



Attainment Statistics (December) Methodology

This document forms part of the SQA methodology document releases designed to supplement and support our Official Statistics publications.

Source Data and Definitions

Entries in this publication are defined by the recorded statistical qualification entries as extracted annually in November each year as part of the SQA statistical data pertaining to certification entries and awards.

Attainment in this publication is defined by:

- **National 2 - National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher, Scottish Baccalaureate and Skills for Work**
The recorded statistical qualification results as extracted annually in November as part of the SQA statistical data pertaining to certification entries and awards.
- **Awards, National Progressions Awards and National Certificates**
The recorded statistical qualification results as extracted on a monthly basis as part of the SQA statistical data pertaining to certificated entries between 1st August YYYY and 31st July YYYY+1 (e.g. 1st August 2020 to 31st July 2021).

Stage in this publication is defined by the candidate's recorded stage for the academic year. SQA statistical stage information is calculated using SQA stage information and a data set from the Scottish Government detailing stage for publicly funded and grant aided schools. The reported stage groups cover third, fourth, fifth and sixth year school candidates, Other School candidates (which includes first year, second year and adults attending school), Further Education Colleges, and Other (which covers candidates outwith school or college, for example workplace candidates).

As the entire source data for this publication is composed of statistical data/extracts, the contents of the publication is reproducible and will remain so in the future.

Methodology

The development work required to undertake this reporting was undertaken in-house.

The total entries are calculated for each qualification within selected qualification types contained in the report: National 2 - National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher, Scottish Baccalaureate and Skills for Work.

The total attainment is calculated for each qualification within all qualification types contained in the report: National 2 - National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher, Scottish Baccalaureate, Skills for Work, Awards, National Progressions Awards and National Certificates

For graded qualifications (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) attainment is reported cumulatively from A to A-D, with No Awards reported separately. For ungraded qualifications (National 2 - National 4, Scottish Baccalaureate, Skills for Work, Awards, National Progressions Awards and National Certificates) attainment is reported as the number of candidates attaining the qualification. The Scottish Baccalaureate also details the number of candidates obtaining the Pass classification 'Distinction'.

Where the qualification can be completed in different language mediums, the combined total entries and attainment are reported:

- 'Mandarin (Traditional)', 'Mandarin (Simplified)' and 'Cantonese' are combined and reported as 'Chinese Languages'.
- 'Mathematics' and 'Matamataig' are combined and reported as 'Mathematics'.
- 'Applications of Mathematics' and 'Gniomhachas Matamataigs' are combined and reported as 'Applications of Mathematics'.
- 'History' and 'Eachdraidh' are combined and reported as 'History'.
- 'Geography' and 'Cruinn-eolas' are combined and reported as 'Geography'.
- 'Modern Studies' and 'Nuadh-Eolas' are combined and reported as 'Modern Studies'.

Stage is calculated on a candidate basis, not a record basis, for each level. To ensure the most appropriate stage is reported, each records associated stage is allocated a priority level. Only the highest priority level is retained and reported for each candidate at each level.

- Stage 6 is given priority 1 – 'S6'
- Stage 5 is given priority 2 – 'S5'
- Stage 4 is given priority 3 – 'S4'
- Stage 3 is given priority 4 – 'S3'
- Stages 1, 2 and 7 are given priority 5 – 'Other School'
- Stage 10 is given priority 6 – 'FE College'
- Any other stage given priority 7 – 'Other'

For example, a candidate with 3 National 5 records and 1 Higher record will be counted once in the National 5 stage table and once in the Higher stage table with the stage retained at each level being based on the prioritisation detailed above.

Full details of the format and content can be found within the 'Tables Format and Content' tab of the publication.

Publication History

The first publication took place during December 2014 and has subsequently been published on an annual basis in December.

Previous to the 2014 publication, an equivalent publication '*Post-Appeals National Course and Awards Result Statistics*' was published on an annual basis in December. Similar to '*Attainment Statistics (December)*', this publication detailed the number of certificated entries

as at November, following the completion of the appeals procedures. This change was necessitated by the removal of the appeals service in place of a new results services process.

Processing Notes/Exceptions

From 2016, Skills for Work and Personal Development courses are reported separately. Personal Development Courses fall within the SQA 'Award' qualifications, previously being part of SQA National Qualification provision.

Information Governance Notes

All of the data in this publication is defined as being 'statistical' for the purposes of information governance and data protection purposes. This primarily means that the associated processing is not carried out for the purposes of measures or decisions with respect to a particular data subject. Please see the appropriate legislation linked at the end of this document for details of this processing category.

Statistical Disclosure Control

Statistical disclosure control is applied to published tables to ensure that candidate level information cannot be identified.

Historic statistical disclosure control policy was to suppress grade distribution figures for subjects with fewer than five entries in order that individual candidates cannot be identified. Issues with this approach included that figures could often be re-calculated from totals or by combining information across tables.

In August 2021, the statistical disclosure control procedures were enhanced with additional suppression of figures. The aim of this has been to ensure that disclosure controlled figures cannot be re-calculated. This applies to December 2021 publications and historic tables have not been amended.

SQA Statistics will review statistical disclosure control with stakeholders and may make changes to this in future publications.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance procedures include the checking of published figures using different statistical programs by individual members of the statistical team.

References

Data Protection Act 2018, Processing for archiving, research and statistical purposes (Section 19) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/section/19/enacted>