

REPORT (FINAL DRAFT)

KEY AUDIENCE RESEARCH – SCHOOL AUDIENCES

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PREPARED FOR: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Report (Final Draft)

Key Audience Research – School Audiences

Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SQA Profile

- Two out of five respondents in November/December 2024 believed SQA to have high credibility. However, this was to a lesser extent than in November/December 2023
- In November/December 2024, approaching half of respondents believed SQA to have low credibility, with this being to a greater extent than in November/December 2023
- The perceived high credibility of SQA in November/December 2024 is primarily due to a belief that ‘it does a good job’ and, thereafter, ‘it has good and well-recognised qualifications’, ‘it organises and marks exams’ and ‘respondents having no complaints or issues with SQA’
- The primary reason for beliefs that SQA has low credibility is that of ‘perceived inaccurate marking of exams’ and, thereafter, ‘problems relating to the marking of Higher History in this academic year’, ‘lack of consistency overall’ and ‘exams being harder or different than before’
- Respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 5.58 out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA’s performance overall. This represented a notable decrease since the last survey in November/December 2023
- Overall, two thirds of respondents in November/December 2024 stated their belief that they knew enough about SQA, with there being very little change in this regard since the last survey
- Those in November/December 2024 who noted that they would like to know more about SQA primarily stated that this related to more information on ‘marking’ and ‘exams’ and, thereafter, ‘more information

about what SQA does', 'more information about SQA's qualifications' and 'how SQA makes decisions'

SQA Qualifications Profile

- Greatest beliefs amongst respondents in November/December 2024 that they knew enough about SQA qualifications of which they were aware relate to 'Highers' and 'National 5s', with this least likely to be the case in relation to a number of qualifications of which they were aware, including 'National 1s', 'National 2s', 'SVQs', 'PDAs' and 'HNCs/HNDs'
- Between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there were no increases in the extent to which those aware of any of the qualifications under consideration believed they knew enough about them. In contrast, during that time, there were decreases apparent here in relation to 'National 1s', 'National 2s', 'PDAs', 'SVQs' and 'HNCs/HNDs'
- 'National 5s', 'Highers', 'Advanced Highers', 'SVQs' and 'HNCs/HNDs' were qualifications most likely to be believed that they could be trusted amongst those aware of them, whilst this was least likely to be the case in relation to 'National 3s' and 'National 4s'
- 'National 5s', 'Highers', 'Advanced Highers', 'SVQs' and 'HNCs/HNDs' were the qualifications most likely to be believed to be appropriately challenging amongst those aware of these qualifications, with this least likely to be the case in relation to 'National 3s' and 'National 4s'
- 'National 5s', 'Highers', 'Advanced Highers', 'SVQs' and 'HNCs/HNDs' were the qualifications that respondents were aware of which were most likely to be believed to be supportive of progression to further study, with this least likely to be the case in relation to 'National 3s' and 'National 4s'
- In November/December 2024, approaching three out of five respondents stated that their overall views on the credibility of **all** of the qualifications

they had heard of taken together had not changed over the last year.

Thereafter, a third of respondents stated that their views had changed and become less positive and one in twelve, that their views had changed and become more positive

- The primary reason for respondents stating that their views had become less positive focused around them 'having issues relating to marking' and, thereafter, 'issues pertaining to the marking of Higher History in this academic year', 'a lowering of standards in qualifications', 'issues relating to assignments', 'too many changes in relation to qualifications' and 'SQA's exams process not being reliable'

SQA Contact and Communications Profile

- Three out of five respondents in November/December 2024 stated that they had had contact with SQA, with this being only marginally different from the outcome in this regard in November/December 2023
- In November/December 2024, respondents provided an average score of 6.28 out of a possible 10. This compares to an average score of 7.22 for November/December 2023
- For those who provided a positive rating of SQA in terms of their contacts with it, this was primarily due to SQA 'being helpful during contacts' and 'being quick to respond to queries' and, thereafter, 'overall, SQA's contacts being good', 'SQA being easy to contact' and 'SQA providing relevant information during contacts'
- On a largely indicative basis, for those providing a negative rating in terms of their contacts with SQA, this was primarily due to 'answers provided during contacts being unclear', 'there being room for improvement in terms of SQA's contacts' and 'SQA not being helpful during contacts'

- In November/December 2024, respondents provided average ratings out of a possible 10 of 5.92 in terms of 'how appropriate the level of detail was' in communications, 5.84 in terms of 'clarity of communications' and 5.68 in terms of 'timeliness of communications'
- Between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a decline in the overall average scores for each of the three indicators noted above
- An average score of 5.72 out of a possible 10 was provided by respondents in November/December 2024 in terms of their overall rating of communications with SQA, with this representing a notable decrease since the last survey (from 6.44)
- The primary reason for respondents providing a positive response in terms of their overall rating of SQA's communications was that 'communications from SQA are clear and easy to understand' and, thereafter, 'SQA's communications being informative' and 'SQA providing a good service during communications'
- The primary reason for respondents providing a negative response here related to 'communications being late' and, thereafter, 'lack of clarity in communications' and 'communications, in general, being poor'

SQA Consultation and Engagement Profile

- When respondents in November/December 2024 were asked to comment as to SQA consultation and engagement with them, an average score of 4.51 out of a possible 10 was noted, with this representing a notable decrease since the last survey
- For those providing a positive response in terms of their consultation and engagement with SQA, this was primarily due to 'good engagement during consultation and engagement' and 'consultation and engagement being

informative’ and, thereafter, ‘engagement being good but not consultation during consultation and engagement with SQA’

- For those providing a negative rating of SQA in terms of their consultation and engagement, this was primarily due to ‘a lack of consultation specifically’ and, thereafter, ‘lack of engagement specifically’, ‘SQA ignoring feedback provided’, ‘beliefs that consultation and engagement could be better’ and ‘lack of communications during consultation and engagement’

A Prospectus for Change Commitment Profile

- Approaching a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 agreed that ‘SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers’
- Around two out of five respondents in November/December 2024 disagreed that ‘SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers’
- Approaching two out of five respondents in November/December 2024 agreed that ‘SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service’
- In November/December 2024, a quarter of respondents disagreed that ‘SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service’
- Overall, a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 agreed that ‘SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy’
- Overall, over a third of respondents in November/December 2024 disagreed that ‘SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy’

Overview of Changes Since the Last Survey

- It should be noted that the decline in key indicators was most notable amongst those in Management roles and, to a lesser extent, amongst Teachers
- It should also be noted that the outcomes for Learners and Parents/Carers are broadly in line with those found in the last survey

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report provides findings from the sixth phase of a programme of tracking research being undertaken on behalf of SQA – Key Audience Research.

The sixth phase targeted four school audiences, namely:

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

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

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

- 260 parents and carers of learners in S4 to S6
- 871 school learners in S4 to S6
- 234 teachers in secondary schools
- 193 members of those in management roles teams within secondary schools

The data was collected during November and December 2024.

For the purposes of analysis, each of the audiences were weighted equally (to 250 each).

Sections 2.0 to 6.0 inclusive provide the following profiles for:

- SQA

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

Within each of these sections, where possible and appropriate:

- Variances between each of the four 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.

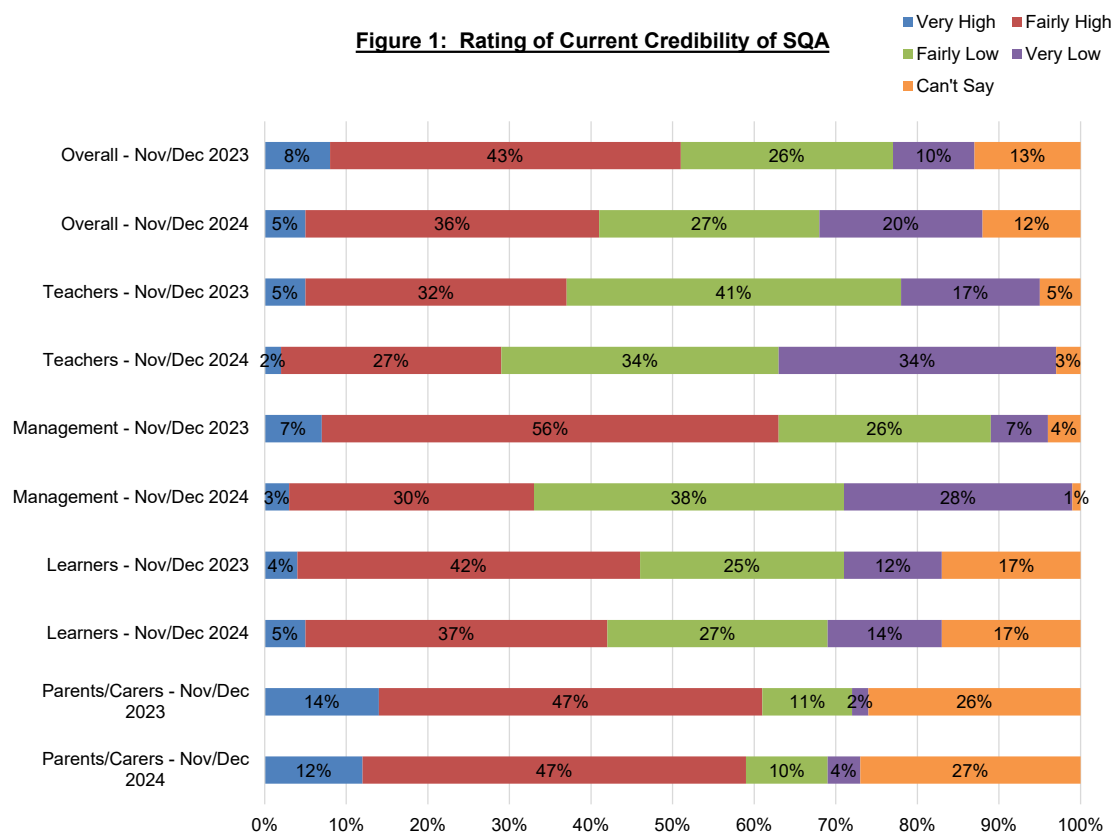
It should be noted that the outcomes for a number of questions have not been included in this report due to the fact that there was an insufficient number of respondents to allow meaningful statistical information to be reported.

Finally, it should be noted that the number of online responses from learners was significantly in excess of the target of 750. Accordingly, analysis of the open-ended questions is based on a random sample of 750 responses received (as agreed with SQA).

2.0 SQA PROFILE

2.1 SQA'S Credibility

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



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 1, it can be seen that two out of five respondents in November/December 2024 (41%) believed SQA to have high credibility, with this outcome being highest amongst parents/carers and, thereafter, learners and lowest amongst those in management roles and teachers:

- Parents/carers (59%)
- Learners (42%)
- Those in management roles (33%)
- Teachers (29%)

It can also be seen from Figure 1 that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a notable decrease in the extent to which, overall, respondents believed SQA to have **high** credibility (falling from 51% to 41%), with this decrease being primarily driven by those in management roles (falling from 63% to 33%) and, to a lesser extent, teachers (falling from 37% to 29%).

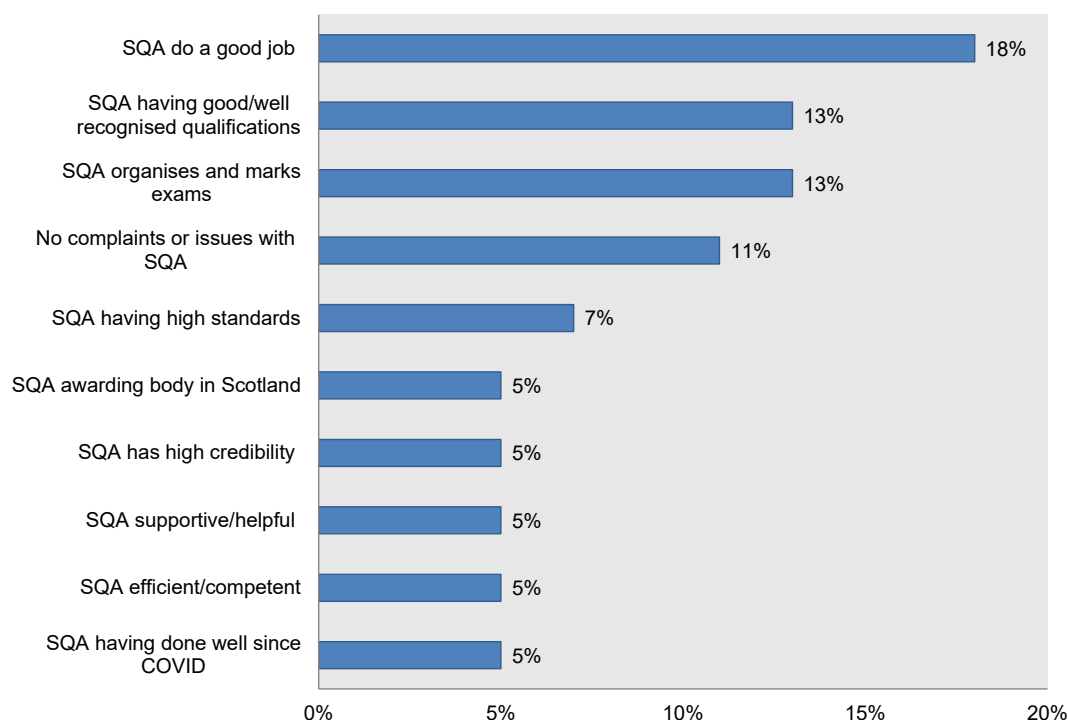
From Figure 1, it can be seen that, overall, approaching half of respondents in November/December 2024 (47%) believed SQA to have **low** credibility, with this outcome being highest amongst teachers and those in management roles, and lowest amongst parents and carers:

- Teachers (68%)
- Those in management roles (66%)
- Learners (41%)
- Parents/carers (14%)

Figure 1 also indicates that, since the last survey, there was a notable increase in the extent to which respondents, overall, rated SQA as having **low** credibility (rising from 36% to 47%), with this increase being primarily driven by those in management roles (rising from 33% to 66%) and, to a lesser extent, teachers (rising from 58% to 68%).

