



National Qualifications 2023–24 Research: Educator Experiences

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Executive summary

Introduction

Between 2021–23, SQA conducted annual evaluations of the modified assessment approach for Graded National Courses, implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to understand its effectiveness and gather insights from stakeholders. Now, SQA's research needs have shifted. Consequently, we developed a wave-based quantitative research approach to track evolving perceptions of National Qualifications (NQ) over time, inspired by Ofqual's annual survey but limited to those with recent lived experience. We intend for this research to continue annually unless there are significant changes that make adjustments necessary.

These findings were gathered during a period of intense external scrutiny of the consistency of standards across years.

Method

This research aimed to capture perceptions of educators who had prepared learners for NQs in 2023–24 about a range of topics. These included:

- ◆ National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
- ◆ Assessment, awarding and standards
- ◆ Impact of the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning

The research also sought to understand how educators experienced several aspects of NQs in 2023–24 by different characteristics (SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate additional support need status).

Educators in SQA centres across Scotland were invited to take part in an online survey on these topics in September and October 2024. The survey received 1,113 full responses. The data was then analysed by using a mixture of descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis tests to assess statistically significant differences in the responses between different demographic sub-groups.

A detailed explanation of the methods used can be found in the [Methodology Report](#) and the [Technical Appendix](#).

Results

National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

In most cases, perceptions were relatively similar across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications, while perceptions of National 4 qualifications were notably poorer. Other SQA research also found less positive views on National 4 qualifications than National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. Our Key Audience Research (SQA, 2024), which looks at the views of key stakeholder groups on SQA and its qualifications shows that National 4 is seen as substantially less credible than the other levels of NQs.

There was general agreement with the statement that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were 'trusted qualifications'. The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement was 77% for National 5, 91% for Higher and 84% for Advanced Higher. The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement for National 4 was 13%. There was also a high proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were 'good preparation for study', with 72% of respondents in agreement for National 5, 81% for Higher and 91% for Advanced Higher. However, the proportion of respondents in agreement with this statement for National 4 was 24%.

When asked whether the qualifications were 'good preparation for work', the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed was slightly lower for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, at 49%, 60% and 68%, respectively. The proportion of respondents in agreement with this statement for National 4 was 17%. The statement that qualifications were 'well understood by the public' in 2023–24 also received a slightly lower proportion of respondents in agreement for National 5 and Advanced Higher, at 57% and 56%, respectively. A high proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement for Higher (86%), while for National 4, only 7% agreed or strongly agreed.

Assessment, awarding and standards

There were moderate to high levels of agreement with statements relating to assessment communications. Seventy-three per cent (73%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood how grades would be determined in 2023–24. Sixty per cent (60%) expressed agreement that 'the assessment process was communicated to [them] effectively', and 53% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I received information on how grades would be determined early enough in the academic year'.

Thirty-seven per cent (37%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment process was fair to all learners, and 36% felt satisfied with the assessment process.

Seventy-three per cent (73%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the national standard. Over half of respondents (53%) were in agreement that Understanding Standards provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard, while just under half (49%) were in agreement that educators are given the opportunity to engage with Understanding Standards resources to enable a strong understanding of the national standard. Forty-seven per cent (47%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'the national standard is articulated in the course specification and other documentation (course reports and marking instructions)'.

Impact of the legacy of COVID-19 on learning

The majority of respondents (68%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the education system as a whole has recovered well from the pandemic. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners are less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic, and 87% were in agreement that many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did.

Seventy-six per cent (76%) of respondents were in agreement that many learners are not as well prepared to study for NQs as their predecessors were, and 68% agreed or strongly

agreed that many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.

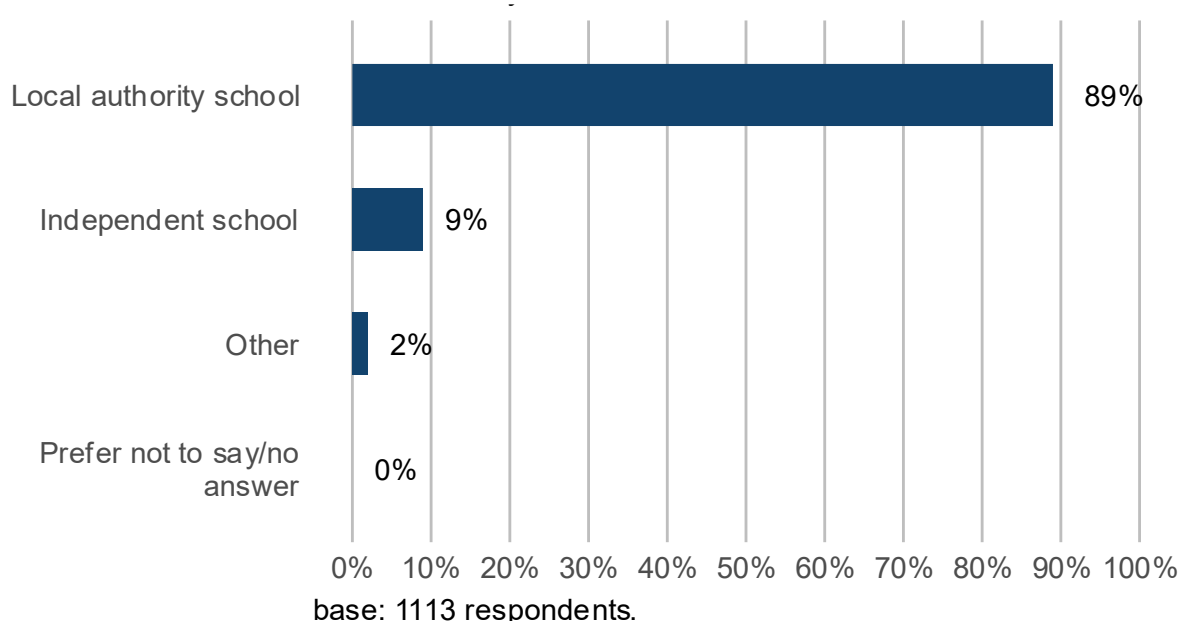
When compared to the previous year's survey, the perceived impact of the pandemic on learning had lessened slightly among respondents. A slightly lower proportion of respondents in 2023–24 agreed or strongly agreed to all statements related to the impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching, ranging between a 3 and 8 percentage point (pp) decrease.

Respondent profiles

A detailed comparison of how the makeup of survey respondents compares to the whole population is available in the Technical Appendix.

Educators were asked where they taught in 2023–24 and in which local authority their centre was based. Most respondents (89%) taught in a local authority school. A small portion of respondents (9%) taught in an independent school and 2% taught at an 'other' institution. Of those who taught at other institutions, around half taught in a further education (FE) institution (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Where did you teach in 2023–24?



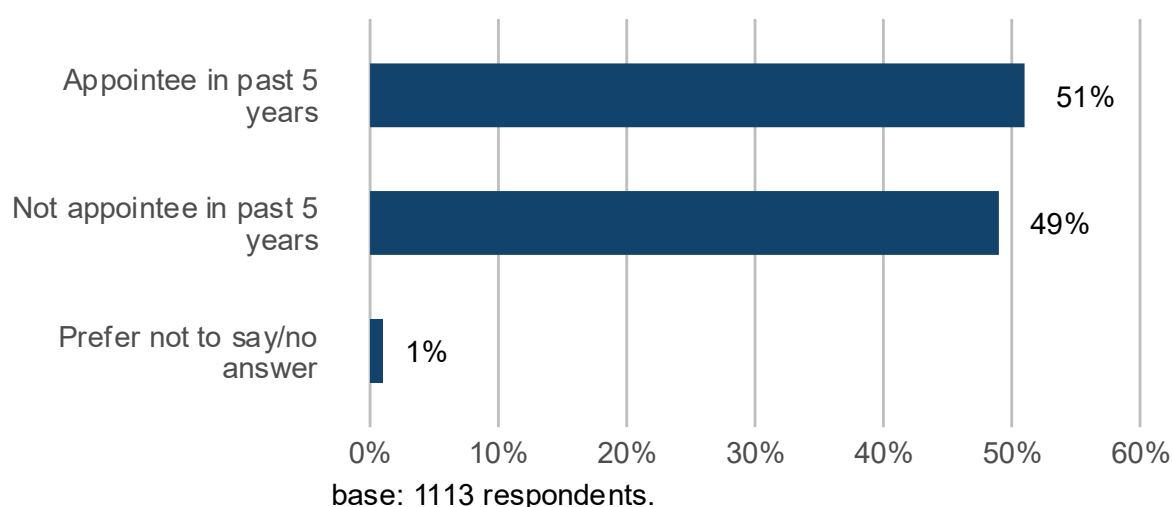
Respondents represented 31 local authority areas. The highest proportion of respondents (11%) were from the City of Edinburgh, followed by North Lanarkshire (8%) and Fife (8%). The local authority areas with the lowest numbers of respondents (less than 1%) were East Ayrshire, Orkney Islands, Na h-Eileanan Siar and Shetland Islands (Table 1).

Table 1: In which local authority area is your school, college or centre?

Local authority area	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
City of Edinburgh	124	11
North Lanarkshire	92	8
Fife	91	8
Aberdeenshire	61	5
Glasgow City	58	5
Renfrewshire	53	5
West Lothian	50	4
Aberdeen City	48	4
Highland	45	4
Dundee City	40	4
Dumfries and Galloway	39	4
East Lothian	35	3
Perth and Kinross	27	2
Argyll and Bute	24	2
East Dunbartonshire	23	2
Scottish Borders	22	2
Angus	21	2
South Ayrshire	21	2
Midlothian	18	2
North Ayrshire	18	2
West Dunbartonshire	17	2
Falkirk	16	1
Inverclyde	13	1
Moray	13	1
Stirling	12	1
East Renfrewshire	11	1
Clackmannanshire	10	1
Other	9	1
East Ayrshire	5	<1
Orkney Islands	3	<1
Na h-Eileanan Siar	2	<1
Shetlands Islands	2	<1
Prefer not to say/no answer	7	1

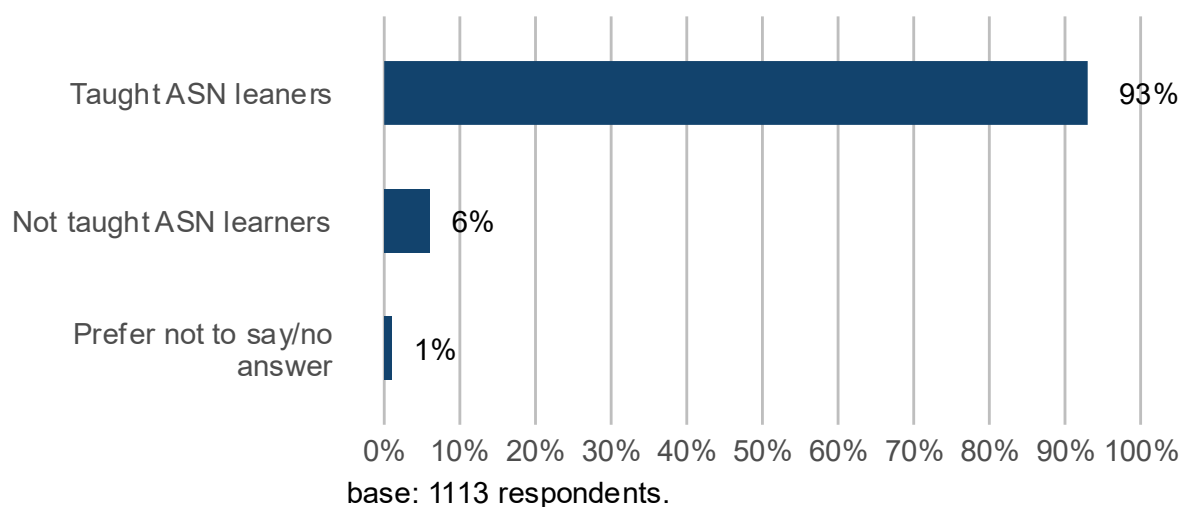
Just over half of respondents (51%) had been an appointee in the past five years, while 49% had not (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Have you been an SQA appointee in the past five years?



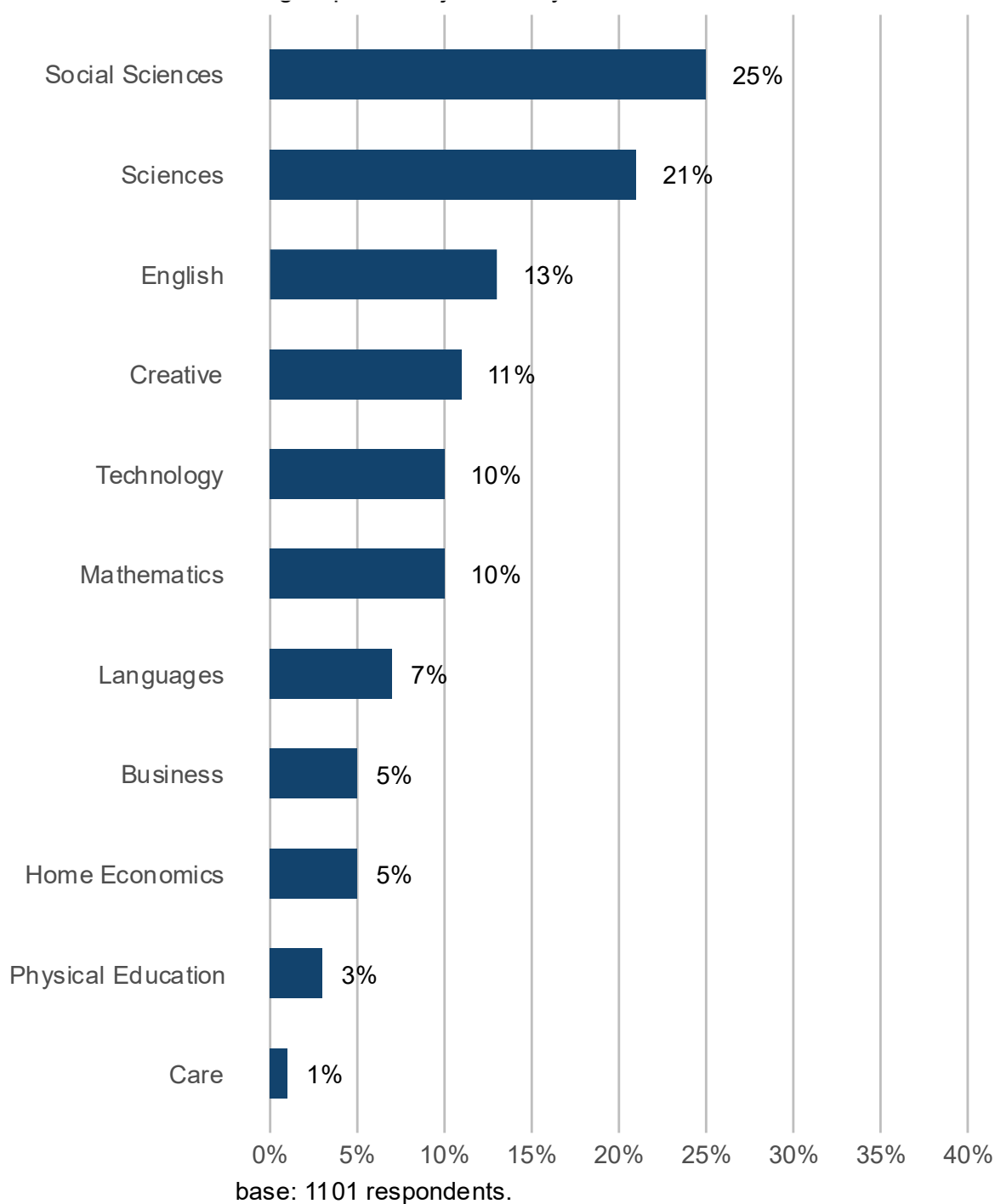
Most respondents (93%) indicated that they taught learners who are disabled and/or have additional support needs in 2023–24, while 6% did not (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Did you teach learners who are disabled and/or have additional support needs in 2023?



