

A and AS Level Geography Results 2015

A level

Entries for A level geography have increased by 4188 (12.7%) since 2014, which is the largest subject increase (Figure 1) and moves geography up to eighth place in terms of total number of candidates (Figure 2). The total number of A levels taken has risen 2.0% since 2014, from 833,807 to 850,749, despite a 1.1% fall in age-group cohort.

The increase in female candidates taking A level geography (+2329) was slightly greater than the increase in male candidates (+1859), continuing the general trend seen over the last few years. There were 50.7% female and 49.3% male candidates in 2015, with 499 more female candidates in total (Figure 4). Female entries for all subjects increased more than males with the weighting 55% female, 45% male.

The percentage of students achieving top grades (A*/A) for geography stabilised at 27.5% from a high of 30.2% in 2010 (Figure 1), although this remains higher than the rate for all subjects (25.9%). The gap in performance at A*/A grade by gender increased slightly (0.2%) to 10.7% with 32.8% of female candidates achieving A*/A grades compared to 22.1% of male candidates (Figure 4). A* grades in geography rose by 0.8% to 7.1% but this remains lower than the 8.2% rate for all subjects.

The overall A level geography pass rate (A*–E) stayed at 99.2%, with a gender difference of 0.6% in favour of female candidates (99.5%). The pass rate (A*–E) for all subjects is 98.1%.

A level entries were 66.8% of the 2014 AS entries, a decline of 2.6% since 2014 and continuation of the downward trend seen since 2008.

Trends

- The overall number of A level geography entries has stayed relatively stable between 2007 and 2014 with annual fluctuations less than ± 900 entries. Despite a drop in overall cohort size, 2015 saw a large increase in geography entries. This appears to be the result of a trend towards 'facilitating subjects'.
- The share of geography entries as a proportion of national entries has risen to a long-term high of 4.4%.
- The A*–A pass rate stabilised at 27.5% in 2015.
- The overall pass rate (A*–E) increased from 98.7% to 99.2% between 2006 and 2012 and has remained stable ever since.

Key points for 2015

- Total geography entries increased by 4188 candidates, the largest total increase in numbers for any subject. It was the third largest percentage increase (12.7%) in entries after computing and Spanish.
- Geography was the eighth most popular A level subject with 37,195 entries.
- The A*/A geography pass rate stayed the same at 27.5%.
- The A*–E geography pass stayed the same at 99.2%.

Figure 1: Trends in A level geography 2006–15

Year	Number of entries	Change from previous year	% of total entry	% achieving grade							
				A*	A	B	C	D	E	A*–E	A*/A
2006	32,522	4139	4.0		25.6	27.2	24.2	15.3	6.4	98.7	25.6
2007	31,653	-869	3.9		27.3	27.5	23.7	14.4	5.8	98.7	27.3
2008	31,714	61	3.8		28.6	27.7	23.7	13.7	5.1	98.8	28.6
2009	32,227	513	3.8		27.3	27.5	23.7	14.4	5.8	98.7	27.3
2010	32,063	-164	3.8	6.8	23.4	27.6	23.1	13.4	4.5	98.8	30.2
2011	31,226	-837	3.6	7.1	23.0	27.9	23.6	13.3	4.1	99.0	30.1
2012	32,005	779	3.7	6.3	22.8	29	24.6	12.6	3.9	99.2	29.1
2013	32,872	867	3.9	5.6	22.9	29.4	24.5	12.7	4.1	99.2	28.5
2014	33,007	135	4.0	6.3	21.2	29.3	24.9	13.1	4.4	99.2	27.5
2015	37,195	4188	4.4	7.1	20.4	29.5	24.6	13.6	4.0	99.2	27.5

Figure 2: Top ten A level subjects 2015. The 2014 ranking is given in brackets

Ranking	Subject	Number of candidates	% of total
1 (1)	Mathematics	92,711	10.9
2 (2)	English	89,499	10.5
3 (3)	Biology	63,275	7.4
4 (4)	Psychology	57,014	6.7
5 (6)	History	55,848	6.6
6 (5)	Chemistry	52,644	6.2
7 (7)	Art and Design subjects	44,864	5.3
8 (9)	Geography	37,195	4.4
9 (8)	Physics	36,287	4.3
10 (10)	Sociology	32,258	3.8

