

# Rise in top grades as students celebrate A level results

Hundreds of thousands of students have had their university places confirmed with more disadvantaged pupils than ever going on to higher education.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances, grades have remained broadly stable with a 2.5 percentage point rise in A and A\* grades at A level, and a 0.7 percentage point rise in overall passes (A\*-E), helping students take their next step.

This year's results reflect the robust grading system implemented by Ofqual after exams were cancelled to prevent the spread of coronavirus and keep schools, colleges and wider communities safe.

Results show the right balance has been achieved of making sure students receive the grades they deserve, while being fair to students studying at different schools and colleges across the country through standardisation.

As a result, this year's AS, A level and vocational and technical qualification results will hold the same value for universities, colleges and employers, with students able to progress to the next stage of their education or training as they would in any other year.

Statistics published today show:

- 98.3% received grades A\* to E at A level, up from 97.6% in 2019
- Increase in As and A\*s awarded at A level, up from 25.5% in 2019 to 27.9%
- Maths remains the most popular subject at A level with a 2.5% increase in entries this year; entries for 18 year olds increased by 7.7%
- Entries for English A level increased by 1.8% despite a decrease in cohort size
- Computing saw an 11.7% increase in entries, with more girls taking up the subject
- A record number of 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in England have been accepted into university – up 7.3% from last year
- Almost 60% of grades received by students are exactly the same as those submitted by schools and colleges
- 96.4% of grades were either the same as the one submitted by schools or colleges or only changed by one grade, testament to the excellent judgement and hard work of teachers
- Results for vocational and technical qualifications are broadly in line with previous years

Whilst the grading system is robust, earlier this week the Government announced a new 'triple lock' process for exam results to give young people added security and make sure the system is fair to all students.

Students can accept the calculated grade received today, appeal to receive a valid mock result, or sit an exam in the autumn. The triple lock will provide an important safety net for the minority of cases where students feel that the calculated grades do not reflect their achievements.

Schools are also able to appeal if they believe their historic data does not reflect the ability of their current students.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Receiving your results is always a huge moment, particularly this year after the disruption caused by coronavirus and the uncertainty that came with it, and I hope all students can take pride in their achievements.

I know how difficult it was for students to find out that they were unable to sit an exam. It wasn't a decision that was taken lightly.

The majority of young people will have received a calculated grade today that enables them to progress to the destination they deserve, with the added safety net of being able to appeal on the basis of their mock results, as well as the chance of sitting autumn exams, thanks to our triple lock process to ensure confidence and fairness in the system.

I want to congratulate all students, and thank parents, teachers and everyone involved in education for their contribution to making sure all of our young people are able to progress with the next stage of their lives.

Many students will also go on to one of the UK's world leading universities, and today's data shows that more than 358,000 UK students have been accepted so far this year, an increase of 3% on last year. There has been a 14% increase in the number of UK students accepted on nursing courses and a 3% increase in UK students accepted on to education and teaching courses.

Thousands of the students getting their results today will also go on to do an apprenticeship, offering them high-quality training and a wide range of career options.

The grades students receive today are based on the judgement of their school or college, and have been moderated by exam boards to make sure the same standard is applied for all students, whichever school, college or part of the country they come from.

Final data published by Ofqual today shows that students have not been disadvantaged due to their background by this year's awarding process.

For any students who want to sit exams in October and November, the government recently announced an extensive support package for all schools and colleges for the additional costs associated with running exams in the

autumn. This is on top of the announcement by Ofqual last week of arrangements for appeals for summer grades.