




Graduate Market Survey 2020



The Association of Higher Education Careers Services also known as AHECS is a recognised authority on graduate career development, learning and employability. AHECS is the voice of higher education careers and employability professionals across Ireland.

Representing over 27 Universities and Institutes of Technology, we enable careers teams to develop their own skills and share best practice approaches and resources. Together, our members and partners are helping over 300,000 students to get ahead.



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Welcome to the AHECS Graduate Market Survey 2020

Research results compiled by AHECS represent an annual snapshot of graduate recruitment across Ireland. Participants of this survey are graduate employers who have engaged with AHECS in 2020. These include local, national and global companies, multinational and SMEs, from all sectors and disciplines. 190 graduate employers participated in this year's survey, the first year of the survey.

AHECS surveyed graduate employers between June and July 2020. Feedback from the organisations proves to be highly beneficial in preparing our graduates for their future careers. The 2020 survey captures graduate recruitment trends including graduate:

- Employment by sector
- Employment by location
- Job vacancies
- Recruitment levels
- Disciplines in demand

190

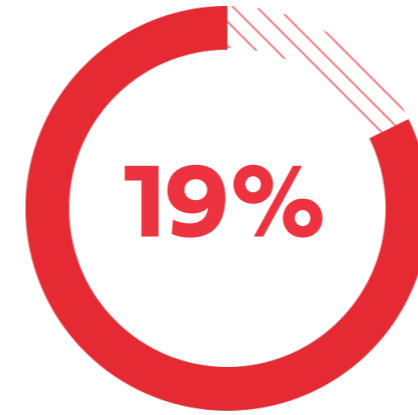
graduate employers participated in the survey

- Recruitment processes
- Top technical and soft skills, ranked by employers
- Recruiter challenges
- Covid -19 impact
- Employment sectors - overview of top five

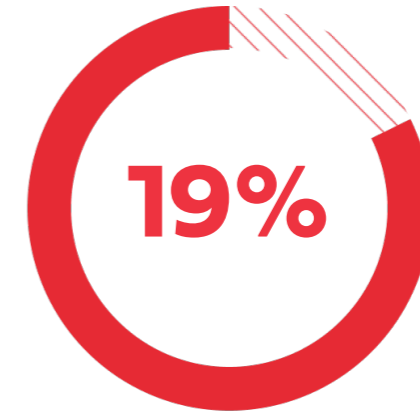
The Graduate Market Survey 2020 provides employer participants and AHECS with invaluable insights into the graduate recruitment market. We would like to thank everyone who took part in the survey. We invite you to view the results and trends, as part of your ongoing exploration of the graduate recruitment market

Sectors Surveyed

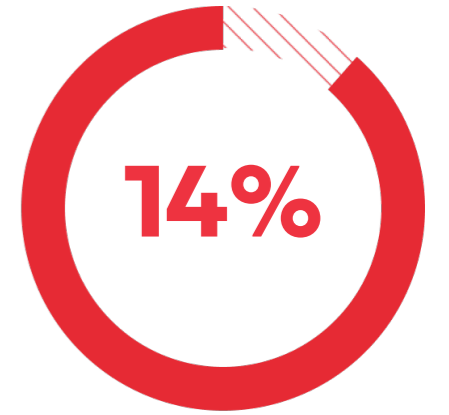
The Graduate Market Survey uses NACE, which is also used by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to ensure the standard classification of economic activity. NACE is an acronym derived from the French title Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes. NACE is the statistical classification of human health and social activities in the EU. For NACE classifications go to [CSO.ie](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&code=sextet)



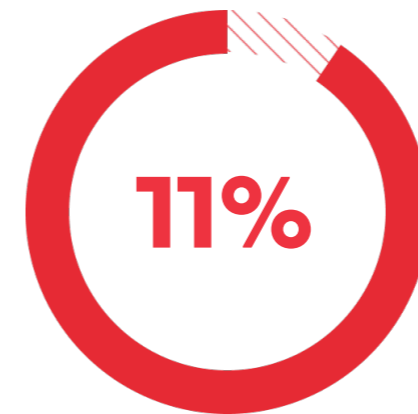
Manufacturing



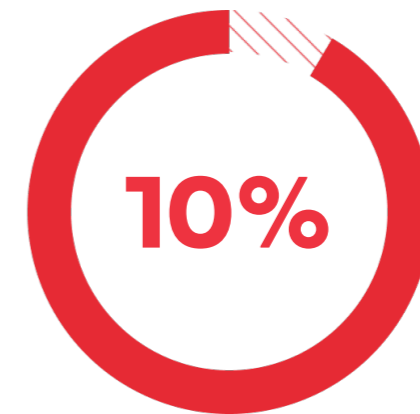
**Professional,
Scientific &
Technical Activities**



