Using part-time working to support graduate employment aspirations: Needs and perceptions of employers

Abstract

This work explores the value attached to work experience of graduates and particularly the value of part-time working whilst studying for a degree, from an employers' perspective. A documentary analysis of graduate recruiters was conducted to assess the extent to which work experience was specified for graduate employment programmes and then further interviews carried out with a sample of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to explore how part-time working of graduates is perceived by employers. Work is deemed to be important to employers, not only as a differentiator, but as a measure of how graduates will perform in-post. However, employers generally signalled the value of work experience, indicating graduates do not make best use of it in job applications. The findings will inform and challenge universities and educators of the contribution and importance of students' part-time working in respect of supporting graduate employment prospects and also contribute to the employability agenda within the HE curriculum.

Keywords

Employability, graduate careers, employers, part-time working

Introduction - Employability and the needs of employers

The employability of graduates remains high on the UK government's agenda (Tomlinson, 2007), with universities increasingly seeking to support students' transition into graduate employment. However, the process of students seamlessly evolving from higher education into the workplace is far from straightforward, despite the relatively simple definition of 'employability', for example, "The character or quality of being employable" (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2003, p.199). Similarly, Pan and Lee (2011) use employability to describe the skills and attributes possessed by individuals that make them attractive to employers, or as Shafie and Nayan (2010) refer, getting them to be in a state of 'job-readiness". Yet employability is not merely the process of endowing individuals with appropriate knowledge and skills, but equally important is the development of personal attributes to facilitate entry and advancement along a graduate career path (Harvey, 2005, Knight and Yorke, 2002). This has led to demands that universities embed employability skills within the learner experiences (Rae, 2007; Storen and Aamodt, 2010), or involve employers in curriculum design (Mason et al, 2009). However, employability skills are not universal (Pan and Lee, 2011) and questions whether students themselves are capable of fulfilling them have been raised (Tymon, 2011). As Rae (2007) highlights, a broad approach to graduate employability is made difficult by individual characteristics, personality and personal motivations, all of which can be shaped by university experiences.

As a consequence, the relationship between universities, students and employers remains complex, with work experience activities deemed to be 'extra-curricular' (Harvey, 2005), rather than an integral part of the degree programme (Knight and Yorke, 2002). The debate continues therefore, as to whether Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are producing graduates that are 'industry-ready' (Boden and Nedeva, 2010; Wilton, 2008). Employers themselves are becoming increasingly explicit in their requirement for graduates to not only possess requisite skills, such as problem-solving or effective communication (Wilton, 2008), but that they can make an effective contribution to the

business from the outset of engagement (21ˢᵗ Century Leaders Report, 2014). It is the ability for graduates to make an immediate impact on business performance that differentiates the skill needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to those of large organisations (Stewart and Knowles, 2000a). Given their limited resources, it is unsurprising that SMEs need to maximise the benefits derived from workforce investments. Nonetheless, Stewart and Knowles (2000b) find commonality between the skills needs of large businesses and SMEs, particularly regarding transferable skills. Yet, despite a need for skilled labour, to support innovation and growth (OECD, 2013), SMEs have difficulty in attracting graduates (UEAPME, 2011). Here, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2012) confirms that graduates tend not to be targeted for positions, due predominantly to a lack of financial resources, leading to the inability for SMEs to meet graduate expectations on pay (Heaton et al, 2008). There is also the possibility of SMEs being unable to attract graduates because of a lack of structured training and development (Hunt et al, 2013). However, Sfedi (2012) also cite a lack of work/practical experience of graduates as a reason for non-targeting of graduates for vacancies. This has led Stewart and Knowles (2000a) and Branine (2008) looking to universities to provide a better 'fit' between graduates and SMEs. Yet as Yorke (2004) notes, achievements other than the formal degree are deemed important by employers. This is also confirmed by Tomlinson (2007) who notes that degree students feel that a degree alone is insufficient in the current graduate jobs market.

