

# Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications in England – Wave 7

An Ofqual commissioned report

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The logo for YouGov, featuring the word "YouGov" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the letter "v".

# Contents

Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications in England – Wave 7 .....	1
Executive summary .....	4
Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications, Functional Skills Qualifications, and Apprenticeships and Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments..	4
Perceptions of T Levels .....	5
Industry and employment.....	5
Introduction .....	6
Section 1: Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications .....	7
Key findings .....	7
Understanding of Vocational and Technical Qualifications by employers .....	8
Why learners chose Vocational and Technical Qualifications .....	11
Benefits associated with other Vocational and Technical Qualifications by learners .....	13
Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications: value and flexibility.....	15
Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications: purpose and future opportunity .....	20
Employers’ reasons for perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications...	33
Section 2: Perceptions of Functional Skills Qualifications .....	35
Key findings .....	35
Understanding of Functional Skills Qualifications by employers .....	36
Why learners chose Functional Skills Qualifications .....	37
Benefits associated with Functional Skills Qualifications by learners.....	39
Perceptions of Functional Skills Qualifications: value and flexibility .....	41
Perceptions of Functional Skills Qualifications: purpose and future opportunity ...	47
Employers’ reasons for perceptions of Functional Skills Qualifications.....	55
Section 3: Perceptions of Apprenticeships and Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments.....	56
Key findings .....	56
Understanding of Apprenticeships and Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments..	58
Why learners chose an apprenticeship .....	67
Benefits associated with apprenticeships by learners.....	68
Perceptions of end-point assessments: value and flexibility .....	69
Perceptions of end-point assessments: purpose and future opportunity.....	74

Employers' reasons for perceptions of End-Point Assessments .....	77
Section 4: Perceptions of T Levels .....	78
Key findings .....	78
Understanding of T Levels .....	78
Perceptions of T Levels .....	81
Section 5: Clarity regarding industry relevant qualifications .....	84
Key findings .....	84
Section 6: Use of qualifications for recruitment and training.....	86
Key findings .....	86
Qualifications deemed essential at different occupational levels .....	86
Annex A: Glossary of Terms .....	98

# Executive summary

Ofqual regularly commissions a survey on the Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications. While this has previously been on an annual basis, after wave 6, Ofqual decided to conduct the survey every other year going forward, meaning wave 7 was collected 2 years after wave 6. The previous wave (wave 6) was reported from fieldwork undertaken over Winter 2022 to 2023. The other waves reported were taken from Winter 2021 to 2022 (wave 5), Winter 2020 to 2021 (wave 4) and Winter 2019 to 2020 (wave 3). Its aim is to explore perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications, Functional Skills qualifications, end-point assessments in Apprenticeships and T Levels, as well as various themes surrounding employment and skills. This report presents the findings of wave 7 of this survey undertaken by YouGov over Winter 2024 to 2025, with fieldwork being undertaken between 9 December 2024 and 30 January 2025

To provide contextual information and details on the methodology, a [background note](#) is published alongside this report.

A range of stakeholders are involved in this survey:

- providers
- learners
- employers

The full report provides detailed findings on respondents' perceptions from up to the past 5 waves, as well as a breakdown of responses by stakeholder group. Reported below are the key findings of this survey.

## Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications, Functional Skills qualifications, and apprenticeships and apprenticeship end-point assessments

### General perceptions

Overall, employers reported similar levels of understanding across Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQ), Functional Skills qualifications (FSQ) and apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPA), with levels of understanding highest for VTQs. Slight increases in understanding across all qualifications surveyed were seen compared with wave 6, and understanding increased with the organisation size. Learners' reported understanding of EPAs also increased slightly, while there was no statistically significant change for the provider group.

Learners and providers remain more likely to value VTQs, FSQs and EPAs compared to employers. Compared to employers and providers, learners also remain most likely to agree that VTQs, FSQs and EPAs are sufficiently flexible. For providers, VTQs, and subsequently FSQs, were more likely to represent value for money than EPAs, each of these unchanged compared with the previous wave.

When deciding to undertake a VTQ or FSQ, learners most commonly agreed they did so in order to improve their skills, or progress further in their studies, and there were broadly comparable benefits associated with these qualifications as well, with confidence being another key theme. For EPAs, the reasoning to undertake these qualifications also remained focused on building skills and progressing

in their current jobs. Learners' perceived benefits for EPAs focused closely on their job: developing their knowledge for their job, progressing in their job, and building a broader range of skills in the workplace.

### **Further perceptions of the qualifications system**

Providers and learners are consistently more positive about VTQs, FSQs and EPAs of apprenticeships than employers were. This finding is in line with results seen in previous years. In wave 7, employers expressed lower levels of agreement that the qualifications were good preparation for work, good preparation for further study and well understood by people. In most cases, however, the lower levels of agreement among employers were caused by them expressing higher levels of uncertainty as opposed to higher levels of disagreement.

## **Perceptions of T Levels**

### **General perceptions**

Reported understanding of T Levels, first introduced to the education system in September 2020, remains lower for both learners and employers in comparison with other types of qualifications. However, among learners, the proportion who report having a very good or good understanding of them almost doubled this wave. Similarly large increases were seen in the proportion of learners who value T Levels, understand their purpose and think availability is sufficiently flexible.

## **Industry and employment**

### **Relevance to organisations**

The proportion of employers agreeing that it is clear what qualifications are relevant to their organisation remained stable this wave, at just over half. Agreement remains higher among larger organisations and public sector employers than other employer groups surveyed.

### **Recruitment and training**

Relevant work experience was seen as essential by many employers when thinking about recruiting to their organisation and was demonstrated to be equally as important as having a degree or equivalent for professional and managerial roles. This echoed findings from previous waves of research.

Relevance to the organisation also remained by far the most important factor reported by employers when deciding which qualifications to offer. When asked why they had not arranged or funded training that led to a vocational qualification, apprenticeship or technical qualification, the most common reasons were related to lack of need.

# Introduction

This report presents the findings of wave 7 of the Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications Survey and should be read alongside the [background information document](#). To best appreciate the display of the data, this report should be viewed in colour.

The project was commissioned by Ofqual and conducted by YouGov. The aim of this study is to investigate learners', providers' and employers' perceptions of vocational and technical qualifications in England. In the context of this report, the term 'learners' refers to students and apprentices of all ages. The survey explored perceptions of a number of topical aspects of the system for vocational and technical qualifications.

The survey was conducted using an online method. The fieldwork for this wave was conducted between 9 December 2024 and 30 January 2025.

The final achieved samples were structured to be representative of the relevant target populations. While the sampling approach aimed to identify groups of participants who were representative, a survey of this kind only captures the views of those involved, so throughout this report responses attributed to groups reflect only those respondents included in the study. Further information on sampling and methodology is available in the accompanying [background information document](#).

YouGov have conducted the [wave 3](#) (2020), [wave 4](#) (2021), [wave 5](#) (2022) and [wave 6](#) (2023) surveys, using a consistent sampling approach and survey mode. Prior to this, [wave 1](#) (2018) and [wave 2](#) (2019) of the research were conducted by another provider using a different sampling approach and survey mode.

Throughout the report, wave 7 findings are mainly compared to wave 6, but those from 3, 4 and 5 are also reported. Throughout the report, all differences in percentages between waves have been significance tested. Unless specified otherwise, all changes included in the commentary in this report are statistically significant. If a change is not statistically significant but may appear interesting or indicative of a trend over time, it is also mentioned in the commentary but is noted as non-statistically significant. Any non-significant differences or other apparent differences in the data are within the margin of error, possibly due to smaller sample sizes, and so cannot be viewed as a change from the previous wave(s). For further information on the significance testing applied, please refer to the [background information report](#).

There are various charts throughout the report that show levels of agreement and disagreement. Please note that although not shown, there were also options provided in the survey for 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 'Don't know'. Where the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed appears particularly low, this is due to the fact that large proportions of responses fit within these other response categories. Only responses from the overall sample have been charted; where relevant, any statistically significant differences between sample sub-groups have been noted in the text.

Throughout the analysis, employers are categorised based on the number of employees into 4 categories: micro (2 to 9 employees), small (10 to 49 employees), medium (50 to 249 employees) and large (250 or more employees) organisations.

## Section 1: Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications

This section covers perceptions of vocational and technical qualifications other than FSQs and EPAs.

### Key findings

- When thinking about VTQs in their sector, 49% of employers reported having very or quite good understanding of these, an increase from wave 6 (43%).
- Six in 10 (61%) employers said they were aware of past or current changes to VTQs in their sector, broadly consistent with wave 6.
- The most commonly given reason by learners for choosing to take a VTQ was wanting to improve their skills (39%), while the most frequently perceived benefit was being more confident using these skills (33%). This was in line with findings from wave 6.
- Of the 3 groups, consistent with wave 6, providers reported the highest agreement that they value VTQs (88%), followed by learners (73%) and then employers (48%).
- Similar to wave 6 (68%), 67% of providers in wave 7 reported agreement that vocational and technical qualifications offer value for money.
- Just over 6 in 10 (63%) of learners reported to agree that the availability of vocational and technical qualifications is sufficiently flexible, an increase compared with wave 6 (53%). Conversely, reported agreement with this statement was lower among employers (27%), broadly consistent with wave 6.
- Six in 10 (61%) learners reported to agree that the purpose of vocational and technical qualifications is well understood by employers, an increase compared with wave 6 (51%). However, reported agreement with this statement was lower among providers (52%) and employers themselves (41%).
- Consistent with wave 6, the majority of learners (76%) and providers (60%) reported agreement that the purpose of VTQs is well understood by learners.
- Agreement that vocational and technical qualifications prepare learners well for the workplace was reported as lower among employers (44%) than providers (73%) and learners (74%). Similarly, reported levels of agreement that people achieving VTQs have the technical skills needed by employers were higher among providers (65%) than employers (36%). These findings were broadly consistent with wave 6.
- Reported agreement that vocational and technical qualifications were good preparation for further study was highest for learners (76%), although still high for providers (73%).

## Understanding of Vocational and Technical Qualifications by employers

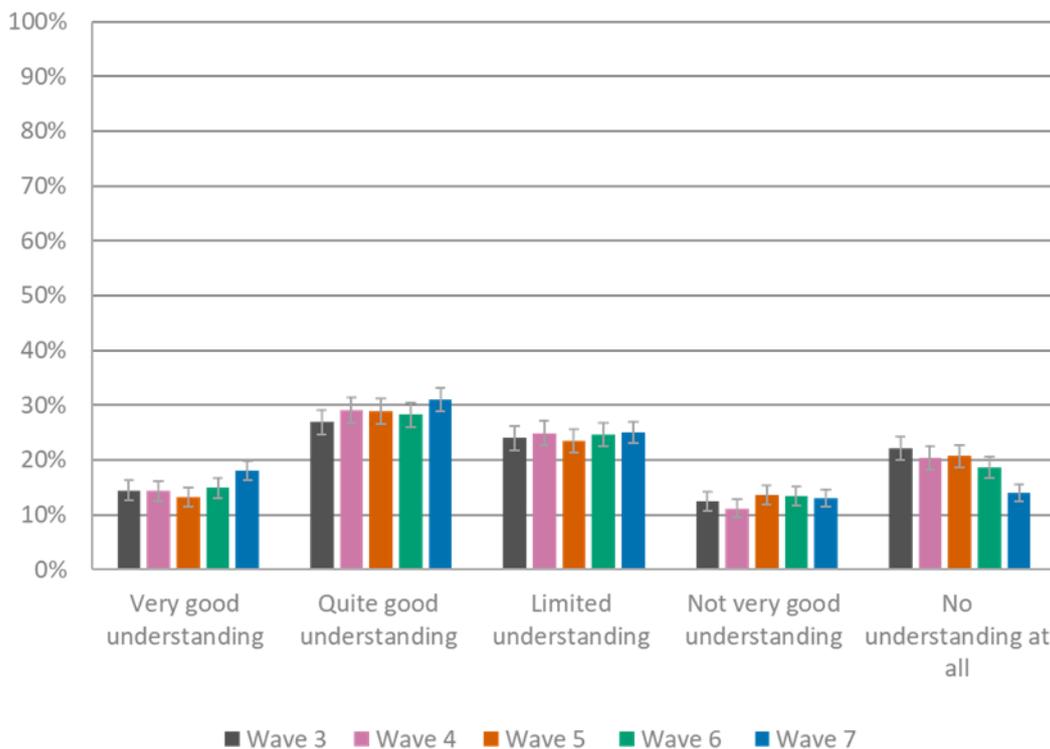
For Figure 1, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers, n=2,026.

Overall, as shown in Figure 1, 49% of employers reported having very or quite good understanding of VTQs in their sector. This was an increase from wave 6 (43%). In wave 7, this was comprised of 18% who had ‘very good understanding’ and 31% who had ‘quite good understanding’. Fourteen percent reported having ‘no understanding at all’ of VTQs in their sector, representing a decrease from wave 6 (19%).

Public sector (67%) employers reported higher levels of very or quite good understanding of VTQs in their sector than private sector (49%) and voluntary sector (42%) employers. In contrast, in wave 6, voluntary sector employers reported higher levels of very or quite good understanding of VTQs than private sector employers (58%).

Large (77%) and medium (63%) employers had relatively high levels of very or quite good understanding of VTQs, compared with small (53%) or micro (47%) employers, consistent with wave 6.

**Figure 1. Results for ‘Please indicate which of the following statements best describes your understanding of vocational and technical qualifications in my sector’ (Employers)**



<b>Statement</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	14%	14%	13%	15%	18%
Quite good understanding	27%	29%	29%	28%	31%
Limited understanding	24%	25%	24%	25%	25%
Not very good understanding	13%	11%	14%	13%	13%
No understanding at all	22%	20%	21%	19%	14%

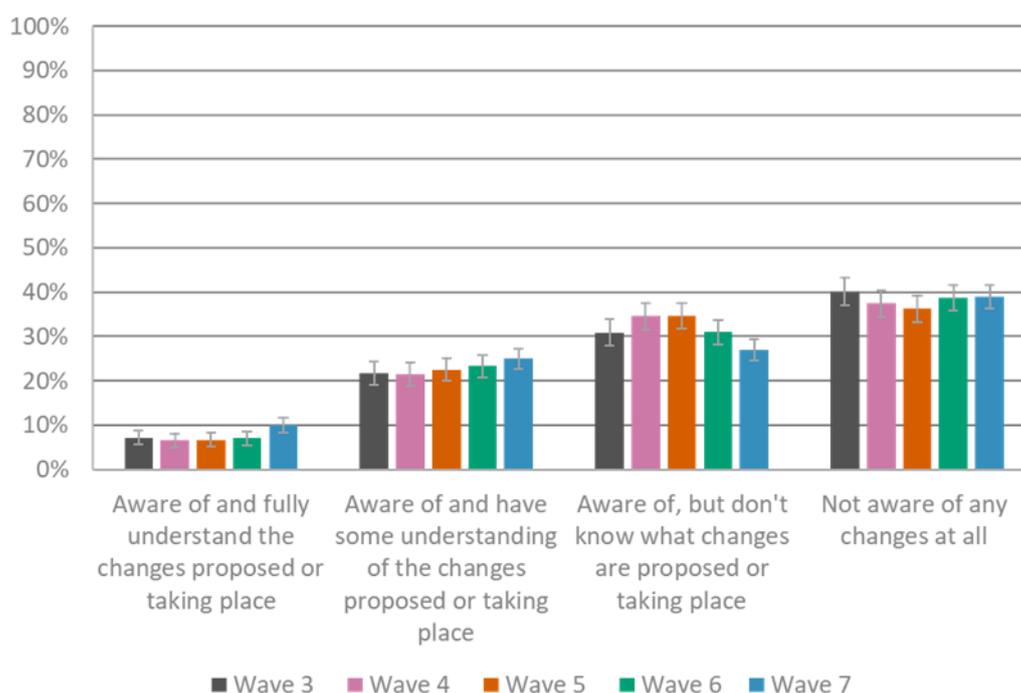
For Figure 2, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of VTQs in their sector, n=1,504.

Employers' awareness of changes that have been made, or those that are currently being made, to VTQs in their sector were broadly consistent with the findings of wave 6, with 61% of employers who have some understanding of VTQs reporting they were aware of the changes. As shown in Figure 2, this was comprised of 10% who reported being aware and fully understanding the changes proposed or taking place, 25% who reported being aware and having some understanding of the changes, and 27% who were aware of them but did not know what the changes are. Overall, 4 in 10 (39%) were not aware of any changes at all.

Micro employers (43%) reported having no awareness of changes taking place more frequently than small (28%), medium (15%), or large (12%) employers.

A higher proportion of public sector employers (30%) reported being aware and fully understanding the changes proposed or taking place than private sector (10%) or voluntary sector (7%) employers. Again, this was broadly in line with the findings in wave 6.

**Figure 2. Results for 'Please say which of the following statements best describes your understanding of the changes that have been, or are currently being made to vocational and technical qualifications in your sector' (Employers)**



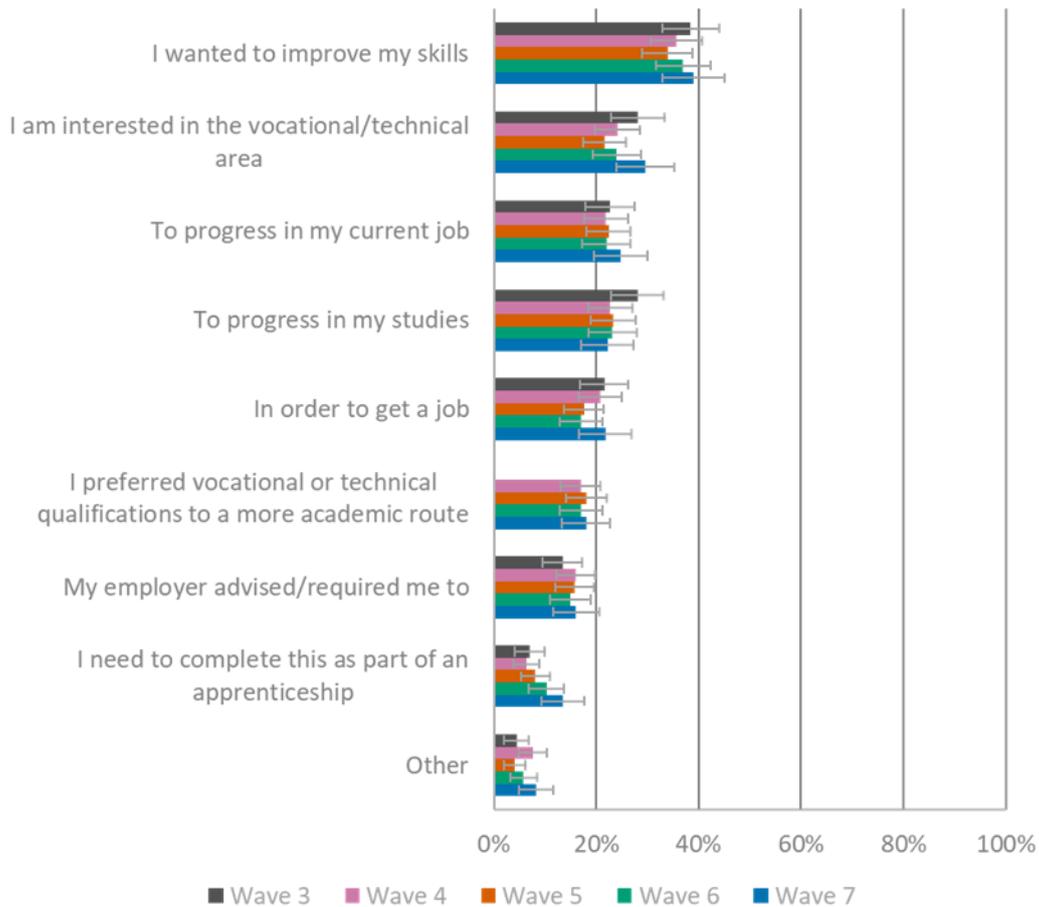
Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Aware of and fully understand the changes proposed or taking place	7%	7%	7%	7%	10%
Aware of and have some understanding of the changes proposed or taking place	22%	21%	23%	23%	25%
Aware of, but don't know what changes are proposed or taking place	31%	35%	35%	31%	27%
Not aware of any changes at all	40%	37%	36%	39%	39%

## Why learners chose Vocational and Technical Qualifications

For Figure 3, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All learners who are studying a VTQ, n=267. Learners were asked their reasons for choosing to take a VTQ, before being asked about the benefits of this.

As shown in Figure 3, wanting to improve their skills was the most commonly given reason (39%) for choosing to take a VTQ, followed by being interested in the vocational/technical area (30%). These findings were broadly consistent with wave 6.

**Figure 3. Results for ‘Why did you decide to take a vocational or technical qualification?’ (Learners)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
I wanted to improve my skills	38%	36%	34%	37%	39%
I am interested in the vocational/technical area	28%	24%	22%	24%	30%
To progress in my current job	23%	22%	22%	22%	25%
In order to get a job	22%	21%	18%	17%	22%
To progress in my studies	28%	23%	23%	23%	22%

I preferred vocational or technical qualifications to a more academic route	n/a	17%	18%	17%	18%
My employer advised/required me to	13%	16%	16%	15%	16%
I need to complete this as part of an apprenticeship	7%	6%	8%	10%	14%
Other	4%	8%	4%	6%	8%

*Note: N/A values indicate a response option wasn't included in a given wave.*

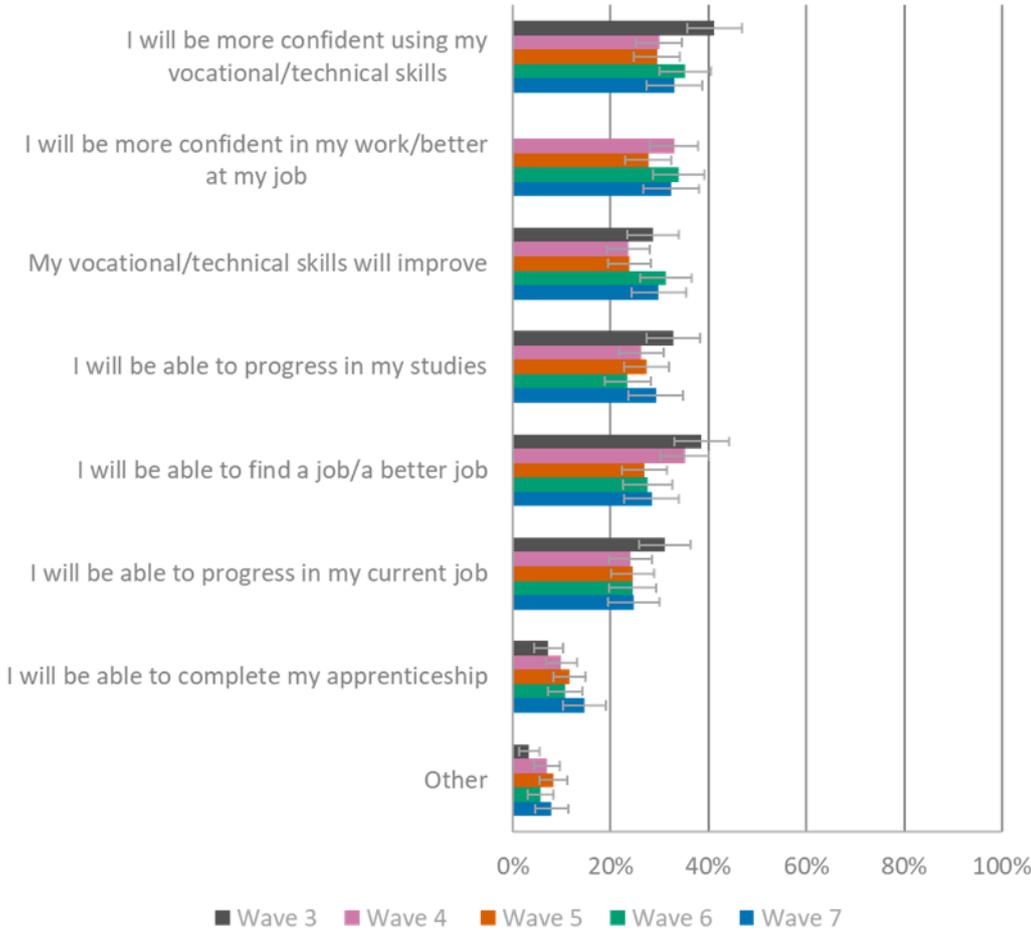
# Benefits associated with other Vocational and Technical Qualifications by learners

For Figure 4, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All learners who are studying a VTQ, n=267.

As shown in Figure 4, the most frequently perceived benefit of taking a VTQ for learners was being more confident using their vocational or technical skills (33%). This was broadly consistent with wave 6. In wave 7, this was followed by being more confident in their work/better at their job (32%), which was again consistent with wave 6.

Those aged under 19 had higher rates than those aged 25 or over of citing being able to progress in their studies (43% and 22% respectively) as a potential benefit of taking a VTQ. Those aged 25 or over cited being able to find a new or better job as a potential benefit (31%) at higher rates than those aged under 19 (17%). Those aged 25 or over also cited being more confident in their work or better at their job as a potential benefit (37%) at higher rates than those aged under 19 (11%).

