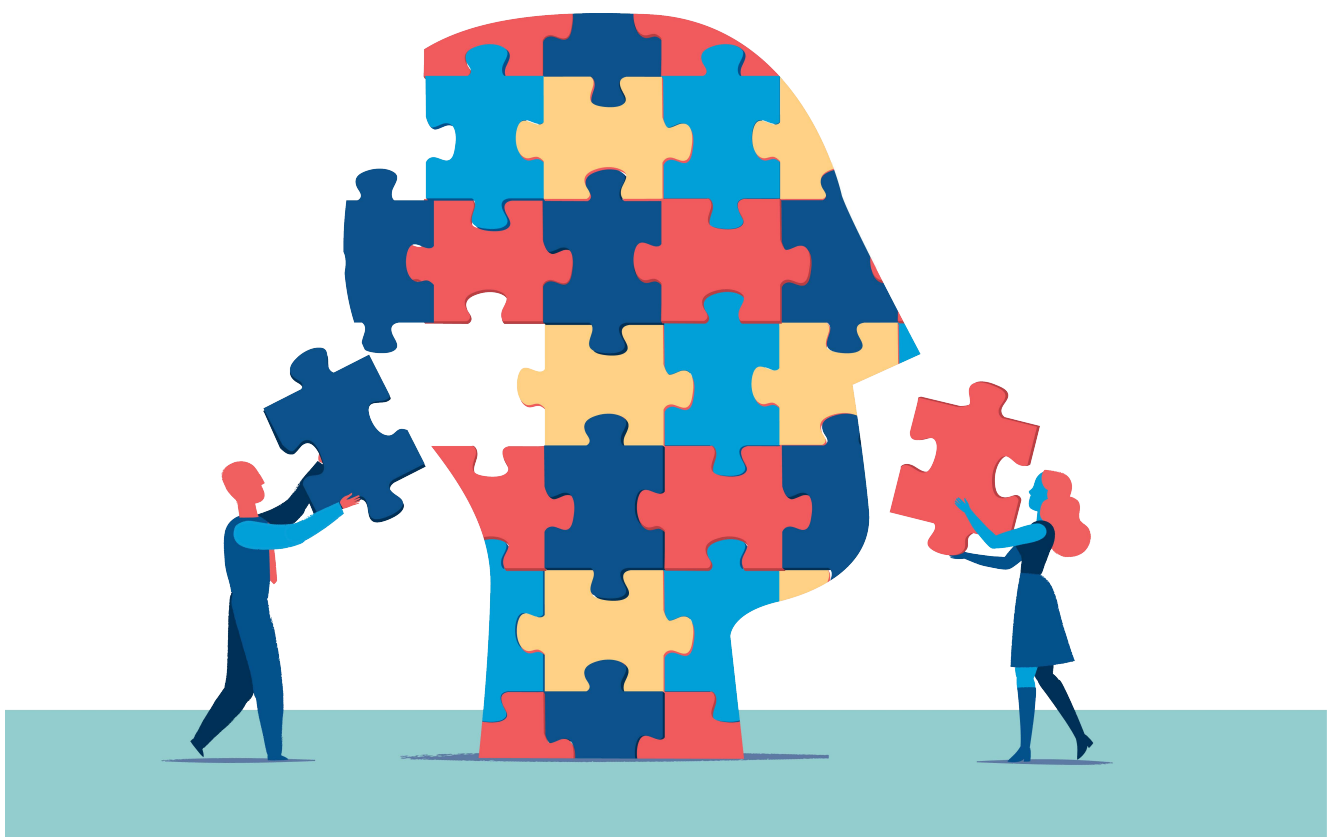# *Learner Voice Report*

September 2022

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May 2022

Contents

Executive Summary

Qualifications Wales and Practical Solutions Ltd (PSL) spoke to a wide range of learners and education providers across Wales between February - August 2022 to better understand their experiences of the qualifications system and gather their views on what assessments should look like for 14-16-year-olds. To capture both qualitative and quantitative information, we ran a combination of workshops, focus groups and an online questionnaire.

- 860 learners from Key Stages 2 to 5 took part in the workshops and focus groups
- 36 learning providers volunteered to run a focus group or workshop.
- 531 learners responded to the online questionnaire.

Having listened to learners' views, we can split our findings into four main themes:

GCSE choices

- Concerns around a lack of choice because of a crowded curriculum with too many compulsory subjects taking up the space of GCSEs they would rather choose
- A need for more information about GCSE content, assessment methods and career pathways before choosing GCSE subjects

Purpose of qualifications

- Learners were clear on the purpose of qualifications, and it was apparent that, regardless of age, background, education provider or ability, they were only too aware of the importance of qualifications to progress and succeed in life
- There was much talk around the extreme stress and anxiety that the process of achieving good grades placed upon them

Methods of assessment

- Learners wanted to see a variety of assessments that would do more than just measure an individual's ability to memorise and recite text
- Different types of assessments would be needed to appraise a wider range of knowledge and capabilities including analytical and research skills, creative thinking, problem solving, creativity, group working, and practical and performance skills

Improving assessment

- An overriding desire from learners' to move from linear exams to modular assessments - to not have GCSE grades determined by one final set of exams
- Learners spoke openly about how the exams affected their mental health, painting an honest picture of what it feels like to go through the current exam process
- Learners felt that a move to modular assessment could help alleviate the detrimental impact that exams have on some learners' mental health.

1. Introduction

During February 2022 – August 2022, Qualifications Wales (QW) collaborated with Practice Solutions Ltd (PSL) to undertake QW's largest ever programme of engagement with learners, as part of the regulator's *Qualified for the future* programme of work.

We spoke to a wide range of learners and education providers across Wales. We wanted to understand their experiences and expectations of the qualifications system and get their views on what assessments should look like for 14-16-year-olds.

This collaboration supports the co-construction and delivery of proposals for a range of new GCSE level qualifications being developed for learners from 2025.

To capture qualitative information from the learner voice, QW and PSL ran a series of workshops and focus groups.

To further support initial findings from the workshops and focus groups, QW and PSL created an online questionnaire based on the themes identified in the workshops and focus groups.

The learners have been insightful, articulate, engaged and forthright and have worked as critical partners during this piece of work. They have shared their experiences to reimagine qualifications to support the ambition of the Curriculum for Wales from 2025.

We are grateful to all learners who gave their time to share their experiences, astute observations and suggestions via the focus groups or the online questionnaire.
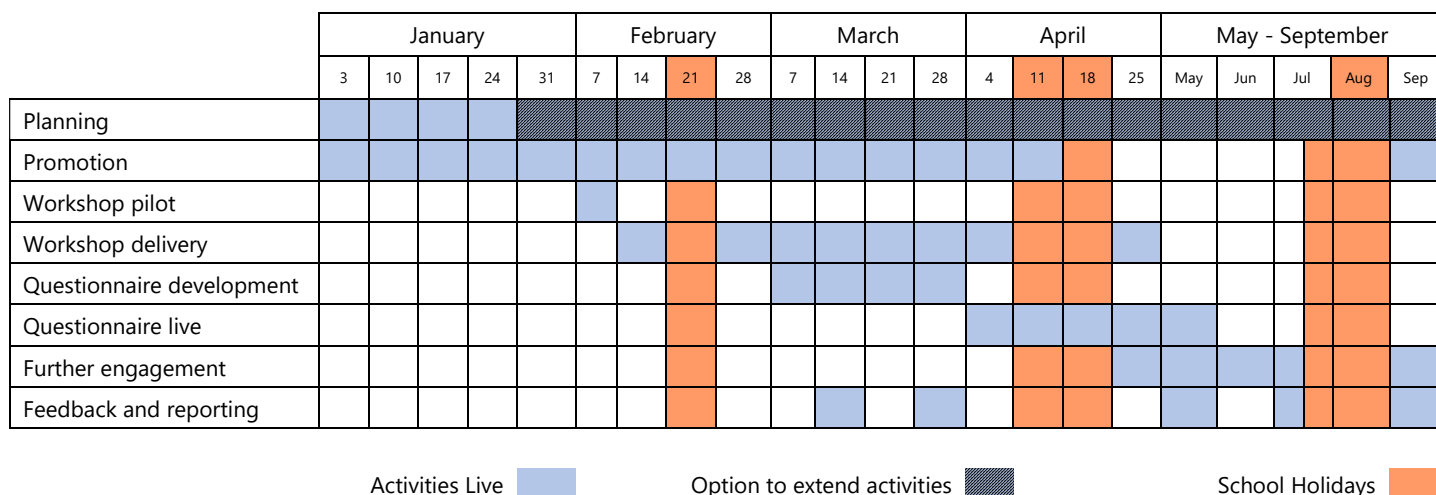
We would also like to thank the teachers and staff who welcomed us into their schools and colleges.

Learners are at the heart of our decision making and we will continue speaking with them, to help maintain confidence in qualifications. Listening to the thoughts and opinions of learners is integral to help shape the future of the qualification system, and qualifications, in Wales.

2. Methodology

Throughout the project, planning was adapted as a continuous process to run in parallel with delivery. This allowed for focus group and workshop materials to be revised and modified to address emerging findings.

The timeline for the work, including planning and future activity, can be seen below.

	January					February				March				April				May - September				
	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Planning																						
Promotion																						
Workshop pilot																						
Workshop delivery																						
Questionnaire development																						
Questionnaire live																						
Further engagement																						
Feedback and reporting																						

Activities Live ▉   Option to extend activities ▨   School Holidays ▉

2.1 Promotion

2.1.1 Focus groups and workshops

The following channels were used to promote the opportunity to schools and centres:

- Direct emails to centres
- Welsh Government's 'Dysg' newsletter
- QW's monthly newsletter
- The HwB website
- QW website
- PSL website
- Social media

All those registering an interest were contacted by QW or PSL and given the opportunity to host a session either online or face to face, through the medium of English or Welsh.

2.1.2 Online questionnaire

The bilingual questionnaire was promoted to schools, colleges, learners, and parents/carers with the aim to attract responses by 18 May from learners and stakeholders that hadn't been involved in the focus groups.

The following channels were used to promote the questionnaire:

- Direct emails to centres
- [QW website](#)
- [PSL website](#)
- Social media
    - Paid-for adverts targeting parents, learners, educators
    - Organic social media posts on QW and PSL's social media platforms
- Dysg newsletter
- QW's monthly newsletter
- The HwB website

2.2   Reach

2.2.1 Focus groups and workshops

The table below shows how engagement was designed to engage with specific learner ages and stages to ensure relevance of content and accessibility of information.

(For a complete list of participating schools see Appendix A).

Key Stage (KS)	Years	Learners
Key Stage 2	Years 5 and 6	Learners who will be taking the new GCSEs
Key Stage 3	Years 7, 8 and 9	Learners preparing for GCSEs and making their choices (some schools making choices in Year 8 and starting the curriculum in Year 9)
Key Stage 4	Years 10 and 11	Those currently undertaking GCSEs in a range of educational settings
Key Stage 5	Years 12 and 13, Colleges	Learners who have completed GCSEs and can talk of the wider experience

- 36 learning providers volunteered to run a focus group or workshop.
- 860 learners from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 took part in the workshops and focus groups

Learner representation was broad, however, not all areas in Wales were represented despite several direct communications to learning providers. The following graphic provides a visual interpretation of the engagement across Wales.

Learner Engagement Map

Anglesey
24

Conwy
134

Flintshire
23

Wrexham
17

Powys
93

Pembrokeshire
18

Camarthenshire
122

Swansea
36

Neath Port Talbot

Bridgend
29

RCT
96

Caerphilly
12

Blaenau Gwent
16

Monmouth
22

Newport
13

Cardiff
154

Vale of Glamorgan
51

2.2.2 Online questionnaire

531 learners responded to the questionnaire.

A boosted Facebook post targeting parents of 13–17-year-olds as well as teachers across Wales reached over 11k people, resulting in over 600 engagements and 47 link clicks.

2.3 Qualitative data

Qualitative data was gathered from focus groups or workshop sessions, in which learners were asked to share their experiences and expectations of the GCSE assessment system.

The sessions lasted one hour and were facilitated by QW and PSL.

During the focus groups discussions were documented under the following headings:

- GCSE choices
- The purpose of the qualification
- Learner experiences and thoughts on different methods of GCSE assessment
- Changes learners would make to improve GCSE assessment

To enable learners to visualise the qualification journey, a map was created to represent the different stages in the process.

Learners could use the map to discuss their experiences and expectations at different stages of the journey. Audio recordings were made in some focus groups, and in other sessions learners recorded their comments on sticky notes and flip charts.

The outputs were analysed, and the key themes identified; learners' direct comments that best illustrate the themes are recorded in this report in italics.
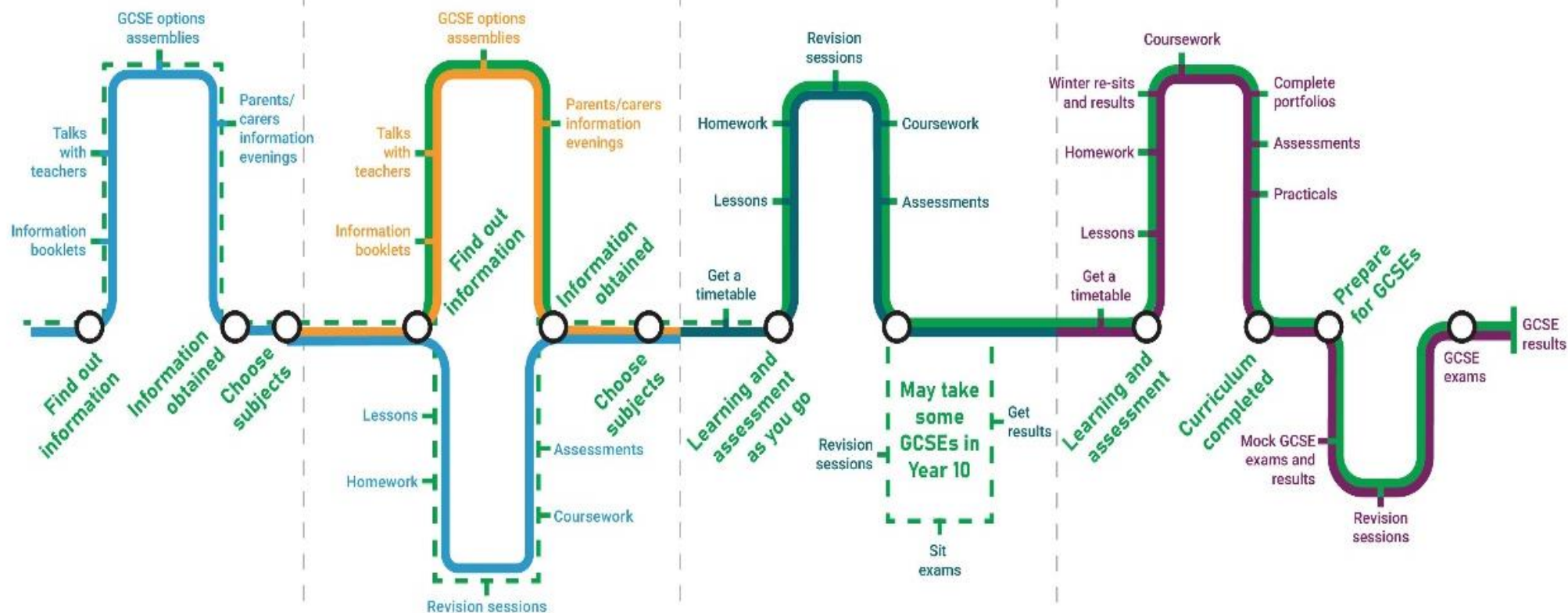
Learner Journey Map

Year 8
- Find out information
  - GCSE options assemblies
  - Talks with teachers
  - Information booklets
  - Parents/carers information evenings
- Information obtained
- Choose subjects

Year 9
- Find out information
  - GCSE options assemblies
  - Talks with teachers
  - Information booklets
  - Parents/carers information evenings
- Information obtained
- Choose subjects
  - Lessons
  - Assessments
  - Homework
  - Coursework
  - Revision sessions

Year 10
- Learning and assessment as you go
  - Revision sessions
  - Homework
  - Lessons
  - Coursework
  - Assessments
- Get a timetable
- May take some GCSEs in Year 10
  - Revision sessions
  - Sit exams
  - Get results

Year 11
- Learning and assessment
  - Coursework
  - Winter re-sits and results
  - Homework
  - Lessons
  - Complete portfolios
  - Assessments
  - Practicals
- Get a timetable
- Curriculum completed
  - Mock GCSE exams and results
- Prepare for GCSEs
  - Revision sessions
- GCSE exams
- GCSE results

Key

- The route of those who start GCSEs in Year 9 (choose subjects in Year 8)
- The route of those who start GCSEs in Year 10 (choose subjects in Year 9)
- The route in Year 10
- The route in Year 11
- The complete learner journey

2.4   Quantitative data

Quantitative data was gathered through the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was based on emerging themes from the focus groups and workshops and were available in English and Cymraeg.

A total of 531 learners responded to the questionnaire: 505 in English and 26 in Cymraeg. *(For the full list of questions see Appendix B).*

3. Findings

Learners' comments included in this section of the report are taken from the focus groups and workshops and the free text responses in the questionnaire. The findings have been split into four separate sections to reflect the discussions and themes.

3.1   GCSE choices

The top three factors that helped learners choose their GCSE subjects were found to be whether learners enjoyed a subject, whether they were good at it and parental influences.

Many of the learners in the focus groups, and just under half of the questionnaire respondents (48%), felt that they did not have enough information to make their choices. The information they would find useful included additional information about the subject topics and the assessments.

"What the subject is like, written or practical based, how many exams? Coursework?"

"Knowing what the real courses were and the realistic workload that certain subjects had."

"More knowledge about all subjects and what is included in courses. What percentage is theory and what percentage is coursework."

3.1.1 Careers

Learners also thought that more information about career paths would be useful before choosing GCSEs.

"What GCSEs are needed to go down a particular career path."

"What the subject could get you in the future."

"I also would like to know what I can actually do with that qualification afterwards

3.1.2 Assessment

How the subject was assessed was not a main consideration in KS3, but learners who were further along the GCSE route or had completed their GCSEs commented that they would have benefitted from more information on how GCSEs were assessed. Learners felt that having a greater understanding of how and when the subjects were assessed may impact their GCSE choices. In the questionnaire, 68% of learners agreed with the statement; 'Knowing how a subject is assessed would influence which GCSEs I choose.'

3.1.3 School Options Process

Some learners felt frustrated that they were not able to take their preferred subjects and were restricted by the school GCSE options processes forcing them to select subjects from different columns. Comments included:

"Two of my favourite subjects were in the same column so I could only take one, and the subjects I didn't want to take were lumped in another"

"I would like to have a bigger say in the GCSEs I have to take"

"I think the categories were unfair. I am taking two subjects that I have no interest in at all."

Learners accepted that there were timetable issues and not all choices could be accommodated, but also felt that more should be done to enable them to take the GCSEs that best suited them.

The younger focus groups, those ages between 11 and 14, were more concerned with GCSE option selection. While the older year groups, those aged 14 plus talked of exam stress and anxiety, crammed exam timetables and the unfairness of end of course exams.

3.2   Purpose of qualifications

Learners were asked about the purpose of qualifications and the responses gathered across the focus groups were reflected in the questionnaire responses.

There was agreement in the focus groups that qualifications are necessary and that learning needs to be assessed. However, there was little support for the current system and there was recognition that it needs to change to be fit for purpose:

"Qualifications… the marketisation of the school basically. Schools focus on the good students who will get good grades/qualifications and promote these grades therefore creating competition between schools, leaving those who may have learning difficulties or may struggle with certain elements of learning and just put them on the back bench."

"Exams are outdated, they don't teach you anything."

"…outdated and obsolete…"

Learners agreed that the current GCSEs help with moving on to further education and getting a job. However, they did not think that GCSEs were a reliable reflection of a person's knowledge and ability.

"Qualifications are necessary but not in the way they are being done now…. I don't know what they are testing but I can remember names and things and write them down… I don't understand anything I wrote but I still got A* because I'm good at memorising what's on a piece of paper."

"It's not about your potential, but can you memorise these specific things that you will never have to repeat again."

3.3   Methods of assessment

Learners were asked to list the different types of GCSE assessment, with the intention of broadening their thinking around alternative methods of assessment in addition to examination. Their responses are listed below:

- End of course exams
- NEA (non-examination assessment)
- Coursework
- Practical exam
- Practical assignment
- Performances
- Online assessments
- Oral exam
- Controlled assessment
- Portfolio of evidence

The creation of this list enabled learners to consider the differences between linear assessment, where all assessment is undertaken at the end of a course, and modular assessment, where assessments are undertaken throughout the course with marks contributing to the final grade.

3.3.1 Linear assessments

The questionnaire results showed that 23% of respondents preferred linear assessments, whilst 65% identified linear assessments as their least preferred type of assessment.

GCSE exam timetable

The focus groups concluded that the GCSE exam timetable increased levels of stress and anxiety with exams in all subjects being scheduled over a number of weeks with some learners having several exams in one day. The words "*stressed*" and "*overwhelmed*" were frequently used by learners.

"The Welsh Government needs to look at how this is affecting students."

Learners spoke of feeling under pressure in each subject area, not knowing what to revise first, with clashing demands on their time:

"no time for yourself, just revising, especially when you have a job and homework as well."

The general feeling was that there were too many assessments in a short period of time.

Content

Learners commented that the volume of content and the tight timescales led teachers and learners to try and "*second guess*" what might come up in exams to try and narrow down revision topics:

"not knowing…it's not a reflection of pupils' true potential because you're just guessing. I'm quite capable but it just depends on what shows up in the exam."

"GCSEs are very much a guessing game, there are so many topics"

"At the end you are expected to revise each topic that may be worth only three or four marks in the exam…. so you have to take a chance."

Most of the learners in the focus groups felt that the end of course examinations did not necessarily test their subject knowledge and understanding, but instead tested their memory, writing speed and time management abilities:

"100 years of history in one exam"

"You're tested on things you learnt ages ago and that can be difficult if you don't have a good memory."

In the questionnaire, when asked to rank what GCSE exams assess, 'memory' was ranked the highest, followed by 'knowledge and understanding of the subject'.

Learners said that they sometimes get confused with the subjects as a result of the length of time before the end of course exam, and the number of exams they take. They also said that they sometimes put incorrect information, which may relate to another similar subject area, in their answers.

Learning Styles

As most GCSE assessments are heavily weighted to the end of course exams, learners felt the system favours those who are better at remembering information rather than those who want time to think about their answer and apply their knowledge to the questions.

"Written exams under such time pressure don't allow you to demonstrate creativity and thinking skills. You're just reciting the textbook and facts"

> *"[exams] don't test your knowledge of subject, it is just a memory test"*
> _____
>
> *"There's little time to think about what you're writing….you just have to start writing straight away"*

Learners commented that the current GCSE exams disadvantage those they described *as "not exam people",* and for these learners, lower grades were seen as inevitable.

> *"…exams are unfair. They say if you put in a lot of effort, you can achieve anything but that's not true"*

Marking

Learners felt that learning the exam specification and using the key words was a key aspect to exam success:

> *"…you need exam technique to get marks even if you know the answer, if you don't use the right words, you get a bad mark"*
> _____
>
> *"…you're not learning a subject; you're just learning how to pass the exam"*

In the questionnaire, 64% of respondents agreed with the statement: *"To be successful I feel it is more important to know how to pass the exam (mark scheme) than know all the course content."*

Some learners thought that the inflexibility of marking schemes was unfair and that examiners needed to be more flexible. One learner remarked that examiners should:

> *"mark what is there, rather than what isn't and get marked down"*

Some learners also discussed the issue of interpreting a question in an exam, and how incorrect interpretation could lead to failure/low marks. They felt that coursework was fairer, as they could discuss and check work with the teacher, which is something that cannot be done in an exam setting.

Capabilities

Most learners felt that these high-stakes assessments were unfair as they base an entire GCSE result on an individual's performance on one day, when that individual is under pressure and sitting in an alien environment.

> *"Your whole grade relies on one day. You could be having an off day"*

Many learners commented that these exams did not fairly demonstrate their true capabilities, and this might be reflected in the final grade.

> *"You could have a bad day and fail, when in class you have been working at A* level for two years"*
>
> *"…the pressure of one exam, all or nothing, is not an accurate display of knowledge"*

Another learner explained this perceived unfairness:

> *"you can have a student that is disruptive in the class all year, but they revise for the exam and pass with good grades, whilst others who work hard all year may not perform as well in an exam and get a lesser grade. It isn't fair."*

Although learners talked about there being too much content to learn, in further discussions they explained that it was not the curriculum per se, but the assessment of all courses in one examination series.

> *"it's not that all exams are bad, it's just having the one exam after years of learning to decide your grade."*

Some learners talked of still working to complete the curriculum right up to the start of the exam season, which added to the feeling of overburden and stress.

But we also heard from some that they would prefer to have end of course exams as opposed to being continually assessed.

> *"Exams are the only fair way as everyone sits the same exam and it shows how much you've revised"*

Open Book Assessment

Learners discussed whether having 'open book' exams (having access to a 'clean' book with no annotation, which is provided for the exam only) would resolve the memory aspect of assessment.

A few learners thought this might make the exam easier and introduce an element of cheating. The counter argument was that as the exam question was unknown, a learner would have to be familiar with the book to find the relevant information.

Learners thought that open book exams would be especially useful in English literature where many felt they had to memorise large amounts of text and quotations from plays, books and poetry, when they could have been learning other things.

They also felt that memorising swathes of text was not a skill needed in the workplace and was therefore an unnecessary exam burden.

"…in real life you'll have resources with you or know where to find them."

Open book exams were deemed to be less stressful and not as overwhelming.

Learners also wanted to be provided with sheets of formulae and equations in science and maths exams rather than having to memorise them.

Overall, learners thought open book exams gave them a greater opportunity to demonstrate their ability, rather than just test memory.

"You're still showing learning and understanding, but it's not just about memory."

3.3.2 Modular assessments

Coursework undertaken throughout the GCSE journey was a preferred method of assessment for most of the learners in the focus groups and 58% of questionnaire respondents.

In contrast to the 'snapshot' approach of a final exam to determine the GCSE grade, learners saw more value in ongoing assessment throughout the course to build a more rounded and accurate picture of their abilities. They also felt that it took away the need to memorise information that many felt so unfair in the current assessment system.

One learner gave the following analogy of coursework and exams:

> *"…it's like a league compared to a tournament. In a tournament, like an exam, once you're knocked out that's it, but not in a league. If each test does count that's much better."*

Timing

Most learners preferred modular assessments (topic tests or coursework) as this removed the pressure and the perceived unfairness of awarding GCSE grades on final exams only. Learners commented that ongoing assessments would help to lower anxiety.

In contrast to the time pressure of an exam, learners talked of the benefits of having a deadline to complete a piece of work with the freedom to complete it over a period of time.

> *"…coursework is good because you can complete it over time. This way, I think pupils can reach their full potential."*
>
> *"You have time to reflect and build on a project, more valuable than an exam under pressure"*

Some learners (a minority) were not in favour of continuous assessment and were concerned that they would be over-assessed and would have to revise all the time.

Others felt that coursework can be intense especially when they had to hand-in multiple pieces of coursework at the same time.

Some felt that exams were the only fair way to determine grades, as work completed at home gave learners the opportunity to cheat.

> *"Coursework is open to manipulation."*

Quality of Work

Learners also felt that modular assessments enabled them to hand in better quality work as they did not have the anxiety of an "*all or nothing exam*", time pressure and the formal setting of the exam hall.

"Controlled assessments work for me as I can concentrate more, and it is not as much pressure when you're in a classroom."

Coursework was considered to be a better reflection of learning and ability, and led to a deeper understanding of the topic.

"With coursework, you must understand it to be able to write it".

Some learners thought that exams tested your memory rather than your understanding and application of a subject.

The common opinion was that those who worked hardest would be rewarded.

"...you can put in as much or as little effort as you want"

"...you have more control of the grade you get."

The learners felt that coursework, without the time pressure, allowed them to

- spend time planning the assignment,
- work at their own pace
- go over their work and make amendments,
- correct any errors such as spelling mistakes, and to hand in work that best showed their capabilities

They also saw coursework as an opportunity to improve their overall GCSE grade.

71% of questionnaire respondents agreed with the following statement:

"I would get a better GCSE grade if the final grade was based on ongoing assessment throughout the course".

Many felt that coursework gave them additional skills such as teamwork, time management and independent study.

"Coursework requires self-motivation and a lot of personal responsibility which is good for later in life".

Future Opportunities

Some learners suggested that the coursework is more relevant for their future in work and further education.

Learners discussed different types of ongoing assessments that could add to the richer picture of an individual's knowledge, understanding and skills.

Oral Exams

There were very mixed comments on the merits of oral exams.

In the questionnaire, 43% of respondents identified oral exams as their least favourite type of assessment, and only 10% identified them as their favourite method of assessment.

Whereas some learners enjoyed speaking rather than writing, many found oral exams to be a source of great anxiety.

For some learners, the main problem was speaking in front of the class, and some spoke of classmates laughing at them and trying to put them off.

"I don't like being forced to speak in front of the class. It's uncomfortable and I don't perform my best."

Learners were less anxious when speaking on a one-to-one basis or in a small group.

"I don't like speaking assessments in front of the class. It can often feel pressurised, and the classroom is usually quite noisy. I don't mind them when we go into a separate room though."

Some learners suggested that they would prefer an oral exam to a written exam, as they couldn't write quickly or well. For this reason, some learners preferred presentations where they could talk through their assignment and show their understanding of a topic.

Practical Assessments

Practical assessments were considered to be an important aspect of science, as they could apply what they'd learnt, as well as show knowledge of the right procedures and health and safety.

15% of questionnaire respondents recorded practical assessments as their preferred method of assessment and 9% recorded them as their least preferred method of assessment.

Learners agreed that group work and discussion-based assessments demonstrated additional skills, such as working as part of a team and communication skills, but one learner commented that it was only a few people that did the work.

> *"only a few of us actually did the work and we kind of carried the rest"*

Overall, however, group assessments were seen as opportunities to demonstrate and assess additional skills.

Ongoing practical assessments were also considered to be the fairest way to grade most of the practical and creative subjects and many learners disagreed with the heavy weighting attributed to the written paper.

> *"In PE, the exam is only about 50%, the rest is coursework and practical. If you have a bad day, you don't completely fail"*

Following this comment, the group suggested that the practical elements should carry far more weight than the written paper.

Assessing Creativity

Learners who preferred creative subjects felt that they were assessed "*in a very uncreative way*" and that if you excelled in subjects such as drama or music you were "*still assessed on your ability to write.*"

3.4   Improving assessment

Learners were asked to consider what changes they would like to see that would improve GCSE assessments.

The change that most learners suggested was to move away from the busy GCSE exam period, where success or failure was based on performance on the day, while being placed under pressure and in an intimidating environment.

Learners wanted the system to change from a single set of exams to a modular, continuous assessment approach based on real learning, not your ability to memorise facts.

Variety of Assessment

Learners felt that GCSE assessments should test them on what they know and shouldn't contain questions that they felt were there to 'trick' them.

Learners discussed their preferred style of assessment and agreed that there was not a one size fits all solution but having a broader range of assessment options throughout the course would be better and more interesting.

A variety of assessment options was also seen as a requirement for making the assessment system a more level playing field for different learners.

"…writing isn't always easy for some, talking may be better" (comment made while discussing presentations to talk through subjects)

"…my brother has dyslexia, if he is asked to write text he has issues and it has got to the point that he has disengaged in school, but if you give him maths to do he is brilliant but that isn't seen because of his issues with written work"

Students also discussed different assessment methods.

Some suggested being able to use a computer to type their answers. One learner likened the current assessment system to a "*straight road*". This led the learners to discuss if "*a pathway of assessment*", taking into account people's strengths and weaknesses, would be fairer.

Environment

Learners suggested that the exam hall environment was not conducive to producing their best work and that the environment made some learners especially anxious. As some felt they needed time to think in an exam before starting to write, many were in favour of a flexible time in which to complete an exam.

Practical Assessment

Learners were supportive of more practical assessments throughout the course to show how they could apply practical knowledge and also thought that practical exams were a more accurate measure of skill, compared to written exams.

They also suggested that they would like more practical exams, especially in the more practical and creative subjects, where the written paper was regarded as carrying too much weight.

Assessing Creativity

In music and drama, learners felt there should be other ways of assessing ability and creativity that are not captured in written exams.

These included taking part in competitions and eisteddfodau, playing in an orchestra or a band, or taking part in a school play (acting, singing, writing, directing, or lighting and stage setting).

The learners felt that these activities take time, preparation and skill but are currently not acknowledged in the GCSE assessment.

Recommendations for art assessment included:

"more opportunity for digital art, including using Apple pens"

"use photography in assessment and take your own photos, not just google them"

"trips to theatres, galleries, museums, potteries etc and get more hands-on experience".

There was a strong feeling that in practical and creative subjects that the written exam should not bring down the final grade.

Timetabling

Several schools which took part in the focus groups started GCSE courses in Year 9, and learners felt this gave them the opportunity to take more assessments in Year 10 which reduced the volume of work, revision, and exam pressure in Year 11.

"…it's good to get some out of the way in Year 10."

Learners in schools where this did not happen thought they might benefit from this, as they would be taking subjects that they had an interest in, and would therefore be more focused.

They also suggested that it would be easier to swap courses if they tried them and changed their minds, and that there would be more opportunities to re-sit exams and improve grades.

Revision Techniques

Learners would like to be taught how to revise for exams in KS3, which would mean that they could practise revision techniques from an early stage.

Several Year 11 learners had recently had sessions on how to revise but although some found them useful, many felt this should have happened much earlier in the curriculum.

Understanding learning styles and revision techniques in KS3 could support individual learning, reduce revision panic and exam anxiety, and maximise GCSE outcomes.

One learner said that they had only just realised they were a visual learner:

"I was in a class with the biology teacher and she put up pictures on the board. I got it and remembered it then… In another class the teacher just showed the textbook with writing. I realised that I learnt more from seeing pictures rather than reading text."

4. Next Steps

The work undertaken to date will help support decision making as part of the *Qualified for the future* programme of work. Learners' thoughts, experiences and opinions will be used to help shape future engagement, to promote the next phases of work and the consultation process in Autumn 2022.

4.1 Dissemination

The findings will be shared internally across departments to ensure the work is accessible and used in subsequent projects to develop further engagement. The experience obtained during the process has impacted the way in which QW engage with learner voice and provided a blueprint for Learner and Parent / Carer Strategy.

The report will be made available publicly and shared on QWs website in accessible formats, with an executive summary.

Appendix A – Participating Schools

| Learning Centre *focus groups facilitated by QW	County	Welsh Language/ Bi-	English	Independent/ Fee paying	Faith School	ALN	EOTAS	Learners
Ysgol David Hughes	Anglesey	X	X					24
Abertillery Learning Community	Blaenau Gwent	X	X				X	16
Brynteg Comprehensive School	Bridgend		X					15
Bryntirion Comprehensive School	Bridgend		X					14
Caerphilly Community Tuition	Caerphilly	X	X				X	12
Coedcae School	Carmarthen		X					21
Coleg Sir Gar	Carmarthen	X						7
St Michael's School	Carmarthen		X	X				30
Ysgol Bro Dinefwr, Llandeilo	Carmarthen	X	X					31
Ysgol Glan y Mor	Carmarthen		X					33
Baden Powell Primary School	Cardiff		X					12
Cathays High School	Cardiff		X					30
Eastern High	Cardiff		X					35
St David's Catholic College	Cardiff		X	X	X			24
St John's College	Cardiff		X	X	X			32
Whitchurch High School	Cardiff		X					33
Eirias High School	Conwy		X					21
Ysgol Aberconwy	Conwy		X					48
Ysgol John Bright	Conwy		X					30
Ysgol Y Gogarth	Conwy		X			X		32
Ysgol Maes Garmon	Flintshire	X						23
Chepstow School	Monmouth		X					22
Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed	Newport	X						13
Haverfordwest High VC School	Pembrokeshire		X					18
PRU Midsouth Powys	Powys		X			X		10
Ysgol Calon Cymru Builth Campus	Powys		X					28
Ysgol Calon Cymru Virtual	Powys		X					23
Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen	Powys	X	X					20
Ysgol Penmaes	Powys		X					12
St John Baptist CiW High School	RCT		X		X			39
Y Pant Comprehensive School	RCT		X					47
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	RCT	X						10
Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr	Swansea	X						36
Llantwit Major School	Vale of Glam		X			X		17
Stanwell School	Vale of Glam		X					34
The Maelor School	Wrexham		X					17

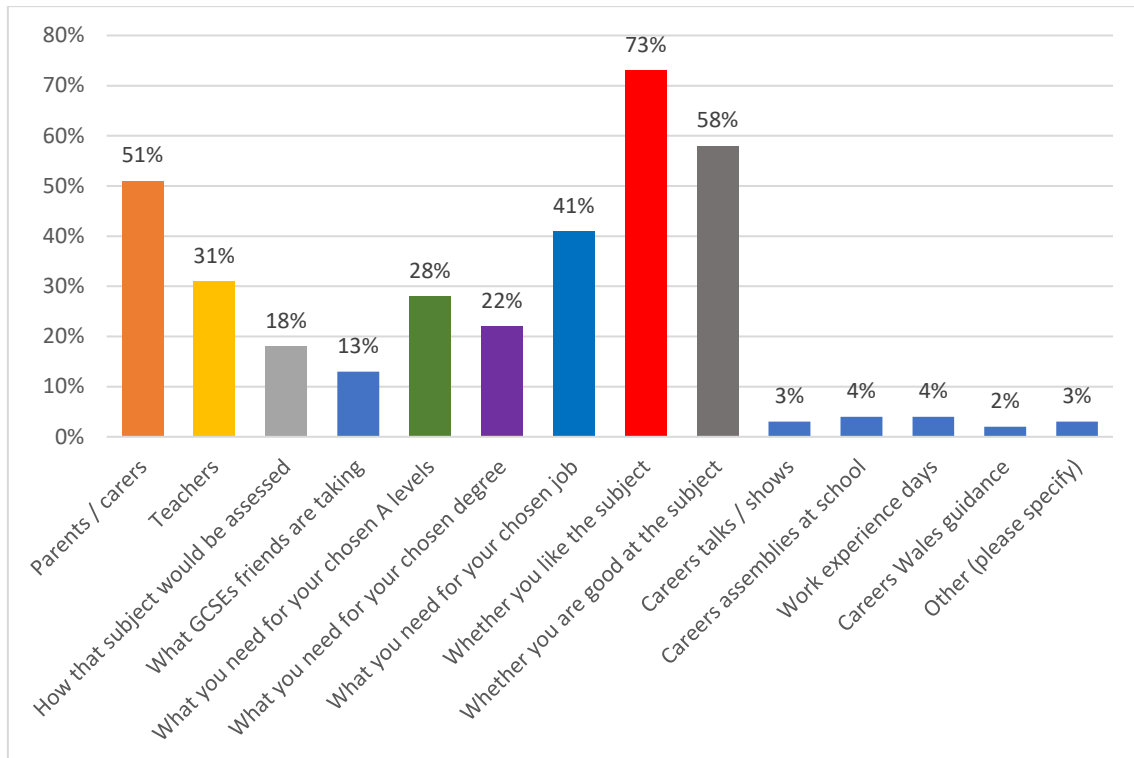# Appendix B – Questionnaire results
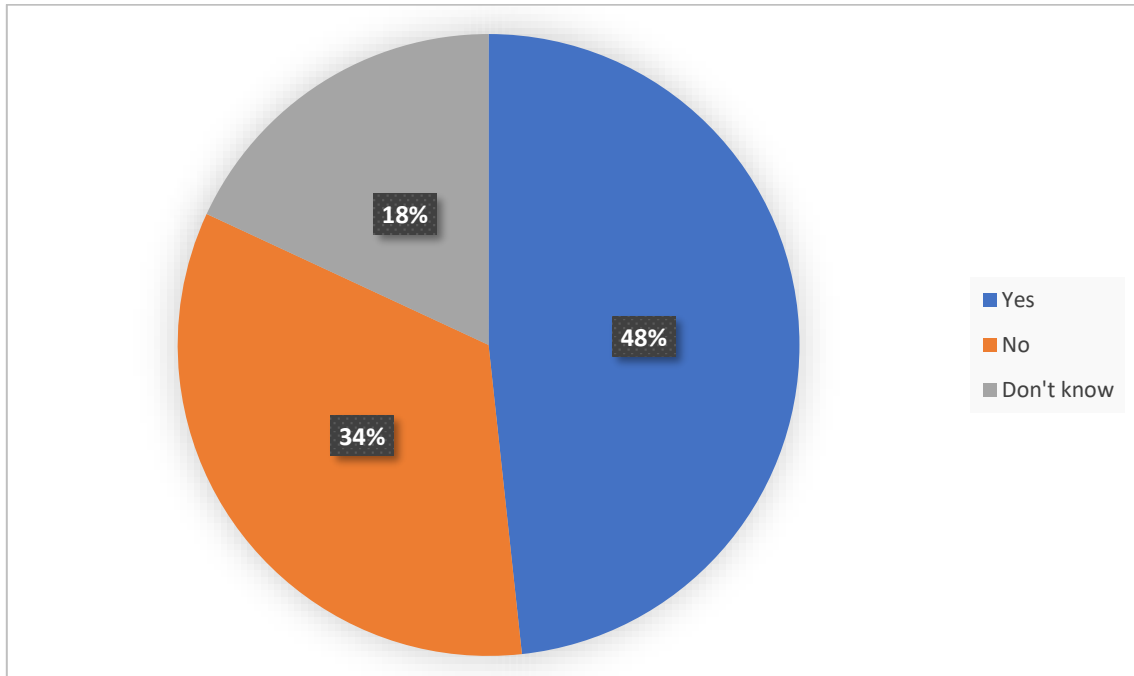
1.   Why do you think you need GCSEs?
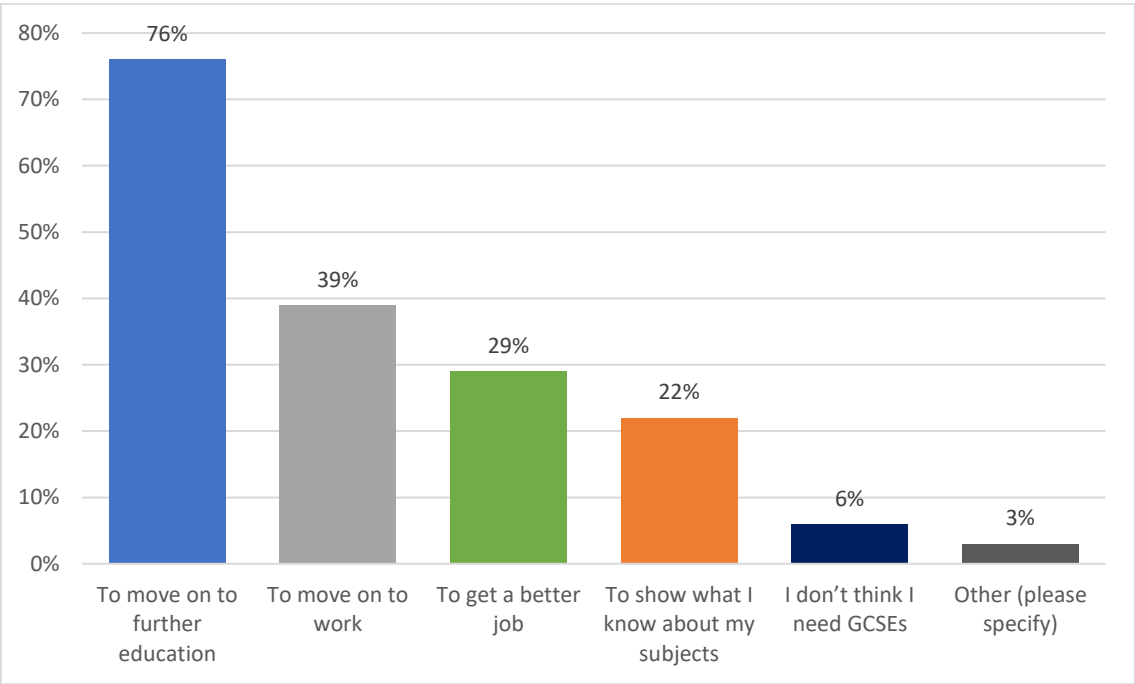
2.   Do GCSE qualifications motivate you to work as hard as you can?
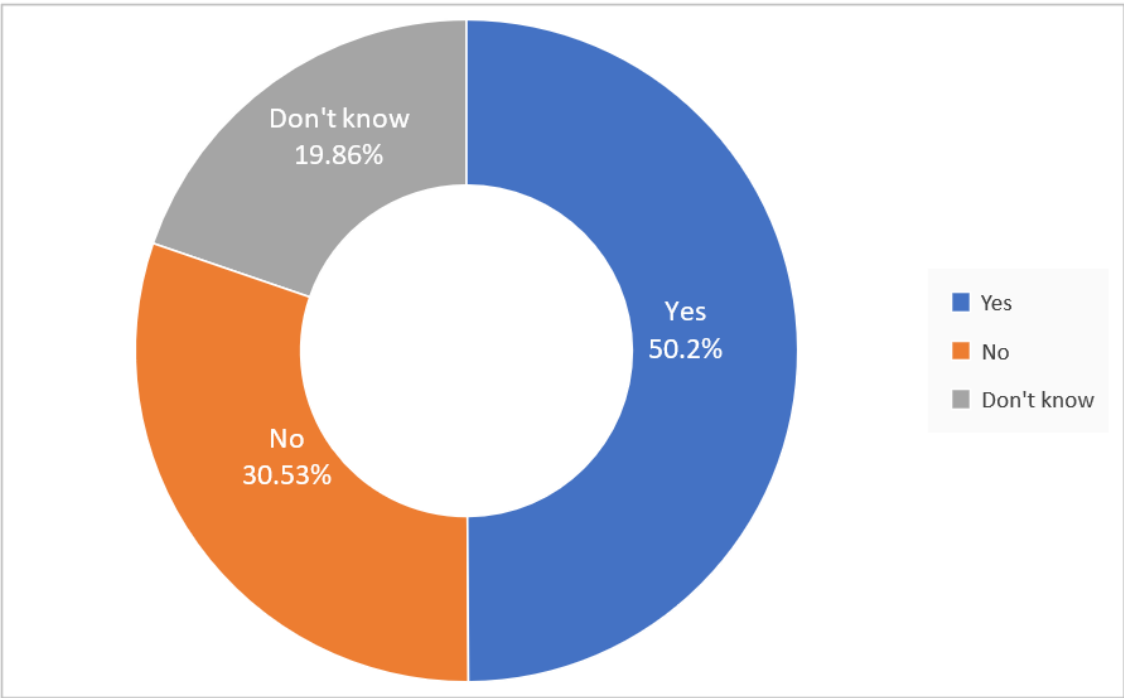
3. Which of the following helped you choose your GCSEs? (please select all that apply)
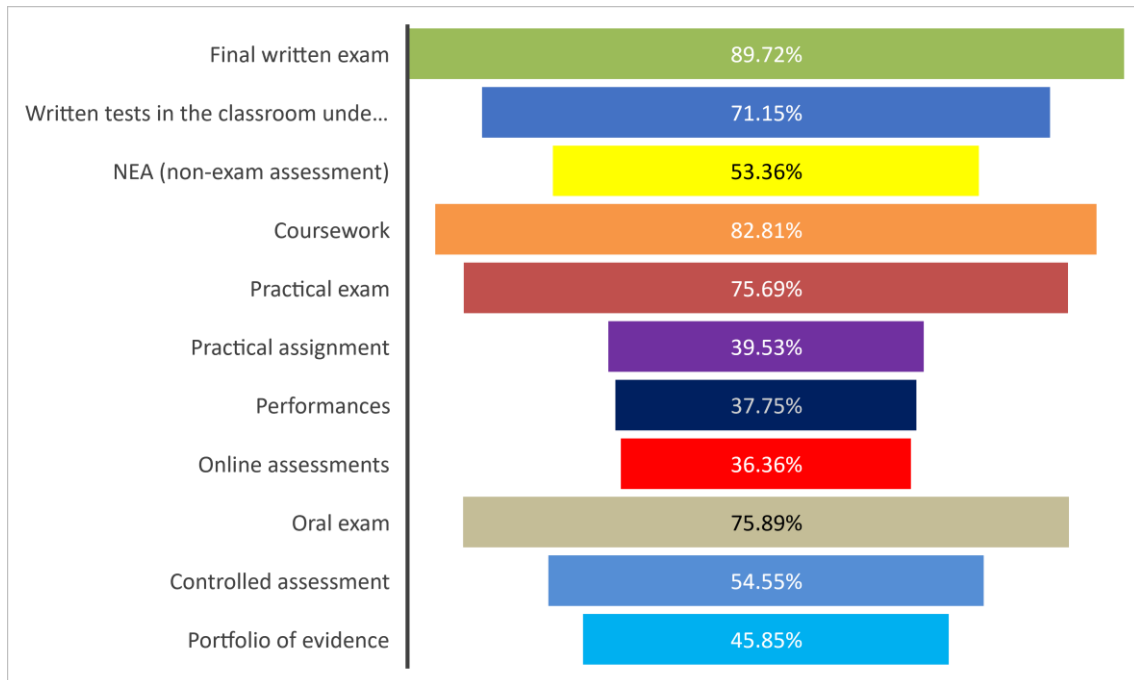