Individuals can go to university for a number of reasons, but typically it is either to gain access to a profession such as medicine, or because a degree is seen to deliver financial benefits over an individual's working life (Ryan, 2010). However, the lack of 'guaranteed-employment' for graduates, coupled with increased tuition fees, perhaps mean individuals now examine the alternatives to full-time university studies. This has also led to the development of new initiatives, such as the "School Leaver Programme" (http://www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk/jobs) and also apprenticeship schemes at various levels including advanced and higher apprenticeships. Apprenticeships, embracing an 'earn while you learn" approach and covering a broad spectrum of career options

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(http://www.ucas.com) provide a clear challenge to the traditional university-degree route. Moreover, apprenticeships seem to be well received by employers, ranking in terms of perceived 'employability' higher than degrees (ICM, 2013). However, while the media has highlighted the superiority of apprenticeships over a degree (e.g. Collins, 2013), research among working parents has indicated the opposite (CIPD, 2013).This has served to re-ignite discussion on the need for individuals to possess appropriate workplace skills, particularly to support the growth of SMEs (Cherry, 2015). HEIs have responded to the need for a greater vocational emphasis in degree programmes, with an increased focus on work-based learning (WBL) initiatives (Burke et al, 2009, Hills et al, 2003) in order to develop those skills demanded by employers (Burn-Callander, 2014). This need for engaging with the workplace is confirmed by High Fliers (2014) in their Graduate Market Report, who warn that graduates with no work experience are unlikely to secure employment on a graduate programme with over half of the top-100 graduate employers. However, the work experience referred to here, focuses largely on those employers' own placement and internship programmes, with suggestions that a number of graduate positions are reserved for those who had previously undertaken internships at that company (Vasagar, 2011; Paton, 2014). Nonetheless, Paisley and Paisley (2009) and Juznic and Pymn (2011) are positive about work placements as enhancing skills that might be transferred to the workplace, although in terms of relating work placement activities to the programme of study, students find this aspect a challenge (Smith et al, 2007). In addition, some concerns have been raised regarding too many students undertaking work placements (Harrison, 2004), potentially restricting appropriate skill development. Consequently, the role of work-based learning has been given greater prominence by HEIs, since it not only seeks to maximise learning in the workplace (Burke et al, 2009), but provide a ready conduit into employment (Hills et al, 2003). Similarly, internships can provide work experience with a desired organisation (Cummings-Carson, 2013; Helyer and Lee, 2014), This is why work placement, work experience and internships have become commonplace – they readily provide an individual with an opportunity to gain first-hand experience in order to develop and hone those skills acquired at

university, although there has been some adverse media coverage regarding the ethical stance of some internship opportunities (Ellis, 2014).

Nonetheless, focus on placements and internships and so largely ignores another significant source of work experience for students, that of part-time working while studying for the degree. While universities are developing a host of initiatives for students to undertake work experience, a significant proportion of undergraduate students are undertaking part-time work (Endsleigh, 2012; NUS/HSBC, 2010; UCAS, 2011) on their own initiative. While this is mostly seen to be financially driven (Richardson et al, 2009), part-time working can also help individuals 'try-out' future jobs (Billet and Ovens, 2007) and is therefore useful in supporting career aspirations. In addition, the students themselves perceive their part-time working as beneficial to their job prospects (Evans et al, 2014; Martin and McCabe, 2007; Morrison, 2009). However, the value placed by employers on students' part-time working remains relatively unexplored, highlighting a clear research gap.

Research questions, rationale and objectives for this study

This study is prompted by Wilton (2011), who suggests that research among employers to the value of particular skills and experience they seek, would help highlight key factors in graduate recruitment. This leads to the first objective for this study:

1. To assess the extent to which employers specify work experience for their graduate employment programmes

However, a number of questions remain unanswered with regard to the value of part-time work in supporting graduate employability, highlighting a clear 'research-gap'. In particular, to what extent is part-time work seen to add-value to an individual's application for graduate positions? Are some

part-time work activities deemed by employers to be more useful than others? Does part-time work help differentiate individuals in the graduate jobs market? How can students utilise their part-time work experience more effectively to enhance graduate employability prospects? As an exploratory study, these questions provide impetus for the second objective of this research:

2   To explore how part-time working is perceived by employers, particularly how it supports graduate job applications

Research Approach

Documentary Analysis

The research approach is split into two elements to best achieve the two objectives. The first part is a documentary analysis (Krippendorff, 2013) of the graduate recruitment sections of organisations' websites, in order to assess the extent to which work experience was a stated entry requirement to a graduate position. As Bennett (2002) notes, employers are typically explicit in job advertisements regarding the skills demanded for respective positions. In addition, Feldman et al (2006) considers the importance of job advertisements in signalling key points to prospective applicants, which acts as the 'bridge' between the employer and prospective applicant (Mathews and Redman, 1998).

