NATIONAL EMPLOYER SURVEY

EMPLOYERS' VIEWS ON IRISH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING OUTCOMES

Commissioned by the Higher Education Authority, SOLAS and Quality and Qualifications Ireland

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Executive Summary

The National Employer Survey provides valuable information on the views of employers on further and higher education outcomes in 2014. The responding employer organisations recruited 9,344 recent graduates from further and higher education. Based on an assumption that approximately 60,000 graduates were recruited in the Republic of Ireland during the past two years, this accounted for an estimated 12% of the total graduate recruitment.

For the purposes of this survey, a graduate is someone who has been recruited within the last 24 months and who has also completed their qualification within the last 24 months.

1,378 organisations accessed the survey with 914 organisations answering the opening questions on staff recruited within the past two years. 383 organisations completed the entire survey.

In terms of satisfaction, employers were very satisfied with graduate recruits across a range of workplace and personal attributes. These included ICT skills; teamwork; communication; adaptability and flexibility; positive attitude and energy. A lower level of satisfaction was noted for foreign language capability, entrepreneurial skills and business acumen/awareness.

The majority of recruitment efforts concentrated on science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related subjects. The main qualification being recruited is an honours degree for higher education graduates and a FETAC award for further education and training graduates.

There was evidence to support the finding that employers from large and/or foreign owned employer organisations were distinctive for their responses on a range of questionnaire topics. These employer organisations were:

- more satisfied with workplace and personal attributes of graduate recruits
- more likely to collaborate with education through internships/placements (82% for large organisations and 61% for small organisations) and have a greater level of satisfaction with these collaborations
- more likely to establish a relationship with an education provider to source graduates (71% of large organisation and 42% of small organisations)
- more likely to have a need for foreign language skills in their organisation (32% for foreign employer organisations and 22% for indigenous employer organisations) and require a higher level of proficiency for specific European languages, and
- more likely to recruit graduates from institutions outside Republic of Ireland (47% for large employer organisations and 30% for small/medium organisations).

Approximately 40% of employer organisations indicated that there were skills not currently available that are required now or in the next five years. The main skills cited were engineering, languages, ICT and specific quantitative skills.

The primary reasons for establishing a relationship with a higher education institution as a source for future graduates were; near proximity, existing relationships with previous graduates who are now employees, and specific offerings such as internships, placements and work experience programmes.

Although collaboration between education and industry is high (approximately 70%), a range of suggestions on how employers and education institutions could further improve collaboration are described. There was a high level of employer engagement in the survey as evidenced by a large number of open-ended responses with two-thirds of employers willing to participate in follow-on research. A detailed review of the qualitative comments provided by employer organisations is planned following this report.

1 KEY FINDINGS

Reasons for not employing graduates

- The main reason for not recruiting any recent graduates within the past two years is because of there were no vacancies at this level (81% of all organisations) – Ref: Figure 2.

Graduate profile by discipline and skill category

- Engineering was the most prominent single discipline among foreign (63%), manufacturing (59%) and large (63%) employer organisations. Graduates from the Business and Law discipline were also prominent among the indigenous (43%), service (45%) and large (50%) employer organisations – Ref: Table 2.
- Approximately 30% of all employer organisations employed a further education graduate from the Business Administration and Management skill category. The next most prominent skill categories were Manufacturing/Engineering (24%) and IT (23%) – Ref: Table 3.

Qualifications recruited

- The majority of employers (72%) recruited graduates with an Honours Degree. The next most frequently occurring level was a Masters Degree, Post-Graduate Diploma (44%) and then a Higher Certificate and Ordinary Bachelors Degree (34%) –Ref: Figure 6.
- Over half of all employers of further education graduates (57%) recruited at least one graduate with a FETAC[1] award and approximately a quarter (26%) recruited at least one qualified apprentice – Ref: Figure 7.
- Approximately 11% of all employer organisations recruited at Doctoral Degree level (18% of foreign employers and 8% of indigenous employers). The discipline with the highest proportion of Doctoral Degrees was Science and Mathematics (18%).
- Approximately 61% of all graduate employers had heard of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This proportion was highest for foreign organisations (70%), large organisations (75%) and the Manufacturing sector (68%). Of those organisations who had heard of the NFQ, just over one-third (36%) had referred to it during their recruitment process – Ref: Figure 8.

Satisfaction with graduates

- Satisfaction rates were more positive for foreign-owned organisations and large employer organisations across most workplace attributes. Although satisfaction

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[1] In 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a new integrated agency (replacing the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board)

with 'Computer and technical literacy', 'Working effectively with others' and 'Numeracy/processing numerical data' was very high, satisfaction was relatively low for the following attributes; 'Foreign language capability', 'Business acumen/ awareness' and 'Entrepreneurial skills' – Ref: Table 4.

- Satisfaction rates with personal attributes of graduates were very high across all cohorts, in particular for large and foreign employer organisations – Ref: Table 5.
- Satisfaction with personal attributes of graduates within each discipline was higher than (aggregated) workplace attributes for each discipline – Ref: Figure 10.
- Satisfaction with personal attributes of graduates within each skill category was higher than (aggregated) workplace attributes for each skill category – Ref: Figure 11.
- Satisfaction rates between employers of HE graduates and employers of FET graduates were similar for workplace attributes with the exception of 'foreign language capability' where there was a lower rate of satisfaction expressed by employer organisations of HE graduates – Ref: Figure 11.
- Satisfaction rates between employer organisations of HE graduates and employer organisations of FET graduates were similar across personal attributes for employer organisations of HE and FET graduates – Ref: Figure 13.

Minimum entry standards

- Approximately 79% of large employer organisations have a minimum entry standard for graduate applications and this was 58% for medium-sized employer organisations – Ref: Figure 14.
- The most common minimum standard among all employer organisations is to have, or expect, at least a 2.1 degree (approximately 70% of all employer organisations). A higher proportion of foreign employer organisations (36%) indicated that graduate applicants must first pass a psychometric or other in-house selection process (e.g. assessment centre) than their indigenous counterparts – Ref: Figure 15.

Skills not currently available

- Approximately four-in-ten of all employers indicated that there were skills not currently available that were required now or in the next three to five years in the Republic of Ireland. This proportion was highest among the mid-sized employer organisations (44%) – Ref: Figure 16.
- The most frequently occurring skills listed included engineering, specific languages, data analysis and software/IT/programming-related skills.

Future supply of graduates

- A higher proportion of foreign employer organisations (74%) feel that there will be an adequate supply of graduates in the next three-to-five years than their indigenous counterparts (59%). Organisations based in Dublin (68%) were marginally more

optimistic about there being an adequate supply of graduates than organisations based outside of Dublin (61%) – Ref: Figure 17.

Collaboration

- There was a higher level of collaboration with education reported by foreign employers (79%) than by indigenous employers (68%). The size of the organisation also appeared to influence this proportion in that larger organisations had a higher collaboration rate (82% for large employer organisations) – Ref: Figure 18.
- "Internships and placement" were the most popular form of collaboration between employers and higher education institutions – Ref: Figure 19.
- "On the job placement" is the most popular form of collaboration between employers and further education and training providers (75% of all employers involved in collaborations with further education providers) – Ref: Figure 20.

All employer organisations were asked what could educational institutions do better to improve collaboration with enterprises and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses[2] is provided below:

- *Reach out, liaise, collaborate, engage, interact, be more proactive, be less bureaucratic and inflexible*
- *Find out what skills are required and map that to course content*
- *Implement a more practical component to courses by proactively seeking (long-term) placements, internships for their students*
- *Collaborate and update companies on progress being made and/or changes to curriculum*
- *Arrange industry/open days and career fairs bringing both sides together and organise interesting speakers*
- *Organise secondment of staff to industry, up-skill lecturers with live working experiences and recognise the value of applied research*
- *Market and promote themselves better*

Conversely all employer organisations were also asked what enterprise could do to improve collaboration with educational institutions. A summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *General acceptance that they could do more and it is in their best mutual interest to engage, and at a high level*
- *Up-skill career guidance about our industry so they can impart this to prospective candidates*
- *Invest more time building the business and personal relationships between industry and education*
- *Help devise more practical programmes and links for students to gain experience and become potential future employees, e.g. placements, scholarships, internships*

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[2] A more detailed review of the open-ended responses in the survey is planned on completion of this report.

- *Provide constructive feedback to HEIs on graduates recruited from that institution*
- *Clarify the lines of communication with education to allow free-flow of information and greater collaboration, i.e. nominate individuals and schedule interaction*
- *Utilise the various governmental initiatives to attract skilled graduates, e.g. Springboard, JobBridge.*

Enterprise–education relationships

- A higher proportion of foreign organisations (69%) have established a relationship with a higher education institute (HEI) as a source of graduates than their indigenous counterparts (51%). The level of engagement appears to be related to the size of organisation as the proportion increases from 42% of organisations with less than 50 employees to 71% for organisations with greater than 250 employees – Ref: Figure 22.

All employer organisations were asked for reasons why they chose a particular HEI for a collaboration and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *Near proximity to work, convenient for graduates, support local educational institutions*
- *Relationships already established with former students and current academic staff through alumni and graduate recruitment office*
- *Good experience from successfully recruiting previous graduates with the necessary skills to satisfy requirements*
- *Good reputation of institution*
- *Specific offerings such as internships, placements, work experience, sponsorship programmes and participation on advisory boards*

Languages

- Approximately a quarter (25%) of all employers indicated that they had a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency skills in their organisation. This proportion was highest for foreign employer organisations (32%) and lowest for indigenous employer organisations (22%) – Ref: Figure 23.
- The core European languages of French and German were the most popular languages selected by employer organisations with a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency – Ref: Figure 24.
- A higher level of language proficiency is required by foreign employer organisations where at least 60% of all employer organisations indicated that they require at least full professional proficiency in their graduate recruits. Although a relatively high proportion of indigenous employer organisations required Chinese language skills in their organisation, a high degree of proficiency was not necessarily required – Ref: Figure 25.

Graduate recruitment outside of Ireland

- Foreign organisations were more likely to recruit from an external source (42%) than indigenous organisations (32%). This proportion was highest for large organisations (47%) and service-type organisations (42%). Organisations based in Dublin were also relatively high (46%) – Ref: Figure 26.

All employer organisations were asked to explain why they recruited graduates from institutions outside of the Republic of Ireland and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *The best candidate got the position, regardless of where they were educated*
- *Conscious decision by company to encourage diversity and multi-cultural aspect within the workforce*
- *Specific languages with a high degree of proficiency were not generally available in Ireland*
- *Specialist skills are not generally available locally and it is necessary to look further afield provide a greater selection and graduates, e.g. mathematics, coding, analytics*
- *Local graduates had a relatively low level of practical workplace experience*
- *The need for local knowledge in export market the firm is working in at this time.*

2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019 present a vision of further and higher education which can successfully meet the many economic and social challenges facing Ireland over the coming decades. Both documents envisage the provision of a high quality learning experience leading to better outcomes for all those who engage with education through excellence in teaching and learning, research, scholarship and engagement with wider society as appropriate. The strategies note that strong engagement between further/higher education and enterprise has the potential to play a vital role in enhancing Ireland's economic competitiveness and that the education and training system is a core part of the enterprise, development and innovation infrastructure in Ireland.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 identifies innovation as a driving force behind such engagement: innovation in teaching, learning and research from higher education; and innovation in taking advantage of learning opportunities from the business community. The Strategy suggests activities that could be progressed in business–academic partnerships range from knowledge transfer and the creation of joint research projects, to the development and provision of education and training for employees, and problem-solving and consulting services. Employer–education partnership could also facilitate high-quality internships and work-placements for students and could be particularly useful as a way of enabling employer feedback on graduate employability and in facilitating employer input into curriculum design and development as well as course supply.

The Higher Education Strategy recommends that a national survey of employers should be undertaken by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on a regular basis and used as part of an assessment of quality outcomes for the system. The Further Education and Training Strategy continues this theme setting out the need for appropriate research on skills needs, including collaboration with the HEA on a national employer survey of Irish further and higher education and training outcomes.

Recent Action Plans for Jobs identified a second round of the National Employers Survey as a priority. Action 181 in the 2014 Plan, under Aligning Education and Training Output with Enterprise and Skills Needs (Action Plan, pg. 70), suggests that the HEA and SOLAS 'undertake a full-scale national employer survey of Irish higher education outcomes and examine the feasibility of including employers' views on further education and training. This survey should build upon, and extend, the National Pilot Survey of Employer' Views of Irish Higher Education Outcomes conducted in 2012.'

This survey provides information on the views on further and higher education outcomes of a broad range of businesses representing different sectors, ownership (multinational and indigenous) and company size (small, medium and large).

The overall objectives of the survey were to ascertain, inter alia, employers' views on a range of items including (but not limited to):

- Overall quality of recent further education and training and higher education graduates with respect to workplace and personal attributes
- Challenges in filling further/higher education graduate vacancies
- Factors considered when recruiting further education and training and higher education graduates (e.g. institution attended, course result, employability skills, degree subject, foreign language capability, relevant work experience/ placement)
- Further/Higher Education - business collaboration on research and innovation.

Project steering group

The HEA, SOLAS and QQI convened a Steering Group made up of representatives from enterprise and education:

Enterprise: American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AMCHAM), British Irish Chamber of Commerce, Chambers Ireland, Construction Industry Federation (CIF), EGFSN, Enterprise Ireland, IBEC, ISME, IDA Ireland, Public Appointments Service, Small Firms Association.

Education: HEA, SOLAS, Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS), Department of Education and Skills, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA), IOTI, IUA, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

A project group, comprising HEA, SOLAS and QQI representatives, managed the day-to-day aspects of the project. Insight Statistical Consulting was engaged to undertake the study. InsightSC (www.insightsc.ie) was established in 1989 and provides specialist marketing research services to a range of public and private organisations.

Methodology

The questionnaire was based on the pilot questionnaire conducted in 2012 with a number of extensions and amendments made to address the specific research questions. A copy of the questionnaire is contained in Appendix A.

There is no publicly available database of employers in Ireland which could be drawn upon for this research. Instead respondents were obtained through the bodies represented on the steering group committee. In order to address possible differences in responses by individual cohorts, results are shown separately, where possible, by each of the key

variables such as ownership (Irish, foreign), type (manufacturing/services) and size (micro/small, medium and large). It is assumed that respondents within each of the reporting cohorts are a random sample of all employers of graduates within that cohort and can therefore represent their collective response.

In summary, the questionnaire covered the following nine topics:

- A profile of the **total number of graduates** recruited, the relevant recruitment classifications and whether formal qualifications other than Leaving Certificate were required
- The **levels in which graduates were recruited** and awareness/usage of the National Framework of Qualifications among employers
- The level of **satisfaction with graduate recruits** across a range of workplace and personal attributes. Graduates recruited from each discipline/skill category were rated separately by employers
- The existence of an **established relationship with higher education institution**(s)
- The extent to which graduates were **recruited from institutions outside of Republic of Ireland**
- Nature of **collaboration between industry and education** with a series of recommendations on how this could be improved
- Specific requirement for **foreign languages** and associated proficiency levels
- **Minimum entry standards** for graduate applications
- **Supply of graduate skills** in Republic of Ireland and suggestions on how shortfalls could be addressed.

The questionnaire went through a series of development stages and was conducted online using Qualtrics survey software. A link to the survey was disseminated by the various steering group participants to their relevant members during a six-week data collection period (mid-October to End November 2014) and the response characteristics are summarised in the next section. The data were analysed using SPSS statistical software with results outputted to Microsoft Excel & Word. Across all respondents, the online survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete (median) with three-quarters of all respondents being completed within approximately 27 minutes.

