

Opportunities in Graduate Employment

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Introduction

The Careers and Employability team offers advice to students about jobs, applications, placements, internships, entrepreneurship, volunteering, mentoring, and anything else a student or alumni might need to develop their career. An essential part of the provision is building partnerships with industry to get valuable opportunities for our students, to inform our practice on current labour market trends, and bringing organisations to the university to provide talks, live briefs, placements, join Industry Advisory Boards/Employer Forums, co-design modules, etc.

This report will address:

- Graduate outcomes
- Internships and placements
- The value of a degree
- Supporting schools
- The university's vacancy service
- Engaging with top employers
- Engaging start-ups
- Brighton labour market information

This report aims to improve connectivity between the Careers and Employability team, Schools, and wider university stakeholders. If everyone works together, it should improve our careers provision for our students and in-turn improve our graduate outcomes. Included is a plan to increase engagement with external organisations and identify work areas needing attention, and start-up opportunities. The action plan intends to develop the standing of the university with external partners on a local national, and international level.

These goals of supporting students/graduates with career planning, a strategic approach to employer engagement, and embedding employability into the curriculum align with [Brighton Works](#).

This research is aimed at staff concerned with employability, specifically student-facing staff such as Careers Development Advisers, placements teams, and key stakeholders within schools: Subject Leaders, Course Leaders, Module Leaders, Employability, Placement and Partnership Leads, etc. If you have any recommendations, solutions or comments on this content please contact me [here](#) and I will pass it on to the Careers and Employability Team.

Background

The University of Brighton has been ranked in the top 50 in the UK for graduate outcomes, exceeding our performance in other league tables. This represents the hard work done by the careers-focussed staff across the university. Brighton is also top 15 (out of 53) for graduate outcomes in London and the South East.¹ While the University of Brighton is performing respectably in graduate outcomes, there is room for improvement. There are significant opportunities to learn from our successes to improve our provision.

Aims

We are aiming to support our graduates into highly skilled graduate roles. Our graduates must realise their full potential, and we need to give them appropriate support to do this. This will improve their quality of life, social mobility (especially as we have many first-generation students), give them greater earning potential, and improve our university's stature. This will help us to achieve a level of excellence in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and meet B3 conditions. In this report *highly skilled* refers to degree-level jobs. Unless otherwise noted, all the findings and recommendations are specifically regarding highly skilled jobs.

As this research was conducted during Covid/Brexit recovery, it is worth considering the fast-paced changes we are experiencing, things will likely look different in six months. The issues addressed here are long term goals and should remain relevant at least through 2022/23.

Research Limitations

This research uses the University of Brighton Graduate Outcomes data from 2018-20. This data is gathered 15 months after graduation and was the most recent fully available data at the time of publication. While the data is pre-Covid, it will give an idea of what our graduates were doing in a 'normal' working culture. It is worth noting that research published in June 2022 shows that the graduate jobs market has been resilient throughout the pandemic.²

¹ <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/news/2021/brighton-the-biggest-climber-in-latest-complete-university-guide>

² [Five key takeaways from Graduate Outcomes 2019/20 | Luminate \(prospects.ac.uk\)](#)

The other datasets used are from 2018-20 unless otherwise stated. There are references to the more recent Graduate Outcomes data (2020-21), but that was experimental data at the time of this report's release. The Graduate Outcomes data is useful but has limitations, has a lot of missing information, particularly gaps in employer names and job titles, and the job location data has gaps or duplicate categorisations. This is also a new dataset not directly comparable to the previous DLHE report which ended in 2016, it asks different questions and is collated differently.

To keep this paper manageably sized, there is unfortunately no distinction between those who enter university immediately after school or mature students, UK or international, or by ethnicity, gender, or ability. These are vital areas for future research and this will be covered in the *Employer and Industry Engagement Strategic Plan* that will be released later this year. The data's findings aim to be broadly applicable across all schools and departments.

Graduate Outcomes

Job Status of Employed Graduates

The Graduate Outcomes data shows that 64% of our graduates are in highly skilled work, this is below the national average.³ Chart A below covers specifically the Graduate Outcomes highly skilled dataset. It shows a high level (76%) of graduates are in full-time employment, this is more promising, but the 2020-21 experimental Graduate Outcomes data it shows we have slipped. We need to innovate and push to improve our standing.

