

Fair Access: Analysis of school leaver attainment by SIMD quintile

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1 Fair Access – background and recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access

In the 2014/15 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government set out its ambition that every child, irrespective of socioeconomic background, should have an equal chance of accessing higher education. The Commission on Widening Access (CoWA or ‘the Commission’) was established to advise Ministers on the steps necessary to achieve this.

The Commission published its final report: A Blueprint for Fairness¹, in March 2016. The report contained 34 recommendations including several ‘foundational’ recommendations such as the introduction of access thresholds for all degree programmes, and the implementation of targets at sector and university level to drive forward equal access to higher education in Scotland.

The Commission’s report also included data-related recommendations such as Recommendation 30 which asked the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government to provide “enhanced monitoring of fair access at key stages of the learner journey including analyses by socioeconomic background of [...] school attainment”.

This evidence paper has been produced in response to Recommendation 30 and the data included here will allow universities to consider the potential impact of access thresholds on the school leaver applicant pool.

Access Thresholds

The Commission highlighted that improvements in school attainment in the last decade or so have led to an increase in competition and a corresponding increase in entry requirements at universities. As a result, applicants are asked for “substantially higher grades than the level of attainment that is necessary to successfully complete degree programmes”. Since attainment is generally lower among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds they have been negatively affected by this shift.

CoWA Recommendation 11 stated that “by 2019 all universities should set access thresholds for all degree programmes against which learners from the most deprived backgrounds should be assessed”. The Commission went on to state that that these thresholds should be set “at a level which accurately reflects the minimum academic standard and subject knowledge necessary to successfully complete a degree programme”. The data provided in this paper does not necessarily assist with the process of *setting* access thresholds as envisaged by the Commission but will help to assess the potential *impact* of these thresholds on the school leaver applicant pool.

Universities Scotland confirmed last year that “every Scottish higher education institution will set minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants starting in 2020/21”.

¹<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/blueprint-fairness-final-report-commission-widening-access/documents/00496619.pdf>

2 Attainment – background and official data

The Scottish Government has made equally clear its commitment to closing the poverty-related attainment gap between children and young people from the least and most disadvantaged communities. Ministers committed to making demonstrable progress in closing the gap during the lifetime of this Parliament, and to substantially eliminate it in the next decade. There are a number of related policy initiatives underway, including the Attainment Challenge and the Pupil Equity Fund.

The CoWA welcomed the priority being placed on closing the school attainment gap and recognised “the potential contribution these policy interventions could make to advancing equal access by increasing the number of disadvantaged learners with the attainment necessary to enter higher education”.

Official data and the attainment gap

In line with the commitment set out in the 2017 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan, the Scottish Government has worked with key stakeholders to explore and agree what specific measures would help drive improvement across all stages of a young person's life. The Scottish Government consulted on proposals for measuring the gap and milestones towards closing it; focusing on the impact of the education system as a whole and using a range of measures that reflect the key stages of the learner journey and the breadth of issues that can impact on attainment. The consultation resulted in a basket of 11 key attainment gap measures.

Three of these attainment measures relate specifically to secondary school Senior Phase:

- 1 or more award at SCQF 4 (e.g. National 4) or above on leaving school
- 1 or more award at SCQF 5 (e.g. National 5) or above on leaving school
- 1 or more award at SCQF 6 (e.g. Higher) or above on leaving school

Official Statistics published annually by the Scottish Government in the Summary Statistics for Attainment, Leaver Destinations and Healthy Living publication² show the attainment of school leavers at these SCQF³ levels by SIMD quintile.

Table 1: Percentage of school leavers with 1 or more award at SCQF 4 or above

| | Most deprived 20% (SIMD20) | Least deprived 20% (SIMD80 to 100) | Gap (percentage points) |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 2011/12 | 90.7% | 98.9% | 8.2 |
| 2012/13 | 91.9% | 99.1% | 7.2 |
| 2013/14 | 92.4% | 98.8% | 6.4 |
| 2014/15 | 92.6% | 98.9% | 6.3 |
| 2015/16 | 92.8% | 98.8% | 6.1 |

²<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/9699>

³<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71377.html>

Table 2: Percentage of school leavers with 1 or more award at SCQF 5 or above

| | Most deprived 20% (SIMD20) | Least deprived 20% (SIMD80 to 100) | Gap (percentage points) |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2011/12 | 65.8% | 93.9% | 28.1 |
| 2012/13 | 68.9% | 94.2% | 25.3 |
| 2013/14 | 71.9% | 94.6% | 22.7 |
| 2014/15 | 74.0% | 94.9% | 20.9 |
| 2015/16 | 74.4% | 94.7% | 20.3 |