**Figure 4. Results for ‘Now that you have started learning/have completed learning, what benefits do you expect from taking a vocational and technical qualification?’ (Learners)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
I will be more confident using my vocational/technical skills	41%	30%	30%	35%	33%
I will be more confident in my work/better at my job	n/a	33%	28%	34%	32%
My vocational/technical skills will improve	29%	24%	24%	31%	30%
I will be able to progress in my studies	33%	26%	27%	24%	29%
I will be able to find a job/a better job	39%	35%	27%	28%	28%
I will be able to progress in my current job	31%	24%	25%	25%	25%
I will be able to complete my apprenticeship	7%	10%	12%	11%	15%
Other	3%	7%	8%	6%	8%

*Note: N/A values indicate a response option wasn't included in a given wave.*

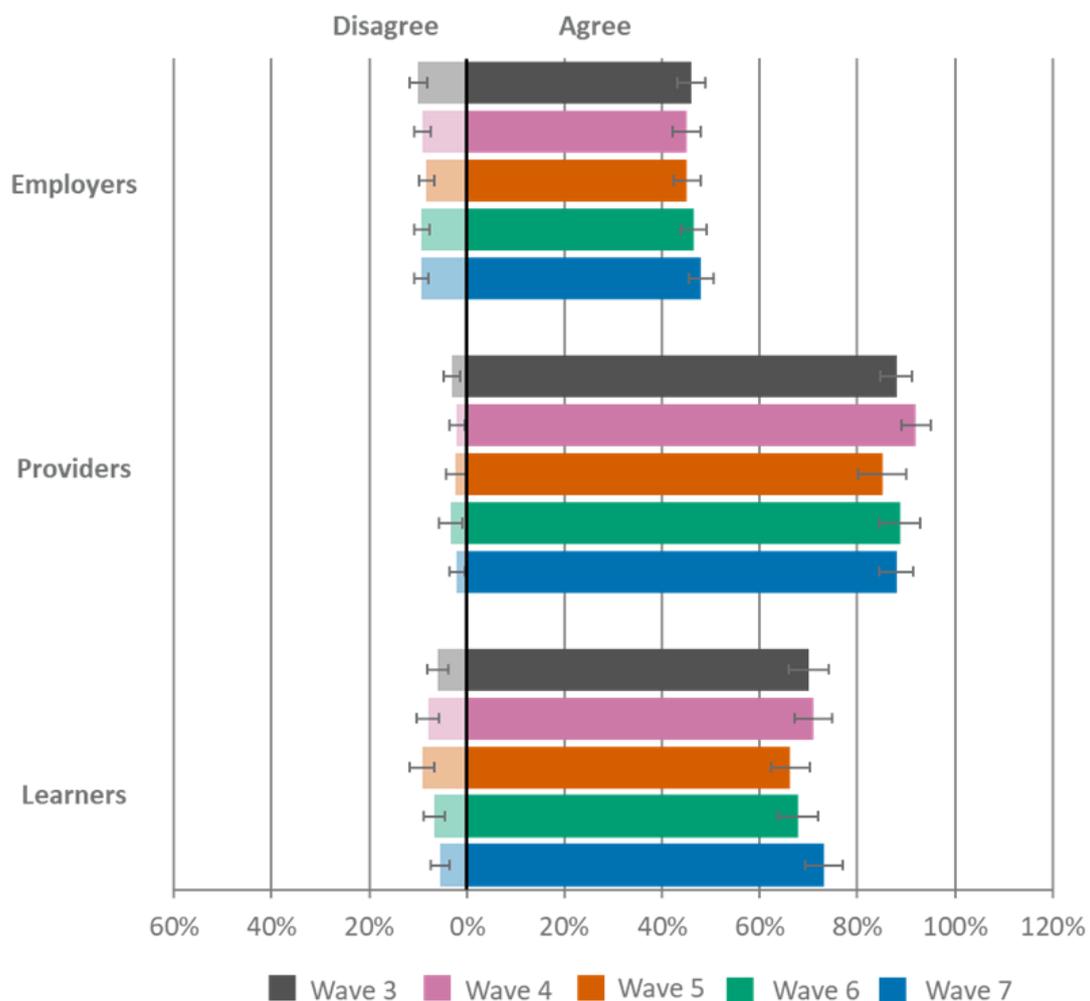
## Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications: value and flexibility

For Figure 5, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers n=1,757; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

As shown in Figure 5, providers had the highest agreement (88%) with the statement 'I value vocational and technical qualifications'. This was followed by learners (73%), and then employers with the lowest levels of agreement (48%). This was consistent with wave 6.

Among employers, public sector (68%) employers had the highest agreement with this statement, compared with private sector (47%) and voluntary sector (54%) employers, consistent with wave 6.

**Figure 5. Results for 'We value vocational and technical qualifications' (Employers) - 'I value vocational and technical qualifications' (All types of providers, Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	46%	45%	45%	46%	48%
Employers – disagree	10%	9%	8%	9%	9%
Providers – agree	88%	92%	85%	89%	88%
Providers – disagree	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%
Learners – agree	70%	71%	66%	68%	73%
Learners – disagree	6%	8%	9%	7%	6%

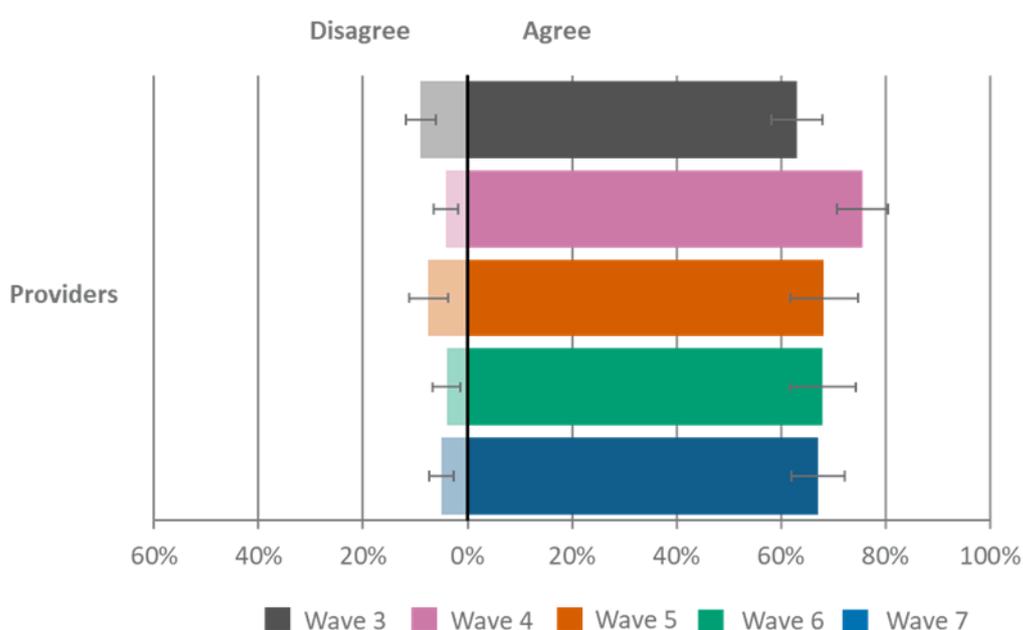
*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 6, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605.

Agreement with the statement ‘vocational and technical qualifications offer value for money’ remained consistently high (67%) among providers, consistent with wave 6 findings, as shown in Figure 6. Disagreement with this statement remained very low and broadly consistent with wave 6 (4%), at 5% of providers.

Agreement was higher among further education (FE), adult and community learning (ACL) or local authority (LA) establishments (70%) than sixth forms (58%), consistent with wave 6. Despite sixth forms reporting lower levels of agreement with the statement ‘vocational and technical qualifications offer value for money’, the proportion agreeing has significantly increased compared to wave 6 (46%).

**Figure 6. Results for ‘Vocational and technical qualifications offer value for money’ (All types of providers)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	63%	76%	68%	68%	67%
Providers – disagree	9%	4%	7%	4%	5%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”.*

For Figure 7, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers, n=1,757; All learners, n=552.

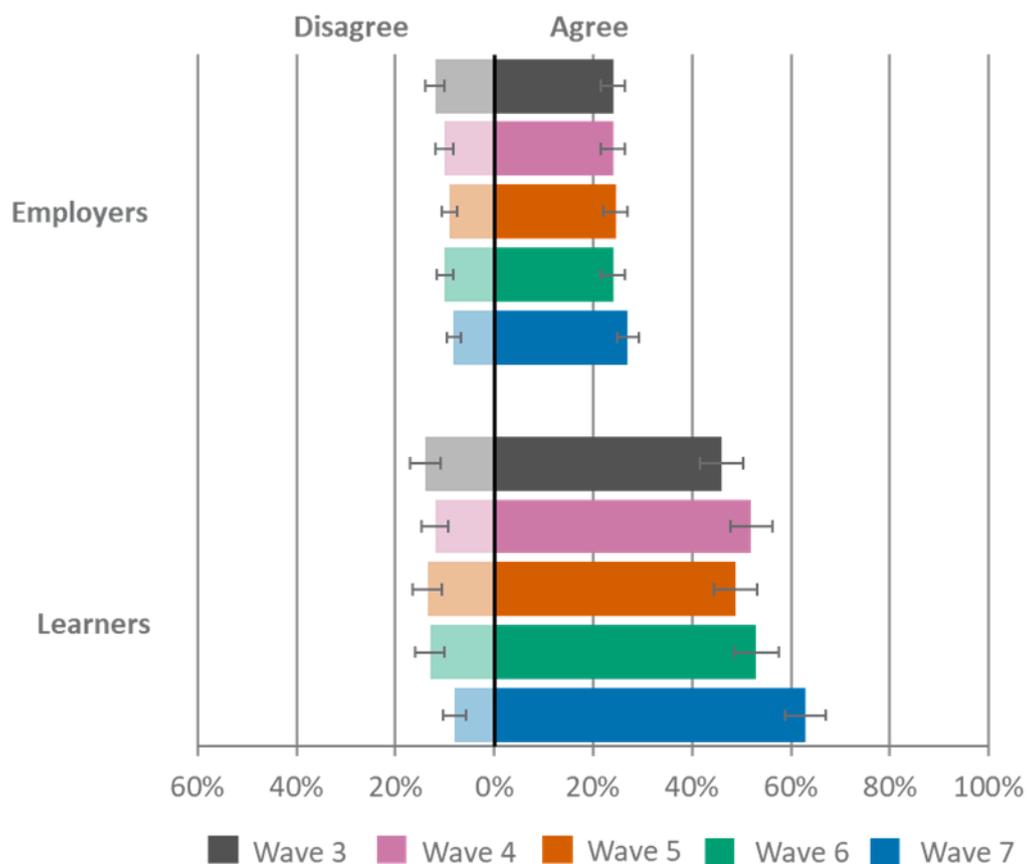
As shown in Figure 7, 63% of learners agreed that ‘the availability of vocational and technical qualifications is sufficiently flexible’, an increase compared with wave 6 (53%).

Agreement with this statement was lowest among the youngest learner group aged under 19 (54%), compared with those aged 19 to 24 (76%) and 25 and over (61%). Agreement has increased substantially compared to wave 6 among those aged 19 to 24 (56% in wave 6) and those aged 25 and over (48% in wave 6). Agreement with this statement was lower overall among employers (27%), a marginal increase from wave 6 (24%). A substantial proportion of employers indicated that they either did not agree or disagree with the statement (34%) or that they did not know (31%).

Agreement was highest for large employers (61%), when compared with medium (49%), small (40%) and micro (23%) employers. Levels of agreement with this statement were also higher than those reported in wave 6 for large (45%), medium (29%) and small (27%) employers.

Agreement was highest among public sector employers (48%), compared with private sector (27%) and voluntary sector (23%) employers.

**Figure 7. Results for ‘The availability of vocational and technical qualifications is sufficiently flexible’ (Employers, Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	24%	24%	25%	24%	27%
Employers – disagree	12%	10%	9%	10%	8%
Learners – agree	46%	52%	49%	53%	63%
Learners – disagree	14%	12%	14%	13%	8%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

## Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications: purpose and future opportunity

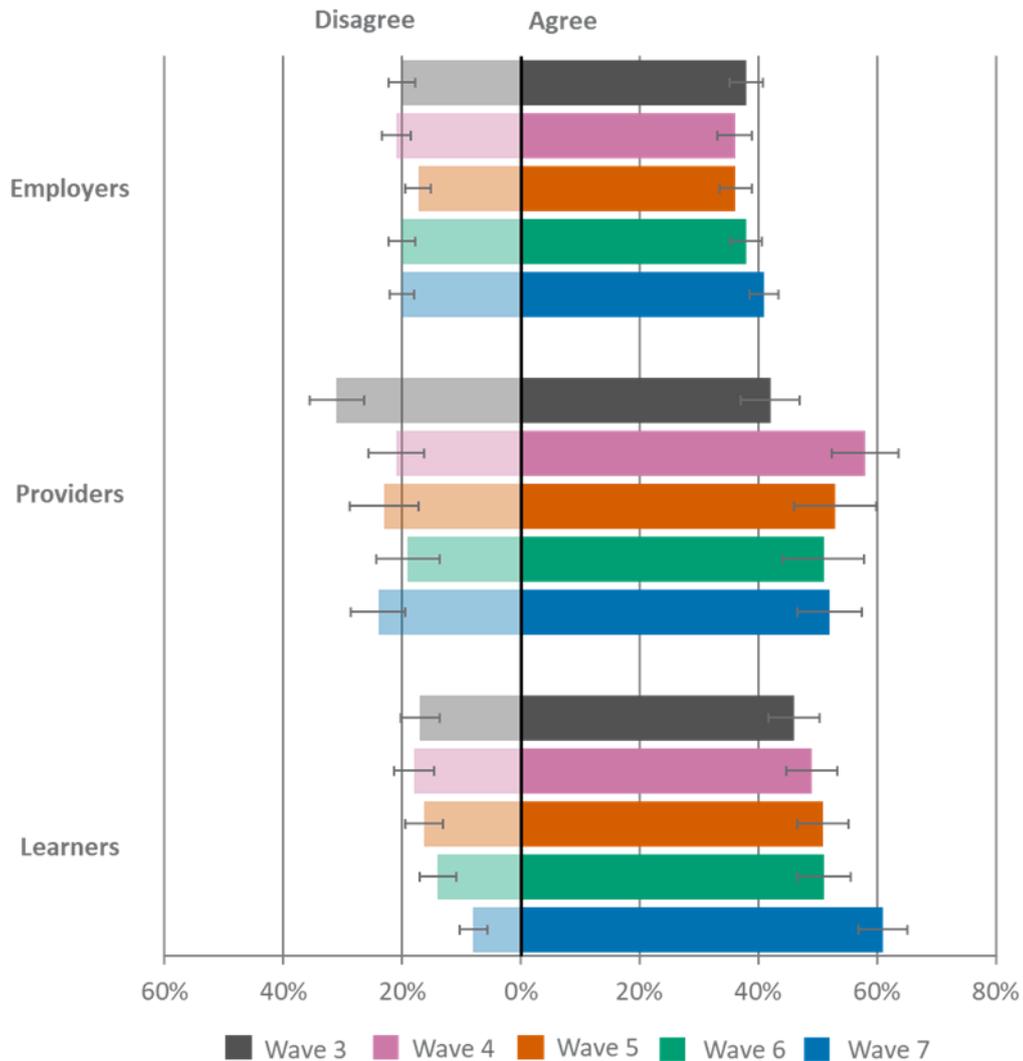
For Figure 8, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers n=1,757; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

Agreement with the statement 'the purpose of vocational and technical qualifications is well-understood by employers' remained highest among learners (61%), an increase compared to wave 6 (51%). Agreement with this statement was lower for providers and employers, with reported agreement being 52% and 41%, respectively.

Among learners, agreement was highest among those aged 19 to 24 (75%), compared with those aged under 19 (48%) and those aged 25 and over (61%), broadly consistent with wave 6.

Among employers, public sector (54%) employers had higher agreement than private sector (40%) employers, again broadly consistent with wave 6.

**Figure 8. Results for ‘The purpose of vocational and technical qualifications is well-understood by my organisation’ (Employers) - ‘The purpose of vocational and technical qualifications is well-understood by employers’ (All types of providers, Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	38%	36%	36%	38%	41%
Employers – disagree	20%	21%	17%	20%	20%
Providers – agree	42%	58%	53%	51%	52%
Providers – disagree	31%	21%	23%	19%	24%
Learners – agree	46%	49%	51%	51%	61%
Learners – disagree	17%	18%	16%	14%	8%

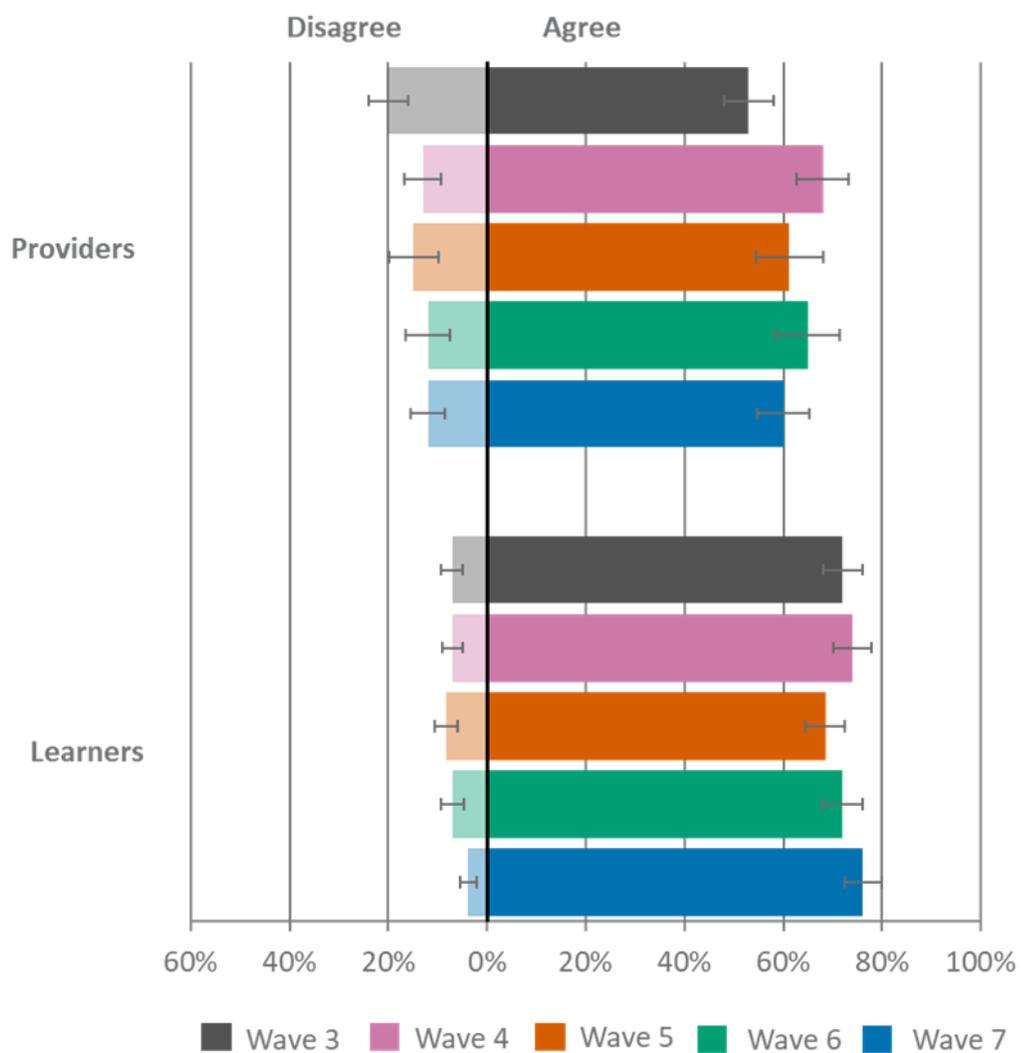
*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 9, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

As shown in Figure 9, the majority of learners and providers agreed that the purpose of VTQs is well understood by learners. Seventy-six percent of learners agreed with this statement, with low disagreement seen by learners (4%). A high proportion of providers (60%) also agreed with this statement. This was broadly consistent with findings from wave 6.

For learners, agreement with this statement was highest among those learners aged 19 and over (80% for both age groups 19 to 24 and 25 and over) when compared with learners aged under 19 (65%).

**Figure 9. Results for ‘The purpose of vocational and technical qualifications is well-understood by learners’ (All types of providers) - ‘I understand the purpose of vocational and technical qualifications’ (Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	53%	68%	61%	65%	60%
Providers – disagree	20%	13%	15%	12%	12%
Learners – agree	72%	74%	69%	72%	76%
Learners – disagree	7%	7%	8%	7%	4%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 10, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers n=1,757; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

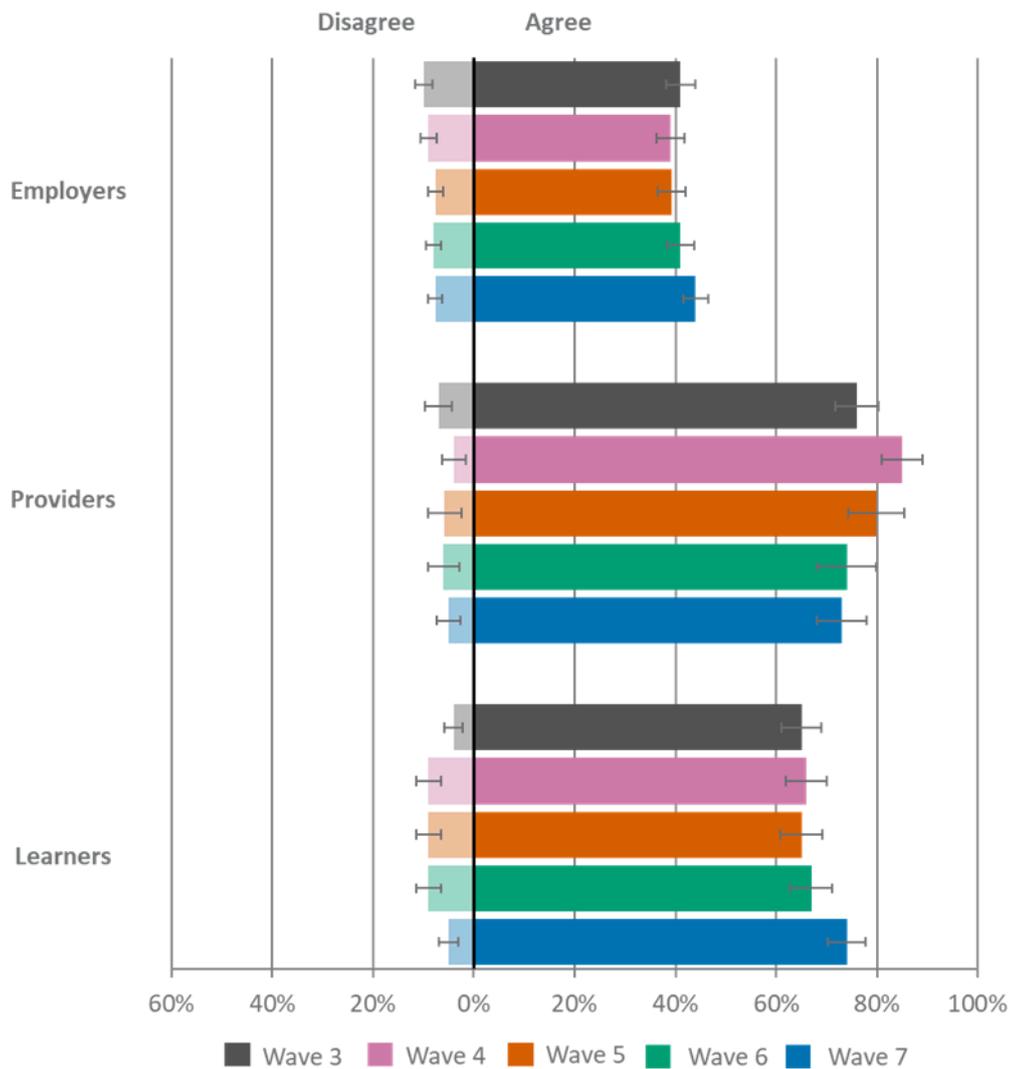
As shown in Figure 10, agreement that 'vocational and technical qualifications prepare learners well for the workplace' increased marginally from 41% to 44% for employers between waves 6 and 7, while remaining stable for providers. Agreement with this statement among learners also increased from 67% in wave 6 to 74% in wave 7. Agreement was highest for learners (74%) followed by providers (73%), with lower levels of agreement among employers (44%).

As seen in previous waves, agreement with this statement was highest among those from FE, ACL or LA establishments (74%), compared with sixth forms (65%).

Learners under the age of 19 (9%) displayed higher levels of disagreement than those aged 19 to 24 (2%) and 25 and over (4%). This represented a decrease among the 19 to 24 learner age group when compared with wave 6 (12%).