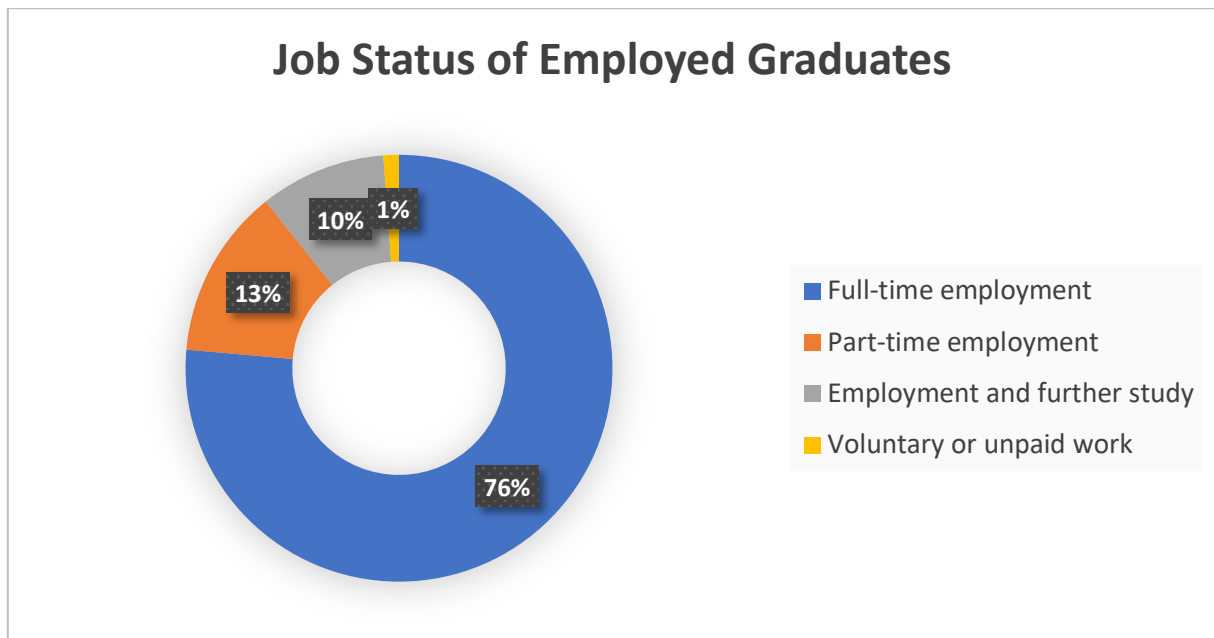


Chart A: Job Status of Employed Graduates

Graduate Work Experience

An analysis of 4 million jobs posted on LinkedIn between 2017-2021 noted that 35% of graduate-level positions asked for years of relevant work experience.⁴ Demonstrating just how vital it is to

³ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/graduate-labour-markets>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210916-why-inexperienced-workers-cant-get-entry-level-jobs>

encourage students to get work experience before graduation. Internships and placements, even short-term opportunities can make a difference. Unpaid internships affect social mobility as disadvantaged students may not be able to afford them.⁵ As an institution, we should look to move away from optional placement modules and make them mandatory. There are great examples in many Schools where students are fully supported through the process and provided with support for travel expenses. Placements and internships are an effective way to engage with employers. Internship schemes give us an insight into industry needs through working closely with organisations and finding out recent developments and what they need from graduates. We received positive feedback from organisations that got interns through the Santander and STEP-UP schemes about the benefits to their businesses. Live briefs [work experience where an employer comes into the university with an industry-relevant problem-solving project] can also be embedded in a way that builds active partnerships with employers, provides our students with 'real world experience', and builds their social capital. Our students provide these organisations with innovative ideas, awareness of digital needs, and the enthusiasm and open-mindedness of a recent starter.

We must support paid work experience, Prospects' Early Careers Survey 2022 found that a greater proportion of students who did a paid internship or placement said their experience was 'very useful' at developing their skills (48%) compared with those who did unpaid work (36%). Individuals who did paid work were also more likely to say their experience improved their career prospects (42%) than those who did unpaid work (30%).⁶

Action - more work to embed compulsory placements, internships, and work experience activities

Value of a Degree

The pandemic has left many students uncertain about what to do after university. In the Prospects Early Careers Survey 2021, 38% of national university students said they were uncertain about their plans. The uncertain students need to know about the much-acknowledged maxim that *60% of degrees are suitable for 60% of jobs*. There are many career options for a degree, and our cohort would benefit from knowing this and having confidence to apply for roles in other areas.⁷

Students need to know how important their degree is and how it can enhance their employment chances, how many options it gives them, and how to speak about it in an interview, in their CV, or showcase in their portfolio. There is a wider variety of jobs than many students know. Our graduates must understand the scope of their qualifications and look beyond straightforward job searches. For example, Gatwick Airport need environment graduates, the Police need ethics staff, the NHS need marketing people etc. If our graduates know to look for these vital but less obvious roles, it will set a precedent for future students, and improve our standing as a university.