Table 3: Percentage of school leavers with 1 or more award at SCQF 6 or above

| | Most deprived 20% (SIMD20) | Least deprived 20% (SIMD80 to 100) | Gap (percentage points) |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2011/12 | 33.6% | 77.9% | 44.3 |
| 2012/13 | 34.9% | 77.3% | 42.4 |
| 2013/14 | 38.5% | 79.1% | 40.6 |
| 2014/15 | 41.2% | 80.3% | 39.1 |
| 2015/16 | 42.7% | 81.2% | 38.5 |

On each of the measures above, the attainment gap decreased over the four years to 2015/16⁴. The narrowing of the gap was driven by increases in the attainment of leavers from the most deprived areas (SIMD20). The attainment of leavers from the least deprived areas also increased over this period at SCQF levels 5 and 6, but to a lesser extent (and from a higher baseline level).

3 Attainment by grade combination and access to university

The official data provides a useful indication of patterns in attainment in a broad sense. More detailed data is required, however, to understand the size and makeup of the pool of school leavers from SIMD20 areas with grades that might allow them to enter university.

Tables 6 to 11 in Annex A show the number of S5 and S6 school leavers achieving a range of relevant grade combinations, broken down by the SIMD quintile they live in. To improve the readability of the data, grade combinations have been 'equivalised' in line with the UCAS tariff points system⁵. For example, AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB because having a C rather than a B is compensated for by having AAA rather than AAB. Table 12 contains a list of equivalised grade combinations and corresponding tariff point scores. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.

⁴ Please note that it is not possible to accurately project future trends in school leaver attainment using historic data due to the range of policy initiatives currently underway which actively seek to raise attainment, as noted above, and the recent changes to national qualifications, including Highers.

⁵ <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator>

Tables 4 and 5 below provide a summary of the data for S6 leavers from the 20% most deprived (SIMD20) areas over recent years, focussing on specific qualification thresholds for illustration.

At universities with relatively lower entry requirements, school leavers who apply are generally asked for at least three Highers at grade C or better to have a chance of gaining a place.

In 2015/16, 2,510 (45%) S6 school leavers from SIMD20 achieved 3 or more Highers at grade C or above and the number of S6 school leavers achieving grades in this range increased over the last three years (Table 4).

Table 4: S6 leavers from the 20% most deprived (SIMD20) areas with 3 or more Highers (grade C or above)

| | Number of S6 leavers from SIMD20 w/ 3+ Highers | Percentage of all S6 leavers from SIMD20 w/ 3+ Highers |
|----------------|---|---|
| 2013/14 | 2,230 | 43% |
| 2014/15 | 2,236 | 41% |
| 2015/16 | 2,510 | 45% |

To gain a place at more selective institutions, school leavers are generally asked for 4 or 5 Highers at A or B, with some of the most competitive courses asking for 5 or 6 Highers at that level. Table 5 covers grade combinations with a UCAS tariff score equivalent to AAAAA (165 tariff points) or higher (see Chart 1 for equalised grade combinations ordered by tariff score). It is important to note, however, that every institution has its own specific admissions policy and won't necessarily equalise or differentiate between grades in this way.

In 2015/16, 570 (10%) S6 school leavers from SIMD20 achieved AAAAA or better. The number of S6 school leavers achieving grades in this range increased compared to 2013/14 but the percentage gaining AAAAA or better was stable over this period i.e. the increase was in line with an increase in the number of SIMD20 pupils staying on to S6.

