



# Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: Quarter 3 (July – September) 2020 for Wales

26 November 2020

## 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 to September 2020 (quarter 3). Wales data prior to quarter 1 2019 was collected by Ofqual.

### Quick links

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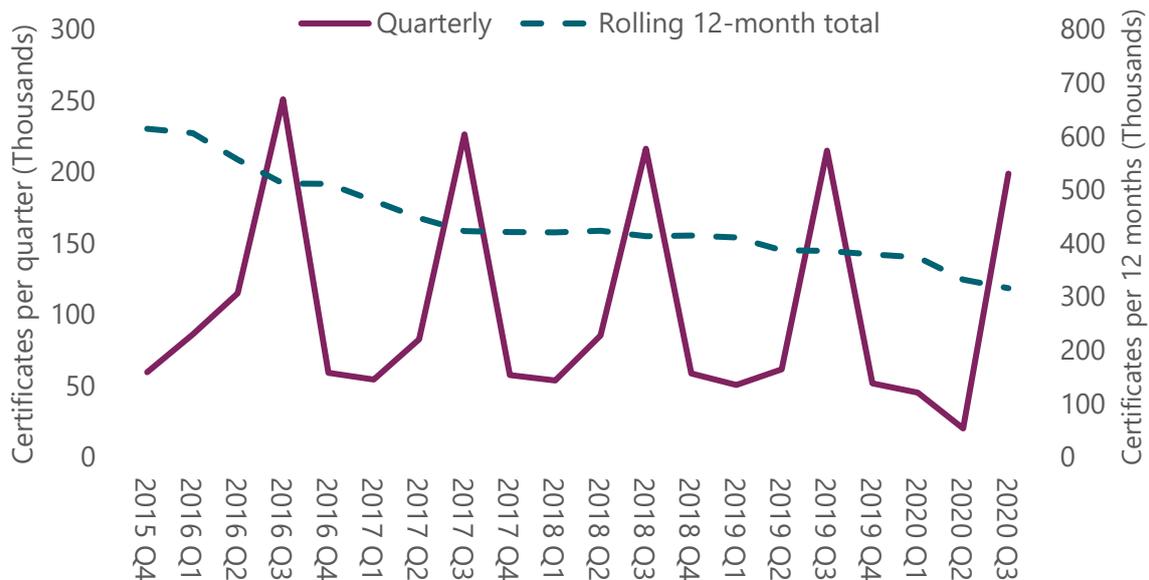
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## Highlights

**Figure 1: Total Certifications**



Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies



**198,870** certificates were awarded between July and September of 2020. This is a **7.6%** decrease compared to the same quarter in 2019, when there were **215,110** certifications.

Between October 2019 and September 2020 there were **316,055** certifications, a decrease of **18.1%** compared to **386,065** between October 2018 and September 2019.



## Contact

|                                      |               |  |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--|
| <b>Statistician:</b> Hannah Williams | 01633 373 292 | <a href="mailto:statistics@qualificationswales.org">statistics@qualificationswales.org</a> |
| <b>Media enquiries:</b> Alan Morris  | 01633 373 216 | <a href="mailto:comms@qualificationswales.org">comms@qualificationswales.org</a>           |

# Introduction

Qualifications Wales regulates qualifications, other than degrees, in Wales. Under the [Qualifications Wales Act 2015](#), 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.

In this release, we present data on the range of vocational and other qualifications and certificates issued during the third quarter of 2020. The figures represent the number of certificates, rounded to the nearest 5, that were awarded by awarding bodies between 1 July and 30 September 2020. 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 in this release is for vocational and other qualifications listed on the [Qualifications in Wales \(QiW\) database](#)<sup>1</sup> or on our internal list of other regulated qualifications. This data does not include GCSEs, AS level, A level, Advanced Extension Awards, Principal Learning and Project qualifications.

This release presents data by quarter, using the quarters of the calendar year. 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.

