✗SQA

Research, Insight and Analysis
Briefing Paper

Prepared by	███████████

Educational Professionals Survey – SQA Website, SQA Connect, and SQA Secure

Contents

Introduction

RIA disseminated a survey exploring educational professionals' views on SQA's website and digital estate at the end of February 2021. This paper highlights the findings.

Timing

Date disseminated: Thursday 18 February 2021 to pulse survey participants and Thursday 25 February 2021 to other participants

Date closed: Monday 15 March 2021

Response

Number of completed responses: **443**

Number of completed pulse survey responses: **405**

Distributed to **1,072** pulse survey respondents (not including emails which bounced back etc)

Pulse survey response rate (from invitations): **38%**

This survey was open and anonymous and, after the pulse survey week, was forwarded on to other participants via SQA News, regional managers, operations staff, and the Scottish Training Federation newsletter. We cannot calculate the overall response rate as we do not know how many individuals the survey was sent on to.

Results

What sort of educational institution do you primarily work at?

The majority (87%) of survey respondents worked in a secondary school, while a further 9% worked in a college.
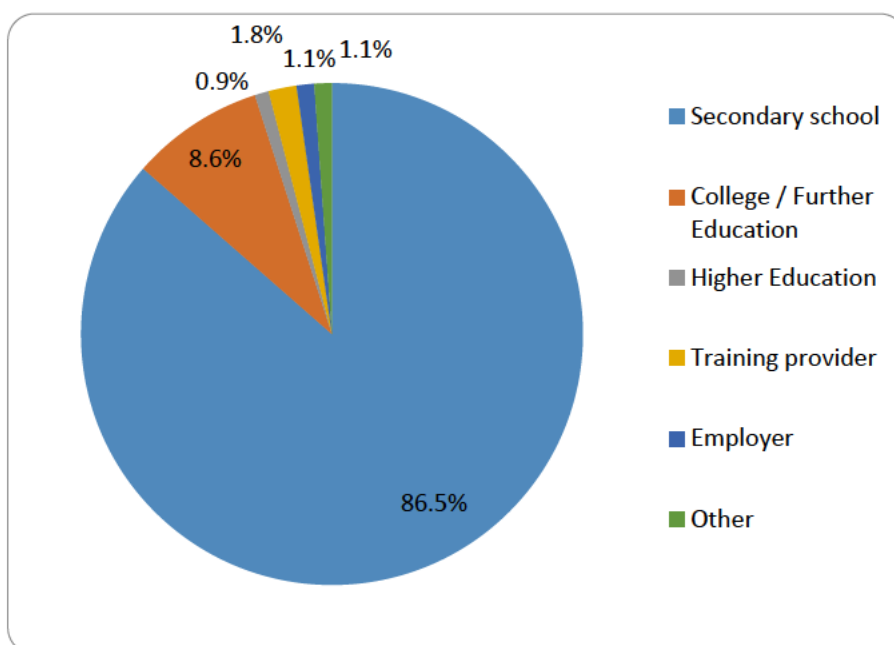
Are you an SQA co-ordinator?

Only 29 respondents (7%) were SQA co-ordinators.

Are you an SQA appointee?

Half of the respondents were SQA appointees.

## Is your role within your institution designated as primarily teaching-based or administrative?

A total of 86% of respondents were teaching staff, 7% were administrative staff, and 8% were those whose role was split between teaching and administration.

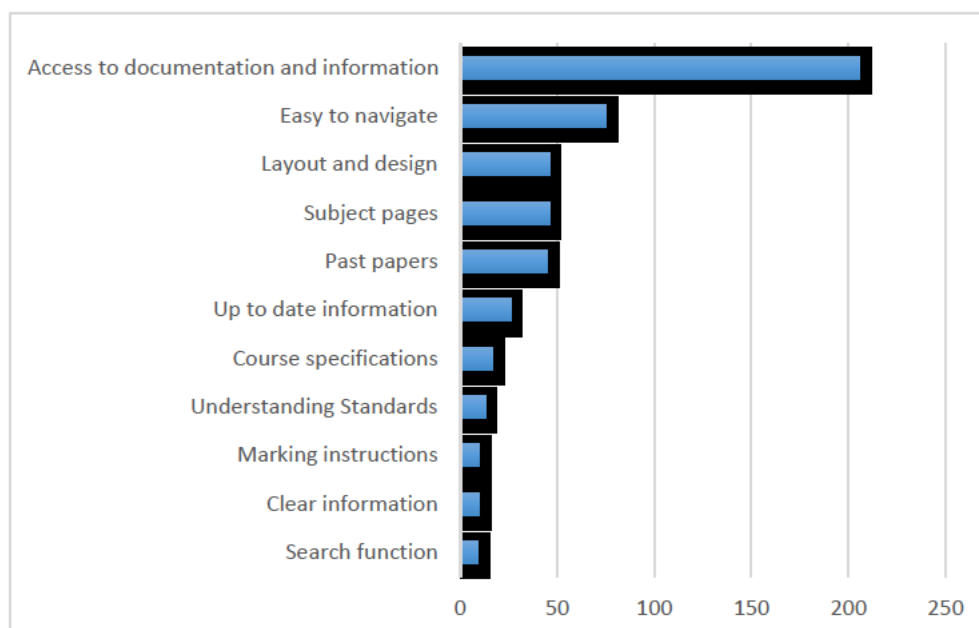**Research, Insight and Analysis**

Briefing

SQA Website

How would you rate the SQA website on a scale of 1 to 5?

When asked how they would rate SQA's website on a scale of 1 to 5, three-quarters of respondents chose 3 or 4.