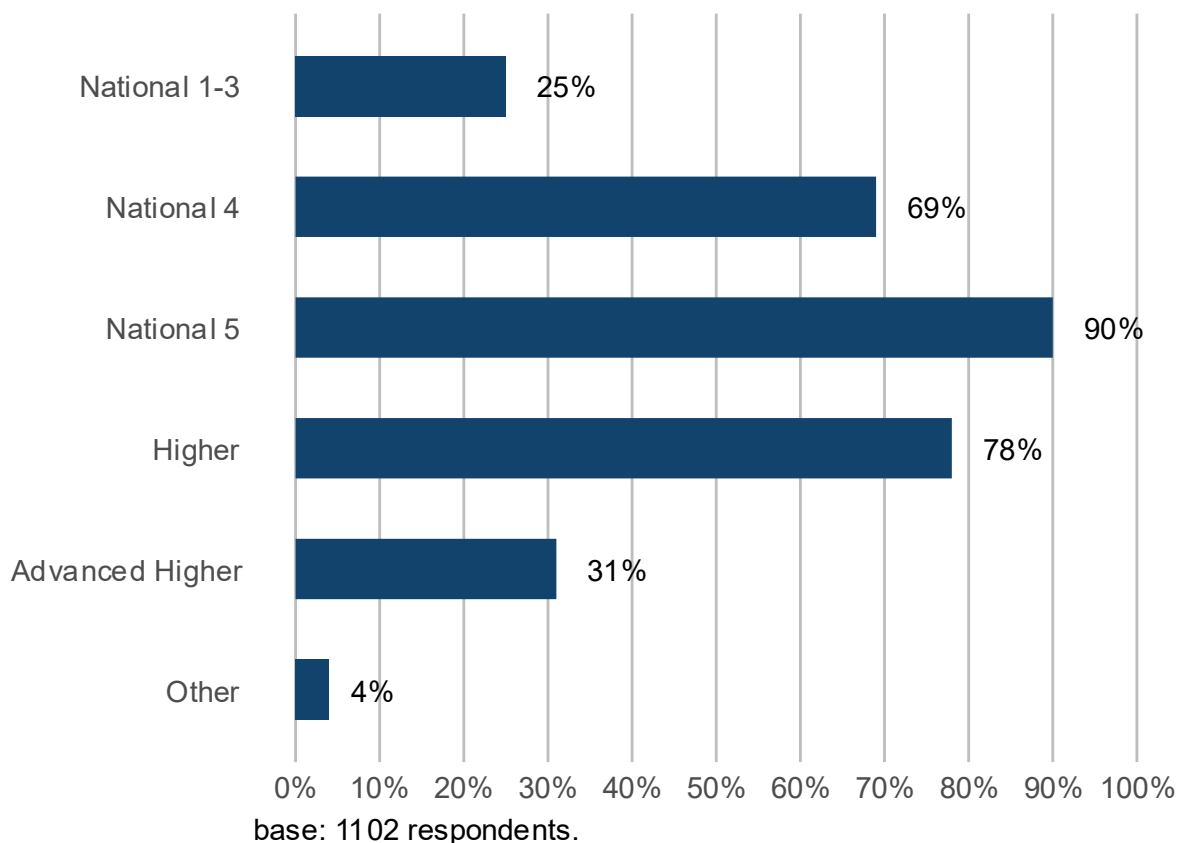
Respondents were asked which groups of subjects they taught in 2023–24. The highest proportion of respondents (25%) taught Social Sciences, followed by Sciences (21%). Thirteen per cent (13%) taught English, 11% taught a Creative subject, 10% taught Technology, 10% taught Mathematics, 7% taught Languages, 5% taught Business, 5% taught Home Economics, 3% taught Physical Education, and 1% taught a Care-related subject (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Which groups of subjects did you teach in 2023–24?



Respondents were asked which levels they taught in 2023–24. Most respondents (90%) taught National 5, 78% taught Higher and 69% taught National 4. Thirty-one per cent (31%) of respondents taught Advanced Higher and a quarter (25%) taught National 1–3 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Which level(s) did you teach in 2023–24?



National Qualifications

Educators were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same six statements for National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. Respondents' answers are discussed in detail in this section.

National 4

Respondents who had taught National 4 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with six statements relating to National 4s. The majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with four out of the six statements (Figures 6a and 6b).

Figure 6a: Perceptions of National 4 qualifications

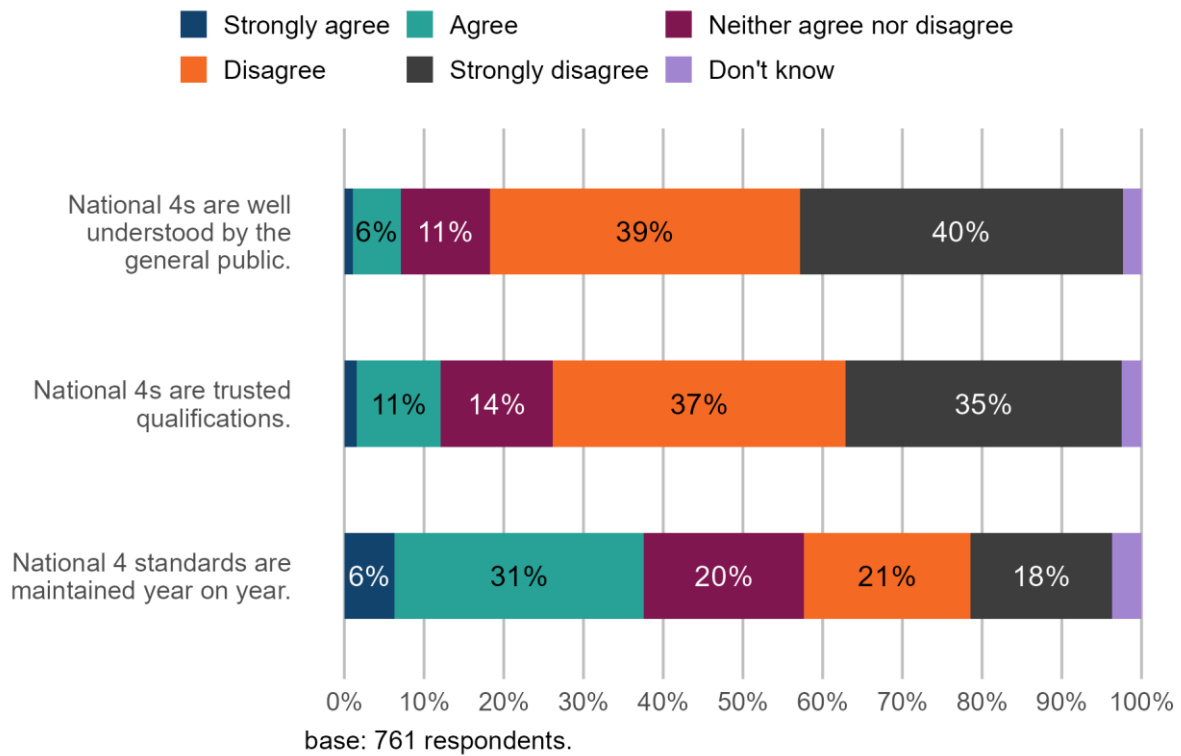
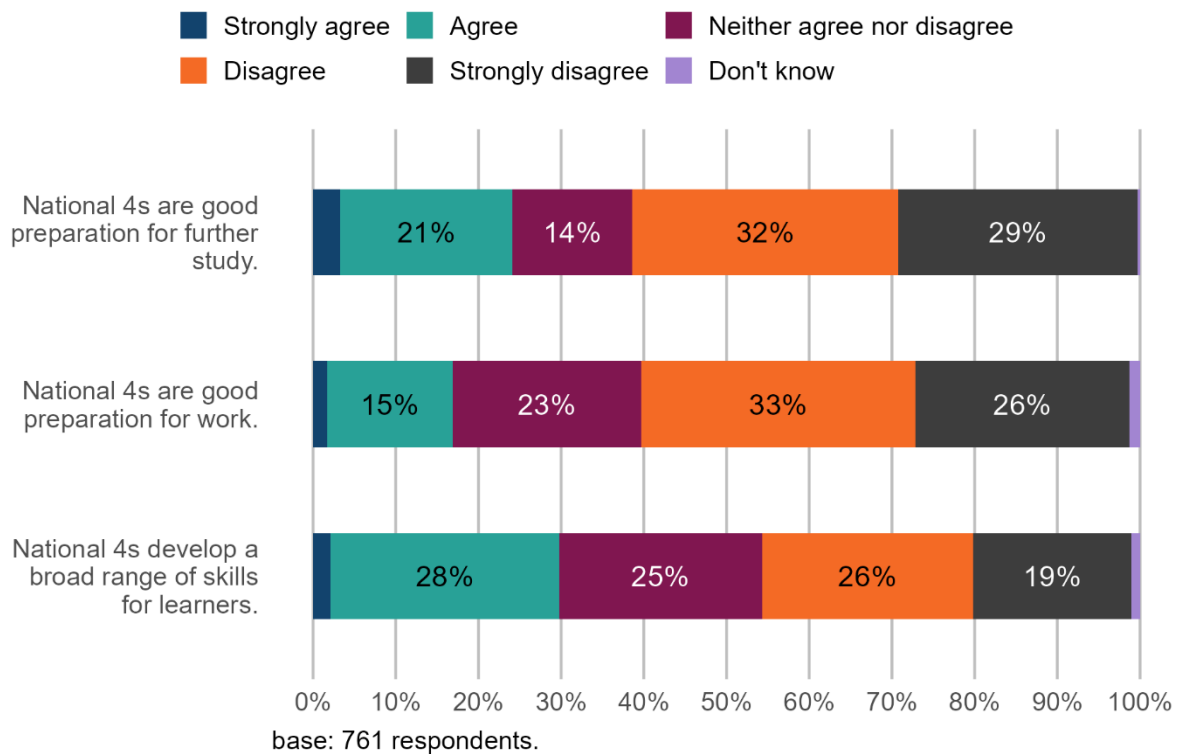


Figure 6b: Perceptions of National 4 qualifications



The statement with the highest level of disagreement was 'National 4s are well understood by the general public', with 79% of respondents saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 7% saying they agreed or strongly agreed.

Respondents who taught a National 4 qualification last year disagreed or strongly disagreed that National 4s are trusted qualifications (72%), good preparation for further study (61%), and good preparation for work (59%).

Respondents were closely split regarding whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'National 4 standards are maintained year on year', with 39% of respondents saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 37% saying they agreed or strongly agreed.

Nearly a third of respondents (30%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners'. However, close to half (45%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

National 5

Respondents who had taught National 5 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same six statements. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all but one of the statements (Figures 7a and 7b).

Figure 7a: Perceptions of National 5 qualifications

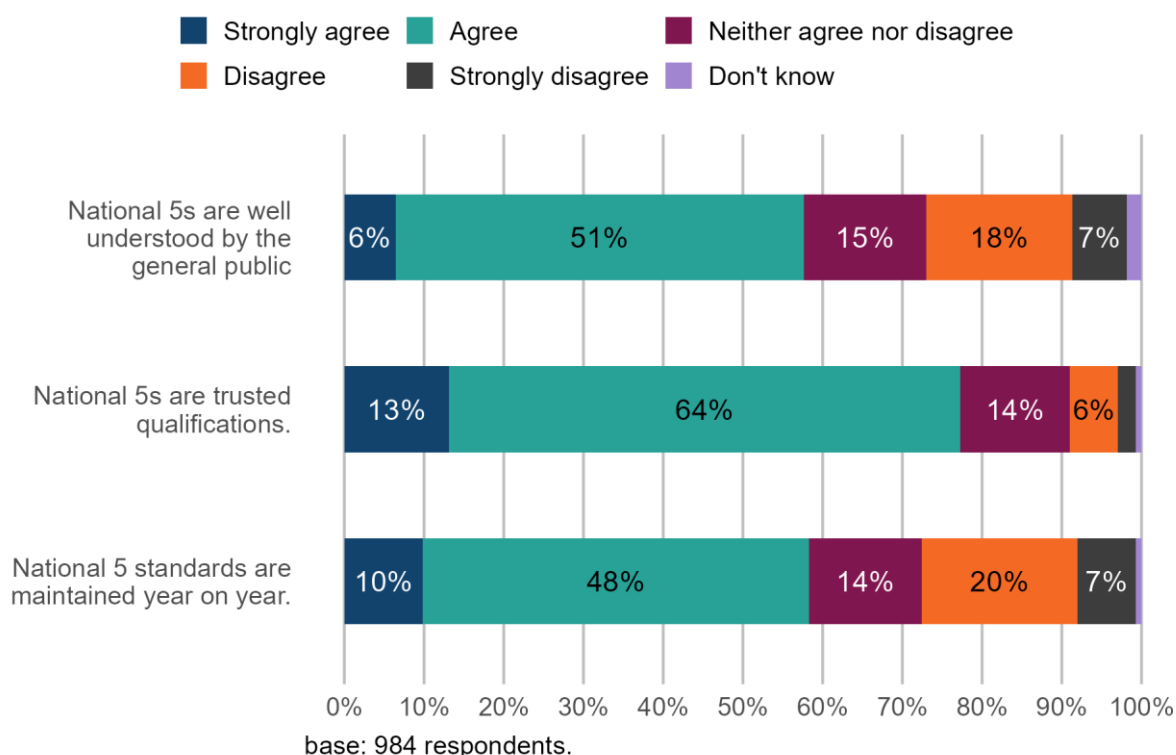
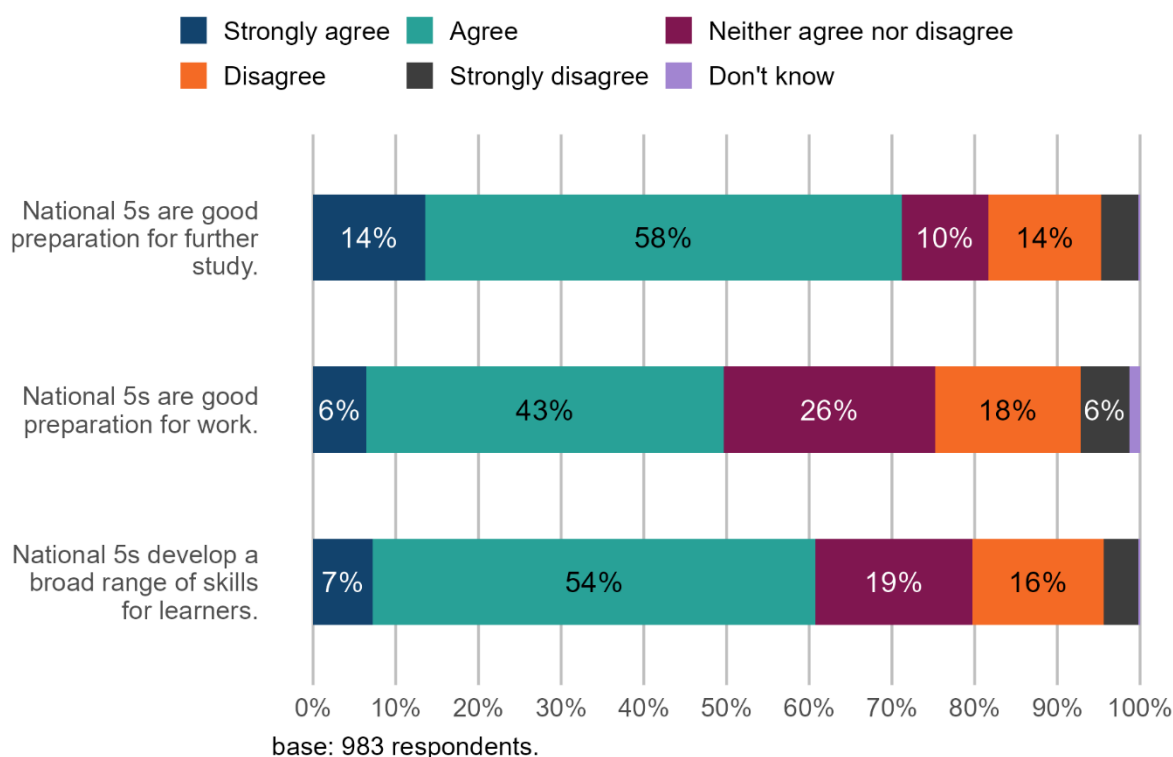


Figure 7b: Perceptions of National 5 qualifications



The statement with the highest level of agreement was 'National 5s are trusted qualifications', with 77% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed, and 8% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that National 5s are good preparation for further study (72%), develop a broad range of skills for learners (61%), has standards that are maintained year on year (58%), and are understood well by the general public (57%).

