

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007: Work-based Learning

July 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in sustaining and improving learning and skills opportunities across the work-based learning system

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Introduction

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Research background

1 This report presents the findings for 5,580 learners in the work-based learning (WBL) system. 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
- the benefits of participation.

3 There have been five national surveys since 2001 (annually between 2001 and 2004, and again in 2007). 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:

- 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 further education (FE), WBL, learndirect and personal and community development learning (PCDL). The FE category includes general FE colleges, sixth form colleges, other/specialist colleges and learning delivered by adult learning providers (ALP).

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.

9 Data for WBL learners has been weighted using final individualised learner record (ILR) profiles for 2006/07. Further details can be found in the 2007 technical report.

Sample profile

10 Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the WBL learner sample (based on weighted data obtained from the survey) and the proportion of learners who reported having a disability or learning difficulties.

Table 1: Demographics of the sample profile

	Percentage of respondents
Age	
16–20	68
21–30	19
31–40	4
41–50	5
51–60	3
61–70	*
71+	*
Refused to respond	*
Gender	
Male	57
Female	43
Ethnicity	
Asian	3
Black	2
Mixed	1
White	94
Other	*
Refused to respond	
Disability	
Yes	6
Learning difficulties	
Yes	9

Note: the base was all WBL learners (5,580). An asterisk denotes values that are above zero but less than 0.5%.

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11 Figure 1 shows the range of subjects studied by WBL learners. The most common subject areas were engineering, technology and manufacturing (20 per cent), construction (17 per cent), health, social care and public services (16 per cent) and business administration, management and professional courses (11 per cent).

Multivariate analysis

12 In addition to standard analysis of the data, the following analysis techniques were used.

- **Multiple regression** (also known as key driver analysis) 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.

13 CHAID uses statistical techniques to select:

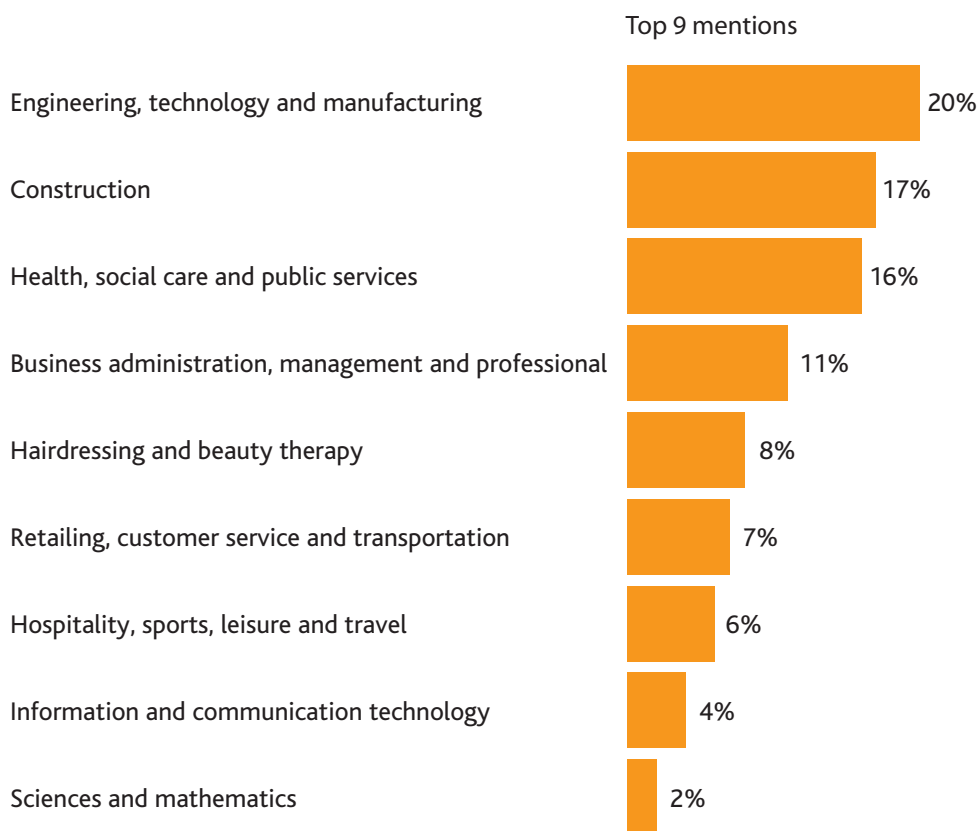
- the key determinants or drivers (such as current learning status, gender, age, ethnicity or course level); and
- the groups that are most and least likely to exhibit these characteristics.

14 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

15 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.**

Figure 1: Subjects studied by WBL learners



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

16 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.

17 In the report, reference is made to '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. 'Net satisfaction' figures represent 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.

18 Combined and 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.

19 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

20 There are a further six main sections to this report:

- 'Summary and Implications';
- 'Overall Satisfaction', looking at learners' satisfaction with their learning experience, including an assessment of what drives satisfaction and an examination of learners who leave their course early;
- 'Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider', covering learners' satisfaction with the quality of their teaching, attitudes to their course tutor and other staff, as well as an examination of how learners feel they have been treated;

- 'Pre-entry Information, Advice and Guidance', including reasons for choice of course and provider;
- 'Learner Support', looking at the various types of learner support available and what learners think of them; and
- 'Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning': how learners feel about learning generally, and how the course has helped them, as well as learners' expectations as far as undertaking further learning is concerned.

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

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Summary and Implications

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Summary

Satisfaction with the learning experience

22 Overall, nine learners in ten were satisfied with their learning experience (91 per cent), including 26 per cent who were extremely satisfied; just 6 per cent were dissatisfied. The proportion of learners who were extremely or very satisfied has increased since 2004/05, and the overall level of satisfaction has been rising steadily since 2002/03.

23 In addition, a similarly high proportion (91 per cent) agreed that the course met their needs, and most learners (71 per cent) said they would speak highly of their learning provider, while just 6 per cent said they would be critical.

24 The key factor influencing overall satisfaction was the learner's status on the course, specifically whether they had left the course early or failed the course; such learners were less satisfied. Otherwise, all learners expressed positive views, with women slightly more positive than men, and satisfaction a little higher among learners studying at Level 2 or below than among those studying at Level 3.

25 To a large extent, overall satisfaction was driven by attitudes to teachers and other staff at the learning provider. In particular, getting prompt and regular feedback was important, as were well-planned lessons and teachers who made the subject interesting and enjoyable. Information and support during the course were also important.

Satisfaction with the teaching and the provider

26 The vast majority of learners were satisfied with the quality of teaching or training on their course (90 per cent) and just 6 per cent said they were dissatisfied. Learners were also positive as regards individual aspects of teaching, in particular the teacher's knowledge of the subject and how the teacher related to the respondent as a person. Views on teaching in general, and on specific aspects of teaching, were more positive than in 2004/05.

27 The majority of learners (70 per cent) said that all or most of the lesson was spent in increasing their knowledge or understanding of their course. The most common problem reported by learners was other students arriving late for class.

28 Sub-group variations on these issues were generally the same as for satisfaction with the learning experience.

29 Almost all respondents said that they were treated fairly and with respect by their learning provider (95 per cent and 96 per cent, respectively). However, although most learners were also positive about the level of consultation offered by their provider, at least one learner in six said that they were not consulted about various issues such as the quality of the learning programme and how to improve it, or about the college and its facilities. In contrast to findings on teaching and the overall learning experience, men were more positive than women on this issue, while older learners (aged 25 or over) tended to be the least positive. In addition, disabled learners and those with learning difficulties were more positive than other learners about the level of consultation.

Pre-entry information, advice and guidance

30 Learners' main reason for choosing a course was to help get a better or different job or to gain promotion, and this was highest among those studying at Level 3. Other learners said that it was relevant to their job or had been suggested/required by their employer, and this was higher among older learners. Choosing a course because of personal interest or liking the subject was higher for 16- to 18-year-olds.

31 Three respondents in ten said they had no choice over the learning provider running their course. The remainder were most likely to say that the convenience of the location was their main reason for choosing the provider.

32 Learners generally felt well informed about their course before enrolling, and this applied in particular to how the course would help them gain job-related skills, the content of the course and the standard of work expected.

Learner support

33 Almost all learners (92 per cent) agreed that support was available to help them carry out their learning programme. Most respondents also confirmed that they had help available from teachers, as well as one-to-one advice from appropriate staff. The availability of services and facilities (e.g. libraries and computers) was greater among those learners studying at Level 3 than at Level 2.

34 Women and older learners were generally more positive about the management of issues relating to the course, such as teacher continuity, staffing and the provision of support for learners during the course.

35 Around half of learners (52 per cent) had experienced at least one type of problem, such as keeping up with work, motivation, travel and money pressures, or dealing with other external pressures. Of these, 38 per cent had sought help with the problem from their provider, and most of these (83 per cent) had found the help they received useful.

36 One learner in seven (14 per cent) said they had made a complaint to their provider about the course or other experiences. Complaints were most likely to concern poor teaching or the incompetence of teachers. Around two in five (37 per cent) said that there had been a satisfactory outcome to the complaint, although more (46 per cent) said there had been no outcome at all.

37 Findings on information, advice, problems and complaints were very similar to those measured in the 2004/05 survey.

Attitudes to learning and the benefits of learning

38 Respondents mostly expressed positive attitudes towards learning in general, and in particular towards enjoying a new challenge. Learners with a higher level of attainment before the course tended to be the most positive.

39 Each of the following benefits was reported by more than four learners in five:

- being able to move forward in their career;
- gaining skills that they could use for a job;
- feeling more confident in their ability to learn;
- feeling more creative and prepared to try new things;
- having greater enthusiasm for the subject; and
- feeling more positive about learning than when they started.

40 Learners studying at Level 3 were the most likely to report job-related benefits, while those studying below Level 2 were the most likely to acknowledge the wider benefits of learning (such as helping them to cope better with daily life and improving their health and well-being).

41 Respondents were more likely than in 2004/05 to say that the course had given them greater enthusiasm for the subject. Otherwise, findings on the benefits of the course and learning in general were similar to the previous survey. Just under half of learners (45 per cent) said it was very likely that they would undertake further learning in the next three years – a similar proportion to the 2004/05 survey.

Early leavers

42 Learners who left their course early did so either because they felt the course was not right for them, or because of issues to do with their job: they had changed jobs, found it difficult to combine the course with work commitments or had problems or lack of support from their employer.

43 Early leavers were less satisfied than other learners with most aspects of their learning experience, and were the least positive about the level of consultation they had had from their provider and the information that had been provided during the course. They were also less likely to feel that the course had helped them with their career or had increased their enthusiasm for the subject.

44 However, most early leavers remained at least fairly satisfied with their learning experience, and retained positive views about learning in general. They were also as likely as other learners to say that they would undertake further learning in the future.

Implications

45 Learners expressed high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience, and satisfaction has been increasing in recent years. Satisfaction was lower, however, among early leavers, both overall and in relation to specific aspects of the course; they were also less likely to obtain positive outcomes. As a result, minimising the number of early leavers will be the most effective means of improving the findings for learners overall. Two ways to address this would be to focus on:

- pre-entry advice and guidance on the relevance of the course to the learner and/or their current or future job: the main reason for leaving early was that the course was not appropriate to the learner;
- consultation with employers: other reasons for leaving early concerned the employer (including difficulties in combining the course with work commitments and a lack of support from the employer); information aimed at employers, and greater discussion between providers and employers, may help alleviate these difficulties.

46 Otherwise, while women were more positive than men, and those studying at Level 2 or below were more positive than other learners, findings did not vary greatly by different groups of learners (according to demographic variations or types of course). This suggests that there are no groups of learners whose experiences are particularly better or worse than those of others.

47 The survey also identified aspects of the course that had an impact on overall satisfaction. Views on teaching and other staff were particularly important, and it is therefore encouraging that attitudes to the quality of teaching were even more positive than in previous years.

48 Another important driver of overall satisfaction was support during the course. While learners were generally positive about the level of support they received, they were less positive about the level of consultation in relation to the course and facilities. In addition, early leavers were particularly negative about the level of consultation and the information they had received during the course, indicating that this is a further area that could be addressed in an effort to reduce the number of early leavers.

