

**REPORT (FINAL DRAFT)**

**KEY AUDIENCE RESEARCH**

**May 2023**

**PREPARED FOR: Scottish Qualifications Authority**

**Report (Final Draft)**

**Key Audience Research**

**Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd**

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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, and reports on the first cycle of research undertaken amongst three key SQA audiences in 2022 and 2023:

- Employer and Training Provider audiences
- College audiences
- School audiences

### Employer and Training Provider Audiences

The research focused around the derivation of information from four Employer and Training Provider audiences (ETPs):

- Employers (individuals responsible for training, recruitment or HR)
- ETP learners (individuals engaged in learning through ETPs)
- ETP teaching professionals (individuals with teaching responsibilities within ETPs)
- ETP managers (individuals with ETP managers' roles in ETPs)

Data was collected during November and December 2022 by means of the administration of structured telephone interviews with employers and the administration of an online questionnaire with ETP learners, ETP teaching professionals and ETP managers.

A total of 159 structured telephone interviews were undertaken with Employers, whilst the following number of online responses were achieved:

- 186 ETP learners
- 108 ETP teaching professionals

- 108 ETP managers

Equal weightings were applied to the audiences on the following basis:

- Employers
- ETP learners
- ETP teaching professionals and ETP managers

### College Audiences

The three college audiences were as follows:

- 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 audiences during the analysis process.

### School Audiences

The four school audiences were as follows:

- Parents and carers of learners in S4 to S6
- School learners in S4 to S6
- Teachers in secondary schools
- Members of management teams within secondary schools

The information for parents and carers was collected via face-to-face interviews, whilst an online methodology was used for the remaining three audiences.

The data was collected during February and March 2023.

The total number of completed questionnaires for each of these audiences was as follows:

- 596 parents and carers of learners in S4 to S6
- 665 school learners in S4 to S6
- 250 teachers in secondary schools
- 250 members of management teams within secondary schools

Equal weightings were applied to each of the four audiences.

## Reporting

Detailed reports have been submitted to SQA for each of the audiences noted above.

This report provides a precis of key findings from the first cycle of the Key Audience Research undertaken during 2022 and 2023 and provides two profiles:

- A profile for SQA (namely its credibility, satisfaction with SQA's overall performance, knowledge of SQA, a contact profile, a communications profile, a consultation and engagement profile and an SQA perception profile)

- A profile of SQA qualifications (namely qualification knowledge, qualification credibility and changing views about qualifications)

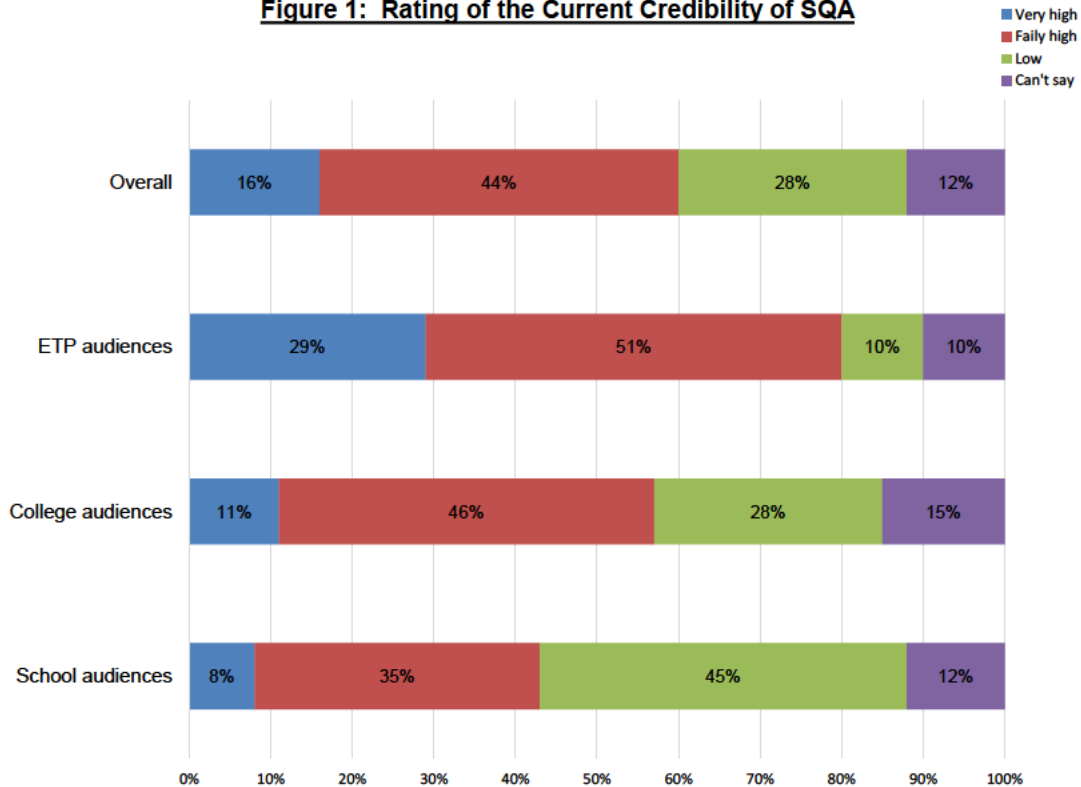
Finally, Section 4.0 provides a number of key messages to emerge from the first cycle of the Key Audience Research undertaken in 2022 and 2023.

## 2.0 SQA PROFILE

### 2.1 SQA's Credibility

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

**Figure 1: Rating of the Current Credibility of SQA**



**Base: All Respondents**

Overall, three out of five respondents (60%) rated SQA's credibility as being 'high', with this outcome being most notable amongst the ETP audiences and least notable amongst the school audiences.

Around one in six respondents overall (16%) specifically believed SQA's credibility to be 'very high', with this outcome being most notable amongst the ETP audiences.

Overall, approaching three out of ten respondents (28%) rated SQA's credibility as being 'low', with this outcome being most notable amongst the school audiences and least notable amongst the ETP audiences.

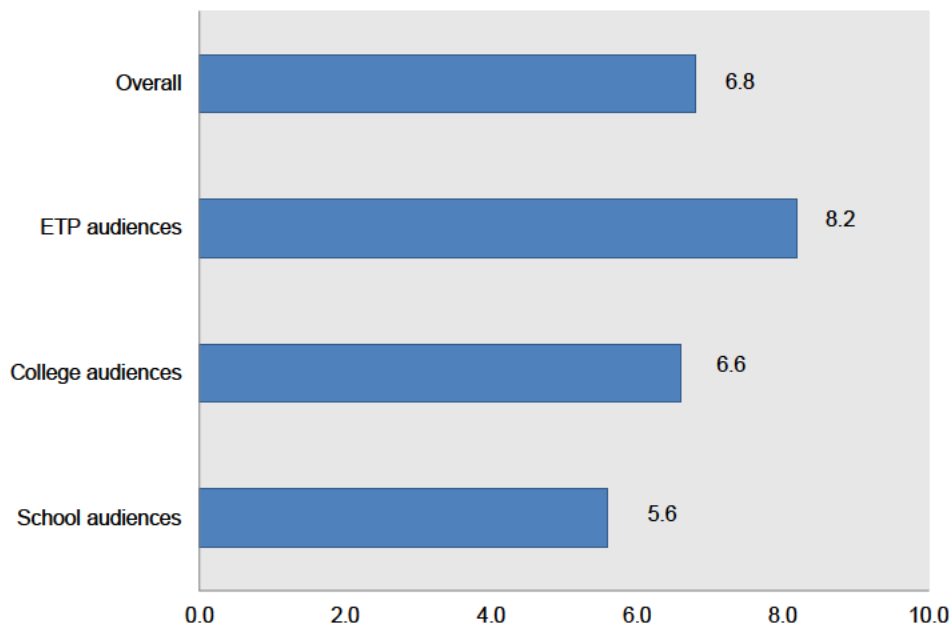


Learners were less likely than practitioners to rate SQA's credibility as being 'low' and were more likely to provide a 'can't say' response in this regard.

