# Apprenticeship as a qualification
# SEMTA – employer consultation

## An employer perspective on the 'Qualification for Apprentices' proposal (England)

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**July 2007**

SEMTA wishes to thank all of the employers that helped or participated in the survey.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Aims and objectives

The purpose of this research is to establish the opinion and attitude of employers towards the proposal to introduce a 'Qualification for Apprentices'. It was important therefore that SEMTA approach employers who currently use the engineering apprenticeship system

## SEMTA's Apprenticeship frameworks

The engineering sector has perhaps the longest tradition of any sector of using apprenticeship frameworks as a means of providing high quality work based training, leading to semi-skilled or skilled status

Indeed, SEMTA's frameworks have the largest number of apprentices in any sector start each year and currently account for about 27,000 people in training across England and Wales. SEMTA plans to double the number of starts in line with Leitch, through increasing both Adult Apprenticeships and the number of young people following this route.

This consultation on the 'Qualification for Apprentices', follows on shortly after SEMTA's recent review of the engineering frameworks, which showed that employer satisfaction with the apprenticeships is very high:

- 91% of employers are satisfied with the AA/AMA in Engineering
- 82% of employers are satisfied with the A/FMA in Engineering

## Methodology

Telephone interviews were undertaken with a target of 150 employers. The interviewees were given a breakdown of three possible options with regard the qualification for apprentices:

Option 1 – the full Qualification and Credit framework (QCF)
Option 2 – the 'wrapper approach' – retention of the current system and just calling it a qualification
Option 3 – retention of the current system.

# The Findings

## Option 1 – the full Qualification and Credit framework

It appears that there is a low level of support for the proposed new Qualification and Credit-based system:

- 31% of employers find the new system attractive as an alternative to the traditional apprenticeship frameworks.

- Overall, 50% of employers would not be happy to see control of apprenticeships pass to QCA. This view was particularly common among large employers. In comparison, 30% of the employers would be happy to see control move to QCA.

- Many employers find the proposed rating of occupational competence at Award, Certificate and Diploma level confusing.

- 41% of employers agree that the new proposals will help to raise levels of achievement and skills within apprenticeships, while 35% disagree.

- Nearly two thirds of employers would not be happy to see NVQs and college-based qualifications, replaced by a credit-based system.

## Option 2 – the 'wrapper approach'

- Two thirds of employers, whether they are attracted to the credit-based system or not, would be supportive of an approach that retains the current apprenticeship system and just calls it a 'qualification'.

- Two thirds of employers believe that apprenticeships are about competency and should not be treated as a qualification.

## Option 3 – retention of the current system

Employers were not asked specifically about whether they would like to retain the current apprenticeship frameworks, but some stated that they would prefer this option.

This suggests that there may be advantages in retaining the established engineering apprenticeship system. Building on the current system, to make it more flexible and accessible, would particularly benefit small and medium-sized companies.

# 1. INTRODUCTON

## 1.1 Aims and objectives

The purpose of this research is to establish the opinion and attitude of employers towards the proposal to introduce a “Qualification for Apprentices”. It was therefore important that SEMTA approach employers who currently use the engineering apprenticeship system.

The report contains a

- description of the current apprenticeship system
- proposal for a new ‘Apprenticeship for a qualification’
- description of the consultation process
- analysis of the results of the consultation

## 1.2 Background

### 1.2.1 SEMTA’s Apprenticeship frameworks

The engineering sector has perhaps the longest tradition of any sector of using apprenticeship frameworks as a means of providing high quality work based training, leading to semi skilled or skilled status. SEMTA, originally as an Industry Training Board (ITB) then as an Industry Training Organisation (ITO) and now as a Sector Skills Council has co-ordinated the industries resources to ensure this important training initiative continues to meet the needs of employers in our sector.

Central to this process is the need to regularly review the specification, applicability, and operation of our frameworks. Traditionally we have felt the need to revise our frameworks on an annual basis in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

The engineering sector is fast moving, with new technologies being developed and brought to the market place at an ever increasing pace. The need to remain on the cutting edge of technology must be reflected in our training arrangements if we are to remain globally competitive. Engineering National Occupational Standards (NOS) drive the process from which new NVQs and technical certificates are developed. These in turn, are incorporated into frameworks for training.

Underpinning these technological developments are the traditional, but no less important traditional engineering practices, such as welding and fabrication, engineering maintenance and engineering production activities. Without these, industry would soon grind to a halt.

The core sub-sectors covered by our engineering frameworks are:
• Aerospace
• Automotive
• Basic metals & metal products
• Electrical equipment
• Electronics
• Other transport equipment
• Mechanical equipment
• Ship building & boatbuilding
• Maintenance

Currently the Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and Advanced Apprenticeship/Modern Apprenticeship account for 27,000 young people in training across England and Wales and they remain the primary mechanism for recruiting both semiskilled and skilled labour into the industry.

Of all the sectors, SEMTA currently has the largest number of starts in Advanced Apprenticeships, over 5,500 (and approximately the same number in Apprenticeships). We plan to double the number of starts in line with Leitch[1] recommendations through increasing both Adult Apprenticeships the number of young people following this route.

## 1.2.2 The Apprenticeship Blueprint

The SSDA Apprenticeship Blueprint has been developed from best practice in the design and operation of apprenticeships and encompasses the recommendations that emerged from the Sir John Cassels report[2]. It also provides greater flexibility to combine the competence, knowledge, and transferable skills elements of apprenticeships to more effectively meet the needs of employers.

Owing to the fast moving nature of the engineering industry, and the relatively short shelf life of qualifications and competencies, it is necessary to review the engineering frameworks on an annual basis rather than the three years allocated by the Blueprinting process.

SEMTA apprentices have a strong track record of participating in Further and Higher Education but have experienced difficulty in gaining appropriate recognition for the skills and knowledge accumulated through the apprenticeship system in order to gain entry into Higher Education. It would therefore be advantageous to recognise the apprenticeship programme as a 'qualification' in its own right, with in own weight and value expressed in terms that academia understand, for this particular purpose.

Recognising apprenticeships as qualifications in their own right would also allow for greater flexibility and portability for learners within the 14 to 19 Education and Skills arena.

