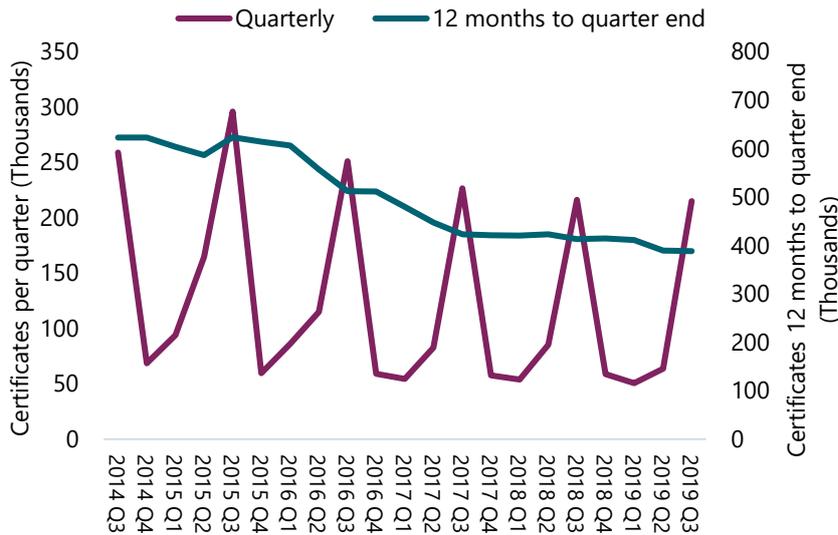


Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: Quarter 3 (July – September 2019) for Wales

Highlights

28 November 2019

Figure 1: Total Certifications



Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies



215,120 certificates were awarded between July and September of 2019. This is a **0.6%** decrease compared to the same quarter in 2018, when there were **216,310** certifications.

Between October 2018 and September 2019 there were **388,240** certifications, a decrease of **6.0%** compared to **413,090** between October 2017 and September 2018.



About this release

This statistical release presents information for Wales collected by Qualifications Wales from awarding bodies. It contains data on the range and number of vocational and other qualification certificates issued during July – September 2019 (quarter 3). Wales data prior to quarter 1 2019 was collected by Ofqual.

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INTRODUCTION

Qualifications Wales regulates qualifications, other than degrees, in Wales. Under the Qualifications Wales Act 2015¹, 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.

From the fourth quarter (October-December) of 2017, we have reported on certificates issued for vocational and other qualifications for Wales. This data does not include GCSEs, AS level, A level, Advanced Extension Awards, Principal Learning and Project qualifications. Initially, we reported data collected from awarding bodies by Ofqual on our behalf. As of quarter 1 2019 (2019 Q1), we are both collecting and reporting data for qualifications that we regulate. Before the fourth quarter (October-December) of 2017, Ofqual² collected and published data for Wales. We have tried as far as possible to keep these statistics consistent with those earlier statistics; changes have only been made where it was clear that doing so would result in the reporting of more accurate certification data.

In this release, we present data on the range of vocational and other qualifications and certificates issued during quarter 3 of 2019. The figures represent the number of certificates, rounded to the nearest 5, that were awarded by awarding bodies between 1 July and 30 September 2019. These statistics do not represent individual learners, as a learner could have achieved multiple certificates in any time period presented in this release.

The data collected is for vocational and other qualifications listed on the Qualifications in Wales (QiW) database³ or on our internal list of other regulated qualifications.

We have developed our own method for producing and reporting these statistics. This is because:

- Our regulatory approach differs from Ofqual: Ofqual ask awarding bodies to opt in qualifications for regulation, whereas we require awarding bodies to opt out qualifications that they do not wish to be regulated. The historical data reported in this release may include

¹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/5/pdfs/anaw_20150005_en.pdf

² Ofqual (2017) *Changes to the publication of geographical breakdowns of data*. [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/changes-to-the-publication-of-geographical-breakdowns-of-data> [Accessed 11 Nov 2019].

³ QiW is a register of regulated qualifications that are eligible for public funding in Wales.

certifications for qualifications that we did not regulate, since some of the qualifications listed on the Ofqual register are likely to have been surrendered for regulation in Wales by recognised awarding bodies. Additionally, there may be a small number of Wales-only qualifications unaccounted for in historical data because they have not been eligible for public funding (i.e. listed on QiW).

Qualification breakdowns

This publication includes breakdowns of qualification certifications by Sector Subject Area (SSA) and level. In producing these breakdowns, we have continued to use Ofqual's methodology. More detail is included in the 'Methodology' section of the background notes.

