

**REPORT (FINAL DRAFT)**

**KEY AUDIENCE RESEARCH – COLLEGE AUDIENCES**

**January 2023**

**PREPARED FOR: Scottish Qualifications Authority**

**Key Audience Research –  
College Audiences**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report details findings to emerge from research undertaken on behalf of SQA by Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd.

The research focused on the derivation of information from three respondent types:

- Individuals with teaching responsibilities in Scottish FE colleges ('lecturers')
- Individuals with management responsibilities in Scottish FE colleges ('management')
- Individuals learning in Scottish FE colleges ('learners')

The information was collected during November and December 2022 by means of the administration of an online questionnaire, with the following number of responses being achieved:

- 151 management
- 233 lecturers
- 396 learners

A 50:50 weighting was applied to the learner and management and lecturer respondent types during the analysis process.

Sections 2.0 to 6.0 inclusive detail findings in relation to:

- SQA's profile
- SQA qualifications profile
- SQA contact and communication profile
- SQA consultation and engagement profile
- SQA's values profile

Thereafter, Section 7.0 provides a number of key messages for SQA, which emerged from the research that was undertaken.

## 2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2.1 SQA Profile

- Overall, approaching three out of five respondents rated SQA's credibility as being **high** (with this outcome being most notable amongst management and lecturers)
- Overall, just over a quarter of respondents believed SQA to have **low** credibility (with this outcome also being highest amongst management and lecturers)
- Learners were far more likely to provide a 'can't say' response here compared to lecturers and management
- The **primary reasons** respondents believed SQA to have high credibility focused around 'SQA being a well-known and well-established organisation', 'beliefs that SQA does a good job' and 'SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications'
- Amongst those who believed SQA to have low credibility, this was **primarily** due to beliefs that 'some courses or materials are out of date'
- Overall, respondents provided an average score of 6.6 out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance, with these figures varying little across the three respondent types
- Overall, three out of five respondents stated their belief that they 'knew enough about SQA' (with this outcome being highest amongst management and lowest amongst learners)
- Amongst those who stated that they didn't believe they knew enough about SQA, their **most common desire** was to find out

‘more about what SQA does’ (with this being noted exclusively by learners)

## 2.2 SQA Qualifications Profile

- Overall, **greatest beliefs** amongst respondents that they know enough about qualifications of which they are aware related to National 4s, National 5s, Highers and HNCs and HNDs
- Overall, **highest levels** of perceived credibility of qualifications of which respondents were aware related to National 5s, Highers, Advanced Highers, SVQs, HNCs and HNDs and PDAs
- Just under half of respondents stated that their overall views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of – taken together – had changed over the last year (with this varying little across the three respondent types) and, amongst these respondents, a third stated their views had become **less positive** and one in six that their views had become **more positive**
- Those stating that their views on the credibility of all qualifications of which they were aware had become more positive over the last year **primarily** stated that this was a function of ‘the quality of qualifications’, ‘recent increased understanding of SQA qualifications’ and ‘SQA qualifications being increasingly fit for purpose’ (with these views being exclusively expressed by learners)
- Amongst those whose views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of had become less positive over the last year, this was due to a **range of factors**, but none emerged with any great prominence

## 2.3 SQA Contact and Communications Profiles

- Just under half of respondents stated that they had had contact from SQA (in the case of lecturers or management) or had contacted SQA (in the case of learners), with contact being most prominent amongst management and least prominent amongst learners
- When respondents were asked how they rated their contact from or with SQA, an **average score** of 6.7 out of a possible 10 was noted (with this outcome being highest amongst management and lecturers)
- Those who provided a positive rating of SQA's contacts **primarily** stated that this was due to 'SQA's quick response to queries' (with this being particularly mentioned by lecturers and management)
- Amongst those who provided a low rating of SQA in terms of contacts, the **most prominent** response was that this was due to 'SQA being slow to respond'
- Respondents provided the following average scores in terms of three specific aspects of SQA communications, namely:
  - how appropriate the level of detail was in these communications (6.1)
  - clarity of communications (6.0)
  - timeliness of communications (5.8)
- These responses were similar across the three respondent types
- An average score of 6.1 out of a possible 10 was provided by respondents in terms of their overall rating of communications with SQA (with the most positive outcomes here being noted by management)



- Those who provided a **high rating** for SQA in terms of communications from SQA primarily stated that this was due to ‘certificates being delivered on time’, ‘the relevance of information provided by SQA’ and ‘response time to queries’ (with the first of these being exclusively noted by management and lecturers)
- Those who provided a **poor rating** for SQA in terms of communications from SQA primarily stated that this was due to ‘SQA being slow to respond’, ‘poor communications from SQA’ and ‘respondents having minimal contact with SQA’

## 2.4 SQA Consultation and Engagement Profile

- When respondents were asked to rate how well SQA consults or engages with them (and, in the case of learners, also their peers), an average score of 5.7 out of a possible 10 was noted (with this score being highest amongst management and lowest amongst learners)
- Those who provided a **good rating** number for SQA in terms of its consultation and engagement identified a wide range of reasons for this being the case, with none of them being particularly prominent
- Those who provided a **poor rating** of SQA’s engagement and consultation primarily stated that this was due to ‘lack of consultation from SQA’ and ‘lack of engagement with SQA’

## 2.5 SQA’s Values Profile

- Just over half of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘SQA can be trusted’ (with this outcome being lowest amongst learners and highest amongst lecturers and management), over a third agreed with the statement that ‘SQA is an enabling organisation’ (with this figure being lowest amongst lecturers and learners and

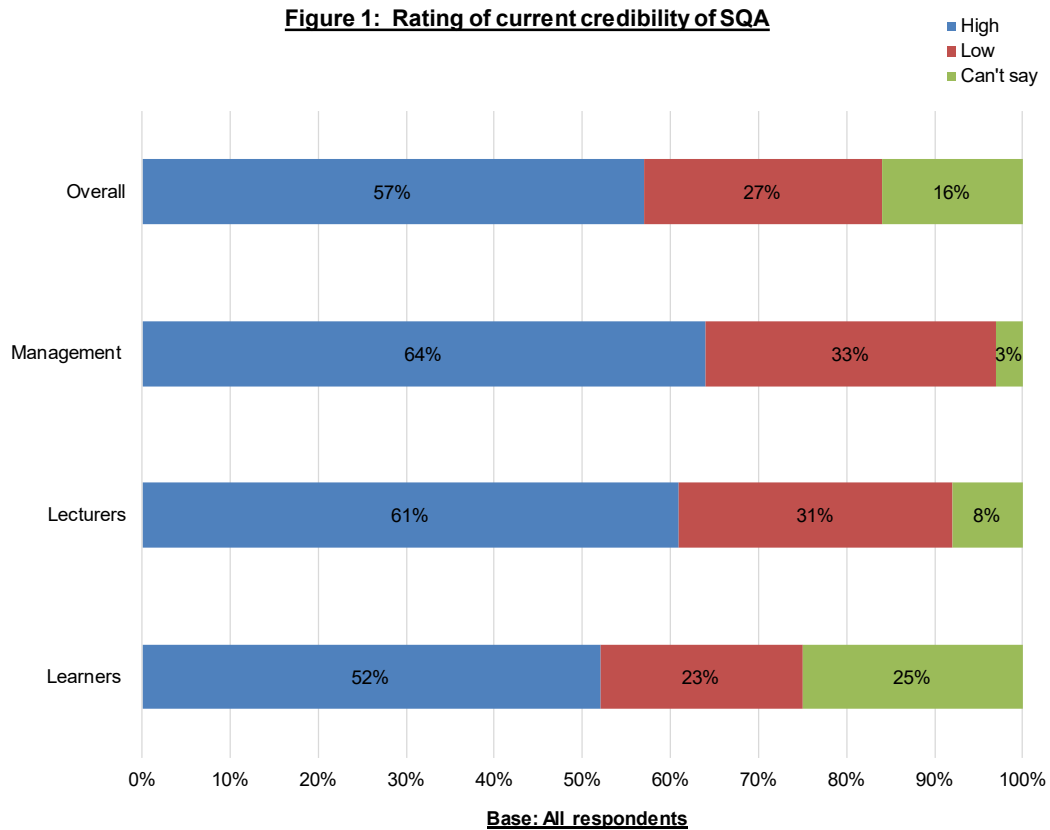
highest amongst management) and three out of ten agreed with the statement that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' (with this outcome being lowest amongst learners and highest amongst management)

- Levels of disagreement with each of the statements under consideration were **far more limited** (ranging from one in ten in terms of beliefs that 'SQA can be trusted' to around one in five in terms of disagreement that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' and 'SQA is an enabling organisation')
- Learners were **far more likely** than management and lecturers to be unable to express an opinion with regard to 'SQA being an enabling organisation' and the extent to which 'SQA can be trusted'

### 3.0 SQA PROFILE

#### 3.1 SQA's Credibility

*'How would you rate the current credibility of SQA?'*



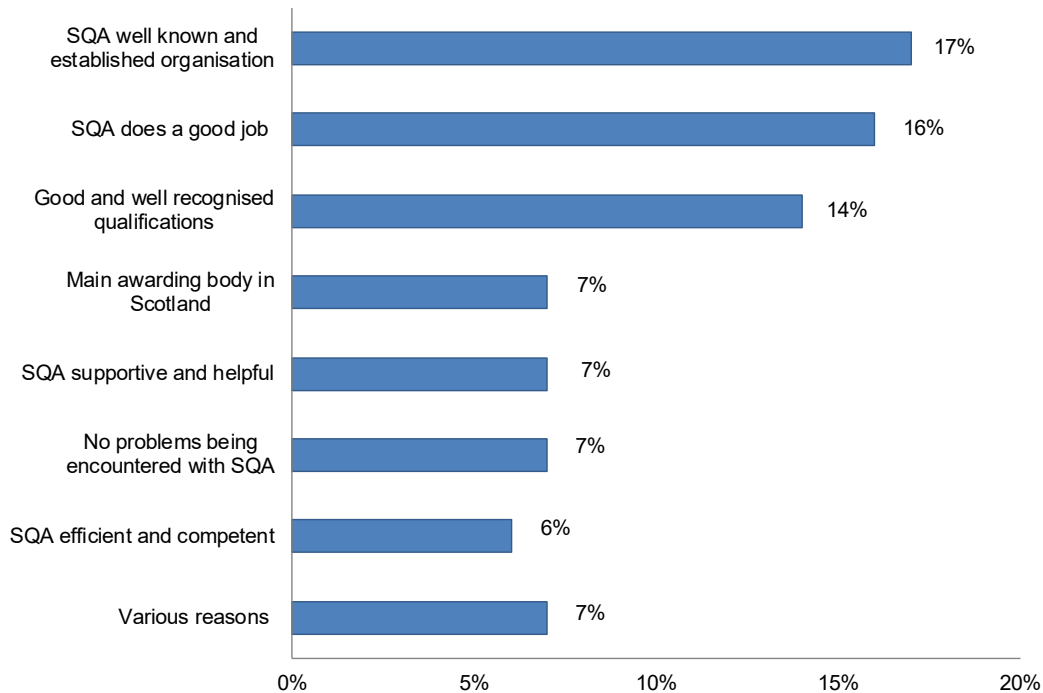
Overall, approaching three out of five respondents (57%) rated SQA's credibility as being **high**, with this outcome being most notable amongst management and lecturers (64% and 61% respectively compared to 52% for learners).

Figure 1 also indicates that, overall, just over a quarter of respondents (27%) believed SQA to have **low** credibility, with this outcome being highest amongst management and lecturers (33% and 31% respectively compared to 23% amongst learners).

