

# **Experiences of National 4s, National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers 2024–25: Senior appointee and Qualifications Development colleague perspectives**

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Note: From 1 February 2026, Qualifications Scotland became fully operational, replacing SQA and becoming the new national awarding body. This document references SQA as the research concerns the delivery of National Courses in the 2024–25 session.

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Introduction .....	1
Method .....	1
Findings .....	2
<b>Respondent profile</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>National Qualifications</b> .....	<b>8</b>
National 4.....	8
National 5.....	10
Higher .....	11
Advanced Higher .....	13
National Qualifications conclusion .....	15
<b>Assessment and awarding</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Changes over time .....	19
<b>Legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Changes over time .....	21
<b>Standards</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Changes over time .....	23
<b>Composite analysis</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Communications satisfaction .....	24
Qualifications satisfaction.....	25
Legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching.....	28
Standards.....	29
<b>Appendix — SA and QD satisfaction composite analysis</b> .....	<b>30</b>
Communication satisfaction .....	30
National 4 satisfaction.....	33
National 5 satisfaction.....	36
Higher satisfaction .....	39
Advanced Higher satisfaction.....	42
Standards satisfaction.....	45
Legacy of COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching .....	48
Assessment and awarding.....	51

# Executive summary

## Introduction

In 2024, we conducted 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. These stakeholders include learners, educators, senior appointees and Qualifications Development (QD) colleagues. In 2025, the second year of the survey was launched. We intend to carry out the research annually unless there are significant changes to the context.

## Method

This piece of research aimed to capture the perceptions of colleagues in our QD Directorate and the senior appointees (SAs) who supported NQs in 2024–25 regarding a range of topics. These included:

- National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
- Assessment and awarding
- The legacy of COVID-19's impact on learning and teaching
- Standards

The research also sought to understand the extent to which views on these topics had changed over time. A final aim of the research was to understand how QD colleagues and SAs with different characteristics experienced several aspects of NQs in 2024–25. These characteristics were SQA appointee role, length of time in SQA appointee role, and subject responsibility.

QD colleagues and those who had been SAs for NQs in 2024–25 were invited to take part in an online survey on these topics in September and October 2025. The survey received 61 full responses. The data were then analysed by applying a mixture of descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis tests to assess statistically significant differences in the responses between different groups in the sample.

The sample size was smaller in this survey compared to the learner and educator surveys. As such, changes over time may appear to be more dramatic in this report compared to the other reports, but this is likely to be due to higher variability in the sample, rather than a significant change in attitudes. For this reason, only changes over time that differed by at least 20 percentage points are included in the report.

QD colleagues and SAs have different responsibilities. The role of colleagues in QD is to develop, manage and maintain our portfolio of qualifications, ensuring compliance with our auditable framework of standards. The role of SAs, on the other hand, is to help with the development and quality assurance of all assessments, and marking candidates' assessments.

A broad range of team members were included in this research. QD participants included qualifications managers and subject implementation managers. SA participants included principal assessors, depute principal assessors, principal verifiers, and depute principal verifiers.

A detailed explanation of the methods used can be found in the methodology report and technical appendix.

## Findings

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

SA and QD respondents agreed that standards for all four qualifications are maintained year on year. They also felt that National 5s, Highers, and Advanced Highers provide learners with a broad range of skills, prepare them well for work and further study, and are well understood by the general public. However, the level of agreement was lower for National 4 qualifications.

There were high levels of agreement with the statement that NQ 'standards are maintained year on year' for Advanced Highers (100%), Highers (98%) and National 5s (93%). A strong majority, but a comparatively lower proportion felt the same way for National 4s (63%).

Similarly, there were generally high levels of agreement with the statement that National 5 (84%), Higher (82%) and Advanced Higher (93%) qualifications developed 'a broad range of skills for learners'. However, the agreement figure dropped to just over half (52%) for National 4s.

The vast majority of respondents thought both Higher (95%) and National 5 (88%) are well understood by the public, and there was a strong level of agreement for Advanced Higher (75%). By a considerable difference, National 4 had the lowest level of agreement for this statement, with only 11% agreeing, no respondents strongly agreeing, and 74% disagreeing or disagreeing strongly.

There was a high level of agreement that National 5s (88%), Highers (100%), and Advanced Highers (100%) were trusted qualifications. However, again, the proportion of respondents

agreeing dropped to 16% for National 4s, while the majority (63%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked whether various NQs were 'good preparation for work', 75% agreed or strongly agreed for National 5s; the figure was 79% for Highers and 89% for Advanced Highers. For National 4s, the proportion who agreed or strongly agreed was again lower at 31%.

All or almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that National 5s (89%), Highers (95%), and Advanced Highers (100%) were 'good preparation for further study'. This percentage dropped to 47% for National 4s.

When comparing the data collected in the 2024 survey to the 2025 survey, we found that for most statements, there were no substantial differences between the perceptions of respondents across the two survey years.

However, perceptions of trust in National 4s were poorer than the previous year among SA and QD respondents, and the proportion who agreed or strongly agreed that Advanced Highers are well understood by the general public had increased since 2024.

## **Assessment and awarding**

The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements relating to the approach to assessment and awarding in 2024–25. Almost all respondents expressed agreement that they were satisfied with the assessment process (92%) and that the assessment process was fair to all learners (90%). However, just over half (52%) agreed that 'SQA's approach to awarding and setting grade boundaries is generally understood by those outside the organisation'.

In 2025, more SA and QD respondents expressed agreement that information about the approach to awarding and grade boundaries was published early enough in the academic year, and that SQA's approach to awarding and setting grade boundaries is generally understood by those outside the organisation, than in 2024.

## **Legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic impact on learning and teaching**

Since 2024, the proportion of respondents who agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on learning and teaching in the academic year surveyed has decreased.

Between 2024 and 2025, the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that the pandemic continued to have an impact on learning and teaching in centres for some learners

decreased from 72% to 64%. The proportion of respondents who expressed agreement that the pandemic continued to have an impact on learning and teaching in centres for all learners decreased from 49% in 2024 to 35% in 2025.

In 2024, 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that skills development in their subject area continued to be impacted by the pandemic, but in 2025 this figure dropped to 44%.

## **Perceptions of standards**

There was a high level of agreement for two statements, 'The national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (course reports and marking instructions)' (90% agree or strongly agree) and 'Understanding Standards generally provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard' (84% agree or strongly agree).

A strong majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'Educators understand SQA assessment requirements' (68%) and 'The national standard was consistently understood and interpreted by educators in 2023–24' (62%).

Just over half (54%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'Educators consistently apply SQA assessment requirements in relation to permitted resources and reasonable assistance'.

More SA and QD respondents agreed that educators understood and applied standards well in 2024–25 than in 2023–24.

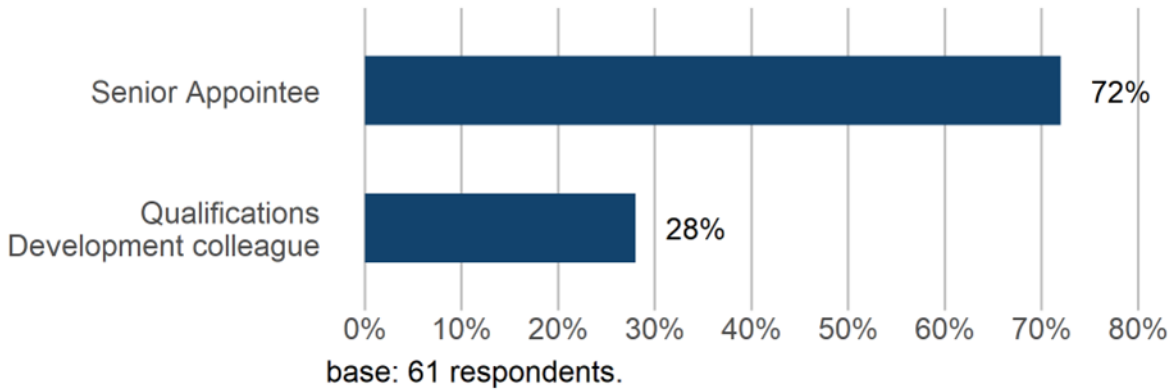
## **Differences in perceptions of NQs by sub-group**

Statistical analysis found that QD colleagues were less satisfied with communications from SQA about NQs in 2024–25 than SAs within our sample. There were no other significant differences by sub-group.

# Respondent profile

This report provides key information about the profile of the respondents. A more detailed description of the respondent profile is available in the technical appendix. Respondents were asked whether they worked for SQA as an SA or within QD in 2025 (Figure 1).

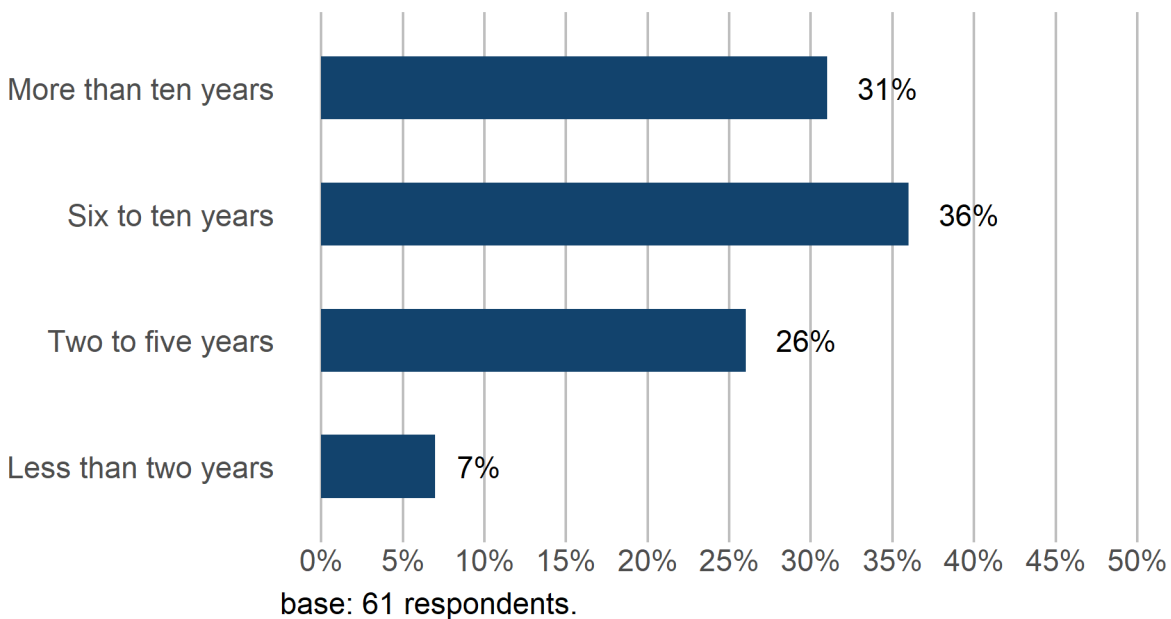
**Figure 1: Were you a senior appointee or QD colleague in 2025?**



Of those who provided a response, 72% of respondents worked as SAs and 28% worked within QD in 2025.

When respondents were asked to indicate how long they have been in their role, 61 individuals responded (Figure 2).

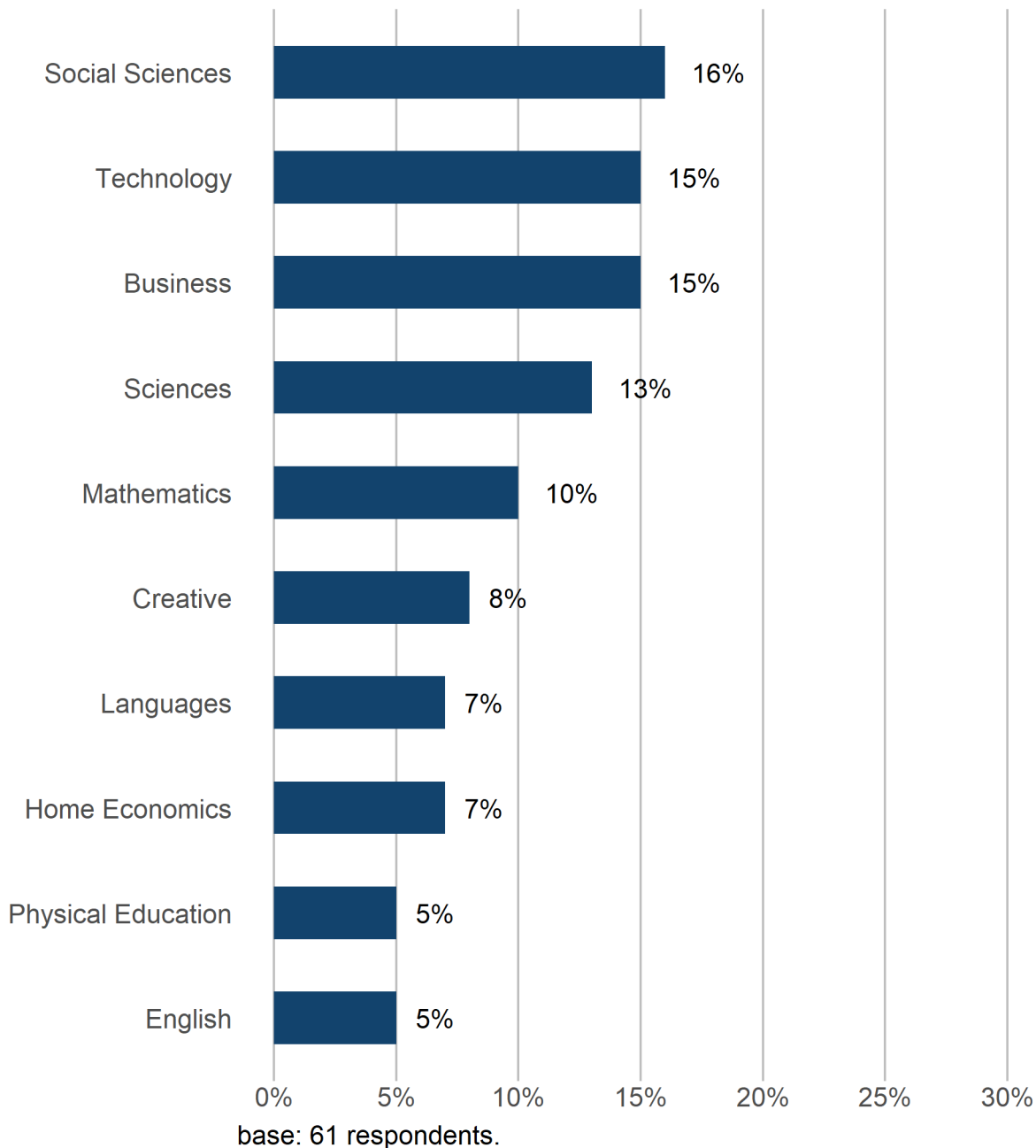
**Figure 2: How long have you been in this role?**



The highest proportion of respondents (36%) had been in their role for between six and ten years. A further 31% had been in the role for more than ten years, 26% had been in their role for between two and five years, and 7% had been in their role for less than two years.