From 2017 Q4, we have reported on certificates issued for vocational and other qualifications for Wales, which was initially collected from awarding bodies by Ofqual on our behalf. As of 2019 Q1, Qualifications Wales both collects and publishes official statistics for qualifications that we regulate. Data for Wales prior to 2017 Q4 was collected and published by [Ofqual](#). 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, or where they were necessary due to differences in our regulatory approach. More detail is included in the [Methodology](#) section of the background notes.

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<sup>1</sup> QiW is a register of regulated qualifications in Wales.

## COVID-19

On 18 March 2020, the Minister for Education Kirsty Williams [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 Mark Drakeford announced further restrictions to slow the spread of coronavirus in Wales](#). These initial measures were eased prior to the start of quarter 3, but a number of restrictions remained in place during some or all of the quarter. As a result of these restrictions, many colleges, assessment centres and training providers were unable to operate for several months. This will likely have an impact on the number of certificates that were awarded for vocational and other qualifications in quarter 3 of 2019.

Many of the vocational and other qualifications that are awarded in quarter 3 are awarded to learners in schools and colleges as part of the summer exam series at the end of the academic year. Due to the closure of schools and colleges, 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.

# Statistics

## Total certificates and historical trends

**Table 1: Number of certificates awarded by quarter and by year**

| Time period            | Year | Q1         | Q2         | Q3             | Q4         |
|------------------------|------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|
|                        |      | Jan to Mar | Apr to Jun | Jul to Sep     | Oct to Dec |
| Quarterly              | 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 | 50,550     | 61,610     | 215,110        | 51,765     |
|                        | 2020 | 45,300     | 20,120     | <b>198,870</b> | N/A        |
| Rolling 12-month total | 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 | 411,075    | 387,265    | 386,065        | 379,030    |
|                        | 2020 | 373,780    | 332,295    | <b>316,055</b> | N/A        |

Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

### Quarterly Comparison

198,870 certificates were awarded between July and September of 2020. This is a 7.6% decrease compared to the same quarter in 2019, when there were 215,110 certifications. This decrease is likely to be an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Details of other external factors which have likely contributed to the overall downward trend seen over the last five years can be found in the [background notes](#) of this release.

### Annual Comparison

Between October 2019 and September 2020 there were 316,055 certifications, a decrease of 18.1% compared to 386,505 between October 2018 and September 2019.

## Certificates by sector subject area (SSA)

**Table 2: Number of certificates awarded by sector subject area**

| Sector Subject Area                                 | Quarterly Comparison |                | Annual Comparison     |                       |
|---|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|   | 2019 Q3              | 2020 Q3        | Oct 2018 to Sept 2019 | Oct 2019 to Sept 2020 |
| 01 Health, Public Services and Care                 | 20,645               | 15,040         | 61,620                | 44,340                |
| 02 Science and Mathematics                          | 5,405                | 7,595          | 5,520                 | 7,830                 |
| 03 Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care        | 2,435                | 1,870          | 4,410                 | 3,910                 |
| 04 Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies       | 10,035               | 6,700          | 20,725                | 13,800                |
| 05 Construction, Planning and the Built Environment | 10,060               | 7,635          | 21,920                | 16,205                |
| 06 Information and Communication Technology         | 4,140                | 4,175          | 5,965                 | 5,475                 |
| 07 Retail and Commercial Enterprise                 | 10,295               | 5,945          | 26,785                | 16,750                |
| 08 Leisure, Travel and Tourism                      | 7,475                | 5,970          | 15,845                | 10,450                |
| 09 Arts, Media and Publishing                       | 11,500               | 5,330          | 26,515                | 14,030                |
| 10 History, Philosophy and Theology                 | 70                   | 260            | 70                    | 260                   |
| 11 Social Sciences                                  | 1,005                | 1,275          | 1,010                 | 1,275                 |
| 12 Languages, Literature and Culture                | 3,520                | 1,425          | 5,980                 | 2,825                 |
| 13 Education and Training                           | 1,460                | 865            | 4,005                 | 3,240                 |
| 14 Preparation for Life and Work                    | 115,325              | 122,425        | 163,190               | 154,725               |
| 15 Business, Administration and Law                 | 11,745               | 12,365         | 22,500                | 20,950                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>215,110</b>       | <b>198,870</b> | <b>386,065</b>        | <b>316,055</b>        |

