

News story: Perceptions of A levels and GCSEs in England: wave 15

Highlights from the survey:

Perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels

1. Confidence in the GCSE, AS and A level systems is significantly higher than in previous years. Levels of trust and confidence in the maintenance of standards have also improved.
2. Overall figures show that, compared to last year and previous waves, significantly higher proportions of stakeholders agreed that GCSEs “are a trusted qualification” (65% to 72%), that “standards are maintained year on year” (30% to 40%), and that “marking of GCSEs is accurate” (26% to 38%).
3. A significantly higher proportion of stakeholders also agreed that “AS and A level standards are maintained year on year” (37% to 47%), and that “the marking of AS and A levels is accurate” (31% to 41%).
4. Around twice as many young people agreed than disagreed that GCSE and AS and A level marking was accurate. The net proportion of teachers in agreement was also larger for both sets of qualifications than in previous years.

Perceptions of GCSE reform

1. The proportion of stakeholders who, in autumn 2016, were aware of the new 9 to 1 grading system was significantly higher than in wave 14. However, this improving picture of understanding is unlikely to reflect current levels of awareness, as Ofqual has since undertaken a wide-ranging communications and engagement campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the new grading system.

National Reference Test

1. The first National Reference Test was undertaken in England in February and March this year. The data suggest that in November last year about half of surveyed head teachers were aware of the test. Ofqual, and its delivery partner NFER, have since provided more information to schools, so these results are unlikely to be a true reflection of the current picture. Awareness and familiarity of the test is expected to improve as more schools are engaged with it over coming years.

Review of marking and appeals

1. Parents, young people and the general public strongly agreed that the systems used by schools and colleges to challenge GCSE, AS and A level results in England are fair. Teachers were also more likely to agree than disagree.
2. There was no change in the proportion of stakeholders who were aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals systems compared with last year, and head teachers remained the group with the highest claimed awareness, at 75%.
3. When asked about whether they felt that they had adequate information about exam boards' review of marking, moderation and appeals systems, overall more stakeholders disagreed (45%) than agreed (28%).
4. Awareness of the systems for appealing vocational qualification results was much lower, with only half of head teachers and a quarter of teachers responding that they knew about the process.

Special consideration, reasonable adjustments and malpractice

1. Head teachers and teachers agreed by significant margins that they have adequate information about the arrangements and adjustments available for eligible GCSE, AS and A level students. They also agreed that it is fair, and that the right adjustments are made for the right students.
2. They also strongly agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice and to whom it should be reported and that allegations are fairly investigated.

Commenting on today's release, Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator, Ofqual, said:

We are pleased that confidence in GCSEs, AS and A levels is improving. This bears out anecdotal feedback we have had from stakeholders about how we have engaged the sector with the reform programme and other changes we have introduced.

This is one of many positives reflected in the report.

We continue to be in period of major reform and many of the systems and processes surveyed in this report are currently changing. There

will inevitably be a period of bedding in as teachers and schools become more familiar with the changes. This is certainly true of the National Reference Test.

We also know that since this research was carried out we have done even more work around the new 9 to 1 grading structure, so the current position is likely to be better than reported here, but it still encouraging to see the figures increasing from this time last year.

Read the [full Official Statistics](#).

Speech: Malaysia and Britain: Partners in a post-Brexit world

Good afternoon, and thank you all for that welcome. It is a pleasure to be here in Malaysia, and a privilege to be able to address the representatives of some of this country's leading firms.

Before I begin, I must start by thanking all of those who have made today's event possible.

Firstly, I am grateful to my Malaysian counterparts – the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, for hosting today's event and providing such an excellent venue.

The Malaysian External Trade Development Council and the Malaysian Investment Development Authority have also been instrumental in helping to deliver this event.

And, of course, The National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia, and their counterpart the British Malaysia Chamber of Commerce, must be thanked for marketing this event, and ensuring such a distinguished audience.

A huge variety of industries are represented here today, from business services to infrastructure to aviation and everything in between.

Your presence here today is not only a gesture of commercial interest, but it is also an act of friendship, a signal of your desire to enhance Malaysia's trading relationship with the United Kingdom, as we open a new chapter in our nation's history.

As I'm sure many of you will be aware, last week the UK triggered Article 50, formally initiating our departure from the EU.

We are at the beginning of a 2 year-process, and over the next 24 months,

Britain will not only negotiate a new relationship with the European Union, but will fundamentally recast our place in the world.

