

Background Information for:  
Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs, and  
Applied General qualifications in England  
– Wave 20

An Ofqual commissioned report

April 2022

Ofqual/22/6920/2

**YouGov<sup>®</sup>**

---

## Contents

Introduction .....	5
Background.....	5
Context .....	5
Geographical coverage.....	6
Related statistics and publications.....	6
User feedback.....	6
Project objectives .....	6
Methods and data limitations.....	7
Overview of method.....	7
Sampling .....	7
Survey design.....	8
Composite confidence measure.....	8
Guidance on analysis.....	9
Section-specific background information .....	10
Section 1: Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2021.....	10
Section 2: Composite confidence measure of qualifications in general .....	10
Section 3: General perceptions of GCSEs .....	10
Section 4: General perceptions of A levels.....	10
Section 5: General perceptions of Applied General qualifications .....	10
Section 6: The review of marking and moderation, and appeals process for GCSEs and A levels ...	10
Section 7: Special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSE and A level qualifications.	11
Section 8: Malpractice for GCSE and A level qualifications.....	11
Section 9: Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications.....	11
Section 10: Malpractice for Applied General qualifications.....	11
Section 11: Innovations .....	11
Glossary.....	12
Applied General qualifications: .....	12
Base size: .....	12
Effective base: .....	12
General qualifications: .....	12
Marking: .....	12
Sample frame: .....	12
Statistically significant:.....	12
Vocational and technical qualifications:.....	12

Weighting: .....	13
Appendix A – Technical report.....	14
Weighting .....	14
Head teachers and teachers sample .....	14
Public, parents and young people’s samples .....	17
Employer sample .....	20
HEI sample .....	21
Appendix B – Survey .....	23
Text.....	23
Text.....	23
Question .....	23
Text.....	23
Question .....	24
Text.....	24
Question .....	24
Text.....	25
Question .....	25
Question .....	25
Text.....	25
Question .....	26
Question .....	26
Text.....	27
Question .....	27
Text.....	27
Question .....	27
Text.....	28
Question .....	28
Text.....	29
Question .....	29
Question .....	29
Text.....	30
Question .....	30
Text.....	30
Question .....	30
Text.....	31
Question .....	31

Text.....	32
Text.....	32
Question .....	32
Text.....	33
Question .....	33
Question .....	33
Text.....	34
Question .....	34
Question .....	34
Text.....	34
Question .....	35
Text.....	35
Question .....	35
Question .....	36
Text.....	36
Question .....	36
Text.....	37
Question .....	37

## Introduction

### Background

This document accompanies the findings of wave 20 (2021 to 2022) of the General Qualifications Perceptions Survey and should be read alongside the [Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and Applied General qualifications in England – wave 20](#) report. This project was commissioned by Ofqual and managed by YouGov. The design template for charts used in the report was provided by Ofqual.

### Context

Ofqual regulates general and vocational and technical qualifications in England. Ofqual collects and utilises perceptions of qualifications and the qualifications system from the range of stakeholders that work with and use the qualifications.

Ofqual has continued (the survey was originally commissioned by the QCA in 2003) to annually collect teachers', parents', students', the general public's, employers', and higher education institutions (HEIs)' perceptions of the AS and A level examination system and, since wave 4 (2005), perceptions of the GCSE system. Starting in wave 16 (2017), the research has also assessed perceptions of Applied General qualifications and from wave 20 (2022), the reference to AS levels was removed due to small and declining entry numbers for AS levels. This large-scale survey is unique in providing a wide overview of perceptions of general and applied general qualifications from the users of these qualifications.

The first part of the survey focussed on eight measures of confidence in the GCSE and A level system. These measures have all been asked in directly comparable ways since wave 13, allowing for comparisons of up to seven years to be made. The previous 5 years of data are reported in the [wave 20 report](#). Since wave 16, the survey was expanded to collect data on the same eight measures for Applied General qualifications as well. The data from these measures have been analysed collectively to form a composite measure of confidence in GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications that can be tracked in future waves.

The second part of the survey asked a series of questions on different topics covering:

- The review of marking, moderation and appeals against results<sup>1</sup> for GCSEs and A levels;
- Special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSEs and A levels; malpractice for GCSEs, A levels, and Applied General qualifications; and
- Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications; and innovations in administering assessments onscreen.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the resulting public health restrictions since March 2020 has had a multitude of impacts on the education sector in England. For significant parts of 2020 and in early 2021, schools and colleges in England were closed for most pupils, exceptions being vulnerable children and children of critical workers, and there was a shift to remote and online

---

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter known as 'the appeals process'

learning. Given the unusual and unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, the summer 2020 and 2021 exam series in England did not go ahead. In 2021 students were assessed only on the content they had been taught and grades were determined by teachers (teacher-assessed grades) following guidance from awarding organisations and based on a range of evidence, including: in-class tests, mock exam results and non-exam assessment. Those grades were quality assured and awarded by exam boards. Due to exams not taking place in 2021, there were no reviews of marking or moderation as students' work was neither marked nor moderated by exam boards given the different arrangements in place. Furthermore, whilst Ofqual and exam boards normally use a range of tools to secure consistent standards between students and over time, it was not possible to use the same approaches in 2021 because exams did not take place. Additionally, there was an exceptional Autumn 2021 exam series to provide an opportunity for students who wanted to try and improve their teacher assessed grade, or who were not able to receive a teacher assessed grade, to sit examinations. Given the uniqueness of 2021, the survey included a 2021-specific section to gauge perceptions of GCSEs, A levels, and Applied General qualifications based solely on that year. The original questions, focusing on general perceptions of qualifications, were asked upfront in the survey, and respondents were informed that a 2021 section would follow later in the survey. These modifications were made to strengthen our ability to track key measures over time despite this exceptional year.

## Geographical coverage

Ofqual regulates general and vocational and technical qualifications in England. The focus of this project was to collect the perceptions of head teachers<sup>2</sup>, teachers, young people, parents, employers, HEIs and the general public in England. Samples of these groups were drawn from England.

## Related statistics and publications

A number of other statistical releases and publications relate to this one:

- [Statistics on key stage 4 results](#), including GCSEs published by the Department for Education
- [Statistics on the attainment of people aged 16 to 19 years](#), including exam results and performance tables published by the Department for Education
- [Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications in England](#)

## User feedback

Ofqual welcomes your comments or suggestions on this version of the Perceptions Survey and how to improve future versions. Please write to Ofqual at [data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk).

## Project objectives

The objectives of the project were to investigate head teachers<sup>2</sup>, teachers', students', parents', the general public's, employers', and HEIs':

---

<sup>2</sup> The head teachers sample consists of head teachers and deputy head teachers.

- Overall general perceptions and confidence in GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications and
- Perceptions of a number of topical aspects of the qualifications system for GCSEs, A levels, and Applied General qualifications<sup>3</sup>; and
- Perceptions of the qualifications system specific to 2021.

## Methods and data limitations

### Overview of method

Wave 20 of the Perceptions Survey was carried out by YouGov, on behalf of Ofqual. The survey was conducted online using YouGov's proprietary survey system. This mirrors the approach adopted since wave 13 (2014) of the Perceptions Survey.

The fieldwork was conducted between 15<sup>th</sup> November and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021, which is a comparable fieldwork period to waves 16, 17, 18 and 19.

### Sampling

The sampling of participants was designed with a view to achieving respondent samples that were representative of the wider population. Fuller details of this sampling procedure and its effectiveness are provided in Appendix A.

The final achieved sample for each of the target groups was as follows:

- 269 head teachers (including deputy head teachers<sup>3</sup>)
- 693 teachers of GCSE, A level and other and vocational and technical qualifications<sup>4</sup> offered to people aged 14 to 19 years (referred to throughout this report as teachers)
- 309 young people, defined as those aged 14 to 19 years who are studying and/or have studied and/or will study A levels and/or GCSEs and/or a qualification such as functional skills, Level 1/2 certificates (for example, Pearson Level 1/2 BTECs and OCR Cambridge National Certificates), Level 3 tech levels (for example, Pearson Level 3 BTECs and OCR Cambridge Technical Certificates) or Applied General qualifications
- 251 parents or carers of students who are taking or who have just taken A levels, GCSEs and/or other qualifications described above
- 253 academic professionals<sup>5</sup> who had knowledge about the process of offering applicants a place on an undergraduate course at their institution (referred to throughout this report as HEIs)

---

<sup>3</sup> Collectively referred to throughout the report as head teachers.

<sup>4</sup> Ofqual defines vocational qualifications as qualifications that are taught in schools and colleges that prepare students for a particular type of job.

<sup>5</sup> This sample consisted of academics and a small number of admissions staff. Please see Appendix A for a description of the sample profile.

- 252 senior or middle managers who worked for an organisation that has recruited young people (aged 16 to 25 years) in the past 12 months (referred to throughout this report as employers)
- 1,000 members of the public

The final achieved samples were structured to be representative of the relevant target populations (a full breakdown of the quotas and weighting can be found in Appendix A). We therefore conclude that, based upon the sampling procedures, the samples delivered for head teachers, teachers, the general public, parents, students, HEIs and employers were of high quality. While the sampling approach has aimed to identify groups of participants that are representative, given that a survey of this kind captures the views only of those involved, throughout this report, perceptions attributed to stakeholder groups (for example, teachers, parents etc.) are inferred from those who took part in the survey.

## **Survey design**

The wave 20 survey was designed in conjunction between Ofqual and YouGov. The survey covered themes explored in previous waves of the survey, namely, perceptions of qualifications and awareness of changes to the qualification system.

The design of the wave 20 survey was very similar to wave 19. A copy of the questions included in wave 20 of the Perceptions Survey is available in Appendix B.

To account for changes made to the A Level qualification system over recent years, for wave 20 the reference to 'AS Levels' was removed from the relevant questions due to small and declining entry numbers for AS levels. The survey pilot phase was used as an opportunity to assess whether this change would impact our ability to compare results over time. To carry this out, the pilot survey sample was split so that half saw 'AS / A levels' and half saw 'A levels'. Although based on small samples, the pilot indicated that the new wording did not have a significant bearing on the results.

## **Composite confidence measure**

The first section of the report presents a composite confidence measure, which was developed as a means of quantifying overall confidence in GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications, and exploring any changes over time.

The composite confidence measure was calculated based on eight criteria: understanding, trust, maintenance of standards, preparation for further study, preparation for work, skill development, accuracy in marking, and value for money. The first seven criteria have been measured since wave 14, while 'value for money' was measured for the first time in wave 17.

These criteria were presented to respondents as eight separate statements within a scale-based question, with responses that ranged from strong agreement to strong disagreement. These questions were asked separately for GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications. Based on respondents' selections, responses were assigned a score between 1 and 5 for each of the eight criteria. 'Don't know' responses were excluded from the calculation. The scoring system is detailed below.

- Strongly agree = 5



- Agree = 4
- Neither agree nor disagree = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly disagree = 1

Next, an average of the individual scores for the eight criteria was calculated for each respondent, which represents the overall confidence measure. This was done separately for GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications.

Finally, an average of the overall scores for all respondents was calculated to produce one confidence measure per stakeholder, for each of GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications. An average of these stakeholder confidence measures was produced to give an overall confidence measure. This method has been applied to the data since wave 13 and allows the comparison of confidence levels over time. The current survey compares overall confidence levels over the five most recent waves of the Perceptions Survey.

## **Guidance on analysis**

The survey was undertaken with seven different sample groups. These data have been combined into one 'All' group referred to as 'stakeholders' in the text of this report. Data for each sample group have been combined and weighted so that each group represents an equal proportion within the 'stakeholder' group.

Throughout this report, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100%. The report summarises the data for each question using charts and tables. The intention of this report is to summarise the main themes in the data and not produce a full replication of the entire data collected.

Percentages are typically described throughout the report as a number out of ten (for example, three in ten stakeholders). However, in instances where a percentage figure falls roughly halfway between two factors of ten (for example, 25%), a more accurate description has been adopted (for example, one quarter) or it is simply written as is without an accompanying descriptor.

Reported differences are based on statistical significance testing as tested at the 95% confidence level. Whenever a difference between waves or groups within the sample is reported, this refers to a statistically significant difference. Additionally, where an apparent shift over the time period between waves 16 and 20 has not been addressed in the commentary or the charts, this is due to it not being a statistically significant difference between the two waves.

For the charts reporting proportions of 'Agree' and 'Disagree' responses, 'Don't know' responses are not included in the figure. As such, proportions may not add up to 100%.

## Section-specific background information

### **Section 1: Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2021**

All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with five of the statements used in the composite confidence measure with regards to GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications in 2021: understanding, trust, maintenance of standards, preparation for further study and preparation for work. The section compares these 2021-specific levels of agreement with the same measures for the qualifications in general. The section also explores perceptions of appeals against results and malpractice thinking specifically about 2021 and how this compared to general perceptions.

### **Section 2: Composite confidence measure of qualifications in general**

Measures of stakeholder confidence were calculated separately for GCSE, A Level, and Applied General qualifications. All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with eight statements for GCSE, A level, and Applied General qualifications in general relating to: understanding, trust, maintenance of standards, preparation for further study, preparation for work, skill development, accuracy in marking, and value for money. The composite confidence measure was calculated based on stakeholders' levels of agreement with the eight statements.

### **Section 3: General perceptions of GCSEs**

All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with the eight statements used in the composite confidence measure with regards to GCSE qualifications in general.

### **Section 4: General perceptions of A levels**

All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with the eight statements used in the composite confidence measure with regards to A level qualifications in general.

### **Section 5: General perceptions of Applied General qualifications**

All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with the eight statements used in the composite confidence measure with regards to Applied General qualifications in general.

### **Section 6: The review of marking and moderation, and appeals process for GCSEs and A levels**

A range of post-results services were available to schools and colleges who have concerns about the results awarded to their students. These services include a clerical check, a review of marking and moderation, and access to marked scripts for some qualifications. If a centre or private candidate thinks something went wrong with the review of marking or moderation, they can submit an appeal for these results. Collectively these services are called Reviews of Marking and Moderation and Appeals (ROMMA). Due to exams not taking place in 2021, there were no reviews of marking or moderation as students' work was neither marked nor moderated by exam boards given the different arrangements in place. As arrangements in 2021 differed to usual, stakeholders were asked

to think both generally about the reviews of marking and moderation and appeals, as well as 2021-specific questions on the appeals against results process.

## Section 7: Special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSE and A level qualifications

[Special consideration](#) is an adjustment to the way in which an examination or assessment is taken, or a post-exam adjustment to a student's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the exam or assessment.

Awarding organisations have a duty to make [reasonable adjustments](#) for disabled<sup>6</sup> students taking their qualifications and are made in cases where a student who is disabled would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with someone who is not disabled in an assessment. An example of this would be providing a Braille paper.

Those head teachers and teachers who teach GCSEs or A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements about special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSEs and A levels.

## Section 8: Malpractice for GCSE and A level qualifications

Any breach of the regulations that might undermine the integrity of an exam constitutes [malpractice](#). Those head teachers and teachers who teach GCSEs or A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements about malpractice for GCSEs and A levels.

## Section 9: Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications

Like for GCSE and A level qualifications, if a centre or private candidate is not happy about the results of a review of marking or moderation for Applied General qualifications they can submit an [appeal](#) for these results.

## Section 10: Malpractice for Applied General qualifications

Like for GCSE and A level qualifications, any breach of the regulations that might undermine the integrity of an exam constitutes [malpractice](#). Those head teachers and teachers who teach Applied General qualifications were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements about malpractice for Applied General qualifications.

## Section 11: Innovations

This section explores innovations in the role technology might have in assessments. In particular, stakeholders are asked about their views regarding assessments administered onscreen (for example, exams taken on screen rather than using pen and paper).

---

<sup>6</sup> Being disabled under the Equality Act 2010 is defined as having a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities.

## Glossary

### **Applied General qualifications:**

‘Applied General’ is a term used to describe a range of level 3 qualifications that meet DfE requirements for performance tables. These include, but are not restricted to, Pearson BTEC Level 3 Applied qualifications and OCR Cambridge Level 3 Applied Certificates.

### **Base size:**

The number of respondents answering the question.

### **Effective base:**

When sampling is undertaken, it creates a ‘design effect’ that can impact upon the reliability of the information collected. The effective base size is the base size that is left when removing this effect. It is used for significance testing.

### **General qualifications:**

There are a variety of general qualifications including the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level).

### **Marking:**

The process of giving a student appropriate credit for their responses according to the requirements set out in a mark scheme.

### **Sample frame:**

The way that the sample population is structured before recruiting a sample for the survey is drawn.

### **Statistically significant:**

If a result is termed statistically significant, it is unlikely to have occurred due to chance. The process of determining whether a result is statistically significant is known as significance testing.

### **Vocational and technical qualifications:**

This term encompasses qualifications that are not ‘general’. These normally have a more vocational focus and can include qualifications designed to support the development of practical skills in English, maths, and ICT (functional skills qualifications) as well as technical, professional, or occupational qualifications.

## **Weighting:**

The process of correcting for imbalances in the sample to accurately reflect the composition of the population being surveyed.

## Appendix A – Technical report

Appendix A outlines the composition of the achieved sampling and additional information on the methods used in wave 20.

### Weighting

A table for each sample group is included in this appendix breaking down the achieved unweighted samples by key characteristics. Alongside this, the weighted base and weight factors applied are also shown. The unweighted base shown in the tables details the number of completed surveys before any weighting took place. Comparatively, the weighted base shown in the tables details the adjustments that have been made to correct for any sample bias. The largest weight factor demonstrates where the weighting has had a greater impact due to the unweighted based being lower than what would be expected in a representative sample.

Weighting adjusts the contribution of individual respondents to aggregated figures and is used to make surveyed populations more representative of a project-relevant, and typically larger, population by forcing it to mimic the distribution of that larger population's significant characteristics, or its size. The weighting tasks happen at the end of the data processing phase on cleaned data.

When standard weighting variables such as gender are used to reweight the achieved sample back to target profiles, a simple weighting factor is created for each record. This weighting factor is a decimal number, such as 1.0 or 1.2 or 0.5. It is calculated by dividing the target proportion required by the actual proportion from the achieved sample data. The weight factor is used as a multiplier for each respondent during aggregation to determine their weighted contribution.

A weight of 1 occurs when the respondent (and respondents with the same profile) exactly reflect our target (we have exactly the number of such respondents in our study that we targeted); weights of <1 occur when the target has been exceeded, and weights of >1 occur when we have under-achieved the targets. This is calculated for each individual respondent, the largest and smallest weight factors for each sample have been detailed in the tables below.

YouGov uses RIM (Random Iterative Method) weighting as its standard approach. RIM is used when there are a number of different standard weights that all need to be applied together. This weighting method calculates weights for each individual respondent from the targets and achieved sample sizes for all of the quota variables. RIM weighting is an iterative process, whereby it recalculates the weights a number of times until the required degree of accuracy is reached. All weights are capped at six, and a weighting report is produced for each project. A summary of weights applied in wave 20 across all stakeholder groups can be seen in the tables below.