Rating scale chart:
- 5 (Best): 4%
- 4: 36%
- 3: 40%
- 2: 16%
- 1 (Worst): 5%
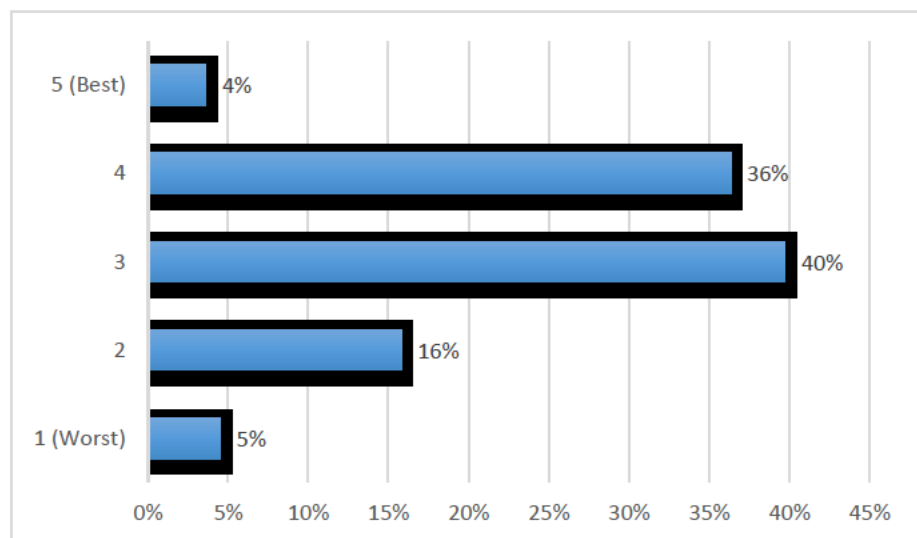
What are the best things about the SQA website?

When asked for the best things about the SQA website, 366 respondents submitted comments. However, 15 of these said 'nothing'. This was a free-text response, but respondents' comments have been sorted into themes. Those themes mentioned most frequently are shown in the chart below.

Themes chart (approximate values):
- Access to documentation and information: ~210
- Easy to navigate: ~80
- Layout and design: ~50
- Subject pages: ~50
- Past papers: ~50
- Up to date information: ~30
- Course specifications: ~20
- Understanding Standards: ~15
- Marking instructions: ~10
- Clear information: ~10
- Search function: ~10

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Briefing

More than 200 respondents cited access to documentation and information as the best thing about the website. While this encompassed a wide range of resources, specific mentions were frequently made of past papers, marking instructions, course specifications, and Understanding Standards.

Clearly laid out, easy to see links which are well broken down to identify the first stage of what you are looking for.

A number of participants thought that the website was most useful as a source of up-to-date information, particularly subject-specific information.

Several respondents also remarked that the website and its navigation had improved in recent years.

The word cloud below shows the words most frequently cited by respondents when asked for the best things about the website.

What are the worst things about the SQA website?

A total of 391 respondents submitted free-text responses when asked for the worst things about the SQA website. Again, these responses were categorised by theme, shown in the chart below. It should be noted that 15 respondents said that they could cite 'nothing' as the worst thing about the website.
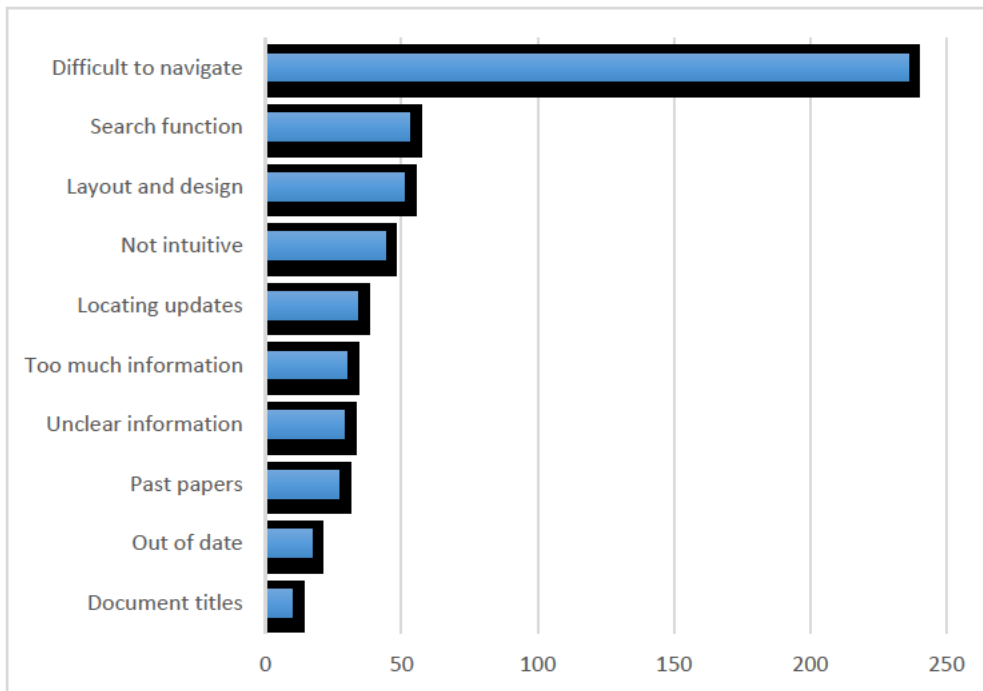
The most frequently cited concern, mentioned by 236 respondents, was that the website is difficult to navigate. Many participants, while generally acknowledging that the website had to have a lot of information on it, found it difficult to locate the information they needed easily. Many respondents stated that they found the search function lacking and that exact terms were required to return the correct information.

> *Very difficult to navigate. Particularly difficult to find subject updates and documents.*

> *Ironically, there's almost too much. Because of the many different levels and courses, it can be a bit of a hunt to find stuff and the search option isn't always that helpful.*

> *Searches don't often take you easily to the information you are seeking.*

This tied in with those who complained that the site is not intuitive or that the layout itself was not helpful. Some of the comments about layout and design were concerns that the website and SQA Secure were separate and that it was not clear where information could be located. Moreover, a number of respondents were unhappy that access to SQA Secure was through SQA co-ordinators.

The comments about past papers were generally that either they were difficult to locate or that there should be more (and older) past papers available on the site.

