

Reformed pension scheme for the judiciary

News story

We support the Ministry of Justice's work on a reformed pension scheme for the judiciary providing actuarial costings and drawing on our experience of public service pensions.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has helped the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) as it progresses in its work to introduce a reformed pension scheme for the Judiciary.

The MOJ [published a consultation](#) on the draft scheme regulations for the reformed judicial pension scheme earlier this month.

The MOJ is introducing this reform to resolve the escalating recruitment and retention problems at all levels of the judiciary. The issue had been identified by the Senior Salaries Review Body's '[Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure 2018](#).'

GAD's support

We supported the MOJ in developing its policy for the new scheme through the proposed regulations. GAD provided both actuarial costings and general pension consultancy drawing on our wide experience of public service pensions. Among the issues we considered included:

- how the 2020 valuations and cost cap review may interact with the scheme
- how to maintain a salary link for past service for judges that remain in service
- death in service, death after retirement and serious ill-health benefits
- partial retirement and interaction with part-time / fee-paid judges' benefits

Innovative reform

Ben Scutt, consulting actuary at GAD, said: “This was an interesting project to introduce an innovative reform.

“GAD worked as part of a multi-disciplinary team including policy officials, pension scheme managers, lawyers and tax experts that prepared draft regulations for the scheme within very tight timescales.”

The consultation runs until 8 October 2021.

Published 10 August 2021

Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain publish 2020-21 annual report

The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain have today (10 August 2021) released their [Annual Report for 2020 to 2021](#).

The commissioners provide updates on their strategic objectives to 2021, detail their new objectives and reflect on the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As with the previous report, a significant part of the report is given to continuity of service through the pandemic, notably on issues such as:

- Issuing of Exemptions
- Processing of applications
- Periods of Grace
- Maintaining vehicle safety
- Maintaining skills
- Regulatory Action
- Local Bus Service Registration

As the previous set of Strategic objectives have now come to an end, this was an appropriate time to reconsider the support the Traffic Commissioners can give to industry, with a new set of objectives, published [here](#).

These areas are discussed in the report and include business recovery, legislative change, local bus services, better targeted regulation and helping compliant businesses.

The reflections of the Traffic Commissioners touch on some very important current issues: traction-only operators, driver shortages and the incoming legislation on LGVs between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes.

Reflecting on the report, the Senior Traffic Commissioner Richard Turfitt said:

“This report identifies some of the key achievements during a very difficult year for the transport industry. Traffic commissioners take responsibility for effective licensing and regulation of the commercial vehicle industries, but the success of any public service relies on the energy and willingness of those at the frontline. People are at the heart of the Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) and the delivery of quality services to our stakeholders; it remains the mission of everyone in OTC to promote safe, fair, efficient, and reliable passenger and goods transport.

“It is right to record the exceptional efforts made during the last year.”

The Annual Report also contains statistics describing the licensing and regulatory activities. The data recognises the achievements of the commissioners and their support during the year, notably:

- 14,080 operator licence applications and variations processed
 - 21,717 local bus registrations processed
 - 1054 public inquiries determined
 - 178 preliminary hearings held
 - 46 Senior Team Leader (STL) interviews held
 - 10,442 vocational driver cases closed
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Fraudulent companies shut down after abusing COVID loan support

The two separate companies submitted false documents to at least 41 local authorities and the Government's Bounce Back Loan scheme to secure £230,000 worth of grants put in place to support businesses during the pandemic.

LV Distributions Ltd and SIO Traders Ltd were wound-up in the High Court in separate hearings on 27 July 2021 following confidential enquiries conducted by the Insolvency Service, which proved neither company ever traded.

Investigators uncovered that SIO Traders registered their offices in Whitchurch, Shropshire, but provided false lease documents and utility bills to 14 different local authorities to fraudulently claim they traded out of premises in their respective areas.

SIO Traders claimed they supplied PPE and secured £95,000 worth of business grants from 10 local authorities. The company also received a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan they were not entitled to.

LV Distributions had registered their offices in Redhill, Surrey, and claimed to sell medical care products. Similar to SIO Traders, in a 10-day period between 17 and 27 August 2020, LV Distributions provided false lease documents and utility bills to 27 local authorities.