[1] [1] *'The Leitch Review of Skills'*, December 2006
[2] *'Modern Apprenticeships: the way to work'* - the report of the Modern Apprenticeships Advisory Committee, September 2001

## 1.2.3 Current employer attitude to engineering apprenticeships

As stated, the engineering apprenticeship frameworks are well-established across the engineering industry. This consultation follows on shortly after SEMTA's recent review of the engineering frameworks[3]. This showed that employer satisfaction is very high for engineering frameworks. The survey, carried out as part of SEMTA's remit to increase the quality of apprenticeship training, revealed the following:

- 91% of employers are satisfied with the AA/AMA in Engineering
- 82% of employers are satisfied with the A/FMA in Engineering

The same report details the importance to employers of the different elements that make up the apprenticeship (table 1).

**Table 1. Importance of apprenticeship elements - table of responses**

| | Very important | Fairly important | Neither important nor unimportant | Not very important | Not at all important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Introduction to Basic Engineering (PEO / PMO NVQ Level 2) | 76% | 23% | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| Competence based element (NVQs) | 63% | 35% | 3% | 0% | 0% |
| Knowledge based element - (Technical Certificate) | 66% | 31% | 3% | 0% | 0% |
| Employment Rights and Responsibilities (ERR) | 30% | 48% | 19% | 3% | 0% |
| Key Skills | 42% | 39% | 14% | 3% | 1% |

Of all the components that make up the apprenticeship framework, the *introduction to basic engineering* was deemed most important – with 99% of employers rating it as important and 76% stating that it is very important.

Both the competence and knowledge based elements (*NVQ & Technical certificates* respectively) were considered important by employers – not one employer considered them unimportant.

Sixty three per cent of employers thought that NVQs are very important – whilst 35% thought they are fairly important. One respondent specified how the apprenticeship framework 'enables us to dovetail in-house training with the NVQ programme'.

Technical Certificates were introduced to focus on the knowledge and understanding that underpins the NVQ competencies. They may also cover wider aspects of the chosen occupation or sector. Of the 97% of respondents who considered this element to be important, 66% believed it to be very important.

[3] '*SEMTA Apprenticeship Frameworks report'* - the employer perspective of the Apprenticeship Frameworks in England and Wales, September 2006

Therefore, this consultation on the proposal to change the apprenticeship framework system and to introduce a qualification and credit-based framework, comes at a time of high levels of satisfaction with the engineering apprenticeships.

### 1.2.4 Apprenticeship as a Qualification

On 31st January 2006, as part of the Education White Paper, the Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) was asked to provide advice to the DfES on the potential for a qualification for apprentices.

With the help of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and other occupational bodies, QCA have been asked to develop a pilot qualification and carry out research into whether such a qualification would provide clearer recognition of apprenticeship achievement and look into the practicality and design of such a qualification. The key component in developing this pilot is ensuring employer ownership and confidence in any new arrangements.

It was therefore deemed appropriate that evaluation research should be carried out with employers currently engaged in apprenticeships to determine their preference for a new qualification.

QCA suggested that the proposed benefits of an Apprenticeship Qualification are that it would:

- be more appealing to employers
- be more appealing to learners
- be a more rounded qualification
- increase the take-up and completion rates of apprentices

**Options for development of the new Apprenticeship Qualification**

The respondents were given a breakdown of possible options with regard the qualification for apprentices. These options are categorised as follows:

Option 1 – the full Qualification and Credit framework (QCF)
Option 2 – the 'wrapper approach'
Option 3 – retention of the current system.

**Option 1 – the full Qualification and Credit Framework**

The credit based approach replaces the NQF framework based on National Occupational Standards with a new system called the *Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF)*.

With this approach all previous apprenticeship components such National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs, on-the-job-training) and college day release courses such as a National Certificates and City and Guilds courses (off-the-job or college day release training) would be redundant.

In their place would be a series of credit units - or bite sized elements of learning. There would be rules of combination within these credit units to ensure that these

would meet occupational competence. Apprentices would be graded within their apprenticeship qualification according to the level and number of credits achieved. The apprenticeship qualification would be recognised at Award, Certificate, and Diploma level.

In some cases a credit based approach may provide a greater degree of flexibility for employers than the current system, but this might be counteracted by increased bureaucracy and unfamiliarity. Furthermore, training providers will have to adapt to deliver the new system.

**Option 2 – the 'wrapper' approach**

The benefits as described above of having an 'Apprenticeship as a Qualification' could be accommodated using the current apprenticeship model made up of:

- NVQs (on-the-job training)
- National Certificates and C&G courses (off-the-job training)
- Key Skills

We would simply negotiate with QCA to have the current apprenticeship system be recognised as a 'qualification'. This wrapper approach would be much simpler than a credit-based approach and would meet QCA's requirements.

**Option 3 – retention of the current system**

Another option is to decline Apprenticeship as a Qualification and retain the current system where apprenticeship certification remains as it is, under the control of employers. This would only be an option if there is an overwhelming mandate from engineering employers.

These changes fundamentally change arrangements for delivery and certification of apprenticeships and therefore it was emphasised to employers that we needed to consult with them and get their views early in the process. To this end SEMTA developed a short consultation telephone interview questionnaire.

# 2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In order to establish the opinion and attitude of employers towards the proposal to introduce a 'Qualification for Apprentices', it was necessary to approach employers that currently use the engineering apprenticeship system. Given the tight timescale it was decided that a telephone survey of 150 employers, of varying sizes and sectors, would be broad enough to effectively gauge opinion.

The research was conducted in June 2007 and was undertaken by ORC International.

## 2.1 Preparatory information mail out

A letter was sent out to over 350 companies explaining the nature of the survey and that a Research Agency would be telephoning them to carry out the ten-minute interview.

## 2.2 Telephone interviews

ORC International carried out the telephone interviews and logged responses using their CATI system. This was undertaken over 3 days to meet the quota of 150 employers with apprentices. SEMTA were then supplied with an export file of all quantitative data and the analysis that had been carried out on the responses to the final open question asking for further comments.

The consultation interview consisted of seven questions explicitly concerned with gaining employers' views on the proposed changes to the apprenticeship system: Option 1, the Qualification and Credit Framework approach and Option 2, the Wrapper Approach. It did not cover the third option of maintaining the current system, although a number of employers did mention this when asked if they had "any other comments".

As an opening question, employers were asked about the extent to which they were aware of SEMTA's responsibilities as an organisation, in order to get an indication of their level of understanding and involvement with the apprenticeship framework system.

## 2.3 Respondent profile

The breakdown of respondents shows that 78% are directly within SEMTA's engineering scope. Respondents broadly reflect the engineering industry – the largest being metal products and mechanical equipment followed closely by electronics.

