



Statement of Administrative Sources



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Last updated: December 2014

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Next review will take place by: December 2015

Introduction

Official statistics published by Ofqual are based on the sources, information systems and processes described within this document. Ofqual acts both as a regulator and as a producer of official statistics. To distinguish between these two functions in this document, the terms 'Ofqual-the-regulator' and 'Ofqual' are used, with the latter referring to the statistical production function.

Official statistics and administrative sources

Publication	Source
<p>Enquiries about results</p> <p>Exam boards must publish information about how they will handle enquiries about results and appeals against their decisions.</p> <p>Every year, information on the number of results enquiries and the number of grade changes as a result of those enquiries is reported by the exam boards. This information is to reassure Ofqual-the-regulator that the exam boards are properly dealing with enquiries. It can also indicate whether they are making sure their quality checks are fit for purpose.</p>	Exam boards enter appropriate data to the Ofqual-the-regulator's RITS system (Regulatory Information Technology System).
<p>Appeals against results</p> <p>If a school or college believes a candidate's GCSE or A level results are wrong, they send an enquiry about results to the exam board. If after the enquiry they still think that the results are wrong, they can appeal against the results. These are the statistics for those appeals for GCSE and A level</p>	Exam boards enter appropriate data to the Ofqual-the-regulator's RITS system.

<p>exams in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.</p>	
<p>Provisional summer GCSE and IGCSE entries</p> <p>This release presents figures on the number of entries for GCSEs and IGCSEs in England submitted to exam boards ahead of the examinations being sat between May and June. These figures are provisional – they represent the number of entries submitted by schools and colleges to exam boards.</p>	<p>Exam boards provide appropriate data to Ofqual.</p>
<p>Provisional summer AS qualification and A level entries</p> <p>This release presents figures on the number of entries for AS qualifications and A levels in England submitted to exam boards ahead of the examinations being sat between May and June. These figures are provisional – they represent the number of entries submitted by schools and colleges to exam boards.</p>	<p>Exam boards provide appropriate data to Ofqual.</p>
<p>Annual Qualification Market Report: England, Wales and Northern Ireland</p> <p>This reports on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of recognised exam boards offering qualifications ▪ The qualifications available and the certificates awarded in them ▪ Participation rates in education and training for 16–19 year olds in England. 	<p>Awarding organisations enter appropriate data to Ofqual either directly to the RITS system or via email. The RQAD system and various other data sources, some public domain, are also used to compile this report.</p>
<p>Malpractice</p> <p>Statistics for malpractice in exams cover more than just cheating. Ofqual reports on any breach of the regulations that might affect an exam. This covers things like using a mobile phone in an exam to schools and colleges failing to properly follow the instructions of their exam board.</p>	<p>Exam boards enter appropriate data to the Ofqual-the-regulator's RITS system.</p>

Special consideration Special consideration is given to students who were not able to perform at their best during an exam or assessment due to exceptional circumstances. This might be due to temporary injury, illness, indisposition or other unforeseen incident.	Exam boards provide appropriate data.
Access arrangements Access arrangements in exams allow students with particular requirements to perform to their best ability. For example, students who have a disability, a medical condition, who are ill for the exam or whose first language is not English, Irish or Welsh may be allowed special arrangements. This could be something like having a modified question paper for a student with a visual impairment.	Exam boards provide appropriate data.
Vocational and other Qualifications Quarterly This bulletin gives data on achievements for all regulated qualifications except GCSEs, GCEs (A levels) and the Diploma. The data covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland.	Exam boards provide appropriate data to the Ofqual-the-regulator's RITS and RQAD systems.
Perceptions of GCSEs and A levels This is an annual survey of how much confidence teachers, parents and students have in A levels and GCSEs in England.	Independent survey of a random sample of students, their parents, teachers and head teachers.
Entries and late entries for GCSE and A level Entries are made up of unitised and component entries, depending on whether the subject that a candidate is taking is unitised or linear. If schools and colleges register an entry after the agreed deadline it is late and may be subject to an additional charge.	Exam boards enter appropriate data to the Ofqual-the-regulator's RITS system.

The administrative systems currently used in the production of official statistics

It is Ofqual-the-regulator's job to maintain standards and confidence in qualifications; to regulate the National Curriculum assessments in England; and to look after GCSEs and A levels in England, and a wide range of vocational qualifications both in England and Northern Ireland.

Ofqual-the-regulator is independent of government ministers and reports directly to Parliament in Westminster and the Northern Ireland Assembly. While independent, it gives advice to government on qualifications and assessment based on research into these areas.

It regulates by recognising and monitoring organisations that deliver qualifications and assessments as set out in the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Education Act 2011.

Only recognised awarding organisations can offer regulated qualifications. In this way Ofqual-the-regulator ensures that only those organisations that have the appropriate resources, capability and expertise can award regulated qualifications. Some qualifications, such as GCSEs and A levels, are subject to extra specific checks and requirements.

The main information system used to help Ofqual in its role both as a regulator and as a producer of official statistics, is known as RITS (Regulatory Information Technology System). This is a .net application that feeds into a SQL Server database.

Using a standard web client, the awarding organisations and exam boards submit information about themselves and the qualifications that they want to deliver. Ofqual-the-regulator then makes decisions based on the information provided. If the proposal is accepted, the awarding organisation and its regulated qualifications are accepted for inclusion on the Register of Regulated Qualifications.

RITS contains information on all regulated qualifications, both current and those withdrawn from the market. In addition, during the year, awarding organisations are required to load to RITS other performance information – for example, the number of certificates issued for each of their qualifications. There are some awarding organisations who for historic reasons to ease their burden, send data direct to the Statistics team.

SQL Server Integration System (SSIS) is then used to extract the certification data from RITS and from the submitted emails and to merge it together into a second SQL Server database known as RQAD (Regulated Qualifications Activity Database). This

second database is used to produce the base data used to prepare some of the statistical reports.

Procedures to be followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative systems are contemplated

The feasibility and burden to producers of changes to the collected data are tested by asking the providers for their views on the proposals. The administrative systems (RITS/RQAD) are designed to allow Ofqual-the-regulator to meet the statutory duties of regulating qualifications and for Ofqual to properly report official statistics. As such, if any of these duties were to be changed those duties and any reporting requirement thereof would be force majeure.

Information on other administrative sources that are not currently used in the production of official statistics but have potential to be so used

None.

Arrangements for providing the statistical staff, whether inside the producer body or elsewhere, with access to administrative data for statistical purposes

Both RITS and RQAD are located on an Ofqual-the-regulator's secure server that can be accessed by the Statistical Production team via SSIS and by SPSS and is used as a common data platform. Reporting data is always held in a secure area only accessible to members of the Statistics team and their manager. This ensures total confidentiality of base data, workings and, prior to official publication, any official statistics.

Arrangements for auditing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes

The source data comes from many external providers and the actual number fluctuates as new awarding organisations are formally recognised and others exit from the market. It is a requirement of recognition for them to provide Ofqual with accurate information.

Ofqual operates a Quality Assurance Framework policy that guides how information requirements are identified and data quality is ensured by:

- ensuring that data suppliers are clear about what is required of them – a process helped by ensuring that providers are fully consulted during the initial design and any subsequent change phases;

- reminding all providers (if appropriate) that, as a condition of them being regulated, all data must be completely accurate;
- being alert to unexpected changes in the data submitted by comparing individual returns over time from the same supplier;
- actively challenging any unexpected results with the data providers;
- using the Data Auditing Framework to audit providers' information collection, collation and delivery processes as necessary, using a wide range of tools, from questionnaires to on-site process audits.

The Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications and the Data Audit Framework are on the Ofqual website (www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofquals-statistics-policies-and-procedures).

Potential for non-sampling errors and processes for identification/mitigation

The administrative data used is census based and so devoid of any sampling error or bias. While it is a legal requirement for accurate data to be provided, Ofqual is mindful that mistakes happen. Below are the steps, and reasons for them, that Ofqual takes to ensure that the information it gleans is accurate:

- **Type (a) data (required for the regulation/accreditation process of awarding organisations and qualifications)**

As described elsewhere, awarding organisations are responsible for inputting information to Ofqual's RITS system. The awarding organisation is responsible for the submission of qualification information and Ofqual-the-regulator's Entry Exit and Enforcement team use that information to review and make, accept or reject decisions on whether the information meets Ofqual-the-regulator's criteria for a regulated qualification. This information is therefore deemed to be accurate with advertent or inadvertent manipulation of the data designed out of the process.
- **Type (b) data (required for monitoring performance – for example, number of certifications in the period)**

There is potential for risk here, in that if an awarding organisation were to consistently exaggerate the number of certifications it would lead to an over-optimistic view of their market share, which in turn may lead to an overvaluation of the company. As previously noted, this information is provided by the awarding organisations from their own systems and shows the number of events (certifications, registrations, appeals and so on) during the previous period (quarter). It is loaded directly to RITS or sent as an email attachment to

the Data and Statistics Analyst within the Statistics team at Ofqual. Data submitted to the RITS system is automatically checked for ‘regular expressions’ to ensure that it fulfils the expected data type formats.

Both data types (for the certifications and registration data) are extracted by a SSIS package, which merges the data into the RQAD database.

The data contains summary information to guard against mistyping. The RQAD process picks up any data summation issues, which are resolved by the Data and Statistics Analyst talking (in the first instance) to the officers responsible for the information at the awarding organisation level. Processes are being used and further developed to flag abnormal percentage changes from previous submissions. This process enables any outliers to be identified, queried and rectified as required before the data is passed on for analysis proper.

Once the data is passed to the data and statistics officers they run further validation. Any large changes from the previous submissions are verified with the data providers.

In these ways Ofqual minimises the potential for miskeying information at the base data entry phase and acts in an intelligent way to identify any potential for distortion.

Arrangements for ensuring the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data

RITS is an ITL2 approved secure SQL Server system (2008R2) requiring password authentication before access is granted.

The SSIS package used to extract data from RITS is based on a secure server to which a very limited number of Statistics team members have access.

The resultant RQAD database is located on a secure server to which only members of the Statistics team have access.

Subsequent data and statistical manipulation is performed by SPSS. The resultant data sets and reports are also saved to a secure drive ensuring that base data and final reports are only available to the Statistics team members.

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