

Graduates' and Employers' Views of Graduate Skills Development

Appendix 1: Survey Design and Questions

QAA Scotland's [Focus On](#) projects aim to help higher education institutions and students' associations with work in their key priority areas. Topics are chosen based on recommendations and commendations from [Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews \(ELIR\)](#). Focus On ties these outcomes to developmental activities, resources and events with which the whole sector can get involved. These are designed to be timely and practical, and help colleagues make a real difference in a short space of time.

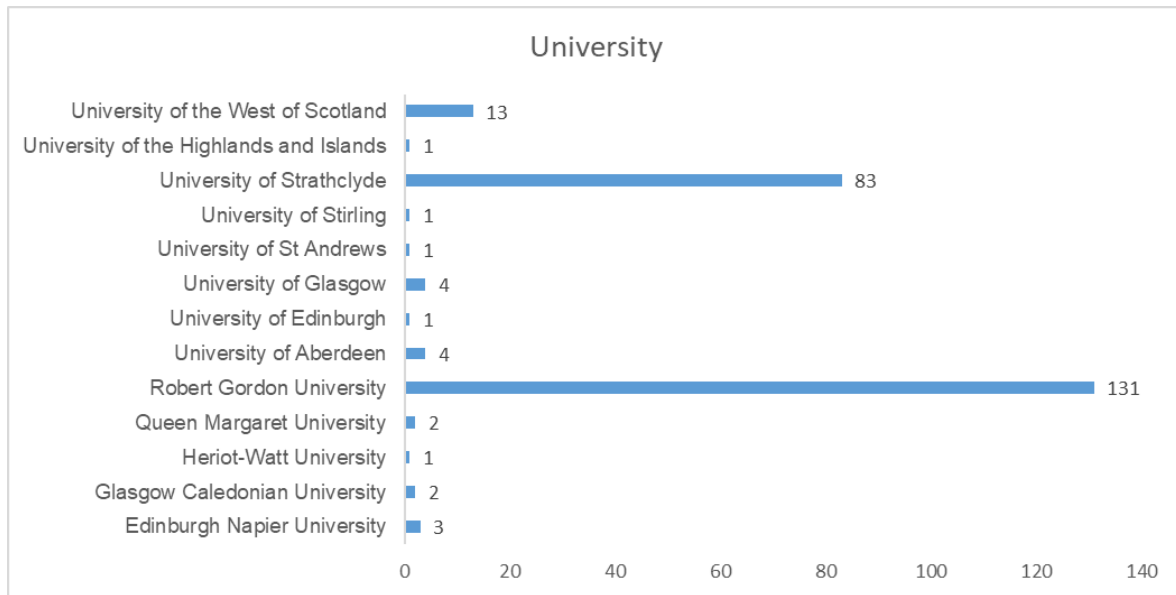
With debate on apprenticeships and skills high on the agenda in higher education, Focus On: Graduate Skills is relevant and timely. This project builds on previous work, including the [Graduates for the 21st Century Enhancement Theme](#). QAA Scotland commissioned [AGCAS Scotland](#) to conduct research into the views of employers and graduates in order to gain a better understanding of employers' and graduates' views of the skills developed by students at Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs), up-to-date examples of good practice, insights into gaps in provision, and areas for development.

The [full report](#) can be found in the Focus On section of the QAA Scotland website. This appendix details the survey design and questions.

Participating universities

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | Edinburgh Napier University | 10 | University of Edinburgh |
| 2 | Glasgow Caledonian University | 11 | University of Glasgow |
| 3 | Heriot-Watt University | 12 | University of St Andrews |
| 4 | Queen Margaret University | 13 | University of Stirling |
| 5 | Robert Gordon University | 14 | University of Strathclyde |
| 6 | Scotland's Rural College | 15 | University of the Highlands
and Islands |
| 7 | University of Aberdeen | 16 | University of the West of Scotland |
| 8 | University of Abertay | 17 | Open University |
| 9 | University of Dundee | | |