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

Figure 2: Reasons for Providing High Rating of SQA’s Credibility (Unprompted)



Base: Fairly High or Very High in Figure 1

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 a belief that ‘SQA does a good job’ (18%)¹.

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

- SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications (13%)
- SQA organising and marking exams (13%)
- Respondents having no complaints or issues with SQA (11%)

¹ It should be noted that the comparisons drawn here are largely indicative in nature.

Further examination of the data in November/December 2024 indicated that the reasons noted above were **most commonly** cited by the following audiences²:

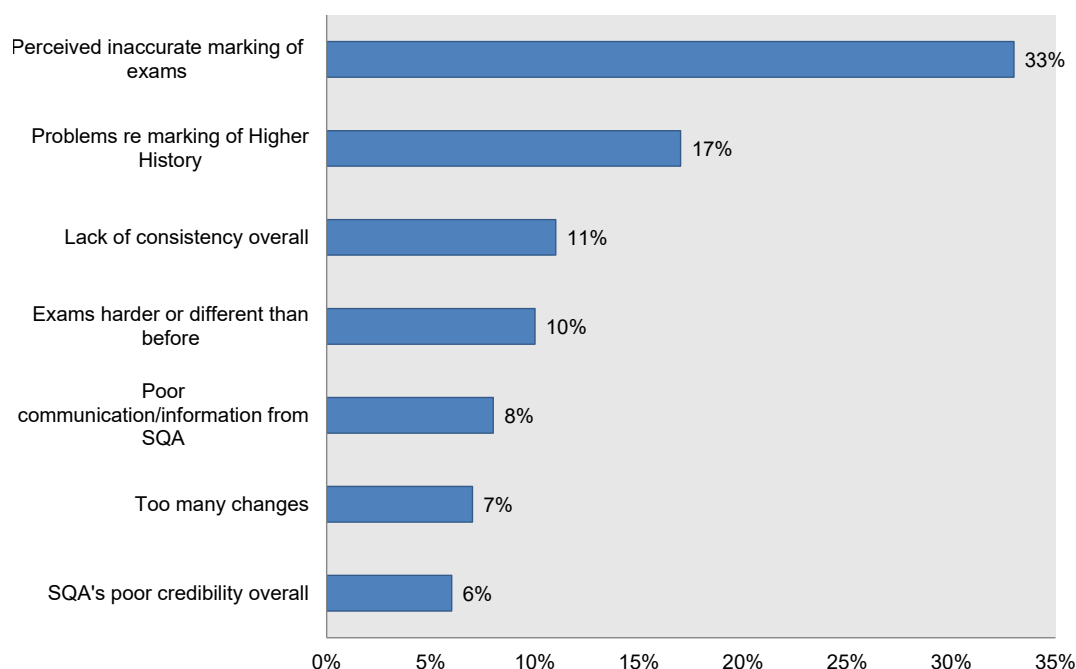
- **SQA doing a good job:** school learners and parents/carers (30% and 26% respectively)
- **SQA having good and well-recognised qualifications:** teachers and those in management roles (25% and 21% respectively)
- **SQA organising and marking exams:** those in management roles (26%)
- **Respondents having no complaints or issues with SQA:** parents/carers (25%)

It should also be noted that those in management roles and teachers were most likely to make reference here to 'SQA having high standards' (both 11% compared to 4% and 2% respectively for parents/carers and learners).

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, increasing unprompted reference was made here to:

- SQA organising and marking exams (rising from 13% to 33%)
- Respondents having no complaints or issues with SQA (rising from 4% to 11%)

² The comparisons drawn here for learners are largely indicative in nature

*‘Why did you provide a low rating of SQA’s credibility?’***Figure 3: Reasons for Providing Low Rating of SQA’s Credibility (Unprompted)****Base: Fairly Low or Very Low in Figure 1**

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, the **primary** reason cited was that of ‘perceived inaccurate marking of exams’ (33%), with this being most commonly cited by teachers, those in management roles and, thereafter, learners:

- Teachers (46%)
- Those in management roles (33%)
- Learners (24%)
- Parents/carers (0%)³

Thereafter, a range of **other unprompted responses** were noted here, including:

³ It should be noted that the comparisons drawn here for learners and parents/carers are largely indicative in nature

- Problems relating to the marking of Higher History in this academic year (17%)
- Lack of consistency overall (11%)
- Exams being harder or different than before (10%)

Further examination of the data for November/December 2024 indicated that the reasons noted above were **most commonly** cited by the following audiences (where notable variances were apparent)⁴:

- **Problems relating to marking of Higher History in this academic year:** teachers and those in management roles (27% and 18% respectively)
- **Lack of consistency overall:** teachers and those in management roles (16% and 11% respectively)
- **Exams being harder or different than before:** parents/carers (20%)

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, increasing unprompted mention was made here of:

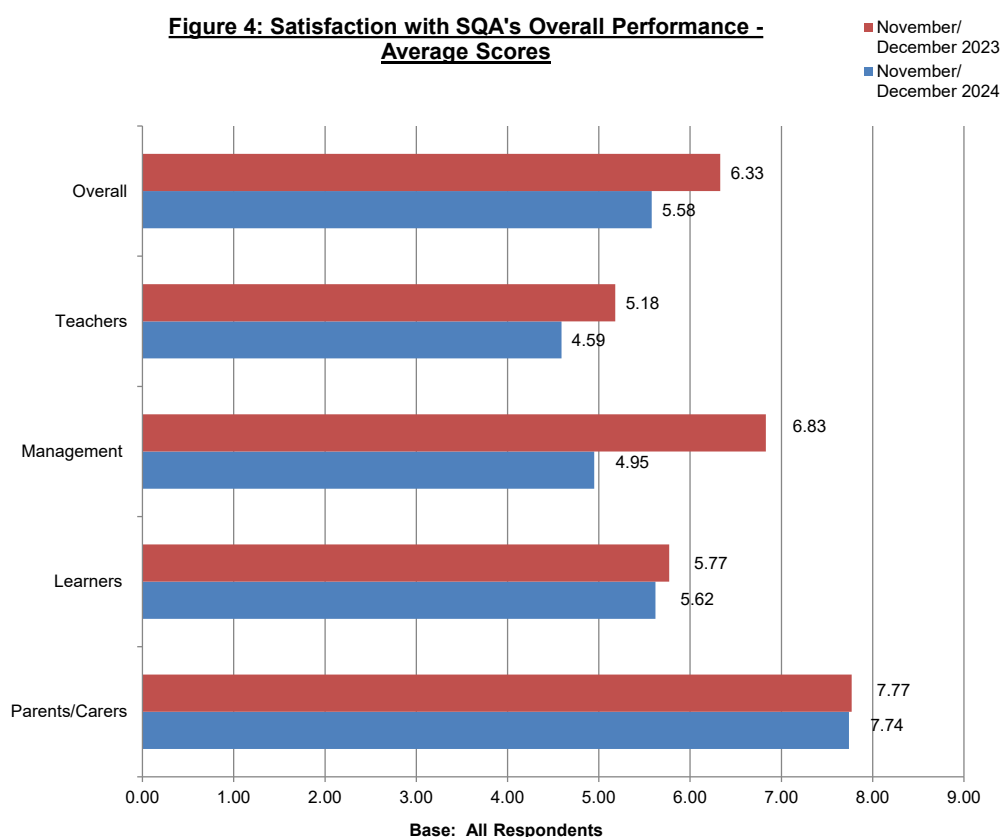
- Perceived inaccurate marking of exams (rising from 13% to 33%)
- Problems relating to the marking of Higher History in this academic year (rising from 0% to 17%)
- Exams being harder or different than before (rising from 1% to 10%)

In contrast, since the last survey, decreasing unprompted reference was made here to 'SQA having poor credibility overall' (falling from 11% to 6%).

⁴ It should be noted that the comparisons drawn here for parents/carers are largely indicative in nature

2.2 Satisfaction with SQA's Overall Performance

'How satisfied would you say you are with the performance of SQA overall, on a scale from 1 to 10, where '1' means 'completely dissatisfied' and '10' means 'completely satisfied'?'



Respondents in November/December 2024 provided an average score of 5.58 out of a possible 10 in terms of their satisfaction with SQA's performance overall, with the average score here being highest amongst parents/carers and lowest amongst teachers:

- Parents/carers (7.74 out of a possible 10)
- Learners (5.62)
- Those in management roles (4.95)
- Teachers (4.59)

Since the last survey, there was a notable decrease in overall satisfaction score (from 6.33 to 5.58), with this decrease being **primarily** driven by those in management roles and teachers:

- Those in management roles (falling from 6.83 to 4.95)
- Teachers (falling from 5.18 to 4.59)

2.3 SQA Knowledge and Information Profile

‘Do you believe you know enough about SQA?’

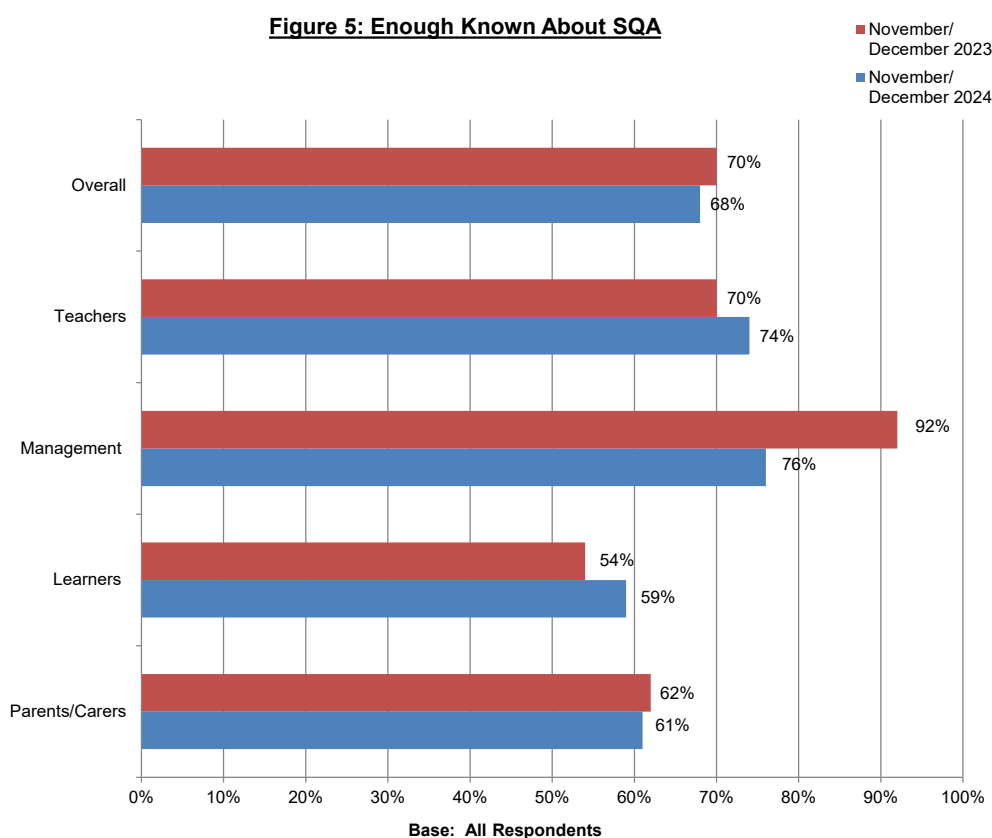


Figure 5 indicates that, overall, two thirds of respondents in November/December 2024 (68%) stated their belief that they knew enough about SQA, with this outcome being highest amongst those in management roles and teachers, and lowest amongst learners:

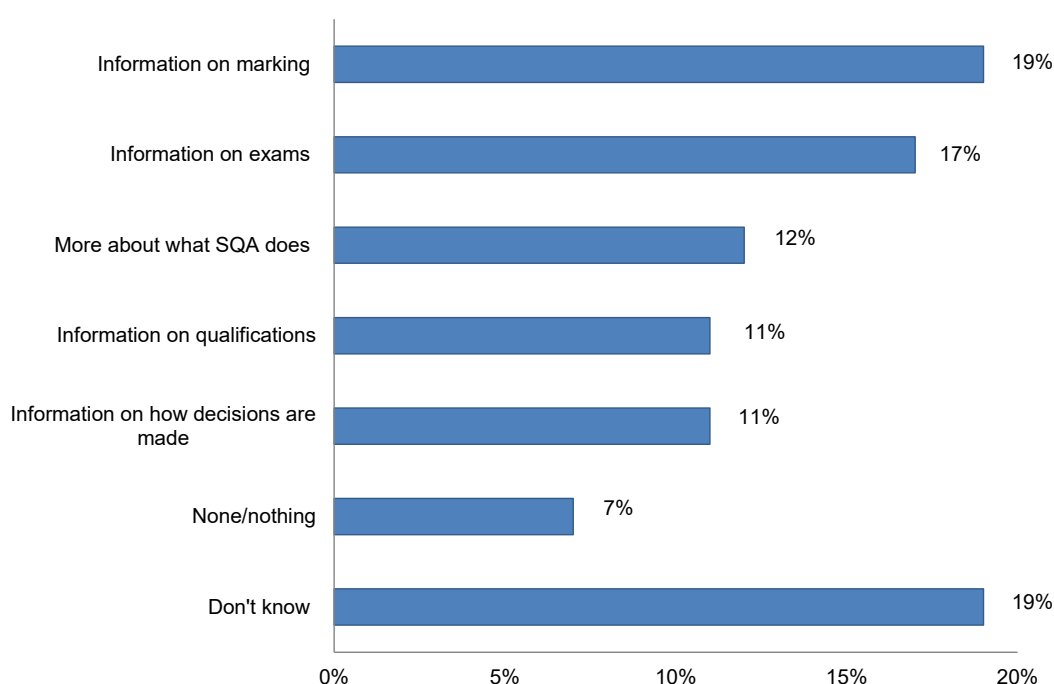
- Those in management roles (76%)
- Teachers (74%)
- Parents/carers (61%)
- Learners (59%)

From Figure 5, it can be seen that between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was very little change in the

extent to which respondents believed they knew enough about SQA (falling by only 2%), with this fall being almost exclusively driven by those in management roles (falling from 92% to 76%). Indeed, amongst learners, there was an increasing extent to which they believed they knew enough about SQA since the last survey (rising from 54% to 59%).

