Experiences of National 4s, National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers 2024–25: Technical appendix

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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 writing@qualifications.gov.scot.

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

Introduction

We developed three Perceptions of National Qualifications (NQs) surveys in the autumn of 2024. This was the second year of the surveys, which were open from 16 September 2025 to 7 October 2025. This three-week timescale was chosen because it meant that all aspects of the NQ 2024–25 assessment process were complete, and it was close enough to the events for participants to clearly recall their experiences. This was the same time period that was used in the 2024 survey.

The surveys were distributed through SQA co-ordinators in schools and colleges in Scotland that offered NQs in 2024–25. We asked them to pass on a survey link to learners and educators with direct involvement in NQs in 2025. Senior appointees (SA) and Qualifications Development (QD) colleagues were invited to complete the survey via an email. For more information, please refer to the methodology report.

User testing

We carried out user testing by filling in the survey from the point of view of a range of user personas in test mode to ensure that question routing was correct and that the survey made sense from these different perspectives. Examples of user personas tested were:

- learners that studied combinations of different qualifications
- learners from different year groups and types of schools
- educators that taught different combinations of qualifications at different types of schools
- SAs or QD colleagues that held different roles and were responsible for different qualification levels

The survey was then adapted to account for any errors identified and retested until all problems were identified and resolved.

Respondent demographics

We received full responses from 1379 learners, 751 educators, and 64 SAs and QD colleagues. It is possible, as with any survey activity of this type, that those who chose to respond were motivated to do so by having particularly strong opinions that they wished to share. As shown below, the schools and colleges that chose to take part in this research were not entirely representative of Scottish schools and colleges as a whole.

Centre type

In terms of types of schools and colleges:

- 87% of learner respondents and 89% educator respondents came from local authority schools; this compared to 92% of entries at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher which came from local authority schools in 2024–25.
- 11% of learner respondents and 9% educator respondents came from independent schools; this compares to 7% of entries at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher which came from independent schools in 2024–25.
- Less than 1% of learner respondents and educator respondents came from further education (FE) colleges; this compares to 1% of entries at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher which came from FE colleges in 2024–25.

Educators

Educator respondents came from 31 local authority areas. Table 1 compares the proportion of educator survey respondents by local authority area with the proportion of secondary teachers in Scotland by local authority. Meanwhile Table 2 demonstrates subject areas of repsondents. Note, however, that the survey respondents also included those that taught at independent schools and FE colleges.

Table 1: Comparison of proportion of educator respondents and secondary school teachers in Scotland by local authority area

Local authority area	Percentage of educator survey respondents (%)	Percentage of local authority secondary teachers (%) (Scottish Government, 2025)[a]
City of Edinburgh	9	7
Glasgow City	9	10
North Lanarkshire	8	7
South Lanarkshire	8	7
Fife	7	7
Highland	6	5
Aberdeenshire	5	4
West Lothian	4	4
Moray	4	2
East Lothian	3	2
Aberdeen City	3	4

Local authority area	Percentage of educator survey respondents (%)	Percentage of local authority secondary teachers (%) (Scottish Government, 2025)[a]
Angus	3	2
Argyll and Bute	3	2
Inverclyde	3	1
North Ayrshire	3	3
Renfrewshire	3	3
South Ayrshire	3	2
Falkirk	3	3
Dumfries and Galloway	2	3
East Ayrshire	2	2
Dundee City	2	3
Midlothian	2	2
Perth and Kinross	1	3
East Dunbartonshire	1	3
East Renfrewshire	1	3
Scottish Borders	1	2
Shetland Islands	1	1
West Dunbartonshire	1	4
Orkney Islands	1	1
Stirling	<1	2
Na h-Eileanan Siar	<1	1
Other	1	N/A
Prefer not to say/no answer	<1	N/A

Table 2: Comparison of proportion of educator respondents and secondary school teachers by subject area

Subjects area	Percentage of educator survey respondents (%)	Percentage of local authority secondary teachers (%) (Scottish Government, 2025)[a]
Social Sciences	15	15
Sciences	18	16
English	13	12
Creative	23	12

Subjects area	Percentage of educator survey respondents (%)	Percentage of local authority secondary teachers (%) (Scottish Government, 2025)[a]
Technology	9	8
Mathematics	10	12
Languages	6	6
Business	6	5
Home Economics	4	4
Physical Education	4	10
Care	0	N/A

Learners

Table 3 shows how the proportion of learner respondents by local authority area compares with the proportion of S4 to S6 learners by local authority. Again, note that the survey respondents included those form non-local authority schools so the data is not directly comparable.