### Head teachers and teachers sample

#### Sample coverage

The sample was designed to be a representative sample of head teachers or deputy head teachers and teachers of A levels, GCSEs, and other vocational and technical qualifications in secondary schools and colleges across England. This provided coverage across the following types of establishment:

- Local authority maintained schools

- Academy and Free schools
- Independent schools
- FE colleges and sixth form centres

To make sure that the survey represented establishments teaching qualifications for people aged 14 to 19 years, only certain types of schools and colleges were eligible for the survey. Eligible types of schools and colleges matched the definitions used in previous years of the survey. That is, secondary and middle-deemed-secondary schools, academies teaching key stage 4 and/or post-16, independent schools teaching key stage 4 and/or post-16, and post-16 institutions.

## **Sample frame**

The samples of head teachers and teachers were drawn from two sources.

### **1. Education Company contact database**

Firstly, contacts in schools were drawn from the Education Company's database of publicly available education sector contacts. This list is the most accurate and comprehensive education dataset available anywhere in the UK. It contains over 5 million education data profiles, including 400,000 named teachers and lecturers, and details and profiles of more than 100,000 schools.

The Education Company's database was used to select contacts in schools to be surveyed. As data is held on school characteristics, this allowed us to develop a sample that was representative of school size, type and region. Sample targets were set, and the total sample was structured to meet the proportions relevant to the school population in England. The database contains named contacts with generic school email addresses. This allowed the survey to be targeted at specific subject teachers in the specified schools.

### **2. YouGov Panel**

The survey was also conducted using teachers and head teachers registered to the YouGov panel, who have consented to participate in surveys with YouGov. A quota sampling approach was used on the sample drawn from the YouGov panel to ensure broad representativeness by school type, size and region.

## **Sample selection**

The sample was selected to ensure the representativeness of the results in line with the school and teacher population in England. The sample frame was based upon [official government statistics on the school and teacher population](#). The sample frame was stratified by the following variables:

- School type (maintained, academy, special school, pupil-referral unit (PRU), independent)
- English region

To maintain consistency with the sampling approach used since wave 13 of the Perceptions survey two samples were drawn that differed in characteristics between the head teacher sample and the teacher sample. Whilst drawing a sample of schools was appropriate for the head teacher survey, it was decided that in order to examine the views of a representative sample of teachers in England, this would require selecting multiple teachers working at the larger establishments. This meant that

the sampling design for the teacher survey took account of the number of teachers working in each school or establishment.

Using the Education Company database, a stratified random sample of school contacts was drawn in line with the above parameters. The sample drawn was compared with the DfE school population statistics to ensure they were broadly in line. In total a sample of 8,000 school contacts that matched the sample criteria was drawn at random from the Education Company database.

The head teacher sample was drawn at random from the list of eligible schools. As previously outlined, the teacher sample was drawn to take into account the numbers of teachers at different types of establishment. As such, multiple teacher contacts were included for schools of a larger size.

Alongside the sample drawn from the Education Company database a random sample of 4,000 head teachers and teachers from the YouGov panel was contacted to take part in the survey. These respondents were contacted at random to take part and sampled to be proportionate to the school population and the teacher population.

### Achieved sample size and weighting

The unweighted achieved sample size and breakdown of the samples by key characteristics is shown in Table 1 for teachers and Table 2 for headteachers. Alongside this the weighted base and weight factors applied are also shown.

**Table 1: Achieved sample size for teachers by school type**

School type	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Local Authority maintained school	121	97	0.52	1.36
Academy	372	333	0.56	1.46
Independent school	97	125	0.84	2.19
FE college/ sixth form	63	125	1.31	3.42
Other	40	14	0.21	0.55

**Table 2: Achieved sample size for head teachers by school type**

School type	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Local Authority maintained school	55	46	0.49	1.03
Academy	169	161	0.53	1.12
Independent school	13	38	1.95	4.11
FE college/ sixth form	16	16	0.57	1.20
Other	16	8	0.28	0.59



## **Public, parents and young people’s samples**

### **Sample coverage**

The public, young people and parents’ samples were drawn from the YouGov online panel of over 1 million adults who have consented to participate in surveys with YouGov.

Three distinct samples were drawn. These were:

1. A nationally representative survey sample of adults aged 16 years or over in England - this was sampled to be representative of the adult population in England using YouGov’s English weighting profile of age interlocked with gender, region and social-economical classification.
2. A survey sample of young people aged 14 to 19 years who were just about to take, were currently taking or had recently taken A levels and/or GCSEs and/or a qualification such as functional skills, Level 1/2 certificates, Level 3 tech levels or Applied General qualifications - this was sampled to be representative of England by gender, age within the age range and region using England representative statistics.
3. A survey sample of parents or carers of young people who met the ‘student’ criteria defined above - this was sampled to be representative of parents by gender, social-economical classification and English region.