3   RESPONSE CHARACTERISTICS

The source of the sample is summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Source of final sample size
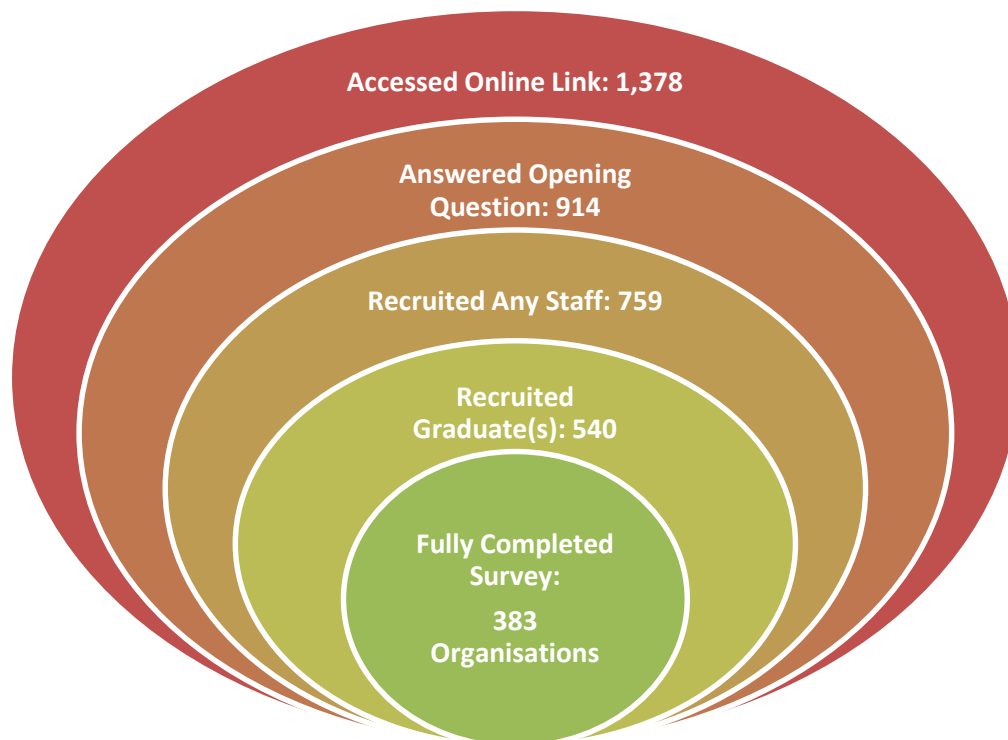
From Figure 1, a total of 1,378 organisations entered the online survey through the various links available (i.e. one of 16 possible entry points) with 914 organisations answering the opening questions on whether *any staff* had been recruited within the past two years (the remainder did not enter any valid data). Approximately 83% (759 of the 914 organisations) indicated they recruited at least one person within the past two years. Of the 759 organisations who recruited at least one employee within the past two years, 540 (or 71%) indicated that they had recruited *at least one graduate*.

For the purposes of this survey, a graduate is someone who has been recruited to the organisation within the last 24 months and who has also completed their qualification within the last 24 months.

Approximately 71% of all eligible entrants to the online survey (or 383 organisations) proceeded to complete the entire questionnaire providing the necessary classification data with which to describe the results in more detail, i.e. region, size, sector, ownership. The final sample, upon which the results are based, was drawn from a range of sources including; The Higher Education Authority, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), Association for Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS), Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME), Enterprise Ireland (EI), American Chamber of Commerce, Construction

Industry Federation (CIF), Irish University Alliance (IUA) and other supporting organisations (listed in Page 3).

Reasons for not employing graduates

Organisations who indicated they had recruited *employees* within the last two years, but that had not recruited any *graduates*, were asked for reason(s) why and Figure 2 summarises the response (where multiple responses are allowed).

Figure 2: Reason(s) for not employing any graduates

[Valid n = 219]
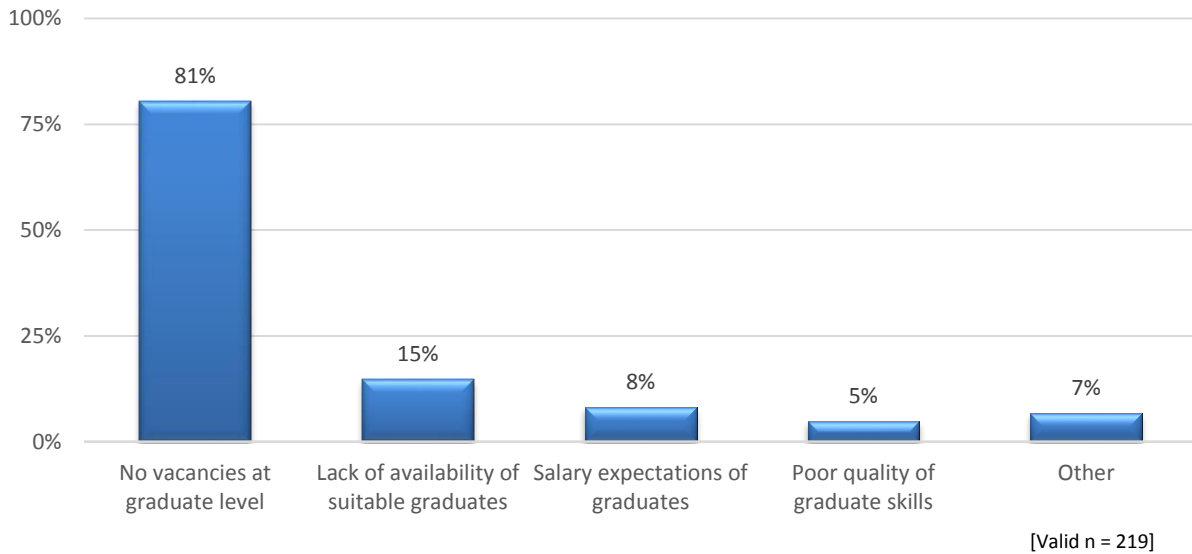
From Figure 2, the main reason for not recruiting any recent graduates within the past two years was because there were no vacancies at this level (81% of all organisations). Some employers indicated that the roles in which employees were recruited were either too advanced for a recent graduate or did not require a graduate level qualification.

Approximately 15% of this cohort indicated that there was a 'lack of availability of suitable graduates' and 8% cited the 'salary expectations of graduates'. Only 5% of respondents indicated 'poor quality of graduate skills'.

- **From this point, all results pertain to the 383 employers who recruited HE and/or FET graduates within the last two years and finished the entire questionnaire.**
- **Unless otherwise stated results pertain to employer organisations of both HE and/or FET graduates.**

Graduates from Higher Education (HE) and Further Education and Training (FET)

The term graduate includes persons qualifying from higher education institutions (e.g. Universities and Institutes of Technology) and also persons qualifying from further education and training where a wide range of programmes in terms of levels and fields of study to a diverse group of learners are provided (e.g. National Craft Certificates for qualified apprentices (e.g. plumber, electrician etc.), FETAC[3] qualifications (e.g. childcare, hairdressing etc.), specific industry related (vendor) qualifications (e.g. Microsoft)).

The number of organisations with graduates from HE and/or FET within the final sample is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Number of employer organisations with HE and/or FET graduates
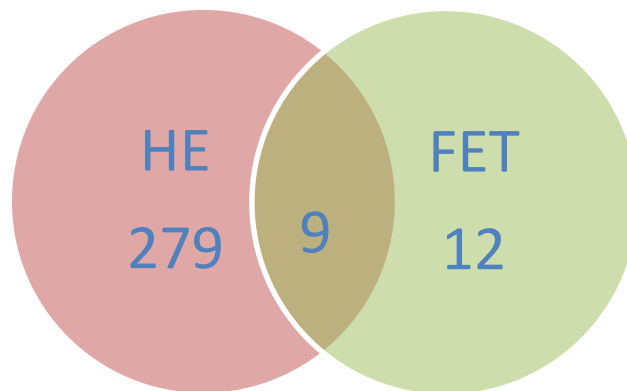
[Valid n =

From Figure 3 above, 279 organisations (of the 383 in the final sample, 73%) employed recent graduates from HE only. A further 92 organisations employed recent graduates from both HE and FET (24%). The remaining 3% (12 organisations) employed recent graduates from FET only.

Key Reporting Classifications

The primary analysis variables used in this report are;

1. **Ownership** (Indigenous or Foreign),
2. **Type** (Manufacturing or Service), and
3. **Size** (Small: Less than 50 employees, Medium: 51-250 employees, and Large: 251+ employees).

In some cases, Region (Dublin and outside-Dublin) was also used for selected questions.

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[3] In 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a new integrated agency (replacing the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board)

Table 1 summarises the number of employer organisations contained within the sample response and the corresponding number of graduates recruited.

Table 1: Employer organisations and graduates recruited

Classification		Organisations		Graduates	
		Count	%	Count	%
Ownership	Indigenous	255	67%	4,697	50%
	Foreign	128	33%	4,647	50%
Type	Manufacturing	148	39%	2,459	26%
	Service	235	61%	6,885	74%
Size	<50 people	135	35%	625	7%
	51-250 people	127	33%	1,552	17%
	251+ people	121	32%	7,167	77%
Region	Dublin	179	47%	6,437	69%
	Outside-Dublin	204	53%	2,907	31%
Total		**383**	**100%**	**9,344**	**100%**

From Table 1:

- Some 9,344 recent graduates were recruited to the 383 employer organisations within the past two years. It is from these 383 employer organisations that the results in the report are based.
- Foreign employer organisations accounted for a third (33%) of all employer organisations and half (50%) of all graduates.
- Large employer organisations accounted for a third of all employer organisations (32%) and over three-quarters of all graduates (77%).
- Service-based organisations accounted for approximately 61% of the total number of employer organisations and nearly three-quarters (74%) of all graduates.
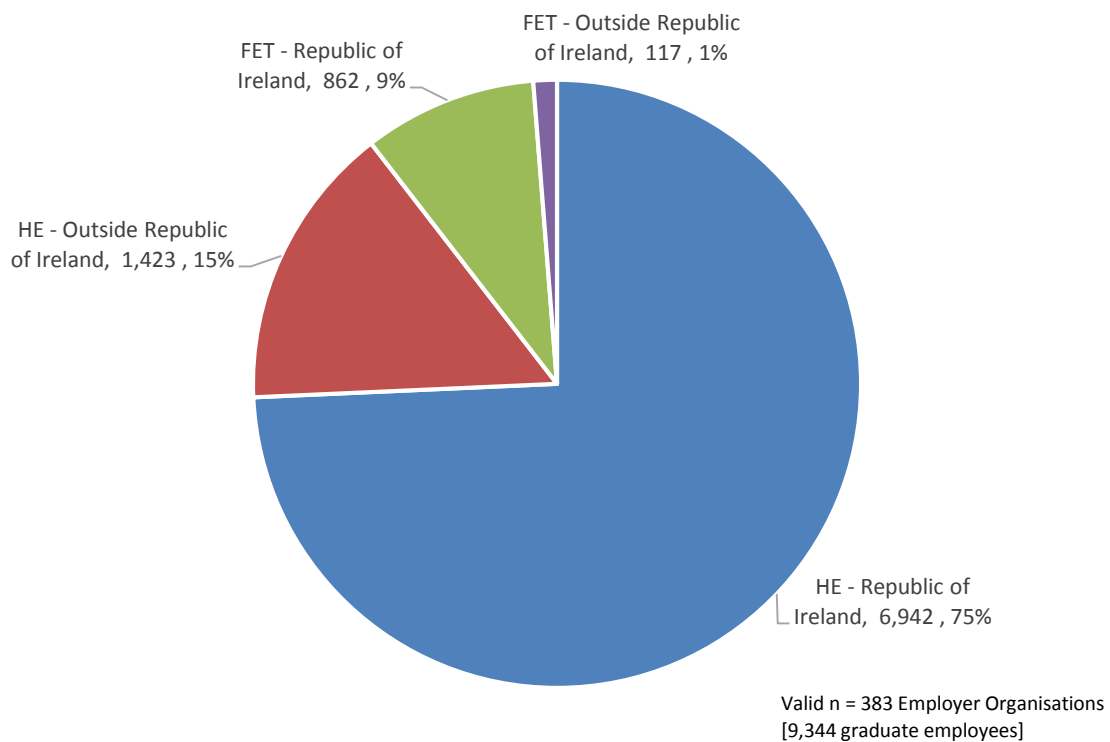
Please note that Table 1 presents the profile of employer organisations who responded to the survey within a backdrop of a public sector employment embargo since 2009 and economic recessionary pressures.

Ownership is considered a key variable with which to split results as multinationals play an important role in the Irish economy. In 2012, although foreign multinationals account for

just 2.2% of all enterprises in the business economy, they employed over 250,000 persons in Ireland (22% of the total persons engaged) and exported goods and services in excess of €180bn (56% of the total exports).[4] Whenever possible, results are shown by ownership.

The 9,344 graduates covered by the 383 employer organisations are described in terms of their source in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Source of all graduates recruited by employer organisations

FET - Outside Republic of Ireland, 117 , 1%

FET - Republic of Ireland, 862 , 9%

HE - Outside Republic of Ireland, 1,423 , 15%

HE - Republic of Ireland, 6,942 , 75%

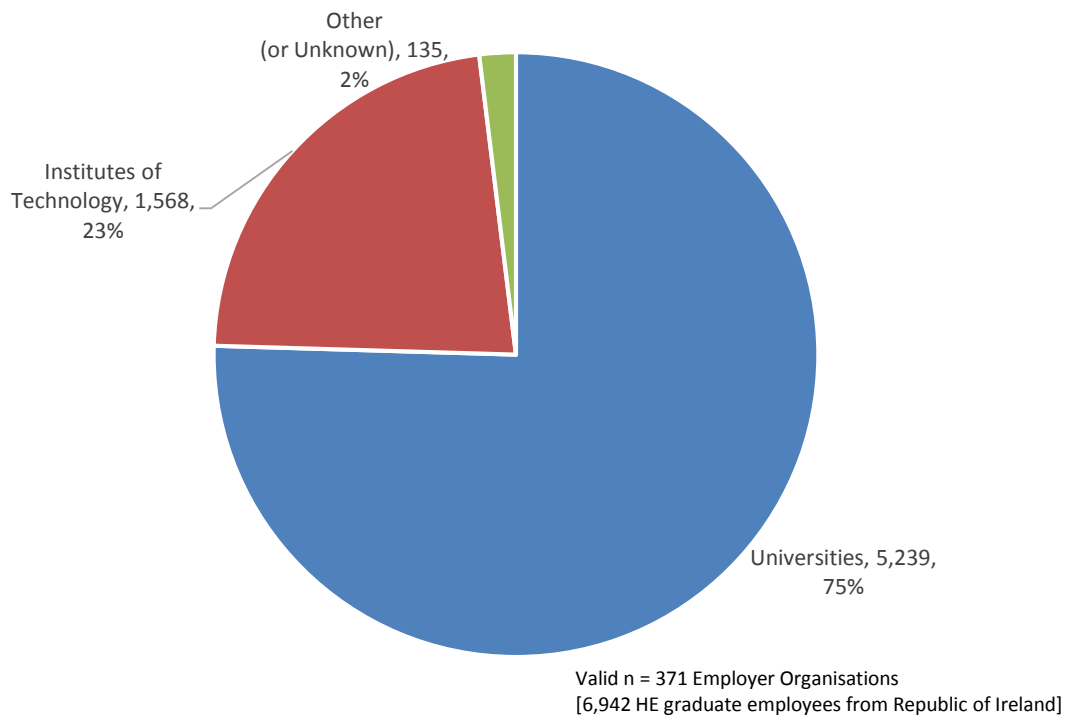Valid n = 383 Employer Organisations
[9,344 graduate employees]

From Figure 4, approximately 16% of graduates from responding organisations were recruited from institutions outside of Ireland, i.e. 15% from higher education and 1% from further education and training. The overall proportion of graduates being sourced from Irish HE institutions was 75%.

Based on an assumption that approximately 60,000 graduates were recruited in the Republic of Ireland during the past two years, the total number of graduates represented by the 383 employer organisations account for approximately 12% of all graduates recruited.

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[4] Business in Ireland 2012 (CSO)

The HE graduates from institutions in Republic of Ireland were further classified into Universities and Institutes of Technology as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Source of all HE graduates

Other (or Unknown), 135, 2%

Institutes of Technology, 1,568, 23%

Universities, 5,239, 75%

Valid n = 371 Employer Organisations
[6,942 HE graduate employees from Republic of Ireland]

From Figure 5, approximately three-quarters (75%) of all HE graduates were recruited from the universities.[5]

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[5] Approximately 56% of all awards in HEA-funded Institutions were from universities in 2013 (full-time and part-time (including distance and e-learning)).

