
Education provider and visitor survey 2020-21

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Provide the Committee with the opportunity to read the enclosed report following the education provider and visitor survey; and
- Seek the Committee's views on any issues raised and the recommendations made in the report.

Previous consideration	ETC paper 10 March 2020 – Education department work plan 2020-21
Decision	The Committee is asked to discuss the report.
Next steps	Executive to act on recommendations made by the Committee, including arranging proposed activity.
Strategic priority	Be visible engaged and informed
Financial and resource implications	Not applicable
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HCPC education provider and visitor survey 2020-21

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Executive summary

As part of the Education department's commitment to developing and improving the involvement of education providers and visitors within the processes and activities of the department, we developed a survey to gather feedback from these stakeholders.

We conducted the survey from mid-October to mid-November and it covers the last two academic years. We conducted the previous survey in early 2018. We produced the results from the last survey in June 2018, and have referenced them where appropriate in this report for comparison.

As well as being a valuable tool in maintaining and improving efficiency and transparency in our processes and activities, the responses will feed into the work we are undertaking to develop our new model of quality assurance, prior to us implementing it in the 2021-22 academic year.

The feedback gathered was generally positive, with some areas noted for improvement. The comments from respondents bore this out. Consequently, a small number of recommendations have been set.

Methodology

We used Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, which we have also used for previous surveys.

We asked a range of questions dependent on the type of contact. We asked 13 questions to visitors; 26 questions to education provider contacts; and 37 questions to those who are both a visitor and an education provider contact. These questions covered the following areas:

- our approach to working with visitors;
- our approval and monitoring processes;
- our new quality assurance approach; and
- communications, including Education Update.

The questions varied in style. Many asked for comments, along with quantitative responses, to ensure respondents could provide further information or reasons for their answers. We designed the survey so that it would take 15-30 minutes to complete.

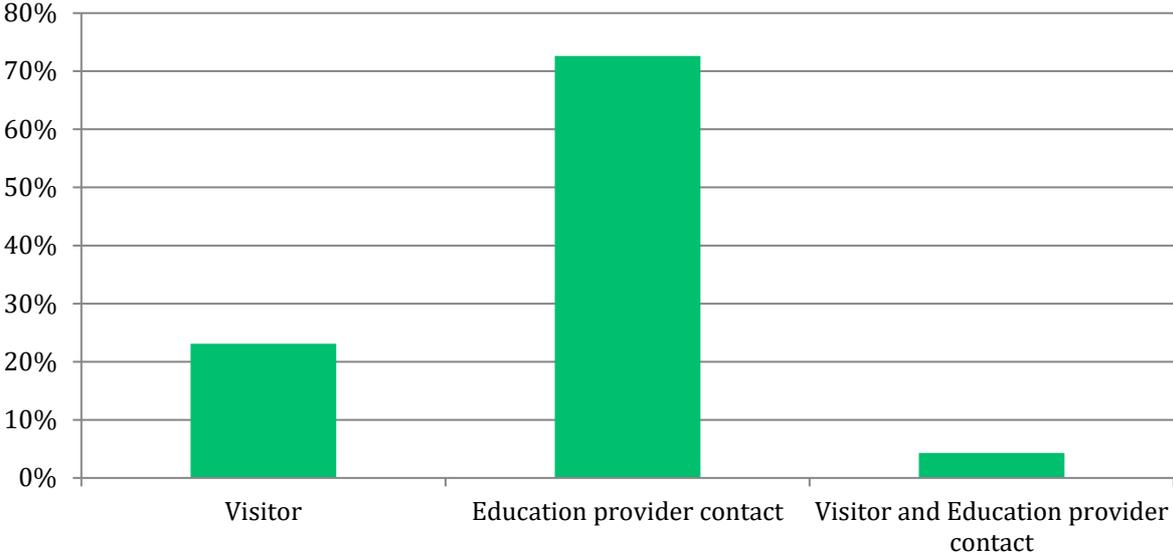
We designed it so respondents could skip some questions if they did not want to disclose that information. Respondents could also partially complete the survey, and we have included the results from partially completed surveys in our analysis.

Two weeks after the initial invite to complete the survey, we sent a reminder. Although we are unable to determine whether the reminder prompted individuals, we note that most respondents completed the survey after we sent the reminder.

Respondents

We sent this survey to all active visitors, programme leaders and quality assurance contacts. We only sent the previous survey to programme leaders and all education contacts linked to programmes, as it was not canvassing for the views from visitors. This meant this survey has seen an increase both in the percentage of responses, from eleven per cent to 25 per cent, and the number of responses, from 284 to 303.

Graph one: Please select the role that most applies to you as a HCPC stakeholder.



Seventy visitor respondents, 220 education provider contacts, and thirteen visitor and education provider respondents completed or partially completed the survey.

Of the 233 education provider contacts, 130 identified the post they work in. 68 per cent held either programme leader roles, or senior academic / management positions. The remainder came from programme or quality assurance staff. Of these education provider contacts, 108 identified their employer, and these respondents named 69 (41 per cent) of the 169 education providers who run approved programmes.

Sixty-one education providers have been through the approval process in academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20, so this reflects the total of respondents from education providers who run approved programmes.

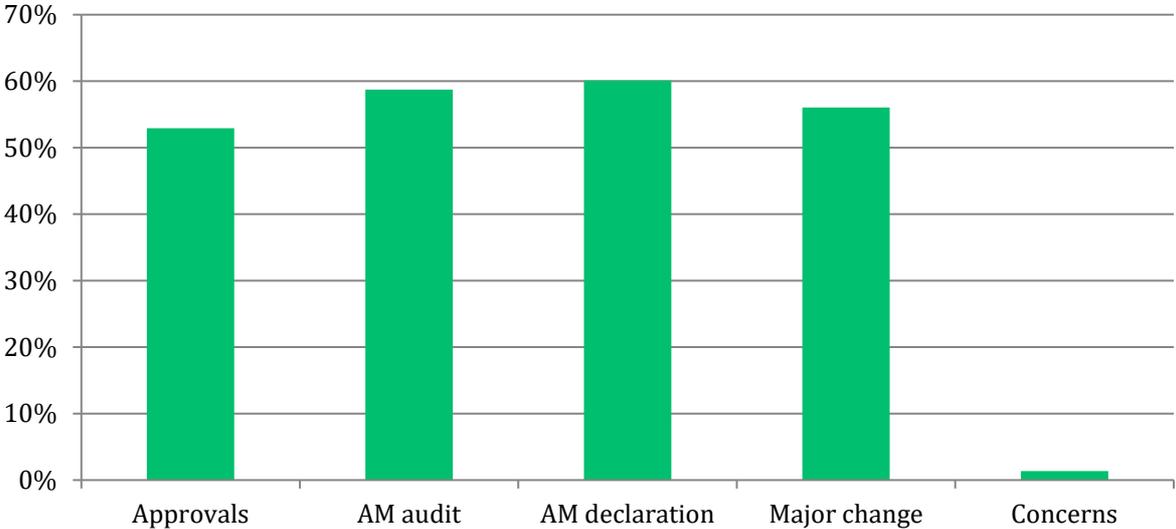
We asked education provider respondents to identify the subject area or areas of the approved programme in which they were involved. We received at least one response from every profession and annotation and the response rate was broadly in proportion to the number of HCPC-approved programmes.

The four professions from which we received the highest numbers of responses were physiotherapists (22 per cent), paramedics (21 per cent), and occupational therapists and radiographers (both eighteen per cent). The last survey saw the highest number of responses from social workers in England (29 per cent), paramedics (23 per cent), and physiotherapists (20 per cent). As we no longer regulate social workers in England, this is consistent in the professions from whom we received responses.

In the last two years, most education provider respondents have interacted with our processes. Education providers could select more than one option, to reflect accurately the multiple interactions they potentially can have with HCPC.

Over 50 per cent of respondents said they have interacted with our approval process, which stands as a high proportion of interactions with this process. Although we are not able to offer definite reasons why this is the case, it may be that some education providers have interpreted 'approvals' as relating to the ongoing approval of programmes through our monitoring processes, and not the approval process specifically.

Graph two: Please tell us which of our approval and monitoring processes you as an education provider have engaged with in the last two years.



Analysis of feedback

Overall, visitors and education providers were satisfied with how we performed, the advice and guidance we have provided and our communications. When a respondent answered negatively, we asked for an explanation as to why they had answered this way. Through analysis of the small number of comments received, we were able to identify the following key themes:

- Our performance and processes – education providers expressed concerns about the application of our standards by visitors. Visitors expressed their concerns about timelines relating to work.
- Electronic documentation – challenges were identified as part of going completely electronic.
- Guidance – possible considerations were identified for the new quality assurance model.
- Collaboration – both groups commented on the variability of the support provided by the Education executive.

What follows is an analysis of those key themes.

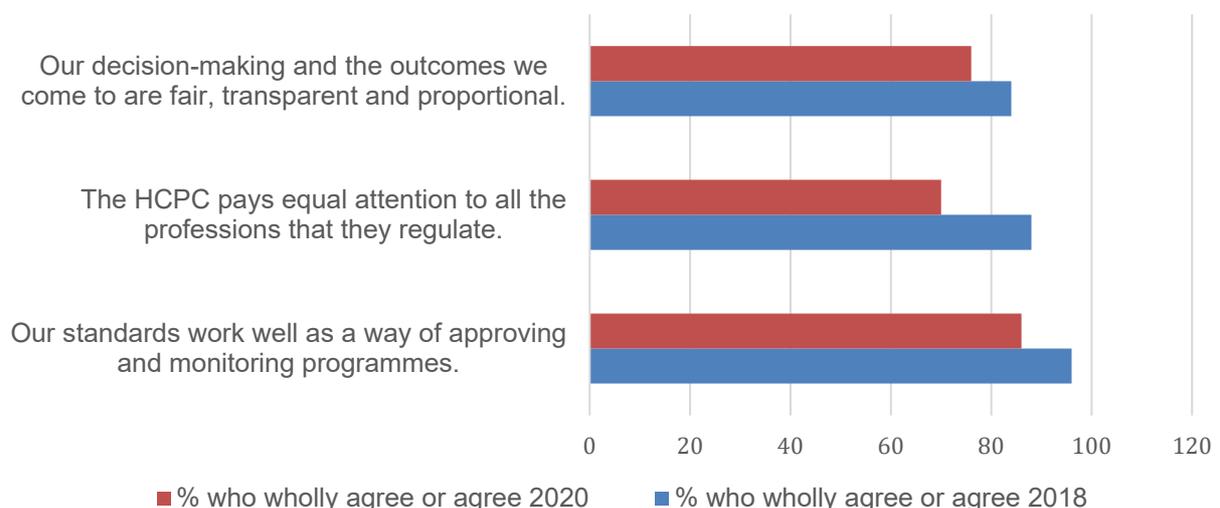
Our performance and processes

As a general overview of the approval and monitoring processes, the visitors and education providers were satisfied with our performance.

Application of the Standards of education and training (SETs)

We asked education providers about their views of our application of the SETs and how we work. This was a question we asked within our previous survey. When comparing the responses with these results, we can see a downward trend in how the application of the standards is perceived across the professions and how our decision making is considered fair and transparent.

Graph three: The HCPC standards of education and training (SETs) are designed to be flexible, so that we can apply them to all 15 professions regulated by us. Please tell us as an education provider whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about the way we work.



We received comments from education providers regarding this. A quarter of these comments related to a negative experience with our visitors. For example, they considered the visitors to be applying their own personal interpretation of the standards, that the visitors had a particular issue they choose to focus on, or that the standards did not appear to be applied equitably. We have investigated these responses and have not been able to ascertain underlying reasons for these. There would appear to be no obvious no correlation between the subjects raised in the comments and the results received this year.

The previous survey also showed some respondents perceiving an inconsistency in how HCPC visitors operated. We consequently recommended that we act on comments about inconsistency with visitors' approach to assessment when developing the next round of visitor training. We also recommended that we use executive training to ensure we guide visitors' deliberations and questioning appropriately, so we apply standards consistently in all situations. We also highlighted for the executive to ensure that reasoning is always clear so the education provider is able to understand why conditions have been set.

This remains an issue for education providers. In response, we have developed online refresher training for visitors and the executive around the application of our practice-based learning standards. All reports are peer reviewed for accuracy of data and the quality of findings, and an Education Manager reviews all approval reports as part of the finalisation of visitors' reports.

We also have increased communication with education provider contacts throughout our approval process if the proposed programme is from a new profession at an education provider. This includes exploring with the education provider any potential issues identified in the initial request and making ourselves available to ensure the education provider understands any conditions set on the programme.

However, while we have introduced measures over the last year to try to rectify this, it is important to recognise these results and take them into consideration as part of the ongoing design of the new quality assurance model. This work started in 2019 and we are currently within the pilot stage, with a planned rollout date of September 2021. The introduction of a new risk based quality assurance model is to address many of these comments and will enhance how our decision making is deemed to be fair, transparent and proportionate. As part of the project, we should consider how we can monitor these areas in a more timely and appropriate way.

Timelines

Two interconnected themes emerged from the visitors comments:

- Timelines can be too short when asked to review further documents or a response to conditions; and
- There needs to be improved communication regarding requests for work to be completed in shortened timescales.

Visitors saw these themes as an inability to view the issue from their perspective in terms of available time to complete the work. They highlighted a perceived lack of understanding or acknowledgement of what we are asking of them in the timeframes. Others presented a solution around giving the visitors advanced warning for work, which required a quick turnaround.

It is clear that ongoing communication is beneficial to building and maintaining a respectful and convivial relationship with visitors. We aim to give visitors the agreed times to consider evidence or a draft report, but circumstances, such as an individual's leave allocation or the need to frame complex arguments, sometimes mean we are unable to do so.

In order to help with this, we have recently introduced revised timeframes for the production of visitors' reports both internally, and to account for a reasonable period of time for the visitors, while meeting our legal requirements. We will continue to monitor the introduction of these revised timeframes and amend as necessary.

Electronic documentation

Visitor feedback

Questions about our approach to their review of documentation gained mostly positive feedback from visitors. Most considered it 'easy' or 'neutral' to review documents for the work they have done for the Education department. This reflects how accustomed visitors have become to our requirement for an electronic-only submission.

