FIRST-YEAR STUDENT CAREER READINESS SURVEY

AGCAS RESEARCH REPORT

July 2018
Acknowledgement

Special thanks are due to all first-year students who responded to the survey and to the survey coordinators at the following 19 AGCAS-member higher education careers services:

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<th>Abertay University</th>
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<td>Canterbury Christ Church University</td>
<td>University of Huddersfield</td>
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<td>Writtle University College</td>
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This report was produced by Dr Chuanyan (Helen) Zhu. The author would like to thank the individuals below for their guidance, support and contribution to this research project.

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Ananda Geluk, Career Development Adviser, National University Ireland (NUI) Galway
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Gemma Green, AGCAS Research and Knowledge Manager
Members of the AGCAS Research Group and the AGCAS Research and Knowledge Committee

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Executive summary

The AGCAS First-year Student Career Readiness Survey reveals the different levels of students’ career readiness, their engagement in career-related activities, and other relevant factors for students who started university study in 2017/2018 at 19 universities in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The research findings can be used as a tool by careers services and broader institutional communities in higher education and policy makers to better understand first-year students’ perceptions of and engagement with social mobility initiatives and careers support programmes.

The following key findings have been drawn from the responses of 2008 UK students studying towards an undergraduate degree or foundation qualification at 18 UK universities. 589 responses from the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway have not been included in this analysis owing to different education policies in Ireland. Where the impact of changes to pre-HE careers education policy is referred to in this report, the analysis outcomes are based on UK students under 20.

Career readiness

- Fewer than one third of younger students had clear career ideas before they chose their university course, which is significantly lower than mature students (over six out of ten had clear career ideas). Mature students demonstrated higher confidence levels across most aspects of career readiness than their younger counterparts.

- The levels of career readiness for UK students under 20 differed according to demographic background:
  - Female students were marginally more confident in goal-setting but less confident in identifying relevant employers and attending an interview. Male students scored higher than female students in most aspects of employability skills, with the exception of business culture awareness.
  - Students educated at private schools reported significantly higher confidence levels than students educated at state schools in making appropriate conversations with professionals, delivering a presentation at a job interview, and understanding the organisational culture of employers.
  - First-generation university students’ confidence levels in career readiness were no lower than their counterparts. They also reported slightly more confident than students where both parents/guardians had attended university in two aspects of career self-efficacy and business culture awareness.
  - Asian students reported significantly lower confidence levels than students from other ethnic backgrounds in determining the steps needed to complete their university course.
Cultural capital and social capital

- More mature students than younger students had read books for leisure. More younger students than mature students had practised arts, participated in sports activities and attended summer schools/camps before university.

- For UK students under 20, the gaps between students from different demographic backgrounds reveal a pattern similar to that for all students.
  - More female students than male students had read books for leisure, visited museums/galleries/historic sites, practised arts, and attended arts performances/concerts before university. More male students than female students had watched live sports matches and participated in sports activities.
  - There are significant gaps between students educated at state schools and those educated at private schools, and between first-generation university students and their counterparts. Apart from going to the cinema and watching live sports matches, fewer students educated at state schools and fewer first-generation university students had participated in habituated cultural activities before university.

- The gaps in participation in habituated cultural activities between students from different demographic backgrounds are more significant for all students than those that appear for UK students under 20.

- Mature students did not have more social capital than their younger counterparts in terms of involvement in community activities.

- For UK students under 20, the gender, ethnicity and socio-economic gaps in social capital are particularly more significant and meaningful than those that appear for all students.

- More female students (57.2%) than male students (52.1%) knew many or most of the people in their neighbourhood. However, slightly more female students (27.8%) than male students (24.8%) had not been involved in any activities in their local community before going to university. Male students were more involved in sports clubs whereas female students were more involved in fundraising activities.

- Both male and female students relied on a wide range of people in their social network for advice about university course choice. Significantly more female students than male students relied on parents/guardians or their spouse/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend for advice.

- Students from different ethnic groups reported different patterns of involvement in community activities and different sources for advice about university course choice. Overall, White students had more social capital than students from other ethnic backgrounds. A significantly higher proportion of Asian students (about one third) and Black students (nearly 50%) practised religion in a religious group than students from other ethnic backgrounds (less than 20%). Asian students relied more heavily on tutors/teachers or careers advisers than their counterparts.

- Nearly a third of first-generation university students and over a quarter of students who had attended state school before university reported that they had not been involved in any activities in their local community before going to university.

- Compared to students educated at state schools, students who were educated at private schools participated more in community activities and benefited more from the wide range of people in their social network for advice about university course choice.
Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) before university

- According to the responses from UK students under 20, a significantly higher proportion of students educated at private schools reported that careers support had been provided in 6 out of 13 initiatives compared to students educated at state schools. This has widened the social capital gap (in terms of sources for careers advice) between students from the two types of schools. The proportion of students who had received advice about university course choice from tutors/teachers and careers advisers at state schools is almost half that of students educated at private schools.

- Another gap lies between the provision of CEIAG in schools/colleges and students’ use of this. The big gap between the availability of printed information and careers advisers and students’ use of both initiatives in state schools requires further exploration to better understand why most students did not access this support.

Career-related activities

- For UK students under 20, 71.6% had done part-time work, 54% volunteering, and 49.8% had undertaken work experience/work shadowing in the last two years.

- More female students than male students had participated in career-related activities in the last two years. The biggest gender difference lies in participation in volunteering activities.