Each qualification is ascribed a level. Levels are described in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales⁴. The table at the top of on the next page shows how levels relate to the types of vocational and other qualifications on the Ofqual register and QiW. Qualification types that were not awarded in Wales in the 12 months to the end of 2019 Q3 are shaded blue in the table.

⁴ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/level-descriptors.pdf>

Qualification type	Current levels
Basic Skills	Entry Level, Levels 1 and 2
CVET ⁶	Levels 1 to 6
End-Point Assessment	Levels 2 to 7
English for speakers of other languages	Entry Level, Levels 1, 2 and 3
Entry level	Entry Level
Essential Skills Wales	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 3
Free-standing mathematics qualification	Levels 1,2,3
Functional skills	Entry level, Levels 1 and 2

Qualification type	Current levels
Higher Level	Levels 4 to 8
IVET ⁵	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 5
Key skills	Levels 1 to 4
NVQ	Levels 1 to 5
'Other general' qualification	Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3
Occupational qualification	Levels 1 to 4
QCF ⁷	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8
Vocationally related qualification	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8
Welsh Bacallaureate ⁸	Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3

⁵ IVET stands for 'Initial vocational education and training' and is a classification for introductory vocational qualifications that are suitable for all ages and abilities (see <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/cqfw-brochure.pdf>).

⁶ CVET stands for 'Continuing vocational education and training' and is a classification for occupational competence vocational qualifications for those over the age of 16 (see <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/cqfw-brochure.pdf>).

⁷ On 1 October 2015, Ofqual withdrew the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) requirements. However, for administrative reasons, until summer 2016, awarding organisations could still use the QCF type on Ofqual's system for new qualifications when no other type was appropriate. Following Ofqual's decision, we also withdrew the QCF requirements from 1 December 2015. When QiW was introduced on the 1 April 2016, new qualifications were no longer classified as QCF.

⁸ The type 'Welsh Bacallaureate' includes both the Welsh Bacallaureate Skills Challenge Certificate (at all levels) and the Welsh Bacallaureate at all levels (the latter requires learners to achieve other qualifications at specified levels in addition to the relevant Skills Challenge Certificate).

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Welsh Bacalaureate (Welsh Bacc)

Following the 'Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales'⁹, which was commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2011, the new Welsh Bacc was introduced for first teaching from September 2015. When the Welsh Government introduced the Welsh Bacc, it announced a policy of universal adoption. This means that the Welsh Bacc is available to all schools and FE Colleges to offer, as opposed to only those approved to offer it, which was the case with the legacy Welsh Bacc. The policy¹⁰ also set targets for schools and FE Colleges to gradually increase the proportion of students taking the Welsh Bacc, with the aim that by 2019-20 the vast majority of learners in Wales will be taking it as part of their programme of study. The reformed Welsh Bacc includes the Skills Challenge Certificate. Certifications for the Skills Challenge Certificate and the Welsh Bacc are included in the statistics in this publication.

For the legacy Welsh Bacc, Key Skills and Essential Skills qualifications could (alongside other qualifications) count towards the award. A learner could have certificated multiple Key Skills and Essential Skills qualifications to count towards the award. Current Key Skills and Essentials Skills qualifications do not count towards the award of the new Welsh Bacc at Key Stage 4 or for the Advanced Welsh Bacc. However, the new Essential Skills Wales qualifications can count towards the Post-16 Foundation and National Welsh Bacc. These changes impact on comparisons over time in this publication.

Performance Measures

Changes to performance measures may also be affecting the number of certifications in 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, Welsh Government introduced a further change to Key Stage 4 performance measures in relation to science with only GCSE Science qualifications counting. Previously vocational science qualifications have been allowed to count¹¹.

⁹ Welsh Government (2014) *Review of Qualifications 14-19* [online]. Available from: <https://beta.gov.wales/review-qualifications-14-19-year-olds-final-report-and-recommendations> [Accessed 11 Nov 2019].

¹⁰ Welsh Government (2017) *The post-16 Welsh Bacalaureate: recording and measuring outcomes* [online]. Available from: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/the-post-16-welsh-bacalaureate-recording-and-measuring-outcomes.pdf> [Accessed 11 Nov 2019].

¹¹ Further information on changes to performance measures in Wales can be found at: <https://digitalanddata.blog.gov.wales/2017/12/06/chief-statisticians-update-understanding-changes-to-education-data/> [Accessed 11 Nov 2019].