### **Sample frame**

The samples of members of the public, parents’ and young people were drawn from the YouGov panel. Over the last nineteen years, YouGov has carefully recruited a panel of over 1 million UK adults to take part in our surveys.

### **Sample selection**

The samples were selected to ensure the representativeness of the results in line with the actual population of each sample group in England.

For nationally representative samples, YouGov draws a sub-sample of the panel that is representative in terms of age and gender combined, social class and region, and invites this sub-sample to complete a survey.

YouGov has a proprietary, automated sampling system that invites respondents based on their profile information and how that aligns with targets for surveys that are currently active. Respondents are automatically, randomly selected based on survey availability and how that matches their profile information.

### **Achieved sample size and weighting**

The achieved sample size and breakdown of the public, parents and young people samples by key characteristics and associated weighting factors is shown in Tables 3 to 11.

**Table 3: Summary of achieved public sample and weighting scheme by region**

Region	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
North East	53	50	0.74	1.20
North West	130	130	0.79	1.26
Yorkshire and the Humber	96	100	0.82	1.31
East Midlands	91	90	0.76	1.22
West Midlands	109	100	0.71	1.14
East of England	110	110	0.79	1.27
London	148	160	0.86	1.38
South East	163	160	0.77	1.25
South West	100	100	0.78	1.25

**Table 4: Summary of achieved public sample and weighting scheme by age and gender**

Age and gender	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Male 16-24	66	67	0.80	1.17
Male 25-39	117	125	0.89	1.36
Male 40-54	131	120	0.74	1.14
Male 55+	165	178	0.90	1.38
Female 16-24	69	64	0.71	1.09
Female 25-39	136	125	0.75	1.15
Female 40-54	133	123	0.76	1.17
Female 55+	183	199	0.90	1.38

**Table 5: Summary of achieved public sample and weighting scheme by social-economical classification**

Social-economical classification	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
ABC1	590	540	0.71	0.90
C2DE	410	460	1.10	1.38

**Table 6: Summary of achieved parents sample and weighting scheme by region**

Region	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
North East	13	13	0.95	1.00
North West	33	33	0.96	1.01
Yorkshire and the Humber	25	25	0.98	1.03
East Midlands	23	23	0.96	1.01
West Midlands	28	28	0.97	1.01
East of England	27	28	1.00	1.05
London	37	38	0.99	1.04
South East	40	40	0.98	1.03
South West	25	25	0.99	1.04

**Table 7: Summary of achieved parents sample and weighting scheme by gender**

Gender	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Male	123	123	0.96	1.05
Female	128	128	0.95	1.04

**Table 8: Summary of achieved parents sample and weighting scheme by social-economical classification**

Social-economical classification	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
ABC1	138	136	0.95	1.01
C2DE	113	115	0.99	1.05

**Table 9: Summary of achieved young people sample and weighting scheme by region**

Region	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
North East	15	15	0.73	1.24
North West	41	40	0.72	1.21
Yorkshire and the Humber	30	31	0.78	1.31
East Midlands	25	28	0.84	1.43
West Midlands	35	31	0.64	1.09
East of England	36	34	0.71	1.21
London	45	49	0.78	1.33
South East	51	49	0.71	1.20
South West	31	31	0.71	1.21

**Table 10: Summary of achieved young people sample and weighting scheme by gender**

Gender	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Male	154	155	0.67	1.43
Female	155	155	0.64	1.37

**Table 11: Summary of achieved young people sample and weighting scheme by age**

Age	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Aged 14 to 15 years	137	103	0.64	0.88
Aged 16 to 17 years	87	103	1.02	1.40
Aged 18 to 19 years	85	103	1.40	1.43

## Employer sample

### Sample coverage

The employer sample was designed to be representative of the English business population by organisation size and sector. The sample definition ensured that only those in middle management and above roles, with the ability to answer on behalf of their organisation were eligible to take the survey. A further criterion was added to ensure that each employer had recruited a young person aged 16 to 24 years in the last 12 months.

### Sample frame

The employer sample was drawn from the YouGov business panel which contains over 9,000 senior decision makers and 8,000 employees with decision making responsibility for HR / personnel within their organisation.

## Sample selection

The sample was selected to ensure the representativeness of the results in line with the business population in England using the following criteria drawn from the Office of National Statistics Business Population Statistics.

Employer size – proportionate number of employers in the 2 to 9, 10 to 49, 50 to 99, 100 to 249 and 250+ employee size band brackets; this was calculated using the percentage on employment that each size band represents rather than the number of enterprises within each

Sector – broad sector coverage was ensured across the private, public and third/voluntary sectors

## Achieved sample size and weighting

The achieved sample size and breakdown of the employer sample by key characteristics and associated weighting factors are shown in Tables 12 and 13.