The UK government's ambition is to build a Global Britain – a nation that is outward-looking and internationalist, rejecting insularity and continuing to play a prominent role in global affairs.

Trade is central to this ambition.

We want Britain to become a global champion of free trade, a nation at the heart of world commerce, working with our international allies and partners to remove barriers and liberalise trading practices.

The UK is looking to agree a comprehensive new trading relationship with the European Union, but at the same time renew our commitment to our oldest and closest international partnerships, as we seek to embrace the wider world.

Our relationship with Malaysia is very important to the UK.

Our 2 countries have always enjoyed a close commercial, political and diplomatic partnership.

At an individual level, the relationship between the British and Malaysian peoples has never been stronger. There are over 17,000 Malaysians currently studying in the UK.

In addition, there are nearly 80,000 more studying for UK qualifications in Malaysia – a figure second only to China. We are very lucky to count Prime Minister Najib as a former student – one of half a million Malaysian alumni of British institutions.

Internationally, our co-operation remains as strong as ever. This is reflected not only in our membership of the Commonwealth, but also in the Five Powers Defence Arrangements.

Your economy is consistently ranked among the most competitive in the world, and like the UK, you are one of the top nations in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.

Malaysia and the UK share a common attitude to trade and investment and a welcoming commercial environment.

At a time when protectionism and barriers to trade are going up across the world, Malaysia has a respect for trading freedoms that welcomes international investors.

This is exemplified by ASEAN, a network that is a world leader in economic growth and commercial opportunity. As a prominent member, Malaysia is an increasingly important partner not just for the UK, but the whole world.

I need hardly remind those here today of the fundamental strengths of the Malaysian economy.

It is because of this energy, drive and dynamism that I am here today, strengthening the economic and commercial ties that unite our nations.

Our partnership has already delivered much for both our countries.

A recent survey by the High Commission found that the UK's 24 leading investors in Malaysia, many of whom are represented here today, employ over 80,000 Malaysians and are responsible for investments worth over 90 billion ringgit.

These British companies have a unique confidence in Malaysia and her booming economy, and other UK investors are also helping to develop new industries and commercial sectors.

Dyson, for example, employ over 1,000 local engineers, and BAE Systems employs 400 highly skilled people here in Kuala Lumpur working in its Cyber Security Global Engineering Centre, including a graduate recruitment programme working in conjunction with local universities.

Such jobs are harnessing the talent and ambition of young Malaysians, and spreading the experience, knowledge and expertise of leading UK firms to the next generation.

They are investing in Malaysia's future.

International trade is, of course, a 2 way process, and the United Kingdom has in turn benefitted hugely from Malaysian investors in recent years.

As the Malaysian economy has boomed, so has your investment in the UK. In the 5 years to 2016, it grew by an astonishing 200%, and was valued at £28.5 billion Ringgit, approximately £5.2 billion.

Among the most visible investment projects in the UK is the £10 billion regeneration of Battersea Power Station.

This iconic London landmark has been given a new lease of life by our partnership with Malaysia.

This country's investment has advanced a huge variety of the UK's industries, from healthcare to leisure to automotive engineering. It has become part of the fabric of British life.

Yet, for all these successes, there is more to be done.

Although we in the UK have been buying ever more Malaysian goods and services, our exports to your country have suffered a decline.

Overall, the value of our mutual trade has shrunk by 2.7% since 2013. It is a disappointing statistic for 2 such complementary economies.

There is no reason why this should be so. Both of our economies are experiencing remarkable growth.

The UK and Malaysia are both business friendly, outward-looking nations, brimming with commercial and investment opportunities.

I am here today to open a new chapter, to further promote our joint commerce and stimulate our mutual trading relationship.

In recognition of the substantial bilateral trade and investment opportunities that exist, the Prime Minister last year appointed a [Trade Envoy](#) to Malaysia, Richard Graham MP.

He is here with me today and has, with the support of our partner, the British Malaysia Chamber of Commerce, been busy scoping new opportunities for British and Malaysian companies to work together in Johor.

You can expect to see a lot more of him in the future!

My own Department for International Trade has been working to promote opportunities across key sectors.

Last year, DIT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, a move that has led to 2 UK visits, and significant interest from the UK technology and research sector in the huge opportunities available here.

Later this year, a 'mega-mission', of 50 of the UK's leading tech companies will visit Malaysia, looking to cement this relationship.

