

News story: Guide to AS and A level results for England, 2017

Key points

1. Overall results are stable for reformed and unreformed A levels. It is important not to over-interpret relatively small changes in year-on-year results.
2. Entries for reformed AS have dropped which makes it much more difficult to compare year-on-year results.
3. In A level French, German and Spanish, outcomes at grades A* and A are up following an agreement with exam boards to make an adjustment to take account of native speakers in these languages.

Today (17 August 2017) we are publishing:

An historical perspective: the past 20 years

The principle of comparable outcomes is not new. It has always been used by exam boards, particularly when qualifications change. It's a principle that exam boards have followed for decades: that if the ability of the cohort of students is similar to previous years, they would expect results (outcomes) to be similar.

The phrase 'comparable outcomes' has also come to mean awarding based on statistical predictions, because that's the way we and the exam boards put that principle into practice. Predictions give us a way to maintain standards, in addition to senior examiner judgements. And crucially, they give us a mechanism to make sure exam boards' standards are aligned, so that it is no easier to get a grade with one than with another. Since we started to set tolerances around those predictions (in 2010 for A level), results in recent years have been stable year-on-year (see graph below).



Setting standards in A levels in 2017

The approach outlined above has been used for all A levels this year – reformed and unreformed (the only difference is that in reformed specifications, there were no tolerances because exam boards agreed to get outcomes as close as possible to predictions). It is particularly important at times of change, to protect students from being disadvantaged because they are the first to sit new qualifications. We have been clear since before students embarked on these new courses that we and the exam boards would use predictions to maintain standards in these new A levels.

In the 2017 A level awards, exam boards used predictions based on students' prior attainment at GCSE. And, as in previous years, senior examiners have

been involved in all awards. In the reformed A levels this year they were asked to check whether student work at the grade boundaries suggested by the statistics was acceptable for the grade (either A or E). We have not intervened to ask any boards to change their grade boundaries this summer.

Results in reformed A level subjects

We have not changed the standards in the new A levels. They are the same standard as the previous A levels. The small decrease in outcomes for 18-year-old students this year reflects the fact that those taking these subjects in 2017 have slightly lower prior attainment than the students in summer 2016.

The following table shows the predicted A* and A outcomes for 18-year-old students in summer 2016 compared to summer 2017 (the predicted outcomes are based on data supplied by the exam boards during July 2016 and July 2017). Predicted outcomes are based on the relationship between prior attainment (GCSE for A level predictions) and national results in that subject in a reference year, and are used by awarding bodies to guide their awarding decisions. If the prior attainment of the cohort increases relative to the reference series, then the predicted outcomes will also increase. Conversely, if the prior attainment of the cohort decreases then [the predicted outcomes will also decrease](#).

The following table shows that in all but two subjects (art & design, and computing), the predicted outcomes at grade A and above were lower in summer 2017 when compared to summer 2016. This shows that the prior attainment of the 18-year-old students sitting these subjects in summer 2017 was lower than in summer 2016 (for reformed A levels, 2016 data includes England, Wales and Northern Ireland students; 2017 data is England only). This has been reflected in a decrease in outcomes for 18-year-old students in summer 2017.

Subject	2016 predicted	2017 predicted	Change (2017 – 2016) %
	outcomes at A* and A %	outcomes at A* and A %	
Art & design	27.88	27.89	0.01
Biology	28.91	26.75	-2.16
Business studies	15.45	14.47	-0.98
Chemistry	34.54	32.52	-2.02
Computing	16.58	17.76	1.18
Economics	31.43	29.86	-1.57
English language	10.57	9.93	-0.64
English literature	25.31	24.07	-1.24
English language & literature	12.70	11.82	-0.88
History	23.51	23.15	-0.36
Physics	31.11	29.22	-1.89
Psychology	18.63	17.87	-0.76
Sociology	19.43	18.75	-0.68

Number of qualifications per student

JCQ data present numbers of entries and certifications, rather than data at student level. This is because students typically take AS and A levels with more than one exam board. (It is also worth noting that many students also take AS or A levels alongside other qualifications, which we have not included in this analysis.) We have combined the exam board data to look at the average number of AS or A levels per student. This is shown in the table below. For A level, the average number has remained stable, whereas for AS the average number of qualifications per student has dropped. This is not surprising, given the drop in entries for reformed AS in 2016 and 2017.

