

# Survey of teachers' views of GCSE and A level question papers in the summer 2007 examination session

Research Study Conducted for the  
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)



November 2007

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# Introduction

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This report presents the findings from a survey of teachers' views regarding the quality of GCSE and A level question papers, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

## Background and Objectives

In recent years, a number of issues have placed GCSEs and A levels in the public spotlight. These have included concerns over the marking of GCSE and A level papers, and the approaching introduction of the Diploma. Most important of all, however, is the criticism that since GCSE and A level pass rates are rising, the examinations must be becoming easier.<sup>1</sup>

QCA is currently investigating the process for setting GCSE and A level question papers, and a key part of this will involve investigating the substance of criticisms that have been made regarding the quality of these. This survey seeks to inform the investigation by providing data on teachers' views of the quality of the GCSE and A level question papers for a sample of subjects in the summer 2007 examination session.

## Survey Aims

This research is particularly concerned with teachers' views of the GCSE and A level question papers, but also addresses their views regarding the examination system more generally. In order to provide QCA with the information required, the survey gauged:

- teachers' perceptions of the summer 2007 GCSE and A level (AS and A2) question papers;
- whether teachers feel that the question papers were an effective assessment tool for candidates;
- whether any of the public criticisms of the quality of GCSE and A level question papers are evident among teachers.

## Methodology

Ipsos MORI ran a telephone survey with GCSE and A level teachers between July 2<sup>nd</sup> and July 13<sup>th</sup> 2007. Prior to the survey, letters<sup>2</sup> were sent out to the head teachers of a sample of education centres in England to raise awareness of the research, and to inform them which subject teachers were eligible to take part.

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<sup>1</sup> In summer 2006 there was an overall A-E pass rate of 97% for A levels. Source: [http://findoutmore.dfes.gov.uk/2007/03/alevel\\_reform.html](http://findoutmore.dfes.gov.uk/2007/03/alevel_reform.html)

<sup>2</sup> Provided as Appendix 1.

The teachers eligible to take part in the research were those who had prepared pupils to sit an examination in the summer 2007 session in any of the following subjects and qualifications:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GCSE English or English Literature</li><li>• GCSE mathematics</li><li>• GCSE history</li><li>• GCSE French, German or Spanish</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AS or A level English Language, English Language and Literature, or English Literature</li><li>• AS or A level mathematics</li><li>• AS or A level biology</li><li>• AS or A level psychology</li><li>• AS or A level geography</li><li>• AS or A level French, German or Spanish</li></ul> |
|---|---|

In order to obtain responses from relevant teachers, Ipsos MORI interviewers called the receptions or switchboards of the schools and asked to speak to a teacher who taught one of the above subjects. If an ineligible teacher was reached, interviewers asked for a referral. In order to minimise the burden on schools, a maximum of two teachers (who had prepared pupils for different subjects and qualifications) were interviewed per centre.

Teachers were keen to take part in the research and several centres made contact with Ipsos MORI to provide the names, numbers and available times of teachers who wanted to participate. When this was the case, these details were passed on to the interviewers.

The questionnaire, designed by QCA and Ipsos MORI, is provided as Appendix 2.

## **Respondent Profile**

Interviews were completed with 40 teachers of each of the ten examination subjects and qualifications indicated. An extra interview was conducted with a mathematics respondent, creating a total achieved sample size of 401. It was ensured that the teachers interviewed were from a sample of centres that was representative in terms of government office region (GOR), centre size and centre type.

Respondents were screened to ensure that they:

- had prepared pupils to sit a GCSE or A level (AS or A2) examination in summer 2007;
- taught one of the ten subjects/qualification levels indicated;
- had seen the summer 2007 examination papers for their subject/qualification.

Teachers who had prepared pupils to sit an A level examination in the summer 2007 session were asked to think about either the AS or A2 examination papers.

Those who had prepared pupils to take GCSE English or English Literature, or GCSE French, German or Spanish examinations, were asked to respond in relation to either the foundation or higher tier papers. Those who had prepared pupils to sit a GCSE mathematics examination were asked to respond in relation to either the foundation, intermediate or higher tier papers.

The majority of respondents (98%) had used one of the unitary awarding bodies – the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Edexcel, and Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations (OCR) – for the summer 2007 examination of their subject and qualification. The remaining two per cent (eight out of 401) of respondents said that they had used the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC). It is important to note that the responses from the small number of respondents who had used WJEC are unlikely to have any real impact on the overall survey results.

The respondents are profiled in Appendix 3.

## **Presentation and Interpretation of the Data**

When interpreting the findings in this report, it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample, rather than the entire total population of teachers. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences between subgroups are statistically significant. We have only commented on notable differences across subgroups (such as qualification type, awarding body, type of centre etc) if they are statistically significant. It should also be noted however, that statistically significant data need to be interpreted to see whether they make reasonable sense.

Ipsos MORI normally recommends a minimum of 100 interviews per cell for subgroup analysis. However, within the analysis, some *indicative* findings at subgroup level are also presented. These are findings where, although there are noteworthy differences between subgroups, base sizes are too small to ensure that the results are statistically reliable. In this report, all of the findings relating to subjects within a qualification level are indicative, as the base size for each is just 40 teachers.

When fewer than 30 respondents have answered a question, we report on the actual number of responses, rather than percentages, to ensure that results are not misleading in any way.

It is important to note that caution should be exercised where groups of less than 50 respondents have been analysed, as large differences between data will need to be present in order for these differences to be statistically significant. For example, when comparing 40 GCSE English teachers with 40 GCSE history teachers, there would need to be a 22% difference (at the 50% level) to say that there is a statistically significant difference between these groups. A guide to statistical significance is included below.

Size of samples compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
10 and 10	28	42	46
20 and 20	19	29	31
40 and 40	13	20	22
100 and 100	8	13	14
400 and 400	4	6	7
40 and 400	10	15	16

Where percentages in the charts or tables in the report do not add up to 100%, it is due to multiple answers or computer rounding. In addition, where percentages in the charts vary by one percentage point from those in the text, this too is simply due to computer rounding.

Although not referred to in this report, in the accompanying computer tables, reference is made to “net” figures. This represents the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions and provides a useful means of comparing the data for a number of variables. In the case of a “net agree” figure, this represents the percentage of respondents who agree with a particular issue, less the percentage who disagree. Throughout the tables, an asterisk (\*) denotes a value greater than zero, but less than 0.5%.

## **Publication of the Data**

As with all our studies, these findings are subject to Ipsos MORI’s standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings of this research requires the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misinterpretation of the findings.

## **Acknowledgements**

We wish to record our gratitude to all people who have taken part in the consultation. Ipsos MORI would also like to thank Phil Carr, Susan Robinson and Sarah Mitchell at QCA for all their assistance with this project.

# Executive Summary

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Encouragingly, teachers are very positive about most aspects of the 2007 GCSE and A level question papers. Those who are critical represent a relatively small, albeit important, minority, but there are no subgroups who are consistently negative.

## Question Paper Structure

Teachers are particularly satisfied with the various aspects of question paper structure. Ninety-six per cent of respondents agree that the general instructions in question papers were clear, while similar proportions agree that the mark allocations for questions were suitable (95%) and that these were in line with what candidates had to do (95%).

Continuing this positive trend, teachers agree that the papers included a range of question types appropriate to the subject (94%) and that the requirements of questions were clear (92%). Just under nine in ten teachers (88%) feel that the papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates, while a similar proportion (86%) feel that the papers covered the specification content appropriately.

Teachers are somewhat less positive about the amount of time given for candidates to complete the papers, but with just over eight in ten (81%) feeling that the time given was about right, this is still an encouraging response. Of the teachers who disagreed with this, more were concerned that candidates did not have enough time, than felt that the time given was too generous.

## Question Paper Accessibility

Just over eight in ten (81%) teachers feel that the question papers this summer were appropriately demanding for the qualification and level. Similar proportions of teachers feel that they were either not demanding enough (eight per cent) or were too demanding (nine per cent).

In terms of accessibility for students of differing abilities, 85% of teachers agree that papers were sufficiently challenging for more able students, but only half (53%) feel that they were sufficiently accessible to less able students (though only 29% actually disagree that this was the case). This might suggest that improving access for less able students is an issue that could be considered further.

The majority of teachers (87%) feel that the level of guidance in questions was appropriate, while similar proportions of teachers feel that there was too little guidance (6%) or too much (5%).

Seventeen per cent of teachers believe that the examination papers discriminated on grounds other than ability in the subject. The main type of discrimination referred to by teachers is knowledge of issues that are not related directly to the subject.

## Question Paper Comparability

Of those teachers who have prepared pupils for examinations in subjects where papers include optional questions, 81% believe that the optional questions were



comparably demanding to each other. Less than half of the teachers believe that the optional questions required different skills (47%) and even fewer (36%) feel that candidates needed different knowledge to complete different optional questions.

With regard to how the 2007 question papers compared to those from 2006, seven in ten (70%) teachers think they were comparably demanding. The significant minority who disagreed that this was the case were more likely to think that the 2007 papers were more demanding than those from 2006 (14%) than they were to think that they were less demanding (11%).

Almost half of the teachers indicate that they have not seen the 2007 question papers for a subject similar or related to the one they teach (49%). Of those (43%) who have a perception regarding how their subject paper compares to those from similar or related subjects, 55% feel that their subject's paper was more demanding, while 40% think the papers are comparable, and only a small minority (five per cent) believe their subject's paper to have been less demanding.

## **Teacher Confidence**

Teachers are similarly confident in the question papers for their selected subject (87%) and the qualification that students gain from the full assessment (88%).

They are less confident in the wider systems, however, with just over seven in ten (71%) expressing confidence in the A level system overall, and fewer (65%) reporting confidence in the GCSE system overall. These levels of confidence, though, are comparable to those noted in the QCA survey conducted in 2006, and they increase significantly where the teacher is commenting on the qualification level for which they have responded (from 71% to 85% for A level and from 65% to 74% for GCSE). It is not known whether these findings simply reflect that teachers are more familiar with their selected qualification and subject than with wider examination systems, or whether there is in fact a deeper dissatisfaction with the wider systems.

## **Parting Comments**

The key positive issues raised by those teachers commenting at this stage (39%) are that the 2007 examination papers were on the whole, good, fair and well thought out (18% of those responding), and that the format or layout of papers was good (17% of those responding). More negative issues were that students should be given more time to complete the examinations, and that examinations were believed to have discriminated against some students (eight per cent of those responding in each case).

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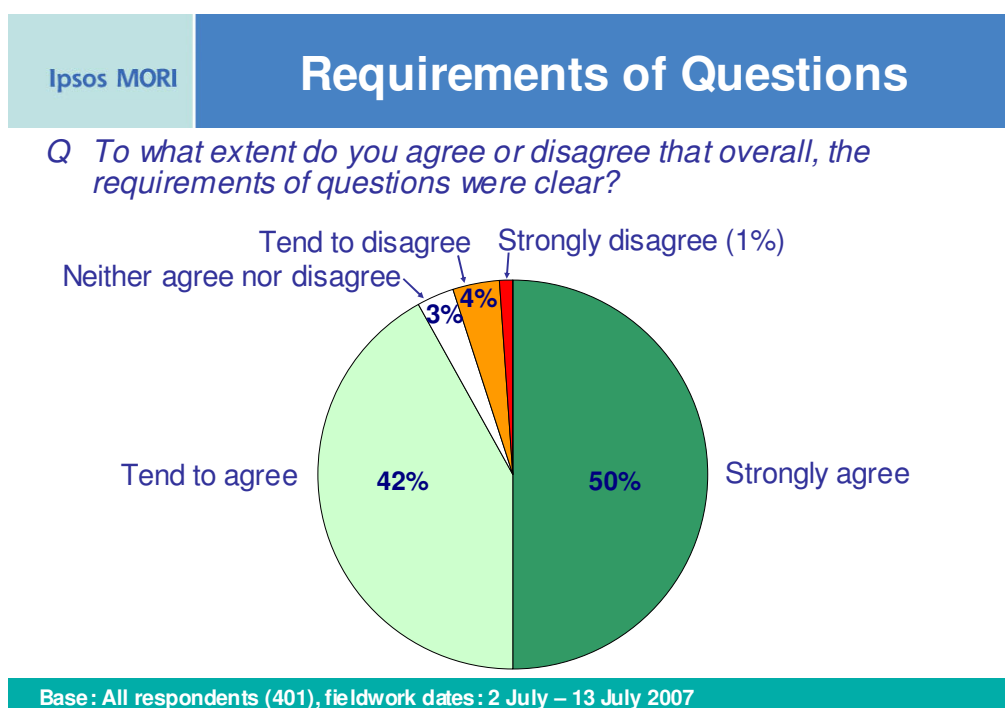
*Ali Ziff*

# Question Paper Structure

This chapter presents the survey findings about the clarity, structure and general content of the 2007 question papers for GCSE and A level. It includes views on question requirements and general instructions, along with views on the presentation of the papers themselves. Attitudes towards the coverage of specification content, the appropriateness of question types, the allocation of marks and the time allowed to complete the papers are also presented.

## Requirements of Questions

The majority of teachers agree that, overall, the requirements of questions on the 2007 GCSE and A level question papers were clear (92%). As many as half (50%) *strongly* agree with this view; only five per cent disagree.



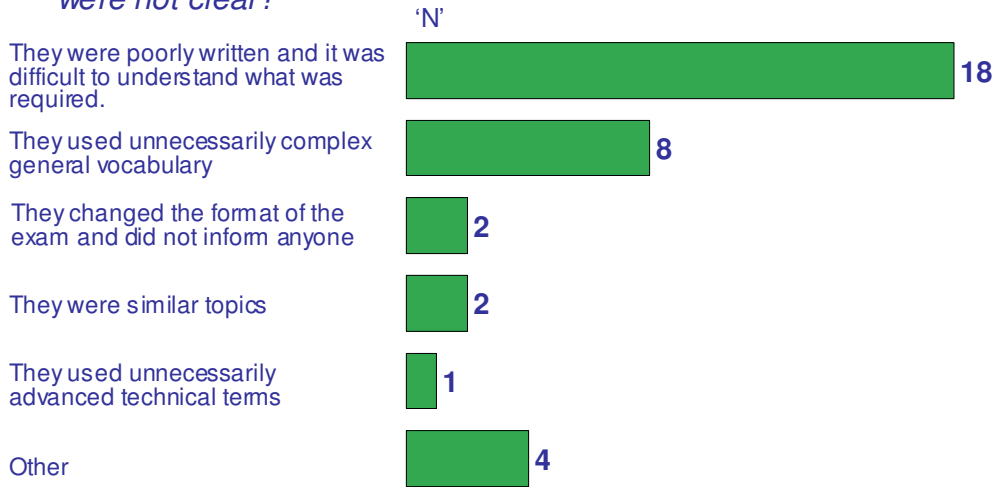
Staff involved in both management and classroom-only roles are equally positive (92%) and this predominantly positive view is present across different qualification levels and awarding bodies. Teachers who have prepared pupils for a mathematics examination are particularly positive, with 98% agreeing that the requirements of questions were clear.