Action - make students know the value of their degree and the range of jobs they can apply for

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unpaid-internships-are-damaging-to-social-mobility>

⁶ <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/raising-the-standard-of-student-work-experience>

⁷ <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/prospects-press-office/nearly-half-of-university-students-unprepared-for-employment>

The skills gained with [Graduate Attributes](#) can help here. For those unfamiliar, they are a set of qualities and characteristics that you will develop or build on through the knowledge, skills and experience you'll gain through studying at the University of Brighton.⁸



Chart B: Graduate Attributes

Visibility of Careers-Centric Staff

‘Careers-centric staff’ means staff who have a direct influence over what a student can do after graduation, those that can advise students in working in a specific area, or that liaise with employers. As well as the Careers team it includes academics, EPPLs, alumni, associate deans, etc. Careers-centric staff must be visible to students and externals for our graduate outcomes to increase, this includes academic and school’s staff, anyone who deals with industry. Several placement teams dedicate time to industry outreach to inform their practice on recruitment trends and skill gaps to maintain the relevance of their teaching materials. Furthermore, there are examples of academic colleagues ensuring industry-led activities are well embedded, and the relevance of the curriculum is fed by industry via employer Forums.

A report by Handshake found that 45% of organisations find it hard to access relevant candidates through university careers services. Improving connectivity can resolve this. If the careers service, the schools (course leaders, EPPLs, placement teams etc.), Alumni, RESP, and everyone who works with employers pools resources we can engage with employers on every level and in a way that

⁸ <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/brighton-students/your-work-and-career/employability-on-my-course/index.aspx>

will benefit our students/graduates, academics, and industry. Handshake also found that 39% of organisations report that finding candidates through university platforms is frustrating as the number and quality of candidates is inconsistent.⁹ This can be partially addressed by helping graduates prepare for the job market, as well as promoting the University of Brighton's vacancy service, Careers Connect, which many of our external partners use.

Action - students need to know where to get careers advice, all staff should know how to direct them to the careers team. This is something all staff can help with.

At the time of writing, the Careers Team are looking into the usability of a standard employer engagement crib sheet. Then everyone can operate with the same level of guidance. This will improve consistency and will be particularly useful for those who only occasionally engage with industry.

Graduate Outcome Results by School

This section focuses on the graduate outcomes of our Schools and how we can support their cohorts. Chart C below shows graduate numbers for each School and how many go into highly skilled roles.