The company fraudulently secured £35,000 in business grants from 2 local authorities, as well as a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan. Investigators, however, uncovered that the premises LV Distributions falsely claimed to operate from were either unoccupied, up for rent or occupied by a different company.

Small Business Minister Paul Scully said:

This decisive enforcement action shows that we will not tolerate shameless attempts to defraud the taxpayer and falsely claim public money intended to help businesses through the pandemic.

We are cracking down on Covid fraud across the board and those who have tried to take support they were not entitled to, which was given in response to the worst crisis of our lifetimes, can expect to face heavy consequences.

Herefordshire County Council was targeted on two occasions by SIO Traders. The local authority initially paid £10,000 after SIO Traders' first fraudulent application but was able to recover the funds in full, before rejecting a second £10,000 application and reporting the company's activities.

The Council also received a further £10,000 application from LV

Distributions, which was also rejected, saving the local authority a total of £30,000 in fraudulent grant claims.

Herefordshire Council's Cllr Liz Harvey, Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning, said:

We have spent more than a year allocating millions of pounds of financial support for local businesses who have been affected by the pandemic. To see companies trying to take advantage of this difficult and unprecedented situation, and fraudulently claim support that is intended to help those who really need it, is despicable.

Herefordshire Council will not tolerate fraud, and it is pleasing to see these two companies wound up.

Guildford Borough Council's Lead Councillor for Resources, Cllr Tim Anderson, said:

We stopped fraudulent requests from LV Distributions and SIO Traders to register as business rate payers in 2020 which, if successful would, have allowed the businesses to receive a Coronavirus (Covid-19) Business Support Grant.

Defeating fraud involves diligence and public sector bodies working together, and we are pleased that the Insolvency Service has been able to take such strong action.

Cllr Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader of Wiltshire Council, said:

We brought staff from across the council to work together and assess more than 15,000 claims for Covid-19 business support grants. The staff brought their experience and local knowledge to the process, which included counter fraud experience and working with National Anti-Fraud Network.

The lengths that fraudsters went to as they tried to falsely claim grants surprised even our most experienced staff, but by using national counter fraud networks, concerns could be raised quickly and trends and patterns were shared with other authorities.

We are very proud of the way our teams supported so many businesses in extraordinary circumstances, and we are also pleased that they foiled attempts by a small minority to exploit the misery that Covid-19 has brought to so many.

After the two companies were wound up in the courts, the Official Receiver was appointed Liquidator of the two companies.

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the companies should be made to: The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 16th Floor, 1 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London, E20 1HZ. Telephone: 0300 678 0015 Email: piu.or@insolvency.gov.uk.

The petition against SIO Traders Ltd (Company number 11864792) was presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 on 17 May 2021 at the Business and Property Court in Manchester in front of DJ Bever.

The petition against LV Distributions Ltd (Company number 11892823) was presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 on 25 May 2021 at the High Court in London in front of Judge Burton.

The Insolvency Service will also soon have extra powers to investigate Bounce Back Loan fraud in cases where the company has been dissolved. The Ratings (Coronavirus) and Directors Disqualification (Dissolved Companies) Bill, currently before Parliament, if passed will give the Insolvency Service powers to investigate, and if appropriate take action to disqualify directors of companies which have fraudulently claimed Bounce Back Loans but which have since been dissolved. This power will be retrospective to allow conduct that took place before the law comes into force to be investigated.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Information about how to complain about a live company](#).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: * [Twitter](#) * [LinkedIn](#) * [YouTube](#)

[Guide to AS and A level results for England, 2021](#)

Summer 2021 arrangements

This year AS and A level exams did not take place because of the disruption to students' education caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It would not have been fair for exams to take place in the usual way. Instead, grades were determined by teachers based on a range of evidence. These were known as teacher assessed grades, or TAGs. Since the pandemic caused different levels of disruption across the country, many schools and colleges had not been able to teach all the course content. In response, students were only assessed on the content they had been taught while ensuring sufficient coverage of the curriculum to enable progression. Centres were given

flexibility to decide how to assess their students' performance, for example, through mock exams, class tests, and non-exam assessment already completed. This flexibility was to accommodate ongoing disruption to teaching including school closures and the need for students and teachers to self-isolate.

