

Prior Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education and Work Based Learning

Research Report prepared for Learning and Skills Council by IFF Research Ltd.

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Prior Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education and Work-based Learning

Summary

This report discusses the findings of a survey conducted in August and September 2005 involving telephone interviews with adults (aged 19 plus) undertaking Learning and Skills Council (LSC)-funded further education courses or work-based learning provision in November 2004. The aim of the survey was to inform, develop and monitor current and future initiatives supporting the LSC and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) target to increase the number of adults qualified to (full) Level 2.

To this end the study sought to measure the proportion of adult learners on provision in November 2004 undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification.

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Executive Summary

Date: March 2006

Subject: Prior qualifications of adult learners in further education and work-based learning

This report discusses the findings of a survey conducted in August and September 2005 involving 3,004 telephone interviews with adults (aged 19 plus) undertaking Learning and Skills Council (LSC)-funded further education (FE) courses or work-based learning (WBL) provision in November 2004. The aim of the survey was to inform, develop and monitor current and future initiatives supporting the LSC and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) target to increase the number of adults qualified to (full) Level 2.

To this end the study sought to measure the proportion of adult learners on provision in November 2004 undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification. The research was similar in approach to a study undertaken by IFF Research for the DfES among adult learners on LSC-funded FE provision in November 2003.¹

Throughout the report it should be noted that we use the term “first full Level 2 qualification” to refer to any learning at Level 2 **or above** where the learner’s highest prior qualification was below full Level 2. That is, it refers not only to those learners studying at full Level 2 whose highest prior qualification was below this level, but also to learners studying Level 3 qualifications with no prior qualification at full Level 2.

“Thin” and “Full” and First Full Level 2 Learning

FE colleges and WBL providers offer very many different courses, beyond the familiar national vocational qualifications (NVQs), that are notionally at Levels 1 to 5. Often courses are only short and require relatively few guided learning hours compared with other qualifications of the same level, and these are labelled within this report as **thin**.

Additionally, classification as a **full** Level 2 requires the course to have met various criteria agreed by the LSC, DfES and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), and this definition is employed both when

publishing statistics on **full** Level 2 learners,² and in determining eligibility for fee remission as part of the Level 2 Entitlement (L2E).

Determining the Level of Prior Qualifications

The survey obtained information on the prior qualifications of Level 2 and Level 3 learners by asking them about all the qualifications they had attained before starting the course which they were on in November 2004, whether these qualifications were obtained at school, college or through work or training. Respondents were read a list of qualifications and asked which they had, and then which other qualifications, if any, they had achieved. (The survey questionnaire is reproduced in Annex F.)

From this list of qualifications achieved and answers to supplementary questions for some regarding the number and level attained, a highest level was assigned to each respondent. Slightly different figures result depending on how “other qualifications” are dealt with. The method which most closely reflects the Labour Force Survey (LFS), and used as the default approach in the report, is as follows: other qualifications are ignored for determining highest prior qualification level if the respondent has achieved any of the (precoded) list of qualifications read out to them. If “other” qualifications are the only qualifications an individual says he or she has, then it is assigned to a level in a predetermined manner as follows:

- 55 per cent are assigned to Level 1
- 35 per cent are assigned to Level 2
- 10 per cent are assigned to Level 3.

These proportions are based on analysis undertaken on the 1991/1992 General Household Survey. The DfES has recently published research which has reviewed these assignments.³ The LFS and measurement of qualifications are discussed in more detail in Annex D.

¹ IFF Research, *Prior Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education*, DfES Research Report 677.

² LSC, *Further Education, Work-based Learning for Young People and Adult and Community Learning – Learner Numbers in England: 2003/2004* (prepared and published by the LSC in consultation with DfES statisticians).

³ DfES (February 2006), *Improving the Collection of Qualification Data*, available on the DfES website (www.dfes.gov.uk/research/).

In Section 3 we comment on the impact of different ways of handling “other qualifications”. For example, in some cases the other qualification is actually one of the precoded list of qualifications. If these are “back-coded” to the precoded list (and in effect then removed from the “other” qualification) then the level highest prior qualification will sometimes be different from that using the LFS method.

The survey also provided the opportunity to ask much more detailed questions about the other qualifications than is possible within the time constraints of the LFS. The impact of assigning a level to these other qualifications taking into account such information as the length of time it took to achieve, what entry requirements there were to undertake the learning for this other qualification and so on is discussed in Annex E – the results presented in the main body of the report do not take into account this additional, more detailed information.

First Full Level 2 Learning

The survey examined five distinct learner groups to examine the instance of first full Level 2 learning: FE learners undertaking full Level 2, thin Level 3 and full Level 3 qualifications; and WBL learners undertaking full Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. (Among FE thin Level 3 learners the survey concentrated almost exclusively on those who had as their learning aim “GCE/AS/A2” – over 9 out of 10 of the thin Level 3 learners interviewed had this as their learning aim).

The survey estimates that among the 450,000 such learners on provision in November 2004, 27 per cent were studying for their first full Level 2 qualification. This represents approximately 119,600 learners who, if successful, would pass the Level 2 threshold.⁴

Table 1 summarises results by learner type. It also shows comparisons with results from the DfES survey *Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education* (DfES Research Report 677) which examined the situation of some 9,000 FE learners on provision in November 2003.

⁴ This figure uses the “LFS method” of assigning other qualifications, as described above. If “other qualifications” are back-coded as described, then the proportion of learners studying for their first full Level 2 qualification changes slightly. Figures are presented in Table 6.

Table 1: First Level 2 learning (using LFS method of determining highest prior qualification).

	<i>Number of interviews</i>	Number of first full Level 2 learners (weighted)	Proportion undertaking their first full Level 2	Comparable 2003/04 FE figure
FE full Level 2	1,338	56,024	38%	39%
FE full Level 3	758	21,670	22%	21%
FE thin Level 3	92	3,234	9%	n/a
WBL full Level 2	541	29,368	32%	n/a
WBL full Level 3	275	9,482	12%	n/a

Predictably, learners on Level 2 provision are the most likely to be undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification (38 per cent for full Level 2 FE learners and 32 per cent for the equivalent in WBL).

FE learners are more likely to be undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification than those currently studying at the same level in WBL. This gap is particularly marked for full Level 3 learners.

There been no significant change in the likelihood of FE learners undertaking full Level 2 or 3 provision to be undertaking their first full Level 2 when results of the study (among learners enrolled in November 2004) are compared with the earlier DfES study (among those enrolled in November 2003).

1: Introduction

1 In June 2003, the DfES published a Skills Strategy White Paper called *21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential*, which specified a number of policies designed to increase skills including the introduction of a new entitlement to free learning for adults studying their first full Level 2 qualification. Further, one of the Department's Public Service Agreement performance targets relates specifically to achievement of Level 2 qualifications among adults:

To reduce the number of adults who lack NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 40 per cent by 2010; and, working towards this, one million more adults already in the workforce to achieve Level 2 between 2003 and 2006.

2 Clearly, then, a key measure in policy terms is the number of learners undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification. While good management information is available on the levels to which current learners are studying towards (through the individualised learner record (ILR) database), information sources do not currently provide adequate information for adult learners linking the level being studied with the prior qualification levels achieved. This led the DfES to commission a study, *The Prior Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education*, the report of which was published in 2005.⁵ This investigated the prior learning levels of some 9,000 individuals studying in FE in November 2003.

3 The 2004/05 study has been led and managed by the LSC National Office Research and MI Teams and has benefited from the participation and representation on the Project Team of colleagues from the DfES who had managed the preceding year's Prior Qualifications Survey. It had similar aims and objectives to the earlier DfES study, namely to provide robust and reliable information on the number of adult learners in the 2004/05 academic year undertaking their first Level 2 qualification. However, compared with the DfES study, it:

⁵ DfES, *Prior Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education*, DfES Research Report 677.

- covers those undertaking WBL rather than being limited to those on FE courses
- has been confined to those on Level 2 and Level 3 courses.

4 More specifically, the study sought to provide reliable and robust information on the proportion of the following learner groups on provision in November 2004 who were undertaking their **first** full Level 2 qualification:

- adult FE learners undertaking a full Level 2 qualification
- adult FE learners undertaking a part Level 3 qualification
- adult FE learners undertaking a full Level 3 qualification
- adult WBL learners undertaking a full Level 2 qualification
- adult WBL learners undertaking a full Level 3 qualification.

5 Level 3 qualifications were included within the scope of the study since learners undertaking a qualification at this level can be undertaking their first **Level 2** qualification, and will hence contribute towards the Level 2 target. More broadly, including Level 3 learners helps develop an understanding of progression – the proportion of learners at particular levels who are undertaking a qualification at a higher level than they had previously attained, and the extent to which lower level learning may lead on to further study at a higher level.

6 As a note, the survey has assessed the proportion of adult learners working towards their first full Level 2 qualification, whereas the Level 2 target relates to the actual achievement of first full Level 2 qualifications. Clearly this distinction between first Level 2 learning among participants and first Level 2 learning among those who end up achieving their learning aim needs to be borne in mind.

