

REPORT (FINAL DRAFT)

KEY AUDIENCE RESEARCH – COLLEGE AUDIENCES

January 2025

PREPARED FOR: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Report (Final Draft)

**Key Audience Research –
College Audiences**

Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd

January 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SQA Profile

- Overall, approaching three out of five respondents in November/December 2024 rated SQA's credibility as being **high**, whilst a third believed SQA to have **low** credibility
- Since the last survey, there was no change in terms of the percentage of respondents, overall, who believed SQA to have high or low credibility
- Amongst those who believed SQA to have high credibility, this was primarily a function of beliefs that 'SQA does a good job' and, thereafter, 'SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications', 'the high standards of SQA', 'SQA being a well-known and well-established organisation' and 'the fairness of SQA', whilst for those who believed SQA to have low credibility, this was primarily due to a belief that 'some courses and materials are out of date' and, thereafter, 'respondents having issues relating to assessment procedures', 'poor press coverage' and 'the process of change being too slow'
- Respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 6.52 out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance, with this average score being almost identical to that found in the last survey
- Overall, approaching three quarters of respondents in November/December 2024 stated their belief that they 'knew enough about SQA'
- Those who did not believe they knew enough about SQA primarily stated that they would like 'information on course setting' and, thereafter, information 'about marking schemes', 'how decisions are made' and 'improvements that have being made by SQA'

SQA Qualifications Profile

- In November/December 2024, overall, respondents most commonly stated that they knew enough about 'National 4s', 'National 5s', 'Highers' and HNCs/HNDs, with this least likely to be the case amongst those aware of National 1s to National 3s
- Since the last survey, there were increasing beliefs that those aware of National 3s, National 4s and National 5s knew enough about them, with decreasing beliefs in this regard in relation to PDAs and SVQs
- Those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were most likely to believe that National 5s, Highers, Advanced Highers, HNCs/HNDs, PDAs and SVQs could be trusted, with this least likely to be the case in relation to National 1s to National 4s. Levels of disagreement that each of the qualifications under consideration could be trusted were far more limited
- Those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were most likely to believe that Highers, Advanced Highers and HNCs/HNDs are appropriately challenging, with this being least likely in relation to National 1s to National 3s. Again, levels of disagreement that each of the qualifications under consideration are appropriately challenging were far more limited
- Those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were most likely to believe that National 5s, Highers, Advanced Highers and HNCs/HNDs support progression to further study, with this being least likely to be the case in relation to National 1s to National 3s. Once again, levels of disagreement that each of the qualifications under consideration support progression to further study were far more limited
- Overall, approaching half of respondents in November/December 2024 stated that their views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard

of – taken together – had changed over the last year, with a quarter of respondents stating that their views had changed and become less positive and approaching one in five that their views had changed and become more positive

- Amongst those stating that their views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of – taken together – had changed and become more positive, this was primarily due to these individuals ‘being more knowledgeable about SQA in general’, ‘being more knowledgeable about SQA qualifications’ and ‘a belief that SQA qualifications provide a better pathway to higher and further education’
- For those whose views on the credibility of all of the qualifications they had heard of had changed become less positive, this was primarily due to a belief that ‘standards of qualifications have lowered’ and, thereafter, a belief that ‘SQA qualifications and/or subjects require to be updated’

SQA Contact and Communications Profile

- Almost three out of five respondents in November/December 2024 stated that they had had contact from SQA or had contacted SQA, with there being virtually no change in this regard since November/December 2023 overall
- Amongst those who had had contact from SQA or had contacted SQA, a rating of 6.84 out of a possible 10 was provided in terms of this contact/ these contacts
- For those noting a positive rating of their contact/contacts, this was primarily due to ‘SQA’s quick response to queries’, with secondary unprompted mention also being made here of SQA being ‘helpful during contacts’, ‘supportive during contacts’ and ‘easy to contact’

- Although on a largely indicative basis, the two main reasons for those providing a negative rating of SQA contacts were ‘SQA being slow to respond to queries’ and ‘experiences of poor interactions during contacts’
- Respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 6.36 out of a possible 10 in terms of the appropriateness of ‘the level of detail of communications’ from SQA
- In November/December 2024, respondents provided an average score of 6.35 out of a possible 10 in terms of the ‘clarity of communications from SQA’
- In November/December 2024, respondents provided a rating of 6.42 out of a possible 10 in terms of the ‘timeliness of communications from SQA’, with this representing a very marginal decrease since November/December 2023 (falling from 6.45 to 6.42)
- In November/December 2024, respondents noted an average score of 6.57 out of a possible 10 in terms of their ‘overall rating of communications with SQA’, with this figure being almost identical to that found in the last survey (6.55)
- Respondents providing an overall positive rating for SQA in terms of their communications stated that this was for a range of reasons, including ‘SQA’s communications being good overall’, ‘good service provided by SQA during communications’, ‘SQA communications being informative’ and ‘respondents receiving regular communication updates’
- For respondents providing an overall negative rating of SQA in terms of their communications, their responses for doing so primarily focused around ‘SQA communications not being specific enough’, ‘communications being too late’ and ‘lack of clarity in communications’

SQA Consultation and Engagement Profile

- When respondents were asked to rate SQA in terms of its consultation and engagement, an average score of 5.96 out of a possible 10 was noted (with this score being very similar to that found last year and the change not being statistically significant)
- For those providing a good rating number of SQA in terms of its consultation and engagement, they primarily did so due to there being 'good communications during consultation and engagement' and, thereafter, 'engagement being good but not consultation', 'good consultation exclusively' and 'good engagement level', whilst for those providing a poor rating of SQA's consultation and engagement, this was primarily due to 'lack of consultation' and, thereafter, 'a belief that consultation and engagement could be better', 'lack of communication during consultation and engagement', 'SQA not listening to lecturers' and 'lack of engagement'

A Prospectus for Change Commitment Profile

- In November/December 2024, over one in five respondents agreed that 'SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers', whilst a third disagreed that this is the case
- Over a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 agreed that 'SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service', whilst around three out of ten respondents disagreed that this is the case
- Just over a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 agreed that 'SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy'. Furthermore, well over two out of five respondents in November/ December 2024 disagreed that this is the case

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 ('those in Management roles')
- Individuals learning in Scottish FE colleges ('Learners')

The information was collected during November and December 2024 by means of the administration of an online questionnaire, with the following number of responses being achieved:

- Those in Management roles (193)
- Lecturers (234)
- Learners (251)

Each of the three audiences were weighted equally during the analysis process.

Sections 2.0 to 6.0 inclusive provide the following profiles for:

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

Within each of these sections, where possible and appropriate:

- Variances between each of the three audiences are noted
- Variances in outcomes from the most recent research and that undertaken in November/December 2023 are noted

All of the variances noted in both regards are statistically significant. It should be stressed that those variances that are cited are the most notable statistically significant variances, but that not all statistically significant variances are cited due to a desire to avoid producing an overly lengthy report.

The statistical tests applied to data to test the significance of variances found in the data samples was determined by the type of data/variable that was being tested and included chi-square tests, t tests and analysis of variance, with SPSS being used to carry out both survey analysis and statistical testing.

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

2.0 SQA PROFILE

2.1 SQA's Credibility

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

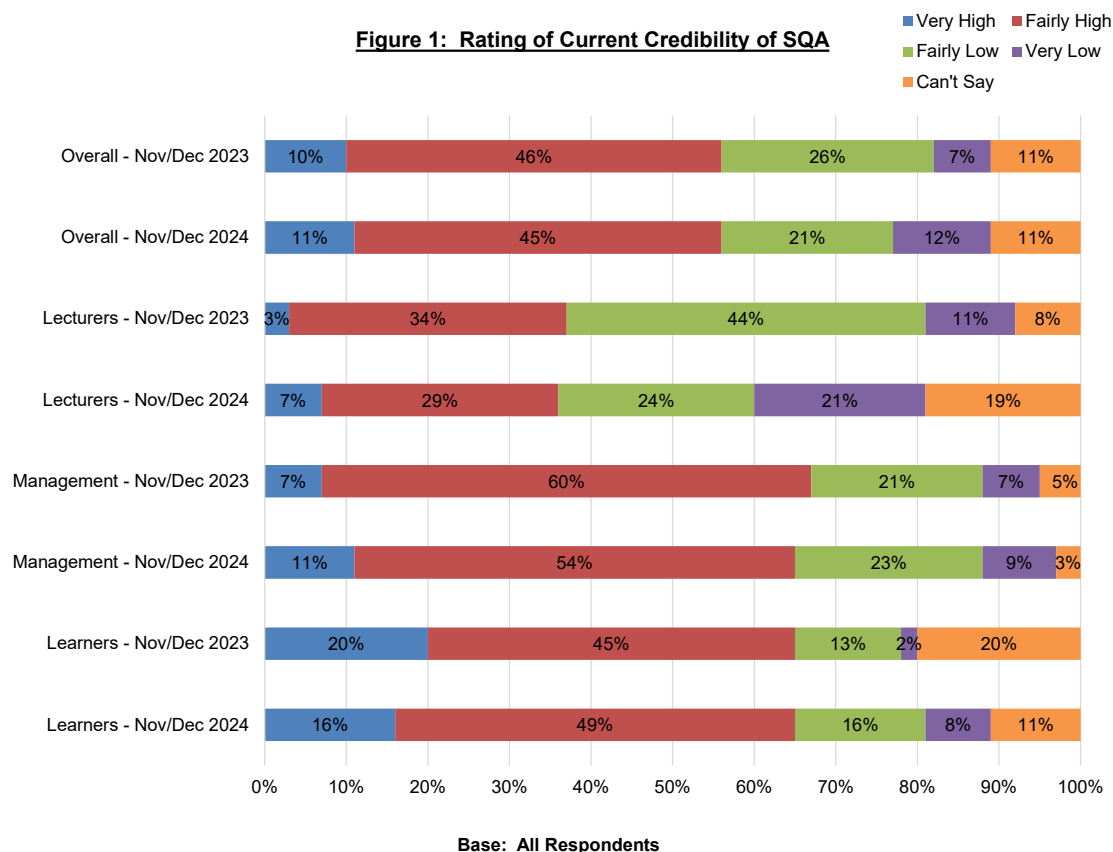


Figure 1 indicates that, overall, approaching three out of five respondents in November/December 2024 (56%) rated SQA's credibility as being **high**, with this outcome being most notable amongst those in management roles and learners (both 65% compared to 36% for lecturers).

From Figure 1, it can also be seen that, overall, a third of respondents in November/December 2024 (33%) believed SQA to have **low credibility**, with this outcome being most notable amongst lecturers (45% compared to 32% and 24% respectively for those in management roles and learners).

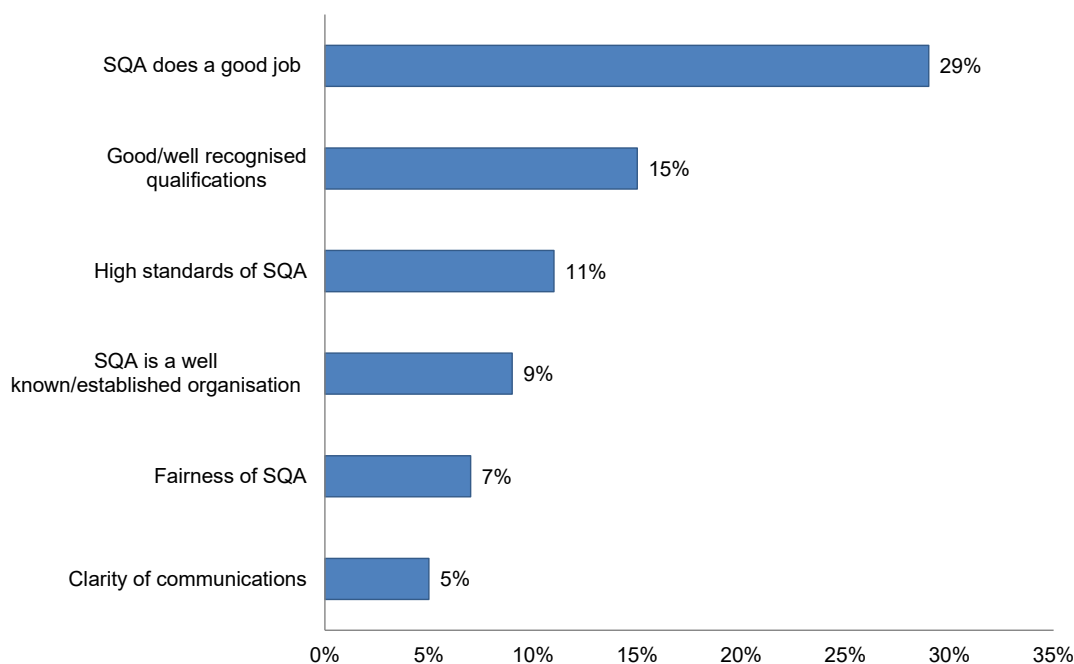
It should also be stressed that lecturers were far more likely to provide a **‘can’t say’** response here (19% compared to 11% and 3% respectively for learners and those in management roles).

From Figure 1, it can also be seen that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was no change in terms of the percentage of respondents, overall, who believed SQA to have **high and low credibility**.

Despite this, further examination of the data indicated that there was an increasing extent to which learners believed SQA to have low credibility (rising from 15% to 24%).

‘Why did you provide this rating?’

