



Official Statistics

Attainment Statistics (August) 2021 - Provisional

Tuesday 10 August 2021

Summary

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

- Entries for Higher and Advanced Higher are up on 2020, and on each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- Entries for National 5 are down on 2020, but are up on each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- A-C attainment rates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher (85.8%, 87.3% and 90.2% respectively) are down on 2020 but are higher than A-C attainment rates in each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- Grade A attainment rates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher (46.7%, 47.6% and 51.0% respectively) are up on 2020 and are higher than grade A attainment rate for each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- The combination of relatively high A-C attainment rates and increased A attainment rates with high volumes of entries in 2021 has resulted in high volumes of total attainment both for grades A-C and for grade A
- The number of A-C grades attained at Higher and Advanced Higher (169,989 and 24,162 respectively) are up on 2020 and on each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- The number of A-C grades attained at National 5, at 255,517, are down on 2020, but are higher than the number of A-C grades in each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- Scottish Baccalaureate attainment rates (Pass and Distinction) are up on recent historical levels (2017-2020). Entries match the 152 seen in 2020 and remain within the range seen between 2017 to 2019

Headline figures for 2021:

National 5

Entries were 297,973 (300,639 in 2020; 288,552 in 2019; 281,785 in 2018)

85.8% attainment at A-C grade for **National 5** (89.0% in 2020; 78.2% in 2019; 77.4% in 2018)

46.7% attainment at A grade for **National 5** (42.3% in 2020; 35.1% in 2019; 35.1% in 2018)

Higher

Entries were 194,661 (186,214 in 2020; 185,914 in 2019; 191,951 in 2018)

87.3% attainment at A-C grades for **Higher** (89.3% in 2020; 74.8% in 2019; 76.8% in 2018)

47.6% attainment at A grade for **Higher** (40.0% in 2020; 28.3% in 2019; 28.4% in 2018)

Advanced Higher

Entries were 26,795 (23,570 in 2020; 23,460 in 2019; 24,331 in 2019)

90.2% attainment at A-C grades for **Advanced Higher** (93.1% in 2020; 79.4% in 2019; 80.5% in 2018)

51.0% attainment at A for **Advanced Highers** (46.3% in 2020; 31.8% in 2019; 32.3% in 2018)

Scottish Baccalaureate

Entries were 152 (152 in 2020; 157 in 2019; 155 in 2018)

91.4% total attainment rate for **The Scottish Baccalaureate** (86.2% in 2020; 69.4% in 2019; 77.4% in 2018)

64.5% entries received Distinction for **The Scottish Baccalaureate** (55.9% in 2020; 33.4% in 2019; 45.2% in 2018)

National 2 – National 4

National 2 – Entries were 2,184 (2,011 in 2020; 2,070 in 2019; 2,077 in 2018)

68.9% attainment rate (75.5% in 2020; 77.1% in 2019; 79.7% in 2018)

National 3 – Entries were 21,046 (21,798 in 2020; 19,285 in 2019; 17,646 in 2018)

86.1% attainment rate (91.5% in 2020; 87.9% in 2019; 91.5% in 2018)

National 4 – Entries were 104,378 (103,596 in 2020; 104,866 in 2019; 106,033 in 2018)

86.1% attainment rate (91.0% in 2020; 88.5% in 2019; 91.1% in 2018)

Skills for Work

SCQF level 3 – 100.0% attainment rate (100.0% in 2020; 0.0% in 2019; 63.6% in 2018)

SCQF level 4 – 66.6% attainment rate (79.3% in 2020; 77.7% in 2019; 79.3% in 2018)

SCQF level 5 – 79.9% attainment rate (86.4% in 2020; 82.7% in 2019; 86.0% in 2018)

SCQF level 6 – 81.0% attainment rate (76.6% in 2020; 78.4% in 2019; 81.4% in 2018)

Awards, National Certificates and National Progression Awards

The overall attainment for Awards, National Certificates (NCs), and National Progression Awards (NPAs) numbered 45,009 in 2021 (51,942 in 2020; 44,744 in 2019; 41,526 in 2018)

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1 Official Statistics

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) became an Official Statistics producer in [The Official Statistics \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2019](#).

This publication marks the first Official Statistics publication produced by SQA in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Attainment Statistics (August) presents a count of attainment on Results Day in August in a given year. This reflects current information at a particular snapshot in time (end of July) and the figures are subject to change later in the year. Attainment Statistics (August) have always been considered “provisional” with Attainment Statistics (December) providing a fuller picture of attainment following appeals, late amendments procedures, etc. In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, these statistics have now been marked as provisional.

Attainment statistics for Awards, National Progression Awards and National Certificate qualifications detail the number of certificated entries between 1st August 2020 and 30th June 2021 and are therefore subject to change when attainment across the complete academic year is published in the later Attainment Statistics (December) report.

More information can be found on our website and in the accompanying statistical methodology documentation via the additional links section at the end of this publication.

2 Background

Attainment Statistics (August – Provisional) details the main qualifications taken at school and college level by learners in Scotland: a mix of current National Courses (National 2 to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) as well as Skills for Work, Awards, National Progression Awards, and National Certificates.

The purpose of National Courses, as well as Skills for Work, Awards, National Progression Awards and National Certifications, is to enable certification and recognition for the programmes of work that learners undertake in the senior phase of secondary education and in colleges.

The broad objectives of National Courses are to provide high standards, and breadth and depth of learning for individual learners, assessed usually via national exams, coursework and / or internally assessed components.

