



# Qualification Insight Report 2022

May 2023

# ANNUAL QUALIFICATIONS INSIGHT 2022

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## Chief Executive Foreword

Each year the examinations system generates a significant amount of data on student entries and performance. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) provides CCEA Regulation with data on Northern Ireland students, whether they take their general qualifications with CCEA or another awarding organisation. In addition, through working with the other regulators, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales, in maintaining standards across GCSE and AS/A Levels, CCEA Regulation monitors data on qualification outcomes across the jurisdictions. The data held by CCEA is at qualification level and subject level and can be used to identify trends and patterns which may be of use to wider educational research.

This Insight report contains analysis based on trends and patterns for GCSE and GCE qualifications. It is hoped that the insights it provides into qualifications uptake and student choices, and student performance in subjects and curriculum areas, will generate engagement and discussion on educational matters and assist policymakers. I therefore trust that stakeholders find this report a valuable and useful resource.

## Part 1

### 1 Executive Summary

The annual CCEA Insight Reports contain analyses, based on historic trends and patterns, for GCSE and GCE qualifications. Reports have been published since 2015.

This 2022 report has been produced by CCEA Regulation. Its aim is to provide information for stakeholders to promote discussion and engagement on educational matters, to identify areas for further exploration and research and to support policymakers, education professionals and industry.

The report is in two parts. Part 1 considers GCSE and GCE entries and outcomes in 2022 compared with 2021. Part 2 looks at entries and outcomes in the context of 2019, the last year in which examinations were conducted before COVID adjustments were put in place.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Northern Ireland's education and qualifications systems, making it particularly challenging for schools and educators to ensure that all learners have had a consistent and equitable educational experience. There has also been an impact on learners' experience of qualifications, in terms of how specifications have been delivered and the means by which they have been assessed and grades awarded. There have been differences year on year, and also in the procedures used by the three nations that share the GCSE and GCE brands.

This means that the last three years are atypical when considering longitudinal trends and patterns, as we are not comparing like with like in terms of the nature of the learner cohort, the process of their assessment or the mechanisms by which their grades were awarded. We should therefore bear this in mind in any subsequent interpretation of the data presented in the report.

GCSE and GCE entries have remained largely stable from 2019 and 2021 to 2022, both in terms of overall entries and in the relative proportion of entries for subject categories such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths). Some subject trends have continued, for example the decline in languages entries despite the high outcomes achieved by learners studying these subjects.

There is, however, evidence of variations in grade outcomes. These include:

- differences between 2019, 2021 and 2022 for Northern Ireland;
- variations between Northern Ireland, England and Wales;
- changes to inter-subject relationships;
- changes in grade distributions and the relative proportions achieving each grade; and
- changes in age and gender performance and the gap between female and male outcomes

All of these indicate the significance of COVID-19 on measures to maintain the stability and comparability of GCSE and GCE grade outcomes. However, they also illustrate the outworking of the agreed policy approaches to awarding, in which outcomes in 2022 were generally lower than in 2021 but higher than in 2019 for both Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole, thus representing a step in the incremental journey back to the pre-COVID examination standard.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background/Rationale

The annual CCEA Insight Reports contain analyses, based on historic trends and patterns, for GCSE and GCE qualifications. Reports have been published since 2015.

This 2022 report has been produced by CCEA Regulation. Its aim is to provide information for stakeholders to promote discussion and engagement on educational matters, to identify areas for further exploration and research and to support policymakers, education professionals and industry.

The report charts participation in Northern Ireland (NI) GCSE and GCE examinations and provides an in-depth look at entries and outcomes and analyses trends and patterns over time. It provides an overview of the educational context for the last three years and highlights caveats in the subsequent interpretation of data due to the impact of COVID-19. The report considers issues such as the age and gender profile of candidates, as well as subject and curriculum area trends.

The report focuses on general (GCSE and GCE) qualifications. However, many learners will also undertake vocational qualifications.

### 2.2 Analysis

The report is structured in two parts.

Part 1 outlines 2022 entries and outcomes for GCSE, AS and A Level and places these in the immediate context of changes from 2021. This section includes consideration of age and gender profiles and subject-specific patterns.

Part 2 considers similar information to Part 1 but places this in the context of changes from 2019, the last year in which examinations were conducted before COVID adjustments were put in place and which is therefore used as a reference point for the incremental journey back to pre-COVID examination standards.

Data given in the report is drawn from Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) results data for summer 2021 and summer 2022; this information can be accessed on the JCQ website at Examination results – JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications.

Note: The report uses JCQ subject categorisations. For classification of NI-specific qualifications, please see Appendix 2. The JCQ subject categories include all general qualifications available to learners, including those from other awarding organisations.



## 2.3 Educational Context

### 2.3.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Teaching, Learning and Qualifications

Over the last number of years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on NI's education and qualifications systems. Learners undertaking qualifications in 2022 have experienced several years of unprecedented change and disruption in their education, with school buildings being closed to most learners during lockdown periods, the increased use of online learning and the impact of pupil and teacher absence due to illness or self-isolating. This has made it particularly challenging for schools and educators to ensure that all learners have had a consistent and equitable educational experience.

Summer 2022 marked the third year of atypical arrangements for GCSE and GCE qualifications, with different arrangements in place for each of the three years. While summer 2022 marked a move towards previous assessment and awarding arrangements with the reintroduction of external examinations, the processes were still different from those in place up to 2019, as outlined in 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 below.

This means that the COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on learners' experience of qualifications, in terms of how specifications have been delivered and the means by which they have been assessed. For example, many of those undertaking A Level qualifications in 2022 comprised the 2020 GCSE cohort and are therefore unlikely to have had previous experience of undertaking external public examinations.

All of this emphasises the atypical nature of the last three years when considering longitudinal trends and patterns, as we are not comparing like with like in terms of the nature of the learner cohort, the process of their assessment or the mechanisms by which their grades were awarded. We should therefore take care in any subsequent interpretation of the data. However, the information presented in this report may raise some interesting questions about the impact of the pandemic on the qualifications landscape.

Further information on the assessment arrangements that were in place for summer 2022 is given below.

### 2.3.2 CCEA Awarding Arrangements in Summer 2022

On 17 May 2021 the Education Minister, Peter Weir, announced a return to public examinations during the following academic year. Students would, however, have the option of taking fewer examinations in 2022 and there would be reductions in assessment across the range of CCEA qualifications. These changes aimed to balance the reductions to assessment by ensuring the continued worth, validity and portability of the qualifications, and were designed to ensure that young people were supported and that their well-being was prioritised. The Minister also gave assurance that grading which recognised the impact of COVID-19 on students would form part of the arrangements for 2022.

As a consequence, CCEA introduced a number of measures for 2022, designed to support students. These included:

1. Optional unit omissions, announced in May 2021, offering students the opportunity to



reduce the number of examinations and assessments that they had to sit in summer 2022 for the majority of GCSE, AS and A Level qualifications. This meant that students could either choose to reduce the number of examinations/assessments or take all of them. CCEA indicated which examinations/assessments were mandatory and which were optional.

2. Adaptations were also introduced in May 2021 to reduce the coursework/controlled assessment requirements for a number of subjects.
3. For GCSE Mathematics, students were provided with an examination aid setting out the required formulae and equations, thus reducing the need for students to memorise and recall this information.
4. CCEA A Level awards in 2022 would be made on the basis of students' performance in their A2 examinations only.
5. The approach taken by CCEA in making awards for the 2021/2022 academic year was slightly different from the arrangements put in place by the other regulators (more detail is provided in the section below). However, CCEA took the approaches adopted by the other regulators into account, and also ensured outcomes in 2022 were higher than those of pre-pandemic years, given the significant challenges faced by students.

In addition, as a measure of further assurance that students would not be disadvantaged, CCEA ensured that examiner judgement was at the centre of the awarding process and that it took account of the significant disruption that young people had encountered, aiming to protect student interests and maintain comparability across qualifications.

6. Enhanced contingency options for students who missed an examination due to illness or self-isolation were also agreed with the Department of Education. This included a reduction in the amount of assessment that had to be completed to be eligible for a missed component calculation, and provision of an additional examination series at the end of June for some A Level units.

### 2.3.3 Arrangements in Other Countries for Summer 2022 and Their Significance for NI

It is a statutory responsibility of CCEA Regulation, as a regulatory body, to ensure that qualifications taken in NI are of a comparable standard to those taken in other parts of the UK. The three regulators operating in jurisdictions that maintain the GCSE & AS/A Level brands (CCEA Regulation in NI, Ofqual in England and Qualifications Wales) have worked together over the years to maintain standards in these qualifications. This helps to maintain public confidence, preserve the portability of qualifications and protect the opportunities of learners.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, examinations were cancelled in summer 2020 and again in summer 2021 across all UK jurisdictions. Alternative arrangements were put in place to award grades to students; these were largely centre-determined, with an additional awarding organisation moderation process put in place in the 2021 series. In summer 2022, with the reintroduction of examinations, a 'generous' approach to grading was adopted in England, Wales and NI, each with different arrangements to achieve this.

The situation was made more complex in NI by the open qualifications market, which allows students to take GCSE and AS/A Level qualifications from Ofqual-regulated awarding organisations and AS/A Levels offered by WJEC, as well the GCSE and AS/A qualifications offered by CCEA. This means that there are potentially three slightly different arrangements operating in the NI jurisdiction.

The variations in approach to awarding outcomes over the past three years and the absence of the usual controls associated with public examinations have led to grade outcomes and grade distributions in 2020, 2021 and 2022 that are atypical in comparison with pre-pandemic years. For example, 2020 and 2021 saw increases in grade outcomes, 'bunching' at certain grades and variations in inter-subject outcomes.

In 2022, with the reintroduction of examinations, the outcomes in England and Wales at all grades were higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021. This was achieved by the adoption of an awarding approach that aimed for results midway between 2021 outcomes and those of 2019.

Ofqual announced that in 2022, examination boards would set grade boundaries using a midway point between pre-pandemic outcomes and 2021 outcomes. Qualifications Wales announced its intention to follow the same approach.

In comparison, CCEA Awarding Organisation used examiner judgement to make its 2022 awards, with a safety net (in the interests of fairness) to ensure award outcomes did not fall below those of 2019. As a result, outcomes were mainly higher than those in 2019, but at GCSE the outcomes in some grades were marginally higher than in 2021. However, all three jurisdictions agreed that a return to examinations in 2022 would not see a deliberate attempt in the awarding arrangements to smooth out any of the inter-subject discrepancies at this stage.

## 3 GCSE

This section of the report presents 2022 entries and grade outcomes, together with age and gender profiles, for GCSE qualifications. These are placed in the contexts of changes from 2021 and of UK-wide data where appropriate.

### 3.1 GCSE Entries

GCSE qualifications are offered in NI, England, Wales and other regions of the UK. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of GCSE entries across NI, England and Wales for the Summer series 2022.

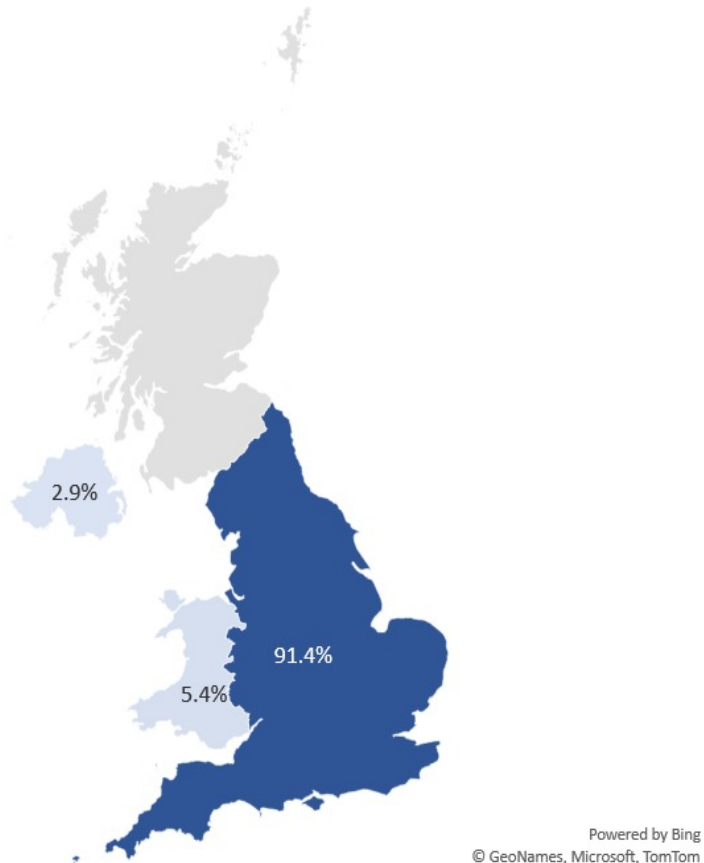


Figure 1: GCSE entries for NI, England and Wales expressed as a percentage of the total number of GCSEs awarded in the summer series 2022

The percentage of the overall GCSE entry made up by students in NI is, as shown in Table 1 below, exactly the same as it was in 2021; the size of the entry has, however, fallen from 166,172 in the Summer series 2021 to 164,413 in the Summer series 2022 – this is in line with a similar drop for the UK as a whole.

**Table 1: GCSE entries for NI and UK in 2021 and 2022 based on the number of GCSEs awarded across all regions of the UK**

Region	Year	Entry Number	Entry as percentage of total UK entry
NI	2022	164,413	2.9
NI	2021	166,172	2.9
UK	2022	5,708,871	100.0
UK	2021	5,745,945	100.0

NI operates an open qualifications market. This means that schools and colleges can offer GCSEs provided by any of the five UK GCSE awarding organisations: CCEA, AQA, Pearson, OCR and WJEC Eduqas (WJEC cannot offer its GCSE qualifications graded on the A\*–G scale). The different awarding organisations use different grading scales, as shown in Table 2 below. CCEA, the only NI based awarding organisation, accounted for over 95% of the grades awarded in NI in 2021 and 2022.

**Table 2: GCSE entries for NI in Summer series 2021 and 2022 by qualification type (grading scale) with percentage of total GCSE grades awarded**

Awarding Organisation	Grading Scale	2021	2022
CCEA	GCSE (A*–C*–G)	97.0	96.8
AQA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC (Eduqas)	GCSE (9–1)	3.0	3.2

### 3.1.1 GCSE Entries by Gender

For the UK as a whole, Table 3 below shows that the GCSE cohort was evenly split between males and females in 2021 and has remained so in 2022.

**Table 3: GCSE entries for UK by gender: Summer series 2021 and 2022 (based on number of grades awarded)**

	Numbers		Percentage	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>Female</b>	2,874,375	2,847,700	50.0	49.9
<b>Male</b>	2,871,570	2,861,171	50.0	50.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,745,945	5,708,871	100.0	100.0

While for the UK as a whole the GCSE cohort has been evenly split between males and females in both 2021 and 2022, it can be seen from Tables 4 and 5 below that the balance between males and females differs between England on the one hand and Wales and NI on the other: in England, the proportion of entries made up of male students has been marginally higher than the proportion made up of females in both 2021 and 2022; in Wales and NI the opposite is the case, with females making up a marginally higher proportion of the entry than males in both years.

Table 4: GCSE entry numbers by gender per region for Summer series 2021 and 2022  
(based on number of grades awarded)

	England		Wales		NI	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>Female</b>	2,615,349	2,599,017	166,442	156,727	85,560	85,035
<b>Male</b>	2,621,512	2,620,546	162,216	154,345	80,612	79,378
<b>Total</b>	5,236,861	5,219,563	328,658	311,072	166,172	164,413

Table 5: GCSE entry by gender per region as percentage of total entry for Summer series 2021 and 2022 (based on number of grades awarded)

	England		Wales		NI	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>Female</b>	49.9	49.8	50.6	50.4	51.5	51.7
<b>Male</b>	50.1	50.2	49.4	49.6	48.5	48.3
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

### 3.1.2 GCSE Entries by Age

GCSE qualifications can be taken by anyone, within the bounds of relevant regulations and legislation; they are, however, targeted at students in the second year of their GCSE studies in school. This means that the majority of GCSE students are sixteen years old when they sit their examinations. Every year, however, some students are entered at age fifteen or under and at age seventeen or older. The age profiles of the 2021 and 2022 GCSE entries for the UK as a whole are shown in Table 6 below and can be seen to have remained broadly stable across the two years.

Table 6: GCSE entry by age for the UK for Summer series 2021 and 2022  
(based on number of grades awarded)

AGE	Numbers		Percentage	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>15 and under</b>	114,980	126,181	2.0	2.2
<b>16</b>	5,245,570	5,262,716	91.3	92.2
<b>17 and over</b>	385,395	319,974	6.7	5.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,745,945	5,708,871	100.0	100.0

While the age profile of the GCSE entry has remained stable across 2021 and 2022 for the UK as a whole, it is evident from Tables 7 and 8 below that there are regional differences. In NI there has been an increase in the proportion of the entry made up of the fifteen-and-under age group, from 1.8% in 2021 to 2.5% in 2022, an increase of 0.7 percentage points; a similar increase for this age group, 0.8 percentage points, has occurred in Wales. In England, the age profile has remained stable. (It should be noted that the higher proportion of '17 and over' entries in NI is due to differences in the school starting age, where those born in July and August each year are oldest in their year group rather than youngest as in England and Wales.)

Table 7: GCSE entry numbers by age by region for Summer series 2021 and 2022  
(based on number of grades awarded)

	England		Wales		Northern Ireland	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>15 and under</b>	84,064	92,841	26,822	28,127	3,003	4,126
<b>16</b>	4,814,522	4,850,226	288,118	272,162	130,287	128,105
<b>17 and over</b>	338,275	276,496	13,718	10,783	32,882	32,182
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,236,861	5,219,563	328,658	311,072	166,172	164,413

Table 8: GCSE entry by age per region as percentage of total entry for Summer series 2021 and 2022 (based on number of grades awarded)

	England		Wales		Northern Ireland	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>15 and under</b>	1.6	1.8	8.2	9.0	1.8	2.5
<b>16</b>	91.9	92.9	87.7	87.5	78.4	77.9
<b>17 and over</b>	6.5	5.3	4.2	3.5	19.8	19.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

### 3.2 GCSE Grade Outcomes

The data presented in this section of the report should be read against the context set out in Section 2, where it is explained that:

1. Whilst different jurisdictions adopted slightly different approaches to awarding in 2022, the intention of England, Wales and NI is to journey to a pre-pandemic standard.
2. The procedures by which GCSE grades were generated in 2022 were different from the procedures in place in 2021 and, in both years, were slightly different in NI, England and Wales.
3. Different GCSE grading scales are used in each of England, Wales and NI. In order to allow cross-country comparisons to be made, outcomes are published for 'key grades', which are those where the three grading scales intersect; the key grades are 7/A, 4/C and 1/G. The use of numbers and letters reflects the fact that England uses a numerical (9–1) grade scale while Wales and NI use letter-based grade scales.

Figure 2 below shows grade outcomes for the UK as a whole at key grades for the Summer series 2021 and 2022. There has been a drop in cumulative grade outcomes at all key grades: down 2.6 percentage points at grade 7/A; down 3.9 percentage points at grade 4/C; and down 0.6 percentage points at grade 1/G.

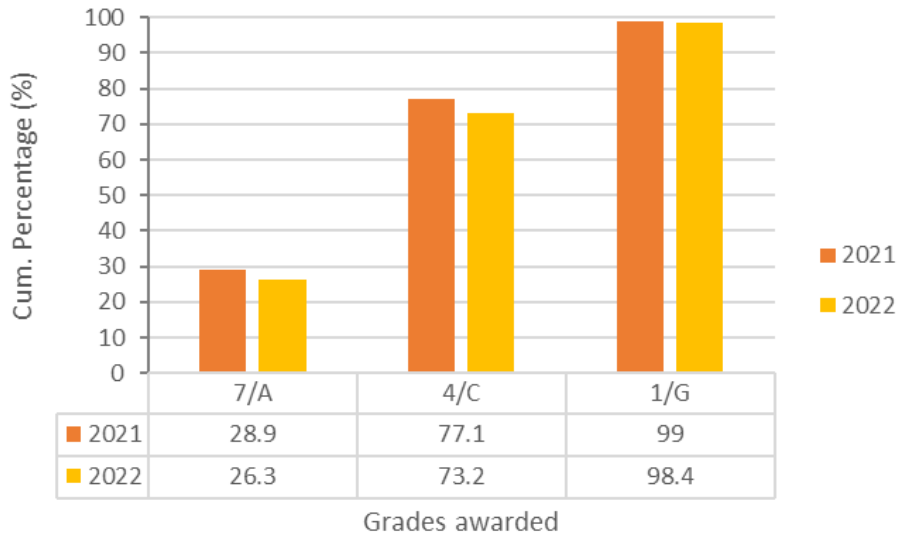


Figure 2: Cumulative GCSE grade outcomes at 7/A, 4/C and 1/G for UK in Summer series 2021 and 2022

Figure 3 below shows the equivalent grade outcome profiles for NI. At grade 7/A, the cumulative grade outcomes for NI in 2022 are 10.7 percentage points higher than for the UK as whole, while at grade 4/C the cumulative outcomes for NI are 16.8 percentage points higher than for the UK as a whole (slightly higher than in 2019 where the difference was 9.7 and 14.9 respectively). At grade 1/G the grade outcomes for NI and for the UK as a whole are broadly similar. At grade 7/A, the cumulative grade outcome for NI fell by 2.9 percentage points from 2021 to 2022, which is similar to the fall for the UK as a whole over the same period. In contrast, the cumulative grade outcomes in NI rose slightly at grades 4/C (by 0.4 percentage points) and 1/G (by 0.2 percentage points). However, it should be noted that this followed slight decreases at these grades in NI in 2021 (by 0.3 percentage points at 4/C and 0.5 at 1/G).

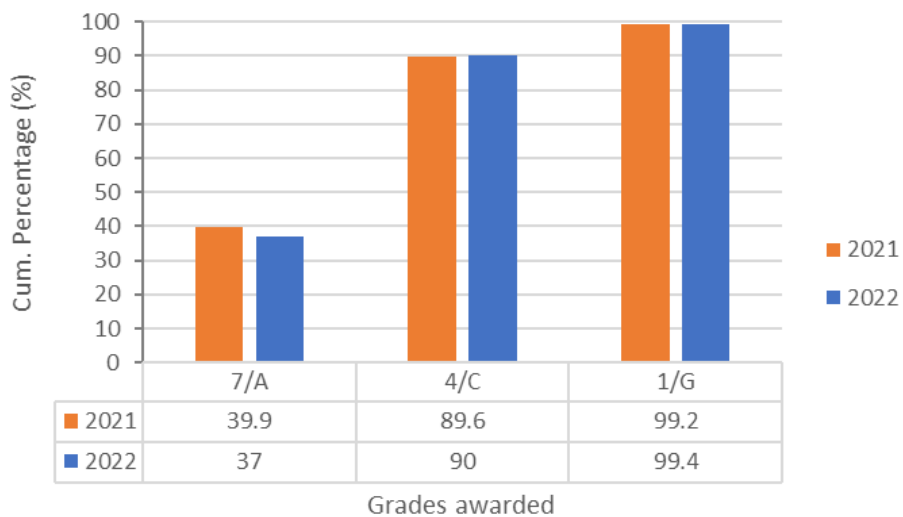


Figure 3: Cumulative GCSE grade outcomes at 7/A, 4/C and 1/G for NI in Summer series 2021 and 2022



### 3.2.1 GCSE Grade Outcomes by Gender

The cumulative grade outcomes for the UK, broken down by gender, shown in Table 9 below, reflect the drop from 2021 to 2022 in the overall cumulative grade outcomes for the UK shown in Figure 2 above. The equivalent data for NI are shown in Table 10 below. These two tables show that, for both the UK as a whole and NI, grade outcomes for female candidates are higher than for male candidates at all key grades in 2021 and 2022.

Table 9: GCSE grade outcomes as cumulative percentage at key grades by gender for UK (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

	2021		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>7/A</b>	24.4	33.4	22.6	30.0
<b>4/C</b>	73.6	80.6	69.8	76.7
<b>1/G</b>	98.7	99.2	98.0	98.8

Table 10: GCSE grade outcomes as cumulative percentage at key grades by gender for NI (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

	2021		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>7/A</b>	32.7	46.6	31.9	41.9
<b>4/C</b>	87.1	91.9	88.1	91.8
<b>1/G</b>	99.0	99.3	99.3	99.5

Table 11 below uses the data from Tables 9 and 10 to determine changes in grade outcomes at key grades for males and females from 2021 to 2022.

At grade 7/A, it is evident that outcomes for females dropped more than for males, for both the UK as a whole and NI: for the UK as whole, the percentage-point drop for females was 3.4 compared with 1.8 for males; for NI the percentage-point drop for females was 4.7, while for males it was 0.8. At other key grades, the change in grade outcomes for males and females between 2021 and 2022 is not as great, although it can be seen that, in NI, outcomes for males at grade 4/C went up by 1.0 percentage points, while the outcomes for females dropped by 0.1 percentage points.

Table 11: Percentage point change in GCSE grade outcomes at key grades by gender for UK and NI (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

	UK	NI	Male	Female
	Male	Female		
<b>7/A</b>	-1.8	-3.4	-0.8	-4.7
<b>4/C</b>	-3.8	-3.9	1.0	-0.1
<b>1/G</b>	-0.7	-0.4	0.3	+0.2

### 3.2.2 GCSE Grade Outcomes by Age

The tables below show GCSE cumulative grade outcomes at key grades by age for the UK as a whole (Table 12) and NI (Table 13).

Table 12 shows that, for the UK as a whole, GCSE outcomes have fallen at all key grades for all three age categories. The fall is greatest for the 16-year-old age group at key grades 7/A (down 3.0 percentage points) and 4/C (down 3.7 percentage points), and for the 15-and-under age group at key grade 4/C (down 3.1 percentage points).

**Table 12: GCSE cumulative grade outcomes at key grades by age and the difference in grade outcomes between 2021 and 2022: UK (Summer series 2021 and 2022)**

	15 and under			16			17 and over		
	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
<b>7/A</b>	35.4	34.4	-1.0	30.2	27.2	-3.0	8.6	8.1	-0.5
<b>4/C</b>	79.5	76.4	-3.1	79.1	75.4	-3.7	48.4	36.2	-12.2
<b>1/G</b>	99.1	98.2	-0.9	99.1	98.6	-0.5	96.3	95.4	-0.9

Table 13 shows that for NI the greatest differences between 2021 and 2022 grade outcomes are in the 15-and-under age group, where there has been a fall of 21.0 percentage points at grade 7/A and a fall of 5.1 percentage points at grade 4/C (see paragraph 3.3.3 below for more detail). There has also been a drop in outcomes at grade 7/A for the 16-year-old and 17-and-over age groups. In contrast to the UK as a whole, the 16-year-old and 17-and-over age groups in NI have seen marginal increases in cumulative grade outcomes at key grades 4/C and 1/G.