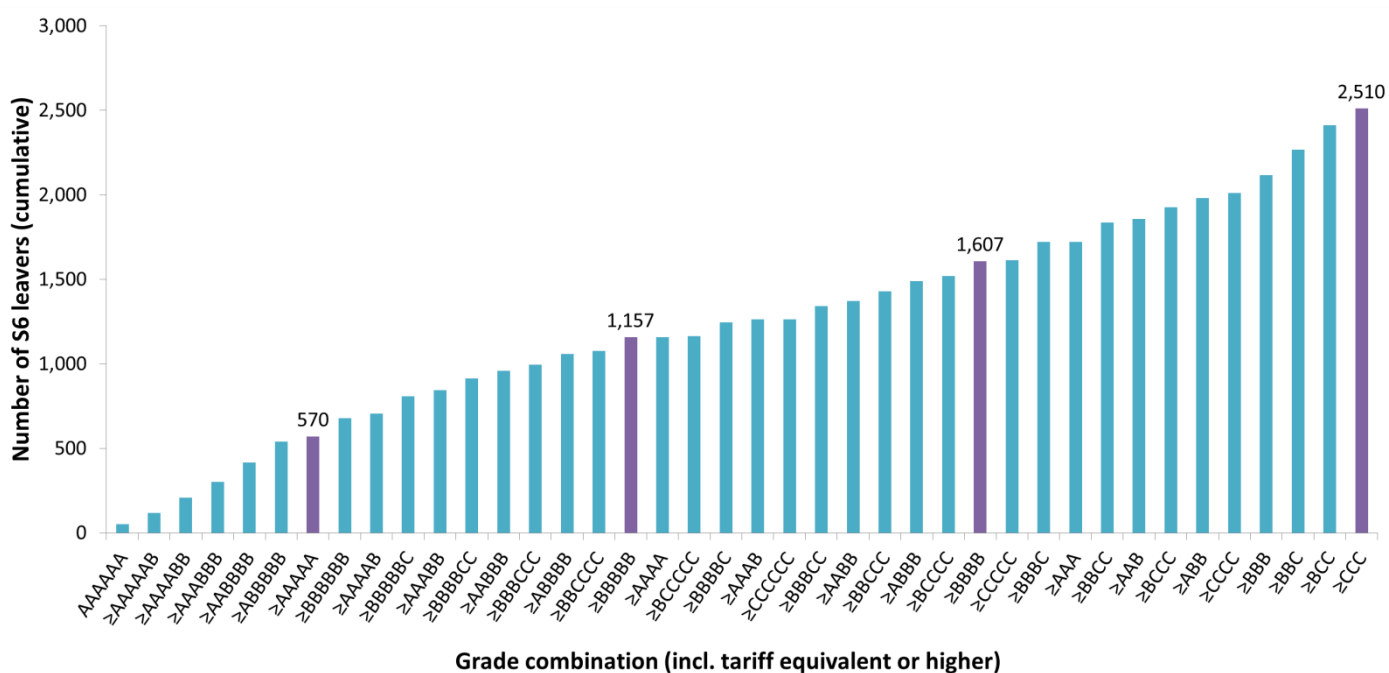
Table 5: S6 leavers from the 20% most deprived (SIMD20) areas with AAAAA or better at Higher

| | Number of S6 leavers from SIMD20 w/ AAAAA or better | Percentage of all S6 leavers from SIMD20 w/ AAAAA or better |
|----------------|--|--|
| 2013/14 | 519 | 10% |
| 2014/15 | 480 | 9% |
| 2015/16 | 570 | 10% |

4 Illustrating the potential impact of access thresholds

The chart below illustrates how the notional S6 school leaver applicant pool increases as entry requirements are lowered. This provides some indication of the potential impact of access thresholds on the size of the university applicant pool. To calculate the cumulative totals, grades were equivalised and ordered by tariff score.

Chart 1: Cumulative number of S6 leavers from SIMD20 areas by Higher (A-C) grade combinations, 2015/16



To provide a more tangible example, we can build on work by researchers at the University of Durham⁶. As noted, the Commission was clear that access thresholds should be based on the minimum required to succeed at degree level, however, this still leaves a number of questions for institutions to consider. For example, what constitutes success? And, should minimum academic requirements vary by subject and institution?

The University of Durham research on contextual admissions took an empirical approach to identifying appropriate minimum entry requirements using historic data on student retention and outcomes. They suggested acceptable levels of success, and used them to calculate access thresholds for science and arts courses at different types of university. For example, they calculated that a threshold of BBBB would have given an 80% likelihood of entrants successfully continuing to the second year of a science or arts course at a highly selective institution.

Replicating an illustration from the Durham research using the latest available attainment data allows us to demonstrate the potential impact of access thresholds.

⁶Mapping and evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland (Vikki Boliver et al.) <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/access-inclusion/contextualised-admissions/evaluating-contextual-admissions.aspx>

If, for example, highly selective institutions required all applicants to achieve AAABB at Higher, a total of 843 (15%) S6 leavers from SIMD20 areas would have been eligible for admission in 2015/16 i.e. 843 achieved grades with a tariff score equivalent to AAABB or higher. If institutions found that BBBBB at Higher reflected the minimum academic standard required and set an access threshold at this level, the pool of eligible S6 leavers would increase by almost 40% to 1,157 (21%).