Schools and colleges put in place internal quality assurance processes. They were required to make sure at least 2 people were involved in each judgement and the head of each school or college had to sign off the grades. Teachers and senior leaders in schools and colleges have worked hard to make sure that judgements were made, quality assured and submitted on time. They also submitted examples of students' work to the exam boards.

Exam boards put in place external quality assurance arrangements, checking each centre's policy, reviewing the profile of grades submitted, and reviewing samples of student work. Where exam boards had concerns, these were followed up with the school or college and in some cases, teachers reconsidered their judgements and submitted revised grades.

These assessment arrangements are quite unlike those typically used. Normally students sit the same assessments, often exams, at the same time and under the same conditions, and they are marked and graded in the same way. Without the mechanisms usually used to secure standards over time and between students, outcomes this year look different from previous years – as we expected they would.

A level students are generally more able to study independently than younger students and have more study time for each subject. There has been an increase in outcomes at the top grades and stability at lower grades. This may be because the most academically able students were most able to study independently.

There are some small changes in the gaps between the average results of some groups of students, which are observed in normal years, which may reflect [the impact of the pandemic on learning](#). It's likely, however, that these changes would have been greater had we had not given teachers the flexibility to assess students only on the content they had taught.

Key points

1. Overall A level results are higher at grade A and above compared to 2020 (44.3% in 2021 compared with 38.1% in 2020, and 25.2% in 2019).
2. Similar patterns in outcomes at grade A and above are seen in Wales (48.3% in 2021 compared with 41.8% in 2020, and 27.0% in 2019) and Northern Ireland (50.8% in 2021 compared with 43.3% in 2020, and 30.9% in 2019).
3. Results are also higher at grade B and above compared to 2020 (69.8% in 2021 compared with 65.4% in 2020, and 51.1% in 2019), whereas results are relatively stable at lower grades (C to E).
4. The overall increase in outcomes this year compared to previous years may partly reflect the change in assessment arrangements, for example, teachers may have given students some benefit of the doubt across the multiple opportunities many students had to show what they had learned –

quite different from end of course exams.

5. Analyses show general stability in the differences in outcomes for students with different protected characteristics compared to previous years and increases in outcomes for many groups. This suggests that the changes to the assessment arrangements have lessened the unevenness in outcomes we may otherwise have seen.
6. Students who think there has been a mistake with their grade can choose to appeal via their school or college; students who are unhappy with their grade can choose to sit an exam in the autumn.

Data for NI in 2020 and 2021 includes Health and Social Care (single and double award)

Summer 2021 results

This summer we have carried out a range of analyses to support understanding of results.

Variability in centres' results

We compared the level of variation in centres' A level outcomes in 2021 to that seen in 2020 and 2019. Higher variation means centres' outcomes have fluctuated between years; lower variation means centres' outcomes have been stable between years. Variation in centre results was generally lower than it was in 2019 and only slightly greater than it was in 2020. This suggests that the assessment arrangements lessened the impact of the pandemic on centres' results – otherwise we would expect to see much greater variability in centres' results this year compared to the past. For example, the variation (standard deviation) in centres' outcomes for A level maths was 13.6 in 2019, 11.12 in 2020 and 11.21 in 2021.

Equalities

Exam boards looked at student work from a sample of schools and colleges. They found no evidence that teachers' judgements were systemically biased in favour of one group of students or another. Nonetheless, we have conducted equalities analyses to consider whether the gaps between the average results of different groups of students, which are observed in normal years, have changed this summer. This has included a consideration of gender, ethnicity, free school meal eligibility (FSM), English as an additional language (EAL), socioeconomic status (SES) and special educational needs and disability (SEND). We compare the extent to which the relationship between results and student background variables in 2019 and 2020 are similar in the 2021 outcomes. In doing so, our model takes account of the prior attainment of the students as well as other factors. The analyses show general stability in the differences in outcomes for students with different protected characteristics compared to 2019 and 2020 and increases in outcomes for many groups. There are some, small, relative changes in overall outcomes. Between 2019 and 2021 the gap between male and female students has reversed and has grown compared to 2020, with females receiving higher grades on average than males. The

average change is a fifth of a grade. Our model suggests that in 2019, SEND students received slightly higher grades than non-SEND students. In 2021, this has reversed with non-SEND students receiving slightly higher grades on average than SEND students. The change is a tenth of a grade. In the raw data, SEND students have historically performed lower than non-SEND students. It seems likely that many of these changes reflect the uneven impact of the pandemic and that the changes to the assessment arrangements may have lessened the unevenness in outcomes we may otherwise have seen. The details of our analyses are included in our technical report.

