**Pathways to Design:
Young People's Entry
to the Design Sector**

Creative & Cultural Skills
November 2013

Creative & Cultural Skills supports the skills and training needs of the UK's creative and cultural industries.
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Sector Priorities Fund Pilot (SPFP) aims to pilot strategic project activity with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in order to inform recommendations which will ensure that the delivery of post-16 skills provision is more responsive and aligned to the needs of employers.

This project is part financed by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government.

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01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With its strong links to sciences, engineering, new technologies and digital industries, the design industry is a key lever in delivering future economic growth. However, a number of key skills challenges threaten this growth potential, particularly the availability of appropriate education and training for those entering and currently working in the design industry.

The aim of this project was to explore employer perceptions of the current entry routes into the design sector for young people aged 16-25, examine views on skills issues for new entrants in this age group and gather insight on employer perceptions of the current education system. The study focussed on providing evidence aligned to the following key questions:

1. What role do 16-25 year olds play in the design workforce?

2. What are employers' expectations of new entrants in this age group?

3. What routes do young people take to a career in the sector?

4. What investment (post full-time education) do employers currently make in skills development?

5. How could current pathways into the sector be improved?

1.1 THE ROLE OF 16-25 YEAR OLDS IN THE DESIGN WORKFORCE

- In terms of share of the workforce, the role of young people in design tends to be small. The latest statistics from Creative & Cultural Skills show that 8% of the design workforce is aged 16-25 compared to 10% in the rest of the Creative & Cultural sector and 13% across the economy.

- The majority of employers (72%) have never tried to recruit in this age group. However, this is not because they feel that young people do not present a valid labour pool.

- The findings suggest that employers feel that young people — more so than older people — require a permanent contract or that the space/ability to train a young person is underpinned by the existence of a strong forward pipeline of work.

- Employers typically look to recruit young people aged 22-25 rather than anyone below the age of 21. This is likely to be driven by the fact that 58% of employers expect candidates to have a Bachelor's degree, from which one typically graduates at the age of 21/22.

- Across all age groups, young people are more likely to be employed in design roles rather than non-design roles (for example, graphic designer or design engineer rather than finance/admin or press/communications).

1.2 EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS OF NEW ENTRANTS AGED 16-25

- Employers have mixed expectations of young people in design related roles; half (47%) expect young people to also work on non-design related tasks (such as reception, admin) and half (53%) do not. Naturally, these expectations are likely to be influenced by internal capacity.

- When recruiting, employers typically place the highest value on creativity (73%), the ability to fit in and work as part of a team (58%), technical skills (53%) and ambition/hunger for a career in the sector (43%) over specific qualifications or work experience.

- Employers expect a young person's education and training to have provided them with sufficient knowledge in the theory of their chosen field of design (51%), commercial awareness (24%) and an enthusiasm and keenness to learn further (19%).

- Just over half (58%) of employers who had recruited a young person indicated that the minimum qualification they looked for was a Bachelor's degree – only 19% stated that they did not look for a specific minimum qualification.

- The role of a strong portfolio is crucial as evidence of ability. Employers (and new entrants) look for an excellent portfolio to ratify technical skill, not academic credentials.

- The ability to use different software packages is important across the sector and new entrants are expected to have significant experience in this area. The main software packages mentioned by respondents included Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign) (67%) and CAD design software (25%).

- Employers tend not to find it difficult to fill roles for young people, with just under one third (31%) of employers reporting any difficulty. Where there are issues, design specific roles tend to present a slightly greater challenge than non-design roles (32% of employers report difficulty with design roles and 28% non-design).

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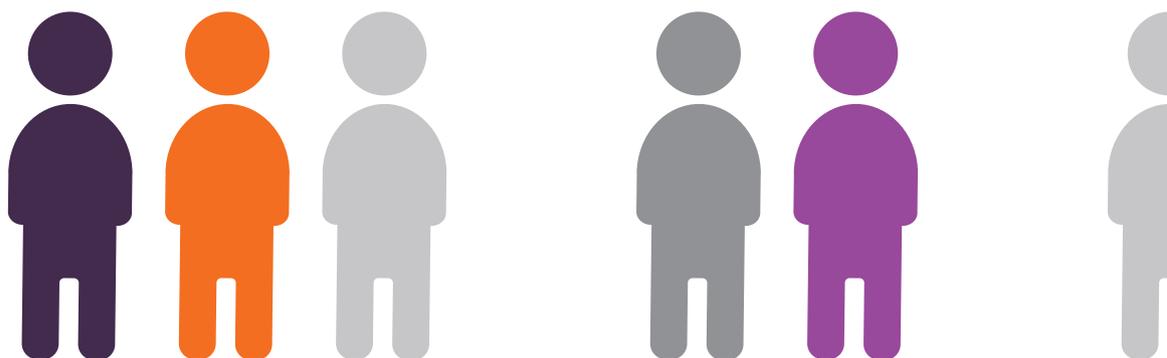
1.3 WHAT ROUTES DO YOUNG PEOPLE TAKE TO A CAREER IN THE SECTOR?

- When considering the various different routes it is possible to take to enter the sector (in any role) young people are most likely to move either from education directly into employment or start work having undertaken paid employment (either in any role or a relevant role) elsewhere. Unpaid internships are the fourth most likely route overall.

- Employers appear to be satisfied with the entry routes young people are taking, with 76% stating that the main entry route was also the preferred entry route. However, it should be noted that in-depth interviewees tended to see a need for change within the existing route, rather than considering a new route.

- Whilst employing direct from education still comes out on top, crucial to note here is the prominence of unpaid internships as the preferred route. Qualitative interviews suggest that unpaid internships appear to be becoming expected, with greater competition meaning employers have more opportunity to use them (because competition is so high).

- Just over a third (34%) of respondents felt that entry routes for those in non-design roles were the same as for design and 40% felt that these staff took a different route. Interestingly, 26% didn't know. Employers were more likely not to know the entry route for those non-design roles, than select any particular one.

1.4 EMPLOYER INVESTMENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Only 23% of businesses employing young people (either currently, or at some point in the past 3 years) have a training budget, which is behind the national average of 29%. There are clear variations in this according to the size of the business.

- Despite the low proportion of businesses with a training budget, 45% of businesses stated that the young people they employed had undertaken training arranged by the business in the past year. This reinforces the finding that training is typically undertaken ad hoc and that the recording/monitoring is informal.

- Following this informal approach, the main types of training provided included part-time or short courses without a qualification (41%), coaching/mentoring from an experienced colleague (34%), and informal on the job training (27%).

- Employers commonly invest resources to develop technical design skills (41%), IT skills (28%), specialist design skills (28%) or generic business skills (22%). The increased focus on filling gaps in business skills once in post, rather than seeking these at the point of recruitment, perhaps suggests that this is an area of expertise employers are happy to develop once they have found the right person in terms of creative talent.

1.5   IMPROVING PATHWAYS TO THE SECTOR

- Whilst 76% of employers stated that they felt the main entry route currently taken into the sector was their preferred route, 58% of businesses who were currently employing young people (or had recently) felt that there were skills that could be better developed within the entry routes to the sector.

- Communication skills (16%), commercial awareness (14%) and basic business & workplace skills (11%) come top of this list. This potentially refutes the previous suggestion that employers are happy to develop these skills. Rather, this suggests that employers are happy to hone these skills, building on foundations that have already been laid.

- Despite the acknowledgement of gaps in the skills of new entrants, just less than half (44%) of businesses engage with education and training providers and only 14% report that they are 'very' engaged.

- In order to improve engagement with education or training providers, businesses equally felt they would need to either be approached by training providers, or paid for the time spent (both 17%). However, 25% felt that there was nothing that could be done to encourage engagement; it simply wasn't relevant for them.

- The qualitative findings are similar to the survey findings in that a lack of time is the main reason, and some struggle to see the benefits. However those who do engage with education or training providers state clearly that the benefits are around finding and recruiting the best candidates.

- However, whilst those already engaging were positive, those who were not, but wanted to, stated that they struggled to see ways of engaging with education.

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1.6 CONCLUSIONS

- **Employers require the skills and knowledge currently provided by a University based pathway:** 58% of employers expect new entrants to have a bachelor's degree, valuing the theoretical grounding and time and space to develop creatively that it provides, rather than the qualification itself.

- **Creativity is prioritised over other workplace skills and demonstrated by an excellent portfolio:** Creative ability (the ability to form concepts and ideas) was cited as the most important factor when recruiting, with a portfolio being the method through which new entrants can demonstrate this ability. This indicates that in most cases an excellent portfolio is the key to getting a job in design.

- **Employers require greater commercial awareness (rather than specific business skills) at the point of recruitment:** It is possible to translate the rather nebulous term of commercial awareness to 'an awareness of working towards a live client brief rather than a simulated university brief,' with employers requiring new entrants to be able to work at pace, see projects from a client perspective, liaise with clients and work in a team.

- **Employers have difficulty matching candidates to vacancies, using a range of recruitment methods to ensure the correct fit:** Whilst employers do not suffer skills shortages due to the high level of competition, they do take pains to ensure they recruit someone who is the right fit for their business (e.g. attending exhibitions, holding work trials). Non-design roles follow a more traditional route, therefore cross-over from a non-design role to a design role appears an unlikely pathway to a career in the sector.

- **It is unclear how employers contribute effectively to design education:** Nearly a third of employers (32%) reported they were not at all engaged with education. In many cases it seems employers do not see the benefit of doing so. Fifty four per cent of those who did engage did to seek the best candidates, but there were concerns over legal and ethical implications of doing so.

- **It is unclear what a vocational route into design consists of:** Any route must deliver a strong portfolio and a good theoretical grounding, therefore other pathways must provide the opportunity to develop these. There appears to be space for more design specific pathways for 19-21 group (26% of employers employ 19-21 years olds compared to 93% employing 22-25 year olds), but the form this would take is unclear.

1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Formalise an alternative route to the University pathway for 19-21 year olds:** Future work on apprenticeship development and qualification development needs to focus on how this cohort of young people can be best developed, in conjunction with the industry. Product and industrial design would appear to have the infrastructure best suited to this type of learner. The concept would need to be carefully marketed to employers to counter concerns over lack of time and resource in their business.

2. **Examine how individual courses can enable students to operate in a real working environment:** Alterations to individual course content such as time-trialled assignments, live briefs or industry input into briefs and shorter deadlines could support this, without removing the space for creative development. A more concerted effort to raise the number of work placements available for sandwich or post-graduate placements could also be of value.

3. **Provide greater clarity on the 'rules of engagement', alongside improved careers advice in schools:** It would be useful to produce clear guidance on what employers are looking for and how to attain it, such as the importance of a portfolio and a need for commercial awareness. Guidance should indicate the different routes available to achieve this and should start from secondary school.

4. **Create an official roadmap for employer engagement with the education sector:** A formal offer of engagement by the education sector which sets out how to do so and how employers can benefit would enable employers to see how and why they can engage. An endorsement from trade bodies and larger design organisations would re-assure against exploitation concerns.

02 INTRODUCTION

"So this is our plan for growth. We want the words: 'Made in Britain, Created in Britain, Designed in Britain, Invented in Britain' to drive our nation forward. A Britain carried aloft by the march of the makers. That is how we will create jobs."[1]
(George Osborne, Budget 2011)

With its strong links to sciences, engineering, new technologies and digital industries, the design industry is a key lever in delivering future economic growth: 32% employment growth is expected within the design industry over the next decade, compared to only 6% across the economy as a whole.[2] However, a number of key challenges threaten this growth potential[3]:

- The existence of significant gaps between the skills required by employers in the design industry and those being taught and learnt in schools, colleges and universities.

- The need to respond fast to changing requirements from clients in industry, and the difficulties of training and education keeping pace with this change.

- A lack of continuous professional development (CPD) among practising designers and a tendency for design practitioners to 'learn on the job' rather than via formal training.

- Good quality training is often found to be inaccessible, expensive and time-consuming.

- A lack of collaborative partnerships between education and industry.

- Difficulties for students and graduates to differentiate between the courses offered.

- An apparent mismatch between the number of design courses and graduates and the number of appropriately-skilled graduates entering the industry.

- A lack of training programmes for Design and Technology (D&T) teachers, who often have little experience of working in the design industry.

1   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2011-budget-britain-open-for-business
2   The Design Commission, (2011) *Restarting Britain: Design Education and Growth*
3   Creative & Cultural Skills (2008) *Design Blueprint*

In response to this, the UK Design Skills Panel was launched in 2008 to improve professional standards, and safeguard potential industry growth from the various challenges encountered, and the UK Design Alliance, led by the Design Council 'Good Design Practice' campaign to address the disconnect between the needs of the design industry and the training currently available.

Despite some progress in addressing this, i.e. the set-up of the UK Design Alliance, there continues to be concerns surrounding the availability of appropriate education and training for those entering and currently working in the design industry.[4] Further concerns have been raised as a result of the changes proposed in the National Curriculum Review and the recent introduction of the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc), both of which appear to place less priority on creative subjects, compared to traditional, academic subjects.[5] It is also the case that vocational pathways – such as design apprenticeships – are in short supply and seen as difficult to meet the needs of both employers and learners.[6] Evidence suggests that preferences over the format of apprenticeships differ amongst designers, students and design educators in higher and further education.[7]

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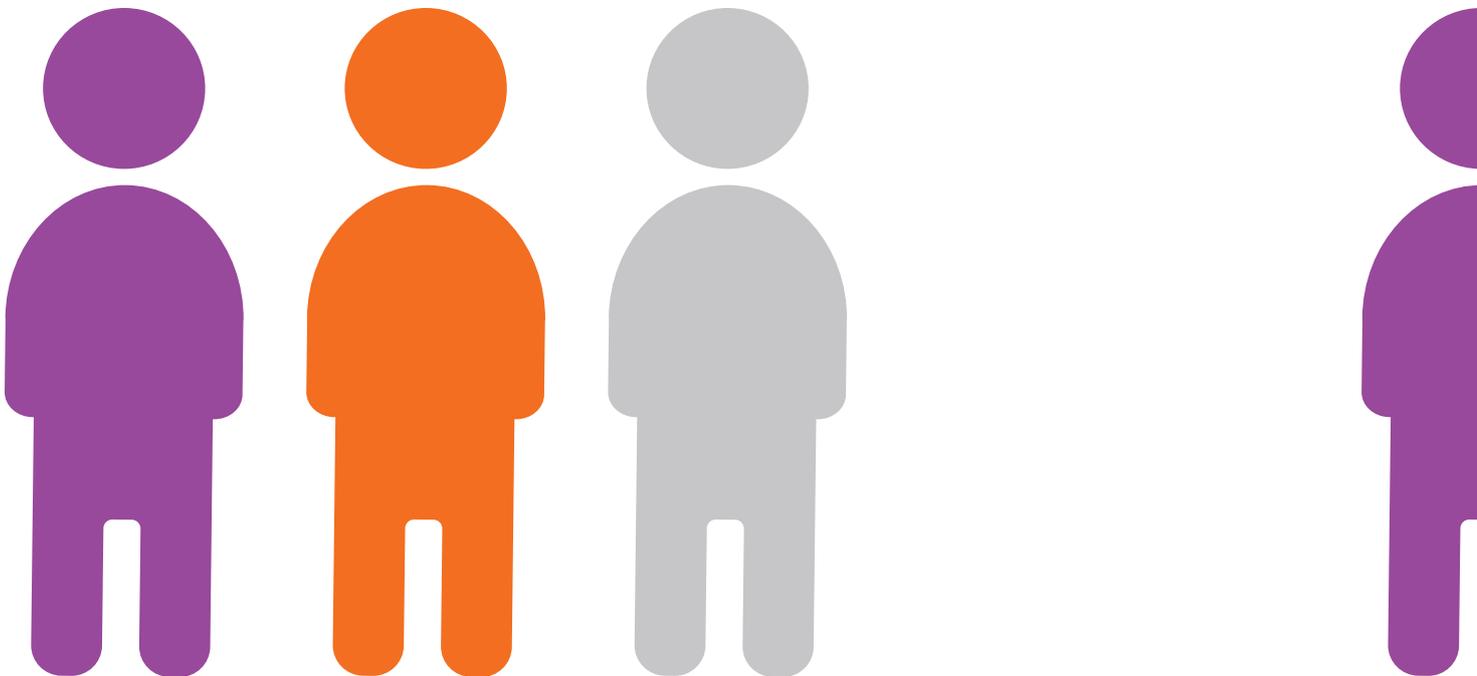
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5   The Design Commission, (2011), *Restarting Britain: Design Education and Growth*, page 8.
6   Design Commission, (2011), *Restarting Britain: Design Education and Growth*, page 13.
7   Design Wales (2011) *The Design Apprenticeships in Wales Survey: The results*

2.1 STUDY CONTEXT

In exploring the perceptions of existing design sector entry routes for young people, the prevailing view is that there is an overreliance on the 'university based' pathway into the design industry.[8] To date, this view has been underpinned by a significant gap in knowledge regarding the supply of graduates to the industry through alternative routes. The Design Commission's 2011 report *Restarting Britain, Design Education and Growth*, suggested that these issues could be in part addressed through the creation of higher level vocational qualifications in design disciplines. However, there have been no previous studies specifically focussing on pathways for 16-25 year olds, and as such there is a limited knowledge about which courses are the most highly regarded, and which are the weakest.