## 2.2 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 2: Overall satisfaction with SQA's performance - mean scores**



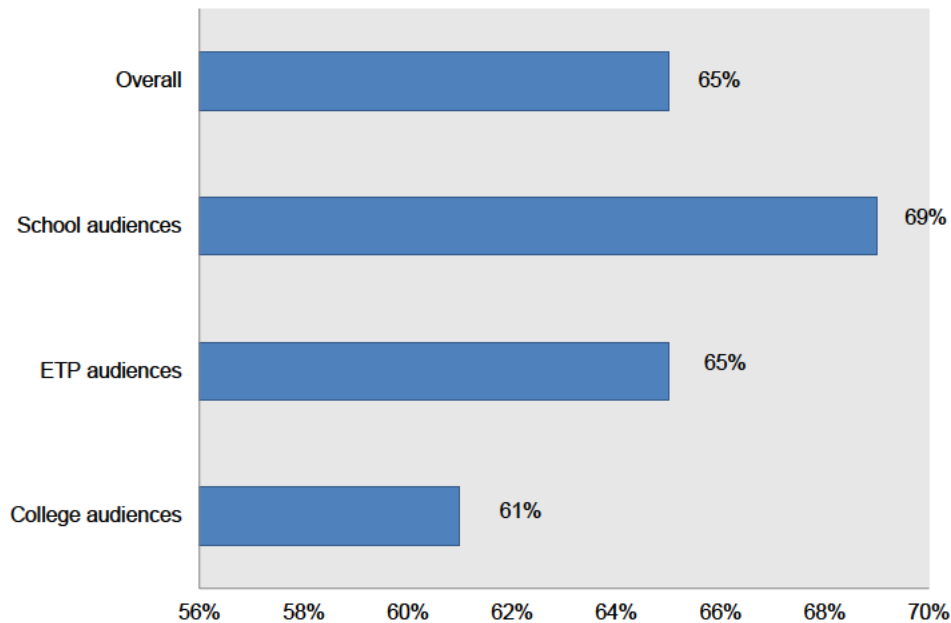
**Base: All Respondents**

Overall, respondents provided an average score of 6.8 out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance, with this figure being highest amongst the ETP audiences and lowest amongst the school audiences.

## 2.3 Knowledge of SQA

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

**Figure 3: Enough known about SQA**

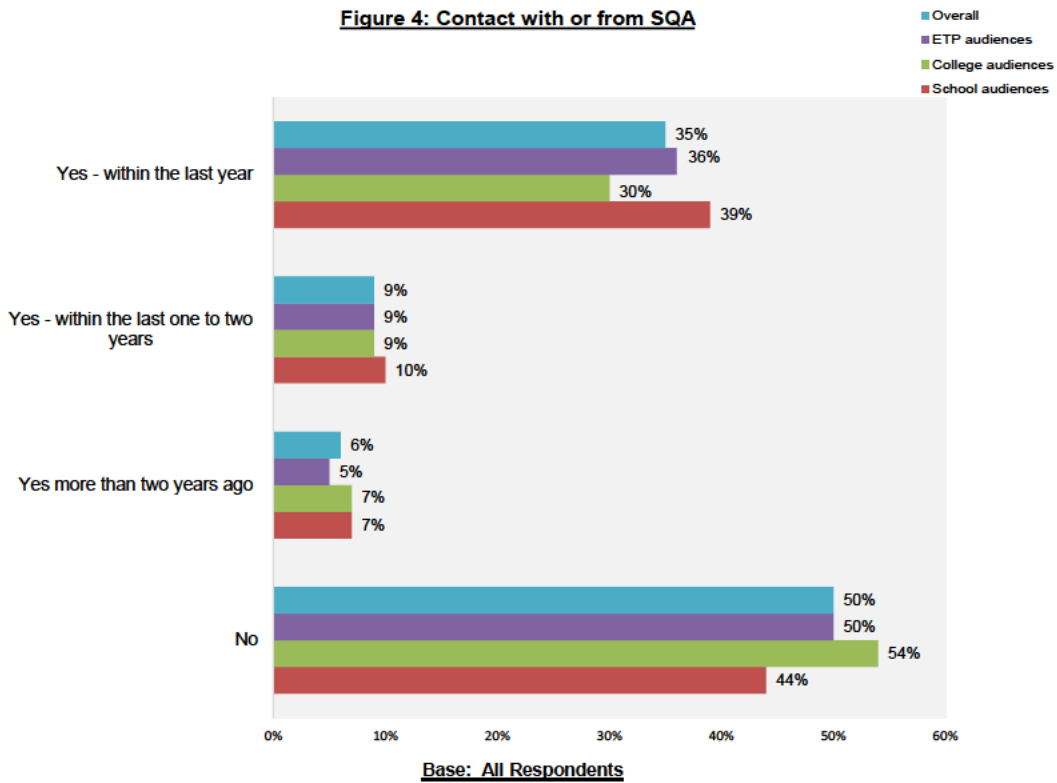


**Base: All Respondents**

Overall, approaching two thirds of respondents (65%) stated that they believe that they know enough about SQA, with this outcome being highest amongst the school audiences and lowest amongst the college audiences.

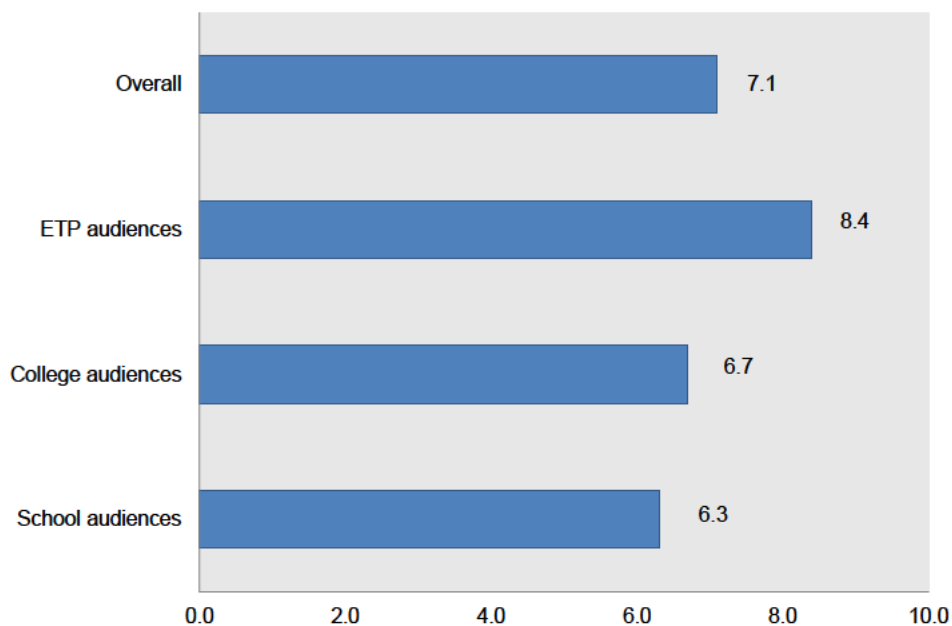
## 2.4 Contact Profile

*‘Have you had contact with or from SQA?’*



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

**Figure 5: Rating of contacts with or from SQA - mean scores**



Base: Had contact with SQA (excluding those unable to answer)

Overall, around half of respondents (50%) had had contact with SQA.

