

Overview of results for AS, A level and Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate in Wales – Summer 2017



Qualifications Wales is the independent regulator of qualifications in Wales. We oversee how exam boards award GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and the Welsh Baccalaureate.

This summer saw the first award of 8 new AS and 14 new A level qualifications that have been developed for, and taken by, learners in Wales. We have closely monitored WJEC's delivery of these new qualifications and are confident that standards have been maintained.

Qualifications in subjects that have not yet been reformed continue to be awarded across Wales, England and Northern Ireland. We have worked closely with the qualifications regulators in those countries (Ofqual and CCEA) to oversee these awards as part of an existing three-country regulatory approach.

The approach to awarding this summer has been consistent with well-established arrangements. Exam boards have used data about how cohorts performed in previous years' exams to predict how the cohort is likely to perform this summer; this is known as the 'comparable outcomes approach'.

If the cohort taking a subject this year is similar, in terms of its past performance, to the cohort that took it last year (and nothing else is seen to change), the expectation is that the overall grade outcomes for the two cohorts will be similar. This reflects the important fact that grade boundaries are set by an exam board for each exam series and apply to all students who sat their exams in that series.

The comparable outcomes approach ensures that variability in outcomes at the national level is limited; this protects standards and secures fairness for students, which is particularly important when qualifications change. However, when changes happen, there is typically more variability in individual school and college results.

At both AS and A level, the number of entries has decreased again this year. At AS level, the number of entries has fallen by 6% to 46,127 compared to 2016. At A level, the number of entries in 2017 is 6% lower at 33,294 compared to 2016.

AS and A level 2015-2017: qualification entries

	2015	2016	2017
AS	52,771	49,144	46,127
A level	36,034	35,537	33,294

Changes to the overall number of entries may have contributed to the change in the percentages of students achieving each grade this summer compared to previous years. To take account of this, we have included in this overview the absolute number of candidates achieving each grade, as well as the percentages.

A level results summary: Wales

In comparison with 2016 results:

- the proportion achieving A* is up 1.7 percentage points to 8.3%
- the proportion achieving A* or A is up 2.3 percentage points to 25.0%
- the proportion achieving A* to E is up 0.4 percentage points to 97.7%

In comparison with 2016 results:

- the number of A* grades awarded is up by 418 to 2,763
- the number of A* or A grades awarded is up by 257 to 8,324
- the number of A* to E grades awarded is down by 2,050 to 32,528

A level results 2015-2017 (cumulative percentage)

	2015	2016	2017
A*	7.3	6.6	8.3
A*-A	23.1	22.7	25.0
A*-E	97.3	97.3	97.7

A level results 2015-2017 (number of grades awarded)

	2015	2016	2017
A*	2,630	2,345	2,763
A*-A	8,324	8,067	8,324
A*-E	35,061	34,578	32,528

The overall A level results for Wales this summer have improved; however, given the large change in numbers sitting the qualifications this year, it is important to consider the absolute number of grades awarded. The absolute number of A* and A grades awarded is broadly stable, with small shifts which we would expect and that can be considered normal variation.

When looking at the percentage changes at subject level, care should be taken to consider the size of the cohort. In some subjects, performance has improved, such as across the science suite, whereas in others it has fallen, for example Mathematics and Geography. This is to be expected since cohorts vary from one year to the next, in both size and ability.

AS level results summary: Wales

In comparison with 2016 results:

- the proportion achieving A is up 1.1 percentage points to 19.1%
- the proportion achieving A to E is up 0.6 percentage point to 88.9%

In comparison with 2016 results:

- the number of A grades awarded is down by 36 to 8,810
- the number of A to E grades awarded is down by 2,387 to 41,007

AS level results 2015-2017 (cumulative percentage)

	2015	2016	2017
A	16.2	18.0	19.1
A-E	86.8	88.3	88.9

AS level results 2015-2017 (number of grades awarded)

	2015	2016	2017
A	8,549	8,846	8,810
A-E	45,805	43,394	41,007

The overall AS level results for Wales this summer have improved; however, given the large change in numbers sitting the qualifications this year, it is important to consider the absolute number of grades awarded. The absolute number of A* and A grades awarded is broadly stable, with small shifts that we would expect, and which can be considered normal variation.

Performance in some subjects has improved, for example across the modern foreign languages. In other subjects, it has fallen, for example across the English suite. This is to be expected since cohorts vary from one year to the next, in both size and ability.

Advanced Welsh Baccaulaureate

This summer sees the first award of the new Welsh Baccaulaureate Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate. The Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate is equivalent in size and demand to an A level. It is graded in the same way and carries the same UCAS tariff points.

Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate results 2017 (cumulative percentage)

	2017
A*	1.5
A*-A	14.6
A*-E	94.0

This table does not include historic data as the qualification has changed significantly this year.

Further information

Full AS and A level results are published by [JCO](#) and full Advanced Welsh Baccaulaureate results are published by [WJEC](#).