In 2021, the Scottish Government commissioned the SQA to develop an Alternative Certification Model (ACM 2021) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher for 2021. This model was developed by the National Qualifications 2021 Group. The National Qualifications 2021 Group is represented by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Colleges Scotland, Education Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), School Leaders Scotland (SLS), the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the Scottish Government, National Parent Forum of Scotland, and the Scottish Youth Parliament. The model is based on teacher judgment, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. More information on the [ACM 2021 methodology](#) can be found on our information page.

In 2020, the Deputy First Minister directed SQA to issue grades, primarily on the basis of teacher estimates. 9,198 grades that had been adjusted upwards in an [earlier moderation process](#) were also retained.

Prior to 2020 and 2021, the Scottish examination system had been in a period of change since the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

Revised National Qualification (RNQ) changes made to the assessment of National 5 courses in 2018, Higher courses in 2019 and Advanced Higher courses in 2020, meant units and unit assessments were removed and each course assessment was adjusted accordingly.

In addition, grade D was extended from a notional 45–49% to a notional 40–49%, meaning grade D attainment (and No Award results) from:

- 2016/17 and previous years are not directly comparable for National 5
- 2017/18 and previous years are not directly comparable for Higher
- 2018/19 and previous years are not directly comparable for Advanced Higher

Users of these statistics should be mindful of the above information and the different approach to deriving results for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in 2021, particularly when commenting on 2021 results in the context of previous years. This includes commenting on 2021 figures in the context of 2020 results.

Generally, the information in this summary focuses on the period 2017-2021 unless indicated otherwise.

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

3 National 5

National 5 Courses are notionally based on 160 hours of directed learning and 80 hours of self-directed learning and equate to 24 SCQF credit points. National 5 courses (SCQF level 5) were introduced in 2014. Until 2018, National 5 courses required the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally-assessed units and a course assessment which, in most cases, was an externally assessed examination and/or coursework. In 2018, units and unit assessment were removed.

SQA implemented various modifications to reduce the assessment requirements for courses in 2021. This was in recognition of the disruption to learning arising from the COVID 19 pandemic. A modification summary for each course is provided on the [relevant subject's page on SQA's website](#).

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

3.1 National 5 overview

- There were **297,973** entries at **National 5 level** in 2021 (-2,666 from 2020)
- The **largest increase in entries** for 2021 was for **Physical Education** (+1,172 to 18,366)
- The **largest decrease in entries** for 2021 was **Mathematics** (-4,803, to 36,481)
- Of the 48 subjects at National 5, 44 saw a decrease or no change in their A-C attainment rate on 2020.
- The **largest decrease in the A-C attainment rate** was for Applications of Mathematics (-11.3 percentage points to 64.0%)
- The **largest increase in the A-C attainment rate** was for Gàidhlig (+1.1 percentage points to 99.5%)
- Of the 48 subjects at National 5, 40 saw an increase in their A attainment rate on 2020.
- The **largest increase in the A attainment rate** was for Fashion and Textile Technology (+19.1 percentage points to 47.4%)
- The **largest decrease in the A attainment rate** was for Urdu (-10.9 percentage points to 78.8%)

3.2 National 5 Entries

This year, entries have decreased on 2020 but remain above recent historical levels.

3.3 National 5 Attainment

Attainment of A-C results as a percentage of total entries (A-C attainment rate) showed a decrease on 2020 but remains high in relation to historical levels.

Attainment of A results as a percentage of total entries (A attainment rate) showed an increase over previous years.

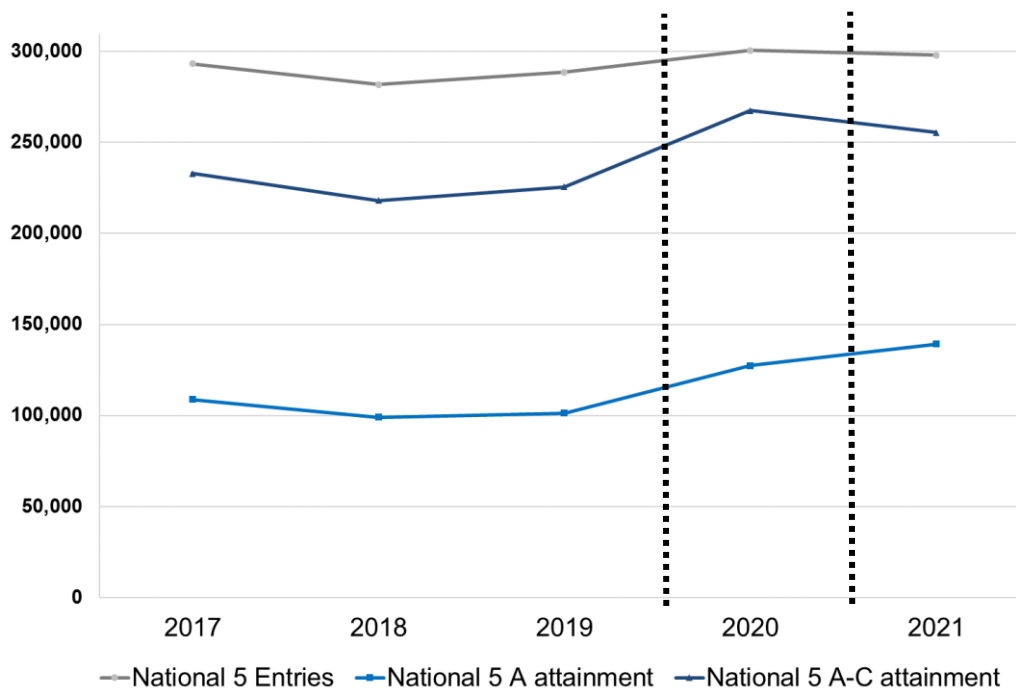
Table 1. National 5 summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	293,220	281,785	288,552	300,639	297,973
Grade A-C attainment volumes	233,005	218,201	225,594	267,558	255,517
Grade A-C attainment rate	79.5%	77.4%	78.2%	89.0%	85.8%
Grade A attainment volumes	108,700	98,959	101,273	127,299	139,133
Grade A attainment rate	37.1%	35.1%	35.1%	42.3%	46.7%

With an increase in entries on historical years, total National 5 attainment volumes at A-C, although lower than 2020, are up on each year in the period 2017 to 2019.