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

Figure 6: Information Desires re SQA (Unprompted)



Base: Respondents not Knowing Enough About SQA

Figure 6 indicates that, when those who did not believe that they knew enough about SQA in November/December 2024 were asked – on an unprompted basis – what they would like to know more about SQA, their **primary responses** were those of:

- More information on marking (19%)
- More information on exams (17%)

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

- More about what SQA does (12%)
- Information on qualifications (11%)
- Information on how decisions are made by SQA (11%)

It should also be noted that almost one in five respondents here in November/December 2024 (19%) stated that they ‘didn’t know’ what they would like to know more about SQA.

Further examination of the data indicated that the **primary and secondary** responses noted above were **most commonly** cited by the following audiences⁵:

- **Information on marking:** those in management roles and, thereafter, teachers and learners (41%, 32% and 28% respectively)
- **Information on exams:** those in management roles and, thereafter, learners (35% and 24% respectively)
- **More about what SQA does:** parents/carers (24%)
- **Information on qualifications:** teachers and those in management roles (18% and 14% respectively)
- **Information on how decisions are made:** those in management roles and teachers (24% and 20% respectively)

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, decreasing unprompted mention was made here of desires to know more about ‘what SQA does’ (falling from 18% to 12%), together with an increase in the provision of ‘don’t know’ responses here (rising from 12% to 19%).

⁵ The variances on the basis of audience type here are largely indicative in nature

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	Teachers Nov / Dec 2023	Teachers Nov / Dec 2024	Management Nov / Dec 2023	Management Nov / Dec 2024	Learners Nov / Dec 2023	Learners Nov / Dec 2024	Parents / Carers Nov / Dec 2023	Parents / Carers Nov / Dec 2024
Highers	89%	87%	86%	88%	94%	92%	86%	90%	87%	76%
Advanced Highers	72%	68%	67%	66%	86%	76%	60%	64%	72%	64%
National 1s	48%	35%	24%	17%	43%	17%	55%	59%	63%	52%
National 2s	47%	36%	26%	20%	44%	20%	54%	58%	59%	53%
National 3s	65%	63%	65%	63%	71%	71%	58%	66%	63%	53%
National 4s	81%	82%	86%	88%	89%	93%	81%	89%	70%	59%
National 5s	89%	87%	90%	95%	95%	97%	97%	97%	76%	60%
HNCs/HNDs	49%	38%	27%	20%	35%	16%	33%	46%	80%	69%
PDAs	44%	34%	38%	26%	40%	25%	24%	34%	59%	50%
SVQs	46%	37%	24%	25%	35%	20%	16%	23%	77%	67%

Table 1 indicates that **greatest beliefs** amongst respondents in November/December 2024 that they know enough about qualifications of which they were aware relate to:

- Highers (87%)
- National 5s (87%)

In contrast, respondents in November/December 2024 were **least likely** to state that they know enough about a number of qualifications of which they were aware, including:

- PDAs (34%)
- National 1s (35%)
- National 2s (36%)
- SVQs (37%)
- HNCs/HNDs (38%)

Further examination of the data indicated a number of variances here in terms of beliefs that enough is known about qualifications of which respondents were aware in November/December 2024, including **greatest beliefs** that enough is known about the following qualifications by the audiences noted below:

- **Highers**: those in management roles, learners and teachers (92%, 90% and 88% respectively)
- **Advanced Highers**: those in management roles (76%)
- **National 1s**: learners and parents/carers (59% and 52% respectively)
- **National 2s**: learners and parents/carers (58% and 53% respectively)
- **National 3s**: those in management roles, learners and teachers (71%, 66% and 63% respectively)

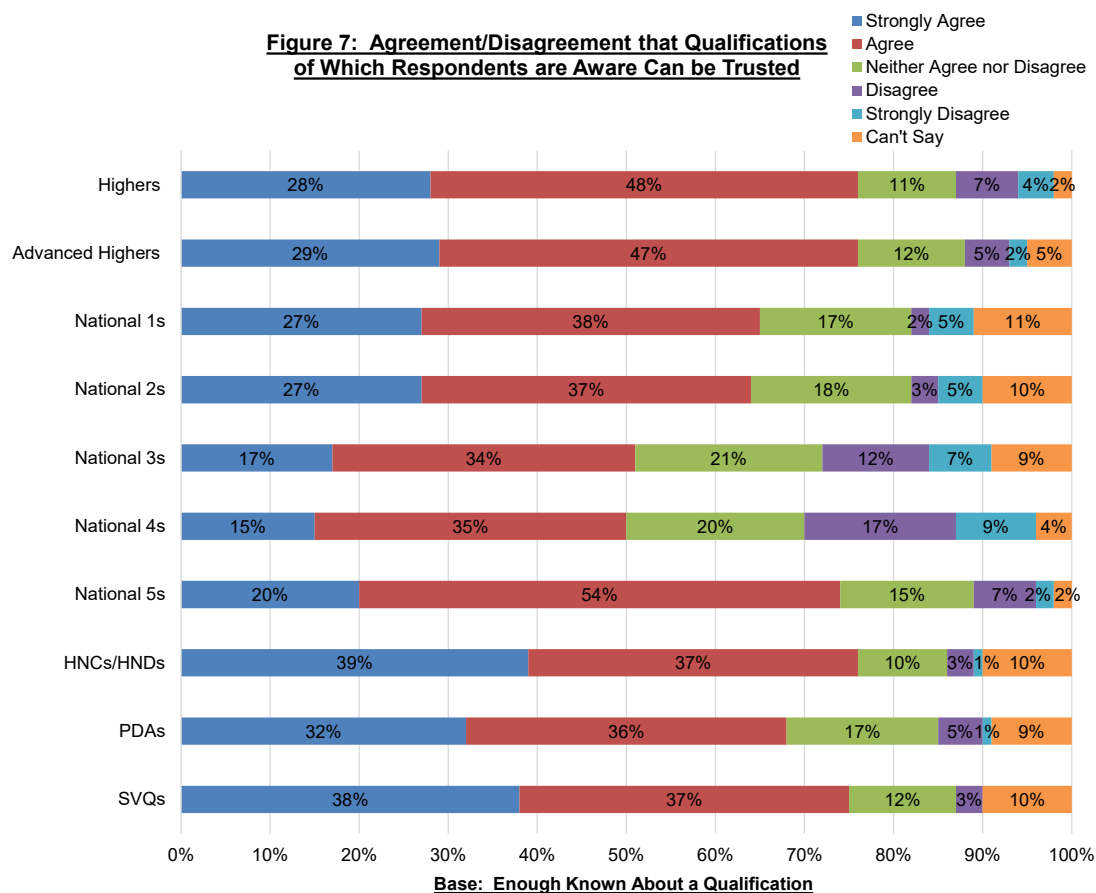
- **National 4s:** those in management roles, learners and teachers (93%, 89% and 88% respectively)
- **National 5s:** those in management roles, learners and teachers (97%, 97% and 95% respectively)
- **HNCs/HNDs:** parents/carers and learners (69% and 46% respectively)
- **PDAs:** parents/carers (50%)
- **SVQs:** parents/carers (67%)

Further examination of the data indicated that, overall, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there were **no increases** in the extent to which those aware of any of the qualifications believed they knew enough about them.

In contrast, during that time, there were **decreases** apparent here in relation to:

- National 1s (falling from 48% to 35%)
- National 2s (falling from 47% to 36%)
- HNCs/HNDs (falling from 49% to 38%)
- PDAs (falling from 44% to 34%)
- SVQs (falling from 46% to 37%)

*'How strongly would you agree or disagree that each of the qualifications you think you know enough about can be trusted?'*⁶



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:

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

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

⁶ This question was asked for the first time in November/December 2024.

- National 3s (51%)
- National 4s (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 but most notable in relation to:

- National 4s (26%)
- National 3s (19%)

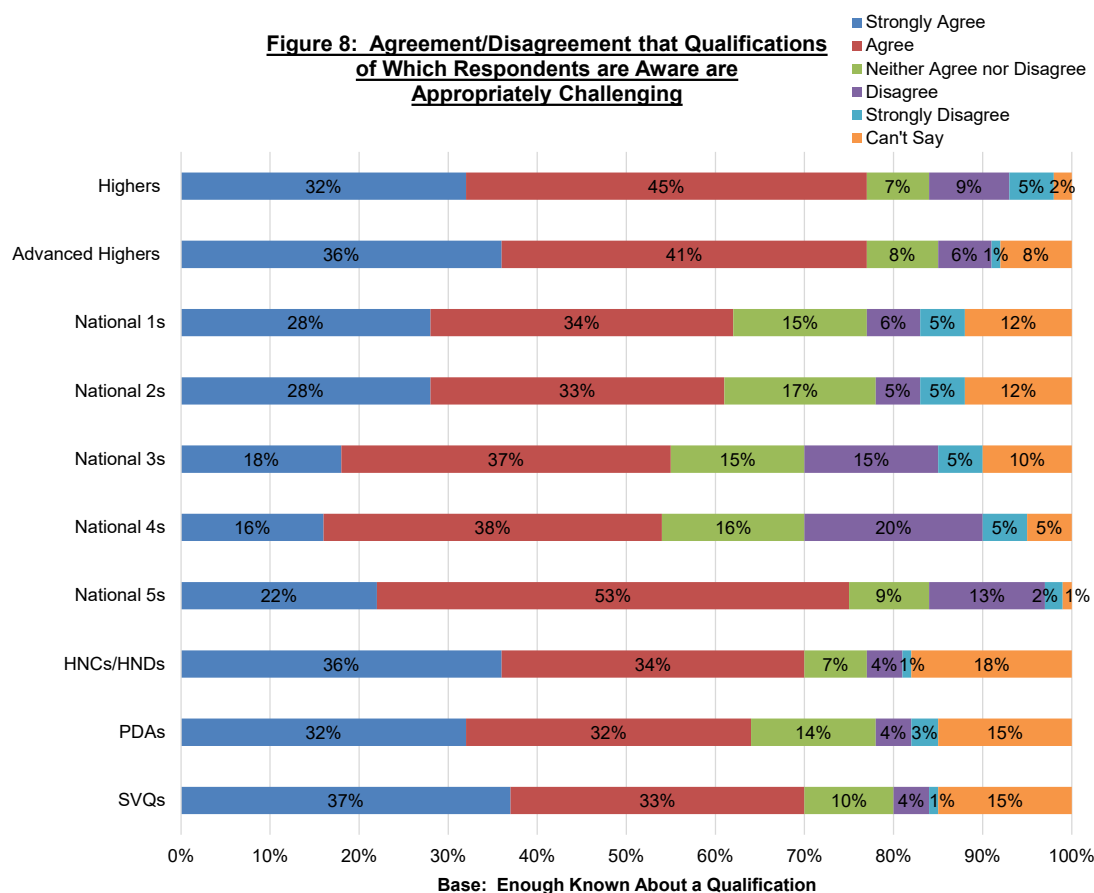
Table 2: Agreement that Qualifications of Which Respondents are Aware Can be Trusted Broken Down by Audience Type

	Teachers	Management	Learners	Parents/ Carers
Highers	67%	68%	73%	97%
Advanced Highers	68%	70%	68%	97%
National 1s	45%	31%	43%	93%
National 2s	26%	41%	43%	94%
National 3s	31%	36%	39%	96%
National 4s	32%	36%	49%	94%
National 5s	66%	70%	71%	96%
HNCs/HNDs	50%	55%	57%	94%
PDAs	41%	42%	58%	94%
SVQs	35%	50%	54%	95%

Table 2 highlights a number of variances between audiences which are worthy of note, including:

- Parents/Carers were most likely to agree that each of the qualifications under consideration could be trusted
- Teachers were least likely to agree that National 2s, National 3s, HNCs/HNDs and SVQs can be trusted
- Those in Management roles were least likely to agree that National 1s can be trusted
- Learners were most likely to agree that National 4s and PDAs 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 (77%)
- Advanced Highers (77%)
- National 5s (75%)
- HNCs/HNDs (70%)
- SVQs (70%)

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

- National 3s (55%)
- National 4s (54%)

It can be seen from Figure 8 that levels of disagreement that qualifications that respondents believed they knew enough about were appropriately challenging tended to be far more limited but most notable in relation to:

- National 4s (25%)
- National 3s (20%)