Among employers, agreement was highest among public sector (59%) employers, when compared with private sector (44%) employers. This was consistent with previous waves.

**Figure 10. Results for ‘Vocational and technical qualifications prepare learners well for the workplace’ (Employers, All types of providers, Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	41%	39%	39%	41%	44%
Employers – disagree	10%	9%	8%	8%	8%
Providers – agree	76%	85%	80%	74%	73%
Providers – disagree	7%	4%	6%	6%	5%
Learners – agree	70%	66%	65%	67%	74%
Learners – disagree	4%	9%	9%	13%	5%

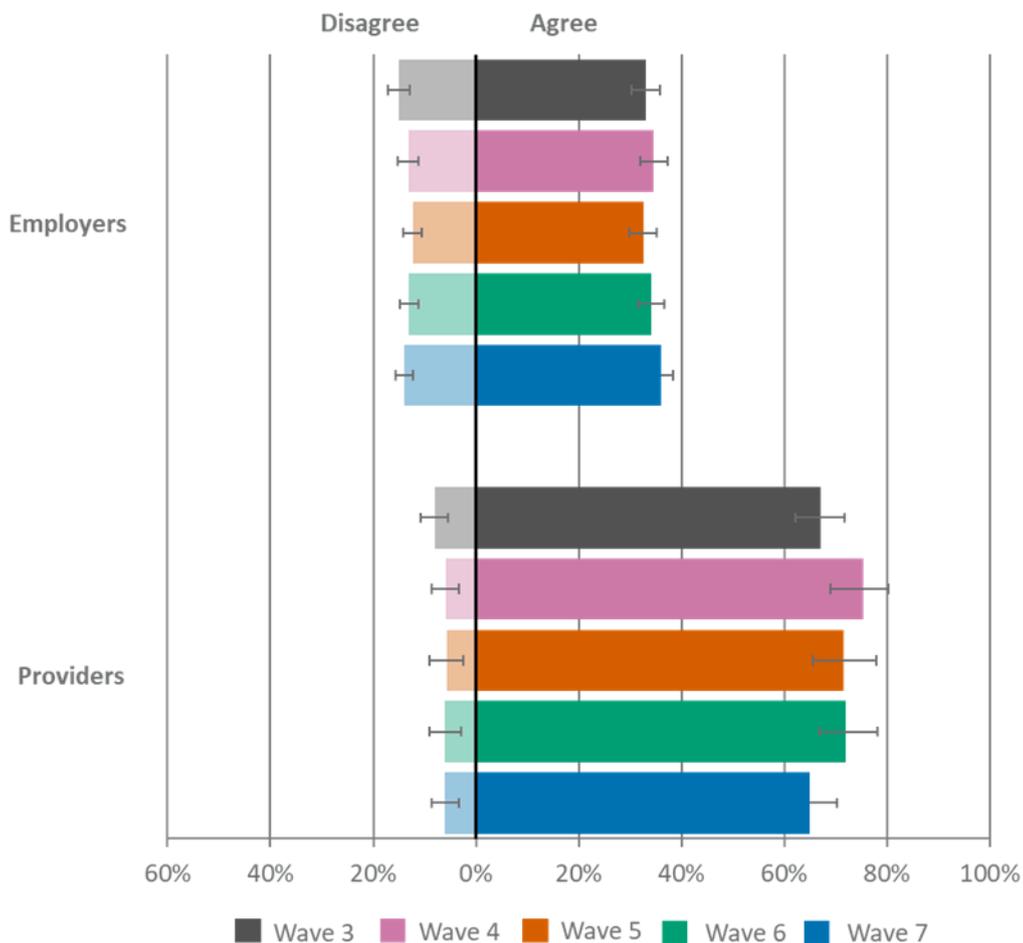
*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 11, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers n=1,757; All types of providers, n=605.

As shown in Figure 11, agreement with the statement was higher for providers (65%), compared with employers (36%). Although agreement with this statement was consistent among employers compared with wave 6, among providers, agreement decreased from wave 6 (72%).

Among employers, agreement with this statement was highest for large employers (72%) when compared with medium (58%), small (48%) and micro (32%) employers. Agreement was highest for public sector employers (58%) compared with private sector (35%) and voluntary sector (42%) employers.

**Figure 11. Results for ‘People achieving vocational and technical qualifications have the technical skills needed by employers in my organisation’ (Employers) - ‘People achieving vocational and technical qualifications have the technical skills needed by employers’ (All types of providers)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	33%	35%	33%	34%	36%
Employers – disagree	15%	13%	12%	13%	14%
Providers – agree	67%	75%	72%	72%	65%
Providers – disagree	8%	6%	6%	6%	6%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

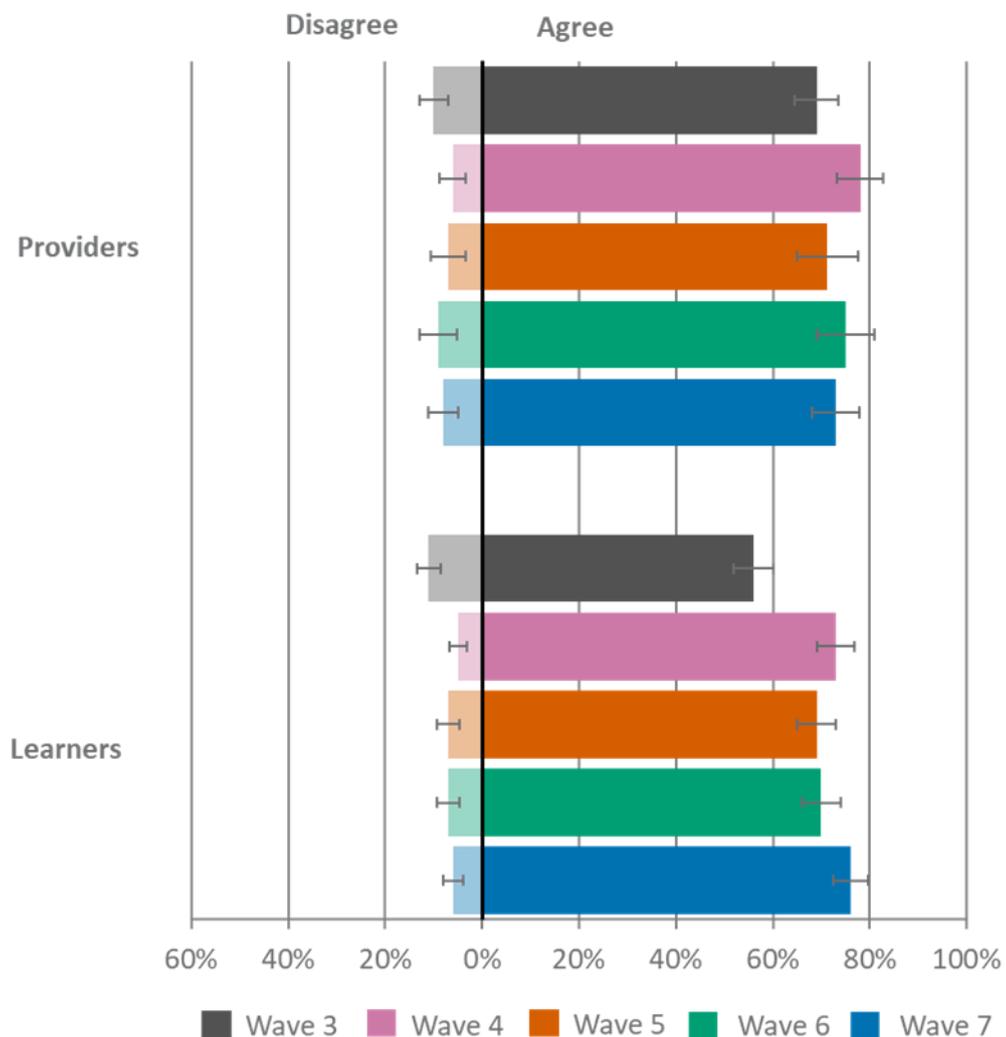
For Figure 12, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

As shown in Figure 12 agreement that vocational and technical qualifications are good preparation for further study was consistently high for both providers (73%) and learners (76%), with agreement for learners being slightly higher.

Learners aged under 19 (12%) had higher levels of disagreement with this statement when compared with those aged 19 to 24 (3%) or aged 25 and over (4%).

Providers from FE, ACL or LA establishments (77%) had higher levels of agreement that vocational and technical qualifications are good preparation for further study than those at sixth forms (63%), consistent with wave 6. However, the level of agreement with this statement among those at sixth forms was still seen to increase compared with wave 6 (52%).

**Figure 12. Results for ‘Vocational and technical qualifications are good preparation for further study’ (All types of providers, Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	69%	78%	71%	75%	73%
Providers – disagree	10%	6%	7%	9%	8%
Learners – agree	69%	73%	69%	70%	76%
Learners – disagree	8%	5%	7%	7%	6%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 13, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who have arranged or funded training for employees in last 12 months, n=801.

Twenty-eight percent of employers who had arranged or funded training for employees in the last 12 months reported that this led to pay increases all or most of the time (see Figure 13), broadly consistent with wave 6.

When comparing sectors, a lower proportion of voluntary sector (12%) employers reported that this led to a pay increase when compared with public (29%) and private (30%) sector employers, again broadly consistent with wave 6.

A quarter (26%) reported that this led to a promotion or improved job status, a higher level of agreement compared with wave 6 (22%). Thirty-four percent said it led to new responsibilities all or most of the time, consistent with findings in wave 6.

**Figure 13. Results for ‘For your employees who achieve vocational or technical qualifications outside an apprenticeship, how often, if ever, does this lead to the following?’ (Employers)**



<b>Pay increase</b>	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
None of the time	18%	23%	19%	18%
Some of the time	39%	38%	35%	37%
Most of the time	16%	12%	17%	21%
All of the time	9%	9%	9%	7%
Don't know	18%	18%	19%	16%

<b>A promotion or improved job status</b>	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
None of the time	17%	20%	17%	17%
Some of the time	44%	43%	42%	42%
Most of the time	16%	14%	16%	20%
All of the time	5%	5%	6%	5%
Don't know	17%	18%	19%	15%

<b>New responsibilities</b>	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
None of the time	17%	17%	14%	14%
Some of the time	40%	40%	38%	37%
Most of the time	25%	19%	22%	26%
All of the time	5%	7%	8%	8%
Don't know	13%	17%	18%	15%

## Employers' reasons for perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Employers who agreed that their organisation values VTQs (48%) were asked to explain further through an open response question.

Those who agreed with this often mentioned that the qualifications guarantee a minimum level of skill and knowledge, provide training in more specific skills, and deliver experience in practical environments required for the workplace. These qualifications were generally seen as a good baseline upon which to build and develop further. Typical responses included:

*"We have many practical responsibilities within our business and these qualifications would create job applicants with relevant knowledge and skills."*

*"They provide individuals with specific practical skills directly relevant to the work space, enabling them to contribute productively from the start of employment and meet the precise needs of a particular job sector."*

*"For us, vocational and technical qualifications are a no-brainer - they demonstrate that our employees have the practical skills and expertise needed to deliver exceptional results in a complex and ever-changing industry. We've found that these qualifications are a great indicator of an individual's ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, which is essential in financial services. By valuing these qualifications, we're able to build a team that's not only knowledgeable, but also effective and efficient."*

There was also a sense that VTQs provide an alternative to university or other entry into their sector and allow for a more diverse range of individuals with 'real life' experience. This was seen as benefitting both those entering in their organisation and as a benefit for the business through gaining different perspectives. Typical responses included:

*"We believe they offer a good alternative to traditional routes."*

*"University only provides so much knowledge. Practical and business skills are also required and at the moment only these can be learned in office."*

*"Too much emphasis is put on people going to university coming out with degrees that are useless for our economy. More kids need to be guided into the above industries and schools, colleges etc need the funding to increase the availability of this training."*

While sentiment was broadly positive, 9% of employers disagreed that VTQs were valued in their organisations. When asked to explain this further, the need for further qualifications through university, or the need for more practical experience were regularly cited as reasons. They were seen as not being reflective of individual cases, and there was a sense that some case-by-case decisions were required, rather than VTQs providing a seal of approval in their organisation. Typical responses included:

*"Qualifications are only the theory side of the job in my organisation. Competence and confidence comes from real world on the job experience and training, not always from a theoretical type of training."*

*"We've never ever thought about them and have always relied on a degree as a measure of attainment and (importantly) maturity."*

*“We need workers who have academic ability at degree level.”*

*“We find that experience and hands on training are more use than these qualifications. In the real world [having a VTQ] does not fit with the training offered.”*

## Section 2: Perceptions of Functional Skills Qualifications

### Key findings

- Among employers, 33% reported having a very or quite good understanding of FSQs. Understanding of FSQs increased with organisation size: large employers (35%) were significantly more likely than micro employers (9%) to report a very good understanding.
- Learners who had undertaken an FSQ in the last 3 years most commonly said they decided to do so in order to improve their English, maths or ICT skills (42%), a significant increase compared with wave 6 (30%). Progression was also an important reason for taking an FSQ; 39% reported they wanted to progress in their studies and 24% reported they wanted to progress in their current job. Both measures saw a significant increase compared with wave 6.
- Likewise, among learners who had started taking an FSQ, the top perceived benefit of taking them was progress to higher level qualifications (36%), again an increase compared to wave 6 (17%).
- Agreement among learners that they valued FSQs increased in wave 7 compared with wave 6 (70% and 61% respectively). For providers (65%) and employers (37%), the level of agreement regarding the value placed on FSQs was broadly consistent with wave 6.
- Similarly, there was increased agreement among learners that FSQs offer value for money compared with wave 6 (from 61% in wave 6 to 68% in wave 7). Agreement among providers remained broadly consistent to the previous waves at 53%.
- Mirroring earlier findings for learners, there was increased agreement that the availability of FSQs is sufficiently flexible compared with wave 6 (from 48% in wave 6 to 60% in wave 7). A comparatively smaller proportion of employers agree (25%).
- The majority of learners and providers (70% and 58% respectively) agreed that those holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in English needed by employers, higher than reported agreement among employers themselves (35%). This represented an increase in agreement among learners in wave 7 compared with wave 6 (65%).
- Levels of agreement that those holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in maths were highest among learners, with 66% in agreement. This was followed by 58% of providers and 31% of employers. These levels of agreement across sample groups were broadly consistent with wave 6.
- Similarly, compared to wave 6, there was consistency in agreement levels that those holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by employers among both employers (28%) and providers (49%). Learners' agreement increased, from 53% in wave 6 to 61% in wave 7.
- The majority of learners (74%) and providers (64%) agreed that FSQs are good preparation for further study, an increase for both groups compared with wave 6 (64% and 55% respectively).

## Understanding of Functional Skills qualifications by employers

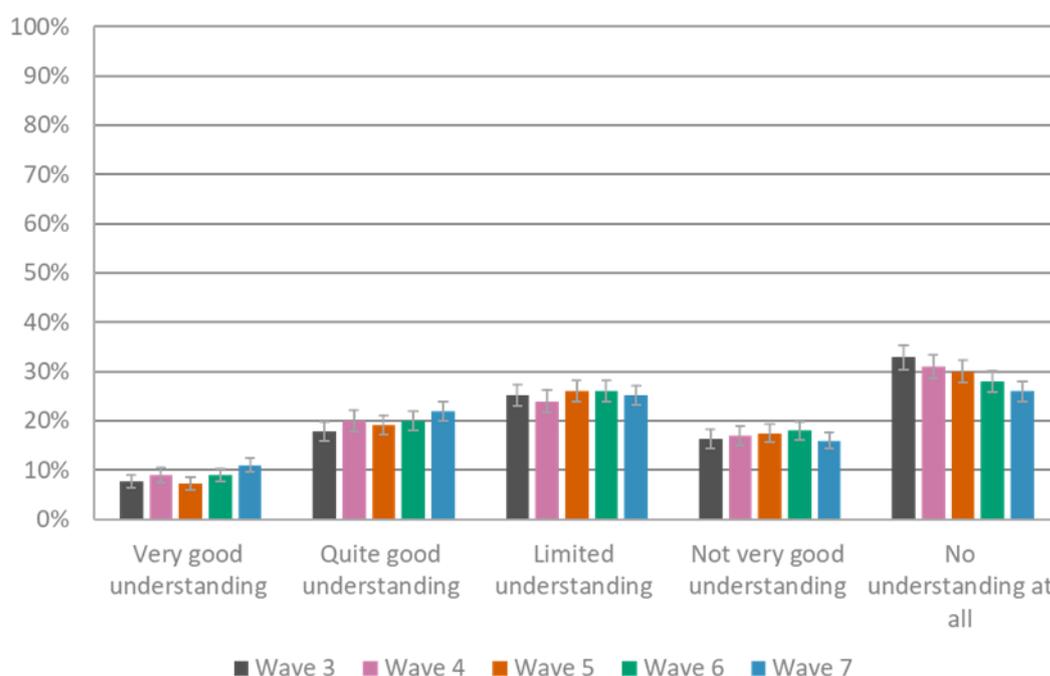
For Figure 14, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers, n=2,026.

As shown in Figure 14, 74% reported that they have some level of understanding of Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs). More specifically, 33% reported having very or quite good understanding, a statistically significant increase compared to wave 6 (29%). Forty-two per cent reported having limited or not very good understanding. The remainder, 26%, said they have no understanding at all of these qualifications, which is broadly in line with previous waves.

Levels of reported understanding of FSQs increased with organisation size, with those in large (35%) organisations significantly more likely to state they have a very good understanding compared to those in micro (9%) and small (16%) organisations.

Public sector employers (27%) were more likely to report having a very good understanding of FSQs than private sector employers (11%) and voluntary sector employers (12%).

**Figure 14. Results for ‘Please indicate your level of understanding of Functional Skills qualifications (Employers)’**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	8%	9%	7%	9%	11%
Quite good understanding	18%	20%	19%	20%	22%
Limited understanding	25%	24%	26%	26%	25%
Not very good understanding	16%	17%	18%	18%	16%
No understanding at all	33%	31%	30%	28%	26%

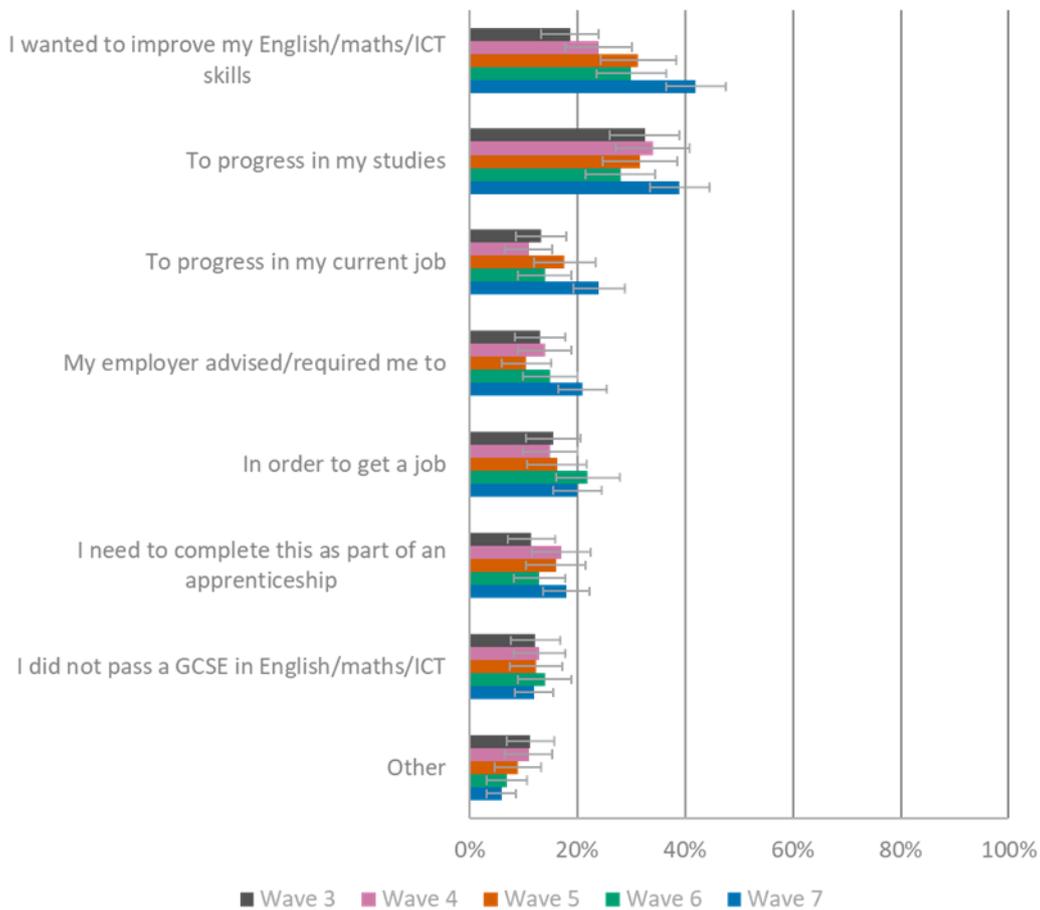
## Why learners chose Functional Skills qualifications

For Figure 15, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Learners who are studying or have studied an FSQ in the last 3 years, n=320.

As shown in Figure 15, the top reason given by learners for deciding to take an FSQ was to improve their English/maths/ICT skills (42%), a significant increase compared with wave 6 (30%).

Progress was also an important reason for taking an FSQ. The proportion who reported they wanted to progress in their studies increased in wave 7 (39%) compared with wave 6 (28%), as did wanting to progress in their current job (24% in wave 7, compared with 14% in wave 6).

**Figure 15. Results for ‘Why did you decide to take a Functional Skills qualification?’ (Learners)**



<b>Statement</b>	<b>Wave 3</b>	<b>Wave 4</b>	<b>Wave 5</b>	<b>Wave 6</b>	<b>Wave 7</b>
I wanted to improve my English/maths/ICT skills	19%	24%	31%	30%	42%
To progress in my studies	33%	34%	32%	28%	39%
To progress in my current job	13%	11%	18%	14%	24%
My employer advised/required me to	13%	14%	11%	15%	21%
In order to get a job	16%	15%	16%	22%	20%
I need to complete this as part of an apprenticeship	12%	17%	16%	13%	18%
I did not pass a GCSE in English/maths/ICT	12%	13%	12%	14%	12%
Other	11%	11%	9%	7%	6%

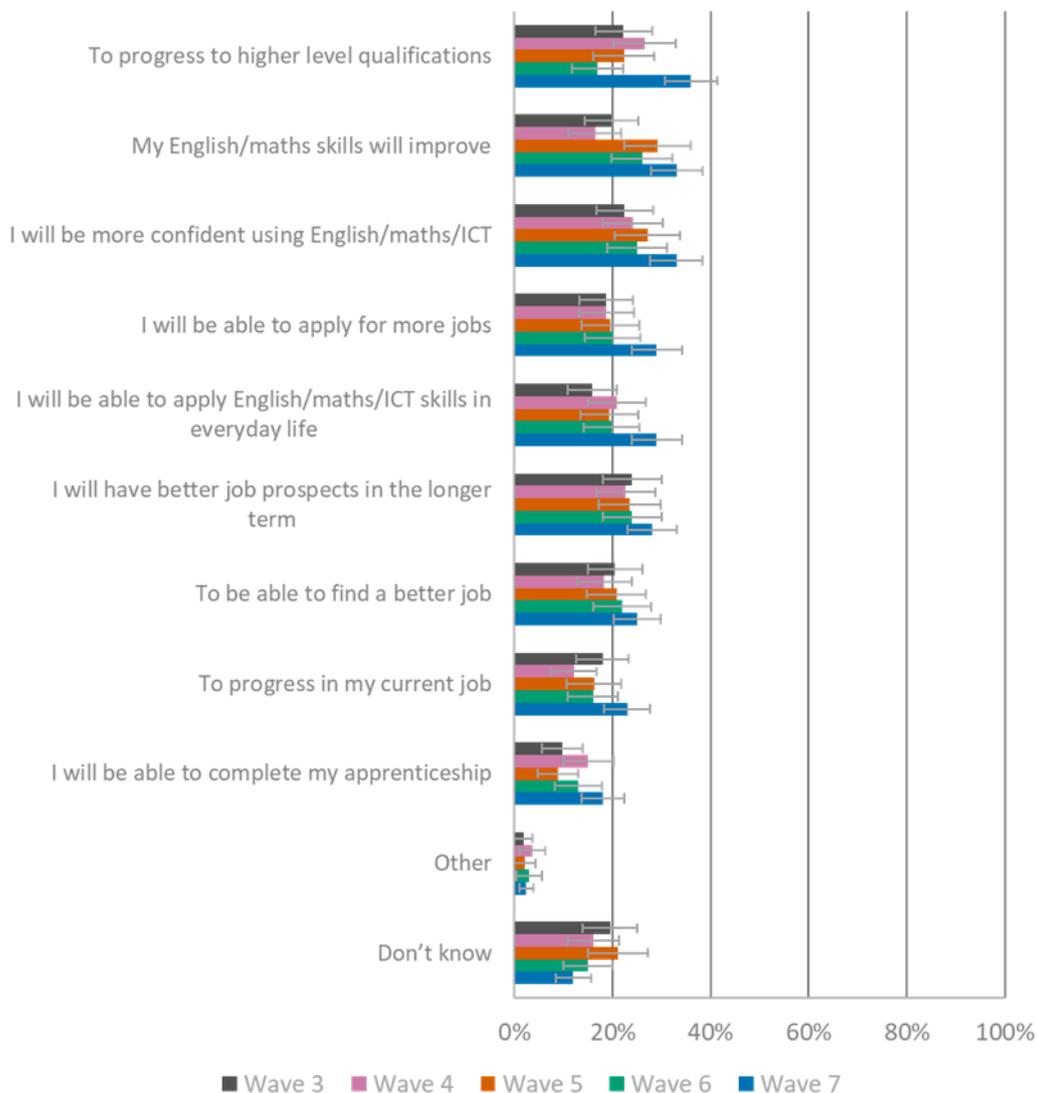
## Benefits associated with Functional Skills qualifications by learners

For Figure 16, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Learners who are studying or have studied an FSQ in the last three years, n=320.