Of those who did not agree that the requirements of questions were clear<sup>3</sup>, more than half (18 of the 33 respondents) say that it is because questions were poorly written and as a result it was difficult to understand what was required. Other reasons for disagreement include that the questions used unnecessarily complex general vocabulary (eight respondents).

<sup>3</sup> Small base size (33) – please interpret findings with caution.

Ipsos MORI **Requirements of Questions**

Q Why do you say that overall, the requirements of questions were not clear?



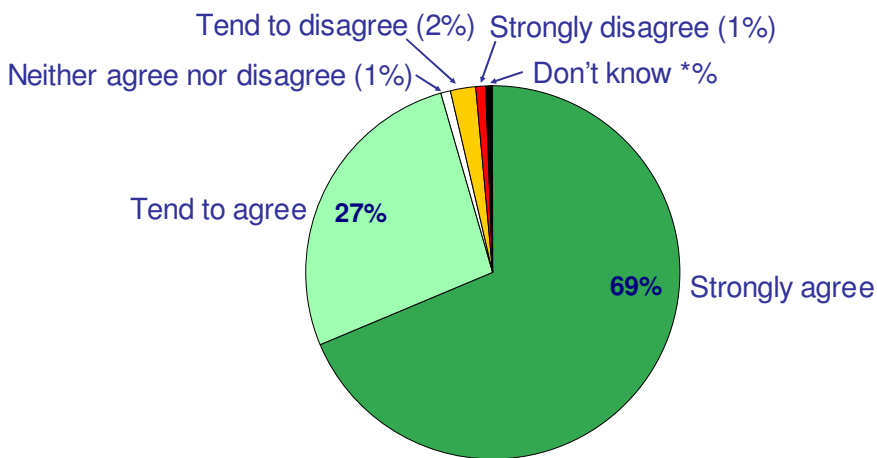
Base: All who neither agree nor disagree, or disagreed that the requirements of the paper were clear (33)

**Clarity of General Instructions**

With regard to the clarity of general instructions provided in question papers, the majority of teachers (96%) agree that they are clear, while only three per cent disagree. Almost seven in ten teachers (69%) *strongly* agree that general instructions were clear.

Ipsos MORI **Clarity of Instructions Provided**

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that general instructions provided in question papers were clear?

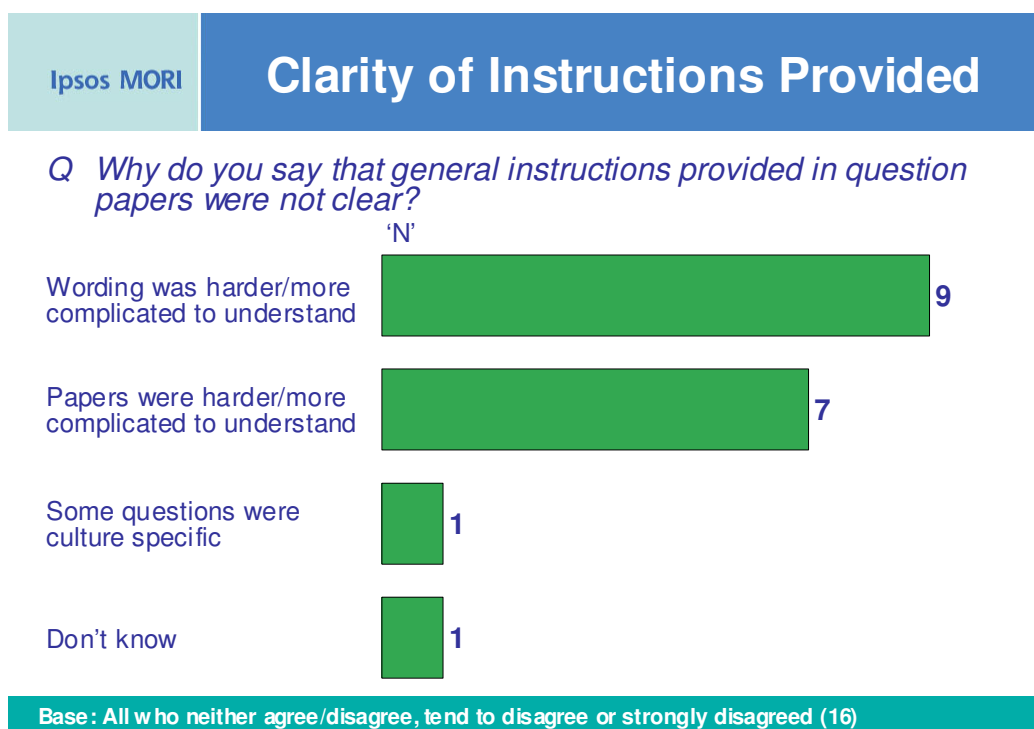


Base: All respondents (401), fieldwork dates: 2 July – 13 July 2007

Teachers who responded in relation to an A level subject are more likely to agree that general instructions provided in question papers were clear than those who responded in relation to a subject at GCSE (98% compared to 93%).

Although the base size is small, and caution therefore needs to be exercised in interpreting the findings, teachers who have prepared pupils for a GCSE English examination are more dissatisfied than average with the clarity of general instructions in question papers (10% compared to three per cent). Findings also suggest that teachers who are not confident in the examination papers or not confident in the qualification they teach are more dissatisfied than average with general instructions (nine per cent in both cases).

Of those who did not agree that general instructions were clear (16 respondents)<sup>4</sup>, nine respondents say it is because the wording was 'harder or more complicated to understand', while seven feel that the entire paper was 'harder or more complicated to understand'.



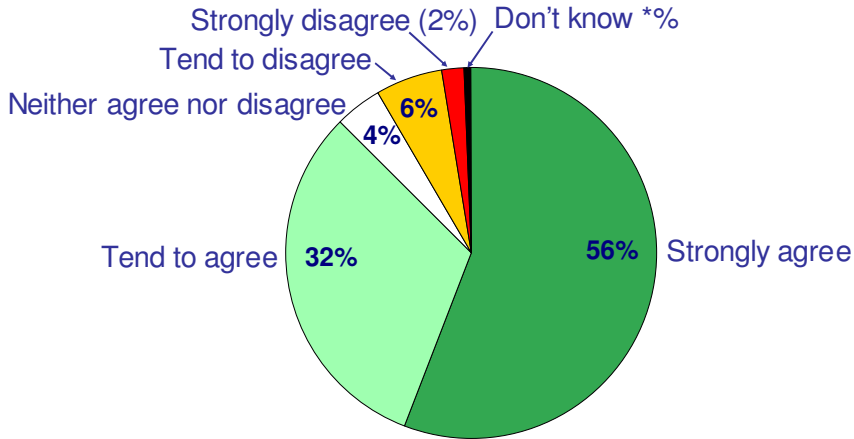
## Presentation of Papers

Almost nine in ten (88%) teachers agree that the question papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates, with eight per cent holding the opposite view. Again, the strength of agreement is marked with over half (56%) *strongly* agreeing that the presentation of the papers was helpful to candidates.

<sup>4</sup>Very small base size (16). Please treat findings with caution.

Ipsos MORI **Presentation of Papers**

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that the question papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates?



Base: All respondents (401), fieldwork dates: 2 July – 13 July 2007

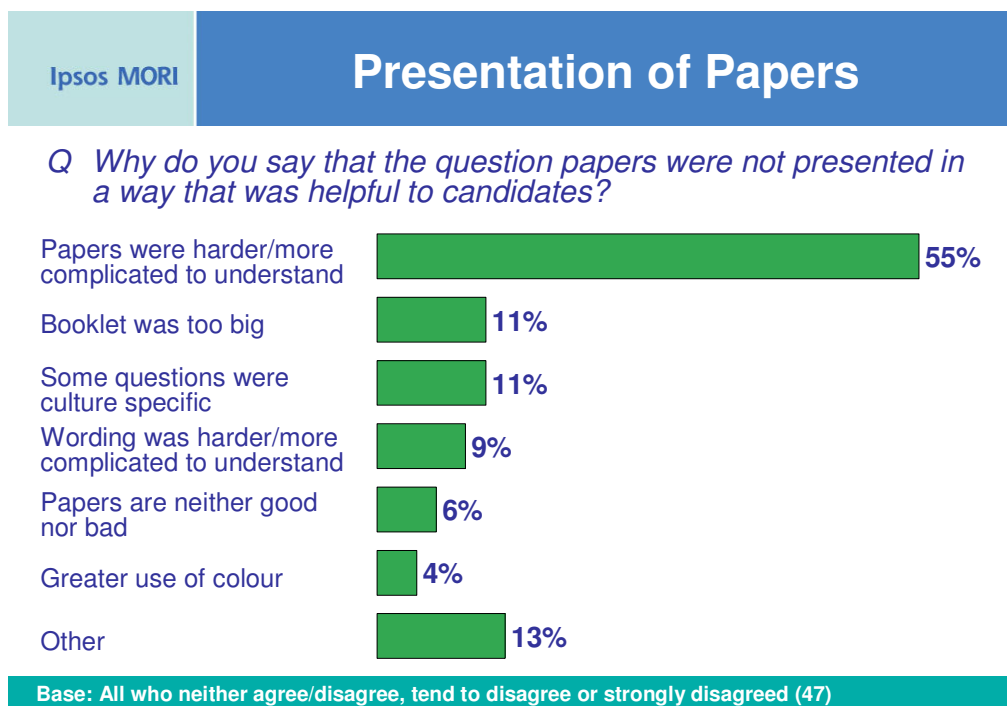
Teachers responding in relation to a GCSE subject are more likely than average to disagree with the statement ‘question papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates’ (12% compared to eight per cent). Those responding in relation to an AS level are more positive than average (95% compared to 88%). These differences are statistically significant.

Further investigation of those who disagree with the statement reveals that for GCSE subjects, teachers responding in relation to higher tier papers are more likely than average to disagree that question papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates (16% compared to 8%). Although this difference is statistically significant, caution must be afforded due to the small base (76 respondents) for higher tier respondents.

Furthermore, indicative findings are that teachers who have prepared pupils for a GCSE English examination are the most dissatisfied with how question papers were presented; a quarter (25% compared to eight per cent) disagrees with the statement. Again, whilst this result is statistically significant, the small base (40 respondents) creates the need for caution when drawing conclusions.

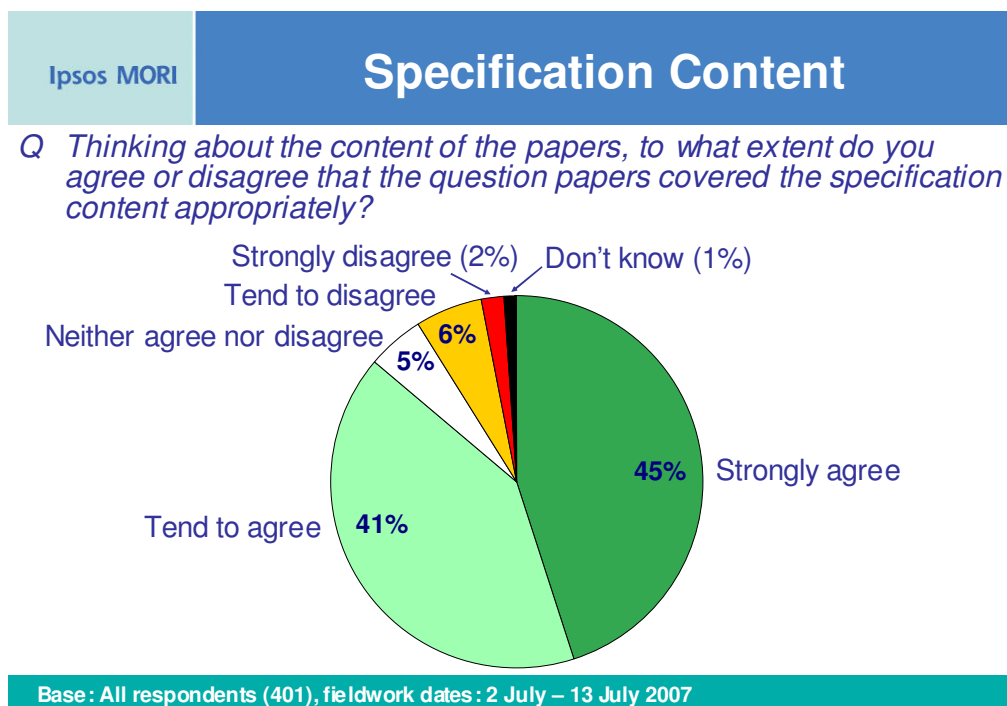
The main reason for some teachers not agreeing with the statement that ‘question papers were presented in a way that was helpful for candidates’ was because they believed the papers to be ‘harder and more complicated to understand’; either than they would expect them to be, or than those from previous years. This reason is mentioned unprompted by 55% of the 47 teachers who did not agree with the statement. Almost half of the teachers who made this observation were commenting with regard to English, and in particular, at GCSE. Other reasons cited include that the booklet was too big or long to get through (11%) and that some questions were culture-specific (11%). None of the reasons cited are

specific to teachers of a particular subject, being given by a range of respondents, though some of these reasons would not apply to some subjects.