**Table 12: Summary of achieved employer sample and weighting scheme by size**

Size	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
2-9 employees	70	73	1.03	1.05
50-249	44	35	0.79	0.80
250+ employees	138	144	1.03	1.04

**Table 13: Summary of achieved employer sample and weighting scheme by sector**

Sector	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Private sector	198	189	0.80	1.05
Public sector	45	45	0.80	1.04
Third/voluntary sector	18	18	0.79	1.03

## HEI sample

### Sample coverage

The HEI sample was designed to be representative of the university population in England by university type. The type of university was drawn from official Higher Education Statistics Authority statistics and universities who responded to the survey were grouped into the following categories:

- Russell group
- Other old
- Post 1992/new
- Other HEI

The sample definition ensured that only those in academic roles with responsibility for and knowledge of the admissions process were eligible to complete the survey.

## Sample frame

The HEI sample was drawn from two sources:

- The YouGov education panel
- HEIs with contacts drawn from the Oscar Research data base of public sector contacts - Oscar Research are the UK Public Sector database specialists. They provide the largest, and most accurate, database of Government and Public Sector contacts and organisations in the UK

## Sample selection

The samples were selected to ensure the representativeness of the results in line with the university population in England by university type. No further restrictions were placed on the sample but throughout the fieldwork period responses were monitored by job role and subject specialism to ensure broad coverage across these factors.

## Achieved sample size and weighting

The achieved sample size and breakdown of the HEI sample by key characteristics and associated weighting factors is shown in Table 14.

**Table 14: Summary of achieved HEI sample and weighting scheme by size**

Size	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Russell group	77	48	0.62	0.62
Other old	46	46	0.99	0.88
Post 1992/New	86	125	1.46	1.46
Other HEI	44	34	0.78	0.78

## Appendix B – Survey

### Text

The following questions relate to your perceptions of GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications in general, and not specific to any exam series. Note that there is a separate section on 2021 after these questions.

### Text

Perceptions of A level qualifications

This first section asks about your perceptions of A level qualifications.

### Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- A levels are well understood by people
- A levels are trusted qualifications
- A level standards are maintained year on year
- A levels are good preparation for further study
- A levels are good preparation for work
- A levels develop a broad range of skills for students
- The marking of A levels is accurate

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

### Text

In 2021, the exam boards' published fee for an A level qualification was approximately £105 (note the exam boards later gave a rebate in light of exam cancellation due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic) (Source: Ofqual 2021).

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- A levels offer “value for money”

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

Perceptions of GCSE qualifications

This section asks about your perceptions of GCSE qualifications.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- GCSEs are well understood by people
- GCSEs are a trusted qualification
- GCSE standards are maintained year on year
- GCSEs are good preparation for further study
- GCSEs are good preparation for work
- GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students
- The marking of GCSEs is accurate

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know



## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

In 2021, the exam boards' published fee for a GCSE qualification was approximately £45 (note the exam boards later gave a rebate in light of exam cancellation due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic) (Source: Ofqual 2021).

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- GCSEs offer “value for money”

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Question

Are you aware that there is a process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and A level results?

## Possible answers

1. Yes
2. No

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Single (choose one of the possible answers)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

The following questions are about the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSEs and A level results.

A range of post-results services are currently available to schools and colleges who have concerns about the marks awarded to their learners. These services include a clerical check, a review of marking and access to marked scripts for some qualifications.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE results is fair
- The process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for A level results is fair

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All who are aware of the appeals system

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

I have adequate information about the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and A level results

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Single (choose one of the possible answers)
<b>Base</b>	All who are aware of the appeals system

## Text

The following questions are about special considerations and reasonable adjustments for GCSEs and A levels.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please click on the icon if you want to see an explanation. Please click the icon again to remove the explanation)

- I have adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE or A level student who is eligible for special consideration
- In the current special consideration system, the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and A level students
- Special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students
- I have adequate information about the adjustments that are available for a GCSE or A level disabled student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments
- Currently, the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE and A level disabled students
- Reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All teachers and head teachers who teach GCSEs or A levels

## Text

The following questions are about malpractice in GCSEs and A levels.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and A levels

- I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for GCSEs and A levels
- I am confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs and A levels
- I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs and A levels

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All teachers and head teachers who teach GCSEs or A levels

### Text

The next few questions are about Applied General qualifications.

Applied General qualifications include, but are not restricted to, Pearson BTEC Level 3 Applied qualifications and OCR Cambridge Level 3 Applied Certificates. They are taught in schools and colleges at level 3 (key stage 5) and are identified by the Department for Education as 'Applied Generals' for the purpose of performance table reporting.

### Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Applied General qualifications are well understood by people
- Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications
- Applied General qualifications standards are maintained year-on-year
- Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study
- Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work
- Applied General qualifications develop a broad range of skills for students
- The marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree

4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

### Text

In 2021, the exam boards' published fee for an Applied General qualification was approximately £150 (note the exam boards later gave a rebate in light of exam cancellation due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic) (Source: Ofqual 2021).

### Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- Applied General qualifications offer “value for money”

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

### Question

Are you aware of the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges?

### Possible answers

1. Yes
2. No

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Single (choose one of the possible answers)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

The following questions are about appeals against results in Applied General qualifications.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I have adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges
- I am confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

Question type	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
Base	All who are aware of the appeals against results process

## Text

The following questions are about malpractice in Applied General qualifications.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges
- I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges
- I am confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges are fairly investigated
- I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree

2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	Teachers and Head teachers who teach Applied General Qualifications in schools or colleges

### Text

The following questions are about examinations taken onscreen (as opposed to traditional pen and paper exams).

### Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations
- Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

The following questions relate to your perceptions of GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications in summer 2021.

The summer 2021 exam series was cancelled by the government because it would not have been fair to assess students by exams given the disruption to their education caused by the pandemic. Instead, students were only assessed on the content they had been taught and grades were determined by teachers (teacher assessed grades) based on a range of evidence. The evidence could include in-class tests, mock exam results and non-exam assessment. There was also an exceptional Autumn 2021 exam series to provide an opportunity for students who wanted to try and improve their teacher assessed grade, or who were not able to receive a teacher assessed grade, to sit examinations.

## Text

Perceptions of A level qualifications

This section asks again about your perceptions of A level qualifications. For this part of the survey, please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

A levels in 2021 were well understood by people

A levels in 2021 were trusted qualifications

A level standards were maintained in 2021

A levels in 2021 were good preparation for further study

A levels in 2021 were good preparation for work

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All



## Text

Perceptions of GCSE qualifications

This section asks again about your perceptions of GCSE qualifications. For this part of the survey, please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- GCSEs in 2021 were well understood by people
- GCSEs in 2021 were a trusted qualification
- GCSE standards were maintained in 2021
- GCSEs in 2021 were good preparation for further study
- GCSEs in 2021 were good preparation for work

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Question

The appeals process for GCSE and A level results was different from usual in 2021. There was no Reviews of Marking/Moderation stage this year. The appeals process was the only way for students or centres to get their results reconsidered if they were not satisfied with their grades. Were you aware that this was the appeals against results process in place for GCSE and A level results in 2021?

## Possible answers

1. Yes
2. No

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Single (choose one of the possible answers)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

The following questions are about the appeals against results process for GCSEs and A levels in 2021. Please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The appeals against results process for GCSEs in 2021 was fair
- The appeals against results process for A levels in 2021 was fair

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

I had adequate information about the appeals against results process for GCSEs and A levels in 2021

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Single (choose one of the possible answers)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Text

The following questions are about malpractice in GCSEs and A levels in 2021, as the types of malpractice in 2021 differed from usual. Please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I had adequate information about what constituted malpractice for GCSEs and A levels in 2021
- I was confident that incidents of malpractice were fairly investigated for GCSEs and A levels in 2021
- I was confident malpractice was properly reported when it happened in GCSEs and A levels in 2021

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	Teachers and Head teachers who teach GCSEs or A levels

## Text

The next few questions are about Applied General qualifications. Please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

Applied General qualifications include, but are not restricted to, Pearson BTEC Level 3 Applied qualifications and OCR Cambridge Level 3 Applied Certificates. They at level 3 (key stage 5) and are identified by the Department for Education as ‘Applied Generals’ for the purpose of performance table reporting.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Applied General qualifications in 2021 were well understood by people
- Applied General qualifications in 2021 were trusted qualifications
- Applied General qualifications standards were maintained in 2021
- Applied General qualifications in 2021 were good preparation for further study
- Applied General qualifications in 2021 were good preparation for work

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All

## Question

The appeals process for Applied General qualifications results was different than usual in 2021. There was no Reviews of Marking/Moderation stage this year. The appeals process was the only way for students or centres to get their results reconsidered if they were not satisfied with their grades. Were you aware that this was the appeals against results process in place for Applied General qualifications in 2021?

## Possible answers

1. Yes
2. No

## Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Single (choose one of the possible answers)
<b>Base</b>	Teachers and Head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications in schools or colleges

## Text

The following questions are about appeals against results in Applied General qualifications in 2021. Please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

## Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I had adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications in 2021
- I was confident that appeals were dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in 2021

## Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree

3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	All who are aware of the appeals against results process

### Text

The following questions are about malpractice in Applied General qualifications in 2021, as the types of malpractice in 2021 differed from usual. Please think specifically about perceptions you have had in 2021 as opposed to other years.

### Question

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I had adequate information about what constituted malpractice for Applied General qualifications in 2021
- I was confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications were fairly investigated in 2021
- I was confident malpractice was properly reported when it happened in Applied General qualifications in 2021

### Possible answers

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### Question design

<b>Question type</b>	Grid (one answer required for each sub-question)
<b>Base</b>	Teachers and Head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications in schools or colleges