Respondents by university



Participating companies

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Mage Control Systems Ltd | 12 Shetland Amenity Trust |
| 2 KPMG UK | 13 DXC Technology |
| 3 RBS | 14 Mott MacDonald |
| 4 NorthLink Ferries | 15 Leaseloco Ltd |
| 5 Wallscope | 16 Enterprise Rent-a-Car |
| 6 Trust Care | 17 DC Thomson |
| 7 Wood Mackenzie | 18 Equiom (Scotland) |
| 8 Babcock International Group | 19 SEPA |
| 9 White Cube Consulting Ltd | 20 Diageo |
| 10 KP Technology Ltd | 21 10 anonymous companies |
| 11 Engage Renfrewshire | |

Graduate survey questions

- 1 Participation and privacy statement agreement
- 2 University (drop-down list):
 - a Edinburgh Napier University
 - b Glasgow Caledonian University
 - c Glasgow School of Art
 - d Heriot-Watt University
 - e Queen Margaret University
 - f Robert Gordon University
 - g Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow
 - h Scotland's Rural College
 - i University of Aberdeen
 - j University of Abertay
 - k University of Dundee
 - l University of Edinburgh
 - m University of Glasgow
 - n University of St Andrews
 - o University of Stirling
 - p University of Strathclyde
 - q University of the Highlands and Islands
 - r University of the West of Scotland
 - s Open University.
- 3 Broad course category (drop-down list):
 - a Agriculture and related sciences
 - b Architecture, building, and planning
 - c Biological sciences
 - d Business, management, and administrative studies
 - e Computer science
 - f Creative arts and design
 - g Education
 - h Engineering and technology
 - i English
 - j Historical and philosophical studies
 - k Languages
 - l Law
 - m Mathematical sciences
 - n Medicine and allied subjects
 - o Music
 - p Physical sciences
 - q Psychology
 - r Publishing, media, and information management
 - s Social studies
 - t Sport
 - u Veterinary science.
- 4 Year of graduation (drop-down list):
 - a 2019
 - b 2018
 - c 2017
 - d 2016
 - e 2015
 - f 2014 or earlier.

- 5 Graduate destination - select the best fit from the following (drop-down list):
 - a Working full-time (e.g. self-employed/freelance, voluntary/unpaid work, developing a professional portfolio/creative practice, internship/placement)
 - b Working part-time (e.g. self-employed/freelance, voluntary/unpaid work, developing a professional portfolio/creative practice, internship/placement)
 - c Due to start a job in the next month
 - d Full-time further study, training or research
 - e Part-time further study, training or research
 - f Taking time out to travel
 - g Doing something else (e.g. retired, looking after home or family)
 - h Unemployed
 - i Please expand on your answer if several apply or you would like to comment further.
- 6 Has attending university given you the opportunity to gain a broad range of skills which allowed you to feel prepared for the workplace? (Yes/No)
 - a Please expand on your answer, what did your university do well? Comment if these skills development opportunities were built into the curriculum or you sought them out.
- 7 How do you think your university could have better prepared you for your future, including for the workplace?
- 8 Please explain, in your own words, what 'digital skills' means to you? Which of these skills has university equipped you with?
- 9 Please review the statements below and say how strongly you agree or disagree (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A):
 - a My university equipped me with digital work-ready skills (e.g. ability to select and fully utilise appropriate tools and software)
 - b My university taught me the appropriate/professional use of digital communication (e.g. use of social media)
 - c My course prepared me to find, analyse, and use credible digital data sources
 - d I had the opportunity to innovate using digital skills (e.g. video, animation, infographics, audio, coding)
 - e I was able to collaborate with others in a digital learning environment (e.g. group projects)
 - f There were opportunities to be recognised for my digital skills (e.g. a certificate or award)
 - g I am satisfied with the digital provision, digitally enabled learning/teaching spaces, and technology enhanced learning opportunities provided by my university
 - h The virtual learning environment offered at my university was fit for purpose
 - i How could your experience have been improved?
- 10 Overall, how well did university ensure you could develop appropriate digital skills?
 - a Comments:
- 11 Which of the following development opportunities were you aware of during your time at university? (Select all that apply):
 - a Societies/clubs
 - b Volunteering
 - c Students' Union, e.g. Union representative
 - d Student Representation, e.g. course representative
 - e Placements, internships, work experience opportunities
 - f Mentoring
 - g Insight experiences, e.g. employer taster days
 - h Networking (e.g. at Careers fairs/events or with peers)
 - i Skills awards
 - j In-curriculum or co-curricular (e.g. talks from employers, careers/employability modules)