SEMTA Apprenticeship frameworks are attractive to other sectors, particularly those involved in process engineering and maintenance. It was felt important to take into account the views of employers in these sectors as well. 22% of respondents fall into this 'Other' category i.e. employers that use SEMTA's engineering apprenticeship framework, but are in the remit of other SSCs, such as Cogent, Proskills and EUSkills.

The split of respondents by company size is fairly equal: 33% have fewer than 50 employees, 41% have 50-249 and 26% have over 250 employees.

The size of company is very important, as although 99% of the engineering industry is made up of SMEs, the 1% that employ over 250 employees accounts for 25% of all apprentices.

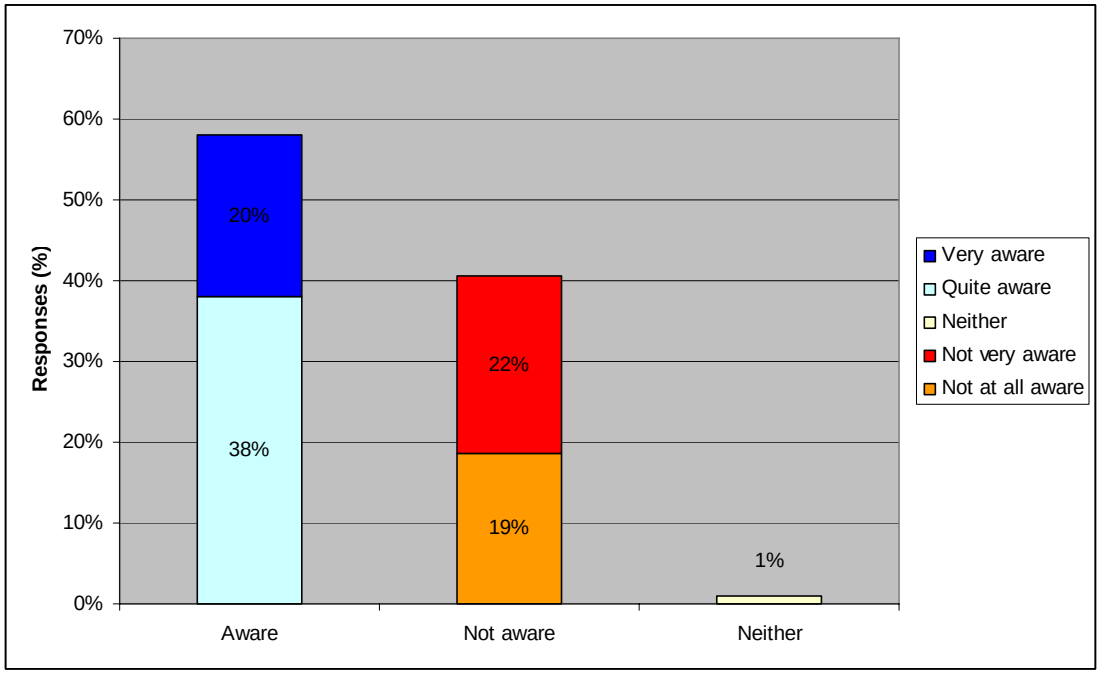
**A full breakdown of the respondent profile can be found in Appendix A.**

# 3. FINDINGS

## 3.1 Awareness of SEMTA and its responsibilities

58% of the employers interviewed had been aware of SEMTA's responsibilities as an organisation prior to being contacted for the consultation. This level of awareness of SEMTA is much higher than that reported in the SfBn employer scorecard for engineering companies as a whole.

**Chart 1: Awareness of SEMTA**




**Base: 150 respondents**

As would be expected, smaller employers have a significantly lower awareness level than the large and medium-sized employers (36% of small employers were aware, compared with 66% of medium-sized employers and 74% of large employers)[4].

**Table 2: Awareness of SEMTA by company size**

| Size of company | Percentage aware |
|---|---|
| Small (1-49 employees) | 36% |
| Medium (50-249) | 66% |
| Large (250+) | 74% |
| **All companies** | **58%** |

**Base: 150 respondents**

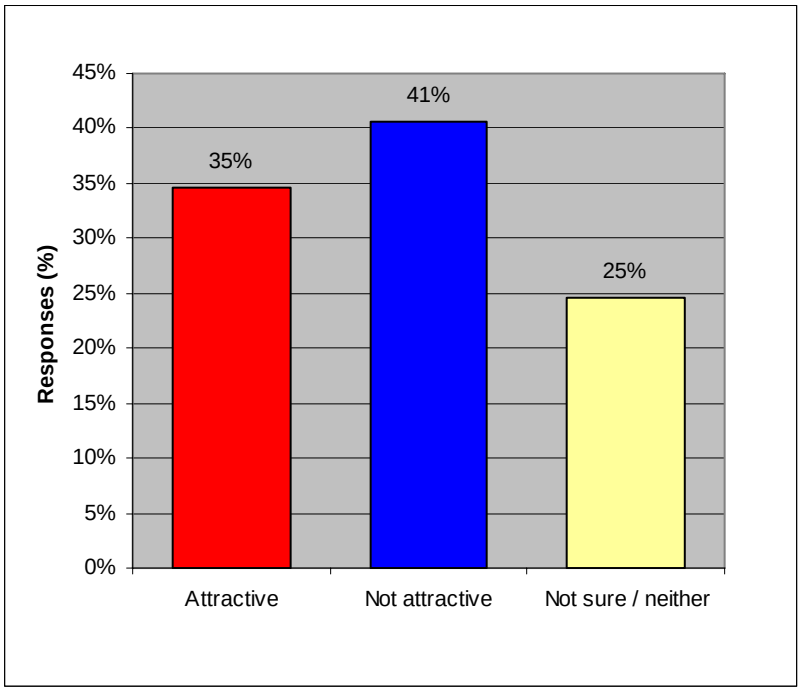
There are also indications, although the numbers in each sector are small, that those sectors that have already been through the Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) process are more aware of SEMTA's responsibilities. The awareness of employers in the sectors covered by the Pathfinder SSA (Aerospace, Automotive and Electronics sectors) is 79% compared with 43% for the Metals, Mechanical and Electrical sectors, which are currently developing a SSA.

[4] Chi Square test significant at 99.9% confidence level.

## 3.2 Attitude to proposed credit-based system - attractiveness of the proposed system of Qualifications and Credit

Overall, 41% of the employers do not find the new qualification and credit system attractive, compared with 35% who find it attractive.

