

Stakeholder Survey 2018

A report on the results from SQA Accreditation's stakeholder survey

Publication Date: September 2018

Publication Code: DE7859

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD

www.sqa.org.uk

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications. If it is reproduced, SQA should be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be used for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from the Editorial Team at SQA. It must not be reproduced for trade or commercial purposes.

© *Scottish Qualifications Authority*

For an up-to-date list of prices visit the **Publication Sales and Downloads** section of SQA's website.

This document can be produced, on request, in alternative formats, including large type, Braille and numerous community languages. For further details telephone SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 0845 279 1000.

SQA is committed to using plain English. We will try to make our publications as easy and straightforward to understand as we can, and will try to avoid all unnecessary jargon. If there's any language in this document that you feel is hard to understand, or could be improved, please write to Editor, Editorial Team, at the Glasgow address or e-mail: editor@sqa.org.uk.

Executive summary

This report details key findings from SQA Accreditation's Stakeholder Survey conducted between May and July 2018.

In total, 46 complete responses were received from a range of Awarding Bodies, Standards Setting Organisations and other stakeholders.

The following key conclusions can be drawn from the survey:

- ◆ Stakeholders have considerable understanding of, and confidence in, SQA Accreditation.
- ◆ Stakeholders' experience of working with SQA Accreditation is largely positive.
- ◆ Stakeholders' opinions of, and experience with SQA Accreditation fares well in comparison to their experience of working with other UK regulators.
- ◆ The services and support that SQA Accreditation provides are highly valued by stakeholders.

The key strengths of SQA Accreditation, as identified by stakeholders, are:

- ◆ Willingness of staff to go the extra mile to support stakeholders.
- ◆ Professional and knowledgeable staff.
- ◆ Communication – accessibility of staff
- ◆ Account management – customer focused and responsive.

No major areas of concern were highlighted in the survey results. However, a number of areas for improvement by SQA Accreditation were suggested:

- ◆ Close association with the SQA Awarding Body, leading to some confusion.
- ◆ Over-reliance on manual systems, sometimes leading to admin-heavy, and burdensome tasks.
- ◆ Improvements to the provision of Research and Statistical information.
- ◆ Certain aspects of the website are perceived as weak.
- ◆ Lack of understanding of the role SQA Accreditation plays in relation to National Occupation Standards (NOS).
- ◆ Weaknesses in relation to information systems – primarily SharePoint

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Interaction with SQA Accreditation	4
2.1	SQA Accreditation's role and remit	4
2.2	Awareness of the four sections	5
2.3	Awareness of the main point of contact	5
2.4	Understanding SQA Accreditation's distinction from SQA Awarding Body	6
2.5	I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers	7
3	Your relationship with SQA Accreditation	8
3.1	Length of relationship	8
3.2	Nature of relationship	10
4	SQA Accreditation's performance	11
4.1	Our services	11
4.2	Our input	14
4.3	Comparison to other regulators	16
5	Provision of information	17
5.1	Our website	18
5.2	Reporting	20
6	Awarding Bodies	22
6.1	Accreditation process	22
6.2	Awarding Body approval process	23
6.3	Awarding Body self-assessment	24
7	Regulation	25
7.1	Quality assurance activities	25
7.2	Regulatory requirements	26
7.3	SharePoint/SQA InfoCentre	28
8	Summarising SQA Accreditation's Performance	31
8.1	Main weaknesses	31
8.2	Main strengths	31
9	Conclusion	32

1 Introduction

SQA Accreditation is dedicated to continuously improving its levels of service, and ensuring that stakeholders get the opportunity to share their opinions and influence the direction of change. SQA Accreditation considers the feedback from stakeholder surveys together with views and comments gathered on an ongoing basis to identify potential areas for improvement and development.

This report details key findings from SQA Accreditation’s stakeholder survey conducted between May and July 2018.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information on stakeholders’ experiences of working with SQA Accreditation, and to identify key strengths and weaknesses with the view to inform further improvement.

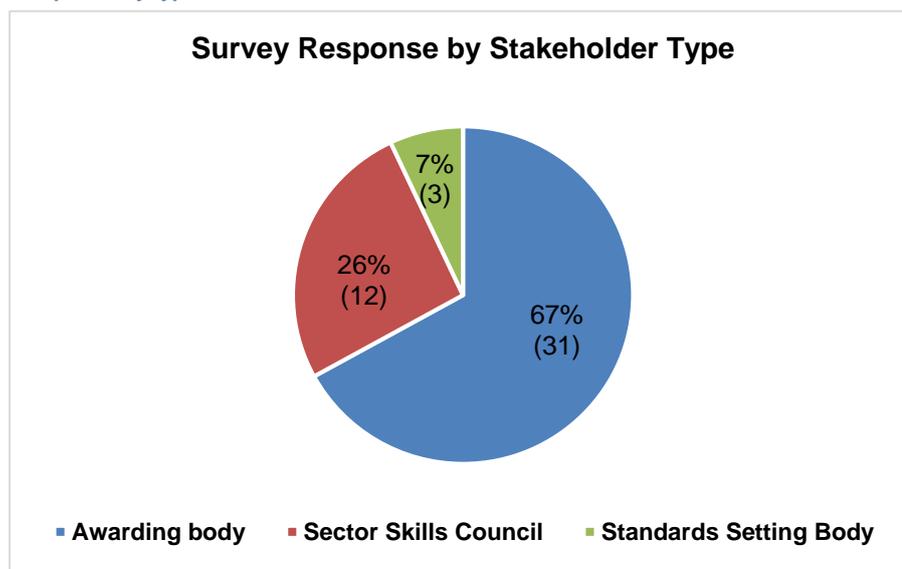
The survey was open for responses from 15 May to 6 July 2018. SQA Accreditation’s key stakeholders were invited by e-mail to respond to the survey. Responses were encouraged via reminder e-mails.

Where possible, comparisons are made with previous stakeholder survey results as a means to track improvements or to identify lack of improvements.

Invitations were sent to 140 contacts, comprising: 66 Awarding Body contacts, 68 Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) and six others. In total, 46 completed responses¹ were received from SQA Accreditation’s stakeholders. This gave a response rate of 33%.

The majority of responses were from Awarding Bodies (67% of responses). The full breakdown by stakeholder type is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Response by type of stakeholder



¹ Some of the responses only answered a limited number of questions. The results of these have not been included in analysis

The survey was sent to a total of 140 individual contacts, giving a response rate of 33%. While this appears low, the survey was sent to multiple contacts at each organisation to ensure awareness of the survey and to encourage relevant responses to the different sections. Stakeholder organisations submitted one collated response per organisation rather than multiple individual responses.

This is an increase in response rate compared to the last survey (2014–15):

- ◆ 221 individuals contacted
- ◆ 44 complete responses
- ◆ 22% response rate

Table 1: Response Rate, comparison by year

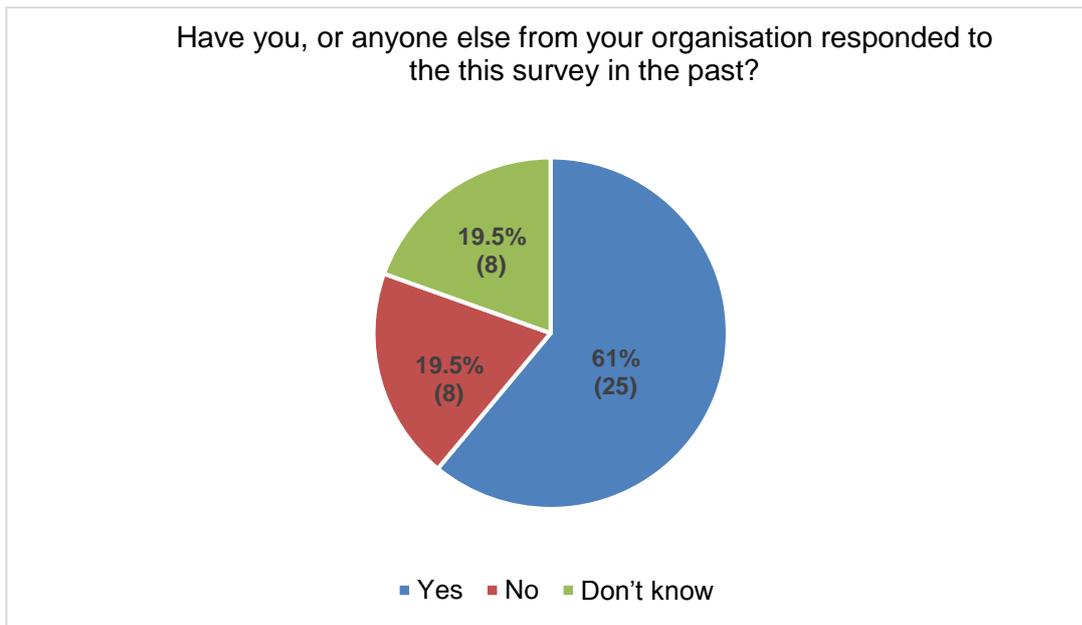
	Number of Responses	Percentage of responses
2009	56	39%
2010	30	29%
2012–13	43	31%
2014–15	44	22%
2018	46	32%

To gauge the overall awareness and interaction of stakeholders with this survey over the years, we asked ‘Have you, or anyone from your organisations, responded to this survey in the past?’ Yes or No

- ◆ 61% answered Yes
- ◆ 39% answered No

After analysing the results, an additional option of Don’t Know was added based on the comments from stakeholders. Several stakeholders selected No but commented that they were not sure, or unsure. The amended results are presented below:

Figure 2: Response to previous surveys



Many stakeholders commented that they were unsure, as they were relatively new to the role, or that they were unaware whether their predecessor had completed the survey. This is to be expected, given that the survey is only issued every three years.

A pattern of decreasing response from Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) is evident when comparing the breakdown of respondents across each survey. In 2009 there were responses from 29 SSOs, this has fallen to 3 SSOs in this year's survey.

Table 2: Standards Setting Organisations' Response, comparison by year

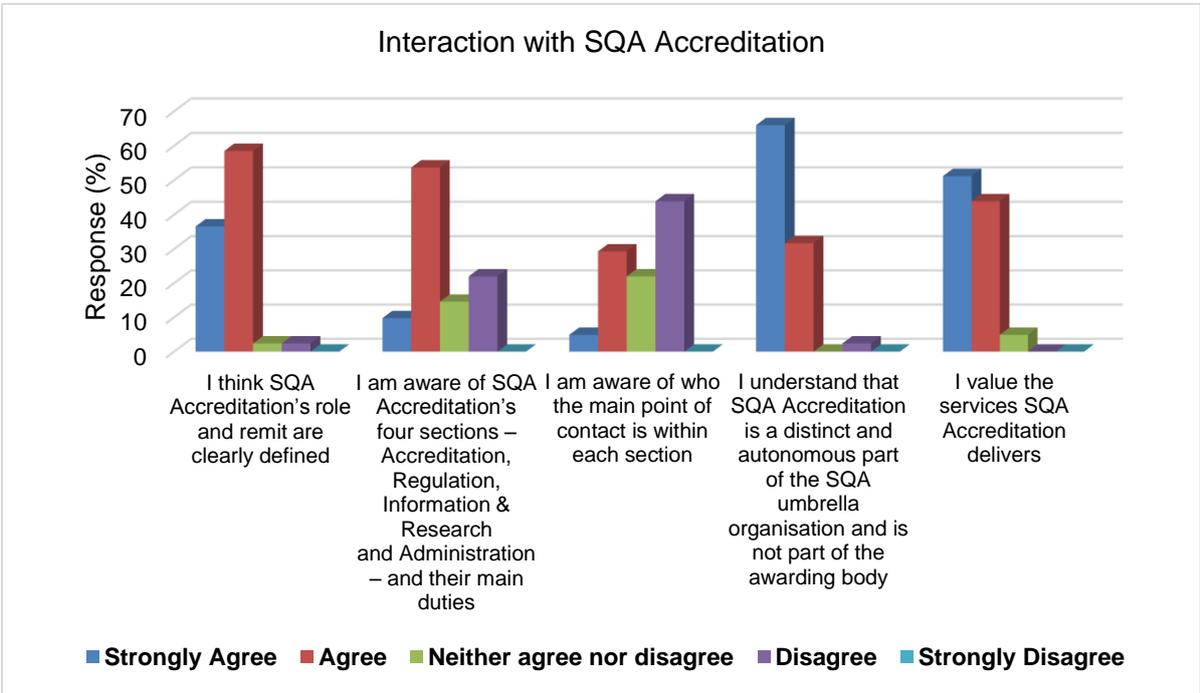
	Standards Setting Organisations Response
2009	29
2010	17
2012–13	14
2014–15	13
2018	3

2 Interaction with SQA Accreditation

SQA Accreditation engages with stakeholders in a number of ways, and often with multiple contacts in the same organisation. Stakeholders are allocated a specific contact from SQA Accreditation, such as an Accreditation Manager and a Regulation Manager in the case of an Awarding Body, and an Accreditation Manager for SSOs. The Head of Accreditation is the key contact for some stakeholders, plus there is general contact from other teams, such as administration and the Information and Research section.