The highest levels of disagreement were in regard to whether 'National 5s are good preparation for work', with 49% saying they agreed or strongly agreed, and 24% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Higher

Respondents who had taught a Higher qualification in 2023–24 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagree with the same six statements. A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all the statements (Figures 8a and 8b).

Figure 8a: Perceptions of Higher qualifications

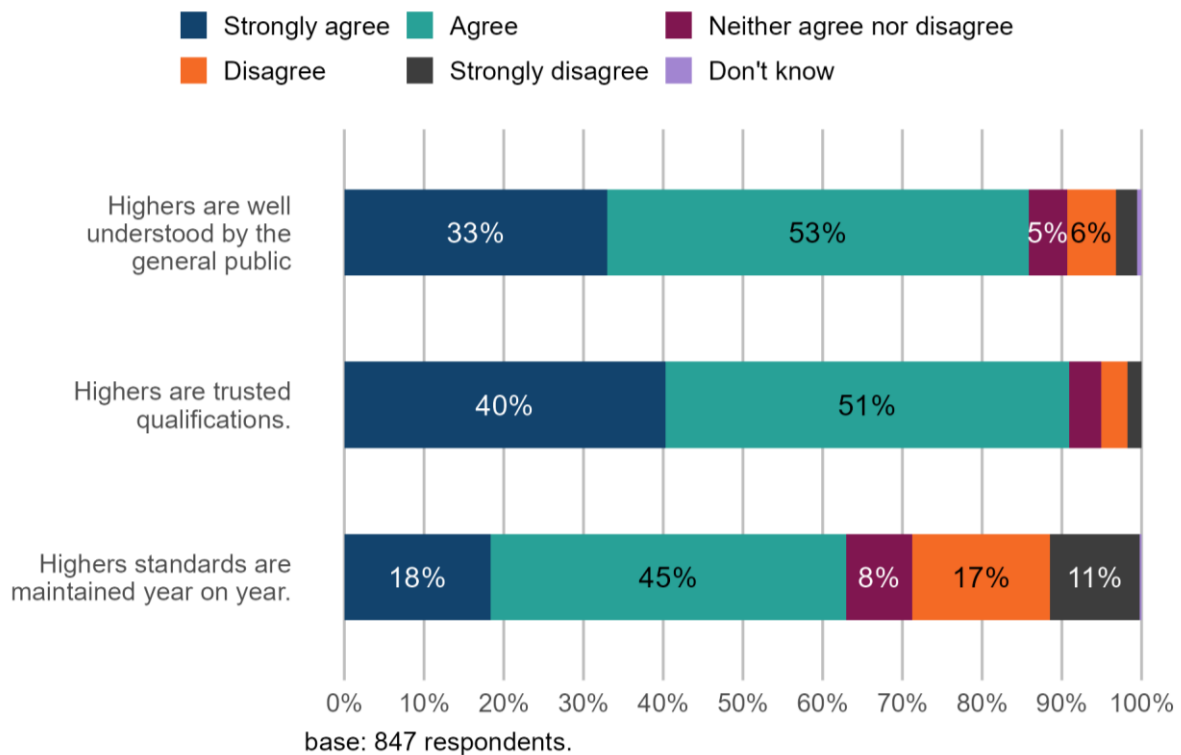
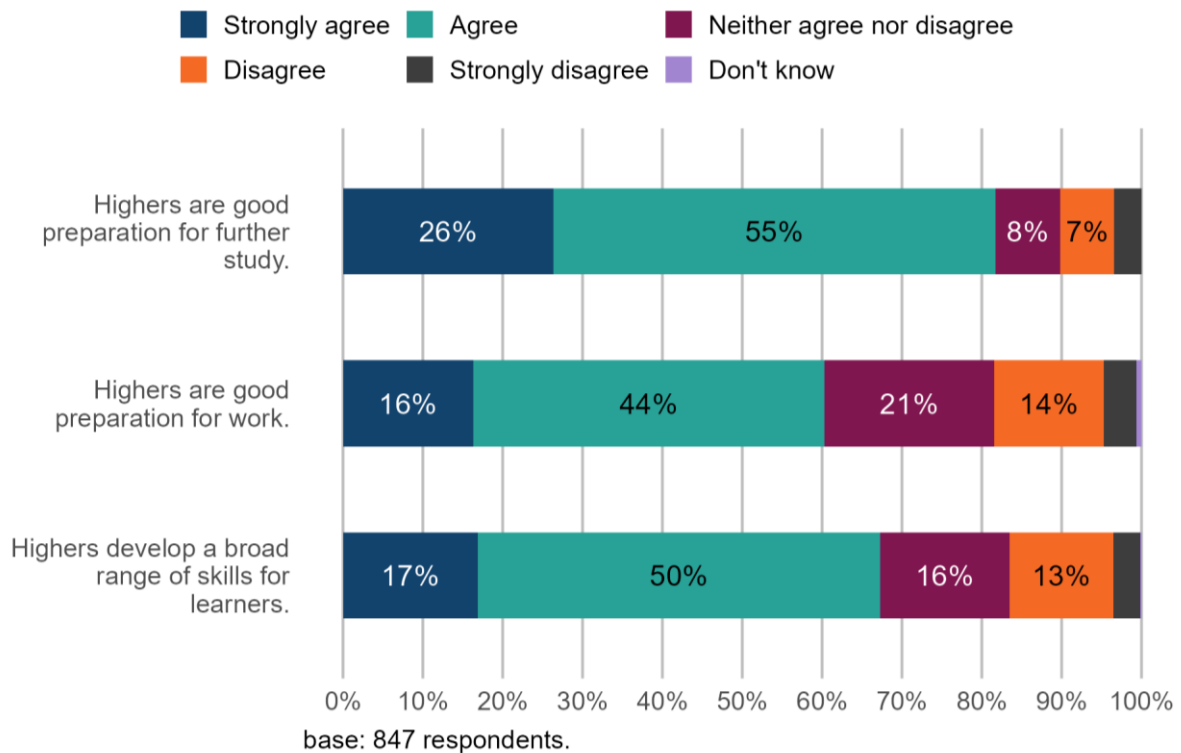


Figure 8b: Perceptions of Higher qualifications



The statement with the highest level of agreement was ‘Highers are trusted qualifications’, with 91% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed, and 5% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. This was followed by ‘Highers are well understood by the general public’, with 86% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed, and 9% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. A large proportion of respondents (81%) also agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Highers are good preparation for further study’, with 10% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

With regard to the statement ‘Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners’, 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed. While 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Highers are good preparation for work’, nearly a quarter (21%) said that they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The statement with the highest level of disagreement was ‘Highers standards are maintained year on year’ with 28% of respondents saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, a higher proportion of respondents (63%) still agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Advanced Higher

Respondents who had taught an Advanced Higher qualification in 2023–24 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same six statements. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements (Figures 9a and 9b).

Figure 9a: Perceptions of Advanced Higher qualifications

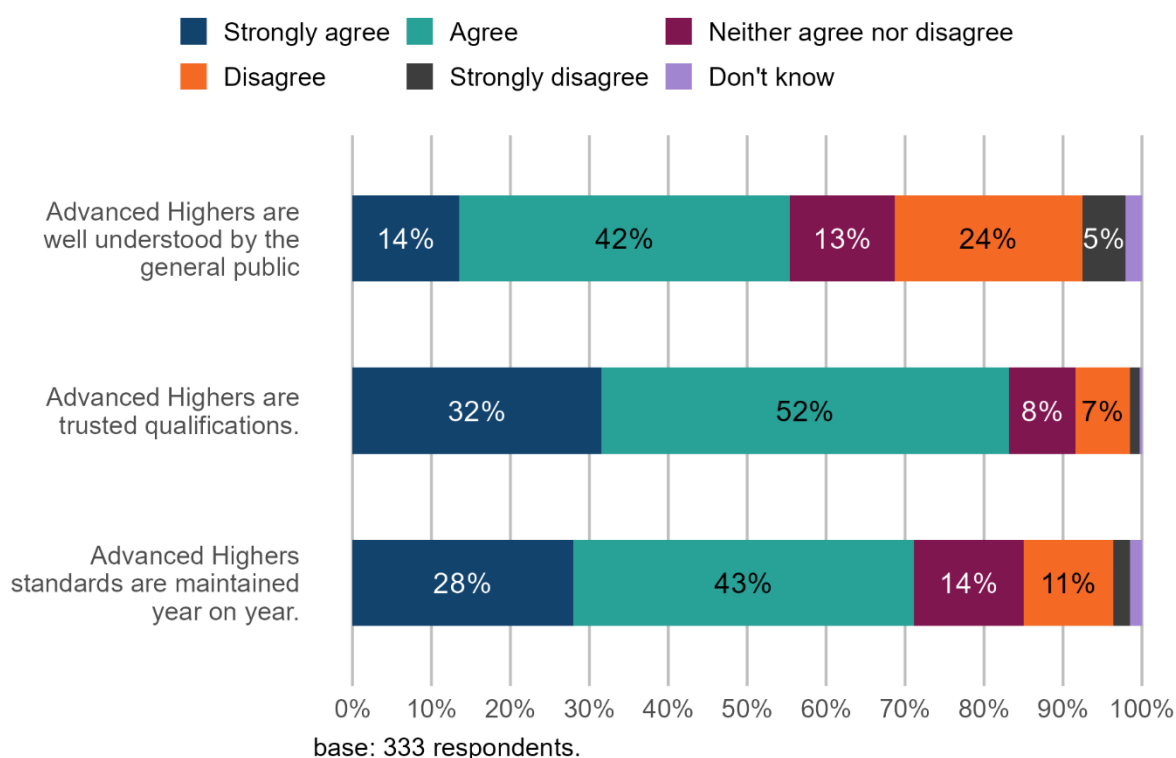
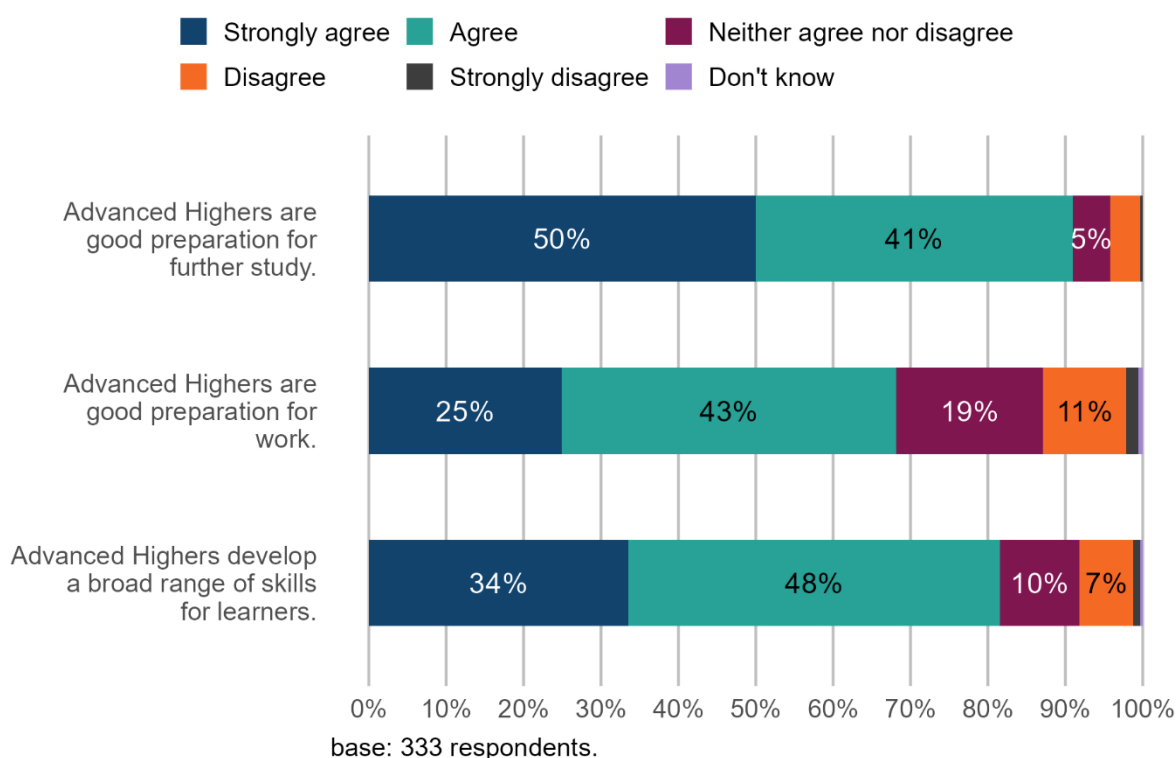


Figure 9b: Perceptions of Advanced Higher qualifications



The statement with the highest level of agreement was 'Advanced Highers are good preparation for further study', with 91% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 4% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

A strong majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Advanced Highers are trusted qualifications (84%), develop a broad range of skills for learners (82%), and that Advanced Higher standards are maintained year on year (71%).

Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of respondents agreed or strongly disagreed that Advanced Highers are good preparation for work, while 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The statement with the highest level of disagreement was 'Advanced Highers are well understood by the general public', with 29% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, more than half (57%) of respondents still agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

National Qualifications summary

In most cases, perceptions were relatively similar across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications. Perceptions of National 4 qualifications were notably poorer.

The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 5 and Higher qualifications 'develop a broad range of skills for learners' were similar (61% and 67%, respectively). However, there was notable difference between National 4s and Advanced Highers. Only 30% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that National 4s develop a

broad range of skills for learners, while 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in relation to Advanced Higher qualifications.

The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 5 and Advanced Higher qualifications are 'well understood by the public' were largely similar, with a 1 pp difference (57% and 56%, respectively). The percentage of respondents who agreed that National 4s are well understood by the public was very low (7%), while the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that Highers are well understood by the public was high (86%).

Regarding whether qualifications are 'trusted,' there were broadly similar perspectives across National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers. The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that these qualifications are trusted ranged between 77% and 91%, with Highers being the most trusted qualification, followed by Advanced Highers (84%). The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 4s are trusted qualifications, however, was only 12%.

Similarly, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were generally considered to be 'good preparation for further study,' while National 4 was not. The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers with the statement ranged from 72% to 91%. Advanced Higher was considered the best qualification for further study (91%), followed by Higher qualifications (81%). The proportion of respondents who agreed that National 4 qualifications were good preparation for further study was 24%.

