

# GCSEs in Vocational Subjects

Final Report (2 May 2006)

Research Study Conducted for  
The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority

March 2006

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# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Background to the research	1
Objectives of the research	2
Methodology	2
Interpretation of the data	5
Publication of the data	6
Acknowledgements	6
<b>Summary of Findings</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>About the Teacher</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Training and Preparation</b>	<b>13</b>
Teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects	13
Training received on GCSEs in vocational subjects	15
Preparedness to teach a GCSE (vs)	16
<b>Teaching the Course</b>	<b>19</b>
Time allocation	19
Differences compared with traditional GCSEs	21
Use of industrial links and vocational applications	22
<b>The Summer 2005 Examinations</b>	<b>24</b>
Support received from Awarding Body	24
Usefulness of support received from Awarding Body	25
Examination results compared	27
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Sample Profile</b>	
<b>Statistical Reliability</b>	
<b>Topline Results</b>	

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# Introduction

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## Background to the research

In recent years there have been a number of changes to the delivery of qualifications in England. Changes such as the introduction of new and revised qualifications at advanced level (brought in as a result of Curriculum 2000), the increased flexibility at key stage 4, the promotion of vocational learning in the 14-19 curriculum, and the three-year modernisation of the exam system. These changes have been overseen by the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority (QCA) as the regulator of the examinations system in England.

GCSEs in vocational subjects were introduced in September 2002 as part of the Government's aim to encourage more young people to combine vocational and general study and to increase the progression routes to post-16 education and training. The provision of GCSEs in vocational subjects is intended to underline the equivalence of vocationally-related and general qualifications within the national qualifications framework.

At present, there are eight GCSE titles covering a range of vocational subject areas, based upon the seven former Part One GNVQ subjects, plus Applied Science. The titles are:

- Applied Art and Design
- Applied Business
- Applied Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Applied Science
- Engineering
- Health and Social Care
- Leisure and Tourism
- Manufacturing

Each of the GCSEs in vocational subjects is a double award, as each is the same size as two other GCSEs; they are therefore demanding qualifications. They are designed to appeal to students of all abilities — mainly 14-16 year olds in schools, but also students in colleges. They can be studied alongside the core national curriculum in schools and by post-16 students in colleges who want to follow a vocational option below advanced level.

## Objectives of the research

QCA commissioned MORI to complete a survey to provide quantitative data on how vocational qualifications are being used at key stage 4. In detail, the project was designed to:

- Determine if teachers' experience of the GCSEs in vocational subjects is changing as the qualifications become more familiar and embedded;
- Examine the extent to which teachers are happier with the results their students are achieving;
- Understand how the courses are taught and what types of industrial links and vocational applications are being used; and
- Understand the attitudes that teachers hold towards the new GCSEs and what types of support they've found useful as they prepare students for their examinations.

The survey was designed to inform the QCA's work developing qualifications at key stage 4, and inform monitoring activities related to the standard of GCSEs. This work will be shared with the DfES.

## Methodology

### 1.1 Sample

The QCA supplied MORI with a sample of 710 schools. The sample was drawn from the 2004 Performance table data and from all schools in England who had entered at least one student for a GCSE (vs). The table below details the sample, showing the response rates and reasons why leads were not used. The unadjusted response rate represents the number of completed interviews as a proportion of the total sample. This, however, masks the nature of the fieldwork – the 172 remaining leads represent schools that were called and were willing to participate, but fieldwork was completed before definite appointments could be made. Given this enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the research, an adjusted response rate is also provided using the number of leads actually used as opposed to the total number of leads provided.

<b>Sample details</b>	
Total sample	710
Total number remaining leads	172
Suspended (duplicate numbers for schools)	11
Refused	35
Screened out/ineligible	81
Incorrect numbers/reached max number of call-backs/other	11
Number of completed interviews	400
Unadjusted response rate	56%
Adjusted response rate <sup>1</sup>	74%

Eighty-one schools were screened out of the sample or deemed ineligible due primarily to the fact that some of the schools listed said they had never actually offered GCSEs in vocational subjects or had recently changed from GCSEs in vocational subjects to BTECs or GNVQs. Because of this, the original quotas set were altered during the fieldwork stage (see 'Quotas for main study' below) to ensure 400 interviews were completed in total.

## 1.2 Obtaining schools' agreement to participate

A letter was sent by the QCA and MORI to the headteachers of schools in the sample asking for their agreement to participate in the survey, explaining its importance, and stressing that MORI would endeavour to minimise inconvenience to the school. Furthermore, in order to ensure that we spoke only to teachers with experience teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects, the letter also disclosed the purpose of the study and the eventual use of the data by the QCA.

## 1.3 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted for the purpose of refining the questionnaire in advance of the main study and obtaining hard codes for the final questionnaire. Between 17 and 19 January, 16 teachers were interviewed from a sample of 16 schools provided by the QCA. All 16 schools were contacted and one interview was conducted per school.

## 1.4 Quotas for main study

To ensure a broad spread of teachers who teach GCSEs in vocational subjects were interviewed, minimum quotas were set on the vocational subject area in which a GCSE is taught.

<sup>1</sup> The adjusted response rate is calculated by dividing the total number of completed interviews (400) by the total number of leads used (total number supplied minus the total number of leads remaining when the project was completed: 710-172=538).

<b>Subject area</b>	<b>Quota</b>	<b>Actual completes</b>
Applied Art and Design	50	39
Applied Business	50	62
Applied ICT	50	54
Applied Science	50	50
Engineering	50	45
Health and Social Care	50	59
Leisure and Tourism	50	65
Manufacturing	50	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>400</b>

In three instances (Applied Art and Design, Engineering, and Manufacturing), the original quotas set were not achieved due to reasons outlined previously – that is, many schools stated that they no longer offer GCSEs in Manufacturing, offering this subject instead as a GNVQ, for example.

### 1.5 Sample profile

In some cases, significant differences have been identified in terms of the findings reported between subject areas and number of years teaching experience. Below is a table that outlines the basic sample profile.

<b>Sample profile</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of sample</b>
<b>Subject area:</b>		
Applied Art and Design	39	10%
Applied Business	62	15%
Applied ICT	54	13%
Applied Science	50	12%
Engineering	45	11%
Health and Social Care	59	15%
Leisure and Tourism	65	16%
Manufacturing	26	7%
<b>Years teaching experience:</b>		
NQT-5 years	71	18%
6-15 years	130	33%
16-25 years	87	22%
Over 25 years	112	28%

*Source: MORI*



## **1.6 Fieldwork**

Fieldwork for the main study was conducted between 30 January and 27 February 2006. In total, 400 schools participated in the study, giving an adjusted response rate of 76%.

## **1.7 Analysis**

A set of computer tables is provided under separate cover which examines the data by a series of cross tabulations, including:

- Subject area;
- Years of teaching experience;
- Years teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects;
- Whether the teacher had previously taught a GCSE in a vocational subject;
- School type (community, foundation, voluntary or other);
- Rurality (urban/rural location);
- Whether the teacher received support from the awarding body;
- How the teacher compares the summer 2005 GCSE exam results in traditional subjects and vocational subjects; and
- Whether the teacher believes that the time allocated to GCSEs in vocational subjects is twice as long as the time allocated to traditional GCSEs.

## **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 teaching a GCSE in vocational subjects in England. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences between sub-groups are statistically significant. At the same time, it should be noted that statistically significant data need to be interpreted to see whether they make reasonable sense.

A detailed table for statistical reliability is included in the appendices.

Data are unweighted as no known profile of schools offering or teachers teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects is available.

Please note that data based on subgroups of less than 25 respondents are shown as numbers rather than percentages.

## Publication of the data

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

## Acknowledgements

It is clear that schools are increasingly working under great pressure from a number of different sources. They also receive numerous requests to participate in surveys such as this. Consequently, we wish to record our gratitude to the many schools that took part and we are indebted to all staff who made this survey possible.

MORI would also like to thank Kate Westmacott, Paul Newton, and Alison Matthews at the QCA for all their assistance with this project.

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Checked & Approved:



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# Summary of Findings

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## Overall findings

- For the most part, teachers are well qualified to teach their GCSE (vs)<sup>2</sup> having originally trained in it or a related subject. A majority also taught a vocational or applied subject before teaching a GCSE (vs) – usually a GVNQ in the subject they currently teach.
- More than four in five teachers have received some kind of training on the GCSE (vs) they are teaching. Primarily, this training has come from their Awarding Body. Furthermore, nearly three-quarters of teachers feel prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) and nearly all feel they teach the applied and vocational aspects well.
- More than four in five teachers feel that the level of support they received from their Awarding Body in summer 2005 is the same or better than in previous years. Given that, it is not surprising that approximately three-quarters received example materials, guidance, and experience of moderation and feedback; and that most feel each type of support was useful.
- Despite the fact that all GCSE (vs) courses should be allocated twice the amount of time as traditional single GCSEs, only three in five teachers say that the time allocated to their GCSE (vs) is twice as long. However, four in five do agree that, given the homework, coursework and examination revision, the GCSE (vs) is the equivalent of two traditional GCSEs.
- Course-related issues are cited most often when asked about the main difference in approach between the GCSE (vs) and traditional GCSEs. The use of practical examples, additional course work, and the fact that lessons are related to the outside world, are all mentioned as main differences.
- Most teachers (94%) include at least one industrial link or vocational application in their curriculum – for most this includes local industry, visits outside the school, and guest speakers. Teachers with more experience teaching their GCSE (vs) are more likely to have established, and use, more links than those who have just started teaching a GCSE (vs).
- Previous experience of teaching an applied or vocational qualification (usually a GNVQ in the GCSE (vs) subject they are now teaching) appears to result in increased confidence in preparedness to teach GCSEs (vs). Teachers who say they feel well prepared are also more likely to

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<sup>2</sup> GCSE in a vocational subject.

report that the grades their students were awarded in summer 2005 were higher than those they got in traditional GCSEs.

- Nearly two-thirds of teachers feel that their students performed better on their summer 2005 GCSE (vs) examination than they had expected them to and felt that they had achieved higher grades than in their traditional GCSEs – a result they attribute primarily to student motivation. The 28% of teachers who feel that student performance was worse than they expected place the blame squarely on grading issues.

## Subject specific findings

- When it comes to examining the findings by GCSE (vs) subject, there appears to be a definite spectrum from well-prepared, well-supported, and trained teachers, who expect, and see, good results from their students; to those who are unprepared, with very little experience, little support, and who see worse results when it comes to GCSE (vs) examinations. Subjects detailed below are highlighted due to their relatively extreme positions in this spectrum – *Leisure and Tourism* and *Manufacturing*, on the other hand, tend to fall in the middle of this spectrum and so are not detailed here.
- Teachers in *Applied Business* tend to feel well prepared to teach their GCSE (vs), possibly due to the fact that many had previously taught a vocational subject. These teachers are also more likely to say they teach the industrial applications well and are more likely to use multiple links with industry as part of the curriculum.
- *Health and Social Care* teachers also tend to have previous experience teaching a vocational subject and feel well prepared to teach their GCSE (vs). They also feel supported by their Awarding Body, have received some form of training, and are more likely to have received example materials and tests from their Awarding Body. These teachers are also more likely to have seen better results in summer 2005 GCSE (vs) examinations than they expected.
- Teachers in *Applied Science*, on the other hand, are less likely to feel prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) and tend to have no previous experience teaching a vocational subject. They do, however, feel that the summer 2005 examination results were better than 2004.
- Teachers in *Applied Art and Design* have little previous experience teaching a vocational subject and feel that students got a higher grade in their GCSE (vs) examinations compared to their traditional GCSEs.
- *Engineering* teachers have little previous experience teaching a vocational subject, do not feel prepared, and generally feel that their students received worse examination results in summer 2005 and lower grades compared to their traditional GCSE examination results.

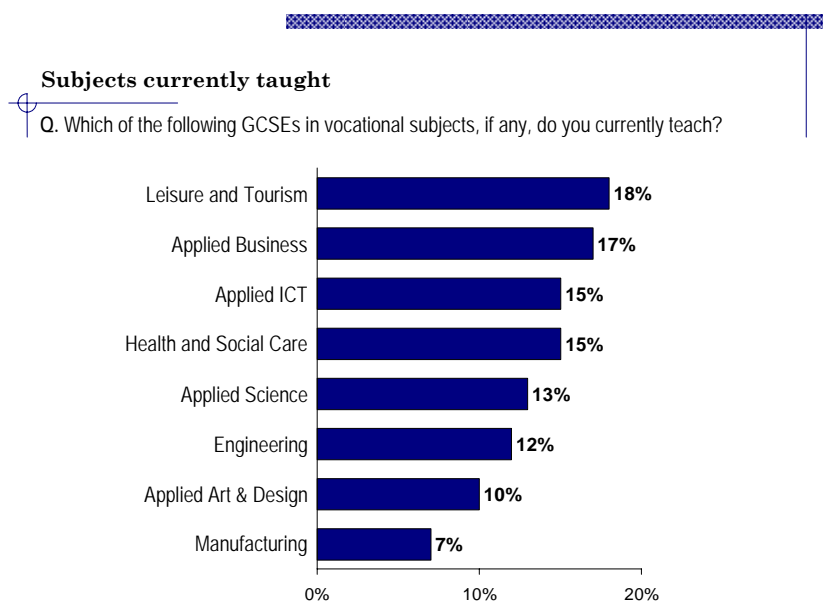
- *Applied ICT* teachers are more likely than their counterparts to feel that their students received lower grades in their GCSE (vs) compared to their traditional GCSEs. They are also more likely to disagree that the time allocated to a GCSE (vs) is twice as long as the time allocated to traditional GCSEs. This suggests that there may be insufficient time available for teaching the qualification and thus students' grades may be suffering as a result.

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# About the Teacher

## Profile of participating teachers

Just under one in five of the teachers interviewed for this study currently teach a GCSE course in Leisure and Tourism (18%) or Applied Business (17%). Slightly fewer teach Applied ICT or Health and Social Care (15% each), and just over one in ten currently teach Applied Science (13%) or Engineering (12%). The remaining teachers in the sample teach Applied Art and Design (10%) and Manufacturing (seven percent).



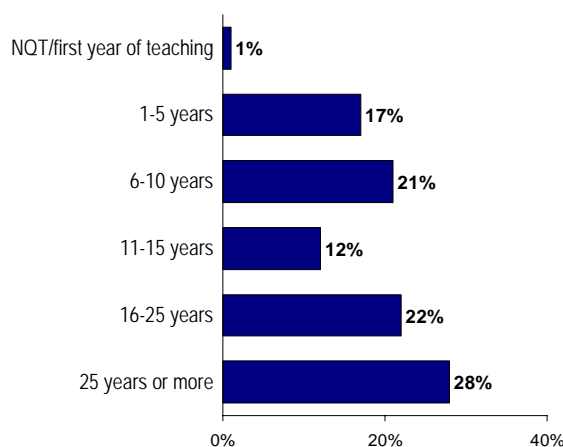
Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Half of the teachers interviewed have over 16 years of teaching experience (50%). A further third have between six and 15 years of experience (33%). Very few teachers in the sample are in their first year of teaching (one percent) and one in six has been teaching for between one and five years (17%).

### Teaching experience

Q. How many years teaching experience do you have?



Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Given the number of teachers in the sample with more than 16 years of experience, it is not surprising that most hold senior posts such as subject managers or heads of subject (54%). It should be noted here that the survey was designed to include teachers at the chalk face, and that in some schools only one teacher is currently responsible for teaching a GCSE in a vocational subject – effectively making them the ‘head of subject’.

### Current responsibilities

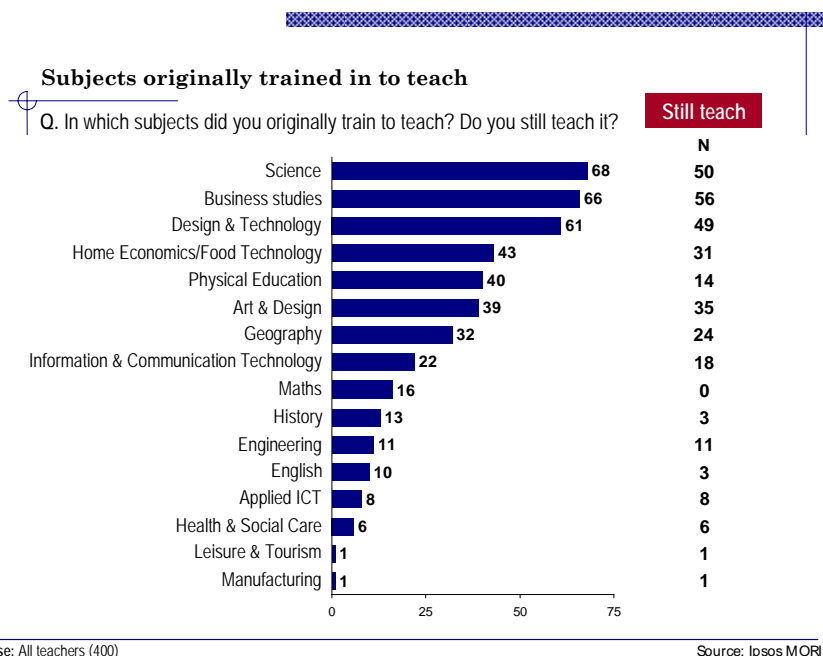
Q. What is the most senior of your current responsibilities?



Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

When asked which subjects they originally trained to teach fewer than one in five cite Science (68 teachers or 17% of the sample), Business Studies (66 teachers or 17% of the sample), and Design and Technology (61 teachers or 15% of the sample). Fewer than one in ten teachers originally trained to teach the other subjects listed.<sup>3</sup>



For the most part, teachers continue to teach the subjects in which they originally trained. There are four exceptions to this, namely: Physical Education (only 14 of the 40 teachers in our sample who originally trained in this subject continue to teach it), English (only three out of the 10 teachers trained in the subject continue to teach it), History (only three out of the 13 teachers trained in the subject continue to teach it), and Maths (no teachers originally trained in this subject continue to teach it).

When it comes to moving from subjects in which they originally trained to GCSE (vs) courses they are currently teaching, nearly every teacher who originally trained in a vocational subject currently teaches it. In other words, most teachers who trained in Business Studies, for example, currently still teach Business Studies (56 out of 66 teachers).

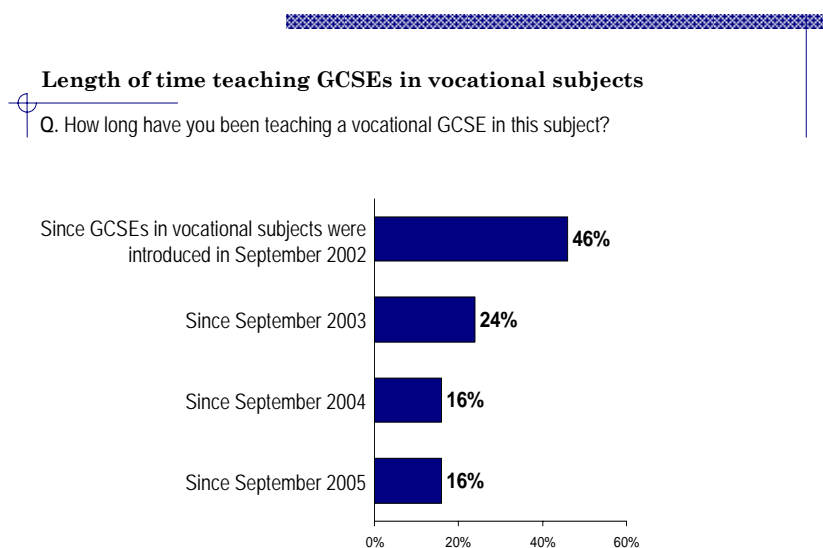
<sup>3</sup> Like much of the sub-group analysis in this report, these results are based on very small numbers of teachers and should, therefore, be interpreted with caution.



# Training and Preparation

## Teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects

Nearly half of the teachers have been teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects since they were first introduced in September 2002 (46%). A further quarter have been teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects since September 2003 (24%), 16% have been teaching them since September 2004, and the same number have been teaching them since September 2005.



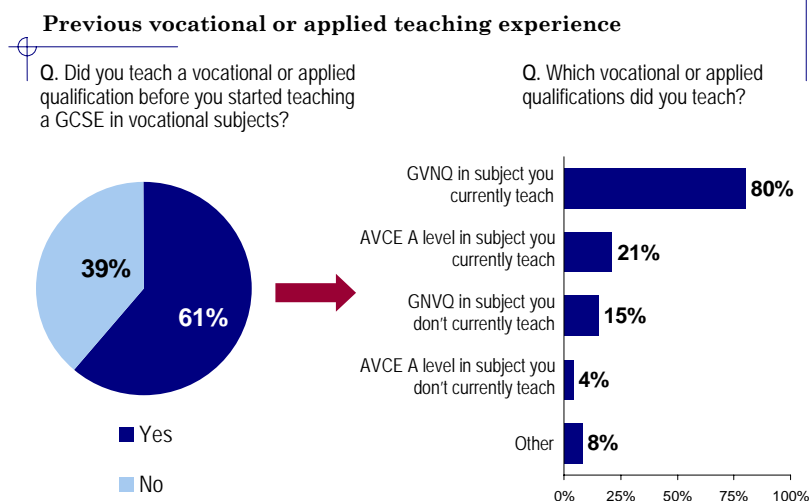
Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

The majority of teachers (61%) had taught a vocational or applied qualification before they started teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects. This is especially true of those who have been teaching for more than six years (65%), those who have been teaching GCSEs in vocational subjects since they were introduced (76%), and those who feel adequately prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) (65%).

Two in five teachers had not taught a vocational or applied qualification before teaching a GCSE (vs) (39%).

When examined by subject, teachers responsible for Applied Business or Health and Social Care are more likely to have taught a vocational or applied qualification before they started teaching their GCSE (vs) (85% and 74%, respectively); and those teaching Applied Art and Design and Applied Science are least likely to have previously taught a vocational or applied qualification (45% and 31%, respectively).

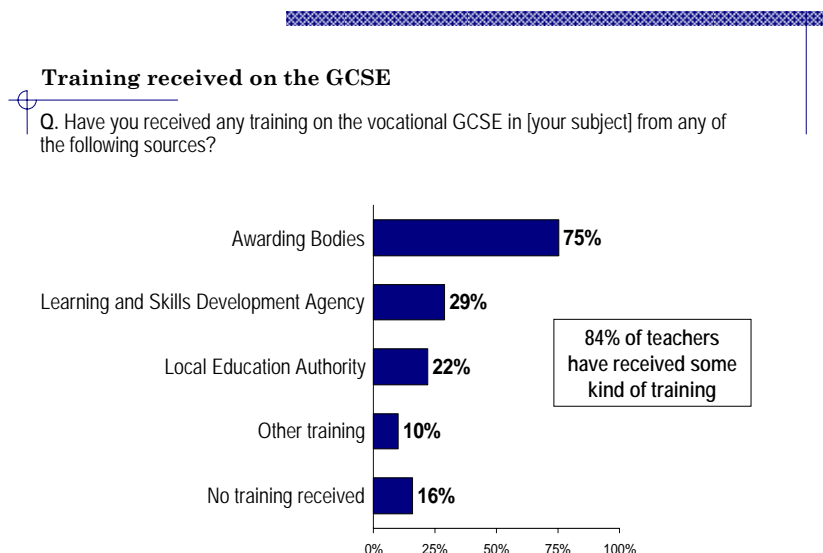


Base: All teachers (400); All teachers who taught a vocational or applied qualification before teaching a GCSE (243) Source: Ipsos MORI

Most of those who had taught a vocational or applied application before the GCSE (vs) taught a GVNQ in a subject they currently teach (80%). Twenty-one per cent taught an AVCE A level in a subject they currently teach and 15% taught a GNVQ in a subject they don't currently teach.

## Training received on GCSEs in vocational subjects

The majority of teachers have received some kind of training on the GCSE (vs) they teach (84%). Training is most commonly received from their Awarding Body (75%), followed by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (29%), and their Local Education Authority (22%).



Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

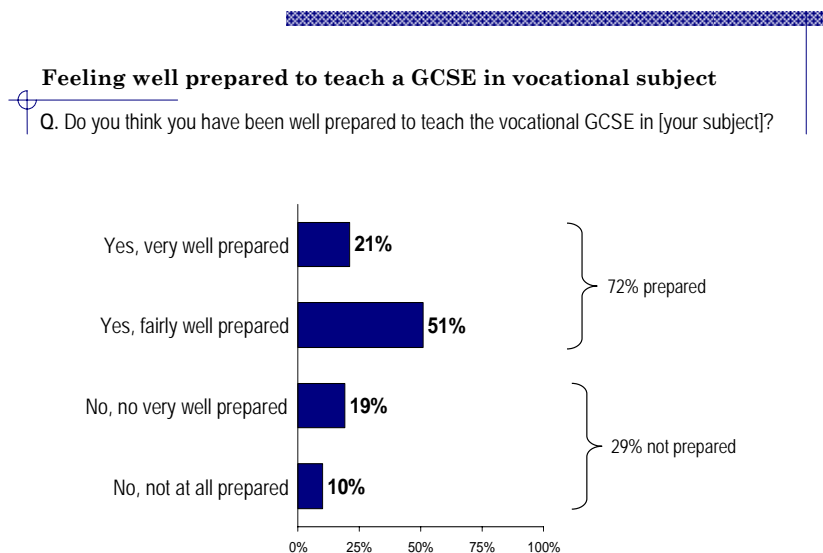
Not surprisingly, teachers who have been teaching GCSEs (vs) since they were introduced are more likely to have received some form of training (91%). In fact, those who have been teaching their GCSE (vs) since they were introduced are most likely to have received training from all three sources.

When examined by subject, those teaching Health and Social Care are more likely than their counterparts to have received training from the Learning and Skills Development Agency (44%, compared with 29% overall) and their Local Education Authority (33%, compared with 22% overall).

While 16% of all teachers report that they have received no training at all, this is more likely to be the case among teachers who have only been teaching a GCSE (vs) since September 2005 (39%). Where they have received training, this group of new GCSE (vs) teachers is most likely to have obtained it from their Awarding Body (40%).

## Preparedness to teach a GCSE (vs)

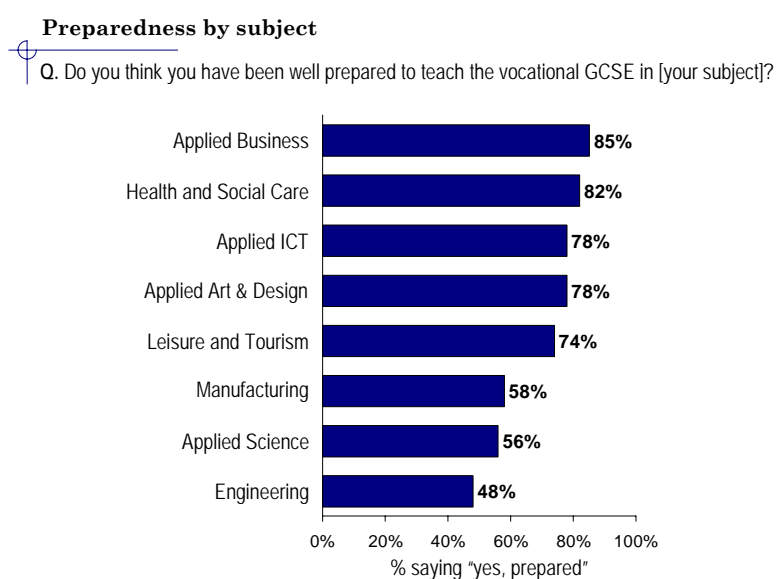
Nearly three-quarters of the teachers interviewed feel they have been well prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) (72%). However, more than a quarter do not feel prepared (29%).



Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Across most subjects, teachers feel very well prepared. The two exceptions are Applied Science and Engineering (44% and 52% do not feel prepared, respectively). While this may be due to the relative novelty of the courses and the lack of a traditional GCSE equivalent, these courses did have an equivalent GNVQ.



Base: All teachers (400)

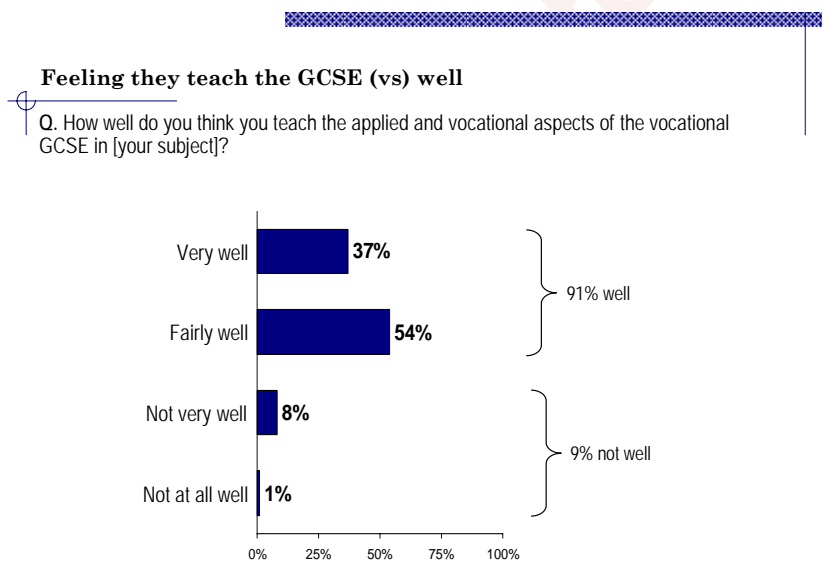
Source: Ipsos MORI

*GCSEs in Vocational Subjects for The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*

Teachers who have been teaching a GCSE (vs) since the courses were introduced are more likely to feel prepared (80%). This is also true of those who received some kind of support from their Awarding Body – they are more likely to feel prepared to teach the GCSE (vs) (73%) compared with those who did not receive any kind of support from their Awarding Body (66%).

Interestingly, teachers who report that their students’ examination grades were higher in their GCSE (vs) compared with their grades in traditional GCSEs are more likely to feel prepared to teach the GCSE (vs) (84%). The opposite is true of those who report that their students did poorly in their GCSE (vs) examinations compared to their traditional GCSEs (55%). It could be that this sense of preparedness comes from a sense of having done a good job with the students.

When it comes to the applied and vocational aspects of their GCSE (vs), nearly all teachers feel they teach them well (91%). Only nine percent feel they do not teach these aspects of the course very well.



Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those currently teaching Applied Business and Health and Social Care are more likely than those teaching other subjects to feel they handle the applied and vocational aspects of the course *very* well (51% and 41%, respectively). The small number of teachers reporting that they do not teach the applied and vocational aspects of their courses well does not allow any subgroup analysis.

Again, as experience increases, so too does confidence in their ability to teach the applied and vocational aspects of the GCSE (vs). Those who feel prepared to teach the GCSE (vs), those who have been teaching the courses since they were introduced, and those who taught a vocational subject before teaching a GCSE (vs) are all more likely to feel they teach the applied and vocational aspects of the course well (95%, 94%, and 92%, respectively). This is also true of those who

received some form of support from their Awarding Body (40% feel very well prepared).

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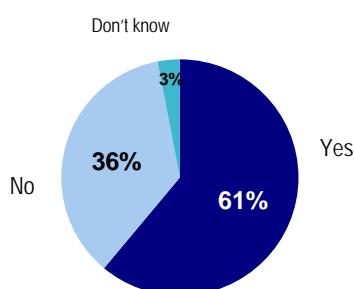
# Teaching the Course

## Time allocation

Teachers were then asked about specific aspects of the GCSE (vs) they teach. In the first instance, three in five teachers report that the time allocated to their course is twice as long as the time allocated to traditional single-award GCSEs (61%). However, that does leave just over one-third who say the time allocated is not twice as long (36%). This is despite the fact that GCSE (vs) courses should be allocated twice as much time as ordinary GCSEs and that students are awarded two GCSE credits for their work in these courses.

### Time allocated to GCSEs in vocational subjects

Q. Is the time allocated to a vocational GCSE in [your subject] twice as long as time allocated to ordinary single award GCSEs?



Base: All teachers (400)

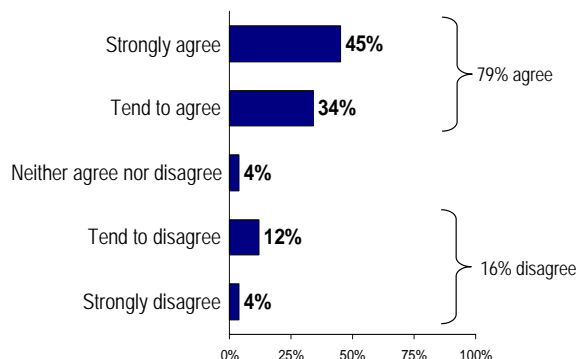
Source: Ipsos MORI

Those teaching Applied Art and Design are more likely than their counterparts to agree that the time allotted to their GCSE (vs) is twice as long as the time allocated to traditional GCSEs (78% agree). Those teaching Applied ICT, on the other hand, are more likely to disagree (61% disagree).

Four in five teachers agree that, given the amount of homework, course work and examination revision undertaken by students taking a GCSE (vs), the qualification is equivalent to two traditional GCSEs (79%). However, one in six disagrees (16%).

### Qualification equivalent to two ordinary GCSEs?

Q. Taking into consideration the amount of homework, coursework and revision for examinations that students taking a vocational GCSE in [your subject] undertake, to what extent do you agree or disagree that this qualification is equivalent to two ordinary GCSEs?



Base: All Teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Interestingly, ICT teachers are more likely than their counterparts to strongly agree that, given the amount of homework, coursework and revision required, the qualification is equivalent to two ordinary GCSEs (59%). However, this seems to run contrary to that the fact that ICT teachers are less likely to report that the time actually allocated to GCSE (vs) courses is twice as long as time allocated to ordinary GCSEs. Those currently teaching Applied Art and Design and Applied Business are also more likely to strongly agree that a GCSE (vs) is equivalent to two traditional GCSEs (55% and 51%, respectively), while those teaching Leisure and Tourism are most likely to disagree (17% tend to disagree and four percent strongly disagree).

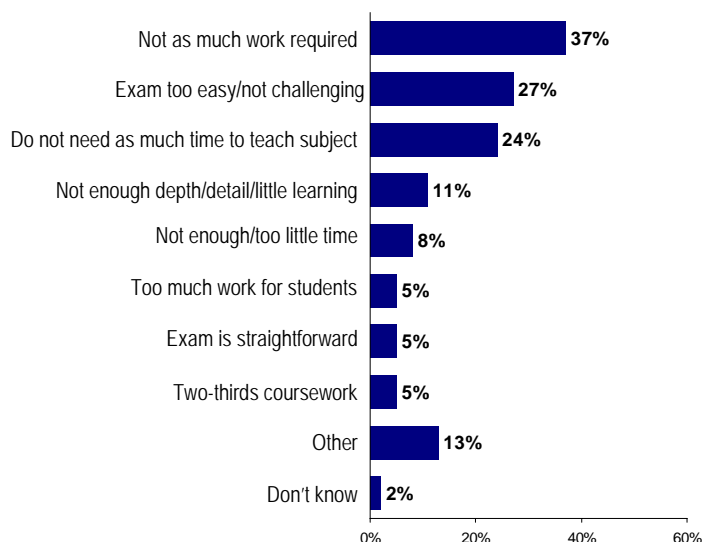
Teachers who feel they are prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) are more likely to agree that it is equivalent to two traditional GCSEs (83%), while those who feel unprepared to teach their GCSE (vs) are more likely to disagree (23% disagree).

When asked to elaborate on why they do not feel that the GCSE (vs) is equivalent to two traditional GCSEs, teachers most often report that not as much work is required (37%), that the exam is too easy (27%) or that they do not need as much time to teach the subject (24%). Approximately one in ten feel that the GCSE (vs) course lacks depth (11%), that too little time is invested by students in the course (eight percent), and that the GCSE (vs) is not academically challenging enough (eight percent).



### Reasons why GCSEs in vocational subjects not equivalent

Q. Why do you not think that a vocational GCSE in [your subject] is equivalent to two ordinary GCSEs?



Base: All those who disagree that a GCSE in vocational subjects are equivalent to two ordinary GCSEs (62)

Source: Ipsos MORI

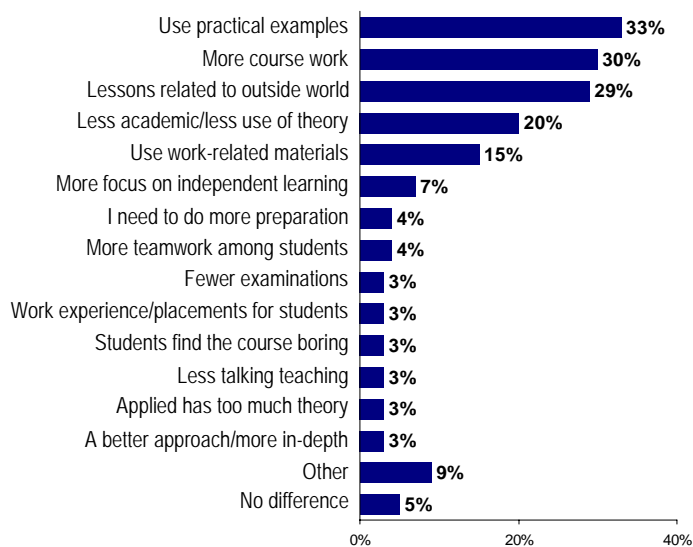
## Differences compared with traditional GCSEs

Most teachers who have taught traditional and applied GCSEs agree there are differences in approach and tend to cite course-related issues rather than teaching styles or student issues. For example, the use of practical examples is the most frequently mentioned difference between the GCSE (vs) and a traditional GCSE. This is followed by additional coursework (30%) and the fact that lessons are related to the outside world (29%). The fact that the GCSE (vs) is less academic or theory based is mentioned less often (20%) as is the use of work-related materials (15%).

Very few feel there is no difference in approach between a traditional GCSE and the GCSE in vocational subjects (five percent). Interestingly, teachers who feel they are well prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) are slightly more likely to feel there is no difference between the two types of GCSEs (seven percent).

### Differences in approach

Q. If you have taught traditional and applied GCSEs in [your subject] what is the main difference in approach?



Base: All teachers who have taught traditional and applied GCSEs (205)

Source: Ipsos MORI

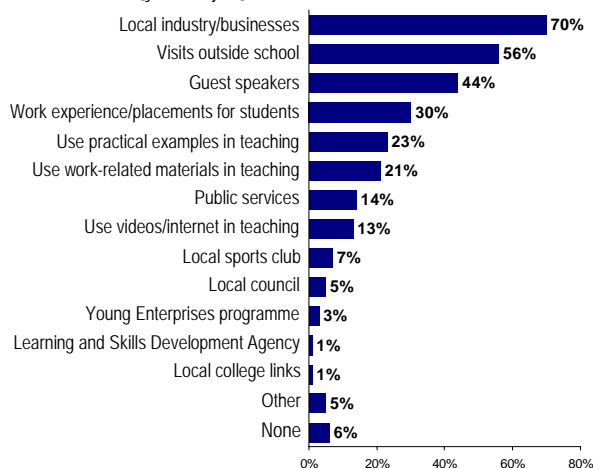
## Use of industrial links and vocational applications

Most teachers include at least one industrial link or vocational application in their GCSE (vs). Seven in ten cite local industry or businesses (70%) and just over half include visits outside the school (56%). A further two in five invite guest speakers to the class (44%) and three in ten arrange work placements for students (30%). Approximately one in five use practical examples (23%) or use work-related materials in their lesson plans (21%). One in seven uses public services (14%) or videos or the internet in their teaching (13%).

Six percent use no industrial links or vocational applications in their GCSE (vs).

### Industrial links and vocational applications used

Q. What industrial links and vocational applications, if any, do you include as part of the vocational GCSE in [your subject]?



Base: All teachers (400)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Teachers who have more experience teaching their GCSE (vs) and those who feel more prepared to teach the course are more likely to use more links (41% and 38%, respectively use four or more links). This is also true of those who teach Applied Business or Health and Social Care – teachers in both subjects use four or more industrial links while teaching their course (48% and 44%, respectively).

Six per cent of teachers report using no industrial links or vocational applications. This number is slightly higher among:<sup>4</sup>

- teachers who have only been teaching their GCSE (vs) since September 2004 and could therefore be argued not had the chance to establish links with industry;
- those who do not feel prepared to teach the course;
- those who report having received no support from the Awarding Body;
- those who teach at a Foundation school;
- those currently teaching Applied Science; and
- those who feel that the GCSE (vs) examination results were lower than other GCSEs taken in summer 2005.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this sub-group analysis is based on very small numbers of teachers and should, therefore, be interpreted with caution.

# The Summer 2005 Examinations

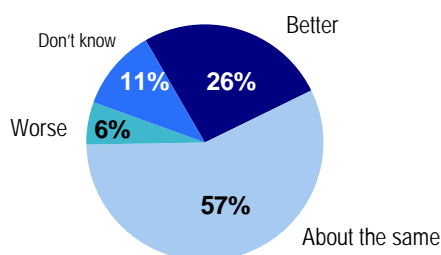
## Support received from Awarding Body

Focussing on the summer 2005 GCSE (vs) examination period, teachers who had been teaching their GCSE (vs) for at least one year were asked a series of questions related to the support they received from their Awarding Body.

Four in five teachers who had received some form of support from their Awarding Body felt that the level of support they received for the summer 2005 GCSE (vs) examinations was the same or better than in previous years (83%). Only six percent perceived it to be worse.

### Level of support compared

Q. How does the level of support you received from the Awarding Body for the summer 2005 vocational GCSE examination in [your subject] compare with previous years?



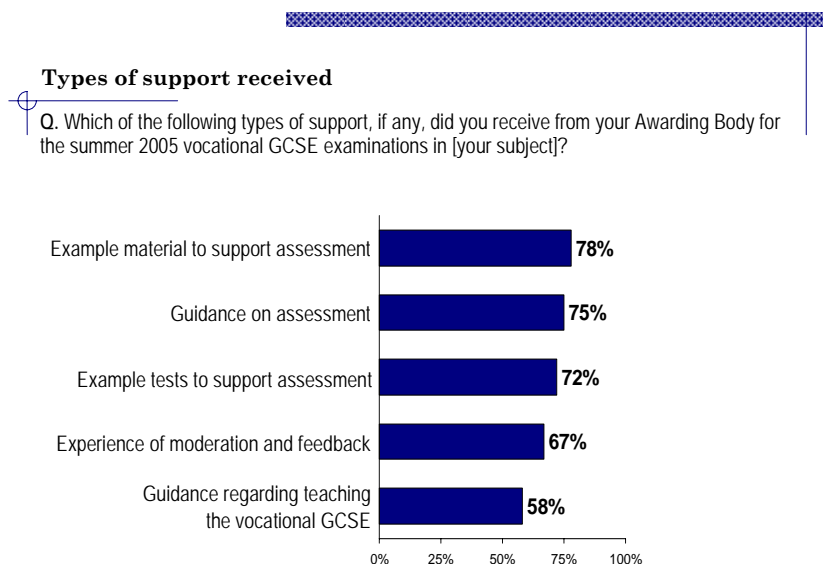
Base: All those who received support (238)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Teachers with more years teaching experience (approximately 33% of those with 16 years experience or more) and more experience teaching a GCSE (vs) (29% of those who have been teaching a GCSE (vs) since September 2002 or 2003) are more likely than those with less experience to feel that the support from the Awarding Body was better.

Those who feel prepared to teach their course were more likely to feel the support was “about the same” (61%), while those who do not feel prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) are more likely to respond “don’t know” (20%).

Approximately three-quarters of teachers received example material to support the GCSE (vs) assessment (78%), guidance on the assessment (75%), and example tests to support the assessment (72%). A further two-thirds received moderation and feedback experience (67%) and slightly fewer received guidance regarding teaching the GCSE (vs) (58%).



Base: All teachers who have been teaching GCSEs in a vocational subject for at least 1 year (338)

Source: Ipsos MORI

When examining the result by subject, very few differences are noted. However, those teaching Health and Social Care are more likely to have received example material to support the assessments (91%), example tests to support the assessments (85%), and experience of moderation and feedback from the Awarding Body (83%).

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who have been teaching a GCSE (vs) since they were introduced and those who feel prepared to teach their GCSE (vs) are more likely to report having received all of these types of support while those with less experience teaching a GCSE (vs) and do not feel prepared are more likely to say “don’t know”.

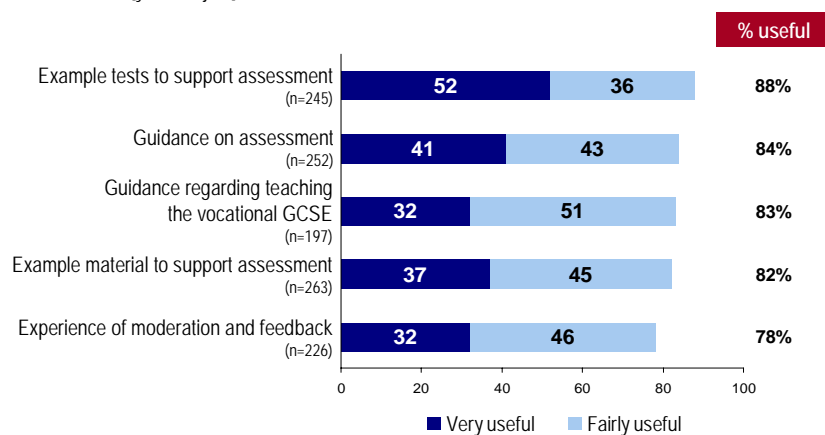
When it comes to school type, teachers at Foundation schools are more likely than their counterparts to have received guidance on the assessment (89%) and experience of moderation and feedback (80%) from their Awarding Body.

## Usefulness of support received from Awarding Body

In terms of the types of support received from their Awarding Body, the majority of teachers found all forms of support they received useful. Example tests to support the assessments were found to be the most useful (88% found them fairly or very useful), followed by guidance on the assessments (84%), guidance regarding teaching the GCSE (vs) (83%), and example material to support the assessments (82%). Slightly fewer found the experience of moderation and feedback useful (78%).