49 Learners acknowledged a number of benefits and positive outcomes from the course, and these remained at a similar level to those reported in previous years of the survey. Results in future years will assess the extent to which new initiatives (including the introduction of sector skills councils and the expansion of Train to Gain) help to bring even more positive outcomes. In this context, future research among employers may be helpful in assessing how well they think training is meeting their skills needs.

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Overall Satisfaction

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Satisfaction with the learning experience

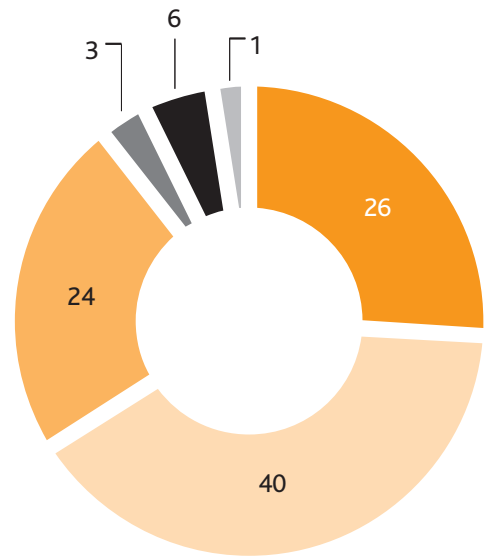
51 Learners expressed high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience. Nine learners in ten (91 per cent) were satisfied, including 26 per cent who were extremely satisfied. Just 6 per cent were dissatisfied with their learning experience. The proportion of learners who were extremely or very satisfied was higher in this survey than in 2004/05 (66 per cent compared with 61 per cent), and there has been a steady increase in the proportion of those who are extremely satisfied since 2001/02 (from 17 per cent to 26 per cent). Details are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

50 This section examines learners' attitudes towards their overall learning experience, and identifies the factors that have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction – in relation both to learner characteristics and to specific components of the course. It also covers learners' reasons for leaving their course early.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with the current learning experience

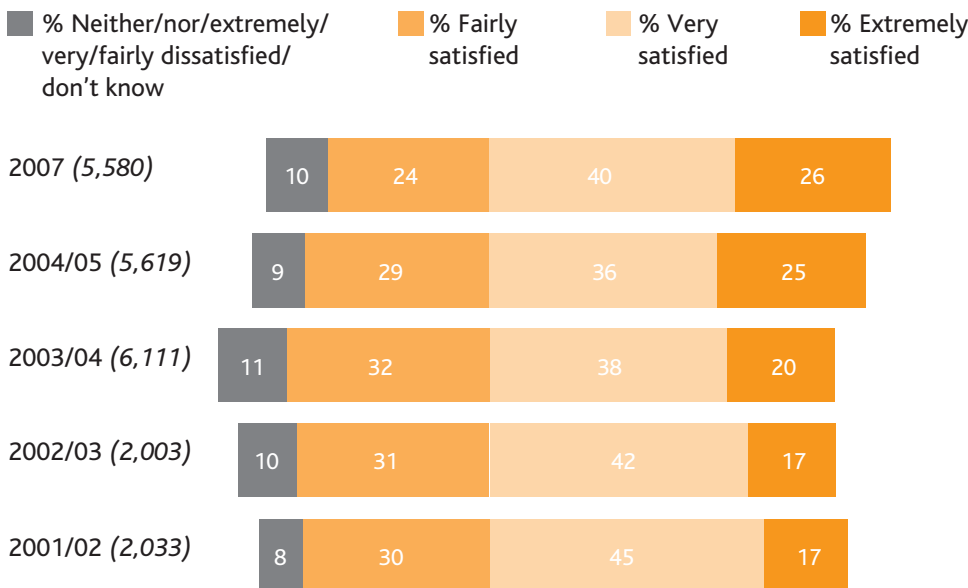
How satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/training provider?

- % Extremely satisfied
- % Very satisfied
- % Fairly satisfied
- % Neither/nor
- % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied
- % Don't know



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Figure 3: WBL learners' satisfaction with the learning experience over time



Note: the base for each year is shown in brackets.

What differentiates learners' views?

52 A CHAID analysis was carried out in order to identify the characteristics that were associated most strongly with overall satisfaction (see paragraphs 12 to 14). The findings are shown in Figure 4, in which satisfaction is highest towards the left of the chart and lowest towards the right.

53 The chart shows that the respondent's status on the course is the main factor affecting satisfaction – in particular, whether the learner left the course early or failed the course. These learners were considerably less satisfied than those who completed the course or were still studying at the time of the survey (net satisfaction was +42 for early leavers, compared with +87 for course completers and +88 for those still studying). This pattern was also seen for FE learners (indeed, the detailed figures were also very similar).

54 The other prominent characteristics highlighted by this analysis are gender and the level of qualification studied as part of the course, and in each case the variation relates specifically to the proportions that were extremely satisfied. Across the sample as a whole, 29 per cent of women were extremely satisfied, compared with 24 per cent of men; while 28 per cent of learners studying at Level 2 or below were extremely satisfied, compared with 24 per cent studying at Level 3 or above.

55 The chart also shows a difference by ethnicity among learners still studying at Level 2 or below, but overall there was no difference in satisfaction by ethnic group.

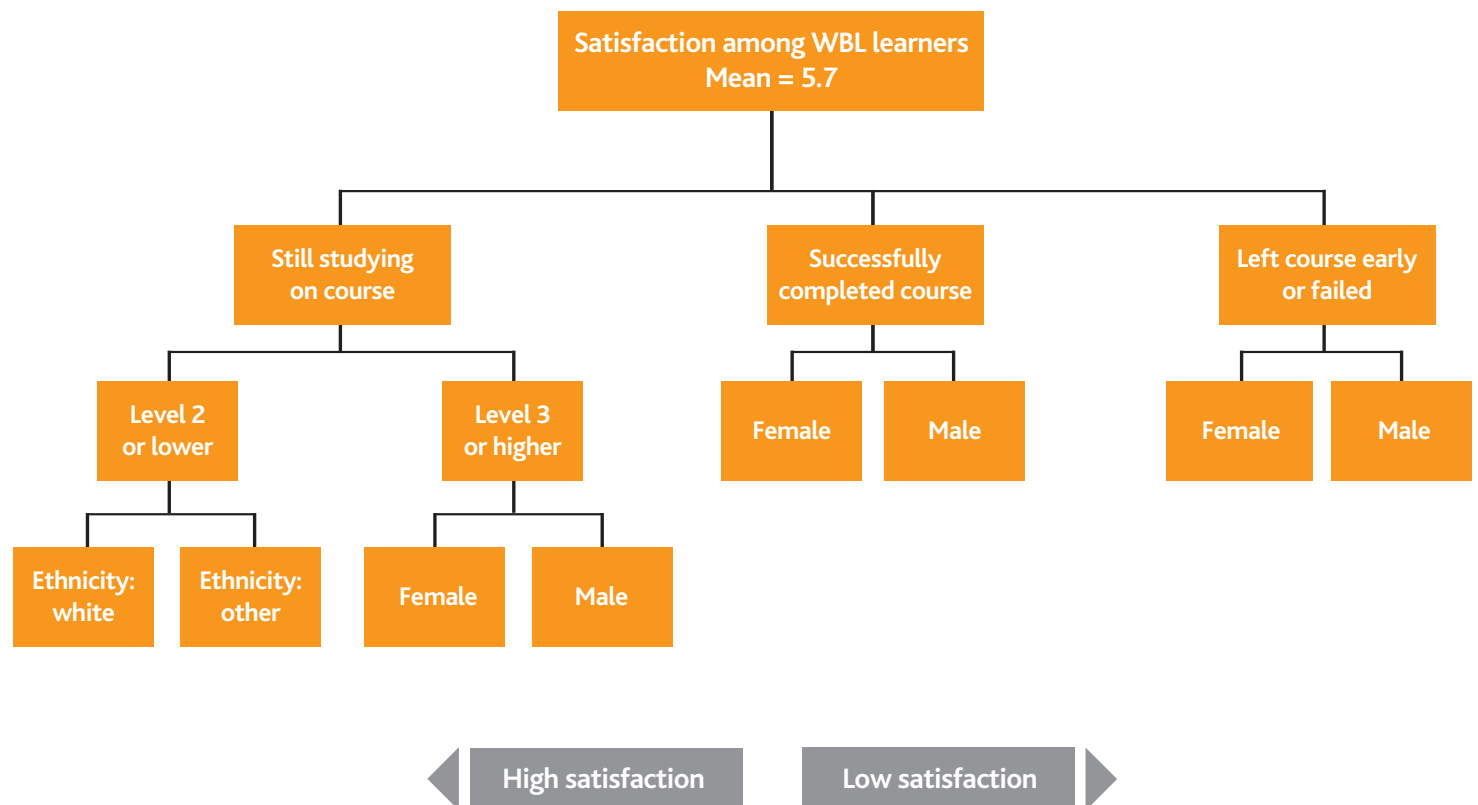
56 Analysis by subject shows that satisfaction was highest among those studying business administration, management and professional courses, while the proportion who were extremely satisfied was lowest among those studying information and communication technology.

Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

57 Learners were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their course. The main reasons for satisfaction were as follows:

- 36 per cent said it was a good course or one that met their expectations, or that they had learned a lot;
- 35 per cent were satisfied because the tutors were good, made it easy or interesting;
- 27 per cent said staff were helpful; and
- 23 per cent said the course gave them the experience or qualification that they needed.

Figure 4: CHAID analysis of learner satisfaction



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners.

58 Where learners were dissatisfied with the course, this was most likely to be because:

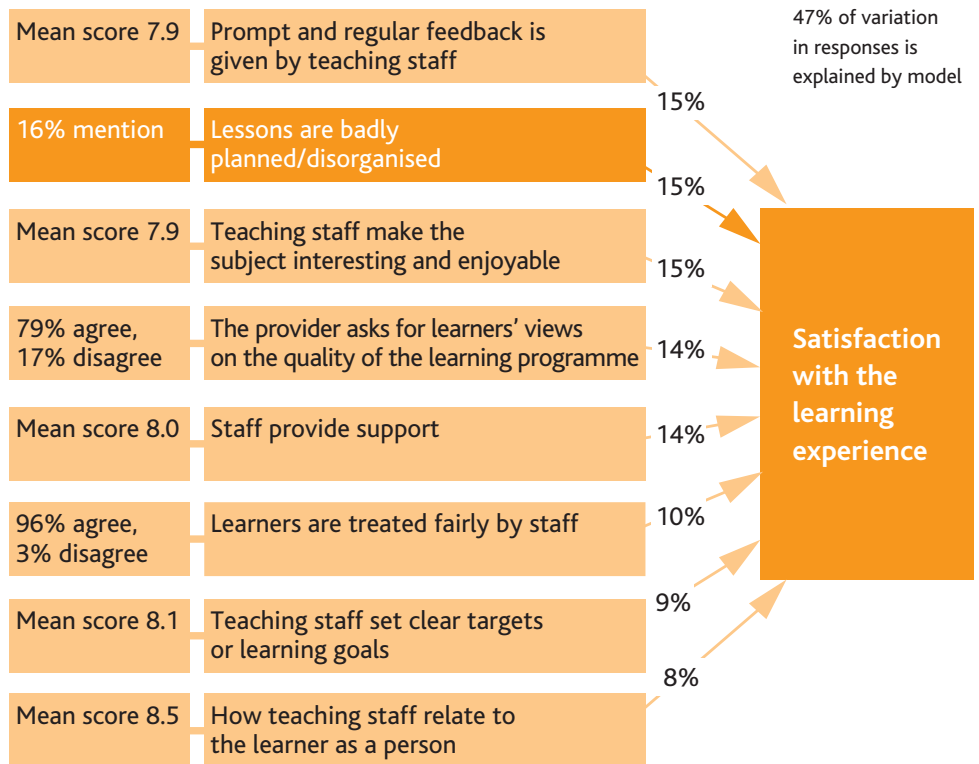
- they thought the course was badly organised or run (40 per cent);
- they perceived their tutors to have a poor attitude (33 per cent);
- they did not get the support they needed (29 per cent);
- they felt that the course was disappointing or not what they had expected (25 per cent);
- they felt that communication was poor (20 per cent); or
- they said that there were not enough staff or that there were changes in staff (16 per cent).

What drives satisfaction with the learning experience?