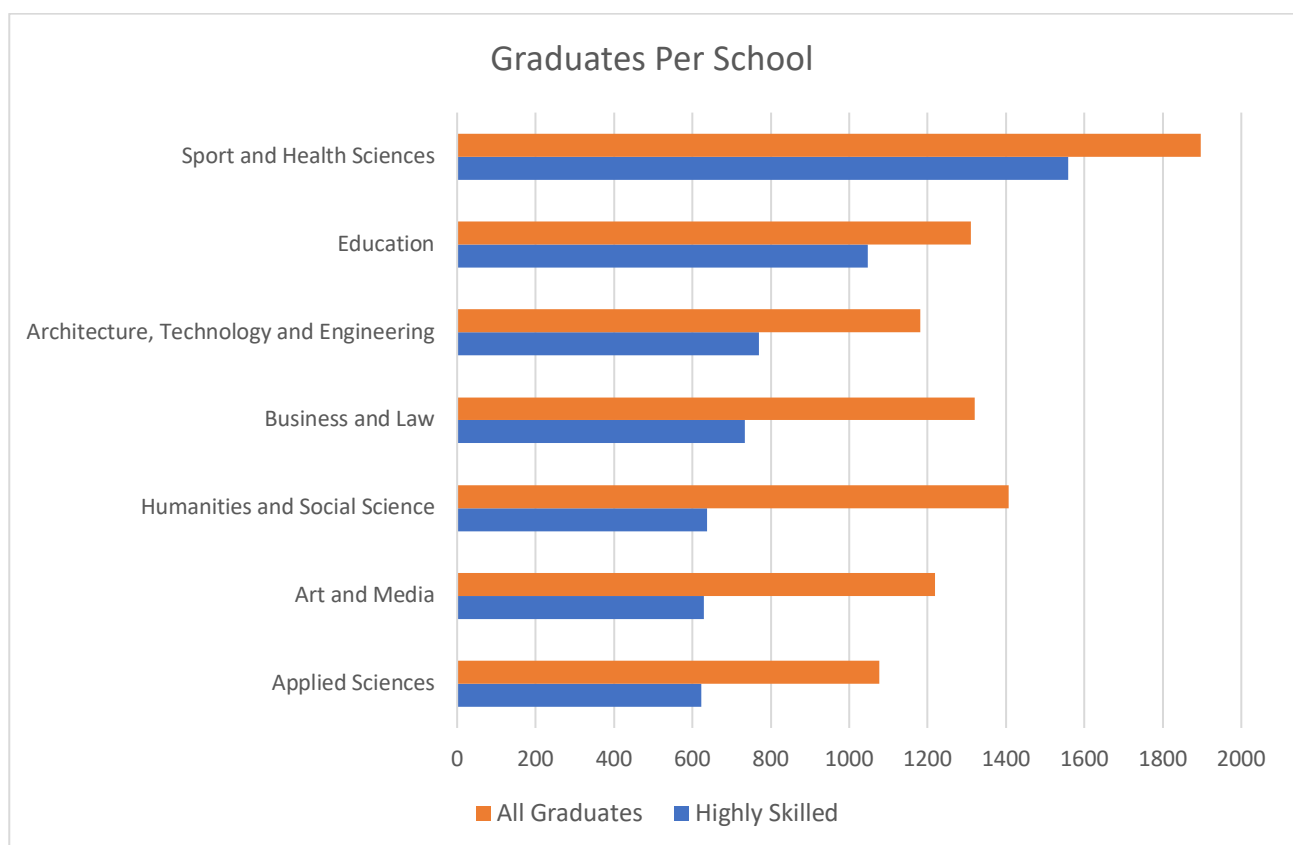


Chart C: Graduates Per School

⁹ https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5d5d679c706df61461f39682/62ac89717c7a73636c15e62e_Graduate%20Employer%20Priorities%20023%20Report.pdf

Sport and Health Sciences perform well in terms of highly skilled jobs; this is consistent with the national picture of these subjects¹⁰. The school of Architecture, Technology and Engineering also performed well. Humanities and Social Science (HSS) have a lower ratio of graduates going into highly skilled jobs. This emphasises the above point about how graduates need to know the range and value of their degree. HSS graduates are sought after by employers because of their critical thinking, leadership, research, and analysis skills. This is particularly significant in an era where many businesses are pushing ethical awareness.¹¹

Only 58% of Applied Sciences graduates are in highly skilled jobs. Although this reflects the national picture of science grads not working in science,¹² this is something the careers services should address. Only 20% of biology graduates go on to a scientific occupation, and over a third of biology graduates go into non-graduate jobs. Chemistry has the highest percentage of science graduates beginning their careers in scientific occupations but that is only 30%.

Research by National Graduate Week in October 2021 shows the five industries with the highest amount of graduate job postings nationally over the previous 12 months, from this we can see that there are many applied sciences jobs¹³:

1. Health and social work (976k)
2. Information and communication (893k)
3. Financial and insurance activities (504k)
4. Education (460k)
5. Professional, scientific, and technical activities (429k)

We need to identify opportunities in terms of promoting opportunities to our students, and greater engagement with science and tech employers. This is another area where more emphasis on placements (particularly mandatory placements) can get graduates into highly skilled jobs, as well as connecting us to industry.

Many chemistry graduates eventually work in finance, their problem-solving and data handling skills are attractive to employers. Although we should not deter students from pursuing their vocation, it is worth highlighting their options. Especially as it often takes more than 15 months to get into a highly skilled applied sciences job, and many science roles need a masters.

Although education is the fourth most nationally posted job, it is our second most successful area for highly skilled graduates. This is because the sector has plenty of opportunities. The School of Education also has courses that embed careers and employability, which is likely a contributing factor.

Action -support the students from the lower performing schools and engage with those subject's employers

¹⁰ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/graduate-labour-markets>

¹¹ <https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/5-reasons-the-humanities-still-matter>

¹² <https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/what-do-science-graduates-do>

¹³ <https://hrnews.co.uk/industries-and-brands-with-the-highest-amount-of-graduate-positions-available/>