Methodology

7 The study involved 3,004 telephone interviews with adult learners aged 19 plus undertaking LSC-funded FE and WBL provision in November 2004.

8 The sample of these learners was drawn by the LSC from the ILR. This covered:

- WBL and FE learners enrolled on provision at Level 2 or 3 in November 2004

- who had not indicated that they were unwilling to be re-contacted for survey work; and
- for whom a telephone number was available.

9 Interviews were conducted by telephone, using Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI), from IFF's telephone centre at its offices in London. Fieldwork took place from 12 August to 5 September 2005. Prior to the main stage of fieldwork, a pilot exercise was conducted: 25 interviews were undertaken and minor revisions made to the questionnaire as a result.

10 Interviews took an average of nine minutes to complete. The questionnaire used for the study is reproduced in Annex F.

11 Quotas were set for the final achieved sample to ensure a distribution of interviews by learner type that would maximise the reliability of the data analysis. The quotas for the survey were set on an interlocked age-by-learning-type matrix. The targets for learning type were set using Neyman allocation whereby targets are allocated in proportion to where the key variable (here, first Level 2 learning) is expected to occur (based on previous survey data and management information). Hence if 10 per cent of all the first Level 2 learning among the sample group is expected to occur among FE learners undertaking a full Level 2 qualification, then 10 per cent of the total number of interviews are allocated to this learner group. The distribution by age reflected the proportions of each learner group falling within the age categories on the grid below, based on ILR information.

12 Further details on the quotas are provided in Annex A.

13 Because the sampling process intentionally oversampled some groups and undersampled others, the survey results were weighted to ensure they were representative of the adult Level 2 and Level 3 learner population. To this end, at the analysis stage results were grossed up to the full profile of adult learners by age within each learning type enrolled on the ILR in November 2004, some 450,000 learners in total.

14 The overall response rate to the survey was 57 per cent. Further details of the response rate, including how this varied by learner type, can be found in Annex B.

Profile of the Achieved Sample

15 Table 2 shows the number of interviews achieved by the variables on which quotas were set, the proportion this number represents of the final (unweighted) sample, and then the proportion this represents once the grossing up process was undertaken. This shows the relative oversampling of FE full Level 2 learners and undersampling of FE thin Level 3 and WBL full Level 3 learners.

Table 2: Sample profile.

	Number of interviews	Proportion of final achieved sample %	Proportion of the weighted sample (that is, once results grossed up) %
<i>Qualification level of current or recent course:</i>			
FE full Level 2	1,338	45	33
FE full Level 3	758	25	22
FE thin Level 3	92	3	8
WBL full Level 2	541	18	21
WBL full Level 3	275	9	17
<i>Age:</i>			
19–24	1,347	45	51
25–44	1,294	43	39
45–retirement	352	12	10
Over retirement age	11	*	*
<i>Base:</i>	3,004	3,004	450,125

2: The Profile of Learners

16 In this short section we describe the demographic profile of the Level 2 and Level 3 learners covered by the survey. This provides context for later findings, and also allows a comparison of how the different learner groups vary demographically.

17 The age, gender and ethnicity of learners are shown in Table 3 overall and by learner type.

Table 3: Demographic profile of adult learners.

	All learners %	Level of current course				
		FE			WBL	
		Full 2 %	Full 3 %	Thin 3 %	Full 2 %	Full 3 %
Male	45	37	33	36	59	62
Female	55	63	67	64	41	38
19–20	30	15	26	23	42	51
21–24	21	14	13	17	31	36
25–30	11	13	10	18	9	9
31–45	28	45	39	24	11	2
45 plus	11	14	13	18	7	2
White	89	86	84	83	95	94
Asian	4	4	7	5	3	3
Black	3	4	4	3	1	–
Mixed or other	2	3	3	4	2	2
Not stated	3	4	3	5	1	1
<i>Base: all</i>	<i>3,004</i>	<i>1,338</i>	<i>758</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>541</i>	<i>275</i>

18 There is a very marked difference in the gender profile of FE and WBL learners. The majority of our sample of FE learners are female (approximately two-thirds, this varying little by the level of the current or recent FE course), whereas the majority of WBL learners (about three-fifths) are male.

19 Adult WBL learners are also much younger than FE learners, reflecting the fact that LSC funding for the WBL programme is only for those aged under 25. Well over half of adult WBL learners are under 25, compared to well under half of FE learners. Those undertaking full Level 2 qualifications in FE were the oldest group, with almost half in the 31–45 age group (46 per cent) and only around 3 in 10 aged under 25.

20 By ethnicity, WBL learners were very heavily skewed towards white learners.

21 While in the report we compare the five learner types, especially in regard to the proportion with prior qualifications at Level 2, it needs to be remembered that the FE and WBL learners are very different in their demographic profile, with the WBL learner profile much more male, young and white.

3: Prior Qualification Level of Learners

22 In this section we present findings on the central part of the study, the prior qualification level of adult learners, particularly the number and proportion of learners undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification. This is examined overall and by learner type, as well as by demographic variables.

23 Throughout the report it should be noted that we use the term “first full Level 2 qualification” to mean any learning at Level 2 **or above** where the learner’s highest prior qualification was below full Level 2. That is, it refers not only to those learners studying at full Level 2 whose highest prior qualification was below this level, but also to learners studying Level 3 qualifications with no prior qualification at full Level 2.

24 First, we briefly discuss the method of determining highest prior qualification.

Determining the Level of Highest Prior Qualification

25 Information on the qualifications that people had attained prior to their current learning were asked in the survey in the following way: survey respondents who indicated that they had any qualifications from school, college or university, through work or through any other sources (question 2 in the questionnaire in Annex F) were read a list of qualifications and asked which they had attained (see question 5). For most individual qualifications there were then follow-up questions asking about the number or level attained. This approach is somewhat different from that used in the LFS,

where respondents are asked to list all the qualifications they have, starting with the highest, with the interviewer then assigning them to relevant codes and then asking follow-up questions where appropriate about the number and level attained.

26 However, based on the range, number and level of the qualifications respondents had attained, findings in this chapter have sought to replicate the LFS approach for how the level of highest prior qualification is determined. One key element of this is that qualifications which respondents have attained which were not one of a set list read out to respondents (which we have termed “other qualifications”) are ignored if any from the list read out to respondents have been obtained.

27 If “other qualifications” are the only ones mentioned, they are randomly assigned to a level in a predetermined manner as follows: 55 per cent are assumed to be Level 1, 35 per cent Level 2 and 10 per cent Level 3. These proportions are based on analysis undertaken on the 1991/1992 General Household Survey. Further work is currently being undertaken by the DfES to review these assignments.

28 At the end of the section, we discuss the impact of a very slightly modified approach whereby other qualifications which in fact should have been assigned one of the pre-coded list of qualifications are in effect “back-coded”, rather than being treated as an “other qualification”.

29 In addition, the questionnaire used for the study allowed much more detail to be collected about the other qualification than is available in the LFS. This included details on the age when the other qualification was achieved, whether there were entry requirements and what these were, how long it took to achieve and whether this was full time or part time. (This additional information was collected about the other qualification either where the respondent had only other qualifications or where the respondent chose an other qualification over one of the pre-coded qualifications read out to them as their highest). Results when using this information to estimate the level of these other qualifications (rather than assigning them in the predetermined way as done by the LFS) are presented in Annex E.

Incidence of First Full Level 2 Learning

30 The survey estimates that among the 450,000 adult learners on provision in November 2004 who were undertaking a full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification either in FE or WBL, or a thin Level 3 in FE, **27 per cent were studying for their first full Level 2 qualification. This represents approximately 119,600 learners who, if successful, would pass the Level 2 threshold.**

31 Table 4 summarises results overall by learner type. It also shows comparisons with results from the DfES survey *Qualifications of Adult Learners in Further Education* (DfES Research Report 677), which examined the situation of some 9,000 FE learners on provision in November 2003.

Table 4: First Level 2 learning (using LFS method of determining highest prior qualification).				
	<i>Number of interviews</i>	Number of first full Level 2 learners (weighted)	Proportion undertaking their first full Level 2	Comparable 2003/04 FE figure
FE full Level 2	1,338	56,024	38%	39%
FE full Level 3	758	21,670	22%	21%
FE thin Level 3	92	3,234	9%	n/a
WBL full Level 2	541	29,368	32%	n/a
WBL full Level 3	275	9,482	12%	n/a

32 Among the Level 2 and Level 3 WBL and FE learners covered by the survey, adult FE learners undertaking a full Level 2 qualification account for almost half of all first Level 2 learners (47 per cent). The survey estimates that some 56,000 FE full Level 2 learners in November 2004 were undertaking their **first** full Level 2 qualification.

33 More generally, learners on Level 2 provision are the most likely to be undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification: this applied to 38 per cent of full Level 2 FE learners and 32 per cent of full Level 2 WBL learners.