**Chart 2: How attractive would you find the new system of Qualification and Credit as an alternative to the current traditional Apprenticeship arrangements?**




**Base: 150 respondents**

While in all size bands, more employers do not find the qualification and credit system attractive than find it attractive, this is particularly noticeable among the large companies. Only 28% of the large companies said that they find the new system attractive.

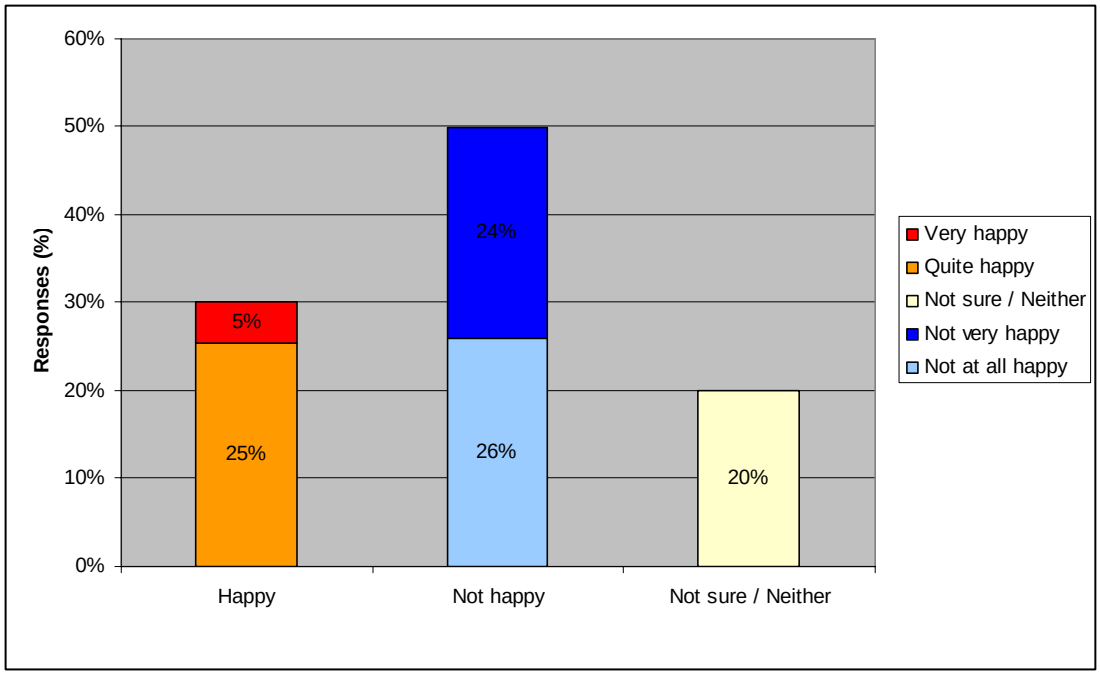
It is interesting to note that, while 50% of those that find the new system attractive would be happy if NVQs and college-based qualifications are replaced by a credit-based system, 33% would not. In other words, one third of those that find the new system attractive would not be happy with the consequences of such a change – the replacement of NVQs and Technical Certificates.

Furthermore, although these employers find the new alternative attractive, over two thirds would support the retention of the current apprenticeship framework system and simply calling it a qualification.

## 3.3 Attitude to QCA taking responsibility for certification of apprenticeships

30% of the employers say that they would be happy to see the control of apprenticeships pass to QCA, compared with 50% that would not be happy. At the extremes of this attitude scale, 26% say they would be '*not at all happy'* to see control pass to QCA whilst only 5% say they would *be* '*very happy*'.

**Chart 3: How happy would you be to see control of apprenticeships pass to QCA rather than remain with employers?**




**Base: 150 respondents**

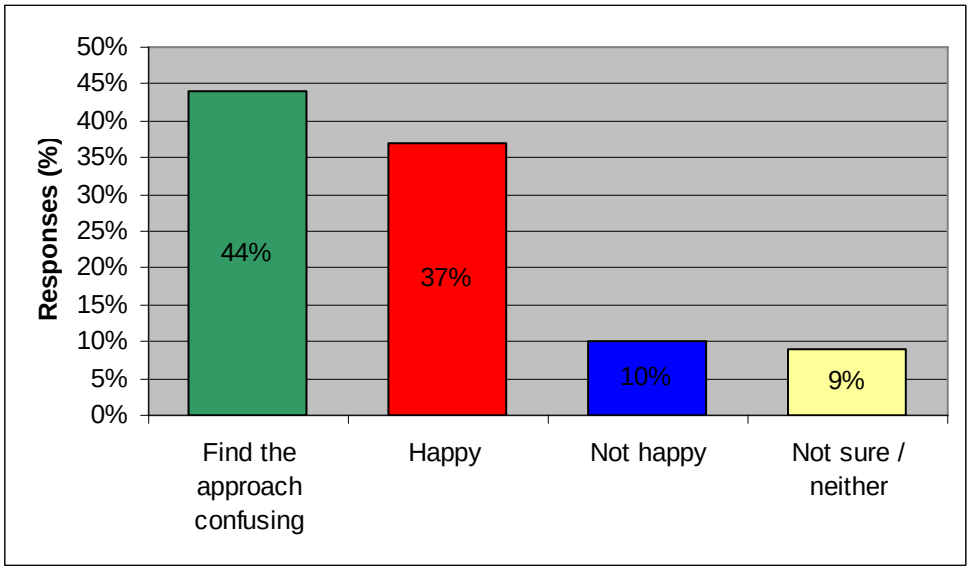
Again, this is particularly pronounced in the large companies: only 13% say that they would be happy with control passing to QCA, whereas 69% say they would not be happy.

## 3.4 Attitude to occupational competence being rated at Award, Certificate and Diploma level

Despite 37% of employers supporting the idea of occupational competence being rated in this way, the largest group (44%) find the approach confusing (chart 4). 10% of the employers are not happy with the levels and the remainder are "not sure" or neither happy nor unhappy.

Again the views of the larger employers are more clearly defined: 15% would not be happy, 15% would be happy and 56% find the approach confusing.