STATISTICS

TOTAL CERTIFICATES AND HISTORICAL TRENDS

Table 1: Number of certificates awarded by quarter and by previous 12 months to quarter end

Time period	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
		Jan to Mar	Apr to Jun	Jul to Sep	Oct to Dec
Quarterly	2014	112,965	182,365	258,795	68,670
	2015	94,070	164,620	295,930	59,650
	2016	86,085	115,010	251,035	59,055
	2017	54,425	82,710	226,505	57,595
	2018	53,765	85,415	216,310	58,795
	2019	50,585	63,740	215,120	N/A
12 months to quarter end	2014	660,415	669,840	622,750	622,795
	2015	603,900	586,150	623,285	614,265
	2016	606,285	556,675	511,780	511,190
	2017	479,525	447,225	422,695	421,235
	2018	420,575	423,285	413,090	414,290
	2019	411,105	389,430	388,240	N/A

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Quarterly Comparison

215,120 certificates were awarded between July and September of 2019. This is a 0.6% decrease compared to the same quarter in 2018, when there were 216,310 certifications.

Annual Comparison

Between October 2018 and September 2019 there were 388,240 certifications, a decrease of 6.0% compared to 413,090 between October 2017 and September 2018.

CERTIFICATES BY SECTOR SUBJECT AREA (SSA)

Table 2: Number of certificates awarded by sector subject area

Sector Subject Area	Quarterly Comparison		Annual Comparison	
	2018 Q3	2019 Q3	Oct 2017 to Sep 2018	Oct 2018 to Sep 2019
01 Health, Public Services and Care	21,215	20,575	72,670	61,685
02 Science and Mathematics	5,175	5,405	6,180	5,520
03 Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	2,725	2,435	6,760	4,415
04 Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	9,180	10,095	21,370	20,885
05 Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	8,135	10,070	17,710	21,930
06 Information and Communication Technology	4,645	4,140	7,555	5,970
07 Retail and Commercial Enterprise	10,035	10,100	28,545	26,395
08 Leisure, Travel and Tourism	6,390	7,475	15,775	15,845
09 Arts, Media and Publishing	12,970	11,500	28,400	26,520
10 History, Philosophy and Theology	130	70	135	70
11 Social Sciences	385	1,005	390	1,010
12 Languages, Literature and Culture	6,240	3,520	10,635	6,035
13 Education and Training	1,660	1,665	4,465	4,555
14 Preparation for Life and Work	116,030	115,325	169,205	164,885
15 Business, Administration and Law	11,395	11,745	23,290	22,520
Total	216,310	215,120	413,090	388,240

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

The predominant subject sector in this quarter was 'Preparation for Life and Work' (115,325 certifications, 53.6% of the total). No other subject sector accounted for more than 10% of total certifications; 'Health, Public Services and Care' (20,575 certifications, 9.6% of the total) and 'Business, Administration and Law' (11,745 certifications, 5.5% of the total) were the second and third most certificated subject sectors in 2019 Q3.

The 'Preparation for Life and Work' sector had the largest number of certifications in 2018 Q4 – 2019 Q3 (164,885 or 42.5% of the total). This sector saw a 2.6% decrease in the number of certifications awarded compared to 2017 Q4 – 2018 Q3 (169,205). The 'Health, Public Services and Care' sector was the second largest with 61,685 certifications (15.9% of the total), which is 15.1% fewer certifications compared to 2017 Q4 – 2018 Q3.

Figure 2: Percentage change in certifications awarded by sector subject area (SSA), 2019 Q3 compared to 2018 Q3

