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**UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYABILITY
ENVIRONMENT & CAREER EXPECTATIONS
OF POLITICS AND HUMANITIES STUDENTS
IN HASS CORNWALL**

Contents

Introduction	2
Background	3
Section 1: Exploring student career-related experiences and expectations	5
Skills and sectors	6
Students' perspectives on employment experience and training	11
Employment expectations after graduation	18
Section 2: Examining the employment and career environment.....	23
Conclusion	28
Appendices.....	29
A1. Student survey descriptive statistics	29
A2. Employability survey questions and layout	40
A3. Handshake data codebook.....	53

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We would also like to express deep gratitude to all HASS-Cornwall students who have given their time to participate in this study and enrich our understanding of their employability-related experiences and expectations.

Introduction

This report feeds into efforts to improve graduate outcomes and further improve employability teaching and personal development programmes for undergraduate students in Politics and Humanities on the University of Exeter's Penryn campus specifically. It provides a much-needed insight into both the students' own assessment of their employment readiness, their expectations and aspirations in this regard to and the analysis of employment opportunities available and advertised to students by the University services.

The report is based on two sources of data. The supply-side of the report - focusing on the students' self-reported assessment of their skills, competencies and aspirations when it comes to the labour market - draws upon an original survey fielded to all undergraduate Politics and Humanities HASS-Cornwall students in May-June 2025. The demand-side of the report - reflecting on the employability environment in which students and the University operate - is based on the analysis of data on employment opportunities advertised on Handshake, the primary, University-approved tool for finding available vacancies. Data collection and analysis for this project was supported via the Research Support Internships Scheme funded by the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Exeter. Aggregate level data on employability, as well as access to the Handshake data, has been collated by the Faculty Student Employability and Academic Success services.

The report will proceed, firstly, to set out the background focusing on current employment trends among Politics and Humanities HASS-Cornwall students and highlighting limitations and gaps concerning available data. Then, we will proceed to discuss the demand-side of the employability environment that Politics and Humanities HASS-Cornwall students face by focusing on the analysis of the Handshake data. Finally, we will explore students' aspirations and expectations concerning employment and examine their self-reported levels and areas of readiness for the world of work. The report will close with conclusions that are relevant to the content and format of employability support delivered by both academics and professional services.

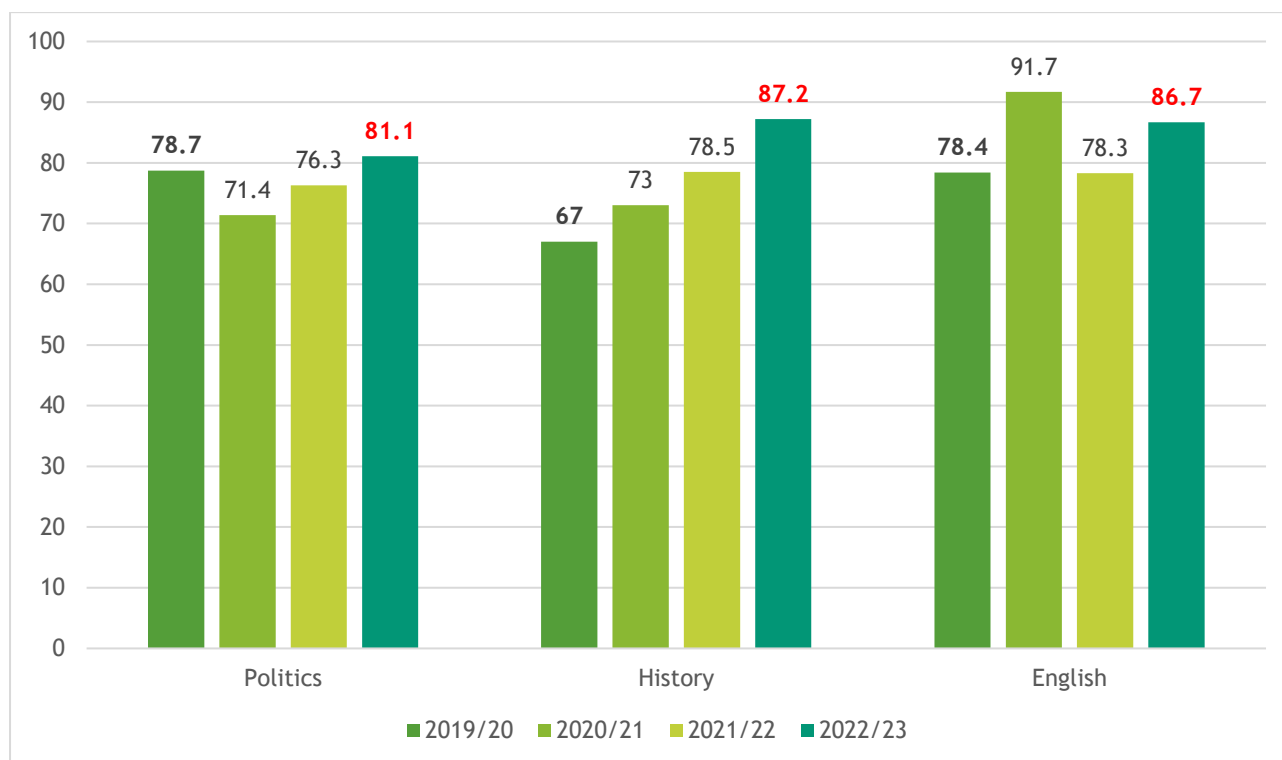
Background

Development of employability skills and linkage of the content of individual modules and undergraduate degree programmes to practical competencies relevant to careers in public, private and third sectors is one of the pillars of QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for [Politics and International Relations](#), [History](#) and [other disciplines](#) in Humanities and Social Sciences. While they are not compulsory for the sector, these benchmarks [provide useful reference points and guidelines](#) on the content and degree programmes that are co-created by academics and students, endorsed by the Office for Students and understood by prospective employers from different sectors.

These aims align with the University of Exeter's aspirations to reinvent its academic curricula and student support in response to the emerging needs of the world beyond the University through enhancement of skills- and competencies-based learning known as [Curriculum for Change](#) (C4C). They are also set out against a growing concern among undergraduate Humanities and, to a lesser extent, Social Sciences students about their earning potential and future career opportunities. The former largely relates to [the recent decrease in the graduate premiums](#). That said, the graduate premium for women (compared to women who do not hold a degree) and for students from a poorer background (relative to their peers without a degree) is still considerable.

Likewise, the most recent available data - 2022/23 - on graduate outcomes for Politics and Humanities disciplines in HASS-Cornwall suggests gradual improvements in employment fortunes of its students following a COVID-19 pandemic related dip between 2020 and 2022 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. HASS-Cornwall graduates with a graduate-level job 15 months after graduation by discipline, %



Source: Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) 2025

All recorded disciplines - Politics, History and English - have shown improvements in graduate outcomes when compared to the pre-pandemic rate of post-graduation employment and to the previous - 2021/22 - year. Compared to the pre-pandemic rate, the percentage of students in graduate-level jobs has risen by 2.5 to 20 percentage points, while the increase in graduate-level employment rates on the previous year ranges from 5 to 9%. In practical terms, this translates into 4 out of 5 Politics and almost 9 out of 10 (History and English) students securing a graduate-level job 15 months after their graduation.

Despite the evidence of generally good to excellent performance of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities disciplines on graduate employment, the sense of unease reported by prospective and current students, including to professional services such as the Student Employability and Academic Support (SEAS) team, warrants a closer look at both the employability environment and the students' perceptions of the labour market and assessments of their readiness for work, as well as the effectiveness of the support systems that are currently in place.

Section 1: Exploring student career-related experiences and expectations

The first section of this report examines the students' perspectives on their career aspirations, employability teaching and personal development, experiences and expectations after graduation. It is based on the analysis of an online survey fielded in May-June 2025 to all undergraduate students in Politics and Humanities in HASS-Cornwall. Considering the size of the cohort, i.e., 163 Humanities and 168 Politics students, and the 85 responses received overall, the response rate for the survey is 26%, which amounts for a quarter of the cohort contributing. While it would not be possible to generalise from these responses to the entire student population of the University of Exeter - or even to all Penryn-based students - it is a solid representation of perceptions and attitudes of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students across the levels of study and programmes, as reported in Table 1.1. There is also a good distribution of responses based on self-declared gender and social class identification, with fewer (but in line with the population) responses being given by students from non-white backgrounds.

Table 1.1. Social-demographic and academic backgrounds of respondents

	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Count</i>
Year of study		
Year 1	34%	23
Year 2	40%	27
Year 3	26%	18
Programmes		
BA Politics and International Relations	26%	17
BA History and Politics	26%	17
BA History and International Relations	9%	6
BA History with Law	2%	1
BA History with Business	22%	1
BA Global Politics	6%	4
BA History	14%	9
BA Politics and Geography	8%	5
BA Environmental Humanities	5%	3
Sex		
Male	43%	28
Female	54%	35
Ethnic background		
White	82%	36
Non-white	18%	8
Social class		
Working class	18%	12
Middle class	69%	46
Upper class	3%	2

Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025.

Note that 'don't know'/'prefer not to say' categories were excluded from the analysis.

Skills and sectors

The University of Exeter's [Skills Framework](#) links several clusters of professional skills to a student's chances of career success - from problem-solving to critical thinking, from collaborating and communicating effectively to developing global awareness, resilience and digital fluency. These skills are embedded - explicitly and implicitly - into Politics and Humanities degree programmes, and yet, until now, we have not asked students directly whether they connect the taught academic content with these practical skills and competences.

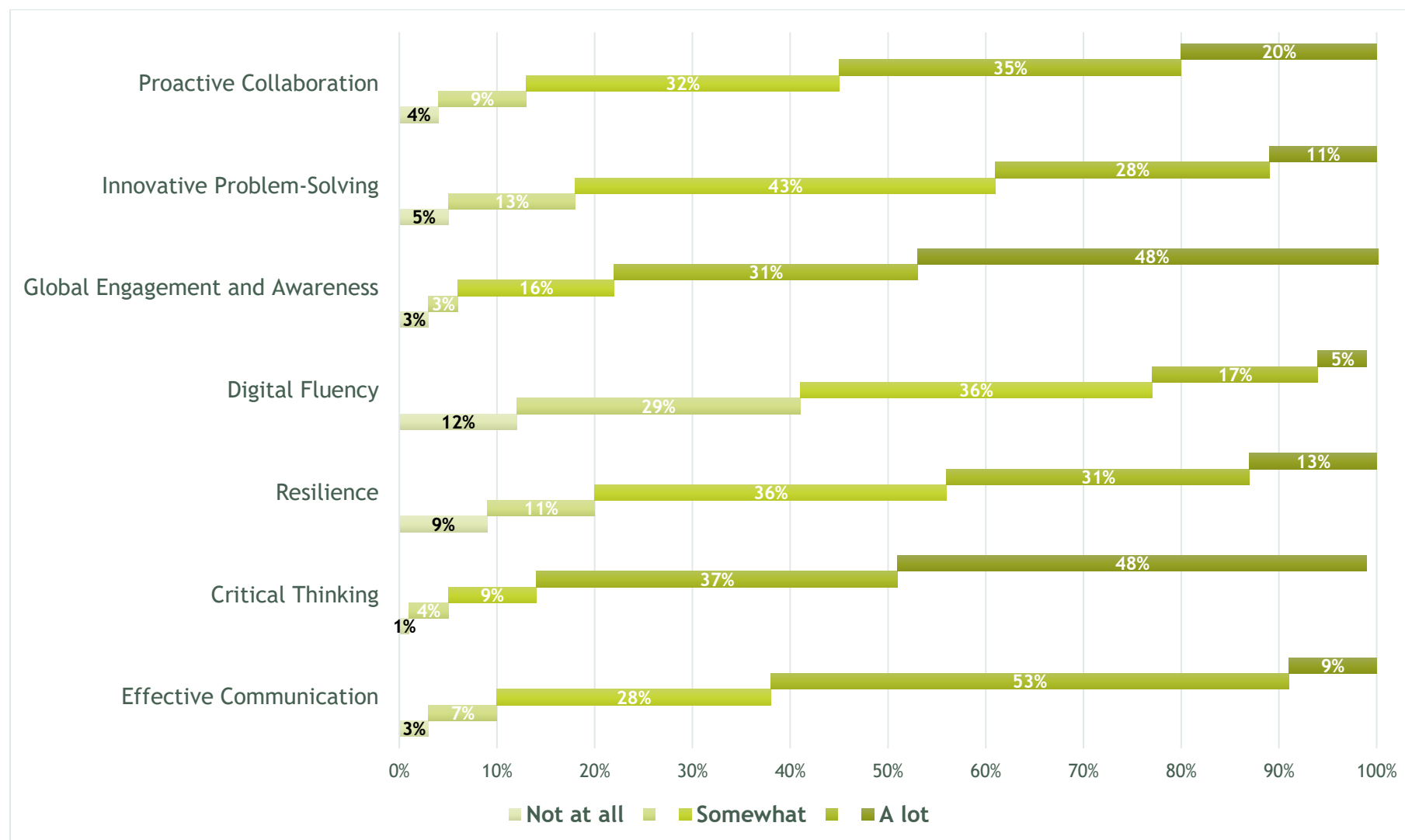
Figure 1.1 shows to what extent, in students' opinion, their modules have contributed to the development of the core professional skills and competences. It demonstrates that module content and professional skills overlap and speak to each other most clearly in the areas that correspond to wider discipline-specific competencies that are likely to be reiterated in each module's Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and speak strongly to the nature and focus of Politics and Humanities programmes. This includes critical thinking and global engagement and awareness, with 85 per cent and 79 per cent of respondents agreeing that modules contributed to the development of these skills, respectively.

There is slightly weaker, but still good, overlap between skills that are often listed as transferable in ILOs, including working effectively in a team (proactive collaboration) and writing clearly and well (effective communication). Over half of the respondents, i.e., 55 per cent and 61 per cent, considered that their modules contributed to the development of these skills.

That said, only 44 per cent of students thought that modules have helped them to develop their resilience (e.g., managing time and tasks, adapting to change, learning from failure), with yet fewer - 39 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively, agreeing that modules help the development of innovative problem solving and digital skills. That said, in each category, over a third of respondents said that their modules somewhat contributed to the development of these competencies.

Overall, there appears to be no issue with students recognising the input from their academic modules with regards to wider discipline-specific skills (such as critical thinking and global awareness). Most recognise that modules help improve their teamworking and communication skills too. However, resilience and digital skills, both faster developing and less explicitly connected to the academic learning areas, fall through the cracks. Interestingly, that same applies to innovative problem-solving skills (e.g., identifying and exploiting innovative opportunities, independent and creative thinking, project management), which requires further exploration, as one would expect it to better align with core discipline-specific skills.

Figure 1.1. Thinking about your study so far, to what extent have your modules contributed to the development of the following skills...