**Figure 2: Reason for Providing High Rating of SQA Credibility
(Unprompted)**



Base: Respondents Believing SQA to Have High Credibility

Figure 2 indicates that it can be seen that, when those stating their belief that SQA had **high credibility** were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, their **primary response** focused around a belief that ‘SQA does a good job’ (29%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made in this regard of a number of other reasons, including:

- SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications (15%)
- The high standards of SQA (11%)
- SQA being a well-known and well-established organisation (9%)
- The fairness of SQA (7%)

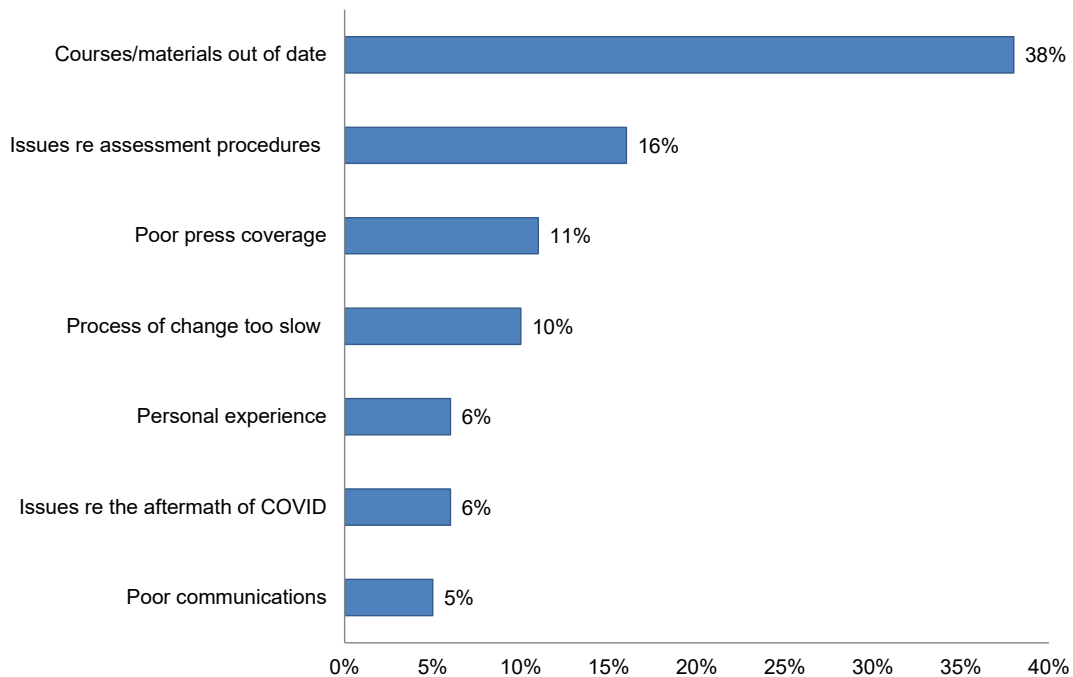
Further examination of the data indicated the following differences in terms of a number of the outcomes noted in Figure 2 being most prominently cited by the audience types indicated below:

- **Beliefs that SQA ‘does a good job’:** lecturers (37% compared to 26% and 25% respectively for learners and those in management roles)
- **SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications:** those in management roles and, thereafter, learners (22% and 15% respectively compared to 3% for lecturers)
- **SQA having high standards:** lecturers and those in management roles (15% and 13% respectively compared to 5% for learners)
- **Fairness of SQA:** learners (13% compared to 8% and 2% respectively for lecturers and those in management roles)

Further examination of the data also indicated that, since the last survey, there were few notable differences in terms of a number of the reasons cited in Figure 2, although it is worthy of note that, in November/December 2024, less unprompted mention was made here of ‘SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications’ (falling from 26% to 15%).

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

**Figure 3: Reason for Providing Low Rating of SQA Credibility
(Unprompted)**



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, Figure 3 indicates that their **primary response** focused around a belief that ‘some courses and materials are out of date’ (38%).

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

- Respondents having issues relating to assessment procedures (16%)
- Poor press coverage (11%)
- The process of change being too slow (10%)

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

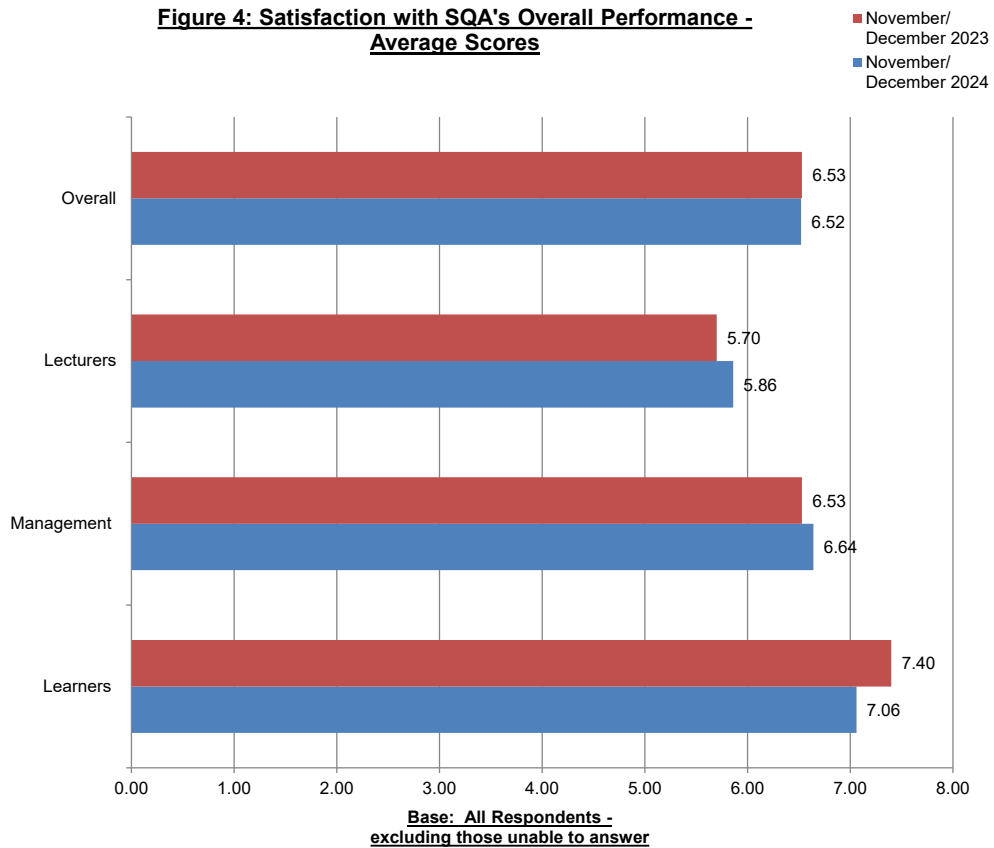
- **Some courses and materials being out of date:** those in management roles (47% compared to 35% and 28% respectively for lecturers and learners)
- **Issues regarding assessment procedures:** learners (23% compared to 16% and 11% respectively for lecturers and those in management roles)
- **Process of change too slow:** those in management roles (19% compared to 5% for both lecturers and learners)

Further examination of the data also indicated that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there were notable differences in terms of a number of the reasons noted in Figure 3, including **increasing unpromoted references** to beliefs that:

- Some courses and materials are out of date (rising from 31% to 38%)
- There has been poor press coverage relating to SQA (rising from 4% to 11%)
- The process of change being too slow (rising from 3% to 10%)

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'?'



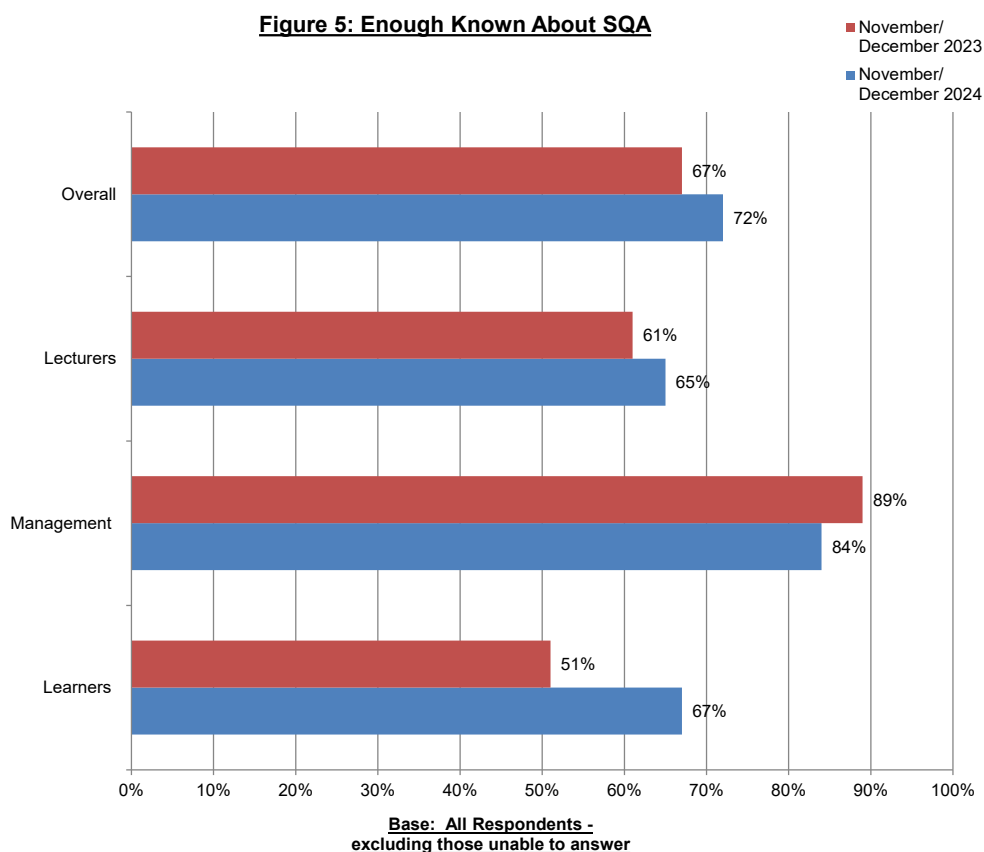
Respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 6.52 out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance overall, with **highest levels of satisfaction** being noted by learners, ie:

- Learners (7.06)
- Those in management roles (6.64)
- Lecturers (5.86)

Figure 4 also indicates that, overall, there was virtually no change between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024 in terms of satisfaction with SQA’s performance overall (falling from 6.53 to 6.52 out of a possible 10). However, during that time, there was a decrease in levels of satisfaction amongst learners (from 7.40 to 7.06), with this fall being very largely counterbalanced by increased levels of satisfaction amongst lecturers (rising from 5.70 to 5.86).

2.3 SQA Knowledge and Information Profile

‘Do you believe you know enough about SQA?’



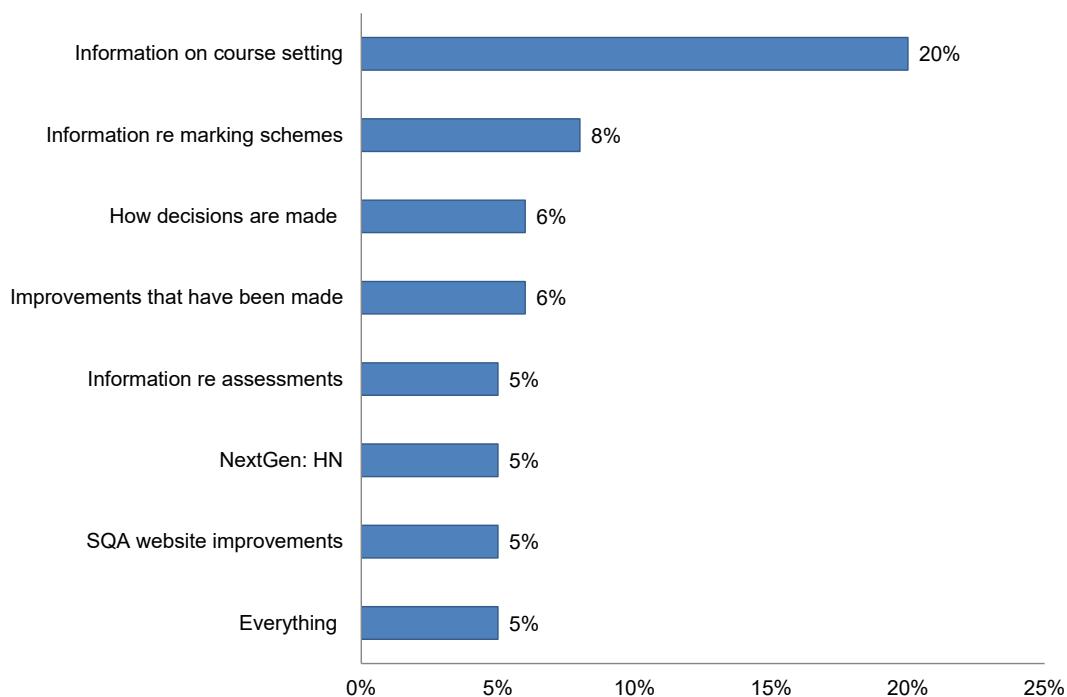
Overall, approaching three quarters of respondents in November/December 2024 (72%) stated their belief that they knew enough about SQA, with this outcome being **highest** amongst those in management roles, ie:

- Those in Management roles (84%)
- Learners (67%)
- Lecturers (65%)

Figure 5 also indicates that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was an increase in beliefs amongst respondents, overall, that they knew enough about SQA (rising from 67% to 72%)¹. This rise was primarily driven by learners (rising from 51% to 67%).

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

Figure 6: Information Desires re SQA (Unprompted)



Base: Respondents not Knowing Enough About SQA

¹ Although this is not statistically significant.