Overall, a third of respondents (35%) had had contact with SQA 'within the last year'.

In addition, learners were far less likely to have had contact with SQA in the past year than practitioners.

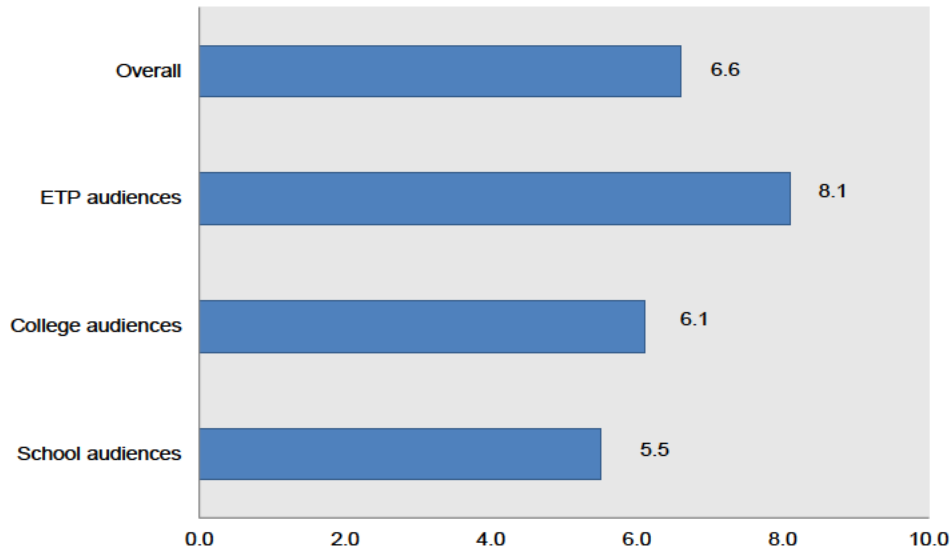
Overall, respondents provided a mean score of 7.1 out of a possible 10 in terms of their rating of their contact with SQA, with the highest mean score being found amongst the ETP audiences.

Learners provided a lower rating than practitioners in terms of their contact with SQA.

## 2.5 Communications Profile

*‘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’?’*

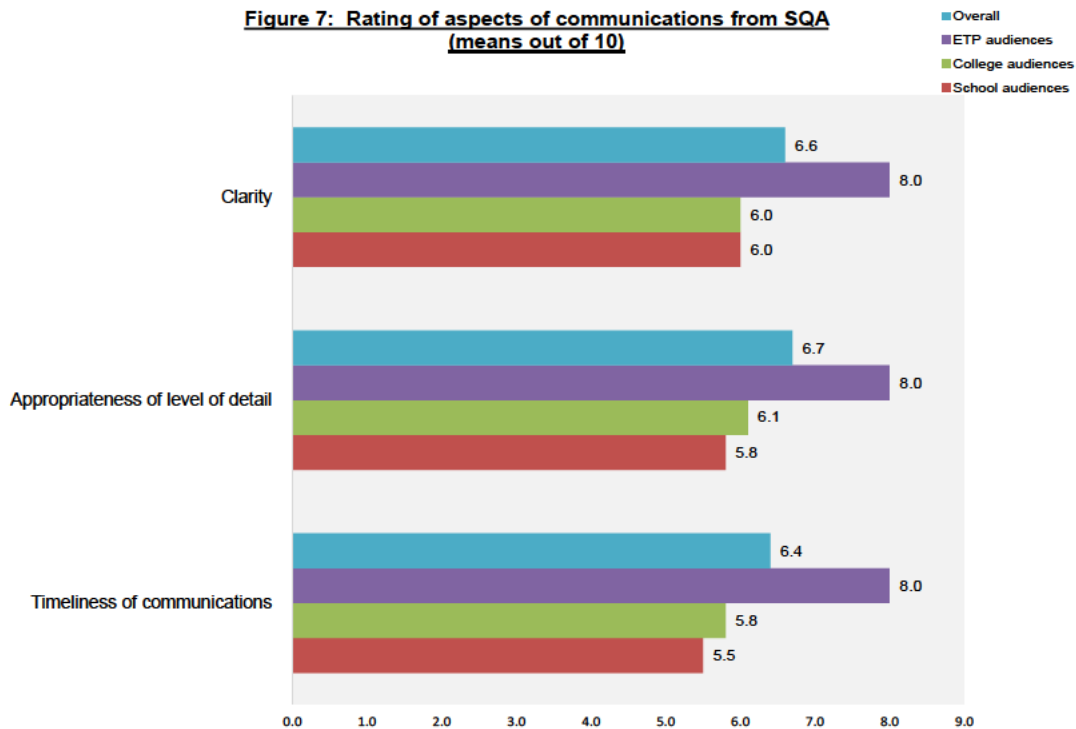
**Figure 6: Rating of communications from SQA - mean scores**



**Base: All Respondents (excluding those unable to answer)**

*‘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’?’*

**Figure 7: Rating of aspects of communications from SQA (means out of 10)**



**Base: All Respondents**

Overall, respondents provided a rating of 6.6 out of 10 in terms of their communications from SQA, with this outcome being highest amongst the ETP audiences and lowest amongst the school audiences.

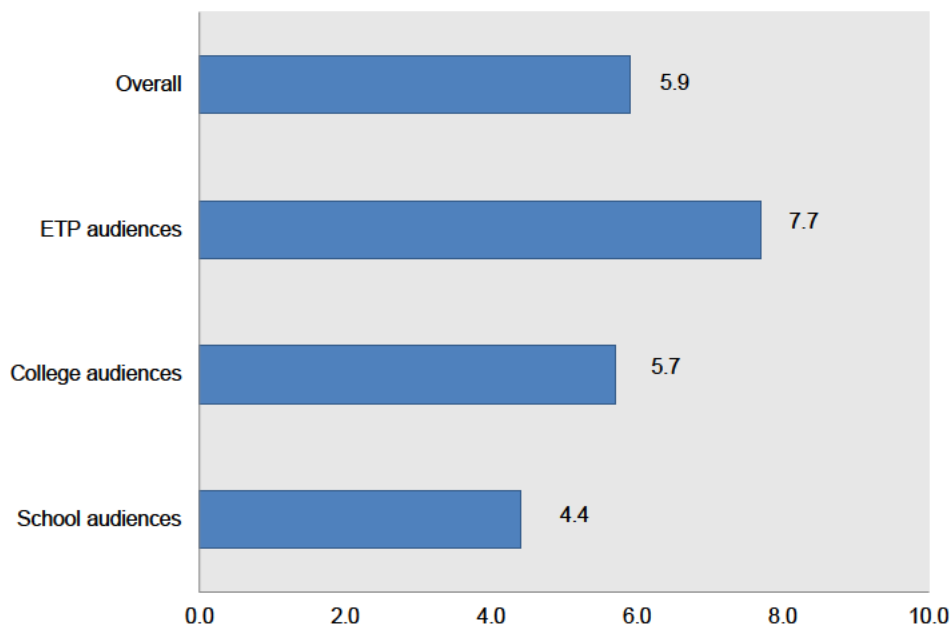
Overall, respondents provided a rating of 6.6 out of 10 in terms of the 'clarity' of communications from SQA, 6.7 in terms of 'how appropriate the level of detail was' and 6.4 in terms of the 'timeliness of communications'.