Graduate profile by discipline and skill category

Employer organisations of HE graduates are profiled in terms of ten distinct disciplines they recruited from and Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2: Profile of HE disciplines (multiple response)

Discipline	Ownership		Type		Size (Employees)		
	Indigenous	Foreign	Manu.	Service	<50	51-250	251+
Humanities & Arts	14%	7%	6%	15%	12%	12%	10%
Social Sciences	10%	5%	4%	11%	6%	7%	12%
Business & Law	43%	37%	33%	45%	33%	39%	50%
Science & Mathematics	23%	42%	31%	28%	16%	31%	42%
Computing	26%	35%	17%	37%	22%	27%	39%
Engineering	30%	63%	59%	30%	26%	36%	63%
Construction	8%	4%	13%	3%	5%	8%	8%
Agriculture & Veterinary	7%	2%	9%	3%	3%	5%	7%
Health & Welfare	6%	3%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%
Services	14%	9%	6%	17%	11%	16%	9%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Valid n	**236**	**123**	**141**	**218**	**123**	**118**	**118**
STEM [6]	59%	89%	77%	64%	56%	70%	82%

From Table 2, Engineering was the most prominent single discipline among foreign (63%), manufacturing (59%) and large (63%) employer organisations. Graduates from the Business & Law discipline were also prominent among the indigenous (43%), service (45%) and large (50%) employer organisations.

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[6] STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics as represented by combined Science and Mathematics, Computing and Engineering disciplines.

Employer organisations from the indigenous sector were more likely to recruit from a wider range of disciplines than their foreign counterparts.

In relation to STEM subjects, a greater proportion of foreign employers recruited HE graduates from 'Engineering', 'Science & Mathematics' and 'Computing' disciplines than their indigenous counterparts. Collectively, 89% of the foreign sector recruited from at least one of these STEM disciplines, 82% for large employer organisations with at least 250 employees[7]).

Employer organisations of FET graduates are profiled in terms of 15 distinct skill categories they recruited from. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: Profile of FET Skill Categories (multiple responses)

Skill Category	All
Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture	3%
Art, Craft and Media	1%
Business Admin and Management	30%
Construction	12%
Financial Services	15%
Food and Beverage/Hospitality	17%
IT	23%
Health /Family /Care/Other Personal Services	3%
Hairdressing/Beauty and Complimentary Therapies	4%
Manufacturing/Engineering	24%
Natural resources	0%
Sales and Marketing	15%
Science and Technology, Animal Science	13%
Transport Distribution/logistics	2%
Tourism and Sport	13%
Total	**100%**
Valid n	**101**

STEM[8]	50%

From Table 3, approximately 30% of all employer organisations employed a FET graduate from the Business Administration and Management skill category. The next most prominent skill categories were Manufacturing/Engineering (24%) and IT (23%).

Although there is no real comparison between the HE disciplines (or FET skill categories) and the profile of enterprises by detailed sector as provided by the CSO Business Demography, it

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[7] HEA 2013: 44% of new entrants to higher education institutions enrolled in Science & Mathematics, Computing and Engineering Disciplines.
[8] STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics as represented by combined IT, Science and Technology, Animal Science and Manufacturing/Engineering.

is clear that the profiles are not similar, i.e. a disproportionate number of employer organisations recruited from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines.

Qualifications recruited

Employer organisations of HE graduates were asked at what levels graduates were recruited and Figure 6 provides the overall results across all disciplines (multiple responses were possible).

Figure 6: Levels at which HE graduates were recruited
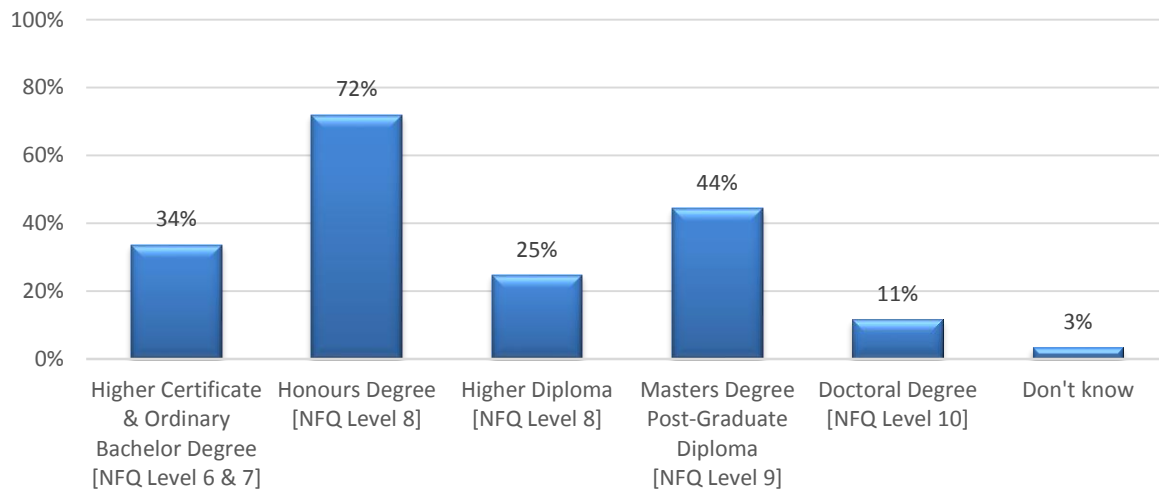
From Figure 6, the majority of employers (72%) recruited from an Honours Degree. The next most frequently occurring level was a Masters Degree, Post-Graduate Diploma (44%) and then a Higher Certificate & Ordinary Bachelors Degree (34%).

Employer organisations of FET graduates were asked at what levels graduates were recruited and Figure 7 provides the overall results across all skill categories (multiple responses were possible).

Figure 7: Levels at which FET graduates were recruited
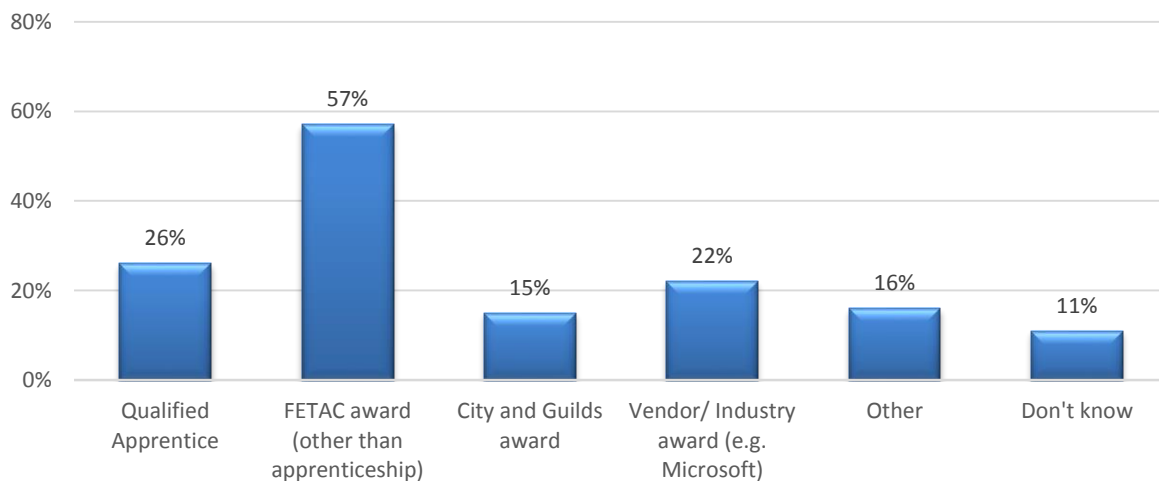
From Figure 7, over half of all employers of FET graduates (57%) recruited at least one graduate with a FETAC[9] award and approximately a quarter (26%) recruited at least one qualified apprentice.

Doctoral degrees [NFQ Level 10]

Approximately 11% of all employer organisations recruited at Doctoral Degree (18% of foreign employers and 8% of indigenous employers). The discipline with the highest proportion of Doctoral Degrees was Science and Mathematics (18%).

Approximately two-thirds (68%) of employer organisations who recruited graduates with Doctoral Degrees (NFQ Level 10) agreed that the position(s) actually required this level of education.

Despite being less likely to recruit at Doctoral level, a higher proportion of indigenous (and smaller) organisations agreed that the position(s) required this level of education.

National Framework of Qualifications

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a ten-level system (1–10) giving an academic or vocational value to qualifications obtained in Ireland. NFQ levels help indicate how an award can be used for training, education and employment opportunities. Each level is based on nationally (and internationally) agreed standards of what a learner is expected to know and be able to do after receiving an award. QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) is a state agency with responsibility for the NFQ system in Ireland.

The level of awareness of employers surveyed in this report and their subsequent reference to the system for recruitment is illustrated in Figure 8 below.

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[9] In 2012, QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) was established as a new integrated agency (replacing the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board)

Figure 8: Awareness of National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

NFQ Awareness

Unsure
8%

No
31%

Yes
61%

[Valid n = 369]

If Yes, do you refer to it?

Don't
know
4%

Yes
36%

No
60%

[Valid n = 225]
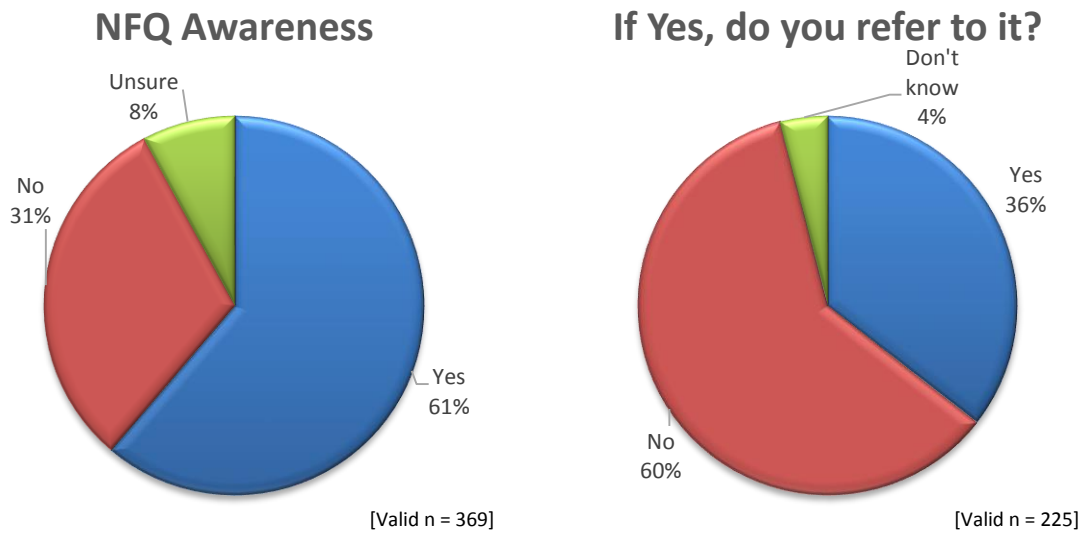
From Figure 8, approximately 61% of all graduate employers had heard of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This proportion was highest for foreign organisations (70%), large organisations (75%) and the manufacturing sector (68%). Nearly one-third (31%) of all graduate employers had not heard of the NFQ and this was highest for small organisations (45%).

Of those organisations who had heard of the NFQ, just over one-third (36%) had referred to it during their recruitment process. Large organisations were most likely to refer to it during their recruitment process (47%) than their smaller counterparts.

Although 64% of mid-sized employer organisations (51-250 employees) had heard of the NFQ, only 22% had referred to it during their recruitment process.

4   SATISFACTION WITH GRADUATES

All employer organisations of HE graduates were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to a series of **workplace attributes**. The level of satisfaction was measured along a five-point scale from none-satisfactory to all satisfactory (exact scale shown on Question 8 in Appendix A). Satisfaction was determined by employers being satisfied with at least 75% of graduate(s) recruited.

Table 4 compares the satisfaction of employer organisations by each workplace attribute.

**Table 4: Level of satisfaction with HE graduates across workplace attributes**

Workplace Attributes	Ownership		Type		Size (Employees)		
	Indig.	Foreign	Manu.	Service	<50	51-250	251+
Computer and technical literacy	82%	92%	84%	87%	78%	84%	92%
Foreign language capability	42%	35%	42%	38%	38%	28%	46%
Numeracy/ Processing and interpreting numerical data	77%	92%	86%	82%	77%	76%	93%
Application of technical knowledge	72%	84%	78%	76%	73%	70%	84%
Effective verbal communication	75%	84%	82%	77%	77%	76%	82%
Effective written communication	68%	76%	65%	74%	67%	64%	79%
Working effectively with others	82%	88%	84%	84%	84%	81%	87%
Working effectively on their own	67%	78%	76%	68%	70%	61%	80%
Attention to detail	72%	84%	81%	75%	73%	68%	88%
Business acumen/ awareness	47%	61%	58%	49%	50%	39%	64%
Entrepreneurial skills	43%	57%	48%	48%	45%	34%	62%
Overall	**68%**	**78%**	**73%**	**71%**	**69%**	**65%**	**80%**
Valid n [10]	**260**	**177**	**161**	**276**	**119**	**129**	**189**

---

[10] Valid n differs marginally for each attribute. This Valid n relates to the first attribute, *Computer and technical literacy* where employer organisations can rate graduates across a single or multiple disciplines.

From Table 4, satisfaction rates were more positive for foreign-owned organisations and large employer organisations across most workplace attributes. Although satisfaction with 'Computer and technical literacy', 'Working effectively with others' and 'Numeracy /processing numerical data' was very high, satisfaction was relatively low for the following attributes; 'Foreign language capability', 'Business acumen/ awareness' and 'Entrepreneurial skills'.

The relevant percentages for these relatively low satisfaction rates by the most popular disciplines, i.e. where sample size allowed, is provided in Figure 9.[11]

Figure 9: Satisfaction with selected workplace attributes by main disciplines for HE
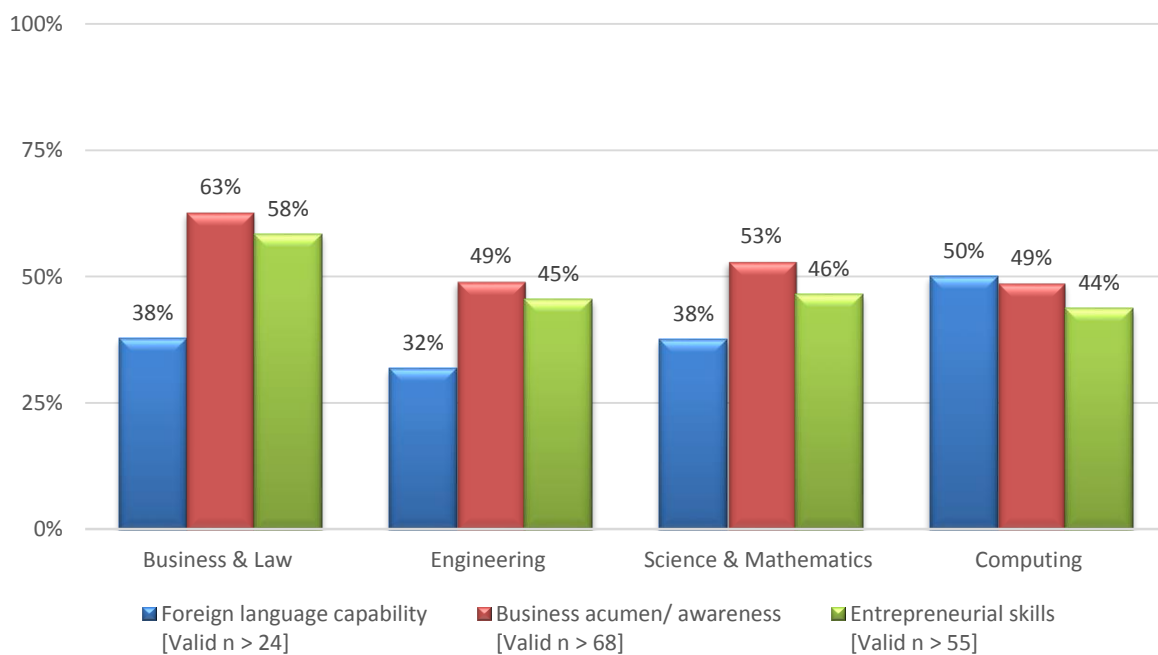
From Figure 9, satisfaction with 'business acumen' and 'entrepreneurial skills' were consistently low for employer of graduates from Science & Mathematics, Computing and Engineering disciplines. Employers from Business & Law discipline were marginally more positive. Employers of gradates from Computing discipline were marginally more positive about the 'foreign language capability' than other disciplines quoted.

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[11] Sample size varied for each attribute depending on which disciplines were selected but Figure 9 shows the minimum sample size from which results were calculated.

All employer organisations of HE graduates were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to a series of **personal attributes**. The level of satisfaction was measured along a five-point scale from none-satisfactory to all satisfactory (exact scale shown on Question 9 in Appendix A). Satisfaction was determined by employers being satisfied with at least 75% of graduate(s) recruited.

Table 5 compares the satisfaction of employer organisations by each workplace attribute.

Table 5: Level of satisfaction with HE graduates across personal attributes

Personal Attributes	Ownership		Type		Size (Employees)		
	Indig.	Foreign	Manu.	Service	<50	51-250	251+
Ability to cope with work pressure	76%	86%	80%	80%	77%	74%	87%
Adaptability and flexibility	82%	94%	87%	86%	87%	78%	93%
Positive attitude and energy	85%	94%	85%	90%	83%	84%	95%
Ethically and socially aware	87%	91%	82%	92%	86%	85%	92%
Reliability	89%	95%	92%	91%	90%	87%	96%
Personal commitment	85%	96%	92%	88%	84%	85%	96%
Professionalism and work ethic	81%	92%	82%	87%	81%	77%	95%
Overall	**84%**	**92%**	**86%**	**88%**	**84%**	**81%**	**93%**
Valid n[12]	**298**	**182**	**166**	**314**	**136**	**151**	**193**

From Table 5, satisfaction rates with personal attributes of graduates were very high across all cohorts, in particular for large and foreign employer organisations.

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[12] Valid n differs marginally for each attribute and this Valid n relates to the first attribute, *Ability to cope with work pressure* where employer organisations can rate graduates across a single or multiple disciplines.

A summary of satisfaction with personal and workplace attributes (where individual attributes have been aggregated into a single rating) is provided in Figure 10 for employer organisations of HE graduates.

Figure 10: Comparison of satisfaction with HE disciplines across workplace and personal attributes
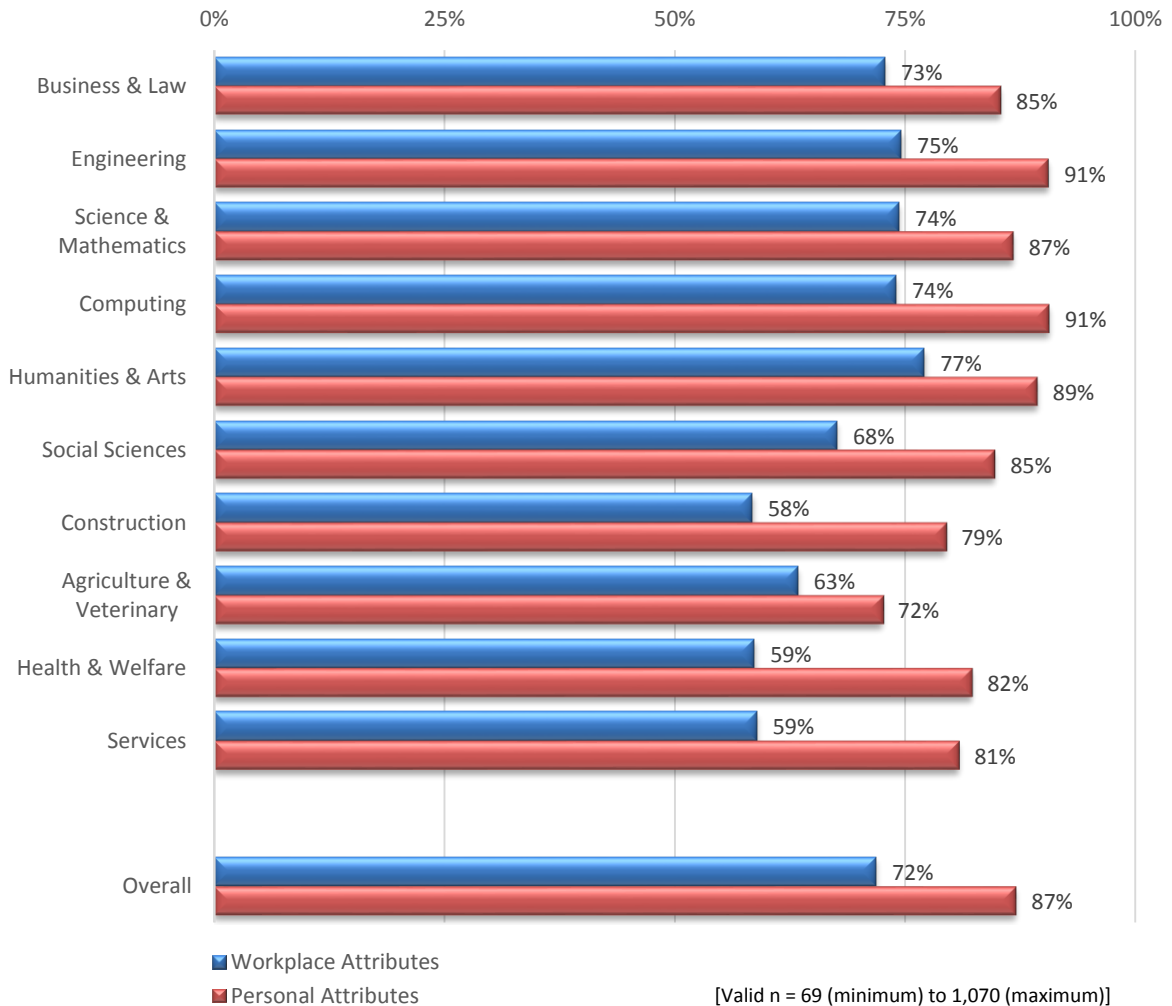
From Figure 10, satisfaction with personal attributes of graduates within each discipline was higher than (aggregated) workplace attributes for each discipline. The relatively low rates of satisfaction observed for 'Foreign language capability', 'Business acumen/ awareness' and 'Entrepreneurial skills' (See Figure 6) contributed towards the aggregated rate for workplace attributes.

A summary of satisfaction with personal and workplace attributes (where individual attributes have been aggregated into a single rating) is provided in Figure 11 for employer organisations of FET graduates.

Figure 11: Comparison of satisfaction with FET Skill Categories across workplace and personal attributes

Legend:
- Workplace Attributes (blue)
- Personal Attributes (red)

[Valid n = 19 (minimum) to 583 (maximum)]

Skill Category	Workplace Attributes	Personal Attributes
Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture	91%	100%
Art, Craft and Media*		
Business Admin and Management	80%	88%
Construction	67%	87%
Financial Services	81%	89%
Food and Beverage/Hospitality	89%	93%
IT	79%	87%
Health /Family /Care/ Other Personal Services	55%	79%
Hairdressing/Beauty and Complimentary Therapies	91%	98%
Manufacturing/Engineering	78%	93%
Natural resources*		
Sales and Marketing	82%	86%
Science and Technology, Animal Science	87%	96%
Transport Distribution/logistics	84%	88%
Tourism and Sport	91%	94%
Overall	82%	90%

From Figure 11[13], satisfaction with personal attributes of graduates within each skill category was higher than (aggregated) workplace attributes for each skill category. The relatively low rates of satisfaction observed for 'Foreign language capability', 'Business

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[13] * Low sample size for 'Art, Craft and Media' (not displayed) and no response from organisations employing graduates within 'Natural Resources' skill category

acumen/ awareness' and 'Entrepreneurial skills' (See Figure 6) contributed towards the aggregated rate for workplace attributes.

Comparison of satisfaction with HE and FET graduates

All employer organisations were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with FET graduate recruits[14] as they relate to a series of **workplace attributes**. The level of satisfaction was measured along a five-point scale from none-satisfactory to all satisfactory (exact scale shown on Question 18 in Appendix A). Satisfaction was determined by employers being satisfied with at least 75% of graduate(s) recruited.

Figure 12 compares the satisfaction rates by each workplace attribute.

Figure 12: Comparison of HE and FET satisfaction rates for workplace attributes
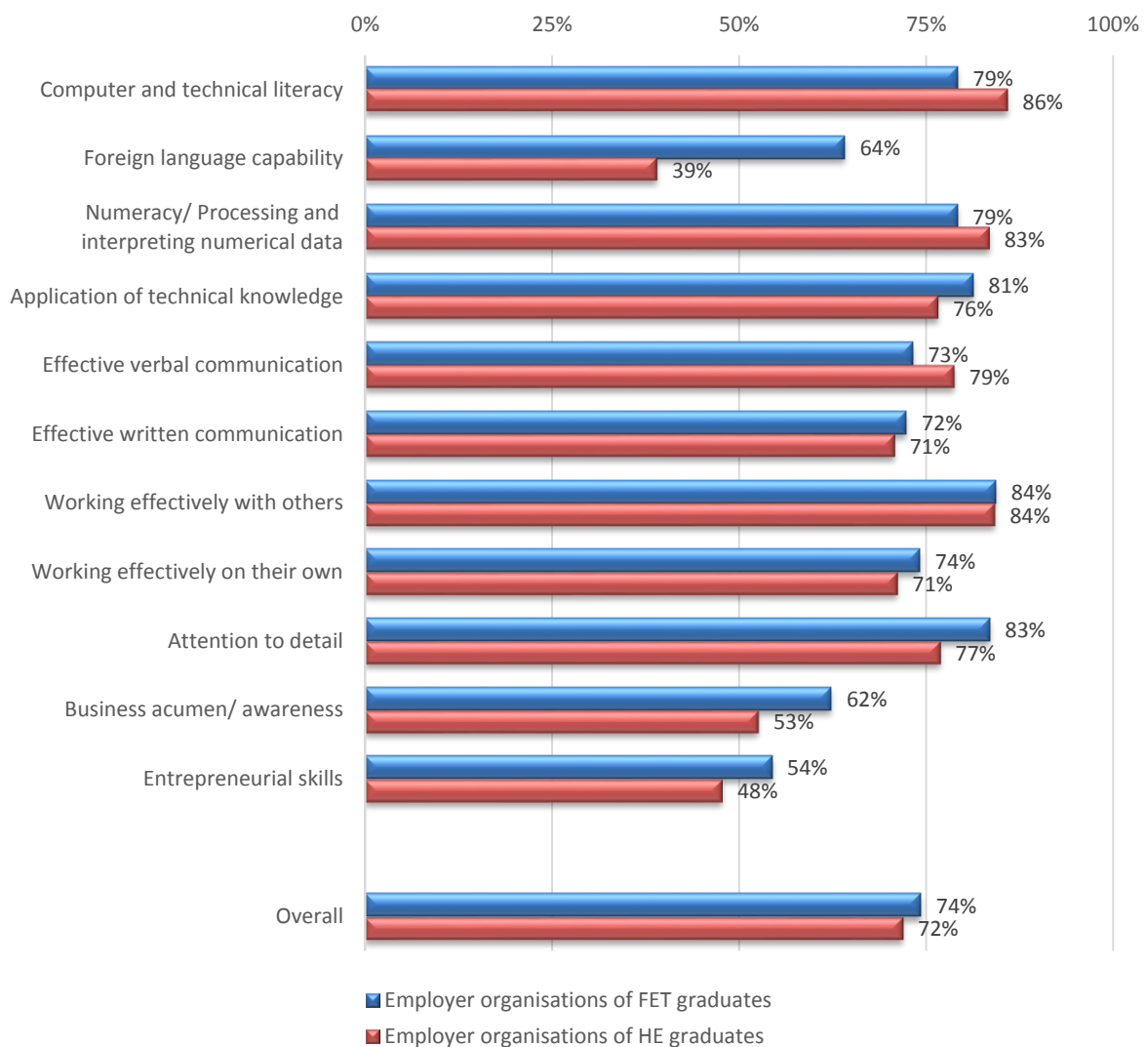
From Figure 12, satisfaction rates between employer organisations of HE graduates and employer organisations of FET graduates were similar for workplace attributes with the

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[14] Please note from Figure 3 that the majority of employer organisations recruiting FET graduates also recruited HE graduates, i.e. they are not mutually exclusive.

exception of 'foreign language capability' where there was a lower rate of satisfaction expressed by employer organisations of HE graduates.

All employers of Further Education and Training graduates were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to a series of **personal attributes**. The level of satisfaction was measured along a five-point scale from none-satisfactory to all satisfactory (exact scale shown on Question 19 in Appendix A). Satisfaction was determined by employers being satisfied with at least 75% of graduate(s) recruited.

Figure 13 compares the satisfaction rates by each personal attribute.

Figure 13: Comparison of HE and FET satisfaction rates for personal attributes
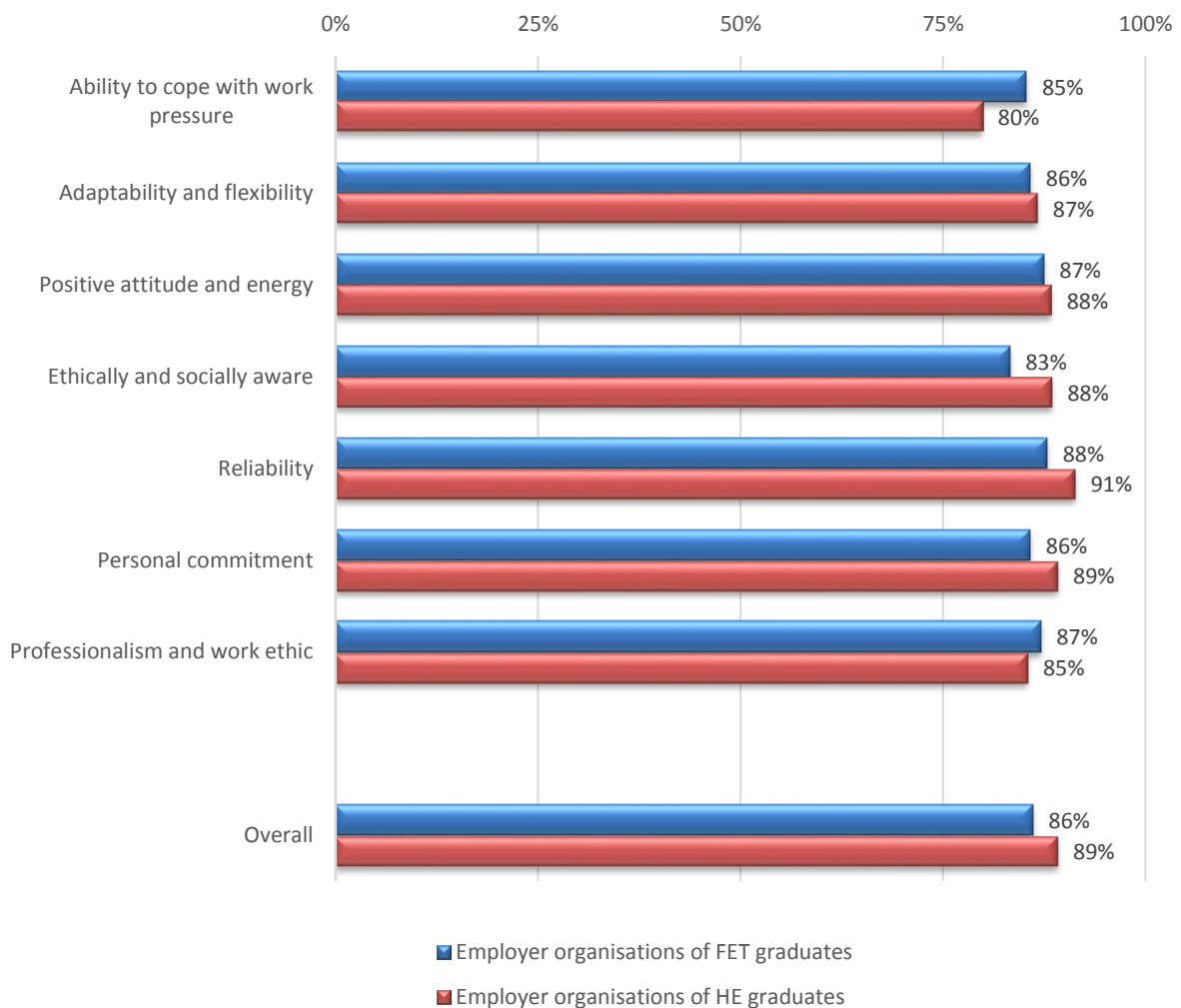
From Figure 13, satisfaction rates between employer organisations of HE graduates and employer organisations of FET graduates were similar across personal attributes for employer organisations of HE and FET graduates.

5   SKILLS REQUIREMENT

Minimum entry standards

Approximately two-thirds (68%) of all employer organisations, i.e. employers of graduates from HE and/or FET, indicated that they have minimum entry standards for graduate applications and Figure 14 shows this for each classification.

Figure 14: Proportion of employer organisations with minimum entry standards
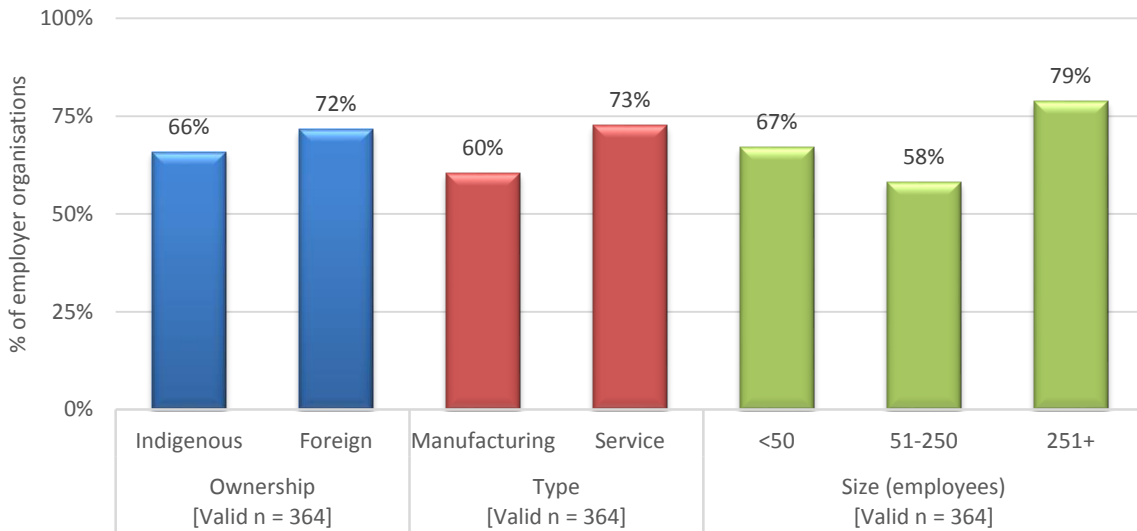
From Figure 14, approximately 79% of large employer organisations have a minimum entry standard for graduate applications and this was 58% for medium-sized employer organisations. Figure 15 illustrates what minimum entry standards are being applied.

Figure 15: Minimum entry standards required
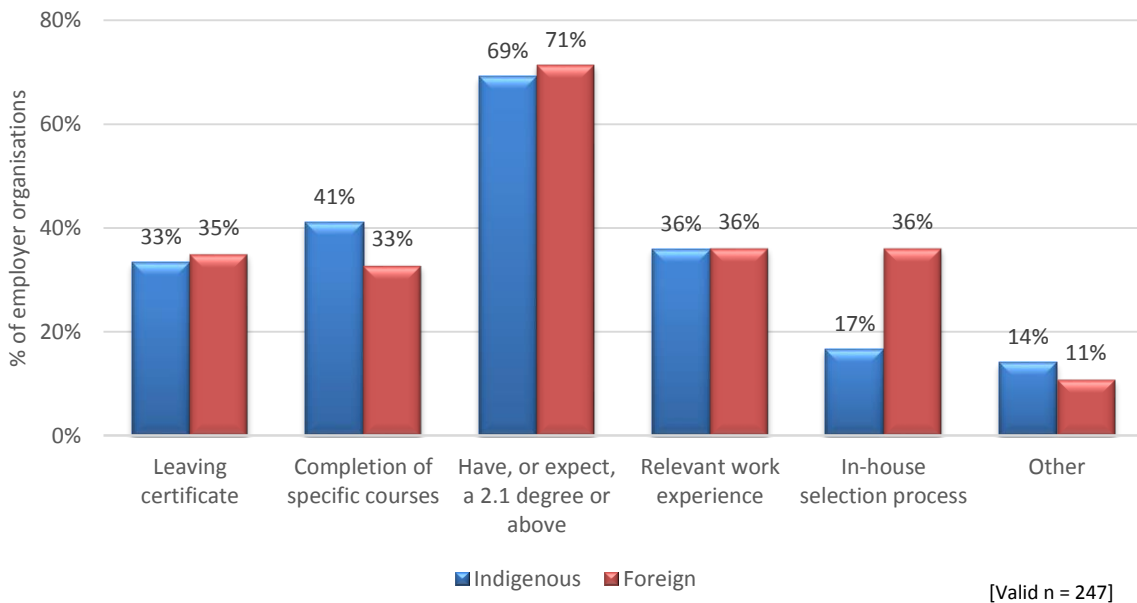
From Figure 15, the most common minimum standard among all employer organisations is to have, or expect, at least a 2.1 degree (approximately 70% of all employer organisations). A higher proportion of foreign employer organisations (36%) indicated that graduate applicants must first pass a psychometric or other in-house selection process (e.g. assessment centre) than their indigenous counterparts.

All employer organisations were asked to specify any other skills (beyond the minimum entry requirements covered in Figure 20) that their organisation currently requires and the Irish higher education system is currently not providing and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *A greater level of soft skills transferrable into the working environment, e.g. verbal and written communication, teamwork, grammar*
- *More practical workplace experience through placements or work experience programmes*
- *More technical skills such as, problem solving, analytical skills, data analysis*
- *An entrepreneurial spirit*
- *Specific languages with a high level of proficiency in sufficient quantities*
- *General presentation skills.*

Skills not currently available

All employer organisations were asked whether there were skills not currently available that are required now (or in the next three to five years) in the Republic of Ireland. Figure 16 shows the outcome by each of the main classifications.

Figure 16: Are there skills not currently available that are required now (or in the next three to five years)?
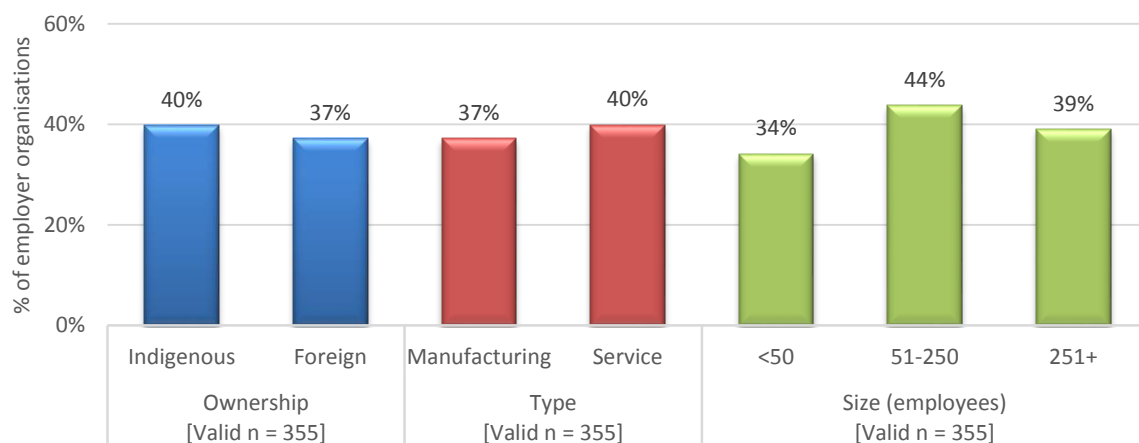
From Figure 16, approximately four-in-ten of all employers indicated that there were skills not currently available that were required now or in the next three to five years in the

Republic of Ireland. This proportion was highest among the mid-sized employer organisations (44%).

All employer organisations were asked to list the specific skills they require and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *Various classifications of engineers and other technical specialists*
- *Specific languages*
- *Business analytics, data analysts*
- *Software, IT, programming.*

Future supply of graduates

All employers were asked how likely is that there will be an adequate supply of graduates with the necessary skills needed to meet their organisations needs in the next three to five years. Figure 17 shows the outcome at each classification where the percentage of organisations who replied that it would be *likely* or *very likely* that there would be an adequate supply of graduates.

Figure 17: Likelihood that there will be an adequate supply of graduates in the next three to five years
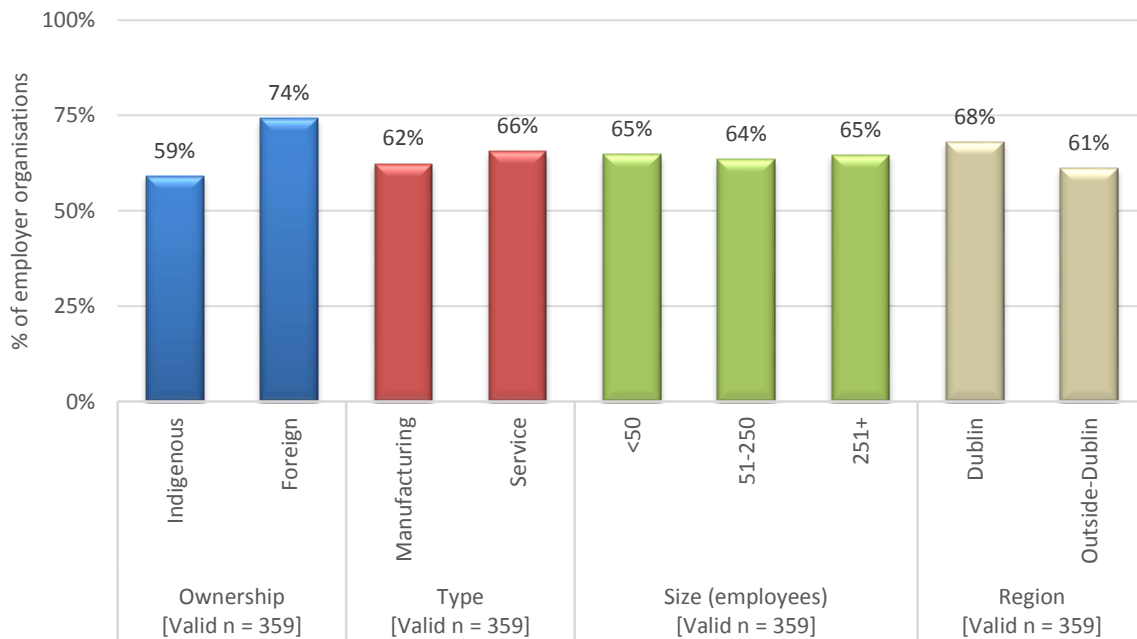
From Figure 17, a higher proportion of foreign employer organisations (74%) feel that there will be an adequate supply of graduates in the next three-to-five years than their indigenous counterparts (59%). Organisations based in Dublin (68%) were marginally more optimistic about there being an adequate supply of graduates than organisations based outside of Dublin.

In Figure 16 (on previous page), approximately four-in-ten of all employers indicated that there were skills not currently available that were required now or in the next three to five years in the Republic of Ireland. Only 47% of these employers considered it likely that there will be an adequate supply of graduates in the next three to five years.

All employer organisations were asked why an adequate supply of graduates will be less than likely in the next three-to-five years and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *General shortage of IT skills and relatively small cohort to choose from, therefore competition for same graduates*
- *General supply of graduates is very susceptible to changes in global economy*
- *Strong demand from multinational sector for the same range of skills, difficulty for small to medium enterprises to complete*
- *Upswing in global economy has resulted in a high demand for engineering discipline*
- *Not enough being done to encourage students to study what is required in the marketplace, e.g. chefs*
- *Graduates have emigrated and it is unlikely that they will return in time*
- *Misalignment of course content to requirements of industry.*

Employer organisations were also asked what could educational institutions do to assist them to address the likely shortfall in graduate supply in the next three to five years and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *Promote more students to study STEM subjects from secondary school as this is where the jobs are, also specific others such as chefs*
- *Increase intake and class sizes of specific courses*
- *More work placements to allow student gain some practical experience*
- *Better understanding of key requirements of industry and align course content*
- *Add a language to many degree courses*
- *Design specific courses to satisfy demand, e.g. injection moulding, games design.*

6   COLLABORATION BETWEEN ENTERPRISE AND EDUCATION

All employer organisations were asked whether they were involved in collaboration with any further or higher education institution in the Republic of Ireland. Collaboration between industry and education can provide mutual benefits and Figure 18 shows the proportions of all employer organisations who indicated they were involved with a higher education institution and/or a further education and training provider.

Figure 18: Collaboration with HEIs and/or FETs
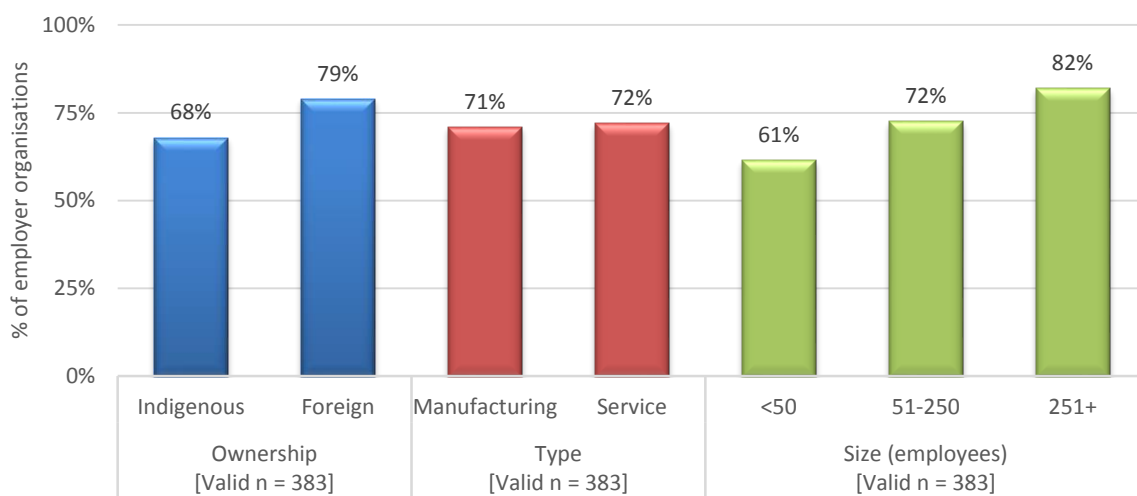
From Figure 18, there was a higher level of collaboration among foreign employers (79%) than indigenous employers (68%). The size of the organisation also appeared to influence this proportion in that larger organisations had a higher collaboration rate (82% for large employer organisations).

The collaboration rate for organisations involved in recruiting from FET is higher than that from HE, i.e. 65% for HE and 88% for FET.[15]

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[15] Note that the majority of employer organisations recruiting from FET also recruit from HE.