**Chart 4: How happy would you be to see occupational competence being rated at Award, Certificate and Diploma level, or do you find this approach confusing?**




**Base: 150 respondents**

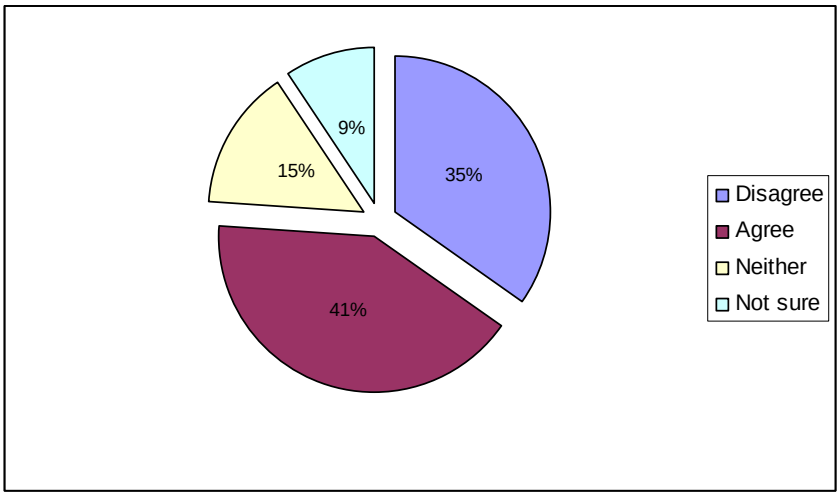
Looking only at those who found the Qualification and Credit system attractive, 77% are happy with the Award, Certificate and Diploma levels and 17% find the approach confusing. This contrasts with those not happy with the proposed Qualification and Credit system, of whom 61% find the approach confusing.

## 3.5 Whether the new proposals will help raise levels of achievement and skills within apprenticeships

Currently, completion rates for engineering apprenticeships in England are the highest of any sector: 63% for Advanced Apprenticeships and 59% for Apprenticeships[5]. These rates have improved over the past few years and the aim is to increase completion rates by 2% per annum.

41% of the employers responding, agree that the new proposals will help to raise levels of achievement and skills within apprenticeships; 35% disagree.

**Chart 5: The new proposals will help raise levels of achievement and skills**




**Base: 150**

Larger employers are more sceptical that the new proposals will raise achievement and skills.

**Table 3: The new proposals will help raise levels of achievement and skills**

| Size of company | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Small (1-49 employees) | 50% | 30% |
| Medium (50-249) | 46% | 34% |
| Large (250+) | 23% | 41% |
| **All companies** | **41%** | **35%** |

**Base: 150 respondents**

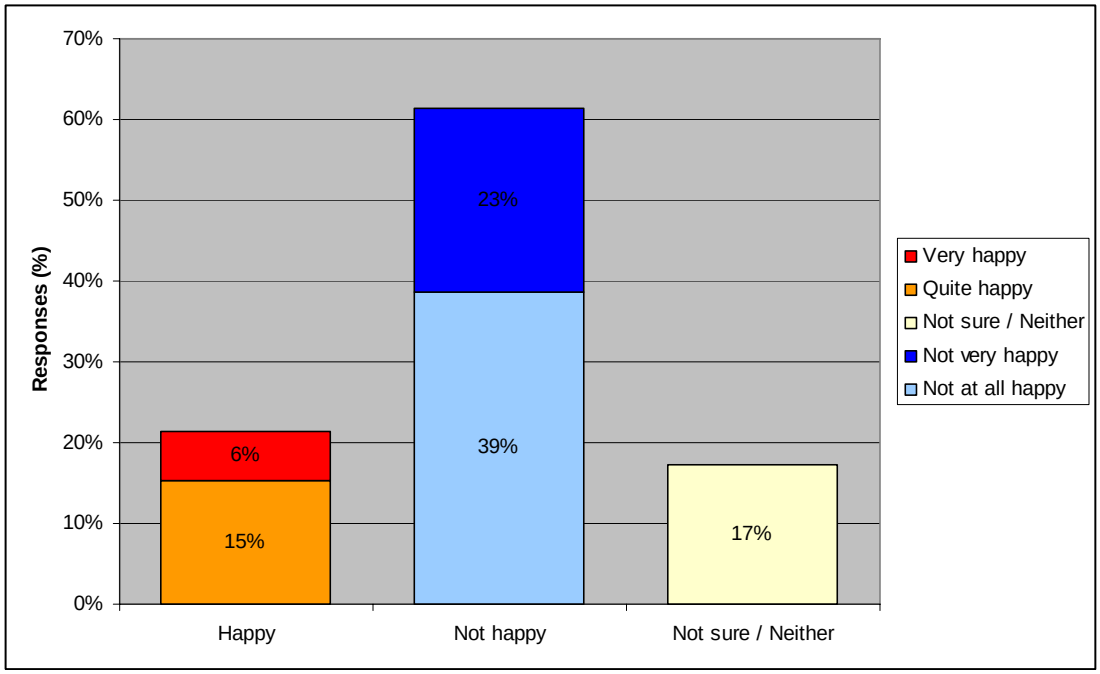
Those that think that the new system will raise achievement and skills, appear to find the Qualification and Credit approach attractive: 73% find the new system attractive. In comparison, of those that do not think it will raise achievement, 87% do not find the new system attractive.

[5] Source: LSC

## 3.6 The replacement of NVQs and college-based qualifications by a credit-based system

The majority of employers said that they would not be happy to see the 'NVQ and College based qualifications' be replaced by the 'Credit-based system'.

**Chart 6: How happy would you be to see NVQs and College based qualifications replaced by a 'Credit-based system'?**




**Base: 150 respondents**

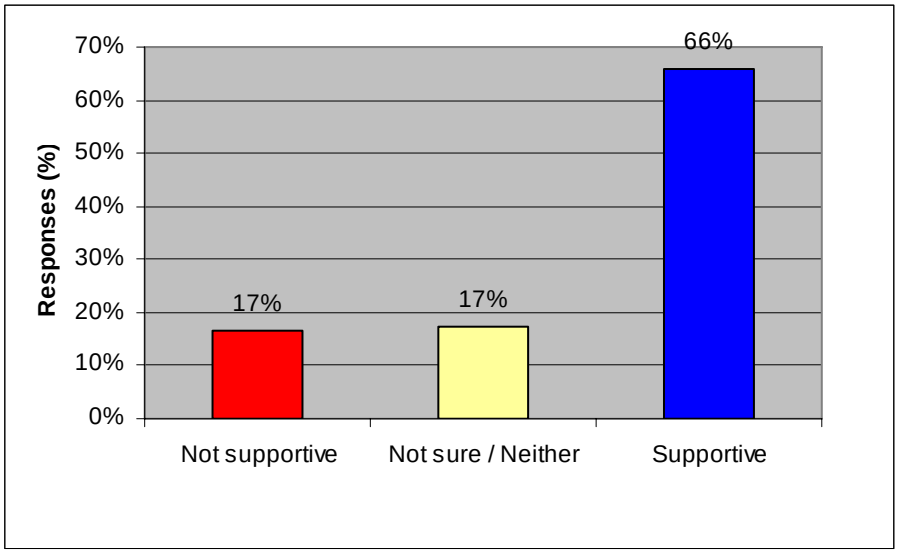
Of the 61% of employers that would not be happy to see NVQs and college based qualifications replaced, 68% would not be happy to see control of apprenticeships going to QCA, 61% find the proposed certification levels confusing and 49% do not think that the new system will raise achievement and skills levels.