Table 3: Comparison of proportion of learner respondents and S4 to S6 local authority learners by local authority area

Local authority area	Percentage of learner survey respondents (%)	Percentage of local authority S4 to S6 learners (%) (Scottish Government, 2025)[b]
City of Edinburgh Council	18	8
Glasgow City Council	11	10
North Lanarkshire Council	9	7
East Lothian Council	5	2
Highland Council	5	4
Orkney Islands Council	4	<1
South Lanarkshire Council	4	7
Aberdeenshire Council	4	5
Fife Council	4	7
South Ayrshire Council	3	2
Angus Council	3	2
Dumfries and Galloway Council	3	3
Midlothian Council	3	2

Local authority area	Percentage of learner survey respondents (%)	Percentage of local authority S4 to S6 learners (%) (Scottish Government, 2025)[b]
Moray Council	3	2
Aberdeen City Council	3	3
Renfrewshire Council	2	3
Argyll and Bute Council	2	2
West Lothian Council	2	4
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	2	<1
East Dunbartonshire Council	2	3
Perth and Kinross Council	1	2
Dundee City Council	1	3
Inverclyde Council	1	1
Falkirk Council	1	3
North Ayrshire Council	<1	2
West Dunbartonshire Council	<1	2
East Ayrshire Council	<1	2
Stirling Council	<1	2
Scottish Borders Council	<1	2
Not sure/none of these	4	N/A

As shown in Table 4, learners with additional support needs (ASN) appear to be under-represented in our sample compared to the general population. It is possible that learners with ASN did not answer ‘yes’ to the question ‘Are you disability and/or do you have an additional support need?’ if they were not also disabled, or if they had not required assessment arrangements. Men and boys were also under-represented compared to the general population.

Table 4: Proportion of learner respondents with specific characteristics compared to the wider population

Learner survey respondents	Wider population
15% of survey respondents had a disability or ASN.	46% of secondary school pupils had an ASN in 2024 according to the Scottish Government pupil census. (Scottish Government, 2025)[b]
• 63% of respondents identified as a woman or a girl. • 33% of respondents identified as a man or a boy.	50% of S4 to S6 pupils in 2024 were female and 50% of S4 to S6 pupils in 2024 were male, according to the Scottish Government pupil census. (Scottish Government, 2025)[b]