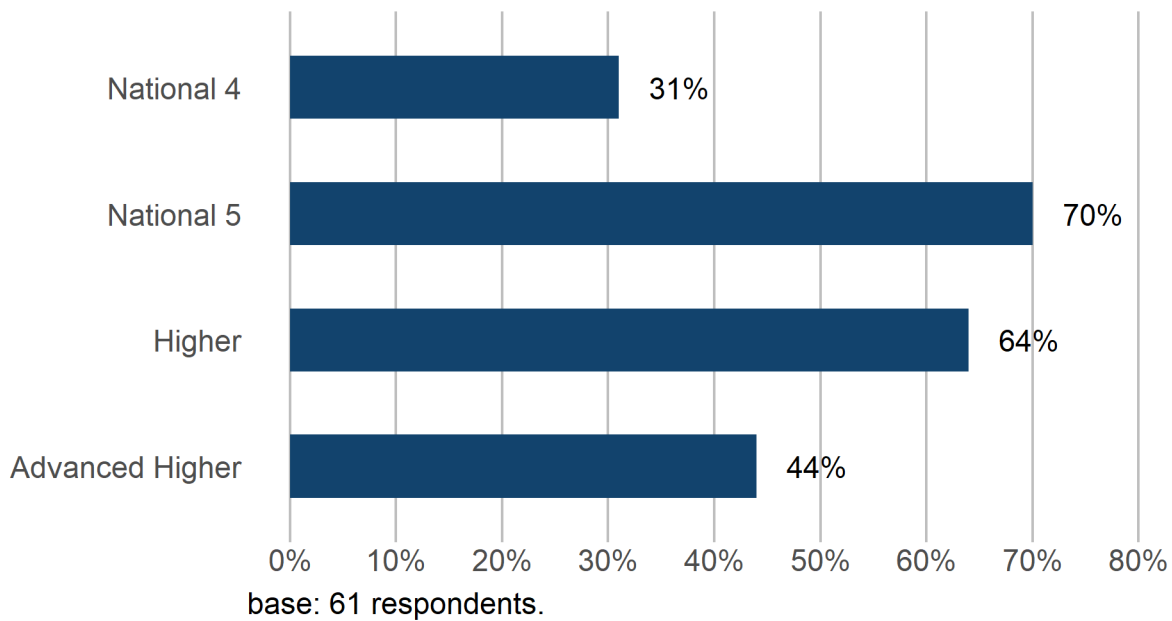
Respondents were also asked which subject areas they represented in 2025, and 61 individuals provided an answer (Figure 3). There was a broad range of subjects represented in the findings. The greatest percentage of respondents (16%) represented the Social Sciences subject area, while Physical Education and English had the lowest representation at 5% each.

**Figure 3: What subject area(s) did you represent in 2025?**



Respondents were then asked the qualification level that they represented in 2025, and 61 individuals provided an answer (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: What qualification level(s) did you represent in 2025?**



Most of the respondents represented National 5 (70%) or Higher (64%). There was also a high number of respondents (44%) who represented Advanced Higher. The fewest number of respondents represented National 4 (31%).

# National Qualifications

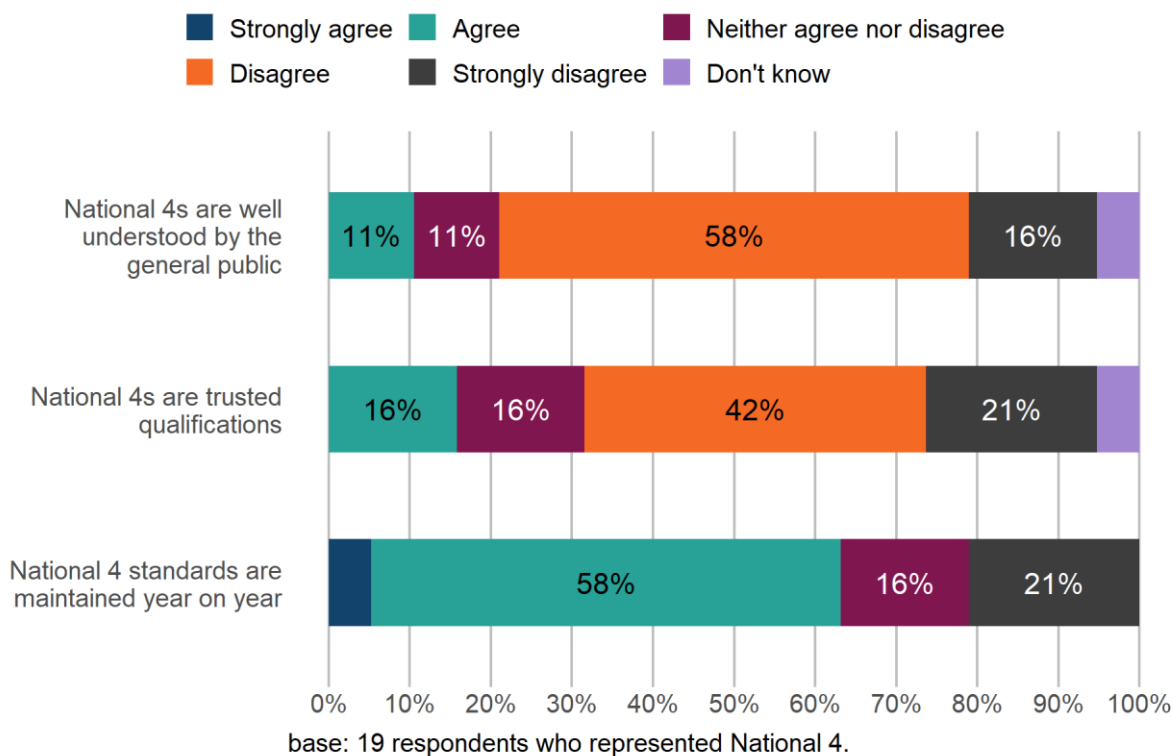
SA and QD colleague respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the same set of six statements for National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. Their answers are discussed in detail in the following section.

The number of SA and QD respondents was substantially lower than the number of learner and educator respondents. This is likely due to the total number of QD colleagues and SAs being lower than the number of learners and educators in Scotland. Given the fewer responses, the data collected from this group should be treated with some caution and may not be as reliable as the data collected from learners and educators. Detailed comparisons are available in the technical appendix.

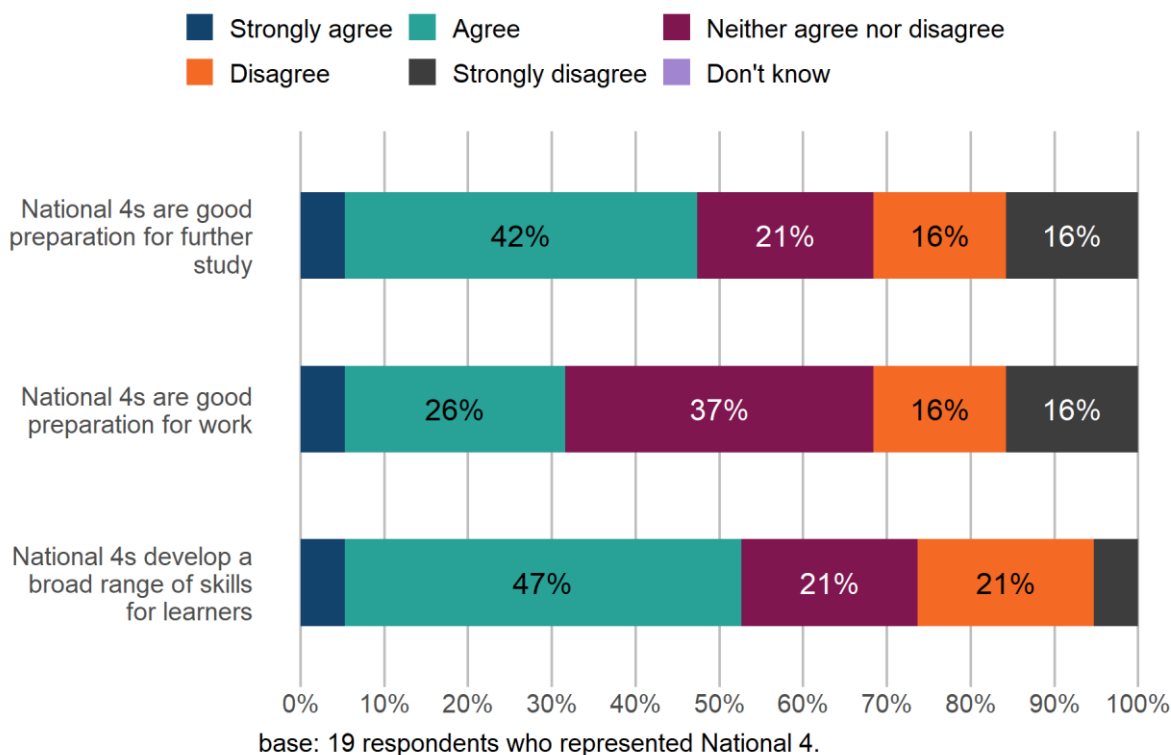
## National 4

The 19 respondents who indicated that they represented a National 4 qualification were asked how much they agree with several statements about National 4s (Figures 5a and 5b).

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



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



SA and QD respondents' perceptions of National 4 were mixed. The statement 'National 4s standards are maintained year on year' had the highest level of agreement, with a majority (63%) strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement.

In addition, there were lower but still high levels of agreement with the statements that National 4s 'develop a broad range of skills for learners' with 52% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 'National 4s are good preparation for further study' with 47% feeling the same way.

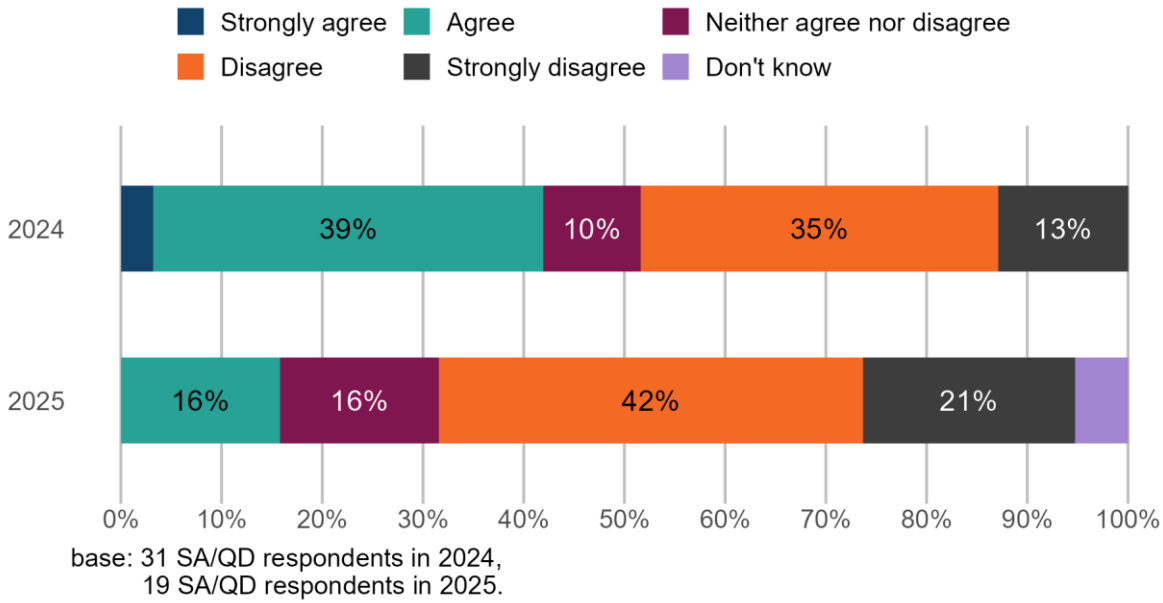
Most respondents had a neutral response when asked whether 'National 4s are good preparation for work' with 37% opting for 'neither agree nor disagree', although 32% opted for disagree or strongly disagree, while 30% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

However, a higher proportion of respondents expressed disagreement in regard to the statements 'National 4s are understood by the general public' (74% disagree or strongly disagree) and 'National 4s are trusted qualifications' (63% disagree or strongly disagree).

### Changes over time

The responses collected in the 2024 survey were compared to the responses collected in 2025. Between 2024 and 2025, the percentage of SA and QD respondents who expressed agreement that National 4s are trusted qualifications dropped from 42% to 16%. (Figure 6).

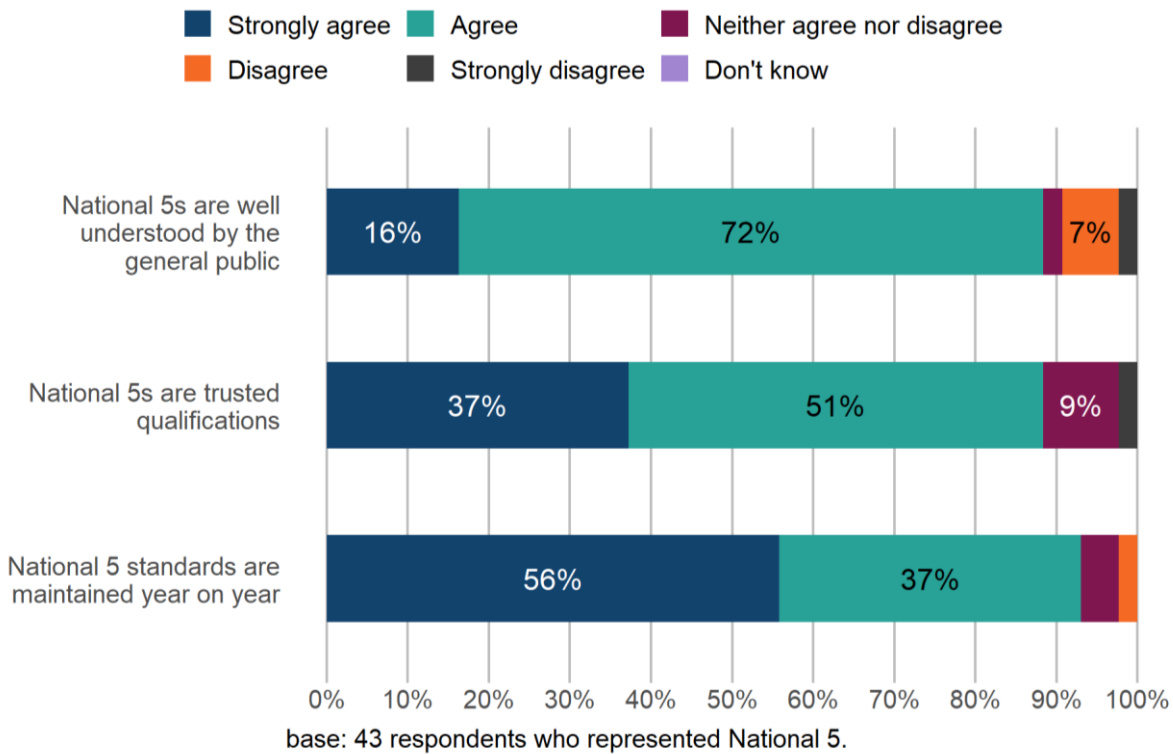
**Figure 6: National 4s are trusted qualifications, comparing 2024 and 2025**



