

Spotlight on English



GCSE English Language is an untiered, linear qualification. This means that all the exams need to be taken at the end of the course and all students sit the same exam paper, regardless of the grade they are aiming for.

GCSE English Literature is a tiered, unitised qualification. This means that students can sit exams for individual units during the course and enter for either a foundation or higher tier paper, depending on the grade they are aiming for.

Who's taking these qualifications this summer?

There is a marked change in this summer's entry pattern for these two qualifications when compared to summer 2017. This has been driven by changes to school performance measures. From Summer 2019, the best result from a student's first attempt at either GCSE English Language or English Literature will count towards school performance measures.

For GCSE English Language, there's been a significant decrease (96%) in Year 10 entries. There's also a decrease in Year 11 entries (34%) as some students will have sat in summer 2017 (as Year 10 students) and November 2017, so only a proportion will be returning this summer hoping to improve their grades. There will also be students sitting the subject for the first time this summer.

For GCSE English Literature, the picture is more complicated. Around 60% of the year 11 students in Wales have been entered for the qualification this summer. However, some of those students who have not been entered this summer were entered for the qualification in year 10. There has also been a significant increase in year 10 entries (153%) compared to last year, with more than 5,000 students taking the qualification this summer.

Schools can decide when to enter students for exams and there is no single approach that's right for all students. However, it's important that students have covered the content of the qualification to give them the greatest chance of achieving their best possible grade.

What does this mean for the results this summer?

These changes to entry patterns are likely to impact on the final overall Wales GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature results this summer.

To help explain how this year's GCSE English Language results compare to previous years, our overview of the summer results will focus on 16-year-olds, that is, year 11 students. With all these changes, it will be difficult to make meaningful year-on-year comparisons this summer and schools are likely to see more variation in their year-on-year results.

In GCSE English Literature, many students will have achieved their grades in summer 2017 and won't be entered this summer. The nature of the cohort has changed which may mean the summer results are different this year compared to previous years. Again, interpreting and comparing the overall summer results will need to be done carefully.

Any comparisons we make will be based on the best results achieved by students who are finishing year 11 this summer. This means that if a student got a better grade earlier in the course, that's the grade we'll use for comparison with year 11 results from previous years.



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