A sample group of organisations to examine was derived from the publications The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, and The Job Crowd Top Companies for Graduates to Work for (2013-14). By eliminating those companies duplicated in the second publication, this gave a sample of 100 + 113 = 213 organisations. These publications were deemed appropriate, since they were most likely to be read by students seeking graduate positions upon graduation, at least as a starting point in their respective employment quest.

The graduate recruitment section of the 213 organisations' websites and linked brochures/publicity material were analysed to determine the extent to which work experience was a stated requirement

for their respective graduate positions. The work experience stated in the organisations' documents was noted, with each business graded into one of the following coding units (Wienslaw, 2009):

1. Explicitly stated that work experience was essential/mandatory

2. Explicitly stated that work experience was desirable

3. Implied that work experience was useful (in order to demonstrate a skill or behaviour)

4. No mention of work experience

5. Work experience was explicitly stated as not required

6. Explicitly stated that previous work experience was undesirable or limited (e.g. maximum 12 months)

7.

While it is accepted that there is some degree of interpretation in a qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012), the above units summarised the extent of stated work experience described in the documents. Because a broad measure of stated work experience was sufficient for this study, a sophisticated content analysis was seen to be unnecessary, for example, to take account of synonyms or grammatical variations. A simple "counting" method (Krippendorff, 2013, p.189) was therefore adopted. Subsequently, a similar approach to that adopted by Wellman (2010) in his analysis of marketing jobs, was used, by entering the item counts into a spreadsheet, to enable tabular or graphical data presentation.

Interviews with SME managers

Since the second research objective sought to explore how part-time working is perceived by employers, particularly how part-time working supports graduate job applications, it was felt that an interview-based approach (Gray, 2014) would yield greater insight than one based on a survey. The study was therefore qualitative descriptive (Sandelowski, 2010). Moreover, this element also enabled the perceptions of SMEs to be sought, rather than those of larger organisations typically

associated with the documentary analysis. These interviews complemented the documentary analysis, enhancing data quality.

Recruitment managers at nine graduate recruiters, with offices located in the West Midlands, UK, were interviewed to explore the importance they attach to work experience especially that derived from part-time jobs. These businesses were selected because they do not appear in the publications used to derive the documentary analysis. In addition, one of the authors had previous working experience with businesses, for example, through joint University and Chamber of Commerce events or they had taken students on work placement and were known to have recruited graduates in the last year. The sample could therefore be termed convenience. The businesses were not identified according to a particular industrial sector, and organisations from the financial services, housing, manufacturing, and IT sectors formed part of the sample group (Table 1).

[Place Table 1 approximately here]

Since the purpose of this element of the study was to explore in greater depth the perceptions of employers in respect of part-time work of students, it was felt that each individual business would offer a useful contrasting qualitative perspective to that of the documentary analysis, particularly from a SME standpoint. Ethical approval was granted by the University, as a mandatory requirement for academic research using human participants. The interview was completely anonymous and respondents were informed they could withdraw at any point if they did not want to proceed. The interviews were conducted at each of the respective businesses' offices by one of the researchers, to ensure a consistent approach in the data gathering process.

The interview was based around sixteen questions, with introductory questions relating to graduate recruitment and selection methods and then more specific questions to explore perceptions relating

to part-time working. The responses were not audio recorded, but shorthand notes were taken which were then word-processed in full. Participants were subsequently requested to confirm the transcription thereby ensuring the correct representation of their views. The interviews were subsequently content analysed for commonality within the responses, identifying common themes which were tabulated. The companies have been allocated a letter (see Table 1) in order to identify their comments in the text, but to maintain anonymity.

Findings

Documentary Analysis

The documentary analysis revealed the importance employers attach to work experience. For 11.3% of graduate recruiters, work experience was mandatory (Table 2), with some specifying minimum periods of work, while others specified that the experience had to be relevant to the company's industrial sector (e.g. retail), clearly highlighting the importance of internships.

[Place Table 2 approximately here]

What also emerged for businesses in this category was the need for students to be able to cite examples from their work experience and relate this to the company or position being applied for. Students are therefore, having to articulate the skills they developed in work situations, and express how these might now be valuable to the prospective employer. This also extended into those 9.4% of businesses classified as "2" (Table 2). Without explicitly specifying that graduates must have work experience, employers in this category are seemingly looking for evidence of how individuals can demonstrate transferable skills, by asking for details of any work experience. Relevant work experience can therefore be invaluable for an individual, to draw on for examples of how transferable skills have be developed or applied in practice. These were also apparent for the 20.2% of businesses in category "3", where applicants might be required, for example, to demonstrate their interest in the company/sector or their passion for customer service, both of which could be effectively supported by appropriate work experience examples.