The ETP audiences provided the highest ratings of each of these aspects of communications.

## 2.6 Consultation and Engagement Profile

*'How would you rate how well SQA consults or engages?'*

**Figure 8: Rating of how well SQA consults and engages - mean scores**

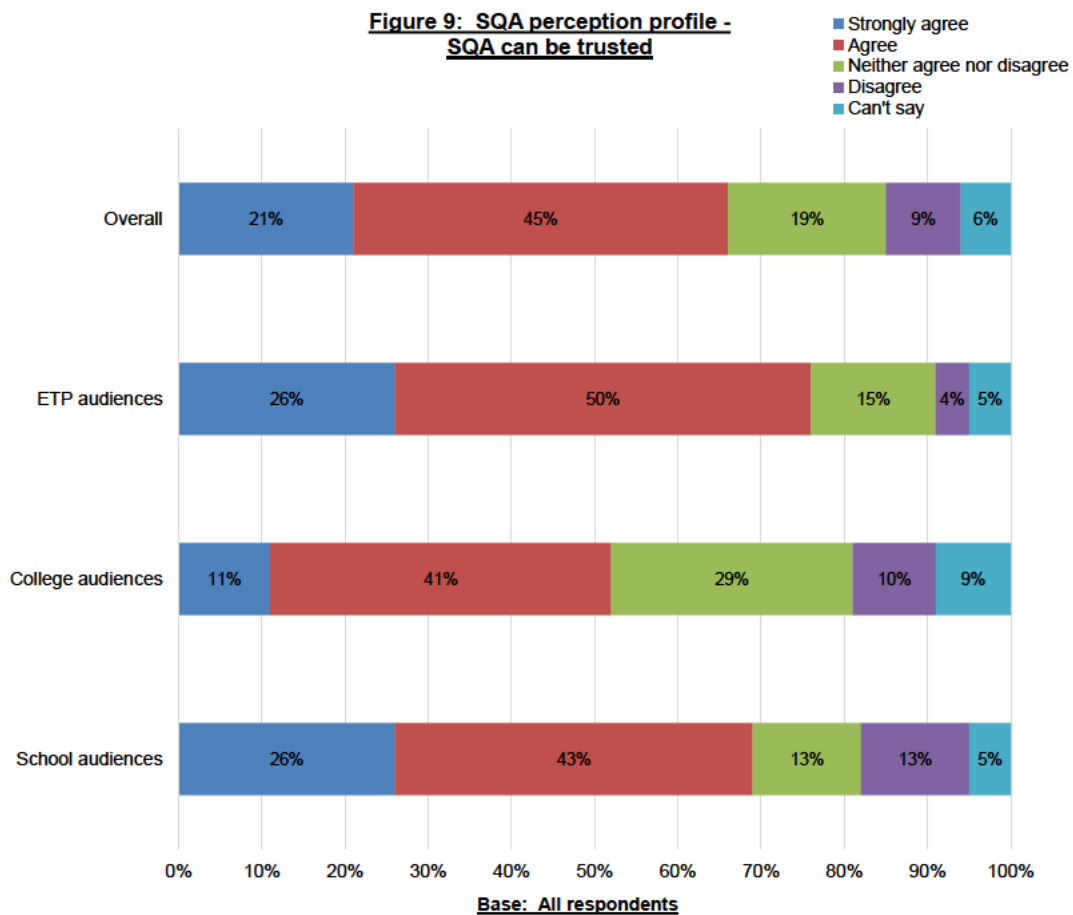


**Base: All Respondents (excluding those unable to answer)**

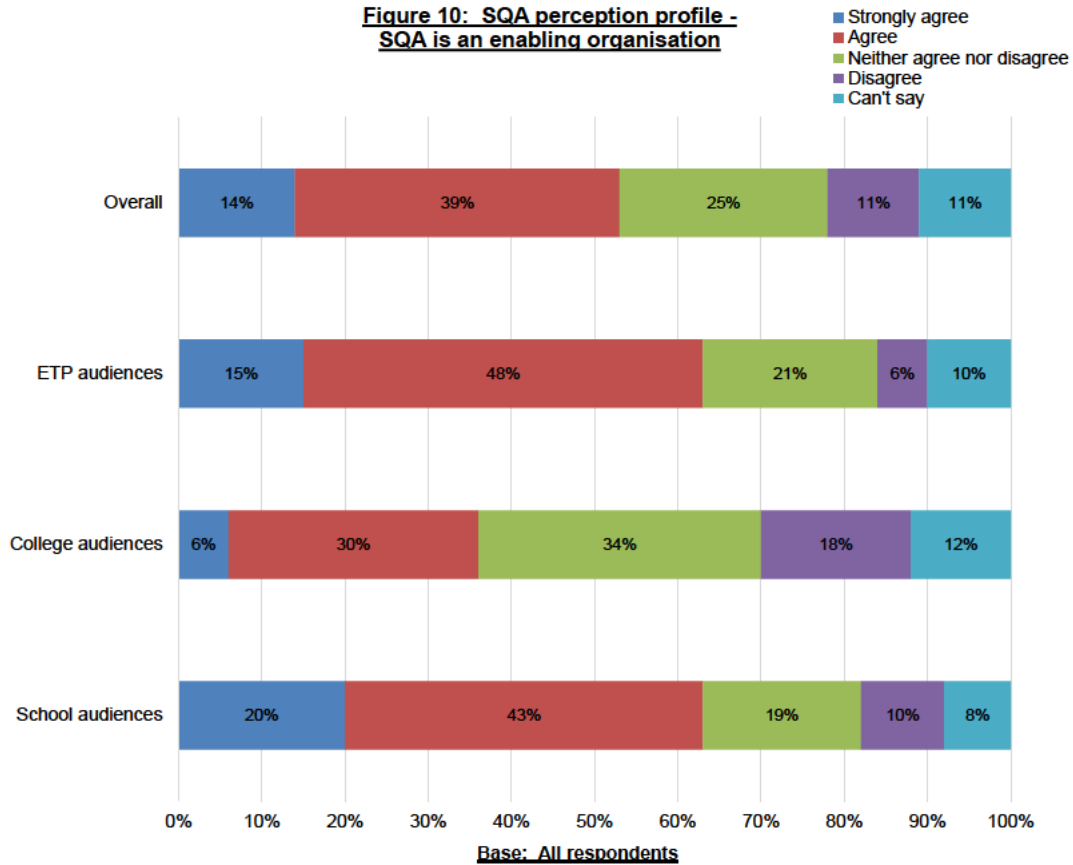
Overall, respondents provided a rating of 5.9 out of 10 in terms of how well SQA consults and engages, with the highest rating here being noted by the ETP audiences and the lowest rating by the school audiences.

