

Perceptions of A levels and GCSEs Wave 7

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Summary

Executive summary

Key findings

As in previous waves of this research, perceptions of the A level system remain largely positive among all audiences: support for the A level system remains high; A level students are perceived to work hard and to get the grade their performance deserves; and, although a significant minority of teachers cite concerns relating to incorrect grading and marking of A level papers, the majority of teachers, students and parents agree that they have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers. Indeed, confidence in the accuracy and quality of A level marking appears to have increased among teachers since 2007.

Perceptions of GCSEs are also largely unchanged since 2007 and students continue to agree that the GCSE is an important qualification to gain. Teachers remain confident in the GCSE examinations system and, as with the A level system, are less likely to report concerns than they were in 2006 (two years ago). Although marking and grading is the most frequently cited concern in relation to GCSEs, confidence among teachers and students in the accuracy and quality of marking remains relatively high.

The majority of teachers, parents and students think most or all GCSE pupils get the right grade. Although better or worse than expected performance is the most commonly cited reason for pupils not getting the grade they deserve, there is also agreement among parents, students and the general public that inaccurate marking and poorly designed papers/coursework tasks contribute to this. As in the 2007 survey, most parents do not feel well informed about the marking and grading of exams.

Familiarity with Ofqual is low among all audiences and most teachers do not yet have an opinion on how effective Ofqual is at regulating the examinations system. However, among those who do express a view, ratings are more positive than negative on balance. Trust in Ofqual as a source of information about exams is also relatively low for the same reasons, although trust in QCA as a source of information about exams remains very high among teachers (90%).

Levels of awareness of the Diploma are unchanged since the 2007 survey. Just over half of teachers claim to know a great deal or a fair amount about the qualification, compared to around two in five students and a quarter of the general public and parents.

Methodology

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by Ofqual to carry out a seventh wave of research to assess perceptions of the A level and GCSE exam system shortly after the end of the 2008 examinations session. The main aim of the research, which has been carried out annually since 2003, was to track perceptions of the GCSE and A level examination system among teachers, parents, students and the general public. Background to the research, including a comprehensive list of survey objectives, is detailed in the Introduction to this report.

Interviews with the following audiences were conducted between 6th November and 3rd December 2008:

- 500 telephone interviews with teachers of AS level, A level or GCSEs in a representative sample of schools in England;
- 1,857 face-to-face interviews with members of the general public aged 15+ in England;
- 152 face-to-face interviews students who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs; and
- 297 face-to-face interviews with parents of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs.

Perceptions of the A level System

- Support for A levels remains high among teachers and students. The vast majority (95% of teachers and 88% students) agree that the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain and four in five (81% teachers and 80% students) agree that it is more important now than ever that students get a higher level of educational qualification such as an A level. In line with this, support for abolishing the qualification remains very low (six per cent) among students.
- While around seven in ten (72%) A level teachers agree that most A level students work hard, only a third (34%) think they work harder today than ever before, a pattern also seen in the last two waves. Prior to 2006, teachers were far more likely to agree that students work harder today than ever before. Parents and students continue to be more likely than teachers to agree that students work harder than ever before, possibly because their experiences of

how hard students worked in the past are limited. However, the proportion of students agreeing that they work harder than ever before has dropped from 60% in 2007 to 48%, suggesting greater recognition among this audience (and among teachers) that the demands placed on them are no longer on the increase.

- Around three quarters of A level teachers (78%) and students (73%) agree that most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves. Although the general public and parents are slightly less likely than teachers to agree that A level students get the grade their performance deserves (56% and 62% agree respectively), levels of agreement with this statement have remained fairly stable since 2003.
- As in 2007, teachers are less likely than in previous waves (i.e. 2006 or earlier) to say they have concerns about the A level system (38% say they have no concerns, compared with 26% in 2006). Concerns continue to focus on incorrect grading and marking of exam papers (mentioned by 17% teachers), and this is also remains parents' biggest concern according to teachers (19% of teachers say parents have raised concerns with them about how exams are marked and graded).
- Despite a significant minority of teachers citing concerns with incorrect grading and marking of A level papers, confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers appears to have grown significantly among teachers in the last year (from 59% in 2007 to 74% this year). In line with 2007 findings, over half of parents (53%) and two thirds (64%) of students agree that they are confident in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers.
- Overall confidence in the A level system remains unchanged since 2007. Around three quarters (77%) of teachers agree that they have confidence in the A level system and there has been no significant change in the proportion of teachers who say they have more or less confidence in the A level system compared to last year.
- With regards to overall confidence in the A level system among other survey audiences, A level students are on balance more likely to agree than disagree that they have more confidence in the A level system than they (personally) did a year ago (again, possibly because these respondents are more familiar with the A level system than they were a year ago), whereas parents and the general public are more likely to disagree than agree. This pattern has been

evident since the first wave of the survey in 2003, and levels of confidence have not changed significantly among any of these audiences since 2007.

- A level teachers are less likely than they were in 2007 to agree that they find the media coverage of A level results helpful (78% vs. 85% agree). Following a similar pattern, findings indicate that A level students are slightly more likely than they were last year to find the media's coverage of the announcement of the A level results upsetting (16% compared with eight per cent in 2007) – although it should be noted that, due to small base sizes, this change is not statistically significant.

Perceptions of the GCSE System

- Support for the GCSE system remains high, with the vast majority (85%) of students agreeing that the GCSE is an important qualification to obtain.
- As with confidence in A levels, teachers' confidence in the GCSE system also remains as high as in 2007, with around three quarters (76%) of GCSE teachers agreeing that they have confidence in the GCSE system.
- Opinion remains divided among the general public and parents as to whether they have more confidence in the GCSE system than they did a few years ago, with roughly equal proportions both agreeing and disagreeing. However, students remain more likely to agree (46%) than the general public (27%) and parents (38%) that their confidence in the GCSE system has grown. As with findings relating to confidence in A levels, this does not necessarily reflect a shift in opinion among students as a whole; instead it may be because the students who took part in this survey were not familiar with the GCSE system a few years ago.
- GCSE teachers are less likely to cite concerns about the GCSE examinations system than they were in 2006, following a similar trend to concerns about the A level system; two in five (43%) do not cite any concerns. Specific concerns mentioned by GCSE teachers are fairly disparate: as in 2007, the incorrect grading and marking of exam papers and heavy workload appear in the top three mentions (cited by eight percent and five percent of teachers respectively); whereas for the first time this year examinations and/or the curriculum being too easy is mentioned by seven percent of teachers. Overall, 37% of teachers say that parents have raised concerns with them about GCSE

exams, with the biggest issue being how exams are marked and graded (cited by 12% teachers).

- Confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers remains relatively high among teachers (63% agree that they have confidence). In line with findings relating to confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers, over half (52%) of parents and around seven in ten (71%) students agree that they have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers. This remains consistent with 2007 findings.

Reliability and accuracy of results

- Teachers, parents and students were asked for the first time this year what proportion of GCSE students they think get the right grade. The majority of teachers, parents and students (83%, 80% and 71% respectively) say that they think most or all GCSE pupils get the right grade. However, the general public as a whole is less confident, with two thirds (66%) saying that most or all pupils get the right grade, and nearly one in five (19%) believing that around a quarter of GCSE students get the wrong grade.
- When asked what contributes to GCSE students not getting the grade they deserve, students performing better or worse than expected in examination papers or coursework is the factor that teachers, the general public, parents and students see as most important. Inaccurate marking of exams and coursework and poorly designed exam papers and coursework tasks are also seen by many to contribute to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve.
- In line with 2007 findings, three in ten (29%) GCSE and A level teachers say that they have to rely on enquiries about results services to get accurate results for their students, most commonly because poor marking means that grades need to be appealed and papers remarked (17%), grades/marks are changed after appeal (16%) or to ensure students get the grades they deserve (12%).

Awareness of QCA and Ofqual

- The vast majority (94%) of teachers say they know at least a little about QCA, with 72% saying that they know the organisation very well or a fair amount. However, perhaps unsurprisingly given how new it is, familiarity with Ofqual is much lower, with just over a third (35%) claiming to know at least a little about

the organisation and just one in ten (10%) saying they know Ofqual very well or a fair amount.

- Familiarity with QCA and Ofqual is far lower among the general public, parents and students than among teachers, with just 17%, 35% and 28% respectively knowing at least a little about QCA and around one in ten claiming to know at least a little about Ofqual.
- Although only 35% of teachers say they know at least a little about Ofqual, two in five (41%) claim to be aware that they knew before taking part in the survey that Ofqual is the new independent regulator of qualifications and examinations in England. By contrast, only around one in ten of the general public claim to be aware of this.
- Around three quarters (74%) of teachers do not yet have an opinion on how effective Ofqual is at regulating the examinations system. Among those who do have an opinion, the balance is positive with around two thirds rating Ofqual effective at regulating the examinations system.

Information

- Three quarters (76%) of teachers recall receiving information from QCA or Ofqual about the changes being introduced to the A level from September 2008, up from 69% in wave six, while half (50%) have received information on foundation and extended project qualifications. Noticeably more teachers this year recall receiving information about how the new Diplomas will be marked and graded (33% this year vs. 23% in 2007) while slightly fewer have received information about how to appeal and how appeals work (43% this year vs. 49% in 2007). The same proportion recalls having received information on how standards are set and maintained year on year (43% this year vs. 42% in 2007).
- Broadly in line with 2007 findings, seven in ten (69%) A level students, but only around three in ten (28%) parents, agree that they have the information they need about how A level exams are marked and graded. Findings indicate that GCSE students feel slightly less informed about marking and grading than their A level counterparts (60% agree) and that GCSE parents feel more informed than the parents of A level students (34%) – this may be because the parents of GCSE students tend to be more closely involved in their child's education than the parents of A level students.

- Among teachers, the most trusted source of information about exams remains colleagues (92% teachers agree they would trust teachers in their school or from other schools as a source of information about exams). There are also high levels of trust in professional and central organisations, including QCA (90%) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (72%). Trust in Ofqual is lower: 53% say they trust Ofqual a great deal or a fair amount, but a third (33%) are unable to say whether or not they trust Ofqual.
- As in previous waves, students and parents are most likely to trust schools or teachers (85% and 87% respectively) as a source of information about exams. The level of trust in exam boards also remains fairly high, but findings indicate that there has been a slight fall in trust since last year among both students and parents (however this change is not statistically significant due to small base sizes). Parents and students are more likely to trust the QCA and Ofqual than not as a source of information about exams, and appear slightly more likely to trust the QCA than Ofqual (44% parents and 62% students trust QCA compared with 38% and 57% trusting Ofqual). However, trust in QCA as a source of information about exams has fallen sharply since 2007 (from 65% to 44%), possibly reflecting recent controversy surrounding the marking of national curriculum tests.
- Both students and parents say they would be most likely to contact their school or teacher (85% and 87% respectively) followed by the exam boards (69% and 63% respectively) if they had concerns about examination grades or the fairness of the examination system. Just over two in five students and around half of parents say they would contact “Ofqual – the exams regulator” or QCA.
- As was found in 2007, students, parents and the general public are more likely to agree that exam boards act in the best interests of students than do the QCA, Ofqual or the Government. Overall, 45% of the general public think exam boards act in the best interest of students, rising to 48% among parents and 58% among students.

Awareness of the Diploma

- Awareness of the Diploma appears to be at the same level as in 2007 among all audiences. Over half (56%) teachers say they know a great deal or a fair amount about the qualification, in comparison to around one in four of the general public (27%) and parents (26%) and two in five (39%) students.

Introduction

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by Ofqual to carry out a seventh wave of research to assess teachers', parents', students' and the general public's perceptions of the A level and GCSE exam system shortly after the 2008 examinations session. This follows six waves of a quantitative survey of perceptions towards A levels between 2003 and 2007 (and, since 2004, perceptions towards GCSEs) commissioned by the QCA. In addition to tracking questions from the previous six waves, the 2008 study includes some new questions on familiarity with Ofqual and the reliability of examination grades at GCSE level.

Background to the research

In any tracking survey of perceptions it is important to consider trends in light of the social and political context, policy changes and media focus. Below we summarise the background against which each wave of this research has been conducted.

In **March 2003** Ipsos MORI was commissioned to conduct the first wave of this research in order to provide a baseline measure of the public's, parents', students' and teachers' perceptions of the A level system. This followed reports in the summer of 2002 that a number of students had not received the A level grades they deserved. The subsequent independent investigation recognised that there was a need to be much clearer about communicating how papers are marked and graded, as well as ensuring students, parents and teachers have the right level of information about the examinations system.

The findings from the initial survey indicated that events of summer 2002 had to some extent damaged confidence in the A level exam, although there was next to no support for abandoning the qualification. The good news for QCA was that it appeared to be a trusted and credible source of information on exams.

Between the first and second waves of the research, QCA undertook an awareness-raising exercise in relation to the A level. This consisted of, among other initiatives, the publication of 'On the Level: the official guide to A levels' and the 'A level of Pride' campaign, launched in May 2003. Wave two of the research was commissioned in **autumn 2003** on conclusion of this awareness-raising exercise. Results from this second wave indicated that some confidence had been restored in the A level exam, and that the A level was widely believed to be an important qualification to obtain.

The 2004 A level examinations session was generally thought to be a successful one, and generated relatively little media attention. However, by September 2004 Mike Tomlinson's forthcoming review of the 14-19 curriculum had attracted media attention, particularly in the education press. Also in 2004, QCA undertook further work to increase understanding of, and confidence in, the A level system among students and teachers. This included publication of a straightforward information guide for students, made available via schools and colleges. The third wave of the research was conducted in the **autumn 2004** and showed support for the continuation of the A level exam. In addition, confidence in GCSE exams, which was measured for the first time in this wave, was also seen to be high among teachers, students, parents and the general public alike.

The fourth wave of research was conducted in **autumn 2005**, following the publication of the White Paper on 14-19 Education and Skills which led to increased attention on the ability of A levels to differentiate between students with the highest grades. The A level guide and an additional guide to GCSEs were also made available during 2005, although these were less well-publicised than in 2004. Also in 2005, A level and GCSE results were made available to the media on the same day that students received their results, whereas in previous years the media received the results the day before they were given to students. This contributed to reduced media coverage of A level and GCSE results.

The 2006 exam session was generally thought to be a successful one. On A level results day, QCA ran national adverts congratulating A level students in five national newspapers. There was also media attention towards the (then named) 'Specialised Diplomas' and their development. The fifth wave of the research, conducted in **autumn 2006**, showed that confidence in both the A level and GCSE examinations system remained strong, with no significant shifts in perceptions compared with the previous year.

Diplomas received increasing media attention throughout 2007 as further lines were developed and schools/colleges prepared to roll these out from September 2008 onwards. The introduction of new Diploma lines in science, languages and humanities was announced by the Secretary of State for Education in October 2007, reigniting media speculation that A levels and GCSEs may be phased out. The review of A levels, which had been planned for 2008, has now been pushed back to 2013 to allow the Diploma time to "bed-down". The Secretary of State also announced the set up of a new independent regulator of qualifications and tests in England in September 2007. The sixth wave of research was conducted in **autumn 2007** and showed that despite

continuing media attention on GCSEs and A levels, support for the qualifications remained high.

In April 2008, Ofqual was launched in its interim form as the new regulator of qualifications, examinations, and tests in England. The Government will be bringing in legislation to establish Ofqual as the regulator of qualifications. Until that time Ofqual operates as part of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. After the legislation is passed Ofqual will be accountable to Parliament rather than to Government ministers. The summer 2008 examinations session, although relatively uncontroversial for GCSEs and A levels, was overshadowed by the failure of ETS Europe, the company contracted by QCA to mark national curriculum tests, to deliver on time. September 2008 also saw the launch of the first five Diplomas in Construction, Engineering, Health, IT and Media, however take-up of this new qualification has been lower than expected. The seventh wave of the survey was conducted in **autumn 2008**.

Objectives of the research

A key aim of all seven waves of the research has been to gain greater insight into perceptions of the **A level examination system** among the general public, parents, students and teachers, in particular:

- perceptions of the A level qualification;
- confidence in the A level examinations system; and
- information received on the A level examination.

Since wave four in 2005, this research has also looked at perceptions of the **GCSE examinations system** among the general public, parents, students and teachers, in particular:

- perceptions of the GCSE qualification; and
- confidence in the GCSE examinations system.

Since wave five in 2006, the scope of the research has been expanded to look at:

- how likely people are to contact various organisations about the fairness of the exam system and whether they feel they act in students' best interests;
- awareness of the Diploma;
- the effectiveness of QCA ("Ofqual" in 2008) at regulating the examinations system;
- preferred channels for receipt of exam results;

- views on the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE and A level papers; and
- whether or not teachers have to rely on enquiries about results services to get accurate results for their students.

In addition, wave seven this year measures:

- familiarity with QCA and Ofqual, and perceptions of Ofqual's effectiveness as exams regulator; and
- perceptions of the reliability of grades at GCSE level, and factors contributing to students not getting the grades they deserve.

Methodology

All seven waves of the research have been carried out using an Ipsos MORI's general public face-to-face omnibus and a telephone survey amongst teachers. Details of the methodology used in each wave of the survey can be found in Appendix A and, under separate cover in the Technical Report. The methodology used for wave seven is summarised below.

Survey of teachers

A telephone survey was conducted among teachers of GCSE and/or AS/A level qualifications in a representative sample of 500 schools and colleges across England between 6th November and 3rd December 2008.

Interviews were carried out by Ipsos MORI Telephone Surveys (MTS) using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), and all data entry, editing, validation and analysis was carried out by MTS' data processing unit.

Quotas were set on region, school type and years' teaching experience. The data were then weighted at the analysis stage to match the known regional profile of schools and colleges in England that deliver GCSE and A level qualifications.

Survey of the general public, teachers and students

Fieldwork for the general public research was conducted face-to-face, in-home, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) on Ipsos MORI's weekly "Capibus" omnibus survey.

Interviews were conducted between 7th and 20th November 2008 with:

- **1,857 members of the general public aged 15+** in England;

- 152 **students** who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs; and
- 297 **parents** of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs.

As in the previous six waves, the general public sample was boosted with additional interviews with parents and students via a second wave of the Ipsos MORI Capibus in order to allow more robust analysis of the views of these groups.

All data have been weighted to match the known population profile of England. It should be noted, however, that not all questions included in the general public research were asked of all respondents. Indeed most of the questions were asked only of parents and/or students.

Profile of respondents

In any study where changes in opinion are being measured over time, it is important to ensure the research methodology is replicated between waves (as has been the case for this study) and that the demographic profile of respondents does not alter significantly.

The teacher and Omnibus respondent profiles are consistent across all seven waves. A detailed profile of respondents can be found in the Appendices.

Interpretation of the data

When interpreting the findings, it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of, rather than the entire total population of teachers, parents and students in England. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences between sub-groups are statistically significant.

An approximate guide to the difference required between waves six and seven of the research to show significant changes in perceptions or attitudes is provided below.

Differences required for significance at the 95% confidence level at or near these percentages

Size of sample on which survey result is based		10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
<i>Wave 6 sample</i>	<i>Vs.</i>			
	<i>Wave 7 sample</i>			
All students (136)	All students (152)	7	11	12
GCSE students (74)	GCSE students (75)	10	15	16
A level students (69)	A level students (88)	10	15	16
All parents (292)	All parents (297)	5	7	8
GCSE parents (192)	GCSE parents (297)	6	8	9
A level parents (237)	A level parents (243)	5	8	9
General public (1,765)	General public (1,857)	2	3	3
All teachers (500)	All teachers (500)	4	6	6
GCSE teachers (397)	GCSE teachers (389)	4	6	7
A level teachers (294)	A level teachers (333)	5	7	8

Source: Ipsos MORI

For example, in the wave seven survey (in 2008) 74% of A level teachers agree they have confidence in the accuracy and quality of marking of A level papers compared to 59% in the wave six survey (in 2007). This is a change of more than seven percentage points, and is therefore statistically significant.

Further details on statistical reliability is included in the Appendices.

Please note that caution should be exercised when comparing percentages derived from base sizes of 99 respondents or fewer, and particularly when comparing percentages derived from base sizes of 50 respondents or fewer. Therefore, the reporting of such sub-samples that follows should be regarded as indicative.

This report makes regular reference to the views of 'students' and 'parents'. Unless otherwise indicated, these terms refer to students who are currently taking, have just taken or are about to take A levels and/or GCSEs, and parents of students in this position. Where 'teachers of A levels' or 'teachers of GCSEs' are referred to, this includes teachers in mainstream and independent schools, and lecturers in college, who are currently teaching AS or A2 level qualifications or vocational A levels or GCSEs and Vocational GCSEs. In waves six and seven, this only refers to teachers of AS or A2 level and GCSEs.

It is important to bear in mind that most of the general public interviewed as part of this research have had no direct, *recent* experience of either the GCSE or A level exam. In addition, parents and students could only draw upon their own experience, which typically only related to one period in time. The majority of teachers, however, were able to reflect on their own experience of teaching with GCSE or A level exams over a period of some years; hence the following report focuses on this audience in the main.

Where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is due to computer rounding the decimal points up or down, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple responses. An asterisk (*) denotes a value of less than 0.5% but greater than zero.

Publication of the data

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

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Perceptions of the A level System

Support for the A level qualification remains high

Support for A levels among teachers remains high. The vast majority (95%) agree that the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain. In addition, four in five (81%) agree that it is more important now than ever that students get a higher level of educational qualification such as an A level.

Table A: Teachers' perceptions of the A level

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 6 vs. Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<i>Overall, the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain</i>								
Agree	94	95	95	91	93	93	95	+2
Disagree	2	2	3	2	5	2	3	+1
<i>It is more important now than ever that students get a higher level of educational qualification such as an A level</i>								
Agree	80	76	78	77	76	83	81	-2
Disagree	12	16	12	10	15	11	9	-2
Base:	All A level Teachers	(500)	(250)	(250)	(281)	(295)	(294)	(332)

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Support for A levels is also strong among students. Nine in ten (90%) agree the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain, with only one per cent disagreeing.

Wave seven has seen a fall in agreement among students that it is more important now than ever that students get a higher level of educational qualification such as an A level. Four in five (81%) students agree with this statement compared with 94% in wave six.

However, support for abolishing A levels remains very low among students, with only six per cent agreeing with the statement “A levels should be abolished” and four in five (80%) disagreeing.

Table B: Students’ perceptions of the A level

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 6 vs. Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<i>Overall, the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain</i>								
Agree	85	82	88	90	90	87	90	+3
Disagree	8	4	5	8	2	7	1	-6
<i>It is more important now than ever that students get a higher level of educational qualification such as an A level</i>								
Agree	82	80	80	82	88	94	81	-13
Disagree	4	9	6	8	2	2	4	+2
<i>A levels should be abolished</i>								
Agree	4	11	14	3	2	8	6	-2
Disagree	76	74	75	85	92	80	80	0
Base: All A level Students	(80)	(73)	(80)	(73)	(84)	(69)	(88)	

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 16 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Do A level students work hard?

The view of teachers

Similar to the findings in Wave six, around seven in ten (71%) A level teachers agree that most A level students work hard. The proportion of A level teachers who disagree also remains consistent with the 2007 survey (wave six) at 15%.

