

[News story: Ofqual reports relating to GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2018](#)

Ofqual has today (Thursday 13 December) published its review of GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2018, providing an overview of the exam boards' planning, administration and marking which supported the series, along with a summary of the awarding process and what happened post-results.

2018 was the biggest year of reform, and most exams taken this summer were in reformed qualifications. We conclude that the 2018 summer series was successful, well planned, and effectively delivered. In recent years, exam results have been stable, and this trend continued. Variability in school and college results this summer was similar to previous years, suggesting that teachers and students responded well to the considerable reforms.

The majority of entries in 2018 were for reformed qualifications. Entries for GCSEs and A levels remained broadly stable. In line with recent trends, entries for AS subjects fell by almost 60% from 659,880 in 2017 to 269,090 in 2018. This is largely because new AS qualifications are stand-alone qualifications in England (meaning students do not have to take an AS as part of a reformed A level).

During the exam series, [14.7 million scripts were generated by 1.3 million students](#). As in previous years, the vast majority of exam papers were error free. Where errors did occur, none was sufficiently serious to have had a significant impact on students. There were fewer security breaches and incidents of malpractice, reflecting work undertaken by exam boards to strengthen procedures.

Chief Regulator, Sally Collier, said:

Against the backdrop of major reform, the 2018 exam series was successfully delivered, with marking completed and results announced on time. Security breaches and incidents of malpractice fell and exam boards better applied our rules around reviews of marking and moderation. We will be working with the exam boards on follow-up actions to drive further improvements in 2019.

The number of GCSE and A level grades challenged and changed fell in 2018 compared to the previous summer, according to official statistics published today. The data also indicate that nearly two-thirds of reviews resulted in no mark change, an increase from 2017. The reasons given for grade changes when they did occur this year are more consistent with the appropriate application of our rules regarding reviews of marking and reviews of moderation as introduced in 2016.

Official statistics of malpractice in the summer 2018 GCSE, AS and A level series, published today, show there were fewer incidents of malpractice. The

number of malpractice penalties issued to students has remained stable since 2017. The main reason for penalties continues to be unauthorised materials – particularly mobile phones – in the examination room. Staff and centre malpractice penalties have both decreased. These falls are encouraging in the context of the significant communications and engagement campaign we, and the exam boards, conducted this summer. We are planning further activity, alongside exam boards, to support exams officers in tackling the problem of students retaining their mobile phones during examinations.

We monitor GCSE, AS and A level awards each summer to make sure, so far as possible, that there is a level playing field for students. One of the ways that we do this is to make sure that the grade standards in a subject are comparable, so that it is not easier or more difficult to get a particular grade with one exam board than with another. Across all awards in summer 2018, we concluded that the exam boards had maintained appropriate standards and that grade standards within each subject were aligned.

We have published more information about the operation of this year's tests. This was the second year of the National Reference Test (NRT) (following the Preliminary Reference Test in 2016). The tests, in English language and maths, are taken by students in a sample of schools and they provide additional evidence about students' performance over time in those subjects. In 2017 we benchmarked the NRT against GCSE results in English language and maths, so that in future years we can compare student performance with the 2017 baseline. Results from the 2018 NRT show an increase in performance in maths and a slight decrease in English, although in English the differences are not statistically significant. The improvement in maths is in line with what we might expect to see as schools get used to the new qualifications. We have been clear that we would not use the NRT results in awarding in summer 2018. From 2019 onwards the NRT results will provide an additional source of evidence for awarding decisions in GCSE English language and maths.

We have published analysis of the variability over time in the relationships between grades for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and other variables (including GCSE grades) that could potentially influence students' performance on EPQ. Findings indicate that there might have been modest grade inflation in EPQ grade outcomes, particularly since 2014. We are planning to do further work to assess grade standards in EPQs over time.

In summer 2018 we enhanced our analytics apps to show variability in school and college GCSE and A level results and launched an interactive map of England showing results in different subjects by grade and county. We have now added a further app to our suite, which provides new data and functionality, showing [GCSE](#) and [A level](#) entries and results by subject and year.

Press release: Dame Glenys Stacey review proposes farm regulation shake-up

A more supportive, flexible and incentives-led approach to farming regulation has been recommended as part of wide-ranging review into the sector published today (Thursday 13 December).

The final report by Dame Glenys Stacey, concludes that the current regulation of the farming sector – with its one-size-fits-all rules-based approach – is far too inflexible. Leaving the EU provides the opportunity to do things differently.

The report recommends a new independent regulator that would be supportive of farmers' individual circumstances, offering them practical advice, guidance and helping to incentivise good practice.

This means local advisers would be able to visit farmers to discuss issues such as biosecurity, soil quality or animal welfare, rather than turning up to impose an automatic sanction. In other words, the regulator should work alongside farmers – to “do with” rather than to “do to” in order to ensure high standards.