5 Limitations

The analysis is of limited relevance at individual institution and course level

The detailed attainment data in Annex A can be used to demonstrate the potential impact of access thresholds on the applicant pool at national level or for a group of institutions. The data is not necessarily suitable, however, for use at an individual institution or course level.

As noted, each institution has its own admissions policy and each course will have its own specific requirements. Sometimes specific grades are expected in key subjects or, at some more selective institutions, a minimum level of S5 attainment is expected for S6 leavers (although institutions have been known to relax this requirement for access students). This means that although the data in Annex A accurately captures attainment of school leavers, the notional applicant pools suggested are only approximate as they do not take account of specific practices and policies within institutions.

The analysis only covers part of the potential applicant pool

School leavers represent only part of the potential applicant pool for universities and it is particularly important to take this into account if comparing historic university entrant numbers and the notional applicant pool suggested by attainment figures. For example, there were approximately 4,000 Scottish domiciled full-time first degree entrants from SIMD20 areas in 2015/16. Around one third of those entrants (35%) were aged under 19 i.e. were likely to have entered directly upon or shortly after leaving school. This means just over 2,600 entrants from SIMD20 areas entered university at 19 or older, and might not have gained entry based solely on the qualifications they obtained at school. Furthermore, the percentage of entrants from SIMD20 areas aged under 19 varied considerably between universities, ranging from 17% at the University of the West of Scotland to 80% at the University of St Andrews.

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Annex A

Table 6: S6 school leavers' attained grade combinations, by SIMD quintile, 2013/14

| No. of Grades | Grade combination (or equivalent) | (SIMD20) SIMD Q1 | SIMD Q2 | SIMD Q3 | SIMD Q4 | SIMD Q5 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | 58 | 102 | 165 | 291 | 456 |
| | AAAAAB | 50 | 87 | 156 | 183 | 301 |
| | AAAABB | 74 | 126 | 191 | 247 | 332 |
| | AAABBB | 88 | 132 | 209 | 269 | 364 |
| | AABBBB | 100 | 147 | 224 | 278 | 392 |
| | ABBBBB | 125 | 128 | 187 | 278 | 305 |
| | BBBBBB | 97 | 150 | 184 | 263 | 280 |
| | BBBBBC | 76 | 127 | 168 | 200 | 253 |
| | BBBBCC | 77 | 103 | 120 | 164 | 180 |
| | BBBCCC | 71 | 73 | 81 | 106 | 138 |
| | BBCCCC | 30 | 36 | 39 | 56 | 57 |
| | BCCCCC | 6 | 17 | 13 | 21 | 30 |
| | CCCCCC | * | * | * | * | * |
| 5 | AAAAA | 24 | 39 | 84 | 176 | 293 |
| | AAAAB | 20 | 32 | 84 | 140 | 157 |
| | AAABB | 28 | 38 | 89 | 108 | 173 |
| | AABBB | 49 | 58 | 100 | 95 | 142 |
| | ABBBB | 51 | 80 | 96 | 144 | 180 |
| | BBBBB | 67 | 81 | 124 | 157 | 167 |
| | BBBBBC | 72 | 84 | 129 | 150 | 186 |
| | BBBCC | 77 | 94 | 112 | 149 | 130 |
| | BBCCC | 48 | 86 | 96 | 122 | 107 |
| | BCCCC | 31 | 35 | 49 | 59 | 74 |
| | CCCCC | 11 | 8 | 10 | 21 | 17 |
| 4 | AAAA | 7 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 14 |
| | AAAB | 10 | 16 | 21 | 13 | 36 |
| | AABB | 17 | 24 | 36 | 42 | 37 |
| | ABBB | 43 | 51 | 62 | 86 | 76 |
| | BBBB | 66 | 91 | 95 | 123 | 121 |
| | BBBC | 84 | 122 | 122 | 158 | 161 |
| | BBCC | 87 | 142 | 163 | 157 | 165 |
| | BCCC | 64 | 62 | 95 | 109 | 117 |
| | CCCC | 26 | 28 | 41 | 42 | 43 |
| 3 | AAA | * | * | * | * | * |
| | AAB | 8 | 9 | 11 | 17 | 13 |
| | ABB | 38 | 49 | 44 | 47 | 46 |
| | BBB | 86 | 92 | 105 | 118 | 109 |
| | BBC | 143 | 149 | 152 | 185 | 147 |
| | BCC | 137 | 146 | 182 | 183 | 174 |
| | CCC | 79 | 91 | 89 | 113 | 86 |
| Totals | 0-2 Highers | 2,931 | 2,755 | 2,531 | 2,309 | 1,786 |
| | 3 or more Highers | 2,230 | 2,946 | 3,943 | 5,090 | 6,070 |

Notes:

1. Grade combinations were 'equivalised' using the UCAS tariff points system e.g. AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB. See Table 12 for list of equivalised grade combinations.
2. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.
3. Table includes Higher grades attained in previous years.
4. Non-zero values lower than 5 have been suppressed.

