

# **Experiences of National 4s, National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers: Educator perspectives**

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We are committed to using plain language. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve, let us know at [editor@qualifications.gov.scot](mailto:editor@qualifications.gov.scot).

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

In 2024, SQA ran the first year of a new annual series of surveys to gauge how perceptions of National Qualifications (NQs) among a range of stakeholders that work with, develop and use the qualifications change over time. The stakeholders surveyed include learners, educators, senior appointees and SQA Qualifications Development colleagues. The research is intended to continue annually unless there are significant changes to the context. In 2025, the second year of the survey was launched.

## Method

This research aimed to capture perceptions of educators who had taught National Qualifications (NQ) in 2024–25 about a range of topics. These included:

- National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
- Assessment and awarding
- Standards
- Impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching

The research also sought to understand how far views on these topics had changed over time. A final aim was to gauge how educator respondents experienced several aspects of NQs in 2024–25 by length of time in an SQA Appointee role.

Educators across centres in Scotland with experience of delivering NQs in 2024–25 were invited to take part in an online survey on these topics in September and October 2025. The survey received 751 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.

## Findings

### National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

In most cases, educator respondents' perceptions of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were relatively positive, while perceptions of National 4 qualifications were notably poorer.

There was a high level of 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 81% for National 5, 92% for Higher, and 85% for Advanced Higher. However, the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement for National 4 was 20%.

A high proportion of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were 'good preparation for further study,' with 71% of respondents in agreement for National 5, 80% for Higher and 94% for Advanced Higher. Again, the proportion of respondents in agreement with this statement for National 4 was substantially lower at 33%.

The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed fell within a lower range when asked whether National 5 (51%), Higher (58%) and Advanced Higher (68%) were 'good preparation for work'. The proportion of respondents agreeing with this statement for National 4 was much lower at 21%.

The statement that qualifications were 'well understood by the public' in 2024–25 also received a slightly lower proportion of respondents in agreement for National 5 (63%) and Advanced Higher (60%). However, there was still a high proportion of respondents agreeing for Higher (87%), while for National 4, only 11% agreed or strongly agreed.

Since the previous year, perceptions of NQs in regards to some elements improved, while others remained similar. The proportion of educator respondents who agreed that 'National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners' increased from 30% to 43% between 2024 and 2025. The proportion of educator respondents who agreed that 'National 4s are good preparation for further study' increased from 43% to 52%. For National 5, the proportion of educator respondents that agreed or strongly agreed that 'National 5 standards are maintained year on year' increased from 58% in 2024 to 67% in 2025.

## **Assessment, awarding and standards**

There were moderate to high levels of agreement with statements relating to communications about assessment. Seventy per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood how grades would be determined in 2024–25. Sixty-three per cent expressed agreement that 'the assessment process was communicated to [them] effectively' and 57% felt the same way for the statement 'I received information on how grades would be determined early enough in the academic year'.

Less than half (43%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment process was fair to all learners, and 45% felt satisfied with the assessment process.

Between 2024 and 2025, the proportion of educator respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the assessment process increased from 37% to 45%.

## **Standards**

Seventy-six per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the national standard, but just over half of respondents (53%) were in agreement that 'Understanding Standards' materials provide educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard. Fifty-three per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'the national standard is articulated in the course specification and other documentation (course assessment tasks, marking instructions and specimen papers)'.

## **Impact of the pandemic on learning**

There was strong agreement among educator respondents that the pandemic continued to have an impact on learning in 2025. However, there was evidence to suggest that respondents perceived the impact to have lessened since the previous year.

The majority of respondents (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that the education system as a whole has struggled to recover from the pandemic. Eighty-six per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners are less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic, and 83% agreed or strongly agreed that many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did.

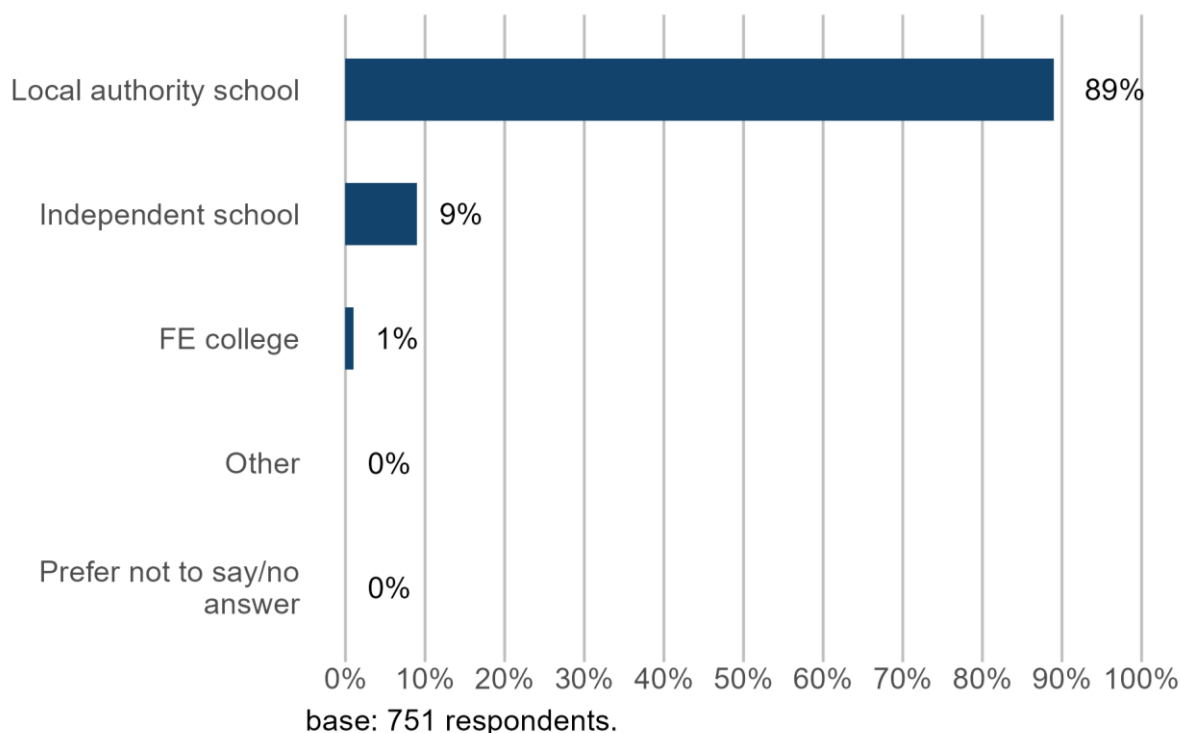
Sixty-eight per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners are not as well prepared to study for NQs as their predecessors were, and 66% agreed or strongly agreed that many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.

When compared to the previous year's survey, a slightly lower proportion of respondents in 2024–25 agreed or strongly agreed with all statements related to the impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching, with the largest percentage point (pp) decrease of 8pp for the statement 'Many learners are not as well prepared to study for National Qualifications as their predecessors'.

## Respondent profiles

Educator respondents were asked where they taught in 2024–25 and in which local authority their centre was based. Most respondents (89%) taught in a local authority school. Nine per cent of respondents taught in an independent school and 1% taught at an FE college or ‘other’ institution (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Where did you teach in 2024–25?**



Respondents represented 31 local authority areas. The joint highest proportion of respondents (9%) were from the City of Edinburgh and Glasgow City, followed by North Lanarkshire (8%) and South Lanarkshire (8%). The local authority areas with the lowest numbers of respondents (less than 1%) were Stirling and Na h-Eileanan Siar (Table 1).

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

Local authority area	Respondents (n)	Respondents (%)
City of Edinburgh	70	9
Glasgow City	65	9
North Lanarkshire	61	8
South Lanarkshire	57	8
Fife	54	7

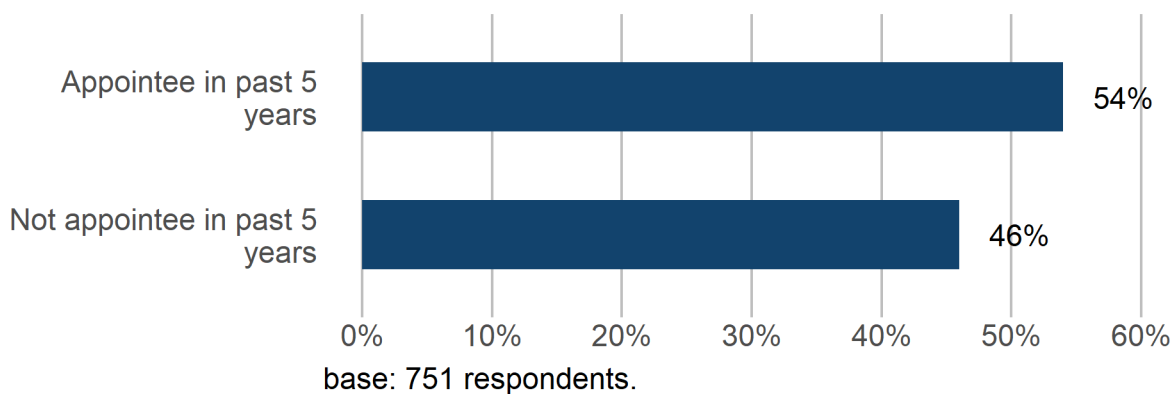
<b>Local authority area</b>	<b>Respondents (n)</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>
Highland	44	6
Aberdeenshire	35	5
West Lothian	29	4
Moray	28	4
East Lothian	26	3
Aberdeen city	24	3
Angus	20	3
Argyll and Bute	20	3
Inverclyde	20	3
North Ayrshire	20	3
Renfrewshire	20	3
South Ayrshire	20	3
Falkirk	19	3
Dumfries and Galloway	16	2
East Ayrshire	15	2
Dundee City	12	2
Midlothian	12	2
Perth and Kinross	11	1
East Dunbartonshire	10	1
East Renfrewshire	7	1
Scottish Borders	6	1
Shetland Islands	6	1
West Dunbartonshire	6	1
Orkney Islands	[c]	1
Stirling	[c]	<1%

Local authority area	Respondents (n)	Respondents (%)
Na h-Eileanan Siar	[c]	<1%
Other	6	1
Prefer not to say/no answer	[c]	<1%

The figures in categories with less than five respondents have been suppressed to maintain anonymity. These figures have been replaced with '[c]' in the table. There were no responses from educators from Clackmannanshire local authority.

