ADULT LEARNERS' SATISFACTION 2007/2008

November 2008

HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

'Adult Learners' Satisfaction 2007/08' is a survey of those Halton Borough residents who took adult and family learning course(s), provided by the Adult Learning and Skills Development Division of the Environmental Directorate of Halton Borough Council, in the 2007/08 academic year. The survey was conducted in October 2008.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire, developed by the Research and Development Unit in cooperation with the Adult Learning and Skills Development Division, asked respondents 16 questions about their overall learning experience, focusing on particular reasons for satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the service and soliciting suggestions for its improvement. The questionnaire included both close-ended and open-ended questions (Appendix A*).*

Paper questionnaires were sent to 500 randomly selected learners (about a quarter of all 2007/08 adult learners), who had done a course of 10 hours or more across all areas in the 2007/2008 academic year. 160 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 32%.

In addition the questionnaire was placed on the Internet. The on-line survey was advertised through flyers in Acorn and Kingsway Centers. Those 2007/08 adult learners who had email addresses were contacted with an invitation to fill in the on-line questionnaire.

Altogether 177 completed questionnaires, including 17 completed on-line, representing 8.3% of all adult learners of 2007/08 academic year, were analysed.

Reporting Results

Since some respondents did not answer all of the questions, the number of respondents who answered a particular question is often not the total number of respondents, who took part in the survey. Therefore, graphs and tables contain information on the number of valid responses.

In some cases respondents were allowed to make more than one response, therefore the total in some tables may add up to more than 100%.


Interpreting Results

Despite the effort to draw a representative sample of the adult learners studied in 2007/08 academic year, the sample under study does not fully match the socio-demographic characteristics of the entire population of learners (see Chapter 1, 1.1 – 1.6). Therefore, the results of the study should be interpreted cautiously with regard to their generalisation to all 2007/08 adult learners**.**

CHAPTER 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1.1 Age

Nearly half of the adult learners (49.2%), who took part in the study, are 60 years of age or older. This group of adult learners is grossly over-represented in the sample, compared to the entire population of adult learners in which students aged 60 and over make up only 25%. Respondents of 25-44 and 45-59 age groups comprise another half of the respondents, with each of the groups accounting for about 24%. At the same time, the youngest age category of adult learners (16-24) makes up less than about 1% of the respondent. 1.7% of the respondents preferred not to disclose their age.
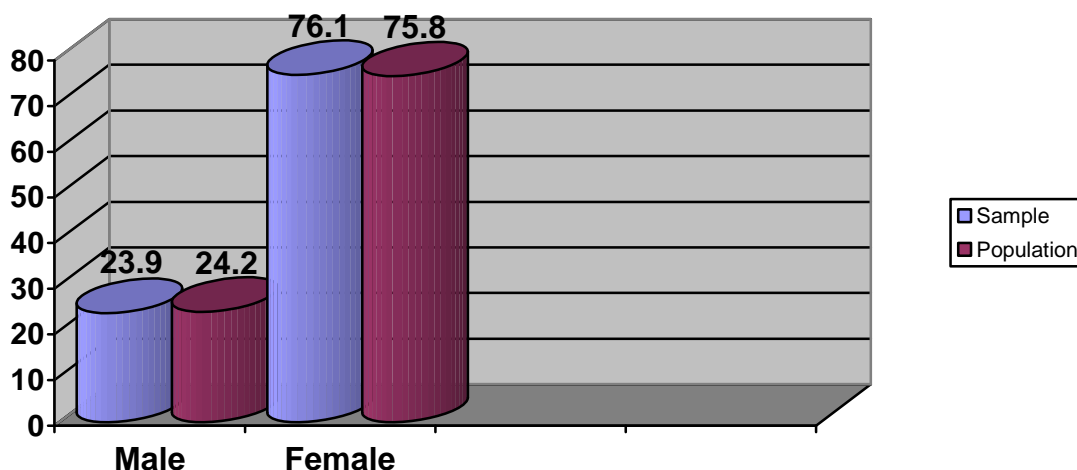
Graph 1. Respondents' Age (%)

No of valid responses 177
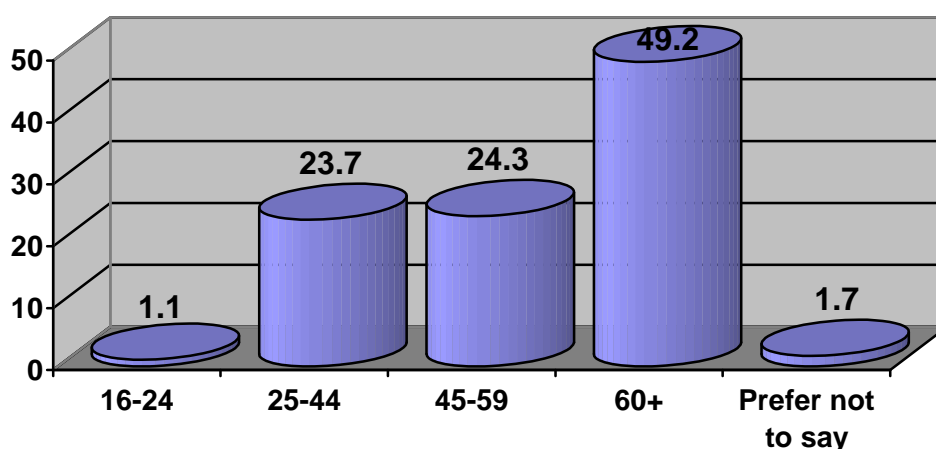
1.2 Gender

The gender distribution of the respondents is: women 76.1% and men 23.9%. The gender distribution of the sample corresponds to the one observed in the total population of learners – 75.8% and 24.2% correspondingly.

Graph 2. Respondents' Gender (%)

No of valid responses 177

1.3 Gender and Age

Cross tabulation analysis suggests that women aged 60 and over constitute the largest group of respondents, with women aged 25-44 and 45-59 representing second and third largest groups of learners. The least populated groups of learners are both women and men aged 25 and under, as well as men of 25-44.

**Graph 3. Gender by Age Profile of Respondents (number of people)**

No of valid responses 177
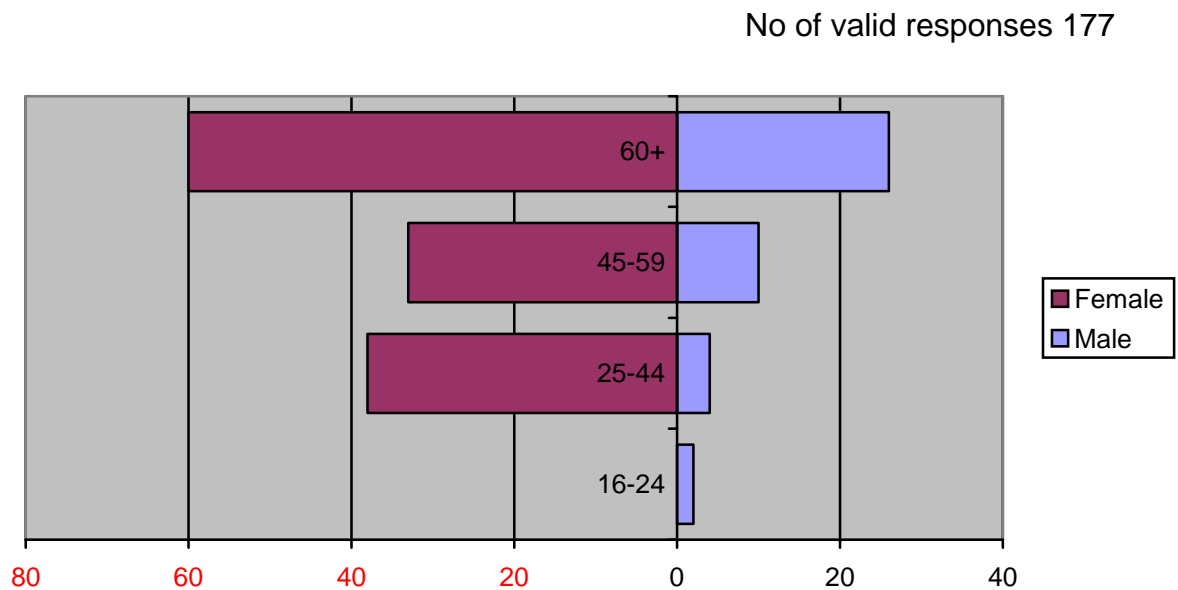
1.4 Ethnicity

Learners of a white background are the largest ethnic group of the respondents – 95.3%, including those of British (90.1%), Irish (2.9%) and Other (2.3%) backgrounds, which corresponds to the ethnic profile of all 2007/08 students (96.4% of White of all backgrounds). Chinese are the largest minority ethnic group of the respondents (1.8%), while groups of students of Mixed (White and Black Caribbean) Other (e.g. neither Asian, nor African, nor Mixed of any background) ethnic backgrounds each account for less than 1% of the respondents. As Graph 4 shows the total number of learners of Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (BME) in the sample corresponds to that in the total population. 1.8% of the respondents preferred not to indicate their ethnicity.