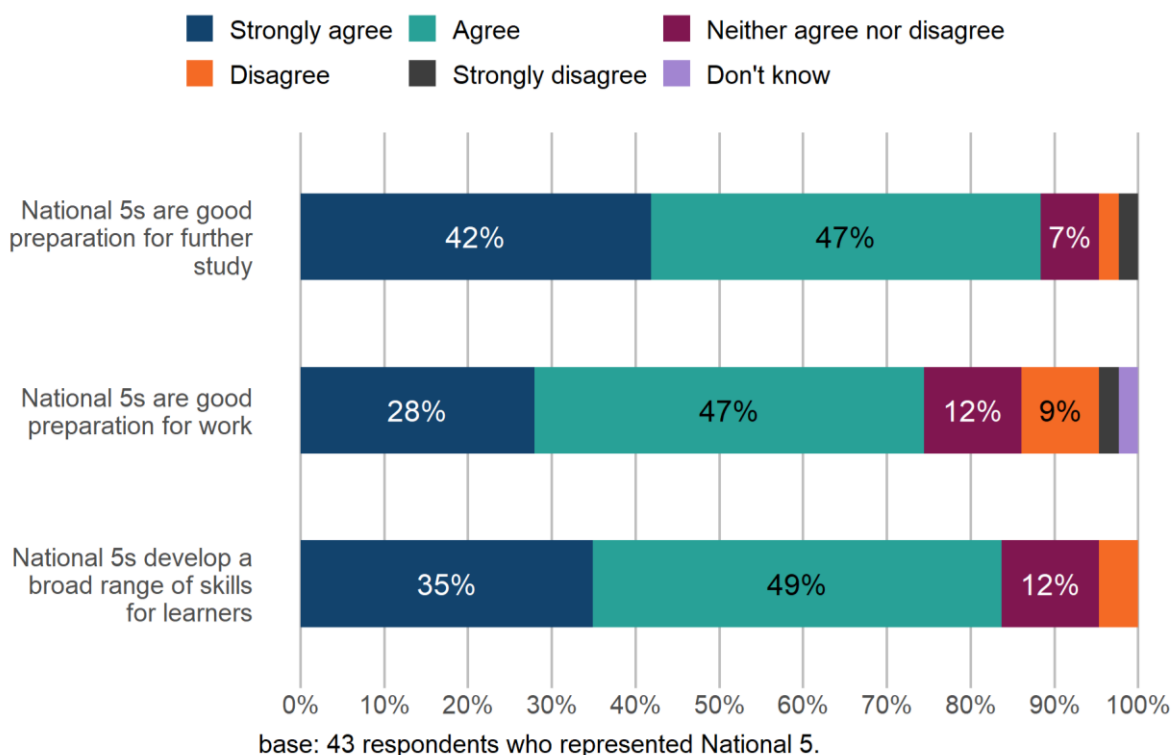
## National 5

The 72 respondents who indicated that they represented a National 5 qualification were asked how much they agree with the same group of statements about National 5s (Figures 7a and 7b).

**Figure 7a: Perceptions of National 5 qualifications**



**Figure 7b: Perceptions of National 5 qualifications**



Among those who represented National 5s, the vast majority expressed agreement with all of the statements. The highest level of agreement was with the statement ‘National 5 standards are maintained year on year’ with 93% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

There were also very high levels of agreement with the statements, ‘National 5s are good preparation for further study’ (89% agree or strongly agree), ‘National 5s are trusted qualifications’ (88% agree or strongly agree), ‘National 5s are understood by the general public’ (88% agree or strongly agree), and ‘National 5s develop a broad range of skills for learners’ (84% agree or strongly agree).

The lowest level of agreement, which still represented a strong majority of respondents, was with regards to the statement ‘National 5s are good preparation for work’. The percentage of respondents who agreed was 75%, and 11% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

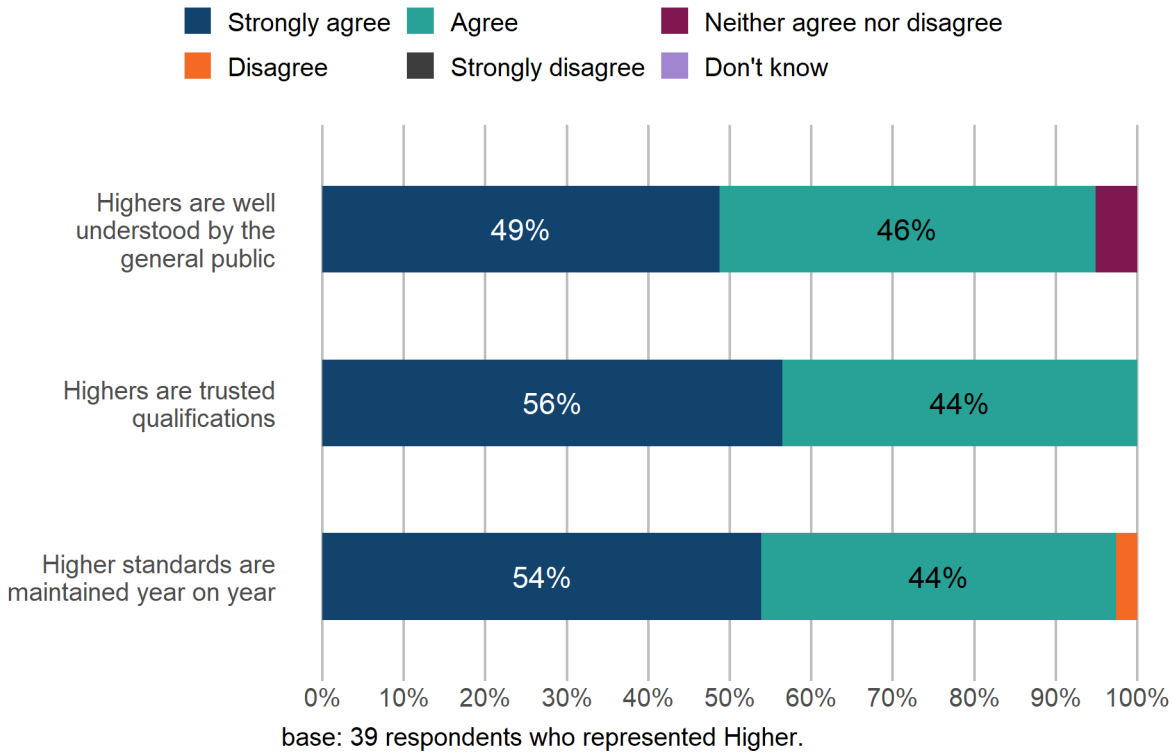
## Changes over time

Responses to the statements about National 5 qualifications were similar to 2024.

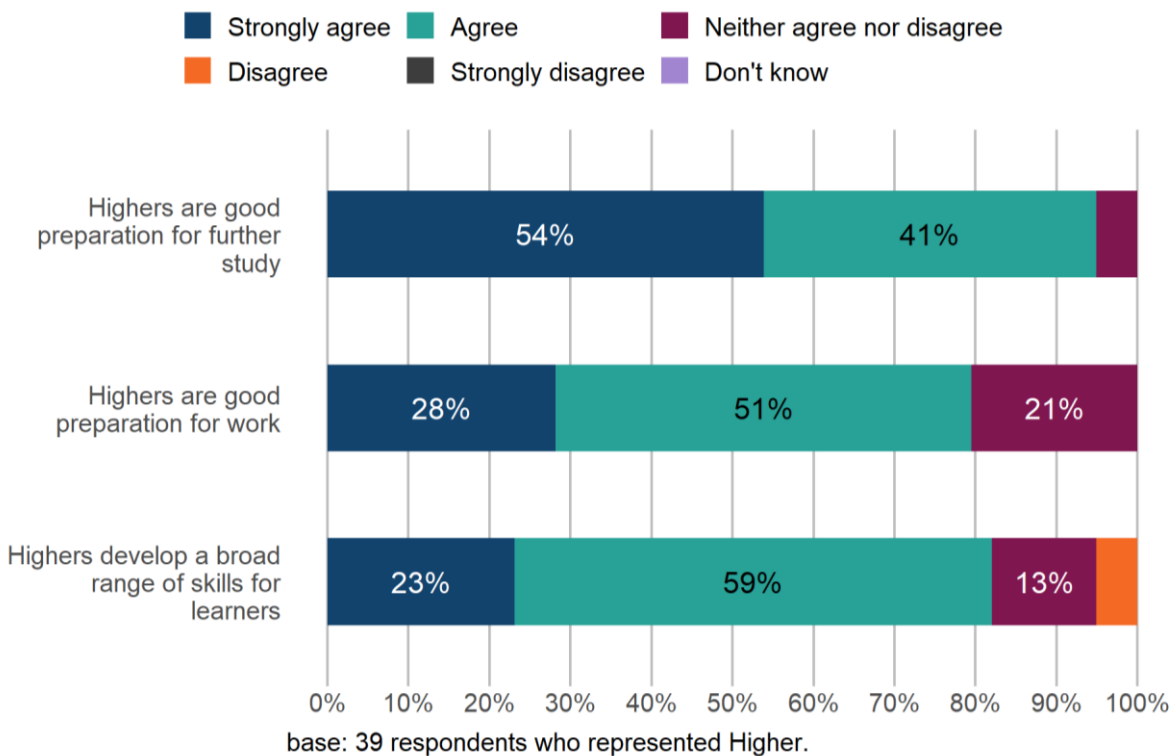
## Higher

The 39 respondents who indicated that they represented a Higher qualification were asked how much they agree with the same group of statements about Highers (Figures 8a and 8b).

**Figure 8a: Perceptions of Higher qualifications**



**Figure 8b: Perceptions of Higher qualifications**



Broadly, there was a high level of agreement with the statements regarding Highers among SA and QD respondents. All respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Highers are trusted qualifications’ (100%), and almost all (98%) expressed agreement that ‘Higher standards are maintained year on year’.

There was also a strong level of agreement with several other statements, including ‘Highers are good preparation for further study’ (95% agreed or strongly agreed) and ‘Highers are well understood by the general public’ (95% agreed or strongly agreed).

There was a slightly lower but still very high level of agreement with the statements that ‘Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners’ (82%) and ‘Highers are good preparation for work’ (79%).

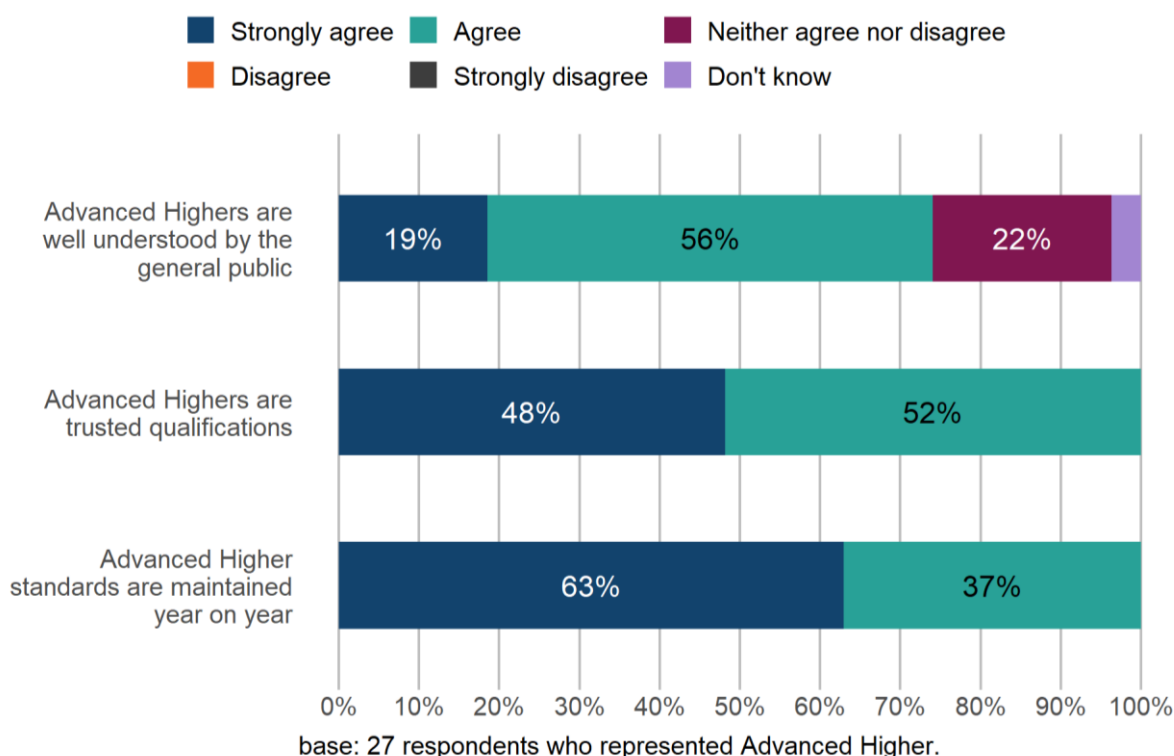
## Changes over time

Responses to the statements about Higher qualifications were similar to 2024.

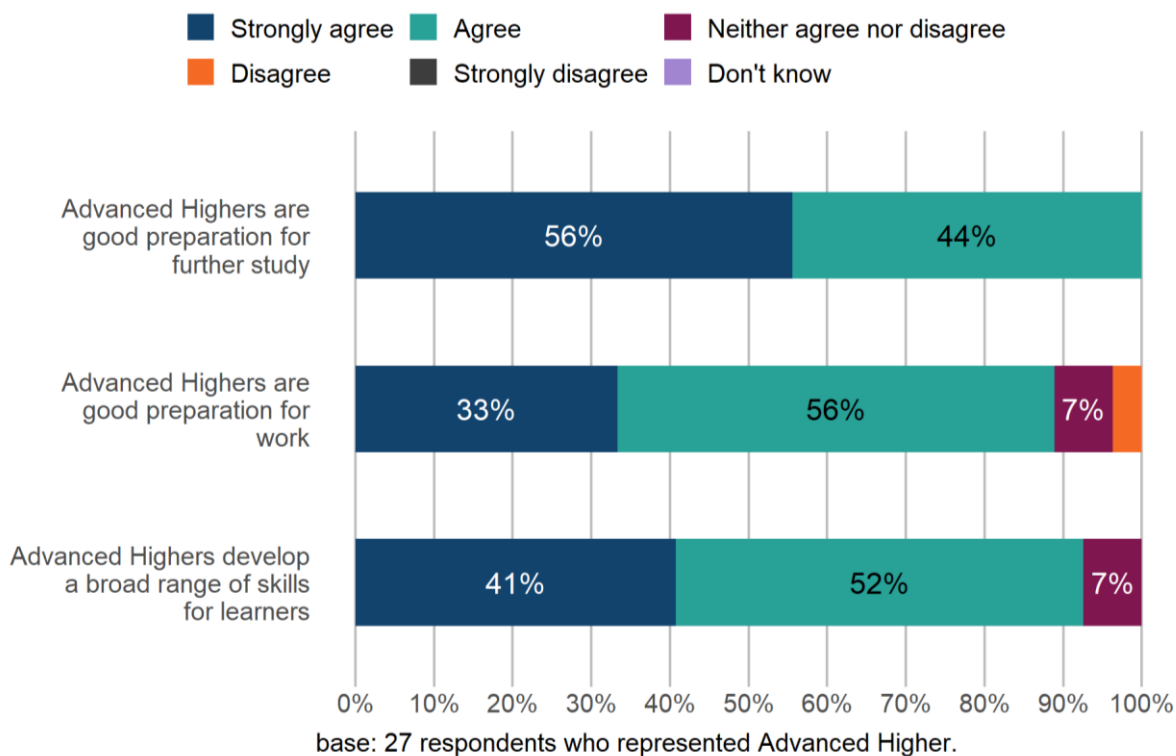
## Advanced Higher

The 45 respondents who indicated that they represented an Advanced Higher qualification were asked how much they agree with the same group of statements about Advanced Highers (Figures 9a and 9b).