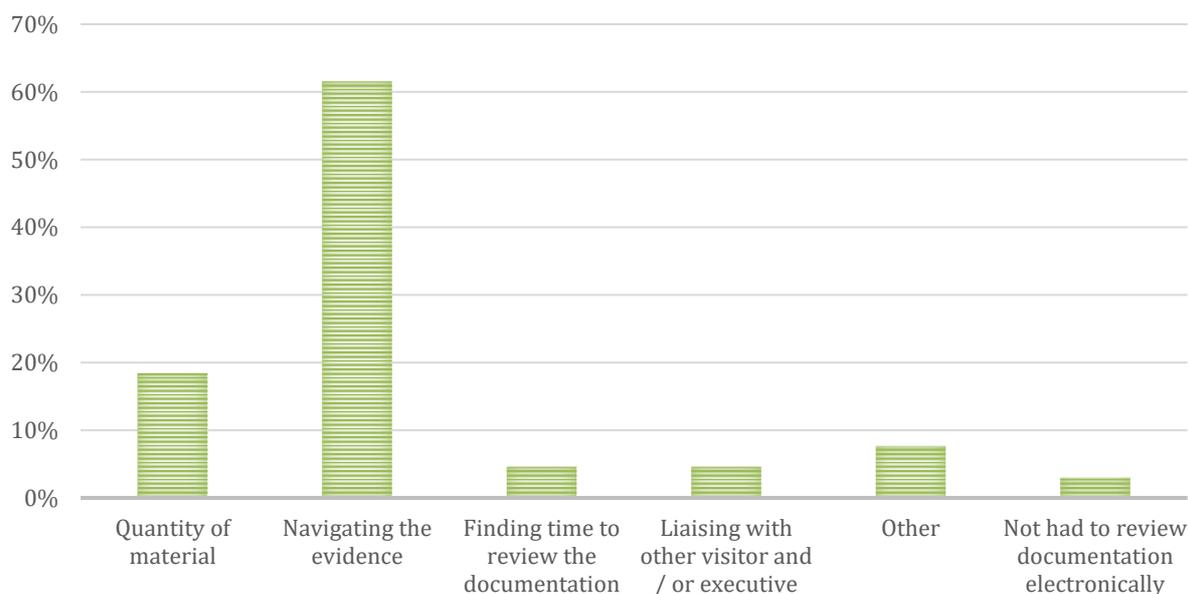
Of those visitors who said it had been 'difficult' or 'very difficult', they noted it was harder to review documents through electronic means, as large documents are difficult to navigate. Other respondents referred to the large number of files and lack of clarity of some of the file names.

To help mitigate against this, we offer guidance to the education provider when they need to submit documentation. However, we do not set precise requirements to the number, nor name, of files they provide.

As part of the Education executive role, evidence which has been supplied is reviewed prior to sending to the visitors. If there are serious discrepancies between the details of files we have been given and their actual names, the executive will push back to the education provider for clarification. The member of the education executive is also available throughout the process for the visitors, should they encounter issues finding information.

Over 60 per cent of visitors highlighted navigating the evidence as the most challenging part of reviewing electronic documentation. Some visitors also commented on needing to scan back and forward through several documents at the same time.

Graph four: If you as a visitor have reviewed documentation electronically, what is the most challenging aspect of this?



This overwhelming feedback may reflect the limitations of current technology, and also people’s ability and capability to use it. It may be that individuals are currently more accustomed to using paper-based means when reading documents. Differing learning techniques and styles may also play a part and it may be that some visitors prefer more tactile approaches such as dealing with physical papers. Moving to an electronic-only documentary submission may therefore take time for some of our stakeholders to be wholly comfortable and confident with.

As part of the move to electronic documentation, we developed online training for visitors to provide guidance on reviewing and feeding back about the approval process documentation. This was rolled out in 2019-20 and remains as a resource for visitors to refer to. It may be that we review this to ensure it remains relevant and remind visitors that it is available should they wish.

It should be noted that although we received feedback that some visitors found their review of documentation to be difficult, they also supported the move to an electronic submission.

Education provider feedback

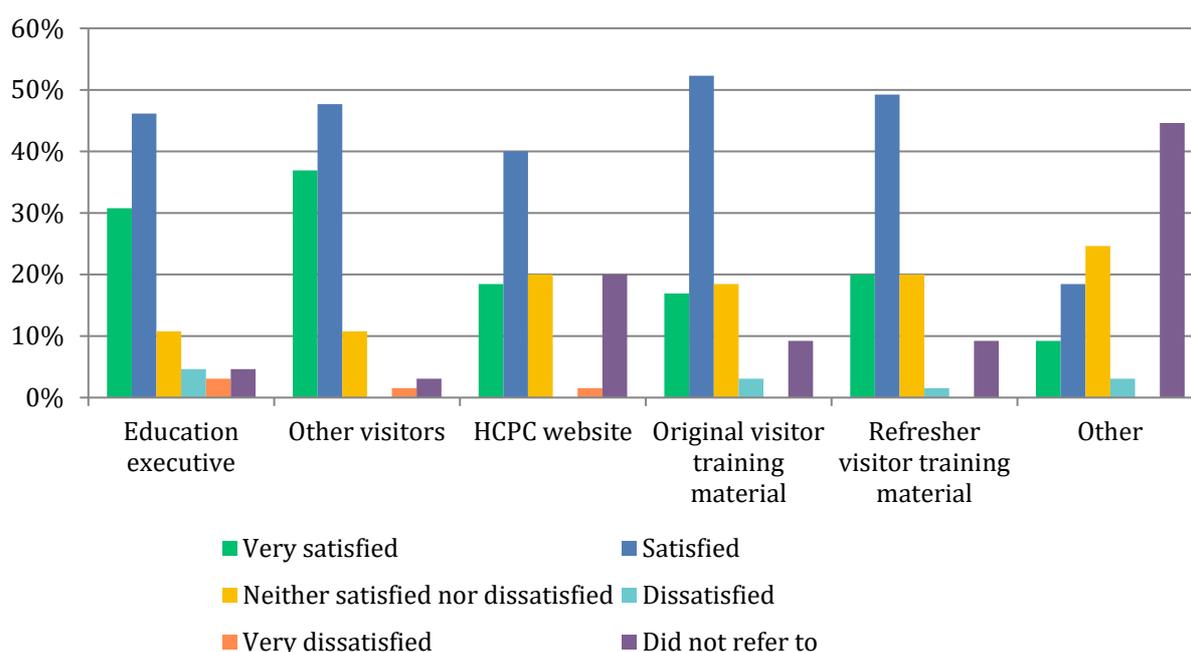
Education providers considered it mostly easy to put together the evidence for our processes. However, at the same time as this positive feedback, they highlighted the potential positive aspects of using a portal or cloud rather than sending emails with attachments. They considered this would reduce issues where our system has returned documents due their size.

The Education department does not currently use a portal or cloud-based system of storage. However, the work we are undertaking as part of the new quality assurance model may mean we adopt a similar system for the receipt and storage of documentation in the future.

Guidance

Visitors were primarily satisfied with all the sources of guidance we provide. In particular, visitors were mostly 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the guidance they receive from other visitors (86 per cent) and the Education executive (77 per cent). This is reassuring as it demonstrates the training and development we provide to both groups is appropriate, relevant and timely. To illustrate this, we received comments that the original visitor training material was very useful in illustrating different kinds of evidence which could be used to demonstrate how to meet our standards.

Graph five: While reviewing documentation, how satisfied were you as a visitor with the following sources of guidance?



Social media

When education providers were asked about whether they follow HCPC on social media, 70 per cent said they did not. This is a 3 per cent increase on the same answer two years ago. There could be the case here for more engagement with education providers, so education providers use social media more as a valued source of news and information. Of those who do use social media to follow HCPC, Twitter was the most popular form.

However, the website is the most popular source of information. This mirrors the previous survey in which 87 per cent said the website was their first port of call about education activities and processes.

Response to COVID-19

The pandemic has seen an unprecedented impact on higher education in the UK. As part of a wider HCPC response to it, we provided information for education providers, highlighting relevant issues such as the flexibility about making temporary changes to a programme and when to inform us, and the temporary Register.

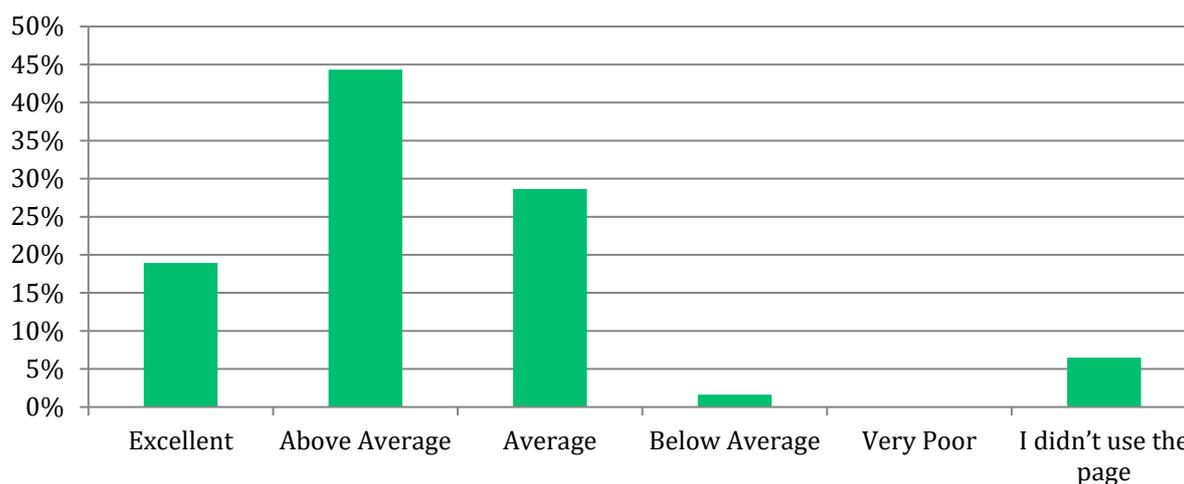
Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the '[Information for education providers](#)' webpage with only 2 per cent of respondents finding it 'below average' or

'poor'. We received positive feedback as to how reasonable and flexible we were in relation to the continued approval of programmes. For those who considered it below 'average' or 'poor' we received comments that it was vague and generic.

Since lockdown, we have also conducted much of our work online. Visitors regarded both virtual video discussions and other electronic means of discussion to be very effective. However, the praise for video discussions was not unanimous with a visitor commenting that for approval events they feel that a physical visit is preferable to a virtual visit.

The move to virtual discussions to enable our processes and our regulatory function to continue has demonstrated it is possible to run effective and efficient decision making in this environment. Our Education and Training Committee have already agreed that we will continue to hold virtual visits until the introduction of the new quality assurance model and it is envisaged that within the new model any approval assessments will be held virtually.

Graph six: How did you find the 'advice for education providers' page as part of the COVID-19 hub on the HCPC website?

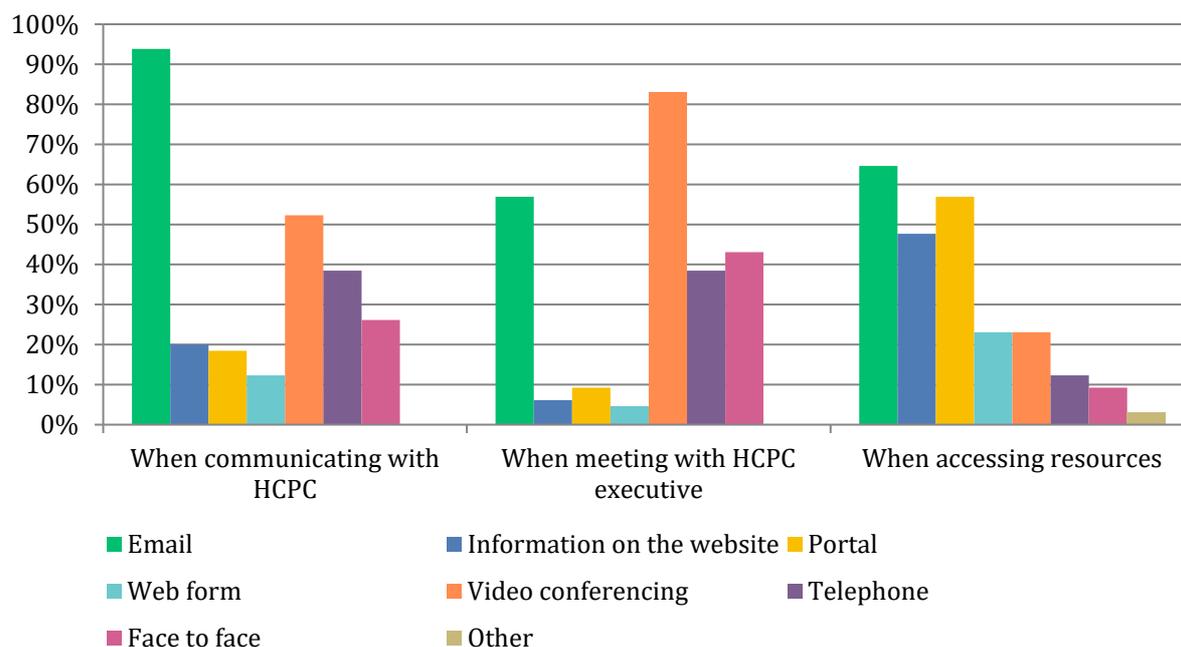


New quality assurance model

We asked both visitors and education providers questions relating to our new quality assurance model. We asked how they would like to interact with us in a number of scenarios, and specifically looking forward, to understand and interact with the new quality assurance model.

Visitors showed strong support for the methods which we currently use, such as email, across all three scenarios. The use of video conferencing has necessarily increased during the pandemic and it is reassuring to see that visitors, in the main, would prefer to contact the HCPC executive using this method. However, over half of respondents indicated they would like us to interact with them when accessing resources using a portal, which we do not currently utilise.

Graph seven: How would you like to interact with us as a visitor in the following scenarios?

