



By email to all schools and colleges in Wales

June 2019

Dear colleague

### **Summer 2019 exams**

We would like to thank you and your colleagues for your role in delivering a successful examination series. Marking is now well underway in preparation for the awarding process, which will take place during July ahead of the release of results in August.

This summer marks an important point in our journey to reform GCSEs and A levels in Wales, as the final phase of reformed qualifications are awarded for the first time. You can read my [blog](#) on the reforms on our website.

There are 7 GCSEs<sup>1</sup> and 5 A level subjects<sup>2</sup> being awarded for the first time this summer. A level Mathematics was awarded for the first time in summer 2018 to a small number of students after one year of teaching. This was an exception to provide students the option of taking A level Mathematics at the end of Year 12 before going on to take A level Further Mathematics in Year 13. Summer 2019 is the first award of the qualification taken by the full Year 13 (18-year-old) cohort.

### **Securing standards and fairness for summer 2019**

Our priority is to ensure that appropriate standards are set and maintained over time and across all qualifications, to be fair to students past, present and future. Senior examiners at WJEC set grade boundaries using both statistical information and

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<sup>1</sup> Business, Computer Science, Design and Technology, History, Media Studies, Religious Studies, Welsh Second Language

<sup>2</sup> Design and Technology, Further Mathematics, Government and Politics, Law, Media Studies

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examples of students' work to establish where key grade boundaries should be set for each qualification.

Where new qualifications are awarded for the first time, our priority is that students are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged as a result of any changes. For the first award of a new qualification we require the exam board to carry forward the standard from the legacy qualification. The exam board must then maintain that standard in future examination series. The same approach to setting and maintaining standards is used by regulators in England and Northern Ireland for GCSEs and A levels. Details of the approach used by WJEC for approved qualifications in Wales can be found on WJEC's [website](#).

### **School results**

Schools and colleges are used to seeing some variability in their results year-on-year. There are many factors that can affect school or college results including the ability of different cohorts of students, changes in teaching personnel or approach, or changes to the curriculum time allocated to a particular subject. However, when a qualification changes, there can be more year-on-year variability than usual in the results for individual schools and colleges, as they may have taken different approaches to delivering the new qualification.

### **Entries**

We published data on the provisional number of [entries](#) for this summer's GCSE, AS and A level exams on 24 May 2019. This data gives us an early indication of changes in entry patterns, which is useful when interpreting the summer results. Once again, there are some substantial changes to the entry patterns in Wales. In particular, there has been a substantial increase in Year 11 entries for GCSE English Language, GCSE Welsh Language, GCSE Welsh Second Language, both Mathematics GCSEs and GCSE English Literature. The increase in Year 11 entries across these qualifications is likely to be driven by the change to school performance measures from summer 2019, which allows only a student's first result to count towards a school's performance.

The changes to school performance measures have led to differences between the groups of students sitting these qualifications. These differences mean that it will be important to take care when interpreting this summer's results and when making any comparisons with previous years. Further details can be found in Annex A.

## Keeping you informed

The Exams 360 section of our website offers a range of useful information on the new qualifications, and the examination and awarding processes. We hope you will find this information helpful and we welcome any feedback or suggestions you have on how we can add to the site. We also send regular updates to schools and colleges on GCSEs, A levels and the other qualifications we regulate through our 'Slate' newsletter. You can sign-up to receive this from our [website](#).

## Have your say!

Our on-line [questionnaire](#), which offers students, teachers and lecturers an opportunity to give feedback about the summer examinations is open until 5 July. We welcome the feedback provided so far and we will use it to inform our monitoring work. We also share the feedback we receive with WJEC for them to consider as part of their review of the summer exams. Please encourage your staff and students to share their views with us.

## Results release

We would like to remind schools and colleges that results are confidential until the official results days (15 August for GCE and 22 August for GCSE) and must not be shared with any person or organisation outside of your school or college before those dates.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any suggestions for information you would find useful in future, please get in touch at [enquiries@qualificationswales.org](mailto:enquiries@qualificationswales.org).

Yours sincerely



**Philip Blaker**

**Chief Executive**

## Annex A: Summer 2019 GCSE entries

### GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics: Numeracy

Total entries for both GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics: Numeracy have increased this summer compared to summer 2018 (by 16.0% and 7.4% respectively). Table 1 shows that there have been changes in the year group composition of entries from 2017 to 2019.

For GCSE Mathematics, Year 10 entries have increased 14.7% between 2018 and 2019 whilst Year 11 entries saw a 17.2% increase. For GCSE Mathematics: Numeracy, both Year 10 and Year 11 entries have increased (by 9.8% and 8.8% respectively).

Comparing the Year 12 and above entries between 2018 and 2019 shows an increase of 11.4% for GCSE mathematics and a decrease of 12.0% for GCSE Mathematics: Numeracy.

