

## A-Level Results: ALL Member Update 22/08/12

ALL was represented at the JCQ Briefing for Stakeholders on Thursday 16 August 2012, where detailed information was issued about 2012 A-Level results.

### A-Level numbers:

The numbers taking A Level in French and German have continued to decrease year on year since 2002 and this year is no exception. 2012 also sees entries for Spanish falling for the first time in several years.

A-Level Numbers	2012	2011	2010	2002
French	12,511	13,196	13,907	16,053
German	4,773	5,166	5,562	7,139
Spanish	7,351	7,610	7,671	5,550

There was however a more positive message regarding other languages - the number taking Other Languages rose by 2%, across almost all languages, with the exception of Dutch and Greek. The main increase continues to be in Chinese which rose from 3,237 in 2011 to 3,425 in 2012, but entries for Polish rose from 844 to 923 and Arabic, Japanese and Russian entries also increased.

A-Level Numbers	2012	2011	2010	2002
Other Languages	9,136	8,953	7,475	5,439

All these figures are in the context of a total entry of 861,819 (with languages\* as 3.92% of entry) in 2012.

	2012	2011	2010	2002
Total Entry	861,819 (Languages = 3.92% of entry)	867,317 (Languages = 4.03% of entry)	858,602 (Languages = 4.03% of entry)	701,380 (Languages = 4.87% of entry)

### A-Level grading:

As an Association we are very aware of the enormous efforts made by language teachers both to promote the study of languages at A level and to gain high grades. This is why we have a number of concerns about the grading of A level, an issue which is as relevant this year as last.

One of our main areas of concern is the award of the A\* grade. The ability profile of candidates taking languages at A level is skewed towards the upper end. This leads to high achievement among candidates, with a significant proportion getting A grades. If we take A\* and A together, the percentage of candidates gaining these grades - French 39.4%, German 41.4%, Spanish 36.5% - is similar to those who enter for STEM subjects where Maths gets 43.9%, Physics 31.9%, Chemistry 34.4%, and Biology 28.6%. This can be compared to the average for all subjects, which is 26.6% in 2012.

Yet in spite of this high achievement, relatively few A\* grades are awarded in languages; this was the case in 2010 and 2011, and results show the same this year. For example, whereas for the STEM subjects the percentage of students awarded A\* grades (of all students awarded A - A\* grades) is high, the figures for languages have become even lower:

A*: A + A*	2012	2011	2010	A*: A + A*	2012	2011	2010
Maths	40%	40%	38%	French	17%	19%	20%
Physics	31%	32%	31%	German	19%	22%	24%
Chemistry	26%	27%	27%	Spanish	19%	22%	22%
Biology	28%	23%	28%	All subjects	30%	30%	30%

## AS-Level numbers:

The AS Level figures for languages fell both in relative and absolute terms in 2012, following the sharp overall increase in the entries for both languages and overall totals from 2010 to 2011. The exception to this trend was Spanish, which increased by 3% in 2012.

AS-Level Numbers	2012	2011
French	18,721	20,579
German	7,119	7,859
Spanish	11,781	11,433
Other Languages	9,591	9,923

All these figures are in the context of a total entry of 1,350,345 (with languages\* as 3.50% of entry) in 2012.

AS Level Numbers	2012	2011	2010	2002
Total Entry	1,350,345 (Languages = 3.50% of entry)	1,411,919 (Languages = 3.53% of entry)	1,220,125 (Languages = 3.69% of entry)	(Languages = 4.62% of entry)

## Progression from AS Level to A2:

These AS figures starkly demonstrate the drop off after AS level in the different languages. In French, with by far the biggest entry, 39% choose not to continue to A2. German is just as badly affected (39%), Spanish slightly less at 36% but the smaller entries of other languages are not so prone to this. It is interesting to see that STEM subjects such as Maths (39%), Physics (41%), Chemistry (38%) and Biology (38%) are similarly affected.

AS – A2 Level Numbers	AS Level entries in 2011	A2 Level entries in 2012	Difference
French	20,579	12,511	8,068 (↓ 39%)
German	7,859	4,773	3,086 (↓ 39%)
Spanish	11,433	7,351	4,082 (↓ 36%)
Other Languages	9,923	9,136	787 (↓ 8%)

The reasons for this drop-off at A2 will be complex and are likely to include the perceived difficulty of languages in comparison to other subjects, the intrinsic motivation of learners, the type of study involved in language learning, and students' awareness of the low number of starred As achieved, especially at a time when competition for the most sought-after university places has intensified.

## The A\* issue:

Ofqual has now accepted that there is an anomaly in the award of A\* in languages, which was highlighted through the joint representations of ALL, the Independent Schools Modern Languages Association and the Association of School and College Leaders. Ofqual is investigating the issue and we are awaiting the outcome; although this does not help the students and teachers whose results have already been affected, we hope that the anomaly will be rectified in time for next year's cohort.

ALL believes that there should be a transparency in this and in other marking / grading processes in state examinations, in order to give confidence to the wider community, and we welcome the forthcoming ASCL Ofqual conference on October 4 2012 regarding exams and grading generally.

ALL will continue to highlight the hard work of teachers and their students, and to press for a "level playing field" in grading to ensure that those efforts are fairly rewarded and recognised.

\*Languages= French + German + Spanish + Other Languages