It should also be stressed that learners were far more likely to provide a ‘can’t say’ response here (25% compared to 8% and 3% respectively for lecturers and management).

*‘Why did you provide a high rating of SQA’s credibility?’*

**Figure 2: Reason for providing high rating of SQA credibility  
(unprompted)**



**Base: Respondents believing SQA to have high credibility**

When those stating their belief that SQA had **high** credibility were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, their **primary responses** focused around:

- SQA being a well-known and well-established organisation (17%)
- Beliefs that SQA ‘does a good job’ (16%)
- SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications (14%)

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made in this regard of:

- SQA being Scotland's main awarding body (7%)
- SQA being supportive or helpful (7%)
- Respondents not encountering any problems with SQA (7%)
- SQA being efficient or competent (6%)

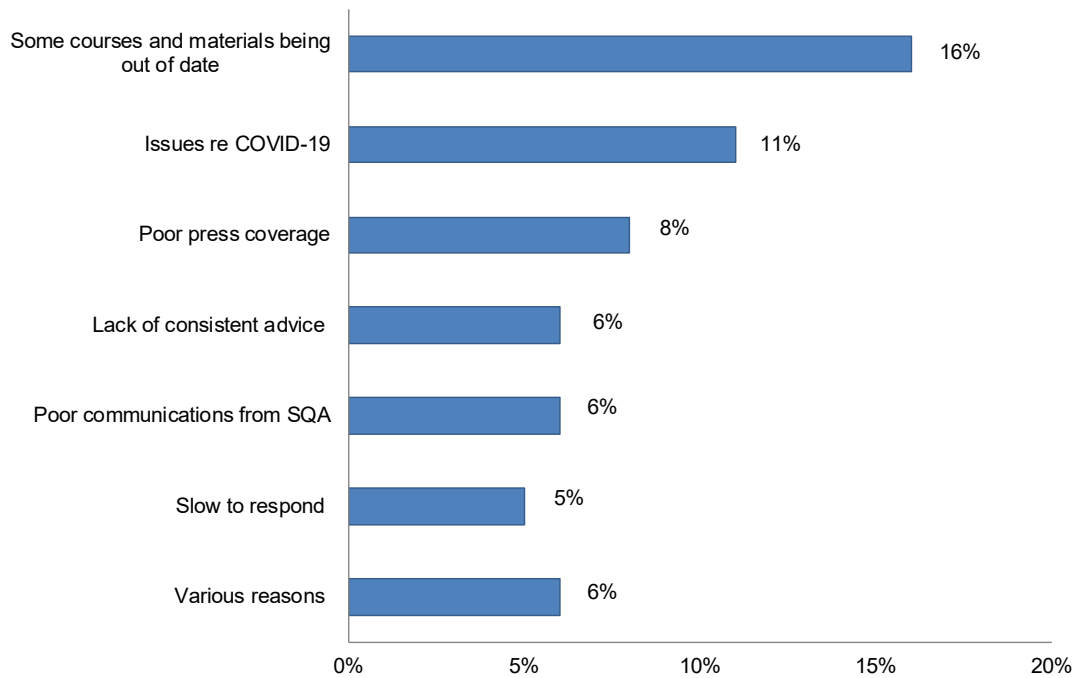
Further examination of the data indicated the following differences in terms of a number of the outcomes noted in Figure 2 being most prominently cited by the respondent types indicated:

- **SQA 'doing a good job'**: learners (30% compared to 10% and 5% respectively for management and lecturers)
- **SQA having good, well-recognised qualifications**: lecturers and management (both 17% compared to 10% for learners)
- **No problems being encountered with SQA**: learners and lecturers (10% and 8% respectively compared to 3% for management)
- **SQA being efficient or competent**: management and lecturers (9% and 8% respectively compared to 2% for learners)

It should also be noted that almost one in ten learners here made unprompted reference to 'SQA providing relevant information' (9% compared to 0% for both lecturers and management).

*‘Why did you provide a low rating of SQA’s credibility?’*

**Figure 3: Reason for providing low rating of SQA credibility  
(uUnprompted)**



**Base: Respondents believing SQA to have low credibility**

When those stating their belief that SQA had **low** credibility were asked – again, on an unprompted basis – why they believed this to be the case, their **primary response** focused around a belief of ‘some courses and materials being out of date’ (16%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of:

- Issues and circumstances relating to COVID-19 (11%)
- SQA receiving poor press coverage (8%)
- Lack of consistency in advice provided by SQA (6%)
- Poor communications from SQA (6%)
- SQA being slow to respond (5%)

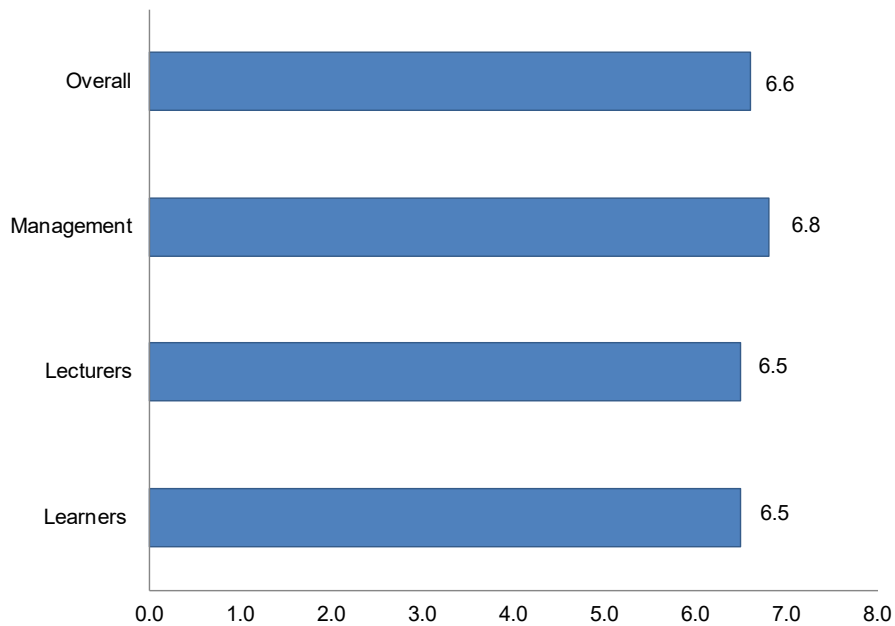
Further examination of the data here indicated that the following respondent types were most likely to make unprompted reference to the factors noted below:

- **Some courses and materials being out of date:** lecturers and management (23% and 22% respectively compared to 0% for learners)
- **Issues relating to COVID-19:** learners (17% compared to, for example, 7% for management)
- **Lack of consistent advice from SQA:** exclusively management and lecturers (both 9%)
- **Poor communications from SQA:** exclusively management and lecturers (9% and 8% respectively)
- **Slow response from SQA:** exclusively management and lecturers (9% and 6% respectively)
- **The length of time taken by SQA to issue certificates:** exclusively learners (10%)
- **SQA being bureaucratic:** exclusively lecturers (6% compared)
- **Errors in SQA materials:** exclusively lecturers (6%)

### 3.2 Satisfaction with SQA's Overall Performance

*'How satisfied would you say you are with the performance of SQA overall, where '1' means 'completely dissatisfied' and '10' means 'completely satisfied'?'*

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with SQA's overall performance - average scores**



**Base: All respondents**

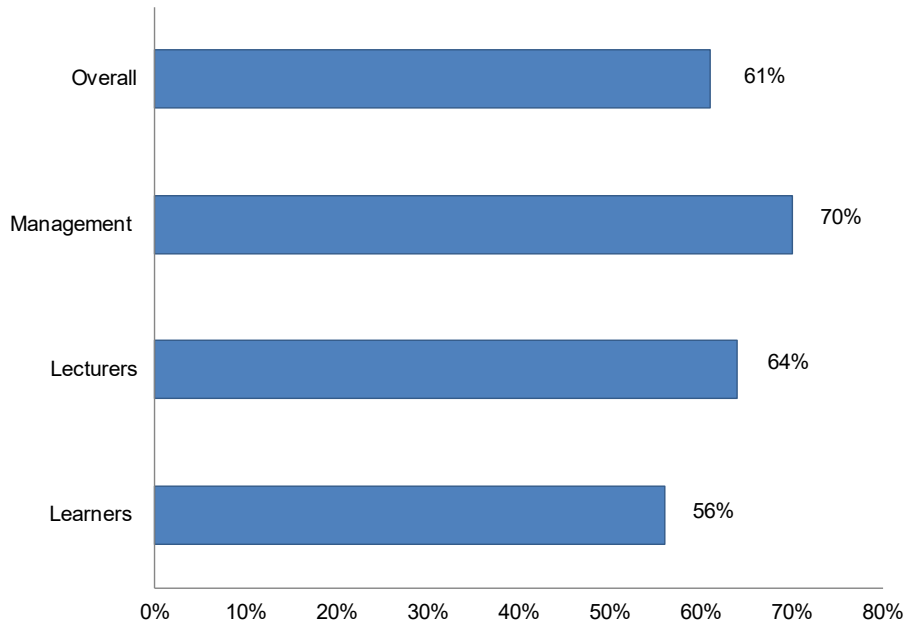
Overall, respondents provided an average score of 6.6. out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance overall, with these figures varying little across the three respondent types (from 6.5 out of a possible 10 for lecturers and learners to 6.8 for management).



### 3.3 SQA Knowledge and Information Profile

*‘Do you believe you know enough about SQA?’*

**Figure 5: Enough known about SQA**



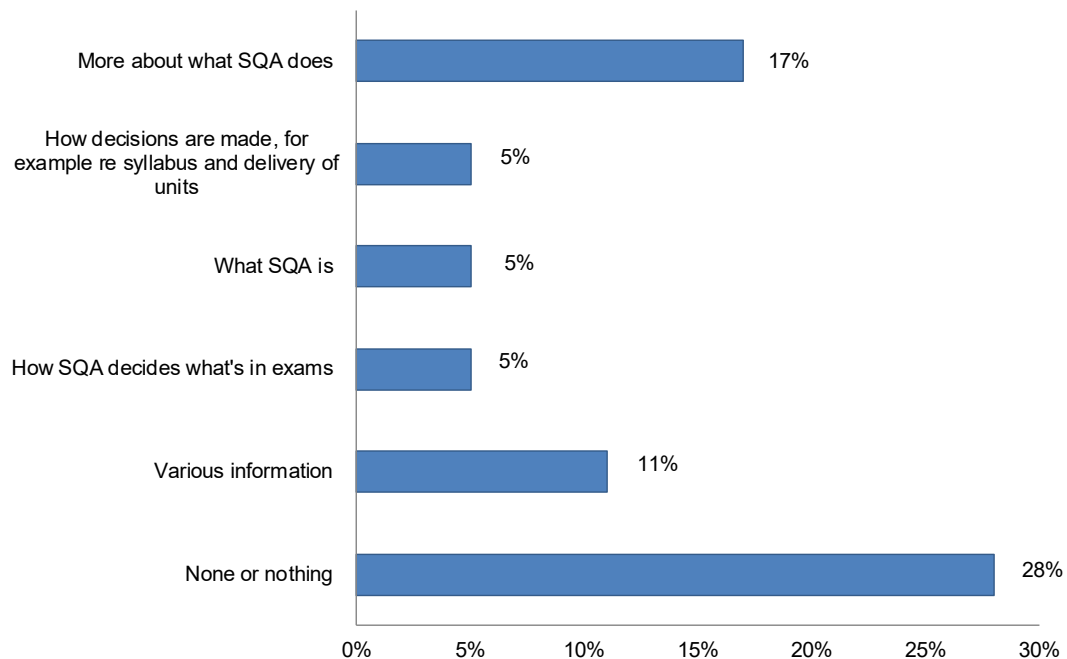
**Base: All respondents**

Overall, three out of five respondents (61%) stated their belief that they knew enough about SQA, with this outcome being highest amongst management and lowest amongst learners:

- Management (70%)
- Lecturers (64%)
- Learners (56%)

*‘What would you like to know more about SQA?’*

**Figure 6: Information desires re SQA (unprompted)**



**Base: Respondents not knowing enough about SQA**

When those who did not believe that they knew enough about SQA were asked – on an unprompted basis – what they would like to know more about SQA, their **principal response** was that of ‘more about what SQA does’ (17%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of a desire for information regarding:

- What SQA is (5%)
- How SQA decides what’s in exams (5%)
- How decisions are made by SQA – for example, in relation to the syllabus and the delivery of units (5%)

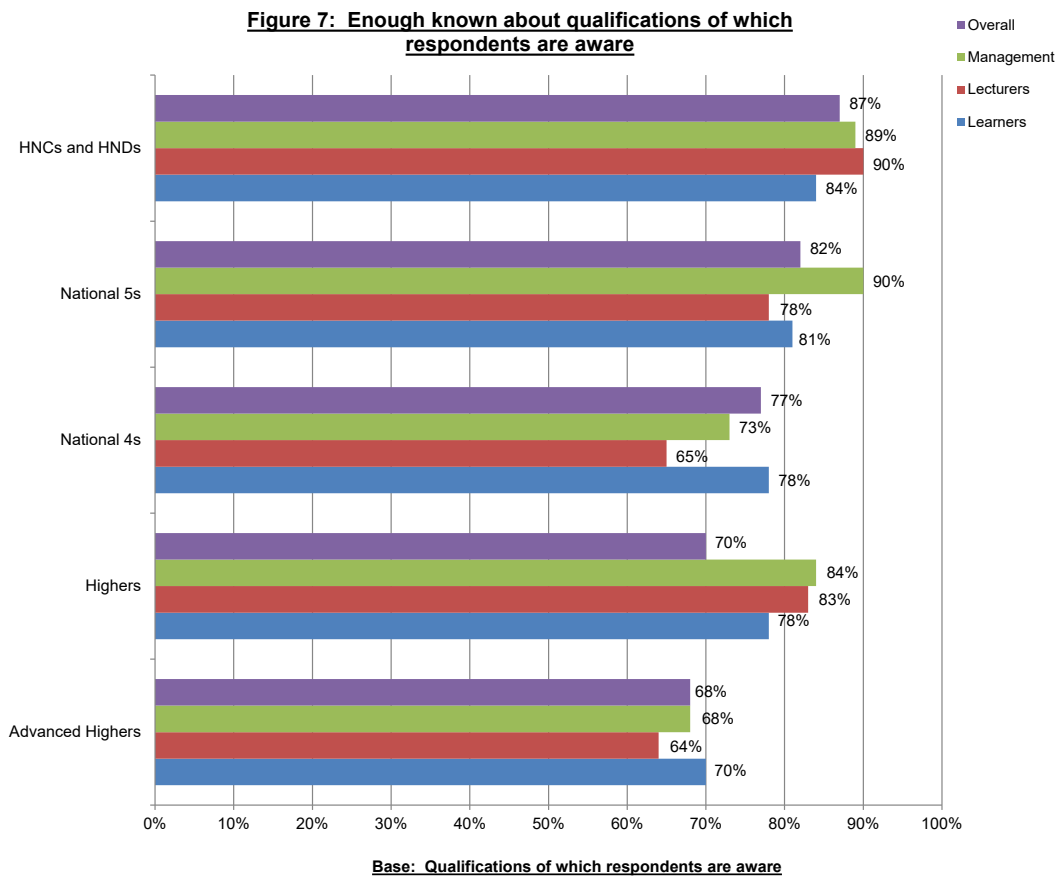
It should also be noted that three out of ten respondents here (28%) stated that they had no information desires regarding SQA.

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a meaningful breakdown on the basis of respondent type. However, it is worthy of note that references to desires for information about 'what SQA does', 'what SQA is' and 'how SQA decides what's in exams' were exclusively cited by learners, whilst references to information about 'how decisions are made by SQA' were exclusively made by management and lecturers.

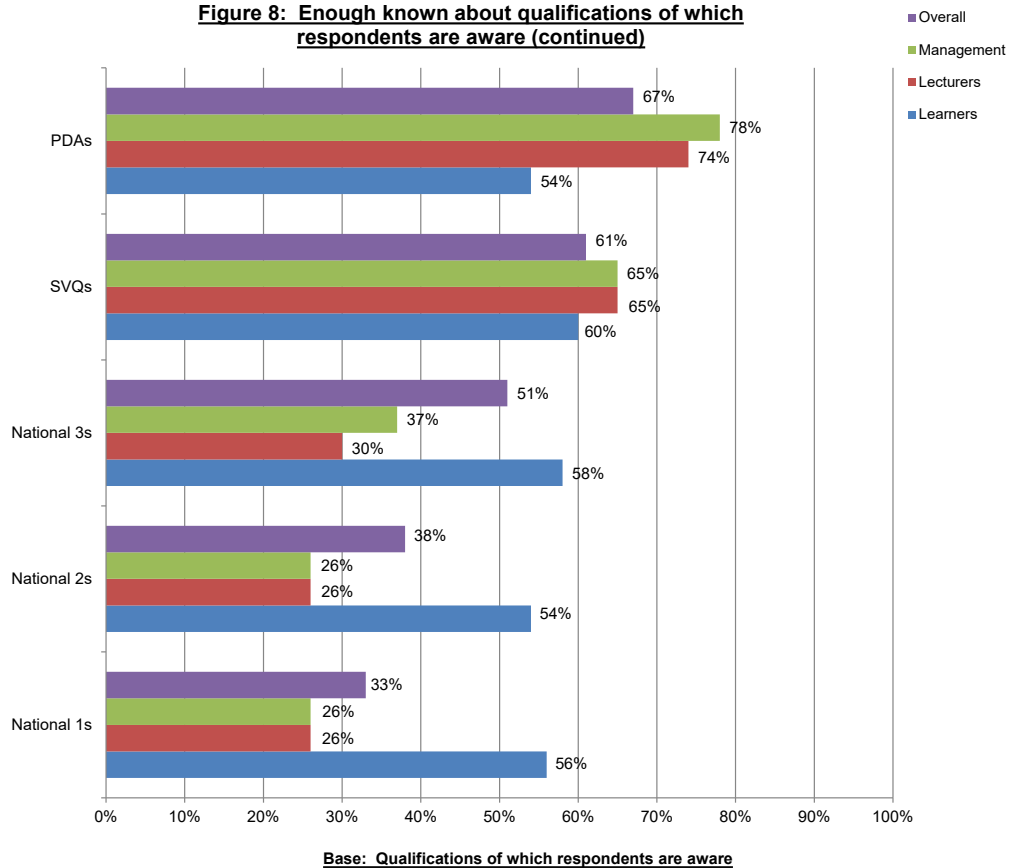
## 4.0 SQA QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE

### 4.1 Qualification Knowledge and Credibility

*‘Do you think you know enough about SQA qualifications of which you are aware?’*



**Figure 8: Enough known about qualifications of which respondents are aware (continued)**



**Greatest beliefs** amongst respondents that they know enough about qualifications of which they are aware relate to:

- HNCs and HNDs (87%)
- National 5s (82%)
- National 4s (77%)
- Highers (70%)
- Advanced Highers (68%)
- PDAs (67%)

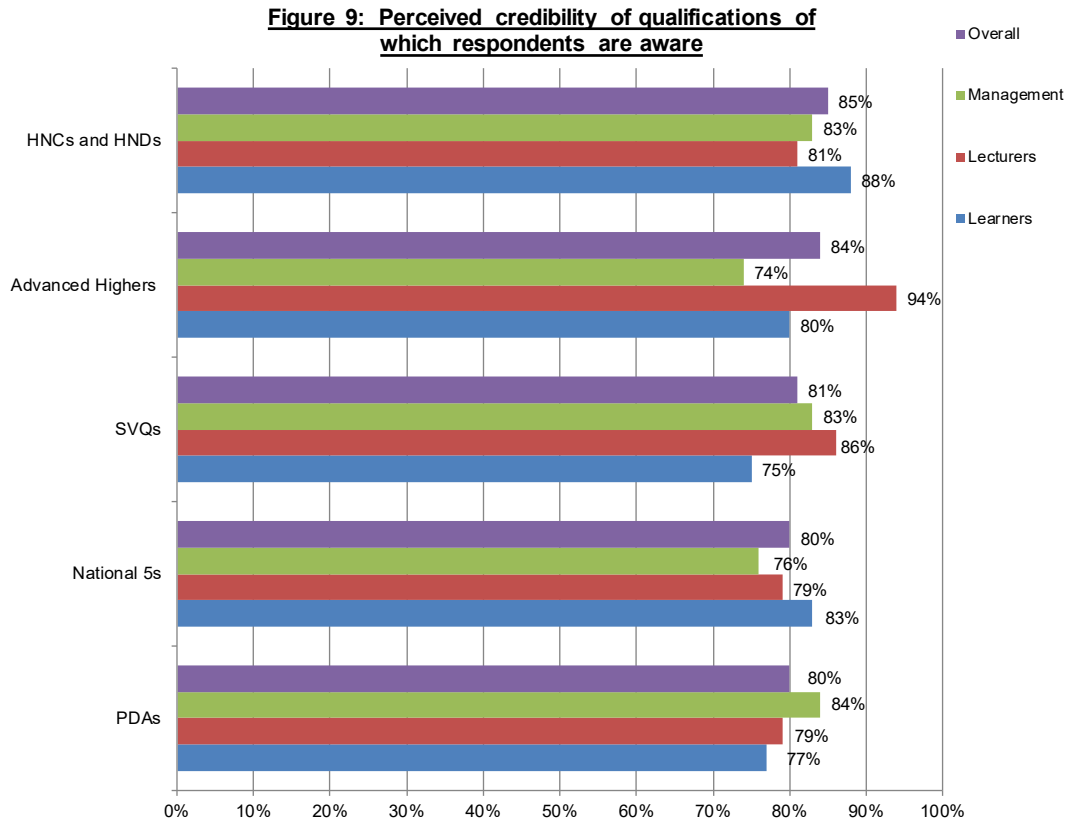
Thereafter, **secondary reference** was made here to enough being known about two further qualifications of which respondents were aware, namely:

- SVQs (61%)
- National 3s (51%)