Not noted on the chart, there were also a few mentions of the use of jargon, repetitive information, the website being slow, documents being removed from the site, and the use of PDFs.

The word cloud below shows the words most frequently cited by respondents when asked for the worst things about the website.
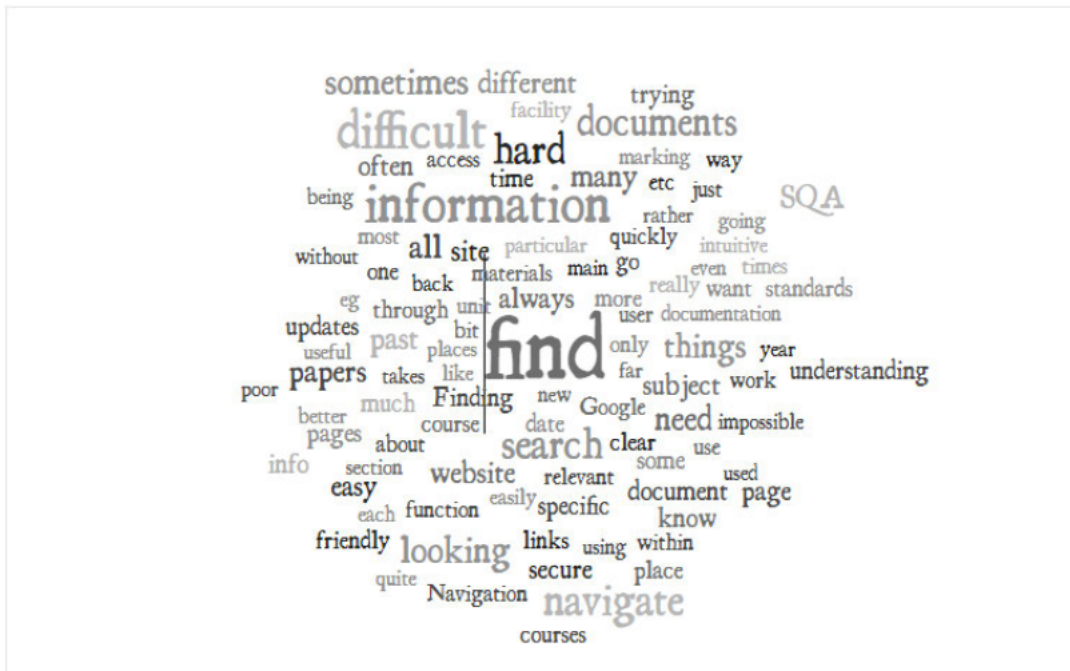
Thinking about the most recent time you used the SQA website, how easy was it to find what you were looking for?

Respondents had a range of experiences when looking for information on the website.

On their most recent use of the website, 42% had found what they were looking very or fairly easily, but 36% had found it fairly or very difficult.

Very easy	16%
Fairly easy	26%
Not too difficult	22%
Fairly difficult	27%
Very difficult	9%
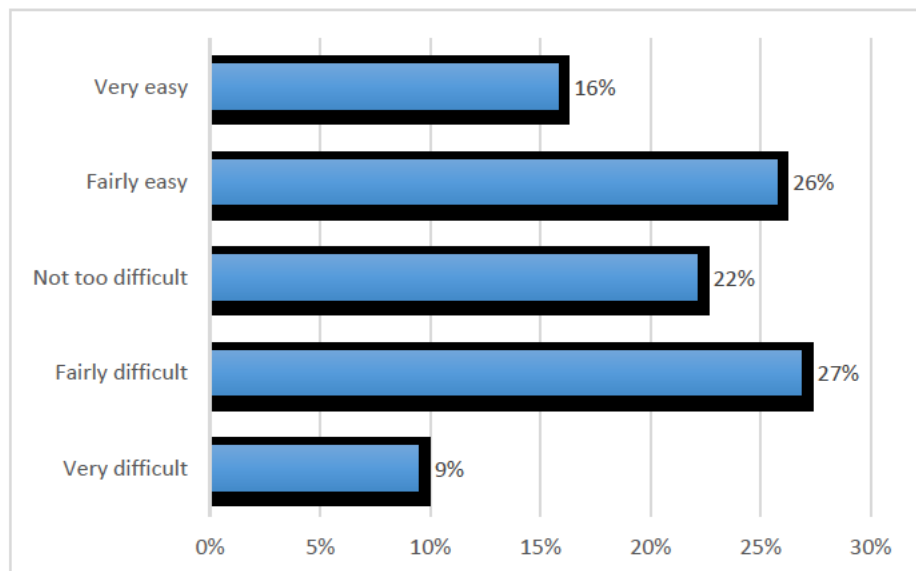
What were you looking for?

When asked what they had been looking for the last time they used the website, 188 respondents said subject-specific information.

Past papers, Understanding Standards materials, and marking instructions were specifically mentioned on a number of occasions.
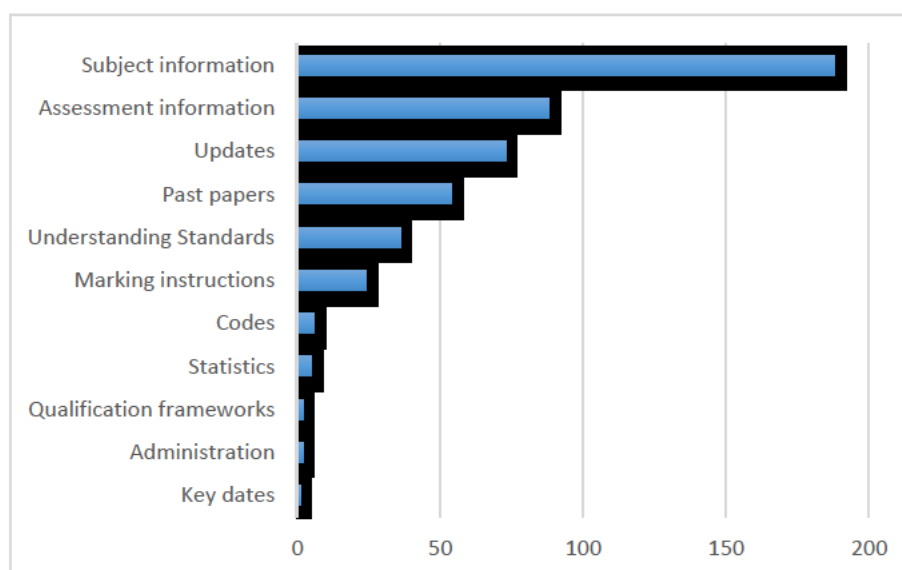
Moreover, 88 respondents said that they had been looking for information and guidance on assessment, particularly around the 2021 alternative certification model (ACM). On a related note, 73 respondents had been looking for updates, again, particularly around the 2021 ACM.