**Figure 9a: Perceptions of Advanced Higher qualifications**



**Figure 9b: Perceptions of Advanced Higher qualifications**



All respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statements ‘Advanced Highers are trusted qualifications’, ‘Advanced Highers are good preparation for further study’, and ‘Advanced Higher standards are maintained year on year’.

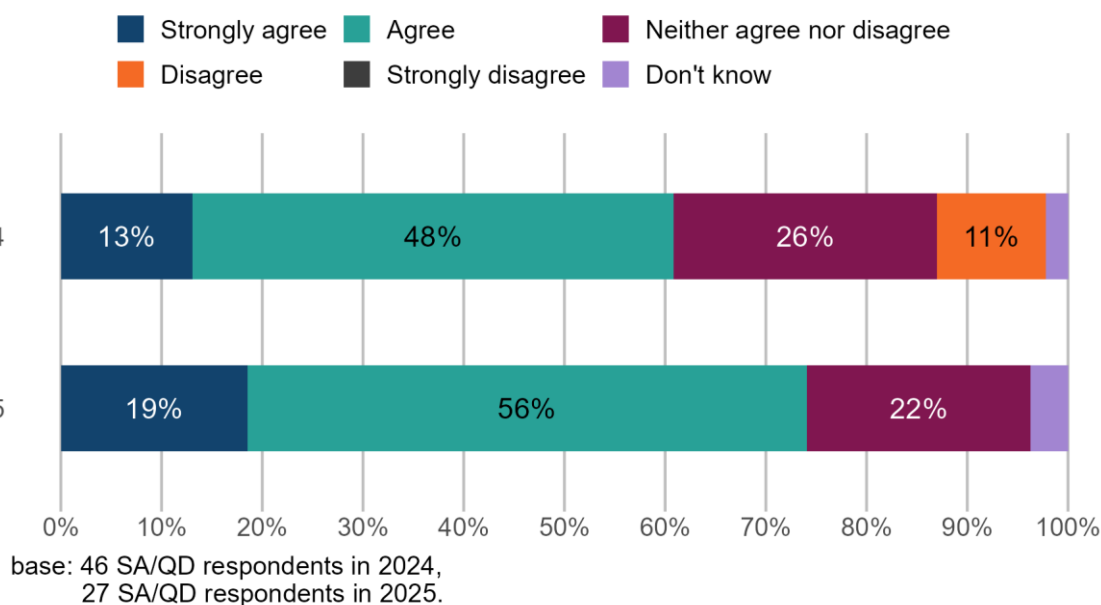
The vast majority also expressed agreement with the statements ‘Advanced Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners’ with 93% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and ‘Advanced Highers are good preparation for work’ with 89% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

The lowest level of agreement was with the statement ‘Advanced Highers are understood by the general public’, as 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 22% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4% did not know.

### Changes over time

Similar to the statements regarding the other qualifications, the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with most statements about Advanced Higher were largely similar between 2024 and 2025. However, as shown in Figure 10, the proportion of respondents who expressed agreement that Advanced Highers were well understood by the general public increased from 62% to 89% between 2024 and 2025.

**Figure 10: Advanced Highers are well understood by the general public, comparing 2024 and 2025**



## National Qualifications conclusion

Overall, SA and QD respondents expressed agreement that standards for all four qualifications are maintained year on year. They also agreed that National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers provide learners with a broad range of skills, prepare them well for work and further study, and are well understood by the general public. However, the levels of agreement were low across these statements for National 4 qualifications.

There were generally high levels of agreement with the statement that National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications developed ‘a broad range of skills for learners’. This was particularly the case for National 5 (84%), Higher (82%) and Advanced Higher (93%). However, the agreement figure dropped to just over half (52%) for National 4.

When asked whether the NQs were ‘well understood by the public’, there were some mixed responses. The vast majority of respondents thought both Higher (95%) and National 5 (88%) are well understood by the public, and levels of disagreement were low. For Advanced Higher, there was a strong level of agreement (75%). By far, National 4 had the lowest level of agreement for this statement, with only 11% agreeing, no respondents strongly agreeing, and 74% disagreeing or disagreeing strongly.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed that various NQs were ‘trusted qualifications’. There was a high level of agreement with this statement for National 5s (88%), Highers (100%),

and Advanced Highers (100%). However, the percentage of agreement dropped for National 4s (16%) and 63% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

There was a mixed response when respondents were asked whether the NQs were 'good preparation for work'. The levels of agreement were high for National 5s (75%), Highers (79%), and Advanced Highers (89%). Once again, this figure was lower for National 4s (31%).

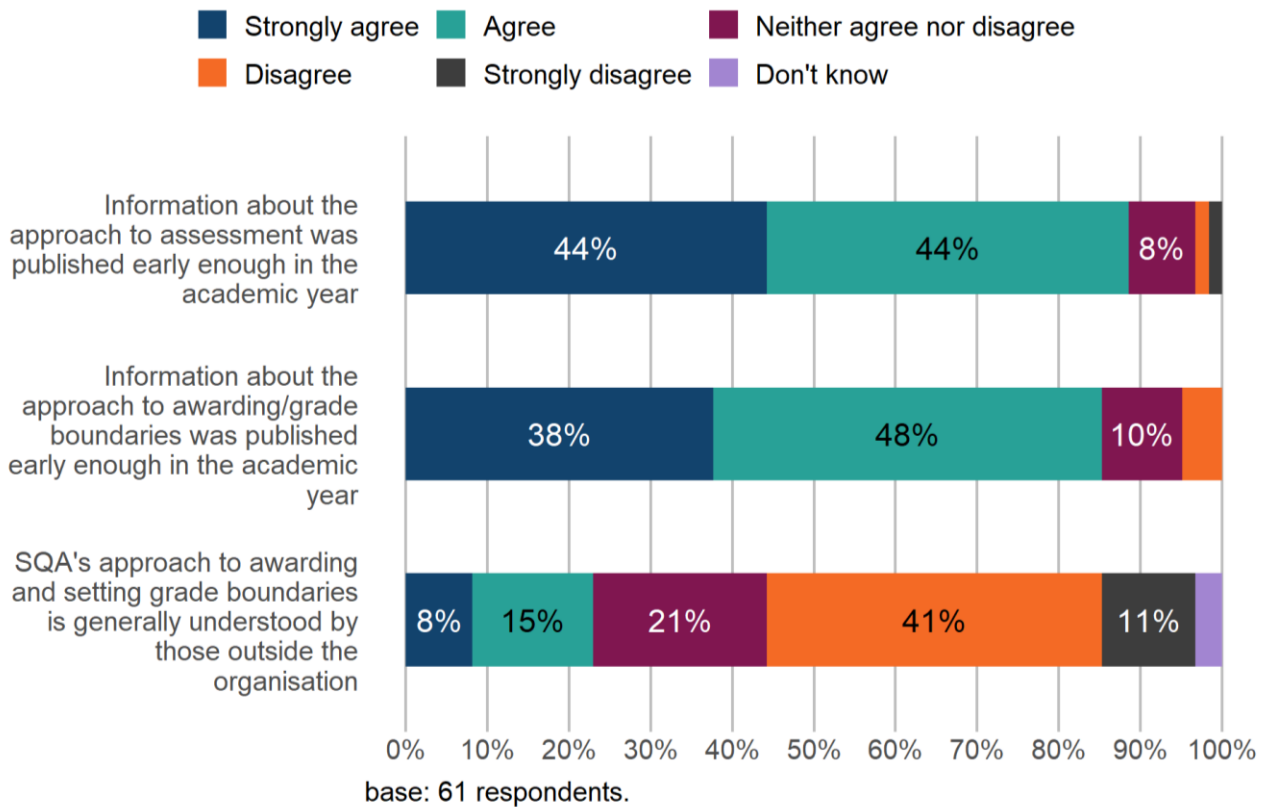
All or almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that National 5s (89%), Highers (95%), and Advanced Highers (100%) were 'good preparation for further study'. This percentage dropped to 47% for National 4s.

There were high levels of agreement with the statement that NQ 'standards are maintained year on year' for Advanced Highers (100%), Highers (98%) and National 5s (93%). Comparatively, there was a low level of agreement for National 4s (63%).

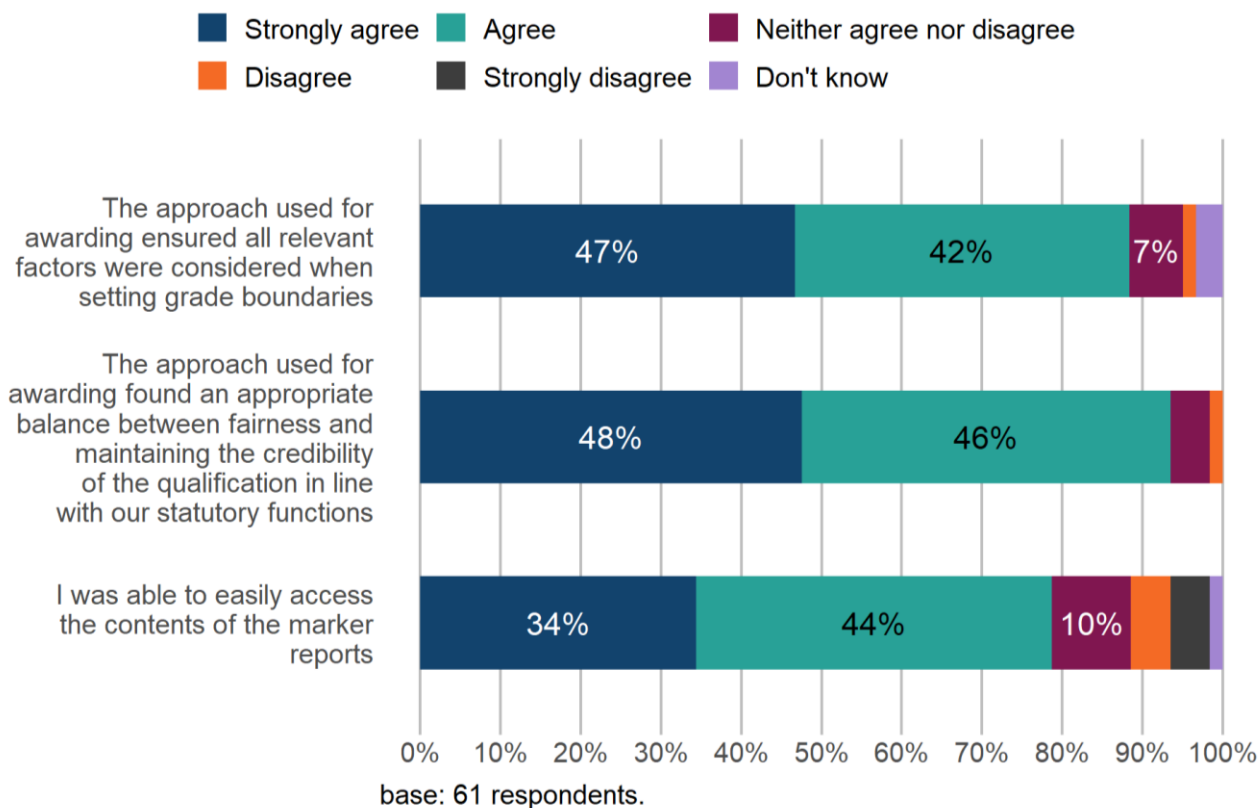
# Assessment and awarding

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with statements about assessment, awarding and results in the 2024–25 academic year (Figures 11a and 11b). Sixty-one respondents answered these questions.

**Figure 11a: Perceptions of assessment and awarding**



**Figure 11b: Perceptions of assessment and awarding**



The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

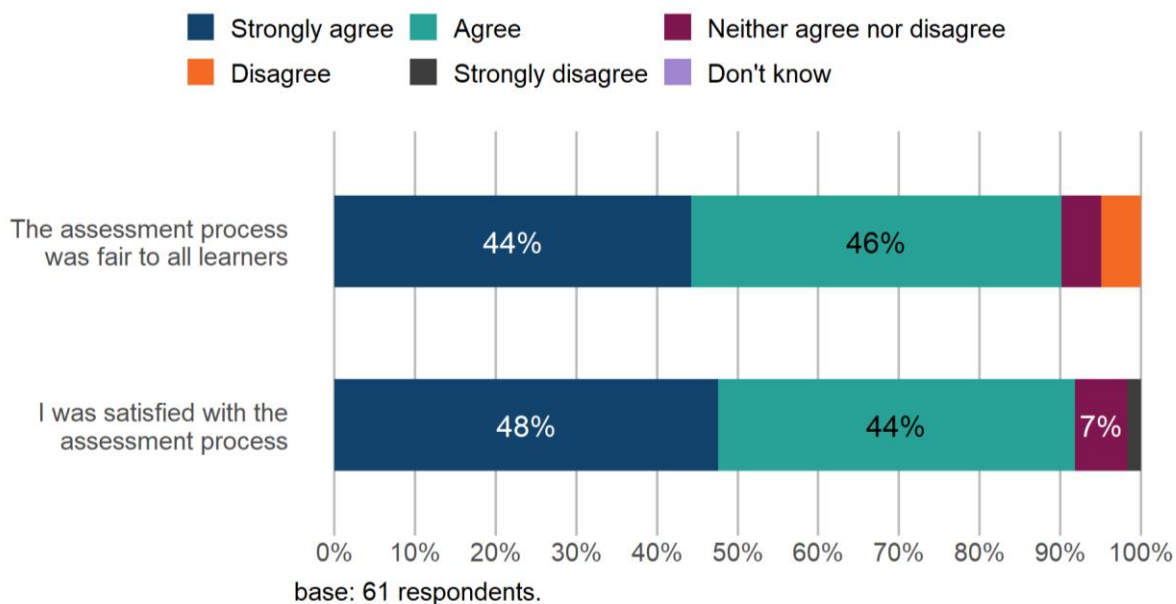
- ‘The approach used for awarding found an appropriate balance between fairness and maintaining the credibility of the qualifications in line with our statutory functions.’ (94%)
- ‘The approach used for awarding ensured all relevant factors were considered when setting grade boundaries.’ (89%)
- ‘Information about the approach to assessment was published early enough in the academic year.’ (88%)
- ‘Information about the approach to awarding/grade boundaries was published early enough in the academic year.’ (86%)

There was also a strong level of agreement with the statement ‘I was able to easily access contents of marker reports’, with 78% of respondents agreeing.

