Graduate Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace

A Report on Graduate Mental Wellbeing For Student Minds

Miss Vicky Reino & Dr. Nicola Byrom

Listening to graduates

student minds

Student Minds is the UK's student mental health charity. We empower students and members of the university community to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to look after their own mental health, support others and create change. We train students and staff in universities across the UK to deliver student-led peer support interventions as well as research-driven campaigns and workshops. By working collaboratively across sectors, we share best practice and ensure that the student voice influences decisions about student mental health.

Together we will transform the state of student mental health so that all in higher education can thrive.

student minds

Contents

Executive Summary

The graduate employment sector has seen a dramatic change over the last 30 years. In 1989 only 19% of school leavers went into university education. In comparison, the Higher Education initial participation rate for the academic year 2014/15 was 48% (Department of Business, 2015). There are thus many more graduates looking for graduate employment. Employment rates for young graduates (aged 21 to 30 years) are high, with 87% of young graduates in employment. However, only 56% of young graduates are in high skilled employment, indicating that many graduates are not able to make use of their degree (Department of Education, 2017). This can lead to substantive pressure on university students and a strong sense of competition for high skills graduate employment.

The cost of stress to the workplace is substantive. The 2016 Labour Force Survey identified that 11.7 million days are lost to work related stress, depression or anxiety (HSE, 2016). Stress accounts for 45% of all working days lost due to ill health (HSE, 2016). While there are many steps that employers can take to reduce workplace stress, the transition into the workplace may require particular attention.

The majority of mental health problems develop before the age of 24 (Kessler et al., 2005). Concerns about university student mental health have been raised in recent years, with a high prevalence of mental health difficulties among university students (Macaskill, 2013) and university counselling services reporting an increase in demand for their services (Williams et al., 2015).

In this context, employers interested in minimising disruptive workplace stress need to be considering how they support young adults to make the transition from university to the workplace. Employers and universities have a part to play in early intervention and prevention. If employers can support young recruits in their early years of employment, they have the opportunity to build a more resilient workforce for the future.

This report summarises findings from a large survey of recent graduates, considering university preparation for the workplace, the transition into the workplace, stress and mental wellbeing. Four key findings, discussed in further detail in the report, stand out.

Universities could do more to prepare students for the transition out of university

Our data suggests that, in general, graduates did not feel their university provided strong preparation for the workplace. In particular, few graduates felt that their university provided training and support on how to make the transition out of university or how to make the transition into the workplace.

A university careers service might be expected to be the first point of call for students to gain information on employment opportunities and information surrounding searching and applying for jobs (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). However, research has previously indicated that students are not making full use of their career services, have low expectations of this service and are dissatisfied with the service (Harris, 2001; Watts, 2005). The data reported here unfortunately echo these findings, with fewer than 50% of graduates ranking their university career services within their "Top 5" resources used to inform their career decisions.

Graduate schemes are associated with a better graduate experience,

Individuals entering the workplace as part of a defined graduate scheme had a better graduate experience and this mediated higher levels of mental wellbeing and lower levels of stress. Differences in the prevalence of graduate schemes across employment sectors contributed to a difference in graduate experience across these sectors; where graduate schemes were common the employment sector was associated with a better graduate experience.

Getting the transition into the workplace place right improves subsequent mental wellbeing and reduces subsequent stress.

A good transition into the workplace was associated with better mental wellbeing and lower levels of stress. A number of factors associated with the transition into the workplace were isolated as particularly influential for subsequent mental wellbeing and stress. These were,
1. The graduate has a manager who is interested in their personal development;
2. The graduate has someone they feel confident contacting if they are struggling with their wellbeing;
3. The graduate feels comfortable taking breaks during the workday, for example, taking a break for lunch;
4. The graduate finds the work they are doing interesting;
5. The graduate feels able to keep up with financial pressures;
6. The graduate feels that their organisation is proactive about promoting wellbeing;
7. The graduate feels included in work-related social activities.

Work culture relates to graduate confidence in disclosing mental health difficulties

Graduate confidence in disclosing mental health difficulties to an employer or manager is important to ensure that the manager is able to provide suitable support where necessary. Around half of graduates reported that they would feel confident disclosing a mental health difficulty. Graduates who felt they had a more positive and inclusive workplace culture were more likely to report feeling confident about disclosing mental health difficulties. In particular, we identified three aspects of the workplace culture related to confidence disclosing;
1. Employees feel able to ask for help;
2. Employees feel like they know what they are doing in relation to their work;
3. Employees overhear helpful and supportive conversations about work life or health issues in the office;
Further, employees who were concerned about the pressure experienced by colleagues or a manager were significantly less likely to feel confident disclosing mental health difficulties.

"Universities could benefit their students' futures and wellbeing by investing more into forward-looking preparation - it would show genuine investment in their students. Making careers services more focal in the life of the student is incredibly important."

- Graduate

Participants

This section of the report includes an overview of who took part in the survey. The report will, subsequently, break down whether any of the demographic factors outlined here relate to differences in graduate mental wellbeing.

Recent university graduates were recruited through graduate employers across a range of employment sectors and via adverts on social media. The survey was started by 550 recent graduates and completed by 338 recent graduates. All participants had graduated within three years of completing the survey.

Age: the average age of graduates was 24 years old (Standard Deviation = 1.65).
Gender: most respondents were female (n = 239).
Family background: 38% of participants (n = 128) identified that neither of their parents (or guardians) went to university.
Ethnicity: many respondents, (77%; n = 261) identified as white British. A few respondents (6%; n = 35) identified as coming from another white background. Other respondents identified a range of ethnicities. Unfortunately, no other ethnicities were represented in sufficient number to permit adequate analysis of the influence of ethnicity.
Sexuality: while many respondents identified as heterosexual, a minority (13%; n = 43) identified as LGBTQIA.
Employment: As summarised in Figure 1, participants were recruited from a range of employment sectors.

Legend:
- 3rd Sector
- Financial Services
- Healthcare
- Law
- Education
- Construction and Engineering
- Combined group of Science, Technology
- Others

Pie chart values: 15.4, 14.1, 13.8, 11.5, 8.5, 6.6, 7.6, 22.5

Approximately half of the participants joined their company on a graduate scheme
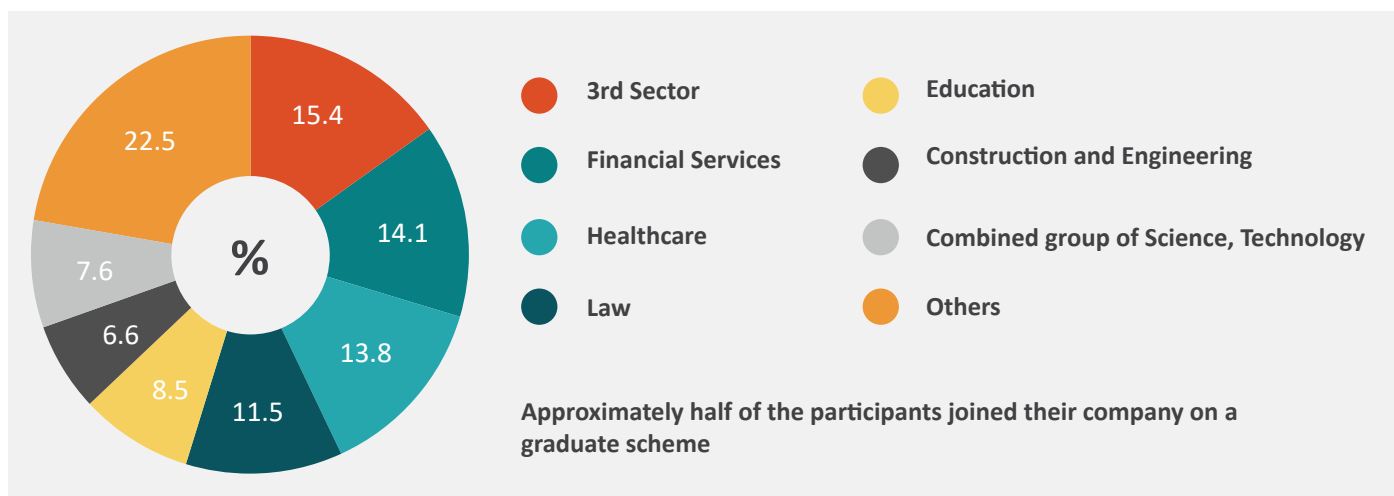
Figure 1: Distribution of employment sectors. Note "other" included accountancy, administration, customer service, social services, civil service, communications, PR, marketing, consultancy and HR

One third of survey respondents (n = 134) had worked with their current company for less than 6 months. One third had worked with their current company for between 6 months and one year (n = 137). The final third had worked with their company for between one and three years (n = 123).

Just under half of respondents (n = 192; 47%) had joined their company as part of a structured graduate scheme.

University: As summarised in Table 1, graduates came from a range of different universities,

	Frequency	Percent
Oxbridge	48	19
Ancient (St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh)	13	4
Durham	15	4
London	21	6
Old & New Redbrick	91	27
1960's	56	17
Post 92	34	10
Million+	17	5
Other	43	13

Table 1: Participants came from a range of universities

Mental health: It is important to note, in terms of mental health, that this is unlikely to be a representative sample of the graduate workforce. Recruitment adverts included a focus on graduate mental wellbeing. We should thus expect an over-representation of individuals with an interested in graduate mental wellbeing, which is likely to include those with lived experience of mental health difficulties.

No experience of mental health difficulties in the past 12 months; 33%

Experience of mental health difficulties: onset before current job; 61%

Experience of mental health difficulties: onset during current job; 3%
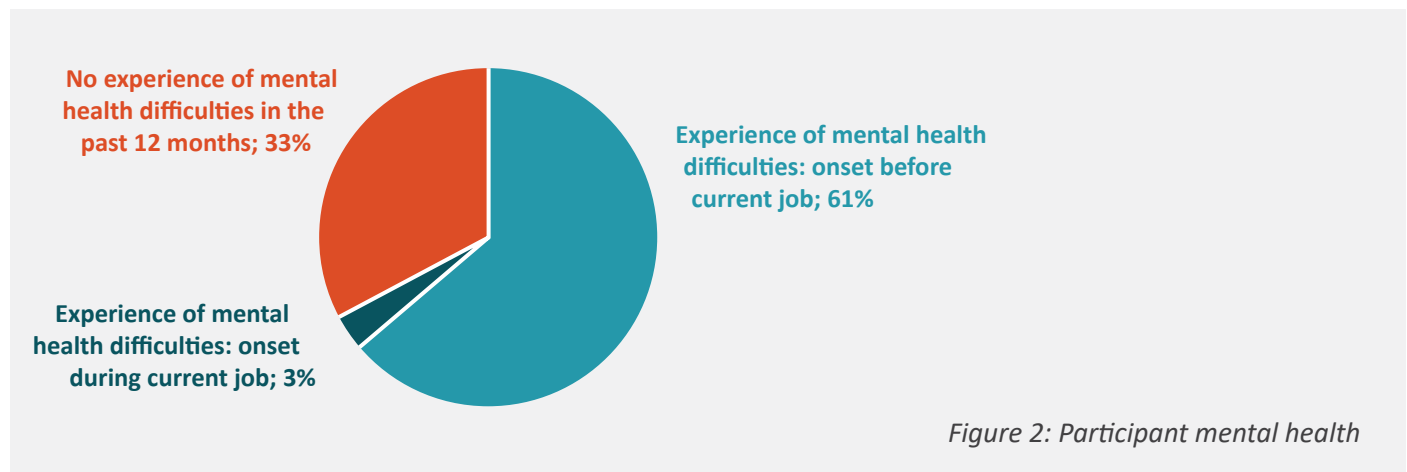
Figure 2: Participant mental health

Over half of respondents (n = 204; 61%) identified that they had experienced some form of mental health difficulty at some point in their life. A further 46 participants stated that they were unsure whether they had experienced mental health difficulties. Of those identifying experience of mental health difficulties, one third (n = 82) reported that these difficulties were in the past. For almost all respondents who identified current mental health difficulties, these were reported to have started before entering the workplace.