Centre type results

We have compared the results of different types of centre across 2021, 2020 and 2019. Outcomes for all types of centre have increased compared to 2020. The extent to which they have increased may partly reflect longstanding differences in the distribution of grades for different centre types. For example, in normal years, the distribution of grades for students attending independent centres is clustered around the top grades. A uniform increase in grades awarded across all types of school and college is therefore most likely to benefit students attending independent schools at the top grades. For other centre types, the impact of increased grades may be lower down the grade distribution – wherever most of their candidates are normally clustered. This clustering of students at different points in the grade distribution means it is helpful to consider both the relative and absolute changes in outcomes across centre types. This is because relative changes on small numbers often look big but relative changes on big numbers often look small. On the other hand, absolute changes on small numbers often look small but absolute changes on big numbers often look big. Therefore, it is important to explore both types of change. At grade A and above, the largest relative increase is for ‘other’ centres (+22.5%), further education establishments (+21.4%) and secondary comprehensives (+18.7%), and the smallest increase is for sixth form colleges (+12.0%). The increases for independent centres and academies at grade A and above are partway between the highest and lowest changes (+15.2% and +15.8%, respectively). At grade C and above, the relative changes are similar across centre types, ranging from -0.1% to +2.2% compared to 2020. The smaller changes at grade C reflect the overall stability in outcomes at this grade compared to 2020. In absolute terms, the increase in outcomes at grade A and above is largest for ‘other’ centres (+9.4 percentage points (pp)) and independent centres (+9.3pp). At grade C and above, outcomes are relatively stable for all centre types, reflecting the stability in overall outcomes. The largest increases at grade C are for ‘other’ centres (+1.9pp) and free schools (+1.6pp). Exam boards looked at student work from all types of school and college as part of the external quality assurance process. They did not find that any type of school or college was more likely than others to have provided grades that did not reflect the standard of their students’ work. Indeed, they found that, irrespective of the type of school or college, the grades were largely supported by the quality of students’ work. It is also worth noting that more able students are also generally more capable of independent study.

Regional results

JCQ have published regional results compared to 2020. The rank order of regions according to their results is broadly similar to 2020 and the percentage of students achieving grade A or above has increased in all regions. As is the case every year, there is some variation in the size of the increase across regions. At grade A and above, the greatest increase was seen in London where the rate increased by 7.2pp compared to 2020. At grade C and above the greatest increase was seen in the East Midlands where the rate increased by 1.6pp compared to 2020. As with the differences seen across centre types, these regional changes will partly reflect the well-established clustering of students around different parts of the grade distribution.

Today (10 August 2021) we are publishing:

- [an analysis of grades awarded for A level qualifications](#)
 - [equalities analysis of grades awarded for A level qualifications](#)
 - [infographics about this year's A level results](#)
 - [interactive analytics of A level outcomes over time, variability in centres' results, and outcomes by county](#)
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[Guide to the 2021 Level 3 qualification results for VTQs in England](#)

This year, due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many assessments for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications had to be adapted or did not go ahead. COVID-19 caused different levels of disruption across the country, so many colleges, schools and training providers were not able to teach all the necessary qualification content.

Vocational qualifications are frequently modular and assessment typically happens throughout the course of study. They also tend to have a high proportion of teacher assessment. Some assessments are necessary to confer occupational competence or are 'Licences to Practice'. This diversity meant that it was not possible to prescribe a single approach to either adaptations or teacher-assessed grades (TAGs).

We asked awarding organisations (AOs) to balance carefully mitigating the effects of COVID-19 with the need to provide fair and reliable results that allowed learners to progress. In many cases, VTQ results have been determined

using normal assessment methods. Some learners will have carried forward centre assessment grades (CAGs), from 2020, for some units or components. Some results have been determined through adapted assessments, including remote invigilation. Other results have been decided wholly, or in part, using TAGs like those used for A levels and GCSEs.