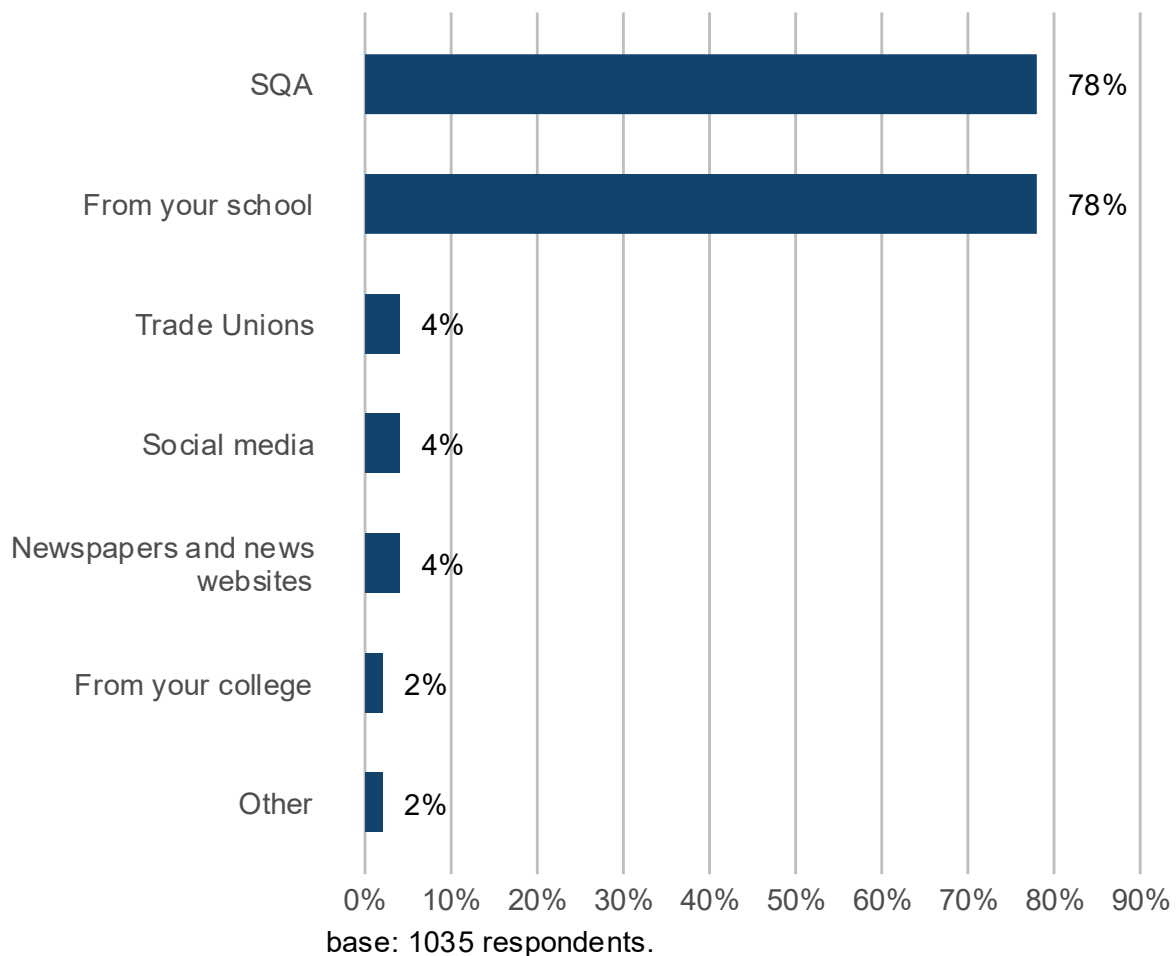
In general, a lower proportion of respondents perceived NQs to be 'good preparation for work'. The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications are good preparation for work ranged between 49% and 68%. Again, the proportion of respondents in agreement was lowest for National 4s. Only 17% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that National 4 qualifications are good preparation for work.

There was slightly less difference between National 4 and the other qualifications in regard to the statement 'Standards are maintained year on year'. The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement ranged from 37% to 71% across all qualifications. The proportion of those in agreement increased level by level from National 4 to Advanced Higher.

Assessment and awarding

Respondents were asked where they received information about how grades would be determined in 2023–24 (Figure 10). The most common sources of information were SQA (78%) and schools (78%). Less common sources of information were trade unions (4%), social media (4%), newspapers and news websites (4%) and colleges (2%).

Figure 10: Where did you get information about how grades would be determined in 2023–24?



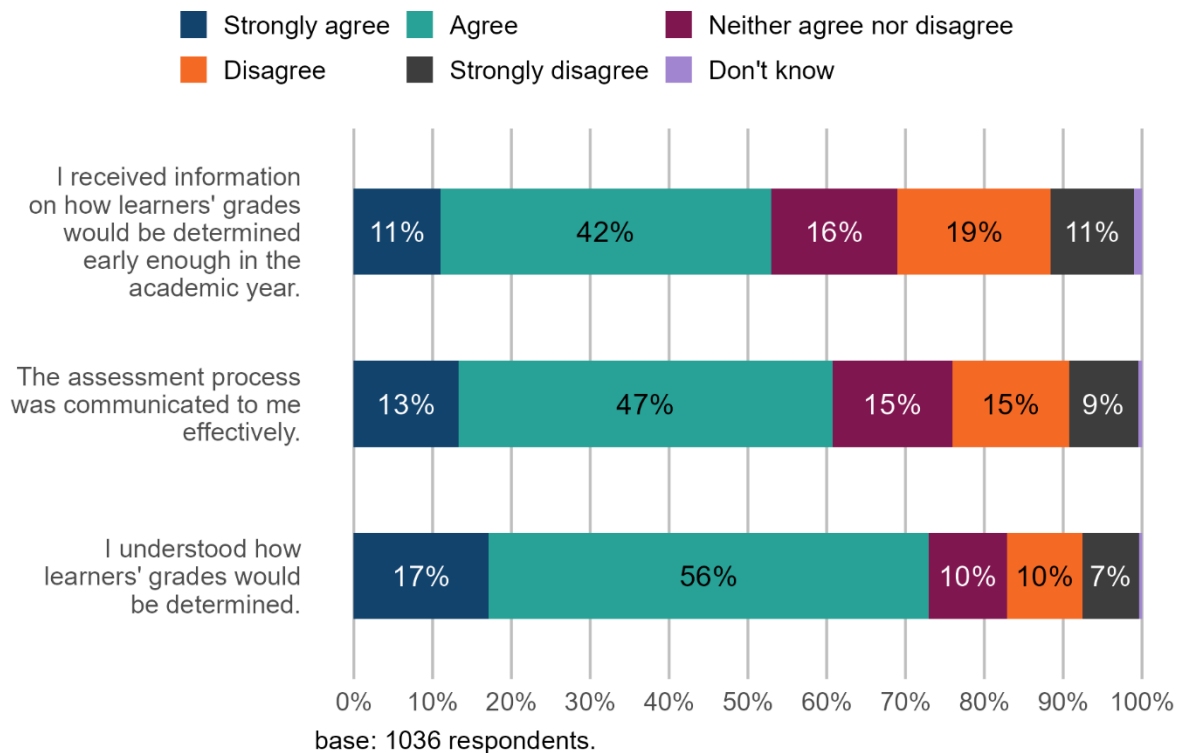
Awarding

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with three statements related to the awarding process in 2023–24:

- ♦ The assessment process was communicated to me effectively.
- ♦ I understood how learners' grades would be determined.
- ♦ I received information on how learners' grades would be determined early enough in the academic year.

A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Perceptions of awarding



Seventy-three per cent (73%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I understood how learners' grades would be determined', while 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A slightly lower proportion of respondents (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment process was communicated to them effectively, with 24% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

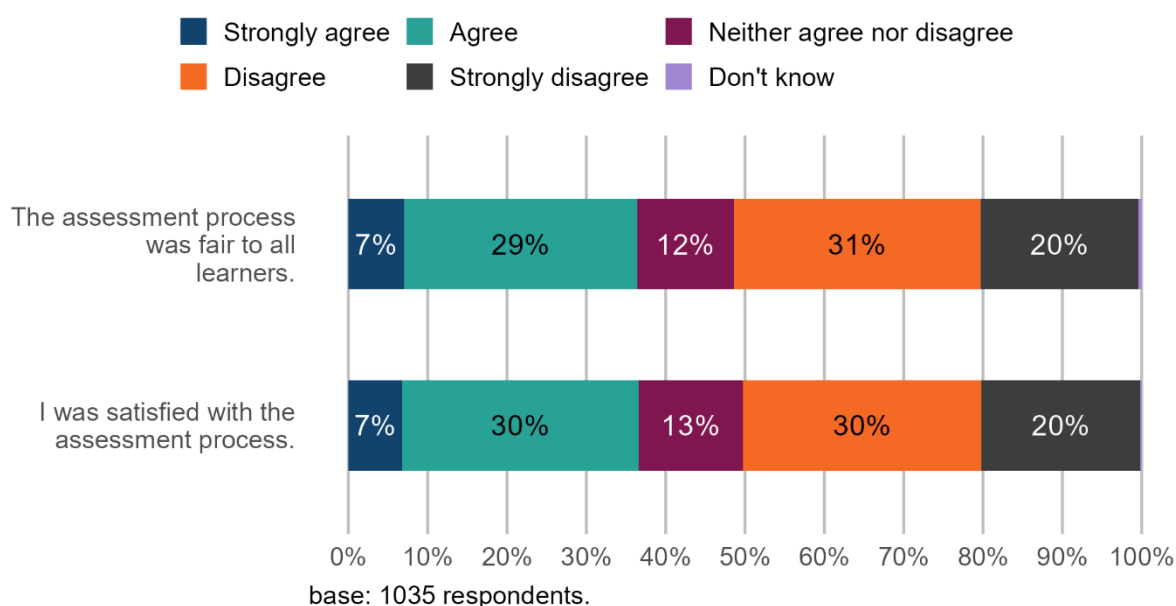
Over half of respondents (53%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I received information on how learners' grades would be determined early enough in the academic year', while under a third (30%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Assessment

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements relating to the assessment process in 2023–24 (Figure 12):

- ◆ The assessment process was fair to all learners.
- ◆ I was satisfied with the assessment process.

Figure 12: Perceptions of assessment



Just over half of respondents (51%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the assessment process was fair to all learners, while 36% agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, half of respondents (50%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the assessment process, while 37% agreed or strongly agreed.

Comparison over time

In 2022–23, educators were asked the same questions regarding assessment and awarding. For all statements, the number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed either stayed about the same or decreased, while the number of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed either stayed about the same or increased. This could suggest that satisfaction with awarding and assessment slightly declined between 2022–23 and 2023–24. However, it is important to note that the change in percentages is not necessarily indicative of a greater trend in educator attitudes in Scotland as a whole.

When asked whether they were satisfied with the assessment process, just over half of respondents (53%) agreed or strongly agreed in 2022–23. In 2023–24, this dropped down to 37%, a 16 pp decrease.

There was a similar decrease for the statement 'The assessment process was fair to all learners'. While in 2022–23 half of respondents (50%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, 36% agreed or strongly agreed in 2023–24, representing a 14 pp decrease.

In terms of whether they received information about how learners' grades would be determined early enough, 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in 2022–23 and 53% agreed or strongly agreed in 2023–24, representing a 4 pp decrease.

When asked whether the assessment process was communicated to them effectively, 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in 2022–23, while 60% agreed or strongly agreed in 2023–24. This represents a 6 pp decrease.

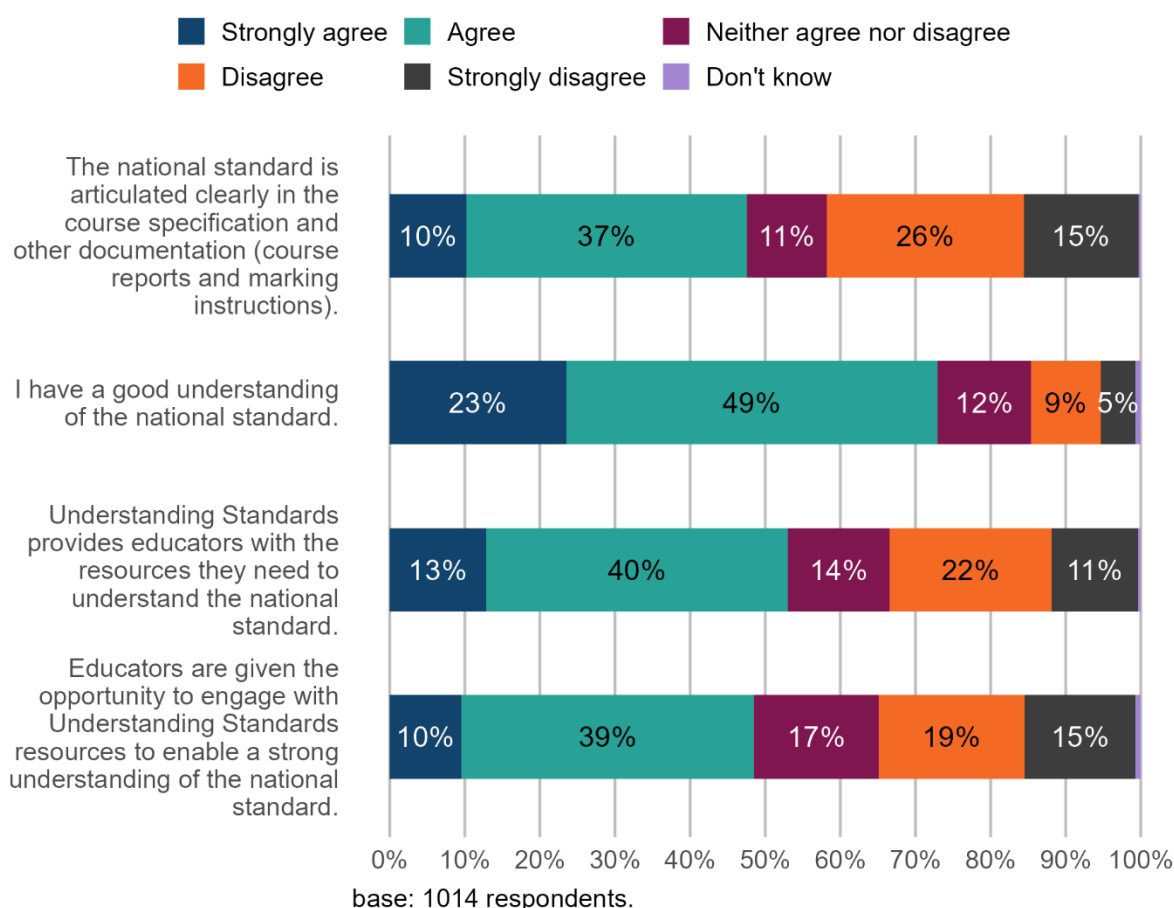
In 2022–23, 77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I understood how learners’ grades would be determined’; while in 2023–24, this number was 73%, a 4 pp decrease.

Standards

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with four statements relating to standards in 2023–24 (Figure 13):

- ◆ Understanding Standards provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard.
- ◆ The national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (course reports and marking instructions).
- ◆ I have a good understanding of the national standard.
- ◆ Educators are given the opportunity to engage with Understanding Standards resources to enable a strong understanding of the national standard.

Figure 13: Perceptions of standards



For all four statements regarding standards, more respondents chose ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ than ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree.’

A strong majority of respondents (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the national standard, while 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Over half of respondents (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that Understanding Standards provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard, while a third (33%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Just under half of respondents (49%) agreed or strongly agreed that educators are given the opportunity to engage with Understanding Standards resources to enable a strong understanding of the national standard, while 34% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

A slightly smaller proportion of respondents (47%) agreed or strongly agreed that the national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (including course reports and marking instructions). Forty-one per cent (41%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Legacy of COVID-19 impact on learning

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with five statements relating to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2023–24:

- ◆ The education system as a whole has recovered well from the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners are not as well prepared to study for National Qualifications as their predecessors were prior to the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners are less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic.

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with four out of the five statements (Figures 14a and 14b).