59 Key driver analysis was undertaken to examine the elements of the learning experience that are associated with overall satisfaction (see paragraphs 12 to 14). The model shown in Figure 5 includes elements relating to the course tutor and other staff at the learning provider, and indicates that a large proportion (47 per cent) of the variation in learners' overall satisfaction can be attributed to these elements. In particular, key elements were whether tutors gave prompt and regular feedback, made the subject interesting and enjoyable, and (on the negative side) whether lessons were badly planned or were disorganised. Performance on each of these issues is indicated in the left-hand column of Figure 5. These issues are covered in more detail in the next section ('Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider').



Figure 5: Key drivers of satisfaction with the learning experience in WBL learners



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners.

60 The importance of learners' perceptions of staff (as shown in Figure 5) is confirmed by analysis of the reasons for satisfaction. This shows that where respondents were extremely (as opposed to very or fairly) satisfied, they were more likely to base their satisfaction on positive impressions of staff (the quality of their course tutor or the helpfulness of staff).

61 A number of other models were tested, and this helped establish that information and support were also important to learners – specifically information on course content and how the course would help learners gain skills that could be used in a job – as was the provision of support when learners had problems. Related to this, where learners felt that they did not receive extra help that had been promised to them, this was also a factor that influenced overall satisfaction.

Meeting learners' needs

62 Figure 6 shows the extent to which learners felt the course met their needs. Nine in ten (91 per cent) agreed that it did meet their needs, while 6 per cent disagreed. These figures are similar to those for overall satisfaction, and again attitudes were less positive among learners who had

left the course early or had failed the course. In this case, however, learners studying at below Level 2 were less positive (+77 net agreement, compared with 85 per cent overall). Related to this, views were also less positive among those with learning difficulties (+80 net agreement), in particular those aged 19 or over (+71 net agreement). Learners studying on courses leading to a national vocational qualification (NVQ) were more positive than other learners (+86 net agreement, compared with +77 overall).

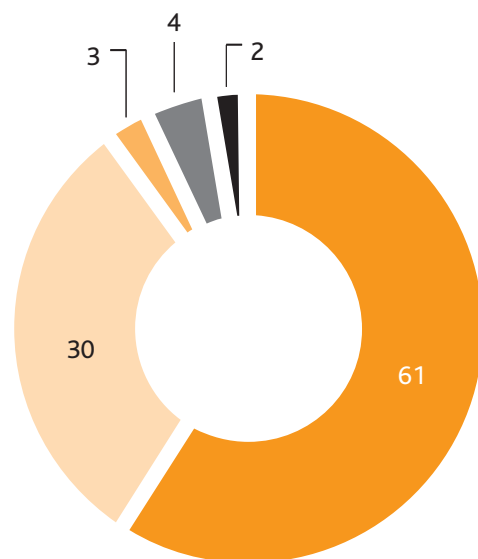
63 These sub-group findings suggest that the qualification gained from the course (type and level) is important in terms of whether learners felt the course was meeting their needs.

64 As with overall satisfaction, views were most positive among those studying business administration, management and professional courses, and least positive among those studying information and communication technology.

Figure 6: The needs of learners and the support available

Do you agree or disagree that your learning programme is meeting your needs?

- % Strongly agree
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither/nor/don't know
- % Tend to disagree
- % Strongly disagree



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

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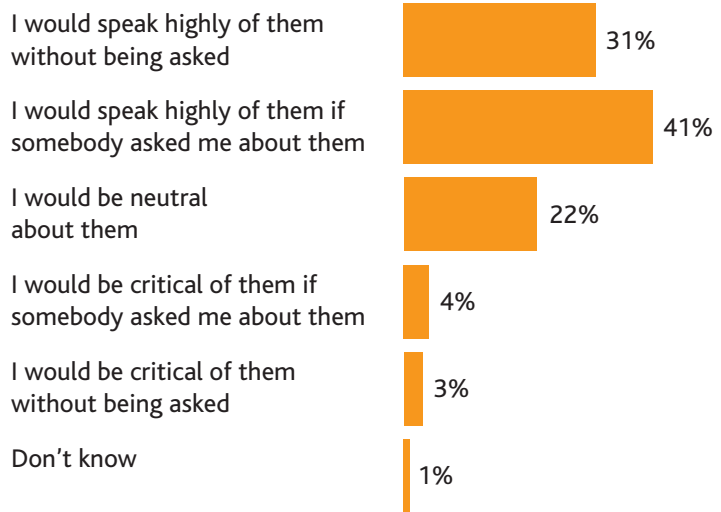
Advocating the provider

65 The majority of learners said that they would speak highly of their learning provider, either without being asked (31 per cent) or if somebody asked them about it (41 per cent). A minority said they would be critical (4 per cent if asked and 3 per cent without being asked). These findings are shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7: 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?



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

66 As with overall satisfaction, views were most negative among early leavers (17 per cent of whom said they would be critical). Women were more positive than men, while those aged 25 or over were more positive than younger learners; these details are shown in Table 2.

67 Although there was no difference in terms of level studied, those with a prior qualification of Level 3 or above were more likely to speak highly of their provider (74 per cent). White learners were more positive than those from other ethnic groups (66 per cent, compared with 53 per cent).

68 In terms of course subject, the most positive responses were given by those studying business administration, management and professional courses, and the least positive were from learners studying construction. The latter finding is partly a reflection of the profile of learners studying construction (mostly men, with a younger age profile and with a lower than average prior attainment level).

Table 2: Advocating the provider, by gender and age

	All	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	16–18	19–24	25+
<i>Base</i>	(5,580)	(3,257)	(2,323)	(2,411)	(2,463)	(701)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would speak highly of the provider	71	69	74	70	71	77
I would be neutral	22	24	19	23	22	17
I would be critical	6	7	5	6	7	5

Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners.

Early leavers

69 At the time of the interview, two learners in three (68 per cent) were still studying, while 25 per cent had completed the course and 6 per cent had left before completing the course.

70 This survey is not designed to provide data on completion rates, which are monitored by the LSC's own analysis of the ILR database; the ILR analysis showed that, in 2005/06, the overall 'success rate' (the proportion of course starters who achieved their learning aim) for learners who left learning with a full framework or an NVQ was only 60 per cent (see *Further Education and work-based learning for young people – learner outcomes in England 2005/06*, Learning and Skills Council Statistical First Release ILR/SFR 13).

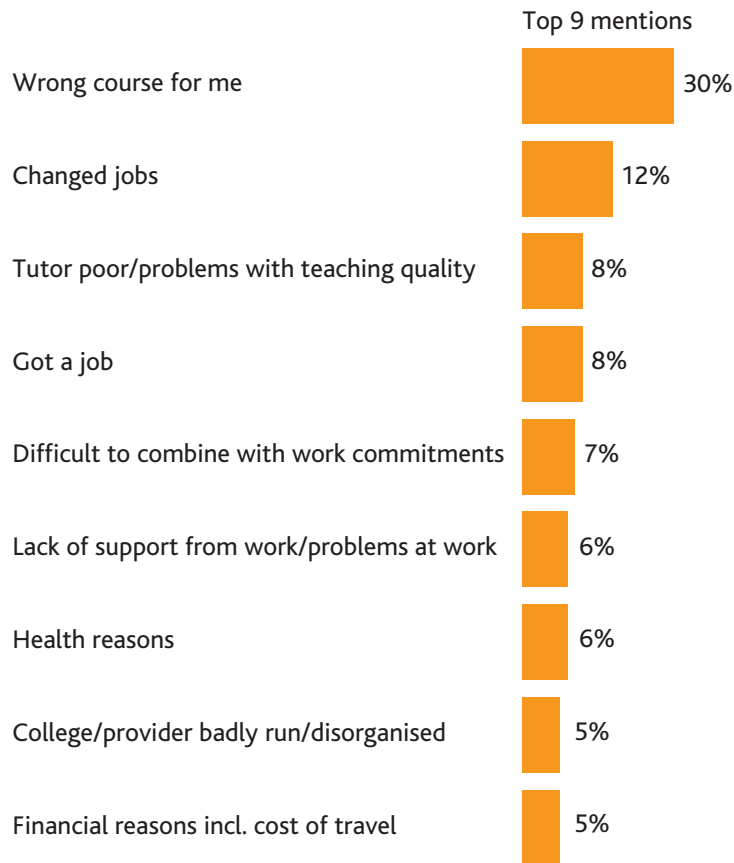
71 We have already seen in this section that overall satisfaction is strongly linked to learners' status on the course, with lower satisfaction among early leavers. It is therefore important to understand the reasons for non-completion.

72 The reasons given for leaving the course early are shown in Figure 8, and these are similar to those obtained in previous years of the NLSS. The most common reason was the feeling that it was the wrong course for the learner, while other reasons tended to relate to their job: they had changed jobs or had got a new one, found it difficult to combine the course with work commitments, or had problems or a lack of support at work. Other reasons related to the quality of teaching or to external factors (such as health problems or financial reasons).

73 The number of early leavers was too small to conduct extensive sub-group analysis, but it was evident that 16- to 18-year-olds were the most likely to say that it was the wrong course for them (25 per cent), while 19- to 24-year-olds and those studying at Level 3 were the most likely to say that they had left the course because they had changed jobs.

Figure 8: Reasons for leaving the course early

What were the main reasons for leaving your course early?



Note: the base was 342 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider

74 In this section, the course itself is examined in detail, in terms of teaching provided and course content. The section also looks at the level of consultation and how learners felt they were treated by their provider.

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training

75 Figure 9 shows learners' attitudes to the quality of teaching or training on their course. Views are generally very positive (90 per cent were satisfied), and, as Figure 10 shows, are consistent with those of previous years. Note that the proportion of learners who are extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching has been increasing year on year since 2001/02.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training

How satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training at your college/provider?

- % Extremely satisfied
- % Very satisfied
- % Fairly satisfied
- % Neither/nor
- % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied
- % Don't know

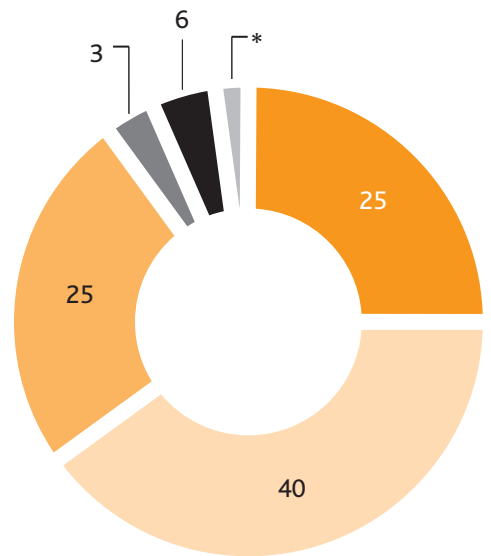
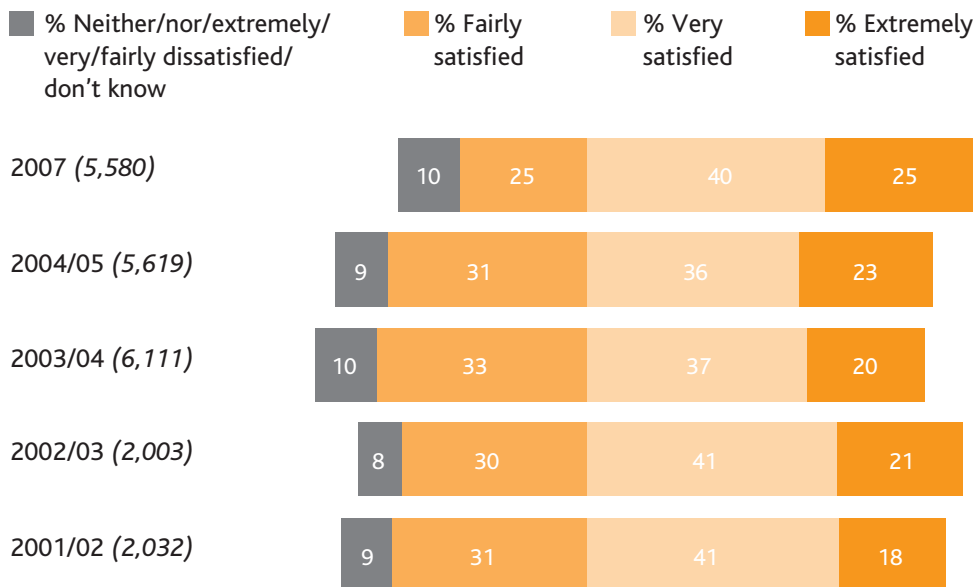


Figure 10: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training over time



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Note: the base for each year is shown in brackets.

