimental Statistics. This is to inform users of the data that centre level results reported statistics are still in a developmental phase and may have issues pertaining to data quality. However, both the analysis and data are still of value provided that users view them in the context of the data quality information provided. As the data set matures the coverage of the data will improve in terms of other phases of qualification reform.

These statistics are classed as 'Experimental statistics' and so are official statistics which are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

It is Qualifications Wales' responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of Official Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the UK Statistics Authority promptly.

Next update

February 2020 (provisional).

User feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to statistics@qualificationswales.org

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⁷<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/upcoming>

⁸<https://qualificationswales.org/english/our-work/research-and-statistics/upcoming-publications/>

⁹<https://www.qiw.wales/?lang=en>