Average number of qualifications per student

Overall 2015 2016 2017

A level 2.57 2.52 2.54

AS level 2.70 2.40 1.93

Grade boundaries

It is difficult to compare in a meaningful way grade boundaries between old and new qualifications, for several reasons. Maximum marks for the papers differ, the number of papers in a subject differs, and the type of assessment can be different. Where some of the old qualifications had coursework, grade boundaries on written papers may have been higher to compensate for high performance on the coursework.

Comparing the previous unitised A levels and the linear A levels is also challenging because the new qualifications no longer use UMS marks. All of these differences mean that looking at individual subjects is unhelpful, but combining grade boundaries across a number of subjects can highlight trends.

The graph below shows the grade boundaries, for examined units or paper only, as a percentage of the maximum mark, in the reformed A level subjects. This shows that, in general, the percentage of marks that students have to score to achieve a grade A has remained very similar. At E, the percentage of marks that students have to score has dropped. This may reflect differences in the type of assessment. As part of the awarding process, senior examiners reviewed student work at all the A and E boundaries and were content that it reflected an appropriate level of performance for that grade.



A level French, German and Spanish

The findings from [our native speaker research](#) show that native and non-native speakers perform differently, with native speakers out-performing the non-native speakers in each language. Native speakers also outperform their statistical prediction based on prior attainment at grade A. However, the relatively small numbers of native speakers means that the effect on the overall outcomes is relatively small.

As a result of our research, for this summer we agreed with exam boards an adjustment to the grade A statistical predictions that are used to guide the setting of grade boundaries in each of the three languages. The same adjustment, +1% at grade A, was applied in each of the three languages.

Language Grade 2016 2017

French	A*	8.7	10.5
French	A	37.6	39.4
German	A*	9.4	9.9
German	A	39.8	41.2
Spanish	A*	8.4	10.4
Spanish	A	34.6	37.2

A level science endorsement

Practical science work is reported separately in the reformed A level biology, chemistry and physics qualifications. Students have to complete at least twelve different experiments over the two years of their course, which are assessed according to criteria that are common to all exam boards. A separate pass grade is issued to those students who meet the criteria for a pass.

The table below shows the percentage of students achieving a pass in the practical skills endorsement, broken down by their A level grade. It is not surprising that most students have achieved this endorsement given the period over which the practicals are completed. Students achieving higher A level grades are slightly more likely to achieve a pass in the practical endorsement.

Grade Not classified % Pass % Total entry

A*	0.09	99.91	10860
A	0.08	99.92	25724
B	0.18	99.82	27551
C	0.61	99.39	25670
D	1.19	98.81	20446
E	2.72	97.28	10901
U	8.53	91.47	4324
Total	0.91	99.09	125476

[News story: Technical difficulties with our phone lines](#)

If you need to contact us please use the contact form.

We are currently experiencing technical difficulties with our phone lines.

If you need to contact us please use our [contact form](#).

We are working on resolving the problem. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Updated 17 August 2017 8.30am.

[News story: Transport apprenticeships celebrated ahead of A-level results day](#)

Transport Minister John Hayes met with apprentices at Heathrow Employment & Skills Academy to mark A-level results day and to discuss the rewards of choosing a transport apprenticeship.

The minister met apprentices employed at the Heathrow Academy to find out about their work and what inspired them to choose apprenticeships.

Today (Thursday 17 August 2017) is A level results day, and young adults across the country will be considering the next steps in their careers. Apprentices at Heathrow Employment & Skills Academy highlighted the benefits of choosing an apprenticeship, such as on-the-job training, the opportunity to earn while you learn and the flexibility of tailoring qualifications to individual needs.