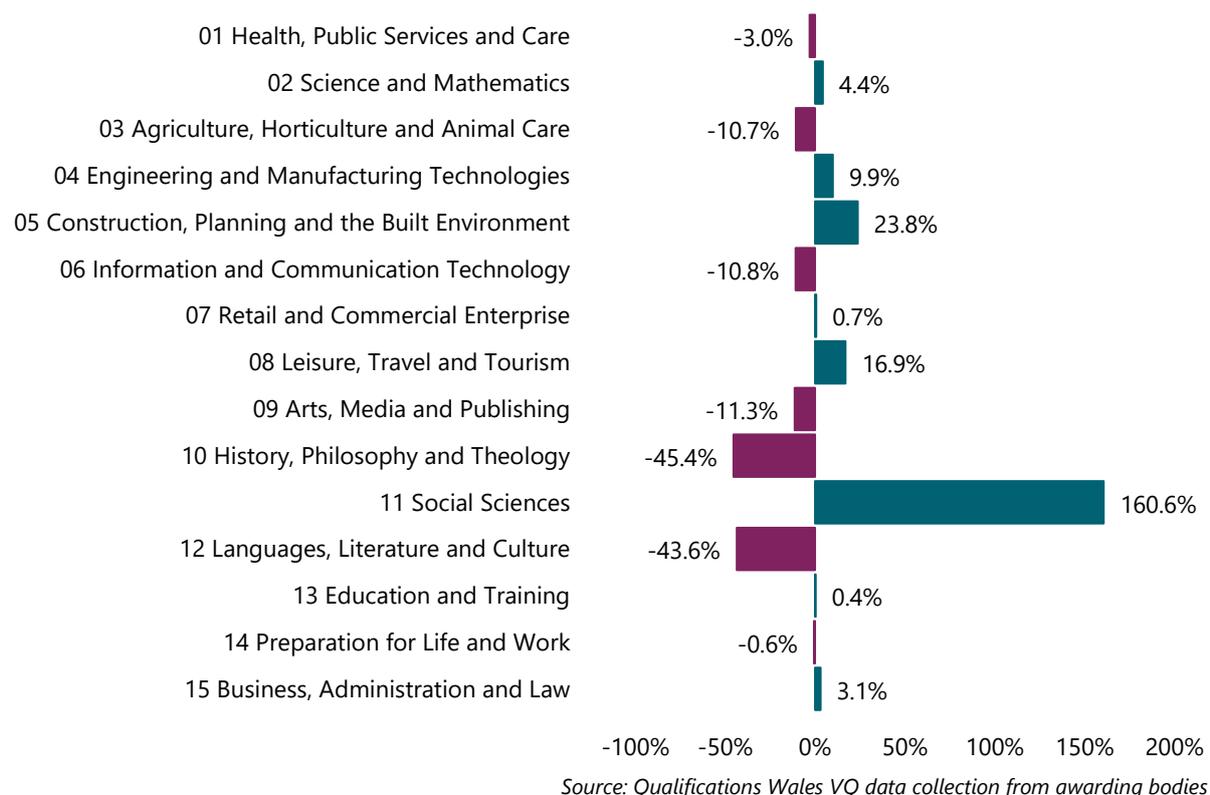


Figure 2 shows that 'Social Sciences' had the largest proportional increase (160.6%) in certificates awarded in 2019 Q3 compared to 2018 Q3. Other sector subject areas that had meaningful proportional increases were 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (23.8%) and 'Leisure, Travel and Tourism' (16.9%).

The 'History, Philosophy and Theology' (-45.4%) and 'Languages, Literature and Culture' (-43.6%) subject sectors had the largest proportional decreases in 2019 Q3 compared to 2018 Q3.

CERTIFICATES BY LEVEL

Table 3: Number of certificates awarded by level

Level	Quarterly Comparison		Annual Comparison	
	2018 Q3	2019 Q3	Oct 2017 to Sep 2018	Oct 2018 to Sep 2019
Entry Level	14,720	16,195	31,290	32,480
Level 1	24,765	22,740	57,855	53,995
Level 1/2	61,050	63,405	63,865	63,495
Level 2	57,125	53,545	141,025	127,340
Level 3	55,120	55,875	108,275	101,150
Level 4	1,595	1,570	4,705	4,470
Level 5	1,350	1,210	4,825	3,945
Level 6	530	530	870	805
Level 7	55	40	375	560
Level 8	*	0	*	*
Total	216,310	215,120	413,090	388,240

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Table 3 shows the number of certifications during quarter 3, compared to the same quarter in 2018, and during the last 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months. The three levels with the largest number of certifications in 2019 Q3 (level 1/2, level 2 and level 3) accounted for 80.3% of the total number of certificates for the quarter. The same levels accounted for 75.2% of the annual total.

Most levels saw a decrease in the number of certifications awarded in 2019 Q3 compared to 2018 Q3. Level 1 (-2,025, down 8.2%) and Level 2 (-3,580, down 6.3%) had the largest drop in real terms while level 7 had the largest proportional decrease (-25.0%). There were an additional 2,355 Level 1/2 certifications awarded in 2019 Q3, a 3.9% increase on the same quarter last year.

The overall decrease in certifications of 6.0% over the last 12 months is primarily driven by fewer level 2 (down 13,685), level 3 (down 7,125) and level 1 (down 3,860) certificates being awarded.

TOP CERTIFICATING AWARDING BODIES

Table 4: Top 10 awarding bodies with the highest number of certificates issued in the 12 months to this quarter end

Awarding Body	Oct 2017 to Sep 2018	Oct 2018 to Sep 2019	Rank Oct 2017 to Sep 2018	Rank Oct 2018 to Sep 2019	Rank Change
WJEC-CBAC	91,605	90,925	1	1	➡ +0
City and Guilds of London Institute	89,640	80,735	2	2	➡ +0
Pearson Education Ltd	55,480	38,860	3	3	➡ +0
Highfield Qualifications	32,490	32,645	4	4	➡ +0
Agored Cymru	17,975	20,630	5	5	➡ +0
Qualsafe Awards	12,055	14,070	6	6	➡ +0
Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music	10,480	10,465	8	7	⬆ +1
Excellence, Achievement & Learning Limited	8,205	8,685	10	8	⬆ +2
Trinity College London	8,830	8,410	9	9	➡ +0
NCFE	4,225	6,325	13	10	⬆ +3

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Table 4 shows the top ten certificating awarding bodies over the last 12 months to the end of this quarter, compared to the previous 12 months. WJEC-CBAC retained its place as the awarding body with the highest number of certifications in the last 12 months having awarded over 90,000 certifications over that period. City and Guilds of London Institute remained in second place but issued 8,905 fewer certifications in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months (down 9.9%).