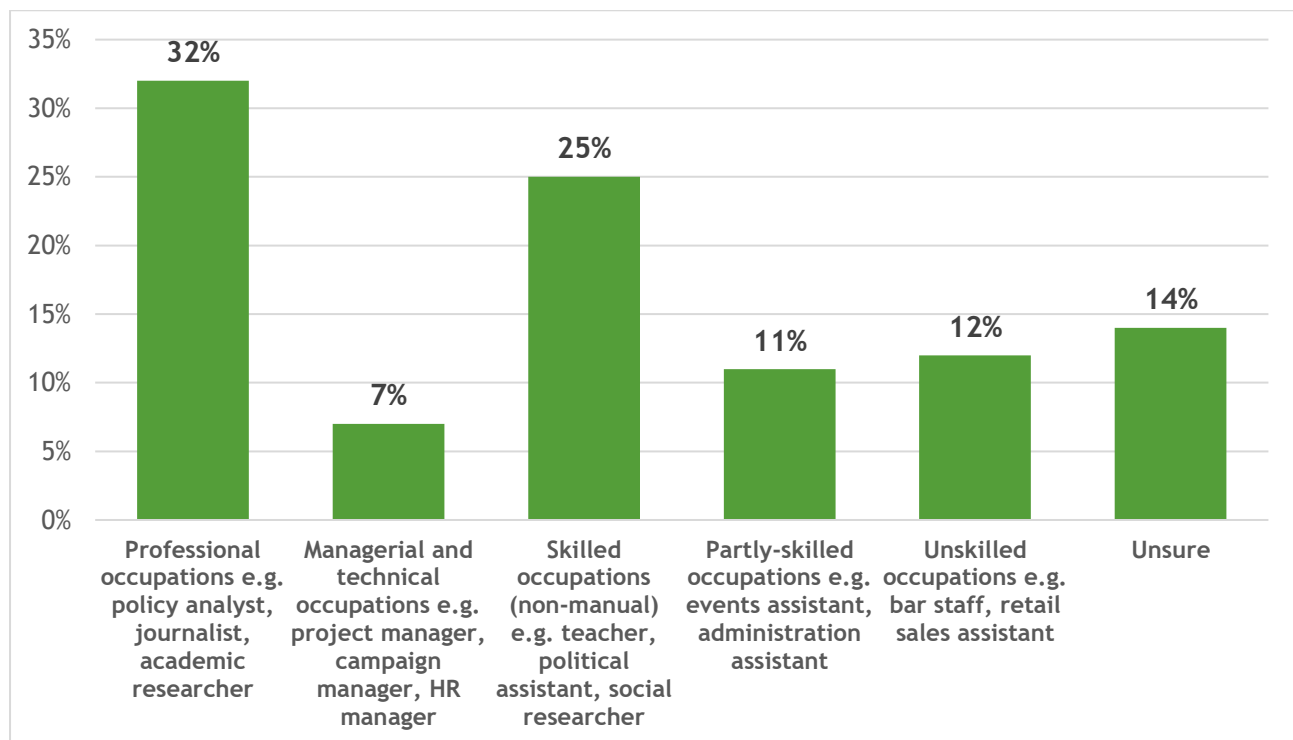


Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=75. Detailed output available in the Appendix.

Note: Responses scale from 1 (did not contribute at all) to 5 (contributed a lot).

The students' assessment of the contribution of modules to their skill set (Figure 1.1) suggests that their learnt strengths lie in occupations that require high levels of analytical skills and engagement with global stakeholders (working individually and in teams), though not necessarily roles that require high levels of technical/digital and/or that occur in high stress environments. This resonates with the students' assessment of the type of job that they feel qualified for, reported in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2. What type of job do you feel you are qualified for currently?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=73.

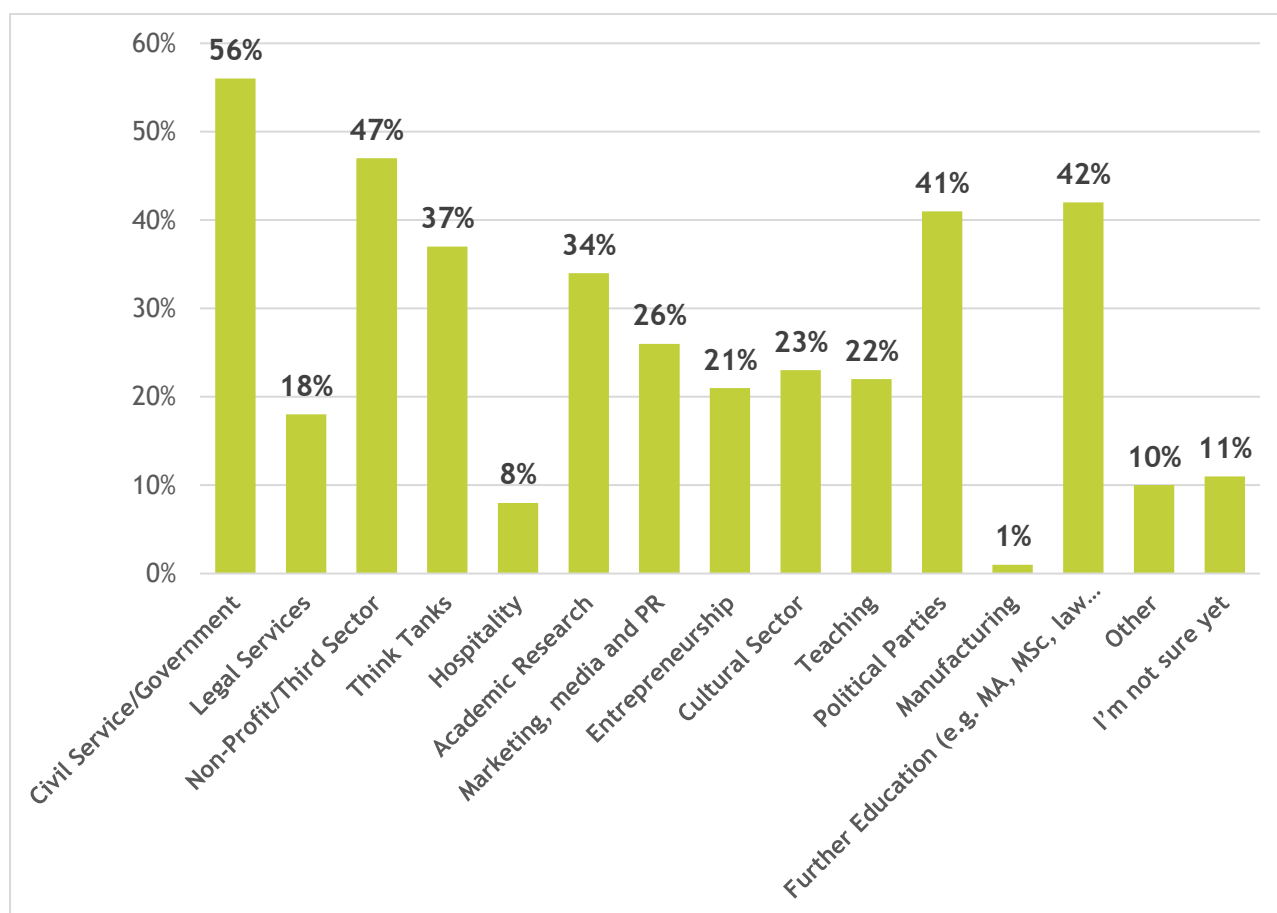
Note: Detailed output available in the Appendix. Question format - multiple choice, categorical.

Professional and skilled, non-manual occupations - both with significant need for strong intellectual skills but not explicitly managerial - were the choice for over half of the respondents (57 per cent). Managerial and technical positions that require better teamwork and leadership skills, as well as technical abilities, were selected by 7 per cent of students, which is lower than the levels for unskilled and party-skilled occupations, for which University graduates are typically over-qualified. 14 per cent of respondents were unsure what type of jobs they feel qualified for.

There are no differences between male and female and working class- and middle class-identifying respondents with regards to being unsure about the type of occupation they could take. However, male students steered stronger towards professional jobs, while female respondents thought they were more qualified for skilled occupations. Students who identified as working class, by contrast, tended to think they were qualified for professional occupations, as opposed to middle class-identifying respondents who disproportionately leaned towards skilled occupations.

While there is some convergence with regards to types of prospective jobs, there is a lot of variation in the career sectors (based on non-squeezed choice, i.e., tick everything that applies) that respondents are interested in after graduation, as evident in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3. Which career sectors are you most interested in after graduation?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=73.

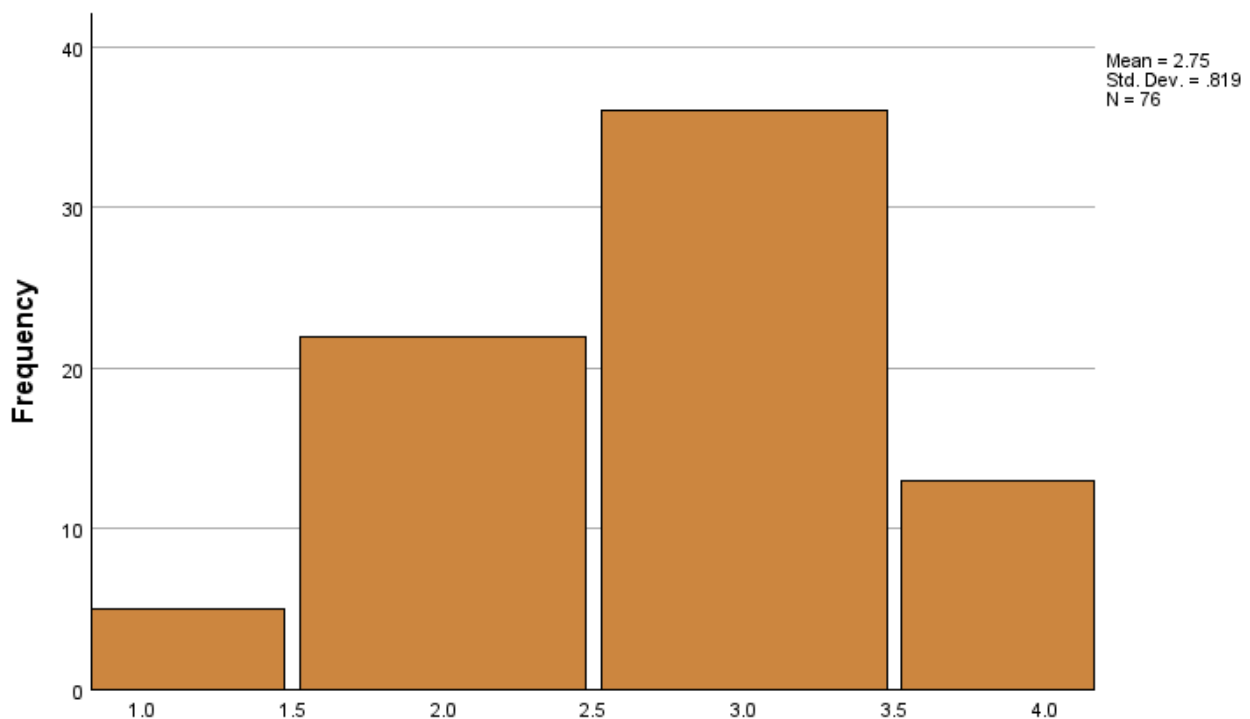
Note: Detailed output available in the Appendix. Question format - tick everything that applies.

While the majority of respondents (56 per cent) are interested in jobs in civil service and government, roles in non-profit/third sector organisations, political parties and pursuing further education attract much interest - all above 40 per cent of respondents. A third of them are also interested in jobs in think tanks and academia, while roughly one in four/five students would be keen to work in the media and PR, business, cultural sector and education. The minority of students favoured careers in hospitality and manufacturing, while one in ten could not decide.

While these responses are in line with our expectations based on conversations with students while supporting their career journeys, Section 2 will show that they do not align with the state and demands of the job market across the country, which is heavily skewed towards private sector roles. Civil service and government positions - while a clear preferred choice among students - are rare (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). Considering the strain on civil service with regards to [job cuts](#) and [external recruitment freezes](#) in various departments, this trend is likely to continue, and both students' expectations and our steer towards certain sectors will need to reflect it.

Two-thirds of respondents (64.5 per cent) reported being moderately to very confident that their university experience is preparing them for a job in their preferred career sector, with only 6 per cent not being confident at all (Figure 1.4). There are no statistically significant differences in the levels of confidence based on respondents' sex and social class. While these are reassuring numbers, again, the questions to consider are (a) whether their preferred sector is a realistic prospect considering the state of the job market and (b) whether the focus of the programme regarding areas for future employment offers a good steer in an appropriate direction.

Figure 1.4. How confident are you that your university experience is preparing you for a job in your preferred career sector?



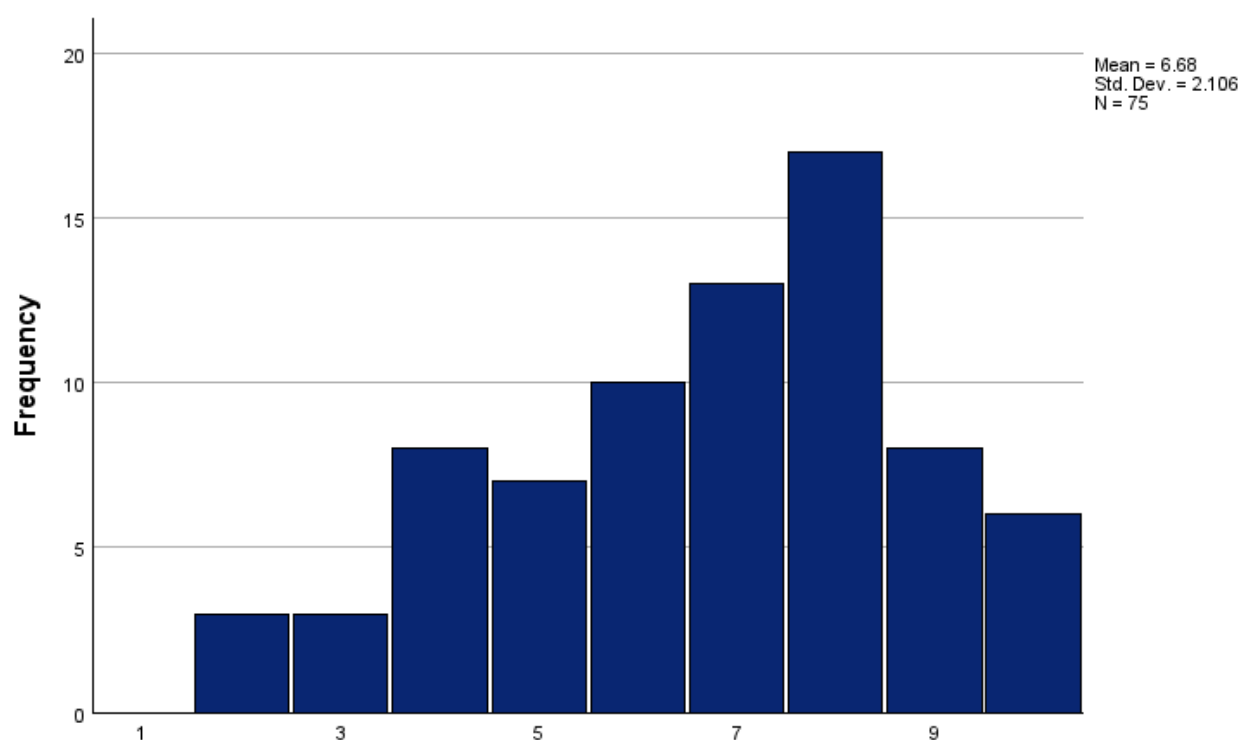
Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=76.

Note: Responses scale from 1 (not at all confident) to 4 (very confident).

That said, it is reassuring to see that students have relatively high levels of confidence in their own competitiveness on the job market overall. As shown in Figure 1.5, on a scale from 1 (not competitive at all) to 10 (extremely competitive), Politics and Humanities students averaged at 7, with over half of the respondents choosing an option above the mid-point of the scale.

There is no statistically significant difference in the mean level of confidence in their competitiveness on the job market between male and female respondents (at 6.5 and 6.9 out of 10, respectively). However, working-class identifying students report significantly higher levels of confidence on average (7.4 out of 10) compared to their middle-class identifying peers (6.3 out of 10). Considering [selection effects into higher education](#), especially a Russell Group institution, and the ambition it had already taken to get to this stage, their disproportionate levels of self-confidence are not entirely surprising.

Figure 1.5. How competitive would you say you are?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=75.

Note: Responses scale from 1 (not at all competitive) to 10 (extremely competitive).