**Table 13: GCSE cumulative grade outcomes at key grades by age for NI and the percentage-point difference in grade outcomes between 2021 and 2022 (Summer series 2021 and 2022)**

	15 and under			16			17 and over		
	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
<b>7/A</b>	82.2	61.2	-21.0	39.4	36.7	-2.7	38.1	35.2	-2.9
<b>4/C</b>	98.8	93.7	-5.1	89.9	90.4	0.5	87.2	87.9	0.7
<b>1/G</b>	99.9	99.5	-0.4	99.3	99.4	0.1	98.4	99.1	0.7

It is evident from Tables 12 and 13 that NI has seen greater variation in the size and direction of age-related changes in cumulative grade outcomes at key grades from 2021 to 2022 than the UK as a whole.

### 3.3 GCSE Entries and Grade Outcomes by Subject

#### 3.3.1 Top Ten Subjects in NI by Entry Size

Previous editions of the Insight report have presented the top five ‘most popular’ GCSE subjects, excluding Mathematics and English, taken in NI. This year’s report presents the top ten GCSE subjects ranked by entry size, including Mathematics and English. Mathematics and English have been included as they are the subjects with the largest entries; their inclusion sets the other subject choices in a more complete, overall context.

Figure 4 shows the top ten subjects ranked by entry size for the NI 2022 GCSE cohort as a whole; Figure 5 shows the equivalent data for the male cohort; and Figure 6 shows the equivalent data for the female cohort.

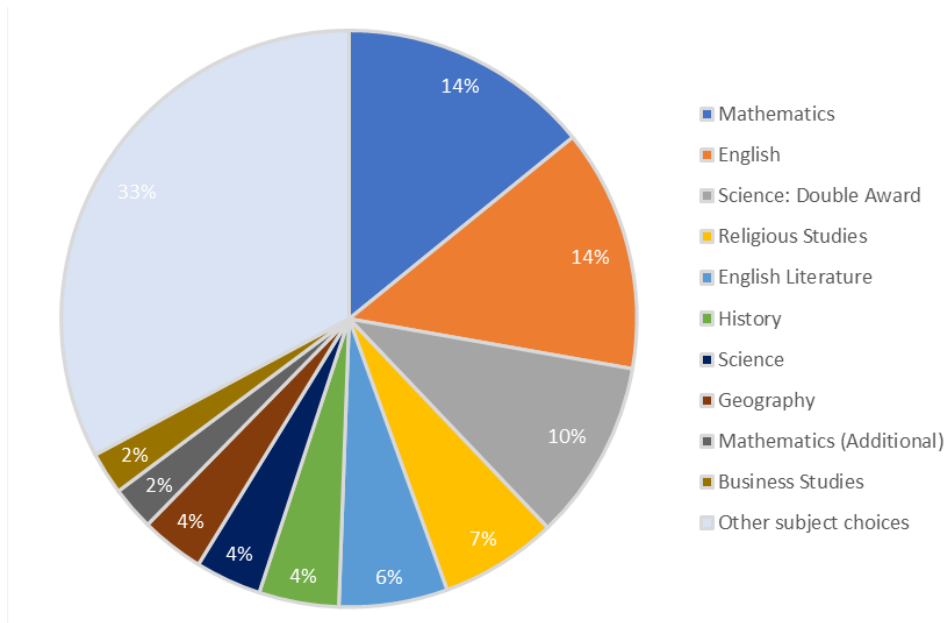


Figure 4: Top ten GCSE subjects ranked by entry size, all candidates: NI, 2022 (Summer series)

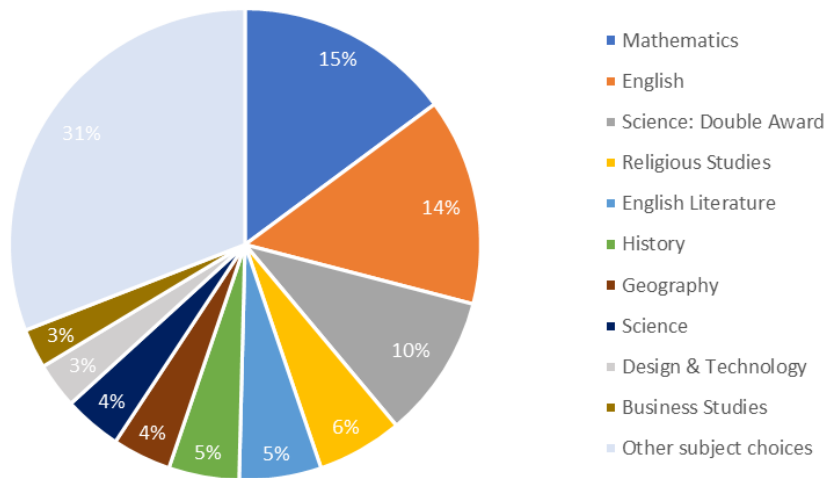
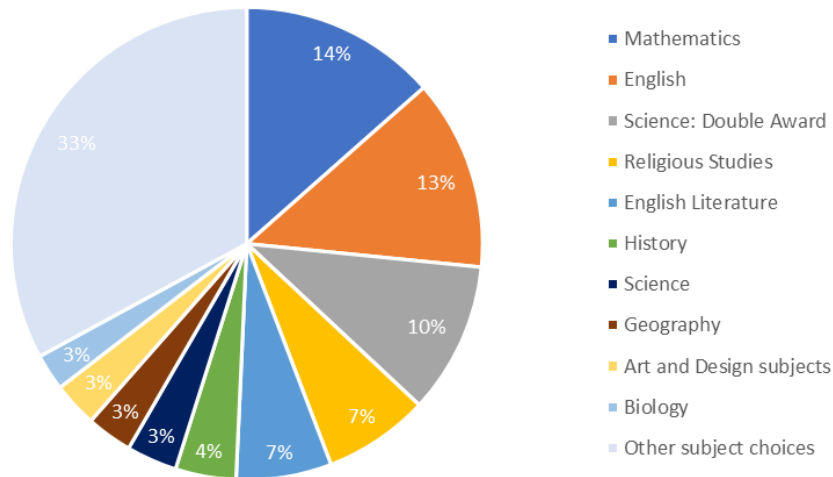


Figure 5: Top ten GCSE subjects ranked by entry size, male candidates: NI, 2022 (Summer series)



**Figure 6: Top ten GCSE subjects ranked by entry size, female candidates: NI, 2022 (Summer series)**

Figures 4, 5 and 6 show that there was a high degree of similarity in the GCSE subjects taken by males and females in NI in 2022 – there is no difference in the rank order of subjects until the 7th and 8th ranked subject: for male candidates Geography is the 7th ranked subject, Science the 8th; this order is reversed for female candidates. The 10th ranked subject for male candidates is Business Studies, while for female candidates it is Biology.

The gender breakdown for all GCSEs taken in NI is illustrated in Figure 7 below. The gender balance in ‘top ten’ subjects such as Mathematics, English and Double Award Science is very similar to the balance in entries overall, while English Literature and Religious Studies have slightly more female entries and Further Mathematics, Single Award Science, History, Geography and Business Studies have more male entries.

Elsewhere, there are two clear extremes: at one end is a group of subjects taken mostly by male candidates; at the other end is a group of subjects taken mostly by female candidates. The subjects taken predominantly by male candidates are all in the STEM category: ICT, Other Sciences, Design and Technology, Computing, Engineering, Construction, and Other Technology. The subjects taken predominantly by female candidates are largely from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the ‘Other’ GCSE categories (see below): Leisure and Tourism, Art and Design subjects, Drama, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Health and Social Care, Home Economics and Performing and Expressive Arts. These gender profiles are illustrated and discussed in more detail in the sections on subject categories, below.

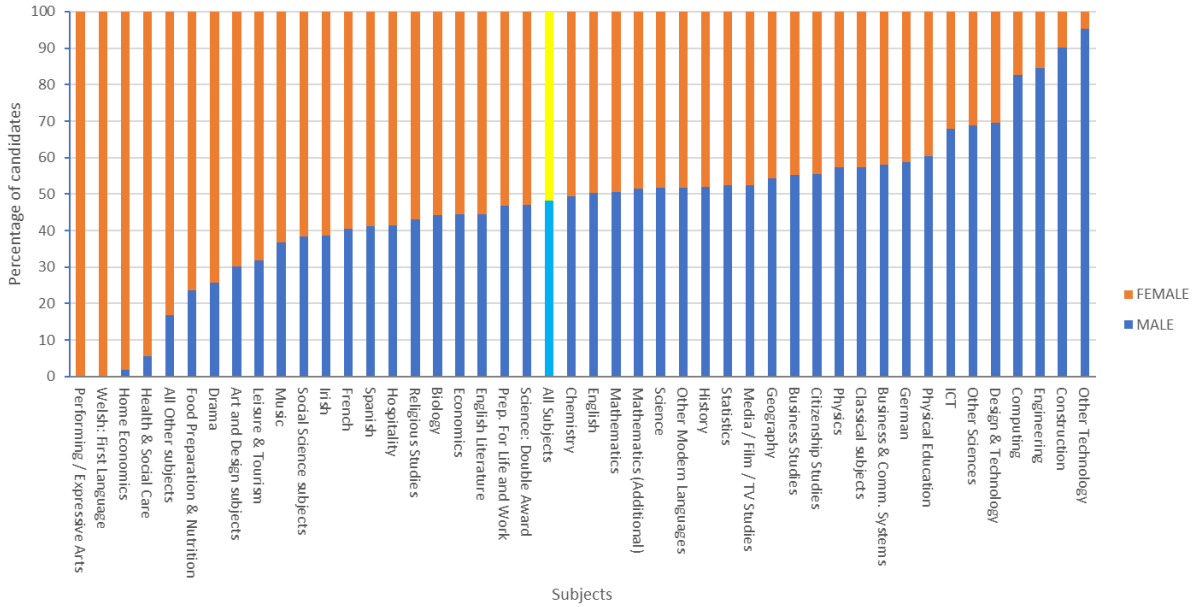


Figure 7: GCSE entries by subject by gender for NI, 2022 Summer series

### 3.3.2 GCSE Subject Entries: 15-Year-Old-and-Under Age Group

Figure 8 below shows the ten GCSE subjects with the highest 15-year-old-and-under entries in NI for 2022. Four subjects stand out as having relatively large 15-year-old-and-under entries: Mathematics, Statistics, Irish and ‘Other Modern Languages’. Schools in NI have historically entered able mathematicians early for GCSE Mathematics with a view to focusing on GCSE Further Mathematics in the second year of their GCSE studies. With regard to GCSE Irish and Other Modern Languages, research has indicated that the 15-year-old-and-under entries are made up in part of candidates with an identified facility for the language in question. Such candidates may be native speakers, live in families in which the language is spoken, or, in the case of Irish, have received some of their education through the medium of Irish.

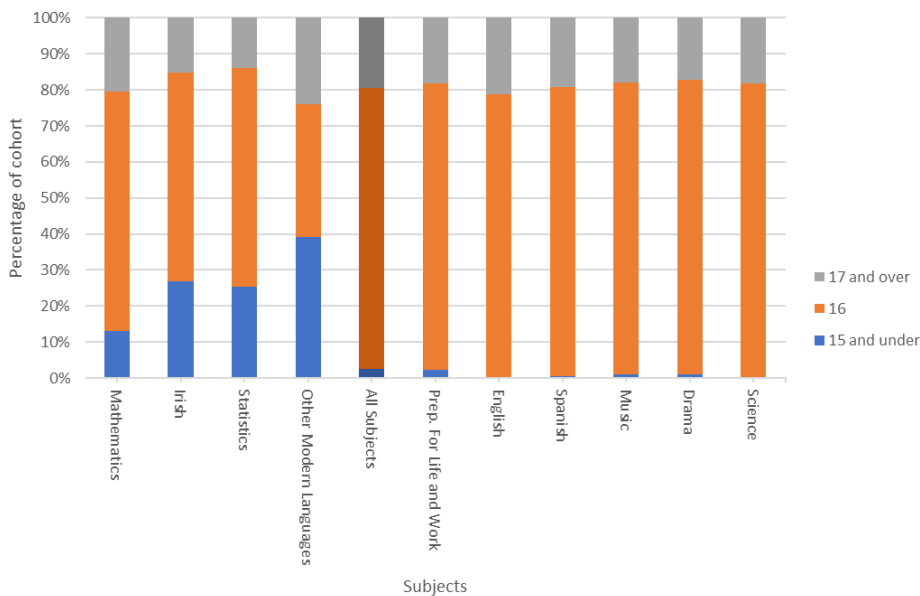


Figure 8: 10 GCSE subjects with the highest 15-year-old-and-under entry: NI, 2022

### 3.3.3 GCSE Mathematics

#### *GCSE Mathematics Entries by Age and Gender*

Table 14 below shows GCSE Mathematics entries for NI by age and gender for 2021 and 2022. The gender balance has shifted very slightly from an even split in 2021 to a 1.4 percentage-point difference in favour of males in 2022. In terms of age, the proportion of the entry made up of the 15-and-under age group entry in 2022 is 2.8 percentage points higher than it was in 2021, while the 17-and-over age group shows a decrease in the proportion of the entry from 22.3% in 2021 to 20.5% in 2022.

Table 14: Mathematics entries (NI) by age and gender as number and percentage of total Mathematics entry: 2022 (Summer series)

	Number		Percentage	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>15 and under</b>	2,528	3,067	10.4	13.2
<b>16</b>	16,311	15,453	67.2	66.3
<b>17 and over</b>	5,418	4,774	22.3	20.5
<b>Female</b>	12,138	11,493	50.0	49.3
<b>Male</b>	12,119	11,801	50.0	50.7

#### *GCSE Mathematics Grade Outcomes by Age and Gender*

Table 15 below shows the cumulative grade outcomes for GCSE Mathematics broken down by gender. Outcomes have fallen for female candidates in comparison with their male counterparts, particularly at grades 7/A and 4/C: at grade 7/A, a 2.8 percentage-point fall in outcomes for female candidates contrasts with a marginal increase of 0.6 for male candidates. At grade 4/C, the outcome for female candidates fell by 3.0 percentage points while there was a much smaller 0.7 percentage-point fall for male candidates.

Table 15: GCSE Mathematics cumulative grade outcomes at key grades (NI) by gender for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) and percentage-point change from 2021 to 2022

	Male			Female		
	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
<b>7/A</b>	28.5	29.1	0.6	32.5	29.7	-2.8
<b>4/C</b>	80.9	80.2	-0.7	82.2	79.2	-3.0
<b>1/G</b>	98.3	98.6	0.3	98.1	98.4	0.3

Table 16 below shows GCSE Mathematics cumulative grade outcomes at key grades for NI candidates, by age, for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series), and the percentage-point change at each grade from 2021 to 2022. Cumulative grade outcomes are lower in 2022 than in 2021 at all key grades for all age groups except for grades 7/A and 1/G for the 17-year-old-and-over age group, which have each seen increases of just over one percentage point. The 20.8 percentage-point drop at grade 7/A for the 15-and-under age group needs to be read against

the relatively small number of candidates involved, though it can be noted that it was this age group that had the largest percentage-point increase in entry from 2021 to 2022 (as shown in Table 14 above).

**Table 16: GCSE Mathematics cumulative grade outcomes at key grades (NI) by age for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) and percentage-point change from 2021 to 2022**

	15 and under			16			17 and over		
	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
<b>7/A</b>	82.1	61.3	-20.8	27.0	26.5	-0.5	16.9	18.1	1.2
<b>4/C</b>	98.7	92.9	-5.8	81.6	80.1	-1.5	73.3	70.2	-3.1
<b>1/G</b>	100.0	99.7	-0.3	98.7	98.6	-0.1	95.9	97.3	1.4

### 3.3.4 GCSE English

#### *GCSE English Entries by Age and Gender*

Table 17 below shows GCSE English entries for NI by age and gender for 2021 and 2022. While the entry has remained stable for both age and gender across 2021 and 2022 in percentage terms, there has been a small drop in overall numbers for all age and gender categories (except for the age group 15-and-under where the numbers represent no more than 0.1 percent of the overall GCSE English cohort and can therefore be disregarded in this context.)

**Table 17: GCSE English entries (NI) by age and gender as number and percentage of total English entry: 2021 and 2022 (Summer series)**

	Number		Percentage	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
15 and under	7	30	0.0	0.1
16	17,628	17,576	78.3	78.6
17 and over	4,871	4,768	21.6	21.3
Female	11,185	11,110	49.7	49.7
Male	11,321	11,264	50.3	50.3

#### *GCSE English Grade Outcomes by Age and Gender*

GCSE English cumulative grade outcomes at key grades for NI by gender for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) and percentage-point change from 2021 to 2022 are shown in Table 18 below. The cumulative grade outcomes are higher for 2022 than for 2021 at all grades for both males and females except for grade 7/A for females which has dropped by 2.7 percentage points. The cumulative grade outcomes for females in 2022 are higher than for males at all grades: by 14.8 percentage points at grade 7/A; by 7.9 percentage points at grade 4/C; and by 0.2 percentage points at grade 1/G.



Table 18: GCSE English cumulative grade outcomes at key grades (NI) by gender for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) and percentage change from 2021 to 2022

	Male			Female		
	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
<b>7/A</b>	20.7	21.4	0.7	38.9	36.2	-2.7
<b>4/C</b>	81.5	84.8	3.3	90.7	92.7	2.0
<b>1/G</b>	98.6	99.2	0.6	99.1	99.4	0.3

Table 19 below shows GCSE English cumulative grade outcomes at key grades for NI by age for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) and percentage-point change from 2021 to 2022. The figures for the 15-and-under age group can be disregarded as they represent no more than 0.1% of the GCSE English cohort. The 16-year-old and 17-and-under age groups have both seen a slight fall in their cumulative percentage outcomes at grade 7/A. At grade 4/C, the cumulative outcomes for the 16-year-old cohort are 2.5 percentage points higher in 2022 than in 2021, while at the same grade, for the 17-and-over age group, the cumulative outcomes for 2022 are up by 3.1 percentage points on those of 2021.

Table 19: GCSE English cumulative grade outcomes at key grades (NI) by age for 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) and percentage-point change from 2021 to 2022

	15 and under			16			17 and over		
	2021	2022	2022–2021 NA	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
<b>7/A</b>	Entries too small			30.1	29.1	-1.0	28.6	27.4	-1.2
<b>4/C</b>				86.8	89.3	2.5	83.4	86.5	3.1
<b>1/G</b>				99.2	99.4	0.2	97.7	99.0	1.3

### 3.4 GCSE Subject Categories

This section looks at GCSE subjects taken in NI in four categories:

Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM); Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS); Languages; and 'Other' GCSEs. The relative entry size of each of these categories, by gender, and overall, is shown in Figure 9 below. It is evident that the majority of GCSEs taken in NI fall within the STEM and AHSS categories. Languages is the smallest category by entry size. (As noted in the Introduction, the subject headings used in this report are those which appear in JCQ data sources. This means, for example, that the subject heading 'Irish' includes both CCEA's Irish and Gaelge qualifications. A full list of JCQ subject headings, together with the CCEA GCSE subjects they cover, is set out in Appendix 2.)

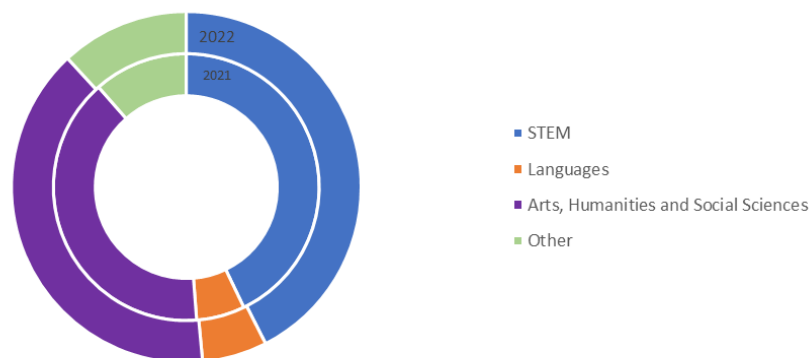


Figure 9: GCSE entry by subject category as proportion of overall GCSE entry for NI in 2021 and 2022 (Summer series)

### 3.4.1 GCSE STEM Subjects

#### GCSE STEM: Entries

GCSE Statistics and GCSE Construction have been added to the STEM category for this year's Insight Report.

Table 20 below shows that, while there has been a drop of 1,353 in the STEM entry from 2021 to 2022, the STEM entry as a proportion of the overall GCSE entry has remained stable across the two years at around 42.5%. As a proportion of the total STEM entry, the entry of each individual STEM subject in 2022 has remained very similar to that of 2021.

Table 20: STEM entry (NI) by subject and overall: 2021 and 2022 (Summer series)

	2021		2022	
	Number	% of total STEM	Number	% of total STEM
Biology	3,949	5.5	3,817	5.5
Chemistry	2,986	4.2	2,910	4.2
Computing	448	0.6	525	0.8
Construction	1,022	1.4	1,053	1.5
Design & Technology	3,654	5.1	3,572	5.1
Engineering	331	0.5	251	0.4
ICT	3,234	4.5	3,168	4.5
Mathematics	24,257	34.0	23,294	33.3
Mathematics (Additional)	4,047	5.7	4,038	5.8
Physics	2,837	4.0	2,811	4.0
Science	6,134	8.6	6,104	8.7
Science: Double Award	16,518	23.2	16,626	23.8
Statistics	452	0.6	569	0.8

Other Sciences	353	0.5	355	0.5
Other Technology	1,020	1.4	796	1.1
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: STEM</b>	71,242	100	69,889	100
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: ALL GCSE</b>	166,172		164,413	
<b>STEM ENTRY AS PERCENTAGE of TOTAL GCSE ENTRY</b>	42.9		42.5	

As shown in Table 21 below, the STEM entry has fallen for both males and females; however, as a proportion of the total entry for GCSE, by gender, the male and female STEM entries have remained stable across 2021 and 2022, with the STEM proportion of overall entries for males being just over 8% higher than that for females in both 2021 and 2022.

Table 21: GCSE STEM entry (NI) by subject 2021 and 2022 (summer series) and by gender, as percentage

	2021	2022		
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Biology	44.1	55.9	44.1	55.9
Chemistry	48.9	51.1	49.5	50.5
Computing	84.6	15.4	82.6	17.3
Construction	90.0	10.0	90.0	10.0
Design & Technology	71.8	28.2	69.5	30.5
Engineering	92.1	7.9	84.5	15.5
ICT	68.3	31.7	68.0	32.0
Mathematics	50.0	50.0	50.7	49.3
Mathematics (Additional)	50.3	49.7	51.6	48.4
Physics	56.7	43.3	57.3	42.7
Science	52.7	47.3	51.6	48.4
Science: Double Award	45.5	54.5	47.0	53.0
Statistics	63.1	36.9	52.4	47.6
Other Sciences	77.6	22.4	42.9	45.2
Other Technology	95.0	5.0	95.2	47.7

The GCSE STEM entry for both males and females was lower in 2022 than in 2021: the entry for males in 2022 was 37,116, which was 883 lower than in 2021; the entry for females in 2022 was 32,773, which was 470 lower than in 2021. These lower entry figures have not had any significant effect on the proportion of males and females entered for STEM subjects. In

2022, males made up 46.8% of the System entry, while females made up 38.5%, a difference of 8.3 pp. In 2021, males made up 47.1% of the System entry while females made up 38.9%, a difference of 8.2 pp. The gender breakdown of entries for individual STEM subjects is shown in Table 21 above. The following points can be noted:

- In 9 out of the 15 STEM subjects, the male entry is at least 10 percentage points higher than the female entry in 2021 or 2022 or both. The nine subjects are:
  - Computing
  - Construction
  - Design and Technology
  - Engineering
  - ICT
  - Physics
  - Statistics
  - Other Sciences
  - Other Technology
- In 9 out of the 15 STEM subjects, the female entry is at least 10 percentage points higher than the female entry in 2021 or 2022 or both. That subject is Biology.

### *GCSE STEM Grade Outcomes*

Table 22 below shows the cumulative grade 4/C outcomes for STEM subjects by gender and all candidates. The 15 subjects have been ranked from the subject with the highest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Physics: 99.7%) to the subject with the lowest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Other Technology: 74.5%).

Out of 15 subjects, it can be noted that Mathematics is ranked 14th, with a cumulative grade 4/C percentage of 79.8%. Additional/Further Mathematics is ranked fourth with a cumulative grade 4/C percentage of 97.8.

Broadly, cumulative grade 4/C outcomes for STEM subjects have remained stable across 2021 and 2022, though the following can be noted:

- ICT outcomes have risen for both males and females.
- Computing outcomes have gone down for both males and females. (The drop for females was 11.8 percentage points, although it needs to be borne in mind that the numbers involved are small.)
- Statistics outcomes have risen for both males and females.
- Other Sciences show stability in the overall outcome, but within this overall figure the outcome for males has fallen while the outcome for females has risen.
- Engineering outcomes for females have fallen by 5.1 percentage points (although it needs to be borne in mind that the numbers involved are small).

Table 22: GCSE STEM cumulative percentage Grade 4/C outcomes (NI) by gender and overall: 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) ranked by outcomes for All Candidates in 2022

	2021			2022		
	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Overall
Physics	98.1	98.7	98.4	99.6	99.8	99.7
Chemistry	98.1	98.8	98.4	98.9	99.1	99.0
Biology	97.2	97.0	97.1	99.3	98.6	98.9
Mathematics (Additional)	97.3	98.7	98.0	97.6	98.0	97.8
ICT	90.2	94.8	91.7	92.9	96.4	94.0
Computing	97.1	98.6	97.3	95.4	86.8	93.9
Science: DA	91.8	94.6	93.3	92.1	94.1	93.2
Design & Technology	86.0	93.0	88.0	87.2	94.0	89.2
Statistics	78.6	94.6	84.5	80.5	97.4	88.6
Other Sciences	87.6	91.1	88.4	84.4	96.4	88.2
Construction	89.2	94.4	89.7	87.2	94.3	87.9
Science	80.7	84.2	82.3	80.3	83.2	81.7
Engineering	76.7	92.3	77.9	78.8	87.2	80.1
Mathematics	80.9	82.2	81.5	80.2	79.2	79.8
Other Technology	76.5	69.2	76.2	74.1	81.6	74.5

### 3.4.2 GCSE Languages

#### *GCSE Languages: Entries*

Table 23 below shows that, while the number of candidates entered for GCSE qualifications overall in NI is lower in 2022 than in 2021, the number of candidates entered for GCSE Language qualifications has risen very slightly (86 candidates). The GCSE Language entry as a proportion of the overall GCSE entry has remained stable at around 6%. The proportion of the entry made up by French has fallen from 36.5% in 2021 to 32.4% in 2022. The raw numbers for Other Modern Languages are small; it can be noted, however, that the entry has more than trebled from 121 in 2021 to 367 in 2022.

