

Education Secretary says post-16 options better than ever, as GCSE results released

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson says there's never been a better time to go into post-16 study, as hundreds of thousands collect their GCSE results today (Thursday 22 August).

Williamson said the rise in the quality of apprenticeships and A levels means young people can be full of confidence as they look to the future, and move into sixth forms and further education colleges.

There were an estimated 5.2 million GCSE entries this summer – up 50,000 on the previous year.

This year also sees the continuation of GCSE reforms, including exams being graded at 9 to 1 and designed to be more rigorous and better prepare young people for further study and the world of work.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today is a proud day for students, teachers and parents up and down the country, and I wish them all the very best for their results.

It should also be an exciting day. It's a day that marks the culmination of years of hard work and opens doors that can create life-changing opportunities.

The work this Government has done to drive up standards means there has never been a better time to go onto further study. We will continue to focus on discipline, outcomes and standards, so whatever path they choose, young people will get a better and better education so they can be full of confidence about their future.

Of the 5.2 million GCSE entries this year, provisional data suggests 4.2 million were for EBacc subjects – up almost 4% on the previous academic year and including rises in entries to Spanish (10%) and French (4%).

The increase in EBacc and modern foreign language entries sits alongside a 3% increase in entries to GCSE arts subjects. The increase includes rises in art and design subjects and performing and expressive arts – showing that a focus on core academic subjects and pupils receiving a cultural, well-rounded education go hand in hand.

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

career options. Apprenticeships now offer more off-the-job training than in previous years and are supported by some of the country's leading employers, including Lloyds Banking Group, Royal Mail and Berkeley Group.

Many others will go on to do A levels, following in the footsteps of almost 250,000 pupils who collected their results last week. Data published alongside last week's results showed 26.2% lift in the number of pupils taking STEM subjects at A level, compared with 2010.

[UK and Korea to sign trade continuity deal to ensure businesses are ready to trade post-Brexit](#)

The UK and Korea will today (Thursday 22 August) sign a continuity Free Trade Agreement that will allow businesses to keep trading freely after Brexit on Thursday 31 October. Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss and the Korean Minister of Trade, Yoo Myung-Hee will meet in London to sign the agreement, protecting annual trade flows between the two countries, with total trade worth £14.6 billion in 2018.

This agreement, when brought into force, will allow businesses to keep trading freely after we leave the EU on 31 October, safeguarding British jobs in key sectors including manufacturing, technology and professional services.

The agreement will help to further strengthen the trading relationship between the UK and Korea that has already increased by an average of 12% per year since the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2011.

Trade continuity agreements signed so far now cover countries accounting for £89 billion of trade, an increase from £39 billion in March 2019.

Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss MP said:

My priority is to make sure that British businesses are fully prepared for Brexit and ready to trade on Thursday 31 October. That's why I'm delighted to sign this trade deal today with one of the biggest markets covered by existing EU trade agreements.

It will allow businesses like Bentley and Denby to keep trading as they do today, and they will be able to take advantage of the opportunities that Brexit offers.

The UK-Korea FTA replicates, as far as possible, the effects of the EU-Korea

trade deal, allowing businesses to continue to benefit from preferential terms. In 2017, there were 6,900 British businesses exporting goods to Korea, worth around £5.8 billion.

Trade Minister Yoo said:

Today's signing of the FTA will remove much Brexit uncertainty out of our long, valuable economic partnership.

In this challenging time, we took a proactive step, and as a result, our Free Trade Agreement today sends a signal to the world of our strong, collective support for free, open, rules-based trade.

Building on today's signing, I hope to see further deepening of our economic partnership, and Korea and the UK walking together on the path of prosperity and a brighter future.

The news has been welcomed by businesses in industries such as automotive, technology, renewable energy, retail and ceramics. Some of the [fastest growing exports to Korea](#) include the sale of British cars, which increased to £943 million in 2018, up by third on the year before.

Bentley's exports of the British classic luxury car to Korea have gone from strength to strength, with a thirty-fold increase in exports between 2006 and 2015, from 10 cars driving on Korean roads in 2006 to over 380 in 2015.

Warren Clarke, Bentley Brand Manager South Korea added:

As the first luxury car brand to enter the market in 2006 Bentley Motors sees South Korea as very significant to our future business plans. The stability this FTA brings is very much welcomed and will enable us to continue to promote the very best of British automotive engineering and craftsmanship as we grow our business in South Korea.

With our fantastic business partner here and a very strong and loyal customer base we are very excited about our future plans for the market.

Exports of ceramic products from the UK to Korea were around £17 million in 2018, an increase of 41% from 2010. Meanwhile, the UK exported £256 million of professional and management consulting services to the country in 2018, up by 8% from the previous year.

Denby, the 200-year-old company based in Derbyshire sells its 100% British-made ceramics in over 40 department stores in Korea, with its assortment of bowls proving especially popular.

Sebastian Lazell, CEO Denby Pottery Company said:

Denby is delighted that the UK-Korea Free Trade Agreement has been signed and that this can guarantee the continued free flow of goods between our two most important markets.

Denby Pottery has become the favourite choice for younger generations in Korea who love table-setting with beautifully crafted Made in England tableware and this will ensure they can continue to do so with confidence for years to come. We congratulate and thank those involved in bringing this important agreement to fruition.

The agreement signed today follows a [joint statement](#) on the terms of the agreement made by the two countries in June.

It also follows a joint statement agreed between Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Korea and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs First Vice Minister in Seoul on Wednesday 21 August. The joint statement reaffirms our mutual commitment to human rights, counter-proliferation and trade liberalisation, and underlines both countries' support for the rules based trading system.

The UK will publish the text of this agreement once it is laid in Parliament.

Notes to editors

- This agreement will now be subject to the domestic internal procedures of both countries party to the agreement before it can be brought into force.
 - The UK will continue to be covered by the EU-Korea agreement while the UK is a member of the EU. This agreement is designed to take effect when the EU-Korea agreement ceases to apply to the UK.
 - The UK has signed 13 trade continuity agreements with 38 countries. These include some of our biggest trading partners. A regularly updated list of all signed agreements is available on [GOV.UK](#). Source of trade statistics:
 - ONS 'UK total trade: all countries, non-seasonally adjusted January to March 2019 release'. Figures are provided on a nominal basis.
 - HMRC Trade in Goods by Business Characteristics 2017, VAT registered businesses exporting to South Korea (accessed July 2019).
 - HMRC overseas trade statistics (accessed August 2019). Figures for cars based upon HS4 code (8703) 'Motor cars and other motor vehicles'.
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Transitioning security responsibilities and preparing for equal elections in Somalia

Thank you, Madam President. Let me begin by thanking our four briefers who have really enriched our discussions here today and also by extending the UK's deepest sympathies to the families of the victims targeted in attacks by Al-Shabaab. We condemn these attacks in the strongest possible terms and we pay tribute to the role of the Somali National Army, the Somalia Police Force and AMISOM troops in their efforts to promote peace, security and stability in Somalia.

Madam President, I want to give a particularly warm welcome to SRSO Swan and to pay tribute to him and his team for the work that they have been doing over the last few months. The UN has played and will play a vital role in enabling lasting peace and security for Somalia, and we encourage full engagement and cooperation with the UN. The sanctions regime is, of course, a key part of security sector reform, and we encourage Somalia to engage in dialogue with the Panel of Experts who have been mandated by this Council.

I would also like to thank SRSO Pramila Patten for her very important briefing today and for the excellent work she has been doing with the Somali government to address conflict-related sexual violence. The government's commitment to develop a new national action plan to end sexual violence in conflict demonstrates willingness to tackle this pervasive issue. But we do share concerns about the lack of progress, in particular in passing the Sexual Offences Bill which SRSO Patten mentioned. I do hope that you will be able to come back to the Council in due course to update us on progress on the many issues that you flagged this morning.

I'd also like to thank Ms Arale for your extremely brave and very powerful briefing today about the work that you are doing on the ground and the work that your organisation and other human rights defenders are doing to strengthen human rights in Somalia. I think we all heard loud and clear your message on the need for the Security Council to integrate the issues of human rights and tackling sexual violence into our work on Somalia so thank you for being so clear. And I think your presence and our meeting today is a further reminder to this Council of the importance of women playing a central role in conflict prevention, mediation and state building. Thank you very much.

Madam President, as we heard from the SRSO, at the next 18 months will be crucial for Somalia. I want to briefly touch on three issues.

First, with regard to the elections in Jubaland, we, together with other partners around this table, have been encouraging all stakeholders to reach agreement on a single electoral process that is credible, inclusive, fair and peaceful. We are very concerned that agreement on such a process hasn't been achieved and that the existing approaches are reaching a point beyond which

the likelihood of instability and division within Jubaland has been significantly increased. We therefore call on all actors in Jubaland to refrain from violence. We encourage a reinvigoration of dialogue between regional states aimed at maintaining stability in Jubaland, Somalia and the wider region. And we call on all stakeholders to pursue any possible changes that would result in a process that enjoys wider support in Jubaland. The UK stands ready to provide our full support to such discussions through the efforts of SRSG Chief Swan and UNSOM and in partnership with the African Union and IGAD.

Madam President, the second area I want to touch on on national elections in 2020 or 2021. The swift passage of an electoral law which ensures a fair process and allows for the representation of all Somalis is vital. If it is not passed by November this year, it could seriously impact the delivery of elections on time. As it stands, the UK is particularly concerned about the insufficient provisions on representation of minority groups and women – an issue that Ms Arale also touched on in her briefing just now. We stand ready as the UK to provide support for the elections and we urge others to do the same.

Madam President, the third area of focus is security. It is vital that the Federal Government of Somalia and the member states work together to implement the national security architecture agreed at the 2017 London conference and deliver the transition plan towards Somali-led security, as this Council fought for in Resolution 2472. We agree with SRSG Swan and with Ambassador Madeira that force generation of an able, accountable, acceptable and affordable Somali security forces is absolutely vital to this. And I would also agree with the message from SRSG Patten that we need to also ensure that the Somali security forces are able to tackle the issue of sexual violence against women and girls which is so prevalent in Somalia, as we heard today. On this note, we do welcome the ongoing Somali-led joint security operations in Lower Shabelle as an as an example of good coordination between Somali and international forces. But much more remains to be done to stabilise and hold this territory in the long term and to carry out similar work elsewhere in Somalia.

In conclusion, Madam President, we agree with SRSG Swan that engagement between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States is at the heart of all of our efforts in Somalia. We therefore urge both the Federal Government and the Member States to come together to settle the remaining questions about federal power and resource sharing through a process of constitutional review to enable the continued trajectory of Somalia to inclusive and peaceful, one person, one vote elections in 2020 or 2021. It's important that a Somalia Partnership Forum in October demonstrates that the Federal Government's Relationship with the Federal Member States is a genuine partnership and that it delivers an agreed set of shared priorities to the end of 2020. External pressures continue to pose risks to political stability. The international community, regional states and this Council must use our influence constructively, invest in the federal system and institutions and increase our coordination to support Somalia in their efforts.

Thank you.

[UK-China trade relations championed by investment minister visit](#)

International Trade Minister Graham Stuart MP travels to China today, to bolster the trade relationship between the UK and China post-Brexit.

Beginning his visit in the Chinese capital Beijing, the Minister will meet with key representatives in the Chinese government in the Ministry of Commerce and officials at the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), to promote the UK-China economic relationship and champion British business in the region.

While in China, he will meet with dozens of potential investors, hosting roundtables with Chinese life sciences, education, infrastructure and financial services businesses, to promote the strengths of the UK as an investment destination and encourage stronger trade ties between the two countries.

The visit will see Minister Stuart lead a 200-strong delegation of UK business leaders representing sectors such as tech, manufacturing, transport and education to the Smart China Expo in Chongqing, where he will champion the UK's global leadership in smart technology, and attend the UK's flagship pavilion at the Horticulture Expo in Beijing, where the UK is showcasing its leadership in clean energy and sustainable development.

The 10-day visit comes as trade and investment with China reaches record levels, bilateral trade between the 2 countries has more than doubled over the past 10 years, with the latest statistics showing trade has succeeded the £70bn mark for the first time during the last financial year.

Over the last decade, China has been the 3rd biggest contributor to the overall increase in British exports, beaten only by Germany and the USA.

Speaking ahead of his visit, the Minister for Investment Graham Stuart said:

China is a world-leading economy and the UK's largest trading partner outside of Europe and North America, holding unparalleled opportunities for UK businesses.

Britain is committed to strengthening the UK-China trading relationship to ensure UK firms are poised to seize the opportunities the region offers as our trading relationship

continues to blossom.

I hope my visit will be instrumental to winning investments into the UK , while opening up new opportunities for UK firms and fostering greater partnerships between our two great nations.

The Minister's visit follows on from the UK-China 10th Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) which took place in London in June this year.

The EFD saw the former Chancellor, Philip Hammond, and Chinese Vice Premier, Hu Chunhua, launch the London-Shanghai Stock Connect UK, which allowed listed companies to sell their shares in China for the first time, alongside the announcement of £500 million worth of commercial deals and partnerships.

Minister Stuart's visit is expected to secure a number of commercial deals and new partnerships between British and Chinese businesses.

North Yorkshire farmer admits Wildlife & Countryside offences on Site of Special Scientific Interest

A farmer from Pickering in North Yorkshire has admitted three offences under the Wildlife & Countryside Act after being prosecuted by Natural England.

These offences included the creation of a track at Newtondale [Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#) and significant earthworks and the felling and removal of trees and vegetation, without Natural England's consent. These actions had a damaging effect on the woodland, mire and physiographic features of the SSSI.

Newtondale SSSI is one of the most important nature conservation sites in North Yorkshire and it is particularly noted for its post-glacial valley landscape with ancient woodlands and extensive semi-natural grassland and mire vegetation. Sites of this nature are rare nationally and particularly rare in North Yorkshire.

At a hearing of York Magistrates Court in mid-July, Brian Eddon, 50, pleaded guilty to three charges and was handed down a fine and ordered to make a contribution to Natural England's costs.

Adelle Rowe, Natural England's Area Manager for Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire, said:

When we find cases of damage, such as this, in some of England's most important and iconic countryside, we will take action and prosecute those responsible. We take our role as a regulator seriously and we look forward to working with Mr Eddon in order to avoid damage to the SSSI in future.

Background

- [Newtondale SSSI](#) was first notified in 1955. It is a large site (935.5 ha) situated within a deep valley extending from north of Pickering towards Goathland, within the North York Moors National Park. It is of geological importance as a large glacial meltwater channel and for sections of exposed Callovian age strata. The site is also of importance for its biodiversity and provides a fine example of the succession of habitats between the upland and lower valley regimes which includes woodland, grassland, fen, valley mire and moorland edge.