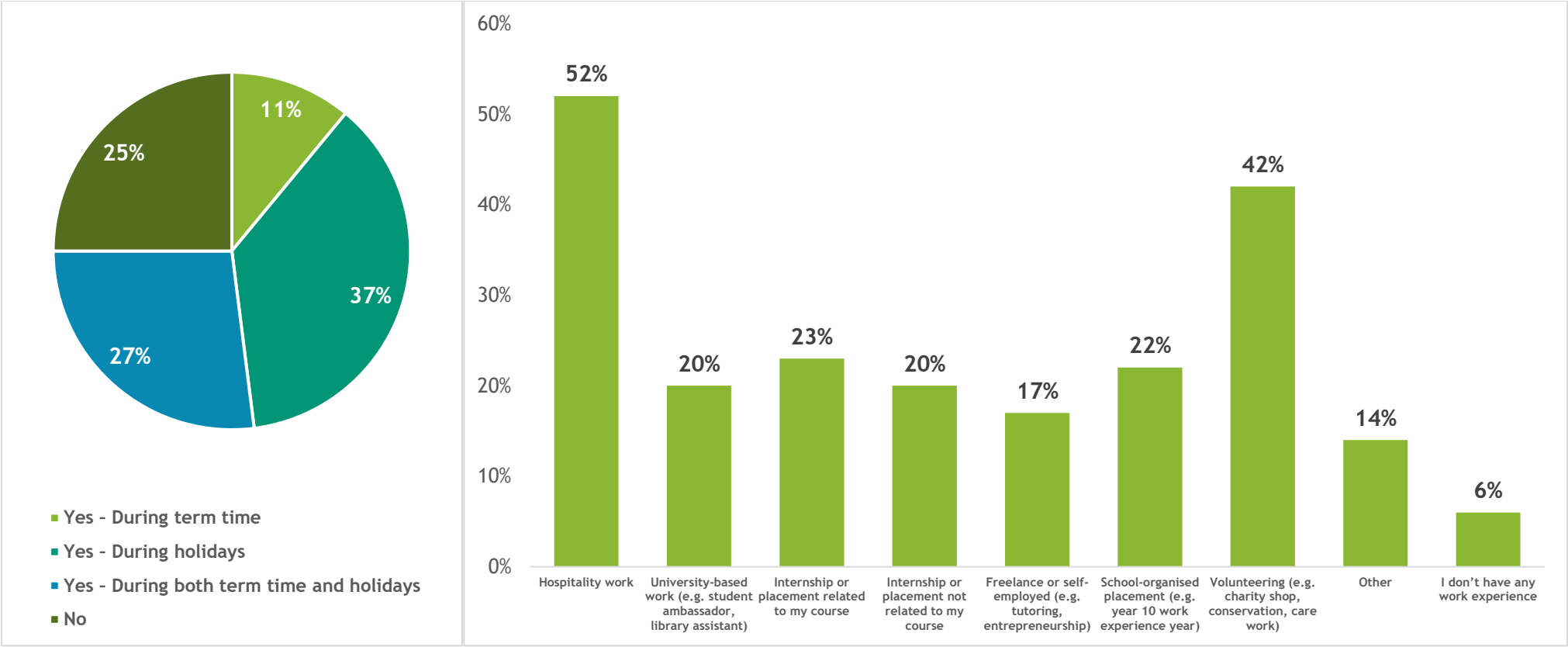
Students' perspectives on employment experience and training

Turning to the underpinnings of students' career expectations, we will explore the employment experiences and training they undertook before and during University, including paid and unpaid career and volunteering opportunities, attendance of employability sessions, and other University-based support.

Firstly, based on students' responses, only a quarter of them have not had a part-time or summer job while at University, as shown in Figure 1.6. Out of three quarters of respondents who have had a part-time job, a third had it during holidays only, while the plurality of students (48 per cent) had a part-time job during term time (only or both in term time and holidays).

The top two types of jobs that respondents held are work in hospitality (52 per cent) and volunteering (42 per cent). This is not surprising, considering their flexible nature and the structure of local employment opportunities in Cornwall. The second major opportunity shaping students' employment experiences are placements and internships organised by schools and the University or related to the degree programme. 65 per cent of respondents took these options, in addition to one out of five students having done University-based work (e.g., student ambassador, research assistant), with a further 17 and 14 per cent having been involved in freelance and other kinds of work, respectively.

Figure 1.6. Have you had a part-time or summer job while at university? What kind of job was it?

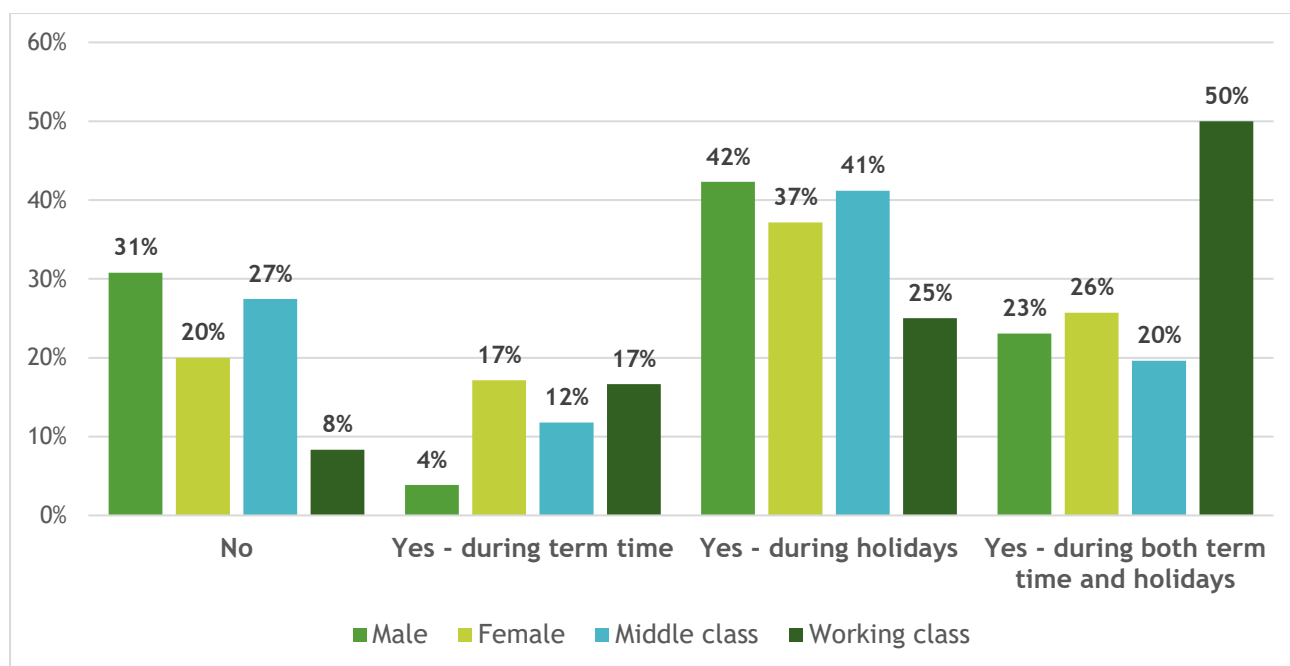


Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=71 and n=69.

Note: Detailed output available in the Appendix. Question format (Q2) - tick everything that applies.

It is important to note that the presence of previous work experience is not evenly distributed across all types of students, as shown in Figure 1.7. Fewer male and middle-class respondents have had any work experience compared to female and working-class students. Only 8 per cent of the latter have not had any previous work experience, and half of that group has worked during both term time and holidays. The plurality of students, including male, female and middle-class, have had part-time jobs during holidays, while only a quarter of working-class students have done so, suggesting that study and work time overlap most heavily for this group.

Figure 1.7. Previous work experience by sex and social class, per cent

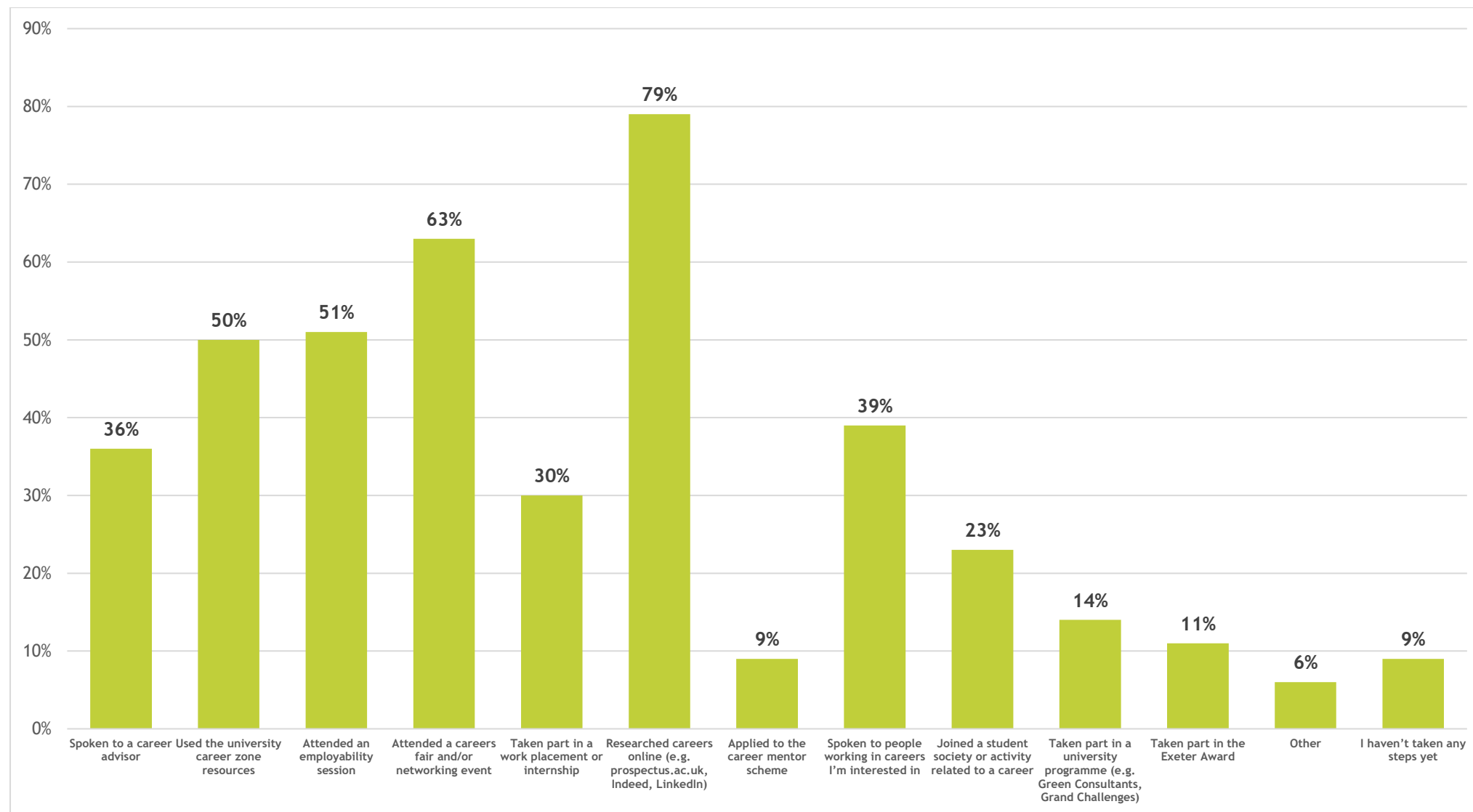


Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025.

Note: Question format - multiple choice, categorical.

In addition to exploring the job market by directly engaging with it through part-time jobs and other opportunities, Politics and Humanities HASS-Cornwall students reported exploring career options independently and using the University-based support (Figure 1.8). 79 per cent of respondents researched careers independently online, and 39 per cent spoke to people who worked in career sectors they were interested in, for example. When looking at patterns of using University support, it is obvious that more formal schemes that require consistent commitment (even if they offer a higher reward) do not seem popular. The Exeter Award and other University programmes (e.g., Grand Challenges) and application to the Career Mentoring Scheme were participated in by only 11, 14 and 9 per cent of respondents, respectively. This contrasts with a greater appeal of more ad-hoc, flexible options such as using the Career Zone resources, attending an employability session or a specially organised networking event that were taken up by 50, 51 and 63 per cent of students, respectively (though the uptake of career events organised by student societies is much lower at 23 per cent). Finally, a third of respondents spoke to a career advisor, thus considering a more tailored approach to exploring career opportunities.

Figure 1.8. Which of the following have you done to explore career options?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=70.

Note: Detailed output available in the Appendix. Question format - tick everything that applies.

Figure 1.9. Have you ever attended an employability session at the University of Exeter? Which of the following sessions have you attended



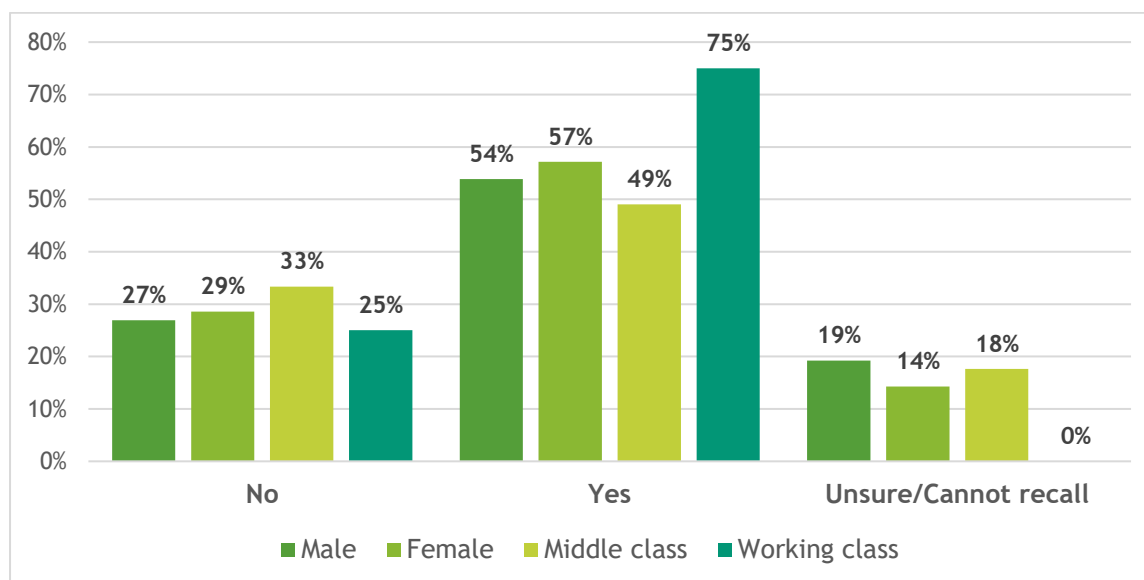
Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=70 and n=38.

Note: Detailed output available in the Appendix. Question format (Q2) - tick everything that applies.

Zooming in on employability sessions specifically, they were attended by just over half of Politics and Humanities respondents, with a further 19 per cent not being able to recall whether they had attended any (Figure 1.9). Out of those students who attended at least one such session, their popularity varied. Career planning sessions, including those that explicitly linked the programme to career and to the recruitment process, were most popular (among around one third of respondents). They were followed by a quarter of students who attended more practice-oriented sessions on marketing transferable skills, developing a good job application and building their own brand identity. The least popular sessions included advising on graduate and post-graduate study, as well as building commercial awareness, which is in keeping with a lack of interest in pursuing careers in commerce and the private sector.

While we do not observe much variation in the uptake of employability sessions based on sex and social class of students (see Figure 1.10), there is a stronger pull to attend for working-class identifying respondents. Three out of four of them attended such sessions in the past.