In 2016, the Education is GREAT campaign was officially launched, aiming to expand a sector that has been at the heart of our bilateral relationship for 2 centuries, since the first English international school opened in Penang in 1816.

Today, there are over 100 international schools teaching the British curriculum in Malaysia, 5 university branch campuses, and over 125 institutions that offer UK degrees.

This is a truly remarkable achievement, and will form the basis of a cultural, political and commercial partnership that will stretch far into the future.

The [GREAT campaign](#) is the largest of its kind in the world, a global drive to promote the UK as a destination for trade, investment, tourism and study.

Yet it is also about working with our partners to spread UK knowledge and expertise across the globe.

This Formula One season, [McLaren will become our official GREAT partners](#), working to promote British research and development strength and education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Look out for their GREAT branded cars at your own Grand Prix in October!

McLaren's involvement in the GREAT campaign illustrates a wider point that I

wish to leave you with today.

Our government will do everything it can to promote trade and investment, but we cannot do it without you, our leading companies, to capitalise on these opportunities and expand that relationship.

You are the wealth creators. You are the ones who generate jobs, stimulate economic growth, and spread prosperity between our countries.

Our businesses matter. Not for nothing is Malaysia ranked among the best places in the world to do business.

Events like today are crucial if we are to build those business-to-business relationships, and seize the opportunities of the future.

My department is listening, and our team at the British High Commission will do everything they can to help you on that journey. But we cannot make it for you.

Malaysia is important to us, and our 2 countries have a long and prosperous history together.

But I firmly believe that the best days of our partnership lie ahead.

Our economies are complementary, we share the same values, and the connection between our nations, at every level, is stronger than ever.

As the UK leaves the European Union, we have an unprecedented opportunity to work with our partners across the world to drive prosperity, champion free trade, and deliver a better future for all our citizens.

Malaysia, and Malaysian companies, are our partners on this journey.

Thank you.

Press release: Government helps dementia sufferers in fight against nuisance calls

- elderly and vulnerable – including dementia sufferers – to be given hi-tech devices which block all nuisance calls
- project is latest government move to tackle the blight of rogue traders
- PM: We want to create a fairer society by cracking down on unscrupulous practices which target the most vulnerable

Rogue traders who bombard the elderly and vulnerable with nuisance phone

calls are to be stopped in their tracks by a targeted government scheme designed to protect those with dementia.

Every year, thousands of complaints are made about nuisance phone calls and in February last year, one firm alone was fined £350,000 for making more than 46 million automated calls.

To help tackle the problem, Prime Minister Theresa May, has today announced the launch of a half-a-million-pound project which will see hi-tech call blocking devices installed in the homes of some of the most vulnerable people across the UK who have been identified by doctors, Trading Standards officials and local councils as being at risk from nuisance callers.

The trueCall devices will completely block all recorded messages, silent calls and calls from numbers not already pre-identified by the home owner – offering particular protection to those with dementia.

The Prime Minister said:

We want to create a fairer society by cracking down on unscrupulous practices which target the most vulnerable.

This new, targeted scheme is the latest step in the government's fight against nuisance calls, protecting those who are most at risk, including those with dementia.

We have seen people tricked out of thousands of pounds by scam callers and this government is determined to clamp down on their activities once and for all.

The project, which is being co-ordinated by the National Trading Standards Scams Team and supported by local Trading Standards departments, is the latest of a series of government crackdowns on nuisance callers

A similar trial scheme run by the National Trading Standards Scams Team last year resulted in 93% of participants feeling safer in their homes. This included one person who had previously paid £150,000 to a scam caller.

The chief executive of Dementia UK, Hilda Hayo, said:

We welcome this project as some people living with dementia are vulnerable to nuisance callers who offer bogus services and financial schemes.

These calls can not only have a negative financial impact but can also lead to psychological affects such as anxiety, depression and a loss of self-esteem. We frequently receive calls to our national helpline from family members who are concerned that their relative with dementia has fallen prey to rogue traders.

The special devices will screen calls and can either ask callers to enter a security code which only genuine callers will know, or direct them to instead call a friend or relative of the home owner.

Lord Toby Harris, the Chair of National Trading Standards, said:

The impact of nuisance calls – both emotional and financial – cannot be underestimated. We know that these call blockers can make a real difference to people’s lives and give those in vulnerable situations, such as those with dementia, and their families a greater sense of protection and security.

Working with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), the government has already forced companies to display their caller ID when cold calling and given out a series of hefty fines – totalling almost £7 million.