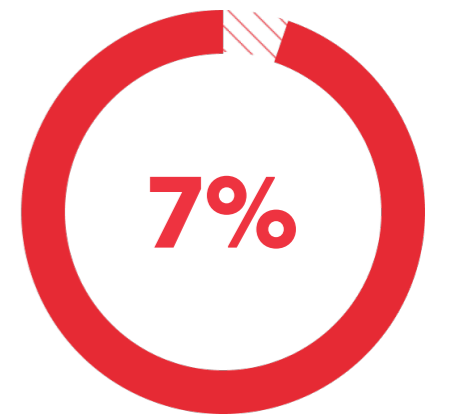
**Information &
Communication**



Construction

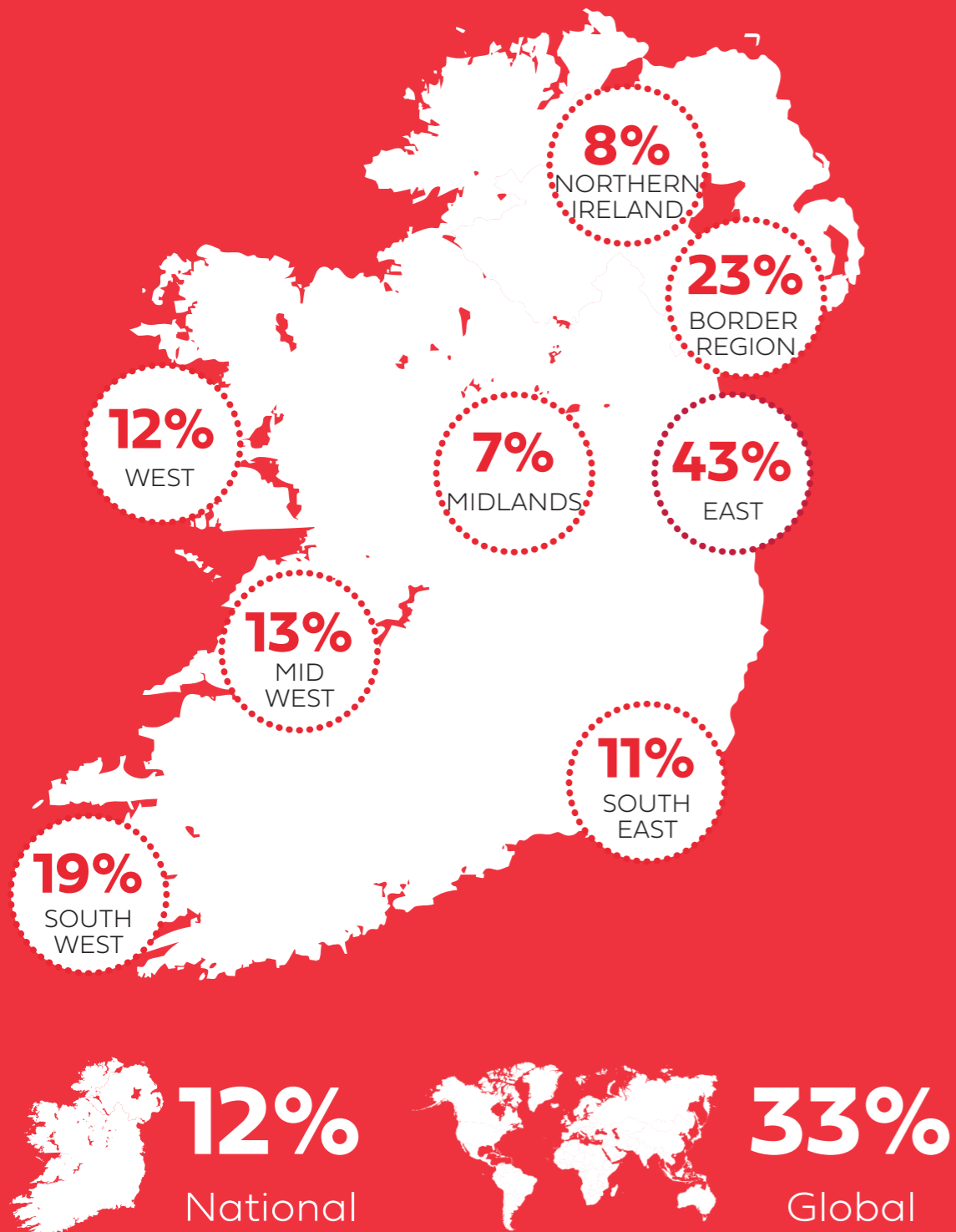


**Financial &
Insurance
Activities**



Education

Location of Graduate Vacancies



Number of Graduate Vacancies

Location of graduate vacancies

Results for the jobs available in the graduate market in 2020 reveal the highest percentage of jobs available is in the East region at 43%, the Border region at 23%, and the South-West at 19%. This reflects the national trend of strong economic growth in the east of the country. 12% of the jobs are national and 33% are global.

Expected number of graduate vacancies: 2020 results

Q. How many graduate vacancies does your organisation expect to have for 2020/21, and how does this compare with 2019/20?

Overall, 46% of respondents indicate they will recruit approximately the same number of graduates as last year, and possibly more, 17% will recruit less than 2019 and 6% are planning to cancel their graduate recruitment plans for 2020. A third of employers don't know how their graduate recruitment numbers will change for 2020 yet which reflects the current uncertainty in the market at the moment due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recruitment Level



12%

We will recruit more than last year.



34%

We will recruit about the same as last year.



17%

We will recruit less graduates this year.



6%

We are planning to cancel our graduate recruitment plans.



30%

We don't know how numbers will change yet.