Figure 3: A level geography entries by country

Year	England	Change England	Northern Ireland	Change NI	Wales	Change Wales	Total	Change total
2008	28,029	274 0.9%	1915	-200 -9.3%	1770	-13 -0.7%	31,714	61 0.2%
2009	28,360	331 1.1%	2001	86 4.0%	1866	96 5.0%	32,227	513 1.5%
2010	28,525	165 0.5%	1806	-195 -9.1%	1732	-134 -7.0%	32,063	-164 -0.5%
2011	27,604	-921 -3.0%	1878	72 3.3%	1744	12 0.6%	31,226	-837 -2.4%
2012	28,430	826 2.7%	1868	-10 -0.5%	1707	-37 -1.9%	32,005	779 2.3%
2013	29,126	696 2.3%	2001	133 6.2%	1745	38 2.0%	32,872	867 2.5%
2014	29,476	350 1.2%	1896	-105 -4.9%	1635	-110 -5.7%	33,007	135 0.4%
2015	33,414	3938 13.0%	1974	78 3.6%	1807	172 9.0%	37,195	4188 12.2%

Figure 4a: Number and performance of A level geography male candidates 2007–15

Year	Male entries	% of total geography entries	% achieving grade							
			A*	A	B	C	D	E	A/A*–E	A*/A
2007	17,343	54.8	n/a	22.8	26.6	25.2	16.8	7	98.4	22.8
2008	17,195	54.2	n/a	24.6	26.9	25.3	15.5	6.2	98.5	24.6
2009	17,531	54.4	n/a	25.2	27.8	24.6	15.2	6.1	98.9	25.2
2010	17,333	54.1	5.1	20.7	27.2	24.9	15.3	5.4	98.6	25.8
2011	16,739	53.6	5.5	19.8	27.9	25.3	15.3	5	98.8	25.3
2012	16,784	52.4	4.7	19.4	28.1	27.2	14.9	4.6	98.9	24.1
2013	16,776	51.0	4.3	19.2	28.5	26.9	14.9	5.2	99	23.5
2014	16,489	50.0	4.8	17.5	28.3	27.4	15.5	5.4	98.9	22.3
2015	18,348	49.3	5	17.1	28.7	27.1	16	5	98.9	22.1

Figure 4b: Number and performance of A level geography female candidates 2007–15

Year	Female entries	% of total geography entries	% achieving grade							
			A*	A	B	C	D	E	A/A*–E	A*/A
2007	14,310	45.2	n/a	32.7	28.8	21.9	11.5	4.2	99.1	32.7
2008	14,519	45.8	n/a	33.3	28.7	21.7	11.7	3.8	99.2	33.3
2009	14,696	45.6	n/a	35.9	28.3	20.7	10.9	3.5	99.3	35.9
2010	14,730	45.9	8.8	26.6	28.1	21	11.1	3.6	99.2	35.4
2011	14,487	46.4	9	26.5	28.1	21.7	10.9	3.2	99.4	35.5
2012	15,221	47.6	8.1	26.6	30	21.6	10.2	3	99.5	34.7
2013	16,096	49.0	7.0	26.6	30.5	21.9	10.5	3.0	99.5	33.6
2014	16,518	50.0	7.8	25.0	30.1	22.6	10.6	3.3	99.4	32.8
2015	18,847	50.7	9.2	23.6	30.2	22.3	11.1	3.1	99.5	32.8

AS level

Entries for AS level geography increased by 124 (0.2%) to 55,801 (Figure 5), while overall AS entries declined 1.9% in line with the 2.1% drop in the age-group cohort. Geography moved down to 10th place in terms of subject entries (Figure 6).

The increase in AS geography candidates was due to an increase in female entries (+235) balanced by a small decrease in male entries (-111) (Figure 7). The gender balance was therefore levelled slightly to 49.6% female/50.4% male.

The percentage of AS geography students achieving the top grade (A) fell by 1.6% to 21.7% but the overall geography pass rate (A–E) was 90.7%, up by 0.2% from 2014 (Figure 5). The gender gap in performance in the top grades decreased to 6.1% (from 8.5% in 2014) with 18.6% (down 0.5%) of male candidates achieving an A grade compared to 24.7% of female candidates (down 2.9%) (Figure 7).

Key points for 2015

- There were 124 more entries for AS level geography (+0.2%).
- The percentage obtaining A grades decreased by 1.6%.
- The share of total entries has increased 0.1% to 4.0%.
- The overall number of AS entries decreased by 1.9% reflecting a 2.1% drop in the age-group cohort.
- Geography dropped one place in the rankings to 10th.

Figure 5: Trends in AS level geography entries 2006–15

Year	Number of entries	Change from previous year	% of total entries	% achieving grade					
				A	B	C	D	E	A–E
2006	37,031	-1115	3.4	22.6	19.8	20.0	16.9	11.5	90.8
2007	36,777	-254	3.3	23.0	20.0	20.3	16.3	11.2	90.8
2008	37,413	636	3.3	23.3	19.8	20.3	16.1	11.3	90.8
2009	38,253	840	3.2	24.5	19.0	19.3	16.0	11.6	90.4
2010	36,819	-1434	3.1	24.4	19.3	19.9	16.1	11.1	90.8
2011	45,302	8483	3.7	23.7	19.5	20.0	16.1	10.6	89.4
2012	45,923	621	3.8	23.9	19.7	20.1	15.6	10.6	89.4
2013	47,586	1663	3.5	23.6	20.1	20.1	16.0	10.1	89.9
2014	55,677	8091	3.9	23.3	20.1	20.6	16.0	10.5	90.5
2015	55,801	124	4.0	21.7	20.1	21.5	16.9	10.5	90.7

Note: The number of grades issued for AS increased by 17.9% (1,197,490 in 2010 to 1,411,919 in 2011). The dramatic increase was expected and was explained by a change to the funding rules in England. Geography entries increased by 23.0% (8483).