Measures used

The survey included several outcome measures to assess graduate mental health.

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) is validated to measure mental wellbeing among the general population (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009; Tennant et al., 2007). Respondents used a scale of 1 (none of the time) through to 5 (all of the time) to identify how often they had experienced thoughts or feelings over the past two weeks.

These are all positive, so higher scores = better mental wellbeing. The scores range from 14 to 120.

1. I've been feeling optimistic about the future
2. I've been feeling useful
3. I've been feeling relaxed
4. I've been feeling interested in other people
5. I've had energy to spare
6. I've been dealing with problems well
7. I've been thinking clearly
8. I've been feeling good about myself
9. I've been feeling close to other people
10. I've been feeling confident
11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things
12. I've been feeling loved
13. I've been interested in new things
14. I've been feeling cheerful

The average graduate mental wellbeing score was 45.75 (SD = 10.73). It is interesting to note that the average score here is lower than the norm that was calculated in England in 2011 (51.61; SD = 8.71).
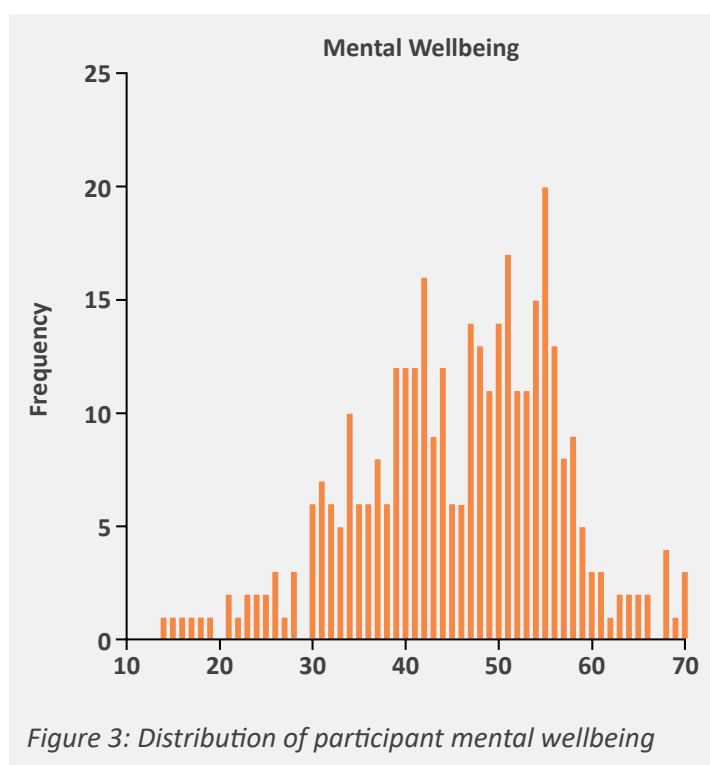
Figure 3: Distribution of participant mental wellbeing

Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. The scale assesses the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. The questions are of a general nature and hence are relatively free of content specific to any sub-population group.

Respondents are given the instructions:
"The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the option that seems like a reasonable estimate. In the last month how often have you…"

Participants rated items on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). The scoring for some items are reversed, these are shown in the list below in italics.

1. Been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. Felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. Felt nervous and "stressed"?
4. *Dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?*
5. *Felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?*
6. *Felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?*
7. *Felt that things were going your way?*
8. Found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
9. *Been able to control irritations in your life?*
10. *Felt that you were on top of things?*
11. Been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
12. Found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?
13. *Been able to control the way you spend your time?*
14. Felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
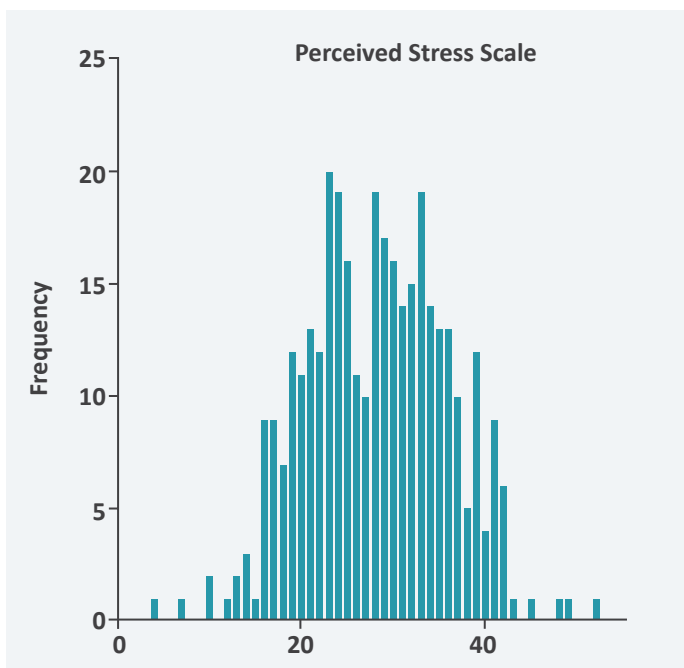
Figure 4: Distribution of Perceived Stress Scale Scores

The average graduate Perceived Stress score was 28.20 (SD = 7.71). As shown in Figure 4, PSS scores were normally distributed, indicating that there was a relatively normal range of stress scores, as we might expect to find in the general population. Some graduates are more stressed, some are less stressed, but most have a relatively expected, moderate, level of perceived stress.

Confidence talking about mental health.
Graduate confidence in talking about mental health and, in particular, disclosing mental health difficulties to an employer or manager, provides another perspective on how well supported graduates feel in terms of mental health. In an ideal situation, all graduates would feel confident disclosing unmanageable stress or mental health problems to their manager. Currently, 51% of graduates report that they would feel confident disclosing mental health difficulties. However, among those with experience of mental health difficulties, confidence falls, with 47% reporting that they would feel confident disclosing mental health difficulties. Further, confidence does not always convert into action; only 67% of those identifying that that they are currently experiencing mental health difficulties and that they would feel confident disclosing a stress or mental health difficulties to a manager also report having disclosed mental health difficulties.

Preparation for the workplace

The survey included questions explicitly focused on preparation for the workplace. These questions asked graduates how well their university had prepared them for the workplace. Each question was answered on a scale of 1 (not at all like my experience) to 5 (very much like my experience). The following questions were grouped together to provide an overall scale of preparation for the workplace. The scoring for one item (3) was reversed, shown in italics.

1. My careers service helped me explore different career options.
2. I used the careers service at my university.
3. *I had to be proactive to get support about careers at my university.*
4. Career advice at my university was tailored to my specific needs.
5. My university encouraged me to think proactively about my career.
6. Since graduating, I continue to feel that I'm welcome to access careers support from my university.
7. My university helped me prepare my expectations for life after university.
8. My university provided me with the opportunity to contact recent university graduates to learn from their experience.
9. My degree course prepared me for future employability.

Average scores on this scale were 22.36 (SD = 7.30). Tests of normality (Shapiro-Wilk) indicated that scores on this scale were significantly skewed in a negative direction; graduates were more likely than not to identify that their university did not provide strong preparation for the workplace.

Figure 5: Distributions of scores for Preparation for the Workplace
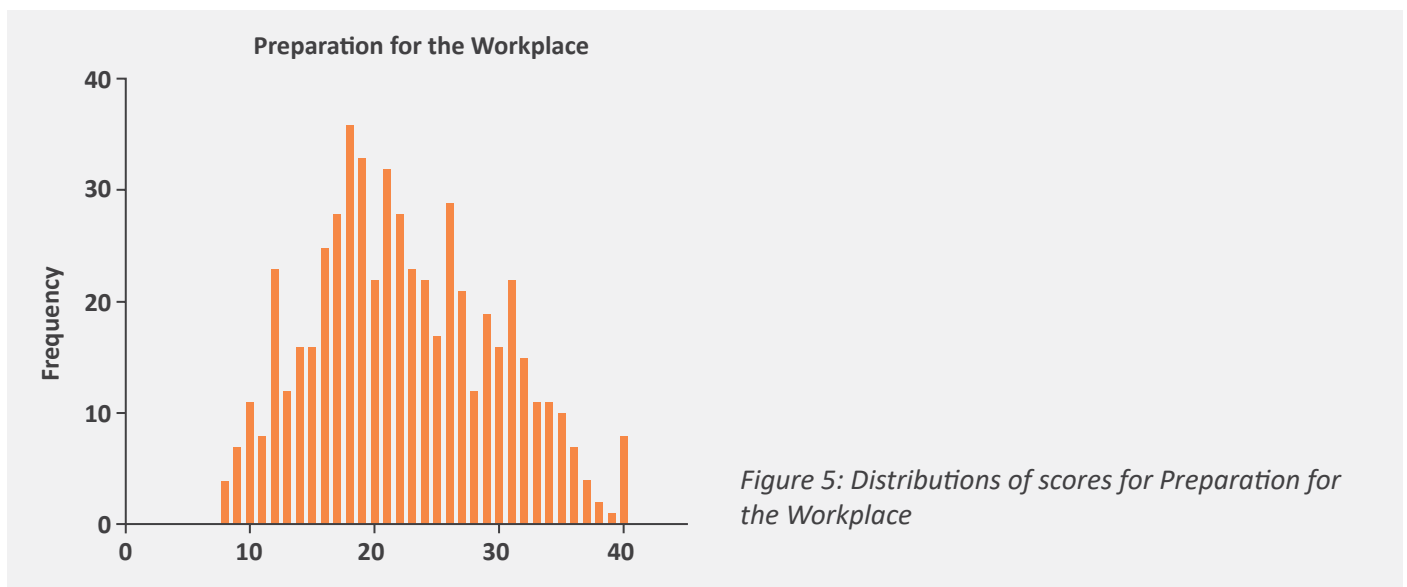
Our data suggest that good university preparation for the workplace was related to several subsequent outcome factors:

Graduate experience, R^2 = .11, B = -.41 (.06), *95% CI* (-.51, -.30), *t* (436) = 7.33, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in the rating of university preparation, students had a .4 lower rating on the graduate experience scale. Graduate experience is discussed in detail below. This scale related to the experience in the first months out of university, and may, for many respondents, reflect their experience of finding work. As lower scores on this scale indicate a *more negative* graduate experience, this suggests that better university preparation for the workplace is related to a more positive graduate experience. However, this relationship was relatively weak: university preparation predicted only 11% of the variance in graduate experience.

Better experience transitioning into the workplace R^2 = .09, B = .67 (.11), *95% CI* (.46, .89), *t* (410) = 6.21, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in university preparation, students had a .7 increase in their score for experience transitioning into the workplace. Again, this relationship was weak: university preparation predicted 9% of the variance in experience transitioning in. Transition into the workplace is discussed in detail below. This scale related to the graduates' experience starting work, their induction and transition into work.