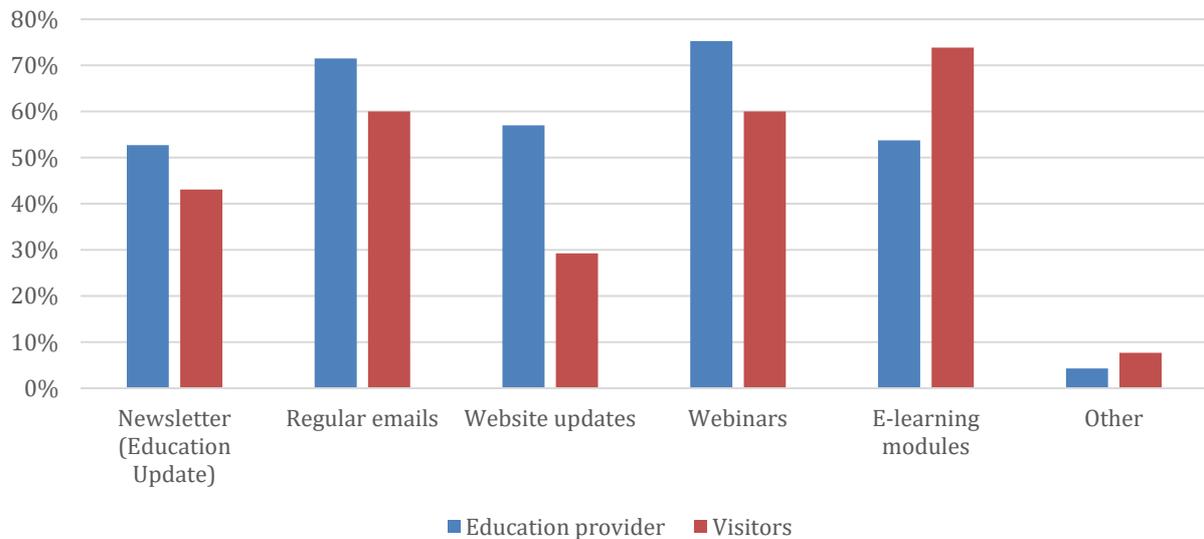


When we asked education providers, we presented them with different scenarios to reflect the different types of interactions between education providers and ourselves. Most education providers chose email as their preferred means of communicating in the scenarios.

Education providers mostly preferred the use of video conferencing when meeting the education executive, and using the website when accessing resources. However, reflecting the feedback from visitors, there was a strong preference for the use of a portal including when accessing resources, submitting data and documents and managing contact details. As outlined earlier, this will be considered as part of the new quality assurance model.

To support visitors to understand the new quality assurance model, and how to interact with us in the future, there was a preference for e-learning modules, and a strong response for webinars and regular emails. Although we did not receive many comments related to this question, a substantial proportion stated they missed face to face training and learning with, and from, their peers.

Graph eight: How can we support you to understand the new quality assurance model and how to interact with us, now and in the future?



From an education provider perspective, regular emails and webinars were the strongest methods to support them to understand the new quality assurance model, and how to interact with us. Education providers also gave examples of face-to-face sessions, question and answer sessions, and virtual meetings.

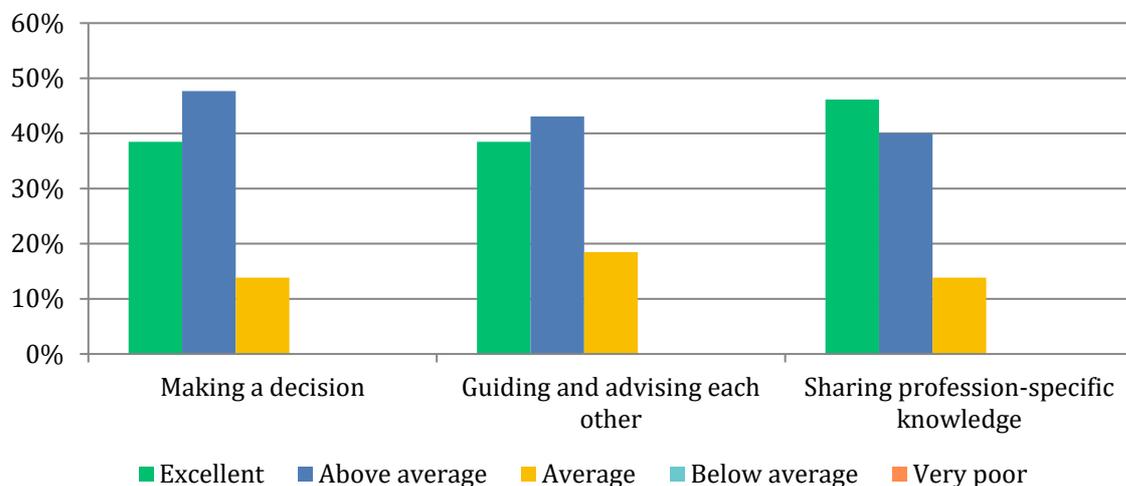
We will now consider this data as part of the pilot for the new quality assurance model.

Collaboration

Visitors deemed collaboration between the HCPC panel to be either ‘excellent’ or ‘above average’ in each of three categories:

- making a decision;
- guiding and advising each other; and
- sharing profession-specific knowledge.

Graph nine: When considering collaboration within the HCPC Panel, how effective would you as a visitor rate the following areas?



Support from the Education Executive

Over 70 per cent of visitors considered themselves either 'extremely' or 'very well supported' by the education executive when undertaking pieces of work.

Although these results are positive, we received a small number of comments from visitors that the support varies according to the executive, and that sometimes there may be a new member of staff who is not always as up to date as others with a piece of work. These comments reflect that when we recruit a new member of the department there is a period when they, and the wider department, needs to ensure they are fully acquainted and confident with the work we do.

However, their comments also highlighted that the expertise of the Education executive can greatly influence the quality of the collaboration. The role of the Education executive is to ensure the evidence demonstrates threshold for all of the standards and an appropriate recommendation is presented to ETC. As part of this, the Education executive will facilitate and manage the discussions between visitors and the education provider and provide advice and guidance. We provide training to individuals as part of their induction to the department and, as necessary, through their ongoing development. We also provide training to our visitors and have recently rolled out online training regarding Working Collaboratively in a virtual environment. This is in recognition that how someone contributes to a virtual meeting can be different to face-to-face opportunities.

Over 70 per cent of education providers said they were either 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with our ability to work collaboratively with them. A small number commented that we could strengthen the interaction with our processes in terms of collaboration between themselves and the HCPC. For example, we received comments that the link between them and the HCPC does not feel like a collaboration at times but rather a requirement, and the following of a process.

We asked education providers in the previous survey about our ability to work collaboratively and then, 88 per cent said they were 'extremely satisfied' or 'very' satisfied, so we have seen a downward swing in this survey, to a total of 74 per cent.

A couple of education providers commented that they worked better with a designated HCPC officer and would like a dedicated individual for their education provider. As part of the work we are undertaking with the new quality assurance model, the education executive will become a link person with a set of education providers from initial approval onwards. This is likely to be on a regional basis, and so they will become experts in their region and providers. This approach will benefit the development of more detailed relationships with an education provider.

The new quality assurance model is designed to build more of a right touch and flexible model of quality assurance. This is so that we understand the issues before determining the solution. This will ensure the quality assurance for each provider and programme will be proportionate to the risk identified. This will develop ongoing relationships with specific education providers and introduce risk based decisions about how we review and assess institutions and programmes on a case by case basis. This hopefully will mean our processes are less of a requirement and more collaborative.

Conclusion and recommendations

The majority of the feedback gathered from visitors and education providers through this survey has been positive. Many of the responses demonstrate that we have a good relationship with our stakeholders, and they understand what we require of them.

However, we did receive comments which offered criticism of how we work. With this in mind, we are making the following recommendations:

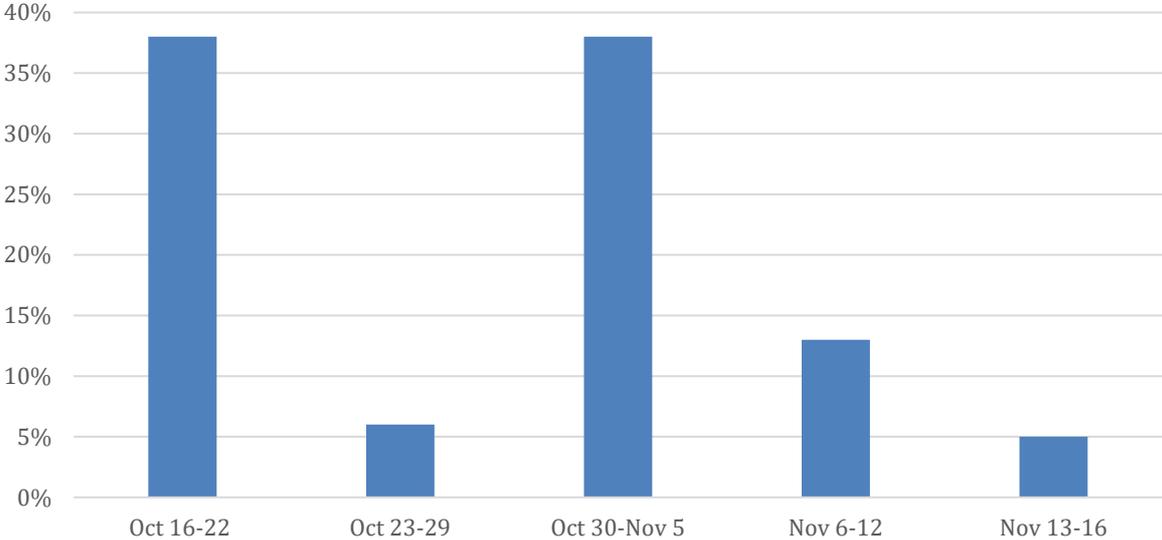
- **Recommendation one**
Undertake activities to ensure the HCPC panel applies our standards equitably and fairly.
- **Recommendation two**
Ensure the appropriate results are considered as part of the pilot of the new quality assurance model. In particular, whether metrics can be developed to monitor our performance against the standards on a more regular basis and the development of an online portal for document submission.
- **Recommendation three**
Create mechanisms so we work with education providers to ensure documentary submissions are clear and easy to navigate.
- **Recommendation four**
Ensure communications with visitors consider the timelines involved and the wider context of building and maintaining a collegiate working relationship. This includes monitoring the introduction of the revised timeframes to produce the visitors' report, to ensure they are working well for all parties involved.
- **Recommendation five**
Consider how best to enhance working collaboratively between visitors, education providers and the Education executive.

This survey was not just a chance to see what we are doing well, and what we could improve upon. It was also useful to see how visitors and education providers would like us to help them through our changing approach to regulation. Through this survey, we will take into consideration the feedback we have gathered for the new quality assurance model.

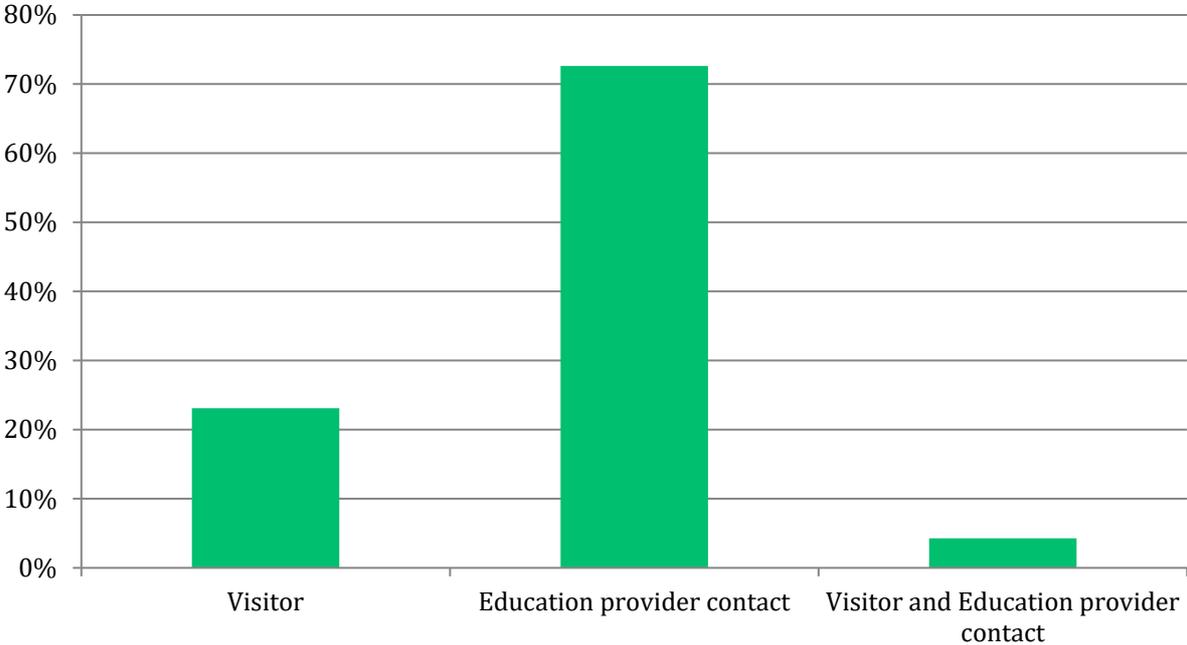
Appendices

Appendix one: Full graphs

Graph one¹: When the survey was completed, by week.

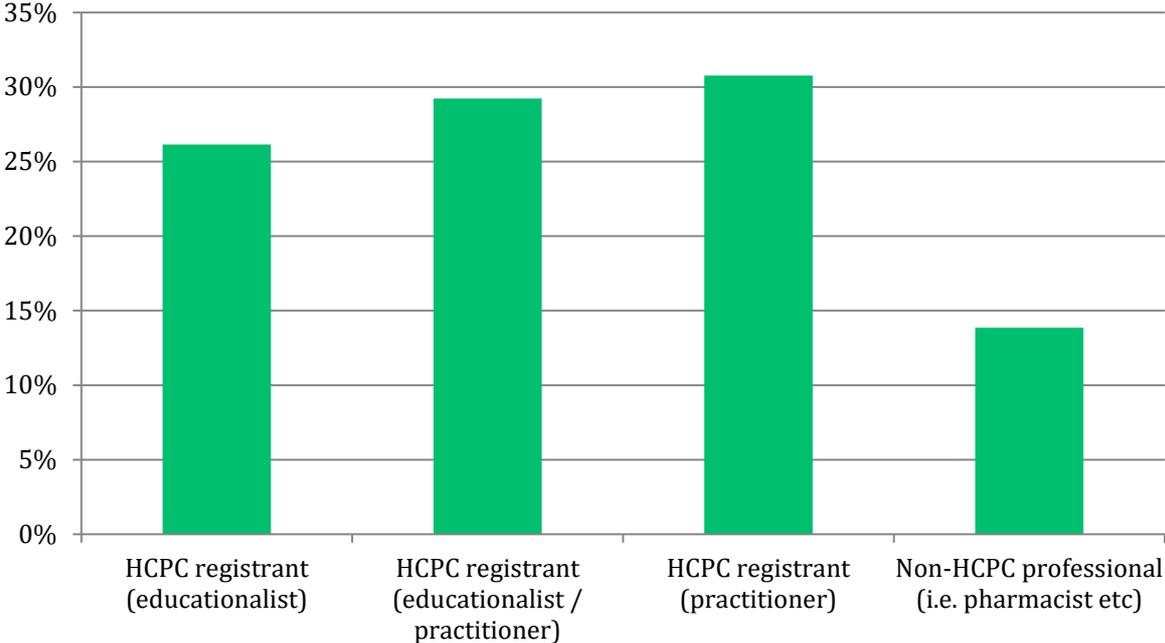


Graph two: Please select the role that most applies to you as a HCPC stakeholder.