Graph 4. Respondents' Ethnicity (%)

No of valid responses 177
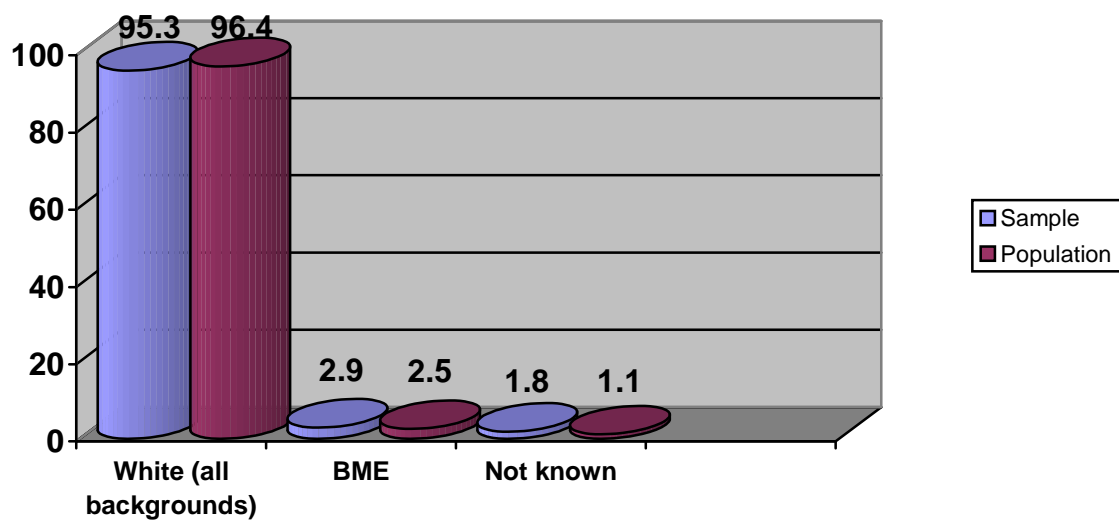
1.5 Disability

When asked whether they considered themselves as having a disability, the majority of the respondents (77.3%) said 'No', while about one fifth of the respondents (19.9%) reported having a disability, which is slightly more than observed in the total population (12.2%). 2.8% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

**Graph 5. Considering Yourself as Having a Disability (%)**

No of valid responses 176
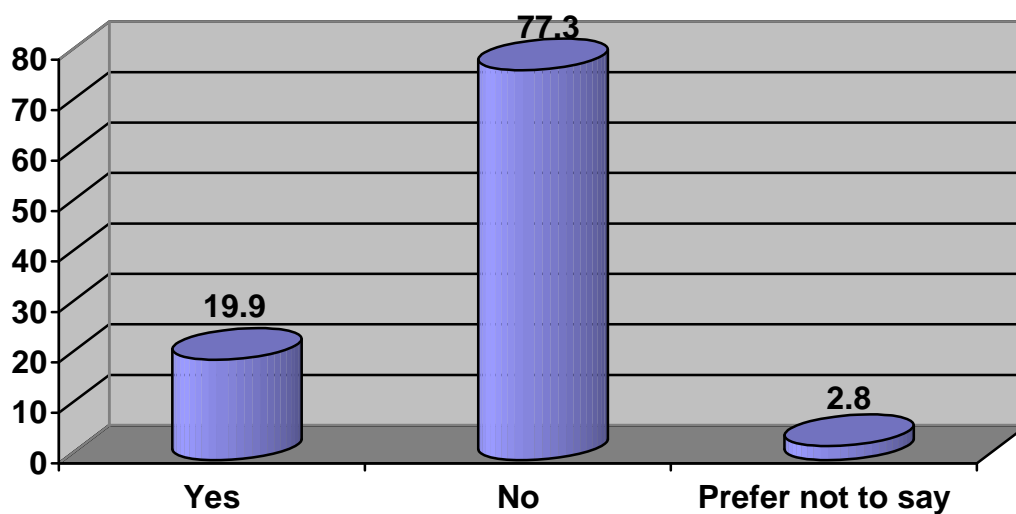
1.6 Learning Difficulty

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (94.4%) consider themselves as not having any learning difficulty, while 4% reported having a learning difficulty. 1.7% of the respondents preferred not to answer this question.

Graph 6. Considering Yourself as Having a Learning Difficulty (%)

No of valid responses 177
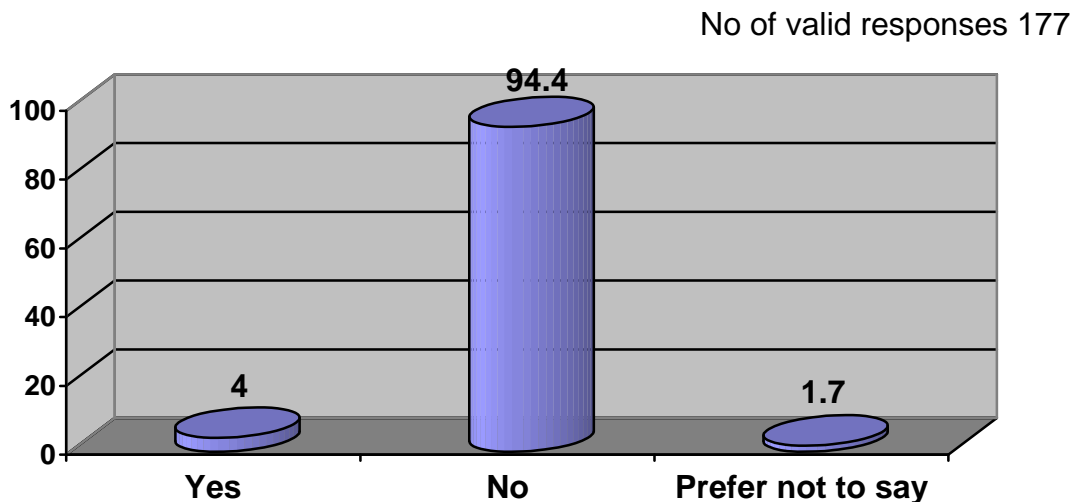
1.7 Main Subject Studied

Only 141 out of 177 respondents (80%) provided valid answers to the question 'What is the main subject you have studied during the past 12 month?', e.g. indicated only one subject studied. As Graph 7 shows the majority of these respondents attended IT classes (45.4%), while the rest of the courses attracted between 1% and 18% of the respondents.

Graph 7. Main Subject Studied
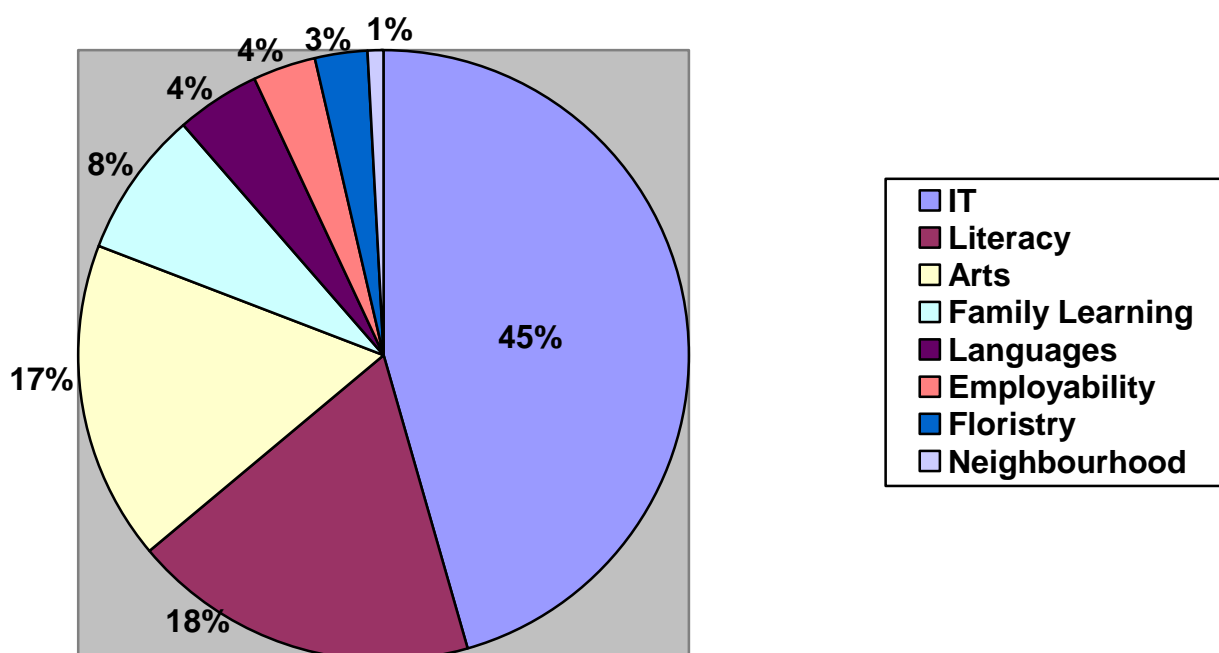
CHAPTER 2. LEARNERS' SATISFACTION

2.1. Satisfaction with the Overall Quality of Teaching

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (97.1%) expressed their satisfaction with the quality of teaching, including 57.1% who were extremely satisfied, 36% - very satisfied and 4% fairly satisfied. Only 1.2% indicated their dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching, including 0.6% who were fairly dissatisfied and 0.6% – very dissatisfied. None of the respondents indicated that they were extremely dissatisfied. 1.7% of the respondents were neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied with the quality of teaching on their course.