76 Early leavers were again less positive than other learners, although three-quarters were at least fairly satisfied (76 per cent), while 17 per cent were dissatisfied. These figures reflect the fact that the quality of teaching was rarely the principal reason for leaving the course, as the previous section showed.

77 Women were more likely than men to be extremely satisfied (27 per cent, compared with 23 per cent), as were those studying at Level 2, compared with those on Level 3 courses (26 per cent, compared with 23 per cent); these findings are related, in that women were more likely than men to be studying at Level 2. This pattern is consistent with the findings on overall satisfaction with the learning experience, discussed in the previous section.

78 The highest levels of satisfaction were recorded by those studying business administration, management and professional courses, retailing, customer service and transportation, and hospitality, sports and leisure.

Views on teaching staff

79 We now look at more detailed issues concerning teachers and tutors. Learners were asked to rate various aspects of their teaching/training 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 who gave a 9 or 10 rating on each item.

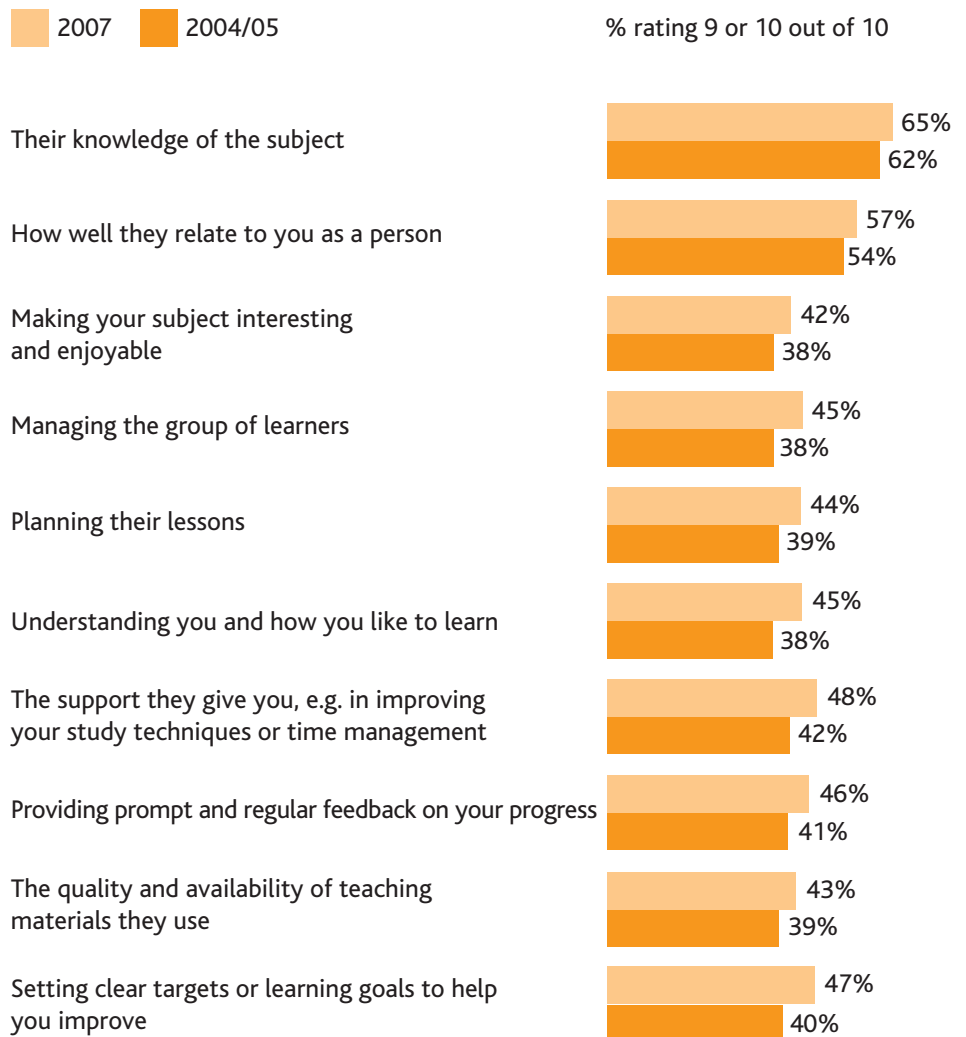
80 Learners were positive about all the various aspects of their tutors' performance, with the highest ratings given for knowledge of the subject and how well the tutors related to the respondent as a person. The differences in the scores shown in Figure 11 tend to reflect the proportion of ratings at 9 or 10, as opposed to 6, 7 or 8; very few low scores (under 5) were given.

81 As is illustrated in Figure 11, these results are consistently more positive than in the 2004/05 survey, and this is also reflected in higher learner satisfaction scores – both with the quality of teaching and the overall learning experience – than in 2004/05. The increases are largest for setting clear targets or learning goals, understanding learners and how they like to learn, and managing the group of learners.



Figure 11: Views on teaching staff over time

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



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 5,619 WBL learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

82 The sub-group variations noted above for satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching also apply here, with early leavers less positive, women more positive than men, and learners studying at Level 2 more positive than those studying at Level 3. Table 3 shows differences by level studied: subject knowledge was the only item where learners studying at Level 3 were as positive as those studying at Level 2.

Table 3: Views on teaching staff, by level of study

	All	Level of study		
		Entry Level & Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Base</i>	(5,580)	(245)	(3,267)	(1,828)
% rating 9 or 10 out of 10	%	%	%	%
Their knowledge of the subject	65	50	66	64
How well they relate to you as a person	57	50	61	52
The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management	48	47	50	44
Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	47	47	50	43
Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress	46	42	49	44
Managing the group of learners	45	42	48	40
Understanding you and how you like to learn	45	43	48	40
Planning their lessons	44	37	46	40
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	43	39	45	41
Making your subject interesting and enjoyable	42	43	46	36

Note: the base was all respondents asked the question; table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers. Figures for Levels 4 and 5 are excluded because of the small number of respondents (65).

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83 Table 4 shows that views were more positive among women than men, again with the exception of subject knowledge, where there was no difference by gender.

84 Respondents with learning difficulties were more positive than other learners on a number of items: making the subject interesting and enjoyable, providing prompt and regular feedback, giving support, setting clear targets, and understanding the learner and how they like to learn. Disabled learners were also more positive about making the subject more interesting or enjoyable and setting clear targets, as well as the quality and availability of teaching materials.

85 Older learners (aged 25 or over) were more positive than those under 25 about the teachers' understanding of them and how they like to learn, how well they related to them as a person and the way they managed the group of learners.

86 The subjects that showed the most positive ratings by learners were hairdressing and beauty therapy; health, social care and public services; hospitality, sports, leisure and travel; and retailing, customer service and transportation. In line with the differences by gender, the first two of these subject areas are studied predominantly by women, while the subjects with the lowest ratings (construction, and engineering, technology and manufacturing) are studied almost exclusively by men.

Table 4: Views on teaching staff, by gender

	All	Gender	
		Male	Female
<i>Base</i>	(5,580)	(3,257)	(2,323)
% rating as 9 or 10 out of 10	%	%	%
Their knowledge of the subject	65	64	66
How well they relate to you as a person	57	53	62
The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management	48	44	53
Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	47	42	54
Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress	46	41	53
Managing the group of learners	45	40	51
Understanding you and how you like to learn	45	39	52
Planning their lessons	44	39	49
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	43	41	47
Making your subject interesting and enjoyable	42	38	48

Note: the base was all respondents asked the question; table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers.

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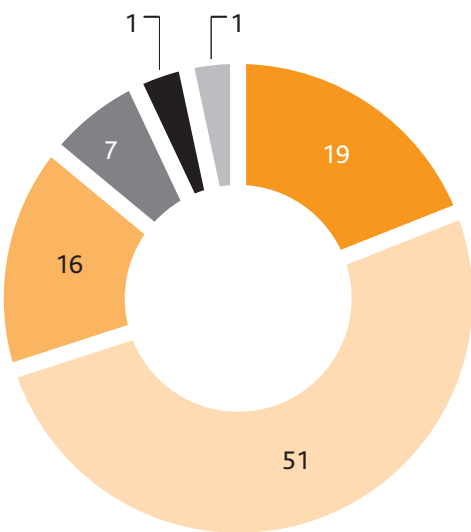
Time utilisation

87 One learner in five (19 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 (51 per cent) said that most of the lesson was spent doing this. Details are shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: 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 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

88 Learners with no prior qualifications were more likely to say that the whole lesson was spent in increasing or helping to increase their knowledge or understanding of their course (28 per cent), but this variation was not reflected in the level studied: those studying at Level 2 were the most likely to say that all of the lesson was spent in increasing their knowledge, but learners studying at Level 3 were more likely to say that all or most of the lesson was spent in this way.

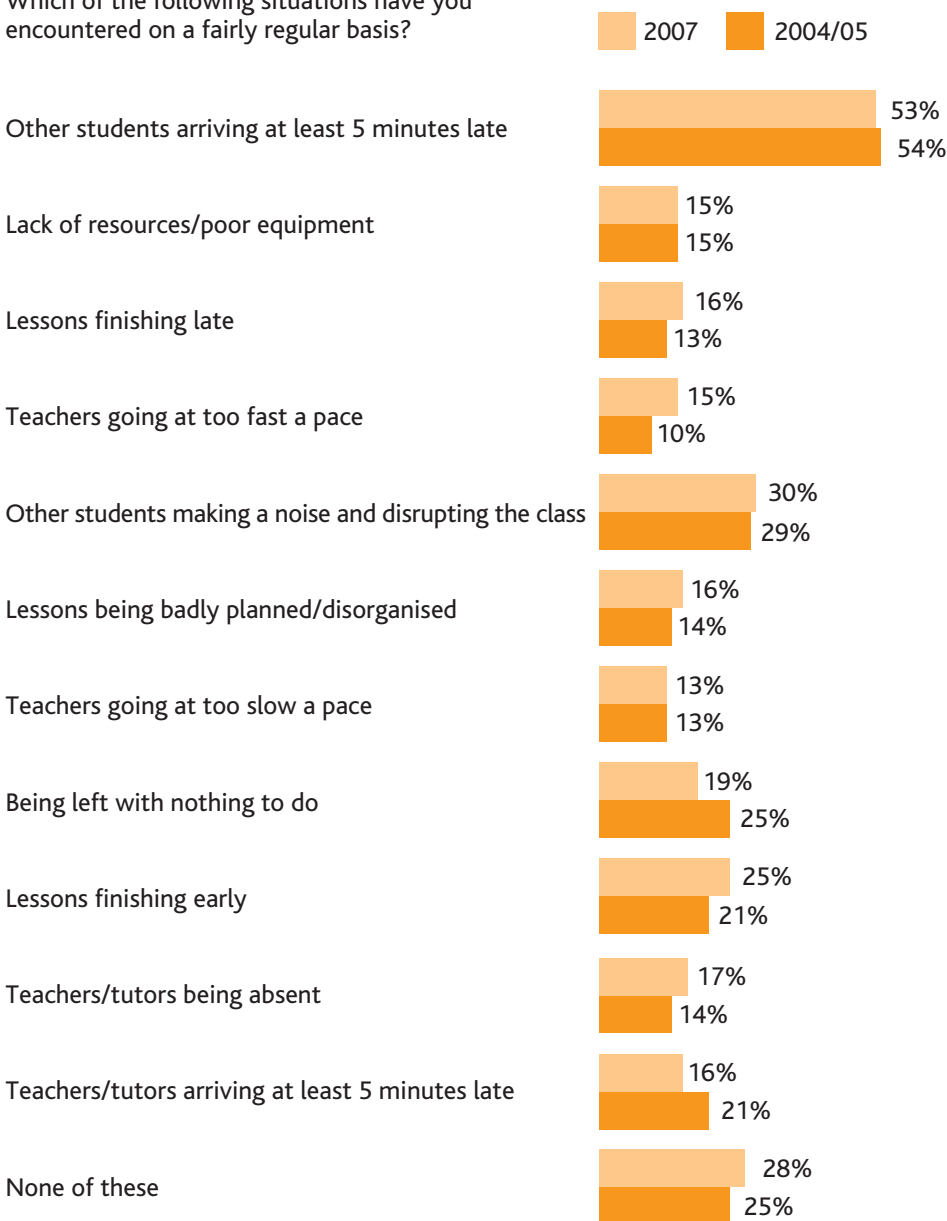
89 Learners studying hairdressing and beauty therapy were the most likely to say that they spent the whole lesson increasing their knowledge, while the figure was lowest for those studying information and communication technology.