Attainment volumes at grade A are up on 2020 and on each year in the period 2017 to 2019.

Chart 1. National 5 summary (2017-2021)



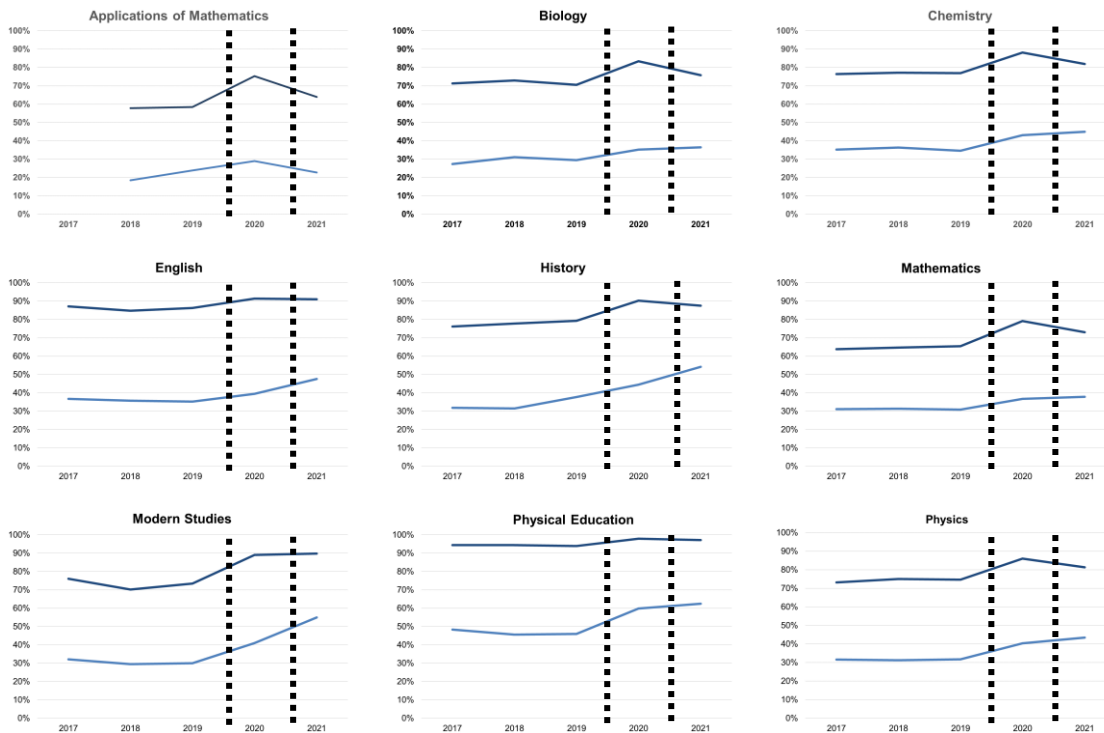
Changes in the A-C attainment rate of a large National 5 subject will have a bigger effect on the total numbers attaining grades A-C at a national level. Whilst there has been a decrease in the overall A-C attainment rate seen this year on last year, the level of change varies from subject to subject.

Most subjects saw a decrease in their A-C attainment rate relative to 2020 to varying degrees. Some subjects (such as Modern Studies) continued to see a rise in their A-C attainment rates this year.

The vast majority of subjects saw a further increases to their A attainment rates this year on 2020. There were exceptions to this including Urdu and Applications of Mathematics which saw year-on-year decreases in A attainment rate.

The charts below show the A-C and A attainment rates from 2017 to 2021 for the National 5 subjects with the largest entries in 2021.

Chart 2. Nine largest subjects at National 5 - A-C and A attainment rates (2017 to 2021)



— Subject A rate (bottom line) — Subject A-C rate (top line)

NB Applications of Mathematics was introduced in 2018

3.4 Sex difference in grade attainment at National 5

Further discussion on sex differences can be found in the 2021 Alternative Certification Model [Equalities Monitoring Report on our information page](#).

Headline Statistics – attainment by Sex

- **87.2%** A-C grade attainment for **Females** at **National 5** (90.4% in 2020; 90.2% in 2019; 80.1% in 2018; 81.4% in 2017)
- **84.3%** A-C grade attainment for **Males** at **National 5** (87.6% in 2020; 76.0% in 2019; 74.5% in 2018; 77.4% in 2017)
- **51.5%** A grade attainment for **Females** at **National 5** (46.4% in 2020; 39.2% in 2019; 39.1% in 2018; 41.1% in 2017)
- **41.8%** A grade attainment for **Males** at **National 5** (38.2% in 2020; 30.8% in 2019; 30.9% in 2018; 32.8% in 2017)

Historically A-C and A attainment rates for females have been higher than for males.

The overall difference in the A-C attainment rate between males and females has reduced from 4.2 percentage points in 2019 to 2.8 and 2.9 percentage points in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

The overall difference in the A attainment rate between males and females was around 8.2-8.4 percentage points between 2017-2020. This year, the difference in the A attainment rate between males and females has increased to 9.8 percentage points.