The report, which was [commissioned by Environment Secretary Michael Gove in February](#), also recommends better use of technology. For instance, through satellite data and drones to monitor field margins and other public goods that the land manager is contracted to deliver.

Changing the balance between ‘on foot’ and remote surveillance would make inspections more efficient for the regulator and less burdensome for the farmer.

Dame Glenys Stacey said:

As things are, farmers are subject to a number of pernicky and sometimes nonsensical rules. There is little practical advice or guidance given to ensure compliance. Instead, automatic financial penalties have become the norm when at times they are unfair.

The large majority of farmers want to farm responsibly but some need guidance, advice and support to do that. A regulator should provide that, and explain why any change on the farm is needed. Yes, sometimes swingeing sanctions are justified, but more often, more is achieved by a more supportive approach.

There is so much scope to regulate more effectively, by harnessing technology and local knowledge. A strong regulatory culture brings many opportunities – from getting on top of systemic issues such as

animal diseases, to improving plant health and our environment under the new farming system.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Dame Glenys and her team have done excellent work on this comprehensive review into farm regulation and inspections, drawing on what works best in other sectors.

It's clear that current regulation isn't working as it should. We commissioned this report because leaving the EU gives us the opportunity for a fresh and modern approach – one that is less onerous for farmers and also helps us to deliver on our environmental ambitions.

The government will respond to the review in the New Year.

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[News story: SMN Explorer report published](#)



MAIB's report on the uncontrolled closure of a hatch cover on the general cargo vessel SMN Explorer with loss of 1 life earlier this year, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened and the subsequent actions taken: [read more](#).

Published 13 December 2018

[Speech: Finding a peaceful resolution to tensions in Haiti](#)

Thank you Mr President. Let me begin by thanking SRSG La Lime for her briefing and in particular for the MINUJUSTH benchmarks mandate implementation dashboard which is very useful, very helpful and I hope we can see similar implementation dashboards for other UN Peacekeeping Missions in future.

Mr President, it's now roughly 18 months since we as a Council visited Haiti under the leadership of the Permanent Representative of Bolivia and it is encouraging to hear that there has been progress on a number of areas.

The United Kingdom continues to appreciate the work of MINUJUSTH and its support to the Government of Haiti to strengthen the rule of law and further develop the capacities of the Haitian National Police.

I also want to recognise the efforts of President Moise to find a constructive resolution to the recent tensions. It is clear that the situation on the ground remains fragile.

Mr President, I will limit my intervention to three main points:

First, with regard to the progress made against the benchmarks, I want specifically to acknowledge some of the important milestones reached. The UK has been greatly encouraged by progress ranging from the passage and rollout of the legal aid law to the recent graduation of 692 police cadets, and the increase in the numbers of women police – which is now close to the benchmarked target. Both MINUJUSTH and the Government of Haiti can justly celebrate these successes.

However, progress is still needed in critical areas. With legislative elections on the horizon, passage of the draft electoral law by parliament, already highlighted today by France and Sweden, remains vital, as does the reconstitution of the Permanent Electoral Council and updating of the electoral role. If professionalization of the Haitian National Police is to

be sustained, its oversight and accountability mechanisms need to be properly functional. This is paramount for increasing the trust between the State and the Haitian people in order to cement the social contract.

And if Haitian rule of law institutions as a whole are to stand up effectively and turn new laws into reality, budgets and implementation plans need to be finalised.

Second, if political and security efforts to build peace are to succeed, they will need to be accompanied by efforts to address the structural issues that have exacerbated or sustained the grievances of the Haitian people, including with regard to economic opportunity and access to basic services.

Dialogue at all levels is essential. The UK encourages the Haitian government, together with its international partners, to intensify dialogue among all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, to reach greater consensus on shared peacebuilding priorities, including the adoption of measures that can respond to the immediate needs of people and minimise the risk of destabilisation or relapse into violence.

Third and finally, regarding the MINUJUSTH transition, I want to say quite simply that it is critical that we all get this right. We now have little more than nine months before MINUJUSTH is expected to leave Haiti to be succeeded by a non-peacekeeping UN presence.

As others today have already said, Haitian ownership and delivery of critical reforms is essential for the transition to be a success, and I was encouraged to note in the report the establishment of a joint commission by the Prime Minister and the SRSG. It is vital that all parties now intensify their efforts to ensure that these benchmarks are met.

I was encouraged also to learn that efforts are being stepped up with regard to the MINUJUSTH-UNDP joint rule of law programme and its sustainability in a post-peacekeeping phase. And the United Kingdom would welcome similar efforts to ensure the sustainability of MINUJUSTH's community violence reduction programme.

With the UN Strategic Assessment process now underway, we look forward to engaging closely with all stakeholders on how to make this transition a success. We continue to urge the Secretary-General to be realistic and clear about the division of responsibilities across the UN system and to support the UN to fill the gaps identified in capacity and capabilities of the UN Country Team, which is a key to a successful transition.

Thank you Mr President.