Stakeholders were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding their understanding and opinion of SQA Accreditation’s key roles and functions. Stakeholders were given five options, from ‘Strongly Agree’ through to ‘Strongly Disagree’.

Figure 3: Interaction with SQA Accreditation

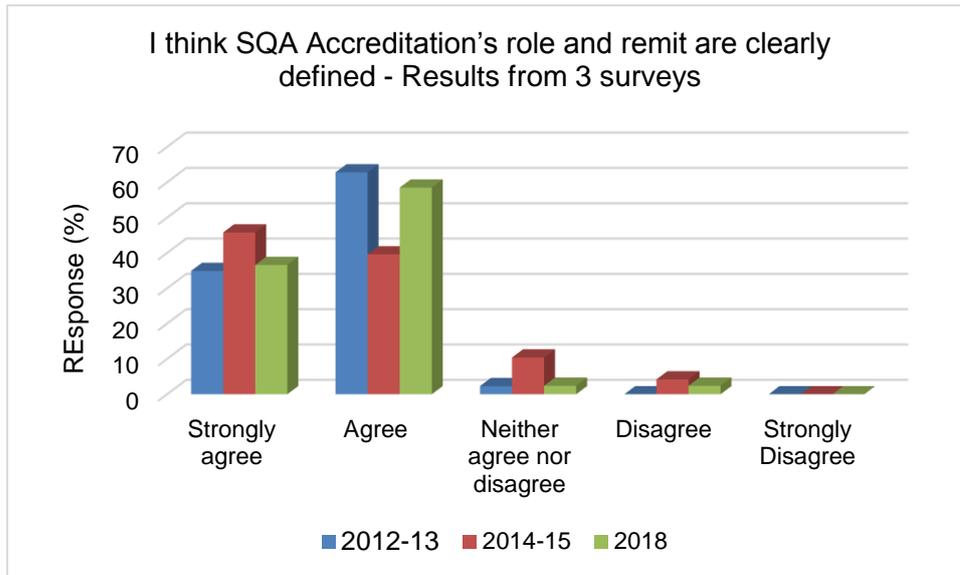


Responses to the questions were positive in the main, with 77% of respondents answering that they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with each of the statements. The largest number of negative responses (i.e. agree or strongly disagree) relate to the different sections of the Accreditation Unit and the main point of contact within each section.

2.1 SQA Accreditation’s role and remit

Based on results, it can be concluded that stakeholders have a good understanding of our role and remit, with 95% selecting strongly agree or agree. This is also an improvement on the 2014–15 survey, and consistent with the earlier 2012–13 survey.

Figure 4: SQA Accreditation’s role and remit – Comparison of 3 surveys



2.2 Awareness of the four sections

In previous surveys, Stakeholders were asked to comment on the following: ‘I am aware of SQA Accreditation’s two distinct sections — Accreditation and Regulation — and their main duties’. After consultation with the whole Accreditation Unit, the realisation was that the unit was actually sub-divided into four sections, and it was important to assess Stakeholder’s awareness of this. These comments should be viewed as opportunities for improvement, particularly those relating to lack of awareness of the four main sections and their contacts. This could be addressed by communicating this to stakeholders via email, or newsletter.

As this questions was re-worded it is not possible to draw with the previous surveys. Comments related to this question included:

- ◆ ‘I was not aware that there was a distinct Administration section or what it is’

2.3 Awareness of the main point of contact

Approximately 40% of stakeholders said that they were not aware of who the main point of contact within each section was. Comments included:

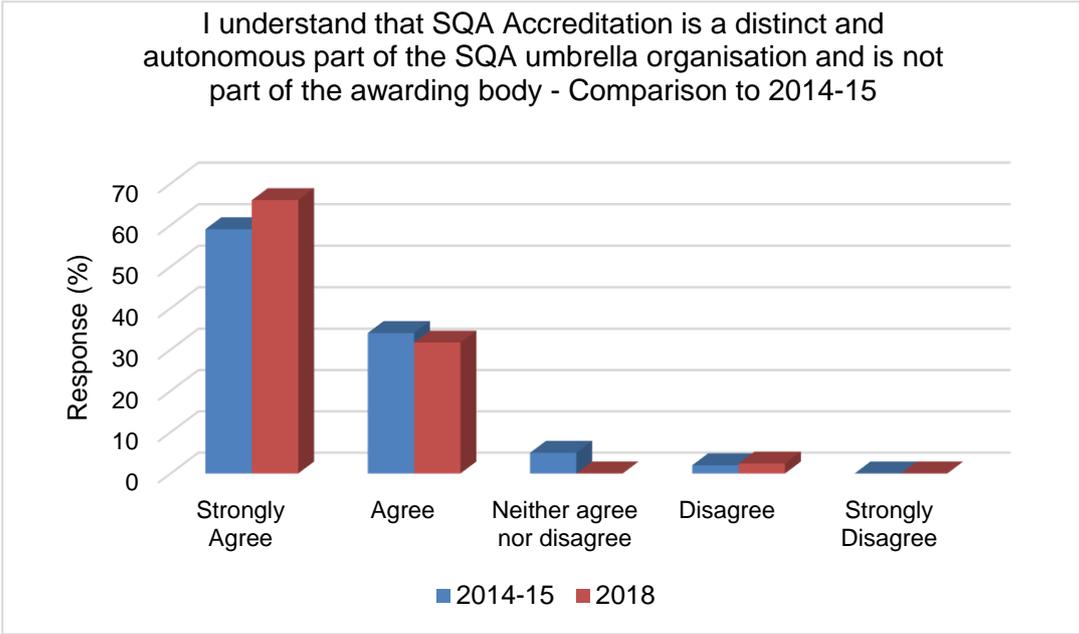
- ◆ ‘Regarding the main points of contact - I am clear for Accreditation, Regulation and Administrations but not sure for Info & Research’
- ◆ ‘Less aware of the contacts and duties of the Information and Research section.’

This lack of awareness can be addressed by SQA Accreditation by communicating with stakeholders via email, and/or using the website to ensure that contact information is up-to-date.

2.4 Understanding SQA Accreditation’s distinction from SQA Awarding Body

A recurrent theme in stakeholder feedback is that there is confusion between SQA Accreditation, SQA the Awarding Body, and corporate SQA. Various attempts have been made to resolve this issue, such as SQA Accreditation getting its own branding and a distinct website dedicated to SQA Accreditation.

Figure 4: Understanding of SQA Accreditation, in relation to SQA Awarding Body



The percentage of stakeholders who responded with ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ has increased since the last survey, with 97.7% of respondents selecting one of these responses, compared to 93% in 2014–15. While only one respondent said that they disagreed with the statement, it is important that as an independent regulator, stakeholders understand SQA Accreditation’s impartiality and its separation from SQA, the Awarding Body.

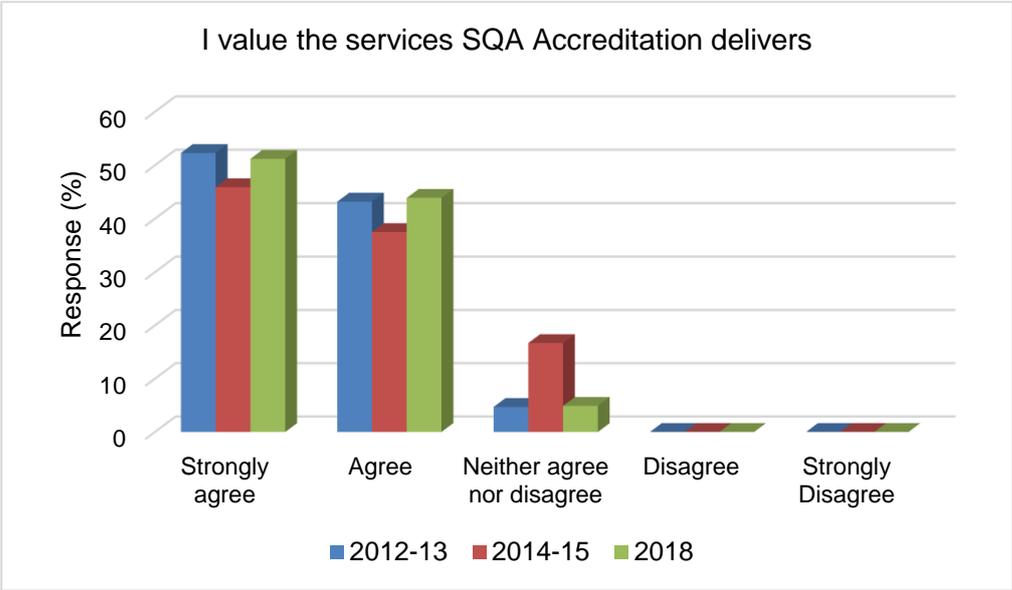
Stakeholders were invited to add comments as required. These comments included:

- ◆ ‘Although AOs are fully aware of the distinction between SQA Accreditation and the SQA AO, the market place do make mistakes when referring to it sometimes believing they are one and the same requiring AOs to continue to distinguish the differences on SQA's behalf.’
- ◆ ‘To the relatively untrained eye, it has sometimes been difficult to identify and access the distinct parts of the 'umbrella' SQA. Now that we refer to SQA Accreditation it is easier. SQA Accreditation have clear standards and are constructive, helpful in their responses.’

2.5 I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers

To conclude this section, stakeholders were asked to comment on this statement: 'I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers'.

Figure 5: I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers – comparison of 3 surveys



95% of stakeholders said that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement – an overwhelmingly positive result. This is an improvement on the 2014–15, where 83% selected that they agree or strongly agree. Since the 2012–13 survey, no respondents have said that they disagree or strongly disagree with this statement.

3 Your relationship with SQA Accreditation

3.1 Length of relationship

Respondents were asked:

How long have you had a working relationship with SQA Accreditation? The results were:

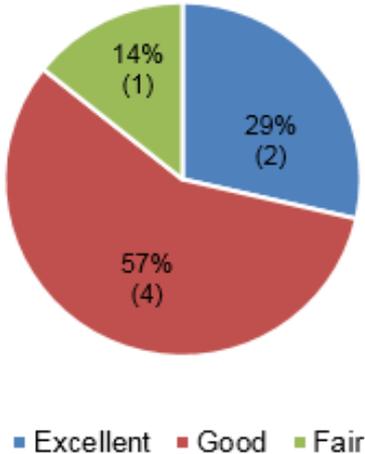
Table 3: Responses to 'How long have you had a working relationship with SQA Accreditation?'

Answer Choices	Responses	
No current working relationship	0%	0
Less than 6 months	0%	0
Between 6 months and 1 year	2%	1
Between 1 and 2 years	5%	2
Between 2 and 5 years	27%	11
More than 5 years	66%	27

None of the respondents who answered this question had been working with SQA Accreditation for less than six months. Almost 93% of respondents have had working relationships with SQA Accreditation for more than two years.