Better mental wellbeing (WEMWBS), R^2 = .12, B = .53 (.08), *95% CI* (.37, .68), t (349) = 6.82, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in the rating of university preparation, students had a .5 higher WEMWBS score. Again, this relationship was relatively weak: university preparation predicted 12% of the variance in mental wellbeing.
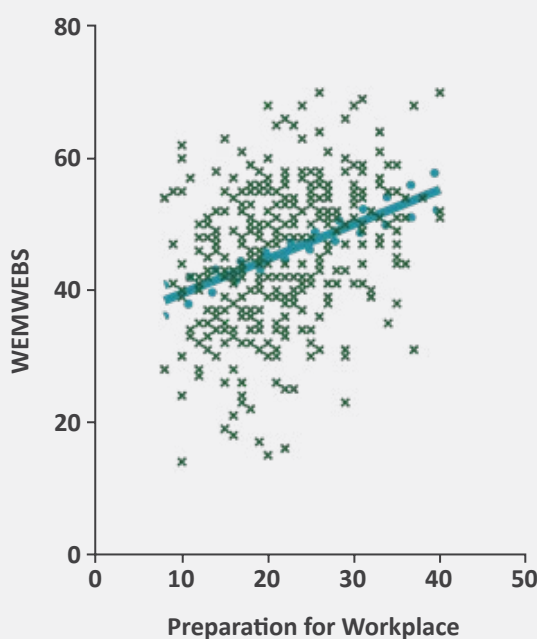

Figure 6: Relationship between University Preparation for the Workplace and Graduate Mental Wellbeing Scores.

Lower perceived stress scores (Less stressed), R^2 = .06, B = -.31 (.07), *95% CI* (-.44, -.19), t (352) = 4.78, $p < .001$; for every 1 point increase in the rating of university preparation, students had .3 lower scores on the Perceived Stress scale. This relationship was weak: university preparation predicted 6% of the variance in stress.

The weak relationships observed here suggest that while improving university preparation for the workplace may have an impact on outcome measures relating to mental wellbeing, this effect might be expected to be small.

Variation in preparation for the workplace

There was some small variance in university preparation for the workplace, as summarised in Table 2. It is important to note that the sample sizes are too small to draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of university on graduate mental wellbeing.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
London	24.29	7.48	21
Oxbridge	24.06	6.88	48
1960's	22.71	6.77	56
Million+	22.24	7.25	17
Old & New Redbrick	22.17	6.66	91
Ancient (St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh)	20.62	6.78	13
Durham	19.27	4.01	15
Post 92	18.97	6.83	34

Table 2: Variation in participant ratings of university preparation for the workplace across university type

Specific advice and support

To further quantify university preparation for the workplace, graduates were asked several questions about the advice they had received from their university. For each item, respondents were given the option of the following responses:

- Yes, my university provided this: this was helpful
- Yes, my university provided this: but this was not helpful
- This was available but I did not access
- This was not available but would have been useful
- This was not available and not necessary

As summarised in Figure 7, many graduates felt their university provided some support with searching for jobs, applying for jobs, developing interview technique, writing C.V.s and practice assessment centres. Very few graduates felt that their university provided them with support or advice on how to make the transition out of university and into the workplace. Few graduates felt that their university had helped them understand the current employment market.
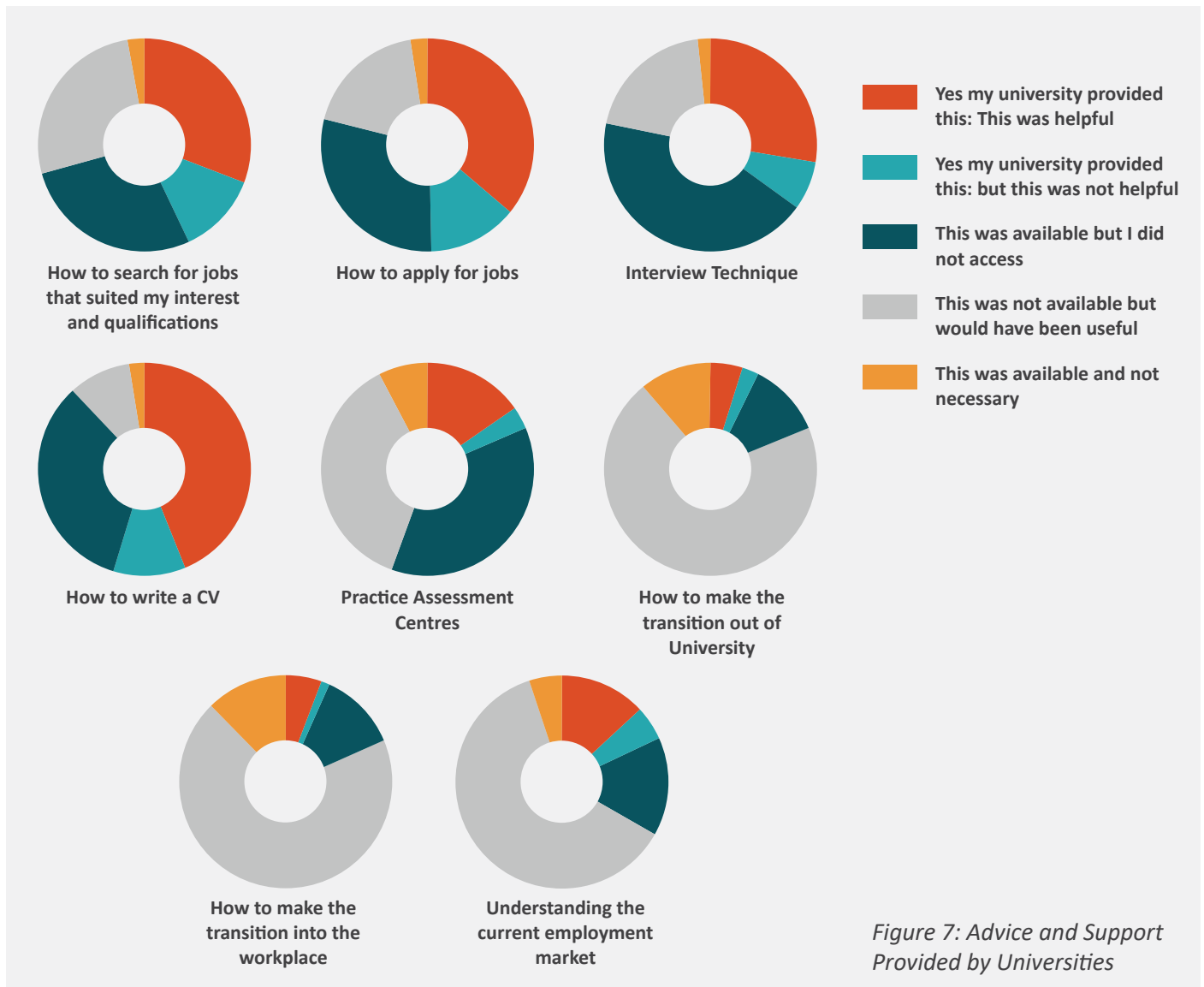
How to search for jobs that suited my interest and qualifications

How to apply for jobs

Interview Technique

How to write a CV

Practice Assessment Centres

How to make the transition out of University

How to make the transition into the workplace

Understanding the current employment market

Yes my university provided this: This was helpful

Yes my university provided this: but this was not helpful

This was available but I did not access

This was not available but would have been useful

This was available and not necessary

Figure 7: Advice and Support Provided by Universities

In many instances, the support provided by the university, related to the graduate's rating of graduate experience and the transition into the workplace. Graduates who felt that support and advice had been available and helpful had a better graduate experience than those who felt support was not available and would have been helpful. However, support provided by the university had less of an impact on the graduates' experience of their transition into the workplace.

What resources are graduates using to inform their career decision?

We asked graduates to rank 11 different career resources in order of usefulness. Resources were ranked as follows:

- **The Internet:** #1 resource for 33% of graduates; median usefulness ranking = 2
- **Work Experience:** #1 resource for 25% of graduates; median usefulness ranking = 3
- **Academic Staff = Parents = Contact with Graduates = Graduate Fairs:** Median usefulness ranking = 5
- **Careers service:** reached the 'Top 5' resource for *less than* 50% of graduates; median usefulness ranking = 6
- **Students' Union = University Societies = Taster Dates = Independent Advice Service:** Median usefulness ranking = 8

Applying for work

There was considerable variability in the number of job applications submitted by graduates. The median number of job applications submitted was 9. However, due to the high number of applications a small number of graduates had submitted, the average (mean) number of applications submitted was 17 (SD = 20.94).

Figure 8: Number of job applications submitted
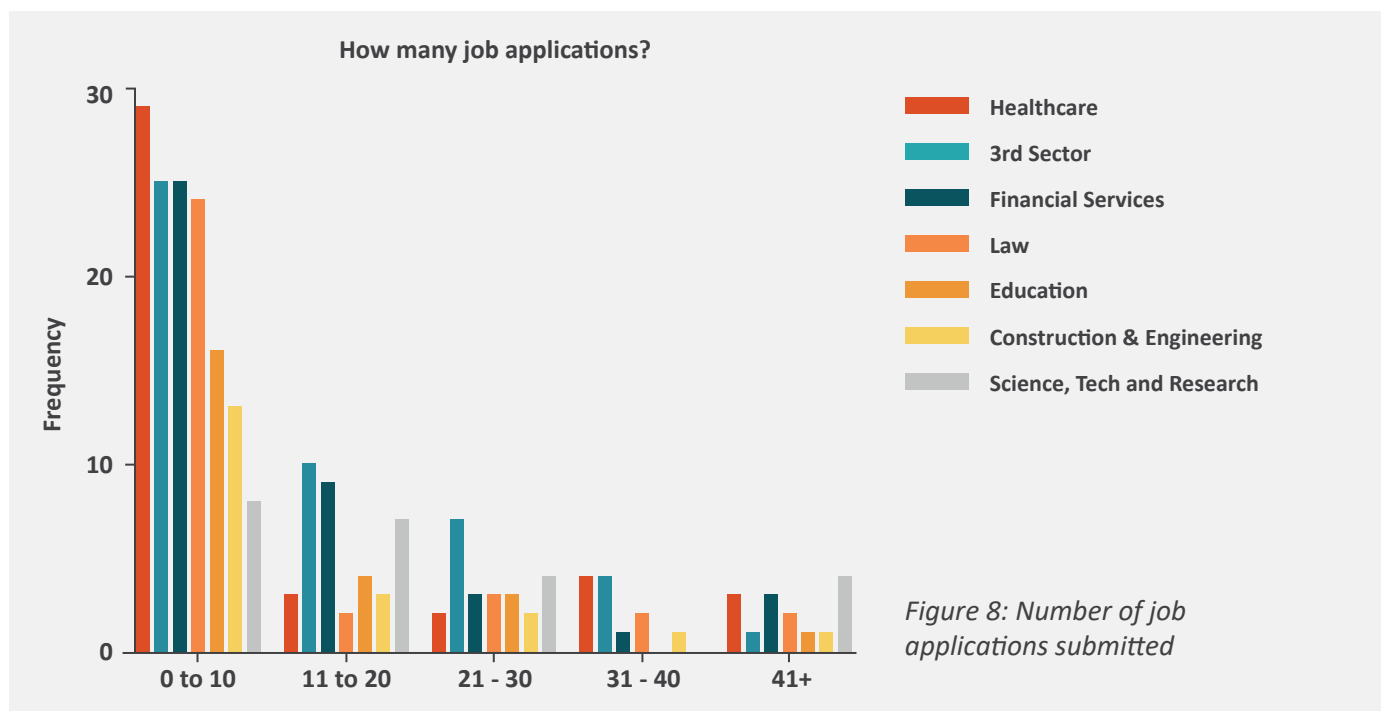
Graduates were offered an average of 4.87 (SD = 6.92) interviews and 2.44 (5.86) jobs. The number of applications submitted explained a small proportion (4%) of the variance in jobs offered, R^2 = .04, B = .02 (.01), *95% CI* (.01, .03), F (1, 438) = 19.94, *p* < .001. As shown in Figure 9, a graduate applying for five jobs is likely to receive between one and two job offers. To be reliably likely to receive more than two job offers, the graduate would need to submit more than 60 applications. This shallow slope suggests that there may be benefit in supporting students to focus on the quality rather than the quantity of applications.