Agreement that A level students work hard is highest among teachers with over 25 years experience, who are significantly more likely to agree that this is the case than A level teachers with five years or less experience (79% vs. 66% respectively).

Table C: Teachers' perceptions of students

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 6 vs. Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<i>Most students taking A levels work hard</i>								
Strongly agree	20	24	27	29	23	25	29	+4
Tend to agree	53	49	49	45	46	46	42	-4
Neither agree nor disagree	9	15	11	12	11	10	13	+3
Tend to disagree	15	10	12	11	18	14	12	-2
Strongly disagree	2	2	2	3	2	4	2	-2
Agree	73	73	76	75	69	71	71	0
Disagree	17	12	14	13	19	19	14	-5
<i>Base: All A level Teachers</i>	<i>(500)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(281)</i>	<i>(295)</i>	<i>(294)</i>	<i>(332)</i>	

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Agreement with the statement "A level students work harder today than ever before" remains consistent with waves five and six (2005 and 2006) with more teachers disagreeing (42%) than agreeing (34%) that A level students work harder than ever before. This represents a shift of opinion since 2005 and earlier, when teachers were more likely to agree than disagree that A level students worked harder than ever before. Teachers are also now less likely than the general public to agree that A level

students work harder today than ever before – a reversal of the trend seen prior to 2006.

Teachers who disagree that they have confidence in the A level system as a whole are also more likely to strongly disagree that A level students work harder than ever before (26% compared with eight per cent of those who have confidence in the A level system, and 12% on average).

Table D: Teachers' perceptions of students

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 6 vs. Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<i>A level students work harder today than ever before</i>								
Strongly agree	20	18	16	21	13	11	12	+1
Tend to agree	29	25	28	23	21	21	22	+1
Neither agree nor disagree	12	19	24	24	24	26	22	-4
Tend to disagree	27	26	21	23	28	24	30	+6
Strongly disagree	9	9	10	7	12	15	12	-3
Don't know	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	-1
Agree	49	43	44	45	34	31	34	+3
Disagree	36	35	31	30	40	39	42	+3
<i>Base: All A level Teachers</i>	<i>(500)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(281)</i>	<i>(295)</i>	<i>(294)</i>	<i>(332)</i>	

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

The view of the general public, parents and students

The general public are generally less likely to see A level students as “more hard working than ever before” (36%) than students (48%) or parents (42%), a trend that

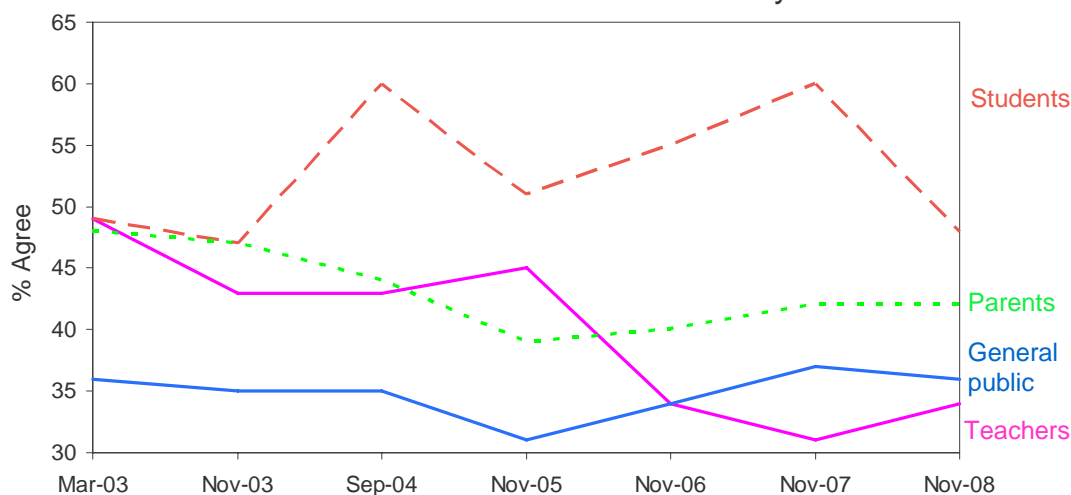
has been consistent across all waves of this research. This may be because the general public have less recent experience or in depth knowledge of A level exams than A level students and parents of A level students.¹

Just over a third (36%) of the general public agree that A level students are hard working, consistent with last year. Parents' perceptions of A level students are also in line with previous waves, with just over two in five (42%) agreeing that A level students work harder than ever before.

Students, on the other hand, are now slightly less likely to agree that A level students today work harder than ever before than a year ago. Just under half (48%) agree with this statement, a fall of 12 percentage points from wave six, indicating that there is some recognition among this group that the demands placed on A level students are stabilising. However, it must be noted that a 12 percentage point change among this relatively small group is only just statistically significant and should therefore not be seen as a large shift in opinion.

Perceptions of how hard A level students are working

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'A level students work harder today than ever before'



Base: see footnote

N.B. General Public: A difference of between ± 2 to 3 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;

Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;

Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



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¹ Where references are made to 'parents of A level students' this includes all parents of students who are taking, have taken in the last two years, or intend to take, A level exams.

² **Bases: Wave 7**, All general public (1,857), A level parents (297), students (152), and teachers (332), November 2008; **Wave 6**, All general public (1,765), A level parents (292), students (136), and teachers (294), November 2007; **Wave 5**, All general public (1,964), A level parents (256), students (84) and teachers (295) November 2006; **Wave 4**, All general public (1,974), A level parents (273), students (73) and teachers (281), November 2005; **Wave 3**, All general public (1,720), A level parents (303), students (80) and teachers (250), September 2004; **Wave 2**, All general public (1,766), A level parents (315), students (119) and teachers (250), November 2003; **Wave 1**, All general public (1,714), A level parents (293), students (92) and teachers (500), March 2003

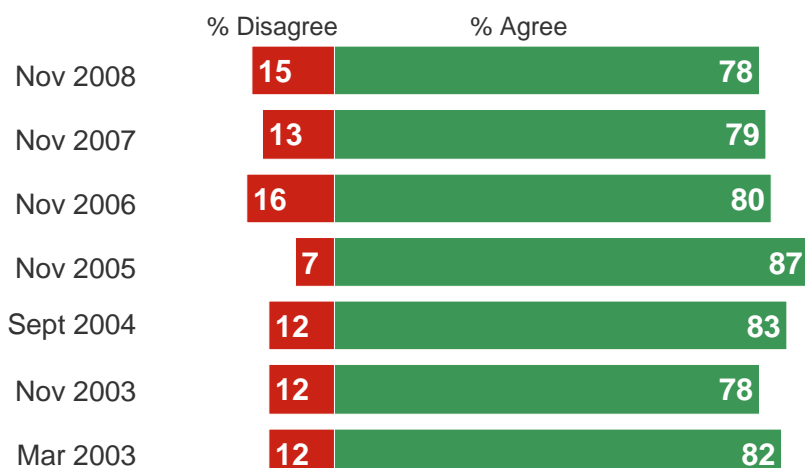
A level grading and performance

Around four in five (78%) A level teachers agree that most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves, a finding that is in line with previous waves of this research.

A level teachers from Further Education colleges (91%) are more likely than those from secondary maintained and independent schools (74% in both cases) to agree that most A level students get the grade their performance deserves.

Teachers' perceptions of A level grading and performance

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'Most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves'



Base: All A level teachers (Nov 2008 = 332, Nov 2007 = 294, Nov 2006 = 295, Nov 2005 = 281, Sept 2004 = 250, Nov 2003 = 250, Mar 2003 = 500)

N.B. A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI

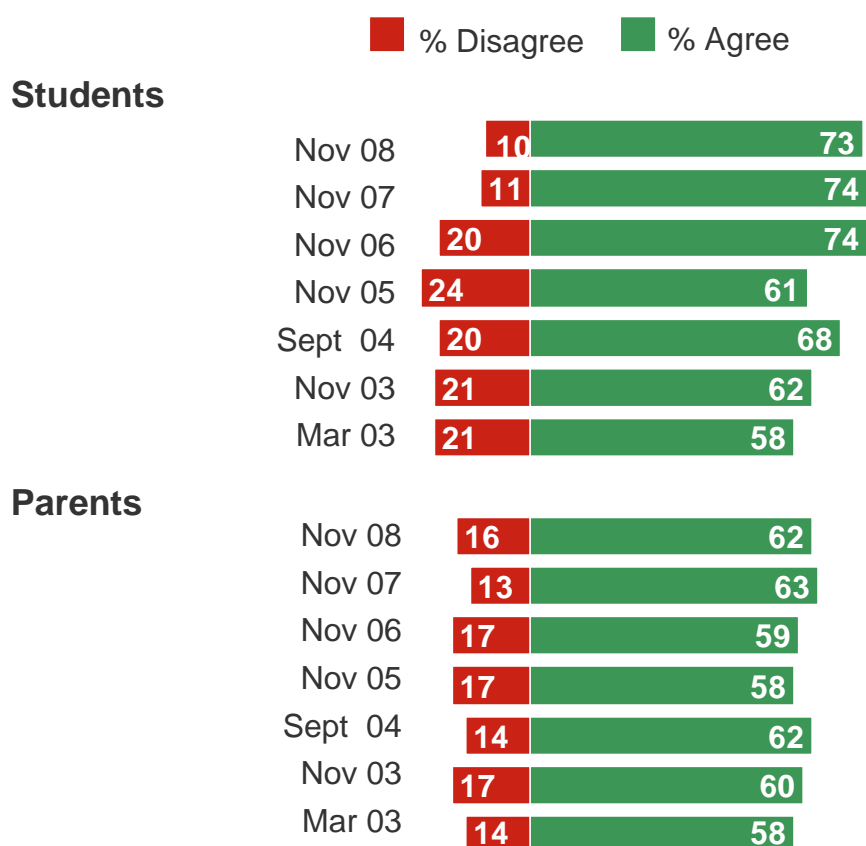


Public confidence in quality of A level grading

Confidence in the quality of A level grading remains lower among the general public, parents and students than among teachers, reflecting findings from previous waves. In addition, there is a continuation of the pattern noted in previous waves that A level students are more likely than both the general public and parents to agree that "most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves": nearly three quarters (73%) of A level students agree with this statement, compared to around three in five parents (62%) and general public (56%).

A level grading and performance

Q To what extent do you agree with the following statement? 'Most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves?'



Base: See footnote

N.B. **Parents:** A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; **Students:** A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



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³ **Base:** Nov 2008, All students (152), and all parents (297); Nov 2007, All students (136), and all parents (292); Nov 2006, All students (138) and all parents (324); Nov 2005, All students (137) and all parents (346) Sep 2004, All students (80) and all parents (303); Nov 2003, All students (119) and all parents (315); Mar 2003, All students (92) and all parents (293).

A level teachers' concerns

Around two in five (38%) teachers do not cite any concerns about the A level system.

As was the case in 2007, incorrect grading and marking of exam papers is the most frequently mentioned concern among A level teachers. Classroom/subject teachers and those with five years or less experience are significantly less likely to cite this concern than A level teachers overall (three per cent and five per cent respectively compared to 17% overall).

The second most common concern among teachers, mentioned for the first time this wave, is that the curriculum is too easy and /or that too many retakes are allowed (mentioned by 13%).

The proportion of A level teachers citing lack of information or knowledge about standards as a concern has increased slightly this year, with seven per cent giving this response compared with only two per cent in 2007.

Table E: Teachers' concerns about the A level system – Top five mentions

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Incorrect grading and marking of exam papers	n/a	n/a	21	11	16	20	17
Examinations/curriculum is too easy/too many re-takes	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0	13
Too many changes to the curriculum/syllabus	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0	7
Lack of information/knowledge about standards	n/a	n/a	6	4	6	2	7
Heavy workload	n/a	n/a	15	12	10	6	5
No concerns	n/a	n/a	21	25	26	35	38
Don't know	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Base: All A level Teachers</i>	(500)	(250)	(250)	(281)	(295)	(294)	(332)

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Parents' concerns, according to teachers

According to A level teachers, three in five (60%) parents never voice concerns about the A level system. Perhaps unsurprisingly, teachers with less experience and classroom or subject teachers are more likely than average to have never had any concerns voiced to them by parents (80% and 86% respectively).

As was the case in 2007, parents of students in independent schools are significantly more likely to have expressed concerns about problems with marking and grading (22%) than parents of students in secondary maintained schools.

The concerns about the A level system voiced to teachers by parents largely remain the same as 2007, although there has been a slight but significant increase in concerns about how exams are marked and graded, up seven percentage points since 2007 to 19%.

The second most common concern – parents' lack of understanding about the system and how it has changed – is mentioned for the first time this year by five per cent of teachers. Concerns about how time-consuming the work is for students' and there being too many exams⁴ are both cited by four per cent.

Teachers who do not have confidence in the A level system are more likely than those who do to have some sort of concern voiced to them by parents (54% and 35% respectively), indicating a correlation between parents expressing concerns with the A level system and teachers' confidence in the system.

⁴ It should be noted that for previous waves this concern was "Too many exams/too exam orientated", whereas for Wave 7 it is "Too many exams/high workload".

Table F: Parents' concerns, according to teachers – Top three mentions (unprompted)

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Problems about how exams are graded and marked	32	19	12	13	12	12	19
Lack of understanding about the education system/changes	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Too many exams/too exam orientated/high workload	8	22	-	4	5	5	4
No, never voice concerns	28	35	57	57	61	62	60
Don't know	*	*	*	-	1	1	1
<i>Base: All A level Teachers</i>	<i>(500)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(281)</i>	<i>(295)</i>	<i>(294)</i>	<i>(332)</i>

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Confidence in the A level system

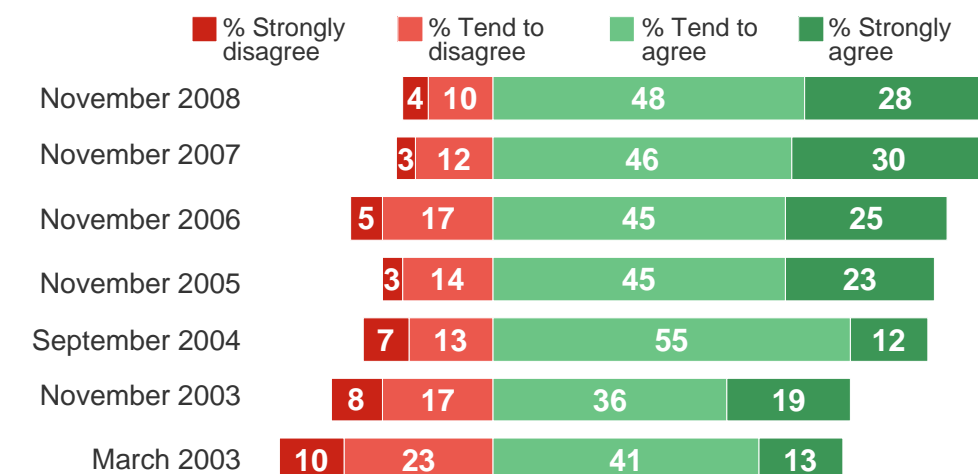
Views of Teachers

Teachers' confidence in the A level system has remained unchanged since 2007, with three quarters (76%) of A level teachers agreeing that they have confidence in the A level system and 14% disagreeing.

Teachers from independent schools are less likely than those from secondary maintained and Further Education colleges to have confidence in the A level system (20% disagree that they have confidence compared with 10% and six per cent respectively), as was found in 2007.

Teachers' confidence in the A level system

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have confidence in the A level system'



Base: All A level teachers (Nov 2008 = 332, Nov 2007 = 294, Nov 2006 = 295, Nov 2005 = 281, Sept 2004 = 250, Nov 2003 = 250, Mar 2003 = 500)

N.B. A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

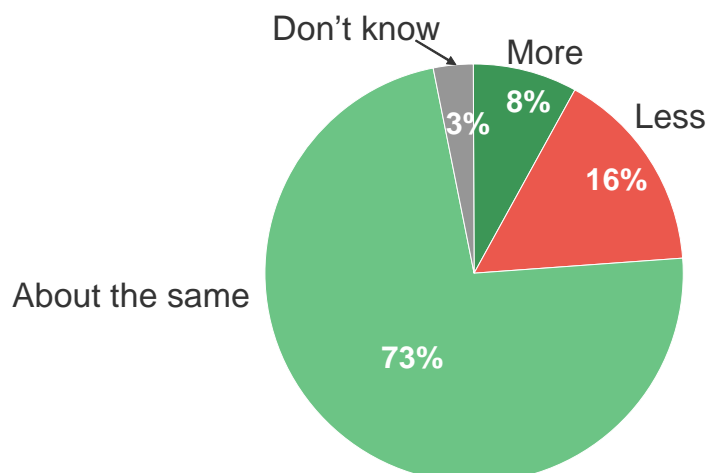
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The majority (73%) of teachers say they have the same level of confidence in the A level system as last year, however this has dropped slightly from 80% in 2007. The percentage of teachers who have less confidence than one year ago remains at a similar level to 2007 (16% in 2008 compared with 12% in 2007).

Teachers' confidence in the A level system compared to last year

Q Compared to last year, would you say that currently you have more confidence in the A level system, less confidence in the A level system or about the same level of confidence?



Base: All A level teachers (332), November 2008

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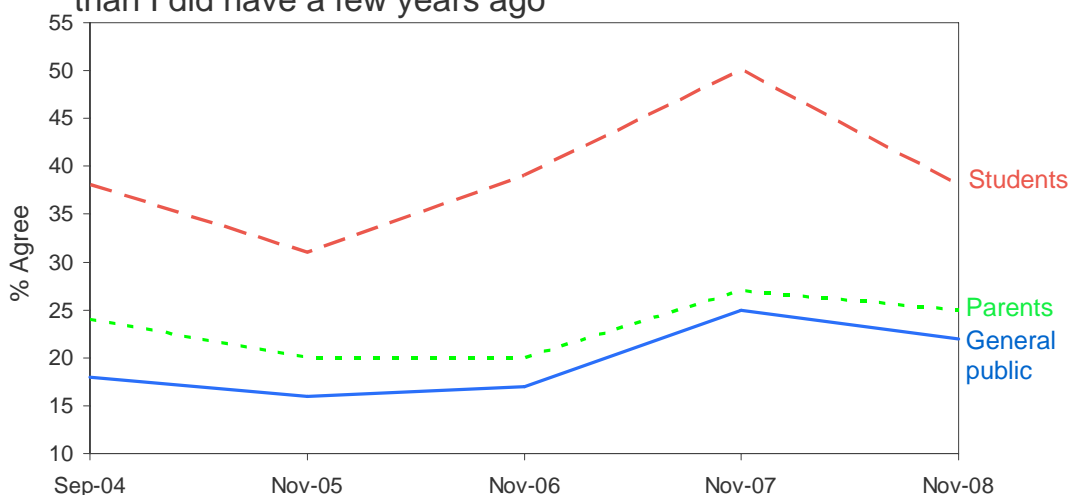
Views of parents and students

Confidence among the general public has remained steady over the past two waves with just over one in five (22%) agreeing that they have more confidence in the A level system now than a few years ago.

In previous waves, students are more likely to have growing confidence than parents or the general public in the A level system, with just under two in five (38%) agreeing that they are more confident now than a few years ago.

Confidence in the A level system

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have more confidence in the A level system now than I did have a few years ago'



Base: See footnote

N.B. **General Public** A difference of between ± 2 to 3 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

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⁵ Base: **Wave 7**, All general public (1,857), A level parents (297), students (152), and teachers (332), November 2008; **Wave 6**, All general public (1,765), A level parents (292), students (136), and teachers (294), November 2007; **Wave 5**, All general public (1,964), A level parents (256), students (84) and teachers (295) November 2006; **Wave 4**, All general public (1,974), A level parents (273), students (73) and teachers (281), November 2005; **Wave 3**, All general public (1,720), A level parents (303), students (80) and teachers (250), September 2004; **Wave 2**, All general public (1,766), A level parents (315), students (119) and teachers (250), November 2003; **Wave 1**, All general public (1,714), A level parents (293), students (92) and teachers (500), March 2003

Confidence in accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers

Views of teachers

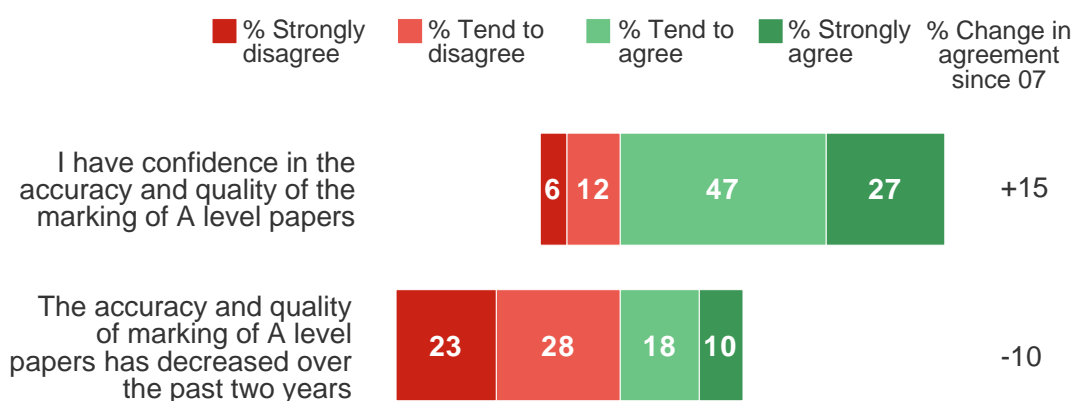
Three quarters (74%) of A level teachers agree they have confidence in the accuracy and quality of marking of A level papers compared to just under three in five (59%) in 2007. Indeed, the proportion of A level teachers strongly agreeing that they have confidence has doubled (27% compared with 13% in 2007) and the proportion of teachers who disagree has fallen by 13 percentage points to 18%.

There has also been a decrease in the proportion of teachers who believe the accuracy and quality of marking has decreased over the past two years. Just under three in ten (28%) teachers now agree that there has been a decrease in quality, compared with 38% in 2007, while around half (51%) disagree.

Teachers with five years or less experience are significantly more positive about the accuracy and quality of A level marking than colleagues with over 25 years experience (38% vs. 26% strongly agreeing).