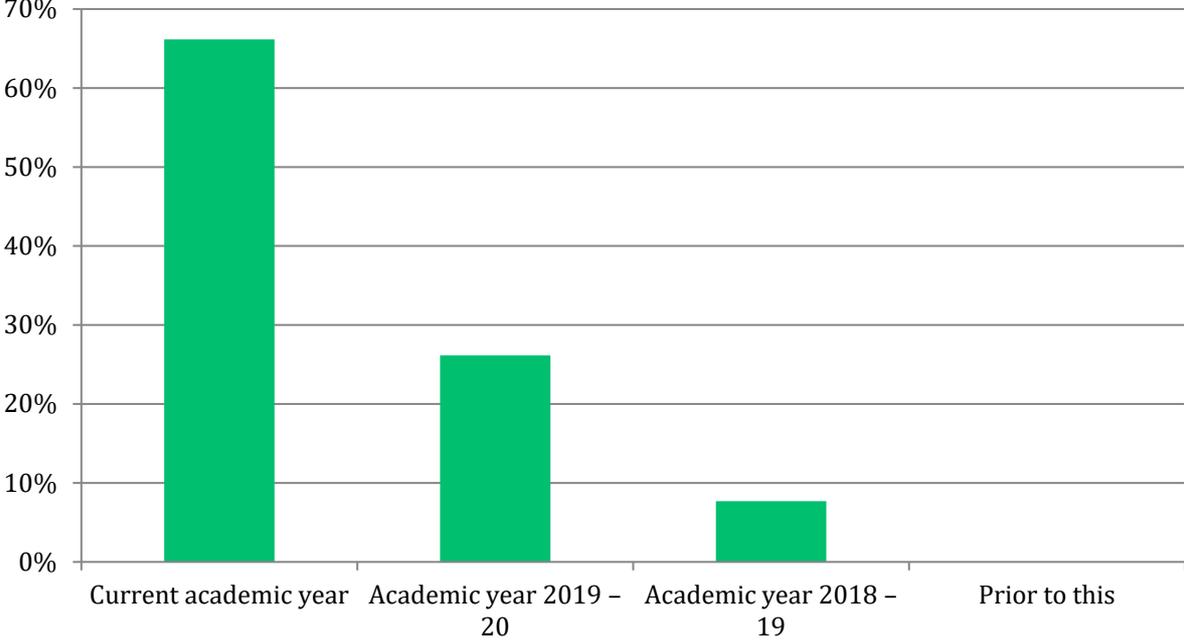


¹ Please note, the graph numbers in the appendix do not reflect the graph number within the main body of this report.

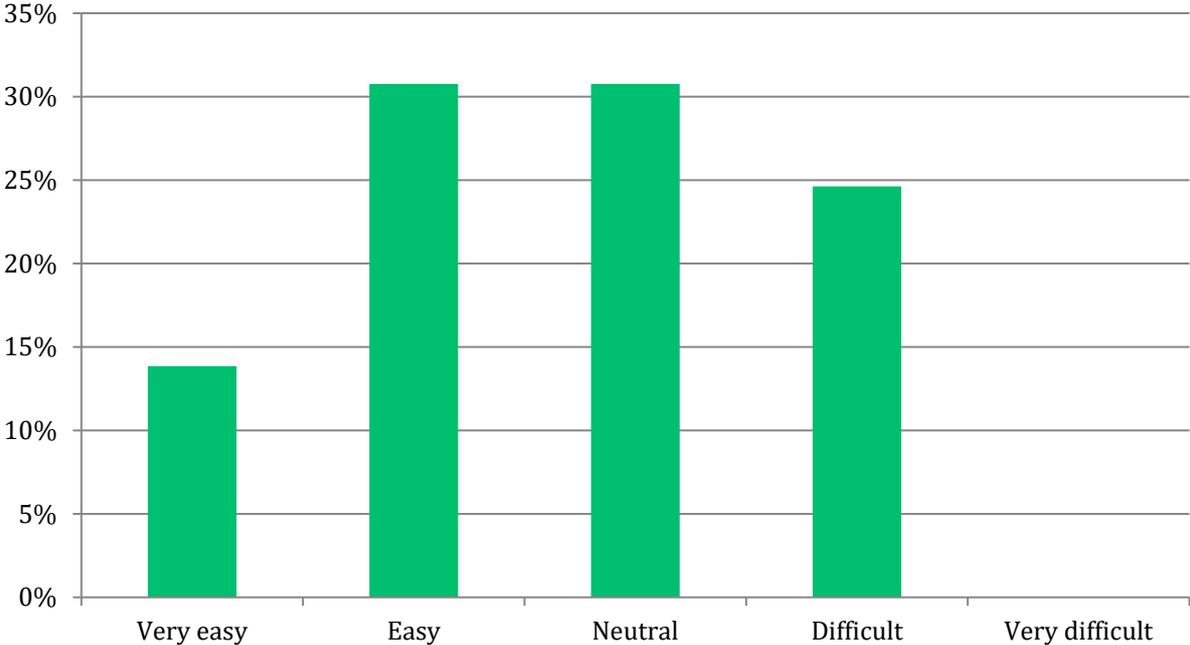
Graph three: Please tell us your visitor role.



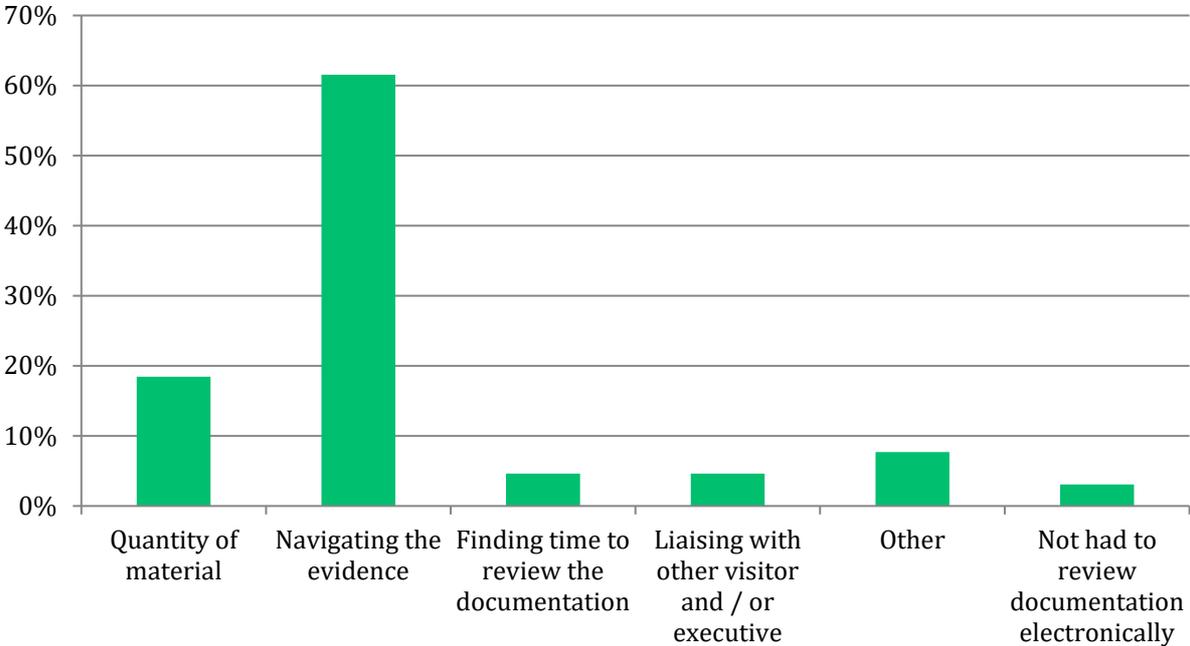
Graph four: When did you last undertake work as a visitor for the HCPC?



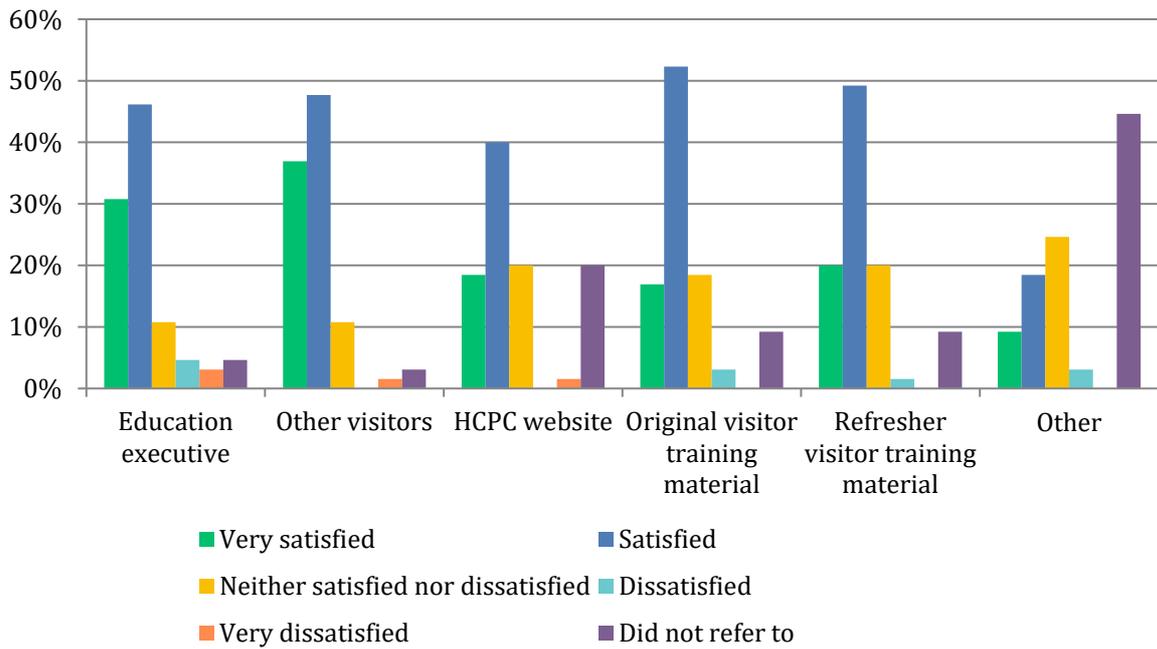
Graph five: In general, how easy has reviewing documentation been for HCPC work for you as a visitor?



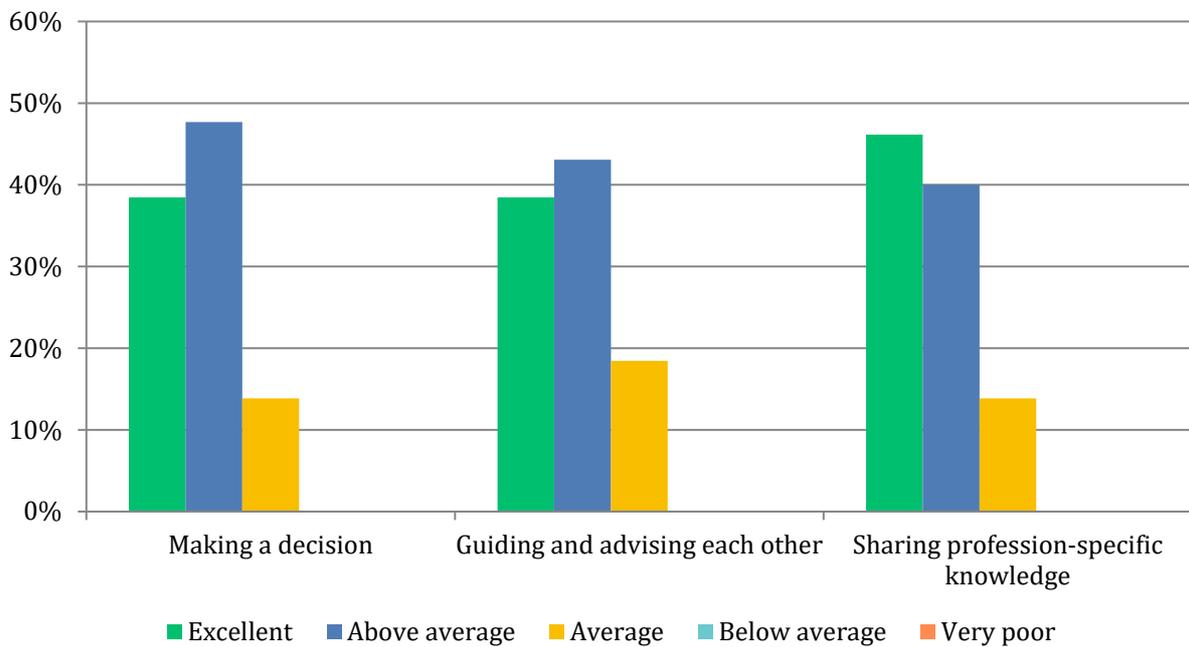
Graph six: If you have reviewed documentation electronically, what is the most challenging aspect of this for you as a visitor?



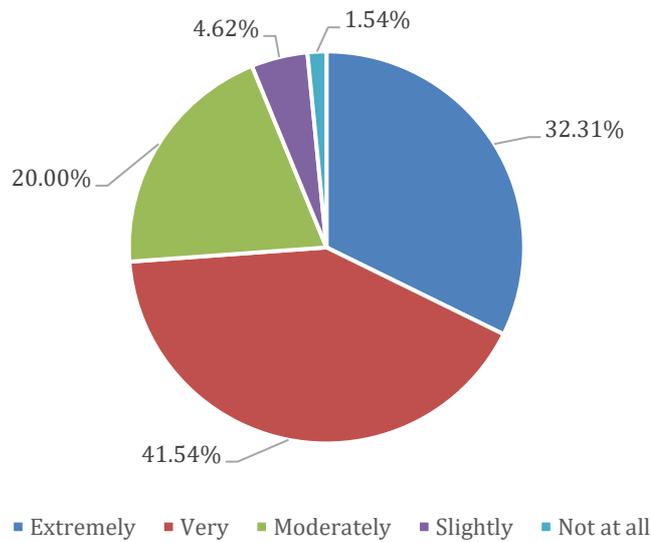
Graph seven: While reviewing documentation, how satisfied were you as a visitor with the following sources of guidance?