How could SQA make this easier for you to find?

When respondents were asked what SQA could do to make finding this information easier, 66 said 'nothing'. However, there were 324 other suggestions. These have been categorised and are shown in the table below.

Theme	Mentions	Theme	Mentions
All subject information in one place	55	Better differentiation of user types	5
Improved search function	39	Remove duplication	5
More intuitive navigation	37	Modernise	4
Highlight updates	32	Older past papers	4
Simplify	22	Subject pages on main page	4
Better links	21	Access to SQA Secure	3
Clearer menus	15	Do not remove old documents	3
Prioritise documents based on popularity	15	More prominence for non-NQ	3
Better signposting	13	A-Z	2
Remove jargon	11	Consistency	2
Straightforward document titles	10	Personalisation	2
Email teachers	8	SQA app	1
Remove out of date documents	7	Training	1

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Briefing

The suggestions encompassed a range of areas, but the most common request was that all subject information is accessible in one place.

Everything in one place - some things are in understanding standards, other in the main subject pages.

Have the information on a subject all on one and if materials are sensitive have that password protected.

There have been improvements recently with better organisation of information on subject pages. Continuing to do this in future would be helpful.

There were also a range of requests that the search function be upgraded, that navigation be more intuitive, and that signposting, links, and layout are improved.

A number of respondents thought that updates should be highlighted more clearly.

Make it clearer when different documents were updated - eg make the last update time bold or highlight documents red if they have been updated in the past month.

Maybe something to highlight where the latest document is maybe by a different colour or a tag beside the bit to click.

Was the information easy to understand?

A significant majority of respondents (80%) said that the information they accessed had been easy to understand. However, 89 respondents said it had not been easy to understand.

Why was it difficult to understand?

Those 89 respondents were invited to say why the information had been difficult to understand, and 83 did submit a comment.

More than half of these respondents thought that the information they had accessed was unclear or vague.

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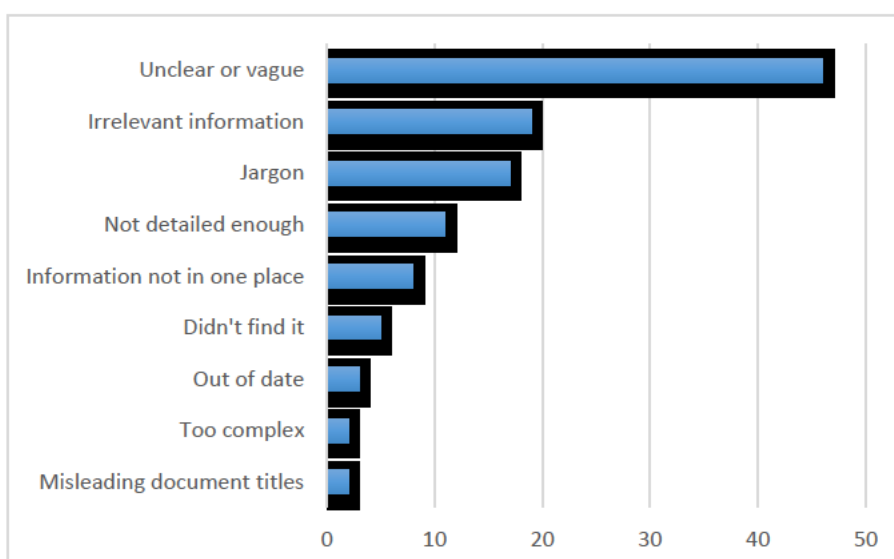
It is the usual SQA "information" - a lot of words saying nothing at all.

It is always written in long winded format.

Often find there are contradictions or ambiguities that are open to interpretation.

There were also concerns about the use of 'SQA jargon' and of respondents having to wade through too much irrelevant information to find what they were looking for. Others mentioned out of date information and all the required information not being available in the one place.
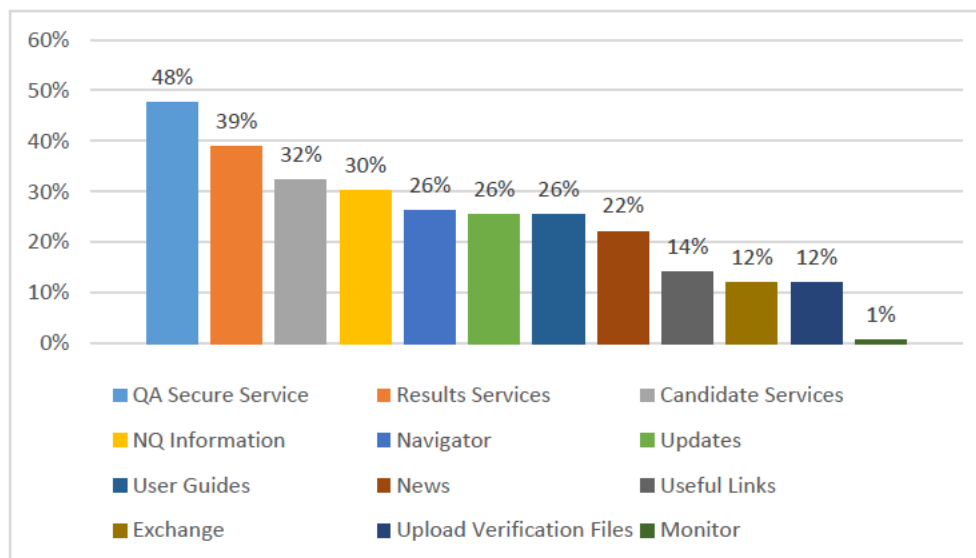
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SQA Connect

Have you used SQA Connect?

