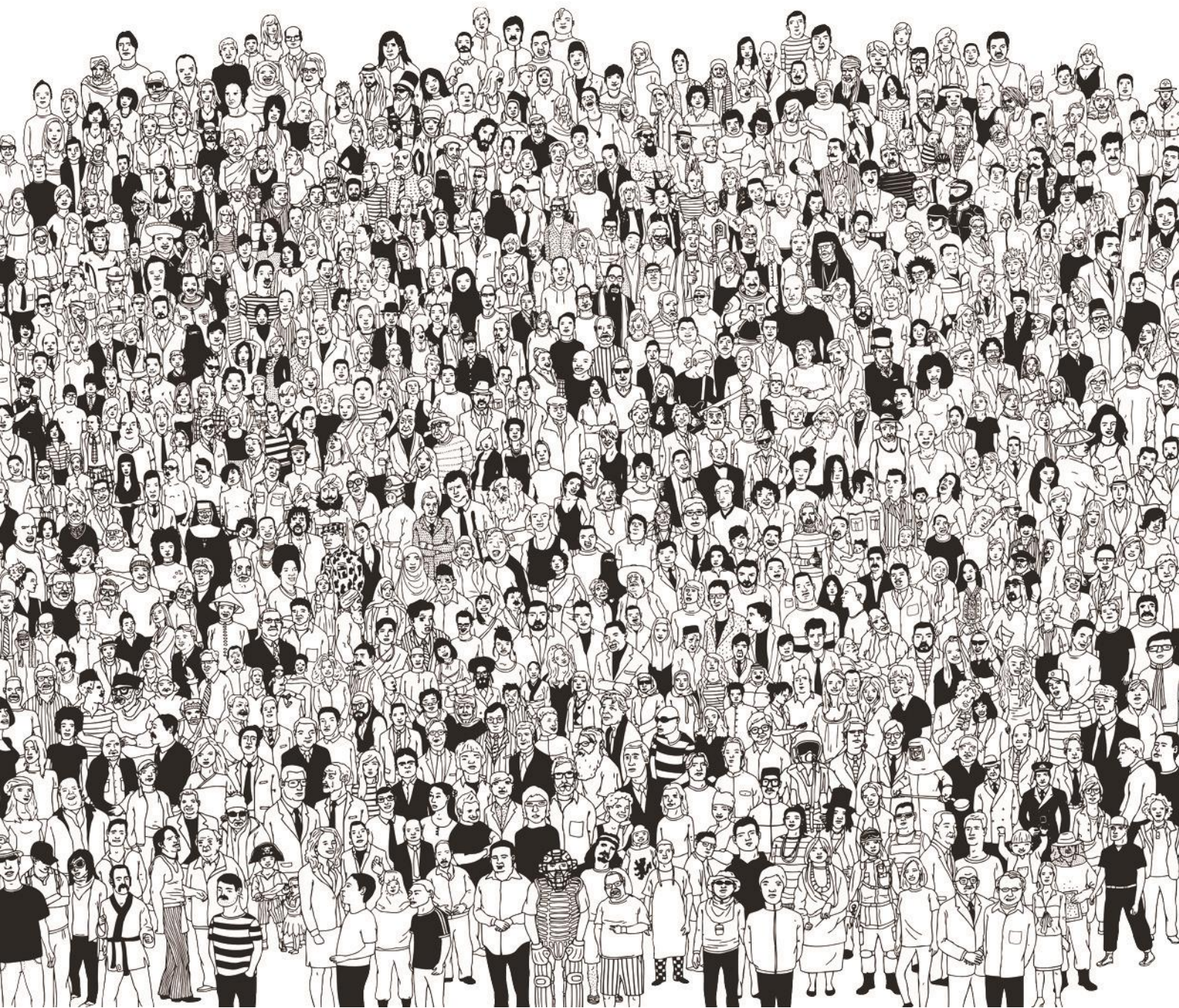


Perceptions of AS/A levels, GCSEs and Other Qualifications in England – Wave 15

An Ofqual commissioned report

April 2017
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This report is best printed in colour to appreciate the display of the data.

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Executive summary

Introduction

- 1.1.1 This report presents the findings of the 15th wave of the Perceptions Survey.
- 1.1.2 The research was commissioned by Ofqual and conducted by YouGov. The aim of this research project was to investigate head teachers', teachers', students', parents', the general public's, employers' and Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) perceptions and levels of confidence in qualifications and the examination system in England.
- 1.1.3 The survey followed the approach used in wave 13 and 14 and was conducted using an online methodology. The fieldwork was conducted between 2nd November and 2nd December, 2016. The final achieved sample for each of the target groups was as follows:
- 262 head teachers
 - 601 teachers of GCSE, AS/A level and other general and vocational qualifications offered to 15- to 19-year-olds (referred to throughout this report as teachers)
 - 313 young people, defined as those aged 15 to 19 who are studying/have studied/will study AS/A levels and/or GCSEs and/or other general and vocational qualifications
 - 261 parents/carers of students who are taking or who have just taken AS/A levels, GCSEs and/or other general and vocational qualifications
 - 265 academic professionals¹ 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)
 - 264 senior/middle managers who worked for an organisation that has recruited young people (aged 16 to 25) in the past 12 months (referred to throughout this report as employers)
 - 1,008 members of the public

¹ This sample consisted of academics and a small number of admissions staff. Please see Appendix B for a description of the sample profile.

1.1.4 The final achieved samples were structured to be representative of the relevant target populations. However, while the sampling approach aimed to identify groups of participants that were representative, given that a survey of this kind only captures the views of those involved, throughout this report responses attributed to groups (for example, teachers, parents etc.) reflect only those respondents included in the study.

Perceptions of GCSEs

- 1.1.5 Confidence in the GCSE system was significantly higher than in the previous two waves, as calculated by a composite measure of agreement with seven statements², for all stakeholders with the exception of the general public, who reported an increase, but not significant. There was also a significant three year trend of increased confidence observed from young people, teachers, and HEIs.
- 1.1.6 Overall figures show that, compared to last year, a significantly higher proportion of stakeholders agreed that GCSEs “are well understood by people” (66% to 70%) and “are a trusted qualification” (65% to 72%), that “standards are maintained year on year” (30% to 40%), and that “marking of GCSEs is accurate” (26% to 38%).
- 1.1.7 Although the levels of agreement that “GCSEs are good preparation for work” have remained unchanged, at around 35%, a larger majority of stakeholders agreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for study” (62% to 70%) than in wave 14.
- 1.1.8 The proportion of stakeholders who agreed that “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills” has remained unchanged at 57%.

Perceptions of AS/A levels

1.1.9 A similar composite measure³ revealed significantly higher levels of confidence in the AS/A level system compared with the previous two waves from all stakeholders apart from the general public who, again, reported a non-significant increase. There was also a significant three year trend of increasing confidence from teachers and HEIs.

² “GCSEs are well understood by people”; “GCSEs are a trusted qualification”; “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”; “The marking of GCSEs is accurate”; “GCSEs are a good preparation for further study”; “GCSEs are good preparation for work”; and “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students”. See Appendix A for further details of the selection of these statements.

³ The composite measure combined responses to the statements: “AS/A levels are well understood by people”; “AS/A levels are a trusted qualification”; “AS/A standards are maintained year on year”; “The marking of AS/A levels is accurate”; “AS/A levels are a good preparation for further study”; “AS/A levels are good preparation for work”; and “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students”. See Appendix A for further details of the selection of these statements.

- 1.1.10 Overall figures show that, compared with last year, a significantly higher proportion of stakeholders agreed that “AS/A level standards are maintained year on year” (37% to 47%), and that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate” (31% to 41%).
- 1.1.11 A significantly higher proportion of stakeholders also agreed that “AS/A levels are good preparation for work” (36% to 41%), and that “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students” (45% to 52%).
- 1.1.12 The proportion of stakeholders who agreed that “AS/A levels are well understood”, that “AS/A levels are a trusted qualification”, and that “AS/A levels are a good preparation for further study” remained unchanged (at around 60%, 80%, and 80% respectively).

New 9 to 1 grading scale

- 1.1.13 In the previous survey, wave 14, stakeholders were asked a number of questions about their awareness of the new 9 to 1 grading system which will be used for the first time in awarding the new GCSEs in English literature, English language, and mathematics in summer 2017. Wave 15 followed up these questions to identify any changes.
- 1.1.14 It should be noted that since the data was collected for this wave (in autumn 2016), Ofqual has run a wide-ranging communication and engagement campaign to raise awareness and understanding among stakeholders of the new grading system. Thus, this data is unlikely to reflect current levels of awareness. Instead, it provides a comparison point with wave 14, as well as with future waves of this survey.
- 1.1.15 The proportion of stakeholders who, in autumn 2016, were aware of the new 9 to 1 grading system was significantly higher for the current wave (66%) compared with wave 14 (58%). There were particularly large increases in the proportion of young people (24 percentage points) and parents (12 percentage points) who were aware.
- 1.1.16 For those who were aware of the new grading system, the proportion of stakeholders who understood that grade 9 is the best grade students can get remained unchanged from wave 14 (around 75%), although the proportion of teachers (84% to 89%), head teachers (90% to 96%), and young people (61% to 71%) with this knowledge was higher.

National Reference Test (NRT)

- 1.1.17 Due to its particular relevance, being introduced in 2017, a number of questions were asked to stakeholders about their understanding of the NRT.
- 1.1.18 Only 12% of stakeholders overall were aware of the NRT, with the most aware group being head teachers, 50% of who were aware, and the least being the general public at 2%.
- 1.1.19 Of the head teachers and teachers that were aware of the NRT, 36% agreed that they have adequate information about its purpose, and 47% were confident in their understanding of it.

The review of marking, moderation and appeals

- 1.1.20 In wave 14, stakeholders were asked about their perceptions of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (formerly known as Enquires about Results and Appeals). Wave 15 followed up on these questions.
- 1.1.21 There was no change in the proportion of stakeholders who were aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system compared with last year (43%), and head teachers remained the group with the highest proportion of awareness, at 75%.
- 1.1.22 Of the stakeholders who were aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system, 39% agreed that it is fair for GCSEs, and 38% that it is fair for AS/A levels. For both GCSEs and AS/A levels, head teachers were the only group for which a higher proportion disagreed than agreed that the system is fair.
- 1.1.23 When asked about whether they felt that they had adequate information about the review of marking, moderation and appeals system, overall more stakeholders disagreed (45%) than agreed (28%).

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

- 1.1.24 For the current wave, head teachers and teachers who had some responsibility for teaching GCSEs and/or AS/A levels were asked about their perceptions of special consideration, reasonable adjustments, and malpractice in schools and colleges.
- 1.1.25 The majority of head teacher and teachers agreed that they have adequate information about special consideration (68%), and that the arrangements make the qualification system fairer (83%).

- 1.1.26 Around half (53%) felt that the right arrangements are made for the right students.
- 1.1.27 The proportion of head teachers and teachers who agreed that they have adequate information about reasonable adjustments was lower than for special consideration, at 58%, as was the proportion who felt that the adjustments made the system fairer for all students (60%).
- 1.1.28 Around half of the head teachers and teachers (49%) felt that the right adjustments are made for the right students.
- 1.1.29 The majority of head teachers and teachers agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels (83%), that they know who to report an incident of malpractice to (86%), and that they are confident that incidents are fairly investigated (67%).

Vocational qualifications

Appeals against results

- 1.1.30 The current wave asked stakeholders about their awareness of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications taught in schools and colleges.
- 1.1.31 Overall, only 19% of stakeholders were aware of the system, although almost half (45%) of head teachers were aware.
- 1.1.32 Of those stakeholders who were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications taught in schools and colleges, around half (50%) agreed that they have adequate information about it, and that they were confident that the appeals are dealt with fairly (54%).

Malpractice

- 1.1.33 Head teachers and teachers with some responsibility for the teaching of vocational qualifications in schools and colleges were asked about their perceptions of malpractice in these assessments.
- 1.1.34 The majority (72%) of these stakeholders agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice, and that they know who to report an incident to (82%).
- 1.1.35 Over half (58%) of these head teachers and teachers were confident that incidents of malpractice in vocational qualifications in schools and colleges are fairly investigated.

Introduction

Background

2.1.1 This report presents the findings of wave 15 (2016/17) of the Perceptions Survey. This research project was commissioned by Ofqual and the research was managed by YouGov.

Context

- 2.1.2 In 2010, The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, established Ofqual as an independent statutory body with responsibility for the regulation of general and vocational qualifications in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland, taking over the regulatory role of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).
- 2.1.3 Ofqual regulates through recognising and monitoring organisations that deliver qualifications. Ofqual must collect and utilise insight on perceptions of the qualifications and qualifications system from the range of stakeholders that work with and use them.
- 2.1.4 To support this requirement Ofqual has continued (research originally commissioned by the QCA in 2003) to annually assess teachers', parents', students', the general public's, employers' and higher education institutions' perceptions of the A level examination system and, since wave 4 (2005), perceptions of the GCSE system. This large-scale research survey is unique in providing a wide overview of perceptions of general and other qualifications from the users of these qualifications.
- 2.1.5 For wave 15, the survey was split into two parts. The first part of the survey focussed on seven measures of confidence in the GCSE system and seven measures of confidence in the AS/A level system. These measures, selected through data analysis by Ofqual⁴, have all been asked in a directly comparable way in wave 13 and wave 14 of the Perceptions Survey, allowing a three year comparison to be made. The data from these measures have been analysed collectively to form a composite measure of confidence in the GCSE and AS/A levels system that will be tracked in future waves.

⁴ See Appendix A for more details of this analysis.

2.1.6 The second part of the survey asked a series of questions on different topics that covered questions on the 9 to 1 grading scale, National Reference Test, the review of marking, moderation and appeals system, special consideration, reasonable adjustments and malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels, the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges, and malpractice in vocational qualifications in schools and colleges. In future waves, this part of the survey will change to reflect topical issues at the time of data collection.

Geographical coverage

2.1.7 Ofqual regulates general and vocational qualifications in England (and until May 2016, vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland as well). The focus of this research was to gain the perceptions of head teachers, teachers, young people, parents, employers, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the general public in England. Samples of these groups were drawn from within England only.

Users of statistics

2.1.8 The annual Perceptions Survey is a long running measure of perceptions of the qualifications system. Some of the users of the statistics produced in wave 15 are the Department for Education, Education Select Committee, awarding organisations, media, subject associations and teaching unions.

Related statistics and publications

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

- Statistical First Release: Revised GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2015 to 2016,⁵ published by the Department for Education. This covers students' achievements in GCSEs and the equivalent regulated qualifications in schools at the end of key stage 4
- Statistical First Release: A level and other Level 3 Results 2014 to 2015 (Revised),⁶ published by the Department for Education. This provides information on achievements in advanced level examinations

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2015-to-2016>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-level-3-results-2014-to-2015-revised>

User feedback

2.1.10 We welcome your comments or suggestions on this version of the Perception Survey and how to improve the future versions. Please write to us at statistics@ofqual.gov.uk.

Research objectives

2.1.11 The aim of this research project was:

- To investigate head teachers', teachers', students', parents', the general public's, employers' and HEIs' perceptions and levels of confidence in qualifications and the examination system.

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

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

Methods and data limitations

Overview of method

2.1.13 Wave 15 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 in wave 13 (2014) and wave 14 (2015) of the Perceptions Survey and offers comparability in the mode of data collection.

2.1.14 The fieldwork was conducted between 2nd November and 2nd December, 2016. The fieldwork for wave 15 has been conducted slightly earlier in the academic year than previous waves when fieldwork was conducted in February and March.

2.1.15 This was done to reduce the time gap between the exam series that the survey covers (summer 2016) and the data collection (autumn 2016) so that the exam series was fresher in respondents' minds. This was particularly important given current developments in the qualifications system. Publishing survey results (in April 2017) before the start of the summer examination series should minimise the likelihood of any confusion with the summer 2017 exam series.

Sampling

2.1.16 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 B.

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

- 262 head teachers
- 601 teachers of GCSE, AS/A level and other general and vocational qualifications offered to 15- to 19-year-olds (referred to throughout this report as teachers)
- 313 young people, defined as those aged 15 to 19 who are studying/have studied/will study AS/A levels and/or GCSEs and/or other general and vocational qualifications
- 261 parents/carers of students who are taking or who have just taken AS/A levels, GCSEs and/or other general and vocational qualifications
- 265 academic professionals⁷ 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)
- 264 senior/middle managers who worked for an organisation that has recruited young people (aged 16 to 25) in the past 12 months (referred to throughout this report as employers)
- 1,008 members of the public

2.1.18 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. However, while the sampling approach has aimed to identify groups of participants that are representative, given that a survey of this kind only captures the views of those involved, throughout this report responses attributed to groups (for example, teachers, parents etc.) reflect only those respondents included in the study.

⁷ This sample consisted of academics and a small number of admission staff. Please see the technical Appendix B for a description of the sample profile

Questionnaire design

2.1.19 The wave 15 questionnaire was designed in conjunction with the YouGov project team. The survey covered themes explored in previous waves of the research, namely, perceptions of general and vocational qualifications and awareness of changes to the qualification system.

2.1.20 The design of wave 15 differed from wave 14 in that the survey was split into two sections:

- The first section was completed by all stakeholders and consisted of a set of measures of confidence in the GCSE and AS/A level systems. These questions were asked in a comparable way in waves 13 and 14 of the Perceptions Survey, and therefore made a three year comparison possible.
- The second section of the survey consisted of a number of questions, asked of the relevant stakeholders, on the following topics: the new 9 to 1 grading system; the introduction of the National Reference Test; processes for special consideration and reasonable adjustment for GCSEs and AS/A levels; processes for reporting malpractice for general and vocational qualifications in schools and colleges; and the examination results appeal processes for general and vocational qualifications in schools and colleges.

2.1.21 A copy of all of the questions is available alongside publication of this report.

Guidance on analysis

2.1.22 The research was undertaken with seven different sample groups. These data have been combined into one 'all' group named 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 total number.

2.1.23 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 data have not been replicated in full for each question across each sample group – 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.

- 2.1.24 The survey contained a series of statements that were asked against a 5-point agreement scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree) with a don't know option. Where shown throughout the report, agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree, and disagree is an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.
- 2.1.25 Reported differences are based on significance testing and the effective base acknowledges the sample sizes of each sub-group to assess whether the differences reported are true differences between the sub-groups who responded to the surveys, and between this wave and previous waves of the survey. Where the terms 'significant' or 'significantly' are used this refers to the fact that the difference between the data points is statistically significant as tested at the 95% confidence level. Not all statistically significant differences have been identified and care has been taken to use more reliable base sizes of over 50 respondents. This is YouGov's approach to all research deliverables.
- 2.1.26 Below each figure an 'effective base' is quoted, which differs from the sample sizes given above. These numbers are a result of the data weighting procedure that is applied (see Appendix B) and are the base used for statistical analysis.

Section 1: Composite confidence measure

Composite confidence measure

3.1.1 The first section of this report presents a composite confidence measure, which has been developed this year as a means of quantifying overall confidence in GCSE and AS/A level qualifications, and of comparing changes over time.