After having started or completed learning, 36% of learners believed a benefit of taking their qualifications was that they would progress to higher level qualifications. This was a significant increase compared to wave 6 (17%).

Wave on wave increases compared to wave 6 were also evident for benefits such as being able to apply English/maths/ICT skills in everyday life (benefit increased from 20% in wave 6 to 29% in wave 7) and being able to apply for more jobs (benefit increased from 20% in wave 6 to 29% in wave 7).

**Figure 16. Results for ‘Now that you have started learning or have completed learning, what benefits do you expect from taking a Functional Skills qualification(s)?’ (Learners).**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
To progress to higher level qualifications	22%	27%	22%	17%	36%
My English/maths skills will improve	20%	16%	29%	26%	33%
I will be more confident using English/maths/ICT	22%	24%	27%	25%	33%
I will be able to apply English/maths/ICT skills in everyday life	16%	21%	19%	20%	29%
I will be able to apply for more jobs	19%	19%	20%	20%	29%
I will have better job prospects in the longer term	24%	23%	24%	24%	28%
To be able to find a better job	20%	18%	21%	22%	25%
To progress in my current job	18%	12%	16%	16%	23%
I will be able to complete my apprenticeship	10%	15%	9%	13%	18%
Other	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Don't know	19%	16%	21%	15%	12%

## Perceptions of Functional Skills qualifications: value and flexibility

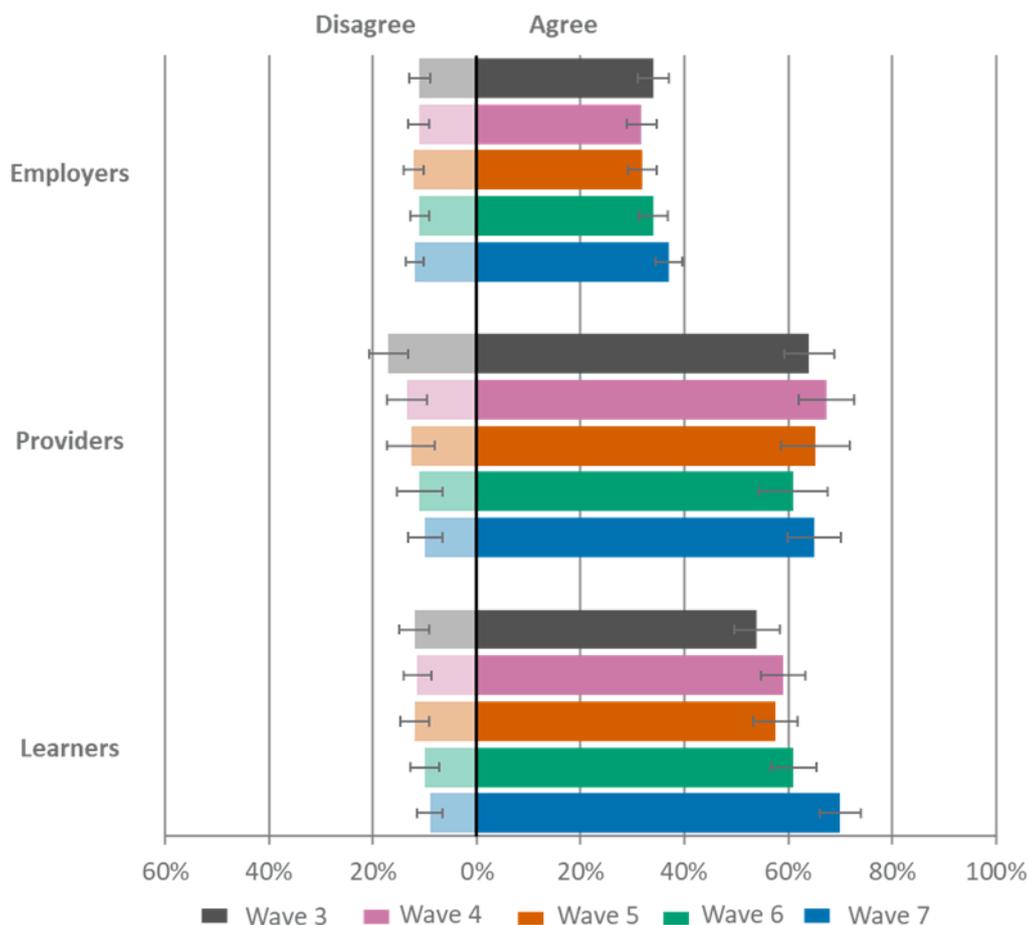
For Figure 17, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who indicated that they have an understanding of FSQs, n=1,522; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

Levels of agreement regarding the value placed on FSQs across providers and employers were broadly consistent with wave 6 (see Figure 17). Sixty-five per cent of providers and 37% of employers agreed they valued them.

Comparatively, learners' agreement increased significantly, from 61% in wave 6 to 70% in wave 7. This was predominantly due to changes in learners aged 19 to 24, as 74% of this group agreed in wave 7 compared with 50% in wave 6. Agreement among those aged under 19 (60%) and 25 and over (72%) was broadly consistent wave on wave.

Although there were no significant changes at an overall level for employers and providers, there were some differences in the sample subgroups. Large employers (61%) expressed higher levels of agreement than micro (34%), and small (45%) employers that their organisation values FSQs. Among the providers surveyed, those from FE, ACL or LA establishments were more likely to agree than those in sixth forms (64% compared with 50% respectively).

**Figure 17. Results for ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Functional Skills qualifications?’ – I value Functional Skills qualifications (Learners, All types of providers) - We value Functional Skills qualifications (Employers)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	46%	32%	32%	34%	37%
Employers – disagree	10%	11%	12%	11%	12%
Providers – agree	64%	67%	65%	61%	65%
Providers – disagree	17%	13%	13%	11%	10%
Learners – agree	54%	59%	58%	61%	70%
Learners – disagree	12%	11%	12%	10%	9%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”.*

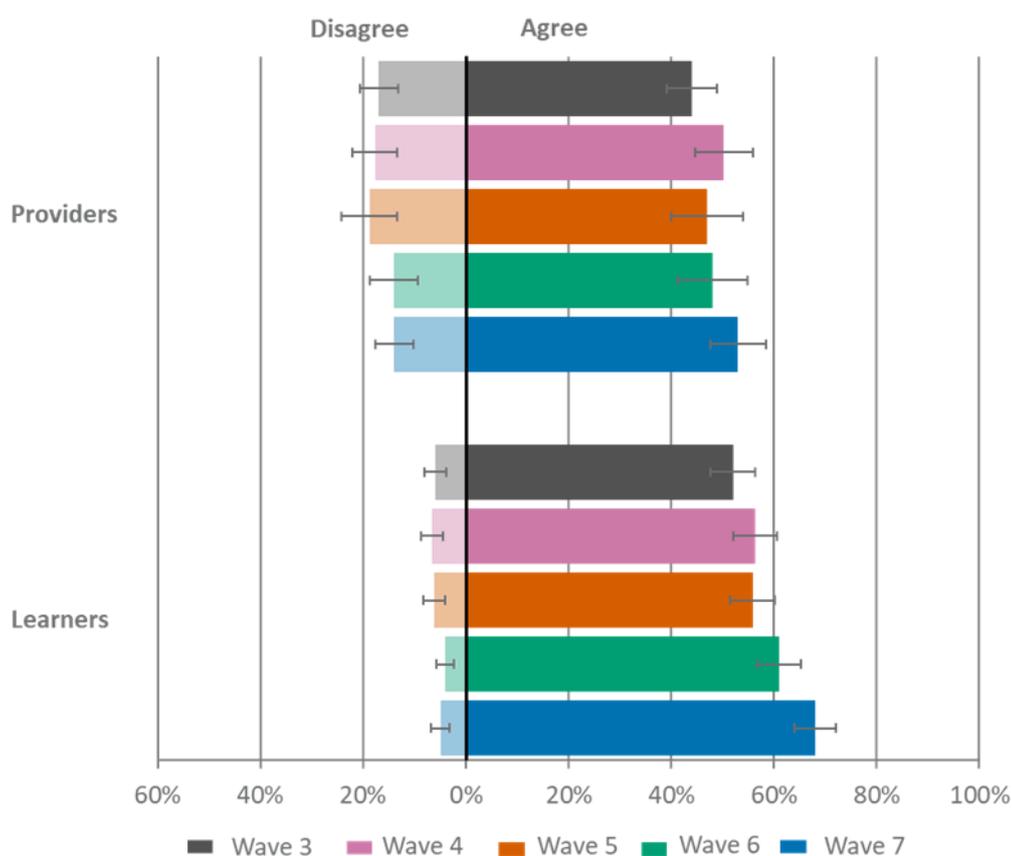
For Figure 18, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

As shown in Figure 18, levels of agreement that FSQs offer value for money were broadly consistent with wave 6 for providers (48%), with 53% of providers agreeing in wave 7. However, among learners, agreement in wave 7 increased significantly from 61% in wave 6 to 68% in wave 7.

The increased agreement in wave 7 among learners compared with wave 6 was evident among those aged 19 to 24 (82% and 65% respectively), and those aged 25 and over (70% and 62% respectively). It was broadly consistent wave on wave for those aged under 19 (52% in wave 7, 56% in wave 6).

Within the providers group, those from FE, ACL or LA establishments expressed higher levels of agreement that FSQs offer value for money than those from sixth forms (52% compared with 39% respectively).

**Figure 18. Results for ‘In 2024, employers, training providers or colleges paid awarding organisations in the region of £18-£20 per student for each Functional Skills qualification (Source: Ofqual 2024). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? – Functional Skills Qualifications offer value for money.’ (Learners, All types of providers)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	44%	50%	47%	48%	53%
Providers – disagree	17%	18%	19%	14%	14%
Learners – agree	52%	56%	56%	61%	68%
Learners – disagree	6%	7%	6%	4%	5%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

*In wave 7, the cost in the question was updated to '£18 to £20 per student'. Prior to wave 7, the cost was "£15 to £20 per student"*

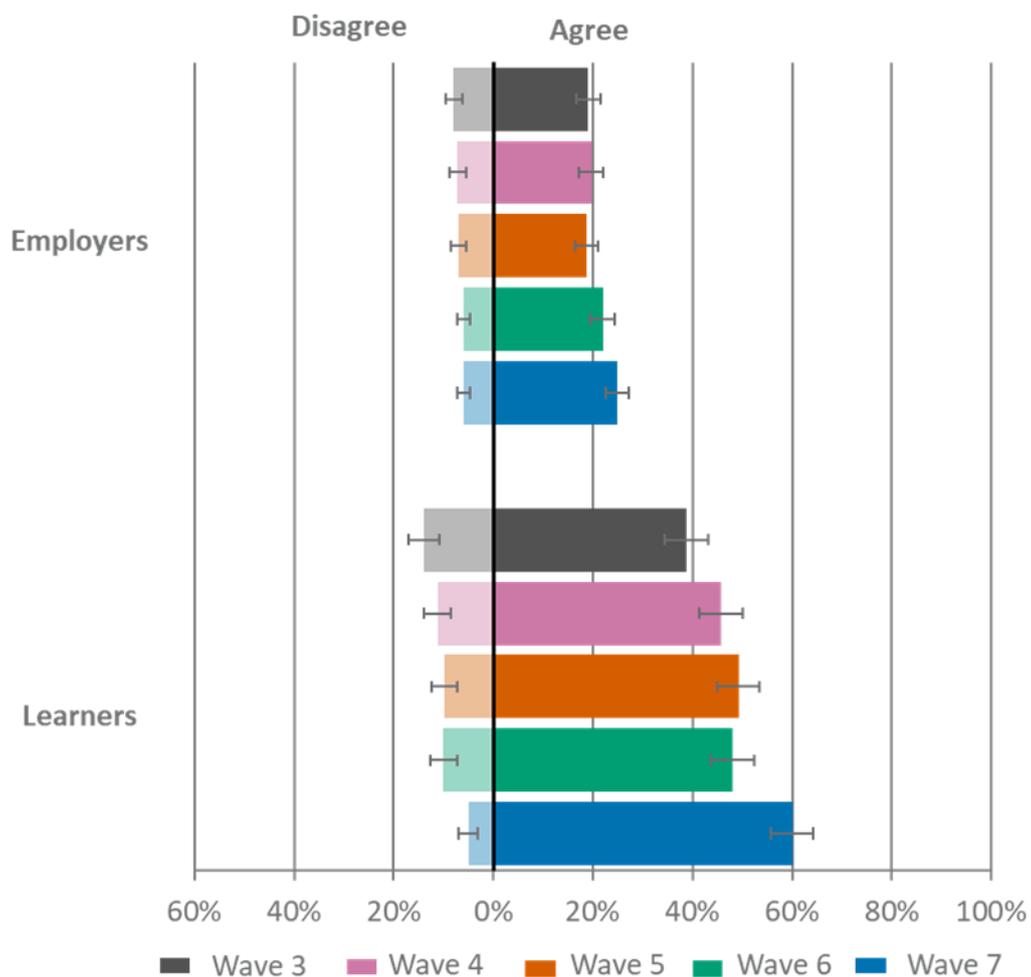
For Figure 19, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who indicated that they have an understanding of FSQs, n=1,522; All learners, n=552.

In wave 7, 25% of employers agreed that the availability of FSQs is sufficiently flexible, which was broadly consistent with wave 6. These relatively low levels of agreement were primarily caused by high proportions of employers expressing a neutral opinion (34%) or saying they did not know (35%) rather than by high levels of disagreement (6%). Meanwhile, levels of agreement among learners were high (60%) and represented an increase compared with wave 6 (48%).

Mirroring earlier findings for FSQs, the increase in learners' agreement in wave 7 compared with wave 6 was evident among those aged 19 to 25 (74% and 48% respectively) and 25 and over (60% and 48% respectively), while agreement among those aged under 19 was broadly consistent (46% in wave 7, 48% in wave 6).

Although consistent at an overall level, large employers (60%) stated higher levels of agreement than micro (21%) and small (33%) employers.

**Figure 19. Results for 'The availability of Functional Skills qualifications is sufficiently flexible' (Employers, Learners)**



<b>Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	19%	20%	19%	22%	25%
Employers – disagree	8%	7%	7%	6%	6%
Learners – agree	39%	46%	49%	48%	60%
Learners – disagree	14%	11%	10%	10%	5%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

## Perceptions of Functional Skills qualifications: purpose and future opportunity

For Figure 20, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who indicated that they have an understanding of FSQs, n=1,522; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

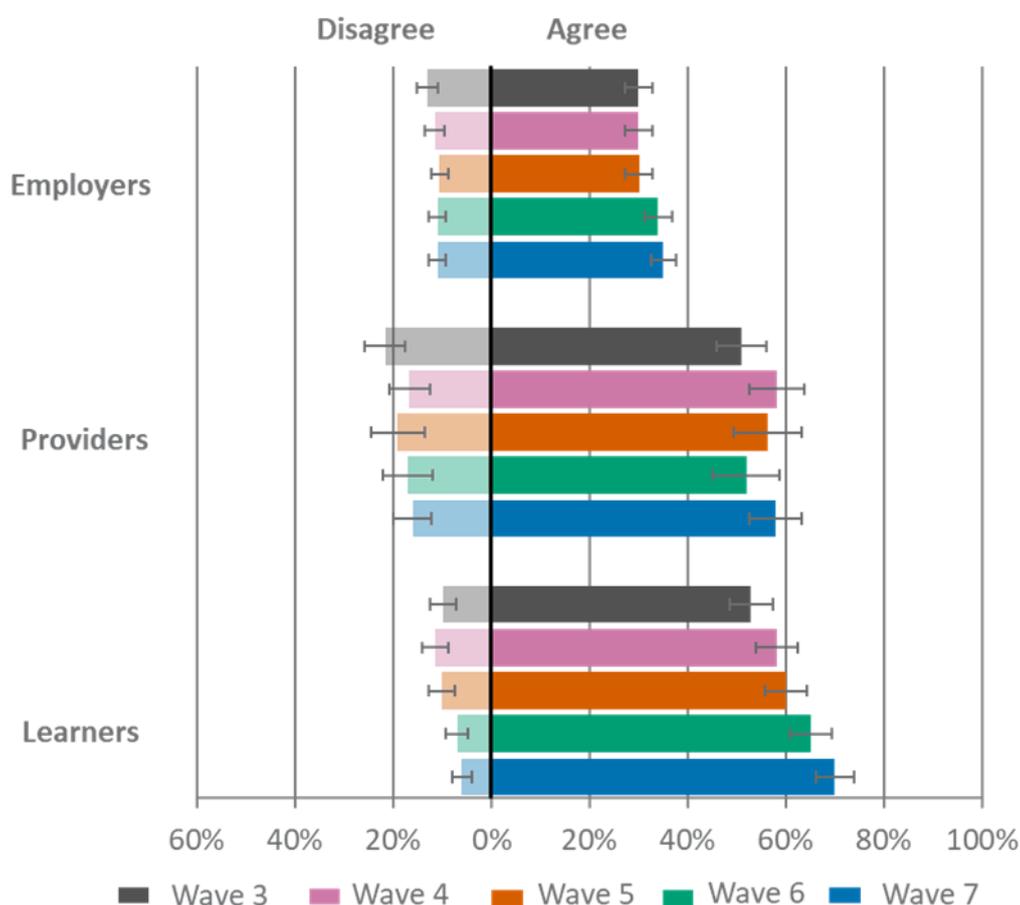
In comparison with wave 6, levels of agreement among employers that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in English needed by their organisation were broadly consistent, with 35% of the employers sampled stating this in wave 7 (see Figure 20). Importantly, levels of disagreement among employers were low (11%); as seen elsewhere, the relatively low levels of agreement could be attributed to higher levels of uncertainty (25%). Levels of agreement for providers were also consistent in comparison with wave 6 (52%); in wave 7, 58% were in agreement. Learners reported the highest levels of agreement across the three groups (70%), an increase compared with wave 6 (65%).

There was no statistically significant difference in agreement between any age groups surveyed. However, learners aged 19 to 24 reported higher (if non-significant) levels of agreement in wave 7 compared with wave 6 (77% and 67%, respectively).

Large employers (63%) expressed higher levels of agreement that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in English needed by their organisation than micro (32%) and small (45%) employers. When looking at organisation sector, public sector employers (49%) were more likely than those in the private sector (35%) to agree that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in English.

Among providers, those from FE, ACL or LA establishments expressed much higher levels of agreement with the statement that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in English needed by employers than those from sixth forms (60% compared with 42%).

**Figure 20. Results for ‘People holding Functional Skills qualifications have the appropriate level of skill in English needed by my organisation’ (Employers) - ‘People holding Functional Skills qualifications have the appropriate level of skill in English needed by employers’ (All types of providers and Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	30%	30%	30%	34%	35%
Employers – disagree	13%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Providers – agree	51%	58%	56%	52%	58%
Providers – disagree	22%	17%	19%	17%	16%
Learners – agree	53%	58%	60%	65%	70%
Learners – disagree	10%	11%	10%	7%	6%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”.*

For Figure 21, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who indicated that they have an understanding of FSQs, n=1,522; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

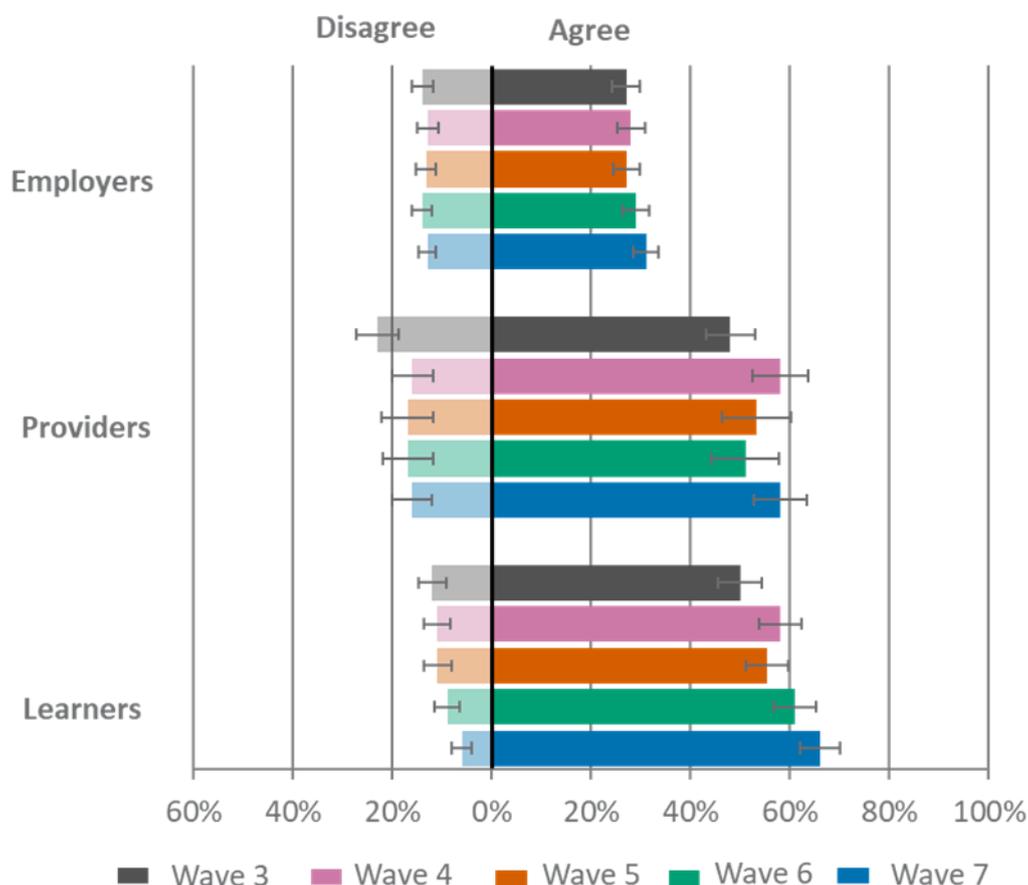
As shown in Figure 21, levels of agreement regarding whether people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in maths were broadly in line with wave 6 across all 3 stakeholder groups. For employers this was in the context of their own organisation, and for providers and learners it was regarding the needs of employers generally. Levels of agreement were highest among learners, with 66% in agreement, followed by 58% of providers and 31% of employers.

Although agreement was consistent compared to wave 6, for employers and learners, this represented a trended increase compared to wave 5, when 27% of employers and 55% of learners agreed.

Large employers (63%) expressed higher levels of agreement that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in maths needed by their organisation than micro (28%) and small (37%). This was consistent with perceptions regarding English skills.

Providers from FE, ACL or LA establishments expressed relatively high levels of agreement with the statement that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in maths needed by employers, compared with providers from sixth forms (61% and 41% respectively). Learners across various age groups, however, reported similar levels of agreement.