Graduate Destinations

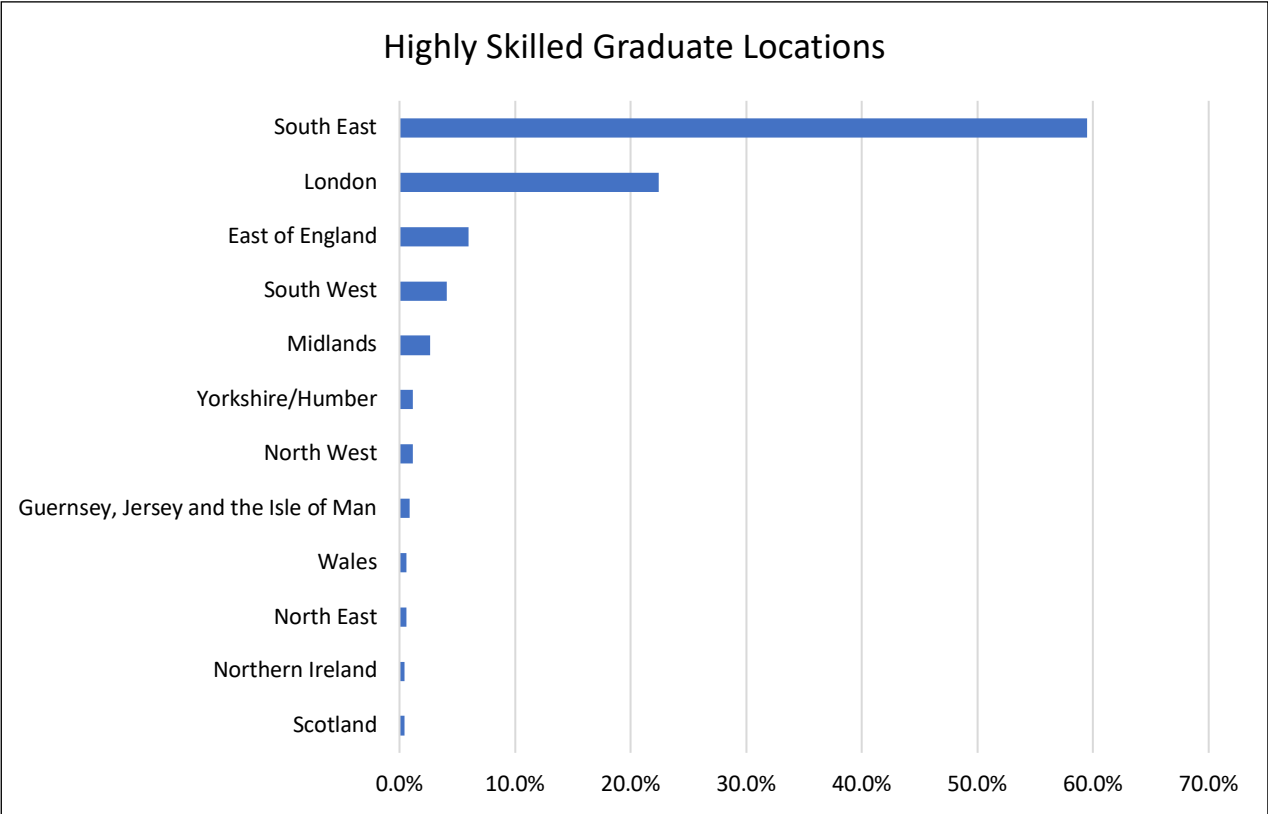


Chart D: Highly Skilled Graduate Locations

After graduation 82% of our cohort work in SE England/London, and a further 10% work in the East and South West of England. This highlights that we might want to identify and share more opportunities beyond the South East of England with our students.

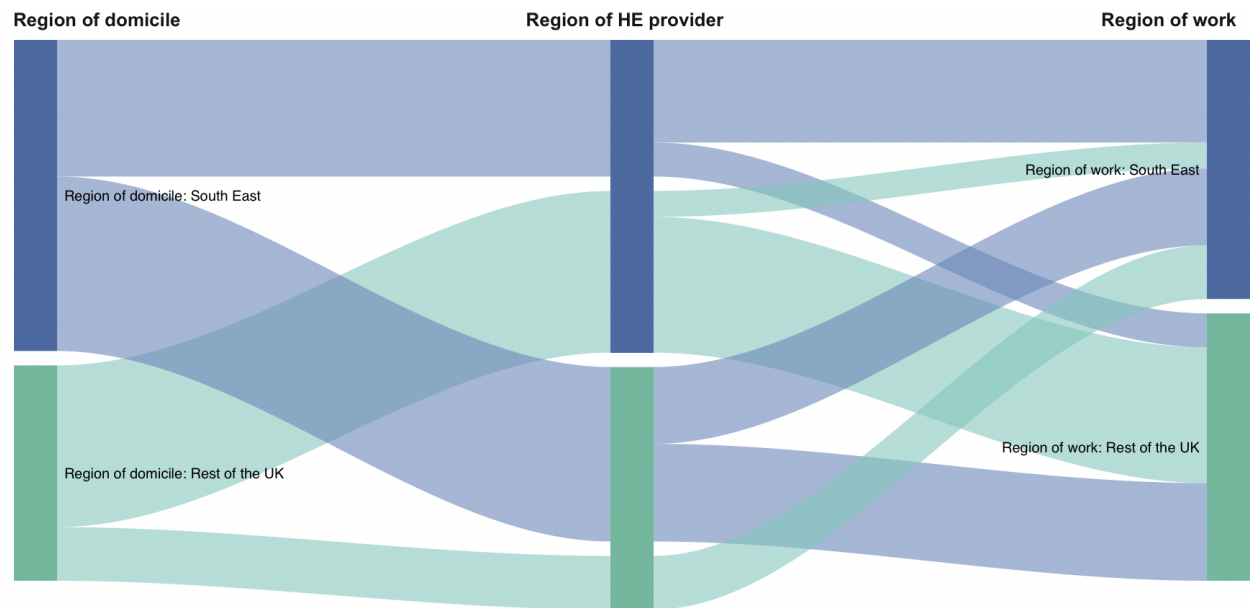


Chart E: HESA Domicile to Regions of Work

This HESA graph is interesting,¹⁴ it shows a picture of how 2018/19 graduate UK students interact with the South East region. We can see that more South East domiciled students leave the region than return to it. This data does not specify where they are going, but the Graduate Outcomes data suggests the majority are going to London. This suggests there is scope to keep graduates in Brighton, this will be covered later.