## 2.7 SQA Perception Profile

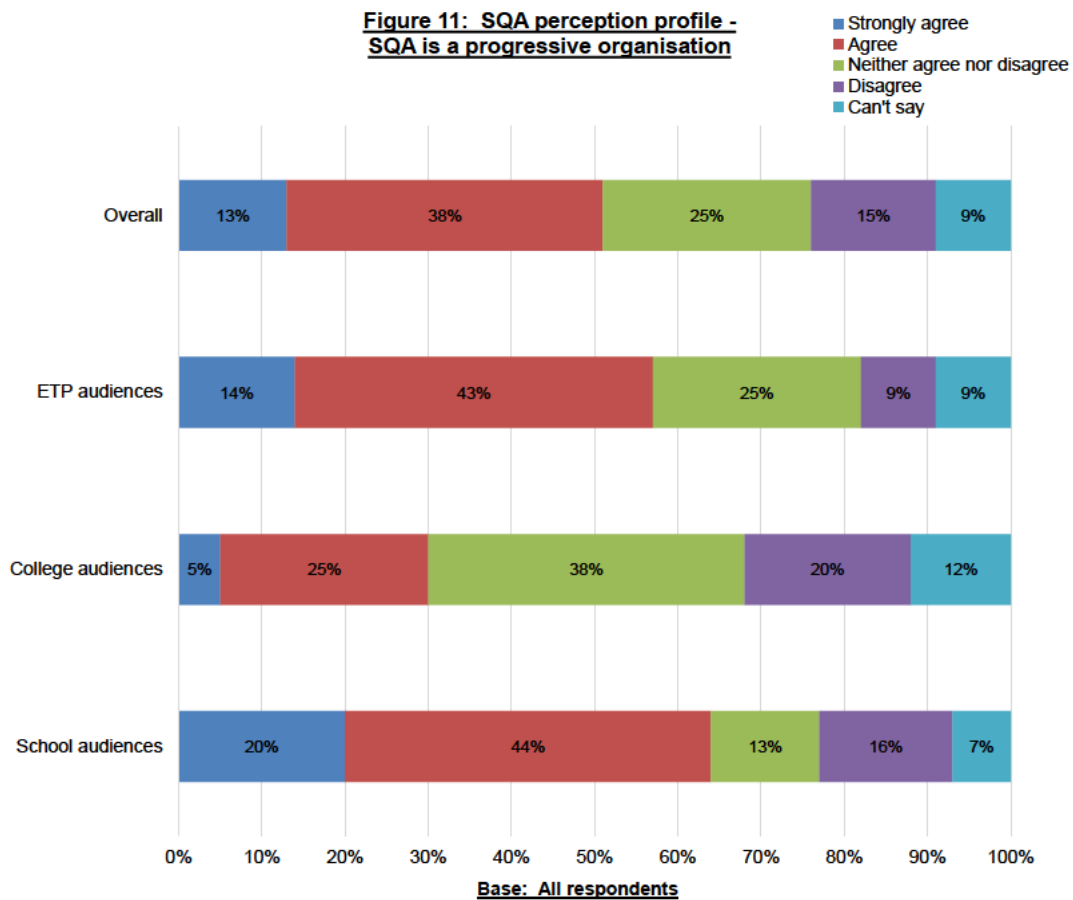
*‘How strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about SQA?’*



**Figure 10: SQA perception profile -  
SQA is an enabling organisation**



**Figure 11: SQA perception profile -  
SQA is a progressive organisation**





Overall, two thirds of respondents (66%) agreed that 'SQA can be trusted', with around half agreeing that 'SQA is an enabling organisation' and that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' (53% and 51% respectively).

The ETP and school audiences were most likely to agree that:

- SQA can be trusted
- SQA is an enabling organisation
- SQA is a progressive organisation

Overall, over one in five respondents (21%) specifically strongly agreed that 'SQA can be trusted', whilst around one in seven specifically strongly agreed that 'SQA is an enabling organisation' and that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' (14% and 13% respectively).

The ETP and school audiences were most likely to strongly agree with each of the SQA attributes under consideration.

Overall, around one in seven respondents disagreed that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' (15%), whilst one in ten disagreed that 'SQA can be trusted' and that 'SQA is an enabling organisation' (9% and 11% respectively).

The college audiences were most likely to disagree that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' and that 'SQA is an enabling organisation', whilst the school and college audiences were most likely to disagree that 'SQA can be trusted'.

Learners were less likely than practitioners to agree that 'SQA is a progressive organisation' and were more likely to be unable to comment in this regard.

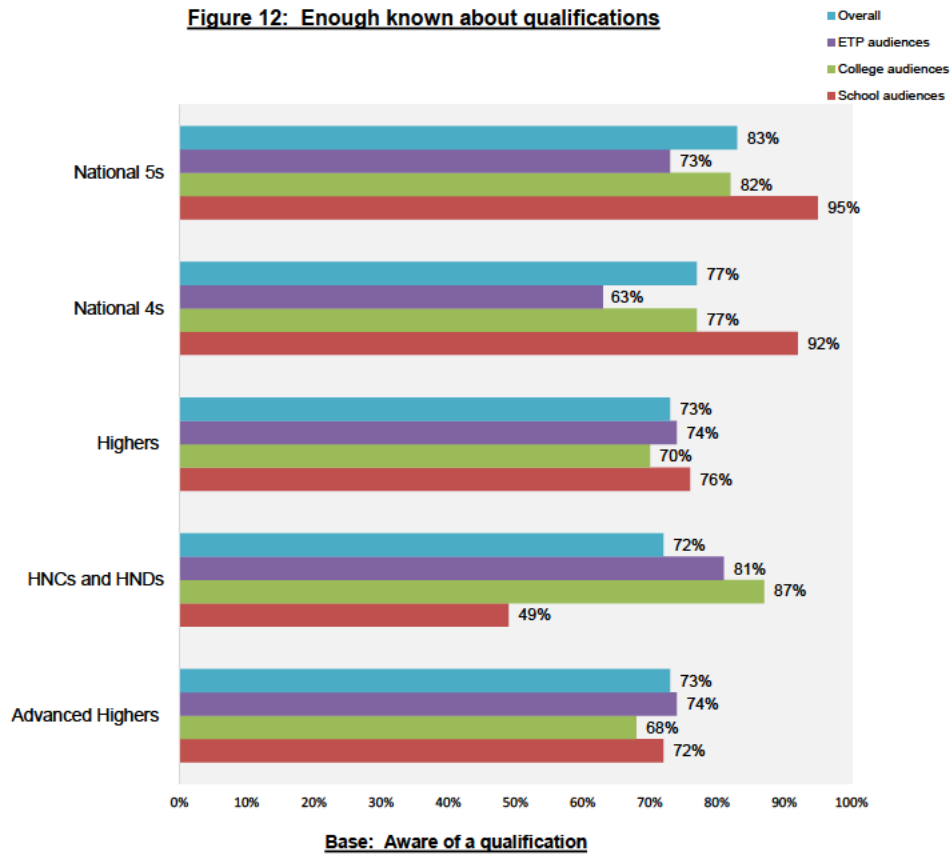
Learners were less likely than practitioners to agree that 'SQA enables organisations to carry out their roles more effectively' and were more likely to be unable to comment in this regard.