Table 7: S5 school leavers' attained grade combinations, by SIMD quintile, 2013/14

| No. of Grades | Grade combination (or equivalent) | (SIMD20) SIMD Q1 | SIMD Q2 | SIMD Q3 | SIMD Q4 | SIMD Q5 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | 0 | 0 | * | 0 | * |
| | AAAAAB | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| | AAAABB | 0 | * | * | * | 0 |
| | AAABBB | 0 | * | 0 | 0 | * |
| | AABBBB | * | 0 | * | * | 0 |
| | ABBBBB | 0 | 0 | * | 0 | 0 |
| | BBBBBB | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | AAAAA | * | 6 | 14 | 18 | 19 |
| | AAAAB | * | * | 7 | 17 | 16 |
| | AAABB | * | * | 6 | 20 | 15 |
| | AABBB | * | * | 8 | 14 | 18 |
| | ABBBB | * | * | 14 | 12 | 15 |
| | BBBBB | 5 | * | 9 | 12 | 10 |
| | BBBBC | * | * | 6 | 12 | 9 |
| | BBBCC | * | * | * | * | * |
| | BBCCC | 0 | * | * | 5 | * |
| | BCCCC | 0 | * | * | 0 | 0 |
| | CCCCC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * |
| 4 | AAAA | 0 | 0 | * | * | * |
| | AAAB | 0 | * | 5 | 6 | * |
| | AABB | * | 10 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| | ABBB | * | * | 7 | 10 | 12 |
| | BBBB | * | 11 | 7 | 23 | 14 |
| | BBBC | 9 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 9 |
| | BBCC | 6 | * | 12 | 19 | 20 |
| | BCCC | * | * | 5 | 6 | 15 |
| | CCCC | * | * | 0 | * | * |
| 3 | AAA | * | 0 | * | * | * |
| | AAB | 0 | * | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| | ABB | * | 8 | 7 | 12 | 8 |
| | BBB | 6 | 14 | 18 | 10 | 18 |
| | BBC | 11 | 15 | 16 | 24 | 25 |
| | BCC | 8 | 13 | 21 | 27 | 19 |
| | CCC | * | 7 | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| Totals | 0-2 Highers | 3,331 | 2,672 | 2,440 | 2,017 | 1,296 |
| | 3 or more Highers | 80 | 135 | 219 | 298 | 286 |

Notes:

1. Grade combinations were 'equivalised' using the UCAS tariff points system e.g. AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB. See Table 12 for list of equivalised grade combinations.
2. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.
3. Table includes Higher grades attained in previous years.
4. Non-zero values lower than 5 have been suppressed.

Table 8: S6 school leavers' attained grade combinations, by SIMD quintile, 2014/15

