

A-Level Results: ALL Member Update 19/08/11

ALL was represented at the JCQ Briefing for Stakeholders on Thursday 18 August 2011, where detailed information was issued about 2011 A-Level results. Frustratingly for language teachers the headlines regarding languages were of further decline at A level. The numbers taking A Level in languages have continued to decrease year on year since 2002:

A-Level Numbers	2011	2010	2002
French	13,196	13,907	16,053
German	5,166	5,562	7,139

On the other hand, there was a more positive message regarding other languages (Spanish saw only a small decrease, whereas the number taking Other Languages rose; the main increase was in Chinese which rose from 2,372 in 2010 to 3,237 in 2011, with smaller increases in Polish and Portuguese).

A-Level Numbers	2011	2010	2002
Spanish	7,610	7,671	5,550
Other Languages	8,953	7,475	5,439

All these figures are in the context of a total entry of 867,317 (with languages as 4.03% of entry) in 2011.

	2011	2010	2002
Total Entry	867,317 (Languages = 4.03%)	858,602 (Languages = 4.03%)	701,380 (Languages = 4.87%)

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. Languages have steadily become subjects where the ability profile of those taking the subject is skewed towards the upper end, leading towards high percentages gaining A and A* grades (French 40.1%, German 42%, Spanish 37.8% - A and A* grades of total A-Level entry) which makes them comparable to STEM subjects (Maths 44.7%, Physics 33%, Chemistry 34%, Biology 38%). (The figure for all subjects is 27%).

However, the situation which was highlighted last year around the relatively low proportion of A* grades in languages has remained deeply concerning. 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 remained low or deteriorated:

A*: A + A*	2011	2010
Maths	40%	38%
Physics	32%	31%
Chemistry	27%	27%
Biology	23%	28%

A*: A + A*	2011	2010
French	19%	20%
German	22%	24%
Spanish	22%	22%
All subjects	30%	30%

The AS figures for languages were up, but this was in the context of a sharp overall increase in the totals entry from 2010 to 2011.

AS Level Numbers	2011	2010	2002
Total Entry	1,411,919 (Languages = 3.53%)	1,220,125 (Languages = 3.69%)	(Languages = 4.62%)

The overall issue regarding A* was accurately raised in the TES in August 2010 by Geoff Lucas, Secretary to HMC [\[Read the TES Article\]](#) in which he assumed that there would be a thorough investigation. It would appear that there has not been an external investigation. This is a matter over which ALL is collaborating with ISMLA as we believe that there should be a transparency to this process in order to give confidence to the wider community.

ALL will continue to highlight the hard work of teachers and their students. David Willetts has made an interesting suggestion [\[Read the Telegraph article\]](#) that 'tough' subjects including languages should gain a higher points score, which could at least be a step to a fairer situation for all.