## Specification Content

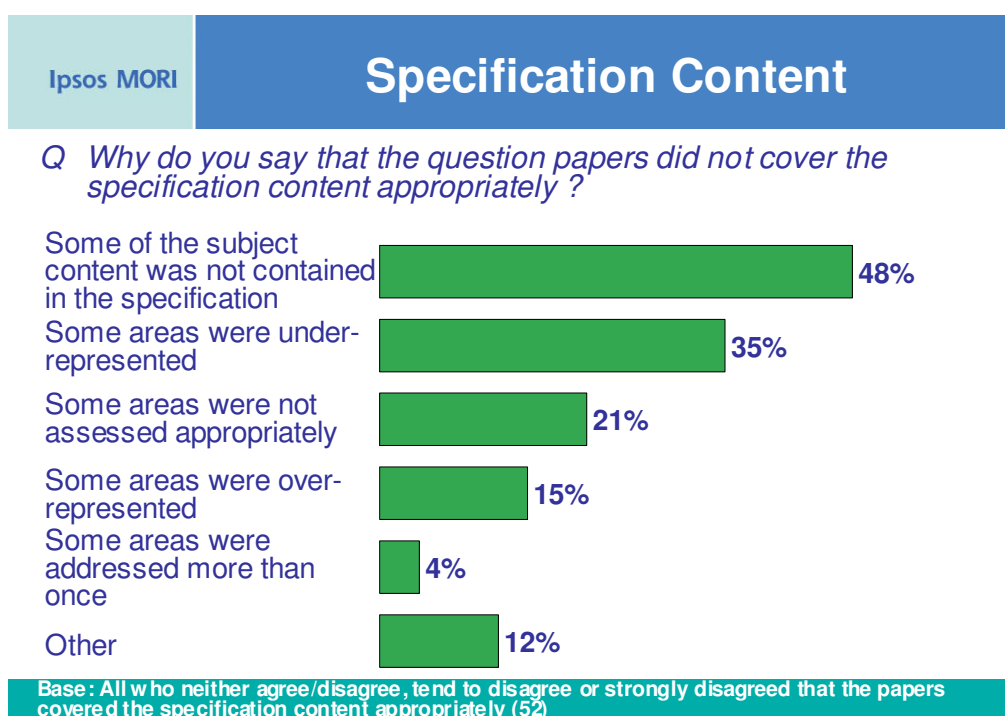
Eighty-six per cent of teachers agree that the question papers covered the specification content appropriately, while only eight per cent disagree with this.



There is very little variation on this response by subgroup, though teachers who have confidence in the examination papers or confidence in the qualification awarded for their subject are more likely to agree that the question papers covered the specification appropriately (89% and 88% respectively) than those who are not confident in these (64% and 69% respectively).

Although the base size is small and the findings must therefore be interpreted with caution, teachers who have prepared pupils for a GCSE history examination are particularly positive that question papers covered the specification content appropriately, with as many as 98% agreeing with the statement.

Of those who do not agree that the question papers covered the specification content appropriately (52 respondents), almost half say it is because some of the subject content was not contained in the specification (48%). Others say that some areas were under-represented (35%), that some areas were not assessed appropriately (21%) and that some areas were over-represented (15%).



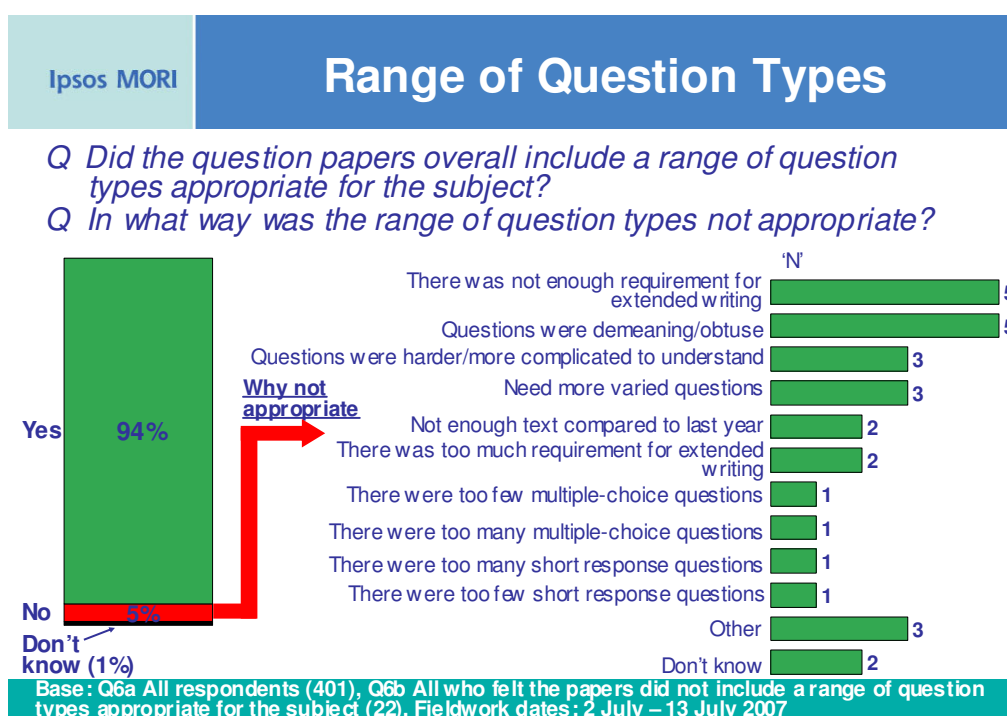
## Appropriateness of Question Types

The vast majority of teachers (94%) agree with the statement that 'the question papers overall included a range of question types appropriate for the subject', while five per cent disagree with this. The response is broadly consistent across qualification level, awarding body and respondent role.

Just over one in five teachers who do not have confidence in the examination papers (21%) or do not have confidence in the qualification (22%) disagree with this statement, which is significantly higher than for those who are confident. Only four per cent of those who are confident in both factors disagree. In addition, teachers responding in relation to GCSE higher tier are significantly

more likely than average to disagree that question papers include a range of question types appropriate for the subject (11%), though a small base for this group of respondents creates the need for caution when interpreting this result.

Of the 22 people who believe that the range of question types was not appropriate, five say there was not enough requirement for extended writing, while another five think that questions were 'demeaning' or 'obtuse'. Other reasons given were that questions were 'harder or more complicated to understand', and that 'more varied' questions are needed. None of these comments are specific to a particular subject or awarding body, though some of them would not apply to some subjects.



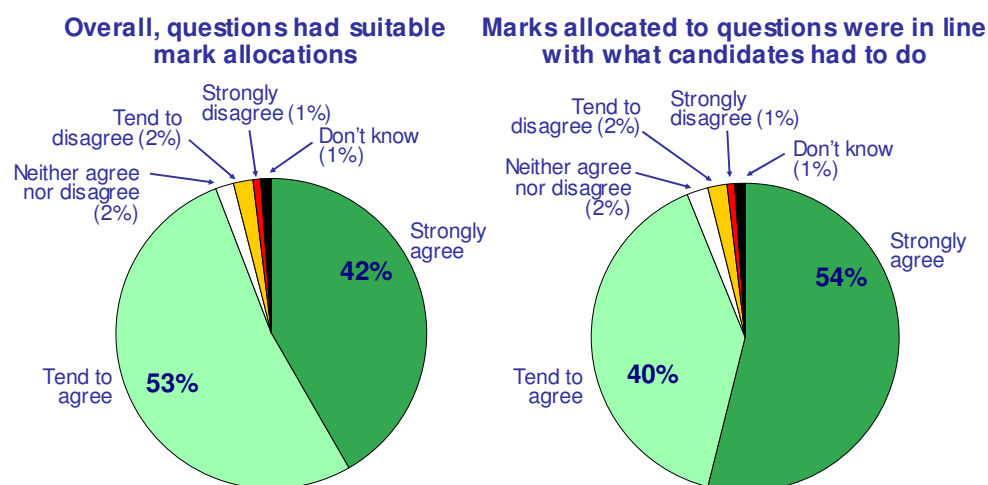
## Allocation of Marks

The majority of teachers (95%) agreed that questions had suitable mark allocations, with only three per cent disagreeing with this. The same proportion of teachers (95%) agree that marks allocated to questions were in line with what candidates had to do, while again, only three per cent hold the opposite view.



Ipsos MORI **Mark Allocations**

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that...?



Base : All respondents (401), fieldwork dates : 2 July – 13 July 2007

As might be expected, teachers who have confidence in the examination papers and in their subject's qualification are slightly more likely than average to agree that mark allocations were suitable (97% in both cases).

With regard to mark allocations being in line with what candidates had to do, some subgroups are less positive about this than others. While only three per cent of teachers disagree with this on average, eight per cent of teachers responding in relation to a subject at GCSE higher tier disagree.

Findings indicate that teachers responding in relation to GCSE English are more likely than average to be dissatisfied with mark allocations. Ten per cent of these teachers disagree that mark allocations are suitable (compared to just three per cent on average) while 13% disagree that mark allocations were in line with what students had to do (compared to three per cent on average). However, due to the small base sizes these findings must be treated with caution.

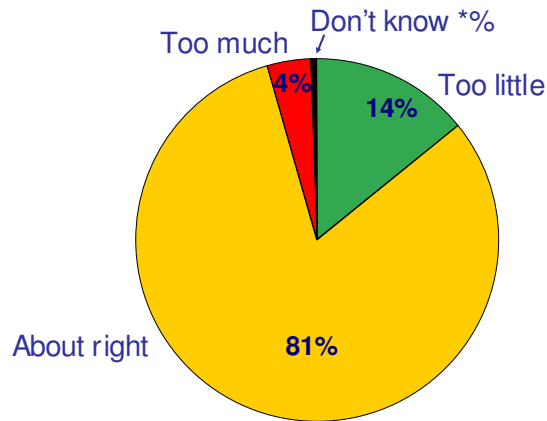
### Completion Time

With regard to how long students are given to complete the question paper, just over eight in ten (81%) teachers think the time given was about right. Fourteen per cent feel students were given too little time to answer the questions, while four per cent felt the amount of time given was too generous.

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## Length of Time Given to Candidates

Q Thinking about this summer's question papers for your chosen qualification and subject overall, do you think the length of time given to candidates to complete the question papers was...?



Base: All respondents (401), fieldwork dates: 2 July – 13 July 2007

Teachers responding in relation to a GCSE subject are more likely than average to feel that the time given to candidates was too generous (nine per cent compared to four per cent overall).

There are some interesting indicative findings with regard to specific subjects. These suggest that almost a quarter of teachers who have prepared pupils for a GCSE mathematics examination feel that too much time was given to students (24%). On the other hand, a quarter of teachers who have prepared pupils for GCSE history and A level psychology examinations feel that their students were not given enough time to complete the papers (25% in both cases). Teachers who have prepared pupils for A level biology examinations are more likely than average to feel that the time given to candidates to complete the question papers is about right (95%).

## Summary

Teachers are particularly satisfied with the various aspects of question paper structure. Ninety-six per cent of respondents agree that the general instructions in question papers were clear, while similar proportions agree that the mark allocations for questions were suitable (95%) and that these were in line with what candidates had to do (95%).

Continuing this positive trend, teachers agree that the papers included a range of question types appropriate to the subject (94%) and that the requirements of questions were clear (92%). Just under nine in ten teachers (88%) feel that the papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates, while a similar proportion (86%) feel that the papers covered the specification content appropriately.

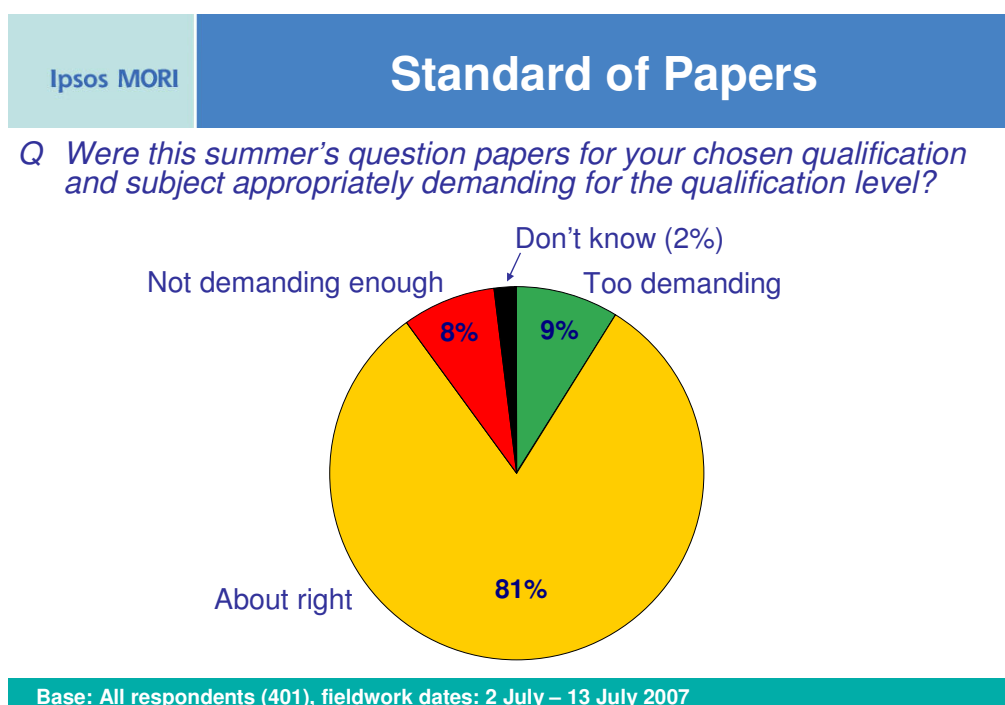
Teachers are somewhat less positive about the amount of time given for candidates to complete the papers, but with just over eight in ten (81%) feeling that the time given was about right, this is still an encouraging response. Of the teachers who disagreed with this, more were concerned that candidates did not have enough time, than felt that the time given was too generous.

## Question Paper Accessibility

This chapter presents the survey findings regarding teachers' views of how demanding the papers were for the qualification level and how accessible they were to candidates of varying abilities. It also includes findings on the level of guidance and perceived levels of discrimination in question papers.

### Level of Demand

Just over eight in ten (81%) teachers feel that this summer's question papers for their chosen subject were appropriately demanding for the qualification level. Just under one in ten (nine percent) feel that the question papers were too demanding, while eight per cent feel they were not demanding enough.



Teachers in maintained non-selective centres are more likely to feel that the question papers this summer were appropriately demanding for the qualification level: whilst 81% of teachers overall say the 2007 papers were about right, this increases to 86% amongst teachers in maintained non-selective centres, but falls to 77% for teachers from independent schools.

While eight per cent of teachers on average believe that papers this summer were not demanding enough, this increases to one in five (21%) for teachers who do not have confidence in the examination papers, and three in ten (31%) for teachers who do not have confidence in the qualification.

