

**Background Information for: Perceptions of AS/A levels,
GCSEs and Applied General qualifications in England
– Wave 18**

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Introduction

Background

This document accompanies the findings of wave 18 (2019 to 2020) of the Perceptions Survey and should be read alongside the Perceptions of AS/A levels, GCSEs and Applied General qualifications in England – [Wave 18 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 qualifications in England. Ofqual collects and utilises insight on perceptions of qualifications and the qualifications system from the range of stakeholders that work with and use them.

Ofqual has continued (the survey was originally commissioned by the QCA in 2003) to annually assess teachers', parents', students', the general public's, employers' and higher education institutions (HEIs)' perceptions of the A level examination system and, since wave 4 (2005), perceptions of the GCSE system. This large-scale survey is unique in providing a wide overview of perceptions of general and other qualifications from the users of these qualifications.

The first part of the survey focussed on eight measures of confidence in the GCSE system and AS/A level system. These measures, selected through data analysis by Ofqual¹, have all been asked in directly comparable ways since wave 13, and the current wave of the Perceptions Survey, allowing for comparisons of up to six years to be made. 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 the GCSE, AS/A levels 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 that covered questions on: the 9 to 1 GCSE grading scale; the review of marking, moderation and appeals against results for GCSEs and AS/A levels; special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSEs and AS/A levels; malpractice for GCSEs, AS/A levels and Applied General qualifications; and appeals against results for Applied General qualifications. For the first time, this year the survey also included a series of questions on innovations in administering assessments onscreen and the role of artificial intelligence in marking. In future waves, this part of the survey, as well as the eight measures of confidence for Applied General qualifications, may change to reflect topical issues at the time of data collection. As such, the qualifications other than GCSEs and AS/A levels reported on this wave may not be the same as those covered in previous waves of the Perceptions Survey.

¹ See Appendix A for more details of this analysis

Geographical coverage

Ofqual regulates general and vocational qualifications in England. The focus of this project was to gain the perceptions of head teachers², 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

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.

Project objectives

The objectives of the project were to investigate head teachers², teachers', students', parents', the general public's, employers' and HEIs':

- overall perceptions and confidence in GCSE, AS/A level and Applied General qualifications taken by young people; and
- perceptions of a number of topical aspects of the qualifications system for GCSEs and AS/A levels, and for Applied General qualifications.

Methods and data limitations

Overview of method

Wave 18 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 24 October and 5 December 2019, which is a comparable fieldwork period to waves 15, 16 and 17.

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:

² The head teachers sample consists of head teachers and deputy head teachers.

- 292 head teachers (including deputy head teachers³)
- 811 teachers of GCSE, A level and other academic⁴ and vocational qualifications⁵ offered to people aged 14 to 19 years (referred to throughout this report as teachers)
- 267 young people, defined as those aged 14 to 19 years who are studying/have studied/will study AS/A levels and/or GCSEs and/or an academic qualification defined as functional skills, Level 1/2 certificates (e.g. Pearson Level 1/2 BTECs and OCR Cambridge National Certificates), Level 3 tech levels (e.g. Pearson Level 3 BTECs and OCR Cambridge Technical Certificates) or Applied General qualifications
- 259 parents/carers of students who are taking or who have just taken AS/A levels, GCSEs and/or other academic qualifications described above
- 269 academic professionals⁶ 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)
- 257 senior/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)
- 1,007 members of the public

The final achieved samples were structured to be representative of the relevant target populations. 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 18 survey was designed in conjunction with the YouGov project team. 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 18 survey was very similar to wave 17. A copy of the questions included in this wave of the Perceptions Survey is available in Appendix B.

³ Collectively referred to throughout the report as head teachers.

⁴ Ofqual defines academic qualifications as qualifications that are assessed by formal examinations and moderated coursework.

⁵ Ofqual defines vocational qualifications as qualifications that are taught in schools and colleges that prepare students for a particular type of job.

⁶ This sample consisted of academics and a small number of admissions staff. Please see Appendix A for a description of the sample profile.

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, AS/A level and Applied General qualifications, and exploring any changes over time.

Method

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 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, which ranged from strong agreement to strong disagreement. These questions were asked separately for GCSE, AS/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 and AS/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, AS/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 number of out ten (e.g. 3 in 10 stakeholders). However, instances where a percentage figure falls between two factors of ten (e.g. 25%), a more accurate description has been adopted (e.g. 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. Therefore, where an apparent shift over the time period between waves 14 and 18 has not been addressed in the commentary, this is due to there not being a statistically significant difference.

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: Composite confidence measure

Measures of stakeholder confidence were calculated separately for GCSEs, AS/A Levels and Applied General qualifications. All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with eight statements for GCSE, AS/A level, and Applied General qualifications 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 2: 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.

Section 3: Perceptions of AS/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 AS/A level qualifications.

Section 4: 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.

Section 5: GCSE 9 to 1 grading scale

[A new grading system was introduced](#) for reformed GCSEs. This was used from 2017 for English language, English literature and maths, and for additional subjects from 2018 and 2019, in line with them being examined for the first time. Since wave 14, including in the current wave, stakeholders were asked about their awareness and knowledge of this new grading system.