Table 2. National 5 summary – Sex (2019-2021)

	2019		2020		2021	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Entries	139,988	148,564	146,914	153,708	147,688	150,206
Grade A-C attainment volumes	106,390	119,204	128,660	138,884	124,466	130,973
Grade A-C attainment rate	76.0%	80.2%	87.6%	90.4%	84.3%	87.2%
Grade A attainment volumes	43,066	58,207	56,054	71,224	61,686	77,389
Grade A attainment rate	30.8%	39.2%	38.2%	46.4%	41.8%	51.5%

4 Higher

Higher Courses are notionally based on 160 hours of directed learning and 80 hours of self-directed learning and equate to 24 SCQF credit points. The Higher courses (SCQF level 6) have been designed to reflect the purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The current Higher qualification was first introduced in 2015. Until 2019, Higher courses required the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally-assessed units and a course assessment which, in most cases, was externally assessed through an examination and/or coursework. In 2019, units and unit assessment were removed.

SQA implemented various modifications to reduce the assessment requirements for courses in 2021. This was in recognition of the disruption to learning arising from the COVID 19 pandemic. A modification summary for each course is provided on the [relevant subject's page on SQA's website](#).

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

4.1 Higher Overview

- There were **194,661** entries at **Higher level** in 2021 (+8,447 from 2020)
- The **largest increase in entries** for 2021 was for **Physical Education** (+1,159 to 11,803)
- The **largest decrease in entries** for 2021 was **Care** (-356, to 363)
- Of the 46 subjects at Higher, 38 saw a decrease or no change in their A-C attainment rate on 2020.
- The **largest decrease in the A-C attainment rate** was for Environmental Science (-9.1 percentage points to 80.4%)
- The **largest increase in the A-C attainment rate** was for Sociology (+6.1 percentage points to 87.9%)
- Of the 46 subjects at Higher, 45 saw an increase in their A attainment rate on 2020.
- The **largest increase in the A attainment rate** was for Psychology (+16.4 percentage points to 49.4%)
- The **only decrease in the A attainment rate** was for Engineering Science (-0.5 percentage points to 40.1%)

Table 3. Higher summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	194,813	191,951	185,914	186,214	194,661
Grade A-C attainment volumes	150,010	147,419	138,972	166,208	169,989
Grade A-C attainment rate	77.0%	76.8%	74.8%	89.3%	87.3%
Grade A attainment volumes	55,939	54,576	52,564	74,478	92,753
Grade A attainment rate	28.7%	28.4%	28.3%	40.0%	47.6%

4.2 Higher Entries

Pre Covid-19, entries at Higher level had seen a consistent year on year decline from 2016, reaching a four year low in 2019. Entries at Higher saw an increase in 2021 to almost 2016 levels.

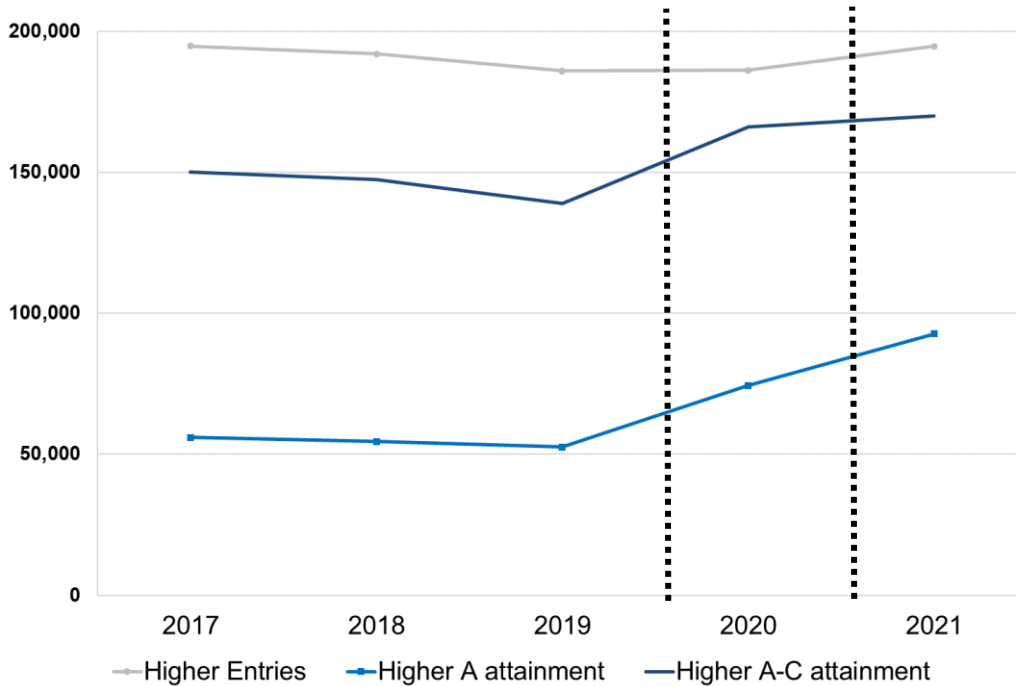
4.3 Higher Attainment

Similarly to entry volumes, attainment of A-C as a percentage of total entries (A-C attainment rate) had seen a year-on-year decline historically, reaching a four-year low in 2019. The A-C attainment rate increased in 2020 over prior historical rates. In that year, the A-C attainment rate increased to 89.3% from 74.8% in 2019. In 2021, the attainment rate has decreased on 2020, but at 87.3%, remains higher than each year in the period 2017 to 2019.

Whilst the A-C attainment rate for Higher fell slightly between 2020 and 2021, the increase in entries this year means that total volumes of A-C grades in 2021, at 169,989, are higher than A-C volumes in 2020 and in each year in the period 2017 to 2019.