TAGs had to be based on evidence of a learner's achievement. Teachers drew on a range of different types of evidence to inform their professional judgement about a learner's result. AOs advised on the process teachers and tutors should follow when determining TAGs and how to check that decisions were evidence-based and consistent. Most learners had already completed assessments, many of which had been marked and, in some cases, moderated earlier in the course. Teacher judgements had to be reviewed by other subject teachers and assessors, as well as the relevant head of department or head of centre before TAGs could be submitted to AOs.

Many AOs reviewed centres' quality assurance procedures upfront, while others adapted their normal verification or moderation processes to provide centres with additional support throughout. Some AOs required centres to confirm that they had complied with their internal quality assurance arrangements, but other AOs confirmed this through their monitoring and quality assurance processes.

After TAGs were submitted, AOs conducted their own quality assurance processes. AOs took different approaches to this, depending on their qualifications and the part that TAGs had played in the final result. Some AOs did this through an extension of their normal centre monitoring, some asked centres to provide rationales for any results that looked unusual and also looked at work from centres selected at random, others looked at a sample of learner evidence, and many conducted a combination of these activities.

Results this year have only been possible due to the hard work of everyone involved, not least learners themselves. We have placed trust in the system, and especially in teachers and tutors. They have done everything possible to help learners achieve their qualifications and progress in their education or career.

Learners who think there has been a mistake with their grade can choose to appeal via their school or college. Learners who are unhappy with their grade can talk to their centre about taking an assessment instead.

This year we have carried out [a range of analyses to support understanding of results](#).

Outcomes

We primarily focus on the issuing of top grades, rather than the issuing of passing grades, as the percentage pass rate in our dataset is usually close to 100% in all years, as fail grades are often not reported.

In every year the cohort of VTQ learners differs quite substantially with

regard to their numbers, their ages, their prior attainment, and the centres and centre types they attend. The general ability of cohorts of learners might also have changed over time. The qualifications vary according to factors such as qualification size and types of assessment.

This year we saw an overall increase in the volumes of Level 3 entries for Applied General qualifications, other VTQ performance table qualifications and 'other general' qualifications. This follows a similar increase in 2020. This is primarily due to a rise in entries for Applied General qualifications.

We did not see any substantial changes to grade distributions across Level 3 VTQs, suggesting general stability across 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

In terms of the proportions of top grades being issued, the patterns of changes are varied. In many Level 3 qualifications the proportions of top grades being issued has increased.

However, for some Applied Generals, the proportion of top grades has slightly decreased, following an increase between 2019 and 2020 (7.1% in 2019, 19.9% in 2020 and 19.1% in 2021).

Equalities

AOs looked at student work from a sample of schools and colleges. They found no evidence that teachers' judgements were biased in favour of one group of students or another.

We conducted equalities analyses to check whether the gaps between the average results of different groups of students, which are observed in normal years, have changed this summer. We compare the extent to which the relationship between results and student background variables in 2019 and 2020 are similar in the 2021 outcomes. In doing so, we take account of the prior attainment of the students. This included a consideration of gender, ethnicity, free school meal eligibility (FSM), the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), and special educational needs (SEND).

The analyses show general stability in the differences in outcomes for students with different protected characteristics compared to 2019 and 2020.

There are [some small changes in the results of some groups of students, which are observed in normal years, which may reflect the impact of COVID-19](#). We did note that males became slightly less likely to achieve top grades compared to females in 2021. Males were on average 1.5% less likely to achieve top grades than females in 2019, which increased to 4.2% in 2020, and increased again to 5.9% in 2021. We also saw this in 2020 relative to 2019. For Applied General qualifications there was also a small increase in the attainment gap over time for learners assigned to the 'very low' prior attainment group. The learners assigned to the 'very low' prior attainment group were on average 2.7% less likely to achieve top grades compared to their middle ability peers in 2019. This difference increased to 6.8% in 2020, increasingly slightly to 8.6% in 2021. A small increase in the

attainment gap over time between high and medium prior attainment learners was also observed.

Regional results

We conducted analysis to identify if any differences in the attainment of top grades appear to exist across different regions. We found that the degree of change for each region between 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 is relatively consistent, accounting for the fact that a degree of variation is always to be expected. The changes occurring in 2021 from previous years for any one region do not seem out of the ordinary, relative to other regions, suggesting a picture of stability across regions.