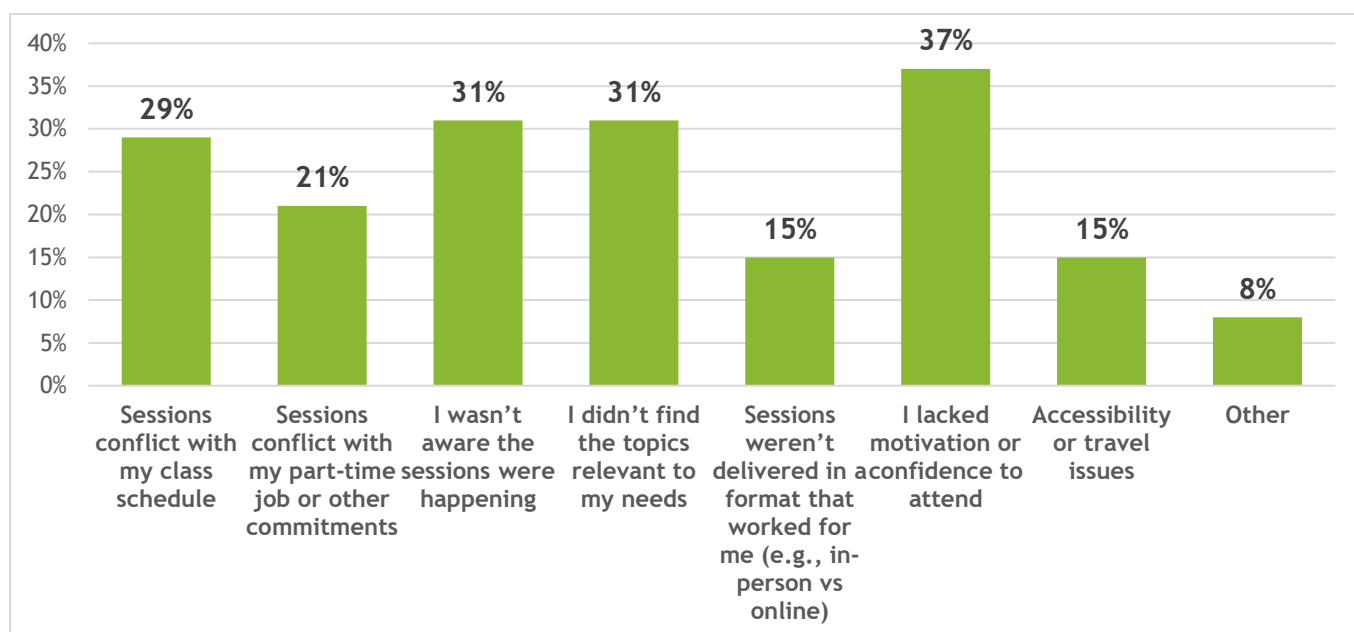
Figure 1.10. Have you ever attended an employability session at the University of Exeter by sex and social class, per cent



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025.

While the plurality of students surveyed have participated in at least one of the employability sessions, they have also identified various barriers to joining more frequently, reported in Figure 1.11. Just over a third of students reported that they lacked the motivation or confidence to attend (based on open-ended responses available in the Appendix, it is more a motivation than a confidence issue, as these sessions are not seen as a priority). 31 per cent of respondents did not find the topic relevant to their needs and/or did not know they were taking place. The latter may be a timetabling or attention issue that may need to be revisited. Half of the respondents also noted conflicts with other modules or their other commitments, including stemming from part-time work, and 30 per cent noted that the format of delivery and/or accessibility or travel issues prevented them from attending sessions in the past.

Figure 1.11. Have you encountered any of the following barriers that may make it difficult for you to attend employability sessions?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=62.

Note: Detailed output available in the Appendix. Question format - tick everything that applies.

Respondents made a range of suggestions on how to improve planning, content and delivery of employability sessions (see open-ended responses in the Appendix). With regards to content, students suggest tailoring the content to degree schemes and specific courses, as well as to stages in career planning (i.e., for those who need to brainstorm and for those who have specific ideas). They suggest using real-life examples of careers and specific roles, including from former students, and applying to a diverse range of roles within traditional politics/humanities and beyond. As several students expressed frustration at not being able to link their degree programme to a particular sector, it may be useful to explain that employers rarely list specific degree requirements when advertising for jobs. As we show in Section 2 of the report, employers are degree-agnostic and only require the candidate to have the appropriate level of qualifications and evidence of their suitable skills and competencies for the role.

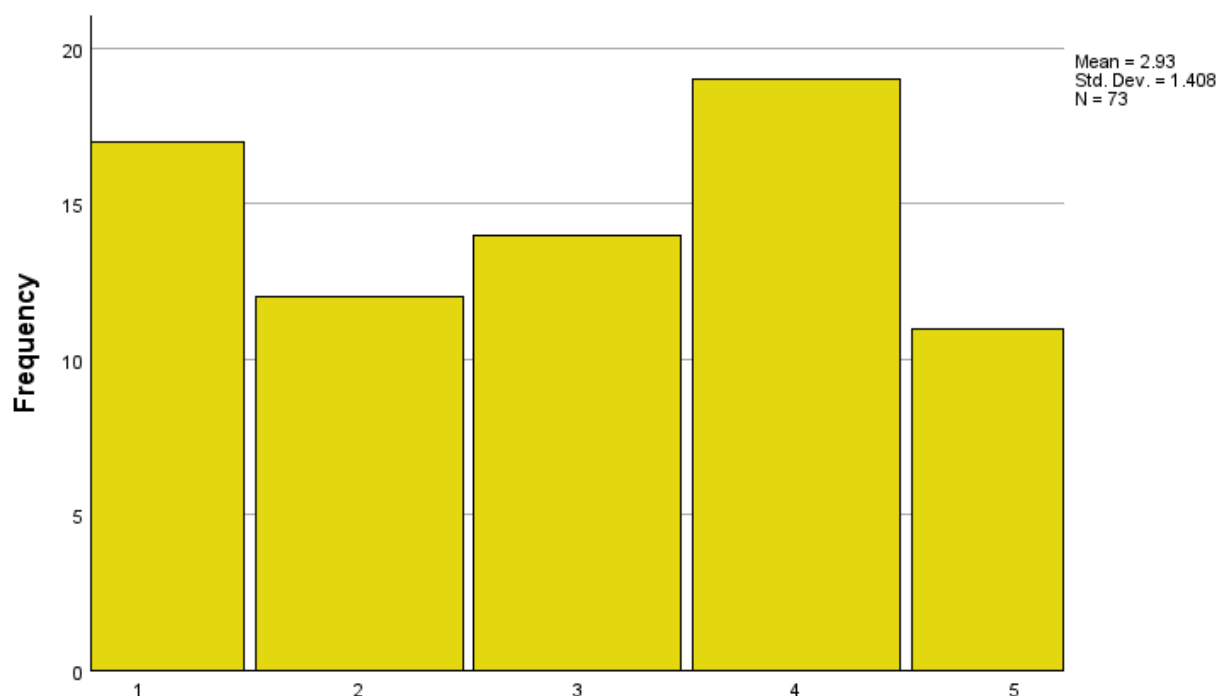
In terms of the format, there is also a call for a less abstract and corporate-feeling top-down approach in delivering these sessions. Finally, there is a uniform preference for hybrid or online sessions rather than in-person ones to make them more accessible for commuters, students with part-time work commitments, and when they happen on Streatham and are thus less accessible for Penryn-based students who may not be able to take an entire day out to travel to Streatham. The tendency to host career fairs and events on Streatham rather than Penryn (or to alternate) is also a source of grievance. Respondents also expressed their preferences for smaller rooms to be booked (as low attendance makes large lecture theatres unnecessary) and suggested moving to shorter, potentially bite-sized, format of delivery and recording.

These suggestions offer useful food for thought and will need to be considered in the context of staff, timetabling and logistical constraints, as changing the model of delivery to hybrid, interactive, tailored, bite-sized sessions that are more reliant on alumni and external speakers is likely to be both cost- and staff-intensive. This transition could be worthwhile if these sessions

become credit-bearing, and we asked for students' views on such a change; the output is shown in Figure 1.12.

Overall, there is no uniformity in support or opposition for making employability sessions credit-bearing, as reflected in the mean value of 3 on the scale from 1 (strongly oppose) to 5 (strongly support). Students were evenly split between those who opposed this change (39.7 per cent) and those who were supportive of it (41.1 per cent). The rest (19.2 per cent) were neutral on the issue.

Figure 1.12. To what extent would you support or oppose the idea of employability sessions counting towards academic credit?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=73.

Note: Responses scale from 1 (strongly oppose) to 5 (strongly support).

Employment expectations after graduation

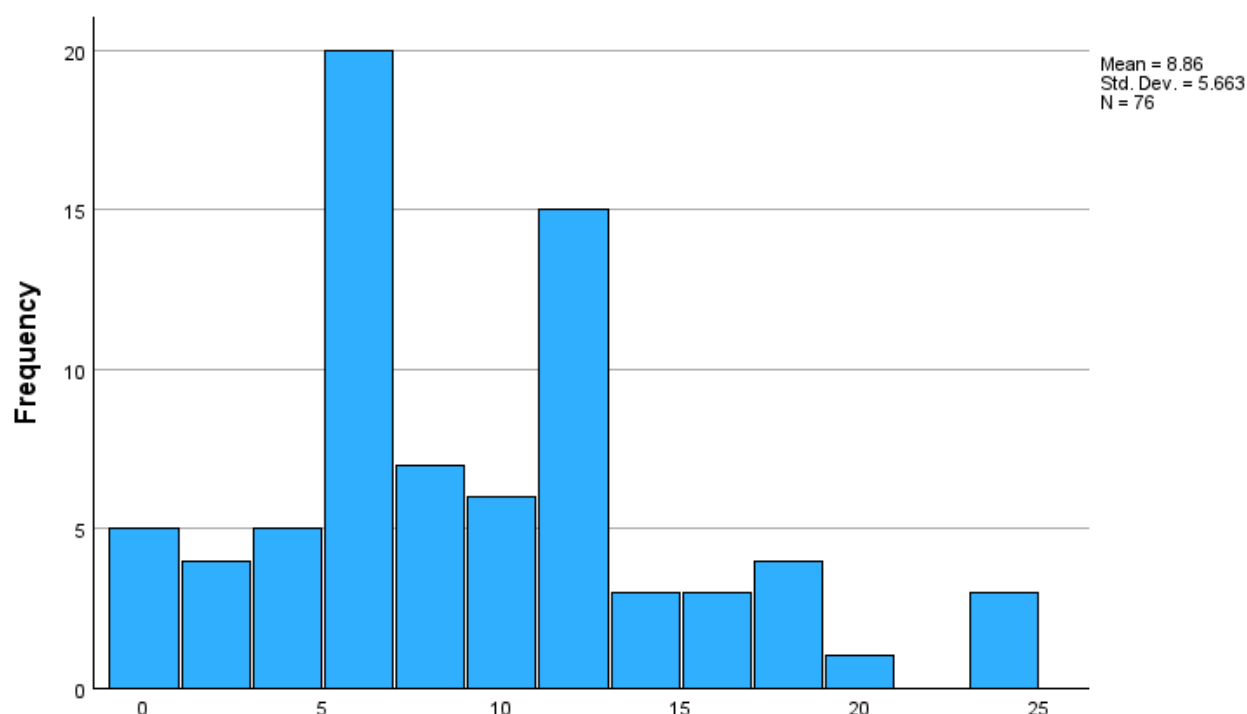
Having considered the experiences of part-time work and other career opportunities, teaching and personal development programmes among HASS-Cornwall Politics and History students, we are now moving to exploring their practical expectations after graduation relating to the time respondents think it will take them to get a graduate-level job and its conditions and salary levels. They are likely to be influenced by the patterns we observed earlier in the section and may eventually trickle into the Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) data (the most recent reported in Figure 1). Throughout the analysis, we also integrated examination of sex- and social class-related trends in career expectations.

Firstly, the expectations of Politics and Humanities students regarding the length of time it would take them to secure a graduate-level job varied. On average, they expected this to take 9 months after graduation, with a median value of 7.5 months, meaning there is a greater clustering of

responses in the top end of the distribution. Responses range from immediately to 24 months, but only a quarter of respondents thought it would take them longer than 12 months after graduation to get a job.

There are also clear differences in expectations between male and female respondents, whereby the former, on average, expected to secure a job within 8 months of graduation, and the latter anticipated it to take 10.5 months. Likewise, working-class identifying students had a more optimistic outlook on the length of time (8 months) for taking up their first graduate-level job, compared to their middle-class identifying peers (10 months). The survey cannot explain these differences, but only to observe them, these differences are likely to reflect perceived and actual inequalities on the labour market for these groups, different criteria applied for job searches, and varied levels of flexibility and willingness to make trade-offs.

Figure 1.13. How many months after graduation do you expect it to take to secure a graduate-level job?

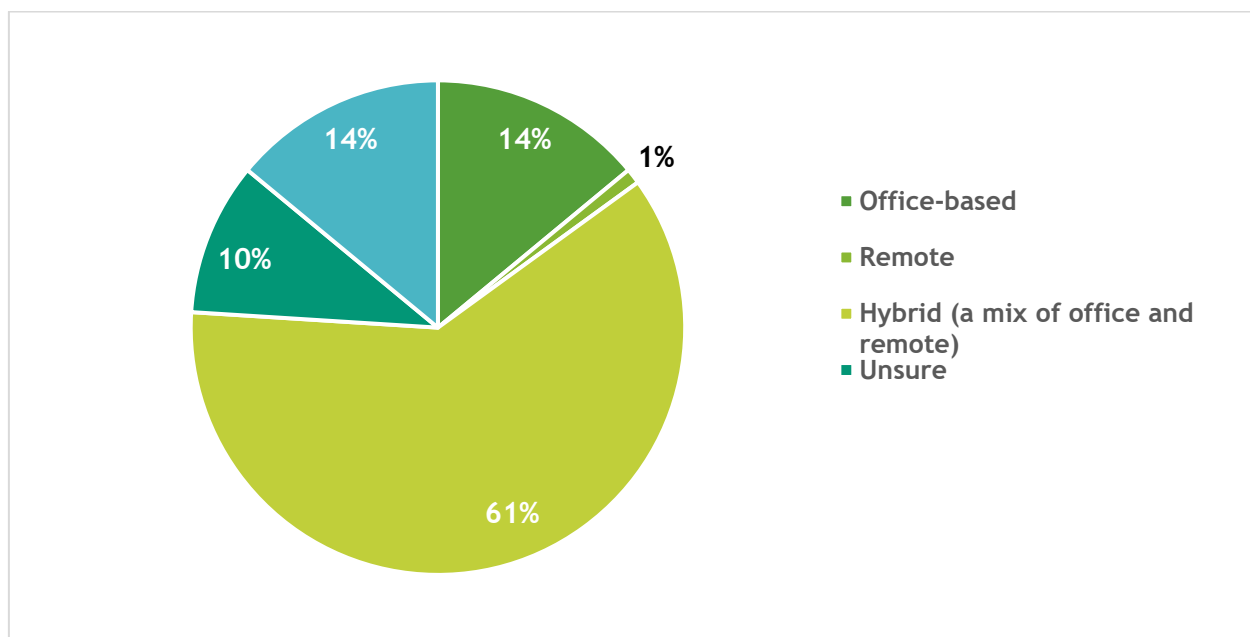


Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=71.

In line with previously expressed preferences for the hybrid mode of teaching sessions delivery, Politics and Humanities respondents expressed an overwhelming preference for a hybrid mode of work after graduation, with 61 per cent of them choosing this option (Figure 1.14). A further quarter of students had no preference or were unsure what would work best for them, while only 14 and 1 per cent, respectively, opted for an office-based and a fully remote position. The latter aligns with the dearth of fully remote roles advertised on Handshake (Figure 2.1) that we discuss in Section 2 of the report. However, there is also a significant push to increase presence of employees in the office, especially [from businesses](#), with the special [House of Lords Select Committee on Home-Based Working](#) appointed on 30 January 2025 to explore ‘[the impact of remote and hybrid working on productivity, and any wider consequences of remote and hybrid working for the UK economy and society](#)’. It is important to recognise that options for hybrid and remote

working are constantly under review and are not necessarily a default opportunity offered to employees. While it is possible to filter employment opportunities by mode of working, it also inevitably limits the range of available opportunities (or their appeal on other criteria such as wage or opportunities for professional development). Discussion of such trade-offs needs to be embedded into employability teaching and personal development programmes too.

Figure 1.14. Which work setup would you prefer after graduation?

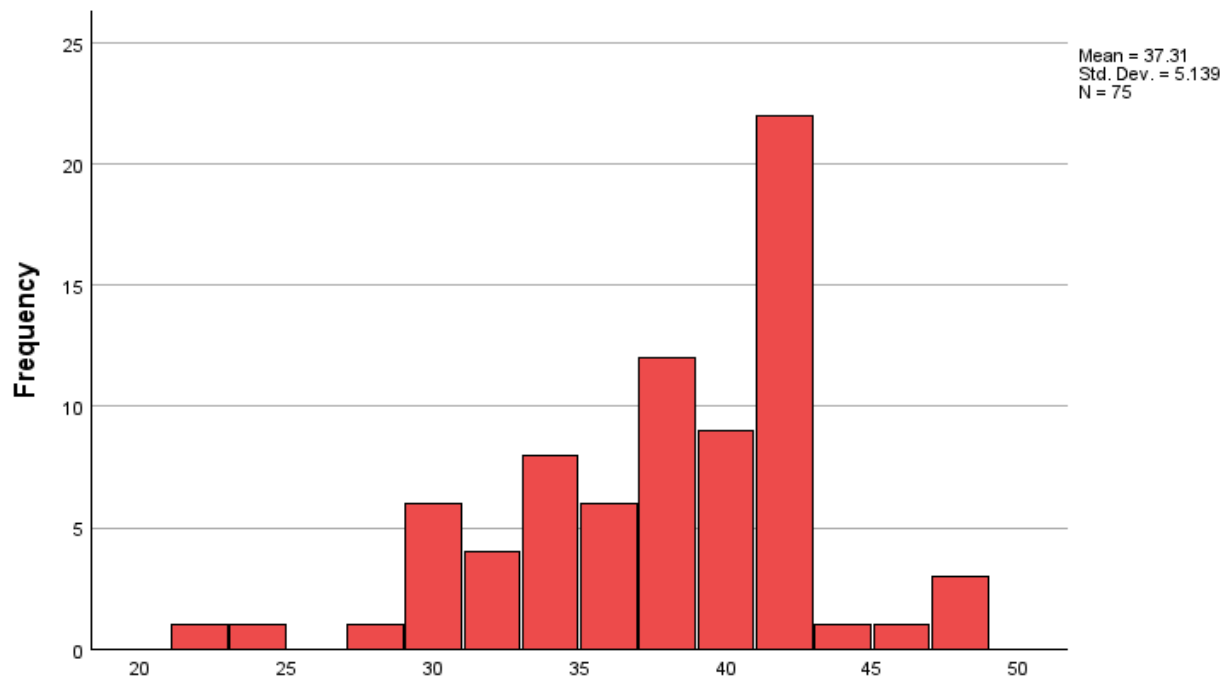


Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=72.

Based on the survey responses reported in Figure 1.15, Politics and Humanities students would like to work full-time hours and above in their first graduate-level job, i.e., 37 hours on average. Reported preferences range from 22 to 41 hours, with the distribution skewed towards the upper end, as indicated by a slightly higher, compared to the mean, median value of 38 hours.

Considering sex- and social class-based differences, we observe that women would like to work slightly fewer hours than men (37 to 39 hours on average). Middle-class identifying respondents too would prefer to work lower hours compared to working-class identifying students (36.5 to 39.5 hours on average). This survey does not allow for explaining these patterns, especially for social class-related differences. However, sex-based differences resonate with the country-wide trends, whereby men tend to work more hours than women (35.5 to 27.5 on average [based on the 2023 ONS estimates](#)). This may shape expectations among HASS-Cornwall students and/or reflect the gendered nature of labour market engagement, including the structure of opportunities and of domestic labour, in Britain.

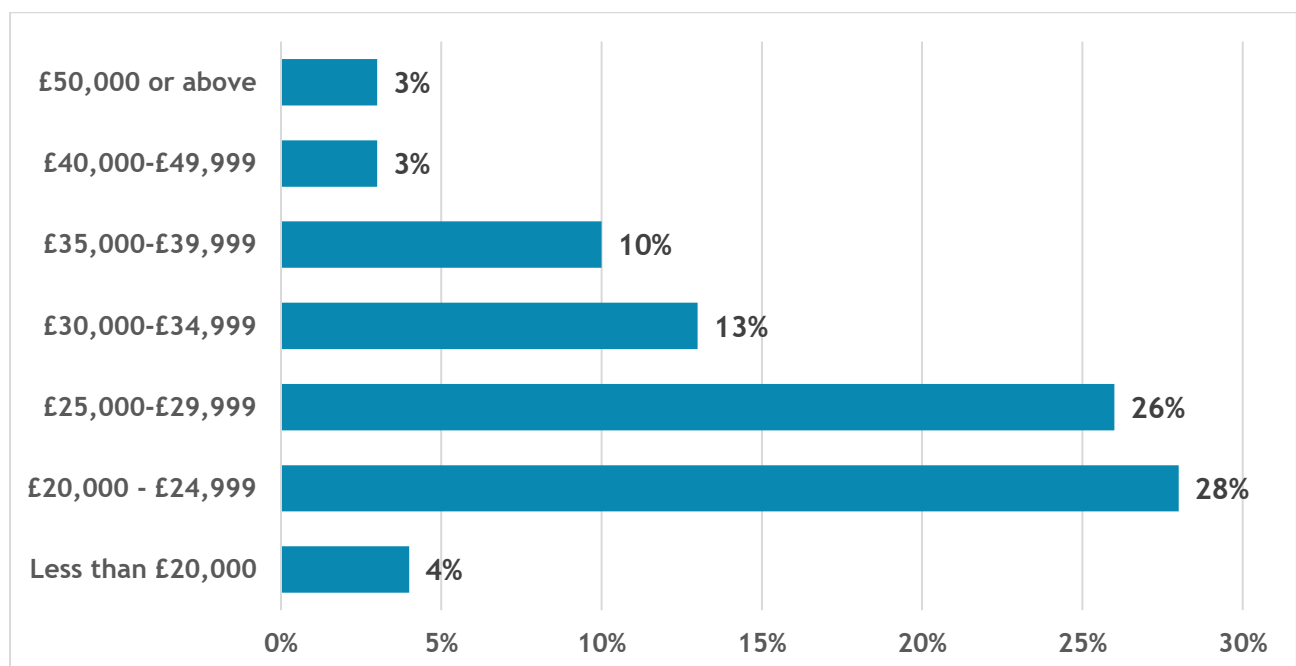
Figure 1.15. How many hours per week would you ideally like to work in your first graduate-level job?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=70.

Finally, most HASS-Cornwall respondents (58 per cent) stated that they expect their starting salary to be below £30,000 (Figure 1.16). This expectation is slightly lower than the estimates of the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) that [places](#) the average graduate starting salary at £32,000 (compared to £23,000 for school leavers), yet roughly in line with the realities of the job market.

Figure 1.16. What starting salary do you expect to receive for your first job after graduation?



Source: Survey of HASS-Cornwall Politics and Humanities students, May-June 2025, n=72.

Again, we do not observe any significant differences between salary expectations of male and female respondents who anticipated earning £25,000-29,999 a year. However, working-class-identifying students reported expecting to earn a slightly higher salary of £30,000-34,999 in their first graduate-level job compared to their middle-class-identifying peers at £25,000-29,999. This expectation is closer aligned with the ISE's estimates and can potentially reflect the working-class students' willingness to work longer hours, reported earlier.

Section 2: Examining the employment and career environment

As Figure 1.8 shows, students undertook independent searches for jobs and other career opportunities, but half of them used the Career Zone resources, including relating to employment opportunities. Importantly, the University and its services also have no control beyond University 'walls'. To this end, to examine the employment and career environment in which students operate and explore what opportunities are open to them, we focus on the analysis of the [Handshake](#) data, which is one of the core resources offered by the Career Zone.

The University has partnered with Handshake, which is a career development platform and an integral part of employability support that [allows students and graduates to discover employers and opportunities, submit applications, and attend career fairs and other events](#). This platform features heavily as an advertising page for events and training activities, placements and jobs, and is advertised to students through the Career Zone resources and by SEAS and academic staff (e.g., tutors). Hence, it is the first port of call and potentially an exclusive venue for students to search for paid employment opportunities from verified and reputable employers. It is also logical to assume that vacancies advertised on Handshake shape students' understanding of the labour market and have a bearing on their perceptions of the range of available jobs and their requirements, as well as their own preparedness to meet these conditions.

With the help of the Student Employability and Academic Success team, we requested and have been granted a list of all jobs posted on Handshake that may be relevant and have been visible to undergraduate students in Politics and Humanities since the start of their partnership with the University in 2023. Note that most employers are 'degree agnostic', and they do not specify a particular degree or discipline from which they want to recruit to avoid limiting the pool of applicants and because these vacancies are likely to be suitable for graduates from several disciplines - or those who may have relevant work experience outside of their discipline.

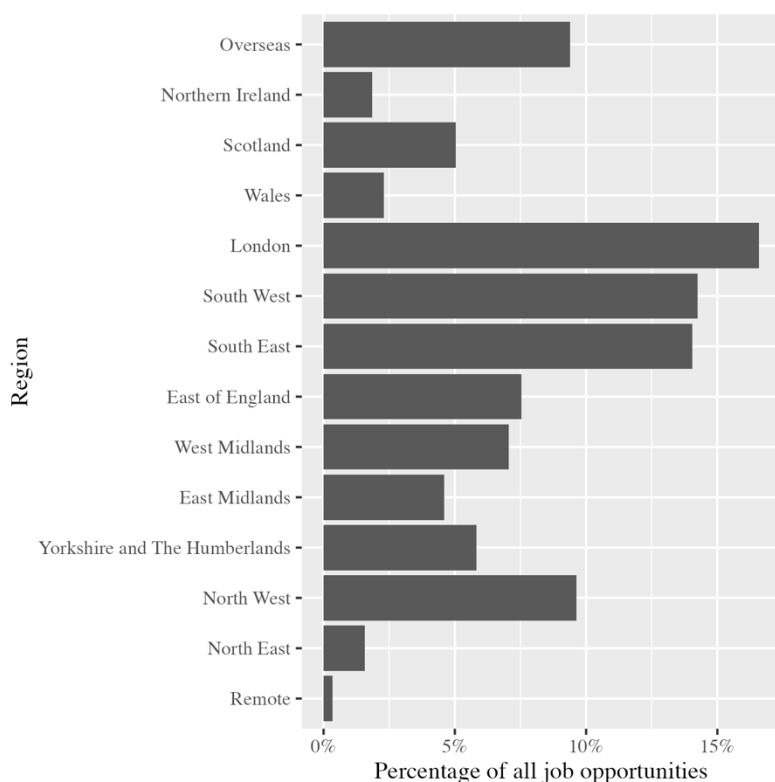
The dataset includes 2,077 job listings and includes the employer's name, job title, its unique ID, and full address. The data was manually coded to generate the following variables based on the available information for each job listed (detailed coding scheme can be found in the Appendix):

- **Sector** recording which job sector the role lies within (i.e., private, public or third sector)
- **Region** recording in which geographic region the position is based (i.e., remote, overseas, or one of the government regions of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
- **Industry** recording which industry the job lies within, based on the type of work and services the employer/organisation provides (e.g., transport, general education, finance, marketing and PR)
- **Level** recording whether the role is described as an entry-level position (requiring lower levels of work experience) and/or that it provides training and skills development.

While the scope of this data is limited, its descriptive analysis offers several interesting insights.

With regards to geographic distribution shown in Figure 2.1, while London-based jobs (18%) are the plurality of jobs on offer, they do not dominate the market. Rather, this data reflects the distribution of opportunities for the country at large, where the South dominates. Together, South West-, South East-, and London-based jobs amount to approximately 45% of the vacancies. By contrast, just over 10% of the opportunities are based in the North, the Midlands and collectively in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, respectively.

Figure 2.1. Handshake job opportunities by region, %



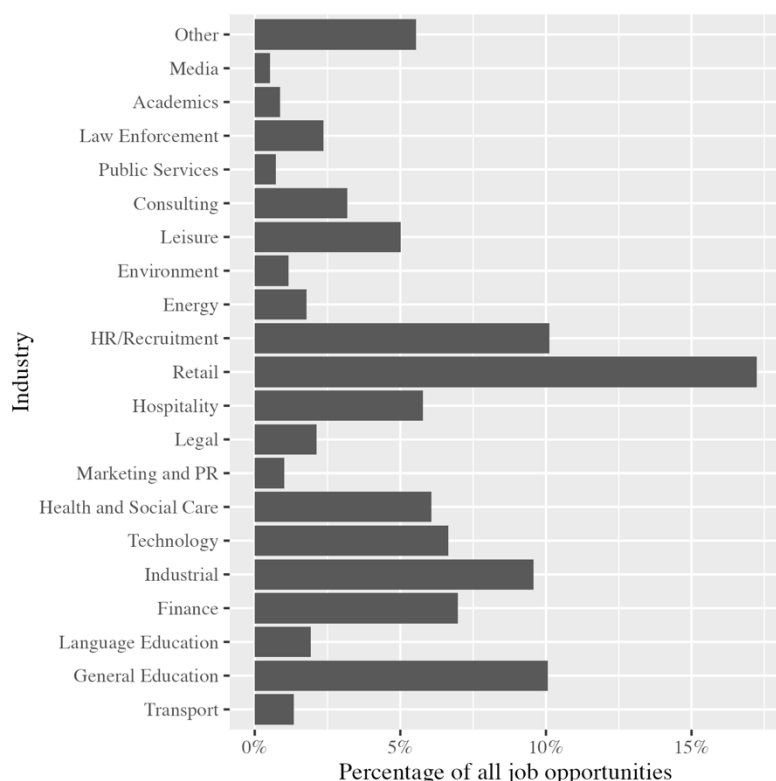
Source: Handshake 2022-2025

Despite the development of hybrid and remote ways of working, only around 1% of jobs are advertised as remote. This reflects the Government's and several large businesses' push to bring the workforce to the office, potentially. But it may also pose difficulties for starter-level jobs, considering inequalities in access to housing and transport across the country and the additional resources that are required to move for a job.

Finally, while under 10% of vacancies are based overseas, this is still 1 in 10 jobs that are available for Politics and Humanities students. At present, most training and support is tailored with the domestic labour market in mind, which resonates with the location of 9 out of 10 jobs advertised on Handshake. However, considering the University's attempts to grow its international student population and increasingly rigid conditions of post-study stay for Tier 4 visa holders (which is likely to see many of them leave the UK), investment in supporting students seeking and undertaking jobs overseas could potentially be expanded by assessing the effectiveness of and building on such [existing resources](#) as GoinGlobal and Student Circus.

Considering the distribution of advertised posts between industries (shown in Figure 2.2), it is obvious that the opportunities that employers choose to advertise to undergraduate HASS-Cornwall students in Politics and Humanities range widely from legal and law enforcement occupations to education-based jobs to hospitality, leisure and retail, etc. This results from a 'degree agnostic' approach of the recruitment process on the part of the employers. This also suggests the importance of developing transferable and 'soft' skills and competencies among students and reiterating their importance in the context of academic study, employability teaching and personal development programmes.

Figure 2.2. Handshake job opportunities by industry, %

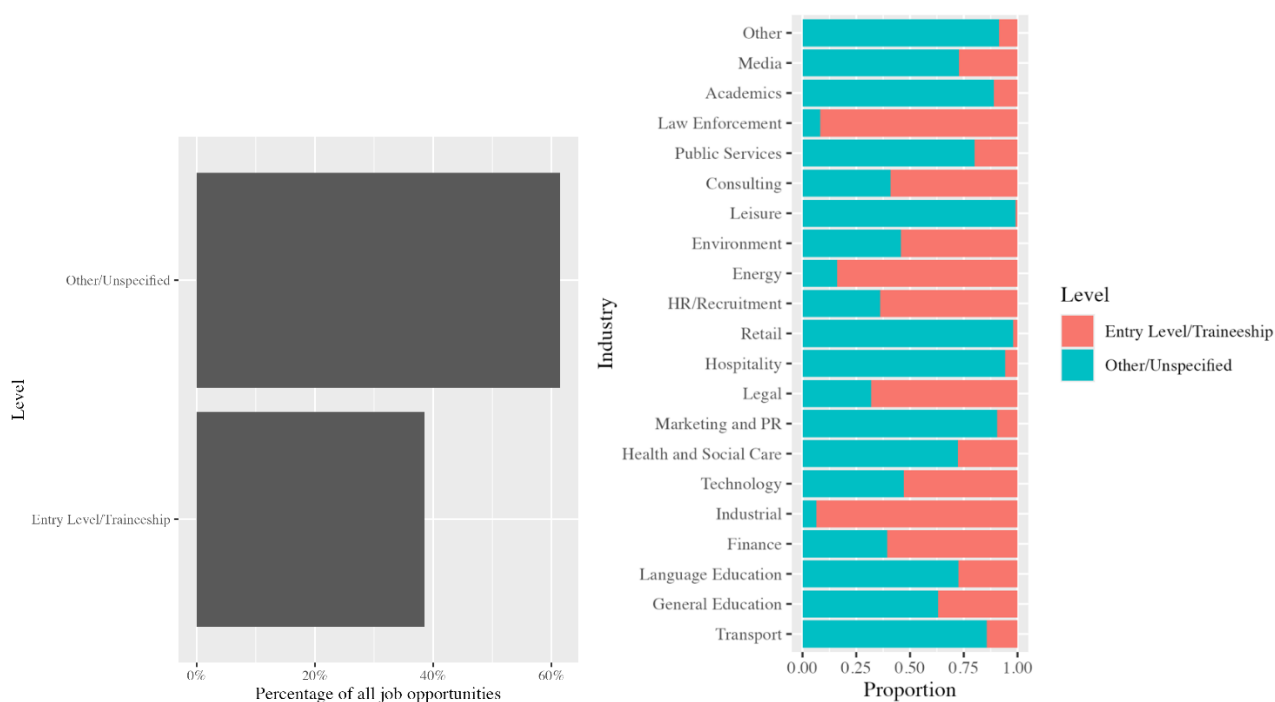


Source: Handshake 2022-2025

Developing appreciation for transferable skills and fostering a mindset for further professional development is important, as the minority of vacancies (around 1 in 3) mention any, as illustrated in Figure 2.3. This puts an onus on an employee to adapt and learn on the job, while making use of existing skills and carving out opportunities for further development that may or may not be baked into their job description. That said, as the right side of Figure 4 shows, provision of entry-level training is also strongly dependent on the industry, depending on practical need (e.g., when working in industrial or energy-related occupations) and/or legal and statutory responsibilities that may be associated with the job (e.g., law enforcement, HR/recruitment).

These small but important points are also worth communicating to students in Politics and Humanities who may not be prepared for either scenario. Students should consider this aspect when applying for jobs and clarify whether the job entails entry-level training in interviews. On the one hand, they may have little to no training in their first graduate job - an issue which may become more pertinent as companies are looking to make savings in all areas, including training and professional development. On the other hand, should the nature and responsibilities of the job require, students may also need to be prepared to embrace the ethos of continuous learning and development and, potentially, go through extensive practical re-training.

Figure 2.3. Handshake job opportunities specified to be 'entry level' and/or involve training and skills development (%). On the right - by industry (%)

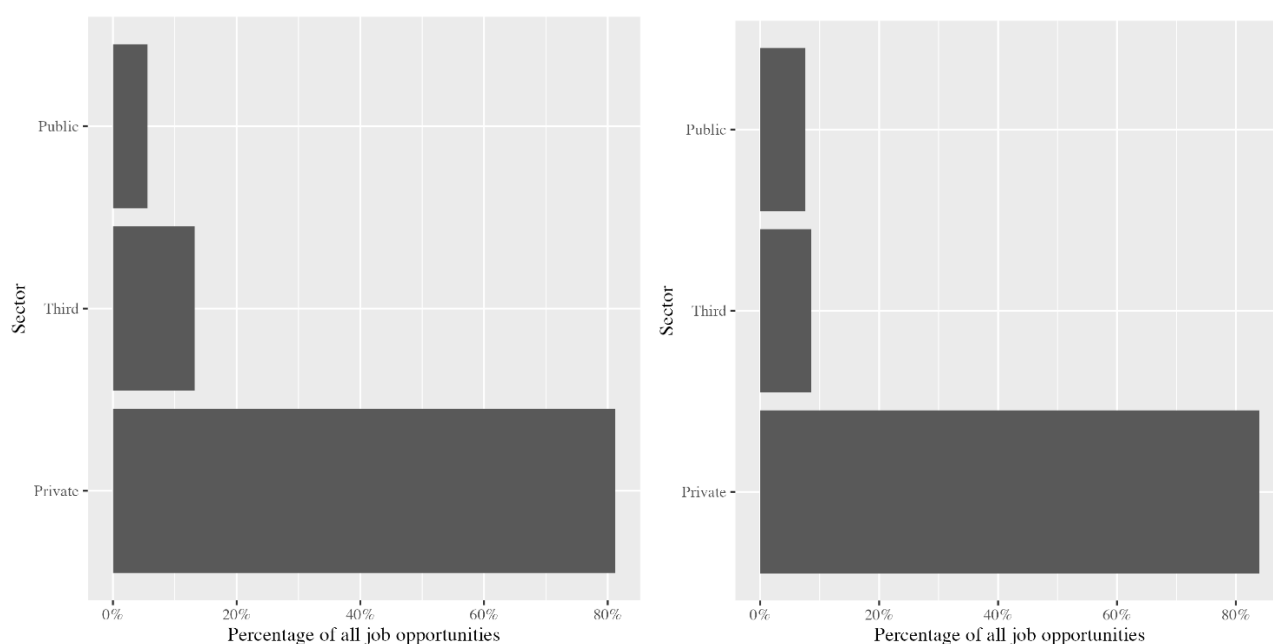


Source: Handshake 2022-2025

Finally and importantly, the analysis of Handshake data suggests that - by a large margin - the majority of jobs and employers that are visible to students of Politics and Humanities are from the private sector, which amount to over 80% of job opportunities and almost 85% of prospective employers. While there is a strong emphasis on public and, to a lesser extent, third sector employment in employability events and fairs, jobs in the public sector account for just over 5% of jobs, with 16-17% for the third sector.

This is a surprising finding that does not align with students' expectations and often the impression given at open days and other outreach events. It seems that, within University, we focus on the highest profile jobs rather than the most common jobs that students take. This could potentially skew the focus of employability teaching and personal development programme provision towards public and third sector employers who, based on this data, offer fewer employment opportunities for students. Although Graduate Outcomes data is used to update employability teaching and information resources, catering for a more diverse range of private sector employers (with a more diverse set of employment opportunities coming from a variety of industries) would require better resourcing of professional services, including dedicated positions of employer engagement staff who could assist with tailoring employability teaching and personal development programmes to the needs of private sector organisations. At present, there is no resource for proper relationship building especially with SME's and local, regional employers. This is a potentially worthwhile investment considering that this data - while surprising for us - reflects a huge skew towards private sector jobs overall across the labour market.

Figure 2.4. Handshake job opportunities by sectors (%) and employers by sector (%)



Source: Handshake 2022-2025

Additionally, there are several aspects of Handshake and ways in which employers engage with it that present further challenges. Firstly, there is a strong selection effect regarding which employers advertise to students studying at the University of Exeter overall and Penryn-based students, in particular. For example, based on the national picture, there are many charities - locally and regionally - that advertise job opportunities; some of them are on Handshake, and yet it is unclear whether they advertise to Exeter students at all. The University has no control over what appears on Handshake, and, disproportionately, it is the bigger organisations that know about this platform and engage with it. The decision-making process through which organisations engage with Handshake to restrict access to vacancies for some universities is neither explained nor transparent.

Considering the importance of Handshake as the gatekeeper through which students engage with the job market, it would be prudent to undertake further research focusing specifically on the University-employers relations and on understanding how they make decisions to advertise job opportunities to Exeter students and on lobbying the platform and the employers to advertise all opportunities potentially suitable for Politics and Humanities students. As this data shows, there is already a wide range of locations and industries that our students consider.

Conclusion

The findings of this report aim to shed light on the expectations, ambitions and experiences of HASS-Cornwall Humanities and Politics students with regards to employment, employability teaching and personal development programmes and explore the structure of career opportunities, with which they are most familiar through the University-approved Handshake platform.

Firstly, students have a good level of awareness of the need for advancing their transferable skills and mixed view on how helpful their academic modules are in supporting this. While they consider the latter helpful for the development of critical thinking and global awareness, they do not believe there is much input in their resilience and digital skills. There is also a healthy and realistic outlook from students when assessing their levels of competitiveness on the job market, as well as expectations relating to such practical matter as salary, hours and conditions of employment that align with the structure of the job market. That said, there is a clear skew of preferences towards civil service and government jobs and public sector positions more generally, with very limited interest in private sector employment. This contrasts sharply with the shape of the labour market, where private sector vacancies dominate.

Secondly, while students seem to be relatively aware and to some extent prepared for future employment, most of this preparation seems to have occurred outside of the University 'walls' based on their limited engagement with employability teaching and participation in professional development programmes in University- and student-run events and personal development programmes (e.g., Exeter Award). Such lack of engagement partly stems from students' impression of employability teaching and personal development programmes as not directly relevant to their degree and/or preferred career path, practical challenges relating to timetabling clashes and accessibility (e.g., mode of delivery), and a lack of motivation/desire to prioritise these sessions considering other academic and work commitments.

Finally, while we observe some difference in perceptions and experiences based on sex and social class of respondents, they are quite small and do not amount to systematic patterns, except for the differences in uptake of part-time employment and its relationship to term times.

Appendices

A1. Student survey descriptive statistics

Question 2.1

N = 75

Thinking about your study so far, to what extent have your modules contributed to the development of the following...

Effective Communication

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	2	5	21	40	7	3.56
Percentage	3%	7%	28%	53%	9%	

Critical Thinking

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	1	3	7	28	36	4.27
Percentage	1%	4%	9%	37%	48%	

Resilience

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	7	8	27	23	10	3.27
Percentage	9%	11%	36%	31%	13%	

Digital Fluency

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	9	22	27	13	4	2.73
Percentage	12%	29%	36%	17%	5%	

Global Engagement and Awareness

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	2	2	12	23	36	4.18
Percentage	3%	3%	16%	31%	48%	

Innovative Problem-Solving

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	4	10	32	21	8	
Percentage	5%	13%	43%	28%	11%	3.24

Proactive Collaboration

	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Somewhat	4	5 - A lot	Average Rating
Count	3	7	24	26	15	
Percentage	4%	9%	32%	35%	20%	3.24

Question 2.2

N = 74

How confident are you that your university experience is preparing you for a job in your preferred career sector?

	Not at all confident	Slightly Confident	Moderately confident	Very confident	Unsure
Count	5	21	34	11	3
Percentage	7%	28%	46%	15%	4%

Question 2.3

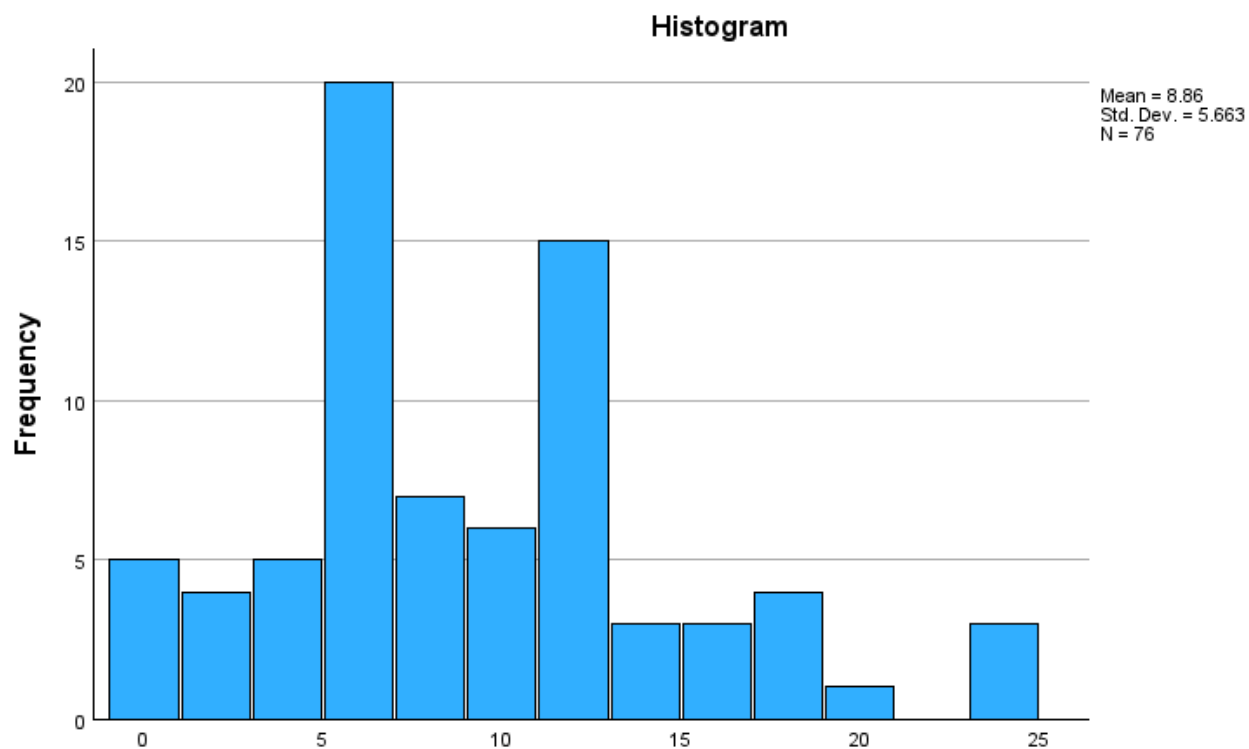
N = 73

What type of job do you feel you are qualified for currently?

	Percentage	Count
Professional occupations e.g. policy analyst, journalist, academic researcher	32%	23
Managerial and technical occupations e.g. project manager, campaign manager, HR manager	7%	5
Skilled occupations (non-manual) e.g. teacher, political assistant, social researcher	25%	18
Partly-skilled occupations e.g. events assistant, administration assistant	11%	8
Unskilled occupations e.g. bar staff, retail sales assistant	12%	9
Unsure	14%	10

Question 2.4

N=71 How many months after graduation do you expect it to take to secure a graduate-level job?



Question 2.5

N = 73 Which career sectors are you most interested in after graduation?

	Percentage	Count
Civil Service/Government	56%	41
Legal Services	18%	13
Non-Profit/Third Sector	47%	34
Think Tanks	37%	27
Hospitality	8%	6
Academic Research	34%	25
Marketing, media and PR	26%	19
Entrepreneurship	21%	15

Cultural sector	23%	17
Teaching	22%	16
Political Parties	41%	30
Manufacturing	1%	1
Further education (e.g. MA, MSc, law conversion, teacher training)	42%	31
Other	10%	7
I'm not sure yet	11%	8

Question 2.6

N = 72

Which work setup would you prefer after graduation?

	Office-Based	Remote	Hybrid (a mix of office and remote)	Unsure	No Preference
Count	10	1	44	7	10
Percentage	14%	1%	61%	10%	14%

Question 2.7

N = 72

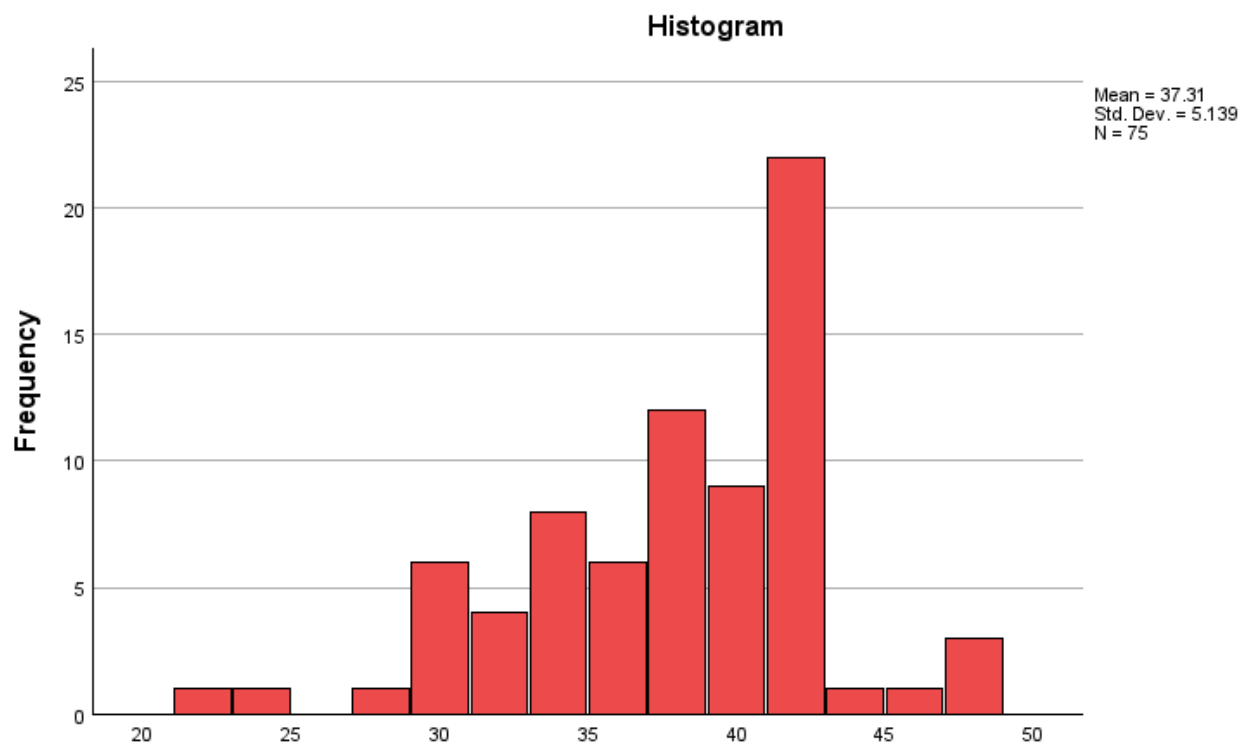
What starting salary do you expect to receive for your first job after graduation?

	Less than £20,000	£20,000 - £24,999	£25,000 - £29,999	£30,000 - £34,999	£35,000 - £39,999	£40,000 - £49,999	£50,000 or above	Unsure
Count	3	20	19	9	7	2	2	10
Percentage	4%	28%	26%	13%	10%	3%	3%	14%

Question 2.8

N=70

How many hours per week would you ideally like to work in your first graduate-level job?



Question 2.9

N = 71

Have you had a part-time or summer job while at university?

	Yes - During time	term	Yes - During holidays	term	Yes - During holidays	term	both and No
Count	8		26		19		18
Percentage	11%		37%		27%		25%

Question 2.10

N = 69

What work experience - paid or unpaid - do you have? Please, tick everything that applies.

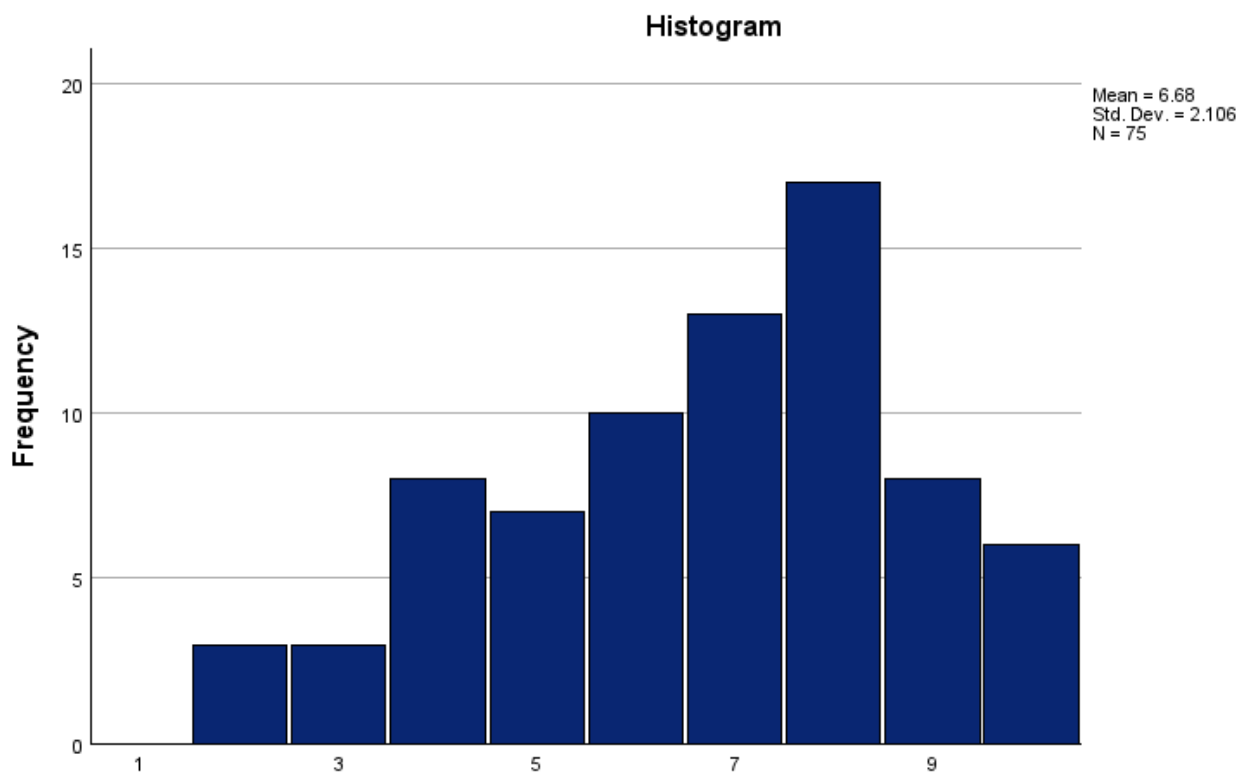
	Percentage	Count
Hospitality work	52%	36
University-based work (e.g. student ambassador, library assistant)	20%	14
Internship or placement related to my course	23%	16

Internship or placement not related to my course	20%	14
Freelance or self-employed (e.g. tutoring, entrepreneurship)	17%	12
School-organised placement (e.g. year 10 work experience year)	22%	15
Volunteering (e.g. charity shop, conservation, care work)	42%	29
Other	14%	10
I don't have any work experience	6%	4

Question 2.11

N = 69

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely), how competitive would you say you are?



Question 2.12

N = 70

Which of the following have you done to explore career options after university?
Please, tick everything that applies.

Percentage Count

Spoken to a career advisor	36%	25
Used the university career zone resources	50%	35
Attended an employability session	51%	36
Attended a careers fair and/or networking event	63%	44
Taken part in a work placement or internship	30%	21
Researched careers online (e.g. prospectus.ac.uk, Indeed, LinkedIn)	79%	55
Applied to the career mentor scheme	9%	6
Spoken to people working in careers I'm interested in	39%	27
Joined a student society or activity related to a career	23%	16
Taken part in a university programme (e.g. Green Consultants, Grand Challenges)	14%	10
Taken part in the Exeter Award	11%	8
Other	6%	4
I haven't taken any steps yet	9%	6

Question 3.1

N = 70

Have you ever attended an employability session at the University of Exeter?

	Yes	No	Unsure/Cannot recall
Count	36	21	13
Percentage	51%	30%	19%

Question 3.2

N = 38

Which of the following employability sessions have you attended? Please, tick everything that applies.

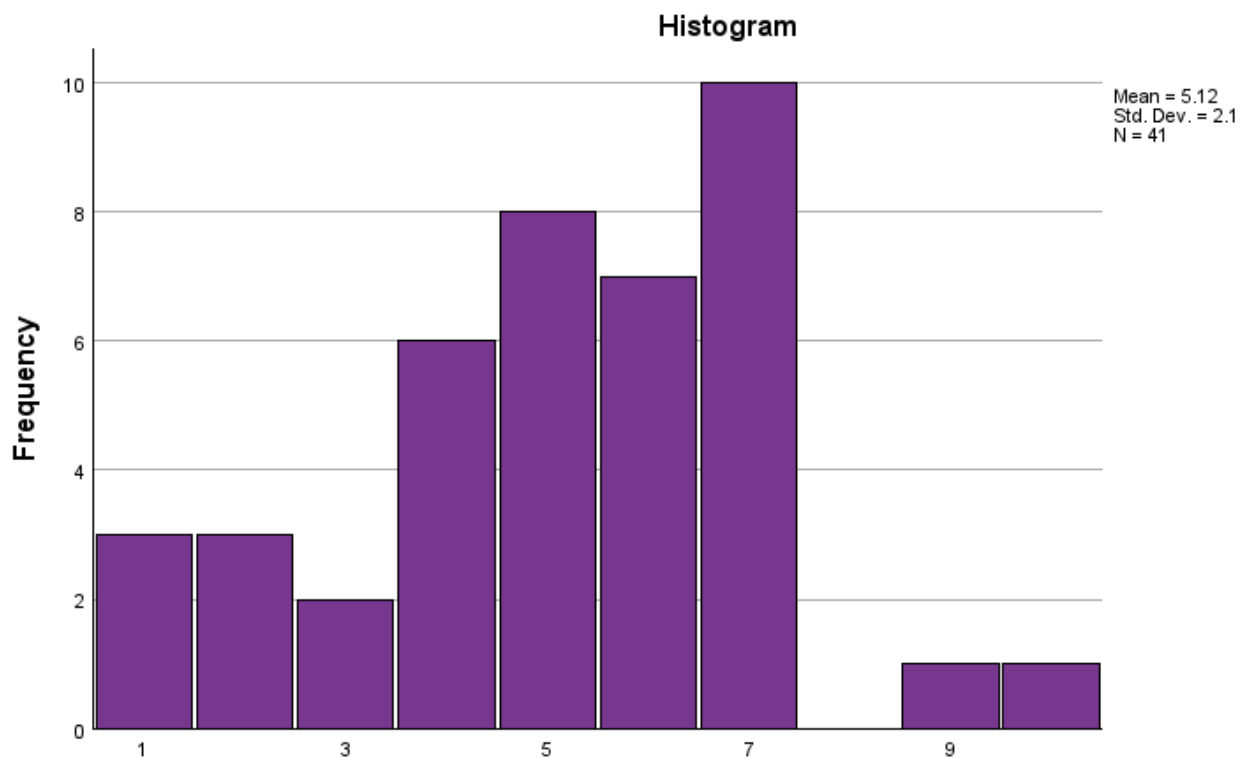
	Percentage	Count
Maximising the Effectiveness of Group Work	29%	11
Where Will Your Degree Take You? From Course to Career	37%	14
Building Your Professional Brand Identity	21%	8
Demystifying the Recruitment Process	32%	12

Discover Your Why - How to Build a Purposeful Career	18%	7
Unpicking Commercial Awareness (People, Planet, Profit, Purpose)	8%	3
Beyond the Basics - Strategies for Outstanding Job Applications	24%	9
Choosing and Applying for Postgraduate Study	13%	5
Preparing to Graduate: Keep Calm and Get Organised	5%	2
Recognising, Valuing, and Selling Transferrable Skills	24%	9
Preparing for the Careers and Opportunities Fair 2024	39%	15

Question 3.3

N = 37

On a scale from 1 (not useful at all) to 10 (extremely useful), how useful did you find these employability sessions for improving your skills and confidence?



Question 3.4

N = 36

Do any of the following employability sessions sound relevant to your career plans?
Please, select all that apply.

	Percentage	Count
Maximising the Effectiveness of Group Work	19%	7
Where Will Your Degree Take You? From Course to Career	53%	19
Building Your Professional Brand Identity	28%	10
Demystifying the Recruitment Process	28%	10
Discover Your Why - How to Build a Purposeful Career	50%	18
Unpicking Commercial Awareness (People, Planet, Profit, Purpose)	31%	11
Beyond the Basics - Strategies for Outstanding Job Applications	50%	18
Choosing and Applying for Postgraduate Study	44%	16
Preparing to Graduate: Keep Calm and Get Organised	28%	10
Recognising, Valuing, and Selling Transferrable Skills	39%	14
Preparing for the Careers and Opportunities Fair 2024	22%	8
I don't know	14%	5

Question 3.5

N = 62 Have you encountered any of the following barriers that may make it difficult for you to attend employability sessions?

	Percentage	Count
Sessions conflict with my class schedule	29%	18
Sessions conflict with my part-time job or other commitments	21%	13
I wasn't aware the sessions were happening	31%	19
I didn't find the topics relevant to my needs	31%	19
Sessions weren't delivered in a format that worked for me (e.g., in-person vs online)	15%	9
I lacked motivation or confidence to attend	37%	23
Accessibility or travel issues	15%	9
Other	8%	5

Question 3.6

What suggestions do you have to make employability sessions more engaging and useful for students like you?

N = 25

Career focus suggestions:

- “It needs to be more tailored to the degree and courses that it’s being delivered too”.
- “I do not feel that the sessions (and even more the careers fair) do not have a specific focus on political-based careers, so I do think a focus on that could make the sessions more useful”.
- “Include a diverse range of careers. For instance, applying to careers outside your job sector”.
- “Use real life examples from where a HASS degree might take you, it feels too general and needs to be more specialised”.
- “The advice oftentimes felt a bit behind of what the job market is currently looking like. There was one session that talked about possible graduate schemes and sites, but we don't know any of the actual sectors our degree has set us up for. Sometimes it feels like we're unqualified for any job out there at entry level now a days so it would be nice if the sessions took this in mind”.
- “Talks from different people across lots of different career sectors, particularly ones that might not be directly related to a HaSS course but that applies skills we learn on the course (i.e. local arts/history charities, institutions, studios). Currently, the talks and advice is directed strongly towards traditional politics jobs like think tanks, consultancy etc but little on arts sector work”.

Content suggestions:

- “The presentations need to feel more specific. It all felt like the same PowerPoint every time with the same graphics, very corporate feeling, most helpful information was just repeated over and over felt like each session was just the same thing”.
- “To give information that focuses on what to expect from different sectors when applying for post-grad jobs, rather than basing everything around some useful, but also some pointless, skills”.
- “Different titles”.
- “To bring in more ex-students to give their opinions on what it is like post-graduation and about life in the workplace”.
- “The sessions could target a specific student group (e.g., one session could target students who do not know their career, whilst the other targets those who know or have some idea of their chosen career)”.
- “I don't have any real suggestions apart from making employability seem less overwhelming, scary and like a reminder of how hard it is to find a job out of University”.
- “More focus on applications”.