The Heathrow Employment & Skills Academy supports Heathrow-based employers as they recruit, train and develop candidates through apprenticeship schemes in aviation, business administration, engineering, ground handling, logistics and construction and other sectors.

Transport Minister John Hayes said:

What could be more exciting than playing a part in building Britain's future? That is the golden opportunity for young people who make a career in transport their choice.

To meet apprentices who share that excitement and are enthusiastic about the skills they are gaining, is an inspiration.

Up to 35,000 apprenticeship opportunities are set to be created in road and rail in the next 5 years, and the proposed expansion of Heathrow has potential to create a further 10,000 apprenticeships across the country. Each apprenticeship will change lives and

nourish life chances.

Today's apprentices will build tomorrow's vital transport infrastructure and I urge still more people to consider embarking on such exciting and rewarding careers.

Karima Khandker, Head of Heathrow Academy, said:

As the UK's largest single site employer – with more than 76,500 people directly employed – apprentices are a critical part of Heathrow's talent pipeline, bringing fresh ideas and innovative ways of working to ensure that the airport runs smoothly.

Our role at the Heathrow Employment & Skills Academy is to welcome and encourage local talent to join the airport and to provide them with the support they need to build long-term careers, not just a job.

This year, we have pledged a record-breaking 516 apprenticeships, sending a clear message that there is a place for everyone at the airport.

Explaining the rewards of an apprenticeship, Rachel said:

When leaving school I was never certain of what I wanted to do. I was driven to succeed and ready to work hard for it, but I just couldn't find the right career path. I worked in various jobs but none of them really allowed me to build a career.

Two years ago I began working with the Heathrow Employment and Skills Academy and have now completed my Level 3 Management Apprenticeship. The on the job qualification was tailored to my role so I was able to utilise my skills straight away. I quickly felt a real sense of achievement and career direction. I'm now looking forward to receiving my certificate in November and continuing to develop my career with the airport.

The cross-industry Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce, set up in 2016, will create more apprenticeships, improve diversity of the sector and promote transport careers. More than 2,000 new apprenticeships have already been created in the first year of the taskforce.

Press release: Schemes to tackle hate crime in the North West pay off

Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP will be visiting the North West of England today to look at what is being done to tackle hate crime in the region.

Hate crime is when someone is targeted because of their actual or perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability. It is a criminal offence and the law provides additional penalties for such crimes.

The North West of England has one of the highest conviction rates for hate crime prosecutions, with nearly 86% of hate crimes prosecuted in Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cumbria resulting in a conviction.

The Solicitor will visit the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) office in Carlisle to discuss its efforts to clamp down on hate crime in the North West, including looking at its successful anti-hate crime education campaign that has been rolled out in schools to help teach young people about the impact hate related bullying has on victims.

As part of the campaign, schools can obtain free packs which include lesson planners for teachers and a DVD that features scenarios based on real-life incidents in which young people have experienced bullying or hate crime because of their identity.

The Solicitor will also visit Carlisle Mencap who received funding last year through the Home Office's [Community Demonstrations Project](#) programme. Mencap has developed a unique teaching programme which was created by people with learning disabilities, for people with learning disabilities based on their own experiences. The programme explains what disability hate crime is, how to recognise it and where people can go for help and support.

Solicitor General Robert Buckland said:

Hate crime has absolutely no place in society, so it's encouraging to see the work that's happening in the North West to try to prevent these crimes from happening in the first place.

These innovative schemes can help get to the root of the problem and show others what can be done to tackle hate crime in the community.

Government is taking action at all levels and we are seeing more people prosecuted than ever before – but we need to encourage victims to report these crimes if we are to stamp this out.

The CPS North West Schools Project packs can be downloaded from the [Schools](#)

[Projects](#) webpages. Each pack contains a DVD and lesson plans for teachers. There is a pack for disability hate crime, racist and religious hate crime, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender hate crime.