Learners were more likely than practitioners to agree that 'SQA can be trusted' and more likely to be unable to comment in this regard.

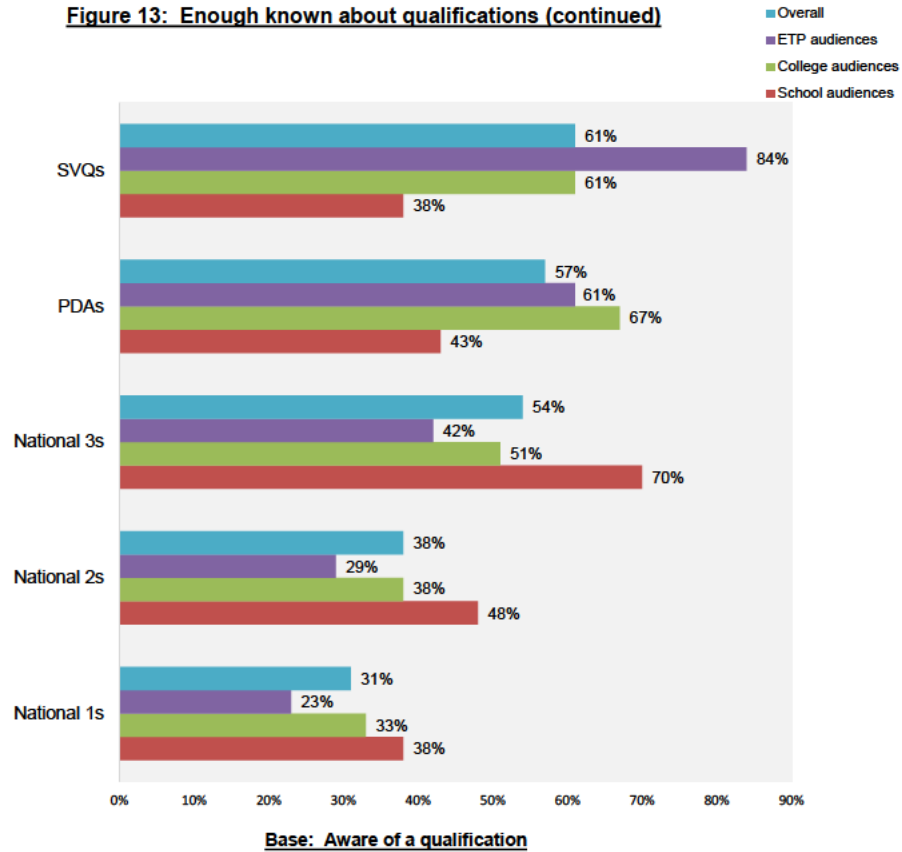
### 3.0 QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE

#### 3.1 Qualifications Knowledge

*‘Do you think you know enough about the following qualifications?’*



**Figure 13: Enough known about qualifications (continued)**



Overall, a significant majority of respondents – and, in some cases, the vast majority – believed that they knew enough about a number of qualifications, namely National 5s (83%), National 4s (77%), HNCs and HNDs (72%), Highers (73%), Advanced Highers (73%) and SVQs (61%).

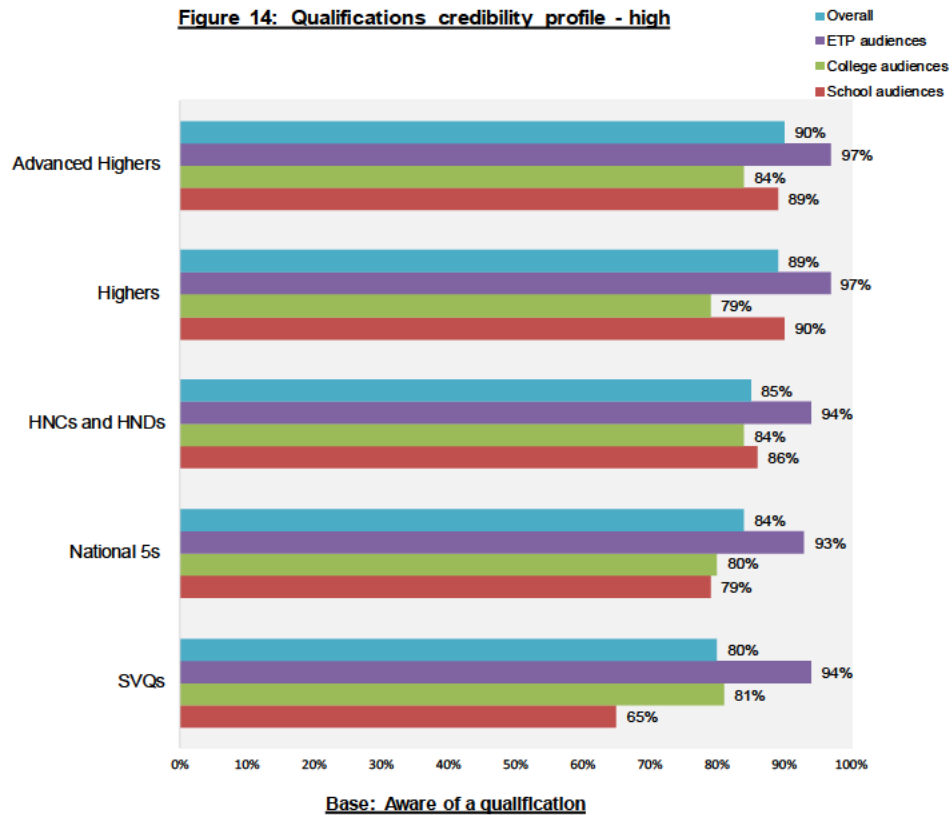
Thereafter, it was least likely that respondents believed that they knew enough about three other qualifications, namely National 3s (54%), National 2s (38%) and National 1s (31%).

Learners were more likely than practitioners to believe that they knew enough about a number of qualifications, namely National 1s, National 2s and National 3s, whilst practitioners were more likely than learners to state that they knew enough about PDAs.