34 At both Level 2 and Level 3, FE learners are more likely to be undertaking their first full Level 2 than WBL learners. This gap is particularly marked at Level 3, where 12 per cent of full Level 3 WBL learners were undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification compared with 22 per cent among full Level 3 FE learners. The clear implication is that most adults on Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3 WBL learners) are progressing from Apprenticeships, and thus few do not have a full Level 2 qualification.

35 There has been little change in the likelihood of FE learners undertaking full Level 2 or 3 provision to be undertaking their first full Level 2 when results of the study (among learners enrolled in November 2004) are compared with the earlier DfES study (among those enrolled in November 2003).

Profile of Full Level 2 Learners Undertaking Their First Full Level 2

36 Table 5 compares the profile of full Level 2 learners undertaking their first full Level 2 with full Level 2 learners in general, and then does this among FE and WBL learners.

	All full L2 learners	L2 doing first full L2	FE		WBL	
			All full L2	L2 and first full L2	All full L2	L2 and first full L2
<i>Base: all full L2 learners</i>	1,879	617	1,338	459	541	158
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender						
Male	45	46	37	38	59	62
Female	55	54	63	62	41	38
Age						
19–24	46	40	29	28	73	63
25–44	43	45	57	56	19	24
45 plus	11	15	14	16	7	13
Ethnicity						
White	89	91	85	88	94	96
Non-white	8	7	11	8	5	4
Not stated	3	3	4	4	1	1
Mode of study						
Full-time	15	16	25	25	–	–
Part-time	85	84	75	75	100	100

37 The profile of Level 2 learners doing their first full Level 2 is relatively close to the profile of full Level 2 learners in general, though they tend to be a little older. This tendency is particularly marked for WBL learners: 37 per cent of Level 2 WBL learners undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification are aged 25 plus, despite this age group accounting for just a quarter (26 per cent) of full Level 2 WBL learners overall.

Detailed Highest Prior Qualification Level

38 The analysis to date has examined the number and proportion of first full Level 2 learners. Table 6 gives a more detailed breakdown of the actual prior qualification level overall and by learner type. Results are presented as horizontal percentages.

Table 6: Prior qualification level by learner type.							
<i>Horizontal percentages</i>	<i>Base</i>		<i>Level of highest prior qualification</i>				
			<i>None</i>	<i>Below 2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4/5</i>
<i>Current level:</i>							
FE full Level 2	1,338	%	9	29	28	18	17
FE full Level 3	758	%	4	18	32	26	20
FE thin Level 3	92	%	–	9	23	25	43
WBL full Level 2	541	%	8	23	37	23	9
WBL full Level 3	275	%	1	12	33	41	13

39 Around half of those undertaking full Level 3 courses already had a qualification at Level 3 or higher. This applied to 54 per cent of full Level 3 WBL learners and 46 per cent of FE full Level 3 learners.

40 Among those undertaking thin Level 3 courses in FE (a low base of 92 interviews, so some caution is needed when analysing results) a high proportion have a Level 4 or 5 qualification (43 per cent) and over 2 in 3 of this group (68 per cent) have at least a Level 3 qualification.

41 As well as the prior qualification level itself, the specific qualifications previously attained by those already qualified to Level 2 are of interest. This is shown in Table 7 specifically for those aged 19–24 for two groups:

- FE learners already qualified to Level 2 currently undertaking an NVQ at Level 2 (the most common learning aim among FE Level 2 learners)
- WBL learners already with a qualification at Level 2 currently undertaking a full Level 2.

42 Relatively low base sizes should be noted.

	Current learning aim	
	FE NVQ Level 2	WBL 2
<i>Base: all with prior qualification at Level 2 aged 19–24</i>	69	154
<i>Academic:</i>	%	%
5+ O level, GCSE grade A*–C or equivalent	59	49
A level or equivalent (1 A level)	13	8
AS level or equivalent	6	6
SCE higher or equivalent (1 or 2 SCE highers)	–	1
<i>Vocational:</i>		
NVQ Level 2	39	28
City and Guilds craft	6	6
BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general diploma	6	3
GNVQ intermediate	10	20
Modern Apprenticeship	5	13
RSA diploma	2	1
Academic	63	55
Vocational	60	55
Both	23	10

43 FE learners aged 19–24 undertaking an NVQ at Level 2 who were already qualified to Level 2 typically had 5 or more O levels, GCSEs or equivalent grade A*–C (59 per cent), or a previous NVQ at Level 2 (39 per cent).

44 The pattern was broadly similar among WBL Level 2 learners with a prior qualification at Level 2, with 5 or more O levels, GCSEs or equivalent at A*–C by far the most common prior qualification (49 per cent). A slightly lower proportion than found among the comparative group of FE learners had a prior NVQ at Level 2 (28 per cent), though they were much more likely to have a GNVQ at intermediate level.

45 Grouping these qualifications as “academic” and “vocational” shows a higher proportion of those in the FE NVQ Level 2 group that held academic prior Level 2 qualifications and slightly fewer with vocational qualifications at this level, but the figures are not statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level, other than for these FE learners to be significantly more likely to have **both** academic and vocational prior Level 2 qualifications.

Comparison of Prior Achievement Level Compared to the Individualised Learner Record

46 The ILR contains information on some learners about their prior achievement level which is collected by providers. This section compares the level recorded with that collected from the survey.

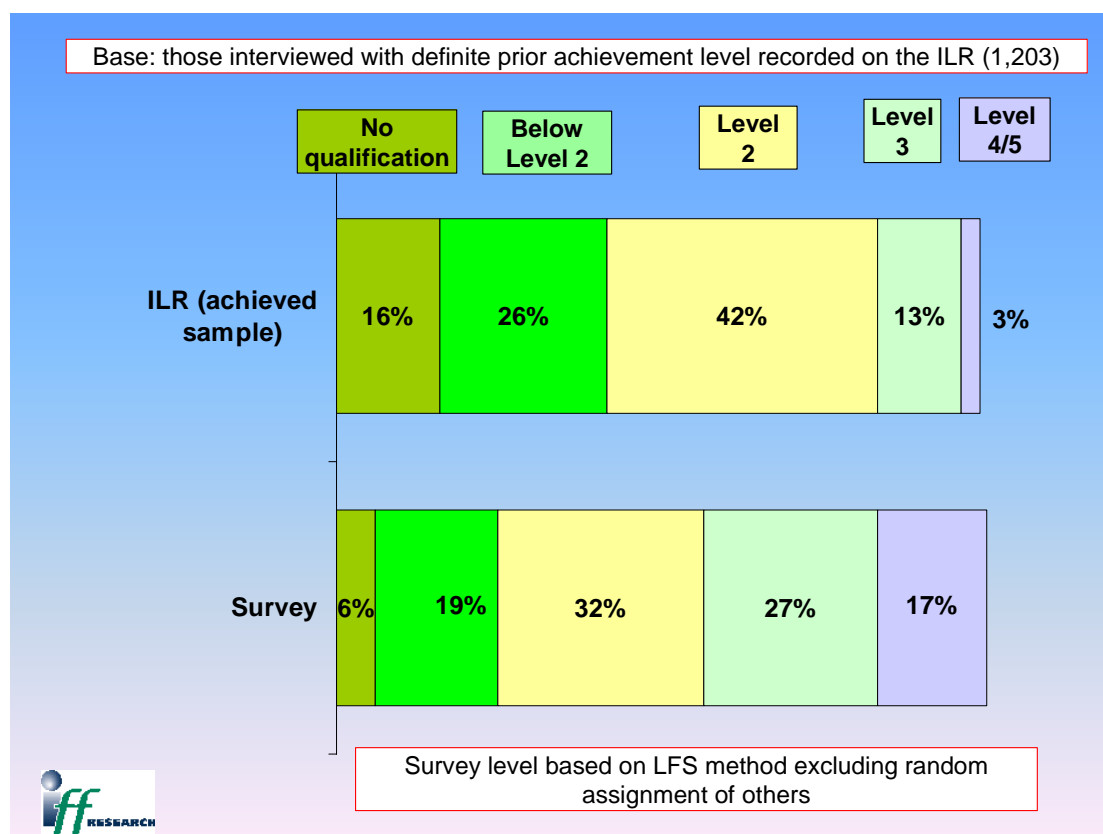
47 In the initial sample supplied by the LSC of Level 2 and Level 3 learners, half (51 per cent) had no prior qualification level information provided. This, and the level of prior qualification where this information was available, is shown in Table 8, both for all the supplied sample and among those where an interview was achieved. The profile of the achieved sample and of the total sample supplied was very similar.

Table 8: Comparison of different measures of prior achievement.			
	ILR (all supplied sample)	ILR (achieved sample)	
	%	%	
No qualifications	7	7	7
Entry Level and below Level 1	2	1	1
Level 1	12	10	10
Level 2	19	20	20
Level 3	5	6	6
Levels 4 or 5	2	2	2
Other qualification, level not known	2	2	2
Not known	51	53	53

48 The key measure is how prior qualification levels compare on the ILR to those collected in the survey. This is summarised in Figure 1, showing, for the achieved sample, where a prior qualification level was recorded on the

ILR (we have seen this is only around half the sample), the level on the ILR, and the level as recorded by the survey questioning.