Even though the 56.3% of companies graded as "4" did not explicitly require work experience, yet 72% within this group typically specified expected behaviours or traits to be demonstrated by the

applicant, such as communication skills, leadership capabilities, social skills etc. which could be derived from work experience to provide relevant and transferable examples (see Table 3).

[Place Table 3 approximately here]

Only 2.3% of companies explicitly stated that work experience was not required for their graduate recruitment programme (Table 2). However, these organisations will not only be looking for high academic achievement but also investigating why an individual has an interest in that particular business or sector. This is something that individuals with work experience, particularly related internships, will be able to explain more effectively. These organisations will undoubtedly have structured graduate schemes that develop and mould individuals from a zero knowledge-base, for that specific business or sector. Similarly, the single business that specified a maximum period work experience in category "6" will presumably have a structured graduate scheme with a related pay-scale.

Interviews

While not expressly stated as mandatory, the importance of graduates possessing work experience was clearly reinforced by the employers interviewed. Not only is previous work experience seen by employers as a differentiator for selecting between two similar applicants,

> *PT work experience allows differentiation between two individuals with similar academic profiles. The candidate with PT work experience will know what it is like to go to work (Co. I)*

> *If we had a choice between two candidates, one a graduate with no work experience and the other who had work experience, then we would probably favour the candidate with work experience (Co. A)*

Previous work experience is also perceived by employers to give individuals a broader range of skills and experiences, and help develop skills that are readily transferable to the workplace:

> *We want people who can socialise and interact. Wouldn't pick the person with the First class honours degree if they could not demonstrate these skills (Co. B)*

> *Work experience is 'all good'. At least those with it can demonstrate the importance of customer facing skills and so on. Real life skills are very important (Co. A).*

In addition to the essential transferable skills, businesses are looking for individuals who can adapt more readily to the world of work, and part-time work experience is seen to provide applicants with this ability:

> *In all positions, part time work experience is advantageous. This makes a candidate look better. They may have picked up transferable skills, and it softens the teething problems there may be otherwise (Co. D)*

> *We are looking for past experience as a predictor of how they are going to work (Co. I)*

In particular, the ability to engage appropriately with customers confirmed the previously described documentary findings:

> *People who have part-time work experience 'generally' have experience of dealing with customers, and 'generally' fit better with the culture of the organisation (Co. B)*

Those students with work experience will potentially have a broader range of examples in their personal inventory to demonstrate the desired behaviours to employers. Yet surprisingly, employers were not choosy where graduates had obtained their part-time work experience, with all environments deemed to be able to provide adequate opportunity to develop desirable skills and behaviours:

> *Shelf stacking would be important to us at short-listing stage. Shows commitment. Being employed helps to get a better rounded person. Demonstrates discipline of getting up and going to work (Co. C)*

> *Any PT work experience would be deemed to be valuable (Co. B)*

These views are useful to students, who typically gain part-time employment in the retail and hospitality sectors, which are traditionally high recruiters of students. While employers did not expressly specify work experience as a criterion for selection on their respective graduate programmes, they did emphasise the importance of part-time working, in terms of helping to develop a more 'rounded individual':

> *Obviously the discipline and grade of degree is important for chartered accounting recruits, but we are often looking for the "more rounded individual". The more focussed upon the degree and the less work and life experience, the less likely they are to adapt to working environment (Co. C)*

> *Always look on the CV for others things that have been done, as well as their degree, for example, involvement in Young Enterprise programmes. This gives them more strings to their bow. We do see a difference in Graduates who have experience of the world of work – more grounded! They do also interview better – more to draw upon (Co. D)*

Nonetheless, discussion at the interviews regarding graduates who had previous management experience as a result of promotion in their respective part-time jobs, received a mixed response, with some employers seeing that it could be something that could be further developed, whereas others, with more structured graduate development programmes, it was not seen to add-value to an application, and might even be perceived to be detrimental:

This would be very attractive to (Co. I) as someone would have seen something in their leadership abilities to put them in that position. May have received some training which (Co. I) can then build upon.