Even of those that are happy for NVQs and college-based qualifications to be replaced, the vast majority (72%) are still supportive of keeping the current apprenticeship system and calling it a qualification.

## 3.7 Employer attitude to the 'wrapper' approach

Two thirds of employers say that they would be supportive of an approach that retains the current apprenticeship system and just calling it a 'qualification'. In fact, of those that have an opinion, 80% support retaining the current system and just calling it a qualification.

**Chart 7: How supportive would you be of an approach that retained the current apprenticeship system and was just called a 'Qualification'?**




**Base: 150 respondents**

Employers were not asked about the third option of simply retaining the current system. However, a number of them made unprompted comments to this effect.

There were 25 employers who did not support retaining the current system and calling it a qualification. Four of these stated that:

> *(1) The current apprenticeship system is working well and they don't want it to be changed* (large aerospace company)
>
> (2) *There is too much change/moving of goalposts and that the current system should be kept* (medium aerospace company)
>
> (3) *Ownership of apprenticeship schemes should be with the employer and the current system currently works for us* (large automotive company)
>
> (4) *The current qualification system should be* kept (medium-sized mechanical equipment company).

In addition, of the 99 employers that supported the retention of the current scheme and just calling it a qualification, 17 stated in their comments that the current system is working well, it should be kept or that there is too much change and that this should be stopped.

Another company commented that, *"The potential changes are not going down well - they are major changes. They need to improve what they've already got".* One company suggested going back to the modules/segments system run by the EITB.

One company made a comment about the apprentices themselves being happy with the way the system is run. In the time allowed for the consultation, we were not able to include a survey of individual apprentices. However, there is some evidence from a recent LSC report that apprentices are more interested in furthering their careers within the engineering industry rather than gaining qualifications. A qualification is just a means by which they gain progress in their career:

*A number of the engineering apprentices had a very pragmatic view of NVQs as representing a stepping-stone towards further educational achievements and career progression. For engineering apprentices who had left school at 16, the NVQ was seen as the next stage of their development, enabling them to improve their educational profile. But generally, the apprentices saw the qualifications as a necessary part of their training of which the goal at the end was the career, and not the qualification.*[6]

The consultation also generated a number of telephone calls and comments from employers who felt strongly that the new proposals would be detrimental to the sector and the apprenticeship system.

Quote from letter:
'I am opposed to changing the system as it is at the moment. We have seen in my opinion a reduction in 'Apprentice Training' requirements over the years and I believe some of the proposals outlined allow this to reduce further'.

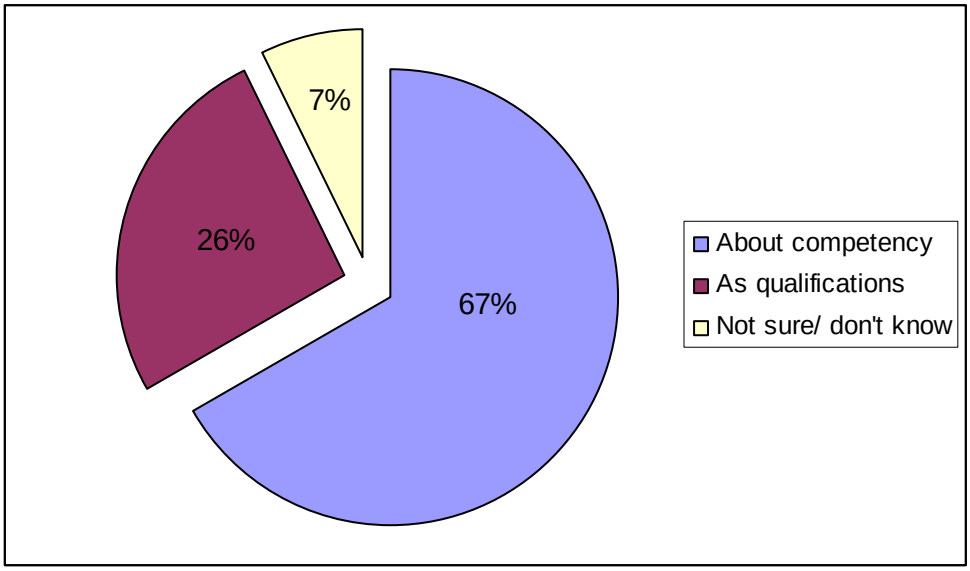
Quote from telephone call:
"The current system is complex enough, let alone a new system that is likely to be far more complicated".

[6] LSC report 'Career paths of former apprentices' making work-based learning work series 2, 2006

## 3.8 Whether apprenticeships should (a) be treated as qualifications or (b) are about competency

When given the choice of apprenticeships being 'treated as qualifications' or as 'competency to undertake an occupational role', two thirds of the employers feel that apprenticeships are about competency (see chart 6). This did not vary by size of company.

**Chart 8. Should apprenticeships be treated as (a) qualifications or (b) as competence to undertake an occupational role?**




**Base: 150**

## 3.9 Summary of findings

Although, throughout the responses to the consultation there are some employers who do not have an opinion about the proposals for a qualification and credit-based system, there are some trends that can be identified.