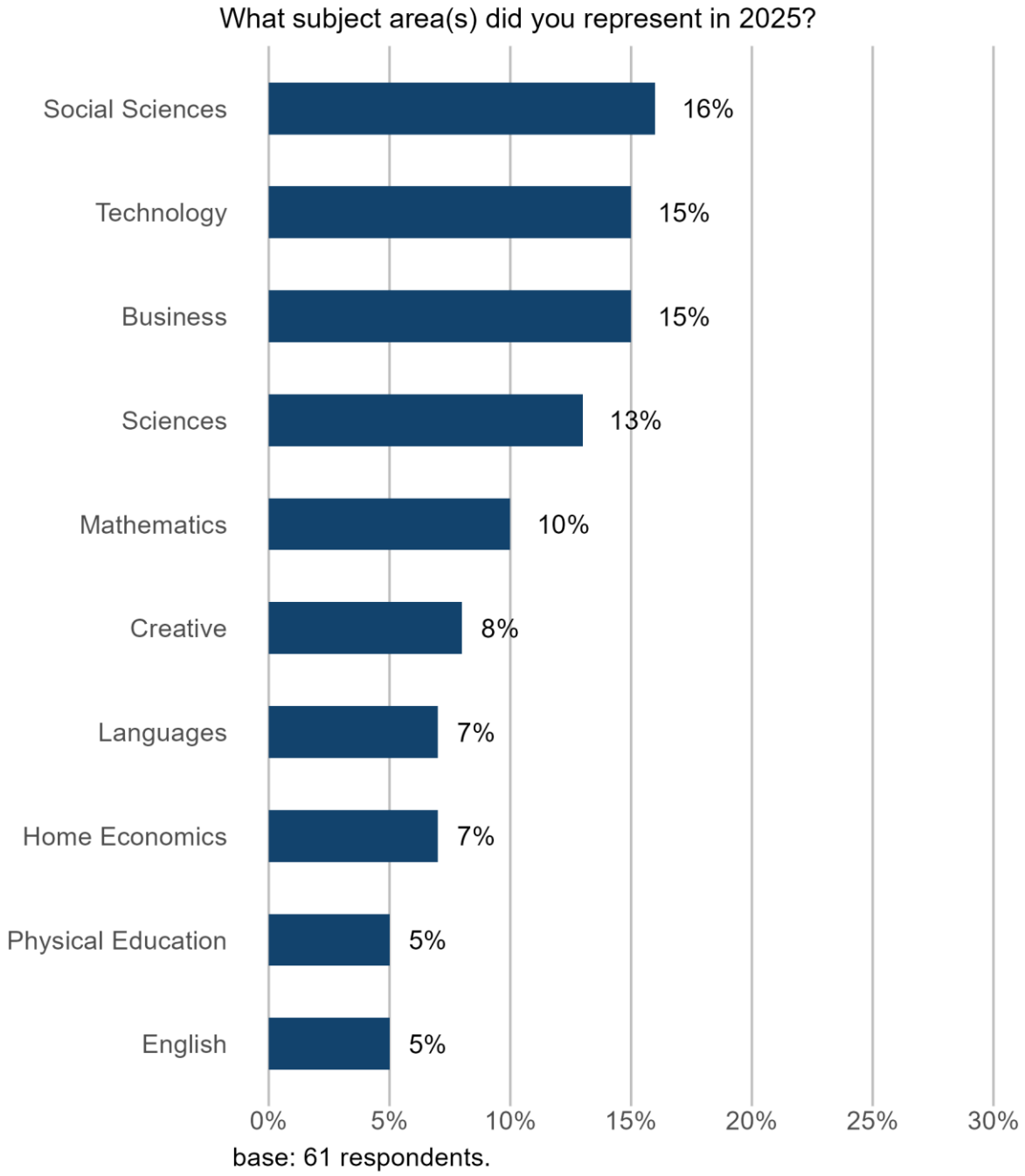
Learner survey respondents	Wider population
• 1% described their gender as non-binary.	Although not directly comparable, the 2022 census found that less than 1% of people aged 16 over or over were non-binary. (Scottish Government, 2022)
14% said they were part of the LGBTQIA+ community.	Although not directly comparable to the survey question, according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS): • 3.3% of the UK population aged 16 years and over identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) in 2022. (ONS, 2022) • For those aged 16 to 24 years, 9.2% identified as LGB. (ONS, 2022)
• 4% were from an African ethnic group. • 1% were from an Arab ethnic group. • 7% were from an Asian ethnic group. • 1% were from a Caribbean or Black ethnic group. • 2% were from mixed or multiple ethnic groups. • 83% of respondents were from a White ethnic group.	According to the pupil census, in 2024, 3% of S4 to S6 pupils were African, 1% were Arab, 6% were Asian, less than 1% were Caribbean or Black, 2% were from mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 89% were White. (Scottish Government, 2025)[b]
4% of respondents said they were care experienced.	There was no comparable figure available.
• 17% were from SIMD 1 areas. • 14% were form SIMD 2 areas. • 17% were from SIMD 3 areas. • 25% were from SIMD 4 areas. • 27% were from SIMD 5 areas.	According to the pupil census, in 2024 (Scottish Government, 2025)[b]: • 22% were from SIMD 1 areas. • 19% were from SIMD 2 areas. • 18% were from SIMD 3 areas. • 21% were from SIMD 4 areas. • 20% were from SIMD 5 areas. Note that these figures are from all secondary school pupils, while we only surveyed S4 to S6 pupils and FE learners.