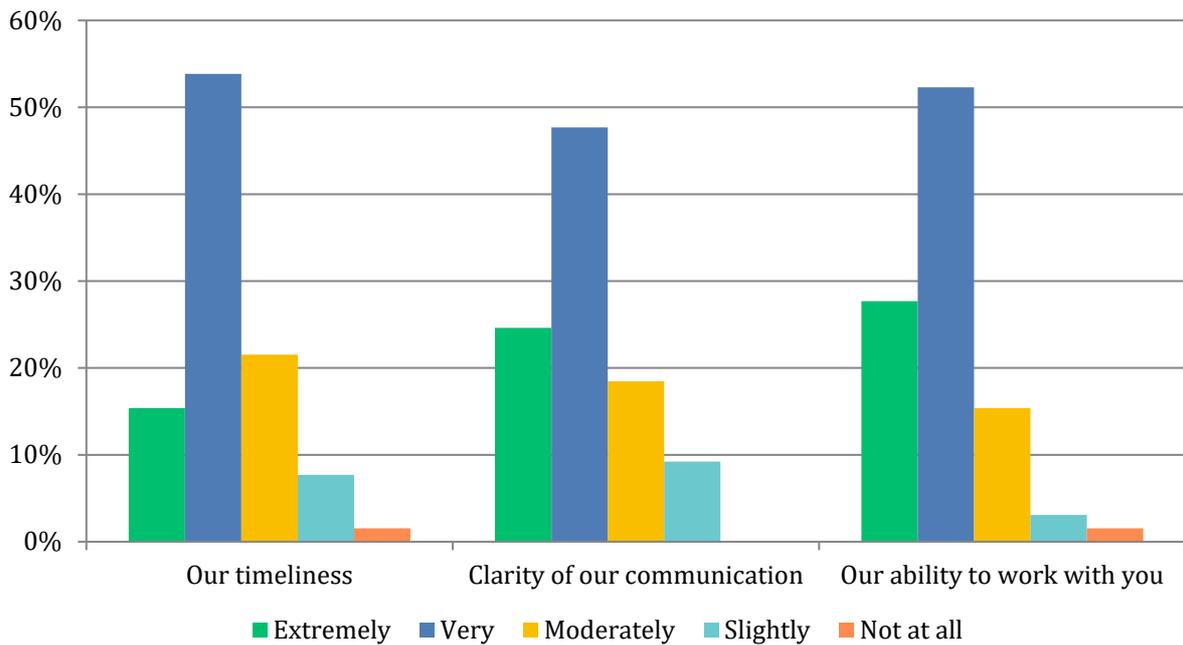
Graph eight: When considering collaboration within the HCPC Panel, how effective would you as a visitor rate the following areas?



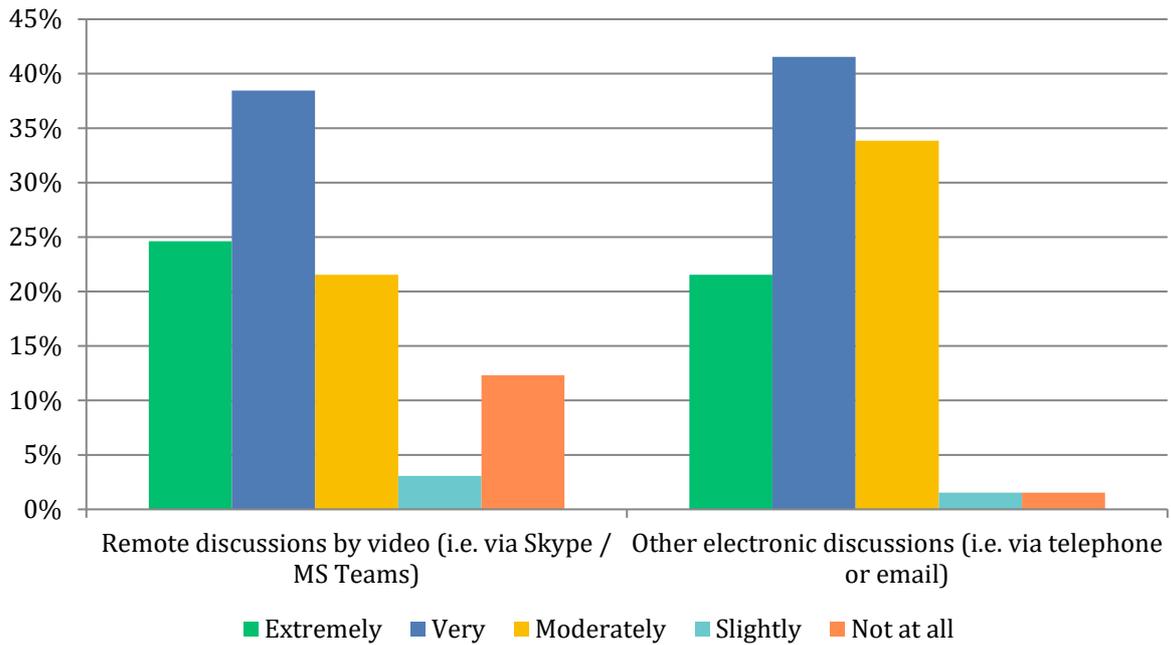
Graph nine: Each item of work has an Education executive assigned to it. How well supported have you as a visitor been by the Education executive assigned to it?



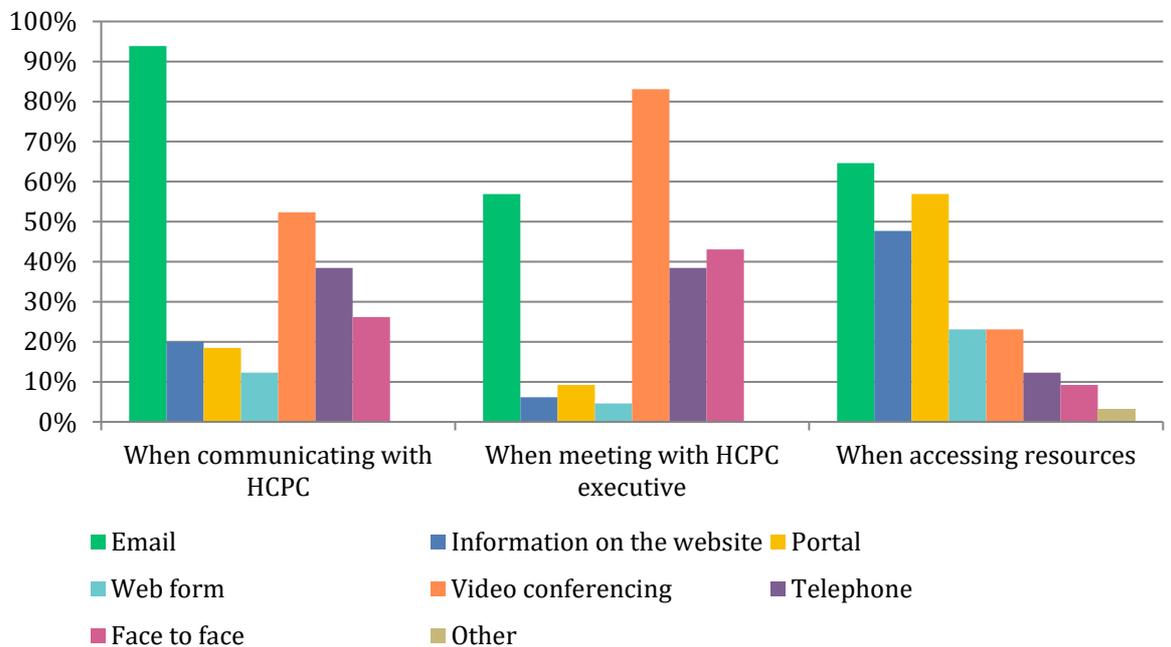
Graph ten: In terms of our performance across our approval and monitoring processes, how satisfied are you as a visitor with:



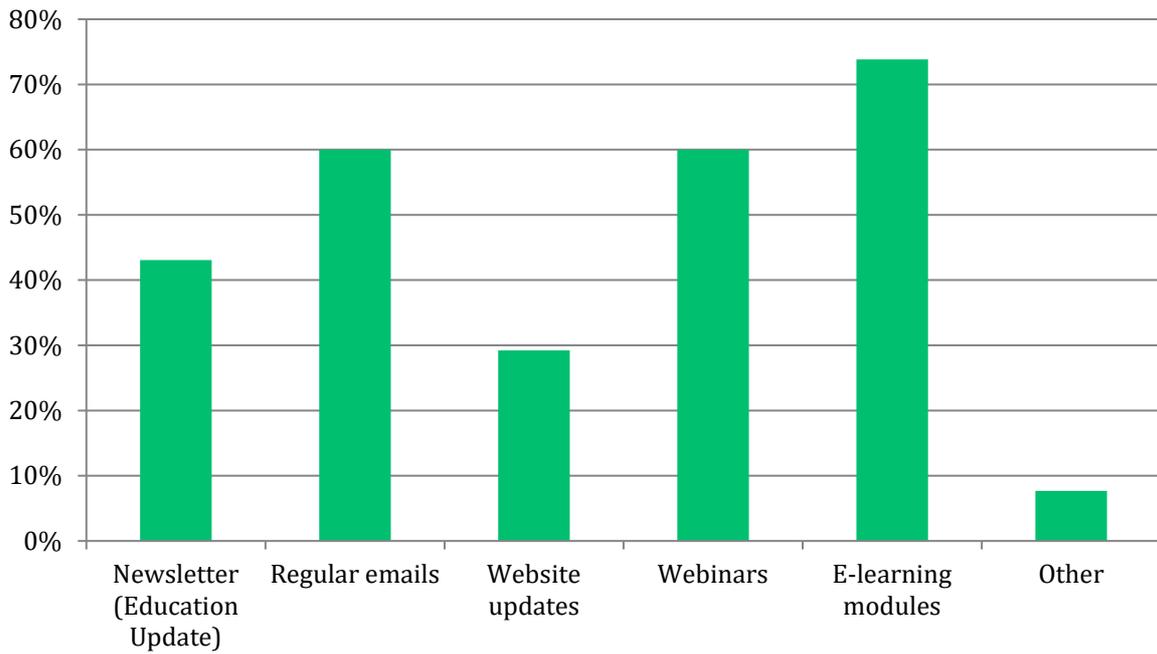
Graph eleven: How effective would you as a visitor rate each of the following communication channels?



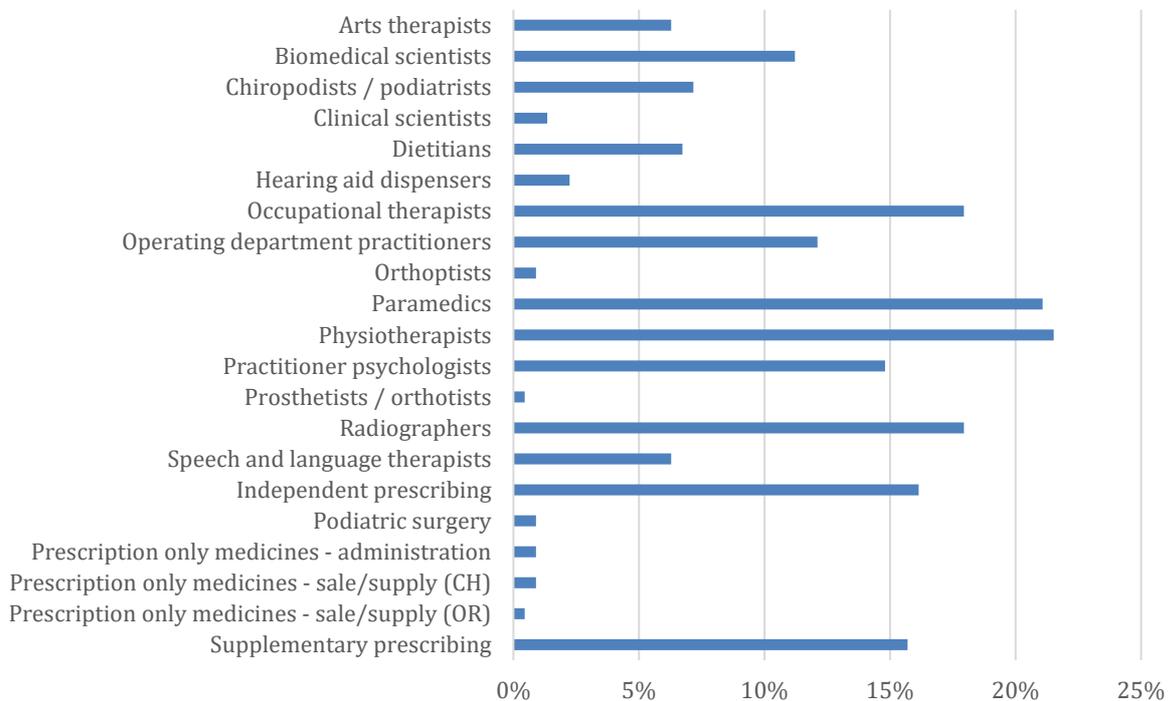
Graph twelve: How would you like to interact with us as a visitor in the following scenarios?