Teachers' confidence in quality of A level marking

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



Base: All A level teachers (332) Nov 2008

N.B. A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



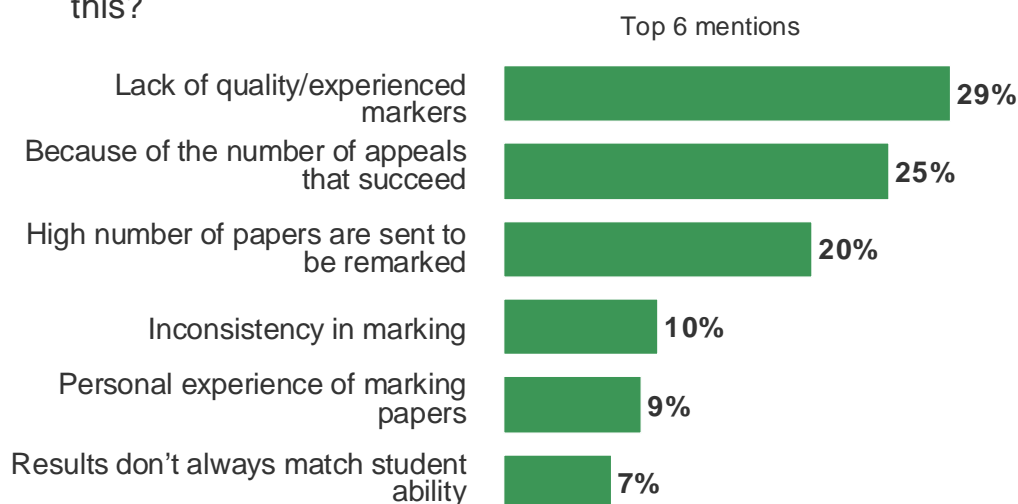
Among teachers who believe that the accuracy and quality of A level marking has decreased over the past two years, the most prevalent reason is the lack of quality/experienced markers (29%), as it was in 2007.

There has been a significant increase from 2007 in the percentage of teachers who cite the number of appeals that succeed as evidence that the accuracy and quality of marking has decreased: a quarter (25%) of A level teachers who agree that the accuracy and quality of marking has decreased give this reason, compared with seven per cent mentioning this last year.

The third most common reason for believing that the accuracy and quality of marking has fallen is the high numbers of papers being sent to be remarked (cited by 20% of those who agree that the accuracy and quality of marking has decreased).

A decrease in the quality of A level marking?

Q You agreed that the accuracy and quality of marking of A level papers has decreased over the past two years. Why do you say this?



Base: All A level teachers who agree the quality of marking has decreased (95), November 2008

Ipsos MORI



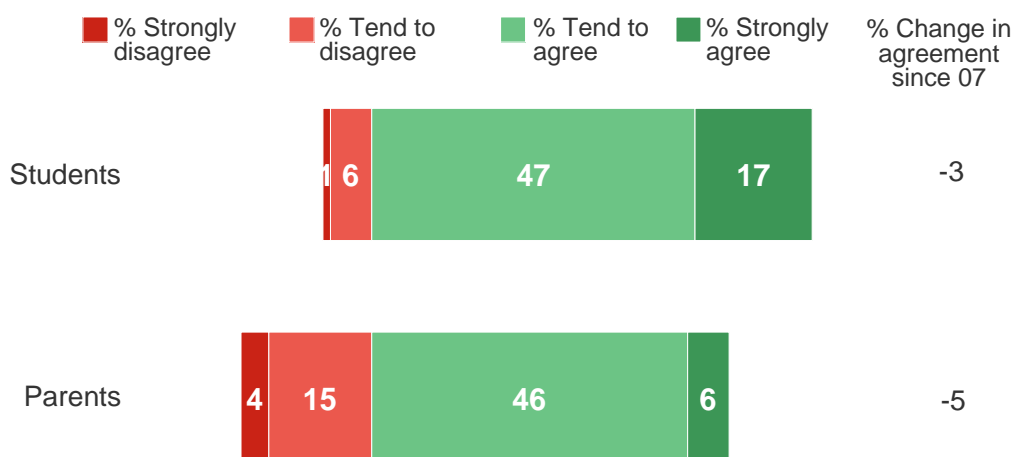
Views of general public, parents and students

Confidence in the accuracy and quality marking of A level papers has not risen among parents or students, as it has among A level teachers, but confidence levels for both these groups has remained constant since 2007 (52% and 64% respectively).

The proportion of students who do *not* have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers appears to have decreased, down from 14% last year to seven per cent for the current wave. However, this is not a statistically significant change and it corresponds with an 11 percentage point increase in those who do not offer an opinion either way (21% currently), indicating that students are less likely to have an opinion on this than they were in 2007.

Parents' and students' confidence in the quality of A level marking

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A Level papers'



Base: All students (152), parents (297), Nov 2008
 N.B. **Parents:** A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.
Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



The media's reporting of A level results

The majority (78%) of A level teachers continue to find the media's coverage of the announcement of A level results unhelpful, although slightly fewer do so than in 2007 (85%).

However, teachers with over 25 years experience are more likely than those with five years or less experience or less to be critical of the media coverage (83% and 67% respectively).

Table G: Teachers' perceptions of media coverage

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 6 vs. Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<i>I find the media's coverage of the announcement of the A level results each year unhelpful</i>								
Strongly agree	58	65	70	70	60	61	51	-10
Tend to agree	26	23	19	16	20	24	27	+3
Neither agree nor disagree	6	5	4	5	8	5	7	+2
Tend to disagree	8	3	4	5	8	7	10	+3
Strongly disagree	2	2	2	3	4	2	5	+3
Don't know	1	*	*	*	*	1	*	-0.5
Agree	84	88	89	86	80	85	78	-7
Disagree	10	5	6	8	12	9	15	+6
<i>Base: All A level Teachers</i>	<i>(500)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(250)</i>	<i>(281)</i>	<i>(295)</i>	<i>(294)</i>	<i>(332)</i>	

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

By contrast, A level students appear to be slightly (but not significantly) more likely this year to find the media's coverage of the announcement of the A level results upsetting than they were last year; however there is an even greater shift towards neutrality on this matter, with around three in ten (28%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they have found media coverage upsetting this year (an increase from 12% in 2007).

Table H: Students' perceptions of media coverage

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 6 vs. Wave 7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<i>I find the media's coverage of the A level results each year upsetting</i>								
Strongly agree	-	3	5	-	2	3	1	-2
Tend to agree	4	8	9	3	-	5	15	+10
Neither agree nor disagree	16	12	9	12	5	12	28	+16
Tend to disagree	36	29	28	42	33	45	32	-13
Strongly disagree	40	45	48	42	58	34	18	-16
Don't know	3	3	3	-	1	1	6	+5
Agree	4	11	14	3	2	8	16	+8
Disagree	76	74	75	85	92	79	49	-30
Base: All A level Students	(80)	(73)	(80)	(73)	(84)	(69)	(88)	

Source: Ipsos MORI

N.B. A difference of at least ± 10 to 16 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Perceptions of the GCSE System

Confidence in the GCSE system

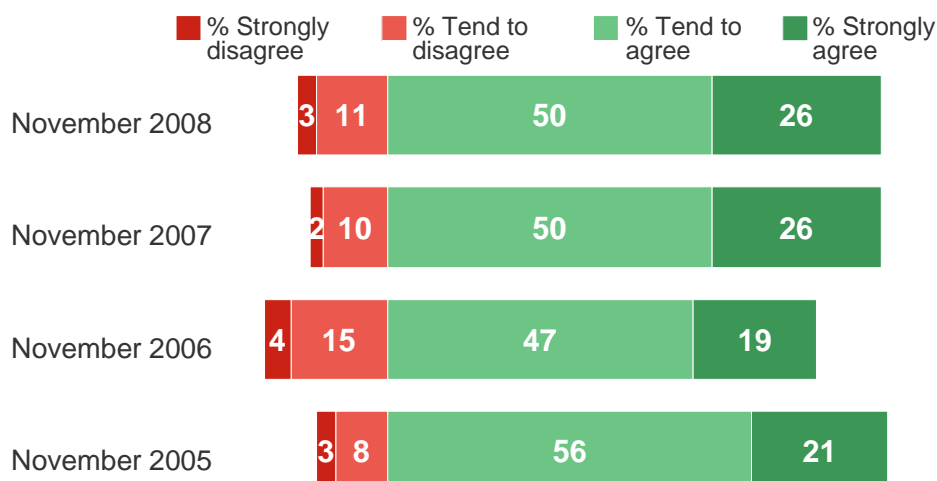
Teachers' views

Three quarters (76%) of GCSE teachers say they have confidence in the GCSE system, exactly the same proportion as in 2007.

Teachers who work in secondary maintained schools are more likely than those in independent schools to have confidence in the GCSE system (85% compared with 72%), as has also been observed for the A level system.

Teachers' confidence in the GCSE system

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have confidence in the GCSE system'



Base: All GCSE teachers (Nov 2008 = 388, Nov 2007 = 397, Nov 2006 = 420, Nov 2005 = 414)

N.B. A difference of between ± 4 to 7 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



Views of parents, students and the general public

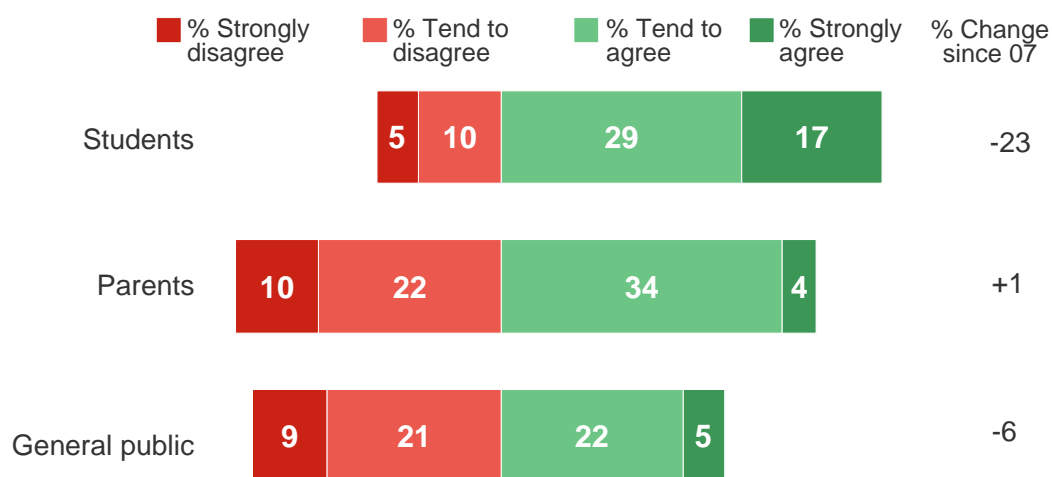
Overall, 27% of the general public agree that they have more confidence in the GCSE system now than they did a few years ago, down from 33% in 2007 but still considerably more than in 2005 and 2006 (19% agreed).

Confidence is higher among parents (38% agree) than the general public and has remained stable since 2007. Students remain more confident than teachers and parents with regard to the GCSE system, a finding which is also seen in relation to A levels (and probably relates to student respondents being more familiar with GCSEs

that they were two years ago). However, this year confidence among students (46% agree) is more in line with levels seen in 2005 and 2006 after peaking in 2007 at 69%.

Confidence in the GCSE System

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have more confidence in the GCSE system than I did a few years ago'



Base: All students (152), parents (297) and general public (1857), Nov 2008

N.B. General Public: A difference of between ± 2 to 3 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;

Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;

Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



Confidence in accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers

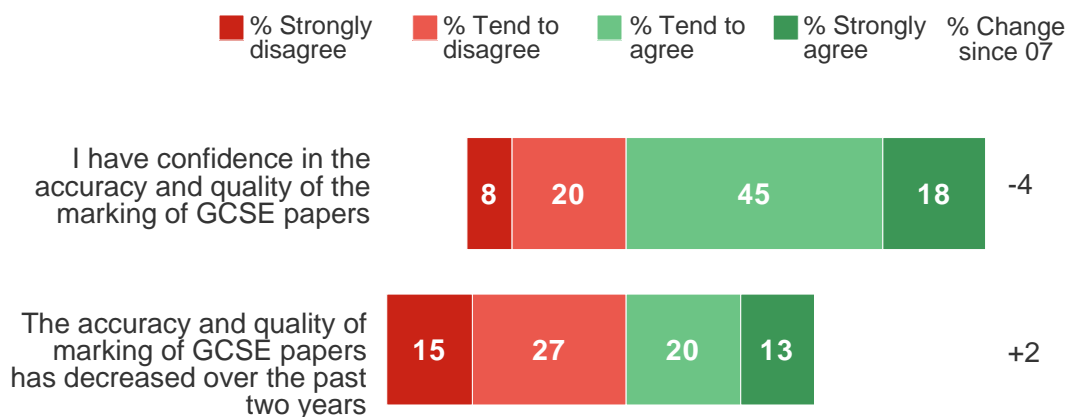
Views of teachers

Just over three in five (63%) teachers have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers, in line with 2007 (67%).

The proportion of teachers who agree that the accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers has decreased in the past two years has not changed much from 2007 (33%, compared with 31% in 2007).

Teachers' confidence in quality of GCSE marking

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



Base: All GCSE teachers (388) Nov 2008

N.B. A difference of between ± 4 to 7 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI

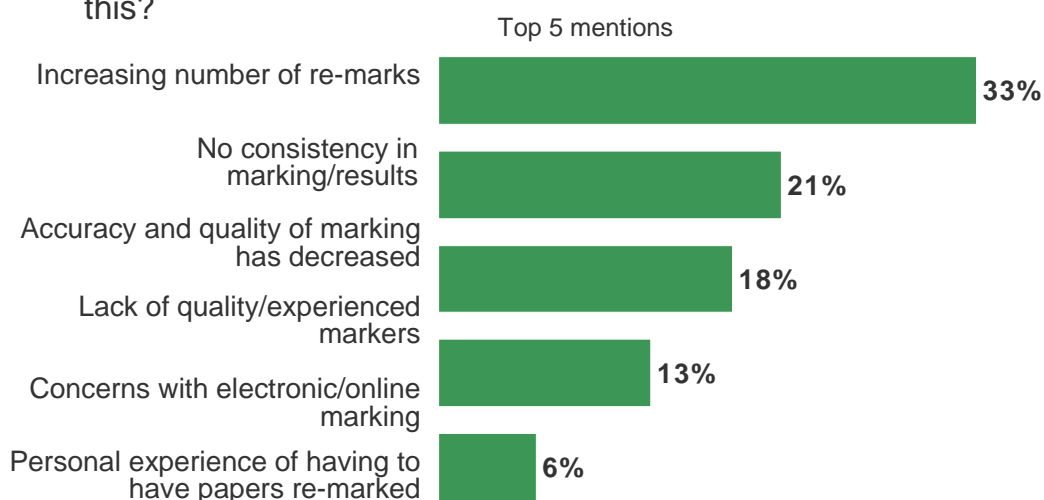


Perhaps not surprisingly, those who are confident in the GCSE as a whole are more likely than average to agree that they are confident in the quality and accuracy of marking (73%). However, teachers with more than 25 years experience are more likely than average to agree that the accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers has decreased over the past two years (45% compared with 33% on average).

Among teachers who agree the accuracy and quality of GCSE marking has decreased, the most common reason they give for this is the increasing number of remarks needed (33%). The issue of there being no consistency in results is also mentioned by around one in five (21%). The reason most frequently cited in 2007, there being a lack of experienced markers, is only mentioned by 13% of those who agree this year that the accuracy and quality of GCSE marking has decreased.

A decrease in the quality of GCSE marking?

Q You agreed that the accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers has decreased over the past two years. Why do you say this?



Base: All GCSE teachers who agree the quality of marking has decreased (128), November 2008

Ipsos MORI

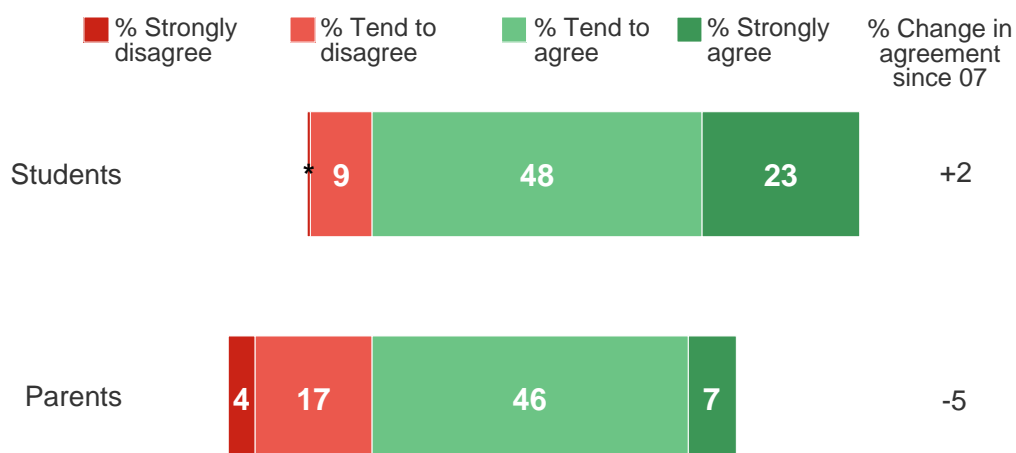


Views of parents and students

Students are more confident than teachers in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers, with seven in ten (71%) saying they are confident, compared with just under two thirds (63%) of teachers. They are also significantly more confident than parents – only 53% of parents feel confident in the accuracy and quality of the marking, an indicative (i.e. not statistically significant) drop of five percentage points since 2007.

Parents' and students' confidence in the quality of GCSE marking

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers'



Base: All students (152), parents (297), Nov 2008
 N.B. **Parents:** A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.
Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI

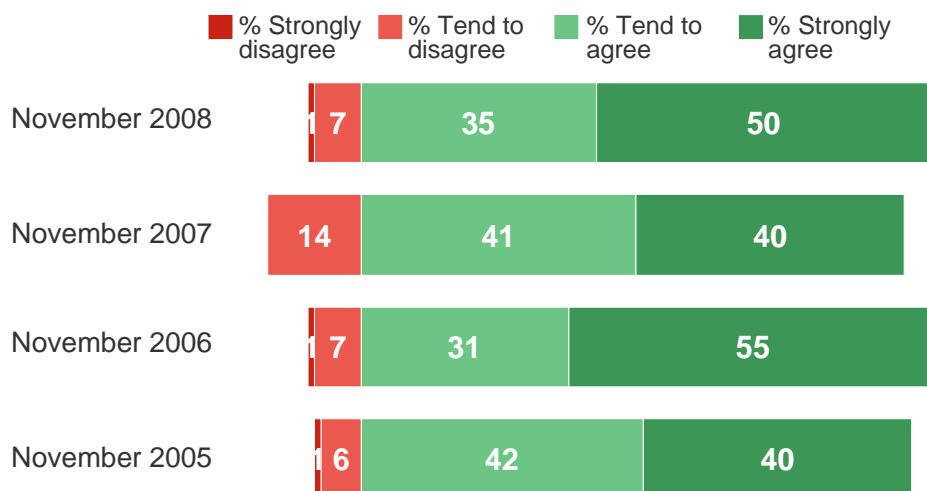


Support for GCSEs among students

In line with findings from previous waves, support for the GCSE remains high among students, with 85% agreeing that it is an important qualification to obtain.

Students' perception of the GCSE

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'Overall, the GCSE is an important qualification to obtain'.



Base: All GCSE students (Nov 2008 = 75, Nov 2007 = 74, Nov 2006 = 74, Nov 2005 = 84)
N.B. A difference of between ± 10 to 16 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



Teachers' concerns about GCSE exams

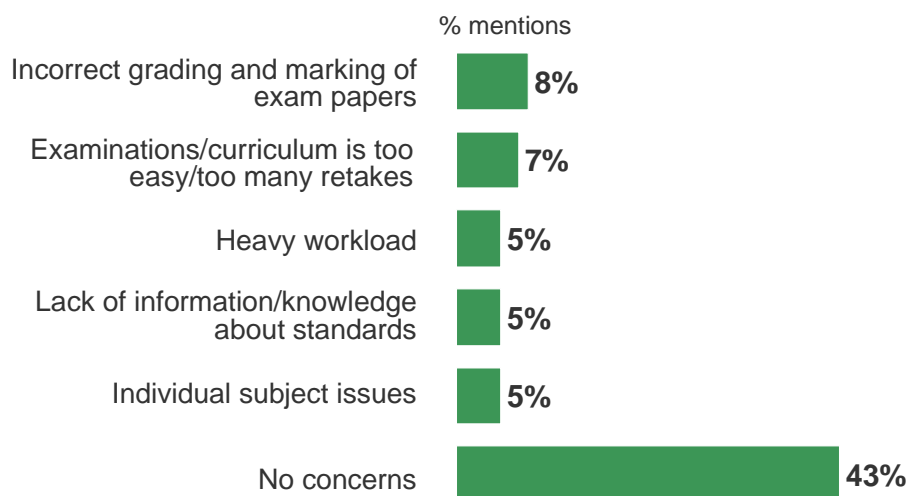
Positively, 43% of teachers do not cite any concerns about the system at all, and this proportion increases among teachers working in secondary maintained schools (56%) and those with five years or less teaching experience (57%).

Over half (56%) of GCSE teachers have concerns about the GCSE system, with the most frequently cited reason being the incorrect grading and marking of exam papers (eight per cent), as in 2007.

The second most frequently mentioned concern, raised for the first time this year, relates to exams and the curriculum as a whole being too easy (seven per cent), followed by concerns about a heavy workload or issues with specific subjects (five per cent in both cases).

Teachers' concerns about the GCSE system

Q Do you have any concerns about the current GCSE examinations system?



Base: All GCSE teachers (388), November 2008
Ipsos MORI

* Only answers 5% or over shown



Parents' concerns about GCSE exams according to teachers

Overall, 37% of teachers cite concerns raised by parents about GCSE exams. By far the most frequently mentioned parental concern relates to how exams are marked and graded: twelve per cent of teachers say parents have mentioned this, an increase of six percentage points since 2007.

Other issues that parents are concerned about and raise with teachers relate to problems with coursework (five per cent) and how time consuming the work is for students (four per cent).

Teachers who work in independent schools are more likely than average to say that parents raise concerns with them about the GCSE system (46%). By contrast, those who work in secondary maintained schools are more likely to say that parents never voice concerns (72%), as do teachers with five years or less experience of teaching (74%).

**Table I: Parents' concerns, according to teachers
– Top three mentions (unprompted)**

	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
	%	%	%	%
Problems about how exams are graded and marked	7	5	6	12
Coursework issues	-	-	-	5
How time consuming the work is for students	13	7	5	4
No, never voice concerns	64	72	66	62
Don't know	1	*	*	1
<i>Base: All GCSE Teachers</i>	<i>(414)</i>	<i>(420)</i>	<i>(397)</i>	<i>(389)</i>

Source: Ipsos MORI

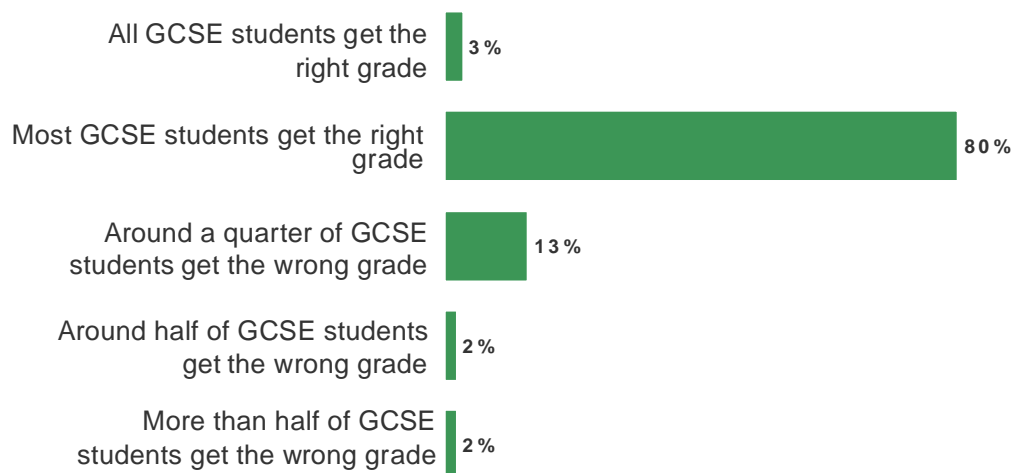
N.B. A difference of at least ± 4 to 7 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Reliability of GCSE grades

For the first time this year, teachers were asked to think about what proportion of GCSE students get the right grade. The majority (80%) say that most pupils get the right grade, with a further three per cent saying that all students get the right grade. However, 17% of teachers feel that at least a quarter of GCSE students get the wrong grade.

