

FINAL REPORT (FINAL DRAFT)

**REFORM TRACKING RESEARCH:
PHASES 1 AND 2**

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PREPARED FOR: Qualifications Scotland

**Final Report:
Reform Tracking Research –
Phases 1 and 2**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This final report details findings to emerge from the first and second phases of a programme of Reform Tracking Research being undertaken on behalf of Qualifications Scotland by Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd.

The purpose of the research is to elicit a range of views amongst four audiences with regard to the reform of qualifications and assessment, together with a range of other issues. These audiences are:

- Education professionals in Schools and Colleges
- Parents and Carers with a child in S4 to S6
- Employers (and, in particular, individuals with training or HR responsibilities)
- Learners in S4 to S6¹

The table below details the research methods used for each of the audiences, together with the number of questionnaires achieved for each audience in both phases of the research:

Audience	Research Method	Number of Achieved Questionnaires: Phase 1	Number of Achieved Questionnaires: Phase 2
Schools and Colleges	Online questionnaire and structured telephone interviews	253	231
Parents and Carers	Face-to-face interviews	384	386
Employers	Structured telephone interviews	185	125
Learners	Online questionnaire	659	1,040

¹ An online questionnaire was also administered for College learners. However, only 99 completed questionnaires were achieved and, accordingly, this audience is not included in this report. However, the key outcomes for this audience have been previously issued to Qualifications Scotland for its information.

The data was collected for the first phase of the Tracking Research during September and October 2025, whilst the data was collected for the second phase of the research during February and March 2026.

The questionnaires administered in both phases of the research focused on the following issues:

- The Scottish Government's plans for qualifications and assessment reform
- Attitudes about qualifications and assessment
- Views about Qualifications Scotland

Survey-Specific Reports and an Interim Report have previously been prepared and submitted to Qualifications Scotland.

This report details the following outcomes:

- Outcomes for the questions asked in Phase 2
- Variances in outcomes within each of the audiences, with the exception of employers, from whom, an insufficient number of structured telephone interviews were undertaken in order to allow accurate comparisons to be drawn
- Comparisons between outcomes in Phase 1 and Phase 2
- An outline of key outcomes to emerge from the research process

It should be noted that all variances referred to in this report are statistically significant, but that not all statistically significant variances between the latest and the last survey phases are referred to in order to promote the precise nature of the reporting outputs as requested by Qualifications Scotland.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Government's Plans for Qualifications and Assessment Reform

- In Phase 2, educators in schools/colleges were most likely to state that they were aware of the Scottish Government's plans for qualifications and assessment reform, with employers being least likely to be aware of these plans
- Learners and educators in schools/colleges in Phase 2 were most likely to believe that they had a well-developed level of understanding of qualifications and assessment reform, with this least likely to be the case amongst parents/carers
- In Phase 2, educators in schools/colleges were most likely to state – on an unprompted basis – that they had desires for information regarding qualifications and assessment reform in terms of 'details of the reform changes' and 'qualification and courses design changes' whilst employers were most likely to make reference here to 'general information about the reforms' and 'details of the reform changes'
- Also in Phase 2, parents/carers primarily made reference to information desires in relation to 'details of the reform changes' and learners primarily made unprompted reference to 'details of the reform changes', 'general information about the reforms' and 'exam structure and format'
- Parents/carers in Phase 2 primarily stated that the main reason they would prefer **not** to know more about qualifications and assessment reform was that their child is leaving school

- In Phase 2, educators in schools/colleges stated that they would be most likely to go to 'Qualifications Scotland' to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform from, with employers primarily making reference here to 'a training provider', parents/carers primarily referring to 'a school', with this also being the case amongst learners, who also made secondary mention of 'Qualifications Scotland'
- Learners and educators in schools/colleges in Phase 2 were far more likely than parents/carers and employers to have previously taken part in any SQA or Qualifications Scotland consultation, engagement or research relating to qualifications and assessment reform
- In Phase 2, educators in schools/colleges were most likely to state that the 'one thing' that Qualifications Scotland should focus on to make qualifications and assessment reform a success was 'consulting or engaging with educators', with employers primarily making reference to Qualifications Scotland 'delivering qualifications that meet industry needs'
- Also in Phase 2, parents/carers primarily made reference to 'having better communications with parents/carers regarding the reforms' and 'ensuring that the reforms are inclusive and equal', with learners primarily making reference to Qualifications Scotland 'having a greater focus on ongoing assessment rather than final exams'

Attitudes About Qualifications and Assessment

- Educators in schools/colleges in Phase 2 were most likely to agree that 'there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they have developed in their courses', 'courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than

those which are pass or fail' and that they 'knew enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to learners'

- In Phase 2, employers were most likely to agree that 'everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way', 'courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail' and 'the Scottish Qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners needs', whilst parents/carers were most likely to agree that 'all courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time', 'there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses' and 'exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed'
- Also in Phase 2, learners were most likely to agree that 'there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses', 'courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail', 'exams should be smaller part of how learners are assessed', that 'they know enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to them' and that 'all courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time'

Views About Qualifications Scotland

- In Phase 2, when respondents were asked what Qualifications Scotland needs to do to improve how it works with them, educators in schools/ colleges stated that this could be achieved if it 'better communicated the changes', with employers primarily making reference to Qualifications Scotland 'improving its website', parents/carers primarily making reference to Qualifications Scotland 'communicating the change from SQA to Qualifications Scotland' and 'engaging more with parents/carers', and learners

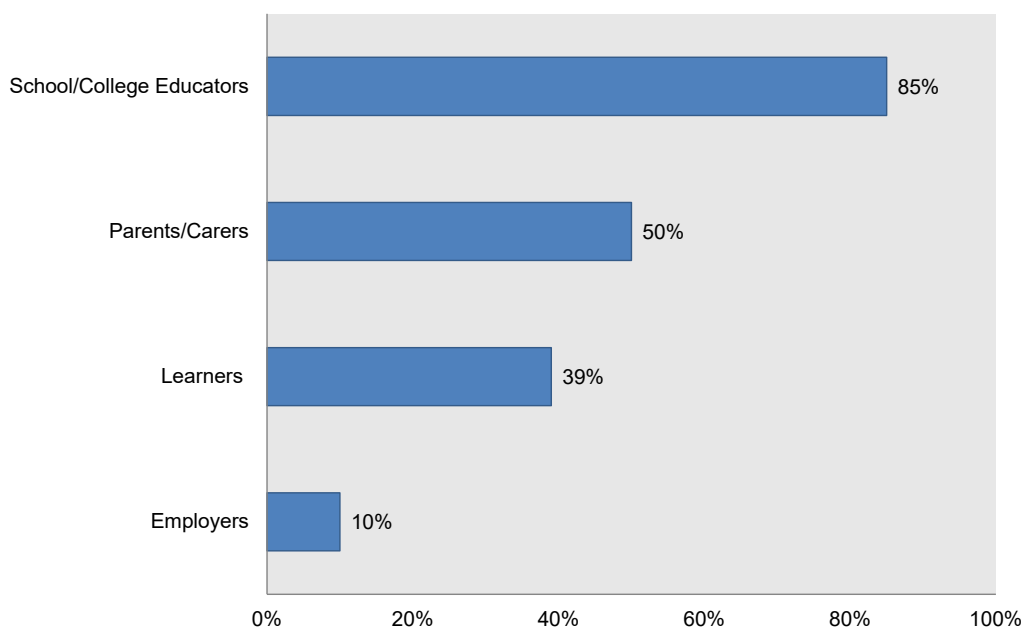
primarily making reference to Qualifications Scotland ‘improving examination processes’

- A majority of parents/carers, learners and educators in schools/colleges in Phase 2 had trust that Qualifications Scotland will consult and engage with learners, teachers, lecturers and other stakeholders to create new qualifications
- Employers in Phase 2 primarily believe that Qualifications Scotland could better support industry needs by ‘addressing employer skill shortages’ and ‘consulting and engaging more with employers’. However, most employers felt unable to express an opinion in this regard
- Employers in Phase 2 primarily believe that emails are the best ways for Qualifications Scotland to communicate with them

3.0 THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT REFORM

“Are you aware of the Scottish Government’s plans for qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 1: Aware of the Scottish Government’s Plans for Qualifications and Assessment Reform



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 1, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, educators in schools and colleges were most likely to state that they were aware of the Scottish Government’s plans for qualifications and assessment reform, with employers being least likely to be aware of these plans, ie:

- Educators in schools/colleges (85%)
- Parents/carers (50%)
- Learners (39%)
- Employers (10%)

Further examination of the data indicated that awareness of the Scottish Government’s plans was greatest amongst:

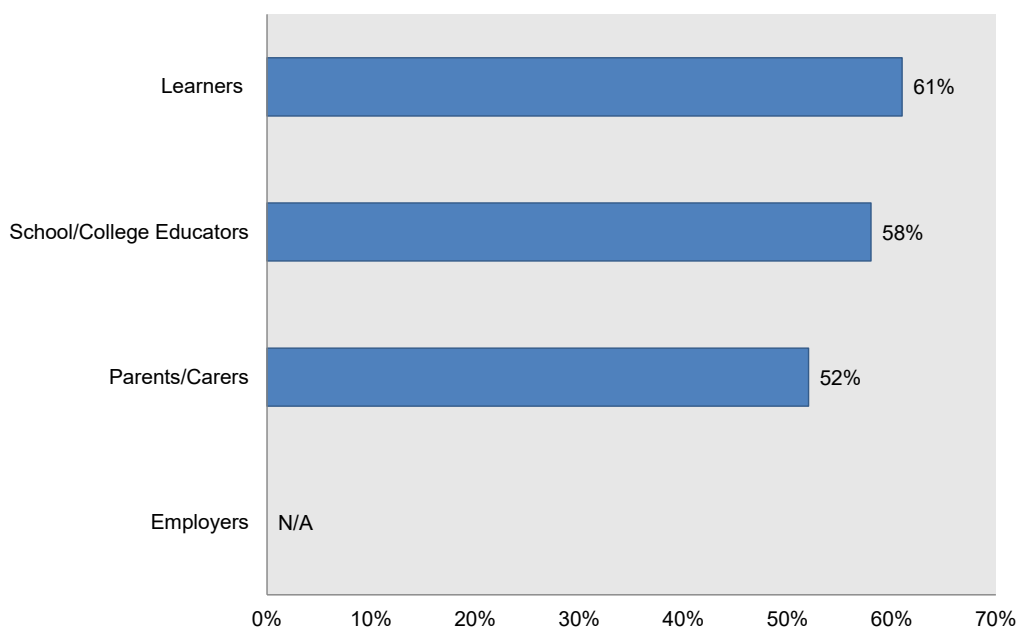
- Educators in secondary schools (90% compared to 80% for those in colleges)
- Parents/carers of a child in S5 (61% compared to 45% and 43% respectively for those with a child in S4 or S6)

Further examination of the data also indicated that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, there was a decreasing level of awareness of the Scottish Government's plans for qualifications and assessment reform amongst schools/colleges and parents/carers, ie:

- Educators in schools/colleges (falling from 92% to 85%)
- Parents/carers (falling from 58% to 50%)

“How well do you understand qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 2: Understand Qualifications and Assessment Reform Well



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 1

From Figure 2, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, learners and educators in schools/colleges were most likely to believe that they had a well-developed level of understanding of qualifications and assessment reform, with this least likely to be the case amongst parent/carers, ie:

- Learners (61%)
- Educators in schools/colleges (58%)
- Parents/carers (52%)

It should be noted that the outcomes here for employers cannot be presented on the basis of the small proportion of employers who were aware of the Scottish Government's plans for qualifications and assessment reform.

Further examination of the data indicated that those most likely to state that they understood the reforms well were:

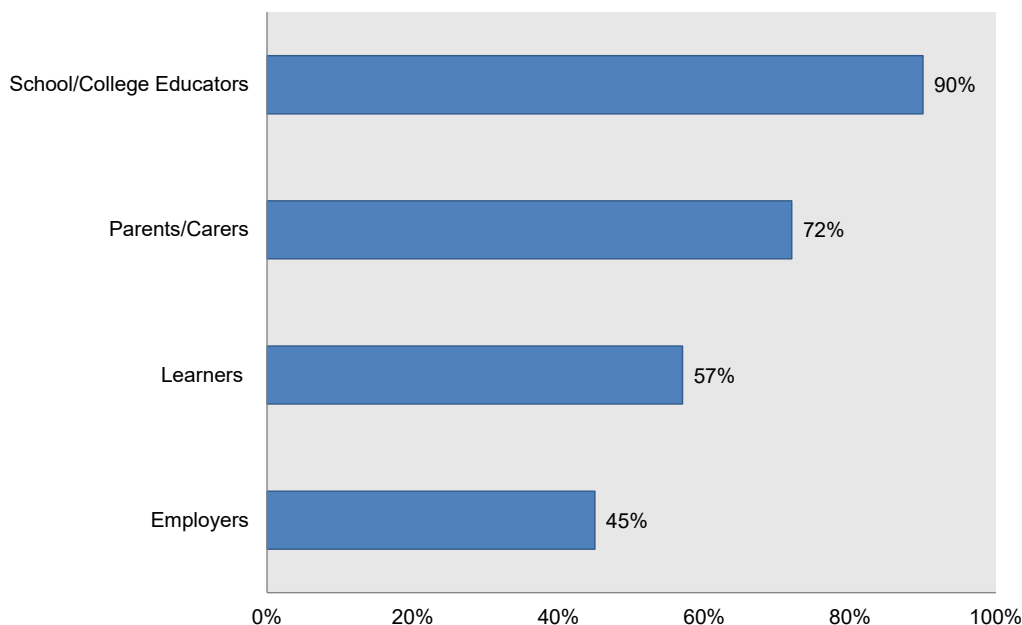
- Educators in colleges (68% compared to 50% for those in secondary schools)
- Parents/carers with a child in S5 or S6 (59% and 58% respectively compared to 37% for those with a child in S4)²

Further examination of the data also indicated that the extent to which educators in schools/colleges believed that they understood qualifications and assessment reform well rose between Phase 1 and Phase 2 (from 51% to 58%), whilst there was a decreasing extent to which parents/carers believed this to be the case (falling from 63% to 52%).

² This outcome is on a largely indicative basis.

“Would you like to know more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

**Figure 3: Like to Know More About
Qualifications and Assessment Reform**



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 3, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, educators in schools/ colleges and, thereafter, parents/carers were most likely to state that they would like to know more about qualifications and assessment reform, with this least likely to be the case amongst employers, ie:

- Educators in schools/colleges (90%)
- Parents/carers (72%)
- Learners (57%)
- Employers (45%)

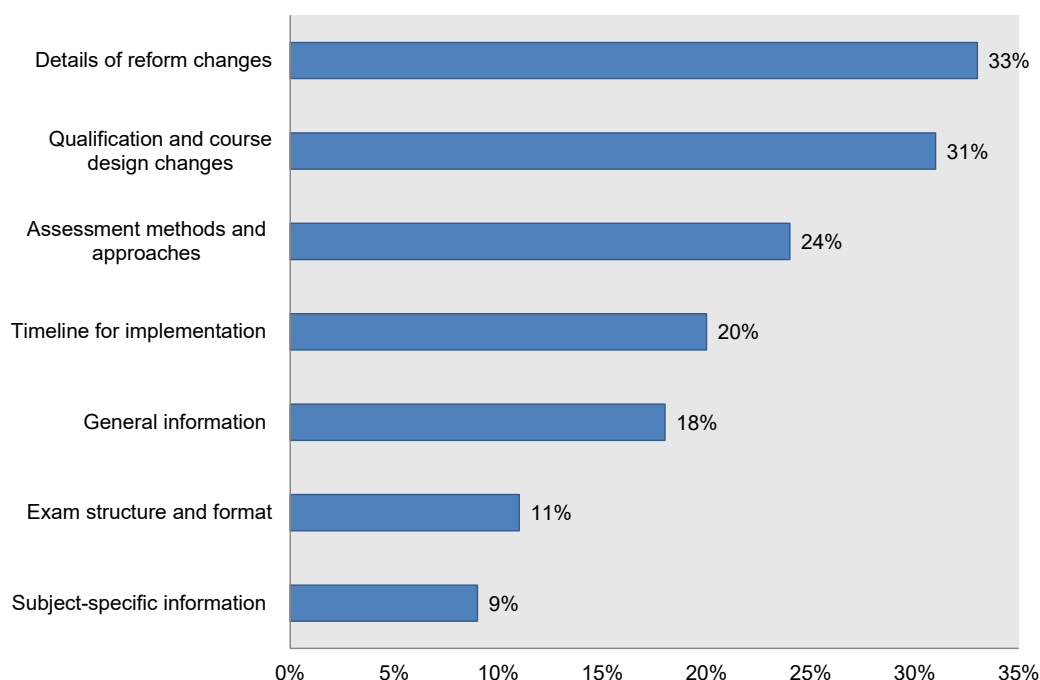
Further examination of the data indicated that those who were most likely to state that they would like to know more about the reforms were parents/carers with a child in S4 or S5 (79% and 76% respectively compared to 62% for those with a child in S6)³.

³ This outcome is on a largely indicative basis for those with a child in S6.

Further examination of the data also indicated that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, there was a decreasing extent to which employers expressed a desire to know more about the reforms (falling from 55% to 45%).

“What types of information would you like about qualifications and assessment reform?”

**Figure 4a: Information Desires re Qualifications and Assessment Reform
- School/College Educators (Unprompted)**



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

From Figure 4a, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **educators in schools/colleges** were **most likely** to state – on an unprompted basis – that they had desires for information regarding qualifications and assessment reform in terms of:

- Details of reform changes (33%)
- Qualification and course design changes (31%)

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

- Assessment methods and approaches (24%)
- Timeline for implementation of the reforms (20%)
- General information about the reforms (18%)

Further examination of the data indicated a number of variances on the basis of educator type, including educators in secondary schools being more likely to make reference here to ‘assessment methods and approaches’ (32% compared to 15% for educators in colleges), ‘exam structure and format’ (15% compared to 7%) and ‘subject specific information’ (19% compared to 0%). In contrast, educators in colleges were more likely to make reference here to ‘general information about the reforms’ (32% compared to 4% for educators in schools).

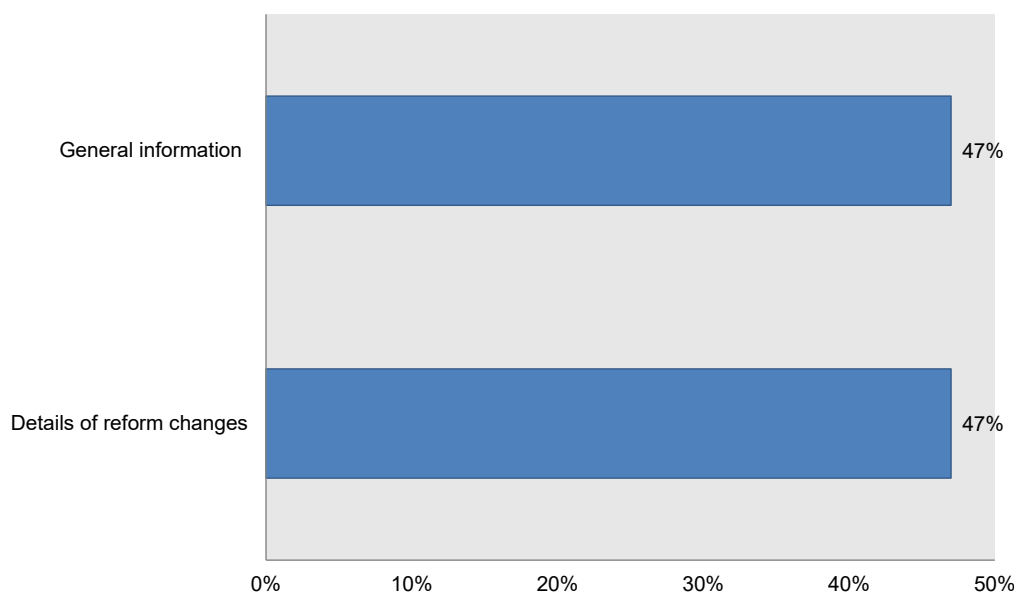
Further examination of the data also indicated that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, increasing unprompted reference was made here to desires for:

- Details of reform changes (rising from 12% to 33%)
- General information about the reforms (rising from 9% to 18%)

During that time, however, decreasing unprompted reference was made to information desires relating to ‘assessment methods and approaches’ (falling from 34% to 24%).

“What types of information would you like about qualifications and assessment reform?”

**Figure 4b: Information Desires re Qualifications and Assessment Reform
- Employers (Unprompted)**



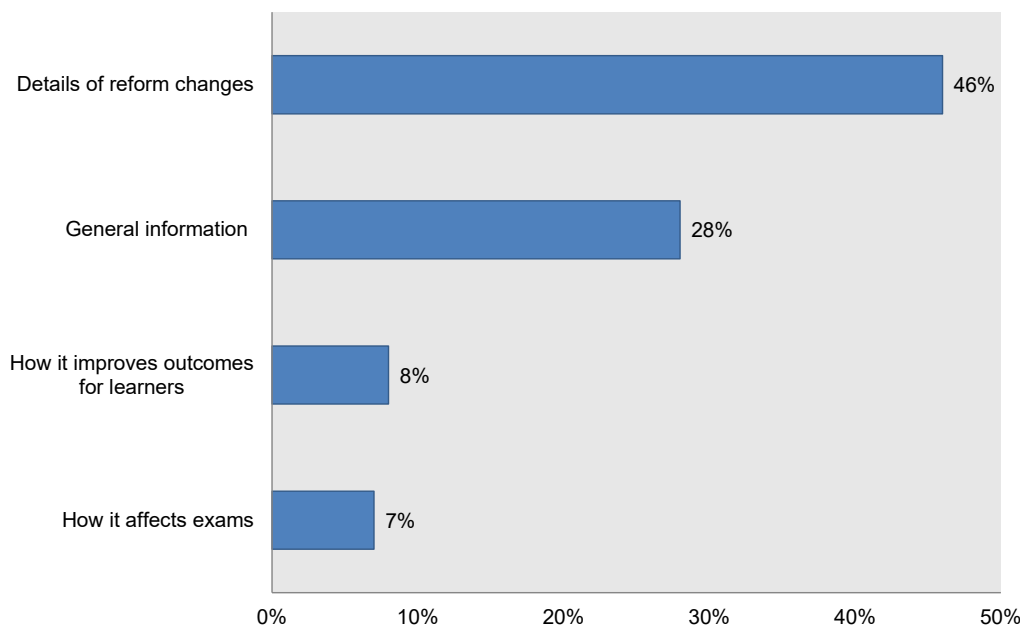
Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

From Figure 4b, it can be seen that, amongst **employers** in Phase 2, their **most notable** information desires noted in relation to qualifications and assessment reform were:

- General information about the reforms (47%), with this being lower than in Phase 1 (59%)
- Details of the reform changes (also 47%), with this being higher than in Phase 1 (38%)

“What types of information would you like about qualifications and assessment reform?”

**Figure 4c: Information Desires re Qualifications and Assessment Reform
- Parents/Carers (Unprompted)**



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

Figure 4c indicates that, in Phase 2, **parents/carers** made **primary unprompted mention** of desires regarding information about qualifications and assessment reform in relation to ‘details of the reform changes’ (46%), with this being substantially higher than in Phase 1 (25%).

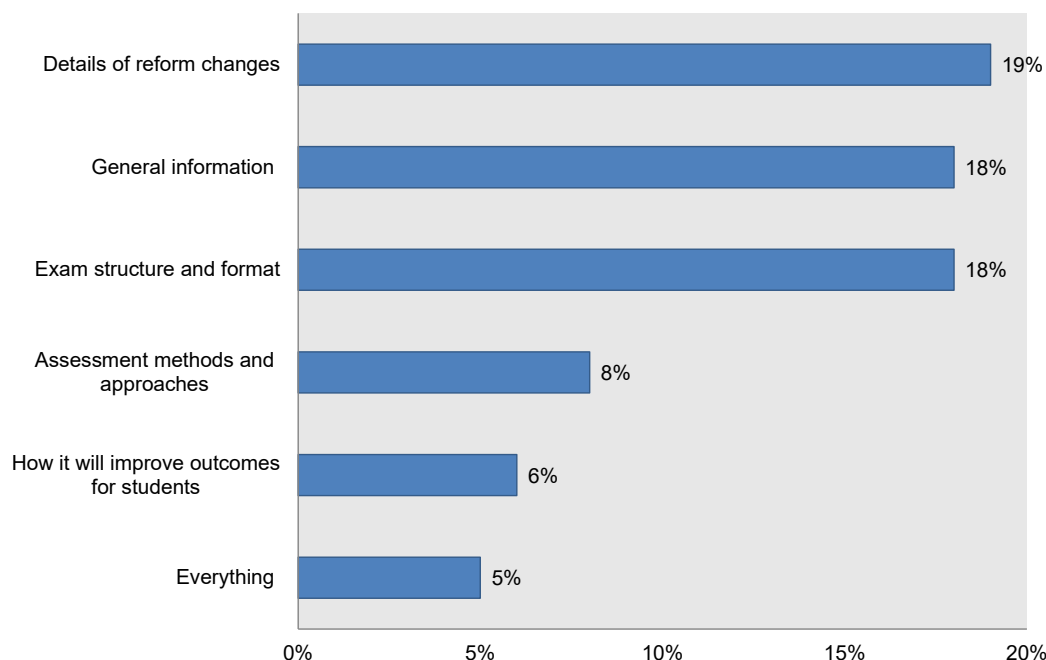
Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here ‘general information about the reforms’ (28%).

Finally, Figure 4c indicates that a small proportion of parents/carers in Phase 2 expressed a desire for information in terms of ‘how the reforms will improve outcomes for learners’ (8%), with this outcome being significantly lower than that found in Phase 1 (21%).

Further examination of the data highlighted no notable variances on the basis of the year group of a respondent’s child.

“What types of information would you like about qualifications and assessment reform?”

**Figure 4d: Information Desires re Qualifications and Assessment Reform
(Unprompted) - Learners**



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

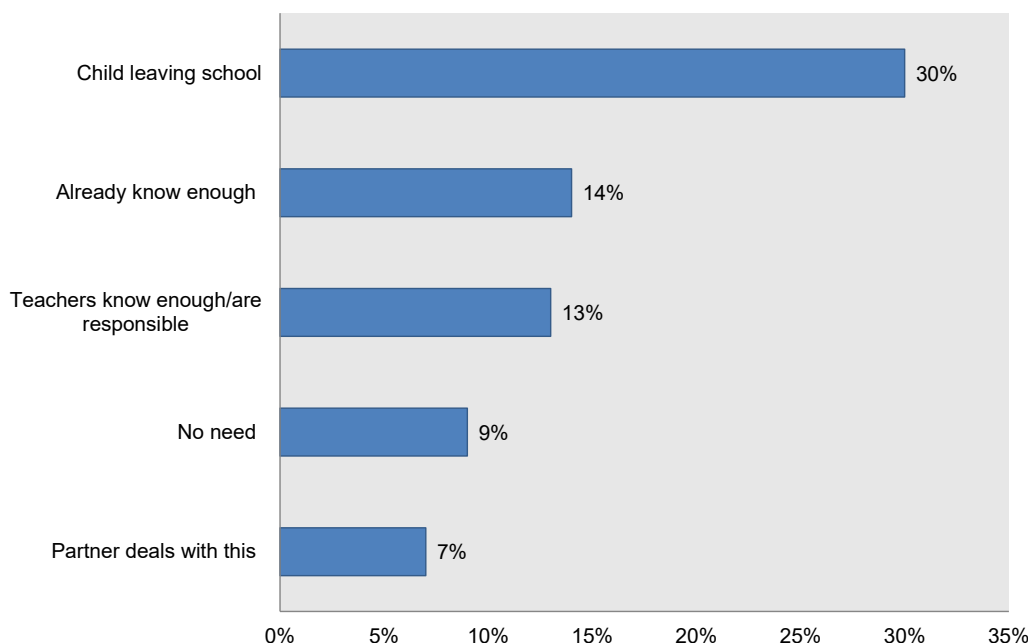
Figure 4d indicates that, amongst **learners** in Phase 2, **primary unprompted reference** was made to the following information desires:

- Details of the reform changes (19%)
- General information about the reforms (18%), with this outcome being far less than in Phase 1 (28%)
- Exam structure and format (18%)

Further examination of the data indicated that learners in S4 and S6 were most likely to make unprompted reference here to a desire for information about ‘exams structure and format’ (22% and 23% respectively compared to 9% for those in S5).

“What are the main reasons you would prefer not to know more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 5: Reasons for Not Preferring to Know More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform (Unprompted) - Parents/Carers Only



Base: 'No' in Figure 3

From Figure 5, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, parents/carers **primarily** stated that they would **not** prefer to know more about qualifications and assessment reform due to ‘their child leaving school’ (30%), which was to a far greater extent than in Phase 1 (11%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of beliefs that ‘they already know enough about the reforms’ (14%) and that ‘teachers know enough about and are responsible for knowing about qualifications and assessment reform’ (13%), with the second of these outcomes being notably higher than in Phase 1 (6%).

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a breakdown of responses on the basis of the year group of a respondent’s child.

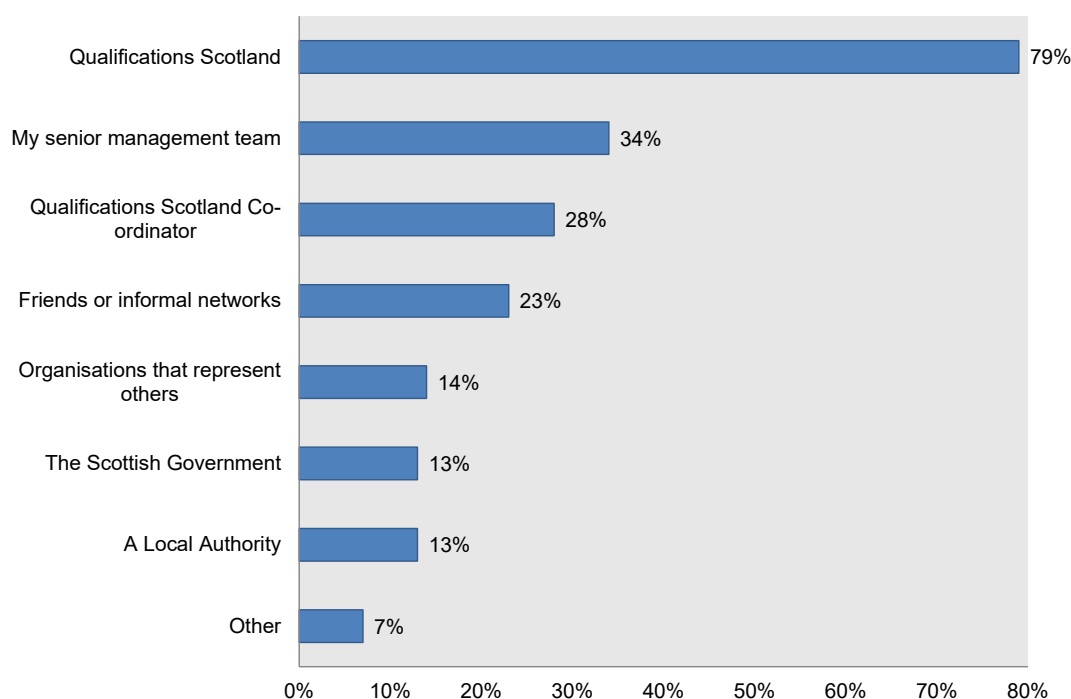
It should also be noted that further examination of the data here indicated that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, there was a significant

decreasing extent to which parents/carers made reference here to beliefs that:

- They had no need to find out more about the reforms (falling from 21% to 9%)
- They could find out themselves about the reforms if they wanted to (falling from 18% to 3%)

“Who would you go to in order to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 6a: Who Would be Approached to Find Out More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform - School/College Educators



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

From Figure 6a, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **educators in schools/colleges primary stated** that they would approach ‘Qualifications Scotland’ to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform⁴.

⁴ It should be noted that, in Phase 1, reference was made here in the questionnaire to ‘SQA/Qualifications Scotland’. Accordingly, no comparison can be drawn in this regard between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

From Figure 6a, it can be seen that **secondary reference** was made here to approaching:

- A member of a respondent's senior management team (34%)
- A respondent's Qualifications Scotland Co-ordinator⁵ (28%)
- Friends or informal networks (23%), with this being to a lesser extent than in Phase 1 (32%)
- The Scottish Government (13%), with this being to a lesser extent than in Phase 1 (20%)

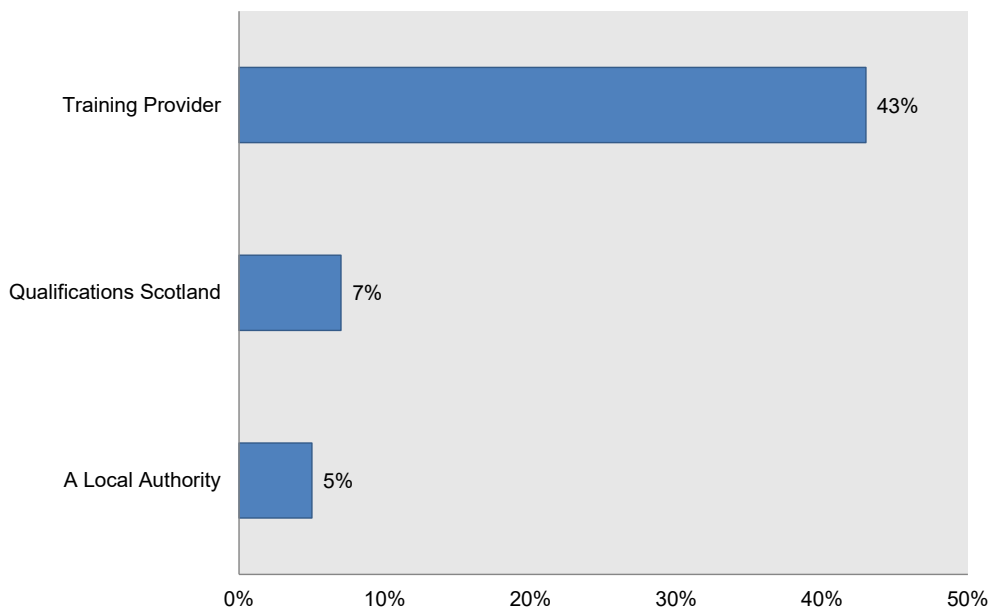
Further examination of the data indicated that educators in secondary schools were more likely to make reference to a number of potential sources of information here, including:

- The Scottish Government (19% compared to 6% for educators in colleges)
- A Local Authority (24% compared to 2%)
- A member of their senior management (40% compared to 28%)
- Friends or informal networks (30% compared to 16%)

⁵ It should be noted that, in Phase 1, reference was made here to a respondent's SQA Co-ordinator. Accordingly, no comparison can be drawn in this regard between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

“Who would you go to in order to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 6b: Who Would be Approached to Find Out More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform - Employers



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

From Figure 6b, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **employers primary stated** that they would approach ‘a training provider’ to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform (43%), with this being to a far lesser extent than in Phase 1 (90%).

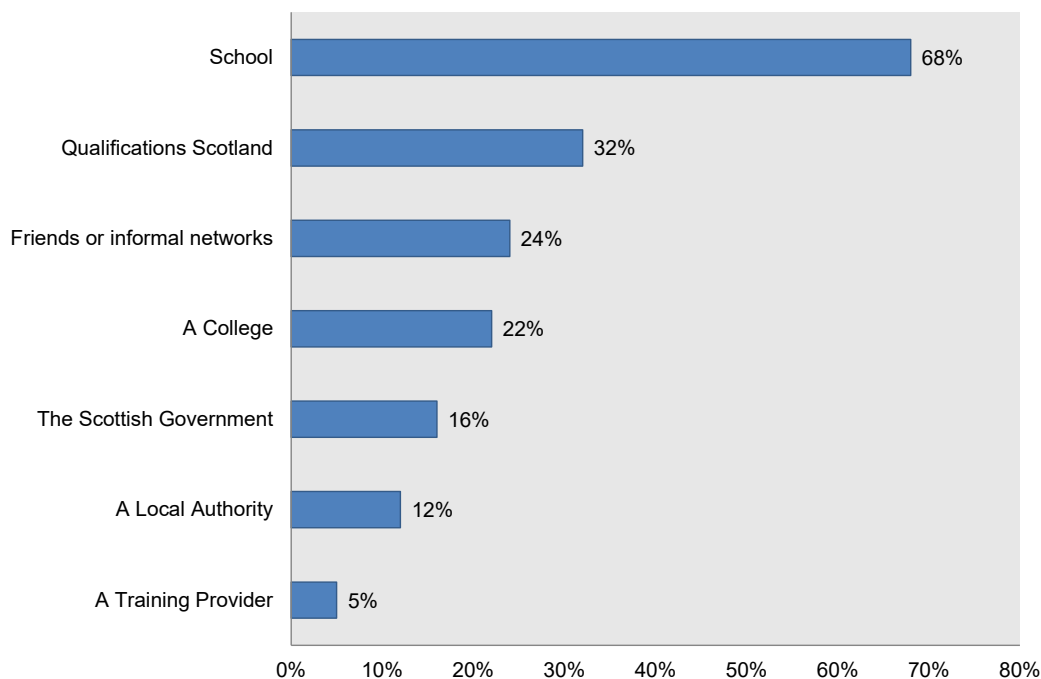
It should also be noted that, in Phase 2, a small proportion of employers stated that they would approach ‘a local authority’ (5%), with this being to a far lesser extent than in Phase 1 (19%).

Finally, it is of interest to note that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, there was a far lesser extent to which employers made reference here to ‘a college’ (falling from 30% to 2%)⁶.

⁶ It should be noted that the extent of this variance is such that there is the potential that it represents a statistical anomaly.

“Who would you go to in order to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 6c: Who Would be Approached to Find Out More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform - Parents/Carers



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

From Figure 6c, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **parents/carers primarily stated** that they would approach ‘a school’ if they wanted to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform (68%), with this outcome being notably higher than in Phase 1 (50%).

Thereafter, **secondary mention** was made here of parents/carers approaching:

- Friends or informal networks (24%), with this outcome being notably higher than that found in Phase 1 (10%)
- Qualifications Scotland (32%)⁷

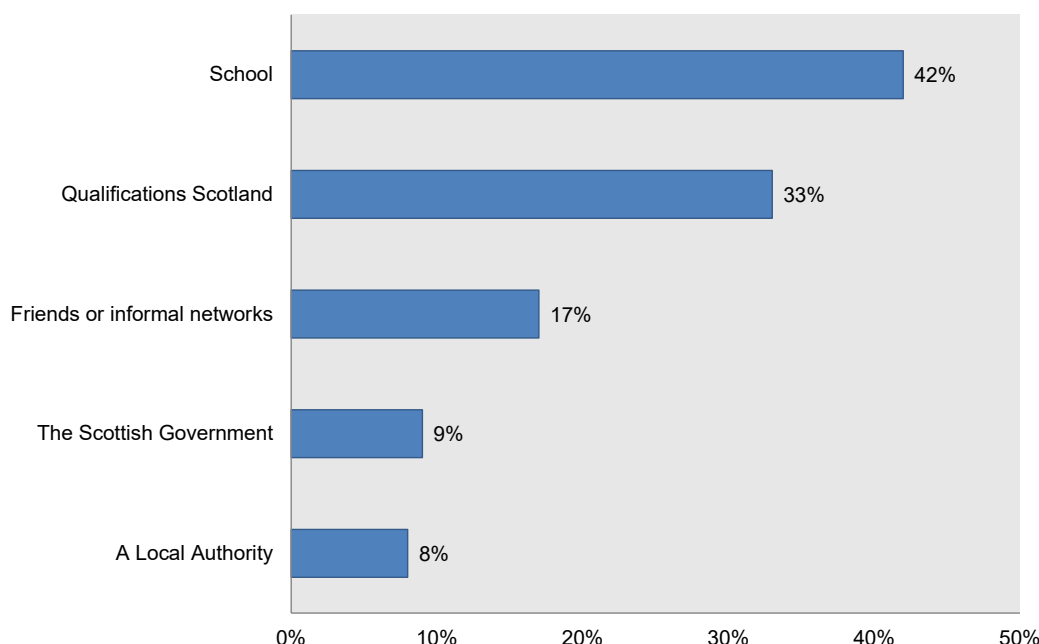
⁷ It should be noted that, in Phase 1, reference was made here in the questionnaire ‘SQA/Qualifications Scotland’. Accordingly, no comparison can be drawn in this regard between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

- A college (22%), with this outcome also being greater than in Phase 1 (12%)

It should be noted that the subsample of respondents here is insufficient to allow a breakdown of responses on the basis of the year group of a respondent's child.

“Who would you go to in order to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 6d: Who Would be Approached to Find Out More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform - Learners



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 3

From Figure 6d, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **learners primarily stated** that they would approach 'their school' or 'Qualifications Scotland'⁸ to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform (42% and 33% respectively), with secondary mention being made here of approaching 'friends or informal networks' (17%).

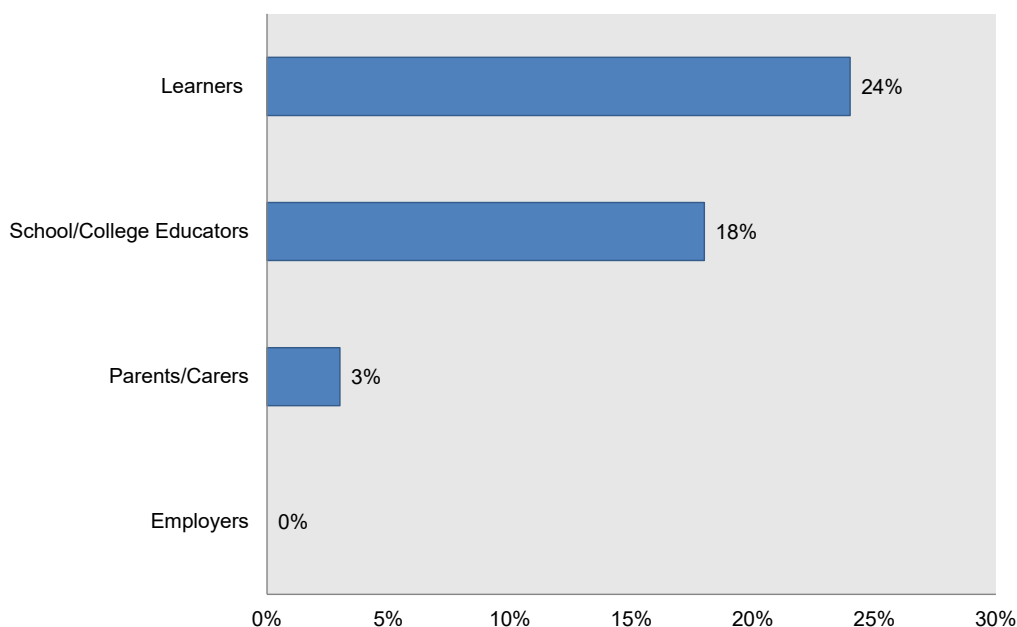
⁸ It should be noted that, in Phase 1, reference was made here in the questionnaire 'SQA/Qualifications Scotland'. Accordingly, no comparison can be drawn in this regard between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Further examination of the data indicated that learners in S6 were most likely to make reference here to ‘Qualifications Scotland’ (38% compared to 29% and 32% respectively for those in S4 and S5).

It should be noted that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, there were no notable changes in terms of the opinions expressed by learners here.

“Before taking part in this survey, have you personally taken part in any SQA or Qualifications Scotland consultation, engagement or research relating to qualifications and assessment reform?”

Figure 7: Previously Consulted, Engaged or Taken Part in Research Relating to Qualifications and Assessment Reform



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 7, it can be seen that learners and educators in schools/ colleges were far more likely than parents/carers and employers to have previously taken part in any SQA or Qualifications Scotland consultation, engagement or research relating to qualifications and assessment reform⁹, ie:

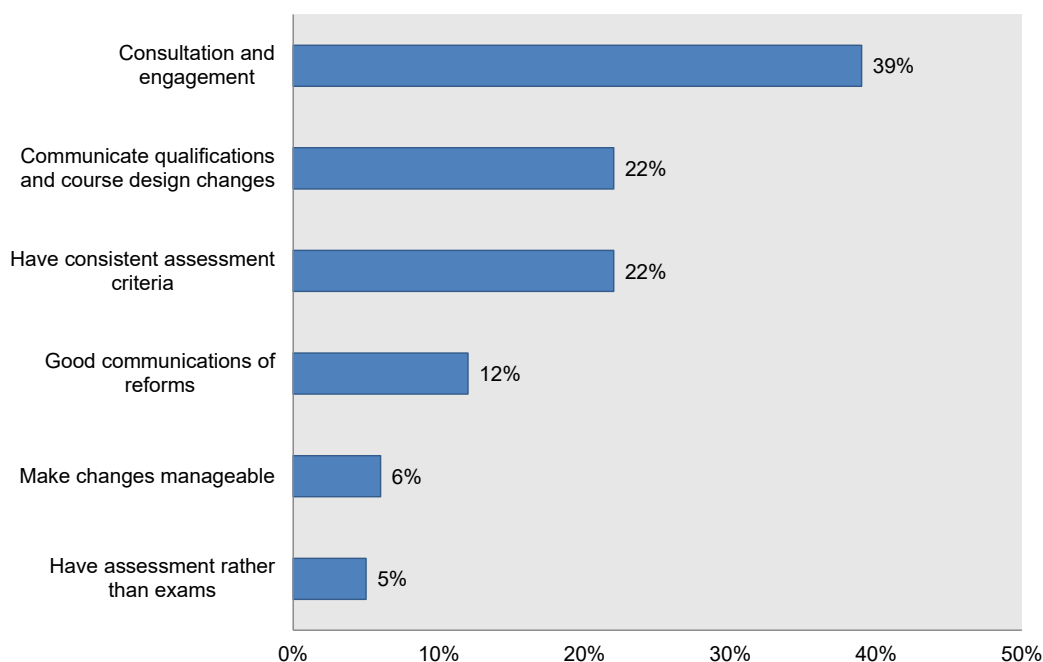
⁹ It should be noted that the term ‘SQA or Qualifications Scotland’ was used in the questionnaire in both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

- Learners (24%), with this being notably lower than in Phase 1 (32%)
- Educators in schools/colleges (18%)
- Parents/carers (3%)
- Employers (0%)

Further examination of the data indicated that educators in schools were more likely to state that they had taken part in SQA or Qualifications Scotland consultation, engagement or research relating to qualifications and assessment reform (26% compared to 10% for educators in colleges).

*“What **one thing** should Qualifications Scotland focus on to make qualifications and assessment reform a success?”*

Figure 8a: What Should Qualifications Scotland Focus on to Make Qualifications and Assessment Reform a Success (Unprompted) - School/College Educators



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 8a, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **educators in schools/colleges primarily stated** – on an unprompted basis – that in order to make qualifications and assessment reform a success, Qualifications Scotland should ‘consult or engage with educators’ (39%), with this being to a greater extent than in Phase 1 (23%). Figure 8a also indicates that **secondary reference** was made here by educators in schools/colleges to:

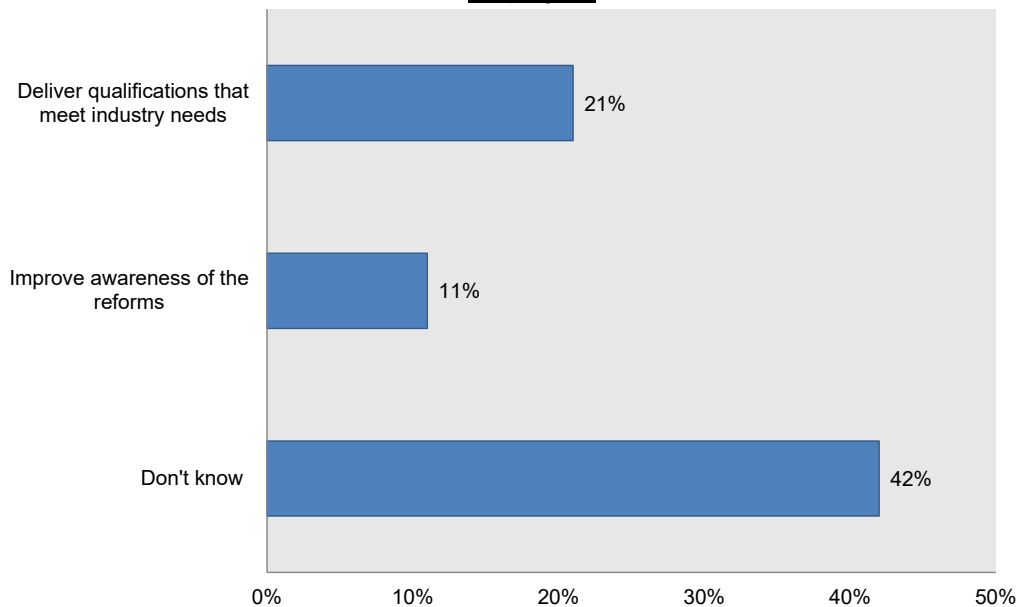
- Communicating qualifications and course design changes (22%), with this outcome being greater than in Phase 1 (12%)
- Having consistent assessment criteria (also 22%), with, again, this outcome being higher than in Phase 1 (11%)

Further examination of the data indicated the following variances on the basis of respondent type:

- Educators in schools being more likely to make unprompted reference to ‘having consistent assessment criteria’ (27% compared to 18% for educators in colleges) and ‘qualification and course design changes’ (29% compared to 16%)
- Educators in colleges being more likely to make unprompted reference to ‘consult or engage with educators’ (44% compared to 33% for educators in schools) and ‘communicating qualifications and course design changes’ (18% compared to 6%)

*“What **one thing** should Qualifications Scotland focus on to make qualifications and assessment reform a success?”*

Figure 8b: What Should Qualifications Scotland Focus on to Make Qualifications and Assessment Reform a Success (Unprompted) - Employers



Base: All Respondents

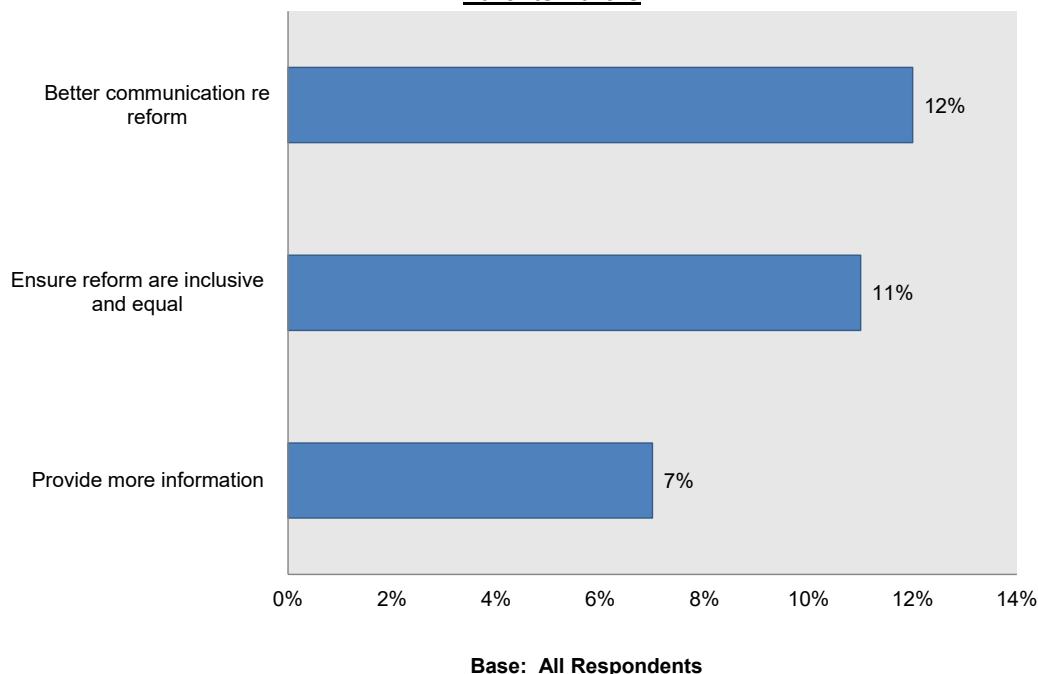
Figure 8b indicates that **employers primarily made reference** here to Qualifications Scotland ‘delivering qualifications that meet industry needs’ (21%), with this being to a greater extent than in Phase 1 (11%).

Thereafter, **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of Qualifications Scotland ‘improving awareness of the reforms amongst employers’ (11%).

It should also be noted that 42% of employers in Phase 2 stated that they ‘didn’t know what Qualifications Scotland should focus on’, with this being to a far greater extent than in Phase 1 (22%).

*“What **one thing** should Qualifications Scotland focus on to make qualifications and assessment reform a success?”*

Figure 8c: What Should Qualifications Scotland Focus on to Make Qualifications and Assessment Reform a Success (Unprompted) - Parents/Carers



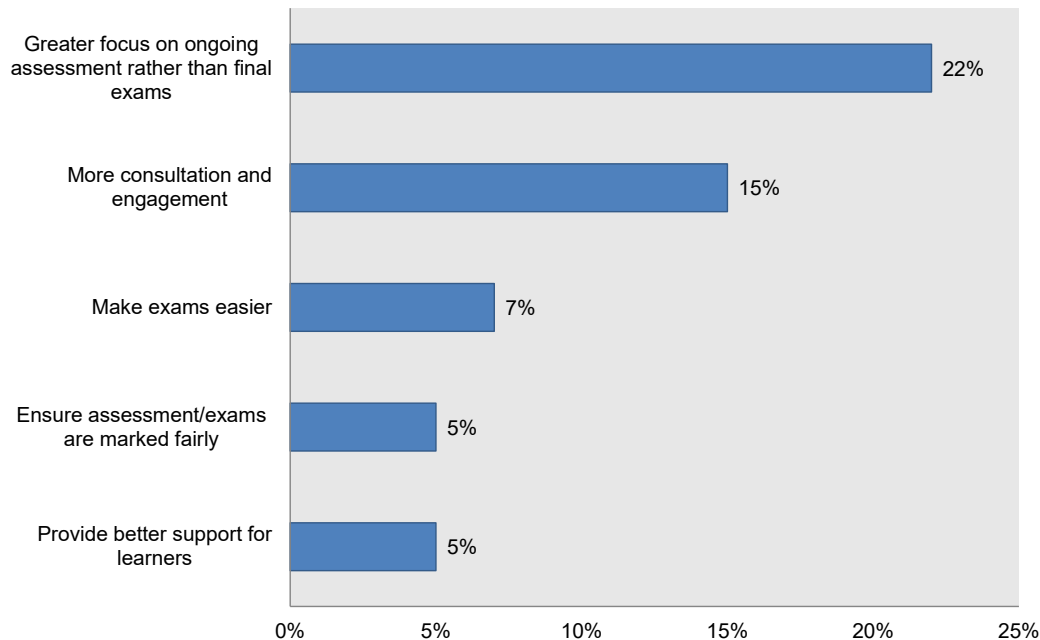
From Figure 8c, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **parents/carers** most notably made unprompted mention of **three factors** which they believed Qualifications Scotland should focus on to make qualifications and assessment reform a success, namely:

- Having better communications with parents/carers regarding the reforms (12%)
- Ensuring that the reforms are inclusive and equal (11%), with this being to a far greater extent than in Phase 1 (0%)
- Providing more information to parents/carers about the reforms (7%)

Further examination of the data indicated that parents/carers with a child in S6 were most likely to make reference to ‘ensuring that the reforms are inclusive and equal’ (15% compared to 7% for those with a child in S5).

*“What **one thing** should Qualifications Scotland focus on to make qualifications and assessment reform a success?”*

Figure 8d: What Should Qualifications Scotland Focus on to Make Qualifications and Assessment Reform a Success (Unprompted) - Learners



Base: All Respondents

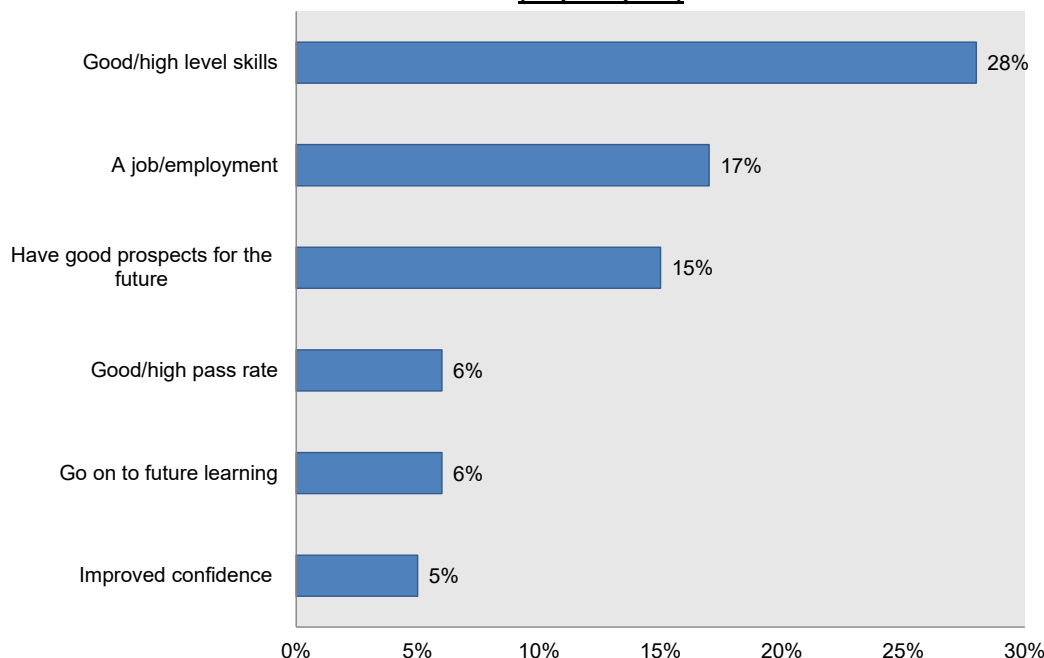
From Figure 8d, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **learners** primarily made reference here to Qualifications Scotland ‘having a greater focus on ongoing assessment rather than final exams’ (22%), with this being to a greater extent than in Phase 1 (15%).

Thereafter, learners made **secondary unprompted mention** here of Qualifications Scotland ‘consulting and engaging more with learners’ (15%), with this being to a greater extent than in Phase 1 (4%).

Further examination of the data indicated no notable variances here on the basis of a learner’s year group.

“What are the key things you would like learners to gain from qualifications that they are studying”

Figure 9: Key Things that Parents/Carers Would Like Learners to Gain From Qualifications that they are Studying - Parents/Carers Only (Unprompted)



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 9, it can be seen that parents/carers in Phase 2 **primarily stated** – on an unprompted basis – that they would like learners to gain ‘good and/or high level skills’ from qualifications that they are studying (28%).

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

- A job and/or employment (17%)
- Having good prospects for the future (15%)

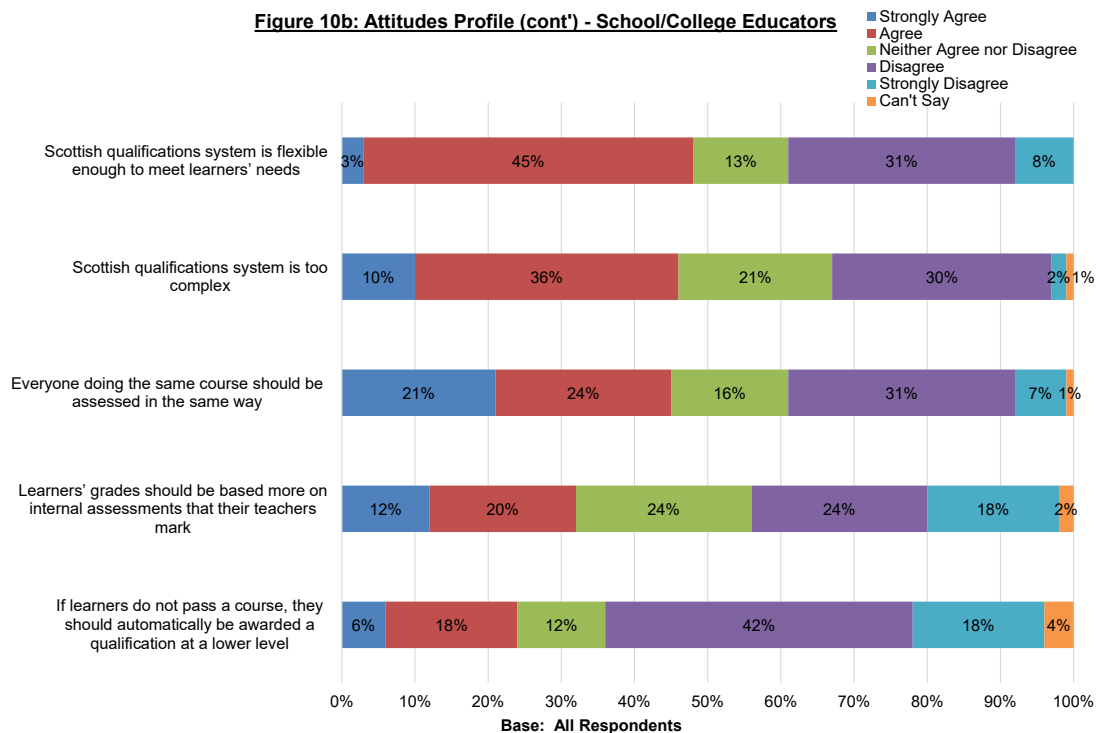
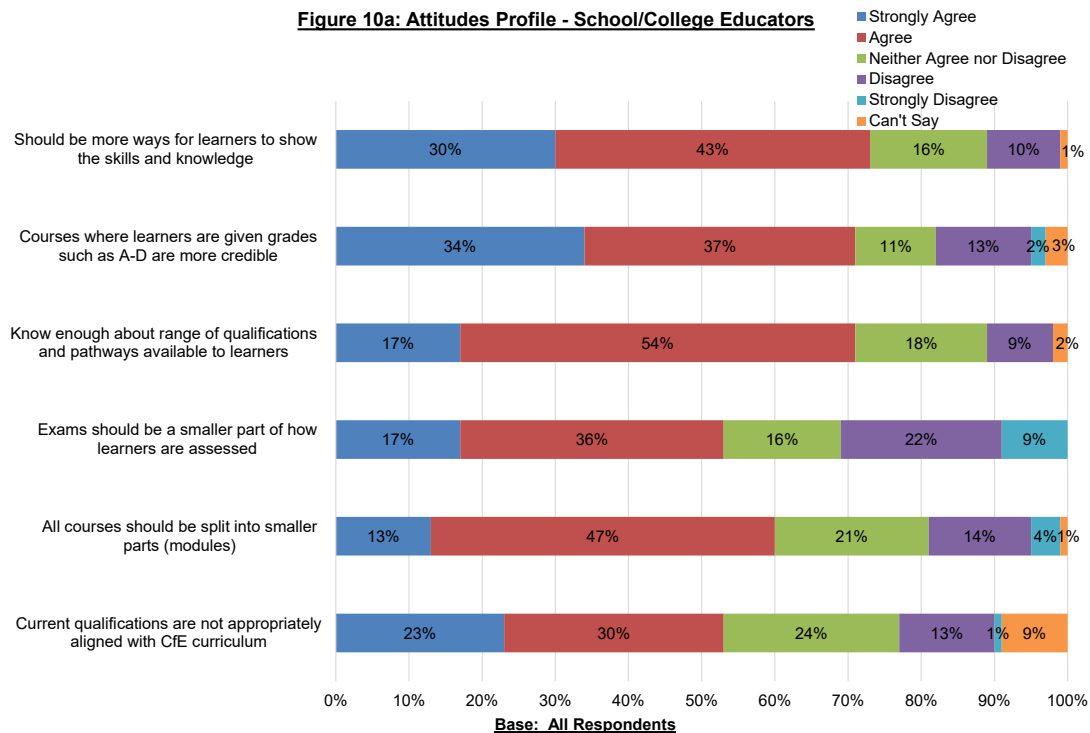
Further examination of the data indicated that parents/carers with a child in S6 or S4 were more likely to make unprompted reference to a desire for learners to gain ‘good and/or high level skills’ (34% and 30% respectively compared to 20% for those with a child in S5). In addition, those with a child in S4 were most likely to provide a ‘don’t know’

response here (9% compared to 3% and 2% respectively for those with a child in S5 or S6).

It should be noted that this question was asked for the first time in Phase 2 and was only asked of parents/carers.

4.0 ATTITUDES ABOUT QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

“Please choose the option which most closely matches your views about each of the statements below”



Figures 10a and 10b note levels of agreement and disagreement with a range of statements provided to **educators in schools/colleges** in Phase 2:

- There should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses (agree – 73%; disagree – 26%)
- Courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail (agree – 71%; disagree – 15%)
- I know enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to learners (agree – 71%; disagree – 27%)
- All courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time (agree – 60%; disagree – 18%)
- Exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed (agree – 53%; disagree – 38%)
- Current qualifications in the senior phase are not appropriately aligned with the CfE curriculum (agree – 53%; disagree – 14%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (agree – 48%; disagree – 39%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is too complex (agree – 46%; disagree – 32%)
- Everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way (agree – 45%; disagree – 38%)
- Learners' grades should be based more internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks (agree – 32%; disagree – 42%)
- If learners do not pass a course, they should automatically be awarded a qualification at a lower level (agree – 24%; disagree – 60%)

Further examination of the data indicated the following variances on the basis of respondent type:

- Educators in secondary schools being more likely to agree that 'current qualifications in the senior phase are not appropriately aligned with the CfE curriculum' (71% compared to 35% for

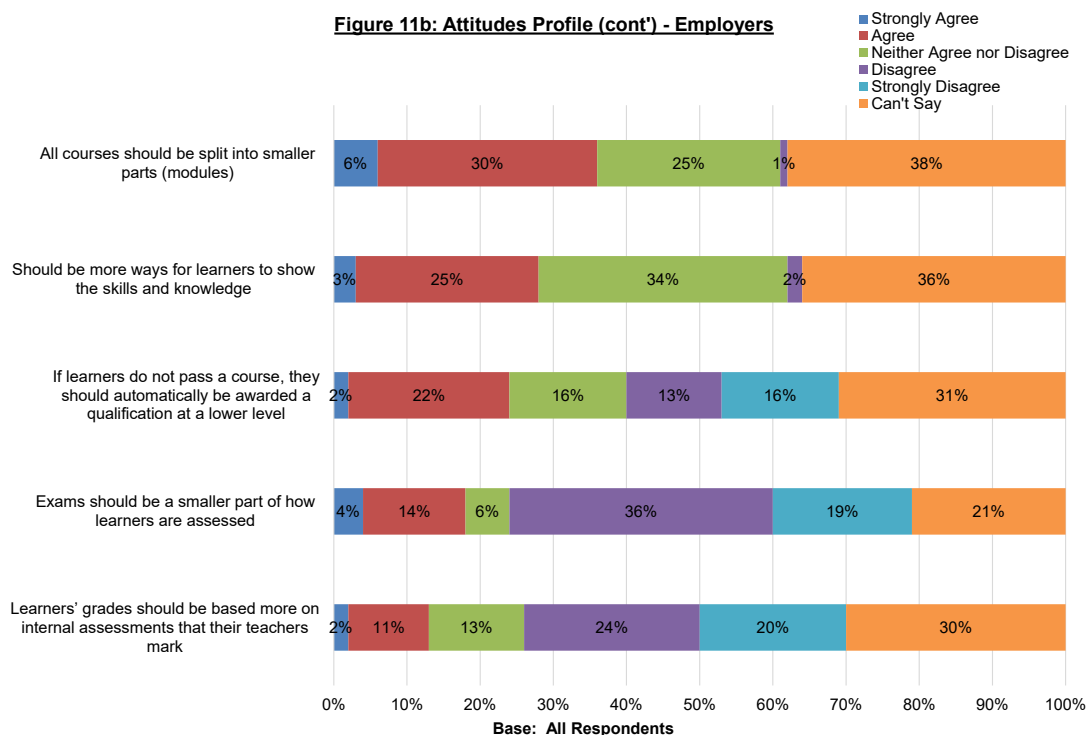
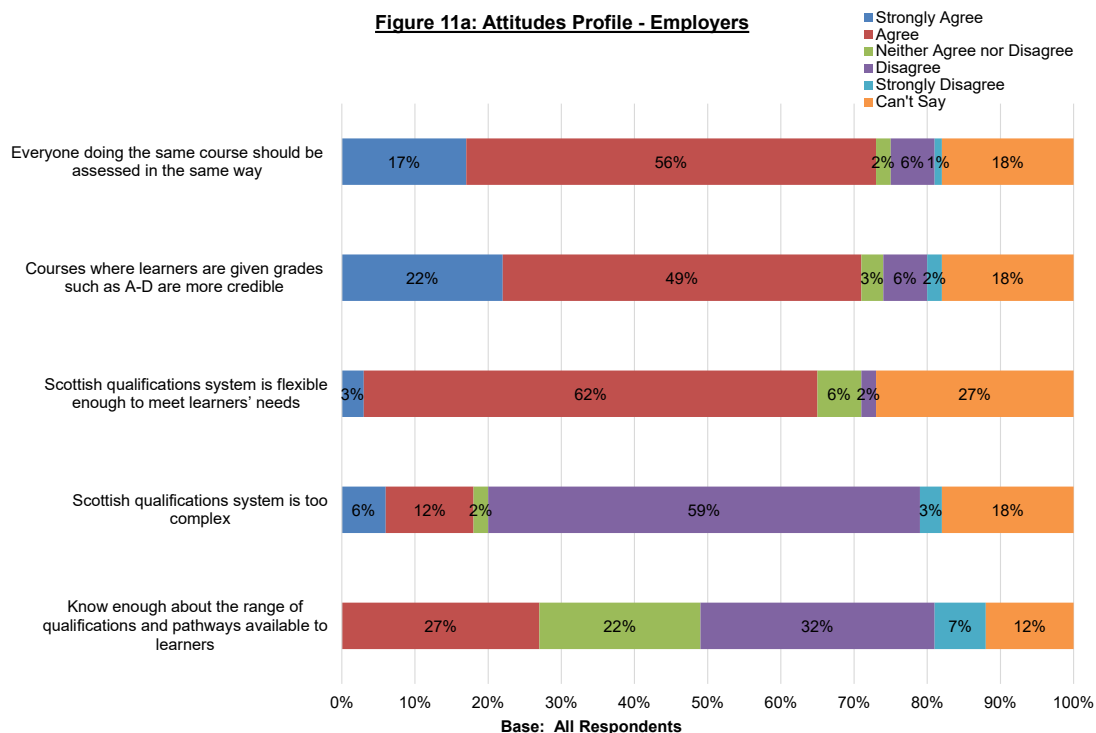
educators in colleges), ‘everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way’ (58% compared to 33%), ‘courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail’ (81% compared to 63%) and ‘if learners do not pass a course, they should automatically be awarded a qualification at a lower grade’ (38% compared to 10%)

- Educators in colleges being more likely to agree that ‘the Scottish qualifications system is too complex’ (52% compared to 41% for educators in secondary schools), ‘there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they’ve developed in their courses’ (79% compared to 68%), ‘exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed’ (63% compared to 43%), ‘learners grades should be based more on internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks’ (40% compared to 26%) and ‘all courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time’ (71% compared to 46%)

Further examination of the data also indicated that, between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the following differences were apparent amongst educators in schools/colleges:

- Learners’ grades should be based more internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks (agreement falling from 43% in Phase 1 to 32% in Phase 2)
- The Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners’ needs (agreement rising from 34% in Phase 1 to 48% in Phase 2)

“Please choose the option which most closely matches your views about each of the statements below”



Figures 11a and 11b note levels of agreement and disagreement with a range of statements provided to **employers** in Phase 2:

- Everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way (agree – 73%; disagree – 7%)

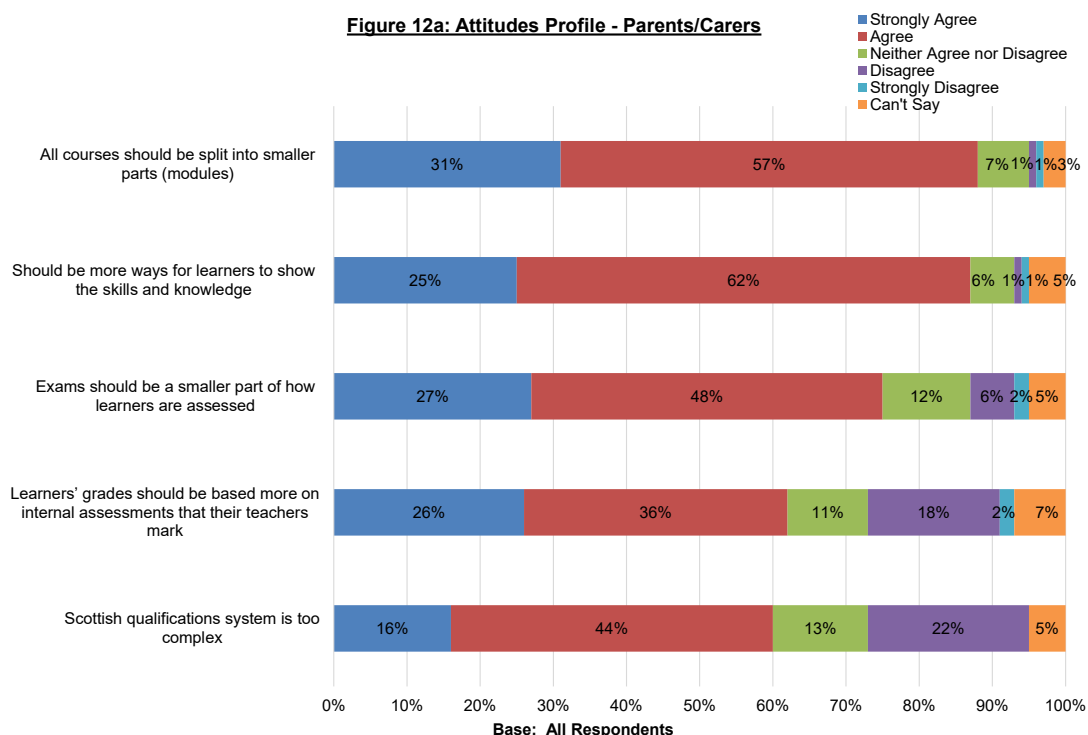
- Courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail (agree – 71%; disagree – 8%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (agree – 65%; disagree – 8%)
- I know enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to learners (agree – 49%; disagree – 39%)
- All courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time (agree – 36%; disagree – 1%)
- There should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses (agree – 28%; disagree – 2%)
- If learners do not pass a course, they should automatically be awarded a qualification at a lower level (agree – 24%; disagree – 29%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is too complex (agree – 18%; disagree – 65%)
- Exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed (agree – 18%; disagree – 55%)
- Learners' grades should be based more internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks (agree – 13%; disagree – 44%)

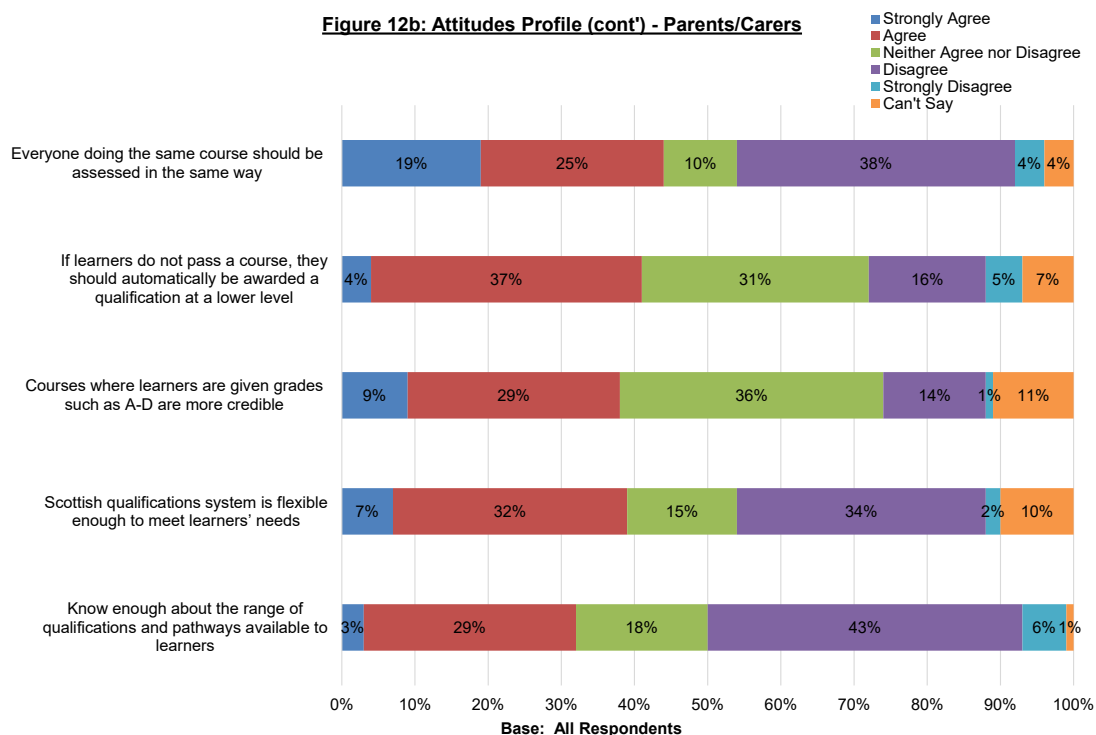
Further examination of the data for employers between Phase 1 and Phase 2 highlighted the following variances:

- Increasing agreement that courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail (rising from 56% to 71%)
- Decreasing agreement that all courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time (falling from 48% to 36%)
- Increasing agreement that the Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (rising from 50% to 62%)

- Decreasing agreement that exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed (falling from 33% to 18%), but increasing disagreement with this statement (rising from 36% to 55%)
- Decreasing agreement that there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses (falling from 61% to 2%)
- Increasing agreement that the Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (rising from 46% to 65%)
- Decreasing agreement that learners' grades should be based more on internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks (falling from 27% to 13%), but increasing disagreement with this statement (rising from 25% to 44%)

“Please choose the option which most closely matches your views about each of the statements below”





Figures 12a and 12b note levels of agreement and disagreement with a range of statements provided to **parents/carers** in Phase 2:

- All courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time (agree – 88%; disagree – 2%)
- There should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses (agree – 87%; disagree – 2%)
- Exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed (agree – 75%; disagree – 8%)
- Learners' grades should be based more internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks (agree – 62%; disagree – 20%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is too complex (agree – 60%; disagree – 35%)
- Everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way (agree – 44%; disagree – 42%)
- If learners do not pass a course, they should automatically be awarded a qualification at a lower level (agree – 41%; disagree – 21%)

- Courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail (agree – 38%; disagree – 15%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (agree – 39%; disagree – 22%)
- I know enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to learners (agree – 32%; disagree – 49%)

Further examination of the data indicated the following variances on the basis of respondent type¹⁰:

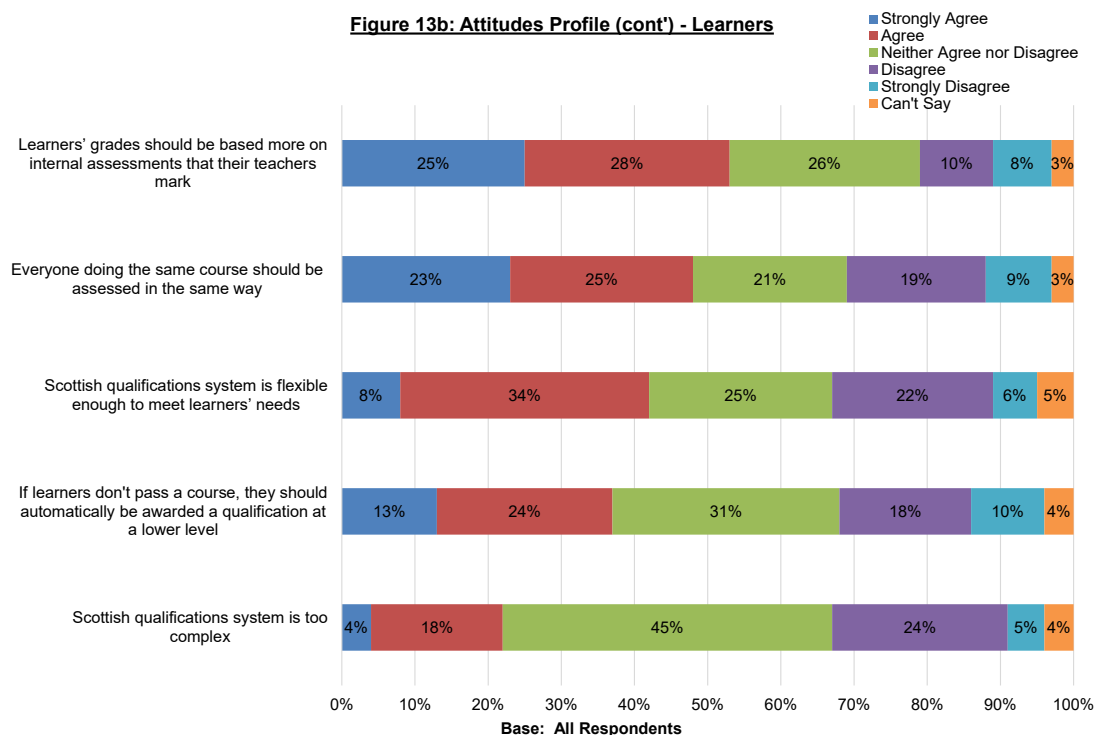
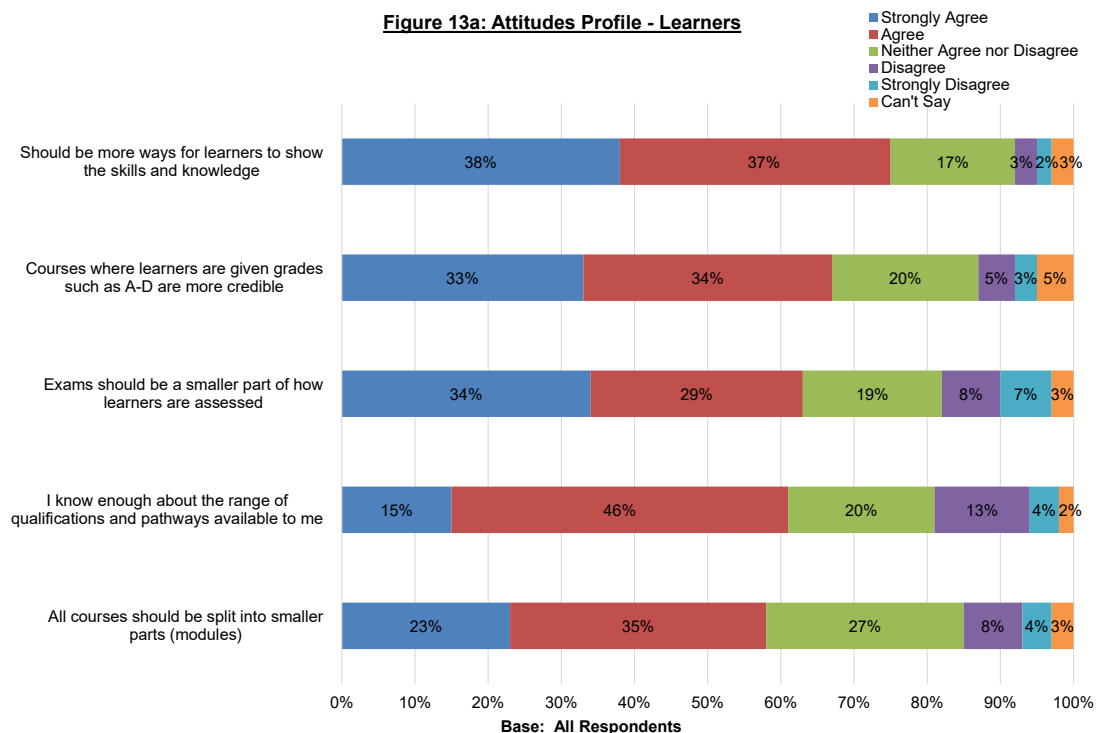
- Parents/carers with a child in S5 or S6 being most likely to agree that 'the Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs' (45% and 44% respectively compared to 28% for those with a child in S4)
- Parents/carers with a child in S6 or S5 being most likely to agree that they 'know enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to learners' (43% and 39% respectively compared to 16% for those with a child in S4)
- Parents/carers with a child in S4 being most likely to agree that 'exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed' (81% compared to, for example, 68% for those with a child in S5)
- Parents/carers with a child in S4 being most likely to agree that 'learners' grades should be based more internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks' (73% compared to 61% and 53% respectively for those with a child in S6 or S5)
- Parents/carers with a child in S6 being most likely to agree that 'if learners do not pass a course, they should automatically be awarded a qualification at a lower level' (51% compared to, for example, 32% for those with a child in S4)

¹⁰ The outcomes here are largely indicative in nature for parents/carers with a child in S5 and, in particular, those with a child in S6.

Further examination of the data for parents/carers between Phase 1 and Phase 2 also highlighted the following variances:

- Increasing agreement that all courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time (rising from 79% to 88%), but decreasing disagreement with this statement (falling from 18% to 2%)
- Decreasing disagreement that there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses (falling from 15% to 2%)
- Increasing disagreement that everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way (rising from 16% to 42%)
- Increasing agreement that the Scottish qualifications system is too complex (rising from 45% to 60%)
- Decreasing agreement that courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail (falling from 59% to 38%)
- Decreasing agreement that the Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (falling from 51% to 39%), but increasing disagreement with this statement (rising from 16% to 36%)

“Please choose the option which most closely matches your views about each of the statements below”



Figures 13a and 13b note levels of agreement and disagreement with a range of statements provided to **learners** in Phase 2:

- There should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've developed in their courses (agree – 75%; disagree – 5%)
- Courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail (agree – 67%; disagree – 8%)
- Exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed (agree – 63%; disagree – 15%)
- I know enough about the range of qualifications and pathways available to me (agree – 61%; disagree – 17%)
- All courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time (agree – 58%; disagree – 12%)
- Learners' grades should be based more internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks (agree – 53%; disagree – 18%)
- Everyone doing the same course should be assessed in the same way (agree – 48%; disagree – 28%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs (agree – 42%; disagree – 28%)
- If learners do not pass a course, they should automatically be awarded a qualification at a lower level (agree – 37%; disagree – 28%)
- The Scottish qualifications system is too complex (agree – 22%; disagree – 29%)

Further examination of the data indicated the following variances on the basis of respondent type:

- Learners in S5 and S4 were most likely to agree that 'the Scottish qualifications system is too complex' (27% and 25% respectively compared to 16% for those in S6)
- Learners in S5 and S6 were most likely to agree that 'there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they've

developed in their courses' (79% and 78% respectively compared to 67% for learners in S4)

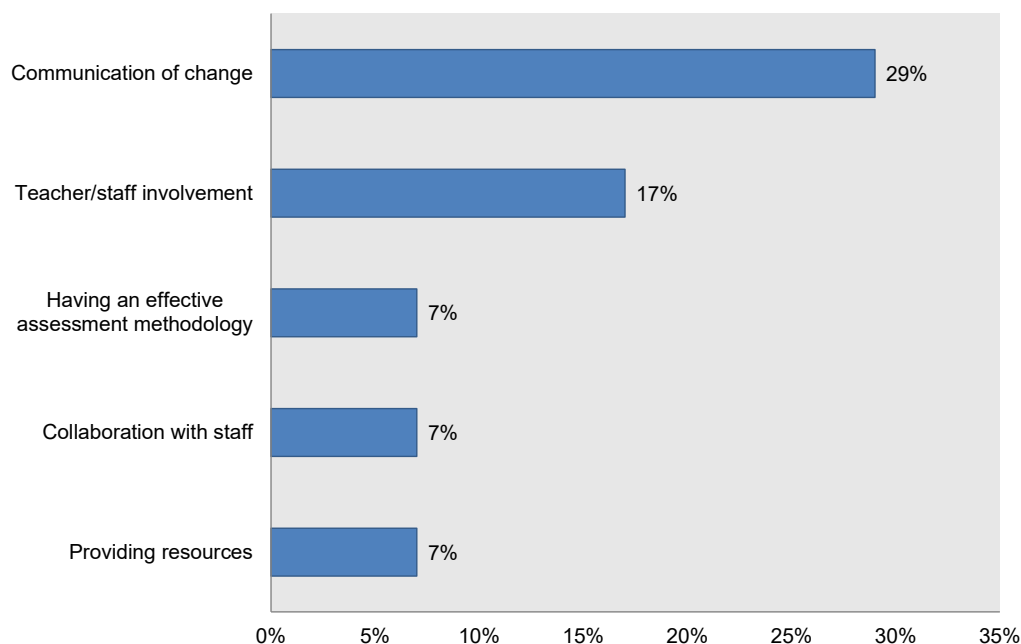
- Learners in S5 were most likely to agree that 'courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail' (75% compared to 64% and 62% respectively for those in S4 and S6)

Further examination of the data for learners between Phase 1 and Phase 2 also highlighted no highly notable variances across each of the indicators under consideration.

5.0 VIEWS ABOUT QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND

*“What **one thing** do you think Qualifications Scotland needs to do to improve how it works with you?”*

Figure 14a: What Qualifications Scotland Needs to Do to Improve How It Works with Educators (Unprompted) - School/College Educators



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 14a, it can be seen that, in Phase 2, **educators in schools and colleges primarily stated** – on an unprompted basis – that in order to improve how it works with educators, Qualifications Scotland needs to have ‘better communication of the changes’ (29%), with this being to a greater extent than in Phase 1 (18%).

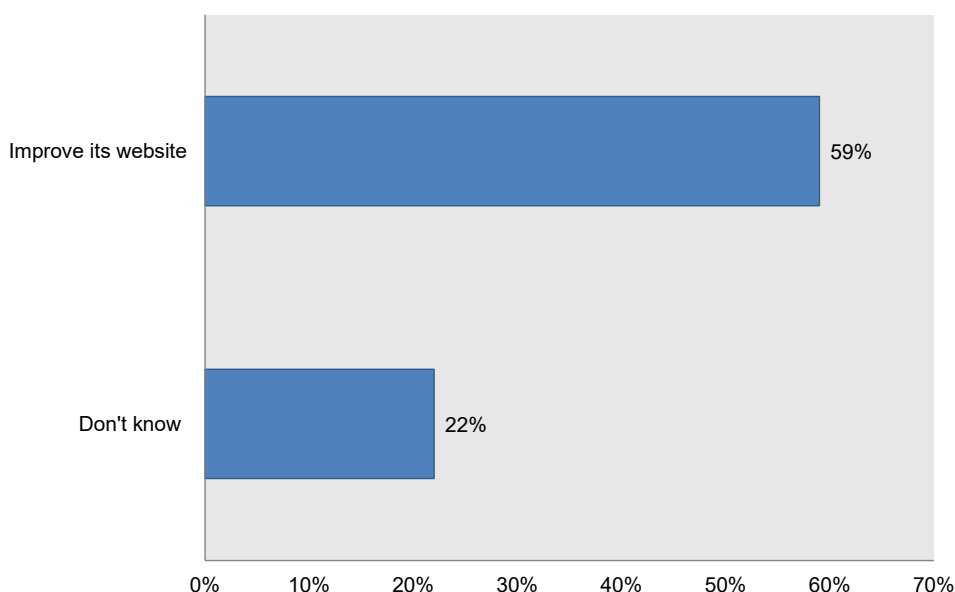
Thereafter, Figure 14a indicates that **secondary unprompted mention** was made here of Qualifications Scotland ‘having greater involvement with teachers and other staff’ (17%), with this being to a greater extent than in Phase 1 (9%).

Further examination of the data indicated that:

- Educators in secondary schools were most likely to make reference here to ‘having greater involvement with teachers and other staff’ (27% compared to 9% for educators in colleges)
- Educators in colleges were most likely to make reference here to ‘communication of change’ (36% compared to 21% for educators in secondary schools) and ‘greater collaboration with staff’ (11% compared to 2%)

*“What **one thing** do you think Qualifications Scotland needs to do to improve how it works with you?”*

Figure 14b: What Qualifications Scotland Needs to Do to Improve How It Works with Employers (Unprompted) - Employers



Base: All Respondents

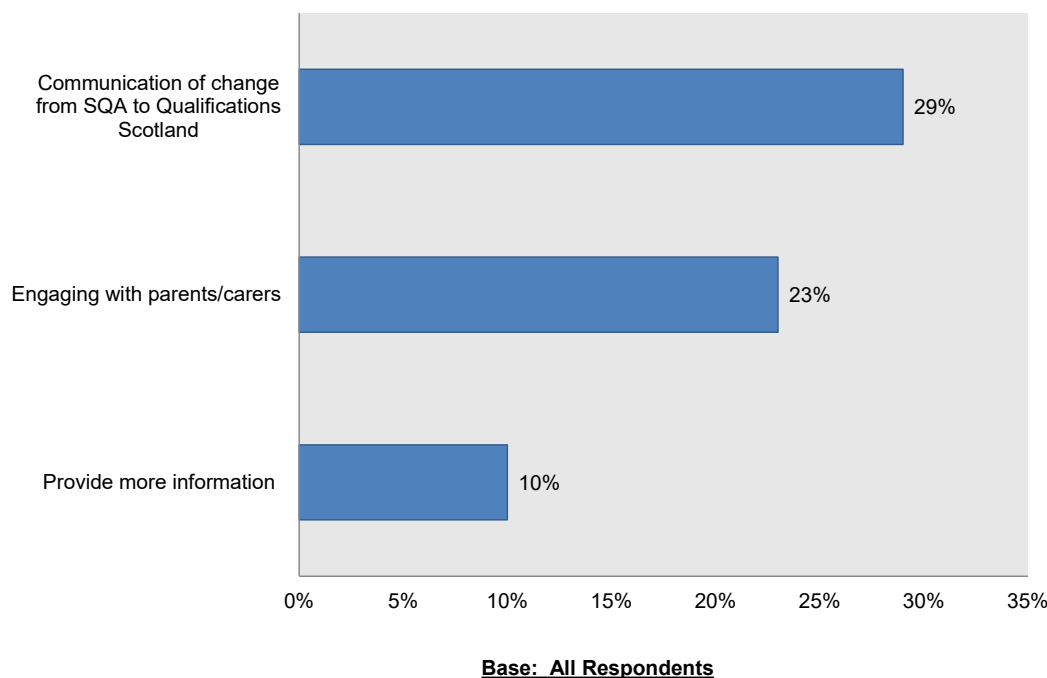
Figure 14b indicates that **employers** in Phase 2 **primarily** made unprompted reference to Qualifications Scotland needing to improve how it works with employers by ‘improving its website’ (59%), with this being to a hugely greater extent than in Phase 1 (0%)¹¹.

¹¹ It should be noted that the extent of this variance is such that there is the potential that it represents a statistical anomaly.

In addition, it can be seen from Figure 14b that over one in five employers in Phase 1 (22%) felt unable to express an opinion in this regard, with this outcome being identical to that found in Phase 2.

*“What **one thing** do you think Qualifications Scotland needs to do to improve how it works with you?”*

Figure 14c: What Qualifications Scotland Needs to Do to Improve How It Works with Parents/Carers (Unprompted) - Parents/Carers



From Figure 14c, it can be seen that, amongst **parents/carers** in Phase 2, **primary** unprompted mention was made here of Qualifications Scotland needing to improve how it works with parents/carers through:

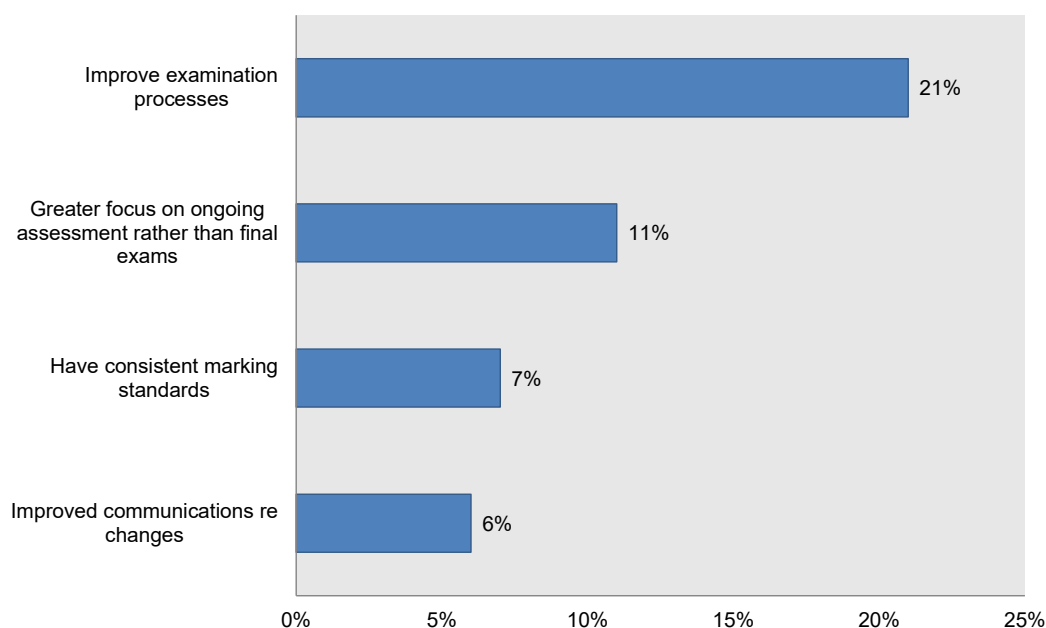
- Communicating the change from SQA to Qualifications Scotland (29%)
- Engaging more with parents/carers (23%)

Thereafter, Figure 14c indicates that **some unprompted reference** was made here to ‘providing more information to parents/carers’ (10%).

It should be noted that further examination of the data indicated no notable variances on the basis of the year group of a respondent's child and that there were no notable variances in the responses provided by parents/carers in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

*“What **one thing** do you think Qualifications Scotland needs to do to improve how it works with you?”*

Figure 14d: What Qualifications Scotland Needs to Do to Improve How It Works with Learners (Unprompted) - Learners



Base: All Respondents

From Figure 14d, it can be seen that, amongst **learners** in Phase 2, **primary unprompted mention** was made of Qualifications Scotland needing to improve how it works with learners through ‘improving examination processes’ (21%), with this being to a far greater extent than in Phase 1 (2%).

It should be noted that further examination of the data here indicated no notable variances on the basis of the year group of a respondent.

Figure 14d also notes a number of **other unprompted responses** here, including Qualifications Scotland having ‘a greater focus on ongoing assessment rather than final exams’ (11%).

It should also be stressed that this outcome and the two others noted in Figure 14d exhibited no notable variances between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

“On a scale from 1 to 10, where ‘1’ is ‘to no extent’ and ‘10’ is ‘to a great extent’, to what extent do you trust Qualifications Scotland to consult and engage with learners, teachers, lecturers and other stakeholders to create new qualifications?”

Figure 15: Extent of Trust that Qualifications Scotland Will Consult and Engage with Learners, Teachers, Lecturers and Other Stakeholders to Create New Qualifications - Average Scores

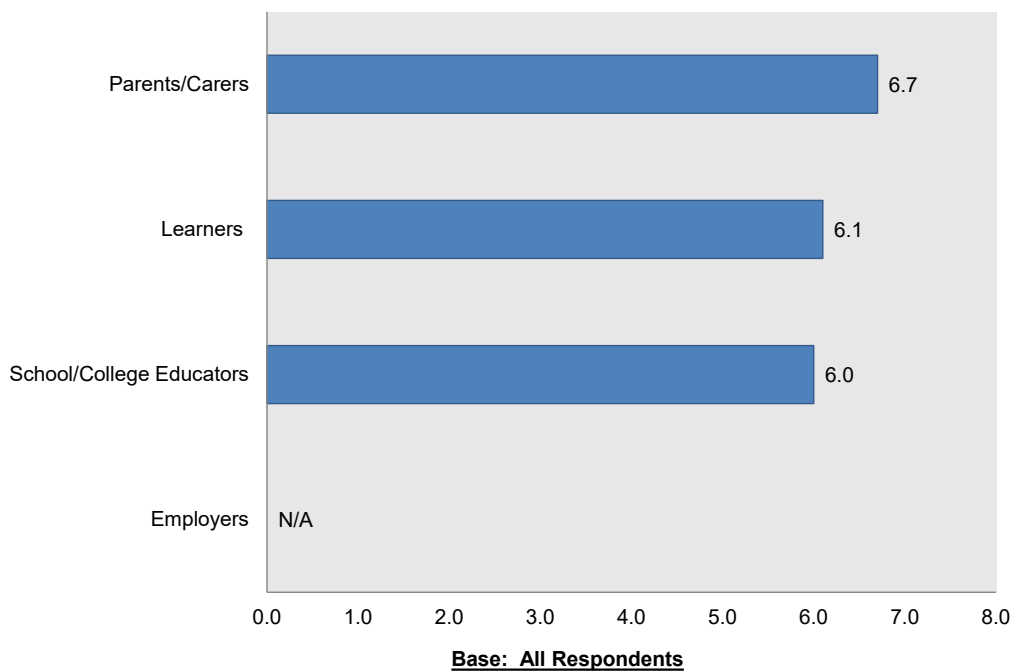


Figure 15 notes the average scores in Phase 2 for parents/carers, learners and educators in schools/colleges in terms of the extent to which they trust that Qualifications Scotland will consult and engage with learners, teachers, lecturers and other stakeholders to create new qualifications and indicates that the average score was highest amongst parents/ carers, ie:

- Parents/carers (6.7 out of a possible 10)
- Learners (6.1)
- Educators in schools/colleges (6.0)

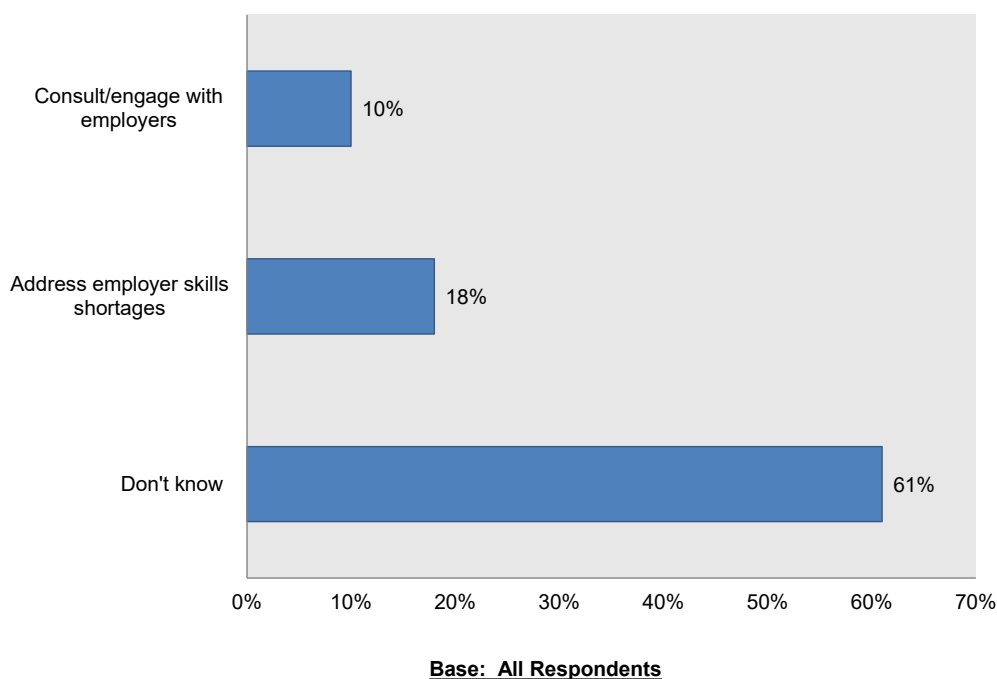
Further examination of the data indicated that educators in colleges noted a higher average score than those in secondary schools (6.8 compared to 5.2).

It should be noted that the average score here for educators in schools/colleges was greater in Phase 2 than in Phase 1 (ie 6.0 compared to 5.2).

It should also be noted that it was not possible to provide an average score for employers here due to the extremely large proportion who provided a ‘can’t say’ response to this question.

“How can Qualifications Scotland better support industry needs?”

Figure 16: How Can Qualifications Scotland Better Support Industry Needs? (Unprompted) - Employers



From Figure 16, it can be seen that three out of five employers in Phase 2 (61%) felt unable to express an opinion with regard to how

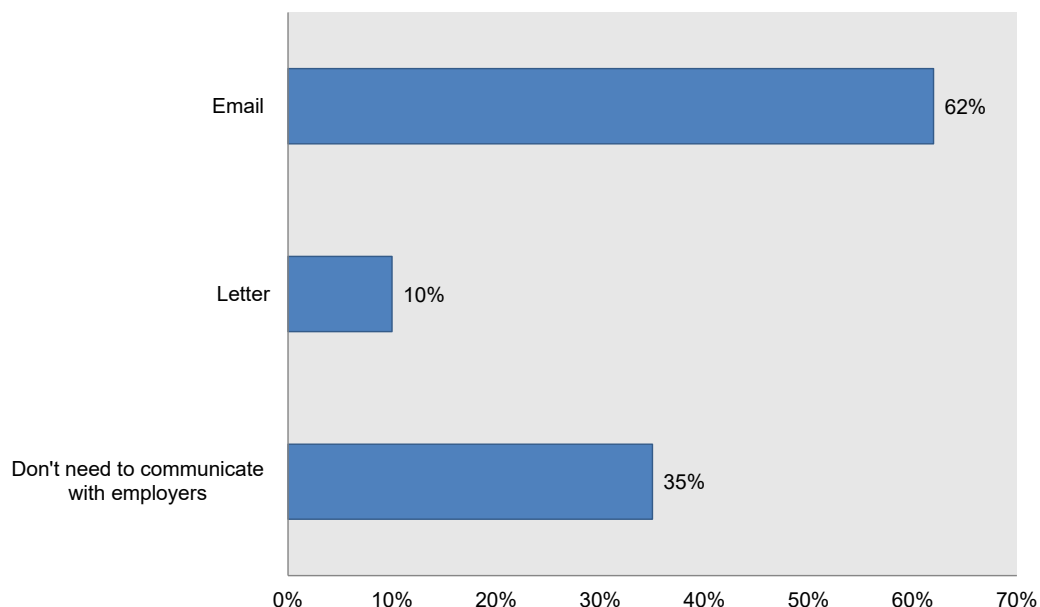
Qualifications Scotland could better support industry needs, with the only unprompted outcomes of any note being those of:

- Addressing employer skills shortages (18%)
- Consulting and engaging more with employers (10%)

It should be noted that this question was only asked of employers and was not asked of any of the other audiences.

“What would be the best ways for Qualifications Scotland to communicate with you?”

Figure 17: Best Ways for Qualifications Scotland to Communicate with Employers? (Unprompted) - Employers



Base: All Respondents

Figure 17 indicates that employers in Phase 2 **primarily** made unprompted reference to ‘emails’ being the best way for Qualifications Scotland to communicate with them (62%).

Thereafter, **some mention** was made here of ‘letters’ (10%).

It is also of interest to note that over a third of employers (35%) stated that 'Qualifications Scotland doesn't need to communicate with employers'.

Again, it should be noted that this question was asked for the first time in Phase 2 and was only asked of employers.

6.0 KEY OUTCOMES

6.1 The Scottish Government's Plans for Qualifications and Assessment Reform

- Educators are most likely to be aware of plans for qualifications and assessment reform, with employers least likely to do so.
- The best levels of understanding of qualifications and assessment reform are amongst learners and educators
- Educators, employers, parents/carers and learners would all like to find out more about the reforms, whilst employers and learners have notable desires to find out more details about the reform changes
- Educators and learners would most commonly approach Qualifications Scotland if they wanted to find out more about the reforms, with parents/carers and learners most likely to approach a child's school/own school
- In terms of making sure that the reforms are a success, educators felt that this should focus on consultation and engagement with educators, employers felt this was about delivering qualifications that industry needs, parents/carers didn't have any strong views in this regard and learners having a primary focus on ongoing assessment rather than final exams
- Parents/carers primarily want learners to achieve good/high level of skills

6.2 Attitudes About Qualifications and Assessment

- Educators believe there should be more ways for learners to show their skills and knowledge, that courses that are graded are more credible and that they know enough about qualifications and pathways available to learners

- Employers are in favour of learners being assessed in the same way if they do the same course, that graded courses are more credible and the Scottish qualification system is flexible enough
- Parents/carers are in favour of all courses are split into smaller parts and believe that there should be more ways for learners to show their skills/knowledge and that learners' grades should be based more on internal assessments that their teachers mark
- Learners believe that there should be more ways for them to show their skills and knowledge and that graded courses are more credible

6.3 Views About Qualifications Scotland

- The four audiences believed that Qualifications Scotland could work more effectively with them in the following ways:
 - Educators: better communicating changes to them
 - Employers: by improving its website
 - Parents/carers: better communicating the changes to them and engaging more with them
 - Learners: improving examination processes
- Most parents/carers, learners and educators trust Qualifications Scotland to consult and engage with a range of audiences to create new qualifications