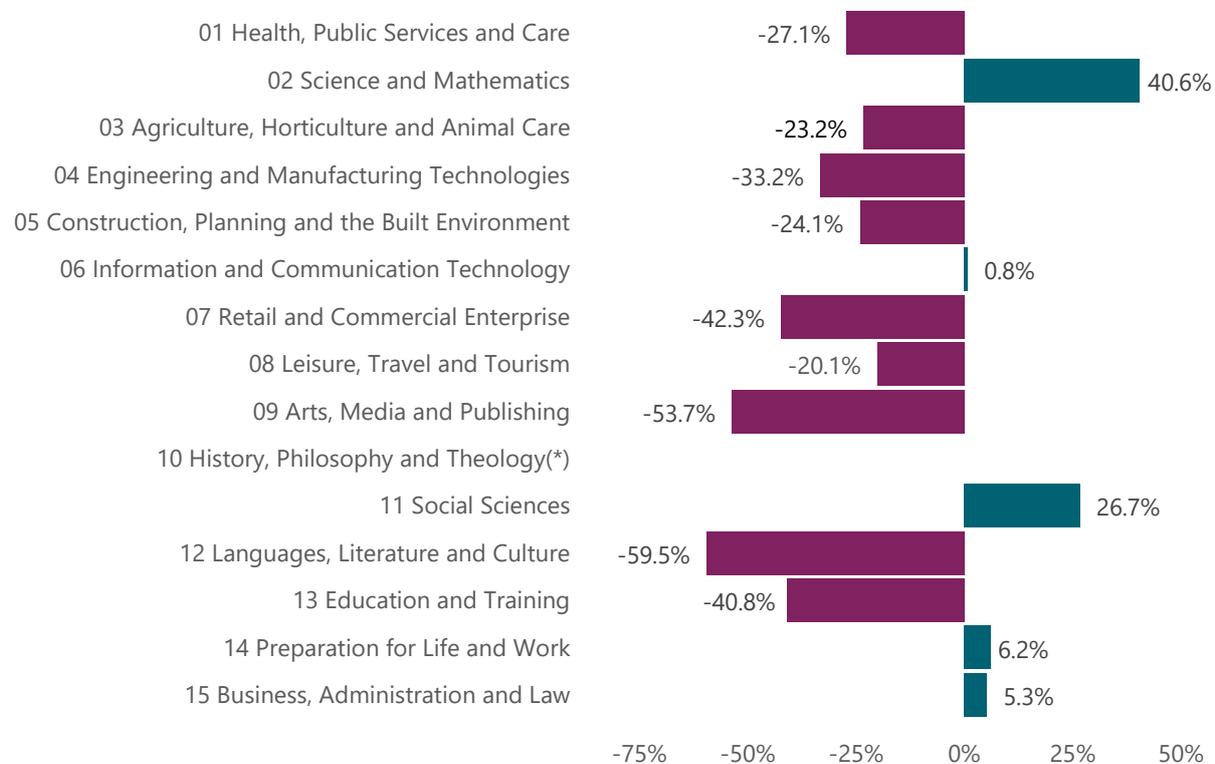
*Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies*

The predominant sectors in 2020 Q3 were 'Preparation for Life and Work' and 'Health, Public Services and Care', respectively making up 61.6% and 7.6% of all certificates. The 'Business, Administration and Law' sector was the third most certificated SSA in 2020 Q3.

'Preparation for Life and Work' was the most certificated SSA between October 2019 and September 2020. Despite an annual decrease in certificates of 5.2%, this sector made up a higher proportion of total certificates (49.0%) compared with October 2018 to September 2019 (42.3%). The 'Health, Public Services and Care' sector was

the second largest over the period October 2019 to September 2020, despite a decrease of 28.0% compared with the previous year.

**Figure 2: Percentage change in certifications awarded by sector subject area (SSA), 2020 Q3 compared to 2019 Q3**



(\*) SSAs with fewer than 100 certifications in either quarter are suppressed.  
 Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies

Figure 2 shows that the 'Languages, Literature and Culture' sector saw the largest quarterly decrease in certificates, with a decrease of 59.5% in 2020 Q3 compared with 2019 Q3. The sector with the largest proportional increase was 'History, Philosophy and Theology' which saw a quarterly increase of 26.7%, or around 190 certificates. The second largest increase of 40.6% was seen in 'Science and Mathematics'.

## Certificates by level

**Table 3: Number of certificates awarded by level**

| Level        | Quarterly Comparison |                | Annual Comparison     |                       |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|              | 2019 Q3              | 2020 Q3        | Oct 2018 to Sept 2019 | Oct 2019 to Sept 2020 |
| Entry Level  | 16,195               | 12,035         | 31,680                | 23,415                |
| Level 1      | 22,740               | 16,710         | 53,465                | 34,740                |
| Level 1/2    | 63,405               | 70,765         | 63,495                | 70,945                |
| Level 2      | 53,535               | 46,330         | 126,620               | 96,085                |
| Level 3      | 55,875               | 50,785         | 101,040               | 83,300                |
| Level 4      | 1,570                | 1,325          | 4,460                 | 3,805                 |
| Level 5      | 1,210                | 805            | 3,940                 | 3,310                 |
| Level 6      | 530                  | 95             | 805                   | 290                   |
| Level 7      | 40                   | 15             | 560                   | 170                   |
| Level 8      | 0                    | 0              | *                     | 0                     |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>215,110</b>       | <b>198,870</b> | <b>386,065</b>        | <b>316,055</b>        |

*Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies*

Levels 1/2, 2 and 3 were the most certificated levels in 2020 Q3, accounting for 84.4% of the total number of certificates for the quarter, compared to 80.3% in 2019 Q2. The same levels accounted for 79.2% of the annual total.

Except for Level 1/2, all levels saw both a quarterly and annual decrease in the number of certificates awarded. The increase in certificates for Level 1/2 qualifications is mainly driven by the 'Preparation for Life and Work' sector, but increases can be seen in other sectors as well.

Level 6 and Level 7 qualifications saw the largest proportional quarterly decreases of 82.3% and 61.9% respectively. These two levels also saw the largest decrease in annual certificates, decreasing by 64.1% and 69.7% respectively. The largest real-terms annual decrease in certificates was at Level 2, which decreased by 30,535 certificates.

## Top certificating awarding bodies

**Table 4: Top 10 awarding bodies by number of certificates awarded between October 2019 and September 2020**

| Awarding Body                                     | Oct 2018<br>to Sept<br>2019 | Oct 2019<br>to Sept<br>2020 | Rank Oct<br>2018 to<br>Sept<br>2019 | Rank Oct<br>2019 to<br>Sept<br>2020 | Rank<br>Change |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| WJEC-CBAC   | 90,925                      | 95,620                      | 1                                   | 1                                   | → +0           |
| City and Guilds of<br>London Institute            | 80,730                      | 60,800                      | 2                                   | 2                                   | → +0           |
| Pearson Education Ltd                             | 38,860                      | 43,000                      | 3                                   | 3                                   | → +0           |
| Agored Cymru                                      | 18,520                      | 18,845                      | 5                                   | 4                                   | ↑ +1           |
| Highfield Qualifications                          | 32,645                      | 18,125                      | 4                                   | 5                                   | ↓ -1           |
| The London Institute of<br>Banking & Finance      | 5,975                       | 11,640                      | 11                                  | 6                                   | ↑ +5           |
| Qualsafe Awards                                   | 14,070                      | 8,875                       | 6                                   | 7                                   | ↓ -1           |
| NCFE  | 6,325                       | 7,200                       | 10                                  | 8                                   | ↑ +2           |
| Associated Board of the<br>Royal Schools of Music | 10,465                      | 4,390                       | 7                                   | 9                                   | ↓ -2           |
| Trinity College London                            | 8,410                       | 4,385                       | 9                                   | 10                                  | ↓ -1           |

*Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies*

Due to the variety of qualifications offered by different awarding bodies, it is likely that individual awarding bodies have been affected differently by COVID-19. Table 4 shows the top ten awarding bodies by certificates over the period October 2019 to September 2020, compared to the previous 12 months. These ten awarding bodies accounted for 86.3% of all certificates awarded during this period. WJEC-CBAC retained its place as most certificating awarding body in the last 12 months, awarding over 95,000 certificates. Highfield Qualifications moved down a rank due to a 44.5% decrease in certificates and was overtaken by Agored Cymru whose annual certificates remained stable.

The London Institute of Banking and Finance is a new entrant in the top 10 certificating awarding bodies, climbing from 11<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> in the rank order due to an annual certificates increase of 94.9%. This increase was driven by qualifications in the 'Preparation for Life and Work' and 'Business, Administration and Law' sectors.

Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity College London remain in the top 10 but both saw large annual decreases in certificates of 58.0% and 47.9% respectively.

Excellence, Achievement & Learning Limited dropped out of the top 10 as a result of an annual decrease in certificates of 68.0%.

## Top certificating qualifications

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

| Qualification   | 2019 Q3 | 2020 Q3 |
|---|---------|---------|
| WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) | 27,125  | 28,245  |
| WJEC National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate                                | 26,415  | 28,000  |
| WJEC Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)            | 11,660  | 11,770  |
| WJEC Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate   | 9,945   | 10,355  |
| LIBF Level 2 Certificate In Financial Capability and Careers Development    | 4,400   | 6,560   |
| Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Certificate in Personal and Social Development      | 2,765   | 3,865   |
| WJEC Level 2 Certificate in Additional Mathematics                          | 2,120   | 2,965   |
| NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Equality and Diversity                          | 610     | 2,745   |
| LIBF Level 1 Lessons in Financial Education Award                           | 155     | 2,405   |
| LIBF Level 1 / Level 2 Lessons in Financial Education Certificate           | 420     | 2,130   |

*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 ten qualifications accounted for 99,035 certificates, which is 49.9% of all certificates awarded in 2020 Q3. Of these top ten qualifications, compared to the same quarter last year, LIBF Level 1 Lessons in Financial Education Award saw the largest proportional increase (1,460.0%), followed by LIBF Level 1 / Level 2 Lessons in Financial Education Certificate (408.1%). These large proportional increases represent an increase in certificates of 2,250 and 1,710 respectively. No qualifications in the top 10 saw a decrease in quarterly certificates.

Qualifications that form part of the Welsh Bacc framework make up the top four qualifications awarded in 2020 Q3, with WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) at the top with 28,245 certificates. More information about the Welsh Bacc and Skills Challenge Certificate, and how they affect these statistics, can be found in the [external influences](#) section of the background notes.

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

| <b>Qualification</b>  | <b>Oct 2018 to<br/>Sept 2019</b> | <b>Oct 2019 to<br/>Sept 2020</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| WJEC Foundation/National Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) | 27,125                           | 28,245                           |
| WJEC National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate                                | 26,415                           | 28,000                           |
| WJEC Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate)            | 11,660                           | 11,770                           |
| WJEC Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate   | 9,945                            | 10,355                           |
| LIBF Level 2 Certificate In Financial Capability and Careers Development    | 4,410                            | 6,575                            |
| NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Equality and Diversity                          | 1,415                            | 4,395                            |
| Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)                | 7,015                            | 4,075                            |
| City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills                     | 5,160                            | 3,980                            |
| Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Certificate in Personal and Social Development      | 3,010                            | 3,925                            |
| QA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF)                       | 5,305                            | 3,780                            |

*Source: Qualifications Wales VQ data collection from awarding bodies*

Table 6 shows the top ten qualifications with the highest number of certifications in the latest 12 months compared to the number of certificates for the same qualifications in the previous 12 months. These ten qualifications accounted for 33.3% of all certificates awarded during the period October 2019 to September 2020.

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. More information about the Welsh Bacc and Skill Challenge Certificate, and how they affect these statistics, can be found in the [external influences](#) section of the background notes.

Aside from the Welsh Bacc and Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications, the most awarded qualifications were the Highfield Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF) and the City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills.

# 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 Qualifications](#) 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 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 2017](#) which named Qualifications Wales as one of the bodies that are in scope of the [Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007](#). 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 2020 (July – September 2020) 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 Qualifications](#).

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 purposes.

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 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 \(QiW\) database](#).

## **Methodology**

We have developed our own method for producing and reporting these statistics, which differs slightly from the method used by Ofqual when producing historical statistics for Wales. 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 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 characteristics included in this report, such as subject sector area (SSA) and level, are based on the Ofqual register and the QiW database. For quarters up to and including 2018 Q4, 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 from the 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 2019 Q1. 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 2019 Q1 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.

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 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.

## Qualification Types and Levels

Each qualification is ascribed a level. Levels are described in the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#). Table 7 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 2020 Q3 are shaded blue in the table.

**Table 7: Qualification types and corresponding levels**

| Qualification type                      | Current levels                 | Qualification type                 | Current levels                 |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Basic Skills                            | Entry Level, Levels 1 and 2    | Key skills                         | Levels 1 to 4                  |
| CVET <sup>2</sup>                       | Levels 1 to 6                  | NVQ                                | Levels 1 to 5                  |
| End-Point Assessment                    | Levels 2 to 7                  | Other general qualification        | Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3         |
| English for speakers of other languages | Entry Level, Levels 1, 2 and 3 | Other life skills qualification    | Entry Level, Levels 1, 2 and 3 |
| Essential Skills Wales                  | Entry Level, Levels 1, 2 and 3 | Other vocational qualification     | Entry Level, Levels 1 to 4     |
| Free-standing mathematics qualification | Levels 1, 2 and 3              | Occupational qualification         | Levels 1 to 4                  |
| Functional skills                       | Entry Level, Levels 1 and 2    | QCF <sup>3</sup>                   | Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8     |
| Higher Level                            | Levels 4 to 8                  | Vocationally related qualification | Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8     |
| IVET <sup>4</sup>                       | Entry Level, Levels 1 to 5     | Welsh Baccalaureate <sup>5</sup>   | Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3         |

<sup>2</sup> 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 [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#)).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#)).

<sup>5</sup> The type 'Welsh Baccalaureate' includes both the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate (at all levels) and the Welsh Baccalaureate 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 Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc)

Following the '[Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales](#)', 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 policy 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 count<sup>6</sup>.

### Geographical Coverage

This release presents data on the number of certifications for vocational and other qualifications for quarter 3 (July – Sept 2020) for centres located in Wales. This release does not include vocational and other qualifications taken outside of Wales,

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<sup>6</sup> Further information on changes to performance measures in Wales can be found on the [Welsh Government website](#).

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. 1<sup>st</sup> 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 |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Pearson EDI Certificates</b>  | 1210   | 1415   | 1835   | 1050   | 1385   | 1480   | 1745   | 1905   | 1205   | 1085   |
| <b>WJEC-EDEXCEL Certificates</b> | 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 |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Pearson EDI Certificates</b>  | 345    | 420    | 205    | 140    | 45     | 30     | 10     | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| <b>WJEC-EDEXCEL Certificates</b> | 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 Sources](#). Historical data has been subject to Ofqual's quality assurance procedures, which are carried out as explained in the [Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications](#) 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 release](#).

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 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. 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.

## 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 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.](#)

### **Useful information**

A glossary of terms is available on [page 11](#) 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.

### **Next update**

February 2021 (provisional).

### **User feedback**

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [statistics@qualificationswales.org](mailto:statistics@qualificationswales.org).

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