However, a substantially lower proportion expressed agreement with the statement: ‘SQA’s approach to awarding and setting grade boundaries is generally understood by those outside the organisation’ with just 23% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 52% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. A further 21% said they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

61 respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed with statements about assessment (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Perceptions of the assessment process**



Both statements had high levels of agreement, with 92% of respondents agreeing that that they were 'satisfied with the assessment process' and 90% agreeing that 'the assessment process was fair to all learners'.

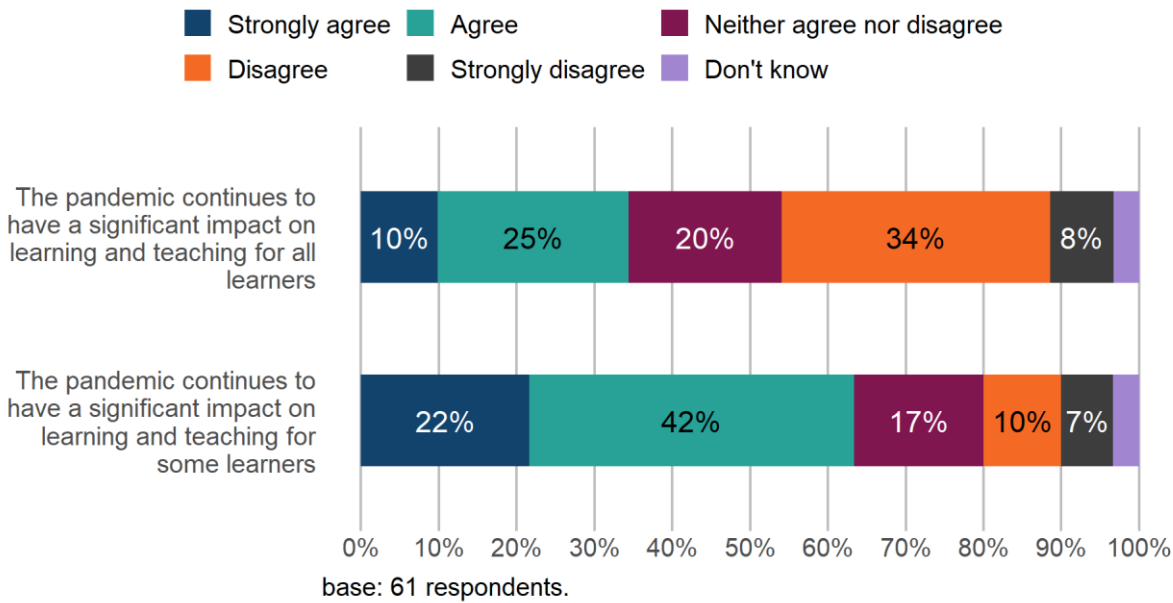
## Changes over time

Responses to the statements about assessment and awarding were similar to 2024.

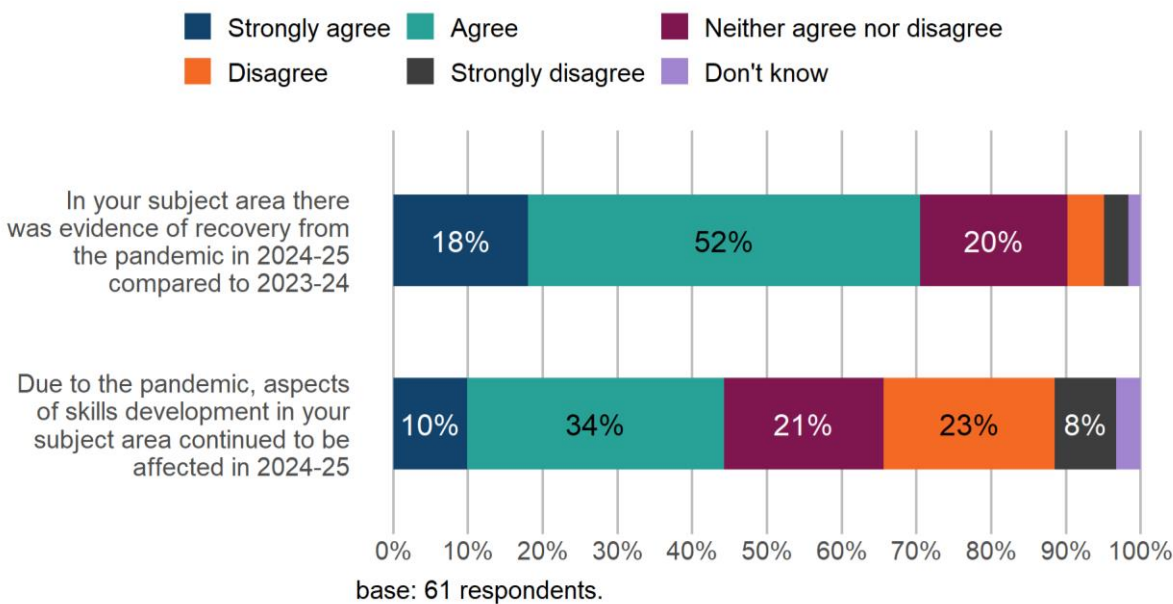
# Legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching

A total of 61 respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with several statements about education since the COVID-19 pandemic (Figures 13a and 13b).

**Figure 13a: Perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching**



**Figure 13b: Perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching**



There was a mixture of opinions in relation to learning and teaching since the pandemic.

There were high levels of agreement with the statements that 'In your subject area there was evidence of recovery from the pandemic in 2023–24 compared to 2022–23' (70%) and 'The

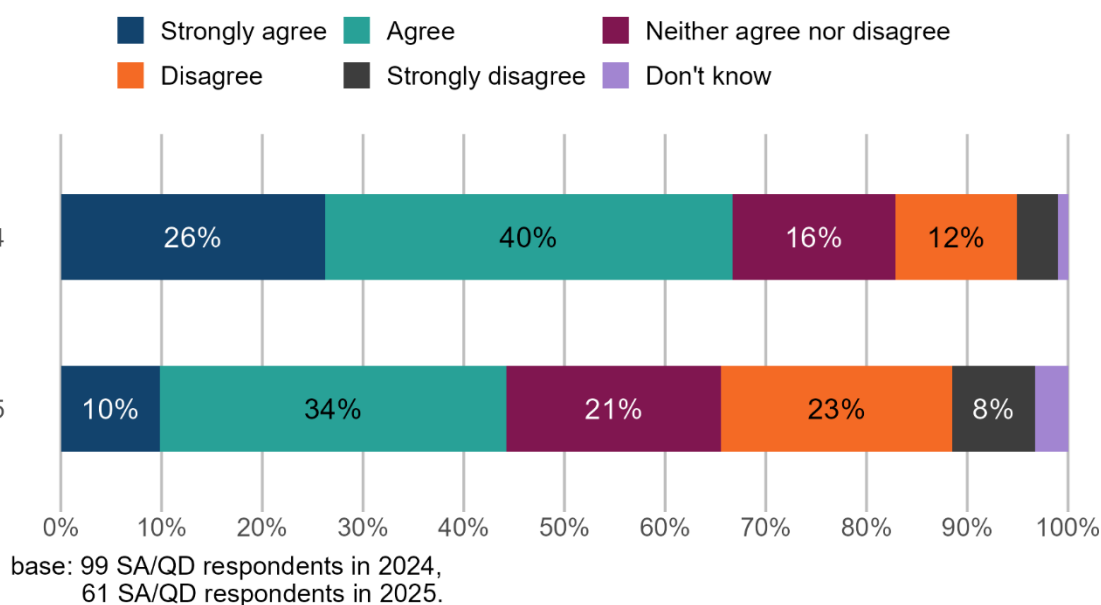
pandemic continues to have an impact on learning and teaching in centres for some learners' (64%).

Yet, there was a more moderate level of agreement with the statements 'Due to the pandemic, aspects of skills development in your subject area continued to be affected in 2023–24' (44%) and 'The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on learning and teaching in centres for all learners' (35%).

## Changes over time

In the 2024 survey, respondents were asked some of the same questions regarding the impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching. In 2024, 66% of respondents agreed that skills development in their subject area continued to be impacted by the pandemic. In 2025, this figure has dropped to 44% (Figure 14).

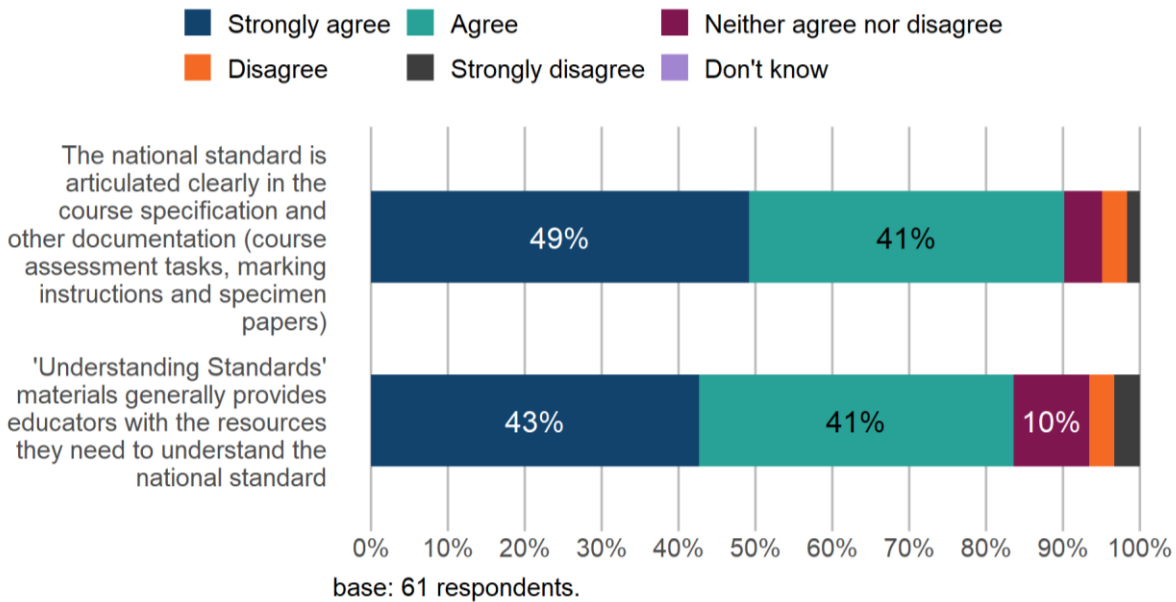
**Figure 14: Due to the pandemic, aspects of skills development continued to be affected in [year], comparing 2024 and 2025**



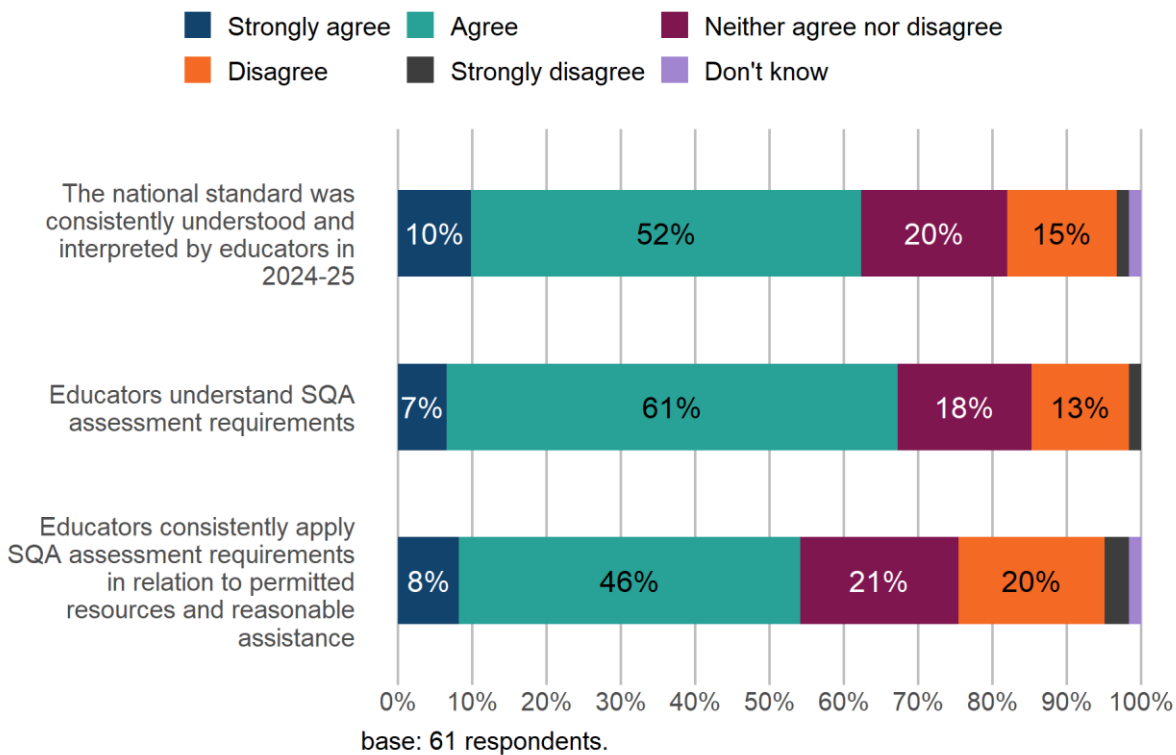
# Standards

A total of 61 respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with statements about standards (Figures 15a and 15b).

**Figure 15a: Perceptions of NQ standards**



**Figure 15b: Perceptions of NQ standard**



There was a high level of agreement for two statements, 'The national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (course reports and marking

instructions)' (90% agree or strongly agree) and 'Understanding Standards generally provides educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard' (84% agree or strongly agree).

A strong majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'Educators understand SQA assessment requirements' (68%) and 'The national standard was consistently understood and interpreted by educators in 2023–24' (62%). However, both of these statements had a moderate proportion of neither agree nor disagree responses (18% and 20% respectively) and disagree or strongly disagree responses (13% and 15% respectively).

There was a mixed response in relation to the statement 'Educators consistently apply SQA assessment requirements in relation to permitted resources and reasonable assistance'. Just over half agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (54%), a further 21% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## **Changes over time**

Responses to the statements about standards were similar to 2024.