The government will shortly implement plans to slap company bosses and firms with fines of up to £1 million if they are found to be in breach of Privacy and Electronics Communications Regulations.

- the funding for this scheme includes £300,000 to supply call blocking machines with the remaining budget spent on the management of the service and raising public awareness of scam and nuisance calls
- plans to make company bosses liable follows previous legislation where only businesses were liable for fines. Many of the businesses tried to escape paying nuisance call penalties by declaring bankruptcy – only to open up again under a different name
- the ICO has issued fines totalling almost £7 million since 2012
- on 2015, the ICO received almost 170,000 complaints about nuisance calls
- to report a nuisance call visit: www.ico.org.uk
- see what else government is doing to combat nuisance calls by searching for: #NoNuisance on social media

[Press release: Welsh Secretary: Aston Martin creating a lasting legacy in Wales](#)

Aston Martin’s investment in St Athan will create a lasting legacy for the region, Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns will say when he attends a special ceremony to mark the beginning of the redevelopment of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) site into the car brand’s newest manufacturing facility.

Work has already begun on staff facilities at the site and the second phase

will start in earnest when the company today (6 April) gains access to the three Ministry of Defence “super hangars” that will house the manufacturing plant.

In February 2016, Aston Martin Lagonda announced that the DBX – a ‘crossover’ sports utility vehicle – would be made at St Athan with the creation of 750 jobs with a likely further 1,000 across the supply chain and local businesses in Wales. The first vehicle is expected to come off the production line in 2020.

Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns will be on hand at the prestigious event in the Vale of Glamorgan which marks the start of the transition of the aircraft hangars into Wales’ newest, state of the art manufacturing plant.

Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

Thanks to the close partnership between the UK and Welsh Governments and the prestigious Aston Martin brand, the St Athan site is springing back to life as a significant centre of employment, bringing with it valuable skills and a lasting legacy for the entire region.

As the UK exits the EU, we are determined that our country remains a great place to invest and to do business. Aston Martin’s decision to invest in Wales shows that we are creating and supporting the right conditions for industry investment. The UK Government’s comprehensive industrial strategy will build on that success, ensuring that we have the right infrastructure, skills and support in place for our world-leading industries as well as support for new emerging sectors to flourish.

The automotive sector is the UK’s largest manufacturing export sector and is spread nationally. St Athan will be the sole production facility for the new Aston Martin crossover vehicle. With growing demand for these types of vehicles in markets such as China and the United States, it is expected that over 90% of the production from St Athan will be exported outside of the United Kingdom.

[Press release: New powers to tackle illegal working in licensed premises](#)

Under the measures, brought in as part of the Immigration Act 2016, immigration checks will be part of the process for applying for a licence. From today, a premises or personal licence will not be issued to anyone who

does not have permission to be or work in the UK. Being granted a licence and continuing to hold it will also be reliant on complying with the UK's immigration laws.

Additionally, the Home Office will be consulted in the same way as the police before a licence is granted. If a business has any immigration offences and civil penalties, these will be considered as part of the licence application, and as a ground for making a formal request to a licensing authority for a licence to be reviewed.

Immigration officers will also receive the same powers as licensing enforcement officers and the police to enter a premises being used to sell alcohol or late night refreshment, in order to investigate immigration offences. This will enable joint enforcement operations with licensing enforcement officers, and allow immigration officers to enter licensed premises without a warrant where there is intelligence of illegal working taking place.

Immigration Minister Robert Goodwill said:

"Illegal working cheats the taxpayer, has a negative impact on the wages of lawful workers and allows rogue employers to undercut legitimate businesses.

"These new measures will allow us to work more effectively with licensing authorities and the police to prevent illegal working in a high risk sector and take the action needed against businesses flouting immigration laws."

Today's licensed premises provisions form part of a wider package of measures in the Immigration Act 2016 to tackle illegal working, which is a key driver of illegal migration to the UK, and often leads to exploitation. They follow similar changes to the licensing regime for private hire vehicles and taxis which were introduced in December.

About 60% of all civil penalties for illegal working served in the UK in the year to February 2017 were issued in the retail, hotel, restaurant and leisure industry sectors, many of which hold licences.

The Home Office continues to work with the hospitality sector, amongst others, to provide support and guidance on how to carry out right to work checks and to raise awareness of the risks of illegal working.

The new measures which come into force in England and Wales today will be followed later this year in Northern Ireland and Scotland.