Section 6: The review of marking and moderation, and appeals against GCSEs and AS/A levels

A range of post-results services are currently available to schools and colleges who have concerns about the marks awarded to their students. These services include a clerical check, a review of marking/moderation, and access to marked scripts for some qualifications. If a centre or private candidate is not happy with the outcomes of 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).

Section 7: Special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSE and AS/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/assessment.

Awarding organisations have a duty to make [reasonable adjustments](#) for disabled⁷ 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 AS/A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements about special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

Section 8: Malpractice for GCSE and AS/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 AS/A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements about malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

Section 9: Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications

Like for GCSE and AS/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 AS/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.

⁷ 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.

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 (e.g. exams taken on screen rather than using pen and paper), and the role of artificial intelligence in marking.

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 (academic) qualifications – Ofqual defines general (academic) qualifications as qualifications that are assessed by formal examinations and moderated coursework. These include GCSE and AS/A level qualifications.

Grading: The process of grouping students into overall performance categories. A levels are graded A* (highest grade) to E and AS are graded A (highest grade) to E. Reformed GCSEs in England are graded 9 to 1 with 9 being the highest grade. For more information on this new grading system, see the [Ofqual website](#).

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 18.

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 shows the number of completed surveys and the weighted base 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.

Head teachers and teachers sample

Sample coverage

The sample was designed to be a representative sample of head teachers/deputy head teachers and teachers of AS/A levels, GCSEs and other academic and vocational 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/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/post-16, independent schools teaching key stage 4/post-16, and post-16 institutions.

Sample frame

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

1. Education Company Education list

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 / 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/establishment.

Using the Education List 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 List 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 List 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. Alongside this the weighted base and weight factors applied are also shown.

Table 1: Achieved sample size by role and school type

| | Unweighted base | Weighted base | Smallest weight factor | Largest weight factor |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Teachers - School type | | | | |
| Local Authority maintained school | 130 | 130 | 0.9 | 1.3 |
| Academy | 371 | 373 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Independent school | 74 | 146 | 1.8 | 2.5 |
| FE college/ sixth form | 166 | 146 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| Other | 70 | 16 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| Head teachers - School type | | | | |
| Local Authority maintained school | 64 | 55 | 0.5 | 1.3 |
| Academy | 156 | 169 | 0.7 | 1.6 |
| Independent school | 41 | 41 | 0.7 | 1.7 |
| FE college/ sixth form | 23 | 18 | 0.4 | 1.1 |
| Other | 8 | 9 | 0.8 | 1.6 |

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 AS/A levels and/or GCSEs and/or an academic qualification defined 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/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 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2: Summary of achieved public sample and weighting scheme

| | Public sample | | Public sample | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Unweighted base | Weighted base | Smallest weight factor | Largest weight factor |
| Region | | | | |
| North East | 51 | 50 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| North West | 131 | 131 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 102 | 101 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| East Midlands | 92 | 91 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| West Midlands | 110 | 111 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| East of England | 109 | 111 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| London | 149 | 151 | 0.9 | 1.3 |
| South East | 164 | 161 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| South West | 99 | 101 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Age and gender | | | | |
| Male 16-24 | 67 | 70 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Male 25-39 | 119 | 121 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Male 40-54 | 131 | 131 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Male 55+ | 166 | 161 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Female 16-24 | 72 | 70 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| Female 25-39 | 127 | 131 | 0.9 | 1.3 |
| Female 40-54 | 131 | 131 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Female 55+ | 194 | 191 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Social-economical classification | | | | |
| ABC1 | 601 | 544 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| C2DE | 406 | 463 | 1.0 | 1.3 |

Table 3: Summary of achieved parents sample weighting scheme

| | Parents sample | | Parents sample | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Unweighted base | Weighted base | Smallest weight factor | Largest weight factor |
| Region | | | | |
| North East | 13 | 13 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| North West | 33 | 34 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 24 | 26 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| East Midlands | 23 | 23 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| West Midlands | 30 | 28 | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| East of England | 29 | 28 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| London | 40 | 39 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| South East | 42 | 41 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| South West | 25 | 26 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 128 | 127 | 0.9 | 1.1 |
| Female | 131 | 132 | 1.0 | 1.1 |
| Social-economical classification | | | | |
| ABC1 | 140 | 140 | 0.9 | 1.1 |
| C2DE | 119 | 119 | 0.9 | 1.1 |

Table 4: Summary of achieved young people sample and weighting scheme

| | Young people sample | | Young people sample | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Unweighted base | Weighted base | Smallest weight factor | Largest weight factor |
| Region | | | | |
| North East | 13 | 13 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| North West | 34 | 35 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 28 | 27 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| East Midlands | 23 | 24 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| West Midlands | 28 | 29 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| East of England | 31 | 29 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| London | 40 | 40 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| South East | 44 | 43 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| South West | 26 | 27 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 145 | 134 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| Female | 122 | 133 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Age | | | | |
| Aged 14 to 15 years | 100 | 89 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Aged 16 to 17 years | 87 | 89 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Aged 18 to 19 years | 80 | 89 | 0.9 | 1.2 |

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 Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of achieved employer sample and weighting scheme

| | Employer sample | | Employer sample | |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Unweighted base | Weighted base | Smallest weight factor | Largest weight factor |
| Size | | | | |
| 2-9 employees | 25 | 37 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 10-49 employees | 50 | 37 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| 50-99 employees | 16 | 18 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| 100-249 employees | 19 | 18 | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| 250+ employees | 147 | 147 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Sector | | | | |
| Private sector | 194 | 193 | 0.7 | 1.5 |
| Public sector | 45 | 46 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Third/voluntary sector | 18 | 18 | 0.7 | 1.5 |

HEI sample

Sample coverage

The HEI sample was designed to be representative of the English university population 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 6 below.

Table 6: Summary of achieved HEI sample and weighting scheme

| | HEI sample | | HEI sample | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Unweighted base | Weighted base | Smallest weight factor | Largest weight factor |
| Size | | | | |
| Russell Group | 67 | 51 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Other old | 50 | 48 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Post 1992/New | 119 | 133 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Other HEI | 33 | 36 | 1.1 | 1.1 |

Appendix B – Survey

Perceptions of AS/A level qualifications

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

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

- 1.1. AS/A levels are well understood by people
- 1.2. AS/A levels are trusted qualifications
- 1.3. AS/A level standards are maintained year on year
- 1.4. AS/A levels are good preparation for further study
- 1.5. AS/A levels are good preparation for work
- 1.6. AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students
- 1.7. The marking of AS/A levels is accurate

In 2019, schools and colleges paid the exam boards around £60 per student for each AS qualification, and around £100 per student for each A Level qualification (Source: Ofqual 2019).

1.8. AS/A levels offer “value for money”

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Perceptions of GCSE qualifications

This section asks about your perceptions of GCSE qualifications.

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

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

In 2019, schools and colleges paid the exam boards around £40 per student for each GCSE qualification (Source: Ofqual 2019).

2.8 GCSEs offer “value for money”

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

The new 9-1 grading scale

This section asks about your awareness and understanding of the grading of GCSEs.

3. Are you aware of the 9 to 1 grading scale used in new GCSEs?

- Yes
- No

Base: all who are aware of the grading system

4. Based on your understanding of the 9 to 1 grading scale, what is the best grade that students can get?

- 9
- 1
- Don't know

The review of marking, moderation and appeals

5. Are you aware that there is a reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSE and AS/A level results?

- Yes
- No

The following questions are about the reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

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.

Base: all who are aware of the appeals system

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

- 6.1 The reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSEs is fair
- 6.2 The reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for AS/A levels is fair

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Base: all who are aware of the appeals system

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

- 7.1 I have adequate information about the reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSEs and AS/A levels

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree

- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Base: all who are aware of the appeals system

8. Are you aware that for any AS or A level subject, or in GCSE English language, English literature and maths, in 2019 a school or college whose concerns about marking that were not addressed during a review of marking could appeal to the exam board on the ground of a marking error as well as on the ground of a procedural failing by the exam board?

- Yes
- No

Special consideration, reasonable adjustments and malpractice for AS/A levels and GCSEs

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

Base: Teachers and Head teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels

9. 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)

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

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Definitions shown to respondents

* Defined as: 'Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of the candidate's control at the time of the assessment, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.'

** Defined as: '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.'

*** Defined as: 'The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements. How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it

involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. There is no duty on Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.'

The following questions are about malpractice.

Base: Teachers and Head teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels

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

- 10.1 I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels
- 10.2 I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels
- 10.3 I am confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs and AS/A levels
- 10.4 I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs and AS/A levels

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Perceptions of Applied General qualifications

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.

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

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

In 2019, schools and colleges paid the exam boards in the region of £60-£170 per student for each Applied General qualification (Source: Ofqual 2019).

11.8 Applied General qualifications offer "value for money"

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications

Base: all teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications in schools or colleges

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

Yes

No

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

Base: all who are aware of the appeals against results process

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

13.1 I have adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges

13.2 I am confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Malpractice in Applied General qualifications

The following questions are about malpractice in Applied General qualifications.

Base: Teachers and Head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications in schools or colleges

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

14.1 I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges

14.2 I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges

14.3 I am confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges are fairly investigated

14.4 I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't know

Innovations

These last questions are about examinations taken onscreen (as opposed to traditional pen and paper exams), and the use of Artificial Intelligence in marking.

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

- 15.1 Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and AS/A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations
- 15.2 Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and AS/A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations
- 15.3 I would be happy for Artificial Intelligence to be used to check the accuracy of marking in GCSE and AS/A level examinations
- 15.4 I would be happy for Artificial Intelligence to be used to mark GCSE and AS/A level examinations
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
 - f. Don't know