SAs and QD colleagues

A total of 61 participants completed the survey in full. The sample comprised SAs (72%) and QD colleagues (28%). Within the sample, 31% had been in their role for more than ten years, 36% had been in their role for six to ten years, 26% for two to five years, and 7% for less than two years.

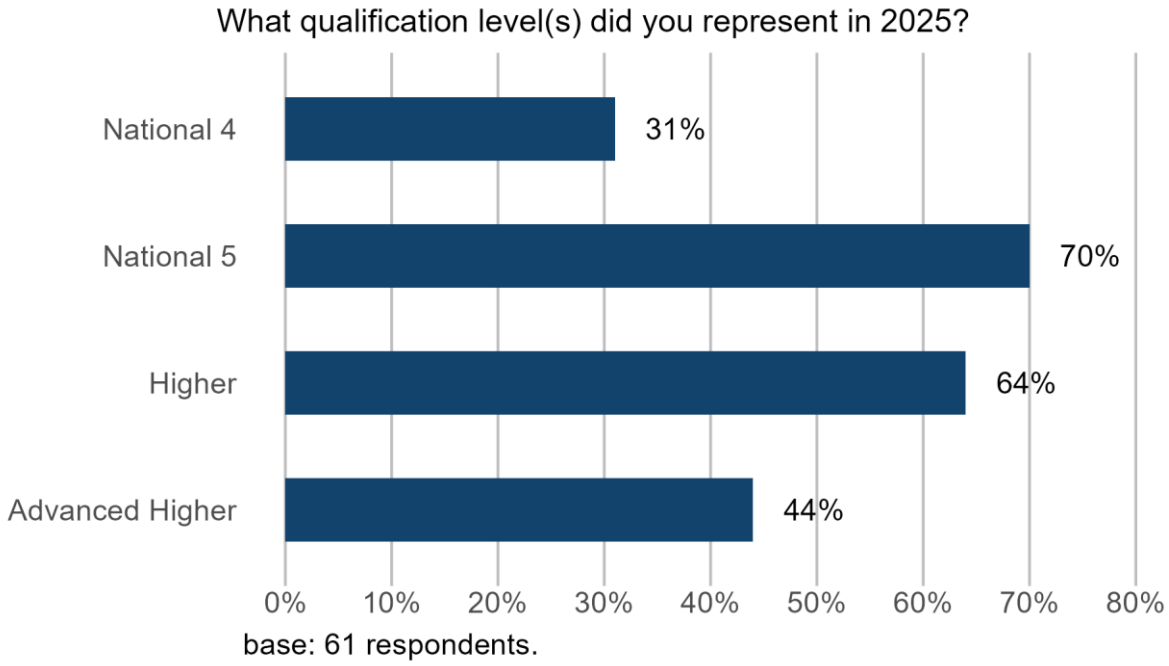
Respondents were responsible for different subjects and qualification levels. Individual subjects that respondents were assigned to were coded into the wider categories shown in Figure 1. Respondents could choose more than one subject.

Figure 1: Proportion of SA/QD respondents by subject area



In total, 31% were responsible for National 4 subjects, 70% were responsible for National 5, 64% for Higher, and 44% for Advanced Higher. Respondents could choose more than one level. Responses are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proportion of SA/QD respondents by qualification level represented



Approach to analysis

A quantitative approach to collecting data was utilised for each survey, and therefore surveys were designed to contain only closed-ended questions.

Individual survey questions

Quantitative survey questions, which asked respondents to choose from two or more options or give a rating on a scale, were analysed numerically, and supported with graphs and tables were appropriate.

Throughout the reports, in graphs and text, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Composite analysis

We analysed the responses to the three surveys both for consistency, and for differences by sub-group of respondents, through the use of composite scores. A composite score is a single variable or data point that represents a combination of information from multiple variables or data points.