With an increase in entries and an increase in the A attainment rate this year, the number of A grades at Higher are also at a high.

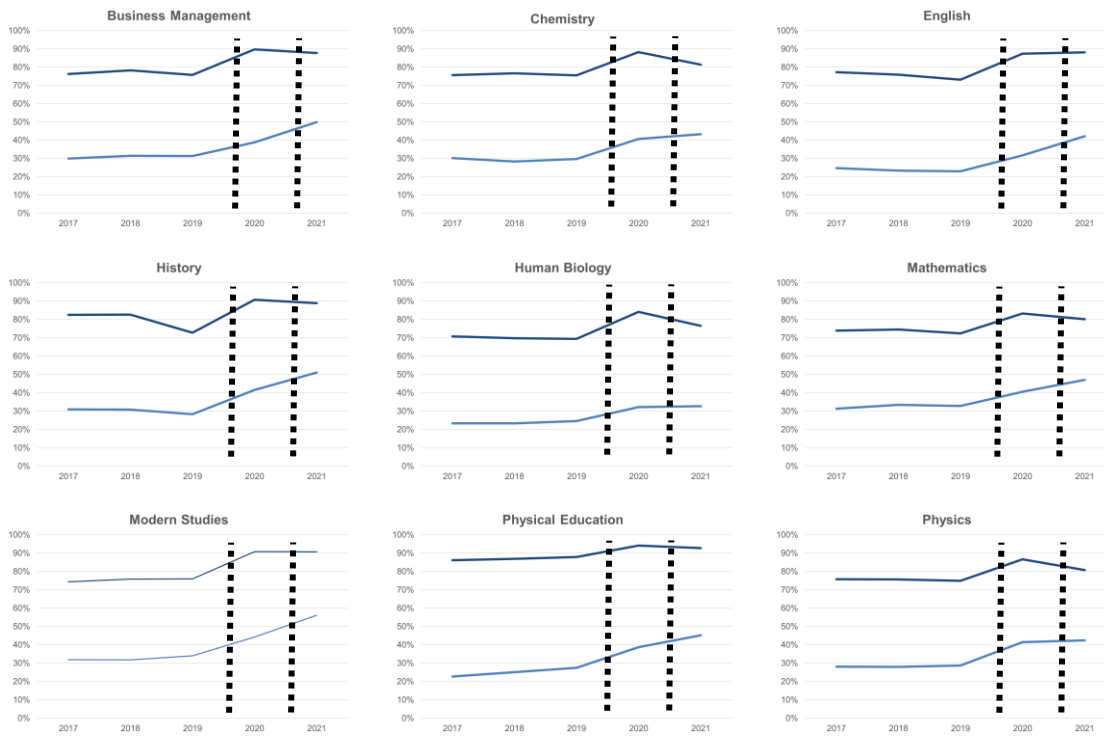
Chart 3. Higher summary (2017 - 2021)



Changes in the A-C or A attainment rate of a large Higher subject has more of an effect on total attainment. The charts below show the differences in attainment rates between 2017 and 2021 for the nine subjects with the largest number of entries at Higher in 2021. The top darker line is the A-C rate and the bottom lighter line shows the A rate.

Whilst there has been a year-on-year decrease in the overall A-C attainment rate for Higher in 2021, the level of change varies from subject to subject. Of the 46 subjects at Higher, only one saw a decrease in its A attainment rate (Engineering Science by half a percentage point). Thirteen Higher subjects saw their A attainment rates increase by over ten percentage points between 2020 and 2021.

Chart 4. Nine largest subjects at Higher - A-C and A attainment rates (2017 to 2021)



— Subject A rate (bottom line) — Subject A-C rate (top line)

4.4 Sex difference in grade attainment at Higher

Further discussion on sex differences can be found in the 2021 Alternative Certification Model [Equalities Monitoring Report on our information page](#).

Headline Statistics – attainment by Sex

- **89.4%** A-C grade attainment for **Females at Higher** (90.9% in 2020; 76.8% in 2019; 79.5% in 2018; 79.6% in 2017)
- **84.8%** A-C grade attainment for **Males at Higher** (87.2% in 2020; 72.2% in 2019; 73.4% in 2018; 73.8% in 2017)
- **52.1%** A grade attainment for **Females at Higher** (43.3% in 2020; 30.3% in 2019; 31.1% in 2018; 31.8% in 2017)
- **42.2%** A grade attainment for **Males at Higher** (35.9% in 2020; 25.6% in 2019; 25.1% in 2018; 24.9% in 2017)

Historically, A-C and A attainment rates for females have been higher than for males at Higher.

The difference in overall A-C attainment rates between males and females reduced from 4.6 percentage points in 2019 to 3.7 percentage points in 2020, returning to 4.6 percentage points in 2021.

The overall difference in the A attainment rate between males and females had decreased to 4.7 percentage points in 2019. The difference in the A attainment rate between males and females increased to 7.4 percentage points in 2020 and 9.9 percentage points in 2021.

Table 4. Higher summary – Sex (2019-2021)

	2019		2020		2021	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Entries	81,891	104,019	82,380	103,828	87,980	106,664
Grade A-C attainment volumes	59,104	79,866	71,839	94,364	74,611	95,367
Grade A-C attainment rate	72.2%	76.8%	87.2%	90.9%	84.8%	89.4%
Grade A attainment volumes	21,001	31,562	29,568	44,910	37,138	55,610
Grade A attainment rate	25.6%	30.3%	35.9%	43.3%	42.2%	52.1%

5 Advanced Higher

National Courses at Advanced Higher are notionally based on 160 hours of directed learning and 160 hours of self-directed learning, and equate to 32 SCQF credit points. The current Advanced Higher qualification was first introduced in 2016.