This suggestion, to focus on quality rather than quantity, is supported by the relationship between number of applications submitted and graduate mental wellbeing. There was a statistically significant relationship between number of applications submitted and graduate mental wellbeing, R^2 = .07, B = -.14 (.03), *95% CI* (-.19, -.09), *t* (347) = 5.05, *p* < .001; for every additional application submitted, graduates have a .14 lower score on the mental wellbeing scale. By comparison, there was no relationship between the number of jobs offered and mental wellbeing, R^2 < .01, B = -.04 (.15), *95% CI* (-.33, .25), *t* (344) < 1, *p* = .801.
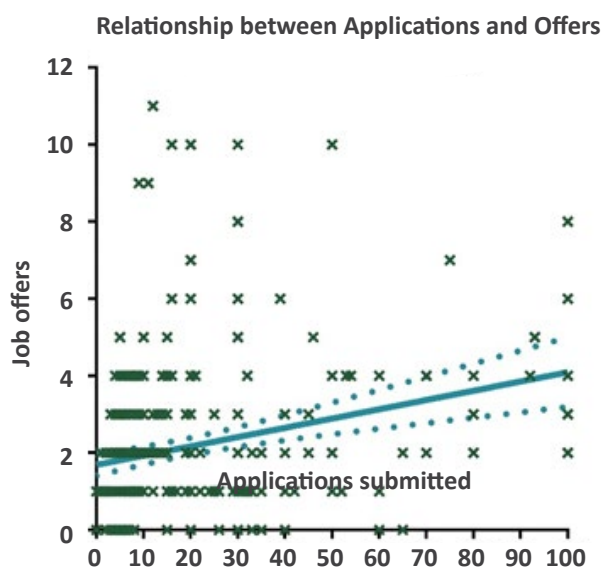

Figure 9: Relationship between number of applications submitted and offers made, showing line of best fit and confidence intervals

Graduate Experience

Focus groups with graduates identified several challenges that graduates face. These were collated into a brief scale focusing on the first year out of university. Survey respondents were invited to rate how well each statement matched their experience on a scale of 1 (not at all like my experience) to 5 (very much like my experience). Higher scores on the total graduate experience scale, reflect a more negative experience in the first year after graduation. Scores could range from 10 to 50. The scoring for a number of items was reversed, these are showed in italics. Specific items included:

1. My first year after graduating was a challenge.
2. *I felt prepared to deal with the challenges of finding employment.*
3. I found rejections from employers hard to take.
4. *I received useful feedback in job rejections.*
5. I found work demoralising.
6. I felt that my friends were doing better than me.
7. I found social media updates of my peers' activities overwhelming.
8. I felt socially isolated: there was not enough time to socialise with friends.
9. *I felt confident that I was applying to jobs that suited my interest & qualifications.*
10. My mental wellbeing declined.

Average scores on this scale were 31.33 (SD = 8.85). As shown in Figure 10 graduate experience scores were normally distributed.
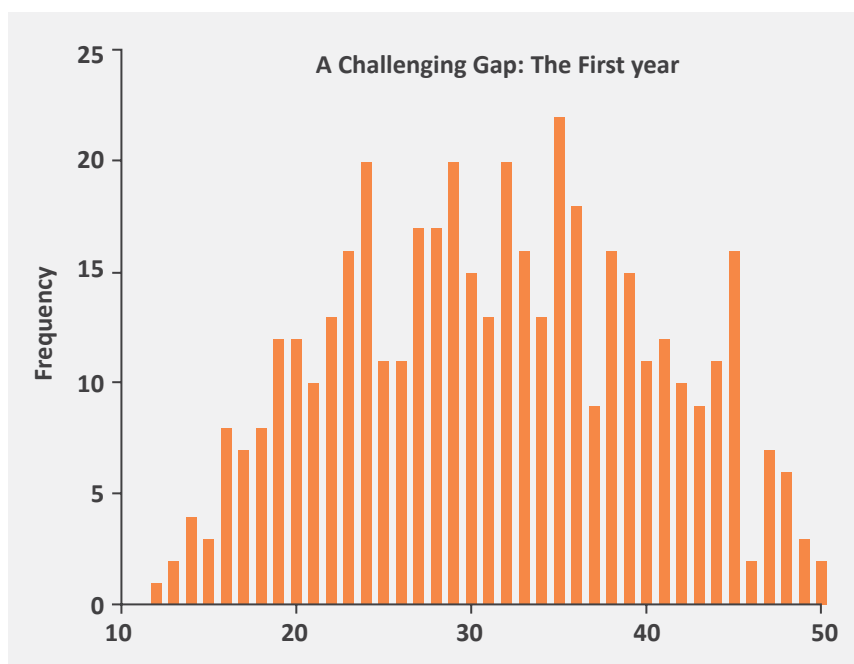
Figure 10: Distribution of scores on the Graduate Experience Scale

Factors predicting graduate experience

As discussed above, university preparation for the workplace had some impact on graduate experience, with the perceived availability and helpfulness of advice and support at university having a further impact on graduate experience scores.

Gender, Employment sector and Graduate Scheme as predictors of graduate experience.
Women (32.10, SD = 8.32), had a more negative graduate experience than men (29.41, SD = 9.01). However, this effect appears to depend in part on employment sector and presence of a graduate scheme.

In a model including gender, graduate scheme and employment sector to predict graduate experience, there is no significant effect of gender, $F (1, 199) < 1$, $p = .993$, $\eta^2 < .01$, or employment sector, $F (6, 199) < 1$, $p = .750$, $\eta^2 = .02$. However, there was a significant effect of graduate scheme, $F (1, 199) = 7.98$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Individuals joining their company as part of an organised graduate scheme had a significantly better graduate experience, as shown in Figure 11.
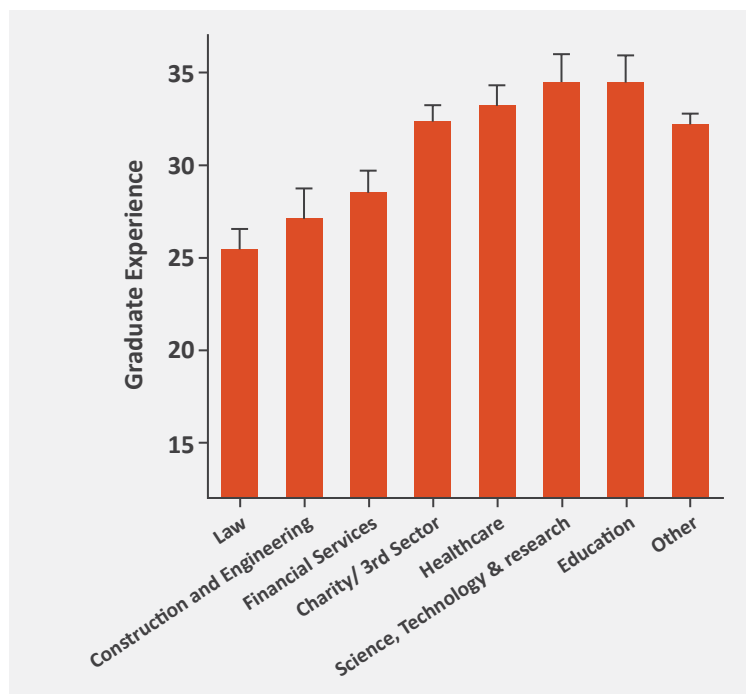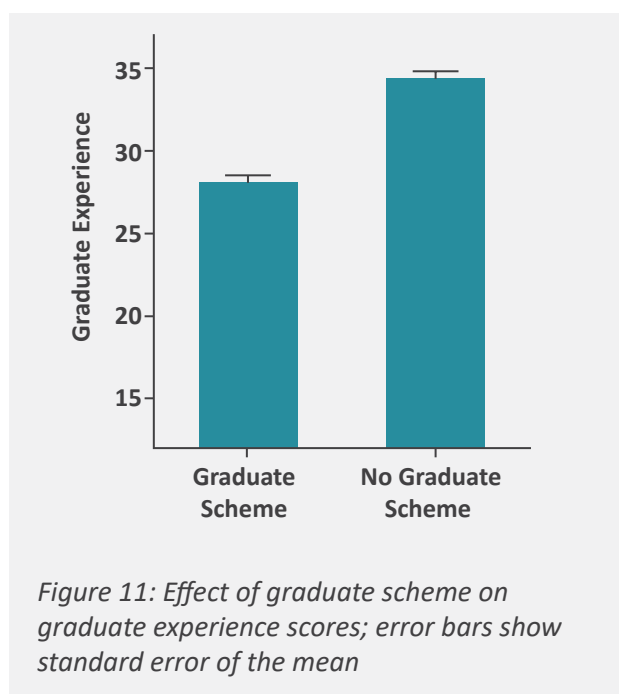
The effect of employment sector on graduate experience is shown in Figure 12. Participants working in the Charity sector, healthcare, science, Technology and Research, or Education had higher Graduate Experience scores, indicating a more negative graduate experience.

The overall analysis however suggests that the key differences between these employment sectors, in determining the graduate experience, is the presence of a graduate scheme. As shown in Table 5 respondents working in Law, Financial Services and Construction and Engineering, were more likely to have joined their company as part of a graduate scheme, than individuals working across the other sectors.

Figure 11: Effect of graduate scheme on graduate experience scores; error bars show standard error of the mean

Figure 12: Graduate Experience Score across Employment Sectors; error bars show standard error of the mean

Employment sector	% on graduate scheme	% women
Law	91	73
Construction and Engineering	90	45
Financial Services	79	48
Charity / 3rd Sector	49	83
Education	8	85
Science, Technology and Research	18	71
Healthcare	33	90

Table 5: Proportion of respondents across employment sectors joining the company on a graduate scheme and proportion of respondents who are female

Further, explaining the difference in graduate experience between men and women in this survey, men were more likely to have joined their company on a graduate scheme than women, $\chi (1) = 8.82$, $p = .003$; 61% of men joined their company on a graduate scheme, compared to 42% of women. This difference is, in part, related to the gender representation across employment sectors; as summarised in Table 5 women were significantly more likely to work in employment sectors which did not have a graduate scheme, $\chi (1) = 22.33$, $p < .001$.

Underlining the importance of graduate schemes for stress and mental wellbeing, graduates who joined their workplace on a graduate scheme had significantly higher levels of mental wellbeing (47.47, SD = 10.17) than those not on a graduate scheme (42.91, SD = 10.92, $F (1, 348) = 12.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .035$), and significantly lower levels of perceived stress (39.60, SD = 8.62, compared to 44.04, SD = 8.71, $F (1,351) = 23.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .062$).

Further, graduate experience mediated an indirect effect of graduate scheme on mental wellbeing and stress, as shown in Figure 13. When we consider Graduate Experience Score, the effect that being on a graduate scheme has on mental wellbeing and perceived stress (c') ceases to be significant. This suggests that the relationship between graduate scheme and mental wellbeing and perceived stress may depend on the effect that being on a graduate scheme has on the graduate experience. Put another way, to the extent that being on a graduate scheme improves graduate experience, mental wellbeing increases and perceived stress decreases.
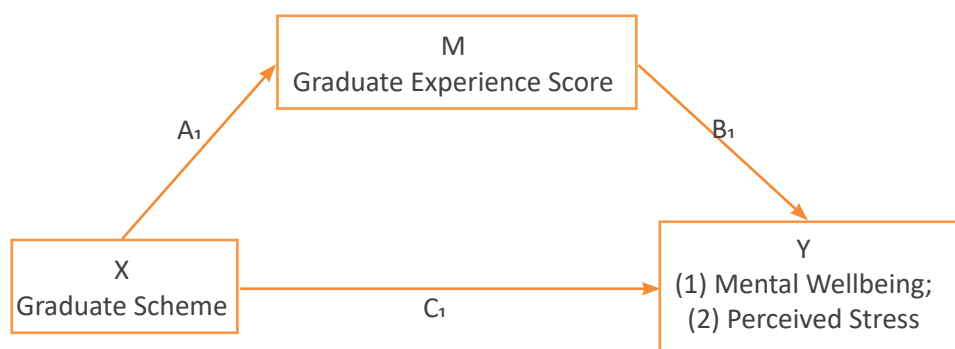
The overall analysis however suggests that the key differences between these employment sectors, in determining the graduate experience, is the presence of a graduate scheme. As shown in Table 5 respondents working in Law, Financial Services and Construction and Engineering, were more likely to have joined their company as part of a graduate scheme, than individuals working across the other sectors.