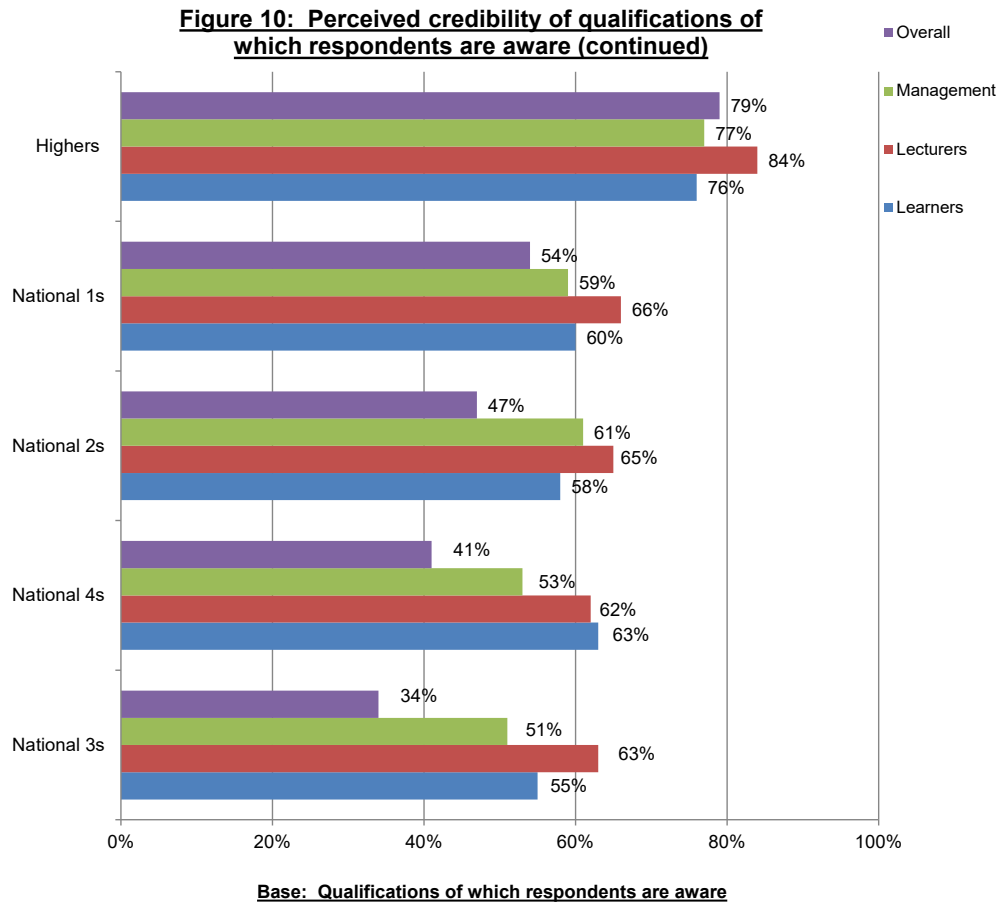
Figures 7 and 8 also indicate the following notable differences here in terms of respondent type in terms of beliefs that enough is known about qualifications of which respondents were aware, including:

- **National 1s:** learners (56% compared to 26% for both other respondent types)
- **National 2s:** learners (54% compared to 26% for both other respondent types)
- **National 3s:** learners (58% compared to 37% and 30% respectively for lecturers and management)
- **National 4s:** learners and management (78% and 75% respectively compared to 65% for lecturers)
- **National 5s:** management (90% compared to 81% and 78% respectively for learners and lecturers)
- **PDAs:** management and lecturers (78% and 74% respectively compared to 54% for learners)

*‘How would you rate the credibility of qualifications of which you are aware?’*



**Base: Qualifications of which respondents are aware**



**Highest levels** of perceived credibility of qualifications of which respondents were aware related to:

- HNCs and HNDs (85%)
- Advanced Highers (84%)
- SVQs (81%)
- National 5s (80%)
- PDAs (80%)
- Highers (79%)

Thereafter, four further qualifications emerged with less **prominence** here, namely:

- National 1s (54%)
- National 2s (47%)
- National 4s (41%)



- National 3s (34%)

Further examination of the data indicated the following notable differences on the basis of respondent type in terms of highest perceived credibility being noted by the respondent types indicated in relation to qualifications of which they were aware:

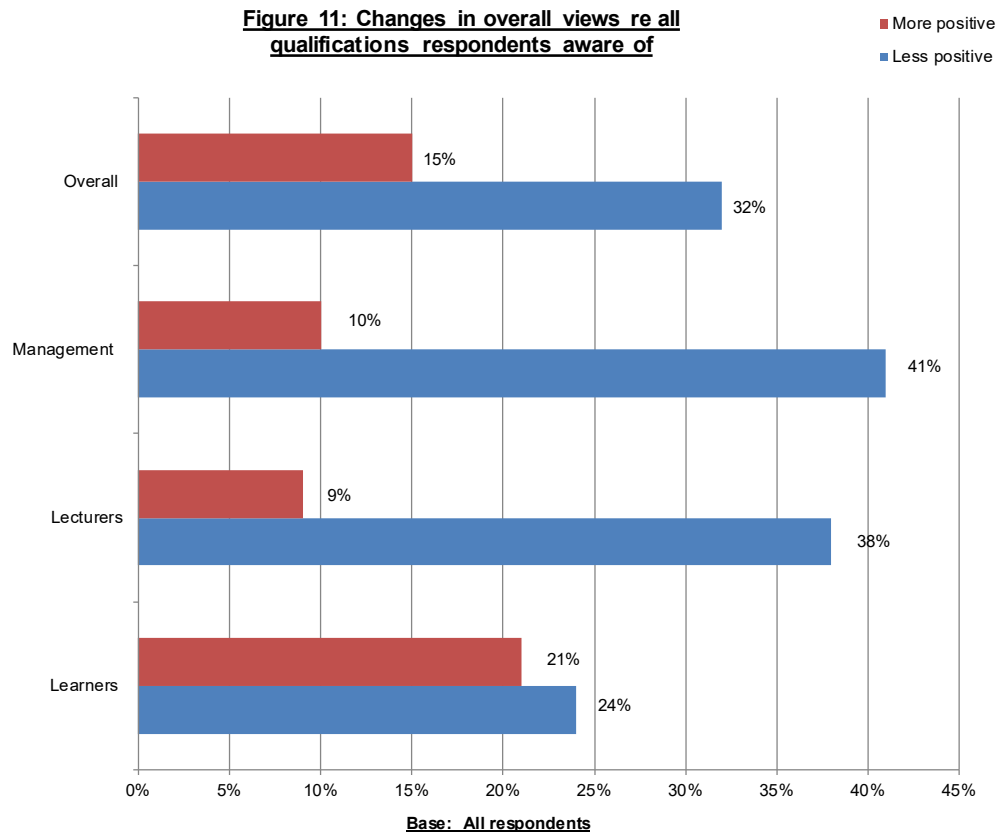
- **National 3s:** lecturers (63% compared to, for example, 51% for management)
- **National 4s:** learners and lecturers (63% and 62% respectively compared to 53% for management)
- **Advanced Highers:** lecturers (94% compared to 80% and 79% respectively for learners and management)
- **SVQs:** lecturers and management (86% and 83% respectively compared to 75% for learners)

It should be stressed, however, that the lower levels of perceived credibility of a number of qualifications amongst learners are due to the greater extent to which they provided a 'can't say' response here compared to the other two respondent types.

## 4.2 Changes in Views About SQA Qualifications

Just under half of respondents (47%) stated that their overall views on the credibility of all of the qualifications they had heard of – taken together – had changed over the last year, with this varying little across the three respondent types (from 45% for learners to 50% for management).

*'Have your overall views on the credibility of all of the qualifications you have heard of taken together changed over the last year?'*



Amongst those whose overall views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of had changed over the last year, for a third (32%), their views had become 'less positive' and, for one in six (15%), their views had become 'more positive'.

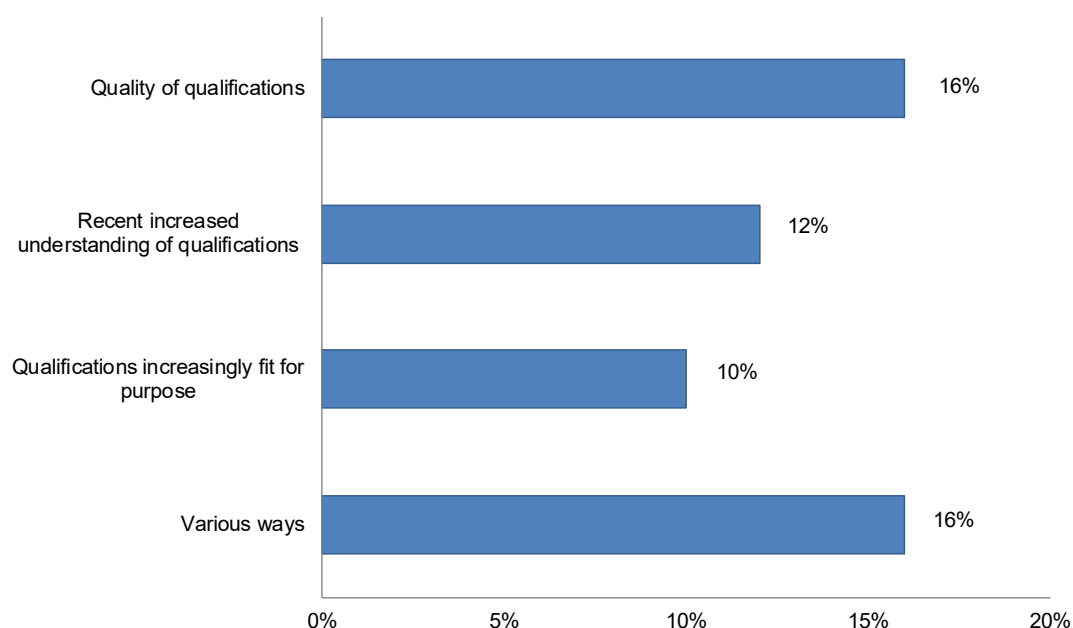
Figure 11 also highlights the following outcomes here:

- That management were four times more likely to state that their views had become 'less positive' than 'more positive' (41% compared to 10%)
- That lecturers were also around four times more likely to state that their views had become 'less positive' than 'more positive' (38% compared to 9%)

- That learners were relatively equally split in terms of their views having become 'more positive' or 'less positive' (21% and 24% respectively)

*'In which ways have your views become more positive?'*

**Figure 12: Ways in which views have become more positive (unprompted) - indicative**



**Base: 'More positive' in Figure 11**

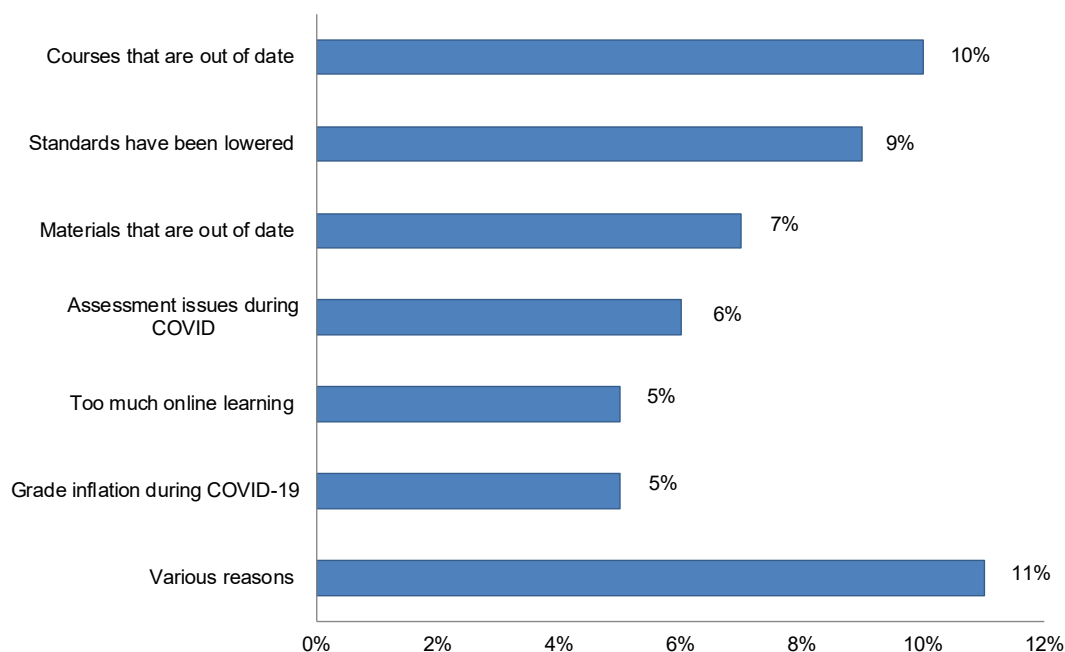
When those stating that their views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of – taken together – had become more positive over the last year were asked (on an unprompted basis) why this was the case, their **principal responses** focused around (on a somewhat indicative basis):

- Quality of qualifications (16%)
- Recent increased understanding of SQA qualifications (12%)
- SQA qualifications being increasingly fit for purpose (10%)

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a meaningful breakdown to be provided on the basis of respondent type. However, it is worth highlighting that the three principal responses noted above were exclusively cited by learners.