| No. of Grades | Grade combination (or equivalent) | (SIMD20) SIMD Q1 | SIMD Q2 | SIMD Q3 | SIMD Q4 | SIMD Q5 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | 67 | 123 | 192 | 293 | 462 |
| | AAAAAB | 48 | 84 | 171 | 229 | 332 |
| | AAAABB | 70 | 119 | 182 | 233 | 376 |
| | AAABBB | 85 | 140 | 206 | 287 | 374 |
| | AABBBB | 104 | 159 | 209 | 323 | 390 |
| | ABBBBB | 84 | 152 | 209 | 299 | 355 |
| | BBBBBB | 93 | 135 | 206 | 290 | 292 |
| | BBBBBC | 92 | 137 | 169 | 213 | 272 |
| | BBBBCC | 78 | 95 | 148 | 186 | 178 |
| | BBBCCC | 49 | 65 | 95 | 115 | 113 |
| | BBCCCC | 28 | 40 | 49 | 56 | 63 |
| | BCCCCC | 10 | 13 | 9 | 24 | 23 |
| | CCCCCC | * | 5 | * | * | * |
| 5 | AAAAA | 22 | 44 | 108 | 176 | 336 |
| | AAAAB | 21 | 41 | 71 | 107 | 182 |
| | AAABB | 39 | 47 | 76 | 105 | 138 |
| | AABBB | 40 | 70 | 95 | 117 | 152 |
| | ABBBB | 59 | 79 | 99 | 160 | 149 |
| | BBBBB | 83 | 113 | 127 | 156 | 187 |
| | BBBBBC | 87 | 96 | 129 | 166 | 166 |
| | BBBCC | 81 | 74 | 99 | 134 | 154 |
| | BBCCC | 48 | 74 | 86 | 99 | 100 |
| | BCCCC | 23 | 34 | 34 | 40 | 50 |
| | CCCCC | 8 | 9 | 10 | 18 | 16 |
| 4 | AAAA | * | 7 | 10 | 15 | 13 |
| | AAAB | 10 | 17 | 31 | 27 | 36 |
| | AABB | 20 | 31 | 36 | 38 | 45 |
| | ABBB | 49 | 59 | 73 | 94 | 80 |
| | BBBB | 73 | 87 | 121 | 136 | 129 |
| | BBBC | 98 | 119 | 160 | 188 | 144 |
| | BBCC | 103 | 122 | 157 | 174 | 133 |
| | BCCC | 59 | 83 | 96 | 116 | 105 |
| | CCCC | 23 | 30 | 29 | 51 | 28 |
| 3 | AAA | 7 | 6 | * | * | * |
| | AAB | 17 | 7 | 19 | 12 | 10 |
| | ABB | 30 | 42 | 50 | 61 | 40 |
| | BBB | 77 | 90 | 140 | 138 | 106 |
| | BBC | 157 | 149 | 173 | 176 | 178 |
| | BCC | 133 | 152 | 161 | 176 | 152 |
| | CCC | 54 | 93 | 117 | 101 | 96 |
| Totals | 0-2 Highers | 3,269 | 2,719 | 2,542 | 2,288 | 1,695 |
| | 3 or more Highers | 2,236 | 3,042 | 4,156 | 5,337 | 6,160 |

Notes:

1. Grade combinations were 'equivalised' using the UCAS tariff points system e.g. AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB. See Table 12 for list of equivalised grade combinations.
2. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.
3. Table includes Higher grades attained in previous years.
4. Non-zero values lower than 5 have been suppressed.

Table 9: S5 school leavers' attained grade combinations, by SIMD quintile, 2014/15

| No. of Grades | Grade combination (or equivalent) | (SIMD20) SIMD Q1 | SIMD Q2 | SIMD Q3 | SIMD Q4 | SIMD Q5 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | 0 | 0 | * | * | * |
| | AAAAAB | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * |
| | AAAABB | 0 | * | 0 | * | * |
| | AAABBB | 0 | * | 0 | * | * |
| | AABBBB | 0 | * | 0 | * | 0 |
| | ABBBBB | * | 0 | 0 | * | 0 |
| | BBBBBB | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * |
| 5 | AAAAA | * | 5 | 9 | 15 | 20 |
| | AAAAB | * | 5 | 18 | 15 | 24 |
| | AAABB | * | 8 | 12 | 16 | 25 |
| | AABBB | 6 | 12 | 11 | 19 | 18 |
| | ABBBB | * | 7 | 10 | 19 | 15 |
| | BBBBB | * | * | 9 | 9 | 12 |
| | BBBBC | * | * | 6 | 9 | 9 |
| | BBBCC | * | 5 | 6 | * | * |
| | BBCCC | 0 | * | * | * | 6 |
| | BCCCC | 0 | 0 | * | 0 | * |
| CCCCC | 0 | 0 | * | * | * | |
| 4 | AAAA | 0 | * | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | AAAB | * | 5 | * | 11 | 7 |
| | AABB | 7 | * | 9 | 12 | 13 |
| | ABBB | 5 | * | 14 | 16 | 22 |
| | BBBB | 11 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 13 |
| | BBBC | 5 | 8 | 18 | 15 | 18 |
| | BBCC | * | 5 | 13 | 15 | 11 |
| | BCCC | * | * | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| | CCCC | 0 | * | * | * | * |
| 3 | AAA | 0 | * | * | * | 0 |
| | AAB | 6 | * | 10 | 9 | 7 |
| | ABB | 10 | 12 | 16 | 16 | 10 |
| | BBB | 22 | 18 | 26 | 21 | 25 |
| | BBC | 21 | 24 | 37 | 35 | 32 |
| | BCC | 13 | 25 | 31 | 35 | 27 |
| | CCC | 5 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 5 |
| Totals | 0-2 Highers | 3,340 | 2,778 | 2,410 | 2,001 | 1,311 |
| | 3 or more Highers | 136 | 190 | 310 | 347 | 350 |

Notes:

1. Grade combinations were 'equivalised' using the UCAS tariff points system e.g. AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB. See Table 12 for list of equivalised grade combinations.
2. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.
3. Table includes Higher grades attained in previous years.
4. Non-zero values lower than 5 have been suppressed.

