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Leading learning and skills

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007:

Personal and Community Development Learning

July 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in sustaining and improving learning and skills opportunities across the personal and community development learning system

ⓘ For information

Contents

Introduction

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Research background

1 This report presents the findings for 3,821 learners engaged in personal and community development learning (PCDL – formerly known as non-accredited adult community learning), and 1,706 learners engaged in further education (FE) delivered by adult learning providers (ALPs – often referred to as accredited adult community learning). These learners were surveyed as part of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) 2007, which was conducted by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and included a total of 43,756 interviews with learners.

2 The NLSS is a large tracking survey of LSC-funded learners aged 16 and over. It provides the LSC and its partners with a wealth of data on learners' satisfaction with their learning experience over time, including detailed information on three key aspects of the learner journey:

- initial choice and information;
- support during learning; and
- benefits of participation.

3 There have been five national surveys since 2001 (annually between 2001 and 2004, and again in 2007, though this is only the second time that PCDL learners have been included). Since 2003, each survey has comprised over 43,000 telephone interviews with learners.

4 The survey is composed of three waves, each dealing with a distinct set of modular questions:

- pre-entry advice and guidance (wave 12);
- support for learners (wave 13); and
- impact of learning (wave 14).

5 There is a set of core questions that are covered in all three waves (in line with previous NLSSs, PCDL learners were not asked the set of modular questions on pre-entry advice and guidance):

- overall satisfaction with the learning experience;
- overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching and management of learning; and
- how likely the learner is to return to learning in the future.

6 The NLSS covers learners in FE, work-based learning (WBL), learndirect and PCDL. The FE category includes general FE colleges, sixth form colleges, other/specialist colleges and learning delivered by ALPs.

7 In 2007, a pilot survey was also conducted with learners in offender institutions, reflecting the LSC's role in managing, planning, funding and delivering the new integrated Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across all nine English regions. The findings for these learners are reported separately.

Methodology

8 Interviews for the NLSS were conducted by telephone between 19 February and 26 July 2007.

Personal and community development learning

9 There is no national database of learners undertaking non-accredited learning. Consequently, the sample of these learners was generated directly from local education authorities. This was also the approach adopted in the previous NLSS in 2004/05. Overall, 22 local education authorities provided the contact details of eligible learners.

10 During fieldwork, quotas were set to ensure equal representation for each of the nine LSC regions. However, the data contained in this report is unweighted, as there is no profile data available for weighting. Further discussion on the methodology can be found in the 2007 technical report.

Adult learning providers

11 A representative sample of learners studying at ALPs was drawn from the LSC's individualised learner records (ILR). Data for ALP learners has been weighted by the local LSC, using the known profile from the ILR in October 2007. Further details can be found in the technical report.

Sample profile

Personal and community development learning

12 Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the non-accredited learner sample. Almost three learners in five (57 per cent) were aged over 50, with just 10 per cent under the age of 30, and 31 per cent in the 'middle' age range. The majority (77 per cent) were female and 92 per cent described themselves as white.

13 As Table 1 demonstrates, most learners said they had neither a disability nor learning difficulties (87 per cent and 94 per cent, respectively). While more women than men reported a disability, this was due to the gender profile of the sample. In fact, men were more likely to report both a disability (18 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of women) and learning difficulties (9 per cent, compared with 4 per cent of women).

Table 1: PCDL – demographics of the sample profile

	Percentage of respondents
Age	
16–20	4
21–30	6
31–40	14
41–50	17
51–60	20
61–70	26
71+	11
Refused to respond	2
Gender	
Male	23
Female	77
Ethnicity	
Asian	4
Black	1
Mixed	1
White	92
Other	1
Refused to respond	1
Disability	
Yes	13
Learning difficulties	
Yes	6

Note: the base was all PCDL learners (3,821).

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14 Figure 1 shows that the most common area of learning cited by PCDL learners was information and communication technology (19 per cent), followed closely by English, languages and communication (17 per cent). A similar proportion were studying hospitality, sports, leisure and travel or visual and performing arts and media (15 per cent each).

15 Due to the nature of the courses (i.e. non-accredited), in most cases it was not possible to determine the level of the learners' current course of study. Of those for whom this was possible (just 22 per cent, or 832 learners), just under half (45 per cent) were studying for Entry Level or Level 1 qualifications, one in four (24 per cent) for Level 2, and a similar proportion (25 per cent) for Level 3 or above, while the remaining 6 per cent said they were not studying at a particular level.

16 Learners were more able to provide details of their prior attainment – this was possible for 3,172 learners (83 per cent of the total sample). Of this group, one in six had obtained no prior qualifications (17 per cent), a third (33 per cent) held qualifications at Level 2 or below, and half (50 per cent) had attained Level 3 or above.

Figure 1: Subjects studied by PCDL learners
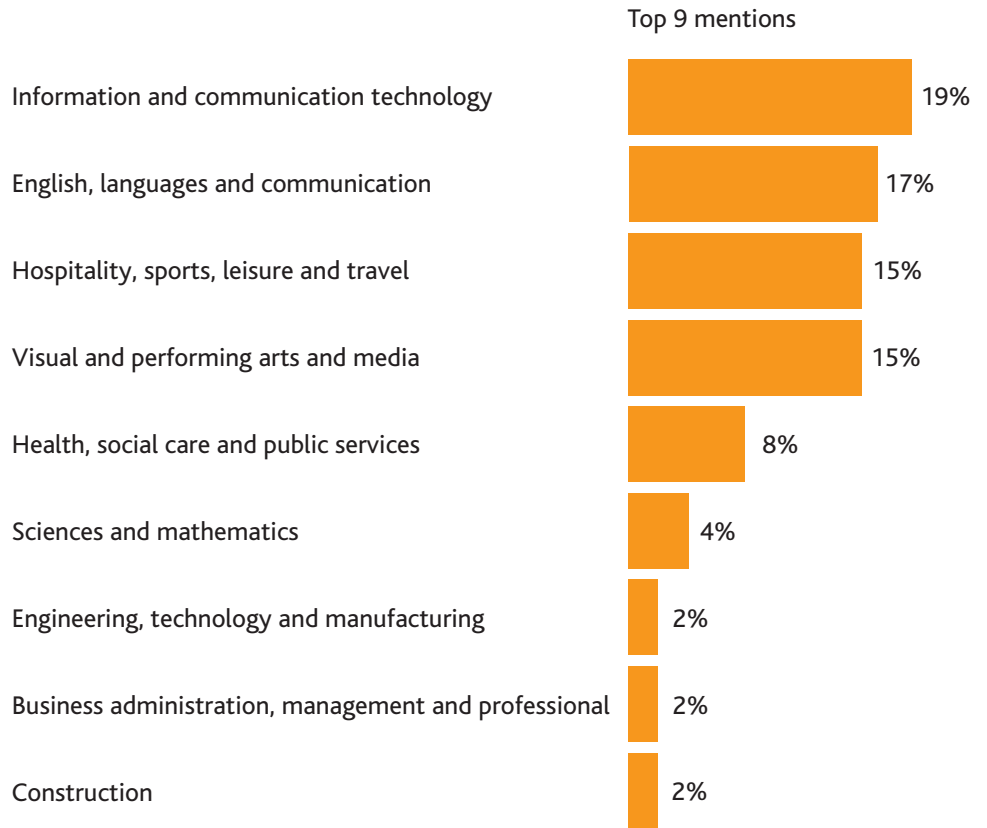
Top 9 mentions

Subject	
Information and communication technology	19%
English, languages and communication	17%
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	15%
Visual and performing arts and media	15%
Health, social care and public services	8%
Sciences and mathematics	4%
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	2%
Business administration, management and professional	2%
Construction	2%

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

Adult learning providers

17 Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the sample of ALP learners. Around half (48 per cent) were aged 40 or below, and the majority (73 per cent) were female. Some 85 per cent described themselves as white.

18 As Table 2 demonstrates, 11 per cent of respondents said that they had a disability and 7 per cent said they had learning difficulties. There was considerable overlap between the two groups: in total, 4 per cent of respondents said they had both a disability and learning difficulties. Around half of those with a disability said that it was a physical disability.

Table 2: ALP – demographics of the sample profile

	Percentage of respondents
Age	
16–20	11
21–30	17
31–40	20
41–50	24
51–60	14
61–70	9
71+	4
Refused to respond	2
Gender	
Male	27
Female	73
Ethnicity	
Asian	6
Black	4
Mixed	1
White	85
Other	3
Disability	
Yes	11
Learning difficulties	
Yes	7

Note: the base was all ALP learners (1,706).

19 Figure 2 shows that the most common area of learning cited by ALP learners was English, languages and communication (28 per cent), followed by information and communication technology (18 per cent).

20 Two respondents in five (42 per cent) were studying at Entry Level or Level 1, while 32 per cent were studying at Level 2, 19 per cent at Level 3, and 5 per cent at Level 4 or Level 5.

21 Half (50 per cent) were qualified to Level 3 or above prior to starting their course, while 25 per cent were qualified to Level 2 or below, and 9 per cent had no prior qualifications. The remainder did not know the level of their highest qualification.

Multivariate analysis

22 In addition to standard analysis of the data, the following analysis techniques were used to interrogate the data on ALP learners (this was not conducted for the PCDL data because, due to a lack of profile data, it was not possible to assess how representative the survey data was for this group).

- **Multiple regression** (also known as key driver analysis – KDA) was used to examine the relative importance of a range of factors in explaining overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

- **Chi-squared automatic interaction detector** (CHAID) analysis was conducted to segment the learner population according to their propensity to express satisfaction with their learning experience.

23 CHAID uses statistical techniques to select:

- the key determinants or drivers (such as current learning status, gender, age, ethnicity or course level); and

- the groups that are most and least likely to exhibit these characteristics.

Figure 2: Subjects studied by ALP learners
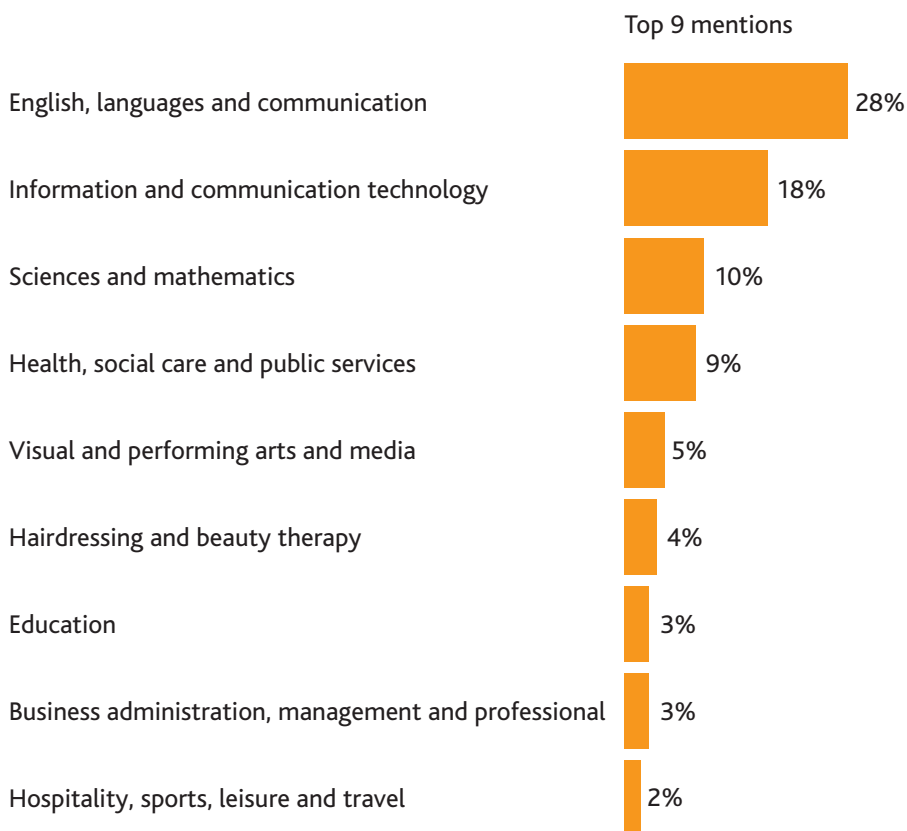
Top 9 mentions

Subject	Percentage
English, languages and communication	28%
Information and communication technology	18%
Sciences and mathematics	10%
Health, social care and public services	9%
Visual and performing arts and media	5%
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4%
Education	3%
Business administration, management and professional	3%
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	2%

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

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24 The advantage the CHAID technique has over standard analysis is that it identifies the relative strength of variables. Variables identified nearer the top of the CHAID tree are more strongly related to the dependent (satisfaction with learning experience) than other variables included in the model (whether they are identified or not).

Presentation of findings

25 It should be remembered that only a sample of learners has been interviewed, and not the entire learner population. Consequently, all results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences are statistically significant. **This report comments only on findings that are statistically significant**.

26 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this is due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) denotes values above zero but less than 0.5 per cent.

27 This report sometimes presents 'combined' scores. This is where we have combined 'extremely', 'very' and 'fairly' or 'strongly' and 'tend to' scores. The report also makes reference to 'net' figures, which represent the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions. A 'net satisfaction' figure represents the percentage of respondents who were satisfied with a particular issue, less the percentage who were dissatisfied. For example, if the figures for one aspect of learning show 40 per cent satisfied and 25 per cent dissatisfied, the 'net satisfaction' figure is +15 points.

28 Net scores are calculated using the true value of the scores before they are rounded. This occasionally results in a small discrepancy (usually one percentage point) between the combined figure and the sum of the rounded scores it relates to.

29 The report also makes reference to 'mean' scores for questions where learners were asked to rank an aspect of their course or provider on a scale of 1 to 10. The mean score is calculated by adding the scores provided by all learners and dividing this figure by the number of learners answering the question.

Report structure

30 This report first contains the findings for learners engaged in PCDL, and then the findings for learners on FE courses delivered by ALPs. Both categories include:

- 'Overall Satisfaction'
- 'Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider'
- 'Learner Support'; and
- 'Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning'.

In addition, there is a section on 'Pre-entry Information and Guidance' for ALP learners.

31 Throughout the report, comparisons are made with findings from NLSS studies from previous years.

Summary and Implications

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Personal and community development learning

32 NLSS 2007 shows that learners on non-accredited courses remain very satisfied with their current/most recent course of study: 93 per cent were satisfied, a figure that is unchanged from 2004/05. There is a real sense that this experience has led to a number of very positive outcomes – from greater confidence and motivation to a range of health and social benefits. Indeed, the vast majority of learners (89 per cent) said they intended to continue with further learning.

33 A large majority are firm advocates of their college or learning provider (80 per cent would speak highly of their provider), and rate the quality of the teaching very highly (92 per cent were satisfied). Non-accredited learners also agreed overwhelmingly that their needs were being met and that they were treated fairly and with respect (90 per cent, 97 per cent and 98 per cent respectively).

34 There are some exceptions to this generally very positive picture, however. Most apparent are the less positive views that were aired by the small minority of learners who did not complete their course – 8 per cent reported having left their course before completion, and this rises to 14 per cent among learners with multiple disabilities. Among this latter group, those who leave early tend to do so for health reasons and other personal circumstances, rather than because of teaching or course-related problems.

35 Only a relatively small number of learners (10 per cent) claimed to have made a complaint about their course/training to their college or learning provider, which is in line with the 8 per cent in 2004/05. The most commonly reported reasons for complaining related to poor college facilities, poor communication, poor teaching and inadequate classrooms. Of those who said that they had made a complaint, just a third (34 per cent) were satisfied with the outcome. However, this represents an improvement on 2004/05, when just 25 per cent reported a satisfactory outcome.

36 And while younger learners, minority ethnic learners and those with learning difficulties are the least satisfied with various aspects of their course, these groups also tend to report more positive outcomes as a result of their learning experience, such as greater enthusiasm and motivation, improved learning skills, social and personal benefits, and job and career-related benefits. These same learners also tend to report that there are greater opportunities to feed back their views to their college or other learning provider.

Adult learning providers

37 Learners on FE courses delivered by ALPs also expressed high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience: 92 per cent were satisfied, in line with 2004/05. In addition, the majority (60 per cent) strongly agreed that the course had met their needs.

38 As with other groups of learners, those who had left the course early were the least positive about their learning. These learners were more likely than completers to have been studying at Level 2 or below. Overall satisfaction was also a little lower among women than men, and among those studying at Level 2 compared with those studying at either a higher or a lower level.

39 Learners were also very positive about the quality of teaching or training (92 per cent were satisfied) and about their learning provider: 78 per cent said they would speak highly of their provider, and nearly all respondents agreed that they were treated fairly and with respect. However, a significant minority (between 22 per cent and 39 per cent) said that they were not asked for their views on the various matters relating to the learning programme and the college. A small proportion of learners (8 per cent) said they had made a complaint to their provider.

40 A range of benefits was reported by learners, and in a number of cases the figures showed an increase over 2004/05: being more creative and being prepared to try new things; being better at managing time and responsibilities; gaining job-related skills; feeling more confident socially; and being able to cope better with daily life. Most learners thought they would undertake further learning in the future, and two learners in three said this was very likely.

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Overall Satisfaction (PCDL)

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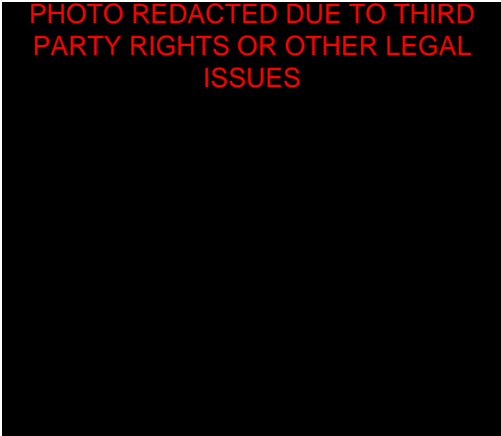
Satisfaction with the learning experience

41 Learners engaged in non-accredited PCDL were overwhelmingly satisfied with their current learning experience, with four in five (79 per cent) saying that they were either extremely or very satisfied (Figure 3). Only a very small minority (5 per cent) expressed any dissatisfaction.

42 As Figure 3 shows, satisfaction has remained at the same high level as in the 2004/05 survey, with the same proportion (79 per cent) saying that they were either 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied. In both years, more than nine learners in ten expressed some degree of satisfaction (93 per cent in 2007 and 94 per cent in 2004/05).

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the learning experience over time

How satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/training provider?

- % Extremely satisfied
- % Very satisfied
- % Fairly satisfied
- % Neither/nor
- % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied

	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Dissatisfied
2007	37	42	14	2	5
2004/05	39	40	15	2	4
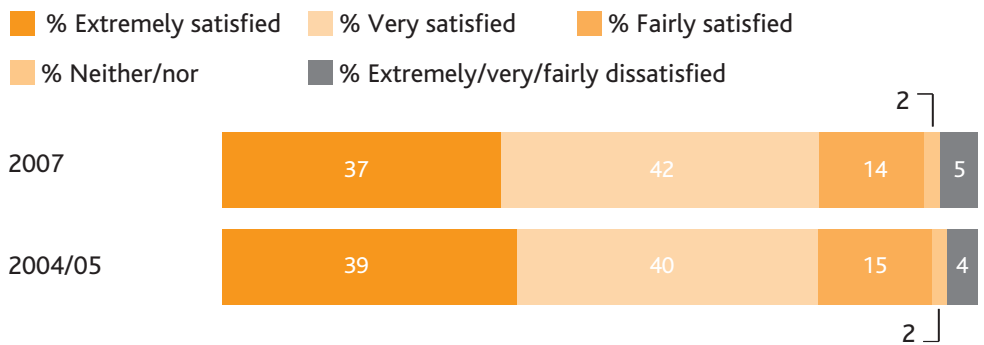
Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14 (2007) and 3,770 PCDL learners for waves 10 and 11 (2004/05).

Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

43 As Figure 4 shows, the main reasons given for these high levels of satisfaction relate to the quality of the teaching, the content of the course and learning needs being met.

44 Conversely, those less satisfied with their learning mostly complained that it did not meet their expectations (36 per cent), that the course was poorly run (31 per cent), or that their needs were not met (30 per cent). Other reasons included the attitude of tutors and lack of support (20 per cent), and poor communications (18 per cent).

45 Gender differences in overall satisfaction were much less marked in 2007 than previously. In the 2004/05 survey, female learners were found to be more satisfied than male learners: 41 per cent of women were extremely satisfied, compared with 31 per cent of men; and the net satisfaction scores were +91 and +87, respectively. In 2007, however, net satisfaction was exactly the same for men and women, although the latter were still slightly more likely to say that they were extremely satisfied (37 per cent, compared with 34 per cent of men).

Figure 4: Reasons for satisfaction with learning

Top 10 mentions

Reason	Percentage
Tutors are good/make it easy/help us	46%
A good course/learnt a lot/enjoyed it	44%
Gives me what I wanted/the experience	33%
They were very helpful/always ready to help	21%
Enjoy the subjects/interested in what I do	16%
Social life is good/met lots of people/good fun	14%
I'm pleased with my progress/doing better than expected	13%
They were very friendly/welcoming	12%
It's well run/well organised	10%
Like the place/good working environment	7%

Note: the base was 3,540 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

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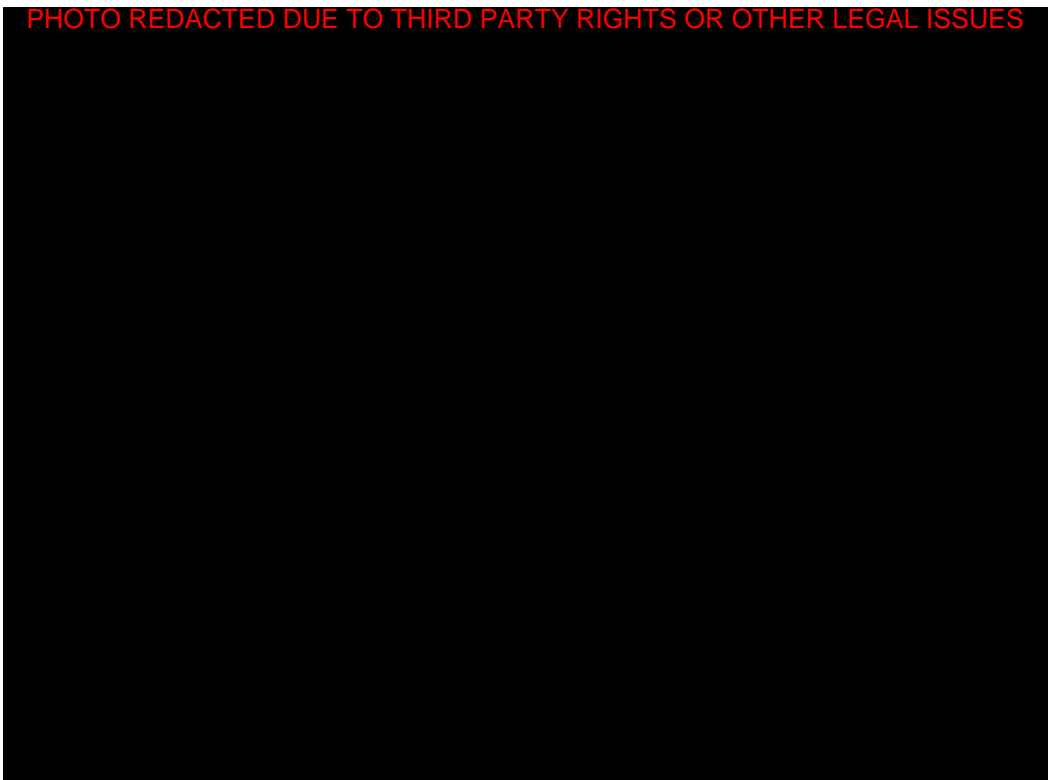
46 While very high levels of satisfaction were found across all groups, learners aged 16 to 24 tended to be the least satisfied (8 per cent dissatisfied, compared with between 4 and 6 per cent for older learners). Older learners (aged 55 and over) were the most likely to say that they were extremely satisfied (38 per cent). A detailed breakdown by age is provided in Table 3.

47 On the whole, white learners were more satisfied than minority ethnic learners (+88, as against +83 net satisfaction). However, satisfaction among Asian learners is broadly similar to that among their white counterparts (+87 net satisfied). This suggests that the difference in satisfaction between white and black and minority ethnic (BME) learners is driven mainly by lower satisfaction among the black, mixed and other ethnic groups. The 2004/05 survey also found minority ethnic learners to be less satisfied in general. Note that the difference between ethnic groups is related to the differences already observed between age groups: indeed, white learners in the survey tend to be older than BME learners (59 per cent of white learners are aged 51 and over, compared with 23 per cent of minority ethnic learners), and we saw earlier that satisfaction is higher among older people.

48 Similarly, learning difficulties were most commonly reported among the 19 to 24 age group, which goes some way to explaining why those with learning difficulties also show themselves to be less satisfied on the whole (net satisfaction for this group was +82, compared with +87 overall).

49 A relatively small proportion (5 per cent) said that they were satisfied because they were treated well/with respect, but among learners with a disability this was a much more common reason: one in ten (11 per cent) of male learners with a disability, and the same proportion of those with multiple disabilities, gave this as a reason. The same applies to learners with learning difficulties: one in twelve (8 per cent) gave this reason, compared with one in twenty (5 per cent) of learners who did not have learning difficulties.

Table 3: Overall satisfaction with learning experience, by age

	All	Age			
		16–24	25–34	35–54	55+
Base	*(3,821)*	*(212)*	*(355)*	*(1,278)*	*(1,913)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	37	29	37	35	38
Very satisfied	42	42	40	41	44
Fairly satisfied	14	18	14	15	12
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2	2	3	2	1
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	5	8	6	6	4
Net satisfaction	+87	+82	+85	+86	+90

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

50 Satisfaction levels also varied by course subject. For example, learners on hospitality, sports, leisure and travel courses were, on the whole, the most satisfied with their learning experience.

51 Perhaps not surprisingly, the least satisfied group of learners were those who had left their course early: a quarter (24 per cent) expressed dissatisfaction, with 10 per cent saying they were extremely dissatisfied.

Meeting learners' needs

52 Corresponding to the very high levels of satisfaction with the overall learning experience reported previously, the vast majority agreed that their learning programme was meeting their needs (90 per cent). As Figure 5 shows, the majority (64 per cent) of learners strongly agreed with this statement.

Figure 5: Meeting learners' needs

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ % Strongly agree   ■ % Tend to agree   ■ % Neither/nor
■ % Tend to disagree   ■ % Strongly disagree   ■ % Don't know

| My learning programme is meeting my needs. | 64 | 26 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| There is support available to help me carry out my learning programme. | 59 | 29 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
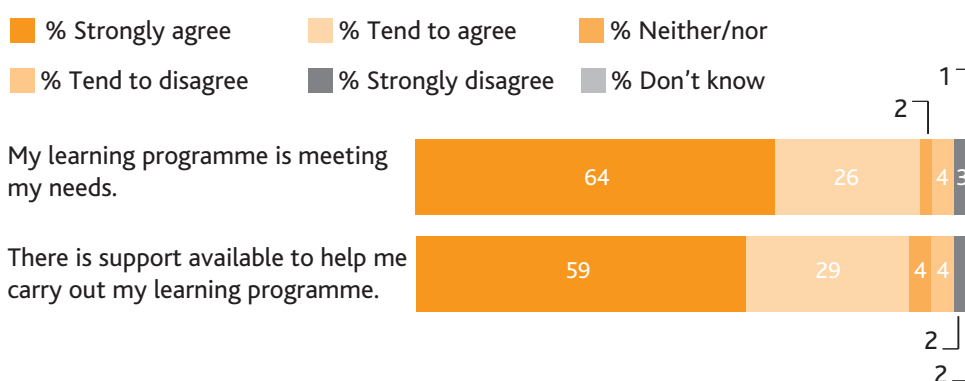
Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

53 As was the case for overall satisfaction, Table 4 shows that there were some age and gender differences in learners' assessments of the extent to which their needs were being met. Once again, it was male learners and those aged 16 to 24 who expressed the least positive opinions.

Table 4: Meeting learners' needs, by gender and age

	All	**Gender**		**Age**			
	All	Male	Female	16–24	25–34	35–54	55+
Base	*(3,821)*	*(879)*	*(2,942)*	*(212)*	*(355)*	*(1,278)*	*(1,913)*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	64	63	64	60	64	62	66
Tend to agree	26	25	27	29	28	27	25
Neither/nor	2	3	2	1	3	2	3
Tend to disagree	4	4	4	4	2	4	4
Strongly disagree	3	4	3	5	3	4	2
Don't know	1	1	1	0	*	*	1

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

54 Again consistent with these age differences, minority ethnic learners were the least likely to agree that their needs were being met (although, once again, Asian learners bucked this trend, showing higher levels of agreement than other ethnic groups: +86 net agree). Those reporting learning difficulties were also less likely to agree.

55 Once again, early leavers were also much less satisfied than other groups – more than a quarter (27 per cent) disagreed that their learning programme had met their needs, and this resulted in a net agree score of just +36 (compared with +83 overall).

56 English, languages and communication programmes were the least likely of all the course subjects to be perceived as meeting learners' needs: learners studying these subjects showed a net agree score of +77, six points lower than the average.

Advocating the provider

57 Overall, four learners in five (80 per cent) said that they would speak highly of their learning provider, with 43 per cent saying that they would speak very highly without being asked. Figure 6 reports these findings and shows that only a very small minority (5 per cent) would speak critically of their learning provider.

Figure 6: Advocating the provider

Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your college/provider in their capacity as a training provider?

I would speak highly of them without being asked — 43%

I would speak highly of them if somebody asked me about them — 36%

I would be neutral about them — 14%

I would be critical of them if somebody asked me about them — 4%

I would be critical of them without being asked — 1%

Don't know — 1%
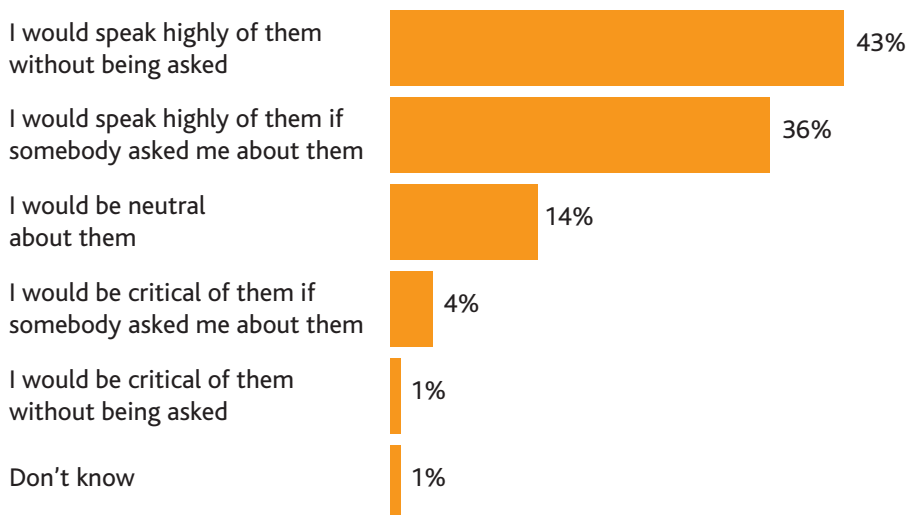
Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

58 The least positive groups are similar to those previously mentioned. They include:

- younger learners (net advocacy score of +66 for learners aged 16 to 24, compared with +74 overall);

- minority ethnic learners, this time including Asian learners (net score of +67, compared with +75 for white learners);

- those reporting learning difficulties (net score of +65, compared with +75 for learners without learning difficulties); and

- early leavers (net score of +52, compared with +77 for those still on the course and +75 for learners who had completed their course).

59 The strongest advocates were found among learners studying sciences and mathematics, and information and communication technology (+83 and +80 net advocacy scores, respectively).

Early leavers

60 Just 8 per cent of non-accredited learners reported that they had left their course early, before completion. Over a third (35 per cent) had successfully completed their course and around half (55 per cent) said they were still studying.

61 Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties were more likely to have left their course early (10 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively, compared with 7 per cent of those without a disability or learning difficulties); those with multiple disabilities were the most likely to have done so (14 per cent). This is consistent with health reasons being cited as the most common cause for not completing a course (mentioned by 17 per cent). The other most commonly cited reasons are shown in Figure 7; many of them are linked to the personal circumstances of the learner, rather than to specifically course-related matters.

Figure 7: Reasons for leaving the course early

What were the main reasons for leaving your course early?

Top 10 mentions

- Health reasons — 17%
- Difficult to combine with family commitments — 12%
- Wrong course for me — 12%
- Personal issues (illness of family members/bereavement) — 12%
- Difficult to combine with work commitments — 11%
- Tutor poor/problems with teaching quality — 10%
- Work too difficult — 5%
- Got a job — 4%
- College/provider badly run/disorganised — 3%
- Travel difficulties — 2%
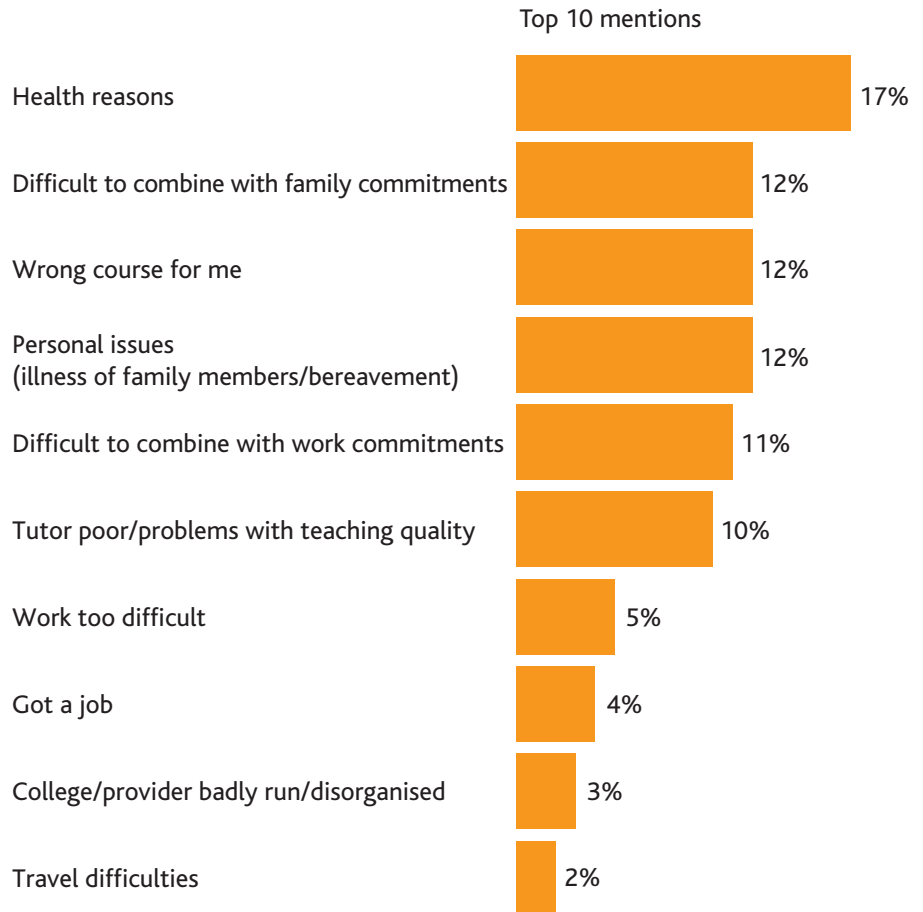
Note: the base was 292 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

62 The only other statistically significant sub-group difference relates to course subject: those who had been studying English, languages and communication subjects (who also complained the most that their course had not met their needs) were more likely than learners on other courses to have left early (14 per cent, compared with 8 per cent overall).

Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider (PCDL)

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training

63 Continuing the very positive feedback from learners in non-accredited learning, more than nine in ten (93 per cent) said that they were satisfied overall with the quality of teaching. Indeed, nearly two in five (38 per cent) were extremely satisfied, and a similar proportion (41 per cent) were very satisfied; just 5 per cent again said they were dissatisfied (see Figure 8).

64 Satisfaction continues to remain at the very high levels recorded in the 2004/05 survey.

65 Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training varies with age: older learners (aged 55 and over) were more satisfied than the youngest age groups (aged 16 to 24 and 25 to 34), as is shown in Table 5. These differences are in line with the age differences observed for satisfaction with the learning experience.

66 However, this time differences by gender and ethnicity are less marked. While, as in previous years, women and white learners were more likely to say that they were extremely satisfied (39 per cent each), the net satisfaction scores across both gender and ethnicity show no statistically significant variation.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training over time
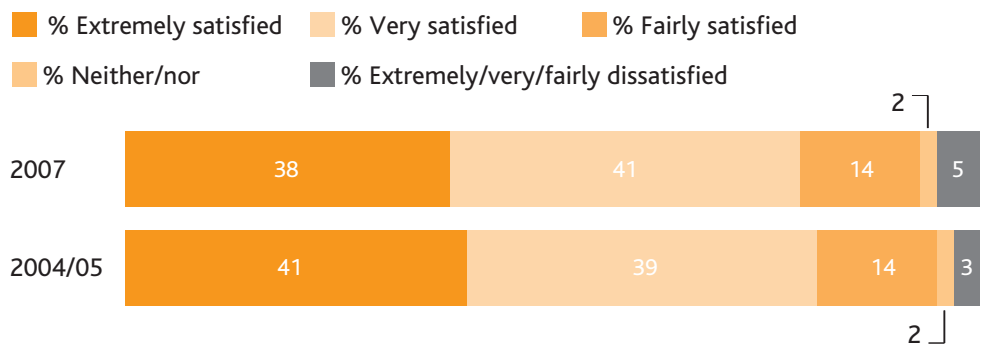
Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14 (2007) and 3,770 PCDL learners for waves 10 and 11 (2004/05).

Table 5: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training, by age (PCDL learners)

	All	Age			
		16–24	25–34	35–54	55+
Base	*(3,821)*	*(212)*	*(355)*	*(1,278)*	*(1,913)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	38	24	34	36	42
Very satisfied	41	46	41	41	40
Fairly satisfied	14	22	15	15	12
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2	2	2	3	1
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	5	7	7	6	4
Net satisfaction	+87	+84	+83	+85	+89

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

67 Table 6 highlights the fact that those who reported learning difficulties again showed themselves to be less satisfied than others (+81 net satisfied). Linked to this, early leavers were, once again, the most dissatisfied, showing the lowest net satisfaction score (+55) as well as particularly high levels of dissatisfaction (20 per cent, as against 5 per cent overall).

Table 6: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training, by learning difficulties, stage of course and prior attainment

	Net satisfaction	
All	*(3,821)*	+87
Learning difficulties		
No	*(3,601)*	+87
Yes	*(212)*	+81
Stage of course		
Early leaver	*(292)*	+55
Complete	*(1,350)*	+85
Still studying	*(2,108)*	+93
Prior attainment level		
No qualification	*(536)*	+89
Level 2 or below	*(1,038)*	+89
Level 3 or above	*(1,598)*	+85

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

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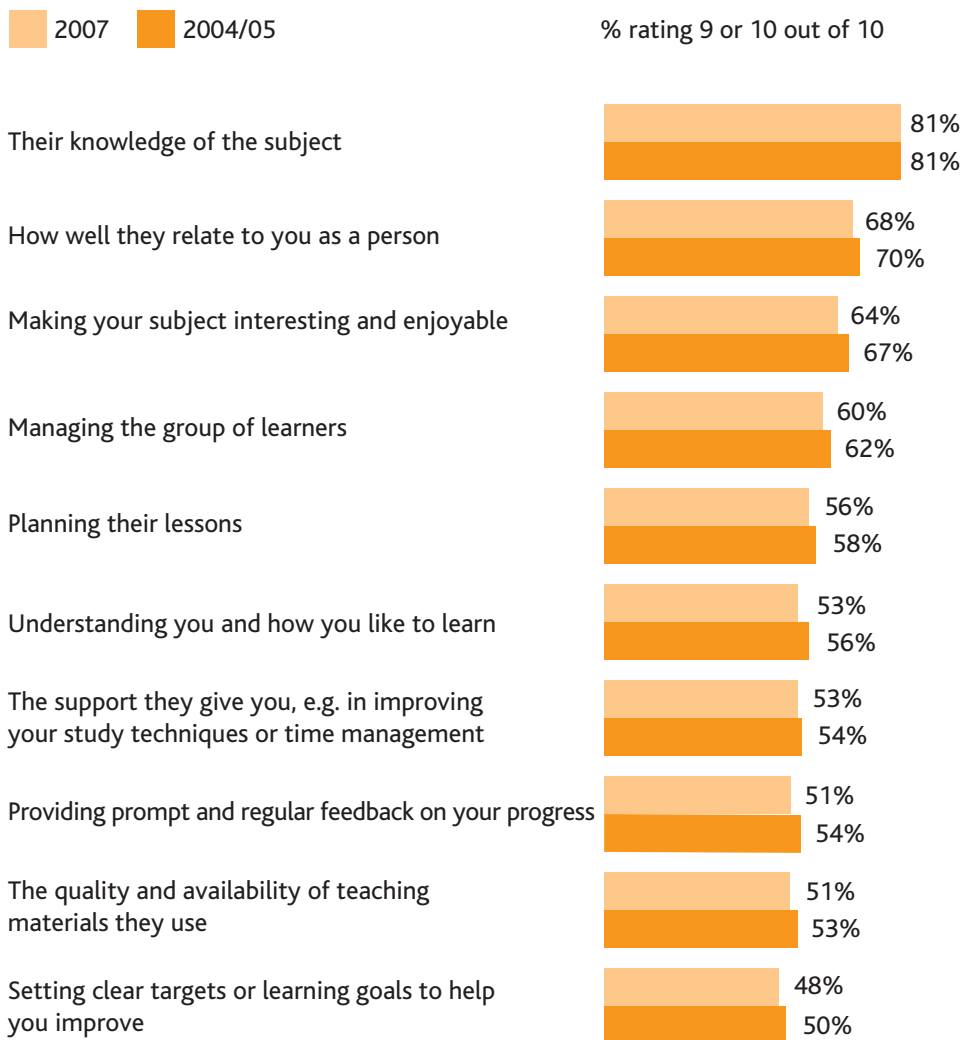
Views on teaching staff

68 Learners were also asked to rate their teachers, tutors or trainers on a range of different aspects of the teaching or training they had received, on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 representing 'very poor' and 10 representing 'excellent'). Figure 9 shows that, as in 2004/05, 'knowledge of the subject' attracted the highest scores, with four learners in five once again giving this a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 (81 per cent in both 2007 and 2004/05), resulting in a mean score of 9.25 in the most recent survey and 9.27 in 2004/05. 'How well they relate to you as a person' and 'making your subject interesting and enjoyable' followed close behind, with, respectively, 68 per cent and 64 per cent of learners giving these aspects a score of at least 9 out of 10.

69 Also in line with the previous survey, the lowest scores were allocated to the setting of clear targets or learning goals (just 48 per cent gave this a score of 9 or 10 in 2007). (Note that, for these sample sizes, only changes of at least +/- 3 percentage points are statistically significant.)

70 Continuing the gender differences already observed, female learners scored higher than male learners on all aspects (see Table 7) – a pattern that is consistent with the 2004/05 survey. In fact, in 2007 women were more likely to give every aspect the top score of 10. However, the gap between men and women appears to have narrowed somewhat, primarily due to women's ratings on all aspects having fallen between the two surveys.

Figure 9: Views on teaching staff over time

How would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training?

	2007	2004/05

% rating 9 or 10 out of 10

	2007	2004/05
Their knowledge of the subject	81%	81%
How well they relate to you as a person	68%	70%
Making your subject interesting and enjoyable	64%	67%
Managing the group of learners	60%	62%
Planning their lessons	56%	58%
Understanding you and how you like to learn	53%	56%
The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management	53%	54%
Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress	51%	54%
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	51%	53%
Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	48%	50%

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14 (2007) and 3,770 PCDL learners for waves 10 and 11 (2004/05).

71 Table 7 also shows that the greatest difference in views between men and women was found for 'planning their lessons' (11 percentage points difference between scores of 9 or 10) followed by 'understanding you and how you like to learn' and 'making your subject interesting and enjoyable' (a difference of 9 and 6 percentage points, respectively). Again, these patterns are broadly consistent with those in 2004/05.

Table 7: Views on teaching staff, by gender and age

	All	Gender		Age			
		Male	Female	16–24	25–34	35–54	55+
Base	*(3,821)*	*(879)*	*(2,942)*	*(212)*	*(355)*	*(1,251)*	*(1,884)*
% rating as 9 or 10 out of 10	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Their knowledge of the subject	81	79	81	68	77	78	85
How well they relate to you as a person	68	65	69	61	60	66	73
Making your subject interesting and enjoyable	64	59	65	48	58	59	70
Understanding you and how you like to learn	53	46	55	43	47	49	58
The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management	53	47	55	55	46	50	56
Planning their lessons	56	48	59	42	49	53	61
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	51	48	52	49	49	47	55
Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	48	43	50	47	46	46	50
Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress	51	47	52	47	48	48	54
Managing the group of learners	60	56	62	46	56	58	65

*Note: the maximum base size for each item was 3,821 PCDL learners.

72 Differences by age are also shown in Table 7. On all aspects, older learners (aged 55 and over) tended to rate their teachers or tutors most highly.

73 Turning now to differences by other variables, the first point to note is that learners with a disability scored certain aspects of their teaching slightly more positively than those without. In particular, a higher than average proportion gave a score of 9 or 10 for 'the support they give you' (57 per cent, as against 52 per cent of those without a disability) and 'providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress' (56 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively).

74 Similarly encouraging results were found for those reporting a learning difficulty, 64 per cent of whom rated the support given by teachers and tutors at 9 or 10. This group also tended to give a higher than average score for the setting of clear goals (55 per cent gave 9 or 10, compared with 48 per cent of learners who did not have learning difficulties).

75 The same groups of learners that expressed lower overall levels of satisfaction with their learning experience and teaching also tended to score specific aspects of the teaching lower than other groups. For example, minority ethnic learners, and particularly early leavers, tended to allocate fewer 9 or 10 scores than average.

76 Once again, those studying hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, as well as learners on sciences and mathematics courses tended to be more positive about a number of aspects of their teaching, particularly compared to learners on health, social care and public services courses. This corroborates the differences observed by course type: students of sciences and mathematics were much more likely than others to be studying for a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), and those studying for a GCSE scored various aspects of their teaching more highly than those on national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses.

77 The most highly qualified learners, however – both those with prior qualifications at Level 3 or above and those currently studying at this level – were the least satisfied with their teaching, scoring lower than other learners on:

- 'how well they relate to you as a person': 64 per cent of learners with a prior qualification at Level 3 or above gave this a score of 9 or 10 (compared with 70 per cent of those with a prior qualification at Level 2 or below and 72 per cent of those with no prior qualification);

- 'making your subject interesting and enjoyable': 59 per cent of learners with a prior qualification at Level 3 or above and 48 per cent of those currently studying at this level scored this at 9 or 10 (compared with 65 per cent of those with a prior qualification at Level 2 or below, and 65 per cent of those currently studying at Entry Level or Level 1); and

- 'understanding you and how you like to learn': 46 per cent of those with a prior qualification at Level 3 or above (compared with 57 per cent of those with a prior qualification at Level 2 or below and 58 per cent of those with no prior qualification).

Time utilisation

78 The question asked in the 2007 survey to ascertain how effectively lesson or training session time was utilised differed from the question asked in previous years. This time, learners were asked how much time was spent on helping them increase their knowledge and understanding of the course in a typical lesson (previously, learners were asked how much lesson time was wasted). As Figure 10 illustrates, three-quarters (75 per cent) claimed that most or the whole of the lesson was used in this way.

Figure 10: Time spent increasing knowledge in a typical lesson

In a typical lesson or training session, how much time is spent on increasing or helping to increase your knowledge or understanding of your course?

- % The whole lesson
- % Most of the lesson
- % Around half of the lesson
- % Less than half of the lesson
- % None of the lesson
- % Don't know

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

79 Learners who were satisfied with their learning experience were far more likely to say that the whole of the lesson or most of it was spent on increasing their knowledge or understanding of the course (78 per cent). Three learners in five who are dissatisfied with their learning experience (61 per cent) said that half or less than half of the lesson was spent increasing their knowledge.
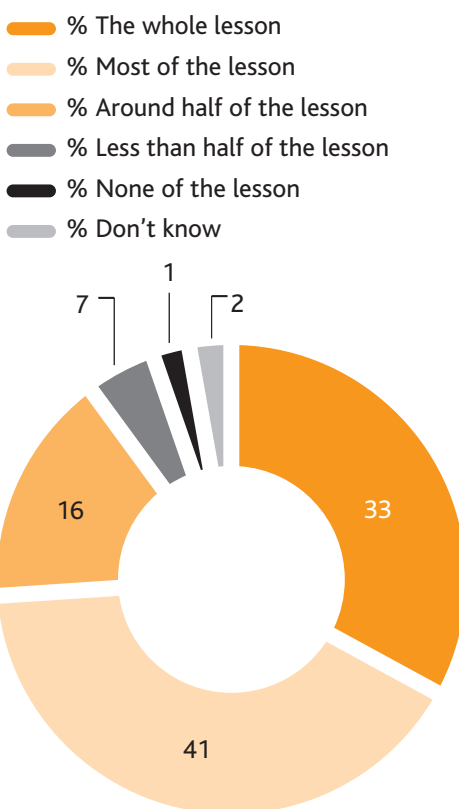
80 Figure 11 provides a more detailed insight into perceived time utilisation in the classroom, and also provides a comparison with the 2004/05 survey. The results are very similar across the two years, with exactly the same proportion citing other learners arriving late by at least five minutes as an issue they had encountered on a fairly regular basis (38 per cent). Other issues were experienced by a relatively small minority, with lack of resources/equipment again the most frequently mentioned after late arrival of other students (13 per cent in 2007 and 12 per cent in 2004/05). In both years, 44 per cent said they had not experienced any of the problems listed.

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Figure 11: Issues affecting the learning programme over time
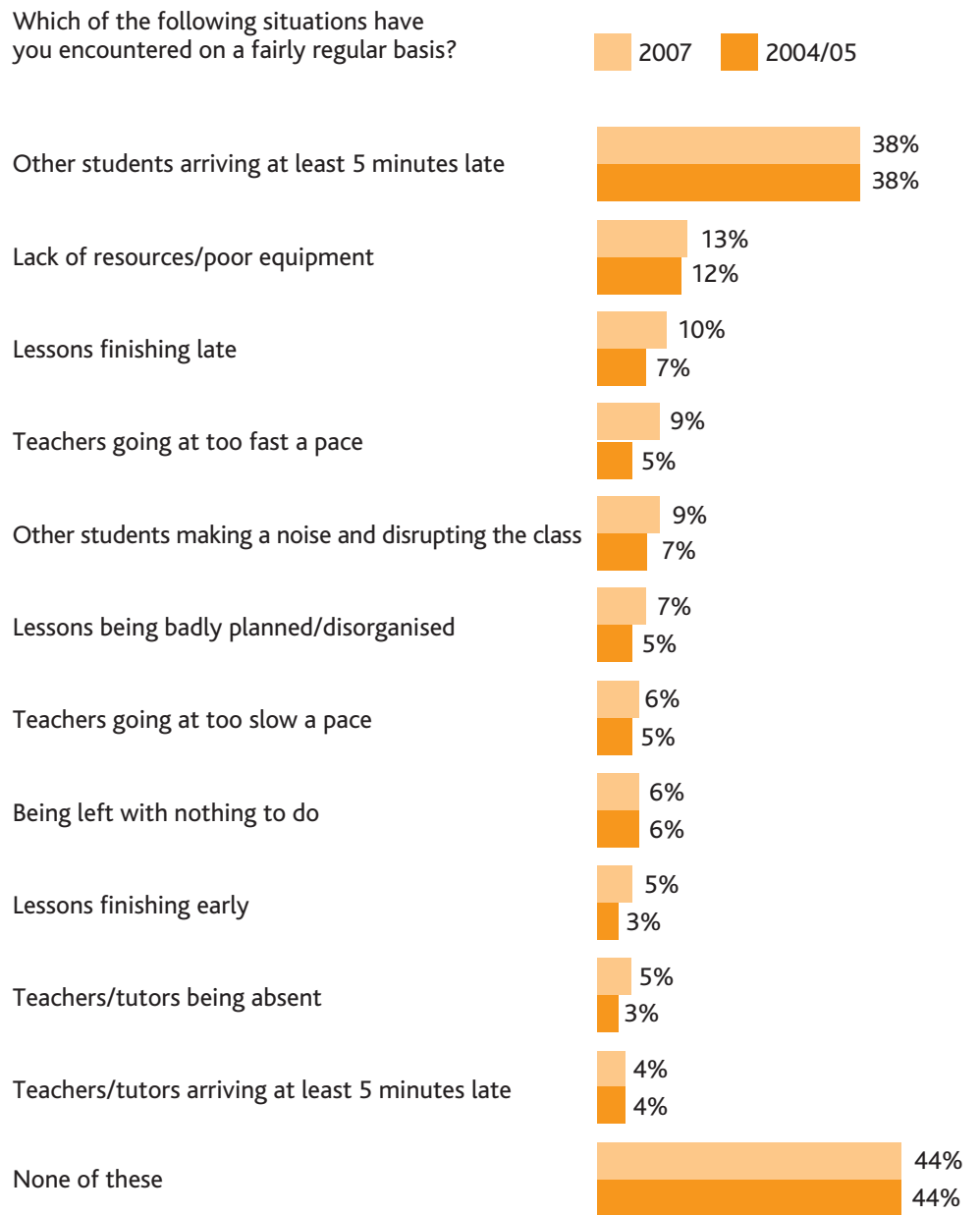
Which of the following situations have you encountered on a fairly regular basis?

2007   2004/05

	2007	2004/05
Other students arriving at least 5 minutes late	38%	38%
Lack of resources/poor equipment	13%	12%
Lessons finishing late	10%	7%
Teachers going at too fast a pace	9%	5%
Other students making a noise and disrupting the class	9%	7%
Lessons being badly planned/disorganised	7%	5%
Teachers going at too slow a pace	6%	5%
Being left with nothing to do	6%	6%
Lessons finishing early	5%	3%
Teachers/tutors being absent	5%	3%
Teachers/tutors arriving at least 5 minutes late	4%	4%
None of these	44%	44%

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14 (2007) and 3,770 PCDL learners for waves 10 and 11 (2004/05).

Fairness and respect

81 Virtually all learners agreed that they were treated fairly and with respect by college/training provider staff, with the vast majority strongly agreeing with these two statements, as Figure 12 shows.

82 Younger learners (aged 16 to 24), as well as minority ethnic learners were, once again, less positive than others about these aspects of their learning experience, as Table 8 shows. As before, those reporting learning difficulties tended to view staff less favourably in both of these respects.

Figure 12: Fairness and respect

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
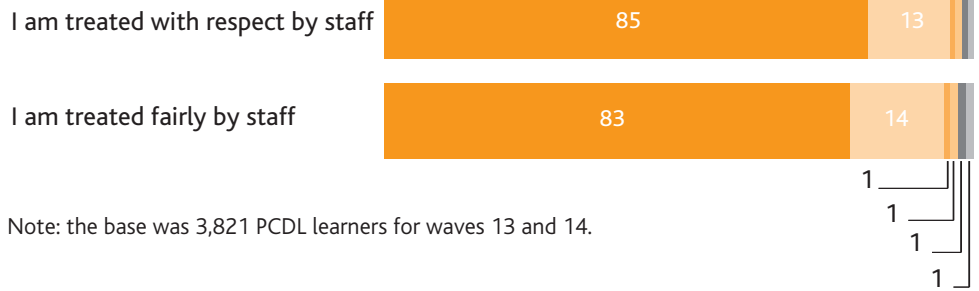
Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

Table 8: Fairness and respect, by age, ethnicity, learning difficulties and disability

		Net agree treated fairly	Net agree treated with respect
All	(3,821)	+95	+96
Age			
16–24	(212)	+86	+92
25–34	(355)	+91	+95
35–54	(1,278)	+95	+96
55+	(1,913)	+97	+98
Ethnicity			
White	(3,500)	+96	+97
Minority ethnic background	(285)	+87	+93
Learning difficulties			
No	(3,601)	+95	+97
Yes	(212)	+85	+89
Disability			
No	(3,333)	+95	+97
Yes	(481)	+91	+95

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

Consultation with learners

83 When asked about the extent to which their learning provider consulted them and responded to their needs, learners were quite mixed. The majority (70 per cent) agreed that their views had been sought on the quality of the learning programme, but more than one in five (22 per cent) disagreed. Figure 13 also shows that there was less agreement on other areas:

- three in five (58 per cent) agreed that their provider asked for their views on ways to improve the learning programme;

- half (49 per cent) agreed that they were consulted about provider facilities; and

- two in five (39 per cent) agreed that their views were sought on the college more generally (e.g. canteen, building, rooms).

84 Many groups generally found to be the least satisfied with a range of dimensions of the learning experience actually rated their provider more positively in relation to opportunities for airing their views. For example, the following groups are more likely to agree, and less likely to disagree, with most statements: learners aged 16 to 24, minority ethnic learners, and those reporting learning difficulties.

85 However, early leavers remain among the least positive learners, and are joined in their dissatisfaction with opportunities for feeding back their views by:

- learners with a prior qualification at Level 3 or above, or currently studying at this level; and

- learners studying sciences and mathematics, as well as learners on health, social care and public services courses.

Figure 13: Level of consultation

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- ■ % Strongly agree
- □ % Tend to agree
- ■ % Neither/nor
- ■ % Tend to disagree
- ■ % Strongly disagree
- ■ % Don't know

My college/provider asks for my views on the quality of the learning programme

| 46 | 24 | 4 | 13 | 9 | 5 |

My college/provider asks for my views on ways to improve the learning programme

| 35 | 24 | 5 | 19 | 12 | 6 |

My college/provider asks for my views on its facilities

| 28 | 21 | 7 | 21 | 15 | 7 |

My college/provider asks for my views on the college (e.g. canteen, building, rooms)

| 21 | 17 | 8 | 22 | 18 | 13 |

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

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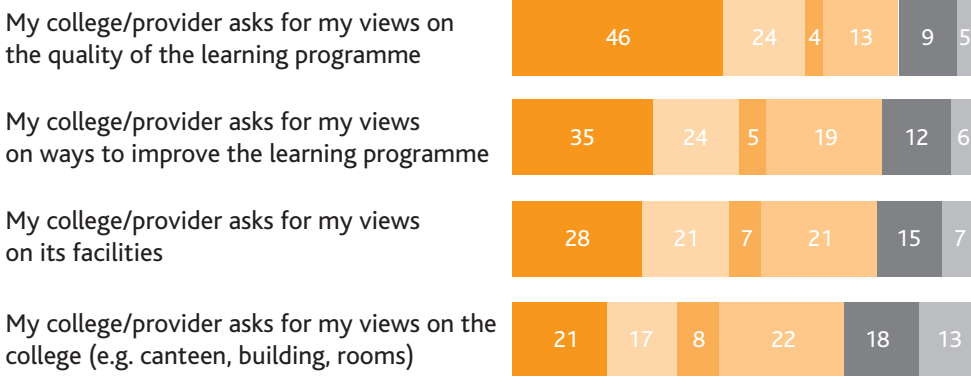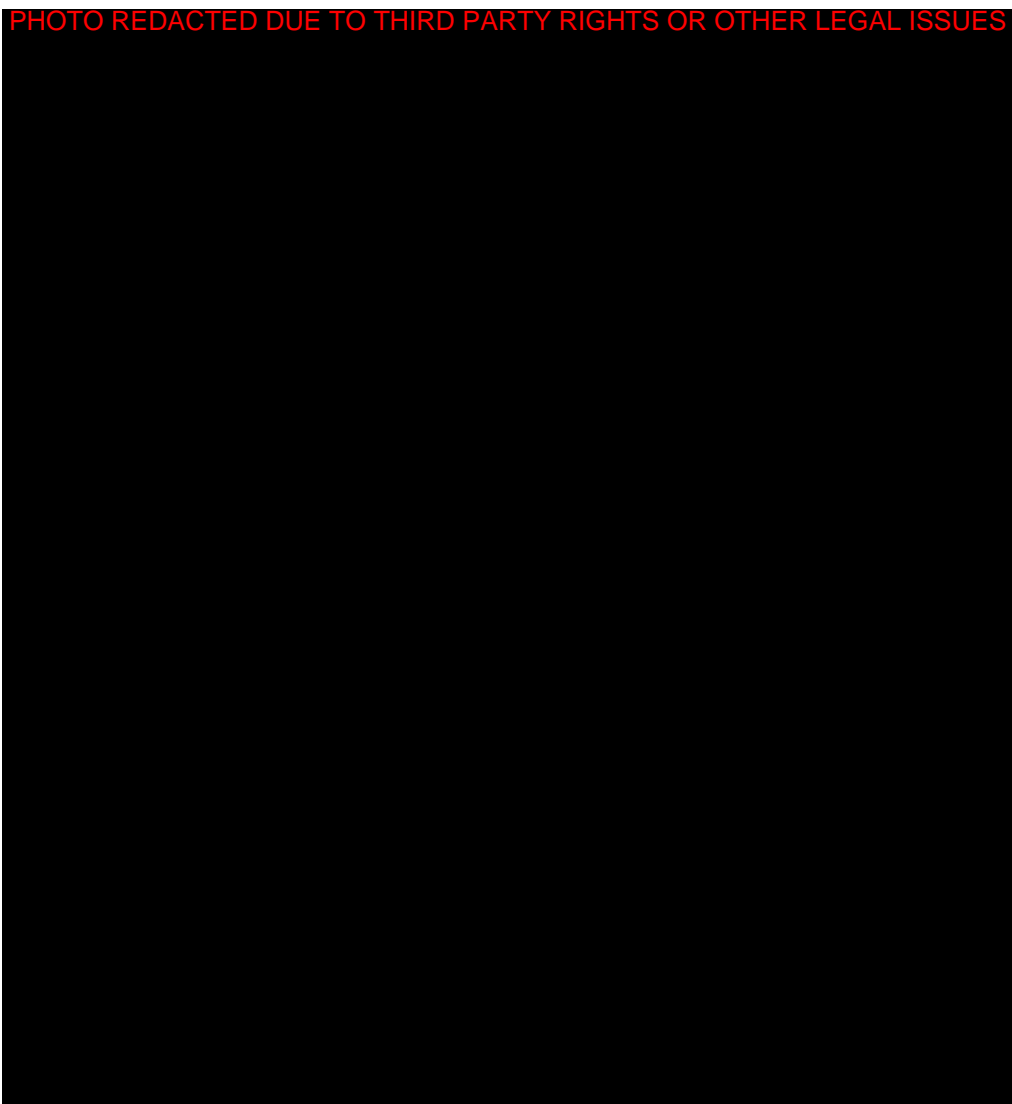
Responsiveness to learners

86 When views are sought, on the whole they are broadly perceived to be taken on board; but a significant minority of learners (15 per cent) are unsure whether or not their views are ever actually responded to. These results are summarised in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Responding to learners' views

Would you agree or disagree that your college/provider responds to your views?

- % Strongly agree
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither/nor
- % Tend to disagree
- % Strongly disagree
- % Don't know
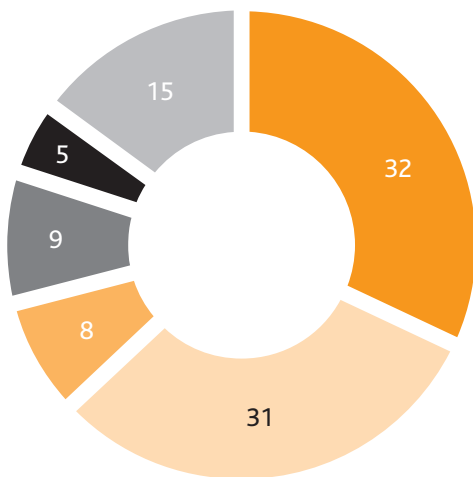
Note: the base was 3,038 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14 who were consulted.

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Learner Support (PCDL)

Health and safety information

87 Learners were asked whether or not they had been informed by their provider about a number of health and safety issues. Table 9 shows that most (84 per cent) said they had been told about emergency arrangements for fire, but smaller majorities claimed to know about the following:

- whom to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions (65 per cent remembered being told about this);

- provision of disabled access (62 per cent aware, and 70 per cent among learners with a disability);

- any dangers involved with their training and how to work safely (61 per cent); and

- emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident (60 per cent).

88 In all cases, recall of having been informed about safety issues had either increased slightly since 2004/05 or remained unchanged.

Table 9: Provision of health and safety information over time

	2007	2004/05
Base	*(3,281)*	*(1,890)*
% net agree	%	%
Emergency arrangements for fire	84	80
Whom to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions	65	64
Provision of disabled access	62	n/a
Any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely	61	61
Emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident	60	57

Note: the base was 3,281 PCDL learners for 2007 and 1,890 PCDL learners for 2004/05.

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Information provision after induction

89 Following their induction, the majority of non-accredited learners felt well informed about their course or training, as Figure 15 shows. Information provision was deemed most adequate in relation to the content of the course and what subjects would be covered (91 per cent said they were informed), followed closely by how the course would be taught (89 per cent informed).

90 Figure 15 also shows, however, that only a slim majority (56 per cent) claimed to have understood how the course or training would help them gain skills to use in a job, with a third (32 per cent) feeling unable to say one way or the other. This is not surprising when one considers the nature of personal and community development learning (which includes many general-interest courses, rather than skills-specific training).
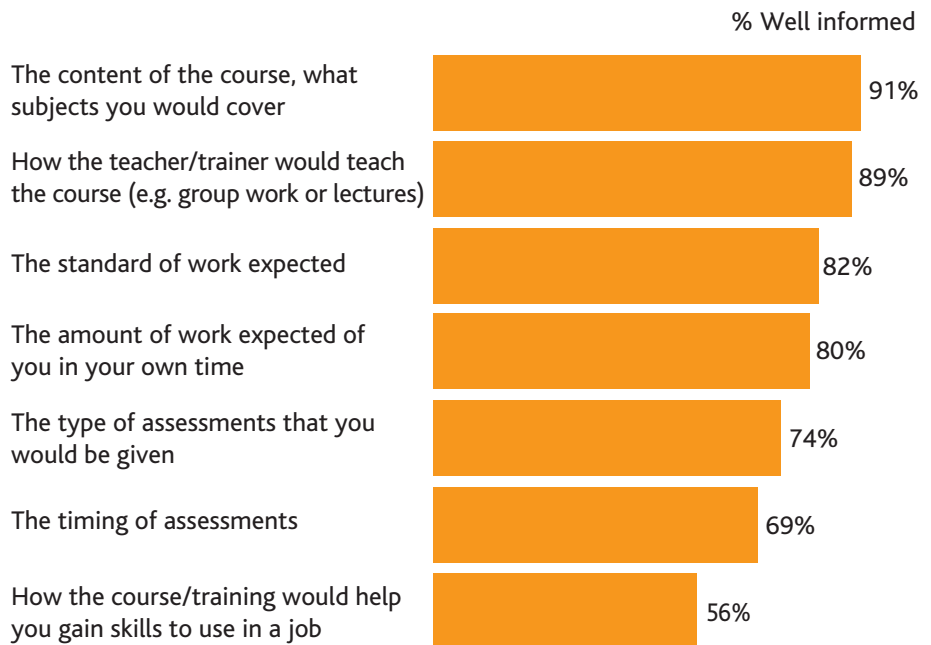
91 There were few gender differences in the extent to which learners felt informed about different aspects of their course after induction. However, on two measures – the type of assessments and their timing – female learners were more likely to say that they were unsure how well informed they felt (19 per cent and 25 per cent responded 'don't know', compared with 13 per cent and 17 per cent of men).

92 Younger learners (aged 16 to 24) tended to feel better informed about a number of different aspects of their course after their induction, with net informed scores higher than in other age groups on most aspects (except 'how the teacher/trainer would teach the course' and 'the standard of work expected'). In addition, older learners (aged 55 and over) were often less certain how much they knew, particularly in relation to the following:

- how the course/training would help them gain skills to use in a job: 44 per cent answered 'don't know', compared with just 4 per cent of learners aged 16 to 24;

- the amount of work they were expected to do in their own time: 15 per cent 'don't know', compared with 2 per cent of learners aged 16 to 24; and

Figure 15: Information provision after induction

How well informed did you feel about the following?

% Well informed

The content of the course, what subjects you would cover	91%
How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures)	89%
The standard of work expected	82%
The amount of work expected of you in your own time	80%
The type of assessments that you would be given	74%
The timing of assessments	69%
How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job	56%

Note: the base was 1,907 PCDL learners for wave 13.

- the standard of work expected: again, 15 per cent answered 'don't know' (no learners under the age of 25 answered 'don't know' in relation to this aspect).

93 This variation by age partly helps to explain the differences observed across course subject, where students of sciences and mathematics (who are also slightly younger than average) more commonly reported being well informed across a number of different aspects of their course.

94 A consistent theme also emerged among early leavers, who yet again were found to hold less positive perceptions than average: on all aspects, this group claimed to have been less well informed than the average following their course induction.

95 Results are more mixed according to ethnic group: minority groups sometimes showed themselves to be better informed than their white counterparts (for example, in relation to the type of assessments and their timing, and how the course would give them job-related skills), while on other aspects they felt less well informed (for example, in terms of the content of the course and the amount of work expected of them in their own time).

Support for learners

96 When presented with the statement 'there is support available to help me carry out my learning programme', learners again gave very positive feedback: almost nine in ten (88 per cent) agreed, including 59 per cent who strongly agreed. Just 6 per cent disagreed.

97 Despite rating their teachers and tutors higher than average on the levels of support they gave (in terms of things like study technique or time management), those learners who reported having learning difficulties were less likely than average to agree with this particular statement. Similarly conflicting findings are recorded for learners with a disability. Differences by ethnic group and stage of course are consistent with the lower levels of satisfaction expressed by these groups reported elsewhere.
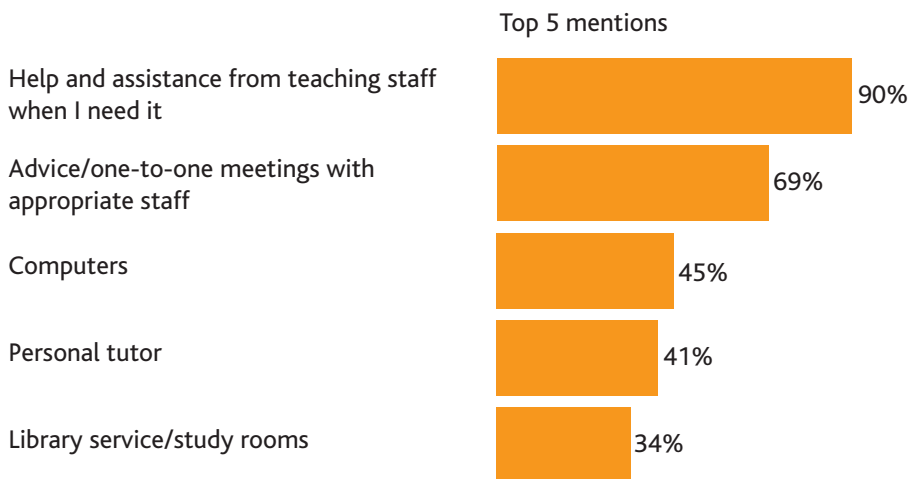
Types of support available

98 When asked about the types of support available, almost all learners (90 per cent) said that they had 'help and assistance from teachers/tutors/lecturers' when they needed it. Seven in ten (69 per cent) said they had been offered advice or a one-to-one meeting with appropriate staff; slightly fewer said that computers, a personal tutor and library services/study rooms had been made available to them during their course of study. Figure 16 provides a detailed breakdown of these findings.

Management of issues affecting learners

99 In 2007, learners were once again asked to rank how effectively a number of specific issues were managed. It is important to keep in mind that a significant minority of learners in 2007 could not say how effectively each of these issues had been managed. For example, 'communicating changes in time for sessions' was deemed 'not applicable' by a fifth (21 per cent); one in seven (14 per cent) responded that 'managing timetables so that they suit the learner as best they can' was not applicable to them; and one in ten (11 per cent) felt unable to pass judgement on 'making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available'. However, the proportion of 'not applicable' is lower this year than in 2004/05.

Figure 16: The types of support available

Which of the following types of support, if any, have been made available to you at your college/provider?

Top 5 mentions

Type of support	Percentage
Help and assistance from teaching staff when I need it	90%
Advice/one-to-one meetings with appropriate staff	69%
Computers	45%
Personal tutor	41%
Library service/study rooms	34%

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14.

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100 Figure 17 displays the proportion of learners who scored each issue at 9 or 10 out of 10, and compares the figures with that of the 2004/05 survey. The chart reveals that since the previous survey, ratings have remained stable or have fallen slightly:

- 'making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available': 78 per cent, as against 81 per cent in 2004/05; and

- 'providing support when I or other learners have problems': 69 per cent, as against 72 per cent in 2004/05.

101 Looking at the general pattern of results, this is broadly unchanged from the previous survey, with learners rating 'seeing the same teacher/tutor/assessor throughout' most highly (86 per cent gave a score of 9 or 10), followed closely by 'teachers/tutors/assessors turning up as planned' (83 per cent).

Figure 17: Management of issues affecting learners over time

How well do you think the following issues were managed?
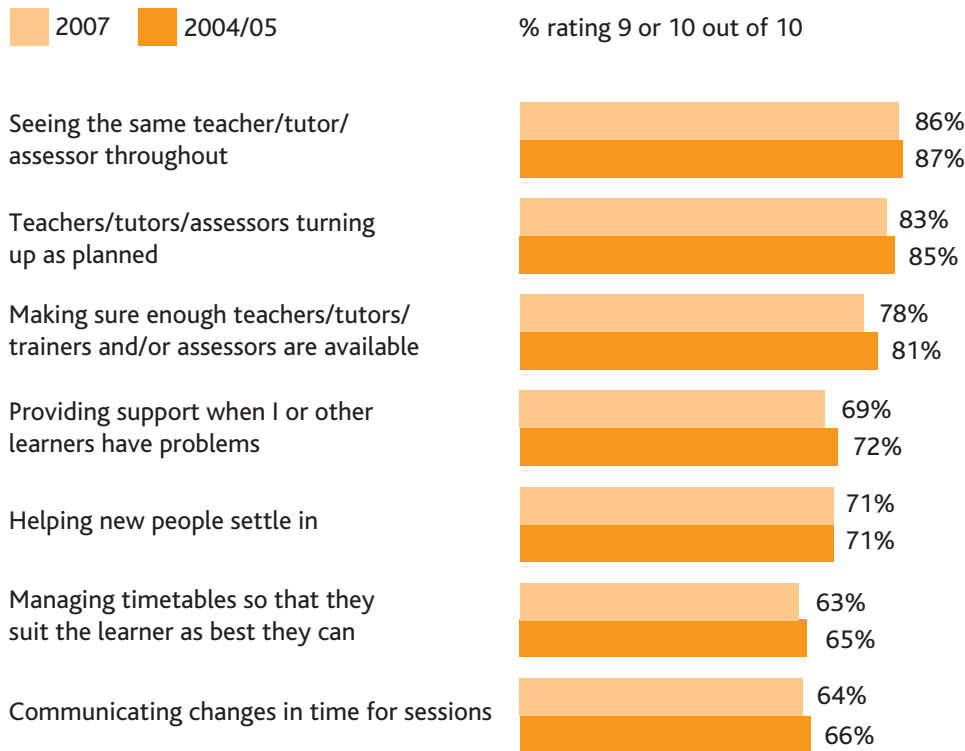
| | 2007 | | 2004/05 | % rating 9 or 10 out of 10 |

Issue	2007	2004/05
Seeing the same teacher/tutor/assessor throughout	86%	87%
Teachers/tutors/assessors turning up as planned	83%	85%
Making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available	78%	81%
Providing support when I or other learners have problems	69%	72%
Helping new people settle in	71%	71%
Managing timetables so that they suit the learner as best they can	63%	65%
Communicating changes in time for sessions	64%	66%

Note: the base was 1,907 PCDL learners for wave 13 (2007) and 1,890 PCDL learners for wave 10 (2004/05).
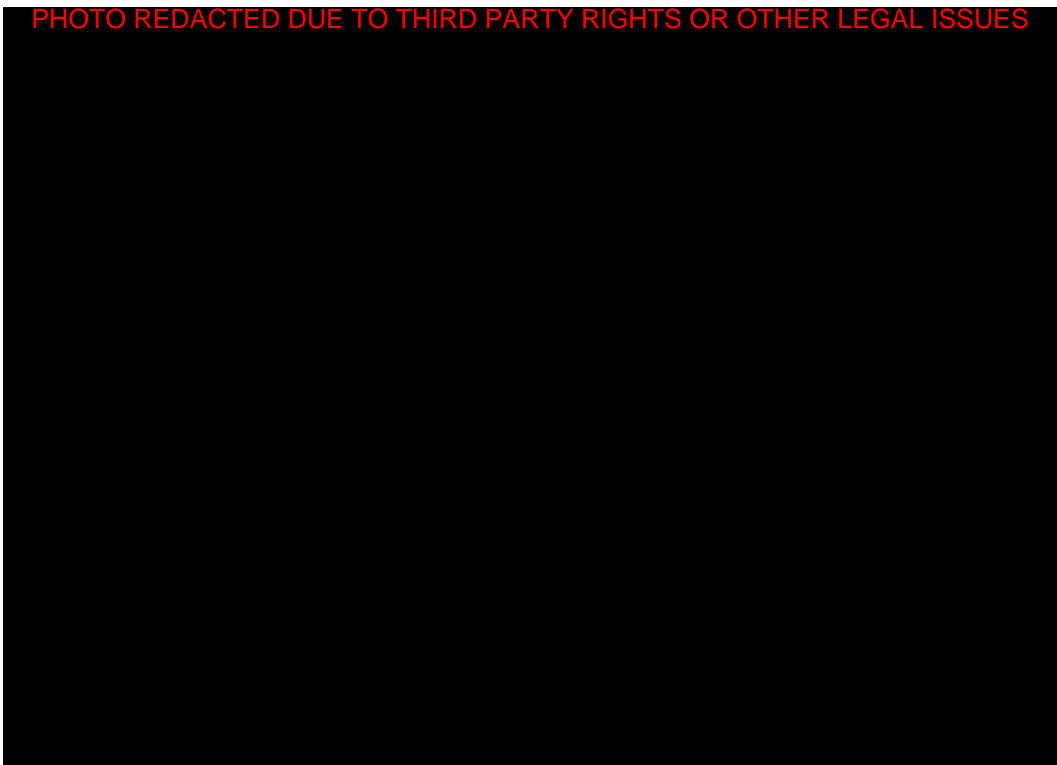
Problems encountered during the course

102 When presented with a list of problems that they may have faced since starting their course, the majority of learners (59 per cent) said they had experienced none (Figure 18). This is virtually unchanged since 2004/05, when 60 per cent of non-accredited learners answered this question in the same way. The numbers reporting various problems were again broadly similar to the previous survey, the most commonly reported being:

- 'maintaining personal motivation': mentioned by 16 per cent (12 per cent in 2004/05);

- 'managing to fit course commitments into other commitments at home': mentioned by 15 per cent (17 per cent in 2004/05); and

- 'managing to keep up with the standard of work required': mentioned by 14 per cent (11 per cent in 2004/05).

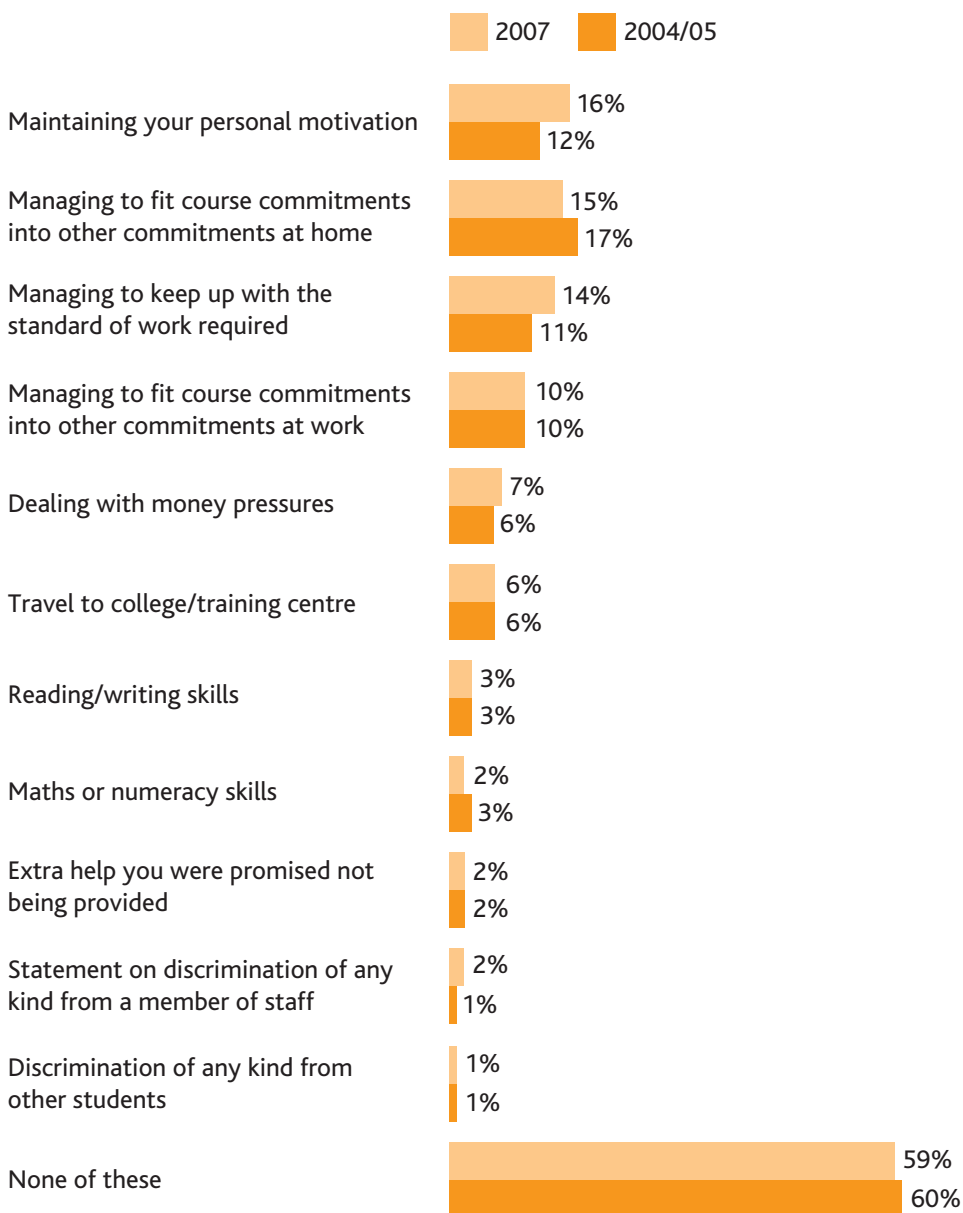**Figure 18: Problems encountered during the course over time**

Have you had problems with any of the following?

2007   2004/05

Maintaining your personal motivation — 16% / 12%

Managing to fit course commitments into other commitments at home — 15% / 17%

Managing to keep up with the standard of work required — 14% / 11%

Managing to fit course commitments into other commitments at work — 10% / 10%

Dealing with money pressures — 7% / 6%

Travel to college/training centre — 6% / 6%

Reading/writing skills — 3% / 3%

Maths or numeracy skills — 2% / 3%

Extra help you were promised not being provided — 2% / 2%

Statement on discrimination of any kind from a member of staff — 2% / 1%

Discrimination of any kind from other students — 1% / 1%

None of these — 59% / 60%

Note: the base was 1,907 PCDL learners for wave 13 (2007) and 1,890 PCDL learners for wave 10 (2004/05).

Help and advice

103 Of those learners who did report problems, a fifth (21 per cent) in 2007 said they had sought advice or help to deal with them – a very similar proportion to 2004/05, when 18 per cent had done likewise. And, as Figure 19 shows, mostly this advice was found to be useful: almost half (47 per cent) deemed it to be very useful. However, more than a quarter felt that the help they received had not been useful (26 per cent), with 13 per cent regarding it as not at all useful, although these figures have fallen slightly since the 2004/05 survey (29 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively).