Pearson Education Ltd remains at third place but has seen a large proportional fall in the number of certificates issued in the last 12 months, down 16,615 (-30.0%) to 38,860. This change is largely driven by decreases in certificates issued for level 2 and level 3 qualifications having awarded 12,040 fewer certifications over the last 12 months to the end of this quarter, compared to the previous 12 months (down 32.0%).

NCFE is a new entrant in the top 10 certificating awarding bodies following an increase of 2,105 certifications, driven largely by 1,955 (up 85.3%) additional level 2 certifications. OCR dropped out of the top 10, awarding 5,970 fewer (-55.3%) certifications over the last 12 months. This included a substantial decrease in the number of 'Languages, Literature and Culture' (-4,680, down 97.2%) certifications.

TOP CERTIFICATING QUALIFICATIONS

Table 5: Top 10 qualifications with the highest number of certificates awarded in this quarter

Qualification	2018 Q3	2019 Q3
WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)	26,960	27,125
WJEC National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate	25,950	26,415
WJEC Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)	12,045	11,660
WJEC Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate	10,185	9,945
LIBF Level 2 Certificate In Financial Capability and Careers Development	4,020	4,400
Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Certificate in Personal and Social Development	1,615	2,765
WJEC Level 2 Certificate in Additional Mathematics	3,130	2,120
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	1,595	1,860
Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)	1,570	1,770
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	2,340	1,765

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Table 5 illustrates the top ten qualifications with the highest number of certifications in the latest quarter compared to the number of certifications for the same qualifications in the same quarter of the previous year.

The top four qualifications in 2019 Q3 were all part of the Welsh Baccalaureate framework, with WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge (Welsh Baccalaureate) the qualification with the highest number of certifications (27,125), closely followed by WJEC National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate (26,415). Taken together, the top four Welsh Bacc qualifications represent **34.9%** of all certifications issued during 2019 Q3.

Of the non-Welsh Baccalaureate framework qualifications, LIBF Level 2 Certificate in Financial Capability and Careers Development was the most awarded vocational qualification in 2019 Q3, as it was in the corresponding quarter last year.

Table 6: Top 10 qualifications with the highest number of certificates awarded in the latest 12 months

Qualification	Oct 2017 to Sep 2018	Oct 2018 to Sep 2019
WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)	26,960	27,125
WJEC National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate	25,950	26,415
WJEC Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)	12,045	11,660
WJEC Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate	10,185	9,945
Highfield Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering (RQF)	7,935	7,590
Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)	6,455	7,015
QA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)	5,735	5,305
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	6,385	5,160
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	3,980	4,645
LIBF Level 2 Certificate In Financial Capability and Careers Development	4,040	4,410

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Table 6 shows the top ten qualifications with the highest number of certifications in 2018 Q4 – 2019 Q3 compared to 2017 Q4 – 2018 Q3.

As with the quarter on quarter data presented in Table 65, qualifications that form part of the Welsh Bacc framework make up the top four qualifications awarded over the past 12 months, with WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) at the top with 27,125 certificates. 2017 was the first year in which this qualification, along with the WJEC National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate, were certificated (see [external influences](#) for further information).

Aside from the new Welsh Bacc and Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications, the most awarded qualifications were the Highfield Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering (RQF) and the Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF), which were certificated 7,590 and 7,015 times respectively.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Approval of qualifications/approval criteria/ approved qualifications

When a qualification is listed on the Priority Qualification List, we publish approval criteria for it. Approval is the process by which we approve such qualifications against the approval criteria. Approved qualifications may not be regulated by other qualifications regulators in Wales and are normally designed to meet the specific needs of learners in Wales.

Awarding body

An organisation that develops qualifications, specifies and monitors assessments and issues awards to learners, formally recognising the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences), following an assessment and validation procedure. In other parts of the UK these are known as Awarding Organisations or Exam Boards.

Awarding body recognition

To offer regulated qualifications in Wales, an awarding body must be recognised by Qualifications Wales. Awarding bodies need to comply with our recognition criteria and apply for recognition.

Certificate/Certification

A formal acknowledgement of a student's achievement. This will be any award that is not graded as U, absent, or X (fail).