*‘In which ways have your views become less positive?’*

**Figure 13: Ways in which views have become less positive (unprompted)**



**Base: 'Less positive' in Figure 11**

When those stating that their views on the credibility of all of the qualifications they had heard of had become less positive over the last year were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, their **principal responses** focused around:

- Courses being out of date (10%)
- Standards having been lowered (9%)
- Materials being out of date (7%)
- Assessment issues during COVID-19 (6%)
- There having been too much online learning (5%)

- Grade inflation during COVID-19 (5%)

Although on a somewhat indicative basis, the following differences are worthy of note here on the basis of respondent type:

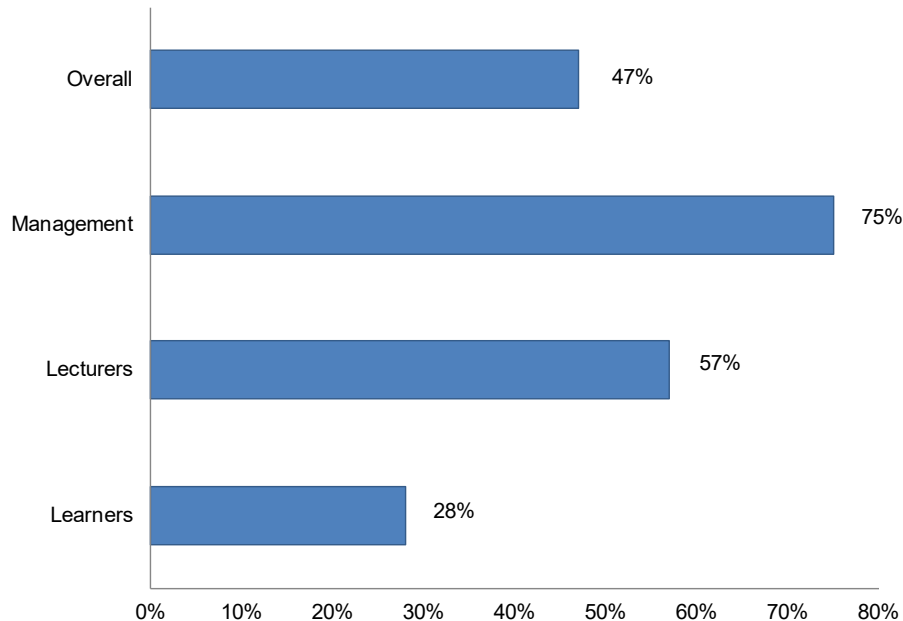
- **Courses being out of date:** exclusively amongst learners (32%)
- **Standards being lowered:** exclusively amongst lecturers and management (14% and 13% respectively)
- **Materials being out of date:** exclusively amongst lecturers and management (11% and 10% respectively)
- **Assessment issues during COVID-19:** exclusively amongst management and lecturers (10% and 6%)
- **Grade inflation due to COVID-19:** exclusively amongst learners (14%)
- **Too much online learning:** exclusively amongst management and lecturers (10% and 6% respectively)

## 5.0 SQA CONTACT AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFILES

### 5.1 Contact Profile

*‘Have you had contact from SQA or have you contacted SQA?’*

**Figure 14: Have had contact from SQA or have contacted SQA**



**Base: All respondents**

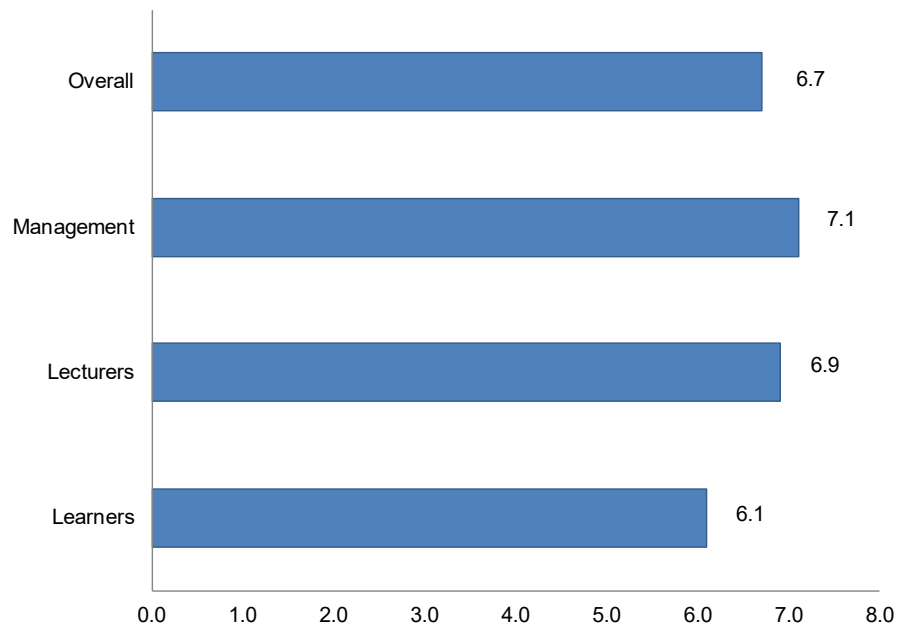
Just under half of respondents (47%) stated that they had had contact from SQA (in the case of lecturers or management) or had contacted SQA (in the case of learners).

Figure 14 also indicates that three quarters of management (75%) had had contact from SQA, with this applying to approaching three out of five lecturers (57%) and indicates that approaching three out of ten learners (28%) had contacted SQA.

Further examination of the data indicated that management and lecturers were most likely to have had contact from SQA in the last year (56% and 42% respectively compared to 13% for learners who had contacted SQA in the last year).

*‘How would you rate your contact from SQA or contact with SQA, on a scale from 1 to 10, where ‘1’ is ‘very poor’ and ‘10’ is ‘very good’?’*

**Figure 15: Rating of contacts from SQA - average scores**

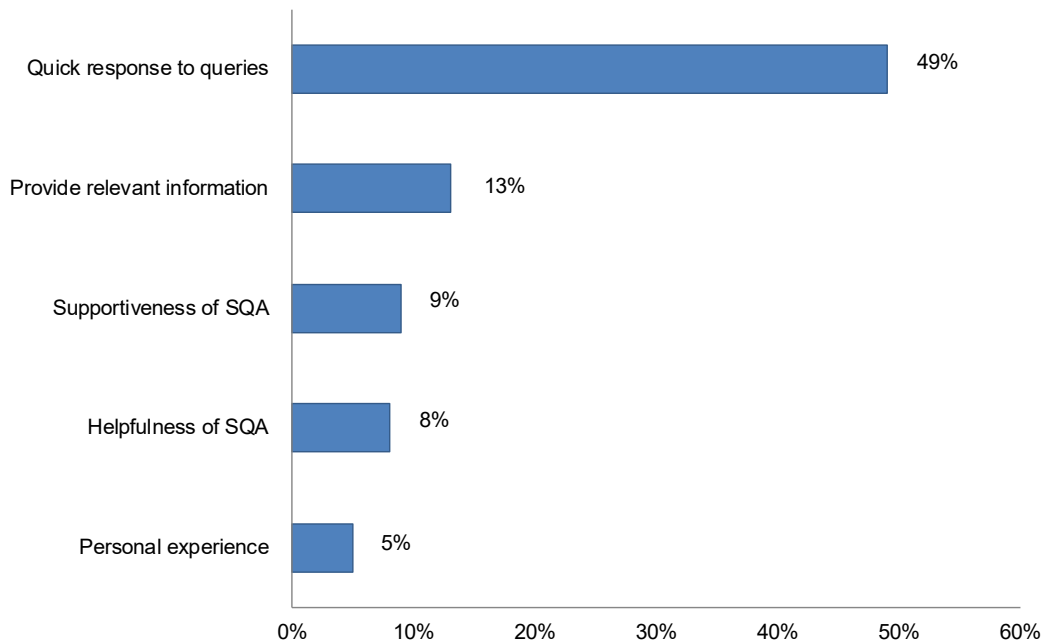


**Base: Have had contact from SQA or have contacted SQA**

When respondents were asked how they rated their contact from SQA (in the case of management and lecturers) and contact with SQA (in the case the learners), an average score of 6.7 out of a possible 10 was noted, with this outcome being highest amongst management and lecturers (7.1 and 6.9 respectively compared to 6.1 for learners).

*‘Why did you choose a positive rating for SQA contacts?’*

**Figure 16: Reasons for choosing positive rating of SQA contacts  
(unprompted)**



**Base: Provided rating of 6 to 10**

When those noting a positive rating (providing a rating of between 6 and 10) were asked (on an unprompted basis) why this was the case, this was **principally** due to ‘SQA’s quick response to queries’ (49%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of:

- The relevance of information provided by SQA (13%)
- The supportiveness of SQA (9%)
- The helpfulness of SQA (8%)
- Personal experience (5%)

Although on a relatively indicative basis, further examination of the data indicated that the following respondent types were most likely to make unprompted reference to the factors noted below, namely:

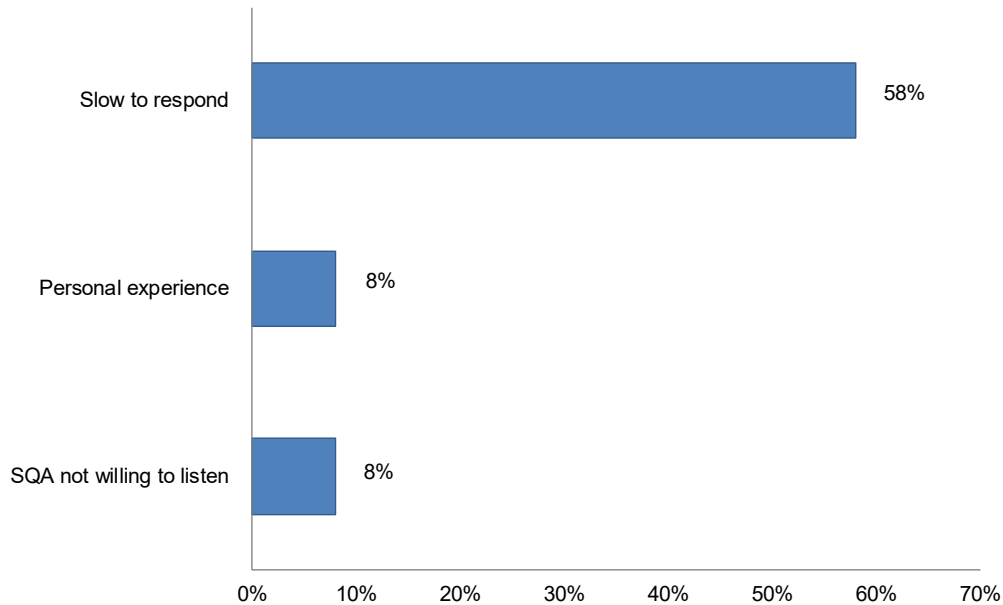
- **Quick response to queries:** lecturers and management (59% and 57% respectively compared to 18% for learners)