104 Younger learners, those with learning difficulties and ethnic minority learners were all more likely than others both to have experienced difficulties and to have sought help in dealing with them.
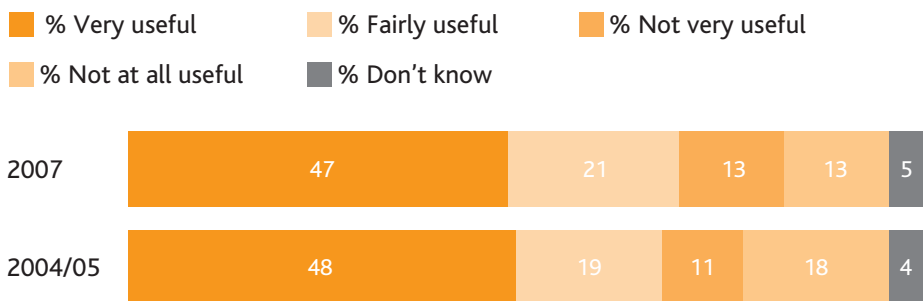
Learners' complaints

105 Only a relatively small number of learners (10 per cent) claimed to have made a complaint about their course or training to their college or learning provider. Self-reported complaints remain at the same low levels as in 2004/05, when 92 per cent said they had not complained (just 8 per cent said they had). It should be noted that, as in previous years, 'complaint' is defined by the learner and does not mean that the learner sought or initiated a formal complaints process.

106 Figure 20 reveals that the reasons behind these complaints were wide ranging. The top mentions were: poor college facilities, poor communication, poor teaching and inadequate classrooms.

Figure 19: The usefulness of help received over time

How useful was any advice and/or help you received?

- % Very useful
- % Fairly useful
- % Not very useful
- % Not at all useful
- % Don't know

Note: the base was 163 PCDL learners for wave 13 who sought advice or help (2007) and 134 PCDL learners for wave 10 who sought advice or help (2004/05).

Figure 20: Reasons for complaint

What was your complaint about?

Top 9 mentions

Poor college facilities/canteen/heating, etc.	15%
Didn't know what was going on/lack of communication	15%
Poor teaching/incompetence/ignorance of teacher	13%
The classroom is inadequate/cramped/cold/noisy/keeps changing	13%
Lack of equipment/inadequate/poor materials/resources	12%
The cost of the course/grant	11%
The course was cancelled/reduced/not possible to complete course	6%
Too much paperwork/admin/bureaucracy	3%
Lack of/high turnover of staff/tutors	3%

Note: the base was 197 PCDL learners for wave 13 who made a complaint.

Figure 21: Outcome of a complaint over time

Which of these best describes the outcome to your complaint?

- % There was an outcome that satisfied me
- % There was an outcome but it did not satisfy me
- % There was no outcome to the complaint at all
- % Don't know
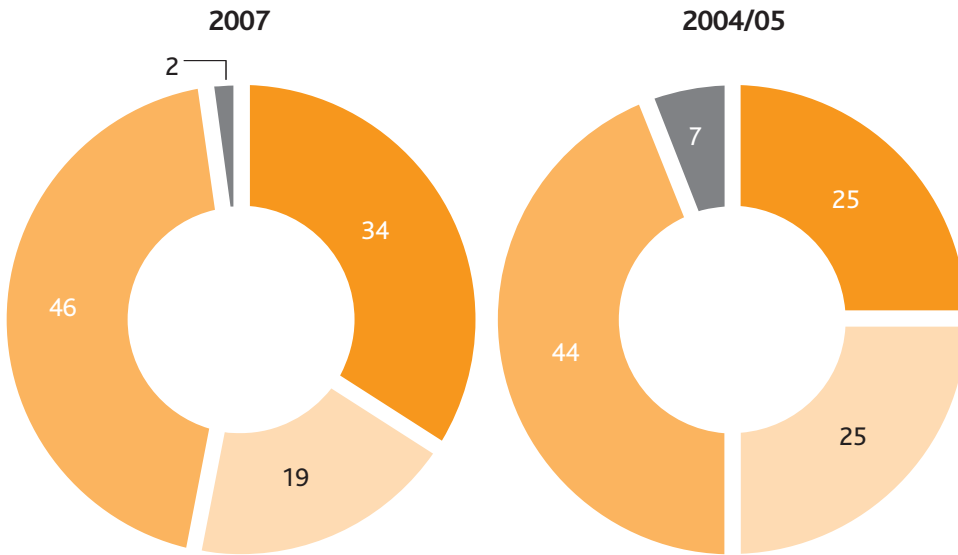
2007

2004/05

Note: the base was 197 PCDL learners for wave 13 who made a complaint (2007) and 149 PCDL learners for wave 10 who made a complaint (2004/05).

107 Of those who said they had made a complaint, just under half (46 per cent) claimed that there had been no outcome at all, and a fifth (19 per cent) were unhappy with the outcome. Just a third (34 per cent) were satisfied with the outcome. However, this represents an improvement on 2004/05, when just 25 per cent reported a satisfactory outcome (see Figure 21).
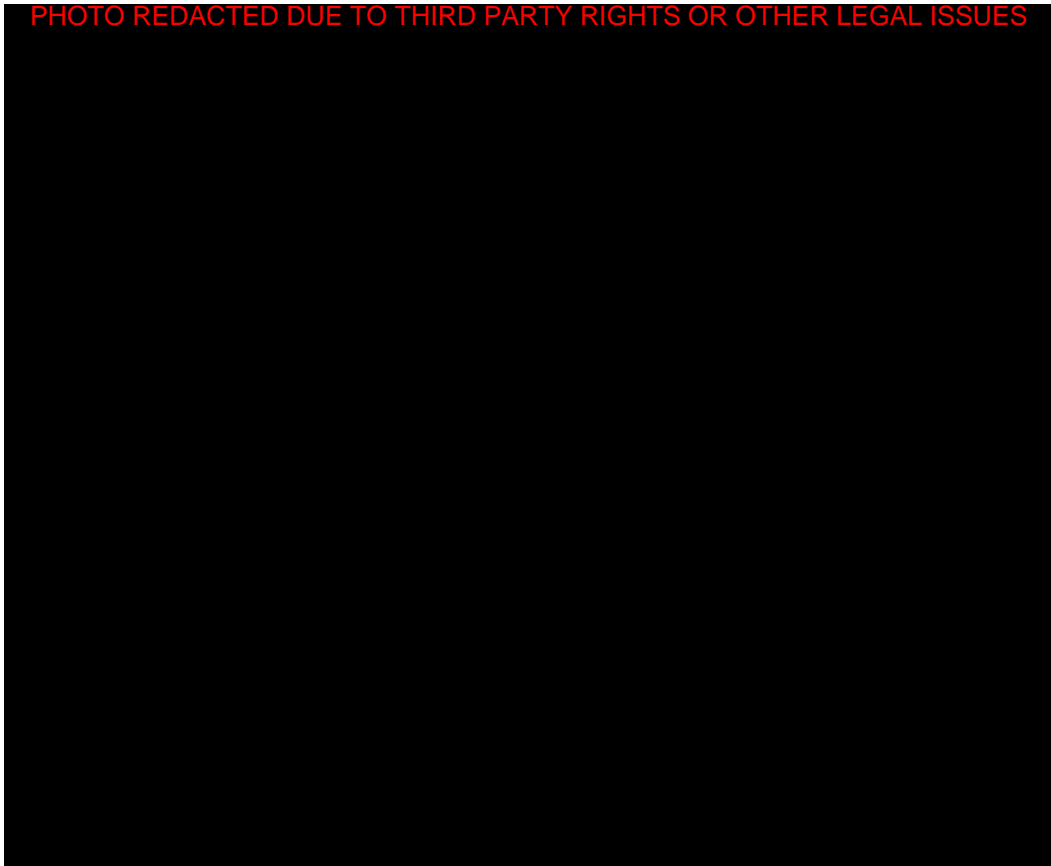
Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning (PCDL)

Feelings about education on leaving school

108 Focusing first on learners' attitudes to education on leaving school, six in ten (61 per cent) considered themselves to have had generally positive feelings, as Figure 22 shows. A fifth (18 per cent) claimed not to have been bothered either way, and the same proportion said they had had generally negative feelings about education at the time. The chart also shows that, in this respect, the survey findings were largely unchanged from 2004/05.

109 Examining the data further, it is evident that women were the more positively predisposed towards education at the time they left school (62 per cent positive, compared with 56 per cent of men), as too were minority ethnic learners (75 per cent positive, as against 60 per cent of white learners) – see Table 10 for details.

Figure 22: Feelings about education on leaving school over time
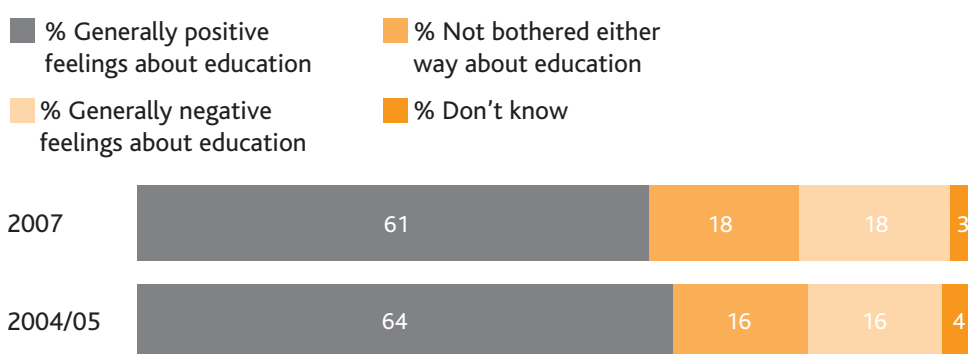
Note: the base was 1,914 PCDL learners for wave 14 (2007) and 1,880 PCDL learners for wave 11 (2004/05).

Table 10: Feelings about education on leaving school, by gender and ethnicity

		Gender		Ethnicity	
		Male	Female	White	Minority ethnic
Base	*(1,914)*	*(445)*	*(1,469)*	*(1,751)*	*(146)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Generally positive feelings about education	61	56	62	60	75
Generally negative feelings about education	18	19	18	19	12
Not bothered either way about education	18	21	18	19	12
Don't know	3	4	2	3	2

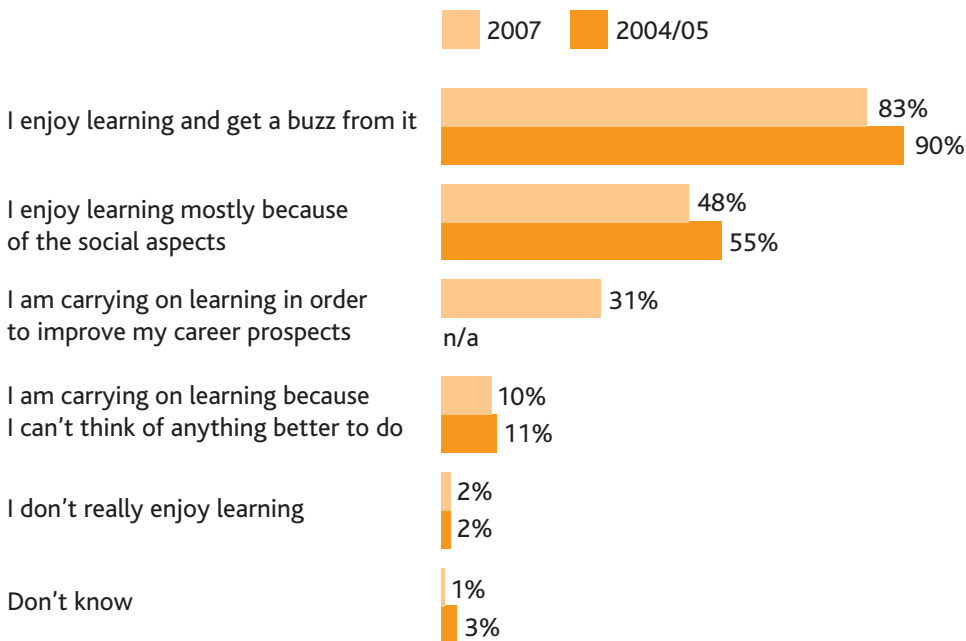Note: the base was 1,914 PCDL learners for wave 14.

110 Turning to other differences, in general learners with a disability or learning difficulties had less positive feelings about education at this time than those without a disability or learning difficulties (33 per cent of learners with learning difficulties and 49 per cent of learners with disabilities said they had had positive feelings about education, as opposed to 61 per cent overall).

Current feelings about learning

111 Even those learners who claimed to have been either not bothered or negative about education when they left school are mostly enthusiastic about their learning now. For example, Figure 23 shows that four in five of all learners (83 per cent) said that they got a buzz out of learning, and half (48 per cent) said they enjoyed learning because of the social aspects; the comparable figures for those who were not bothered/negative about education when they left school were very similar, at 79 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively.

112 Figure 23 also provides a comparison with the 2004/05 survey findings, revealing similarly high levels of enthusiasm for current learning (although direct comparisons are distorted by the inclusion of an additional response option in 2007: 'I am carrying on learning in order to improve my career prospects').

Figure 23: Current attitudes towards learning over time

2007   2004/05

I enjoy learning and get a buzz from it — 83% / 90%

I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects — 48% / 55%

I am carrying on learning in order to improve my career prospects — 31% / n/a

I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do — 10% / 11%

I don't really enjoy learning — 2% / 2%

Don't know — 1% / 3%

Note: the base was 1,914 PCDL learners for wave 14 (2007) and 1,800 PCDL learners for wave 11 (2004/05).

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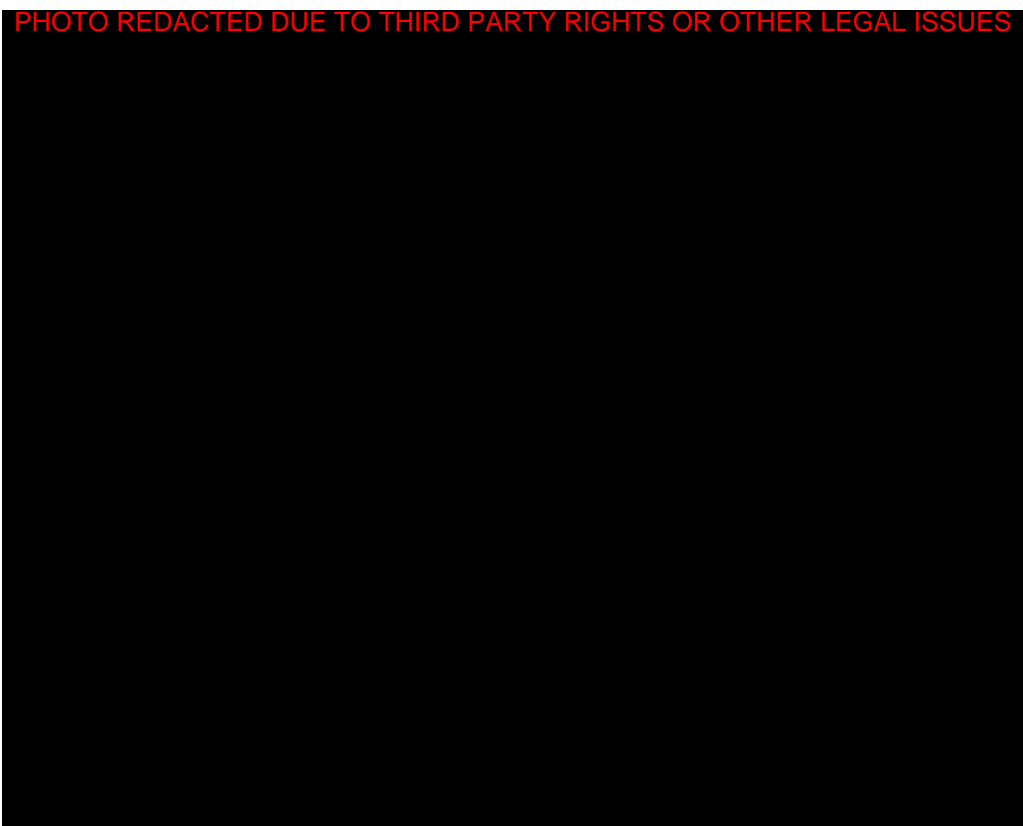
113 Figure 24 echoes these generally positive current attitudes towards learning by charting net agree scores for a number of different statements about personal responsibility and self-discipline. Most learners agree with the two positive statements:

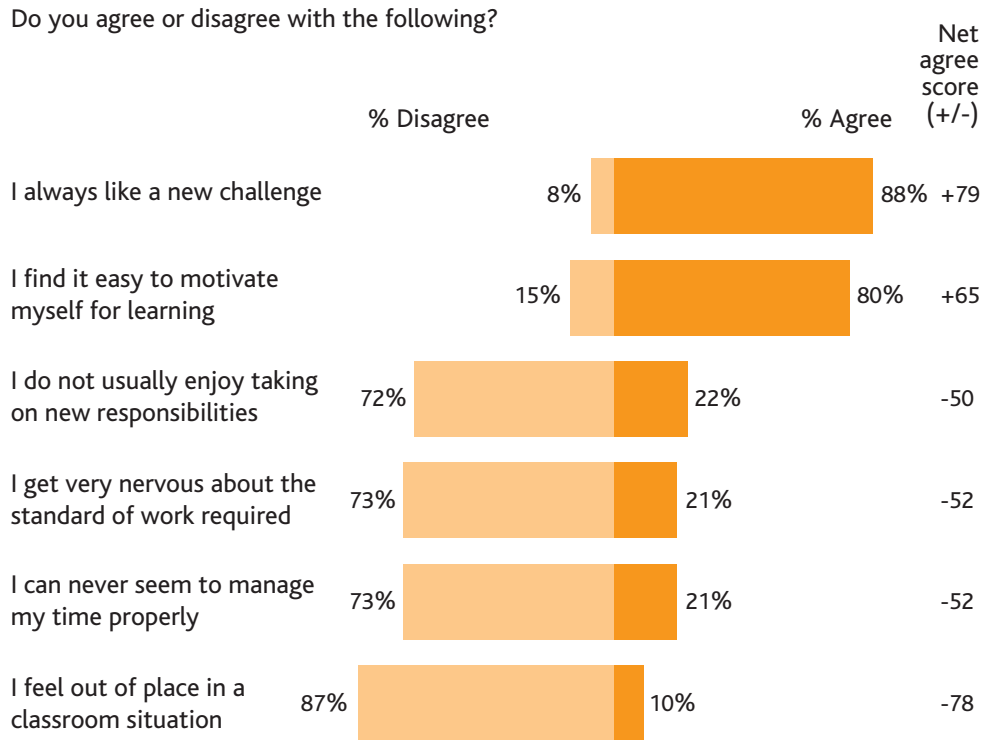- 88 per cent agreed that they always like a new challenge (54 per cent strongly agreed); and

- 80 per cent agreed that they find it easy to motivate themselves to learn (44 per cent strongly agreed).

114 Conversely, the majority disagreed with all the negative statements about learning set out in Figure 24, reflecting again the generally positive attitudes from these learners.

115 Older learners tended to reveal different motivations for learning than did younger learners. For example, four in five learners aged 25 and over (85 per cent) said they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it, compared with three in five 16- to 24-year-olds (58 per cent). Younger learners more commonly said that they were continuing with their learning in order to improve their career prospects (86 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds, compared with just 29 per cent of learners aged 25 and over).

116 Learners aged 25 and over were also more likely to agree that they found it easy to motivate themselves for learning (66 per cent net agree) than were their younger counterparts (36 net agree among 16- to 24-year-olds). Conversely, younger learners were less likely to feel out of place in a classroom situation (net agree score of -55 for this statement, compared with -79 among older learners) or to get very nervous about the standard of work required (-23 and -53 net agree, respectively).

Figure 24: Current attitudes towards learning

Do you agree or disagree with the following?

Statement	% Disagree	% Agree	Net agree score (+/-)
I always like a new challenge	8%	88%	+79
I find it easy to motivate myself for learning	15%	80%	+65
I do not usually enjoy taking on new responsibilities	72%	22%	-50
I get very nervous about the standard of work required	73%	21%	-52
I can never seem to manage my time properly	73%	21%	-52
I feel out of place in a classroom situation	87%	10%	-78

Note: the base was 1,914 PCDL learners for wave 14.

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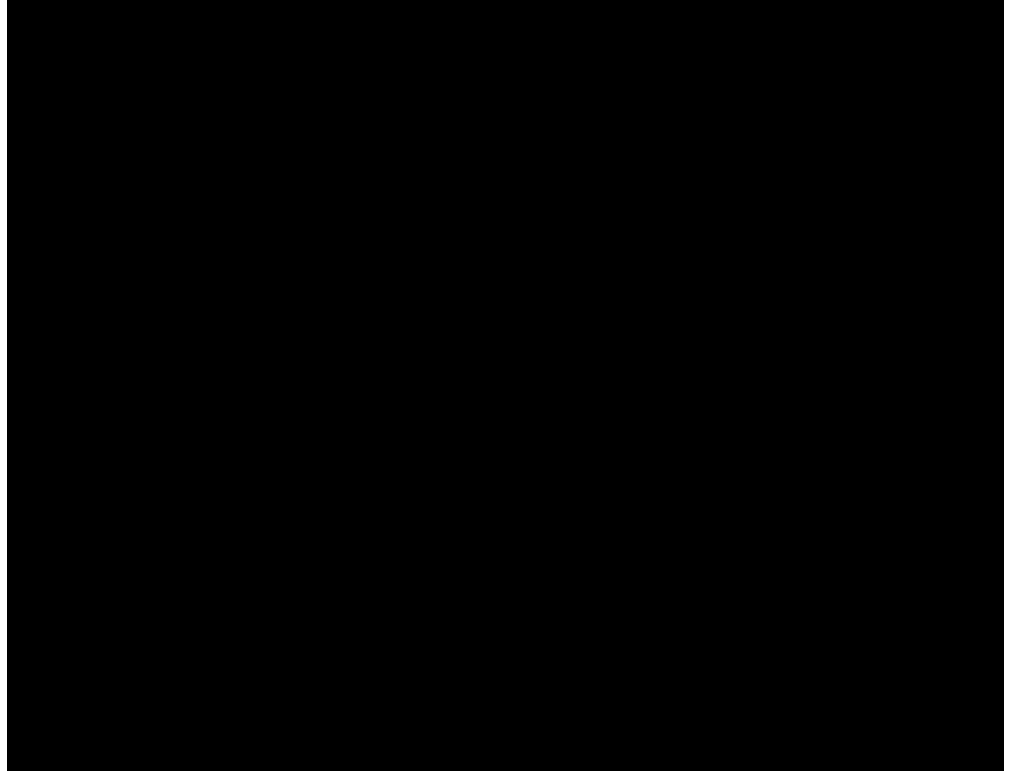
117 In contrast to the findings on attitudes to education on leaving school, it appears that minority ethnic learners currently feel less positive than their white counterparts.

- White learners were more likely to say that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it (84 per cent, compared with 75 per cent of minority ethnic learners), while minority ethnic learners were more than twice as likely to claim to be carrying on learning in order to improve their career (64 per cent, as against 29 per cent of white learners); Asian learners most commonly said they simply couldn't think of anything better to do (26 per cent, compared with 10 per cent overall, but note the small sample size of 88 people).

- Minority ethnic learners were more likely to say that they felt out of place in a classroom situation and that they got very nervous about the standard of work required (-54 and -27 net agree, respectively, compared with -80 and -54 among white learners).

118 Other differences were more consistent with the results reported on feelings about education on leaving school. Once again, those reporting a disability or learning difficulties generally held less positive attitudes. In particular:

- they were less likely to say that they were carrying on learning to improve their career prospects, and more likely to say that they were carrying on learning because they could not think of anything better to do; and

- both groups were also more likely than others to say that they felt out of place in a classroom situation, that they got very nervous about the standard of work required, and that they had difficulties managing their time properly.

119 Differences were also found by course subject. For example, learners studying sciences and mathematics and learners on health, social care and public services courses focused more on learning as a way of improving their career prospects (59 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively). Learners on hospitality, sports, leisure and travel courses, on the other hand, were more likely than others to say that they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects (61 per cent).

The benefits of participation in learning

120 Learners' perceptions of the benefits of their course were measured by asking them whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements. Based on responses to these statements, perceived benefits from learning can be grouped into four categories, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Perceptions of the benefits of participation in learning

Enthusiasm and motivation	I have a greater enthusiasm for the subject
	I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started
	I am more creative and prepared to try new things
Improved learning skills	I feel more confident in my ability to learn
	I am better at managing my time and responsibilities
	I am better at learning on my own now
Job and career-related benefits	It has given me skills I can use in a job
	Taking part in this course will help me move forward in my career
Social or personal benefits	I feel more confident socially
	It enables me to cope better with daily life
	It has benefited my health and sense of well-being
	I now take a more active part in the community

121 Figure 25 reveals that the greatest benefit appears to have been felt in relation to the enthusiasm and motivation that learners now had for learning, for example:

- nine in ten (90 per cent) claimed to have greater enthusiasm for the subject as a result; and

- eight in ten (79 per cent) said they were now more willing to try new things.

122 Improved learning skills were also commonly reported: for example, more than three-quarters of learners (77 per cent) said they felt more confident in their ability to learn.

123 Social or personal benefits of learning (such as feeling more confident socially, plus health benefits) were also cited by a majority of learners. In particular:
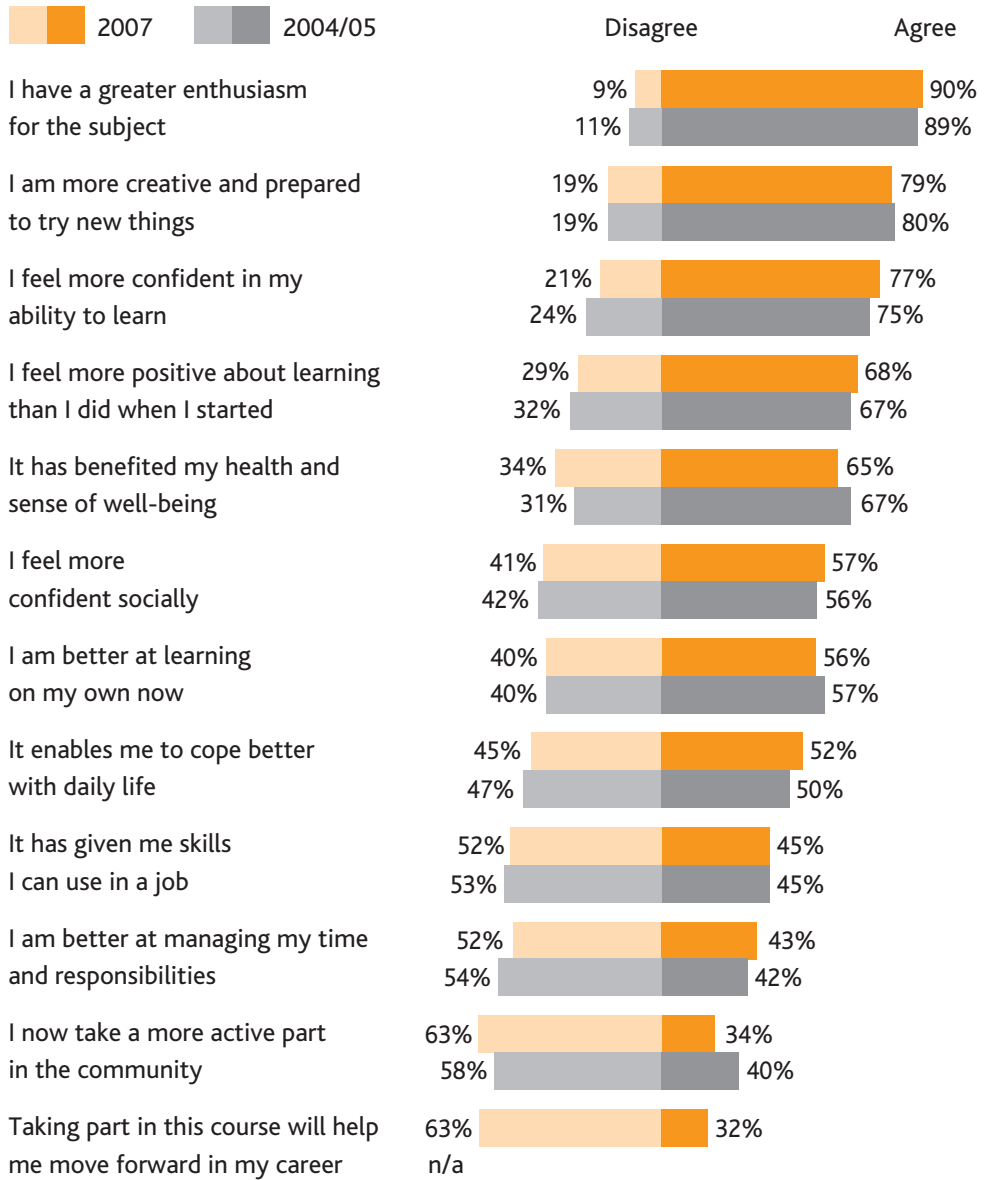
- two-thirds (65 per cent) agreed that their learning experience had benefited their health and sense of well-being; and

- more than half (57 per cent) said they felt more confident socially as a result.