Indicative findings suggest that some subject teachers are concerned that examination papers for their subjects are too demanding, particularly those who

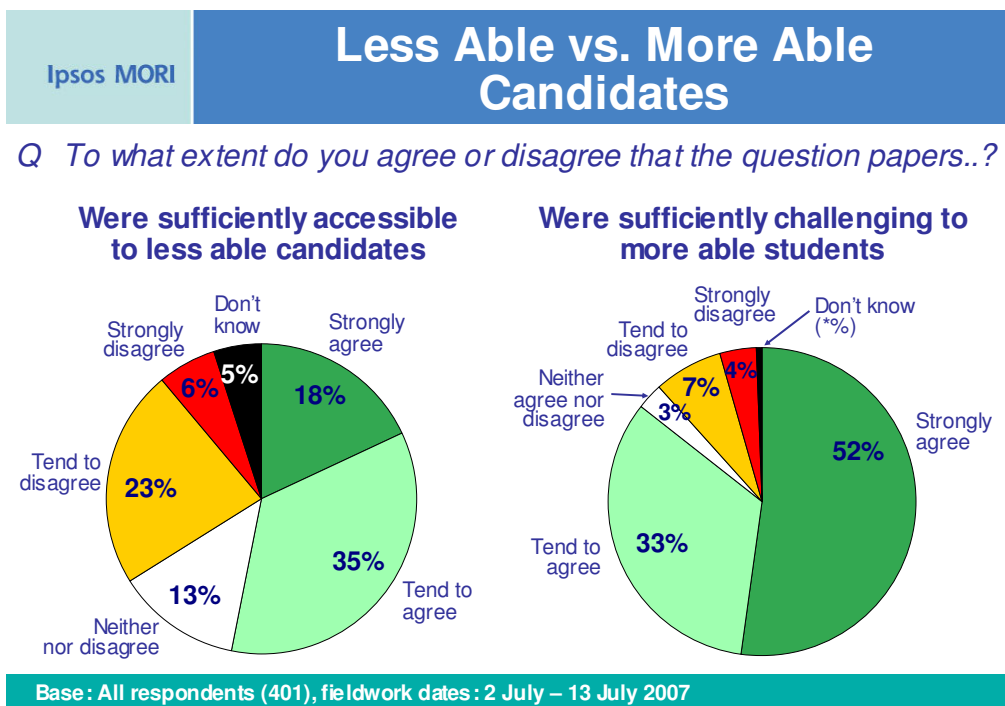
have prepared pupils for an examination in French, German or Spanish. While only nine per cent of teachers overall believe the papers this summer were too demanding, this figure increases to 23% for teachers who had prepared pupils for GCSE French, German or Spanish examinations, and 30% for teachers who had prepared pupils for A level examinations in these subjects.

By contrast, 22% of GCSE mathematics teachers and 18% of A level biology teachers think the examination papers this summer were not demanding enough, compared to eight per cent of teachers on average.

## Level of Accessibility

Just over half of teachers (53%) feel that this summer's question papers were sufficiently accessible to less able candidates, while almost three in ten (29%) disagree that this is the case. Thirteen per cent of teachers do not offer an opinion either way.

With regard to more able candidates, teachers are more positive, with 85% agreeing that papers were sufficiently challenging for these, and only 11% holding the opposing view.



Teachers who strongly agree that they have confidence in the examination papers are more likely than average to believe they *are* accessible to less able candidates (64%) as are those who strongly agree that they have confidence in the qualification they teach (59%).

With regard to centre type, teachers who work in a maintained non-selective centre are more likely than average (and than those in other centre types) to disagree that the question papers were sufficiently accessible to less able

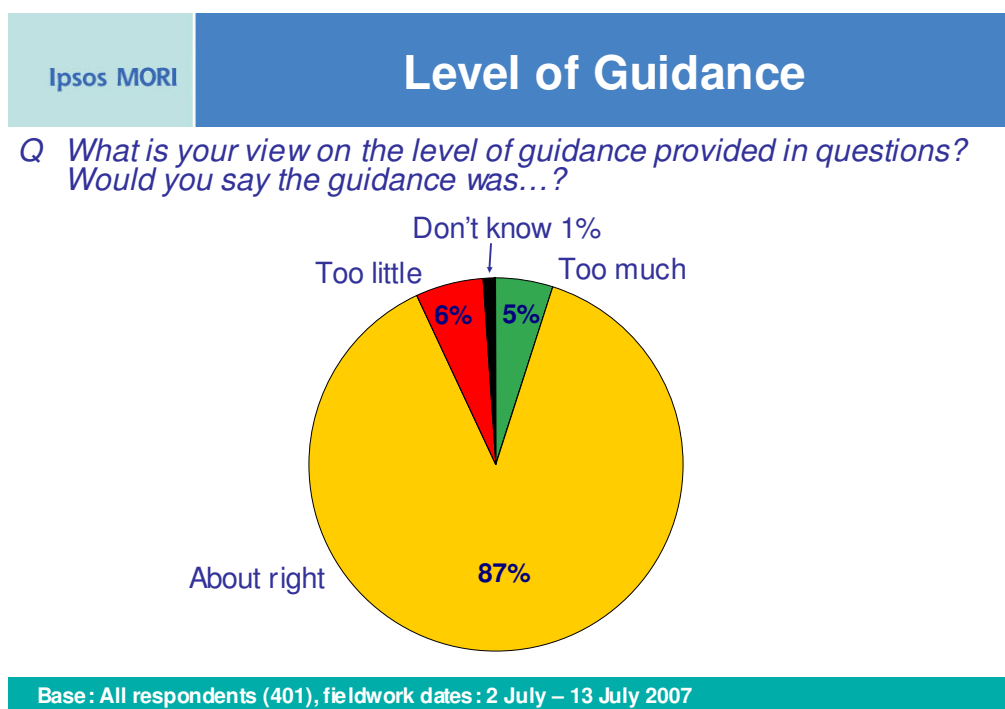
candidates (35% compared to 29% on average and 24% among teachers in other centre types). Teachers who have prepared pupils for French, German or Spanish examinations are also more likely than average to disagree that papers were sufficiently accessible to less able candidates (43% compared to 29% overall).

Teachers who *strongly* agree that they have confidence in the question papers for their subject, as well as those who *strongly* agree that they are confident about the qualification they teach, are more likely than average to agree that papers *are* sufficiently challenging to more able students (94% in both cases compared to 85% overall). Teachers who work in independent schools are twice as likely as those working in non-independent schools to disagree that papers were sufficiently challenging to more able students (18% compared to nine per cent).

Although only indicative, findings suggest that teachers who have prepared pupils for an A level mathematics qualification are more likely than average to disagree that papers were challenging enough to more able students (23% compared to 11% overall).

## Level of Guidance

The majority of teachers (87%) feel that the level of guidance provided in questions was about right. Only a small minority think there was too little guidance (6%), while even fewer think there was too much (5%).



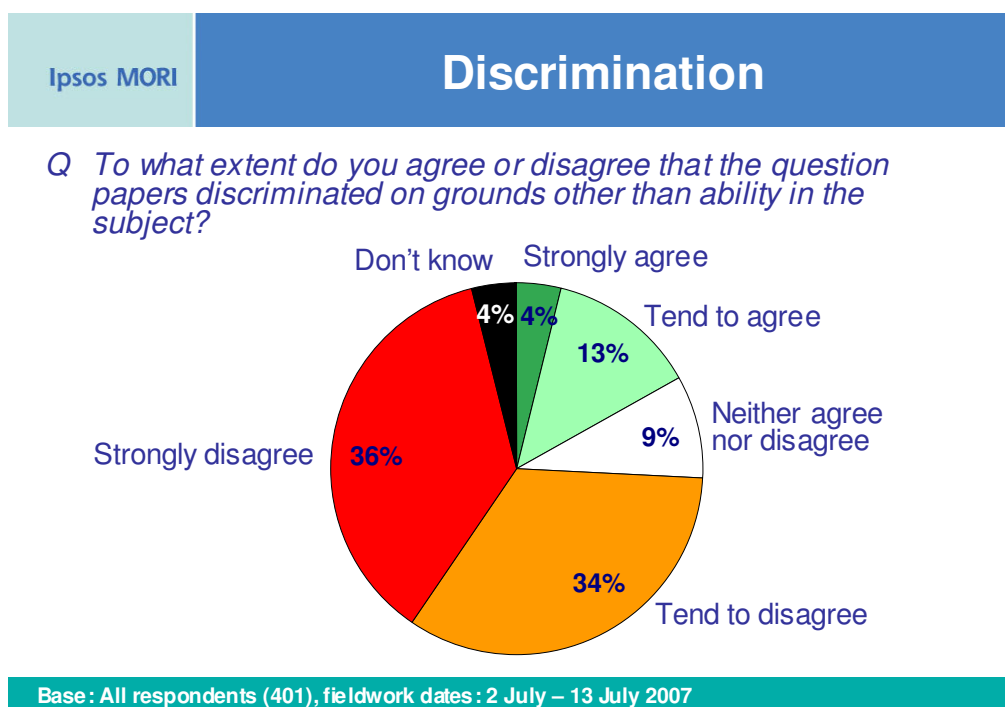
Teachers who work at independent schools are more likely than average to think that too much guidance is given, potentially restricting more able candidates from creating their own response strategies (10% compared to five per cent on

average). By contrast, those who teach in Sixth Form Colleges are more likely than average to think that question papers give too little guidance (16% compared to six per cent).

Teachers of GCSE mathematics are particularly likely to feel that the level of guidance on question papers was about right (98%), although this finding should be treated with caution owing to the small base size.

## Discrimination

Less than one in five teachers (17%) believes that the 2007 question papers for their subject discriminated on grounds other than ability in the subject. Whilst this is a significant minority, the majority of around seven in ten (71%) disagree that discrimination was present. The remaining teachers either did not offer an opinion either way (nine per cent) or do not know (four per cent).

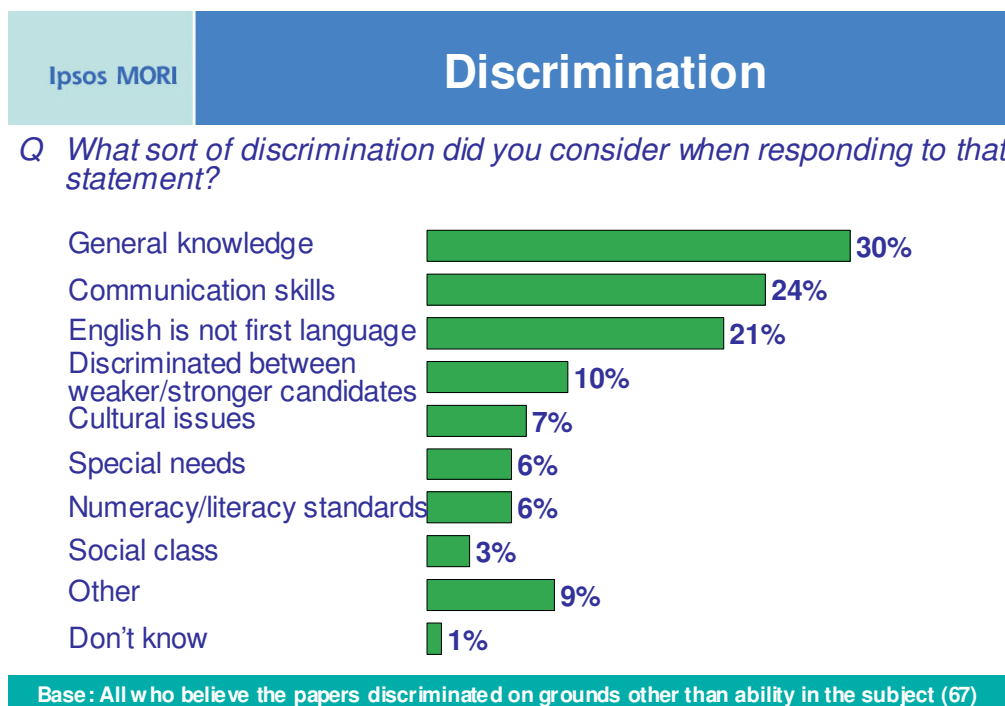


Teachers responding in relation to A2 question papers are more likely than average to disagree that these discriminated on grounds other than ability in the subject (81% compared to 71%), but there are no significant differences between teachers of different subjects on this matter.

Those who are confident in the examination papers and confident in the qualification are slightly more likely than average to believe that the examination papers do not discriminate on grounds other than ability in the subject (74% and 73% respectively, compared to 71% overall).

Of those teachers (17%) who believe that question papers discriminated on grounds other than ability in the subject, the main type of discrimination noted was that question papers addressed general knowledge, i.e. candidates were asked

about issues such as current affairs which lie beyond the specification of the subject. Thirty per cent of the teachers in question hold this view. Other types of discrimination mentioned relate to communication skills, including poor writing and essay skills (24%), not having English as a first language (21%), and discrimination between stronger and weaker candidates (10%).



None of these types of discrimination are mentioned more often than average by teachers of any specific subject or qualification, however with regard to numeracy and literacy standards, all of the teachers who mentioned this as a type of discrimination work in maintained non-selective schools.

## Summary

Just over eight in ten (81%) teachers feel that the question papers this summer were appropriately demanding for the qualification and level. Similar proportions of teachers feel that they were either not demanding enough (eight per cent) or were too demanding (nine per cent).

In terms of accessibility for students of differing abilities, 85% of teachers agree that papers were sufficiently challenging for more able students, but only half (53%) feel that they were sufficiently accessible to less able students (though only 29% actually disagree that this was the case). This might suggest that improving access for less able students is an issue that could be considered further.

The majority of teachers (87%) feel that the level of guidance in questions was appropriate, while similar proportions of teachers feel that there was too little guidance (6%) or too much (5%).



Seventeen per cent of teachers believe that the examination papers discriminated on grounds other than ability in the subject. The main type of discrimination referred to by teachers is knowledge of issues that are not related directly to the subject.

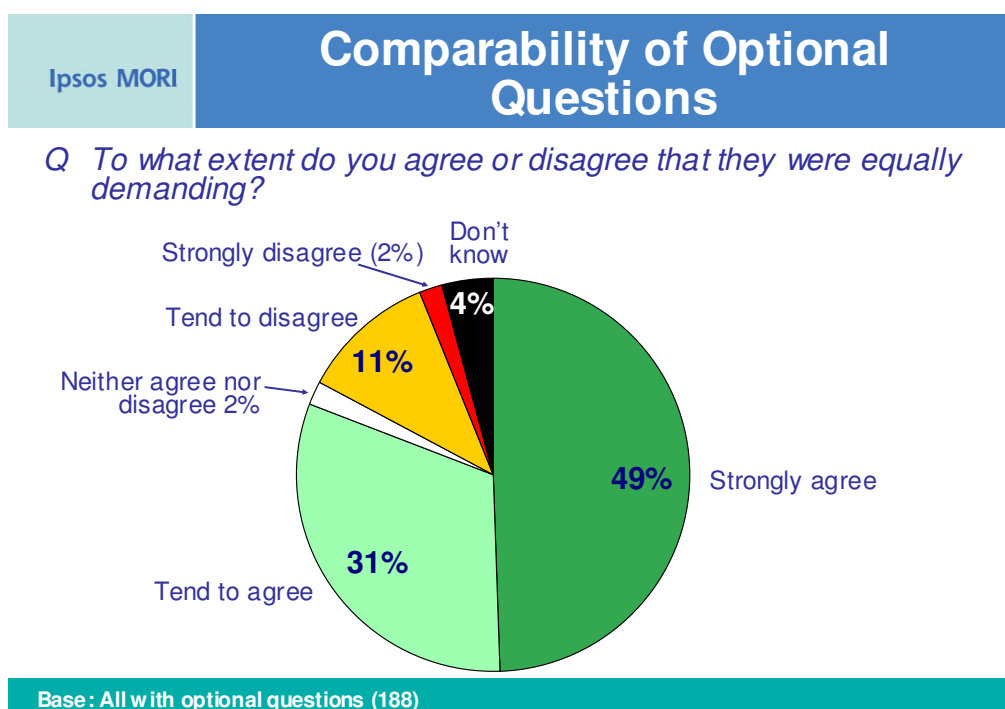
## Question Paper Comparability

This chapter presents the survey findings about question paper comparability on a number of levels. First, it examines the degree to which optional questions (where relevant) are comparably demanding to each other. It continues by considering how the 2007 papers compare to those from 2006, and concludes by considering how teachers feel the 2007 papers compare to those for similar or related subjects.