Previous research indicates that employers are concerned about graduates' lack of understanding of the pathways currently available, in addition to their lack of clarity regarding which courses will lead to which jobs. The 2007 *High-level Skills for High Value* report published by the Design Council states that more explicit pathways are required. To date, there has been very little written about other pathway options that could be developed as alternatives to those currently available – i.e. the university pathway. As a result, questions remain as to what a vocational route into the design industry would consist of. Creative & Cultural Skills is helping to build this picture through their audit of all design courses on offer across the UK.

The evaluation of the Creative Apprenticeship Wales Pilot Programme highlighted the benefits of apprenticeships to the creative industries; reporting that developing a modular approach that allowed apprentices to gain the qualification across strands is potentially very useful for (especially small) employers who have several functions in-house and want to develop functionally flexible staff. The report also found the apprenticeships to be welcomed by students with a considerable benefit being gaining industry relevant skills.[9] However evidence on apprenticeships as a whole show that they are unlikely to be used as an entry route into a career, with 71 per cent of apprentices working for their employer before starting an apprenticeship. If design follows this pattern, apprenticeships would form part of the pathway to a career rather than the entry route.[10]
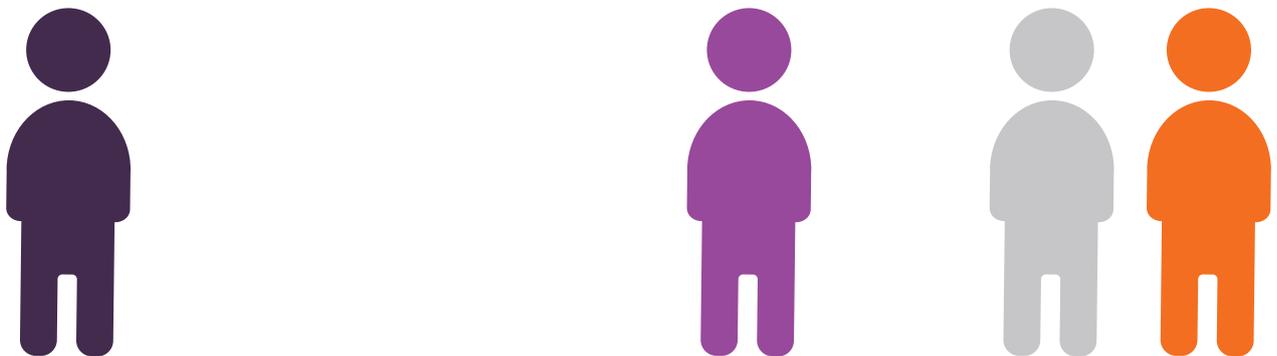
8   Design Council & CCSkills (2007) *Higher Level Skills for Higher Value*
9   Wavehill (2011) *Evaluation of the Creative Apprenticeships Wales Pilot Programme*
10 BIS (2012) *Apprenticeships Pay Survey: Research Findings*

Regarding the recruitment process into a design career, despite the fact that the number of design graduates is higher than the number of jobs currently available, employers reportedly still have difficulty matching potential employees to their vacancies.[11] In relation to the recruitment of young people into the design industry, little is known about the typical recruitment process. Not only is it not known how easy or difficult it is for employers to find prospective employees, but there is also limited knowledge of how vacancies are advertised, and the number of applicants typically reaching interview stage for each vacancy.

Other aspects of a typical recruitment process are also unknown. Questions remain over what trade-offs employers make when trying to find people with the right skills. Is creativity prioritised over other skills, for example business acumen, financial or IT skills? Existing literature reports that prospective employers need to develop more/ better business and professional skills in relation to marketing, finance, IT and digital.[12] Whilst this goes some way to revealing the skills issues and barriers to employment, it is unknown how much emphasis employers place on these different skills areas.

Regarding employers' perceptions of the education system, it would appear that there are concerns with the process at all levels. Employers have pointed out the apparent disconnect between what students are taught in the classroom and how this can be applied to a work-based environment.[13] At a University level, there are concerns that not enough placements are currently being made available to students. *The Wilson Review of Business – University Collaboration* reported that 'despite the undoubted advantages of undertaking a placement, there has been a decline in this practice in recent years from 9.5 percent of the total full-time cohort in 2002/2003 to 7.2 percent in 2009/2010.'[14]

There are also concerns that studies focus too heavily on traditional spheres, such as product design and less on emerging areas – such as service design – or the study of design in relation to social agendas (e.g. issues associated with unemployment, environment and health).[15]

Whilst it is recognised that employers do have a role to play in developing pathways for young people, more research is needed to explore exactly how they can contribute effectively. Should employers work directly with universities, training providers and graduates, or should they focus their efforts on internal training? This is further complicated by the fragmented nature of the design industry itself. Acquiring this knowledge will help employers tailor their approach to both education and 'on-the-job' training, for which there is also limited knowledge at this time.

11 Based on a small number (12) of qualitative interviews for this research
12 IES, Council for Higher Education in Art and Design and University of the Arts London (2010) *Creative Futures, Creative Graduates*
13 Based on a small number (12) of qualitative interviews for this research
14 Professor Sir Tim Wilson (2012) *A Review of Business-University Collaboration*, BIS
15 A Stepping Out case study (2010) *Leading Design Professionals in Design Education*, HEA

2.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

With these issues and challenges in mind Creative & Cultural Skills, with funding from the Welsh Sector Priorities Fund Pilot, commissioned TBR and the Madano Partnership, working with Qa Research, to deliver a study considering entry routes into the design sector. The aim of this project was to explore employer perceptions of the current entry routes into the design sector for young people aged 16-25, examine views on skills issues for new entrants in this age group and employer perceptions of the current education system. The objectives to deliver this were to:

1. Build a useable and robust breakdown of both occupations and sub-sectors within the design sector to sample, which could be applicable to the UK as a whole.

2. Conduct primary research of the skills and workforce needs within the design sector, gathering information primarily from employers in order to:

- Increase knowledge about the skills needed to enter the workforce and the impact of any shortages or gaps.

- Assess the appropriateness of the education system in relation to the design sector, the training budgets held by organisations and the supply and demand for design qualifications to understand if there is a need for a new design qualification or scheme and where this would sit within the current framework of design qualifications available.

- Increase understanding of design practices from within the workplace which could be implemented into the teaching of any new qualification.

In addressing these aims and objectives and with the aim of building on the findings of existing research, the study focussed on providing evidence aligned to the following key questions:

1. What role do 16-25 year olds play in the design workforce?

2. What are employers' expectations of new entrants in this age group?

3. What routes do young people take to a career in the sector?

4. What investment (post full-time education) do employers currently make in skills development?

5. How could current pathways into the sector be improved?

2.3 METHODOLOGY

The project involved the following main stages:

- A high level literature review and informal stakeholder consultation to understand the current stock of knowledge against the study's objectives. This identified gaps to focus on in the survey and consultation.

- Consultation with the steering group to finalise the sector definition to be used and desk research to gather correlating data to develop a population estimate. This was also tested through the survey to establish if respondents associated with the suggested definitions.

- A representative survey of the design sector across the UK. Interviews were conducted with 520 design organisations (including sole traders and freelancers) sampled according to population figures drawn from Creative & Cultural Skills' footprint statistics. Contacts for the survey were drawn from TCR[16] with additional records provided by the Design Business Association (DBA) and the British Industrial Design Association (BIDA).

- In-depth interviews with 6 employers and 8 new entrants working in the sector in England and Wales.

The survey covered the whole of the UK. However, taking into account the specific England and Wales funding, the in-depth interviews focused on England and Wales only. Due to low response rates in service design and fashion & textiles design, breakdowns of the quantitative data are not provided for these sub-sectors.

Further detail on the methodology, including a breakdown of responses and the definitions used in the study is available in the appendix. A more detail technical appendix is available on request from Creative & Cultural Skills.
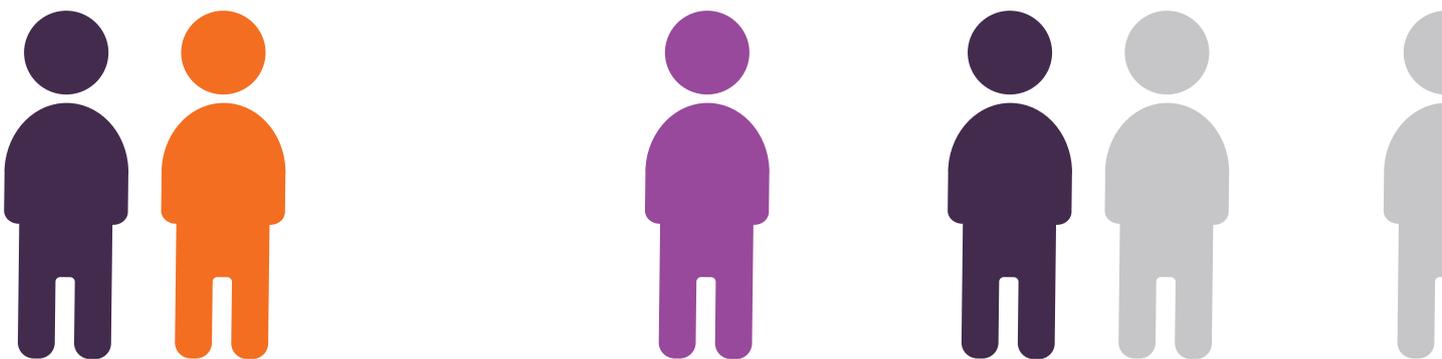
16 TCR is one of the most extensive bodies of information on UK enterprise, containing information on economic performance, business activity, and ownership on an individual firm basis. For more information see http://www.tbr.co.uk/pages/tbr-observatory/tcr-database.php

03 THE ROLE OF 16-25 YEAR OLDS IN THE DESIGN WORKFORCE

Despite concerns about a mismatch between the number of graduates and the number of appropriately-skilled graduates entering the industry, there have been no previous studies specifically focussing on young people in the sector. The opening section of this report considers the way in which young people are employed in the sector, the extent to which firms hire them, at what age and in which roles.

3.1 EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In terms of their share of the workforce, the role of young people in design tends to be small. The latest statistics from Creative & Cultural Skills show that 8% of the design workforce is aged 16-25 compared to 10% in the rest of the Creative & Cultural sector and 13% across the economy.[17] The survey conducted for this project found that just over one third (36%) of businesses currently employ a young person and 21% of design businesses have recruited someone in this age group in the last three years.

Figure 1:
Employment of young people aged 16-25
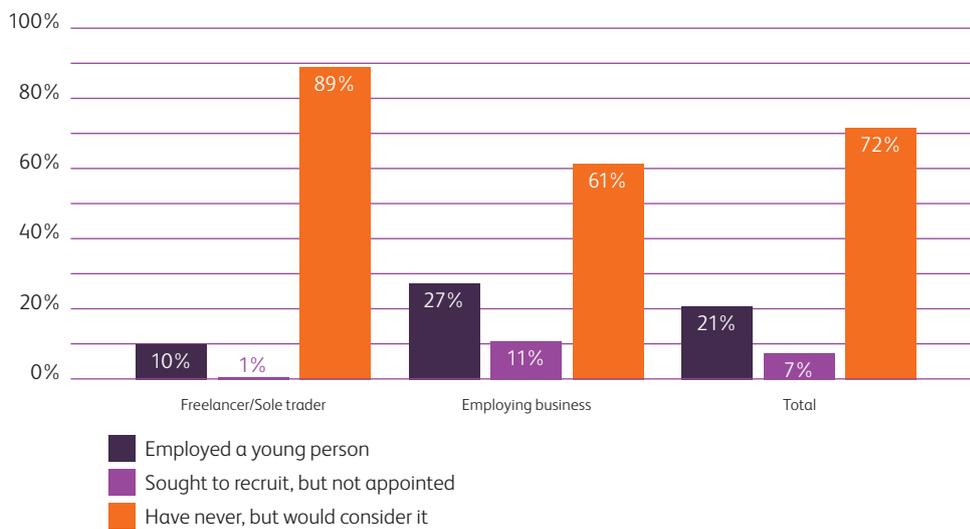
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03/C28)

The majority of businesses (72%) have never tried to recruit in this age group. This high proportion is perhaps to be expected given the high proportion of freelancers and sole traders operating in the sector. When considering employing businesses (i.e. those currently with more than one member of staff, including the owner) the figure reduces to 61%, although this is still relatively high.

The research does not suggest that this is because they feel that young people do not present a valid labour pool. Whilst some of these employers raised concerns about their ability and capacity to support the development of a young employee (19%), reasons for not recruiting tended to relate to a general lack of demand for more staff (41%), or fluctuating amounts of work throughout the year making it impossible to take on and train permanent staff (22%). The lack of demand for staff (at any level) was reflected in the qualitative fieldwork, which highlighted that the recession has had a specific impact in the last few years; small employers in particular cannot consider recruitment when they do not have a sufficient workload.

"It's been hard enough to keep the company going. I would love to employ a young person and help them develop but there's not enough work for them."
(Communications Design Business, 2-5 employees, Wales)

These findings suggest that employers feel that young people – more so than older people – require a permanent contract or that the space/ability to train a young person is underpinned by the existence of a strong forward order book. The latter is borne out by the fact that when these employers were asked what would encourage them to employ more young people, more than half (58%) noted a more consistent pipeline of booked work. The lack of permanency can have a negative impact on the quality of work for young entrants, who discuss undertaking placements, or positions which are unstable, rather than a permanent position:

"You have to take what you can get, they [employers] know that so they don't need to offer you anything, you don't really have any rights to ask questions, [because] they'll just get someone else in."
(New entrant Communications Design, in a freelance position)

Just under a quarter (23%) of design employers looked for new employees from an international pool of candidates. Perhaps unsurprisingly, firms based in London and larger firms (with 25+ staff) are most likely to look for candidates internationally. London employers particularly are aware they have an international pool 'on their doorstep'. Businesses in other regions may like to recruit internationally, but understand people would not re-locate to them. Just under half of those who do (46%) consider that international candidates offer more than UK based candidates, with a broader knowledge of overseas/different cultures is seen to the main advantage. These employers also consider international candidates to be more creative. However, employers didn't feel that these candidates had a cutting edge in terms of specific qualifications, work experience or technical skills. Interestingly, in the in-depth interviews, UK based new entrants did not consider they were in competition for jobs with international candidates.