Until 2020, Advanced Higher courses (SCQF level 7) required the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally-assessed units and a course assessment which, in most cases, was externally assessed through an examination and/or coursework. In 2020, units and unit assessment were removed.

SQA implemented various modifications to reduce the assessment requirements for courses in 2021. This was in recognition of the disruption to learning arising from the COVID 19 pandemic. A modification summary for each course is provided on the [relevant subject's page on SQA's website](#).

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

5.1 Advanced Higher overview

- There were **26,795** entries at Advanced **Higher level** in 2021 (+3,225 from 2020)
- The **largest increase in entries** for 2020 was for **English** (+589 to 2,830)
- The **largest decrease in entries** for 2020 was **Economics** (-24, to 79)
- Of the 35 subjects at Advanced Higher, 28 saw a decrease or no change in their A-C attainment rate on 2020.
- Of the 35 subjects at Higher, 30 saw an increase or no change in their A attainment rate on 2020

Due to the small numbers taking some Advanced Higher subjects, A-C and A rate changes can be more variable at a subject level.

Table 5. Advanced Higher summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	24,112	24,331	23,460	23,570	26,795
Grade A-C attainment volumes	19,283	19,585	18,627	21,935	24,162
Grade A-C attainment rate	80.0%	80.5%	79.4%	93.1%	90.2%
Grade A attainment volumes	7,643	7,865	7,458	10,919	13,654
Grade A attainment rate	31.7%	32.3%	31.8%	46.3%	51.0%

5.2 Advanced Higher Entries

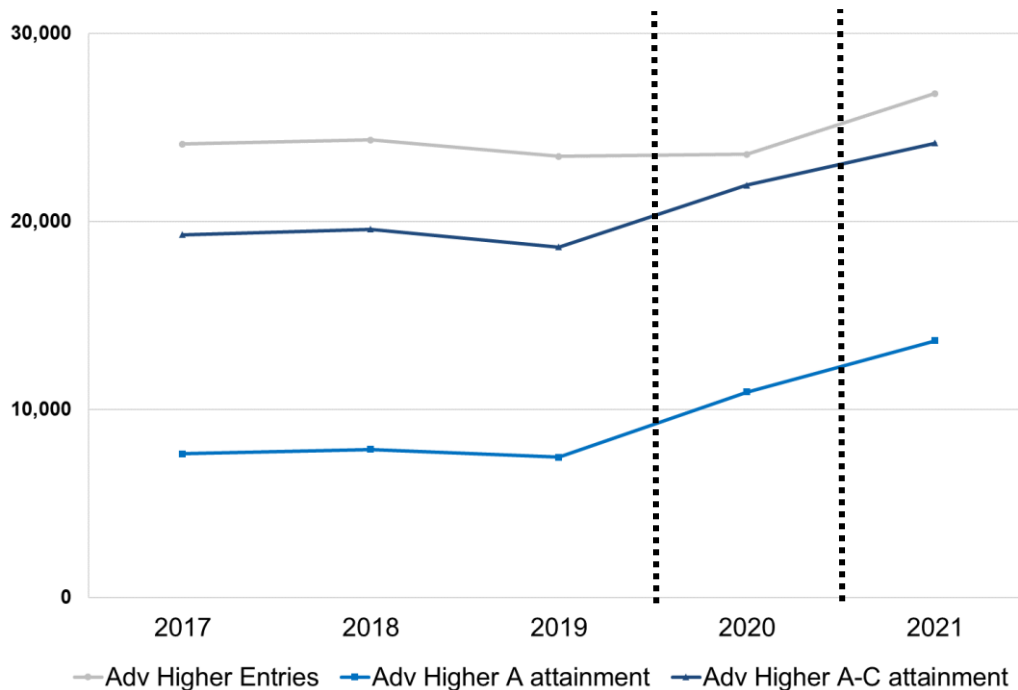
Entries at Advanced Higher in 2021 at 26,795, are higher than each year in the period 2017 to 2020.

5.3 Attainment

Attainment of A-C results as a percentage of total entries (A-C rate) increased in 2020 over previous historical rates to 93.1%. In 2021, the A-C attainment rate 90.2% has decreased on 2020, but remains higher than each year in the period 2017 to 2019.

Similarly to Higher, whilst the A-C attainment rate decreased between 2020 and 2021 for Advanced Higher, the increase in entries in 2021 means that the total volume of A-C grades at 24,162 are higher than any year in the period 2017 to 2021.

Chart 5. Advanced Higher summary (2017 - 2021)



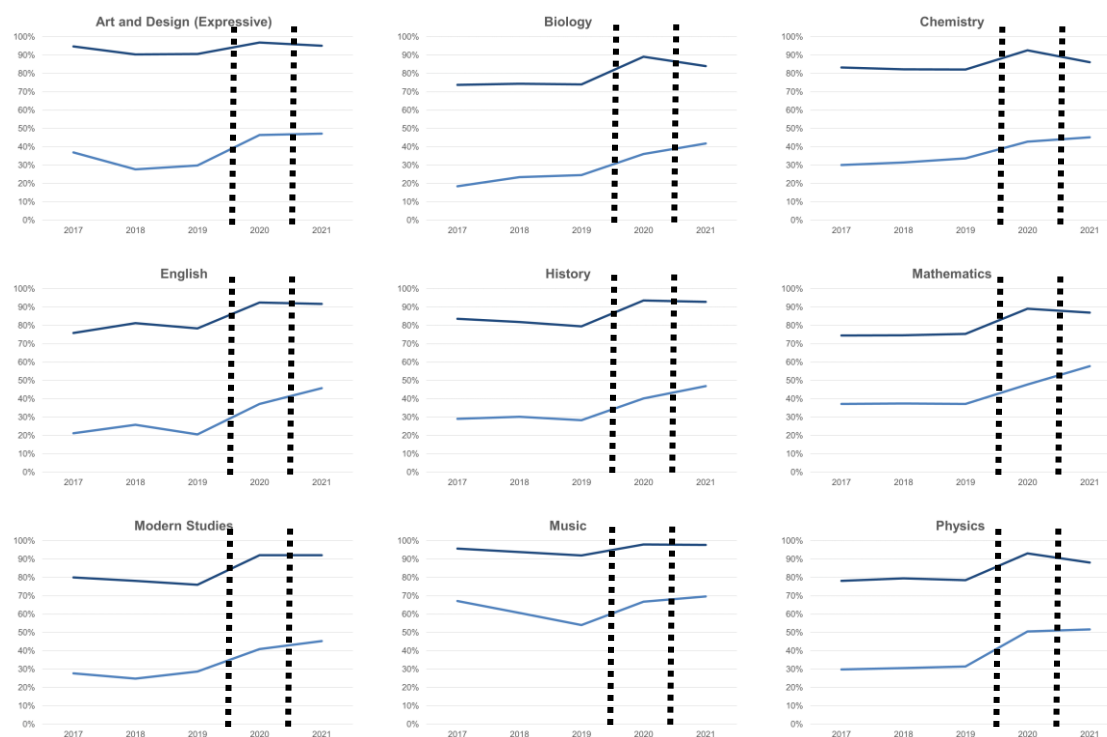
A attainment rates increased in 2021 on 2020, and on historical attainment rates. With an increase in entries, there has been a corresponding increase in overall A attainment volumes this year. Similarly to National 5 and Higher, this year the number of A grades attained for Advanced Higher, at 13,654, are at a high.

Changes in the A-C or A attainment rate of a large subject has more of an effect on the total attainment for that level. Whilst there has been a decrease in the overall A-C attainment rate relative to 2020, the level of change varies from subject to subject. Out of 35 subjects, 23 saw decreases in their A-C attainment rates on last year.

Out of 35 subjects, only five saw decreases in their A attainment rate. Nine Advanced Higher subjects saw their A attainment rates increase by over ten percentage points between 2020 and 2021.

The charts below show A-C and A attainment rates from 2017 to 2021 for the nine subjects with the largest entries at Advanced Higher in 2021.

Chart 6. Nine largest subjects at Advanced Higher - A-C and A attainment rates (2017 to 2021)



— Subject A rate (bottom line) — Subject A-C rate (top line)

5.4 Sex difference in grade attainment at Advanced Higher

Further discussion on sex differences can be found in the 2021 Alternative Certification Model [Equalities Monitoring Report on our information page](#).

Headline Statistics – attainment by Sex

- **92.2%** A-C grade attainment for **Females** at **Higher** (94.4% in 2020; 81.4% in 2019; 83.5% in 2018; 82.4% in 2017)
- **87.6%** A-C grade attainment for **Males** at **Higher** (91.4% in 2020; 76.8% in 2019; 76.7% in 2018; 77.1% in 2017)
- **53.2%** A grade attainment for **Females** at **Higher** (47.6% in 2020; 32.0% in 2019; 33.3% in 2018; 32.5% in 2017)
- **48.1%** A grade attainment for **Males** at **Higher** (44.8% in 2020; 31.5% in 2019; 31.1% in 2018; 30.8% in 2017)

Historically A-C and A attainment rates for females have been higher than for males (with the exception of 2019 when the A attainment rate for males (31.5%) achieved near equivalence with females (32.0%)).

The difference in overall A-C attainment rate between males and females reduced from 4.6 percentage points in 2019 to 3.1 percentage points in 2020, returning to 4.6 percentage points in 2021.

The overall difference in the A attainment rate between males and females had decreased to 0.5 percentage point in 2019. The difference in the A attainment rate between males and females increased to 2.8 percentage points in 2020 and to 5.1 percentage points in 2021.

Table 6. Advanced Higher summary – Sex (2019-2021)

	2019		2020		2021	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Entries	10,283	13,177	10,361	13,209	11,636	15,158
Grade A-C attainment volumes	7,901	10,726	9,465	12,470	10,192	13,969
Grade A-C attainment rate	76.8%	81.4%	91.4%	94.4%	87.6%	92.2%
Grade A attainment volumes	3,243	4,215	4,638	6,281	5,593	8,061
Grade A attainment rate	31.5%	32.0%	44.8%	47.6%	48.1%	53.2%

6 Scottish Baccalaureate

The Scottish Baccalaureate is available in four subject areas (Science, Languages, Social Sciences and Expressive Arts) and consists of a coherent group of Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications, and an Interdisciplinary Project.

Learners must attain a grade A-C result in at least two Advanced Highers and one Higher in the eligible courses, as well as a grade A-C result in the Interdisciplinary Project.

In The Scottish Baccalaureate, a 'Distinction' requires a grade A in one of the Advanced Highers, one other grade A in one of the other constituent components and at least a grade B in all other components.

A 'Pass' is awarded to those who achieve at least a grade C in all mandatory components.

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

Table 7. Scottish Baccalaureate summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	161	155	157	152	152
Pass attainment volumes	138	120	109	131	139
Pass attainment rate	85.7%	77.4%	69.4%	86.2%	91.4%
Distinction attainment volumes	71	70	54	85	98
Distinction attainment rate	44.1%	45.2%	34.4%	55.9%	64.5%

While entries remain stable, Scottish Baccalaureate attainment rates (pass and distinction) are at the highest they have ever been in the period considered.

7 National 2 to National 4

National 2-3 courses are a flexible provision and are not necessarily completed by learners in a single academic year. Consequently, the results are not directly comparable with other courses.

For National 2 - National 4 and Skills for Work, which are all ungraded, the attainment rate is based on entries which have resulted in a pass.

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

National 2

National 2 courses (SCQF level 2) were introduced in 2014. National 2 courses require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Table 8. National 2 summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	1,896	2,077	2,070	2,011	2,184
Attainment volumes	1,547	1,655	1,596	1,518	1,505
Attainment rate	81.6%	79.7%	77.1%	75.5%	68.9%

Entries were made in 15 National 2 Courses. Entries numbered 2,184 in 2021 with attainment of 1,505, giving an attainment rate of 68.9%.

48.0% of learners entered for National 2 courses in 2021 were 4th year learners, 23.5% were from 5th year, 15.1% 6th year, 6.8% from FE colleges, with the remaining learners coming from other stages.

National 3

National 3 courses (SCQF level 3) were introduced in 2014. National 3 courses require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Table 9. National 3 summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	17,114	17,646	19,285	21,798	21,046
Attainment volumes	15,543	16,138	16,958	19,947	18,131
Attainment rate	90.8%	91.5%	87.9%	91.5%	86.1%

Entries were made in 37 National 3 Courses. Entries numbered 21,046 in 2021 with attainment of 18,131, giving an attainment rate of 86.1%.

83.4% of learners entered for National 3 courses in 2021 were 4th year learners, 7.2% 5th year, with the remaining learners coming from other stages.

National 4

National 4 courses (SCQF level 4) were introduced in 2014. National 4 courses require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units, including an Added Value unit, in a particular subject.

Table 10. National 4 summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	116,032	106,033	104,866	103,596	104,378
Attainment volumes	107,631	96,613	92,845	94,228	89,894
Attainment rate	92.8%	91.1%	88.5%	91.0%	86.1%

Entries were made in 43 National 4 Courses. Entries numbered 104,378 in 2021 with attainment of 89,894, giving an attainment rate of 86.1%.

80.9% of learners entered for National 4 courses in 2021 were 4th year learners, 12.7% from 5th year, and 3.3% from 6th year, with the remaining learners coming from other stages.

NB. National 4 figures for 2019 and previous years include those awarded through the Recognising Positive Achievement (RPA) process. SQA treat National 4 attainment arising through course completion and the RPA process as being equivalent. In 2019, National 4 course entries within centres (excluding entries arising through RPA) was estimated, using certification data, to be 95,870.

8 Skills for Work

Skills for Work courses are available across SCQF level 3-6. Skills for Work courses involve a strong element of learning through involvement in practical activities which are directly related to a particular vocational area, and they develop knowledge and skills that are important to employment. Skills for Work courses require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Similarly, Skills for Work courses are a flexible provision, not necessarily completed by learners in a single academic year. Consequently, the results are not directly comparable with other courses.

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

Table 11. Skills for Work summary (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	10,341	10,508	11,938	14,632	13,624
Attainment volumes	8,665	8,779	9,662	12,332	10,466
Attainment rate	83.8%	83.5%	80.9%	84.3%	76.8%

9 Awards, National Certificates and National Progression Awards

SQA Awards recognise the life and work skills that learners gain from activities they might already be taking part in at school, at college or elsewhere - such as sport, mentoring, voluntary work or fund-raising activities. In common with some other qualifications in SQA's portfolio they have been designed to recognise wider achievement. Awards require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.

Table 12. Awards, NCs and NPAs summary (2017-2021)

	Attainment				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
SCQF level 1					
Awards	290	386	439	399	115
SCQF level 2					
Awards	1,167	664	1,004	912	710
National Progression Awards	88	121	69	91	84
SCQF level 3					
Awards	4,303	3,937	4,428	4,253	3,358
National Certificates	1	0	7	5	0
National Progression Awards	177	142	100	207	47
SCQF level 4					
Awards	10,834	9,851	10,292	11,736	9,491
National Certificates	345	213	223	166	131
National Progression Awards	4,803	4,759	4,371	4,321	3,691
SCQF level 5					
Awards	3,662	3,755	5,184	8,232	7,200
National Certificates	2,691	2,450	1,809	1,465	1,175
National Progression Awards	4,395	4,604	5,252	5,915	5,393
SCQF level 6					
Awards	3,523	4,258	5,388	5,896	5,677
National Certificates	3,585	3,538	2,834	2,648	1,841
National Progression Awards	1,619	2,848	3,344	5,696	6,096
TOTAL	41,483	41,526	44,744	51,942	45,009

Entries were made in 23 Awards courses across SCQF levels 1 – 6. Attainment numbered 26,551 in 2021.

National Certificates are primarily aimed at 16-18 year olds and adults in education, normally at a college. They offer learners a full-time programme of vocational study. National

Certificates require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Entries were made in 64 National Certificates courses across SCQF levels 3 – 6. Attainment numbered 3,147 in 2021.

National Progression Awards are designed to develop and assess a defined set of skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas. They are linked to National Occupational Standards - the basis of Scottish Vocational Qualifications. National Progression Awards require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Entries were made in 151 National Progression Awards courses. Attainment numbered 15,311 in 2021.

10 Additional links

[SQA Official Statistics documentation](#)

[SQA Methodology for Attainment Statistics \(August\)](#)

[SQA Statistics Publication Schedule](#)

[SQA Statistics](#) – current year

[SQA Statistics - archive](#)

[SQA Information](#) – current year

[SQA Information - archive](#)

[SQA Statistics Revisions and Correction Policy](#)