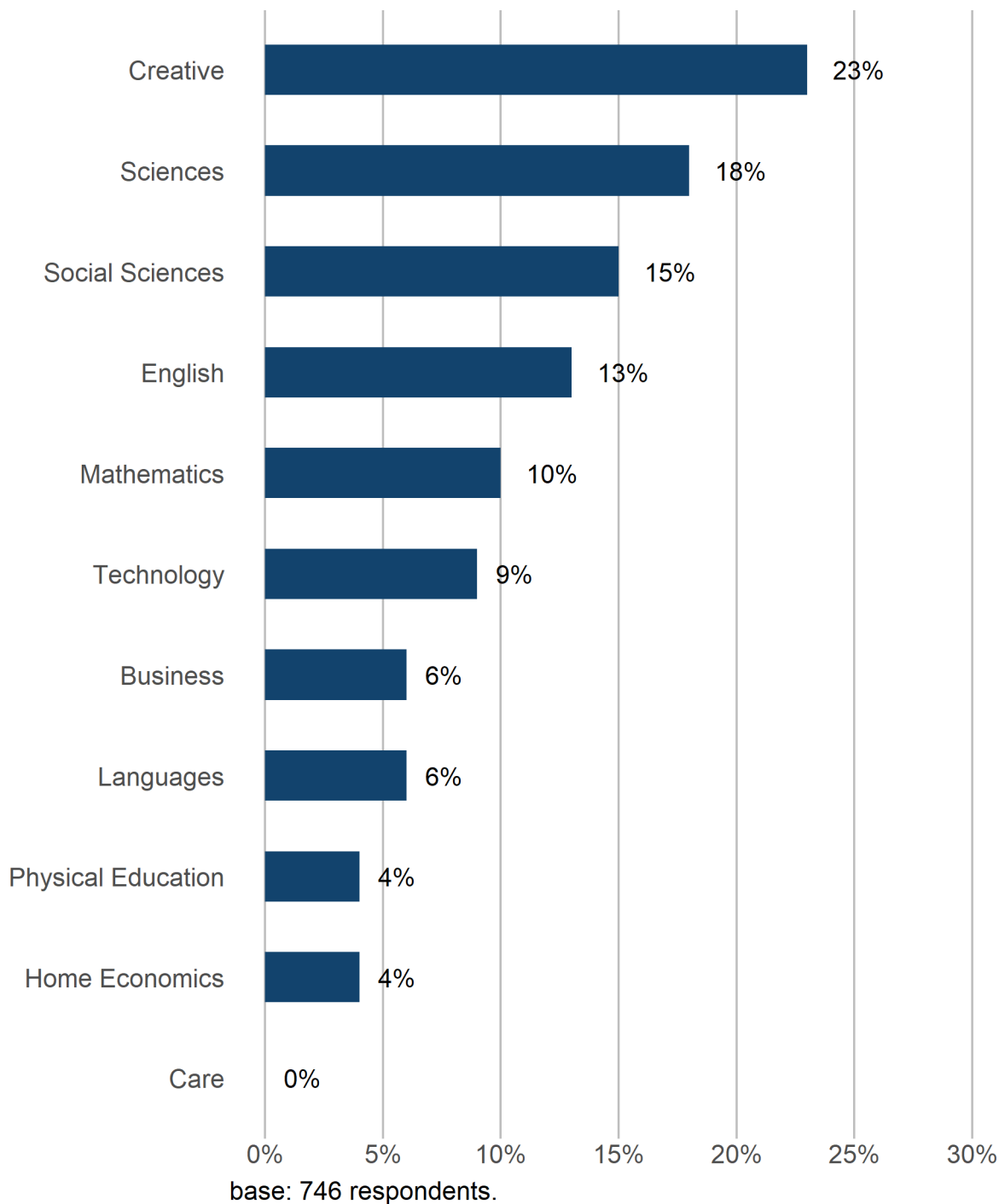
Just over half (54%) of respondents had been an SQA appointee in the past five years, while 46% had not (Figure 2).

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



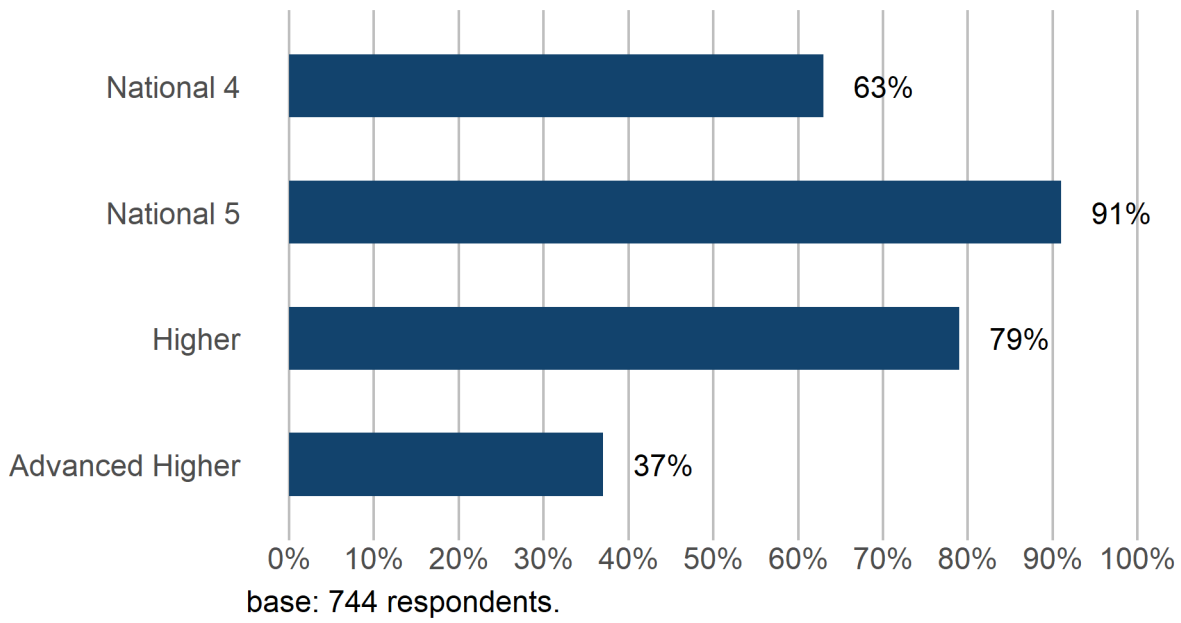
Respondents were asked which groups of subjects they taught in 2024–25. The highest proportion of respondents (23%) taught a creative subject, followed by sciences (18%), then social sciences (15%). Thirteen per cent taught English, 10% taught mathematics and 9% taught technology. Six per cent of respondents taught a language, 6% taught business, 4% taught home economics and 4% taught physical education. Less than one per cent of respondents taught a care-related subject (Figure 4).

**Figure 3: Which groups of subjects did you teach in 2024–25?**



Respondents were asked which levels they taught in 2024–25. Most respondents (91%) taught National 5, 79% taught Higher and 63% taught National 4. Thirty-seven percent of respondents taught Advanced Higher (Figure 4.)

**Figure 4: Which level(s) did you teach in 2024–25?**

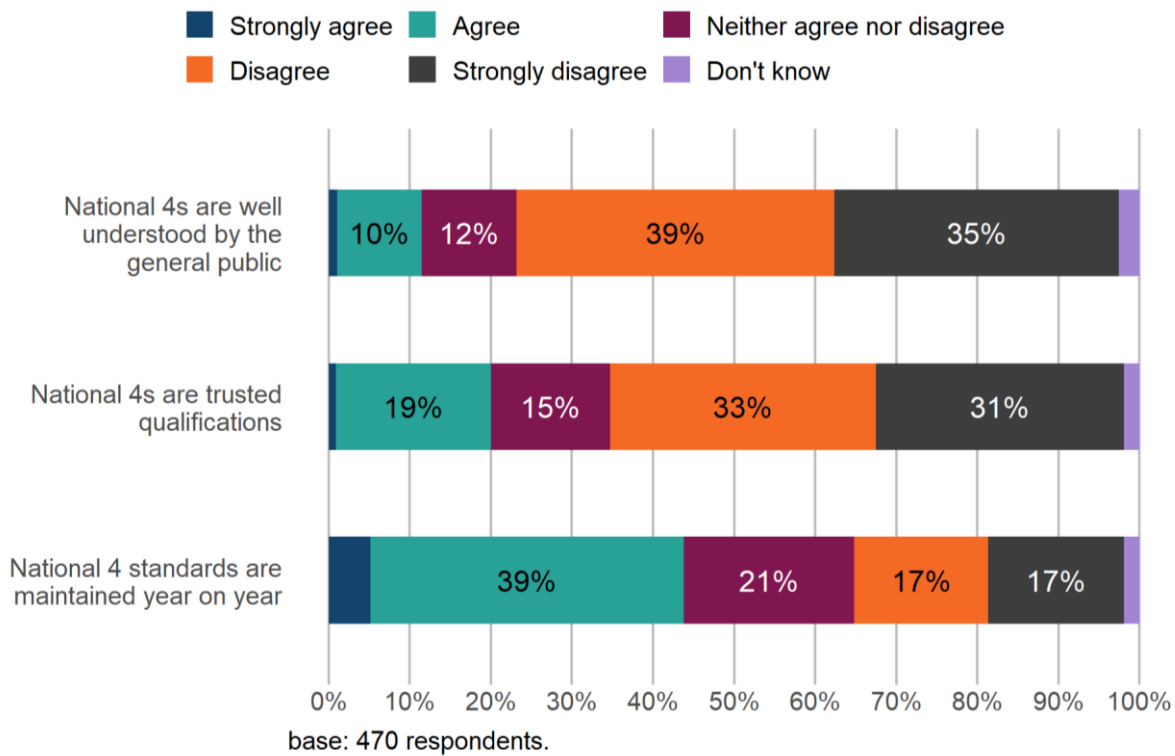


# National Qualifications

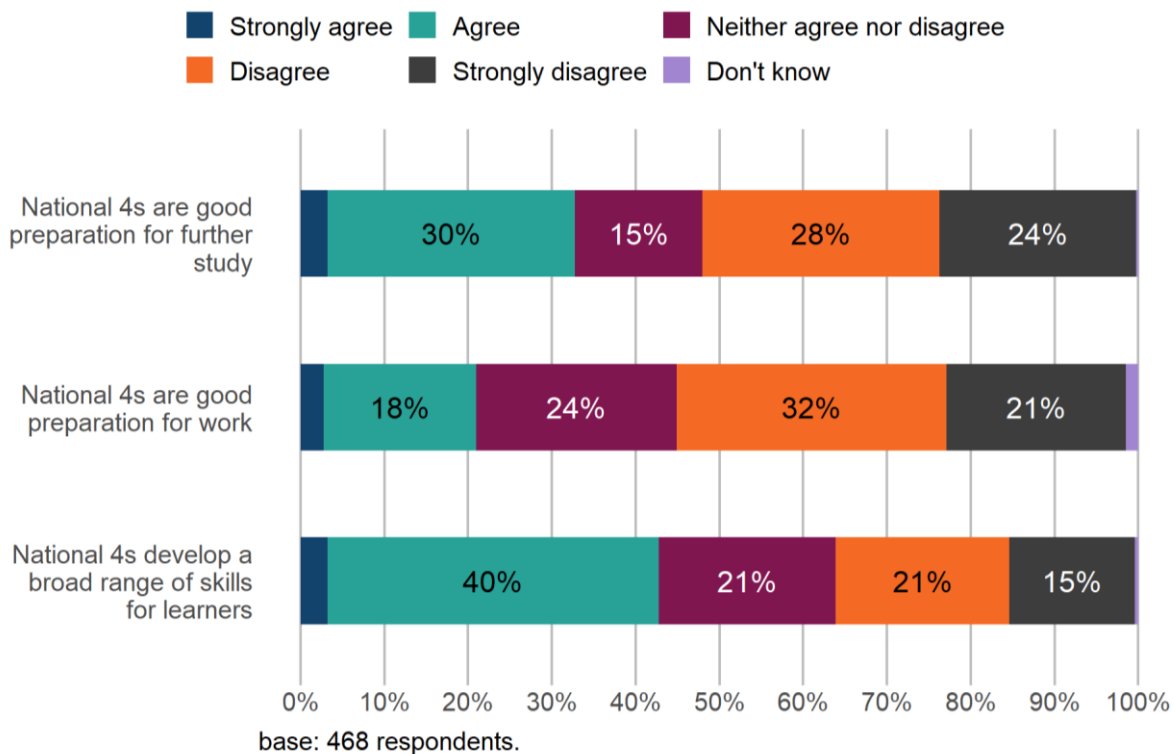
## National 4

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 who had taught a National 4 qualification disagreed or strongly disagreed with four out of the six statements (Figures 5a and 5b).

