[News story: A level results day 2017](#)

Congratulations to everyone receiving their results today, which are the culmination of two years of dedication and hard work. We want everyone, regardless of background, to be able to fulfil their potential and, for many, A levels are the pathway to a university degree.

The increase in entries to facilitating subjects, those that give students the greatest choice of options at university, mean even more young people will have access to all the opportunities higher education provides.

There has been a strong uptake in core subjects, such as maths, which continues to be the most popular A level with maths and further maths having nearly 25 per cent more entries than in 2010. This and increasing entries to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects bodes well for the economic prosperity of our country. It will help to grow our workforce in these sectors, allowing young people to secure well-paid jobs and compete in the global jobs market of post Brexit Britain.

Increasing the number of girls studying STEM subjects has been an important objective of the Government, so it is particularly pleasing to see that more young women are taking STEM subjects and that for the first time since 2004 there are more young women than young men studying chemistry. I hope everyone receiving their results will go on to successful careers.

[Press release: Lord Lieutenant for West Lothian: Moira Niven](#)

The Queen has been pleased to appoint Ms Moira Niven MBE as Lord-Lieutenant for West Lothian to succeed Mrs Isobel Brydie CVOMBE who retires on 20 September 2017.

Background information:

Ms Niven spent 38 years in public service working in local government, 20 years of which were spent in service to the West Lothian Community. From 2011 to 2015 she was Deputy Chief Executive of West Lothian Council which incorporated the role of Director of Education. She was also responsible for Planning and Economic Development and a wide range of community services including Sport, Libraries, Regeneration and Employability and Community Youth Services.

From 2004 to 2011 Ms Niven worked as Head of Schools within Education Development for West Lothian Council. She was a member of the Education

Services senior management team with responsibility for pre-school and primary school education as well as support services including school placement, strategic resources and the school estate. She was a member of the National School Estate Strategy Group. She was awarded an MBE in 2010 for her services to Education.

Previous to that she was Head of Planning and Resources in Education and Cultural Services and was involved in establishing the new Education Service for West Lothian. In her teaching career which spanned from 1977 to 1991, she taught at James Gillespie's High School and then at Balerno High School.

From 1983, as Principal Teacher of Business Studies and subsequently as Acting Assistant Head Teacher, she contributed to the development of the new Balerno Community High School. She was involved in running school hockey and other outdoor education activities such as hill walking, canoeing and weekend school camps, as well as running a youth club and photography club. Since her retirement, she has been involved in voluntary activities in West Lothian, supporting the work of the Girl's Brigade and working with senior school students assisting with interview experience.

Press release: Lord Lieutenant for Caithness: Viscount Thurso

The Queen has been pleased to appoint Viscount Thurso as Lord Lieutenant for Caithness to succeed Ms Anne Dunnett.

The Queen has been pleased to appoint The Right Honourable John Archibald Sinclair, Viscount Thurso of Ulbster, PC as Lord-Lieutenant for Caithness to succeed Ms Anne Dunnett CVO who retired on 25 June 2017.

Background information

Viscount Thurso was Managing Director of the Savoy Group's Lancaster 5star Hotel in Paris at the age of 27. He then went on to lead a number of hospitality businesses including Cliveden, which under his leadership become the UK's highest rated hotel, East Sussex National Golf Course, and Champneys. He has served as a non-executive member on a number of public company boards and is Chairman of the family company in Caithness. In 2016 he was appointed Chair of VisitScotland and serves as an Ex-Officio Board Member of VisitBritain. He was awarded a "Catey" for services to Tourism in 2003 and is a Fellow of The Institute of Hospitality as well as aMaster Inn Holder. He is President of the Tourism Society.

He served in the House of Lords as a hereditary peer until 1999 and was then elected to the House of Commons as MP for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter

Ross until 2015. He returned to the House of Lords in 2016 by winning a by-election fora vacancy created by the death of Lord Avebury. He sits on the Lib Dem benches, but is no longer a member of the Party. He was made a Privy Councillor in 2014.

He is aged 63 and married with three grown up children.

[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 outcomes at A* and A %	2017 predicted outcomes at A* and A %	Change (2017 − 2016) %
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

Subject	2016 predicted outcomes at A* and A %	2017 predicted outcomes at A* and A %	Change (2017 − 2016) %
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

Grade	Not classified %	Pass %	Total entry
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.