# Composite analysis

## Communications satisfaction

The communications satisfaction composite examined how respondents felt about NQ communications overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following statements about communication:

- Information about the approach to assessment was published early enough in the academic year.
- Information about the approach to awarding/grade boundaries was published early enough in the academic year.
- SQA's approach to awarding and setting grade boundaries is generally understood by those outside the organisation.
- The approach used for awarding ensured all relevant factors were considered when setting grade boundaries.
- The approach used for awarding found an appropriate balance between fairness and maintaining the credibility of the qualification in line with our statutory functions.
- I was able to easily access the contents of the marker reports.

In designing the communications satisfaction composite, we interpreted higher levels of agreement with the six statements as indicating higher levels of satisfaction with SQA's communications about NQ in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicated low levels of satisfaction.

We calculated a communications satisfaction score for respondents who answered all six questions. The composite had an overall average score of 4.0 for all respondents, indicating a higher level of satisfaction. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of 'agree'.

The communication satisfaction score across three different sub-groups was compared: the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role, and the subject responsibility. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between satisfaction scores based on the three sub-groups.

## SQA role

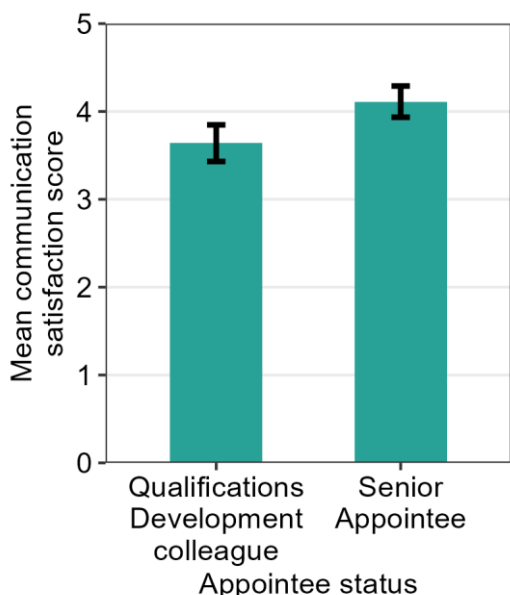
QD respondents had a mean composite score of 3.6, compared to 4.1 for SAs (Table 1 and Figure 16).

**Table 1: Communication score composite Information**

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	3.6	3.4	3.8
Senior appointee	45	4.1	3.9	4.3

There was a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the composite scores between the SAs and the QD respondents. This may indicate that QD respondents were less satisfied than SAs with the communications about the NQ in 2024–25.

**Figure 16: Mean communications satisfaction score**



## Qualifications satisfaction

### National 4

The National 4 satisfaction composite score examines how respondents felt about National 4s overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following six statements about National 4s:

- National 4s are well understood by the general public.
- National 4s are trusted qualifications.
- National 4 standards are maintained year on year.
- National 4s are good preparation for further study.
- National 4s are good preparation for work.

- National 4s develop a broad range of skills for learners.

In designing the National 4 satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with National 4s in 2024–25. 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 2.8 for all respondents, indicating a slightly below mid-range level of satisfaction with National 4. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response slightly below ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and above ‘disagree’.

The National 4 satisfaction score was compared against three different sub-groups : the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role, and the subject responsibility. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between satisfaction scores based on the three factors.

## **National 5**

The National 5 satisfaction composite score examines how respondents felt about National 5s overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following six statements about National 5s:

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

In designing the National 5 satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with National 5s in 2024–25. 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 4.1 for all respondents, indicating a higher level of satisfaction with National 5s. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of ‘agree’.

The National 5 satisfaction score was compared against three different sub-groups : the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role, and the subject responsibility.

Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between satisfaction scores based on the three factors.

## **Higher**

The Higher satisfaction composite score examines how respondents felt about Highers overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following six statements about Highers:

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

In designing the Higher satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with Highers in 2024–25.

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 4.3 for all respondents, indicating a higher level of satisfaction with Highers. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response slightly above 'agree'.

The Higher satisfaction score was compared against three different sub-groups : the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role and the subject responsibility. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between satisfaction scores based on the three factors.

## **Advanced Higher**

The Advanced Higher satisfaction composite score examines how respondents felt about Advanced Highers overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following six statements about Advanced Highers:

- Advanced Highers are well understood by the general public.
- Advanced Highers are trusted qualifications.
- Advanced Higher standards are maintained year on year.
- Advanced Highers are good preparation for further study.
- Advanced Highers are good preparation for work.

- Advanced Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners.

In designing the Advanced Higher satisfaction composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the six statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with Advanced Highers in 2024–25. 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 4.4 for all respondents, indicating a higher level of satisfaction with Advanced Highers. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response above ‘agree’ and below ‘strongly agree’.

The Advanced Higher satisfaction score was compared against three different sub-groups: the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role, and the subject responsibility. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between satisfaction scores based on the three factors.

## **Legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching**

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

- The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on learning and teaching for all learners.
- The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on learning and teaching for some learners.
- In your subject area there was evidence of recovery from the pandemic in 2024–25 compared to 2023–24.
- Due to the pandemic, aspects of skills development in your subject area continued to be affected in 2024–25.

Agreement with the third statement (‘In your subject area there was evidence of recovery from the pandemic in 2024–25 compared to 2022–23’) indicates a view that things are improving. Agreement with any of the other three statements indicates a more negative view (the pandemic legacy remains an issue). The Likert scale scores for the third statement were therefore flipped when combined with the scores for the other statements to match the overall trend of what agreement or disagreement means. As a result, a low mean composite score from all four questions would indicate that participants do not believe that COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to have an impact on learning and teaching in 2024–25. Further information on this is available in the technical appendix.

We calculated a legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching impact score for respondents who answered all four questions. The composite had an overall average score of 3.0 for all respondents, indicating amid-range level of impact. Translated back to the original Likert scale responses, this would be an average response of 'neither agree nor disagree'. This indicates that respondents had a neutral view on the impact of the legacy of the pandemic on learning and teaching in 2024–25.

The legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching impact score was compared against three different sub-groups: the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role, and the subject responsibility. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between impact scores based on the three factors.

## Standards

The standards satisfaction composite examined how respondents felt about standards overall in 2024–25 by taking an average of their response to the following five statements about standards:

- The national standard is articulated clearly in the course specification and other documentation (course assessment tasks, marking instructions and specimen papers).
- 'Understanding Standards' materials generally provide educators with the resources they need to understand the national standard.
- The national standard was consistently understood and interpreted by educators in 2024–25.
- Educators understand SQA assessment requirements.
- Educators consistently apply SQA assessment requirements in relation to permitted resources and reasonable assistance.

In designing the standards composite, we interpreted that higher levels of agreement with the five statements indicated higher levels of satisfaction with standards in 2024–25. Therefore, low mean scores indicate low levels of satisfaction.

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

The standards satisfaction score was compared against three different sub-groups: the SQA appointee role, the length of time in the SQA appointee role, and the subject responsibility. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between satisfaction scores based on the three factors.

# Appendix — SA and QD satisfaction composite analysis

## Communication satisfaction

Figure 17: Communication satisfaction by appointee status

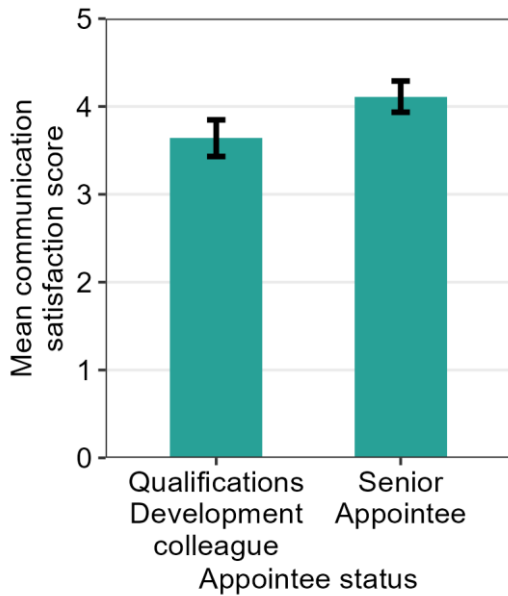


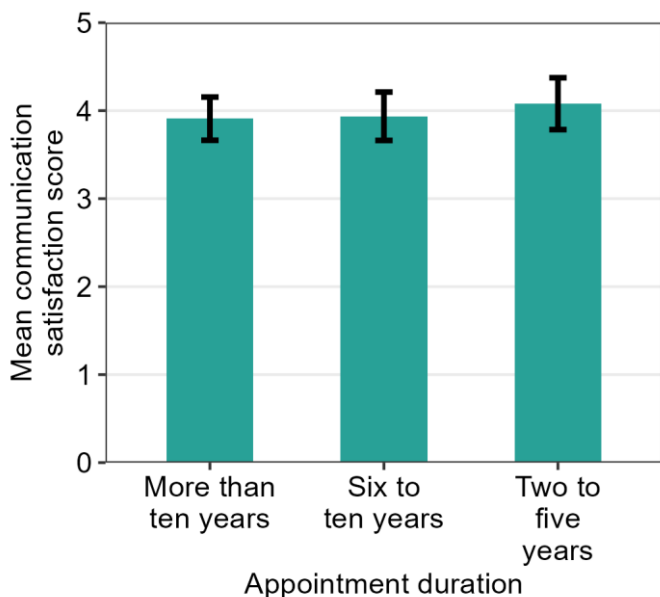
Table 2: Communication score composite by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	3.6	3.4	3.8
Senior appointee	45	4.1	3.9	4.3

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0031

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

**Figure 18: Communication satisfaction by appointment duration**



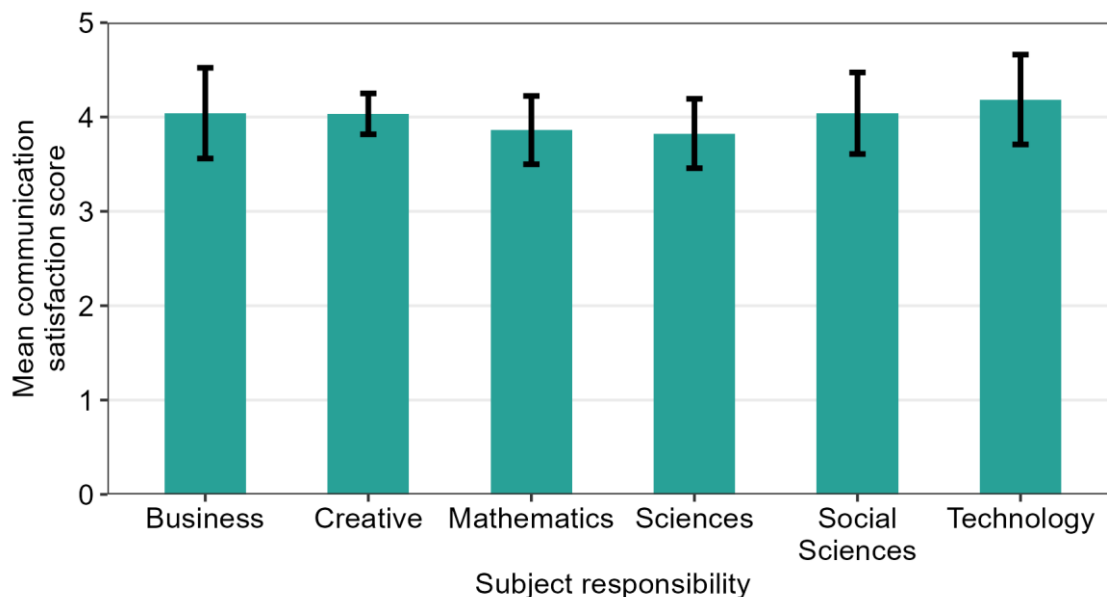
**Table 3: Communication score composite by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	20	3.9	3.7	4.2
Six to ten years	20	3.9	3.7	4.2
Two to five years	15	4.1	3.8	4.4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.7145

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

**Figure 19: Communication satisfaction by subject responsibility**



**Table 4: Communication score composite by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	10	4	3.6	4.5
Creative	5	4	3.8	4.3
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	5	3.9	3.5	4.2
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	10	3.8	3.5	4.2
Social Sciences	10	4	3.6	4.5
Technology	10	4.2	3.7	4.7

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.6542

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 is no evidence to suggest that any of the subject responsibility groupings have a different median score.

## National 4 satisfaction

Figure 20: National 4 satisfaction by appointee status

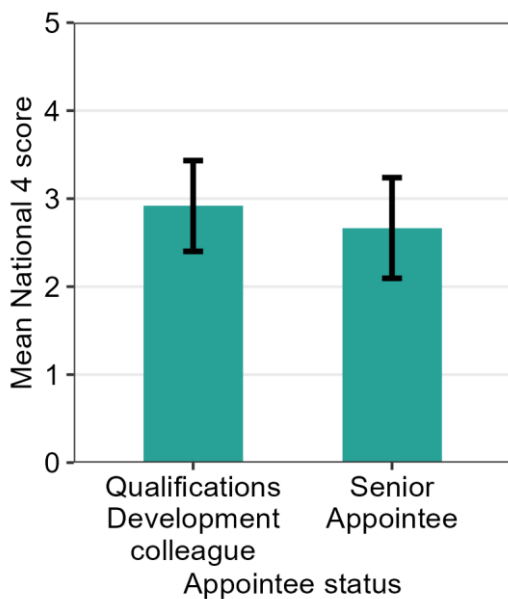


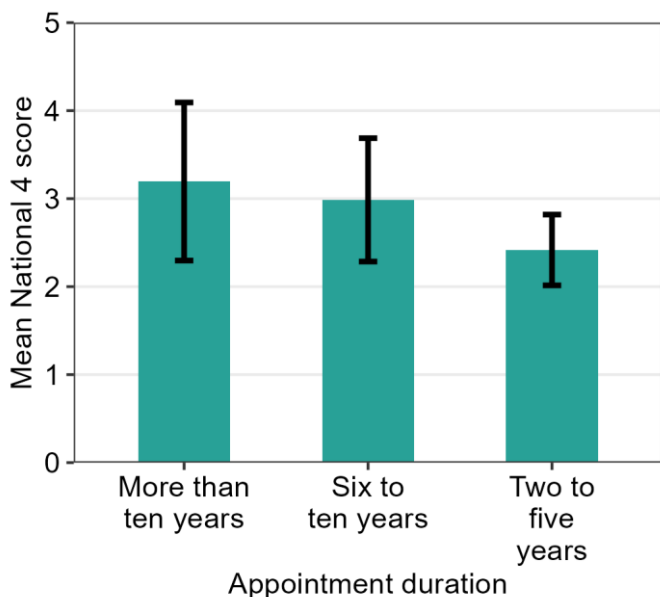
Table 5: National 4 satisfaction by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	2.9	2.4	3.4
Senior appointee	5	2.7	2.1	3.2

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.6285

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

**Figure 21: National 4 satisfaction by appointee duration**



**Table 6: National 4 satisfaction by appointee duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	5	3.2	2.3	4.1
Six to ten years	5	3	2.3	3.7
Two to five years	5	2.4	2	2.8

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0665

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

**Table 7: National 4 satisfaction by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Creative	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]

<b>Subject responsibility</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Mean communication satisfaction score</b>	<b>Confidence interval lower bound</b>	<b>Confidence interval upper bound</b>
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Social Sciences	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Technology	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]

The number of groups is insufficient to perform a Kruskal-Wallis test.