As Figure 2 shows, whilst sub-sectors do not tend to vary far from the sector average of 36% of businesses employing young people, Product & Industrial and Digital & Multimedia design businesses appear to offer slightly more opportunity. Employers in these sectors are more likely to:

- Employ a young person (42% and 41% respectively),

- Have recruited a young person recently (28% and 24% respectively), or

- Have found it comparatively challenging to recruit young people into their businesses (14% and 12% respectively) – which may suggest more attempts to try to.
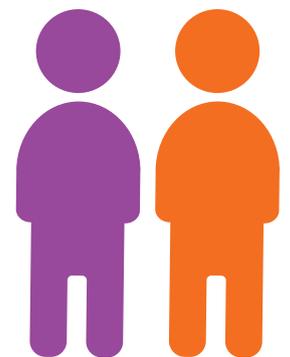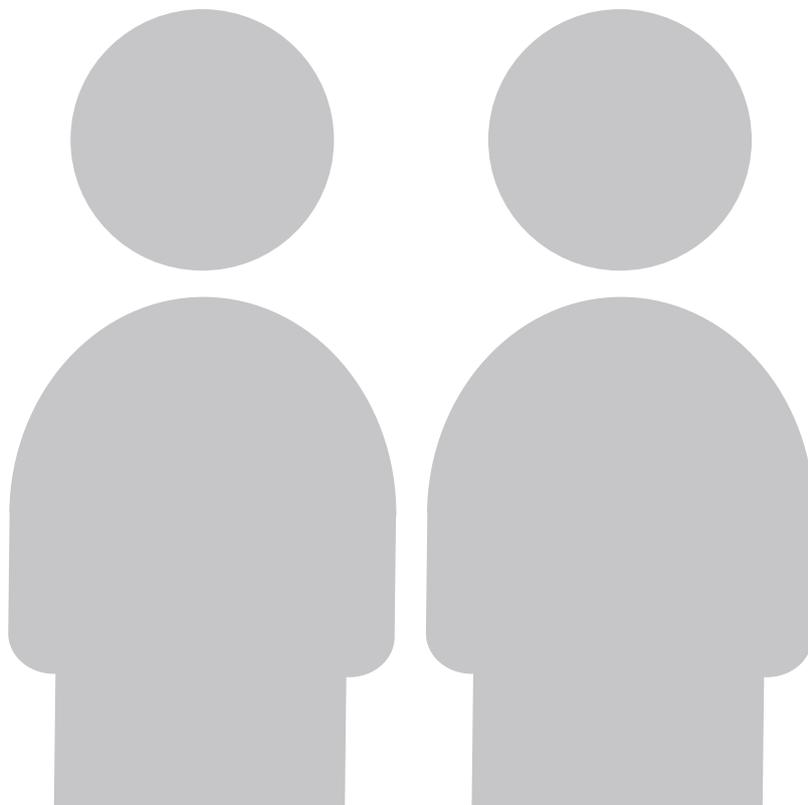
Figure 2:
Employing young people breakdown

Sector

Interior & Exhibition design	39%	60%
Product & Industrial design	41%	59%
Digital & Multimedia design	42%	57%
Communication design	30%	70%

Nation

England	37%	63%
Northern Ireland	31%	69%
Scotland	25%	75%
Wales	20%	80%

Business size band

101-250		100%
50-100	76%	24%
25-49	86%	14%
11-24	70%	30%
6-10	63%	37%
2-5	23%	76%
1	100%	

Turnover

£1 million or more	74%	26%
£750,001-£1 million	70%	30%
£500,001-£750,000	65%	35%
Between £250,001-£500,000	42%	56%
Between £100,001-£250,000	27%	72%
£50,000-£100,000	3%	97%
Less than £50,000	2%	98%

■ Yes, does employ young people   ■ No, does not employ young people

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Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR Ref: W03/C2-C5)

The qualitative interviewees from Product & Industrial design also tended to have a more formal/systematic approach to recruitment; involving job advertisements and application rounds as opposed to an informal approach including recruitment through word of mouth, attending exhibitions, and paid/unpaid placements which appear to be common in most other sectors. This may suggest a greater level of strategic thinking and/or planning around recruitment than in other sub-sectors.

Young people are more typically employed within large design firms. In general, the larger the design firm, both in terms of total employees and turnover, the greater likelihood that young people are employed. This reinforces the importance of a strong pipeline of work in creating the space to dedicate time to the development of a young employee. The point at which the preferred environment exists within which to employ young people – i.e. an above average tendency to employ a young person is shown – seems to be at £500k+ in turnover and once a firm employs 6+ employees.

Young people appear to play a more active role in design businesses based in England and Northern Ireland than in Scotland and Wales (with a higher proportion of businesses in these areas employing young people than in Scotland and Wales). In terms of specific regions, London was found to be a key employment market for young people, with 55% of businesses currently employing a young person under the age of 26. As shown in Figure 3, businesses in London (and also the North West) are most likely to have a high average number of young people per firm.

Figure 3:
Average number of young people currently employed per business by age

Region	16-18	19-21	21-25
UK	0.08	0.38	2.13
Northern Ireland		0.37	1
Scotland		0.26	1.08
East of England		0.54	1.4
North East		0.57	1.43
West Midlands	0.3	0.3	1.44
Yorkshire and Humber	0.21	0.38	1.48
Wales		0.05	1.71
East Midlands	0.13	0.26	1.8
South East	0.07	0.71	1.92
South West		0.08	2.23
London	0.08	0.32	2.51
North West	0.08	0.68	3.24
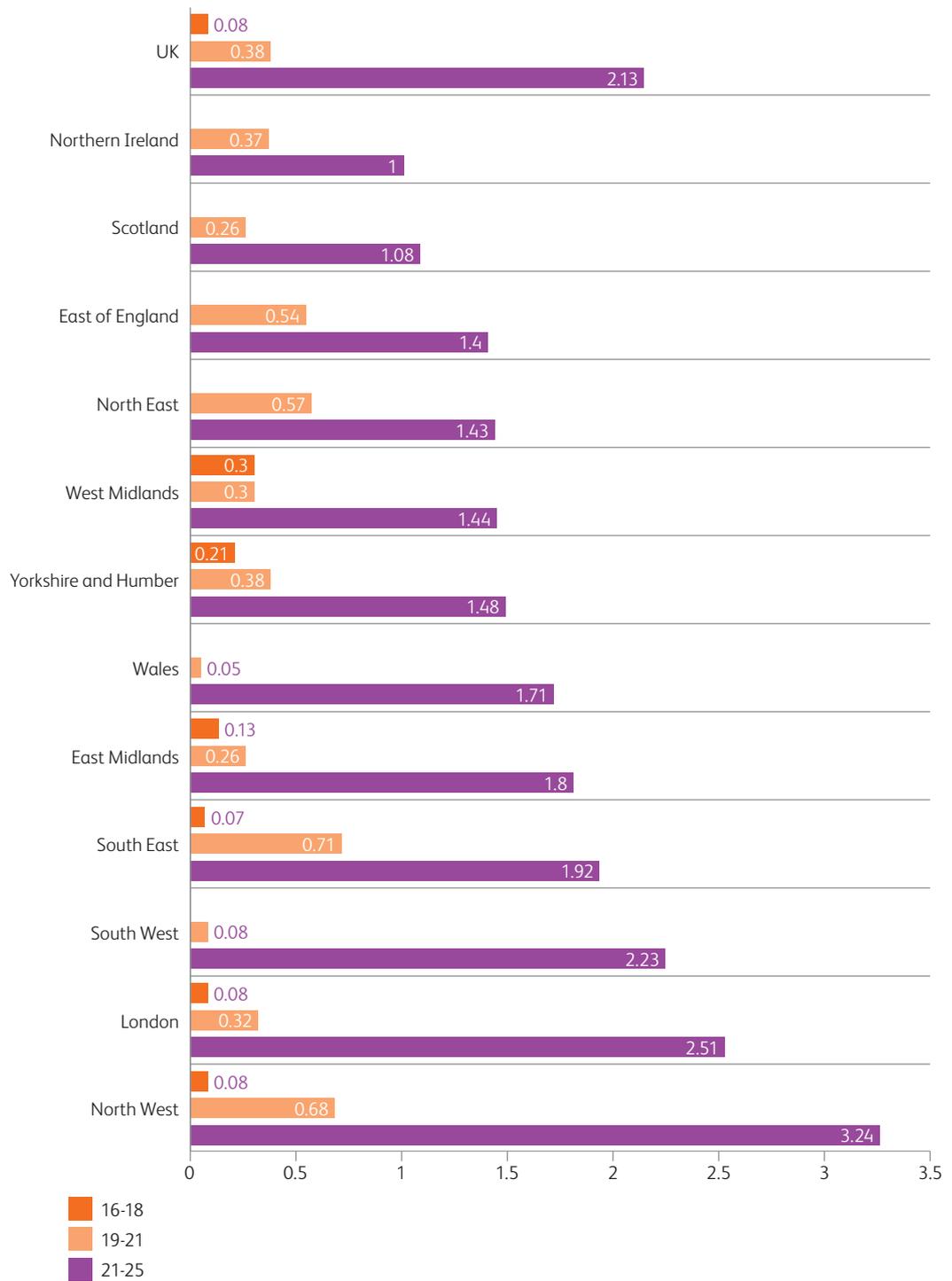
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03/C29)

Given the finding that young people are more frequently employed in large firms, this is likely to be driven by the fact that London is home to a greater proportion of the large Design firms.[18] Young people are aware of this need to base themselves in London to find design work. As happens in other sectors, young people move from across the UK and internationally to build careers in London.

However, it is interesting to note that only 15% of London based employers had recruited in this age group in the last three years; approximately half the proportion of employers who had successfully recruited a young person in the North West (32%), Yorkshire & Humber (27%) or the West Midlands (34%). The high average number of people aged 22-25 in London based businesses makes it perfectly feasible that the young people currently employed could have been recruited aged 21/22 three years ago, with little recruitment since. This is potentially reinforced through the qualitative interviews. New entrants discussed the high prevalence of freelance employment in London and the tendency to work in temporary or freelance positions whilst looking for permanent work. It may be the case that rather than recruiting to permanent positions, employers in London are capitalising on the expanse of candidates available to them by using non-permanent contracts.

3.2 AGE GROUPS AND ROLES

As reflected in Figure 3, employers typically look to recruit young people aged 22-25 rather than anyone below the age of 21, likely to be driven by the fact that 58% of employers expect candidates to have a Bachelor's degree, from which one typically graduates at the age of 21/22. This is backed up by findings from qualitative interviews that both employers and new entrants expect a Bachelor's degree; for employers because they feel this is the most appropriate route to train a young person to develop creatively, for new entrants in order to compete because 'everyone has one'.

"We need people who have interacted with their peers and been in an environment where they've learned from each other. Only education can provide this really."
(Employer, Industrial Design, 25 to 49 employees, England)

Only 7% of business employed young people aged 16-18, 26% young people aged 19-21, but 93% employed young people aged 22-25.[19]

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18   According to the latest Creative & Cultural Skills Footprint statistics, 51% of firms employing 10 or more individuals are based in London or the South East (37% in London and 14% the South East).
19   Totals to more than 100% as business could employ people in more than one age group.

Figure 4:
Percentage of businesses employing young people by age group
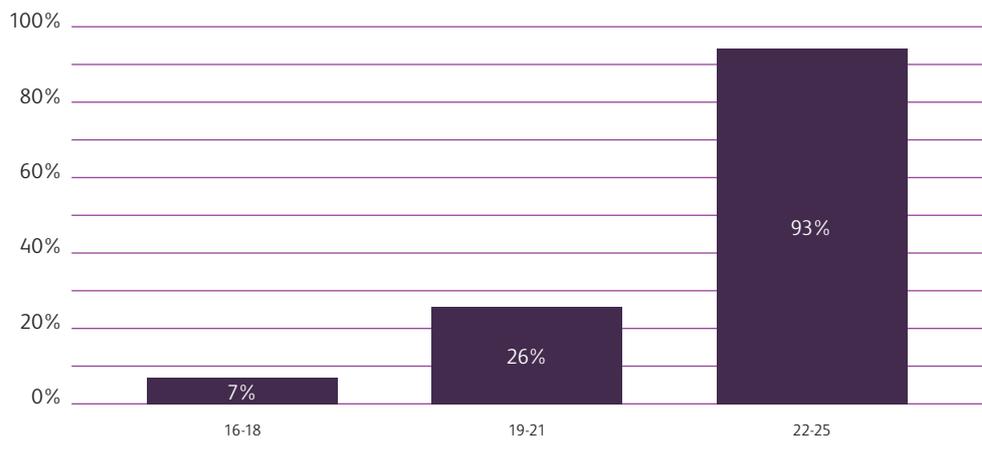
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03/C30)
Totals to more than 100% as business could employ people in more than one age group

As well as being a key area of opportunity for employment of young people overall, Digital & Multimedia and Product & Industrial firms also appear to provide greater opportunity for young people aged 19-21: 42% of Digital & Multimedia and 31% of Product & Industrial firms who employ young people recruited at least 1 young person aged 19-21 (compared to an overall average of 26%). Again, larger businesses tend to provide more opportunity in terms of employment across a range of age bands.

Across all age groups, young people are more likely to be employed in design roles rather than non-design roles (for example, graphic designer or design engineer rather than finance/admin or press/communications). However, it is interesting to note that in the 19-21 age group a young person is less likely to be in a design role than those aged 16-18 or 22-25. The junior designer role in particular is a key entry point for young people, with 74% of respondents recruiting into this position. The majority (66%) of those who had not yet recruited a young person were also likely to seek to appoint someone to this role.

Figure 5:
Employment in Design/Non-Design related roles
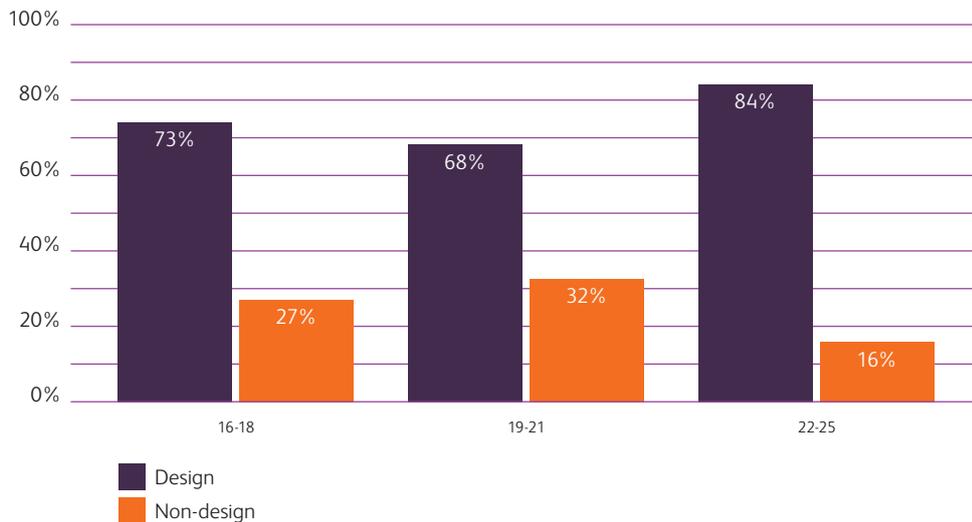
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W01/S1)

Employers have mixed expectations of young people in design related roles; half (47%) expect young people to also work on non-design related tasks (such as reception, admin) and half (53%) do not. Naturally, these expectations are likely to be influenced by internal capacity. A higher proportion (68%) of businesses with 2-5 staff indicated that young people would be expected to work on non-design related tasks compared to 29% of businesses with 11-24 staff and 30% of businesses with 25-49 staff. The same patterns are evident by turnover, with only 27% of £1m+ employers expecting that young people would also work on non-design tasks.

The culture of 'fitting in' appears to become increasingly important in smaller businesses, perhaps due to the need to take on a number of roles and interact with a small team.

"We need someone that fits in quickly, we're in a small team and we work long hours."
(Employer, Communications Design, 6 to 10 employees, Wales)

"They don't just want someone to make tea, everywhere I've been they want to listen to you, and want you to be a part of it…which is really helpful when you're just starting out."
(New entrant, Product Design, Wales)

Whilst Digital & Multimedia and Product & Industrial design offer more opportunity for the employment of young people, young people working in Digital & Multimedia businesses are more likely to make a stronger contribution to design related work; 45% of Product & Industrial respondents considered that young people would also work on non-design related tasks compared to 33% of Digital & Multimedia businesses. However, following the finding that smaller firms tend to require more working outside of the main role, Product & Industrial businesses do tend to be smaller, with 63% having fewer than 5 staff compared to 46% of Digital & Multimedia.

As previously noted, the barriers to recruiting young people predominantly revolve around a lack of need for new staff at any level (41%) or fluctuating levels of work (22%), rather than the skills young people hold. The in-depth interviews indicated that the offer of a trial period, as part of the process of ensuring recruitment of the 'right person', alleviates worries that they may employ someone not suitable for their business. Budgetary restrictions, particularly coming out of the recession, also play a role for some businesses (17%). However, a small proportion of employers do feel they lack the capacity to develop a young person (13%) and some also feel they lack the ability to do so (6%).

In Product & Industrial, capacity to develop a young person (24%) is a more pressing barrier than fluctuating amounts of work (12%) and in Digital & Multimedia, equal weight is given to budget restrictions, capacity and fluctuating work (each 29%).

Budget restrictions were a particular issue for businesses based in Scotland (36%). Businesses based in Northern Ireland were also found to be more likely than other regions to consider that they did not have the capacity to support a young person in the business (34%). In London, where fewer businesses have recruited a young person recently, employers were more likely than any other area to give an 'other' response to this question, with 17% stating that young people did not have the right skill set. This may well be the result of large labour pool in London, as many young people head there to find work, or the fact that as reported in the qualitative interviews, rolling internships are common in larger companies, possibly removing the need to recruit young people permanently.

As larger firms are typically found to recruit more young people, fewer were asked about barriers. However, none of the larger firms (with 50+ staff) mentioned capacity or fluctuating work load as an issue.

Persona 1:
Chris, Head Designer at mid-sized Industrial Design firm in England

Recruitment

- 36% of design agencies employ a young person.

- Reasons for not employing young people include a general lack of demand for staff (41%) and employers being concerned about ability and capacity to support a young person (19%).

- Barriers to the recruitment of young people predominantly revolve around a lack of need for new staff, budgets or fluctuating levels of work, rather than the skills young people hold.

"I head up the design team within the business and have overall responsibility for new recruits into our team. We also have a manufacturing team but we consider recruitment for that separately. I'd like to say we have a HR team but we're not large enough so recruitment falls to me and our finance director. We place ads online and in local press.

There are a lot of people looking for a small number of jobs so although it can take time we can normally find the right person for the job. It does seem harder lately to track down 'those with real design talent' however. Around 40% of people now go to University compared to 6 or 7%, so although there's now more people, it's still only that top 6 to 7% you actually want to employ.

We'd like to be able to employ more young people, but it has been a difficult past few years and in order to keep the business going we've been working hard to retain work so we haven't really had the time or the work to support many people, as we like to invest in our staff. Hopefully this will change in future."

Job role

- 74% recruited into a junior design role.

- 45% of Product & Industrial (of which 63% had fewer than 5 staff) respondents considered that young people would also work on non-design related tasks compared to only 33% of Digital & Multimedia businesses (of which 46% had fewer than 5 staff).

"If a team member is recruited to the design department they would be given the generic title of 'Junior Designer' and this is where most entry staff begin their career. Most would start after a degree so they would be over 21. I would be happy to consider an apprenticeship, say someone with A-Levels, who wanted to work on the job, but this option has never come up; people who apply for jobs with us tend to have a degree.

Their role is just to be a part of the team. We expect them to muck in at all levels really, from coming up with new ideas and concepts, to helping draft sketches. I would say their role is mainly design but to be honest we could call on them to help generally around the office where needed, a bit of admin, tidying the studio for example, there are some things we just don't have time to do and the junior staff help us out."

04 EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS OF NEW ENTRANTS AGED 16-25

As noted in the study context (section 2.1) to date it has been unclear what trade-offs employers make when trying to find people with the right skills and the extent to which creativity is prioritised over other skills, for example business acumen, financial or IT skills. The following section considers the skills and expertise employers seek from new entrants in this age group and skills shortages experienced when recruiting.

4.1 SKILLS AND EXPERTISE SOUGHT

When recruiting, employers typically place highest value on creativity (73%), the ability to fit in and work as part of a team (58%), technical skills (53%) and ambition/hunger for a career in the sector (43%) over specific qualifications or work experience.

Figure 6:
Important factors when recruiting
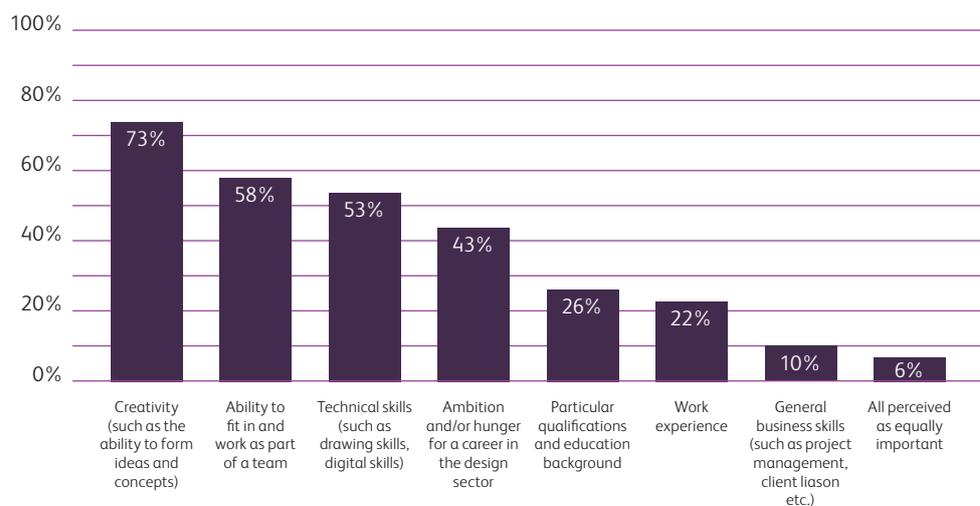
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03/C9)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

As shown in Figure 7 there tends to be little variation in this across different sectors, the nations or employer sizes.

Employers expect a young person's education and training to have provided them with sufficient knowledge in the theory of their chosen field of design (51%), commercial awareness (24%) and an enthusiasm and keenness to learn further (19%). The latter suggests that many expect to provide further training to young people, rather than anticipating they will be 'work ready' at entry.[20] Other key skills noted were the ability to work in a team (16%), IT/software skills (16%), literacy and numeracy skills (15%) and creativity (12%).

Whilst employers tended to give a lower ranking to qualifications, clearly the desired theoretical and technical skills have to be developed through a process of education and training. Just over half (58%) of employers who had recruited a young person indicated that the minimum qualification they looked for was a Bachelor's degree – only 19% stated that they did not look for a specific minimum qualification. However, it is important to emphasise the crucial role of a strong portfolio as evidence of ability for design related roles. Employers (and new entrants) look for an excellent portfolio to ratify technical skill, not academic credentials. The importance of having a degree is that it is recognised (by both employers and new entrants) that experience at University provides the opportunity to spend time developing a portfolio.

"No-one's ever asked what I got, what grade or where I went to University… The portfolio is much more important, that's what matters."
(New entrant Communications Design, in a freelance position)

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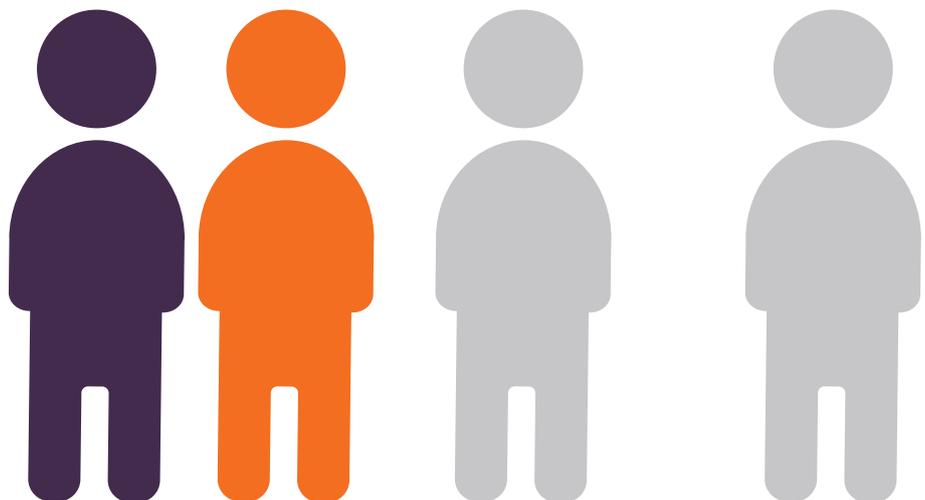
20 Another reading of this finding is that some employers noted inflexibility in some new entrants, who have the perception that 'they know it all already' and 'do not have anything else to learn'.

Figure 7:
Important factors when recruiting breakdown

Sector

	Ambition	Creativity	Particular qualifications	Work experience	Technical skills	General business skills	Ability to fit in and work as part of a team	All perceived as equally important
Interior & Exhibition design	48%	69%	33%	24%	46%	14%	58%	
Product & Industrial design	32%	66%	35%	19%	67%		55%	
Digital & Multimedia design	36%	70%	22%	22%	53%		57%	10%
Communication design	46%	79%	22%	21%	52%		61%	

Nation

England	44%	73%	26%	22%	54%		57%	
Northern Ireland	37%	63%	37%	34%	31%	23%	75%	
Scotland	34%	84%	30%	14%	55%		65%	
Wales	50%	77%	17%	16%	64%		51%	

Business size band

101-250	86%	100%	86%				100%	14%
50-100	63%	47%	18%	18%	76%		46%	20%
25-49	59%	56%	59%	18%	48%		52%	
11-24	54%	64%	19%	26%	35%		46%	14%
6-10	35%	71%	31%	24%	56%		58%	
2-5	40%	79%	22%	23%	55%		63%	
1	40%	76%	26%	18%	57%		59%	

Turnover

Don't know	41%	75%	26%	39%	52%		62%	
Refused	39%	86%	34%		64%	13%	44%	
£1 million or more	61%	62%	38%	18%	36%		49%	13%
£750,001-£1 million	42%	54%	21%	29%	65%		81%	
£500,001-£750,000	48%	54%	17%	17%	47%		26%	27%
Between £250,001-£500,000	36%	77%	17%	20%	58%	17%	74%	
Between £100,001-£250,000	39%	76%	28%	29%	47%		57%	
£50,000-£100,000	40%	71%	19%	15%	63%	14%	64%	
Less than £50,000	46%	77%	27%	19%	53%		61%	

Legend:
- Ambition and/or hunger for a career in the design sector
- Work experience
- Ability to fit in and work a part of a team
- Creativity (such as the ability to form ideas and concepts)
- Technical skills (such as drawing skills, digital skills)
- All perceived as equally important
- Particular qualifications and education background
- General business skills (such as project management, client liaison etc.)

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03/C10-13)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

29

The relative lack of importance attributed to work experience and business skills is interesting given the emphasis placed on improving business and professional skills of graduates (such as marketing, finance, IT & digital etc.) in previous pieces of work.[21] This could be explained by employers expecting candidates to pick up work experience and business skills outside of education, for example through an internship, and therefore do not expect this to be covered in education and training. However, when asked explicitly about the work based skills they look for, employers noted skills in particular software packages (33%), applicants being strong communicators, motivated and enthusiastic (both 25%) and self-starting (20%) and having commercial awareness (17%) above team work (12%), time management (8%) or problem solving (7%).

The ability to use different software packages is important across the sector and new entrants are expected to have significant experience in this area. The main software packages mentioned by respondents included Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign) (67%) and CAD design software (25%).

4.2 SKILLS SHORTAGES

Employers tend not to find it difficult to fill roles for young people, with just under one third (31%) of employers reporting any difficulty. Where there are issues, design specific roles tend to present a slightly greater challenge than non-design roles (32% of employers report difficulty with design roles and 28% non-design). Consensus from the in-depth interviews is that this is due to the high number of graduates and competition for a small number of jobs, resulting in a large talent pool for recruitment.

> **"I would like someone just out of university with a relevant degree, but as a small design firm I couldn't pay high wages… I still expect to find someone suitable though, there's plenty of supply."**
> **(Employer, Communications Design, 2 to 5 employees, Wales)**

The graduation statistics support this, with just under 23,000 Higher Education (HE) design qualifications[22] being obtained in the 2011/12 academic year (the latest for which numbers are available). As shown in Table 1, only six other subject areas produced more graduates.

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21 For example, Creative & Cultural Skills and the Design Council (2007) *Higher-level skills for higher value*; Design Skills Alliance (2008) Design Blueprint
22 Undergraduate and post-graduate

Table 1:
Top ten subjects for HE qualifications

Rank	Course subject area	Total HE qualifications obtained
1	Business studies	48,485
2	Nursing	47,545
3	Training teachers	45,750
4	Management studies	33,540
5	Academic studies in education	28,585
6	Psychology	24,070
7	**Design studies**	**22,805**
8	Social work	21,160
9	Computer science	19,685
10	English studies	18,325

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency 2011/12
Table 16 – HE qualifications obtained by subject of study (#1), level of qualification and class of first degree

In absolute terms employers are most likely to identify challenges recruiting to a 'junior designer' post, this is to be expected given that this is the most common role in which young people are employed. Generally, employers felt candidates had completed the relevant qualifications but did not have the relevant skills. Reflecting the top three attributes noted earlier in this section, the skills lacking were creativity/talent and motivation/enthusiasm.

> **"Talent is the elephant in the room here; it doesn't matter how much work experience they have if they're not talented it becomes clear very quickly."**
> **(Employer, Industrial Design, 25 to 49 employees, England)**

Although considerably less numerous, where vacancies had arisen employers were more likely to experience issues with junior/trainee engineer and account executive/manager posts – half of employers recruiting to these positions noted challenges. For both, the main cause of difficulty was insufficient candidates with the relevant qualifications, those recruiting junior/trainee engineers also felt that candidates lacked relevant experience in the workplace.

In-depth interviews considered motivation and enthusiasm from a new entrant's perspective. Many felt the level of competition and amount of work needed to get a permanent job in the sector can impact negatively on motivation. Young people discussed undertaking a number of placements, with their expectation of it becoming a permanent role gradually decreasing with each placement.

Persona 2:
Bethan, Owner of small (2-5 employees) Fashion Design firm in Wales

Skills sought

- 58% of employers who had recruited a young person indicated that the minimum qualification they looked for was a Bachelor's degree.

- Employers typically expect a young person's education and training to have provided them with sufficient knowledge in the theory of their chosen field of design (51%), commercial awareness (24%) and an enthusiasm and keenness to learn further (19%).

- Employers seek skills in particular software packages (33%), applicants being strong communicators, motivated and enthusiastic (both 25%) and self-starting (20%) and having commercial awareness (17%).

"I run my own business in fashion, selling my products online. I tend to take on a couple of young people a year on temporary contracts, if they're good I keep them on.

It's not essential to me that someone has a degree but the majority of applicants have. What is important to me, whatever route someone has taken, is that they have a thorough understanding of the skills needed in fashion. They need to have an understanding of the technical equipment / machinery; the ability to create and construct a piece; an understanding of pattern work; and the ability to carry out technical drawing.

If they have a basic understanding, then I would work with them to develop this, they don't need to be professionals as soon as they arrive! However what is very important is that they are enthusiastic and eager to learn, I would say this is almost equal to their technical skills. This becomes clear early on and for me this is the deciding factor of whether we would keep someone on.

A confident manner, particularly in showing initiative to get on with things, is a plus. It just means it takes up less of my time if they can get going from the start."

Skills shortages

- Employers tend not to find it difficult to fill roles for young people, with just under one third (31%) of employers reporting any difficulty.

"I haven't had too many problems filling any roles. I have quite strong links with local colleges and Universities and I would approach them when I needed someone. I find this a really good way to learn what types of candidates are available, looking for work and what their skillset is like. Often I get to meet and chat with people and view their work before they come in for an interview or I consider employing them; that's a real plus as a small business where every recruit forms a large part of the team. Also, being in Wales, the talent pool is smaller than say London so I feel my relationships with education are even more important as it increases my options and keeps talent in the local area.

Creativity, the ability to think creatively, is so important and I'm not saying young people don't have it but I do think that they can find it hard to express themselves, particularly to a business or someone external. I think education has a role to play here, perhaps by offering closer work with employers."
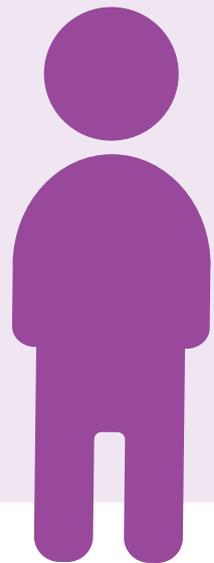
05 THE ROUTES YOUNG PEOPLE TAKE TO A CAREER IN THE SECTOR

In the context of a prevailing view that there is an overreliance on a university based pathway into the design industry, the following section considers the various routes into jobs within the sector. It takes into account the extent to which the routes young people take are also the routes employers would prefer and whether there are any differences in routes for those seeking design and non-design roles.

5.1 VARIATIONS IN ENTRY ROUTES

When considering the various different routes it is possible to take to enter the sector (in any role) young people are most likely to move either from education directly into employment or start work having undertaken paid employment (either in any role or a relevant role) elsewhere. Unpaid internships are the fourth most likely route overall, but in both Digital & Multimedia and Fashion & Textiles they are more common than one or both of the paid employment categories. It should be noted that this survey provides an employer perspective and it was suggested in the qualitative interviews with new entrants that their employers were not always aware of the detail of their route into employment.