Mode of delivery suggestions (online vs in-person sessions):

- “Hybrid options each time. Sessions are often at 9am, and this is not doable when commuting”.
- “More remote courses”.
- “Online recordings”.
- “Online instead of in-person, not time bound to work around academic schedule. Also, I’ve missed talks that they were only available to attend in person on the Exeter main campus”.
- “If they aren’t already would be great if they were recorded and available to watch on ELE”.
- “Online sessions that can be accessed from any time at home, similar to the layout of Green Consultants but shorter”.

Delivery/accessibility suggestions:

- “Better accessibility for working students, so it can be viable to attend”.
- “They don’t need to be two hours long”.
- “Perhaps should have been a 15-credit module on employability. Otherwise, it falls down the list of priorities, as there is no direct stake involved”.
- “Perhaps move them to seminar rooms - there is never enough attendance to be in a lecture theatre anyway, so it would be more conducive to an interactive session”.
- “Being more bite-sized, as it felt difficult to think about careers when under the pressure of immediate assignments”.
- “Integrate them more into the course. It’s hard to be motivated to do more than what is expected”.

Careers fairs suggestions:

- “Have careers fairs relevant to politics and IR on the Penryn campus, as well as Exeter, and for the attending stalls not to only be from local Cornwall and Devon companies, etc”.
- “Would like more relevant careers events hosted in Cornwall. Feels like there is a big separation in careers provision between Cornwall and main campus”.

Question 3.8

N = 68

To what extent would you support or oppose the idea of employability sessions counting towards academic credit?

	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Neutral	Somewhat Support	Strongly Support
Count	17	12	12	18	9
Percentage	25%	18%	18%	26%	13%

A2. Employability survey questions and layout

Start of Block: Consent

Q1.1 Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! It explores your career ambitions and expectations, your engagement with employability support services, and your experiences of part-time work so far.

This survey should take approximately [X] minutes to complete. All questions are optional, so you can skip any questions you are not comfortable answering. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from it at any time.

All responses will be anonymised and used solely for evaluation purposes helping us to understand students' perspectives on employability and to improve student and graduate career support at the University of Exeter.

Should you have any concerns or follow up questions, please, contact Dr Ekaterina Kolpinskaya at e.kolpinskaya3@exeter.ac.uk

If you have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing informationgovernance@exeter.ac.uk. or at Information Governance | Information Governance | University of Exeter

Please, indicate whether you would like to proceed with the survey - or not - by choosing one of the following options:

- ☐ Yes: I have read the above information and consent to take part in this survey.
- ☐ No: I do NOT consent to take part in this survey.

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1.1 = No: I do NOT consent to take part in this survey.

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Employment expectations

Q2.1 How many months after graduation do you expect it to take to secure a graduate-level job?

0 6 12 18 24+



Q2.2 Which career sectors are you most interested in after graduation?

- ☐ Civil Service/Government
 - ☐ Legal Services
 - ☐ Non-Profit/Third Sector
 - ☐ Think Tanks
 - ☐ Hospitality
 - ☐ Academic Research
 - ☐ Marketing, media and PR
 - ☐ Entrepreneurship
 - ☐ Education
 - ☐ Political Parties
 - ☐ Manufacturing
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I'm not sure yet
-

Q2.3 How confident are you that your university experience is preparing you for a job in your preferred career sector?

- ☐ Not at all confident
 - ☐ Slightly confident
 - ☐ Moderately confident
 - ☐ Very confident
 - ☐ Unsure
-

Q2.4 What type of job do you feel you are qualified for currently?

- ☐ Professional occupations e.g. policy analyst, journalist, academic researcher
 - ☐ Managerial and technical occupations e.g. project manager, campaign manager, HR manager
 - ☐ Skilled occupations (non-manual) e.g. teacher, political assistant, social researcher
 - ☐ Skilled occupations (manual) e.g. conservation worker, craftsperson
 - ☐ Partly-skilled occupations e.g. events assistant, administration assistant
 - ☐ Unskilled occupations e.g. bar staff, retail sales assistant
 - ☐ Unsure
-

Q2.5 Which work setup would you prefer after graduation?

- ☐ Office-based
 - ☐ Hybrid (a mix of office and remote)
 - ☐ Remote
 - ☐ Unsure
 - ☐ No Preference
-

Q2.6 What starting salary do you expect to receive for your first job after graduation?

- ☐ Less than £20,000
 - ☐ £20,000-£24,999
 - ☐ £25,000-£29,999
 - ☐ £30,000-£34,999
 - ☐ £35,000-£39,999
 - ☐ £40,000-£49,999
 - ☐ £50,000 or above
 - ☐ Unsure
-

Q2.7 How many hours per week would you ideally like to work in your first graduate-level job?

0 8 16 24 32 40 48+



Q2.8 Have you had a part-time or summer job while at university?

- ☐ Yes - during term time
- ☐ Yes - during holidays (e.g. summer, Christmas, Easter)
- ☐ Yes - during both term time and holidays
- ☐ No

Q2.9 What work experience - paid or unpaid - do you have? Please, tick everything that applies.

- ☐ Hospitality work
 - ☐ University-based work (e.g. student ambassador, library assistant)
 - ☐ Internship or placement related to my course
 - ☐ Internship or placement not related to my course
 - ☐ Freelance or self-employed (e.g. tutoring, entrepreneurship)
 - ☐ School-organised placement (e.g. year 10 work experience week)
 - ☐ Volunteering (e.g. charity shop, conservation, care work)
 - ☐ Other _____
 - ☐ I don't have any work experience
-

Q2.10 Have you ever volunteered?

- ☐ Yes - at university (e.g. through a student society or university programme)
- ☐ Yes - outside of university (e.g. fundraising, conservation, care work)
- ☐ Yes - both at and outside of university
- ☐ No

Display this question:

If Q2.10 = Yes - at university (e.g. through a student society or university programme)

Or Q2.10 = Yes - outside of university (e.g. fundraising, conservation, care work)

Or Q2.10 = Yes - both at and outside of university

Q2.11 Which organisation(s) did you volunteer with?

Q2.12 On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely), how competitive would you say you are?

1 2 3 4 5 6 6 7 8 9 10



Q2.13 Which of the following have you done to explore career options after university? Please, tick everything that applies

- ☐ Spoken to a career advisor
 - ☐ Used the university's career zone resources
 - ☐ Attended an employability session
 - ☐ Attended a careers fair and/or networking event
 - ☐ Taken part in a work placement or internship
 - ☐ Researched careers online (e.g. prospects.ac.uk, Indeed, LinkedIn)
 - ☐ Applied to the career mentor scheme
 - ☐ Spoken to people working in careers I'm interested in
 - ☐ Joined a student society or activity related to a career
 - ☐ Taken part in a university programme (e.g. green consultants, grand challenges)
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I haven't taken any steps yet
-

Q2.14 Have you ever attended a networking event at university for your preferred career sector?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

End of Block: Employment expectations

Start of Block: Employability sessions

Q3.1 Have you ever attended an employability session at Exeter University?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure/Cannot recall

Skip To: Q3.4 If Q3.1 = No

Q3.2 Which of the following employability sessions have you attended? Please, tick everything that applies

- ☐ Maximising the Effectiveness of Group Work
- ☐ Where Will Your Degree Take You? From Course to Career
- ☐ Building Your Professional Brand Identity
- ☐ Demystifying the Recruitment Process
- ☐ Discover Your Why - How to Build a Purposeful Career
- ☐ Unpicking Commercial Awareness (People, Planet, Profit, Purpose)
- ☐ Beyond the Basics - Strategies for Outstanding Job Applications
- ☐ Choosing and Applying for Postgraduate Study
- ☐ Preparing to Graduate: Keep Calm and Get Organised
- ☐ Recognising, Valuing, and Selling Transferable Skills
- ☐ Preparing for the Careers and Opportunities Fair 2024

Skip To: Q3.4 If Condition: Selected Count Is Less Than 1. Skip To: Have you encountered any of the following....

Q3.3

On a scale from 1 (not useful at all) to 10 (extremely useful), how useful did you find these employability sessions for improving your skills and confidence?

1 2 3 4 5 6 6 7 8 9 10

A horizontal slider scale with a grey track and a blue slider knob. The track is labeled with numbers 1 through 10. The slider knob is currently positioned at the number 6.

Q3.4 Have you encountered any of the following barriers that may make it difficult for you to attend employability sessions?

- ☐ Sessions conflict with my class schedule
- ☐ Sessions conflict with my part-time job or other commitments
- ☐ I wasn't aware the sessions were happening
- ☐ I didn't find the topics relevant to my needs
- ☐ Sessions weren't delivered in a format that worked for me (e.g., in-person vs. online)
- ☐ I lacked motivation or confidence to attend
- ☐ Accessibility or travel issues
- ☐ Other _____

Q3.5 Do any of the following employability sessions sound relevant to your career plans? Please, select all that apply.

- ☐ Maximising the Effectiveness of Group Work
 - ☐ Where will your degree take you? From course to career
 - ☐ Building Your Professional Brand Identity
 - ☐ Demystifying the Recruitment Process
 - ☐ Discover Your Why - How To Build a Purposeful Career
 - ☐ Unpicking Commercial Awareness (People, Planet, Profit, Purpose)
 - ☐ Beyond the Basics - Strategies for Outstanding Job Applications
 - ☐ Choosing and Applying for Postgraduate Study
 - ☐ Preparing to Graduate keep calm and get organised
 - ☐ Recognising, valuing, and selling transferable skills
 - ☐ Preparing for the Careers and Opportunities Fair 2024
 - ☐ I don't know
-

Q3.6 What suggestions do you have to make employability sessions more engaging and useful for students like you?

Q3.7 Are there any topics not currently covered that you think would be beneficial to include in future employability sessions?

Q3.8 To what extent would you support or oppose the idea of employability sessions counting towards academic credit?

- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Don't know

End of Block: Employability sessions

Start of Block: Background information

Q4.1 What year of study are you currently in?

- ☐ Year One
 - ☐ Year Two
 - ☐ Year Three
-

Q4.2 Please, type in the name of your degree programme (e.g. BA History, LLB Law)

Q4.3 What is your age (in years)?

- ☐ 18
 - ☐ 19
 - ☐ 20
 - ☐ 21
 - ☐ 22
 - ☐ 23
 - ☐ 24
 - ☐ 25+
-

Q4.4 What is your sex?

Q4.5 What is your ethnic background?

Q4.6 How would you describe your social class?

- ☐ Working Class
- ☐ Middle Class
- ☐ Upper Class
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q4.7 What is your mother's most recent occupation?

Q4.8 What is your father's most recent occupation?

End of Block: Background information

A3. Handshake data codebook

Category	Code definition	Sub-category	Code	Code description	Examples/Keywords
SECTOR	Describes which job sector the role lies within.	Private	0	Positions within organisations (often businesses) that are owned and operated by individuals or companies, rather than the government.	Amazon. Gekko. Oho Group Ltd.
		Third	1	Positions that are within organisations that are not-for-profit and non-governmental	RNLI. National Citizens Advice. Teach First.
		Public	2	Positions that are within government-owned or -funded organizations that provide services to the public.	Home Office. Kent County Council. University of Exeter.
REGION	Describes in which geographic region the position is based in	Remote	0	Position is remote (working from the employees' home)	
		North East	1	Position is located in the North East of England	
		North West	2	Position is located in the North West of England	
		Yorkshire and The Humber	3	Position is located in Yorkshire and the Humber	
		East Midlands	4	Position is located in the East Midlands in England	
		West Midlands	5	Position is located in the West Midlands in England	
		East of England	6	Position is located in the East of England	

		South East	7	Position is located in the South East of England	
		South West	8	Position is located in the South West of England	
		London	9	Position is located in the London	
		Wales	10	Position is located in Wales	
		Scotland	11	Position is located in Scotland	
		Northern Ireland	12	Position is located in Northern Ireland	
		Overseas	13	Position is located outside the UK	
INDUSTRY	Describes which industry the job lies within, based on the type of work and services the employer/organisation provides.	Transport	0	Position is related to the transport industry	Rail Replacement Coordinator. Uber.
		General Education	1	Position is related to the education industry	United Teaching. Summer Boarding Courses. Ark Schools.
		Language Education	2	Position is related to specialised language programmes in the education industry.	Baby Languages. Language Connexion. English Language Teaching Assistant Internship.
		Finance	3	Position is related to the finance industry	eFinancialCareers. Investments Internship. JP Morgan Chase.
		Industrial	4	Position is related to the industrial industry such as manufacturing or construction businesses in goods and services.	Trainee Mechanical Estimator. Bentley Motors. Vehicle Performance Industrial Placement.
		Technology	5	Position is related to the technology industry, such as big tech companies or software services.	Devi Technologies. Thales UK. Software Engineer. Graduate IT Consultant.

		Health and Social Care	6	Position is related to the health and social care industry.	First Care Ambulance. Nexime Healthcare. Pharmacy Technician. Support Worker.
		Marketing and PR	7	Position is related to the marketing and/or PR industry.	Publicis Groupe UK. Powerforce. Marketing Intern.
		Legal	8	Position is related to the legal industry	Freeths LLP. Paralegal. Trainee Solicitor.
		Hospitality	9	Position is related to the hospitality industry	Marriott International. Hospitality Staff for Festivals & Events. Food & Beverage Assistant - Seasonal.
		Retail	10	Position is related to the retail industry	Gekko. Moonpig. Merchandiser. Sales Assistant.
		HR/Recruitment	11	Position is related to the HR/recruitment industry. Excludes roles listed by a recruitment company that aren't themselves related to HR/recruitment.	The Reed Group. g2 Recruitment. Graduate Recruitment Consultant.
		Energy	12	Position is related to the energy industry.	Tesla. Aurora Energy Research. Energy Modelling Analyst.
		Environment	13	Position is related to the environment protection industry.	UNESCO. Scottish Wildlife Trust. Ecologists. Graduate Urban Designer.
		Leisure	14	Position is related to the leisure industry.	Camps For Friends. Multi Sports Coach. Holiday Camp Counsellor. Chess Teacher.

		Consulting	15	Position is related to the consultancy industry, often for businesses.	Boston Consulting Group. Grayce. Graduate Business Analyst.
		Public services	16	Position is related to the public service industry.	Home Office. Hertfordshire County Council.
		Law enforcement	17	Position is related to the law enforcement industry, a sub-sector of the public service industry.	Metropolitan Police. Special Constable (Volunteer Police Constable).
		Academics (PhD)	18	Position is related to the academic industry, specifically PhD opportunities.	University of Exeter Postgraduate Education. PhD Studentship. PhD Positions at CDT
		Media	19	Position is related to the media industry, often tv production or newsprint.	TVF Media. Retail Gazette. Media Operator.
		Other	20	Positions provided by an industry that has less than 10 job roles represented in the dataset, thus being too infrequently observed for individual analysis or does not provide enough information for coding.	Make this summer sweet by signing up to KPMG's Talent Community!
LEVEL	Distinguishes whether the role is described as an entry level position (requiring lower levels of work experience) and/or that it provides training and skills development.	Entry level	0	The position title is specified as an entry level or trainee role	Graduate DevOps Engineer (Summer 2025). Maths Trainee Teacher. Environmental Graduate Scheme. Asset Management Intern. Degree Apprentice Software Engineer.

		Other/Unspecified	1	The position title is <u>not</u> specified as an entry level or trainee role	Hardware engineer. Rail Replacement Coordinator. Holiday Camp Counsellor. Sales Executive.
No information	Describes when the observation has a missing value	No information	NA	The available data on the job position does not provide information regarding the corresponding category.	Cell is blank.