Those that do not find the new system attractive (41% of the employers) tend to:

- Be large companies (only 28% of large companies find it attractive)
- Not be happy to see control of apprentices pass to QCA (80%)
- Find occupational competence being rated at Award, Certificate and Diploma level confusing (61%)
- Think that the new proposals will not raise levels of achievement and skills (74%)
- Would not be happy to see NVQs and college-based qualifications replaced by a credit-based system (90%)
- Would support the retention of the current apprenticeship system and it just being called a qualification (62%)

Those that find the new system attractive (35% of the employers) tend to:

- Be medium-sized companies (41% of medium-sized companies find it attractive)
- Be happy to see control of apprentices pass to QCA (63%)
- Be happy with occupational competence being rated at Award, Certificate and Diploma level (77%)
- Think that the new proposals will raise levels of achievement and skills (87%)
- Would be happy to see NVQs and college-based qualifications replaced by a credit-based system (50%)
- Would support the retention of the current apprenticeship system and it just being called a qualification (69%)

In summary, most employers, whether they find the credit-based system attractive or not, support the retention of the current system and just calling it a qualification.

Further research would be needed to establish whether most employers who support the retention of the current system actually want it to be called a ‘qualification’ or whether they would actually prefer to keep the apprenticeship framework system as it is and make improvements to increase its flexibility, attractiveness and achievement rates.

# 4. CONCLUSION

It appears that there is a low level of support for the proposed new Qualification and Credit-based system as an alternative to the current traditional apprenticeship framework.

Even amongst those employers that find such a system attractive, there would be a substantial amount of work to be done in explaining the system in more detail and with more clarity, as well as convincing them that the new system should replace the current system of NVQs and college-based qualifications. Indeed, most of the employers who support the credit-based approach, show a preference for retaining the current system and just calling it a qualification.

There would be an even more substantial job to be done in convincing the large group of employers who do not find the new system attractive that it is a viable alternative to the current apprenticeship framework system.

The vast majority of these employers would not want control of apprenticeships to pass to QCA and they find the certification levels confusing. Perhaps more importantly, they do not believe that the new system would raise levels of achievement and skills. They are also opposed to NVQs and the current college qualifications being replaced by a credit-based system. Again, they show a preference for retaining the current apprenticeship system.

Overall employers have expressed views that are generally supportive of the retention of the current system and just calling it a qualification, i.e. the option of the 'wrapper approach'. Furthermore, 23 employers expressed views in their comments that they would not want to see even this change and would want to retain the current system and build on this.

This suggests that there may be advantages in retaining the current engineering apprenticeship framework system and enhancing it to make it more flexible and overcoming the known barriers to training. This would particularly benefit small and medium-sized companies.

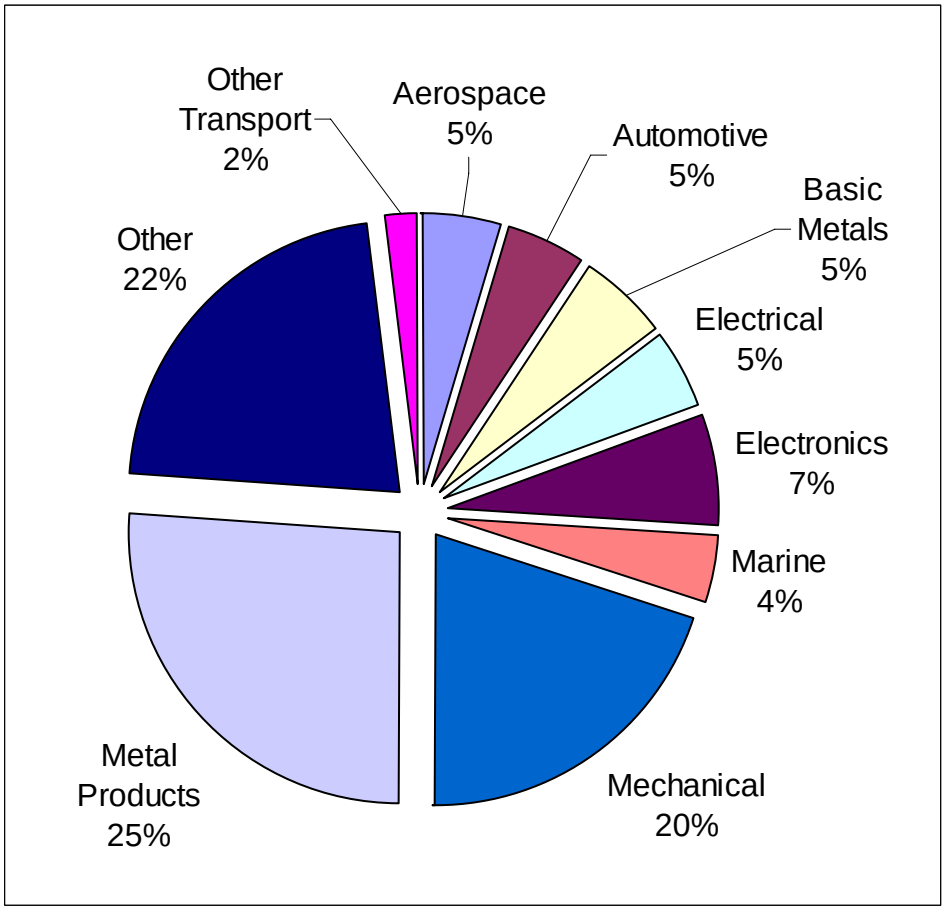
# APPENDIX A

## Respondent profile

**Manufacturing sub-sectors**
The breakdown of respondents (illustrated in chart 1) shows that 78% respondents operate directly within SEMTA's engineering footprint

There is a good spread of companies within the engineering sub sectors, broadly reflecting the actual population. The largest sub-sectors are *Metal Products* and *Mechanical Equipment,* followed by *Electronics.* . Although all the respondents use SEMTA's apprenticeship frameworks, the main business functions of some companies are covered by other Sector Skills Councils (see Table 1).

**Chart 1: Main activity of respondents**




**Base: 150**

SSCs such as *Improve* and *Proskills* have a direct cross-over with engineering through the use and maintenance of machinery for processing of food, drink, paper and other such materials. In addition, the responses within the *Lantra* remit included agricultural machinery and wire fencing, whilst *Construction Skills* employers are involved in civil engineering.

The largest sub-sector, outside engineering manufacture, falls within the boundaries of *Cogent*. The majority of these companies deal with fuels - oil, gas and petro-

chemicals. Other activities within *Cogent's* scope include the utilisation of polymers and rubber.

Both *EUSkills* and *Skills for Logistics* involve engineering related activity within the energy & utility and freight logistics industries respectively.