Figure 6: Top ten AS level subjects 2015. The 2014 ranking is given in brackets

Ranking	Subject	Number of candidates	% of total
1 (1)	Mathematics	165,311	11.93
2 (2)	English	124,452	8.98
3 (3)	Biology	103,859	7.49
4 (4)	Psychology	103,476	7.47
5 (5)	Chemistry	87,621	6.32
6 (6)	History	80,694	5.82
7 (8)	Physics	64,377	4.65
8 (7)	Art and Design subjects	62,375	4.50
9(10)	Sociology	57,589	4.16
10 (9)	Geography	55,801	4.03

Figure 7a:AS level geography entries by gender 2009–15

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change 2014-15
Male	20,814	19,842	24,332	24,080	24,467	28,222	28,111	-111
Female	17,439	16,978	20,970	21,843	23,119	27,455	27,690	235
<i>Total</i>	<i>38,253</i>	<i>36,819</i>	<i>45,302</i>	<i>45,923</i>	<i>47,586</i>	<i>55,677</i>	<i>55,801</i>	<i>124</i>

Figure 7b: Number and performance of AS level geography male candidates 2012–15

Year	Number of entries	% of total geography entries	% achieving grade					
			A	B	C	D	E	A–E
2012	24,080	52.4	19.2	18.5	21.1	17.2	12.2	88.2
2013	24,467	51.4	19.0	19.2	21.2	17.8	11.3	88.5
2014	28,222	50.7	19.1	19.4	21.3	17.6	11.9	10.7
2015	28,111	50.4	18.6	19.6	22	18	11.5	10.3

Figure 7c: Number and performance of AS level geography female candidates 2012–15

Year	Number of entries	% of total geography entries	% achieving grade					
			A	B	C	D	E	A–E
2012	21,843	47.6	29.0	21.1	19.1	13.7	8.9	91.8
2013	23,119	48.6	28.4	21.1	19.0	14.0	8.8	91.3
2014	27,455	49.3	27.6	20.9	19.8	14.4	9.1	91.8
2015	27,690	49.6	24.7	20.8	21	15.7	9.5	8.3

Other subjects

'Provisional results for 2015 A-level and AS qualifications published by JCQ show there is stability across the grades at A-level, with the A remaining unchanged at 8.2 per cent of all awards; A*-A declining marginally by 0.1 percentage points to 25.9 per cent; and A*-E rising by 0.1 percentage points to 98.1 per cent.*

'The number of A-levels taken has risen 2.0% compared with 2014, from 833,807 to 850,749. This is despite a 1.1 per cent fall in the 18 year old cohort.

'The proportion of total entries coming from "facilitating subjects"¹ has remained relatively stable, rising only 0.8 percentage points year on year ("facilitating subjects" account for 51.2 per cent of all entries; other subjects 48.8 per cent). This small increase is mainly from rises in Geography (up 4,188), History (up 3,717) and English Literature (3,393). There is also an increase in the largest entry subject, Mathematics (up 3,895). The increases in these subjects are relatively small compared to the total entry and not unexpected as they showed significant increases at AS in 2014.

'Results for AS also remain relatively stable. The percentage of A grades awarded increased 0.3 percentage points to 20.2 per cent and A-E increased 0.6 percentage points to 89.4 per cent. Overall, AS entries declined 1.9% to 1,385,901, in-line with the 2.1% drop in the 17 year old cohort' (JCQ, 2015a).

Sources of information

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) (2015a) 'GCE Press Notice UK'. Available online at www.jcq.org.uk/media-centre/news-releases/gce-press-notice-uk (last accessed 13 August 2015).

JCQ (2015b) 'A, AS and AEA Results, Summer 2015'. Available online at www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels/a-as-and-aea-results-summer-2015 (last accessed 13 August 2015).

JCQ (2015c) 'GCE Trends 2015'. Available online at www.jcq.org.uk/media-centre/news-releases/gce-trends-2015 (last accessed 13 August 2015).

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¹ Some A-level subjects are more frequently required for entry to degree courses than others. These subjects are commonly known as 'facilitating subjects' and include: Maths and Further Maths; Physics; Biology; Chemistry; History; Geography; Modern and Classical Languages; English Literature.