- A higher proportion of White students (74.9%) had done part-time work compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. Fewer Asian students had done part-time work (56.2%), yet more of them (52.6%) had undertaken work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds.

- A lower proportion of first-generation university students and students educated at state schools had done volunteering or undertaken work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) compared to their counterparts. Fewer students where both parents/guardians had attended university and those educated at private schools had done part-time work compared to their counterparts.

- Students’ perceptions of the importance of university activities did not match their participation in these activities. Applying for work experience and networking with professionals were perceived as important; however, students’ participation (or intention to participate) in these activities was much lower than for most other activities. On the contrary, accessing the careers service website and attending careers fairs were perceived as less important than most other activities, but students’ participation (or intention to participate) in these activities was much higher than for most other activities.
Constraints to career-related activities and career planning

- Mature students and first-generation university students reported greater time constraints compared to their counterparts. Mature students spent more time than younger students on study, doing paid work, family responsibilities and commuting and less time on social or extracurricular activities.

- Mature students were less confident than younger students in their ability to finance their university education. Over a quarter of mature students reported that they had major concerns and were not sure they would have enough funds, compared to 13.6% of younger students. A significantly higher percentage of male students had no financial concerns compared to female students, regardless of age.

- Factoring in students’ time pressures, financial position, social capital, cultural capital, accommodation and the career-related activities they had undertaken in the past, different students reported different constraints to career planning. This reveals the need for a variety of nudge/support approaches within higher education and wider society.
1. Introduction

1.1 Why career readiness?

In the current context, ‘graduate outcomes’ is used as the primary index to evaluate university students’ success and a university’s performance. Universities cannot control or even predict the graduate labour market; however, they can seek to better understand students and provide careers support to help them prepare for the transition to the workplace and achieve positive destinations. Employers are increasingly shifting focus away from degree subject and classification towards soft skills, experience and personality in their recruitment drives. It is important for universities to better understand where students are at entry point and how far they need to travel to reach their goal. Career readiness is a useful tool that can be used by universities to evaluate their students for career planning purposes.

Career readiness has been defined in different ways and has different meanings in different contexts. AGCAS’s counterpart in the USA, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), defines career readiness as ‘the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace’. Given that no definition has been widely accepted in the UK higher education careers sector, a flexible approach was adopted to define career readiness in this survey. Only the most important and well-defined dimensions of career readiness have been included: career self-efficacy and employability skills.

1.2 How to measure it?

The two dimensions of career readiness, career self-efficacy and employability skills, are measured with a five-point Likert scale. The key aspects of career self-efficacy and employability were identified via an extensive literature review. The statements were developed from the questions or scales used in previous surveys, e.g. AGCAS’s earlier first-year student surveys, the Annual Survey of the Institute of Student Employers (ISE). A confirmative factor analysis and reliability analysis were carried out before all other data analysis. The outcomes confirmed the research design of the two dimensions and the

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1 Available at: http://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/ (accessed 13 June 2018).
key aspects under each dimension. The reliability analysis of the statements used to measure career self-efficacy and employability skills is very good.2

1.3 Other research questions

Other research questions were also asked to better understand first-year students:

- What factors might affect first-year students’ careers readiness?
- What can careers practitioners and other stakeholders do to better support first-year students?

These research questions were answered through investigation of the following aspects, which literature suggests link strongly to students’ career choices and planning:

- Social capital and cultural capital
- CEIAG provided and used before university
- Career-related activities undertaken before university and at university
- Possible constraints to career planning
- Careers support expected at university

These aspects form the key structure of the report.

1.4 Who will benefit from the research?

This report is written with the following readers in mind:

- Careers practitioners in the higher education sector
- Other university staff who work with undergraduate students
- CEIAG providers in both the higher and secondary education sector
- Policy makers and advocacy groups related to higher education and careers education
- Graduate recruiters
- Undergraduate students

2 Cronbach’s Alpha 0.887 for employability skills and 0.911 for career self-efficacy
1.5 Terminology

**Mature students**

Any student aged 22 years old or over at the start of their studies.

**Younger students**

Any student aged 21 years old or younger at the start of their studies.

**UK students under 20**

UK home students who are younger than 20 years old. The vast majority of the students in this group had just completed their secondary education and entered higher education without a gap year.

**Habituated cultural activities**

Students were asked how frequently they had participated in cultural activities before university. Based on the responses, the habituated cultural activities reported in this report are defined as:

- Read books for leisure: once a week or more
- Visit museums/galleries/historic sites: once a year or more
- Practise arts: once a week or more
- Attend arts performances/concerts: once a year or more
- Go to the cinema: once a year or more
- Watch live sports matches: once a week or more
- Participate in sports activities: once a week or more
- Attend summer schools/camps: once a year or more
- Travel: once a year or more

**First-generation university students**

Students where neither parent/guardian had attended university.

**Subject groups**

Subjects were classified into seven groups in order to achieve reliable and meaningful results when the subject variable was used to break down data. The classification was based on the characteristics of the subjects and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) results broken down into subjects. The following table demonstrates how the subjects were classified into new subject groups (highlighted in bold).
### Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
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<tr>
<td>Medicine and dentistry</td>
<td>Medicine and subjects allied to medicine</td>
<td>Mass communication and documentation</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
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<td>Veterinary sciences, agriculture and related subjects</td>
<td>Linguistics, classics and related subjects</td>
<td>Social science and humanities subjects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterinary sciences, agriculture and related subjects</td>
<td>Architecture, building and planning</td>
<td>European languages, literature and related subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture, building and planning</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Eastern, Asiatic, African, American and Australasian languages, literature and related subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>Historical and philosophical studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Mathematical sciences</td>
<td>Business and administrative studies</td>
<td>Business and administrative studies</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Creative arts and design</td>
<td>Creative arts and design</td>
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### Ethnic Groups

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<td>White – Irish</td>
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<tr>
<td>White - any other White background</td>
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<td>Asian - Indian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>Asian - Pakistani</td>
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<td>Asian - Bangladeshi</td>
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<td>Asian - Chinese</td>
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<td>Asian - any other Asian background</td>
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<td>Black - African</td>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>Black - Caribbean</td>
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<td>Black - any other Black background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background</td>
<td>Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Career readiness gaps

Overall, the survey findings reveal that career readiness significantly associates to age. Mature students were more likely than younger students to have clear career ideas before they chose their university course. Mature students’ scores in most aspects of career readiness were significantly higher than their younger counterparts.

When age is controlled, some gaps in gender, ethnicity, first-generation status and subject groups are revealed.

2.1 Career ideas

Nearly two thirds of mature students (61.9%) had clear career ideas before choosing their university course compared to less than one third of younger students (32.7%).

**UK students under 20**

For UK students under 20, gaps were revealed among students from different ethnic backgrounds, from different schools and from different degree courses. Four out of ten Black students had clear career ideas before choosing their university course compared to around one third of White students and a quarter of students from Asian or Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups. Students educated at private schools (25.2%) were less likely than those educated at state schools (32.7%) to have clear career ideas before choosing their university course. A significantly higher proportion of students studying professional subjects, e.g. medicine and subjects allied to medicine and law, had clear career ideas than students from other degree courses (Figure 1). Social science and humanities had the lowest proportion of students who had clear career ideas before choosing their university course.
Figure 1: Career ideas before choosing university course by subject groups (% of UK students under 20)

(Base: 89 for Medicine and subjects allied to medicine, 100 for Traditional professional subjects (not including medicine), 250 for STEM (not including biological sciences), 216 for Social science and humanities subjects, 57 for Business and administrative studies, 48 for Creative arts and design, 189 for Biological sciences, and 50 for Combined)

2.2 Career self-efficacy

In every aspect of career self-efficacy, mature students’ average confidence levels were significantly higher than younger students’ scores (Figure 2). Both mature students and younger students were the least confident in writing a covering letter. Mature students were the most confident in knowing what skills they needed to get a professional job, while younger students were the most confident in knowing how their skills could be used in a variety of jobs.

UK students under 20

Female students were marginally more confident in making a plan of their goals for the next three years but less confident in identifying employers, firms and institutions relevant to their career options and in attending an interview. Male students (3.72) reported significantly higher confidence level scores than female students (3.42) in attending an interview.
The only significant difference among students from different ethnic backgrounds appears in one aspect of career planning, ‘determine the steps I need to take to successfully complete my university course’, where Asian students (3.55) reported significantly lower confidence level scores than their counterparts (White 3.77; Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups 4.04).

Figure 2: Career self-efficacy by age (average confidence level scores)

(Base: 1614 for younger students and 394 for mature students)
First-generation university students reported significantly higher confidence levels than students where both parents/guardians had attended university in two aspects of career self-efficacy: career goal and job application. First-generation university students’ confidence level scores ranged from 2.93 to 3.71 whereas the scores of their counterparts ranged from 2.68 to 3.53.

Table 1: Comparison of career self-efficacy for first-generation university students and students where both parents/guardians had attended university (average confidence level scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of career self-efficacy</th>
<th>First-generation university students</th>
<th>Students where both parents/guardians had attended university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career goal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work persistently towards a goal, even if I get frustrated</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for help and support to achieve my goal</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a good CV</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill in a job application form accurately</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a covering letter</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: 539 for first-generation university students and 237 for students where both parents/guardians had attended university)

Students educated at private schools reported higher confidence level scores (3.72 to 4.08) than students educated at state schools (3.31 to 3.81) in the following three aspects:

- Determine the steps I need to take to successfully complete my university course
- Identify employers, firms and institutions relevant to my career options
- What skills I need to get a professional job

Students from different subject groups reported significantly different confidence levels in all aspects of career self-efficacy apart from ‘determine the steps I need to take to successfully complete my university course’. Students studying medicine and subjects allied to medicine and other traditional professional subjects scored higher in most aspects of career self-efficacy than their peers. Conversely, students studying STEM subjects (not including biological sciences) scored lower in most aspects of career self-efficacy for all students.

Similar to the findings for mature students, UK students under 20 were the least confident in writing a covering letter and the most confident in knowing what skills they needed to get a professional job, regardless of demographic background.
2.3 Employability skills

Only in a few aspects of social skills, work skills and business culture awareness did mature students report similar confidence levels to younger students (not highlighted in bold in Table 2). Both mature students and younger students had high confidence level scores for business culture awareness but low scores for ‘deliver a presentation at a job interview’, ‘manage my time efficiently’ and ‘persuade others to listen to me or accept my points’.

Table 2: Employability skills (average confidence level scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of employability skills</th>
<th>Statements of employability skills</th>
<th>Younger students</th>
<th>Mature students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business communication</td>
<td>Make appropriate conversation with professionals already employed in the field that I am interested in</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write an email to enquire about a post in a job advertisement</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliver a presentation at a job interview</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal and social skills</td>
<td>Lead or contribute to a group discussion</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiate small talk with strangers at a social occasion</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiate with others to reach a better solution</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persuade others to listen to me or accept my points</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help friends to resolve or find solutions to the problems in their life</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential work skills</td>
<td>Resolve problems in my academic studies</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master the IT systems and software used at university or in the workplace</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage my time efficiently</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stay calm when I am confronted</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business culture awareness</td>
<td>The professional dress code in the industries that I am interested in</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That certain language is not tolerated in the industries that I am interested in</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The requirements of professional behaviour in the industries that I am interested in</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organisational culture of the employers that I am interested in</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: 1614 for younger students and 394 for mature students)
UK students under 20

There is no gender difference among UK students under 20 in terms of business culture awareness. However, in the other three dimensions of employability skills, male students scored higher than female students in half of the statements.

Figure 3: Employability skills by gender for UK students under 20 (average confidence level scores)

(Base: 384 male students and 684 female students)

First-generation university students reported slightly higher confidence levels than students where both parents/guardians had attended university in two aspects of business culture awareness: ‘the requirements of professional behaviour in the industries that I am interested in’ and ‘the organisational culture of the employers that I am interested in’.

Students educated at private schools reported significantly higher confidence level scores than students educated at state schools in the following aspects of business communication and business culture awareness:

- Make appropriate conversation with professionals already employed in the field that I am interested in (3.67 vs 3.29)
- Deliver a presentation at a job interview (3.10 vs 2.65)
- The organisational culture of the employers that I am interested in (4.13 vs 3.80)

Students from different subject groups reported no significant differences in negotiation skills, persuasion skills, delivering a presentation at a job interview, and all aspects of essential work skills.
Students studying medicine and subjects applied to medicine and other traditional professional subjects scored higher in most other aspects of employability skills compared to students studying STEM subjects (not including biological sciences). Students studying business and administrative studies were the most confident in leading or contributing to a group discussion out of all students in this age group.
3. Capital gaps

3.1 Cultural capital

There are significant differences between different student groups in the extent to which they participated in habituated cultural activities before university. More mature students than younger students had read books for leisure. More younger students than mature students had practised arts, participated in sports activities and attended summer schools/camps before university. The gaps between students from different demographic backgrounds reveal a similar pattern, regardless of age.

Gender (UK students under 20)

More female students than male students reported that they had participated in the following activities: read books for leisure, visit museums/galleries/historic sites, practise arts, and attend arts performances/concerts. A higher percentage of male students than female students had watched live sports matches and participated in sports activities regularly (Figure 4).

Ethnicity

For White students, there is no statistically significant difference between the percentage of all students and the percentage of students under 20 participating in each type of habituated cultural activity.

The key gaps between White students and BME students (especially Asian and Black students) are revealed in the following four habituated cultural activities:

- **Travel**: White students (over 80%), Black students (about 50%) and Asian students (about 60%)
- **Attend arts performances/concerts**: White students (about two thirds), Asian students (about one third)
- **Visit museums/galleries/historic sites**: White students (nearly two thirds), Black students (about half) and Asian students (around four out of ten)
- **Practise arts**: White students (over a third), Asian students (about two out of ten)
Figure 4: Participation in habituated cultural activities before university by gender (% of UK students under 20)

(Base: 384 male students and 684 female students)

**Socio-economic**

Through the lens of state or private school education, significant gaps appear in seven out of nine habituated cultural activities, regardless of age. Conversely, first-generation status reveals a different picture. For UK students under 20, the gaps between first-generation university students and their counterparts were significant; however, for all students the gaps were less significant. For all students, there was no significant difference between first-generation university students and the students where one parent/guardian had attended university, yet for UK students under 20 there was a significant difference between the two groups.
Table 3: Participation in habituated cultural activities by parents'/guardians’ higher education background and school attended before university (% of UK students under 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents'/Guardians’ higher education background</th>
<th>School attended before university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither attended university</td>
<td>One attended university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books for leisure</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit museums/galleries/historic sites</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practise arts</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend arts performances/concerts</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the cinema</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch live sports matches</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in sports activities</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend summer schools/camps</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: 539 for students where neither parent/guardian had attended university, 298 for students where one parent/guardian had attended university, 237 for students where both parents/guardians had attended university; 947 students from state schools in the UK, 107 students from private schools in the UK)

3.2 Social capital

Mature students did not have more social capital than their younger counterparts. Only 43.4% of mature students claimed that they knew many or most of the people in their neighbourhood compared to 55.6% of younger students. A significantly higher proportion of mature students (35.3%) than younger students (25.9%) reported that they had not been involved in any activities in their local community before going to university.

For UK students under 20, the gender, ethnicity and socio-economic gaps in social capital are particularly more significant and meaningful than those that appear for all students.

**Gender (UK students under 20)**

Although slightly more female students (57.2%) than male students (52.1%) knew many or most of the people in their neighbourhood, a higher proportion of female students (27.8%) had not been involved in any activities in their local community before going to university compared to male students (24.8%). In particular, the gender gap was significant for two activities:

- Being a member of one or more sports clubs (male 44.0% vs female 31.1%)
- Raising funds for schools, churches, any other charities, or individuals (male 32.6% vs female 43.4%)

Both male and female UK students under 20 relied on a wide range of people in their social network for advice about university course choice. However, significantly more female students than male students relied on parents/guardians or their spouse/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend for advice. Considering that a significantly higher proportion of female students had done work experience in the last two years, it raises a question as to why female students did not rely more heavily on their colleagues for advice.

Figure 5: Sources of advice for university course choice by gender (% of UK students under 20)

[Graph showing sources of advice by gender]

(Base: 384 male students and 684 female students)

Ethnicity

Regardless of age, the ethnicity gaps in social capital were consistent. Fewer Black students (about 40%) knew many or most of the people in their neighbourhood compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds (over 50%). Fewer Asian students (less than 20%) than White students (over 30%)
had been a member of one or more sports clubs. A significantly higher proportion of Asian students (about one third) and Black students (nearly 50%) practised religion in a religious group compared to students from other ethnic groups (less than 20%). Fewer Asian students and Black students (less than 20%) had organised a party, a group trip or other group activities than students from other ethnic backgrounds (nearly 30%).

UK students under 20 reported different preferences for sources of advice about university course choice according to their ethnic group. Fewer Black students relied on their parents/guardians for advice compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. A higher proportion of Asian students and Black students went to their siblings for advice. Asian students relied more heavily on tutors/teachers or careers advisers. Overall, parents/guardians, tutors/teachers and friends were the top three sources for advice about university course choice.

Table 4: Sources of advice for university course choice by ethnic groups (% of UK students under 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Advice</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My parents/guardians</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spouse/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My siblings</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My tutors/teachers</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My careers advisers/coaches/consultants</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues who I have worked with (including employers)</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential people who I know (e.g. religious leaders, doctors, lawyers, government officers, journalists, activists, etc)</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t take advice from anybody</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: 384 male students and 684 female students)

Socio-economic

Although a higher percentage of first-generation university students (nearly 60%) and students who had attended state school before university (over 56.2%) claimed that they knew many or most of the people in their neighbourhood than their counterparts (around 50%), they did not appear to have more social capital. Nearly a third of first-generation university students and over a quarter of students
who had attended state school before university reported that they had not been involved in any activities in their local community before going to university.

Table 5: Involvement in community activities by parents’/guardians’ higher education background and school attended before university (% of UK students under 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents'/Guardians’ higher education background</th>
<th>School attended before university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neither attended university</td>
<td>One attended university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a member of one or more sports clubs</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising funds for schools, churches, any other charities, or individuals</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending political meetings</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practising religion in a religious group</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in lobbying/advocacy activities, such as petitions</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaking a business venture to make money (for example selling at a car boot sale/market or setting up a small enterprise)</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising a party, a group trip, or other group activities</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other community activities</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was not involved in any activities in my local community</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: 539 for students where neither parent/guardian had attended university, 298 for students where one parent/guardian had attended university, 237 for students where both parents/guardians had attended university; 947 students from state schools in the UK, 107 students from private schools in the UK)

The patterns of how first-generation university students took advice about university course choice from the connections in their social network are largely the same for their counterparts. However, fewer first-generation university students went to their parents/guardians or influential people they knew for advice. Compared to students educated at state schools, students who were educated at private schools benefited more from the wide range of people in their social network for advice about university course choice. This perhaps associates to the level of careers support available at the school/college where they were educated.
Figure 6: Sources of advice for university course choice by type of school (% of UK students under 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Advice</th>
<th>UK State</th>
<th>UK Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My parents/guardians</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spouse/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My siblings</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My tutors/teachers</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My careers advisers/coaches/consultants</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues who I have worked with</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential people who I know</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t take advice from anybody</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Base: 947 students from state schools in the UK and 107 students from private schools in the UK)
4. CEIAG before university

In this survey, we explored the CEIAG initiatives that younger students had been provided with in their schools/colleges, and that they had used before university.

4.1 CEIAG provision in schools/colleges

According to the responses from UK students under 20, the most significant differences in CEIAG provision associates to the type of school attended before university. A significantly higher proportion of students educated at private schools reported that careers support had been provided in the following 6 out of 13 initiatives compared to students educated at state schools:

- Sessions/talks/presentations about higher education/apprenticeships/employment options, delivered by teachers/tutors/advisers
- Representatives from universities came to give talks about study opportunities
- Employers came to give talks about employment opportunities
- Other people were invited to inspire students about post-school/college opportunities and career options
- One-to-one careers guidance was available to book
- There was access to careers sessions, such as how to complete a job application, how to develop networking skills, etc

This explains the big gaps between students from both types of school in the two sources of advice for university course choice indicated in Figure 6: ‘my tutors/teachers’ and ‘my careers advisers/coaches/consultants’.
Figure 7: CEIAG provision in schools/colleges by type of school (% of UK students under 20)

(Base: 947 students from state schools in the UK and 107 students from private schools in the UK)
4.2 Students’ use of CEIAG provided in schools/colleges

Careers practitioners and stakeholders should pay special attention to the gaps that exist between the provision of CEIAG and students’ use of this. Figure 8 demonstrates the gaps between students’ perceptions and use of CEIAG provision in schools/colleges. Given that some careers support initiatives used by students had not been provided by their school/college, the actual gaps could be wider than indicated in the following figure.

Figure 8: CEIAG provision in schools/colleges and that used by students (% of UK students under 20)

(Base: 1074 UK students under 20)

I  Online information about higher education/apprenticeships/employment options
II  Printed information about higher education/apprenticeships/employment options
III  Sessions/talks/presentations about higher education/apprenticeships/employment options, delivered by teachers/tutors/advisers
IV  School/college or external careers fair type events to meet different representatives from universities and/or employers
V  Representatives from universities came to give talks about study opportunities
VI  Apprenticeship providers came to give talks about apprenticeship opportunities
VII  Employers came to give talks about employment opportunities
VIII  Other people were invited to inspire students about post-school/college opportunities and career options
IX  Work placements were arranged for students
X  Visits to universities, apprenticeship providers or employers were organised
XI  One-to-one careers guidance was available to book
XII  Careers advisers were available to students
XIII  There was access to careers sessions, such as how to complete a job application, how to develop networking skills, etc
Two provision-usage gaps between students educated at state schools and those educated at private schools need further exploration. According to students’ responses, there were no significant differences between the two types of schools in the provision of the following careers support:

- Printed information about higher education/apprenticeships/employment options (over 70%)
- Careers advisers were available to students (over 80%)

Nevertheless, students educated at state schools reported significantly lower usage of these initiatives than students educated at private schools.

Figure 9: CEIAG provision in UK state schools and that used by students (% of UK students under 20)

(Base: 947 for UK students under 20 from state schools)
Figure 10: CEIAG provision in UK private schools and that used by students (% of UK students under 20)

(Base: 107 for UK students under 20 from private schools)
5. Career planning

Students' career planning was examined through the career-related activities they had undertaken in the last two years and the activities they perceived as important, had already taken part in or planned to take part in during their first year at university.

5.1 Career-related activities before university

Part-time work (71.6%), volunteering (54%) and work experience/work shadowing (required by school/college) (49.8%) were the top three career-related activities UK students under 20 had undertaken in the last two years. There are significant differences between students from different demographic backgrounds.

More female students than male students had participated in career-related activities. The biggest gender difference lies in participation in volunteering activities.

Figure 11: Participation in career-related activities in the last two years by gender (% of UK students under 20)

A higher proportion of White students (74.9%) had done part-time work than students from other ethnic backgrounds. Fewer Asian students had done part-time work (56.2%), yet more of them (52.6%) had
undertaken work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds.

A lower proportion of first-generation university students and students educated at state schools had done volunteering or undertaken work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) compared to their counterparts. Fewer students where both parents/guardians had attended university and those educated at private schools had done part-time work compared to their counterparts.

A higher proportion of students studying traditional professional subjects (not including medicine), creative arts and design, and combined subjects had done part-time work (around 80%) than their peers. More students studying medicine and subjects allied to medicine, other traditional professional subjects and biological sciences (over 60%) had done volunteering compared to other students. Students studying medicine and subjects allied to medicine had undertaken the most work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) (71.9%) compared to their peers (ranging from 41.7% to 56%). Over 10% of students studying STEM subjects (not including biological sciences) and business and administrative studies had not taken part in any career-related activities, compared to 5.9% of all UK students under 20.

5.2 Perceived importance vs action

In the survey, students were asked what activities were important to them and what activities they had participated in at university. The results indicate that the order of perceived importance is different to the order of actual participation. For example, ‘apply for work experience’ is in third place according to the percentage of students who perceived it as important, but in seventh place based on the percentage of students who had actually participated in the activity. In Figure 11, the twelve activities are mapped into four groups according to the order of importance and the order of participation.

- **The liked**: high importance, high participation
- **The lagged**: high importance, low participation
- **The leaped**: low importance, high participation
- **The left**: low importance, low participation

This mapping analysis demonstrates that first-year students value activities that link directly to work experiences and social networks. Careers service provision perceived as less important (seventh to twelfth) to the students, falling in ‘the leaped’ and ‘the left’ categories, are those that did not present immediate outcomes to the students. However, accessing the careers service website and attending a careers fair are in the top six activities students had participated in at university. The gap between perceived importance and actual participation could be interpreted in two ways: a) careers service
inductions helped students understand how to use career service provision to get careers information, e.g. about work experience, which led the students to action; b) students’ perceptions of the careers service was utilitarian oriented, so careers service provision was used as a quick fix, e.g. to get work experience. The latter is also supported by the activities in ‘the left’ category. Students neither perceived as important nor participated in careers service provision (e.g. employability training and one-to-one guidance) that did not associate directly to work experiences and social networks. Qualitative research is needed to better understand students’ perceptions and use of careers services for career planning.

Figure 12: Mapping the activities at university based on perceived importance and actual participation for all students³

(Base: 2008 students)

Compared to younger students, mature students’ perceptions of what activities were important to them and what activities they had participated in at university are somewhat different. For mature students, the gaps between perception and participation in most activities are narrower than the gaps that appear for younger students. However, the gaps are still significant in the activities labelled as ‘the

³ The percentages following each activity are the proportion of all students who perceived the activity as important to them and the proportion who reported that they had participated in the activity at university.
lagged" in Figure 13. More effort is needed from both students and careers services to close these gaps.

Figure 13: Mapping the activities at university based on perceived importance and actual participation for mature students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The leaped</th>
<th>The liked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend a careers fair (20.8%, 16.2%)</td>
<td>Make new friends (45.2%, 63.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join a university society (19.3%, 23.1%)</td>
<td>Get a part-time job (40.1%, 47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access the careers service website to get careers information (18.8%, 15.5%)</td>
<td>Do some volunteering (28.2%, 16.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the careers service (16.8%, 11.2%)</td>
<td>Start networking with professionals (42.6%, 14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a social media/blog/website (10.4%, 9.1%)</td>
<td>Apply for work experience (34%, 14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join a religious group (4.1%, 6.1%)</td>
<td>Sign up to a programme to build new skills (23.4%, 13.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentages following each activity are the proportion of mature students who perceived the activity as important to them and the proportion who reported that they had participated in the activity at university.

(Base: 394 mature students)
6. Life balance and pressures

To achieve a better understanding of students’ university life, students were asked how much time they spent on routine tasks and for further information about financing their university education.

6.1 Time

Mature students and first-generation university students reported greater time constraints compared to their counterparts. Mature students were especially time poor compared to younger students. Mature students spent more time than younger students on study, doing paid work, family responsibilities and commuting and less time on social or extracurricular activities.

Figure 14: Time spent weekly by age (% of younger/mature students)

(Base: 1614 younger students and 394 mature students)

When age was controlled, first-generation university students demonstrated different patterns to their counterparts in how they spent their time. For UK students under 20, first-generation university students spent less time on study and on social or extracurricular activities but more time doing paid work. The gender difference in this age group is only apparent for social or extracurricular activities, where more male students than female students spent time on such activities. Students from different subjects also presented different patterns. Students studying medicine and subjects allied to medicine and traditional professional subjects spent more time on study. Students studying STEM subjects (not including biological sciences) spent more time on social or extracurricular activities but less time doing paid work compared to their peers. Similarly, students studying social science and humanities subjects...
also spent less time doing paid work. Students studying business and administrative studies spent less time on study and on social or extracurricular activities but more time doing paid work than their peers.

### 6.2 Finance

Mature students were less confident than younger students in their ability to finance their university education. Over a quarter of mature students reported that they had major concerns and were not sure they would have enough funds, compared to 13.6% of younger students. A significantly higher percentage of male students had no financial concerns compared to female students, regardless of age.

For UK students under 20, the differences in financial concerns are not statistically significant between students from different ethnic groups or according to first-generation status. It is understandable that fewer students educated at private schools had financial concerns compared to those educated at state schools. However, further research is needed to make sense of why more female students than male students in this age group had concerns about financing their university education.

Overall, more mature students than younger students were under greater time and financial pressures. For UK students under 20, those whose parents/guardians could afford private education for their children were better off: these students were able to spend more time studying and participating in social or extracurricular activities to build up capital for future employment.
6.3 Factors influencing career planning

The findings reveal the possible constraints faced by different students in undertaking career-related activities.

Time and finance

Mature students faced time and financial pressures. Many of them lived at a distance from their university, had family responsibilities, and juggled part-time jobs with academic study. Many also had to sacrifice opportunities to participate in social or extracurricular activities. Although networking with professionals was listed as the second most important activity to mature students (42.6%), only 14.2% of them had taken part in this activity at university.

Family

For UK students under 20, Asian students presented unique characteristics in many aspects compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. Before university, fewer Asian students had done part-time work, but more had taken advice about university course choice from tutors/teachers and/or careers advisers/coaches/consultants and had undertaken work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) than their counterparts. Their awareness of career-related activities was also good. A significantly higher proportion of Asian students perceived applying for work experience,
signing up to a programme to build new skills not covered on their courses, and doing some volunteering important compared to White students. However, their participation in career-related activities was not as high as their counterparts. Apart from applying for work experience (13.1%), Asian students’ participation in other activities was lower than students from other ethnic backgrounds. The reason, perhaps, links to the fact that 44.5% of Asian students still lived with their parents/guardians at the time of answering the survey. Family and cultural values might play a role in their lagged action in undertaking career-related activities.

**Capital**

For all students, apart from joining a university society and getting a part-time job, there were no differences between first-generation university students and their counterparts in terms of the career-related activities they perceived to be important and their participation in these activities. A lower proportion of first-generation university students perceived joining a university society important, and had participated in this activity, compared to their counterparts. A higher proportion of first-generation university students had got part-time jobs. This pattern also appeared for UK students under 20. However, in this age group, there were differences between first-generation university students and their counterparts in their participation in career-related activities at university. Fewer first-generation university students had made new friends and attended careers fairs than their counterparts.

The career-related activities that first-generation university students, especially UK students under 20, had engaged less with all fall into the category of social activity. This echoes the social capital gap between first-generation university students and their counterparts reported previously (Section 3.2). A higher proportion of first-generation university students had not been involved in any activities in their local community before going to university and fewer of them had been a member of one or more sports clubs or organised a party, a group trip, or other group activities than their counterparts. As indicated in Section 3.1, first-generation university students were highly likely to bring less cultural capital with them to university than their counterparts. The capital difference could be an obstacle to first-generation university students’ participation in social activities that are helpful to career planning.

The patterns of differences in the perceptions of and participation in career-related activities, and the social capital and cultural capital gaps between first-generation university students and their counterparts, are largely the same as those between students educated at state schools and students educated at private schools. It is highly likely that the differences in CEIAG provision at the two types of schools reported in Section 4.1 have increased the capital gaps. The possible impact of capital gaps on students’ perceptions of and participation in career-related activities at university needs further exploration.
Extracurricular activities
For UK students under 20, female students appeared to be more active than male students in career-related activities, both before university and while at university. More female students than male students had done part-time work, volunteering and undertaken work experience/work shadowing (required by their school/college) in the last two years. At university, more female students than male students perceived getting a part-time job, making new friends, applying for work experience and doing some volunteering as important. A higher proportion of female students than male students had got a part-time job, made new friends, attended a careers fair and done some volunteering at university. However, female students were less confident than male students in terms of career readiness (reported in Section 2.2 and Section 2.3). The areas where female students reported less confident all relate to interpersonal and social skills. The gender differences in participation in extracurricular activities are highly likely to be a key factor, according to the following findings:

- Significant gender differences appeared in students’ participation in habituated cultural activities (reported in Section 3.1) and community activities (reported in Section 3.2).
- Female students participated more in habituated cultural activities that did not involve collaboration whereas male students practised more sports (often in sports clubs).
- More female students (42.7%) than male students (33.1%) reported that they did not spend time on social or extracurricular activities at university.
7. Careers support expected

Mature students, female students and White students expected to receive more careers support from their university careers service across almost all of the available options. Expectations varied according to student group. The most significant difference in preference lies between mature students and younger students.

Figure 16: Careers support expected from university careers services by age

(Base: 1614 younger students and 394 mature students)
8. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings from the AGCAS First-year Career Readiness Survey reveal that first-year students are not a holistic group. Mature students are more career-ready than younger students but they do not carry with them more social or cultural capital. Time and financial pressures are a major obstacle to their participation in some career-related activities, many of which can help build up valuable social capital. Even for UK students under 20 who had just left school/college, there are still significant gaps in many aspects of career readiness, participation in career-related activities, capitals and careers support received/expected between students from different demographic backgrounds. The following conclusions have been drawn to assist higher education careers services plan targeted careers provision, and as a reference for policy makers and other stakeholders.

8.1 Conclusions

- First-year students had different levels of career readiness.
- Significant gaps appeared between mature students and younger students, male and female students, and students from different types of schools.
- First-generation university students and students educated at state schools were worse off than their counterparts in terms of sources of advice about university course choice. The difference associates to both family background and type of school.
- Students from different demographic backgrounds carried different capital with them. For UK students under 20, significant differences were observed according to gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background in students' participation in habituated cultural activities and community activities. The differences in participation in social activities suggest a link to the differences in career-related activities at university.
- Responses from UK students under 20 to questions about the provision and use of CEIAG in schools/colleges reveal big differences between state schools and private schools in the careers support available to students.
- Benefitting from family/school support, and with different capital, UK students educated at private schools, students who were not first-generation university students and male students under 20 participated more in social activities related to career planning at university.

8.2 Recommendations

The differences in career readiness, career-related activities and other relevant factors between first-year students from different demographic backgrounds indicate that some students have further to travel to reach their goal. To enable all students to achieve successful graduate outcomes, careers services, universities and policy makers need a better understanding of students' starting points and reasons for engaging (or otherwise) in order to close the gaps in ways which work for students. Clearly,
university careers services have no control over the provision of pre-HE CEIAG, but they deal with the impact of the different levels of provision and engagement described in this report.

**Recommendations for careers practitioners**

The bespoke careers support initiatives for specific student groups developed in many UK universities are positive approaches. However, the different characteristics of students and the factors influencing their career planning suggest that careers and employability provision at universities may need more segmented communication and clearer value propositions to the heterogeneous student audience described in this report.

**Innovation in engaging students:**

More students had accessed their university careers service website than had visited their careers service to get help. This is entirely understandable behaviour, given the relative ease of access and relatively ‘low risk’ engagement. For many services, the next steps are related to increasing the value and impact of online engagement to complement and enhance face-to-face engagement.

**Effective communication to change perceptions:**

The survey revealed that students’ perceptions of which career-related activities were important differed according to demographic background. Those who need more support with increasing social capital lack awareness of and participation in social activities related to career planning at university. Careers services and their institutions need to develop communication campaigns with targeted students to raise their awareness of how important social activities might be to their future careers and facilitate their engagement.

**Recommendations for universities and policy makers**

The gaps between first-generation university students and their counterparts, students from different schools, and gender have societal bases well beyond the scope of university careers and employability provision alone. However, this report raises issues in relation to the interface between universities’ own pre-entry careers support and that provided by secondary schools before students choose their GCSE subjects. To help students gain a realistic perception of higher education pathways (and, indeed, other options), universities’ engagement activities should not only be organised and delivered with targeted students, but also with their parents/guardians and communities in mind.

This report suggests the need for a critical reflection of the radical changes to CEIAG provision in secondary education (in England, at least) since 2012. The significant gaps between students from public funded and private funded schools cannot be narrowed without policy change, financial investment and supporting resources.
Recommendations for researchers

The data collected in this survey can be joined with any other datasets collected from the same group of students by university careers services, e.g. Careers Registration, service engagement data, DLHE. Further analysis of joined datasets could identify which careers support initiatives can help narrow or close the gaps between students from different demographic backgrounds.

A triangulated research design would be a better approach. Qualitative research can help increase understanding of the possible reasons behind the gaps and for the lagged action in career-related activities.

The scales used to measure career readiness need to be evaluated and evolved from time to time, in line with changes in the student experience and the graduate opportunity structure.
Appendix

National/regional distribution of valid responses

Table 6: Number of participating universities and valid responses by country/nation/region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/nation/region</th>
<th>Number of participating universities</th>
<th>Number of valid responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: Scotland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: London</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: West Midlands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: North West England</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: East Midlands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: East England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: South East England</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: Wales</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>2597</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic distribution of valid responses

**Student status**

(Base: 2008 students)

**Age**

(Base: 2008 students)
**Gender**

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)

**Ethnic groups**

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)
Type of school before university

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)

Family background

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)
Subject groups

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)

Mode of study

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)
Qualification studying towards

(Base: 2008 All students; 1074 UK students under 20, 394 mature students)

Home country/region

(Base: 2008 students)