

# 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](mailto:statistics@qualificationswales.org).

## Data Source

Information on regulated qualifications and their characteristics (e.g., level, awarding body, SSA) is 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 Essential 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.

## About us and our statistics

[Qualifications Wales](#) is the independent organisation responsible for regulating general and vocational qualifications in Wales.

The [Official Statistics \(Wales\) Order 2017](#) names us 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, this data 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

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 are based on unrounded figures. Figures have been rounded independently and therefore may not sum to the total.

## 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.

## **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.](#)

## **Users of these statistics and feedback**

Qualifications Wales uses these statistics to monitor the qualification system. These statistics are also likely to be of interest to Ofqual and other qualifications regulators, awarding bodies, centres (schools and colleges) and the Welsh Government. We welcome any feedback on these statistics which can be provided by email to [statistics@qualificationswales.org](mailto:statistics@qualificationswales.org).

© (2022) *Permission is granted to reproduce provided reference is made to Qualifications Wales as the original source.*