Graph 8. Satisfaction with the Overall Quality of Teaching (%)
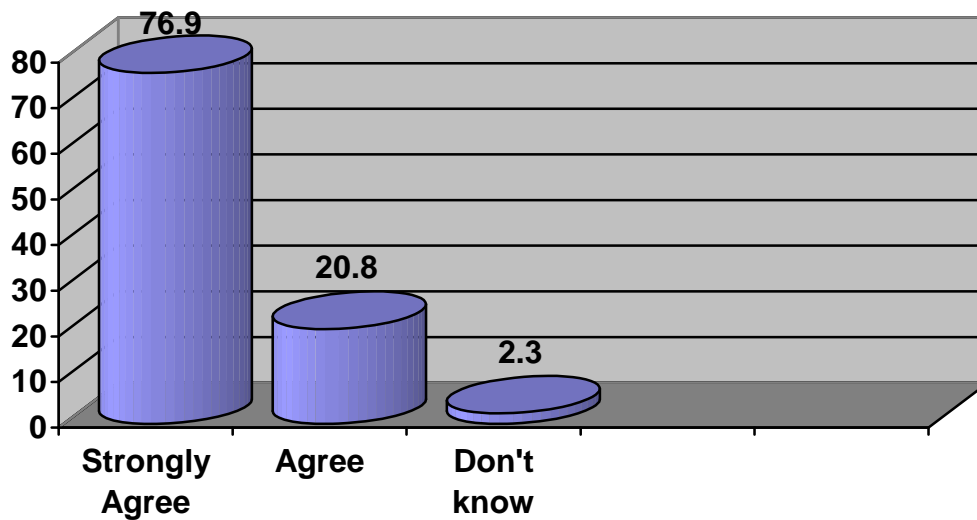
No of valid responses 175
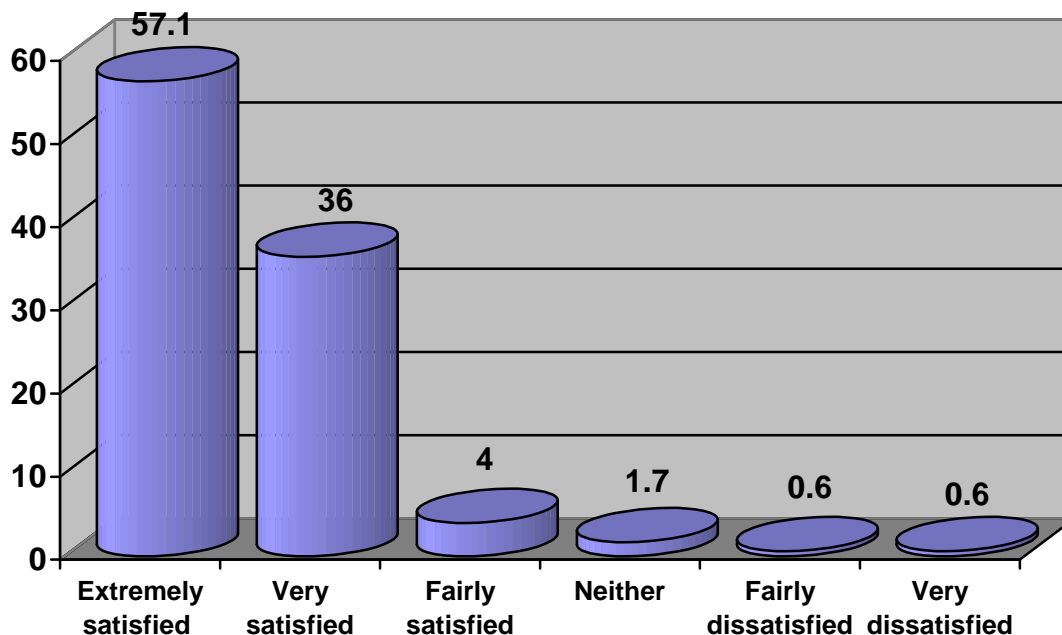
2.2 Satisfaction with the Tutor(s)

In addition to assessing the satisfaction of the learners with the overall quality of teaching on their courses, the respondents were asked to evaluate their tutors in greater detail. They were provided with 10 statements, capturing different aspects of tutoring, and asked to rate their tutor(s) on each of them, choosing from a range of 6 options from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', including a 'do not know' option. Graphs 9-18 depict the results of respondents' evaluation of their tutor(s).

Graph 9. Tutor Knows the Subject Very Well (%)

No of valid responses 175

Graph 10. Tutor Related to Me as a Person Very Well (%)

No of valid responses 174
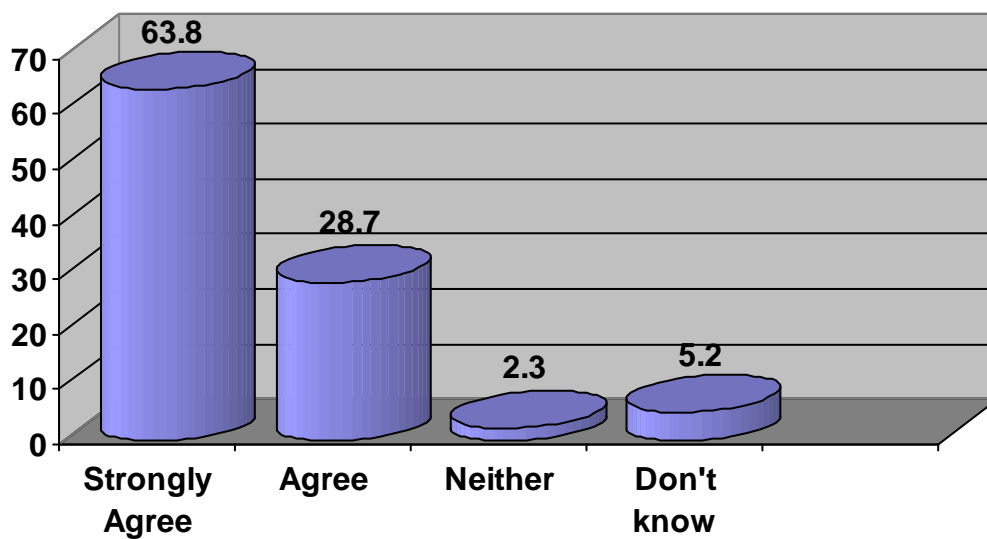
Graph 11. Tutor Makes My Subject Interesting or Enjoyable for Me (%)

No of valid responses 173

Graph 12. Tutor Understands Me and How I Learn (%)

No of valid responses 170

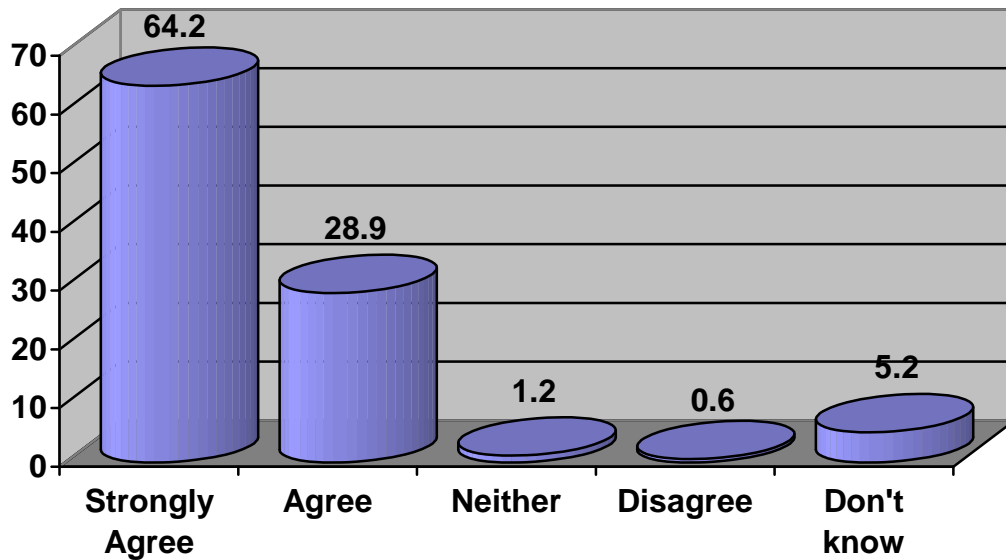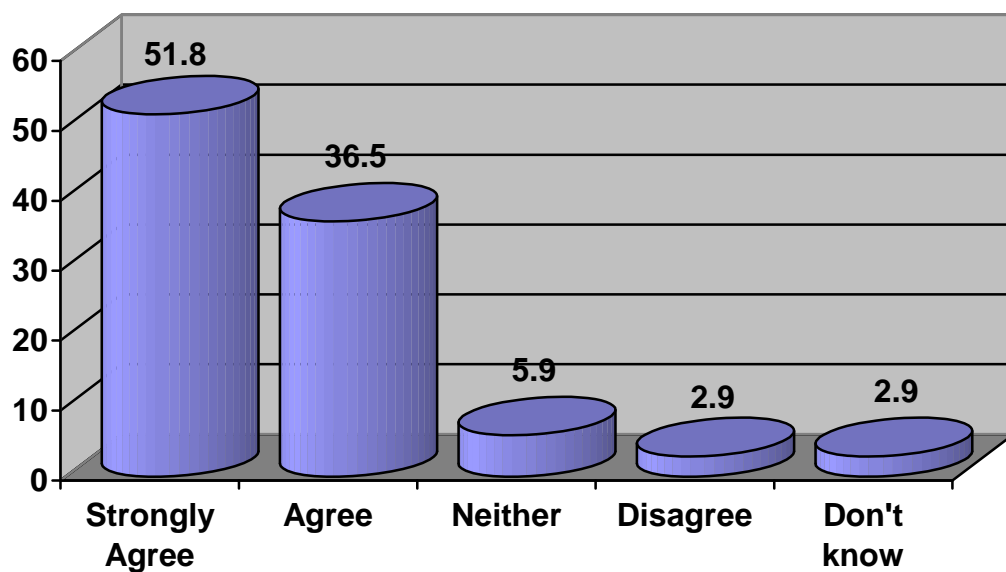## Graph 13. Tutor Gives Me a Lot of Support (%)