Figure 1: Comparison of different measures of prior achievement for those with prior level recorded on the ILR.



49 Compared to the survey findings, the ILR suggests a much higher proportion with no qualifications (16 per cent against 6 per cent), and a much lower proportion with high-level qualifications whether this is measured in terms of at least Level 3 (16 per cent against 44 per cent) or at least Level 4 (3 per cent against 17 per cent).

50 More generally, of the 1,203 interviews undertaken where a prior level was recorded on the ILR **and** the survey gave a definite level (that is, without the need for random assignment), the survey agreed with the ILR level in 37 per cent of cases (unweighted). In 50 per cent of cases, the ILR underestimated the level of prior achievement; in 13 per cent of cases, the ILR overestimated prior achievement.

51 As well as a comparison of the levels recorded on the ILR and by the survey, as presented in Figure 1, it is also possible to assess the specific prior qualifications recorded by the survey against the level indicated in the ILR. An

analysis is presented in Table 9 for learners with a prior qualification at Level 2 or Level 3, where information on qualification level was recorded on the ILR as Level 1 or no qualification. This is shown separately for WBL learners and FE learners. Qualifications are ranked in descending order of likelihood of mention among WBL learners. Data are unweighted.

Table 9: Highest prior qualification of learners with a prior Level 2 or 3, where ILR stated prior qualification as below Level 2.				
<i>Data unweighted</i>	ILR stated highest prior			
	WBL		FE	
	No qualifications	L1	No qualifications	L1
<i>Base: All with prior Level 2 or 3 where ILR stated prior as below Level 2</i>	(26)%	(88)%	(62)%	(56)%
NVQ Level 2	35	23	19	13
5+ O level, GCSE grade A*–C or equivalent	12	22	21	25
A level or equivalent	23	15	19	7
GNVQ Intermediate	–	11	3	9
NVQ Level 3	–	9	11	9
GNVQ advanced	12	2	5	7
OND, ONC, BTEC and so on, national	4	5	6	4
Modern Apprenticeship (L2)	–	6	–	4
AS level or equivalent (L2)	4	2	–	4
City and Guilds craft	8	1	6	7
BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general diploma	–	2	2	5
Modern Apprenticeship (L3)	–	1	–	4
City and Guilds advanced craft	–	1	5	2
SCE higher or equivalent	4	–	–	–
RSA advanced diploma	–	–	–	2
Access to HE	–	–	2	–

52 WBL learners indicating they had qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, but recorded on the ILR as having no qualifications or qualifications at Level 1, had attained a large range of qualifications, most often NVQs at Level 2, five or more O levels, GCSE grade A*–C or equivalent, or A level(s) or equivalent. Among the equivalent cohort of FE learners, the same three qualification categories were the most likely to have been attained.

53 The reason for the ILR having information recorded differently from that indicated by the respondent at the interview (as we have seen, survey findings suggest that the ILR **underestimates** prior qualification level) can only be hypothesised. The ILR prior qualification level comes from information recorded by the college or provider, and the range of methods used and questions asked to collect this information is not known.

54 Clearly few colleges or providers will be able to spend the time taken during this survey to collect information on prior qualifications, but one would expect that any question aimed at collecting highest qualification would capture the kind of qualifications listed in Table 9 and that few individuals would rate a Level 1 qualification as higher than qualifications such as an NVQ at Level 2 or an A level.

55 In addition to cases where the ILR may record the wrong level due to incomplete or inaccurate data collection, it may also be the case that where the prior qualification is not known or not available, providers may be assigning prior qualifications to learners on the assumption that most of those studying at this level will not have a Level 2 qualification already.

The Effect of Back-coding Other Qualifications

56 Results in the report to date have been based on assigning prior qualifications to levels based on an approach similar to the LFS (see paragraphs 26 and 27). In some cases the other qualifications listed by the respondent are ones which were read out to them (which we term “pre-coded qualifications”). If these are back-coded to the pre-coded list, and in effect removed from the list of other qualifications, then this can change the level of prior qualification assigned to a respondent.

57 Using this approach the overall proportion of our sample of learners undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification is 26 per cent, a slight reduction compared with the “LFS approach” (27 per cent).

58 The figures by learner type are shown in Table 10. The proportion of first Level 2 learners using this method is 1 per cent lower for full Level 2 learners in FE and in WBL compared with the LFS approach.

Table 10: Prior qualification level by learner type.

<i>Horizontal percentages</i>	<i>Base</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Prior qualification level</i>				<i>4/5</i>	<i>First full Level 2</i>
			<i>Below 2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>		
<i>Current level:</i>								
FE full Level 2	1,338 %	9	28	27	18	18	37	
FE thin Level 3	92 %	–	9	23	25	43	9	
FE full Level 3	758 %	4	18	32	26	21	22	
WBL full Level 2	541 %	8	23	37	23	9	31	
WBL full Level 3	275 %	1	11	33	41	13	12	

Concluding Remarks

59 The survey has highlighted the following points.

- A minority of Level 2 and Level 3 learners are undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification.
- For learners undertaking full Level 2 qualifications FE learners are more likely than WBL learners to be undertaking their **first** full Level 2 qualification (38 per cent and 32 per cent respectively).
- The same is found for full Level 3 learning (22 per cent of FE learners undertaking a Level 3 qualification were undertaking their first full Level 2 qualification compared with 12 per cent among full Level 3 WBL learners).
- Around half of those undertaking full Level 3 courses already had a qualification at Level 3 or higher.
- Survey findings suggest that where the ILR records prior qualifications (it did so for only around half the sample supplied), it overstates the proportion with no prior qualifications or qualifications below Level 2, and underestimates the proportion with prior qualifications at Level 2, Level 3 and at Level 4 or above.
- While adult learners have a wide range of prior qualifications, and the complexity and time involved in gaining full, accurate and detailed information on the full extent of their prior qualifications is significant, information on the ILR as to whether learners have a prior full Level 2 qualification or above could be improved by concentrating on a number of the main qualifications which contribute to learners having a prior full Level 2. These are particularly: five or more O levels, GCSE or equivalents at grade A*–C; NVQs at Level 2 or Level 3; A levels; GNVQ Intermediate or Advanced; and degrees and qualifications at Levels 4 and 5. Even this list could be reduced given

that those with the Level 4 or Level 5 qualifications will nearly all have qualifications at Levels 2 and 3.

Annex A: Quotas

1 The quota targets for the survey were set as shown in Table A1. The setting of these is described in paragraph 11.

Table A1: Quota targets.					
	19–24	25–44	45 to retirement age	Over retirement age	Total
<i>Learning type:</i>					
FE full Level 2	361	768	200	6	1,335
FE full Level 3	293	369	95	2	759
FE thin Level 3	37	38	14	3	92
WBL full Level 2	408	95	36	1	540
WBL full Level 3	243	25	5	1	274
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,342</i>	<i>1,295</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>3,000</i>

Annex B: Sample Outcomes and Response Rate

1 In total, 15,705 learners were called at least once. Table A2 shows the final outcome of all these attempted contacts.

Table A2: Final outcome of attempted contacts.		
	Number of learners	% of all sample called one or more times
“Definite” outcome at end of fieldwork		
Completed interview	3,004	19
Quit during interview	62	*
Refused	1,874	12
Other “dead” outcome ⁶	338	2
No recollection of specified course or college	63	*
Number not available or won’t accept anonymous calls	2,800	18
“Live” sample at end of fieldwork		
Live sample removed because quota targets were met	508	3
Remaining live contacts	7,056	45

Base

2 The valid response rate can be taken to be the number of completed interviews as a proportion of all definite outcomes in scope (that is, excluding wrong numbers or those not mentioning the course detailed on the ILR). In effect, this is derived from the following calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Completed interviews}}{(\text{Completed interviews} + \text{Quit during interview} + \text{Refused} + \text{Other dead outcome})}$$

3 The valid response rate for this survey is therefore **57 per cent**, a reasonably high rate for a survey of this nature.

4 Achieving a good response rate at an overall level is critical in order to minimise the potential bias in the results. However, it is also important to minimise the incidence of bias due to differential response rates between different groups of respondents. Table A3 shows how the response rate (as defined above) differs by a number of key groups:

⁶ This includes learners who felt they could not do the interview because they had very poor spoken English, hearing problems or learning difficulties as well as cases where the respondent had recently moved house.

Table A3: Response rate by learner type.

	Response rate
	%
<i>Overall</i>	57
<i>Age</i>	
19–24	54
25–44	61
45 plus	58
<i>Level of current course</i>	
FE full Level 2	59
FE full Level 3	64
FE thin Level 3	63
WBL full Level 2	49
WBL full Level 3	46

Annex C: Classification of Level by Qualifications

1 The classification system used in reporting the level of prior qualifications replicated the Labour Force Survey (LFS), and was as shown in Table A4.