[Press release: Welsh workers on the lowest pay to benefit from over £30,000 of back pay](#)

- More than 13,000 of the UK's lowest paid workers to receive back pay thanks to UK Government investigations
- Employers across the UK fined a record £1.9m for underpaying minimum wage rates

More than 13,000 of the UK's lowest paid workers will get around £2m in back pay as part of the government's scheme to name employers who have failed to pay National Minimum Wage and Living Wage.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy today (16 August 2017) published a list of 233 businesses that underpaid workers.

As well as paying back staff the money owed, employers on the list have been fined a record £1.9m by the government. Retail, hairdressing and hospitality businesses were among the most prolific offenders.

Since 2013, the scheme has identified £6m back pay for 40,000 workers, with 1,200 employers fined £4m.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

While most employers get it right, it is simply not acceptable that some employers in Wales are failing to pay at least the minimum wage their workers are entitled to.

The UK Government is determined to make sure everybody in work receives a fair wage and to building an economy that works for all. April's increase in the national minimum and living wage rates is putting more money into the pockets of Wales' lowest paid workers than ever before.

Excuses for not paying employees what they are legally owed will not be tolerated.

Business Minister Margot James said:

It is against the law to pay workers less than legal minimum wage rates, short-changing ordinary working people and undercutting honest employers.

Today's naming round identifies a record £2m of back pay for workers and sends the clear message to employers that the government will come down hard on those who break the law.

Common errors made by employers in this round included deducting money from pay packets to pay for uniforms, failure to account for overtime hours, and wrongly paying apprentice rates to workers.

Melissa Tatton, Director at HM Revenue and Customs said:

HMRC is committed to getting money back into the pockets of underpaid workers, and continues to crack down on employers who ignore the law.

Those not paying workers the National Minimum or Living Wage can expect to face the consequences.

The 17 employers in Wales named today are:

1. Mr William Gareth Griffiths & Mrs Llinos Griffiths trading as Gareth Griffiths, Ceredigion SY23, failed to pay £9,230.56 to 1 worker.
2. Miss Tracey Newnian trading as Tracey's Unisex Salon, Carmarthenshire SA31, failed to pay £3,879.67 to 1 worker.
3. Thai Lounge (Cardiff) Limited trading as Thai Lounge, Cardiff CF14, failed to pay £2,527.27 to 4 workers.
4. Bluestone Resorts Limited, Pembrokeshire SA67, failed to pay £2,378.98 to 2
5. Mr Paul Isaac and Mrs Hayley Isaac trading as Refit Design Shopfitters, Neath Port Talbot SA10, failed to pay £1,941.04 to 1 worker.
6. Burlesque Hair Company Limited, Newport NP20, failed to pay £1,672.58 to 3 workers.
7. Celtic Community Services Limited, Rhondda Cynon Taf CF72, failed to pay £1,521.44 to 5 workers.
8. Kingston City Properties Limited, Cardiff CF24, failed to pay £626.01 to 1 worker.
9. The Burrows Day Care Nursery (Porthcawl) Limited, Bridgend CF36, failed to pay £550.30 to 4 workers.
10. The Wild Swan Limited, Swansea SA1, failed to pay £380.71 to 4 workers.
11. Mr Talal Al-Arab and Mr Hani Hussain trading as Bella Pizza, Gwynedd LL55, failed to pay £377.25 to 1 worker.
12. Ms Mandy James trading as Prince of Wales Treorchy, Rhondda Cynon Taf CF42, failed to pay £254.34 to 1 worker.

13. M Camilleri & Sons Roofing Limited, Vale of Glamorgan CF64, failed to pay £1,150.68 to 11 workers.
14. Adeiladwyr Eryri Builders CYF, Gwynedd LL52, failed to pay £864 to 1 worker
15. Mr Dylan Rhys Roberts trading as D R Roberts Plumbing & Heating, Denbighshire LL15, failed to pay £735.58 to 1 worker.
16. Whistlestop Café (North Wales) Ltd trading as Whistlestop Café, Denbighshire LL18, failed to pay £433.68 to 1 worker.
17. Ruthin Castle Hotel Ltd, Denbighshire LL15, failed to pay £2,182.49 to 1 worker.