Stakeholders who had only recently engaged with SQA Accreditation for the first time were asked to rate the service they received so far. This question received seven responses:

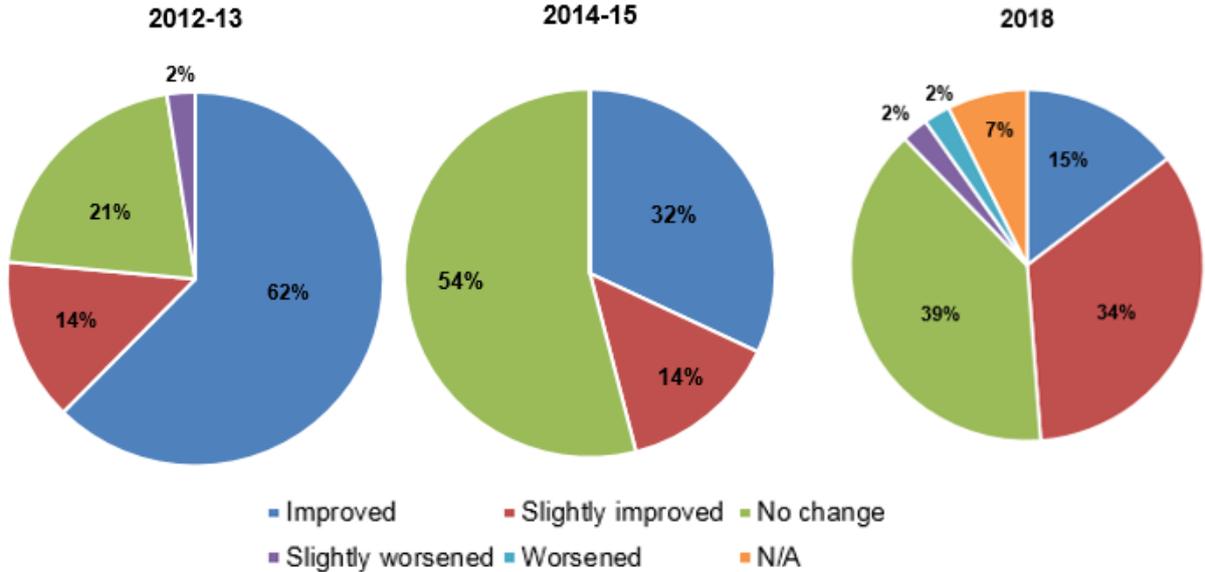
Figure 6: If you have only recently engaged with SQA Accreditation for the first time, how do you rate the service you have received so far?



The results from new stakeholders are very positive - none of the new stakeholders selected the options 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'.

In order to determine how stakeholders rate our service in comparison to previous years, respondents were asked 'In the time that you have been working with SQA Accreditation, do you feel that our services have improved?'

Figure 7: 'Do you feel that our services have improved?' Responses since 2012-13



49% of respondents answered that services had improved or slightly improved - a slight increase on the previous survey's 46%. Comments received included:

- ◆ 'Engagement has been more face to face of lately which has helped overcome previous communication issues.'
- ◆ 'We appreciate the quality and constructiveness of the responses we receive'
- ◆ 'The staff at SQA Accreditation are always very professional, approachable and considerate.'

39% of stakeholders selected 'No Change' – comments included:

- ◆ 'No change recorded as the service I have experienced over 10 years has been first class.'
- ◆ 'Your services have always been at a high professional level - and remain so. (Therefore you ought not to take 'No Change' as a negative).'

One stakeholder selected 'Worsened' but did not comment as to why this was the case. The stakeholder who selected 'Slightly Worsened' commented:

- ◆ 'Have recently been confused by some of the decisions taken by SQA Accreditation specifically around commissioning of NOS products through SDS'

3.2 Nature of relationship

To understand the nature of stakeholders' relationships with SQA Accreditation, we asked a series of questions.

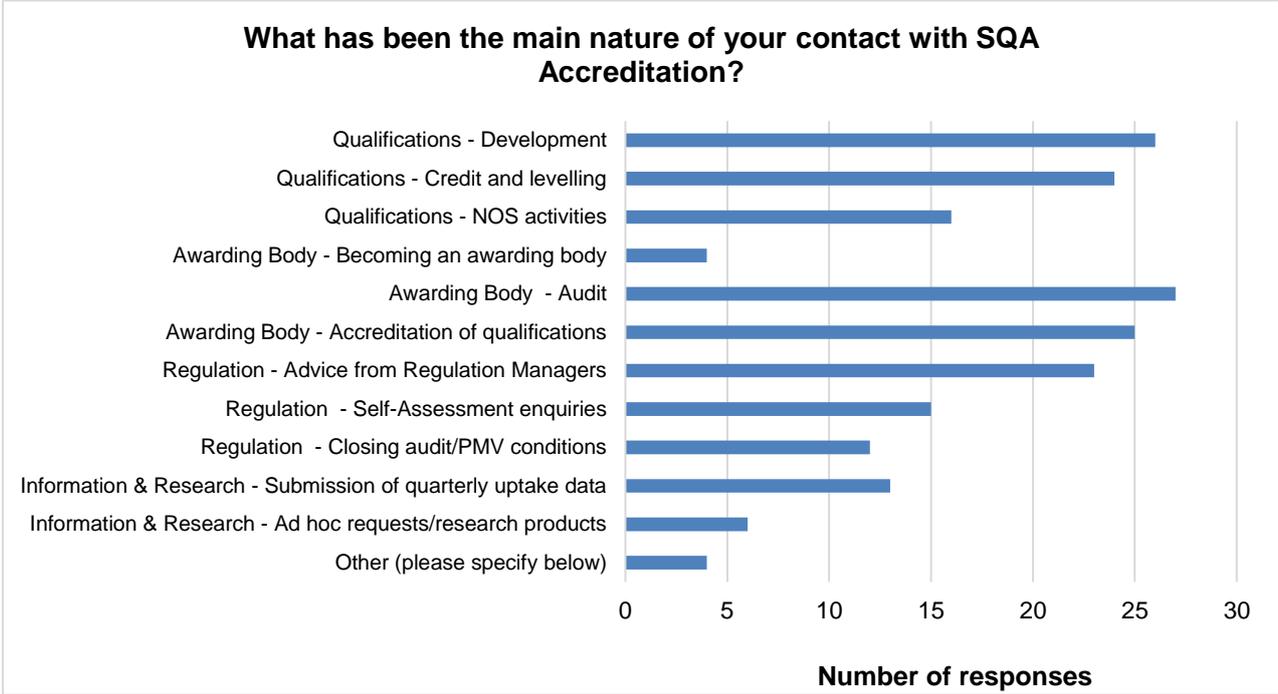
We asked Stakeholders 'What level of contact do you have with SQA Accreditation staff?' The answer choice with the highest number of responses was Regular Contact with a Specific Member of staff (66% of responses), followed by some contact with a General Contact (with 59%).

Table 4: Responses to 'What level of contact do you have with SQA Accreditation staff?'

	Regular contact		Some contact		Little contact		No contact	
Specific member of staff	27	66%	12	29%	2	5%	0	0%
General contact	17	17%	25	59%	10	24%	0	0%

To expand on this, stakeholders were asked 'What has been the main nature of your contact with SQA Accreditation?' and were given the option to tick more than one answer.

Figure 8 'What has been the main nature of your contact with SQA Accreditation?' responses



As a percentage of the total number of answers ticked by stakeholders, the activities with the largest percentage of stakeholder interaction are:

- ◆ Awarding Body - audit
- ◆ Qualifications development
- ◆ Awarding Body - accreditation of qualifications

The activity group with the highest number of responses was Qualifications, with 34% of the total responses. This is broken down as follows:

Table 5: Staff contact results, grouped into activity groups

Activity Group	Number of Responses	% of Total Responses
Qualifications activities	66	34%
Awarding Body activities	56	29%
Regulation activities	50	26%
Information & research activities	19	10%
Other	4	2%

These results can be viewed as an opportunity to improve on the contact and interaction of stakeholders with Information & Research section.

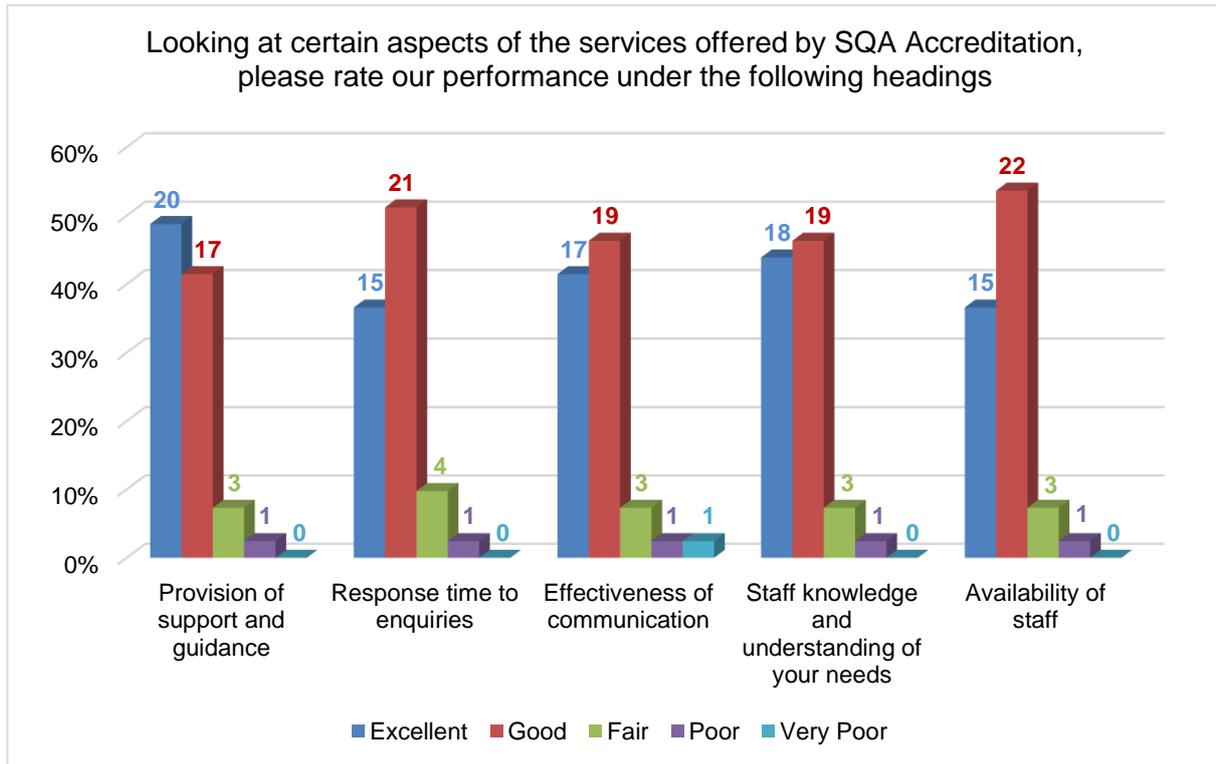
4 SQA Accreditation’s performance

SQA Accreditation has undertaken a number of continuous improvement activities over recent years in an effort to improve the overall experience for its stakeholders, reduce bureaucracy, increase support and guidance provided, and make SQA Accreditation’s processes work more efficiently.

4.1 Our services

Stakeholders were asked to look at certain aspects of the services offered by SQA Accreditation and rate our performance under different headings. The results are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Results of performance rating (2018)



These results are very positive, with between 80-95% of respondents selecting Excellent or Good for each question. Comments from stakeholders included:

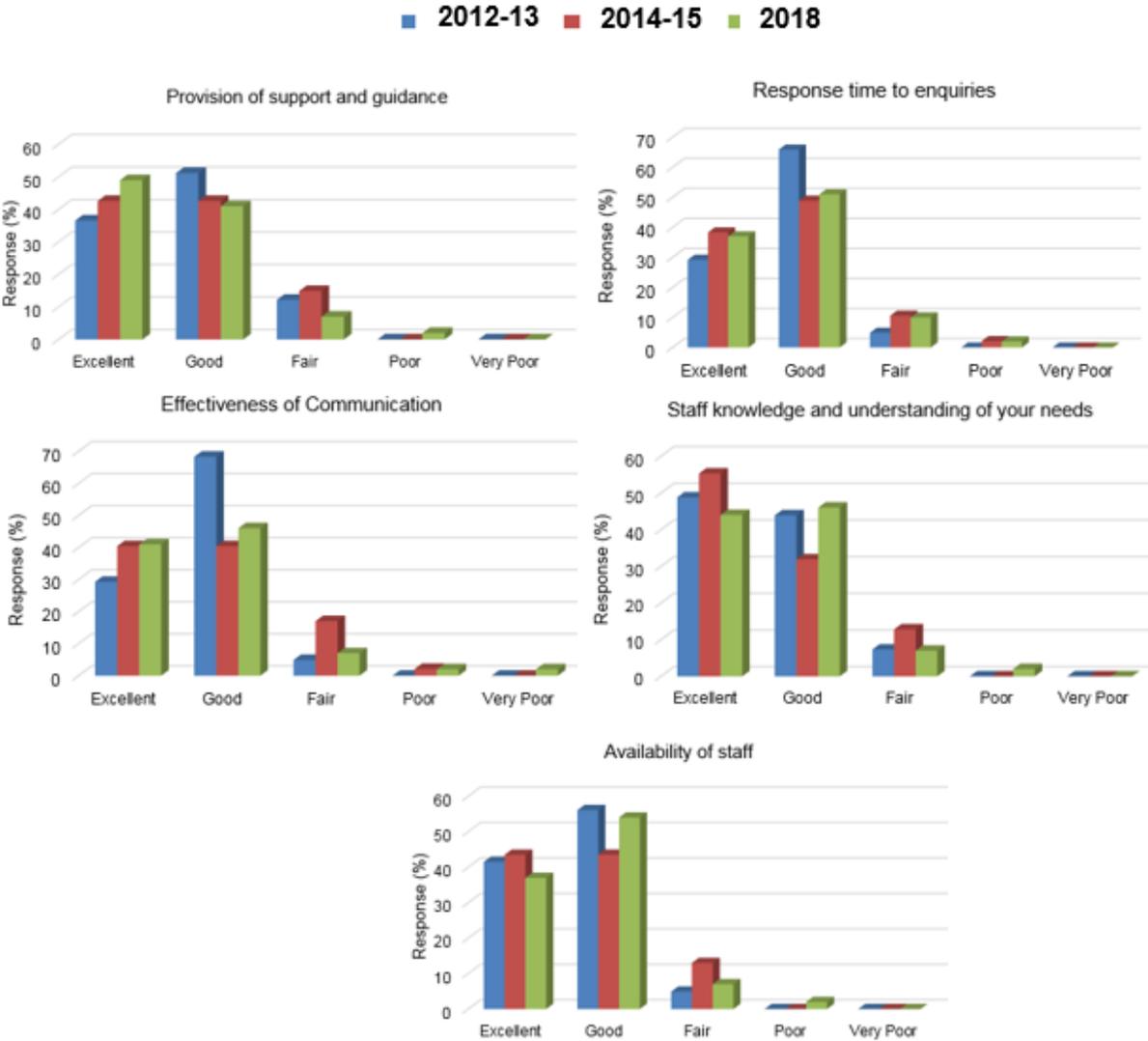
- ◆ 'We remain pleased with quality of responses we receive. They are helpful and facilitate going forward. This is not necessarily typical of all regulators.'
- ◆ 'We have received an excellent level of support from our SQA Accreditation Relationship Manager over the past 12 years which have led to successful delivery of projects'.
- ◆ 'Staff are always very quick to respond to communication and generally speaking provide an informative and useful response at first time of asking rather than needing to get in to a back and forth discussion.'

Feedback was highly positive for most services with the majority of responses being 'excellent' or 'good'. The following services received the highest ratings:

- ◆ Staff knowledge and understanding of your needs (49% answered 'Excellent')
- ◆ Availability of staff (54% answered 'Good')
- ◆ Response time to enquiries (51% answered 'Good')

There were a total of 16 'Fair' responses, five 'Poor' and one 'Very Poor'. It is worth noting that all of the Poor and Very Poor responses can be attributed to two respondents to the survey. This indicates that there is a specific problem rather than a more widespread issue with our services. No comments were added by these respondents, so the reasons for their dissatisfaction cannot be gleaned. Figure 10 compares the results of these questions over the past three surveys. There are no significant changes in responses, and no real causes for concern with regards to our service.

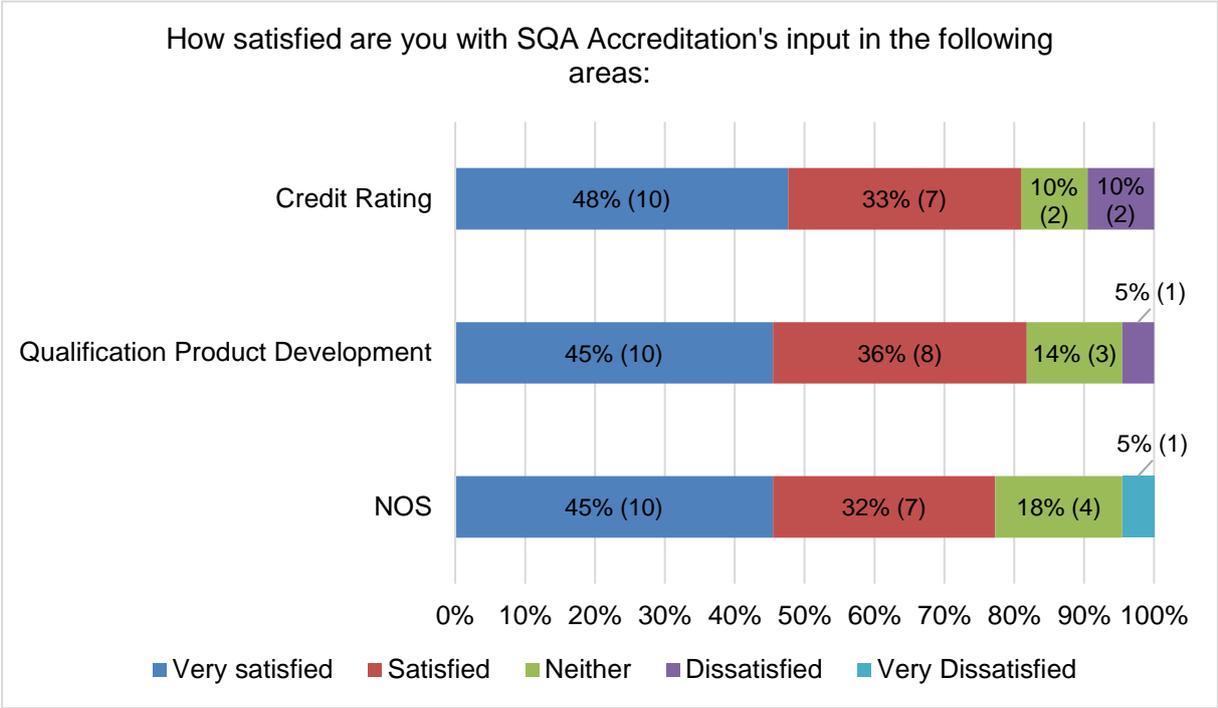
Figure 10 Stakeholder response to service statements: comparison of three surveys



4.2 Our input

Stakeholders were asked ‘How satisfied are you with SQA Accreditation’s input in the following area?’

Figure 11: ‘How satisfied are you with SQA Accreditation’s input’ responses

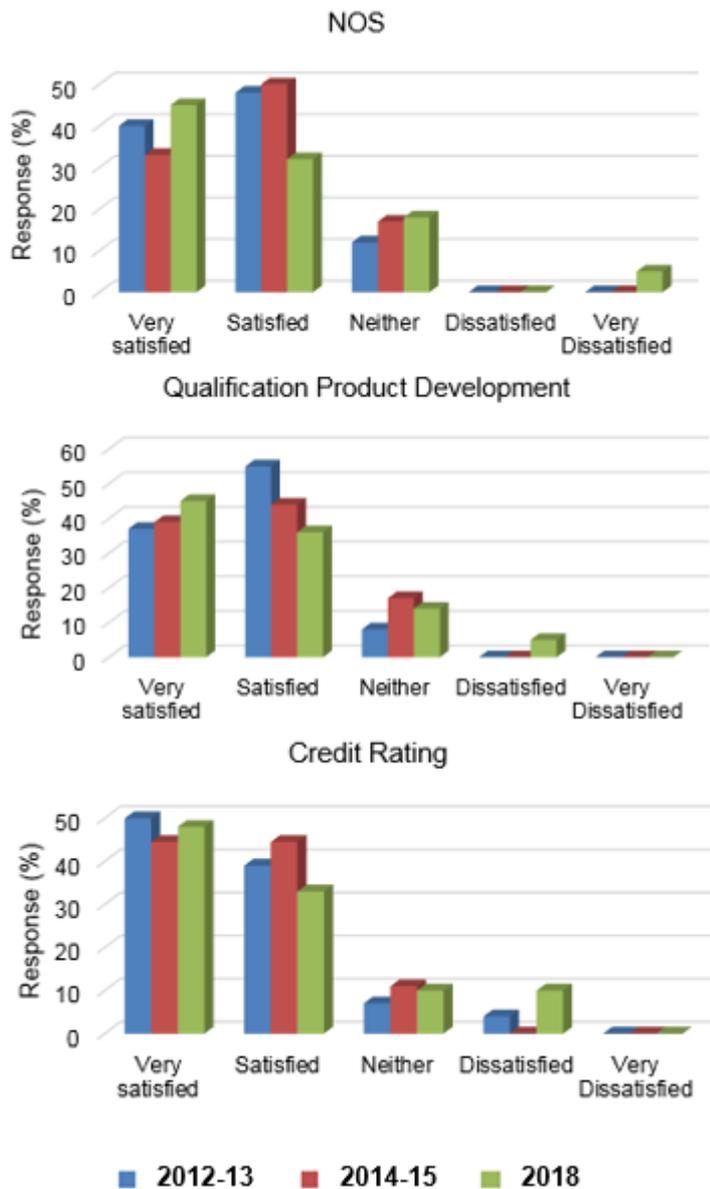


Stakeholders were given the opportunity to suggest ways that SQA Accreditation could provide a better service in the areas highlighted above. These commented included:

- ◆ ‘No, very happy with the level of support provided’
- ◆ ‘The NOS web processes are very clunky. I know you know, but it would be good to see them change.’
- ◆ ‘Excellent level of service and support’.

Stakeholders have also been asked the same question in previous surveys - see Figure 12.

Figure 12: Stakeholder response to NOS, QP Development and Credit Rating input: comparison of three surveys



In relation to NOS, the percentage of Very Satisfied stakeholders has increased since 2014-15, and has surpassed the 2012–13 rate.

The Very Dissatisfied and Dissatisfied responses in relation to this question have been made by one respondent. SQA Accreditation will endeavour to address their concerns.

For Qualification Product Development, the number of Very Satisfied responses is at its highest level.

There are no significant spikes or decreases in overall satisfaction in comparison to previous surveys.

4.3 Comparison to other regulators

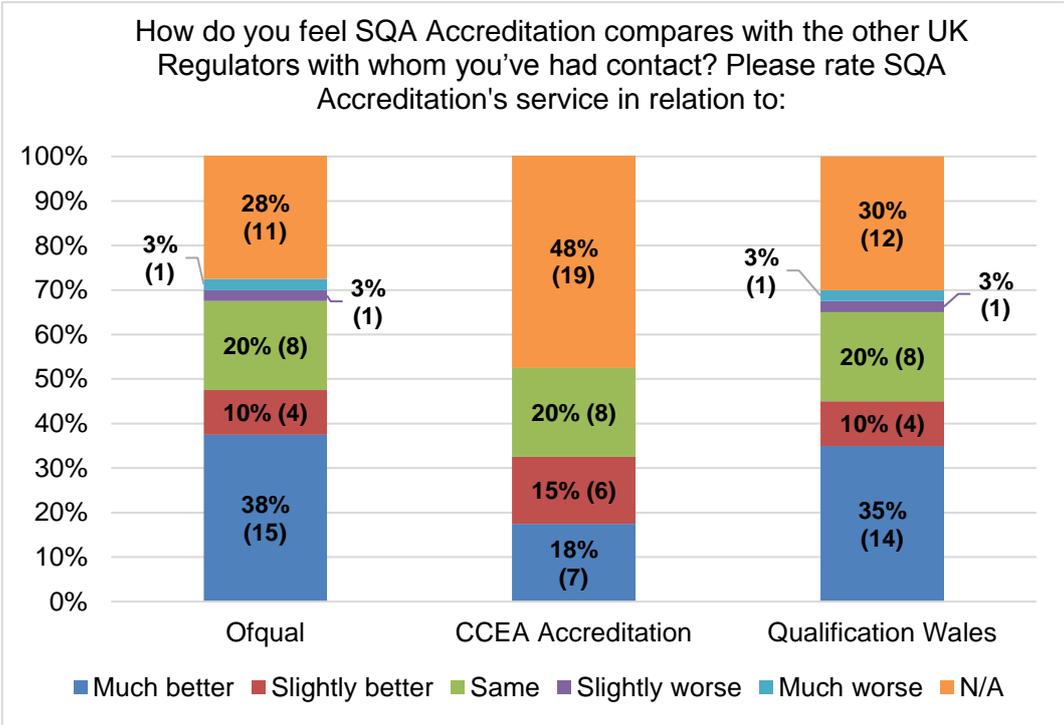
We asked stakeholders to rate our performance in comparison to other regulatory authorities in the UK. First, we asked stakeholders about the frequency of their contact with the other regulators in the UK.

Table 6: Results for ‘How frequently do you have contact with the following Regulatory Authorities?’

Regulator	Frequent contact		Some contact		Little contact		No contact		Not relevant	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Ofqual	13	33%	11	28%	9	23%	6	15%	3%	1
CCEA Accreditation	3	8%	10	25%	12	30%	6	15%	23%	9
Qualification Wales	6	15%	18	45%	9	23%	5	13%	5%	2
SQA Accreditation	23	58%	15	38%	0	5%	0	0%	0%	0

Stakeholders were then asked to compare their interactions with SQA Accreditation to the other UK regulators.

Figure 13: Comparison of SQA Accreditation to other UK regulators



The results show that SQA Accreditation is held in high regard in comparison to Ofqual, CCEA and Qualifications Wales:

- ◆ 48% of respondents feel that SQA Accreditation’s service is much better, or better than, Ofqual

- ◆ 33% of respondents feel that SQA Accreditation's service is much better, or better than, CCEA Accreditation
- ◆ 45% of respondents feel that SQA Accreditation's service is much better, or better than, Qualification Wales

The Worse and Much Worse responses can be attributed to two respondents. However, no comments were made regarding the reasons for these responses.

5 Provision of information

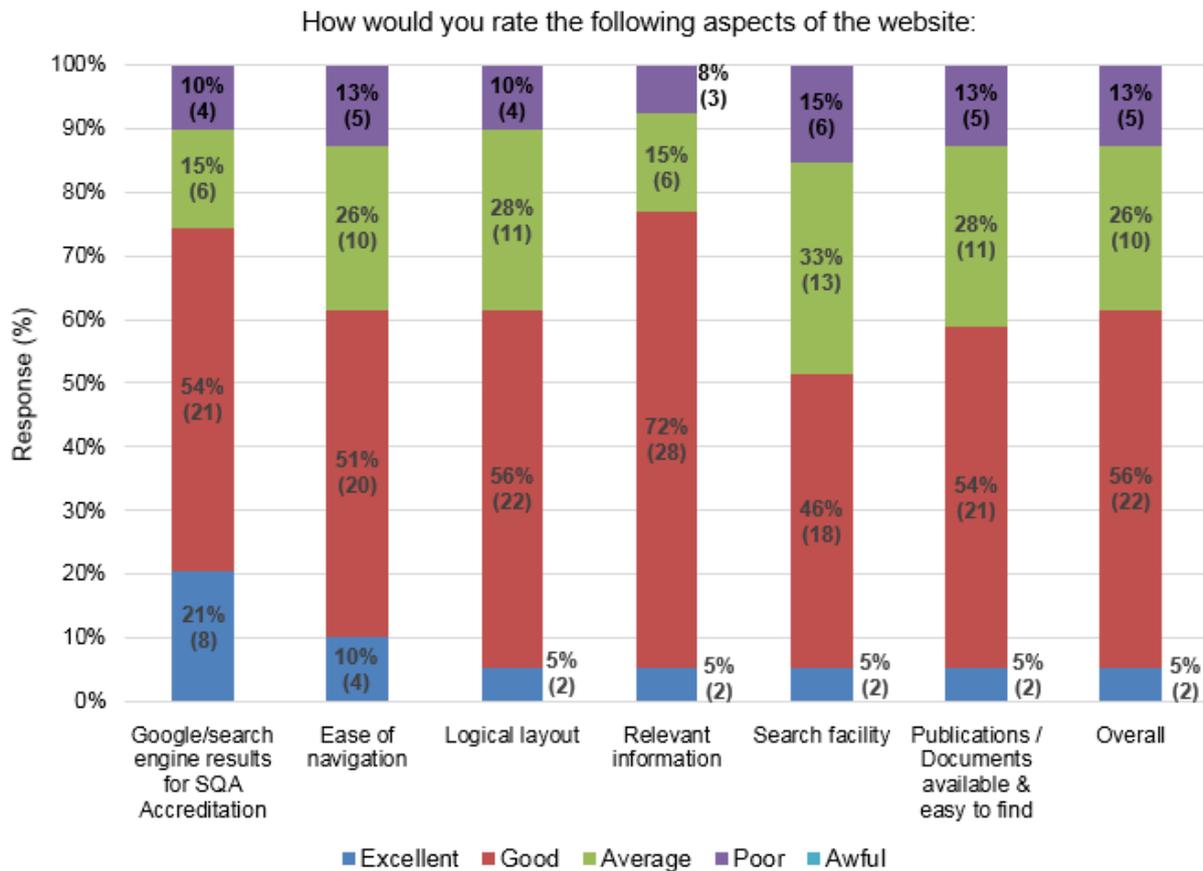
We aim to provide accurate and up-to-date information on our website – for example, weekly decisions made by the Accreditation Co-Ordination Group, reports relating to our accredited qualifications, and other general updates.

We asked stakeholders to rate, and comment on, different aspects of the website and our reporting functions.

5.1 Our website

In previous surveys, SQA Accreditation’s website had been identified as a weakness by survey respondents – citing that it was difficult to navigate and source information. This year’s survey invited stakeholders to rate the Accreditation website and provide their feedback on a range of aspects.

Figure 14: Stakeholder rating of several aspects of the SQA Accreditation website



- ◆ Between 56% and 74% of respondents selected excellent or good with regards to the website.
- ◆ Between 15% and 33% rated the website as average.
- ◆ Between 8% and 15% of respondents selected poor in response to this question.

Table 7 compares the results of this survey to those of the 2014–15 survey, and indicates whether the percentage of each response has:

- ◆ increased ↑
- ◆ or decreased ↓

Table 7: Stakeholder rating of several aspects of the SQA Accreditation website – compared to 2014–15 survey results.

Response	2018 Survey					2014-15 Survey				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Awful	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Awful
Google/search engine results for SQA Accreditation	21% ↑	54% ↓	15% ↓	10% ↑	0%	16%	59%	25%	0%	0%
Ease of navigation	10% ↓	51% ↓	26% ↓	13% ↑	0%	12%	59%	27%	2%	0%
Logical layout	5% ↓	56% ↓	28% ↑	10% ↑	0%	10%	61%	27%	2%	0%
Relevant information	5% ↓	72% ↑	15% ↓	8% ↑	0%	14%	61%	23%	2%	0%
Search facility	5%	46% ↓	33% ↑	15% ↑	0%	5%	59%	31%	5%	0%
Publications, documents available & easy to find	5%	54% ↓	28% ↓	13% ↑	0%	5%	61%	30%	5%	0%
Overall	5% ↓	56% ↓	26% ↑	13% ↑	0%	7%	66%	25%	2%	0%

In general, the number of Poor responses has increased, and the number of Excellent and Good responses has decreased, across all aspects of the website. Stakeholders' comments included:

- ◆ 'We have had problems accessing qualification information, particularly the latest and approved documents. The qualifications section is not easy to navigate in terms of finding relevant information and could do with updating.'
- ◆ 'The website is not intuitive - for example, lapsing and listing reports are not research or statistical data, they are information on the status of qualifications and cannot be found where you would expect to find them. Public reporting would be better renamed or subtitled 'Audit and PMV report' as these are the only items reported on this page. QER does not specifically list the weightings (i.e. 2, 4, 8 etc.), and how this relates to the frequency of external audit. Is there a confidentiality issue about this? If not, it would be helpful to have this information on the website. On the Accreditation page, there should be a link to ACG decision lists on the side navigation bar. Appreciate it is elsewhere and on the landing page, but it is likely that you will look at this page to find it too.'

These results show that the website is under-performing and there are improvements to be made across the board.

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to comments on the following:

Are there any aspects of the website that need further improvement?

- ◆ 'Easier navigation'
- ◆ 'Found it difficult to access information on the subjects that we offer.'
- ◆ 'Search function could be much better.'
- ◆ 'Searching for accredited qualifications.'

Can you suggest ways in which we can use the website to provide you with a better service?

- ◆ 'Better guidance with prescriptive requirements'
- ◆ 'Just ensure its kept current & up to date'
- ◆ 'Review of qualifications section and ensuring all approved and latest versions of qualifications are available to search for. We often have to ask our Relationship Manager for assistance.'
- ◆ 'Possibly have distinctions to be able to search for the relevant levels etc. within the genre.'

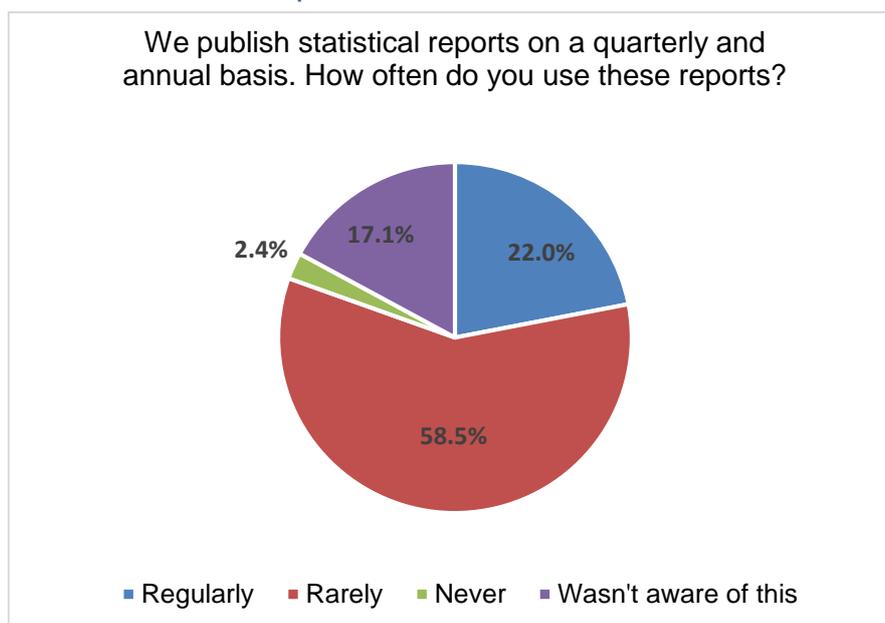
Feedback from those who use the website is very valuable, particularly to identify gaps and implement change in order to improve the service. This change can be implemented relatively easily by the appropriate persons in SQA Accreditation. Given that the website was set-up in 2014, it would be beneficial to both SQA Accreditation as an organisation and to website users, to review the website in light of these results and comments.

5.2 Reporting

To assess the opinions of stakeholders with regards to the regular statistics reports published on SQA Accreditation's website, we asked the following questions:

'We publish statistical reports on a quarterly and annual basis. How often do you use these reports?'

Figure 15: Stakeholders' use of statistical reports

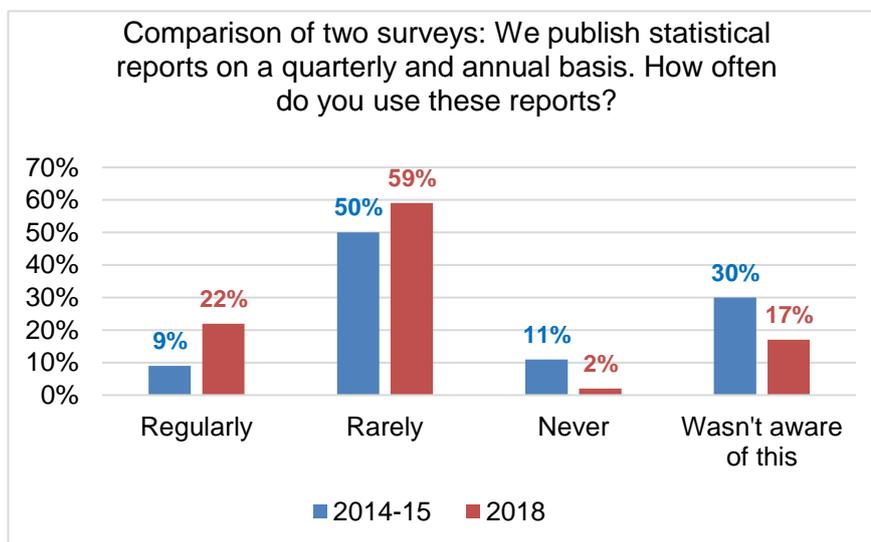


These results are disappointing – with 58.5% of respondents rarely using the reports, and only 22% regularly making use of the reports. Stakeholders were asked to comment as appropriate – these comments included:

- ◆ 'It is our intention to use them regularly'
- ◆ 'We tend to use them when developing our business plan'
- ◆ 'I do not often view these personally but would find them beneficial and will use this as a prompt for me to start viewing'
- ◆ 'On the website the latest annual report is 2015-2016, and the latest quarterly report is Q1 2017. I can't find more recent information'
- ◆ 'It would be helpful if these were more widely published'

Compared to previous surveys, overall awareness and use of the statistical reports has improved, with the exception of an increase of 9% of stakeholders who reported that they rarely used the reports.

Figure 16: Stakeholders' use of statistical reports – comparison of results with 2014–15 survey results



Stakeholder feedback is essential to ensure that we provide useful and relevant information. The respondents were given the opportunity to suggest what else could be included in these report. Their suggestions included:

- ◆ 'An annual statistical report in the same format as the quarterly report'
- ◆ 'NOS - dates of last reviews/revisions, as well as upcoming reviews. Would be useful to see these broken down by Unit, Quals, Sector and SSO. Does Accreditation plan to do an anonymised review of the self-assessment reports to identify trends, and share best practice with other awarding bodies? This would mirror the current practice of Ofqual and Qualifications Wales.'
- ◆ 'Data on qual usage'

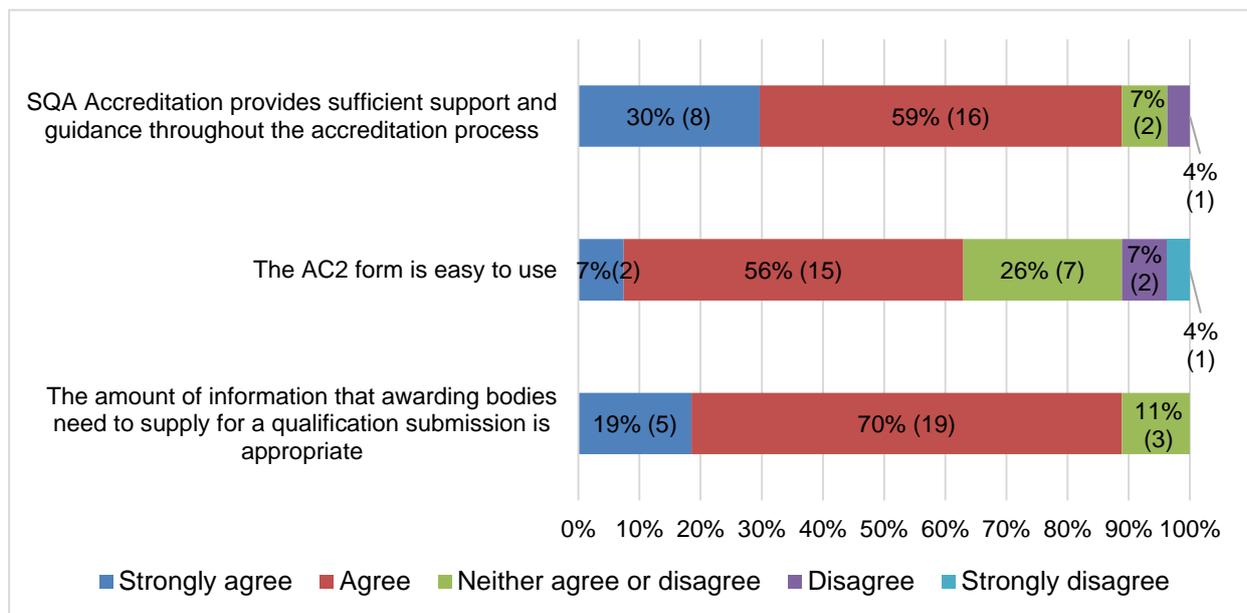
We can continue to improve this by ensuring that we provide up-to-date statistical reports and information on our website. In addition, we can implement additional measures, such as contacting stakeholders via email to inform them of any major updates to our website. Further improvements to our communication with stakeholders can be made via SQA Accreditation's social media presence - part of the communications plan for 2018–19.

6 Awarding Bodies

6.1 Accreditation process

Stakeholders were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements relating to the accreditation process:

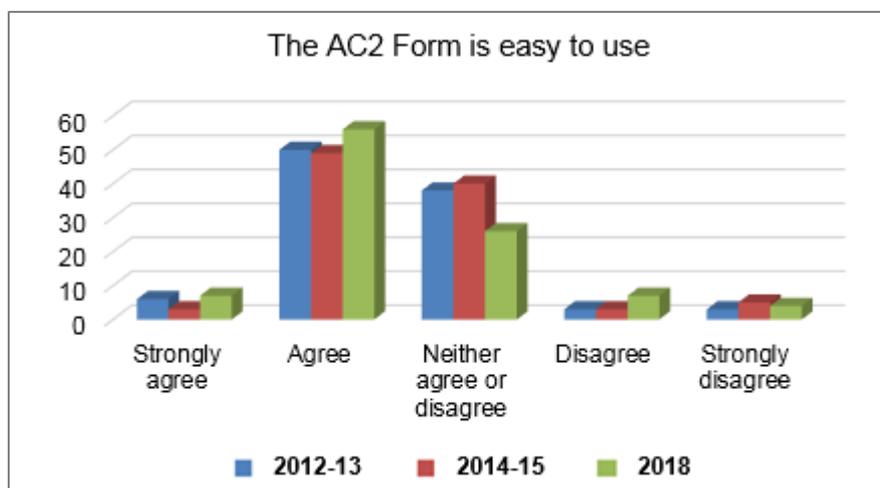
Figure 17: Stakeholders' opinions on the Accreditation Process



11% of stakeholders disagree or strongly disagree. This is a slight increase on previous surveys:

- ◆ 6% in 2012–13
- ◆ 8% in 2014–15

Figure 18: The AC2 Form is easy to use – comparison of 3 surveys



Their comments included:

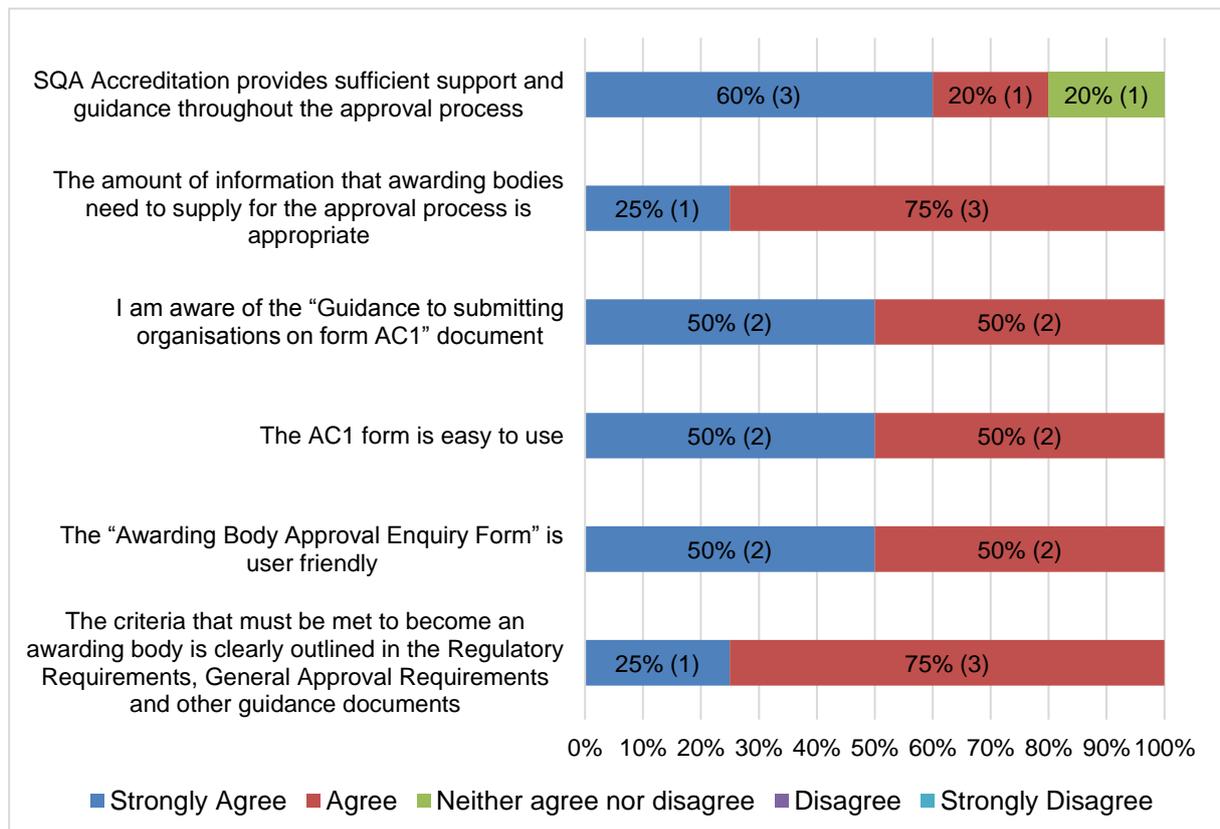
- ◆ ‘The AC2 form is not user-friendly, or intuitive to use. There are formatting issues where text is entered by the QD teams and ends up hidden on the Excel form, and the text is sometimes missed by Accreditation. This form is locked down and protected, so QD colleagues cannot change. This was also reported in our 2014–15 Survey response.’
- ◆ ‘The AC2 form currently available on the website does not have the additional lines present (for when entries for a specific field exceed the character limit) whereas it did previously?’
- ◆ ‘As an excel spreadsheet the AC2 Form is not easy to use; it hides wording, does not allow text to be displayed in easy to read manner etc. It makes the completion of the form more time consuming than it needs to be.’

Considering this feedback, SQA Accreditation will look to review the AC2 form and make changes in order to address the concerns of our stakeholders.

6.2 Awarding Body approval process

Feedback from Awarding Bodies who have been through the approval process in recent years is vital to ensure that we maintain a high standard of service. Awarding Bodies were asked to comment on the following if they had been through the approval process in the last four years. This is a new addition to the survey, therefore comparisons cannot be made with previous surveys.

Figure 19: Stakeholders’ opinions on the approval process



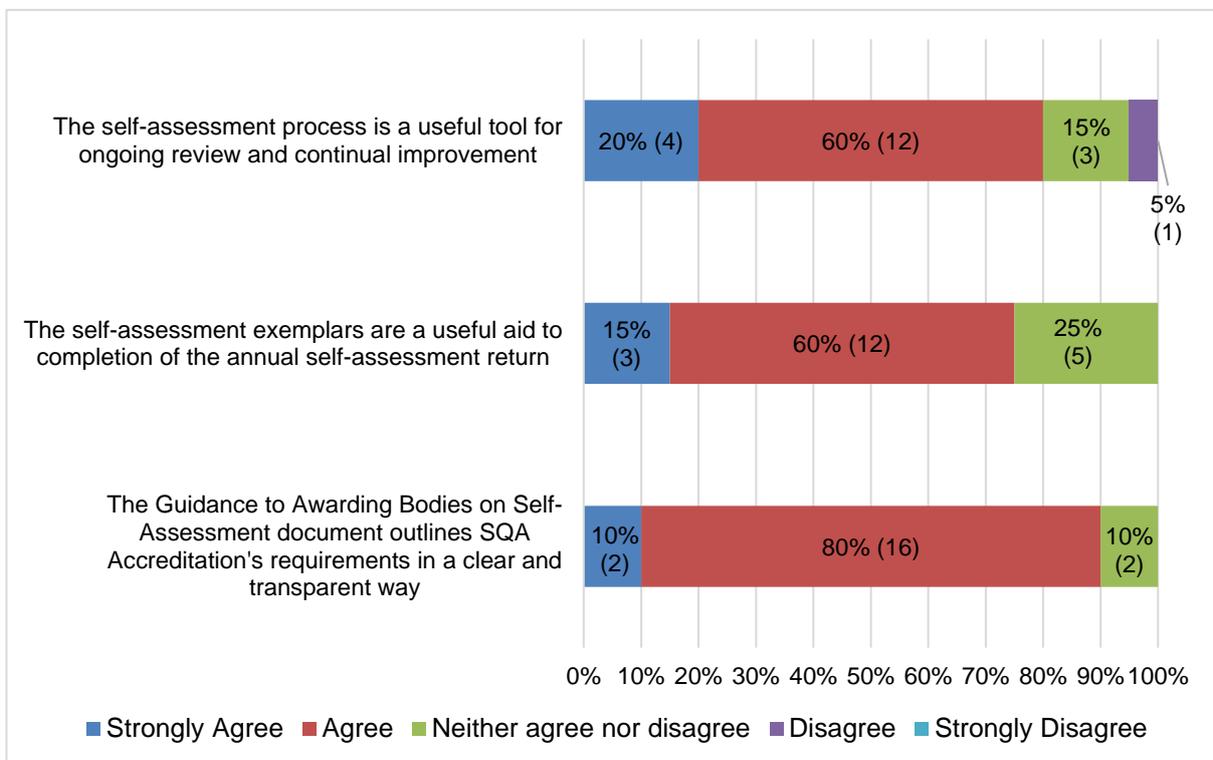
Results in relation to the approval process are very positive - with between 80% and 100% of respondents selecting either strongly agree or agree for each statement. There were no comments in relation to any of these statements.

6.3 Awarding Body self-assessment

This year’s survey asked stakeholders about the self-assessment process. 75% off the respondents said that they had used the guidance and exemplar documents relating to the self-assessment process, and 25% answered no.

Those who answered yes to the initial question were asked to what extend they agreed with following statements:

Figure 20: Stakeholders’ opinions on the self-assessment process



Stakeholders were given the opportunity suggest ways in which the self-assessment could be improved:

- ◆ ‘Just compiling a report on the previous year's actions does not affect actions going forward’
- ◆ ‘Annual self-assessment where little current activity is taking place can be rather burdensome and limited in value compare to the lengthy process. Perhaps for mature ABs with low risk and limited activity the SAR process could be reduced to every 2 years.’

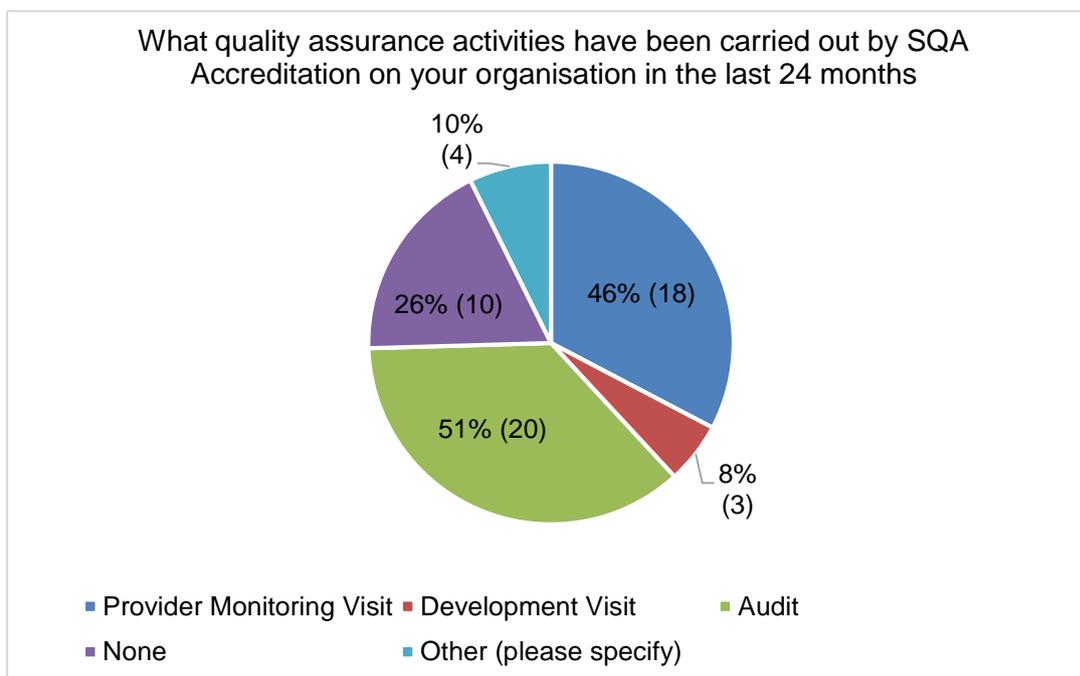
7 Regulation

SQA Accreditation carry out quality assurance activities to protect and maintain the high standard of our accredited qualifications, in turn protecting the interests of learners. Awarding Bodies are subject to audit, and the frequency of audit activity is determined by a risk-based, cyclical approach.

7.1 Quality assurance activities

Stakeholders were asked a series of questions relating to these quality assurance activities:

Figure 21: Stakeholders' opinions on the self-assessment process

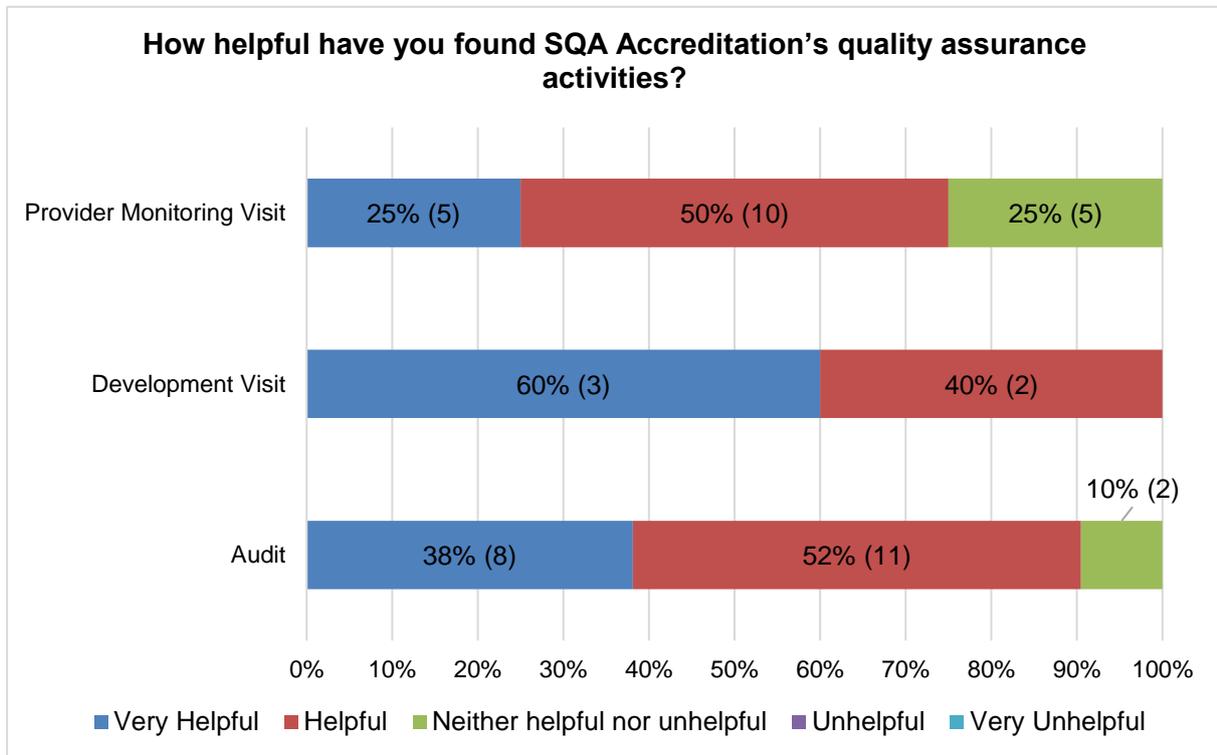


Stakeholders who answered 'Other' commented:

- ◆ 'Audit with our partner body'
- ◆ Accreditation Manager is part of our working groups with the industry on the review of NOS, SVQs and MAs.

Stakeholders were asked to rate how helpful, or unhelpful, they found quality assurance activities.

Figure 22: Stakeholders' opinions on the helpfulness of SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities



Across the three types of quality assurance activities, between 75% and 100% of respondents selected either very helpful or helpful, and 0% selected unhelpful or very unhelpful. This is extremely positive, and demonstrates that these activities are worthwhile and beneficial to stakeholders, as well as to SQA Accreditation.

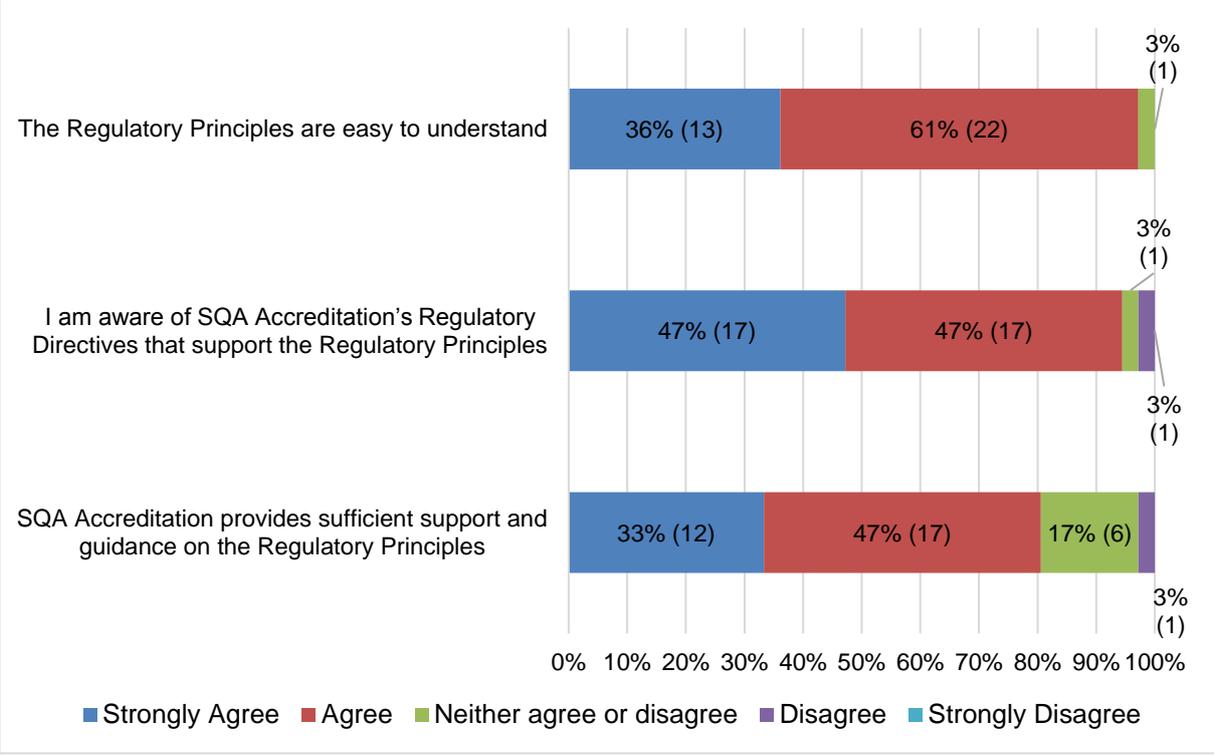
7.2 Regulatory requirements

Our regulatory activity is underpinned by these regulatory requirements:

- ◆ Regulatory Principles
- ◆ Regulatory Directives
- ◆ Accreditation Licence.

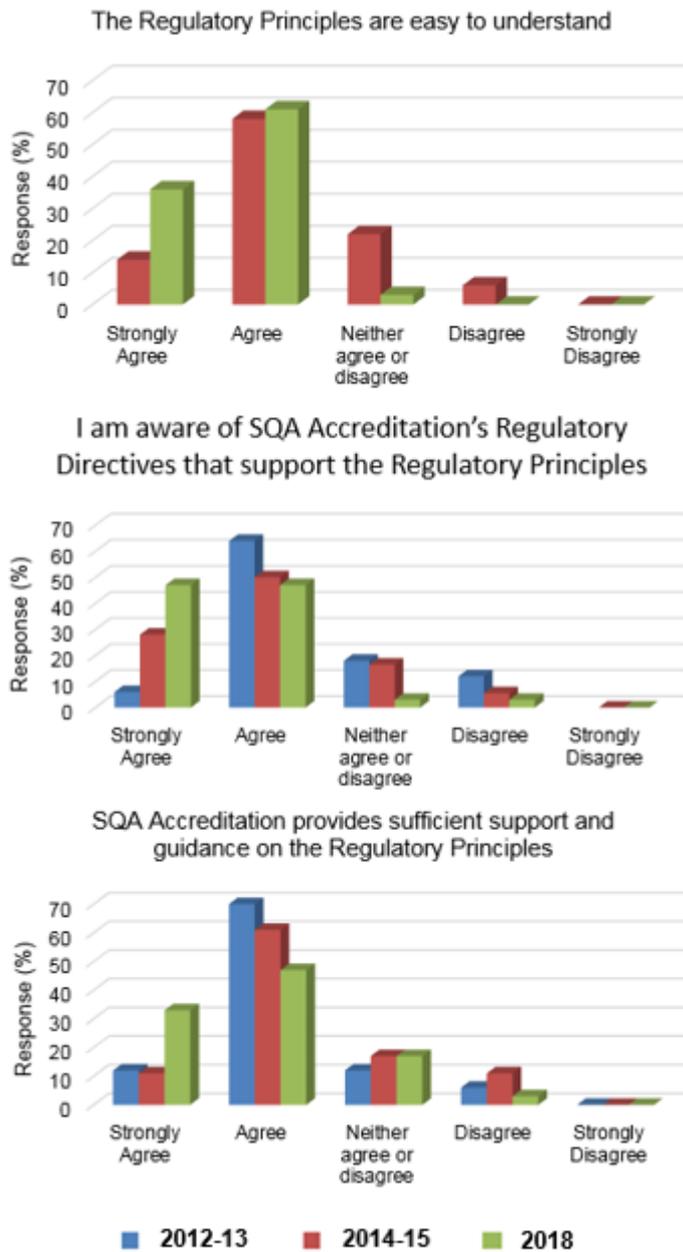
Stakeholders were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding the regulatory principles:

Figure 23: Results of ‘Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding SQA Accreditation’s regulatory requirements’



Stakeholder response was overwhelmingly positive, with between 80% and 97% selecting the Strongly Agree or Agree options. The stakeholders who selected disagree did not add any comments, so it is not possible to determine the reasons for these responses.

Figure 24: Results of statements relating to regulatory requirements – comparison with previous surveys



Overall, the percentage of stakeholders who strongly agree or agree with the statements in relation to the regulatory principles has increased over the past three surveys, and conversely, the percentage of disagree statements has decreased.

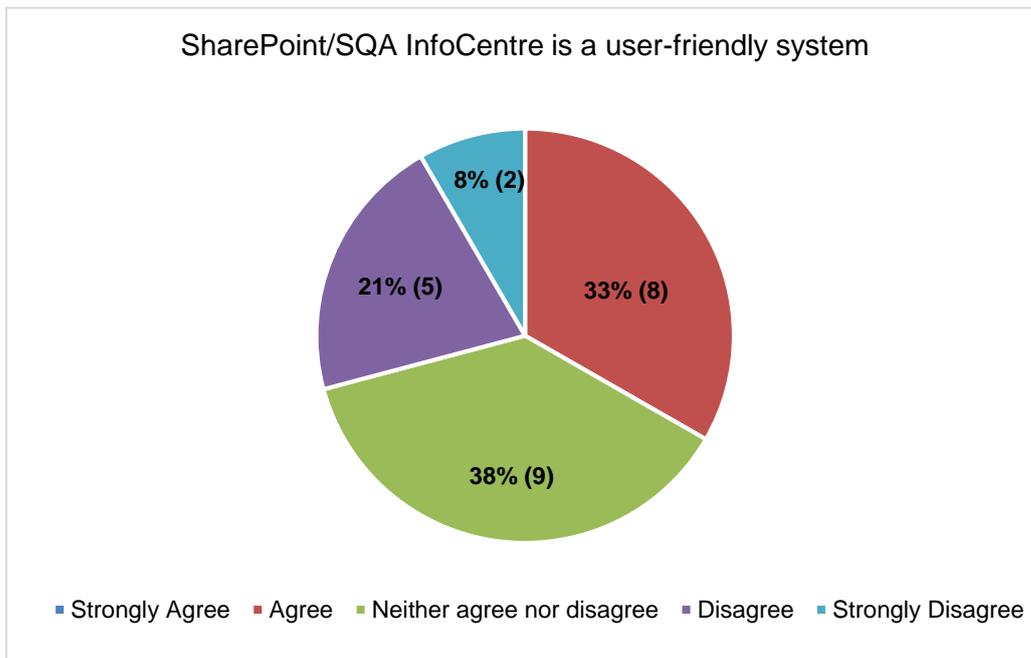
Note that the first statement 'The Regulatory Principles are easy to understand' was not introduced until the 2014–15 survey.

7.3 SharePoint/SQA InfoCentre

Following consultation from the Accreditation Team, it was felt that asking stakeholders for their feedback regarding SharePoint was key. SharePoint is a collaborative system for information management, which enables Awarding Bodies to upload and store information. SharePoint has replaced the previous system (Quickr) in the years since the last stakeholder survey.

Stakeholders were asked to what extent they agreed with the following:

Figure 25: Stakeholder opinions on SharePoint/SQA InfoCentre

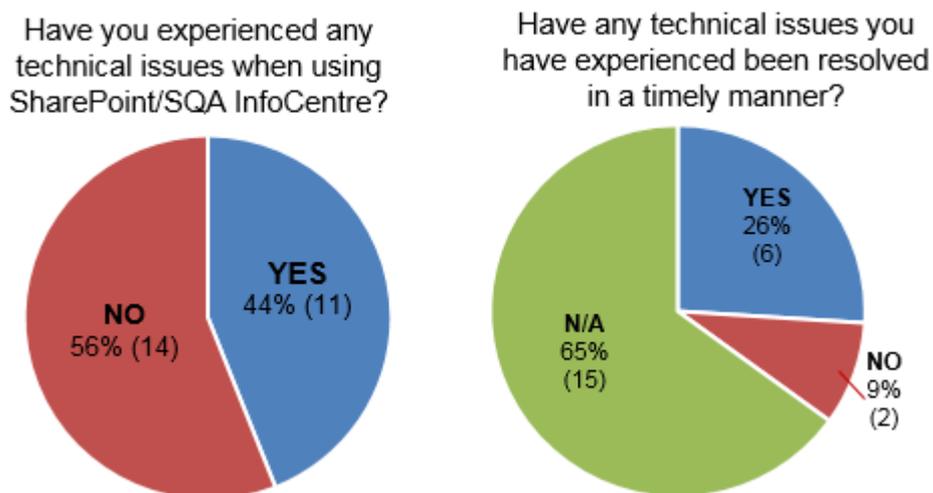


Stakeholders who disagree or strongly disagree left the following comments:

- ◆ 'Set up and access are unnecessarily complicated. I prefer the old system.'
- ◆ 'The log in process appears to be hit and miss despite using private browser functionality. One log in step also would be more user friendly.'
- ◆ 'Numerous irrelevant screens/not intuitive.'

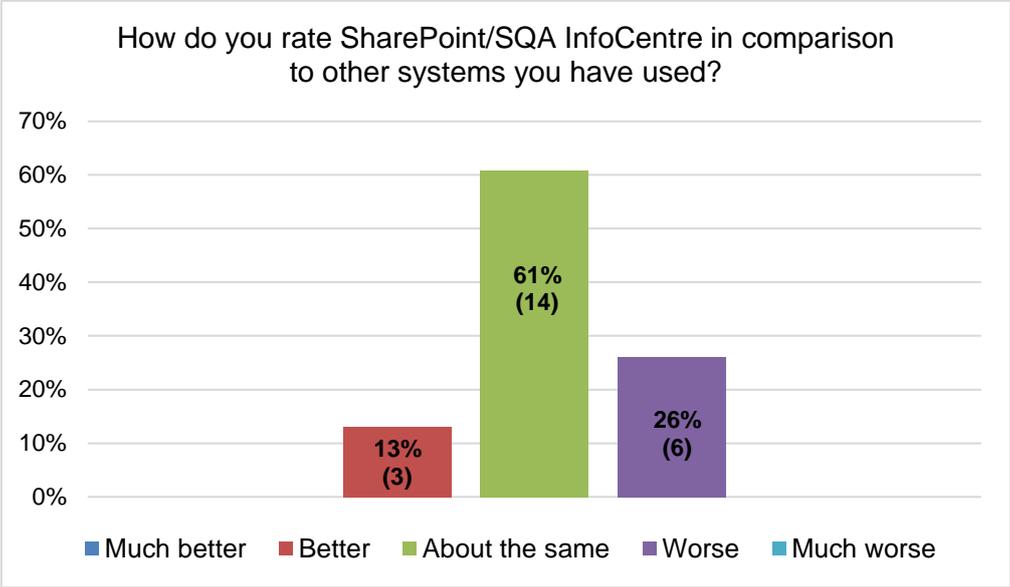
Stakeholders were also asked if they had experienced any technical issues when using SharePoint/SQA InfoCentre, and if so, whether these were resolved in a timely manner:

Figure 26: Stakeholder results relating to technical issues with SharePoint/InfoCentre



To determine the effectiveness of the new system, compared to other systems that perform the same functions – stakeholder were asked:

Figure 27: Stakeholder comparison of SharePoint/InfoCentre with other systems



- ◆ '2 logins is overkill'
- ◆ 'Quickr was not much better – however access to the system generally remained stable'
- ◆ 'Dropbox is simpler'.

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to suggest ways to improve SharePoint/SQA InfoCentre:

- ◆ 'More guidance and testing of system for AO users'
- ◆ A simplified one step log in process with 100% success rate each time logging in'.

SQA Accreditation could view these results and comments as opportunities to improve the system for users. Although going back to the previous system is not an option, it may be possible to work with the relevant IT and Business Systems' teams within SQA to improve the system.

8 Summarising SQA Accreditation's Performance

8.1 Main weaknesses

Stakeholders were asked to consider what our main weaknesses, in terms of performance, are. Their comments included:

- ◆ 'Accreditation might want to consider continuity when dealing with awarding bodies when there are staff changes'.
- ◆ 'On the whole there are no main weaknesses. However, at times a bit more flexibility in resolving issues could be introduced.'
- ◆ 'An understanding of the nature of competence based qualifications vs SVQs'.
- ◆ 'It is still relatively easy for the quick and, or untrained eye to confuse it with SQA Awarding.'
- ◆ 'Website and accessing information'
- ◆ 'Streamlining of forms/processes using online systems rather than a mix of offline and online forms'
- ◆ 'Slightly burdensome at times – admin-heavy'
- ◆ 'Too much reliance on manual systems - therefore data errors occur. IT systems that are in place are inadequate.'

It is very valuable to obtain this feedback from stakeholders in order to identify areas where our services can be improved.

8.2 Main strengths

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to outline the main strengths of SQA Accreditation. Comments included:

- ◆ 'The staff are quick to respond, and always endeavour to understand the AB position.'
- ◆ 'Willingness to go the extra mile to support development and communication.'
- ◆ 'Excellent communication. Highly knowledgeable and experienced staff. Real team working - ready to cover colleagues' work when needed. Ability to be critical and apply regulation firmly whilst also offering support and guidance. As a result, we respect your decision when something is not approved or needs to be changed.'
- ◆ 'Professionalism; continuity of staff and their knowledge and experience; readily contactable.'
- ◆ 'The staff are quick to respond, and always endeavour to understand the AB position.'
- ◆ 'High quality staff who can relate to and explain standards and their requirements. Very constructive in their responses'
- ◆ 'Customer focused and innovative in ways they interact with AOs and users of qualifications'

9 Conclusion

The response rate to the survey is consistent with previous surveys, although the number of responses from SSOs has decreased in line with the reduction in the number operating in the UK.

The main strengths of SQA Accreditation, according to stakeholders, can be attributed to our staff and the level of customer service they provide. Respondents commented that staff were knowledgeable, helpful, and professional and that they appreciated a customer-focused environment where help was easily accessible and available.

There was a very positive response from stakeholders who only recently engaged with SQA Accreditation for the first time. This is the first time new stakeholders had been specifically asked to comment on their experience with our service, and 86% rated this as either Excellent or Good.

The majority of respondents stated that they found the regulatory activity carried out by SQA Accreditation helpful, or very helpful. This is positive, and shows that this essential regulatory activity is seen as beneficial.

One of the main weaknesses identified by stakeholders was the SQA Accreditation website. Respondents commented that the website was not easy to navigate and that it was difficult to find and access information.

Another opportunity for improvement relates to the current awareness of the Information & Research section within SQA Accreditation, and the regular reports produced by this section. Overall awareness is poor, and stakeholders are not regularly making use of the monthly, quarterly and annual reports published on the website.

Other weaknesses identified related to systems and processes - for example technical issues related to SharePoint/Info Centre. Despite improvements being made in recent years, the AC2 form - part of the accreditation process - is still cited as being difficult to use and format appropriately.

The results from this survey have been reviewed to identify actions and opportunities for improvement. These will be implemented in order to continuously improve and build on our service.