Figure 14a: COVID-19 impact on learning

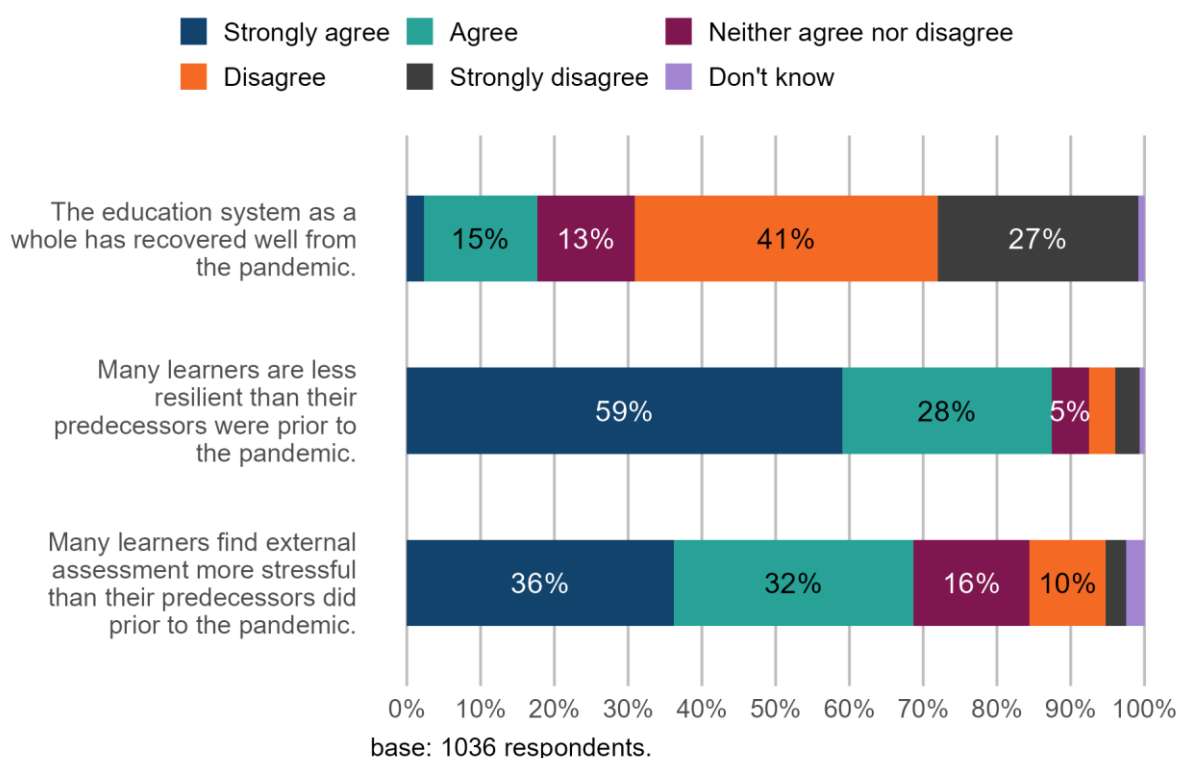
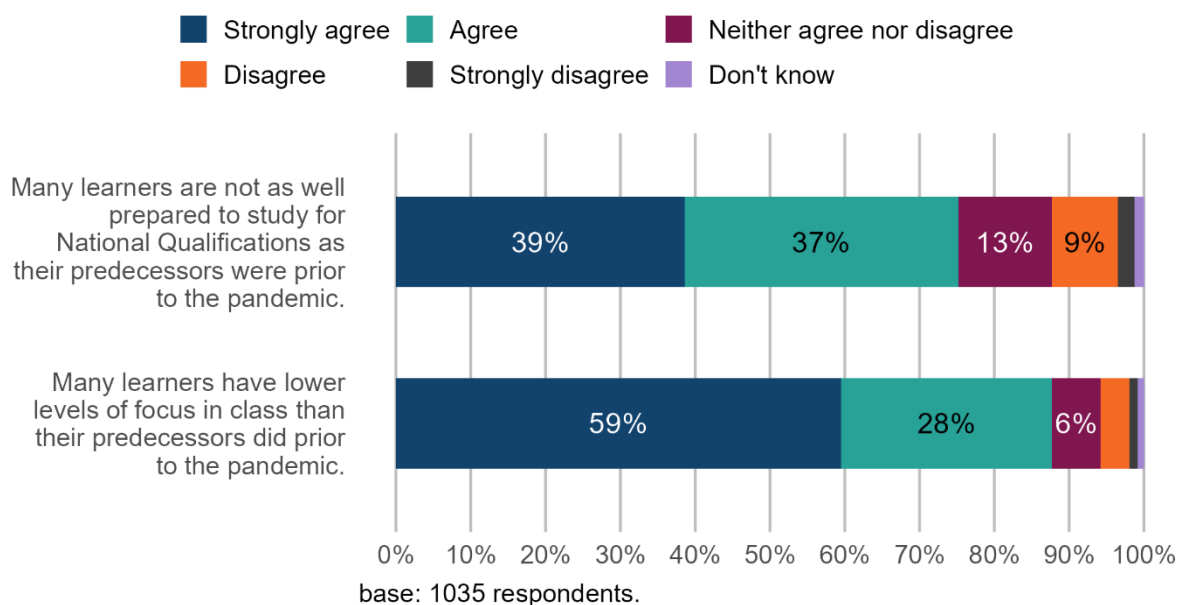


Figure 14b: COVID-19 impact on learning



The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic (87%), and that many learners are less resilient than their predecessors (87%). Seventy-six per cent (76%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Many learners are not as well prepared to study National Qualifications as their predecessors were prior to the pandemic', while 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In regard to the statement 'Many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic', 68% agreed or strongly agreed, while 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The statement with the highest level of disagreement was 'The education system as a whole has recovered well from the pandemic', with 68% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, and 17% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Comparison over time

In 2022–23, educators were asked the same questions regarding the effects of the pandemic on learning. A comparison of findings between 2022–23 and 2023–24 suggests that the effects of the pandemic on learning may have lessened slightly.

Seventy-one per cent (71%) of respondents from the 2023 evaluation of the Approach to Assessment of National Graded Courses disagreed or strongly disagreed that the education system as a whole has recovered well from the pandemic. This number slightly decreased by 3 pp in 2024, with 68% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

When asked if many learners were less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic, 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in 2023; whereas 87% agreed or strongly agreed in 2024, representing a 7 pp decrease.

In 2023, 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic; whereas in 2024, 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, representing an 8 pp decrease.

While 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners are not as well prepared to study for NQs as their predecessors were prior to the pandemic in 2023, 76% of respondents did so in 2024, representing an 8 pp decrease.

When asked if many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic, 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in 2023; while in 2024, 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, representing a 3 pp decrease.

It should be noted that the relatively small changes in percentages between 2022–23 and 2023–24 is not necessarily indicative of a greater trend in educator attitudes in Scotland as a whole.

Composite analysis

Communications satisfaction

The communications satisfaction composite examined how respondents felt about NQ communications overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following three questions about communications:

- ◆ I received information on how learners' grades would be determined early enough in the academic year.

- ◆ The assessment process was communicated to me effectively.
- ◆ I understood how learners' grades would be determined.

In designing the communications satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the three statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's communications about NQ in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a satisfaction score for respondents who answered all three questions. The composite had an overall average score of 3.4 for all respondents, indicating an above mid-range level of satisfaction with communications. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of slightly above 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Communication satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate additional support need (ASN) status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD or candidate ASN status ($p > 0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Length of time in an SQA appointee role

Respondents who had been an appointee in the past five years had a mean composite score of 3.6, compared with 3.3 for who had not been an appointee in the past five years (Table 2 and Figure 15).

Table 2: Communication satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

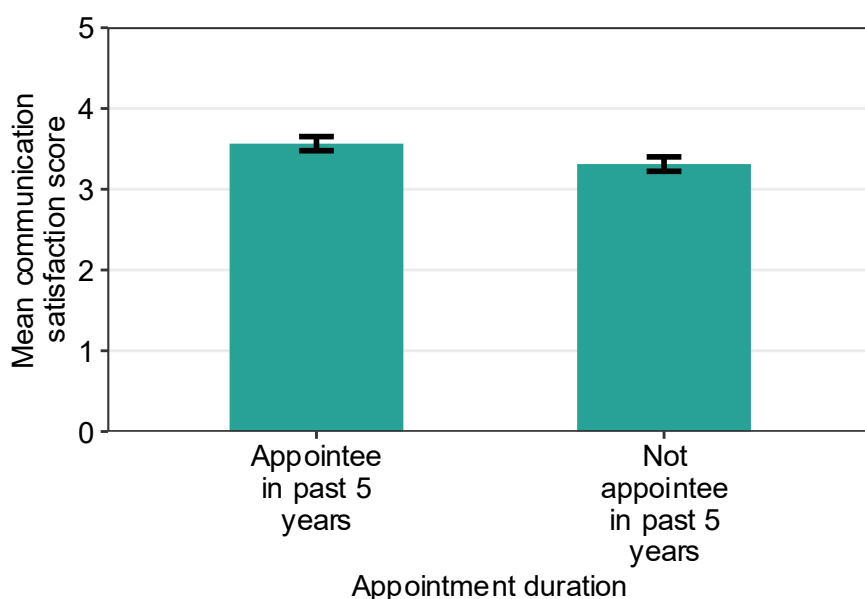
Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	540	3.6	3.5	3.7
Not appointee in past 5 years	490	3.3	3.2	3.4

Kruskal-Wallis test p -value = 0

There is evidence to suggest that at least one of the appointment duration groupings has a different median score.

There was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the composite scores of respondents who had been an appointee in the past five years, and those who had not. This could indicate that educators who had not been an appointee in the past five years in the general population were slightly less satisfied with communications from SQA about NQ in 2023–24 than educators who had been an appointee in the past five years.

Figure 15: Communication satisfaction composite score by appointment duration



Qualifications satisfaction

National 4

The National 4 composite examined respondent satisfaction with National 4 qualifications overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following six questions about National 4s:

- ◆ National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners.
- ◆ National 4s are well understood by the general public.
- ◆ National 4s are trusted qualifications.
- ◆ National 4s are good preparation for work.
- ◆ National 4s are good preparation for further study.
- ◆ National 4 standards are maintained year on year.

In designing the National 4 satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's National 4 qualifications in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a National 4 satisfaction score for respondents who answered all six questions. The composite had an overall average score of 2.4 for all respondents, indicating a low level of satisfaction with National 4. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of slightly above 'disagree'.

National 4 satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD, appointment duration or candidate ASN status ($p > 0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

National 5

The National 5 composite examined respondent satisfaction with National 5 qualifications overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following six questions about National 5s:

- ◆ National 5s develop a broad range of skills for learners.
- ◆ National 5s are well understood by the general public.
- ◆ National 5s are trusted qualifications.
- ◆ National 5s are good preparation for work.
- ◆ National 5s are good preparation for further study.
- ◆ National 5 standards are maintained year on year.

In designing the National 5 satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's National 5 qualifications in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a National 5 satisfaction score for respondents who answered all six questions. The composite had an overall average score of 3.5 for all respondents, indicating an above mid-range level of satisfaction with National 5. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response in between 'neither agree nor disagree' and 'agree'.

National 5 satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD, appointment duration or candidate ASN status ($p>0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Higher

The Higher composite examined respondent satisfaction with Higher qualifications overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following six questions about Highers:

- ◆ Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners.
- ◆ Highers are well understood by the general public.
- ◆ Highers are trusted qualifications.
- ◆ Highers are good preparation for work.
- ◆ Highers are good preparation for further study.
- ◆ Highers standards are maintained year on year.

In designing the Higher satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's Higher qualifications in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a Higher satisfaction score for respondents who answered all six questions. The composite had an overall average score of 3.8 for all respondents, indicating an above mid-range level of satisfaction with Higher. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of just below 'agree'.

Higher satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD, appointment duration or candidate ASN status ($p>0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Advanced Higher

The Advanced Higher composite examined respondent satisfaction with Advanced Higher qualifications overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following six questions about Advanced Highers:

- ◆ Advanced Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners.
- ◆ Advanced Highers are well understood by the general public.
- ◆ Advanced Highers are trusted qualifications.
- ◆ Advanced Highers are good preparation for work.
- ◆ Advanced Highers are good preparation for further study.
- ◆ Advanced Highers standards are maintained year on year.

In designing the Advanced Higher satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's Advanced Higher qualifications in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated an Advanced Higher satisfaction score for respondents who answered all six questions. The composite had an overall average score of 3.9 for all respondents, indicating an above mid-range level of satisfaction with Advanced Higher. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of just below 'agree'.

Advanced Higher satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD, appointment duration or candidate ASN status ($p>0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Impact of the legacy of COVID-19 on learning

The COVID-19 impact on learning composite examined how respondents felt about NQ learning overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following five questions about the impact of the legacy of COVID-19 on learning:

- ◆ The education system as a whole has recovered well from the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners are less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners are not as well prepared to study for National Qualifications as their predecessors were prior to the pandemic.
- ◆ Many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.

In contrast to the other composite scores, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with statements indicated lower levels of satisfaction with NQ learning in 2023–24. To ensure consistency, the 5-point Likert scale for the statement 'The education system as a whole has recovered well from the pandemic' was flipped for the purposes of creating a meaningful composite score. This was due to this statement having a positive slant and the other four statements having a negative slant. Therefore, for this composite, low mean scores indicate high levels of satisfaction and high mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a learning satisfaction score for respondents who answered all five questions. The composite had an overall average score of 4.1 for all respondents, indicating a low level of satisfaction with NQ learning in 2023–24. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of just above 'agree'.

Learning satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD, appointment duration or candidate ASN status ($p>0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Assessment and awarding satisfaction

The assessment and awarding satisfaction composite examined how respondents felt about NQ assessment and awarding overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following two questions about assessment and awarding:

- ◆ The assessment process was fair to all learners.
- ◆ I was satisfied with the assessment process.

In designing the assessment and awarding satisfaction composite, we interpreted higher levels of agreement with the two statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with NQ assessments and awarding in 2023–24. Therefore, lower mean scores indicated lower levels of satisfaction.

We calculated an assessment and awarding satisfaction score for respondents who answered both questions. The composite had an overall average score of 2.7 for all respondents, indicating a below mid-level of satisfaction with assessment and awarding. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of slightly below 'neither agree nor disagree' for all respondents.

Assessment and awarding satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD or candidate ASN status ($p>0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Length of time in an SQA appointee role

Respondents who had been an appointee in the past five years had a mean composite score of 2.8, compared with 2.6 for those who had not been an appointee in the past five years (Table 3 and Figure 16).

Table 3: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

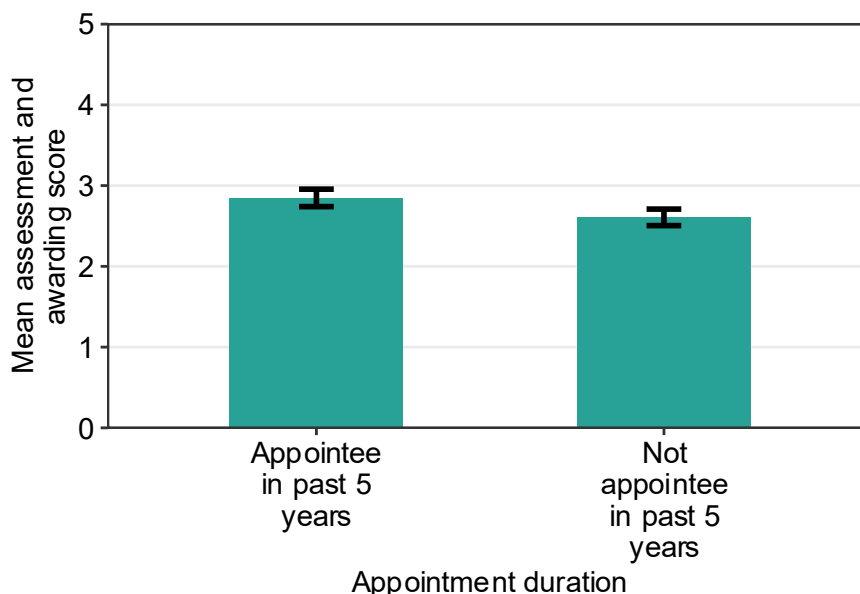
Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	540	2.8	2.7	3
Not appointee in past 5 years	490	2.6	2.5	2.7

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0061

There is evidence to suggest that at least one of the appointment duration groupings has a different median score.

There was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the composite scores of respondents who had been an appointee in the past five years, and those who had not. This could indicate that respondents who had not been an appointee in the past five years in the general population were slightly less satisfied with NQ assessment and awarding in 2023–24 than respondents who had been an appointee in the past five years.