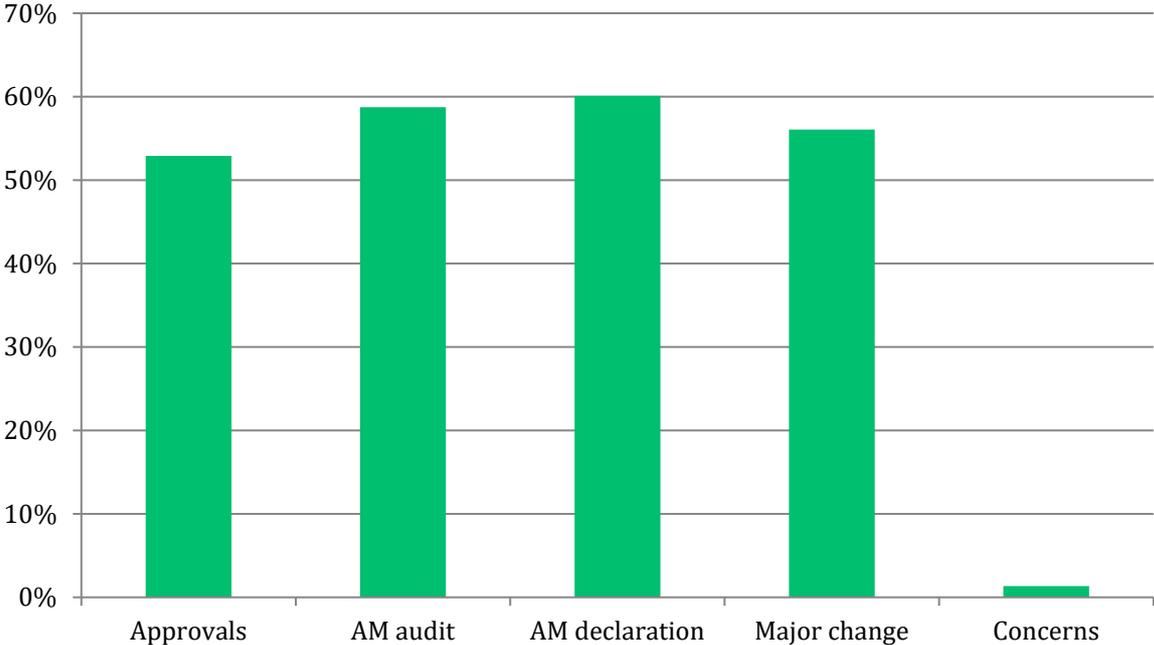
Graph 13: How can we support you as a visitor to understand the new quality assurance model and how to interact with us, now and in the future?



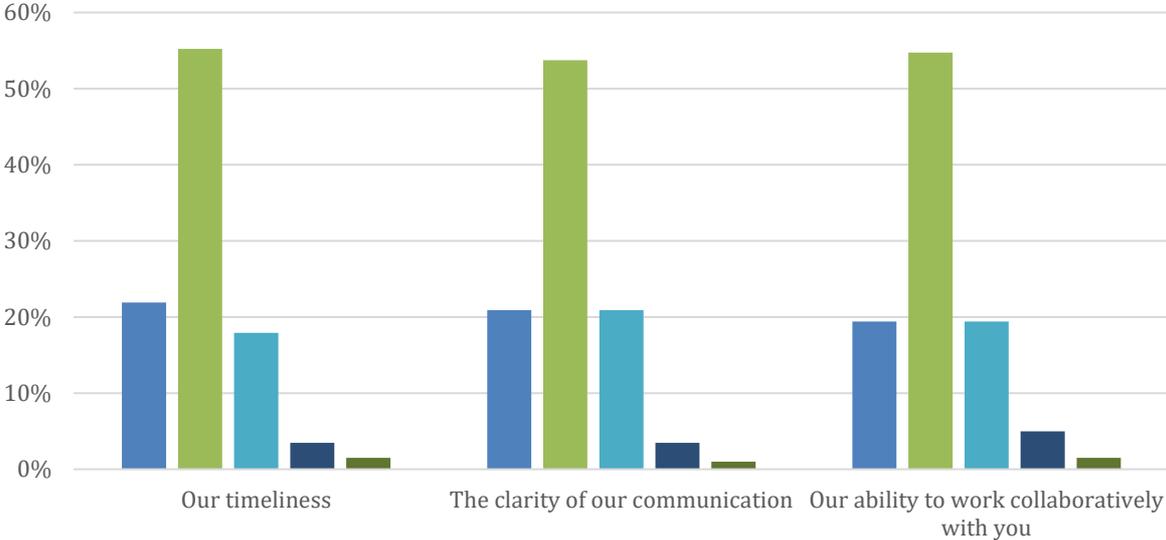
Graph 14: Please select the subject area of your approved education programme(s).



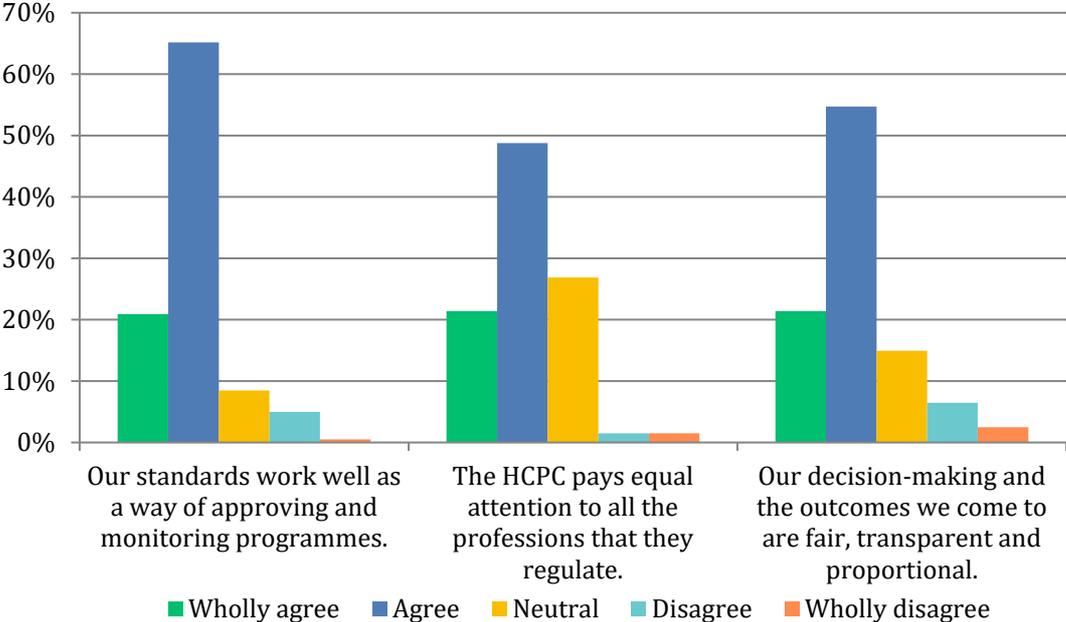
Graph 15: Please tell us which of our approval and monitoring processes you as an education provider have engaged with in the last two years.



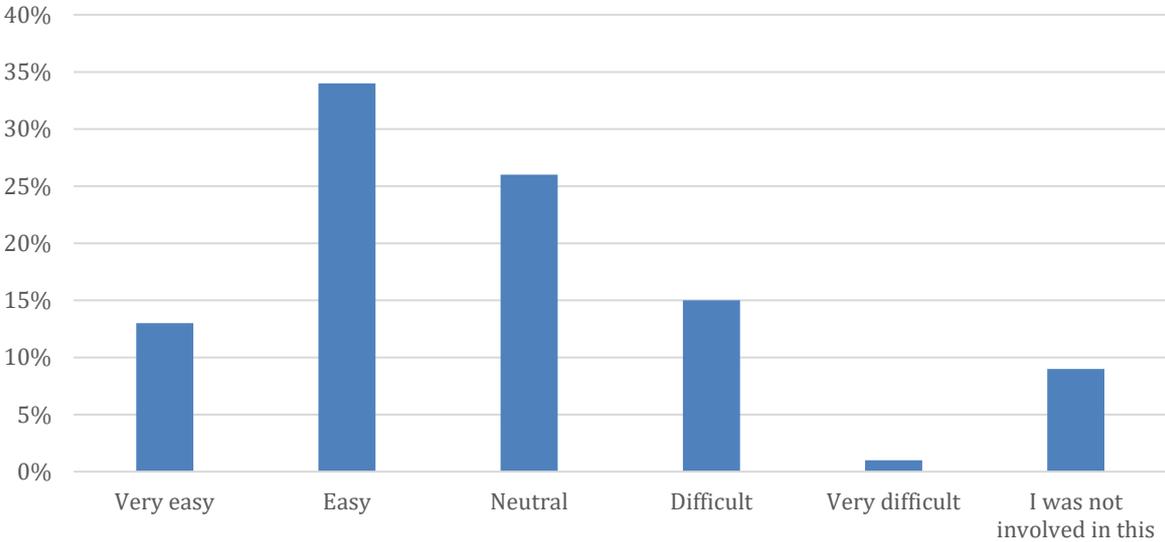
Graph 16: In terms of our performance across our approval and monitoring processes, how satisfied are you as an education provider with:



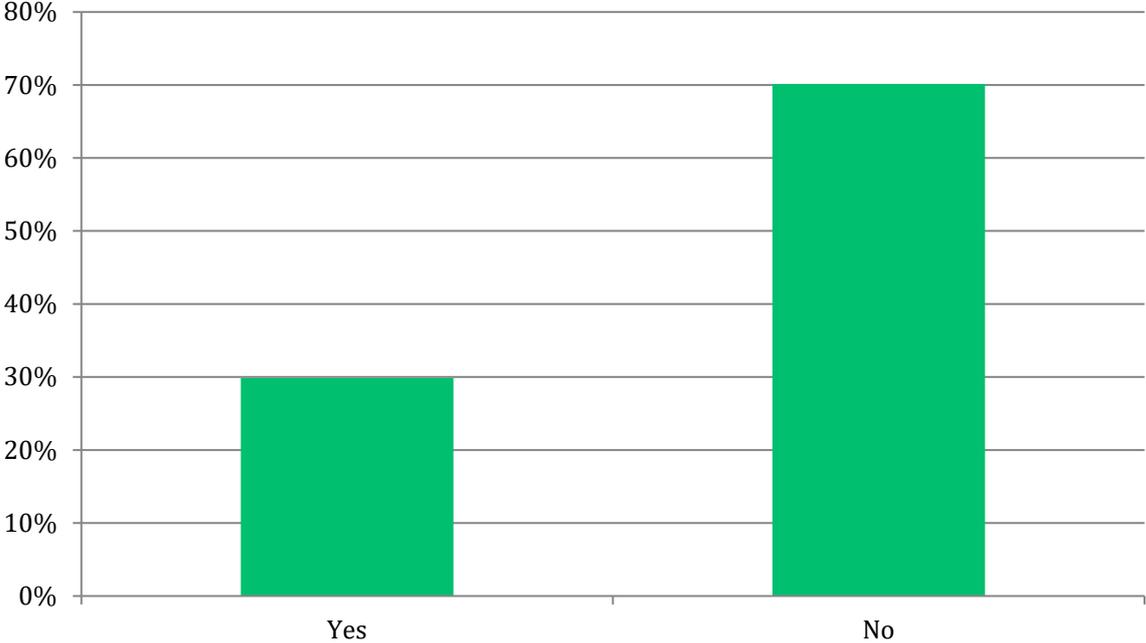
Graph 17: The HCPC standards of education and training (SETs) are designed to be flexible, so that we can apply them to all 15 professions regulated by us. Please tell us whether you as an education provider agree or disagree with the following statements about the way we work.



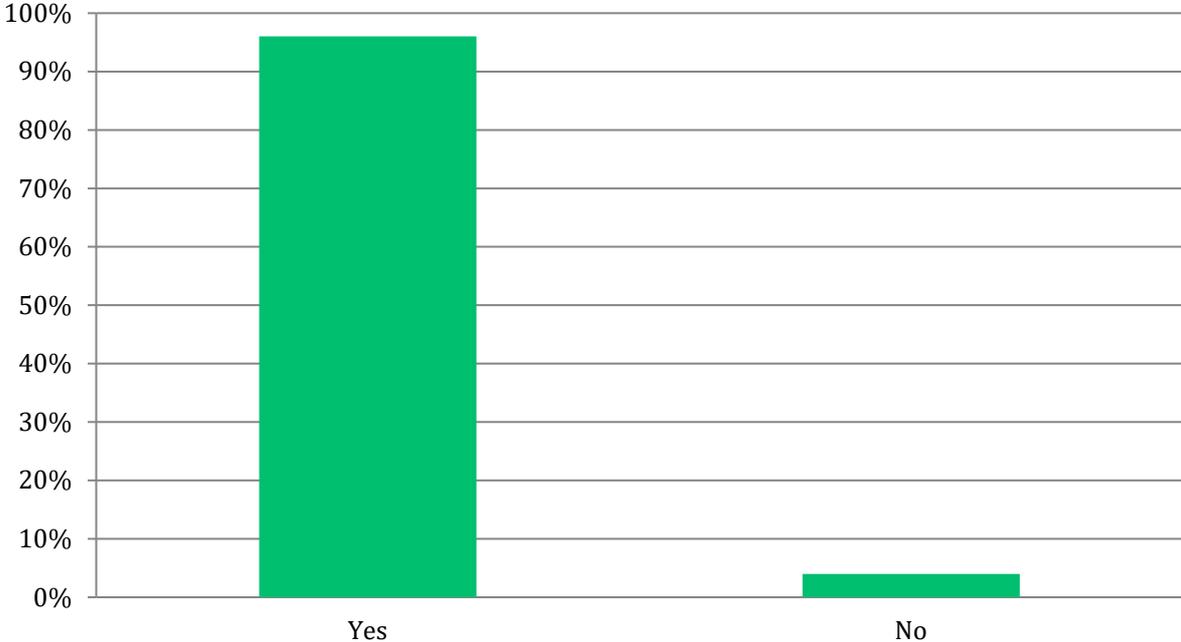
Graph 18: How easy did you find it to collate and submit the electronic documentary evidence for our approval and annual monitoring processes?