Analysis 1, where Y = Mental Wellbeing

Direct Path	β	LCL	UCL	Indirect path	β	LCL	UCL
a_1	-6.35	-8.05	-4.63	a_1b_1	4.13	2.92	5.74
b_1	-.63	-.77	-.53				
c'	-.10	-2.18	1.97				

Analysis 2, where Y = Perceived Stress

Direct Path	β	LCL	UCL	Indirect path	β	LCL	UCL
a_1	-6.47	-8.18	-4.77	a_1b_1	-3.92	-5.13	-2.71
b_1	.61	.51	.70				
c'	-.52	-2.14	1.09				

Confidence limits (LCL = lower confidence limit; UCL = upper confidence limit) refer to bias corrected bootstrap 95% confidence limits.

Figure 13: Mediation analysis; Graduate Experience mediates the effect of a graduate scheme on mental wellbeing and perceived stress

Effect of Graduate Experience

The graduates' experience in their first year out of university predicted several outcomes;

Transition into the workplace R^2 = .23, B = -.89 (.08), *95% CI* (-1.04, -.73), t (410) = 10.96, p < .001; for every 1 point increase in the rating of graduate experience, students had a .9 lower score for experience transitioning into the workplace. This relationship was relatively robust: graduate experience predicted 23% of the variance in experience transitioning into the workplace, with a better graduate experience predicting a better transition into the workplace.

Mental wellbeing R^2 = .28, B = -.65 (.06), *95% CI* (-.76, -.54), t (349) = 11.50, p < .001, for every 1 point increase in the rating of graduate experience, participants had a .65 lower score for WEMWBS mental wellbeing. This relationship was relatively robust: graduate experience predicted 28% of the variance in WEMWBS score. A better graduate experience predicted higher mental wellbeing, as shown in Figure 13.

Levels of stress R^2 = .36, B = -.62 (.60), *95% CI* (.53, .70), t (352) = 14.14, p < .001, for every 1 point increase in the rating of graduate experience, students had a .62 higher score for perceived stress. This relationship was robust: graduate experience predicted 36% of the variance in stress. Note, there is a double negative here, so this result is indicating that participants with a better graduate experience had lower levels of stress, as shown in Figure 14.
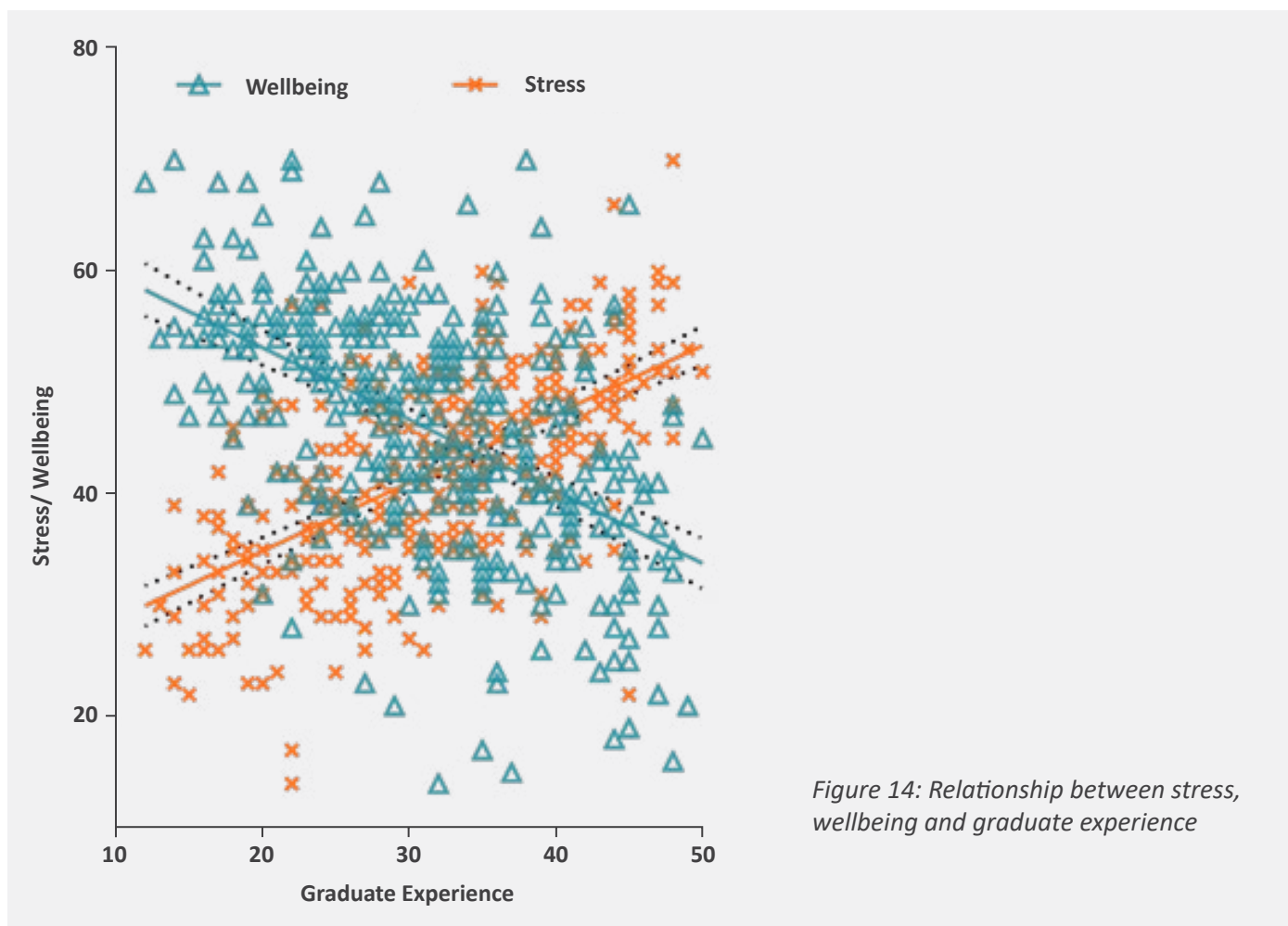

Figure 14: Relationship between stress, wellbeing and graduate experience

Transition into the workplace

Respondents were asked to rate their experiences of the first 3 months of starting their current job on a scale of 1 (not at all like my experience) to 5 (very much like my experience). A total score on this scale is positive – the higher the score the more positive the respondents experience transitioning into their current job. Scores can range from 22 to 110. Some items were reversed; these are shown in italics.

1. My induction helped me understand how to do my job.
2. I had a comprehensive orientation when I joined the company, meeting colleagues, managers, and learning how the organisation worked.
3. There were clear and reasonable expectations: I knew what is expected of me and felt able to deliver this.
4. I had meetings with the whole team and understand the work that is going on around me and my role within this.
5. *I often felt like I didn't know what I was doing.*
6. It was okay for me to make mistakes.
7. I could ask for help.
8. I was in charge of my own time and time management.
9. I felt comfortable taking breaks during the work day (e.g. lunch)
10. My colleagues were supportive.
11. I was interested in the work I was doing.
12. My manager recognised that the first months in the role would be difficult and was supportive.
13. My manager was interested in my personal development
14. My manager provided me with reassurance that I could do the job.
15. Meetings with my manager were very task focused.
16. I was encouraged / supported to have interests outside of work (e.g. volunteering, sports etc.)
17. I felt included in work related social activities
18. I developed new friendships with my colleagues
19. There was someone I felt confident contacting if I was struggling with my wellbeing.
20. My organisation was proactive about promoting wellbeing.
21. *I struggled to keep up with financial pressures*
22. *I felt my work culture pressured me to spend more money than I could afford*

As shown in Figure 15, the distribution of scores on the scale, Transition into the workplace, was significantly positively skewed, W (412) = .97, p < .001, indicating that, within this survey, individuals were more likely than not to identify that they had a more positive transition into the workplace. Higher scores on this scale indicate a more positive experience.
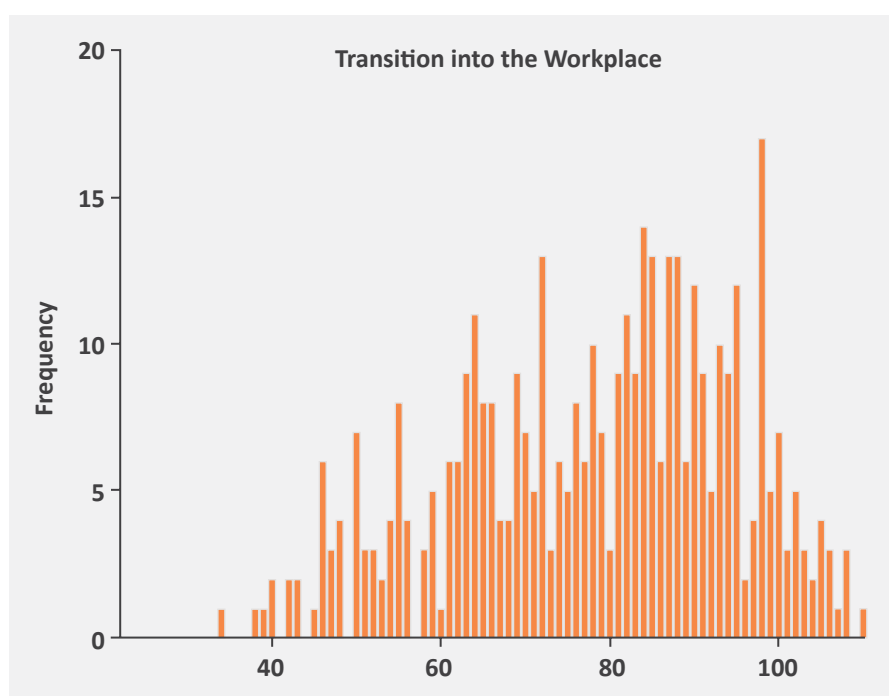

Figure 15: Distribution of scores for Transition into the workplace

Factors predicting the transition in

As discussed above, university preparation for the workplace and graduate experience had some impact on the transition into the workplace.

**Gender, Employment sector and Graduate Scheme.**
In contrast to the graduate experience scale, men and women reported a comparable experience transitioning into the workplace, with an average score of 78 for both men and women.

In a model including gender, graduate scheme and employment sector to predict the transition into the workplace, there is no significant effect of gender, $F (1, 199) < 1$, $p = .885$, $\eta^2 < .01$. There was a significant effect of employment sector, $F (6, 199) = 2.40$, $p = .029$, $\eta2 = .07$ and graduate scheme, $F (1, 199) = 7.32$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .04$. These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between employment sector and presence of a graduate scheme, $F (6, 199) = 2.42$, $p = .028$, $\eta^2 = .07$.

Exploring this interaction further, there was a significant main effect of employment sector for graduates who were not on a graduate scheme, $F (6, 101) = 3.10$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .16$. In contrast, the effect of employment sector is only marginally significant for graduates who were on a graduate scheme, $F (6, 120) = 2.24$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .10$.

This analysis indicates that individuals on a graduate scheme report a better experience transitioning into the workplace, as shown in Figure 16. For individuals who were not on a graduate scheme, the employment sector they were working in had a significant effect on their experience transitioning in.