No of valid responses 173
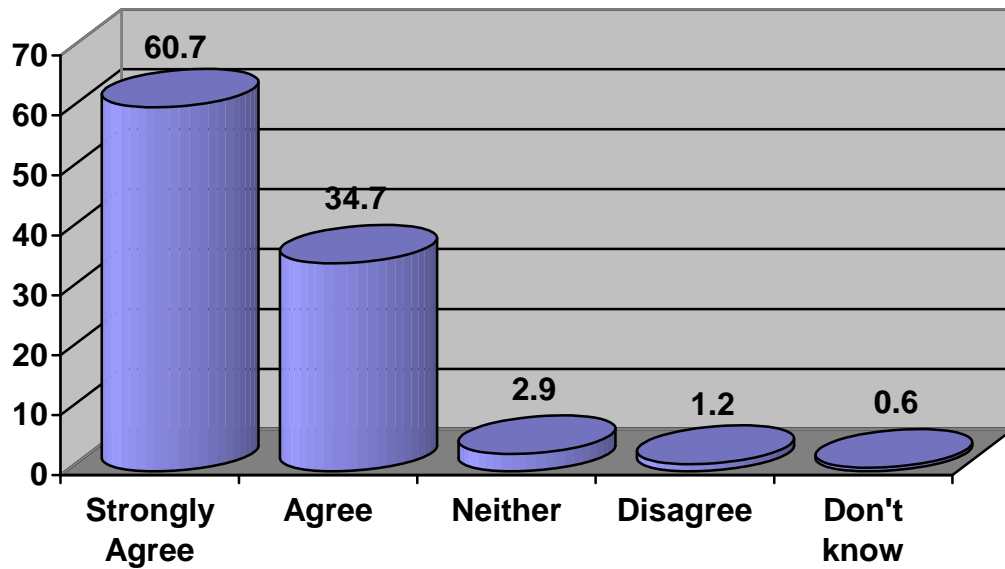
Graph 14. Tutor Plans Lessons Well (%)

No of valid responses 174
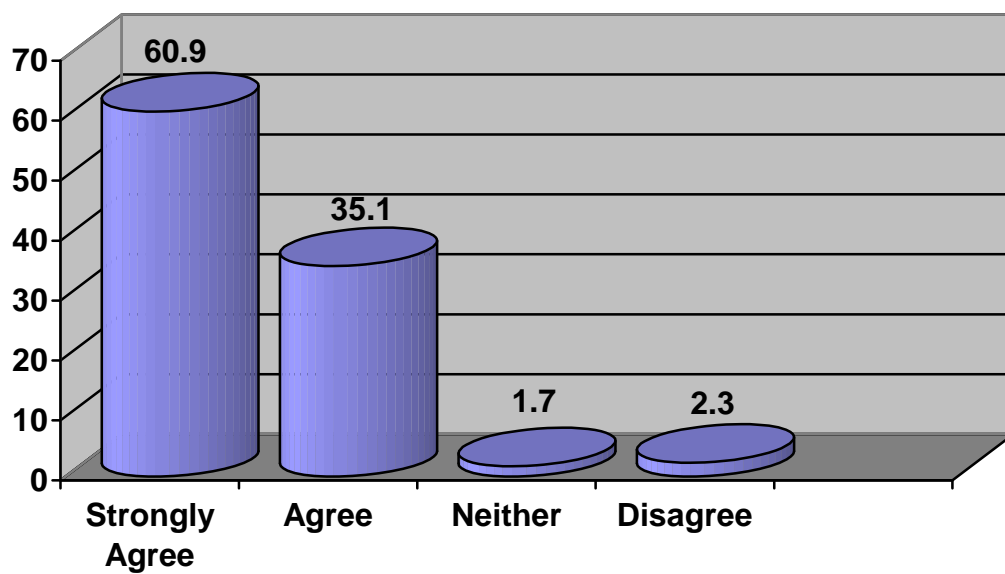
Graph 15. Tutor Uses Teaching Materials that are of Good Quality and Easily Accessible (%)

No of valid responses 172

Strongly Agree	64
Agree	29.7
Neither	3.5
Disagree	1.7
Strongly Disagree	0.6
Don't know	0.6
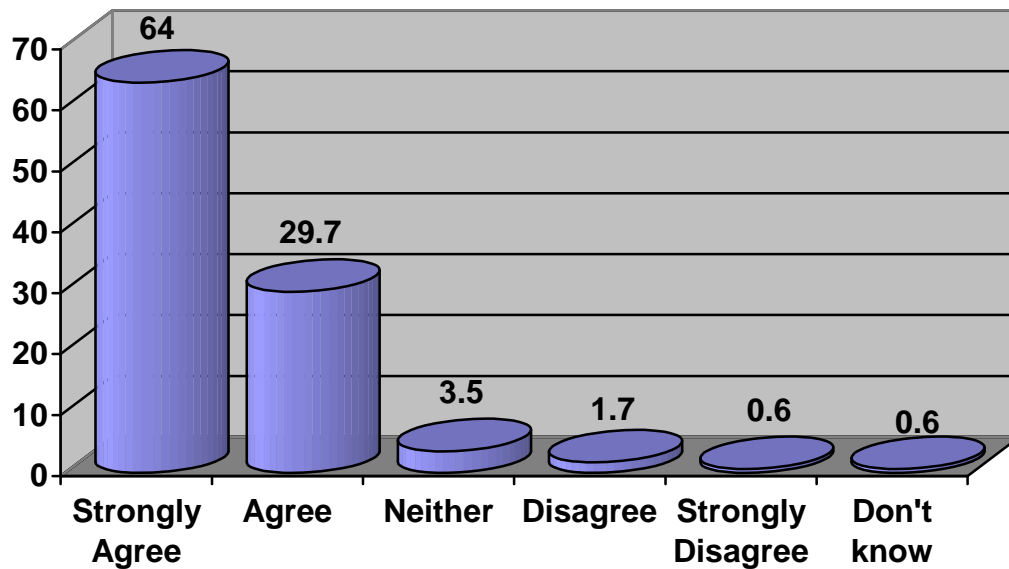
Graph 16. Tutor Sets Clear Goals to Help Me Improve (%)

No of valid responses 171

Strongly Agree	55.6
Agree	37.4
Neither	4.7
Disagree	1.8
Strongly Disagree	0.6
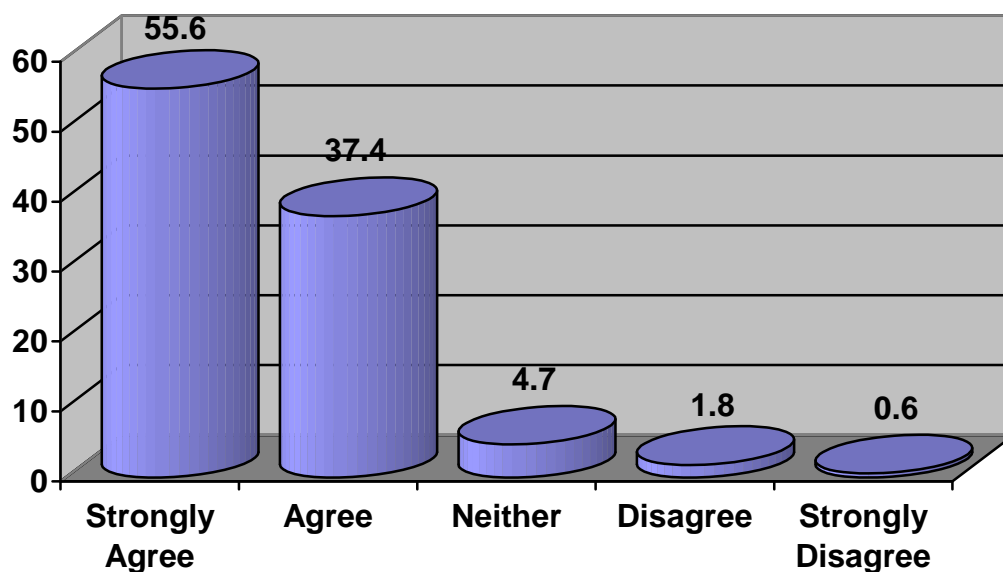
Graph 17. Tutor Provides Prompt and Regular Feedback on Progress (%)