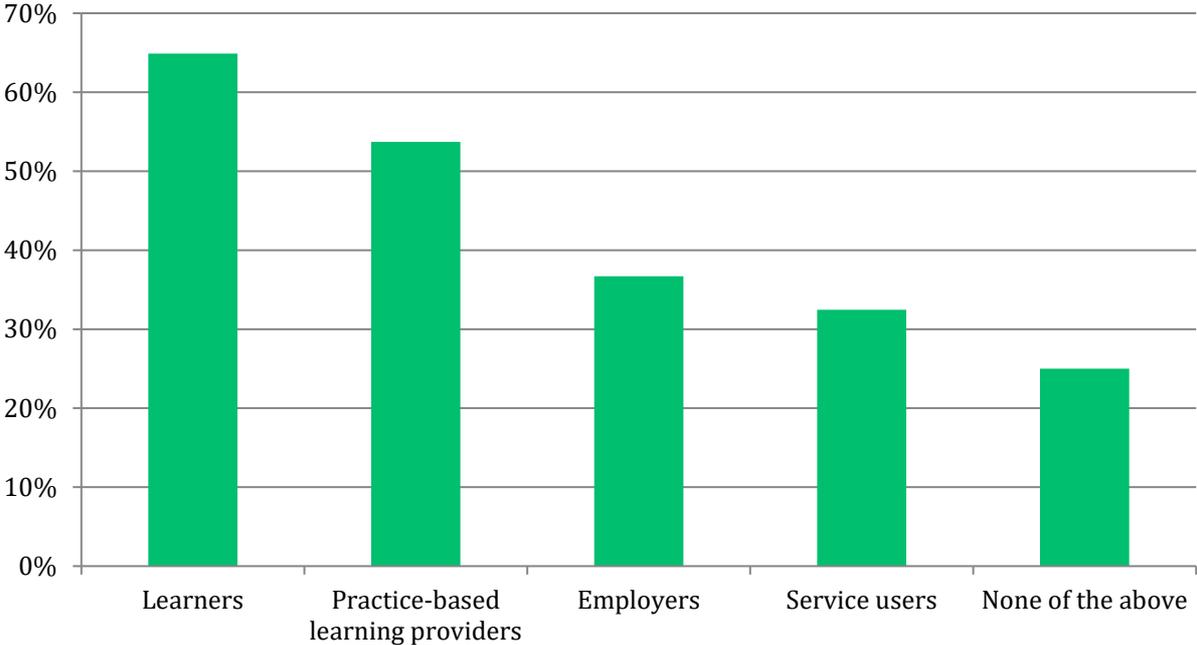
Graph 19: Considering other regulators / professional bodies approach to quality assuring education programmes, have you as an education provider identified areas of best practice?



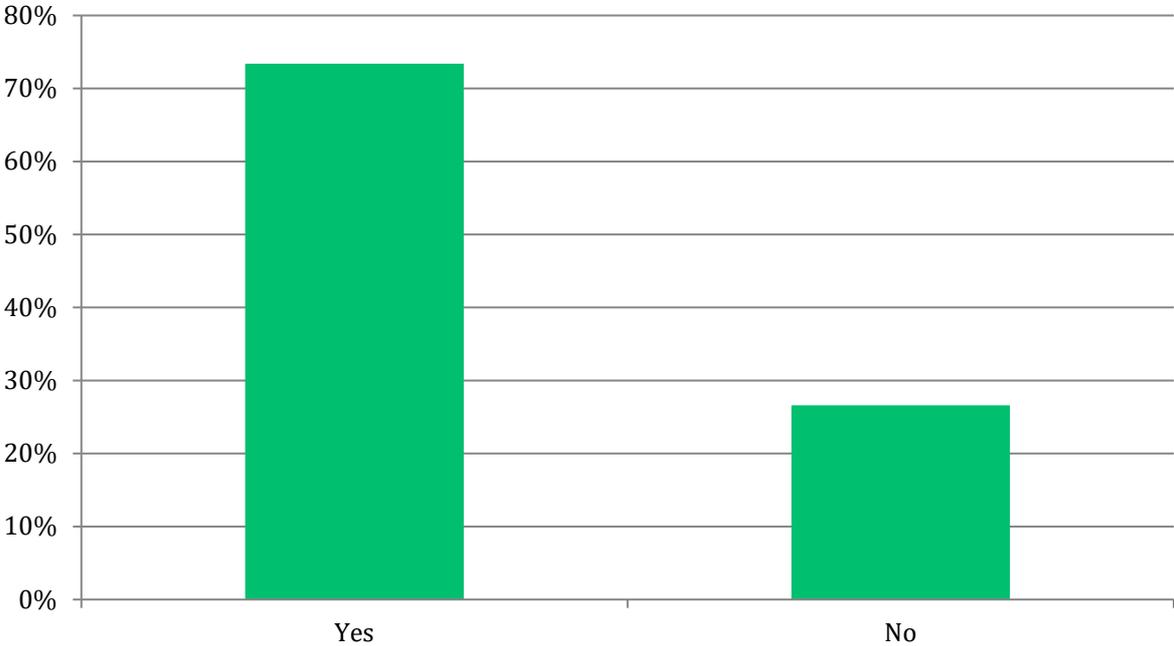
Graph 20: Were you as an education provider aware that we investigate concerns about education programmes?



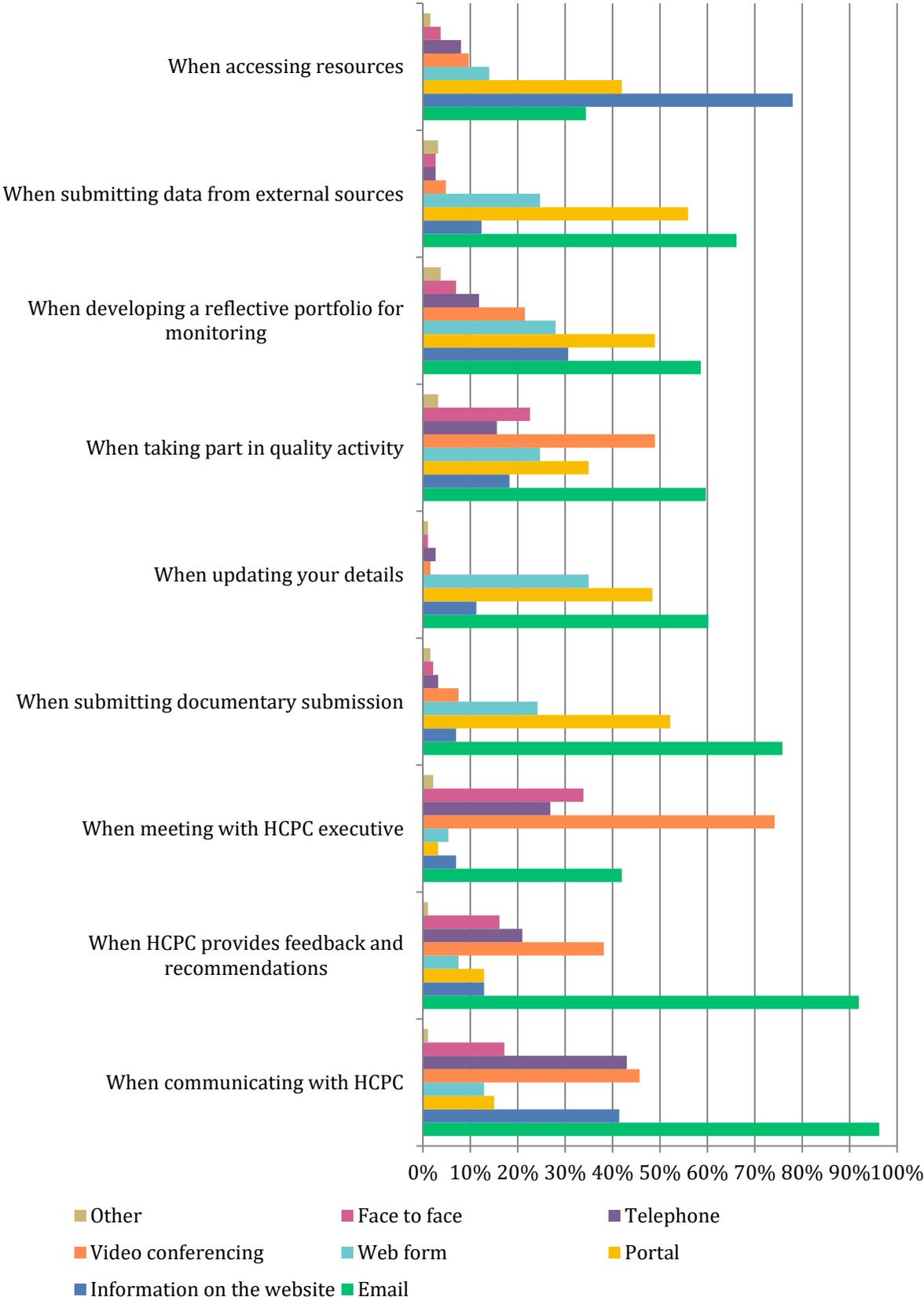
Graph 21: Do you as an education provider tell any of the following stakeholders about our concerns process?



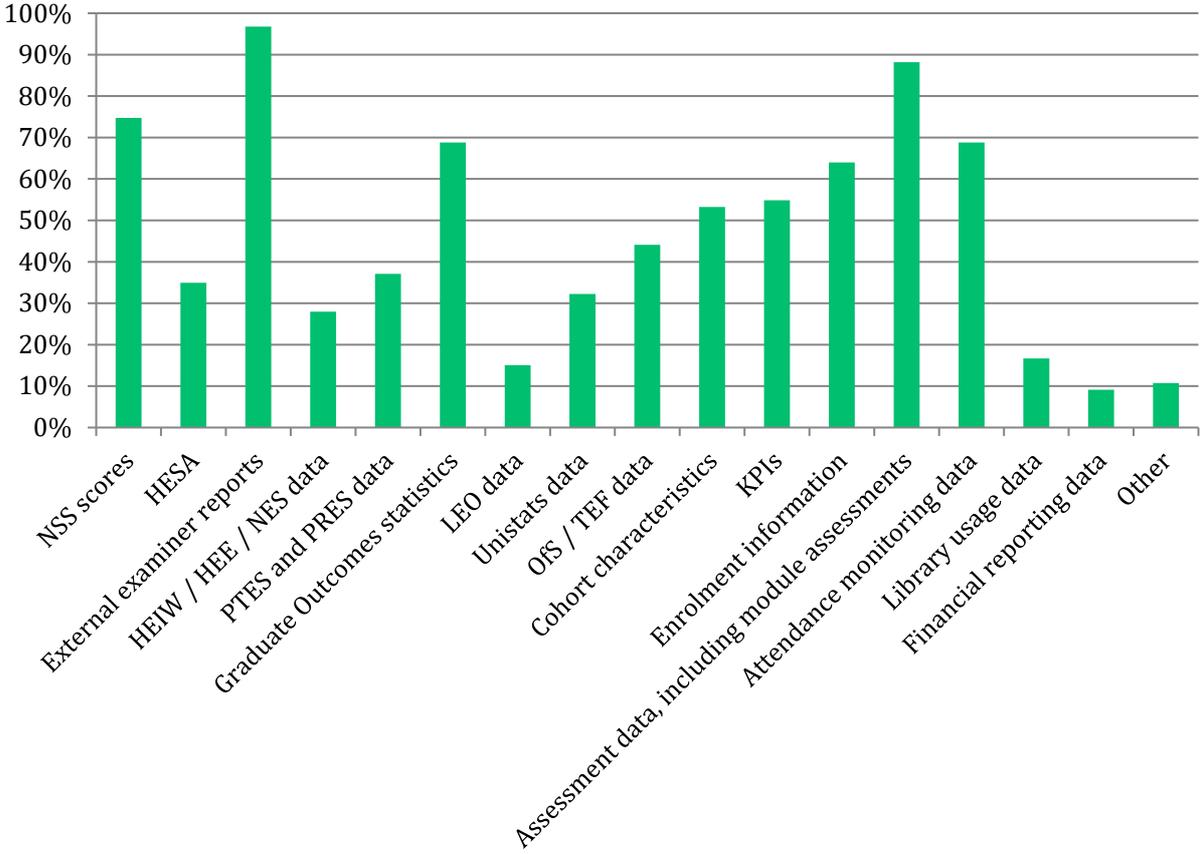
Graph 22: Do you as an education provider know where to find information about the concerns process?



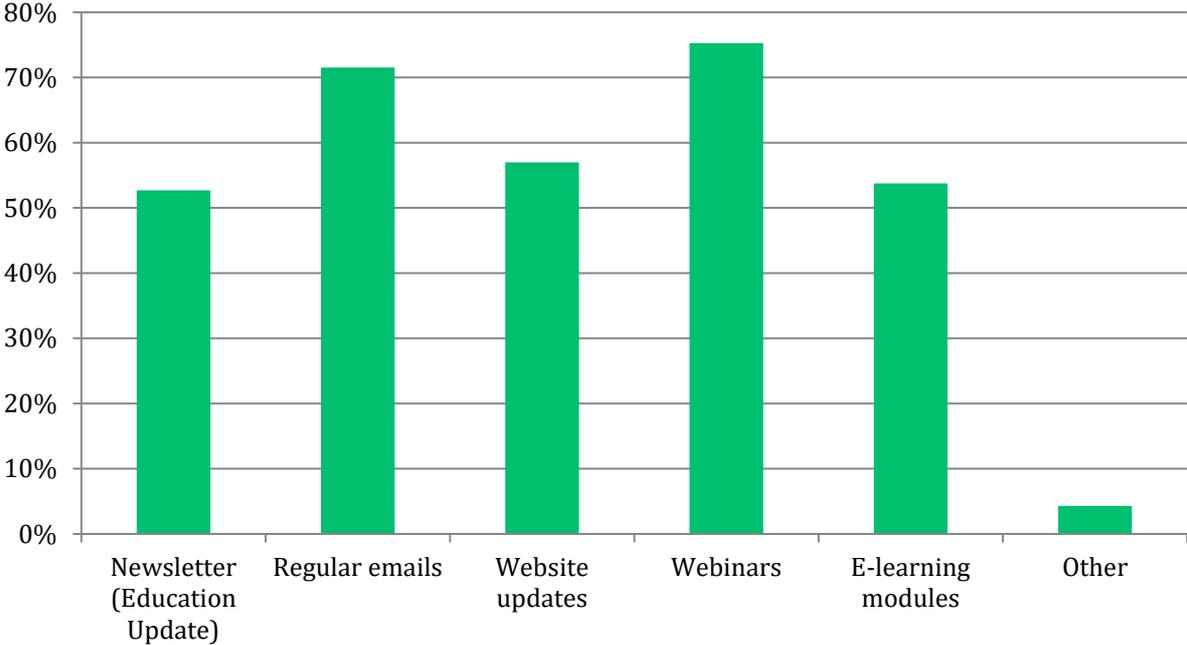
Graph 23: As an education provider, how would you like to interact with us in the following scenarios?



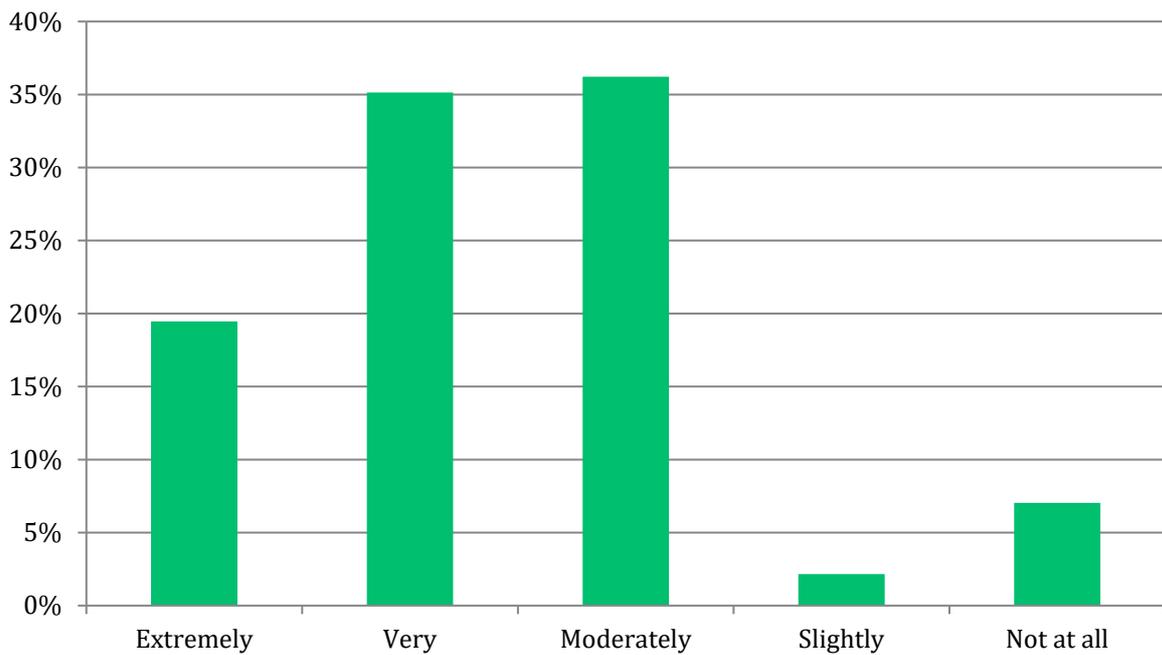
Graph 24: What data do you as an education provider use to measure quality, both internally and externally?



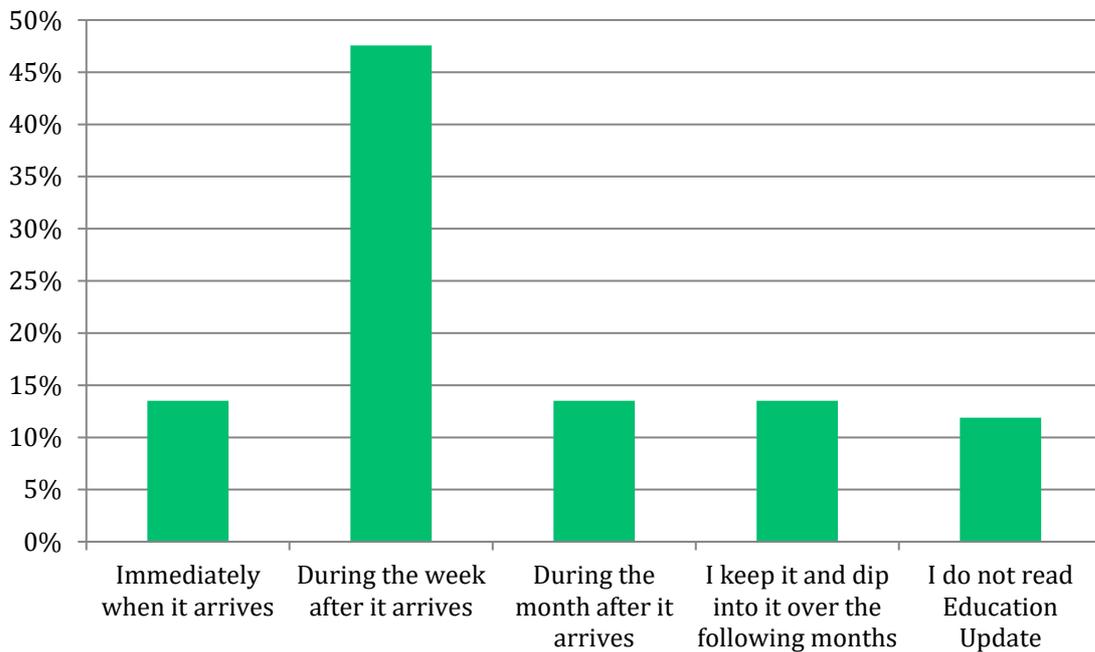
Graph 25: How can we support you as an education provider to understand the new quality assurance model and how to interact with us, now and in the future?



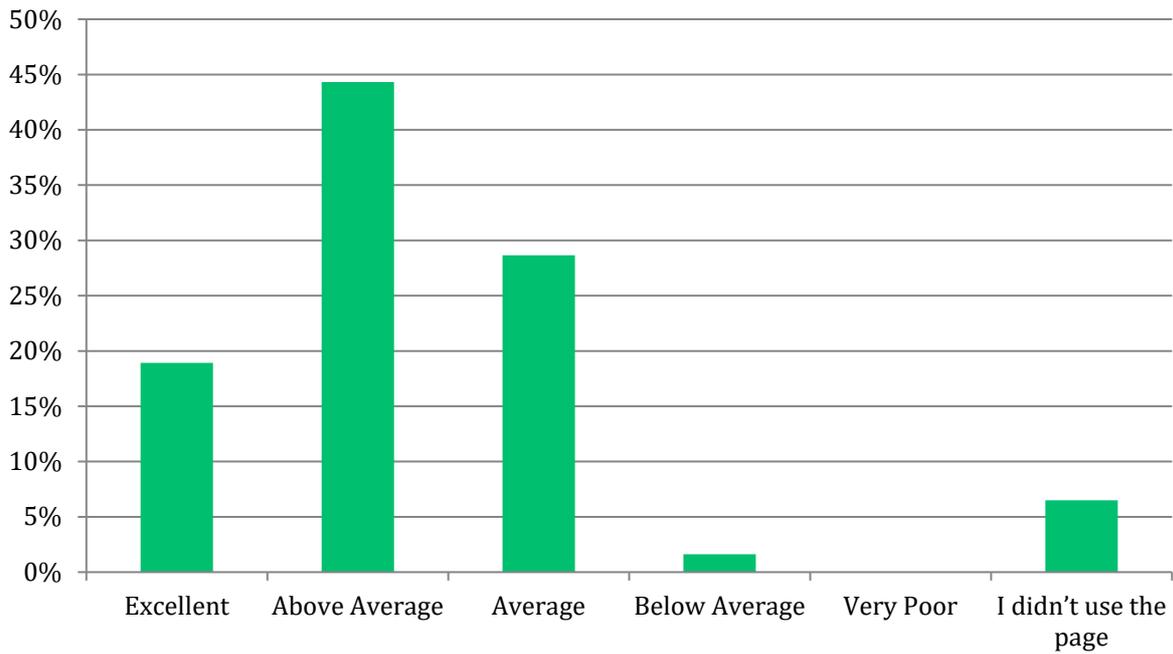
Graph 26: How useful do you find Education Update?



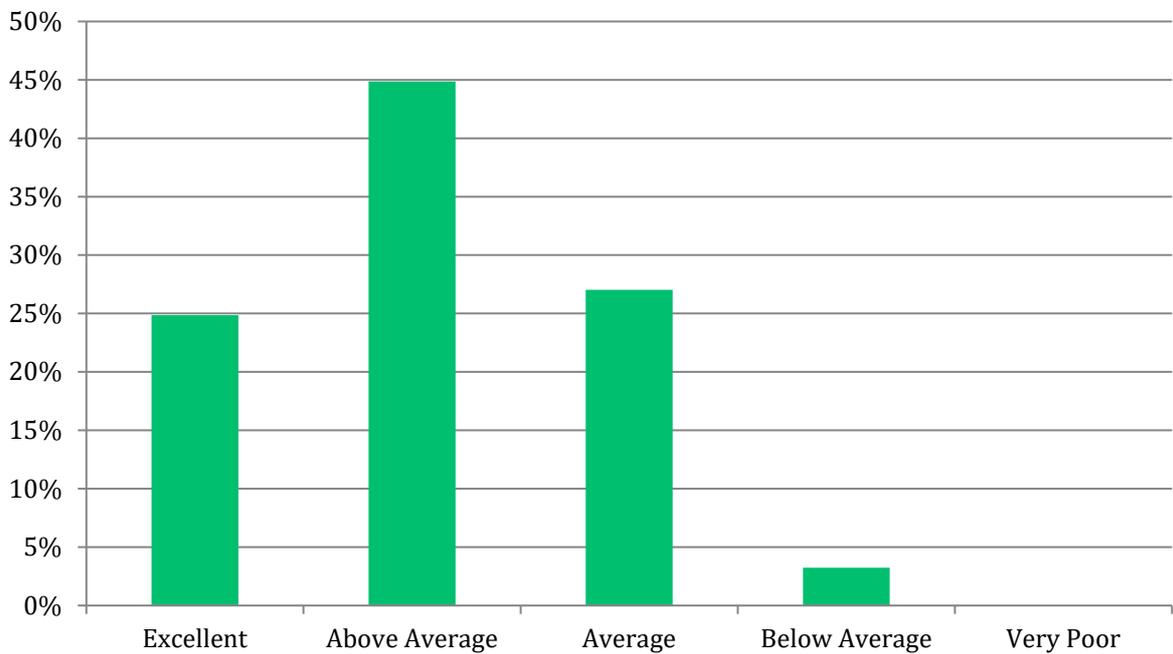
Graph 27: When do you read Education Update?



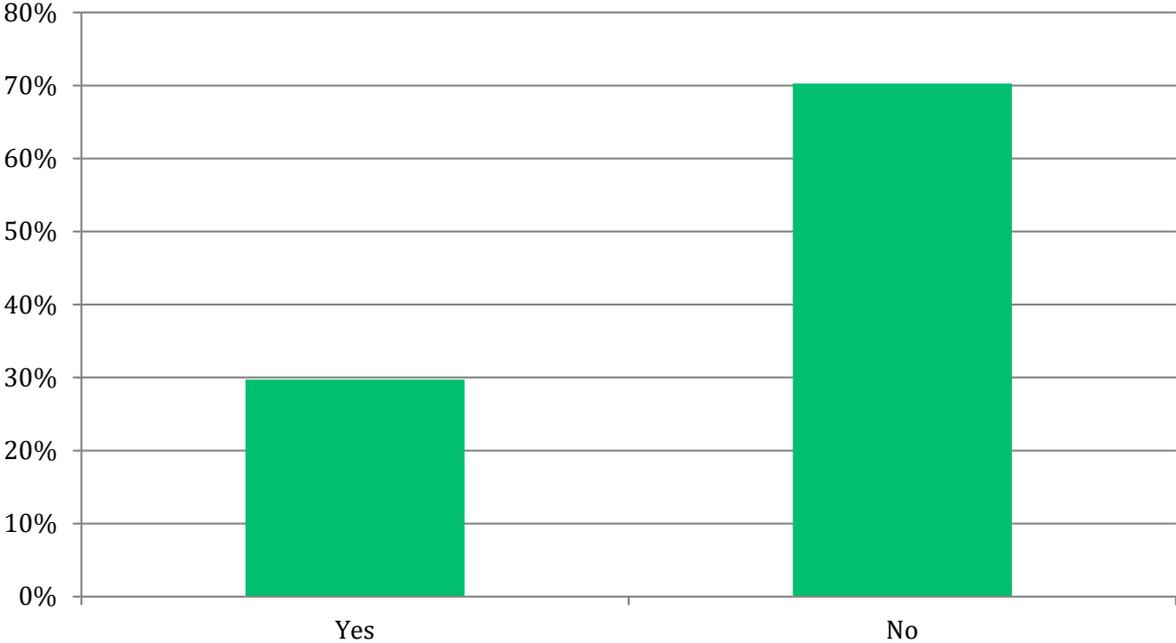
Graph 28: How did you find the 'advice for education providers' page as part of the COVID-19 hub on the HCPC website?



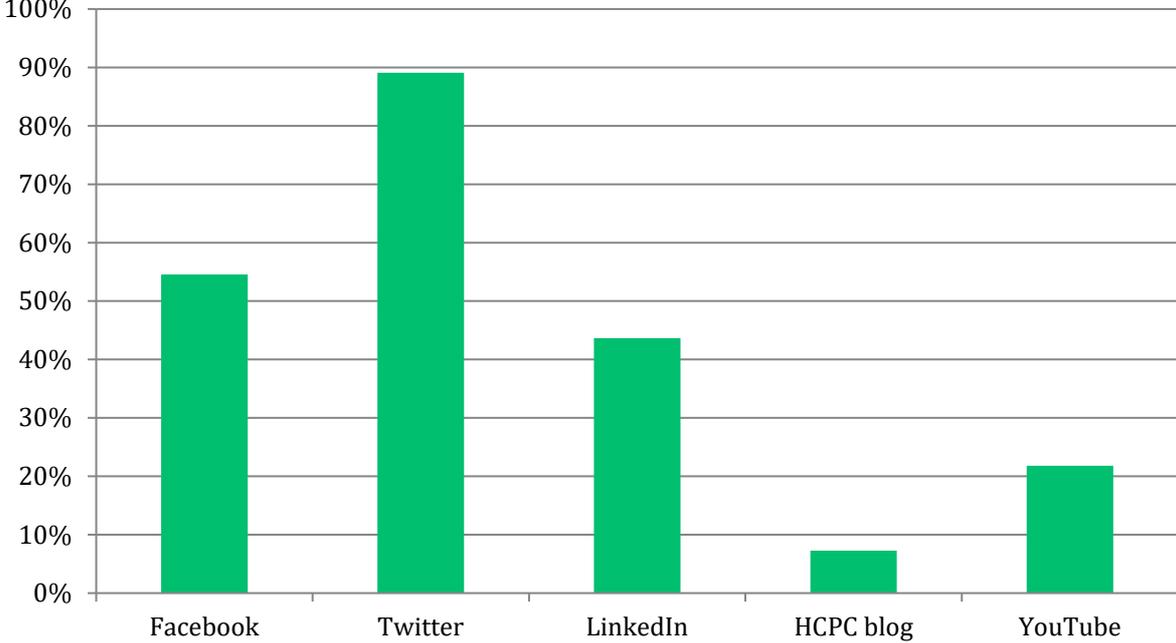
Graph 29: From the point of view of your interaction as an education provider with the Education department, how did you consider our response to the COVID-19 pandemic?



Graph 30: Do you as an education provider follow the HCPC on social media?



Graph 31: Which channels do you use?



Graph 32: If you as an education provider need information about the HCPC Education department processes or activities, which would you first use to find this out?