Of the survey participants, 145 out of 443 (33%) had used SQA Connect.

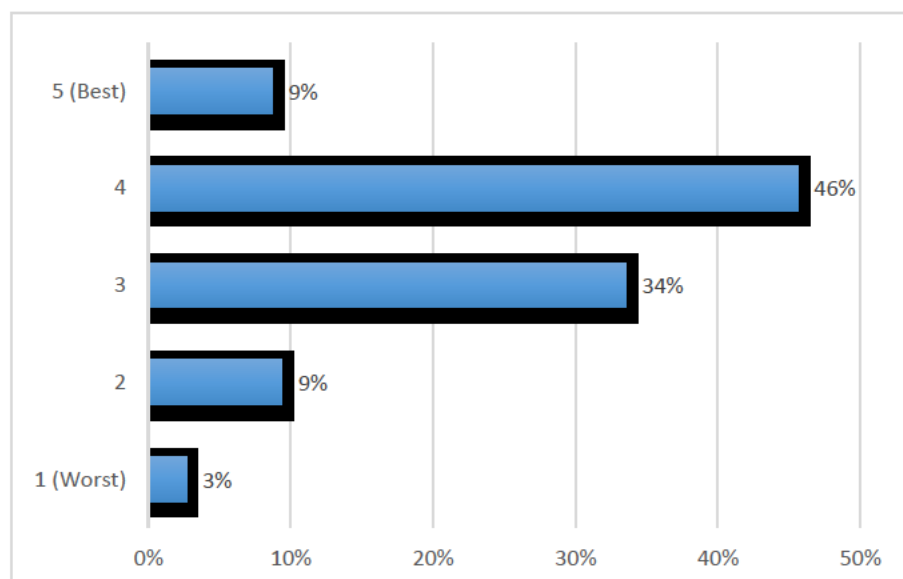## Which resources on SQA Connect do you use?

Those 145 respondents were asked which resources on SQA Connect they use.

The most used resources on SQA Connect were QA Secure Service, Results Services, and Candidate Services.

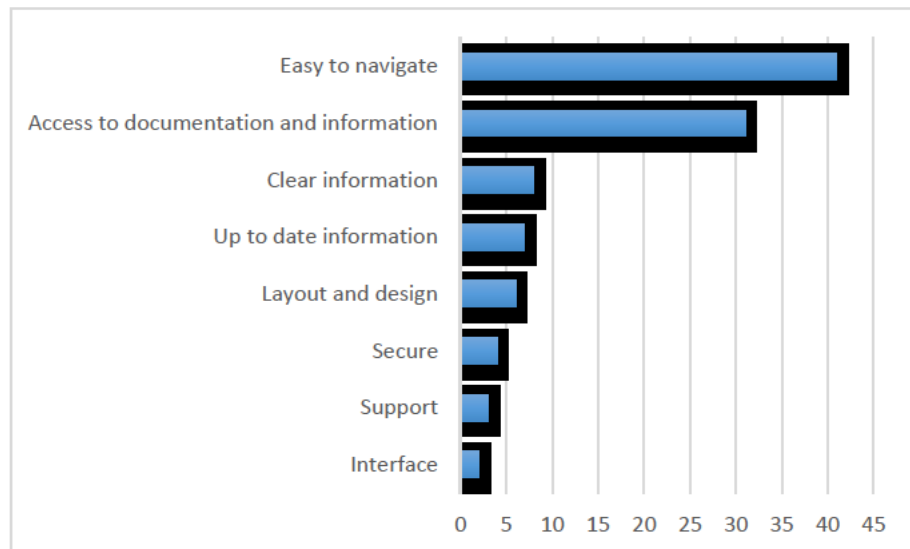## How would you rate SQA Connect on a scale of 1 to 5?

When asked to rate SQA Connect on a scale of 1 to 5, more than half of the respondents chose 4 or 5.

What are the best things about SQA Connect?

While six respondents suggested that they could not answer what was best about SQA Connect, 41 said that it was easy to navigate and 31 said that they appreciated access to comprehensive information.

Access to up-to-date information was also deemed important by a number of participants.

Easy to navigate (~42)
Access to documentation and information (~31)
Clear information (~8)
Up to date information (~7)
Layout and design (~6)
Secure (~4)
Support (~4)
Interface (~3)

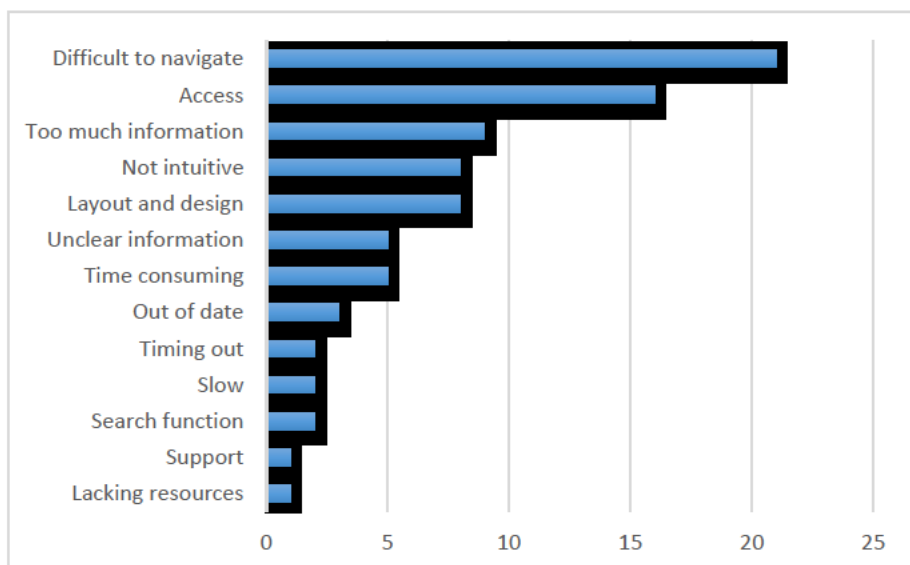(Scale: 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45)

There were a few comments that compared SQA Connect favourably with the SQA website in terms of usability.