**Figure 5a: Perceptions of National 4 qualifications**



**Figure 5b: Perceptions of National 4 qualifications**



The statement that produced the highest level of disagreement was ‘National 4s are well understood by the general public’, with a strong majority (74%) of respondents saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, and 11% saying they agreed or strongly agreed.

A smaller majority of respondents who taught a National 4 qualification last year also disagreed or strongly disagreed that National 4s are trusted qualifications (64%), are good preparation for further study (52%), and are good preparation for work (53%).

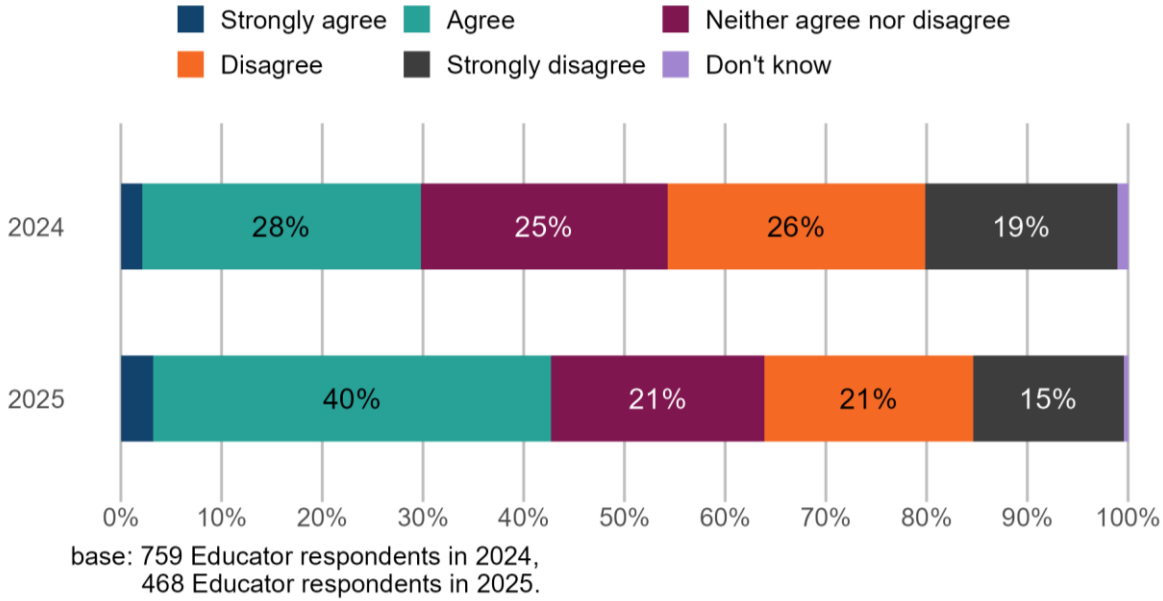
However, more respondents agreed than disagreed with the statement ‘National 4 standards are maintained year on year’, with 43% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed, and 34% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Forty-three per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners’, with 36% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## Changes over time

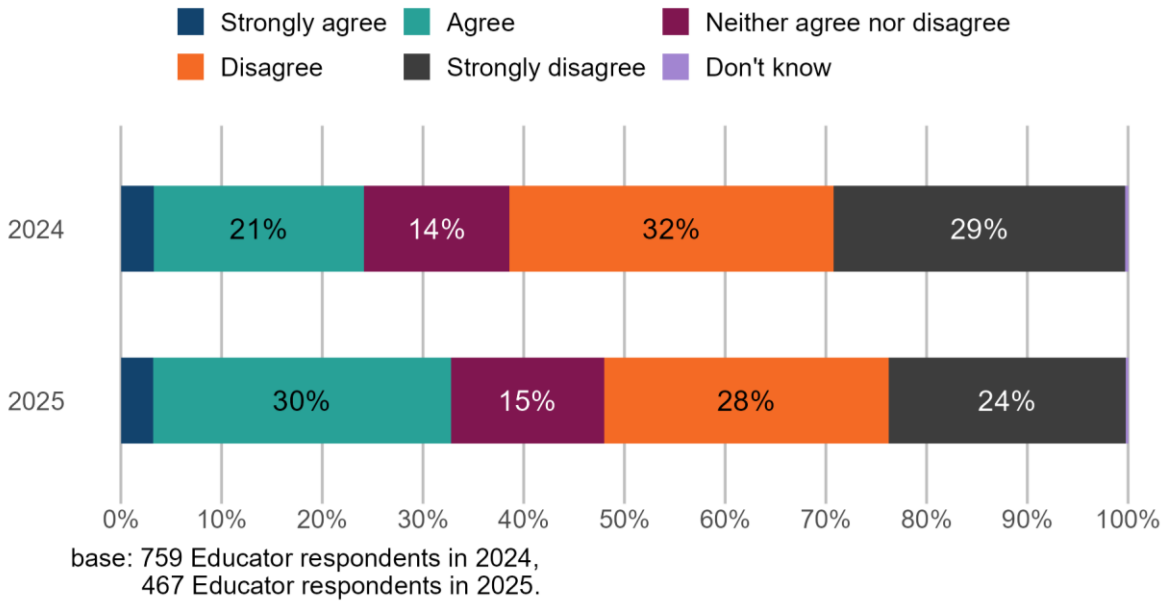
In 2023–24, educator respondents were asked the same questions about the perceptions of National 4 qualifications. The biggest increase was ‘National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners’ for which strongly agree and agree increased by 13 percentage points between 2023–24 and 2024–25 (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners, 2024–2025**



As shown in Figure 7, there was also a nine-percentage point increase in educator respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that ‘National 4s are good preparation for further study’.

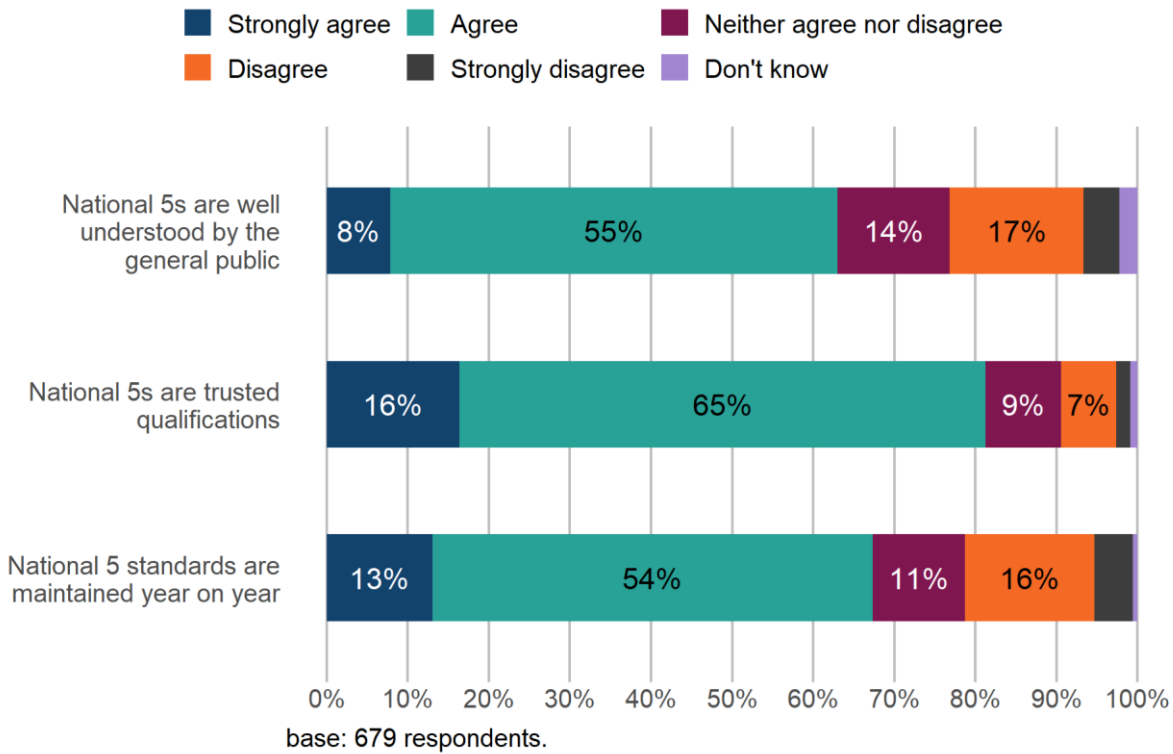
**Figure 7: National 4s are good preparation for further study, 2024–2025**



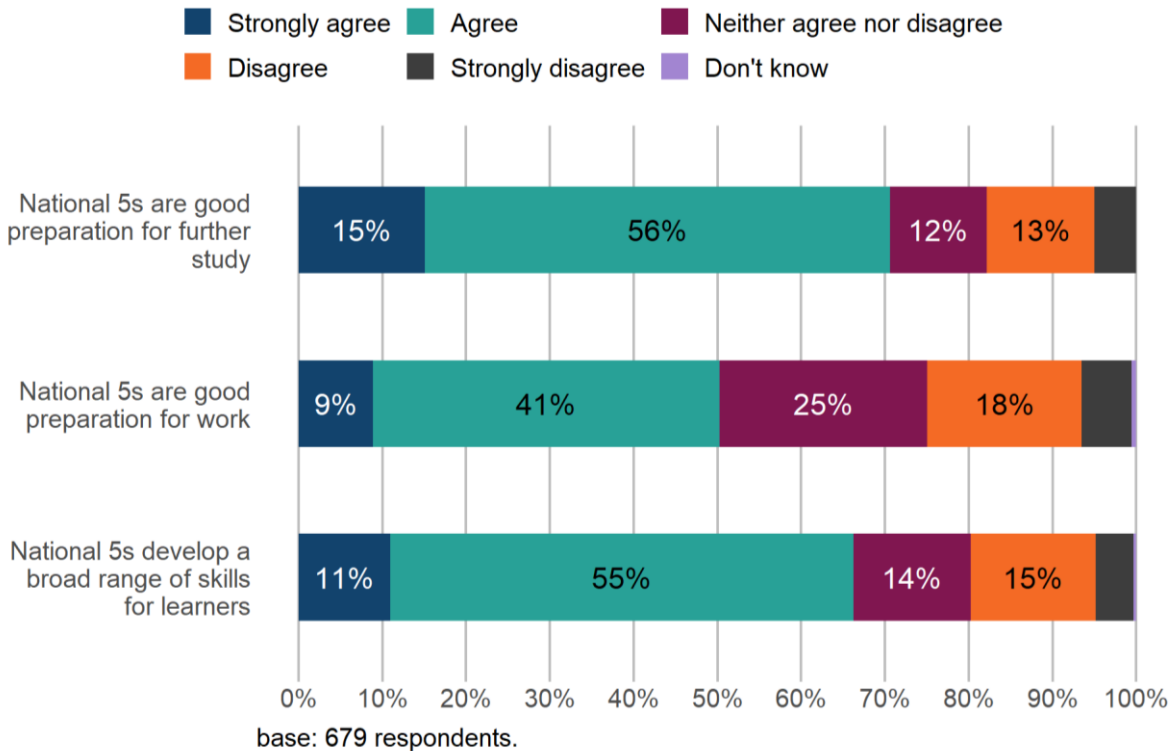
## National 5

Respondents who taught National 5 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same six statements as those who taught National 4. The majority of respondents who taught National 5 agreed or strongly agreed with all but one of the statements (Figures 8a and 8b).

**Figure 8a: Perceptions of National 5 qualifications**



**Figure 8b: Perceptions of National 5 qualifications**



The statement with the highest level of agreement was ‘National 5s are trusted qualifications’, with 81% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, and 8% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A strong majority of respondents who taught National 5 agreed or strongly agreed that National 5s are good preparation for further study (71%), develop a broad range of skills for learners

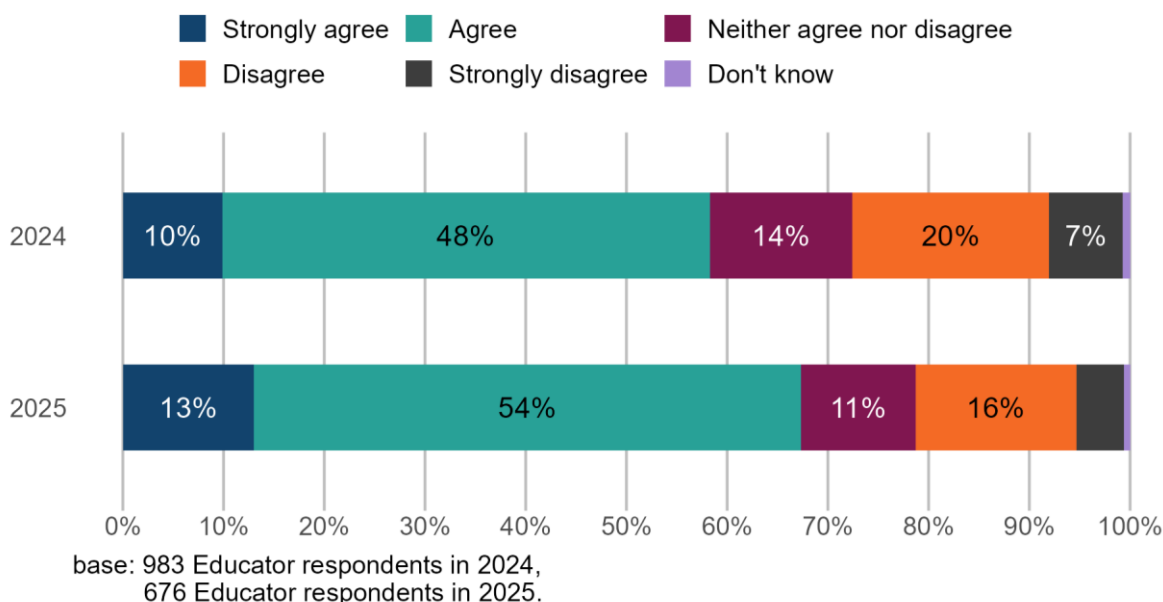
(66%), has standards that are maintained year on year (67%) and are understood well by the general public (63%).

The highest levels of disagreement were in regard to whether 'National 5s are good preparation for work' with 50% saying they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, and 23% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## Changes over time

Educator respondents' opinions on National 5s slightly improved or were similar to 2023–24. The proportion of educator respondents who expressed agreement with the statement 'National 5 standards are maintained year on year' was 67% in 2024–25, nine percentage points higher than the previous year (shown in Figure 9).

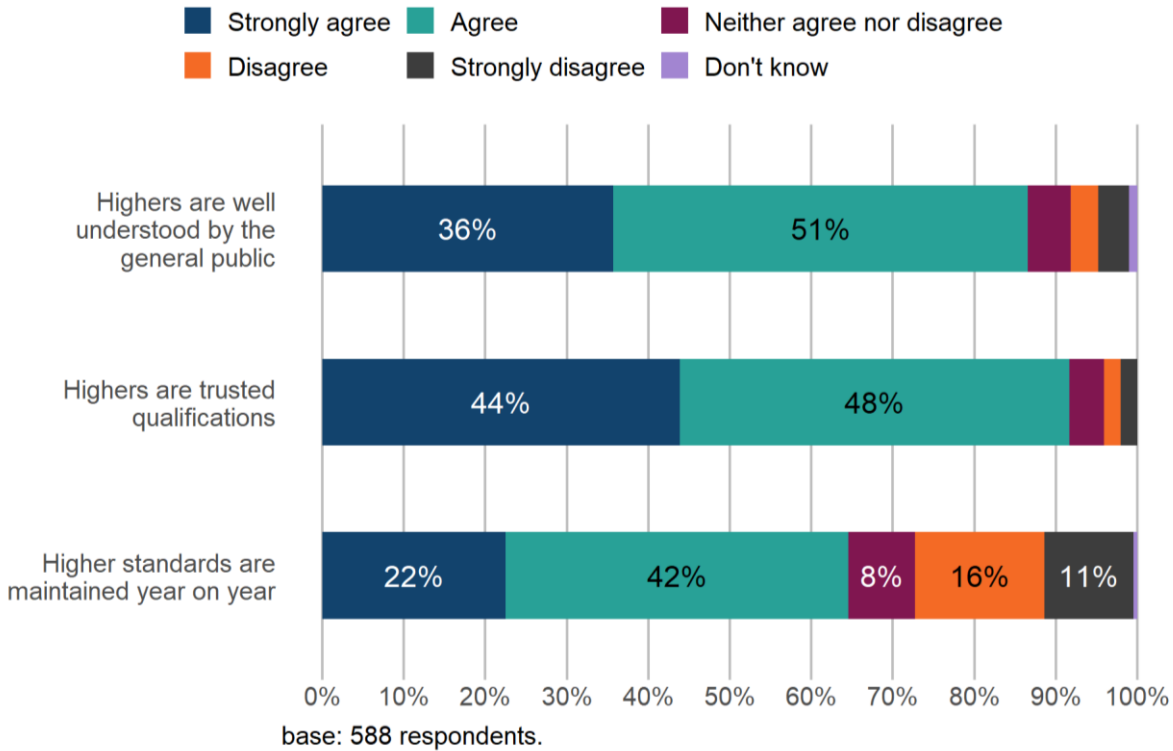
**Figure 9: National 5 standards are maintained year on year, 2024–2025**



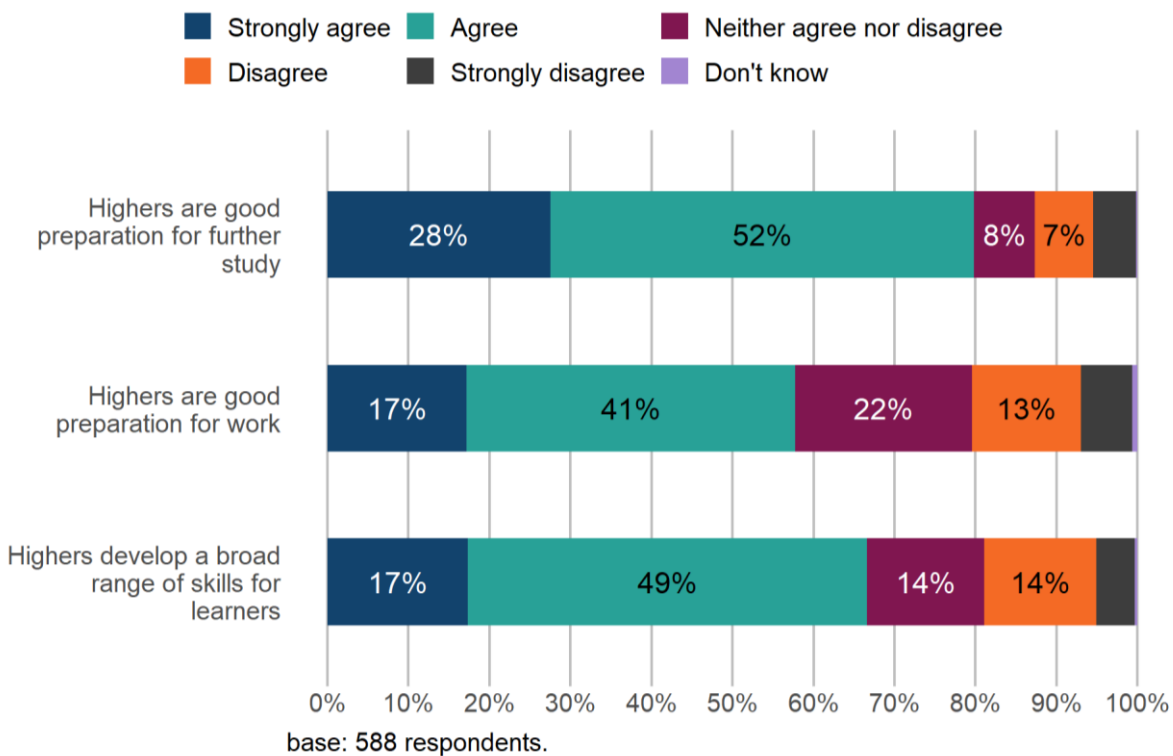
## Higher

Respondents who taught a Higher qualification in 2024–25 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same set of statements asked of those who taught National 4 and National 5. A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all the statements (Figures 10a and 10b).

**Figure 10a: Perceptions of Higher qualifications**



**Figure 10b: Perceptions of Higher qualifications**



The highest level of agreement was with the statement 'Highers are trusted qualifications', with 92% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 4% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. This was followed by 'Highers are well understood by the general public' with 87% of respondents saying they agreed or strongly agreed with this

statement, and 6% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. A large proportion of respondents (80%) also agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Highers are good preparation for further study, with 12% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

With regard to the statement ‘Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners,’ 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed and 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed. While 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Highers are good preparation for work’ nearly a quarter (22%) said that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Nineteen per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The statement with the highest level of disagreement was ‘Highers standards are maintained year on year’ with 27% of respondents saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, a higher proportion of respondents (64%) still agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

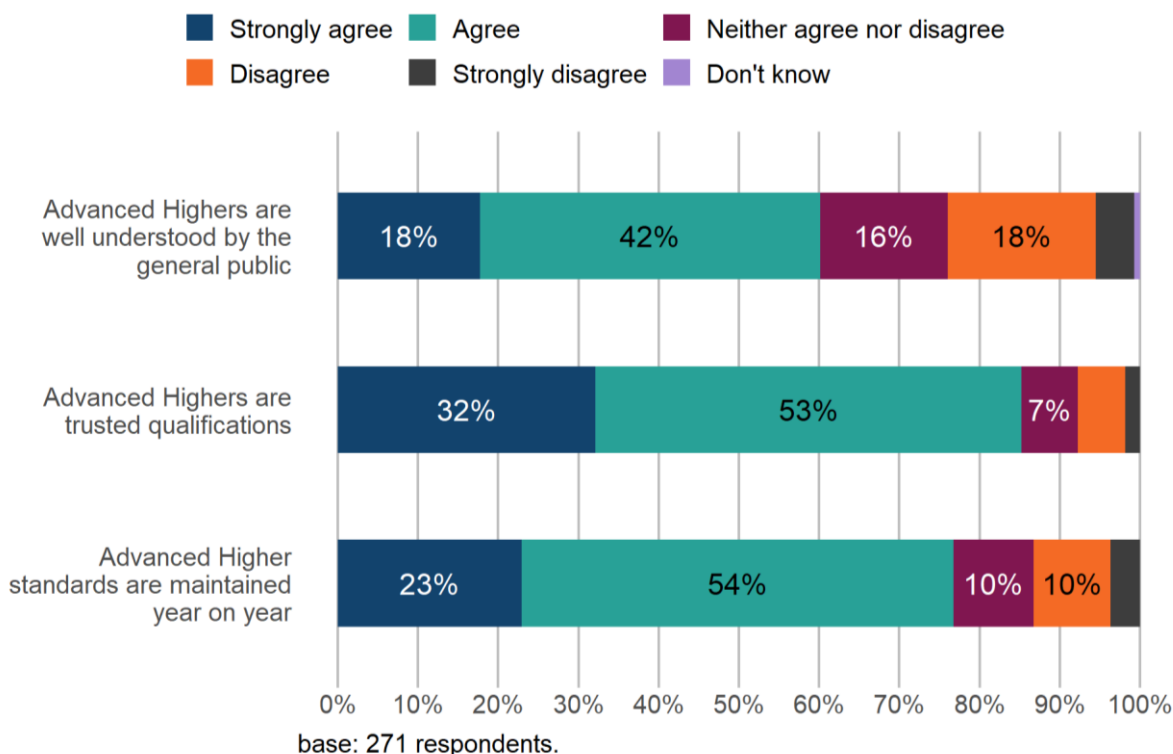
## Changes over time

Responses to the statements about Higher qualifications were similar to last year.

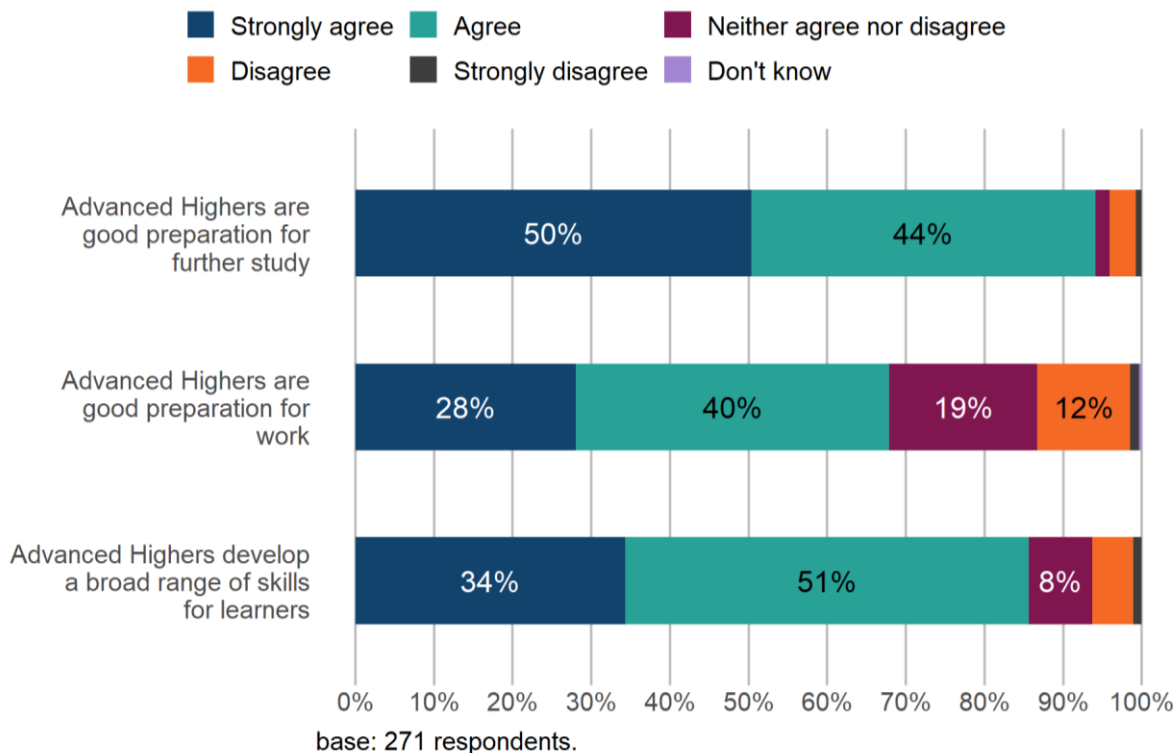
## Advanced Higher

Respondents who taught an Advanced Higher qualification in 2024–25 were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same set of statements asked in National 4 – Higher. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements (Figures 11a and 11b).

**Figure 11a: Perceptions of Advanced Higher qualifications**



**Figure 11b: Perceptions of Advanced Higher qualifications**



The statement with the highest level of agreement was ‘Advanced Highers are good preparation for further study’, with 94% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement and 4% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

A strong majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Advanced Highers are trusted qualifications (85%), develop a broad range of skills for learners (85%) and that Advanced Higher standards are maintained year on year (77%).

Sixty-eight per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Advanced Highers are good preparation for work, while 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The statement with the highest level of disagreement was ‘Advanced Highers are well understood by the general public’, with 22% saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, almost two thirds (60%) of respondents still agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

## Changes over time

Responses to the statements about Advanced Higher qualifications were similar to last year.

## National Qualifications summary

In most cases, perceptions were relatively similar across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications. Consistent with the previous year, 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 the same (falling at 66%). However, there was a notable difference between National 4s and Advanced Highers. Under half (43%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners, while 85% 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 three percentage-point difference (63% and 60%, respectively). The percentage of respondents who agreed that National 4s are well understood by the public was very low (11%), while the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that Highers are well understood by the public was high (87%).

Regarding whether qualifications are considered to be 'trusted,' there were broadly similar perspectives across National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers, but differed substantially when asked about National 4. The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that these qualifications are trusted ranged between 81% and 88%, with Highers being the most trusted qualification, followed by Advanced Highers (85%). The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 4s are trusted qualifications, however, was substantially lower at 20%.

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 were good preparation for further study ranged from 71% to 94%. Advanced Higher was considered the best qualification for further study (94%), followed by Higher (80%). However, the proportion of respondents who agreed that National 4 qualifications were good preparation for further study was 20%.

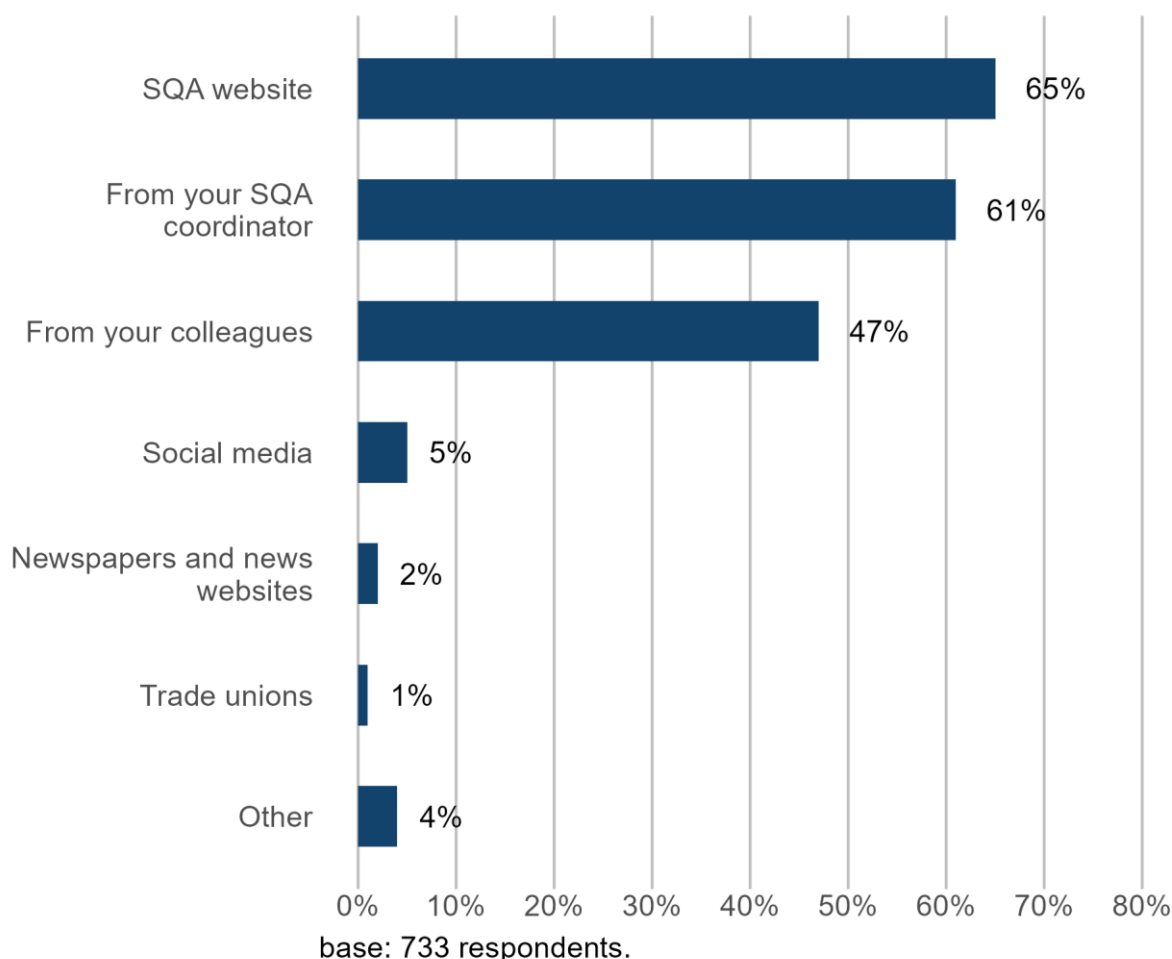
National Qualifications were generally less considered to be 'good preparation for work' than for further study. The proportions of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications are good preparation for work ranged between 50% and 68%. Again, the proportion of respondents in agreement was lowest for National 4s, with 21% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that National 4 qualifications are good preparation for work.

There was slightly less variation between perceptions of 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 44% to 77% across all qualifications. National 4 was lowest, with National 5 and Higher being 67% and 64% respectively.

## Assessment and awarding

Respondents were asked where they obtained information about how grades would be determined in 2024–25 (Figure 12). The most common sources of information were SQA website (65%), SQA co-ordinators (61%) and from colleagues (47%). Less common sources of information were trade unions (1%), social media (1%) and newspapers and news websites (2%).