### Optional Questions

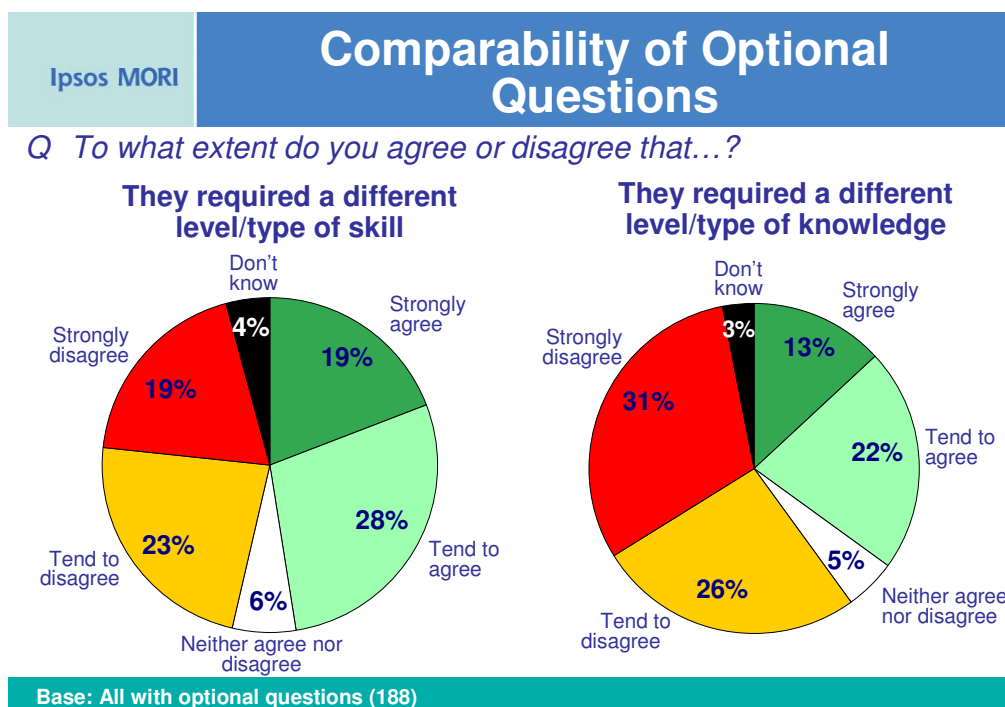
Just under half of the teachers who took part in the survey say that the question papers for their qualification and subject had optional questions (47%). The remaining 53% comprises 52% who do not teach subjects that had optional questions, and one per cent who are unsure as to whether any of the questions were optional.

Of those teachers whose papers did have optional questions, just over eight in ten (81%) agree that they were comparably demanding to each other, with around half (49%) *strongly* agreeing that this is the case. Thirteen per cent of these teachers did not agree that the optional questions were similarly demanding.



Just under half (47%) of the teachers whose papers had optional questions feel that these questions required 'a different level or type of skill', while slightly fewer (42%) disagree with this statement. The remaining 10% either do not offer an opinion (six per cent) or do not know (four per cent).

Just over a third (36%) of the teachers whose papers had optional questions feel that these questions required 'a different level or type of knowledge'. A larger proportion (57%) disagrees with this view. Five per cent neither agree nor disagree, while three per cent do not know.



Although the base size is small, findings indicate that teachers who have prepared pupils for GCSE history examinations are more likely than average to believe that the optional questions on these papers were 'equal' to each other. Over nine in ten (92%) agree that these questions were equally demanding (compared to 81% on average), just under three in five (59%) disagree that they required a different level or type of skill (compared to 42% on average) and 85% disagree that they required a different level or type of knowledge (compared to 57% on average).

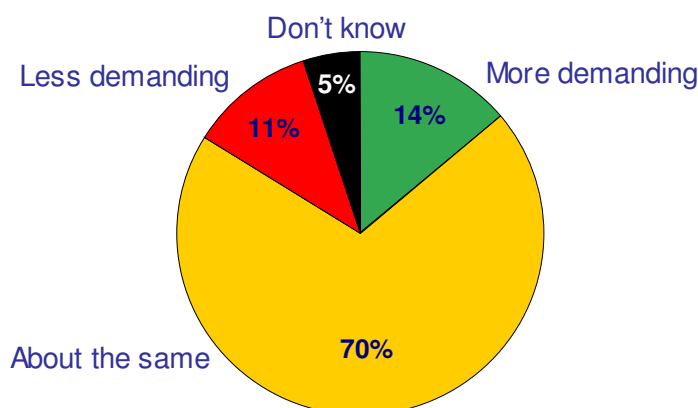
### Comparability – 2007 vs. 2006

The majority of teachers (70%) think that the summer 2007 question papers for their qualification and subject were comparably demanding to the 2006 papers. Fourteen per cent class the 2007 papers as more demanding, while fewer, 11%, think they were less demanding. Five per cent do not know.

Ipsos MORI

## Comparison: 2007 vs. 2006

Q What is your view in relation to comparing this summer and last summer's question papers for your chosen qualification and subject. Do you feel this summer's papers were...



Base: All respondents (401), fieldwork dates: 2 July – 13 July 2007

There are some interesting findings by subgroup on this issue. Teachers responding regarding GCSE higher tier papers are more likely than average to think that the papers in 2007 were more demanding than those from 2006 (22% compared to 14%). A smaller proportion is more likely than average to think they were less demanding (18% compared to 11%).

Teachers who are more likely than the average of 14% to believe that the 2007 papers were *more* demanding than those from 2006 include those who have been teaching their qualification for 6-15 years (18%) and those who teach in a large centre (19%).

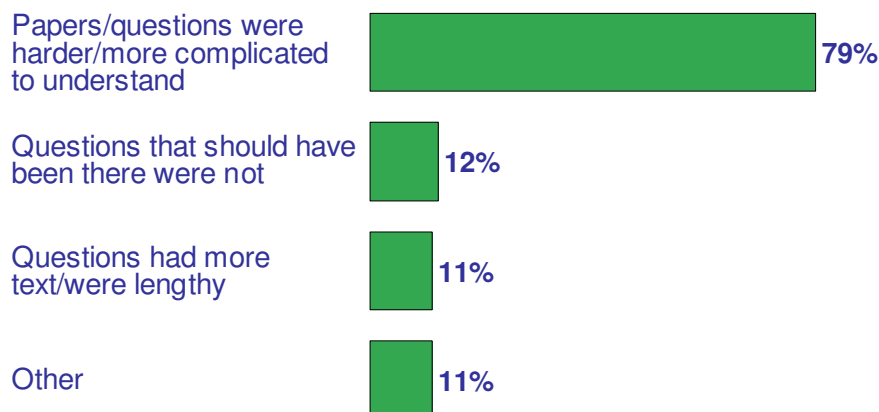
Teachers who are more likely than the average of 11% to believe that the 2007 papers were *less* demanding than those from 2006 include those who teach in independent schools (18%), and those who teach in a small centre (16%).

Indicative findings suggest that teachers who have prepared pupils for GCSE French, German or Spanish examinations are more likely than average to think that papers were *more* demanding in 2007 (40% compared to 14% overall) while those who have prepared pupils for GCSE mathematics examinations hold the opposite view, believing that the 2007 papers were *less* demanding than in 2006 (29% compared to 11% on average).

Of the teachers who feel that the 2007 papers were *more* demanding than the 2006 papers, almost eight in ten (79%) say it is because the papers or questions were 'harder and more complicated to understand'.

Ipsos MORI **Papers More Demanding**

Q Why do you say that this summer's papers were more demanding?

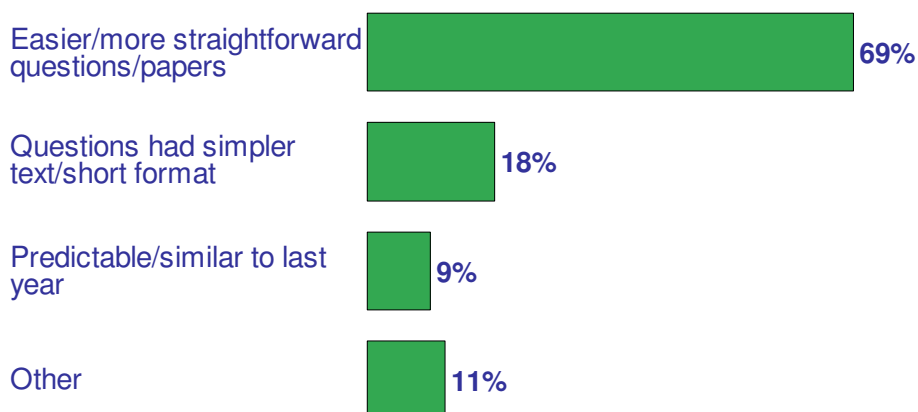


Base: All who believe the paper is more demanding (57)

Of the teachers who feel that the 2007 papers were *less* demanding than the 2006 papers, almost seven in ten (69%) say it is because the papers or questions were 'easier and more straightforward'. Just under one in five (18%) believe that the questions had 'simpler text or were in a shorter format', while nine per cent think the questions were 'predictable and similar to the 2006 papers'.

Ipsos MORI **Papers Less Demanding**

Q Why do you say that this summer's papers were less demanding?

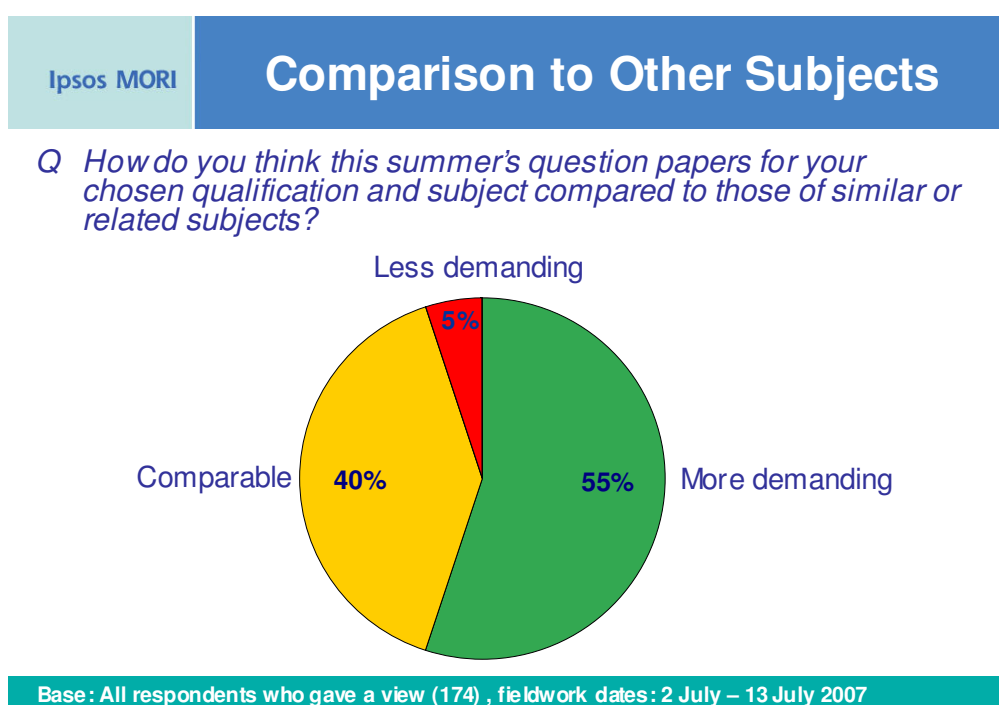


Base: All who believe the paper is less demanding (45)

## Comparability – Other Subjects

When asked to compare the 2007 question papers for their qualification and subject with the 2007 papers for similar or related subjects, almost half of teachers (49%) say they have not seen any other papers, while three per cent do not think there are any similar or related subjects, and five per cent do not know.

Of the 43% of teachers who have a perception regarding the comparability of their subject paper with those for similar or related subjects, just over half (55%) believe that the papers for their qualification and subject were more demanding than the other papers they had seen. Two in five of the teachers (40%) think that papers for other subjects were comparable to theirs, while a minority of five per cent feel that papers for their qualification and subject were less demanding than those for similar or related subjects.



Teachers who work in independent schools are more likely than average, and more likely than those who teach in non-independent schools, to feel that the question papers for their subject and qualification are less demanding than those for other subjects (12% compared to five per cent overall and two per cent of teachers in non-independent schools).

## Summary

Of those teachers who have prepared pupils for examinations in subjects where papers include optional questions, 81% believe that the optional questions were comparably demanding to each other. Less than half of the teachers believe that the optional questions required different skills (47%) and even fewer (36%) feel that candidates needed different knowledge to complete different optional questions.

With regard to how the 2007 question papers compared to those from 2006, seven in ten (70%) teachers think they were comparably demanding. The significant minority of teachers who disagreed that this was the case were more likely to think that the 2007 papers were more demanding than those from 2006 (14%) than they were to think that they were less demanding (11%).

Almost half of the teachers indicate that they have not seen the 2007 question papers for a subject similar or related to the one they teach (49%). Of those (43%) who have a perception regarding how their subject paper compares to those from similar or related subjects, 55% feel that their subject's paper was more demanding, while 40% think the papers are comparable, and only a small minority (five per cent) believe their subject's paper to have been less demanding.

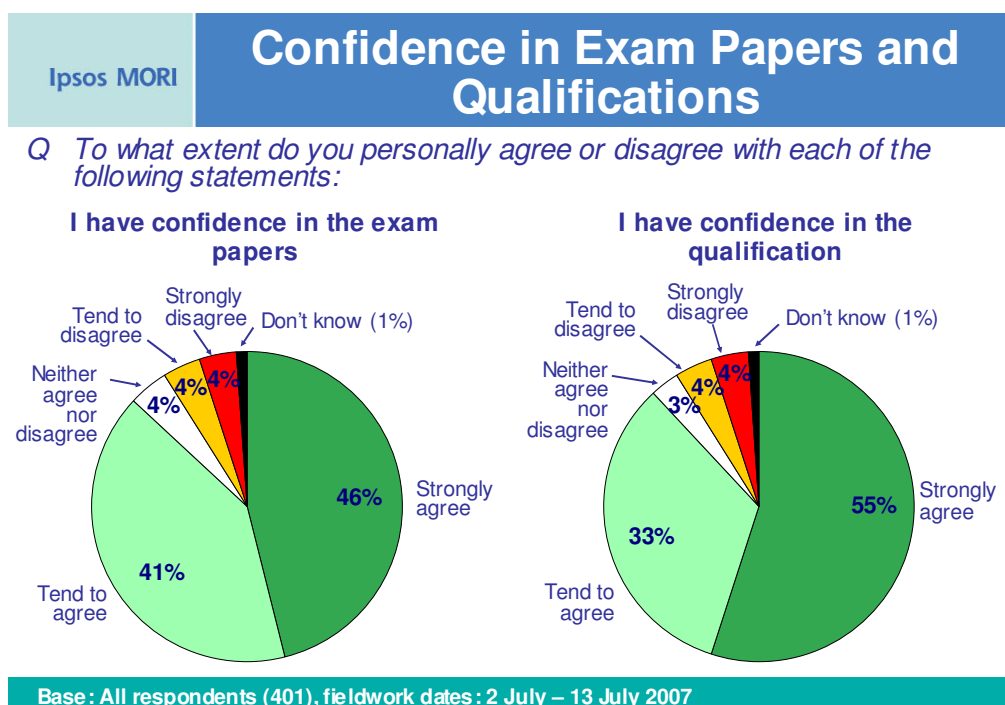
# Teacher Confidence

This chapter presents the survey findings regarding how confident teachers are in the examination papers for their subject (including the way the paper is put together, the marks and the marking process) and how confident they are with the qualification for their subject<sup>5</sup> (including the course specification and what pupils actually “walk away with”). Confidence in the GCSE and A level systems overall are also presented, alongside comparative data from a survey of teachers conducted by Ipsos MORI in 2006.

## Own Area of Expertise

Almost nine in ten (87%) teachers say that they have confidence in the examination papers for their subject, while just eight per cent hold an opposing view.

Teachers have a similar level of confidence (88%) in the qualification for the subject they teach as they have in its examination papers. The degree of confidence for the qualification is stronger, however, than that for the examination papers, with 46% *strongly* agreeing that they have confidence in the papers increasing to 55% *strongly* agreeing that they have confidence in the qualification. The proportion who does not have confidence is the same for the overall qualification as for the examination papers (eight per cent).



<sup>5</sup> Subject reflects subject and qualification level.



## **Confidence in question papers: subgroups**

Teachers responding for GCSE higher tier papers are twice as likely as the average not to have confidence in the examination papers for their subject (16% compared to eight per cent overall). Other subgroups of teachers more likely than average not to have confidence in the examination papers are those who teach in maintained selective centres (20%) and those who disagree that they have confidence in the qualification (59%). These findings are statistically significant though the base sizes are small.

Although base sizes are also small by subject subgroup and therefore findings should be treated with caution, data suggest that teachers who have prepared pupils for A level psychology examinations are more likely than average to have confidence in the examination papers (98% compared to 87%). By contrast, teachers who have prepared pupils for GCSE French, German or Spanish examinations are more likely than average not to have confidence in the examination papers (20% compared to eight per cent).

## **Confidence in qualification: subgroups**

Perhaps not surprisingly, teachers who have higher than average confidence in their chosen subject's examination papers, also have a significantly higher level of confidence than average in the qualification (96% compared to 88%). Other teachers more likely than average to have confidence in the qualification are those who teach in maintained non-selective centres (93%).

Although only indicative, teachers who have prepared pupils for GCSE history examinations appear to be more likely than average to agree that they have confidence in the qualification they teach (98% compared to 88% overall).

## **Confidence in the GCSE System Overall**

After discussing confidence in their chosen subject and qualification, teachers were then asked to comment on the GCSE and A level qualification systems overall.

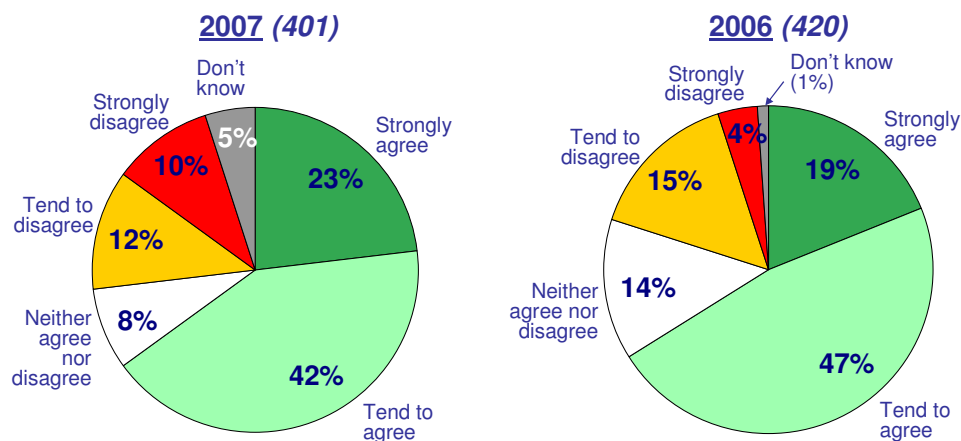
Almost two thirds (65%) of teachers express confidence in the GCSE system, while just over one in five (22%) state they are not confident in the system. When comparing these results to those obtained in 2006, when the same question was asked of teachers in a QCA survey<sup>6</sup>, it emerges that views are unchanged. In 2006, two thirds of teachers (66%) said they were confident in the GCSE system overall, while 19% stated that they were not confident in the system.

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<sup>6</sup> *Confidence in GCSE and A levels*, 2006, Ipsos MORI on behalf of QCA.

Ipsos MORI **Confidence in the GCSE system overall**

Q To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with the statement: I have confidence in the GCSE system overall



Base: All respondents, fieldwork dates: 2 July – 13 July 2007 (base size in brackets above)

Further analysis of this year's results reveals that teachers who responded in relation to a GCSE subject are more likely than average to express confidence in the GCSE system (74% compared to 65%), perhaps due to closer affinity to this. This subgroup is significantly more likely to express confidence in the GCSE system than those responding in relation to an A level subject (59%).

**Confidence in the GCSE system overall by respondent qualification:**  
 % expressing confidence in the GCSE system<sup>7</sup>

Respondent's selected qualification	% of respondents
GCSE	74%
AS level	59%
A2 level	60%
A level – all	59%
Overall	65%

Other subgroups who are more confident in the GCSE system than average are those who are also confident in the examination papers for their particular subject (70%), those who have confidence in the qualification they teach (69%) and those who teach in maintained non-selective centres (72%).

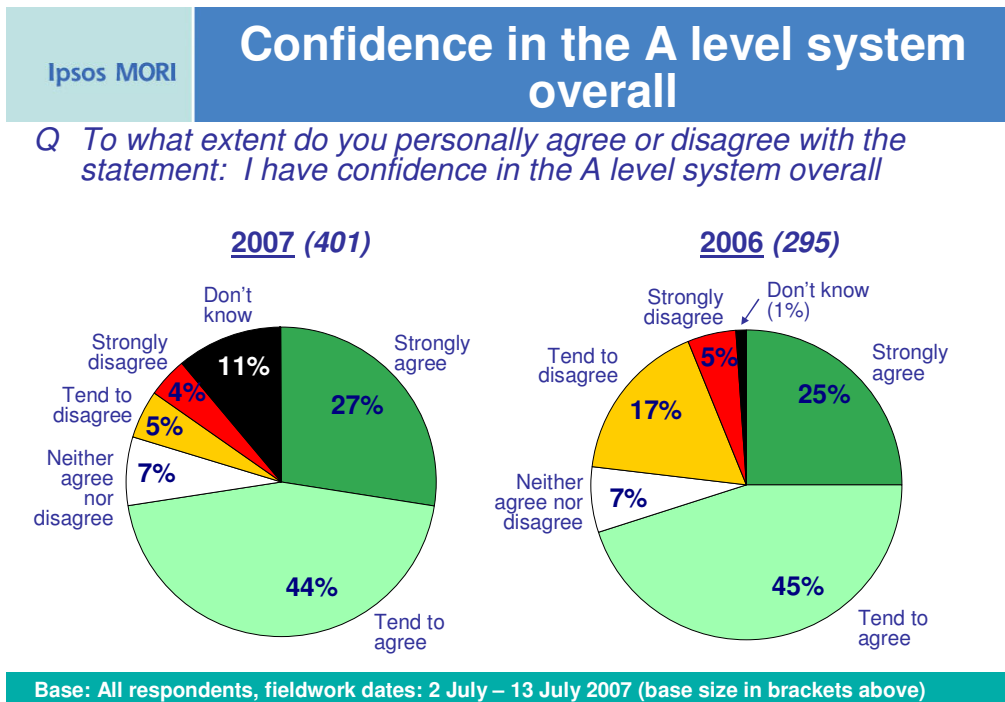
Although only indicative owing to small base sizes, findings suggest that teachers who have prepared pupils for GCSE mathematics examinations are more likely

<sup>7</sup> Percentage of teachers stating that they strongly agree or agree with the statement 'I have confidence in the GCSE system overall.'

than average to have confidence in the GCSE system (83%). Those who have prepared pupils for GCSE history examinations are more likely than average to *strongly* agree that they have confidence in the GCSE system (43% compared to 23% overall). Teachers more likely than average to express a lack or absence of confidence in the GCSE system were those responding for A level biology (38%) and A level French, German or Spanish (35%).

## Confidence in the A Level System Overall

Around seven in ten (71%) teachers agree that they have confidence in the A level system overall, while 10% disagree with this. Comparing these results to those obtained in the aforementioned QCA survey conducted in 2006, it emerges that although a similar proportion of teachers agreed that they had confidence in the A level system (70%), a higher number last year (22%) disagreed with this. Far fewer said that they did not know in 2006 than in 2007 (one per cent compared to 11%).



As with views on the GCSE system, teachers who responded in relation to an A level subject are more likely than average to agree that they have confidence in the A level system overall (85% compared to 71%), particularly if they were responding to a subject at A2 (88%). This subgroup is significantly more likely to express confidence in the A level system than those responding in relation to a GCSE subject (50%).

**Confidence in the A level system overall by respondent qualification:  
% expressing confidence in the A level system<sup>8</sup>**

Respondent's selected qualification	% of respondents
GCSE	50%
AS level	83%
A2 level	88%
A level – all	85%
Overall	71%

Other subgroups more likely than average to be confident in the A level system are those who have been teaching for 5 years or less (81%), those who *strongly* agree that they have confidence in the examination papers (77%) and the qualification they teach (77%), and those who teach at sixth form colleges (88%) or further education colleges (86%). All of these findings are statistically significant.

Subgroups that are significantly less likely than average to have confidence in the A level system are those who are also less confident about the examination papers for their particular subject (36%) or the qualification they teach (53%), and those who teach in maintained selective centres (27%) or independent schools (17%). Furthermore, teachers in independent schools are also significantly more likely than those in maintained non-selective centres to express a lack or absence of confidence (17% compared to six per cent).

Although only indicative, findings suggest that teachers who have prepared pupils for examinations in A level psychology, A level biology, A level English and A level geography are more likely than average to agree that they have confidence in the A level system overall (93%, 90%, 88% and 88% respectively).

## Summary

Teachers are similarly confident in the question papers for their selected subject (87%) and the qualification that students gain from the full assessment (88%).

They are less confident in the wider systems, however, with just over seven in ten (71%) expressing confidence in the A level system overall, and fewer (65%) reporting confidence in the GCSE system overall. These levels of confidence, though, are comparable to those noted in the QCA survey conducted in 2006, and they increase significantly where the teacher is commenting on the qualification level for which they have responded (from 71% to 85% for A level and from 65% to 74% for GCSE). It is not known whether these findings simply reflect that teachers are more familiar with their selected qualification and subject than with wider examination systems, or whether there is in fact a deeper dissatisfaction with the wider systems.

## Parting Comments

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This final chapter of this report looks at the unprompted issues raised by respondents to an open ended question at the end of the interview. For some teachers, this was used as a chance to raise issues that they felt had not been covered by the questionnaire, while others chose to reiterate points that had already been covered, possibly because they were felt to be of particular importance.

Just under two in five (39%) of the teachers interviewed offered further comments. Although only indicative, findings suggest that teachers who had prepared pupils for GCSE English examinations were particularly keen to comment further, with more than half of these (55%) wishing to do so.

### Positive Issues

Encouragingly, the comments cited most frequently relate to a positive issue that was raised by the highest proportion of teachers. Just under one in five (18%) of those who made further comments say that the papers this summer were good, fair or well thought out. Although this comment was made by teachers across a whole range of subjects, teachers who have prepared pupils for English examinations (at both GCSE and A Level) are particularly keen to make this observation (39% compared to 18% overall). Their positive view here may counterbalance some of the negative comments noted earlier. Other subgroups who are more likely than average to express this positive view are those who strongly agree that they are confident in the examination papers (28%) and the qualification they teach (27%). These findings are all statistically significant although base numbers are low and therefore caution must be used when interpreting the results.

Seventeen per cent of teachers are also positive, without being prompted, about the way examination papers were laid out this year, describing the format or layout as better than in previous years. Whilst there are minor variations in the results across different subgroups, this comment is not specific to any of these in particular.

### Negative Issues

The negative issues mentioned by the highest number of teachers (eight per cent in each case) are that students need more time to complete examinations and that the examinations put some students at a disadvantage.