**Figure 21. Results for ‘People holding Functional Skills qualifications have the appropriate level of skill in maths needed by my organisation’ (Employers) - ‘People holding Functional Skills qualifications have the appropriate level of skill in maths needed by employers’ (All types of providers and Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	27%	28%	27%	29%	31%
Employers – disagree	14%	13%	13%	14%	13%
Providers – agree	48%	58%	53%	51%	58%
Providers – disagree	23%	16%	17%	17%	16%
Learners – agree	50%	58%	55%	61%	66%
Learners – disagree	12%	11%	11%	9%	6%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 22, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who indicated that they have an understanding of FSQs, n=1,522; All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

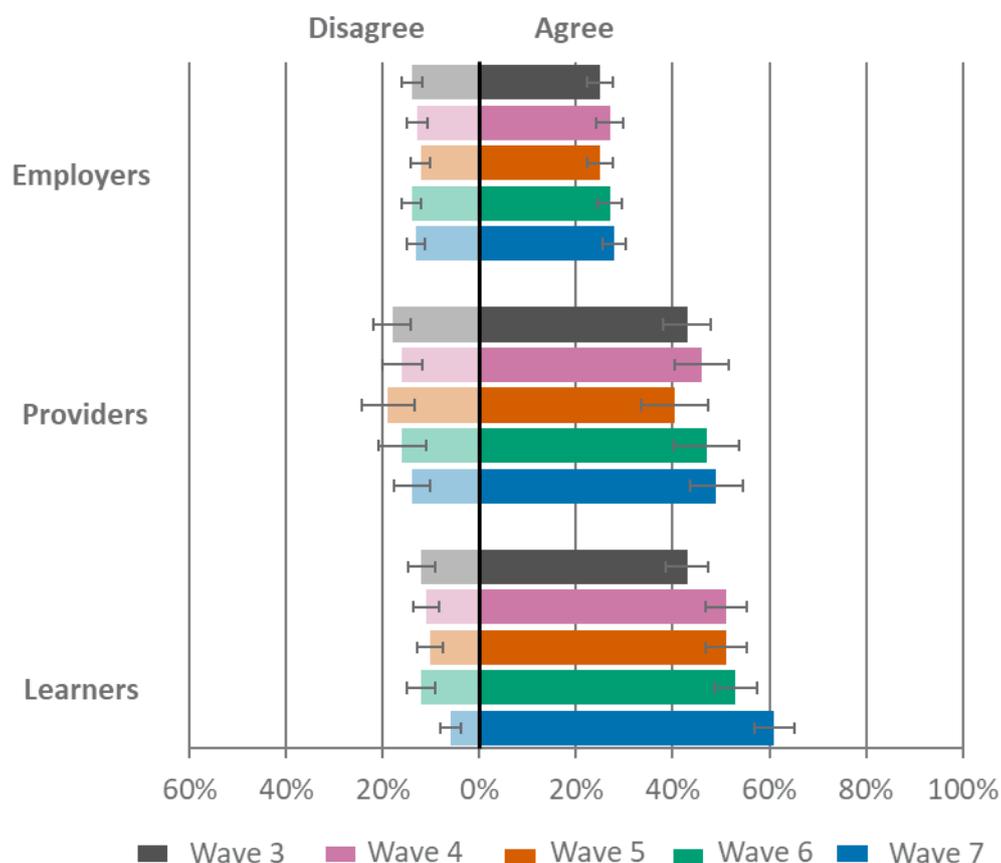
Among employers and providers, levels of agreement that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed in the context of employment were broadly consistent with wave 6 (see Figure 22). In wave 7, 49% of providers agreed that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by employers, while 28% of employers agreed that these individuals have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by their organisation. Comparatively, agreement among learners increased in wave 7 compared to wave 6, from 53% to 61%.

This increase among learners was evident among learners aged 19 to 24 (from 51% in wave 6 to 71% in wave 7) and those aged 25 and over (from 55% in wave 6 to 63% in wave 7).

As seen with perceptions of other skills, large employers (56%) reported higher levels of agreement that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by their organisation than micro (25%) or small (36%) employers. The same was true for public sector employers (48%) in comparison with private sector employers (28%) and voluntary sector employers (21%).

Similarly, providers from FE, ACL or LA establishments expressed higher levels of agreement than those from sixth forms (48% compared with 38%) that people holding FSQs have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by employers.

**Figure 22. Results for ‘People holding Functional Skills qualifications have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by my organisation’ (Employers) ‘People holding Functional Skills qualifications have the appropriate level of skill in ICT needed by employers’ (All types of providers and Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	25%	27%	25%	27%	28%
Employers – disagree	14%	13%	12%	14%	13%
Providers – agree	43%	46%	40%	47%	49%
Providers – disagree	18%	16%	19%	16%	14%
Learners – agree	43%	51%	51%	53%	61%
Learners – disagree	12%	11%	10%	12%	6%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”.*

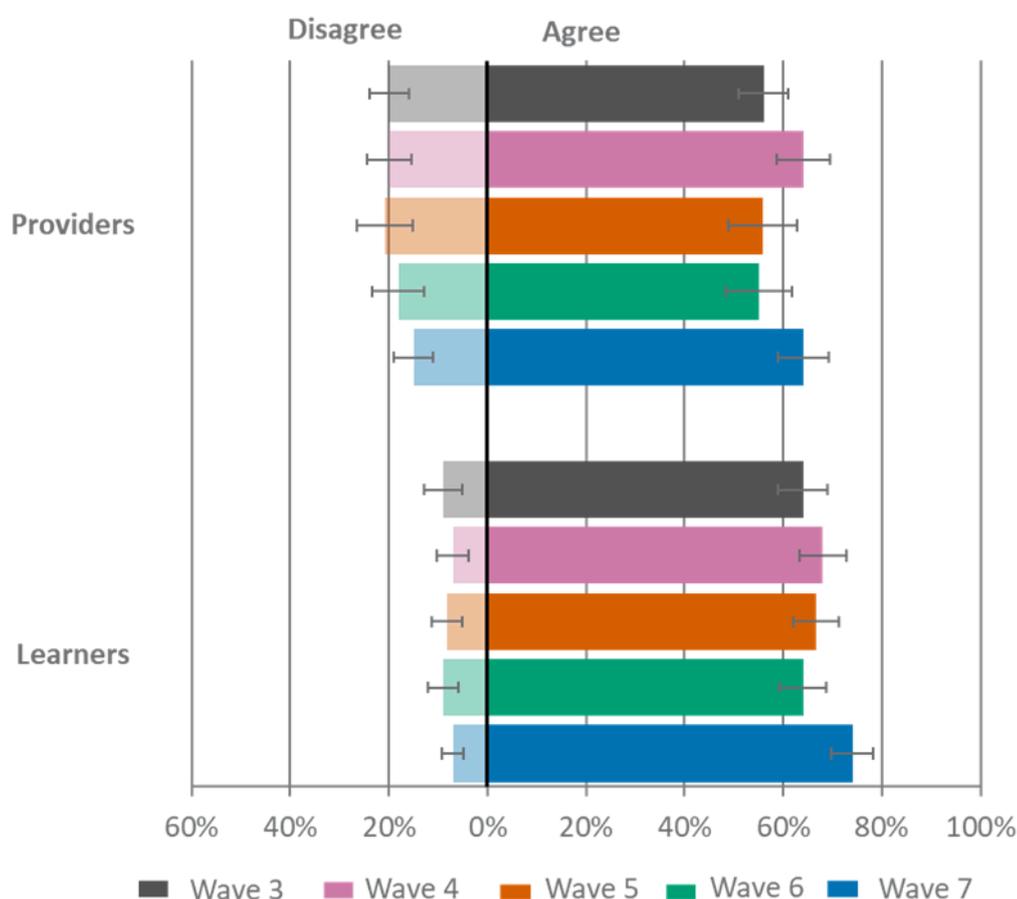
For Figure 23, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605; All learners, n=552.

Both providers' and learners' levels of agreement that FSQs are good preparation for further study increased from wave 6 to wave 7. For learners, agreement increased to 74% from 64% in wave 6, and providers' agreement increased to 64% from 55% in wave 6.

Among the providers surveyed, those from FE, ACL or LA establishments reported much higher levels of agreement with the statement that FSQs are good preparation for further study than providers from sixth forms (67% and 43% respectively).

Learners aged 19 to 24 reported higher levels of agreement than those aged and under 19 (81% and 66% respectively), with agreement for learners aged 19 to 24 increasing significantly compared with wave 6 (52%).

**Figure 23. Results for 'Functional Skills qualifications are good preparation for further study' (All types of providers and Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	56%	64%	56%	55%	64%
Providers – disagree	20%	20%	21%	18%	15%
Learners – agree	64%	68%	67%	64%	74%
Learners – disagree	9%	7%	8%	9%	7%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

## Employers' reasons for perceptions of Functional Skills qualifications

Among the 37% of employers who agreed that their organisation values FSQs, a variety of reasons were given for this. As observed in wave 6, many said this was because FSQs are a requirement for their organisation or that they provide assurance on a certain standard of basic skills (for example, English or maths) and benchmark employees against this. Many employers also wrote that they are a good alternative to GCSEs and can be more relevant to their workplace. Typical responses include:

“Less training is required & some of the legal requirements are already fulfilled which allows us to employ people quicker and saves costs in acquiring those legalities”

“It's an alternative way to show your skills, not reliant on what GCSE you did as a young person, and is an indication of a commitment to lifelong learning”

“Useful standard to benchmark employees and applicants by. Shows ability to learn and retain information if little else. Gives basic maths skills required for our roles”

“A qualification that shows levels of numeracy & literacy outside of the rigidity of formal GCSE”

“We believe people with functional skills qualifications have the capacity to run certain tasks in business and must also have some experience to do so”

“The fundamental base of functional skills is useful and suited for the type of work performed”

“They equip employees with practical skills in English, Math, and ICT, enhancing productivity and efficiency. They also help with effective communication and problem-solving skills”

“To be honest, we've seen firsthand the impact that Functional Skills qualifications can have on our team's performance and overall success [...] For us, it's about investing in our people and giving them the tools they need to thrive, and Functional Skills qualifications are a key part of that strategy”

“More relevant to employment than GCSE”

“Shows a basic grasp of what we need. We can build upon that in their future development”

“It provides a baseline level of education to ensure that an employee has reached a standard which can be used to determine suitability for shortlisting for recruitment.”

## Section 3: Perceptions of apprenticeships and apprenticeship end-point assessments

### Key findings

- Overall, 35% of employers reported having a very or quite good understanding of apprenticeships in their sector. This was an increase from 30% in wave 6.
- Among employers who have at least some understanding of apprenticeship EPAs in their sector, 21% reported having a very or quite good understanding, again an increase from 16% in wave 6.
- Understanding of apprenticeship EPAs among the provider group was broadly consistent with wave 6 (29%), with 34% of the provider group reporting having a very or quite good understanding.
- Among learners, 69% reported very or quite good understanding of EPAs, consistent with wave 6 (63%).
- Thirty-six percent of the provider group said that they know the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards, comparable with wave 6. Awareness of the difference was much lower among employers, with only 11% reporting this, a small increase from 8% in wave 6.
- Awareness that EPAs are specific to apprenticeship standards and not part of apprenticeship frameworks was highest among learners (73%). This was followed by providers (51%), a decline from 62% in wave 6. Employers reported much lower understanding (13%), again a decline from 20% in wave 6.
- It was most common for learners to say they decided to take an apprenticeship because they wanted to improve their skills (48%). Following this, 42% said it was because they wanted to find a job or a better job, and the same proportion (42%) said it was because they wanted to progress in their current job.
- Learners were most likely to say that the benefits they expect from taking an apprenticeship would be to have a broader range of skills to apply in the workplace (57%), more confidence in their skills/knowledge (52%) and being able to find a job or a better job (41%).
- Learners (66%) displayed higher levels of agreement that they value EPAs than both providers (50%) and employers (53%), showing an increase from 57% of learner agreement in wave 6. Employer agreement increased in wave 7 from 44% in wave 6, while providers agreement stayed broadly consistent with wave 6 (44%).
- Thirty-four percent of providers agreed that apprenticeship EPAs offer value for money, whilst 12% disagreed, broadly consistent with wave 6.
- Fifty-nine percent of learners agreed that the availability of EPAs is sufficiently flexible, an increase from 46% in wave 6. An increase was also seen among employers, rising from 38% in wave 6 to 45% in wave 7, while agreement was broadly consistent among providers between wave 7 (31%) and wave 6 (33%).
- The proportion of learners agreeing that EPAs test the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers increased from 63% in wave 6 to 71% in wave 7. An increase was also seen among employers, from 43% in wave 6 to 58% in wave 7. Among providers, 52% agreed in wave 7, broadly consistent agreement seen in with wave 6 (55%).

- Sixty-five percent of learners said that they understand the purpose of EPAs, an increase from 59% in wave 6. This was higher than the 48% of providers agreeing in wave 7, broadly consistent with provider agreement wave 6 (52%).

## Understanding of apprenticeships and apprenticeship end-point assessments

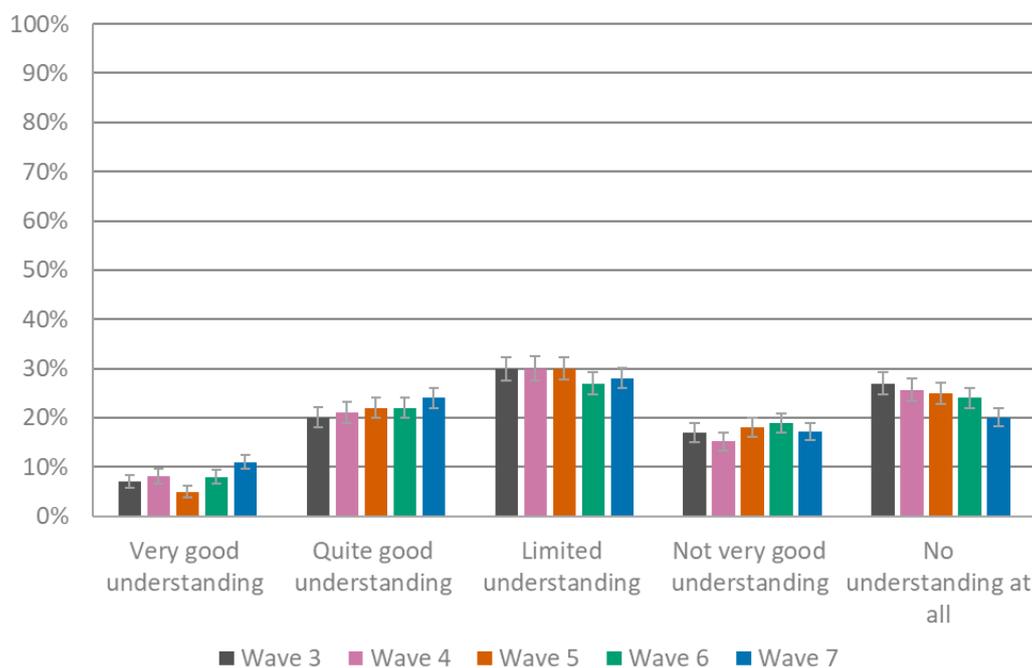
For Figure 24, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers, n=2,026.

As shown in Figure 24, 80% of employers reported that they have some level of understanding of apprenticeships in their sector, an increase from 76% in wave 6. Thirty-five percent reported very or quite good understanding compared to 30% in wave 6, and 45% reported limited or not very good understanding compared to 46% in wave 6.

The remainder, 20%, said they have no understanding at all of apprenticeships in their sector, lower than the 24% reporting no understanding in wave 6.

The proportion of those reporting a very good understanding of apprenticeships in their sector remains much higher among those in larger organisations. Thirty-three percent of large employers reported a very good understanding, compared with 9% of micro, 16% of small, and 14% of medium employers.

**Figure 24. Results for ‘Please indicate your level of understanding about apprenticeships in my sector or organisation (Employers)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	7%	8%	5%	8%	11%
Quite good understanding	20%	21%	22%	22%	24%
Limited understanding	30%	30%	30%	27%	28%
Not very good understanding	17%	15%	18%	19%	17%
No understanding at all	27%	26%	25%	24%	20%

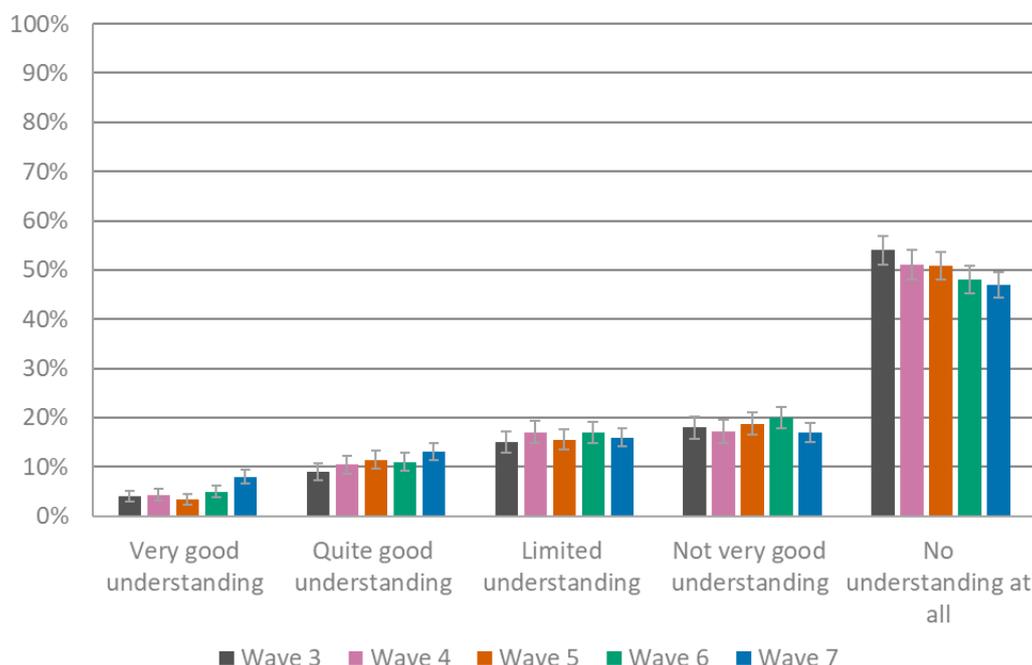
For Figure 25, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of apprenticeship end-point assessments in their sector, n=1,644.

As shown in Figure 25, among employers who have at least some understanding of apprenticeship EPAs in their sector, levels of understanding of EPAs have increased since the previous wave. Overall, 8% reported having a very good understanding and 13% reported having quite a good understanding of EPAs, meaning that the proportion with very or quite good understanding of EPAs is 21%, compared to 16% in wave 6.

Levels of reported understanding of EPAs increased with organisation size. Twenty-seven percent of large employers reported very good understanding, compared with 6% of micro employers, 14% of small employers, and 10% of medium employers. A further 40% of large employers reported having quite a good understanding of EPAs, compared with 11% of micro and 16% of small employers.

Public sector employers demonstrated higher levels of very good understanding of EPAs than both private sector and voluntary sector ones. Seventeen percent of public sector employers reported very good understanding, compared with 8% of private sector and 7% of voluntary sector employers.

**Figure 25. Results for ‘Please indicate which of the following statements best describes your understanding of end-point assessment of apprenticeships.’ (Employers)**



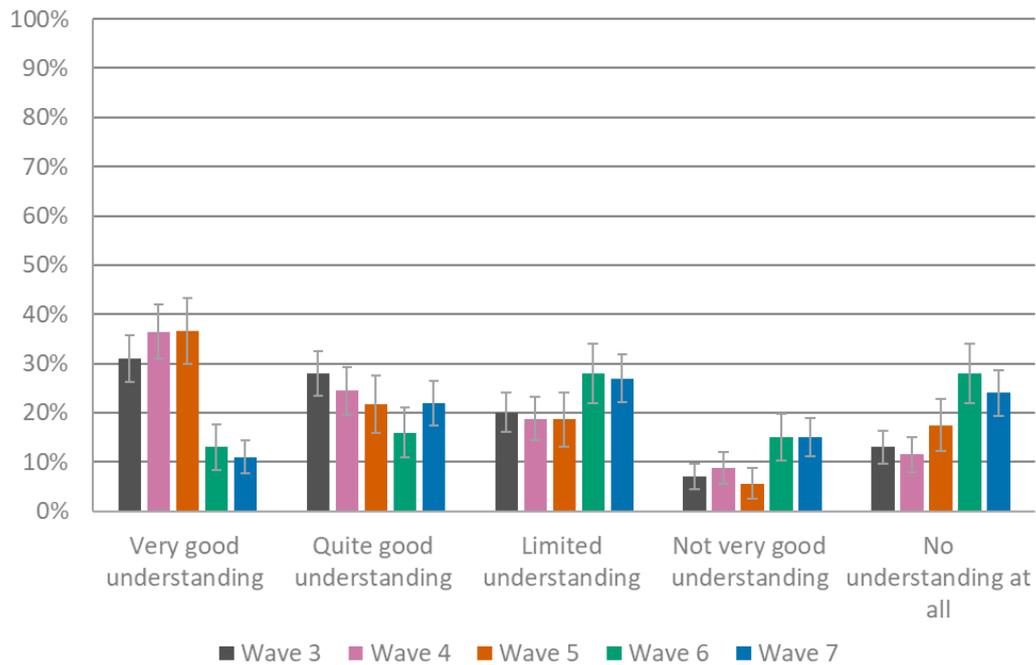
Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	4%	4%	3%	5%	8%
Quite good understanding	9%	10%	11%	11%	13%
Limited understanding	15%	17%	16%	17%	16%
Not very good understanding	18%	17%	19%	20%	17%
No understanding at all	54%	51%	51%	48%	47%

For Figure 26, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605.

As shown in Figure 26, 76% of providers reported having some level of understanding of EPAs. Correspondingly, 24% reported having no understanding at all of EPAs. Both of these figures are broadly comparable with wave 6.

Looking at provider type, there were higher levels of understanding of apprenticeship EPAs among those from further education (FE), adult and community learning (ACL) or local authority (LA) establishments than those from sixth-forms. Thirty-one percent of providers from FE, ACL or LA establishments reported good levels of understanding, compared with 20% among sixth forms.

**Figure 26. Results for ‘Which of the following describes your understanding of the end-point assessment of apprenticeship standards?’ (All types of providers)**



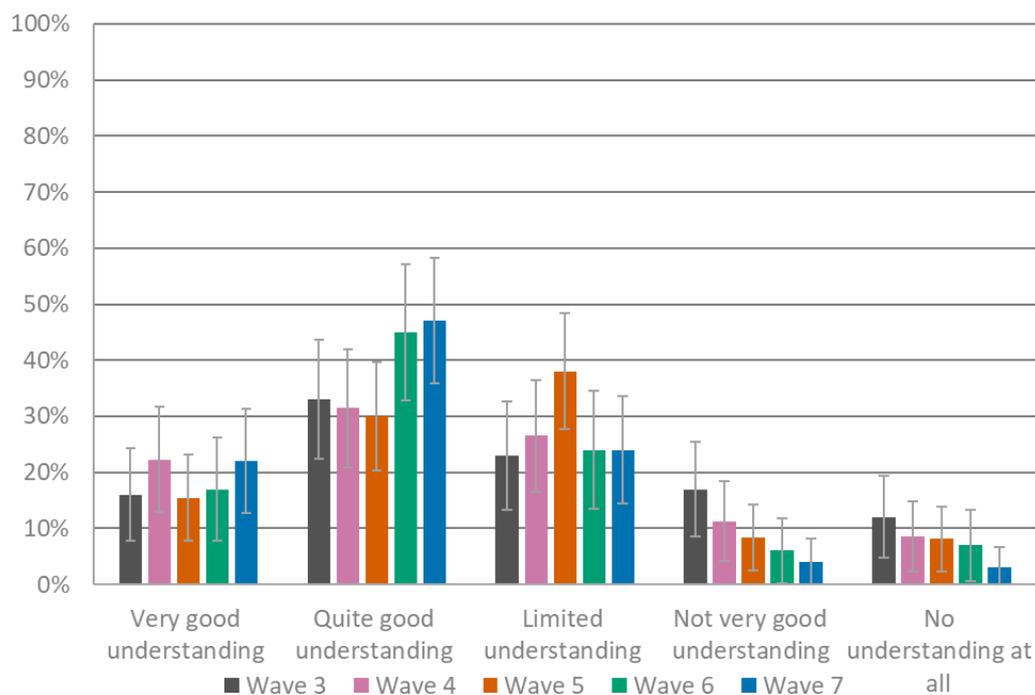
Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	31%	36%	37%	13%	11%
Quite good understanding	28%	24%	22%	16%	22%
Limited understanding	20%	19%	19%	28%	27%
Not very good understanding	7%	9%	6%	15%	15%
No understanding at all	13%	12%	17%	28%	24%

For Figure 27, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All learners who are taking an apprenticeship, n=91.

As shown in Figure 27, 69% of learners who are taking an apprenticeship reported having a very or quite good understanding of EPAs, broadly consistent with wave 6 (63%).

Twenty-eight percent of learners who are taking an apprenticeship reported having a limited or not very good understanding of EPAs, while 3% reported having no understanding at all.

**Figure 27. Results for ‘Please tell us which of the following statements best describes your understanding of end-point assessment of apprenticeship standards’ (Learners)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	16%	22%	15%	17%	22%
Quite good understanding	33%	31%	30%	45%	47%
Limited understanding	23%	27%	38%	24%	24%
Not very good understanding	17%	11%	8%	6%	4%
No understanding at all	12%	9%	8%	7%	3%

For Figure 28, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of EPAs, n=1,644; All types of providers, n=605.

As shown in Figure 28, 89% of employers reported not knowing the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards, a small decline from 92% in wave 6.

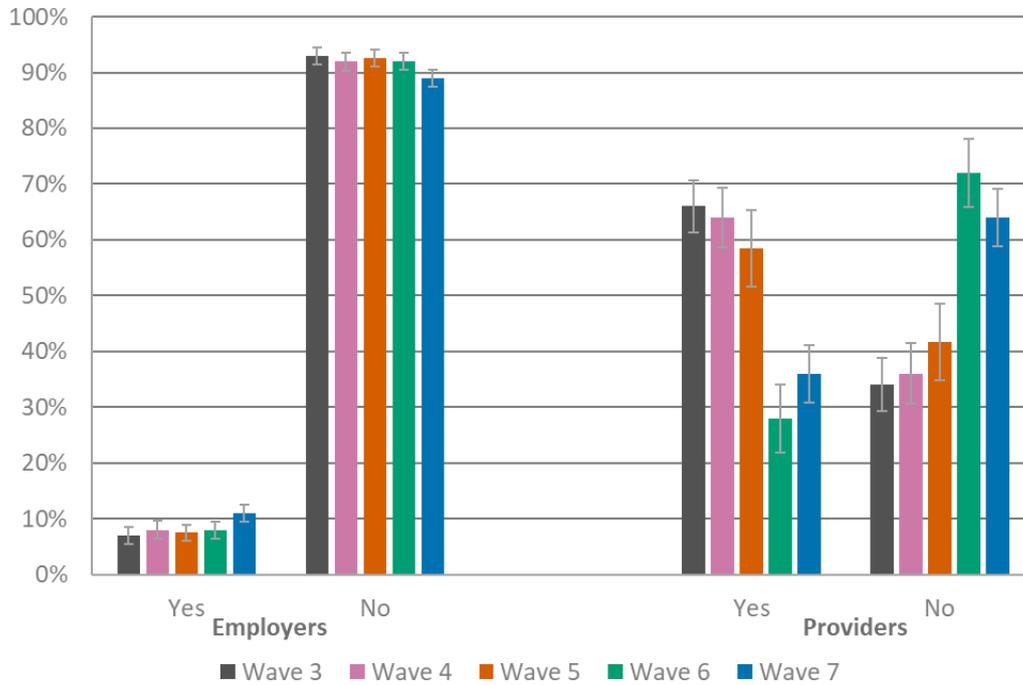
The level of understanding of the difference increased with organisation size. Forty percent of large employers stated that they know the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards, compared with 9% of employers from micro-organisations, and 15% from small organisations.

Employers from public sector organisations also had higher levels of understanding than private sector or voluntary sector employers. Thirty-four percent of public sector employers reported that they do understand the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards compared with 10% of private sector employers and 12% of voluntary sector employers.

Sixty-four percent of providers reported not knowing the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards, broadly consistent with the previous wave.

Seventy-seven percent of providers from sixth forms said they did not understand the difference, compared with 65% of providers from FE, ACL or LA establishments. However, it is worth noting that sixth-forms do not usually offer apprenticeships.

**Figure 28. Results for ‘Do you know the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards?’ (Employers) - ‘Do you understand the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards?’ (All types of providers)**



<b>Respondent Type – Yes/No</b>	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers - Yes	7%	8%	7%	8%	11%
Employers - No	93%	92%	93%	92%	89%
Providers - Yes	66%	64%	58%	28%	36%
Providers - No	34%	36%	42%	72%	64%

For Figure 29, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of EPAs, n=1,644; All types of providers, n=605; All learners who are undertaking an apprenticeship, n=91.

As shown in Figure 29, 87% of employers reported not being aware that EPAs are specific to apprenticeship standards, and not part of apprenticeship frameworks, an increase from 80% in wave 6.

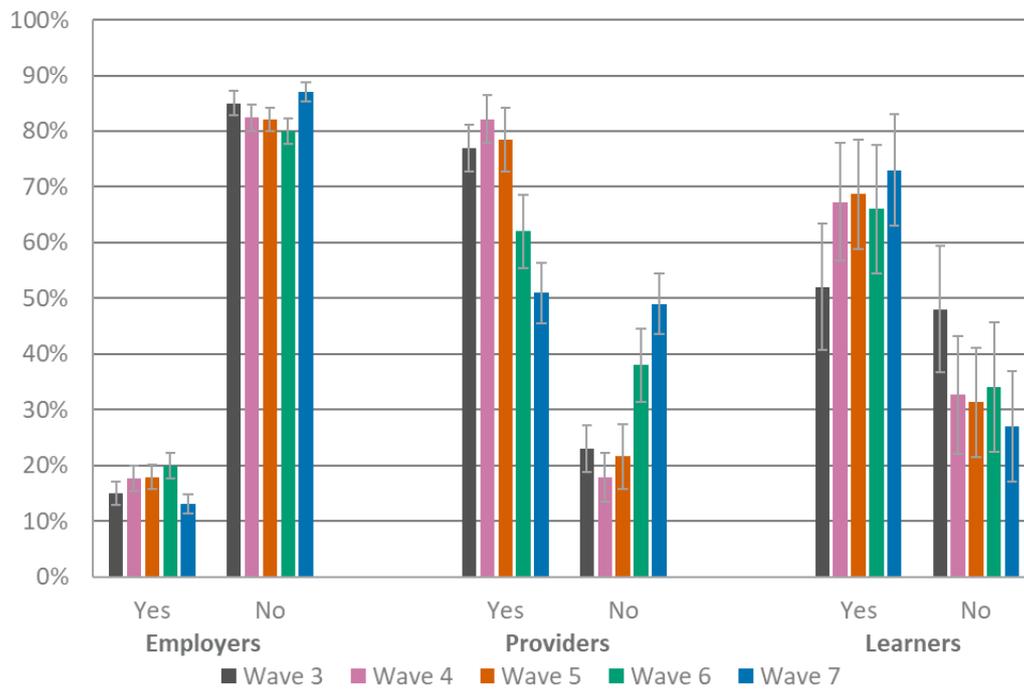
Awareness increased with organisation size, with 35% of medium employers and 43% of large employers having said they were aware, compared with 10% of micro employers and 19% of small employers.

Awareness was higher among providers than employers but fell from 62% in wave 6 to 51% in wave 7.

Among providers, awareness was higher among those from FE, ACL or LA establishments than those from sixth forms. Fifty-six percent of providers from FE, ACL or LA establishments said they were aware, compared with 31% from sixth forms.

Seventy-three percent of learners reported being aware that EPAs are specific to apprenticeship standards, broadly consistent with levels of awareness in wave 6 (66%).

**Figure 29. Results for ‘Are you aware that end-point assessments (EPAs) are specific to apprenticeship standards, and not part of apprenticeship frameworks?’ (Employers, All types of providers, Learners)**



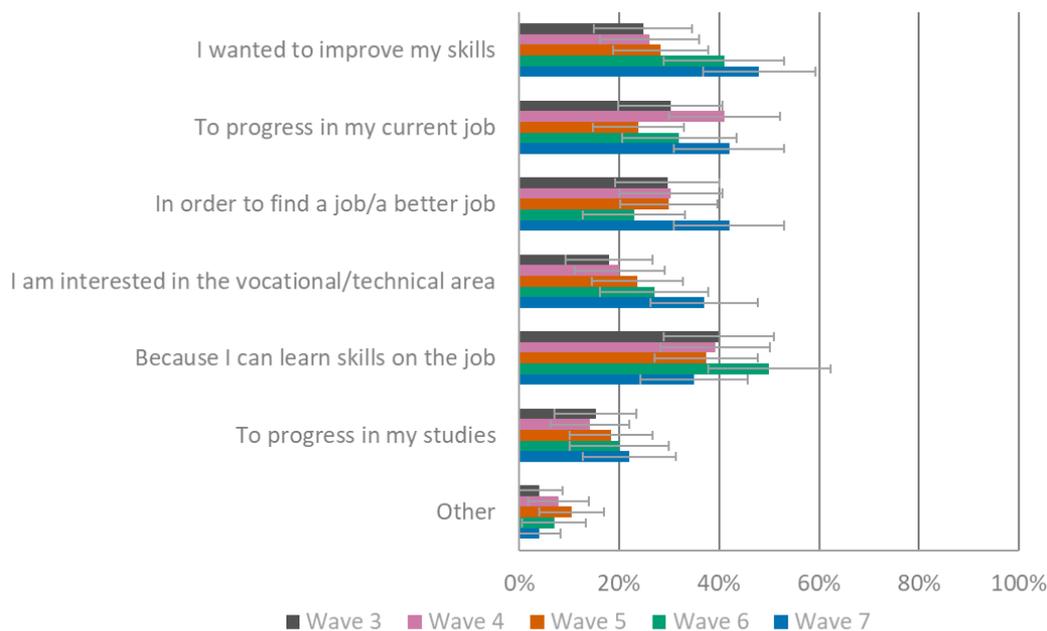
Respondent type – Yes/No	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers - Yes	15%	18%	18%	20%	13%
Employers - No	85%	82%	82%	80%	87%
Providers - Yes	77%	82%	78%	62%	51%
Providers - No	23%	18%	22%	38%	49%
Learners - Yes	52%	67%	69%	66%	73%
Learners - No	48%	33%	31%	34%	27%

## Why learners chose an apprenticeship

For Figures 30 and 31, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All learners who are taking an apprenticeship, n=91.

As shown in Figure 30, it was most common for learners to say they decided to take an apprenticeship because they wanted to improve their skills (48%). Following this, 42% said it was because they wanted to find a job or a better job, and the same proportion said it was because they wanted to progress in their current job. Despite there being apparent differences between wave 6 and 7, the only statistically significant increase was for the reason of finding a job or a better job, up from 23% in wave 6.

**Figure 30. Results for ‘Why did you decide to take an apprenticeship?’ (Learners)**

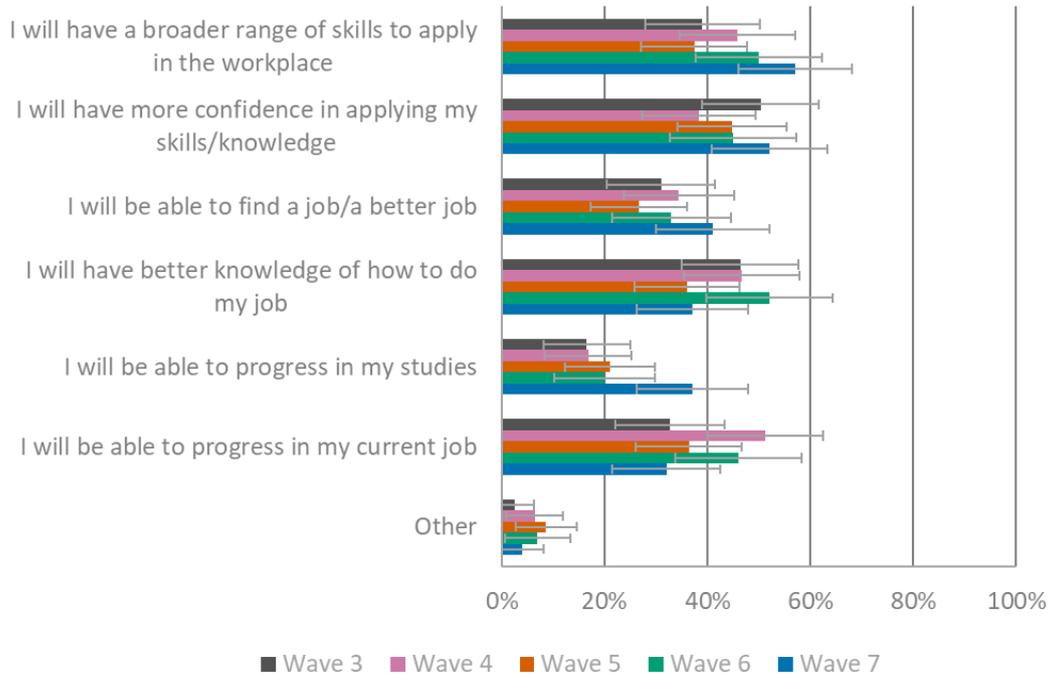


Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
I wanted to improve my skills	25%	26%	28%	41%	48%
To progress in my current job	30%	41%	24%	32%	42%
In order to find a job/a better job	30%	30%	30%	23%	42%
I am interested in the vocational/technical area	18%	20%	24%	27%	37%
Because I can learn skills on the job	40%	39%	37%	50%	35%
To progress in my studies	15%	14%	18%	20%	22%
Other	4%	8%	10%	7%	4%

## Benefits associated with apprenticeships by learners

As shown in Figure 31, 57% of learners said they expect to have a broader range of skills to apply in the workplace from taking an apprenticeship. Fifty-two percent say they will have more confidence in their skills/knowledge, while 41% say they will be able to find a job or a better job.

**Figure 31. Results for ‘Now that you have started learning/have completed learning, what benefits do you expect to get from taking an apprenticeship?’ (Learners)**



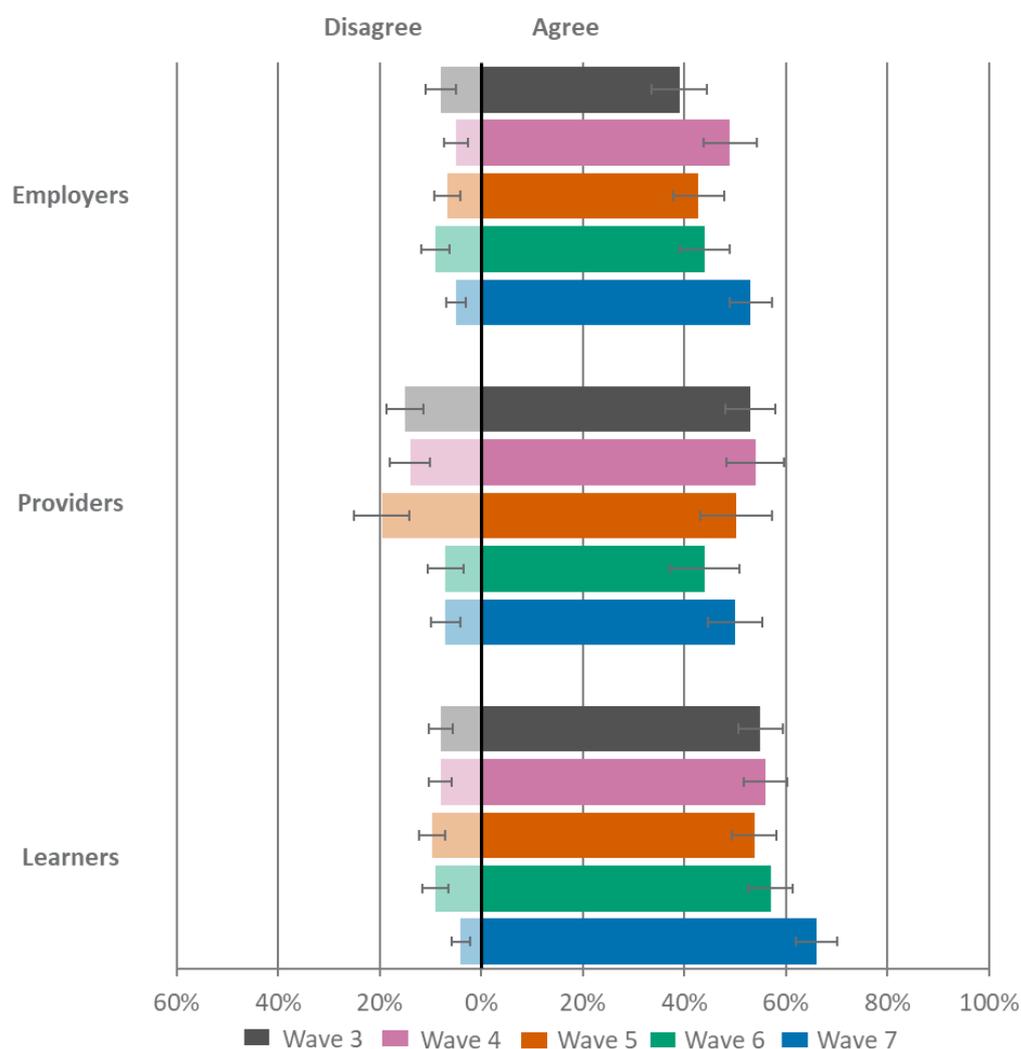
Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
I will have a broader range of skills to apply in the workplace	39%	46%	37%	50%	57%
I will have more confidence in applying my skills/knowledge	50%	38%	45%	45%	52%
I will be able to find a job/a better job	31%	34%	27%	33%	41%
I will have better knowledge of how to do my job	46%	47%	36%	52%	37%
I will be able to progress in my studies	17%	17%	21%	20%	37%
I will be able to progress in my current job	33%	51%	36%	46%	32%
Other	3%	6%	9%	7%	4%

## Perceptions of end-point assessments: value and flexibility

For Figure 32, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of apprenticeship EPAs in their organisation, n=643; All types of providers n=605; Learners, n=552.

Learners displayed higher levels of agreement that they value EPAs than both providers and employers (see Figure 32). Sixty-six percent of learners said that they value EPAs, an increase from 57% in wave 6. Fifty-three percent of employers said this, again up from 44% in wave 6, whilst 50% of providers agreed, broadly consistent with wave 6 (44%).

**Figure 32. Results for ‘We value end-point assessments of apprenticeships’ (Employers) - ‘I value end-point assessments of apprenticeships’ (All types of providers, Learners)**



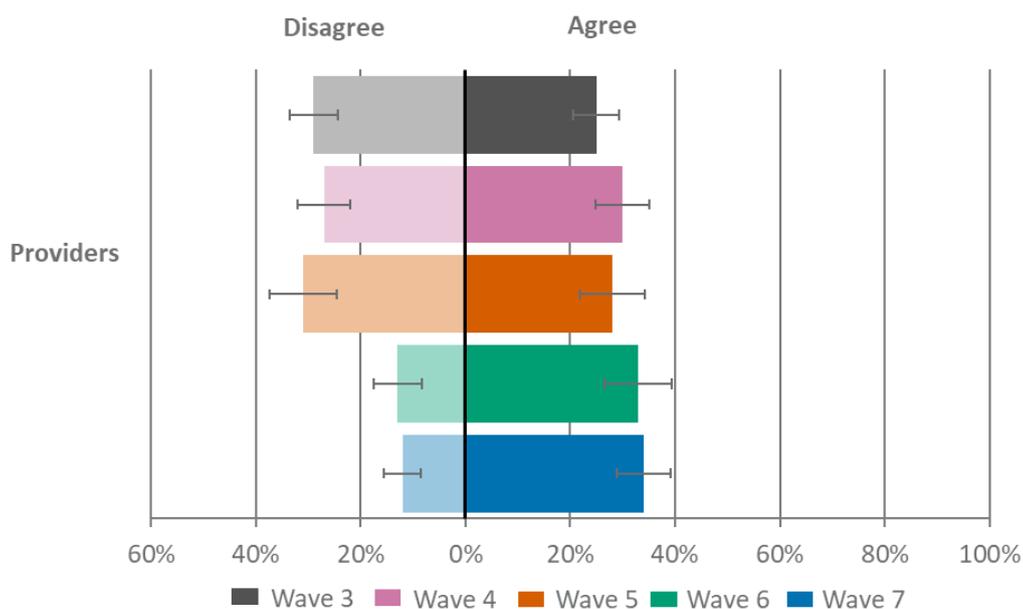
Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	39%	49%	43%	44%	53%
Employers – disagree	8%	5%	7%	9%	5%
Providers – agree	53%	54%	50%	44%	50%
Providers – disagree	15%	14%	20%	7%	7%
Learners – agree	55%	56%	54%	57%	66%
Learners – disagree	8%	8%	10%	9%	4%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 33, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers n=605.

Thirty-four percent of providers agreed that EPAs offer value for money, comparable with wave 6 (33%). Although levels of disagreement were higher among further education (FE), adult and community learning (ACL) or local authority (LA) establishments (16%) than sixth-forms (7%), levels of agreement between establishment types were broadly consistent with each other (29% and 32% respectively).

**Figure 33. Results for ‘end-point assessments offer value for money’ (All types of providers)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	25%	30%	28%	33%	34%
Providers – disagree	29%	27%	31%	13%	12%

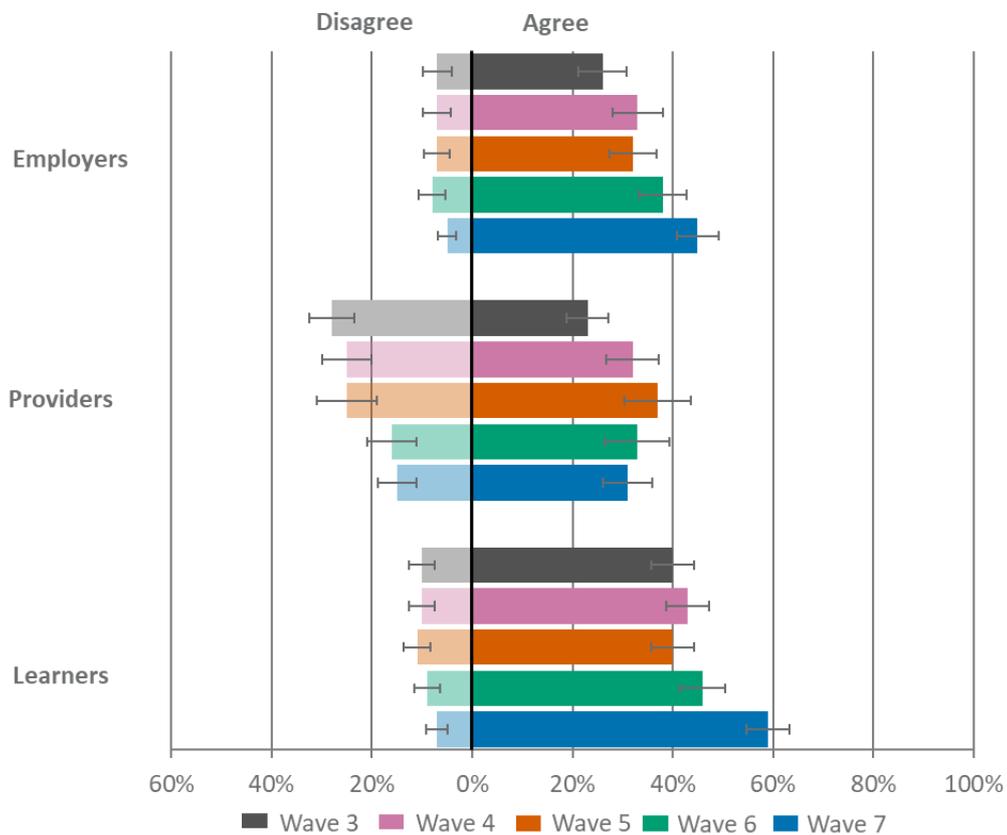
*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

For Figure 34, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of apprenticeship EPAs in their organisation, n=643; All types of providers n=605; All learners, n=552.

As shown in Figure 34, 59% of learners agreed that the availability of EPAs is sufficiently flexible, an increase from 46% in wave 6. An increase was also seen among employers, rising from 38% in wave 6 to 45% in wave 7. For providers, levels of agreement were broadly consistent between wave 7 (31%) and wave 6 (33%).

For learners, those aged 19 to 24 reported higher levels of agreement (75%) compared with those aged under 19 (46%) and 25 or over (58%).

**Figure 34. Results for ‘The availability of end-point assessments is sufficiently flexible’ (Employers) – ‘The availability of end-point assessments of apprenticeship standards is sufficiently flexible’ (All types of providers and Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	26%	33%	32%	38%	45%
Employers – disagree	7%	7%	7%	8%	5%
Providers – agree	23%	32%	37%	33%	31%
Providers – disagree	28%	25%	25%	16%	15%
Learners – agree	40%	43%	40%	46%	59%
Learners – disagree	10%	10%	11%	9%	7%

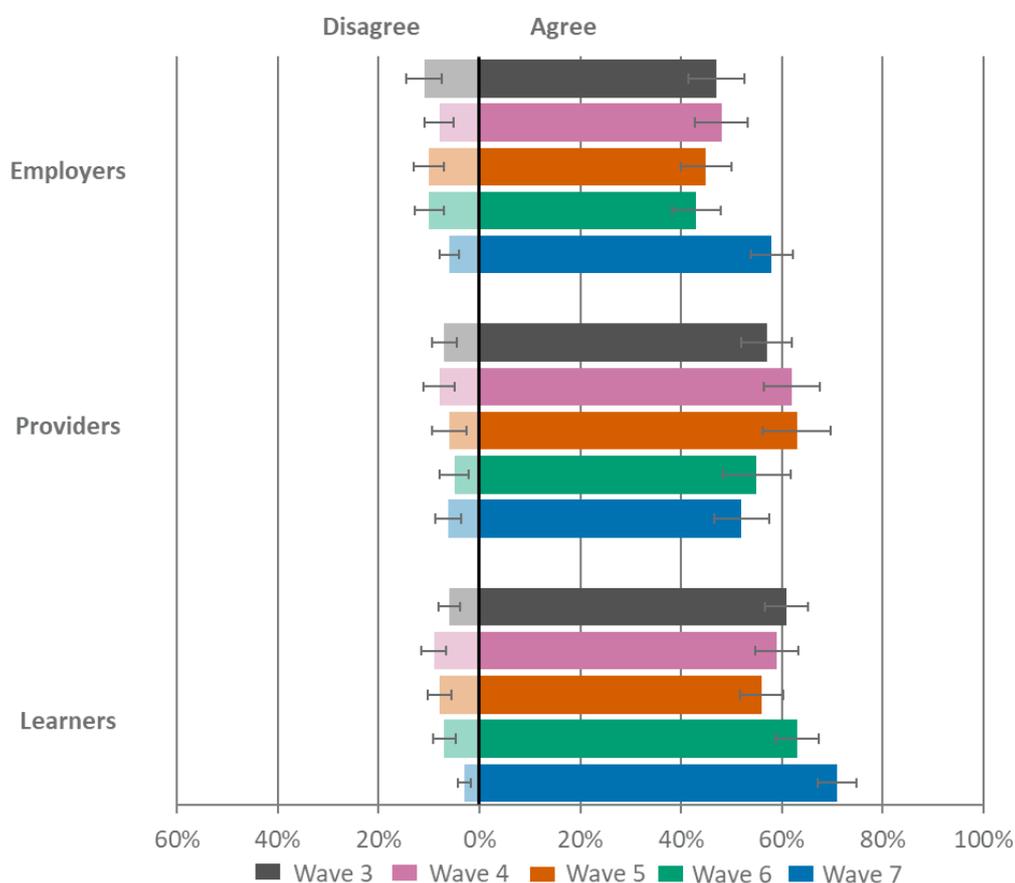
*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

## Perceptions of end-point assessments: purpose and future opportunity

For Figure 35, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers who indicated that they have at least a limited understanding of apprenticeship EPAs in their organisation, n=643; All types of providers, n=605; all learners n=552.

As shown in Figure 35, the proportion of learners agreeing that EPAs test the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers increased from 63% in wave 6 to 71% in wave 7. An increase was also seen among employers in the proportion agreeing that people passing EPAs have the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers, from 43% in wave 6 to 58% in wave 7. Among providers, 52% agreed with this statement in wave 7, broadly comparable with the 55% who agreed in wave 6.

**Figure 35. Results for ‘People completing end-point assessments have the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by my organisation’ (Employers) ‘People passing end-point assessments have the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers’ (All types of providers) ‘End-point assessments test the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers’ (Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Employers – agree	47%	48%	45%	43%	58%
Employers – disagree	11%	8%	10%	10%	6%
Providers – agree	57%	62%	63%	55%	52%
Providers – disagree	7%	8%	6%	5%	6%
Learners – agree	61%	59%	56%	63%	71%
Learners – disagree	6%	9%	8%	7%	3%

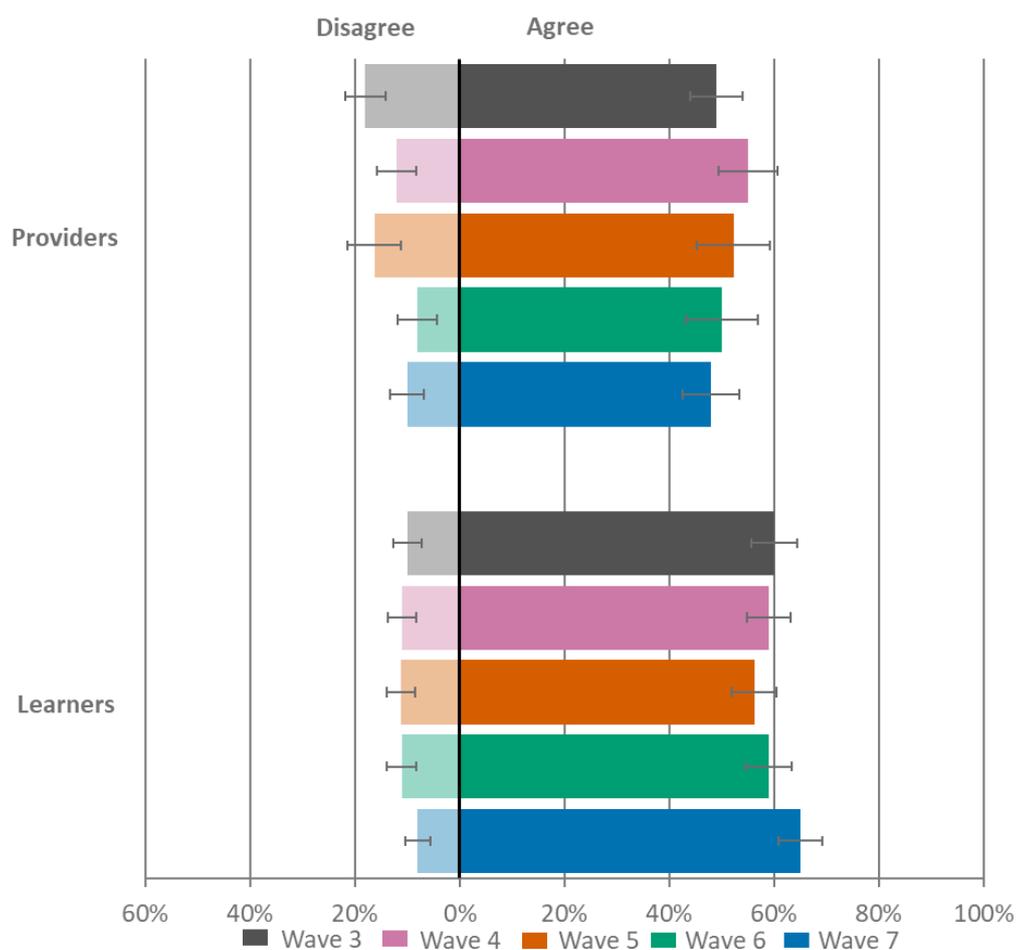
*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”.*

For Figure 36, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All types of providers, n=605; all learners n=552.

As shown in Figure 36, 65% of learners said that they understand the purpose of EPAs, an increase from 59% in wave 6. This was higher than the 48% of providers agreeing with this statement, which was broadly consistent the level of agreement reported by providers in wave 6 (52%).

Learners younger than 19 report lower levels of agreement with this statement (57%) than those aged 19 to 24 (71%) or 25 or older (67%).

**Figure 36. Results for ‘Learners understand the purpose of end-point assessment of apprenticeship standards’ (All types of providers) - ‘I understand the purpose of end-point assessments of apprenticeship standards’ (Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Providers – agree	49%	49%	55%	52%	48%
Providers – disagree	18%	18%	12%	16%	10%
Learners – agree	60%	60%	59%	56%	65%
Learners – disagree	10%	10%	11%	11%	8%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

## Employers' reasons for perceptions of end-point assessments

Employers who said that they value EPAs (46%) were asked to explain why they think this. Responses suggested that perceptions of the value of EPAs among this group comes from the view that EPAs are a good way of measuring or showing that the learner has reached the required standard. Additionally, responses indicated that it gives employers confidence that the learner has had appropriate training and could dedicate themselves to learning. Typical responses included:

*"Because it allows to assess the skills and competence of employees."*

*"Because that's the only way to know if an apprentice has really learnt the work."*

*"They demonstrate a commitment and ability to complete the task."*

*"It is not just an academic test but a chance to see people in a working situation."*

However, 7% of employers said that they do not value EPAs. This group were asked to expand on their reasons. For some, this was because they do not hire people with apprenticeships or that they are not relevant for the role or industry. Typical responses included:

*"We mainly look for university graduates so does not apply to us."*

*"Our organisation has no apprenticeship requirements."*

## Section 4: Perceptions of T Levels

All learners were shown a set of questions about T Levels, regardless of whether they studied them or not.

### Key findings

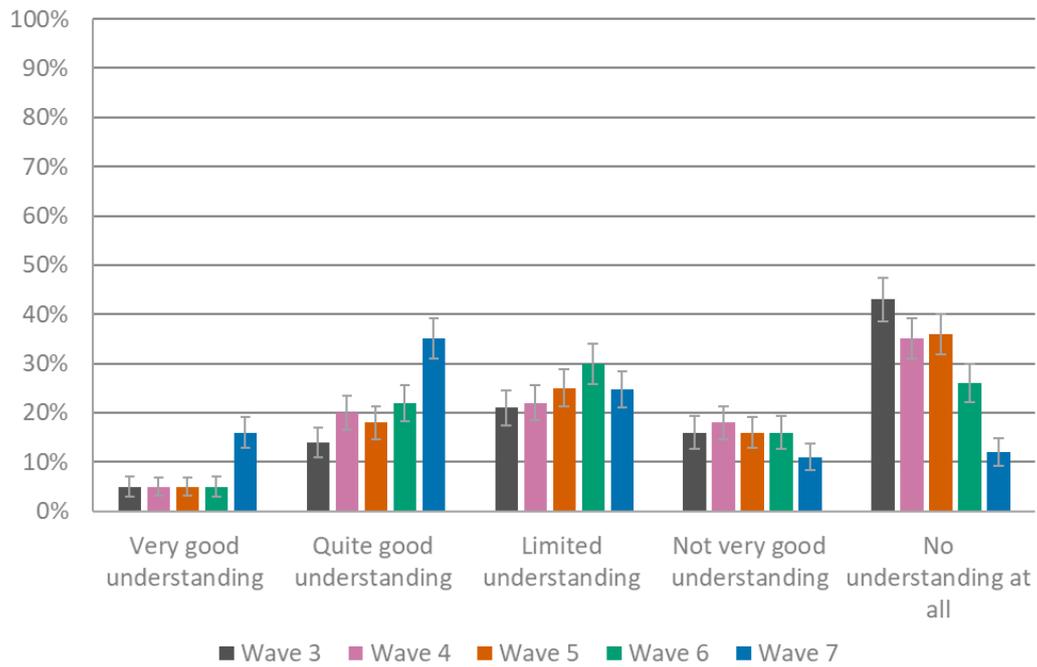
- Fifty-one percent of learners reported having very or quite good understanding of T Levels, a large increase since wave 6 (27%). Among learners, the proportion who stated that they had no understanding fell from 26% to 12%.
- In comparison, 19% of employers reported having very or quite good understanding, an increase from 14% in wave 6. The proportion who reported no understanding at all was broadly unchanged from wave 6 (37%) at 36%.
- Fifty-eight percent of learners agreed that T levels are good preparation for work, and similar proportions agreed that they value T Levels (54%) and understand the purpose of them (54%). All of these have increased substantially compared to wave 6.

### Understanding of T Levels

For Figure 37, the wave 7 unweighted base is all learners, n=552.

In wave 7, 51% of learners reported having very or quite good understanding of T Levels, much higher than the 27% who reported this in wave 6 (see Figure 37). Thirty-seven percent stated that they have limited or not very good understanding of T Levels, while 12% reported having no understanding at all. The increase in the proportion having good or very good understanding is driven by 19 to 24 year olds (from 29% in wave 6 to 67% in wave 7) and those aged 25+ (from 24% to 51%), with no statistically significant change for under 19s.

**Figure 37. Results for ‘Which of the following statements describes your understanding of T Levels?’ (Learners)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	5%	5%	5%	5%	16%
Quite good understanding	14%	20%	18%	22%	35%
Limited understanding	21%	22%	25%	30%	25%
Not very good understanding	16%	18%	16%	16%	11%
No understanding at all	43%	35%	36%	26%	12%

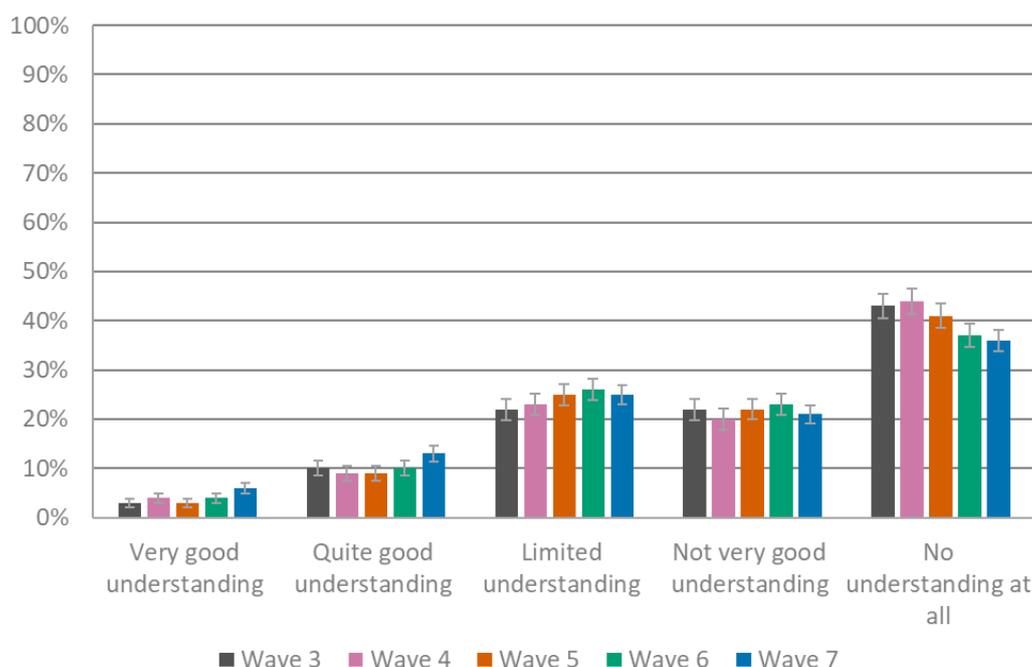
For Figure 38, the wave 7 unweighted base is all employers, n=2,026.

As indicated in Figure 38, the proportion of employers who stated that they have a very or quite good understanding of T Levels has risen from 14% in wave 6 to 19% in wave 7. Forty-six percent reported limited or not very good understanding, comparable with wave 6 (49%). The proportion who reported no understanding at all was also unchanged (wave 6 at 37% understanding and wave 7 at 36% understanding).

Private and voluntary sector employers reported lower levels of T Level understanding; 36% and 32% respectively reported no understanding at all, compared to 19% of public sector employers.

Large employers had the highest reported levels of T Levels understanding, with 57% saying that their understanding was quite or very good. Meanwhile, micro employers had the lowest rates of understanding of any group – with 39% reporting no understanding at all compared with only 10% of large employers. However, employers of all sizes have seen an increase in understanding since wave 6.

**Figure 38. Results for ‘Please indicate your level of understanding about T Levels or the technical qualifications within T Levels (Employers)’**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Very good understanding	3%	4%	3%	4%	6%
Quite good understanding	10%	9%	9%	10%	13%
Limited understanding	22%	23%	25%	26%	25%
Not very good understanding	22%	20%	22%	23%	21%
No understanding at all	43%	44%	41%	37%	36%

## Perceptions of T Levels

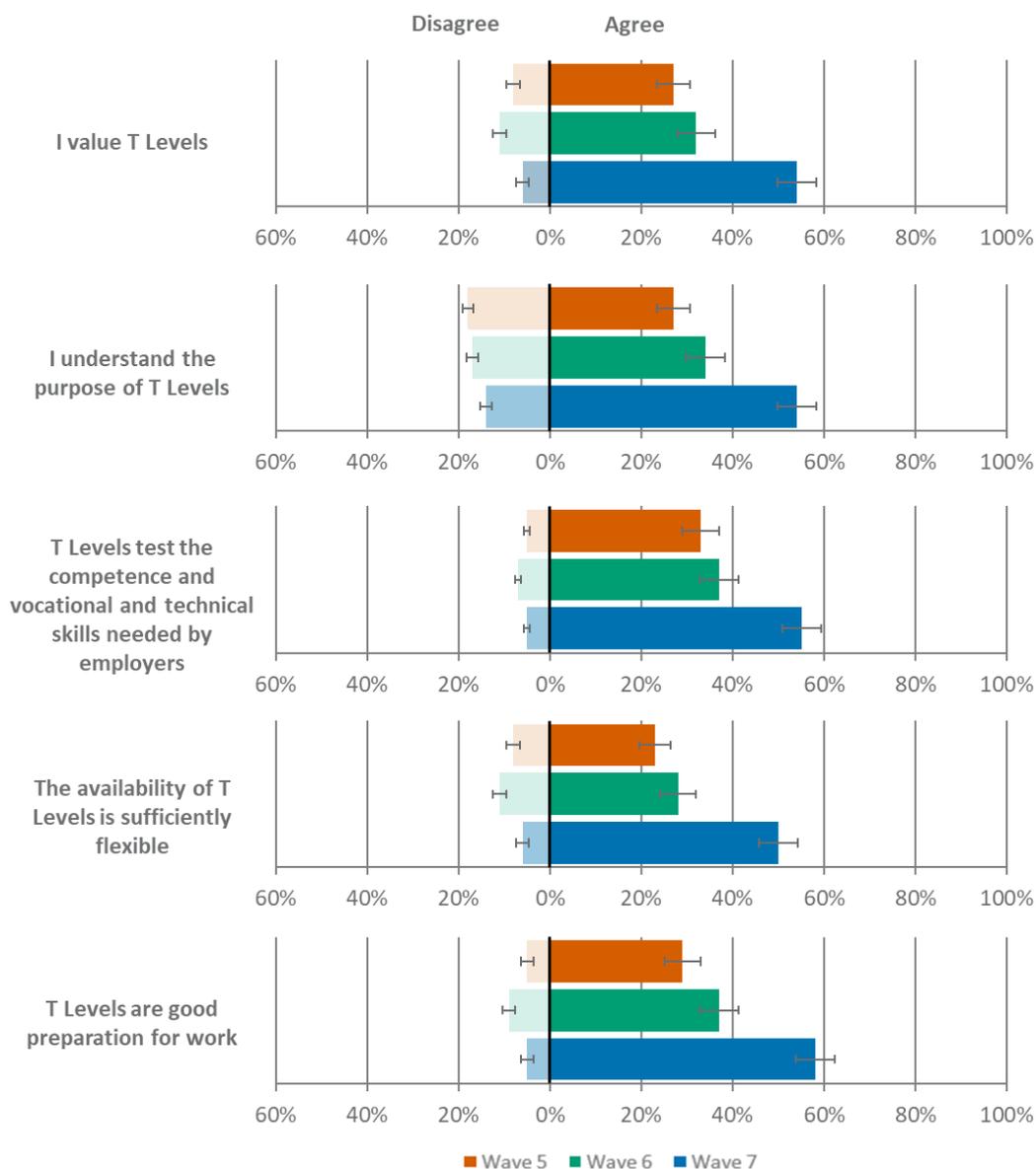
For Figure 39, the wave 7 unweighted base is all learners, n=552.

Learners were presented with 5 statements about T Levels. For each statement, there were large increases in agreement compared to wave 6.

The highest proportion of agreement was associated with the statement 'T levels are good preparation for work' (58%), an increase from 37% in wave 6. The proportion who agreed with the statement 'I value T levels' increased from 32% to 54%, 'I understand the purpose of T levels' from 34% to 54%, 'T Levels test the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers' from 37% to 55% and 'the availability of T Levels is sufficiently flexible' from 28% to 50%.

Across all 5 statements, agreement was higher among those aged 19 to 24 than those aged under 19 or 25 and over. Increases in agreement across all five statements were driven by the 19 to 24 and 25 and over age groups, with no change seen for those aged under 19. For example, the proportion of 19 to 24 year olds who said they value T levels increased from 32% in wave 6 to 71% in wave 7, and from 29% to 53% among those aged 25 and over. There was no statistically significant change among under 19s, in wave 7 40% of learners reported to value T levels consistent with wave 6 (39%).

**Figure 39. Results for ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about T Levels?’ (Learners)**



<b>I value T Levels</b>	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Agree	27%	32%	54%
Disagree	8%	11%	6%

<b>I understand the purpose of T Levels</b>	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Agree	27%	34%	54%
Disagree	18%	17%	14%

<b>T Levels test the competence and vocational and technical skills needed by employers</b>	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Agree	33%	37%	55%
Disagree	5%	7%	5%

<b>The availability of T Levels is sufficiently flexible</b>	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Agree	23%	28%	50%
Disagree	8%	11%	6%
<b>T Levels are good preparation for work</b>	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Agree	29%	37%	58%
Disagree	5%	9%	5%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer "Neither agree nor disagree" or "Don't know", which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know".*

## Section 5: Clarity regarding industry relevant qualifications

### Key findings

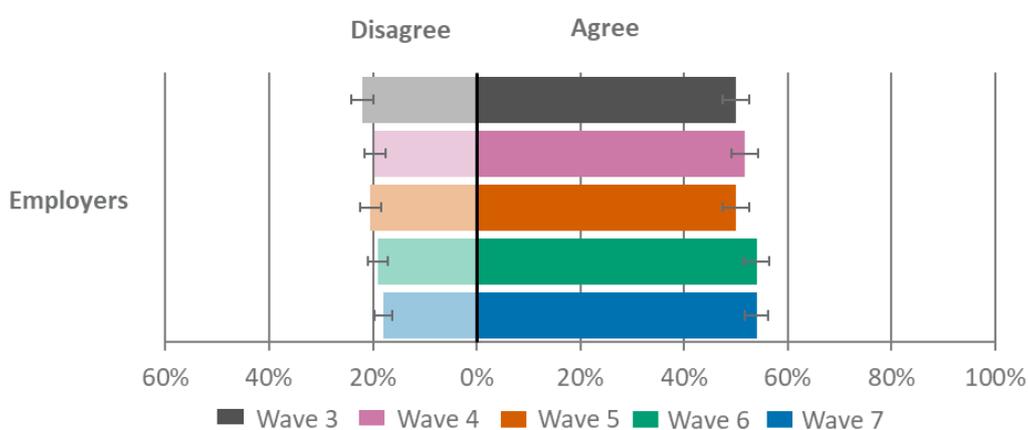
- Fifty-four per cent of employers said it is clear which qualifications are relevant to their organisation, unchanged from wave 6 (54%).
- Seventy-seven per cent of learners reported that it is clear to them which qualifications are relevant to their needs, an increase from 66% in wave 6.

For Figure 40, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All employers, n=2,026.

As shown in Figure 40, the proportion of employers who stated it is clear which qualifications are relevant to their organisation was unchanged, with 54% agreeing in both wave 6 and wave 7. The proportion who disagreed was also not statistically significantly changed compared with wave 6 (18% and 19% respectively).

Public sector employers (76%) were more likely to agree than private (54%) or voluntary sector (49%) employers. Large employers (82%) were also significantly more likely to agree, compared to 51% of micro employers.

**Figure 40. Results for ‘It is clear which qualifications are relevant to my organisation’ (Employers)**



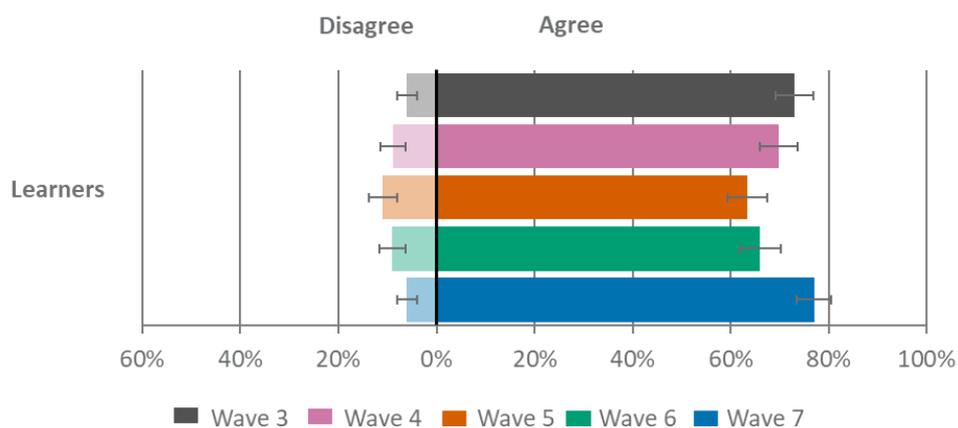
Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 6
Employers – agree	50%	52%	50%	54%	54%
Employers – disagree	22%	20%	20%	19%	18%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”*

For Figure 41, the wave 7 unweighted base is: All learners, 552.

In wave 7 77% of learners agreed that it is clear which qualifications are relevant to their needs, with 6% who disagreed (see Figure 41). The percentage of learners agreeing to this statement has increased in wave 7 from 66% in wave 6. Those learners that disagreed with this statement in wave 7 have decreased from 9% in wave 6. Those aged 19 to 24 (85%) were more likely to agree than those aged under 19 (75%) or 25 and over (76%).

**Figure 41. Results for ‘It is clear which qualifications are relevant to my needs’ (Learners)**



Respondent Type – Agree/Disagree	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Learners – agree	73%	70%	63%	66%	77%
Learners – disagree	6%	9%	11%	9%	6%

*Note: Respondents were also allowed to answer “Neither agree nor disagree” or “Don’t know”, which are not reported here. For this reason, the sum of the proportion who agreed and disagreed do not add up to 100%. Please note that in some cases, large proportions of respondents reported “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Don’t know”.*

## Section 6: Use of qualifications for recruitment and training

### Key findings

- Relevant work experience was seen as essential to 31% of employers when recruiting to skilled and supervisory roles and professional and managerial roles, broadly consistent with wave 6.
- For employers recruiting for professional and managerial roles, relevant work experience was considered equally as essential as having a degree or equivalent level 6 qualification (31%). Employers selected a degree or equivalent qualification as essential in higher proportions for professional/managerial roles than for skilled/supervisory roles (16%) and entry level/admin roles (8%). These trends were also broadly consistent with wave 6.
- Thirty-two percent of employers reported that all or most training at their organisation typically results in a qualification for people in entry level/admin roles. This was slightly lower than for skilled/supervisory roles (36%) and professional/managerial roles (37%). A greater proportion of employers said that all or most training typically results in a qualification for wave 7 compared with wave 6.
- Forty per cent of employers stated that training at their organisation had led to a vocational or technical qualification, broadly consistent with wave 6.
- When deciding which qualification to offer, relevance to their organisation (60%) remained the most important factor reported by employers. Thirty-six percent also mentioned the qualification being recognised or valued in their sector as a factor to consider, broadly consistent with wave 6.
- The reasons employers most commonly gave for not having arranged or funded training that led to a vocational qualification, apprenticeship or technical qualification were that they do not have any apprentices in their organisation (36%) and that there was no need for them (32%). This was broadly consistent with wave 6.

### Qualifications deemed essential at different occupational levels

For Figure 42, the unweighted base for wave 7 is: All employers, n=2,026.

As shown in Figure 42, relevant work experience was seen as essential to 31% of employers when recruiting to both skilled and supervisory roles and professional and managerial roles.

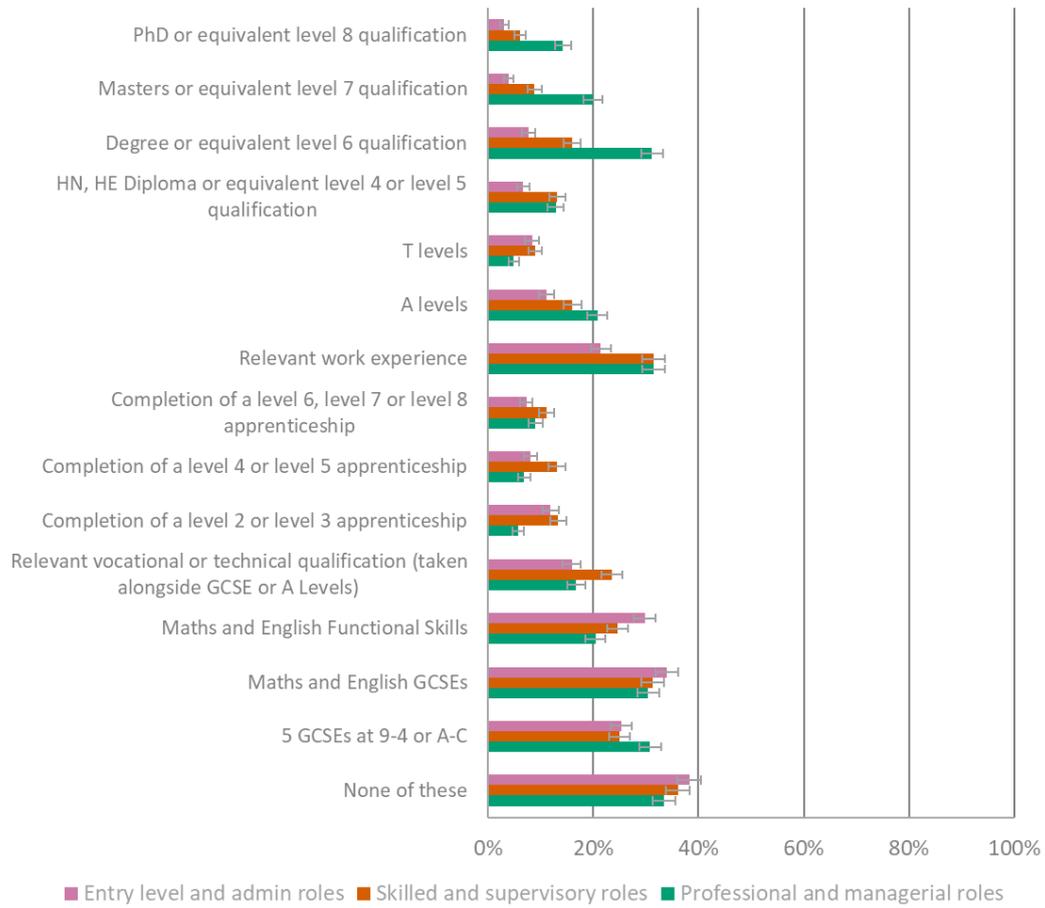
For employers recruiting for professional and managerial roles, relevant work experience was considered the most essential along with having a degree or equivalent level 6 qualification (31%) and having 5 GCSEs at 9-4 or A-C (31%). For employers recruiting for skilled and supervisory roles, relevant work experience was considered the most essential along with having Maths and English GCSEs (31%).

Employers selected a degree or equivalent qualification as essential in higher proportions for professional/managerial roles than for skilled/supervisory roles (16%) and entry level/admin roles (8%). This trend was also mirrored when it came to having a Masters degree or equivalent level 7 qualification, with 20% of professional/managerial roles stating it as essential, compared with skilled/supervisory roles (9%) and entry/admin roles (4%). These skills identified by employers as the most important when recruiting for new roles are in line with wave 6.

Maths and English GCSEs were considered the most essential for employers recruiting to entry level/admin roles (34%), followed by Maths and English Functional Skills (30%). These results were consistent with findings from wave 6 (32% Maths and English GCSEs, 28% Maths and English Functional Skills).

It is worth noting that when recruiting for the outlined roles, employers most commonly report that none of the listed qualifications are essential (34% professional and managerial roles, 36% skilled and supervisory roles, 38% entry level and admin roles).

**Figure 42. Results for ‘When recruiting new employees, are any of the following essential for the following types of roles’ (Employers)**



*Note: the data shown in this chart is for wave 7 only.*

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Professional and managerial roles</b>	<b>Skilled and supervisory roles</b>	<b>Entry level and admin roles</b>
PhD or equivalent level 8 qualification	14%	6%	3%
Masters or equivalent level 7 qualification	20%	9%	4%
Degree or equivalent level 6 qualification	31%	16%	8%
HN, HE Diploma or equivalent level 4 or level 5 qualification	13%	13%	7%
T levels	5%	9%	8%
A levels	21%	16%	11%
Relevant work experience	31%	31%	21%
Completion of a level 6, level 7 or level 8 apprenticeship	9%	11%	7%
Completion of a level 4 or level 5 apprenticeship	7%	13%	8%
Completion of a level 2 or level 3 apprenticeship	6%	13%	12%
Relevant vocational or technical qualification (taken alongside GCSE or A Levels)	17%	24%	16%
Maths and English Functional Skills	20%	25%	30%
Maths and English GCSEs	30%	31%	34%
5 GCSEs at 9-4 or A-C	31%	25%	25%
None of these	34%	36%	38%

For Figures 43, 44 and 45, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who have arranged or funded training for their employees in the last 12 months, n=801.

Across the differing levels of job roles, similar proportions of employers stated that all or most training typically leads to a qualification in all levels of roles captured by the survey (see Figure 43). For those in entry level/admin roles, 32% of employers reported that all or most training typically results in a qualification, compared with 36% for skilled/supervisory roles and 37% for professional/managerial roles.

The proportion of employers reporting that all or most training typically results in a qualification increased compared to wave 6 for all 3 role types (29% professional/managerial, 30% skilled/supervisory, 24% entry level/ admin). A similar proportion of employers also reported that only some training leads to a qualification in all levels of roles, with 30% stating this for professional managerial roles, 31% for skilled/supervisory roles, and 30% for entry level/admin roles, consistent with wave 6.

There was an increase in the proportion of employers in the private sector who stated that all or most training led to a qualification for all role types compared with wave 6. For professional and managerial roles, 39% of private sector employers said this, compared with 29% in wave 6. Similarly, 37% of private sector employers said this for skilled and supervisory roles (compared with 30% in wave 6), and 33% for entry level and admin roles (25% in wave 6).

**Figure 43. Results for ‘Thinking about the training your organisation has arranged or funded in the last 12 months, how much of it, if any, typically results in a qualification’ (Employers who have arranged or funded training for employees in last 12 months)**



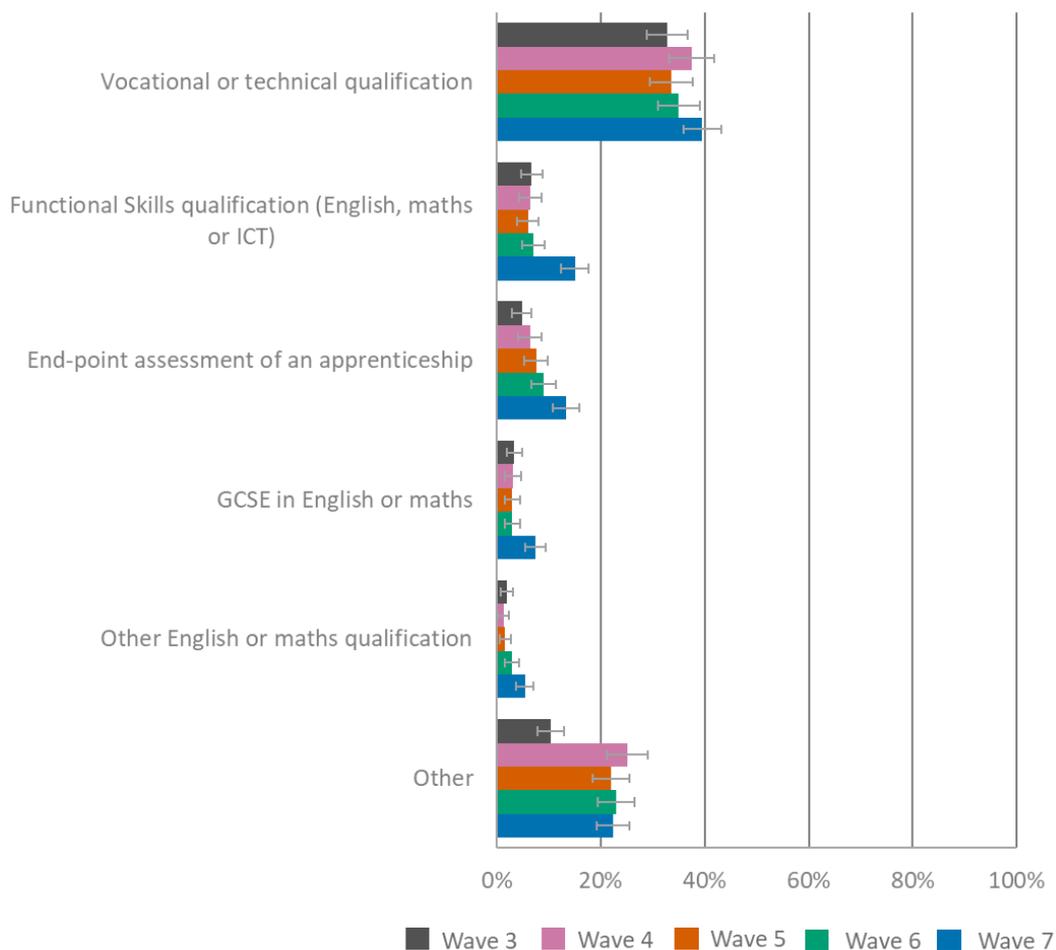
*Note: The data shown in this chart is for wave 7 only.*

Statement	Professional and managerial roles	Skilled and supervisory roles	Entry level and admin roles
All training leads to a qualification	18%	14%	14%
Most training leads to a qualification	19%	22%	18%
Some training leads to a qualification	30%	31%	30%
No training leads to a qualification	26%	24%	26%
Don't know	6%	9%	12%

As shown in Figure 44, 40% of employers stated that training that their organisation had arranged led to a vocational or technical qualification, comparable with wave 6 (35%). Twenty-two percent selected a different unspecified qualification ('Other'). Notably, a high proportion (27%) were uncertain and stated that they did not know if their organisation's training led to a qualification or not, although this proportion decreased compared to wave 6 (34%).

Public sector employers (21%) stated that training in their organisation led to a GCSE in English or maths at higher levels than both private sector (7%) and voluntary sector (5%) employers, broadly consistent with wave 6. Public sector employers (27%) also stated Functional Skills qualifications at higher levels than private sector (15%) and voluntary sector (8%) employees.

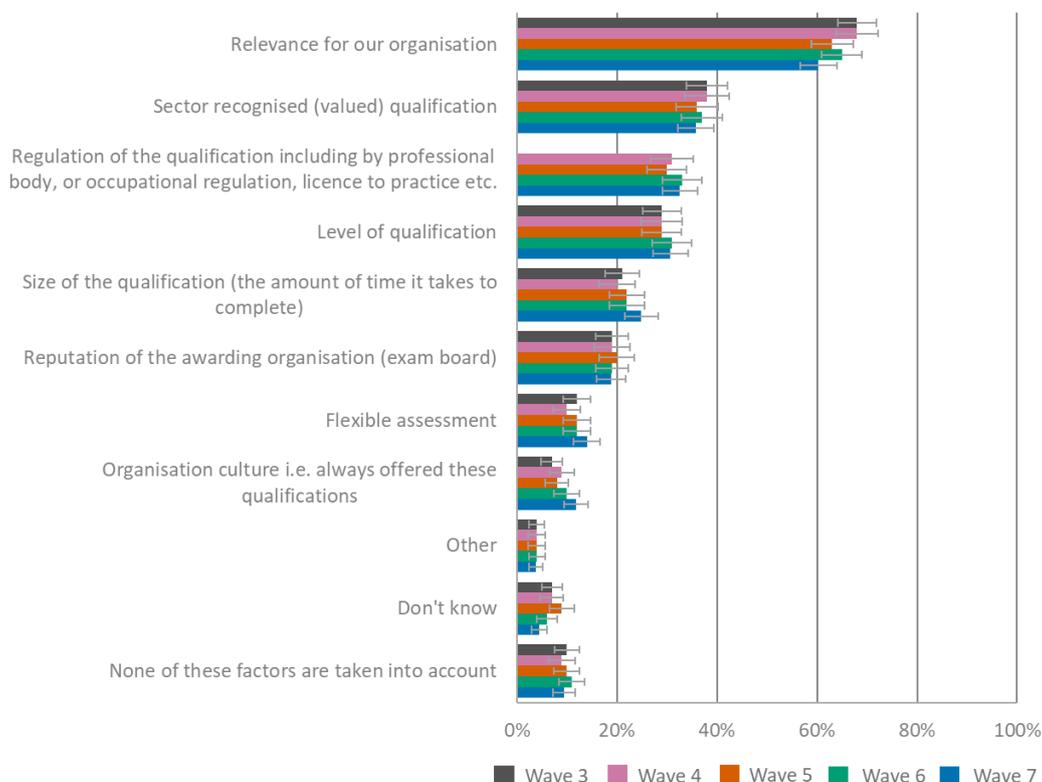
**Figure 44. Results for ‘Has any of the training your organisation has arranged or funded in the last 12 months led to any of the following?’ (Employers who have arranged or funded training for employees in last 12 months)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Vocational or technical qualification	33%	38%	34%	35%	40%
Functional Skills qualification (English, maths or ICT)	7%	6%	6%	7%	15%
End-point assessment of an apprenticeship	5%	6%	8%	9%	13%
GCSE in English or maths	3%	3%	3%	3%	7%
Other English or maths qualification	2%	1%	2%	3%	5%
Other	10%	25%	22%	23%	22%

When deciding which qualification to offer, relevance to their organisation (60%) remained the most important factor reported by employers in wave 7 (see Figure 45). Thirty-six percent also mentioned that the qualification being recognised or valued in their sector was a factor to consider. Nine percent of the employer sample said that none of the factors listed were taken into account by employers when deciding which qualifications to offer employees. These findings were all broadly consistent with wave 6.

**Figure 45. Results for ‘Can you please indicate which of the following factors are taken into account when your organisation decides which qualifications to offer its employees?’ (Employers who have arranged or funded training for employees in last 12 months)**

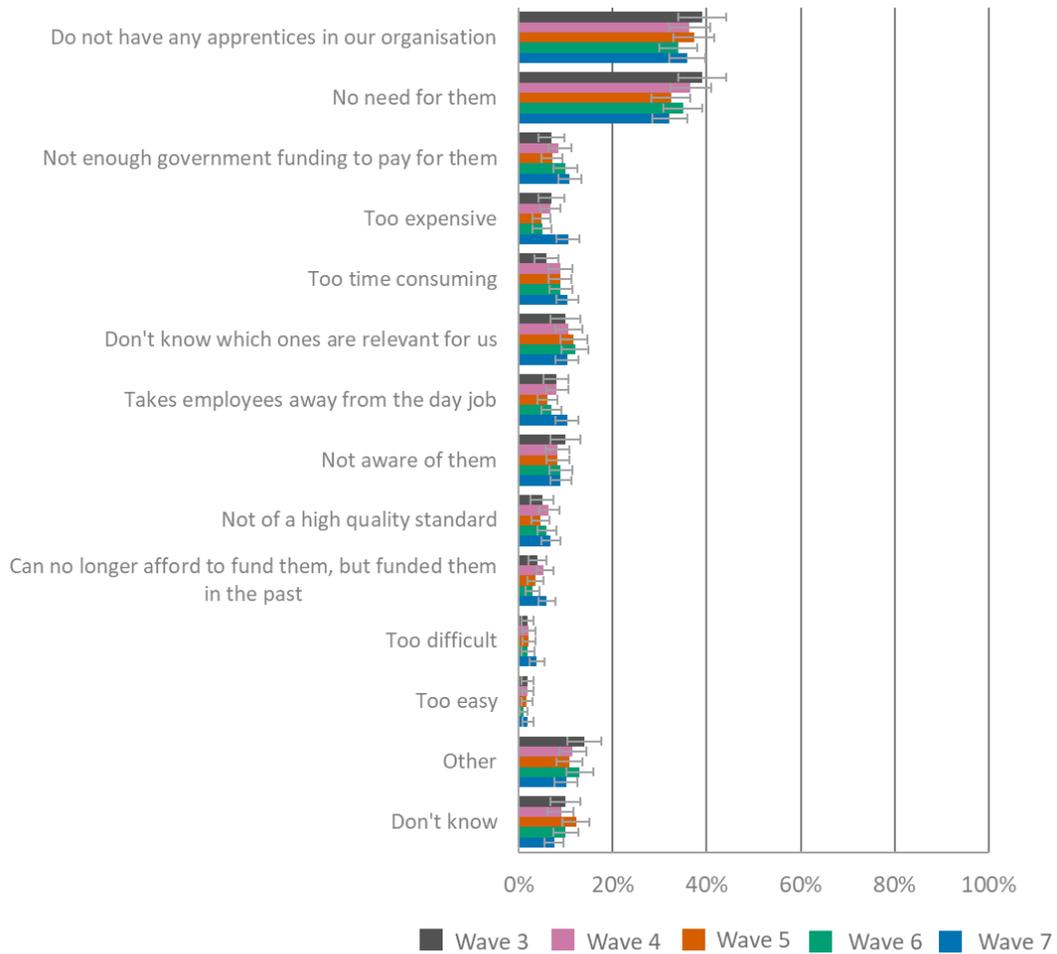


Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Relevance for our organisation	68%	68%	63%	65%	60%
Sector recognised (valued) qualification	38%	38%	36%	37%	36%
Level of qualification	29%	29%	29%	31%	31%
Size of the qualification (the amount of time it takes to complete)	21%	20%	22%	22%	25%
Reputation of the awarding organisation (exam board)	19%	19%	20%	19%	19%
Flexible assessment	12%	10%	12%	12%	14%
Organisation culture i.e. always offered these qualifications	7%	9%	8%	10%	12%
Regulation of the qualification including by professional body, or occupational regulation, licence to practice etc.	0%	31%	30%	33%	33%
Other	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Don't know	7%	7%	9%	6%	4%
None of these factors are taken into account	10%	9%	10%	11%	9%

For Figure 46, the wave 7 unweighted base is: Employers who arranged or funded training that did not lead to a vocational or technical qualification or EPA of an apprenticeship, n=733.

Employers who said that they had not arranged or funded training that led to a vocational qualification, an apprenticeship or a technical qualification were asked why that was. Consistent with wave 6, the most commonly cited reasons were that they do not have any apprentices in their organisation (36%) and that there was no need for them (32%) (see Figure 46). Ten percent said that they did not know which ones were relevant to them and that they were too time consuming, broadly consistent with wave 6. Ten percent also said that it takes employees away from the day job, an increase compared to wave 6 (7%); other percentage increases in reasons compared to wave 6 are seen for the proportion of employers who said they are too expensive (11% in wave 7, 5% in wave 6) and that they can no longer afford to fund them (6% in wave 7, 3% in wave 6).

**Figure 46. Results for ‘Can you please say why your organisation hasn’t arranged or funded training that led to a vocational or technical qualification and/or apprenticeship?’ (Employers who have arranged or funded training for employees in last 12 months which has not led to vocational/technical qualification or end-point assessment of an apprenticeship)**



Statement	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
Do not have any apprentices in our organisation	39%	36%	37%	34%	36%
No need for them	39%	36%	32%	35%	32%
Too expensive	7%	7%	5%	5%	11%
Not enough government funding to pay for them	7%	9%	7%	10%	11%
Too time consuming	6%	9%	9%	9%	10%
Takes employees away from the day job	7%	8%	6%	7%	10%
Not aware of them	10%	8%	8%	9%	9%
Not of a high quality standard	5%	6%	5%	6%	7%
Can no longer afford to fund them, but funded them in the past	4%	5%	4%	3%	6%
Too difficult	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%
Too easy	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Other	14%	12%	11%	13%	10%
Don't know	10%	9%	12%	10%	8%

## Annex A: Glossary of Terms

### **Adult and community learning (ACL)**

Adult and community learning includes a range of community based and outreach learning opportunities, primarily managed and delivered by local authorities and general further education colleges.

### **All provider types**

The scope of the survey sample included providers of all types such as in the following categories: further education (FE); higher education (HE); private class-based; private work-based; public sector community based; public sector 'other'; schools; voluntary sector education; independent training provider (ITP). ITPs are distinct from other types of Further Education providers as they are 'independent' and not run or directly controlled by the state. In the report the category 'All provider types', may be referred to as the provider group or all types of providers or all providers.

### **Apprenticeship frameworks**

These were developed by sector bodies, primarily focused on qualifications. They were phased out in 2020-21 and replaced by apprenticeship standards. Framework apprenticeships are assessed throughout by completing a unit at a time but there is no end-point assessment.

### **Apprenticeship standards**

New apprenticeship standards, developed by employers, to show what an apprentice will be doing, and the skills required of them, by job role. Standards are developed by employer groups known as 'trailblazers'. Standards are occupation-focused rather than qualification-led, with the apprentice being assessed through an end-point assessment. At the time this survey was carried out, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education ('IfATE') supported employer groups in the development of apprenticeship standards. As of June 2025, IfATE has been replaced by Skills England.

### **Awarding organisation (AO)**

An organisation recognised by the qualifications' regulators in England, Wales or Northern Ireland to develop, deliver and award qualifications. In England, this includes organisations that are regulated by Ofqual as End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs).

### **End-point assessment of apprenticeship (EPA)**

End-point assessment (EPA) is an independent assessment that takes place at the end of the apprenticeship training. This is to test that the apprentice is competent in their occupation.

### **Functional Skills qualifications (FSQ)**

Functional Skills qualifications are available in English, maths and ICT and are available in levels from Entry 1 to Level 2. Functional Skills assessments test the fundamental, applied skills in these subjects for life, learning and work.

It should be noted that reformed Functional Skills qualifications were introduced for first teaching in September 2019. Legacy qualifications are no longer available.

Whilst some Functional Skills qualifications in ICT were still certificating in 2023 to 2024, they are no longer available to new learners and have been replaced by Digital Functional Skills qualifications (DFSQs). DFSQs were first certificated in 2023 to 2024 and are a separate qualification type only available at Entry Level and Level 1. DFSQs place greater emphasis on the use of digital devices and developing digital skills to use in daily life as well as in the workplace or education setting.

**Further education (FE)**

Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that's not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree).

**Local authorities (LAs)**

Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas, including social care, schools and adult education.

**Organisation size**

Throughout the report organisations are categorised by number of employees into micro (2-9 employees), small (10-49 employees), medium (50-249 employees) and large (250+ employees) organisations.

**Providers**

The scope of the survey sample included providers in the following categories: further education (FE); higher education (HE); private class-based; private work-based; public sector community based; public sector 'other'; schools; voluntary sector education.

**T Levels**

T Levels are programmes of study which follow GCSEs and are equivalent to 3 A levels. These 2-year courses, which launched for first teaching from September 2020, have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses. T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning, through a compulsory Technical Qualification and English, maths and digital provision, and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days). Ofqual is responsible for regulating the Technical Qualification assessments within T Levels (the core and occupational specialism). At the time this survey was carried out, IfATE was responsible for managing the development and approval of T Levels, and setting the subject content. As of June 2025, IfATE has been replaced by Skills England.

**Vocational & Technical Qualifications (VTQs)**

These normally have a vocational focus and include, amongst others, Technical Qualifications and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). For this report, this term refers to vocational and technical qualifications other than FSQs, EPAs and T Levels.