33

Figure 8:
Entry routes to any role in the design sector

Entry route	Percentage
Education to employment in your company	75%
Education to any paid employment elsewhere and then onto employment in your company	47%
Education to paid employment relevant to the role elsewhere and then onto employment in your company	42%
Education to unpaid internship and then onto employment in your company	31%
Education to freelance work for your company to employment in your company (on a permanent basis)	24%
Education to a paid non-design role in the design sector to employment in your company	12%
Education to an apprenticeship and then onto employment in your company	11%
Education to internship (paid or unpaid for anyone) and then onto employment in your company	5%
Education to paid internship with your company and then onto employment in your company	3%

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W01.1/C3)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

Qualitative findings suggest that Communications design and Digital & Multimedia new entrants expect to do unpaid work and employers offer an unpaid placement as a route into a permanent position as they like to trial the candidate. In-depth interviews in Fashion & Textiles and Product & Industrial demonstrated more willingness to train people straight from education, whilst in a permanent position, particularly as they are aware they may have specific technologies or skills to learn for that individual business.

> **"Overall, candidates should show an ability to work in fashion and textiles design, but we would plan to equip young people with the specific skills required for the role."**
> **(Employer, Fashion & Textiles, 2 to 5 employees, Wales)**

Reasons for the product sector and fashion design sector being more willing to take people straight from education appear to be due to these sectors wanting to teach new recruits skills specific to their industry. For example, furniture design (product) or women's wear (fashion), whereas communications and digital design use skills which can be transferred across a wide range of organisations. Communications and digital employers also appeared to value a candidate having commercial awareness, which can be developed during work experience. This is anecdotal evidence but provides some idea as to why the difference occurs across sub-sectors.

Figure 9 shows the high degree of variety in the entry routes to working in the sector, with Digital & Multimedia and Communication particularly showing a range of different routes.

Figure 9:
Entry routes to the design sector breakdown

Sector

Interior & Exhibition design	73% 42% 40% 21% 15% 11%
Product & Industrial design	73% 34% 42% 21% 28% 13%
Digital & Multimedia design	67% 60% 41% 49% 37% 20% 17%
Communication design	82% 51% 46% 33% 25% 14%

Nation

England	39% 13% 10% 19% 8% 8%
Northern Ireland	65% 18% 18%
Scotland	35% 10% 8% 28% 12% 7%
Wales	34% 18% 15% 13%

Business size band

50-100	47% 32%
25-49	52% 7% 7% 7%
11-24	33% 23% 5% 9% 20%
6-10	40% 21% 11% 17% 9%
2-5	39% 20% 12% 15% 4%
1	36% 20% 34% 10%

Turnover

|	
Don't know	34% 18% 27% 6% 4%
Refused	71% 6% 8% 10%
£1 million or more	33% 16% 5% 4% 20%
£750,001-£1 million	40% 21% 10% 21%
£500,001-£750,000	31% 42% 11% 15%
Between £250,001-£500,000	47% 14% 19% 4% 8%
Between £100,001-£250,000	31% 27% 10% 20% 5%
£50,000-£100,000	50% 21% 28%
Less than £50,000	34% 13% 21% 12%

Legend:

- Education to Employment in your company
- Education to unpaid internship and then onto employment in your company
- Education to an apprenticeship and then onto employment in company
- Education to any paid employment elsewhere and then onto employment in your company
- Education to freelance work for your company to employment in your company (on a permanent basis)
- Education to internship (paid or unpaid for anyone) and then onto employment in your company
- Education to paid employment relevant to the role elsewhere and then onto employment in your company
- Education to a paid non-design role in the design sector to employment in your company
- Education to paid internship with your company and then onto employment in your company

Note: as none of the businesses with 101-250 staff answered this question, there is no data for this business size.
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W3.01/C6-C8)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

Survey respondents were also asked which was the main route taken by young people into their company and whilst education to employment was again the most common (39%), unpaid internships were almost as likely to be noted as paid employment (19% compared to 23%, 13% any paid employment and 10% paid employment in a relevant role).

On the whole, employers appear to be satisfied with the entry routes young people are taking, with 76% stating that the main entry route was also the preferred entry route. However, it should be noted that interviewees tended to see a need for change within the existing route, for example, "a University needs to offer live briefs", rather than considering a new route.

Figure 10 below shows the preferred entry routes noted by employers, based on the main routes that 76% noted as preferred and the alternatives that the remaining 24% provided.

Figure 10:
Employer's preferred entry routes to design roles

Route	Percentage
Education to employment in your company	30%
Education to unpaid internship and then onto employment in your company	17%
Education to any paid employment elsewhere and then onto employment in your company	11%
Education to paid employment relevant to the role elsewhere and then onto employment in your company	9%
Education to freelance work for your company to employment in your company (on a permanent basis)	6%
Mix of the above	4%
Education to work experience/work placement and then onto employment in your company	4%
Education to unpaid internship with your company and then onto employment in your company	2%
Education to an apprenticeship and then onto employment in your company	2%
Don't know	1%
Education to internship (paid or unpaid for anyone) and then onto employment in your company	1%

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W05/C1)

Whilst employing direct from education still comes out on top, crucial to note here is the prominence of unpaid internships as the preferred route. Qualitative interviews suggest that unpaid internships appear to be becoming expected, with greater competition meaning employers have more opportunity to use them (because competition is so high). The challenge is that if more and more people graduate to a small number of paid jobs, they are only likely to become more common. The main value of this type of placement is that they provide a clear opportunity to develop the commercial awareness that new entrants are perceived as lacking straight from education:

"Work experience can give the basics of how a business works and the idea of working to a budget."
Employer, Communications Design, 6 to 10 employees, Wales

"At University everything's 'free', all of your resources, and your time! It was definitely a learning curve to realise actually all of this in the real word means money."
**New entrant, Product Design, Wales**

5.2 ENTRY ROUTES FOR THOSE IN NON-DESIGN ROLES

Employers were asked to comment on any variation in entry route for those entering non-design roles. Just over a third (34%) of respondents felt that routes were the same and 40% that these staff took a different route. Interestingly, 26% didn't know, which reflects the comment in Persona 1 about recruitment for different teams being done separately.

Figure 11 compares the main entry routes taken for those in non-design roles and the preferred entry routes for those in design roles. It's interesting to note that employers were more likely not to know the entry route for those non-design roles, than select any particular one.

Figure 11:
Comparison of entry routes for design and non-design roles

Entry route	Design role	Non-Design role
Education to employment in your company	30%	17%
Education to unpaid internship and then onto employment in your company	17%	6%
Education to any paid employment elsewhere and then onto employment in your company	11%	4%
Education to paid employment relevant to the role elsewhere and then onto employment in your company	9%	6%
Education to freelance work for your company to employment in your company (on a permanent basis)	6%	2%
Education to work experience/work placement and then onto employment in your company	4%	4%
Education to unpaid internship with your company and then onto employment in your company	2%	0%
Education to an apprenticeship and then onto employment in your company	2%	2%
Other	15%	3%
Mix of the above	4%	4%
Don't know	1%	29%

Design role　　Non-Design role

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W6/C1)

The degree of separation between the people doing the hiring in these different functions suggests that the anecdotal perception that if you want to be a designer, getting any job in a design firm is a good first step is false. If you want to be noticed by the person responsible for design recruitment, you have to be applying directly to them.

Persona 3:

**Ben, New entrant Communications Design,
Graphic Designer freelancer**

Variations in entry routes

- Education to employment was again the most common (39%) route to employment, unpaid internships were almost as likely to be noted as paid employment (19% compared to 23%: 13% any paid employment and 10% paid employment in a relevant role).

"I'm now freelancing, I moved to London from Leeds to try and work for the big brands and it's going alright so far although I've only managed to freelance in London.

My route to a career in Graphic Design included lots of different things. I didn't know what I wanted to do at school and just did Graphic Design at college as I didn't really enjoy academic subjects. Then as this was the subject I was best at I did a BTEC in Graphic Design, then I was advised to look at degree courses and completed a foundation year and degree in Graphic Design at Falmouth.

Throughout my course I did a lot of work placements, working for free mainly, I think maybe 2 out of about 8 placements were paid. That was ok because I just wanted the experience. Then I worked on a temporary contract for about 6 months at a company in Leeds before making the move to London to hopefully work for the big brands, which is what I really want to do. Getting a permanent position is really hard and I think lots of people work for free or on temporary contracts for a long time.

For me I think attending exhibitions was key. That's where I made all of my contacts. We knew this and our tutors told us about them. Some people didn't make the effort but I'd go for the week, stay on at a friends and get the sleeper train back, they [the exhibitions] were so important."
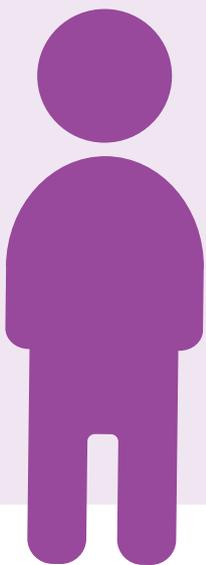
Persona 3: Continued

Entry routes by role

- 75% of employers reported that they had employed young people directly from Education.

- The most commonly reported preferred route into education was to employ young people directly from education (30%) or from education to unpaid internship and then onto employment (17%).

- Unpaid internships and work experience/placements were also found to be a common entry route, particularly amongst Digital & Multimedia design students (49%) and Communications design (33%).

"I don't really know what it's like in other sectors but I think my experience was quite similar to my peers, I maybe just tried harder. I think jobs in graphic design are easier to come by than illustration or fashion but then competition seems harder in graphic design.

I don't think employers really know what you've done previously as everything you do goes towards building your portfolio and that's what they're interested in. Saying that, I think work experience is really important as it gives you the workplace skills to help you fit in and get going quickly, I think employers really value that. I would advise anyone to do as much work experience as possible, paid if possible but you do have to made sacrifices and work for free.

Making contacts at University and doing work experience when doing your course makes it much easier to get a job straight after University, I'm still using the contacts made at University and I think a lot of people get jobs from work placements they do during their course."
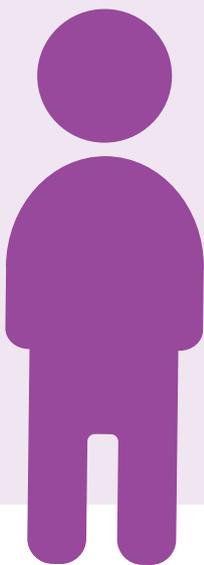
06 EMPLOYER INVESTMENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Previous research with employers has identified a disconnect between what students are taught in the classroom and how this can be applied to a work-based environment, underlining the need to provide additional training once in work to compensate for this. The following chapter explores the budgets employers dedicate to training, the skills that most commonly need to be addressed and the types of training used to do so.

6.1 TRAINING BUDGETS

Only 19% of businesses employing young people (either currently, or at some point in the past 3 years) have a training budget, which is behind the national average of 29%.[23] There are clear variations in this according to the size of the business, the larger the organisation the more likely they are to have a budget. However, amongst the larger design firms the comparison to the national average is also worse, only 27% of design firms with 5+ employees had a training budget compared to 44% nationally.

Table 2:
Extent and value of training budgets

Whether company has an annual training budget. If yes, the value of the budget	% Respondents
Yes	**19%**
Less than £1,000	2%
£1,001 – £2,500	13%
£2,501 – £5,000	12%
£5,001 – £10,000	17%
£10,001 +	28%
Refused	2%
Don't know	26%
No	**77%**
Don't know	**4%**
Total	**100%**

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03.1/S6)

23 *Employer Skills Survey 2011* – Table 86/ 1: Whether establishment has a business plan, training plan, and/or a budget for training expenditure

Unsurprisingly, the majority (63%) of the small number of businesses with a training budget in place were those with the highest turnover (£500k+). This is also reflected in the amount dedicated to training, with the most common amount being £10k+. This was noted by 28% of employers, 76% of whom turned over £1m+ (most others refused to give a turnover figure, however one business turning over £250k-£500k noted a budget of this size).

The lack of a dedicated budget for training obviously presents a clear barrier in terms of the ability to plan investment in skills development, the risk being that decisions could be made ad-hoc, rather than according to any kind of strategy related to business goals. The qualitative findings suggest business planning is also ad hoc, with training and recruitment decisions made according to business need at that time, implying that to plan investment in skills is unlikely. However, interestingly the presence of a young person does make it more likely for an employer to have a training budget; 24% of those currently employing a young person had a budget, compared to only 7% amongst those who had in the past 3 years but didn't currently.

Product & Industrial and Digital & Multimedia businesses showed the greatest tendency to have a budget in place (both at 25%) compared to other sub-sectors, reinforcing the view that these appear to offer greatest opportunity for young people.

6.2 SKILLS GAPS

Despite the low proportion of businesses with a budget, 45% of businesses stated that the young people they employed had undertaken training arranged by the business in the past year. This reinforces the notion that training is typically undertaken ad hoc and that the recording/monitoring is informal. Some qualitative interviewees felt this was naturally in line with the design process:

"We are a bunch of thinkers and we tend to work in an ad-hoc way […] you'll find that with most designers."
(Employer, Digital Design, 50 to 100 employees, England)

Following this informal approach, the main types of training provided included part-time or short courses without a qualification (41%), coaching/mentoring from an experienced colleague (34%), informal on the job training (27%). However, it's interesting to note that, at 24%, part-time or short courses with a qualification were almost as common as on the job training. These preferences are reflected in the fact that just over half employers (56%) feel that the most appropriate route to addressing skills gaps is a mix of both in house and externally developed training. Of the rest, 26% felt that skills could only be provided through in-house training whilst in work and 12% via courses delivered by a training provider outside of the workplace.[24]

43
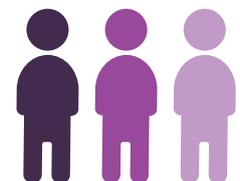
24 The remaining 6% didn't know.

Employers commonly invest resources to develop technical design skills (41%), IT skills (28%), specialist design skills (28%) or generic business skills (22%).[25] The main technical or specialist design skills that training was provided for were particular software packages, web/internet design/development and knowledge of new technology and platforms. Key software training predominantly revolved around Adobe Creative Suite, CAD software or Photoshop, although additional software suites mentioned in qualitative interviews included Illustrator, InDesign, Acrobat and Quark Express.

The increased focus on filing gaps in business skills once in post, rather than seeking these at the point of recruitment, perhaps suggests that this is an area of expertise employers are happy to develop once they have found the right person in terms of creative talent. As shown in Figure 12 in a mix of general training (such as on-the-job) and technical skills, the darker segments pulled out from the chart all reflect business skills that employers find they address upon appointment.

25 Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

Figure 12:
Initial training provided for young people upon recruitment

Category	Percentage
Presentation skills	1%
Commercial & marketing training	2%
Health & safety	2%
Communication or customer service skills	3%
CAD training	3%
Training relevant to the requirements of their own job role	4%
Training in dealing with clients	4%
In-house training courses	6%
Mentoring with senior colleagues	6%
Training in company internal processes e.g. admin, HR, timesheets	6%
External short courses & conferences	7%
General business skills	9%
General design skills e.g. drawing, sketching, measuring etc.	10%
None – already functional	15%
On the job training	24%
Computer & software application training	28%

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W01.1/C4)

Employers in qualitative interviews were strongly of the view that other skills were secondary to creativity and more easily learned on the job. Employers also stated that they recruited to fill a gap in the organisation's design capability, therefore seeking certain technical skills at recruitment rather than business skills at recruitment. This was also reflected when employers were asked what extra initial training they typically needed to provide for young people.

In general design businesses appear to be well served in regards to training for young people; the majority (92%) of businesses hadn't experienced any difficulty finding the training they required and 5% didn't know. There was little variation in this by sub-sector. However, as might be expected there was some geographical variation. Respondents from the South West, Wales and Scotland made up the majority of respondents who had experienced challenges in finding appropriate training.

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Figure 13:
Format of training provided breakdown

Sector

Interior & Exhibition design	23%	34%	18%	35%	13%	13%	6%	7%
Product & Industrial design	24%	21%	42%	20%	9%	14%		
Digital & Multimedia design	20%	47%	47%	34%	24%	24%		
Communication design	27%	56%	34%	24%	12%			

Nation

England	25%	41%	33%	28%	13%	9%	
Northern Ireland	59%	41%					
Scotland	45%	33%	22%	22%			
Wales	31%	58%	17%	11%	11%		

Business size band

101-250	86%	100%				
25-49	35%	37%	45%	22%		
11-24	15%	59%	18%	20%	21%	
6-10	19%	50%	35%	32%	10%	13%
2-5	32%	15%	32%	39%	13%	
1	93%	93%				
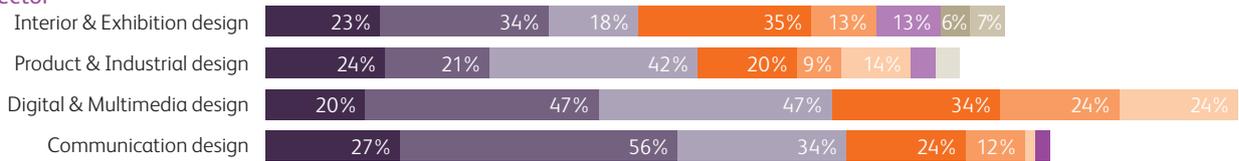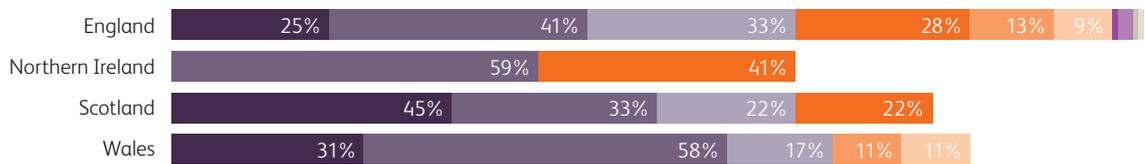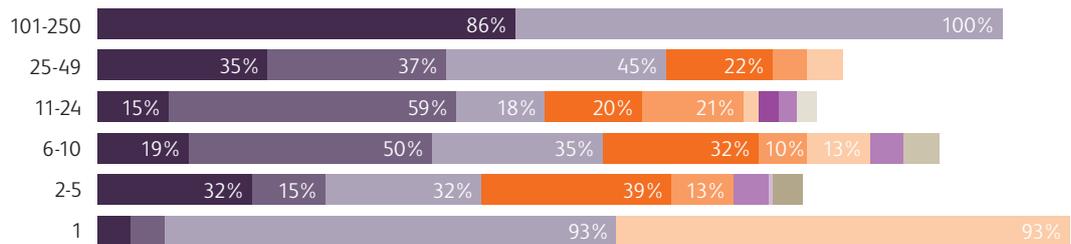
Note: as none of the businesses with 50-100 staff answered this question, there is no data for this business size.

Turnover

Don't know	64%	48%	57%	47%	13%	13%
Refused	25%	31%	44%	44%		
£1 million or more	27%	44%	33%	16%		
£750,001-£1 million	18%	34%	41%	41%	40%	11%	11%
£500,001-£750,000	10%	42%	32%	31%	16%	16%
Between £250,001-£500,000	63%	10%	34%	10%		
Between £100,001-£250,000	25%	36%	32%	42%	9%	
£50,000-£100,000	46%	9%	54%			
Less than £50,000	100%	24%	76%			

Legend:

- Part-time or short courses with a qualification
- Part-time or short courses without a qualification
- Coaching/mentoring from an expert
- Informal training delivered on the job by colleagues (ie. informal mentoring)
- Free online tutorials
- Networking
- Don't know
- Net – other
- Paid online
- On the job training
- Freelancer came in for half a day
- Coaching/mentoring from a dedicated trainer from the developer

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03.1/C15-C18)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

Persona 4:

Neil, Head of Digital Design, Large Digital & Multimedia Firm in England

Training budgets

- Only 23% of businesses employing young people (either currently, or at some point in past 3 years) have a training budget, which is behind the national average of 29%.

- The main types of training provided included part-time or short courses without a qualification (41%), coaching/mentoring from an experienced colleague (34%), and informal on the job training (27%).

"I head up the digital content of our organisation, so I would be responsible for video production and web content for our clients; more often than not it's contributing to an advertising campaign.

We mainly offer in-house training. This is the best approach for us as our work can be quite niche. When someone starts working for us they would be assigned a 'buddy' for three months and the new recruit would shadow their buddy and learn things that way.

We like to think we develop our staff but it is fairly unstructured, we don't have a set training budget. We do have an appraisal process but this is quite ad hoc. We are looking to review this though to create an official process for new recruits to develop their career with us.

I don't think we're necessarily any different to other design firms; the culture of design is informal and taking things as they go. We're also all very busy and time for training is limited!"

Skills Gaps

- Employers commonly invest resources to develop technical design skills (41%), IT skills (28%), specialist design skills (28%) or generic business skills (22%).

- In general design businesses appear to be well served in regards to training for young people; the majority (92%) of businesses hadn't experienced any difficulty finding the training they required and 5% didn't know.

"For digital design in particular it is important for us to stay on top of our game. If there was a new form of software we may send someone on a short course to learn but this would be quite rare. We would expect our recruits to come ready equipped with the skills we need – that's why we're recruiting in the first place – because there's a gap to fill.

Although it can't really be taught formally I do think there's a need for young people to become more client focussed. I'm concerned that young people's egos affect their attitude to work. At University they're all working individually and developing their individual creativity. Lately I've had experiences of people thinking they know everything. You need to learn from your peers and this is under-estimated. I think the internet is helping people to gain individual exposure which can affect their ability to then become part of a team, and have a client focus."
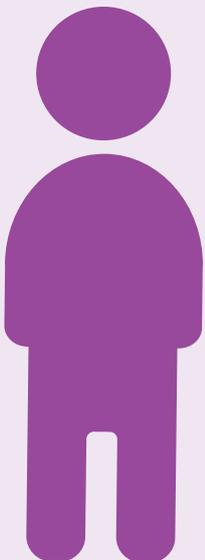
07 IMPROVING PATHWAYS TO THE SECTOR

The penultimate section of the report considers the ways in which pathways to the sector could be improved, considering changes that employers would like to see to course content and the role of employer engagement with education providers.

7.1   CHANGES TO ENTRY ROUTES

Whilst 76% of employers stated that they felt the main entry route currently taken into the sector was their preferred route, 58% of businesses who were currently employing young people (or had recently) felt that there were skills that could be better developed within the entry routes to the sector. Table 3 shows that whilst communication is at the top of the list, demand is relatively evenly balanced between specific design skills (including digital) and business and workplace skills.

The qualitative interviews suggest that communication encompasses internal communication with the design team, external communication with clients/ potential clients and the ability to communicate their concepts and ideas. Employers wanted a candidate who contributed ideas to the team, not just skills.

"They need to bring something to the table, it's not a 9 to 5 heads down job."
(Employer, Communications Design, 2 to 5 employees, Wales)
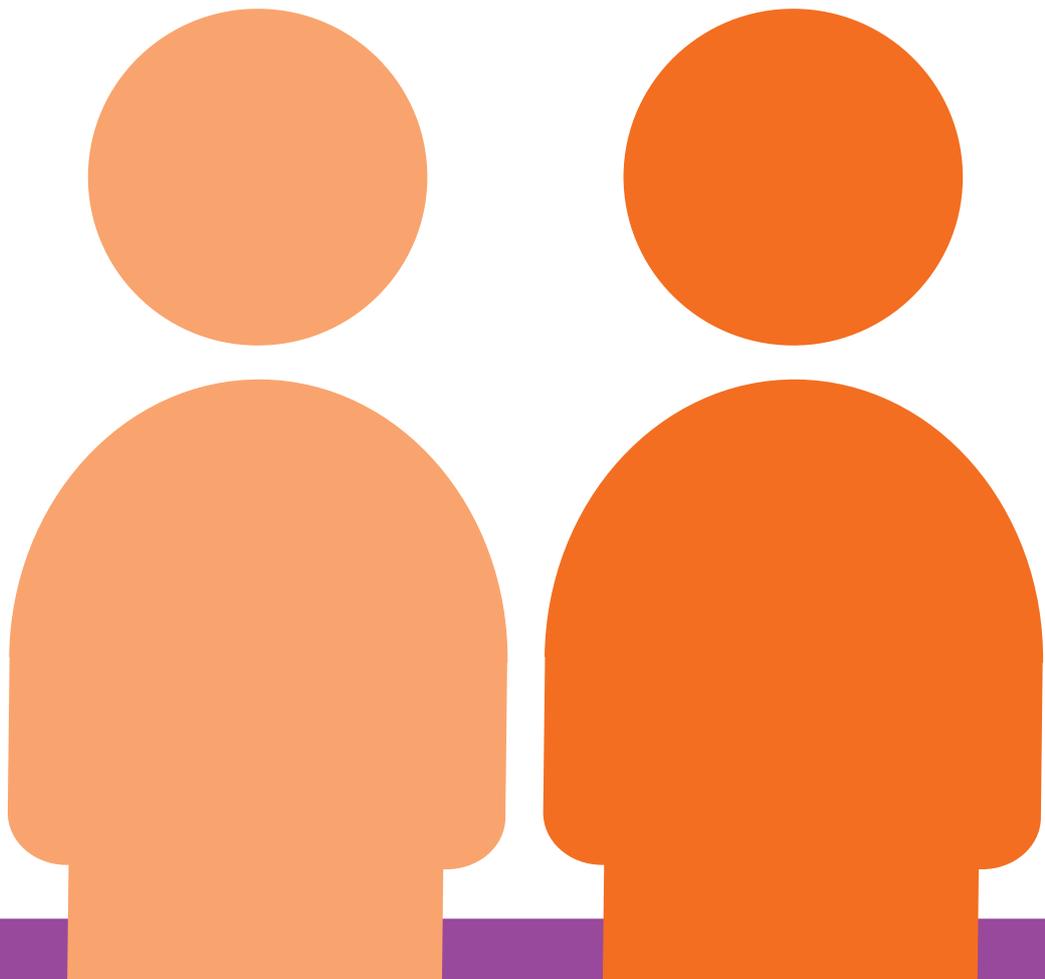
Table 3:
Skills that could be better developed

Group	Skill	% Total
Personal skills	Communication	16%
Business & workplace skills	Commercial awareness (or business acumen)	14%
Business & workplace skills	Basic business & workplace skills	11%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Knowledge of the design sector	8%
Other	Relevant work experience	8%
Business & workplace skills	Time management	8%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Practical Skills	6%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Web based or digital design skills	6%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Skills in particular software packages	6%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Experience of working to a design brief	5%
Other	Basic skills e.g. numeracy, literacy, language etc.	4%
Personal skills	Creativity and talent	4%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Technical Skills	3%
Personal skills	Showing initiative and being self-starting	3%
Business & workplace skills	Teamwork	2%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Basic design skills (including sketching and drawing etc.)	2%
Design skills (inc. Digital)	Specific design skills	2%
Business & workplace skills	Presentation skills	1%
Business & workplace skills	Problem solving	1%

Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W01.1/Q5)

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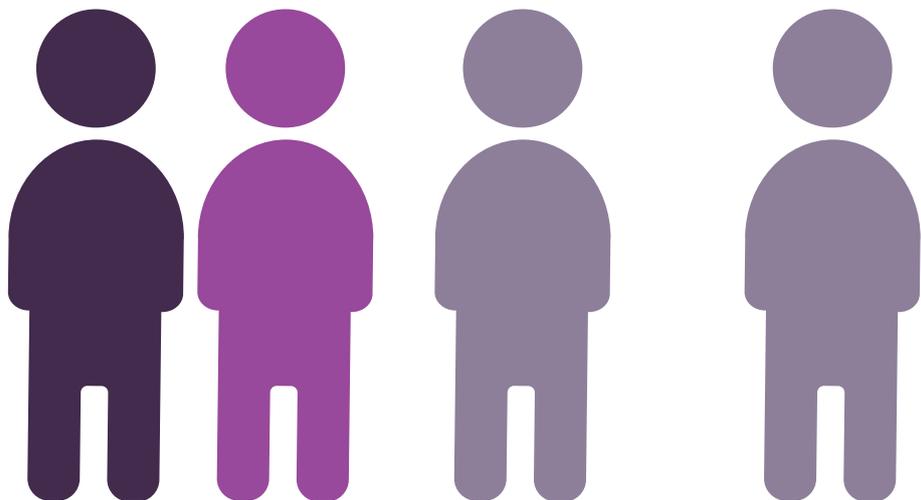
The list is perhaps unsurprising, given what the previous section demonstrated as to the range of training currently provided by employers to fill skills gaps. However, there is a much greater emphasis on communication skills and commercial awareness here, which potentially refutes the previous suggestion that employers are happy to develop these skills. The demand for commercial and business skills of new entrants, such as the ability to liaise with clients and an awareness of budgets, came through in the qualitative research also:

"It [business skills] seems to be passed over at University, learning how to deal with clients, that your work fits into a chain, the ability to talk to clients etc."
(Employer, Digital Design, 50 to 100 employees, England)

The qualitative research indicates employers expect some level of commercial awareness prior to employment (and for education to contribute to this as per the quote above), but they do also expect to build on foundations that have already been laid.

New entrants also feel that it would be preferable to them to have the opportunity to gain this experience whilst studying:

"It was a shock having such a short time to deliver, you get 3 weeks at Uni and 3 days at work."
(New entrant, Communications Design, England)

Almost half (45%) feel that if such skills issues were to be addressed it would allow for more focus on growing the businesses skill set, rather than teaching the basics, 35% felt it would reduce the amount of time existing staff need to spend training new staff and 27% felt it would reduce the length of time required for an induction period for new staff. These views were reflected in the qualitative interviews, where participants raised concern about reduced profitability as a result of spending too much time on training:

"If I'm not working, we're losing money, it's a risk taking on someone who needs training."
**(Employer, Communications design, 2 to 5 employees, Wales)**
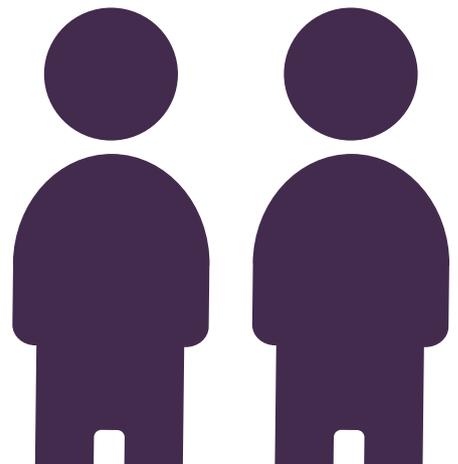
7.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATION OR TRAINING PROVIDERS

Nearly half (44%) of businesses engage with education and training providers and 14% report that they are 'very' engaged. For those who do not engage, key reasons are lack of time (32% – although these businesses state that they would like to if they had more time), a perception that it is not relevant for them to do so (25%)[26] and not seeing any benefit in doing so (8%).

Figure 14:
Extent of engagement with education or training providers

A	**32%** Not at all engaged
B	**23%** Not very engaged
C	**31%** Fairly engaged
D	**14%** Very engaged
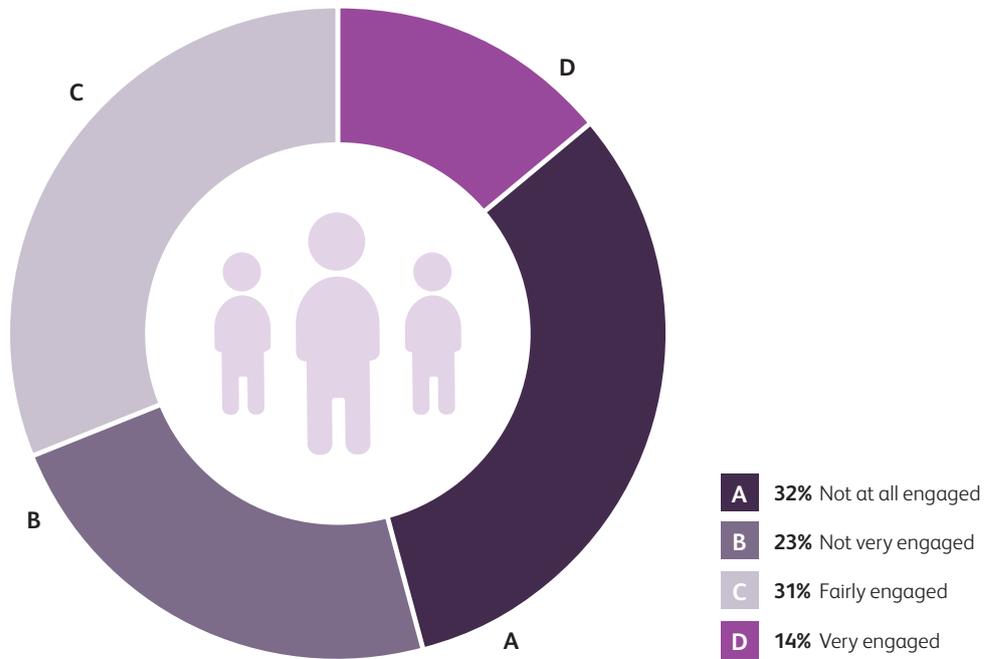
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03.1/C28)
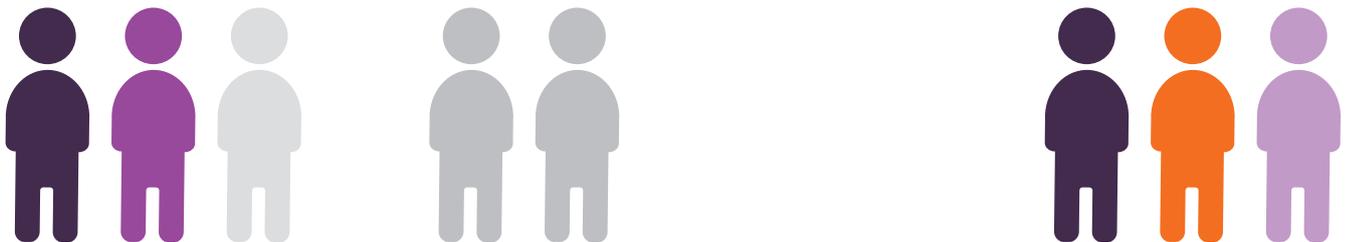
26 25% = Don't see it as my role (8%), not relevant for the company (13%), company needs something too specific (4%)

In order to improve engagement with education or training providers, businesses equally felt they would need to either be approached by training providers, or paid for the time spent (both 17%). This could suggest that while capacity is a key issue, there may also be a role for education and training providers to actively approach, or communicate with design businesses in order to encourage a greater level of engagement. However, 25% felt that there was nothing that could be done to encourage engagement, it simply wasn't relevant for them. Interestingly one or two employers felt that if students had too much engagement with employers in education this could hinder their creative development.

"We expect them to come with fresh ideas."
(Employer, Digital Design, 50 to 100 employees, England)

The in-depth interviews offered further insight into the mixed level of engagement by employers with education. The qualitative findings are similar to the survey findings in that a lack of time is the main reason, and some struggle to see the benefits. However those who do engage state clearly that the benefits are around finding and recruiting the best candidates. They appreciate being able to engage with the students and see their work pre-employment. One interviewee discussed how by engaging with students it kept his organisation up to date on trends and design methods:

"It is important, you get the exchange of information; we get in amongst it… we get to see the creative energy. It's very inspiring to see how young people are thinking."
**(Employer, Communications Design, 6 to 10 employees, Wales)**

However, whilst those already engaging were positive, those who were not, but wanted to, stated that they struggled to see ways of engaging with education. A concern from a small number of in-depth interviewees was that they could be seen to exploit young people by offering work placements and that they need to think carefully about this. Some suggested that formal routes of engagement, such as government initiatives or an official website would help provide a clear route of communication and ease worries around exploitation.

From a new entrant perspective where their University/education provider did engage with employers this offered a number of benefits including contacts, work placements and receiving information about exhibitions and competitions. However, it was reported that even within the same provider, engagement was sporadic and could depend in personal interest/drive – either on the part of the student or the tutor:

"One of my tutors knew everyone, the other had no interest in business or employers so it was hit and miss really who you got."
**(New entrant, Product Design, Wales)**
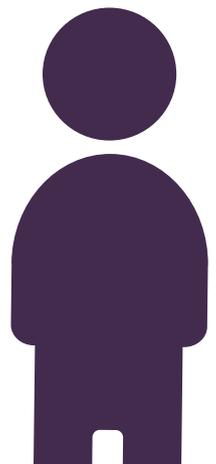
**Figure 15:**
Extent of engagement breakdown

Sector

	Net – Not engaged	Net – Engaged	1 – not at all engaged	2 – not very engaged	3 – fairly engaged	4 – very engaged
Interior & Exhibition design	64%	36%	41%	22%	23%	13%
Product & Industrial design	46%	54%	26%	20%	28%	25%
Digital & Multimedia design	65%	35%	34%	31%	28%	7%
Communication design	51%	49%	29%	22%	39%	12%

Nation

	Net – Not engaged	Net – Engaged	1 – not at all engaged	2 – not very engaged	3 – fairly engaged	4 – very engaged
England	54%	46%	33%	22%	33%	14%
Northern Ireland	82%	18%	30%		53%	18%
Scotland	61%	39%	33%	28%	20%	19%
Wales	47%	53%	15%	31%	40%	13%

Business size band

	Net – Not engaged	Net – Engaged	1 – not at all engaged	2 – not very engaged	3 – fairly engaged	4 – very engaged
101-250	14%	86%		14%		86%
50-100	55%	45%	17%	38%		45%
25-49	49%	51%	39%	10%	41%	10%
11-24	43%	57%	19%	24%	38%	19%
6-10	51%	49%	28%	23%	38%	11%
2-5	68%	32%	40%	28%	23%	9%
1	58%	42%	47%	11%	15%	28%

Turnover

	Net – Not engaged	Net – Engaged	1 – not at all engaged	2 – not very engaged	3 – fairly engaged	4 – very engaged
Don't know	51%	49%	31%	20%	43%	
Refused	42%	58%	15%	27%	26%	32%
£1 million or more	48%	52%	29%	20%	32%	20%
£750,001-£1 million	56%	44%	19%	36%	12%	32%
£500,001-£750,000	51%	49%	35%	15%	31%	18%
Between £250,001-£500,000	61%	39%	39%	22%	32%	
Between £100,001-£250,000	62%	38%	37%	25%	34%	
£50,000-£100,000	97%		36%		62%	
Less than £50,000	40%	60%	40%		27%	33%

Legend:
- Net – Not engaged
- Net – Engaged
- 1 – not at all engaged
- 2 – not very engaged
- 3 – fairly engaged
- 4 – very engaged

53

Source: Pathways to Design 2013 (TBR ref: W03/C19-C22)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

7.3 MOTIVATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Those who do engage with education and training providers typically do so via offering work experience, guest lecturing, having links with a local training provider or engaging with the careers service. The key motivations for this include finding the best candidates, to give something back, or to support training and development.

Figure 16:
Reasons for engagement
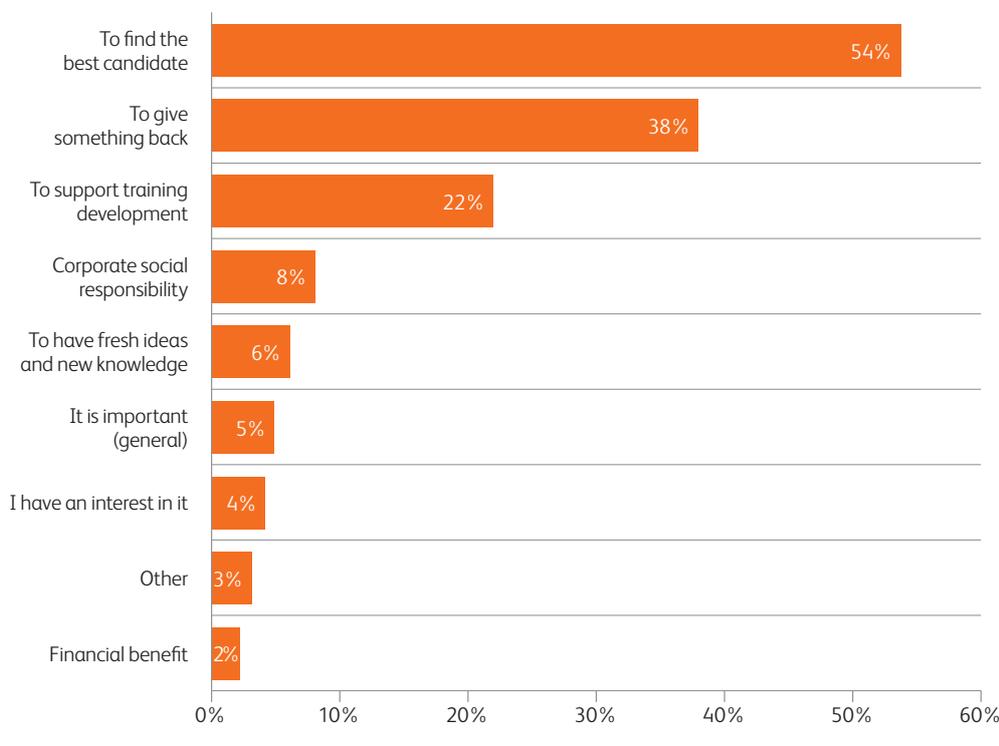
Source: Pathways to Design Survey 2013 (TBR ref: W03.1/C28)
Totals to greater than 100% as respondents could pick more than one.

Larger businesses (with 25+ staff) are more likely to cite finding the best candidates as their main motivation, whereas smaller firms were found to be driven in main part by a personal interest in education development or the desire to give something back. Without this personal interest, or a perceived need for recruitment it appears that businesses struggle to see the relevance of engagement with such providers:

"I don't really see benefits for employers, it's more about giving something back to the community."
Employer, Industrial Design, 25 to 49 employees, England

Small employers in the in-depth interviews indicated they would be interested in developing new pathways which enabled them to pay a lower wage in return for training a young person, which is essentially an apprenticeship due to the expense of employing graduates. This may allow their businesses to grow at the same time as offering opportunities to those aged 16 to 21 in design.

Persona 5:
Rosie, Digital Designer, Small Digital & Multimedia agency in England and her mentor, Afzal

Changes to Entry Routes (Rosie)

- 58% of businesses who were currently employing young people (or had recently) felt that there were skills that could be better developed within the entry routes to the sector.

- The top three skills that could be better developed as reported by employers were communication (16%), commercial awareness (14%) and basic business and workplace skills (11%).

"I've just finished an apprenticeship in design and luckily I was offered a permanent position by my employer. I knew University wasn't for me, I prefer practical subjects. I did a BTEC in design and then looked on the National Apprenticeship Service and found this and it was perfect for me. I did look at University but there were so many courses it was confusing.

I think I got the apprenticeship because I was confident and probably came across like I wouldn't be too much of a burden. Since starting I've been involved with clients and learned a lot from the team. My role is quite varied and sometimes I'm doing quite tedious work that the others don't have time to do like copy and pasting and tidying up but that's all part of work.

My employers have been very supportive and I think being an apprentice suits them, the responsibility is on us to make it work, we give up a lot of our own time."

Engagement with education and training providers (Afzal)

- Just less than half (44%) of businesses engage with education and training providers and only 14% report that they are 'very' engaged.

"What was most important for me when I was approached about an apprenticeship was that I would get the choice to how it worked. I did not want my apprentices leaving for a day every week so the assessor comes to us and the apprentices do their work at home. We link to a work project if we can.

Working with education is quite new to me. I have gone to exhibitions at Universities but I haven't really had a relationship with individuals. I haven't had much time in the past but our business is established now and at a stage where we are able to know where an apprentice would fit. I don't think apprentices would work in a new business where no-one has any time.

It would help employers engage if there were more formal routes to do so. From my experience employers do not know how to engage with education, who do they speak to, and what's in it for them? I can see that students benefit from getting 'real life' experience or contacts but for employers it's harder to tell."
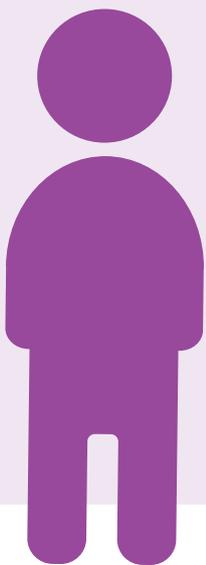
08 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 CONCLUSIONS

In drawing together the key conclusions of this study, it is useful to revisit some of the key issues raised in the existing literature (summarised in section 2.1) and consider how this research provides further insight:

Employers require the skills and knowledge currently provided by a University based pathway

Fifty eight per cent of respondents expect new entrants to have a bachelor's degree, with qualitative findings showing that this is a preferred route for employers as they value the theoretical grounding that young people receive through this type of study and the time and space to develop creatively that a degree provides. Given our findings it is therefore likely that, without a degree, a young person will struggle to gain entry to the sector. However, as the importance is placed on what the degree provides, rather than the qualification itself, it may well be the case that employers in this study are happy with (and rely on) university based routes, only because there currently is no other credible option.

There is also an issue of business impact here. All employees need to make a productive contribution, particularly in a sector dominated by small firms. Most employers struggle to see how a 16 year old's creative ability could be sufficiently developed to do so.

Creativity is prioritised over other workplace skills and demonstrated by an excellent portfolio

The research indicates that in most cases an excellent portfolio is the key to getting noticed and getting a job. Qualitative interviews suggest a portfolio is the method through which a new entrant is able to demonstrate their individual creative ability (such as the ability to form ideas and concepts), which is cited as the most important factor when recruiting. New entrants interviewed understood the importance of a portfolio in showcasing their creative potential, and employers interviewed used it to assess creativity rather than other workplace capabilities. Related to the conclusion above, that employers value the creative and technical skills a degree provides; a portfolio is the demonstration of this time in education to develop creatively, rather than the qualification itself.

Employers clearly place an extremely high value on individual creativity. This is the essential spark that they recruit for.

Software skills are important across the board. However, it is not a finding of this research that employers see skills in this area as something education providers should be delivering. Rather, software skills are noted as an expectation and something that training tends to be provided for once in post. As such, the demand is for accessible CPD training for individuals to maintain skills, which at the moment employers do not note any difficulty finding.
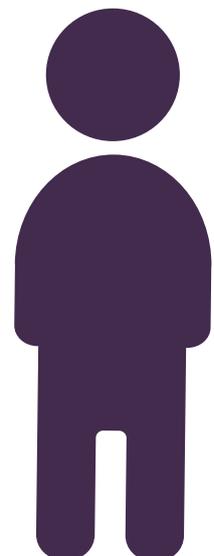
Employers require greater commercial awareness (rather than skills) at the point of recruitment

A preference for work experience (17% of employers preferred route is through an unpaid internship) links to the need for new entrants to have greater commercial awareness at the point of recruitment. The research does not bear out findings from previous studies that there are specific 'business' skills (such as finance/marketing) that employers would like new entrants to have at the point of recruitment. However, there is clearly a need for new entrants to have greater commercial awareness. This could be seen as a somewhat nebulous term. However, is possible to translate to 'an awareness of working towards a live client brief rather than a simulated university brief'. The differences being:

- A need to work at pace on a client brief

- An ability to see things from a client perspective. It was reported by both employers and new entrants that they work on their individual creativity at University, but in the workplace they need to adhere to a client's list of requirements, not their own.

- The capability to liaise with clients; some employers expressed concern that new recruits lacked the skills to pitch and respond to clients. This is linked to the lack of ability to see things from a client perspective.

- The ability to work in a team, in collaboration – not competition, which some new entrants stated was difficult when they were used to working towards individual grades.
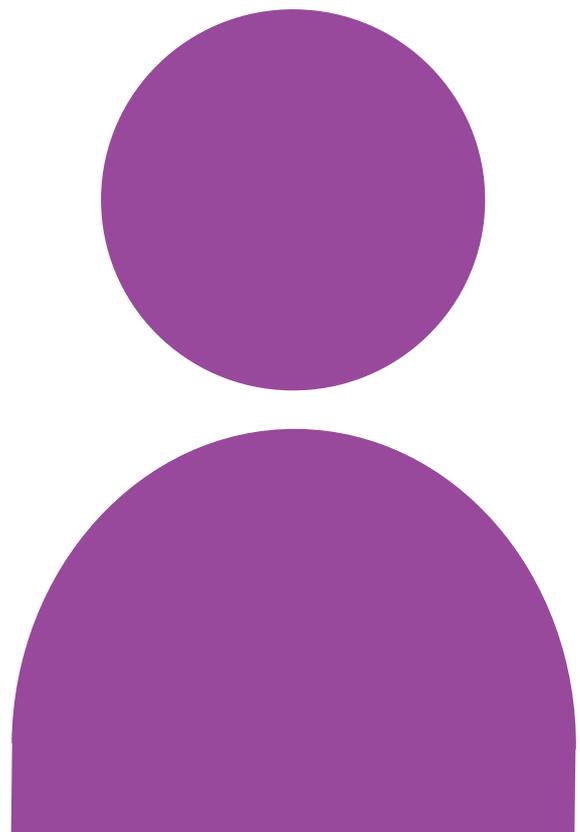
Employers have difficulty matching candidates to vacancies, using a range of recruitment methods to ensure the correct fit

Competition is fierce, so employers don't tend to suffer from skills shortages. However, they do take pains to make sure they get the right fit for their business. For example attending exhibitions and using work trials. The varied recruitment processes across the sector are likely to add to confusion for new entrants. Greater clarity on the 'rules of engagement' would therefore be helpful. Whilst it was not the role of this study to evaluate the potential for specific courses to lead to a job in the sector, it is clear from the array of approaches taken (from education to work experience to exhibiting) that there is a lack of clarity, apart from the need for a strong portfolio, on which is the most effective, and what needs to be included in the pathway to a design career.