**Table 2. Responses by sub-sector**

| SSC | Sub-sector | Count | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| SEMTA | Aerospace | 7 | 5% |
| | Automotive | 7 | 5% |
| | Basic Metals | 8 | 5% |
| | Electrical | 7 | 5% |
| | Electronics | 10 | 7% |
| | Marine | 6 | 4% |
| | Mechanical | 30 | 20% |
| | Metal Products | 39 | 26% |
| | Other Transport | 3 | 2% |
| | Pharmaceutical | 4 | 3% |
| Cogent | Chemical, nuclear, oil and gas, petroleum and polymer industries | 8 | 5% |
| Construction skills | Construction skills | 6 | 4% |
| EU Skills | Energy & Utility Skills | 2 | 1% |
| Improve | Food & drink | 4 | 3% |
| Lantra | Environmental and land-based industries | 3 | 2% |
| Proskills | Process and manufacturing industries | 4 | 3% |
| Skills for Logistics | Freight logistics industry | 2 | 1% |
| | **Total** | **150** | **100%** |

**Region**

It was felt that the sample need not be regionally representative but should only cover England. Despite not receiving any feedback for London, the responses were broadly spread across the country.

**Employment size**

The vast majority of respondents were small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

**Table 4. Responses by size band**

| Employment size | Count | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 to 49 | 50 | 33% |
| 50 to 249 | 61 | 41% |
| 250 + | 39 | 26% |
| **Total** | **150** | **100%** |

A third of respondents had less than 50 employees and the majority (74%) had no more than 250 employees. Only five micro companies (less than 5 employees) responded and 13% were companies with over 500 employees.

The most recent SEMTA Labour Market Survey explains that the propensity to employ any apprentices or recognised trainees increases with organisation size (from 4% of 1-4 employee organisations to 38% of those with between 50 and 299 employees to 59% of those with 500+ employees).

Of all organisations with at least 5 employees, the proportion is 24%. Organisation size is the key determinant in this respect and this is reflected in sector differences to a great extent.

Over a third of organisations employing any apprentices or recognised trainees employ them in crafts occupations (36%) and a similar proportion employ them as technician engineers/engineering technicians (33%). These apprentices and trainees will have followed the Advanced Apprenticeship programme. The remainder tend to be employed as Operatives and are more likely to have followed an Apprenticeship programme.

# SEMTA
# Apprenticeship as a Qualification Survey
# Job Number 94215

Good morning / afternoon, please can I speak to <respondent name>?

**WHEN THROUGH TO RIGHT PERSON:**
My name is _____ and I am calling from ORC International, an independent research company. We are conducting research on behalf of SEMTA, the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.

SEMTA is contacting employers to seek their views on potential changes to Apprenticeship schemes that have been suggested by the DfES. The SSC would like to speak to employers as your views are very valuable at this early stage in the decision making process. I would like to ask you a few questions that will help the SSC to advise the DfES on the best way forward.

You should have received some information from SEMTA on apprenticeships that gave information on potential changes to the way that apprenticeships are awarded and controlled. Do you remember receiving this information?

**IF NO:** That's no problem. Thank you for your time, I am sorry to have bothered you.
**IF YES ASK SCREENING QUESTION S3.**

## SCREENING QUESTIONS

**S1** Have you had an opportunity to read the information from SEMTA?
**DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Yes — **Go to S3**
- ❑ No — **Go to S2**

**S2** Would you be happy for me to re-schedule this call to give you an opportunity to read the information?
**DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Yes — **Make appointment**
- ❑ No – not prepared to be interviewed — **Thank and close**

**S3** The call will take no longer than ten minutes and may be monitored as part of our quality control procedures. Any comments that you make will be treated confidentially and your views will not be attributed to you as an individual. Are you willing to take part?
**DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Yes — **Go to Section A**
- ❑ No — **Thank and close**

# APPENDIX B

## SECTION A.

**All respondents**

**Q1** Before receiving the information from SEMTA, how aware were you of their responsibilities as an organisation?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Very aware
- ❑ Quite aware
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Not very aware
- ❑ Not at all aware
- ❑ Not sure

**All respondents**

**Q2** As an employer how attractive would you find the new system of Qualification and Credit as an alternative to the current traditional Apprenticeship arrangements?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Very attractive
- ❑ Quite attractive
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Not very attractive
- ❑ Not at all attractive
- ❑ Not sure

**All respondents**

**Q3** How happy would you be to see control of apprenticeships pass to the Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) rather than remain with employers as represented by your Sector Skills Council?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Very happy
- ❑ Quite happy
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Not very happy
- ❑ Not at all happy
- ❑ Not sure

**Q4** How happy would you be with occupational competence being rated at Award, Certificate, and Diploma level or do you find this approach confusing?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Very happy
- ❑ Quite happy
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Not very happy
- ❑ Not at all happy
- ❑ Find the approach confusing
- ❑ Not sure

# APPENDIX B

**All respondents**

**Q5** How far do you agree that the new proposals will help to raise levels of achievement and skills within apprenticeships?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Strongly agree
- ❑ Slightly agree
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Slightly disagree
- ❑ Strongly disagree
- ❑ Not sure

**All respondents**

**Q6** How happy would you be to see National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and College based qualifications such as National Certificates and City and Guilds Qualifications disappear in favour of a 'Credit Based System'?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Very happy
- ❑ Quite happy
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Not very happy
- ❑ Not at all happy
- ❑ Not sure

**All respondents**

**Q7** How supportive would you be of an approach that retained the current apprenticeship system and was just called a 'Qualification'?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ Very supportive
- ❑ Quite supportive
- ❑ Neither
- ❑ Not very supportive
- ❑ Not at all supportive
- ❑ Not sure

**All respondents**

**Q8** Do you think that apprenticeships should be (a) treated as qualifications in the same way as 'A' levels or GCSEs or (b) about competency to undertake an occupational role?

**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

- ❑ As qualifications
- ❑ About competency
- ❑ Not sure/ don't know

**All respondents**

**Q9** Finally, do you have any other comments that you would like to make on Apprenticeship schemes, or on your experiences of employing an Apprentice?

**TEXT ENTRY. DP TO PROVIDE VERBATIMS.**

# APPENDIX B

**CLOSING SPEECH:**

**READ:** I'd like to thank you for your time and co-operation, and to confirm that this interview was conducted within the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. As I said, I am calling from ORC International. If you wish to check the legitimacy of this company, please call the Market Research Society on Freephone 0500 39 69 99 and give our company name. I can also give you the name and telephone number of the person in charge of this project at ORC International.

**IF REQUIRED:**
The ORC International Executive responsible for this project is Gayle Higginson. Gayle can be contacted during office hours on 0161 888 8005.