Table 5: The composite score groups for each survey

Survey	Composite score groups
Learners	• Communications satisfaction • Teaching and learning • National 4 qualifications • National 5 qualifications • Higher qualifications • Assessment and awarding
Educators	• Communications satisfaction • Understanding assessment standards • Teaching and learning • National 4 qualifications • National 5 qualifications • Higher qualifications • Advanced Higher qualifications • Assessment and awarding
SAs and QD colleagues	• Communications satisfaction • National 4 qualifications • National 5 qualifications • Higher qualifications • Advanced Higher qualifications • Standards satisfaction • Legacy of COVID-19 on learning and teaching • Assessment and awarding

For example, in the learner survey, the communications satisfaction composite score was the average (mean) score given by respondents across three statements:

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

For each of these statements, respondents could rate them from a Likert scale of ‘Strongly agree’ to ‘Strongly disagree’. The Likert responses were encoded onto a ordinal numerical scale that captured the logical order of the responses.

- Strongly agree = 5
- Agree = 4
- Neither agree nor disagree = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly disagree = 1
- Set any missing responses to no numerical value

The numerical difference of 1 between each response does not imply that all respondents have equally distributed opinions; that is ‘strongly agree’ may be much further away from ‘agree’ than ‘agree’ is away from ‘neither agree nor disagree’, and so on.

In the survey, the question ‘How would you say you feel about the results of your National Qualifications in 2025?’ had only three options, which were encoded as:

- Overall, my results exceed what I was expecting = 4
- My results broadly matched my expectations = 3
- Overall, my results fell below what I was expecting = 2

For composite scores to be meaningful, question responses in each group needed to be checked for consistency, which would indicate that the issues being investigated were linked. In the context of these surveys, these were questions that asked about the same concept or topic.

To verify that the responses to the selected questions that made up each composite score were consistent, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated from the respondents’ encoded Likert scale scores.

Cronbach’s alpha ranges in value from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better internal consistency. Table 6 shows how to interpret different ranges of Cronbach’s alpha:

Table 6: Summary of interpretation of Cronbach’s alpha

Cronbach’s alpha range	**Interpretation**
$0.9 \leq \alpha < 1.0$	Excellent internal consistency
$0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good internal consistency
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$	Acceptable internal consistency
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Questionable internal consistency
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor internal consistency
$0 \leq \alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable internal consistency

All Cronbach’s alpha values are estimated of the theoretically true value and given with 95% confidence intervals. Across all three surveys, all of the calculated Cronbach’s alpha values exceeded 0.7, with one exceeding 0.8. All confidence intervals had tolerances of less than ± 0.13.

Tables 8, 9 and 12 summarise the Cronbach’s alpha values for the associated composite score questions in each of the three surveys.