Method

3.1.2 The composite confidence measure was calculated based on seven criteria that were measured in waves 13, 14 and 15: understanding, trust, maintenance of standards, preparation for further study, preparation for work, skill development, and accuracy in marking.

3.1.3 These criteria were presented to respondents as seven separate statements within a scale-based question, which ranged from strong agreement to strong disagreement. These questions were asked separately for GCSEs and AS/A levels. Based on their choices, respondents were assigned a score between 1 and 5 for each of the seven 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

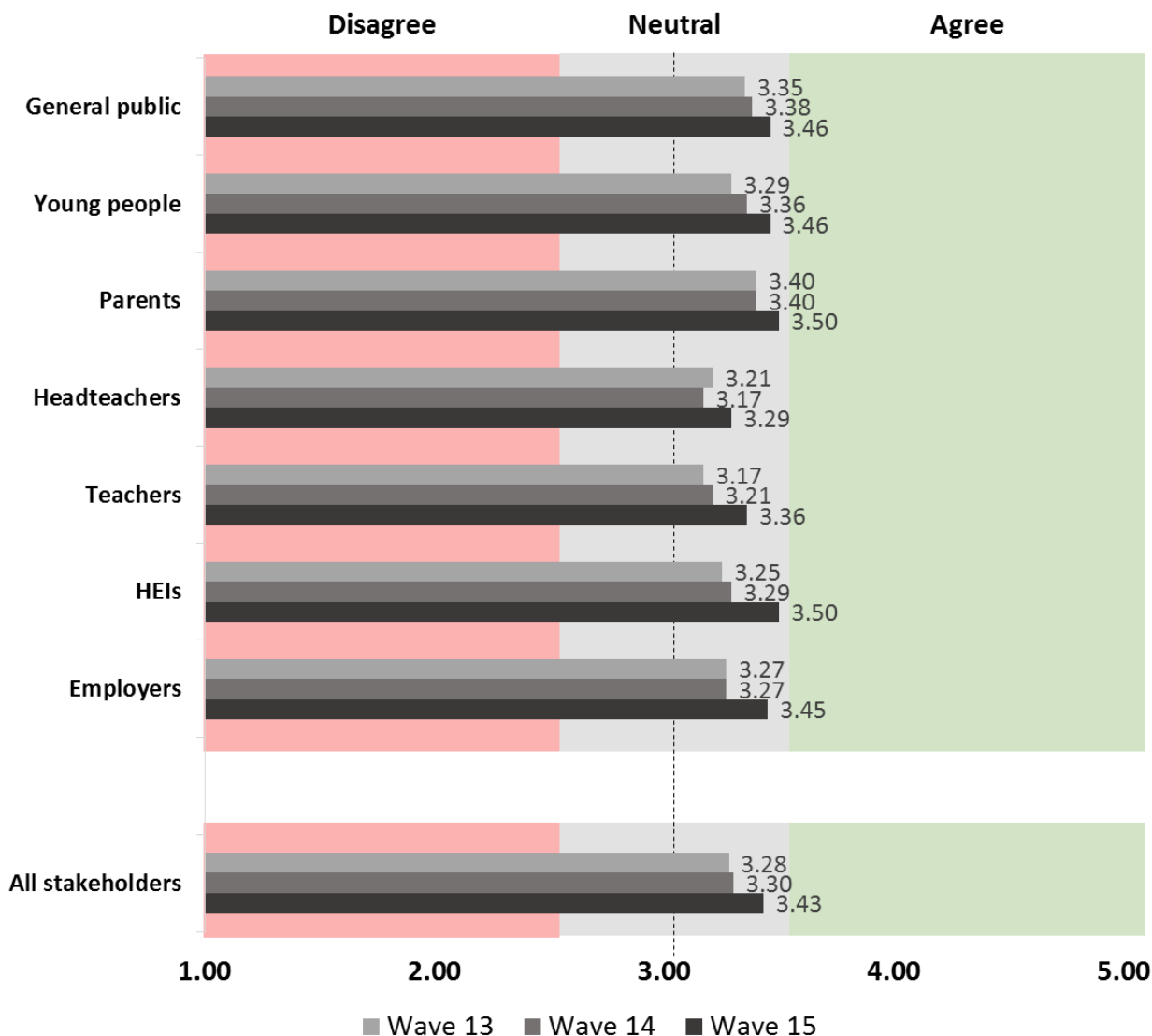
3.1.4 Next, an average of the individual scores for the seven criteria was calculated for each respondent, which represents the overall confidence measure. This was done separately for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

3.1.5 Finally, an average of the overall scores for all respondents was calculated to produce one confidence measure for all stakeholders for GCSEs and one for AS/A levels. Subsequently, an average of this measure was produced for each of the individual stakeholder groups. This method was applied to the data from waves 13, 14, and the current wave in order to make a comparison of confidence levels over a three year period.

Composite confidence in the GCSE system

3.1.6 Among all stakeholders, the overall average measure for confidence in GCSE qualifications was 3.43 out of 5 (Figure 1). This is a significant increase from previous waves when the overall measure was 3.30 in wave 14 and 3.28 in wave 13.

Figure 1: Composite confidence measure: GCSEs



Base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,927; General public 977; Parents 258; Young people 311; Teachers 594; Head teachers 262; HEIs 265; Employers 260

Note: Those who selected 'Don't know' have been excluded

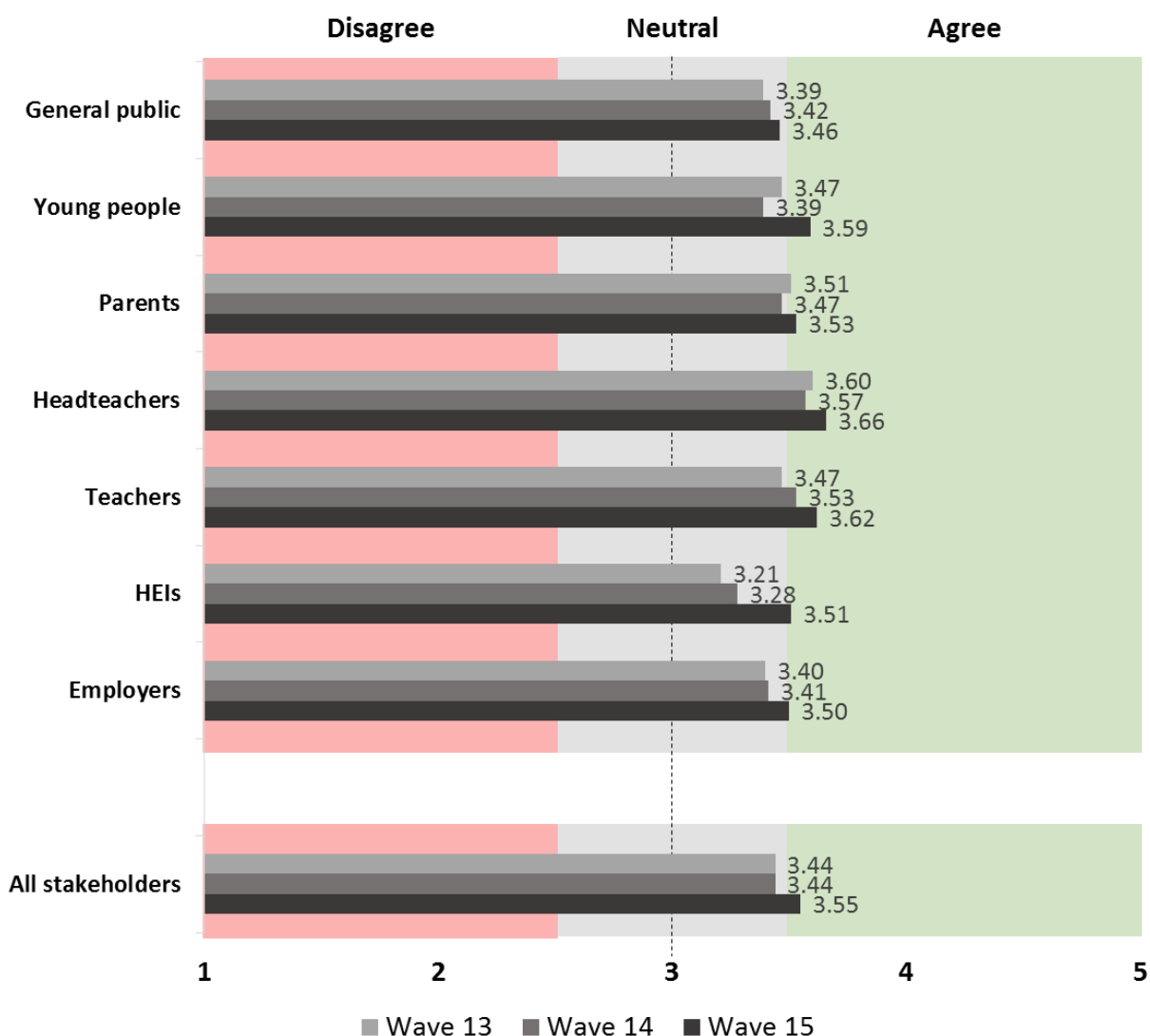
Composite confidence in the AS/A level system

3.1.7 The average confidence measure for AS/A level qualifications was slightly higher, sitting at 3.55 out of 5 (Figure 2). This is also a significant increase from earlier waves when the measure was 3.44 in waves 13 and 14.

3.1.8 In comparison with waves 13 and 14, there has been a significant increase in the composite measure in wave 15 for both GCSEs and AS/A levels for all stakeholder groups, with the exception of the general public.

3.1.9 For some groups, a three year trend can also be observed in the gradual increase of the composite measure between waves 13 and 15. This is the case for young people in their perceptions of GCSEs, and teachers and HEIs for both GCSEs and AS/A levels.

Figure 2: Composite confidence measure: AS/A levels



Base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,868; General public 955; Parents 257; Young people 307; Teachers 575; Head teachers 252; HEIs 265; Employers 257

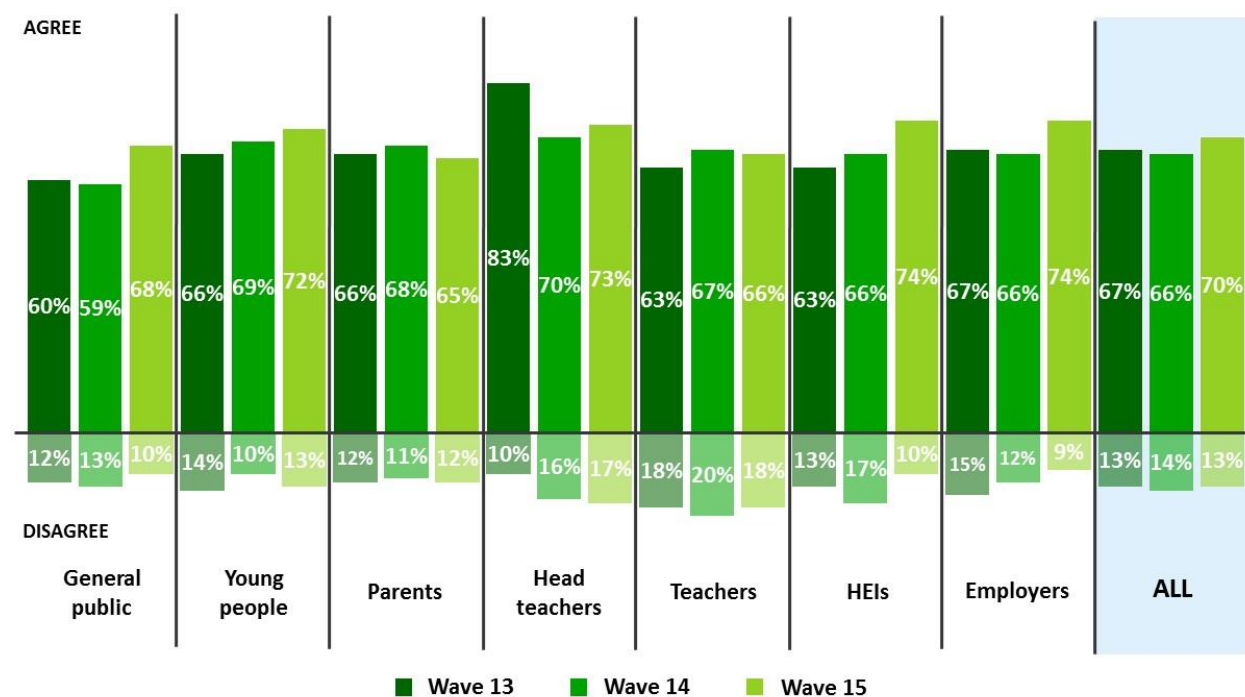
Note: Those who selected 'Don't know' have been excluded

Section 2: Perceptions of GCSEs

Overall perceptions of GCSEs

4.1.1 All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with seven statements about GCSEs. Figure 3 shows the responses for the statement “GCSEs are well understood by people” for waves 13, 14 and 15.

Figure 3: GCSEs are well understood by people



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree is an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

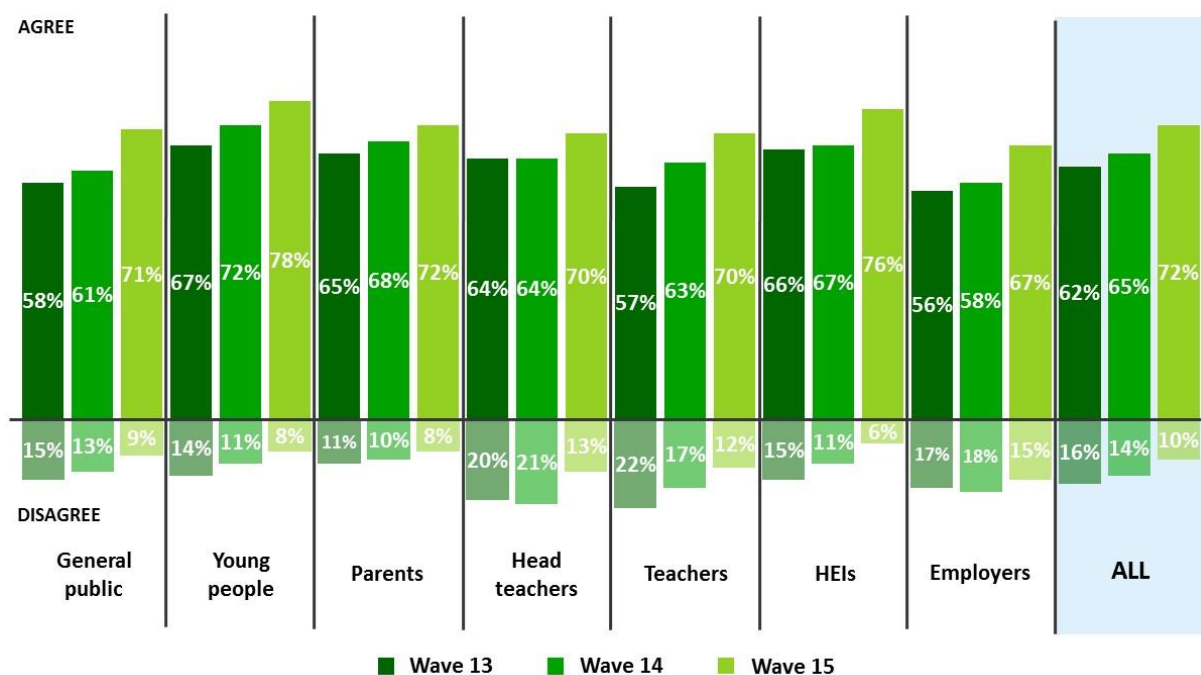
4.1.2 Levels of agreement that “GCSEs are well understood by people” have increased, with seven out of ten stakeholders (70%) in agreement that “GCSEs are well understood by people” in wave 15 compared with 66% in wave 14. There has been no change in the proportion of stakeholders that disagreed with the statement.

4.1.3 There has been a significant increase in the proportion of the general public who agree that “GCSEs are well understood by people”, with seven out of ten (68%) agreeing compared with six out of ten (59%) in the previous wave.

4.1.4 There have also been increases in the proportion of HEIs and employers who agreed that “GCSEs are well understood by people”.

4.1.5 Stakeholder agreement that “GCSEs are a trusted qualification” has also increased over the previous three years, as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: GCSEs are a trusted qualification



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

4.1.6 Seventy two per cent of stakeholders agreed that “GCSEs are a trusted qualification” compared with 65% who reported this in wave 14 and 62% in wave 13.

4.1.7 The majority of all groups agreed that “GCSEs are a trusted qualification” and, compared with the previous wave of this study, there have been increases in the proportions of teachers, the general public, HEIs and employers who agreed with the statement.

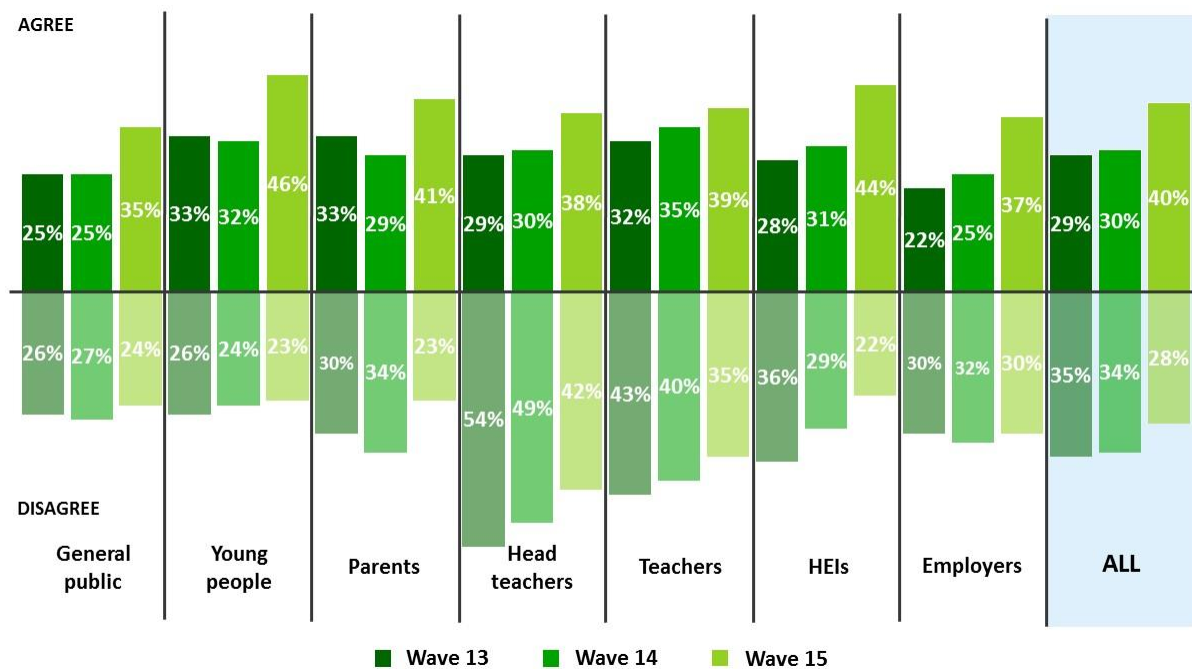
4.1.8 Young people (78%) offered the highest level of agreement that “GCSEs are a trusted qualification” and were significantly more likely than the general public, head teachers, teachers and employers to agree that this was the case.

Confidence in GCSE standards and marking

4.1.9 Figure 5 shows the responses for the statement “GCSEs standards are maintained year on year” for wave 13, 14 and 15.

4.1.10 Four out of ten stakeholders (40%) agreed that “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”, and three out of ten (28%) disagreed. Compared with wave 14 and wave 13, wave 15 showed an increase in the proportion of all stakeholders who agreed that “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”.

Figure 5: GCSE standards are maintained year on year

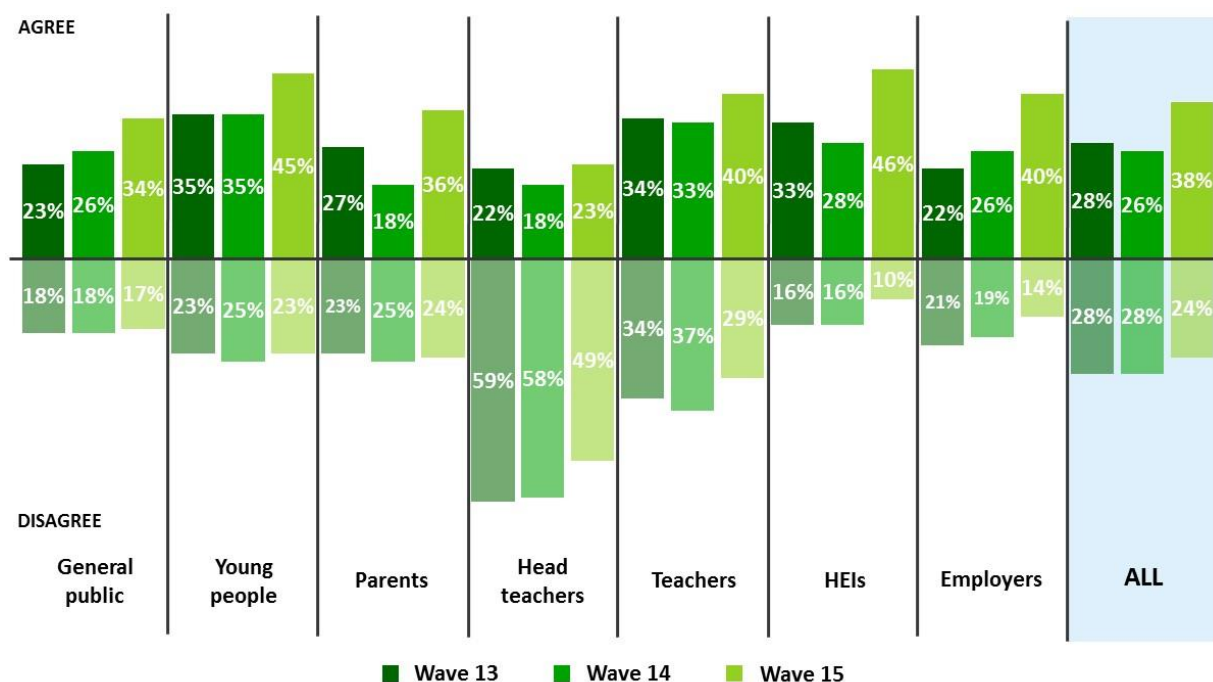


Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

- 4.1.11 All stakeholder groups, with the exception of teachers, reported higher levels of agreement that “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”.
- 4.1.12 There was a 14 percentage point increase in the proportion of young people who agreed that “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”, bringing the perceptions of young people in line with that of head teachers, and significantly higher than the proportion of teachers, who agreed that “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”.
- 4.1.13 Although there has been an increase in the proportion of head teachers who agreed that “GCSE standards are maintained year on year”, this group continued to be the ones to express the highest proportion of disagreement with the statement (42%).
- 4.1.14 There have also been positive increases in the proportion of all stakeholders who agreed that “the marking of GCSEs is accurate” (Figure 6). Four out of ten (38%) stakeholders agreed that “the marking of GCSEs is accurate”, significantly higher than the 26% and 28% who reported this in waves 14 and 13 respectively.

Figure 6: The marking of GCSEs is accurate



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

4.1.15 Excluding head teachers, across all stakeholder groups there have been statistically significant increases in the proportion of respondents who agreed that “the marking of GCSEs is accurate”. Comparing wave 15 with wave 13 there have been large increases in the proportions who agree that “the marking of GCSEs is accurate” for young people (10 percentage points), HEIs (13 percentage points) and employers (18 percentage points).

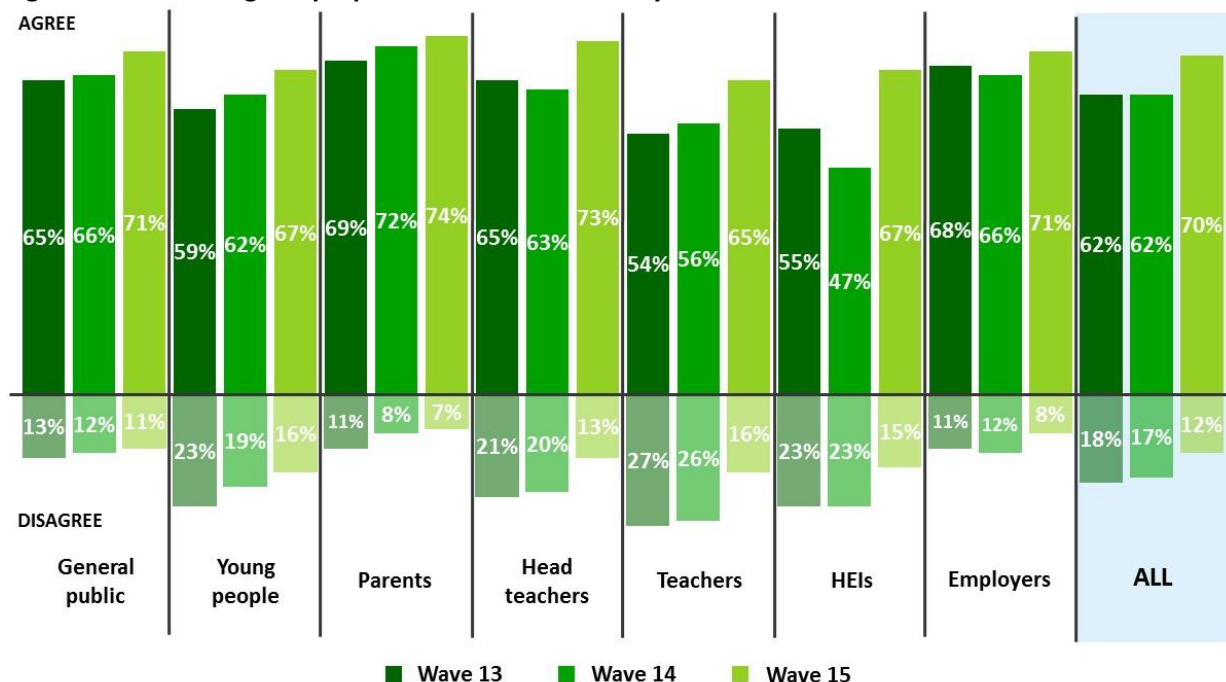
4.1.16 There continued to be a much higher proportion of head teachers compared to any other group who disagreed that “the making of GCSEs is accurate”, although this proportion was less in wave 15 (49%) than it was in waves 14 (58%) and 13 (59%).

Skills and preparation

4.1.17 Figures 7, 8 and 9 show stakeholder responses to the statements “GCSEs are good preparation for further study”, “GCSEs are good preparation for work” and “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students” from waves 13, 14 and 15 of the Perceptions Survey.

4.1.18 There has been an increase in the proportion of all stakeholders who felt that “GCSEs are good preparation for further study”. Seven out of ten stakeholders (70%) agreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for further study”, higher than the proportion of all stakeholders who reported this in waves 13 and 14, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: GCSEs are good preparation for further study



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

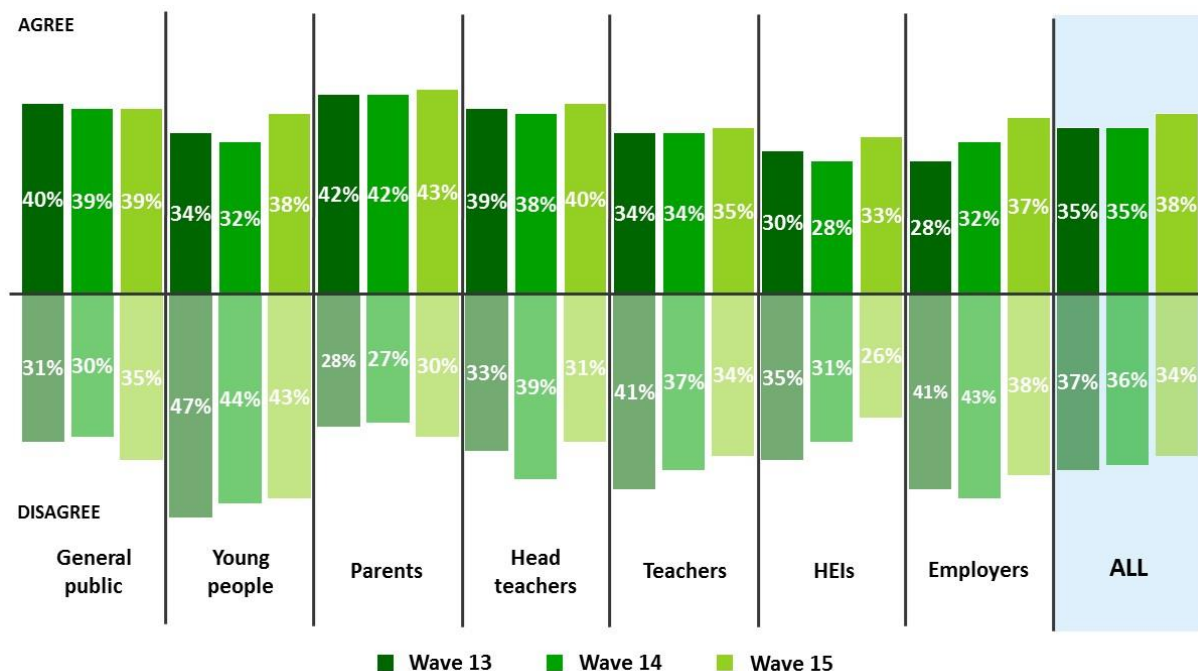
4.1.19 The majority of all stakeholder groups agreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for further study”, with the proportion of head teachers, teachers and HEIs who agreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for further study” being larger for wave 15 than waves 14 and 13.

4.1.20 Considering the views of young people, the proportion that expressed agreement that “GCSEs are good preparation for further study” remained unchanged compared with wave 14 but has increased from the level reported in wave 13.

4.1.21 Teachers (16%) and young people (16%) remained more likely than the general public (11%), employers (8%) and parents (7%) to disagree that “GCSEs are good preparation for further study”, although these proportions were smaller than in previous waves.

4.1.22 The proportion of all stakeholders that agreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for work” has remained unchanged (Figure 8) across the three waves.

Figure 8: GCSEs are good preparation for work



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

4.1.23 The proportion of employers who agreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for work” has increased in comparison with wave 13, but there has been no change since wave 14.

4.1.24 Four out of ten (43%) young people disagreed that “GCSEs are good preparation for work”, significantly higher than the levels of disagreement offered from all other stakeholder groups excluding employers.

4.1.25 The proportion of all stakeholders who agreed that “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students” has remained unchanged compared with waves 13 and 14 of the Perceptions Survey, with overall six out of ten (57%) agreeing with the statement (Figure 9).

Figure 9: GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

4.1.26 A higher proportion of young people and teachers than the general public and parents disagreed that “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students”.

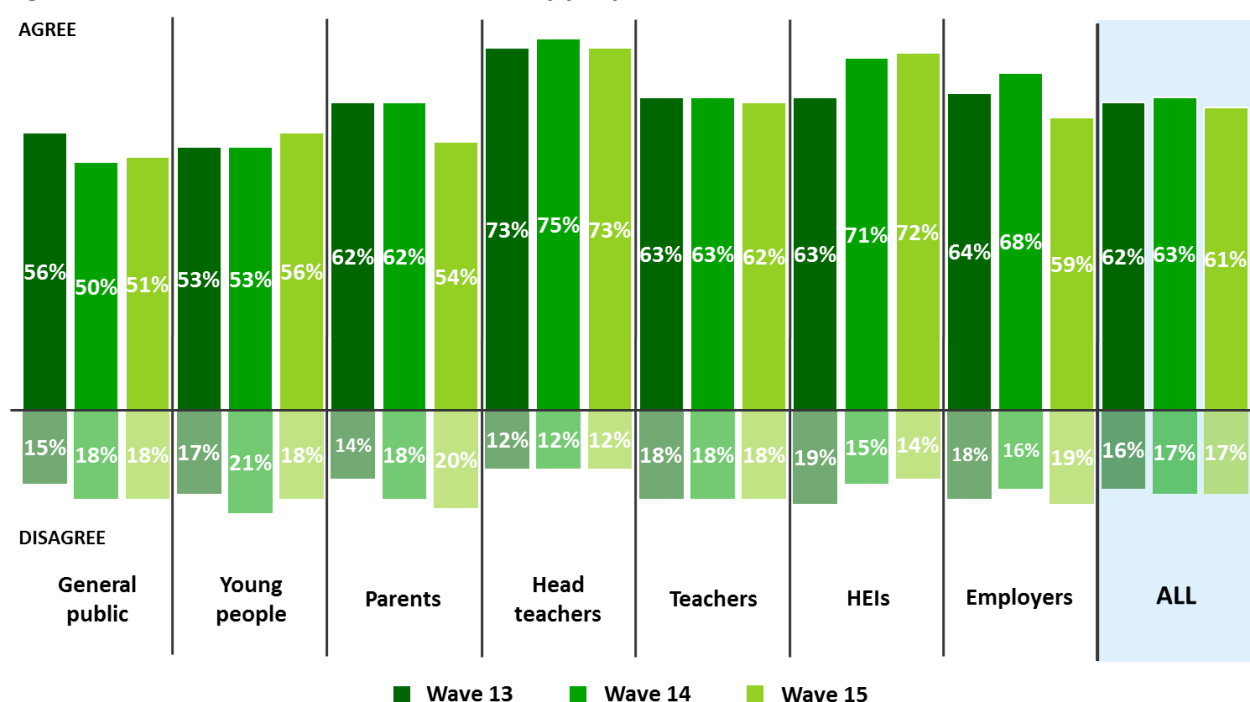
Section 3: Perceptions of AS/A levels

Overall perceptions of AS/A levels

5.1.1 All stakeholders were asked to report their levels of agreement with seven statements about AS/A levels.

5.1.2 Figure 10 shows the responses for the statement “AS/A levels are well understood by people” for waves 13, 14 and 15. Levels of agreement that “AS/A levels are well understood by people” remained broadly consistent across waves 13 (62%), 14 (63%), and 15 (61%).

Figure 10: AS/A levels are well understood by people



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

5.1.3 For all stakeholder groups, the majority agreed that “AS/A levels are well understood by people”.

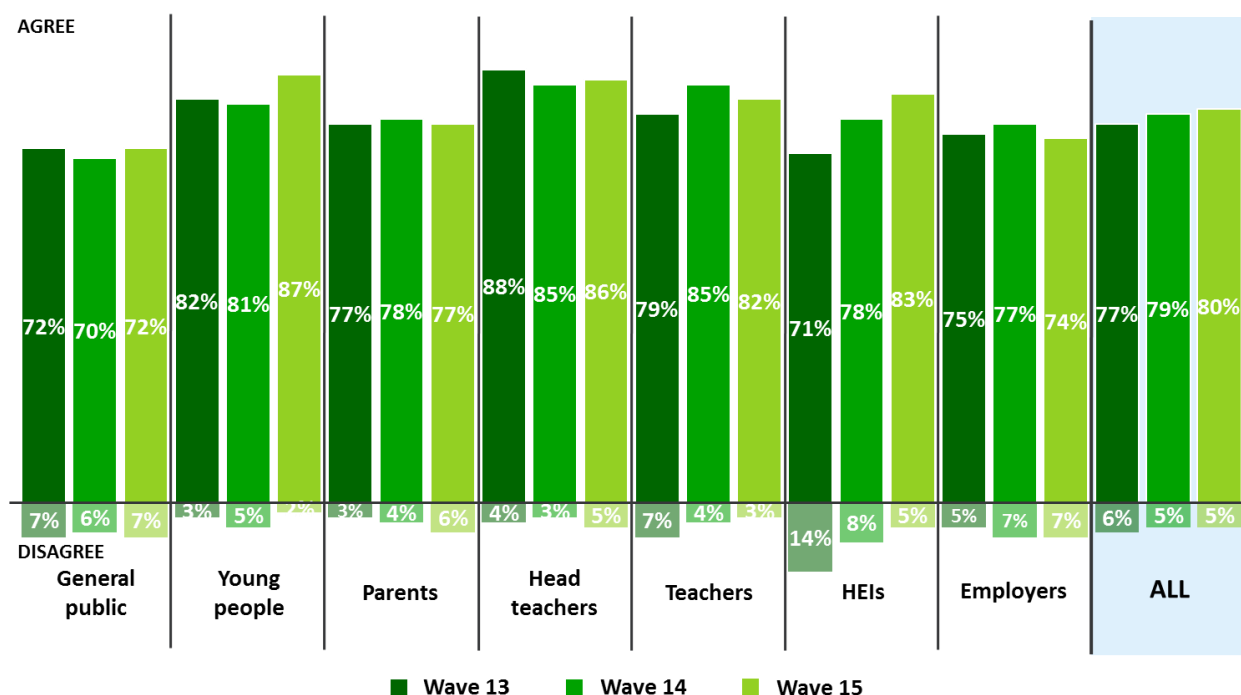
5.1.4 Consistent with past waves, head teachers (73%) and HEIs (72%) were most likely to consider AS/A levels to be well understood, followed by teachers (62%) and employers (59%).

5.1.5 Compared with other groups, young people (56%), parents (54%) and the general public (51%) reported lower levels of agreement with the statement that “AS/A levels are well understood”.

5.1.6 These perceptions among each group were consistent with the levels of agreement reported in wave 14, with the exception of employers, a smaller proportion of which agreed that “AS/A levels are well understood by people” than in wave 14 (59% compared with 68%).

5.1.7 Consistent with previous years, levels of trust in AS/A level qualifications were high, with a strong majority of stakeholders in agreement that “AS/A levels are a trusted qualification”, as shown in Figure 11. Four in five (80%) felt that “AS/A levels are trusted qualifications”, which is consistent with waves 13 and 14, when 77% and 79% respectively agreed with the statement (Figure 11).

Figure 11: AS/A levels are a trusted qualification



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

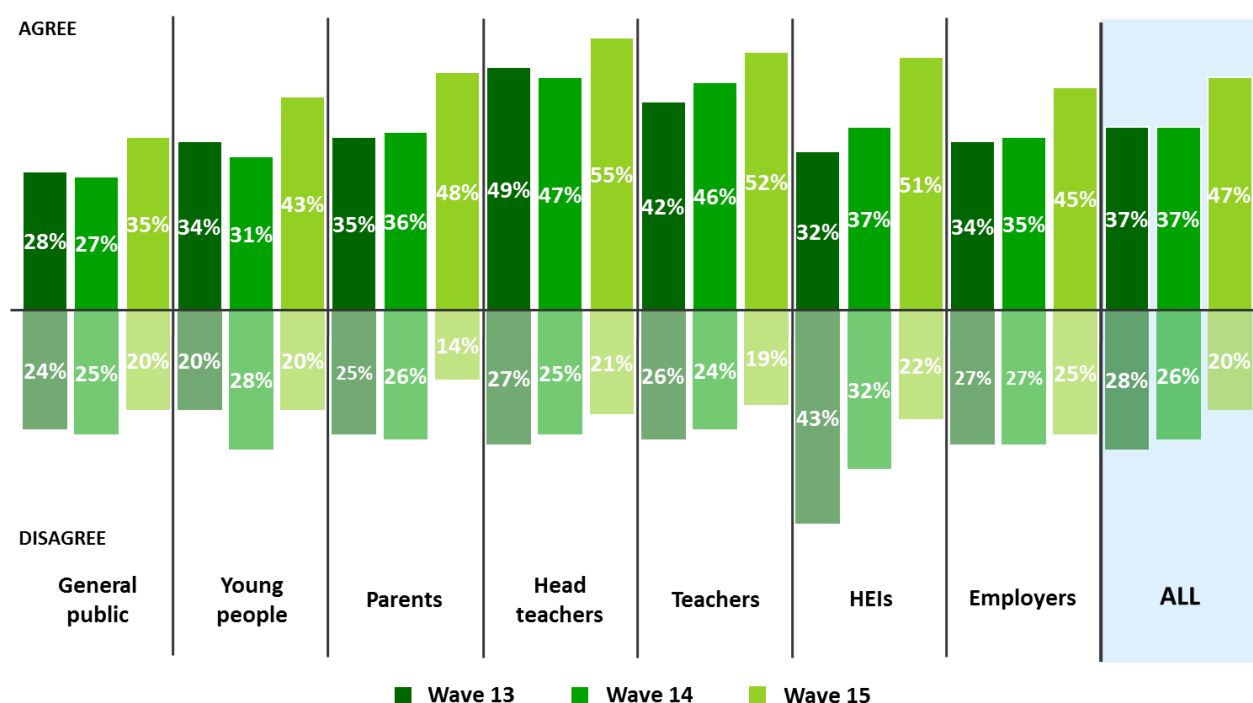
5.1.8 In line with their perceptions of AS/A levels being well understood, head teachers were among those most likely to believe that “AS/A levels are a trusted qualification”, with 86% agreeing with the statement. A large proportion of young people (87%), HEIs (83%), teachers (82%) and parents (77%) also agreed with the statement.

5.1.9 In the current wave, a larger proportion of young people agreed that “AS/A level are a trusted qualification”, with 87% agreeing compared with 81% in wave 14 and 82% in wave 13.

AS/A level standards and marking

5.1.10 Nearly half of stakeholders (47%) agreed that “AS/A level standards are maintained year on year”, as shown in Figure 12. There has been a significant increase compared with previous years in the proportion who agreed with this statement, with it rising ten percentage points from 37% in both waves 13 and 14.

Figure 12: AS/A level standards are maintained year on year



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

5.1.11 Looking at individual stakeholder groups more specifically, consistent with previous years, head teachers (55%) and teachers (52%) were among those reporting higher levels of agreement that “AS/A level standards are maintained year on year”.

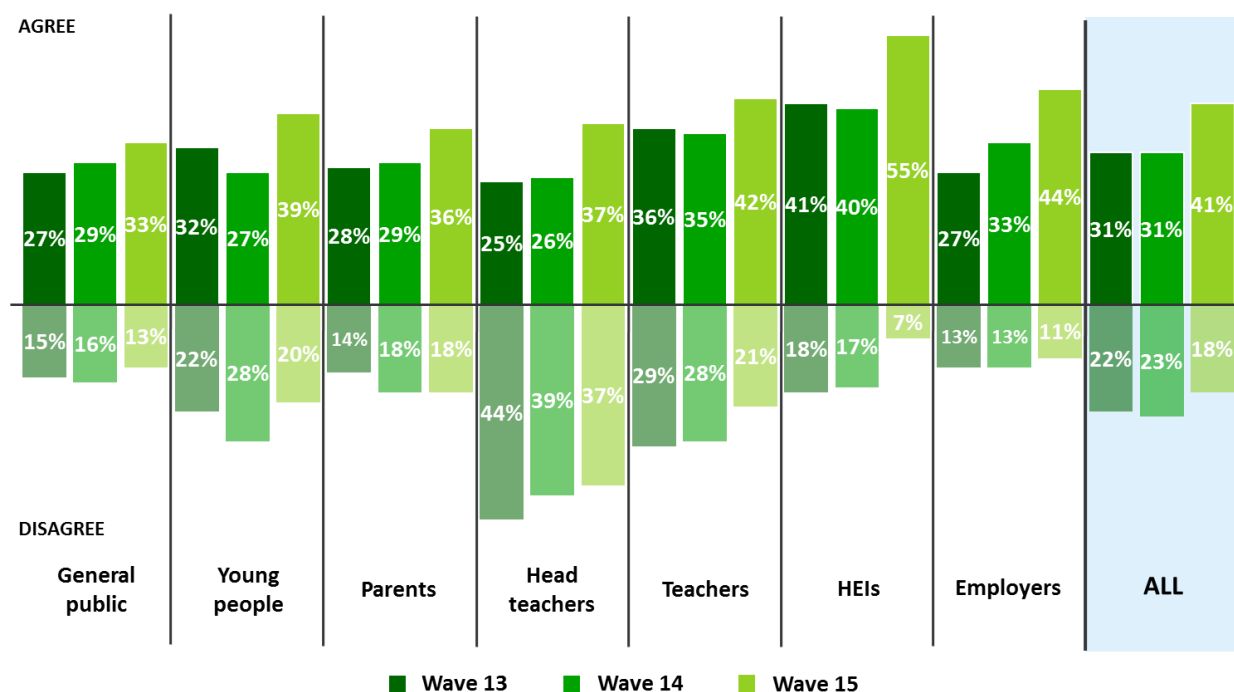
5.1.12 Over the past three waves, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of teachers who agreed that “AS/A level standards are maintained year on year”, from 42% in wave 13 to 52% in wave 15. This could represent an emerging trend among teachers, with the figure having risen by ten percentage points over two years.

5.1.13 Similarly, there was a significant increase over the past three waves in the proportion of HEIs who agreed that “AS/A level standards are maintained year on year” (from 32% in wave 13 to 51% in wave 15), meaning that their overall level of agreement is now nearly equal to that of head teachers and teachers.

5.1.14 The general public (35%), young people (43%), parents (48%) and employers (45%) also reported an increased level of confidence in the maintenance of AS/A level standards in comparison with previous waves.

5.1.15 In wave 15 there was an increase in the proportion of all stakeholders who agreed that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate” (Figure 13). Two-in-five stakeholders (41%) held this belief, in comparison with 31% in both waves 13 and 14.

Figure 13: The marking of AS/A levels is accurate



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

5.1.16 As observed in previous waves, head teachers were most likely to disagree that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate”. In wave 15, 37% of head teachers disagreed with the statement compared with 21% of teachers and 20% of young people, the next highest groups.

5.1.17 However, compared with wave 14, there was a significant increase in the proportion of both teachers (35% to 42%) and head teachers (26% to 37%) who agreed that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate”.

5.1.18 Only a very small proportion of HEIs (7%) disagreed that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate”. The majority (55%) agreed with the statement. Notably, there has been a significant shift among HEIs in comparison with previous years, when 41% in wave 13 and 40% in wave 14 agreed that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate”.

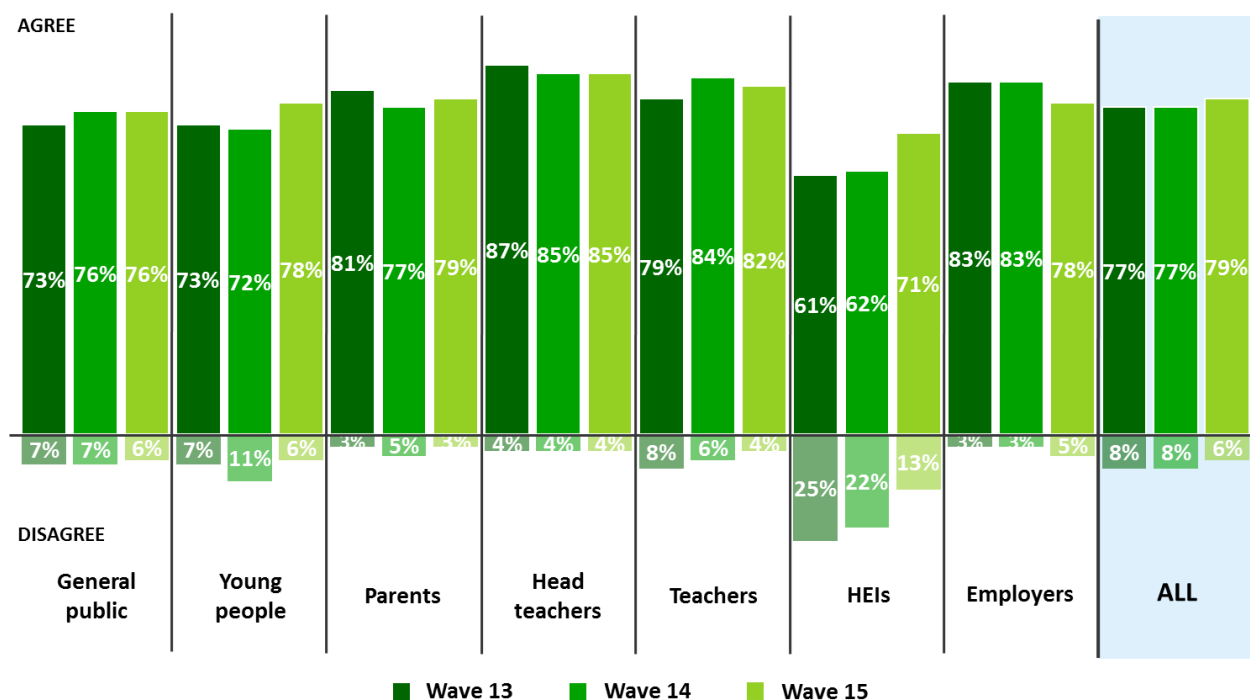
5.1.19 Roughly one third of the general public (33%) and parents (36%) agreed that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate”, and a smaller proportion disagreed with this statement. This is broadly consistent with waves 13 and 14 for both groups.

5.1.20 Among employers, 44% agreed that “the marking of AS/A levels is accurate”, while a much smaller proportion (11%) did not. Over the course of the last three waves, a gradual rise in the proportion who agreed with this statement has been observed, with a significant increase between waves 14 and 15.

AS/ A level preparation and further study

5.1.21 Four out of five stakeholders (79%) agreed that “AS/A levels are good preparation for further study” (Figure 14). This is consistent with waves 13 and 14, when 77% agreed with this statement.

Figure 14: AS/A levels are good preparation for further study



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

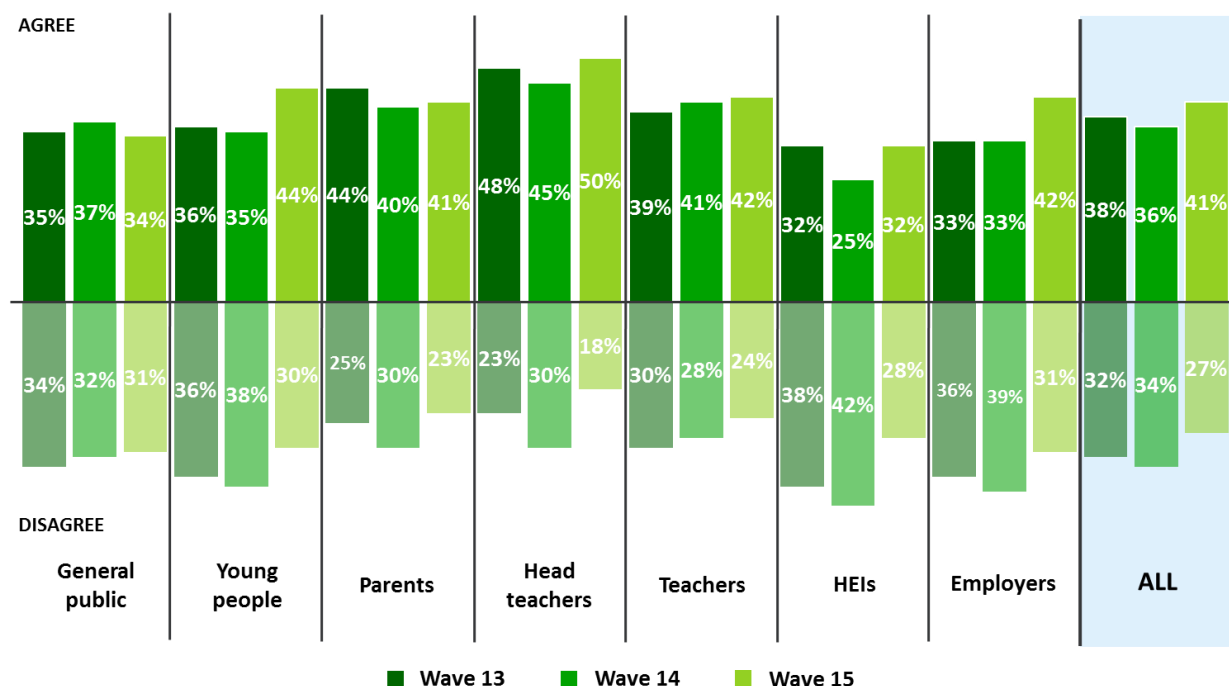
Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

5.1.22 Head teachers and teachers (85% and 82%, respectively) expressed the highest levels of agreement with the statement that “AS/A levels are good preparation for further study”, as seen in Figure 14. A strong majority of all other stakeholder groups were also in consensus (79% among parents; 78% among young people; 78% among employers; 76% among the general public; and 71% among HEIs).

5.1.23 The proportion who agreed that “AS/A levels are good preparation for further study” has remained broadly consistent with previous years for all stakeholder groups, with the exception of HEIs, among whom there was an increase from 62% in wave 14 to 71% in wave 15.

5.1.24 The proportion of all stakeholders who agreed that “AS/A levels are good preparation for work” has increased from wave 14 (36%) to wave 15 (41%) (Figure 15). Between wave 13 and wave 14, this figure was relatively stable.

Figure 15: AS/A levels are good preparation for work



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

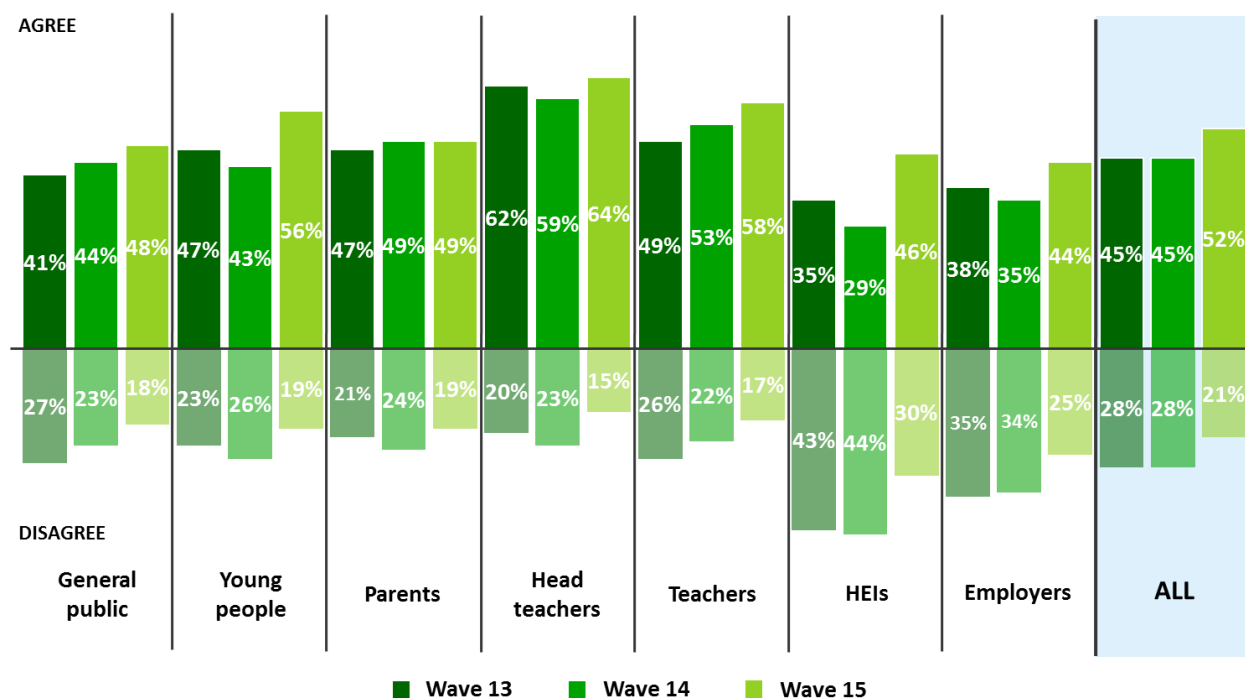
Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

5.1.25 One in two head teachers (50%) agreed that “AS/A levels are good preparation for work”. Although higher proportions agreed than the other groups, similar proportions of young people (44%), teachers (42%), employers (42%) and parents (41%) agreed with the statement.

5.1.26 This perception has remained relatively stable for most stakeholder groups over the past three waves with the exception of young people and employers, among whom there was a significant increase in the proportion who agreed that “AS/A levels are good preparation for work” (9 percentage points for both groups).

5.1.27 Around half of stakeholders (52%) agreed that “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students”, as shown in Figure 16. Similar to perceptions of preparation for work, there was an increase compared with previous years in the proportion of all stakeholders who agreed that “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills”, rising from 45% in waves 13 and 14.

Figure 16: AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

5.1.28 Head teachers and teachers (64% and 58%, respectively) reported the highest level of agreement that “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students”, followed closely by students themselves (56%). Slightly less than half among the other groups agreed with this statement (49% among parents; 48% among the general public; 46% among HEIs; and 44% among employers).

5.1.29 Compared with the previous wave, the proportion of young people, employers and HEIs who agreed that “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students” has increased. Among the other stakeholder groups, levels of agreement remained consistent.

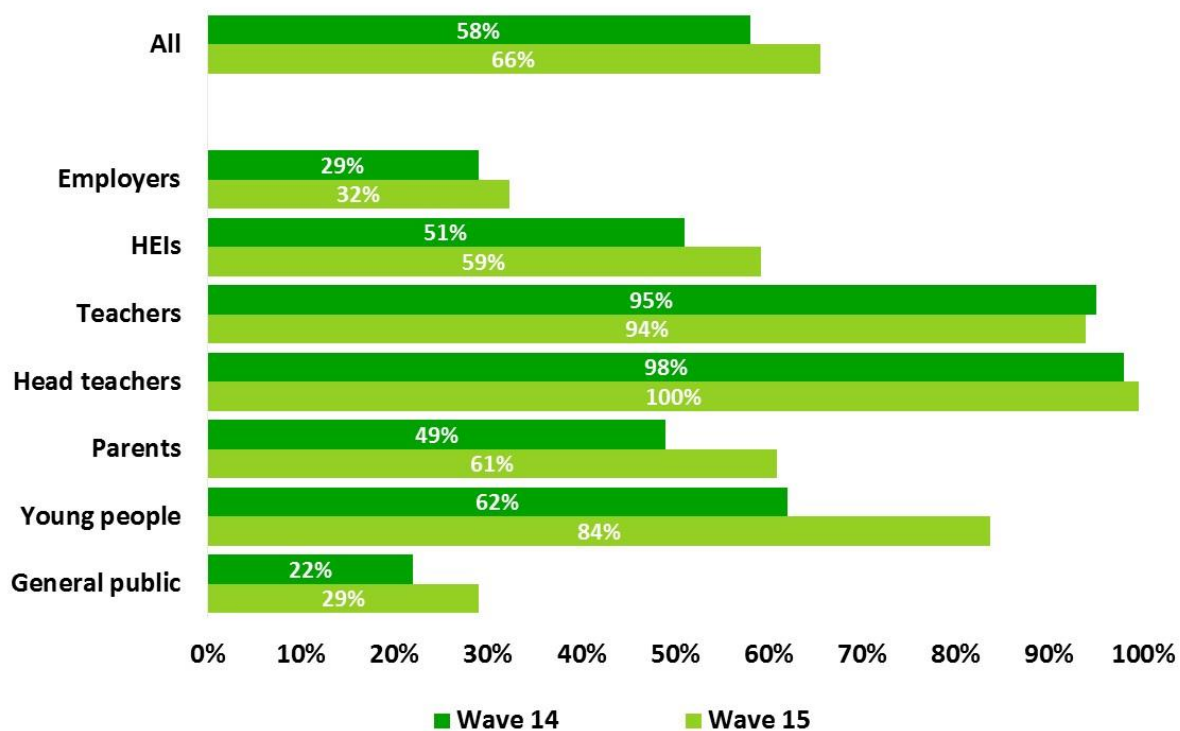
Section 4: New 9 to 1 grading scale

- 6.1.1 A new grading system is being introduced gradually for GCSEs, with the first subjects (mathematics, English language, and English literature) having been taught from September 2015, and to be first examined in summer 2017. In wave 14 of the Perceptions Survey, and again in the current wave, stakeholders were asked about their awareness and knowledge of these new grades.
- 6.1.2 Although the current data act as a useful monitoring tool, it should be noted that, compared to its collection in November 2016, a number of campaign activities have been run by Ofqual that aimed to raise the awareness of the new 9 to 1 grading system. These included items in educational-topic newsletters and on relevant websites, coverage by the Times Education Supplement and the BBC, webinars viewed over 3,000 times collectively, the launch of a dedicated e-bulletin, and resources (such as a flyer, a newsletter item and text messages) made available for schools to download to inform their communities.
- 6.1.3 It can therefore be expected that the current levels of awareness (at the time of publishing) might be higher than reported here. Ofqual is also planning a range of further campaign activities for the coming months, including promotional videos aimed at different audiences that will be available on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Video on Demand (VoD) advertising.
- 6.1.4 For more information about the 9 to 1 grading system, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-gcse-9-to-1-grades-coming-soon>.

Awareness and understanding

- 6.1.5 The proportion of all stakeholders who were aware of the new 9 to 1 grading scale for GCSEs has increased by eight percentage points compared with wave 14, standing at 66% in wave 15 up from 58% in wave 14 (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Are you aware of the new 9 to 1 grading scale to be used in new GCSEs? – Proportion aware

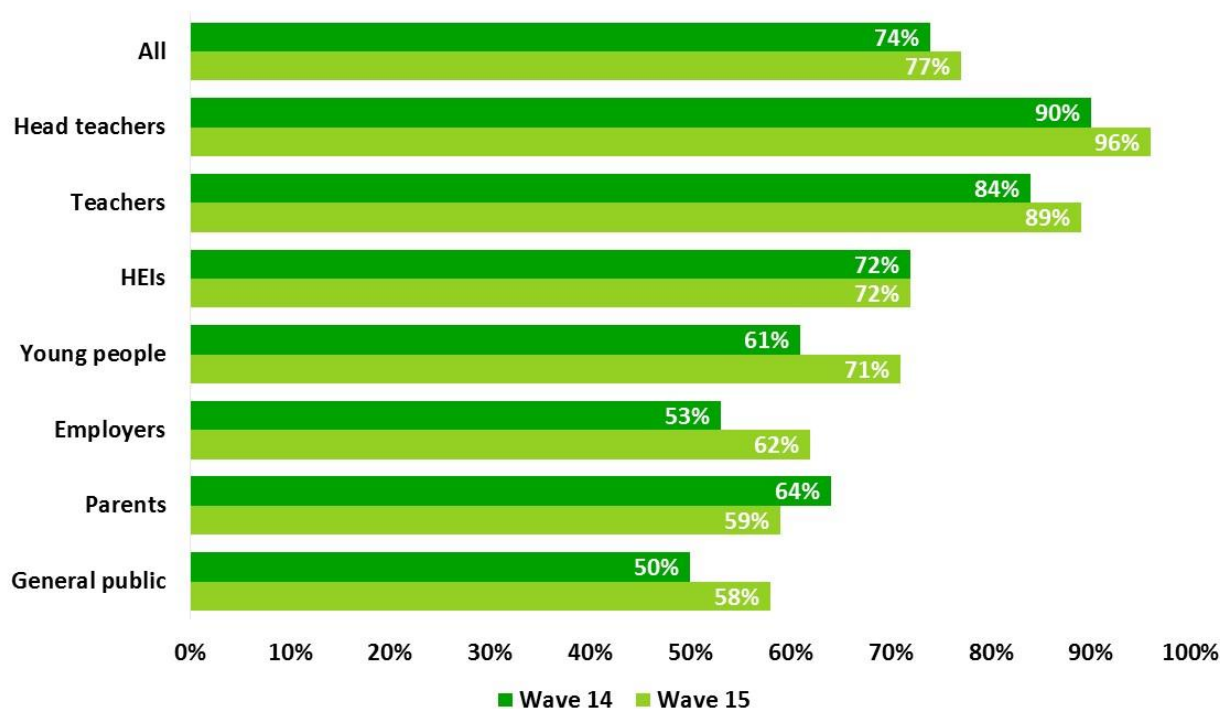


Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

- 6.1.6 All head teachers (100%) were aware of the new 9 to 1 grading scale for GCSEs and teachers’ levels of awareness remained high at 94%. Awareness among head teachers and teachers continued to be significantly higher than any other group.
- 6.1.7 Awareness among young people increased significantly from six out of ten (62%) being aware of the new 9 to 1 grading scale in wave 14, to eight out of ten (84%) in wave 15. The percentage of young people reporting that they were not aware has halved compared to wave 14 (32% down to 15% in wave 15).
- 6.1.8 Although young people’s awareness continued to be significantly higher than that of parents, the level of awareness among parents regarding the new 9 to 1 grading system has also increased significantly compared with wave 14 from 49% up to 61% in wave 15.
- 6.1.9 The lowest levels of awareness of the new 9 to 1 grading scale for GCSEs continued to be seen among employers and the general public. While awareness among employers stayed the same, awareness among the general public has increased significantly (22% in wave 14 up to 29% in wave 15).

6.1.10 On a par with wave 14, among the stakeholders aware of the new grading scale, three quarters (77%) reported that grade 9 was the best grade that students can achieve under the new grading system in wave 15 (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Based on your understanding of the 9 to 1 grading scale, what is the best grade that students can get? – Proportion of each stakeholder group who selected ‘9’



Effective base for wave 15 All respondents aware of new grading scale. All stakeholders 1,409; General public 292; Parents 159; Young people 261; Teachers 565; Head teachers 260; HEIs 158; Employers 88

6.1.11 The percentage of head teachers and teachers who correctly identified that grade 9 was the best grade that students can achieve under the new grading system has increased significantly (90% in wave 14 to 96% in wave 15 for head teachers, and 84% in wave 14 to 89% in wave 15 for teachers).

6.1.12 In addition to head teachers and teachers, the percentage of young people who correctly identified that grade 9 was the best grade that students can achieve under the new grading system also increased significantly (61% in wave 14 to 71% in wave 15).

6.1.13 The general public continued to have the lowest levels of understanding of the new grading system for GCSEs with just under six in ten (58%) identifying grade 9 as the highest grade that students can achieve.

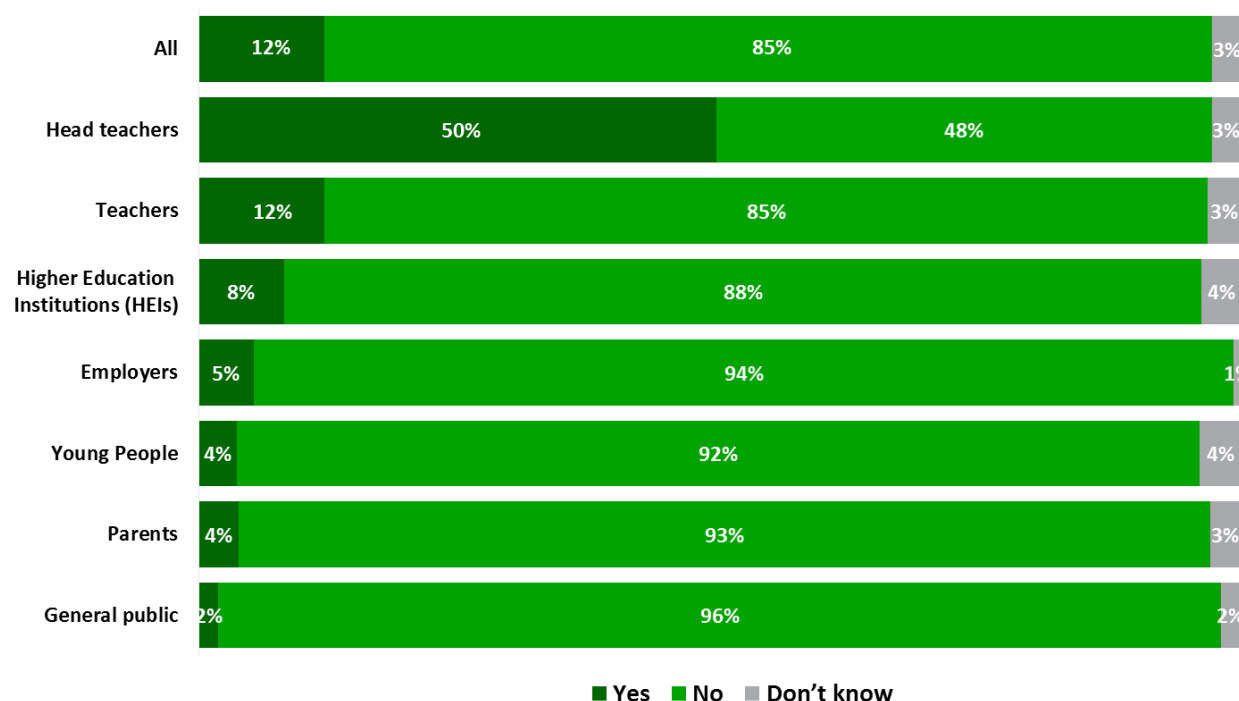
Section 5: National Reference Test

7.1.1 The National Reference Test (NRT) is being introduced in 2017. Annual tests of mathematics and English will be taken by a sample of year 11 students from around 300 schools. Over time, the test will provide an additional source of information that may be used to support the awarding of GCSEs. For more information about the NRT, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-reference-test-information>.

Awareness and understanding

7.1.2 All stakeholder groups were asked if they were aware of the NRT. Around nine out of ten (85%) stakeholders were not aware, one in ten (12%) were aware, and 3% did not know (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Are you aware of the National Reference Test?



Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

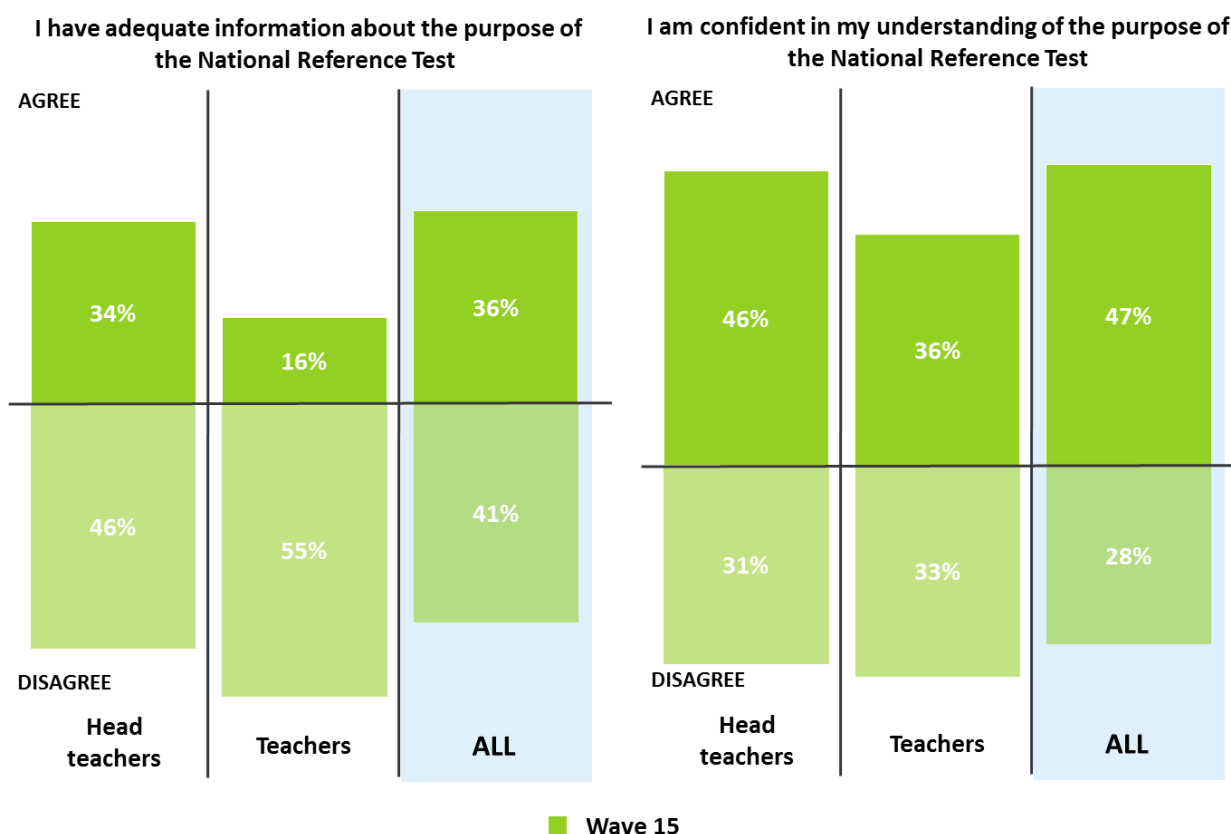
7.1.3 Head teachers had the highest level of awareness of the NRT, with one in two (50%) being aware and 48% being unaware. Awareness levels among teachers were much lower with one in ten (12%) being aware of the NRT and eight in ten (85%) being unaware.

7.1.4 For all the other stakeholder groups, awareness was below 10%, with 8% of HEIs, 5% of employers, 4% of young people and parents, and 2% of the general public aware of the NRT.

7.1.5 Those who were aware of the NRT were asked if they had adequate information about the purpose of the test and whether they were confident in their understanding of the purpose of the test (Figure 20). Due to low awareness among most stakeholder groups, only data for head teachers and teachers has been shown.

7.1.6 Among those who are aware of the NRT, four in ten (41%) disagreed that they had adequate information about the purpose of the test and just over one in three (36%) agreed. Head teachers were significantly more likely than teachers to agree that they had adequate information (34% compared with 16%).

Figure 20: Understanding of the National Reference Test*



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who are aware of the National Reference Test (All 244; Teachers 71; Head teachers 127)

*Note results for other stakeholder groups have not been reported due to low base sizes. Any percentages calculated on bases fewer than 50 respondents are not reported as they do not represent a wide enough cross-section of the target population to be considered statistically reliable

7.1.7 Just under half (47%) who are aware of the NRT agreed that they were confident in their understanding of the purpose of the test, and one in four (28%) disagreed (Figure 20). A larger proportion of head teachers agreed (46%) than disagreed (31%), while teachers were more divided with 36% agreeing and 33% disagreeing.

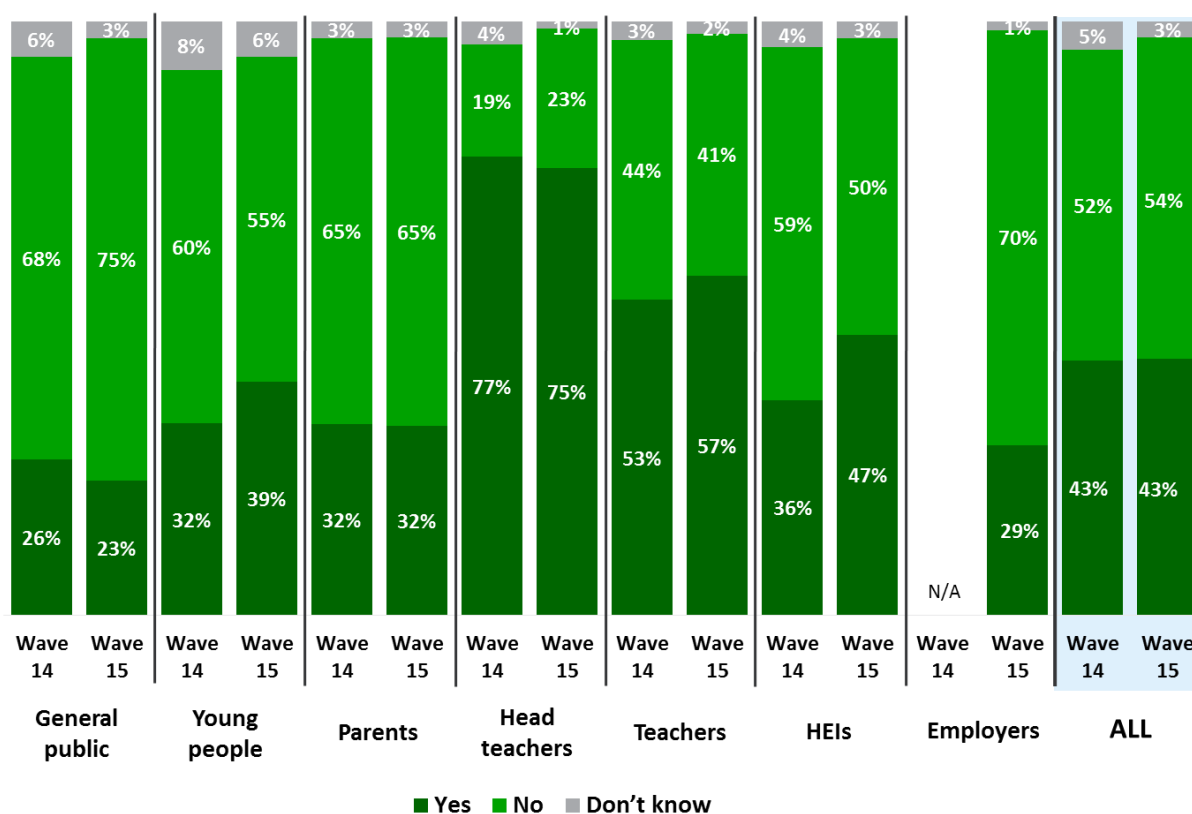
Section 6: The review of marking, moderation and appeals

8.1.1 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, and access to marked scripts for some qualifications. These services were, until recently, known as “Enquiries about Results and Appeals”.

Awareness and perceptions

8.1.2 Two in five (43%) stakeholders were aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals system for GCSE and AS/A level results. The majority (54%), however, were not (Figure 21). This was consistent with wave 14, when the same proportion of all stakeholders stated they were aware.

Figure 21: Are you aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals system (formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals) for GCSE and AS/A level results?



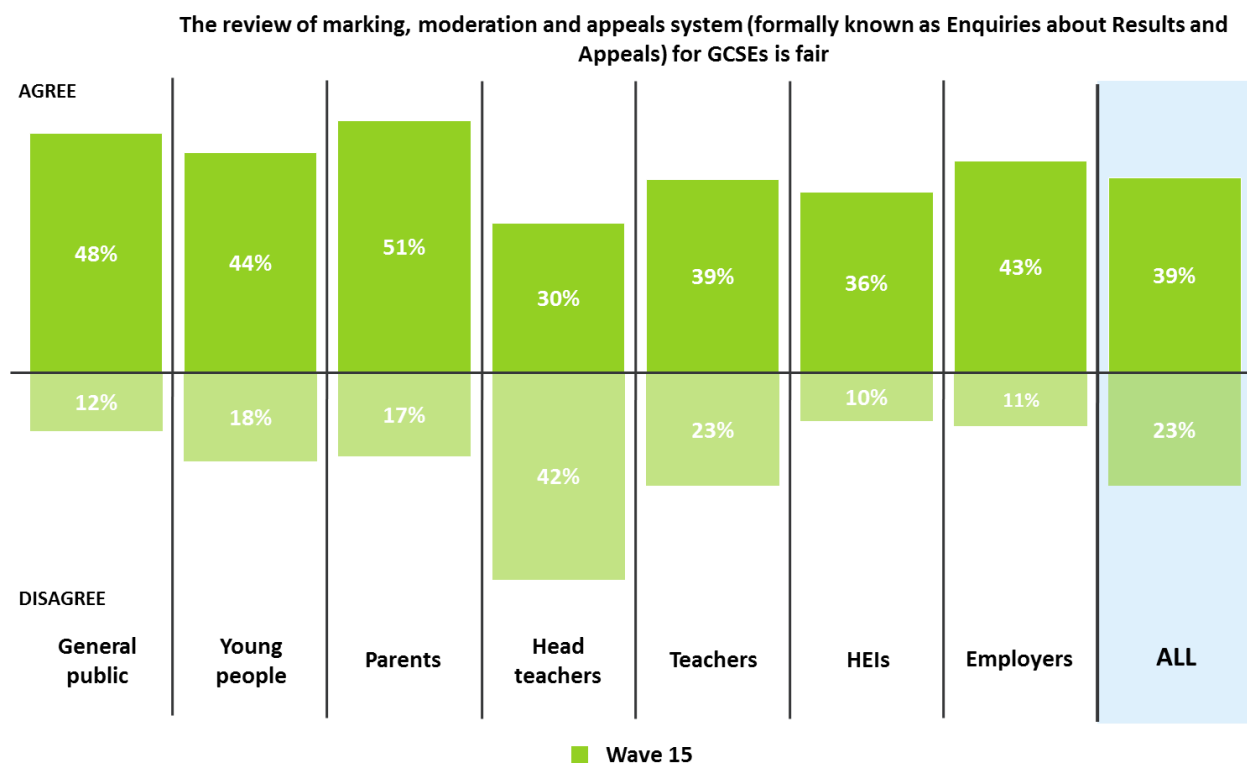
Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

Note: Employers were not asked this question in wave 14

8.1.3 Three in four (75%) head teachers were aware of the review and appeals system. This is significantly higher than any other stakeholder group. A slight majority of teachers (57%) were aware while 41% were not.

- 8.1.4 Parents (65%), employers (70%) and the general public (75%) were significantly more likely than any other stakeholder group to *not* be aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals system for GCSE and AS/A level results.
- 8.1.5 In comparison with wave 14, there was an increase in the proportion of HEIs who stated they were aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system, from 36% to 47%.
- 8.1.6 Those stakeholders who were aware of the marking, moderation and appeals system for GCSEs and AS/A levels were asked to express their level of agreement with three statements about the system (Figures 22, 23 and 24).
- 8.1.7 Among those who were aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals system, four in ten (39%) agreed that the process for GCSEs is fair and two in ten (23%) disagreed (Figure 22).
- 8.1.8 Head teachers were significantly more likely than any other stakeholder group to disagree that the review of marking, moderation and appeals system for GCSEs is fair (42% compared with 23% teachers, 18% young people, 17% parents, 12% the general public, 11% employers and 10% HEIs).

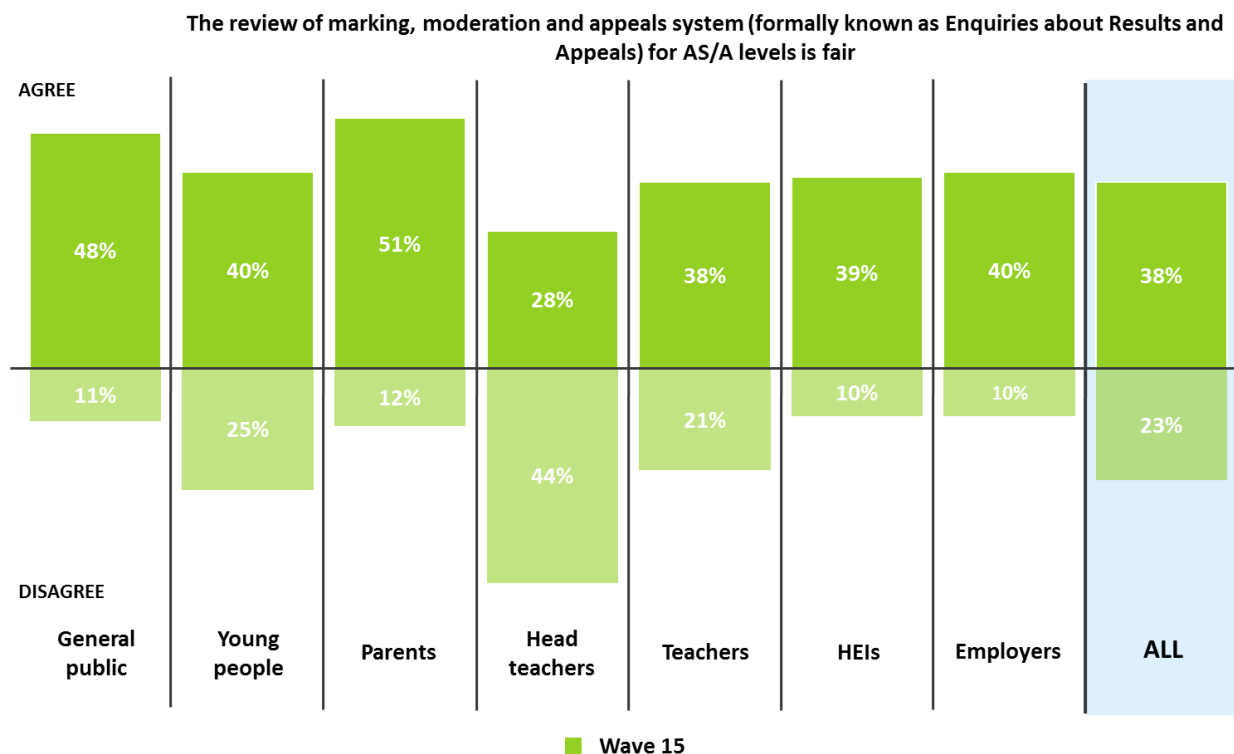
Figure 22: Fairness of the marking, moderation and appeals system for GCSEs



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (General public 226; Parents 83; Young people 117; Teachers 172; Head teachers 334; HEIs 118; Employers 72)

8.1.9 Results were similar for AS/A levels, with four in ten (38%) of all stakeholders who agreed the process for AS/A levels is fair and two in ten (23%) who disagreed (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Fairness of the marking, moderation and appeals system for AS/A levels

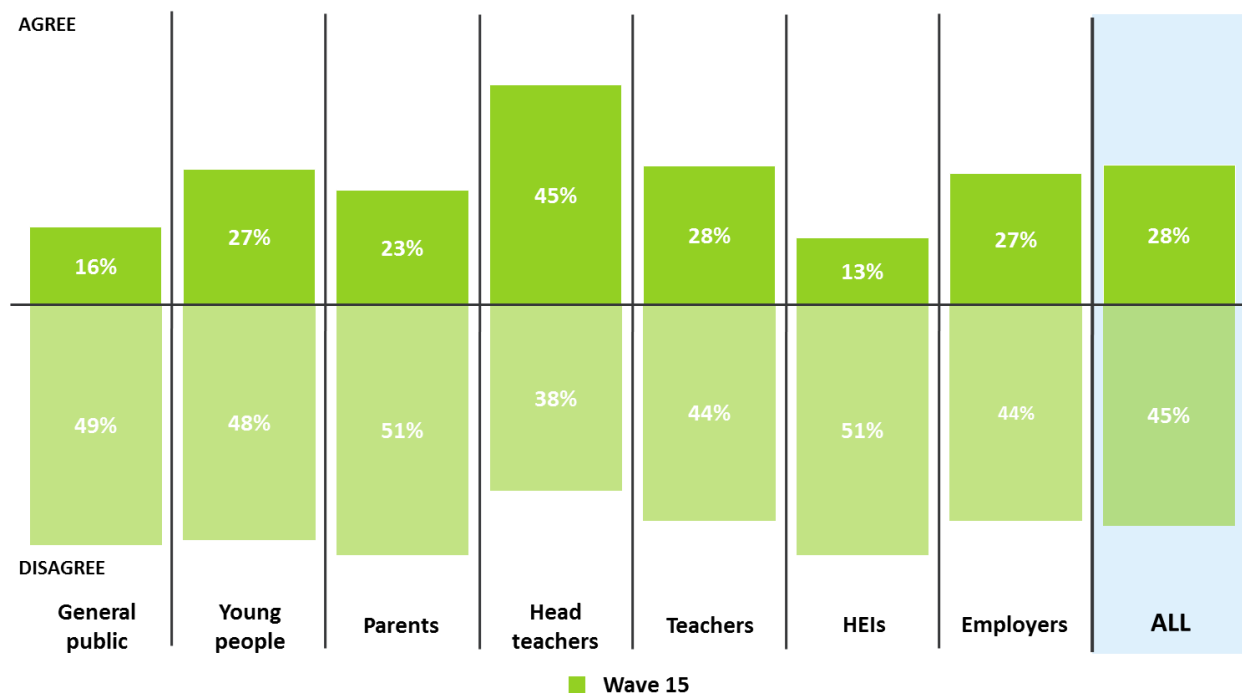


Effective base for wave 15: All respondents aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (General public 226; Parents 83; Young people 117; Teachers 172; Head teachers 334; HEIs 118; Employers 72)

8.1.10 Head teachers were also significantly more likely than any other stakeholder group to disagree that the review of marking, moderation and appeals for AS/A levels is fair (44% compared with 25% young people, 21% teachers, 12% parents, 11% the general public and 10% HEIs and employers).

8.1.11 Among those who were aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals system, three in ten (28%) agreed they have adequate information about the changes to the review of marking, moderation and appeals for GCSEs and AS/A levels but over four in ten (45%) disagreed (Figure 24).

Figure 24: I have adequate information about the changes to the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals) for GCSEs and AS/A levels



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (General public 226; Parents 83; Young people 117; Teachers 172; Head teachers 334; HEIs 118; Employers 72)

8.1.12 Head teachers were significantly more likely than any other stakeholder group to agree that they had adequate information about the changes to the review of marking, moderation and appeals for GCSEs and AS/A levels (45% compared with 28% teachers, 27% young people and employers, 23% parents, 16% the general public and 13% HEIs).

8.1.13 Aside from head teachers, all other stakeholder groups reported higher proportions of agreement that they have adequate information about the changes to the review of marking, moderation and appeals for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

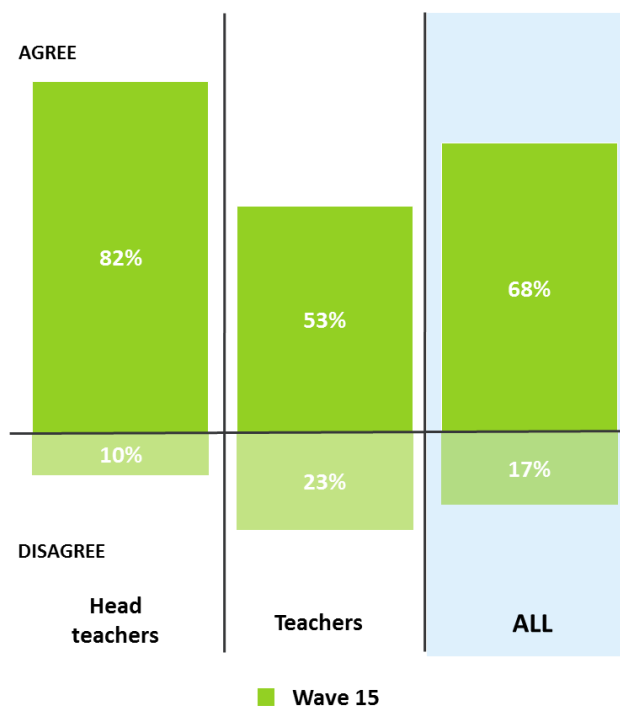
Section 7: Special consideration, reasonable adjustments and malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels

- 9.1.1 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.
- 9.1.2 Reasonable adjustments 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.
- 9.1.3 For more information about both of these, see <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>.
- 9.1.4 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, reasonable adjustments and malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

Special consideration

- 9.1.5 Those head teachers and teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with three statements about special consideration (Figures 25, 26 and 27).

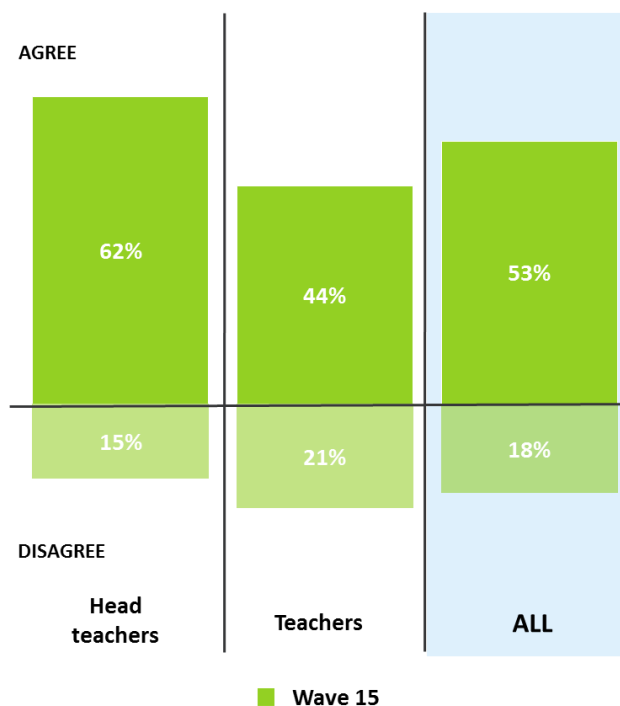
Figure 25: I have adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE or AS/A level student that is eligible for special consideration



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

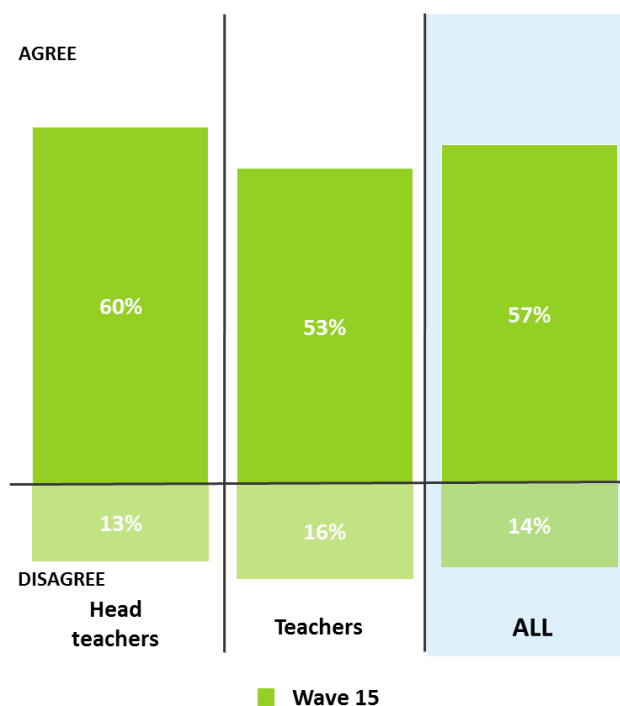
Figure 26: In the current special consideration system, the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level students



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Figure 27: Special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

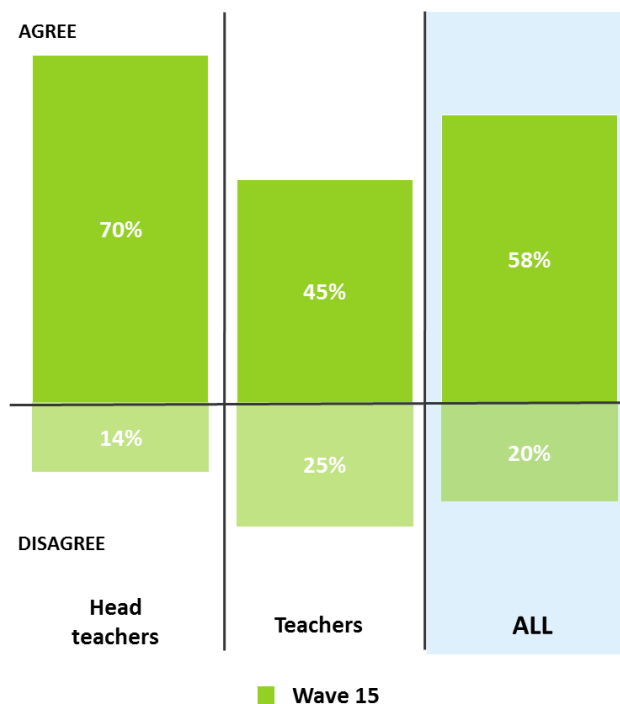
Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

- 9.1.6 Overall, two thirds (68%) of teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that they have adequate information about the arrangements available for a student who is eligible for special consideration (Figure 26). Head teachers (82%) were much more likely than teachers (53%) to agree that they have adequate information about the arrangements available for a student that is eligible for special consideration.
- 9.1.7 Approximately half (53%) of those who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that in the current special consideration system, the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level students, with a fifth (18%) expressing disagreement.
- 9.1.8 Head teachers (62%) were significantly more likely than teachers (44%) to agree that the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level students in the current special consideration system.
- 9.1.9 The majority (57%) of those who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students. This perception was broadly consistent between teachers and head teachers.