The regional mobility of graduates varies by subject studied. Graduates in arts, humanities, and education are far more likely than STEM, law, economics, and management graduates to stay in their region of study for work.¹⁵ This is worth being mindful of when deciding to work with an organisation on a local or national level. Many people are happy to move location to pursue their career. This should influence where we build industry partnerships, it is worth a quick investigation into where a company's sites are.

Careers Connect

Careers Connect is the University of Brighton vacancy service. It has 4300 registered organisations, roughly half are from the South East, a quarter from London, and the rest are UK and international, thus the data it provides is valuable at showing what we have and what we need. We have been successful at getting organisations to register with Careers Connect and post vacancies - at any given point it has about 900 jobs - but there are still key employers and sectors missing. We need to use our resources to connect with these organisations and increase our industry reach.

Action - encourage all students and employers to register with Careers Connect

It would be interesting to compare Careers Connect with other university's job portals, but this is difficult data to find [if anyone can help please contact [here](#)]. Every organisation that contacts the Careers Service through email or a webform is sent the Careers Connect registration details. Once Careers Connect has been rolled out to all the careers teams and beyond it could be an invaluable CRM tool, as a useful single database of organisations the university works with.

Times Top 100 Employers.

Below is a list of the 2021/22 Times Higher Education top 100 graduate employers.¹⁶ The green highlighted companies have taken on a UoB graduate. The yellow highlighted companies have not signed up for Careers Connect, but they may have posted nationally with Target Connect [the hosting site for Careers Connect]. The dark red have never been featured on Target Connect, likely they are companies that do not promote their vacancies via universities [which is a potential subject for further research]. The top 10 is below, the rest of the list is [here](#) on SharePoint.

Rank	Company	Registered with Careers Connect	National Posting
1	Civil Service	Yes	
2	PwC	Yes	

¹⁴ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates/activities/work>

¹⁵ [Migration patterns of the highly educated across UK regions | Luminare \(prospects.ac.uk\)](#)

¹⁶ <https://www.top100graduateemployers.com/employers>

3	NHS	Some branches	
4	Deloitte	No	Yes
5	Aldi	Yes	
6	EY	No	Yes
7	Google	No	No
8	BBC	Yes	
9	Teach First	Yes	
10	KPMG	No	Yes

Chart F: Times Top 100 Employers

We need to gather the yellow and red businesses and liaise with them. Many stakeholders at School level and other teams may already work with these organisations. Stakeholders should be encouraged to invite employers they work with to register with Careers Connect (which can be done [here](#), or they can contact the careers team [here](#)), this will help all the university teams know who we work with. If you are in contact with an organisation that is not on the vacancy service, there is a good chance someone at the university will want to connect with them. Please direct the company to the above links.

Action - foster relationships with the top graduate employers

Significant UK Start-Ups

In business, a unicorn is a privately held start-up company valued at over \$1 billion (£730 million). They are called unicorns to represent the rarity of such successful ventures. [Here](#) on SharePoint is the current list of unicorn start-ups in the UK. The companies highlighted in green are on Careers Connect.

Start-ups typically look for ambitious talent with a diverse skillset who are willing to take risks. These companies are at the forefront of expanding UK business, likely on an international scale. It would be wise to follow their progress and engage with them. Our most innovative students could be encouraged to approach these companies.

Top Start-Ups in Brighton

The top start-ups in Brighton are listed [here](#) on SharePoint, those highlighted in green are on Careers Connect. These organisations create highly skilled jobs; this gives us an opening to help develop local industry, make Brighton a more sought-after place to come and study, and expand our commitment to local SMEs. The list shows a wide array of industries to plug our graduate outcome gaps. SMEs are ideal for interacting with the curriculum as there are so many locally, they can accommodate the variety of curricula across different schools because they cover diverse subject and disciplinary areas. They can come in for industry talks, live briefs, feed the relevancy of the curriculum via IABs/Employer Forums, provide placements, dissertation topics, facilitate onsite visits/field trips, etc.

Action - engage with prominent local start-ups and small to medium sized organisations (SMEs)

Largest Graduate Employers

This is a list of the largest employers of highly skilled University of Brighton graduates in 2021, yellow organisations are not on Careers Connect.