124 While job and career-related benefits were less commonly mentioned, almost half (45 per cent) did agree that their course had equipped them with skills that would be useful in a job.

125 The figure also shows that these findings are very similar to the results of the 2004/05 survey.

Figure 25: The benefits of participation over time

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the effect the course has had on you?

	2007		2004/05	Disagree	Agree

Statement	2007 Disagree	2007 Agree	2004/05 Disagree	2004/05 Agree
I have a greater enthusiasm for the subject	9%	90%	11%	89%
I am more creative and prepared to try new things	19%	79%	19%	80%
I feel more confident in my ability to learn	21%	77%	24%	75%
I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started	29%	68%	32%	67%
It has benefited my health and sense of well-being	34%	65%	31%	67%
I feel more confident socially	41%	57%	42%	56%
I am better at learning on my own now	40%	56%	40%	57%
It enables me to cope better with daily life	45%	52%	47%	50%
It has given me skills I can use in a job	52%	45%	53%	45%
I am better at managing my time and responsibilities	52%	43%	54%	42%
I now take a more active part in the community	63%	34%	58%	40%
Taking part in this course will help me move forward in my career	63%	32%	n/a	

Base: 1,914 PCDL learners for wave 14 (2007) and 1,778 PCDL learners for wave 11 (2004/05).

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126 On the whole, younger learners (aged 16 to 24) tended to perceive greater benefits than did older learners (aged 55 and over). However, 'greater enthusiasm for the subject' is an impact more commonly felt among older learners in general, which is probably at least in part due to the nature of the learning they are undertaking (more general interest and less focused on academic qualifications or work). The widest gaps between younger and older learners are in relation to job and career-related benefits:

- 86 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds agreed that their course had given them skills they could use in a job – triple the proportion of older learners (29 per cent); and

- almost nine in ten younger learners (88 per cent), compared with just three in ten older learners (13 per cent), believed their course would help them in their future career.

127 Minority ethnic learners, who tend to be slightly younger, consistently reported greater benefits from learning than did white learners. In particular, improved career prospects (71 per cent agree among minority ethnic learners, compared with 29 per cent among white learners), improved time management (75 per cent, as against 41 per cent) and taking a more active role in the community (35 per cent, as against 32 per cent), were all identified as benefits by a high proportion of minority ethnic learners. This is very encouraging in light of the fact that this group tended to report less positive views about education when they left school, suggesting that subsequent learning has helped to turn around these perceptions.

128 Those with learning difficulties and, to a lesser extent, learners with a disability also tended to be more positive than average about the impact of their course. This is particularly true of social and personal benefits that are not related to specific learning or job-related outcomes. Again, this provides some evidence that adult learning can generate positive outcomes even for those who might have had a negative experience at school.

129 Another group with less positive perceptions of their earlier education experience, learners with no prior qualifications, also tended to perceive greater benefits accruing from their current/most recent course than did others. This was particularly true in relation to motivational benefits, learning skills and social/personal outcomes:

- four-fifths (82 per cent) agreed that they felt more positive about learning than they had when they started (compared with 68 per cent overall);

- half (51 per cent) said they were better at managing their time and responsibilities (43 per cent overall);

- almost two-thirds (63 per cent) believed they were now better at learning on their own (56 per cent overall); and

- almost two-thirds (64 per cent) felt that it had enabled them to cope better with daily life (52 per cent overall).

130 And, while early leavers reported fewer benefits from their learning experience than the overall sample, a majority did agree that it had had an impact in some ways:

- three-quarters (74 per cent) agreed that they now had a greater enthusiasm for the subject;

- more than two-thirds (69 per cent) said they were more creative and prepared to try new things;

- two-thirds (67 per cent) felt more confident in their ability to learn;

- just over half (53 per cent) said they felt more positive about learning than they had when they started; the same proportion agreed they were better at learning on their own as a result; and

- half (52 per cent) said that their learning experience had benefited their health and sense of well-being.

131 Finally, there was some variation by subject and type of course. For example, students of sciences and mathematics, as well as those on NVQ courses, tended to be the most positive about the outcome of their learning experience.
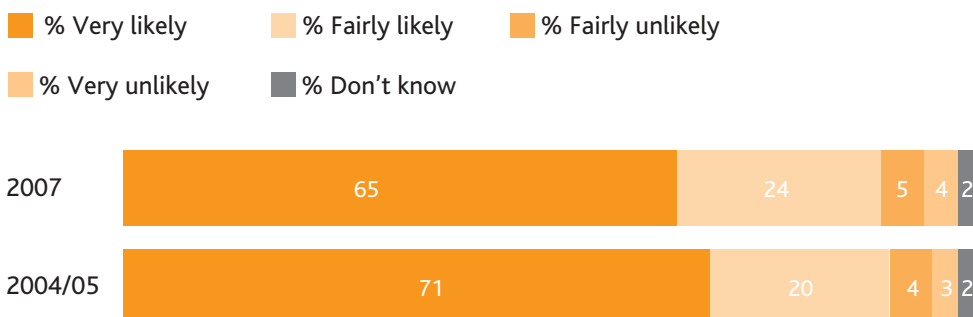
Likelihood of undertaking further learning

132 Echoing the generally positive experiences reported earlier, a large majority (89 per cent) of learners said that they would be likely to undertake further learning in the next three years. In fact, almost two-thirds (65 per cent) said that they would be very likely to do so, and only a small minority (9 per cent) said this was unlikely. Figure 26 shows that these findings are similar to the 2004/05 survey, when again nine in ten learners (91 per cent) said they would be likely to return to learning in the near future.

Figure 26: Likelihood of undertaking further learning over time

How likely are you to undertake further learning in the future (say, in the next three years)?

- % Very likely
- % Fairly likely
- % Fairly unlikely
- % Very unlikely
- % Don't know

Year	Very likely	Fairly likely	Fairly unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know
2007	65	24	5	4	2
2004/05	71	20	4	3	2

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners for waves 13 and 14 (2007) and 3,770 PCDL learners for waves 10 and 11 (2004/05).

**Table 12: Likelihood of undertaking further learning, by gender and age**

	All	Male	Female	16–24	25–34	35–54	55+
		Gender		Age			
Base	*(3,821)*	*(879)*	*(2,942)*	*(212)*	*(355)*	*(1,278)*	*(1,913)*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	65	61	66	61	66	67	64
Fairly likely	24	26	23	25	27	25	22
Fairly unlikely	5	8	5	7	3	4	7
Very unlikely	4	3	4	5	3	2	5
Don't know	2	2	2	3	1	1	2

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

133 As in 2004/05, more female learners than male claimed that they would be very likely to undertake further learning in the near future (Table 12).

134 Despite reporting fewer benefits from their current/recent learning experience than younger learners, those aged 55 and over were equally likely to say that they would return to learning in the future (Table 12). The middle age groups (25 to 34 and 35 to 54) were more likely than average to take up further learning.
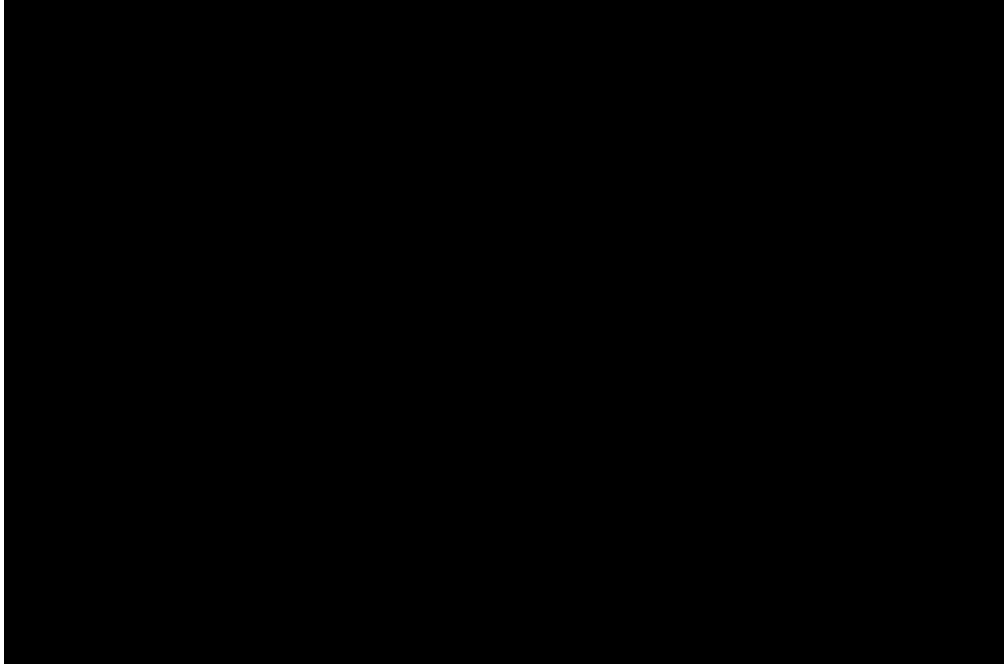
135 Other groups that held less positive attitudes towards learning were more likely to assert that they would not undertake further learning. These included learners with no prior qualifications and those reporting learning difficulties (the latter are also more likely to be among the early leavers). Table 13 summarises these differences in future learning aspirations.

Table 13: Likelihood of undertaking further learning, by prior attainment level and learning difficulties

	All	Prior attainment level			Learning difficulties	
		None	Level 2 or below	Level 3 or above	No	Yes
Base	*(3,821)*	*(536)*	*(1,038)*	*(1,598)*	*(3,601)*	*(212)*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	65	56	63	70	65	58
Fairly likely	24	24	26	23	23	27
Fairly unlikely	5	9	6	4	5	6
Very unlikely	4	7	4	3	4	5
Don't know	2	4	2	1	2	4

Note: the base was 3,821 PCDL learners.

136 Finally, minority ethnic learners were more likely to be planning to return to learning than was the case generally: two-thirds (67 per cent) claimed that it was very likely and a quarter (24 per cent) that it was fairly likely. Just 5 per cent of minority ethnic learners (compared with 9 per cent overall) said it was unlikely that they would undertake further learning in the future.

Overall Satisfaction (ALPs)

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Satisfaction with the learning experience

137 Learners on FE courses delivered by adult learning providers expressed high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience. More than nine in ten (92 per cent) were satisfied, including 31 per cent who were extremely satisfied. Just 5 per cent were dissatisfied with their learning experience. Details are shown in Figure 27.
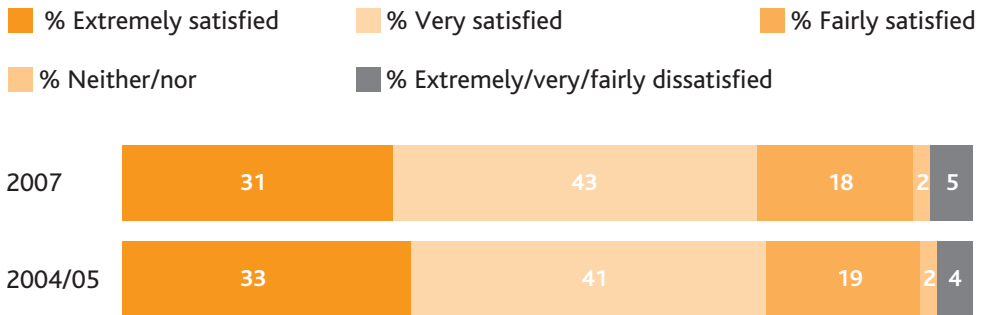
138 There has been no change in satisfaction overall since 2004/05, and learners expressed similarly high levels of satisfaction in both surveys.

What differentiates learners' views?

139 CHAID analysis was carried out in order to identify the characteristics that were associated most strongly with overall satisfaction (see paragraphs 22 to 24). The findings are shown in Figure 28, in which satisfaction is highest towards the left of the chart and lowest towards the right.

Figure 27: Satisfaction with the learning experience over time

How satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/training provider?

■ % Extremely satisfied   ■ % Very satisfied   ■ % Fairly satisfied
■ % Neither/nor   ■ % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied

| Year	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Dissatisfied
2007	31	43	18	2	5
2004/05	33	41	19	2	4

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 1,731 ALP learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

140 The chart shows that the respondent's status on the course is the main factor that affects satisfaction, in particular whether the learner left the course early or failed the course: such learners were considerably less satisfied than those who had completed the course or were still studying at the time of the survey (net satisfaction was +59 for early leavers, compared with +83 for course completers and +91 for those still studying).

141 The other prominent characteristics highlighted by this analysis are gender and the level of qualification being pursued. Across the sample as a whole, net satisfaction was higher for men than for women (+95, compared with +84), while learners studying at Level 2 were the least satisfied (net satisfaction was +79, compared with +92 for those studying at Entry Level or Level 1, and +89 for those studying at Level 3 or above).

142 The chart also shows differences by ethnicity and age, although these are at the bottom of the chart, indicating that they exert weaker influences on overall satisfaction. The sample of learners studying at adult learning providers contains only small numbers of respondents aged below 25 or from non-white ethnic groups, and so it is difficult to analyse findings by age and ethnicity; however, variations have been highlighted in the report wherever possible.

Figure 28: CHAID analysis of learner satisfaction among ALP learners
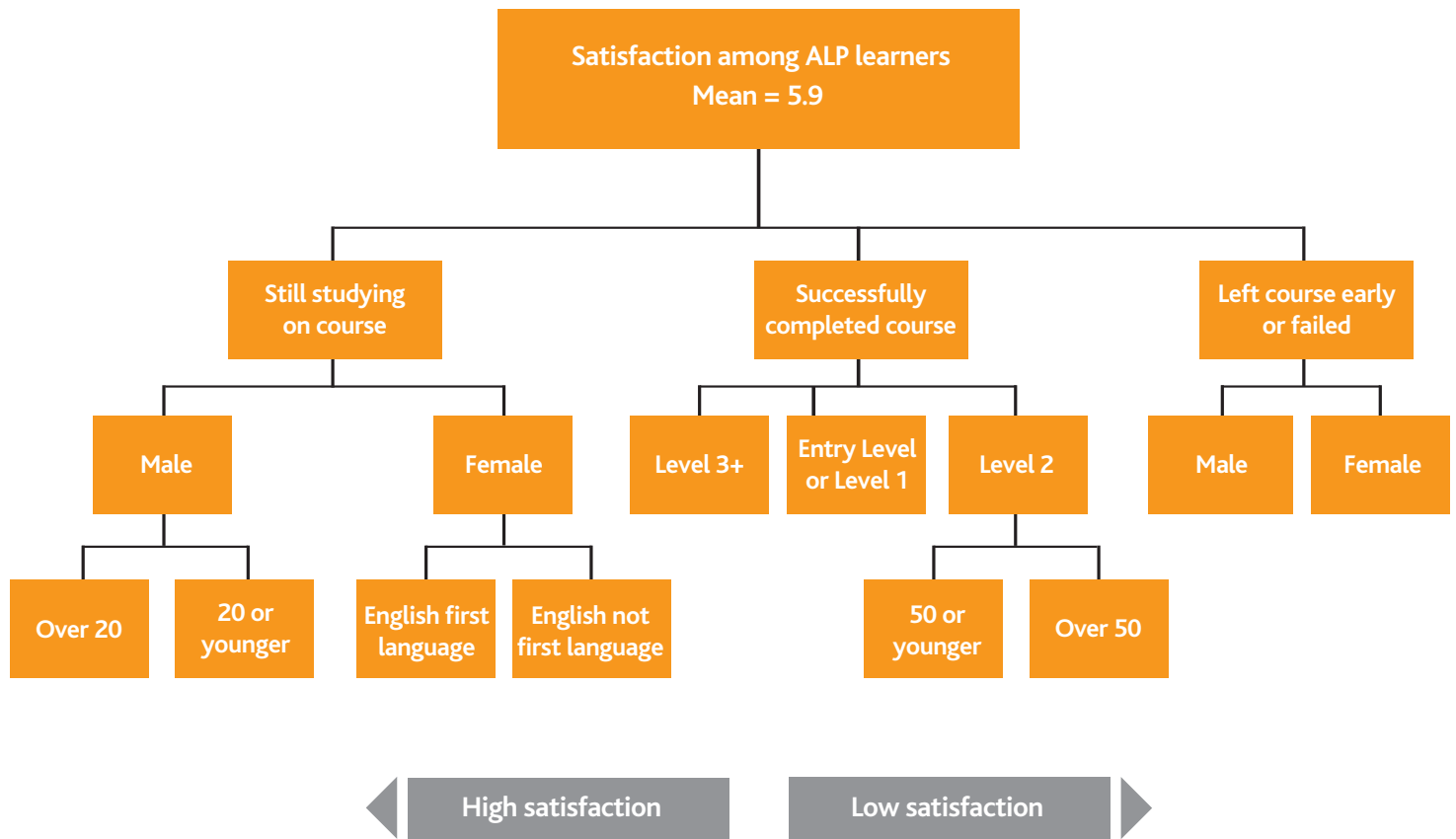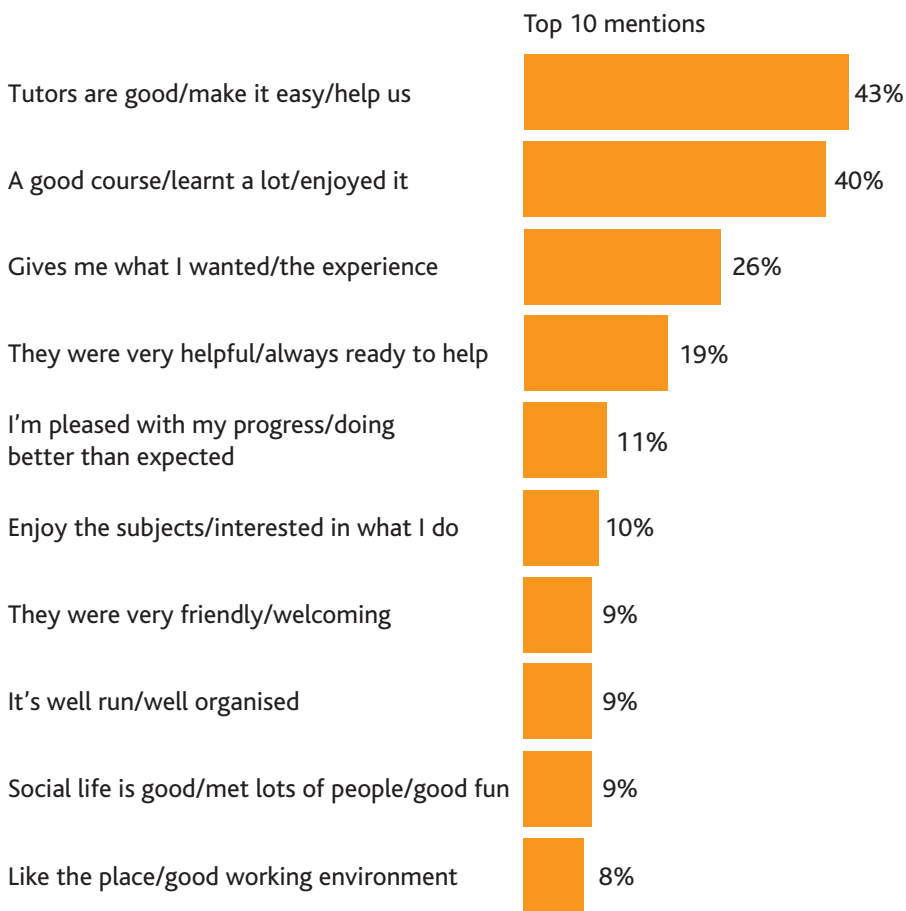

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

143 Learners were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their course. The main reasons for satisfaction, as indicated in Figure 29, were related to the course tutors or the course itself.

144 Only 91 respondents were dissatisfied with the learning experience (5 per cent of the sample), most commonly because they thought the course was badly organised or run (43 per cent) or because they felt that the course was disappointing or not what they had expected (30 per cent). Other respondents said that tutors had a poor attitude or were not supportive (23 per cent) or felt that communication was poor (20 per cent).

Figure 29: Reasons for satisfaction with learning

Top 10 mentions

Reason	%
Tutors are good/make it easy/help us	43%
A good course/learnt a lot/enjoyed it	40%
Gives me what I wanted/the experience	26%
They were very helpful/always ready to help	19%
I'm pleased with my progress/doing better than expected	11%
Enjoy the subjects/interested in what I do	10%
They were very friendly/welcoming	9%
It's well run/well organised	9%
Social life is good/met lots of people/good fun	9%
Like the place/good working environment	8%

Note: the base was 1,576 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

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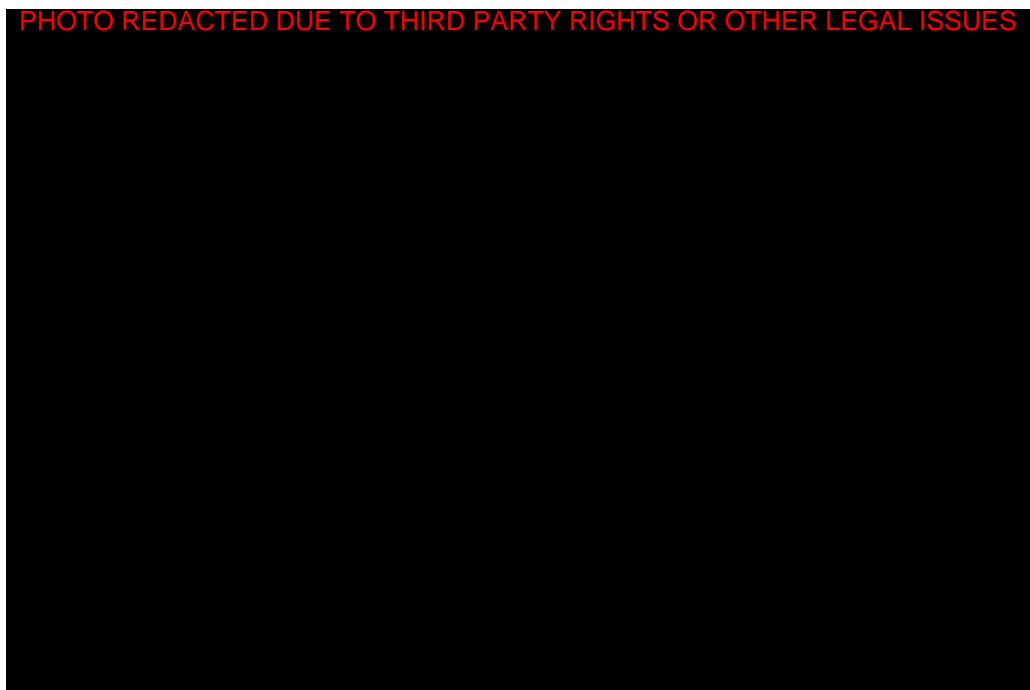
What drives satisfaction with the learning experience?

145 Key driver analysis (KDA) was undertaken to examine the elements of the learning experience that are associated with overall satisfaction. The model shown in Figure 30 includes elements relating to the course tutor and other staff at the learning provider, and indicates that a large proportion (51 per cent) of the variation in learners' overall satisfaction can be attributed to these elements. In particular, structure and planning on the course were important to learners: key elements were whether tutors set clear targets or learning goals and (on the negative side) whether lessons were badly planned or were disorganised. These issues are covered in more detail at paragraph 157).

146 Additional KDA models were carried out to determine which key aspects of the learner journey also have an impact on satisfaction with the learning experience. This showed that information and support were also important to ALP learners, specifically:
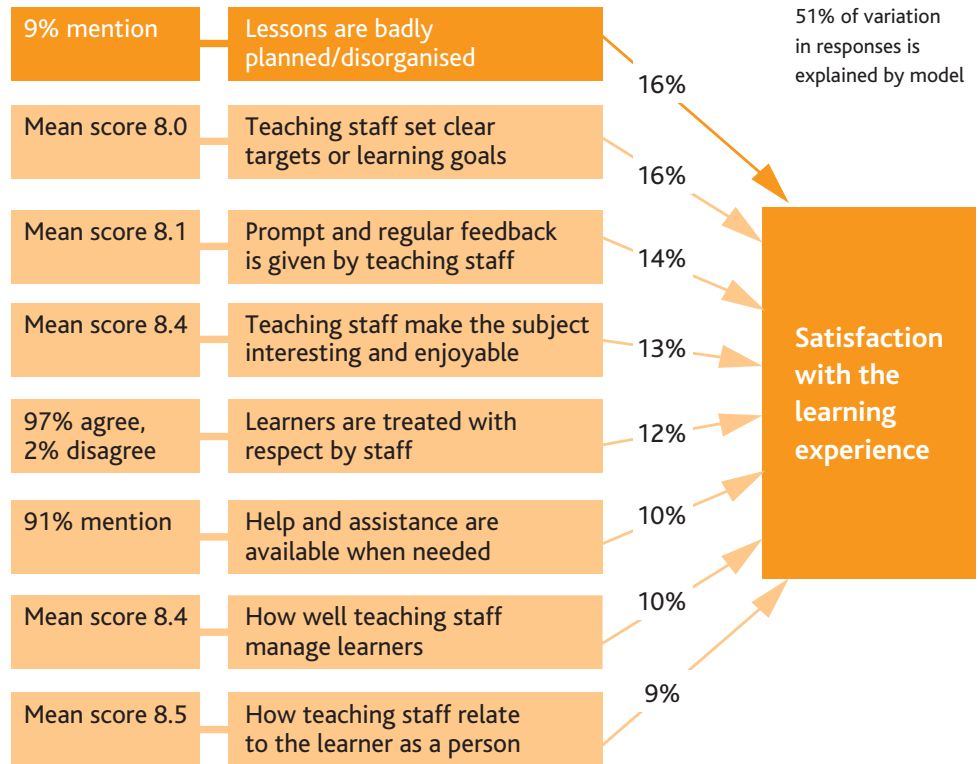
- pre-entry information on course content and subject coverage, as well as information on how the course would be taught; and

- support for learners when they were settling in and for learners who were having problems maintaining personal motivation.

Meeting learners' needs

147 Nine learners in ten (90 per cent) agreed that their course was meeting their needs, including 60 per cent who agreed strongly; just 6 per cent disagreed. As with overall satisfaction, attitudes were less positive among learners who had left the course early (22 per cent of whom disagreed).

148 Views were most positive among 16- to 18-year-olds, and this appeared to be driven by women aged 16 to 18 (99 per cent of whom agreed that the course met their needs). There was no difference by gender overall.

Figure 30: Key drivers of satisfaction with the learning experience among ALP learners

51% of variation in responses is explained by model

9% mention	Lessons are badly planned/disorganised	16%
Mean score 8.0	Teaching staff set clear targets or learning goals	16%
Mean score 8.1	Prompt and regular feedback is given by teaching staff	14%
Mean score 8.4	Teaching staff make the subject interesting and enjoyable	13%
97% agree, 2% disagree	Learners are treated with respect by staff	12%
91% mention	Help and assistance are available when needed	10%
Mean score 8.4	How well teaching staff manage learners	10%
Mean score 8.5	How teaching staff relate to the learner as a person	9%

Satisfaction with the learning experience

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Advocating the provider

149 The majority of learners said that they would speak highly of their learning provider, either without being asked (32 per cent) or if somebody asked them about it (46 per cent); just 4 per cent said they would be critical. These findings are shown in Figure 31.

150 Early leavers were only slightly less positive than other learners (72 per cent said they would speak highly and 9 per cent would be critical), suggesting that problems encountered by early leavers were less to do with the provider than with other factors (as discussed below at paragraph 153).

151 Although they were more likely than other learners to say that the course had met their needs, 16- to 18-year-olds were less positive than others in their advocacy of the provider, and again this appeared to be driven by women aged 16 to 18 (64 per cent of whom said they would speak highly of their provider).
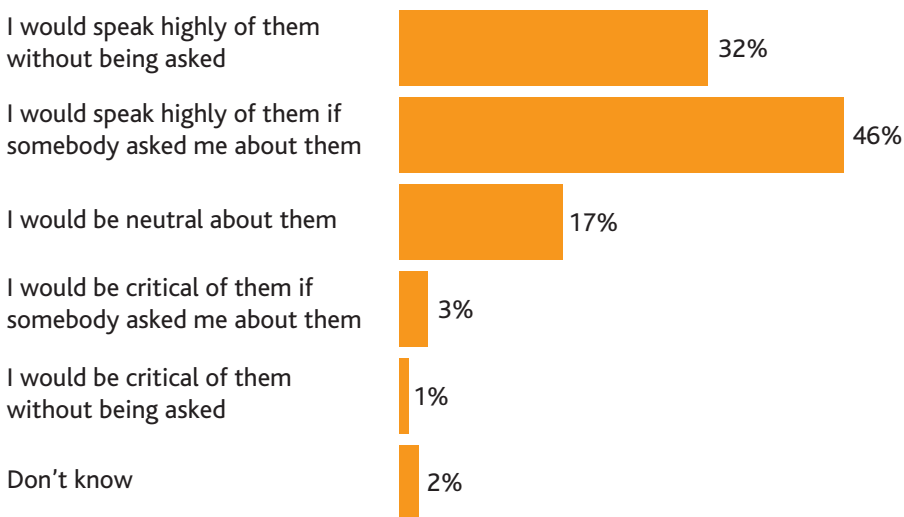
152 Views were more positive than average among learners studying information and communication technology (86 per cent said they would speak highly of the provider).