Figure 16: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by appointment duration



Standards satisfaction

The standards satisfaction composite examined how respondents felt about NQ standards overall in 2023–24 by taking an average of their response to the following four questions about standards:

- ◆ The national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (course reports and marking instructions).
- ◆ I have a good understanding of the national standard.
- ◆ Understanding Standards provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard.
- ◆ Educators are given the opportunity to engage with Understanding Standards resources to enable a strong understanding of the national standard.

In designing the standards satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the four statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with NQ standards in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a standards satisfaction score for respondents who answered all four questions. The composite had an overall average score of 3.3 for all respondents, indicating an above mid-range level of satisfaction with standards. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of slightly above 'neither agree nor disagree' for all respondents.

Standards satisfaction score was compared against three different demographic sub-groups: SIMD, length of time in an SQA appointee role and candidate ASN status. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on SIMD, appointment duration or candidate ASN status ($p>0.01$) (see Appendix for more detail).

Appendix – Educator satisfaction analysis

Communications satisfaction composite

Communications satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 17: Communications satisfaction composite score by SIMD

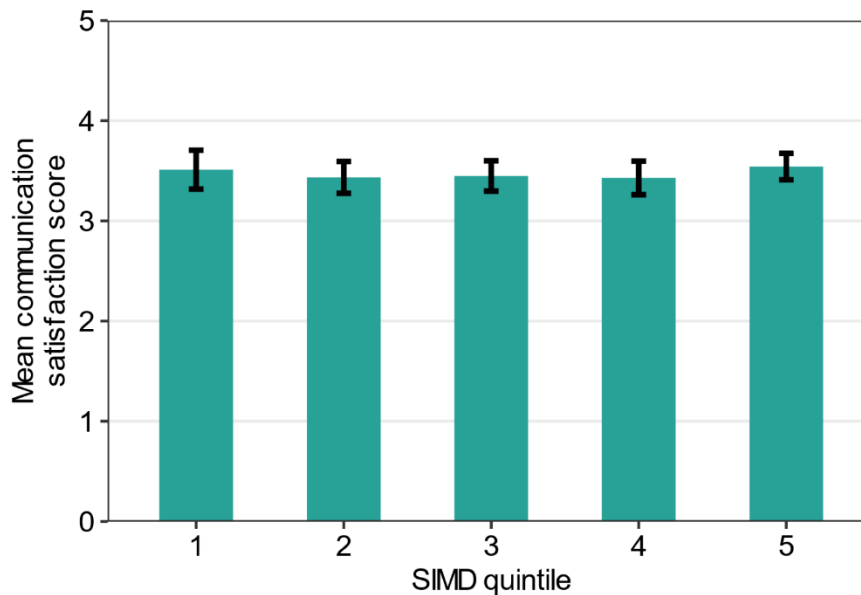


Table 4: Communications satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	105	3.5	3.3	3.7
2	155	3.4	3.3	3.6
3	170	3.4	3.3	3.6
4	170	3.4	3.3	3.6
5	220	3.5	3.4	3.7

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.3219

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

Communications satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 18: Communications satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

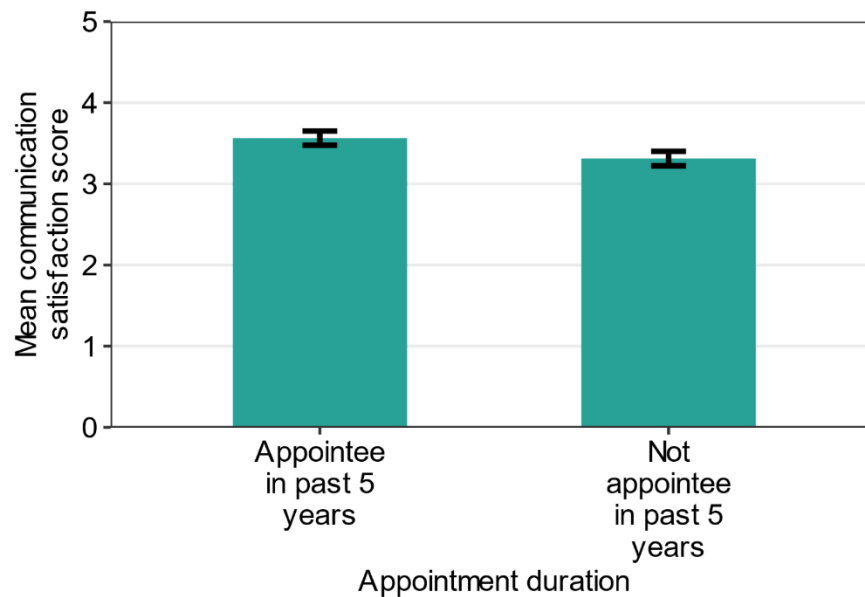


Table 5: Communications satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	540	3.6	3.5	3.7
Not appointee in past 5 years	490	3.3	3.2	3.4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0

There is evidence to suggest that at least one of the appointment duration groupings has a different median score.

Communication satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 19: Communication satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

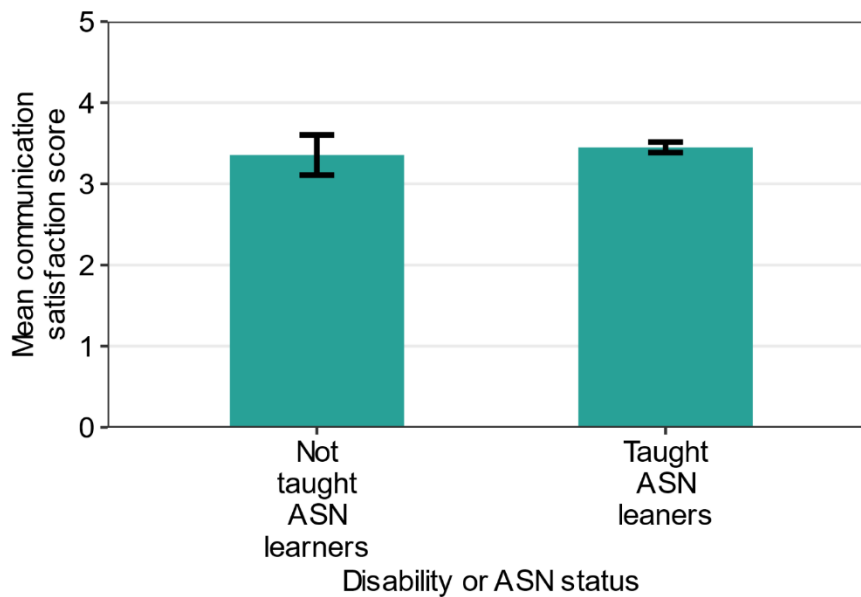


Table 6: Communication satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	60	3.4	3.1	3.6
Taught ASN learners	970	3.4	3.4	3.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.2956

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

National 4 satisfaction composite

National 4 satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 20: National 4 satisfaction composite score by SIMD

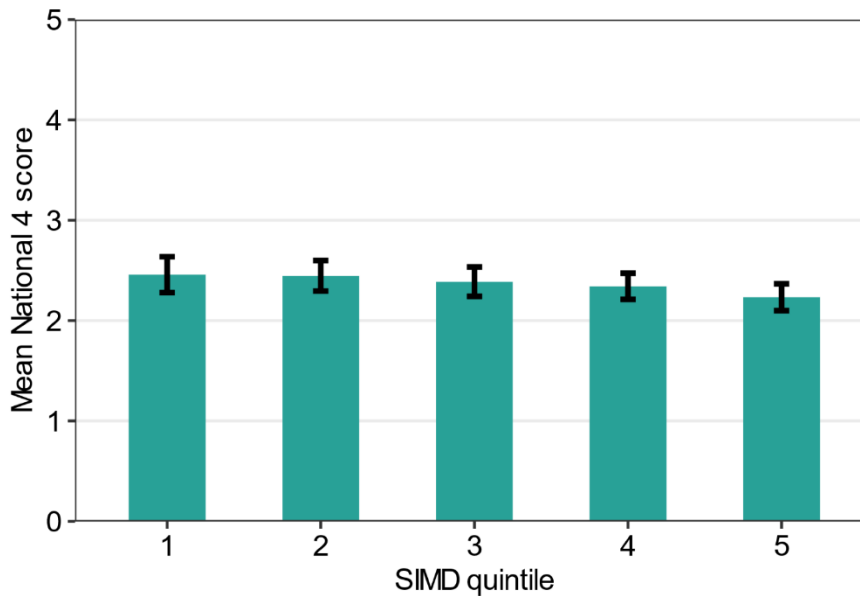


Table 7: National 4 satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean National 4 score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	85	2.5	2.3	2.6
2	125	2.4	2.3	2.6
3	115	2.4	2.2	2.5
4	140	2.3	2.2	2.5
5	140	2.2	2.1	2.4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.2596

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

National 4 satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 21: National 4 satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

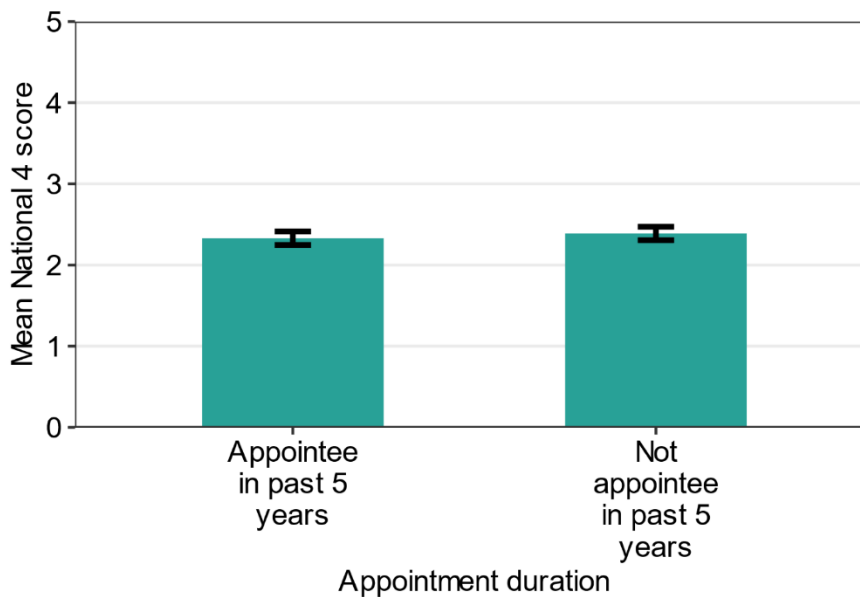


Table 8: National 4 satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean National 4 score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	390	2.3	2.2	2.4
Not appointee in past 5 years	365	2.4	2.3	2.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.4659

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the appointment duration groupings have a different median score.

National 4 satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 22: National 4 satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

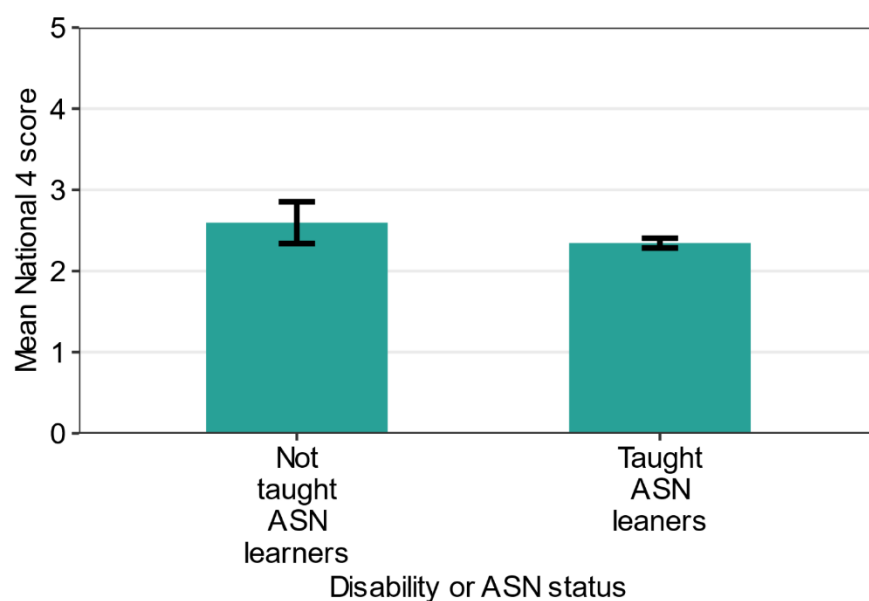


Table 9: National 4 satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean National 4 score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	40	2.6	2.3	2.9
Taught ASN learners	720	2.3	2.3	2.4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.1049

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

National 5 satisfaction composite

National 5 satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 23: National 5 satisfaction composite score by SIMD

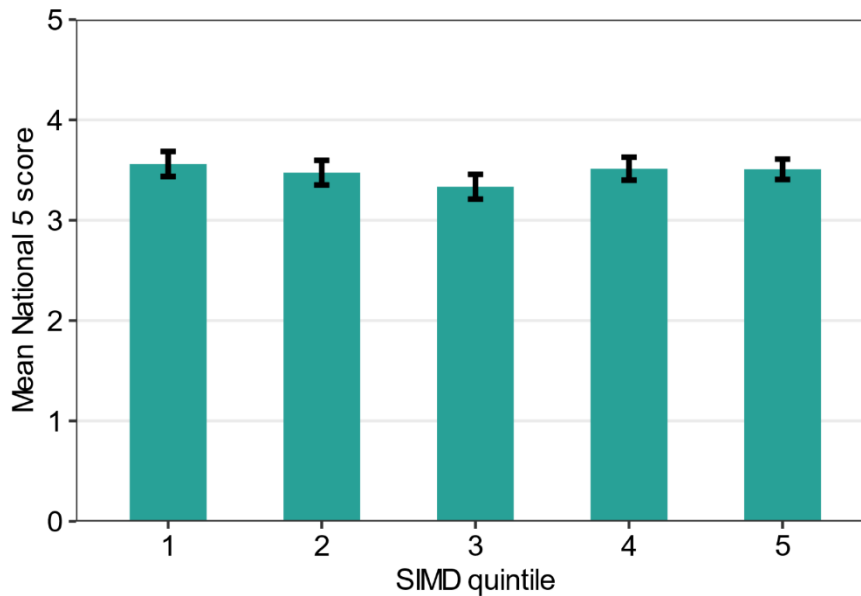


Table 10: National 5 satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean National 5 score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	100	3.6	3.4	3.7
2	145	3.5	3.4	3.6
3	155	3.3	3.2	3.5
4	165	3.5	3.4	3.6
5	210	3.5	3.4	3.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.3377

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

National 5 satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 24: National 5 satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

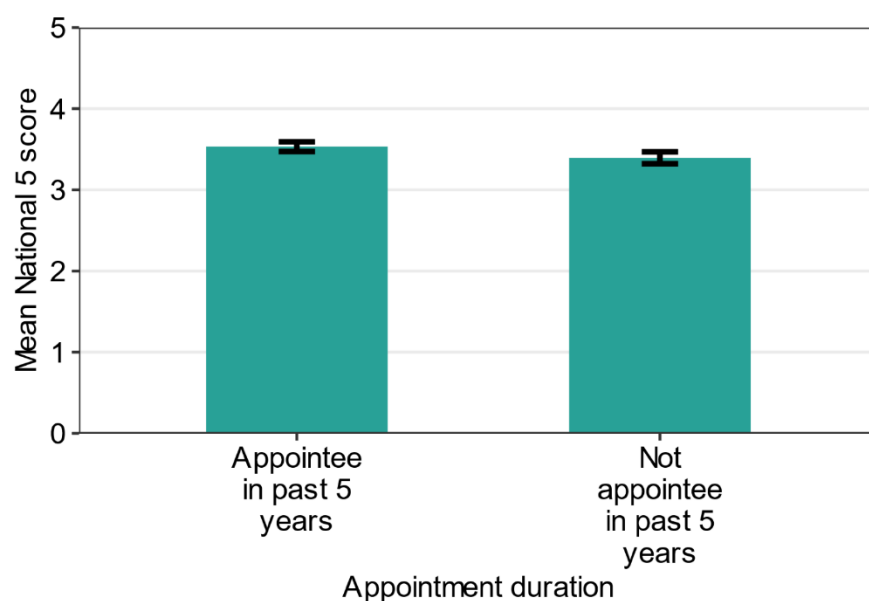


Table 11: National 5 satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean National 5 score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	515	3.5	3.5	3.6
Not appointee in past 5 years	465	3.4	3.3	3.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0563

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the appointment duration groupings have a different median score.