The research seems to demonstrate that seeking a non-design role in an agency with a view to crossing over into the design team is not necessarily a valid approach. Recruitment tends to be done separately and often follows a different process (qualitative interviews tended to show that non-design roles are recruited more traditionally, i.e. through advertisements and CV submission).

It is unclear how employers contribute effectively to design education

This is clearly an issue with only 14% of employers reporting they are 'very engaged' and nearly a third (32%) not at all engaged with education. The extent to which employers engage varies widely and seems to depend very much on personal preference. In many cases employers simply do not see the benefit of doing so, and as such promotional work or case studies to clarify this would be useful, perhaps in conjunction with some of the organisations running design awards.

54% of employers who engage with education do so to find the best candidates but employers report being nervous about the legal and ethical implications of employing a young person or offering an internship to do so, and felt that an official initiative or website would help provide a clear route of communication and engagement and ease worries around exploitation.

There is also an argument for improved careers advice in schools. None of the new entrant interviews had careers advice to lead them into design pre-University. University advice was positive, but prior to this, reports of parental support and 'falling into' design were common, with school advice being focussed on academia and knowledge of 'good' courses very minimal.

It is unclear what a vocational route into the design industry consists of

There is a clear consensus from employers that any route must deliver a strong portfolio and a good theoretical grounding in order to be credible. As such, other pathways must provide the space/opportunity to develop these.

There would appear to be space for more design specific pathways for the 19-21 age group. Fewer people at this age seem to be able to make it into either design or non-design roles (26% of businesses employ 19-21 year olds compared to 93% employing 22-25 year olds). As previously noted, the point at which the preferred environment exists within which to employ a young person (any age between 16 and 25) seems to be at £500k+ in turnover and once a firm employs 6+ employees. For 19-21 year olds, this changes slightly to 11+ employees (but the £500k marker remains the same).

Apprenticeships could potentially fill this gap, but they would need to be carefully marketed to employers who see a lack of time and resource to develop an apprentice as an issue, alongside concerns that at 19 young people haven't had the opportunity to fully develop their creative skills. Success would very much depend on how young people had therefore had the chance to develop their skills and knowledge between 14 and 19; it could be that apprenticeships are marketed to those with a BTEC or A-levels in design, who are seeking an alternative to a degree.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Formalise an alternative route to the University pathway for 19-21 year olds

The research has uncovered that while the vast majority of employers that take on young people do so at a period after graduation (22-25 years old), a significant percentage are still willing to recruit people aged 19-21, and these people are being recruited primarily in design, rather than support, roles. This is interesting, when coupled with the fact that 19% of design businesses claim not to be interested in any particular qualification when examining candidates. Future work on apprenticeship development and qualification development needs to focus on how this cohort of young people can be best developed, in conjunction with the industry. This may involve testing higher level apprenticeships which offer an equivalent to a degree. The capacity for the development of a portfolio, which may be lacking in vocational routes, also needs to be specifically examined.

While apprenticeship pathways are generally not sought in the design industry, the Product & Industrial design sub-sector would appear to have the infrastructure most suited to taking on this type of learner.

However, when developing new qualifications (for any design sector) it will be important to consider how they will be marketed to employers to counter concerns over a lack of time and resource in their business.
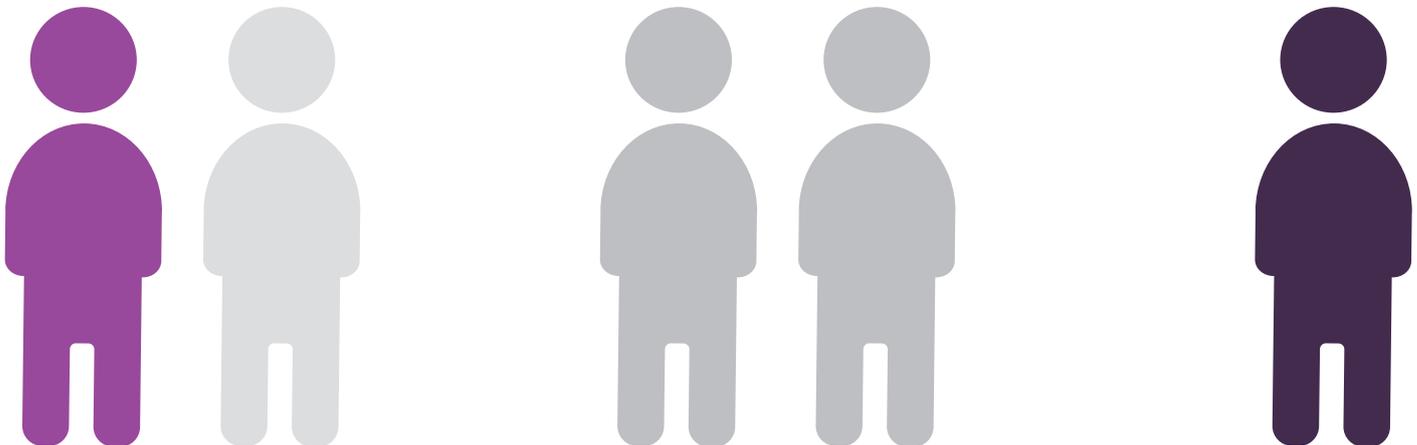
Examine how individual courses can enable students to operate in a real working environment

There is a disconnect between what students are taught in the classroom and how this can be applied to a work-based environment. On the one side, employers value the space and time to develop theoretical understanding and experiment creatively. On the other, they would like new entrants to have a more developed appreciation of real working environment.

It's clear that there are some alterations to course content that could support this, without removing the space for creative development. For example, time-trialled assignments, live briefs or greater industry input into sample briefs, shorter deadlines for more varying pieces of work and so on. However, it is impossible to fully simulate the business environment. One could also argue that it is also un-necessary, if it's possible to provide meaningful and useful (for the employer and the young person) work placements in business. This is an on-going issue that needs to be resolved through examining how higher education courses can individually be improved.

Integrated post-graduate or sandwich year placements during higher education could be of value in offering a work-based environment within education to the sector, yet over the past few years the number of placements has reduced in the economy in general. A concerted effort has to go into raising the number of placements available, and specifically building work-related skills within these placements. This research has revealed only limited interest in post-graduate qualifications. Rather, employers have expressed the need for graduates to be able to gain industry experience once they have graduated from their bachelor's degree (if they haven't been able to do so whilst studying), i.e. something that is done 'post' graduation.

Provide greater clarity on the 'rules of engagement' which would be helpful, alongside improved careers advice in schools.

This research highlights that the pathway to a career in design is currently complex and employers are seemingly unaware of the range of methods undertaken by young people to achieve a career in design. It would be useful to produce clear guidance on what employers are looking for and how to attain it, for example this research points to the importance of the portfolio and a need for commercial awareness. Guidance should indicate the different routes available to achieve this.

The guidance should include information for young people, parents, educators and employers, starting from secondary school, where clear careers guidance for design appears to be particularly lacking.

Create an official roadmap for employer engagement with the education sector

Routes for employers to engage with education appear to be unofficial and often down to personal relationships and motivations. Employers need to see the benefit of engaging with education, and feel ethically secure in doing so. This could be achieved through the creation of a formal offer of engagement by the education sector which sets out how to do so, and how employers can benefit. To reassure against exploitation the offer could be endorsed by design trade bodies and potentially larger design employers.

09 APPENDIX

9.1 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Table 4:
Breakdown of telephone survey responses by region and sector

Region	Sub-sector						
	Commun-ication design	Digital & Multimedia design	Product & Industrial design	Interior & Exhibition design	Fashion & Textiles design	Service design	Total
North East	6	1	3	5	-	1	16
North West	17	3	4	9	-	1	34
Yorkshire & Humber	11	3	6	5	-	-	25
East Midlands	12	7	8	9	-	1	37
West Midlands	13	2	8	8	-	2	33
East of England	12	4	13	11	-	3	43
London	27	11	19	23	4	1	85
South East	18	4	12	23	2	1	60
South West	23	5	8	14	-	1	51
England Total	139	40	81	107	6	11	384
Wales	44	14	6	7	2	2	75
Scotland	21	11	5	10	3	-	50
Northern Ireland	3	2	1	4	-	1	11
Total	**207**	**67**	**93**	**128**	**11**	**14**	**520**

Table 5:
In-depth interview respondents

Employers (6)	New entrants (8)
Large digital firm, London, England. (50 to 100 employees)	Industrial designer with 3 years' experience, England.
Medium sized industrial design firm, Leicestershire, England (31 employees)	Junior graphic designer with 18 months experience in the workplace, England, freelance following one year's employment.
Medium sized product design firm, London, England (40 employees)	Focus group with 3 young designers' at large international communications and brand design firm based in London, between 6 to 18 months experience.
Small communications brand design firm, Wales (6 to 10 employees)	Junior designer in small digital design firm in the Midlands having just completed a design apprenticeship and started 1st year of permanent employment.
Small fashion design firm, Wales (2 to 5 employees)	Junior fashion designer with less than 1 years' experience, Wales.
Small communication print design firm, Wales (2 to 5 employees)	Junior product and brand designer with 1 years' experience, Wales, starting own product and fashion design business.

9.2 DEFINITION

The remit for this project was to focus on the design industry as a separate sector, rather than looking in depth at design in the wider economy (e.g. embedded design teams in businesses engaged in non-design related activities). Given the exclusion of support activities to performing arts[27] and design and development engineers[28] in the recent DCMS consultation to classify the creative industries[29], Set design and Engineering design were excluded from this study. In order to develop a more detailed view of the roles within design agencies, the following sub-sectors were also excluded:

- Advertising

- Architecture

- Marketing agencies

- PR agencies

27 https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/classifying-and-measuring-the-creative-industries-consultation-on-proposed-changes
28 Standard Industrial Code (SIC) 9002
29 Standard Occupational Code (SOC) 2126
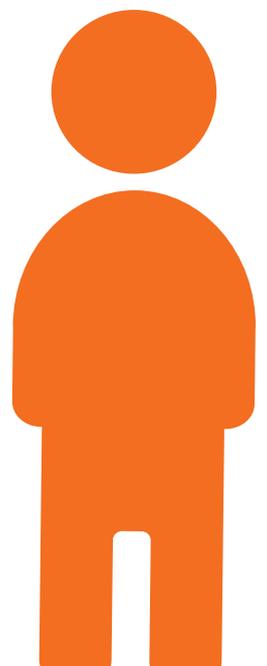
The final definition applied to this study was developed in consultation with the project steering group by drawing on previous definitions by Creative & Cultural Skills, the Design Council and other research definitions as follows:

Sub-sector	Definition applied to this study
Communication design	Communication design includes the development of a distinct identity and personality in order to create a corporate identity or communicate and promote an organisation, person, product or service. This includes packaging and brand designers, graphic designers, graphic artists, information designers and commercial artists.
Digital & multimedia design	Digital & Multimedia design includes the development of recorded and played or displayed information content using computerised or electronic devices, but can also be a part of live performances. This includes web design and development, visual lighting shows/displays, simulations, broadcast, film and television idents, digital design and interaction design. For the purposes of this study, computer games and animation designers are excluded as this is covered under the remit of other work.
Product & Industrial design	Product design is the process of creating a new product to be sold by a business to its customers. A very broad concept, it is essentially the efficient and effective generation and development of ideas through a process that leads to new products (including packaging, furniture etc.). Industrial design is the use of both applied art and applied science to improve the aesthetics, ergonomics, functionality, and/or usability of a product, and it may also be used to improve the product's marketability and even production. The role of an industrial designer is to create and execute design solutions for problems of form, usability, physical ergonomics, marketing, brand development, and sales. For the purposes of this study, engineering and architectural related product and industrial design is excluded.
Interior & Exhibition design	Interior design can include a specialisation in kitchen or bathroom design, on interpreting trends and fashion, or focus on the architecture and fabric of a building's interior. For the purposes of this study, residential interior design is excluded however commercial interior design is included. Exhibition design includes the creation of fixtures and display stands for events such as large public exhibitions, conferences, trade shows and temporary displays for business, museums, libraries and galleries.
Fashion & Textiles design	Fashion & Textiles design includes a range of design activities related to textiles, wearing apparel, shoes, furniture and other interior decoration and other fashion goods as well as other personal or household goods. As there is simultaneous work being completed on the skills needs of the jewellery design sector, this area is excluded from this study.
Service design	Service design is the process of making a delivered service useful, efficient, effective and desirable. Service design includes identifying problem areas and areas for improvement, redesigning products to improve customer interaction, designing spaces to allow more effective delivery and creating printed material/websites/uniforms/adverts to improve communication relating to a particular service.[30]

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creative & Cultural Skills would like to thank the Design Business Association (DBA) and the British Industrial Design Association (BIDA) for sharing their membership databases with the research team. Furthermore, we would like to thank all of the businesses and individuals that took time to be part of the research, either through the telephone survey or the in-depth interviews. Creative & Cultural Skills would also like to thank the following people for their participation in this research project:

- Sorrel Herschberg (The Sorrell Foundation)

- Ross Anderson (University of the Arts London)

- Bel Reed (Design Council)

- Ailbhe McNabola (Design Council)

- Richard Green (The Design and Technology Association)

- Cheryl Phillips (The Design and Technology Association)

- Jenny Hann (University of South Wales)

- Sally Lukins (The Design Business Association)

- Carole-Anne Davies (Design Commission for Wales)
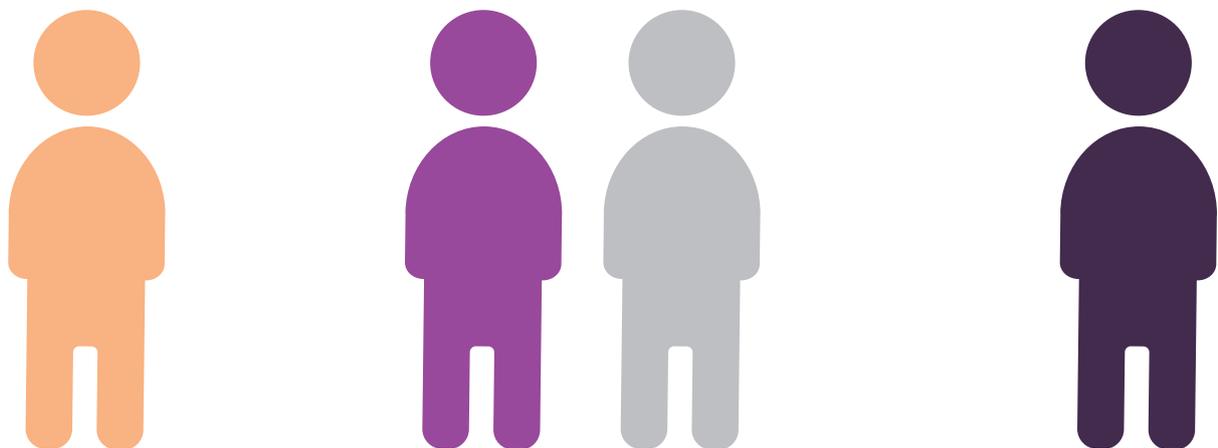
This research has been led by Fiona Tuck, Head of Research at TBR, in association with Qa Research and Madano Partnership.

TBR is an economic development and research consultancy with niche skills in understanding the dynamics of local, regional and national economies, sectors, clusters and markets. TBR has a wealth of experience in delivering mapping and skills based research in the creative and cultural industries and related sectors. TBR celebrated its 25th year in business in 2011 and is proud to continue providing invaluable evidence and knowledge from which strategic decisions can be made. **www.tbr.co.uk**

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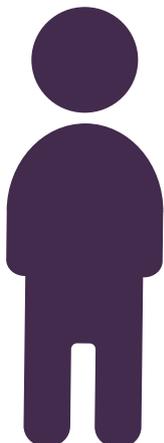
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