**Table 1 GCSE Mathematics and Mathematics: Numeracy entries by year group**

Subject	Year	Year 9 or below	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13 or above	Total
<b>Mathematics</b>							
	2019	25	690	27,530	2,750	3,765	34,755
	2018	10	610	23,495	2,770	3,085	29,970
	2017	20	10,415	25,940	2,240	3,610	42,230
<b>Mathematics: Numeracy</b>							
	2019	*	1,940	21,285	645	820	24,695
	2018	*	1,765	19,565	715	950	23,000
	2017	10	11,135	20,455	520	1,050	33,170

Source: Awarding bodies - Entries by Year Group collection, 2018 and later - Qualifications Wales; 2017 - Ofqual

### GCSE English Language

Total entries for GCSE English Language in summer 2019 are 36,405, an increase of 8,515 (30.5%, see Table 2). This increase is driven by the increase in Year 11 entries.

In the first summer award (2017) of GCSE English Language there was a large Year 10 entry, many of whom did not return as Year 11s in summer 2018. Additionally, in summer 2018, there was a large decrease in the Year 10 entry. This summer the Year 10 entry has further decreased, and the Year 11 entry is the majority of the Year 11 national cohort (estimated at approximately 33,000).

Comparing the Year 12 and above entries between 2018 and 2019 shows a small increase of 5.2 %.

**Table 2 GCSE English Language Entries by year group**

<b>English</b>	<b>Year 9 or below</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Year 12</b>	<b>Year 13 or above</b>	<b>Total</b>
2019	10	270	29,320	2,980	3,830	36,405
2018	5	805	20,610	2,730	3,735	27,890
2017	10	21,090	31,115	2,945	3,885	59,045

*Source: Awarding bodies - Entries by Year Group collection, 2018 and later - Qualifications Wales; 2017 - Ofqual*

### GCSE English Literature

Total entries for GCSE English Literature was show a 20.7% increase in summer 2019 compared to summer 2018 (Table 3). This increase is likely the result of GCSE English Literature counting towards the literacy elements of school performance measures from summer 2019.

All year groups except Year 13 or above saw an increase in entries in summer 2019 compared to summer 2018. The largest increase was for Year 10, with an increase of 4,165 entries (80.2%).

**Table 3 English Literature Entries by year group**

<b>English Literature</b>	<b>Year 9 or below</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Year 12</b>	<b>Year 13 or above</b>	<b>Total</b>
2019	*	9,355	19,630	120	10	29,120
2018	*	5,195	18,805	105	20	24,125
2017	*	2,055	14,640	75	10	16,780

*Source: Awarding bodies - Entries by Year Group collection, 2018 and later - Qualifications Wales; 2017 - Ofqual*

### GCSE Welsh Language and GCSE Welsh Literature

There are 5,220 entries for Welsh Language this summer, which is an 11.0% increase compared to summer 2018 (Table 4). Year 11 entries for Welsh Literature have also increased, from 3,320 in 2018 to 3,685 in summer 2019.

**Table 4 Welsh Language and Welsh Literature Entries by Year Group**

Subject	Year	Year 9 or below	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13 or above	Total
<b>Welsh Language</b>							
	2019	0	85	5,110	25	*	5,220
	2018	0	245	4,585	30	*	4,865
	2017	0	1,030	5,385	10	0	6,430
<b>Welsh Literature</b>							
	2019	0	0	3,685	10	0	3,695
	2018	0	*	3,320	*	0	3,325
	2017	0	*	3,325	0	0	3,330

Source: Awarding bodies - Entries by Year Group collection, 2018 and later - Qualifications Wales; 2017 - Ofqual

### GCSE Welsh Second Language

The new GCSE Welsh Second Language qualification will be awarded for the first time this summer and replaces the previous full course (FC) and short course (SC) GCSE and Applied GCSE qualifications. The new GCSE is the only qualification available to students studying Welsh Second Language in schools. Students who may have previously been entered for the short-course or applied qualifications can now only be entered for the new GCSE. As a result, there is a substantial change in the number of entries for the full course GCSE (19,670) this summer compared to the legacy full course GCSE in 2018 (12,115) (see *Table 5*). Given the change in the size and make-up of the cohort entering the qualification, coupled with changes to the assessments within the new GCSE, centres may see more variation in outcomes this summer compared to previous years.

**Table 5: Provisional Summer Entries for GCSE Welsh Second Language Qualifications**

Qualification <sup>(1)</sup>	2019	2018
Welsh Second Language (new)	19,670	N/A
Welsh Second Language (FC) (legacy)	N/A	12,115
Welsh Second Language (SC) (legacy)	N/A	5,645
Welsh Second Language Applied (FC) (legacy)	N/A	2,550
Welsh Second Language Applied (SC) (legacy)	N/A	775
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,670</b>	<b>21,080</b>

Source: Entries by Year Group Data Collection, Qualifications Wales

(1) Each qualification is a WJEC Level 1/Level 2 GCSE.