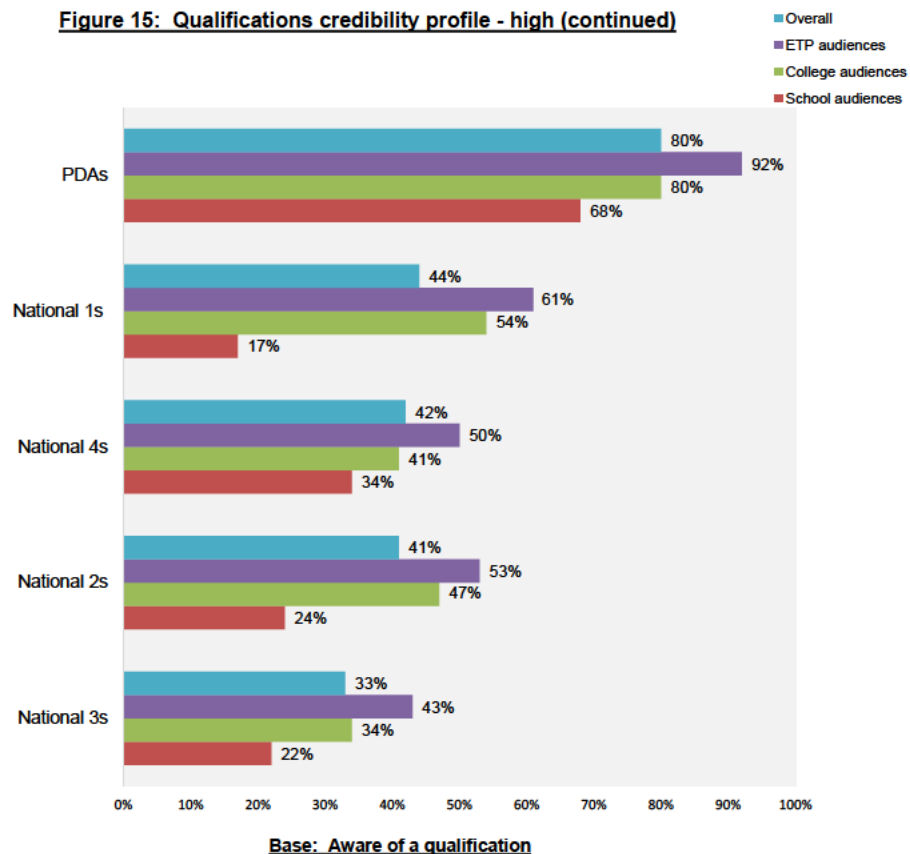
### 3.2 Qualification Credibility

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

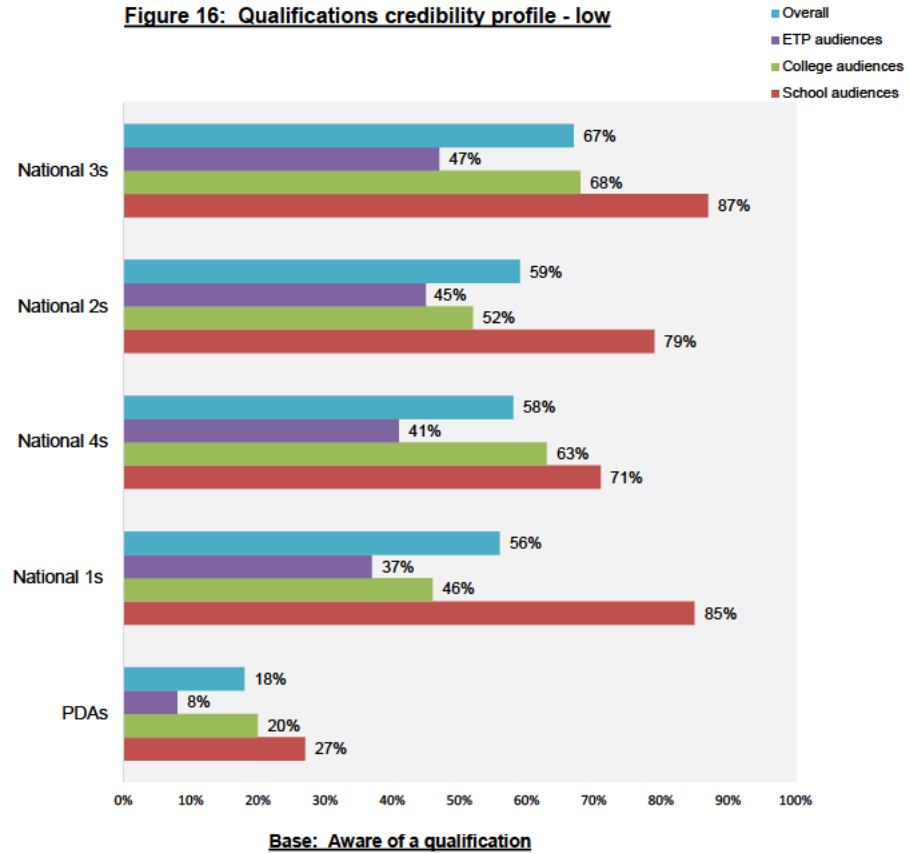
**Figure 14: Qualifications credibility profile - high**



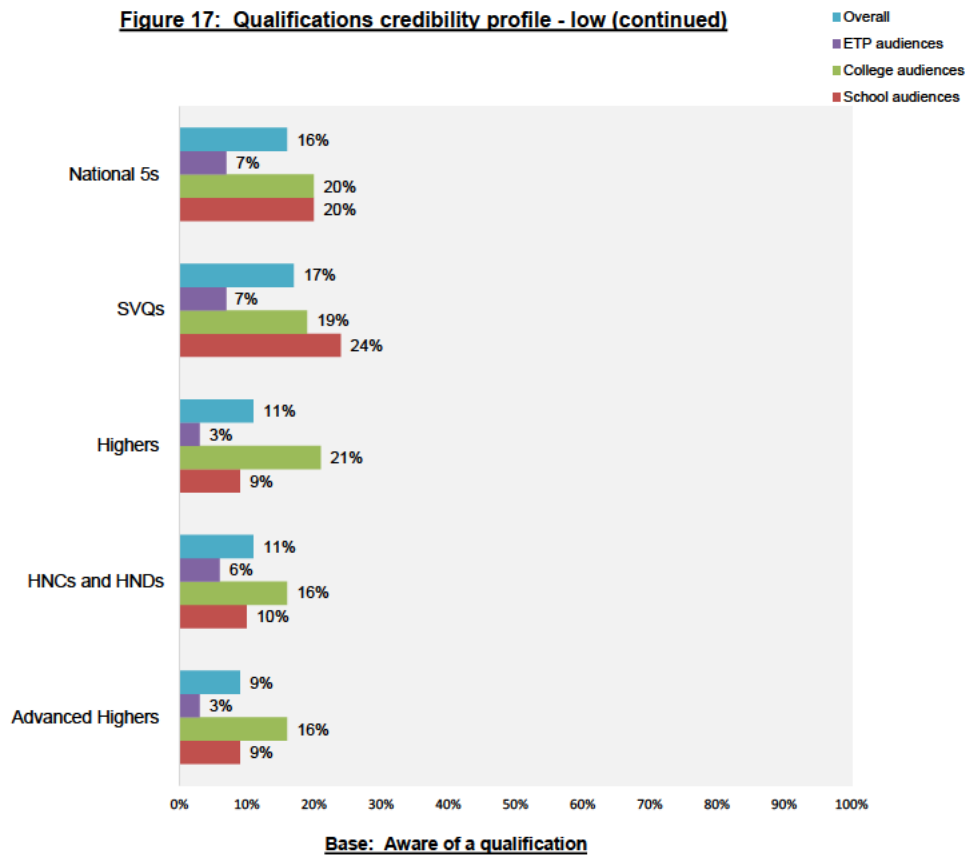
**Figure 15: Qualifications credibility profile - high (continued)**



**Figure 16: Qualifications credibility profile - low**



**Figure 17: Qualifications credibility profile - low (continued)**



Overall, a significant majority – and, in many cases, the vast majority – of respondents believed a range of qualifications of which they were aware to have high credibility, namely:

- Advanced Highers (90%)
- Highers (89%)
- HNCs and HNDs (85%)
- National 5s (84%)
- SVQs (80%)
- PDAs (80%)

In contrast, perceived high credibility of three other qualifications is far lower, namely:

- National 1s (44%)
- National 2s (41%)
- National 3s (33%)

It should be noted that the ETP audiences provided better ratings of each of the qualifications under consideration in terms of their high credibility than those provided by the college and school audiences.