- k None of the above
 - l Other (please specify):
- 12 Which did you choose to access? (Select all that apply):
- a Societies/clubs
 - b Volunteering
 - c Students' Union, e.g. Union representative
 - d Student Representation, e.g. course representative
 - e Placements, internships, work experience opportunities
 - f Mentoring
 - g Insight experiences, e.g. employer taster days
 - h Networking (e.g. at Careers fairs/events or with peers)
 - i Skills awards
 - j In-curriculum or co-curricular (e.g. talks from employers, careers/employability modules)
 - k None of the above
 - l Other (please specify):
 - m Why did you select these opportunities? If you chose not to access any, why?
- 13 Please review the statements below and say how strongly you agree or disagree (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A):
- a I was aware of the range of development opportunities available to me
 - b Development opportunities were easy to access
 - c My university offered opportunities to gain an insight into local industry/employers
 - d I could take part in activities which were relevant to me/could help me to develop relevant skills for my future career.
- 14 Did your university provide interdisciplinary development opportunities (e.g. working with students from different degree disciplines/backgrounds/countries)?
- a Please expand on your answer, mentioning whether you had opportunities to complete projects/group work with students from overseas.
- 15 What development opportunities were missing that you would have liked to participate in?
- 16 What could your university do to make development opportunities easier to access?
- 17 We are interested in how students from all backgrounds and/or with different characteristics can develop skills that help them to secure and sustain success in the workplace. During your time as a student, do you feel there were any barriers (e.g. economic, social, or personal in nature) that prevented you from taking advantage of opportunities to develop skills? If yes, what were the barriers?
- a What could your university do to help students to overcome them?
- 18 Do you think all students (irrespective of background and different characteristics) are able to access the full range of development opportunities offered at university?
- a Comments:
- 19 Which of the following overseas experiences were available to you?
- a Study abroad year
 - b Exchange programme
 - c Overseas placement, internship, or work experience opportunity
 - d Arranged trips abroad (e.g. group trip, global insight programme)
 - e None of the above
 - f Other (please specify):
- 20 Which of the following overseas experiences did you choose to access?
- a Study abroad year
 - b Exchange programme
 - c Overseas placement, internship, or work experience opportunity
 - d Arranged trips abroad (e.g. group trip, global insight programme)
 - e None of the above
 - f Other (please specify):

- g What did you gain from these experiences? If you selected 'none of the above' please comment on why you didn't take up an overseas experience?
- 21 Do you know how to access your university's global alumni network?
 - a If yes, have you chosen to access it?
- 22 Please review the statements below and say how strongly you agree or disagree (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A):
 - a I am confident to travel and/or work abroad
 - b I have appropriate global/cultural understanding to interact with individuals from other countries.
- 23 Do you feel that you are well equipped to live and work in a global society as a result of attending university?
 - a Please expand on your response.