## National 5 satisfaction

Figure 22: National 5 satisfaction by appointee status

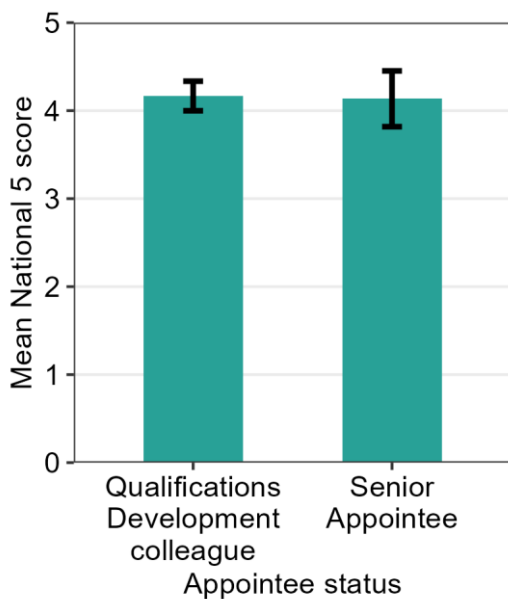


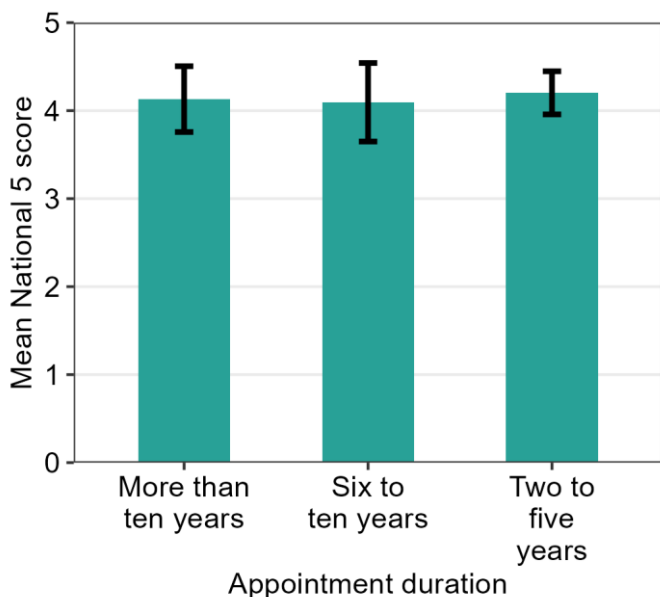
Table 8: National 5 satisfaction by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	4.2	4	4.3
Senior appointee	25	4.1	3.8	4.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.626

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

**Figure 23: National 5 satisfaction by appointment duration**



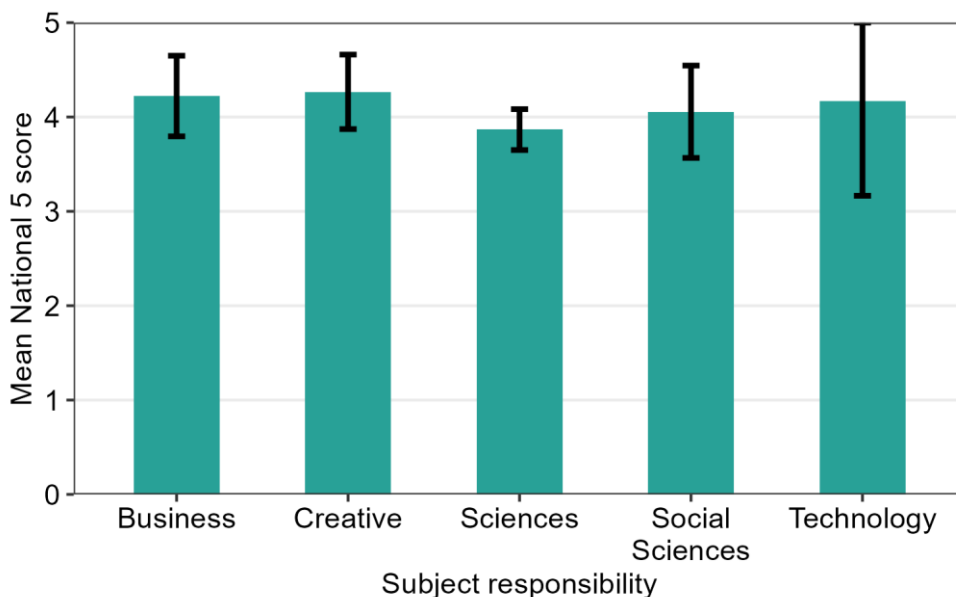
**Table 9: National 5 satisfaction by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	15	4.1	3.8	4.5
Six to ten years	15	4.1	3.6	4.5
Two to five years	15	4.2	4	4.4

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.9927

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

**Figure 24: National 5 satisfaction by subject responsibility**



**Table 10: National 5 satisfaction by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	5	4.2	3.8	4.6
Creative	5	4.3	3.9	4.7
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	5	3.9	3.6	4.1
Social Sciences	5	4.1	3.6	4.5
Technology	5	4.2	3.2	5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.4359

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

## Higher satisfaction

Figure 25: Higher satisfaction by appointee status

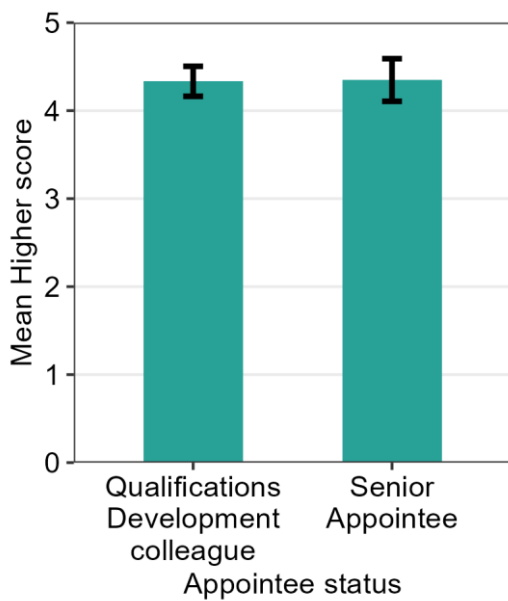


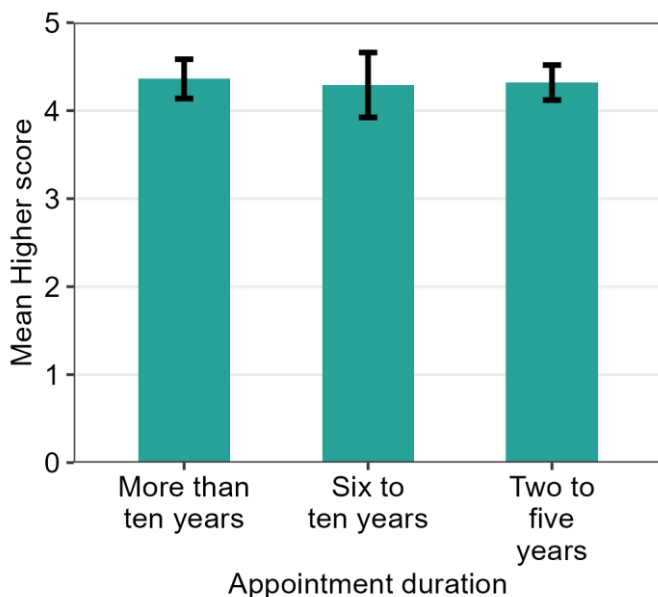
Table 11: Higher satisfaction by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	4.3	4.2	4.5
Senior appointee	20	4.3	4.1	4.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.8857

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

**Figure 26: Higher by appointment duration**



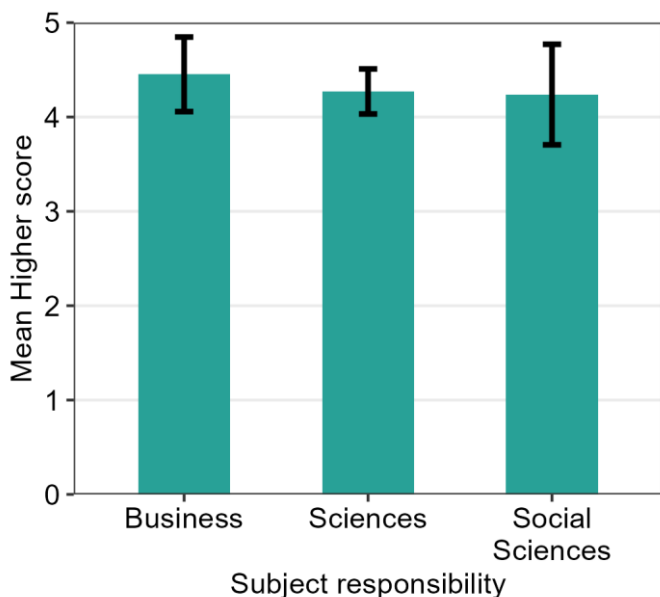
**Table 12: Higher by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	10	4.4	4.1	4.6
Six to ten years	10	4.3	3.9	4.7
Two to five years	10	4.3	4.1	4.5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.9713

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

**Figure 27: Higher by subject responsibility**



**Table 13: Higher by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	5	4.5	4.1	4.8
Creative	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	10	4.3	4	4.5
Social Sciences	5	4.2	3.7	4.8
Technology	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.8063

No evidence to suggest that any of the Subject responsibility groupings have a different median score.

## Advanced Higher satisfaction

Figure 28: Advanced Higher by appointee status

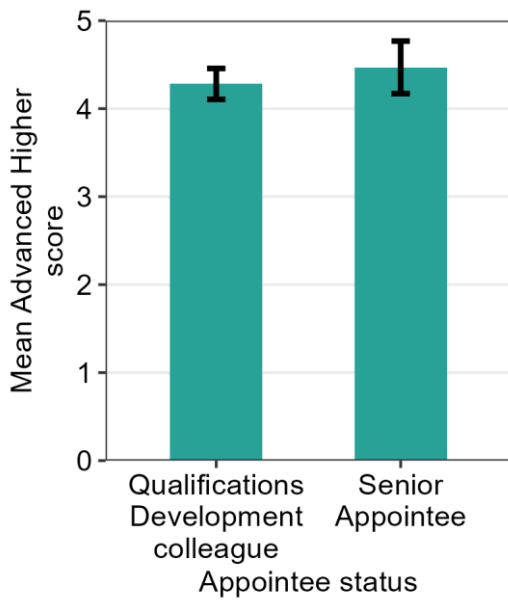


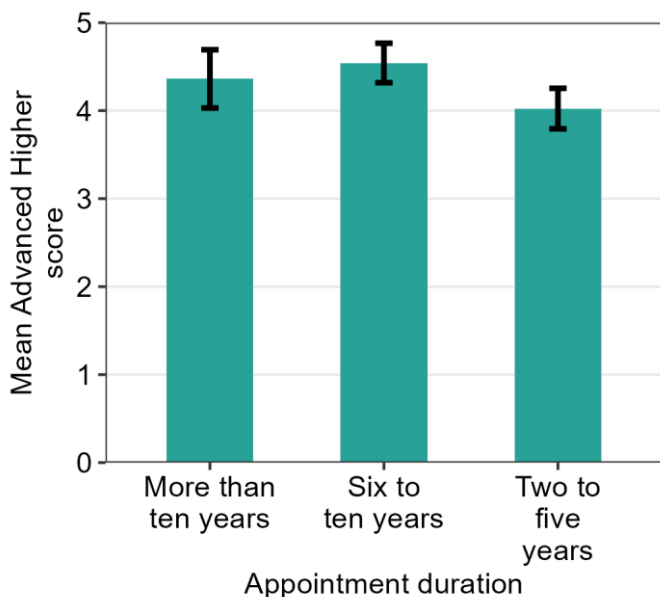
Table 14: Advanced Higher by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	4.3	4.1	4.5
Senior appointee	10	4.5	4.2	4.8

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.2097

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

**Figure 29: Advanced Higher by appointee duration**



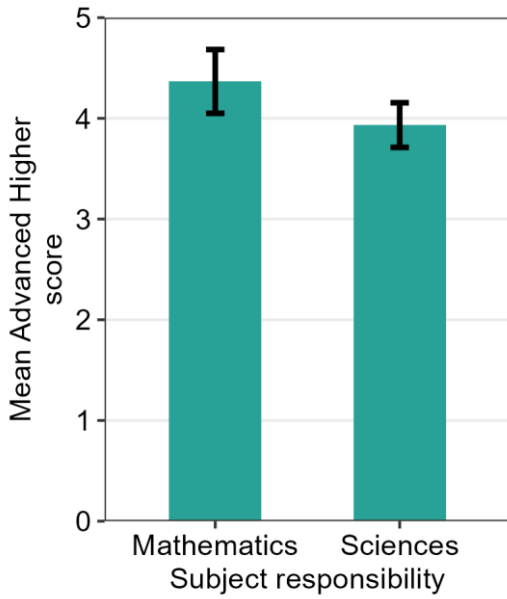
**Table 15: Advanced Higher by appointee duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	5	4.4	4	4.7
Six to ten years	10	4.5	4.3	4.8
Two to five years	5	4	3.8	4.3

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0521

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

**Figure 30: Advanced Higher by subject responsibility**



**Table 16: Advanced Higher by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Creative	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	5	4.4	4	4.7
Mathematics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Physical Education	5	3.9	3.7	4.2
Sciences	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Social Sciences	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Technology	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0935

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

## Standards satisfaction

Figure 31: Standards satisfaction by appointee status

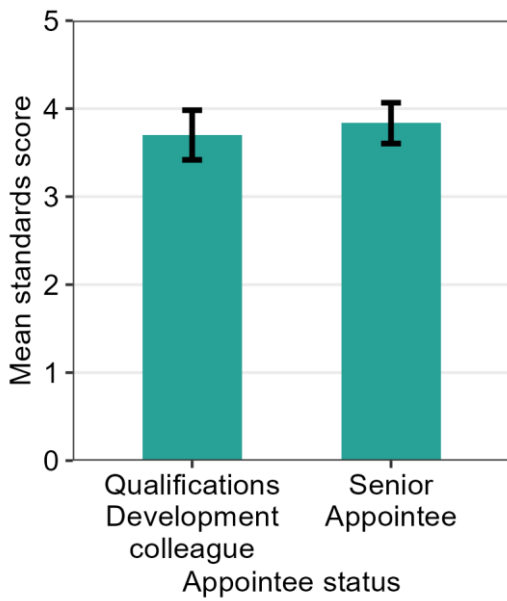


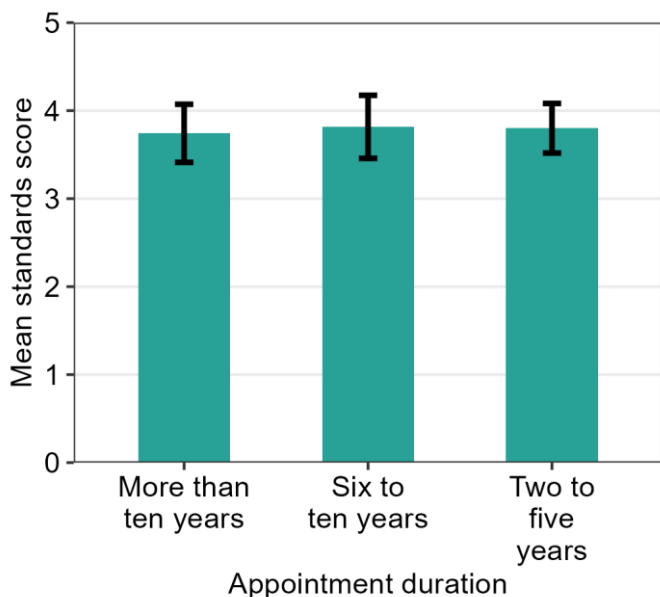
Table 17: Standards satisfaction by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	3.7	3.4	4
Senior appointee	45	3.8	3.6	4.1

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.3484

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

**Figure 32: Standards satisfaction by appointment duration**



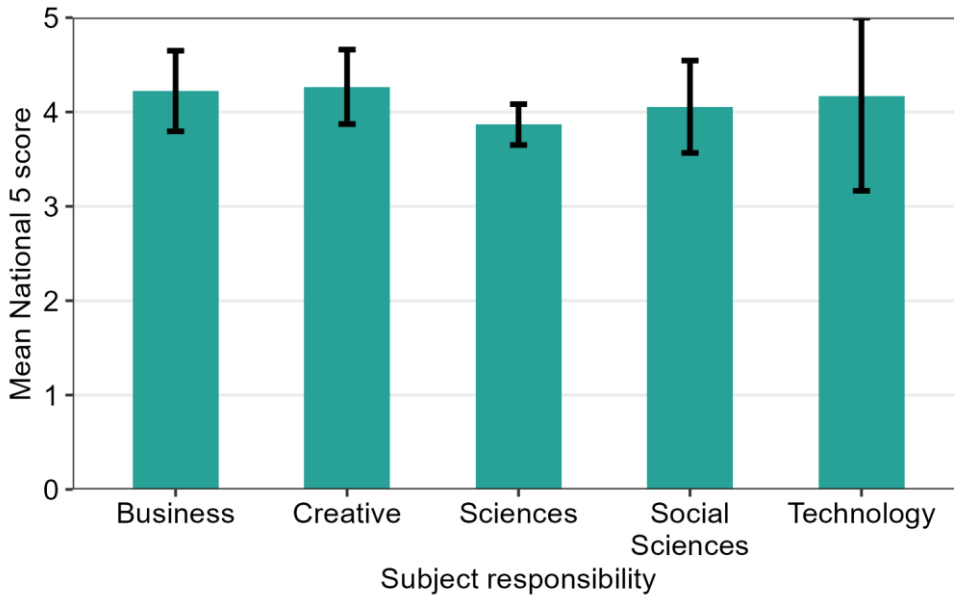
**Table 18: Standards satisfaction by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	20	3.7	3.4	4.1
Six to ten years	20	3.8	3.5	4.2
Two to five years	15	3.8	3.5	4.1

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.8975

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

**Figure 33: Standards satisfaction by subject responsibility**



**Table 19: Standards satisfaction by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	10	4.4	4.2	4.7
Creative	5	3.8	3.5	4.2
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	5	3.5	3.2	3.8
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	10	3.3	2.7	3.9
Social Sciences	10	3.9	3.4	4.3
Technology	10	3.5	2.9	4.1

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.0163

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

## Legacy of COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching

Figure 34: COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching by appointee status

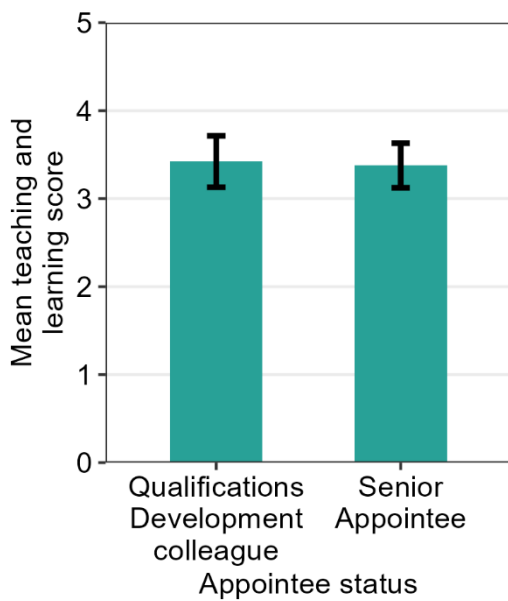


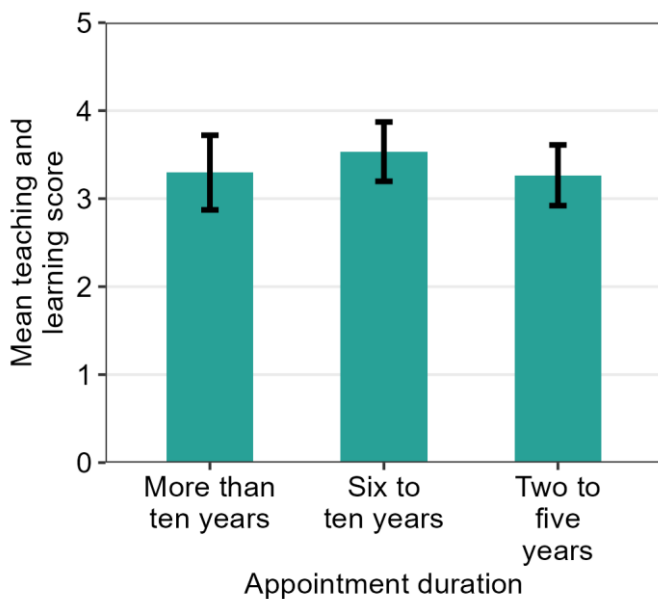
Table 20: COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	3.4	3.1	3.7
Senior appointee	45	3.4	3.1	3.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.8928

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

**Figure 35: COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching by appointment duration**



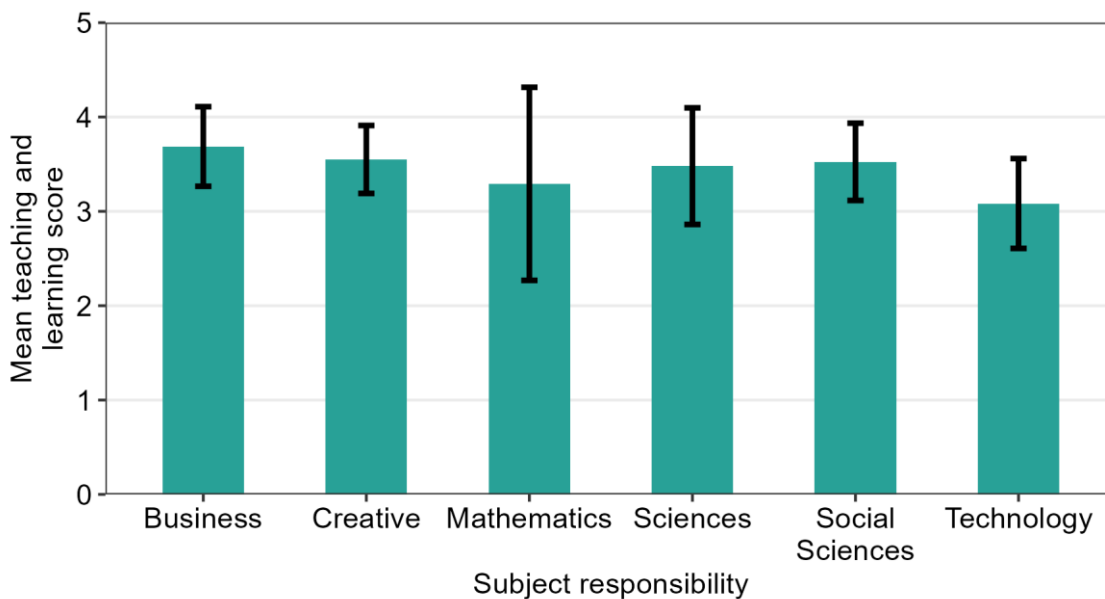
**Table 21: COVID-19 Impact on learning and teaching by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	20	3.3	2.9	3.7
Six to ten years	20	3.5	3.2	3.9
Two to five years	15	3.3	2.9	3.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.4464

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

**Figure 36: COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching by subject responsibility**



**Table 22: COVID-19 impact on learning and teaching by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	10	3.7	3.3	4.1
Creative	5	3.6	3.2	3.9
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	5	3.3	2.3	4.3
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	10	3.5	2.9	4.1
Social Sciences	10	3.5	3.1	3.9
Technology	10	3.1	2.6	3.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.6928

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

## Assessment and awarding

Figure 37: Assessment and satisfaction by appointee status

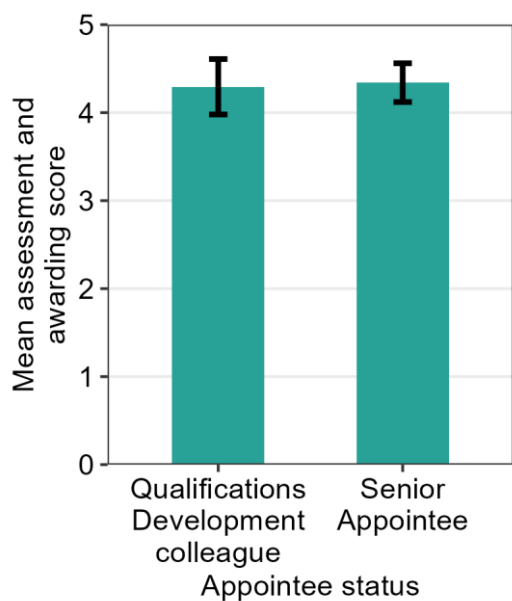


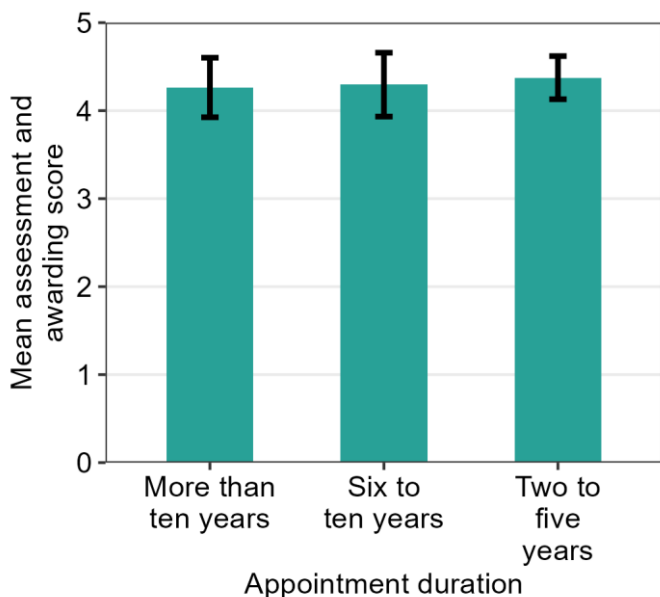
Table 23: Assessment and awarding satisfaction by appointee status

Appointee status	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
QD colleague	15	4.3	4	4.6
Senior appointee	45	4.3	4.1	4.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.6808

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

**Figure 38: Assessment and satisfaction by appointment duration**



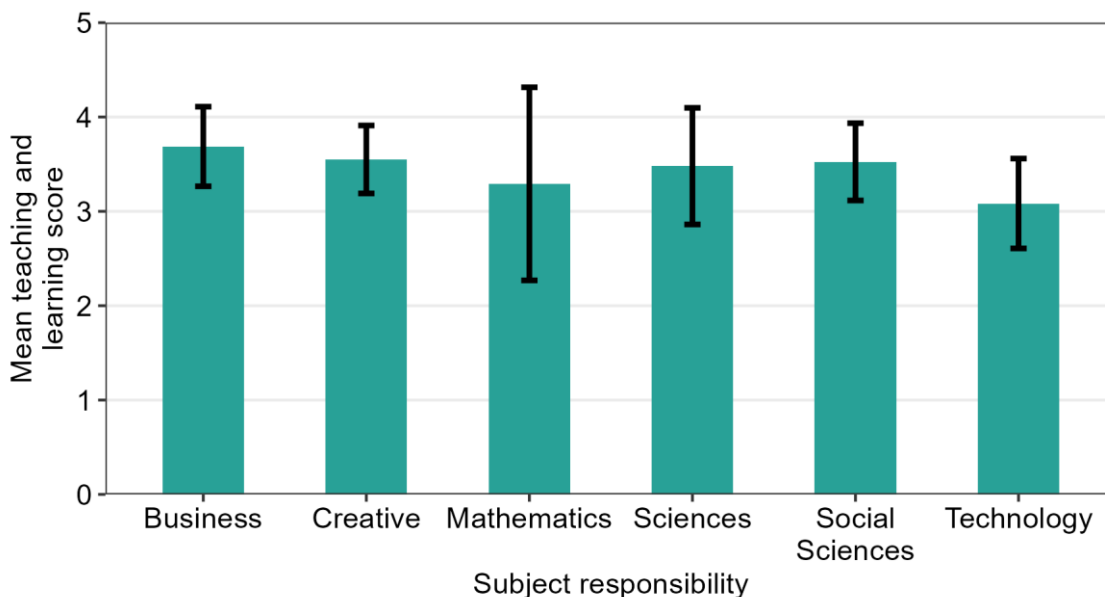
**Table 24: Assessment and satisfaction by appointment duration**

Appointment duration	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Less than two years	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
More than ten years	20	4.3	3.9	4.6
Six to ten years	20	4.3	3.9	4.7
Two to five years	15	4.4	4.1	4.6

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.9144

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

**Figure 39: Assessment and satisfaction by subject responsibility**



**Table 25: Assessment and satisfaction by subject responsibility**

Subject responsibility	Number of respondents	Mean communication satisfaction score	Confidence interval lower bound	Confidence interval upper bound
Business	10	4.6	4.3	4.9
Creative	5	4.4	3.9	4.9
English	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Home Economics	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Languages	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Mathematics	5	4.1	3.3	4.8
Physical Education	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
Sciences	10	4.3	3.8	4.7
Social Sciences	10	4.3	3.8	4.8
Technology	10	4.4	3.9	5

Kruskal-Wallis test p-value = 0.8145

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