The effect of employment sector on experience transitioning into the workplace is shown in Figure 16. Where a graduate scheme is in place, there is little difference between employment sectors, except for a low experience transitioning into the workplace for healthcare, whether or not a graduate scheme is in place. The analysis reported above indicated a significant effect of employment sector on experience transitioning into the workplace when no graduate scheme was in place, Figure 17 suggests that this reflects a difference between charity / 3rd sector and other employment sectors; individuals report a good transition into the charity sector whether or not they are entering on a graduate scheme.
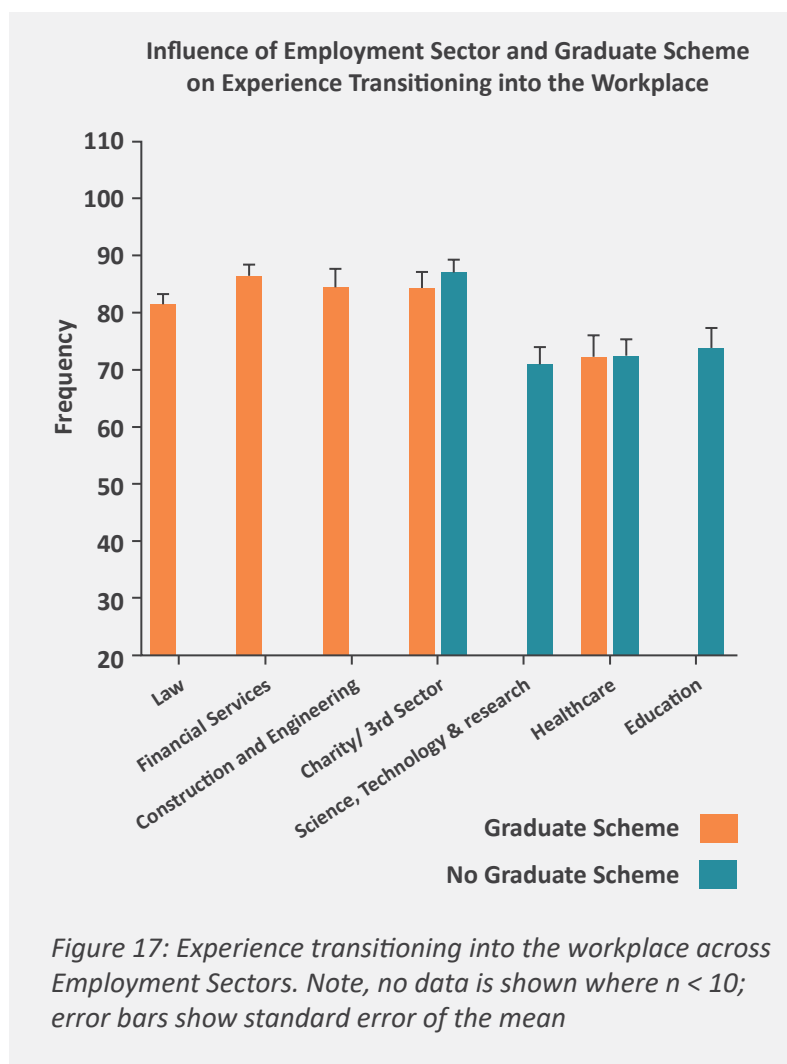

Figure 16: Effect of graduate scheme on Experience Transitioning in; error bars show standard error of the mean
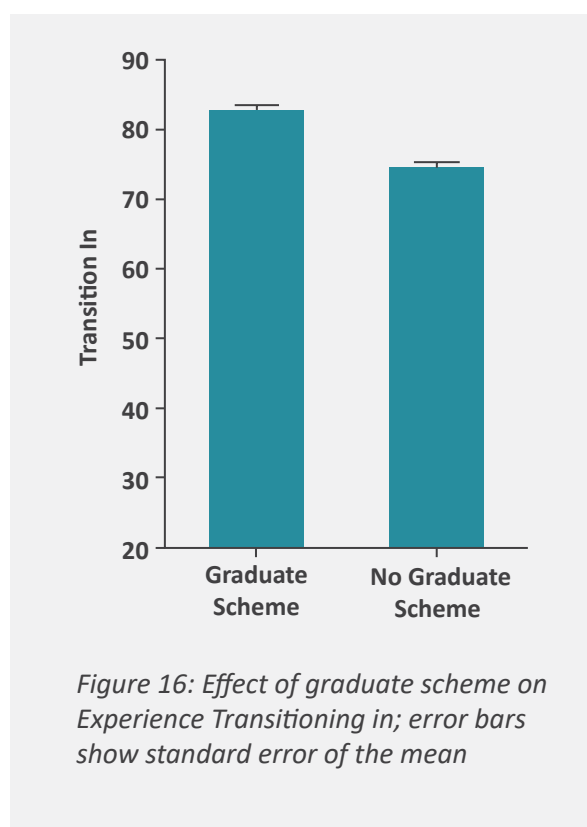
Experience of mental health difficulties
Graduates with current experience of mental health difficulties reported a more negative transition into the workplace than those with previous experience or no experience, $F(2, 336) = 6.45$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Individuals who had never experienced mental health difficulties (x = 82.01, SD = 15.18, N = 106) did not differ significantly in their experience transitioning into the workplace from individuals reporting previous experience of mental health difficulties (x = 79.12, SD = 16.24, N = 82, $t(186) < 1$, $p = .215$), but did report a significantly better transition into the workplace than individuals with current experience of mental health difficulties (x = 74.94, SD = 16.49, N = 151, $t(255) = 3.50$, $p = .001$).

University, Sexuality and Family background
Graduate experience did not differ significantly with the factors of the type of university the graduate attended, $F(7, 287) = 1.86$, $p = .076$, their sexuality, $F(1, 303) < 1$, $p = .600$, or whether their parents attended university, $F(1, 333) < 1$, $p = .917$.

Figure 17: Experience transitioning into the workplace across Employment Sectors. Note, no data is shown where n < 10; error bars show standard error of the mean

Effect of transition into the workplace

The graduates' experience transitioning into the workplace predicted several outcomes;

Better mental wellbeing; R^2 = .28, B = .35 (.03), *95% CI* (.28, .41), *t* (349) = 11.60, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in experience transitioning in, participants had a .35 higher score for WEMWBS mental wellbeing. This relationship was relatively robust: experience transitioning in predicted 28% of the variance in WEMWBS score.

Lower levels of stress; R^2 = .23, B = -.26 (.03), *95% CI* (-.31, -.21), *t* (352) = 10.28, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in experience transitioning in, students had a .26 lower score for perceived stress. This relationship was relatively robust: experience transitioning in predicted 23% of the variance in stress.

Hierarchical linear regression has been run to identify which aspects of the transition into the workplace are the best predictors of outcome measures.

Mental Wellbeing

All of the items in the Experience Transitioning in scale were significantly correlated with **mental wellbeing (WEMWBS),** with the exception of "I struggled to keep up with financial pressures" and "I felt my work culture pressured me to spend more money than I could afford." Thus, improving all the other factors will contribute to better graduate mental wellbeing.

Regression analysis identified five factors that together provide account for 32% of the variance in **mental wellbeing**, R^2 = .32, F (5, 345) = 32.62, p < .001. This is the largest proportion of variance that can be accounted for by the factors that we have measured. These five factors thus appear to be the most influential factors. These five factors are listed in order of significance:

- **My manager was interested in my personal development** – this alone accounts for 21% of the variance in mental wellbeing, B = 1.43 (.48), *95% CI* (.49, 2.38), *t* (345) = 2.98, *p* = .003.
- **There was someone I felt confident contacting if I was struggling with my wellbeing** – this accounted for a further 6% of the variance in mental wellbeing, B = 1.31 (.39), *95% CI* (.54, 2.08), *t* (345) = 3.33, *p* = .001.
- **I was interested in the work I was doing** – this accounted for a further 2.3% of the variance, B = 1.41 (.45), *95% CI* (.53, 2.29), *t* (345) = 3.16, *p* = .002.
- **I felt included in work related social activities** – this accounted for a further 1.9% of the variance, B = 1.29 (.45), *95% CI* (.41, 2.18), *t* (345) = 2.88, *p* = .004.
- **My organisation was proactive about promoting wellbeing** – this accounted for a further 1.2% of the variance. While this is a small increase, it remains significant. *B* = .93 (.38), *95% CI* (.19, 1.68), *t* (345) = 2.47, *p* = .014.

This analysis has been run for all graduates, as a single group. It may be of further interest to keep in mind, that while this combination of five factors predicts mental wellbeing for individuals who have never experienced mental health difficulties (accounting for 38% of the variance in mental wellbeing) **and** individuals who are currently experiencing mental health difficulties (accounting for 67% of the variance in mental wellbeing), it does not provide a good prediction of mental wellbeing for individuals who had experienced mental health problems prior to starting work. For this group, **NOT feeling in charge of my own time and time management,** B = -2.13 (.85), *95% CI* (-3.81, -.44), t (79) = 2.51, p = .014, and **feeling comfortable taking breaks during the day,** B = 3.15 (.69), *95% CI* (1.77, 4.53), t (79) = 4.55, *p* < .001, were most important for predicting mental wellbeing, with the combination of these two factors explain 22% of the variance in mental wellbeing, R^2 = .22, F (2, 79) = 11.22, p < .001.

Perceived Stress

The same approach was then taken to predict perceived stress. All factors, including ones related to finance, were significantly correlated with perceived stress, hence working on any of these factors is likely to reduce perceived stress. A different set of factors were identified as most important for stress. Combined, 5 factors explained 28% of the variance in perceived stress, $R2$ = .28, F (5, 348) = 26.84, p < .001. These factors are listed in order of significance:

- **My manager was interested in my personal development** – this alone accounts for 16% of the variance in perceived stress; *B* = -1.35 (.39), *95% CI* (-2.12, -.59), *t* (348) = 3.49, *p* = .001
- **I felt comfortable taking breaks during the work day (e.g., lunch)** – this accounted for a further 5% of the variance in perceived stress; *B* = -1.08 (.34), *95% CI* (-1.74, -.42), *t* (348) = 3.22, *p* = .001
- **I struggled to keep up with financial pressures** – this accounted for a further 4% of the variance, ; *B* = 1.24 (.28), *95% CI* (.69, 1.81), *t* (348) = 4.39, *p* < .001
- **My organisation was proactive about promoting wellbeing** – a further 2% of variance; *B* = -.98 (.37), *95% CI* (-1.71, -.25), *t* (348) = -2.63, *p* = .009
- **I was interested in the work I was doing** – a further 1% of the variance; *B* = -.84 (.38), *95% CI* (-1.59, -.09), *t* (348) = 2.20, *p* = .028

Further development of the scale,

High correlations between several items on the scale, suggest that these items might be combined in future iterations of this scale to create a shorter measure. Specifically, there were strong correlations between items relating to inductions:

1. My induction helped me understand how to do my job.
2. I had a comprehensive orientation when I joined the company, meeting colleagues, managers, and learning how the organisation worked.
3. There were clear and reasonable expectations: I knew what is expected of me and felt able to deliver this.

In a stepwise linear regression model, the third item, relating to clear and reasonable expectations, accounted for 51% of the variance in the total "transition into the workplace" score, with the first and second items accounting for an additional 10% and 5% of the variance respectively. As such, we recommend that the first and second items be removed from subsequent implementation of this scale.

There was a strong correlation between the items "I could ask for help" and "my colleagues were supportive." Both items relate to a supportive team. The second item, "my colleagues were supportive" accounted for 55% of the variance in the total scale score, with "I could ask for help" explaining an additional 10% of the variance in the scale score. The item "I could ask for help," could be dropped from subsequent implementation of this scale.

There was a strong correlation between the items, "I felt included in work related social activities" and "I developed new friendships with colleagues." The second of these two items might be dropped from subsequent tests. The first item, "I felt included…" accounted for 50% of the variance in the total scale score, with the second item "I developed new friendships…" explaining only an additional 2% of the variance.