Comparing composite scores between groups of respondents

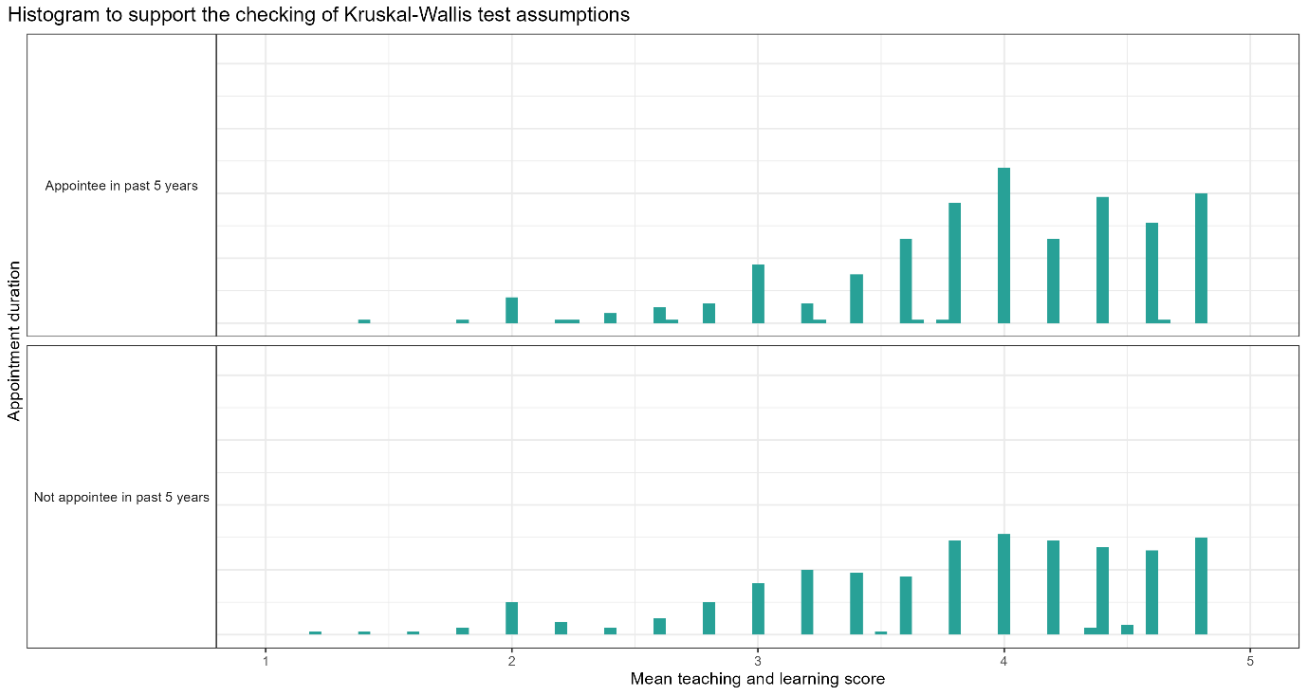
Once the questions to include in a single composite score had been confirmed as consistent through Cronbach's alpha, composite scores were compared between different groups of respondents within each survey.

For example, in the educator survey, comparisons were made for the teaching and learning composite score based on the respondent's length of time as an SQA appointee.

For each survey respondent, the mean response score across all five questions about teaching and learning was calculated. If a respondent did not answer all questions, then the mean of the questions which they responded to was calculated.

The mean response scores were split into two groups: 'Appointee in past 5 years' and 'Not appointee in the past 5 years'. The distribution of the two groups of mean response scores was visualised using a histogram, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Histogram of distribution of mean response scores for two appointee groups



The histogram was used to check the assumption that the two groups had similar shaped distributions to each other, which would indicate that the samples may have come from populations that had similar shaped distributions. This assumption must be valid for subsequent analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test.

Groups with fewer than five responses were excluded from the Kruskal-Wallis test procedures. For the educator survey's teaching and learning composite score across the two appointment

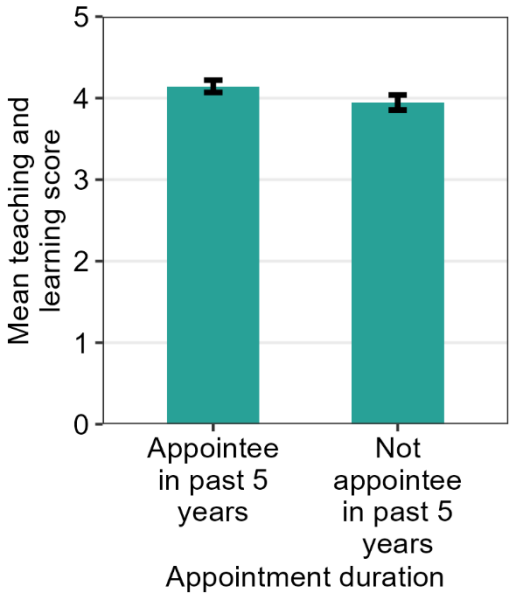
duration groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test's p-value was 0.0017. Using a significance level of 1%, the conclusion was that there was evidence to suggest that one of the groups had a different median score.

Table 7 shows further summary information that was calculated for the two groups' responses, and Figure 4 displays this same information in a column chart. The number of respondents has been rounded to the nearest 5.

Table 7: Summary information of mean scores and confidence intervals by appointee duration

Appointee duration	Number of respondents	Mean teaching and learning 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

Figure 4: Column chart of mean scores and their confidence intervals by appointee duration



The construction of confidence intervals requires minimum group sample sizes and assumptions about the population scores being normally distributed, which are not always supported by the survey sample's data. Hence, the column chart only gives an approximate visual representation of the data, providing a broad overview of how similar each group responded to the selected composite score's questions.

