

News release

Strict embargo: 09.30 hours Thursday 27 August 2009

Fewer 16-year-olds but record GCSE results achieved

The UK GCSE results for 2009 show continuing improvements across most subjects.

The number of entries is down this year by 199,817 (from 5,669,077 in 2008 to 5,469,260) a decrease of 3.5 per cent, which is in line with the reduction in the size of the 16-year-old cohort by 3.6 per cent.

Data published today (Thursday 27 August 2009) by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCO) show the overall results increasing by 0.9 percentage points at grades A*-A (from 20.7 per cent in 2008 to 21.6 per cent in 2009) and 1.4 percentage points at grades A*-C (from 65.7 per cent in 2008 to 67.1 per cent in 2009). Overall the cumulative percentage of candidates attaining GCSE grades A*-G increased by 0.2 percentage points (from 98.4 per cent in 2008 to 98.6 per cent in 2009).

The number of entries for GCSE in the core subjects is largely governed by the statutory requirements of the National curricula in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. In the core subjects - English, mathematics and science, and Welsh in Wales - the great majority of students will take a GCSE examination. These core subjects account for nearly half of all GCSE full course entries (48.4 per cent).

Performance in English has decreased at grades A*-C, down 0.2 per cent (62.9 per cent in 2008 to 62.7 per cent). However, performance in Mathematics is up by 0.9 per cent (56.3 per cent in 2008 to 57.2 per cent). Science is also up by 0.9 per cent (59.3 per cent in 2008 to 60.2 per cent).

Increased uptake of separate sciences continues, with biology up 18.0 per cent (from 85,521 in 2008 to 100,905), chemistry up 20.3 per cent (from 76,656 in 2008 to 92,246) and physics up 21.0 per cent (from 75,383 in 2008 to 91,179).

Entries in modern foreign languages continue to decline with French down by 13,252 or 6.6 per cent (from 201,940 in 2008 to 188,688), German, down by 3,226 or 4.2 per cent (from 76,695 in 2008 to 73,469) however, entries in Spanish are stable, only down by 22 (from 67,092 in 2008 to 67,070).

Other modern languages continue their upward trend, by 1,429 or 4.5 per cent (from 31,682 in 2008 to 33,111).

Information and communication technology has further declined by 12,080 or 14.1 per cent (from 85,599 in 2008 to 73,519). Design and Technology is down by 26,978 or 8.1 per cent (from 332,787 in 2008 to 305,809).

Commenting on the 2009 GCSE results, Dr Jim Sinclair, Director of the Joint Council for Qualifications, said:

"This is a day of celebration for students and their teachers. There has been good performance overall across most subjects including mathematics and languages. It is also reassuring to see increased entry to the separate sciences.

"The core subjects of English, mathematics and science continue to dominate and account for almost half of the full course entry."

GCSE Short Course

The Short Course entries have decreased by 19,107 or 3.6 per cent (528,325 in 2008 to 509,218 in 2009) in line with the reduction in the size of the 16-year-old cohort. Four subjects – religious studies (56.3 per cent of total entries), citizenship studies (18.9 per cent), information and communication technology (12.1 per cent) and physical education (6.3 per cent) – together comprise 93.6 per cent of all entries.

The Short Course results show an improvement of 1.2 percentage points at grades A*-C (from 53.0 per cent in 2008 to 54.2 per cent in 2009).

Applied GCSE Double Award

Entries for the Applied GCSE Double Award continue to decrease, down 26,412 or 21.6 per cent (from 122,529 in 2008 to 96,117 in 2009). The most significant drop in entry is for Applied ICT, down 6,904 or 43.0 per cent (from 16,062 in 2008 to 9,158 in 2009).

Overall, the achievement in these double award qualifications shows an improvement of 3.0 per cent at grade A*A*-CC (from 46.2 per cent in 2008 to 49.2 in 2009).

Applied GCSE Single Award

The number of entries rose by 4,549 or 28.5 per cent but remain very small in comparison to other qualifications (from 15,935 in 2008 to 20,484 in 2009).

Entry Level Certificate

The number of entries fell again this year by 5,556 or 4.6 per cent (from 120,762 in 2008 to 115,206 in 2009).

Notes to editors

1. 'Results 2009'- detailed tabulations of the GCSE Full Course, GCSE Short Course, Applied GCSE Double Award, Applied GCSE Single Award and Entry Level Certificate examinations are published separately, also with the STRICT EMBARGO: 09.30 hours Thursday 27 August 2009.
2. These are the results for the above qualifications taken by students across the UK but predominantly in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.
3. In the Home National Curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales at Key Stage 4 students must study six subjects and most will take examinations in at least five of these. In three of the Core subjects - English, mathematics and science (and Welsh in Wales), the great majority of students will take a GCSE examination. Outside the Core subjects, examinations may lead to GCSE Full Course, GCSE Short Course, GCSE Applied or a range of other qualifications. Details of the National Curriculum in England can be obtained from National Curriculum online www.nc.uk.net. Although not part of the National Curriculum, Religious Studies is a statutory requirement of the Education Act, 1996.
4. The JCQ consists of AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, Edexcel, OCR, SQA and WJEC, the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK, offering GCSE, GCE, AEA, Entry Level, Vocational and vocationally-related qualifications.
5. The JCQ was established in January 2004 and supersedes the Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCGQ, 1998-2003). The JCQ has been formed to enable member awarding bodies to act together in:
 - providing, wherever possible, common administrative arrangements for the schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications;
 - dealing with the regulators; in responding to proposals and initiatives on assessment and the curriculum;
 - dealing with the media on issues affecting all member Bodies.

Media Contact: Richard Rose on 0207 638 4132 or 07949 408 942.

The JCQ can be contacted through:
Veritas House
125 Finsbury Pavement
London, EC2A 1NQ

Tel: 020 7638 4132
E-mail: pressoffice@jcq.org.uk
www.jcq.org.uk