Overall, highest levels of perceived low credibility of a number of qualifications of which respondents were aware related to:

- National 4s (58%)
- National 3s (67%)
- National 2s (59%)
- National 1s (56%)

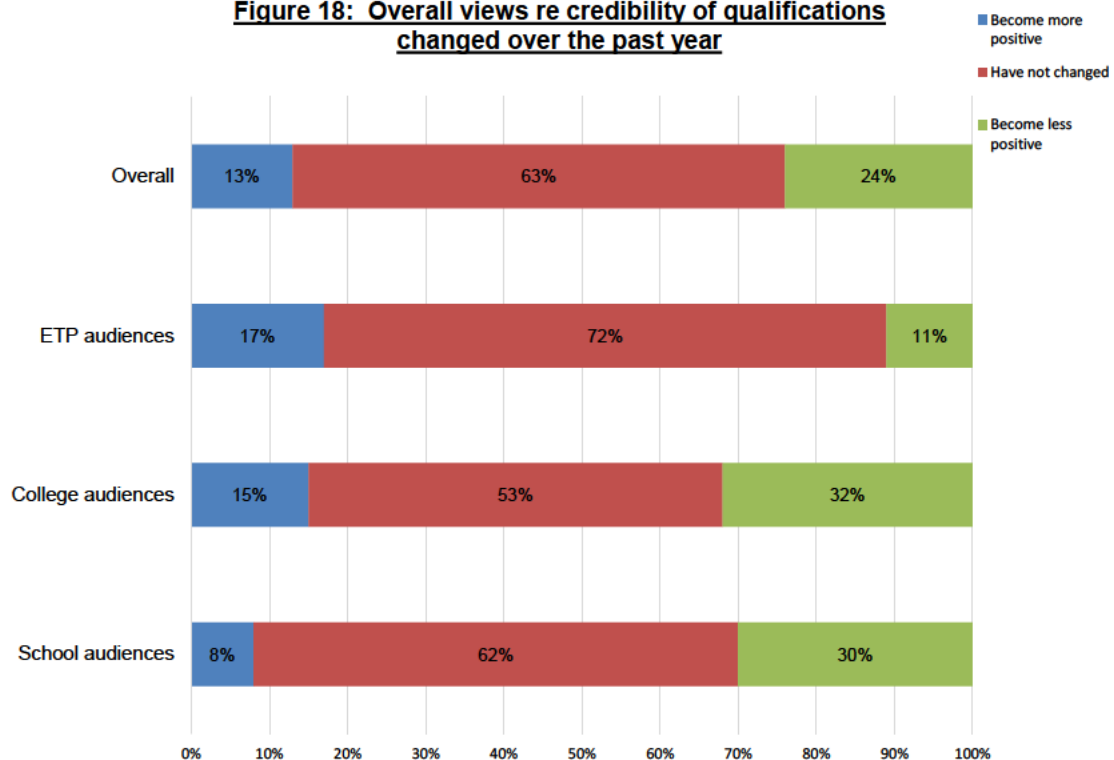
It was also apparent that perceived low credibility of these qualifications were significantly higher amongst the school audiences.

Learners were more likely than practitioners to believe a number of qualifications of which they were aware to have high credibility, namely National 1s, National 2s, National 3s, National 4s, HNCs and HNDs and PDAs.

### 3.3 Changing Views About Qualifications

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

**Figure 18: Overall views re credibility of qualifications changed over the past year**



**Base: All Respondents**

Overall, approaching two out of five respondents (37%) stated that their views on the credibility of all of the qualifications they had heard of taken together had changed over the last year. For a quarter of respondents (24%), their views had changed and had become less positive, whilst for one in seven (13%), their views had changed and have become more positive.

Those in the ETP audiences were least likely to state that their views had changed in the past year, those in the school audiences were



least likely to state that their views had changed and have become more positive, whilst those in the college and school audiences were more likely to state that their views had changed and have become less positive.

Learner views about the overall credibility of all of the qualifications they had heard of were more likely than practitioner views to have become more positive over the last year, whilst practitioner views were more likely than learner views to have become less positive.

## 4.0 KEY MESSAGES

### 4.1 SQA Profile

Taken together, the three key audiences believe SQA to have high credibility, particularly the ETP audiences but to a lesser extent amongst the school audiences.

There is a limited extent to which the key audiences believe SQA to have very high credibility, with this belief being most commonly held by the ETP audiences.

Practitioners are more likely than learners to believe SQA to have low credibility.

Taken together, the three key audiences provided a positive rating of their satisfaction with SQA's performance, particularly the ETP audiences but to a lesser extent amongst the school audiences.

The three key audiences tend to believe that they know enough about SQA, particularly the school audiences.

Taken together, the three key audiences provided a positive rating of their contact with SQA, particularly the ETP audiences but to a lesser extent amongst the college and school audiences, with learner ratings in terms of their contact being poorer than those noted by practitioners.

Taken together, the three key audiences provided a positive rating in terms of their overall communications from SQA, particularly amongst the ETP audiences but to a lesser extent amongst the college and school audiences, with this also applying to key aspects of these communications.

Ratings of how well SQA consults and engages with the three key audiences are poorer than those pertaining to contact and communications, although they are positive rather than negative.

The ETP audiences noted the highest rating of how well SQA consults and engages, whilst the school audiences provided the lowest rating in these regards.

Taken together, most of the three key audiences believed SQA can be trusted and around half believed that it is an enabling and progressive organisation (with the ETP and school audiences being most likely to hold all three beliefs).

There is a limited extent to which SQA is **not** believed to possess each of the attributes under consideration.

## 4.2 Qualifications Profile

Taken together, the three key audiences tend to believe that they know enough about SQA qualifications, although this is less likely to be the case in relation to National 3s and, in particular, National 1s and National 2s.

Learners tend to believe they know enough about National 1s to National 3s than practitioners, with practitioners being more likely to believe that they know enough about PDAs.

Across the three key audiences, there is a tendency to believe a range of SQA qualifications to have high credibility, with this least likely to be the case for National 1s through to National 4s.

Perceptions of low credibility of SQA qualifications tend to be limited but most notable in relation to National 3s, particularly amongst the school audiences.

Learners are more likely than practitioners to believe that National 1s to National 4s, HNCs and HNDs and PDAs have high credibility.

For those whose views about the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of taken together had changed, overall, it was far more likely that their views had become less positive than more positive, with the college and school audiences being most likely to state that their views had changed and become less positive and the ETP audiences being most likely to state that their views had changed and become more positive.

Changing learner views in this regard are more likely to have become more positive, whilst practitioner views were more likely to have become less positive.