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, Figure 6 indicates that their **primary response** was that of ‘information on course setting’ (20%).

Thereafter, **some unprompted mention** was made here of other desires, including information about:

- Marking schemes (8%)
- How decisions are made (6%)
- Improvements that have been made by SQA (6%)

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 worth noting that references to ‘information on how decisions are made’ were exclusively cited by lecturers (13%), with this also being the case in terms of ‘desires for information about assessments’ (10%).

It should also be noted that, since the last survey, there was **decreasing unprompted reference** made here for desires for:

- Information regarding marking schemes (falling from 14% to 8%)
- Information on how decisions are made (falling from 30% to 6%)
- More information about what SQA does (falling from 15% to 2%)
- General information about SQA (falling from 8% to 0%)

3.0 SQA QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE

3.1 Qualification Knowledge and Profile

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

Table 1: Enough Known About Qualifications of Which Respondents Are Aware

	Overall Nov / Dec 2023	Overall Nov / Dec 2024	Lecturers Nov / Dec 2023	Lecturers Nov / Dec 2024	Management Nov / Dec 2023	Management Nov / Dec 2024	Learners Nov / Dec 2023	Learners Nov / Dec 2024
Highers	87%	88%	79%	90%	93%	84%	86%	90%
Advanced Highers	65%	70%	54%	66%	73%	74%	68%	70%
National 1s	43%	46%	22%	37%	31%	32%	57%	70%
National 2s	44%	47%	24%	36%	31%	35%	57%	71%
National 3s	44%	54%	30%	48%	34%	40%	67%	74%
National 4s	50%	81%	67%	76%	76%	81%	76%	86%
National 5s	72%	91%	88%	90%	92%	93%	83%	90%
HNCs/HNDs	83%	89%	91%	86%	97%	93%	74%	89%
PDA	79%	73%	58%	81%	90%	85%	48%	40%
SVQs	83%	64%	50%	57%	82%	82%	69%	48%

From Table 1, it can be seen that, in November/December 2024, overall, respondents **most commonly** stated that they knew enough about the following qualifications of which they were aware:

- National 5s (91%)
- HNCs and HNDs (89%)
- Highers (88%)
- National 4s (81%)

Table 1 also indicates that **lowest levels** of belief that enough was known about qualifications of which respondents were aware related to:

- National 1s (46%)
- National 2s (47%)
- National 3s (54%)

Further examination of the data indicated that **highest levels** of belief that enough was known about qualifications of which respondents were noted by the audience types indicated (where variances are apparent):

- **National 1s:** learners (70%)
- **National 2s:** learners (71%)
- **National 3s:** learners (74%)
- **National 4s:** learners and those in management roles (86% and 81% respectively)
- **Highers:** lecturers and learners (both 90%)
- **PDAs:** those in management roles and lecturers (85% and 81% respectively)
- **SVQs:** those in management roles (82%)

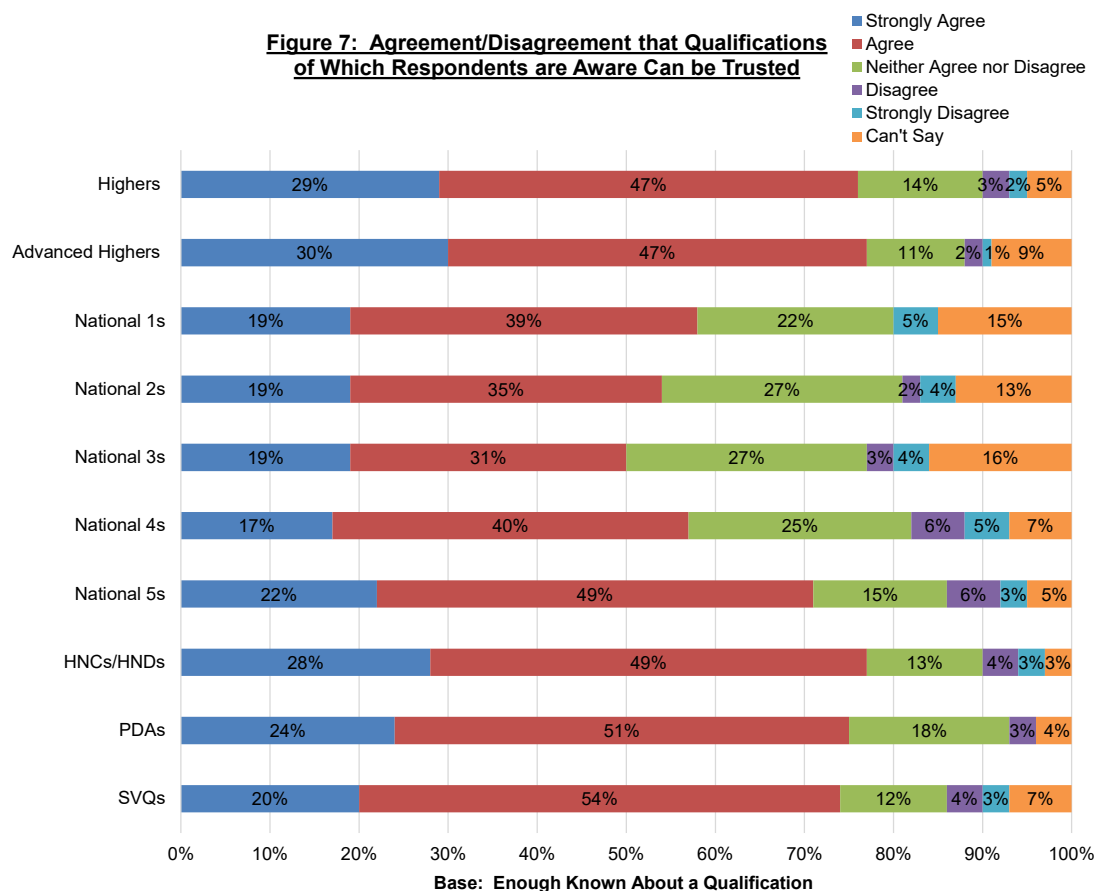
Table 1 also indicates that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there were **increases** in the extent to which, overall, respondents believed they knew enough about a number of the qualifications of which they were aware, including:

- National 3s (rising from 44% to 54%)
- National 4s (rising from 50% to 81%)
- National 5s (rising from 72% to 91%)

In contrast, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there were **decreases** in relation to two qualifications, namely:

- PDAs (falling from 79% to 73%)
- SVQs (falling from 83% to 64%)

‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that each of the qualifications you think you know enough about can be trusted?’²



From Figure 7, it can be seen that those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were **most likely** to believe that the following ‘could be trusted’:

- Advanced Highers (77%)
- HNCs/HNDs (77%)
- Highers (76%)
- PDAs (75%)
- SVQs (74%)
- National 5s (71%)

² This question, together with those relating to Figures 8 and 9 were asked for the first time in November/December 2024.

In contrast, those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were **least likely** to believe that four could be trusted:

- National 1s (58%)
- National 4s (57%)
- National 2s (54%)
- National 3s (50%)

Figure 7 also indicates that levels of **disagreement** that qualifications which respondents thought they know enough about could **not** be trusted were far more limited.

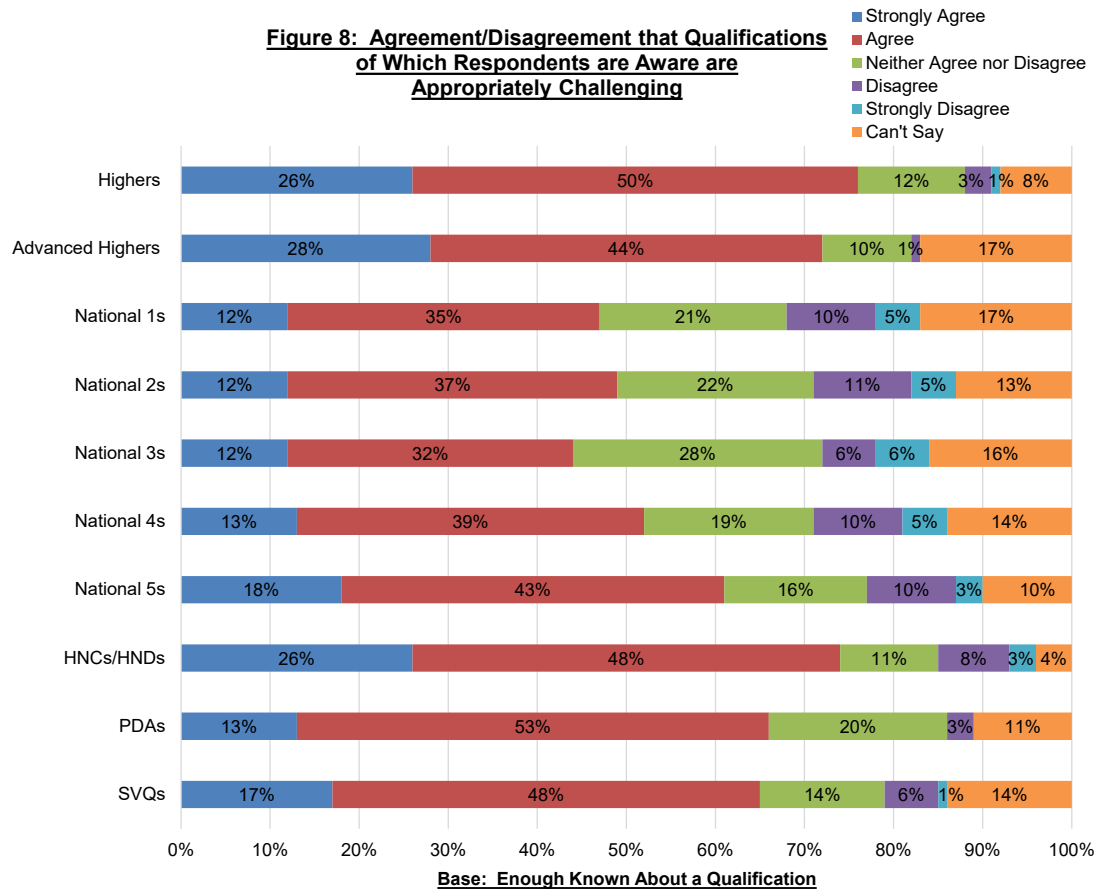
Table 2: Agreement that Qualifications of Which Respondents are Aware Can be Trusted Broken Down by Audience Type

	Lecturers	Management	Learners
Highers	73%	81%	82%
Advanced Highers	76%	71%	82%
National 1s	45%	58%	64%
National 2s	60%	30%	62%
National 3s	44%	41%	58%
National 4s	56%	56%	61%
National 5s	63%	72%	79%
HNCs/HNDs	74%	79%	82%
PDAs	71%	78%	80%
SVQs	75%	75%	75%

Table 2 highlights a number of variances in terms of agreement that qualifications of which respondents are aware can be trusted broken down by audience type, including:

- Lecturers were least likely to agree that Highers, National 1s, National 5s, HNCs/HNDs and PDAs can be trusted
- Those in Management roles were least likely to agree that Advanced Highers and National 2s can be trusted
- Learners were most likely to agree that National 3s can be trusted

‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that each of the qualifications you think you know enough about are appropriately challenging?’



From Figure 8, it can be seen that those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were **most likely** to believe that the following were ‘appropriately challenging’:

- Highers (76%)
- HNCs/HNDs (74%)
- Advanced Highers (72%)

In contrast, those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were **least likely** to believe that the following were appropriately challenging:

- National 3s (44%)
- National 1s (47%)

- National 2s (49%)

Figure 8 also indicates that levels of **disagreement** that qualifications which respondents thought they knew enough about were **not** appropriately challenging were, again, far more limited.

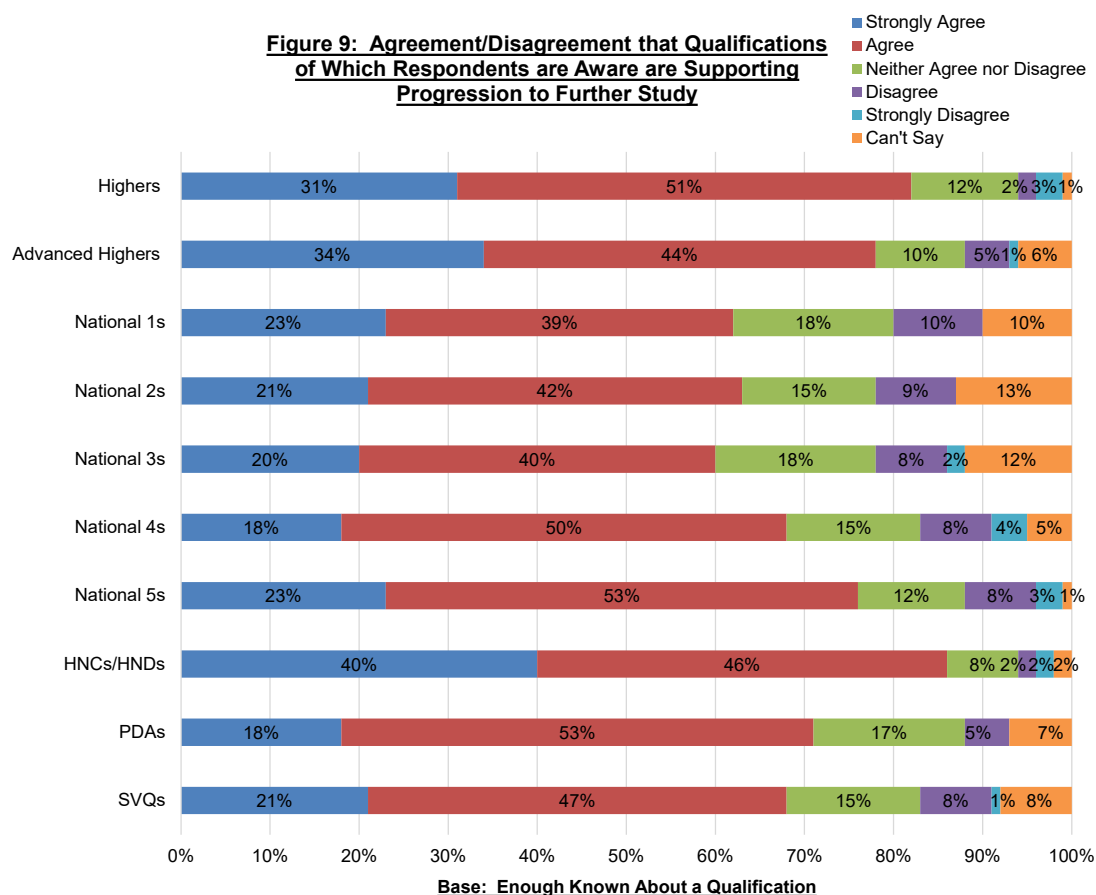
Table 3: Agreement that Qualifications of Which Respondents are Aware Are Appropriately Challenging Broken Down by Audience Type

	Lecturers	Management	Learners
Highers	69%	75%	81%
Advanced Highers	70%	68%	76%
National 1s	42%	53%	46%
National 2s	48%	59%	42%
National 3s	44%	54%	39%
National 4s	36%	67%	53%
National 5s	53%	61%	68%
HNCs/HNDs	69%	78%	76%
PDAs	70%	69%	54%
SVQs	64%	66%	62%

Table 3 notes a number of variances which are apparent in terms of agreement that qualifications of which respondents are aware are appropriately challenging broken down by audience type, including:

- Lecturers were least likely to believe that National 1s and HNCs/HNDs are appropriately challenging
- Those in management roles were most likely to agree that National 2s, National 3s and National 4s are appropriately challenging
- Learners were most likely to agree that Highers, Advanced Highers and National 5s are appropriately challenging but least likely to believe this to be the case in relation to PDAs

‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that each of the qualifications you think you know enough about support progression to further study?’



From Figure 9, it can be seen that those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were **most likely** to believe that the following ‘support progression to further study’:

- HNCs/HNDs (86%)
- Highers (82%)
- Advanced Highers (78%)
- National 5s (76%)

In contrast, those who thought they knew enough about qualifications were **least likely** to believe that the following support progression to further study:

- National 3s (60%)
- National 1s (62%)
- National 2s (63%)

Figure 9 also indicates that, once again, levels of **disagreement** that qualifications which respondents thought they knew enough about did **not** support progression to further study were far more limited.

Table 4: Agreement that Qualifications of Which Respondents are Aware Support Progression to Further Study Broken Down by Audience Type

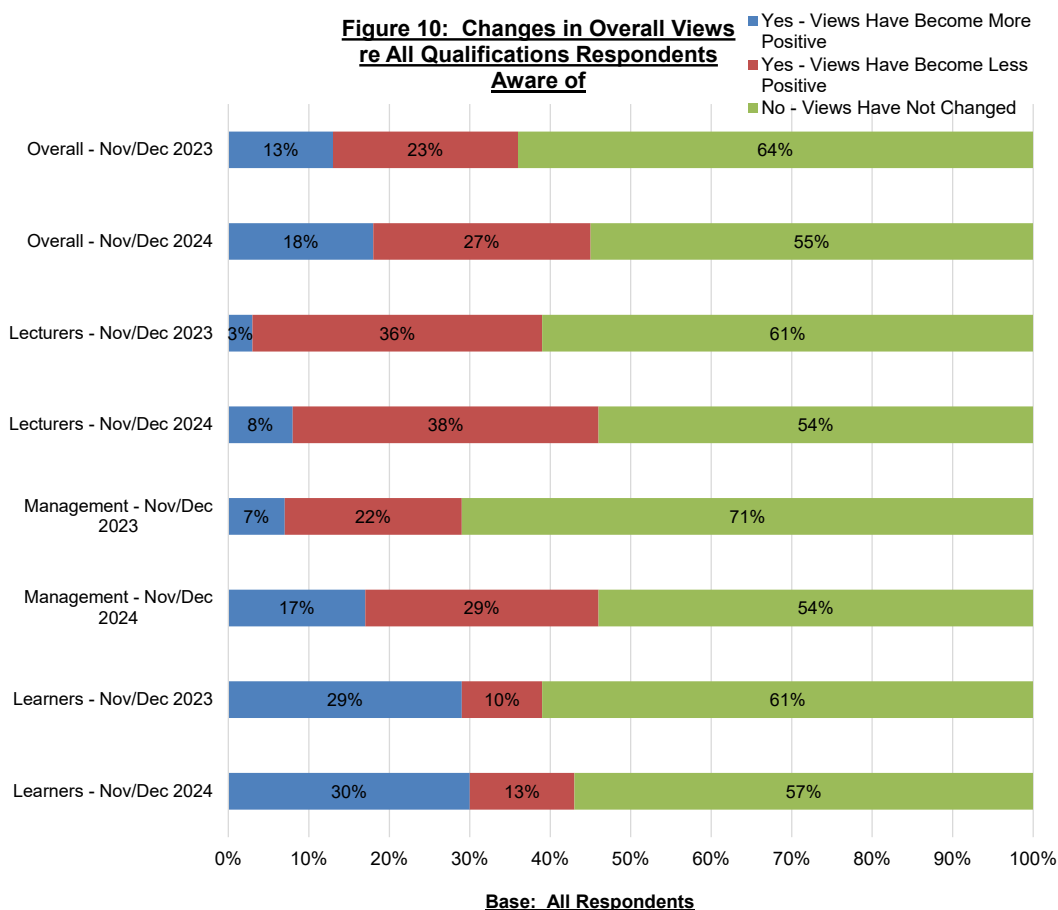
	Lecturers	Management	Learners
Highers	81%	86%	79%
Advanced Highers	85%	70%	81%
National 1s	71%	57%	59%
National 2s	61%	76%	58%
National 3s	57%	74%	53%
National 4s	68%	69%	65%
National 5s	80%	75%	75%
HNCs/HNDs	87%	93%	76%
PDAs	71%	74%	66%
SVQs	64%	69%	67%

Table 4 highlights a number of variances in terms of agreement that a number of qualifications of which respondents are aware support progression to further study, including:

- Lecturers being most likely to agree that National 1s support progression to further study
- Those in Management roles being most likely to agree that Highers, National 2s and National 3s promote progression to further study
- Learners were least likely to agree that HNCs/HNDs and PDAs support progression to further study

3.2 Changes in Views About SQA Qualifications

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



From Figure 10, it can be seen that, overall, approaching half of respondents in November/December 2024 (45%) stated their views on the credibility of all qualifications they had heard of – taken together – **had changed** over the last year, with this outcome being very similar across the four audiences (ranging from 43% to 46%).

Figure 10 also indicates that, overall, over a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 (27%) stated that their views had changed and become **less positive**, with this being most likely to be the case amongst lecturers (38%).

In addition, Figure 10 indicates that, overall, approaching one in five respondents in November/December 2024 (18%) – whose views on

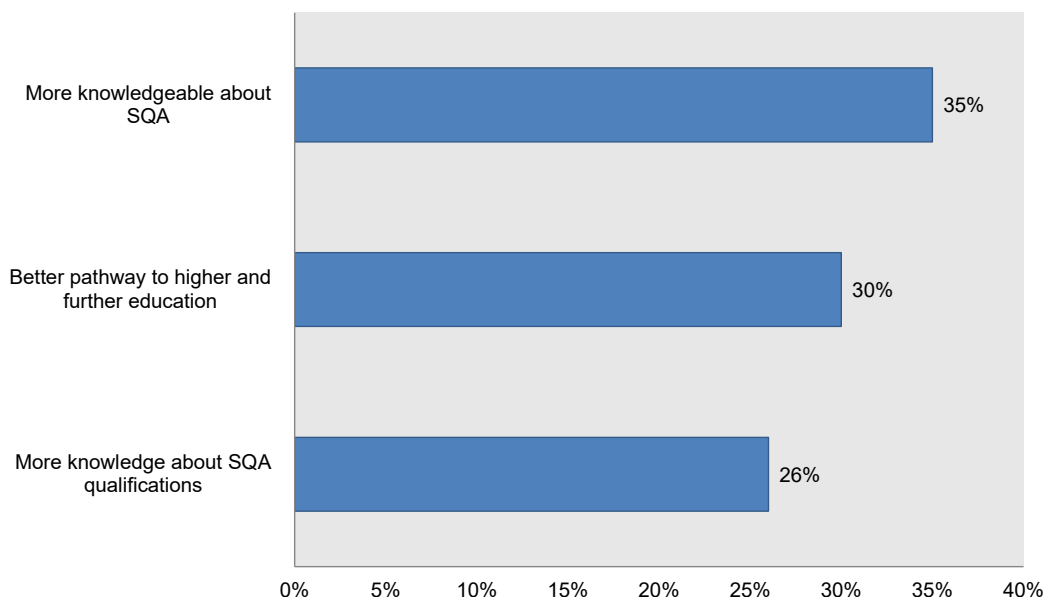
qualifications had changed – stated that they had become **more positive**, with this most likely to be the case amongst learners (30%).

In terms of changes since the last survey, it can be seen from Figure 10 that it was apparent that there was:

- A fall in the extent to which respondents stated that their views had not changed (falling from 64% to 55%), with this fall being primarily driven by those in management roles (falling from 71% to 54%) and lecturers (falling from 61% to 54%)
- An increase in the extent to which those in management roles stated that their views had changed and become less positive (rising from 22% to 29%)
- A rise in the extent to which respondents' views had changed and become more positive (rising from 13% to 18%), with this rise being primarily driven by those in management roles (rising from 7% to 17%) and lecturers (rising from 3% to 8%)

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

Figure 11: Ways In Which Views on the Overall Credibility of Qualifications Have Become More Positive (Unprompted) - Indicative



Base: Views Have Become More Positive in Figure 10

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, Figure 11 indicates, on an indicative basis, that their **principal responses** focused around:

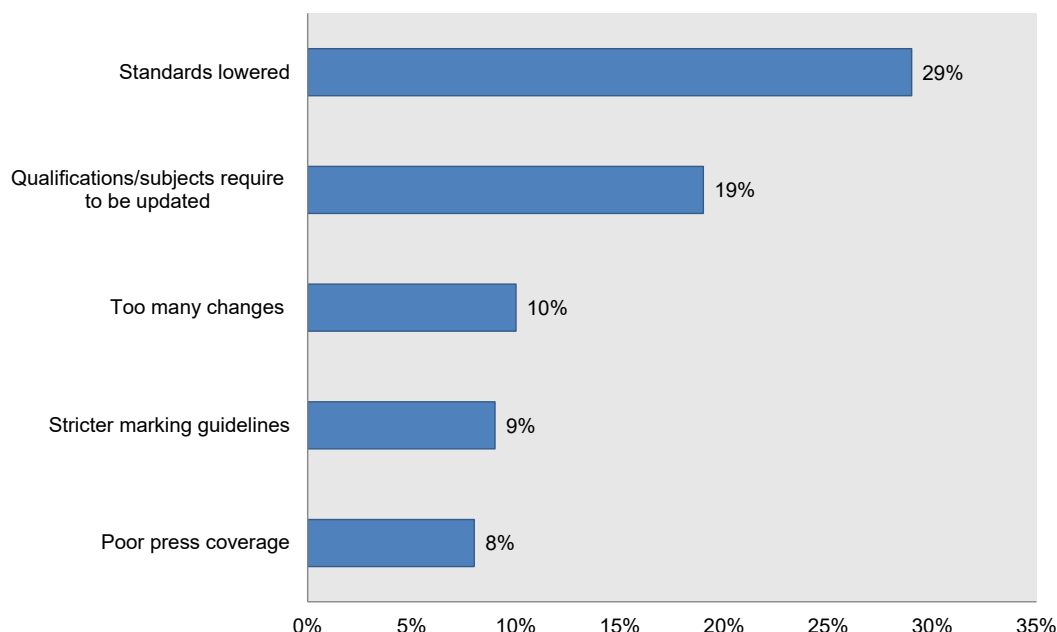
- Being more knowledgeable about SQA in general (35%)
- SQA qualifications providing a better pathway to higher and further education (30%)
- Being more knowledgeable about SQA qualifications (26%)

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.

Similarly, the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow comparisons to be drawn between reasons cited by respondents in November/December 2023 and November/December 2024.

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

Figure 12: Ways In Which Views on the Overall Credibility of Qualifications Have Become Less Positive (Unprompted)



Base: Views Have Become Less Positive in Figure 10

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, Figure 12 indicates that **primary reference** was made here to a belief that ‘standards of qualifications have lowered’ (29%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of a belief that ‘SQA qualifications and/or subjects require to be updated’ (19%).

Further examination of the data indicated that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, decreasing unprompted reference was made here to a number of views, including beliefs that ‘SQA qualifications and/or subjects require to be updated’ (falling from 36% to 19%). In contrast, during that time, there was increasing reference here to there being ‘too many changes relating to qualifications’ (rising from 1% to 10%).

4.0 SQA CONTACT AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFILES

4.1 Contact Profile

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

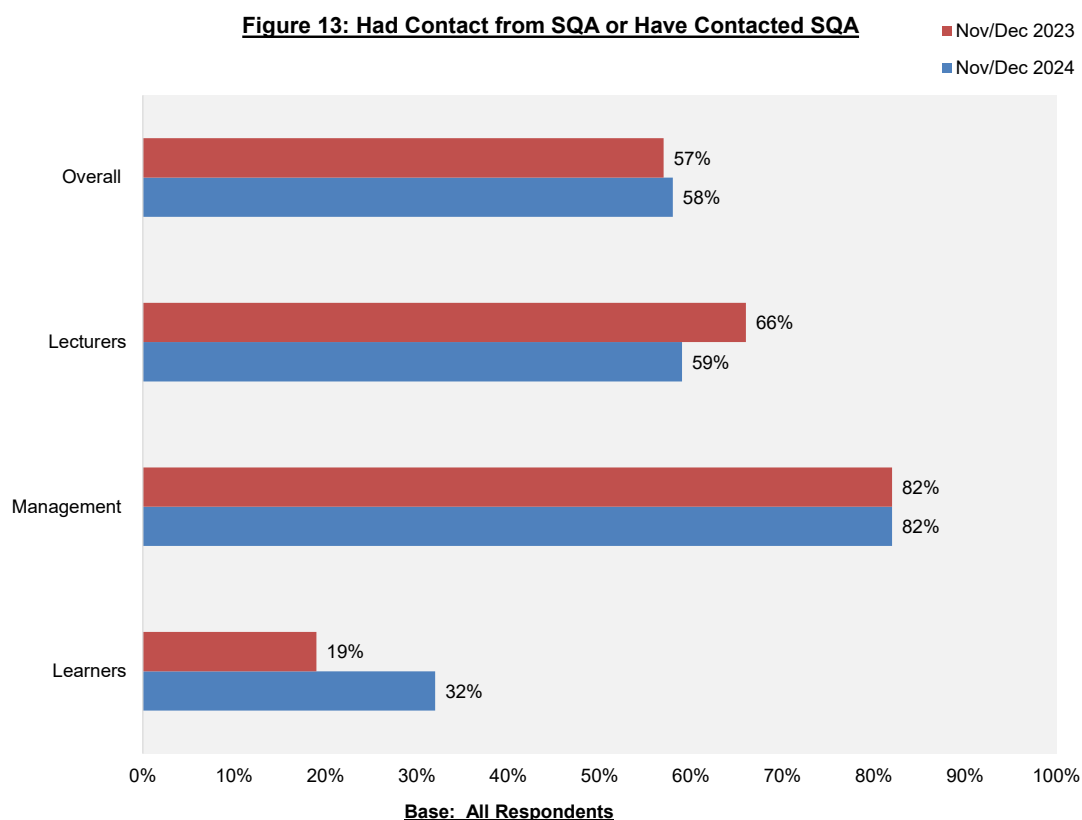


Figure 13 indicates that almost three out of five respondents in November/December 2024 (58%) stated that they had had contact from SQA or have contacted SQA (with this being the case **most prominently** amongst those in management roles and, thereafter, lecturers:

- Those in management roles (82%)
- Lecturers (59%)
- Learners (32%)

From Figure13, it can also be seen that between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was virtually no change in the extent to which respondents stated that they had had contact from

SQA or had contacted SQA (rising by only 1% to 58%). However, during that time, there was a decreasing extent to which this was the case amongst lecturers (falling from 66% to 59%), but an increasing extent to which this was the case amongst learners (rising from 19% to 32%).

‘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’?’

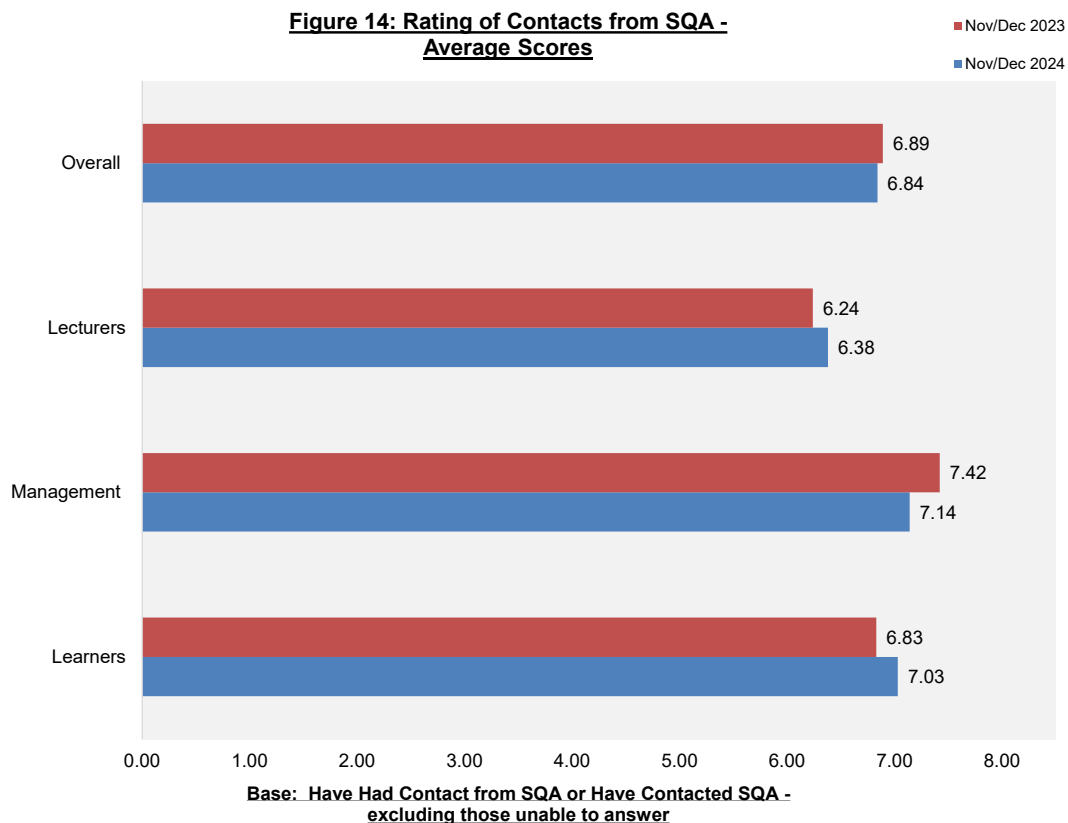


Figure 14 indicates that, amongst those who had had contact from SQA or had contacted SQA, a rating of 6.84 out of a possible 10 was provided in terms of this contact/these contacts, with the highest ratings being provided by those in management roles and learners:

- Those in management roles (7.14)
- Learners (7.03)
- Lecturers (6.38)

From Figure 13, it can also be seen that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a marginal fall in the overall rating of contacts (from 6.89 to 6.84)³, with this fall being entirely driven by those in management roles (falling from 7.42 to 7.14). Indeed, during that time, there were increasing average scores noted by:

- Lecturers (rising from 6.24 to 6.38)
- Learners (rising from 6.83 to 7.03)

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

Figure 15: Reasons for Providing Positive Rating of SQA Contacts (Unprompted)

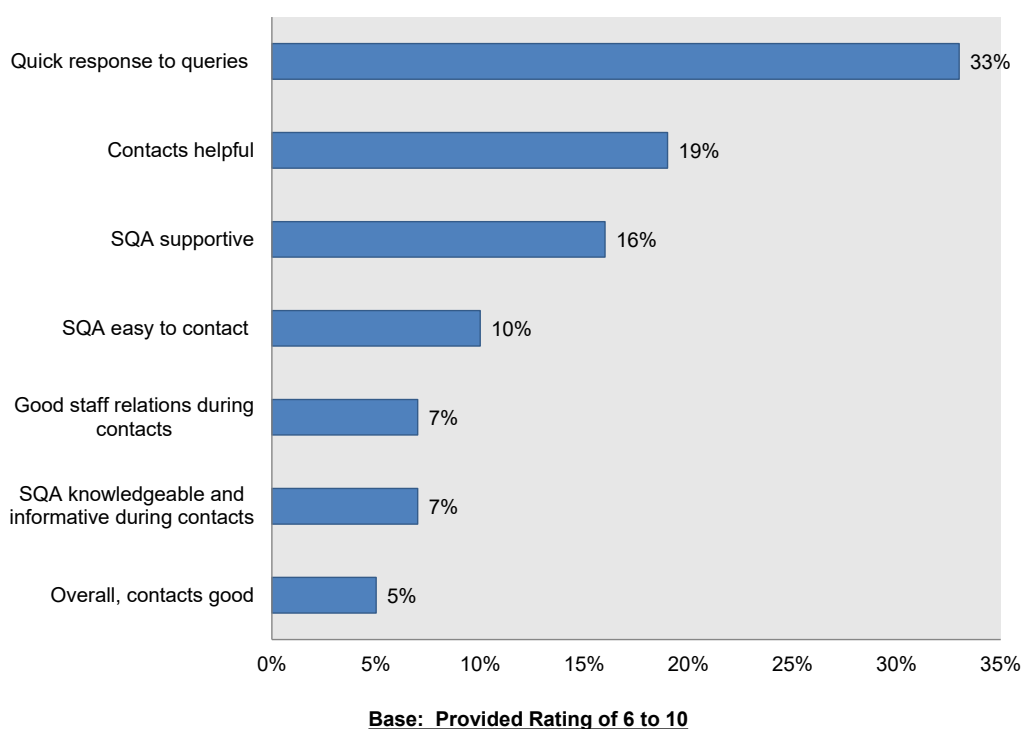


Figure 15 indicates that, when those noting a positive rating (ie those providing a rating of between 6 and 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, it was **primarily** stated that this was due to ‘SQA’s quick response to queries’ (33%).

³ Although this is not statistically significant.

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

- Helpful during contacts (19%)
- Supportive during contacts (16%)
- Easy to contact (10%)

Further examination of the data here – although somewhat indicative in nature – indicated that the following audience types were most likely to make unprompted reference to the reasons noted above (where these variances were most notable), namely:

- **SQA being helpful during contacts:** lecturers and those in management roles (23% and 19% respectively)
- **SQA being supportive during contacts:** those in management roles and learners (19% and 16% respectively)
- **SQA being easy to contact:** those in management roles and lecturers (12% and 11% respectively)

In addition, it should be noted that those in management roles were most likely to make reference here to 'SQA being knowledgeable and informative during contacts' (12%).

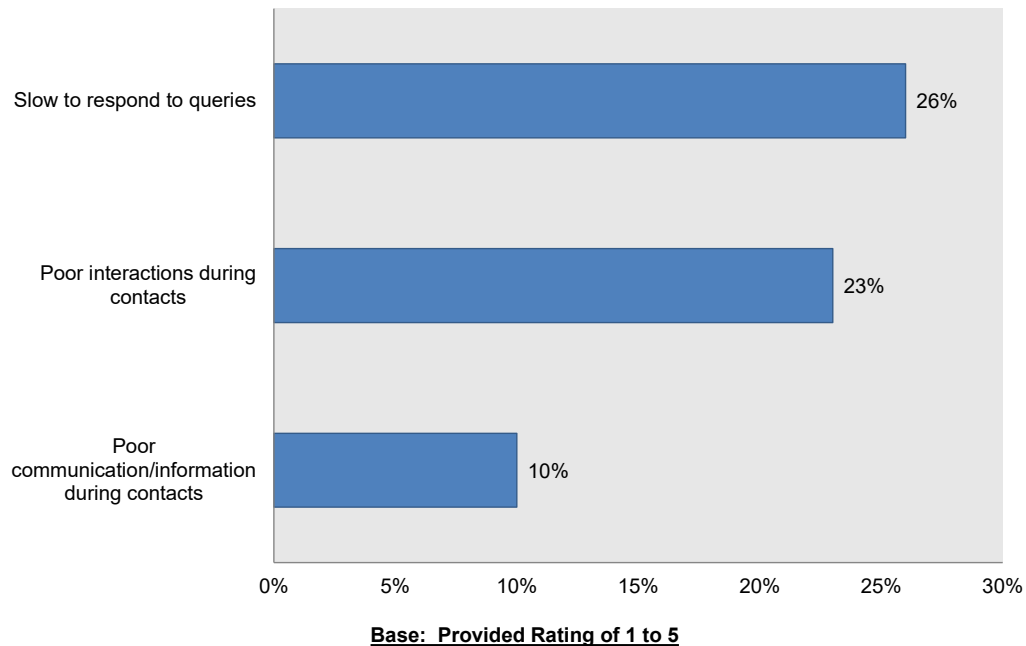
Further examination of the data also indicated that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, **increasing unprompted reference** was made here to 'SQA being supportive during contacts' (rising from 11% to 16%).

In contrast, during that time, **decreasing unprompted reference** was made here to:

- SQA's quick response to queries (falling from 43% to 33%)
- SQA being easy to contact (falling from 18% to 10%)
- Overall, SQA's contacts being good (falling from 11% to 5%)

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

**Figure 16: Reasons for Providing Negative Rating of SQA Contacts
(Unprompted) - Indicative**



From Figure 16, it can be seen that – although on a largely indicative basis – two main reasons were cited for those providing a negative rating of SQA contacts (ie those providing a rating of between 1 and 5), with these being:

- SQA being slow to respond to queries (26%)
- Experiences of poor interactions during contacts (23%)

4.2 Communications Profile

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

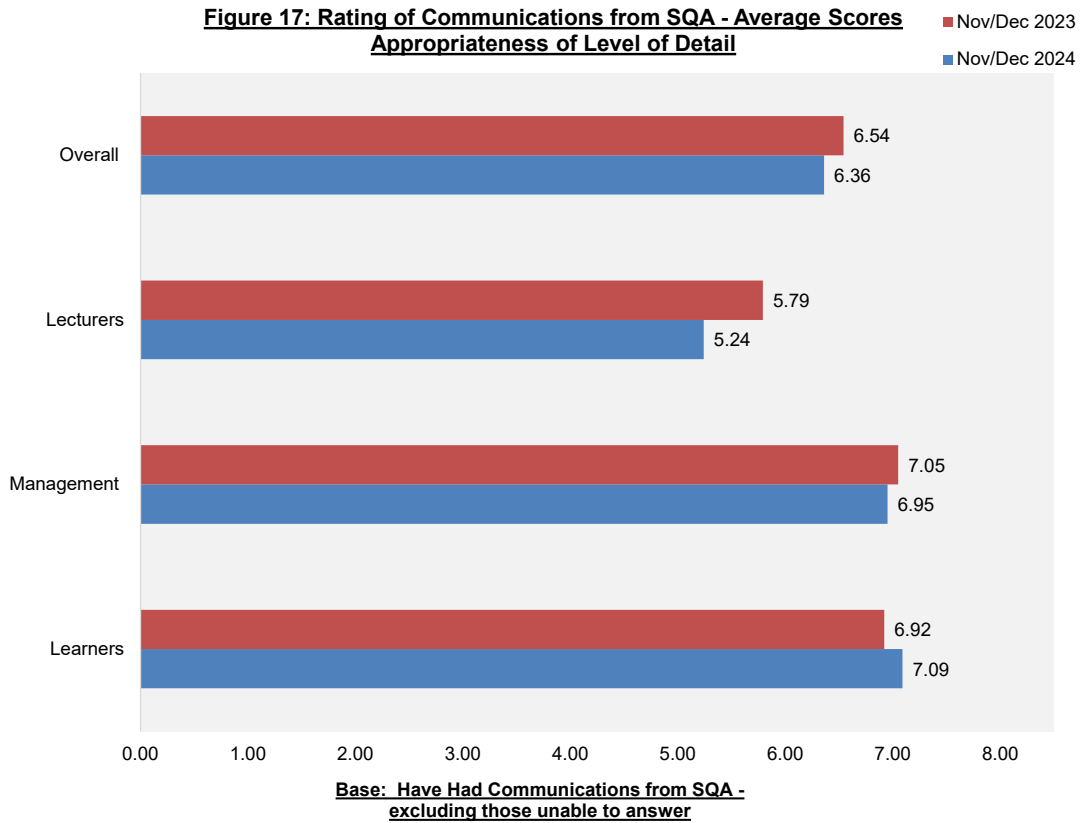


Figure 17 indicates that respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 6.36 out of a possible 10 in terms of the **appropriateness of the level of detail of communications from SQA**, with this outcome being highest amongst learners and those in management roles:

- Learners (7.09)
- Those in Management roles (6.95)
- Lecturers (5.24)

It can also be seen from Figure 17 that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a **decrease** in the rating of the appropriateness of the level of detail of communications

from SQA (falling from 6.54 to 6.36)⁴, with this decrease being primarily driven by lecturers (falling from 5.79 to 5.24).

Finally, from Figure 17, it should be noted that, since the last survey, there was a **rise** in the rating of the appropriateness of the level of detail of communications from SQA amongst learners (rising from 6.92 to 7.09)⁵.

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

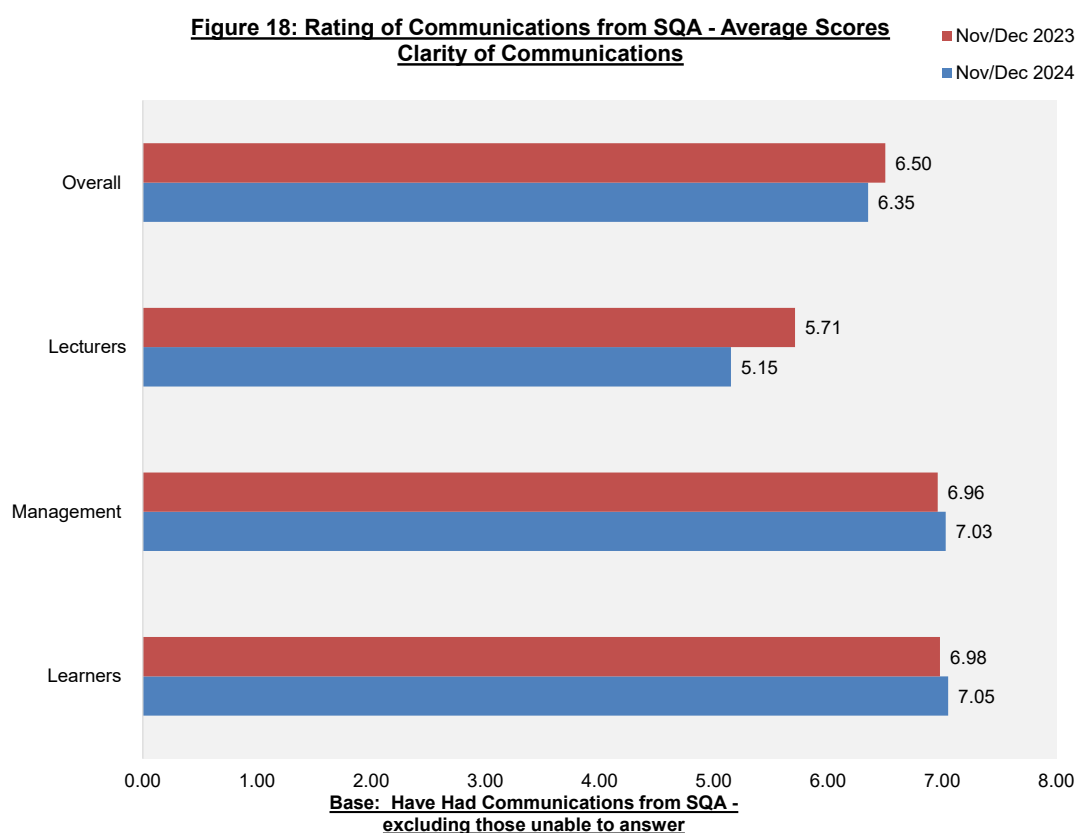


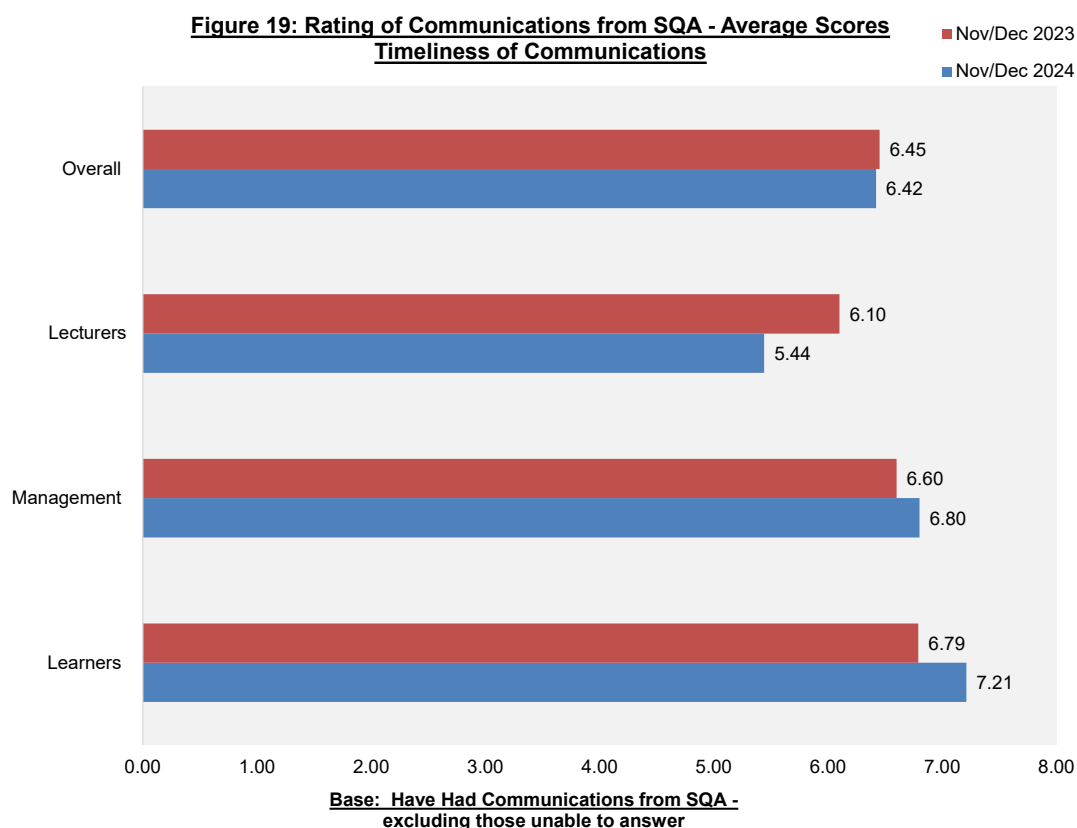
Figure 18 indicates that respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 6.35 out of a possible 10 in terms of the **clarity of communications with SQA**, with this outcome being highest amongst learners and those in management roles (7.05 and 7.03 respectively).

⁴ Although this is not statistically significant.

⁵ Although this is not statistically significant.

Figure 18 also indicates that, since the last survey, the overall rating of the clarity of communications from SQA fell (from 6.50 to 6.35)⁶, with this decrease being entirely driven by lecturers (falling from 5.71 to 5.15).

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



From Figure 19, it can be seen that, in November/December 2024, respondents provided a rating of 6.42 out of a possible 10 in terms of the **timeliness of communications from SQA**, with this outcome, again, being highest amongst learners and those in management roles (7.21 and 6.80 respectively).

It can also be seen from Figure 19 that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a very marginal

⁶ Although this is not statistically significant.

decrease in the rating of the timeliness of communications from SQA (falling from 6.45 to 6.42)⁷, with this decrease being entirely driven by lecturers (falling from 6.10 to 5.44) and, indeed, during that time, there were increased average scores noted by both learners and those in management roles (rising from 6.79 to 7.21 and 6.60 to 6.80 respectively)⁸.

‘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’?’

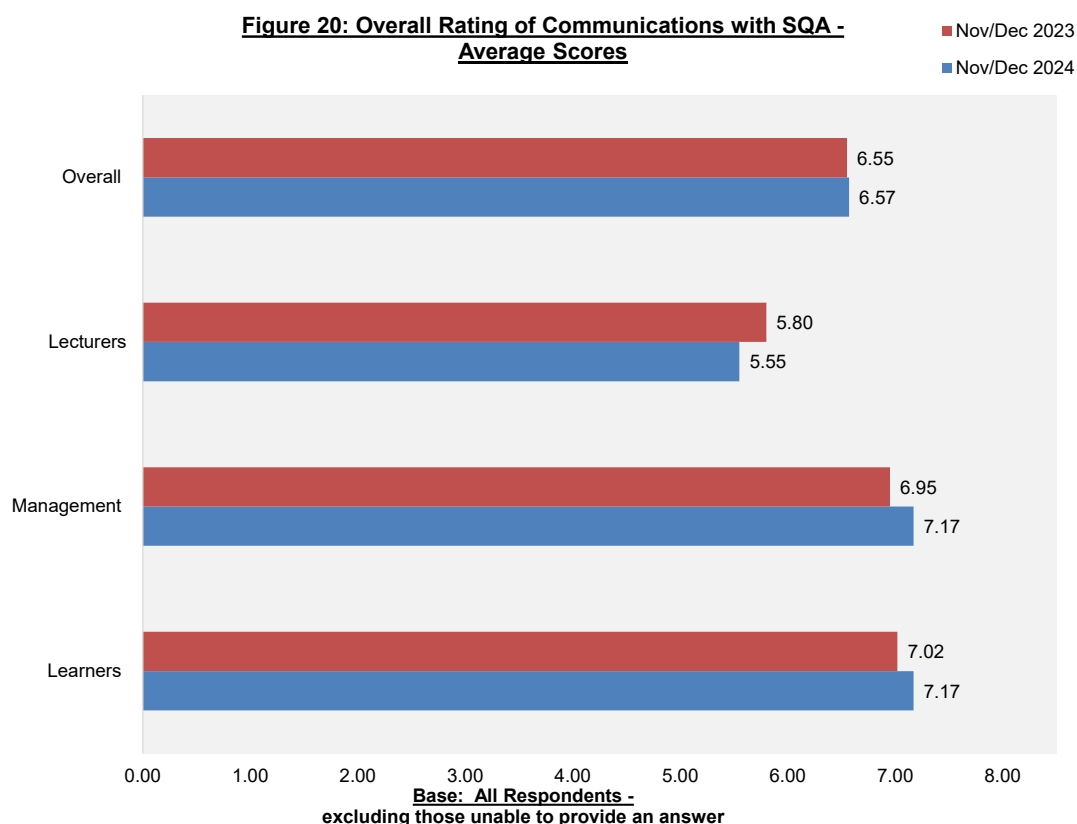


Figure 20 indicates that respondents in November/December 2024 noted an average score of 6.57 out of a possible 10 in terms of their **overall rating of communications from SQA**, with this outcome being highest amongst learners and those in management roles (both 7.17).

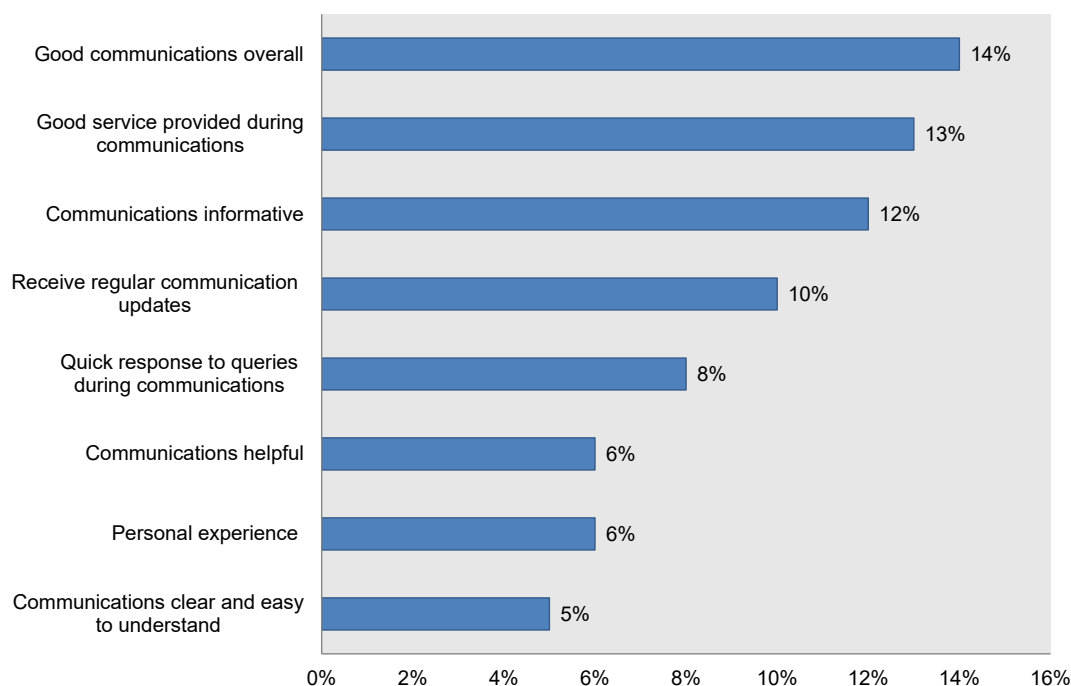
⁷ Although this is not statistically significant.

⁸ Although these are not statistically significant.

From Figure 20, it can also be seen that, since the last survey, there was a very marginal increase in the overall rating of communications with SQA (from 6.55 to 6.57)⁹, with this, again, being driven by increases amongst those in management roles and learners (from 6.95 to 7.17 and 7.02 to 7.17 respectively)¹⁰.

‘Why did you choose a high rating number here?’¹¹

Figure 21: Reasons for Choosing Good Rating of SQA Communications (Unprompted)



Base: Providing Rating of 6 to 10

Figure 21 indicates that, when those providing a positive rating for SQA in terms of their overall communications (ie those providing a rating of 6 to 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, a range of responses were noted, including:

⁹ Although this is not statistically significant.

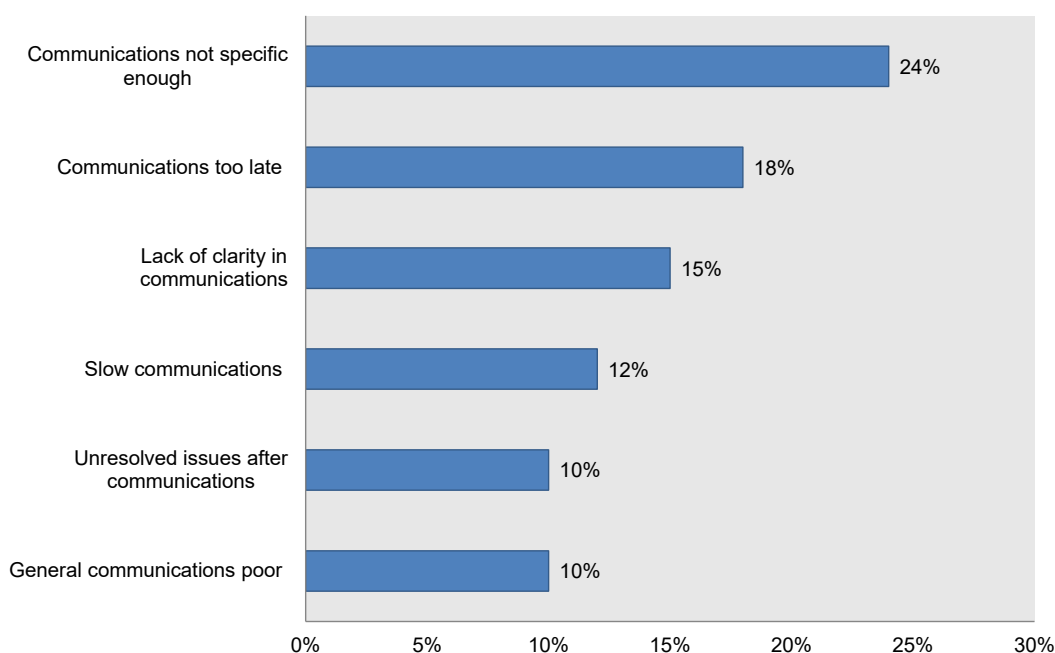
¹⁰ Although these are not statistically significant.

¹¹ The outcomes cited for the last survey were indicative in nature and, therefore, it's not appropriate to draw comparisons between these outcomes in November/December 2023 and November/December 2024. This also applies to reporting these findings on the basis of respondent type.

- SQA's communications being good overall (14%)
- Good service provided by SQA during communications (13%)
- SQA communications being informative (12%)
- Respondents receiving regular communication updates (10%)

*'Why did you choose a low rating number here?'*¹²

Figure 22: Reasons for Choosing Poor Rating of SQA Communications (Unprompted) - Indicative



Base: Providing Rating of 1 to 5

Although on a somewhat indicative basis, Figure 22 indicates that, when those providing a poor rating of SQA communications (ie those who provided a rating of 1 to 5) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why they had chosen this rating, responses primarily focused around:

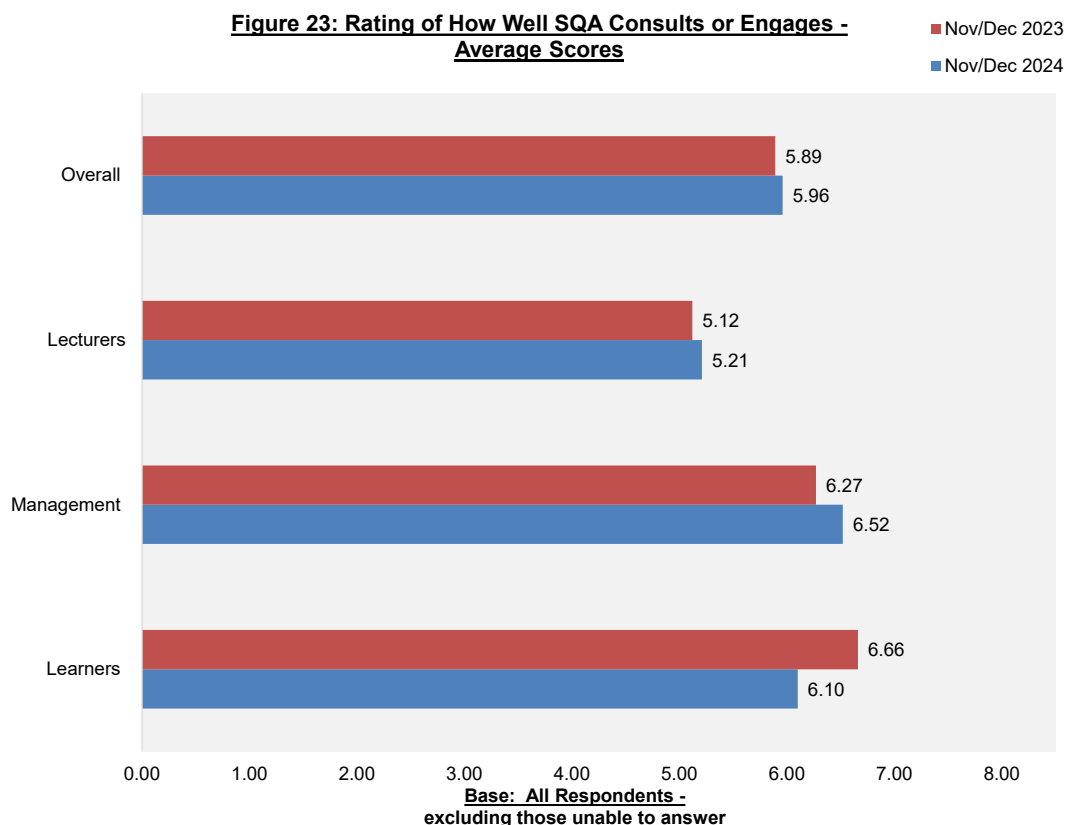
- SQA communications not being specific enough (24%)

¹² The outcomes cited for November/December 2024 were indicative in nature and, therefore, it is not appropriate to draw comparisons between these outcomes and those noted for November/December 2023. This also applies to reporting these findings on the basis of respondent type.

- Communications being too late (18%)
- Lack of clarity in communications (15%)

5.0 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’?’



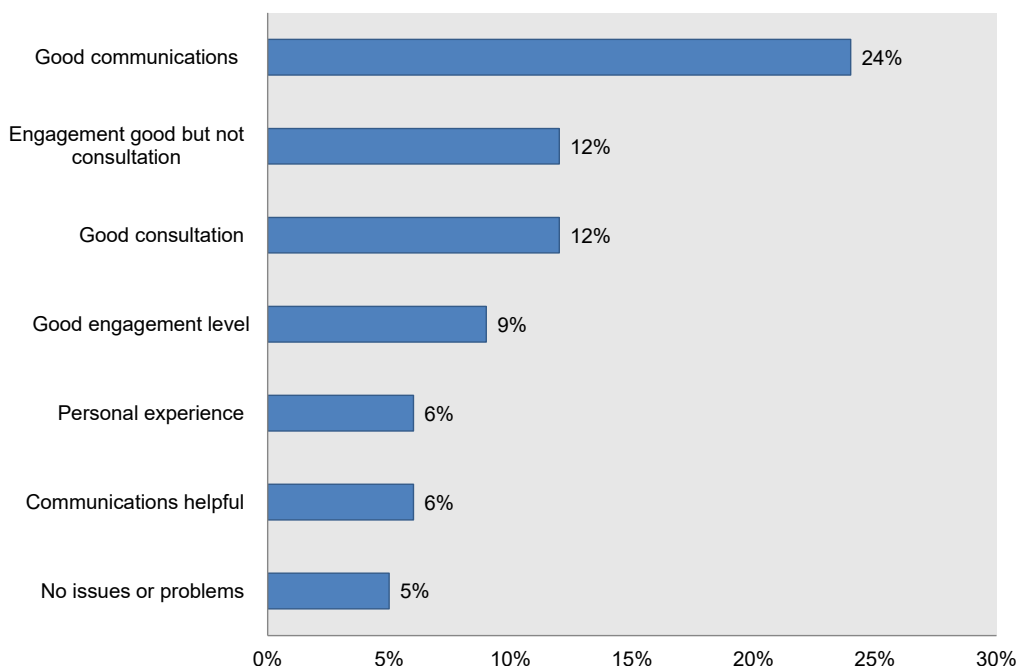
When respondents were asked to rate how well SQA ‘consults or engages with them or their colleagues’ (in the case of those in management roles and lecturers) and ‘consults with themselves or their peers’ (as in the case of learners), Figure 23 indicates that an average score of 5.96 out of a possible 10 was noted, with this score being highest amongst those in management roles (6.52 compared to 6.10 and 5.21 respectively amongst learners and lecturers).

It can also be seen from Figure 23 that, overall, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was an increase in the rating of how well SQA consults or engages (from 5.89 to 5.96), with this improvement being apparent amongst both those in management roles and lecturers (rising from 6.27 and 6.52 to

5.12 and 5.21 respectively). Indeed, during that time, there was a decrease in the average score noted by learners (falling from 6.66 to 6.10)¹³.

‘Why did you choose this rating number?’

Figure 24: Reasons for Providing Good Rating re Consultation and Engagement (Unprompted)



Base: Provided Rating of 6 to 10

From Figure 24, it can be seen that, when those providing a **good rating** number for SQA in terms of its consultation and engagement (ie those providing a score of between 6 and 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, the **primary reason** cited was that of there being ‘good communications during consultation and engagement’ (24%).

Thereafter, **secondary mention** was made of a number of other reasons, including:

- Engagement being good but not consultation (12%)

¹³ Although all of the changes noted in this paragraph are not statistically significant.

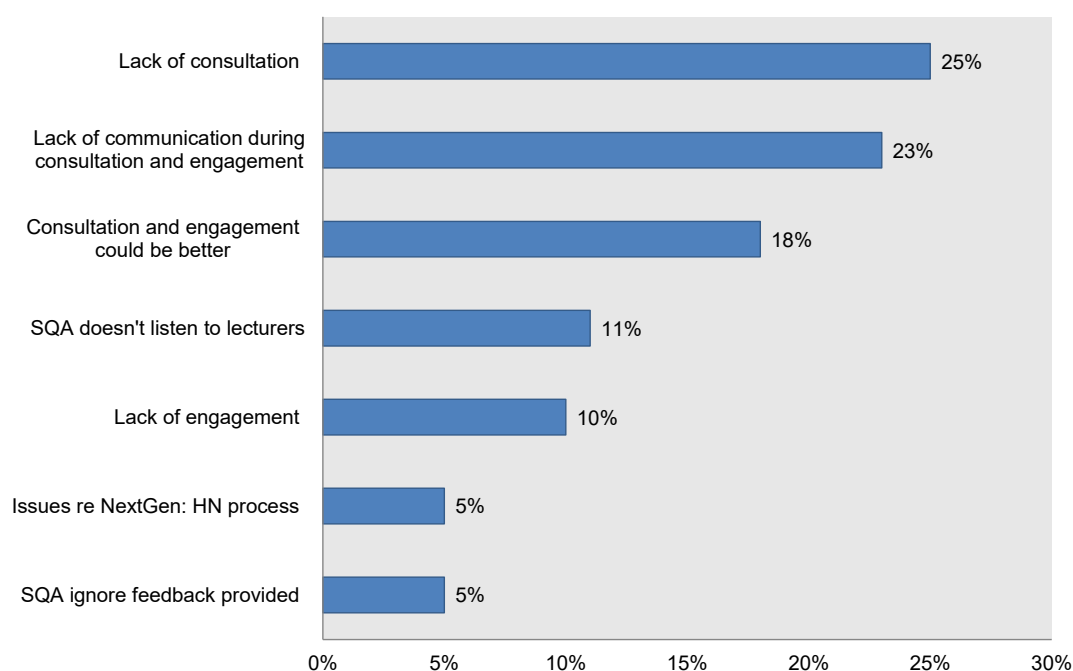
- Good consultation (12%)
- Good engagement level (9%)

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a meaningful breakdown to be provided on the basis of audience type. However, it is of interest to note that, since the last survey, there was increasing unprompted reference made here to ‘good communications during consultation and engagement’ (rising from 16% to 24%) but decreasing unprompted reference to a number of other factors here, including:

- Good consultation (falling from 35% to 12%)
- Good engagement level (falling from 33% to 9%)

‘Why did you choose this rating number?’

Figure 25: Reasons for Providing Poor Rating re Consultation and Engagement (Unprompted)



Base: Provided Rating of 1 to 5

The outcomes noted in Figure 25 indicate that, when those providing a poor rating of SQA’s consultation and engagement (ie provided a

rating of between 1 and 5) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, their **primary responses** were those of:

- Lack of Consultation (25%)
- Lack of communication during consultation and engagement (23%)

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted references** were made here to a number of factors, including:

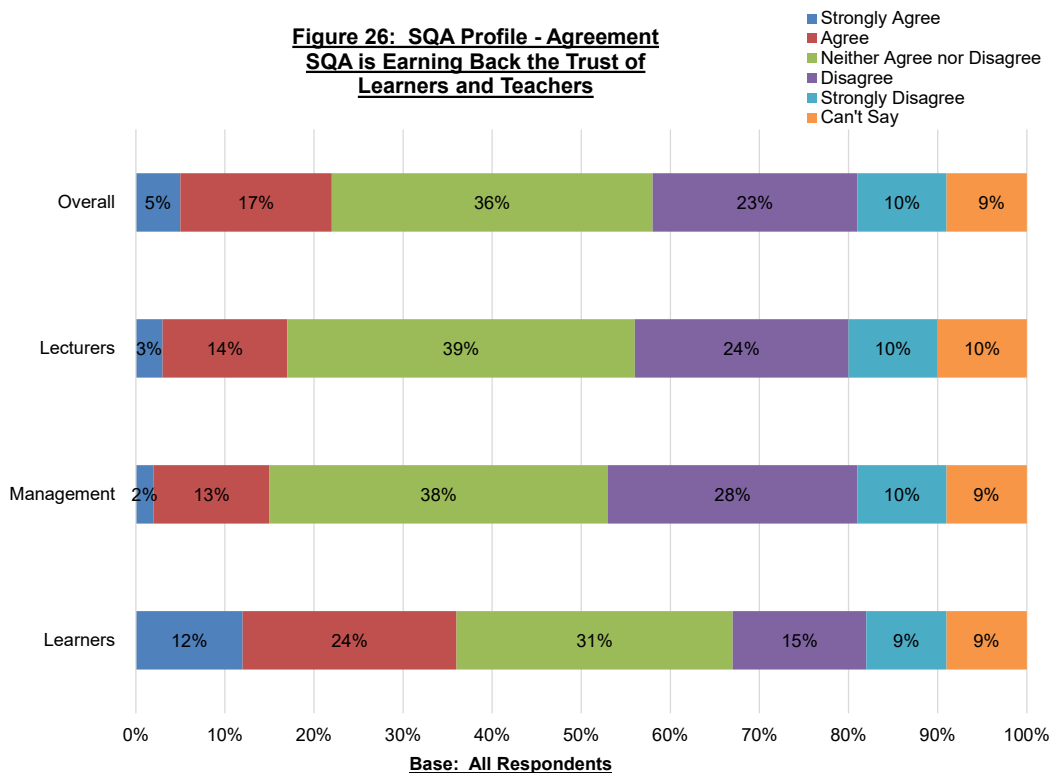
- A belief that consultation and engagement could be better (18%)
- SQA not listening to lecturers (11%)
- Lack of engagement (10%)

Again, it should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a meaningful breakdown of outcomes on the basis of audience type.

However, it should be noted that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a notable increase in unprompted reference here to 'lack of consultation' (rising from 18% to 25%) but notable decrease in unprompted references here to lack of engagement (falling from 37% to 10%).

6.0 A PROSPECTUS FOR CHANGE COMMITMENT PROFILE¹⁴

‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers?’



From Figure 26, it can be seen that, overall, over one in five respondents in November/December 2024 (22%) **agreed** that ‘SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers’, with this belief being greatest amongst learners (36% compared to 17% and 15% respectively amongst lecturers and those in management roles).

¹⁴ These questions were asked for the first time in November/December 2024.

‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service?’

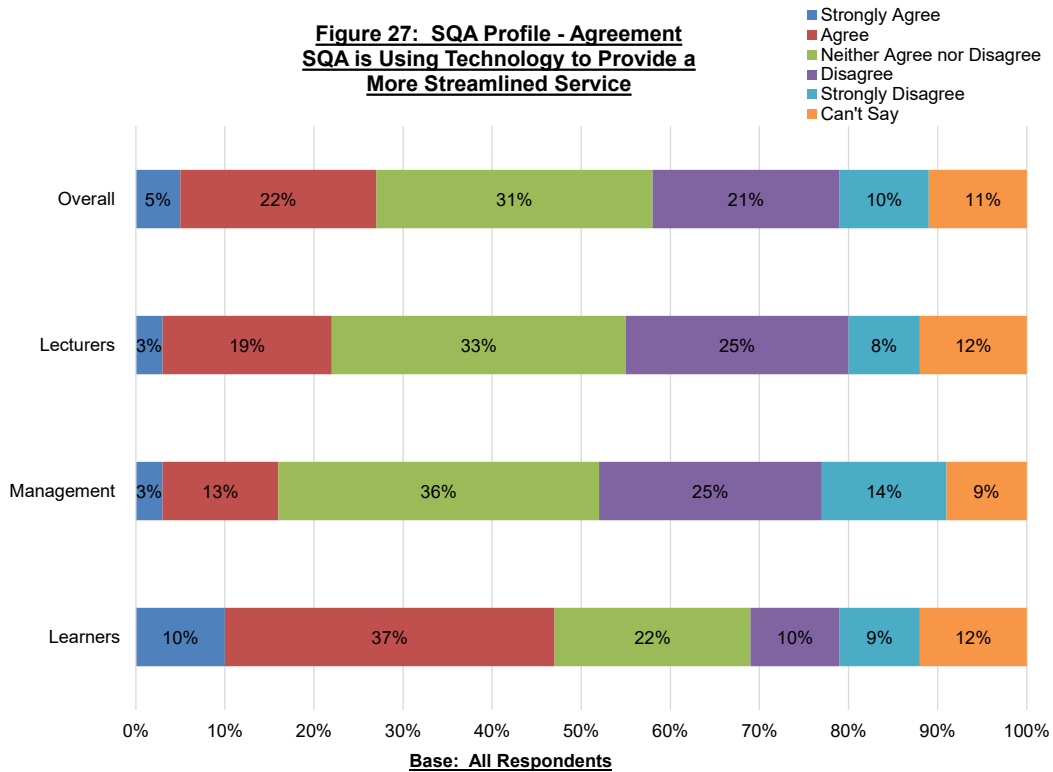


Figure 27 indicates that, overall, over a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 (27%) **agreed** that ‘SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service’, with this outcome being highest amongst learners (47% compared to 22% and 16% respectively for lecturers and those in management roles).

‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy?’

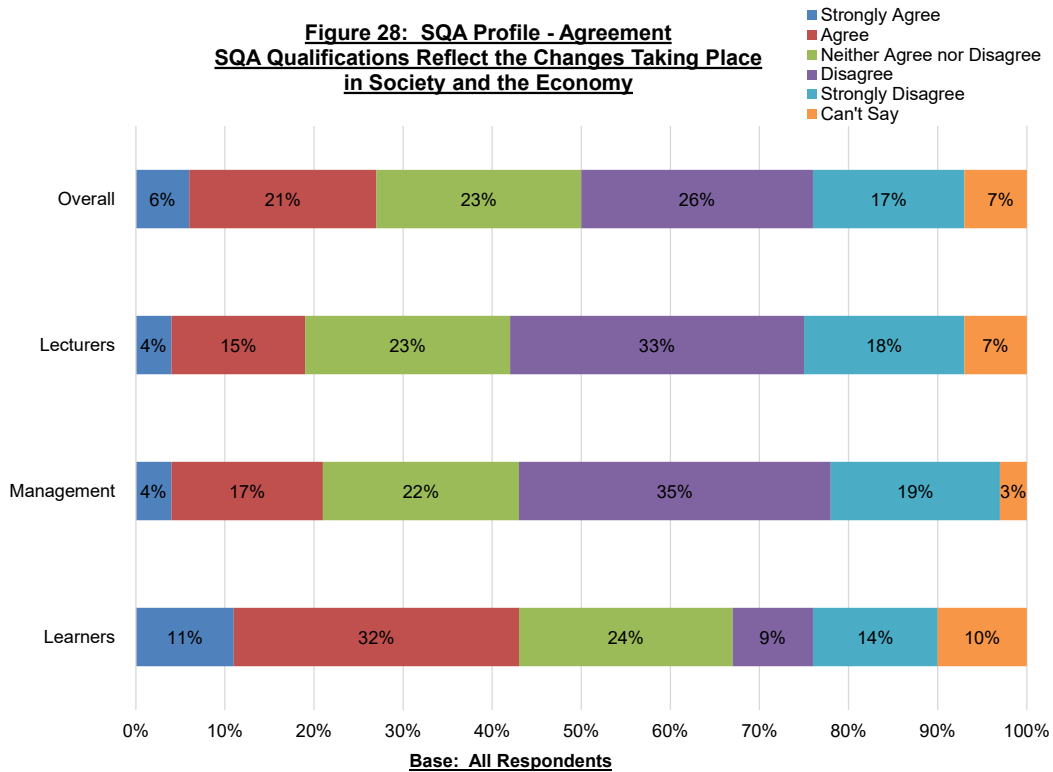


Figure 28 indicates that just over a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 (27%) **agreed** that ‘SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy’, with this outcome being highest amongst learners (43% compared to 21% and 19% respectively for those in management roles and lecturers).

7.0 KEY MESSAGES

7.1 Overall Message

The overall message to emerge from the latest phase of the KAR College Audiences research is that its outcomes are broadly similar across all three audiences and that there are few distinct patterns, even at an audience level.

7.2 All Three Audiences

There are a range of key messages that emerged from this phase of the KAR research undertaken amongst the College Audience which are pertinent to all three audiences. These are as follows:

- Learners were most likely to be satisfied with SQA's overall performance, but there were still positive scores for those in management roles and lecturers
- Decrease in levels of satisfaction amongst those in management roles and learners were counterbalanced by increased levels of satisfaction amongst lecturers
- Those in management roles were most likely to believe they know enough about SQA, but a majority of learners and lecturers also believe this to be the case
- Those in management roles were most likely to have contact from or have contacted SQA, with this being to a lesser extent amongst lecturers and to a far lesser extent amongst learners
- Those in management roles and learners noted the highest levels of satisfaction with contacts, however, there was also a positive score here for lecturers

- The decrease in rating of the timeliness of communications was primarily driven by lecturers, with increases in this regard noted by learners and those in management roles
- Learners and those in management roles provided the best ratings of the level of detail in communications from SQA, with lecturers also noting a marginally positive average score (ie in excess of 5 out of 10)
- Improvements in the rating of the timeliness of communications since the last survey were apparent amongst those in management roles and lecturers, with there being a decrease in the average score noted here by learners

7.3 Those in Management Roles Only

There are a number of key messages that relate to particular audiences or a combination of two of the three audiences, these are as follows:

- Those in management roles were most likely to provide a positive rating of SQA's consultation and engagement
- The decrease in rating of clarity of communications was entirely driven by lecturers
- Increasing extent to which learners believe SQA to have low credibility
- Those in management roles and learners were most likely to believe SQA has high credibility, with lecturers being most likely to believe SQA to have low credibility

- Learners and those in management roles provided the highest ratings of the clarity of communications
- Learners and those in management roles provided best rating of timeliness of communications
- Learners and those in management roles were most likely to provide the best overall ratings of communications from SQA
- The marginal increase in the rating of overall communications was driven by those in management roles and learners
- For lecturers and learners, their average scores in terms of satisfaction with contacts rose since the last survey
- The decrease in the rating of the appropriateness of the level of detail in communications was primarily driven by lecturers and, indeed, there was a rise in this regard amongst learners