No of valid responses 172

Strongly Agree: 58.7
Agree: 34.3
Neither: 5.2
Strongly Disagree: 0.6
Don't know: 1.2
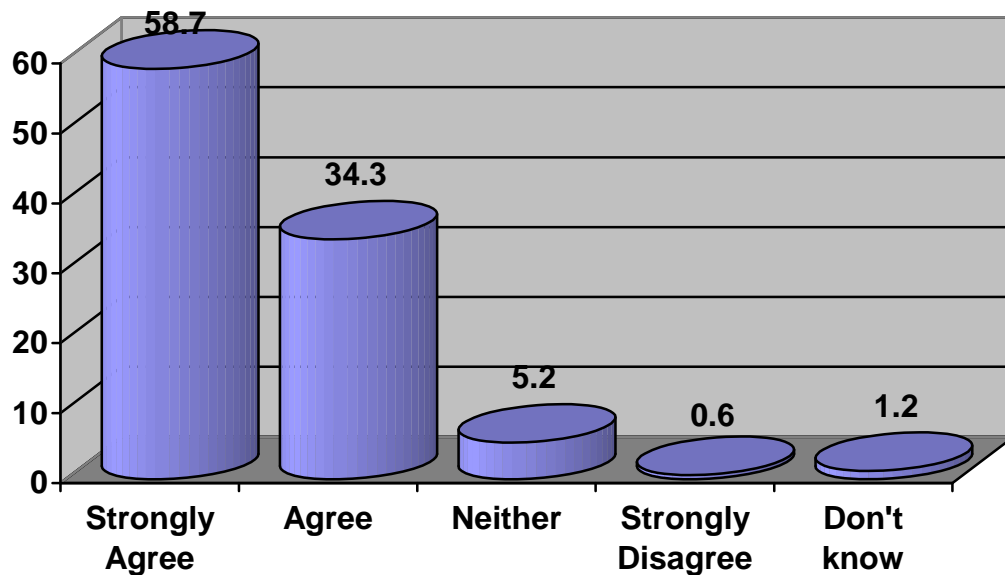
Graph 18. Tutor Manages the Group of Learners Well (%)

No of valid responses 172

Strongly Agree: 64
Agree: 32.6
Neither: 2.3
Disagree: 0.6
Strongly disagree: 0.6
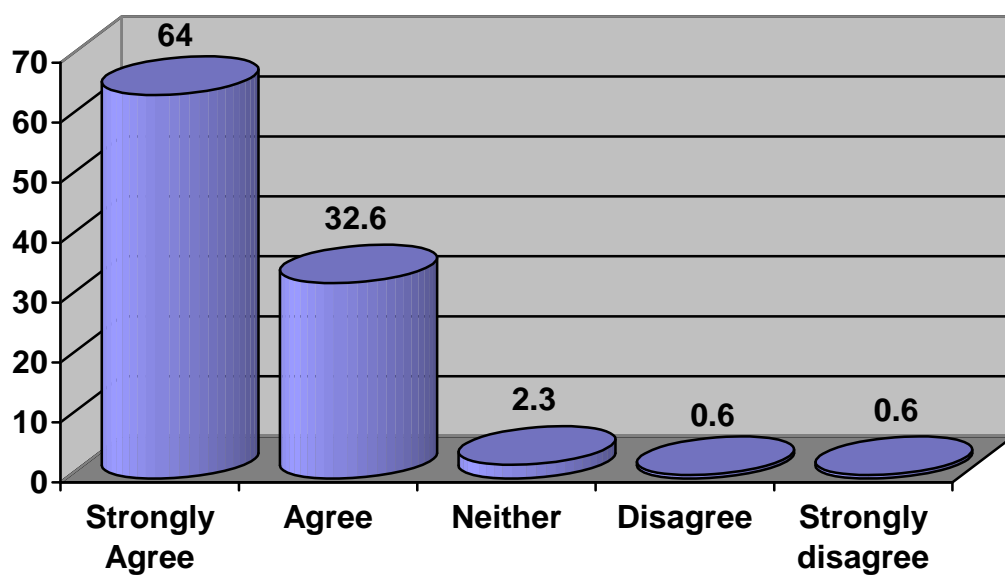
2.3 Time Spent on Increasing Students' Understanding of the Subject

The majority of the respondents (89.9%) stated that the tutor normally spends the whole lesson or most of the lesson helping the learners to increase their understanding of the subject: 53.3% and 36.7% respectively. 8.9% of the respondents indicated that around half or less than half of the lesson is spent for these purposes: 6.5% and 2.4% respectively. None of the respondents said that that no time at all was spent on helping them to increase the subject.

Graph 19. Respondents' Assessment of How Much Time of the Lesson Is Spent to Increase Students' Understanding of the Subject (%)

No of valid responses 169
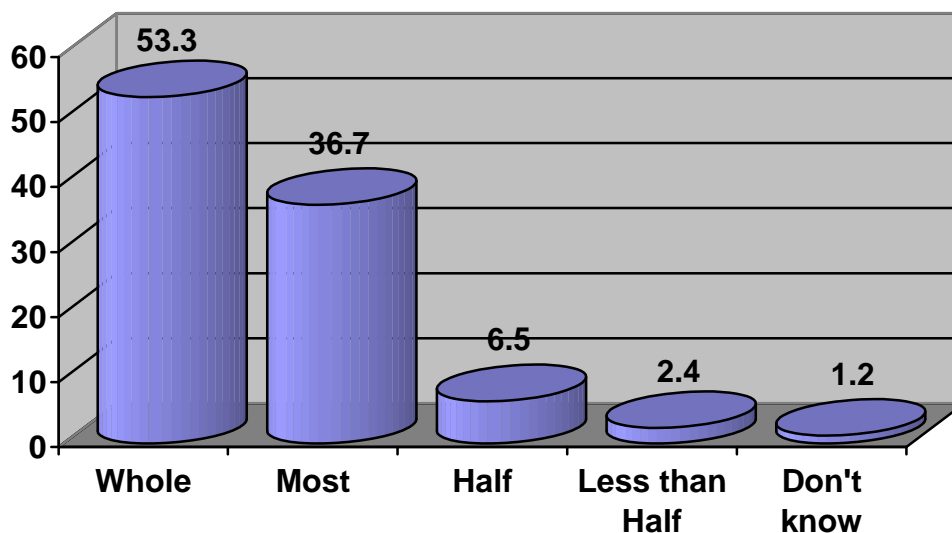

2.4 Problems in Class

Respondents were also provided with a list of statements, describing a number of situations in a classroom setting, and asked to indicate whether they regularly encountered each of the situations during their learning experience or not. As Graph 20 shows, other learners being late for classes and other learners making a noise and disrupting class are the two most prominent problems experienced by the respondents in class: 19.8% and 7.9% respectively. 7.3% of the respondents experienced problems in the classroom, which were not part of the suggested list, including the following: 'me being late', 'me being slower than others in learning', 'a very varied ability group hindered the learning process', 'tutor talking about things not relating to the subject' and 'moving from venue to venue'. Tutor's teaching pace being fast was encountered by 4% of the respondents, whilst other classroom situations were experienced by between 2.8 and 0.6% of the respondents (Graph 20).

Graph 20. Problems in Class, Encountered by Respondents on a Fairly Regular Basis (%)

No of valid answers 177

Category	Value
Other	7.3
Lessons Finished Late	0.6
Lessons Finished Early	1.7
Lack of resources	2.8
Lessons Badly Planned	2.8
Tutor Absent	1.7
Tutor Too Fast	4
Tutor Too Slow	2.3
Noise	7.9
Learners Late	19.8
Tutor Late	2.8
Left Hanging Around	1.1
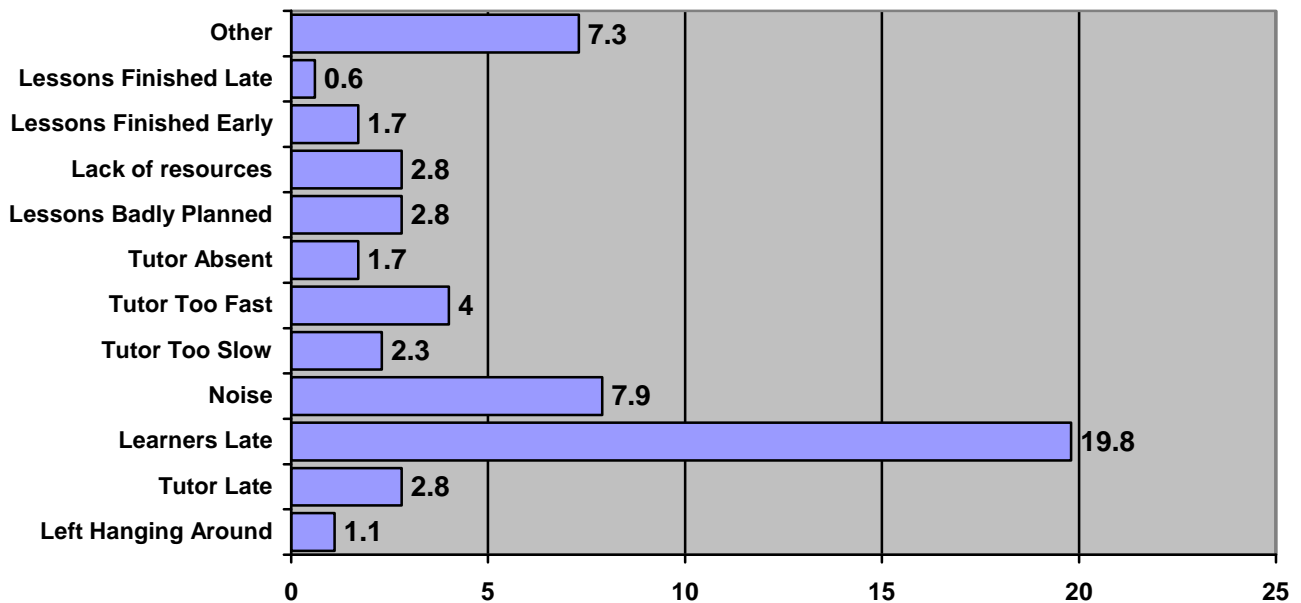
2.5 Overall Satisfaction with the Learning Experience

97.1% of the respondents expressed their satisfaction with the overall learning experience, including 51.5% of those who were extremely satisfied, 38.5% – very satisfied and 7.5% - fairly satisfied. 1.2% of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction, including 0.6% who were extremely dissatisfied and 0.6% - fairly dissatisfied. 1.7% of the respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Graph 21. Respondents' Overall Satisfaction with the Learning Experience (%)

No of valid answers 174

Category	Value
Extremely Satisfied	51.1
Very Satisfied	38.5
Fairly Satisfied	7.5
Neither	1.7
Fairly Dissatisfied	0.6
Extremely Dissatisfied	0.6
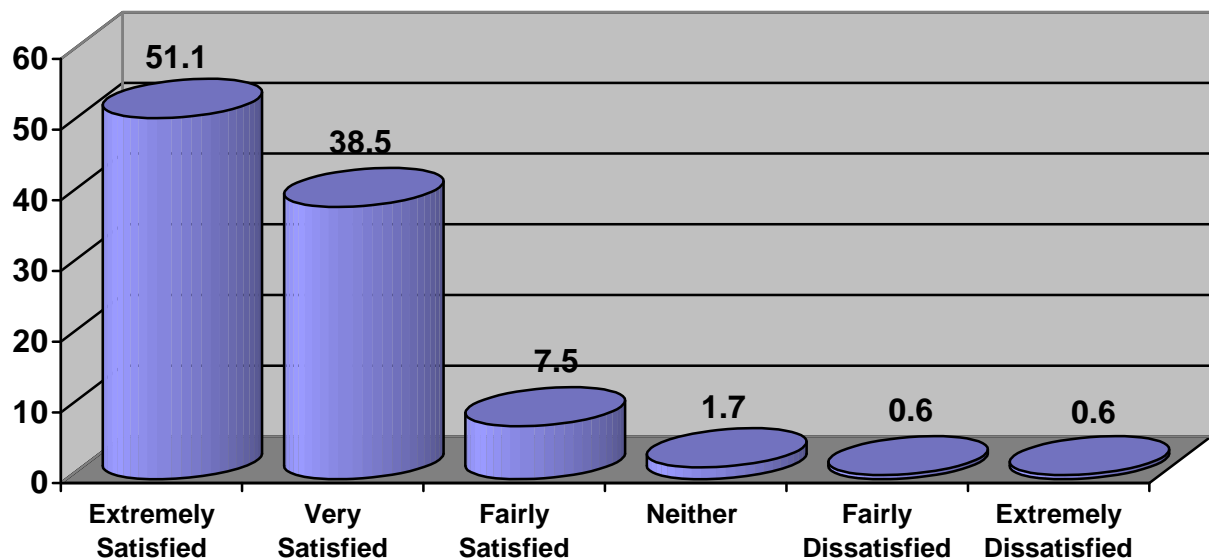
2.6 Reasons for Being Satisfied

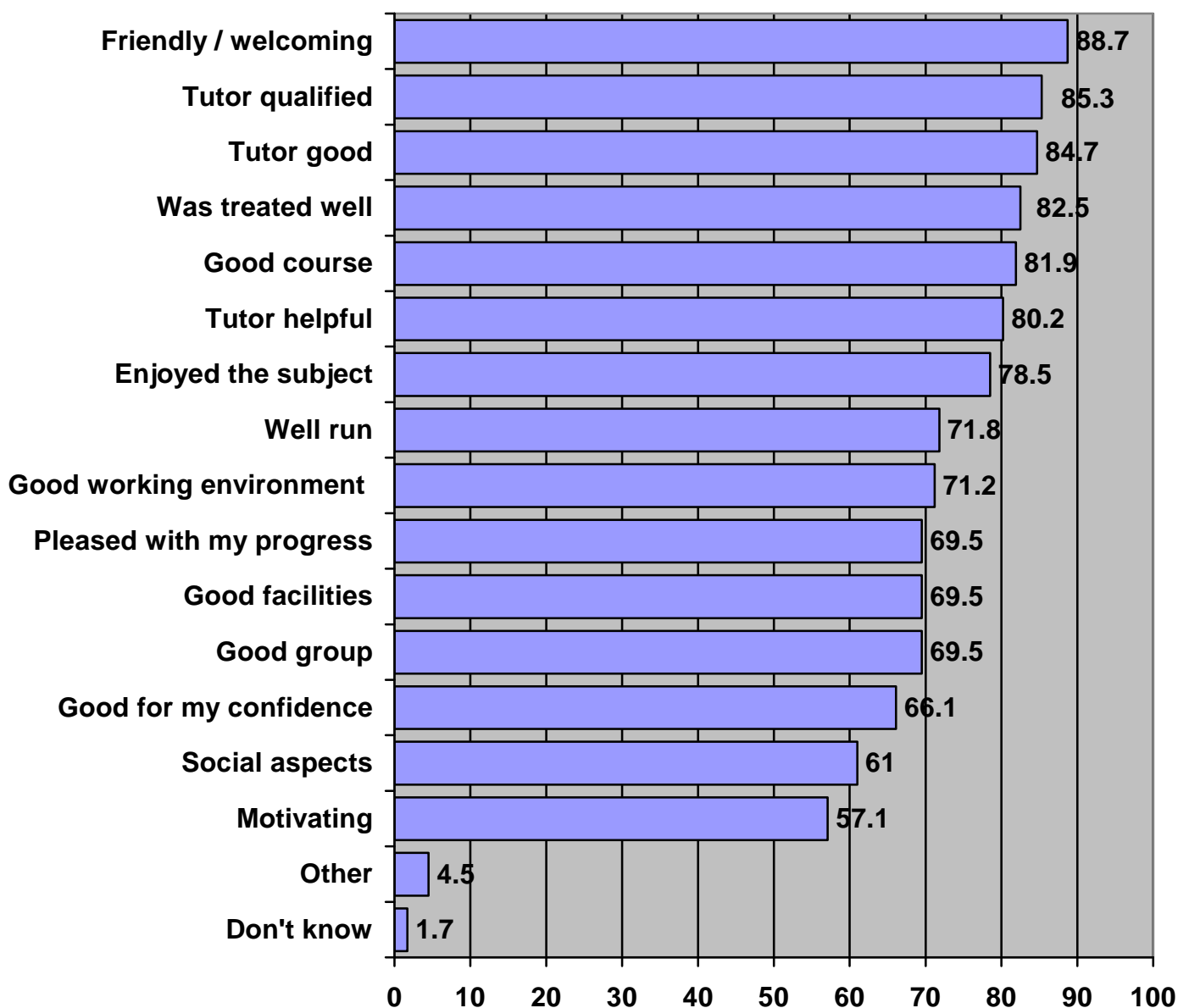Respondents were invited to indicate why they were satisfied with the overall learning experience by either choosing from a list of reasons provided or suggesting other reasons. Graph 22 shows the number of respondents (as per cent of the total number) who chose any particular reason for satisfaction. Other reasons for satisfaction were as follows: 'challenging when necessary', 'plenty of encouragement', and 'people on course at same level of skills'.

Graph 22. Respondents' Satisfaction with Learning Experience (%)

No of valid reasons 177

| Reason	%
Friendly / welcoming	88.7
Tutor qualified	85.3
Tutor good	84.7
Was treated well	82.5
Good course	81.9
Tutor helpful	80.2
Enjoyed the subject	78.5
Well run	71.8
Good working environment	71.2
Pleased with my progress	69.5
Good facilities	69.5
Good group	69.5
Good for my confidence	66.1
Social aspects	61
Motivating	57.1
Other	4.5
Don't know	1.7

2.7 Reasons for Being Dissatisfied

Respondents were also asked to indicate their reasons for dissatisfaction with the overall learning experience. They could either choose from a list of reasons provided or suggest other reasons. Graph 23 shows the number of respondents (as per cent of the total number) who chose any particular reason for dissatisfaction. Other reasons for dissatisfaction were as follows 'tutor spent more time with some people and less with others' and 'other learners talking in class about things not relating to the subject'.

Graph 23. Respondents' Dissatisfaction with Learning Experience (%)

No of valid reasons 177
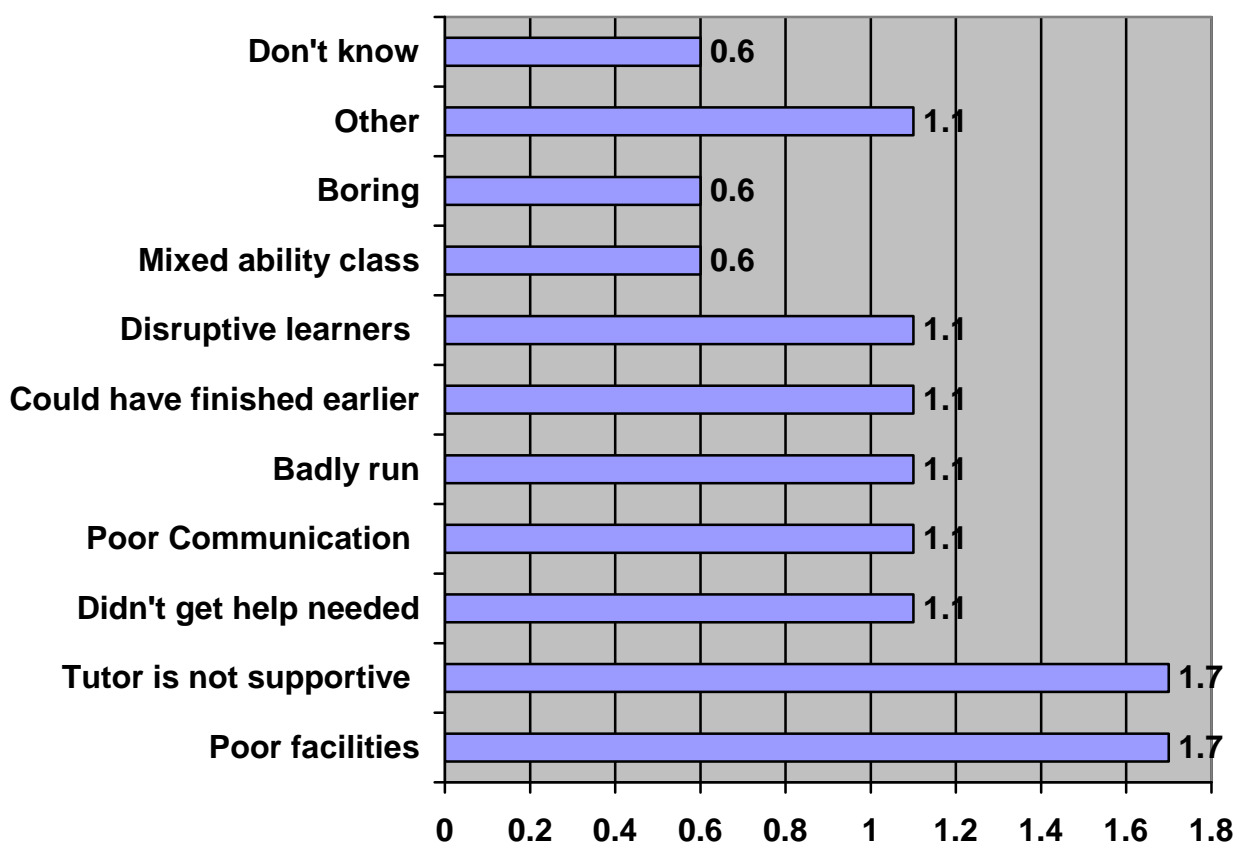
2.8 Further Learning

When asked about the likelihood of undertaking further learning within the next three years, two-thirds of the respondents (61.3%) expressed a high degree of certainty and 28% said it was quite likely (Graph 24). 8.9% of the respondents were uncertain about further learning. Only 1.8% of them said that further learning was quite unlikely and none chose the 'definitely not' option.

Graph 24. Likelihood of Undertaking Further Learning (%)

No of valid answers 168

Bar chart values: Almost certainly 61.3, Quite likely 28, Not sure 8.9, Quite unlikely 1.8
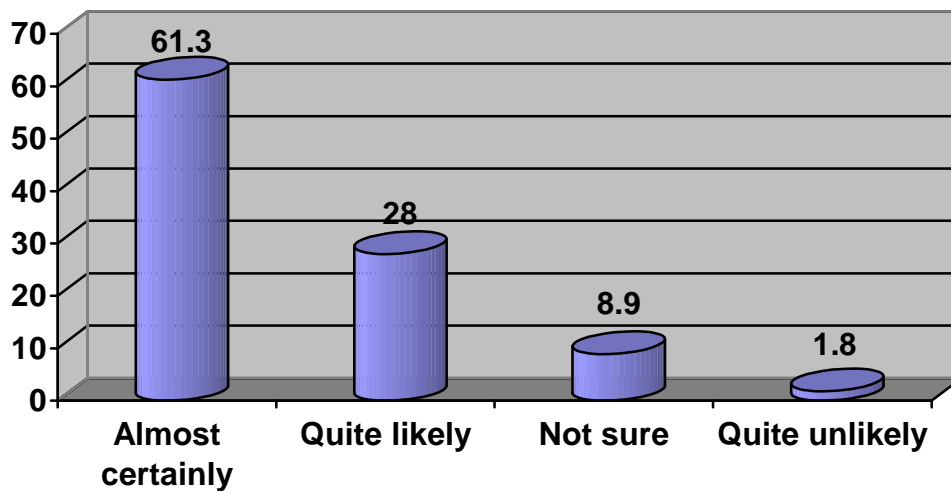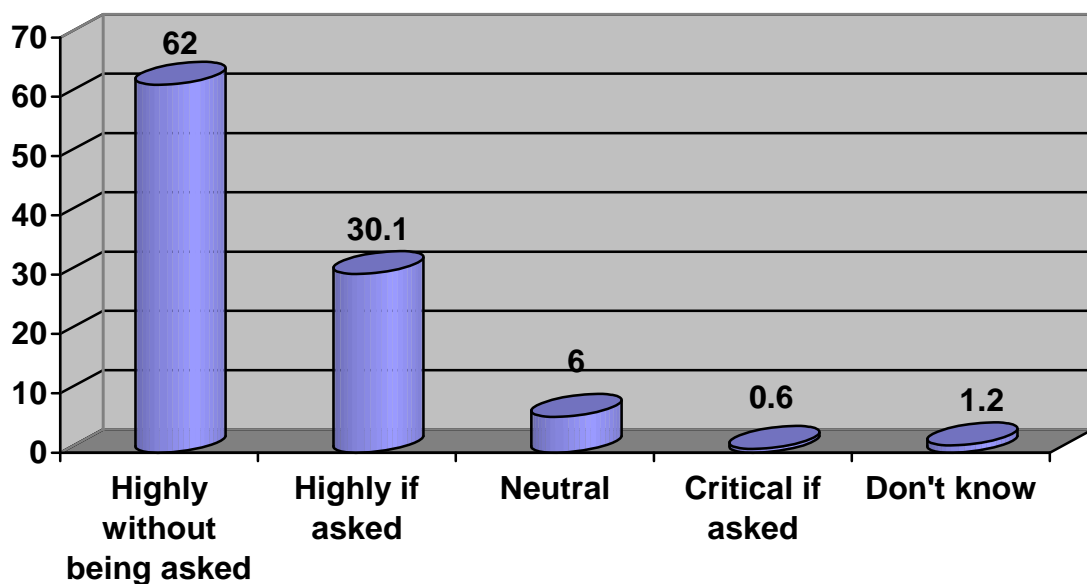
2.9 Speaking about the Service

Two-thirds of the respondents (62%) said that they would speak about the Adult Learning and Skills Development Division's service highly even without being asked, while 30.1% indicated that they would speak positively if asked. 6% of the respondents would give a neutral comment about the service. Only 0.6% of the respondents said that they would give a critical comment if asked, while none of the respondents would be critical without being asked. 1.2% of the adult learners indicated that they didn't know how they would speak of the service.

Graph 25. Respondents, Speaking about the Service (%)

No of valid answers 166

Bar chart values: Highly without being asked 62, Highly if asked 30.1, Neutral 6, Critical if asked 0.6, Don't know 1.2

CHAPTER 3. RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS

In addition respondents were asked to comment on anything, relating to their learning experience, that they felt strongly about. 58 respondents provided 83 comments and/or suggestions, which were categorised into the following categories: general positive comments; tangible learning outcomes; management issues; comments on tutors; equipment (relating to the learning process); academic issues and other. Table 1 shows the distribution of the answers across the specified categories.

Table 1. Open-Ended Comments

CATEGORY	No of responses	% of responses
General Positive Comments	24	28.9
Management Issues	19	22.9
Tutors and staff	13	15.7
Academic Issues	12	14.5
Tangible Positive Outcomes	5	6
Equipment	2	2.4
Other	8	9.6
TOTAL	**83**	**100**

3.1 General Positive Comments

As Table 1 shows the largest group of the comments – about one-third of all the comments received – are general positive remarks such as 'very helpful'; 'all I needed'; 'positive experience'; 'good work'; 'I really appreciate the course'; 'very impressed'; 'friendly and welcoming'; 'very informative'; 'learning was a pleasure'; 'I feel empowered in many respects'; 'surprised by the level of teaching' and others.

3.2. Management Issues

Remarks concerning the management side of the service constitute the second largest group of the comments (22.9%). 5 comments in this category were concerned with poor/inadequate advertisement of the courses and 3 comments were about the crèche facility of both a positive and a negative character: 'can only attend course with a crèche facility, therefore it is important'; 'the use of crèche was brilliant'; 'the availability of crèche for 6 weeks in 6 months is ridiculous'. Other comments in this group include:
- 'too long wait for the certificate after the passing exams' (2 counts);
- 'transport to get to the place where the course is taught' (2 counts);
- 'was put on a waiting list and haven't heard back for over 12 months';
- the day for the second part of the course had been altered, therefore could not attend the course';
- 'enrolment and payment should be available by telephone';
- 'bad air-conditioning in the class';
- 'better communication about pending courses';
- 'same tutor- same location for those people who want to take 'Next step' of the subject (Spanish)';
- 'moving from venue to venue was disruptive'.

3.3. Tutors and Staff

10 out of 13 of the comments on tutors, which make up the third largest group of all comments (15.7%), were positive, including:
- Bereavement course tutors are 'well informed' – 2 counts.
- Spanish language tutor – 'cannot speak highly enough';
- Tutor for Digital Photography, Acorn centre is 'excellent';
- Years Ahead Arts tutors are 'extremely passionate with both old and young students';
- Calligraphy tutor and Art & Design tutor are 'knowledgeable and friendly';
- First Steps IT Keyboarding tutor is a 'good tutor';
- 'good tutor'
- 'Acorn staff is excellent and more than helpful'
- 'friendly staff at HVA, Runcorn'

The negative remarks about tutors and staff are: 'needed more support from tutor'; 'assignments were marked late and no feedback given' and 'the tutor was very talkative but not about the subject'.

3.4 Academic Issues

Comments, which could be characterised as relating to academic issues account for 14.5% of all the comments and include:
- 'no possibility to study subject further after completing 'First step' and 'Next step';
- 'more courses to offer';
- 'modern dance class for all ages';
- 'was not possible to take next level course due to the lack of funding';
- 'want a course to learn how to use key-board';
- 'want to carry on in dressmaking';
- 'need exercises that would refresh what was studied earlier on the course';
- 'Life course' was difficult for the entry level course';
- 'would like the lesson times to be longer than the current two hour sessions two days a week';
- 'more time needed to complete the course';
- 'boring digital photography course';
- 'more support needed for learners with disabilities'.

3.5 Tangible Outcome of Learning

Comments mentioning specific outcomes of learning experience account for 6% of all the comments and include:
- 'acquired IT skills' (2 counts);
- 'learnt Spanish language/culture/history';
- 'helped me to go to college';
- 'helped me to help my children in school'.

3.6 Equipment

Two comments, constituting 2.4% of all comments received, mentioned equipment relating to the learning process. They are 'computers at Ditton Community Centre need upgrading' and 'no required software on PCs' (Photoshop).

3.7. Other

Finally, 8 comments (9.6%) were categorised as 'other', including:
- 'bridge lane closures resulted in many students being late';
- 'too many people from the Council coming around, give the opportunity to study to unemployed';
- 'pleased that could re-take the test when ready';
- 'prefer Widnes centre (more convenient)';
- 'good value for money';
- 'waste of money';
- 'terrible coffee and tea machines';
- 'great opportunity for social networking (met people).

Appendix A. QUESTIONNAIRE

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Adult Learning and Skills Development Division

Learner Satisfaction Survey

2007/2008

This survey is being conducted by Halton Borough Council's Adult Learning and Skills Development Division to find the views of you, our learners, so that our services can be monitored and improved in the way you want.

The first few questions are about you. These questions are to help us put your answers in context. All your answers are confidential, and nobody will be able to identify you from the answers that you give.

1. **Which of the following age groups do you belong to?**
   (Place an 'X' in one box only)

   16-24 ☐   25-44 ☐   45-59 ☐   60+ ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

2. **Are you?** (Place an 'X' in one box only)

   Male ☐   Female ☐

3. **Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**
   (Place an 'X' in one box only)

   Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

4. **Do you consider yourself to have a learning difficulty?**
   (Place an 'X' in one box only)

   Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

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5. **To help us give services of equal quality to all learners, please tell us to which ethnic group you belong.** (Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ White - British

☐ White - Irish

☐ White - any other White background

☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi

☐ Asian or Asian British - Indian

☐ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani

☐ Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background

☐ Black or Black British - African

☐ Black or Black British - Caribbean

☐ Black or Black British - any other Mixed Background

☐ Mixed - White and Asian

☐ Mixed - White and Black African

☐ Mixed - White and Black Caribbean

☐ Mixed - any other Mixed Background

☐ Chinese

☐ Any other

☐ Prefer not to say

6. **What is the MAIN subject you have studied during the past 12 months?** (Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ Floristry and flower arranging   ☐ Literacy, Numeracy or ESOL

☐ IT   ☐ Employability Skills

☐ Arts, Crafts, Design and Media   ☐ Family Learning

☐ Modern European Languages   ☐ Neighbourhood Learning

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7. How satisfied were you with the quality of teaching on your course?
(Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ Extremely satisfied   ☐ Fairly dissatisfied

☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Neither   ☐ Very dissatisfied   ☐ Don't know

☐ Fairly satisfied   ☐ Extremely dissatisfied

8. Thinking of your tutor(s) please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Place an 'X' in one box on each line only)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Knows the subject very well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relates to me as a person very well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Makes my subject interesting or enjoyable for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understands me and how I learn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gives me a lot of support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Plans lessons well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Uses teaching materials that are of good quality and easily accessible	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sets clear targets or goals to help me improve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provides prompt and regular feedback on progress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manages the group of learners well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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9. Thinking of your typical lesson, how much of that time is spent on increasing or helping to increase your knowledge or understanding of the subject? (Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ The whole lesson   ☐ Less than half of the lesson

☐ Most of the lesson   ☐ None of the lesson

☐ Around half of the lesson   ☐ Don't know

10. Which of the following have you encountered on a fairly regular basis?
(Place an 'X' in all that apply)

☐ Being left hanging around with nothing to do

☐ Tutors arriving late by 5 minutes or more

☐ Other learners arriving late by 5 minutes or more

☐ Other learners making a noise and disrupting class

☐ Tutors going at too slow a pace

☐ Tutors going at too fast a pace

☐ Tutors being absent

☐ Lessons badly planned/disorganised

☐ Lack of resources/poor equipment

☐ Lessons finishing early

☐ Lessons finishing late

☐ Other (please specify) __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

For office use only

☐ ☐ ☐

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11. Taking into account all the answers you have given, how satisfied are you with your overall learning experience? (Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ Extremely satisfied   ☐ Fairly dissatisfied

☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Neither   ☐ Very dissatisfied   ☐ Don't know

☐ Fairly satisfied   ☐ Extremely dissatisfied

12. If you were satisfied to any degree, what are the main reasons for this?
(Put an 'X' in all that apply)

☐ A good course/learned a lot/up to my expectations

☐ Tutors were good/they made it easy/interesting/helped us

☐ They were very helpful/were always ready to help

☐ Friendly/welcoming

☐ Social aspects were good/met lots of people/good fun

☐ Well run/well organised

☐ I was pleased with my progress/did better than expected

☐ Good working environment

☐ I was treated well/with respect/as an adult/individual

☐ Enjoyed the subjects/areas covered

☐ Good facilities/equipment/resources

☐ Motivating/made me want to work

☐ Good group of learners/worked well together/helped each other

☐ Tutors well qualified

☐ Good for my confidence/self-esteem

☐ Other (please specify) __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

☐ Don't know

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13. At Question 11, if you indicated that you were dissatisfied in any way, please tell us why. (Place an 'X' in all that apply)

☐ Poor facilities/inadequate equipment

☐ Mixed ability/classes too large

☐ Didn't get the help that I needed/didn't respond to my needs

☐ Badly organised/badly run

☐ Lack of staff/changes in staff

☐ The course was too difficult

☐ Communication poor/didn't tell me what I needed to know

☐ Tutors not supportive

☐ Was boring/repetitive/not interesting

☐ Could have finished earlier/covered subject faster

☐ Disruptive learners

☐ Other (please specify) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

☐ Don't know

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14. How likely are you to undertake further learning within the next three years? (Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ Almost certainly   ☐ Quite unlikely

                              ☐ Not sure

☐ Quite likely   ☐ Definitely not

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15. **Which of the following statements best describes how you would speak of our service?** (Place an 'X' in one box only)

☐ I would speak highly without being asked

☐ I would speak highly if somebody asked me

☐ I would be neutral

☐ I would be critical if somebody asked me

☐ I would be critical without being asked

☐ Don't know

Finally, if there is anything you feel strongly about (positive or negative), or you have any suggestions for improvements please use the space below to tell us:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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*On behalf of the Adult Learning & Skills Development Division,
Halton Borough Council, we thank you for your time and help -
your views really do count!*