Reasonable adjustments

9.1.10 Those head teachers and teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with three statements about reasonable adjustments (Figures 28, 29 and 30).

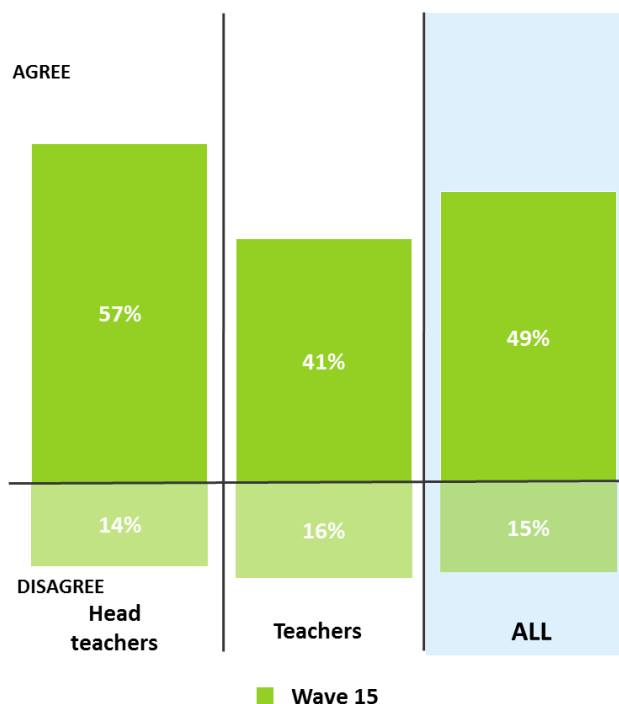
Figure 28: I have adequate information about the adjustments that are available for a GCSE or AS/A level disabled student that is eligible for reasonable adjustments



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

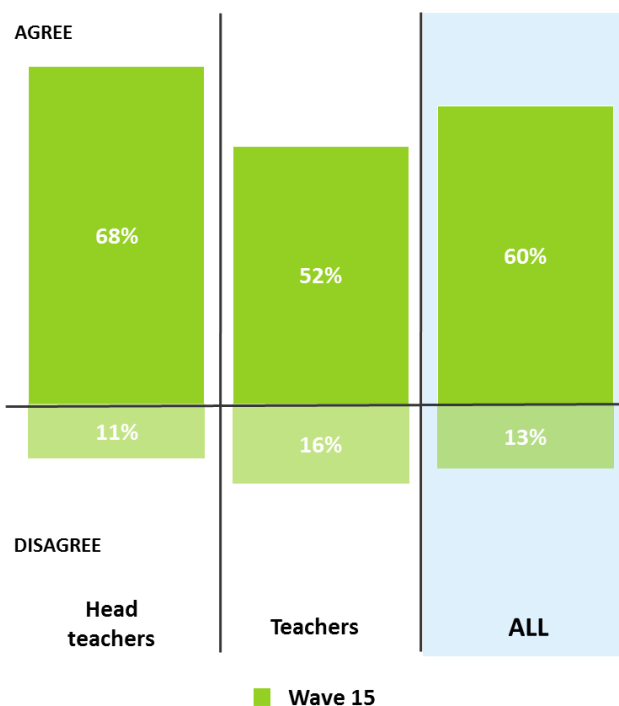
Figure 29: Currently, the right reasonable adjustments system are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level disabled system students



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Figure 30: Reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

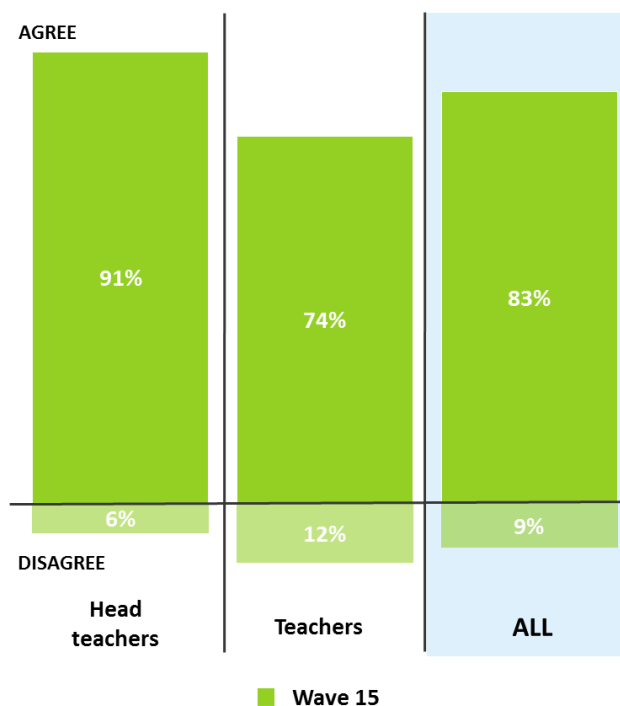
Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

- 9.1.11 Six out of ten (58%) of those who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that they have adequate information about the adjustments that are available for a GCSE or AS/A level disabled student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments (Figure 28).
- 9.1.12 As seen with arrangements available for special consideration, head teachers (70%) were much more likely than teachers (45%) to feel they have adequate information about the adjustments available for reasonable adjustments.
- 9.1.13 Half (49%) of those who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level disabled system students (Figure 29). Head teachers (57%) expressed stronger agreement with this statement than teachers (41%).
- 9.1.14 As shown in Figure 30, three out of five (60%) of those who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students. A relatively small minority (13%) disagreed with this. Head teachers (68%) were more likely than teachers (52%) to agree that reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students.

Malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels

- 9.1.15 Those head teachers and teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with three statements about malpractice (Figures 31, 32, 33).

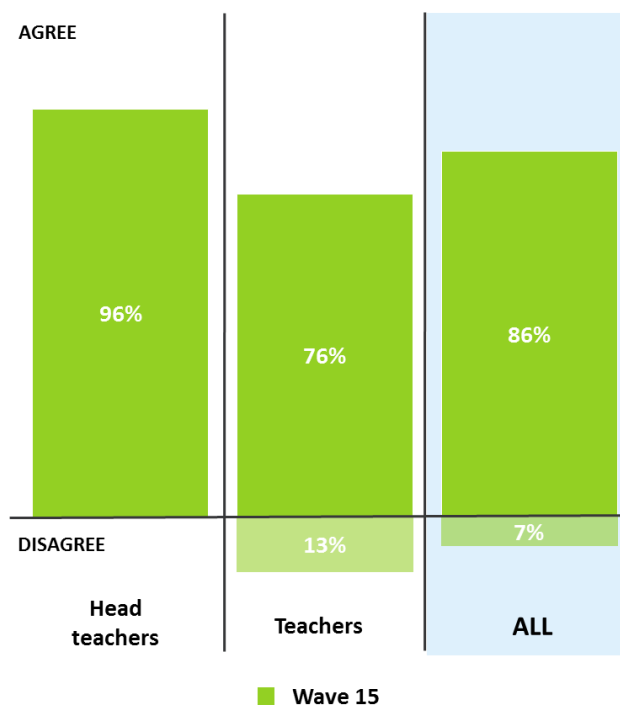
Figure 31: I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

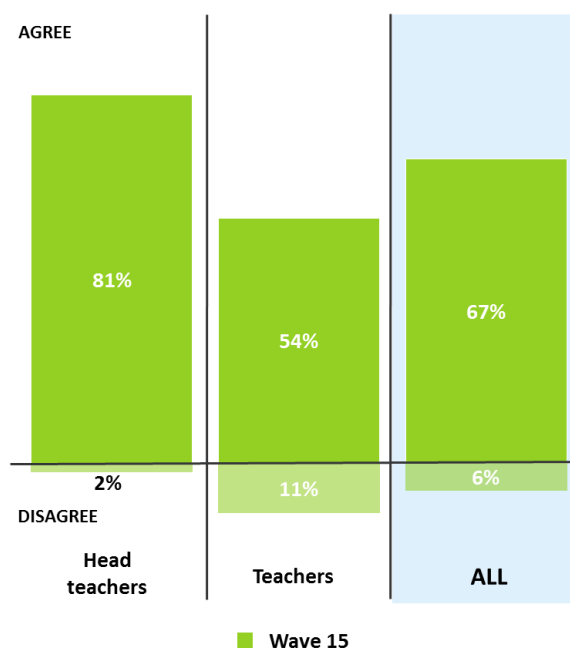
Figure 32: I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Figure 33: I am confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs and AS/A levels



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (All 567; Teachers 489; Head teachers 202)

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

9.1.16 The vast majority of teachers (83%) who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for these qualifications (Figure 31). Although head teachers (91%) were somewhat more likely to report this, three quarters (74%) of teachers also agreed that they have adequate information.

9.1.17 As seen in Figure 32, the vast majority of those who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels (86%) reported they know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels. Once again, levels of agreement were stronger among head teachers, with nearly all stating they knew whom it should be reported to (96%).

9.1.18 Two thirds (67%) of teachers who teach GCSEs or AS/A levels were confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for these qualifications (Figure 33). However, this confidence was significantly lower among teachers (54%) than it was among head teachers (81%).

Section 8: Vocational qualifications

9.1.19 As part of Ofqual’s commitment to regulating the use of vocational qualifications, a number of questions were asked to stakeholders about their understanding of the processes and systems that support vocational qualifications that are taught in schools and colleges.

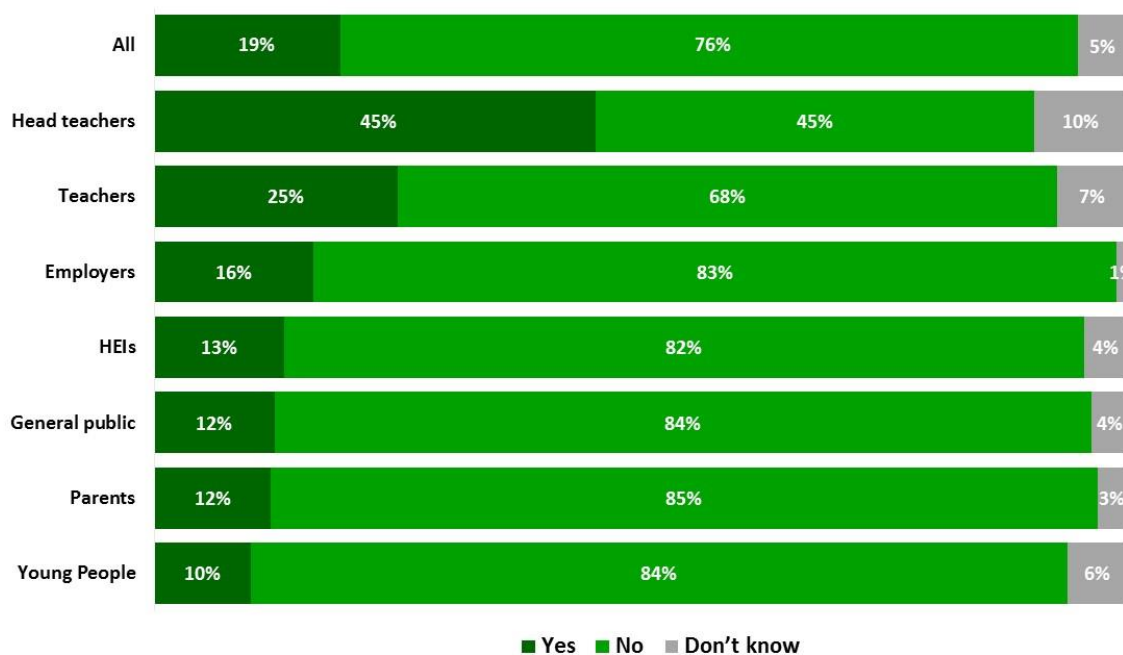
Awareness and perceptions of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications

10.1.1 Awarding organisations that offer vocational qualifications that are taught in schools and colleges must establish and maintain a process for users to appeal against results. All stakeholders were asked to report if they were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications.

10.1.2 Following this, those stakeholders who were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications were asked a series of agreement statements related to the process.

10.1.3 A fifth (19%) of all stakeholders were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges. The majority (76%) were not (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Are you aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges?

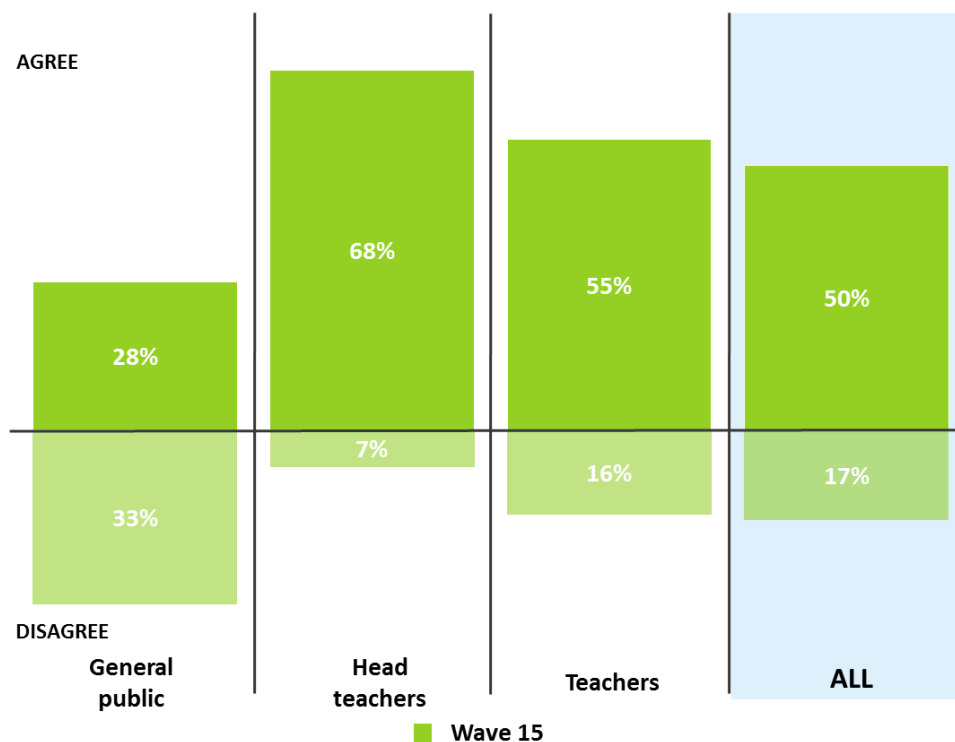


Effective base for wave 15: All stakeholder respondents 2,214; General public 1004; Parents 261; Young people 308; Teachers 566; Head teachers 231; HEIs 249; Employers 253

- 10.1.4 Looking at the stakeholder groups more specifically, head teachers were significantly more likely than any other group to be aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges, although the same proportion of head teachers were aware (45%) and unaware (45%) of the process.
- 10.1.5 A quarter (25%) of teachers were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges and this was also significantly higher than the levels of awareness among other stakeholder groups.
- 10.1.6 All stakeholders who were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges were asked two statements about the process (Figures 35 and 36)⁸.
- 10.1.7 Among those who were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges, half (50%) agreed that they have adequate information about the appeals against results process (Figure 35).
- 10.1.8 The majority of head teachers (68%) and teachers (55%) agreed that they have adequate information about the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges, significantly higher than the proportion of the general public who agreed with the statement.

⁸ The data for young people, parents, HEIs and employers has not been included in these comparisons due to the low awareness of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges and resultant small effective base sizes.

Figure 35: I have adequate information about the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges (All 403; General public 124; Teachers 134; Head teachers 107).

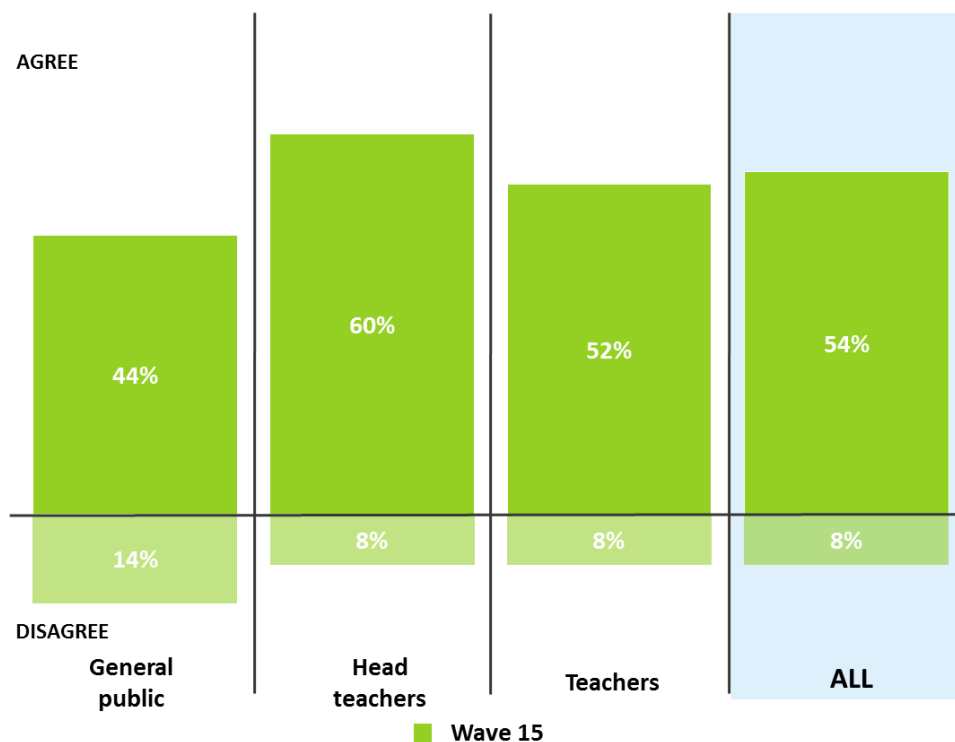
Please note data for young people, parents HEIs and employers has not been shown as the effective base is smaller than 50 and therefore deemed unreliable

All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree. The remainder either neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know.

10.1.9 Among those who were aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges, half (54%) agreed that they are confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges (Figure 36).

10.1.10 Six out of ten head teachers (60%) and one in two teachers (52%) agreed that they are confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges.

Figure 36: I am confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents aware of the appeals against results process for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges (All 403; General public 124; Teachers 134; Head teachers 107).