There are currently around 2,000 open cases which HMRC is investigating. Eligible employers will be named and shamed after their cases have been closed.

The government has committed £25.3m for minimum wage enforcement in 2017/18, as well as a £1.7m awareness campaign earlier this year.

David Metcalf, Director of Labour Market Enforcement, released his introductory report in July 2017, stating that he would be working with enforcement agencies to further crackdown on rogue employers.

For more information about your pay, or if you think you might be being underpaid, get advice and guidance [here](#)

1. This is the 12th round of government naming and shaming for employers who have failed to pay national minimum wage and living wage rates.
2. Employers have a duty to be aware of and comply with the different legal national minimum and living wage rates. If workers are concerned that they are not being paid the correct rates or if employers need more information about the legal requirements then they can seek advice from [Acas](#).
3. Any complaints that are raised with Acas, where they believe there is a NMW underpayment, will be referred to HMRC who will investigate.
4. HMRC follows up on every complaint received from Acas.
5. Around 2,000 cases are currently being worked on by HMRC and eligible employers will be named and shamed after their cases have been closed.
6. Sectors that featured prominently in this naming and shaming round were:
 - Hairdressing and other beauty treatment: around 60 employers, around £121,000 arrears for around 200 workers
 - Hospitality: around 50 employers, around £77,000 arrears for around 220 workers
 - Retail trade: around 20 employers, £1.5m arrears for around 12,200 workers
7. The current minimum wage rates are:
 - National Living Wage (25 years and over) – £7.50 per hour
 - adult rate of National Minimum Wage (21 to 24-year-olds) – £7.05 per hour
 - 18 to 20-year olds – £5.60 per hour
 - 16 to 17-year-olds – £4.05 per hour
 - apprentice rate – £3.50 per hour for apprentices under 19, or over 19 and in the first year of an apprenticeship.

8. The government is committed to ensuring all employers are compliant with minimum wage legislation and the effective enforcement of it:
 - the government will spend £25.3 million on minimum wage enforcement in 2017 to 2018, up from £20 million in 2016 to 2017
 - in November last year, labour market enforcement undertakings and orders came into force under the Immigration Act which can ultimately lead to criminal prosecutions and prison sentences of up to 2 years for employers who mistreat their workers, including national minimum wage violations
 - Director of Labour Market Enforcement Sir David Metcalf publish his introductory report in July 2017, setting out the areas he will be focusing on in the coming months, including ensuring enforcement agencies are ready to use the new undertakings and orders to jail rogue employers

9. The revised BEIS scheme to name employers who break minimum wage law came into effect on 1 October 2013. The scheme is one of a range of tools at the government's disposal to tackle this issue. Employers who pay workers less than the minimum wage not only have to pay back arrears of wages to the worker at current minimum wage rates but also face financial penalties of up to 200% of arrears, capped at £20,000 per worker. In the most serious cases employers can be prosecuted.

10. From 1 October 2013, the government revised the naming scheme to make it simpler to name and shame employers who break the law;

11. Under this scheme the government will name all employers who have been issued with a Notice of Underpayment (NoU) unless employers meet one of the exceptional criteria or have arrears of £100 or less. All 233 cases named today (16 August 2017) failed to pay the correct national minimum or living wage rates and owed arrears of more than £100.

12. Employers have 28 days to appeal against the NoU (this notice sets out the owed wages to be paid by the employer together with the penalty for not complying with minimum wage law). If the employer does not appeal or unsuccessfully appeals against this NoU, BEIS will consider them for naming. The employer then has 14 days to make representations to BEIS outlining whether they meet any of the exceptional criteria;
 - naming by BEIS carries a risk of personal harm to an individual or their family
 - there are national security risks associated with naming in this instance
 - other factors which suggest that it would not be in the public interest to name the employer

13. If BEIS does not receive any representations or the representations received are unsuccessful, the employer will be named via a BEIS press release under this scheme.