Table 10: S6 school leavers' attained grade combinations, by SIMD quintile, 2015/16

| No. of Grades | Grade combination (or equivalent) | (SIMD20) SIMD Q1 | SIMD Q2 | SIMD Q3 | SIMD Q4 | SIMD Q5 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | 50 | 103 | 206 | 300 | 487 |
| | AAAAAB | 69 | 101 | 186 | 275 | 368 |
| | AAAABB | 89 | 139 | 197 | 275 | 377 |
| | AAABBB | 95 | 142 | 215 | 312 | 384 |
| | AABBBB | 113 | 157 | 252 | 306 | 370 |
| | ABBBBB | 125 | 147 | 200 | 335 | 345 |
| | BBBBBB | 107 | 145 | 208 | 264 | 320 |
| | BBBBBC | 100 | 107 | 183 | 205 | 256 |
| | BBBBCC | 72 | 91 | 148 | 144 | 180 |
| | BBBCCC | 35 | 62 | 99 | 95 | 129 |
| | BBCCCC | 20 | 34 | 20 | 53 | 70 |
| | BCCCCC | 6 | 18 | 15 | 16 | 23 |
| | CCCCCC | * | * | * | * | * |
| 5 | AAAAA | 29 | 59 | 78 | 162 | 333 |
| | AAAAB | 30 | 49 | 83 | 138 | 185 |
| | AAABB | 36 | 60 | 77 | 133 | 157 |
| | AABBB | 45 | 81 | 122 | 126 | 162 |
| | ABBBB | 62 | 110 | 133 | 146 | 166 |
| | BBBBB | 80 | 118 | 137 | 160 | 175 |
| | BBBBC | 82 | 110 | 130 | 163 | 154 |
| | BBBCC | 79 | 80 | 97 | 152 | 131 |
| | BBCCC | 58 | 64 | 78 | 93 | 84 |
| | BCCCC | 31 | 29 | 34 | 49 | 53 |
| CCCCC | 7 | 9 | 11 | 6 | 10 | |
| 4 | AAAA | * | 5 | 15 | 11 | 12 |
| | AAAB | 17 | 22 | 24 | 38 | 35 |
| | AABB | 31 | 33 | 52 | 46 | 58 |
| | ABBB | 59 | 57 | 89 | 89 | 97 |
| | BBBB | 87 | 110 | 109 | 149 | 148 |
| | BBBC | 106 | 122 | 145 | 174 | 130 |
| | BBCC | 116 | 124 | 156 | 164 | 148 |
| | BCCC | 70 | 89 | 108 | 118 | 107 |
| | CCCC | 30 | 35 | 30 | 42 | 35 |
| 3 | AAA | * | * | * | * | * |
| | AAB | 21 | 16 | 18 | 24 | 12 |
| | ABB | 55 | 49 | 57 | 62 | 56 |
| | BBB | 103 | 111 | 89 | 122 | 116 |
| | BBC | 152 | 160 | 171 | 205 | 169 |
| | BCC | 146 | 144 | 166 | 208 | 173 |
| | CCC | 90 | 77 | 73 | 108 | 78 |
| Totals | 0-2 Highers | 3,018 | 2,550 | 2,319 | 2,179 | 1,544 |
| | 3 or more Highers | 2,510 | 3,174 | 4,223 | 5,475 | 6,302 |

Notes:

1. Grade combinations were 'equivalised' using the UCAS tariff points system e.g. AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB. See Table 12 for list of equivalised grade combinations.
2. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.
3. Table includes Higher grades attained in previous years.
4. Non-zero values lower than 5 have been suppressed.