Management responsibility wouldn't be singled out. There is a three year training contract. Shouldn't come in thinking they can supervise because they 'have' previously supervised. Won't be able to fast-track (Co. C)

Similarly a mixed response was received in respect of charitable work or volunteering. Those organisations who actively engaged with the community saw it as valuable personal criteria:

Specifically, (Co. B) wants people to be involved in the community, so candidates who have done this kind of work previously with voluntary organisations would be well-placed

Also looking for voluntary activity as selection criteria for graduates. If people haven't volunteered may not get through to next stage (Co. F)

However, other employers perceived charitable working as merely another item on the application, without adding much significance to the selection outcome:

If a candidate had done voluntary activity rather than working in a bar or restaurant it would be viewed by (Co. I) as 'other valuable experience'. It would probably not be seen as too beneficial to the organisation

Personally, volunteer work doesn't really stand out (Co. E)

This does indicate that individuals will need to carefully consider charitable working as a career development activity, although, the organisations used in this research sample were commercial enterprises and therefore the charitable sector was not represented, which could have provided a different perspective to the value of charity/volunteering activities.

However, the employers were generally agreed in condemning some graduate applications, not only for poor grammar and spelling, but failing to make the most of their skills and work experience:

In (Co. B's) experience, students do not sell themselves actively enough - do not draw out their previous experience which can be very relevant. Sometimes the advice from University careers can conflict with advice that employers may give. For example, I would personally move employment experience above qualifications on a CV. Students should try to match their attributes to the skills that employers are looking for.

Some students can't demonstrate the impact of what they've done. Best forms seem to come from the higher end universities. Good applicants need to show how they demonstrate the competencies (Co. F)

Discussion

Discussion of Findings including comparison of the two approaches

The two research approaches show that work experience is clearly important to employers, not only as a differentiator between applicants, but for SMEs in particular, as a tool to gauge how well individuals will perform once in-post. Experience of the workplace is seemingly viewed by employers as an indicator of the graduate's readiness for employment. In addition, work experience is perceived by employers to give individuals a broader range of skills and 'wider-life' experiences, seemingly providing a measure of maturity than someone who has only been exposed to school and academic study. Here, the concept of a 'rounded individual' emerged from both the documentary analysis and the interviews, indicating that individuals need to expose themselves to a broad range of experiences outside of the classroom. This does suggest that the degree on its own is becoming less important to employers, as confirmed by Tomlinson (2007) and Yorke (2004). This could see more individuals pursuing alternative routes to employment rather than university study.

Experience of working in a chosen career sector prior to entry provides what Billet and Ovens (2007) describe as a 'taster', and demonstrates commitment to the chosen vocation. Yet only 5 out of the 24 companies graded as "1" (explicitly specifying work experience) in the documentary analysis, required work experience to be in that particular sector. It is therefore clear from the documentary analysis and the subsequent interviews, that it is not critical how or where the work experience was derived. What is important is how that work experience can be translated and shown as relevant and useful, in the context of the graduate employer. Yet, as Tymon (2011) questions, applicants do not seemingly make the most of their work experience, explaining its impact and practical application, which leads to frustration on the part of the employer, and to the typical 'lack of preparedness' of graduates' comment that resonates from the interviews.

Nonetheless, individuals have to exercise care in progressing in their part-time job role, since one of the SMEs viewed those with supervisory experience suspiciously, as if they would make higher demands on entry, or try to 'shortcut' the structured training programme. This possibly explains why one organisation was graded '6' in the documentary, by specifying a maximum work experience period to gain entry onto its graduate scheme. However, smaller organisations would presumably not have the typical structured graduate development schemes that are common with large corporations.

Implications for individuals and organisations

A key aspect emerging from the research for students was the importance employers attach to customer-facing skills. Given that students typically work in the retail and hospitality sectors (www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Part-Time_Work)., this should provide them with useful experience to elaborate in graduate applications. However, while Jackson (2013) highlights the importance of students being able to fully articulate their skills to employers, it seems that students fail to make the most of part-time work experience to potential employers (Neil et al, 2004).

Surprisingly, only one organisation in the documentary analysis referred to the usefulness of charity working, and this was based in the voluntary sector. Similarly, students undertaking charity work received mixed a mixed review in the interviews, with those with on-going community or charitable activities welcoming it, while others were more 'neutral' to its value in the graduate recruitment process. This could however be symptomatic of the commercial organisations contributing to this research.