What are the worst things about SQA Connect?

Eight respondents said that there was nothing they would identify as the worst thing about SQA Connect.

Of the others, 21 suggested that it was difficult to navigate, along with eight who thought it was not intuitive.

Eight respondents also cited perceived issues with the

Difficult to navigate (~21)
Access (~16)
Too much information (~9)
Not intuitive (~8)
Layout and design (~8)
Unclear information (~5)
Time consuming (~5)
Out of date (~3)
Timing out (~2)
Slow (~2)
Search function (~2)
Support (~1)
**Lacking resources** (~1)

(Scale: 0 5 10 15 20 25)

layout and design of SQA Connect. There were also concerns about there being too much information on SQA Connect or that information was not always clear.

Of the 16 respondents who said that the worst thing about SQA Connect was access, several mentioned that they struggled with the password and encountered difficulty with re-setting it if required.

Thinking about the most recent time you used SQA Connect, how easy was it to accomplish the task that you visited the site to complete?

58% of respondents thought that accomplishing the task they last visited SQA Connect for was very easy or fairly easy.

Very easy: 19%
Fairly easy: 39%
Not too difficult: 28%
Fairly difficult: 9%
Very difficult: 5%
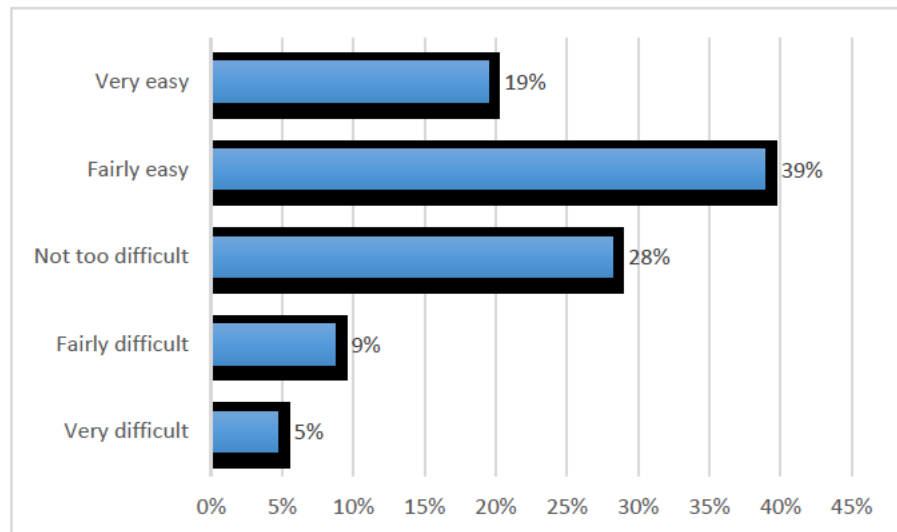
What could SQA do to make using SQA Connect easier?

There were 40 suggestions of how SQA Connect could be made easier to use.

Twelve of these suggestions were around functionality, including new ways of creating reports, uploading information, and making changes.

Six respondents requested more intuitive navigation. A further six made related suggestions around layout and design, including in some cases a more user-friendly interface and better visuals and menus.

Six respondents thought that a better log-in process would make SQA Connect easier to use.
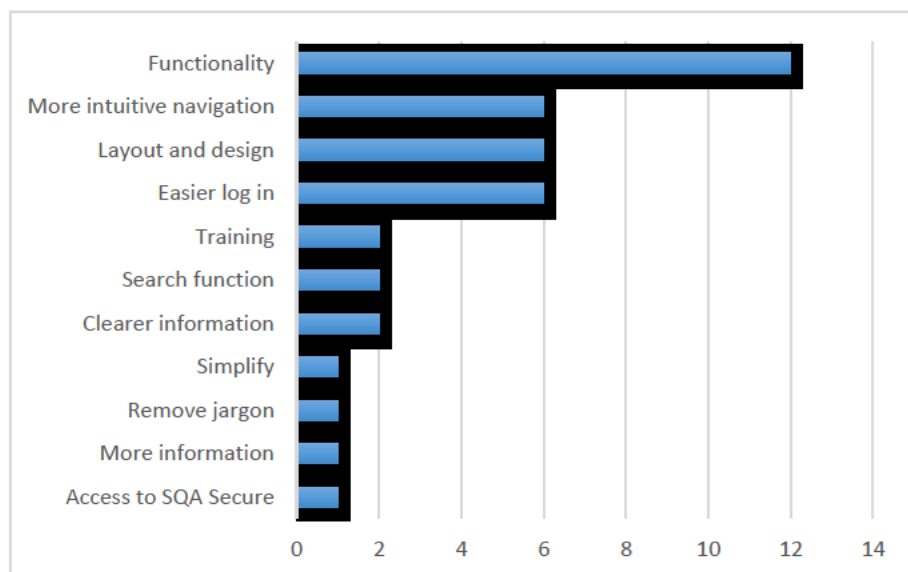
SQA Secure

Have you used SQA Secure?

Of the survey participants, 340 out of 443 (77%) had used SQA Secure.

How would you rate SQA Secure on a scale of 1 to 5?

There were 342 responses to this question which means two people who stated they had not used SQA Secure have still rated the site.

When asked to rate SQA Secure on a scale of 1 to 5, more than half of the respondents (74%) chose 3 or 4.