Table A4: Labour Force Survey spring 1997 onwards – conversion to NVQ level equivalents.

General qualification level	LFS list	NVQ level equivalents				
		Level 5	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Below Level 2
	Base					
Higher degree	Higher degree	Yes				
	NVQ Level 5	Yes				
First degree	First degree		Yes			
	Other degree		Yes			
Other HE	NVQ Level 4		Yes			
	Diploma in higher education HNC, HND, BTEC and so on, higher		Yes			
	Teaching, further education		Yes			
	Teaching, secondary education		Yes			
	Teaching, primary education		Yes			
	Teaching, level not stated		Yes			
	Nursing and so on		Yes			
	RSA higher diploma		Yes			
	Other HE below degree		Yes			
A-level or equivalent	NVQ Level 3			Yes		
	GNVQ advanced			Yes		
	A level or equivalent			If 2+	If 1	
	RSA advanced diploma			Yes		
	OND, ONC, BTEC and so on, national			Yes		
	City and Guilds advanced craft Scottish Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS)			Yes		
	SCE higher or equivalent			67%	33%	
	AS level or equivalent			If 3+	If 1 or 2	
	Trade apprenticeship			If 4+	If 2 or 3	If 1
GSCE A*–C	NVQ Level 2					
	GNVQ intermediate				Yes	
	RSA diploma				Yes	
	City and Guilds craft BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general diploma				Yes	
	O level, GCSE grade A*–C or equivalent				Yes	
					If 5+	If <5
Other	NVQ Level 1					Yes
	GNVQ, GSVQ foundation level CSE below grade 1, GCSE below grade C					Yes
	BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general certificate					Yes
						Yes
						Yes
	SCOTVEC modules					Yes

qualification						
	RSA other					Yes
	City and Guilds other					Yes
	YT, YTP certificate					Yes
	Other qualifications			10%	35%	55%
No qualifications	No qualifications					

Annex D: The Labour Force Survey Classification System

1 The LFS is a large-scale survey of households living at private addresses in Great Britain and is based on a random sample of over 60,000 private addresses every quarter. Households are interviewed face-to-face when first included in the survey, and by telephone thereafter. Its purpose is to provide information on the UK labour market that can then be used to develop, manage, evaluate and report on labour market policies.

2 Because it has a broad purpose (the questionnaire collects information about household, family structure, basic housing information and demographic details of individuals in the households, economic activity, education, health, and so on), a relatively small amount of the survey is dedicated to questions on education. In this area it covers qualifications attained and qualifications that are being studied for. This is within the following structure.

- “Do you have any qualifications from school, college or university or connected with work or from government schemes or no qualifications or don’t know?”
- “Which qualifications do (you think) you have, starting with the highest qualifications?”

3 There are then follow-up questions on grades and number of specific qualifications held. From this, highest qualification is then “determined”. Information is collected on when and where they obtained their highest qualification.

4 This study provided the opportunity to collect more detailed information on qualifications held than is possible within the time constraints of the LFS. However, as the LFS is used for monitoring the PSA target on Level 2 achievement it was felt more appropriate to use its classification system for determining the level of the highest prior qualification in this report. Key elements of this system are described in this Annex.

5 A relatively high proportion of respondents have their highest qualification identified either as unknown or “other” (about 13 per cent). The

system for classifying these into level of highest qualification is by assigning them a level in a predetermined manner, as follows:

- 55 per cent are assigned to Level 1
- 35 per cent are assigned to Level 2
- 10 per cent are assigned to Level 3.

6 If a trade apprenticeship is the highest qualification, half these learners are assigned as having achieved a Level 2 qualification and half a Level 3.

7 If a Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) is the highest qualification, 67 per cent are allocated as a Level 2 and 33 per cent a Level 3.

8 There are a number of qualifications where the level is determined by the number and level achieved. For example, four GCSEs at grade A*–C count as being below Level 2, whereas someone with five or more GCSEs at grade A*–C counts as being at Level 2. Similarly two or more A levels count as Level 3, one as being a Level 2. If A levels, AS levels or O levels are the highest qualification but the learner is unsure how many they have, then level is determined using the results of those who do have such qualifications as their highest and assigning the proportion of learners at each level, as follows:

- A levels – 32 per cent Level 2 and 68 per cent Level 3
- AS levels – 18 per cent Level 1, 55 per cent Level 2 and 27 per cent Level 3
- O levels – 52 per cent Level 1 and 48 per cent Level 2.

9 There are a number of other issues with regard to LFS that are worth noting.

- The high proportion of proxy answers (that is, answers given about a respondent by someone else in the household). Nearly a third of responses are by proxy and a follow-up survey indicated that the qualification questions were poorly answered by proxy respondents in relation to lower-level qualifications (GCSEs) and vocational qualifications (responses for degree level qualifications were more accurate).
- For approximately 1 per cent of respondents there is no answer given for the qualifications that they have.
- The relatively high proportion of respondents with their highest qualification identified either as unknown or “other” (about 13 per cent).

10 Comparisons of the number of current learners as collected through the LFS compared with administrative counts of current learners show large differences, which suggest that the LFS has difficulties accurately capturing information on current learning.

Annex E: “Other” Qualifications: A Comparison of the Survey Against the Labour Force Survey

1 With the LFS classification of level, where the highest qualification reported by a learner is not one of a set list of qualifications, then these “other” qualifications are assigned to a level in a predetermined manner (55 per cent to Level 1, 35 per cent to Level 2 and 10 per cent to Level 3). These proportions are based on analysis undertaken on the 1991/92 General Household Survey. Further work is currently being undertaken by the DfES to review these assignments.

2 One of the advantages of the methodology used in the current survey was that additional information was collected on these “other” qualifications in an attempt to assign every single highest “other” qualification to a specific level (in this Annex this is titled the “survey classification” to distinguish it from the LFS classification). It was therefore expected that the breakdown of these “other” qualifications by level would not exactly match the LFS predefined assignment ratios. The additional information on this “other” highest qualification that was collected in this survey was:

- a age when achieved highest qualification
- b the entry requirement in terms of qualifications or experience required, if any
- c how long it took to achieve the qualification
- d whether the qualification was part-time or full-time
- e a combined respondent and interviewer **estimation** of the level using the following descriptions:
 - a Level 1 qualification which is entry or foundation level – this includes short courses
 - a Level 2 intermediate qualification, such as O levels or City and Guilds craft level
 - a Level 3 advanced qualification such as A levels, and ONC or OND or a City and Guilds Advanced craft. This is likely to take two years to complete, and would not be gained by anyone under 17

- a first degree (this would take 2–3 years to complete and you would normally need qualifications at A level or equivalent) (would be aged 20 plus to acquire this)
- A higher degree such as an MBA or a PhD (this would take a number of years to complete and would normally require a first degree).

3 Using all this information to assign a specific level to the highest qualification enables a comparison of the outcome with the predetermined LFS assignment (55 per cent to Level 1, 35 per cent to Level 2 and 10 per cent to Level 3). Table A5 shows the level assigned to those learners from the survey who have an “other” qualification and no pre-coded qualification, compared against the predefined assignment ratios that the LFS uses.⁷

Table A5: Level of “other” qualification (where no pre-coded qualification) based on “survey classification”.				
	Survey classification		LFS system of assigning “other” qualifications	
	%		%	
Level 1	51		55	
Level 2	25		35	
Level 3	6		10	
Level 4 or 5	18		–	
<i>Base</i>	<i>102</i>		<i>102</i>	

4 Although the assignment to levels in the survey classification is relatively subjective, the survey findings suggest that LFS assumptions overstate the proportions with lower level qualifications and indeed ignores those with qualifications at Levels 4 or 5. The survey results suggest 18 per cent of these “other” highest qualifications are at Levels 4 or 5. Just over half of these Level 4 and 5 qualifications are degrees acquired outside the UK, with other qualifications at this level being advanced IT qualifications, foreign teaching or nursing qualifications and foreign diplomas.

5 Again, it needs to be noted that that the survey is looking at current adult (aged 19 plus) learners enrolled on LSC-funded FE and WBL provision, whereas the LFS is a survey of the general population. The differences in how

⁷ It is only possible to make direct comparisons between the survey classification of the highest “other” qualification with LFS where no pre-coded qualifications were mentioned. If a learner says they have an “other” qualification **and** a pre-coded qualification in the LFS classification system then the pre-coded qualification is **always** taken to be the highest. So if the learner says that they have a pre-coded Level 1 qualification and an “other” non-pre-coded qualification then the highest qualification taken is always the Level 1 qualification even if the “other” qualification was, say, a foreign degree.

these “other” qualifications are assigned partly reflect the fact that learners in FE and WBL are likely to be more highly qualified than the general population.

Annex F: Survey Questionnaire

Can I speak to (NAMED RESPONDENT) please?

WHEN SPEAKING TO NAMED RESPONDENT

Hello, my name is XXX and I'm calling from IFF Research, an independent market research company. We are conducting a survey of people who have recently been on FE courses and work-based learning programmes on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council. It is an important study for the Learning and Skills Council, and will help them understand the qualifications that people had before starting their recent learning.