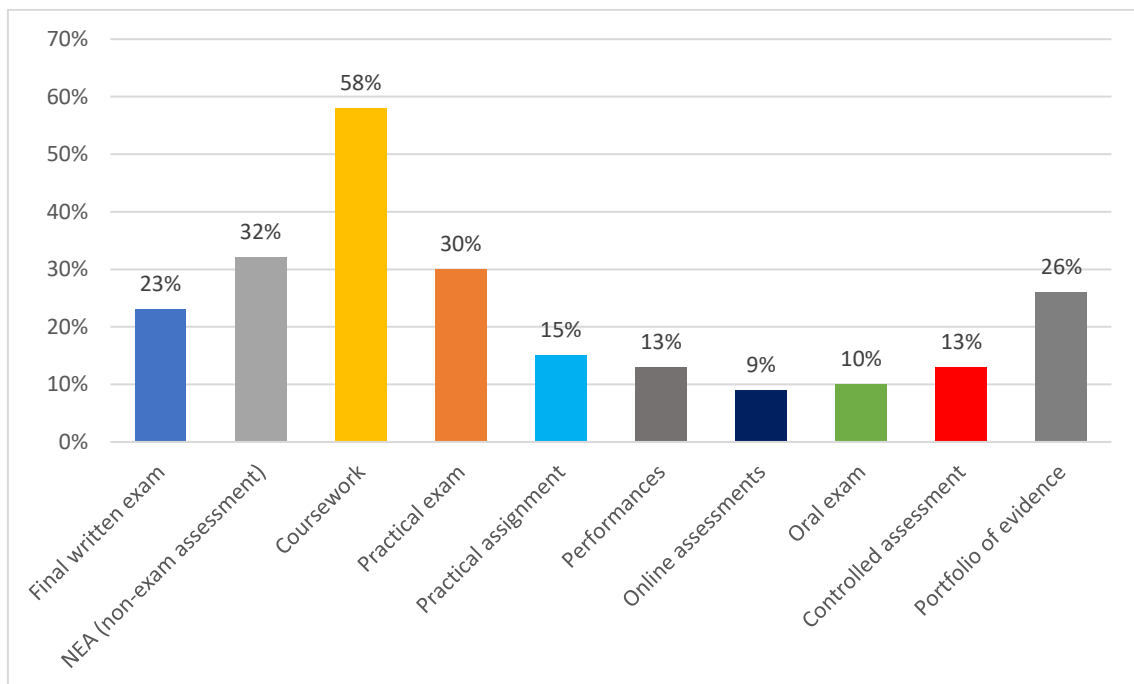**4. Do you feel you had enough information to make your decision?**