Early leavers

153 At the time of the interview, the majority of learners (72 per cent) were still studying on their course, while 20 per cent had completed the course and 7 per cent had left it before it had finished; 1 per cent had completed but failed the course. Learners studying at Level 2 or below were more likely to have left the course early than those studying at Level 3 or above (8 per cent, compared with 3 per cent). Otherwise, there were no sub-group differences in the proportions of early leavers.

Figure 31: Advocating the provider

Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your college/provider in their capacity as a training provider?

Statement	Percentage
I would speak highly of them without being asked	32%
I would speak highly of them if somebody asked me about them	46%
I would be neutral about them	17%
I would be critical of them if somebody asked me about them	3%
I would be critical of them without being asked	1%
Don't know	2%

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

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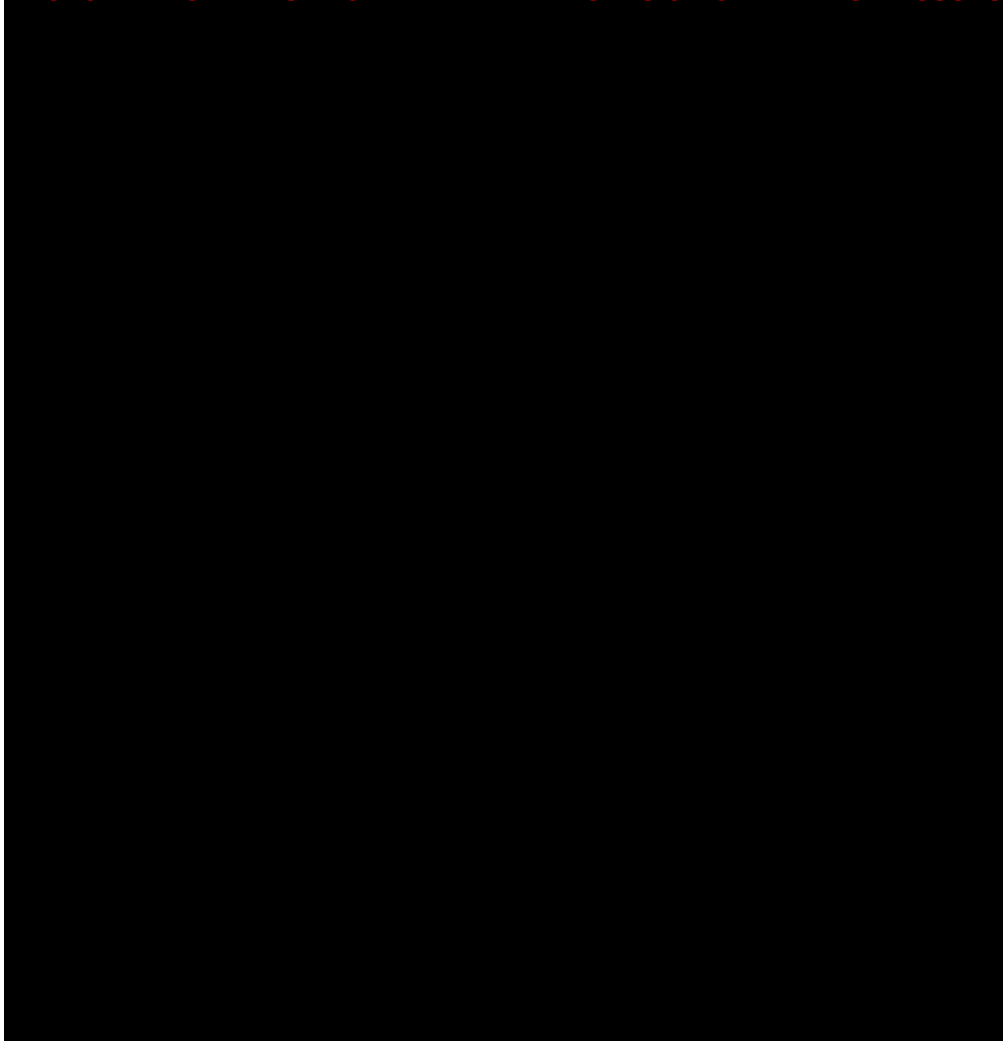
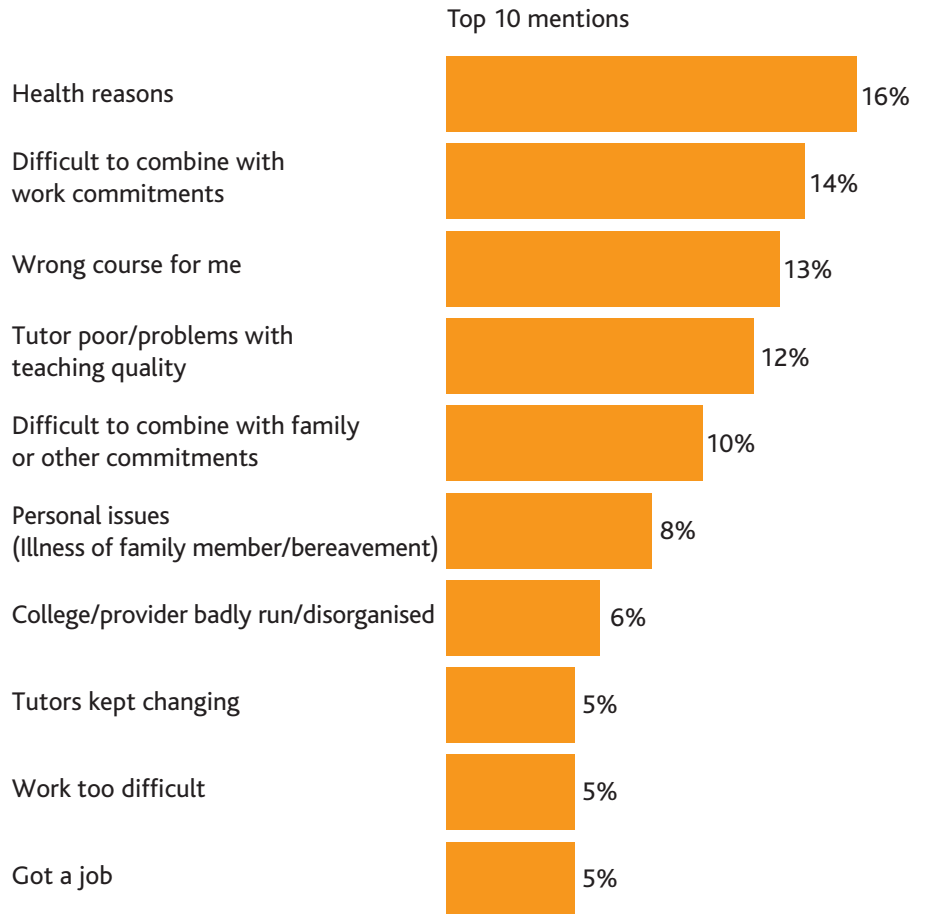**154** We have already seen (paragraph 140) that overall satisfaction is strongly linked to a learner's status on the course, with lower satisfaction among early leavers. It is therefore important to understand the reasons for non-completion (Figure 32).

155 The most common reason given for leaving the course early was poor health. Respondents also mentioned other reasons that were not related to the course itself: work and family commitments, and other personal reasons. Where reasons were related to the course, respondents were most likely to say that it had been the wrong course for them, or that they had had problems with the teaching quality or the tutor. These reasons are consistent with those given in the 2004/05 survey.

156 For the remainder of the report, additional analysis on early leavers was carried out where possible. However, this was restricted by the small number of such respondents who identified themselves as having left the course early (141 in total, and between 35 and 56 learners for questions asked in a single wave only).

Figure 32: Reasons for leaving the course early

What were the main reasons for leaving the course early?

Top 10 mentions

Reason	%
Health reasons	16%
Difficult to combine with work commitments	14%
Wrong course for me	13%
Tutor poor/problems with teaching quality	12%
Difficult to combine with family or other commitments	10%
Personal issues (Illness of family member/bereavement)	8%
College/provider badly run/disorganised	6%
Tutors kept changing	5%
Work too difficult	5%
Got a job	5%

Note: the base was 141 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider (ALPs)

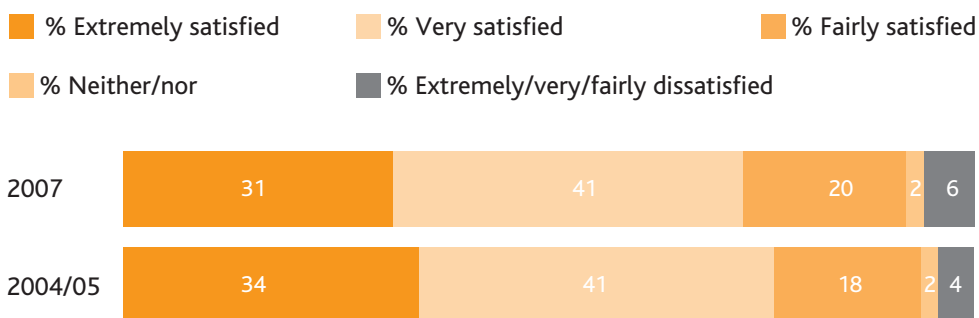## Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training

157 Figure 33 shows learners' attitudes to the quality of teaching or training on their course. Views are generally very positive, with 31 per cent extremely satisfied, and a further 61 per cent very or fairly satisfied. As can be seen, this year's figures show no significant change from 2004/05.

158 Respondents studying at Entry Level and Level 1 registered particularly high levels of satisfaction (94 per cent satisfied and just 4 per cent dissatisfied). The only difference by gender or age was that older learners (25 or over) were more likely to be extremely satisfied (33 per cent).

159 Those studying information and communication technology were more likely than other learners to be extremely satisfied (37 per cent); this is linked to other sub-group findings, in that information and communication technology has an older age profile and is often studied at Entry Level or Level 1.

160 Early leavers were again less positive than other learners, although the majority were at least fairly satisfied (80 per cent), while 13 per cent were dissatisfied.

Figure 33: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training over time

Legend:
- % Extremely satisfied
- % Very satisfied
- % Fairly satisfied
- % Neither/nor
- % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied

Year	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Dissatisfied
2007	31	41	20	2	6
2004/05	34	41	18	2	4

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 1,731 ALP learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

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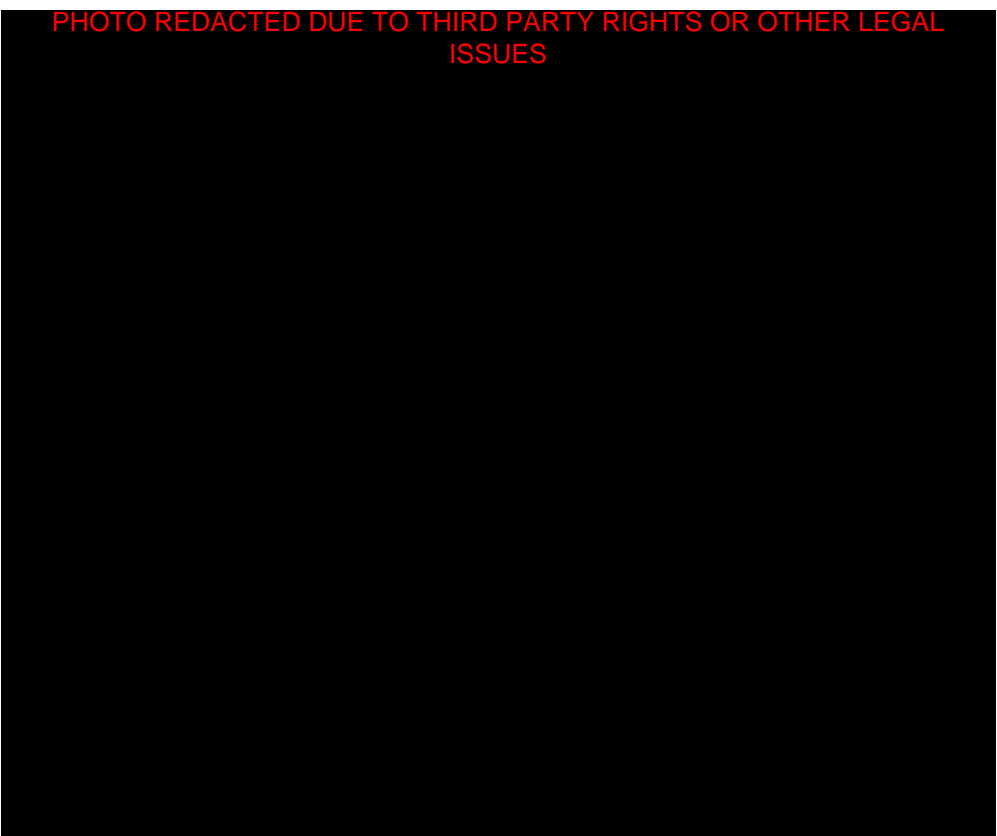
Views on teaching staff

161 These paragraphs look at more detailed issues concerning teachers and tutors. Respondents were asked to rate various items on a numeric scale from 1 (representing 'very poor') to 10 ('excellent'). As in previous years, the analysis in this report focuses on the proportions of learners who gave a 9 or 10 rating for each item.

162 Learners were positive about all the various aspects of their tutors' performance, with the highest ratings given for knowledge of the subject and how well the tutor related to the respondent as a person.
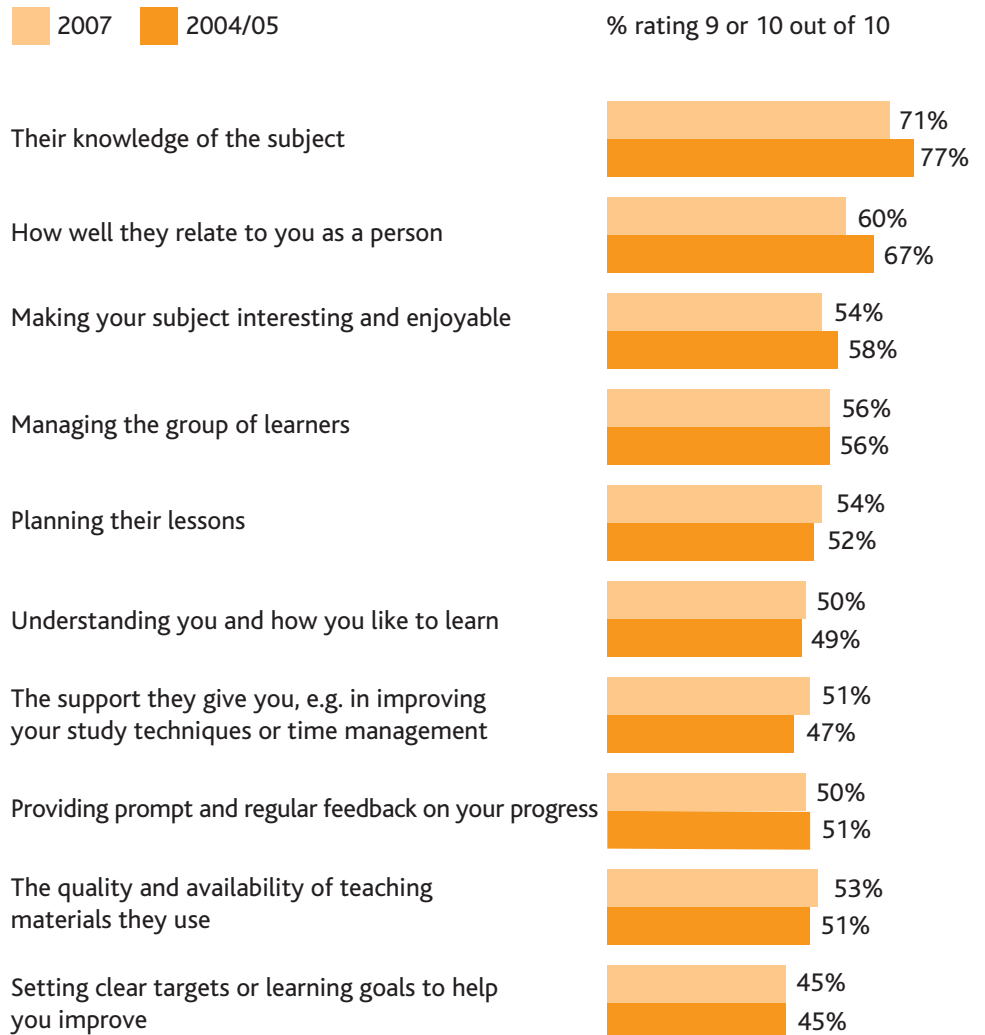
163 As is illustrated in Figure 34, findings are similar to those observed in 2004/05 in many cases. Learners were more positive this year than in 2004/05 in relation to the support provided (e.g. in improving study techniques or time management), but were less positive about subject knowledge, how well tutors related to them as a person and whether they made the subject interesting and enjoyable.

164 The sub-group variations noted above for satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching also apply here, and specifically:

- early leavers were less positive: the proportion giving a 9 or 10 rating was between 14 and 22 percentage points lower than in the sample as a whole;

- learners studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were more positive than other learners, the difference being greatest for making the subject interesting and enjoyable. Details are shown in Table 14. Related to this, learners without prior qualifications (often studying at Entry Level or Level 1) also tended to be more positive than other learners, while those studying for an NVQ tended to give lower ratings;

Figure 34: Views on teaching staff over time

How would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training?

2007   2004/05   % rating 9 or 10 out of 10

Their knowledge of the subject — 71% / 77%

How well they relate to you as a person — 60% / 67%

Making your subject interesting and enjoyable — 54% / 58%

Managing the group of learners — 56% / 56%

Planning their lessons — 54% / 52%

Understanding you and how you like to learn — 50% / 49%

The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management — 51% / 47%

Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress — 50% / 51%

The quality and availability of teaching materials they use — 53% / 51%

Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve — 45% / 45%

Note: the base was 1,697 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 1,731 ALP learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

- those aged 25 or over were more positive than younger learners, the largest differences being in relation to how well tutors related to them as a person (64 per cent of those aged 25 or over gave this a rating of 9 or 10), whether they made the subject interesting and enjoyable (54 per cent) and whether they set clear targets or learning goals (49 per cent); and

- learners studying information and communication technology were more positive than other learners on all items except lesson planning, where there was no difference.

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Table 14: Views on teaching staff, by level of study

	All	Level of study		
		Entry Level & Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 or higher
Base	*(1,706)*	*(792)*	*(532)*	*(362)*
% rating 9 or 10 out of 10	%	%	%	%
Their knowledge of the subject	71	75	67	71
How well they relate to you as a person	60	68	54	54
Managing the group of learners	56	61	52	51
Planning their lessons	54	61	48	50
Making your subject interesting and enjoyable	54	64	49	43
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	53	56	52	48
The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management	51	60	46	45
Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress	50	53	44	51
Understanding you and how you like to learn	50	58	41	47
Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	45	50	42	40

Note: the base figures show the number of all respondents asked the question; table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers.

165 In addition, learners with a disability or with learning difficulties tended to be much more positive than other learners on all aspects.
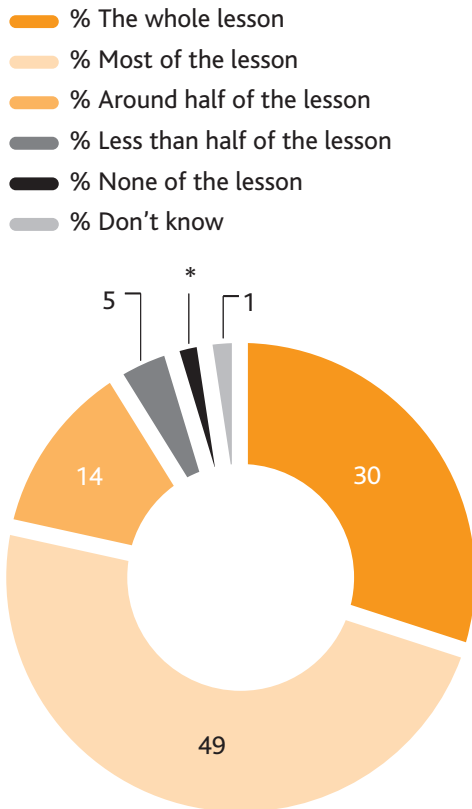
166 Paragraph 145 illustrated the impact of learners' perceptions of teaching on overall satisfaction, in particular the planning of lessons and the setting of clear targets or learning goals. The relatively low proportion giving a 9 or 10 rating for setting clear targets or learning goals indicates that an improvement in this rating in the future would be likely to increase overall satisfaction.

Time utilisation

167 Three learners in ten (30 per cent) said that the whole lesson was spent in increasing or helping to increase their knowledge or understanding of their course, while a further half (49 per cent) said that most of the lesson was spent doing this. Details are shown in Figure 35.

Figure 35: Time spent increasing knowledge in a typical lesson

In a typical lesson or training session, how much time is spent on increasing or helping to increase your knowledge or understanding of your course?

- ━ % The whole lesson
- ━ % Most of the lesson
- ━ % Around half of the lesson
- ━ % Less than half of the lesson
- ━ % None of the lesson
- ━ % Don't know

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

168 Those without prior qualifications were the most likely to say that the whole lesson was spent increasing or helping to increase their knowledge or understanding of the course (50 per cent), and this was also higher than average among learners aged 25 or over (33 per cent), those with a disability (42 per cent) or with learning difficulties (43 per cent), and those studying English, languages or communication (38 per cent), a subject area that includes a relatively high proportion of learners without prior qualifications.

169 Figure 36 shows the prevalence of different situations in class, as reported by learners. The most common of these was other students arriving late by five minutes or more on a fairly regular basis. Overall, 70 per cent of learners had experienced at least one of the listed items. Respondents were more likely to mention at least one item in this survey than in 2004/05, and there were increases in a number of individual items: other students arriving late by five minutes or more, other students making a noise and disrupting class, teachers going at too fast a pace, and lessons finishing early.

Figure 36: Issues affecting the learning programme over time

Which of the following situations have you encountered on a fairly regular basis?
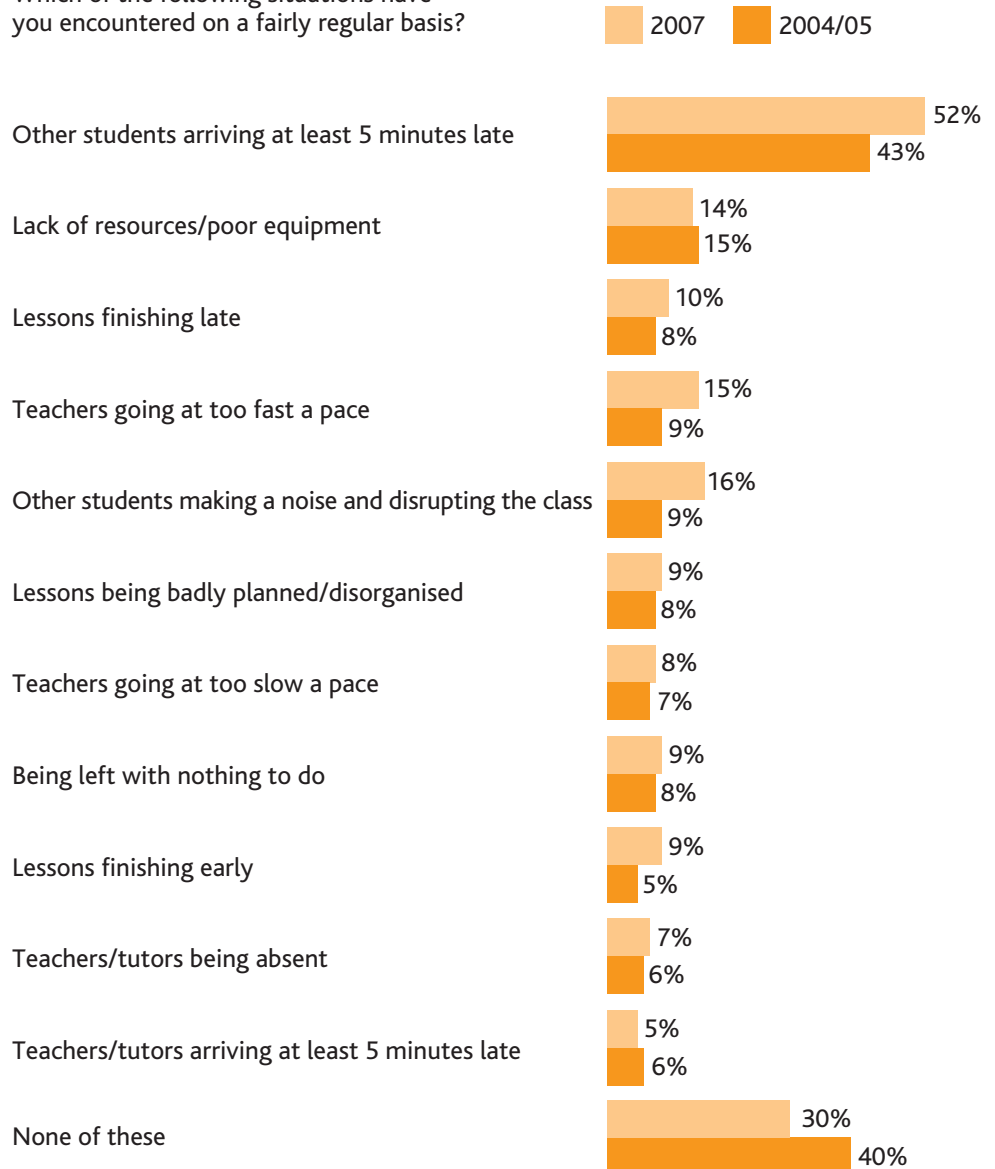
Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners in 2007 and 1,731 ALP learners in 2004/05.

170 Younger learners were more likely to say that they had experienced at least one of the situations (86 per cent aged under 25, compared with 66 per cent of those aged 25 or over), as were those studying at Level 3 (80 per cent). Learners studying information and communication technology were less likely to report any of the situations (54 per cent), reflecting the older age profile of this subject area.

Fairness and respect

171 The vast majority of learners said that they had been treated fairly and with respect by their training provider. As Figure 37 shows, 97 per cent agreed that they were treated with respect, and 95 per cent that they were treated fairly. In each case, at least four learners in five agreed strongly (83 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively).

172 While all learners were positive on these issues, learners studying sciences or mathematics were less likely to feel that they were treated fairly (10 per cent disagreed). Learners who had left their course early were almost as positive as other learners (92 per cent agreed with each statement).

Consultation with learners

173 Figure 38 shows learners' views on the level of consultation on different issues. While the majority agreed that they were asked for their views on the quality of the learning programme and on ways to improve the learning programme, a minority disagreed. Attitudes were less positive still in relation to being asked about facilities and the college (e.g. the canteen, building and rooms).

Figure 37: Fairness and respect

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.
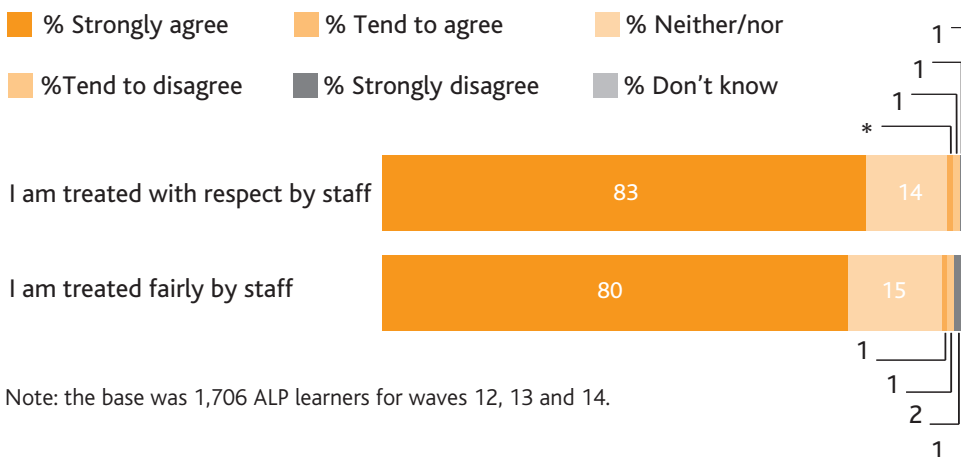
Figure 38: Level of consultation

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.
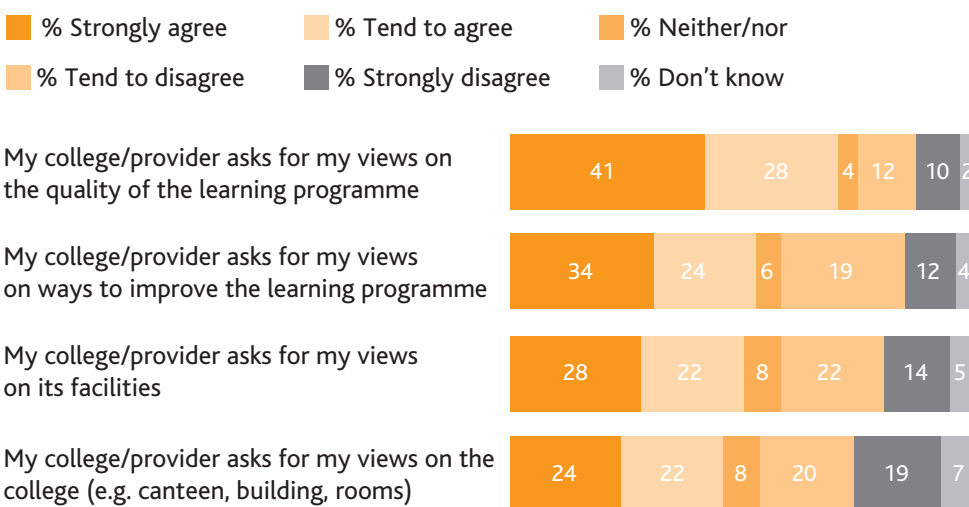
174 Table 15 shows that views were more positive among men than among women (whereas on many other issues there was no difference by gender).

175 Other sub-group differences were as follows:

- older learners (aged 25 or over) tended to be less positive; in relation to asking for views on improving the learning programme and on the college, this was the result of less positive attitudes among women aged 25 or over;

- those studying at Level 4 tended to be more positive than other learners;

- respondents with learning difficulties were more positive than other learners when it came to their views on improving the learning programme and on the college;

- learners studying English, languages and communication were the most positive, while those studying information and communication technology were the least positive; in addition, those studying visual and performing arts and media were particularly negative in relation to whether they were asked for their views on the college (e.g. canteen, building and rooms); and

- learners who had left their course early were again less positive than other learners (between 43 per cent and 51 per cent disagreed that they had been asked for their views on the four items). This is in contrast to other issues concerning the learning provider, where early leavers were generally positive.

Table 15: Level of consultation, by gender

	All	Gender	
		Male	Female
Base	*(1,706)*	*(439)*	*(1,267)*
% net agree	%	%	%
My college/provider asks for my views on:			
the quality of the learning programme	47	51	45
ways to improve the learning programme	27	38	22
its facilities	14	22	11
the college (e.g. canteen, building, rooms)	7	17	3

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners.

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Responsiveness to learners

176 Respondents who had agreed that they were consulted on at least one of the items covered in Figure 38 (81 per cent of the total sample) were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the provider had responded to their views.

177 As Figure 39 shows, 70 per cent agreed that the provider had responded to their views, while 13 per cent disagreed.

178 Once again, views were more positive among men than among women (net agreement +65 and +54, respectively). Otherwise, views were consistent across different groups of learners.

179 Although early leavers were less likely to feel that they had been consulted in the first place, those who did were mostly positive about their provider's responsiveness (+48 net agreement).

Figure 39: Responding to learners' views

Would you agree or disagree that your college/provider responds to your views?

- % Strongly agree
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither/nor
- % Tend to disagree
- % Strongly disagree
- % Don't know
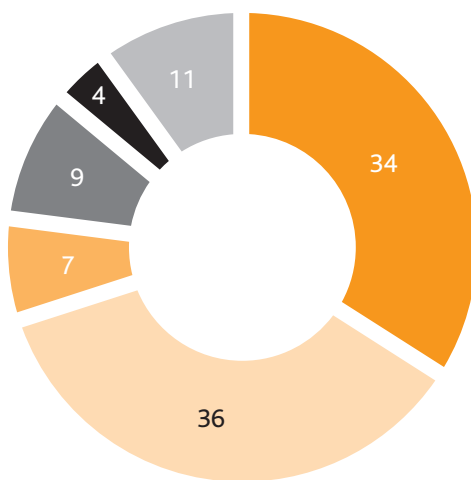
Note: the base was 1,348 ALP learners
for waves 12, 13 and 14 who were consulted.

Pre-entry Information, Advice and Guidance (ALPs)

Reasons for choosing a course

180 There were three main reasons given by learners for choosing their course: for their own personal interest (35 per cent), to help them get a job/different job or promotion (33 per cent), and to advance their skills and knowledge in the area (29 per cent).

181 All questions in this sub-section were asked at wave 12 only and covered 585 respondents. Although sub-group analysis is limited by the relatively small number of respondents, it was clear that:

- those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were most likely to say that they had chosen the course to advance their skills and knowledge in the area (40 per cent), while learners studying at Level 2 or below were more likely than those studying at Level 3 or above to have chosen the course out of personal interest (40 per cent, compared with 23 per cent). Those studying at Level 3 were more likely than other learners to say that they had chosen the course because they liked the subject (26 per cent) or to help them move on in education (23 per cent); and

- learners studying English, languages and communication were the most likely to have chosen the course because of personal interest (57 per cent), while those studying information and communication technology were the most likely to say that they wanted to advance their skills and knowledge (58 per cent).
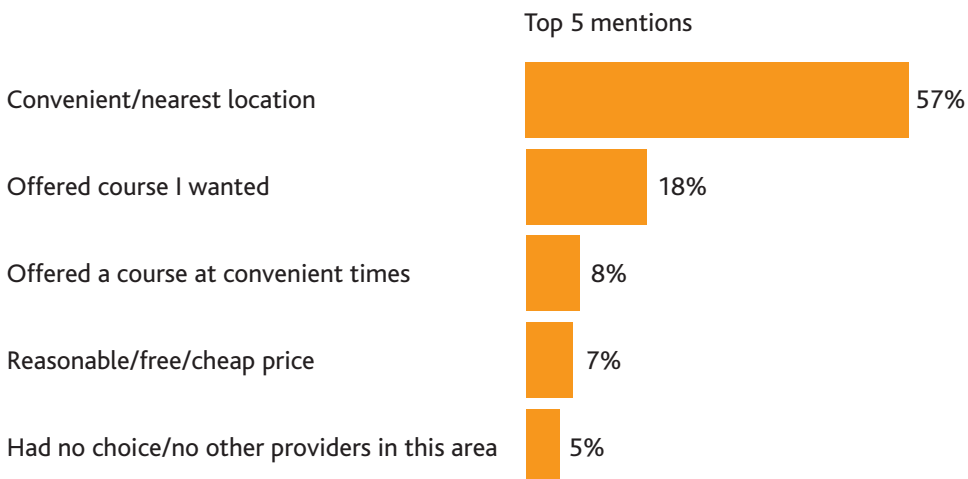
Reasons for choosing a provider

182 The convenience of the location was the most common reason for choosing a particular provider, as Figure 40 shows, and this was also the case in 2004/05.

183 Learners studying at Entry Level and Level 1 were most likely to mention the convenience of the location (67 per cent), while those studying at Level 3 or above were more likely than other learners to say that the provider offered the course they wanted (28 per cent).

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Figure 40: Reasons for choosing a learning provider

Top 5 mentions

Convenient/nearest location	57%
Offered course I wanted	18%
Offered a course at convenient times	8%
Reasonable/free/cheap price	7%
Had no choice/no other providers in this area	5%

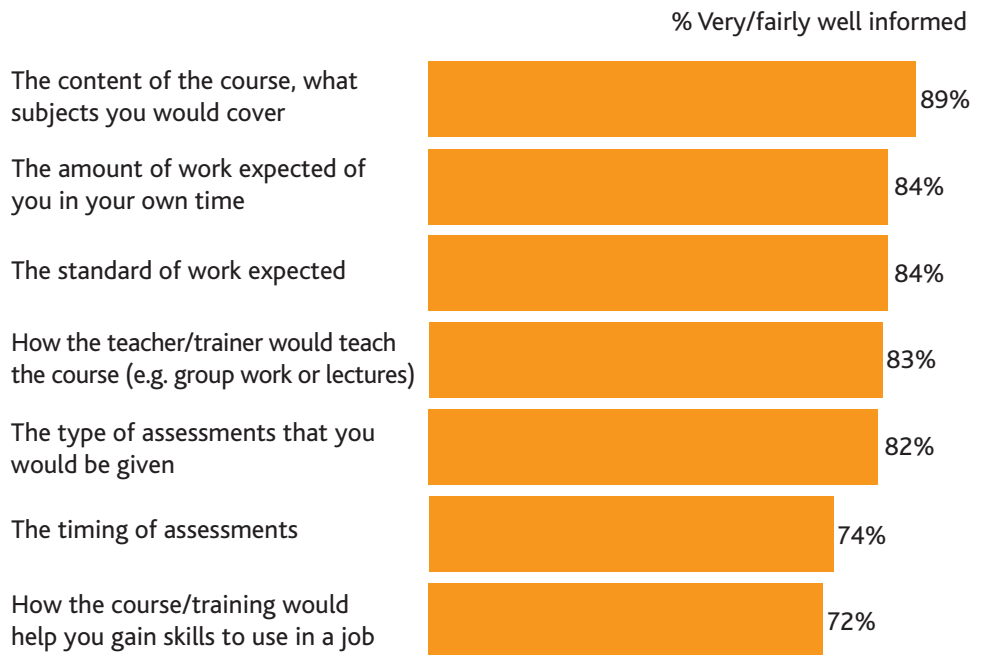Note: the base was 585 ALP learners for wave 12.

Information about the course at enrolment

184 Learners mostly said that they had been well informed about various aspects of their course before they enrolled, and this applied in particular to the content of the course and the subjects that would be covered. Details are shown in Figure 41.

185 The only discernible sub-group pattern was that learners studying English, languages and communication were less positive about a number of issues (type and timing of assessment, course content and the standard of work expected).

Figure 41: Information provision at the time of enrolment

How well informed did you feel about the following?

% Very/fairly well informed

The content of the course, what subjects you would cover	89%
The amount of work expected of you in your own time	84%
The standard of work expected	84%
How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures)	83%
The type of assessments that you would be given	82%
The timing of assessments	74%
How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job	72%

Note: the base was 585 ALP learners for wave 12.

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Learner Support (ALPs)

Health and safety information

186 Learners were asked whether their learning provider had informed them about a number of health and safety issues, as detailed in Table 16. Most learners (84 per cent) recalled being informed about emergency fire arrangements, but the proportions recalling other types of information were lower. In comparison with the 2004/05 survey, more learners in this survey recalled getting information on whom to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions, and on the dangers involved in the training and how to work safely.

187 Three in four disabled learners (73 per cent) recalled having been given information on the provision of disabled access.

188 Recall of a number of types of information tended to be higher among learners studying for NVQs (whom to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions, emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident, and any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely).

Table 16: Provision of health and safety information over time

	2007	2004/05
Base	*(536)*	*(581)*
% net agree	%	%
Emergency arrangements for fire	84	82
Whom to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions	66	58
Emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident	62	60
Provision of disabled access	61	n/a
Any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely	58	52

Note: the base was 536 ALP learners for 2007 and 581 ALP learners for 2004/05.

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Information provision after induction

189 In paragraphs 184 and 185, we examined the extent to which learners had been informed about their course before enrolling. We now look at the same items and see how well informed learners said they were after their induction. Figure 42 shows that learners generally felt well informed about all the various aspects of their course.

190 With the relatively small base size (536 respondents), it was not possible to identify any sub-group patterns for this question.

Support for learners

191 The vast majority of learners – 88 per cent – agreed that there was support available to help them carry out their learning programme. Just 6 per cent disagreed.
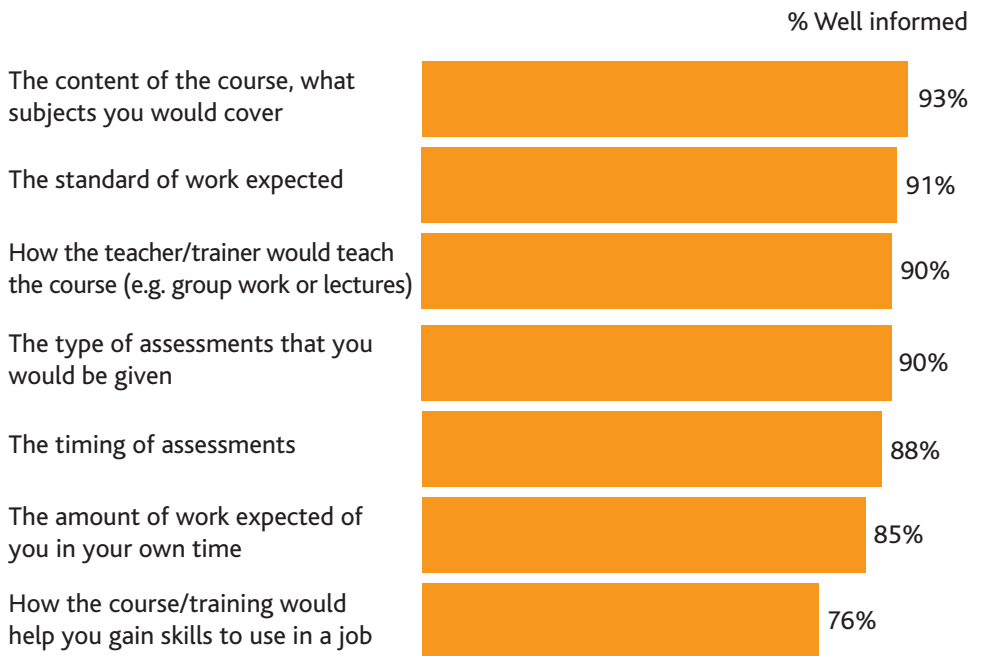
192 Although less positive than other learners, early leavers were also likely to agree that support had been available (77 per cent agreed and 15 per cent disagreed). Otherwise, findings were consistent across different sub-groups.

Types of support available

193 Learners were asked whether a number of types of support had been made available to them at their college or learning provider (Figure 43). Almost all respondents (91 per cent) said they had help and assistance from teachers or tutors available when they needed it, and 76 per cent said they had access to advice or one-to-one meetings with staff. The overall proportion that had access to a computer (61 per cent) fell to 54 per cent if information and communication technology courses are excluded (where nearly all respondents said they had computer access).
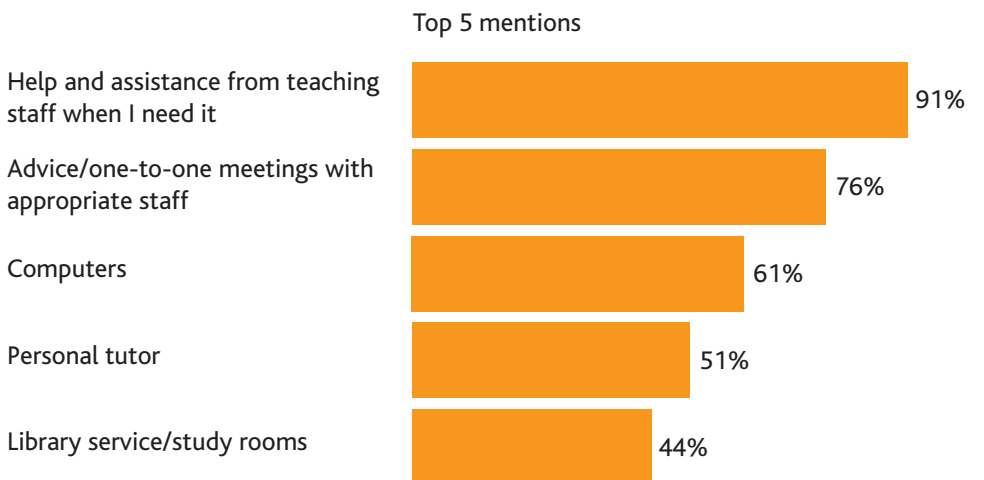
Figure 42: Information provision after induction

How well informed did you feel about the following?

% Well informed

The content of the course, what subjects you would cover	93%
The standard of work expected	91%
How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures)	90%
The type of assessments that you would be given	90%
The timing of assessments	88%
The amount of work expected of you in your own time	85%
How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job	76%

Note: the base was 536 ALP learners for wave 13.

Figure 43: The types of support available

Which of the following types of support, if any, have been made available to you at your college/provider?

Top 5 mentions

Help and assistance from teaching staff when I need it	91%
Advice/one-to-one meetings with appropriate staff	76%
Computers	61%
Personal tutor	51%
Library service/study rooms	44%

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

194 Younger learners (aged 16 to18) were more likely than other respondents to have had access to all the types of support (with the exception of help from teachers, which was equally high across all age groups). The availability of advice/one-to-one meetings and of personal tutors was higher among learners studying on health, social care and public services courses.

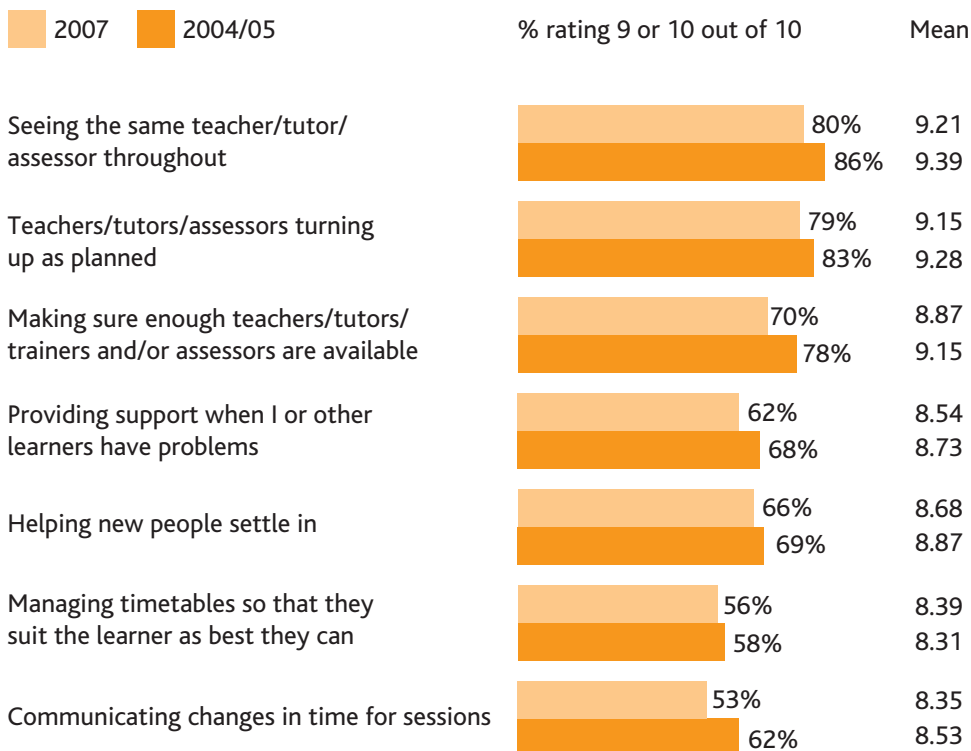## Management of issues affecting learners

195 Learners were asked to rate the management of a number of issues related to their course, as illustrated in Figure 44; this shows the proportion giving each item a score of 9 or 10 out of 10.

196 Learners were generally positive about these issues, particularly about seeing the same teacher or tutor throughout and the teachers or tutors turning up as planned. Very few respondents gave scores of less than 5 on any of the items. However, some of the ratings were a little lower than in 2004/05: seeing the same teacher/tutor/assessor throughout, making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available, providing support when learners have problems, and communicating changes in time for sessions.

197 Although base sizes are small, it is possible to identify some consistent patterns in the findings: older learners (25 or over) were more positive than younger respondents on all the items, while those without any prior qualifications were also more positive than other learners. Disabled learners also tended to give higher ratings on the various measures.

Figure 44: Management of issues affecting learners

How well do you think the following issues were managed?

	2007	2004/05	% rating 9 or 10 out of 10	Mean

Issue	2007 %	2004/05 %	2007 Mean	2004/05 Mean
Seeing the same teacher/tutor/assessor throughout	80%	86%	9.21	9.39
Teachers/tutors/assessors turning up as planned	79%	83%	9.15	9.28
Making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available	70%	78%	8.87	9.15
Providing support when I or other learners have problems	62%	68%	8.54	8.73
Helping new people settle in	66%	69%	8.68	8.87
Managing timetables so that they suit the learner as best they can	56%	58%	8.39	8.31
Communicating changes in time for sessions	53%	62%	8.35	8.53

Note: the base was 526 ALP learners for wave 13 (2007) and 581 ALP learners for wave 10 (2004/05).

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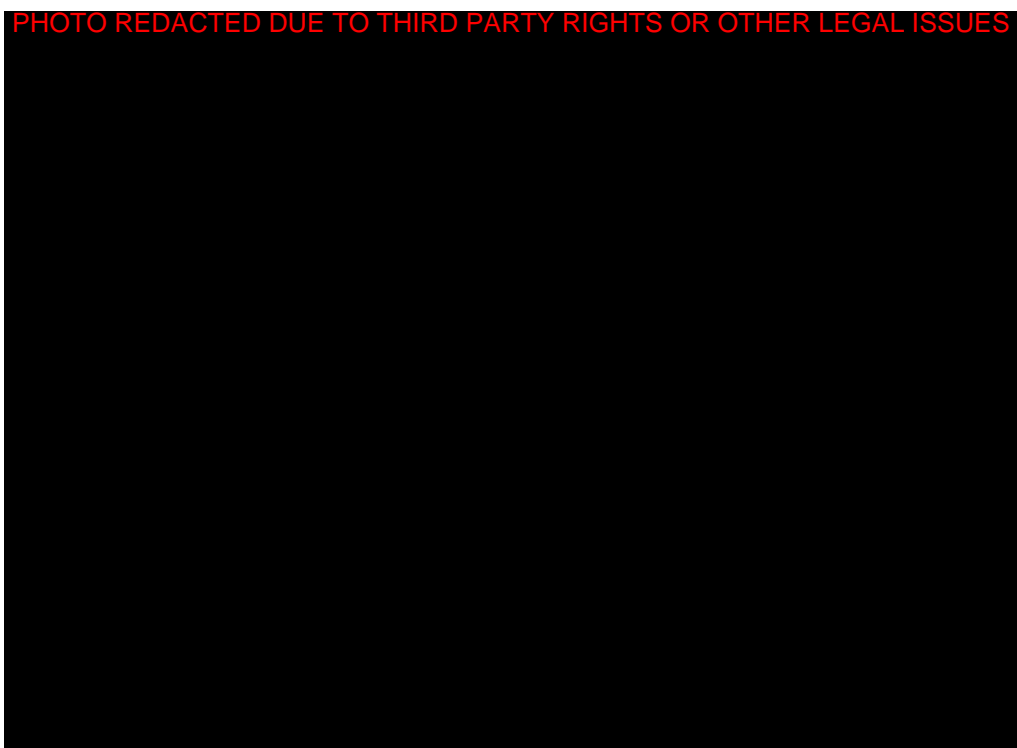
Problems encountered during the course

198 Just under half of learners (46 per cent) said that they had not experienced any of the problems listed in Figure 45, which covers a range of problems related both to the course itself and to external pressures that cause learners difficulty. The most common problems experienced by learners were in maintaining personal motivation, managing to keep up with the standard of work required, and managing to balance the course with home commitments.

199 Findings were similar to those recorded in the 2004/05 survey.

200 Those studying at Level 3 or above were more likely to report problems than were learners studying at Level 2 or below (30 per cent had no problems, compared with 49 per cent), while learners under 25 were more likely than older learners to report problems (36 per cent had no problems, as against 48 per cent).
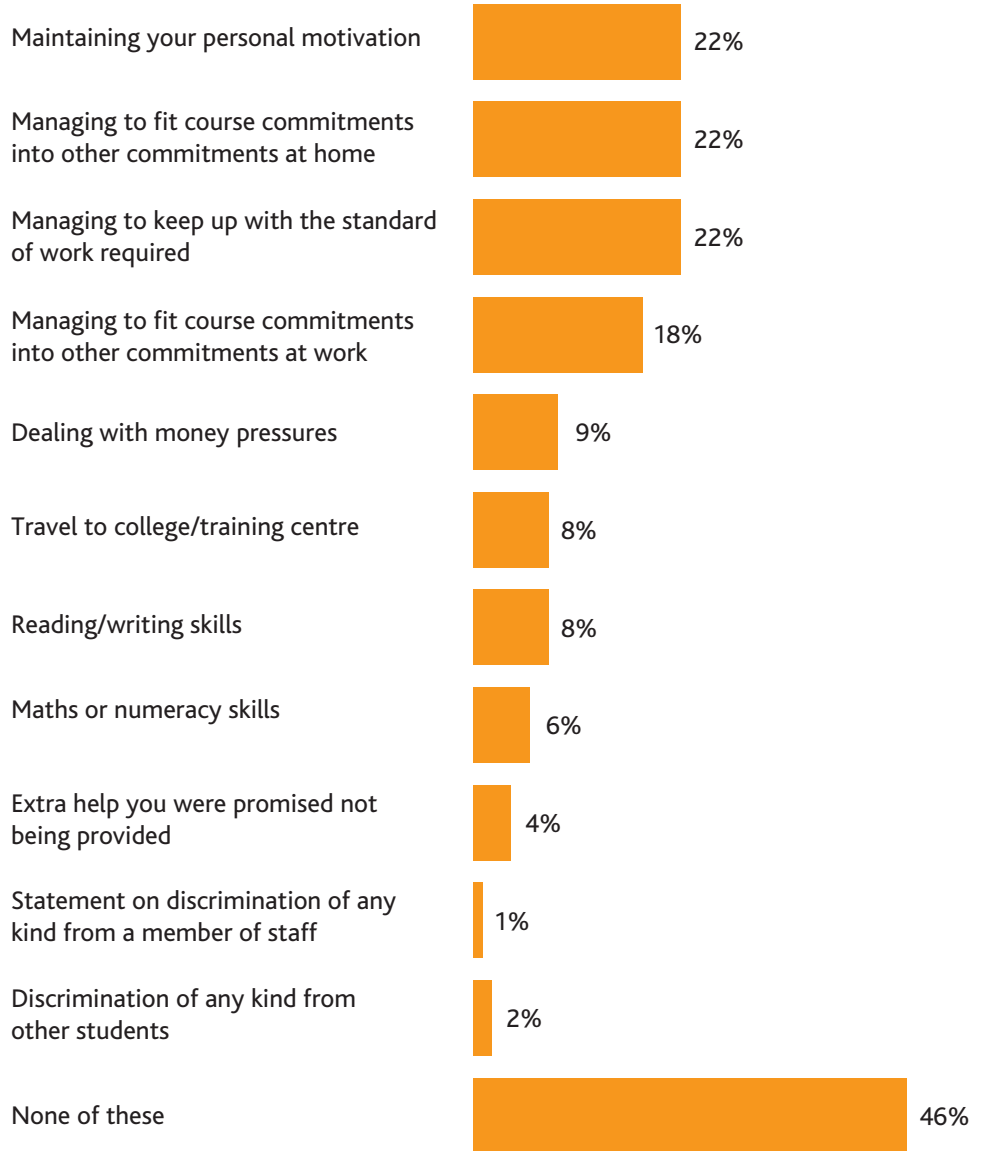
Help and advice

201 Of the respondents who said they had experienced at least one type of problem, only one in five (20 per cent) said that they had sought help with the problem from their learning provider, although this figure is higher than was recorded in 2004/05 (13 per cent).

202 When respondents had looked to their provider for help, most (80 per cent) said the help they had received was useful. However, this should be treated with caution, as only 55 respondents answered this question.

Figure 45: Problems encountered during the course

Have you had problems with any of the following?