Certification end date

A qualification may not be awarded to learners, as an approved or designated qualification, after this date.

Designated Qualifications

Regulated qualifications that are designated by Qualifications Wales as eligible for use on publicly funded programmes of learning for learners under the age of 19, as defined under section 29 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015. We take a number of matters into account when determining whether to designate qualifications.

General Qualification

Describes qualifications that are taken typically by learners in school or college as part of their statutory or further education. This includes GCSEs, AS and A levels and the Welsh Baccalaureate and other qualifications that share some of the features common to GCSEs and A levels. WJEC is the main provider of these qualifications in Wales, although some are also offered by other awarding bodies.

National Vocational Qualification

Work-related, competence-based qualifications that cover a broad range of industry sectors and occupations and are delivered in a workplace setting.

Ofqual Register

The Register of Regulated Qualifications¹² contains details of the qualifications and awarding organisations regulated by Ofqual and CCEA Regulation.

Other general

Qualifications that assess a particular subject area, such as music or art, other than GCSEs, AS and A levels. These qualifications are not directly work-related but may support career development. They are often structured against graded examinations. The category also includes qualifications categorised as level 1/2 certificates.

Other regulated qualifications

Those qualifications awarded in Wales by recognised awarding bodies, which have not been designated or approved by Qualifications Wales, and which awarding bodies have not surrendered or exempted from the scope of their recognition.

Qualification Type

Qualification types refer to groups of qualifications that have been developed to meet common design requirements. The design requirements for some qualification types may no longer be in effect, such as for QCF qualifications (designed to meet the requirements of the Qualifications and Credit Framework).

Qualification Level

The level of attainment that a qualification represents as defined by the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales has been aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This means that the level of a qualification gained in Wales can be compared to a level in the EQF. This helps people and organisations to translate achievements between countries and work across the EU.

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

A framework, now discontinued, for qualifications containing units and qualifications in three sizes. Awards (1-12 credits), certificate (13-36 credits) and diplomas (37 or more credits).

Qualifications in Wales (QiW)

A publicly available database which provides a source of information on approved and designated qualifications awarded in Wales¹³.

¹² <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/>.

¹³ <https://www.qiw.wales/>.

Quarter

Refers to calendar quarters. Quarter 1 (Q1) refers to January – March, quarter 2 (Q2) to April – June, quarter 3 (Q3) to July – September, and quarter 4 (Q4) to October – December.

Regulated qualifications

All non-degree qualifications (whether approved, designated or other regulated) that are offered for award by an awarding body recognised by Qualifications Wales (unless either an awarding body has surrendered its recognition in respect of that qualification, or if an awarding body excluded that qualification from the scope of its recognition by notifying Welsh Government prior to 21 September 2015).

Sector Subject Area (SSA)

Sector subject areas are the series of categories based on industry sectors and academic subjects used to classify qualifications.

Sub-Sector Subject Area (previously Sector Subject category)

Sub sector areas are the second tier of categories based on industry sectors and academic subjects used to classify qualifications.

Surrender of Recognition

Recognition may cease where an awarding body decides to surrender either partial or full recognition. Recognised awarding bodies may surrender part of their recognition by informing Qualifications Wales of qualifications, or descriptions of qualifications, that they would like to offer as unregulated qualifications. In such cases, the unregulated qualifications cannot carry the Qualifications Wales logo on certificates issued to learners.

Vocational Qualification (VQ)

Qualifications that are awarded and certificated by an awarding body, taken by learners from the age of 14 upwards, and which assess knowledge, understanding and/or skills that relate explicitly to the world of work. These qualifications are a subset of the qualifications included in the statistics in this publication.

Vocationally related qualifications

Work-related, competence-based qualifications designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to do a job. They are related to employment but, unlike NVQs, do not necessarily require experience or assessment in the workplace.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Status

On 21 November 2017 the National Assembly for Wales approved the Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2017¹⁴ which named Qualifications Wales as one of the bodies that are in scope of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007¹⁵. We have developed our processes to ensure we are fully meeting our obligations as an official statistics producer, allowing this statistical release to be formally published as an official statistic.

Data Source

The number of certifications awarded for each vocational or other qualification in Quarter 3 2019 (July – September 2019) have been submitted to Qualifications Wales by awarding bodies. The certifications are only for learners who were wholly or mainly assessed at centres located in Wales, regardless of the type of centre. It does not include the Advanced Extension Award, GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications, project and principal learning. The number of certifications awarded for these qualifications can be found on the website of the Joint Council for Qualifications¹⁶.

Prior to quarter 4 2017, Wales data for vocational and other qualifications was collected and reported by Ofqual. Between quarter 4 2017 and quarter 4 2018 (inclusive), Ofqual collected Wales data for vocational and other qualifications and provided it to Qualifications Wales to allow production of this quarterly report. As of quarter 1 2019, this data is being collected and reported by Qualifications Wales. In April 2019, Ofqual informed awarding bodies of their intention to collect vocational quarterly certificates data for all UK regions, and so will continue to collect Wales vocational qualification data for their own internal purposes¹⁷.

Qualifications Wales and Ofqual conducted parallel vocational data collections for quarter 4 2018 and quarter 1 2019. The purpose of this was to provide a transition period during which we could test our data collection systems and quality assure the data we collected by comparing it with the data collected by Ofqual. Analysis of any differences between the two collections was used to inform engagement with awarding bodies to assure and improve the quality of the data published in this report. Some awarding bodies have made changes to the vocational data they

¹⁴ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1142/pdfs/wsi_20171142_mi.pdf

¹⁵ https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/pdfs/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.jcq.org.uk/>

¹⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797024/RO65.2019_international_certificates_and_qualifications.pdf

submit as a result of this work. It is uncertain whether awarding bodies will replicate these changes in their data submission to Ofqual; therefore, we are not in a position to determine the extent to which collecting the data ourselves has impacted upon reported certification volumes.

Differences between the certification totals we collect and what Ofqual collect from awarding bodies are to be expected due to slight differences in the coverage of each collection. A small subset of Wales-only other regulated qualifications do not appear on either the Ofqual register or on QiW and would have been missed from Ofqual's historical vocational data collections for Wales. The Wales vocational data that we collect will no longer include qualifications that have been surrendered from the scope of our recognition but are still listed on the Ofqual register. Our qualification templates are produced using QiW and the list of other regulated qualifications and will therefore provide complete coverage of the regulated vocational and other qualifications landscape in Wales.

Information on approved or designated qualifications offered in Wales is available on the Qualifications in Wales (QiW) database¹⁸.

Methodology

Qualification characteristics included in this report, such as subject sector area (SSA) and level, are based on the Ofqual register and QiW database. For quarters up to and including quarter 4 2018, Ofqual's data collection template allowed awarding bodies to submit data for the same qualification against a QiW number (a unique identifier for qualifications in the QiW database), a QAN (a unique identifier for qualifications on Ofqual's register) or a proportion against both for Wales. Where awarding bodies submitted data to Ofqual with a QiW number, the qualification characteristics were taken off QiW database, and where awarding bodies submit data using a QAN, qualification characteristics were taken from the Ofqual register.

The adjusted format of our data collection templates will allow only one data submission per qualification from quarter 1 2019. This will remove the risk of awarding bodies double counting certificates by erroneously submitting the same certification against both the QiW number and QAN. As we are only collecting data for qualifications listed on QiW or our other regulated list, all qualification characteristics from quarter 1 2019 onwards will be taken from our database. Characteristics from the Ofqual register will only be used for historical data for qualifications not listed on our database.

¹⁸ <https://www.qiw.wales/?lang=en>

This report includes historical data for the past 5 years. Where qualifications are still live on the registers, the historical data published in this report they will show these characteristics as they are on the day the report was run for the latest quarter. If the qualification is no longer live, the latest characteristics recorded for that qualification on the registers will be reported. This is in line with Ofqual's methodology.

Geographical Coverage

This release presents data on the number of certifications for vocational and other qualifications for quarter 3 (July – September 2019) for centres located in Wales. This release does not include vocational and other qualifications taken outside of Wales, nor certifications for GCSEs, AS level, A level, Advanced Extension Award, Project and Principal learning.

Limitations of data

While we aim to collect certifications relating to learners who were assessed wholly or mainly at a centre based in Wales, it is possible that non-Welsh learners may be included in the data that some awarding bodies submit. A scenario where this might arise is the awarding of a certification to a distance learner (i.e. there is no centre). We have instructed awarding bodies to use the learner address in the absence of a centre, although this information is not always collected from learners.

Ofqual have collected historical data for Wales on our behalf. In their background notes they describe the limitations of the data:

"Data are collected at the earliest point available, which is the first day of the next reporting period. This reduces the time between the activity and reporting on the activity. The main source of potential error is in the information provided by awarding bodies. Ofqual cannot guarantee the number of certificates submitted is correct and there may be systematic bias when the information is sent, although awarding organisations are expected to provide the correct data. Ofqual compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues. Summary data are then sent back to awarding organisations to be checked and confirmed. The figures reported in this release reflect the certificates issued by awarding organisations at the time of data collection."

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 certification data to Ofqual. It is not practical to obtain corrected data from AVA, but the scale of corrections is known to be small. AVA had very low certificate numbers (about 15 in the past 5 years in the existing

data) so these inaccuracies do not significantly affect the overall trends in the data. Therefore, we have reported the existing AVA data as it is in this statistical release.

Comparisons

This data has been collected the same way Ofqual have collected data for previous quarters. Ofqual pre-populate their data collection forms with qualifications from their register and our QiW database; we have followed a similar strategy, populating templates using our QiW database and other regulated list of qualifications that is kept up-to-date by awarding bodies. For this publication we have removed qualifications by awarding bodies that we do not recognise from historical data. We have done this for the last 5 years included in this publication and corresponding data tables. Where an awarding body has surrendered recognition at the beginning of a quarter (e.g. 1st January) data for that awarding body has been removed from that quarter onwards. Where an awarding body has surrendered recognition partway through a quarter, the data for that quarter is included where available, 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 quarters and years totals may not match what is published by Ofqual. The table below shows the impact this has had on totals for each quarter:

Quarter	2012.4	2013.1	2013.2	2013.3	2013.4	2014.1	2014.2	2014.3	2014.4	2015.1
Number of certificates removed	90	45	110	230	*	55	110	75	105	0
Percentage of total certificates	0.15%	0.05%	0.06%	0.07%	0.00%	0.05%	0.06%	0.03%	0.16%	0.00%

Quarter	2015.2	2015.3	2015.4	2016.1	2016.2	2016.3	2016.4	2017.1	2017.2	2017.3
Number of certificates removed	0	20	280	265	130	215	215	245	225	180
Percentage of total certificates	0.00%	0.01%	0.47%	0.31%	0.11%	0.09%	0.36%	0.45%	0.27%	0.08%

In the case of two partnerships of awarding bodies – WJEC-EDEXCEL and Pearson EDI – we know that their recognition was not transferred over to Qualifications Wales on inception in August 2015. WJEC-EDEXCEL did not award any certificates after 2013 Q3, and Pearson EDI saw a large decrease in certificates from 2015 Q2 onwards. Considering the trends described, data for these partnerships has been included up to and including 2015 Q3 (i.e. until Qualifications Wales was established) and excluded after this point. The table below shows the data for these awarding bodies – the figures highlighted with shading have been removed from the data for this release:

Quarter	2012.4	2013.1	2013.2	2013.3	2013.4	2014.1	2014.2	2014.3	2014.4	2015.1
Pearson EDI Certificates	1210	1415	1835	1050	1385	1480	1745	1905	1205	1085
WJEC-EDEXCEL Certificates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Quarter	2015.2	2015.3	2015.4	2016.1	2016.2	2016.3	2016.4	2017.1	2017.2	2017.3
Pearson EDI Certificates	345	420	205	140	45	30	10	0	0	0
WJEC-EDEXCEL Certificates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Quality assurance

Now that Qualifications Wales are collecting this data ourselves, we have the responsibility for quality assuring it. Detail around the processes we follow to quality assure this data are covered in our Interim Statement on Statistical Quality and Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Sources¹⁹ document. Historical data has been subject to Ofqual's quality assurance procedures, which are carried out as explained in the Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications²⁰ published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary. More information is also included in the background notes of the Ofqual vocational and other qualifications quarterly release²¹.

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

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of vocational qualification certifications is not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or correct an error.

Rounding and Confidentiality

To protect confidentiality, and in accordance with Qualifications Wales's interim statistical outputs policy²², 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. In the commentary and tables, they 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.

¹⁹ <https://www.qualificationswales.org/media/3723/interim-statement-on-statistical-quality-and-quality-assurance-of-administrative-data-sources.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofquals-statistics-policies-and-procedures>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-vocational-qualifications>

²² <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/interim-statistical-outputs-policy/>

Users of these statistics

These statistics are likely to be of interest to Qualifications Wales, Ofqual, awarding bodies, and the Welsh Government. We welcome feedback from users to gain a better understanding of who our users are over time. Qualifications Wales uses these statistics to inform understanding of certification patterns, and to help aid monitoring of vocational qualifications.

Related statistics and publications

Ofqual publish statistics on vocational qualifications for England²³.

Research and Statistics published by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA)²⁴.

Statistics published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)²⁵.

Statistics published by Eurostat²⁶.

Useful information

A glossary of terms is available on page 13 to help you interpret this release. You can find information about future publications on the Welsh Government website²⁷.

The QiW database²⁸ gives information on approved and designated qualifications which are eligible for public funding in Wales.

Next update

February 2020 (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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²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-vocational-qualifications>.

²⁴ http://ccea.org.uk/more/research_statistics.

²⁵ <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48269.8311.html>.

²⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/overview>.

²⁷ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/?upcoming=true&lang=en>

²⁸ <https://www.qiw.wales/?lang=en>