Employer survey questions

- 1 Participation and privacy statement agreement.
- 2 Company name (not required - add if you would like your company's involvement recognised in the research report).
- 3 Company sector (drop-down list):
 - a Accountancy, banking and finance
 - b Business, consulting and management
 - c Charity and voluntary work
 - d Creative arts and design
 - e Energy and utilities
 - f Engineering and manufacturing
 - g Environment and agriculture
 - h Healthcare
 - i Hospitality and events management
 - j Information technology
 - k Law
 - l Law enforcement and security
 - m Leisure, sport and tourism
 - n Marketing, advertising and PR
 - o Media and internet
 - p Property and construction
 - q Public services and administration
 - r Recruitment and HR
 - s Retail
 - t Sales
 - u Science and pharmaceuticals
 - v Social care
 - w Teacher training and education
 - x Transport and logistics.
- 4 Company size
 - a Micro (1-9 employees)
 - b Small (10-49 employees)
 - c Medium (50-249 employees)
 - d Large (250+ employees).
- 5 How many graduates did your company recruit in 2018?
- 6 Was this an increase or decrease on the previous year?
- 7 What is the main reason your company recruits graduates?
- 8 How does your company ensure it recruits graduates from all backgrounds and/or with different characteristics?
- 9 If your company does not recruit graduates, please comment on why.
- 10 Are graduates from Scottish universities adequately prepared for your workplace?
 - a Please expand on your answer.
- 11 Please rate graduate preparedness for your workplace. (Likert scale: Excellent, Good, Acceptable, Poor, Very poor)
- 12 How important is it that a candidate has a degree?
 - a We only recruit graduates
 - b Very important
 - c Important
 - d Of Little importance
 - e Not important at all
 - f Please expand on your answer.

- 13 What kinds of employer engagement and/or development opportunities for students would you like to see included or improved in Scottish universities? (Already involved, would consider, would not consider)
- Attend a Recruitment Fair
 - Deliver presentations/workshops
 - Offer an insight experience, e.g. taster day
 - Advertise UK-based vacancies
 - Advertise vacancies based overseas
 - Offer work experience/placement/internship opportunities
 - Contribute to a mentoring scheme
 - Contribute to an employability or skills Award/Certificate
 - Offer business challenges, projects, or competitions
 - Collaborate on research with academics
 - Influence module design/contribute to the curriculum
 - Engage with the alumni network of the university of study.
- 14 What kinds of employer engagement and/or development opportunities for students would you like to see included or improved in Scottish universities?
- 15 Has your company identified any skills which graduates frequently lack?
- If yes, please note them here.
- 16 Which skills has your company identified as a priority for future graduate recruitment?
- 17 Does your company have a digital strategy?
- 18 Please review the statements below and say how strongly you agree or disagree (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A). Scottish universities:
- Equip students with digital work-ready skills (e.g. ability to select and fully utilise appropriate tools and software)
 - Teach students appropriate/professional use of digital communication (e.g. use of social media)
 - Prepare students to find, analyse, and use credible digital data sources
 - Teach students to innovate using digital skills (e.g. video, animation, infographics, audio, coding)
 - Equip students with skills to collaborate with others in a digital learning environment
 - Provide opportunities for students to be recognised for their digital skills
 - Provide a high standard of digital provision, digitally enabled learning/teaching spaces, and technology enhanced learning opportunities
 - Comments:
- 19 Please review the statements below and say how strongly you agree or disagree (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A):
- Universities equip students and graduates with relevant global skills
 - Graduates in my company are confident to travel/work abroad when needed
 - Graduates from Scottish universities have appropriate global/cultural understanding to interact with overseas customers and clients
 - Comments:

Coding

Each qualitative question was assigned a coding column in the 'full data' spreadsheet for both surveys. Each relevant question was then reviewed for common themes in a general sift of the information; a number code was then assigned to ensure clarity in the Excel spreadsheet. Each question had up to 10 codes during this initial sift, and were then condensed further once meaning had been established.

For example, the category 'the ability to successfully use/interact with the digital world (e.g. computers, internet) including social media' includes:

- 1 Computing/IT skills
- 2 Effective use of everyday technology (computers, smartphones)
- 3 The ability to use basic software like Microsoft Office Suite
- 4 Use of the internet
- 5 References to a 'digital world' both at home and in work.

Several of these categories were initially numerically coded individually but were eventually combined as they referred to general skills that enable someone to use/interact with the digital world.

Each qualitative question has a key that includes the numerical code, category list, and number of respondents, to limit the chance of error and to ensure the data can be used effectively by any other researcher, QAA, AGCAS, etc. This also allowed the use of Pivot Tables; themes can be easily explored by referencing against any other characteristic or survey response.

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2019
18 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 6NU
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 0141 572 3420
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland