UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Cooperative Education and Careers Division

Early Careers Employer Survey 2023

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To access more detailed and relevant data for your industry, please scan the QR Code with your smartphone or tablet. This will direct you to a website where you can download reports, charts, and graphs that will help you understand the market trends and opportunities for your business.

Welcome

Welcome to the Early Careers Employer Survey 2023

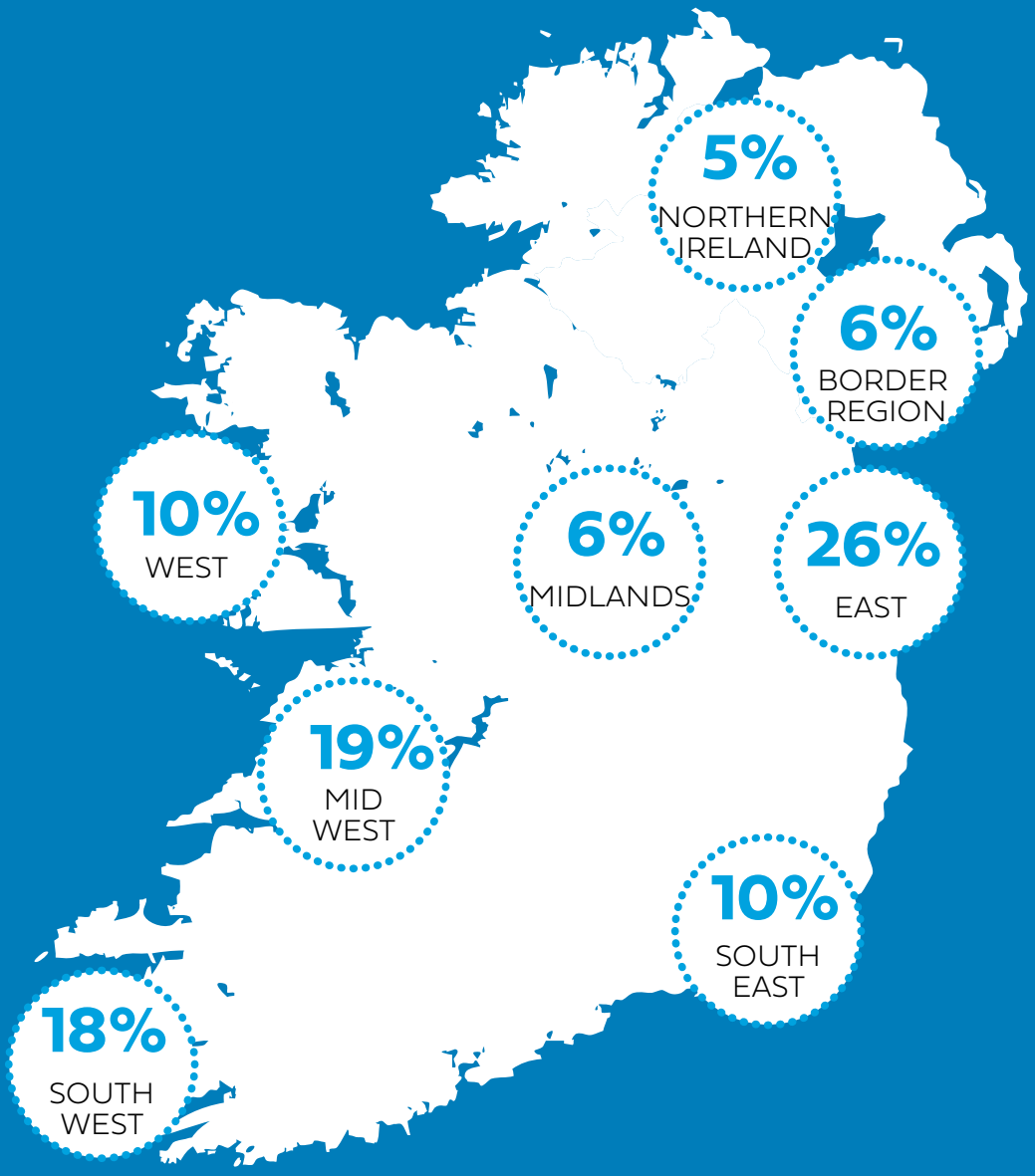
The University of Limerick conducted this survey to provide an annual overview of graduate recruitment in Ireland. The survey participants are employers who hired graduates or offered placements in 2022/23. They represent a diverse range of organisations, including local, national and global companies, multinationals and SMEs, and not-for-profits, from various sectors and disciplines. Three hundred and forty employers responded to the survey this year. The survey took place between April and May 2023. The feedback from the organisations helps us to prepare our graduates for their future careers.

The survey covers various aspects of placement and graduate recruitment, such as:

- Average Salaries
- Disciplines in demand
- Employment by location
- Employment by sector
- Job vacancies
- Recruitment levels
- Work Placement activities
- Recruitment processes
- Top technical and soft skills, ranked by employers
- Recruitment challenges

The Early Careers Employer Survey is a valuable resource for employers, students, and HEI (AHECS) colleagues to understand the placement and graduate recruitment market. We are grateful to everyone who supported and participated in the survey. We encourage you to view the results and trends as part of your ongoing exploration of the placement and graduate recruitment market.

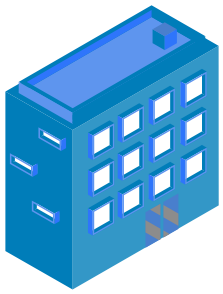
Organisation Location



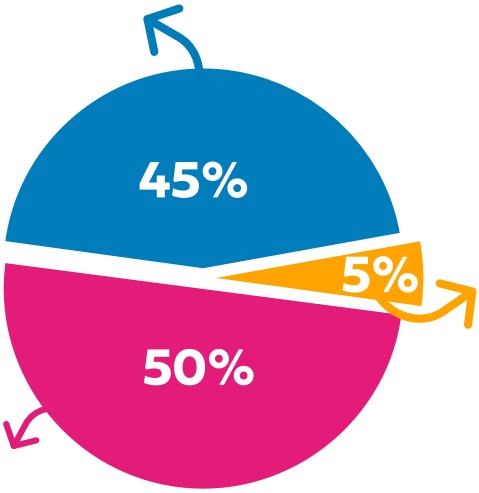
68%
National

32%
Global

Organisation Type



Small - Medium Enterprises (SME)
Less than 250 employees



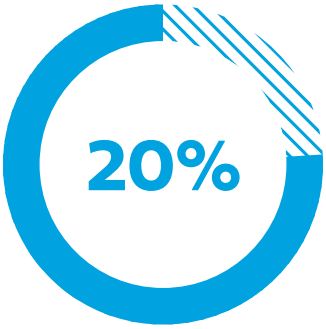
Charitable or Not-for-profit

Large Organisations
Over 250 employees

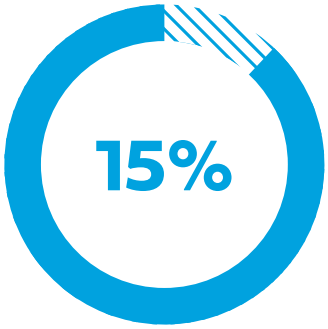
Three hundred and forty employers responded to the survey this year. The distribution of organisation types responding to the survey has become more balanced in 2023, with Small – Medium Enterprise organisations accounting for 45% of the response rate and large organisations for 50%. The remaining 5% of the response rate belongs to charities or not-for-profit organisations.

Sectors Surveyed

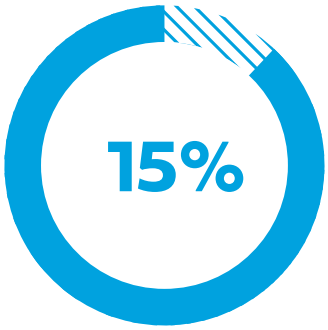
The Graduate Market Survey uses NACE, which is also used by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Higher Education §Authority (HEA) to ensure thestandard classification of economic activity. NACE is an acronym derived fromthe French title Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes. NACE is the statistical classification of human health and social activities in the EU. For NACE classifications go to CSO.ie



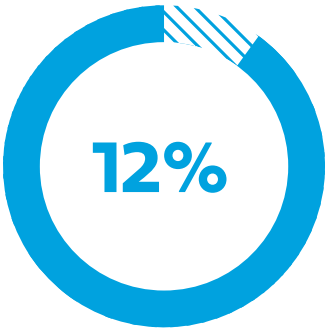
Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities



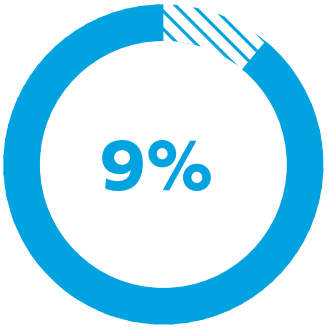
Industry



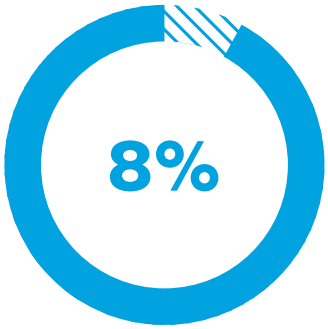
Construction



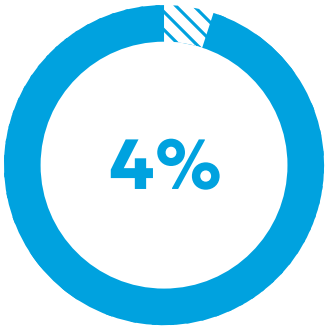
Financial & Insurance Activities



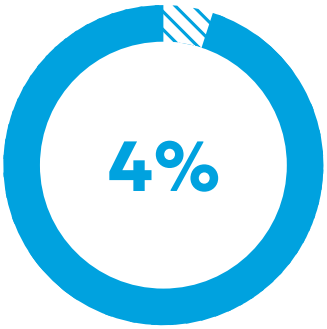
Information & Communication



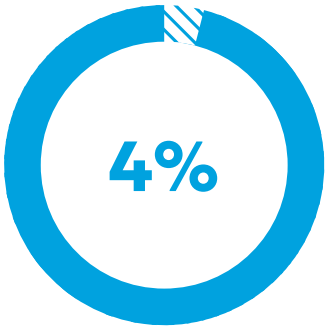
Education



Wholesale & Retail Trade

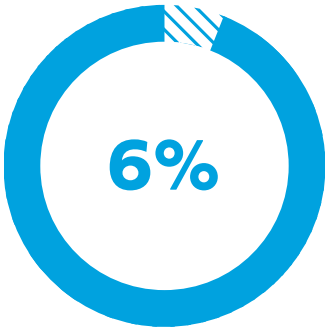


Human Health & Social Work



Arts, Entertainment & Recreation

Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing



All Others

Work Placement

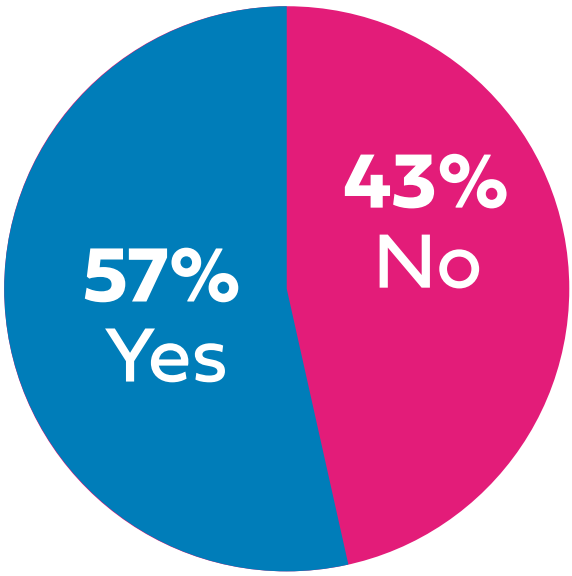
Work Placement is a type of work experience that is part of a degree or a training programme, where students can apply their knowledge and skills in a professional setting related to their field of study.

It involves a three-way partnership between an employer, a student and a Higher Education Institution (HEI), where the student works for a certain period of time, usually between 3-12 months, and may receive academic credit or payment.

Work Placement is offered by 79% of employers surveyed, a 3% increase from last year, and 57% of employers also offer summer internships.

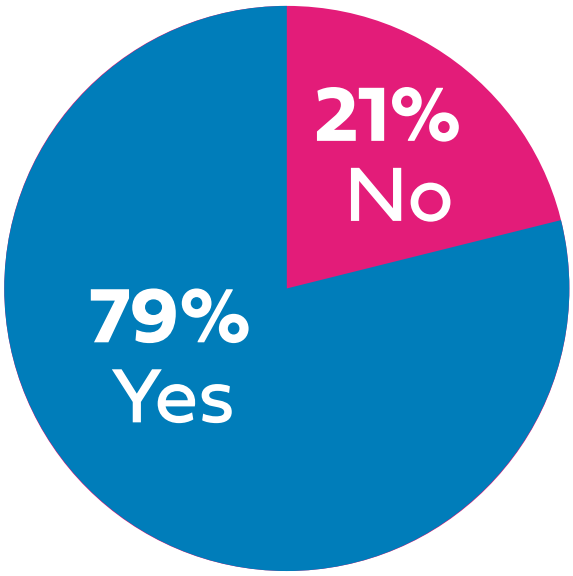
Summer Internships

Q. Do you offer Summer Internships?

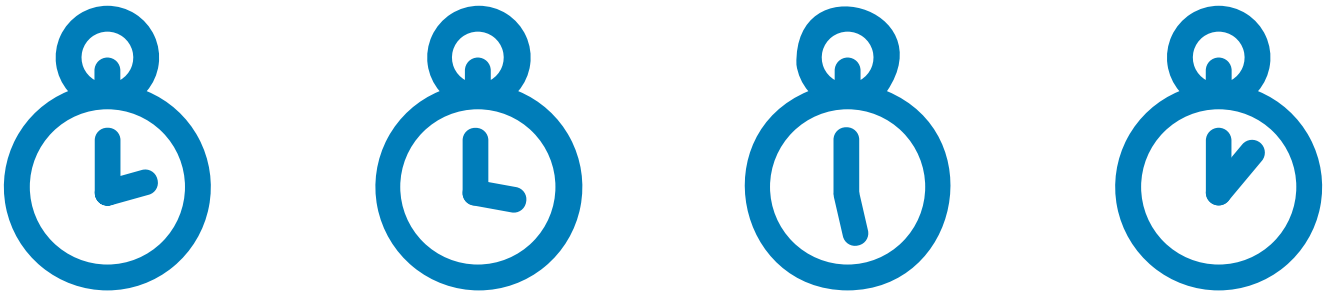


Work Placements

Q. Do you offer Work Placements?



Duration of Work Placements



17%
Up to 3mths

27%
3 - 6mths

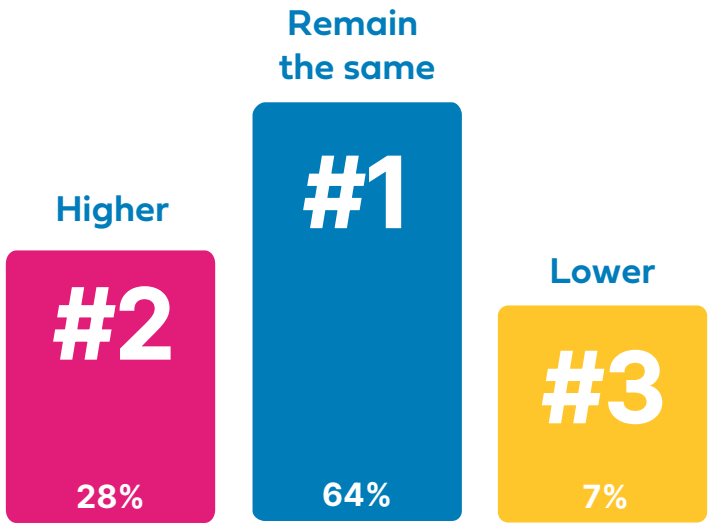
45%
6 - 12mths

11%
12mths +

Changes in Placement

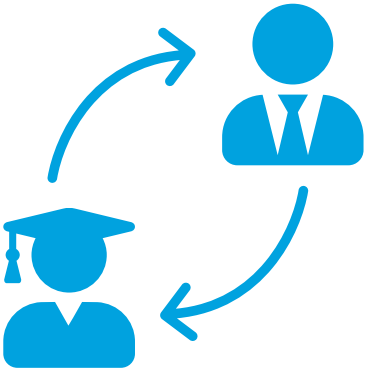
According to a recent survey, the number of summer internships and work placements offered by employers will not change significantly from previous years. One third of the surveyed organisations plan to increase their intake of interns and placement students, while 7% will reduce their opportunities. The proportion of placement students who are hired as graduates after their work experience remains stable at 40% up 3% from last year.

Q. How do you expect the total number of work placements to change during 2023/24?



Conversion Rates

Q. Typically, what percentage of work placement students converted to graduate hires?



Average Conversion Rate

40%

Graduate Recruitment

The graduate recruitment market is constantly evolving and adapting to employers' and candidates' changing needs and expectations. Some of the current trends that are shaping the graduate recruitment market are:

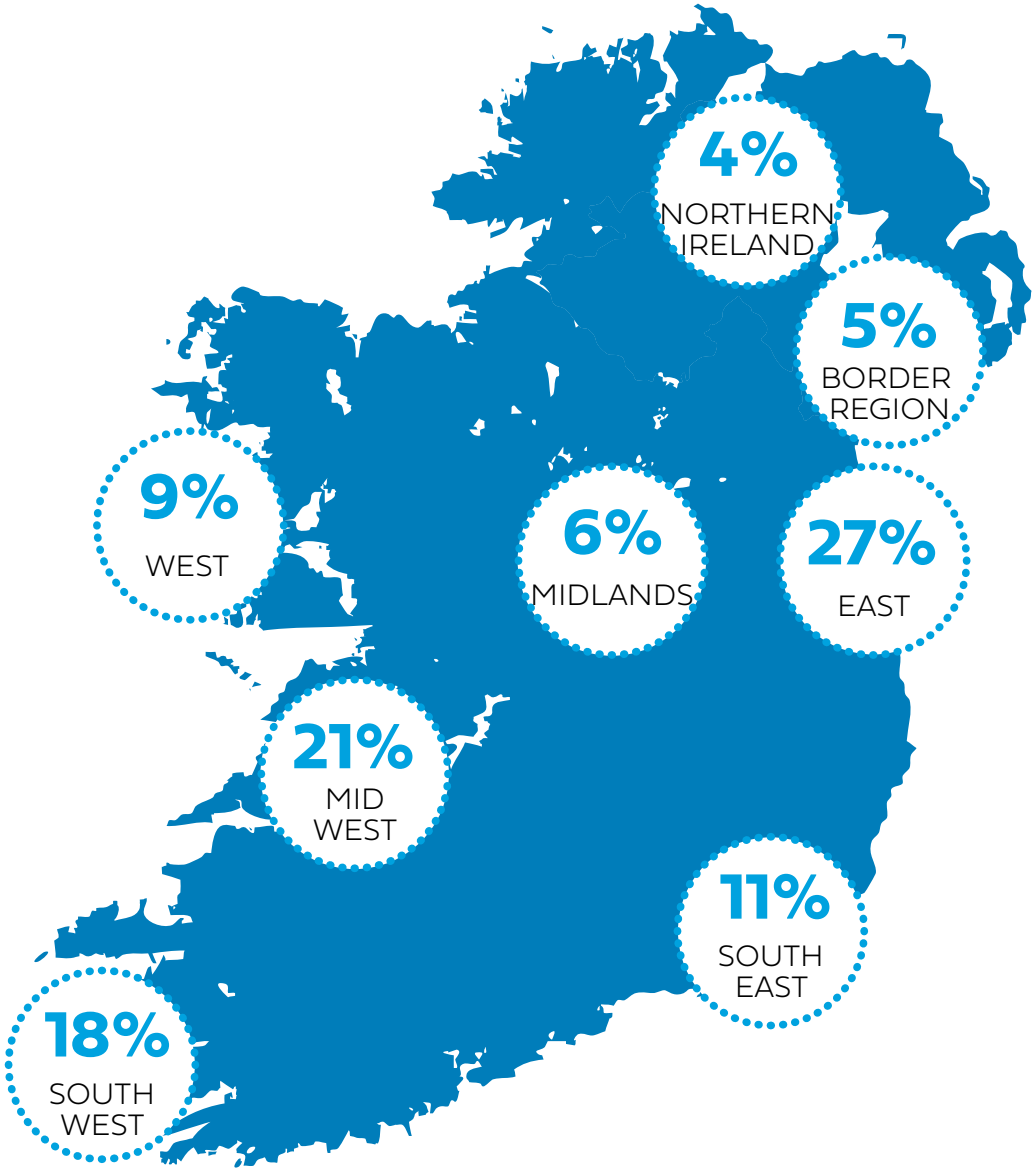
- The rise of remote work and flexible arrangements offer more opportunities for graduates to work from anywhere and balance their personal and professional lives.

- The increased demand for digital skills and competencies requires graduates to be proficient in using various technologies and platforms and learn new ones quickly.

- The growing importance of diversity and inclusion encourages employers to seek out and hire graduates from different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences and foster a culture of belonging and respect in the workplace.

- The shift from linear to nonlinear career paths allows graduates to explore different roles and industries and pursue their passions and interests rather than following a predetermined trajectory.

Vacancy Location



79%
National

21%
Global

Graduate Vacancies

Location of graduate vacancies

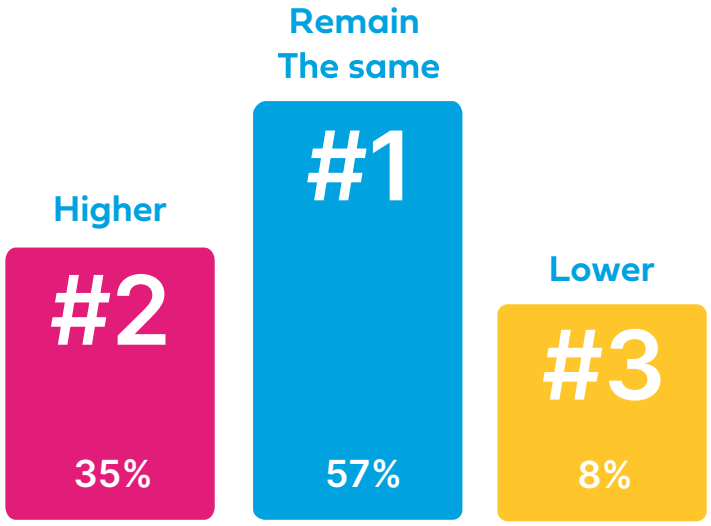
Graduate roles are most prevalent in the East, accounting for 27% of the total. The Midwest comes second with 21%, followed by the Southwest at 18%. 79% of opportunities are based in Ireland with 21% of opportunities available overseas.

Graduate Vacancies and Hiring Environment for 23/24

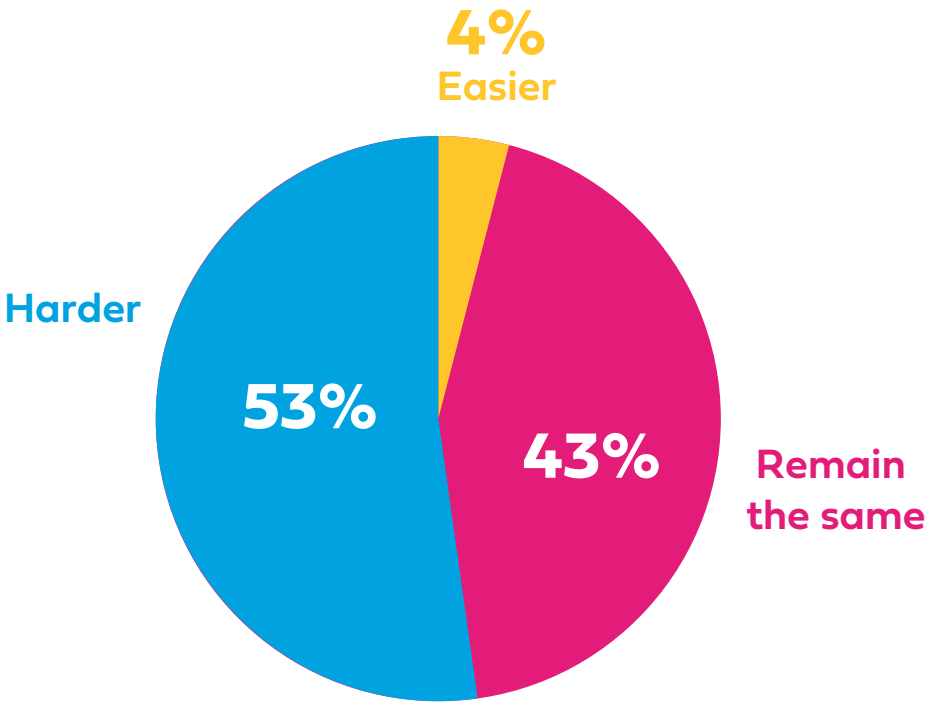
According to a survey, 92% of respondents expect the level of graduate vacancies to be higher or at a similar level as 2023 with only 8% citing a decrease in graduate levels.

The survey also asked participants to rate the difficulty of filling these open positions and the results showed that most participants expect the hiring environment to become more challenging in the next 12 months. Specifically, 53% of respondents anticipate an increase in the difficulty level, 43% predict no change, and only 4% foresee a decrease. These findings suggest employers may face more competition and challenges in hiring as the demand for talent exceeds the supply.

Expected level of graduate vacancies



Expected hiring environment over next 12 months



EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

How important is diversity and inclusion to your recruitment policy?

75% Very Important

17% Somewhat Important

6% No Opinion

2% Not Important

15% Gender

78% No Targets

1% Physical Disability

1% Social Class

1 % Ethnicity

N/A Age

N/A Religion

N/A Mental/ Neurodiversity

N/A Sexual Orientation

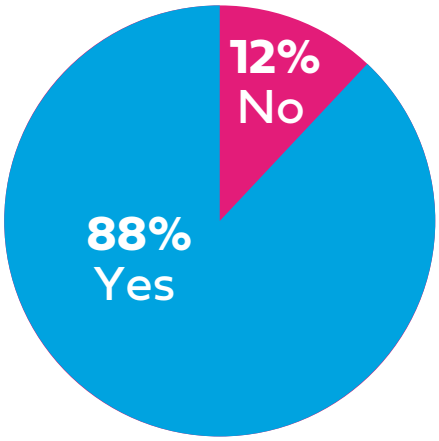
5% Other

Diversity and inclusion are essential for creating a positive and productive work environment. They also help organisations attract and retain the best talent from various backgrounds and perspectives. Inclusive recruitment is connecting with, assessing, and selecting diverse individuals when hiring. It requires organisational and individual practices that value diversity and are bias-free. Diversity refers to representing and recognising people with different characteristics, such as age, gender, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. Inclusion goes beyond representation and recognition to valuing these differences and enabling everyone to thrive at work.

One way to measure the effectiveness of inclusive recruitment is to set hiring targets for different groups of candidates. Hiring targets are specific goals or quotas to increase the representation of underrepresented or marginalised groups in the workforce.

However, not all employers use hiring targets as part of their diversity and inclusion strategy. Our study found that while most respondents (92%) see diversity and inclusion as important to their recruitment policy, 78% do not set any hiring targets; for those who do, the significant target is gender.

Do you provide job specs for each new graduate role?



Channels used to recruit/advertise graduate opportunities?

91% Your Own Website

83% LinkedIn

81% University Vacancy systems

64% Employee Referral

59% Jobs boards

56% Placement/ Internships

30% Recruitment agency

28% Facebook

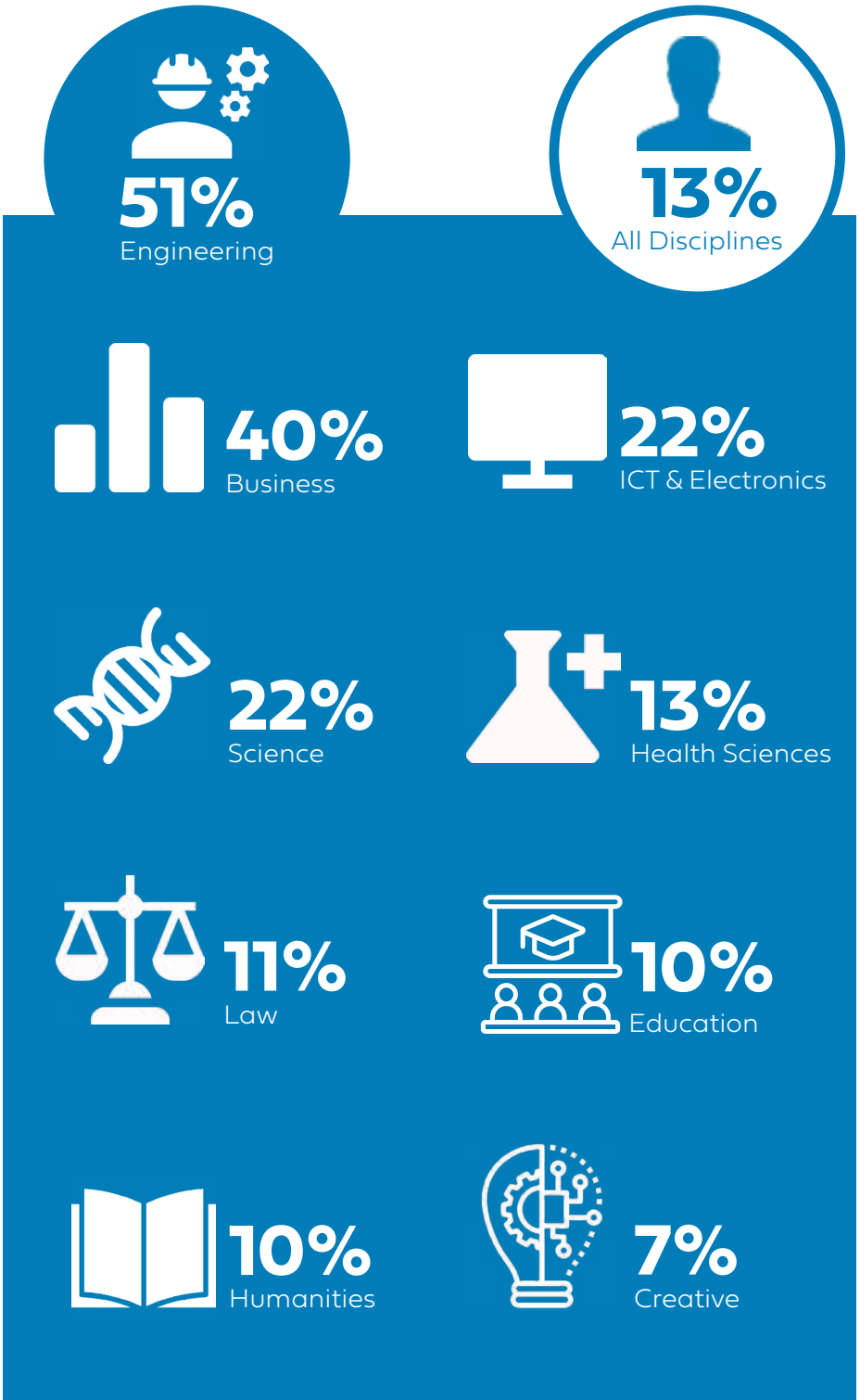
24% Instagram

6% TikTok

6% Other

Who Should Apply?

The survey conducted by the University of Limerick collected data from 340 companies across various sectors and regions. The survey aimed to identify the most sought-after disciplines among graduate applicants by employers. The survey results showed that the top 9 disciplines that employers are looking for have remained stable compared to the previous year. The most in demand disciplines are engineering, business, and ICT and electronics, which account for 51%, 40%, and 22% of the total demand respectively. These disciplines reflect the growing needs of the economy in areas such as infrastructure, innovation, and digitalization. 13% of the surveyed employers indicated that they are not restricted to any specific discipline and are willing to consider graduates from any field of study up 2% on last year.



TimeFrame

Average Time Frame

7-8 Weeks

The process of hiring new graduates is designed to be efficient and thorough. It takes about 7-8 weeks from posting the job to making the offer. This may change depending on how many people apply, how complex the role is, and other factors. This process involves several steps, such as screening applications, conducting interviews, assessing candidates' skills and abilities, and checking references.

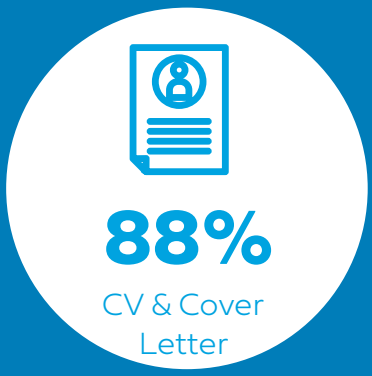
Application Stage

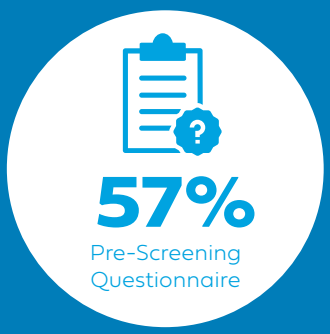
Application Stage

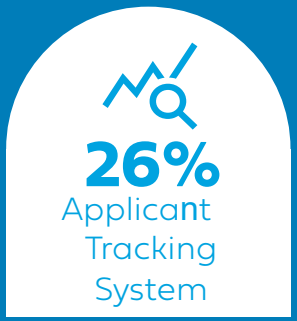
The survey results show that having a strong CV and cover letter is essential for job seekers, as 88% of the employers who participated in the survey require them at the application stage. The survey also reveals that online applications are a common method, used by 44% of the organisations. Additionally, 57% of the respondents use pre-screening questions to filter out candidates at the application stage.

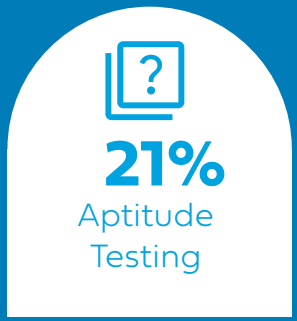
The results of the 2023 survey on the most common selection methods showed that competency-based interviews are still the dominant technique, with 57% of the organisations surveyed using them. However, the survey also indicated a rise in the use of virtual, telephone and video interviews. These methods were reported by 77%, 42% and 37% of the respondents respectively. Other selection methods used by some organisations include presentations (19%), assessment centres (10%) and strengths-based interviews (28%). The survey also asked about the screening methods that organisations use before or after the interviews. The most prevalent screening method was reference checking (96%), followed by social media checks (16%).

Application Process



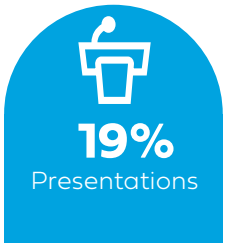




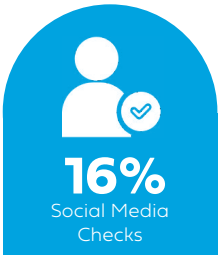


Selection Tools

Interview Process



Pre-Employment Process



Employers Ranking

Q. Please rank the following of how positively you view them when reviewing applications?

#1 Degree Discipline

#2 Completing a summer internship or work place-ment

#3 Classification of degree (2:1)

#4 Additional independent learning undertaken

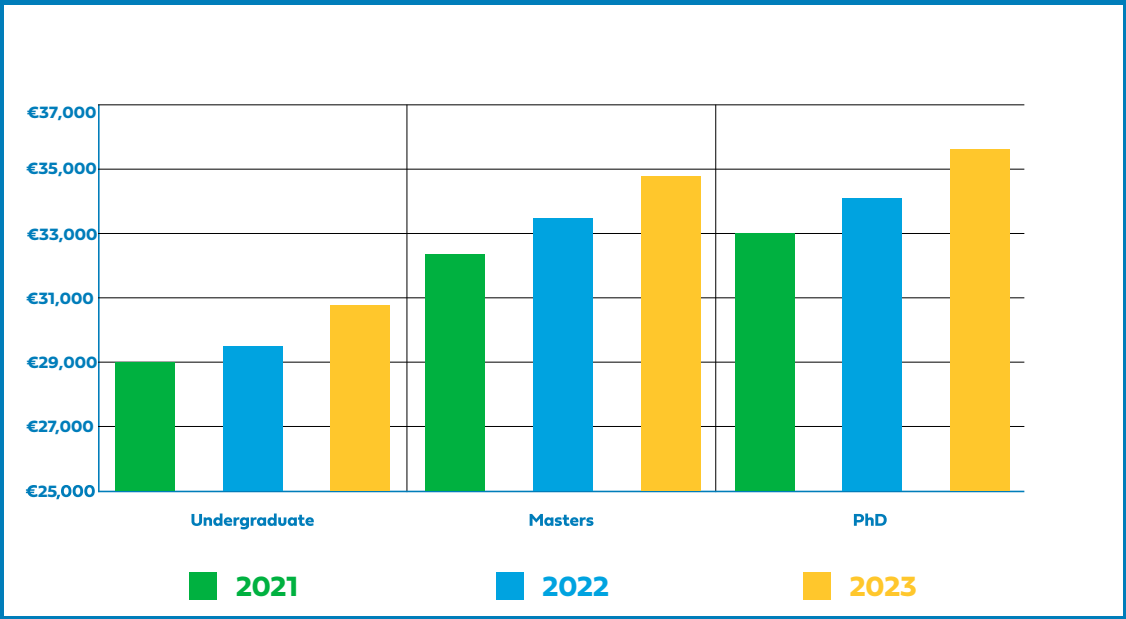
#5 University/ College Attended

#6 Working to support themselves throughout college

#7 Involvement in Volunteering, Clubs, Societies, Sports whilst in college

Graduate Salaries

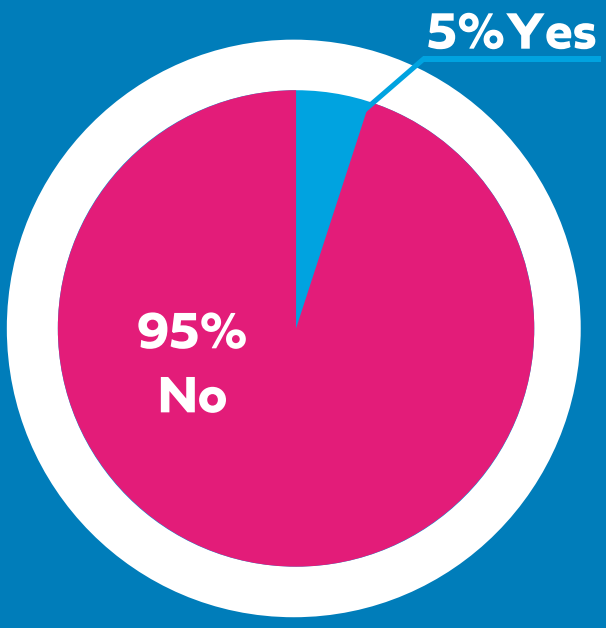
Average Graduate Salaries - Trending Data



The table compares the average starting salaries for graduates with Undergraduate, Postgraduate Master's and PhD degrees. The data indicates that there is a positive relationship between the level of education and the starting salary, although there may be variations depending on the sector, qualification location and other factors.

The average starting salary for Undergraduates is €30,918, which is €1,600 higher than the previous year. For Postgraduate Master's degrees, the average starting salary is €34,167, which is €900 more than the previous year. For PhD graduates, the average starting salary is €35,460, which is €1,500 more than the previous year.

Do you offer different starting salaries for fully remote positions?



Remuneration

65%
Learning & development roadmaps

65%
Pension

64%
Wellbeing initiatives

62%
Cycle-to-work Scheme

62%
Remote/Hybrid

55%
Further Study support

51%
Sports/social activities

44%
Healthcare

42%
Bonus/ Commision

37%
Flexi-time

32%
Volunteering days

31%
Overtime/ Time in Lieu

29%
Subsidized canteens

22%
Gym

15%
Company Product Discount

15%
Leapcards

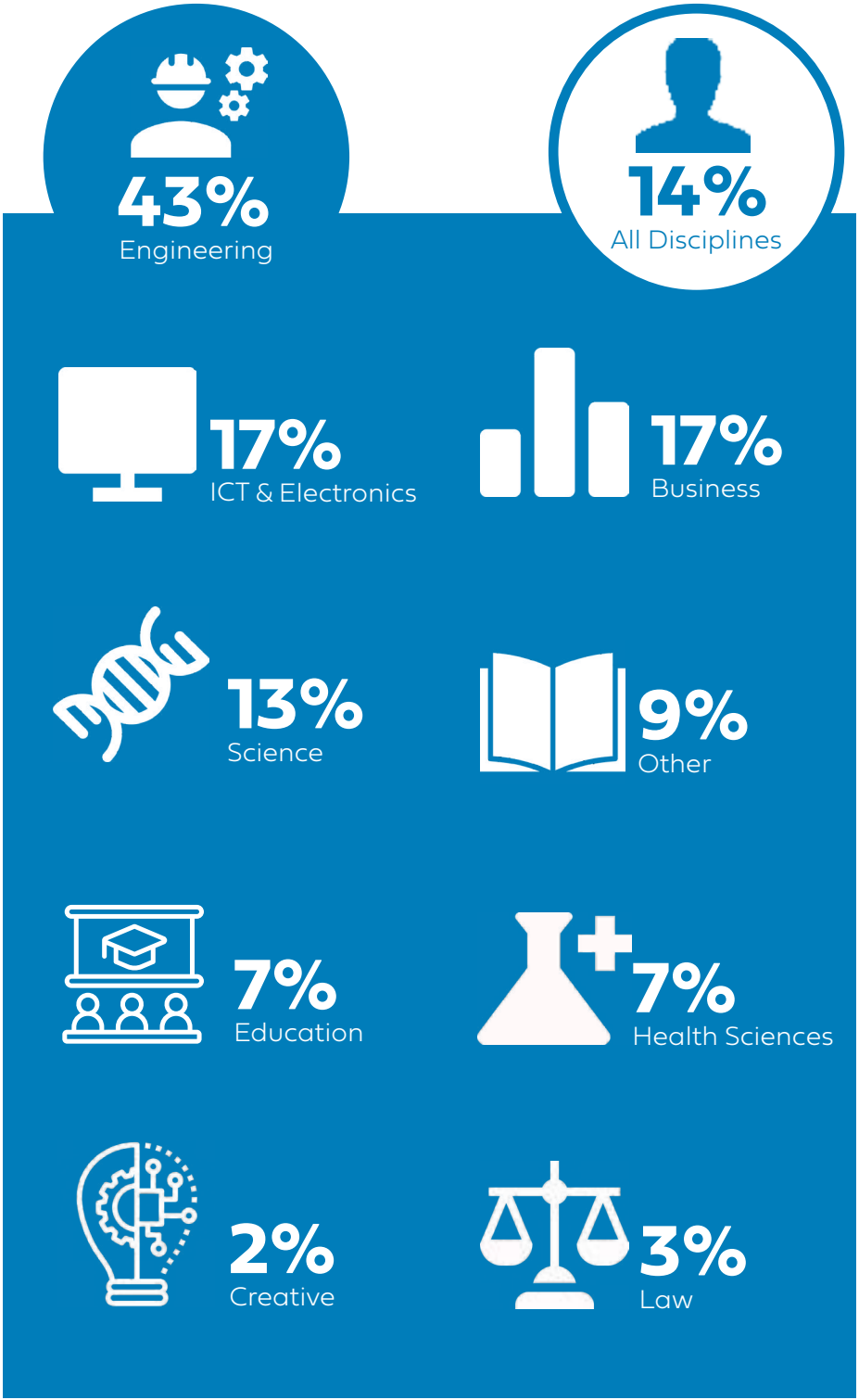
9%
Stocks

8%
Other

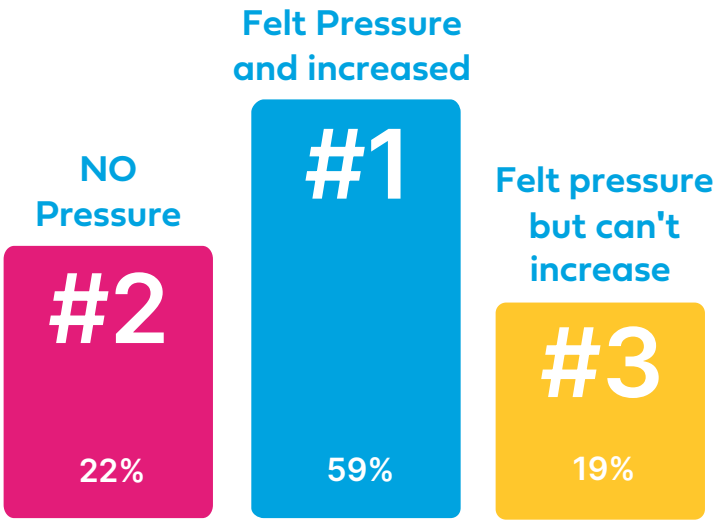
2%
None

Challenging Disciplines to hire

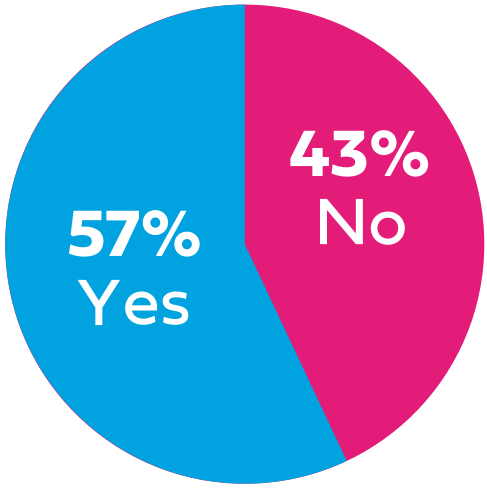
One of the most difficult tasks for graduate recruiters is to attract candidates from fields that are in high demand and low supply. According to our survey, the top three disciplines that face this challenge are engineering (43%), ICT and electronics (17%), and business (17%). These disciplines require specialized skills and knowledge that are not easily found among the general population.



How much pressure have you been experiencing to increase starting salaries for key target groups?



Have graduates accepted a job offer they later declined in the last 12 months?



Graduate recruitment challenges

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

According to a recent survey, the most significant challenge for organisations in hiring graduates is the high level of competition from other employers in the same sector. The second most challenging factor is the limited supply of graduates with specific degree skills/sets that match the organisation's needs. The third most cited issue is the gap between the expectations of graduates and the reality of entry-level positions.

Foreign Languages

Q. What foreign languages do you require in your organisation?

11%
French

10%
German

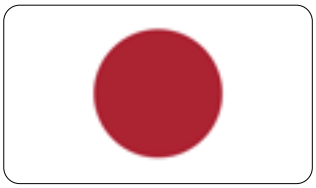
7%
Spanish

7%
Dutch

6%
Italian

3%
Portuguese

2%
Chinese

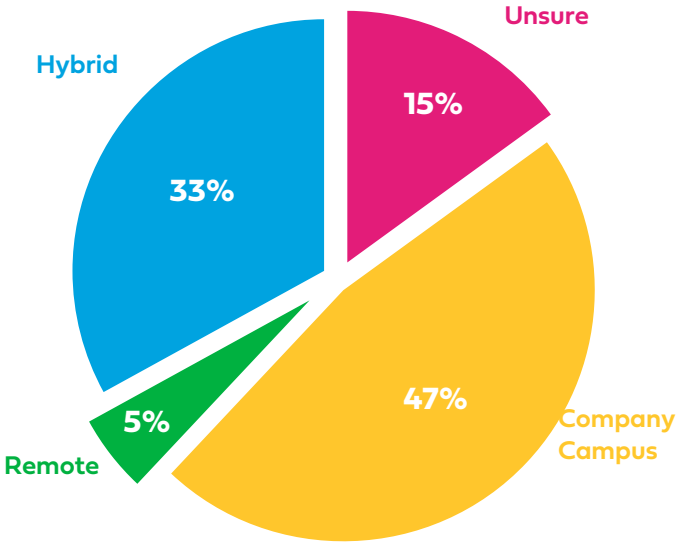


2%
Japanese

87%
No Foreign Langueges

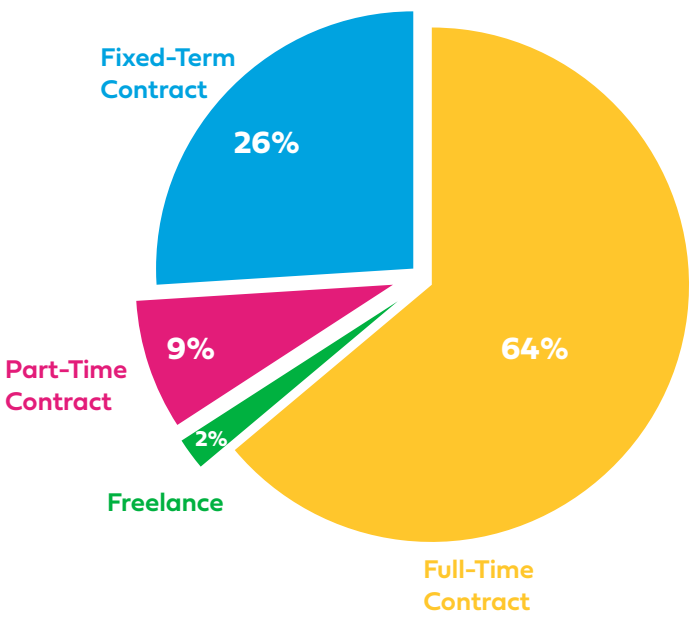
Onboarding

Q. What are your plans for onboarding new graduate hires?

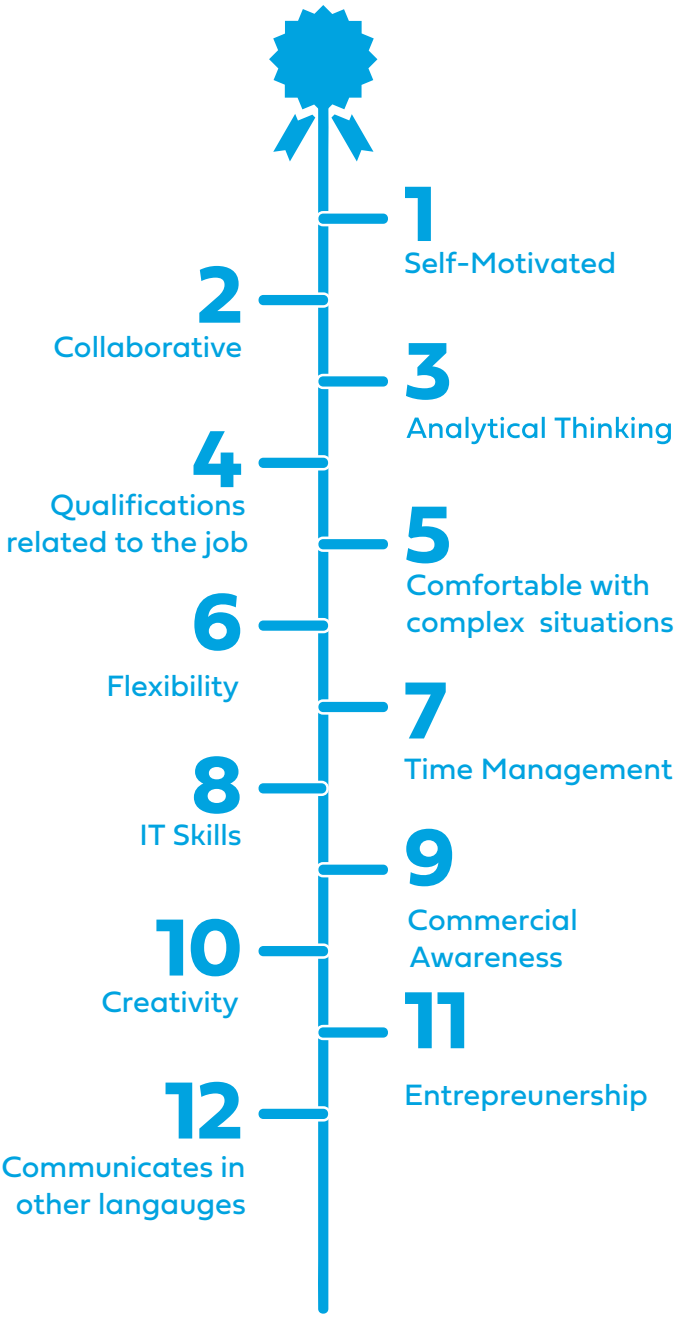


Contract Type

Q. What type of graduate contract do you offer graduates?



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 the 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 2022:

1. Self-Motivated
2. Analytical Thinking
3. Collaborative
4. Flexibility
5. Qualifications related to job

Top five global technical skills 2021:

1. Analytical thinking
2. Self-motivated
3. Collaborative
4. Flexibility
5. Comfortable with complex situtations

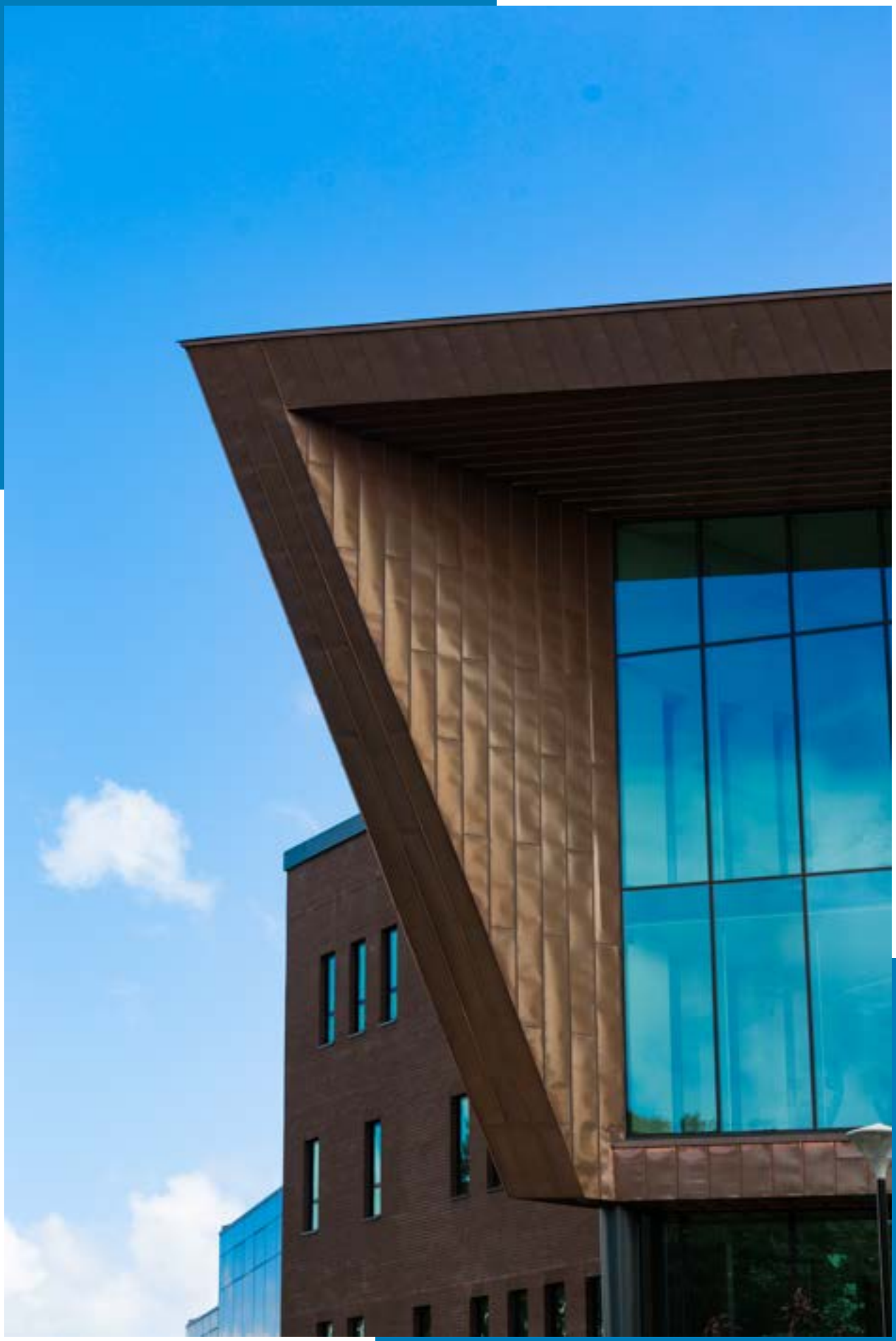
Global Soft Skills

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 2022:

1. Positive attitude and energy
2. Ability to cope with pressure
3. Work ethic
4. Seeks opportunities for continuous learning
5. Reliability

Top five global soft skills 2021:

1. Positive attitude and energy
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4. Reliability
5. Seeks opportunities for continuous learning