Table 11: S5 school leavers' attained grade combinations, by SIMD quintile, 2015/16

| No. of Grades | Grade combination (or equivalent) | (SIMD20) SIMD Q1 | SIMD Q2 | SIMD Q3 | SIMD Q4 | SIMD Q5 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | 0 | 0 | * | * | * |
| | AAAAAB | 0 | * | * | 0 | * |
| | AAAABB | * | * | * | * | * |
| | AAABBB | 0 | * | 0 | 5 | * |
| | AABBBB | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| | ABBBBB | * | 0 | * | * | 0 |
| | BBBBBB | 0 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | AAAAA | 7 | 5 | 9 | 18 | 24 |
| | AAAAB | * | 5 | 9 | 24 | 22 |
| | AAABB | * | 8 | 7 | 22 | 23 |
| | AABBB | 5 | 9 | 14 | 14 | 12 |
| | ABBBB | 5 | * | 16 | 21 | 15 |
| | BBBBB | * | 6 | 8 | 11 | 15 |
| | BBBBC | * | 9 | 6 | 6 | 10 |
| | BBBCC | * | 6 | 5 | 11 | 7 |
| | BBCCC | * | * | * | 8 | * |
| | BCCCC | 0 | * | * | * | * |
| | CCCCC | 0 | 0 | * | * | 0 |
| 4 | AAAA | * | * | * | 7 | 6 |
| | AAAB | * | * | * | 6 | 14 |
| | AABB | * | 9 | 10 | 8 | 10 |
| | ABBB | 5 | 9 | 9 | 19 | 15 |
| | BBBB | 5 | 8 | 14 | 25 | 16 |
| | BBBC | 12 | 8 | 13 | 28 | 20 |
| | BBCC | 7 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 9 |
| | BCCC | * | * | * | * | 7 |
| | CCCC | * | * | * | * | * |
| 3 | AAA | * | * | * | * | * |
| | AAB | * | 7 | * | 5 | * |
| | ABB | 13 | * | 13 | 16 | 17 |
| | BBB | 16 | 19 | 30 | 29 | 22 |
| | BBC | 20 | 28 | 35 | 40 | 32 |
| | BCC | 13 | 15 | 37 | 38 | 32 |
| | CCC | 7 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 13 |
| Totals | 0-2 Highers | 3,359 | 2,745 | 2,334 | 2,043 | 1,261 |
| | 3 or more Highers | 146 | 208 | 297 | 410 | 366 |

Notes:

1. Grade combinations were 'equivalised' using the UCAS tariff points system e.g. AAABC is considered equivalent to AABBB. See Table 12 for list of equivalised grade combinations.
2. For leavers with more than 6 Highers, the best 6 grades were used.
3. Table includes Higher grades attained in previous years.
4. Non-zero values lower than 5 have been suppressed.

Table 12: Higher grade combinations equivalised by UCAS tariff point scores

| No. of Grades | Grade combination | Equivalent grade combinations | Tariff score |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 6 or more | AAAAAA | | 198 |
| | AAAAAB | | 192 |
| | AAAABB | AAAAAC | 186 |
| | AAABBB | AAAABC | 180 |
| | AABBBB | AAABBC, AAAACC | 174 |
| | ABBBBB | AABBBC, AAABCC, | 168 |
| | BBBBBB | ABBBBC, AABBC, AAACCC | 162 |
| | BBBBBC | AABCCC, ABBBCC | 156 |
| | BBBBCC | ABBCCC, AACCCC | 150 |
| | BBBCCC | ABCCCC | 144 |
| | BBCCCC | ACCCCC | 138 |
| | BCCCCC | | 132 |
| | CCCCCC | | 126 |
| 5 | AAAAA | | 165 |
| | AAAAB | | 159 |
| | AAABB | AAAAC | 153 |
| | AABBB | AAABC | 147 |
| | ABBBB | AABBC, AAACC | 141 |
| | BBBBB | ABBBC, AABCC | 135 |
| | BBBBC | ABBCC, AACCC | 129 |
| | BBBCC | ABCCC | 123 |
| | BBCCC | ACCCC | 117 |
| | BCCCC | | 111 |
| | CCCCC | | 105 |
| 4 | AAAA | | 132 |
| | AAAB | | 126 |
| | AABB | AAAC | 120 |
| | ABBB | AABC | 114 |
| | BBBB | AACC, ABBC | 108 |
| | BBBC | ABCC | 102 |
| | BBCC | ACCC | 96 |
| | BCCC | | 90 |
| | CCCC | | 84 |
| 3 | AAA | | 99 |
| | AAB | | 93 |
| | ABB | AAC | 87 |
| | BBB | ABC | 81 |
| | BBC | ACC | 75 |
| | BCC | | 69 |
| | CCC | | 63 |