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

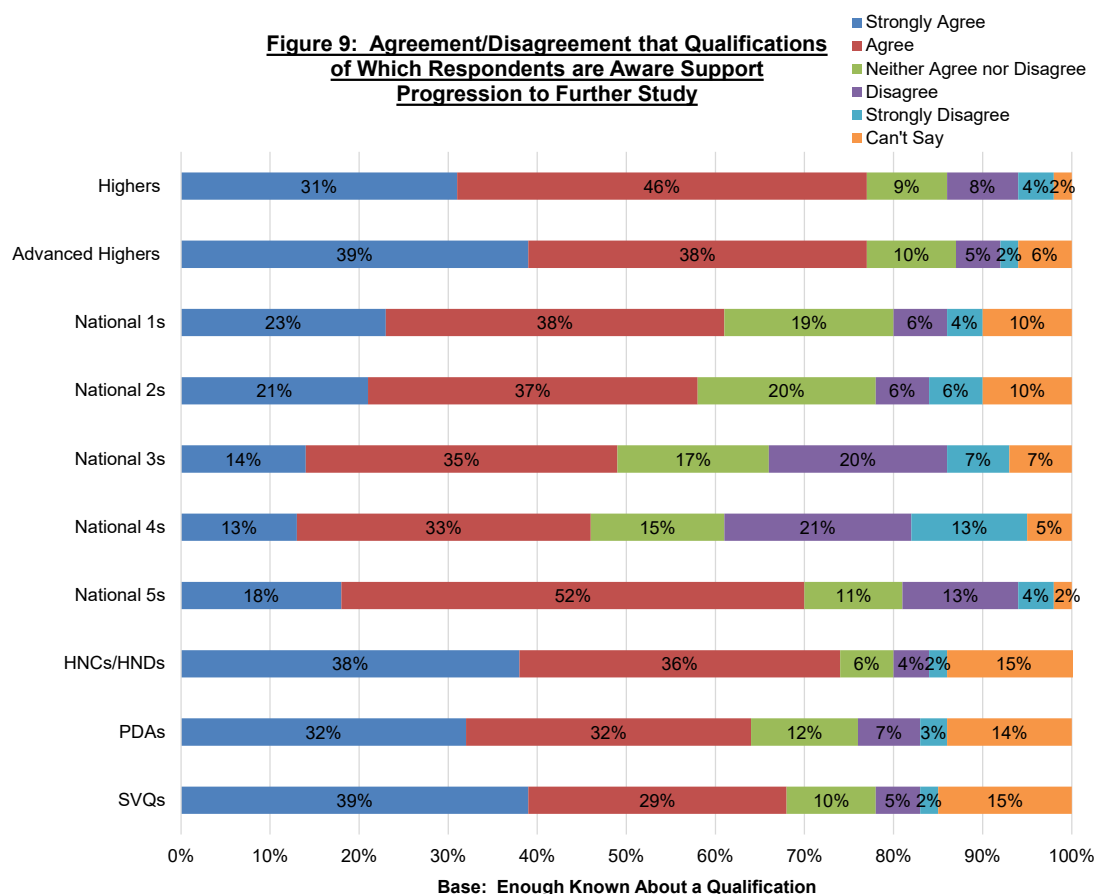
	Teachers	Management	Learners	Parents/ Carers
Highers	73%	74%	68%	95%
Advanced Highers	74%	80%	57%	95%
National 1s	48%	35%	37%	85%
National 2s	36%	44%	38%	87%
National 3s	44%	45%	38%	91%
National 4s	43%	47%	43%	92%
National 5s	68%	69%	72%	94%
HNCs/HNDs	35%	45%	38%	95%
PDAs	39%	35%	46%	94%
SVQs	21%	44%	55%	94%

From Table 3, it can be seen that there are a number of variances between audiences which are worthy of note, including:

- Parents/Carers were most likely to agree that each of the qualifications under consideration are appropriately challenging
- Teachers were most likely to believe that National 1s are appropriately challenging and were least likely to believe that this is the case in relation to SVQs
- Those in Management roles were most likely to believe that National 2s and HNCs/HNDs are appropriately challenging

- Learners were most likely to agree that PDAs are appropriately challenging, but were most likely to believe this to be the case in relation to Highers, Advanced Highers and National 3s

‘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:

- Highers (77%)
- Advanced Highers (77%)
- HNCs/HNDs (74%)
- National 5s (70%)
- SVQs (68%)

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

- National 4s (46%)
- National 3s (49%)

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 tended to be far more limited but were most notable in relation to:

- National 4s (34%)
- National 3s (27%)

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

	Teachers	Management	Learners	Parents/ Carers
Highers	72%	70%	71%	97%
Advanced Highers	70%	78%	63%	95%
National 1s	44%	24%	36%	87%
National 2s	30%	31%	37%	87%
National 3s	35%	35%	35%	91%
National 4s	32%	33%	43%	92%
National 5s	63%	62%	68%	95%
HNCs/HNDs	36%	48%	51%	95%
PDAs	41%	33%	46%	92%
SVQs	35%	21%	51%	93%

From Table 4, it can be seen that a number of variations are worthy of note in relation to beliefs that the qualifications under consideration support progression to further study, including:

- Parents/Carers were most likely to believe that each of the qualifications under consideration support progression to further study
- Teachers were least likely to believe that HNCs/HNDs support progression to further study
- Those in management roles were least likely to believe that National 1s and PDAs support progression to further study
- Learners were most likely to agree that National 2s, National 4s and SVQs support progress to further study but were least likely to believe this to be the case in relation to Advanced Highers

3.2 Changes in 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?’*

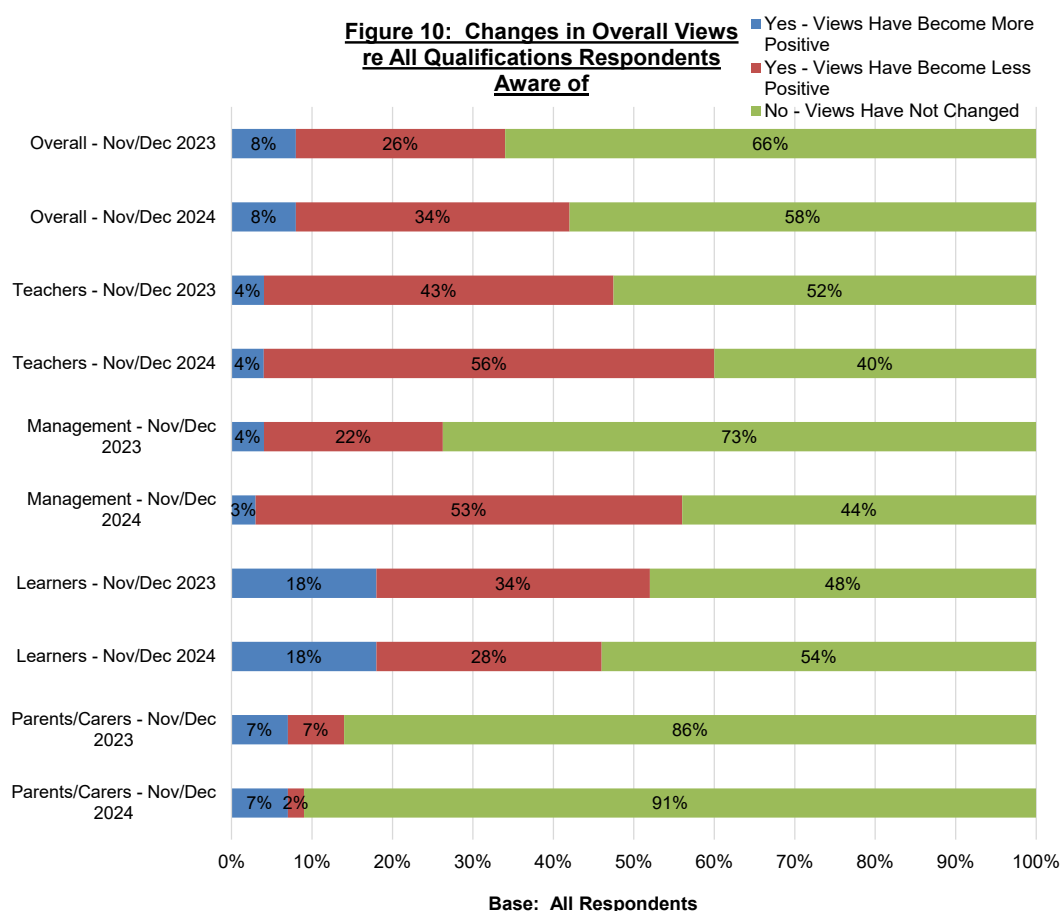


Figure 10 indicates that, in November/December 2024, approaching three out of five respondents (58%) stated that their overall views on the credibility of **all** of the qualifications they had heard of taken together had **not changed** over the last year.

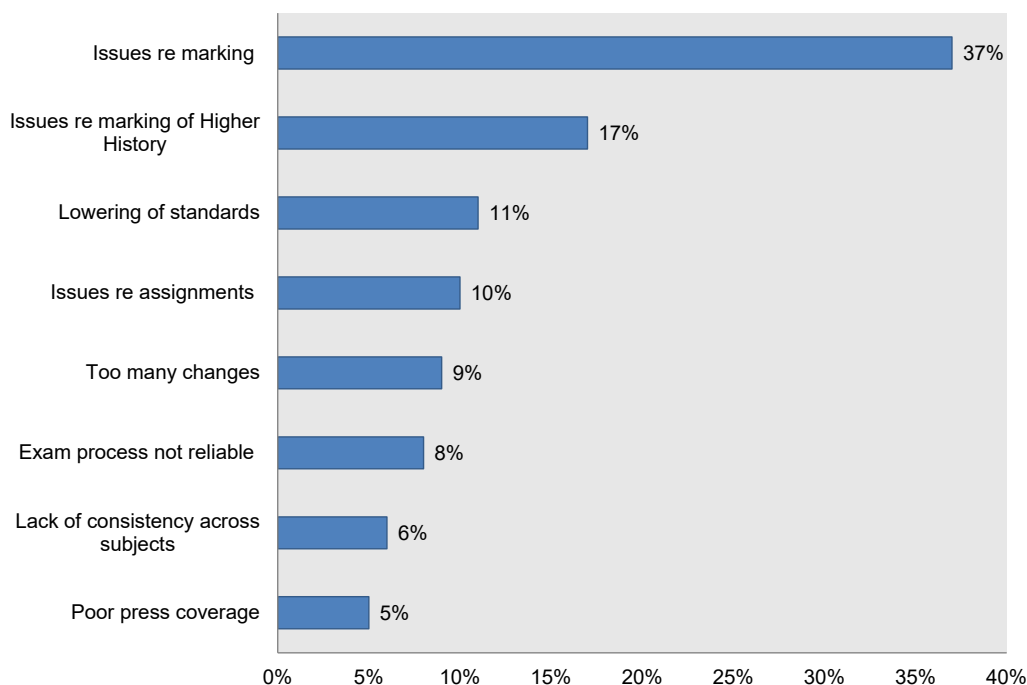
Thereafter, a third of respondents in November/December 2024 (34%) stated that their views had changed and become **less positive**, whilst one in twelve (8%) stated that their views had changed and become **more positive**.

Further examination of the data for November/December 2024 indicated the following:

- **Learners** were most likely to state that their views had changed and become **more positive** (18%)
- **Teachers** and **those in management roles** were most likely to state that their views had changed and become **less positive** 56% and 53% respectively)
- **Parents/carers** were most likely to state that their views had **not changed** (91%)

‘In what ways have your views on the overall credibility of these qualifications become less positive?’⁷

Figure 11: 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 had changed and become **less positive** were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, Figure 11 indicates that their **primary response** focused around them having issues relating to marking (37%).

Thereafter, **some mention** was made of a range of other unprompted reasons here, including:

- Issues pertaining the marking of Higher History in this academic year (17%)
- Lowering of standards in qualifications (11%)

⁷ Respondents stating that their views had changed and had become more positive were also asked in what ways this had been the case. However, the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow meaningful outcomes to be reported.

- Issues relating to assignments (10%)
- Too many changes in relation to qualifications (9%)
- SQA's exams process not being reliable (8%)

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

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, increasing unprompted mention was made here of:

- Issues relating to marking (rising from 21% to 37%)
- Issues relating to the marking of Higher History in this academic year (rising from 0% to 17%)

In contrast, since the last survey, decreasing unprompted mention was made here of:

- National 1s to National 3s not being perceived as being credible (falling from 11% to 2%)
- Issues relating to the appeals system (falling from 11% to 3%)

4.0 SQA CONTACT AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFILE

4.1 Contact Profile

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

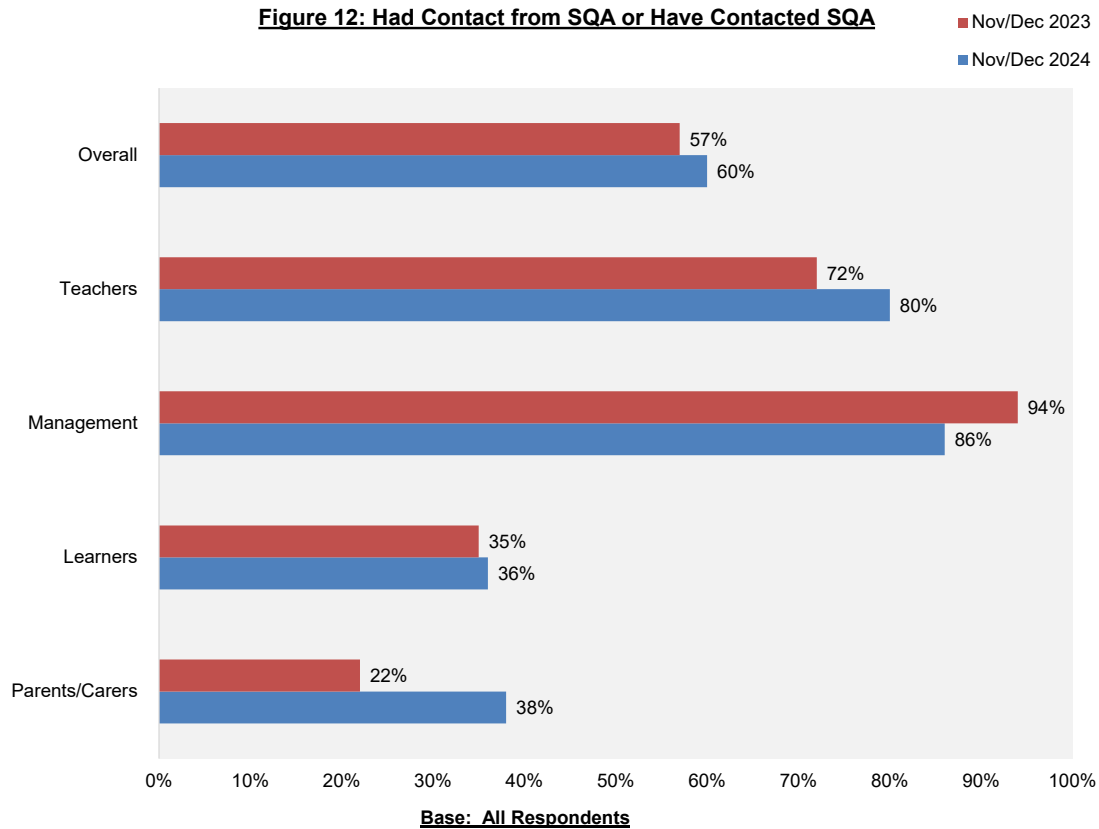


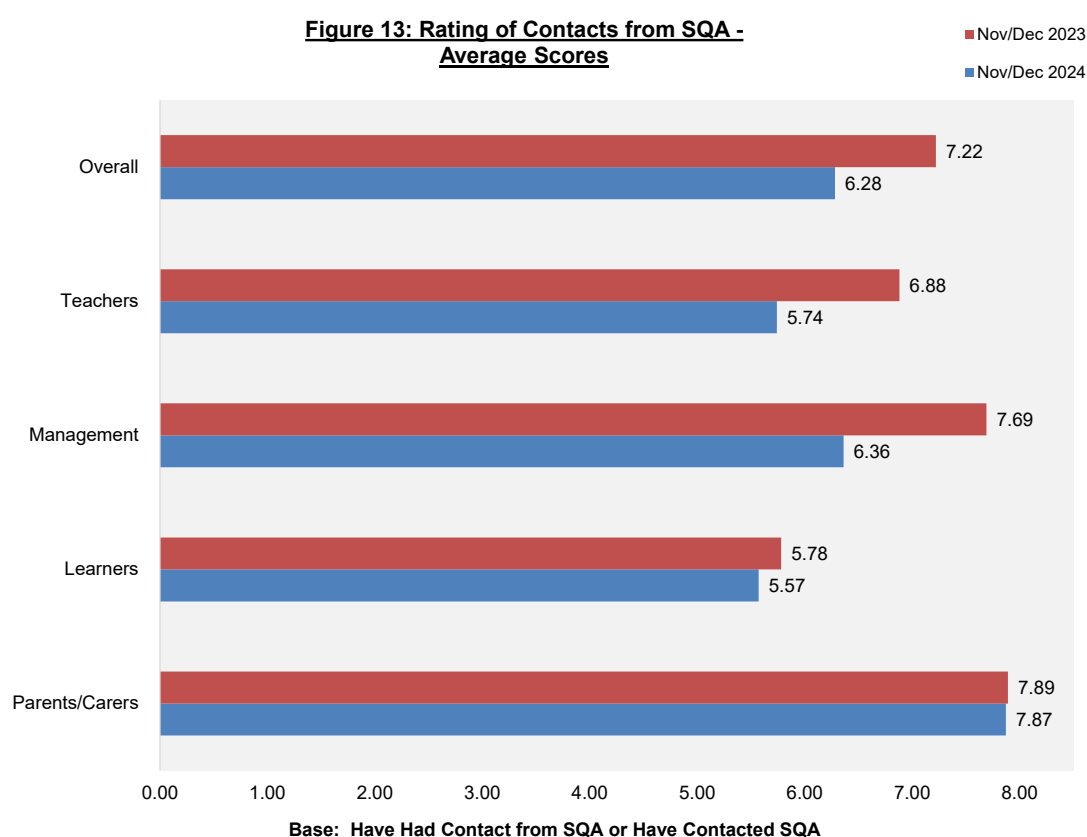
Figure 12 indicates that three out of five respondents in November/December 2024 (60%) stated that they had had contact with SQA.

Figure 12 also indicates that **highest levels** of contact were most common amongst those in management roles and teachers:

- Those in management roles (86%)
- Teachers (80%)
- Parents/carers (38%)
- Learners (36%)

Figure 12 also indicates that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was very minimal change in terms of levels of contact (rising from 57% to 60%), although, during that time, levels of contact increased significantly amongst teachers (from 72% to 80%) and, to a far greater extent, parents/carers (rising from 22% to 38%), whilst levels of contact decreased amongst those in management roles (falling from 94% to 86%).

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



When respondents in November/December 2024 were asked how they rated their contact from SQA, Figure 13 indicates that an average score of 6.28 out of a possible 10 was noted. This compares to an average score of 7.22 in November/December 2023, with decreases in average scores being most apparent amongst teachers and those in management roles, ie:

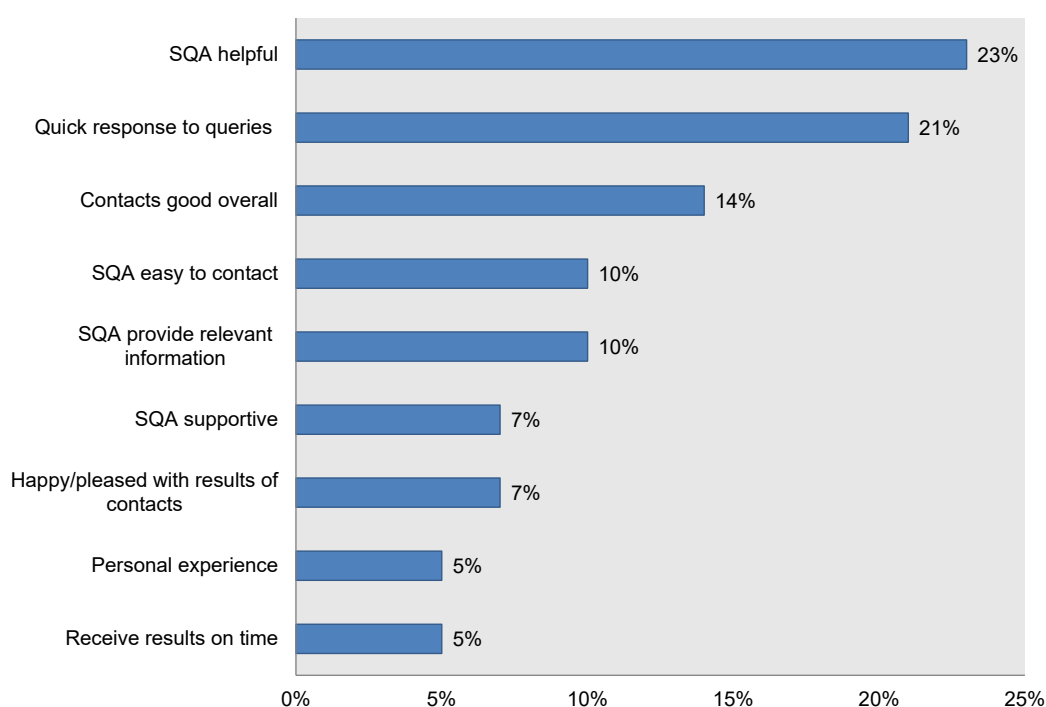
- Teachers (falling from 6.88 to 5.74)
- Those in management roles (falling from 7.69 to 6.36)

Figure 13 also indicates that, in November/December 2024, the average scores noted were **highest** amongst parents/carers and lowest amongst learners, ie:

- Parents/carers (7.87)
- Those in management roles (6.36)
- Teachers (5.74)
- Learners (5.57)

‘Why did you choose this rating number?’

**Figure 14: Reasons for Providing Positive Rating of SQA Contacts
(Unprompted)**



Base: Provided Rating of 6 to 10

When those who provided a positive rating of SQA in terms of their contacts with it (ie those who provided a rating of between 6 and 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why they provided such a rating, Figure 14 indicates that the **most prominent reasons** cited were those of:

- SQA being helpful during contacts (23%)
- SQA being quick to respond to queries (21%)

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

- Overall, SQA's contacts being good (14%)
- SQA being easy to contact (10%)
- SQA providing relevant information during contacts (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 audience type, although **indicatively**, it should also be noted that the audiences indicated below were most likely to provide the following responses:

- **SQA being helpful during contacts:** those in management roles (37%)
- **SQA being quick to respond to queries:** those in management roles (31%)
- **Overall, SQA's contacts being good:** teachers (22%)
- **SQA being easy to contact:** those in management roles and teachers (15% and 11% respectively)
- **SQA providing relevant information during contacts:** parents/carers (28%)

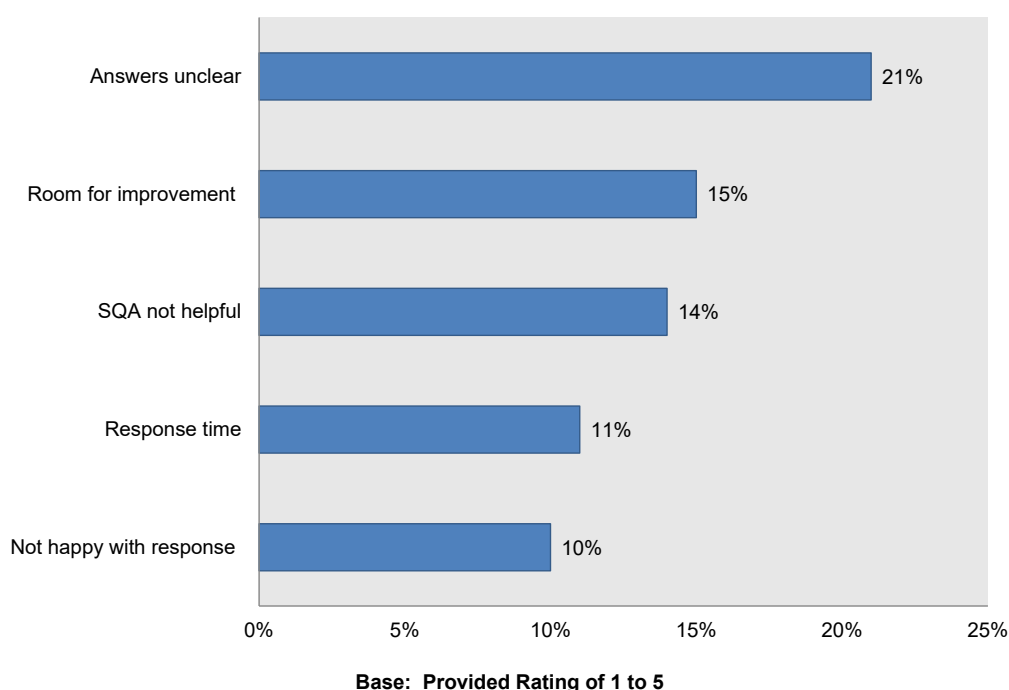
Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, decreasing reference was made here to respondents being happy/pleased with the results of their contacts (rising from 0% to 7%).

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

- SQA being helpful during contacts (falling from 30% to 23%)
- SQA being quick to respond to queries (falling from 29% to 21%)
- SQA being knowledgeable during contacts (falling from 11% to 4%)

‘Why did you choose this rating number?’

Figure 15: Reasons for Providing Negative Rating of SQA Contacts (Unprompted) - Indicative



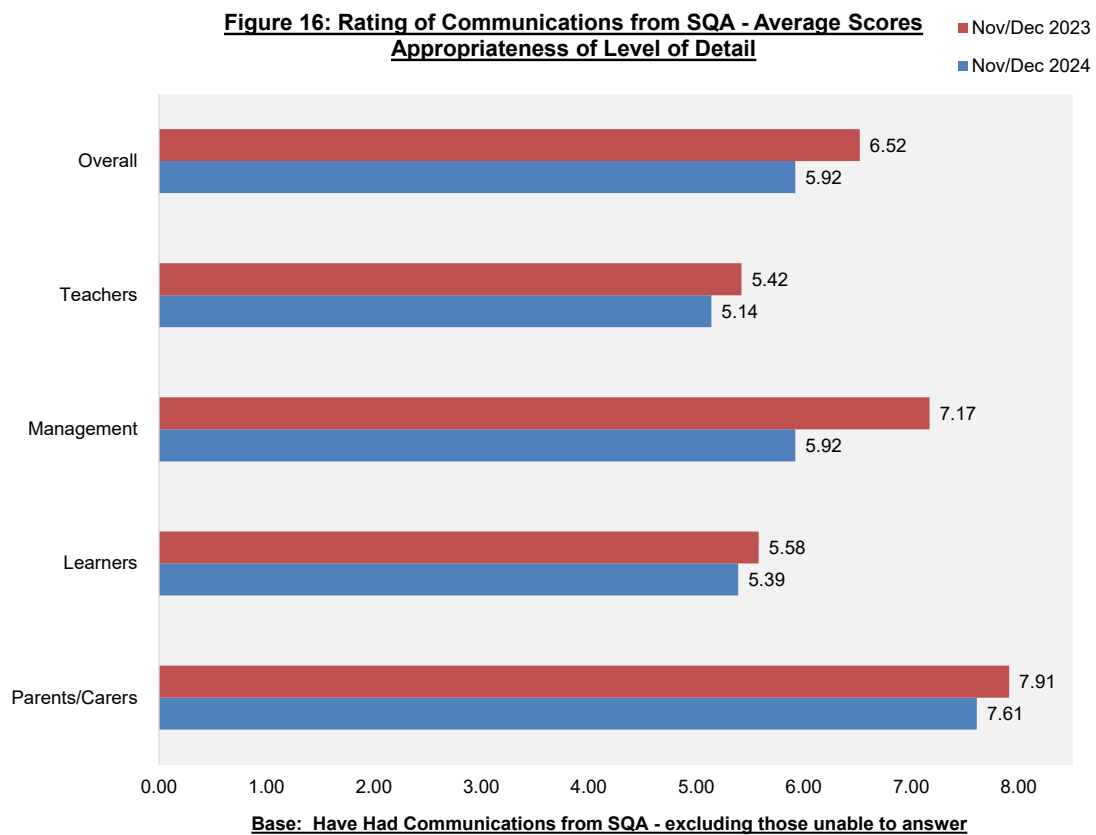
The outcomes noted in Figure 15 are **indicative** in nature but, nonetheless, it is worthy of note that a number of reasons were cited for those who provided a rating of 1 to 5 (ie a negative rating) of their SQA contacts, including:

- Answers provided during contacts being unclear (21%)
- There being room for improvement in terms of SQA contacts (15%)
- SQA not being helpful during contacts (14%)

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

4.2 Communications Profile⁸

‘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’?’



⁸ The outcomes noted in Figures 16 to 19 exclude those unable to express an opinion and, in particular, those who had not engaged in communications with SQA

Figure 17: Rating of Communications from SQA - Average Scores
Clarity of Communications

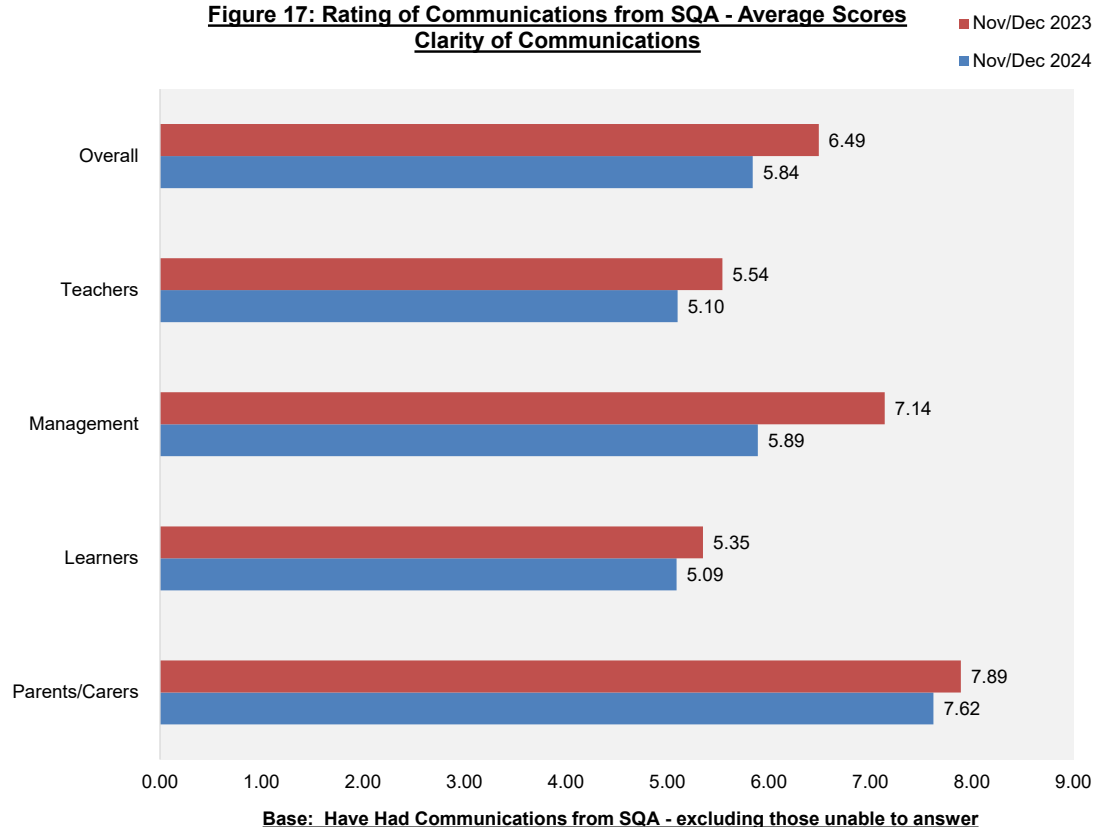
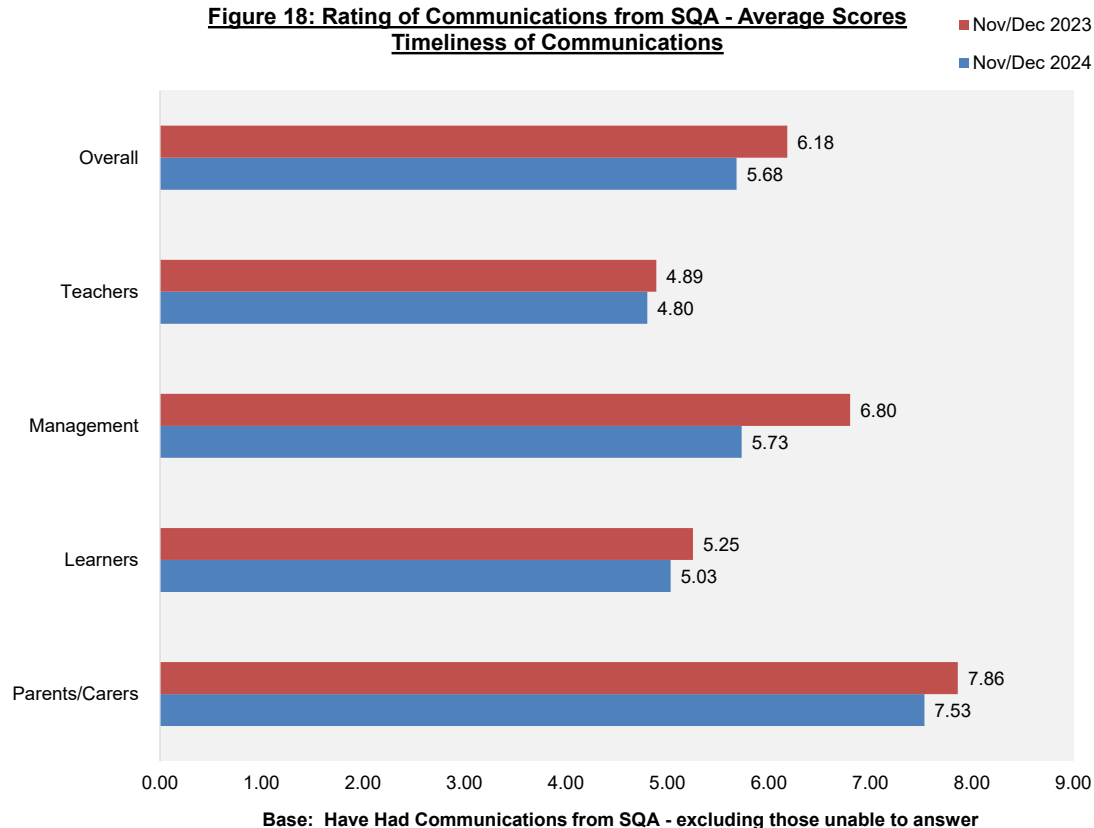


Figure 18: Rating of Communications from SQA - Average Scores
Timeliness of Communications



Figures 16 to 18 indicate that respondents in November/December 2024 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 (5.92)
- Clarity of communications (5.84)
- Timeliness of communications (5.68)

Figures 16 to 18 also indicate that the responses of the four audience types varied on the following basis:

- How appropriate the level of detail was (ranging from 5.14 for teachers to 7.61 for parents/carers)
- Clarity of communications (ranging from 5.09 and 5.10 respectively for learners and teachers to 7.62 for parents/carers)
- Timeliness of communications (ranging from 5.03 and 4.80 respectively for learners and teachers to 7.53 for parents/carers)

Furthermore, Figures 16 to 18 also indicate that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a decline in the overall average score for each of these three indicators, ie:

- **How appropriate the level of detail was** (falling from 6.52 to 5.92), with this decline being primarily driven by those in management roles (falling from 7.17 to 5.92)
- **Clarity of communications** (falling from 6.49 to 5.84), with this decline being primarily driven by those in management roles (falling from 7.14 to 5.89)
- **Timeliness of communications** (falling from 6.18 to 5.68), with, once again, this decline being primarily driven by those in management roles (falling from 6.80 to 5.73)

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

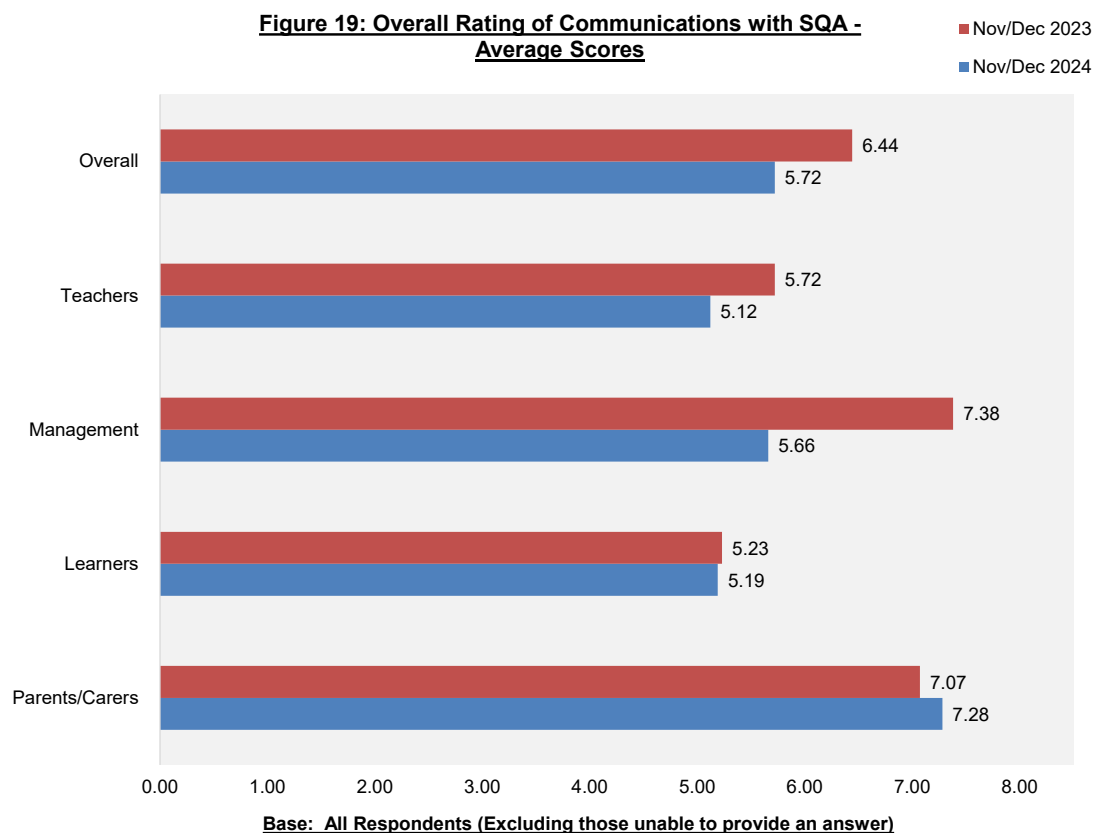


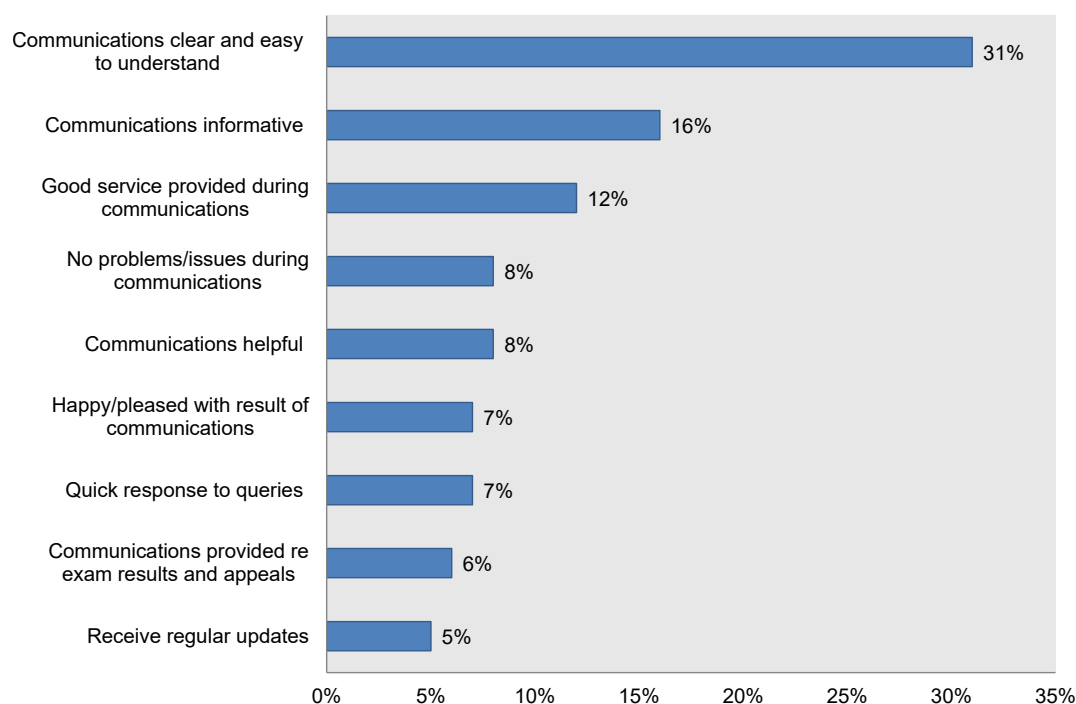
Figure 19 indicates that an average score of 5.72 out of a possible 10 was provided by respondents in November/December 2024 in terms of their overall rating of communications with SQA, with this outcome being **highest** amongst parents/carers, ie:

- Parents/carers (7.28)
- Those in management roles (5.66)
- Learners (5.19)
- Teachers (5.12)

Further examination of the data also indicated that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a notable decrease in the overall rating of communications with SQA (falling from 6.44 to 5.72), with this decline being primarily driven by those in management roles (falling from 7.38 to 5.66) and, to a lesser extent, teachers (falling from 5.72 to 5.12).

‘Why did you choose this rating?’

**Figure 20: Reasons for Choosing Good Rating of SQA Communications
(Unprompted)**



Base: Providing Rating of 6 to 10

When those providing a positive response for SQA in terms of their overall rating of its communications (ie those providing a rating of 6 to 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, Figure 20 indicates that their **principal response** related to ‘communications from SQA being clear and easy to understand’ (31%).

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

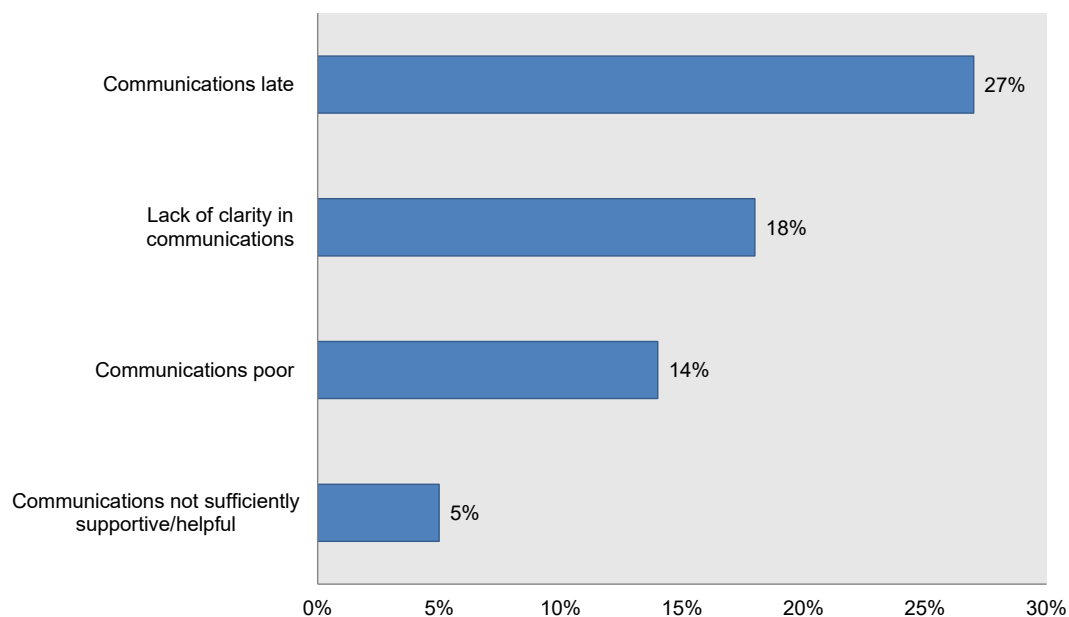
- Communications being informative (16%)
- Good service provided during communications (12%)

Further examination of the data indicated that the reasons cited above were most commonly noted by the audiences indicated⁹:

- **Communications clear and easy to understand:** those in management roles and, thereafter, teachers (42% and 35% respectively)
- **Communications being informative:** those in management roles, teachers and parents/carers (17%, 16% and 16% respectively)
- **SQA providing a good service during communications with them:** learners (28%)

‘Why did you choose a poor rating number?’

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



Base: Providing Rating of 1 to 5

Figure 21 indicates that the **primary reason** cited – on an unprompted basis – for those providing a negative response (ie between 1 and 5) in terms of their communications related to ‘communications being late’ (27%).

⁹ The comparisons drawn here for all audiences are somewhat indicative in nature, particularly learners

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

- Lack of clarity in communications (18%)
- Communications, in general, being poor (14%)

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, decreasing unprompted mention was made here of:

- Communications, in general, being poor (falling from 27% to 14%)
- Communications not being sufficiently supportive and helpful (falling from 10% to 5%)
- Lack of communications (falling from 14% to 4%)
- Unclear answers during communications (falling from 12% to 0%)

5.0 SQA CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROFILE

‘How would you rate how well SQA consults and engages with you and your colleagues (for teachers and those in management roles)/you and your peers (for learners)/you for parents/carers?’

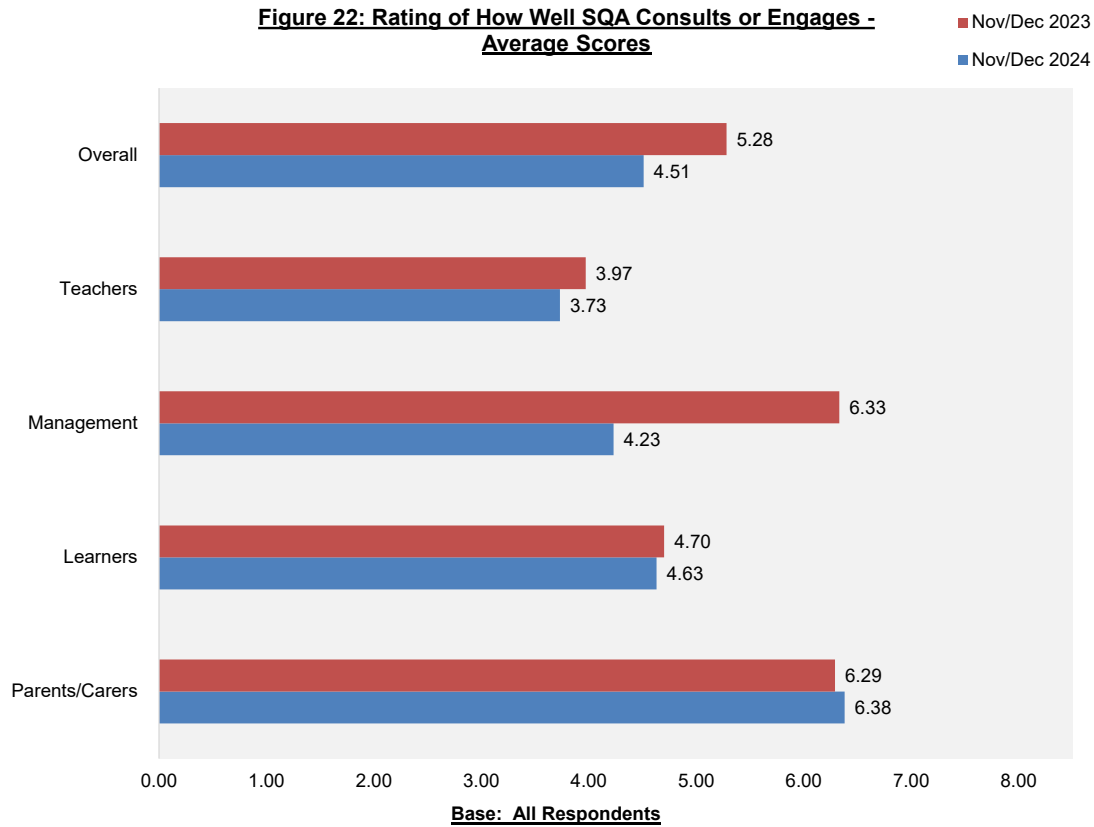


Figure 22 indicates that, when respondents were asked to rate how well SQA consults or engages ‘with themselves or their colleagues’ (in the case of those in management roles and teachers), consults ‘with themselves and their peers’ (in the case of learners) and ‘consults and engages with them’ (in the case of parents/carers), an average score of 4.51 out of a possible 10 was noted, with this score being notably higher amongst parents/carers (6.38) and notably lowest amongst teachers (3.73), ie:

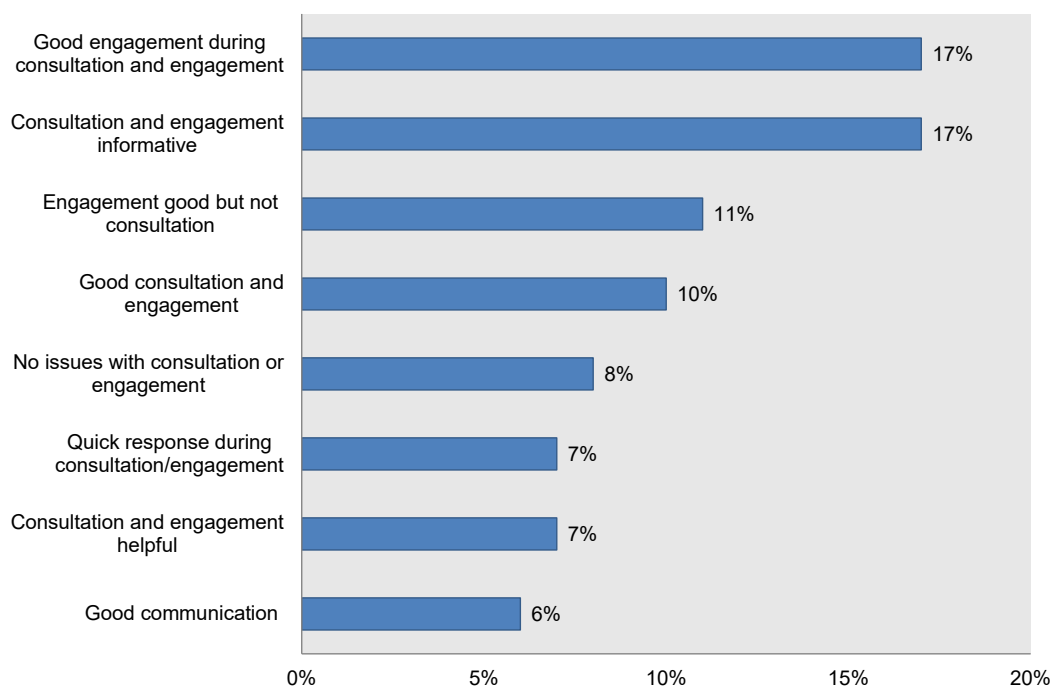
- Parents/carers (6.38)
- Learners (4.63)
- Those in management roles (4.23)

- Teachers (3.73)

It can also be seen that, between November/December 2023 and November/December 2024, there was a notable decrease in the overall rating here (falling from 5.28 to 4.51), with this fall being almost exclusively driven by those in management roles (falling from 6.33 to 4.23), although there was a far lower –although statistically significant – fall in the average score in this regard amongst teachers (falling from 3.97 to 3.73).

‘Why did you choose this rating number?’

Figure 23: Reasons for Providing Good Rating re Consultation and Engagement (Unprompted)



Base: Provided Rating of 6 to 10

From Figure 23, it can be seen that, when respondents providing a positive rating of SQA consultation and engagement (ie provided a rating of 6 to 10) were asked – on an unprompted basis – why this was the case, their **primary responses** focused around:

- Good engagement during consultation and engagement (17%)
- Consultation and engagement being informative (17%)

Thereafter, a number of other **unprompted reasons** were cited here, including:

- Engagement being good but not consultation (11%)
- Good consultation and engagement by SQA (10%)

Further examination of the data indicated that the reasons noted above were most commonly cited by the following audience types¹⁰:

- **Good engagement during consultation and engagement:** those in management roles (33%)
- **Consultation and engagement being informative:** parents/carers (26%)
- **Engagement good but not consultation:** teachers and those in management roles (23% and 15% respectively)
- **Good consultation and engagement:** those in management roles and learners (17% and 16% respectively)

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, increasing unprompted reference was made here to:

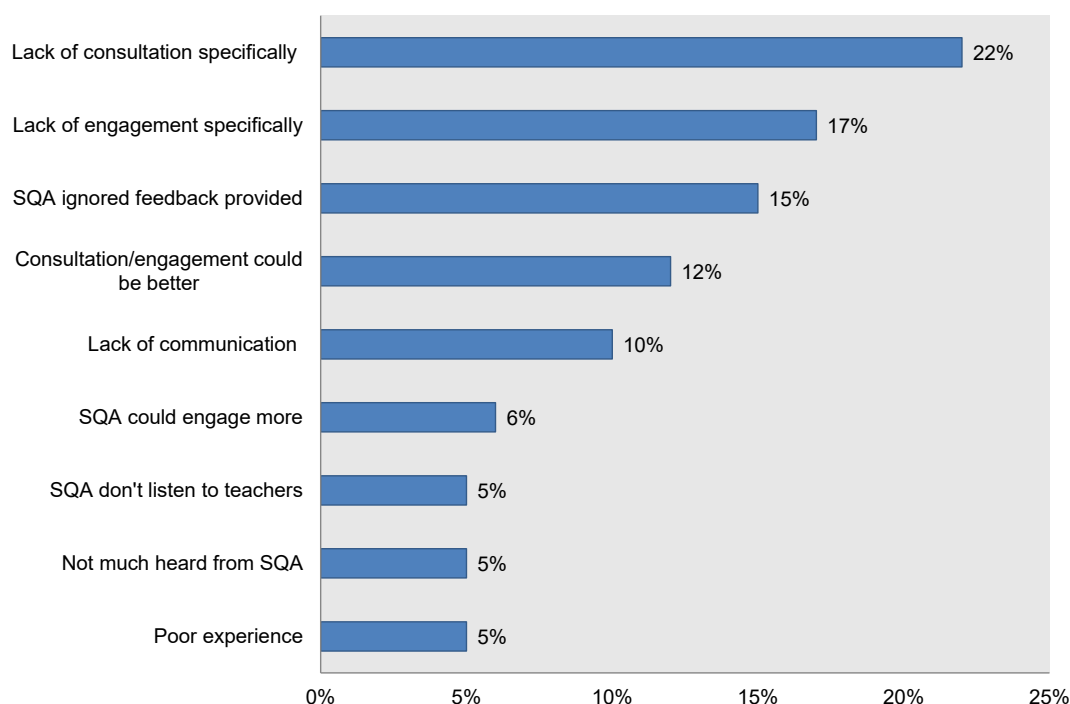
- Good consultation and engagement (rising from 0% to 10%)
- Consultation and engagement being helpful (rising from 0% to 7%)

In contrast, since the last survey, decreasing unprompted reference was made here to 'good engagement during consultation and engagement' (falling from 27% to 17%).