National 5 satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 25: National 5 satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

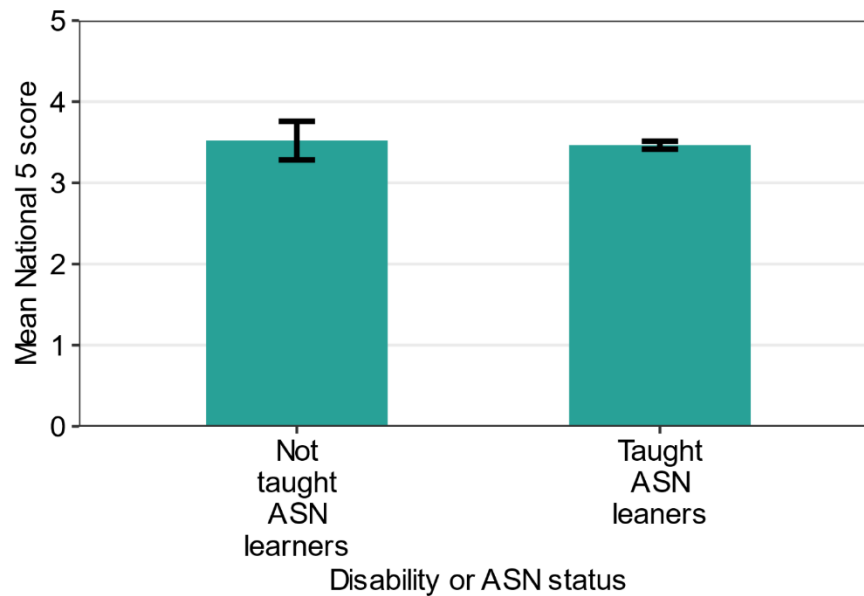


Table 12: National 5 satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean National 5 score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	50	3.5	3.3	3.8
Taught ASN learners	930	3.5	3.4	3.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.6397

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

Higher satisfaction composite

Higher satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 26: Higher satisfaction composite score by SIMD

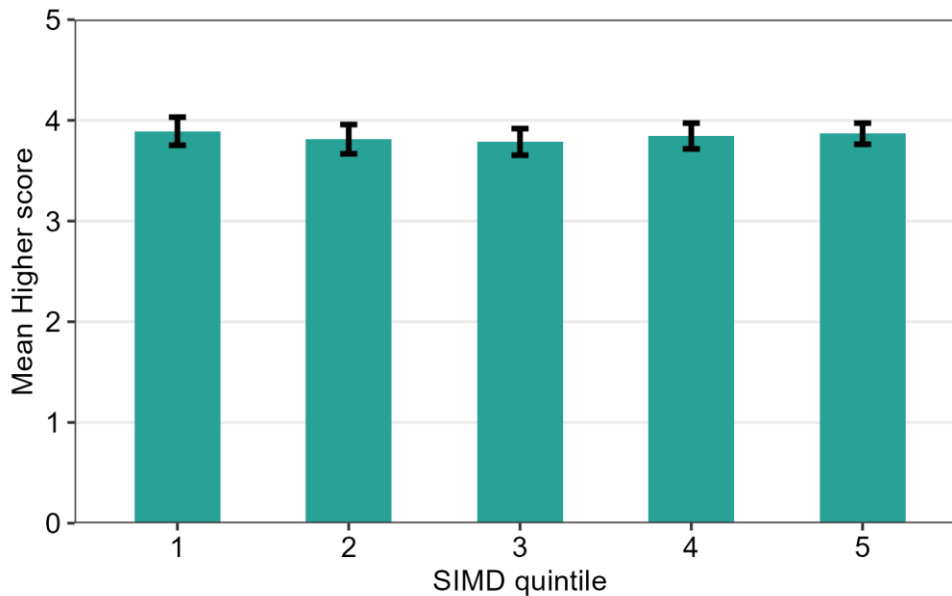


Table 13: Higher satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean Higher score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	85	3.9	3.8	4
2	120	3.8	3.7	4
3	140	3.8	3.7	3.9
4	140	3.8	3.7	4
5	190	3.9	3.8	4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.5552

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 27: Higher satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

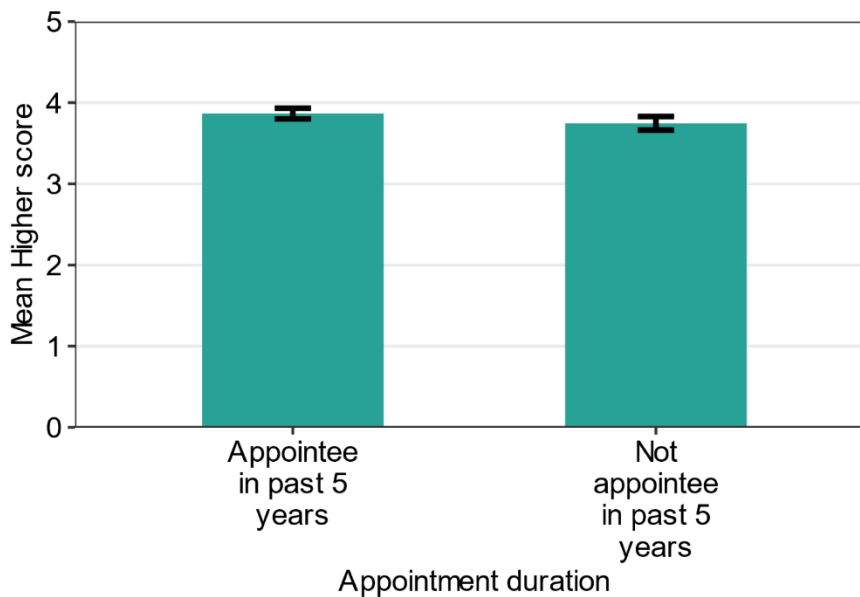


Table 14: Higher satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean Higher score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	470	3.9	3.8	3.9
Not appointee in past 5 years	375	3.7	3.7	3.8

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.1873

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the appointment duration groupings have a different median score.

Higher satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 28: Higher satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

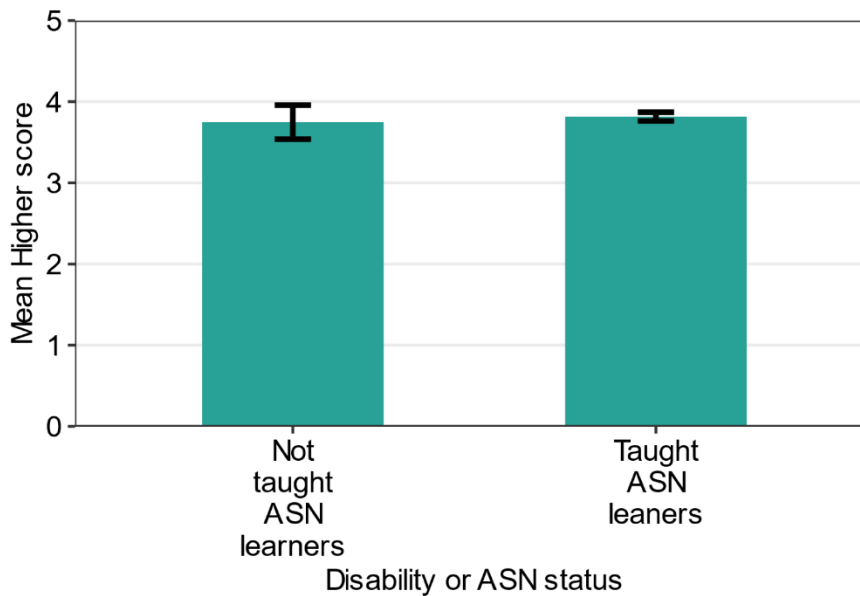


Table 15: Higher satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean Higher score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	45	3.7	3.5	4
Taught ASN learners	795	3.8	3.8	3.9

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.7218

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

Advanced Higher satisfaction composite

Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 29: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by SIMD

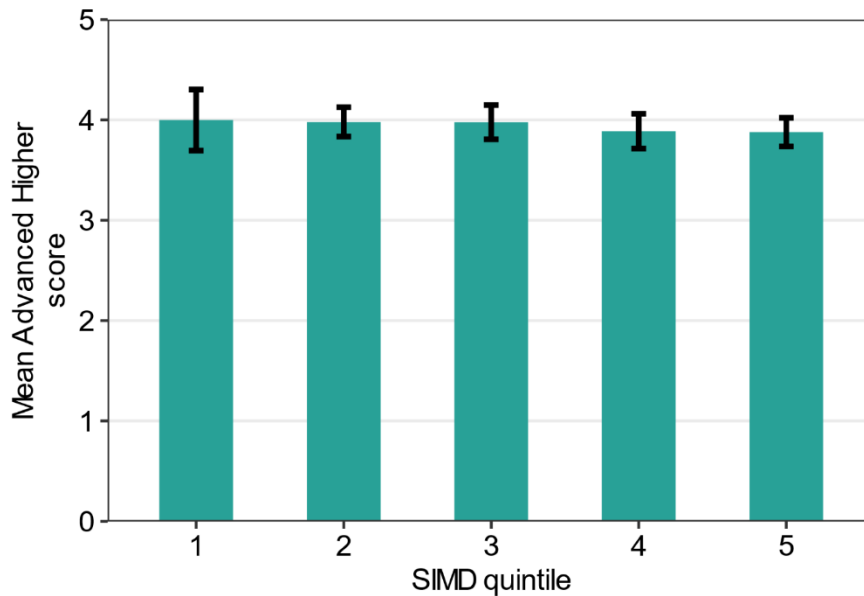


Table 16: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean Advanced Higher score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	25	4	3.7	4.3
2	35	4	3.8	4.1
3	60	4	3.8	4.1
4	65	3.9	3.7	4.1
5	90	3.9	3.7	4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.7735

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 30: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

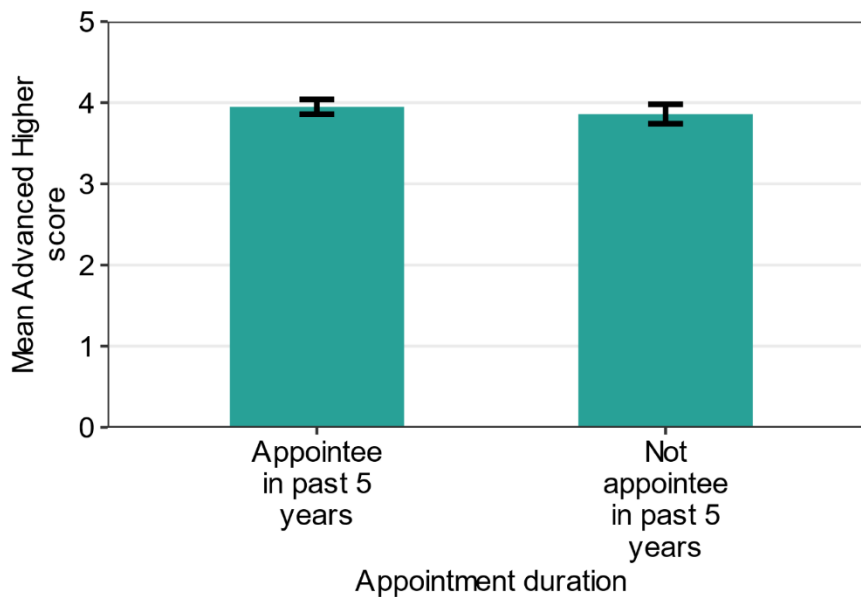


Table 17: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean Advanced Higher score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	210	3.9	3.9	4
Not appointee in past 5 years	125	3.9	3.7	4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.2641

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the appointment duration groupings have a different median score.

Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 31: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

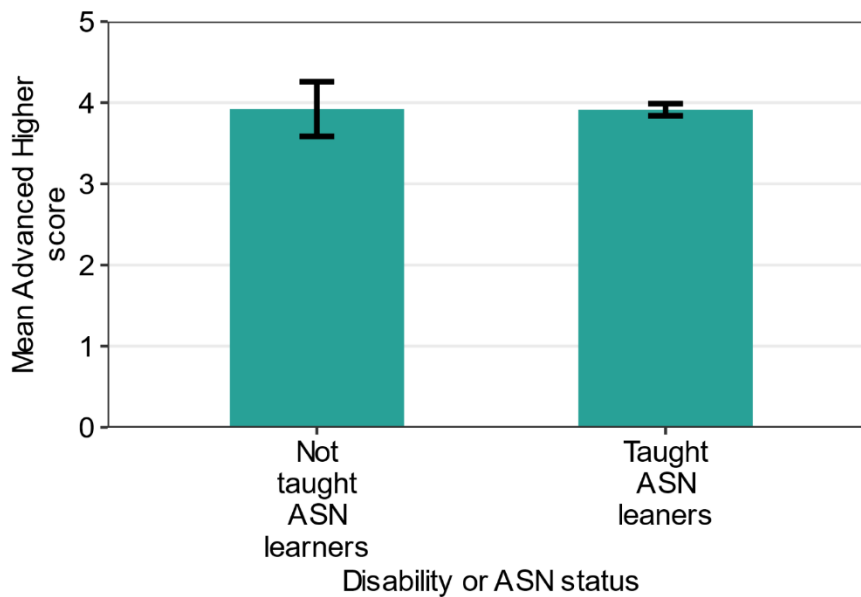


Table 18: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean Advanced Higher score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	15	3.9	3.6	4.3
Taught ASN learners	315	3.9	3.8	4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.9664

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

Legacy of COVID-19 impact on learning composite

Legacy of COVID-19 impact composite score by SIMD

Figure 32: COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by SIMD

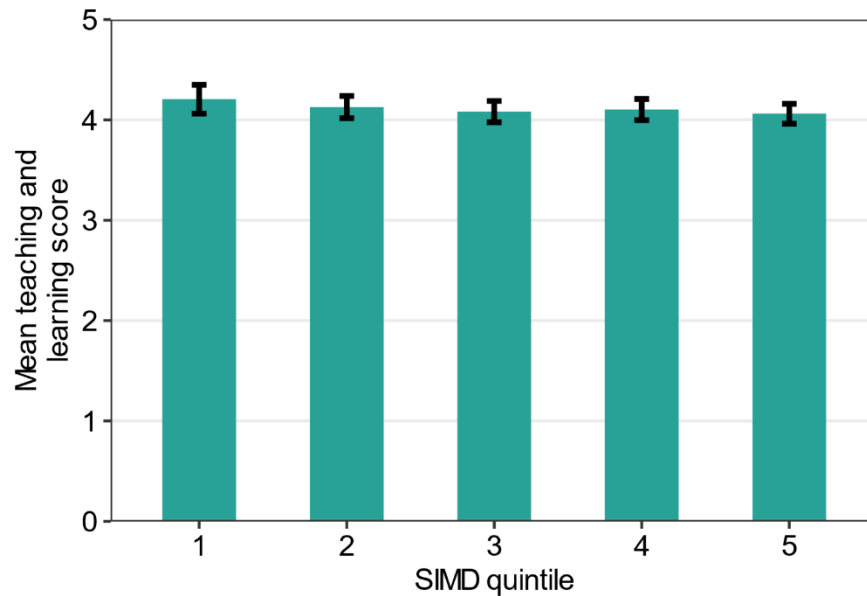


Table 19: COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean teaching and learning score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	100	4.2	4.1	4.4
2	155	4.1	4	4.2
3	170	4.1	4	4.2
4	175	4.1	4	4.2
5	220	4.1	4	4.2

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.4536

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

Legacy of COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 34: COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by appointment duration

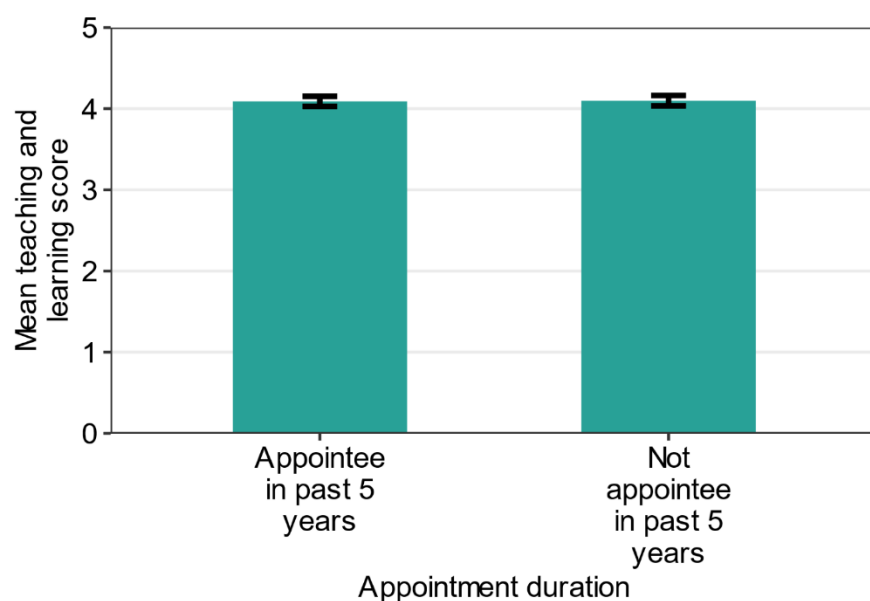


Table 20: COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean teaching and learning score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	530	4.1	4	4.2
Not appointee in past 5 years	500	4.1	4	4.2

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.5244

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the appointment duration groupings have a different median score.