Reliability of GCSE grades - teachers

Q I would like you to think about the reliability of GCSE grades.
Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



Base: All teachers (500), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



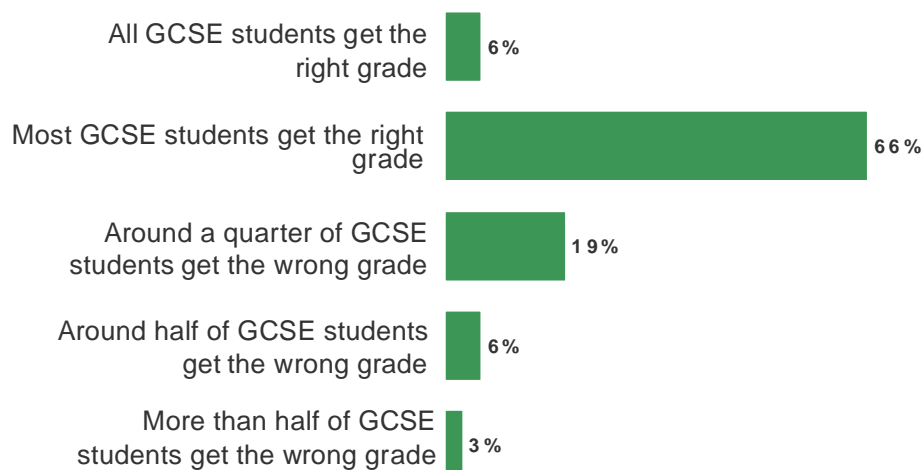
Those who feel that at least a quarter of GCSE students get the wrong grade are more likely than average to say they are not confident in the quality of the marking (56% compared with 28% on average).⁶

The general public are less confident in the reliability of GCSE grades than teachers; only two thirds (66%) think that most pupils get the right grade, compared with eight in ten (80%) teachers. Reflecting this, the proportion of the general public who believe that at least a quarter of GCSE students get the wrong grade is higher, at 28%. Again, it is a minority who feel the level of error is higher than this; six per cent feel that around half of students get the wrong grade, while three per cent think it is more than half.

⁶ N.B. Small base size (61) please treat finding with caution.

Reliability of GCSE grades – general public

Q I would like you to think about the reliability of GCSE grades. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



Base: All general public (1857), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



Looking at the views of parents and students, parents are more likely to be confident about the reliability of assessment and, like teachers, 80% believe that most students get the right grades. Students are slightly less positive than parents (but more positive than the general public), with 71% saying that most students get the right grades.

There are also differences by region – Londoners are the least positive with a third (33%) saying that at least a quarter of students get the wrong grade, while those living in Yorkshire and Humber are more positive (74% think that most GCSE students get the right grade).

Factors contributing to students not getting grades they deserve

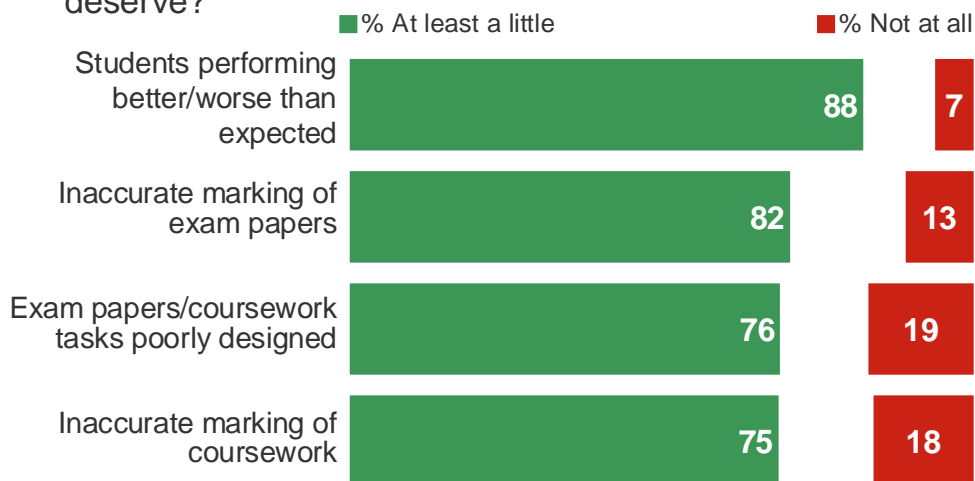
“Students performing better or worse than expected in examination papers or coursework” is the factor that teachers see as the biggest contributor to students not getting the grades they deserve – 88% feel that this contributes at least a little.

Around four in five (82%) teachers feel that inaccurate marking of examination papers contributes at least a little to students not getting the grade they deserve, while three quarters (75%) say the same about inaccurate marking of coursework.

A similar proportion (76%) say that poorly designed exam papers and coursework tasks contribute at least a little to students not getting the grade they deserve.

Contributing factors to inaccurate grades - teachers

Q To what extent, if at all, do you think that each of the following factors contributes to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve?



Base: All teachers (500), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



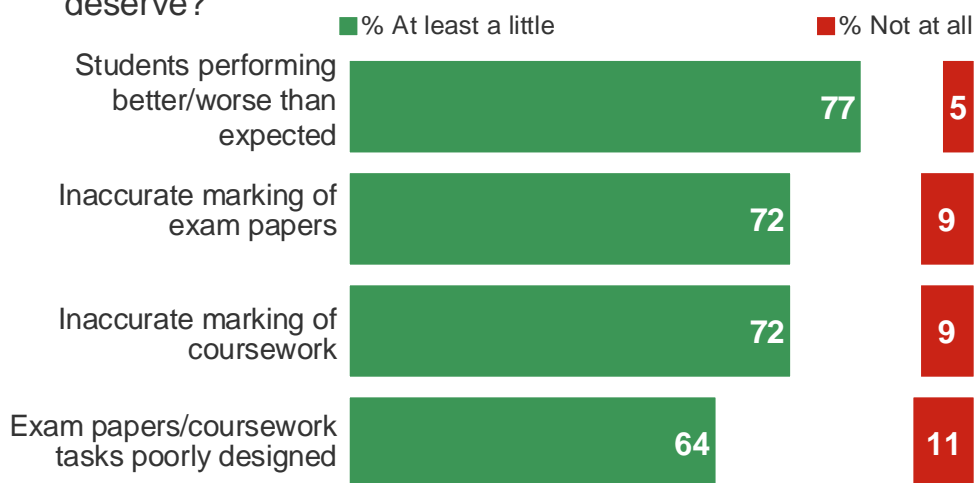
Like teachers, the general public also feel that students performing better or worse than expected in examination papers or coursework is the biggest contributing factor to students not getting the grades they deserve (77% feel this contributes at least a little).

Around seven in ten feel that poorly marked exam papers and coursework contributes at least a little to incorrect grading (72% in both cases) while around two thirds (64%) think that poorly designed exam papers and coursework tasks are a contributing factor.

Certain groups are more likely to say that all factors contribute to students not getting the grades they deserve. Those who are working, for example, are more likely to believe that each of the above factors contributes at least a little than those who are not working. Those who live in the South East of England and those from social grades AB are also more likely to think that these factors contribute to inaccurate grades being given.

Contributing factors to inaccurate grades – general public

Q To what extent, if at all, do you think that each of the following factors contributes to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve?



Base: All General Public (1857), November 2008

Ipsos MORI



Familiarity with the 14-19 Diploma

Familiarity with the Diploma remains unchanged since 2007 among the general public, parents and students.

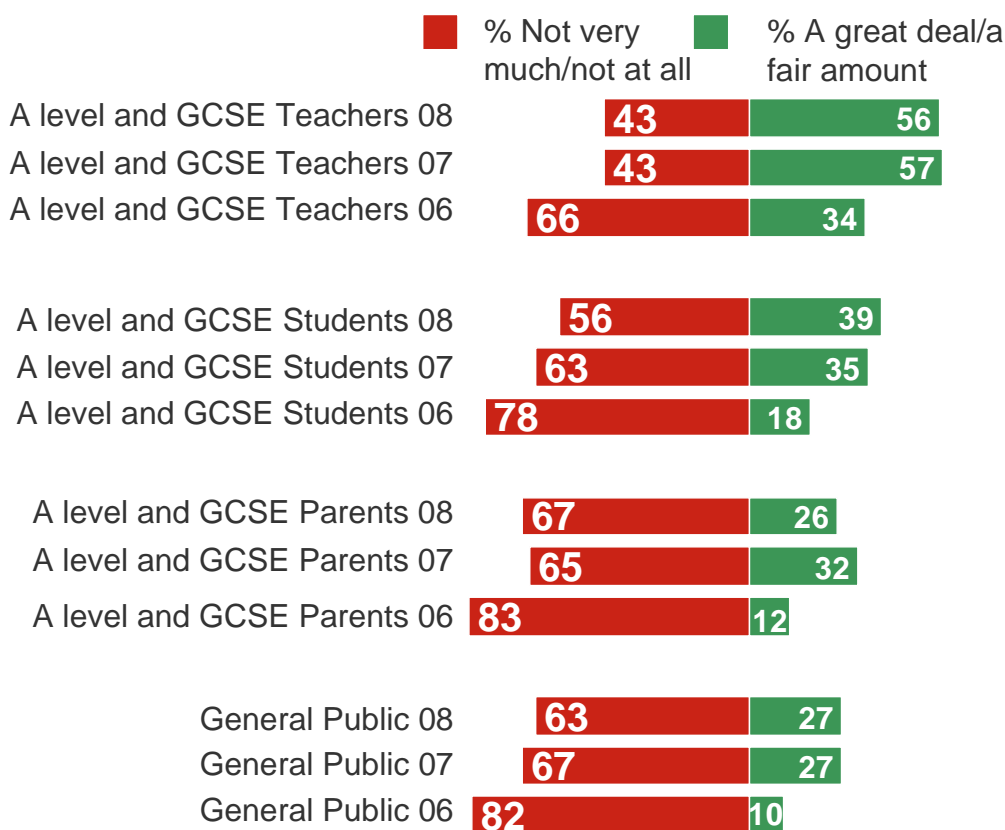
Around a quarter (27%) of the general public say they know a fair amount or a good deal about Diplomas while nearly two thirds (63%) do not. Levels of familiarity among parents are similar to those of the general public: a quarter (26%) of parents claim to know a fair amount or a good deal about Diplomas.

Students remain more familiar with the Diploma than either the general public or parents, with two in five (39%) saying they know a fair amount or a good deal about the qualification.

The proportion of teachers who say they are familiar with Diplomas is, perhaps unsurprisingly, higher with 56% familiar and 44% not familiar. Familiarity with the Diploma is highest among teachers from Further Education colleges (67%) and lowest among those from independent schools (47%). Knowledge of Diplomas is also higher among teachers with over 25 years experience than those with five years experience or less (67% compared with 37%).

Awareness of 14-19 Diplomas

Q How much, if anything, did you know about the Diploma* before today?



Base: see footnote

N.B. **General Public**: A difference of between ± 2 to 3 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; **Parents**: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; **Students**: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; **Teachers**: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

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⁷ Asked as 'Specialised Diploma' in 2006

Base: **Nov 2008**, All A level and GCSE teachers (300); **Nov 2007**, All A level and GCSE teachers (500); **Nov 2006**, All A level and GCSE teachers (506); **Nov 2008**, All A level and GCSE students (152); **Nov 2007**: All A level and GCSE students (136); **Nov 2006**: All A level and GCSE students (138); **Nov 2008**: All A level and GCSE parents (297); **Nov 2007**: All A level and GCSE parents (292); **Nov 2006**: All A level and GCSE parents (324); **Nov 2008**: All general public (1,857); **Nov 2007**: All general public (1,765); **Nov 2006** (All general public (1,964).

Outcomes of A level and GCSEs

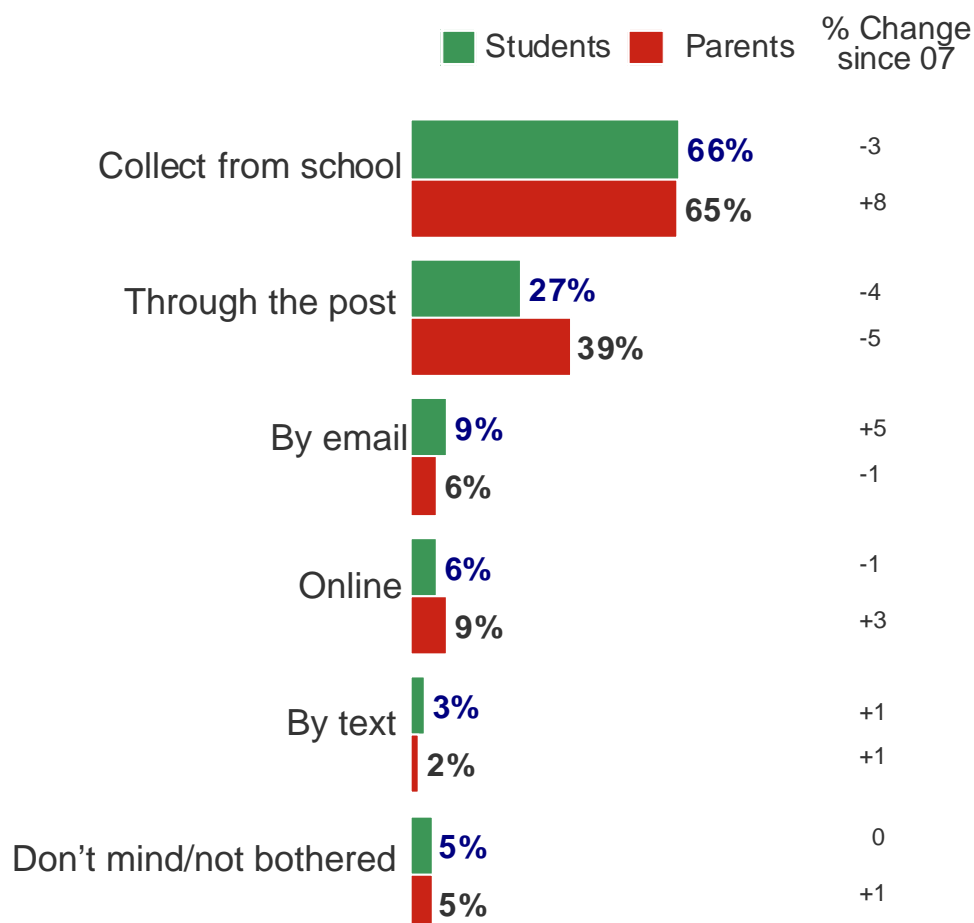
Collecting exam results

Views of parents and students

As was the case in 2007, both students and parents say that their preferred method of receiving exam results is to collect them from school (66% and 65% respectively). Support for collecting exam results from school has increased among parents since 2007 (57%) while a preference for receiving results via the post has gone down (39% compared with 44% in 2007). Post remains the second most popular method of receiving results for students (27%) but the proportion saying they would like to receive their results by email has increased slightly since 2007 (nine per cent compared with four per cent in 2007).

Students and parents – collecting exam results

Q There are different ways that students may be able to receive their exam results, for example, collect from school, through the post, by text, by email or online. How do you think students should collect their exam results?



Base: Nov 2008, All students (152), and all parents (297); Nov 2007, All students (136), and all parents (292)

N.B. Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



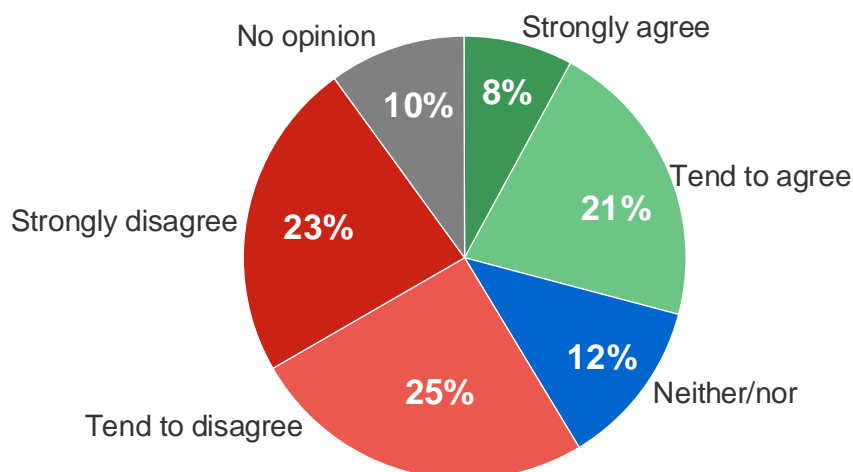
Enquiries about results services

Three in ten (29%) teachers say that they have to rely on enquiries about results services to get accurate results for their students, the same proportion as in 2007 (28%).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, teachers who feel that at least a quarter of GCSE students get the wrong grade are more likely than average to say they have to rely on enquiries about results services (43%), highlighting their concerns about grading in general.

Enquiries about results services

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I have to rely on enquiries about results services to get accurate results for my students



Base: All teachers (500), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



Among those who say they have to rely on enquiries about results services to get accurate marks for their students, the most frequently mentioned reason is that poor marking means that grades need to be appealed and papers remarked (17%). A similar proportion of teachers say it is because grades are often changed after remarks (16%).

Just over one in ten of these teachers say they rely on enquiries because they are the only place they can contact about results that they trust to be accurate, and because they have to use the service to ensure students get the grades they deserve (12% in both cases).

Information

Awareness of QCA and Ofqual

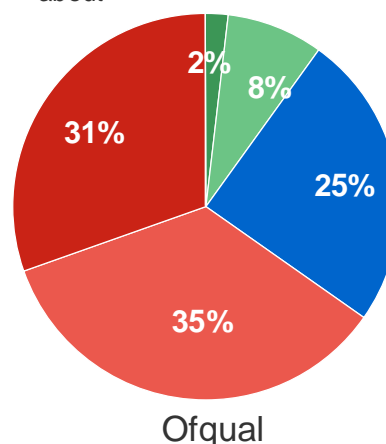
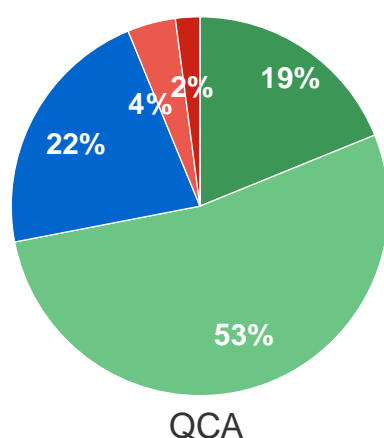
The vast majority of teachers are familiar⁸ with QCA (94%) with one in five (19%) saying that they know QCA very well. Four per cent admit they have heard of QCA but know nothing about them. Two per cent of teachers say they have never heard of QCA, though this increases to five per cent among teachers with five or less years of experience. Teachers with 16-25 years of teaching experience are more likely than average to say they know QCA very well (28%).

Given how new Ofqual is as an organisation, it is not surprising that familiarity is lower, with just over a third (35%) of teachers claiming to be familiar with Ofqual. One quarter of teachers (25%) say they know just a little about Ofqual, while eight per cent know a fair amount and two per cent know them very well. Just over a third (35%) of teachers say they have heard of Ofqual but know nothing about them, while three in ten (31%) have never heard of them. Teachers with five years or less experience and classroom or subject teachers are more likely to say they have never heard of Ofqual (48% and 45% respectively).

Familiarity with QCA and Ofqual

Q How well do you know...a) QCA? b) Ofqual?

■ Know very well
 ■ Know a fair amount
 ■ Know just a little
 ■ Heard of but know nothing about
 ■ Never heard of



Base: All teachers (500), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



⁸ For the purpose of this report, being familiar with an organisation is classed as knowing at least a little about them.

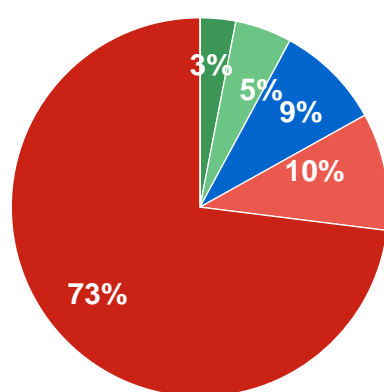
Familiarity with QCA is far lower among the general public than among teachers, as would be expected. Just 17% of the general public claim to be familiar with QCA; three per cent know QCA very well, five per cent know a fair amount while nine per cent know just a little. One in ten (10%) have heard of QCA but know nothing about it, while the majority (73%) have never heard of the organisation at all. Those from social groups AB are most likely to be familiar with QCA (27%).

The general public are less familiar with Ofqual than they are with QCA; four in five (80%) say they have never heard of them while familiarity with the organisation is just eight per cent. One in ten (11%) say they have heard of Ofqual but know nothing about them. Familiarity among parents and students is similar to that of the general public (19% and 21% respectively).

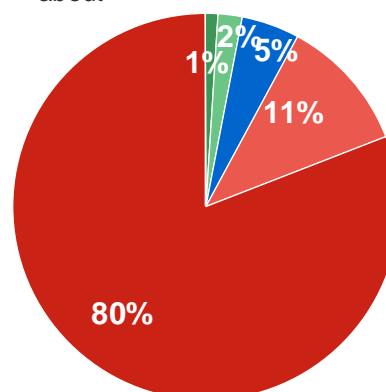
General public familiarity with QCA and Ofqual

Q How well do you know...a) QCA? b) Ofqual?

■ Know very well
 ■ Know a fair amount
 ■ Know just a little
 ■ Heard of but know nothing about
 ■ Never heard of



QCA



Ofqual

Base: All general public (1857), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



Awareness of Ofqual's status as the independent regulator

Although only 35% of teachers are familiar with Ofqual, 41% claim to be aware that Ofqual is the new independent regulator of qualifications and examinations in England when prompted. Three in five (59%) teachers are not aware of Ofqual's role.

Awareness of Ofqual's role is highest among teachers with 16-25 years experience or over 25 years experience (55% and 53% respectively), and teachers who are familiar with Diplomas also know more than average about what Ofqual do (51%), suggesting that these teachers are more informed across the board. Teachers with five years or

less experience of teaching and classroom or subject teachers are more likely than average to admit they do not know what Ofqual do (83% and 76% respectively).