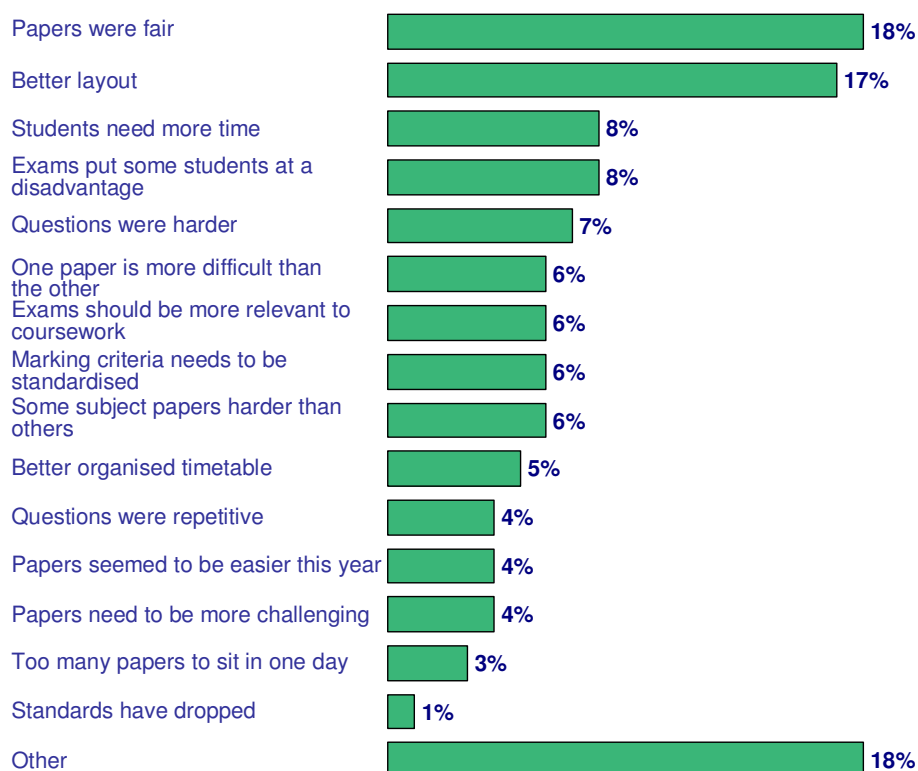
The range of issues mentioned by teachers at this point is illustrated in the chart below.

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<sup>8</sup> Percentage of teachers stating that they strongly agree or agree with the statement 'I have confidence in the A level system overall.'

Ipsos MORI **Parting Comments**

Q What would you like to say about the question papers?



Base: All with further comments (158)

### Summary

The key positive issues raised by those teachers commenting at this stage (39%) are that the 2007 examination papers were on the whole, good, fair and well thought out (18% of those responding), and that the format or layout of papers was good (17% of those responding). More negative issues were that students should be given more time to complete the examinations, and that examinations were believed to have discriminated against some students (eight per cent of those responding in each case).

# Appendices

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Appendix 1: Advance letter

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Appendix 3: Respondent profile

## Appendix 1: Advance Letter

<Head name>  
<School name>  
<Address 1>  
<Address 2>  
<Address 3>  
<Address 4>  
<Postcode>

Ipsos MORI ID number: <insert ID number>

June 2007

### **Survey of teachers' views regarding the quality of GCSE and A level question papers**

Dear <Head title and surname>.

We are writing to ask for your centre's help with an important survey. Ipsos MORI has been commissioned by QCA to carry out a national survey to find out teachers' views regarding the quality of this summer's GCSE and A level question papers. We would like to speak to two teachers at your centre, who have prepared pupils this academic year for summer exams in any of the following subjects:

- GCSE English or English Literature
- GCSE Mathematics
- GCSE History
- GCSE French, Spanish or German
- AS or A level English Literature
- AS or A level Mathematics
- AS or A level Biology
- AS or A level Psychology
- AS or A level Geography
- AS or A level French, Spanish or German

#### ***What happens next?***

Ipsos MORI interviewers will be calling your reception or switchboard number from 2<sup>nd</sup> July, looking to speak to a member of teaching staff who fits the above criteria. The interview will last around 10 minutes and can be scheduled for a time that suits your staff. As with all Ipsos MORI studies, everything said during the course of the interview is entirely confidential and will not be reported in a way that can identify either individuals or individual schools.

If you or any of your colleagues have any questions about the survey, please contact Ali Ziff at Ipsos MORI at [ali.ziff@ipsos-mori.com](mailto:ali.ziff@ipsos-mori.com) or 020 7347 3957 or Phil Carr at QCA at [carrp@qca.org.uk](mailto:carrp@qca.org.uk) or 020 7509 5335.

Yours sincerely,



Kate Smith  
Project Director  
Ipsos MORI



Susan Robinson  
Team Leader – Qualifications Monitoring  
QCA



## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

### Survey of teachers' views regarding the quality of GCSE and A level question papers for QCA

Main stage questionnaire – FINAL version (revised)  
02/07/2007

Good morning/afternoon,

I'm calling from Ipsos-MORI, the independent market and opinion research agency. We are conducting research on behalf of QCA about the quality of this year's GCSE and A level question papers. QCA is undertaking a review of these, and is extremely keen that this review should incorporate the views of teachers.

We would like you to participate in the survey by taking part in a short telephone interview – this would involve approximately 10 minutes of your time, either now or at another time that is convenient for you. Your answers and comments will be treated in total confidence and will not be traced back to you or your school in any way.

#### A: SCREENING

##### Q1. Are you willing to take part in the survey?

*Single code*

Yes	If happy to be interviewed, before proceeding to interview or setting an appointment go to Q2
No	Thank and ask for referral

##### Q2. Can I first check with you, have you prepared any pupils this academic year for either a GCSE or A level exam that took place this summer?

*Interviewer note: Current academic year is 2006-07. A level exam can include AS and/or A2 examinations*

*Single code*

Yes	Proceed to Q3
No	Thank and ask for referral

**Q3a. And can you confirm which levels and subjects this was for?**

*Interviewer note:* If respondent simply states 'A level', please ask them to state whether this is 'AS level', 'A2' or both.

Multi code

GCSE English	If multi coded and more than 1 remains in quota, record all and continue to Q3b.
GCSE English Literature	
GCSE Mathematics	<p>If only one coded response and it is in quota, or only 1 response remains in quota:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If GCSE English/English literature or GCSE French / Spanish / German, proceed to Q3e.</li> <li>• If selects GCSE Maths, proceed to Q3f.</li> <li>• All other single coded responses, continue to Q4a.</li> </ul> <p>If not listed or out of quota, thank and ask for referral.</p>
GCSE French / Spanish / German	
GCSE History	
AS Level English Literature	
A2 English Literature	
AS Level English Language	
A2 English Language	
AS Level English Language and Literature	
A2 English Language and Literature	
AS Level Mathematics	
A2 Mathematics	
AS Level Biology	
A2 Biology	
AS Level Psychology	
A2 Psychology	
AS Level Geography	
A2 Geography	
AS Level French / Spanish / German	
A2 French / Spanish / German	

**Q3b. CATI scripter note:** If multi coded at Q3a, respondent to be asked to select one level and subject to discuss during the interview – however, please ensure that we only list levels and subject that are in quota. Interviewer should read: **You stated that you have prepared pupils for exams this summer in <list all in quota responses at Q3a>. Can you please select only one of these to discuss during this interview? You may wish to discuss the level and subject with which you are most familiar with the exam paper.**

Single code

*Interviewer note:* If respondent teaches both English and English Literature at GCSE, should select one for purpose of interview. Same applies for languages at GCSE/AS level/A2 – must select one for purpose of interview. If respondent teaches more than one type of English at AS level/A2, may select which to discuss (e.g. English Literature, English Language, or English Language and Literature).

Interviewer selects one from list	<p>If selects GCSE English/English literature or GCSE French / Spanish / German, proceed to Q3c.</p> <p>If selects GCSE Maths, proceed to Q3d</p> <p>All other responses, proceed to Q4a</p>
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**Q3c. For the purpose of this interview, I would like you to think *only* about <auto-selected level and subject>. Can you also select which tier you would like to discuss. Again, you may wish to discuss the tier with which you are most familiar with the exam paper.**

*Single code*

Higher	Proceed to Q4a
Foundation	

**Q3d. For the purpose of this interview, I would like you to think *only* about GCSE Maths. Can you also select which tier you would like to discuss. Again, you may wish to discuss the tier with which you are most familiar with the exam paper.**

*Single code*

Higher	Proceed to Q4a
Intermediate	
Foundation	

**Q3e. CATI scripter note: If multi coded at Q3a but all except one subject and level remains in quota, or if GCSE English/English literature, GCSE French/Spanish/ German or GCSE Maths stated at Q3a CATI script should select this level and subject automatically and respondent should be told which level and subject they are answering for – interviewer should read: **For the purpose of this interview, I would like you to think *only* about <auto-selected level and subject>.****

Scripter instruction: If either GCSE English/English literature or GCSE French / Spanish / German selected, proceed to Q3f

If GCSE Maths selected, proceed to Q3g

All other responses, interviewer can simply proceed to Q4a

**Q3f. Can you select which tier you would like to discuss? You may wish to discuss the tier with which you are most familiar with the exam paper.**

*Single code*

Higher	Proceed to Q4a
Foundation	

**Q3g. Can you select which tier you would like to discuss? You may wish to discuss the tier with which you are most familiar with the exam paper.**

*Single code*

Higher	Proceed to Q4a
Intermediate	
Foundation	

**Q4a. And as a final check, have you seen this summer's exam papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) set at Q3>?**

Single code

Yes	Proceed to Q4b
No	Thank and ask for referral

Either conduct interview now or secure appointment – if appointment made retain answers to Q1-4a for respondent. Also suggest to respondent that they may wish to have a look at this summer's exam papers for the selected subject and level before the appointment.

If there is an appointment, the interviewer should restart the interview by reminding the respondent of the selected subject and level OR if the interview is conducted there and then: the interviewer should read

**Can I remind you that you are to respond only in relation to this summer's question papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) set at Q3>**

**Q4b. How familiar do you feel you are with this summer's exam paper for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) set at Q3>? Would you say you are....?**

*Interviewer note: we mean familiar with the exam paper(s) for the subject selected at Q3*

Read out, single code

Very familiar	Go to Q5
Fairly familiar	
Not very familiar	
Not at all familiar	

## B. STRUCTURE

I'd like to start by asking a few general questions about the structure of the question papers.

**Q5. Firstly, thinking about this summer's question papers overall for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) set at Q3>, do you think the length of time given to candidates to complete the question papers was...?**

Read out, single code

Too little	Go to Q6
About right	
Too much	
Don't know (Do not read out)	

**Q6a. Did the question papers overall include a range of question types appropriate for the subject, for example, extended writing, short response or multiple-choice questions?**

Single code

Yes	Proceed to Q7
No	Proceed to Q6b
Don't know (Do not read out)	Proceed to Q7

**Q6b. In what way was the range of question types not appropriate?**

Do not read out (but prompt if necessary), multi code (logic checks in place to ensure contradictory responses not possible)

There was not enough requirement for extended writing	Proceed to Q7
There were too many short response questions	
There were too many multiple-choice questions	
There was too much requirement for extended writing	
There were too few short response questions	
There were too few multiple-choice questions	
Do not know (Do not read out)	
Other - SPECIFY	

**Q7. Now thinking about the allocation of marks on the question papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) selected at Q3>, for each of the following statements can you tell me if you strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree or strongly disagree.**

Single code each statement

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that...?**

(7a) Overall, questions had suitable mark allocations	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK
(7b) Marks allocated to questions were in line with what candidates had to do (E.g. straightforward tasks had an appropriate number of marks and more marks were allocated for more complex tasks)	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK

Go to Q8a

**Q8a. It is important that candidates are clear about *what they must do to answer each question*. To what extent do you agree or disagree that...**

Single code

<b>Overall, the requirements of questions were clear</b>	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK
--	----	----	---	----	----	----

If 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree' or 'strongly disagree' – go to Q8b

All other responses – proceed to Q8c

**Q8b. Why do you say that?**

Do not read out, multi code

They were poorly written, and as a result it was difficult to understand what was required	Proceed to Q8c
They used unnecessarily complex general vocabulary (e.g. words that were not subject-specific, but that some candidates might not be familiar with)	
They used unnecessarily advanced technical terms (e.g. terms that were subject-specific, but were above the requirements of this qualification)	
Do not know (Do not read out)	
Other - SPECIFY	

**Q8c. It is also important that candidates are clear about the requirements of question papers *overall*. To what extent do you agree or disagree that...**

Single code

<b>General instructions provided in question papers were clear</b>	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK
<b>The question papers were presented in a way that was helpful to candidates</b>	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK

If 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree' or 'strongly disagree' – go to Q8d

All other responses – proceed to Q9a

**Q8d. Why do you say that?**


Go to Q9a

**C: CONTENT**

**Q9a. Thinking now about the *content* of the papers, to what extent do you agree or disagree that *'the question papers covered the specification content appropriately'*. Again, I'd like you to tell me if you strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.**

*Single code*

Strongly agree	Go to Q10
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	Go to Q9b
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Do not know (Do not read out)	Go to Q10

**Q9b. Why do you say that?**

*Do not read out (but prompt if necessary), multi code (logic checks will be set so that opposing statements cannot be selected)*

Some areas/topics are were over-represented	Go to Q10
Some areas/topics were under-represented	
Some areas/topics were not assessed appropriately	
Some areas/topics were addressed more than once	
Some of the subject content was not contained in the specification	
Other - SPECIFY	

**SECTION D: DEMAND**

**Q10. Were this summer's question papers for <enter subject and level selected (and tier if relevant) at Q3> appropriately demanding for the qualification level? Would you say they were...?**

*Read out, single code*

Too demanding	Go to Q11
About right	
Not demanding enough	
Don't know (Do not read out)	

**Q11. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. I'd like you to tell me if you strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.**

*Single code each statement*

**The question papers...**

(11a) Were sufficiently accessible to less able candidates	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	
(11b) Were sufficiently challenging to more able students	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	
(11c) Discriminated on grounds other than ability in the subject	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	If SA or TA go to Q11d All other responses go to Q12

Go to Q11d

**Q11d. What sort of discrimination did you consider when responding to that statement?**

*Do not read out, multi code*

Gender	Go to Q12
Race	
Social class	
Special Needs (e.g. Dyslexia)	
English is not first language	
Communication skills (e.g. poor writing or poor essay skills)	
General knowledge (e.g. issues beyond specification of subject such as current affairs)	
Do not know (do not read out)	
Other – SPECIFY	

**Q12. What is your view on the level of guidance provided in questions? Would you say the guidance was...?**

*Read out, single code*

Too much and so could restrict opportunities for more able students (e.g. to create response strategies)	Go to Q13a
About right	
Too little and so could restrict access for less able candidates	
Don't know (Do not read out)	



**SECTION E: COMPARABILITY**

**Q13a. Did any of the question papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) set at Q3> have optional questions?**

Single code

Yes	Go to Q13b
No	Go to Q14
Don't know (Do not read out)	

**Q13b. Thinking about these optional questions, to what extent do you agree or disagree that...?**

Single code each statement

*Interviewer note: we are comparing across optional questions, we are not comparing optional questions with compulsory questions*

They were equally demanding	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK
They required a different level or type of knowledge	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK
They required a different level or type of skill	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK

Go to Q14a

**Q14a And what is your view in relation to comparing this summer and last summer's question papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) for Q3>. Do you feel that this summer's question papers were...?**

Read out, single code

More demanding	Go to Q14b
About the same	Go to Q15
Less demanding	Go to Q14b
Don't know (Do not read out)	Go to Q15

**Q14b. Why do you say that?**


Go to Q15

**Q15. How do you think this summer's question papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) set at Q3> compared to those of similar or related subjects? Were they...?**

*Read out, single code*

More demanding	Go to Q16a
Comparable	
Less demanding	
Not relevant (there are no similar or related subjects)	
Have not seen any other papers	
Don't know (Do not read out)	

**F: OTHER ISSUES**

**Q16a. Do you have any comments to make about this summer's question papers for <enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) for Q3> that you feel haven't been covered in the questions you've just answered?**

*Single code*

Yes	Proceed to Q16b
No	Proceed to Q17

**Q16b. What would you like to say about the question papers?**


Go to Q17

**Q17. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each of the following statements:**

*Single code each statement*

I have confidence in <i>the &lt;enter subject and level (and tier if relevant) from Q3&gt;</i> exam papers (Do not read out unless asked: includes the way the paper is put together, the marks, the marking)	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	DK
I have confidence in <i>the &lt;enter subject and level from Q3&gt;</i> qualification (Do not read out unless asked: includes the course specification, what the pupil walks away with)	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	DK
I have confidence in the GCSE system overall	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	DK
I have confidence in the A level system overall	SA	TA	N	TD	SD	DK	DK

Go to Q18

**G: CLASSIFICATION**

**Q18. To help us with our analysis, can you confirm your current most senior level of responsibility?**

*Do not read out, single code*

*Interviewer note: include deputy or acting positions in the main categories*

Headteacher/principal
Course leader
Curriculum co-ordinator
Head of year
Member of the senior management or leadership team
Programme manager
Subject manager/leader
Classroom teacher
Other – specify

Go to Q19

**Q19. Can you tell me how many years' you have been teaching <enter subject and level for Q3>? This is the number of years excluding breaks.**

*Interviewer to code into category, do not read out, single code*

*Interviewer note: we mean this specific qualification, respondent should not, for example, include any years teaching O level in the subject.*

NQT/First year of teaching	Go to Q20
1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-25 years	
Over 25 years	
Refuses	

**Q20. And can you tell me how many years' teaching experience you have *in total*? Again, this is the number of years excluding breaks**

*Interviewer to code into category, do not read out, single code*

NQT/First year of teaching	Go to Q21
1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-25 years	
Over 25 years	
Refuses	

**Q21. And finally, which awarding body did you use this year for <enter subject and level for Q3>?**

Do not read out, multi-code (may not be necessary, can check in the pilot)

AQA	Thank and close
Edexcel	
OCR	
Do not know	
Other – SPECIFY	

## Appendix 3: Respondent Profile

### By GOR<sup>9</sup>:

	GOR	Number of interviews achieved
1.	<b>North</b> <i>North East, North West and Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</i>	109
2.	<b>Midlands</b> <i>East of England, East Midlands and West Midlands</i>	121
3.	<b>South</b> <i>London, South East and South West</i>	171
	<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>

### By centre type<sup>10</sup>:

	Centre type	Number of interviews achieved
1.	<b>Maintained non-selective</b> <i>Academies, City Technology Colleges, Community, Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled</i>	181
2.	<b>Maintained selective</b> <i>Community, Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled</i>	30
3.	<b>Sixth Form College</b> <i>General, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled</i>	32
4.	<b>Further Education College</b> <i>General and Tertiary</i>	51
5.	<b>Independent</b>	107
	<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>

<sup>9</sup> Although quotas were not set for GOR, the sample was designed to be nationally representative, and the correct number of interviews in each region has been achieved.

<sup>10</sup> Although quotas were not set for centre type, the sample was designed to be nationally representative, and the correct number of interviews in each centre type has been achieved.

**By centre size<sup>11</sup>:**

	Centre size	Number of interviews achieved
1.	<b>Small</b> <i>up to 419 pupils</i>	152
2	<b>Medium</b> <i>from 420 to 989 pupils</i>	99
3	<b>Large</b> <i>990 or more pupils</i>	150
	<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>

**By qualification:**

	Qualification	Target number of interviews	Number of interviews achieved
1.	GCSE	160	161
2.	A level (all)	240	240
	AS	100 *	128
	A2	100 *	112
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>401</b>

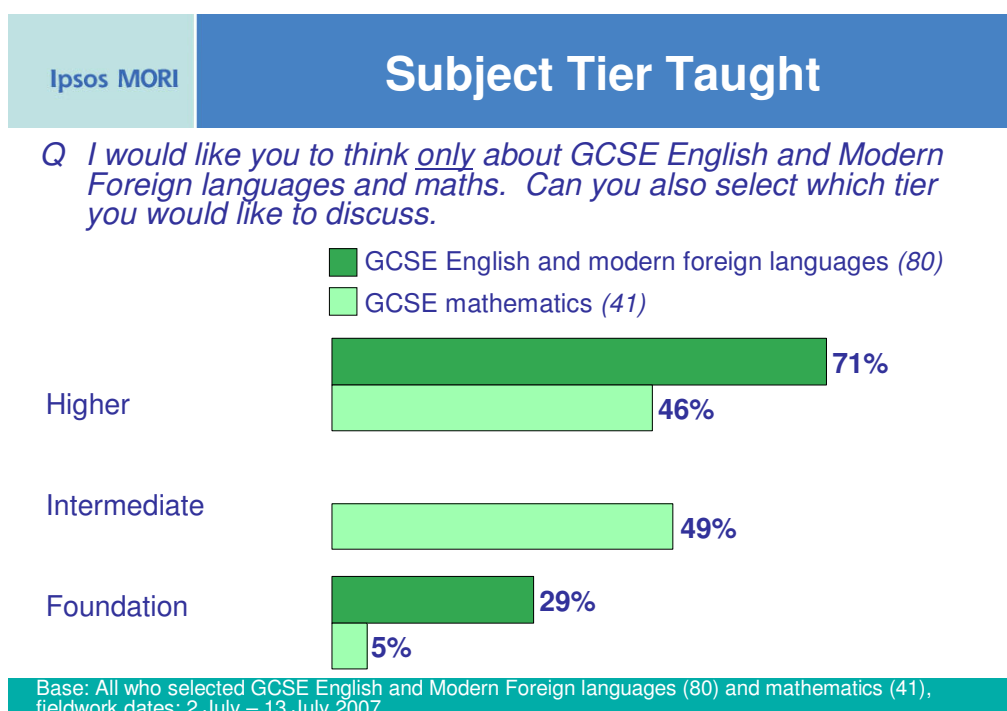
\* Minimum target set for each level

<sup>11</sup> Although quotas were not set for centre size, the sample was designed to be nationally representative, and the correct number of interviews in each centre size has been achieved.

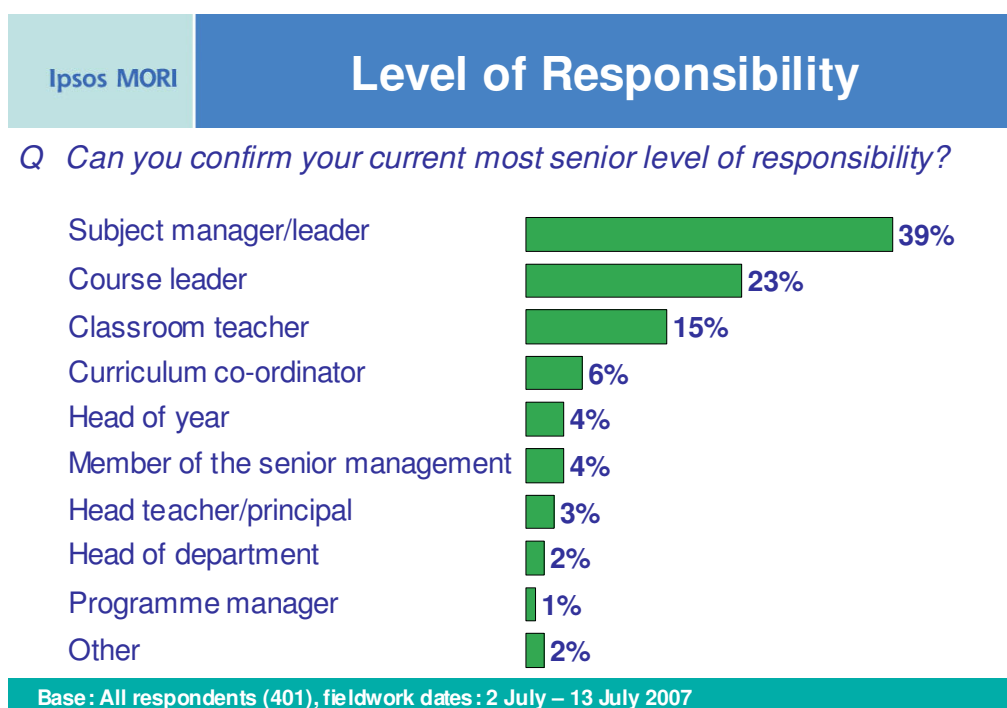
**By qualification and subject:**

	<b>Qualification and subject Combination</b>	<b>Target number of interviews</b>	<b>Number achieved</b>
1.	GCSE English	40	40
	GCSE English Literature		
2.	GCSE Mathematics	40	41
3.	GCSE French / Spanish / German	40	40
4.	GCSE History	40	40
5.	AS Level English Literature	40	40
	A2 English Literature		
	AS Level English Language		
	A2 English Language		
	AS Level English Language and Literature		
	A2 English Language and Literature		
6.	AS Level Mathematics	40	40
	A2 Mathematics		
7.	AS Level Biology	40	40
	A2 Biology		
8.	AS Level Psychology	40	40
	A2 Psychology		
9.	AS Level Geography	40	40
	A2 Geography		
10.	AS Level French / Spanish / German	40	40
	A2 French / Spanish / German		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>401</b>

## By tier:

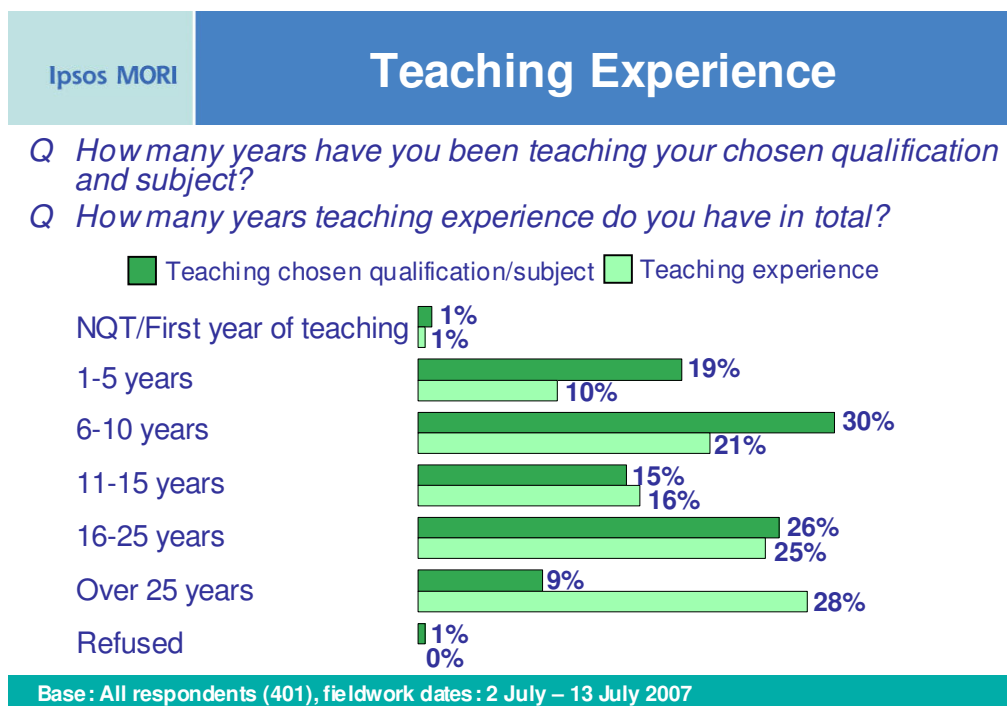


## By level of responsibility:

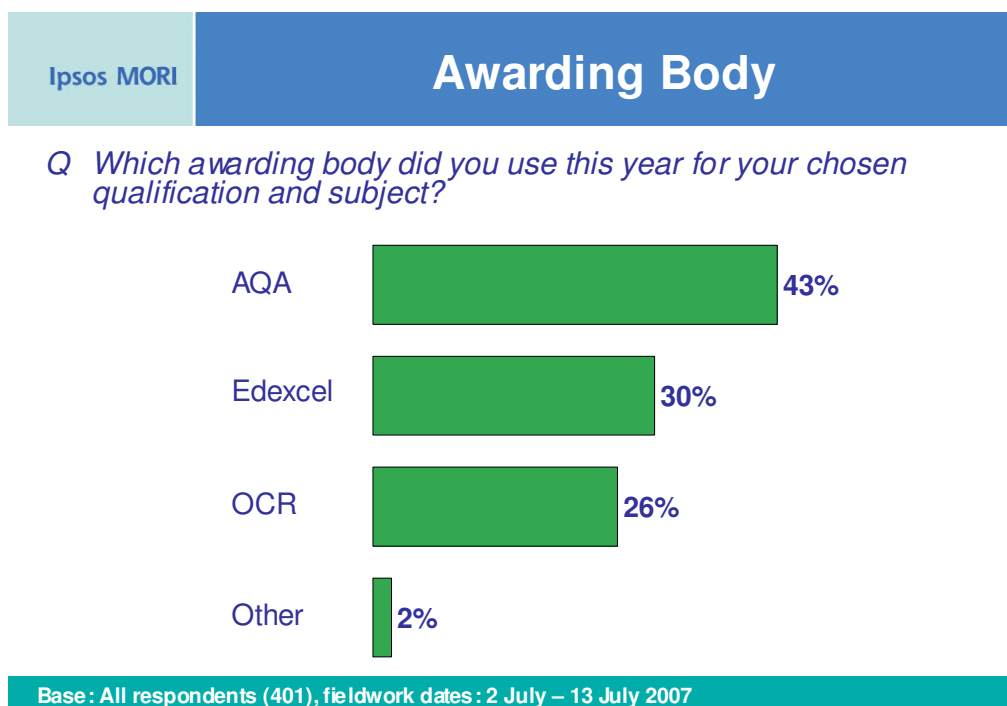




## By teaching experience:



## By awarding body:



## By familiarity with examination paper:

