

Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: Quarter 4 (October – December 2021) for Wales

25 February 2022

About this release

This release presents data collected from awarding bodies on vocational and other qualification certificates issued in Wales during October to December (quarter 4) of 2021. This release no longer includes Welsh Baccalaureate or Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications. More information on this change can be found in the background notes, as well as information on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected these statistics. Data was not collected for two awarding bodies. Typically, these two awarding bodies make up less than 0.5% of certificates in Quarter 4.

Highlights

8.9%

38,000 certificates were awarded in quarter 4 of 2021. This is a **8.9%** decrease compared to the same quarter in 2020.

5.9%

Between January 2021 and December 2021, **241,945** certificates were awarded, an increase of **5.9%** compared to the previous year.



Between Q4 2020 and Q4 2021 only five of the fifteen sectors saw an increase in certificates. The largest increase was in Health, Public Services and Care.



Between Q4 2020 and Q4 2021 three of the ten levels saw an increase in certificates. Level 3 saw the largest increase in terms of number of certificates.

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Background notes

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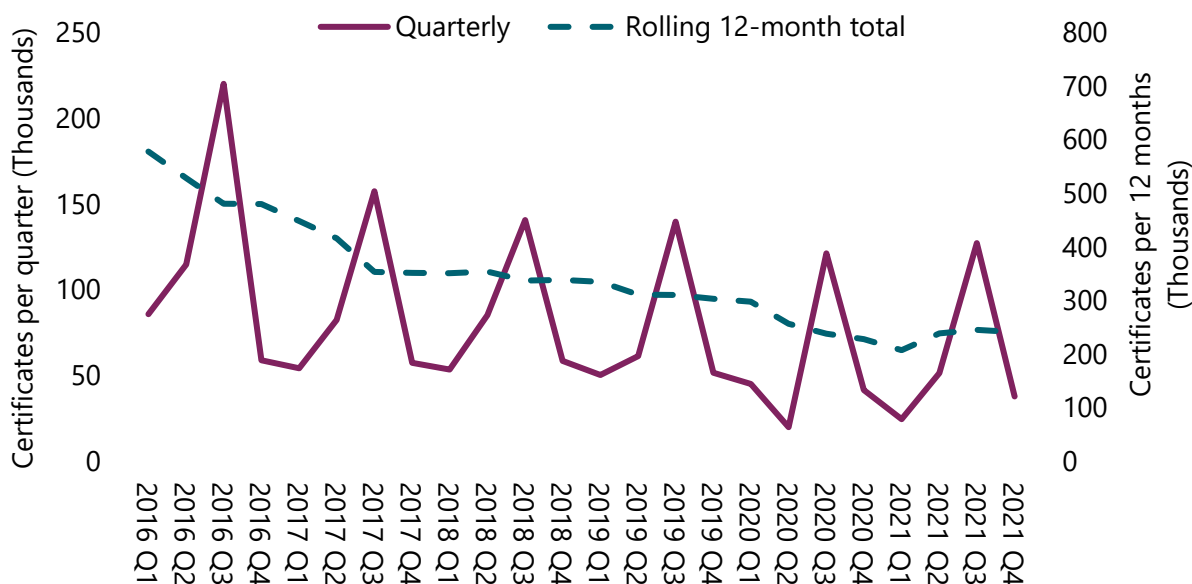
Next update: May 2022

Statistics

Total certificates and historical trends

Figure 1: Number of certificates awarded in the past 5 years

Quarterly and annual certificates awarded for vocational and other qualifications



Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies
Full data can be found in table 1 of the data tables published alongside this release

Quarterly Comparison

38,000 certificates were awarded in quarter 4 (Q4) of 2021. This is an 8.9% decrease compared to Q4 2020.

Annual Comparison

Between January 2021 and December 2021, 241,945 certificates were awarded, an increase of 5.9% compared to the previous year. Details of external factors which have likely contributed to changes can be found in the [background notes](#) of this release.

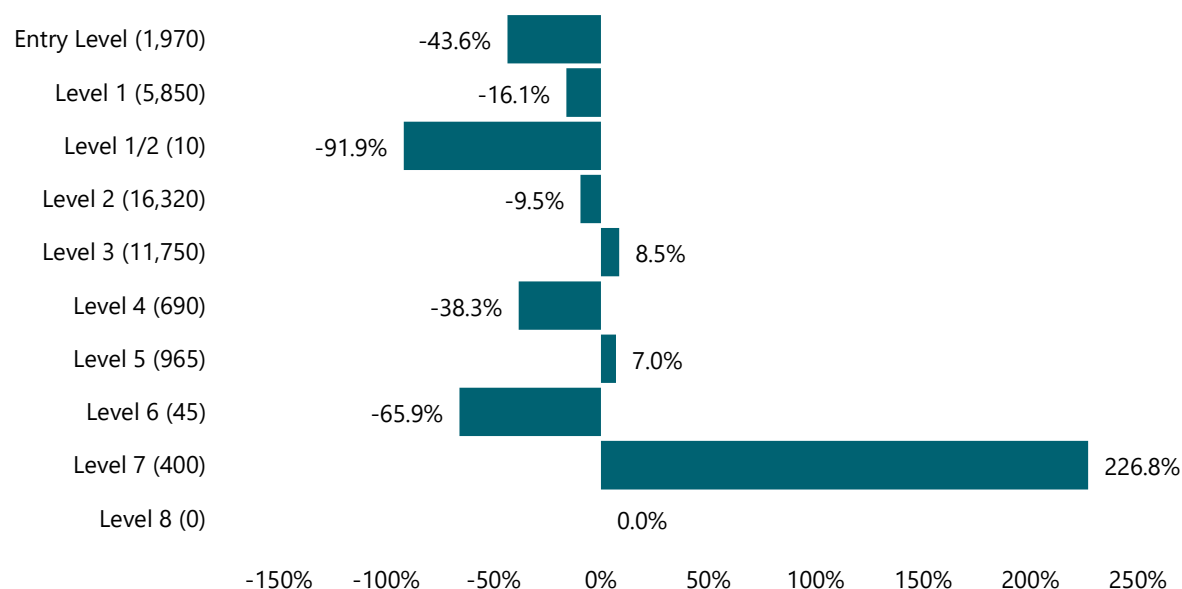
These statistics no longer include Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) or Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualifications (see [Changes to these statistics](#)). To help users with the transition to this new approach, the quarterly and annual totals calculated on the old basis (i.e., including Welsh Bacc and SCC) can be found in table 1b of the data tables published alongside this release.

Certificates by level

Figure 2: Number of certificates awarded by level

Percentage change in certificates awarded by level, Q4 2021 compared to Q4 2020

Total certificates for 2021 Q4 shown in brackets



*Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies
Full data can be found in table 2 of the data tables published alongside this release*

Levels 2 and 3 were the most awarded levels in Q4 2021, jointly accounting for 73.9% of all certificates. Levels 4 and above made up only 5.5% of all certificates awarded.

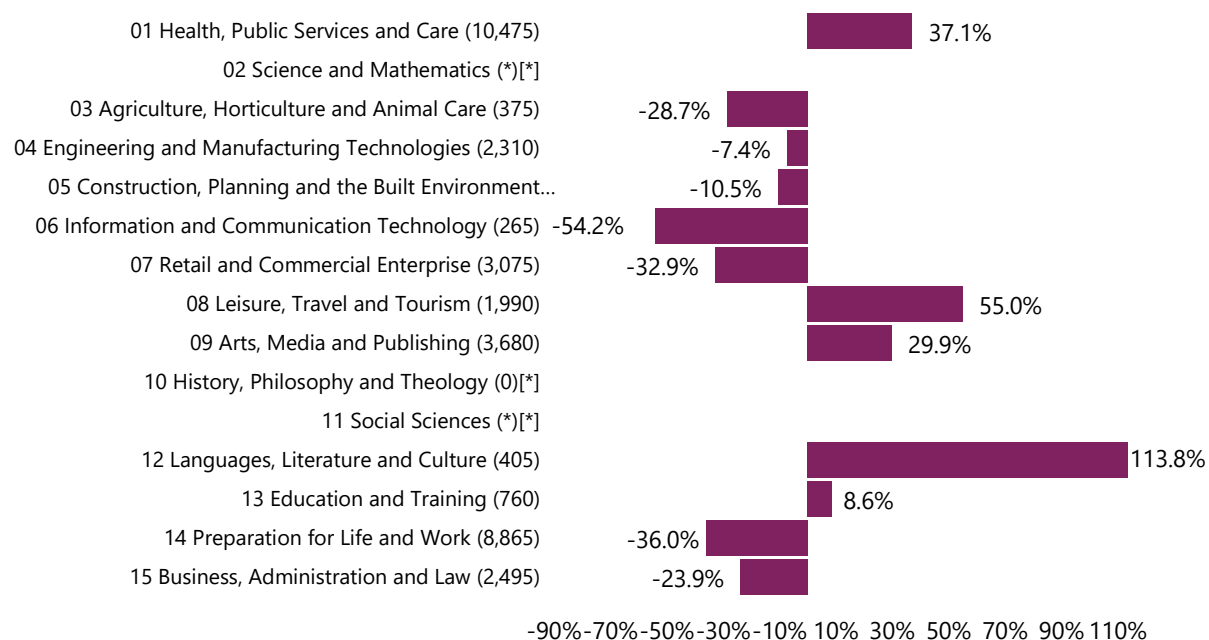
Three of the ten levels saw a quarterly increase in certificates compared to Q4 2020. The largest increases were at levels 3 and 7, which increased by 920 and 280 certificates respectively. For Level 7 this represents a 226.8% increase when compared to Q4 2020.

Certificates by sector subject area (SSA)

Figure 3: Certificates awarded by sector subject area

Percentage change in certificates awarded by SSA, Q4 2021 compared to Q4 2020

Total certificates for 2021 Q4 shown in brackets



[*] SSAs with fewer than 100 certificates in either quarter are suppressed.

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Full data can be found in table 4 of the data tables published alongside this release

The SSA with the most certificates awarded in Q4 2021 was 'Health, Public Services and Care' which made up 27.6% of all certificates. 'Preparation for Life and Work' was the second most awarded SSA at 23.3%.

The 'Health, Public Services and Care' sector saw the largest quarterly increase in certificates, increasing from 7,635 certificates in Q4 2020 to 10,475 in Q4 2021. The sector with the largest percentage increase was 'Languages, Literature and Culture' which saw a quarterly increase of 113.8%, or 215 certificates.

Despite being the SSA with the second highest number of certificates in Q4 2021, 'Preparation for Life and Work' saw a decrease of 36.0%, or 4,985 certificates, compared to Q4 2020.

Top 10 awarding bodies

On 31 August 2021, there were 96 recognised awarding bodies in Wales.

Table 1: Top 10 awarding bodies by number of certificates awarded between January 2021 and December 2021

Awarding Body	January 2020 to December 2020	January 2021 to December 2021	Rank January 2020 to December 2020	Rank January 2021 to December 2021	Rank Change
City & Guilds - City and Guilds of London Institute	61,450	60,340	1	1	↔ +0
Pearson - Pearson Education Ltd	43,005	39,215	2	2	↔ +0
WJEC - WJEC-CBAC	19,200	19,150	3	3	↔ +0
Highfield - Highfield Qualifications	14,145	17,895	5	4	↑ +1
Agored Cymru	16,975	15,175	4	5	↓ -1
LIBF - The London Institute of Banking & Finance	11,630	11,585	6	6	↔ +0
ABRSM - Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music	3,355	9,420	13	7	↑ +6
QA - Quasafe Awards	5,535	7,480	8	8	↔ +0
NCFE	6,655	7,195	7	9	↓ -2
TCL - Trinity College London	4,190	5,785	10	10	↔ +0

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

A full list of the top 50 awarding bodies can be found in table 7 of the data tables published alongside this release

Due to the variety of qualifications offered by different awarding bodies, it is likely that individual awarding bodies have been affected differently by COVID-19.

The top ten awarding bodies shown in table 1 accounted for 79.9% of all certificates awarded between January 2021 and December 2021. City & Guilds continues to award the most certificates, despite an annual decrease of 1.8%. ABRSM moved up six ranks due to an increase of 6,060 certificates. NCFE dropped two places into the top 10, despite an annual increase of 545 certificates.

Top 10 qualifications

Table 2: Top 10 qualifications by certificates awarded in this quarter

Qualification	2020 Q4	2021 Q4
Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)	720	1,715
QA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)	720	1,300
City & Guilds Level 2 Health and Social Care: Core	215	1,090
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills	1,350	1,005
Highfield Level 2 Award in Food Safety for Catering (RQF)	500	870
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	1,535	865
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	825	680
QNUK Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)	345	560
Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International Speaking and Listening (Entry 3) (GESE Grade 5) (B1.1)	845	560
City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills	960	505

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

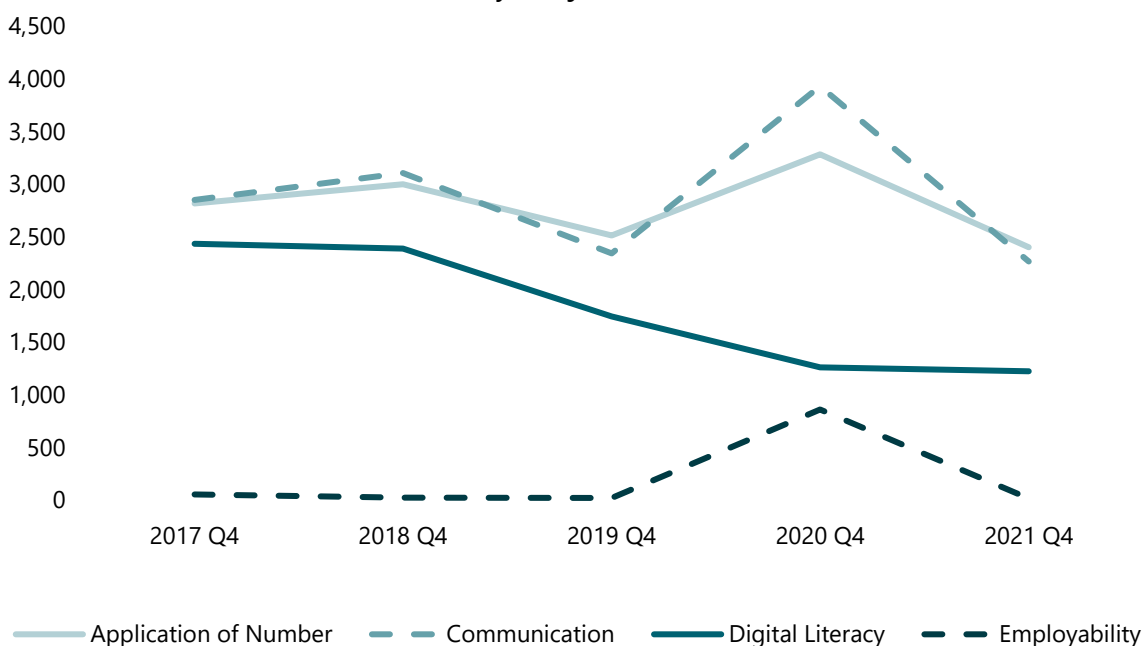
A full list of the top 50 qualifications can be found in table 9 of the data tables published alongside this release

The top ten qualifications accounted for 24.1% of all certificates awarded in Q4 2021. Of these top ten qualifications, compared to Q4 2020, Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF) saw the largest increase of 1,000 certificates. City & Guilds Level 2 Health and Social Care: Core had the largest proportional increase of 410.8%. This is still a relatively new qualification, which may be the reason for this increase. The largest proportional decrease was seen in City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills, which decreased by 47.5% or 455 certificates.

Essential Skills Wales (ESW)

Figure 4: Essential Skills Wales certificates by subject

Q4 Essential Skills Wales certificates by subject, 2017 to 2021



Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies
A full list of the top 50 qualifications can be found in table 11 of the data tables published alongside this release

Compared to Q4 2020, total certificates for Essential Skills Wales qualifications decreased by 36.7% in Q4 2021. This was driven by decreases in all four subjects, particularly Employability certificates which decreased by 98.0%, and Communication certificates which decreased by 42.3%.

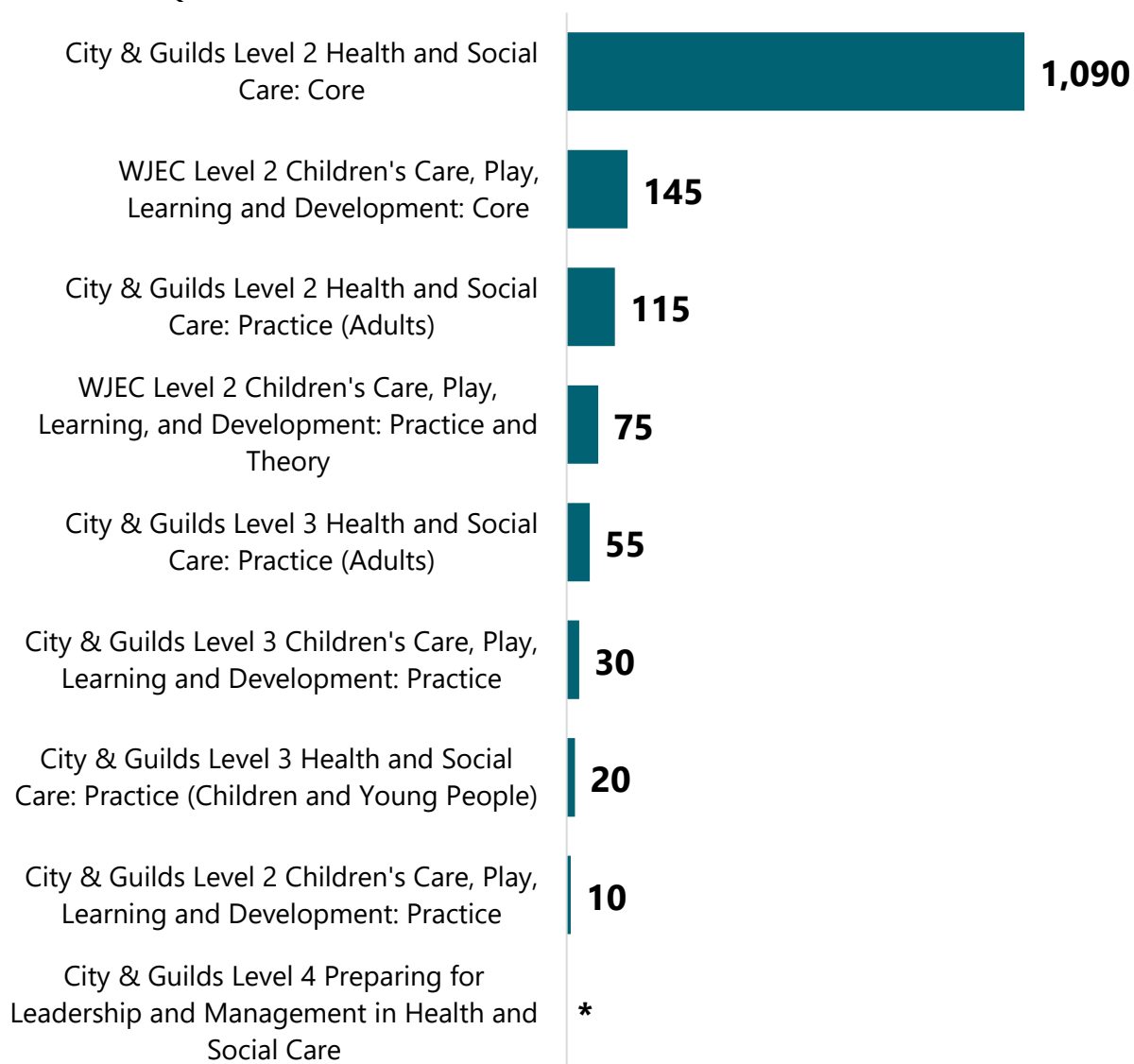
Certificates decreased at all levels. Level 3 qualifications had the largest proportional decrease of 49.2%.

Approved Vocational Qualifications

Approved vocational qualifications have been designed and made for Wales. There are currently approved vocational qualifications available in the Health and Social Care sector only.

Figure 5: How many certificates were awarded in approved qualifications?

Number of certificates awarded for approved vocational qualifications that were awarded in Q4 2021



Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies
 A full list of the top 50 qualifications can be found in table 13 of the data tables published alongside this release

In 2021 Q4 1,550 certificates were awarded across nine approved vocational qualifications, an increase of 1,335 compared to 2020 Q4 when only 215 certificates were awarded across one approved vocational qualification, City & Guilds Level 2 Health and Social Care: Core.

Background Notes

Purpose and coverage of this release

This release presents information on the number of certificates issued for regulated vocational and other qualifications in Wales. A full list of regulated qualifications can be found on the [Qualifications in Wales \(QiW\) database](#).

This data does not include GCSEs, AS level, A level, Advanced Extension Awards, Principal Learning, Project, Skills Challenge Certificates or Welsh Baccalaureate qualifications. The number of certificates awarded for some of these qualifications can be found on the [website of the Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

The data only includes certificates awarded to learners who were wholly or mainly assessed at centres located in Wales, regardless of the type of centre.

This release presents data by calendar quarter. Q1 represents 1 January to 31 March; Q2 represents 1 April to 30 June; Q3 represents 1 July to 30 September; and Q4 represents 1 October to 31 December.

This release shows the number of awards broken down by qualification level, sector subject area and awarding body.

Comparisons in this release are mainly made with data from the same quarter of the previous year. This is because there are seasonal changes in the number of certificates awarded over the year. For example, some qualifications are only awarded in the summer, at the same time as GCSEs and A levels.

These statistics do not represent individual learners, as a learner could have achieved multiple certificates during this period.

Changes to these statistics

From quarter 1 2021, Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) and Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications are no longer included in these statistics. Certificates for both the current and legacy Welsh Bacc qualifications have been removed from the data for all time periods. Qualifications that could contribute towards the legacy Welsh Bacc (e.g., Key Skills) have not been removed as we are unable to identify whether or not an individual certificate contributed to the Welsh Bacc.

We made this change following feedback from users of these statistics, both within Qualifications Wales and from other organisations. We found that because these qualifications are taken by a large number of school-age learners, these qualifications were dominating the statistics, and made it hard to understand what was happening

in the vocational sector as a whole. The regulation and monitoring of these qualifications is closer to GCSEs and A levels than to other vocational qualifications, so we have moved the reporting of statistics for these qualifications into our suite of general qualifications statistics.

To help users with the transition to this new approach, the quarterly and annual totals calculated on the old basis (i.e., including Welsh Bacc and SCC) can be found in table 1b of the data tables published alongside this release. All other tables and charts are calculated on the new basis only. If your use of these statistics is affected by these changes, or to give any other feedback on these changes, please contact us at statistics@qualificationswales.org.

Data Source

Information on regulated qualifications and their characteristics (e.g., level, awarding body, SSA) are taken from the [QiW database](#). Where a historic qualification is not listed on QiW, characteristics are taken from the Ofqual register. A new extract of each database is taken at the time of production, and all data for each qualification is reported against the latest available characteristics data.

Data on the number of certificates awarded are sent to Qualifications Wales by awarding bodies. Data before quarter 1 2019 was collected from awarding bodies by Ofqual and provided to us to allow us to produce these statistics.

Prior to quarter 4 2017, statistics for Wales were reported by Ofqual. Ofqual [continues to collect certificates data for all UK regions](#) for internal purposes, but no longer publishes data for Wales.

When Qualifications Wales began collecting this data from awarding bodies, we ran two collections in parallel with Ofqual. We analysed any differences between the data we collected, and the data collected by Ofqual, and used this to engage with awarding bodies to assure and improve the quality of the data. As a result of this process, there may be some differences in the way awarding bodies report data to us, compared with how they previously reported data to Ofqual.

Until October 2020, the QiW register did not include regulated qualifications that were not eligible for public funding (known as "other regulated" qualifications). Therefore, a small number of Wales-only other regulated qualifications may be missing from pre-2019 data, as at they were not on Ofqual's register or QiW. The historical data may also include some qualifications that had been surrendered from the scope of our recognition but were still listed on the Ofqual register at the time of collection. Our data collection templates include both qualifications eligible for

public funding and other regulated qualifications, and therefore provide complete coverage of the regulated vocational and other qualifications landscape in Wales.

External influences

COVID-19

On 18 March 2020, the Minister for Education announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools in Wales would be closed by 20 March 2020. On 23 March 2020, First Minister announced further restrictions to slow the spread of coronavirus in Wales. These initial measures were eased prior to the start of quarter 3 2020, but a number of restrictions remained in place throughout 2020 and into 2021. As a result of these restrictions, many colleges, assessment centres and training providers were unable to operate for several months. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to cause disruption to learners and awarding bodies. This will likely have an impact on the number of certificates that were awarded for vocational and other qualifications from quarter 2 of 2020 onwards.

Due to the closure of schools and colleges and general disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the qualifications were assessed and awarded in a way that was different to the usual process. For some qualifications, this meant that overall results were notably different to result in previous years. The figures in this release represent the number of certificates awarded and do not include learners who do not pass the qualification. In some cases, changes in totals for individual qualifications may be due to changes in the pass rate, rather than changes in entry.

Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc)

The Welsh Bacc is a qualification awarded to many learners in Wales. In previous years, Key Skills and Essential Skills qualifications could (alongside other qualifications) count towards the award. Current Key Skills and Essentials Skills qualifications do not count towards the award of the current Welsh Bacc. This change may have affected the number of Key Skills and Essential Skills certificates that are reported in this data.

Performance Measures

Changes to performance measures may also be affecting the number of certificates awarded for vocational and other qualifications over time, particularly at levels 1 to 3. For example, from 2017, vocational qualifications were capped to provide a maximum of 40% of the points for Welsh Government school (Key Stage 4) threshold measures. In 2018, a further change meant that only GCSE Science qualifications could count towards the science portion of the performance measure. Previously, vocational science qualifications had been allowed to count. Further information on

changes to performance measures in Wales can be found on the [Welsh Government website](#).

Qualification characteristics

Each qualification is given a level, sector subject area (SSA) and type. Levels are described in the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#). The SSA is chosen by the awarding body to indicate which industry or academic subject the qualification is most relevant to. This release includes quarterly and annual totals for all qualifications by level and SSA. Due to issues with data quality and definitions, data by qualification type is not included in this release.

Limitations of data

While Qualifications Wales expects awarding bodies to provide us with accurate data, we cannot guarantee that the information given to us is accurate. We compare the data over time to check for any systemic issues or anomalies and engage with awarding bodies to validate the data. We aim to collect data relating to learners who were assessed wholly or mainly at a centre based in Wales, but it is possible that non-Welsh learners may be included in the data, or that some Welsh learners may be excluded. For example, distance learners who study from home do not attend a centre at all. If this is the case, we expect awarding bodies to use the learner address, but this information is not always available.

When an awarding body stops being recognised by Qualifications Wales, they are no longer required to provide data to us. This means that if an awarding body stops being recognised by us during or immediately after a quarter, they will not provide data for that quarter. Any certificates awarded in Wales during that quarter while the awarding body was still recognised will be missing from the data in this release. The historical data provided by Ofqual contains data for some awarding bodies who, at the time of data collection, were recognised by Ofqual but not Qualifications Wales. Where an awarding body has never been recognised by Qualifications Wales, all data for that awarding body has been removed. Where an awarding body was recognised by us, but later surrendered recognition partway through a quarter, the data for that quarter is included, and the awarding body has been removed from the data from the following quarter onwards. In a small number of cases, an awarding body has surrendered recognition and then been recognised again later. In these cases, data has been excluded only when the awarding body was not recognised for the entire duration of the quarter. Therefore, historical totals may not match those published by Ofqual.

On 04 May 2018 Ofqual withdrew recognition from The Awarding Body for Vocational Achievement (AVA) Ltd (trading as BAA). Please see [this page](#) for more details. As part of the investigation which preceded the decision it was found that AVA had been providing incorrect certificates data to Ofqual. It is not practical to obtain corrected data from AVA, but the scale of corrections is known to be small.

Who we are

Qualifications Wales regulates qualifications, other than degrees, in Wales. Under the [Qualifications Wales Act 2015](#), our principal aims are to ensure that qualifications, and the Welsh qualifications system, are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales and to promote public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualifications system.

Our statistics

The [Official Statistics \(Wales\) Order 2017](#) names Qualifications Wales as one of the bodies in scope of the [Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007](#). This release is published as official statistics, in compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Quality assurance

Details of how we quality assure this data are covered in our [Interim Statement on Statistical Quality and Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Sources](#). Historical data has been subject to [Ofqual's quality assurance procedures](#).

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

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of vocational qualification certificates awarded is not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or correct an error. More information can be found in our [Revisions and Corrections Policy](#).

Rounding and Confidentiality

To protect confidentiality, and in accordance with [Qualifications Wales's statistical outputs policy](#), 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 figures for the number of certificates issued are rounded to the nearest 5. 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, and the Welsh Government. Qualifications Wales uses these statistics to understand patterns in the awarding of these qualifications, and to help monitoring of vocational qualifications.

Related statistics and publications

[Ofqual published statistics on vocational qualifications for England.](#)

[Research and Statistics published by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment \(CCEA\).](#)

[Statistics published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\).](#)

[Statistics published by Eurostat.](#)

Useful information

A glossary of terms is available [on our website](#) to help you interpret this release. You can find information about future publications on the [Welsh Government website](#).

The [QiW database](#) gives information on approved and designated qualifications which are eligible for public funding in Wales.

Next update

May 2022 (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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