

The forecast presented here is for February and the average of the February-March-April period for the United Kingdom as a whole. The forecast for February will be superseded by the long-range information on the public weather forecast web page (www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/#?tab=regionalForecast), starting from 7th February 2014.

This forecast is based on information from observations, several numerical models and expert judgement.

SUMMARY - TEMPERATURE:

Latest predictions for February favour a continuation of the predominately mild conditions experienced so far this winter, with above-average temperatures more likely than below-average. For February-March-April as a whole, confidence is lower, but temperatures near-to slightly above-average are most probable.

Overall, the probability that the UK-mean temperature for February-March-April will fall into the warmest of our five categories is around 20% and the probability of falling into the coldest of our five categories is close to 10% (the 1981-2010 probability for each of these categories is 20%).

CONTEXT:

There are currently no significant sea surface temperature anomalies across the tropical Pacific and therefore neither El Niño nor La Niña prevailing. Computer models suggest near-neutral conditions persisting in the coming months; this will offer little predictive value for conditions across Europe during the next three months.

The Quasi-Biennial Oscillation (QBO), an oscillation of the equatorial zonal wind in the stratosphere, continues to be in a westerly phase, although not as strong as earlier in the winter. The QBO does have a link to conditions over western Europe during the winter months, by influencing the strength of the polar vortex and thereby the phase of the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO). A westerly phase of the QBO tends to favour a stronger polar vortex, leading to a positive phase of the NAO. This is a transitional time of year with the QBO exerting some influence at the beginning of the season but providing little known contribution by the end.

During February, the factors described above, along with computer models having a preference for positive NAO conditions, favour a continuation of the predominately mild weather experienced so far this winter. This does not preclude occasional spells of colder weather, but these are less probable than is typical at the end of winter and early spring. The left-hand graph of Figure T2 shows a shift towards milder conditions, with a reduced probability of below-average temperatures and an increased probability of above-average temperatures.

As the season progresses the large-scale global drivers become less influential and confidence in predictions for temperatures during February-March-April is lower than for February alone. The right-hand graph of figure T2 reflects this, with the forecast curve more closely resembling climatology than the curve for February. Nevertheless, even with lower confidence, there is still an increased probability of near to above-average temperatures.