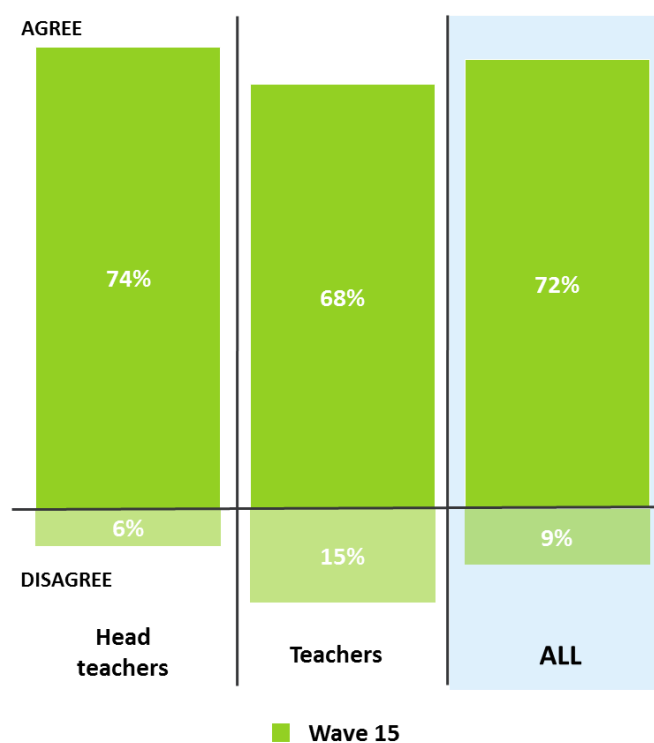
Please note data for young people, parents HEIs and employers has not been shown as the effective base is smaller than 50 and therefore deemed unreliable

All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Malpractice in vocational qualifications

10.1.11 Awarding organisations that offer vocational qualification in schools and colleges must have in place procedures for investigating suspected or alleged malpractice. Those head teachers and teachers who teach vocational qualifications were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with three statements about malpractice for vocational qualifications (Figures 37, 38 and 39).

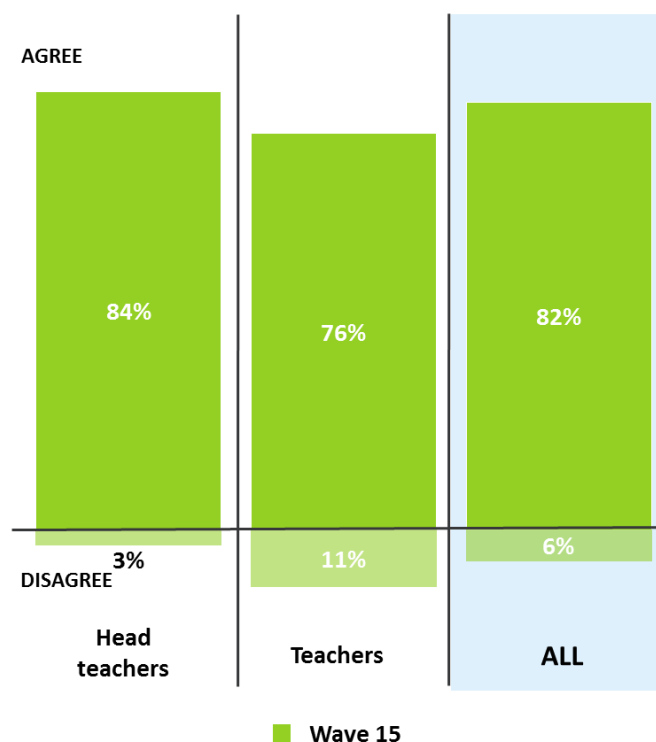
Figure 37: I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach vocational qualifications, all stakeholder respondents 173; Teachers 102; Head teachers 91.

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Figure 38: I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges



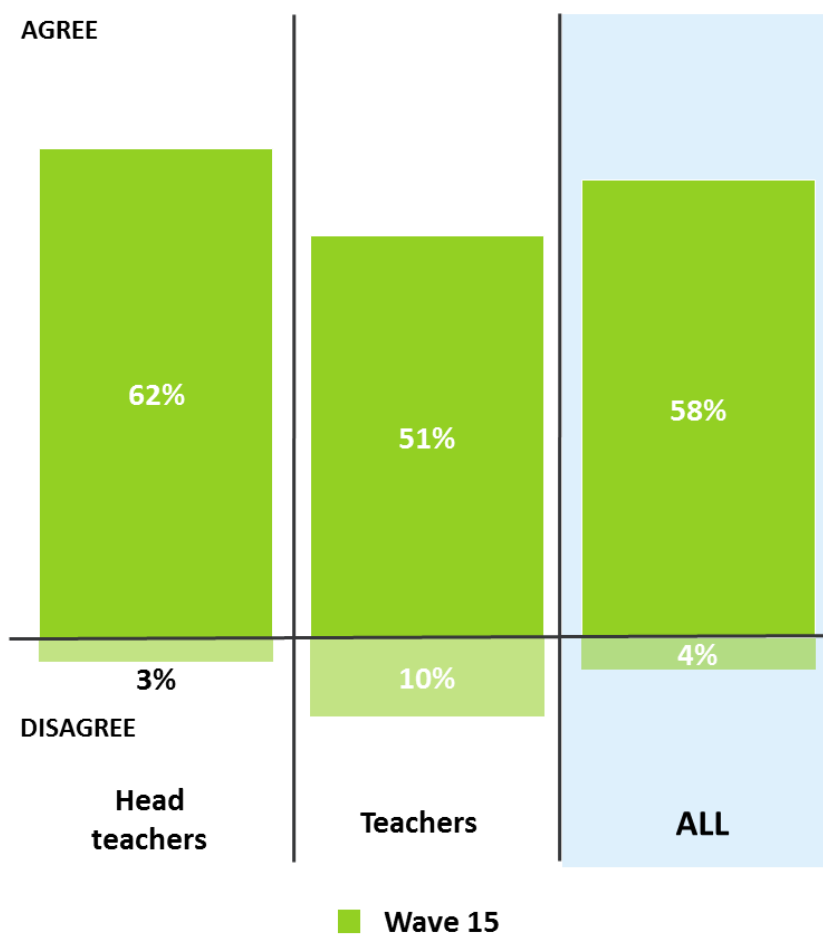
Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach vocational qualifications, all stakeholder respondents 173; Teachers 102; Head teachers 91.

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

10.1.12 The majority of head teachers (74%) and teachers (68%) agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges (Figure 37).

10.1.13 Also, the majority of head teachers (84%) and teachers (76%) agreed that they know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges (Figure 38).

Figure 39: I am confident that incidents of malpractice for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges are fairly investigated



Effective base for wave 15: All respondents who teach vocational qualifications, all stakeholder respondents 173; Teachers 102; Head teachers 91.

Note: All respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

10.1.14 As shown in Figure 39, while a majority of head teachers (62%) and about half of teachers (51%) expressed agreement that incidents of malpractice for vocational qualifications in schools and colleges are fairly investigated there was more uncertainty here.

Appendix A – The composite confidence measures

Data from wave 14 (2015/16) of the “Annual Perceptions of A Levels, GCSEs and Other Qualifications in England” were analysed to construct a composite measure of confidence in the GCSE and AS/A level systems to more validly monitor changes year on year. Seven statements were chosen for GCSEs, and a similar seven statements for AS/A levels.

For each question in wave 14, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement, and the answers were coded as follows:

- Strongly agree = 5
- Agree = 4
- Neither agree nor disagree = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly disagree = 1
- Don't know = removed from the data set

This resulted in a score for each respondent, for each statement, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5. For all stakeholders on each statement, correlations between these scores were analysed to determine to what extent they were measuring a composite ‘overall confidence’ construct. Table 1 shows the seven statements that were chosen to measure confidence in the GCSE system, and the correlations between them.

Table 1: Wave 14 data: correlations between confidence statements for GCSEs

Confidence statements	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 GCSEs are well understood by people						
2 GCSEs are a trusted qualification	.505**					
3 GCSE standards are maintained year on year	.338**	.481**				
4 GCSEs are good preparation for further study	.372**	.516**	.377**			
5 GCSEs are good preparation for work	.310**	.427**	.385**	.509**		
6 GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students	.330**	.466*	.385**	.548**	.583**	
7 The marking of GCSEs is accurate	.302**	.415**	.524**	.333**	.277**	.303**

Notes: **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed); *correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

These seven items are all significantly correlated, with an internal reliability Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha=.83$. The inter-correlations, and high internal reliability ensure that the seven items were measuring a single construct of ‘confidence in the GCSE system’.

Table 2 shows the seven statements that were chosen to measure confidence in the A level system, and the correlations between them.

Table 2: Wave 14 data: correlations between confidence statements for A levels

Confidence statements	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 A levels are well understood by people						
2 A levels are a trusted qualification	.425**					
3 A level standards are maintained year on year	.317**	.434**				
4 A levels are good preparation for further study	.335**	.480**	.316**			
5 A levels are good preparation for work	.285**	.312**	.304**	.415**		
6 A levels develop a broad range of skills for students	.267**	.358**	.341**	.436**	.551**	
7 The marking of A levels is accurate	.261**	.328**	.438**	.269**	.226**	.246**

Notes: **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed); *correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

These seven items were all significantly correlated, with an internal reliability Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha=.79$. The inter-correlations, and high internal reliability ensured that the seven items are measuring a single construct of 'confidence in the A level system' to be used to track changes in confidence from year to year.

Appendix B – Technical report

Appendix B outlines the composition of the achieved sampling and additional information on the methods adopted in wave 15.

Head teachers and teachers sample

Sample coverage

The sample was designed to be a representative sample of head teachers/deputy heads and teachers of AS/A levels, GCSEs and other general 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 was representative of establishments teaching qualifications for 14- to 19- year olds, only certain types of schools/colleges were eligible for the survey. Eligible types of schools and colleges matched the definition used in previous years of the survey, that is, secondary and middle-deemed secondary schools, and 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 Education List. Containing over 5 million education data profiles, it includes 400,000 named teachers' and lecturers' email addresses, and details and profiles of more than 100,000 schools profiles. This list is the most accurate and comprehensive education data set available anywhere in the UK.

This was used as a database 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 contained

named contacts with generic school email addresses that allowed the survey to be targeted at specific subject teachers in the specified schools.

2. YouGov Panel

The research was also conducted via teachers and head teachers registered to the YouGov panel, who have consented to participate in research with YouGov. A quota sampling approach was adopted to 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 designed using the Department for Education (DfE) School Capacity and the Edubase data⁹. 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 adopted in waves 13 and 14 two samples were drawn that differed in characteristics between the head teacher (senior leader) 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 random stratified 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 discussed, the teacher sample was drawn to take into account the numbers of teachers at different types of establishment and multiple teacher contacts were included for schools of a larger size.

⁹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase/home.xhtml>

Alongside the sample drawn from the Education List database a random sample of 4,000 head teachers (senior leaders) and teachers from the YouGov panel was contacted to take part in the research. 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 3 below. 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.

Table 3: Achieved sample size by role and school type

	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Teachers - School type	601	601		
Local Authority maintained school	159	162	0.7	1.3
Academy	254	264	0.7	1.4
Independent school	87	54	0.4	0.8
FE college/ sixth form	80	108	0.9	1.8
Other	21	12	0.4	0.7
Head teachers- School type	262	262		
Local Authority maintained school	64	68	0.8	1.4
Academy	133	107	0.6	1.1
Independent school	52	63	0.9	1.6
FE college/ sixth form	10	21	1.4	2.7
Other	3	3	0.8	0.9

Public, parents and young people's samples

Sample coverage

The public, parents and students sample was drawn from the YouGov online research panel of over 800,000 adults who have consented to participate in research with YouGov.

Three distinct samples were drawn. These were:

- A nationally representative survey sample of 16 plus adults 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 grade
- A survey sample of young people aged 14 to 19 who were just about to take, were currently taking, or had recently taken GCSEs, AS/A levels, and other general and vocational qualifications – this was sampled to be representative of England by gender, age within the age range and region using England representative statistics
- A survey sample of parents of young people who met the 'student' criteria defined above – this was sampled to be representative of parents by gender, social grade and English region

Sample frame

The samples of members of the public, parents and students were drawn from the YouGov panel. Over the last ten years, YouGov has carefully recruited a panel of over 800,000 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 and 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 students samples by key characteristics and associated weighting factors is shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6 below.

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 base being lower than what would be expected in a representative sample.

Table 4: 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	1.1
North West	134	131	0.9	1.1
Yorkshire and the Humber	102	101	0.9	1.1
East Midlands	87	91	0.9	1.1
West Midlands	104	101	0.9	1.1
East of England	111	111	0.9	1.1
London	151	151	0.9	1.1
South East	163	171	1.0	1.1
South West	105	101	0.9	1.0
Age and gender				
Male 16-24	78	81	1.0	1.1
Male 25-39	131	121	0.9	1.0
Male 40-54	121	131	1.0	1.1
Male 55+	159	161	1.0	1.1
Women 16-24	77	71	0.9	1.0
Women 25-39	123	121	0.9	1.0
Women 40-54	135	131	0.9	1.0
Women 55+	184	192	1.0	1.1
Social grade¹⁰				
ABC1	576	585	0.9	1.1
C2DE	432	423	0.9	1.1

¹⁰ Please see the glossary for definitions of these classifications.

Table 5: Summary of achieved parents sample weighting scheme

	Parents sample		Parents sample	
	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Smallest weight factor	Largest weight factor
Region				
North East	14	13	0.9	0.9
North West	34	34	1.0	1.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	27	26	1.0	1.0
East Midlands	23	23	1.0	1.0
West Midlands	26	26	1.0	1.0
East of England	29	29	1.0	1.0
London	40	42	1.0	1.1
South East	42	42	1.0	1.0
South West	26	26	1.0	1.0
Gender				
Male	126	125	0.9	1.0
Female	135	136	0.9	1.1
Social grade				
ABC1	144	144	0.9	1.0
C2DE	117	117	0.9	1.1

Table 6: 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	16	16	0.9	1.1
North West	48	41	0.8	0.9
Yorkshire and the Humber	29	31	1.0	1.2
East Midlands	27	28	0.9	1.1
West Midlands	36	31	0.8	0.9
East of England	31	34	1.0	1.2
London	45	50	1.0	1.2
South East	48	50	0.9	1.1
South West	33	31	0.9	1.0
Gender				
Male	155	157	0.8	1.2
Female	158	156	0.8	1.2
Age				
14-15 year olds	117	104	0.8	1.0

16-17 year olds	95	104	0.9	1.2
18-19 year olds	101	104	0.9	1.1

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 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 of 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 7 below.

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.

Table 7: 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	24	37	1.5	1.5
10-49 employees	41	37	0.9	0.9
50-99 employees	12	16	1.3	1.4
100-249 employees	26	19	0.7	0.8
250+ employees	161	156	0.9	1.1
Sector				
Private sector	189	193	0.7	1.5
Public sector	59	55	0.7	1.5
Third/voluntary sector	16	16	0.8	1.4

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 research and 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 8 below.

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 base being lower than what would be expected in a representative sample.

Table 8: 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	78	50	0.6	0.6
Other old	38	48	1.3	1.3
Post 1992/New	109	131	1.2	1.2
Other HEI	40	36	0.9	0.9

Appendix C – Glossary

Base size: The number of respondents answering the question.

Effective base: When sampling is undertaken, it creates a ‘design effect’ that can impact 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 – This type of qualification includes the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (AS/A level).

- The GCSE is a qualification awarded in a specified subject, generally taken in a number of subjects by students aged 14 to 16 in secondary education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- The AS/A level is a qualification offered by educational bodies in the UK to students completing secondary or pre-university education. At present, a combination of legacy and reformed AS/A levels are available to students.
 - The legacy A level qualification is generally studied for over two years and split into two parts, with one part studied in each year. The first part is known as the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and was previously known as the Advanced Supplementary, with the same abbreviation. The second part is known as the A2 level. The AS is a qualification in its own right, and the AS combined with the A2 level forms the complete A level qualification.
 - Reformed AS/A qualifications are different in that the results of the reformed AS qualification do not count towards a student’s final A level grade as they do now. As such, there is no requirement for students to enter the AS qualification in a given subject, even if they intend to study the full A level. Reformed AS specifications were available for the first time to be awarded in summer 2016 in 13 subjects: art & design, biology, business, chemistry, computing, economics, English language, English language and literature, English literature, history, physics, psychology and sociology. Reformed AS/A level qualifications in the other subjects will be introduced for 2017 and 2018.

Grading: The process of grouping students into overall performance categories. Currently, the system for GCSEs and AS/A levels awards a grade of A* (highest), A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Reformed GCSEs will follow a different grading system of 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. For more information on this new grading system, see the Ofqual website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/your-qualification-our-regulation-gcse-as-and-a-level-reforms>

Level of qualifications: Qualifications are assigned a level from Entry then Level 1 through to Level 8: Entry includes entry-level certificates and foundation learning tier pathways.

- Level 1 includes GCSEs graded D to G (or 3 to 1 in the new grading system), the Foundation Diploma and Level 1 NVQs, Key Skills, Functional Skills and BTEC awards.
- Level 2 includes GCSEs graded A* to C (or 9 to 4 in the new grading system), the Higher Diploma and Level 2 NVQs, Key Skills, Functional Skills and BTEC awards.
- Level 3 includes AS/A levels, the Advanced and Progression Diplomas and Level 3 NVQs, Key Skills and BTEC awards.

- Level 4 includes certificates of higher education, Level 4 NVQs, Key Skills and BTEC Professional Awards.
- Level 5 includes diplomas of higher education, foundation degrees, the Higher National Diploma and BTEC professional awards.
- Level 6 includes bachelor degrees, graduate certificates, the National Diploma in Professional Production Skills and BTEC advanced professional awards.
- Level 7 includes master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and BTEC advanced professional awards.
- Level 8 includes doctorates.

Marking: The process of giving a student credit for their right answers according to the requirements set out in a mark scheme.

Rebasing: This is the process of recalculating percentages for a question with some respondents removed from the total base. For example an approach is to remove those people who did not know from the percentage calculation and rebase to just those who offered an opinion.

Sample frame: The way that the population is structured before a sample for the survey is drawn.

Sampling tolerances: When using a sample for a survey rather than surveying the whole population, results can be expected to differ slightly. The difference between the two is known as the sampling tolerance and is established by ascertaining the standard deviation. For the purposes of this survey, the tolerance (or confidence level) used is at the 95% level.

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

Stratified sample: A sample that has been divided into subgroups – for example, regions or type of institution. These subgroups may all consist of equal numbers or some might be higher or lower than others.

Vocational qualifications: Vocational qualifications help prepare young people to work in a particular industry or occupation. This survey focused particularly on vocational qualifications that are taught in schools and colleges. This survey asked about 'tech levels' and 'applied general qualifications' at Level 3 (e.g. Pearson Level 3 BTECs and OCR Cambridge Technical Certificates) and, at Level ½, as vocational qualifications (e.g. Pearson Level 1/2 BTECs and OCR Cambridge National Certificates)

Weighting: The process of making some respondents in a survey more or less important than others to accurately reflect their position in the population being surveyed.