90 Figure 13 shows the prevalence of various 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; the other situations were less common, but were still

each mentioned by at least 13 per cent of learners. The findings were broadly similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey, although fewer learners in 2007 mentioned tutors arriving late, or learners being left hanging around. By contrast, a greater proportion in 2007 had experienced lessons finishing early and tutors going at too fast a pace.

Figure 13: Issues affecting the learning programme over time

Which of the following situations have you encountered on a fairly regular basis?



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 5,619 WBL learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

91 The various situations were reported most frequently by learners aged 16 to 18, followed by 19- to 24-year-olds; learners aged 25 or over were less likely to say that these situations happened regularly. They were also reported more by men than by women, particularly the issues relating to other students.

92 The situations were also reported more frequently by those studying at Level 1 or below and by those on non-NVQ courses, both containing a high proportion of male learners and 16- to 18-year-olds.

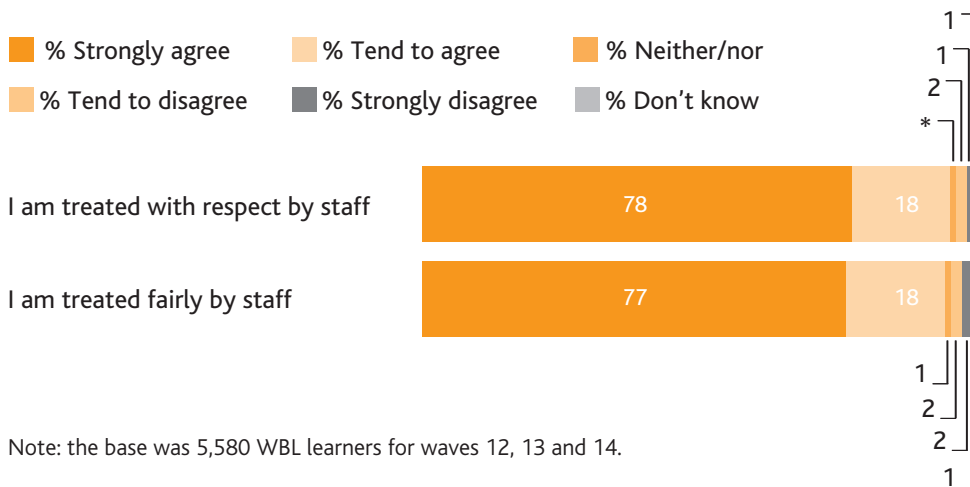
93 Similarly, subjects with a high incidence of these situations were those taken by a high proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds and/or men: science and mathematics; construction; engineering, technology and manufacturing; and hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Fairness and respect

94 The vast majority of learners said they had been treated fairly and with respect by their training provider. As Figure 14 shows, 96 per cent agreed that they were treated with respect, and 95 per cent that they were treated fairly. In each case, more than three learners in four agreed strongly (78 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively).

Figure 14: Fairness and respect

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



95 While the vast majority of learners were positive on these issues, ratings were particularly high among those with a high prior level of attainment (Level 3 or above), and among those studying retailing, customer service and transportation; and business administration, management and professional courses.

96 Learners who had left their course early were less positive than other respondents, but were still likely to agree that they had been treated with respect (76 per cent) and treated fairly (73 per cent).

Consultation with learners

97 Table 5 shows learners' views on the level of consultation on different issues. The majority agreed that they were asked for their views on the four items, although at least one respondent in six disagreed.

98 Table 5 also shows that views were more negative among learners aged 25 or over. In addition, men tended to be more positive than women, except on ways to improve the learning programme, where there was no difference.

99 This difference by gender is in contrast to findings on other issues, such as overall satisfaction and the quality of teaching, in which women were more positive than men.

100 Disabled learners and those with learning difficulties tended to be more positive about consultation opportunities than were other learners, as Table 6 shows. This applied to all four items for those with learning difficulties; disabled learners were more positive in relation to feedback on the learning programme, but were no different from other learners in their views on the college and facilities.

101 Learners who had left their course early were again more negative than other learners (between 31 per cent and 44 per cent disagreed that they had been asked for their views on the four items). Although early leavers were more critical on a number of issues, their views on consultation were particularly negative.

Table 5: Level of consultation, by age

	All	Age		
		16–18	19–24	25+
<i>Base</i>	(5,580)	(2,411)	(2,463)	(701)
Net agree score (+/-)	%	%	%	%
My college/provider asks for my views on:				
the quality of the learning programme	+61	+64	+63	+49
ways to improve the learning programme	+49	+55	+51	+29
its facilities	+43	+49	+44	+25
the college (e.g. canteen, building, rooms)	+29	+36	+30	+12

Note: the base was all respondents.

Table 6: Level of consultation, by disability and learning difficulties

	All	Disability		Learning difficulties	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>Base</i>	(5,580)	(331)	(5,249)	(481)	(5,099)
Net agree score (+/-)	%	%	%	%	%
My college/provider asks for my views on:					
the quality of the learning programme	+61	+70	+61	+70	+60
ways to improve the learning programme	+49	+57	+49	+63	+48
its facilities	+43	+39	+44	+53	+42
the college (e.g. canteen, building, rooms)	+29	+30	+29	+41	+28

Note: the base was all respondents.

Responsiveness to learners

102 Learners who agreed that they had been consulted on at least one of the items covered in Table 6 (88 per cent of all learners) were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the provider had responded to their views.

103 As Table 7 shows, 82 per cent agreed that the provider had responded to their views, while 12 per cent disagreed.

104 Once again, views were most positive among disabled learners and those with learning difficulties (Table 7). Those studying retailing, customer service and transportation were also more positive than other respondents, and these learners were also more positive towards the level of consultation on the quality of the learning programme. Otherwise, views were consistent across different groups of learners.

105 Although early leavers were less likely to feel that they had been consulted in the first place, those that did were mostly positive about their provider's responsiveness (+50 net agreement).

Table 7: Whether learning provider responds to learners' views, by disability and learning difficulties

	All	Disability		Learning difficulties	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>Base</i>	(4,942)	(294)	(4,648)	(440)	(4,502)
	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	46	51	46	54	45
Tend to agree	36	37	35	31	36
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3	3	3	3
Tend to disagree	8	5	8	6	8
Strongly disagree	4	3	4	4	4
Don't know	3	2	3	2	4
Net agree	+70	+79	+69	+76	+69

Note: the base was all respondents who were consulted.

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Pre-entry Information, Advice and Guidance

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106 This section considers the reasons for choosing a course and a learning provider, and also examines the information given to learners at enrolment.

Reasons for choosing a course

107 Learners were most likely to say that they had chosen their course to help them get a different or better job, or to get promotion. Others said that the course was relevant to their job, or had been suggested or required by their employer. Liking the subject or personal interest were also reasons for choosing the particular course, along with advancing skills and knowledge and gaining qualifications. Details are shown in Table 8.

108 Reasons varied by age group. Table 8 shows that 16- to 18-year-olds were more likely than other age groups to have chosen the course because they liked the subject or for personal interest. Older learners were more likely to have chosen the course to gain qualifications, or because it was relevant to their current job, or because it had been suggested or required by their employer.

109 Those studying at Level 3 were the most likely to say that they had chosen the course to help them get a better or different job, or to gain promotion (51 per cent). Otherwise, findings were consistent across different levels of qualification studied.

Table 8: Reasons for choosing a course, by age

	All	Age		
		16–18	19–24	25+
<i>Base</i>	<i>(1,831)</i>	<i>(826)</i>	<i>(823)</i>	<i>(182)</i>
	%	%	%	%
To help me get a job/ promotion/better job/different job	44	43	47	39
Because I liked the subject	23	33	18	4
It was relevant to my job	20	12	25	31
For my own personal interest	16	22	12	6
To gain qualifications	15	10	18	23
Suggested or required by employer	12	5	14	25
To advance my skills and knowledge in this area	7	5	8	14

Note: the base was 1,831 WBL learners for wave 12. The table shows answers given by 5% or more of respondents.

110 Disabled learners were more likely than others to say that they had chosen the course for personal interest (26 per cent) or to advance their skills (13 per cent).

111 Those studying hairdressing and beauty therapy were much more likely than other learners to say that they had chosen the course because they liked the subject or for personal interest (this is partly explained by the young age profile of these subject areas). Relevance to an existing job was most frequently a reason for those studying retailing, customer service and transportation, as well as for those studying hospitality, sports, leisure and travel. Gaining a qualification was more of an issue for those studying business administration, management and professional courses.

112 Early leavers were very similar to other respondents in terms of the reasons for choosing a course, and for their choice of learning provider (below).

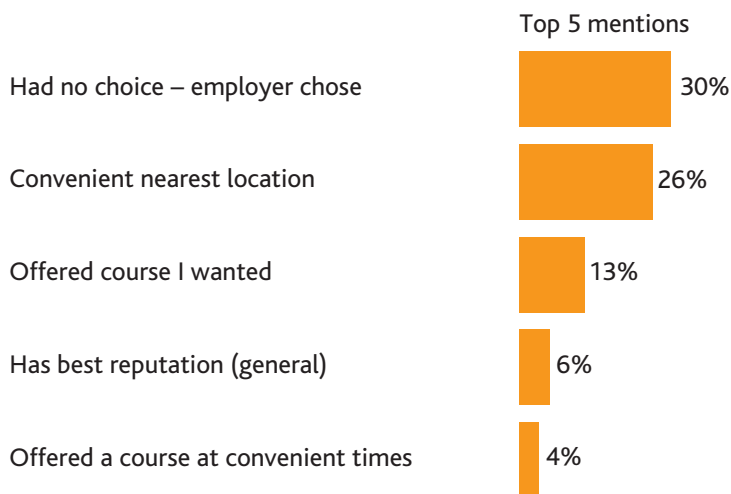
Reasons for choosing a provider

113 Three learners in ten (30 per cent) said that they had had no choice as to the learning provider running their course, as it had been decided by their employer. Otherwise, the convenience of the location was the most common reason for choosing a particular provider. Results are shown in Figure 15.

114 Compared with the 2004/05 survey, a smaller proportion in 2007 mentioned the fact that the provider had the programme they wanted (13 per cent, compared with 24 per cent in 2004/05).

115 The proportion that said they had no choice over their learning provider was higher among learners studying at Level 3 than at Level 2 (38 per cent, compared with 28 per cent), and also increased with age (from 22 per cent among 16 to 18-year-olds to 46 per cent among those aged 25 or over). Learners aged 25 or over were also more likely to refer to the convenience of the times of the course (10 per cent).

Figure 15: Reasons for choosing a learning provider



Note: the base was 1,831 WBL learners for wave 12.

116 Women were more likely than men to mention the convenience of the course timing (7 per cent, compared with 3 per cent), while men were more likely to refer to the convenience of the location (29 per cent, compared with 22 per cent of women).

117 Disabled learners were more likely than other respondents to be concerned with the provider's general reputation (11 per cent, compared with 5 per cent), but were less likely to say that they had had no choice (14 per cent, compared with 31 per cent).

118 Analysis by subject showed that learners studying engineering, technology and manufacturing were the most likely to say that they had had no choice over the provider. The convenience of the location was mentioned most frequently by learners studying construction, and convenient times most frequently by those studying retailing, customer service and transportation, or business administration, management and professional courses. Learners studying hairdressing and beauty therapy were the most likely to mention the general reputation of the provider.

Information about the course at enrolment

119 Learners mostly said that they were well informed about various aspects of their course before they enrolled, and this applied in particular to how the course would help them gain skills they could use in a job, the standard of work expected, and the course content. Details are shown in Table 9. Figures are similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey, although a greater proportion in 2007 felt very well informed about the course content.