**Figure 12: Where did you get information about how grades would be determined in 2024–25?**



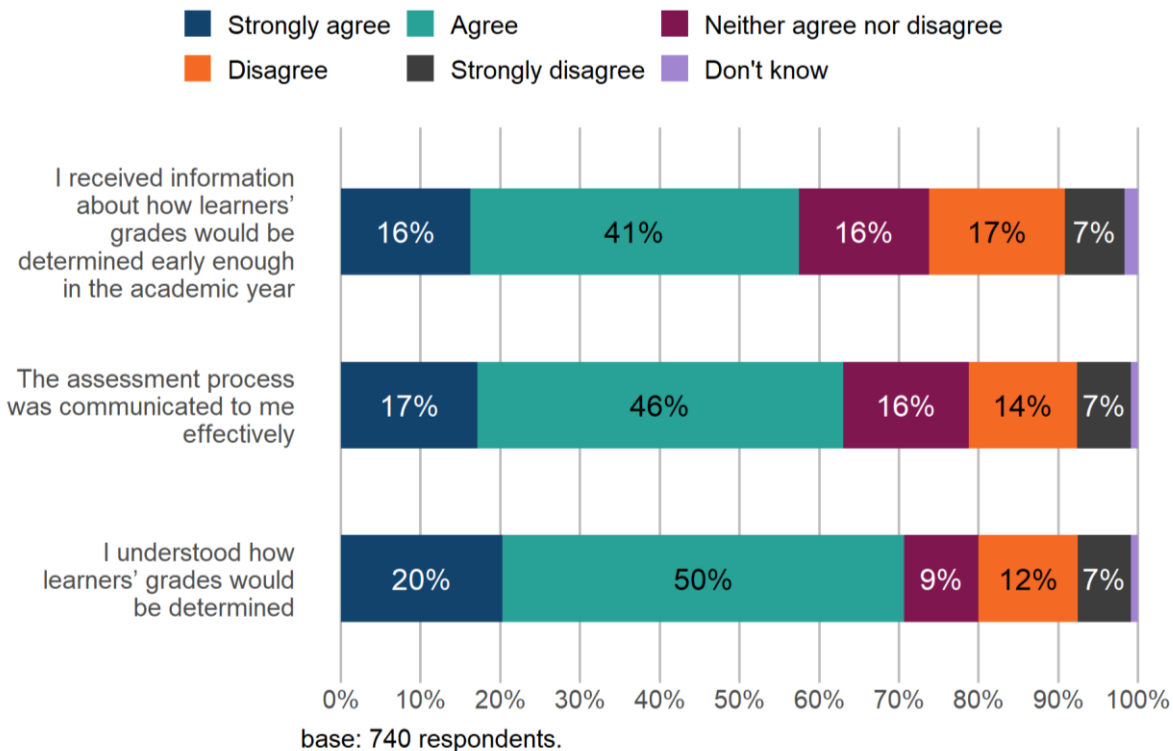
## Awarding

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with three statements related to the awarding process in 2024–25:

- 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.

A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Perceptions of awarding**



Seventy per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I understood how learners’ grades would be determined,’ while 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A slightly lower proportion of respondents (63%) agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment process was communicated to them effectively, with 21% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

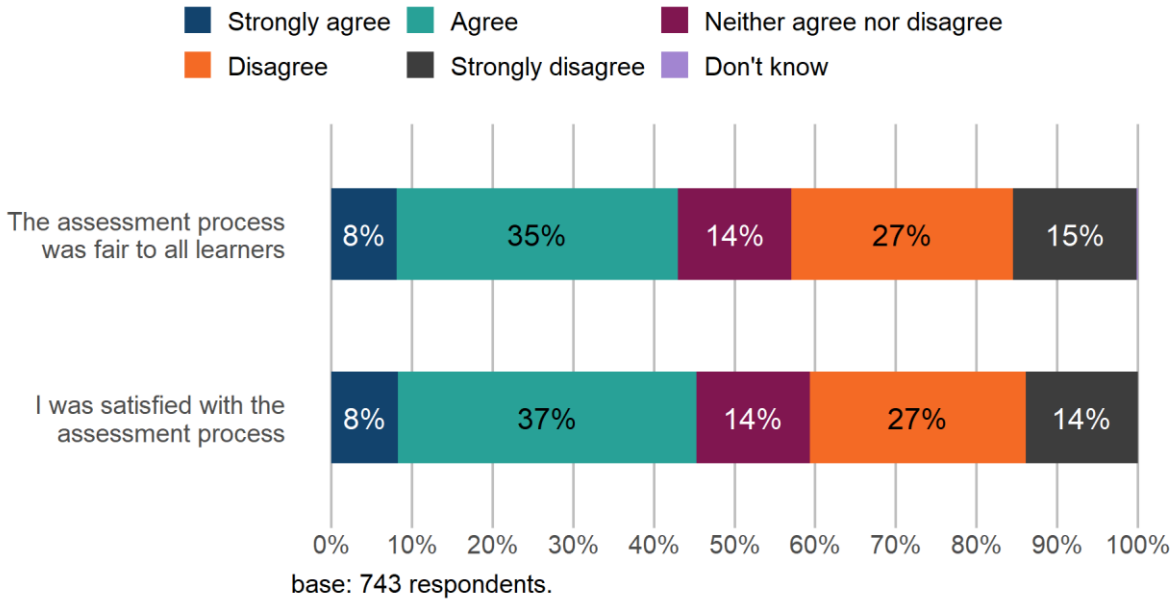
Over half (57%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I received information on how learners’ grades would be determined early enough in the academic year,’ while just under a quarter (24%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## Assessment

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements relating to the assessment process in 2024–25 (Figure 14):

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

**Figure 14: Perceptions of assessment**

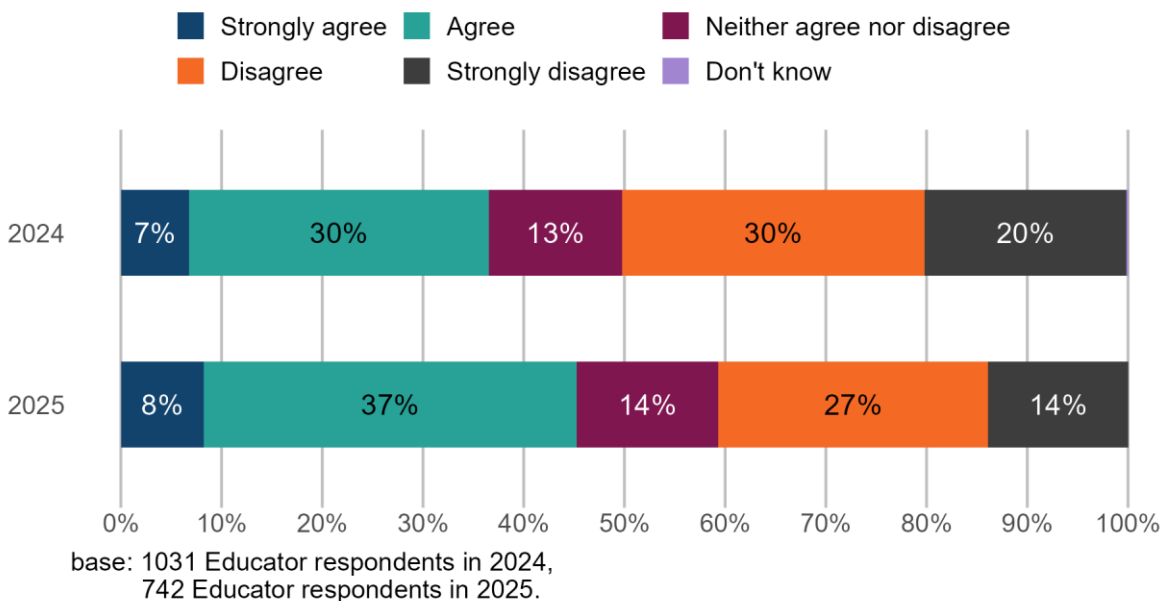


Less than half (43%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment process was fair to all learners, while 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the assessment process, while 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### Changes over time

When asked whether educators were satisfied with the assessment process, just over a third (37%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in 2023–24. In 2024–25, this rose to 45%, an 8pp increase.

**Figure 15: I was satisfied with the assessment process, 2024–2025**

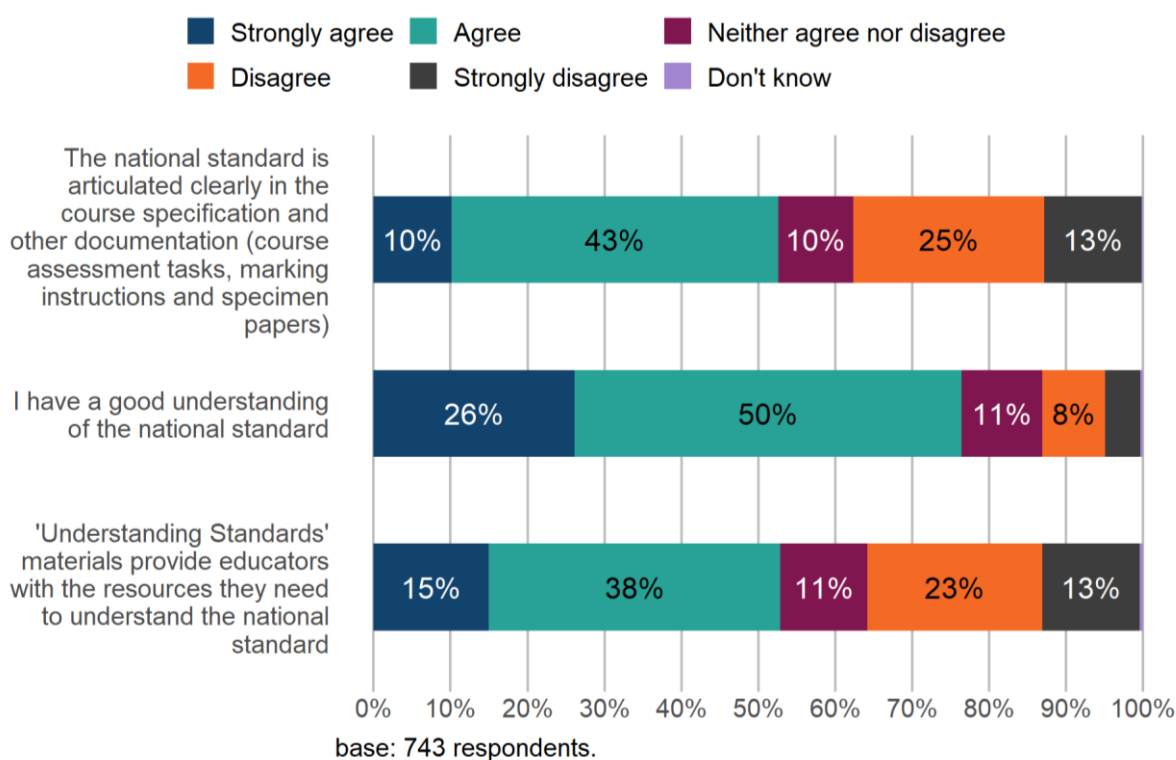


# Standards

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with three statements relating to standards in 2024–25 (Figure 17):

- The national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (course assessment tasks, marking instructions and specimen papers).
- I have a good understanding of the national standard.
- ‘Understanding Standards’ materials provide educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard

**Figure 16: Perceptions of standards**



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

A strong majority of respondents (76%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the national standard, while 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Over half (53%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Understanding Standards provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard, while just over a third (35%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The same proportion of respondents (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that the national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (including course assessment tasks, marking instructions and specimen papers). Thirty-eight per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

## Changes over time

Responses to the statements about standards were similar to last year.