The interview only takes about 10 minutes. All responses you give will be strictly confidential – we are only reporting anonymised responses back to the LSC. Would now be a convenient time to undertake the interview (or could I call you back later at a more convenient time)?

REASSURANCES: USE AS NECESSARY

Where did you get my name / number from? The sample was drawn at random from records held by the Learning and Skills Council on current and recent learners in FE and on work-based learning programmes.

Who are the LSC?: The LSC are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone over 16 in England, other than higher education.

Contacts:

At IFF – Zehra Koroglu or Stefan Schafer at IFF Research on 020 7250 3035.

At LSC – Rob Birkett on 024 7682 5725

IFF works strictly within the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. The MRS has a freephone number, 0500 396999.

RECORD FROM SAMPLE:

S1) GENDER

Male	1	
Female	2	

S2) AGE

19–24	1	
25–44	2	
45–60 (if female) / 45–65 (if male)	3	
61 plus (if female) / 66 plus (if male)	4	

S3) FE / WBL AND LEVEL

FE Full Level 2	1	
FE Full Level 3	2	
FE Part Level 3	3	
WBL Full Level 2	4	
WBL Full Level 3	5	

CHECK QUOTAS ON S2 AND S3 BEFORE CONTINUING

- 1) First can I just check, in November 2004 were you enrolled on a course at (INSERT COLLEGE or PROVIDER)?

Yes – currently on course	1	GO TO MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE
Yes – was on it but have left now (= RECENT LEAVER)	2	GO TO Q1a
No / not sure	3	THANK AND CLOSE

- ASK LEAVERS (Q1 = 2) OTHERS GO TO MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE
 1a) Did you complete the course or did you drop out without completing?

Completed course	1	GO TO MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE
Did not complete course / dropped out	2	
Don't know	3	

- ASK ALL
 1b) Which course or programme [TEXT SUB: are (Q1/1) / were (Q1/2)] you enrolled on at (INSERT COLLEGE or PROVIDER)[TEXT SUB: in November 2004 (Q1/2)]?

--

Main questionnaire

ASK ALL

- 2) The first area I would like to cover is any qualifications you may have had **BEFORE** you started the [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course or programme with [NAME OF PROVIDER]. I am interested in any qualifications you had before starting the course, whether you got them at school or college or through work or training; and no matter how long ago you got them. So do you have any qualifications from any of the following? READ OUT

		Yes	No	Don't know
a	School, college or university	1	2	3
b	From any other training provider	1	2	3
c	Connected with work, whether your current employer or a previous one	1	2	3
d	From government schemes	1	2	3
e	From a Modern Apprenticeship [ADD IF NECESSARY: These qualifications began in 1995. They are work based learning opportunities and are for those aged 16–25.]	1	2	3
f	From some other trade apprenticeship	1	2	3
g	And do you have qualifications from any other sources (PLEASE SPECIFY)	1	2	3

IF NO/DON'T KNOW TO ALL OPTIONS AT Q2 ASK Q3 (OTHERS GO TO QUALIFICATIONS SECTION)

- 3) So can I just check, you left full time education with no qualifications and have not gained any qualifications since then, for example through work or returning to college?

Correct – no qualifications	1	CHECK SECTION ON ADDITIONAL DFES QUESTIONS
No – DO have qualifications	2	GO TO QUALIFICATIONS SECTION
Not sure if what have counts as a qualification	3	GO TO QUALIFICATIONS SECTION
Can't remember if have qualification	4	THANK AND CLOSE (THIS DOES NOT COUNT AS AN INTERVIEW)

QUALIFICATIONS SECTION

IF ANY QUALIFICATIONS:

- 4) Before I run through some qualifications, can you tell me if you had any qualifications specific to Scotland or Wales before starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course (ADD IF NECESSARY: such as SCOTVEC or SCEs)?

Yes – Scottish	1	IF THIS SINGLE CODED EXCLUDE UNDERLINED IN ITALICS AT Q5
Yes – Welsh	2	IF THIS SINGLE CODED EXCLUDE THOSE IN PLAIN UNDERLINING AT Q5
No	3	EXCLUDE QUALIFICATIONS UNDERLINED IN FOLLOWING TABLE

- 5) I'd like to run through a list of qualifications to see which you had BEFORE starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course. (IF Q2 has at least one Yes among first 4 statements: "Please include all those acquired from [list statements answered YES AT Q2_a to Q2_d]". However, please do NOT include the qualifications which your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course intended to lead to. READ OUT

Qualification	Code	Max level achievable with that qualification
A degree acquired in the UK (such as a foundation degree, a BSc, a BA, MA or a PhD), graduate membership of a professional qualification or a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate of Education)	1	5
A Diploma in Higher Education: this usually takes <u>two years full-time or three years part-time</u> . (Examples are DipHE in youth and community work, or DipHE in design)	2	4
HNC / HND (Higher National Certificate / Higher National Diploma)	3	4
ONC / OND (Ordinary National Certificate / Ordinary National Diploma)	4	3
BTEC	5	4
SCOTVEC, SCOTEC or SCOTBEC	6	4
Teaching qualification other than PGCE	7	4
Nursing or other medical qualification (excluding nursery nurse qualifications) not yet mentioned (please do not include first aid courses)	8	4
Other Higher Education qualifications below degree level	9	4
A levels (if respondent aged 60 plus add: including Higher School Certificate and Matriculation Higher)	10	3
SCE Higher	11	3
NVQ / SVQ	12	5
GNVQ / GSVQ	13	3
AS-level / vocational AS-level	14	3
Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS)	15	3
Access to HE	16	3
O levels or AO levels (if respondent aged 60 plus add School Certificate and Matriculation) [NB ended in 1988]	17	2
SCE standard / ordinary O grade	18	3
GCSEs [NB introduced from 1988]	19	2
CSEs [NB ended in 1988]	20	2
National Qualifications (Scotland) including SCE Intermediate	21	4
RSA or OCR	22	4

City and Guilds	23	3
YT Certificate	24	1
Key Skills	25	2
Basic Skills including ESOL	26	1
<i>Welsh Baccalaureate</i>	27	Level 3
International Baccalaureate	28	Level 3
<u>Entry Level Qualifications (Wales)</u>	29	1
Any other professional or vocational qualification such as HGV or first aid qualification (IF YES: Can you tell me what such qualifications you have?)	30	Level derived (if highest) from next but one section
Any foreign, non-UK qualifications (IF YES: Can you tell me what such qualifications you have?)	31	Level derived (if highest) from next but one section
Which other qualifications, if any, do you have? (LIST)	32	Level derived (if highest) from next but one section
Any other qualifications? (LIST)	33	Level derived (if highest) from next but one section
Any other qualifications? (LIST)	34	Level derived (if highest) from next but one section

SECTION: FOLLOW UP ON QUALIFICATIONS TO DETERMINE HIGHEST LEVEL & 'THINNESS'

Before starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course ...

IF BTEC AT Q5

- 6) Was your highest BTEC qualification ... READ OUT AND CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

At higher level	1	Full (100%) Level 4
At National Certificate or National Diploma level	2	Full (100%) Level 3
A first diploma or general diploma	3	Full (100%) Level 2
A first certificate or general certificate	4	Full (100%) Level 1
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	5	= treat as full (100%) Level 1 for determining level

- 7) IF SCOTVEC / SCOTEC / SCOTBEC AT Q5
Was your highest SCOTVEC qualification ... READ OUT AND CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

At higher level	1	Full (100%) Level 4
A full National Certificate	2	Full (100%) Level 3
A first diploma or general diploma	3	Full (100%) Level 2
A first certificate or general certificate	4	Full (100%) Level 1
Modules towards a National Certificate	5	Part Level 1
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	6	= treat as part Level 1 for determining level

- 8) IF A LEVEL AT Q5
Did you have ... READ OUT

One A level (or equivalent)	1	Counts as 50% of Level 3
Or more than one	2	Full (100%) Level 3
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	3	= treat as (50%) Level 3 for determining level

- 9) IF SCE HIGHERS AT Q5
Did you have ... READ OUT

One SCE Higher	1	Counts as 33% of Level 3
Two SCE Higher	2	Counts as 66% of Level 3
Three or more SCE Higher	3	Full (100%) Level 3
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	4	= treat as 33% of Level 3 for determining level

- 10) IF NVQ/SVQ AT Q5
What was your highest level of full NVQ / SVQ ... READ OUT

Level 1	1	Full (100%) Level 1
Level 2	2	Full (100%) Level 2
Level 3	3	Full (100%) Level 3
Level 4	4	Full (100%) Level 4
Or Level 5	5	Full (100%) Level 5
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	6	= full Level 1 for determining level

- 11) IF GNVQ/GSVQ AT Q5
Was your highest GNVQ / GSVQ at ... READ OUT?