Salary Range

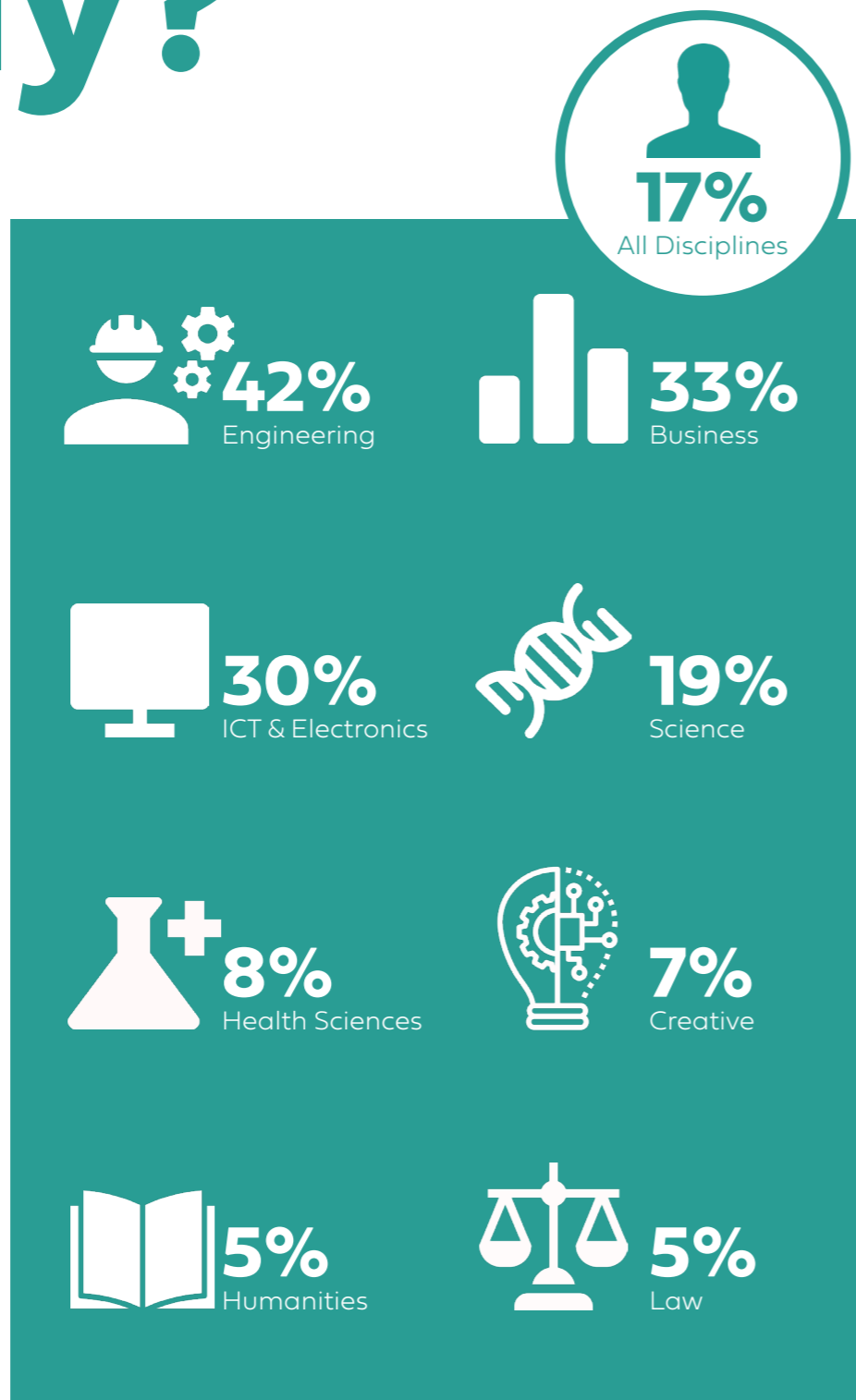
Q. What do you expect the graduate entry salary to be in your organisation for 2020/21?

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate Masters	Postgraduate PhD
€17,000 - €20,999	14%	0%	0%
€21,000 - €24,999	19%	10%	9%
€25,000 - €28,999	23%	28%	27%
€29,000 - €32,999	24%	25%	18%
€33,000 - €36,999	13%	23%	27%
€37,000 - €40,999	3%	7%	6%
€41,000 +	4%	7%	12%

This table presents the average starting salaries on offer to graduates, based on their level of educational qualifications. It clearly illustrates the correlation between a graduate's level of education and the starting salary they can command in the market. Average salary for Undergraduates is €28,045, for Postgraduate Master's degrees is €31,254 and for Postgraduate PhDs is €31,969.

Who should apply?

Results for 2020 indicate that 17% of respondent employers are looking for graduate applicants from all disciplines. This highlights the general aim of many employers to diversify their talent pool. Of the companies surveyed, 42% are looking for engineering graduates, 33% for business graduates, and 30% for informatics and electronics graduates.



Application & Selection Tools

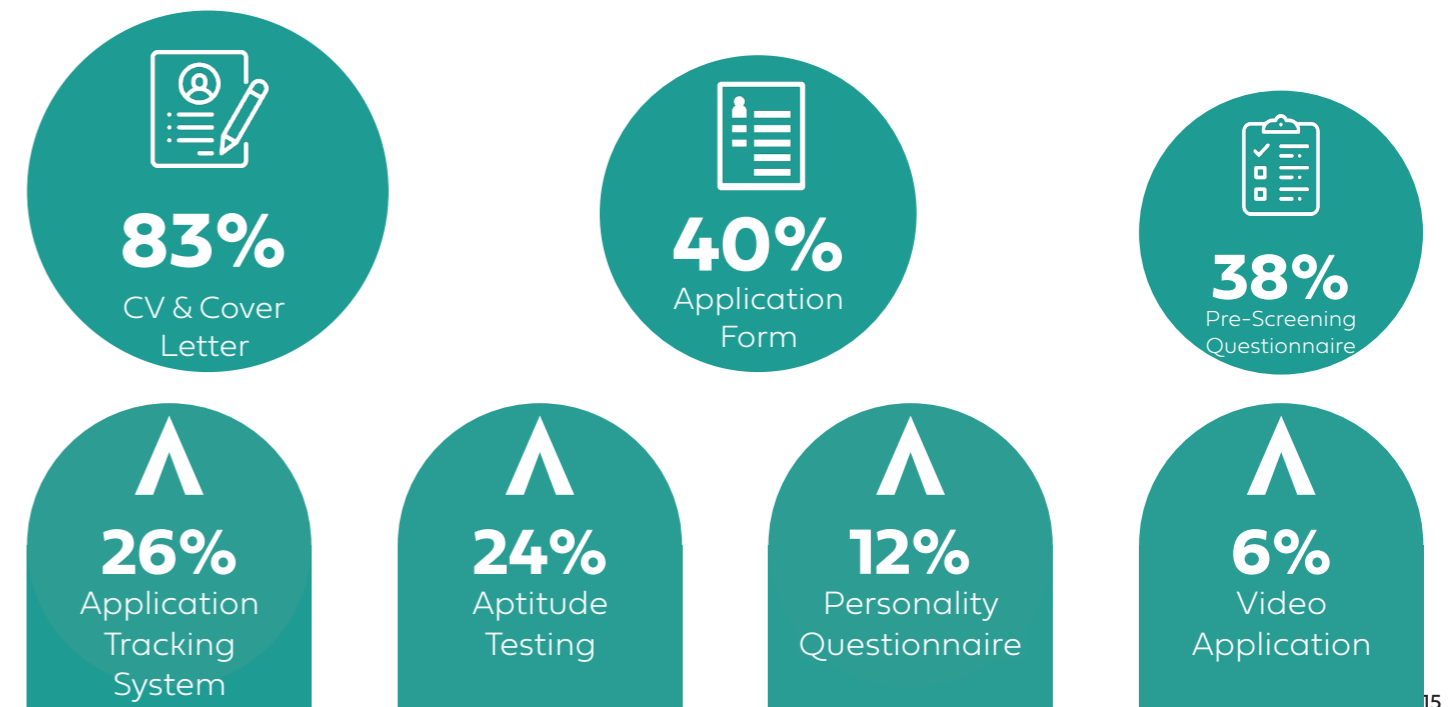
Application Stage

Results highlight the importance of having an excellent CV and cover letter with 83% of respondent employers indicating the requirement for a CV and cover letter at the application stage. Online applications are popular, used by 40% of the organisations surveyed. 38% of respondents are now using pre-screening questions at application stage.

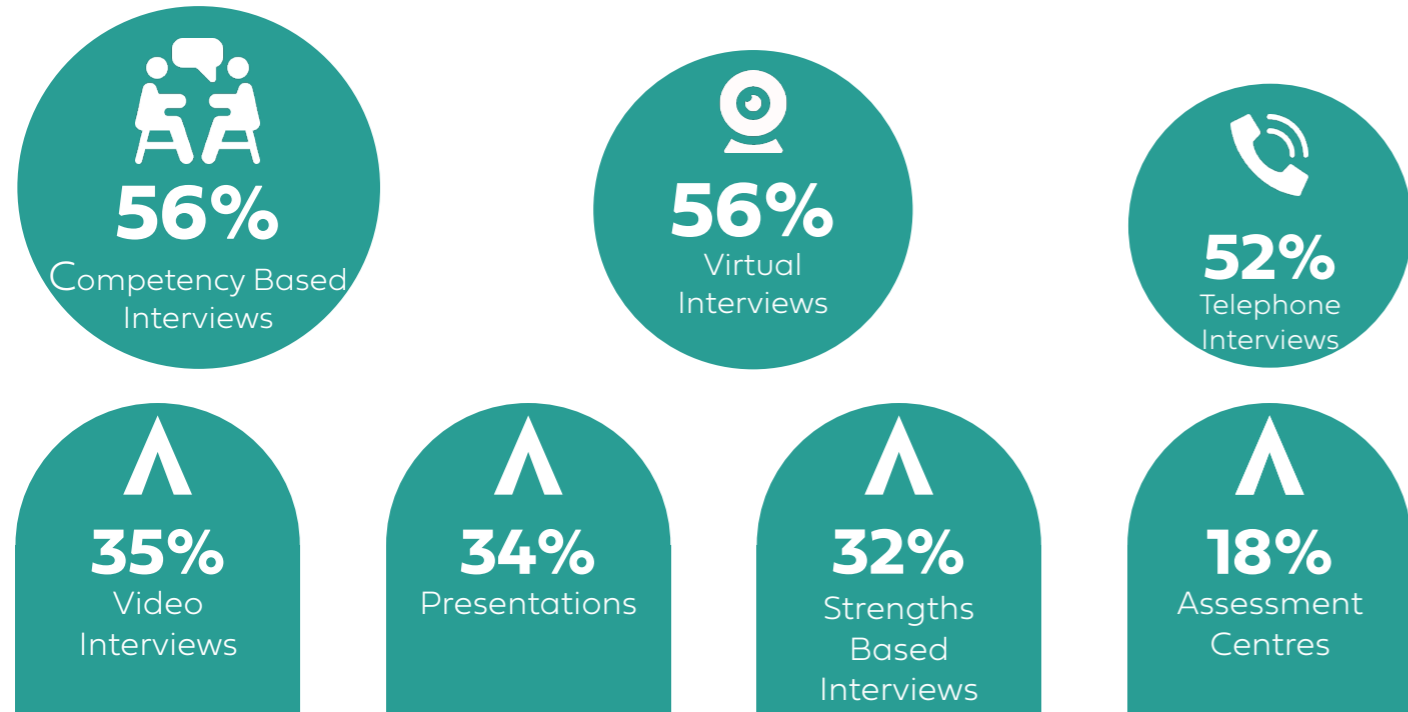
Selection Stage

The 2020 survey examined the most widely used selection methods. Survey participants could select more than one method from the list. The survey results reveal 56% of the organisations use competency/behavioural-based interviews. Virtual and telephone interviews remain popular with 56% and 52% of companies surveyed using this method in their recruitment process. 34% of respondents use presentations, and 18% of respondents use assessment centres. 32% of organisations use strengths-based interviews. Other recruitment screening methods include reference checking (54%) and social media checks (13%).

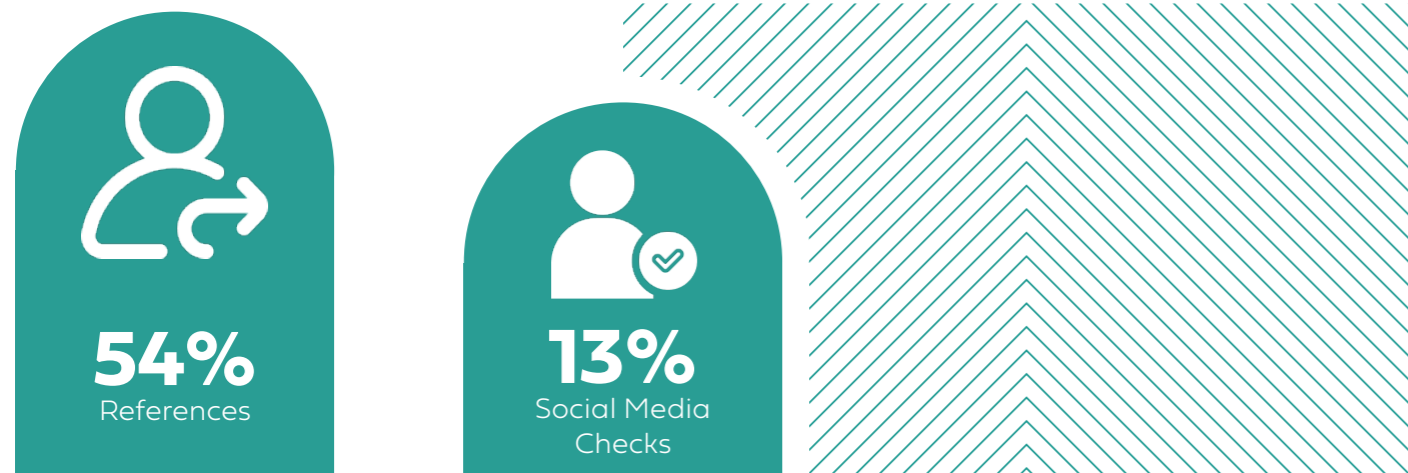
Application Process



Interview Process



Pre-Employment Process



Summer Internships

Q. Does your organisation offer summer internships?



Work Placements

Q. Does your organisation offer 6-12 month work placements?



Covid-19

Have you withdrawn any offers already made due to Covid-19?

Graduate Offers:



Placement/Summer Internship Offers:



Do you anticipate starting graduate hires remotely?



Do you anticipate deferring the start date of graduate hires in 2020?



Results for 2020 indicate that 63% of respondent employers were going to continue with their graduate offers with 14% withdrawing their graduate offers; there was a more significant impact on placement and summer internships with 31% of offers withdrawn. The dichotomy between graduate offers and placements/summer internships would be because of the timeline of the COVID impact, i.e. graduate roles to commence in Sept/Oct, and placement students would have been in situ at the time of the lockdown.

A significant amount (46%) of those proceeding with their graduate offers will be starting their graduate hires remotely with 42% planning on continuing with their original start date.

Graduate recruitment challenges

Q. Please rank the challenges you face in your graduate recruitment this year

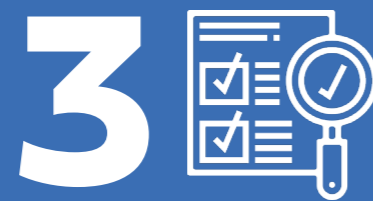
2020 survey results reveal the number of available graduates from specific degrees/skillsets is the most significant recruitment challenge for employer respondents. The next challenge is the expectations of graduates at entry-level stage, and their work-readiness levels. This calls for a greater partnership between employers and universities when it comes to preparing students for the working world.



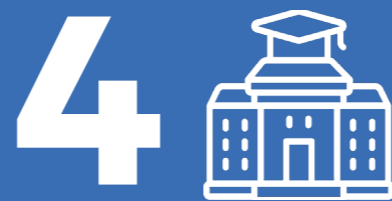
1 Number of available graduates from specific degrees/skillsets.



2 Graduates expectations at entry level stage.



3 Work readiness level of graduates.



4 Managing your on-campus profile.



5 Setting and achieving diversity targets.



6 Managing the employer - university relationship.

Demand Vs. Supply

Q. Did you recruit the number of graduates in 2019/20 that you had hoped in the following areas? The below table shows how companies hoping to recruit graduates in certain sectors did or didn't fill these positions. Healthcare, leisure & tourism, recruitment and retail all failed to fill the graduate positions available.

	Yes	No
Audit and Accountancy	53%	47%
Banking, investment banking, financial services	50%	50%
Construction, built environment	39%	61%
Consulting	34%	66%
Engineering	74%	26%
Food and drink industry	42%	58%
Healthcare	27%	73%
Human Resources	53%	47%
IT and Technology	65%	35%
Law	33%	67%
Leisure and tourism	26%	74%
Logistics and transport	42%	58%
Marketing and Digital media	46%	54%
Public sector	21%	79%
Recruitment Consultancy	26%	74%
Research and development	42%	58%
Retail	26%	74%
Sales / Account Management	47%	53%

Global Technical Skills



Respondent employers were asked to rank **12 global technical skills**, according to the value of those skills to their organisation.

Economic and technological changes are facilitating an internationalisation of business. Many companies, large and small, have international customers/operations and international recruitment patterns. The jobs market for highly-skilled graduates is becoming increasingly global.

Top five global technical skills 2020:

1. Analytical thinking
2. Self-motivation
3. Flexibility
4. Collaborative
5. Qualifications related to job

Top five global technical skills 2019:

1. Flexibility
2. Self-motivation
3. Analytical thinking
4. Qualifications related to job
5. Collaborative

Global Soft Skills

Respondent employers were asked to rank **12 global soft skills**, according to the value of those skills to their organisation.

Organisations are challenging the national expectations of the graduate workforce. As the requirements of employers for their global workforce continue to change, graduates and providers of higher education must adapt to succeed.

Top five global soft skills 2020:

1. Positive attitude and energy
2. Work ethic
3. Ability to cope with pressure
4. Open to new ideas/ways of thinking
5. Seeks opportunity for continuous learning

Top five global soft skills 2019:

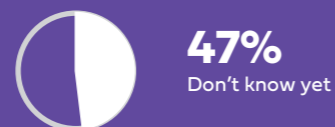
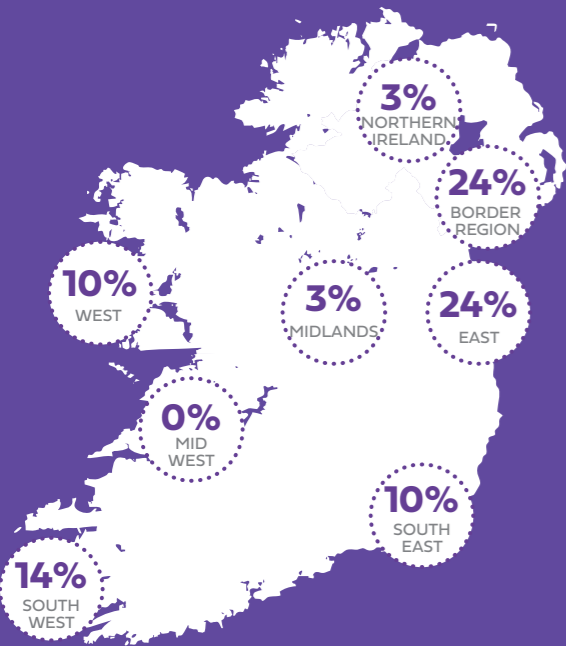
1. Open to new ideas/ways of thinking
2. Seeks opportunities for continuous learning
3. Demonstrates respect for others
4. Listens/observes to deepen understanding
5. Works effectively in diverse teams



Sector Analysis

Construction

Survey results reveal the East and Border Region as the primary location for jobs in the construction sector with 24% of jobs on offer in each region, followed by the South-West at 14%, and the South-East and Mid-West at 10% each. The 2020 results reveal that 40% of companies will hire the same number of graduates as they did in 2019, and 7% of companies will hire more. 47% currently don't know the impact to their recruitment activities. The top three Technical Skills are Commercial awareness, Flexibility and Self-motivation. The top three Soft skills are Ability to cope with pressure, Listens/observes for deeper understanding and Positive attitude and energy.



Construction Technical Skills Ranked 1 – 12



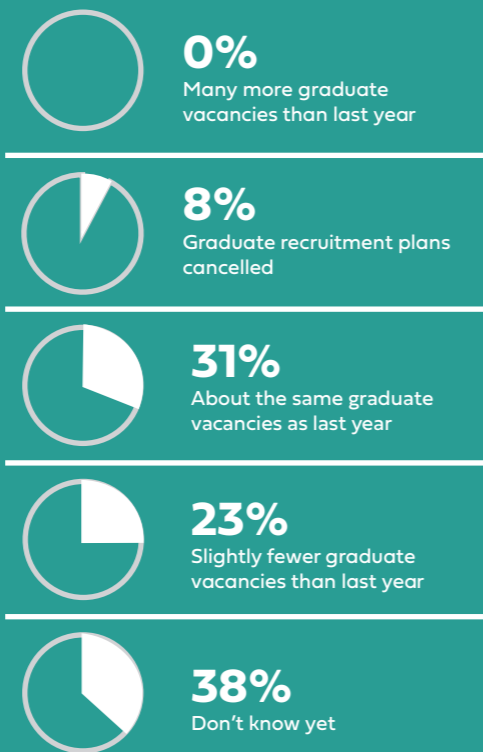
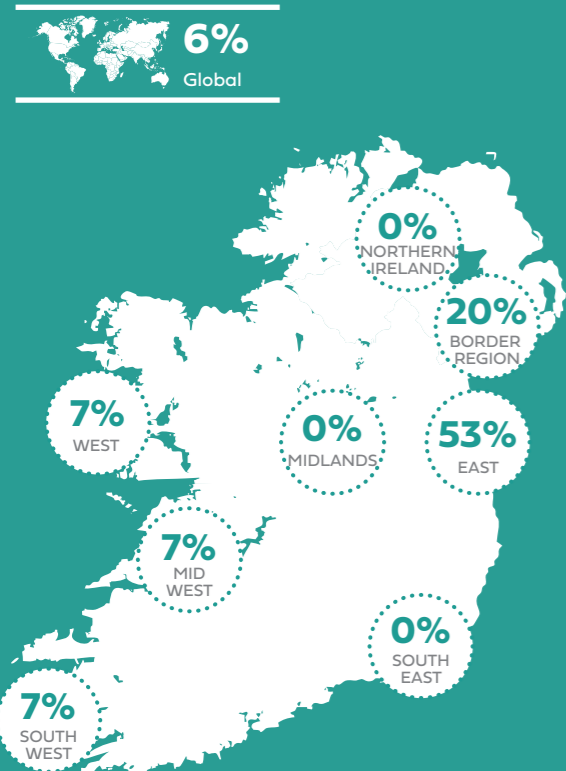
Construction Soft Skills Ranked 1 – 12



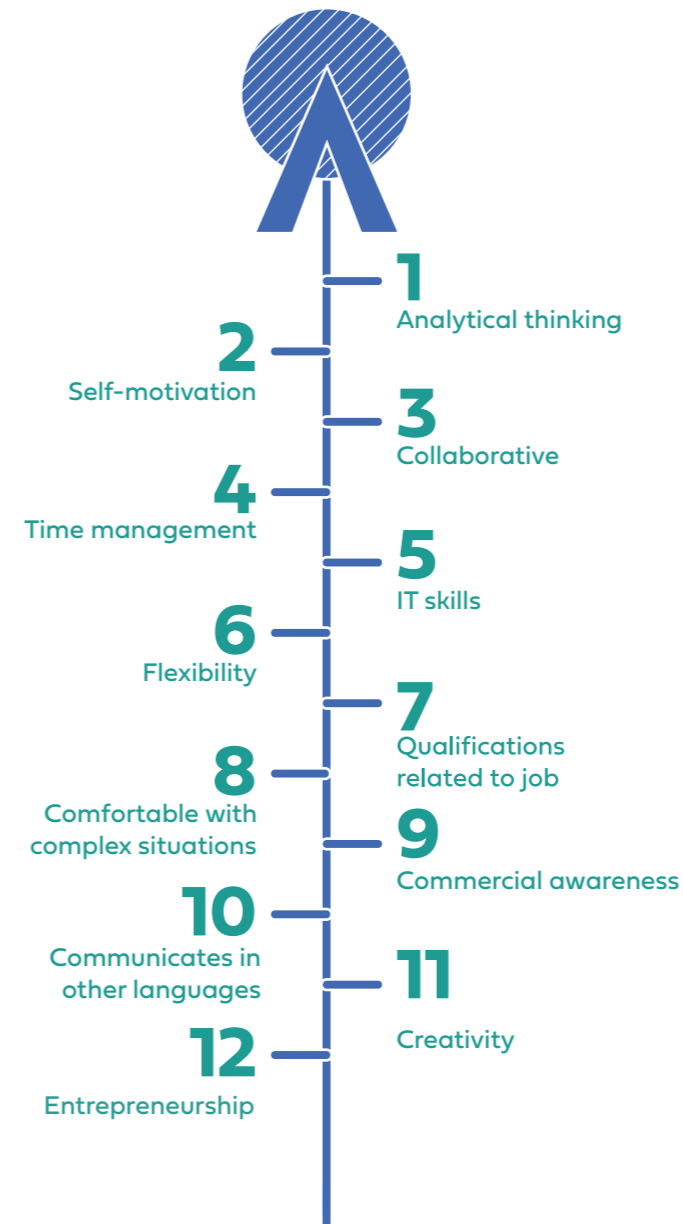
Sector Analysis

Finance & Insurance

Survey results reveal the East as the primary location for jobs in the finance and insurance activities sector with 53% of jobs on offer in this region, followed by the Border Region at 20%, and the South-West, South-East and Mid- West at 7% each. The 2020 results reveal that 31% of companies will hire the same number of graduates as they did in 2019, 23% slightly less than last year. 38% currently don't know the impact to their recruitment activities. The top three Technical Skills are Analytical, Self-motivation and Collaboration skills. The top three Soft skills are Seeking opportunity for continuous learning, positive attitude and energy and Listens/observes for deepen understanding.



Finance & Insurance Technical Skills Ranked 1 – 12



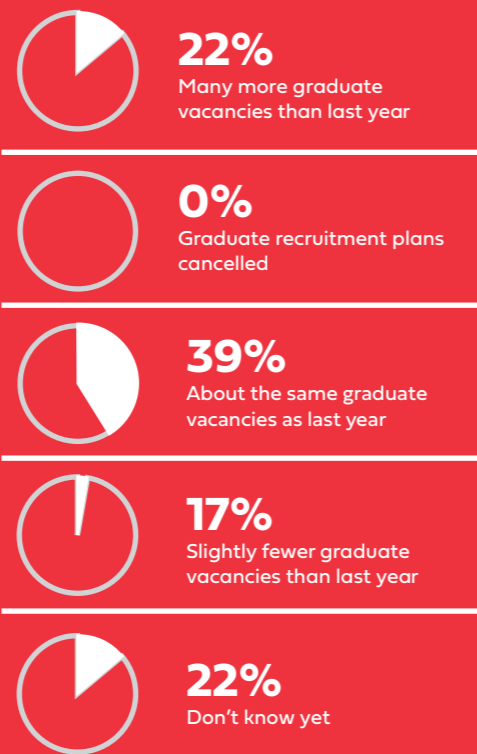
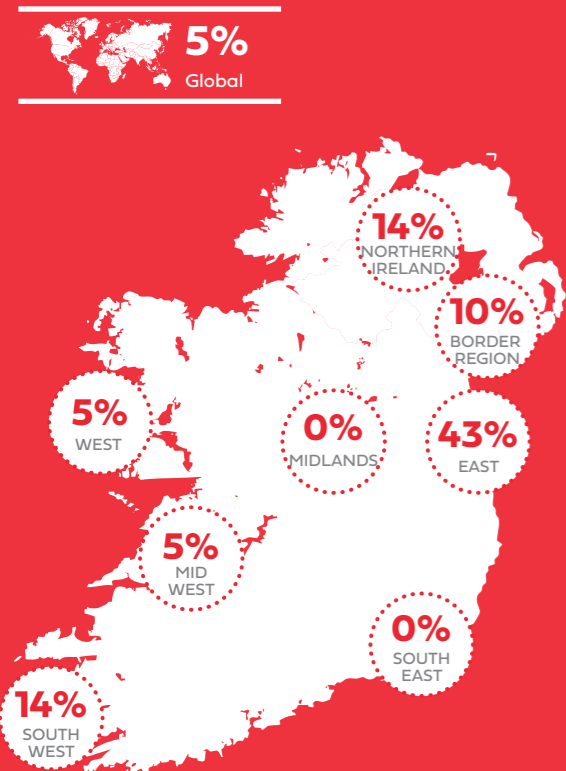
Finance & Insurance Soft Skills Ranked 1 – 12



Sector Analysis

Information & Communications

Survey results reveal the East as the primary location for jobs in the information and communication activities sector with 43% of jobs on offer in this region, followed by the Northern Ireland and the South-West at 14%, the Border Region at 10% and Mid-West and West at 5% each. The 2020 results reveal that 31% of companies will hire the same number of graduates as they did in 2019, 23% slighter less than last year. 38% currently don't know the impact to their recruitment activities. The top three Technical Skills are Analytical, Collaboration and IT skills. The top three Soft skills are Positive Energy, works effectively in diverse teams and demonstrating respect for others.



Information & Communications Technical Skills Ranked 1 – 12



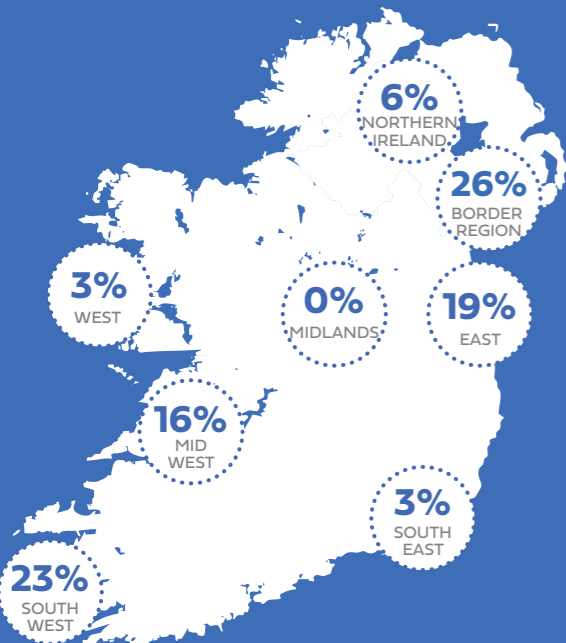
Information & Communications Soft Skills Ranked 1 – 12



Sector Analysis

Manufacturing

Survey results reveal the Border Region as the primary location for jobs in the manufacturing sector with 26% of jobs on offer in this region, followed by the South-West at 23%. The East and the Mid-West at 19% and 16% respectively. The 2020 results reveal that 28% of companies will hire the same number of graduates as they did in 2019, 28% more graduates than last year. 28% currently don't know the impact to their recruitment activities. The top three Technical Skills are Analytical thinking, Flexibility and Qualification related to the job. The top three Soft skills are Positive Energy, Ability to cope with pressure and Open to new ideas/ways of thinking.



Manufacturing Technical Skills Ranked 1 – 12



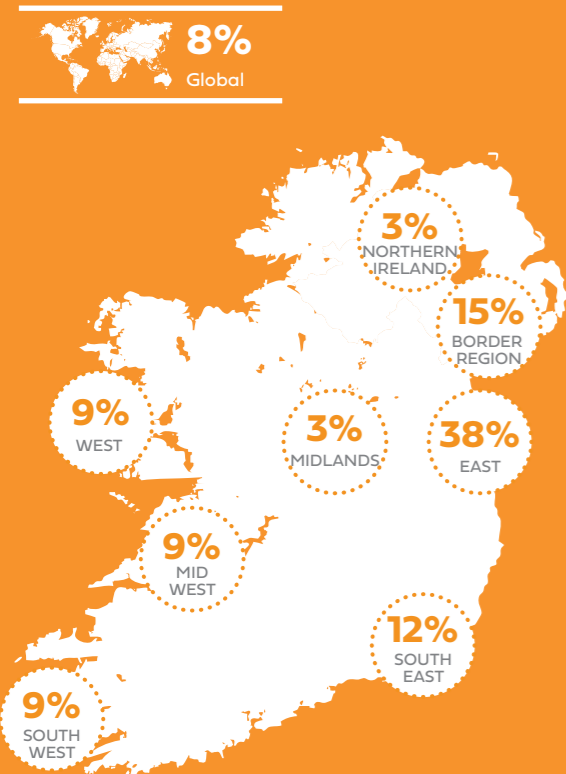
Manufacturing Soft Skills Ranked 1 – 12



Sector Analysis

Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities

Survey results reveal the East as the primary location for jobs in the professional, scientific and technical activities sector with 38% of jobs on offer in this region, followed by the Border Region at 15%. The South-East at 12% and the South-West, West and Mid-West at 9% each. The 2020 results reveal that 40% of companies will hire the same number of graduates as they did in 2019. 32% currently don't know the impact to their recruitment activities. The top three Technical Skills are Analytical thinking, Collaborative and Self-motivation. The top three Soft skills are Work ethic, Positive Energy, and Open to new ideas/ways of thinking.



Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities Technical Skills Ranked 1 – 12



Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities Soft Skills Ranked 1 – 12





**ASSOCIATION of HIGHER
EDUCATION CAREERS SERVICES**

Cooperative Education & Careers Division,
University of Limerick,
V94 T9PX,
Ireland