120 Learners studying at Level 3 were more likely than other learners to say that they were well informed about the amount of work expected and the timing of assessments. However, those studying at Level 2 were the most likely to say that they were well informed about the course content. Details are contained in Table 9, which shows the net agreement scores by level studied. In addition, learners who were studying for an NVQ felt better informed than other learners on a number of the items (standard and amount of work expected, the timing of assessments and how the course would help them gain job-related skills).

121 Findings were generally consistent by gender and age, although women and older learners (aged 25 or over) felt less well informed about the amount of work expected in their own time (+72 and +62 net informed, respectively, compared with +76 overall).

122 Early leavers were less likely than other learners to say that they had been well informed about most of the items, but were positive about the course content (+81 net informed) and how the course would help them gain skills they could use in a job (+83).

Table 9: Information provision at the time of enrolment, by level of study

	All	Level of study		
		Entry Level & Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Base</i>	(1,831)	(80)	(1,023)	(666)
Net agree score (+/-)	%	%	%	%
The content of the course, what subjects you would cover	+84	+74	+87	+82
The standard of work expected	+87	+73	+87	+89
The amount of work expected of you in your own time	+76	+65	+73	+82
The type of assessments that you would be given	+80	+77	+79	+81
How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures)	+76	+80	+77	+74
How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job	+90	+85	+90	+91
The timing of assessments	+71	+56	+70	+75

Note: the base was 1,831 WBL learners for wave 12. Figures for Levels 4 and 5 are excluded because of the small number of respondents (18).

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Learner Support

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123 This section focuses on the support learners received during the course, and specifically on the information, help and advice they received. The section also examines the problems encountered by learners and how they were dealt with, as well as complaints made by learners.

Health and safety information

124 Learners were asked whether their learning provider had informed them about a number of health and safety issues, as shown in Figure 16. Most learners recalled being informed about each of the various issues, with more than nine in ten saying they were told about emergency fire arrangements, emergency arrangements for first aid, and whom to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions. These figures are in line with the 2004/05 survey.

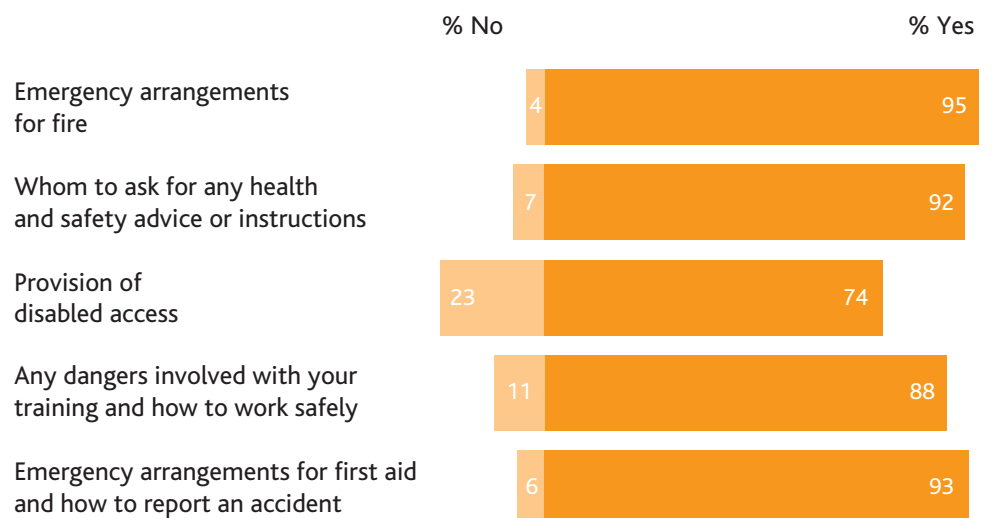
125 It is important to bear in mind that these findings are subject to learners' recall of events, which will vary depending on when they started the course.

126 Recall of the various types of information tended to be lower among learners aged 25 or over; in relation to emergency fire arrangements and working safely, it was higher among those studying construction, and engineering, technology and manufacturing.

127 Three disabled learners in four (76 per cent) recalled receiving information on the provision of disabled access – a figure that is similar to that for other learners.

Figure 16: Information provision on health and safety

Which of the following did your college/provider inform you about?



Note: the base was 1,875 WBL learners for wave 13.

Information provision after induction

128 In the previous section, we examined the extent to which learners had been informed about their course before enrolment. We now look at the same items and see how well informed learners said they were after their induction. Table 10 shows that learners generally felt well informed about all the various aspects of their course, and the figures tended to be very similar to those recorded for the level of information before enrolment. These figures are also very similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey.

129 As Table 10 shows, learners studying at Level 3 were more positive on a number of items, as was the case for information before enrolment. For post-induction information, Level 3 learners were more positive than those studying at Level 2 or below about the standard and amount of work expected, and the type and timing of assessments.

130 Women were more likely than men to feel well informed about the way that the course would be taught and about the timing of assessments, and views were also more positive on these items among learners studying business administration, management and professional courses.

131 Early leavers were more negative than other learners on most items, and this difference in views was much more pronounced than for information before enrolment. As was noted previously, early leavers were also critical of the level of consultation during the course, suggesting that information and consultation during the course may be an area for improvement among this group.

Table 10: Information provision after induction, by level of study

	All	Level of study		
		Entry Level & Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Base</i>	(1,875)	(77)	(1,050)	(662)
Net agree score (+/-)	%	%	%	%
The content of the course, what subjects you would cover	+87	+90	+86	+89
The standard of work expected	+89	+74	+89	+93
The type of assessments that you would be given	+83	+84	+80	+87
How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures)	+79	+74	+79	+81
The amount of work expected of you in your own time	+81	+72	+81	+85
The timing of assessments	+73	+68	+72	+77
How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job	+87	+70	+88	+89

Note: the base was 1,875 WBL learners for wave 13. Figures for Levels 4 and 5 are excluded because of the small number of respondents (29).

Support for learners

132 The vast majority of learners agreed that there was support available to help them carry out their learning programme: 92 per cent agreed with this statement and just 5 per cent disagreed.

133 Findings were consistently positive among all sub-groups, the only differences being the higher level of agreement among those with a high prior level of qualification (+90 net agreement for those qualified to Level 3 or above), and lower agreement among early leavers (+60 net agreement).

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Types of support available

134 Learners were asked whether a number of types of support had been made available to them at their college or learning provider (Figure 17). Almost all respondents (93 per cent) said they had had help and assistance from teachers or tutors available when they needed it, as well as one-to-one advice with appropriate staff (90 per cent).

135 Learners studying at Level 2 were the most likely to have access to a personal tutor (75 per cent), but were less likely than Level 3 learners to have access to a computer (76 per cent, compared with 87 per cent) or a library service or study room (59 per cent, compared with 73 per cent). Those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were also more likely to have access to a computer (86 per cent), as were those on non-NVQ courses (88 per cent).

136 Women and older learners (aged 25 or over) were less likely to say they had access to a computer or library service/study room, as were those without any prior qualifications. The difference by gender is linked to the relatively high proportion of women studying at Level 2, and indeed those without prior qualifications contain a relatively high proportion of women and older learners.

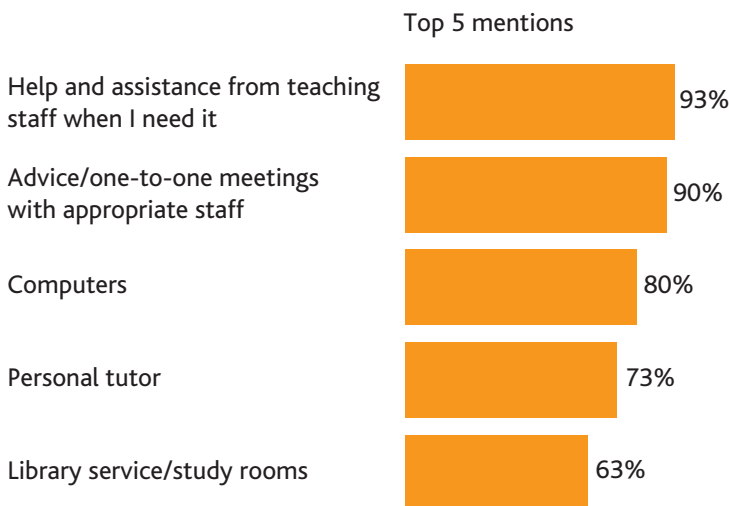
Management of issues affecting learners

137 Learners were asked to rate the management of a number of issues related to their course. Table 11 shows the proportion giving each item a score of 9 or 10 out of 10.

138 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 learners gave scores of less than 5 on any of the items. Findings were similar to those in the 2004/05 survey, although the 2007 survey showed an increase in the rating for seeing the same teacher or tutor throughout (from 60 per cent in 2004/05 to 66 per cent in 2007).

Figure 17: The types of support available

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



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

139 Women were consistently more positive than men on the various issues, and learners aged 25 or over were also more positive than other learners (Table 11).

Table 11: Management of issues affecting learners, by gender and age

	All	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	16–18	19–24	25+
<i>Base</i>	<i>(1,875)</i>	<i>(1,111)</i>	<i>(764)</i>	<i>(824)</i>	<i>(842)</i>	<i>(206)</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Seeing the same teacher/tutor/assessor throughout	66	62	71	64	65	75
Teachers/tutors/assessors turning up as planned	63	61	68	62	63	70
Making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available	55	50	61	52	54	66
Helping new people settle in	56	49	64	57	52	65
Providing support when I or other learners have problems	55	49	64	54	53	67
Managing timetables so that they suit the learner as best they can	47	41	56	45	44	66
Communicating changes in time for sessions	43	37	51	40	42	57

Note: the base was all wave 13 respondents asked the question. Table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers.

140 Those studying at Level 2 were more positive than other learners in relation to making sure that enough teachers or tutors are available (56 per cent gave a rating of 9 or 10) and managing timetables to suit learners (51 per cent), while those studying at Entry Level and Level 1 were less positive than other learners about seeing the same teacher or tutor throughout (46 per cent gave a rating of 9 or 10). Otherwise, findings did not vary by level studied.

141 Disabled learners were more positive than others in relation to managing timetables to suit learners (58 per cent gave a rating of 9 or 10).

Problems encountered during the course

142 Half of learners (52 per cent) said that they had experienced at least one of the problems listed in Figure 18. This covers a range of problems related both to the course itself and to external pressures that cause learners difficulty. Findings were very similar to those recorded in the 2004/05 survey.

143 There was some variation by age group, with older learners (aged 25 or over) most likely to report difficulties in fitting course commitments into other commitments, either at home or at work; however, they were less likely to have money pressures or problems travelling to the training provider.

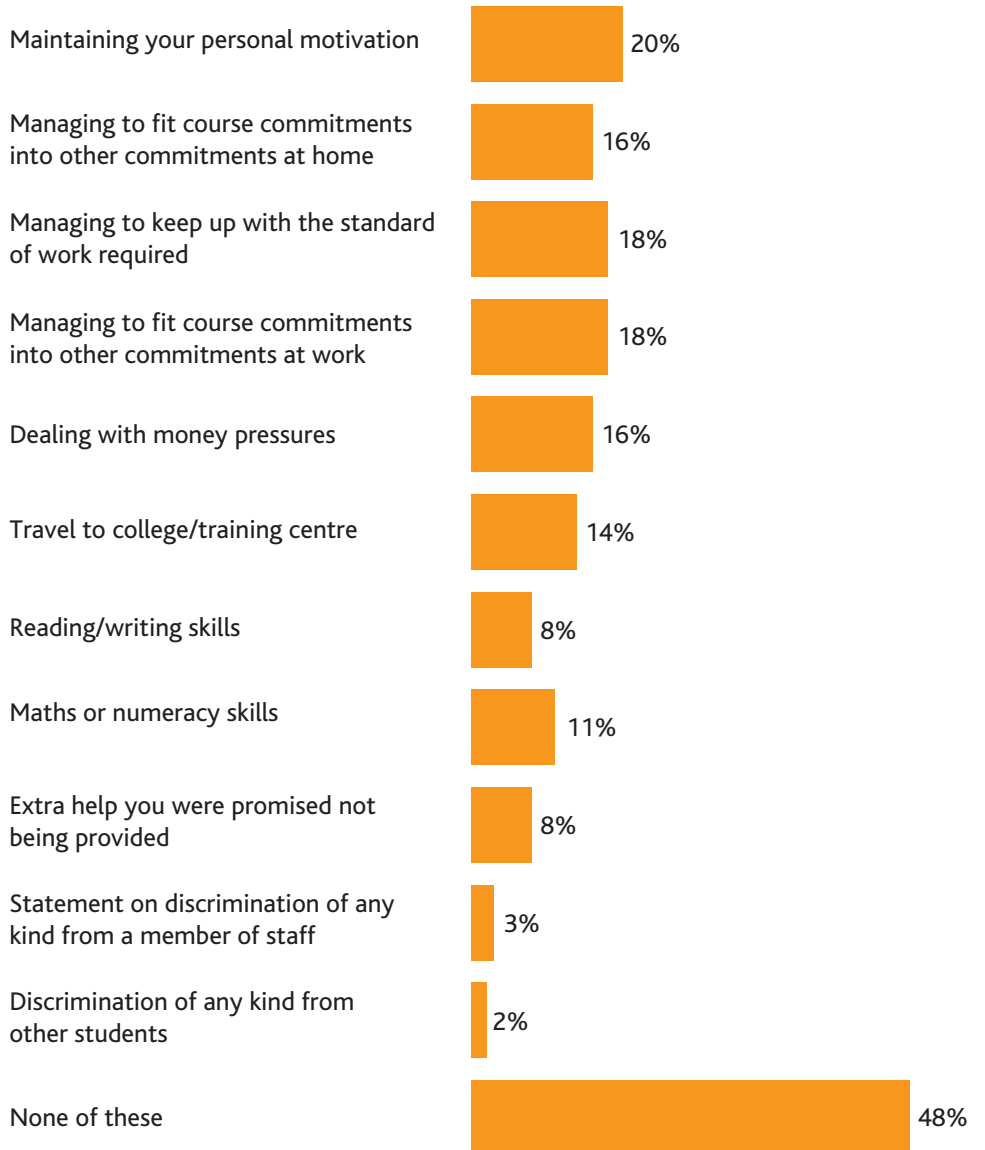
144 Learners studying at Level 3 were the most likely to say that they had problems maintaining their personal motivation.

145 Problems with basic skills were concentrated among learners studying at Entry Level or Level 1, those with no prior qualifications, disabled learners and those with learning difficulties; those with learning difficulties also said they had problems keeping up with the standard of work required.

146 Early leavers were more likely than other learners to mention the various problems (67 per cent said they had experienced at least one), and in particular they were more likely to say that they had had problems with basic skills (early leavers were more likely to be in courses at a lower level) and in not getting extra help that had been promised.

Figure 18: Problems encountered during the course

Have you had problems with any of the following?



Note: the base was 1,875 WBL learners for wave 13.

Help and advice

147 As was noted above, 52 per cent of respondents said they had experienced at least one type of problem; of these, 38 per cent said that they had sought help with the problem from their learning provider. This was similar to the proportion in the 2004/05 survey (39 per cent).

148 Women were more likely than men to have sought help with a problem (43 per cent, compared with 35 per cent), and this was highest among women aged 16 to 18 (49 per cent).

149 When learners had looked to their provider for help, 83 per cent said the help they had received was useful, while 16 per cent said it had been not very or not at all useful. Again, these findings are very similar to those from the 2004/05 survey.

Learners' complaints

150 Overall, 14 per cent of learners said they had at some time made a complaint to their provider about their course or other experiences, a figure that has remained constant over the years of NLSS. 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.

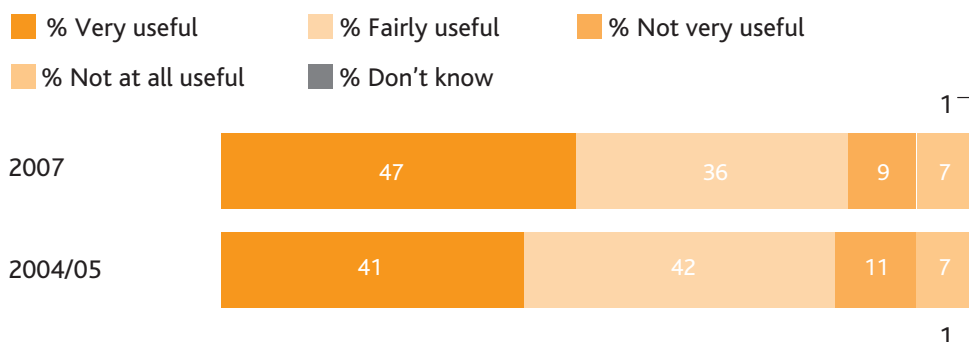
151 The proportion that had made a complaint was lower among those aged 25 or over (6 per cent), and higher among those studying at Level 3 than at Level 2 (16 per cent, compared with 12 per cent). It was also higher among disabled respondents (22 per cent), as well as among those studying hairdressing and beauty therapy (26 per cent).

152 Early leavers were more likely than other learners to have made a complaint (26 per cent); they were also more negative about the management of different issues affecting learners (as listed in Table 11).

153 Learners who had made a complaint were less satisfied with their learning experience overall, although the majority were still positive: 69 per cent were satisfied and 22 per cent dissatisfied. This indicates that, although complaints can lead to a less favourable impression of the course overall, many learners were prepared to see their complaint as a single negative incident in the context of a generally positive experience.

Figure 19: The usefulness of help received over time

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



Note: the base was 370 WBL learners for wave 13 who sought advice or help (2007) and 382 WBL learners for wave 10 who sought advice or help (2004/05). It is not possible to analyse these findings in more detail because of the small number of respondents answering the questions (967 respondents had a problem and 370 sought help with it).

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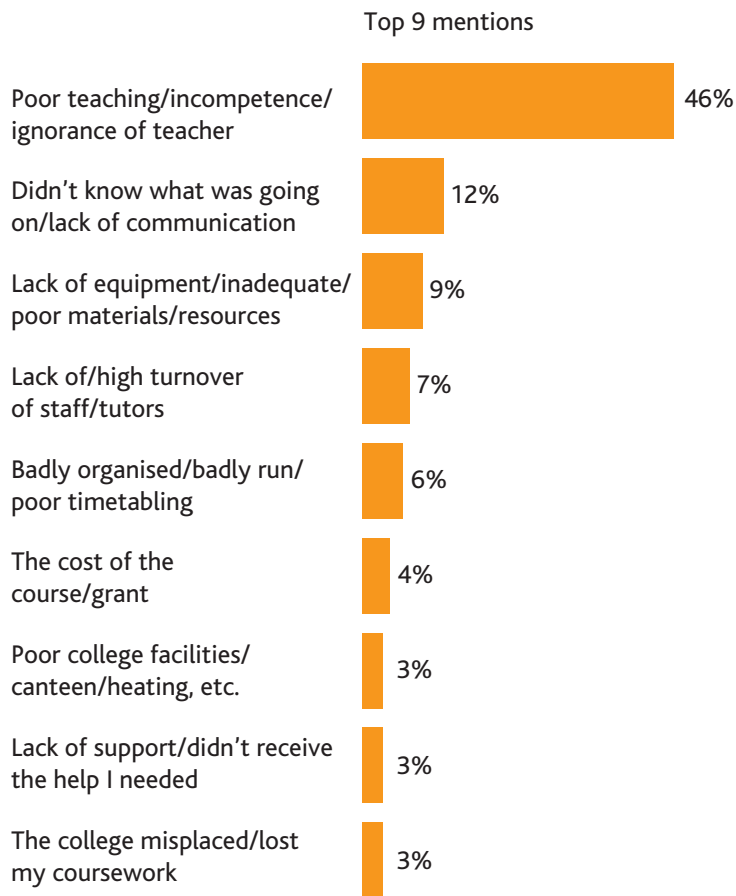
154 By far the most common reason for complaint was poor teaching or the incompetence of the teacher (46 per cent). Lack of communication was the reason given by 12 per cent of respondents. A breakdown of the reasons for complaints is shown in Figure 20.

155 When asked which statement best described the outcome of their complaint, around two learners in five (37 per cent) said there had been an outcome that satisfied them, while 15 per cent said there had been an outcome but it was not satisfactory. Almost half (46 per cent) said there had been no outcome to the complaint at all. These findings are similar to those measured in previous years.

156 The number of respondents who made a complaint (269) was too small for sub-group analysis of reasons and outcomes.

Figure 20: Reasons for complaint

What was your complaint about?



Note: the base was 269 WBL learners for wave 13 who made a complaint.

Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning

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157 This section first examines work-based learners' general attitudes towards learning, both now and when they left school. It then looks at the benefits that learners felt they had received from the course, and the likelihood that they would undertake further learning.

Feelings about education on leaving school

158 Just under half of learners (46 per cent) said they had had generally positive feelings about education when they left school, while 23 per cent said they had had negative feelings. These findings show no change from the 2004/05 survey.

159 Attitudes differed according to the level to which respondents were qualified prior to their course, as is shown in Table 12. Those qualified to a higher level tended to be more positive. Related to this, those studying at Level 3 were more positive than other learners (57 per cent said they had had generally positive feelings).

160 In addition, feelings about education at the time of leaving school were more positive among women than among men (49 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, said they had had positive feelings), and were more positive among black and minority ethnic learners (61 per cent, compared with 44 per cent of white respondents). Disabled learners were less likely to have had positive feelings about education when they left school (33 per cent).

161 There was no difference between the views of early leavers and those of other learners.

Table 12: Feelings about education on leaving school, by prior attainment level

	All	Prior attainment level		
		No qualification	Level 2 or below	Level 3 or above
<i>Base</i>	<i>(1,874)</i>	<i>(111)</i>	<i>(1,159)</i>	<i>(491)</i>
	%	%	%	%
Generally positive feelings about education	46	33	42	57
Generally negative feelings about education	23	33	23	17
Not bothered either way about education	31	32	34	26
Don't know	1	2	1	*

Note: the base was 1,874 WBL learners for wave 14.

Current feelings about learning

162 Table 13 shows learners' current feelings about learning. The vast majority agreed that they were carrying on learning in order to improve their career prospects (91 per cent), while around half agreed that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it (53 per cent) and slightly fewer agreed that they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects (44 per cent). Only a minority agreed that they carried on learning because they could not think of anything better to do or said that they did not really enjoy learning. These figures are similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey, although the proportion saying they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects has fallen from 53 per cent to 44 per cent.

163 The main difference in attitudes was by age, with older learners (aged 25 or over) more likely to say that they enjoyed and got a buzz from learning, and learners aged 16 to 18 more likely to be learning mostly because of the social aspects. The 16- to 18-year-olds were also a little more likely to say that they did not really enjoy learning. Details are shown in Table 13.

164 The one difference by gender was that women were more likely than men to say that they enjoyed and got a buzz from learning (59 per cent, compared with 47 per cent).

165 Learners studying at Level 3 were particularly likely to say that they were learning in order to improve their career prospects (94 per cent), while those studying at Level 2 were the most likely to say that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it (57 per cent). Those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were more likely than other learners to say that they did not really enjoy learning (22 per cent). Early leavers were also more likely to say that they did not really enjoy learning (18 per cent), but were otherwise similar to other learners for this aspect and for their attitudes towards learning.

166 The proportion saying that they were learning because they could not think of anything better to do was higher among those with learning difficulties (19 per cent), disabled learners (17 per cent) and those on non-NVQ courses (16 per cent).

Table 13: Current attitudes towards learning, by age

	All	Age		
		16–18	19–24	25+
<i>Base</i>	(1,874)	(761)	(798)	(313)
	%	%	%	%
I am carrying on learning in order to improve my career prospects	91	90	92	90
I enjoy learning and get a buzz from it	53	49	49	66
I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects	44	53	36	40
I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do	9	9	6	12
I don't really enjoy learning	9	13	8	5
Other	1	1	2	2

Note: the base was 1,874 WBL learners for wave 14.

167 Table 14 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. These attitudes have not changed since the 2004/05 survey, except that learners were more positive in 2007 than in 2004/05 in terms of managing their time properly.

168 On most items, there was a difference by prior attainment, as is shown in Table 14. Those qualified to a higher level prior to their course tended to be more positive about the various issues, and this was most pronounced for enjoying new responsibilities. This pattern was less pronounced for self-motivation, where figures were similar.