Rating	Percentage
5 (Best)	8%
4	37%
3	37%
2	14%
1 (Worst)	5%
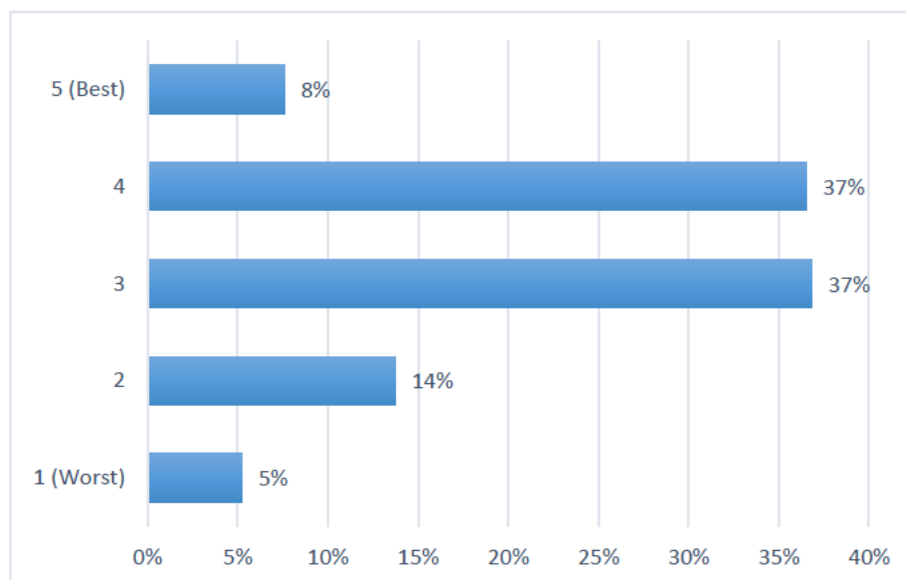
What are the best things about SQA Secure?

Comments were submitted by 255 respondents, however, 28 said 'nothing' or did not provide a relevant comment.

When asked for the best things about SQA Secure, 138 respondents reported liking access to the documentation and information, with

Category	Value
Access to documentation and information	138
Easy to navigate	68
Layout and design	21
Secure	15
Up to date information	4

specific mention being made of assessment-related materials in a number of cases. Ease of navigation was reported by 68 respondents, while 21 appreciated the layout and design of the site.
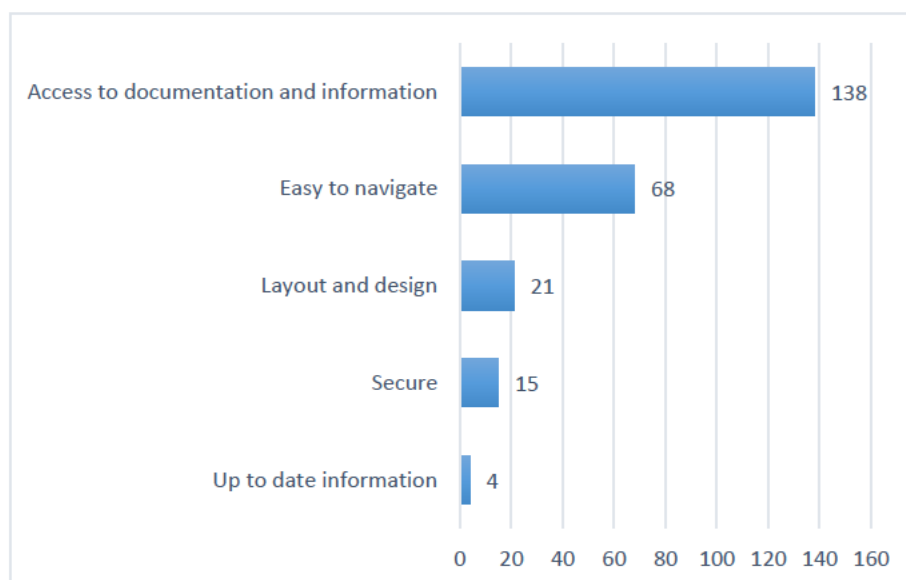
What are the worst things about SQA Secure?

Comments were submitted by 270 respondents, however, 26 said 'nothing' or did not provide a relevant comment.

Theme	Mentions	Theme	Mentions
Difficult to navigate/not intuitive	**101**	**Content**	**72**
		Out of date content/not updated enough	22
Layout/design	**79**	Lack of/missing content	18
Organisation of content	24	Unclear labelling/document titles	9
Dated/clunky design	10	Format of content	5
Difficult to find/identify updated content	8	Content not personalised/relevant	4
Too many lists	7	Documents removed unnecessarily	4
Cluttered/too much information	6	Quality of content	4
Different sites	5	Too many versions of documents	4
General layout	5	Use of jargon	2
Too many levels	5		
Unclear menus/signposting	5	**General**	
Complicated	2	Restricted access	23
Font	2	Log-in/access process	14
		Slow	11
		Reliability	10
		Search function	7
		Inconsistency	3

The theme mentioned most by respondents was difficulty navigating the site, with 101 respondents stating they found it hard to find what they were looking for.

Convoluted ways to access materials and then enormous lists of materials with no detailed descriptions. Have to open 8 docs to find what you are looking for.

Finding specific material especially at present is difficult – items are not clearly accessible – understanding standards materials – it is more by luck than good management some items are found.

Can't find anything you want! It's a minefield.

Respondents also reported issues with the layout and design of the site, particularly the organisation of content which was mentioned 24 times. Some respondents raised the frustration of materials not being logically grouped together.

The way it is laid out, I want all documents for my subject in one section of the website, having to got [sic] to different bits for understanding standards etc is really frustrating.

The fact that you have to visit several different parts to find what you need from the NQ page to the Understanding Standards page. I don't see why all the materials for a specific subject cant be linked from subject area.

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Issues regarding content on the site were also highlighted: 22 respondents mentioned content being out of date or not updated regularly enough and 18 respondents reported a lack of content or missing content, with several of these looking for more examples to be provided.
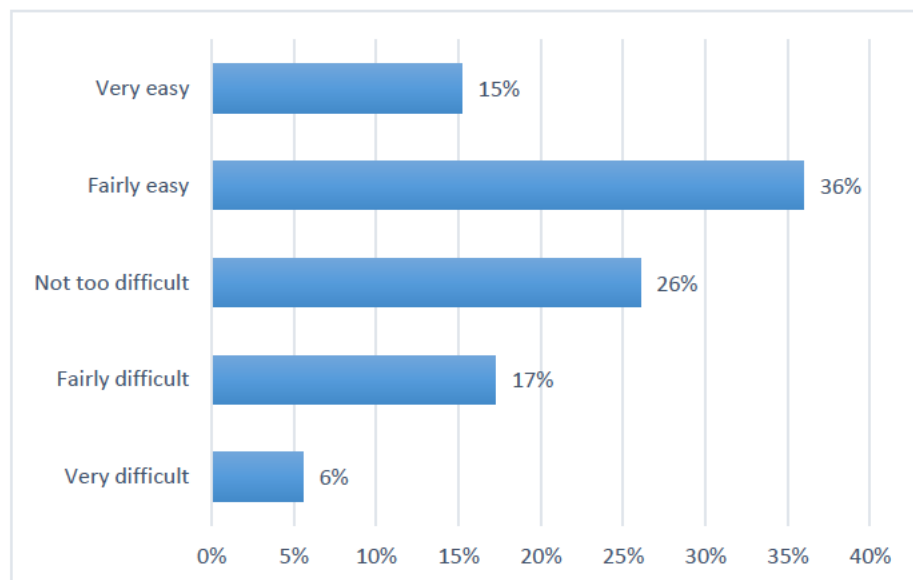
The restricted nature of access to SQA Secure was raised by 23 respondents, particularly the difficulties caused by the fact that only certain individuals have a password:

As a Faculty lead I have to go through our SQA Coordinator every time I want something from the Secure Site. This is often difficult as I do not know what to ask for as often new things are posted and I want to peruse at my leisure.

Not every teacher has access so you have to make arrangements to ask nicely to get access. That is ridiculous - absolutely shocking in fact as every teacher needs to have access to it. Trust us as professionals.

Thinking about the most recent time you used SQA Secure, how easy was it to accomplish the task that you visited the site to complete?

There were 342 responses to this question. Just over half of the respondents (51%) thought that accomplishing the task they last visited SQA Secure for was very easy or fairly easy.

Very easy	15%
Fairly easy	36%
Not too difficult	26%
Fairly difficult	17%
Very difficult	6%

Research, Insight and Analysis

Briefing

What could SQA do to make using SQA Secure easier?

Comments were submitted by 227 respondents, however, 39 said 'nothing' or did not provide a relevant comment. All responses that were mentioned more than once are listed in the table in descending order.

The theme most reported by respondents was improving the organisation of site content, which was mentioned 47 times, with 18 of these responses requesting all subject-related information be grouped together in one place.

Respondents also suggested that improving the layout and design of the site, making the navigation more intuitive and making access to the site easier would make using SQA Secure easier overall. As would be expected, these top reported themes reflect the main issues raised earlier by respondents.

Theme	Mentions
Improve organisation of content	47
Improve layout/design generally	26
More intuitive navigation	24
Easier access	22
Clearer menus/headings	16
Improve search function	13
Clearer document titles	11
Highlight updated content	10
Declutter/simplify	10
Increase range of content	9
Remove out of date content	9
Improve links	8
More regular updates	7
Improve reliability	6
Modernise	5
Improve signposting	4
Improve quality of content	4
Same design across SQA sites	4
Provide a help/tutorial function	3
Remove duplicate documents	3
Remove jargon	3
Have only one site	3
Improve integration with other SQA sites	2
Improve consistency	2

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Briefing

General

Where would you prefer to access an online version of the SQA Co-ordinators' Guide?

Of the 329 respondents who answered this question, the majority (76%) had no preference regarding the location of an online SQA Co-ordinators' Guide, when given the choice of SQA Secure or SQA Connect.
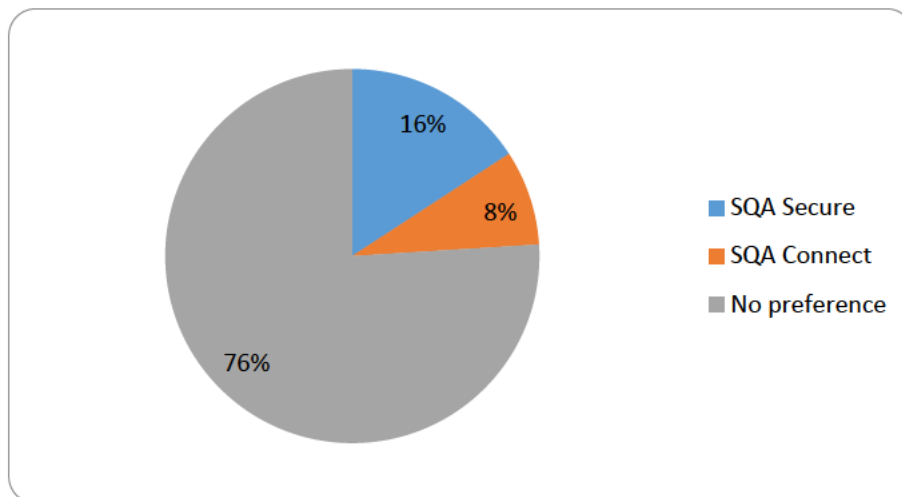
However, of the 27 respondents who were SQA Co-ordinators, three said they would prefer to access the guide through SQA Secure, eight had no preference, and 16 would like to access it through SQA Connect.

Overall comments or suggestions about SQA's websites and what would improve them

This request for further comments was answered by 169 respondents, however, 19 said 'nothing' or did not provide a relevant comment.

There were 15 positive comments which mainly related to the sites being easy enough to use and containing useful information. The remaining comments reflected the themes reported previously and highlighted issues or suggestions for improvement. In summary, respondents would like to see sites that are simplified and easier to navigate, with a clear layout and well organised, relevant content.