Figure 19 provides a listing of the most prominent types of collaboration with HEIs

Figure 19: Collaborations with HEIs by employer organisations recruiting HE graduates
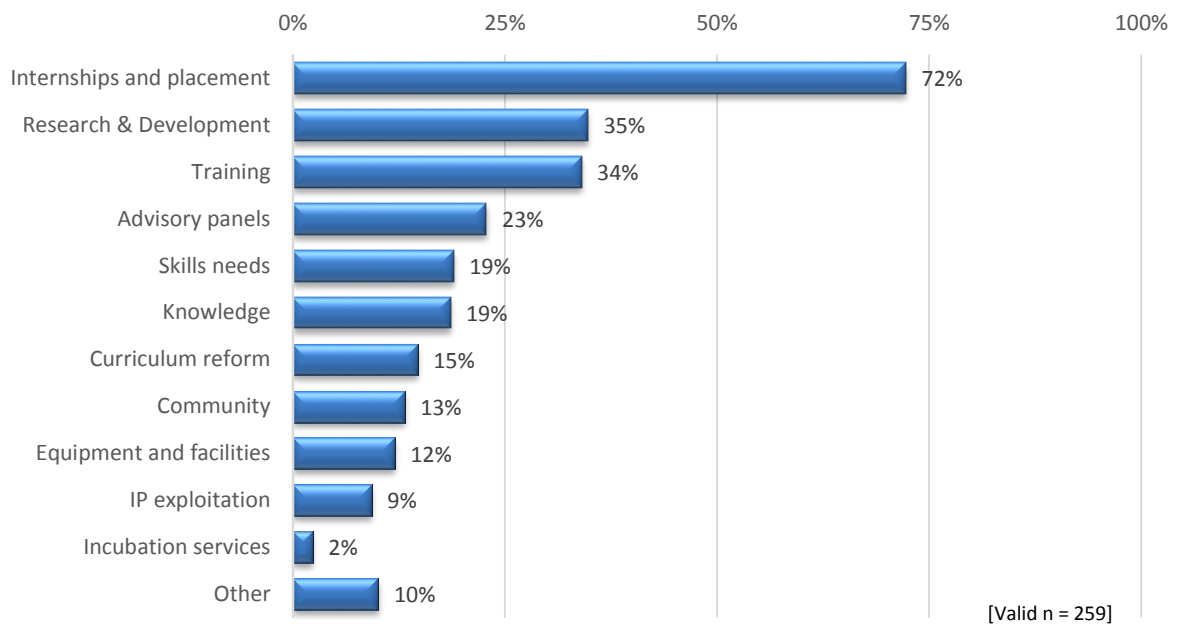
From Figure 19, 'Internships and placement' were the most popular forms of collaboration between employers and higher education institutions. This is followed by 'Research & Development' and 'Training' collaborations. Figure 20 provides a listing of the most prominent collaborations by employer organisations involved in recruiting from FET.

Figure 20: Collaborations with HEIs by employer organisations of FET graduates
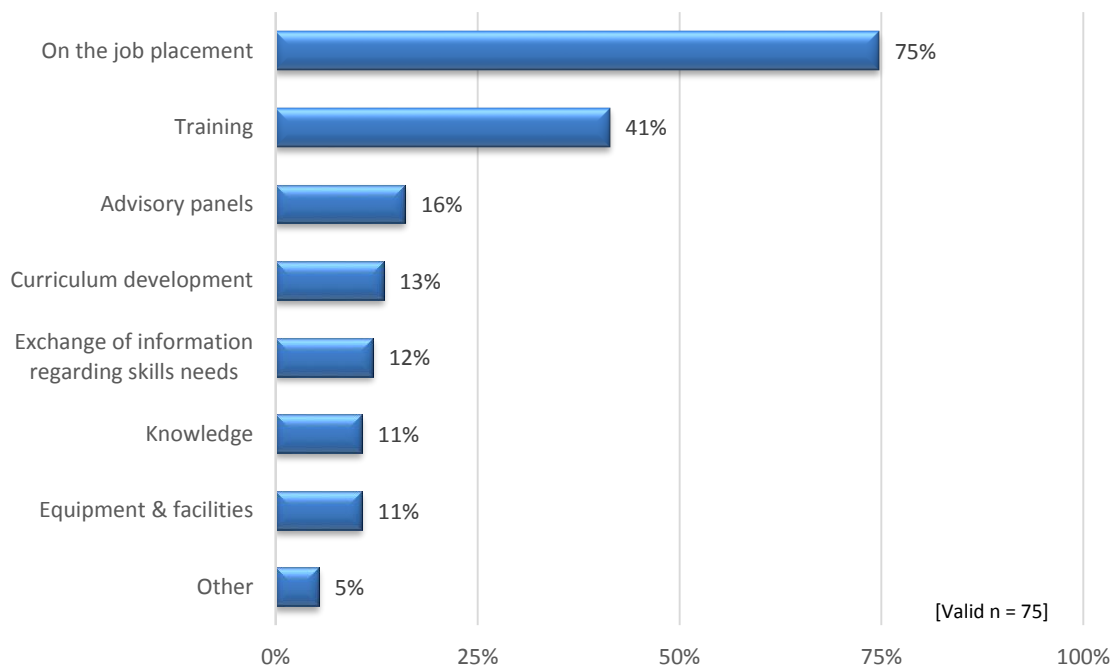
From Figure 20, "On the job placement" is the most popular form of collaboration between employers and further education and training providers (75% of all employers involved in collaborations with FET providers). This is followed by "Training" (41%).

In describing the current level of collaboration with Irish higher education institutions Figure 21 illustrates what proportion indicated that it was *good* or *very good*.

Figure 21: Comparison of collaboration rating by HE & FET employer organisations
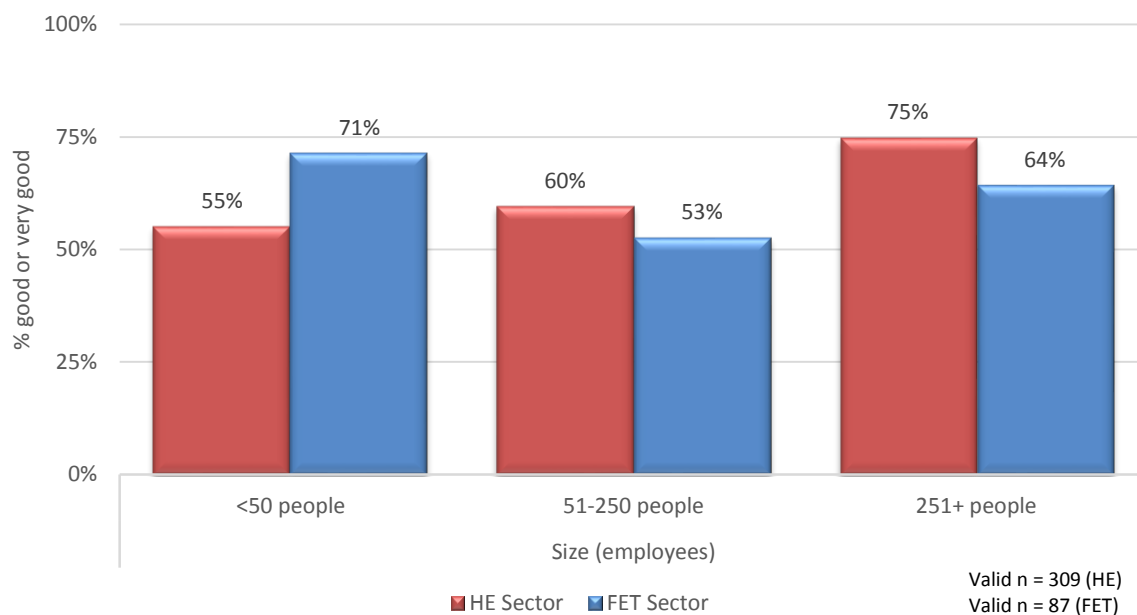
From Figure 21, large employer organisations recruiting from HE (75%) and small employer organisations recruiting from FET (71%) provided the most positive rating about the collaboration.

All employer organisations were asked what could educational institutions do better to improve collaboration with enterprises and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *Reach out, liaise, collaborate, engage, interact, be more proactive, less bureaucratic and inflexible*
- *Find out what skills are required and map that to course content*
- *Implement a more practical component to courses by proactively seeking (long-term) placements, internships for their students*
- *Collaborate and update companies on progress being made and/or changes to curriculum*
- *Arrange industry/open days and career fairs bringing both sides together and organise interesting speakers*
- *Organise secondment of staff to industry, up-skill lecturers with live working experiences and recognise the value of applied research*
- *Market and promote themselves better.*

Conversely all employer organisations were also asked what could enterprises do better to improve collaboration with educational institutions and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *General acceptance that they could do more and it's in their best mutual interest to engage, and at a high level*
- *Up-skill career guidance about our industry so they can impart this to prospective candidates*
- *Invest more time building the business and personal relationships between industry and education*
- *Help devise more practical programmes and links for students to gain experience and become potential future employees, e.g. placements, scholarships, internships, etc.*
- *Provide constructive feedback to HEIs on graduates recruited from that institution*
- *Clarify the lines of communication with education to allow free-flow of information and greater collaboration, i.e. nominate individuals and schedule interaction*
- *Utilise the various governmental initiatives to attract skilled graduates, e.g. Springboard, JobBridge.*

Enterprise – education relationships

All organisations were asked whether they had an established relationship with a higher education institution **as a source of graduates** and Figure 22 illustrates the results by the main classifications.

Figure 22: Established relationship with a higher education institution as a source of graduates
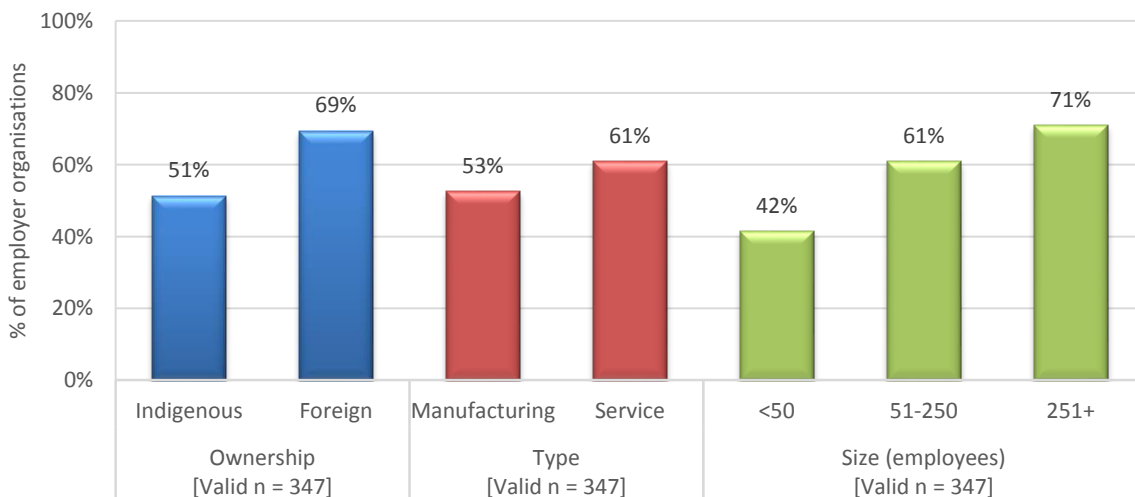
From Figure 22, a higher proportion of foreign organisations (69%) have established a relationship with a HEI as a source of graduates than their indigenous counterparts (51%). The level of engagement appears to be related to the size of organisation as the proportion increases from 42% of organisations with less than 50 employees to 71% for organisations with greater than 250 employees.

All employer organisations were asked for reasons why they chose a particular HEI for a collaboration and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *Near proximity to work, convenient for graduates, support local educational institutions*
- *Relationships already established with former students and current academic staff through alumni and graduate recruitment office*
- *Good experience from successfully recruiting previous graduates with the necessary skills to satisfy requirements*
- *Good reputation of institution*
- *Specific offerings such as internships, placements, work experience, sponsorship programmes and participation on advisory boards.*

7   LANGUAGES AND GRADUATE RECRUITMENT OUTSIDE OF IRELAND

The survey asked all employer organisations, i.e. both HE and FET employers, whether they had a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency skills in their organisation. Figure 23 provides the outcome.

Figure 23: Specific requirement for foreign language proficiency skills in their organisation
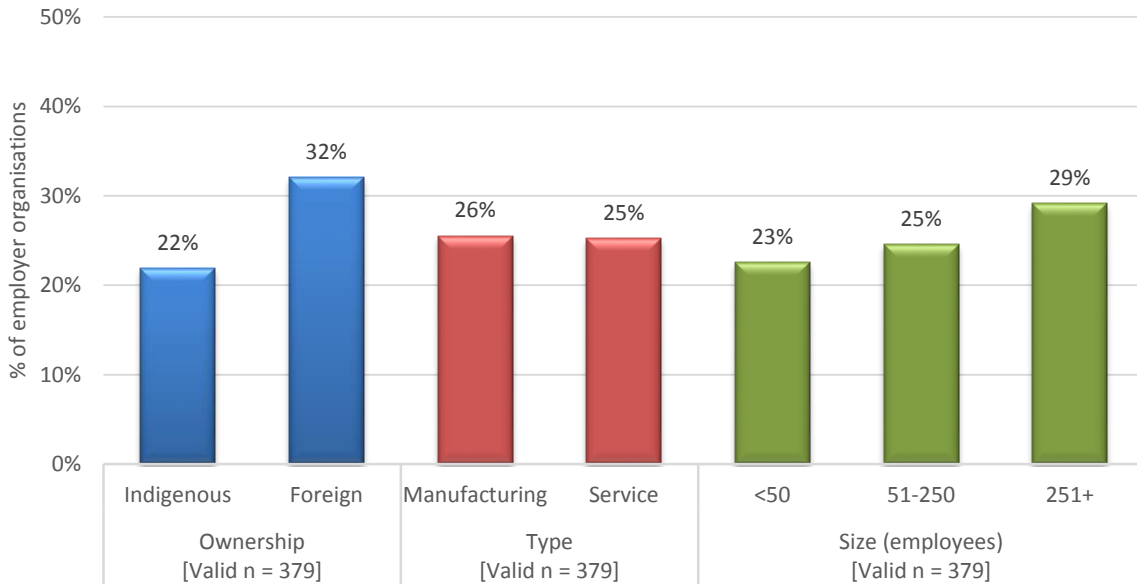
From Figure 23, approximately a quarter (25%) of all employers indicated that that they had a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency skills in their organisation. This proportion was highest for foreign employer organisations (32%) and lowest for indigenous employer organisations (22%). The proportion did not differ significantly by type of employer organisation (manufacturing and service).

Of those with specific language requirements (approximately a quarter of all employer organisations), Figure 24 shows which languages are most popular by ownership.

Figure 24: Specific languages required by employers

[Valid n = 54 indigenous, Valid n = 41 foreign]
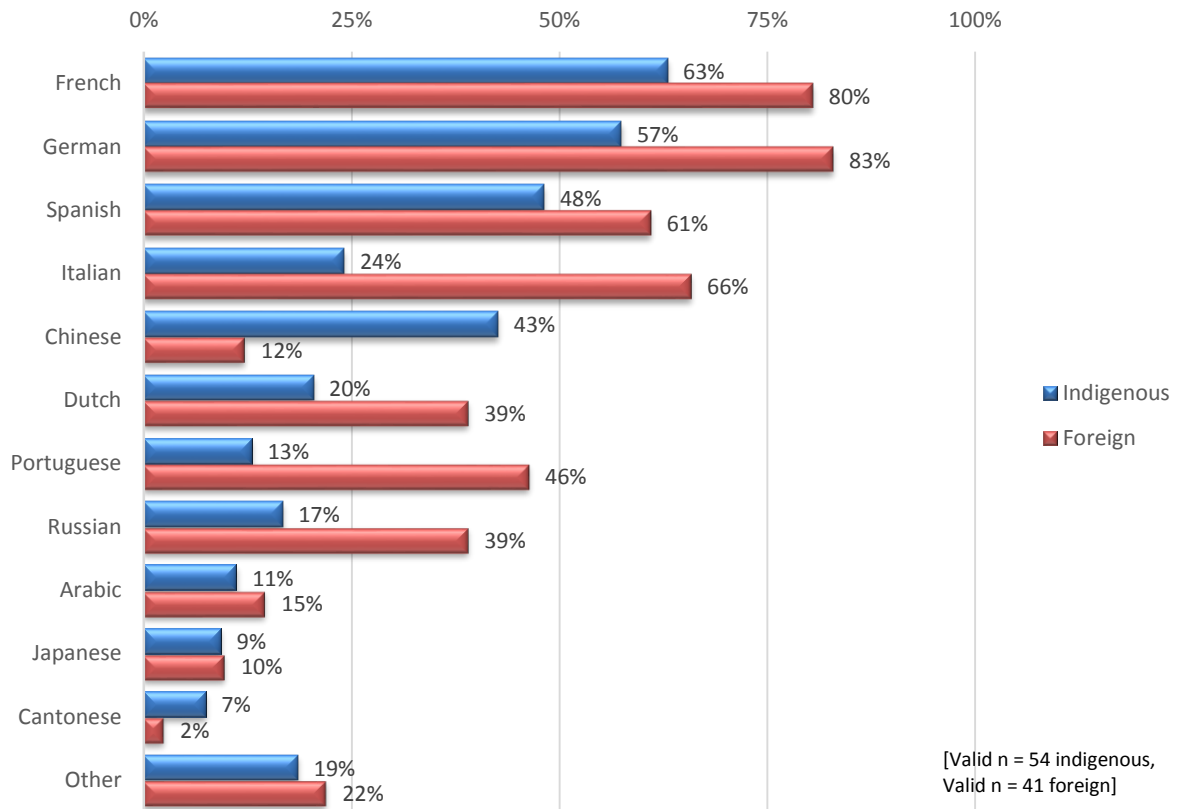
Exports to central and mainland Europe remain a significant proportion of total exports from the Republic of Ireland (Approximately 50% of exports from foreign employer organisations are to Europe (excluding the UK), the corresponding figure for the indigenous sector is approximately 30% (DJEI). From Figure 24, the core European languages of French and German were the most popular languages selected by employer organisations with a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency.

Several differences were noted by ownership where Indigenous employer organisations had a greater requirement for Chinese (43%) than their foreign counterparts (12%) whereas foreign employer organisations had a greater requirement for Italian (66%) and Portuguese (46%) than their indigenous counterparts (24% and 13% respectively[16]). The range of languages selected appeared to increase for foreign (and large) employer organisations. This is illustrated in Figure 24 where the foreign proportions are larger than indigenous proportions in all cases with the exception of Chinese.

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[16] Note small sample sizes for some languages

Language proficiency

Language proficiency was measured using the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale[17]. Employer organisations were asked to indicate the minimum proficiency required for each of the languages specified. The highest levels of proficiency (as listed in footnote) are "Native or bilingual" or "Full professional" and the proportion of employer organisations indicating that they required a specific language at this advanced level are provided in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Minimum required proficiency (at least full professional level)
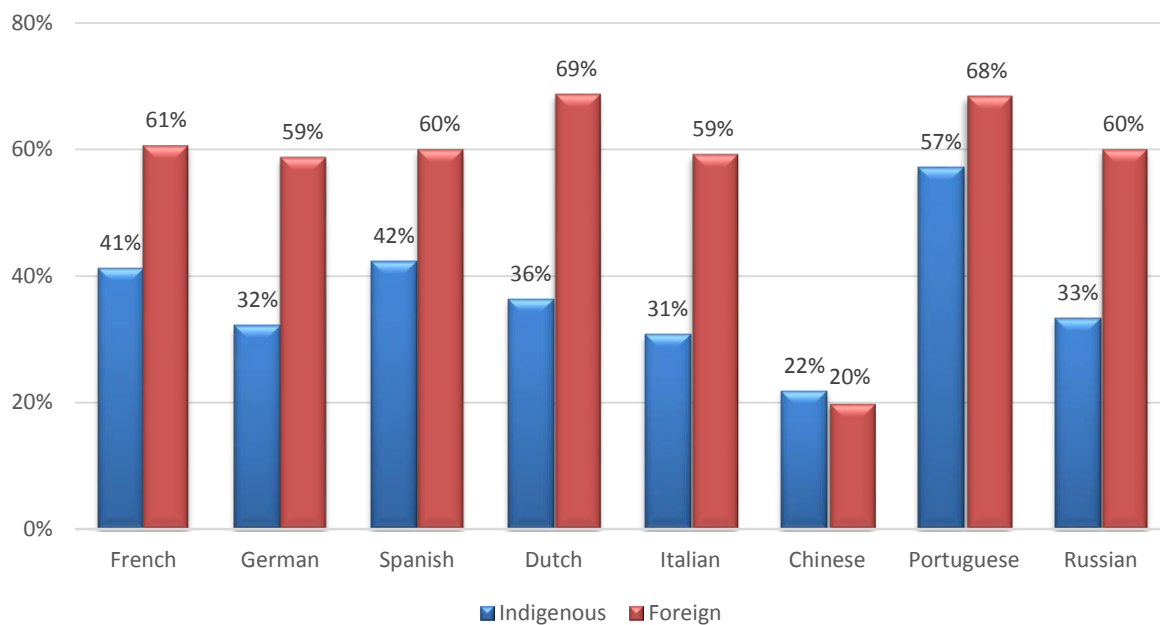
From Figure 25, a higher level of language proficiency is required by foreign employer organisations where at least 60% of all employer organisations indicated that they require at least full professional proficiency in their graduate recruits. Although a relatively high

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[17] The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) is an organisation established for the coordination and sharing of information about language-related activities. It serves as a way to keep abreast of the progress and implementation of techniques and technology for language learning, language use, language testing and other language-related activities.

The **Interagency Language Roundtable** scale for measuring language proficiency is**:**

1 ILR Level 0 – No proficiency
2 ILR Level 1 – Elementary proficiency
3 ILR Level 2 – Limited working proficiency
4 ILR Level 3 – Professional working proficiency
5 ILR Level 4 – Full professional proficiency
6 ILR Level 5 – Native or bilingual proficiency

Although there are a number of alternative scales available to measure language proficiency, it is expected that similar conclusions would have been reached when comparing the proportions within the highest two levels.

proportion of indigenous employer organisations required Chinese language skills in their organisation, a high degree of proficiency was not necessarily required.

Graduate recruitment from outside of Ireland

All employers were asked whether they had recruited at least one graduate from an academic institution outside of the Republic of Ireland. Figure 4 showed that 1,540 graduates from HE and FET met this description, i.e. 1,423 graduates from HE and 117 graduates from FET (approximately 16% of the total number of graduates recruited). Figure 26 illustrates the relative proportions of employer organisations recruiting from outside of Ireland.

Figure 26: Graduate Recruitment from outside of Ireland
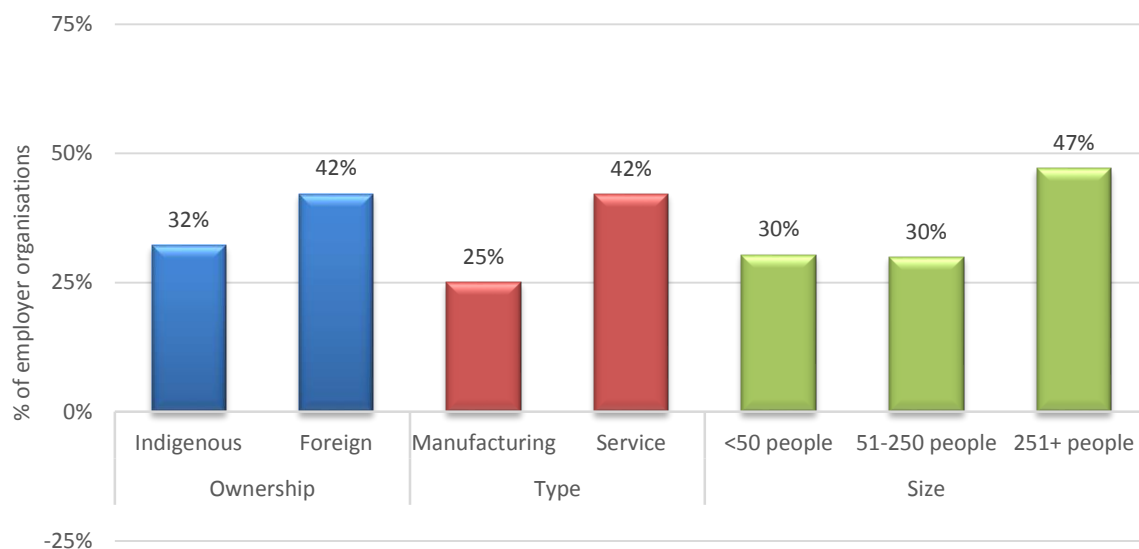
From Figure 26, foreign organisations were more likely to recruit from an external source (42%) than indigenous organisations (32%). This proportion was highest for large organisations (47%) and service-type organisations (42%). Organisations based in Dublin were also relatively high (46%) as were employer organisations of graduates from FET (42%).

In terms of graduate numbers, the majority (80%) of all HE graduates recruited from institutions outside of Ireland were recruited from within the European Economic Area (EEA) with the remainder coming from outside the EEA. The disciplines from which the majority of graduates were sourced were 'Engineering' and 'Computing' for foreign organisations and 'Health & Welfare' and 'Engineering' for indigenous organisations.

All employer organisations were asked to explain why they recruited graduates from institutions outside of the Republic of Ireland and a summary of the most frequently occurring open-ended responses is provided below:

- *The best candidate got the position, regardless of where they were educated*

- *Conscious decision by company to encourage diversity and multi-cultural aspect within the workforce*
- *Specific languages with a high degree of proficiency were not generally available in Ireland*
- *Specialist skills are not generally available locally and it is necessary to look further afield provide a greater selection and graduates, e.g. mathematics, coding, analytics*
- *Local graduates had a relatively low level of practical workplace experience*
- *The need for local knowledge in export market the firm is working in at this time*

Glossary

ISC	Insight Statistical Consulting
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HE	Higher Education
FET	Further Education and Training
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IoT	Institute of Technology
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

National Employer Survey

Employers' Views of Irish Further and Higher Education Outcomes

The National Employer Survey on Graduates in Ireland 2014 is being run on a partnership basis between the Higher Education Authority (HEA); SOLAS - the Further Education & Training Authority and Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI), with the online survey being conducted on our behalf by Insight Statistical Consulting.

The survey will provide a snapshot of employer opinion with the results helping to inform policy direction in further and higher education. It offers you as an employer the opportunity to have your say on the quality and employability of Irish graduates as well as to shape the future as Ireland strives towards economic recovery. All respondents will receive a summary of the results in advance of a detailed report which will be published in the coming months.

Thank you for taking the time to participate and sharing your valuable insight. The length of the time required to complete the survey varies by organisation but on average, it should take about 15 minutes. It is possible to leave the survey and resume at a later stage (if you use the same computer) but you should aim to complete the survey in one session if possible.

All information received will be treated in the strictest of confidence. If you have any queries in relation to the survey please contact David Harmon at Insight Statistical Consulting (dharmon@insightsc.ie). Queries about the research project should be directed to Tim Conlon at the Higher Education Authority (tconlon@hea.ie) or Jasmina Behan at SOLAS (jasmina.behan@solas.ie).

Q1a - Did you recruit any staff to your workforce during the past 24 months?

[Please include all classifications of staff]

○ Yes
○ No

Q1b - Why did you not recruit any graduates in the last two years?

[Please tick all that apply]

❑ No vacancies at graduate level
❑ No vacancies within the organisation
❑ Poor quality of graduate skills
❑ Lack of availability of suitable graduates
❑ Salary expectations of graduates
❑ Other, please specify: _____

Q1c How many staff have you recruited to your workforce over the last 24 months?

[Please include all types of recruitment and use best estimates if exact number is not known]

	Your Organisation
TOTAL RECRUITMENT	

GRADUATE DEFINITION

For the purposes of this survey, a graduate is someone who has been recruited to the organisation within the last 24 months and who has also completed their qualification within the last 24 months.

Please note that the term graduate includes persons qualifying from higher education institutions (e.g. Universities and Institutes of Technology) and also persons qualifying from further education and training where a wide range of programmes in terms of levels and fields of study to a diverse group of learners are provided (e.g. National Craft Certificates for qualified apprentices (e.g.

plumber, electrician etc.), FETAC qualifications (e.g. childcare, hairdressing etc.), specific industry related (vendor) qualifications (e.g. Microsoft)).

Q2a - Have you recruited any graduates to your workforce over the last 24 months?

[Please note graduate definition below]

○ Yes
○ No

Q2b - Why did you not recruit any graduates in the last two years?

[Please tick all that apply]

❑ No vacancies at graduate level
❑ No vacancies within the organisation
❑ Poor quality of graduate skills
❑ Lack of availability of suitable graduates
❑ Salary expectations of graduates
❑ Other, please specify: _____

Q3a & Q3b - Approximately how many graduates have you recruited from each of the following types of education institutions within the Republic of Ireland and outside of the Republic of Ireland:

[Please use best estimates if exact numbers are not known]

Institution-type	Institutions from within the Republic of Ireland	Institutions from outside the Republic of Ireland
HIGHER EDUCATION [e.g. higher diploma, degree, masters or doctorate]		
FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING [e.g. National Craft Certificates for qualified apprentices (e.g. plumber, electrician etc.), FETAC qualifications (e.g. childcare, hairdressing etc.), specific industry related (vendor) qualifications (e.g. Microsoft)]		

HIGHER EDUCATION

Q3c - Please indicate how many higher education graduate(s) are from each of the following types of higher education institutions in Republic of Ireland:

	Universities	Institutes of Technology	Other (or Unknown Classifications)
Number of Graduates			

Q4a - From which disciplines did you recruit the higher education graduates from the Republic of Ireland?

[Please tick all that apply]

- ❑ Business & Law - (incl. Marketing, Sales, Management, Accounting, Finance, Property Sales)
- ❑ Engineering - (excl. Civil and/or Software Engineering)
- ❑ Science & Mathematics - (incl. Food Science, Environmental Science)
- ❑ Computing - (incl. Software Engineering)
- ❑ Humanities & Arts - (incl. Teacher Education, Languages, History, Philosophy)
- ❑ Social Sciences - (incl. Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Journalism)
- ❑ Construction - (incl. Civil Engineering)
- ❑ Agriculture & Veterinary
- ❑ Health & Welfare - (incl. nursing, medical, social work)
- ❑ Services - (incl. Hospitality, Tourism, Travel, Environmental Protection, Transport, Security)

Q4b - Did any of the higher education recruitment require formal qualifications other than Leaving Certificate?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Business & Law	○	○	○
Engineering	○	○	○
Science & Mathematics	○	○	○
Computing	○	○	○
Humanities & Arts	○	○	○
Social Sciences	○	○	○
Construction	○	○	○
Agriculture & Veterinary	○	○	○
Health & Welfare	○	○	○
Services	○	○	○

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS (NFQ)

Q5a - Have you ever heard of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Unsure

Q5b - Do you refer to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at any point during your recruitment process?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Don't know

Q6 - Please indicate all levels in which graduates were recruited from higher education:

[Please tick all levels that apply and refer to this publication if any clarifications are required]

	Higher Certificate & Ordinary Bachelor Degree [NFQ Level 6 & 7]	Honours Degree [NFQ Level 8]	Higher Diploma [NFQ Level 8]	Masters Degree Post-Graduate Diploma [NFQ Level 9]	Doctoral Degree [NFQ Level 10]	Don't know
Business & Law	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Engineering	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Science & Mathematics	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Computing	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Humanities & Arts	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Social Sciences	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Construction	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Agriculture & Veterinary	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Health & Welfare	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Services	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Q7 - If PhD level graduates were recruited [NFQ Level 10], do you agree or disagree that the position(s) required this level of education?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
Business & Law	○	○	○	○	○	○
Engineering	○	○	○	○	○	○
Science & Mathematics	○	○	○	○	○	○
Computing	○	○	○	○	○	○
Humanities & Arts	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social Sciences	○	○	○	○	○	○
Construction	○	○	○	○	○	○
Agriculture & Veterinary	○	○	○	○	○	○
Health & Welfare	○	○	○	○	○	○
Services	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q8 - Please rate your level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to the following workplace attributes:

[In your assessment please rate the graduates collectively within disciplines, i.e. as a group]

	Each Discipline Selected					
	All satisfactory	75% satisfactory	50% satisfactory	25% satisfactory	None satisfactory	Don't know/Not Applicable
Computer and technical literacy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Foreign language capability	○	○	○	○	○	○
Numeracy/ Processing and interpreting numerical data	○	○	○	○	○	○
Application of technical knowledge	○	○	○	○	○	○
Effective verbal communication	○	○	○	○	○	○
Effective written communication	○	○	○	○	○	○
Working effectively with others	○	○	○	○	○	○
Working effectively on their own	○	○	○	○	○	○
Attention to detail	○	○	○	○	○	○
Business acumen/ awareness	○	○	○	○	○	○
Entrepreneurial skills	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q9 - Please rate your level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to the following personal attributes:

[In your assessment please rate the graduates collectively within disciplines, i.e. as a group]

	Each Discipline Selected					
	All satisfactory	75% satisfactory	50% satisfactory	25% satisfactory	None satisfactory	Don't know/Not Applicable
Ability to cope with work pressure	○	○	○	○	○	○
Adaptability and flexibility	○	○	○	○	○	○
Positive attitude and energy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ethically and socially aware	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reliability	○	○	○	○	○	○
Personal commitment	○	○	○	○	○	○
Professionalism and work ethic	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q10 - Do you have an established relationship with a higher education institution as a source of graduates for each of the disciplines below?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Business & Law	○	○	○
Engineering	○	○	○
Science & Mathematics	○	○	○
Computing	○	○	○
Humanities & Arts	○	○	○
Social Sciences	○	○	○
Construction	○	○	○
Agriculture & Veterinary	○	○	○
Health & Welfare	○	○	○
Services	○	○	○

Q11 - Please indicate the higher education institution where there is an established relationship as a source of graduates for each discipline <u>and the reason(s) why this institution was selected</u>.

Yes	Each Discipline Selected
Dublin City University	◯
University College Cork	◯
University College Dublin	◯
National University of Ireland, Galway	◯
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	◯
University of Limerick	◯
Trinity College	◯
Dublin Institute of Technology	◯
Athlone Institute of Technology	◯
Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown	◯
Institute of Technology, Carlow	◯
Cork Institute of Technology	◯
Dún Laoghaire IADT	◯
Dundalk Institute of Technology	◯
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	◯
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	◯
Limerick Institute of Technology	◯
Institute of Technology, Sligo	◯
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	◯
Institute of Technology, Tralee	◯
Waterford Institute of Technology	◯
St Angela's College of Education, Sligo	◯
Church of Ireland College of Education	◯
Marino Institute of Education	◯
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	◯
Mater Dei Institute of Education	◯
St Patrick's College of Education	◯
Other	◯

Graduate Recruitment from Institutions Outside of Ireland

Q12 - Please indicate which disciplines graduates were recruited from across European Economic Area (EEA) and outside of the EEA, if known.

	EEA	Outside EEA	Unknown territory	Reason(s)
Business & Law				
Engineering				
Social Sciences				
Science & Mathematics				
Computing				
Humanities & Arts				
Construction				
Agriculture & Veterinary				
Health & Welfare				
Services				

COLLABORATIONS

Q13 - Please indicate whether your organisation is involved in any of the following collaborations with higher education institutions;

[Please tick all that apply, there is more information about each collaboration available by pointing towards the blue text]

- ❑ Curriculum reform
- ❑ Skills needs
- ❑ Internships and placement
- ❑ Training
- ❑ Advisory panels
- ❑ Research & Development
- ❑ IP exploitation
- ❑ Equipment and facilities
- ❑ Knowledge
- ❑ Incubation services
- ❑ Community
- ❑ Other, please specify: _____

Q14a - How would you describe the current level of collaboration with Irish higher education institutions by your organisation:

○ Very good
○ Good
○ Neither good nor bad
○ Poor
○ Very poor
○ Don't know/Not applicable

Q14b - What could educational institutions do (better) to improve collaboration with enterprise in Republic of Ireland?

Q14c - What could enterprise do (better) to improve collaboration with education institutions in Republic of Ireland?

FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

This section asks a series of questions about the graduate(s) recruited from further education and training organisations in the Republic of Ireland.   These are persons qualifying from further education and training where a wide range of programmes in terms of levels and fields of study to a diverse group of learners are provided (e.g. National Craft Certificates for qualified apprentices (e.g. plumber, electrician etc.), FETAC qualifications (e.g. childcare, hairdressing etc.), specific industry related (vendor) qualifications (e.g. Microsoft)).

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRADUATES

Q15 - From which skill categories did you recruit graduates from Further Education and Training institutions in the Republic of Ireland?

[Please tick all that apply]

- ❑ Construction
- ❑ Hairdressing/Beauty and Complimentary Therapies
- ❑ IT
- ❑ Health /Family /Care/Other Personal Services
- ❑ Business Admin and Management
- ❑ Financial Services
- ❑ Manufacturing/Engineering
- ❑ Transport Distribution/logistics
- ❑ Sales and Marketing
- ❑ Food and Beverage/Hospitality
- ❑ Tourism and Sport
- ❑ Science and Technology, Animal Science
- ❑ Natural resources
- ❑ Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture
- ❑ Art, Craft and Media

Q16 - Did any of the further education and training recruitment require formal qualifications other than Leaving Certificate?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Construction	○	○	○
Hairdressing/Beauty and Complimentary Therapies	○	○	○
IT	○	○	○
Health /Family /Care/Other Personal Services	○	○	○
Business Admin. and Management	○	○	○
Financial Services	○	○	○
Manufacturing/Engineering	○	○	○
Transport Distribution/logistics	○	○	○
Sales and Marketing	○	○	○
Food and Beverage/Hospitality	○	○	○
Tourism and Sport	○	○	○
Science and Technology, Animal Science	○	○	○
Natural resources	○	○	○
Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture	○	○	○
Art, Craft and Media	○	○	○

Further education and training provides a wide range of programmes in terms of levels and fields of study to a diverse group of learners. Some of the best known FET qualifications include National Craft Certificates for qualified apprentices (e.g. plumber, electrician etc.), FETAC qualifications (e.g. childcare, hairdressing etc.), specific industry related (vendor) qualifications (e.g. Microsoft).

Q17 - Please indicate the qualifications in which graduates were recruited from further education and training:

[Please tick all that apply]

	Qualifications					
	Qualified Apprentice	FETAC award (other than apprenticeship)	City and Guilds award	Vendor/ Industry award (e.g. Microsoft)	Other	Don't know
Construction	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Hairdressing/Beauty and Complimentary Therapies	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
IT	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Health /Family /Care/Other Personal Services	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Business Admin. and Management	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Financial Services	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Manufacturing/Engineering	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Transport Distribution/logistics	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sales and Marketing	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Food and Beverage/Hospitality	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Tourism and Sport	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Science and Technology, Animal Science	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Natural resources	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Art, Craft and Media	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q18 - Please rate your level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to the following workplace attributes:

[In your assessment please rate the graduates collectively within skill category, i.e. as a group]

	Each Skill Category Selected					
	All satisfactory	75% satisfactory	50% satisfactory	25% satisfactory	None satisfactory	Don't know/Not Applicable
Computer and technical literacy	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Foreign language capability	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Numeracy/ Processing and interpreting numerical data	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Application of technical knowledge	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Effective verbal communication	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Effective written communication	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working effectively with others	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working effectively on their own	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Attention to detail	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Business acumen/ awareness	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Entrepreneurial skills	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q19 - Please rate your level of satisfaction with graduate recruits as they relate to the following personal attributes:

[In your assessment please rate the graduates collectively within skill category, i.e. as a group]

Each Skill Category Selected						
	All satisfactory	75% satisfactory	50% satisfactory	25% satisfactory	None satisfactory	Don't know/Not Applicable
Ability to cope with work pressure	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Adaptability and flexibility	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Positive attitude and energy	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ethically and socially aware	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Reliability	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Personal commitment	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Professionalism and work ethic	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

GRADUATES RECRUITED FROM INSTITUTIONS OUTSIDE OF IRELAND

Q20 - Please indicate which skill categories they were recruited from across the European Economic Area (EEA) and outside the EEA, if known.

	EEA	Outside EEA	Unknown territory	Reason(s)
Construction				
Hairdressing/Beauty and Complimentary Therapies				
IT				
Health /Family /Care/Other Personal Services				
Business Admin. and Management				
Financial Services				
Manufacturing/Engineering				
Transport Distribution/logistics				
Sales and Marketing				
Food and Beverage/Hospitality				
Tourism and Sport				
Science and Technology, Animal Science				
Natural resources				
Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture				
Art, Craft and Media				

COLLABORATIONS

Q21 - Please indicate whether your organisation is involved in any of the following collaborations with further education and training providers;

[Please tick all that apply, there is more information about each collaboration available by pointing towards the blue text]

- ❑ Curriculum development
- ❑ Exchange of information regarding skills needs
- ❑ On the job placement
- ❑ Training
- ❑ Advisory panels
- ❑ Equipment & facilities
- ❑ Knowledge
- ❑ Other, please specify: _____

Q22a - How would you describe the current level of collaboration with further education and training providers by your organisation:

- ○ Very good
- ○ Good
- ○ Neither good nor poor
- ○ Poor
- ○ Very poor
- ○ Don't know/Not applicable

Q22b - What could educational institutions do (better) to improve collaboration with enterprise in Republic of Ireland?

Q22c - What could enterprise do (better) to improve collaboration with education institutions in Republic of Ireland?

GENERAL - This is the final section about general issues facing employers of graduates such as a requirement for a foreign language proficiency. It ends with some general classification questions about your organisation for analysis purposes.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Q23a - Do you have a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency skills in your organisation?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Don't know

Q23b - What foreign languages do you require in your organisation?

[Please tick all that apply]

❑ French
❑ German
❑ Spanish
❑ Dutch
❑ Italian
❑ Chinese
❑ Japanese
❑ Portuguese
❑ Arabic
❑ Russian
❑ Cantonese
❑ Other, please specify: _____
❑ No foreign languages required

Q23c - Please indicate the minimum proficiency required for each of the languages below.

❑ Elementary
❑ Limited working
❑ Professional working
❑ Full professional
❑ Native or bilingual

MINIMUM ENTRY STANDARDS

Q24a - Does your organisation have minimum entry standards for graduate applications?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Don't know

Q24b - Please indicate the minimum entry standards for graduate applications in your organisation.

[Please tick all that apply]

❑ Leaving certificate
❑ Completion of specific courses
❑ Have, or expect, a 2.1 degree or above
❑ Relevant work experience
❑ Pass psychometric or other in-house selection processes (e.g. assessment centres)
❑ Other, please specify: _____

Q24c - Could you specify any other skills (beyond those covered above) that your organisation currently requires and the Irish higher education system is currently not providing?

Q24d - Are there skills not currently available that you require now (or in the next three to five years) in the Republic of Ireland?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Q25 - Please list the particular skills that your organisation requires (or will require in the next three to five years):

	When do (or will) you need these skills? [Please tick one/both options]		
	Now (or within 1-2 years)	From 3 to 5 years (or beyond)	Skills
First	❑	❑	
Second	❑	❑	
Third	❑	❑	

Q26a - How likely is that there will be an adequate supply of graduates with the necessary skills needed to meet your organisation's needs in the next three to five years:

❍ Very likely
❍ Likely
❍ Neither likely nor unlikely
❍ Unlikely
❍ Very unlikely
❍ Don't know/Not applicable

Q26b - Please describe why you feel the supply will be less than likely:

Q26c - What should educational institutions do to assist you to address this?

ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION

Q27 - Please indicate region (or location of head office):

○ Dublin
○ South-West
○ Mid-East
○ Border
○ South-East
○ West
○ Mid-West
○ Midlands

Q28 - Please assign your organisation into the most appropriate NACE Rev. 2 classification below:

○ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
○ Mining and quarrying
○ Manufacturing
○ Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
○ Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
○ Construction
○ Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
○ Transportation and storage
○ Accommodation and food service activities
○ Information and communication
○ Financial and insurance activities
○ Real estate activities
○ Professional, scientific and technical activities
○ Administrative and support service activities
○ Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
○ Education
○ Human health and social work activities
○ Arts, entertainment and recreation
○ Other service activities
○ Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use
○ Other, please specify: _____

Q29 - Please indicate the total size of your workforce into one of the following categories:

- ○ Fewer than 10 people
- ○ Between 10 and 50 people
- ○ Between 51 and 250 people
- ○ 251 people and above

Q30 - Please indicate the primary ownership of your organisation:

- ○ Indigenous
- ○ Foreign
- ○ Other, please specify: _____

Q31 - Finally, would you be willing to participate in a further targeted follow-up survey or discussion based on your responses?

- ○ Yes, I am willing to take part in a follow-up
- ○ Yes, but only if necessary
- ○ No thanks

Please provide your contact details below if you wish to receive a summary of the results from this survey. Alternatively send a separate email to amoser@insightsc.ie.
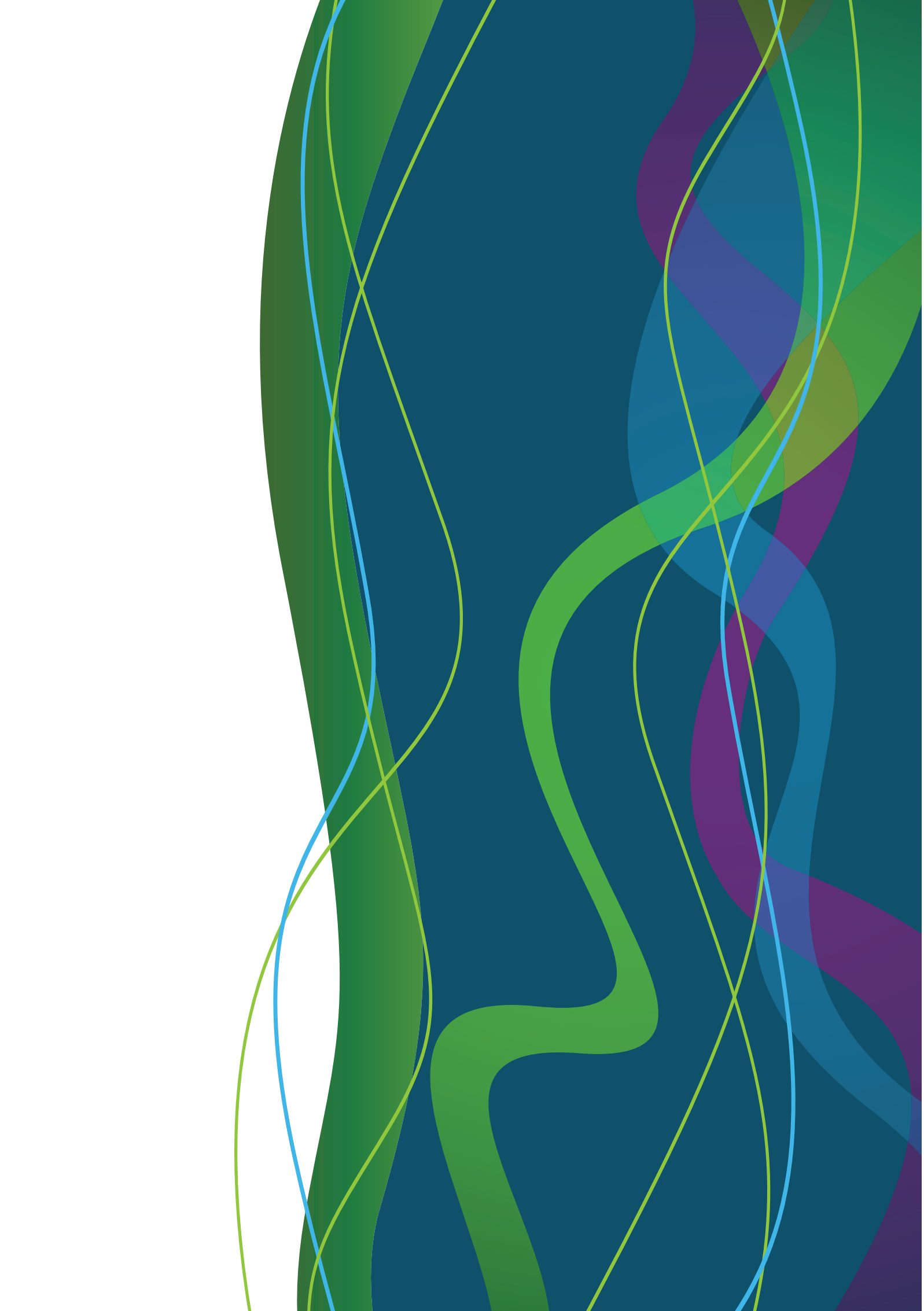
Name
Position
Organisation
Email
Telephone

If you wish to provide any final comments about this survey, or related topics, please enter below:

Thank you for your help!

When you are ready to submit your response please click the SUBMIT button below and your responses will be gratefully received.

Upon submission you will be redirected to the Higher Education Authority website.

NATIONAL EMPLOYER SURVEY

EMPLOYERS' VIEWS ON IRISH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING OUTCOMES

Commissioned by the Higher Education Authority, SOLAS and Quality and Qualifications Ireland

May 2015