Fig T1

3-month UK outlook for temperature in the context of the observed annual cycle

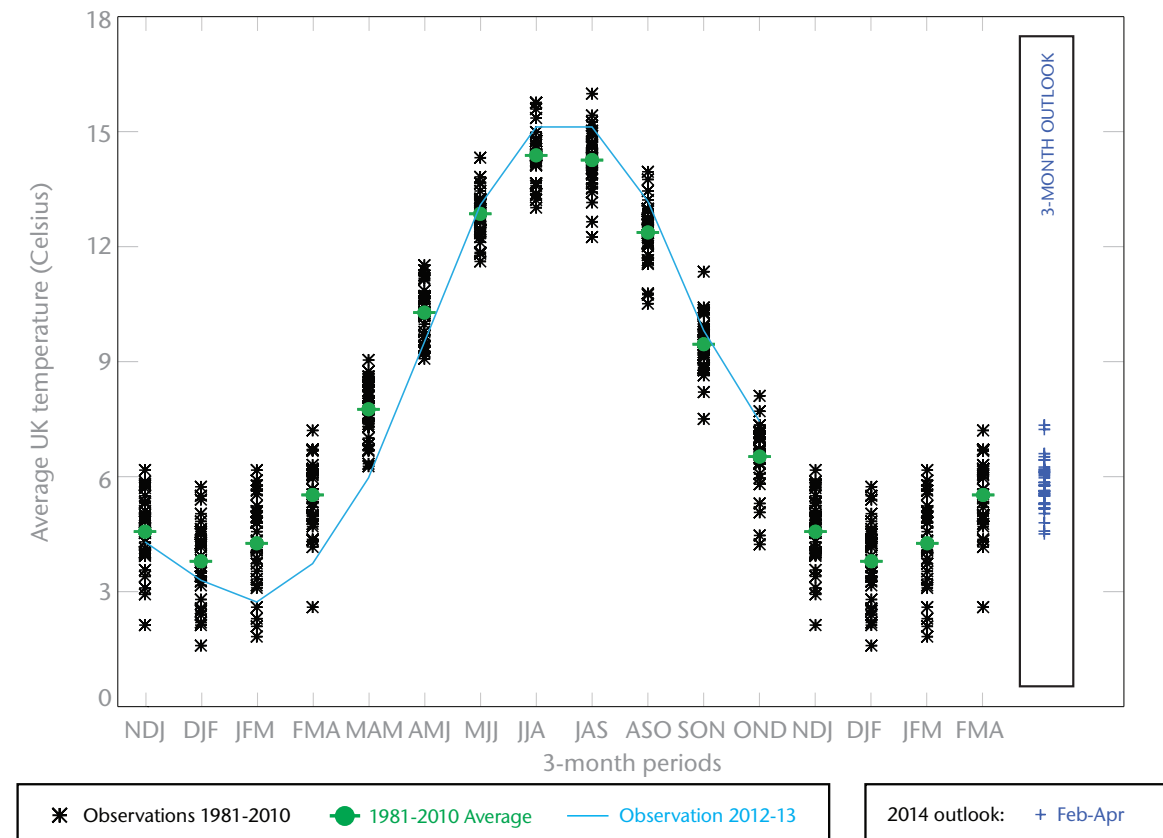


Fig T2 1-month and 3-month UK outlook for temperature in the context of observed climatology

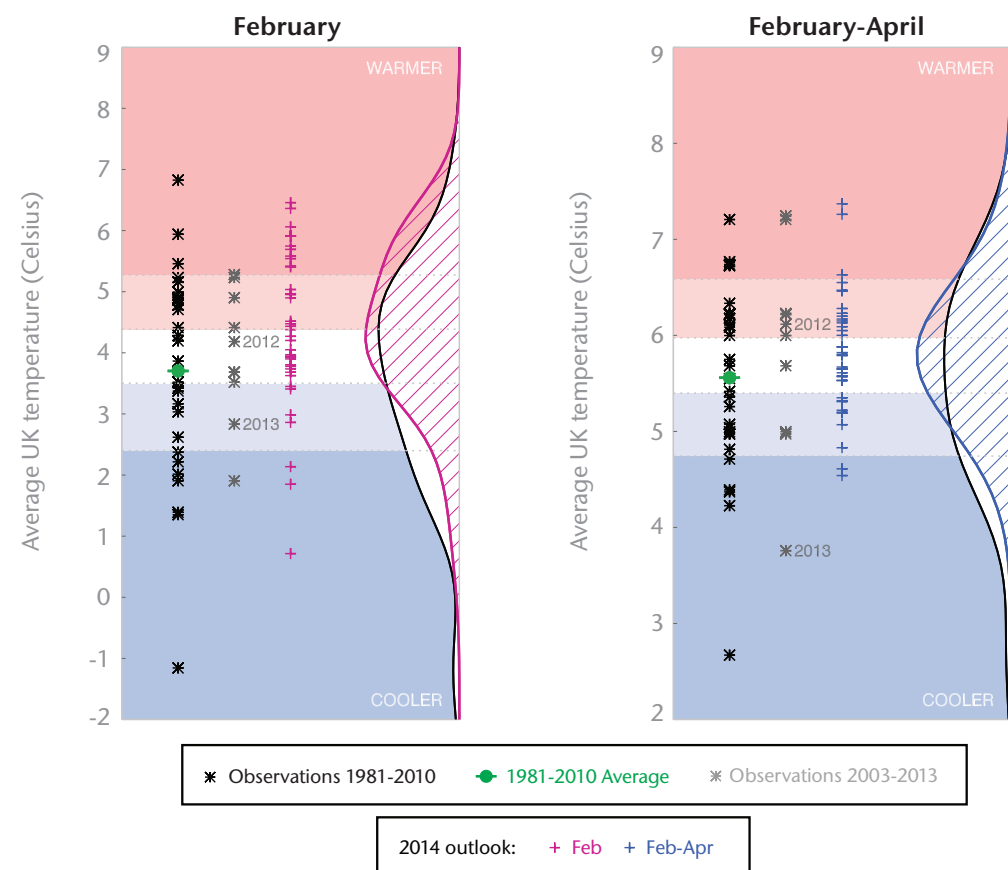
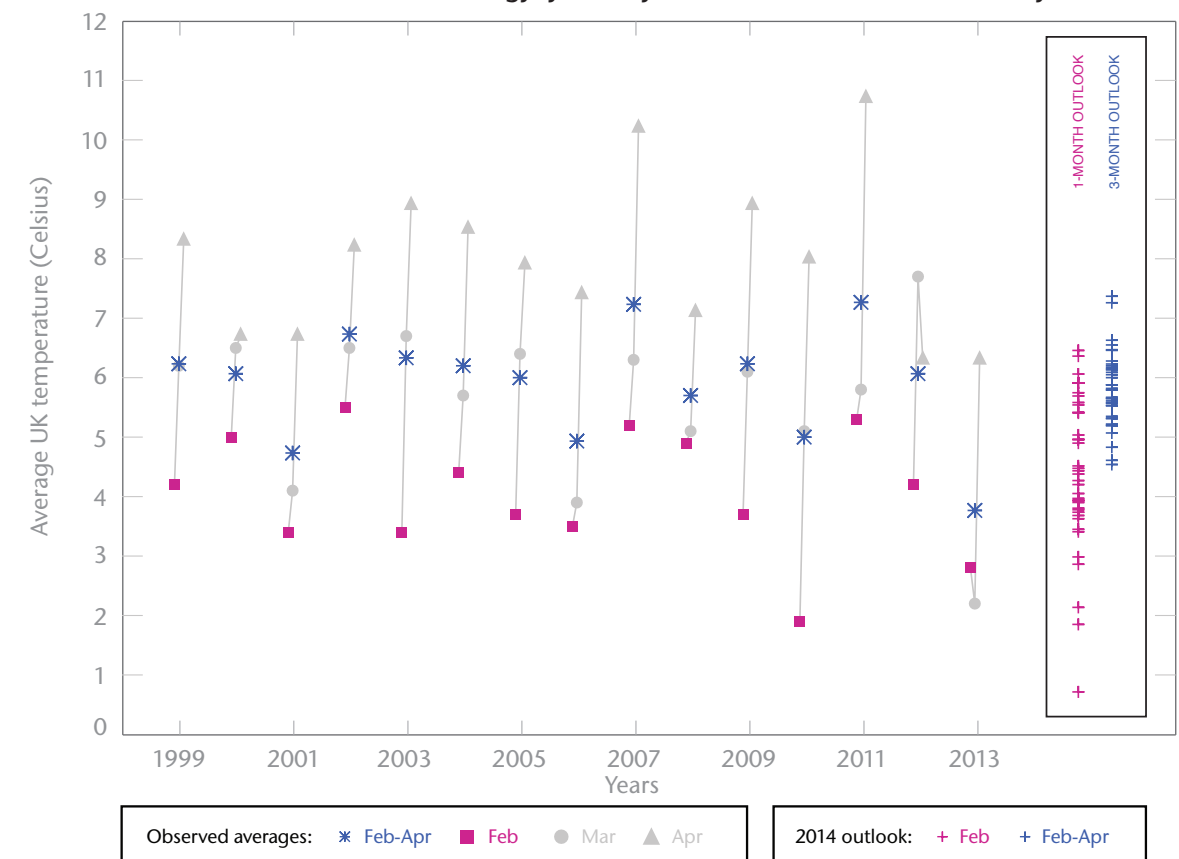


Fig T3

1-month and 3-month UK outlook for temperature in the context of recent climatology: year-to-year and within-season variability



This Outlook provides an indication of possible temperature and rainfall conditions over the next 3 months. It is part of a suite of forecasts designed for contingency planners.

The Outlook should not be used in isolation but should be used with shorter-range and more detailed (30-day, 15-day and 1-to-5-day) forecasts and warnings available to the contingency planning community from the Met Office.