Organisation	Graduates
NHS	299
University of Brighton	81
West Sussex County Council	47
East Sussex county council	38
Brighton and Hove City Council	27
South east coast ambulance service	22
Sussex Community NHS Trust	21
West Sussex County Council	18
Network Rail	14
East Sussex Healthcare trust	14
University of Sussex	13
Boots	13
Sussex Partnership NHS foundation Trust	12
East Sussex county council	12
American Express	12
Sussex community Foundation trust	11
Step Academy Trust	9
East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust	9
Paydens	8
University hospital Sussex	7
Royal Sussex county hospital	7
London ambulance service	7
East Sussex College Group	7
ESHT	7
Brighton and Sussex university hospital	7

Chart G: Largest Graduate Employers

This list is gathered from the Graduate Outcomes data and shows the employers with which our graduates entered highly skilled jobs. The organisations are largely health, an area we do not need to concentrate on as health organisations typically advertise using NHS recruitment methods away from university job portals [although in the last 6 months there has been a rise in health vacancies on Careers Connect], and Health Sciences already performs well with graduate outcomes. We can, however, build relationships with health organisations where they need non-health support: IT, data analysis, PR, estates, HR, and finance.

Range of Employers on Careers Connect

We'll now look at vacancy areas that are underrepresented in what we offer to students on Careers Connect, by looking at the split of industries by number of organisations (orange), and then their percentage of total vacancies (blue).