Legacy of COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 35: COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by candidate ASN status

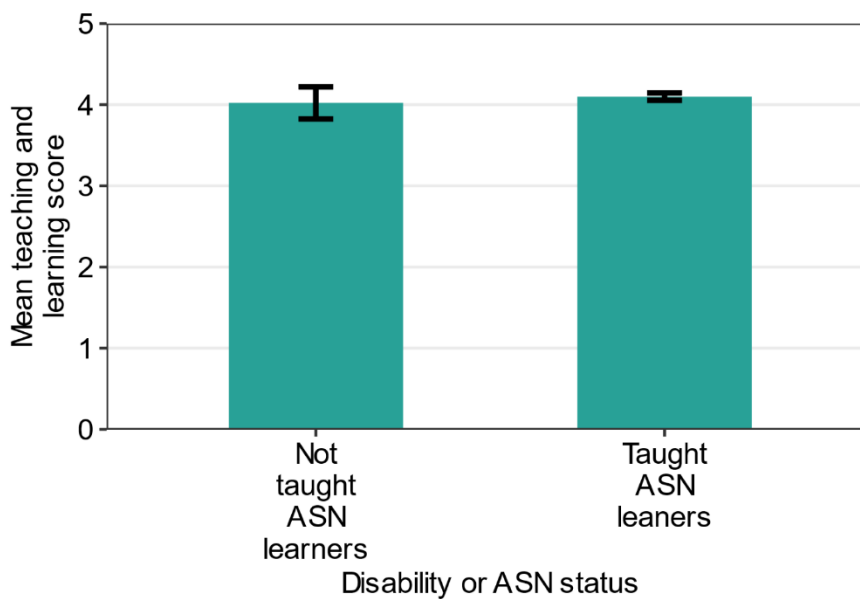


Table 21: COVID-19 impact on learning composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean teaching and learning score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	65	4	3.8	4.2
Taught ASN learners	965	4.1	4.1	4.1

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.1443

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite

Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 36: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by SIMD

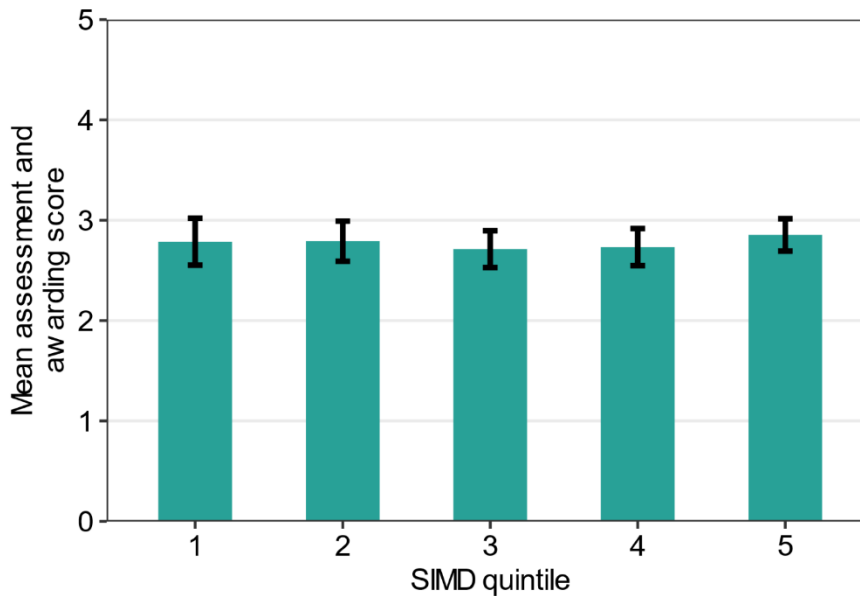


Table 22: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	105	2.8	2.6	3
2	155	2.8	2.6	3
3	165	2.7	2.5	2.9
4	170	2.7	2.5	2.9
5	220	2.9	2.7	3

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.1805

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 37: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

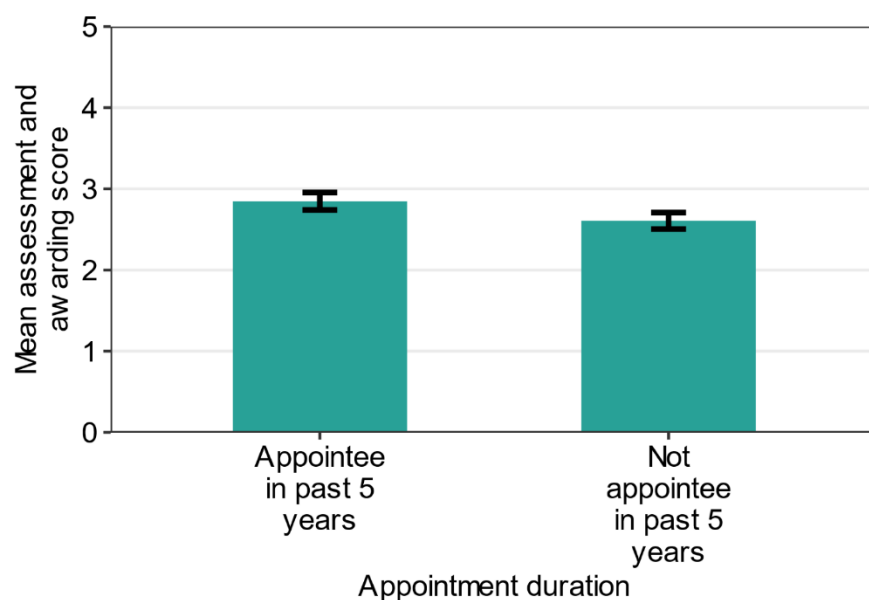


Table 23: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	540	2.8	2.7	3
Not appointee in past 5 years	490	2.6	2.5	2.7

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0061

There is evidence to suggest that at least one of the appointment duration groupings has a different median score.

Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 38: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

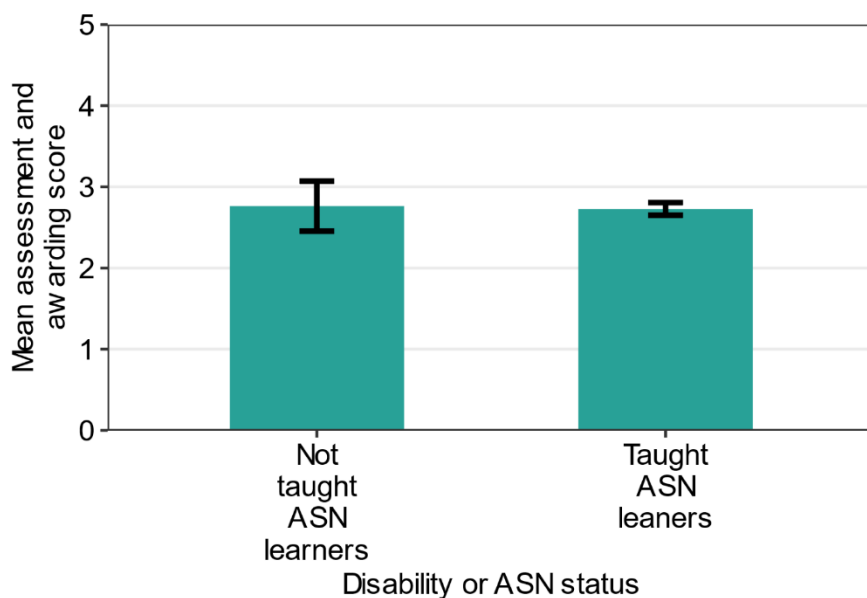


Table 24: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	60	2.8	2.5	3.1
Taught ASN learners	970	2.7	2.7	2.8

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.977

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.

Standards satisfaction composite

Standards satisfaction composite score by SIMD

Figure 39: Standards satisfaction composite score by SIMD

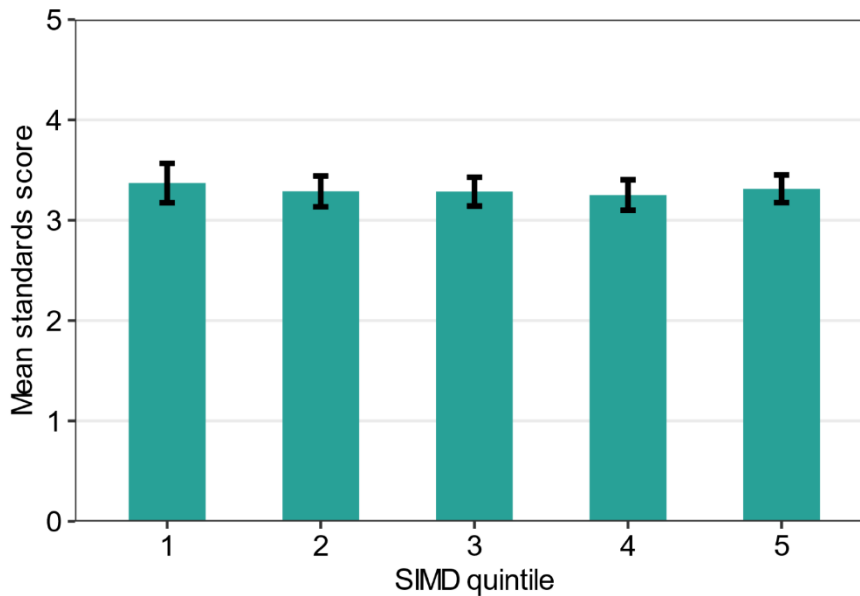


Table 26: Standards satisfaction composite score by SIMD

SIMD quintile	Number of respondents	Mean standards score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
1	100	3.4	3.2	3.6
2	150	3.3	3.1	3.4
3	165	3.3	3.1	3.4
4	170	3.3	3.1	3.4
5	215	3.3	3.2	3.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.6768

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the SIMD quintile groupings have a different median score.

Standards satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA appointee role

Figure 40: Standards satisfaction composite score by length of appointment duration

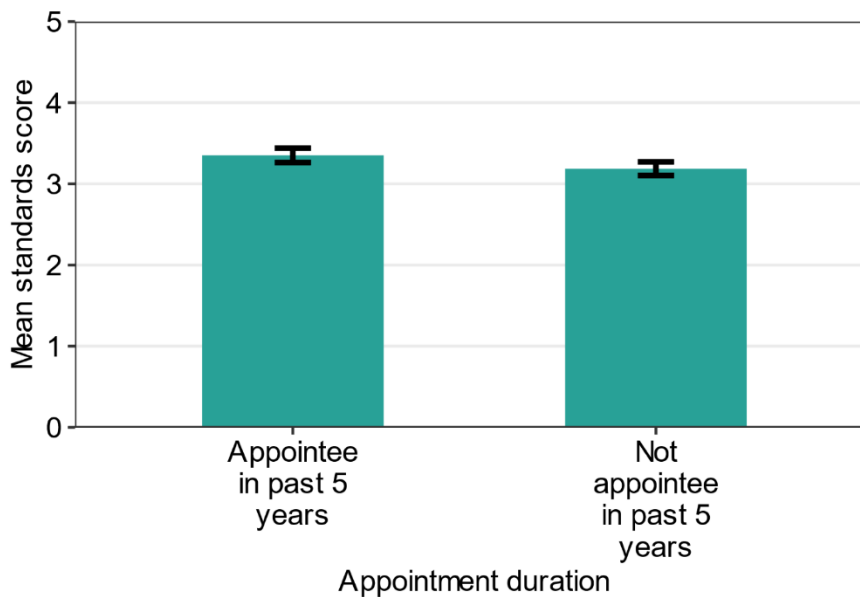


Table 27: Standards satisfaction composite score by appointment duration

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean standards score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	530	3.4	3.3	3.4
Not appointee in past 5 years	480	3.2	3.1	3.3

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0213

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the appointment duration groupings have a different median score.

Standards satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Figure 41: Standards satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

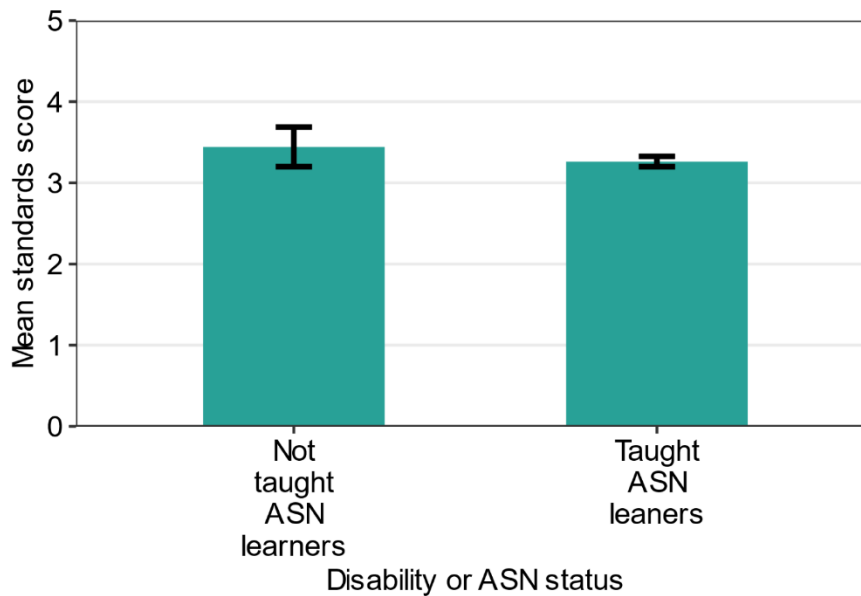


Table 28: Standards satisfaction composite score by candidate ASN status

Disability or ASN status	Number of respondents	Mean standards score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Not taught ASN learners	55	3.4	3.2	3.7
Taught ASN learners	955	3.3	3.2	3.3

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.3971

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the disability or ASN status groupings have a different median score.