There was a high correlation between three factors relating to relationship with a manager;
1. My manager recognised that the first months in the role would be difficult and was supportive.
2. My manager was interested in my personal development
3. My manager provided me with reassurance that I could do the job.

The second of these items accounted for 61% of the variance in the total score with the first and third item explaining an additional 7% and 3% of the variance in total score respectively. On this basis, the first and third item might be removed from subsequent scales.

Removing the items suggested above from the scale, the combined model of the remaining 16 items still accounted for 98% of the variance in the total score of the scale, $R^2 = .98$, $F (16, 395) = 1182.26$, $p < .001$. Further, following the removal of these items, the models described above, for predicting mental wellbeing and perceived stress remain unchanged. The revised scale is included in appendix A.

"I was very pleased with the way my employer ran its graduate induction from this perspective. The cohort was together in a quasi-classroom environment for two weeks learning about the organisation; during this time, there were frequent social events and friendships were formed. We were also told about my employer's wellbeing offer, which includes on-site counsellors and a 24-hour phone line. On arrival at my division, I was assigned a buddy in case I needed help with anything not directly related to my work."

- Graduate

Work culture

Participants rated how often events had happened over the last month on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always/daily). This is scored positively, the higher the score the more supportive the work culture. The scale ranges from 8 to 40. The scoring for some items, shown in italics, was reversed:

1. Seen your manager
2. *Worked over-time*
3. Asked for help
4. Socialised with your colleagues
5. *Felt like you didn't know what you were doing (in relation to your work)?*
6. *Overheard conversations in the office that make you feel uncomfortable*
7. Overheard helpful/ supportive conversations about work-life or health issues
8. *Been concerned about the pressure experienced by your colleagues/ manager*
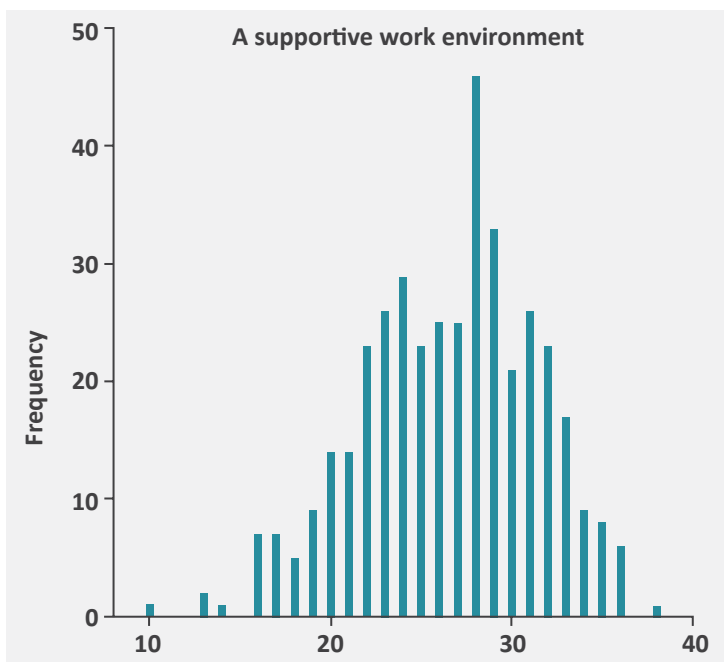
Higher scores suggest a more supportive work environment. As shown in Figure 18, there was a significantly positive skew on this scale, W (401) = .99, p = .001, indicating that, in general, survey respondents felt that they had a positive work culture.

Figure 18: Distribution of scores for work culture

Factors predicting gradates' ratings of work culture

Gender
Men and women did not differ in their ratings of work culture, with both groups giving an average score of 26 on this scale.

Employment sector and Graduate Scheme.
In a model including graduate scheme and employment sector to predict the transition into the workplace, there was a significant effect of employment sector, F (6, 221) = 3.96, p = .001, η² = .10 and graduate scheme, F (1, 221) = 5.99, p = .015, η² = .03. The interaction between these two factors was not significant, F (6, 221) = 1.44, p = .202, η² = .04. Thus, both graduate scheme and employment sector independently related to work culture.

Individuals on a graduate scheme gave higher ratings for their experience of the work culture, as shown in Figure 19.
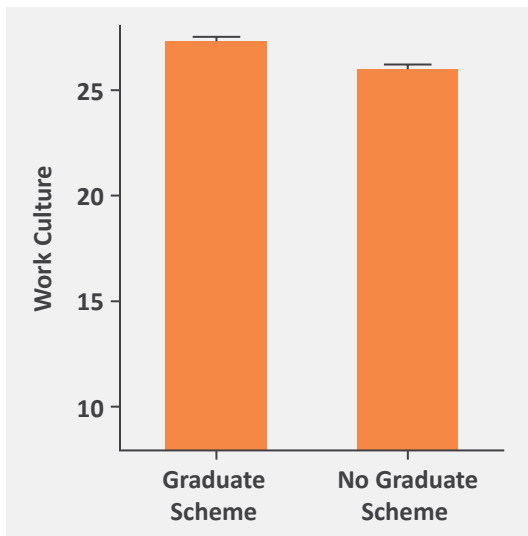
Figure 19: Effect of graduate scheme on perception of work culture; error bars show standard error of the mean

The effect of employment sector on rating of work culture is shown in Figure 20. Individuals working in healthcare gave significantly lower ratings of work culture than individuals working in education, $t(66) = 2.29$, $p = .025$ or the charity sector, $t(87) = 3.81$, $p < .001$, or financial services, $t(83) = 4.22$, $p < .001$. Further, individuals working in law gave significantly lower ratings for work culture than individuals working in financial services, $t(76) = 2.50$, $p = .014$. No other differences reached significance.

Financial services outperformed law in terms of ratings for the items:
- *Worked over-time,* $t(76) = 6.05$, $p < .001$; individuals working in law were more likely to work overtime than those in financial services.
- Overheard helpful/ supportive conversations about work-life or health issues, $t(76) = 2.56$, $p = .012$; individuals working in the financial services were more likely to overhear helpful or supportive conversations than those working in law.
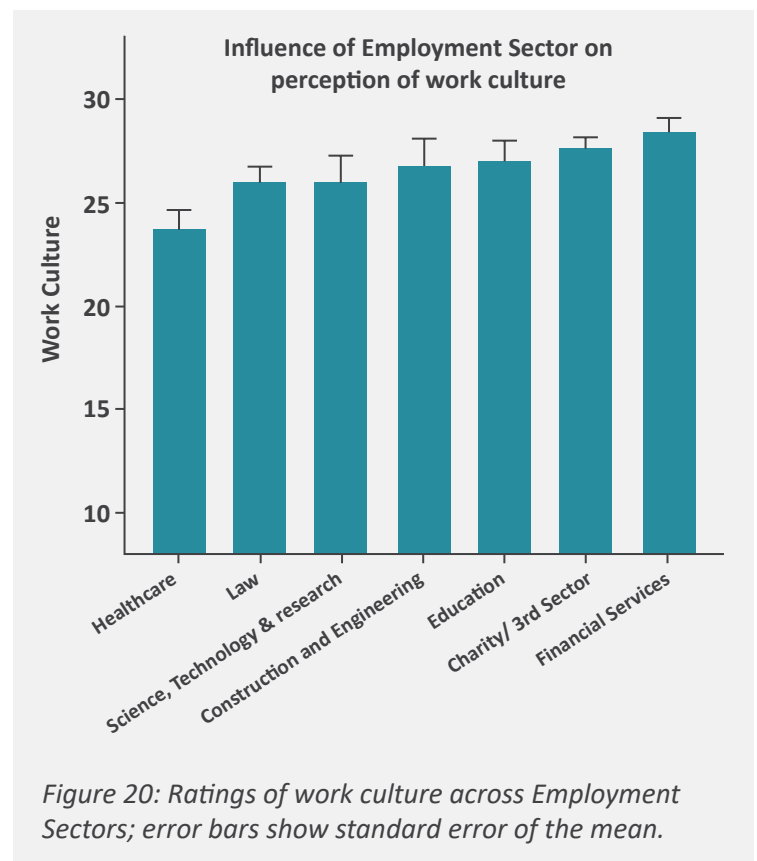

Figure 20: Ratings of work culture across Employment Sectors; error bars show standard error of the mean.

Experience of mental health difficulties

Experience of mental health difficulties was significantly related to experience of work culture, $F(2, 336) = 7.24$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Individuals who had never experienced mental health difficulties ($x = 27.58$, SD = 4.69, N = 106) did not differ significantly in their experience transitioning into the workplace from individuals reporting previous experience of mental health difficulties ($x = 26.83$, SD = 4.65, N = 82, $t(186) = 1.10$, $p = .273$), but did report a significantly better transition into the workplace than individuals with current experience of mental health difficulties ($x = 25.32$, SD = 5.07, N = 151, $t(255) = 3.64$, $p < .001$). Further, individuals with previous experience of mental health difficulties gave significantly higher scores for work culture than individuals with current experience of mental health difficulties, $t(231) = 2.24$, $p = .026$.

Further, confidence disclosing unmanageable stress or mental health problems to your current employer or manager was significantly related to ratings of workplace culture, with individuals who felt confident disclosing giving significantly higher ratings of workplace culture (x = 29.21, SD = .3.58, N = 145) than those who did not feel confident disclosing (x = 23.06, SD = 4.37, N = 114; t (257) = 12.46, p < .001).

Sexuality and Family background
Ratings of workplace culture did not differ significantly with the factors of sexuality, F (1, 305) = 3.04, p = .083, or parents attending university, F (1, 333) < 1, p = .817.
Factors predicting gradates' ratings of work culture

Effect of work culture
Feeling that the work environment is supportive predicted several important outcomes;

Better mental wellbeing; R^2 = .27, B = 1.13 (.10), *95% CI* (.94, 1.33), *t* (349) = 11.32, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in Feeling that the work environment is supportive, participants had a 1.13 higher score for WEMWBS mental wellbeing. This relationship was relatively robust: Feeling that the work environment is supportive in predicted 27% of the variance in WEMWBS score.

Lower levels of stress; R^2 = .25, B = -.91 (.08), *95% CI* (-1.07, -.74), *t* (352) = 10.79, *p* < .001; for every 1 point increase in Feeling that the work environment is supportive, students had a .91 lower score for perceived stress. This relationship was relatively robust: Feeling that the work environment is supportive predicted 25% of the variance in stress.
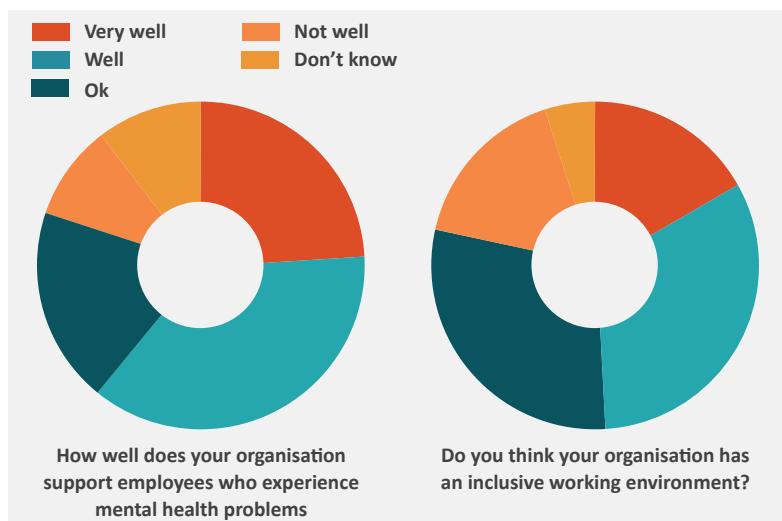
Confidence disclosing mental health difficulties; Nagelkerke R^2 = .49, B = -.38 (.05), χ (1) = 65.64, *p* < .001, Exp (B) = .687. With a more positive rating for workplace culture, individual were more likely to report feeling confident about disclosing mental health difficulties. Within the overall model, important significant determinants of confidence disclosing were:

1. Whether employees felt able to ask for help; *B* =.74 (.21), χ (1) = 12.23, *p* < .001, Exp (B) = .479
2. Whether employees felt like they knew what they were doing in relation to their work; *B* = .65 (.19), χ (1) = 12.05, *p* = .001, Exp (B) = 1.92
3. Whether employees had overheard helpful/ supportive conversations about work-life or health issues; *B* = .86 (.15), χ (1) = 31.45, *p* < .001, Exp (B) = .424
4. Whether employees were concerned about the pressure experienced by their colleagues/ manager reduced the confidence in disclosing mental health difficulties; *B* = .53 (.16), χ (1) = 10.89, *p* = .001, Exp (B) = 1.69

Other aspects of workplace culture

As shown in Figure 20, 61% of respondents felt that their organisation supports employees who experience mental health problems well or very well. There is a significant positive relationship between this measure and scores for workplace culture, R^2 = .30, B =.11 (.01), *95% CI* (.09, .12), t (285) = 11.05, *p* < .001. Fewer graduates, 49%, feel that their organisation has an inclusive work environment. There was again a significant positive relationship between ratings for inclusivity and workplace culture, R^2 = .30, B = .11 (.01), *95% CI* (.09, .13), *t* (347) = 12.15, *p* < .001.