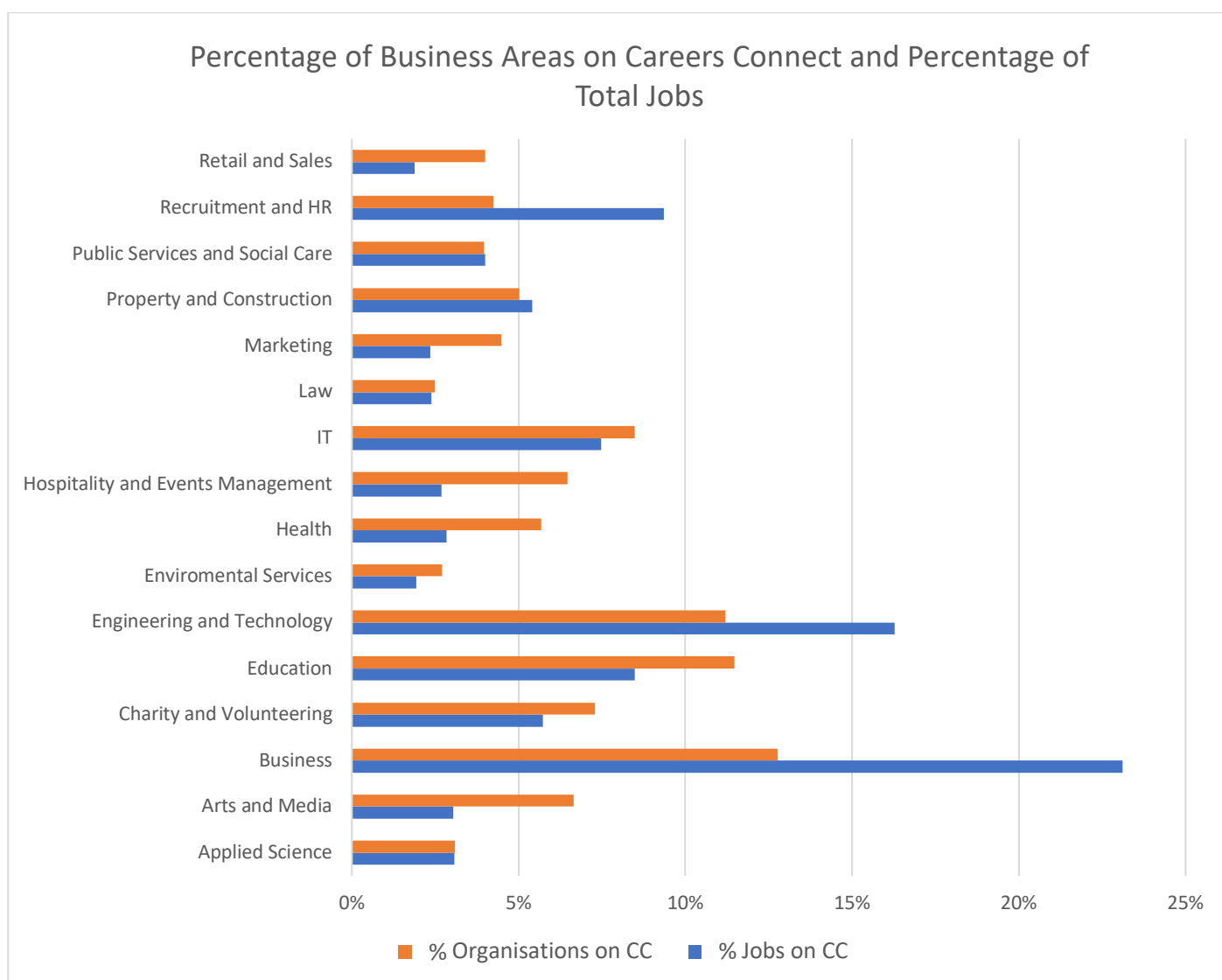


Chart H: Percentage of Business Areas and Jobs on Careers Connect

The jobs figures are for all skill levels, not just highly skilled, as the data could not be divided that way. Given that the majority of jobs on Careers Connect are highly skilled, this still gives a useful picture of the industries we need. We are well catered for with vacancies in business, engineering and tech. We should concentrate our efforts on law, hospitality and events, applied sciences, and environmental organisations. Any interactions we have with organisations in these industries need to be developed and nurtured, any contact needs to be framed by how we can build a relationship with them and encourage them to sign up to Careers Connect. We need to understand and support the needs of these industries across a range of staff within the university.

Action - engage with underrepresented industries: law, hospitality and events, applied sciences, and environmental organisations

Brighton Labour Market Information

The Brighton labour market information below can be used to inform business engagement decisions, careers advice, and to help make sense of industry changes recently and in the future. These are all opportunities to steer our graduates into highly skilled jobs.

The Brighton city region has an economy worth £21bn and supports 400,000 jobs. The Institute for Employment Studies states that 86% of local businesses in 2019 employed ten people or fewer.¹⁷ There is a large number of SMEs, making working with local industry a challenge. Many companies will recruit ad hoc, and they may not think of the University as an obvious partner. SMEs particularly need technical and business skills, our graduates can offer entrepreneurial drive, and we can lead on that when corresponding with local SMEs.

Digital

There are 1,500 high-value digital businesses. Notable areas where Brighton excels are:¹⁸

- Digital advertising and marketing
- Gaming
- App and software development
- Data management and analytics

Software is the largest creative industries sector with a turnover of £785m, 8,467 employees and 3,087 businesses.

Culture & Creative

Brighton has a high rate of engagement in culture amongst residents and employs over 16,000 people. The performing arts is the second largest creative industries sector with a turnover of £329m from 1,123 companies employing 3,307 staff.¹⁹

An area of rapid innovation is the CreaTech sector, which brings together new technology and the creative industries. The sector is driven by innovations in AI, VR, 5G and augmented reality in areas as diverse as media, fashion, museums, and entertainment. In 2021 the UK sector received £1bn in venture capital investment - the third largest investment in the world after China and the US. It is worth being mindful of Brighton's significant place in CreaTech when engaging with local businesses. This sector should be supported to grow further to enhance innovation and remain as a global leader.²⁰ This particularly is an opportunity for arts, humanities, and design graduates.

Environmental

Brighton's coastal location and progressive population make it an attractive location for environmental businesses. The area's environmental business include Ricardo, a global provider of technology, product innovation and strategic consulting; SeaRoc, specialists in offshore renewables; EDF Energy, a leading energy company; Elektromotive, a provider for electric vehicle recharging; and UTC@Harbourside which specialises in marine and environmental engineering.

Advanced engineering

This is a key sector with an estimated 400 firms in Brighton. The main manufacturing areas are motor vehicles, instruments for measuring and testing, radioactivity safety, and medical equipment. Specialist skills needed are strategy, supply chain management, production and

¹⁷ <https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/uk/brightons-future-hangs-in-the-balance>

¹⁸ <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/invest-in-brighton-hove.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/49277>

²⁰ <https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/createch-activity-in-the-uk>

process control, and advanced digital skills. There are significant skills gaps and shortages, this demand is reflected in higher than average pay, and the sector being geared towards full-time workers. Emerging areas include communication and electrical equipment, installation of industrial machinery, engineering activities, and technical consultancy.²¹

Financial

There are an estimated 19,000 employees working in the financial sector, American Express alone employs 3,000 staff. The city is also a base for multiple insurance companies, the largest being Legal & General.

Conclusion

There is a lot to do to improve our graduate outcomes, but it is achievable. With a cross-team effort we can improve our students' career prospects, work better with industry, work more effectively across the institution, and advance the reputation of the University of Brighton.

Recommendation

We need further research on the race, gender, LGBTQIA+, age, and socio-economic backgrounds as they relate to graduate outcomes and careers service engagement.

Useful links

Careers and Employability Team email - Careers@brighton.ac.uk

Careers and Employability homepage - <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/careers/index.aspx>

--- Chris Kuzmicki C.Kuzmicki2@brighton.ac.uk September 2022

²¹ https://www.coast2capital.org.uk/storage/downloads/advanced_engineering_and_manufacturing-1480416026.pdf