Table 23: Entries for GCSE Language subjects (NI) in 2021 and 2022 (Summer series)

	2021		2022	
	Number	% of total language entry	Number	% of total language entry
French	3,567	36.5	3,193	32.4
German	692	7.1	723	7.3
Irish	1,757	18.0	1,980	20.0
Spanish	3,638	37.2	3,598	36.5
Other Modern Languages	121	1.2	367	3.7
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: Languages</b>	<b>9,775</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9,861</b>	<b>100</b>

TOTAL ENTRY: ALL GCSE	166,172		164,413	
LANGUAGES ENTRY AS % OF TOTAL GCSE ENTRY	5.9		6.0	

The gender breakdown for GCSE modern languages is shown in Table 24 below. Given the relatively small numbers involved, the gender profile of entries can be considered to have remained consistent across 2021–2022.

Table 24: GCSE Modern Languages entry (NI) gender proportion by Language 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) as percentage

	2021		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
French	38.8	61.2	40.5	59.5
German	53.5	46.5	58.6	41.4
Irish	40.7	59.3	38.6	61.4
Spanish	41.5	58.5	41.3	58.7
Other Modern Languages	47.1	52.9	51.8	48.2

Table 25 below shows the range of other GCSE Languages that were taken by candidates in NI in 2021 and 2022. While overall numbers remain small, there has been a year-on-year increase in entries for all languages (except Bengali), particularly for Arabic, Polish and Portuguese.

Table 25: Entry numbers for GCSE 'Other' Modern Languages, NI, 2021/2022 (Summer series). (Only those languages for which there was at least one entry are shown.)

	2021	2022
Arabic	29	70
Bengali	1	0
Chinese	16	27
Italian	4	11
Japanese	2	4
Modern Greek	0	1
Persian	0	1
Polish	42	147
Portuguese	17	67
Russian	10	33
Turkish	0	4
Urdu	0	2
Total	121	367

### GCSE Languages: Grade Outcomes

Table 26 below shows the cumulative grade 4/C outcomes for GCSE modern language subjects by gender and all candidates. The five subjects have been ranked from the subject with the highest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Irish: 97.7%) to the subject with the lowest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (German: 93.4%). (It should be noted that Irish is referenced here as it is in the JCQ subject categorisation which means that it includes Gaeilge.) The outcome profile for 2022 is broadly consistent with that of 2021. There has been a 4.1 percentage-point drop in overall outcomes for Other Modern Languages, but the numbers involved are small.

Table 26: GCSE Languages cumulative percentage grade 4/C outcomes (NI) by gender and overall: 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) ranked by outcomes for All Candidates in 2022

	2021			2022		
	Male	Female	All Candidates	Male	Female	All Candidates
Irish	96.2	98.4	97.5	96.9	98.2	97.7
Spanish	92.7	96.7	95.1	93.9	96.6	95.5
Other Modern Languages	100.0	98.4	99.2	94.2	96.0	95.1
French	91.9	96.2	94.6	92.7	95.3	94.3
German	93.5	96.3	94.8	92.9	94.0	93.4

### 3.4.3 GCSE Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

#### GCSE Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS): Entries

Table 27 below shows that, while there has been a drop of 943 in the AHSS entry from 2021 to 2022, the AHSS entry as a proportion of the overall GCSE entry has remained stable across the two years at around 40.0%. As a proportion of the total AHSS entry, the entry of each individual AHSS subject in 2022 has remained very similar to that of 2021.

Table 27: Entries for GCSE Arts, Humanities and Social Science (AHSS) subjects (NI) 2021 and 2022 (Summer series)

	2021		2022	
	Number	% of total AHSS entry	Number	% of total AHSS entry
Art and Design Subjects	3,879	5.9	3,730	5.7
Drama	1,497	2.3	1,385	2.1
Media / Film / TV Studies	1,392	2.1	1,252	1.9
Music	1,389	2.1	1,379	2.1
Performing / Expressive Arts	9	0.0	11	0.0



Classical Subjects	188	0.3	143	0.2
Economics	187	0.3	223	0.3
English	22,506	34.1	22,374	34.4
English Literature	10,168	15.4	10,033	15.4
Geography	6,332	9.6	5,879	9.0
History	7,504	11.4	7,382	11.3
Religious Studies	10,580	16.0	10,818	16.6
Social Science Subjects	439	0.7	517	0.8
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: AHSS</b>	66,070		65,126	
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: ALL GCSE</b>	166,172		164,413	
<b>AHSS ENTRY AS % of TOTAL GCSE ENTRY</b>	39.8		39.6	

The gender breakdown for GCSE AHSS is shown in Table 28 below. The gender profile of entries has remained consistent across 2021 to 2022.

It is a feature of the gender profile of entries for GCSE AHSS that, in a number of subjects, the female entry as a proportion of total entries for the subject is at least 10% higher than the male entry:

- Drama: female entry 48.4% higher than male entry
- Art and Design Subjects: female entry 40% higher than male entry
- Music: female entry 26.6% higher than male entry
- Social Science Subjects: female entry 23.4% higher than male entry
- Religious Studies: female entry 13.8% higher than male entry
- Economics: female entry 11.2% higher than male entry
- English Literature: female entry 11% higher than male entry

In English, Classical Studies, Geography and History, the male entry is higher than the female entry, but the differences are not as large as for those subjects in which the female entry is larger than the male entry.

Table 28: GCSE Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences entry (NI) by gender and by subject 2021/2022 (Summer series) as percentage

	2021		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Art and Design Subjects	30.0	70.0	30.0	70.0
Drama	31.7	68.3	25.8	74.2
Media / Film / TV Studies	57.8	42.2	52.5	47.5
Music	34.8	65.2	36.7	63.3
Performing / Expressive Arts	Entries too small			
Classical Subjects	52.1	47.9	57.3	42.7

Economics	39.6	60.4	44.4	55.6
English	50.3	49.7	50.3	49.7
English Literature	44.4	55.6	44.5	55.5
Geography	54.5	45.5	54.4	45.6
History	51.5	48.5	52.1	47.9
Religious Studies	43.4	56.6	43.1	56.9
Social Science Subjects	33.0	67.0	38.3	61.7

### GCSE AHSS: Grade Outcomes

Table 29 below shows the cumulative percentage grade 4/C outcomes for AHSS subjects by gender and all candidates. The 13 subjects have been ranked from the subject with the highest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Performing and Expressive Arts: 100%) to the subject with the lowest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Media/Film/TV studies: 83.1%). (The entry for Performing and Expressive Arts is so small, 11 candidates, that it should be disregarded as the top-ranked subject, and English Literature, with a cumulative grade 4/C outcome of 98.5%, taken instead.)

In 11 out of the 13 AHSS subjects, the 2022 cumulative grade outcomes for females are higher than those for males, including the four subjects identified above in which the male entry was higher than the female entry.

Table 29: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) cumulative grade 4/C outcomes (NI) by gender and overall: 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) ranked by outcomes for All Candidates in 2022

	2021			2022		
	Male	Female	All Candidates	Male	Female	All Candidates
Performing / Expressive Arts	Entries too small					
English Literature	94.5	98.1	96.5	97.8	99.1	98.5
Music	96.1	96.1	96.1	98.2	97.4	97.7
Economics	91.9	95.6	94.1	93.9	98.4	96.4
Drama	87.6	92.9	91.2	88.5	94.2	92.7
Geography	88.6	93.9	91.0	89.6	93.7	91.5
History	86.3	92.5	89.3	88.6	92.0	90.2
Religious Studies	88.3	95.1	92.2	85.8	93.4	90.1
Art and Design subjects	88.1	94.3	92.4	84.7	92.4	90.1
English	81.5	90.7	86.1	84.8	92.7	88.7
Classical subjects	96.9	97.8	97.3	81.7	88.5	84.6

Social Science subjects	86.9	87.8	87.5	84.3	83.7	83.9
Media / Film / TV Studies	84.6	86.9	85.6	82.3	83.9	83.1

### 3.4.4 GCSE 'Other' Subjects

The heading 'GCSE "Other" Subjects' is used here as a catch-all category to refer to all GCSE subjects taken by schools in NI not captured by the STEM, AHSS and Languages categories discussed above.

#### *GCSE 'Other' Subjects: Entries*

Table 30 below shows that, while there has been an increase of 451 in the 'Other' subjects entry from 2021 to 2022, the 'Other' subjects entry as a proportion of the overall GCSE entry has remained stable across the two years at around 11.5%. The 2022 entry for each individual 'Other' subject, as a proportion of the total 'Other' subjects entry, has remained very similar to that of 2021.

Table 30: Entries 'Other' subjects – NI in 2021 and 2022 (Summer series)

	2021		2022	
	Number	%age of total 'Other' subject entry	Number	%age of total 'Other' subject entry
Business Studies	3,809	20.0	3,916	20.0
Business and Communications Systems	1,747	9.2	1,920	9.8
Citizenship Studies	12	0.1	9	0.0
Food Preparation and Nutrition	2,681	14.0	2,781	14.2
Health and Social Care	1,515	7.9	1,745	8.9
Home Economics	2,214	11.6	2,142	11.0
Hospitality	483	2.5	404	2.1
Leisure and Tourism	164	0.9	182	0.9
Physical Education	2,784	14.6	2,846	14.6
Preparation for Life and Work	3,494	18.3	3,448	17.6
All Other Subjects	182	1.0	143	0.7
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: OTHER SUBJECTS</b>	<b>19,085</b>		<b>19,536</b>	
<b>TOTAL ENTRY: ALL GCSE</b>	<b>166,172</b>		<b>164,413</b>	

<b>OTHER SUBJECTS ENTRY AS % of TOTAL GCSE ENTRY</b>	11.5		11.9	
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Table 31 below shows that the gender profile of entries for GCSE 'Other' Subjects has remained consistent across 2021 to 2022. It is of note that in four subjects ('All Other Subjects', Food Preparation and Nutrition, Health and Social Care, and Home Economics) the female entry makes up over 75% of the overall entry for the subject. For Physical Education, the balance is reversed with over 60% of the entry made up of male candidates. These gender imbalances are of note, given that the subjects involved relate to matters of health, diet and exercise, all of which are current issues of concern in society.

**Table 31: GCSE 'Other' subjects entry (NI) by gender and by subject 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) as percentage**

	2021		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Business Studies	53.8	46.2	55.2	44.8
Business and Communications Systems	56.4	43.6	58.1	41.9
Citizenship Studies	Entries too small			
Food Preparation and Nutrition	26.2	73.8	23.5	76.5
Health and Social Care	5.7	94.3	5.7	94.3
Home Economics	1.6	98.4	1.7	98.3
Hospitality	42.4	57.6	41.3	58.7
Leisure and Tourism	48.8	51.2	31.9	68.1
Physical Education	61.6	38.4	60.4	39.6
Preparation for Life and Work	47.3	52.7	46.8	53.2
All Other Subjects	35.7	64.3	16.8	83.2

#### *GCSE 'Other' Subjects: Grade Outcomes*

Table 32 below shows the cumulative percentage grade 4/C outcomes for 'Other' Subjects by gender and all candidates. The 11 subjects have been ranked from the subject with the highest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Physical Education: 94.7%) to the subject with the lowest 'all candidates' cumulative grade 4/C outcome in 2022 (Leisure and Tourism: 74.7%). The table shows that cumulative grade outcomes at 4/C for females are higher than for males in all subjects, including Physical Education in which, as noted above, the male-to-female ratio is around 60:40.

Table 32: Other GCSEs cumulative grade 4/C outcomes (NI) by gender and overall: 2021 and 2022 (Summer series) ranked by outcomes for All Candidates in 2022

	2021			2022		
	Male	Female	All Candidates	Male	Female	All Candidates
Citizenship Studies	Entries too small					
Physical Education	93.1	96.8	94.5	93.8	96.1	94.7
Food Preparation & Nutrition	80.5	92.8	89.6	89.3	95.2	93.8
Health & Social Care	71.3	87.3	86.4	79.8	91.3	90.6
Business Studies	89.1	92.5	90.7	87.5	91.7	89.4
All Other Subjects						
	90.8	98.3	95.6	66.7	93.3	88.8
Prep. For Life and Work	79.4	88.4	84.2	84.9	91.5	88.4
Home Economics	74.3	88.4	88.2	56.8	88.7	88.2
Business & Comm. Systems	79.8	84.1	81.7	84.1	87.6	85.6
Hospitality	83.9	88.5	86.5	71.3	86.1	80.0
Leisure & Tourism	81.3	83.3	82.3	72.4	75.8	74.7

## 4. AS Level

This section of the report presents 2022 entries and grade outcomes, including gender profiles, for GCE AS qualifications. As with the GCSE section of the report, these are placed in the context of changes from 2021 and of UK-wide data where appropriate.

### 4.1 AS Level Overall Entries and Outcomes

#### 4.1.1 AS Overall Entries by Region

Across the UK, GCE AS Level qualifications are all graded on an A to E scale.

There are policy differences between the three nations in terms of the status of AS Levels. From 2017, A Levels in England transitioned from modular to linear awards, in which AS Levels no longer contribute to the overall A Level grade but are now separate stand-alone qualifications. NI and Wales retained modular structures, in which AS Levels contribute to the overall A Level grade, although this has been reduced from 50% to 40%.

These policy differences are reflected in the total number of entries for AS Level in 2022, when 26.1% were from NI, 28.1% were from Wales and 45.3% were from England. This is in contrast to the balance of entries across the three nations at GCSE and A Level, indicating that AS Levels are much more commonly taken in NI and Wales than in England.

NI entries overall have declined slightly by 0.6% since 2021. This mirrors the very slight drop across the UK as a whole but is in contrast to the 1.2% increase in entries at A Level in NI in 2022 and the 1.9% increase in the Year 13 cohort.<sup>1</sup> 91.9% of GCE AS Level grades awarded in NI are awarded by CCEA Awarding Organisation; the remaining grades are awarded from either AQA, OCR, Pearson or WJEC.

Figure 10 below shows the distribution of AS entries (measured by number of AS grades awarded) across NI, England and Wales for the Summer series 2022. Table 33 provides further information on the numbers taking AS Levels in each region and the changes from 2021.

<sup>1</sup> School level – post primary schools data 2021\_22 .XLSX (live.com).

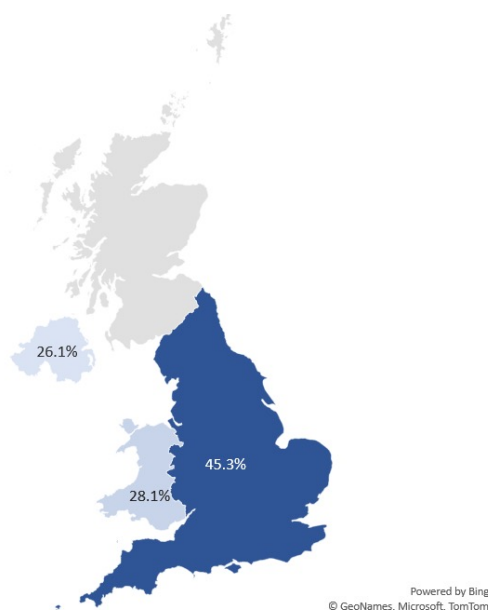


Figure 10: AS entries for NI, England and Wales expressed as a percentage of the total number of AS awards across all regions of the UK in the Summer series 2022

Table 33: AS entries by region in 2021 and 2022 (% change and regional entry as proportion of total UK entries)

AS Level candidates	2021	2022	Change (%)	2021 %	2022 %	Change (pp)
NI	35,533	35,328	-0.6	26.2	26.1	-0.1
England	56,559	61,354	8.5	41.7	45.3	3.6
Wales	42,820	38,106	-11.0	31.6	28.1	-3.5
Other	677	609	-10.0	0.5	0.4	-0.1
UK	135,589	135,397	-0.1	100	100	0.0

#### 4.1.2 AS Overall Entries by Gender

As can be seen in Table 34 below, in 2022, 59.7% of total AS entries in NI were from females, whereas 40.3% were from males. This is similar to the female/male balance in 2021, with 59.9% and 40.1% respectively, and to the balance at A Level. However, as at A Level, females represent a higher proportion of entries in NI than in England and Wales.



Table 34: AS Level entries by region, by gender and as percentage of total entry, in Summer series 2021 and 2022 (based on number of grades awarded)

AS Level	2021					2022					
	Gender	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)	Male & Female	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)	Male & Female
NI		21,301	14,232	59.9	40.1	35,533	21,090	14,238	59.7	40.3	35,328
England		30,666	25,893	54.2	45.8	56,559	32,179	29,175	52.4	47.6	61,354
Wales		24,662	18,158	57.6	42.4	42,820	21,457	16,649	56.3	43.7	38,106
Other		315	362	46.5	53.5	677	299	310	49.1	50.9	609
UK		76,944	58,645	56.7	43.3	135,589	75,025	60,372	55.4	44.6	135,397

#### 4.1.3 AS Overall Grade Outcomes

As outlined in the Introduction, the awarding approach in 2022 aimed for results that would be higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021.

As can be seen in the table below, in line with the agreed policy approaches to awarding, outcomes in 2022 across all grades were lower than in 2021 for NI. There were some variations observed between grades awarded and between NI and the UK.

For example, NI outcomes showed a decrease of 6.7 percentage points from 2021 at A grade, a slightly greater decline than in the UK as a whole (5.6 percentage points), whereas at grades A–C, NI grades declined by 4.8 percentage points, in contrast to 7.8 percentage points for the UK overall. The NI cumulative grades at A–E declined by 0.7 percentage points, in contrast to the UK, which saw a drop of 3.8 percentage points.

Nevertheless, across all regions, A remained the most common grade awarded in 2022, followed by B, C, D, E and U in that order (except in England where there were more C than B grades). This pattern was most pronounced in NI, where 38.8% achieved an A grade, whereas 3.3% were awarded an E (in contrast with the UK overall which awarded 30.3% at A and 8.4% at E). Similarly, 86.4% achieved a C grade or above in NI, 15.2 percentage points above the UK as a whole.

It should be noted that, in England, AS Level is a separate qualification and does not contribute to the overall A Level grade; the characteristics of the cohort taking these qualifications may therefore be different from NI and Wales.

The following Figure 11 and Tables 35 and 36 show the distribution of grades at AS Level across the UK in 2021 and 2022.

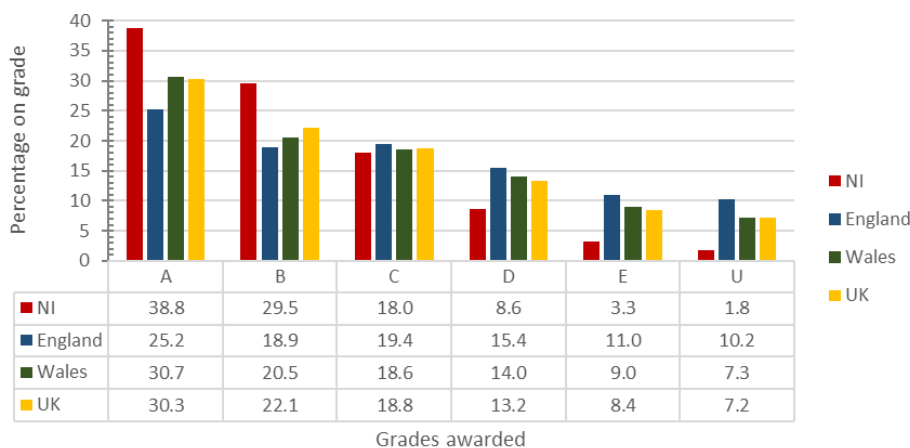


Figure 11: Non-Cumulative AS grade outcomes for NI, England, Wales and UK in Summer series 2022

Table 35: UK cumulative AS grade outcomes for NI, England, Wales and UK in Summer series 2022

	Number Sat	A	B	C	D	E	U
NI	35,328	38.8	68.3	86.4	94.9	98.2	100
ENGLAND	61,354	25.2	44.0	63.4	78.8	89.8	100
WALES	38,106	30.7	51.1	69.8	83.7	92.7	100
UK	135,397	30.3	52.4	71.2	84.4	92.8	100

Table 36: UK cumulative AS grade outcomes for NI, England, Wales and UK in Summer series 2021

	Number Sat	A	B	C	D	E	U
NI	35,533	45.5	73.9	91.2	96.6	98.9	100
ENGLAND	56,559	29.1	50.2	71.1	85.4	95.2	100
WALES	42,820	37.1	60.8	79.4	90.3	96.7	100
UK	135,589	35.9	59.8	79.0	89.9	96.6	100

#### 4.1.4 AS Overall Grade Outcomes by Gender

In NI in 2022, there was a larger drop in outcomes at A grade for females (8.3%) than for males (4.2%) in comparison with 2021 outcomes. This decreased the gender gap from 8.3% in 2021 to 4.2% in 2022. Similarly, the gender gap also narrowed at B and above and C and above, by 3.3 and 1.0 percentage points respectively. This is a different pattern from that observed at cumulative A–E, where outcomes for both males and females decreased by 0.7 percentage points this year, meaning that the gender gap remained stable at 0.8 percentage points.

In both years, more females than males were awarded A or B grades, while more males than females were awarded C, D and E grades.

In the UK, the gender gap also narrowed for cumulative grade outcomes at grades A, B, C and

D between 2021 and 2022. The gender gap in the UK remained lower than in NI for grades A and B and higher for grades C, D and E.

Tables 37 and 38 provide information on the grade outcomes for males and females in NI and the UK in 2021 and 2022 and the gender gap at each grade in these years, while Table 39 outlines the change in grades outcomes for each gender from 2021 to 2022.

Table 37: AS Level cumulative grade outcomes by gender for NI (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

NI Grades	2021			2022		
	Female %	Male %	Gender gap (pp)	Female %	Male %	Gender gap (pp)
A	48.8	40.5	8.3	40.5	36.3	4.2
B	77.4	68.7	8.7	70.5	65.1	5.4
C	93.1	88.3	4.8	87.9	84.1	3.8
D	97.4	95.3	2.1	95.7	93.8	1.9
E	99.2	98.4	0.8	98.5	97.7	0.8

Table 38: AS Level cumulative grade outcomes by gender for UK (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

UK Gender	2021			2022		
	Female %	Male %	Gender gap (pp)	Female %	Male %	Gender gap (pp)
A	38.4	32.7	5.7	31.0	29.3	1.7
B	63.5	55.0	8.5	54.4	49.9	4.5
C	82.1	74.9	7.2	73.4	68.4	5.0
D	91.6	87.5	4.1	86.0	82.4	3.6
E	97.3	95.7	1.6	93.7	91.7	2.0

Table 39: NI and UK: % change in AS grade outcomes from 2021 to 2022 by gender

Region	Year	Gender	A	B	C	D	E	U
NI	2022–2021 pp	Female	-8.3	-6.9	-5.2	-1.7	-0.7	0
NI	2022–2021 pp	Male	-4.2	-3.6	-4.2	-1.5	-0.7	0
UK	2022–2021 pp	Female	-7.4	-9.1	-8.7	-5.6	-3.6	0
UK	2022–2021 pp	Male	-3.4	-5.1	-6.5	-5.1	-4.0	0

## 4.2 AS Entries and Outcomes by Subject, Subject Category and Gender

### 4.2.1 AS Entries by Subject and Subject Category

As can be seen in Figure 12 below, the AS subject with highest entries in NI in 2022 was Biology with 10.0% of total entries, closely followed by Mathematics (9.0%) and Health and Social Care (Single Award) (8.3%). The top ten subjects were the same for both AS and A Level, with only minor variations in ranking.

The NI subject popularity rank differs slightly from the UK ranking, which places Mathematics ahead of Biology (as is also the case at A Level in NI) and reveals that Psychology was the third most popular subject choice for AS candidates across the UK in 2022.<sup>2</sup>

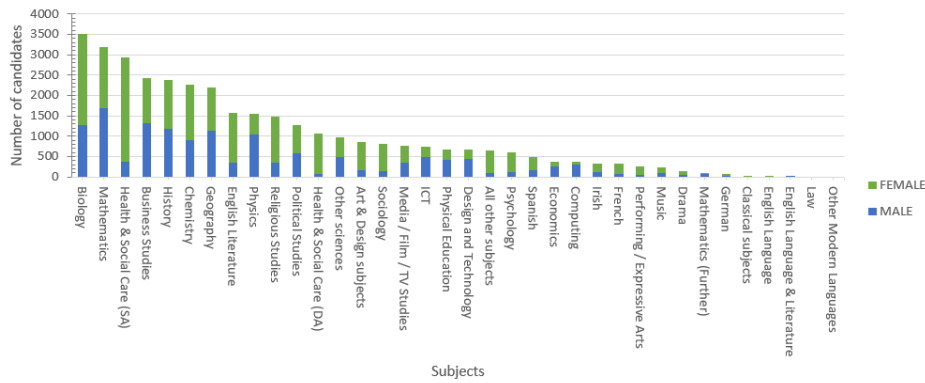


Figure 12: AS Level subjects ranked by entry size, all candidates (male and female split): NI, Summer series 2022

Figure 13 illustrates the relative entry size for subject categories at AS Level. Subject category choices have been broadly stable in the past two years, with STEM, Languages and Arts subjects accounting for almost half of GCE AS Level entries in NI.

The STEM proportion of overall entries remained stable with 38.0% in 2021 and 37.9% in 2022. Languages also remained stable while the Arts proportion of entries declined by 0.5 percentage points (from 6.8% to 6.3%). Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subjects increased by 0.9 percentage points (from 52.4% to 51.5% of the total cohort), representing over half of total entries.

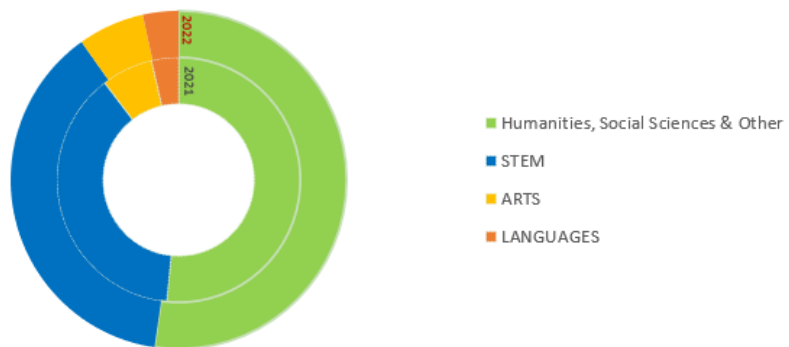


Figure 13: NI AS subject choices by subject category

### STEM

STEM entries remained stable as a proportion of overall entries at AS Level, but there was an annual decrease of 0.9% in STEM entries in 2022, which was slightly greater than the overall decrease of 0.6% at AS Level and is in contrast to the 4.2% increase at A Level. The only subject that saw an increase in candidate numbers was Biology (6.8%), while entries for 'Other Sciences' qualifications increased by 26.3%. The subject with the most significant decrease was Further Mathematics (by 41.3%), which represented a decrease of 0.2 percentage points as a proportion of overall entries.

### Languages

Overall, entries for Languages decreased by 4.5% from 2021 while maintaining their share of overall entries. Irish decreased the most – by 49 candidates or 12.7% – whereas Spanish entries increased slightly by 4.1% (19 candidates). This is in contrast to A Level where overall entries for Languages decreased by 7.8% in 2022 but Irish remained relatively stable.

### Arts

While the Arts entries decreased by 0.5 percentage points of overall entries, those for Art and Design increased by 9.6% between 2021 and 2022. There were notable drops in entries for Media/Film/TV Studies (19.2%) and Music (17.3%), while the decline in Drama (25.1%, 51 candidates) was slightly balanced by growth in the Performing Arts (12.1%, 27 candidates). Overall, entries for Arts subjects decreased by 7.3%.

### Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subjects

This category increased its share of overall entries by 0.9 percentage points. Growth areas included Classical subjects (45.5%), Economics (15%), Business Studies (8.0%), Physical Education (7.1%), History (7%), Geography (6.7%), Political Studies (5.5%) and Health and Social Care (SA: 2.0%; DA: 2.3%). There were notable drops in entries for Religious Studies (by 15.3%) and English Literature (by 8.2%).

Table 40: AS Level entries (NI) by subject, subject category and overall (including % Change and '% of Total No. Sat' percentage-point change from 2021)

Subjects	2021	2022	2022–2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
STEM	Number sat	Number sat	Change (%)	% of Total No. Sat	% of Total No. Sat	Change (pp)
Biology	3,299	3,522	6.8	9.3	10.0	0.7
Chemistry	2,273	2,266	-0.3	6.4	6.4	0.0
Computing	399	370	-7.3	1.1	1.0	-0.1
Design and Technology	727	663	-8.8	2.0	1.9	-0.1
ICT	837	743	-11.2	2.4	2.1	-0.3
Mathematics	3,458	3,182	-8.0	9.7	9.0	-0.7
Mathematics (Further)	179	105	-41.3	0.5	0.3	-0.2
Physics	1,559	1,552	-0.4	4.4	4.4	0.0
Other sciences	777	981	26.3	2.2	2.8	0.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	13,508	13,384	-0.9	38.0	37.9	-0.1
<b>All Subjects</b>	35,533	35,328	-0.6	100.0	100.0	0.0

Subjects	2021	2022	2022/2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
LANGUAGES	Number sat	Number sat	Change (%)	% of Total No. Sat	% of Total No. Sat	Change (pp)
French	337	317	-5.9	0.9	0.9	0.0
German	82	75	-8.5	0.2	0.2	0.0
Irish	386	337	-12.7	1.1	1.0	-0.1
Spanish	466	485	4.1	1.3	1.4	0.1
Other Modern Languages	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,271	1,214	-4.5	3.5	3.5	0.0
<b>All Subjects</b>	35,533	35,328	-0.6	100.0	100.0	0.0

Subjects	2021	2022	2022/2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
ARTS	Number sat	Number sat	Change (%)	% of Total No. Sat	% of Total No. Sat	Change (pp)
Art & Design subjects	782	857	9.6	2.2	2.4	0.2
Drama	203	152	-25.1	0.6	0.4	-0.2
Media / Film / TV Studies	932	753	-19.2	2.6	2.1	-0.5
Music	289	239	-17.3	0.8	0.7	-0.1
Performing / Expressive Arts	224	251	12.1	0.6	0.7	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,430	2,252	-7.3	6.8	6.3	-0.5
<b>All Subjects</b>	35,533	35,328	-0.6	100.0	100.0	0.0

Subjects	2021	2022	2022/2021	2021	2022	2022–2021
Humanities, Social Sciences & Other	Number sat	Number sat	Change (%)	% of Total No. Sat	% of Total No. Sat	Change (pp)
Classical subjects	22	32	45.5	0.1	0.1	0.0
Economics	327	376	15.0	0.9	1.1	0.2
English Language	42	25	-40.5	0.1	0.1	0.0
English Literature	1,717	1,576	-8.2	4.8	4.5	-0.3
English Language & Literature	19	5	-73.7	0.1	0.0	-0.1
Geography	2,054	2,192	6.7	5.8	6.2	0.4
History	2,216	2,371	7.0	6.2	6.7	0.5
Political Studies	1,197	1,263	5.5	3.4	3.6	0.2

Psychology	593	598	0.8	1.7	1.7	0.0
Religious Studies	1,753	1,485	-15.3	4.9	4.2	-0.7
Sociology	798	804	0.8	2.2	2.3	0.1
Business Studies	2,255	2,436	8.0	6.3	6.9	0.6
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	2,868	2,926	2.0	8.1	8.3	0.2
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	1,038	1,062	2.3	2.9	3.0	0.1
Physical Education	638	683	7.1	1.8	1.9	0.1
All Other subjects	787	644	-18.2	2.2	1.8	-0.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	18,324	18,478	0.8	51.5	52.4	0.9
<b>All Subjects</b>	35,533	35,328	-0.6	100.0	100.0	0.0

#### 4.2.2 AS Level Entries by Subject and Gender

In 2022, 59.7% of total AS entries were from females, whereas 40.3% were from males.

Taking this overall proportion into account, there are still some notable differences between subjects, as can be seen in Figure 14, which illustrates the differences in proportion of male and female uptake in each subject, and in Figures 15 and 16, which identify the relative popularity of subjects for females and males.

For example, Health and Social Care is the most common AS subject taken by females, where they represent 93.4% of entries for Double Award and 87.5% for Single Award. In contrast, males make up 84.3% of entries for Computing, 69.5% for Further Mathematics and 68.0% for Design and Technology.

There are also variations within the sciences, where females represent 64.0% of entries for Biology and 60.1% for Chemistry, but only 32.7% for Physics. Other subjects in the top ten where males are in the majority include Mathematics, Business Studies and Geography.

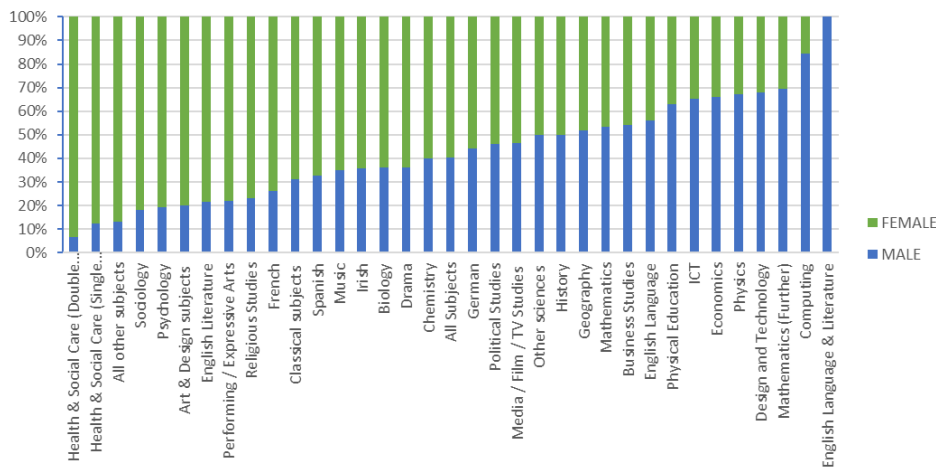


Figure 14: Male/female balance in AS subject entries in NI, Summer 2022

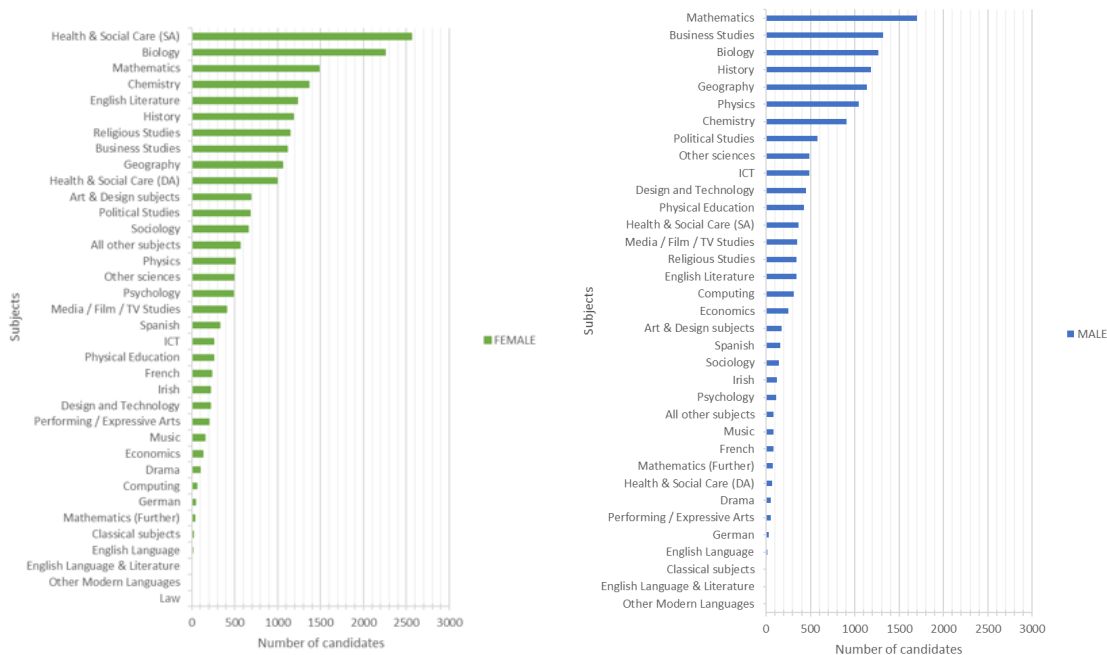


Figure 15: Female uptake of AS subjects (NI, Summer series 2022)

Figure 16: Male uptake of AS subjects (NI, Summer series 2022)

### 4.2.3 AS Outcomes by Subject and Gender

The following provides a brief snapshot of AS subject outcomes at A grade in 2022. For more detail, see JCQ AS Level Results for Summer 2022.

There was a wide variation in A grade awards across the subjects. The highest achieving subject was Further Mathematics, with 84.8% achieving an A grade. Languages also performed strongly, with 68.5% achieving an A grade in Irish, 57.3% in German and 56.5% in French. Of those studying Drama, 57.9% were awarded an A. In contrast, in Health and Social Care, 31.0% were awarded an A in Single Award and 16.4% in Double Award.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/A-Level-Results-Summer-2022.xlsx>.



Overall, outcomes at A fell by 6.7 percentage points. Only three subjects saw a modest increase – Psychology (by 1.2 percentage points), Irish (1.2 pp) and Computing (0.3 pp). History, Physical Education and ICT had some of the biggest drops at A grade, by 11.5, 10.0 and 9.9 percentage points respectively.

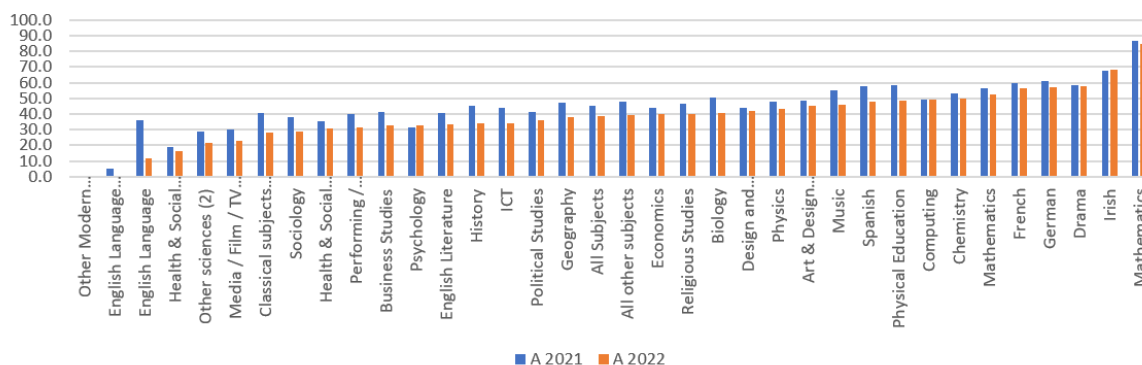


Figure 17: AS % of candidates awarded grade A by subject, NI, Summer series 2021 and 2022

As at A Level, there were also notable gender variations in outcomes at A grade. Subjects where females achieved more A grades included Health and Social Care Single Award (by 23.8 percentage points), Physical Education (22.3), Drama (19.4), Geography (18.5) and Psychology (18.0). Subjects where males achieved more A grades than females included Performing and Expressive Arts by (6.3 percentage points), Further Mathematics (5.0), Design and Technology (3.8) and Physics (2.5). This is in contrast with A Level, where males only performed higher in Physics and in the small entry subject of English Language and Literature.

Outcomes at A grade in 2022 were lower for AS than for A Level for both females (by 4.6 percentage points) and males (6.1 percentage points).

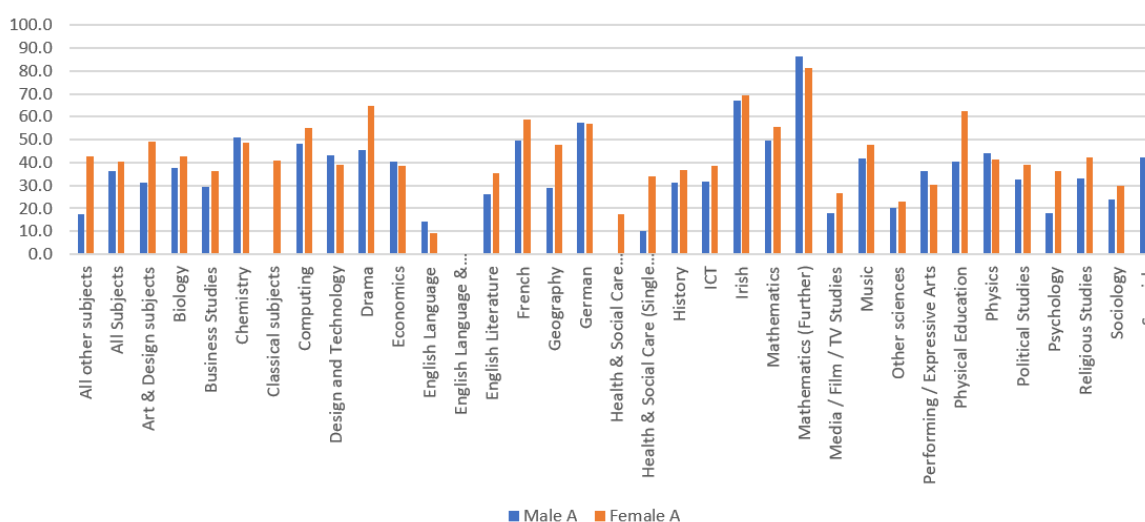


Figure 18: AS % of candidates awarded grade A by subject and gender, NI, Summer series 2022

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/AS-Level-Results-Summer-2022.xlsx>.

## 5. A Level

This section of the report presents 2022 entries and grade outcomes, including gender profiles, for GCE A Level qualifications. As with the GCSE and AS sections of the report, these are placed in the context of changes from 2021 and of UK-wide data where appropriate. However, this information should be considered in the wider context of the disruption caused by COVID-19 in recent years.

### 5.1 A Level Overall Entries and Outcomes

#### 5.1.1 A Level Overall Entries by Region

In 2022, 3.8% of all A Level entries across the UK came from NI. While this is lower than the proportion for AS Level (due to differences in policy across the three countries), it is still higher than the proportion at GCSE (2.9%). Indeed, if A Level entries for each region are calculated as a proportion of GCSE entries in 2022, then the figure for NI is 19.8% – higher than the overall UK figure of 14.9% and almost twice the figure in Wales (11.4%) – indicating that learners in NI may be more likely to progress to GCE qualifications in their post-16 studies.

Figure 19 below shows the distribution of A Level entries across NI, England and Wales for the Summer series 2022.

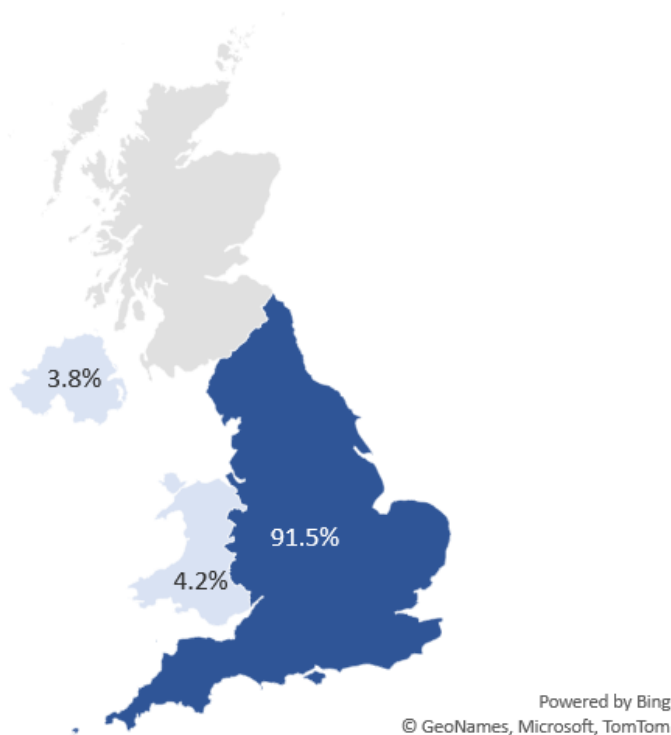


Figure 19: A Level entries for England, Wales and NI expressed as a percentage of the total number of GCE A Levels awarded across all regions of the UK in the Summer series 2022

Across the UK, GCE A Level qualifications are all graded on an A\* to E scale. In 2022, 88% of GCE A Level grades awarded in NI were awarded by CCEA Awarding Organisation. The remaining grades are awarded by either AQA, OCR, Pearson or WJEC.

As outlined in Table 41 below, A Level entries in NI increased by 1.2%, from 32,111 in 2021 to 32,506 in 2022, which is less than the 2.9% increase across the UK as a whole. It is also less than the 3.3% increase in the size of the Year 14 cohort, from 13,542 to 13,944, according to DE census data.

Table 41: A Level entries for NI and UK in 2021 and 2022, shown as number of A Levels sat and as percentage of A Levels awarded across all regions of the UK (based on number of grades awarded)

UK Region	Entry Number (Grades awarded)			Entry as a percentage of Total UK Entry		
	2021	2022	Change (%)	2021 %	2022 %	Change (pp)
NI	32,111	32,506	1.2	3.9	3.8	-0.1
England	752,554	776,625	3.2	91.2	91.5	0.3
Wales	35,867	35,499	-1.0	4.3	4.2	-0.1
UK	824,718	848,910	2.9	100	100	0

### 5.1.2 A Level Overall Entries by Gender

The female-to-male ratio widened slightly in 2022. This is in contrast to the UK as a whole, where the female-to-male ratio was already lower than in NI and slightly decreased. This means that NI continues to have the largest difference in gender balance at A Level in comparison with Wales and England.

Table 42: A Level entries for NI by gender and as percentage of total entry in Summer series 2021 and 2022 (based on number of grades awarded)

ENTRIES FOR NI BY GENDER				
	Numbers		Percentage	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
Female	19,025	19,356	59.2%	59.5%
Male	13,086	13,150	40.8%	40.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	32,111	32,506	100%	100%

Table 43: A Level entry numbers by gender and as percentage of total entry per region for Summer series 2021 and 2022 (based on number of grades awarded)

ENTRIES BY REGION AND GENDER												
	Numbers						Percentage					
	England		Wales		UK		England		Wales		UK	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Female	413,079	423,354	20,504	20,195	454,731	465,017	54.9	54.5	57.2	56.9	55.1	54.8
Male	339,475	353,271	15,363	15,304	369,987	383,893	45.1	45.5	42.8	43.1	44.9	45.2
Total	752,554	776,625	35,867	35,499	824,718	848,910	-	-	-	-	-	-

### 5.1.3 A Level Overall Outcomes: NI and UK

The data in this section of the report should be read against the context set out in Section 2, where it outlines the different procedures in place across the UK in 2022 and how these in turn were different from those in place in 2021. It should also be considered in the context of agreed policy approaches to awarding in 2022, which aimed for results that would be higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021. Tables 44 and 45 show the cumulative percentages for all grades awarded in 2022 and 2021 across the UK. As anticipated, due to the revised awarding arrangements in place for 2022, the percentage of cumulative grade outcomes in NI decreased across all grades. At A\*, the decrease was only 1.3 percentage points, but there was a greater decrease in the cumulative percentages at the A (6.8), B (7.3) and C (5.1) grades. The percentage achieving A\*–E in 2022 decreased slightly to 99.1%, although this was slightly higher than the UK as a whole (98.4%).

There was a greater decrease in outcomes across the grades in the UK as a whole. As a result, the percentage of candidates achieving an A\* at A Level in NI was very similar to the UK average in 2022 (14.5% compared with 14.6%), but outcomes for the other grades remained higher. For example, outcomes in NI were 7.6 percentage points higher than the UK at A and above (44.0% compared with 36.4%), while grades at C and above remained ahead of the rest of the UK by 6.9 percentage points.

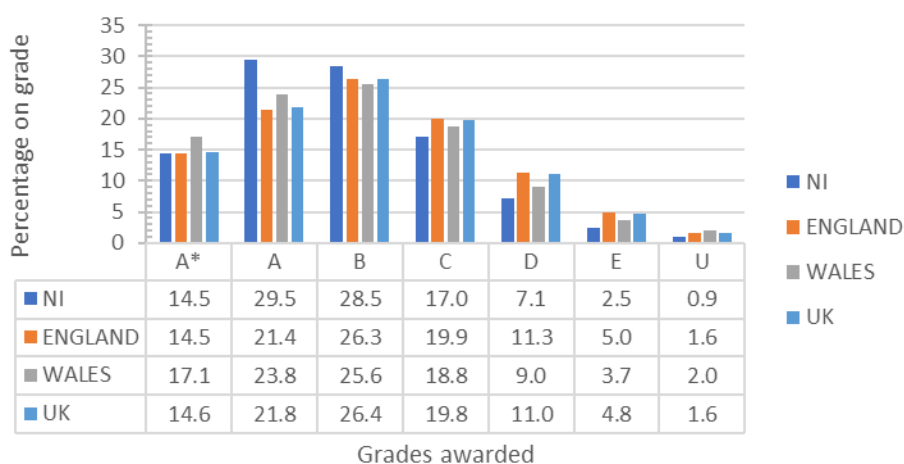


Figure 20: A Level grades (non-cumulative) awarded across all subjects, 2022

Table 44: Cumulative A Level grade outcomes for NI, England, Wales and UK in Summer series 2022

Region	Number Sat	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
NI	32,506	14.5	44.0	72.5	89.5	96.6	99.1	100
ENGLAND	776,625	14.5	35.9	62.2	82.1	93.4	98.4	100
WALES	35,499	17.1	40.9	66.5	85.3	94.3	98.0	100
UK	848,910	14.6	36.4	62.8	82.6	93.6	98.4	100

Table 45: Cumulative A Level grade outcomes for NI, England, Wales and UK in Summer series 2021

Region	Number Sat	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
NORTHERN IRELAND	32,111	15.8	50.8	79.8	94.6	98.1	99.4	100
ENGLAND	752,554	19.1	44.3	69.8	88.2	96.2	99.5	100
WALES	35,867	21.3	48.3	73.0	89.2	95.9	99.1	100
UK	8,824,718	19.1	44.8	70.3	88.5	96.3	99.5	100

### 5.1.4 A Level Overall Grade Outcomes by Gender

In 2022, a similar percentage of males (14.2%) and females (14.7%) achieved an A\* at A Level in NI. The gap was wider at A\*–A grades, with 45.1% of females achieving the top grades in comparison with 42.4% of males. The gap widened to 4.6 percentage points at A\*–B, before narrowing again at the lower grades. (This means that more females than males achieved grades A\*, A and B, while more males than females achieved grades C to U.) There was a similar pattern in the UK as a whole in 2022.

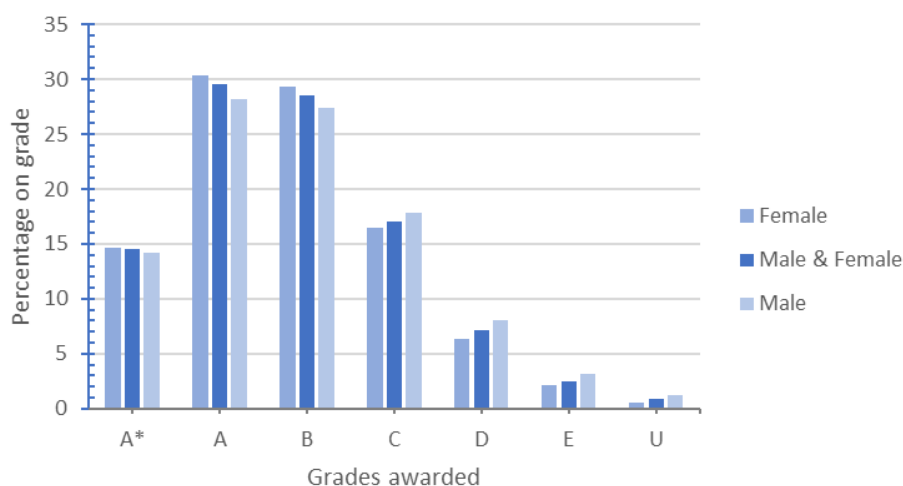


Figure 21: A Level outcomes by grade and by gender for NI, Summer 2022

As can be seen in Table 46 below, in NI the gender gap at A\* decreased slightly from 2021 (where it was 1.3 percentage points in favour of females), and also at A and above (4.2 percentage points) and A\*–B (5.3 percentage points), while increasing slightly at the lower grades. This means that outcomes for females dropped more than for males at the higher grades (A\*–B).

However, Tables 47 and 48 demonstrate that these changes were less notable than for the UK as a whole, where the gender gap decreased in all grades (except A\*–D where it remained the same) and where outcomes for females dropped more than for males across grades A\* to C. Despite this, the gender gap in the UK remained larger than in NI at grades B to D.

Table 46: A Level cumulative grade outcomes by grade and by gender for NI (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

NI	2021		Gender gap (pp)	2022		Gender gap (pp)
	Female	Male		Female	Male	
A*	16.4	15.1	1.3	14.7	14.2	0.5
A	52.5	48.3	4.2	45.1	42.4	2.7
B	82.0	76.7	5.3	74.4	69.8	4.6
C	95.6	93.1	2.5	90.9	87.6	3.3
D	98.6	97.4	1.2	97.3	95.6	1.7
E	99.6	99.2	0.4	99.4	98.8	0.6

Table 47: A Level cumulative grade outcomes by gender for UK (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

UK	2021		% Diff. (F–M)	2022		% Diff. (F–M)
	Female	Male		Female	Male	
A*	19.7	18.4	1.3	14.8	14.4	0.4
A	46.9	42.1	4.8	37.4	35.2	2.2
B	73.4	66.5	6.9	64.9	60.2	4.7
C	90.7	85.9	4.8	84.3	80.4	3.9
D	97.2	95.2	2.0	94.5	92.5	2.0
E	99.6	99.3	0.3	98.7	98.1	0.6

Table 48: NI and UK: percentage-point change in grade outcomes from 2021 to 2022 by gender

	A*	A	B	C	D	E
NI Female	-1.7	-7.4	-7.6	-4.7	-1.3	-0.2
NI Male	-0.9	-5.9	-6.9	-5.5	-1.8	-0.4
UK Female	-4.9	-9.5	-8.5	-6.4	-2.7	-0.9
UK Male	-4.0	-6.9	-6.3	-5.5	-2.7	-1.2

## 5.2 A Level Entries and Grade Outcomes by Subject, Subject Category and Gender

### 5.2.1 A Level Entries by Subject and Subject Category

Previous editions of the Insights report have presented the top five ‘most popular’ A Level subjects taken in NI. This report considers the entries for all A Level subjects, including the gender balance within each subject entry.

Figure 22 below shows that in 2022 the A Level subjects with most entries in NI were Mathematics (3,124 entries or 9.6% of total A Levels sat), followed by Biology (2,976 or 9.2%), Single Award Health and Social Care (2,586 or 8.0%), Business Studies (2,087 or 6.4%) and History (1,991 or 6.1%).

The main change from GCSE top ten rankings is Health and Social Care, which had only 1.1% of the total entries for GCSE in NI in 2022 with 1,745 candidates, but is ranked third overall for A Level entries and first for females.

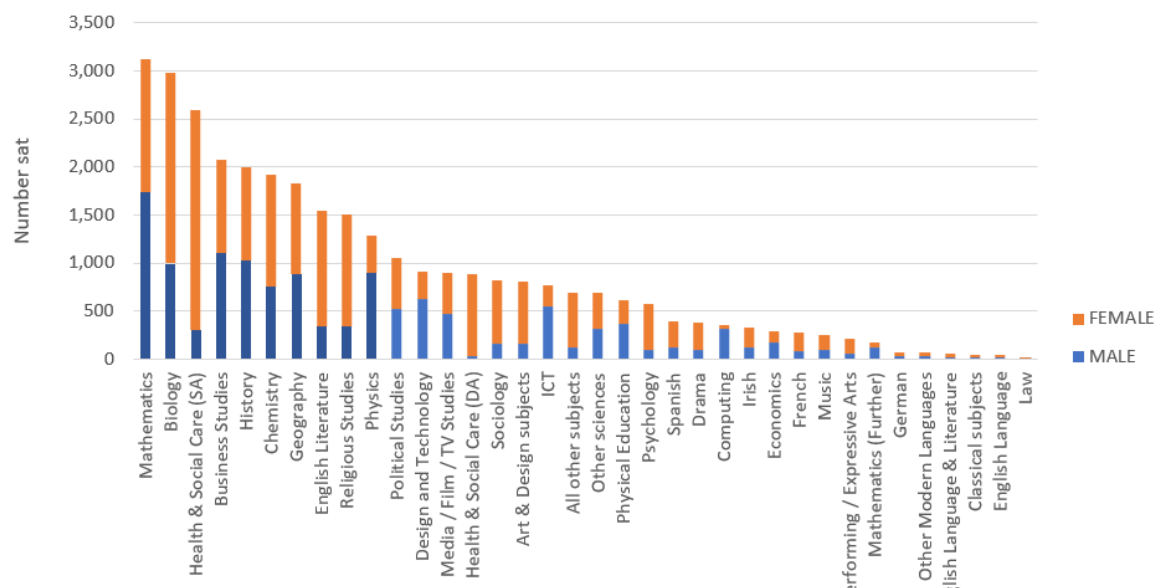
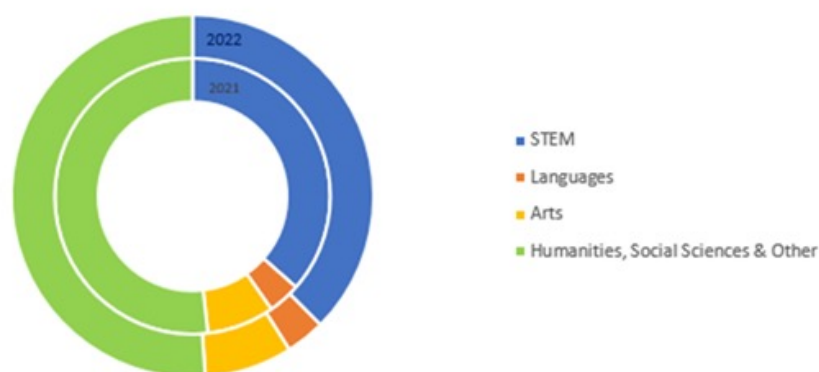


Figure 22: A Level subjects ranked by entry size, all candidates (male/female split): NI, 2022 (Summer series)

Figure 23 illustrates the relative popularity of subject categories at A Level. As at AS Level, subject category choices have been broadly stable in the past two years, with STEM, Languages and Arts subjects accounting for almost half of GCE A Level entries in NI.

STEM subjects increased their proportion of total A Level entries in NI from 36.5% of the cohort in 2021 to 37.5% in 2022. There were slight declines across the other categories; Languages decreased from 3.8% to 3.5%, Arts were down marginally from 7.9% to 7.8% of total entries, and Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subjects also declined by 0.7 percentage points (from 51.8% to 51.1%) while still constituting over half of total entries.



**Figure 23: NI A Level subject choices: proportion of total entry by subject category, 2021 and 2022**

There was a 4.2% rise in entries for STEM subjects (in the context of an overall rise of 1.2% for A Level entries overall), with the greatest rise seen in Design and Technology (13.6%). While its percentage rise was lower than for Design and Technology, Biology increased its share of total entries by 0.5 percentage points. The only STEM subjects to see a slight decrease in entries were Mathematics and Further Mathematics.

In comparison, all Languages saw a decrease in entries in 2022 (with the exception of the collective 'Other Modern Languages'), with the smallest decrease in Irish (0.6%) and the largest in German (20%). Languages entries overall decreased by 7.8% (10.4% if 'Other Modern Languages' are excluded).

Entries for the Arts remained steady; Music saw gains of 11.3% in entries while the fall of 5.4% in Performing/Expressive Arts was balanced by a rise of 5.5% in Drama.

In Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subjects, there were substantial gains from 2021 in Physical Education (up 23.4%) and Psychology (14.0%), whereas Religious Studies saw a fall of 10.8% in entries. Subjects that increased their share of overall A Level entries included Business Studies and Physical Education, while Religious Studies, History and Health and Social Care (Single Award) were the subjects with the largest decrease in their share of total entries, although the drop of 96 candidates for Health and Social Care (SA) was somewhat balanced by the rise of 62 for Double Award.

Table 49 below provides further information on subject entries in 2021 and 2022 and their share of total A Level entries, including changes between the two years.



Table 49: A Level entries (NI) by subject, subject category and overall (including % change from 2021 and proportion of total entries)

Subject	2021 Number sat	2022 Number sat	% diff in entries (2021 to 2022)	2021 % diff in entries (2021 to 2022)	2022 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	Change in proportion of total entries (2021 to 2022)
<b>STEM</b>						
Biology	2,786	2,976	6.8	8.7	9.2	0.5
Chemistry	1,860	1,924	3.4	5.8	5.9	0.1
Computing	338	357	5.6	1.1	1.1	0.0
Design and Technology	799	908	13.6	2.5	2.8	0.3
ICT	750	766	2.1	2.3	2.4	0.0
Mathematics	3,134	3,124	-0.3	9.8	9.6	-0.1
Mathematics (Further)	178	174	-2.2	0.6	0.5	0.0
Physics	1,252	1,284	2.6	3.9	4.0	0.1
Other sciences	611	688	12.6	1.9	2.1	0.2
<b>TOTAL STEM</b>	11,708	12,201	4.2	36.5	37.5	1.1
<b>All Subjects</b>	32,111	32,506	1.2	100	100	0.0

Subject	2021 Number sat	2022 Number sat	% diff in entries (2021 to 2022)	2021 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	2022 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	Change in proportion of total entries (2021 to 2022)
<b>Languages</b>						
French	322	282	-12.4	1.0	0.9	-0.1
German	90	72	-20.0	0.3	0.2	-0.1
Irish	325	323	-0.6	1.0	1.0	0.0
Spanish	451	388	-14.0	1.4	1.2	-0.2
Other Modern Languages	44	71	61.4	0.1	0.2	0.1
<b>TOTAL Languages</b>	1,232	1,136	-7.8	3.8	3.5	-0.3
<b>All Subjects</b>	32,111	32,506	1.2	100	100	0.0

Subject	2021 Number sat	2022 Number sat	% diff in entries (2021 to 2022)	2021 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	2022 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	Change in proportion of total entries (2021 to 2022)
<b>Arts</b>						
Art & Design subjects	796	803	0.9	2.5	2.5	0.0
Drama	361	381	5.5	1.1	1.2	0.0
Media / Film / TV Studies	934	899	-3.7	2.9	2.8	-0.1
Music	231	257	11.3	0.7	0.8	0.1
Performing / Expressive Arts	221	209	-5.4	0.7	0.6	0.0
<b>TOTAL Arts</b>	2,543	2,549	0.2	7.9	7.8	-0.1
<b>All Subjects</b>	32,111	32,506	1.2	100	100	0.0

Subject	2021 Number sat	2022 Number sat	% diff in entries (2021 to 2022)	2021 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	2022 Subject as % of Total No. Sat	Change in proportion of total entries (2021 to 2022)
<b>Humanities, Social Sciences and Other</b>						
Classical subjects	49	50	2.0	0.2	0.2	0.0
Business Studies	1,899	2,078	9.4	5.9	6.4	0.5
Economics	275	286	4.0	0.9	0.9	0.0
English Language	46	42	-8.7	0.1	0.1	0.0
English Literature	1,497	1,539	2.8	4.7	4.7	0.1
English Language & Literature	35	55	57.1	0.1	0.2	0.1

Geography	1,872	1,834	-2.0	5.8	5.6	-0.2
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	2,682	2,586	-3.6	8.4	8.0	-0.4
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	824	886	7.5	2.6	2.7	0.2
History	2,097	1,991	-5.1	6.5	6.1	-0.4
Law	7	8	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Physical Education	495	611	23.4	1.5	1.9	0.3
Political Studies	1,014	1,056	4.1	3.2	3.2	0.1
Psychology	507	578	14.0	1.6	1.8	0.2
Religious Studies	1,689	1,507	-10.8	5.3	4.6	-0.6
Sociology	882	820	-7.0	2.7	2.5	-0.2
All other subjects	758	693	-8.6	2.4	2.1	-0.2
<b>TOTAL Humanities, Social Sciences and Other</b>	<b>16,628</b>	<b>16,620</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>51.8</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>-0.7</b>
<b>All Subjects</b>	<b>32,111</b>	<b>32,506</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0.0</b>

### 5.2.2 A Level Entries by Subject and Gender

There were significant differences in the subjects taken by males and females.

For females, the most popular subjects were Health and Social Care (Single Award) (2,277 entries or 11.8% of total female entries), followed by Biology (1,981 or 10.2%), Mathematics (1,387 or 7.2%), English Literature (1,201 or 6.2%) and Chemistry 1,174 or 6.1%).

While Health and Social Care (SA) was first for females, it only ranked 17th for male subject choices. Similarly, English Literature was the fourth most popular choice for females but only 14th for males.

In contrast, the most popular subjects for males were Mathematics (1,737 or 13.2% of total male entries), followed by Business Studies (1,111 or 8.4%), History (1,021 or 7.8%), Biology (995 or 7.6%) and Physics (904 or 6.9%). Subjects which showed variations in popularity between males and females were Physics (5th for males, 17th for females), ICT (9th versus 23rd), Design and Technology (8th versus 20th) and Computing (16th versus 31st), thus demonstrating a continuing gender imbalance in technology-focused subjects.

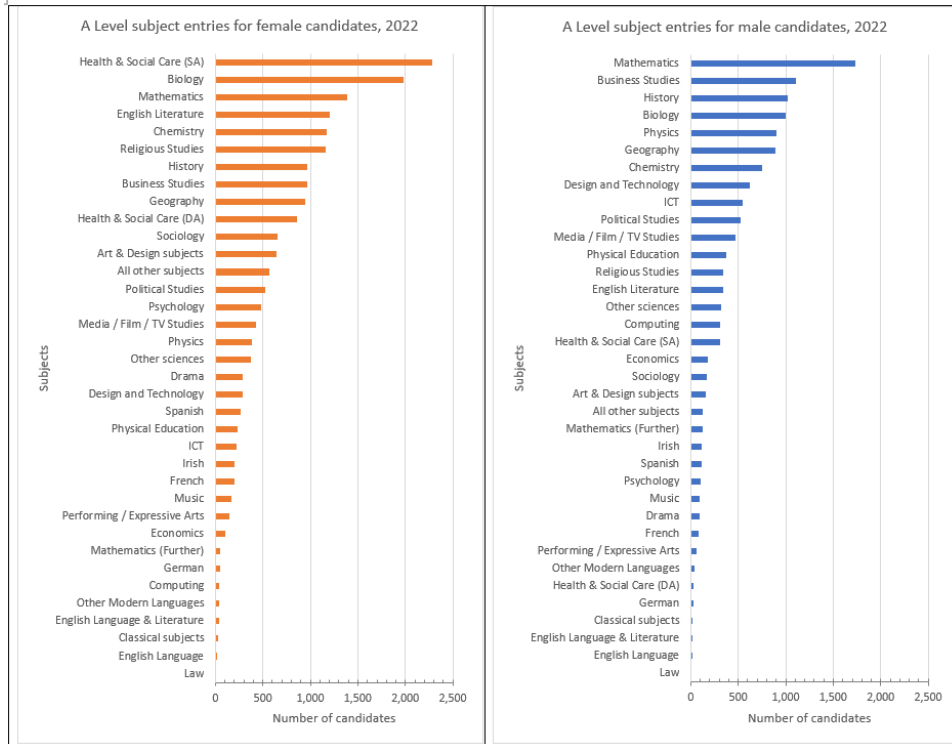


Figure 24: A Level subjects ranked by entry size, female candidates: NI, 2022 (Summer series)

Figure 25: A Level subjects ranked by entry size, male candidates: NI, 2022 (Summer series)

While Mathematics and Biology appeared in the top five subjects for both males and females, Biology was favoured by females (66.6% of entries for that subject, in contrast with a female balance of 59.6% overall) whereas Mathematics was favoured by males (55.6% of entries for that subject, in contrast with a male balance overall of 40.5%).

Health and Social Care showed the biggest imbalance between the genders, where entries were 96.4% female for Double Award and 88.1% female for Single Award. Other subjects with a predominantly female uptake included Psychology (82.7% female), Art and Design (80.1%) and Sociology (79.8%).

Subjects with a predominantly male uptake included Computing (87.7% male), ICT (70.9%), Physics (70.4%), Further Mathematics (69.5%) and Design and Technology (68.5%).

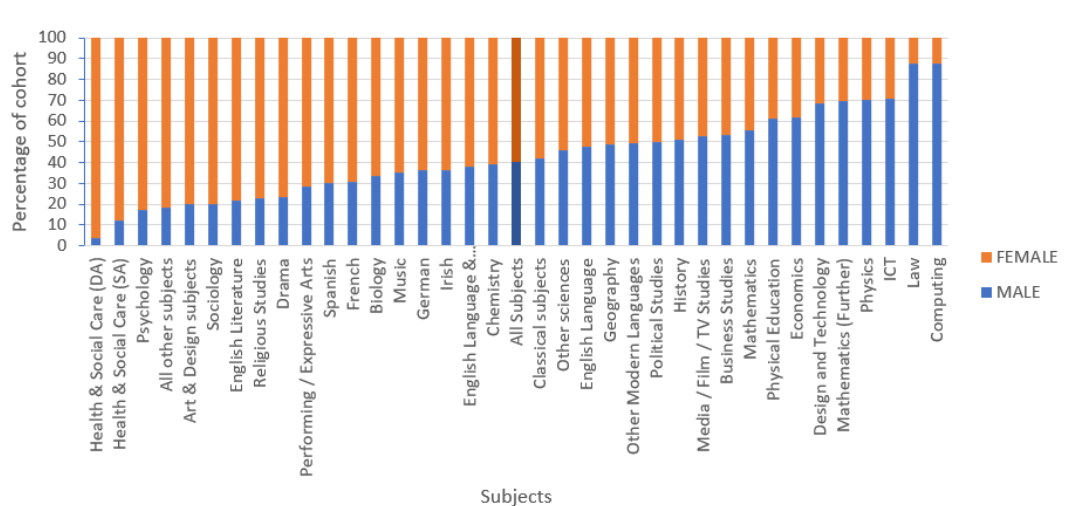


Figure 26: Balance of female and male subject entries: NI, Summer 2022

Table 50: Differences between female and male subject entries: NI, Summer 2022

Subject	Female Nos.	Male Nos.	Female %	Male %
Art & Design subjects	643	160	80.1	19.9
Biology	1,981	995	66.6	33.4
Business Studies	967	1,111	46.5	53.5
Chemistry	1,174	750	61	39
Classical subjects	29	21	58	42
Computing	44	313	12.3	87.7
Design and Technology	286	622	31.5	68.5
Drama	291	90	76.4	23.6
Economics	109	177	38.1	61.9
English Language	22	20	52.4	47.6
English Literature	1,201	338	78	22
English Language & Literature	34	21	61.8	38.2
French	196	86	69.5	30.5
Geography	943	891	51.4	48.6
German	46	26	63.9	36.1
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	2,277	309	88.1	11.9
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	854	32	96.4	3.6
History	970	1,021	48.7	51.3
ICT	223	543	29.1	70.9
Irish	205	118	63.5	36.5
Law	1	7	12.5	87.5
Mathematics	1,387	1,737	44.4	55.6
Mathematics (Further)	53	121	30.5	69.5
Media / Film / TV Studies	426	473	47.4	52.6
Music	166	91	64.6	35.4

Performing / Expressive Arts	149	60	71.3	28.7
Physical Education	238	373	39	61
Physics	380	904	29.6	70.4
Political Studies	527	529	49.9	50.1
Psychology	478	100	82.7	17.3
Religious Studies	1,161	346	77	23
Sociology	654	166	79.8	20.2
Spanish	270	118	69.6	30.4
Other Modern Languages	36	35	50.7	49.3
Other sciences	370	318	53.8	46.2
All other subjects	565	128	81.5	18.5
<b>All Subjects</b>	<b>19,356</b>	<b>13,150</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>

### 5.2.3 A Level Grade Outcomes by Subject

[Note: the discussion below excludes subjects with low candidatures. These include Law, Classical Subjects, English Language, English Language and Literature and Other Modern Languages.]

There was a wide variation in outcomes across subjects in 2022.

The subject with the highest percentage of top grades was Further Mathematics, with 65.5% of candidates achieving A\* and 90.2% achieving A and above. 64.9% also achieved an A or above in Mathematics. Languages also achieved high results, with 55% or over achieving grades A\* and A in Irish (68.4%), German (65.3%), French (65.2%) and Spanish (55.7%).

Further Mathematics and Languages also saw high outcomes at A\*–C, with all these subjects having 95% or higher at C grade and above. Other subjects with high outcomes at A\*–C included Art and Design (95.8%) and Physical Education (95.4%).

In contrast, Health and Social Care had 0.2% at A\* and 14.7% at A\*–A in the Double Award qualification, and 2.5% at A\* and 30.0% at A\*–A in the Single Award. Similarly, Media/Film/TV Studies had 27.3% at A and above, of which only 4.8% were A\*. However, these subjects had stronger outcomes at A\*–C, where the subjects with the lowest outcomes also experienced the largest decreases from 2021; these were Psychology (73.7%, down 15.1 percentage points) and ICT (79.5%, down 15.2 percentage points).

Subjects which saw an increase in A\*–A grades from 2021 included Further Mathematics (2.6 pp), German (0.9 pp) and French (0.3 pp). Excluding subjects with very small candidatures, the biggest decreases at the A\*–A were for ICT (20.8 percentage points), Music (14.7) and Psychology (13.7). The only subject to experience a modest rise at A\*–C was Further Mathematics (0.6 percentage points).

In terms of A\*–E, all subjects had high outcomes. Subjects with 100% pass rates included German, Irish, Spanish and Music, and all subjects had pass rates over 96%. There were only minor changes from 2021. Irish was the only subject that increased by more than one

percentage point (1.2) while the only subjects that saw decreases of over one percentage point were Other Sciences (1.3), Other Modern Languages (1.4), ICT (2.5) and Psychology (3.0).

Figure 27 below shows the cumulative grade distribution for all subjects and all grades for A Level in NI in the Summer series 2022, ranked by the A grade from lowest to highest. Table 51 further illustrates the percentage change at the A\*–A and A\*–C grades for each subject.

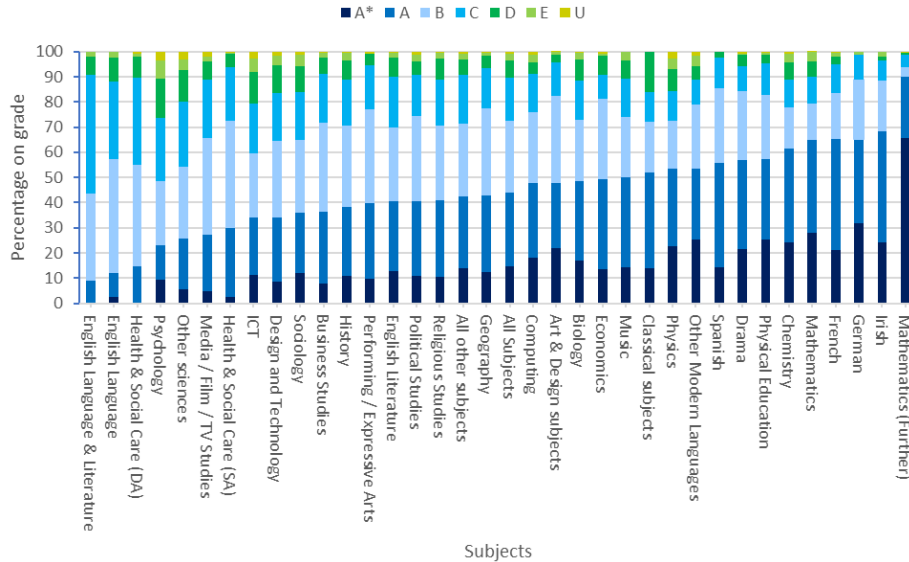


Figure 27: A Level cumulative grade distribution for all subjects and all grades in NI, Summer 2022 (ranked by A grade)

Table 51: A Level grades A\*–A and A\*–C in 2021 and 2022 (and percentage-point difference), by subject

Subject	A*–A 2021	A*–A 2022	Diff. A*–A	A*–C 2021	A*–C 2022	Diff. A*–C
Art & Design subjects	55.9	47.7	-8.2	96.9	95.8	-1.1
Biology	55.7	48.6	-7.1	94.9	88.7	-6.2
Business Studies	44.3	36.4	-7.9	94.1	91.2	-2.9
Chemistry	62.2	61.3	-0.9	94.5	88.9	-5.6
Classical subjects	46.9	52.0	5.1	93.9	84.0	-9.9
Computing	58.9	47.6	-11.3	95.0	91.3	-3.7
Design and Technology	44.7	34.0	-10.7	92.7	83.7	-9.0
Drama	61.5	57.0	-4.5	99.7	94.2	-5.5
Economics	57.1	49.3	-7.8	96.0	90.9	-5.1
English Language	37.0	11.9	-25.1	93.5	88.1	-5.4
English Language & Literature	37.1	9.1	-28.0	80.0	90.9	10.9
English Literature	46.4	40.4	-6.0	94.1	89.9	-4.2
French	64.9	65.2	0.3	97.2	95.0	-2.2
Geography	49.5	42.9	-6.6	95.1	93.3	-1.8
German	64.4	65.3	0.9	98.9	98.6	-0.3

Health & Social Care (Double Award)	21.1	14.7	-6.4	93.9	89.8	-4.1
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	36.3	30.0	-6.3	95.6	93.9	-1.7
History	47.4	38.4	-9.0	94.9	89.0	-5.9
ICT	54.7	33.9	-20.8	94.7	79.5	-15.2
Irish	69.5	68.4	-1.1	98.2	96.6	-1.6
Mathematics	65.7	64.9	-0.8	93.9	89.9	-4.1
Mathematics (Further)	87.6	90.2	2.6	98.3	98.9	0.6
Media / Film / TV Studies	38.4	27.3	-11.1	93.3	88.8	-4.5
Music	64.9	50.2	-14.7	99.1	89.1	-10.0
Other Modern Languages	84.1	53.5	-30.6	100.0	88.7	-11.3
Other sciences	38.5	25.7	-12.8	89.2	80.2	-9.0
Performing / Expressive Arts	45.7	39.7	-6.0	96.4	94.7	-1.7
Physical Education	65.5	57.3	-8.2	97.2	95.4	-1.8
Physics	54.0	53.4	-0.6	92.5	84.3	-8.2
Political Studies	47.2	40.4	-6.8	93.9	90.6	-3.3
Psychology	36.9	23.2	-13.7	88.8	73.7	-15.1
Religious Studies	50.4	40.9	-9.4	96.0	88.7	-7.3
Sociology	42.0	35.9	-6.1	91.4	83.9	-7.5
Spanish	62.7	55.7	-7.0	98.0	97.7	-0.3
All Other subjects	52.5	42.6	-9.9	95.5	90.9	-4.6
<b>All Subjects</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>-6.8</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>-5.1</b>

#### 5.2.4 A Level Grade Outcomes by Subject and Gender

In 2022, there were variations in outcomes for the genders across subjects. The top five subjects for males in terms of A\*–A grades were Further Mathematics (90.1%), Irish (65.3%), Mathematics (62.5%), Chemistry (57.9%) and French (57.0%).

Females also achieved high outcomes at A\*–A in Further Mathematics (90.6%) and Languages (German, 71.7%, Irish 70.2% and French 68.9%) as well as Physical Education (74.8%). However, males achieved more A\* grades than females in Further Mathematics (by 4.6 percentage points), Music (1.5), Spanish (1.2), Biology (0.6) and Classical subjects (0.5).

Overall, females had higher outcomes than males by 2.7 percentage points at A\*–A, but there were large variations across subjects. The gap was widest for Physical Education (28.7 percentage points), Health and Social Care (Single Award) (23.1), Geography (18.0), German (17.9) and Performing and Expressive Arts (16.0), while males were higher than females in only one subject – Physics – by 3.3 percentage points.

At A\*–C, females had higher outcomes than males by 3.3 percentage points overall, with notable gender gaps in Sociology (13.8 percentage points), Classical subjects (13.5) and Other Sciences (10.6). In contrast, males were higher in Economics (4.6 percentage points), Irish (2.7) and Physics (2.4), as well as Business Studies, Performing and Expressive Arts and Biology.



Table 52: A Level subject outcomes at A\*–A and A\*–C by gender, with percentage-point difference, Summer 2022

Subject title	Female A*–A	Male A*–A	Gender gap (pp) A*–A	Female A*–C	Male A*–C	Gender gap (pp) A*–C
Art & Design subjects	49.8	39.4	10.4	96.4	93.1	3.3
Biology	48.8	48.2	0.6	88.6	88.8	-0.2
Business Studies	38.5	34.6	3.9	90.5	91.9	-1.4
Chemistry	63.5	57.9	5.6	90.2	86.9	3.3
Classical subjects	58.6	42.9	15.7	89.7	76.2	13.5
Computing	59.1	46.0	13.1	95.5	90.7	4.8
Design and Technology	39.5	31.5	8.0	87.4	82.0	5.4
Drama	59.5	48.9	10.6	94.8	92.2	2.6
Economics	50.5	48.6	1.9	88.1	92.7	-4.6
English Language	18.2	5.0	13.2	95.5	80.0	15.5
English Language & Literature	8.8	9.5	-0.7	94.1	85.7	8.4
English Literature	42.0	34.6	7.4	90.3	88.5	1.8
French	68.9	57.0	11.9	96.4	91.9	4.5
Geography	51.6	33.6	18.0	95.2	91.2	4.0
German	71.7	53.8	17.9	100	96.2	3.8
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	15.0	6.3	8.7	90.2	81.3	8.9
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	32.8	9.7	23.1	94.6	88.3	6.3
History	42.1	35.0	7.1	89.9	88.1	1.8
ICT	41.3	30.9	10.4	85.7	77.0	8.7
Irish	70.2	65.3	4.9	95.6	98.3	-2.7
Mathematics	67.9	62.5	5.4	91.6	88.5	3.1
Mathematics (Further)	90.6	90.1	0.5	100	98.3	1.7
Media / Film / TV Studies	30.0	24.7	5.3	92.3	85.6	6.7
Music	50.6	49.5	1.1	89.8	87.9	1.9
Other Modern Languages	61.1	45.7	15.4	88.9	88.6	0.3
Other sciences	28.1	23.0	5.1	85.1	74.5	10.6
Performing / Expressive Arts	44.3	28.3	16.0	94.6	95.0	-0.4
Physical Education	74.8	46.1	28.7	97.5	94.1	3.4

<b>Physics</b>	51.1	54.4	-3.3	82.6	85.0	-2.4
<b>Political Studies</b>	44.6	36.3	8.3	91.1	90.2	0.9
<b>Psychology</b>	25.9	10.0	15.9	73.8	73.0	0.8
<b>Religious Studies</b>	41.5	39.0	2.5	89.4	86.4	3.0
<b>Sociology</b>	37.0	31.3	5.7	86.7	72.9	13.8
<b>Spanish</b>	57.4	51.7	5.7	98.1	96.6	1.5
<b>All Other subjects</b>	45.5	29.7	15.8	94.2	76.6	17.6
<b>All Subjects</b>	45.1	42.4	2.7	90.9	87.6	3.3

## PART 2

### Introduction

Part 1 of this report presented a year-on-year comparison of the entries and outcomes for 2022 with those of the immediately preceding year, 2021.

Part 2 presents a comparison of entry and outcomes data for 2022 with the equivalent data for 2019, the last year in which a full examination series took place. This is a useful comparison to make given that government policy across England, Wales and NI in 2022 was to begin an incremental return to pre-COVID examination standards. Part 2 of the report provides a picture of the first steps in that incremental journey.

As in Part 1, analysis of trends has been kept to minimum because each of the past four examinations series has been unique, so that an analysis based on like-with-like comparisons across or within the four years is not possible and would be inappropriate. Consequently, like Part 1, Part 2 is more descriptive than analytical. As in Part 1, the data for GCSE, AS and A Level are presented separately.

### 2019 GCSE Comparison

The purpose of this section of the report is to allow the 2022 GCSE data for NI to be compared with those of the last year in which a full examination series took place, 2019. Data for all GCSEs combined, and for the four subject categories (STEM; Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Languages; and Other GCSEs), are given for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates.

### GCSE Entries (All Subjects), 2019 and 2022

Table 53: Total GCSE entries for NI for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

	Number		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Male	78,291	79,378	48.5	48.3
Female	83,114	85,035	51.5	51.7
All candidates	161,405	164,413		

Table 53 shows that the GCSE entries for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019. The relative proportions of the total entry made up by male and female candidates have remained stable, with the female entry sitting around 3% higher than the male entry for both years.

## GCSE Entries by Subject Category, 2019 and 2022

### STEM

Table 54: GCSE STEM entries for NI for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

	Number		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Male	36,858	37,116	53.0	53.1
Female	32,682	32,773	47.0	46.9
All candidates	69,540	69,889		

Table 54 above shows that the entry pattern for the STEM subject category replicates the pattern evident for the overall GCSE entry: entries for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019. The relative proportions of the total STEM entry made up by male and female candidates have remained stable, with the male entry sitting at around 6% higher than the female entry in both years.

Figures for individual STEM subjects, and groups of subjects, are shown in Table 55 below. Three clear trends are evident:

1. The entry for the individual sciences was lower in 2022 than in 2019. The entry for Double Award Science was higher in 2022 than in 2019.
2. The entry for ICT was lower in 2022 than it was in 2019. (The entry in 2022 and 2019 is more than 50% lower than it was in 2018, when the entry was 7,454).
3. The entries for Mathematics and Additional Mathematics were higher in 2022 than in 2019.

Table 55: GCSE STEM entries for NI by subject, showing entry number and percentage of the total GCSE (NI) entry, 2019 and 2022

	2019		2022		Diff. in %age of GCSE entry: 2022–2019
	Number	%age of GCSE entry	Number	%age of GCSE entry	
Biology	3,971	2.5	3,817	2.3	-0.2
Chemistry	3,016	1.9	2,910	1.8	-0.1
Physics	2,842	1.8	2,811	1.7	-0.1
Science: DA	15,840	9.8	16,626	10.1	0.3
Science	5,879	3.6	6,104	3.7	0.1
ICT	3,876	2.4	3,168	1.9	-0.5
Computing	458	0.3	525	0.3	0.0
Mathematics	23,034	14.3	23,294	14.2	-0.1
Mathematics (Additional)	3,655	2.3	4,038	2.5	0.2

Statistics	651	0.4	569	0.3	-0.1
Other Sciences	259	0.2	355	0.2	0.0
Construction	799	0.5	1,053	0.6	0.1
Engineering	507	0.3	251	0.2	-0.1
Other Technology	937	0.6	796	0.5	-0.1
Design and Technology	3,816	2.4	3,572	2.2	-0.2

Table 55 shows that the percentage of the total (NI) GCSE entry accounted for by each STEM subject is very similar for 2019 and 2022. The differences between the two years all fall within a 0.5 percentage-point range. The largest difference is seen in ICT for which the entry as a proportion of the overall (NI) GCSE entry was 0.5 pp lower in 2022 than it was in 2019.

## Languages

Table 56: GCSE Language entries for NI for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

	Number		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Male	4,381	4,156	42.5	42.1
Female	5,921	5,705	57.5	57.9
All candidates	10,302	9,861		

Table 56 above shows that for the Languages subject category, entries for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates were lower in 2022 than in 2019. The relative proportions of the total Languages entry made up by male and female candidates have remained stable, however, with the female entry sitting around 15% higher than the male entry for both years.

While the overall entry for GCSE (NI) Languages was lower in 2022 than in 2019, Table 57 below shows that this fall is attributable to lower entry numbers for French and German; entries for Irish and Spanish were marginally higher in 2022 than in 2019. It is the case, however, that while entry numbers have changed somewhat, the proportion of the overall GCSE (NI) entry made up by each language is similar in 2022 and 2019, apart from French for which the entry in 2022 is 0.6 percentage points lower than in 2019.

Table 57: GCSE Language entries for NI by subject, showing entry number and percentage of the total GCSE (NI) entry, 2019 and 2022

	2019		2022		Diff. in %age of GCSE entry: 2022–2019
	Number	%age of GCSE entry	Number	%age of GCSE entry	
French	4,031	2.5	3,193	1.9	-0.6
German	788	0.5	723	0.4	-0.1
Irish	1,841	1.1	1,980	1.2	0.1
Spanish	3,359	2.1	3,598	2.2	0.1

Other Modern Languages	283	0.2	367	0.2	0.0
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### Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

Table 58: GCSE AHSS entries for NI for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

	Number		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Male	29,249	30,453	46.4	46.8
Female	33,845	34,673	53.6	53.2
All Candidate	63,094	65,126		

Table 58 shows that the total entry numbers for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019. The relative proportions of the total AHSS entry made up by male and female candidates have remained fairly stable, with the female entry sitting at around 7 pp higher than the male entry for both years.

As shown in Table 59 below, the stability in the overall pattern disguises variations across individual subjects. Thus, the higher overall AHSS entry for 2022 can be seen to be attributable to two large entry subjects: English and History. Three smaller entry subjects show lower entry figures for 2022 as compared with 2019: Art and Design, Drama, and Media/Film/TV Studies. All other AHSS subjects show a stable entry pattern or have very low entry numbers. When viewed as a proportion of the overall GCSE (NI) entry, the entries for AHSS are very similar for the two years shown, apart from English which, as a proportion of the overall GCSE (NI) entry, was 0.7 percentage points higher in 2022 than in 2019.

Table 59: GCSE AHSS entries for NI by subject, showing entry number and percentage of the total GCSE (NI) entry, 2019 and 2022

	2019		2022		Diff. in %age of GCSE entry: 2022–2019
	Number	%age of GCSE entry	Number	%age of GCSE entry	
Art and Design subjects	3,854	2.4	3,730	2.3	-0.1
Classical subjects	141	0.1	143	0.1	0.0
Drama	1,478	0.9	1,385	0.8	-0.1
Economics	202	0.1	223	0.1	0.0
English	20,894	12.9	22,374	13.6	0.7
English Literature	9,930	6.2	10,033	6.1	-0.1
Geography	5,827	3.6	5,879	3.6	0.0
History	6,893	4.3	7,382	4.5	0.2

Media / Film / TV Studies	1,529	0.9	1,252	0.8	-0.1
Music	1,379	0.9	1,379	0.8	-0.1
Performing and Expressive Arts	9	0.0	11	0.0	0.0
Religious Studies	10,576	6.6	10,818	6.6	0.0
Social Science Subjects	382	0.2	517	0.3	0.1

### Other GCSEs

Table 60: Other GCSEs entries for NI for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

	Number		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Male	7,803	7,653	42.2	39.2
Female	10,666	11,883	57.8	60.8
All candidate	18,469	19,536		

As shown in Table 60 above, the entry for all candidates for the subject category Other GCSEs was higher in 2022 than for 2019. There is a distinct difference in the entry patterns for male and female candidates: the male entry was lower in 2022 than in 2019; the female entry was higher in 2022 than in 2019. In percentage terms, the difference between the female entry and male entry was greater by 6.0 percentage points in 2022 compared with 2019 (15.6 percentage-point difference in 2019; 21.6 percentage-point difference in 2022).

Table 61 below shows that for every 'Other GCSE' subject except Preparation for Life and Work, entry numbers were higher in 2022 than in 2019, and that the proportion of the overall GCSE entry made up by each subject (except, again, Preparation for Life and Work) is broadly similar across the two years. The entry for Preparation for Life and Work is lower in 2022 than in 2019 and, as a proportion of the overall (NI) GCSE entry, it was 0.6 percentage points lower in 2022 than in 2019.

Table 61: Other GCSE entries for NI by subject, showing entry number and percentage of the total GCSE (NI) entry, 2019 and 2022

	2019		2022		Diff. in %age of GCSE entry: 2022–2019
	Number	%age of GCSE entry	Number	%age of GCSE entry	
Business & Comm. Systems	1,685	1.0	1,920	1.2	0.2
Business Studies	3,493	2.2	3,916	2.4	0.2
Citizenship Studies	13	0.0	9	0.0	0.0
Food Preparation & Nutrition	2,448	1.5	2,781	1.7	0.2

Health & Social Care	1,215	0.8	1,745	1.1	0.3
Home Economics	1,964	1.2	2,142	1.3	0.1
Hospitality	359	0.2	404	0.2	0.0
Leisure & Tourism	111	0.1	182	0.1	0.0
Physical Education	2,767	1.7	2,846	1.7	0.0
Prep. For Life and Work	4,301	2.7	3,448	2.1	-0.6
All Other Subjects	113	0.1	143	0.1	0.0

## GCSE: Gender Differences in Entry Patterns, 2019 and 2022

Tables 62 and 63 below show those GCSE subjects where there is a clear gender difference in the entry profile. Table 62 shows those subjects in which the female entry was higher than the male entry and in which the difference between the proportion of female candidates and the proportion of male candidates was at least 25% in 2019 or 2022 or both. Table 63 shows those subjects in which the male entry was higher than the female entry and in which the difference between the proportion of male candidates and the proportion of female candidates was at least 25% in 2019 or 2022 or both.

Table 62: GCSE subjects in which the female entry is higher than the male entry and in which the difference between the proportion of female candidates and the proportion of male candidates was at least 25% in 2019 or 2022 or both.

	2019			2022		
	Male Entry Number	Female Entry Number	%age difference in proportion of entry	Male Entry Number	Female Entry Number	%age difference in proportion of entry
Art and Design subjects	1,177	2,677	38.9	1,122	2,608	39.8
Drama	491	987	33.6	357	1,028	48.4
Food Preparation & Nutrition	576	1,872	52.9	654	2,127	53.0
Health & Social Care	87	1,128	85.7	99	1,646	88.7
Home Economics	19	1,945	98.1	37	2,105	96.5
Leisure & Tourism	40	71	27.9	58	124	36.3
Music	437	942	36.6	506	873	26.6

Table 62 above shows that, for the subjects shown, the gender gap for entries was similar in 2022 and 2019 except for:

- Drama: the female entry in 2022 was higher than in 2019 while the male entry was lower in 2022 than in 2019. Consequently, the difference between the proportions of females and males taking the subject was 14.8 percentage points greater in 2022 than in 2019.



- Leisure and Tourism: entry numbers, while relatively low, were higher for both females and males in 2022 than in 2019. The difference between the proportions of females and males taking the subject was 8.4 percentage points greater in 2022 than in 2019.
- Music: the female entry for 2022 was lower than in 2019 while the entry for males was higher in 2022 than in 2019. Consequently, the difference between the proportions of females and males taking the subject was 10.0 percentage points smaller in 2022 than in 2019.

**Table 63: GCSE subjects in which the male entry is higher than the female entry and in which the difference between the proportion of male candidates and the proportion of female candidates was at least 25% in 2019 or 2022 or both**

	2019			2022		
	Male Entry Number	Female Entry Number	%age difference in proportion of entry	Male Entry Number	Female Entry Number	%age difference in proportion of entry
Computing	407	51	77.7	434	91	65.3
Construction	744	55	86.2	948	105	80.1
Design & Technology	2,662	1,154	39.5	2,483	1,089	39.0
Engineering	467	40	84.2	212	39	68.9
ICT	2,422	1,454	25.0	2,154	1,014	36.0
Physical Education	1,755	1,012	26.9	1,719	1,127	20.8

Table 63 above shows that for the subjects shown, the gender gap for entries was similar in 2022 and 2019 only for Design and Technology. In all the other subjects there is a clear change in the differences between the proportions of males and females entered in 2022 and the differences between those proportions in 2019:

- Computing: while the numbers involved are relatively small, the entry for both males and females was higher in 2022 than in 2019. The difference between the proportions of males and females taking the subject was 12.4 percentage points smaller in 2022 than in 2019.
- Construction: the entry for both males and females was higher in 2022 than in 2019. The difference between the proportions of males and females taking the subject was 6.1 percentage points smaller in 2022 than in 2019.
- Engineering: the numbers involved are relatively small. The entry for males was more than 50% lower in 2022 than in 2019 while the entry for females was almost the same for both years. Consequently, the difference between the proportions of males and females taking the subject was 15.3 percentage points smaller in 2022 than in 2019.
- ICT: entry numbers were lower in 2022 than in 2019 for both male and female candidates. The difference between the proportions of males and females taking the subject was 11.0 percentage points greater in 2022 than in 2019.

- Physical Education: while entry numbers were higher in 2022 than in 2019 for both male and female candidates, the difference between the proportions of males and females taking the subject was 6.1 percentage points smaller in 2022 than in 2019.

## Top 10 GCSE Subjects by Entry

Tables 64 and 65 below show that 10 GCSE subjects with the highest entry, both overall and by gender, are largely the same in 2022 as in 2019. Indeed, were only the top six subjects to be shown, the same six would stand in the same order for both 2019 and 2022, for the candidature overall and for the candidature broken down by gender.

For the entry as a whole (Table 64), it can be seen that Preparation for Life and Work and French, which were ranked 9 and 10 respectively in 2019, were replaced by Mathematics (Additional) and Business Studies in 2022. This means that no GCSE modern language subject was among the top 10 in 2022.

Table 64: Top 10 GCSE subjects by entry, 2019/2022, all candidates

Rank	Subject	
	2019	2022
1	Mathematics	Mathematics
2	English	English
3	Science: Double Award	Science: Double Award
4	Religious Studies	Religious Studies
5	English Literature	English Literature
6	History	History
7	Science	Science
8	Geography	Geography
9	Prep. For Life and Work	Mathematics (Additional)
10	French	Business Studies

From Table 65 below, it can be seen that the top nine subjects for male candidates were the same in 2022 as in 2019. ICT, the tenth ranked subject for male candidates in 2019, was replaced by Business Studies in 2022. For female candidates, the top nine subjects in 2019 were again the top nine subjects in 2022. French, the tenth-ranked subject in 2019, was replaced by Biology in 2022.

Table 65: Top 10 GCSE subjects by entry, 2019/2022, by gender

Rank	Subject			
	2019		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
2	English	English	English	English
3	Science: DA	Science: DA	Science: DA	Science: DA
4	Religious Studies	Religious Studies	Religious Studies	Religious Studies

5	English Literature	English Literature	English Literature	English Literature
6	History	History	History	History
7	Geography	Science	Geography	Science
8	Science	Geography	Science	Geography
9	Design & Technology	Art and Design subjects	Design & Technology	Art and Design subjects
10	ICT	French	Business Studies	Biology

## GCSE Grade Outcomes for NI, 2019 and 2022

In this subsection of the report, cumulative grade outcomes are presented for each of the four subject categories (STEM; Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Languages; and Other GCSEs) for all candidates, male candidates and female candidates. The grades presented are the key grades 4/C and 7/A. At cumulative grade 1/G there was a 95% + achievement rate in virtually every subject in both 2022 and 2019 and so there is little to be said by including this grade in this subsection of the report. (The pairings of lettered and numbered grades are explained in the Introduction of the report.)

As outlined in the Introduction, there were slight policy differences between the nations in their approach to awarding in 2022. England and Wales adopted an awarding approach that aimed for results midway between 2021 outcomes and those of 2019, so that all grades would be higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021.

In comparison, CCEA Awarding Organisation used examiner judgement to make the 2022 awards, with a safety net (in the interests of fairness) to ensure award outcomes did not fall below those of 2019.

## GCSE Overall Outcomes

As can be seen in the tables below, in line with the agreed policy approaches to awarding, outcomes in 2022 across all grades were generally higher than in 2019 for NI.

The difference in gender outcomes at 7/A was slightly smaller in 2022 than in 2019 (in contrast to 2021 when the difference was 13.9 percentage points). The difference in gender performance was smaller at the 4/C and 1/G grades, and smaller in 2022 than in 2019.

Table 66: Overall GCSE Outcomes at Key Grades for NI, 2019 and 2022

Year	7/A	4/C	1/G
2019	30.5	82.2	98.8
2022	37.0	90.0	99.4

Table 67: GCSE Outcomes at Key Grades for Males and Females, NI, 2019 and 2022

	2019 Male	2019 Female	Difference pp	2022 Male	2022 Female	Difference pp
7/A	25.0	35.7	10.7	31.9	41.9	10.0
4/C	78.5	85.6	7.1	88.1	91.8	3.7
1/G	98.6	99.1	0.5	99.3	99.5	0.2

## STEM

### STEM Overall Outcomes

Table 68: cumulative grade outcomes for all NI GCSE STEM candidates, 2019 and 2022

STEM Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome			
	4/C		7/A	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Biology	94.8	98.9	49.1	54.2
Chemistry	95.2	99.0	57.9	62.7
Computing	88.4	93.9	45.0	46.7
Construction	78.2	87.9	25.9	34.8
Design & Technology	79.8	89.2	24.5	33.2
Engineering	63.7	80.1	13.4	20.7
ICT	82.9	94.0	39.1	46.7
Mathematics	71.3	79.8	25.6	29.4
Mathematics (Additional)	94.8	97.8	57.8	67.4
Physics	96.9	99.7	55.9	62.5
Science	70.2	81.7	6.3	10.2
Science: Double Award	88.5	93.2	24.4	31.2
Statistics	83.6	88.6	5.8	19.3
Other Sciences	78.4	88.2	23.6	41.4
Other Technology	57.7	74.5	7.2	11.8

As shown in Table 68 above, for all STEM subjects, cumulative outcomes at grades 4/C and 7/A were higher in 2022 than in 2019, in line with NI government policy.

### STEM Outcomes by Gender

Table 69 below shows that the overall STEM outcomes disguise the fact that, when analysed by gender, three subjects have lower outcomes in 2022 than in 2019, for either males or females at either grade 4/C or 7/A:

- In Computing, cumulative outcomes for females at grade 4/C were lower in 2022 than in 2019.
- In Statistics, cumulative outcomes for males at grade 4/C were lower in 2022 than in 2019.

- In Other Technology, cumulative outcomes for females at grade 4/C were lower in 2022 than in 2019.

It should be noted, however, that the entry numbers for these three subjects are small, which means that minimal significance, statistical or otherwise, can be attributed to the relationship between these 2022 and 2019 outcomes. For all other STEM subjects, cumulative grade outcomes for both male and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019 at both grade 4/C and grade 7/C.

Table 69: GCSE (NI) STEM cumulative grade outcomes for male and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

Cumulative Grade Outcome								
STEM Subject	4/C				7/A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Biology	95.3	99.3	94.4	98.6	46.8	53.5	51.0	54.7
Chemistry	93.4	98.9	96.9	99.1	52.4	59.5	63.4	65.9
Computing	88.7	95.4	86.3	86.8	44.0	48.6	52.9	37.4
Construction	78.0	87.2	81.8	94.3	25.4	32.5	32.7	55.2
Design & Technology	76.8	87.2	86.8	94.0	19.9	27.7	35.2	45.8
Engineering	63.6	78.8	65.0	87.2	13.3	18.9	15.0	30.8
ICT	81.0	92.9	86.1	96.4	35.1	43.5	45.8	53.7
Mathematics	70.3	80.2	72.3	79.2	24.0	29.1	27.1	29.7
Mathematics (Additional)	94.0	97.6	95.6	98.0	53.9	64.1	62.0	70.9
Physics	95.7	99.6	98.7	99.8	52.6	61.0	60.8	64.4
Science	66.9	80.3	73.9	83.2	3.8	7.3	9.1	13.3
Science: Double Award	86.6	92.1	90.1	94.1	20.9	28.5	27.5	33.7
Statistics	83.1	80.5	84.0	97.4	3.4	22.1	8.3	16.2
Other Sciences	78.9	84.4	77.4	96.4	26.9	36.5	16.7	52.3
Other Technology	58.5	74.1	44.2	81.6	6.9	11.6	51.0	15.8

## Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

### AHSS Outcomes: All Candidates

Table 70: cumulative grade outcomes for all NI GCSE AHSS candidates, 2019 and 2022

AHSS Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome			
	4/C		7/A	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Art and Design subjects	82.5	90.1	29.5	35.6
Classical subjects	93.0	84.6	59.7	49.0
Drama	90.4	92.7	34.4	47.4
Economics	94.5	96.4	43.6	52.5
English	80.2	88.7	22.9	28.7
English Literature	92.9	98.5	39.1	46.9
Geography	79.9	91.5	33.8	43.7
History	80.4	90.2	33.3	40.9
Media / Film / TV Studies	73.7	83.1	16.8	27.2
Music	90.3	97.7	44.2	53.3
Performing / Expressive Arts	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Religious Studies	81.3	90.1	38.9	46.1
Social Science subjects	70.2	83.9	11.4	31.5

As shown in Table 70 above, for all AHSS subjects, except Classical Subjects, cumulative outcomes at grades 4/C and 7/A were higher in 2022 than in 2019, in line with NI government policy. In Classical Subjects, at both cumulative grade 4/C and cumulative grade 7/A, outcomes were lower in 2022 than in 2019.

### AHSS Outcomes by Gender

Table 71 below shows that the overall outcomes for Classical Subjects have been shaped by lower outcomes for male candidates in 2022 than in 2019 at both cumulative grade 4/C and at cumulative grade 7/A. It can also be seen that the overall outcomes for Economics disguise the fact that the outcome for females at cumulative grade 4/C was marginally lower in 2022 than in 2019. It has to be noted, however, that the entry numbers for Classical Studies and for Economics are small and that, therefore, minimal significance, statistical or otherwise, can be attributed to the relationship between the 2022 and 2019 outcomes for these subjects. For all other AHSS subjects, cumulative grade outcomes for both male and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019 at both grade 4/C and grade 7/C.

Table 71: GCSE (NI) AHSS cumulative grade outcomes for male and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

AHSS Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	4/C		7/A					
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Art and Design subjects	75.4	84.7	86.2	92.4	18.3	22.5	34.0	41.2
Classical subjects	92.2	81.7	88.3	88.5	50.0	41.5	55.8	59.0
Drama	81.9	88.5	92.0	94.2	20.6	31.9	39.2	52.8
Economics	89.5	93.9	99.2	98.4	47.4	52.5	44.4	52.4
English	74.3	84.8	87.1	92.7	15.4	21.4	30.4	36.2
English Literature	91.0	97.8	96.2	99.1	31.2	36.4	47.3	55.4
Geography	76.6	89.6	86.9	93.7	26.1	37.0	44.2	51.7
History	79.9	88.6	84.8	92.0	29.9	36.8	38.6	45.4
Media / Film / TV Studies	73.9	82.3	82.8	83.9	12.8	22.2	25.4	32.6
Music	89.0	98.2	91.7	97.4	38.4	49.0	48.6	55.8
Performing / Expressive Arts	0.0	0.0	77.8	100.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	100.0
Religious Studies	74.6	85.8	87.6	93.4	29.2	36.5	48.2	53.3
Social Science subjects	69.1	84.3	68.4	83.7	25.5	28.3	18.8	33.5

## Other GCSEs

### Other GCSEs Outcomes: All Candidates

Table 72 below shows that cumulative outcomes at grades 4/C and 7/A were higher in 2022 than in 2019 for all 'Other' GCSE subjects, in line with N.I. government policy.

Table 72: Cumulative grade outcomes for all Other GCSEs candidates, 2019 and 2022

'Other' Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome			
	4/C		7/A	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Business & Comm. Systems	67.5	85.6	15.3	23.6
Business Studies	80.1	89.4	27.4	35.9
Citizenship Studies	92.3	100.0	46.2	55.6
Food Preparation & Nutrition	83.5	93.8	31.6	40.1
Health & Social Care	73.0	90.6	13.5	26.0
Home Economics	74.8	88.2	18.2	30.0
Hospitality	64.9	80.0	6.7	16.1
Leisure & Tourism	57.7	74.7	7.2	19.8
Physical Education	83.4	94.7	31.1	44.8

Prep. For Life and Work	78.3	88.4	20.5	26.1
All Other subjects	73.5	88.8	26.5	50.3

### Other GCSEs Outcomes by Gender

As shown in Table 73 below, overall outcomes disguise the fact that, when analysed by gender, three 'Other' GCSE subjects have lower outcomes in 2022 than in 2019, for either males or females at either grade 4/C or 7/A:

- In Citizenship Studies, cumulative outcomes for females at grade 7/A were lower in 2022 than in 2019.
- In Home Economics, cumulative outcomes for males at grade 4/C were lower in 2022 than in 2019.
- In All Other subjects, cumulative outcomes for males at grade 4/C were lower in 2022 than in 2019.

It has to be noted, however, that the entry numbers involved in all these instances are small and that, therefore, minimal significance, statistical or otherwise, can be attributed to the relationship between the 2022 and 2019 outcomes. (While the overall entry for Home Economics is around 2,000 in both 2019 and 2022, the male entry is less than 50 in both years.) For all other 'Other GCSE' subjects, cumulative grade outcomes for both male and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019 at both grade 4/C and grade 7/C.

Table 73: Other GCSEs cumulative grade outcomes for male and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

'Other' Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	4/C				7/A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Business & Comm. Systems	63.9	84.1	72.8	87.6	13.6	18.2	17.9	31.2
Business Studies	76.8	87.5	84.3	91.7	22.8	31.2	33.3	41.6
Citizenship Studies	85.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	28.6	60.0	66.7	50.0
Food Preparation & Nutrition	70.0	89.3	87.7	95.2	13.4	21.1	37.2	45.9
Health & Social Care	50.6	79.8	74.7	91.3	2.3	10.1	14.4	26.9
Home Economics	63.2	56.8	74.9	88.7	10.5	13.5	18.3	30.3
Hospitality	59.2	71.3	69.1	86.1	4.6	11.4	8.2	19.4
Leisure & Tourism	65.0	72.4	53.5	75.8	12.5	15.5	4.2	21.8
Physical Education	81.1	93.8	87.4	96.1	25.8	38.1	40.4	54.9
Prep. For Life and Work	71.3	84.9	85.4	91.5	14.2	16.8	26.8	34.4
All Other subjects	68.6	66.7	75.6	93.3	14.3	37.5	32.1	52.9



## GCSE Languages

### GCSE Languages Outcomes: All Candidates

Table 74: cumulative grade outcomes for all NI GCSE Language candidates, 2019 and 2022

Languages Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome			
	C		A	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
French	83.6	94.3	35.3	42.7
German	84.0	93.4	37.7	46.9
Irish	94.0	97.7	49.6	54.3
Spanish	91.5	95.5	40.6	44.1
Other Modern Languages	89.4	95.1	70.3	70.3

As shown in Table 74 above, for all GCSE Languages, cumulative outcomes at grades 4/C and 7/A were higher in 2022 than in 2019, in line with NI government policy.

### GCSE Languages Outcomes by Gender

Table 75 below shows that the overall cumulative outcomes for Other Modern Languages disguise the fact that the outcome for females at cumulative grade 4/C was marginally lower in 2022 than in 2019. However, the entry numbers for Other Modern Languages are small and, therefore, minimal significance, statistical or otherwise, can be attributed to the relationship between the 2022 and 2019 outcomes. For all other GCSE Language subjects, cumulative grade outcomes for both male and female candidates were higher in 2022 than in 2019 at both grade 4/C and grade 7/C.

Table 75: Languages GCSEs cumulative grade outcomes for male and female candidates, 2019 and 2022

Languages Subject	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	C				A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
French	78.2	92.7	87.3	95.3	26.2	35.0	41.6	47.9
German	80.0	92.9	88.7	94.0	30.4	41.3	46.2	54.8
Irish	91.8	96.9	95.4	98.2	42.2	49.2	54.4	57.5
Spanish	86.9	93.9	94.9	96.6	31.0	35.9	47.9	49.9
Other Modern Languages	87.1	94.2	91.7	96.0	58.3	71.6	81.9	68.9

## 2019 AS Level Comparison

### AS Level Entries

#### AS Level Total Entries

Since 2019, AS Level entries in NI have declined from 41,803 to 35,328 in 2022, but NI's proportion of total UK entries has grown from 21.1% to 26.1%. The male/female balance has shifted slightly by 1% in this period.

Table 76: Female, male and total AS Level entries for NI, 2019 and 2022 (number and percentage)

ENTRIES FOR NI BY GENDER				
	Numbers		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Female	24,745	21,090	59.2%	59.7%
Male	17,058	14,238	40.8%	40.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41,803</b>	<b>35,328</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### AS Entries by Subject

Subject entries in NI have remained relatively stable since 2019. The 'top ten' subjects are the same but with minor variations within this, the main ones being Religious Studies moving from 7th in 2019 to 10th in 2022, and Geography moving from 9th in 2019 to 7th in 2022.

Subjects where the proportion of total AS Level entries is one percentage point or more higher in 2022 than in 2019 include Health and Social Care (SA), Geography, History and Other sciences, while subjects where the proportion of total AS Level entries is one percentage point or more lower in 2022 than in 2019 include Mathematics, Religious Studies and ICT.

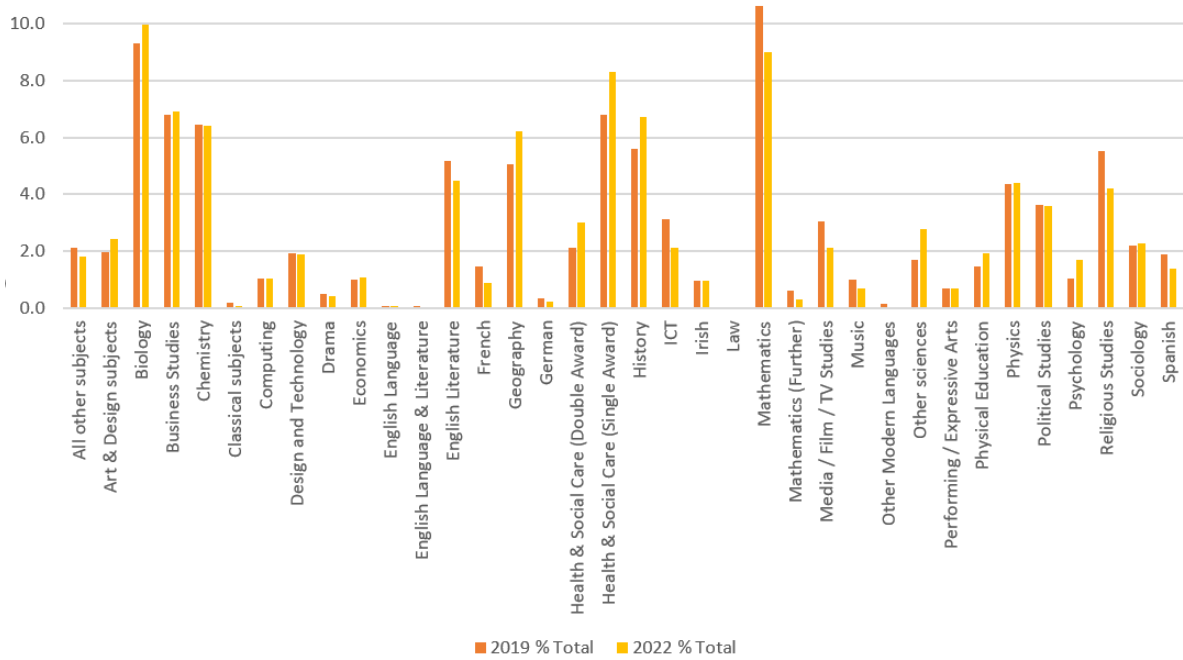


Figure 28: Subject proportion of total AS Level entries, 2019 and 2022

### AS Entries by Subject Category

STEM entries in 2022 were 37.9% of total AS Level entries, which is 1.3 pp lower than in 2019. This was mainly due to the reduction in Mathematics (-1.6 pp) and ICT (-1.0 pp), while 'Other Sciences' were 1.1 pp higher and Biology was 0.7 pp higher.

The Languages proportion of total entries declined from 4.8% in 2019 to 3.4% in 2022. French, German and Spanish all saw decreases in entries during this period, while entries in Irish rose to 505 in 2020 before decreasing again to 386 in 2021 and 337 in 2022. There were no entries at AS Level for Other Modern Languages in 2021 and 2022.

Arts entries as a proportion of total entries were 0.8 pp lower in 2022 than in 2019. During this period, there was a decline in entries for Drama, Music and Media/Film/TV Studies. Entries for Art and Design subjects declined slightly in 2020 (808 entries) and 2021 (782 entries) but rose again in 2022.

Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subjects represent the largest category, and the proportion of total entries rose from 48.9% in 2019 to 52.3% in 2022. Health and Social Care (SA and DA), Geography and History increased their proportion of total entries in this period, while retaining their overall numbers. Religious Studies and English Literature saw a decline both in numbers and in their share of total entries.

Table 77: AS Level subject entries by category, 2019 and 2022 (numbers, percentages and change in proportion of total entries)

Subjects	2019 Entries	% Total Entries	2022 Entries	% Total Entries	Diff % 2022–2019
<b>STEM</b>					
Biology	3,892	9.3	3,522	10.0	0.7
Chemistry	2,690	6.4	2,266	6.4	0.0
Computing	437	1.0	370	1.0	0.0
Design and Technology	810	1.9	663	1.9	-0.1
ICT	1,307	3.1	743	2.1	-1.0
Mathematics	4,436	10.6	3,182	9.0	-1.6
Mathematics (Further)	259	0.6	105	0.3	-0.3
Other sciences	710	1.7	981	2.8	1.1
Physics	1,819	4.4	1,552	4.4	0.0
<b>STEM Total</b>	<b>16,360</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>13,384</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>-1.3</b>
<b>Languages</b>					
French	616	1.5	317	0.9	-0.6
German	146	0.3	75	0.2	-0.1
Irish	397	0.9	337	1.0	0.0
Other Modern Languages	58	0.1	0	0.0	-0.1
Spanish	786	1.9	485	1.4	-0.5
<b>Languages Total</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>-1.4</b>
<b>Arts</b>					
Art & Design subjects	827	2.0	857	2.4	0.4
Drama	208	0.5	152	0.4	-0.1
Media / Film / TV Studies	1,273	3.0	753	2.1	-0.9
Music	413	1.0	239	0.7	-0.3
Performing / Expressive Arts	284	0.7	251	0.7	0.0
<b>Arts Total</b>	<b>3,005</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>2,252</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>-0.8</b>
<b>Humanities, Social Sciences and Other</b>					
Business Studies	2,832	6.8	2,436	6.9	0.1
Classical subjects	73	0.2	32	0.1	-0.1
Economics	417	1.0	376	1.1	0.1
English Language	37	0.1	25	0.1	0.0
English Language & Literature	27	0.1	5	0.0	-0.1
English Literature	2,166	5.2	1,576	4.5	-0.7

Geography	2,113	5.1	2,192	6.2	1.2
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	890	2.1	1,062	3.0	0.9
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	2,844	6.8	2,926	8.3	1.5
History	2,340	5.6	2,371	6.7	1.1
Law	2	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Physical Education	615	1.5	683	1.9	0.5
Political Studies	1,522	3.6	1,263	3.6	-0.1
Psychology	441	1.1	598	1.7	0.6
Religious Studies	2,303	5.5	1,485	4.2	-1.3
Sociology	924	2.2	804	2.3	0.1
All other subjects	889	2.1	644	1.8	-0.3
<b>HSSO Total</b>	<b>20,435</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>18,478</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>All Subjects</b>	<b>41,803</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>35,328</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

### Subject Entries: Gender

The top ten subjects for females remained the same in 2022 as for 2019, although there were some changes in rank order within this. The top ten subjects for males were also broadly similar in 2022 as in 2019, except 'Other Sciences' replaced Media/Film/ICT Studies. There were also strong similarities in the male/female balance in subjects, in that those subjects where female representation was greater than average in 2019 remained so in 2022, as did those where male representation was greater than average. In both years, males favoured mathematical and technological subjects.

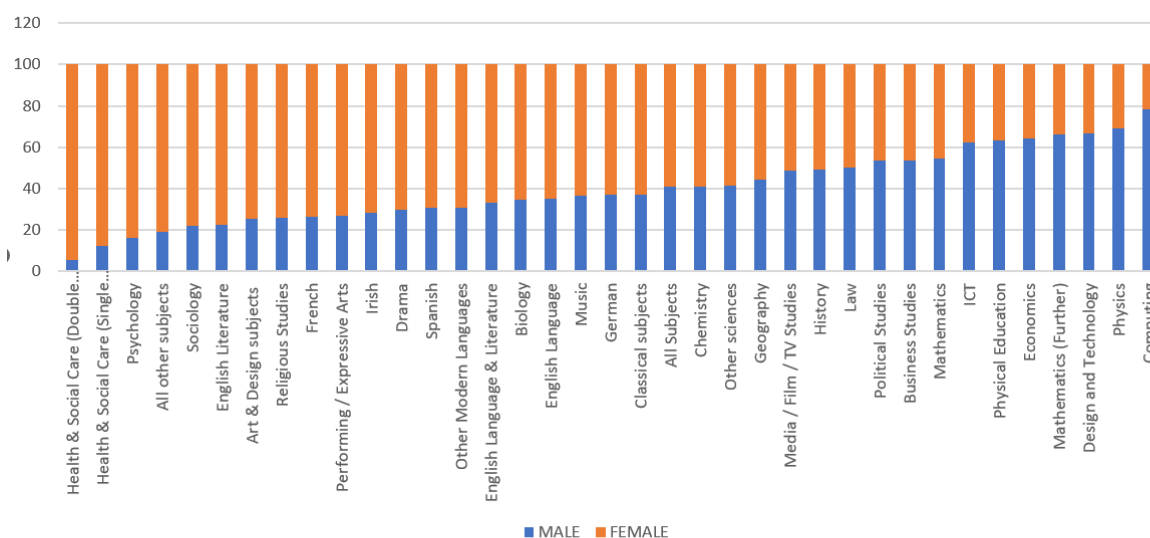


Figure 29: Male/female balance in AS Level subject entries, 2019

## AS Level Outcomes

### Overall AS Level Grade Outcomes

As outlined in the Introduction, the awarding approach in 2022 aimed for results that would be higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021.

As can be seen in the table below, in line with the agreed policy approaches to awarding, outcomes in 2022 across all grades were higher than in 2019 for NI.

Table 78: Cumulative AS Level grade outcomes for NI, 2019 and 2022

Year	Number Sat	A	B	C	D	E	U
2022	35,328	38.8	68.3	86.4	94.9	98.2	100
2019	41,803	26.4	54.3	77.6	90.3	95.7	100

### Cumulative Grade Outcomes 2019 to 2022: By Gender

In comparison with 2019, the gender gap in NI in 2022 was wider at the cumulative A and B grades but narrower at grades C, D and E, as there was a greater increase in overall outcomes at the higher grades and also a greater increase for females than for males.

Table 79: AS Level cumulative grade outcomes by gender for NI (Summer series 2021 and 2022)

NI Grades	2019			2022		
	Female %	Male %	Gender gap (pp)	Female %	Male %	Gender gap (pp)
A	28.9	25.3	3.6	40.5	36.3	4.2
B	56.8	51.6	5.2	70.5	65.1	5.4
C	79.2	74.4	4.8	87.9	84.1	3.8
D	91	88.4	2.6	95.7	93.8	1.9
E	96	94.8	1.2	98.5	97.7	0.8

### AS Grade A by Subject

The following provides a brief snapshot of AS subject outcomes at A grade in 2019 and 2022. Overall, outcomes at A grade were 12.4 pp higher in 2022 than in 2019, but there was a wide variation in A grade awards across the subjects in both years. In 2019, this varied from 7.3% for 'Other Sciences' to 69.1% for Further Mathematics, and in 2022 from 16.4% for Health and Social Care (DA) to 84.8% for Further Mathematics. Health and Social Care (DA) had the smallest difference between percentage A grades awarded in 2019 and 2022 (7.6 pp) while French had the largest (23.5 pp).

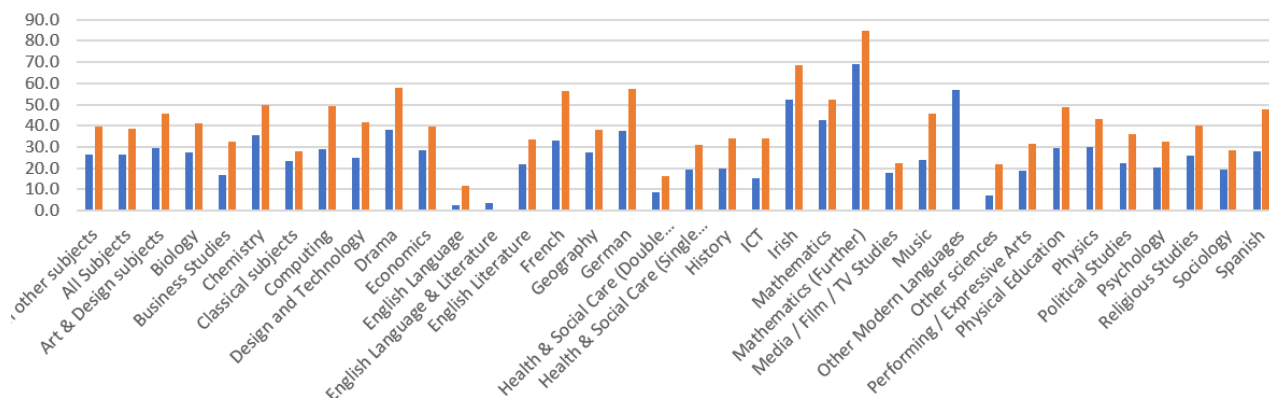


Figure 30: AS Level percentage A grades by subject, 2019 and 2022

## A Level 2019 Comparison

### A Level Entries

#### A Level Total Entries

Since 2019, A Level entries in NI have grown from 31,332 to 32,506, a slight increase of 3.7%. NI's proportion of total UK entries has also grown from 3.5% to 3.8%. The male/female balance has remained stable during the period 2019 to 2022, with an approximate 60:40 balance in favour of females.

Table 80: Female, male and total A Level entries for NI, 2019 and 2022 (number and percentage)

ENTRIES FOR NI BY GENDER				
	Numbers		Percentage	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
Female	18,625	19,356	59.4%	59.5%
Male	12,707	13,150	40.6%	40.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,332</b>	<b>32,506</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Subject entries in NI have also remained fairly stable since 2019. The 'top ten' subjects are the same, except that History, Chemistry and Geography have overtaken English Literature and Religious Studies.

Only one subject – Religious Studies – has changed its share of total A Level entries by more than one percentage point (down 1.3 between 2019 and 2022). Within these relatively minor changes, Health and Social Care (SA), Biology and Chemistry have seen the largest positive difference, while Religious Studies, ICT and English Literature have seen the biggest negative difference.

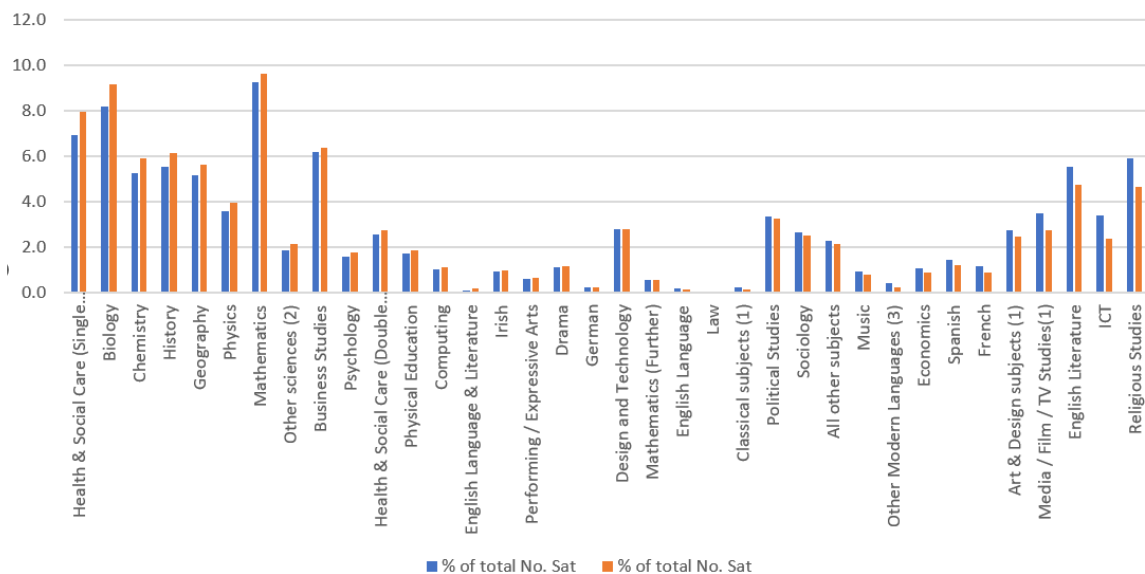


Figure 31: A Level subject entries by % of total entries, 2019 and 2022 (ordered by change in share of total entries)

### A Level Entries by Subject Category: STEM

Since 2019, STEM subjects as a proportion of total entries have grown from 35.9% to 37.5%. Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics have seen the largest increases within this, while ICT has declined by one percentage point.

While males are still in the majority in STEM subjects, the gap has changed from 7.5 percentage points in 2019 to 3.4 pp in 2022.

Table 81: Male, Female and total entries for STEM subjects, 2019 and 2022

		2019	2022	Diff 2022–19
<b>STEM</b>	Male	6,023	6,303	280
	Female	5,231	5,898	667
	Total	11,254	12,201	947
<b>STEM % of All Subjects</b>		<b>35.9</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>1.6</b>

Table 82: STEM subject entries by category, 2019 and 2022 (numbers, percentages and change in proportion of total entries)

Subject title	2019		2022		pp Change
	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	
Biology	2,570	8.2	2,976	9.2	1.0
Chemistry	1,648	5.3	1,924	5.9	0.7
Computing	317	1.0	357	1.1	0.1
Design and Technology	878	2.8	908	2.8	0.0



ICT	1,061	3.4	766	2.4	-1.0
Mathematics	2,899	9.3	3,124	9.6	0.4
Mathematics (Further)	172	0.5	174	0.5	0.0
Other sciences	588	1.9	688	2.1	0.2
Physics	1,121	3.6	1,284	4.0	0.4

### A Level Entries by Subject Category: Languages

Since 2019, Language subjects as a proportion of total entries have decreased from 4.1% to 3.5%. There were 156 fewer female entries in 2022 than in 2019, while there were only seven fewer male entries. This means that the 70:30 balance in favour of females in 2019 has shifted slightly to a two-thirds to one-third split in 2022.

While entries for Languages overall showed a decrease in 2022, there is no consistent pattern within this. Entries in French have fallen since 2019, while entries for Spanish rose in 2020 before falling in 2021 and 2022. Similarly, entries for German rose in 2020 and 2021 before dropping slightly in 2022, while entries in Irish have risen during this period.

Table 83: Male, female and total entries for Languages subjects, 2019 and 2022

		2019	2022	Diff 2022–19
<b>Languages</b>	Male	390	383	-7
	Female	909	753	-156
	Total	1,299	1,136	-163
<b>Languages % of All Subjects</b>		<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>-0.7</b>

Table 84: Languages subject entries by category, 2019 and 2022 (numbers, percentages and change in proportion of total entries)

Subject title	2019		2022		pp Change
	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	
Irish	291	0.9	323	1.0	0.1
German	69	0.2	72	0.2	0.0
French	358	1.1	282	0.9	-0.3
Other Modern Languages	123	0.4	71	0.2	-0.2
Spanish	458	1.5	388	1.2	-0.3

### A Level Entries by Subject Category: Arts

Since 2019, Arts subjects as a proportion of total entries have decreased from 8.9% to 7.8%, with Media/Film/TV Studies seeing the greatest decline in entries during this period.

There was a broadly two-thirds to one-third split between females and males in both years, although this gap was slightly wider in 2022 (by 0.8 pp).

Table 85: Male, female and total entries for Arts subjects, 2019 and 2022

		2019	2022	Diff 2022–19
<b>Arts</b>	Male	967	874	-93
	Female	1,819	1,675	-144
	Total	2,786	2,549	-237
<b>Arts % of All Subjects</b>		<b>8.9</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>-1.1</b>

Table 86: Arts subject entries by category, 2019 and 2022 (numbers, percentages and change in proportion of total entries)

	2019		2022		
Subject title	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	pp Change
Art & Design subjects	862	2.8	803	2.5	-0.3
Drama	352	1.1	381	1.2	0.0
Media / Film / TV Studies	1,091	3.5	899	2.8	-0.7
Music	296	0.9	257	0.8	-0.2
Performing / Expressive Arts	185	0.6	209	0.6	0.1

### A Level Entries by Subject Category: Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subjects

Since 2019, Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subjects have remained stable at around 51% of total entries. There are variations within this; subjects such as Health and Social Care (SA), History and Geography have seen increases in their numbers and proportion of total entries, while English Literature and Religious Studies have declined.

There was a broadly two-thirds to one-third split between females and males in both years, although this gap was slightly narrower in 2022 (by 2.0 pp).

Table 87: Male, female and total entries for Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subjects, 2019 and 2022

		2019	2022	Diff 2022–19
<b>Humanities, Social Sciences, Other</b>	Male	<b>5,237</b>	<b>5,590</b>	<b>353</b>
	Female	10,666	11,030	364
	Total	15,903	16,620	627
<b>HSSO % of All Subjects</b>		51.0	51.1	0.1

Table 88: Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subject entries by category, 2019 and 2022 (numbers, percentages and change in proportion of total entries)

Subject title	2019		2022		pp Change
	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	Number sat	% of total No. Sat	
Business Studies	1,939	6.2	2,078	6.4	0.2
Classical subjects	78	0.2	50	0.2	-0.1
Economics	340	1.1	286	0.9	-0.2
English Language	50	0.2	42	0.1	0.0
English Language & Literature	29	0.1	55	0.2	0.1
English Literature	1,741	5.6	1,539	4.7	-0.8
Geography	1,619	5.2	1,834	5.6	0.5
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	796	2.5	886	2.7	0.2
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	2,172	6.9	2,586	8.0	1.0
History	1,731	5.5	1,991	6.1	0.6
Law	20	0.1	8	0.0	0.0
Physical Education	533	1.7	611	1.9	0.2
Political Studies	1,050	3.4	1,056	3.2	-0.1
Psychology	497	1.6	578	1.8	0.2
Religious Studies	1,853	5.9	1,507	4.6	-1.3
Sociology	831	2.7	820	2.5	-0.1
All other subjects	714	2.3	693	2.1	-0.1

### Subject Entries: Gender

The ten most popular subjects for males and for females are the same in 2022 as they were in 2019, with only minor shifts in position (the greatest being the drop by three places for female entries in Religious Studies, from third place to sixth).

Large differences in gender balance are still evident. The gender gap was wider in some subjects in 2022 where the majority of entries are female, such as Art and Design, Religious Studies, Health and Social Care (DA) and Biology. However, male representation was greater in Health and Social Care (SA), Drama, Performing Arts, and languages such as French, Irish and Spanish.

In subjects where the majority of entries are male, the gender gap was wider in 2022 for Computing and ICT, while it was narrower for a range of subjects including Economics, Physical Education, Design and Technology, Physics, Political Science and Mathematics/ Further Mathematics.

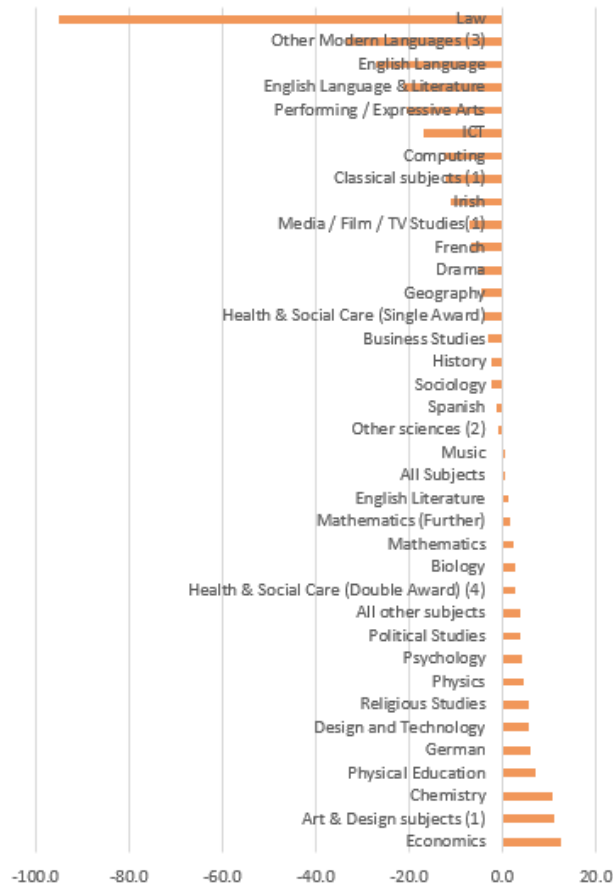


Figure 32: Difference in gender balance 2019 and 2022 (ranked from largest shift towards male entries in 2022 to largest shift towards female entries)

## A Level Outcomes

### Overall A Level Outcomes

As outlined in the introduction, the awarding approach in 2022 aimed for results that would be higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021.

As can be seen in the table below, in line with the agreed policy approaches to awarding, outcomes in 2022 across all grades were higher than in 2019 for NI.

Table 89: Cumulative A Level grade outcomes for NI, 2019 and 2022

Year	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
2022	14.5	44.0	72.5	89.5	96.6	99.1	100.0
2019	8.0	29.4	61.6	85.0	95.0	98.4	100.0

### A Level Outcomes: Gender

In NI, different patterns in gender outcomes can be seen across the grades. At A\*, the gap changed from 0.2 pp in favour of males in 2019 to 0.5 in favour of females in 2022. Based on cumulative grade outcomes, in 2022 the gender gap was wider at grades A\*, A\*–A and A\*–B than in 2019, but slightly narrower at cumulative grades A\*–C, A\*–D and A\*–E.

Table 90: NI: Male and female outcomes for cumulative grades 2022

	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>U</b>
Male	14.2	42.4	69.8	87.6	95.6	98.8	100.0
Female	14.7	45.1	74.4	90.9	97.3	99.4	100.0
Difference (pp F–M)	0.5	2.7	4.6	3.3	1.7	0.6	

Table 91: NI: Male and female outcomes for cumulative grades 2019

	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>U</b>
Male	8.1	28.6	59.3	83.0	93.9	97.9	100.0
Female	7.9	30.0	63.1	86.4	95.8	98.7	100.0
Difference (pp F–M)	-0.2	1.4	3.8	3.4	1.9	0.8	–

### Subject Outcomes 2019/2022 Comparison

In this section, subject outcomes in 2022 are compared with those of 2019; however, they must be considered in the context of policy decisions around 2022 as a ‘midpoint’ return to 2019 outcomes, and in comparison with 2021, where overall A\*–A outcomes were 50.8% (21.4 pp higher than in 2019 and 6.8 pp higher than in 2022) and overall A\*–C outcomes were 94.6% (9.6 pp higher than in 2019 and 5.1 pp higher than in 2022).

Variations in grade outcomes were more evident at higher grades. For example, at A\*–E, 2022 overall outcomes were only 0.8 pp higher than in 2019; however, even the largest difference was only 2.4 pp for Sociology.

At A\*–C, the difference in outcomes overall between 2019 and 2022 was 4.5 pp but subject outcome differences ranged from 0.3 in Spanish to 14.1 in ‘Other Sciences’ and 10.9 in Health and Social Care (DA).

In contrast, at A\*–A, Health and Social Care (DA) had the smallest difference in outcomes at 7.4 pp. Overall, the difference between 2019 and 2022 was 14.6 pp, while subjects with a difference of over 20 pp included Physical Education, Further Mathematics, Drama, Music, French and Computing.

From this, it is evident that variations in grade outcomes were not unique to any particular subject category such as STEM or Arts.

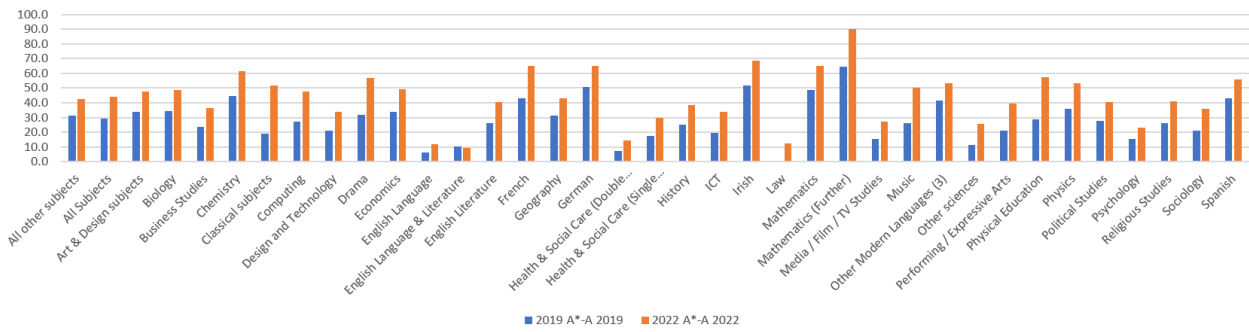


Figure 33: A Level cumulative percentage A\*–A grades by subject, 2019 and 2022

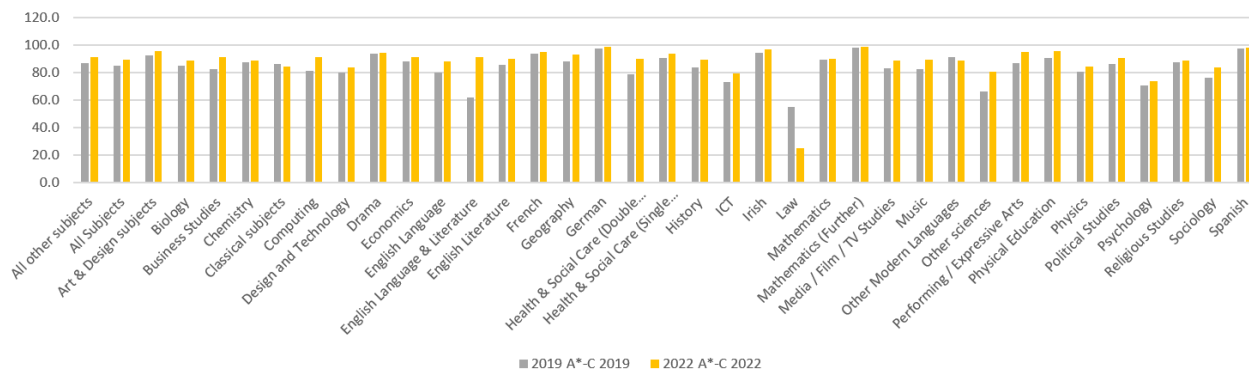


Figure 34: A Level cumulative percentage A\*–C grades by subject, 2019 and 2022

### Subject Category Outcomes: All Candidates and by Gender

There were a few subjects in which the male or female outcomes were lower in 2022 than in 2019. These include lower male outcomes at grade A\*–C in German, Other Modern Languages, Drama, Classical Studies, English Language and Law. Males also had lower outcomes at grade A\*–A in English Language, English Language and Literature, and Psychology, while females had lower outcomes at A\*–C in Other Modern Languages and Law, and at A\*–A in English Language and Literature. However, it should be noted that in each case, the relevant male or female entries for the subject were less than a hundred, so these outcomes should not be seen as typical due to the low numbers involved.

### STEM

STEM outcomes at A\*–A and A\*–C were higher in 2022 than in 2019. At A\*–A, the percentage-point difference between 2019 and 2022 ranged from 13 pp for Design and Technology to 25.7 pp for Further Mathematics; however, the overall ranking of subjects was maintained.

At A\*–C, differences were smaller, ranging from 0.9 pp for Mathematics to 14.1 pp for Other Sciences. Again, the ranking of subjects was largely maintained, although in 2022 outcomes in Other Sciences were higher than for ICT, while outcomes in Computing overtook those in Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology.

Table 92: STEM subject outcomes A\*-A and A\*-C, 2019 and 2022

	2019	2022	2019	2022
STEM Subject title	A*-A	A*-A	A*-C	A*-C
Biology	34.5	48.6	84.7	88.7
Chemistry	44.4	61.3	87.2	88.9
Computing	27.1	47.6	81.4	91.3
Design and Technology	21.1	34.0	80.1	83.7
ICT	19.7	33.9	73.3	79.5
Mathematics	48.8	64.9	89.0	89.9
Mathematics (Further)	64.5	90.2	97.7	98.9
Other sciences	11.6	25.7	66.2	80.2
Physics	36.1	53.4	80.6	84.3

In STEM subjects in 2019, males had higher outcomes at A\*-A in a number of subjects, including Chemistry, Computing, Mathematics and Other sciences. There was a different pattern in 2022, where only Physics had higher outcomes for males. The gender gap in Computing changed by 17.3 percentage points, from 4.2 pp in favour of males in 2019 to 13.1 pp in favour of females in 2022.

At A\*-C, Computing again saw a change of 13.1 percentage points, from 8.3 pp in favour of males in 2019 to 4.8 pp in favour of females in 2022. Other Sciences also changed by 12.0 percentage points, meaning that in 2022 females achieved higher results than males at both A\*-A and A\*-C, reversing the pattern observed in 2019.

Table 93: STEM subject outcomes by gender, male and female, 2019 and 2022

STEM Subjects	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	A*-C				A*-A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Biology	83.5	88.8	85.3	88.6	34.5	48.2	34.5	48.8
Chemistry	86.7	86.9	87.6	90.2	44.8	57.9	44.1	63.5
Computing	82.9	90.7	74.6	95.5	27.9	46.0	23.7	59.1
Design and Technology	78.1	82.0	84.9	87.4	18.4	31.5	27.8	39.5
ICT	71.5	77.0	76.4	85.7	15.2	30.9	27.1	41.3
Mathematics	88.2	88.5	90.0	91.6	49.2	62.5	48.2	67.9
Mathematics (Further)	96.7	98.3	100.0	100.0	62.8	90.1	68.6	90.6
Other sciences	66.9	74.5	65.5	85.1	13.0	23.0	10.3	28.1
Physics	81.2	85.0	78.8	82.6	35.5	54.4	37.8	51.1

## Languages

Languages outcomes at A\*–A and A\*–C were higher in 2022 than in 2019.

At A\*–A, the percentage-point difference between 2019 and 2022 ranged from 12.1 pp for Other Modern Languages to 22 pp for French; however, the overall ranking of subjects was maintained.

At A\*–C, differences between 2019 and 2022 were minimal, ranging from 0.3 pp lower for Other Modern Languages to 2.4 pp higher for Irish. In this category, outcomes at A\*–C were highest in Spanish in 2019 but were highest in German in 2022.

Table 94: Languages subject outcomes A\*–A and A\*–C, 2019 and 2022

	2019	2022	2019	2022
Languages Subject title	A*–A		A*–C	
French	43.3	65.2	93.6	95.0
German	50.7	65.3	97.1	98.6
Irish	51.9	68.4	94.2	96.6
Other Modern Languages	41.5	53.5	91.1	88.7
Spanish	43.0	55.7	97.4	97.7

In Languages subjects in 2019, males had higher results than females at A\*–A in French, German and Spanish, and at A\*–C in German, Irish and Other Modern Languages. There was a different pattern apparent in 2022, where females had higher results than males at A\*–A in all languages and at A\*–C except for Irish. The largest percentage-point changes were at A\*–A for German (with a 32.0 percentage-point change in gender balance from 2019 to 2022), French (14.8 pp) and Spanish (14.6 pp).

Table 95: Languages subject outcomes by gender, male and female, 2019 and 2022

Languages Subjects	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	A*–C				A*–A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
French	90.7	91.9	94.6	96.4	45.4	57.0	42.5	68.9
German	100.0	96.2	95.2	100.0	59.3	53.8	45.2	71.7
Irish	94.4	98.3	94.0	95.6	48.9	65.3	53.2	70.2
Other Modern Languages	95.0	88.6	89.2	88.9	32.5	45.7	45.8	61.1
Spanish	96.3	96.6	97.8	98.1	49.3	51.7	40.4	57.4



## Arts

Arts outcomes at A\*–A and A\*–C were higher in 2022 than in 2019.

At A\*–A, the percentage-point difference between 2019 and 2022 ranged from 12 pp for Media/Film/TV Studies to 23.8 pp for Music and 25.1 pp for Drama; as a consequence, the latter two subjects overtook Art and Design.

At A\*–C, a different pattern was observed. Differences between 2019 and 2022 ranged from 0.8 pp for Drama to 8.3 pp for Performing/Expressive Arts; as a consequence, Art and Design and Performing/Expressive Arts overtook Drama.

Table 96: Arts subject outcomes A\*–A and A\*–C, 2019 and 2022

Arts Subject title	2019	2022	2019	2022
	A*–A	A*–A	A*–C	A*–C
Art & Design subjects	33.9	47.7	92.1	95.8
Drama	31.8	57.0	93.5	94.2
Media / Film / TV Studies	15.2	27.3	83.1	88.8
Music	26.4	50.2	82.4	89.1
Performing / Expressive Arts	21.1	39.7	86.5	94.7

In Arts subjects in 2019, males had higher outcomes than females at A\*–C in Drama, Music and Media/Film/TV Studies, and at A\*–A in Music. The pattern was different in 2022, when females had higher outcomes across all Arts subjects at both grade boundaries except for A\*–C in Performing/Expressive Arts. The gender gap was wider at A\*–A in the same subject, moving from 0.6 percentage points in favour of females in 2019 to 15.4 percentage points in 2022. In comparison, the gender gap at A\*–A in Art and Design subjects changed from 15.4 percentage points in favour of females in 2019 to 10.4 percentage points in 2022.

Table 97: Arts subject outcomes by gender, male and female, 2019 and 2022

Arts Subjects	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	A*–C				A*–A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Art and Design Subjects	87.2	93.1	93.8	96.4	22.4	39.4	37.8	49.8
Drama	94.6	92.2	93.2	94.8	21.6	48.9	34.5	59.5
Media/Film/TV Studies	84.1	85.6	82.2	92.3	14.4	24.7	16.0	30.0
Music	82.9	87.9	82.2	89.8	31.4	49.5	23.6	50.6
Performing/Expressive Arts	85.3	95.0	86.8	94.6	20.6	28.3	21.2	44.3

## Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subjects

Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subject outcomes at A\*–A and A\*–C were higher in 2022 than in 2019, except for some small-entry subjects such as Classical subjects and Law.

At A\*–A, the percentage-point difference between 2019 and 2022 ranged from -1.3 pp for English Language and Literature to 32 pp for Classical subjects; however, these are low-entry subjects and are therefore atypical. Of larger-entry subjects, the greatest difference was for Physical Education (overtaking Economics and Geography in ranking) and the smallest difference was for Health and Social Care (DA).

At A\*–C, a different pattern was again observed. The largest differences were again for English Language and Literature and Classical subjects (although reversed) while in larger-entry subjects, the greatest difference was for Health and Social Care (DA) and the smallest difference was for Religious Studies.

**Table 98: Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subject outcomes A\*–A and A\*–C, 2019 and 2022**

	2019	2022	2019	2022
Subject title	A*–A	A*–A	A*–C	A*–C
Business Studies	23.8	36.4	82.2	91.2
Classical subjects	19.2	52.0	85.9	84.0
Economics	33.8	49.3	88.2	90.9
English Language	6.0	11.9	80.0	88.1
English Language & Literature	10.3	9.1	62.1	90.9
English Literature	26.4	40.4	85.5	89.9
Geography	31.1	42.9	87.7	93.3
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	7.3	14.7	78.9	89.8
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	17.7	30.0	90.3	93.9
History	25.2	38.4	83.5	89.0
Law	0.0	12.5	55.0	25.0
Physical Education	28.9	57.3	90.2	95.4
Political Studies	27.6	40.4	86.4	90.6
Psychology	15.3	23.2	70.6	73.7
Religious Studies	26.0	40.9	87.3	88.7
Sociology	21.1	35.9	76.1	83.9
All other subjects	31.2	42.6	86.8	90.9

There were a number of Humanities, Social Science and Other subjects that have small entries and experienced large differences in gender outcomes in 2019 and 2022; these variations should not be seen as significant due to the entry size. These include Classical subjects, English Language, English Language and Literature, and Law.

The gender gap in Health and Social Care (SA) was narrower in 2022 than in 2019 by 8.9 percentage points at A\*–C, while the gap at A\*–A was wider by 8.1 percentage points. The same pattern was apparent in Psychology, where the gender gap was narrower by 13.1 percentage points at A\*–C, while the gap at A\*–A was wider by 9.8 percentage points. At A\*–A, the gender gap in Physical Education was wider by 11.2 percentage points, while in Religious Studies it was narrower by 7.1 percentage points.

Table 99: Humanities, Social Sciences and Other subject outcomes by gender, male and female, 2019 and 2022

Humanities, Social Sciences and Other Subjects	Cumulative Grade Outcome							
	A*–C				A*–A			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Business Studies	81.9	91.9	82.5	90.5	20.6	34.6	27.2	38.5
Classical subjects	78.6	76.2	90.0	89.7	14.3	42.9	22.0	58.6
Economics	90.9	92.7	82.4	88.1	34.5	48.6	32.4	50.5
English Language	94.1	80.0	72.7	95.5	5.9	5.0	6.1	18.2
English Language & Literature	50.0	85.7	66.7	94.1	12.5	9.5	9.5	8.8
English Literature	80.4	88.5	87.0	90.3	22.9	34.6	27.4	42.0
Geography	84.1	91.2	90.8	95.2	23.9	33.6	37.4	51.6
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	70.0	81.3	79.4	90.2	0.0	6.3	7.7	15.0
Health & Social Care (Single Award)	76.6	88.3	91.8	94.6	4.2	9.7	19.2	32.8
History	82.4	88.1	84.6	89.9	21.4	35.0	29.0	42.1
Law	50.0	28.6	58.3	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.0	0.0
Physical Education	88.7	94.1	93.1	97.5	22.7	46.1	40.2	74.8
Political Studies	84.2	90.2	88.7	91.1	25.5	36.3	30.0	44.6
Psychology	59.4	73.0	73.3	73.8	10.4	10.0	16.5	25.9
Religious Studies	85.7	86.4	87.8	89.4	18.9	39.0	28.5	41.5
Sociology	71.1	72.9	77.2	86.7	18.9	31.3	21.6	37.0
All other subjects	75.2	76.6	89.8	94.2	20.0	29.7	34.1	45.5

## Appendix 1: Data Sources

### GCSE

JCQ GCSE (Full Course) Results Summer 2022:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GCSE-Full-Course-Results-Summer-2022.xlsx>

JCQ GCSE (Full Course) Results Summer 2022 (compared to 2021):

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GCSE-Full-Course-Results-Summer-2022-Compared-to-2021-v2.pdf>

JCQ GCSE England, NI, Wales age breakdowns Summer 2022 (compared to 2021):

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GCSE-England-Northern-Ireland-and-Wales-age-breakdowns-Summer-2022-Compared-to-2021.pdf>

JCQ GCSE (Full Course) Results Summer 2022 (compared to 2019):

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GCSE-Full-Course-Results-Summer-2022-Compared-to-2019.pdf>

### GCE AS Level and A Level

JCQ AS Level Results Summer 2022:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/AS-Level-Results-Summer-2022.xlsx>

JCQ A Level Results Summer 2022:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/A-Level-Results-Summer-2022.xlsx>

JCQ A and AS Results Summer 2022 (compared to 2021):

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/A-and-AS-Results-Summer-2022-Compared-to-2021.pdf>

JCQ AS and A Level Results Summer 2021:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/A-Level-and-AS-Results-Summer-2021-v3.pdf>

JCQ A and AS Results Summer 2022 (compared to 2019):

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/A-and-AS-Results-Summer-2022-Compared-to-2019.pdf>

## Appendix 2: Subject Categorisation of CCEA Qualifications

### GCSE

CCEA Subject Title	JCQ Subject Title
AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE	Other Sciences
CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS	Art & Design subjects
STATISTICS	Statistics
FURTHER MATHEMATICS	Mathematics (Additional)
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	Health & Social Care
LEISURE, TRAVEL & TOURISM	Leisure & Tourism
CONSTRUCTION	Construction
ART & DESIGN	Art & Design subjects
BIOLOGY	Biology
ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING	Engineering
BUSINESS STUDIES	Business Studies
CHEMISTRY	Chemistry
DRAMA	Drama
ECONOMICS	Economics
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	English Language
ENGLISH LITERATURE	English Literature
FRENCH	French
GEOGRAPHY	Geography
BUSINESS & COMM. SYSTEMS	Business & Comm. Systems
GERMAN	German
HISTORY	History
GOVERNMENT & POLITICS	Social Science subjects
CHILD DEVELOPMENT	Home Economics
HOSPITALITY	Hospitality
FOOD AND NUTRITION	Food Preparation and Nutrition
MOVING IMAGE ARTS	Media/Film/TV Studies
IRISH	Irish
GAEILGE	Irish
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: MULTIMEDIA	ICT
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: PROGRAMMING	ICT
JOURNALISM	All Other Subjects
MATHEMATICS	Mathematics
LEARNING FOR LIFE AND WORK	Prep. For Life and Work
MOTOR VEHICLE & RUS	Other Technology
MUSIC	Music
PHYSICS	Physics

PHYSICAL EDUCATION	Physical Education
RELIGIOUS STUDIES	Religious Studies
RELIGIOUS STUDIES SHORT COURSE	Religious Studies
SCIENCE: DOUBLE AWARD	Science: Double Award
SPANISH	Spanish
SCIENCE: SINGLE AWARD	Science
TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN	Design & Technology

## A Level

CCEA Subject Title	JCQ Subject Title
GCE ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY	Other Sciences
GCE SOFTWARE SYSTEMS DEVELOP'	Computing
GCE SPORTS SCIENCE	Physical Education
GCE PERFORMING ARTS	Performing / Expressive Arts
GCE JOURNALISM/MEDIA/COMM'IND'	Media / Film / TV Studies
GCE BIOLOGY	Biology
GCE CHEMISTRY	Chemistry
GCE PHYSICS	Physics
GCE MATHEMATICS (NEW)	Mathematics
GCE FURTHER MATHEMATICS (NEW)	Mathematics (Further)
GCE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY	ICT
GCE P. BUSINESS SERVICES	Business Studies
GCE BUSINESS STUDIES	Business Studies
GCE NUTRITION AND FOOD SCIENCE	All Other Subjects
GCE ART & DESIGN	Art & Design subjects
GCE GEOGRAPHY	Geography
GCE HISTORY	History
GCE ECONOMICS	Economics
GCE RELIGIOUS STUDIES	Religious Studies
GCE GOVERNMENT & POLITICS	Political Studies
GCE ENGLISH LITERATURE	English Literature
GCE MOVING IMAGE ARTS	Media / Film / TV Studies
GCE IRISH	Irish
GCE FRENCH	French
GCE GERMAN	German
GCE SPANISH	Spanish
GCE MUSIC	Music
LIFE AND HEALTH SCIENCES	Other Sciences
LIFE AND HEALTH SCIENCES (DA)	Other Sciences
GCE TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN	Design and Technology
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	Health & Social Care (Single Award)
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE (DA)	Health & Social Care (Double Award)

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