- **The helpfulness of SQA:** learners (24% compared to 3% and 4% respectively for lecturers and management)

*‘Why did you choose a negative rating for SQA contacts?’*

**Figure 17: Reasons for choosing poor rating of SQA contacts  
(unprompted) - indicative**



**Base: Provided rating of 1 to 5**

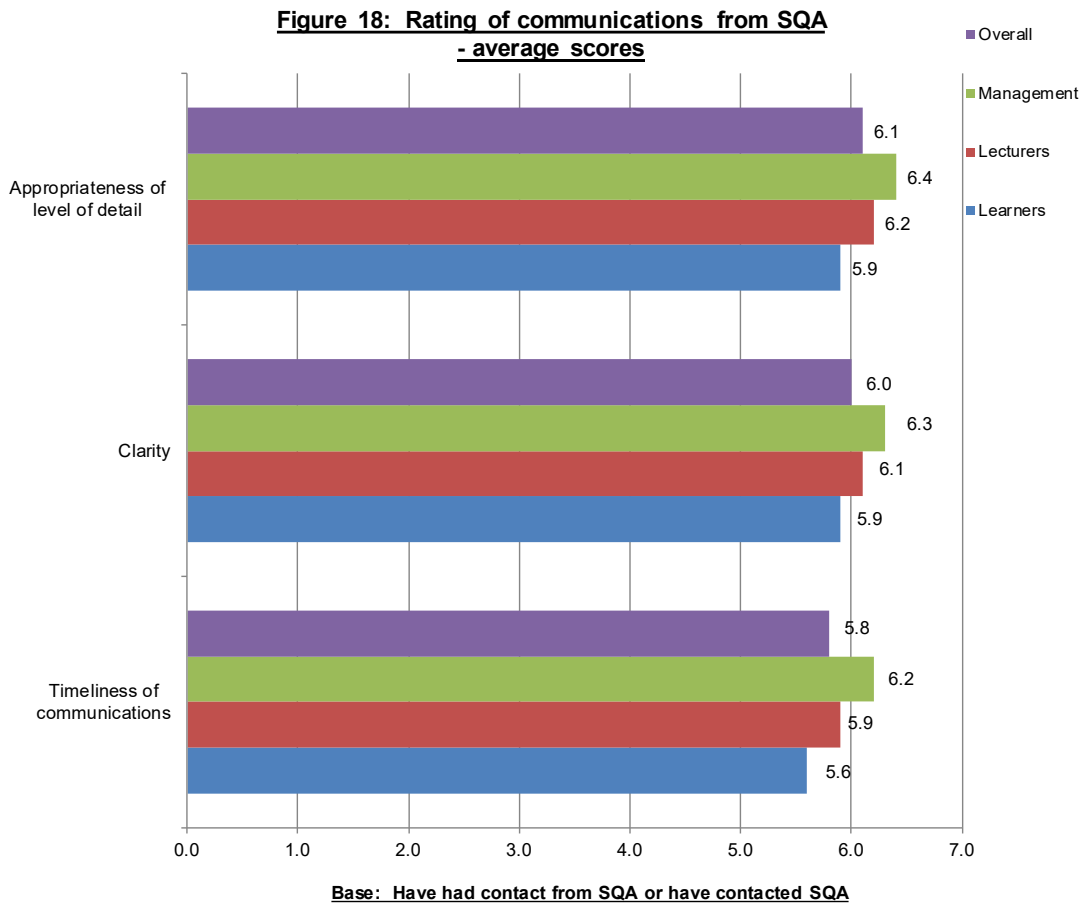
When those who provided a low rating of SQA in terms of their contacts with SQA (and, in particular, provided a rating of between 1 and 5) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why they provided such a rating, by far the **most prominent** response provided was that of ‘SQA being slow to respond’ (58%), with **some** unprompted mention being made here of a low rating being provided due to:

- Their personal experience (8%)
- SQA not being willing to listen (8%)

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a meaningful breakdown to be provided on the basis of respondent type.

## 5.2 Communications Profile

*‘How would you rate the following aspects of communications from SQA, on a scale from 1 to 10, where ‘1’ is ‘very poor’ and ‘10’ is ‘very good’?’*



Respondents provided the following average scores (out of a possible 10) for three aspects of their communications from SQA:

- How appropriate the level of detail was (6.1)
- Clarity (6.0)
- Timeliness of communications (5.8)

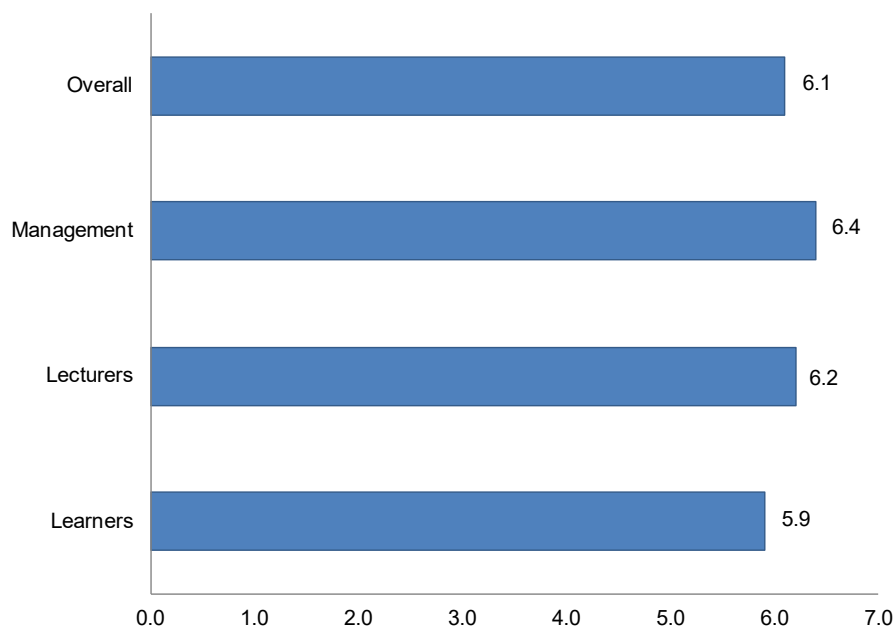
Figure 18 indicates that the responses of the three respondent types here are similar:

- How appropriate the level of detail was (ranging from 5.9 out of a possible 10 for learners to 6.4 for management)
- Clarity (ranging from 5.9 for learners to 6.3 for management)
- Timeliness of communications (ranging from 5.6 for learners to 6.2 for management)

In this regard, however, it should be stressed that the greatest difference is apparent in relation to the third of these indicators.

*‘Overall, how would you rate communications from SQA, on a scale from 1 to 10, where ‘1’ is ‘very poor’ and ‘10’ is ‘very good’?’*

**Figure 19: Overall rating of communications with SQA - average scores**

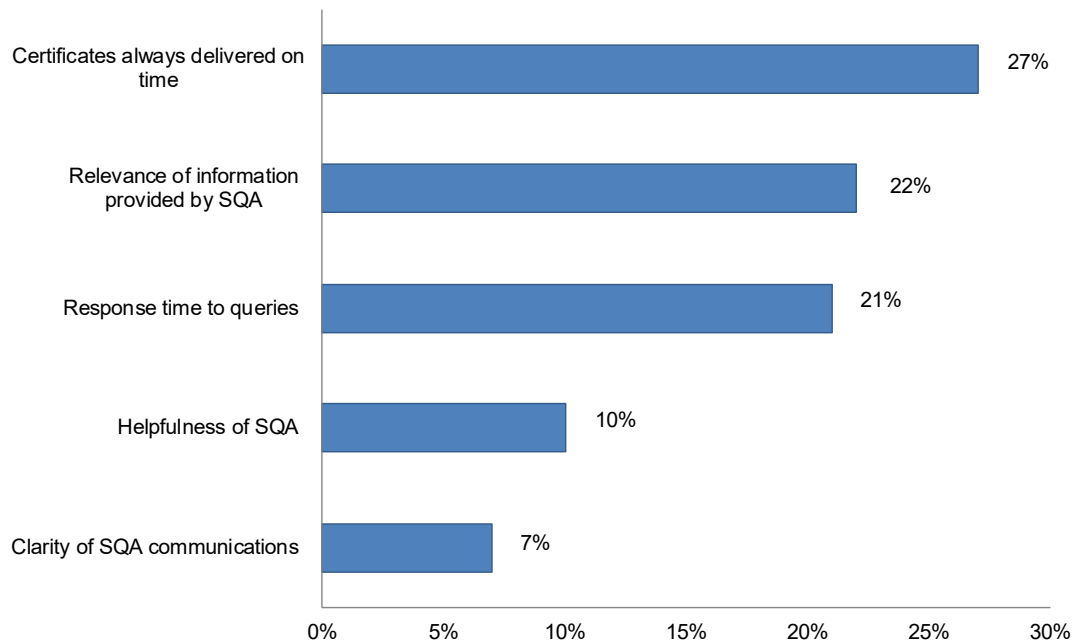


**Base: All respondents excluding those unable to provide an answer**

An average score of 6.1 out of a possible 10 was provided by respondents in terms of their overall rating of communications from SQA, with this outcome ranging from 5.9 for learners to 6.4 for management.

*‘Why did you choose a high rating number here?’*

**Figure 20: Reasons for choosing good rating of SQA communications**



**Base: Provided rating of 6 to 10**

When those providing a high rating number for SQA in terms of their overall rating of its communications (provided a rating of 6 to 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, their **principal responses** related to:

- Certificates always being delivered on time (27%)
- The relevance of information provided by SQA (22%)
- Response time to queries (21%)

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of:

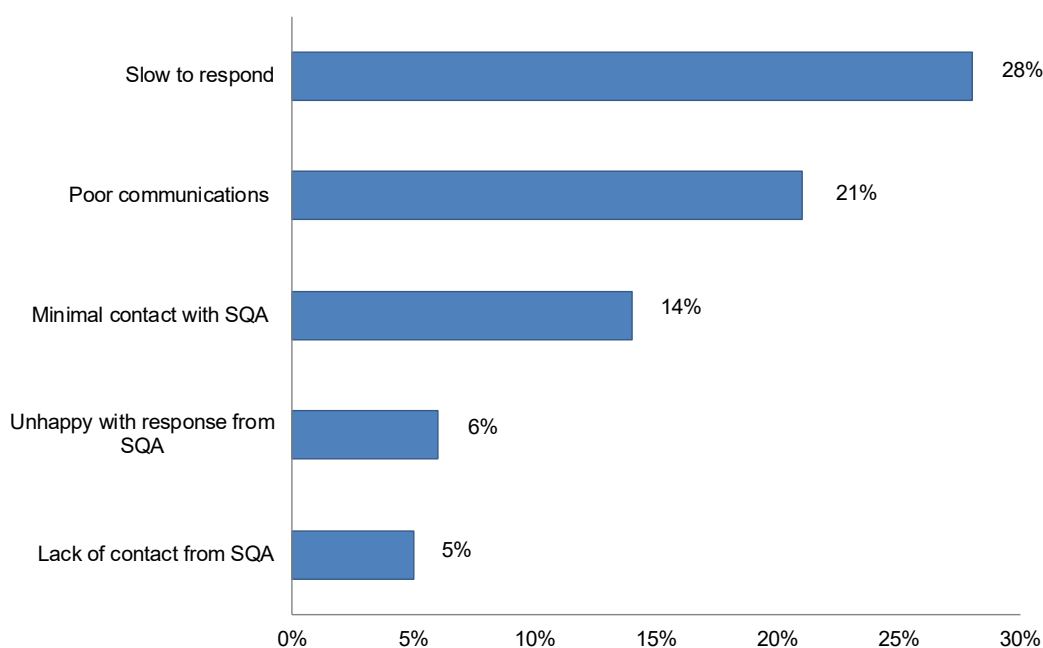
- The helpfulness of SQA (10%)
- The clarity of SQA communications (7%)

Further examination of the data indicated the following differences on the basis of respondent type in terms of the responses cited above:

- **Certificates always being delivered on time:** management and lecturers (45% and 32% respectively compared to 0% for learners)
- **Relevance of information provided by SQA:** lecturers and management (38% and 25% respectively compared to 10% for learners)
- **The helpfulness of SQA:** exclusively noted by learners (32%)
- **The clarity of SQA communications:** exclusively noted by learners (24%)
- **SQA being knowledgeable and informative:** exclusively noted by learners (15%)

*‘Why did you choose a poor rating number here?’*

**Figure 21: Reasons for choosing poor rating of SQA communications (unprompted) - indicative**



**Base: Provided rating of 1 to 5**

On a largely indicative basis, the **principal reasons** cited (on an unprompted basis) by those providing SQA with a poor rating (between 1 and 5) in terms of the communications focused around:

- SQA being slow to respond (28%)
- Poor communications from SQA (21%)

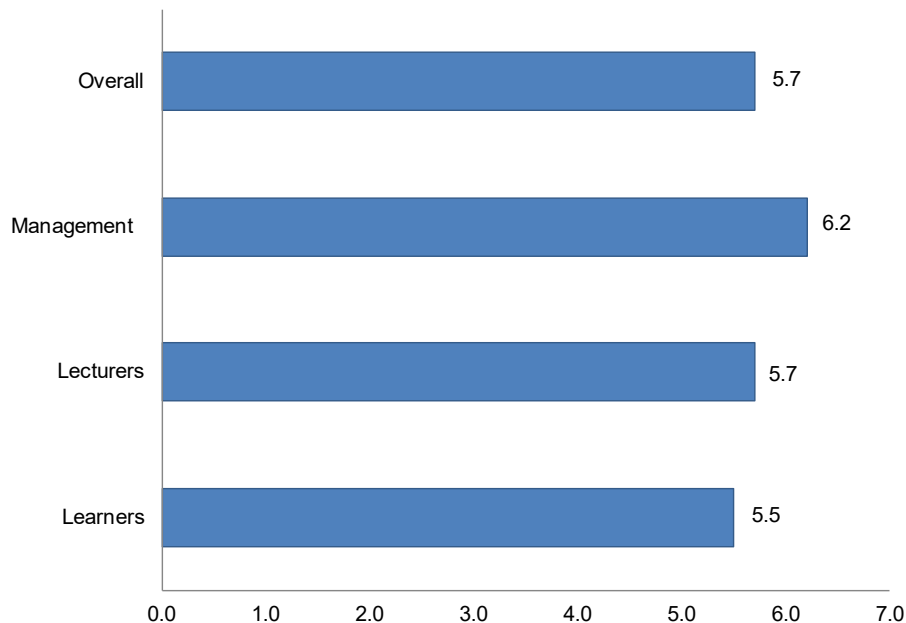
- Respondents having minimal contact with SQA (14%)

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a meaningful breakdown of findings on the basis of respondent type.

## 6.0 SQA CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROFILE

*‘How would you rate how well SQA consults or engages with you or you and your peers, on a scale from 1 to 10, where ‘1’ is ‘very poor’ and ‘10’ is ‘very good’?’*

**Figure 22: Rating of how well SQA consults or engages -  
average scores**

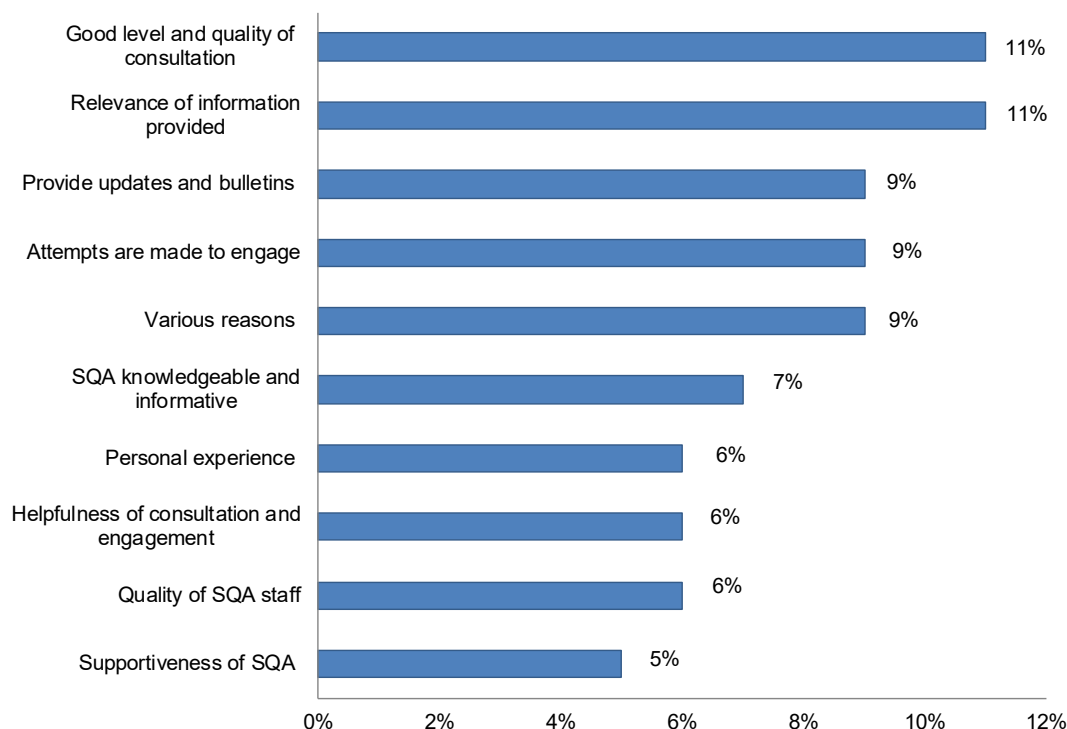


**Base: All respondents**

When respondents were asked to rate how well SQA consults or engages with them (in the case of management and lecturers) and consults with themselves or their peers (as in the case of learners), an average score of 5.7 out of a possible 10 was noted, with this score being notably higher amongst management (6.2 compared to 5.7 amongst lecturers and 5.5 amongst learners).

*‘Why did you choose this good rating number?’*

**Figure 23: Reasons for providing good rating re consultation and engagement (Unprompted)**



**Base: Provided rating of 6 to 10**

When those providing a good rating number for SQA in terms of its consultation and engagement (providing a score of between 6 and 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, a **wide range of reasons** were cited, none with any notable prominence, with these including:

- SQA having good level and quality of consultation (11%)
- The relevance of information provided by SQA (11%)
- SQA providing updates and bulletins (9%)
- SQA attempting to engage with stakeholders – and, in particular, being proactive in this regard (9%)

Although somewhat indicative in nature, further examination of the data indicate that the reasons cited above were most prominently noted on an unprompted basis by the respondent types indicated:



- **SQA having good level and quality of consultation:** exclusively amongst lecturers and management (17% and 10% respectively)
- **The relevance of information provided by SQA:** learners (21% compared to 10% and 5% respectively for management and lecturers)
- **SQA providing updates and bulletins:** exclusively lecturers and management (14% and 10% respectively)
- **SQA attempting to engage with stakeholders:** exclusively lecturers and management (16% and 8% respectively)
- **The helpfulness of SQA consultation and engagement:** exclusively amongst learners (27%)

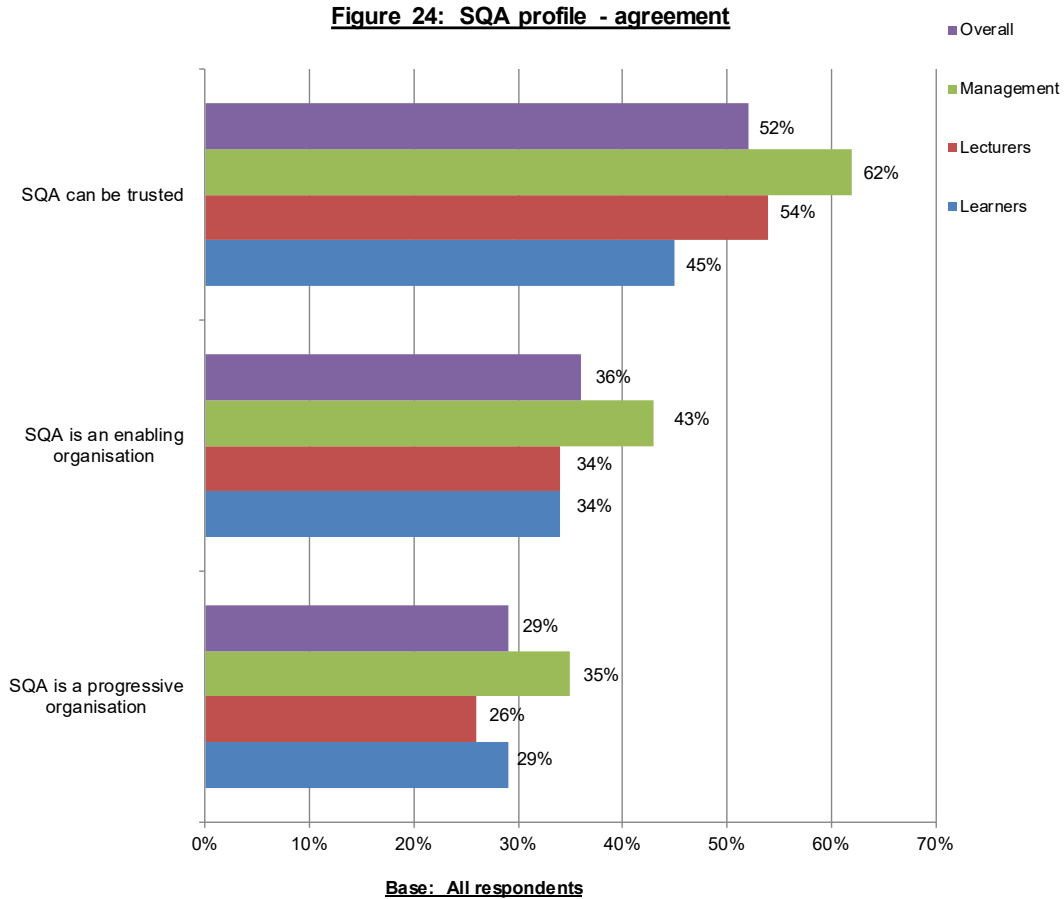
When those providing SQA with a poor rating in terms of its consultation and engagement (providing a rating of between 1 and 5) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, two key factors were noted on a largely indicative basis, namely:

- Lack of consultation from SQA (44%)
- Lack of engagement with SQA (27%)

Further examination of the data indicated that ‘lack of consultation from SQA’ was exclusively noted by lecturers and management (80% and 64% respectively), whilst ‘lack of engagement with SQA’ was exclusively noted by learners (65%).

## 7.0 SQA'S VALUES PROFILE

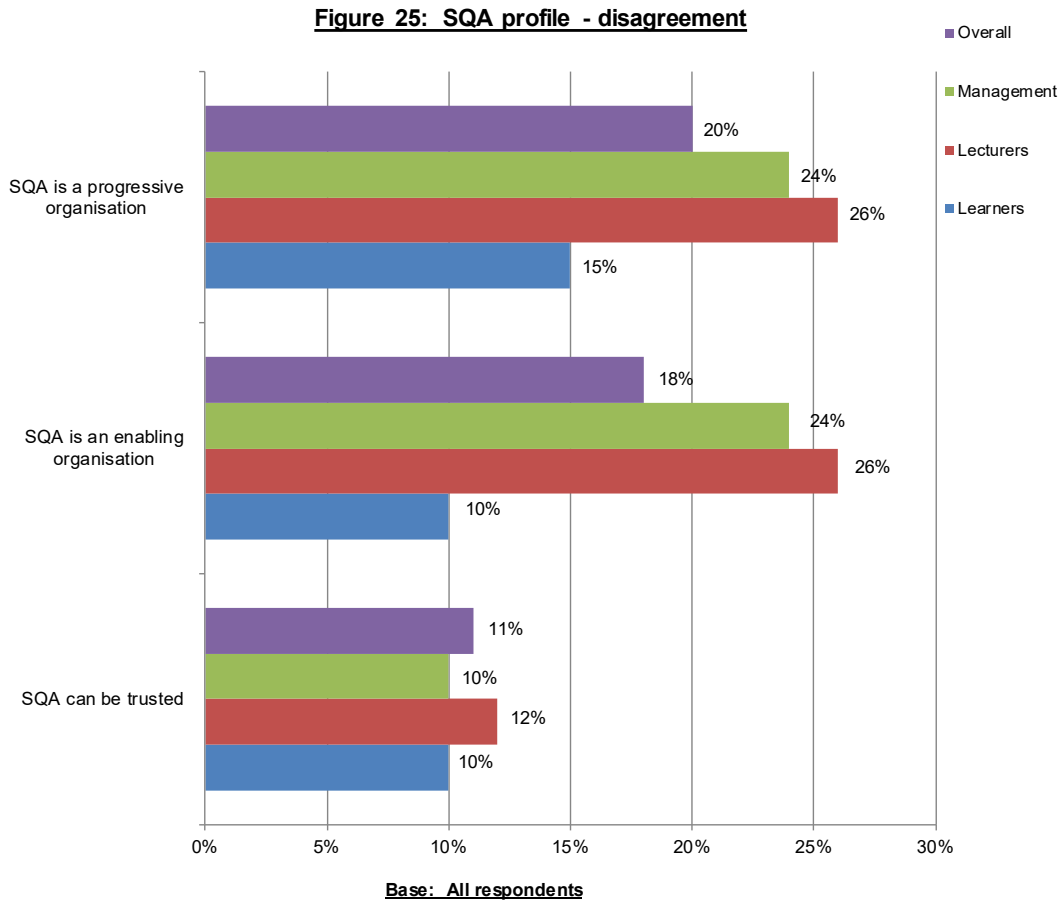
*'How strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about SQA?'*



The graphic above indicates that:

- Just over half of respondents **agreed** with the statement that 'SQA can be trusted' (with this ranging from 45% for learners to 54% and 62% respectively for lecturers and management)
- Well over a third of respondents **agreed** with the statement that 'SQA enables organisations to carry out their roles effectively' (with this ranging from 34% for both lecturers and learners to 43% for management)
- 3 in 10 respondents **agreed** with the statement that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' (ranging from 26% and 29% respectively for lecturers and learners to 35% for management)

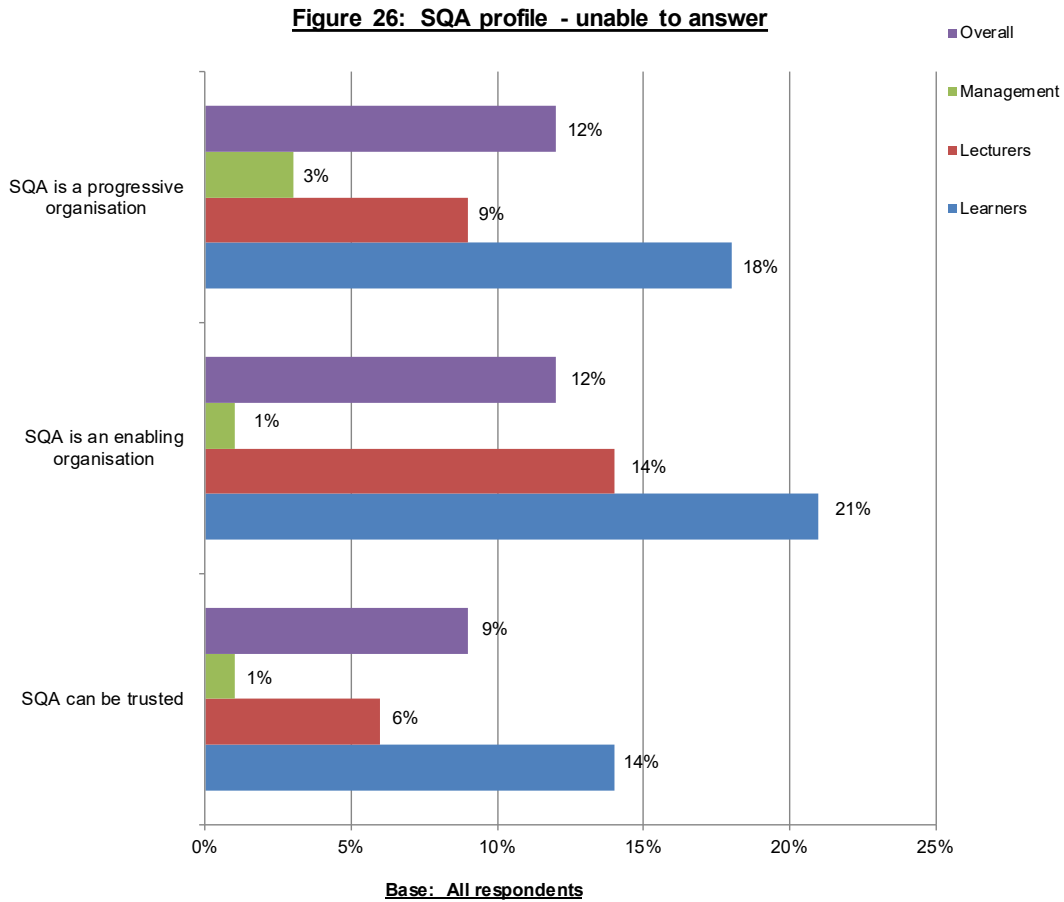
*‘How strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about SQA?’*



**Disagreement** with each of the three statements under consideration were as follows:

- ‘SQA is an enabling organisation’ disagreed with by less than one in five respondents (18%) (ranging from 10% for learners to 24% and 26% respectively for management and lecturers)
- ‘SQA is a progressive organisation’ disagreed with by one in five respondents (20%) (ranging from 15% for learners to 24% and 26% respectively for management and lecturers)
- ‘SQA can be trusted’ disagreed with by one in ten respondents (11%) (ranging from 10% to 12% across the three respondent types)

*‘How strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about SQA?’*



The extent to which respondents felt unable to provide an answer in relation to each of the three statements under consideration tended to be minimal amongst management and lecturers. However, around one in five learners felt unable to express an opinion with regard to ‘SQA being an enabling organisation’ (21%) and ‘SQA being a progressive organisation’ (18%), with this applying to one in seven learners (14%) in terms of the extent to which ‘SQA can be trusted’.

## 8.0 KEY MESSAGES

### 8.1 SQA Profile

SQA is perceived as having high credibility (particularly amongst management and lecturers in colleges), with levels of low credibility being far more limited (although, again, more prominent amongst management and lecturers). These divergent findings are due to learners having a far greater propensity to feel unable to express an opinion regarding SQA's credibility.

Perceptions of high SQA credibility are a function of a number of factors, whilst perceptions of low credibility are primarily driven by a belief that some courses and materials are outdated.

Those participating in the research provided a positive rating in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance, although there is scope for improvement in this regard across all three respondent types.

There was a general belief amongst respondents that they knew enough about SQA (particularly amongst management), with learners primarily stating a desire to find out 'more about what SQA does'.

### 8.2 SQA Qualifications Profile

Respondents primarily stated their belief that they knew enough about National 4s, National 5s, Highers and HNCs and HNDs, with highest levels of perceived credibility relating to National 5s, Highers, Advanced Highers, SVQs, HNCs and HNDs and PDAs.

Amongst those whose views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of – taken together – had changed over the last year, views were far more likely to have become 'less positive' rather than 'more positive'.

For those whose views had become either less positive or more positive over the last year, this was due to a range of factors, none of which were particularly prominent in relation to the latter but three of which were most prominent in relation to the former, namely ‘the quality of SQA qualifications’, ‘increased understanding of SQA qualifications’ and ‘SQA qualifications being increasingly fit for purpose’ (with these views being exclusively expressed by learners).

### 8.3 SQA Contact and Communication Profiles

Contact from SQA was most common for management and contact with SQA was relatively limited amongst learners.

Respondents provided an encouraging rating in terms of their contact from or with SQA (particularly management and lecturers), but there is scope for improvement in this regard.

Positive views about SQA contact focused around SQA’s speed of response to queries (as primarily noted by lecturers and management), with low ratings of contacts primarily pertaining to the slow speed of SQA’s response.

SQA’s communications are largely seen as being clear, timely and incorporating an appropriate level of detail. Again, however, there is scope for improvement in each of these three regards.

Respondents provided a positive average score in terms of their overall rating of communications with SQA (particularly those in management).

Management provided a high rating of SQA (primarily due to the timely delivery of certificates by SQA), whilst there was a general consensus that positive ratings were a function of information

provided by SQA being relevant and SQA responding quickly to queries.

For those who provided a poor rating in terms of SQA's communications, this was due to a range of factors, one of which was poor communication (which – as noted above – also emerged as a positive about SQA).

#### **8.4 SQA Consultation and Engagement Profile**

Respondents were largely positive about how well SQA consults or engages with them, particularly management.

For those who rated SQA positively in terms of consultation and engagement, this was due to a wide range of factors (none of which were particularly prominent), whilst for those who rated SQA negatively in terms of engagement and consultation, this was primarily a function of lack of consultation from – and lack of engagement with – SQA.

#### **8.5 SQA Values Profile**

Lecturers and management are most likely to believe that SQA can be trusted, with learners being least likely to believe this to be the case.

Management is most likely to believe that SQA is an enabling organisation (with this least likely to be the case amongst lecturers and learners).

Management is most likely to believe that SQA is a progressive organisation (particularly compared to learners).

Levels of disagreement with three statements about SQA are far more limited (particularly in terms of disagreement that SQA is a progressive organisation and an enabling organisation).

In the context of the outcomes above, it should be stressed, however, that learners were far less able to express an opinion with regard to SQA being an enabling organisation and one that can be trusted.