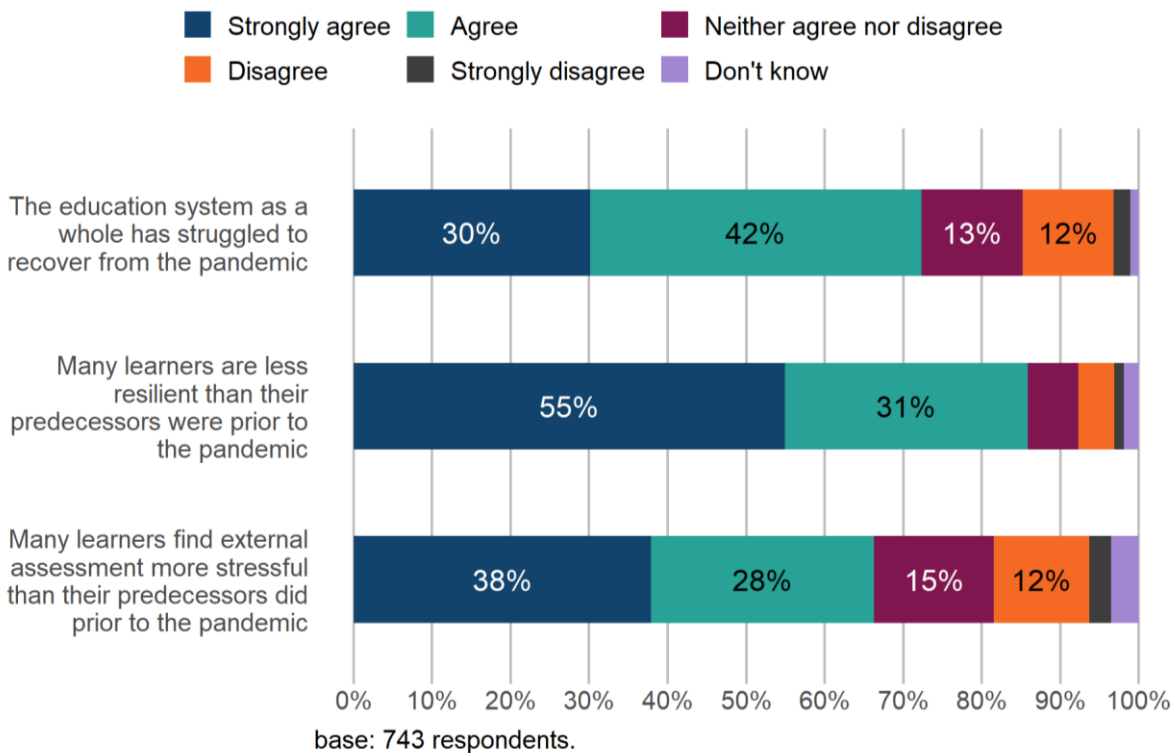
## COVID-19 impact on learning

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with five statements relating to the ongoing impact of the pandemic in 2024–25:

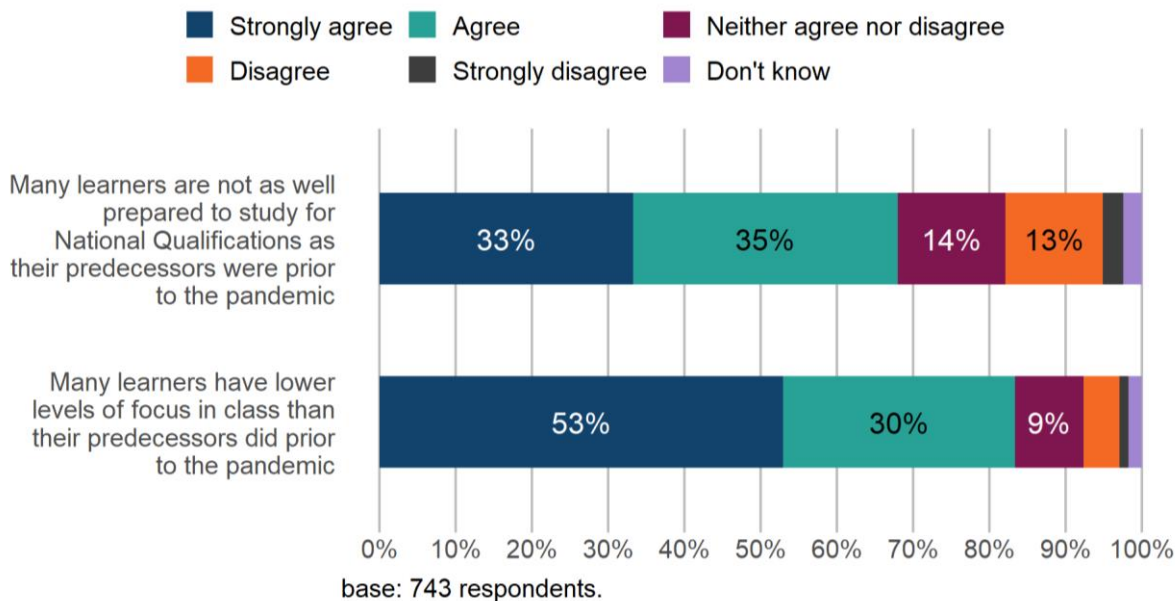
- The education system as a whole has struggled to recover from the pandemic.
- Many learners are less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic.
- Many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic.
- Many learners are not as well 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.

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all of the five statements (Figures 18a and 18b).

**Figure 17a: COVID-19 impact on learning**



**Figure 17b: COVID-19 impact on learning**



The majority of respondents (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that the education system as a whole has struggled to recover from the pandemic.

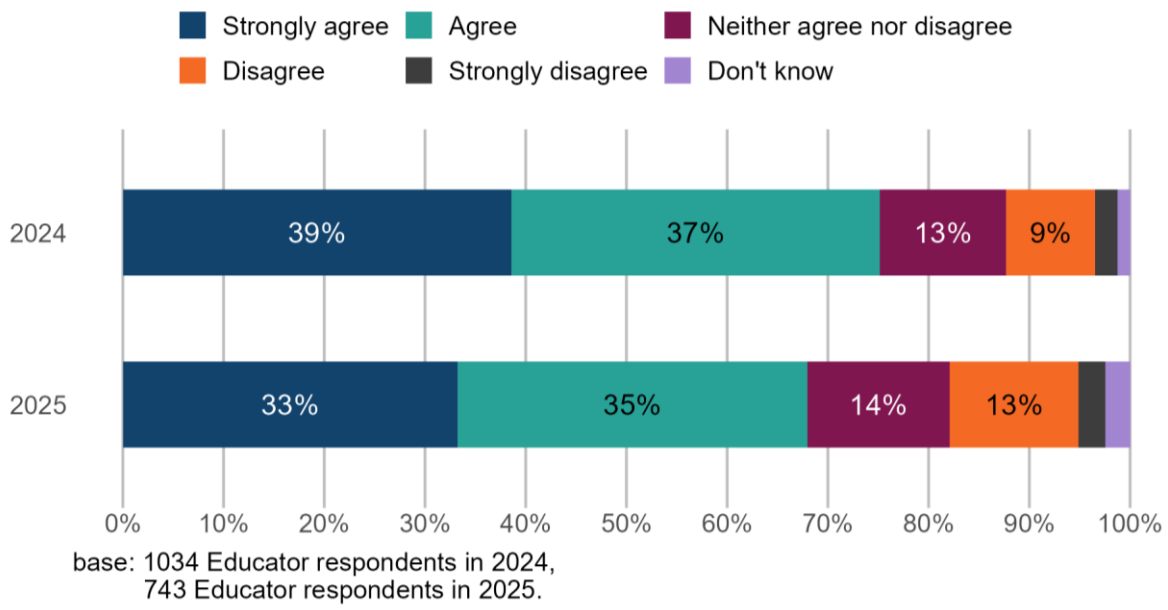
The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners have lower levels of focus in class than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic (83%) and that many learners are less resilient than their predecessors were prior to the pandemic (86%). Sixty-eight per cent of respondents 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 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In regard to the statement 'Many learners find external assessment more stressful than their predecessors did prior to the pandemic' 66% agreed or strongly agreed, while 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## Changes over time

While 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that many learners are not as well prepared to study for NQ qualifications as their predecessors were prior to the pandemic in 2024, 68% of respondents did so in 2025, an 8pp decrease.

**Figure 18: Many learners are not as well prepared to study for National Qualifications as their predecessors, 2024–2025**



# Composite analysis

## Communications satisfaction

The communications satisfaction composite examined how educator respondents felt about National Qualifications (NQ) communications overall in 2024–25 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, researchers interpreted higher levels of agreement with the three statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's communications about National Qualifications in 2023–24. Therefore, low mean scores indicate less satisfaction with SQA's communications in 2024–25.

Respondents who answered all three questions had a communications satisfaction score calculated. The composite had an overall average score of 3.5 for all respondents, indicating an above mid-range level of satisfaction with communications. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would place the respondents with an average response of slightly above 'neither agree nor disagree' for all respondents.

Communication satisfaction score was compared against the demographic of 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 3.4 for who had not been an appointee in the past five years. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration.

## Qualifications satisfaction

### National 4

The National 4 composite examined educator respondent satisfaction with National 4 qualifications overall in 2024–25 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, researchers interpreted higher levels of agreement with the six statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's National 4 qualifications in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicate less satisfaction with SQA's National 4 qualifications in 2024–25.

Respondents who answered all six questions had a National 4 satisfaction score calculated. The composite had an overall average score of 2.5 for all respondents, indicating a low level of satisfaction with National 4. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would place the respondents with an average response of slightly above 'disagree' for all respondents.

National 4 satisfaction score was compared against the demographic of length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration.

## **National 5**

The National 5 composite examined educator respondent satisfaction with National 5 qualifications overall in 2024–25 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, researchers interpreted higher levels of agreement with the six statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's National 5 qualifications in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicate less satisfaction with SQA's National 5 qualifications in 2024–25.

Respondents who answered all six questions had a National 5 satisfaction score calculated. 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 place the respondents with an average response in between 'neither agree nor disagree' and 'agree' for all respondents.

National 5 satisfaction score was compared against the demographic sub-group length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration.

## Higher

The Higher composite examined educator respondent satisfaction with Higher qualifications overall in 2024–25 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, researchers interpreted higher levels of agreement with the six statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's Higher qualifications in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicate less satisfaction with SQA's Higher qualifications in 2024–25.

Respondents who answered all six questions had a Higher satisfaction score calculated. 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 place the respondents with an average response of just below 'agree' for all respondents.

Higher satisfaction score was compared against the demographic sub-group of length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration.

## Advanced Higher

The Advanced Higher composite examined educator respondent satisfaction with Advanced Higher qualifications overall in 2024–25 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, researchers interpreted higher levels of agreement with the six statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's Advanced Higher qualifications in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicate less satisfaction with SQA's Advanced Higher qualifications in 2024–25.

Respondents who answered all six questions had an Advanced Higher satisfaction score calculated. 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 place the respondents with an average response of just below 'agree' for all respondents.

Advanced Higher satisfaction score was compared against the demographic sub-group length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration ( $p < 0.01$ ).

## **COVID-19 impact on learning**

The COVID-19 impact on learning composite examined how educator respondents felt about NQ teaching and learning overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following five questions about teaching and learning:

- The education system as a whole has struggled to recover 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 designing the COVID-19 impact on learning composite, researchers interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the five statements indicated lower levels of satisfaction in 2024–25. Therefore, for this composite, low mean scores indicate high levels of satisfaction.

Respondents who answered all five questions had a teaching and learning satisfaction score calculated. The composite had an overall average score of 4.0 for all respondents, indicating that the educator respondents think the pandemic had a significant impact on learning and teaching in 2024–25. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would place the respondents with an average response of 'agree' for all respondents.

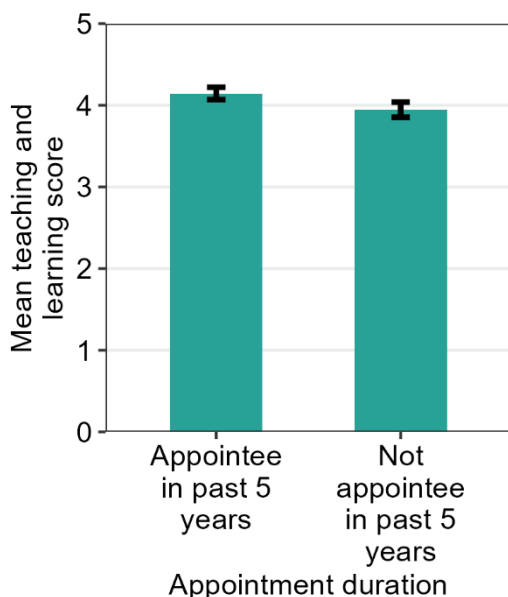
**Table 2: Learning and teaching satisfaction composite score by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	405	4.1	4.1	4.2
Not appointee in past 5 years	335	3.9	3.9	4.0

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0017

Learning and teaching satisfaction score was compared against the demographic sub-group of length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed there is a significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration ( $p < 0.01$ ). This could indicate that educator respondents who had not been an appointee in the past five years in the general population were slightly more satisfied with learning and teaching in 2024–25 than educator respondents who had been an appointee in the past five years.