Advanced level 12 units	1	Full (100%) Level 3
Advanced level 6 units	2	Part (50%) Level 3
[DO NOT READ OUT] Advanced level – unsure of units	3	Full (100%) Level 3
Full intermediate level (6 units)	4	Full (100%) Level 2
Part one intermediate level (3 units)	5	Part (50%) Level 2
[DO NOT READ OUT] Intermediate level – unsure of units	6	Full (100%) Level 2
Full foundation level (6 units)	7	Full (100%) Level 1
Part one foundation level (3 units)	8	Part (50%) Level 1
[DO NOT READ OUT] Foundation level – unsure of units	9	Full (100%) Level 1
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't remember / Don't know	10	= full Level 1 for determining level

- 12) IF AS-LEVEL AT Q5
Did you have ... READ OUT

One AS level	1	Counts as 25% of Level 3
Two AS levels	2	Counts as 50% of Level 3
Three AS levels	3	Counts as 75% of Level 3
Four or more AS levels	4	Counts as 100% of Level 3
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	5	Counts as 25% of Level 3

- 13) IF HAVE O LEVELS OR AO LEVELS
How many O levels or AO levels did you have in total? PROMPT IF NECESSARY. IF DON'T KNOW / CAN'T REMEMBER ASK IF LESS THAN FIVE

One	1	Counts as 20% of a Level 2
Two	2	Counts as 40% of a Level 2
Three	3	Counts as 60% of a Level 2
Four	4	Counts as 80% of a Level 2
Or 5 or more	5	Full (100%) Level 2
Can't remember but less than 5	6	= treat as 20% of a Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't remember at all	7	= treat as 20% of a Level 2

- 14) IF HAVE SCE STANDARD / ORDINARY O GRADE
 How many SCE Standard grades 1–3 or O grades at grade C did you have? PROMPT IF NECESSARY. IF DON'T KNOW / CAN'T REMEMBER, ASK IF LESS THAN FIVE

None	1	Counts as full Level 1
One	2	Counts as 20% of a Level 2
Two	3	Counts as 40% of a Level 2
Three	4	Counts as 60% of a Level 2
Four	5	Counts as 80% of a Level 2
Or 5 or more	6	Full (100%) Level 2
Can't remember but less than 5	7	= treat as 20% of a Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't remember at all	8	= treat as 20% of a Level 2

- 15) IF HAVE GCSEs
 How many GCSEs grade C or above did you have? PROMPT IF NECESSARY. IF DON'T KNOW / CAN'T REMEMBER, ASK IF LESS THAN FIVE

None	1	Counts as full Level 1
One	2	Counts as 20% of a Level 2
Two	3	Counts as 40% of a Level 2
Three	4	Counts as 60% of a Level 2
Four	5	Counts as 80% of a Level 2
Or 5 or more	6	Full (100%) Level 2
Can't remember but less than 5	7	= treat as 20% of a Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't remember at all	8	= treat as 20% of a Level 2

- 16) IF HAVE CSEs AT Q5
 How many CSEs did you have at grade 1? PROMPT IF NECESSARY. IF DON'T KNOW / CAN'T REMEMBER, ASK IF LESS THAN FIVE

None	1	Counts as full Level 1
One	2	Counts as 20% of a Level 2
Two	3	Counts as 40% of a Level 2
Three	4	Counts as 60% of a Level 2
Four	5	Counts as 80% of a Level 2
Or 5 or more	6	Full (100%) Level 2
Can't remember but less than 5	7	= treat as 20% of a Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't remember at all	8	= treat as 20% of a Level 2

IF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (SCOTLAND) INCLUDING SCE INTERMEDIATE AT Q5

- 17) Was your highest National Qualification... READ OUT AND CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES?

Advanced higher	1	ASK NEXT QUESTION
Higher	2	Full (100%) Level 3
Intermediate Level 2	3	<u>ASK Q20</u>
Intermediate Level 1	4	<u>ASK Q19</u>
Access Level	5	Full (100%) Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	6	Full (100%) Level 2 for determining level

IF ADVANCED HIGHER NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (SCOTLAND) INCLUDING SCE INTERMEDIATE AT PREVIOUS QUESTION

- 18) Did you have ... READ OUT AND CODE?

One advanced higher	1	Part (50%) Level 4
Or more than one	2	Full (100%) Level 4
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	3	= Part (50%) Level 4 for determining level

IF INTERMEDIATE LEVEL 1 AT NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (SCOTLAND) INCLUDING SCE INTERMEDIATE AT LAST BUT ONE QUESTION

- 19) How many Scottish National Qualifications Intermediate Level 1 did you have at grade B or above ... READ OUT AND CODE?

None	1	Counts as full Level 1
One	2	Counts as 20% of a Level 2
Two	3	Counts as 40% of a Level 2
Three	4	Counts as 60% of a Level 2
Four	5	Counts as 80% of a Level 2
Five or more	6	Full (100%) Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	7	= treat as 20% of a Level 2

IF INTERMEDIATE LEVEL 2 AT NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (SCOTLAND) INCLUDING SCE INTERMEDIATE

- 20) How many Scottish National Qualifications Intermediate Level 2 did you have at grade C or above ... READ OUT AND CODE?

None	1	Counts as full Level 1
One	2	Counts as 20% of a Level 2
Two	3	Counts as 40% of a Level 2
Three	4	Counts as 60% of a Level 2
Four	5	Counts as 80% of a Level 2
Five or more	6	Full (100%) Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	7	= treat as 20% of a Level 2

- 21) IF CITY AND GUILDS AT Q5
Was your highest City and Guilds qualification ... READ OUT AND CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES?

Advanced Craft / part 3	1	Full (100%) Level 3
Craft / part 2	2	Full (100%) Level 2
Foundation / part 1	3	Full (100%) Level 1
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	4	= Full Level 1 for determining level

- 22) IF RSA / OCR AT Q5
Was your highest RSA or OCR ... ? READ OUT AND CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

A higher diploma	1	Full (100%) Level 4
An advanced diploma or advanced certificate	2	Full (100%) Level 3
A diploma	3	Full (100%) Level 2
Or Some other RSA or OCR (including Stage I, II and III)	4	Full (100%) Level 1
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	5	Treat as full (100%)_Level 1

- 23) IF MODERN APPRENTICESHIP AT Q2
Was your Modern Apprenticeship ... READ OUT?

Advanced level	1	Full (100%) Level 3
Foundation level (National traineeship)	2	Full (100%) Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure	3	ASK Q24

- 24) IF NOT SURE (Q23/3)
When did you complete your Modern Apprenticeship. Did you complete before 2001 or in 2001 or later?

Before 2001	1	Full (100%) Level 3
In 2001 or more recently	2	Full (100%) Level 2
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't remember	3	= treat as full Level 2

NOTE – IF TRADE APPRENTICESHIP AT Q2 – TREAT AS FULL (100%) LEVEL 2

SECTION FOR "OTHER" AND "FOREIGN" QUALIFICATIONS AT Q5 (that is, codes 30–34)
(OTHERS GO TO NEXT SECTION)

IF "OTHER" OR "FOREIGN QUALIFICATION" CODED AT Q5 (codes 30–34) AND THIS MULTICODED WITH OTHER RESPONSES (including 2 other responses, or an other and a foreign qualification) ASK Q25 (IF 30–34 AT Q5 AND THIS SINGLE CODED ASK Q26)

- 25) You've mentioned that you had a number of qualifications before starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course. Which of the following do you regard as the highest qualification? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

(INSERT EACH OF THOSE CODED FROM 1–29 IF ANY. ALSO INSERT ANY OF Q2_E AND Q2_F IF CODED)	1	GO TO NEXT SECTION
INSERT TEXT OF "OTHER" (CODE 30 IF APPLICABLE)	2	ASK NEXT QUESTION
INSERT TEXT OF "OTHER" (CODE 31 IF APPLICABLE)	3	
INSERT TEXT OF "OTHER" (CODE 32 IF APPLICABLE)	4	
INSERT TEXT OF "OTHER" (CODE 33 IF APPLICABLE)	5	
INSERT TEXT OF "OTHER" (CODE 34 IF APPLICABLE)	6	
INSERT TEXT OF ANY FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS (CODE 31)	7	
All equal	8	see instructions below*
Not sure	9	GO TO NEXT SECTION

*if "All Equal" coded, set dummy variable below and re-ask Q25 based on which is most recent.

IF CODES 30–34 AT Q5 SINGLE CODED, OR IF CODE 2–7 AT Q25 (OTHERS GO TO NEXT SECTION)

- 26) Can you tell me a bit more about this qualification. What age were you when you achieved it? IF DON'T KNOW EXACT THEN HAVE A RANGE

16 or under	1	
17–18	2	
19–24	3	
25 plus	4	
Can't remember	5	

- 27) Were there entry requirements for starting this qualification, for example could you only start learning for this qualification if you had other qualifications or if you had relevant experience?

Yes – entry requirements	1	ASK Q28
No – entry requirements	2	ASK Q29
Can't remember	3	

IF ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

28) What other qualifications or relevant experience did you need?