Figure 21: Organisation inclusivity and support for employees who experience mental health problems

Very well | Not well
Well | Don't know
Ok

How well does your organisation support employees who experience mental health problems

Do you think your organisation has an inclusive working environment?

Workplace Training

Graduates were given a list of training examples and were asked to state if they had received training in this area and whether or not this was useful.

Most graduates identified that their employer had provided training about the structure and internal operations of their company, health and safety, equality and diversity and in task relevant technical skills. The majority of those attending training in these areas found this training to be useful. Where the training was not provided, the majority of respondents felt this training would be useful, with the exception of equality and diversity training.

Type of Training	Attended (% of those attending who found this training helpful)	Available but did not access	Not available (% who felt this training would be useful)
Learning about the company (internal workings & structure)	174 (76%)	21	66 (67%)
Health and safety (including First aid training / fire training)	164 (80%)	33	64 (69%)
Technical training	150 (80%)	25	86 (72%)
Equality and Diversity	147 (72%)	41	84 (30%)

Approximately half of graduates reported that their employer had provided training in communication skills, skills in task prioritisation, IT and personal time management. In general, this training was felt to be useful. Where it was not available, graduates tended to identify that this training would have been useful.

Type of Training	Attended (% of those attending who found this training helpful)	Available but did not access	Not available (% who felt this training would be useful)
Communication skills	165 (82%)	49	117 (76%)
Prioritising work	110 (67%)	49	172 (62%)
Database management/ Software / IT – e.g. Excel, word	107 (82%)	41	113 (60%)
Personal time management	107 (68%)	50	174 (58%)

Other training was not widely available or accessed. Over 80% of those who did not feel training in mental health or managing conflict and confrontation was available to them felt that this training would have been useful. This indicates that such training might be a valuable addition for new graduates. Those who attended such training overwhelmingly found it helpful. It should be noted that a relatively high proportion of those who had access to mental health training did not take this up. This suggests that there may be benefits in making mental health training compulsory and indicates that there may be value in clearly communicating the benefits of such training to secure motivated buy-in. This step might also remove any possibility of stigma associated with attending such training.

Type of Training	Attended (% of those attending who found this training helpful)	Available but did not access	Not available (% who felt this training would be useful)
Mental health	85 (82%)	74	172 (84%)
Managing conflict or confrontation	90 (77%)	40	131 (82%)

Other training, related to graduate skills, listed below was not widely available to graduates. Graduate ratings on the helpfulness of training accessed and the perceived usefulness of training (when not available) suggests that graduates might benefit in particular from training in leadership and management and in project management.

Type of Training	Attended (% of those attending who found this training helpful)	Available but did not access	Not available (% who felt this training would be useful)
Leadership/ management/ chairing	63 (83%)	52	146 (66%)
Project management	71 (82%)	46	144 (63%)
Managing meetings	69 (67%)	57	205 (62%)
Team work	73 (76%)	30	149 (60%)
Presentation skills	78 (74%)	40	143 (57%)
Research	57 (65%)	41	163 (50%)
Managing my inbox	92 (72%)	43	196 (47%)

Conclusions

This report has provided a detailed analysis on the experience of transitioning between university and the workplace. The analysis indicates that a number of factors influence graduate mental wellbeing, perceived stress and confidence disclosing mental health difficulties. Graduates' perception of the preparation that their university provided for the workplace was, in general, relatively negative, providing a clear indication that universities could be doing more to prepare students for the transition out of university. However, the graduates' perception of the preparation their university provided for the workplace had a weak relationship to current mental wellbeing and perceived stress, indicating that action by universities alone is unlikely to have a substantive influence on graduate mental wellbeing.

While graduates in general feel that their university provided support in looking for and applying for jobs, few felt their university provided support for how to make the transition out of university or into the workplace. Further few felt that their university had helped them understand the current employment market.

Scores on the graduate experience scale, created for this survey, were normally distributed. Graduate schemes improved graduate experience and graduate experience mediated a relationship between graduate schemes and better mental wellbeing and lower levels of perceived stress.

Graduates in general identified a positive transition into the workplace. Individuals joining a graduate scheme, in general, had a more positive transition into the workplace. However, the effect of graduate scheme may interact substantively with employment sector, as graduate schemes were common in some employment sectors (law, financial services and construction and engineering) and rare in others (science, technology and research, education). In the charity sector, where graduates joined both on, and not on, a graduate scheme, the presence of a graduate scheme had no influence on the graduates' experience of the transition into the workplace. We must thus take care in interpreting the effect of the graduate scheme; it is possible that the type of organisation likely to establish a graduate scheme may also be likely to support a good transition into the workplace, independent of a graduate scheme.

"Universities should strive to make students' experiences more geared and prepared towards their futures so that they are better able to cope when that transitioning stage comes."

- Graduate

Seven factors associated with the transition into the workplace were isolated as particularly influential for subsequent mental wellbeing and stress. These were,

1. The graduate has a manager who is interested in their personal development;
2. The graduate has someone they feel confident contacting if they are struggling with their wellbeing;
3. The graduate feels comfortable taking breaks during the workday, for example, taking a break for lunch;
4. The graduate finds the work they are doing interesting;
5. The graduate feels able to keep up with financial pressures;
6. The graduate feels that their organisation is proactive about promoting wellbeing;
7. The graduate feels included in work-related social activities.

A substantive proportion of graduates completing this survey identified that they had experience of mental health difficulties. This must be treated with caution as we should expect a substantive bias in recruitment to this study as the survey was advertised as relating to mental wellbeing. It is however interesting to note that of those reporting mental health difficulties almost exclusively reported these developing *before* starting in the workplace. Further, those with current or previous experience of mental health difficulties reported a more negative graduate experience and a more negative transition into the workplace. While there is often a focus on encouraging employers to take action to minimise the development of mental health difficulties, this data strongly suggests that we need employers to think carefully about how they support young people with experience of mental health difficulties to make a good transition into the workplace.

Graduates generally identified a positive workplace culture. A positive workplace culture was associated with better mental wellbeing and lower levels of stress. Further, a positive workplace culture was associated with a higher confidence disclosing mental health difficulties. Changing cultures is challenging. However, the survey data here highlights four areas that may be of particular relevance for improving employee confidence in disclosing mental health difficulties. These include building an environment where employees feel able to ask for help and ensuring that employees feel like they know what they are doing in relation to their work. Further, allowing employees to overhear helpful and supportive conversations about work-life balance and health issues encourages confidence disclosing. Finally, it is important to avoid situations where employees are concerned about the pressure experienced by their manager and colleagues.

While this report provides novel insights into the challenges of transitioning into the workplace there are a number of limitations that should be kept in mind. The sample size is relatively small. While the report shows data split across employment sectors, this must be interpreted with caution as the sample sizes here are particularly small. It is unfortunate that this sample mostly represents White British graduates and is thus uninformative about the additional challenges that graduates from other ethnic backgrounds might encounter. Throughout the report we have suggested that factors such as graduate experience, the transition into the workplace and workplace culture influence graduate mental wellbeing and perceived stress. However, this is a cross-sectional study, with the survey being completed at one time point. It is thus possible that the relationships that we describe are bi-directional, such that mental wellbeing today in part influences how the graduate reflects on their graduate experience and transition into the workplace.

With these limitations in mind, future research using a shorter questionnaire, recruiting more graduates and employing a longitudinal design could provide additional insights into the challenges of transitioning between university and the workplace and may clarify some of the findings reported here.

"An employer will never get the best from its graduates if they are unable to support them with their mental health difficulties. Starting a new job can be stressful at the best of times, let alone if it is your first "real" job, you are potentially in a new city with no support network, and you already struggle with mental illness."

- Graduate

References

Department of Business Innovation and Skills (2015). Participation Rates in Higher Education Academic Years 2006/2007 - 2014/2015. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/552886/HEIPR_PUBLICATION_2014-15.pdf

Department for Education (2017). Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2016. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610805/GLMS_2016_v2.pdf

Harris, M. (2001). Developing modern higher education careers services. Department for Education and Employment.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE). (2016). Labour Force Survey. Retrieved from www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/

Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Arch Gen Psychiatry, 62(6), 593-602.

Macaskill, A. (2013). The mental health of university students in the United Kingdom. British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 41(4), 426-441.

McKeown, T., & Lindorff, M. (2011). The graduate job search process–a lesson in persistence rather than good career management? Education+ Training, 53(4), 310-320.

Stewart-Brown, S., Tennant, A., Tennant, R., Platt, S., Parkinson, J., & Weich, S. (2009). Internal construct validity of the Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale (WEMWBS): a Rasch analysis using data from the Scottish health education population survey. Health and quality of life outcomes, 7(1), 15.

Tennant, R., Hiller, L., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., Weich, S., . . . Stewart-Brown, S. (2007). The Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale (WEMWBS): development and UK validation. Health and quality of life outcomes, 5(1), 63.

Watts, A. (2005). Career guidance policy: An international review. The Career Development Quarterly, 54(1), 66-76.

Williams, M., Coare, P., Marvell, R., Pollard, E., Houghton, A., & Anderson, J. (2015). Understanding provision for students with mental heatlh problems and intensive support needs; a report to HEFCE. Retrieved from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2015/Understanding,provision,for,students,with,mental,health,problems/HEFCE2015_mh_.pdf

Appendix A

Revised Transition into the Workplace scale

1. There were clear and reasonable expectations: I knew what is expected of me and felt able to deliver this.
2. I had meetings with the whole team and understand the work that is going on around me and my role within this.
3. *I often felt like I didn't know what I was doing.*
4. It was okay for me to make mistakes.
5. I was in charge of my own time and time management.
6. I felt comfortable taking breaks during the work day (e.g. lunch)
7. My colleagues were supportive.
8. I was interested in the work I was doing.
9. My manager was interested in my personal development
10. Meetings with my manager were very task focused.
11. I was encouraged / supported to have interests outside of work (e.g., volunteering, sports etc.)
12. I felt included in work related social activities
13. There was someone I felt confident contacting if I was struggling with my wellbeing.
14. My organisation was proactive about promoting wellbeing.
15. *I struggled to keep up with financial pressures*
16. *I felt my work culture pressured me to spend more money than I could afford*

student
minds