**Figure 19: Learning and teaching satisfaction composite score by appointment duration**



## Assessment and awarding satisfaction

The assessment and awarding satisfaction composite examined how educator respondents felt about NQ assessment and awarding overall in 2024–25 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.

Respondents who answered both questions had an assessment and awarding satisfaction score calculated. The composite had an overall average score of 2.9 for all respondents, indicating a below mid-level of satisfaction with assessment and awarding. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would place the respondents with an average response of slightly below 'neither agree nor disagree' for all respondents.

Assessment and awarding satisfaction score was compared against the demographic sub-group length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on length of time in an SQA Appointee role.

## **Standards satisfaction**

The standards satisfaction composite examined how educator respondents felt about NQ standards overall in 2024–25 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 assessment tasks, marking instructions and specimen papers).
- 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, researchers interpreted higher levels of agreement with the four statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with NQ standards in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicate less satisfaction with NQ standards in 2024–25.

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

Standards satisfaction score was compared against the demographic sub-group of length of time in an SQA Appointee role. Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between satisfaction scores from groups based on appointment duration status.

## Appendix – Composite satisfaction analysis

### Communication satisfaction composite

#### Communications satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Figure 20: Communications satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

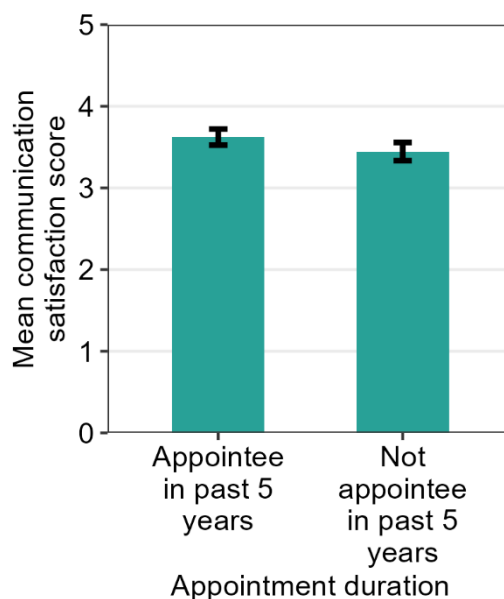


Table 3: Communications satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	400	3.6	3.5	3.7
Not appointee in past 5 years	335	3.4	3.3	3.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.0193

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

## National 4 satisfaction composite

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

Figure 21: National 4 satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

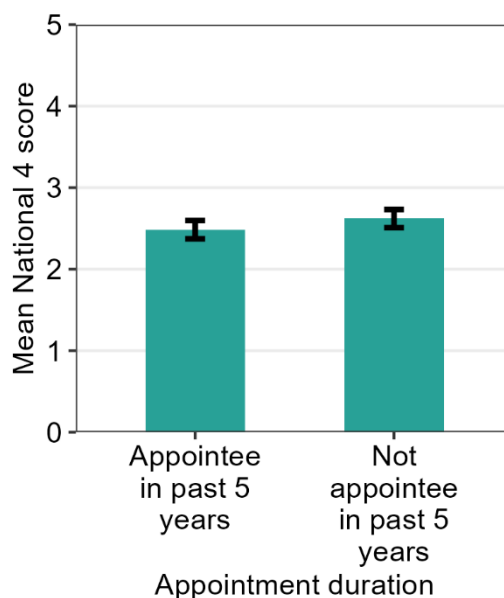


Table 4: National 4 satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	250	2.5	2.4	2.6
Not appointee in past 5 years	220	2.6	2.5	2.7

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.0609

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

## National 5 satisfaction composite

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

Figure 22: National 5 satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

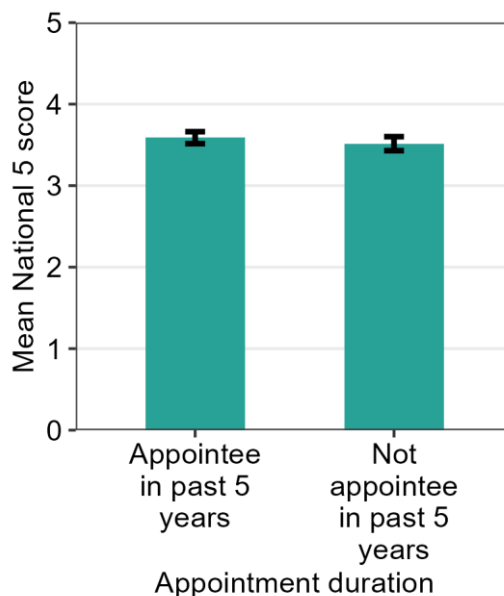


Table 5: National 5 satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	380	3.6	3.5	3.7
Not appointee in past 5 years	295	3.5	3.4	3.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.1585

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

## Higher satisfaction composite

### Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Figure 23: Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

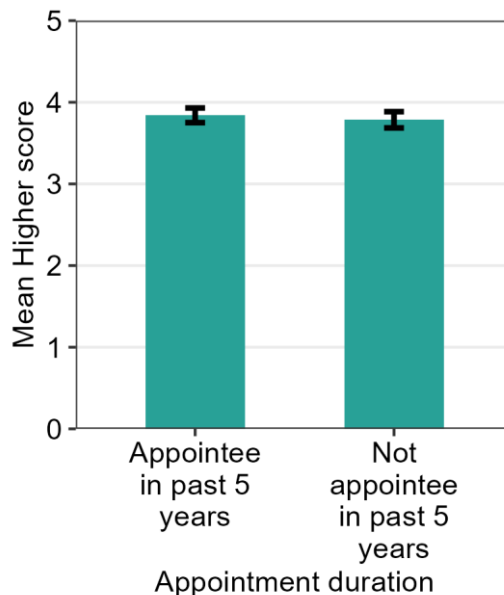


Table 6: Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	340	3.8	3.8	3.9
Not appointee in past 5 years	250	3.8	3.7	3.9

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.2561

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

## Advanced Higher satisfaction composite

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

Figure 24: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

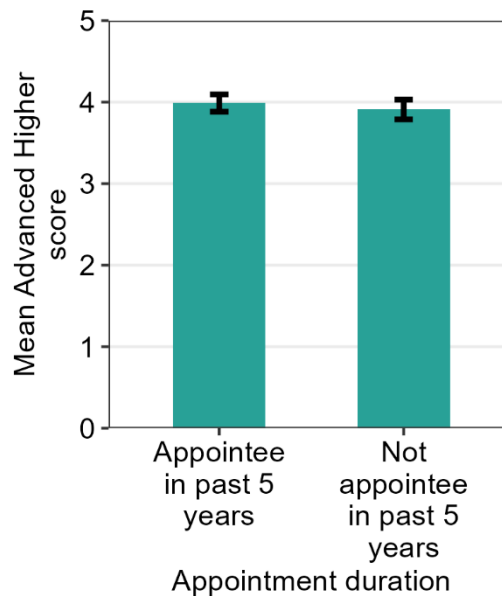


Table 7: Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	170	4.0	3.9	4.1
Not appointee in past 5 years	100	3.9	3.8	4.0

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.111

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

## COVID-19 impact on learning composite

### COVID-19 impact on learning by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Figure 25: Teaching and learning satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

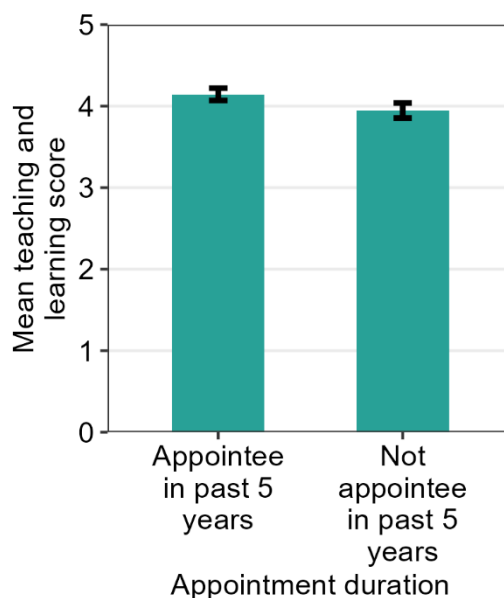


Table 8: Teaching and learning satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	405	4.1	4.1	4.2
Not appointee in past 5 years	335	3.9	3.9	4.0

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.0017

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

## Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite

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

Figure 26: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

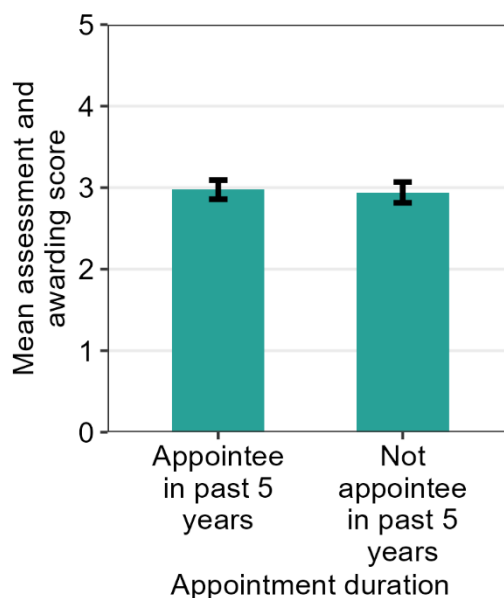


Table 9: Assessment and awarding satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	405	3.0	2.9	3.1
Not appointee in past 5 years	340	2.9	2.8	3.1

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.7496

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

## Standards satisfaction composite

### Standards satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Figure 27: Standards satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

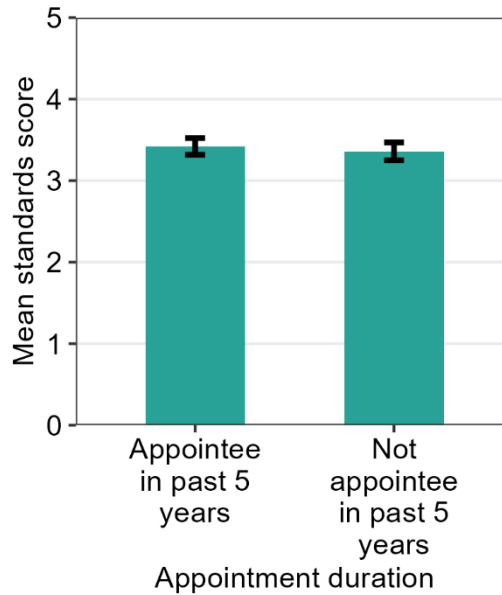


Table 10: Standards satisfaction composite score by length of time in SQA Appointee role

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean assessment and awarding satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Appointee in past 5 years	405	3.4	3.3	3.5
Not appointee in past 5 years	340	3.4	3.2	3.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value was 0.3429

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