**Usefulness of support**

Q. How useful did you find it in helping you to prepare your students for their vocational GCSE exam in [your subject]?

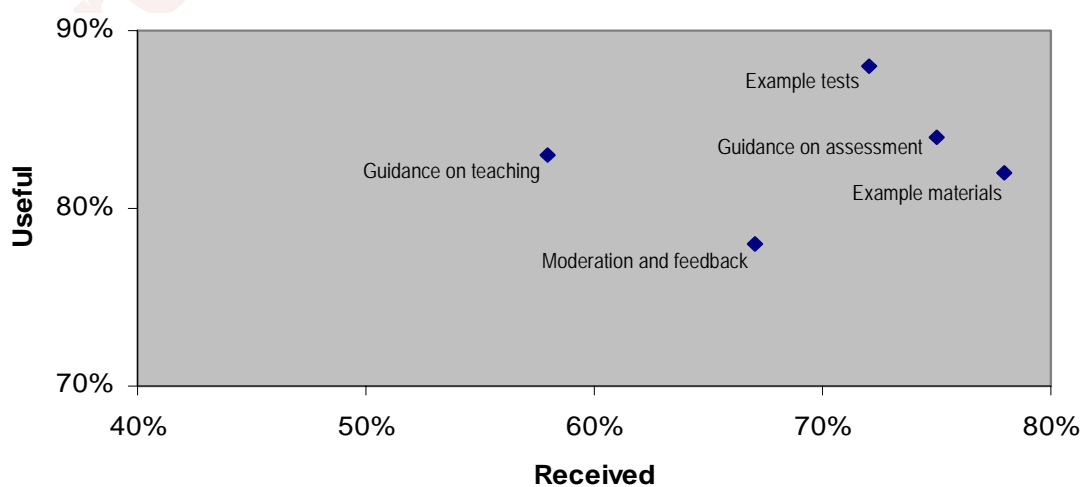


Base: All those who received each type of support

Source: Ipsos MORI

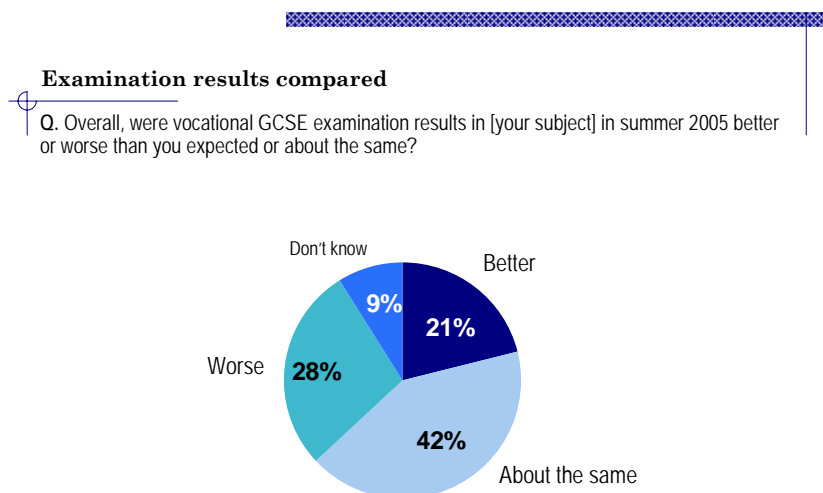
Teachers in Health and Social Care and Leisure and Tourism are more likely to find the example material to support the assessment useful (93%). These teachers, along with those in Applied Business, are also more likely to find the example tests to support the assessments useful (93% and 98% respectively).

For the most part, teachers who received each type of training or guidance feel it was useful to them. Interestingly, however, while many teachers received example materials or guidance on the assessment, they did not necessarily find them as useful as those who received example tests (as shown in the Chart below). Also, guidance regarding teaching the course was also found to be useful, although not as many teachers actually received this type of support. The least useful type of support was found to be experience of moderation and feedback, although teachers were more likely to receive this type of support.



## Examination results compared

The majority of teachers feel that, overall GCSE (vs) examination results in summer 2005 were about the same or better than they expected (63%). Just over a quarter of teachers feel that the results were worse than they expected (28%).



Base: All those who taught a GCSE in vocational subjects before September 2005 (338)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those teaching Health and Social Care and Applied Science are more likely than their counterparts to feel that GCSE (vs) examination results were better in summer 2005 (36% and 33%, respectively). This is also true of teachers who had not taught a vocational subject before their GCSE (vs) and those who feel their students achieved higher marks in their GCSE (vs) compared to their traditional GCSEs (28% and 41%, respectively).

Teachers who currently teach Engineering and those who felt that their students got lower marks in their GCSE (vs) compared to their traditional GCSEs are more likely to feel that, overall, GCSE (vs) examination results were worse in summer 2005 (49% and 77% respectively feel the results were worse). Those who have previous experience with teaching a vocational subject are more likely to feel that the examination results in summer 2005 are “about the same” (47%).

Those who feel examination results were better than they expected were most likely to attribute it to the motivation and hard work of the students in the course (44%). Fewer than one in five attribute the better marks to the amount of course work (14%), early preparation (10%), and the fact that students and teachers knew what to expect (10%). Slightly fewer attribute it to teachers having a better understanding of the course and the quality of teaching (nine percent each).

**Reasons examination results were better**

Q. Why do you think vocational GCSE examination results in [your subject] in summer 2005 were **better** than you expected?

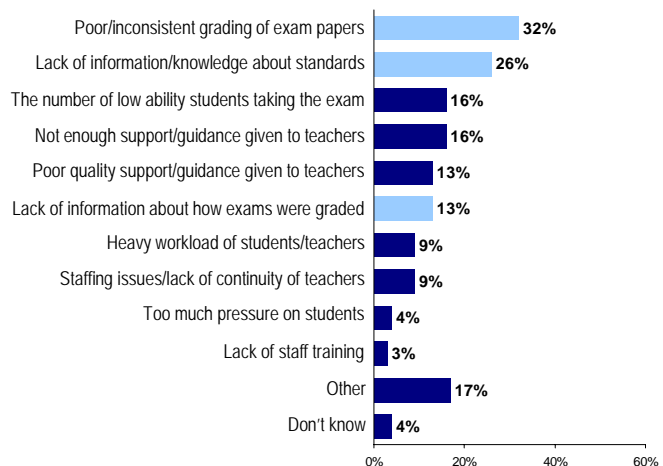


Base: All those who think summer 2005 examination results were better than expected (70) Source: Ipsos MORI

Of the 28% of teachers who feel the examination results were worse than they expected they are most likely to place the responsibility on grading issues, such as: poor or inconsistent grading of exam papers (32%), lack of information about the standards (26%), and lack of information about how the examinations were graded (13%). Support issues are less of a concern, for example not enough support or guidance is mentioned in one in six (16%) and poor quality support given to teachers is mentioned by one in eight (13%).

**Reasons examination results were worse**

Q. Why do you think vocational GCSE examination results in [your subject] in summer 2005 were **worse** than you expected?



Base: All those who think summer 2005 examination results were worse than expected (94) Source: Ipsos MORI

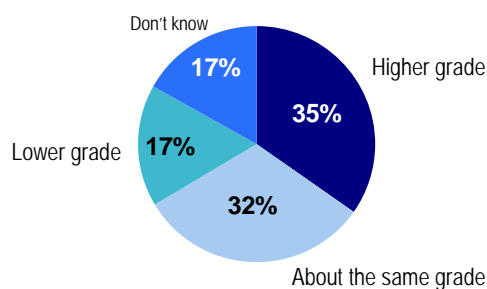
When asked to compare student results in their summer 2005 GCSE (vs) examinations against examination results in their traditional GCSEs, two-thirds of teachers report that their students received the same grade or higher in their



GCSE (vs). Only one in six feels their students got a lower grade in their GCSE (vs) examination when compared to their traditional GCSE.

#### GCSE examinations in vocational subjects v. traditional GCSEs

Q. Thinking generally, would you say students who took a vocational GCSE examination in [your subject] in summer 2005 got a higher or lower grade in this subject than they did in other GCSE examinations they took, or were they about the same?



Base: All those who taught a GCSE in vocational subjects before September 2005 (338)

Source: Ipsos MORI

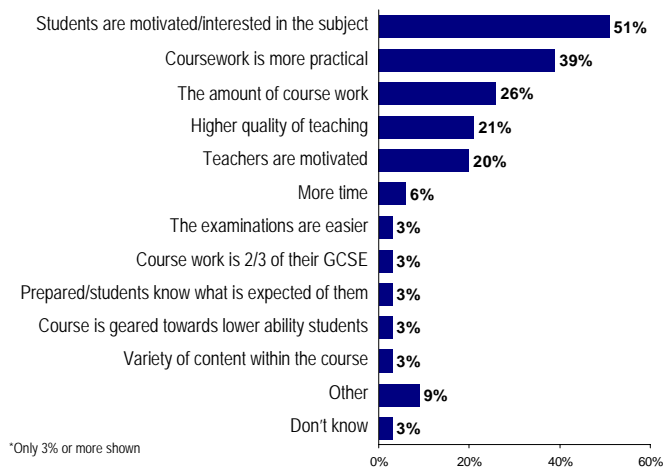
Those teaching Applied Art and Design, Leisure and Tourism, and Health and Social Care are all more likely to feel their students received higher grades in their GCSE (vs) compared to their traditional GCSEs (53%, 45%, and 42%, respectively). Those teaching Engineering and Applied ICT, on the other hand, are more likely to feel their students did poorly in their GCSE (vs) compared to their traditional GCSEs (44% and 28%, respectively). This is perhaps unsurprising given that Applied ICT teachers say that the time allocated to their GCSE (vs) is not twice as long as the time allocated to ordinary GCSEs, but the coursework required makes the course the equivalent of two GCSE credits. In other words, students are completing twice the amount of coursework in the same amount of time as in their ordinary GCSEs and their marks are lower as a result.

Teachers who feel prepared to teach the GCSE (vs) course and who received support from the Awarding Body are more likely to report that their students got higher grades (40%), while those who feel unprepared to teach the course and who did not receive support feel their students got lower grades (27%).

Higher grades are credited to student and staff motivation (51% and 20%, respectively) and more practical coursework (39%). This is followed by the amount of coursework (26%) and the higher quality of teaching (21%).

**Reasons examination results were higher**

Q. Why do you think students who took a vocational GCSE examination in [your subject] in summer 2005 got a **higher** grade than they did in other GCSE examinations they took?

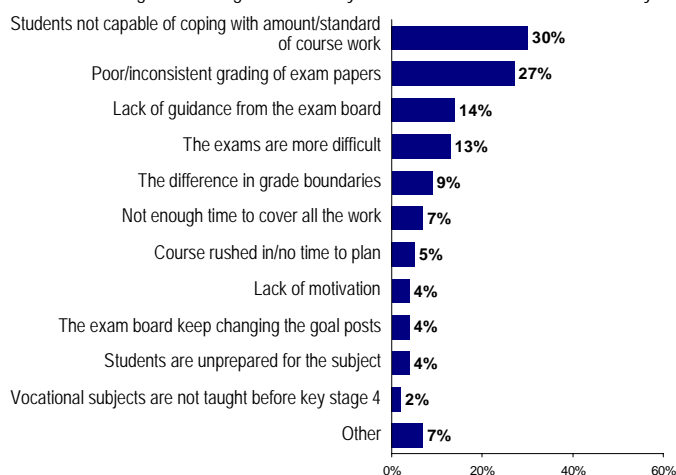


Base: All those who think students got a higher grade in their GCSE in a vocational subject (117) Source: Ipsos MORI

Teachers who feel their students received a lower grade in their GCSE (vs) examinations compared to their traditional GCSEs are most likely to attribute it to the students' inability to cope with the amount of course work (30%) and poor or inconsistent grading of examination papers (27%). Lack of guidance from the examination board (14%) and more difficult examinations (13%) are also mentioned.

**Reasons examination results were lower**

Q. Why do you think students who took a vocational GCSE examination in [your subject] in summer 2005 got a **lower** grade than they did in other GCSE examinations they took?



Base: All those who think students got a lower grade in their GCSE in a vocational subject (56) Source: Ipsos MORI

While lack of time to cover all the work is mentioned by only seven percent of those interviewed, it is more often cited by teachers who have never taught a vocational subject before teaching their GCSE (vs) (14%) and those who say the time allocated to the GCSE (vs) is not twice as long (10%).

## Conclusions

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- A key theme that emerges from this research is the disparity between GCSE (vs) subjects in the level of preparedness felt by teachers, their experience teaching vocational or applied qualifications and the level of support they receive. Whilst the teaching of Applied Business and Health and Social Care appears to be on track, the teaching of Applied Science, Applied Art and Design, and Engineering may require further attention. Teachers in these subjects may therefore benefit from targeted support and specific training to develop their level of expertise in delivering these new vocational qualifications.
- However, despite the differences between subjects, GCSEs in vocational subjects are generally well regarded by teachers. The majority of teachers recognise the distinct requirements of the GCSE (vs), particularly the practical and vocational aspects of the course, and believe that the qualification is equivalent to two ordinary GCSEs. However, while the majority of teachers say they use links with local industry or business, ensuring that teachers across all subjects are given the necessary support to include industrial links or vocational applications in their teaching may be important in ensuring the future development of these subjects. In particular, it may encourage student motivation and interest in the subjects – key reasons given by teachers who feel their students performed better in their GCSE (vs) than their ordinary GCSEs.
- It may also be beneficial to further investigate the time that is being allocated to GCSE (vs) lessons and the factors that are limiting the time allocated to some subjects. This may be particularly important for ICT, which is the least likely of all subjects to be allocated twice as much time as ordinary GCSEs.
- The marking and grading of GCSE (vs) examinations does not seem to be a particular concern for teachers. The majority of teachers feel that their students' performance in the summer 2005 examinations was the same or better than expected. However, maintaining teachers' and students' confidence in examination marking and grading will be important in the expansion and development of vocational provision at key stage 4.

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# Appendices

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# Sample Profile

	Unweighted	
	N	%
<b>Total</b>	400	100
<b>GCSE (vs) currently teach</b>		
Applied Art & Design	40	10
Applied Business	67	17
Applied ICT	59	15
Applied Science	52	13
Engineering	46	12
Health and Social Care	61	15
Leisure and Tourism	70	18
Manufacturing	26	7
<b>Level of responsibility</b>		
Headteacher/principal	22	6
Classroom or subject teacher/lecturer	43	11
Course leader	13	3
Curriculum co-ordinator	42	11
Head of year	14	4
Member of the senior management or leadership team	33	8
Programme manager	8	2
Subject manager/head of subject	216	54
Vocational co-ordinator	2	1
Other	7	2
<b>Years in teaching</b>		
NQT/first year in teaching	3	1
1-5 years	68	17
6-10 years	84	21
11-15 years	46	12
16-25 years	87	22
Over 25 years	112	28
<b>School status</b>		
Community	281	70
Foundation	51	13
Voluntary	51	13
Other	17	4
<b>Rurality</b>		
Urban	332	87
Rural	57	14

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# 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 an (unweighted) sample of 400 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more than five 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% ±
400 (all teachers)	3	5	5
281 (all teachers in Community schools)	4	5	6
112 (all teachers with more than 25 years' teaching experience)	6	9	9
67 (all Applied Business teachers)	7	11	12

*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% ±
Teachers in urban schools (332) vs. rural schools (57)	9	13	14
Health and Social Care teachers (61) vs. all teachers (400)	8	12	14
Applied Art & Design teachers (40) vs. Applied Business teachers (67)	12	18	20

*Source: Ipsos MORI*

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# Topline Results

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