Maintaining your personal motivation	22%
Managing to fit course commitments into other commitments at home	22%
Managing to keep up with the standard of work required	22%
Managing to fit course commitments into other commitments at work	18%
Dealing with money pressures	9%
Travel to college/training centre	8%
Reading/writing skills	8%
Maths or numeracy skills	6%
Extra help you were promised not being provided	4%
Statement on discrimination of any kind from a member of staff	1%
Discrimination of any kind from other students	2%
None of these	46%

Note: the base was 536 ALP learners for wave 13.
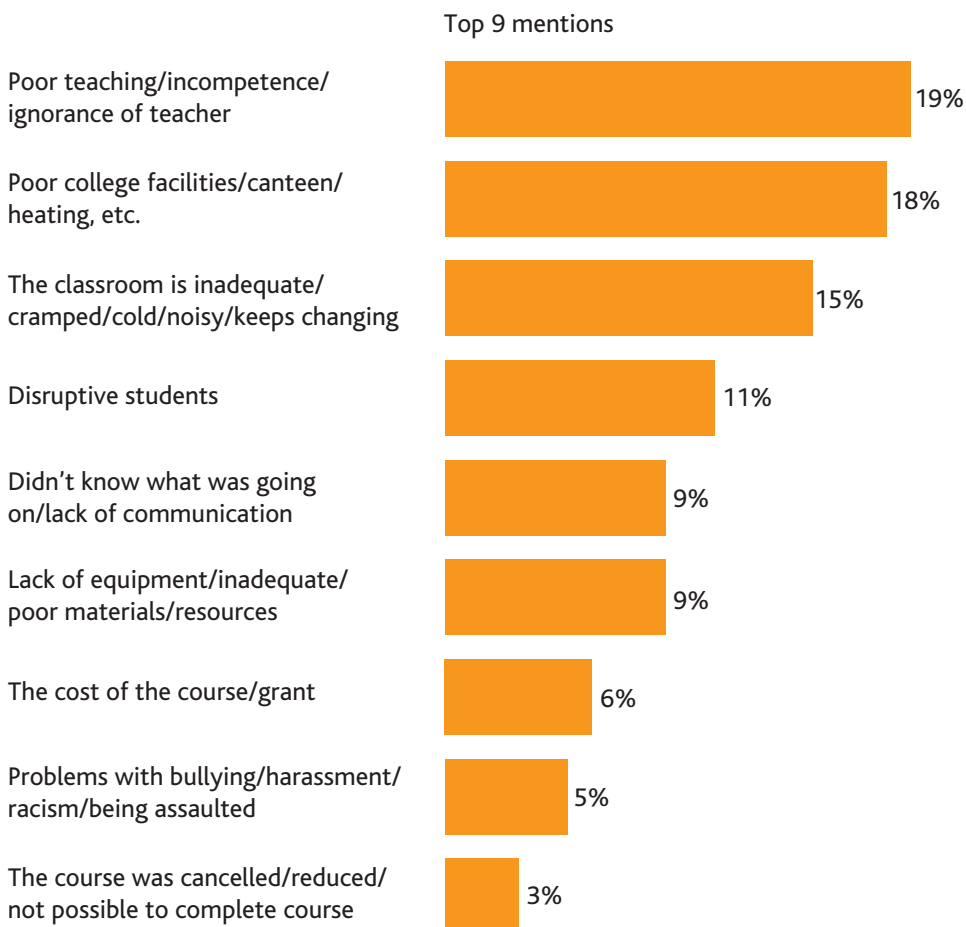
Learners' complaints

203 Overall, 8 per cent of learners said that they had made a complaint at some time to their provider about their course or other experiences – a figure that is similar to that recorded in the 2004/05 survey. It should be noted that, as in previous years, 'complaint' is defined by the learner and does not mean that the learner sought or initiated a formal complaints process.

204 The most common reasons for complaint were poor teaching or the incompetence of the teacher, poor college facilities and problems with classrooms. A breakdown of the reasons for complaints is shown in Figure 46 (note that only a small number of respondents (44) were asked this question).

205 When asked which statement best described the outcome of their complaint, respondents were divided between those who said there had been an outcome that satisfied them (41 per cent), those who said there had been an outcome but it was not satisfactory (32 per cent) and those who said there had been no outcome to the complaint at all (25 per cent). Again it should be noted that only 44 respondents answered this question.

Figure 46: Reasons for complaint

What was your complaint about?

Top 9 mentions

Reason	Percentage
Poor teaching/incompetence/ignorance of teacher	19%
Poor college facilities/canteen/heating, etc.	18%
The classroom is inadequate/cramped/cold/noisy/keeps changing	15%
Disruptive students	11%
Didn't know what was going on/lack of communication	9%
Lack of equipment/inadequate/poor materials/resources	9%
The cost of the course/grant	6%
Problems with bullying/harassment/racism/being assaulted	5%
The course was cancelled/reduced/not possible to complete course	3%

Note: the base was 44 ALP learners for wave 13 who made a complaint.
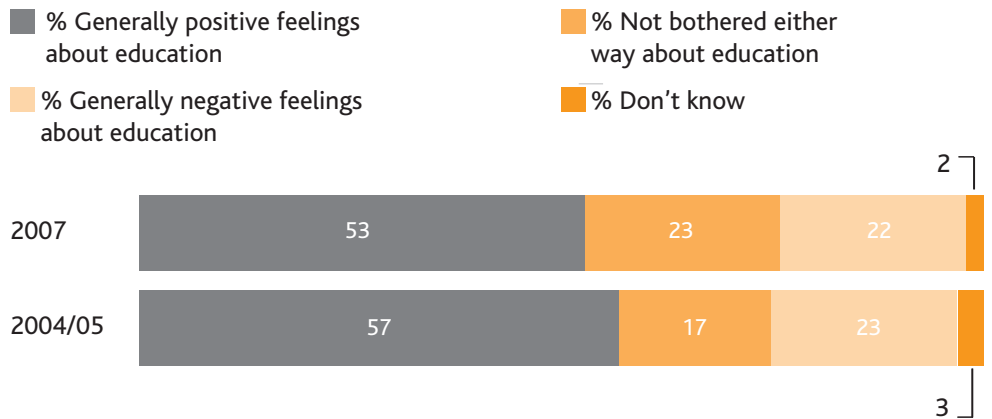
Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning (ALPs)

Feelings about education on leaving school

206 Just over half of learners (53 per cent) said they had had generally positive feelings about education when they left school, while 22 per cent said they had had negative feelings. These findings (shown in Figure 47) show no significant change from the 2004/05 survey.

207 Attitudes differed according to the level to which respondents were qualified prior to their FE course. Those qualified to Level 3 or above tended to be more positive than those qualified to Level 2 or below or without any prior qualifications (66 per cent, compared with 46 per cent).

Figure 47: Feelings about education on leaving school over time

■ % Generally positive feelings about education

■ % Not bothered either way about education

■ % Generally negative feelings about education

■ % Don't know

	Positive	Not bothered	Negative	Don't know
2007	53	23	22	2
2004/05	57	17	23	3

Note: the base was 585 ALP learners for wave 14 (2007) and 578 ALP learners for wave 11 (2004/05).

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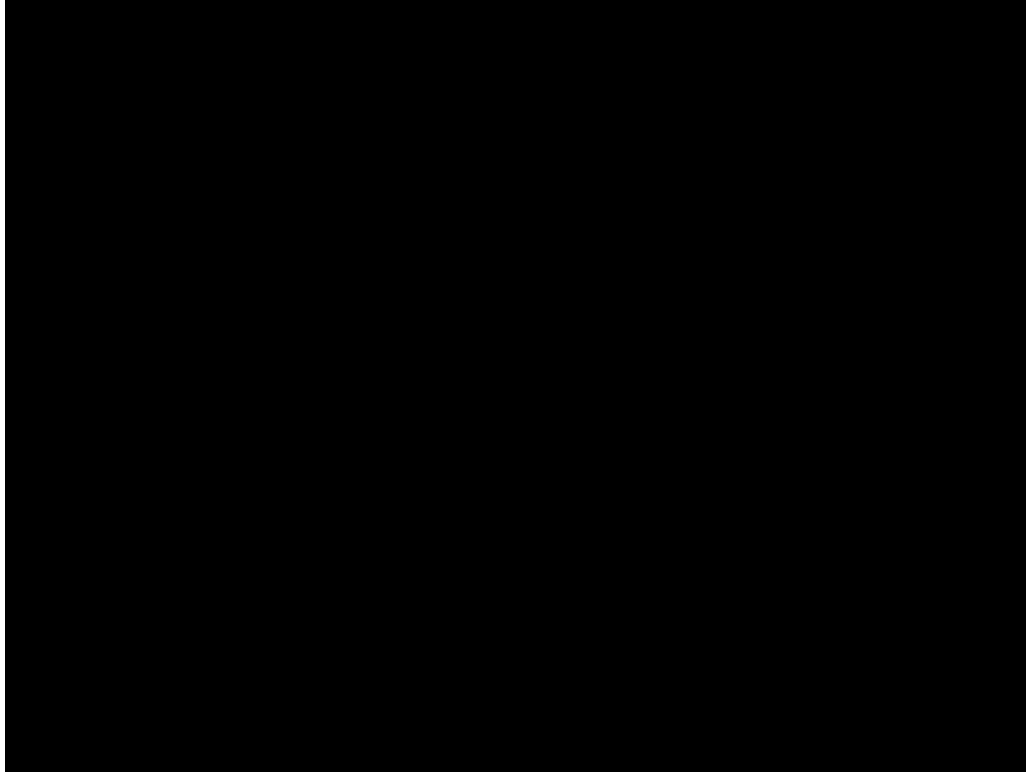
Current feelings about learning

208 Figure 48 shows respondents' current feelings about learning. The majority agreed that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it (77 per cent), while 62 per cent said that they were carrying on learning in order to improve their career prospects. Just under half agreed that they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects (46 per cent).

209 These figures are similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey, although direct comparisons are distorted by the inclusion of an additional response option in 2007: 'I am carrying on learning in order to improve my career prospects'.

210 Learners studying at Level 3 or above, as well as those studying for an NVQ, were the most likely to say that they were carrying on learning to improve their career prospects, while those without any prior qualifications were the most likely to say that they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects and because they couldn't think of anything better to do. Older learners (aged 25 or over) were more likely than younger learners to say that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it.

Figure 48: Current attitudes towards learning over time
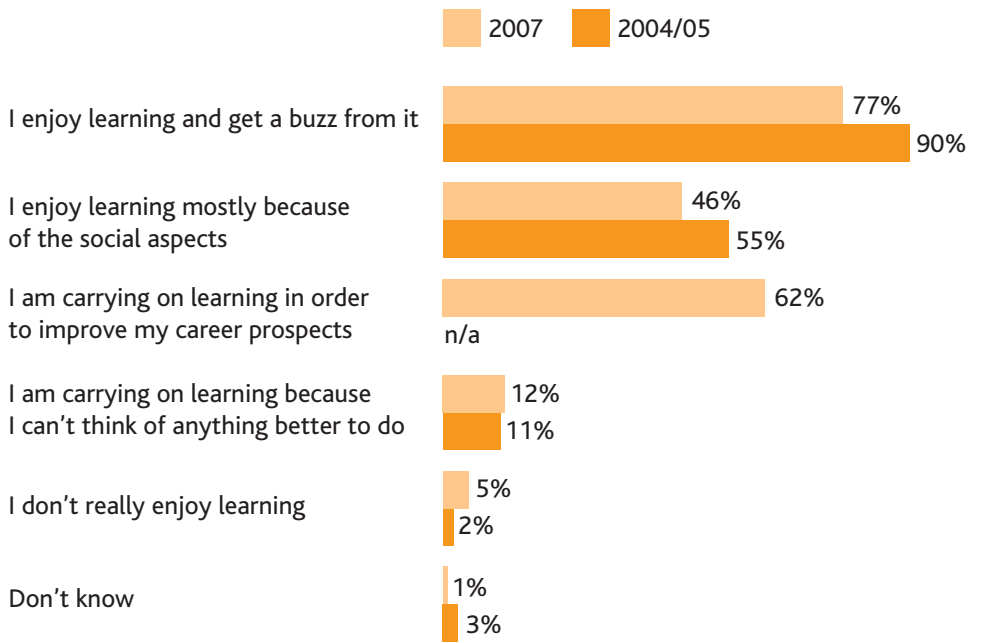
Note: the base was 585 ALP learners for wave 14 (2007) and 578 ALP learners for wave 11 (2004/05).
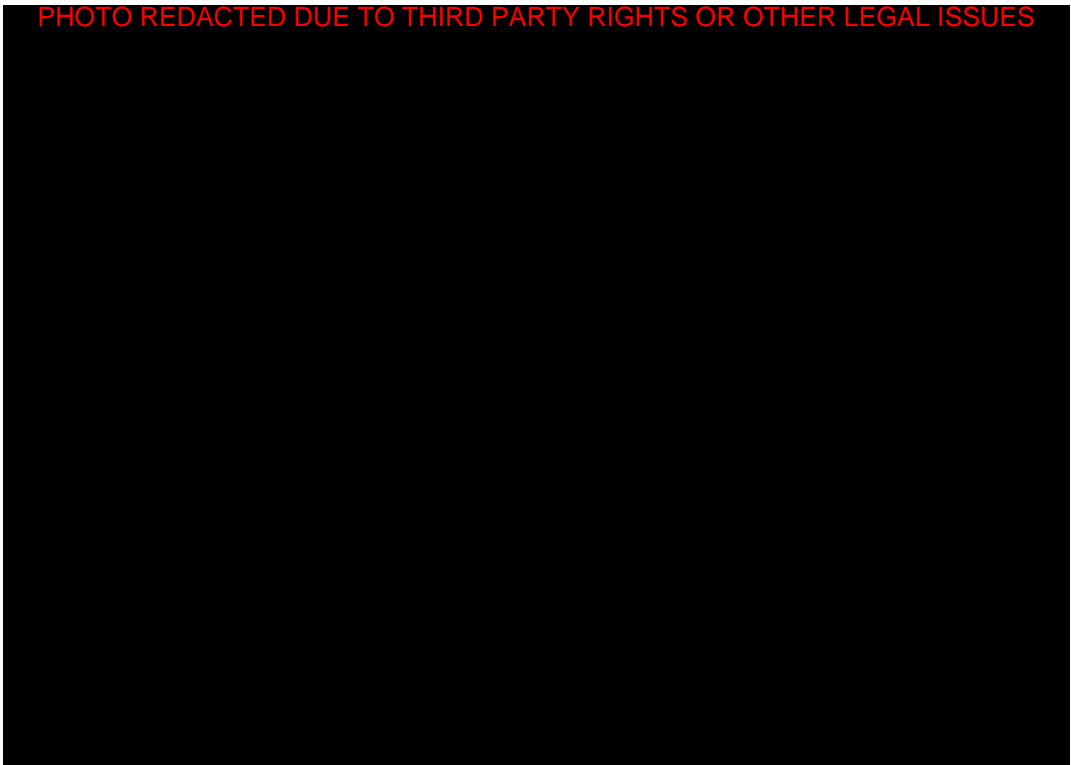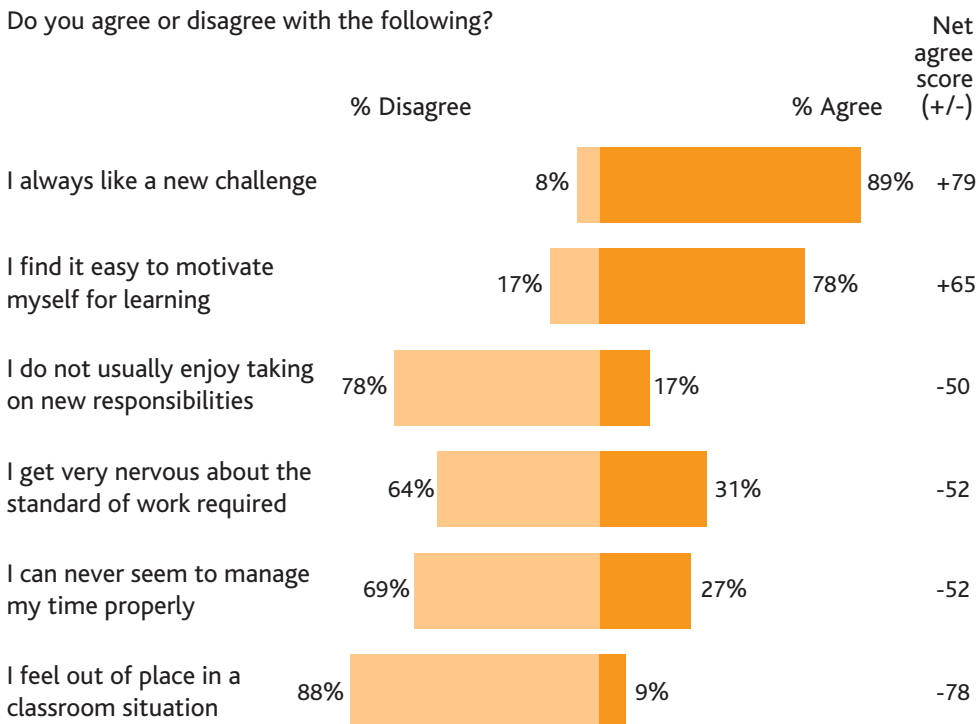
211 Figure 49 shows learners' attitudes towards some specific elements of learning. These again confirm a mainly positive view of learning, especially in relation to liking a new challenge and self-motivation. These attitudes have not changed since the 2004/05 survey.

212 Again, learners with higher qualifications prior to the course tended to be the most positive; this applied specifically in relation to enjoying taking on new responsibilities and managing time, as well as not feeling out of place in a classroom situation and not getting nervous about the standard of work required.

213 Women were more likely than men to agree that they got very nervous about the standard of work required, but were less likely to agree that they felt out of place in a classroom situation and that they did not usually enjoy taking on new responsibilities. Older learners (aged 25 or over) were more likely than others to say that they found it easy to motivate themselves, and that they felt comfortable in a classroom situation.

Figure 49: Current attitudes towards learning

Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	% Disagree	% Agree	Net agree score (+/-)
I always like a new challenge	8%	89%	+79
I find it easy to motivate myself for learning	17%	78%	+65
I do not usually enjoy taking on new responsibilities	78%	17%	-50
I get very nervous about the standard of work required	64%	31%	-52
I can never seem to manage my time properly	69%	27%	-52
I feel out of place in a classroom situation	88%	9%	-78

Note: the base was 585 ALP learners for wave 14.

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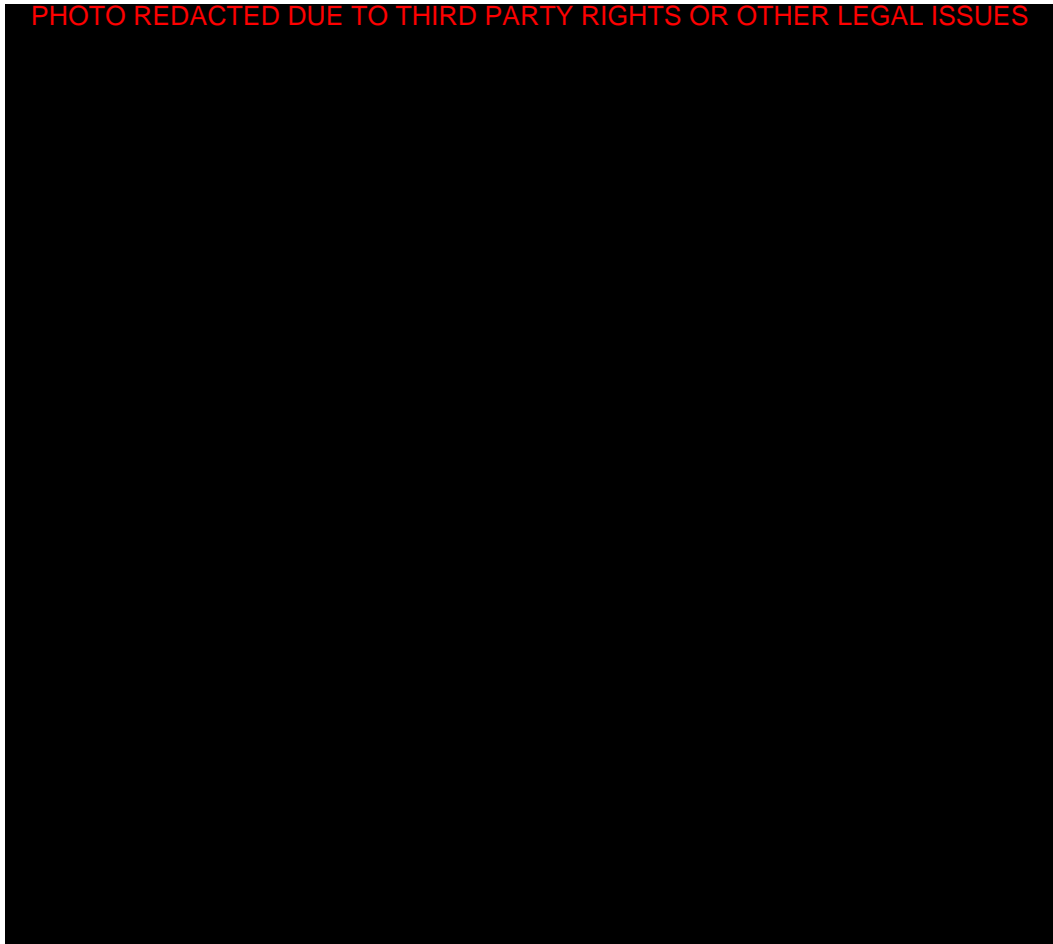
The benefits of participation in learning

214 Learners' perceptions of the benefits of their course were measured by asking them whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements. The details are shown in Figure 50. As was noted in the findings for the PCDL sector (paragraph 120 and Table 11), perceived benefits from learning can be grouped into four categories, covering: enthusiasm and motivation, improved learning skills, job and career-related benefits, and social or personal benefits.

215 Respondents were most positive in relation to increased enthusiasm and motivation, as well as increased confidence in their ability to learn. The proportions reporting a number of benefits have increased since the 2004/05 survey: being more creative and being prepared to try new things; being better at managing their time and responsibilities; gaining job-related skills; feeling more confident socially; and helping them to cope better with daily life.

216 Learners studying at Level 3 were most likely to say that the course had given them greater enthusiasm for the subject and had made them better at managing their time and responsibilities. However, those with higher prior qualifications (qualified to Level 3 or above before the course) were less likely to report the benefits related to improved learning skills and enthusiasm or motivation.

217 The job and career-related benefits showed a distinctive pattern that is related to vocational courses: they were reported most frequently by learners studying for an NVQ and by those studying on health, social care and public services courses. They were less likely to be reported by older learners (aged 25 or over).

218 Early leavers were less likely to report the various benefits than were other learners, although as many as 72 per cent said that they felt more confident in their ability to learn as a result of having started the course – this was the benefit most frequently reported by early leavers.

Figure 50: The benefits of participation over time

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the effect the course has had on you?
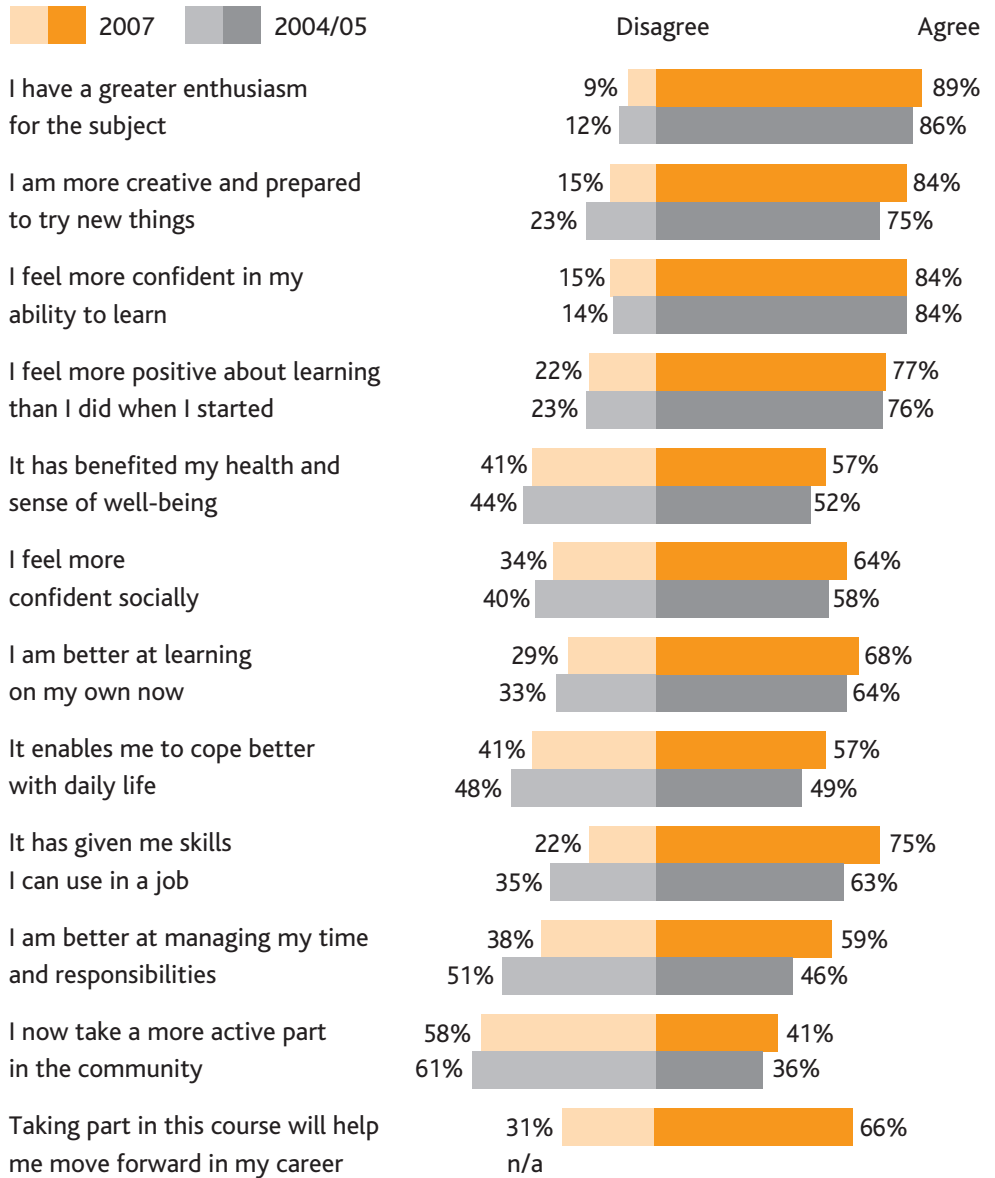
Note: the base was 586 ALP learners for wave 14 (2007) and 578 ALP learners for wave 11 (2004/05).

219 As shown above, most learners felt that their course gave them job-related benefits. When asked directly, 34 per cent said that the course was essential for their current job or a future job, while a further 41 per cent said that it was not essential but would help them.
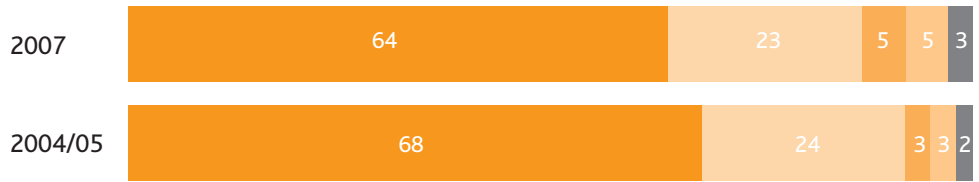
Likelihood of undertaking further learning

220 Around two learners in three (64 per cent) said they would be very likely to undertake further learning in the future (say, in the next three years), a slight decrease from the 2004/05 survey. Details are shown in Figure 51.

221 The likelihood of undertaking further learning was higher among those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 (67 per cent very likely) and, related to this, among those studying English, languages and communication (70 per cent), where courses are often at lower levels. It was no lower among early leavers (61 per cent) than among other learners.

Figure 51: Likelihood of undertaking further learning over time

How likely are you to undertake further learning in the future (say, in the next three years)?

- % Very likely
- % Fairly likely
- % Fairly unlikely
- % Very unlikely
- % Don't know

Year	Very likely	Fairly likely	Fairly unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know
2007	64	23	5	5	3
2004/05	68	24	3	3	2

Note: the base was 1,706 ALP learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 1,731 ALP learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

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