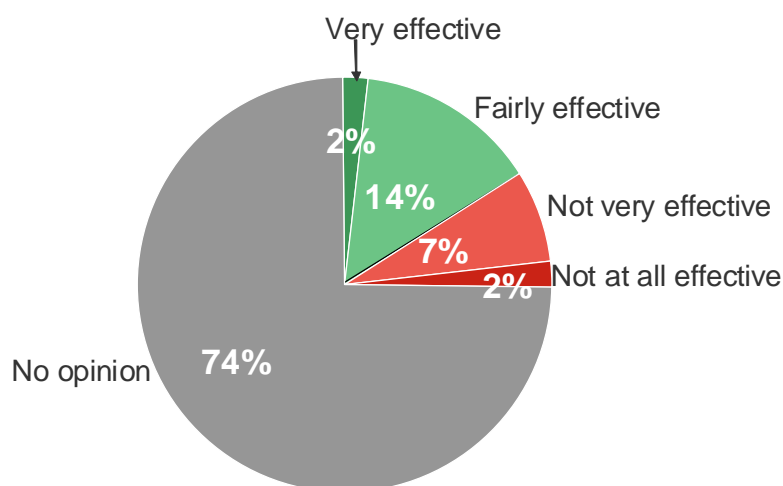
Nine per cent of the general public claim to be aware of Ofqual's status as the new independent regulator for qualifications and exams, but a majority of 88% say they did not know that this was the case. Awareness is highest among those educated to a postgraduate level (21%) or those with a first degree (17%). People in social class AB (16%) and those aged between 45 and 64 (14%) are also more likely to be aware of Ofqual's status.

Effectiveness of Ofqual

Almost three quarters (74%) of teachers do not have an opinion on how effective Ofqual is at regulating the examinations system. However, more teachers rate Ofqual as effective than ineffective (16% vs. nine percent). Those who are aware of Ofqual's status as the exams regulator are more positive than average: a quarter (26%) think Ofqual is effective at regulating the exams system. Teachers in Further Education colleges are also more positive than colleagues in secondary maintained schools (23% vs. 13%).

Effectiveness of Ofqual at regulating the exam system

Q In your opinion, how effective, if at all, is Ofqual at regulating the examinations system?



Base: All teachers (500), November 2008
Ipsos MORI



Information on exams for teachers

In this year's survey, the questions on receipt of information were revised to include Ofqual as an information source. These results are therefore not *directly* comparable with previous waves, which asked about information from QCA.

Three quarters (76%) of teachers say they received information about the changes being introduced to the A level from September 2008, with teachers with five years or less experience less likely to have received information on this than those with six years or more experience (51% vs. 82%).

Half (50%) of teachers recall receiving information on foundation and extended project qualifications, compared with slightly less than half (45%) who do not. Again, teachers with more experience are more likely to recall receiving information: three in five (59%) teachers with over 25 years experience say they have received information, compared to a third (32%) of teachers with five years or less experience.

Noticeably fewer teachers recall receiving information about how the new Diplomas will be marked and graded. A third (33%) say they have received information while three in five (61%) say they have not. The importance of experience can again be seen with two in five (42%) teachers with over 25 years experience recalling having received information compared to a quarter (24%) of those with five years or less experience.

Similar proportions of teachers say they have received information about how to appeal and how appeals work (43%) and about how standards are set and maintained year on year (43%).

Around half of teachers in independent schools (48%) recall having received information about the appeals process, significantly higher than the percentage in secondary maintained schools (37%). Classroom or subject teachers are less likely to recall having received information on standards than Heads of Year (54%).

The table below illustrates the pattern that teachers with five years or less experience are less likely to have received information from QCA or Ofqual.

Table J: Information from QCA or Ofqual by years' teaching experience

<i>Ever received information on...</i>	<5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16-25 yrs	25+ yrs
	%	%	%	%
<i>The changes to A levels introduced from September 2008</i>				
<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>	(61)	(71)	(89)	(111)
Yes	51	79	82	83
No	49	21	14	15
<i>Information on foundation, higher and extended project qualifications</i>				
<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>	(61)	(71)	(89)	(111)
Yes	32	51	51	59
No	65	46	40	38
<i>How the new Diplomas will be marked and graded</i>				
<i>Base: All teachers</i>	(125)	(101)	(110)	(164)
Yes	24	28	35	42
No	75	64	61	51
<i>How to appeal and how appeals work</i>				
<i>Base: All teachers</i>	(125)	(101)	(110)	(164)
Yes	24	38	52	55
No	74	58	43	40
<i>How standards are set and maintained year on year</i>				
<i>Base: All teachers</i>	(125)	(101)	(110)	(164)
Yes	37	44	43	47
No	59	50	54	46

Source: Ipsos MORI

All teachers N.B. A difference of at least ± 8 to 13 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

All A level teachers N.B. A difference of at least ± 13 to 21 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

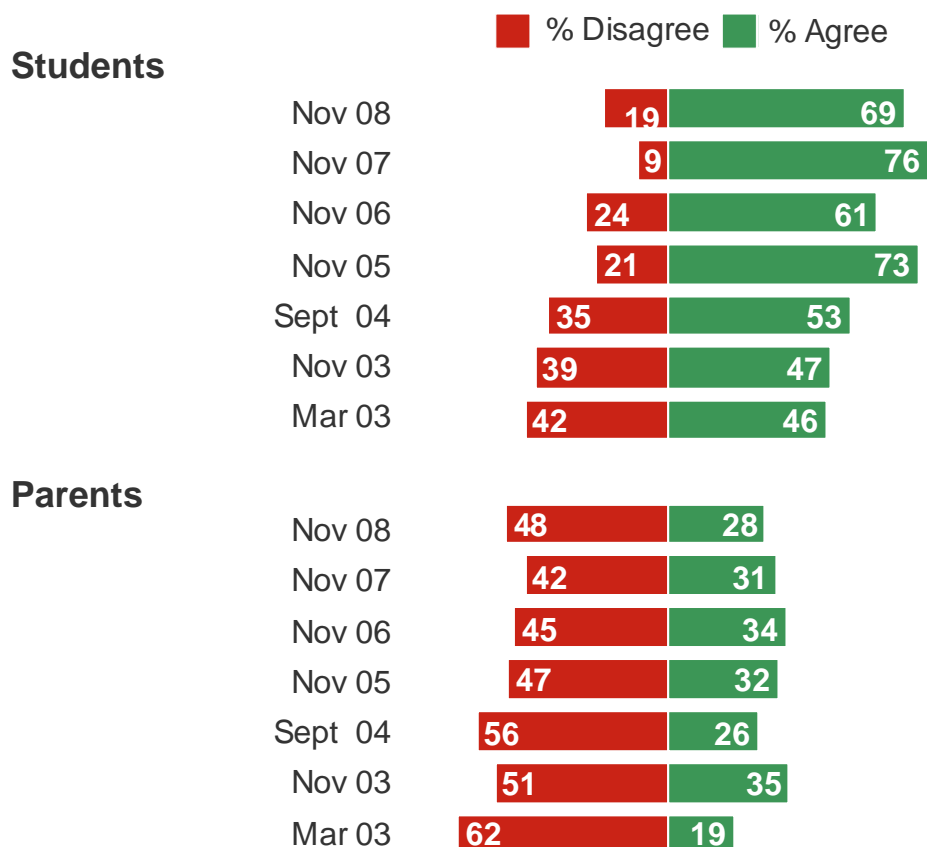
Information on A level exams for parents and students

Seven in ten (69%) students agree that they have the information they need about how A level exams are marked and graded. However, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of students who disagree they have the information they need: one in five (19%) this year compared with one in ten (nine per cent) in 2007.

As in previous waves, parents are considerably less likely than students to agree that they have the information they need about how A level exams are marked and graded: this may reflect parents' relatively lower level of involvement in their child's education at this level (i.e. compared to their involvement at GCSE stage).

Information on A level exams

Q To what extent do you agree with the following statement? 'I have the information I need about how the A level exams are marked and graded?'



Base: See footnote

N.B. **Parents:** A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; **Students:** A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



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⁹ Base: **Nov 2008**, All A level students with an interest in making and grading (88) and A level parents (243); **Nov 2007**, All A level students with an interest in marking and grading (69) and A level parents (237); **Nov 2006**, All A level students (84) and A level parents (256); **Nov 2005**, All A level students (73) and A level parents (273); **Sep 2004**, All A level students (80) and A level parents (303); **Nov 2003**, All A level students (119) and A level parents (315); **Mar 2003**, All A level students (92) and A level parents (293)

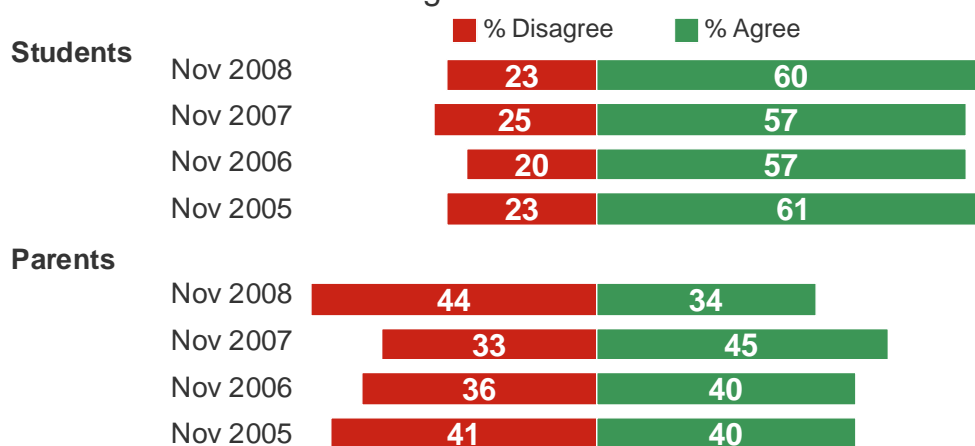
Information on GCSE exams for parents and students

Three in five (60%) students agree that they have the information they need about how GCSE exams are marked and graded, in line with previous waves. A significant minority of 23% students disagree that they have the information they need.

Parents on the other hand are far less likely to agree that they have the information they need about how GCSEs are marked and graded, and agreement has dropped from 45% in 2007 to just 34% this year.

Information on GCSE exams

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I have the information I need about how the GCSE exams are marked and graded.'



Base: All GCSE students (Nov 2008 = 78, Nov 2007 = 74, Nov 2006 = 74, Nov 2005 = 84) and GCSE parents (Nov 2008 = 241, Nov 2007 = 235, Nov 2006 = 242, Nov 2005 = 262).
 N.B. Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;
 Students: A difference of between ± 10 to 16 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Ipsos MORI



Trusted sources of information

Teachers' views

The most trusted source of information about exams for teachers remains colleagues, with nine in ten (92%) saying they would trust teachers in their school or other schools. There are also high levels of trust in professional and central organisations, including QCA whom 90% of teachers trust as a source of information. Trust in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has risen by five percentage points to 72%, partially rectifying the fall seen between 2006 and 2007 (a fall of 14 percentage points from 80% to 66%); this might have been at least in part due to the change in name from DfES to DCSF in that year.

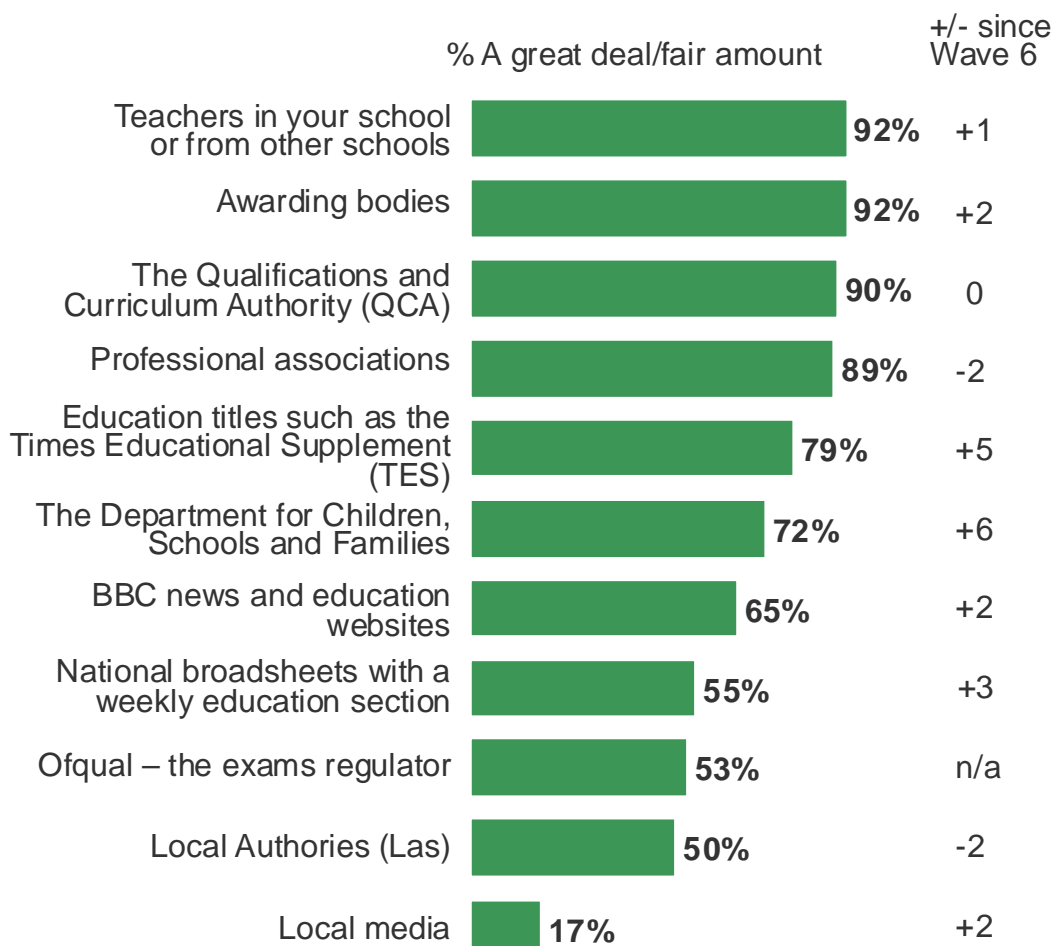
Trust in the media as a source of information about exams remains low. Local media is seen as particularly untrustworthy with only 16% of teachers saying they would trust it as a source of information about exams.

For the first time this year, teachers were asked to rate how much they trust Ofqual as a source of information about exams. Trust in Ofqual is lower than some of the other sources at 52%, perhaps not surprising given that familiarity with the organisation is low. A third of teachers (33%) say that they do not know if they would trust Ofqual.

Reassuringly, teachers who are aware of Ofqual's status as the exams regulator are significantly more likely to trust the organisation than those who do not know about its role (67% vs. 42%) as whole.

Trusted sources of information – teachers

Q How much, if at all, do you trust each of the following as a source of information about exams?



Base: All teachers (Nov 2008 = 500, Nov 2007 = 500, Nov 2006 = 506,)

N.B. Parents: A difference of between ± 4 to 6 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance

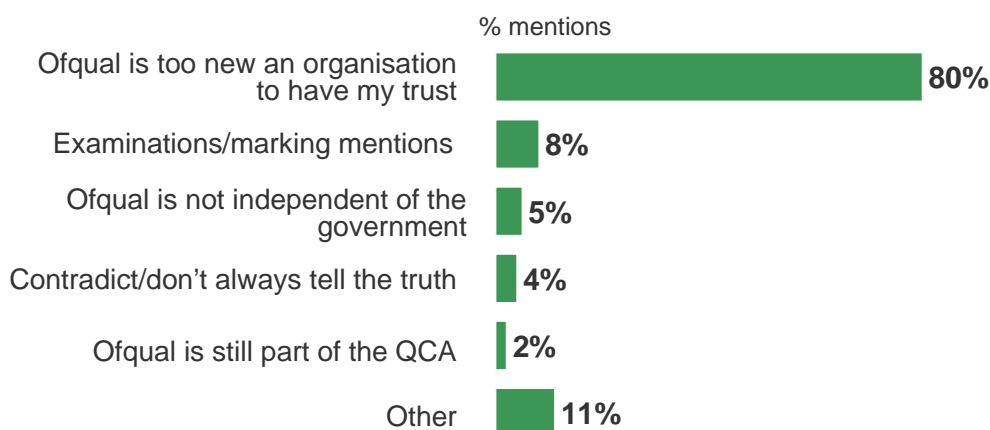
Ipsos MORI



Those who said they would not trust Ofqual as a source of information were asked why this was the case, and four out of five (80%) responded that it is too new an organisation to have their trust. Other reasons cited were issues with exams and marking (eight per cent) and because it is not independent of the government (five per cent).

Teachers' reasons for not trusting Ofqual

Q You said that you don't trust Ofqual as a source of information about exams, why is that?



Base: All teachers who do not trust Ofqual as a source of information about exams (75), November 2008

Ipsos MORI



Parents' and students' views

Trust in most sources of information about exams among students and parents is broadly similar to last year, with schools and teachers remaining the most trusted sources for both groups (85% and 87% respectively).

Trust in exam boards remains fairly high for both students (76%) and parents (67%) despite an indicatively small (six percentage points) decline since 2007. However, trust in the QCA has dropped considerably among parents since 2007 (from 65% in 2007 to 44% this year); it is possible that the problems with the marking of national curriculum tests that received considerable media attention may have contributed to this. Trust in the media has also fallen for both students (26% compared with 35% in 2007) and parents (22% compared with 29% in 2007).

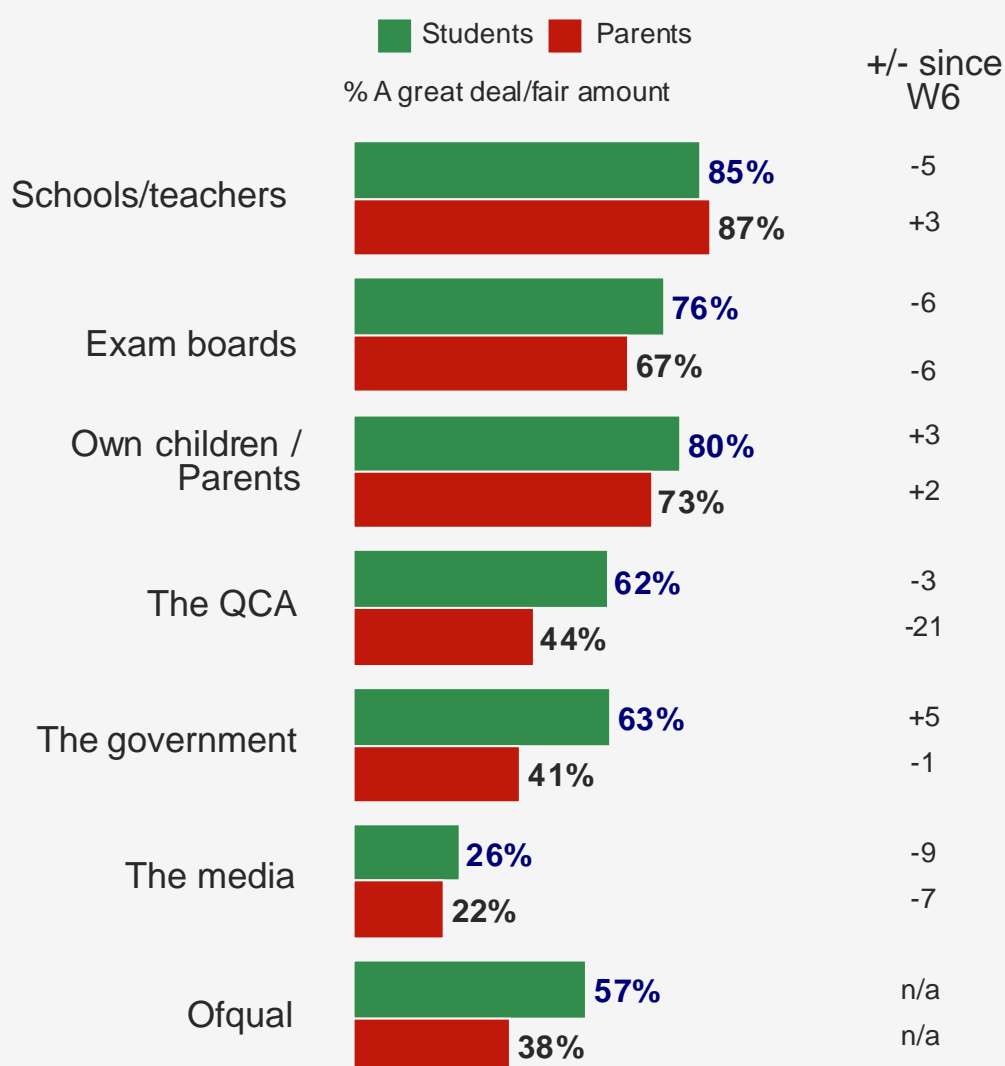
As with the survey of teachers, parents and students were for the first time asked how much they trust Ofqual as a source of information about exams. A much higher proportion of students than parents say they trust Ofqual, but a large proportion of both

groups don't know (23% and 35% respectively). Nearly three in five (57%) students say they trust Ofqual, and one in five (20%) say they do not.

As with the previous two waves, trust in the Government is low, particularly among parents. Two in five (41%) parents say they trust the government as a source of information, rising to 63% among students.

Trusted sources of information – students and parents

Q How much, if at all, do you trust each of the following as a source of information about exams?



Base: Nov 2008, All students (152), and all parents (297); Nov 2007, All students (136), and all parents (292)

N.B. Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance; Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

Organisations most likely to be contacted in light of concerns in the fairness of the examination system

Students and parents were asked how likely they would be to contact various organisations should they have concerns about the examination grades they (or their son/daughter) had received, or about the fairness of the examination system. For the first time this year Ofqual was included in the list of organisations.

Findings for this wave are similar across the board to those in 2007. Both students and parents say they likely to contact their school or teacher (85% and 87% respectively) or the exam boards (69% and 72% respectively) if they have concerns.

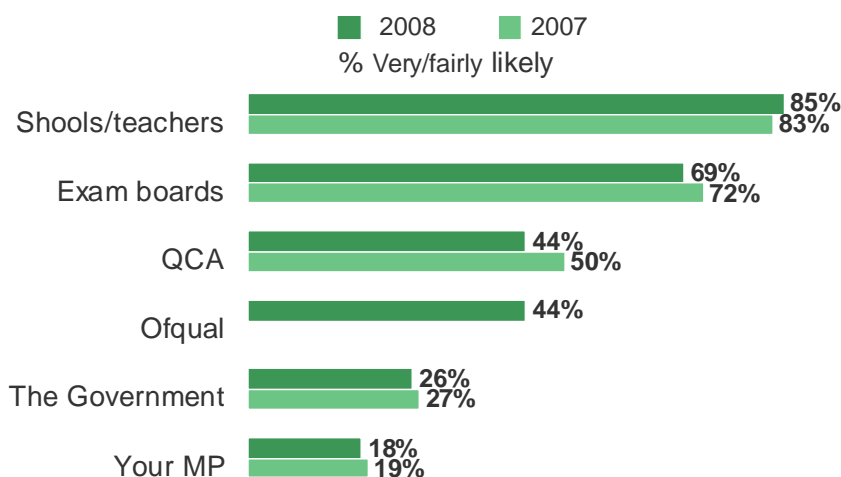
There has been an indicative fall in the proportion of students and parents who say they would contact QCA (both down six percentage points to 44% and 48% respectively), possibly reflecting the decline in trust in QCA as a source of information about exams among parents.

Two in five (44%) students and half (51%) of parents say they would contact “Ofqual – the exams regulator” if they had concerns about the exams system, similar to the proportion who say they would contact QCA.

As in previous years, students and parents are much less likely to say they would contact the government or their MP than other organisations if they had any concerns about these issues.

Students - Organisations to contact if concerns about the exam system

Q If you had a concern about the examination grades you had received or the fairness of the examination system, how likely or unlikely would you be to contact each of the following?



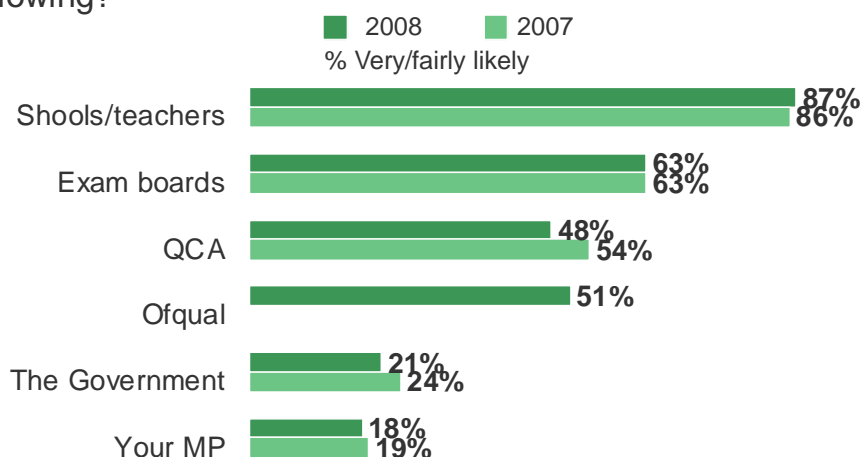
Base: All students (152 in Nov 2008, 136 in Nov 2007, 138 in Nov 2006)
 N.B. A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

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Parents - Organisations to contact if concerns about the exam system

Q If you had a concern about the examination grades your son/daughter had received or the fairness of the examination system, how likely or unlikely would you be to contact each of the following?



Base: All parents (297 in Nov 2008, 292 in Nov 2007)
N.B. A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

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Organisations acting in best interests of students

Parents, students and the general public were asked the extent to which they think certain organisations act in the best interests of students. For the first time this year Ofqual was included in the list.

As was found in 2007, students, parents and the general public are more likely to agree that exam boards act in the best interests of students than the QCA, Ofqual or the Government.

Overall, 45% of the general public think exam boards act in the best interest of students. Similarly, 48% of parents agree exam boards act in the best interest of students. Nearly six in ten (58%) students agree with this. However, parents and students were slightly more positive about exam boards last year (52% and 66% respectively agreed that they act in the best interests of students).

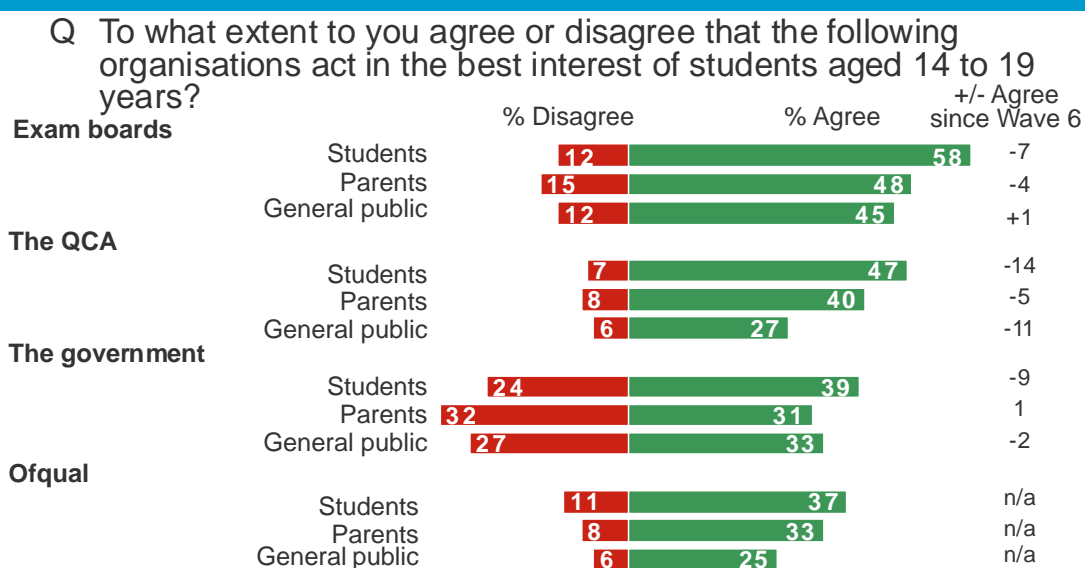
A similar trend emerges with regard to the QCA, with fewer people this year believing they act in students' best interests than last year (27% of the general public this year compared with 37% in 2007, 40% of parents this year vs. 45%¹⁰ in 2007 and 47% of students this year vs. 61% in 2007). The decrease among the general public and

¹⁰ An indicative fall as this is not statistically significant due to the small base size.

students is statistically significant, and may again reflect concerns about the marking of national curriculum tests.

Results for Ofqual highlight the importance that awareness plays in trusting an organisation to do the right thing. In total, 33% of parents and 37% of students agree that Ofqual acts in the best interests of students, compared to a quarter of the general public (25%) who are less likely to be aware of Ofqual.

Organisations acting in the best interest of students



Base: All students (152 in 2008, 136 in 2007), all parents (297 in 2008, 292 in 2007) and all general public (1,857 in 2008, 1,765 in 2007).
 N.B. General Public: A difference of between ± 2 to 3 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;
 Parents: A difference of between ± 5 to 8 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance;
 Students: A difference of between ± 7 to 12 percentage points between waves 6 and 7 is required for statistical significance.

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Appendix A

Methodology – previous waves

All seven waves of the research were carried out using Ipsos MORI's general public omnibus and a telephone survey amongst teachers. Details of the methodology in each wave are as follows:

Wave 1

Representative samples of the following groups were interviewed between 20th February and 14th March 2003, specifically:

- 500 **teachers** of AS level, A level or Vocational A level in England; and
- 1,714 **members of the general public aged 15+** in England.

As there was a need within the scope of the general public research to examine the views of those directly involved in the A level system, the general public sample was boosted with extra interviews among:

- 92 **students** in England who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels; and
- 293 **parents** of children in England who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels.

Wave 2

A representative sample of teachers, the general public, parents and students were interviewed between 23rd October and 14th November 2003, specifically:

- 250 **teachers** of AS level, A level or Vocational A level in England;
- 1,766 **members of the general public aged 15+** in England;
- 119 **students** who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels; and
- 315 **parents** of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels.

Wave 3

A representative sample of teachers, the general public parents and students were interviewed between 13th September and 12th October 2004, specifically:

- 250 **teachers** of AS level, A level or Vocational A level in England;
- 1,720 **members of the general public aged 15+** in England;
- 80 **students** who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels; and
- 303 **parents** of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels.

Wave 4

A representative sample of teachers, the general public, parents and students were interviewed between 3rd and 25th November 2005, specifically:

- 504 **teachers** of AS level, A level or Vocational A level, GCSEs or Vocational GCSEs in England;
- 1,974 **members of the general public aged 15+** in England;
- 137 **students** who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs; and
- 346 **parents** of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs.

Wave 5

A representative sample of teachers and the general public, parents and students were interviewed between 6th and 24th November 2006, specifically:

- 506 **teachers** of AS level, A level or Vocational A level, GCSEs or Vocational GCSEs in England;
- 1,964 **members of the general public aged 15+** in England;
- 138 **students** who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs; and
- 324 **parents** of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs.

Wave 6

A representative sample of teachers and the general public, parents and students were interviewed between 12th and 30th November 2007, specifically:

- 500 **teachers** of AS level, A level or GCSEs in England;
- 1,765 **members of the general public aged 15+** in England;
- 136 **students** who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs; and

292 **parents** of children who are just about to take, are currently taking, or have recently taken, A levels and/or GCSEs.

Appendix B

Sample Profile¹¹

Sample profile – Omnibus General Public	Unweighted		Weighted
	N	%	%
Total	1,857	100	100
Gender			
Male	900	48	48
Female	957	52	52
Age			
15-24	329	18	18
25-34	283	15	15
35-44	350	19	20
45-54	283	15	17
55-64	256	14	13
65+	356	19	17
Social class			
AB	349	19	26
C1	620	33	30
C2	448	24	21
DE	440	24	24
Work status			
Working (full or part-time)	857	46	55
Not working	1000	54	45
Region			
North East	147	8	6
North West	266	14	14
Yorks & Humber	237	13	9
East Midlands	84	5	5
West Midlands	228	12	13
South West	156	8	10
Eastern	177	10	12
London	339	18	15
South East	251	14	17

¹¹ A detailed profile of respondents who participated in the March 2003, Wave 1 study, the November 2003, Wave 2 study, the September 2004, Wave 3, the November 2005, Wave 4 study, the November 2006, Wave 5 study and the November 2007, Wave 6 study can be found in the previous reports, provided in separate volumes.

Sample profile – Omnibus Parents	Unweighted Only	
	N	%
Total	297	100
Parental status		
Parent with child in yrs 10-11 and intends to take A level exams	187	63
Parent with child in their 1 st /2 nd year of A levels	61	21
Parent with child who has taken A levels in the last 2 years	47	16
Parent with child in yrs 10-11 and due to take GCSE exams	194	65
Parent with child who has taken GCSEs in the last 2 years	106	36
<hr/>		
Sample profile – Omnibus 15-19 year olds	Unweighted Only	
	N	%
Total	152	100
Student status		
Currently in KS4 and intends to take A level exams	12	8
Currently studying for A levels	62	41
Completed A levels in the last 2 years	24	16
Currently in KS4 and will be taking GCSE exams	8	5
Completed GCSEs in the last 2 years	98	64

Sample profile - Teachers	Unweighted		Weighted
	N	%	%
Total	500	100	100
A level/GCSE teacher			
Teaches A level	332	66	64
Teaches GCSEs	388	78	77
Level of responsibility			
Classroom/ subject teacher/ lecturer	129	26	26
Member of SMT/ leadership team	122	24	25
Course leader	51	10	10
Head of year	32	6	6
Subject manager	52	10	10
Curriculum co-ordinator	31	6	6
Examinations officer	14	3	3
Programme Manager	16	3	3
Deputy Head	16	3	3
Head of department	16	3	3
Director of studies	8	2	2
Other	14	3	3
Years in teaching			
NQT/1 st year in teaching	25	5	5
1-5 years	100	20	20
6-10 years	41	8	8
11-15 years	60	12	12
16-25 years	110	22	22
Over 25 years	164	33	33
School/ College status			
Secondary maintained	166	33	33
Independent school	234	47	47
FE/ Sixth Form College	100	20	20

Appendix C

Statistical Reliability

Because a sample, rather than the entire population, was interviewed the percentage results are subject to sampling tolerances – which vary with the size of the sample and the percentage figure concerned. For example, for a question where 50% of the people in a (weighted) sample of 1,857 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more than two percentage points, plus or minus, from the result that would have been obtained from a census of the entire population (using the same procedures). The tolerances that may apply in this report are given in the table below.

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels (at the 95% confidence level)

Size of sample or sub-group on which survey result is based	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
152 (i.e. all students)	5	7	8
297 (i.e. all parents)	3	5	6
500 (i.e. all teachers)	3	4	4
1,857 (i.e. respondents in England)	1	2	2

Source: Ipsos MORI

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results between different elements of the sample. A difference must be of at least a certain size to be statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons between sub-groups.

Differences required for significance at the 95% confidence level at or near these percentages

	Size of sample on which survey result is based	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
W1 v W7	W1 students (92) v W7 students (152)	8	12	13
	W1 teachers (500) v W7 teachers (500)	4	6	6
	W1 parents (293) v W7 parents (297)	5	7	8
	W1 members of the general public (1,714) v W7 members of the general public (1,857)	2	3	3
W2 v W7	W2 students (119) v W7 students (152)	7	11	12
	W2 teachers (250) v W7 teachers (500)	5	7	8
	W2 parents (315) v W7 parents (297)	5	7	8
	W6 members of the general public (1,766) v W7 members of the general public (1,857)	2	3	3
W3 v W7	W3 students (80) v W7 students (152)	8	13	14
	W3 teachers (250) v W7 teachers (500)	5	7	8
	W3 parents (303) v W7 parents (297)	5	7	8
	W3 members of the general public (1,720) v W7 members of the general public (1,857)	2	3	3
W4 v W7	W4 students (137) v W7 students (152)	7	11	12
	W4 teachers (504) v W7 teachers (500)	4	6	6
	W4 parents (346) v W7 parents (297)	5	7	8
	W4 members of the general public (1,974) v W7 members of the general public (1,857)	2	3	3
W5 v V	W5 students (138) v W7 students (152)	7	11	12

W7	W5 teachers (506) v W7 teachers (500)	4	6	6
	W5 parents (324) v W7 parents (297)	5	7	8
	W5 members of the general public (1,964) v W7 members of the general public (1,857)	2	3	3
W6 V W7	W6 students (136) v W7 students (152)	7	11	12
	W6 teachers (500) v W7 teachers (500)	4	6	6
	W6 parents (292) v W7 parents (297)	5	7	8
	W6 members of the general public (1,765) v W7 members of the general public (1,857)	2	3	3

Source: Ipsos MORI

Appendix D

Definition of Social Grades

The grades detailed below are the social class definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, and are standard on all surveys carried out by Ipsos MORI.

Social Grades			
	Social Class	Occupation of Chief Income Earner	Percentage of Population
A	Upper Middle Class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional	2.9
B	Middle Class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional	18.9
C1	Lower Middle Class	Supervisor or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional	27.0
C2	Skilled Working Class	Skilled manual workers	22.6
D	Working Class	Semi and unskilled manual workers	16.9
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	State pensioners, etc, with no other earnings	11.7

Appendix E

Marked-up Questionnaires

Confidence in the A Level and GCSE Examination System Teachers' Survey Weighted Topline Results

This topline shows the results from seven waves of telephone surveys with teachers relating to their perceptions of the A level and GCSE exam systems.

- For the first wave: 500 telephone interviews were conducted with a representative sample of teachers of AS level, A level or Vocational A level, in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 3rd - 14th March 2003.
 - For the second wave: 250 telephone interviews were conducted with teachers of AS Level, A Level or Vocational A Level in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 3rd - 14th November 2003.
 - For the third wave: 250 telephone interviews were conducted with teachers of AS Level, A Level or Vocational A Level in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 13th – 23rd September 2004.
 - For the fourth wave: 504 telephone interviews were conducted with teachers of GCSEs, AS Level, A Level or Vocational A Level in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 9th – 25th November 2005.
 - For the fifth wave: 506 telephone interviews were conducted with teachers of GCSEs, AS Level, A Level or Vocational A Level in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 6th – 24th November 2006.
 - For the sixth wave: 500 telephone interviews were conducted with teachers of GCSEs, AS Level or A Level, in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 12th November – 3rd December 2007.
 - **For the seventh wave: 500 telephone interviews were conducted with GCSEs, AS Level or A Level teachers in a representative sample of schools and colleges throughout England between 6th November – 3rd December 2008.**
 - Demographic questions are shown at the beginning of the topline.
 - Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated.
 - An asterisk (*) represents a value of less than one half of one per cent, but greater than zero.
 - Where results do not sum to 100%, this is due to multiple responses, computer rounding, or the exclusion of 'don't know/not stated' responses.
 - Data have been weighted by Government Office Region (GOR) to the known profile of schools and colleges in England.
 - *As a guide, results need to differ by more than 6% between waves to show statistically significant differences.*
-

Q1. Which of the following qualifications do you personally currently teach?

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
AS level	64	59	58	54	99	99	97
A2 level	58	-	-	-	-	-	-
GCSEs	77	79	83	82	-	-	-
Diplomas	4	-	-	-	-	-	-

Q2. What is your current, most senior level of responsibility?

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Classroom or subject teacher/ lecturer	26	23	29	25	24	27	17
Member of the senior management or leadership team	25	25	21	12	8	23	5
Course leader	10	9	20	6	8	10	17
Head of year	6	9	8	18	20	29	42
Subject manager/head of subject	10	12	8	18	5	-	4
Curriculum co-ordinator	6	10	7	8	7	8	5
Other	17	2	3	1	3	2	8
Don't know	-	-	-	-	3	-	-

Q3. How many years' teaching experience do you have?

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
NQT/first year of teaching	5	2	3	2	1	4	*
1-5 years	20	16	18	14	20	18	13
6-10 years	8	13	12	15	13	13	17
11-15 years	12	13	10	13	11	9	12
16-25 years	22	23	24	22	26	24	23
Over 25 years	33	33	33	34	30	33	34

Q4.a How well do you know QCA?

	%
Know very well	19
Know a fair amount	53
Know just a little	22
Heard of but know nothing about	4
Never heard of	2

Q4.b How well do you know Ofqual?

	%
Know very well	2
Know a fair amount	8
Know just a little	25
Heard of but know nothing about	35
Never heard of	31

Q5. Ofqual is the new independent regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. Their aim is to ensure that learners get the results they deserve, and that the qualifications they receive count, both now and in the future.

Before today, were you aware that Ofqual were the new independent regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England?

	%
Yes, I was aware of this	41
No, I was not aware of this	59
Don't know	*

Q6. In your opinion, how effective, if at all, is Ofqual at regulating the examinations system?

	%
Very effective	2
Fairly effective	14
Not very effective	7
Not at all effective	2
No opinion	74

Q7. **I am going to read out some groups of people that could provide you with information about how exams are marked and graded. For each one, please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams.¹²**

A Teachers in your school or from other schools			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	39	41	43	47	46	51	37
	A fair amount	%	53	50	50	47	49	39	54
	Not very much	%	4	7	5	4	4	8	7
	Not at all	%	1	1	1	*	*	1	1
	Don't Know	%	3	2	2	1	1	2	2
B The Department for Children, schools and families (DCSF) – previously the DfES ¹³			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	24	26	40	37	27	30	28
	A fair amount	%	48	40	40	42	54	45	48
	Not very much	%	18	20	13	12	13	19	15
	Not at all	%	6	8	3	6	4	5	5
	Don't Know	%	5	7	5	3	3	2	5
C Ofqual – the exams regulator ¹⁴			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
	A fair amount	%	32	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Not very much	%	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Not at all	%	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Don't Know	%	33	-	-	-	-	-	-

¹² Please note that 2005 -2008 data includes interviews with GCSE teachers, who were surveyed for the fourth time this year. Data previous to 2005 is based only on interviews with A level teachers.

¹³ Asked in 2003-6 as 'The Department for Education & Skills (DfES)

¹⁴ Asked for the first time this year (2008).

D The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	46	55	54	56	42	43	39
	A fair amount	%	44	35	35	36	48	46	48
	Not very much	%	7	5	6	4	6	8	8
	Not at all	%	1	2	1	2	1	2	3
	Don't Know	%	2	2	3	2	3	2	3
E Awarding bodies			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	55	59	59	61	45	44	62
	A fair amount	%	37	31	32	32	43	42	32
	Not very much	%	6	7	6	4	9	10	4
	Not at all	%	*	1	2	2	2	2	1
	Don't Know	%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
F Local Authorities (LAs) ¹⁵			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	10	14	15	14	10	15	9
	A fair amount	%	40	39	40	42	46	34	36
	Not very much	%	28	26	22	24	24	24	25
	Not at all	%	11	14	8	11	7	12	15
	Don't Know	%	10	8	15	9	13	15	15
G Education titles such as the Times Educational Supplement (TES)			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	21	16	18	22	19	20	12
	A fair amount	%	58	58	59	56	60	55	63
	Not very much	%	16	18	18	16	19	17	18
	Not at all	%	3	5	3	5	1	4	5
	Don't Know	%	2	3	2	2	1	4	2

¹⁵ Asked in 2003-6 as 'Local Education Authorities (LEAs)

H National broadsheets with a weekly education section such as the Guardian and the Independent			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	7	6	7	8	9	11	5
	A fair amount	%	48	46	49	46	54	39	43
	Not very much	%	34	34	33	31	28	34	36
	Not at all	%	9	9	6	11	7	13	13
	Don't Know	%	3	5	4	4	3	4	2
I BBC news and education websites			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	9	12	14	11	13	14	7
	A fair amount	%	56	51	54	60	52	46	49
	Not very much	%	28	27	25	18	26	23	30
	Not at all	%	6	6	4	9	6	10	9
	Don't Know	%	1	4	4	3	3	7	5
J Local media (radio, TV and newspapers)			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	1	1	1	1	2	-	-
	A fair amount	%	15	14	14	13	18	10	5
	Not very much	%	53	52	53	49	48	46	48
	Not at all	%	28	31	31	37	32	43	46
	Don't Know	%	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
K Professional associations – either subject or general			Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	A great deal	%	38	44	45	44	37	44	36
	A fair amount	%	51	47	47	49	52	48	54
	Not very much	%	6	4	5	4	8	6	4
	Not at all	%	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
	Don't Know	%	3	3	2	1	3	2	3

Q8. You said that you don't trust Ofqual as a source of information about exams, why is that?

	%
Ofqual is too new an organisation to have my trust	80
Examination/Marking Mentions	8
Ofqual is not independent of the government	5
Contradict/don't always tell the truth	4
Ofqual is still part of the QCA	2
Other	11
Don't know	-

Q9. Can you tell me whether you have ever received information from the QCA relating to the following issues?

<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>		(332)	(294)
A Information about the changes to A levels being introduced from September 2008		Nov 2008	Nov 2007
		%	%
Yes		76	69
No		22	28
Don't know		2	3

<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>		(332)
B Information on foundation, higher and extended project qualifications		Nov 2008
		%
Yes		50
No		45
Don't know		5

<i>Base: All teachers</i>		(500)	(500)
C How the new Diplomas will be marked and graded		Nov 2008	Nov 2007
		%	%
Yes		33	23
No		61	72
Don't know		5	5

<i>Base: All teachers</i> ¹⁶		(500)	(500)	(295)	(281)	(250)
D How to appeal and how appeals work		Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004
		%	%	%	%	%
Yes		43	49	55	52	51
No		53	49	40	43	47
Don't know		4	3	4	5	2

<i>Base: All teachers</i> ¹⁷		(500)	(500)	(295)	(281)	(250)
E How standards are set and maintained year-on-year		Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004
		%	%	%	%	%
Yes		43	42	33	38	36
No		52	53	60	55	59
Don't know		6	4	7	7	5

¹⁶ Please note that 2005 -2008 data includes interviews with GCSE teachers, who were surveyed for the fourth time this year. Data previous to 2005 is based only on interviews with A level teachers.

¹⁷ Please note that 2005 -2008 data includes interviews with GCSE teachers, who were surveyed for the fourth time this year. Data previous to 2005 is based only on interviews with A level teachers.

Q10. Do you have any concerns about the current A level examinations system?
If so, what are they?

<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>	(333) Nov 2008 %	(294) Nov 2007 %	(295) Nov 2006 %	(281) Nov 2005 %	(250) Sept 2004 %
Incorrect grading and marking of exam papers	17	20	16	11	21
Examinations/curriculum is too easy/too many re-takes	13	-	-	-	-
Too many changes to the curriculum/syllabus	7	-	-	-	-
Lack of information/ knowledge about standards	7	2	6	4	6
Heavy workload	5	6	10	12	15
Concerns about/problems with coursework	4	-	-	-	-
Inconsistency in grading and marking exam papers	4	-	-	-	-
Issues with A/S & A- Level structure/abolish A/S levels	4	-	-	-	-
Concerns about introducing an A* grade at A level	3	-	-	-	-
Grade inflation/some worth more than others	3	-	-	-	-
Lack of/inexperienced staff/teachers/resources	3	-	-	-	-
Timetabling of exams	3	4	7	7	13
Too much pressure/ stress on students	3	1	4	11	11
Diplomas replacing A-levels/becoming to skill based	2	-	-	-	-
Increasing gap between GCSE/A levels/not enough preparation for A levels	2	-	-	-	-
Some are harder/more complicated than others	2	-	-	-	-
Too many exams	2	7	12	13	16
Ability of the system to cope with large numbers of papers	1	1	2	3	4
Accessibility for less academic students/ stretch at ability range	1	-	-	-	-
Increasing Modular content/concerns about Modular set up	1	-	-	-	-
Individual subject issues (e.g. too many sciences/content of courses etc)	1	-	-	-	-
Not happy/problems with online marking/ electronic marking	1	-	-	-	-
Removal of one of the exams/intermediate	1	-	-	-	-
Students receive too much help with coursework from teachers/parents	1	-	-	-	-
The A level qualification is being undermined	1	-	-	-	-
The outcome of an enquiry or appeal about a result	1	2	-	-	-
Other	3	9	8	10	3
No concerns	38	35	26	25	21
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1

Q11. Have parents ever voiced concerns about the A level system to you, and if so, what are their main concerns?

Base: All A level teachers

	(333) Nov 2008 %	(294) Nov 2007 %	(295) Nov 2006 %	(281) Nov 2005 %	(250) Sept 2004 %	(250) Nov 2003 %	(500) Mar 2003 %
Problems about how exams are graded and marked	19	12	12	13	12	19	32
Lack of understanding of education system/changes etc	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
About A levels being unfair	4	1	1	4	*	1	5
How time consuming the work is for students	4	5	7	11	14	12	10
Too many exams/high workload	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dealing with their children's concerns about whether they will get good results or not	3	3	1	3	4	1	4
Difference between level of qualifications/A level/GCSE/NVQ	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Exams are too easy	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Worry about their child's grades/options	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
The breadth of subjects taken/too many subject choices	1	1	2	2	5	4	10
The outcome of an enquiry or appeal about a result	1	3	-	-	-	-	-
Suitability of subjects	1	1	1	*	2	2	1
Timetabling for the exams	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
No never voice concerns	60	62	61	57	57	35	28
Other	3	8	10	4	4	5	8

Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All A level teachers

	(333) Nov 2008 %	(294) Nov 2007 %	(295) Nov 2006 %	(281) Nov 2005 %	(250) Sept 2004 %	(250) Nov 2003 %	(500) Mar 2003 %
A. Most students taking A levels work hard	Strongly agree	29	25	23	29	24	20
	Tend to agree	42	46	46	45	49	53
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	10	11	12	11	9
	Tend to disagree	12	14	18	11	12	15
	Strongly disagree	2	4	2	3	2	2
	Don't know / no opinion	1	-	1	1	*	-
B. A Level students work harder today than ever before	Strongly agree	12	11	13	21	16	18
	Tend to agree	22	21	21	23	28	25
	Neither agree nor disagree	22	26	24	24	24	19
	Tend to disagree	30	24	28	23	21	26
	Strongly disagree	12	15	12	7	10	9
	Don't know / no opinion	2	3	2	2	2	3

C. Most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves	Strongly agree	27	26	34	40	29	25	24
	Tend to agree	51	52	45	47	54	53	58
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	7	4	5	4	9	5
	Tend to disagree	13	11	11	5	9	9	10
	Strongly disagree	2	2	4	2	3	3	2
	Don't know / no opinion	1	1	1	1	*	2	1

D. I have confidence in the A level system	Strongly agree	28	30	25	23	12	19	13
	Tend to agree	48	46	45	45	55	36	41
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	9	7	14	13	19	13
	Tend to disagree	10	12	17	14	13	17	23
	Strongly disagree	4	3	5	3	7	8	10
	Don't know / no opinion	1	1	1	1	1	1	*

Q13. Compared to last year, would you say that currently you have more confidence in the A level system, less confidence in the A level system or about the same level of confidence?

<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>		(333)	(294)	(295)	(281)	(250)
		Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004
		%	%	%	%	%
More		8	7	3	6	10
Less		16	12	13	12	12
About the same		73	80	82	81	77
Don't know		3	2	3	1	*

Q14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<i>Base: All A level teachers</i>		(333) Nov 2008 %	(294) Nov 2007 %	(295) Nov 2006 %	(281) Nov 2005 %	(250) Sept 2004 %	(250) Nov 2003 %	(500) Mar 2003 %
A. It is more important now than ever that students get a higher level educational qualification such as an A level	Strongly agree	60	57	57	54	49	49	52
	Tend to agree	21	26	20	22	29	27	28
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	6	8	12	10	7	6
	Tend to disagree	6	9	10	7	10	13	10
	Strongly disagree	3	2	5	3	2	3	2
	Don't know / no opinion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
B. Overall, the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain	Strongly agree	78	69	72	67	68	68	68
	Tend to agree	17	24	20	24	27	27	26
	Neither agree nor disagree	1	3	3	6	3	4	3
	Tend to disagree	2	2	4	2	2	2	2
	Strongly disagree	1	*	1	*	1	-	-
	Don't know / no opinion	-	1	-	1	-	-	*
C. I find the media's coverage of the announcement of A level results each year unhelpful	Strongly agree	51	61	60	70	70	65	58
	Tend to agree	27	24	20	16	19	23	26
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	5	8	5	4	5	6
	Tend to disagree	10	7	8	5	4	3	8
	Strongly disagree	5	2	4	3	2	2	2
	Don't know / no opinion	-	1	*	*	-	-	-

Q15. Do you have any concerns about the current GCSE examinations system?
If so, what are they?

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005
<i>Base: All GCSE teachers</i>	(389) %	(397) %	(420) %	(414) %
Incorrect grading and marking of exam papers	8	13	11	8
Examinations/curriculum is too easy/too many retakes	7	-	-	-
Heavy workload	5	9	11	19
Lack of information/ knowledge about standards	5	2	8	3
Individual subject issues (e.g. too many sciences/content of courses etc)	5	-	-	-
Concerns about/problems with coursework	4	-	-	-
Students receive too much help with coursework from teachers/parents	4	-	-	-
Too many exams	3	2	3	5
Inconsistency in grading and marking exam papers	3	2	2	10
Increasing gap between GCSE/A Levels/not enough preparation for A Levels	3	-	-	-
Increasing modular content/concerns about Modular set up	3	-	-	-
Ability of the system to cope with large numbers of papers	2	1	-	2
Accessibility for less academic students/stretch at ability range	2	-	-	-
Difference/comparison between exam boards	2	-	-	-
Tiering issues	2	-	-	-
Outcome of an enquiry or appeal about a result	1	*	-	-
Timetabling of exams	1	2	-	3
Too much pressure/ stress on students	1	2	2	6
Diplomas replacing qualification/becoming too skill based	1	-	-	-
Grade inflation/some worth more than others	1	-	-	-
Removal of one of the exams/intermediate	1	*	-	-
Some are harder/more complicated than others	1	-	-	-
The GCSE qualification is being undermined	1	-	-	-
Lack of/inexperienced staff/teachers/resources	*	-	-	-
Other	5	8	12	9
No concerns	43	40	26	30
Don't know	1	1	2	1

Q16. Have parents ever voiced concerns about the GCSE system to you, and if so, what are their main concerns?

<i>Base: All GCSE teachers</i>	Nov 2008 (389) %	Nov 2007 (397) %	Nov 2006 (420) %	Nov 2005 (414) %
Problems about how exams are graded and marked	12	6	5	7
Coursework issues	5	-	-	-
How time consuming the work is for students	4	5	7	13
Dealing with their children's concerns about whether they will get good results or not	3	2	1	3
Suitability of subjects	3	1	3	1
About GCSEs being unfair	2	1	2	2
The breadth of subjects taken / too many subject choices	2	2	1	5
Exams/courses are too easy	2	-	2	-
Gap between GCSE & A Levels/don't prepare for A Levels/becoming of less worth	2	*	-	-
Too many exams/high workload	2	1	-	-
The outcome of an enquiry or appeal about a result	1	1	-	-
Don't understand the system/too complicated	1	-	-	1
Modules	1	-	-	-
Requirements of exams	1	-	-	-
Other exam issues (timetabling/some easier than others etc)	1	-	-	-
Other	3	10	8	6
No concerns	62	66	72	64

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"I have confidence in the GCSE system"

<i>Base: All GCSE teachers</i>	(389) Nov 2008 %	(397) Nov 2007 %	(420) Nov 2006 %	(414) Nov 2005 %
Strongly agree	26	26	19	21
Tend to agree	50	50	47	56
Neither agree nor disagree	9	11	14	12
Tend to disagree	11	10	15	8
Strongly disagree	3	2	4	3
Don't know	*	*	1	1

Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

a

“I have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers”

Base: All GCSE teachers

	(389) Nov 2008 %	(397) Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	18	16
Tend to agree	45	51
Neither agree nor disagree	9	9
Tend to disagree	20	13
Strongly disagree	8	10
Don't know	*	1

Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

b

“The accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers has decreased over the past two years”

Base: All GCSE teachers

	(389) Nov 2008 %	(397) Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	13	10
Tend to agree	20	21
Neither agree nor disagree	14	15
Tend to disagree	27	31
Strongly disagree	15	15
Don't know	12	9

Q19. You agreed that the accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers has decreased over the past two years. Why do you say this?

Base: All GCSE teachers who agree that the accuracy and quality of marking of GCSE papers has decreased over the past 2 years

	(128) Nov 2008 %	(120) Nov 2007 %
Increasing number of re-marks ¹⁸	33	16
No consistency in marking/results ¹⁹	21	15
Accuracy and quality of marking has decreased	18	-
Number of errors in marking/remarking has increased ²⁰	16	24
Lack of quality / experienced markers	13	27
Concerns with electronic/online marking	6	-
Personal experience of having to have papers re-marked	-	11
Because of the number of appeals that succeed	-	10
Results don't always match student ability	-	10
Standards keep changing	-	8
Too many papers are scanned and marked online	-	6
The speed at which the marking has to be completed	-	5
The markers are not paid enough for the work that they do	-	3
Just a feeling from what I have seen/heard	-	3
The rise in the number of complaints/queries	-	3
Personal experience of marking papers	-	2
Unregulated/lack of quality control	-	2
We have to have the papers re-marked at our own expense	-	2
Examiners have too many papers to mark	-	2
Sending papers to be marked abroad is ridiculous	-	2
Seen/heard things in the press/media	-	2
High turnover of markers/they are marked by too many people	-	1
Other	5	10
Don't know	2	1

¹⁸ Worded as 'Many grades are changed after re-marking' in 2007

¹⁹ Worded as 'Inconsistency in marking' in 2007

²⁰ Worded as 'Numerous requests for re-marks which have shown up errors' in 2007

Q20 I would like you to think about the reliability of GCSE grades. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

		%
A	All GCSE students get the right grade	3
B	Most GCSE students get the right grade	80
C	Around a quarter of GCSE students get the <u>wrong</u> grade	13
D	Around half of GCSE students get the <u>wrong</u> grade	2
E	More than half of GCSE students get the <u>wrong</u> grade.	2

Q21. To what extent, if at all, do you think that each of the following factors contributes to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve?

		A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't know
		%	%	%	%	%
A	Students performing better or worse than expected in examination papers or coursework	25	31	32	7	6
B	Exam papers and coursework tasks poorly designed	15	27	34	19	5
C	Inaccurate marking of examination papers	14	27	41	13	5
D	Inaccurate marking of coursework	12	25	38	18	7

Q22. Do you feel that there are any other factors that contribute to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve? If so, what are they?

	%
Poor behaviour/attendance/motivation/effort	11
Conditions outside school/home issues/social problems	7
Students inadequately prepared by their school/college for the exam	6
Students inadequately prepared by their school/college for the coursework	5
Overload of work/too much pressure	5
Students inadequately prepared by their school/college in general	5
Course/GCSEs/exams are too hard/too easy	4
Illness/nerves on exam day	3
Lack of support/parental support	3
Specific groups at a disadvantage e.g. boys/foreign students/learning difficulties	3
Too much help given on coursework (from parents/internet etc)	3
Poor timetabling of exams	2
Government pressure/targets	2
Poor exam technique/preparation/revision	2
Poor teaching facilities/classes too big	2
Structure/content of course (too much/little coursework etc)	2
Curriculum/syllabus problems	1
Funding resources	1
Literacy issues	1
No other factors	47
Other	2
Don't know	-

Q23. The Diploma is a new qualification that has been developed to recognise achievement for 14-19 year olds. It combines practical skill development with theoretical and technical understanding and knowledge. How much, if anything, did you know about the Diploma before today? ²¹

	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %
A great deal	14	13	6
A fair amount	42	43	28
Not very much	35	32	37
Nothing at all	9	11	29
Don't know	1	*	*

Q24.a To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
“I have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A level papers”

	(333) Nov 2008 %	(294) Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	27	13
Tend to agree	47	46
Neither agree nor disagree	7	8
Tend to disagree	12	20
Strongly disagree	6	11
No opinion	1	1

Q24.b To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
“The accuracy and quality of marking of A level papers has decreased over the past two years”

	(333) Nov 2008 %	(294) Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	10	14
Tend to agree	18	24
Neither agree nor disagree	12	15
Tend to disagree	28	25
Strongly disagree	23	14
No opinion	8	8

²¹ Asked in 2006/2007 as “being developed” and in 2006 as ‘Specialised Diploma’

Q25. **You agreed that the accuracy and quality of marking of A level papers has decreased over the past two years. Why do you say this?**

Base: All A level teachers who agree that the accuracy and quality of marking has decreased over the past 2 years

	(96) Nov 2008 %	(114) Nov 2007 %
Lack of quality / experienced markers	29	24
Because of the number of appeals that succeed	25	7
High numbers of papers are sent to be remarked	20	-
Inconsistency in marking	10	19
Personal experience of marking papers	9	1
Results don't always match student ability ²²	7	9
Too many papers are scanned and marked online	7	5
The speed at which the marking has to be completed	5	2
The markers are not paid enough for the work they do	3	-
Numerous requests for re-marks which have shown up errors	-	22
Many grades are changed after re-marking	-	13
The rise in the number of complaints/queries	-	7
Personal experience of having to have papers re-marked	-	5
Standards keep changing	-	4
Inconsistency of marking coursework	-	4
Just a feeling from what I have seen/heard	-	2
Other	6	8
No reason/no opinion	-	1
Don't know	1	1

Q26. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
"I have to rely on the enquiries about results services to get accurate results for my students"**

	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	8	8
Tend to agree	21	20
Neither agree nor disagree	12	12
Tend to disagree	25	28
Strongly disagree	23	19
No opinion	10	12

²² Wording included "predicted grades" in 2007

Q27. You agreed that you have to rely on the enquiries about results services to get accurate results for your students. Why do you say this?

Base: All who agree that they have to rely on the enquiries about results services to get accurate results for their students

	(147) Nov 2008 %	(144) Nov 2007 %
Need to appeal/be re-marked/poor marking	17	-
Grades/marks are changed after appeal/remark	16	-
You have to use the service to ensure students get the grades they deserve	12	33
Trust them to be accurate/only place who you can contact about results	12	-
Issues with how results are returned	10	-
A high proportion need querying each year / cannot take results at face value	9	30
From experience ²³	9	7
Hard evidence that marking has been variable	3	6
Exam board issues	3	-
No other alternative / No other framework to check results	-	10
Need to use the service to get extra/more information	-	7
There are a lot of re-marks for English	-	3
You have to go through a long/complicated process to get papers remarked	-	3
There have been cases where exam results have been lost/not delivered	-	2
It costs a lot of money to get the papers re-marked	-	2
Students' university places are affected by the grades	-	1
There is a different marking system now which is not as good as before	-	1
Other	9	10
Don't know	1	5

²³ Worded "I have experience of papers poorly marked" in 2007

Confidence in the A Level and GCSE Examination System

Omnibus Survey of the General Public with Booster Sample of Parents and Students

This topline shows the results from Omnibus surveys of the general public which took place in March 2003, November 2003, September 2004, November 2005, November 2006, November 2007 and November 2008.

- The most recent survey (wave seven) took place between 7th and 20th November 2008.
- A total of 1,857 interviews were conducted with young people and adults aged 15 years and over in England. 297 interviews were with parents of children who are taking, have recently taken or are about to take GCSE or A level exams. 152 interviews were with young people aged between 15 and 19 who are currently in Key Stage 4, will be taking GCSEs/A levels in the next two years, or who completed GCSE/A level studies in the past two years.
- The base is all respondents unless stated otherwise.
- Data are weighted by gender, age, social grade, region and working status to reflect the national demographic of young people and adults aged 15 years and over.
- In all surveys, interviews were conducted face-to-face, in home.
- An asterisk (*) represents a value of less than one half or one percent, but not zero.
- Where results do not sum to 100, this is due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated.
- *As a guide, results need to differ by more than 6% between the whole sample (1,857) and parents (297), more than 8% between the whole sample (1,857) and students (152), and more than 10% between parents (297) and students (152) to show statistically significant differences. Between waves, results need to differ by more than 3% for the whole sample, 8% for parents and 12% for students to show statistically significant differences.*

Q1 Do you have a child who...

a) who is currently in years 10 or 11 at school (aged 14-16) and intends to take A level exams when they are older

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005
	%	%	%	%
Yes	17	21	17	18
No	82	77	78	81
Don't know	1	1	4	1

Base: All parents in England

1,028

950

1,079

1,144

b) who is currently in years 10 or 11 at school (aged 14-16) and intends to take or is thinking about taking the new Diploma qualification when they are older

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005
	%			
Yes	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
No	89	N/A	N/A	N/A
Don't know	5	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base: All parents in England 1,028

c) who is currently in their first or second year of A level study

	%	%	%	%
Yes	6	10	7	8
No	93	89	89	92
Don't know	1	*	4	1

Base: All parents in England 1,028 950 1,079 1,144

d) who is currently studying for one of the new Diploma qualifications

	%			
Yes	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
No	96	N/A	N/A	N/A
Don't know	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base: All parents in England 1,028

e) who has taken an A level exam in the last two years

	%	%	%	%
Yes	5	13	10	10
No	94	86	86	89
Don't know	1	1	4	1

Base: All parents in England 1,028 950 1,079 1,144

f) who is currently in years 10 or 11 at school (aged 14-16) and is due to take their GCSEs within the next two years

	%	%	%	%
Yes	18	20	17	17
No	81	79	79	82
Don't know	1	1	4	1

Base: All parents in England 1,028 950 1,079 1,144

g) who has taken a GCSE exam in the last two years

	%	%	%	%
Yes	10	13	10	10
No	89	86	86	89
Don't know	1	1	4	1

Base: All parents in England 1,028 950 1,079 1,144

Q2 Which of the following, if any, applies to you?

Nov Nov Nov Nov

	2008	2007	2006	2005
	%	%	%	%
I am currently in Key Stage 4 at school (years 10-11) and have decided to take A levels when I am older	4	7	3	6
I am currently in Key Stage 4 at school (years 10-11) and have decided to take or am thinking about taking the new Diploma when I am older	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
I am currently studying for my A levels (in the first or second year)	24	23	29	19
I am currently studying for one of the new Diploma qualifications	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
I completed my A level studies within the last two years	9	8	14	16
I am currently in Key Stage 4 at school (years 10-11) and will be taking my GCSEs within the next two years	3	7	4	6
I completed my GCSE studies within the last two years	38	30	35	42
None	27	27	27	23
<i>Base: All 15-19 year olds in England</i>	222	200	188	177

Q3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. "A Level students work harder today than ever before"

GENERAL PUBLIC	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	7	10	9	9	8	9	11
Tend to agree	29	27	25	23	27	26	25
Neither agree nor disagree	23	26	21	22	19	20	30
Tend to disagree	22	19	22	24	25	25	17
Strongly disagree	6	5	8	8	7	7	4
Don't know	13	13	15	15	13	13	13
Agree	36	37	34	31	35	35	36
Disagree	28	24	30	31	32	32	21
Base	1,857	1,765	1,964	1,765	1,720	1,766	1,714
PARENTS							
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	8	14	12	12	16	16	17
Tend to agree	34	28	27	27	28	31	31
Neither agree nor disagree	18	27	21	22	22	19	26
Tend to disagree	25	19	24	23	21	20	14
Strongly disagree	6	5	8	7	5	5	3
Don't know	9	7	7	9	9	9	8
Agree	42	42	40	39	44	47	48
Disagree	31	24	32	30	26	25	17
Base	297	292	324	292	303	315	293
STUDENTS							
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	15	16	26	18	26	21	15
Tend to agree	33	43	31	32	34	26	34
Neither agree nor disagree	25	19	24	24	22	28	29
Tend to disagree	15	13	11	13	17	21	13
Strongly disagree	3	3	1	4	-	1	-
Don't know	8	5	6	9	1	3	8
Agree	48	60	57	50	60	47	49
Disagree	18	16	12	16	17	22	13
Base	152	136	138	136	80	119	92

b. "Most students taking A levels get the grade their performance deserves"

GENERAL PUBLIC	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	9	10	9	8	9	8	7
Tend to agree	47	45	40	42	44	43	47
Neither agree nor disagree	17	18	16	19	15	16	21
Tend to disagree	12	13	16	15	17	18	12
Strongly disagree	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
Don't know	13	12	15	14	14	12	12
Agree	56	55	49	49	52	51	54
Disagree	14	15	19	18	19	21	13
<i>Base</i>	1,857	1,765	1,964	1,765	1,964	1,974	1,720
PARENTS							
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	13	14	12	11	12	12	9
Tend to agree	49	50	47	47	50	48	49
Neither agree nor disagree	13	17	12	14	14	15	20
Tend to disagree	16	12	17	14	17	14	13
Strongly disagree	*	1	3	5	0	3	1
Don't know	8	7	8	9	7	8	7
Agree	62	63	59	58	62	60	58
Disagree	16	13	20	19	17	17	14
<i>Base</i>	297	292	324	292	324	346	303
STUDENTS							
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	15	15	23	13	20	16	14
Tend to agree	59	60	51	48	47	46	44
Neither agree nor disagree	11	13	7	12	8	15	15
Tend to disagree	8	10	14	15	21	17	19
Strongly disagree	2	1	3	4	3	3	2
Don't know	5	2	2	7	1	3	6
Agree	73	74	74	61	68	62	58
Disagree	10	11	17	20	24	20	21
<i>Base</i>	152	136	138	136	138	137	80

c) "I have more confidence in the A level system now than I did have a few years ago."

GENERAL PUBLIC	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004
	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	4	6	4	2	3
Tend to agree	18	19	13	14	16
Neither agree nor disagree	31	29	37	36	32
Tend to disagree	22	22	22	24	25
Strongly disagree	10	9	7	8	8
Don't know	15	14	17	16	17
Agree	22	25	17	16	18
Disagree	32	31	29	32	33
<i>Base</i>	1,857	1,765	1,964	1,765	1,964

PARENTS	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	4	6	5	4	4
Tend to agree	21	22	15	17	20
Neither agree nor disagree	31	35	40	38	39
Tend to disagree	22	23	25	23	26
Strongly disagree	12	7	6	9	4
Don't know	10	7	9	10	7
Agree	25	27	20	20	24
Disagree	34	30	32	32	31
<i>Base</i>	297	292	324	292	324

STUDENTS	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	7	15	11	6	7
Tend to agree	31	35	28	25	30
Neither agree nor disagree	32	25	32	29	37
Tend to disagree	11	14	16	23	19
Strongly disagree	4	3	2	6	5
Don't know	15	10	11	11	3
Agree	38	50	39	31	38
Disagree	15	16	17	29	23
<i>Base</i>	152	136	138	136	138

Q4 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

“I have the information I need about how A level exams are marked and graded”

PARENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	9	11	11	7	7	11	6
Tend to agree	19	20	23	25	19	24	13
Neither agree nor disagree	13	18	16	17	13	11	15
Tend to disagree	31	24	27	31	36	31	38
Strongly disagree	17	18	18	16	20	20	24
Don't know	11	9	5	5	5	3	5
Agree	28	31	34	32	26	35	19
Disagree	48	42	45	47	56	51	62
<i>Base</i>	243	237	256	273	303	315	293

STUDENTS	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	18	31	23	21	10	15	13
Tend to agree	51	45	38	52	43	32	33
Neither agree nor disagree	10	10	13	5	13	11	10
Tend to disagree	13	8	20	15	26	32	37
Strongly disagree	6	1	4	5	9	8	5
Don't know	2	5	2	1	0	3	2
Agree	69	76	61	73	53	47	46
Disagree	19	9	24	21	35	39	42
<i>Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels</i>	88	69	84	73	80	119	92

Q5. How well do you know...

a) QCA

	%
Know very well	3
Know a fair amount	5
Know just a little	9
Heard of but know nothing about	10
Never heard of	73

Base: All respondents 1,857

b) Ofqual

	%
Know very well	1
Know a fair amount	2
Know just a little	5
Heard of but know nothing about	11
Never heard of	80

Base: All respondents 1,857

- Q6. Ofqual is the new independent regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. Their aim is to ensure that learners get the results they deserve, and that the qualifications they receive count, both now and in the future. Before today, were you aware that Ofqual were the new independent regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England?

	%
Yes, I was aware of this	9
No, I was not aware of this	88
Don't know	3

Base: All respondents

1,857

- Q7.a I am going to read out some groups of people that could provide you with information about how exams are marked and graded. For each one, please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

Schools/Teachers

PARENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	29	35	32	37	31	38	31
A fair amount	58	50	56	47	55	50	56
Not very much	9	12	6	12	9	8	8
Not at all	3	3	2	2	2	1	2
Don't know	2	1	3	2	3	2	3
A great deal/ fair amount	87	84	88	84	86	88	87
Not very much/ at all	11	15	9	14	11	9	10

Base

297

292

324

292

303

315

293

STUDENTS

	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	49	45	42	39	36	37	46
A fair amount	36	45	46	45	50	54	50
Not very much	8	5	7	11	6	6	1
Not at all	3	4	4	2	4	-	1
Don't know	3	*	1	2	4	3	2
A great deal/ fair amount	85	90	88	85	86	91	96
Not very much/ at all	11	19	11	13	10	6	2

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels²⁴

152

136

138

136

80

119

92

²⁴ Please note that before November 2006 this question was only asked of students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels.

Q7.b ...please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

The government

PARENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	4	8	5	9	8	5	2
A fair amount	37	34	35	33	32	27	32
Not very much	32	35	41	40	40	44	44
Not at all	23	20	17	16	17	20	17
Don't know	4	2	2	3	4	3	4
A great deal/ fair amount	41	42	40	41	40	32	34
Not very much/ at all	55	55	58	56	56	64	61
<i>Base</i>	297	292	324	346	303	315	293

STUDENTS	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	15	13	15	14	9	7	16
A fair amount	47	45	46	40	41	44	34
Not very much	22	27	25	26	30	31	36
Not at all	11	12	9	15	14	13	10
Don't know	5	3	5	4	6	6	4
A great deal/ fair amount	63	58	62	54	50	51	50
Not very much/ at all	32	39	33	42	44	44	46
<i>Base</i>	152	136	138	137	80	119	92

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels²⁵

²⁵ Please note that before November 2006 this question was only asked of students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels.

Q7.c ...please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

Ofqual – the exams regulator

PARENTS

	%
A great deal	8
A fair amount	30
Not very much	19
Not at all	8
Don't know	35
A great deal/ fair amount	38
Not very much/ at all	27

Base 297

STUDENTS

	%
A great deal	16
A fair amount	41
Not very much	12
Not at all	8
Don't know	23
A great deal/ fair amount	57
Not very much/ at all	20

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels²⁶ 152

²⁶ Please note that before November 2006 this question was only asked of students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels.

Q7.d ... please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

QCA – the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

PARENTS

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	8	21	18	22	25	21	14
A fair amount	36	43	50	48	45	46	52
Not very much	16	20	11	14	14	18	22
Not at all	9	5	5	7	6	3	5
Don't know	30	10	16	10	11	12	8
A great deal/ fair amount	44	65	69	70	70	67	66
Not very much/ at all	26	25	16	20	19	21	27

Base

297 292 324 346 303 315 293

STUDENTS

	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	24	31	33	36	40	33	36
A fair amount	39	35	48	44	38	45	47
Not very much	8	16	7	8	10	10	5
Not at all	12	8	3	4	4	4	2
Don't know	17	9	10	8	9	8	10
A great deal/ fair amount	62	66	80	80	78	78	83
Not very much/ at all	20	24	9	12	14	14	7

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels²⁷

152 136 138 137 80 119 92

²⁷ Please note that before November 2006 this question was only asked of students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels.

Q7.e ... please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

Exam Boards

PARENTS

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	13	23	20	23	23	20	9
A fair amount	54	50	55	51	51	54	56
Not very much	22	19	15	17	17	18	23
Not at all	6	3	4	5	4	3	7
Don't know	5	6	6	4	4	5	5
A great deal/ fair amount	67	73	75	74	74	74	65
Not very much/ at all	28	21	19	22	21	21	30

Base

297 292 324 346 303 315 293

STUDENTS

	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	36	40	44	42	38	34	35
A fair amount	40	42	41	45	49	47	38
Not very much	11	15	9	9	5	13	20
Not at all	6	2	3	1	5	1	3
Don't know	7	1	3	3	4	5	4
A great deal/ fair amount	76	82	86	86	86	81	73
Not very much/ at all	17	18	12	11	10	14	23

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels²⁸

152 136 138 137 80 119 92

²⁸ Please note that before November 2006 this question was only asked of students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels.

Q7.f ... please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

The media

PARENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	2	5	3	4	1	1	2
A fair amount	19	24	27	21	21	23	20
Not very much	45	39	49	45	50	46	48
Not at all	28	29	18	27	24	27	25
Don't know	5	3	4	3	3	3	5
A great deal/ fair amount	22	29	29	25	22	24	22
Not very much/ at all	73	68	67	71	74	73	73
Base	297	292	324	346	303	315	293

STUDENTS

STUDENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	6	6	4	2	3	3	2
A fair amount	20	29	18	14	19	18	15
Not very much	39	38	49	50	51	50	57
Not at all	26	24	25	31	23	24	23
Don't know	8	3	4	4	5	5	3
A great deal/ fair amount	26	35	22	16	21	21	17
Not very much/ at all	65	62	73	80	74	74	80
Base	152	136	138	137	80	119	92

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels²⁹

Q7.g ... please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

Your own children

Your own children	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	March 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	32	30	27	25	22	27	24
A fair amount	48	48	52	51	52	52	53
Not very much	13	15	13	16	17	13	16
Not at all	5	4	5	5	5	5	3
Don't know	3	3	4	3	4	3	5
A great deal/ fair amount	80	78	79	75	74	79	77
Not very much/ at all	18	20	17	21	21	18	19
Base	297	292	297	346	303	346	315

Base: All parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels

²⁹ Please note that before November 2006 this question was only asked of students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels.

Q7.h ... please tell me how much, if at all, you would trust them as a source of information about exams?

Your parents

	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	March 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	37	32	30	21	16	21	28
A fair amount	36	38	33	39	39	45	36
Not very much	15	23	23	29	24	21	27
Not at all	7	6	8	8	13	7	7
Don't know	5	2	5	2	9	6	2
A great deal/ fair amount	73	70	64	61	55	66	64
Not very much/ at all	22	28	31	37	36	28	34

Base: All students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels

152 136 138 137 80 137 80

Q8. If you had a concern about the examination grades your son/daughter had received or the fairness of the examination system, how likely or unlikely would you be to contact each of the following?

Schools/teachers

	PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006*	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	62	64	65	54	50	59
Fairly likely	24	22	28	31	32	28
Not very likely	7	9	4	8	10	5
Not at all likely	4	3	3	4	5	4
Don't know	2	2	-	4	2	4
Likely	87	86	93	85	83	87
Unlikely	12	12	7	11	16	9

Base: All students and parents who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels
* Based on all excluding 'don't know'

297 292 299 152 292 138

The government

	PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006*	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	6	7	5	5	12	6
Fairly likely	12	12	15	21	16	14
Not very likely	30	28	47	25	34	43
Not at all likely	49	51	33	45	37	33
Don't know	2	2	-	5	2	4
Likely	18	19	21	26	27	20
Unlikely	80	79	79	69	71	76

Base: All students and parents who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels
* Based on all excluding 'don't know'

297 292 296 152 136 138

Your MP

	PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006* %	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %
Very likely	6	6	6	3	6	4
Fairly likely	16	18	19	15	13	12
Not very likely	35	33	42	31	28	38
Not at all likely	39	41	32	45	46	38
Don't know	5	2	-	6	6	8
Likely	21	24	25	18	19	17
Unlikely	73	74	75	76	74	75
	297	292	291	152	136	138

Base: All students and parents who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels

* Based on all excluding 'don't know'

Ofqual – the exams regulator

	PARENTS	STUDENTS
	%	%
Very likely	19	11
Fairly likely	32	34
Not very likely	25	27
Not at all likely	16	19
Don't know	9	10
Likely	51	44
Unlikely	40	46
	297	152

Base: All students and parents who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels

* Based on all excluding 'don't know'

QCA - the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

	PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006* %	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %
Very likely	16	14	20	6	21	16
Fairly likely	32	40	38	38	29	35
Not very likely	27	22	29	24	31	28
Not at all likely	16	19	12	21	12	13
Don't know	9	5	-	12	7	9
Likely	48	54	59	44	50	51
Unlikely	43	41	41	45	43	41
	297	292	286	152	136	138

Base: All students and parents who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels

* Based on all excluding 'don't know'

Exam boards

	PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006* %	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %
Very likely	23	23	30	33	34	31
Fairly likely	40	40	41	35	38	41
Not very likely	21	18	21	12	18	16
Not at all likely	12	15	8	14	7	9
Don't know	4	3	-	5	3	4
Likely	63	63	71	69	72	72
Unlikely	33	34	29	27	24	25
	297	292	298	152	136	138

Base: All students and parents who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels
* Based on all excluding 'don't know'

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a) "It is more important now than ever that students get a higher level educational qualification such as an A Level"

STUDENTS	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %	Nov 2005 %	Sept 2004 %	Nov 2003 %	Mar 2003 %
Strongly agree	43	48	54	38	39	40	36
Tend to agree	38	47	35	44	41	40	46
Neither agree nor disagree	11	4	8	10	13	8	13
Tend to disagree	3	1	2	7	4	7	4
Strongly disagree	1	0	-	1	3	2	-
Don't know	3	1	1	0	1	3	1
Agree	81	95	88	82	80	80	82
Disagree	4	1	2	8	6	9	4

Base: All students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels

b) "Overall, the A level is an important qualification for people to obtain"

STUDENTS	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %	Nov 2005 %	Sept 2004 %	Nov 2003 %	Mar 2003 %
Strongly agree	61	64	60	40	46	43	36
Tend to agree	29	24	31	51	41	39	49
Neither agree nor disagree	6	6	6	1	6	11	7
Tend to disagree	1	5	2	8	5	3	7
Strongly disagree	0	1	-	0	0	1	1
Don't know	3	0	1	0	1	3	1
Agree	90	88	90	90	88	82	85
Disagree	1	6	2	8	5	4	8

Base: All students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels

c) "A levels should be abolished."

STUDENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005	Sept 2004	Nov 2003	Mar 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	2	3	2	-	5	3	-
Tend to agree	4	5	-	3	9	8	4
Neither agree nor disagree	11	12	5	12	9	12	16
Tend to disagree	23	45	33	42	28	29	36
Strongly disagree	58	34	58	42	48	45	40
Don't know	3	1	1	-	3	3	3
Agree	6	8	2	3	14	11	4
Disagree	80	79	92	85	75	74	76

Base: All students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels

88 69 84 73 80 73 80

d) "I find the media's coverage of the announcement of A level results each year upsetting."

STUDENTS	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	1	3	2	-	5	3	-
Tend to agree	15	5	-	3	9	8	4
Neither agree nor disagree	28	12	5	12	9	12	16
Tend to disagree	32	45	33	42	28	29	36
Strongly disagree	18	34	58	42	48	45	40
Don't know	6	1	1	-	3	3	3
Agree	16	8	2	3	14	11	4
Disagree	49	79	92	85	75	74	76

Base: All students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take A levels

88 69 84 73 80 73 80

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"I have more confidence in the GCSE system now than I did have a few years ago."

GENERAL PUBLIC	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005
	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	5	7	4	4
Tend to agree	22	26	16	15
Neither agree nor disagree	31	29	41	37
Tend to disagree	21	19	18	22
Strongly disagree	9	9	7	8
Don't know	13	11	15	14
Agree	27	33	19	19
Disagree	30	27	25	30

Base: 1,857 1,765 1,765 1,974

PARENTS

	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	4	9	5	5
Tend to agree	34	28	20	20
Neither agree nor disagree	23	36	44	42
Tend to disagree	22	17	17	18
Strongly disagree	10	6	8	8
Don't know	7	4	6	6
Agree	38	37	25	26
Disagree	32	23	25	26
Base:	297	192	292	346

STUDENTS

	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	17	21	14	9
Tend to agree	29	47	27	32
Neither agree nor disagree	29	16	32	27
Tend to disagree	10	6	15	18
Strongly disagree	5	4	4	10
Don't know	11	5	8	5
Agree	46	69	41	40
Disagree	14	10	19	28
Base:	152	136	136	137

Q11. We would like you to think about the reliability of GCSE grades. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

	%
A All GCSE students get the right grade	6
B Most GCSE students get the right grade	66
C Around a quarter of GCSE students get the <u>wrong</u> grade	19
D Around half of GCSE students get the <u>wrong</u> grade	6
E More than half of GCSE students get the <u>wrong</u> grade.	3

Base: All respondents

1,857

Q12. To what extent, if at all, do you think that each of the following factors contributes to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve?

a) Students performing better or worse than expected in examination papers or coursework

	%
A lot	13
Somewhat	37
A little	27
Not at all	5
Don't know	18
At least a little	77
	1,857

b) Exam papers and coursework tasks poorly designed

	%
A lot	11
Somewhat	28
A little	25
Not at all	11
Don't know	24
At least a little	64

1,857

c) Inaccurate marking of examination papers

	%
A lot	14
Somewhat	29
A little	29
Not at all	9
Don't know	19
At least a little	72

1,857

d) Inaccurate marking of coursework

	%
A lot	11
Somewhat	29
A little	32
Not at all	9
Don't know	19
At least a little	72

Base:

1,857

Q13. Do you feel that there are any other factors that contribute to GCSE students not getting the grades they deserve? If so, what are they?
UNPROMPTED RESPONSES

	All mentions with 1% or higher %
Students inadequately prepared by their school/college for the coursework	19
Students inadequately prepared by their school/college for the exam	18
Poor timetabling of exams	8
Not studying/revising enough	2
Bad teachers/teaching methods	2
Personal/home circumstances	2
Too much pressure	1
Nervousness during exams	1
Not enough discipline	1
Illness	1
Too many other distractions	1
Laziness	1
Lack of family support/parental guidance	1
Other staff issues	1
Lack of motivation	1
Other	2
No other factors	25
Don't know	27

1,857

Q14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“I have the information I need about how GCSE exams are marked and graded”

PARENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005
	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	8	12	10	11
Tend to agree	26	33	31	29
Neither agree nor disagree	15	19	21	18
Tend to disagree	27	23	26	24
Strongly disagree	18	10	11	16
Don't know	6	3	2	2
Agree	34	45	40	40
Disagree	44	33	36	41

Base:

241

235

235

262

STUDENTS				
	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	13	18	19	19
Tend to agree	47	39	38	42
Neither agree nor disagree	17	16	22	12
Tend to disagree	14	19	19	15
Strongly disagree	8	6	1	7
Don't know	1	1	1	5
Agree	60	57	57	61
Disagree	23	25	20	23

Base: All students and parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs

78 74 74 84

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“Overall, the GCSE is an important qualification for people to obtain”

STUDENTS	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2005
	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	50	40	55	40
Tend to agree	35	41	31	42
Neither agree nor disagree	7	7	4	11
Tend to disagree	7	11	7	6
Strongly disagree	1	0	1	1
Don't know	0	1	-	-
Agree	85	81	86	82
Disagree	8	11	8	7

Base: All students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs

75 74 74 74

Q16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following organisations act in the best interests of students aged 14 to 19 years?

The government

	GENERAL PUBLIC			PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006
Strongly agree	5	4	3	5	4	4	6	8	10
Tend to agree	28	27	26	26	28	26	33	39	37
Neither agree nor disagree	25	24	24	25	24	29	28	20	28
Tend to disagree	20	23	22	21	26	27	20	19	12
Strongly disagree	7	12	8	11	13	10	3	9	6
Don't know	14	10	16	12	5	5	9	5	7
Agree	33	31	29	31	32	29	39	47	47
Disagree	27	34	30	32	39	37	24	28	18

Base

1,857 1,765 1,964 297 291 324 152 136 138

Ofqual – the exams regulator

	GENERAL PUBLIC	PARENTS	STUDENTS
	%	%	%
Strongly agree	4	4	7
Tend to agree	22	29	30
Neither agree nor disagree	31	26	32
Tend to disagree	5	5	9
Strongly disagree	2	3	2
Don't know	38	33	20
Agree	25	33	37
Disagree	6	8	11
Base	1,857	297	152

QCA – the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

	GENERAL PUBLIC			PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	4	6	5	5	8	9	8	13	18
Tend to agree	23	31	31	35	37	41	39	48	47
Neither agree nor disagree	28	30	27	23	32	27	24	23	22
Tend to disagree	5	11	10	5	7	8	7	3	4
Strongly disagree	1	4	2	2	5	2	*	2	1
Don't know	38	18	25	29	10	13	23	11	9
Agree	27	37	36	40	45	50	47	61	64
Disagree	6	15	12	8	12	10	7	5	5
Base	1,857	1,765	1,964	297	292	324	152	136	138

Exam boards

	GENERAL PUBLIC			PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006	Nov 2008	Nov 2007	Nov 2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	6	7	5	8	9	10	11	22	14
Tend to agree	39	37	38	39	43	45	47	44	55
Neither agree nor disagree	26	27	23	22	29	24	22	19	19
Tend to disagree	10	12	12	13	9	11	11	10	6
Strongly disagree	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	*	2
Don't know	17	14	19	15	7	7	8	5	5
Agree	45	44	43	48	52	55	58	66	69
Disagree	12	15	14	15	12	14	12	10	8
Base	1,857	1,765	1,964	297	292	324	152	136	138

- Q17. The Diploma is a new qualification that has been developed to recognise achievement for 14-19 year olds. It will combine practical skill development with theoretical and technical understanding and knowledge. How much, if anything, did you know about the Diploma before today?

	GENERAL PUBLIC			PARENTS			STUDENTS		
	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %	Nov 2008 %	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2006 %
A great deal	6	6	3	3	7	3	7	15	6
A fair amount	21	21	8	23	25	9	32	20	12
Not very much	30	27	17	38	27	19	30	30	26
Nothing at all	33	40	65	29	39	64	26	33	52
Don't know	10	6	8	7	2	5	5	3	4
Know of Specialised Diplomas	27	27	10	26	32	12	39	35	18
Don't know of Specialised Diplomas	63	67	82	67	65	83	56	63	78
Base	1,857	1,765	1,964	297	292	324	152	136	138

- Q18. There are different ways that students may be able to receive their exam results, for example: collecting from school, through the post, by text, by email or online.

How would you prefer/prefer your child to receive exam results?

	PARENTS		STUDENTS	
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2008	Nov 2007 %
Collect from school	65	57	66	69
Through the post	39	44	27	31
Online	9	6	6	7
By email	6	7	9	4
By text	2	1	3	2
Don't mind/ not bothered	5	4	5	5
Don't know	*	1	*	0
Base	297	292	152	136

- Q19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.....?

a) "I have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of GCSE papers

	PARENTS		STUDENTS	
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2008	Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	7	10	23	22
Tend to agree	46	48	48	47
Neither agree nor disagree	20	23	13	12
Tend to disagree	17	14	9	16
Strongly disagree	4	2	*	*
Don't know	6	3	6	2
Agree	53	58	71	69
Disagree	21	16	10	16
Base:	297	292	152	136

b) “I have confidence in the accuracy and quality of the marking of A Level papers”

	PARENTS		STUDENTS	
	Nov 2008	Nov 2007 %	Nov 2008	Nov 2007 %
Strongly agree	6	10	17	20
Tend to agree	46	47	47	47
Neither agree nor disagree	19	21	21	12
Tend to disagree	15	13	6	13
Strongly disagree	4	1	1	1
Don't know	10	8	9	6
Agree	52	56	64	67
Disagree	19	15	7	14
	297	292	152	139

Base: All students/parents of students who are taking, have recently taken or intend to take GCSEs or A levels