The Kruskal-Wallis test does not require the same assumptions of normality, does not use means or confidence intervals, and it can accommodate smaller group sample sizes. In addition, it is well suited to the underlying ordinal Likert response data.

Learner survey respondents

A range of learner characteristic data was collected as part of the learner survey. This was for two main reasons: firstly, to help monitor whether respondents to the survey were representative of the wider population; and secondly, to understand how learners with different characteristics experienced the NQ assessment process in 2025. Full respondent profile information is available in the learner perspectives report.

Representativeness

The demographic profile of learner respondents was compared to the general population of learners who studied NQs in 2024–25. Analysis of the raw data indicated that, compared to the general population, there was an over representation of participants who identified as a 'woman/girl', were from SIMD 4 or 5 areas, were from the White ethnic group, or did not have an ASN or disability.

In the 2024 survey, we considered weighting the learner data to account for discrepancies in the representativeness of the sample. Weighting is a statistical process whereby raw data is adjusted to make it more representative of the target population. This means giving more importance to the responses from under-represented groups in the sample and less importance to those from over-represented groups.

However, we found that there was only around one percentage point's difference between the weighted data's results and the unadjusted data's results. After considering these minor differences, alongside the assumptions required to fully support the weighting procedures, we decided to use the unadjusted data for analysis. In addition, any possible gains that might have been achieved from using weighted data would be negated by the increased complexity of subsequent analysis and its interpretation. We did not find any reasons to reconsider this approach this year.

Learner composites

The composites created from the learner survey can be found in Table 8.

Table 8: Learner survey composite variables and key questions

Composite variable	Variables
Communications satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79±0.03)	• I received information on how my grades would be determined early enough in the academic year. • The assessment process was communicated to me effectively. • I understood how my grades would be determined.
Teaching and learning (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86±0.01)	• The pandemic continues to have an impact on my learning. • I feel that the pandemic has had an effect on the development of my skills and knowledge. • I feel that the pandemic continues to affect my mental wellbeing.
National 4 qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86±0.01)	• National 4s are trusted qualifications. • 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.
National 5 qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78±0.02)	• National 5s are trusted qualifications. • 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.
Higher qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82±0.02)	• Highers are trusted qualifications. • Highers are good preparation for further study. • Highers are good preparation for work. • Highers develop a broad range of skills for learners.
Assessment and awarding (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88±0.02)	• The assessment process was fair to me. • I was satisfied with the assessment process.

In the composite analysis, we looked for differences across different equality characteristics: ASN/disability status, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA+ status, care experience status and SIMD quintile.

ASN was measured as a Yes or No response to the question 'Are you disabled, or do you have an additional support need?'.

Gender was measured as a response to the question 'How would you describe your gender?'. Response choices were 'man/boy', 'woman/girl', 'non-binary', or learners could enter another term. Open responses were recoded into these categories if they could be clearly categorised. Any open responses that could not be clearly categorised were categorised as 'other'.

For ethnicity, to avoid potential issues of statistical unreliability, more detailed responses to a multi-category race and ethnicity question were collapsed into two categories: minority ethnic

and White. This is consistent with the Scottish Government's use of the term 'minority ethnic' to refer to people whose self-defined ethnicity is not White Scottish or British.

Minority ethnic learners, then, were those that described their identity as:

- African, African Scottish or African British
- any other African ethnic group
- Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
- any other Arab ethnic group
- Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
- Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
- Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
- Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish, Pakistani British
- any other Asian ethnic group
- Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
- Black, Black Scottish or Black British
- any other Caribbean or Black ethnic group
- any mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Irish
- Gypsy/Traveller/Roma

LGBTQIA+ identity was measured as a Yes or No response to the question 'Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA community?'

Care experience was measured as a Yes or No response to the question: 'Do you consider yourself to be care experienced based on the definition below? The term 'care experienced' refers to any person who is or has ever been in care or looked after for any length of time. This includes anyone who has ever been provided with care in a range of settings, such as foster care, residential care, kinship care (with relatives or friends) or through being looked after at home with supervision requirements.'