¹⁰ The comparisons drawn here for all audiences are largely indicative in nature

‘Why did you choose this rating number?’

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



Base: Provided Rating of 1 to 5

When those providing a poor rating of SQA communication and engagement (those providing a rating of between 1 and 5) were also asked – again, on an unprompted basis – why they had done so, Figure 24 indicates that their **primary response** was that of ‘a lack of consultation specifically’ (22%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of a range of **other reasons**, including:

- Lack of engagement specifically (17%)
- SQA ignoring feedback provided (15%)
- A belief that consultation and engagement could be better (12%)
- Lack of communications during consultation and engagement (10%)

Further examination of the data here indicated that the reasons noted above were most commonly cited by the following audience types¹¹:

- **Lack of consultation specifically:** those in management roles and, thereafter, teachers (36% and 22% respectively)
- **Lack of engagement specifically:** learners and, thereafter, parents/carers (41% and 25% respectively)
- **SQA ignoring feedback provided:** those in management roles and teachers (24% and 15% respectively)
- **A belief that consultation and engagement could be better:** those in management roles (18%)
- **Lack of communications during consultation and engagement:** parents/carers (20%)

Finally, it should be noted that, since the last survey, decreasing unprompted mention was made here of:

- Lack of engagement specifically (falling from 31% to 17%)
- Lack of communication during consultation and engagement (falling from 18% to 10%)

¹¹ The comparisons drawn here for learners and parents/carers are largely indicative in nature

6.0 A PROSPECTUS FOR CHANGE COMMITMENT PROFILE¹²

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

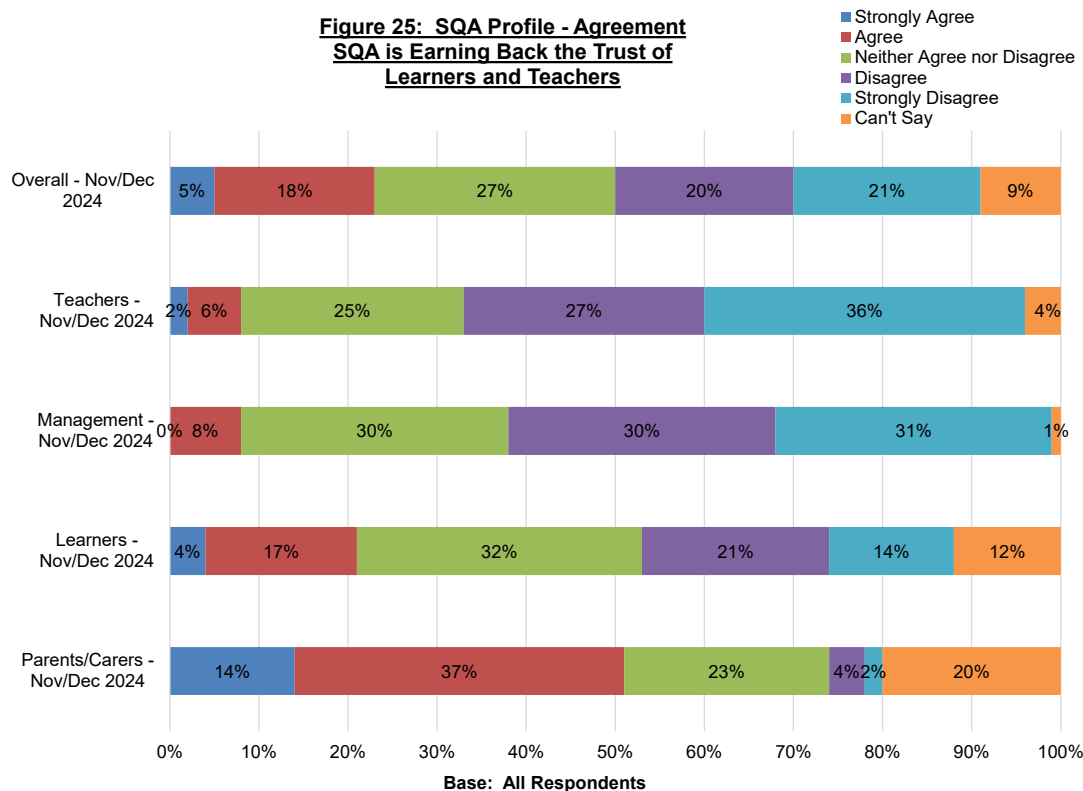
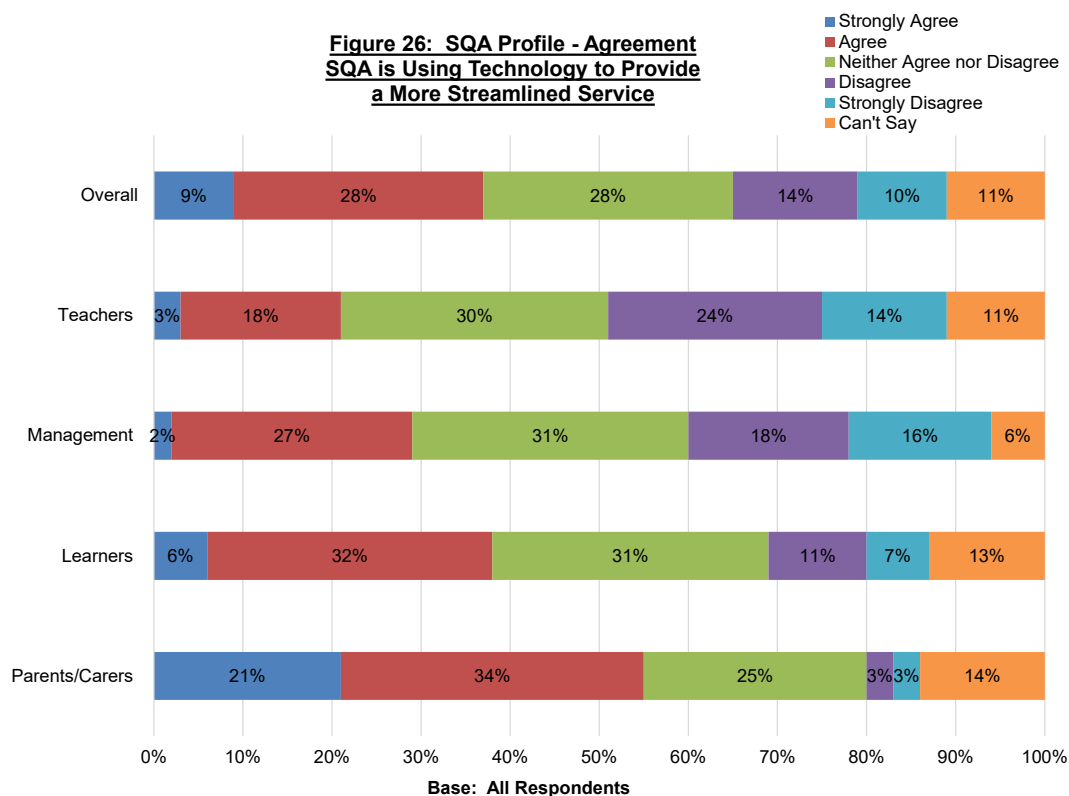


Figure 25 indicates that, overall, approaching a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 (23%) **agreed** that ‘SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers’, with this outcome being highest amongst parents/carers (51%) and lowest amongst teachers and those in management roles (both 8%).

Finally, Figure 25 indicates that, overall, around two out of five respondents in November/December 2024 (41%) **disagreed** that SQA is earning back the trust of learners and teachers, with this outcome being highest amongst teachers and those in management roles (63% and 61% respectively) and lowest amongst parents/carers (6%).

¹² These questions were asked for the first time in November/December 2024.

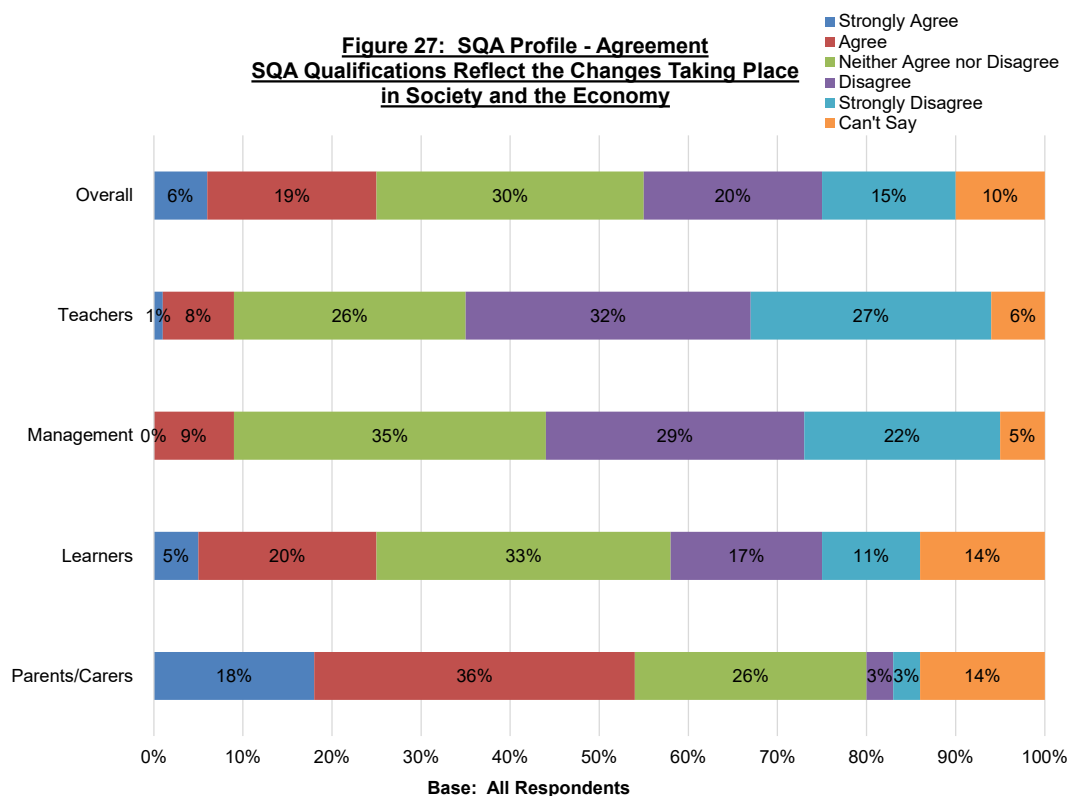
‘How strongly would you agree or disagree that SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service?’



From Figure 26, it can be seen that approaching two out of five respondents in November/December 2024 (37%) **agreed** that ‘SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service’, with this ranging from 21% for teachers to 55% for parents/carers.

It can also be seen from Figure 26 that, in November/December 2024, a quarter of respondents (24%) **disagreed** that SQA is using technology to provide a more streamlined service (with this ranging from 6% for parents/carers to 38% and 34% respectively for teachers 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?’



From Figure 27, it can be seen that a quarter of respondents in November/December 2024 (25%) **agreed** that ‘SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy’ (ranging from 9% for both teachers and those in management roles to 54% for parents/carers).

Figure 27 also indicates that, overall, over a third of respondents (35%) **disagreed** that SQA qualifications reflect the changes taking place in society and the economy (ranging from 6% for parents/ carers to 59% and 51% respectively for teachers and those in management roles).

7.0 KEY MESSAGES

The overriding key message to emerge from the most recent research undertaken amongst the KAR school audiences is that of changes in views expressed by those in management roles and teachers since the last survey in relation to:

- A decrease in perceived high credibility of SQA allied to an increase in perceived low credibility of SQA
- A decrease in satisfaction with SQA's overall performance
- A decrease in average scores relating to the rating of contact with SQA
- A decrease in their rating of overall communications with SQA

It should also be noted that the increase in the number of Teachers and those in Management roles who expressed concerns about inaccurate marking and/or about history is both important and, potentially, worrying for SQA.