



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **This year's qualifications are as valuable as any other year**

The qualifications being awarded in Wales today carry the same value as those awarded in any other year.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made this a very challenging year for everyone involved in education,” said Chief Executive Philip Blaker.

“The cancellation of exams meant that we had to find an alternative way of awarding grades to enable learner progression. The method we have chosen is meaningful, robust and has been carefully thought through to be as fair as possible in the circumstances, protecting the value of results.

“We’ve been sharing our approach and guidance throughout this process with schools, colleges, learners and their families and we’ve also been listening. We consulted widely on this year’s grading plans that attracted thousands of responses, more than half from young people, which helped inform our thinking before finalising the process for awarding grades and the appeals arrangements.

“We have also regularly shared information to help people understand how grades are calculated.”

The results in Wales for A, AS level and the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (ASCC) have increased in Wales but are broadly similar to recent years.

- 29.9% achieved an A\* or A for A level, up 2.9 percentage points from 2019.
- 22.2% achieved an A\* or A for AS, up 1.9 percentage points from last year.
- 22.6% achieved an A\* or A in the ASCC, up 1.1 percentage points from last year.
- 98.6% achieved A\*-E at A level compared with 97.6% in 2019.
- 91.4% achieved A\*-E at AS level compared with 90.0% in 2019.

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The number of A level qualifications entries in Wales continues to fall, standing at 30,448 this year compared with 31,483 in 2019, a decrease of 3.3%. There has been a steady decline since 2015 when 36,034 A level qualifications were taken.

This could be due to a smaller population size at 18-years-old, a fall in the number of qualifications taken by learners and an increase in the number of learners choosing to study vocational qualifications, enter training or starting apprenticeships.

The number of AS levels this year has risen, from 39,646 in 2019 to 45,435 in 2020. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including an increase in the population size of 17-year-olds and the number of centres choosing to cash in AS grades.

“We have analysed attainment gaps this year relative to previous years – looking at aspects such as gender, age and eligibility for free school meals. Our analysis shows no statistically significant differences this year relative to other years.”

Mr Blaker said that Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, had issued a Direction to Qualifications Wales on 12 August, requiring the regulator to pay due regard to a new policy that A level learners should not receive a grade in a subject in Summer 2020 that is lower than their corresponding AS level grade.

“This rule is being introduced after the initial release of results by WJEC to schools and colleges,” said Mr Blaker. “Therefore, learners receiving their A level grades should look at the grade awarded to see if it is the same, higher or lower than their AS level grade in that subject.

“If the grade is the same or higher, then no action is required. If, however, the grade is lower it will be replaced with the same grade as that received for the AS level - revised grades will be issued by WJEC as soon as possible.”

A full analysis of this year’s A and AS level results and the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate can be found on the [Qualifications Wales website](#).

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