IF CODES 30–34 AT Q5 SINGLE CODED, OR IF CODE 2–7 AT Q25, ASK Q29

29) How long did it take to achieve this qualification from start to completion? PROMPT WITH RANGES IF NECESSARY

A month or less	1	CHECK Q30a
More than a month but less than 3	2	
More than 3 months but less than 6	3	ASK Q29a
More than 6 months but less than 9	4	
More than 9 months but less than a year	5	
Between 1 year and 18 months	6	
More than 18 months	7	
Can't remember	8	
Other (RECORD HOW LONG AND DETAILS PROVIDED)	0	

IF Q29 = CODES 3–8 OR 0

29a) And was the course a full-time or part-time course?

Full-time	1	
Part-time	2	
Can't remember	3	

- 30) INTERVIEWER EITHER CLASSIFY INTO LEVEL IF CLEAR OR CHECK WITH RESPONDENT: Qualifications are often classified into broad levels. Which of the following broad descriptions do you think comes closest to the level of this qualification?

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION – USE PREVIOUS ANSWERS TO HELP GAUGE ESTIMATED LEVEL RELEVANT

	Estimated at:	
Level 1 which is entry or foundation level – this includes short courses.	1	= Level 1
A Level 2 intermediate qualification, such as O levels or City and Guilds craft level.	2	= Level 2
A Level 3 advanced qualification such as A levels, and ONC or OND or a City and Guilds Advanced craft. This is likely to take 2 years to complete, and would not be gained by anyone under 17.	3	= Level 3
A first degree (this would take 2–3 years to complete and you would normally need qualifications at A level or equivalent) [Would be 20 plus to acquire this.]	4	= Level 4
A higher degree like an MBA or a PhD (this would take a number of years to complete and would normally require a first degree). [Would be over 20 to acquire this.]	5	= Level 5
Don't know / unsure	6	= UNCLEAR

IF SAY "Teaching qualification other than PGCE" AT Q5 (Q5 = 7) ASK 30a (OTHERS CHECK Q30b)

- 30a) You said earlier that you had some teaching qualification other than a PGCE. Can you tell me a bit about this teaching qualification – where you attained it, at what age, how long it took, whether you needed any qualifications to get on the course and, if so, what qualifications and finally whether it was a full or part-time course? Also can you tell me what type of job the qualification was needed for (e.g. classroom teacher vs. classroom assistant)

NOW CHECK Q30b

IF SAY "Nursing or other medical qualification, excluding nursery nurse qualifications" AT Q5 (Q5 = 8) ASK Q30b (OTHERS CHECK NEXT PAGE)

- Q30b) You said earlier that you had some nursing or other medical qualification, excluding nursery nurse qualifications. Can you tell me a bit about this nursing qualification – where you attained it, at what age, how long it took, whether you needed any qualifications to get on the course and, if so, what qualifications and finally whether it was a full or part-time course? Also can you tell me what type of job the qualification was needed for?

--

CATI TO DETERMINE HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OR QUALIFICATIONS

IF Q5 SINGLE CODED HIGHEST QUALIFICATION = ANSWER AT Q5

IF Q25 ANSWERED CODE 2-7 TAKE ANSWER OF HIGHEST QUALIFICATION FROM ANSWER AT Q25

IF Q25 ANSWERED AS CODE 1 (REFERRING TO A RESPONSE CODED AT Q5 AS 1-29) AND ONLY ONE ANSWER AT Q5 CODED 1-29 TAKE THIS AS HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

OTHERS TAKE HIGHEST QUALIFICATION(S) FROM HIGHEST QUALIFICATION FROM Q5-Q30 RESPONSES (LEVEL 3 FULL HIGHER THAN A PART LEVEL 3; PART LEVEL 3 HIGHER THAN LEVEL 2 ETC)

NOTE:

IF A LEVEL AND AS LEVEL SELECTED AS HIGHEST THEN ALWAYS CHOOSE A LEVEL AS HIGHEST AND ASK Q32 (ONE QUAL HIGHEST)

- 31) IF MORE THAN ONE QUALIFICATION HIGHEST (OTHERS ASK Q32)
 From what you have told us about the qualifications you had before starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course, we take it that your highest qualifications were <insert qualifications>. Which of these did you achieve most recently? SINGLE CODE ONLY

<Highest qualification 1>	1	ASK Q32
<Highest qualification 2>	2	
<Highest qualification 3>	3	
Two or more at the same time	4	
Don't know	5	

- 32) SAY TO ALL WITH QUALIFICATIONS
 IF ONE QUALIFICATION HIGHEST: From what you have told us about the qualifications you had before starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course, we take it that your highest qualification was <insert qualification>. How many years ago did you achieve this qualification? IF UNSURE PROMPT WITH RANGES.

IF MORE THAN ONE QUALIFICATION HIGHEST: How many years ago did you achieve [<ANSWER FROM Q31> IF CODES 1-3 OR IF DON'T KNOW OR CODE 4 "the most recent of these qualifications"]

EXACT NUMBER OF YEARS AGO THAT ACHIEVED _____	1	RECORD EXACT YEAR (1920-2003)
Don't know	2	ASK Q33

- 33) IF DON'T KNOW (OTHERS ASK Q34)
Roughly how many years ago would you say it was ... ? READ OUT

Within the last 3 years	1	
Within the last 5 years	2	
Within the last 10 years	3	
Within the last 20 years	4	
Within the last 30 years	5	
More than 30 years ago	6	
Don't know	7	

ASK ALL EXCEPT THOSE SINGLE CODE AT Q5 (IF SINGLE CODED GO TO NEXT SECTION)

- 34) Have you gained any other qualifications since your {[<highest qualification> if only one highest qualification identified by CATI] OR [<highest qualification> at Q31 if codes 1–3] OR ["these highest qualification" if other answer at Q31]}? Please do not include your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course that you enrolled on in November 2004.

Yes	1	ASK Q35
No	2	GO TO NEXT SECTION
Don't know	3	

ASK ALL WITH MORE RECENT QUALIFICATIONS (ie NO AT Q34)

- 35) What was the most recent qualification that you had before starting your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1B] course? LIST ANSWERS FROM Q5 [PLUS AN OTHER – NOTE TO RESEARCH – WE WILL NEED TO EDIT THESE] AND PROMPT IF NECESSARY

- 36) And how many years ago did you achieve <ANSWER FROM Q35>?

EXACT NUMBER OF YEARS AGO THAT ACHIEVED _____	1	RECORD EXACT YEAR (1920–2003)
Don't know	2	ASK Q37

IF DON'T KNOW (OTHERS GO TO NEXT SECTION)

- 37) Roughly how many years ago would you say it was ... ? READ OUT

Within the last 1 year	1	
Within the last 3 years	2	
Within the last 5 years	3	
Within the last 10 years	4	
Within the last 20 years	5	
More than 20 years ago	6	
Don't know	7	

ADDITIONAL DfES SECTION

IF FE AND REGION FROM SAMPLE = NE or SE ASK Q38 (OTHERS READ OUT STATEMENT ON FINAL PAGE)

- 38) Have you heard of the Level 2 entitlement? It is a new initiative where learners studying for their first Level 2 qualification do not have to pay for their course.

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

- 39) Did the college charge you anything for the TUITION or TEACHING involved on your [INSERT TEXT FROM Q1b] course – please don't include exam fees, registration fees, or books/equipment costs for the course?

Yes	1	Ask Q41
No	2	Ask Q40
Don't know	3	READ OUT FINAL STATEMENT AFTER Q42

IF NO AT Q39

- 40) Did the college not charge you tuition or teaching fees for any of the following reasons? READ OUT AND CODE EACH YES

you were studying for a first Level 2 qualification?	1
you were receiving income-based state benefit? (e.g. jobseekers allowance, working families tax credit, disabled persons tax credit, other state benefit)	2
you were/are an asylum seeker in receipt of state benefit?	3
there were no fees to pay?	4
Some other reason (please specify)?	5
ONLY IF NO to all the above: Or do you not know the reason	6

IF YES AT Q39

- 41) How much did you pay the college for course tuition? PROBE FOR BEST ESTIMATE OR RECORD RANGE

Record number	1	ASK Q42
Don't know	2	GO TO Q41RAN

IF DON'T KNOW AT Q41

41ran) Can you give me an approximate range of what you paid?

Less than £50	1	ASK Q42
£50 to £75	2	
£76 to £99	3	
£100 to £149	4	
£150 to £199	5	
£200 to £299	6	
£300 to £499	7	
£500 up to £750	8	
More than £750 but less than a thousand	9	
A thousand or more	10	
Don't know	11	READ OUT STATEMENT AFTER Q42
Refused	12	

42) Was this for ... READ OUT

The whole course	1
Each year of the course	2
Each term	3
Some other period (SPECIFY)	4
(DO NOT READ OUT) not sure / don't know	5

SAY TO ALL

"You've now reached the end of the survey. Just in case you missed it, my name is X and I am calling from IFF Research on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council. I'd like to thank you ever so much for taking part and I hope you have a pleasant day / evening"

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

I declare that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct.	
Interviewer signature:	Date:

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