Table 14: Current attitudes towards learning, by prior attainment level

	All	Prior attainment level		
		No qualification	Level 2 or below	Level 3 or above
<i>Base</i>	(1,874)	(111)	(1,159)	(491)
Net agree score (+/-)	%	%	%	%
I feel out of place in a classroom situation	-62	-40	-60	-72
I always like a new challenge	+90	+76	+91	+94
I can never seem to manage my time properly	-54	-42	-53	-61
I find it easy to motivate myself for learning	+62	+61	+60	+67
I get very nervous about the standard of work required	-36	-16	-36	-46
I do not usually enjoy new responsibilities	-54	-28	-51	-70

Note: the base was 1,874 WBL learners for wave 14.

169 Those studying at Level 3 also tended to be more positive than other learners, with those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 more likely to agree that they struggled to manage their time properly.

170 Learners with learning difficulties were less positive in terms of a new challenge and new responsibilities, being nervous about the standard of work required and less positive about feeling comfortable in a classroom situation. A similar pattern was evident for disabled learners, although figures were significantly different only in terms of new responsibilities and being nervous about the standard of work required.

171 Women were more likely than men to agree that they find it easy to motivate themselves. They were also more likely to agree that they get very nervous about the standard of work required and that they never seem to manage their time properly. Older learners (aged 25 or over) were more likely than others to say they got nervous about the standard of work expected, and were less likely to enjoy new responsibilities (this is linked to the pattern for prior attainment, as learners aged 25 or over were less likely to have prior qualifications).

172 If respondents had a positive attitude to learning when they left school, they were also more likely to have positive attitudes now, and this pattern was strongest in relation to self-motivation.

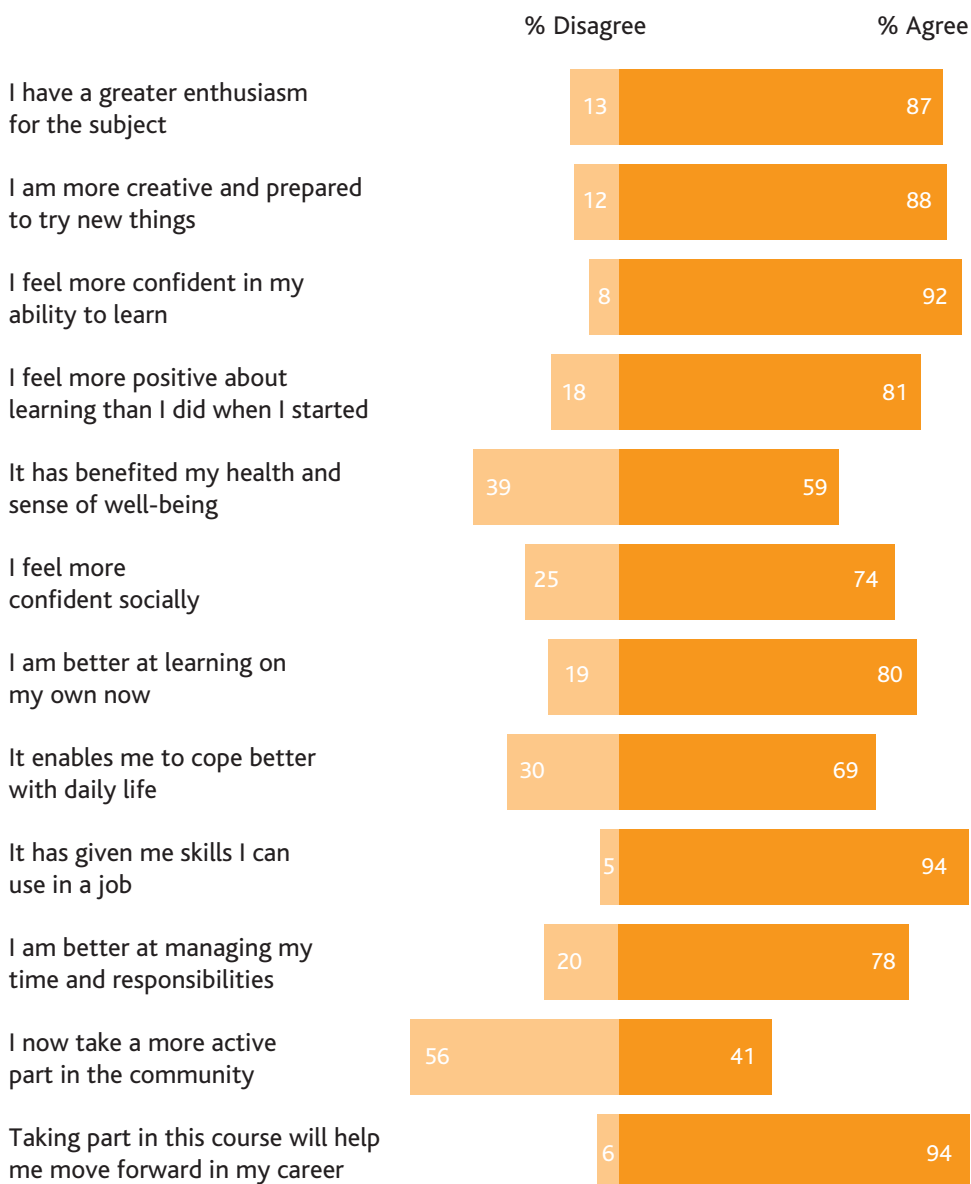
The benefits of participation in learning

173 Learners acknowledged that they had gained a number of benefits from their course, with more than four learners in five agreeing that they would be able to move forward in their career, that they had gained skills that they could use for a job, that they felt more confident in their ability to learn, felt more creative and prepared to try new things, had greater enthusiasm for the subject, and felt more positive about learning than when they started. Details are shown in Figure 21.

174 These findings are similar to the 2004/05 survey, although the proportion who said they had greater enthusiasm for the subject was greater in 2007 (87 per cent, compared with 84 per cent), and this continues an upwards trend since 2003/04.

Figure 21: The benefits of participation

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



Note: the base was 1,874 WBL learners for wave 14.

175 Table 15 shows differences by age group. This shows that younger learners were more likely to report a number of benefits, and this applied in particular to the wider benefits of learning (feeling more confident socially, managing time and responsibilities better, coping better with daily life, and benefiting health and well-being). There were no differences by age in terms of feeling more positive about learning and being better at learning alone.

176 Those studying at Level 3 were the most likely to report the benefits relating to work, whereas those studying at Level 1 or below were the most likely to say that the course had helped them to cope better with daily life and that it had enhanced their health and sense of well-being. Those with learning difficulties were also more likely than other learners to report these two benefits, as well as to report being better at managing their time and responsibilities.

177 Learners studying hairdressing and beauty therapy were consistently more likely than other learners to report various benefits.

178 Early leavers were less likely to report benefits, and the difference was greatest in relation to helping their career and improving their enthusiasm for the subject. These findings tie in with the reasons for leaving the course: often because the respondent felt it was the wrong course for them, or because they had changed job or had work-related difficulties.

Table 15: The benefits of participation, by age

	All	Age		
		16–18	19–24	25+
<i>Base</i>	(1,874)	(761)	(798)	(313)
	%	%	%	%
I have a greater enthusiasm for the subject	87	89	87	82
It has given me skills I can use in a job	94	94	96	91
I feel more confident in my ability to learn	92	91	91	92
I am more creative and prepared to try new things	88	91	87	83
Taking part in this course will help me move forward in my career	94	95	97	89
I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started	81	82	80	82
I am better at learning on my own now	80	80	82	79
I feel more confident socially	74	85	73	56
I am better at managing my time and responsibilities	78	83	80	68
It enables me to cope better with daily life	69	78	67	55
It has benefited my health and sense of well-being	59	70	55	50
I now take a more active part in the community*	41	n/a	n/a	41

*This was asked only of those aged 25 or over.
Note: the base was 1,874 WBL learners for wave 14.

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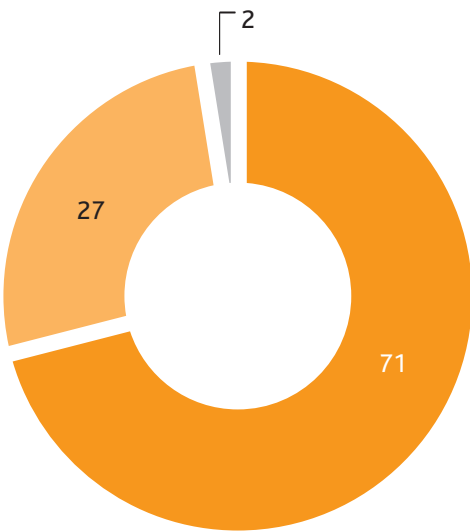
Usefulness of the course/training for employment

179 As has already been noted in this section, most learners felt that their course had given them job-related benefits. When asked directly, 71 per cent said that the course had been essential for their current job or a future job, while a further 27 per cent said it was not essential but would help them. This is illustrated in Figure 22.

Figure 22: The impact of learning on learner's current job

What would you say about your course and your current job?

- % Essential for learner's current job
- % Not essential but will help in current job
- % Will not help in learner's current job



Note: the base was 1,831 WBL learners for wave 12.

180 The proportion who said the course had been essential increased with the level studied, as is shown in Table 16. Related to this, it was also higher among those studying for an NVQ than among those on other courses (73 per cent, compared with 56 per cent).

Table 16: Importance of the course for learner's current or future job, by level of study

	All	Level of study		
		Entry Level & Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Base	(1,831)	(80)	(1,023)	(666)
	%	%	%	%
Essential for learner's current job/ any future job	71	51	70	77
Not essential but will help	27	42	28	22
Will not help in learner's current job/any future job	2	5	2	1
Irrelevant/don't know	*	1	*	*

Note: the base was 1,831 WBL learners for wave 12. Figures for Levels 4 and 5 are excluded because of the small number of respondents (29).

181 Younger learners were also more likely to say that the course was essential for their career (76 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds, falling to 70 per cent of 19- to 24-year-olds and 54 per cent aged 25 or over), and men were more likely than women to say this (74 per cent, compared with 67 per cent).

182 Learners were most likely to see the course as essential for their career if they were studying hairdressing and beauty therapy, construction, or engineering, technology and manufacturing.

183 Early leavers were much less likely to say that it had been essential for their job or career (33 per cent).

Likelihood of undertaking further learning

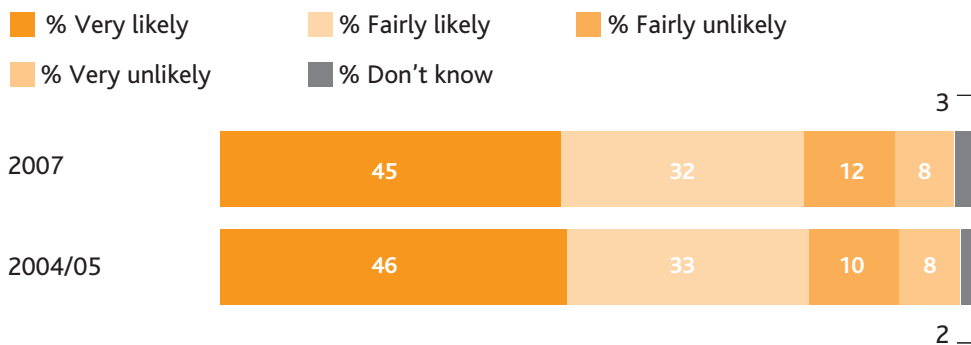
184 Three learners in four (77 per cent) said that they would be likely to undertake further learning in the future (e.g. in the next three years), including 45 per cent who said they would be very likely to do so. This is similar to the proportion saying this in the 2004/05 survey. Details are shown in Figure 23.

185 The likelihood of undertaking further learning was higher among women (49 per cent very likely), especially those under 25 (51 per cent), and was also higher among those learners with a higher prior attainment level (50 per cent qualified to Level 3 or above); there was no difference in terms of the level being studied.

186 Disabled learners and those from minority ethnic groups were also more likely than average to say that they would be very likely to undertake further learning (55 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively). Encouragingly, early leavers were as likely as other learners to say that they would do further learning in the future.

Figure 23: Likelihood of undertaking further learning over time

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



Note: the base was 5,580 WBL learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 5,619 WBL learners for waves 9, 10, and 11 (2004/05).

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