The documentary analysis revealed a significant number of graduate recruiters not specifically mentioning work experience. They were however, demanding in the need for individuals to demonstrate traits, behaviours or 'softer-skills' in the recruitment process, such as problem-solving. Raybould and Sheedy (2005) find that nearly two-thirds of available graduate vacancies are open to

graduate of any discipline. This highlights that employers are looking for those softer-skills rather than degree-specific knowledge. Again, the SMEs interviewed highlighted that work experience helped to develop these transferable skills

Yet employers are not entirely explicit how individuals must demonstrate those desired characteristics or behaviours, just that applicants must possess them, and be able to contextualise them in relation to the business.

For universities, there is a clear need to ensure students are 'employment-ready' upon graduation. Employers are seeking individuals who can demonstrate skills beyond the academic qualification, supported by examples that are relevant to that particular business. This however, as Hunt et al (2011) suggest, need HEIs to consider alternative approaches to delivering skills needed by employers, especially to meet the needs of SMEs.

However, where a student does not possess work experience, the onus must fall on universities to develop those employability skills demanded by employers. There is clearly a need for HEIs to not only provide and facilitate work opportunities, but to ensure students develop and practice appropriate skills during any work experience, and to subsequently help them exploit these and articulate them in the graduate application process. Nonetheless, this does, reiterate concerns of some authors regarding the ability of students to perform highly in their academic studies while at the same time accumulate the requisite work experience (see for example Curtis and Shani, 2002). Should students' part-time working be incorporated into a wider learning experience while at university, perhaps through explicit accredited work-based learning components, embedded within academic programmes (Knight and Yorke, 2002)?

Conclusion

This work has identified the important precondition of work experience for graduates. It also signals the importance of focus upon the development of transferable / employability skills during the course of students' academic study, and how part-time working in particular, can contribute to the acquisition and development of these skills and to their personal profiles. At the same time it has raised further research questions that should open-up debate for not only those in universities who are responsible for managing work placements and internships, but also career services regarding information and support at the application stage. Moreover, it challenges educators in HE to make the most of those work experiences back in the classroom to both support and enhance student learning, and future employability, as in the use of accredited work-based projects linked to their experience and critical reflection upon learning.

This work has also highlighted the needs of employers that individuals should be able to demonstrate possession of skills that will support and business and its development needs. This is largely perceived by employers to be derived from work experience, and a practical application of their knowledge and understanding in a workplace setting. Although, how well individuals 'sell' the experience, making it relevant to the recruiting employer is of paramount importance.

In addition, this work has also shown the value of students' part-time work experience as a differentiator in the employer-recruitment process. This should initiate a change in the way graduates perceive part-time work while studying, from merely being a source of finance to being a key driver in supporting career aspirations.

The limitations of this study lie in dealing with graduate recruitment schemes 'at a distance' through an analysis of documents. A deeper study therefore might yet yield further insight into the needs and expectations of employers in respect of work experience. Moreover, while the sample of SMEs provided a broad coverage of industrial sectors, this could also be extended, including those for

example, from the voluntary sector, thereby achieving a more accurate representation of UK organisations.

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Listing of Tables

Table 1: Details of Companies

Company Reference	Type of Company
A	Accountants
B	Bank
C	Accountants
D	IT Software Developer
E	High-Tech Manufacturer
F	Housing Association
G	Solicitors
H	Housing Association
I	Manufacturer

Table 2: Classification of businesses by stated work experience

Grade	No. of Businesses (%)
1 (Explicitly stated that work experience was essential/mandatory)	**24** (11.3%)
2 (Explicitly stated that work experience was desirable)	**20** (9.4%)
3 (Implied that work experience was useful (in order to demonstrate a skill or behaviour)	**43** (20.2%)
4 (No mention of work experience)	**120** (56.3%)
5 (Work experience was explicitly stated as not required)	**5** (2.3%)
6 (Explicitly stated that previous work experience was undesirable or limited (e.g. maximum 12 months)	**1** (0.5%)
Total	**213 (100%)**

Table 3: Breakdown of the 120 Companies graded

as "4" (No mention of work experience) in Table 2

Grade '4'	No. of Businesses (%)
No details	**27** (22%)
Apply for specific jobs	**6** (5%)
No graduate scheme	**1** (1%)
Listed desirable behaviours/traits (e.g.	**86** (72%)
Total	**120 (100%)**