Learners' SIMD quintile was obtained by converting the postcode they submitted using the Scottish Government's 2023 SIMD postcode lookup tool.

Educator survey respondents

For educators, data was collected on whether they had been an SQA appointee in the past five years or not. This cut-off was chosen to identify those who had recently been involved with SQA's assessment process. Again, as with learners, these categories were chosen to understand how educators in different contexts experienced the NQ assessment process in 2025. Full respondent profile information is available in the educator perspectives report.

Table 9: Educator survey composite variables and key questions

Composite variable	Survey variables
Communications satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88±0.02)	• 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.
Understanding assessment standards (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83±0.02)	• 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.
Teaching and learning (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86±0.02)	• 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.
National 4 Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86±0.02)	• 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.
National 5 Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83±0.02)	• 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.
Higher Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87±0.02)	• 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.

Composite variable	Survey variables
Advanced Higher Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.8±0.03)	• 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.
Assessment and Awarding (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93±0.02)	• The assessment process was fair to all learners. • I was satisfied with the assessment process.

SA and QD respondents

A broad range of characteristic data was collected as a part of the SA and QD colleague survey. This allowed the results to be analysed based upon the respondent's role at SQA, time in their current position and their subject responsibility. This data allowed us to understand whether specific characteristics impacted respondents' perspectives. A full respondent profile is available in the senior appointee and Qualifications Development colleague perspectives report.

Representativeness

The survey was sent to all SAs and QD colleagues in the following roles: qualifications manager and subject implementation manager. Recruitment emails were sent to 343 SAs and 39 QD colleagues. The response rate was 17%.

Table 10 indicates how the representativeness of the SA and QD sample compared with the total population of SAs and QD colleagues.

Table 10: Distribution of survey respondents and total SAs and QD colleagues by role

Role	Distribution of survey respondents	Distribution of all SAs and QD colleagues
QD	28%	10%
SA	72%	90%

Table 11 summarises the criteria used to group survey responses into different sub-categories.

Table 11: Description of variables and sub-categories

Description of variable	New variable categories and original variable categories
Respondent's role at SQA	**Qualifications Development** = qualifications manager; subject implementation manager; other (where appropriate) **Senior appointee** = principal assessor; depute principal assessor; other (where appropriate)
Subject respondent is responsible for	**Sciences** = Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Human Biology, Physics **Social Sciences** = Classical Studies, Cruinn-eòlas, Eachdraidh, Geography, History, Modern Studies, Nuadh-eòlas, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, RMPS, Sociology **Creative** = Art and Design, Dance, Drama, Media, Music, Music Technology, Photography **English** = English **Technology** = Computing Science, Design and Manufacture, Engineering Science, Graphic Communication, Practical Electronics, Practical Metalworking, Practical Woodworking **Mathematics** = Applications of Mathematics, Gnìomhachas Matamataigs, Matamataig, Mathematics, Mathematics of Mechanics, Statistics **Business** = Accounting, Administration and IT, Business Management, Economics **Languages** = Chinese Languages, English for Speakers of Other Languages, French, Gaelic (Learners), Gàidhlig, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, Urdu **Physical Education** = Physical Education **Home Economics** = Fashion and Textile Technology, Health and Food Technology, Practical Cake Craft, Practical Cookery **Care** = Care, Childcare and Development

Table 12: SA and QD survey composite variables and survey variables

Composite variable	Key questions
Communications satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75±0.1)	• Information about the approach to assessment was published early enough. • 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.

Composite variable	Key questions
	• 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.
Understanding assessment standards (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86±0.07)	• 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.
Teaching and learning (Cronbach's alpha = 0.71±0.12)	• The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on learning and teaching in centres for all learners. • The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on learning and teaching in centres 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.
National 4 Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88±0.05)	• 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.
National 5 Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89±0.05)	• 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.
Higher Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86±0.07)	• 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.

Composite variable	Key questions
Advanced Higher Qualifications (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81±0.08)	• 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 the comparative analysis, we looked for differences across the SQA appointee role, the length of time in that role, and the subject responsibility.

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