5. What further information would have been useful?

The free text comments were analysed, grouped by theme and have been included within the body of the report.
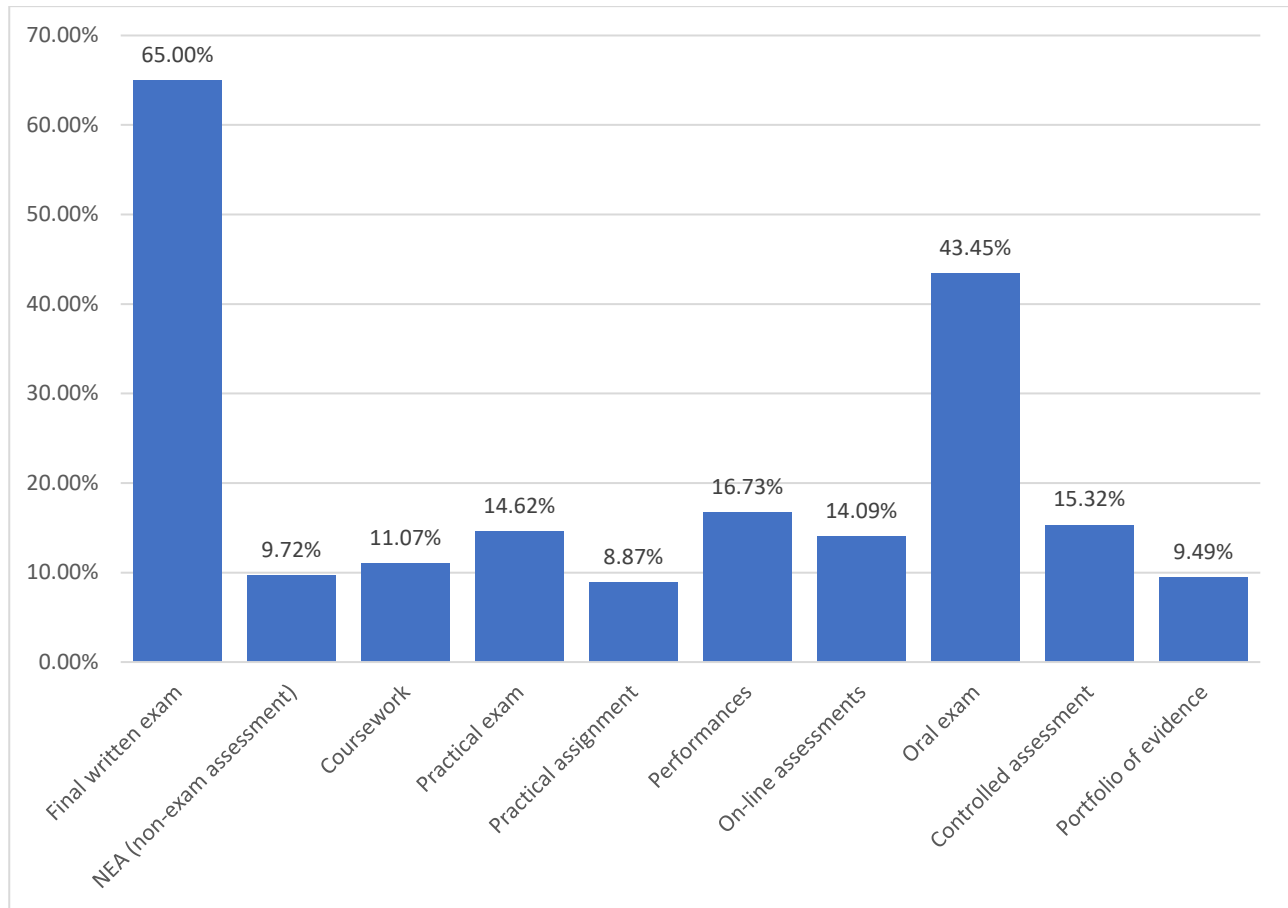
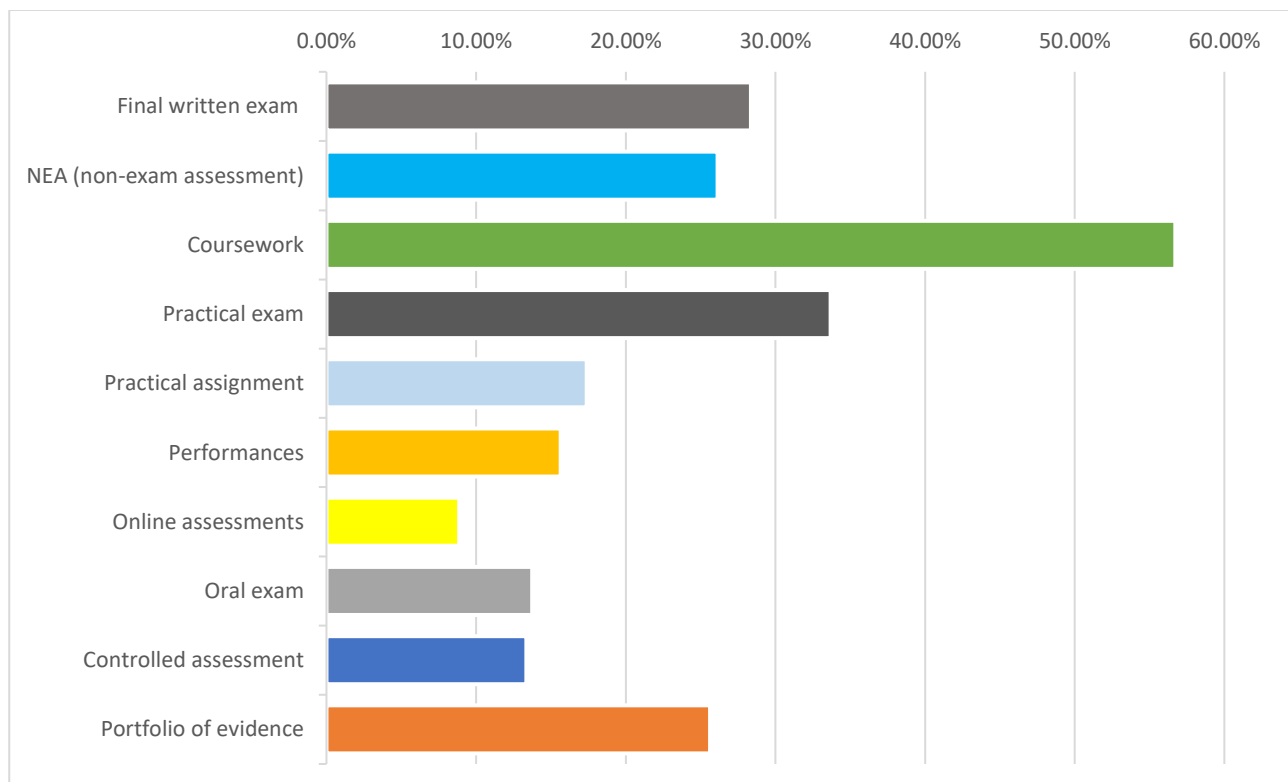**6. What types of assessments do you know about?**

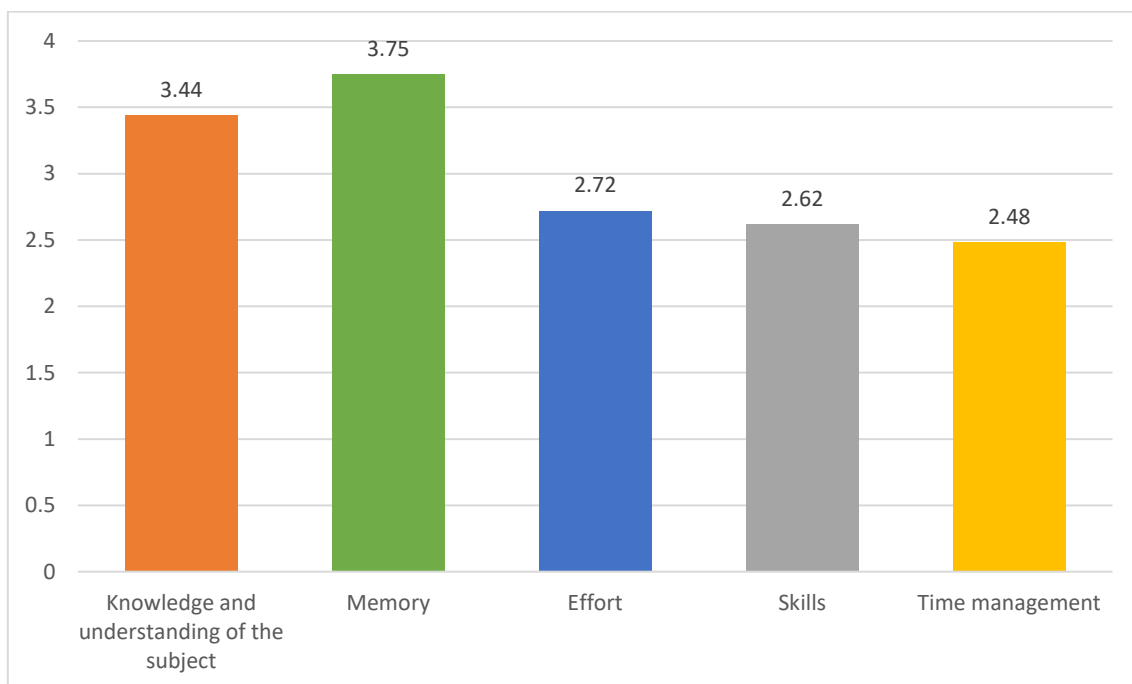**7. Which is your preferred type of assessment?**

8.   What type of assessment is your least favourite?

9.   Which type of assessment best demonstrates your abilities? (Please select all that apply)

10.   What do Year 11 GCSE exams assess? Please rank (1-5 Weighted Scores)

Questions 11 to 15 required respondents to indicate whether or not they agreed with a statement. The percentage of those who agreed with the statements are represented in the following graph.