

[News story: Employer survey reveals attitudes to vocational qualifications](#)

Ofqual has today (18 July 2017) [published its first employer qualifications perceptions survey](#) which asked over 2,000 employers for their views on vocational and technical qualifications and assessments. These included functional skills in English and maths and the end-point assessments of apprenticeships. The survey marks a significant step for Ofqual in increasing its understanding of what employers think about the qualifications they use when making decisions about who to hire, which training to invest in, and what business impact they expect to see from staff who achieve those qualifications.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, commented:

With major reform of apprenticeship assessment and functional skills in English and maths already underway, and the introduction of the government flagship T level programme on the horizon, there has never been a more important time to hear what employers have to say about qualifications and assessments.

Phil Beach, Executive Director of Vocational and Technical Qualifications, added:

We are committed to supporting the government's ambitious reform programme. This valuable research is a significant step in our plans to engage more closely with employers and understand their needs and views of vocational and technical qualifications.

We now have an in-depth source of new data to draw upon as we aim to understand the reasons why qualifications in particular sectors do (and do not) work well for employers. The data provides a baseline of employer perceptions, which will be monitored and explored through further engagement with the employers, learners and teaching staff who use these qualifications and assessments.

The survey found that familiarity with qualification reform varies by industrial sector. For example, nearly twice as many respondents from the transport and logistics sector (40%) reported awareness and understanding of functional skills reform than employers from the hospitality sector (23%). These results should help Ofqual target future engagement with sectors that have less familiarity with qualifications to understand whether this is the driver in their lower uptake.

The survey also found that 65% of employers who recruit staff to skilled or supervisory roles consider it essential for applicants to hold a relevant

vocational or technical qualification. This was a higher proportion than employers who required applicants to hold A levels (48%) for those type of roles. Conversely, holding a relevant vocational or technical qualification is much less important for employers when recruiting to other roles, with only 46% considering it essential for professional and managerial roles. This information will help Ofqual understand how employers use qualifications according to job types and levels within an organisation.

Elsewhere the study showed that higher proportions of respondents in the public sector say their organisation recruits people with, or arranges training leading to functional skills qualifications, compared to respondents in the private and third/voluntary sector. Ofqual wants to understand why there is a greater reliance on functional skills qualifications in the public sector, and whether other sectors have lower levels of confidence in them.

The '[Employer Qualifications Perceptions Survey](#)' was a pilot project conducted by Pye Tait, who interviewed senior managers with responsibility for recruitment and training decisions from a range of employers. This was a representative sample of industrial sector, employee size and region. Fieldwork took place between February and March 2017 using a quantitative telephone methodology. The intention is to run further studies to build up a longitudinal view of the extent to which employers have confidence in vocational and technical qualifications.