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# The Brighton Factor: New graduates and their local labour market

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# 1 Introduction

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This report presents the findings from the first phase of a study undertaken by the University of Sussex Career Development and Employment Centre and the Institute for Employment Studies to explore the **aspirations and expectations** of the university's graduates, particularly those who stay on in the city of Brighton and Hove and in the wider county after they graduate. There are concerns that graduates wishing to stay local are competing within a wide pool and may suffer underemployment due to the nature of the local labour market. The city is vibrant and has seen strong economic growth but has a dual economy with highly skilled jobs supported by lower skilled front-line support service jobs, and high levels of out-migration of residents (commuting outwards for work). How can the city make the most effective use of those graduates who want to stay, and how can graduates develop their careers locally?

Almost 650 final year students, from different courses and with different backgrounds, shared with us their plans for the future (both the immediate future and longer term), what they wanted to do and where they would like to be, and how they thought they would get there. They also provided feedback on their university experience and their thoughts about the city of Brighton and Hove.

In the next stages of the research we will explore whether graduates' expectations were met, how early careers develop and what factors help and hinder careers, particularly for those who want to stay on in the city after graduating.

Research undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) in other regions of the UK<sup>1</sup> indicates that London and the South East have strong attractions to graduates who want to benefit from quality of life and the employment opportunities that the South offers. Indeed, data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows these regions see a large influx of graduates every year. The most recent data shows

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<sup>1</sup> Tyers et al. (2006) *Welsh Graduates and their Jobs: Employment and Employability in Wales*, HEFCW; Pollard et al. (2005) *Graduate Employment Choices in the East Midlands*, emda; Pollard et al. (2004) *Next Choices: Career Choices Beyond University*, IES; Perryman et al. (2003) *Choices and Transitions: A study of the Graduate Labour Market in the South West*, HERDA-SW.

that almost one in every five working first degree graduates are working in London six months after leaving university, and a further 12 per cent are based in the South East.

Table 1.1: Geographical distribution of first degree graduates in employment after six months (study region and employment region)

Region	Destination (N)	Destination (%)	Study (N)	Study (%)
North East	5,605	4.0	7,470	5.3
North West	15,205	10.9	16,075	11.4
Yorkshire & Humberside	11,260	8.1	14,870	10.6
East Midlands	8,860	6.4	12,885	9.1
West Midlands	10,760	7.7	10,515	7.5
East	9,160	6.6	6,130	4.3
London	26,515	19.1	18,905	13.4
South East	16,915	12.2	16,025	11.4
South West	10,305	7.4	11,425	8.1
Wales	6,760	4.9	8,385	5.9
Scotland	13,160	9.5	14,080	10.0
Northern Ireland	4,630	3.3	4,170	3.0
All known	139,135	100.0	140,935	100.0

Note: Base is UK domiciled first degree graduates of known employment

Source: Derived from Table 7b, HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education 2004/05, 2006

There are concerns, however, that graduates wishing to stay local (stay on in the South East after finishing their studies) are competing within a wide, and increasing, pool and may suffer underemployment. Staying on in the local labour market may, therefore, carry a penalty for the University of Sussex graduates. This new research explores the migration decisions of a cohort of graduates from one university, the University of Sussex. In particular it examines migration decisions at a local/city level, exploring whether graduates wish to stay on in the city of Brighton and Hove or its surroundings after graduating. It investigates the motivations behind location decisions and expectations for the labour market and early careers. It also provides a sample of graduates to track over time, to examine their progress in the labour market and to see whether graduates find the work they want and are using the skills and knowledge gained whilst at university in the local labour market.

## 1.1 Methodology

In mid April 2007, 3,295 final year students from the University of Sussex were sent a questionnaire asking about their plans for the future. All full-time students were surveyed, including those who had studied at undergraduate level and postgraduate level, and those who came to the university to study from outside of the UK (ie

European Union students and Overseas or International students). The questionnaire covered:

- the importance of factors when choosing to study at Sussex, and satisfaction with time at the university
- realistic expectations for the short term (six months after graduating) and medium term (three years after graduating) in terms of activity, and for those anticipating employment, the job and industry
- the importance of factors when choosing an employer
- decisions about where to live and where to work
- the importance of factors when choosing a place to live and a place to work, and how well the city of Brighton and Hove measures against these factors
- background information about the individual and their study at the university.

The students were sent a reminder copy of the questionnaire in early May and were also given the opportunity to respond to the survey electronically by completing the questionnaire online. All individuals were emailed a further reminder about the study in the final week of term, and were directed to the research website where details of the study and findings of the research would be posted. By the end of June 648 responses were received, giving a response rate of 19.6 per cent. However, it should be noted that a number of questionnaires were unable to be delivered, due to out of date addresses, so the true response rate is higher. Overall, a higher response rate was achieved from postgraduate students than for undergraduate students (27.4 per cent compared with 15.8 per cent). Similarly, a higher response was achieved amongst home students (those who lived in the UK before starting their studies at the university) than for those who had come to study at the university from the wider European Union or further overseas (21.6 compared to 18.0 per cent).

### 1.1.1 The responding sample

Just under half (46 per cent) of the responding sample were postgraduate students taking either masters degrees or postgraduate diplomas, and just over half (54 per cent) were undergraduate students, the majority of whom were studying for a bachelors degree. The largest group (68 per cent) of respondents were home students, in that they lived in the UK before starting their studies at the university, a further 14 per cent were from the wider EU, and 18 per cent were international students. A much lower proportion of postgraduate students were home students, indeed almost half (49 per cent) of the postgraduate respondents were originally from outside of the UK. These patterns broadly reflect those found in the overall finalist population at the university, however our responding sample was biased towards postgraduate students.

Women and older individuals were over-represented in the responding sample when compared to the final year student population, and this reflects patterns generally found in social research that women and older individuals are more likely to respond to surveys. Nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) of the students who completed the survey were female. Just over half (56 per cent) were between 21 and 25, which under-represents this group, whereas just over one-third (36 per cent) were at least 25. The vast majority of respondents were white (81 per cent), four per cent described their background as mixed, four per cent were black, two per cent Chinese and eight per cent were from an Asian background. The group of Asian students were slightly under-represented in the responding sample as this group accounts for approximately 11 per cent of the final year population.

To address some of the known bias in the profile of the responding sample and to bring this group in to line with the overall final year student population profile, the data were weighted. A three-way weight was calculated to take into account level of study, location prior to study at the university, and gender. The results of the weighting adjustment are illustrated below, and the findings presented in this report make use of the weighted data.

Table 1.2: Sample breakdown

		Population (N)	Population (%)	Sample (N)	Sample (%)	Weighted (N)	Weighted (%)
Level of Study	UG	2,210	67.0	349	53.9	434	67.0
	PG	1,090	33.0	299	46.1	214	33.0
Domicile	UK	2,045	62.0	441	68.1	402	62.0
	EU	494	15.0	89	13.7	97	15.0
	Overseas	761	23.1	118	18.2	149	23.1
Gender	Male	1,314	39.8	172	26.5	258	39.8
	Female	1,986	60.2	476	73.5	390	60.2
Age	Under 21	161	4.9	46	7.1	54	8.4
	21-24	2,066	62.6	363	56.2	391	60.5
	25-29	601	18.2	131	20.3	111	17.1
	30-44	381	11.5	84	13.0	72	11.2
	45 or older	91	2.8	22	3.4	18	2.8
Ethnicity	White	2,513	77.1	528	81.5	506	78.0
	Mixed	132	4.0	24	3.7	25	3.8
	Asian	342	10.5	49	7.6	55	8.4
	Black	125	3.8	23	3.5	25	3.8
	Chinese	84	2.6	13	2.0	20	3.0
	Other	65	2.0	11	1.7	19	2.9

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007



## 1.2 Background

It is useful here to set the research in context, looking at what is known about the city and about graduate migration decisions.

### 1.2.1 The City of Brighton and Hove

*'Brighton and Hove is a unique city; nestled between the sea and the Downs, it is known for its easy-going approach to life, quirky shopping, restaurants, festivals and beautiful architecture. Many people choose to come and live in this city for the opportunities it offers'*<sup>1</sup>

The city of Brighton and Hove offers its workers and residents a high quality of life. It is close to London and all of the Capital's facilities but also offers a range of attractions of its own. It has become a fashionable place to live and work, known for its ability to embrace diversity and encourage creativity. The city hosts internationally recognised festivals such as the Brighton Festival which attracts 130,000 non-residents and contributes £20m per year to the economy, and Pride which attracts 120,000 people and generates £5m per year. It has more than 30 conservation areas, covering one-fifth of the city, and over 3,000 listed buildings. It has a variety of open spaces including three green flag parks, one-sixth of the city area is covered by a nature conservation designation, and the city is bordered to the North by the South Downs (a proposed national park). The city has seen a growth in national and international tourism which has led to its re-emergence as a high profile destination for visitors.<sup>2</sup>

It also has a vibrant economy and a large working age population of over 160,000 to support this, many of whom are young and well-educated. Indeed, more than one-third of the city's residents are aged between 20 and 39, and 29 per cent of adult residents hold a degree or equivalent qualification. In terms of qualification levels, the city outperforms the rest of Sussex, the wider South East and the UK.<sup>3</sup> The size of the city's working age population is largely driven by in-migration rather than by natural change. It has a large student population (approximately 32,000) as it hosts two universities. Together these universities produce 7,000 graduates a year, many of whom stay on in the city after graduating. Analysis of HESA statistics for the University of Sussex's graduates shows that almost half of the 2005 graduating cohort who were in work after six months, were working in Sussex and over one-third were

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<sup>1</sup> Roger French, Chair, 2020 Community Partnership, Foreword to *Creating the City of Opportunities, the Sustainable Community Strategy for the City of Brighton and Hove*.

<sup>2</sup> Figures sourced from *The New Era: Brighton and Hove Economic Strategy 2005–2008*, Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership, September 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from *Creating the City of Opportunities: The Sustainable Community Strategy for the City of Brighton and Hove*, 2020 Community. Note the English average is 19.9 per cent.

working in the city of Brighton and Hove itself.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the University of Brighton estimates that 35 per cent of its students stay in the city.<sup>2</sup>

The city has performed strongly since the mid-90s and has seen strong economic growth, significant increases in employment, large falls in unemployment and has been recognised as a profitable place to do business. Its proximity to London (with its relative shortage of land) has seen the city of Brighton and Hove benefit from a number of highly successful business clusters.<sup>3</sup> It has a strong entrepreneurship culture and one in five people are self-employed (which is above the national average) and also the number of VAT registered businesses in the city has grown faster than the national rate. The city has over 8,300 registered businesses and more than 12,000 business units, and the total stock of businesses has increased in the last three years by 4.7 per cent, particularly small firms. Rising sectors (in terms of businesses) are: health (increasing stocks by 28.6 per cent), property and business services (by 8.8 per cent), other services (7.1 per cent) and education (4.8 per cent). Financial services has maintained a constant stock of businesses. However, telecommunications has declined over recent years.

Thus the city has a strong service sector economy and is well represented in terms of public service, education and health, and financial and business service employers and employment.<sup>4</sup> The biggest employers in the city are in retail, public services, education and health sectors, and the latter three sectors account for 29 per cent of the city's employees (a large proportion of whom are over 55). The city also has a growing financial and business services sector, a sector requiring good IT and customer service skills. More than a quarter of all employees in the city work in the financial and business services sector, many of the city's large private sector employers are in this sector (for example, Amex, Legal and General, Lloyds TSB), and there has been a rapid growth in companies specialising in real estate and renting and in professional consultancy. It also has a thriving creative industries sector and well established new media cluster.<sup>5</sup> One in five businesses and ten per cent of jobs are in arts or creative industries, a sector with a young and highly skilled workforce.

A high proportion of people living in the city do so in higher level professional and associate professional occupations. Indeed, at the occupational level, 3.2 per cent of

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<sup>1</sup> Source: CDEC, University of Sussex.

<sup>2</sup> As noted in Binks J and Clayton N (2006) *Undergraduates and the Brighton and Hove Knowledge Economy: A Scoping Study for Brighton and Hove City Council*.

<sup>3</sup> Hunt J, Ohringer A and Weston J (2001) *The Regional Mission: The Regional Contribution of Higher Education – South East*, HEFCE.

<sup>4</sup> Figures sourced from *The New Era: Brighton and Hove Economic Strategy 2005–2008*, Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership, September 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Supported by SEEDA's Enterprise Hub initiative, bringing a focal point to innovation and entrepreneurial activity.

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the Brighton and Hove population are classified as senior management, 9.9 per cent in higher professional occupations and a further 22.3 per cent in lower level managerial or professional occupations. This gives a total of 32.2 per cent of the workforce that could be said to be in occupations that graduates might aspire to. This is reflected in the average annual household incomes, which at £30,500 are higher than national average (of £29,000).<sup>1</sup>

Despite this positive picture, there are concerns that the area is developing a 'dual economy', with highly skilled jobs in knowledge-based industries (generally in small companies) supported by growing numbers of lower paid workers in lower skilled, front-line support service jobs in retail, hospitality and care<sup>2</sup>, and rising unemployment;<sup>3</sup> an economy with lower paid residents working in the city (earning 93 per cent of the national average), and higher paid residents commuting outwards of the city to the North and along the coast. The city has high levels of outcommuting, a net of 5,000 individuals commute out to work rather than commute in; and figures indicate that those who live in the city (particularly those who commute to London) earn more than those who work in the city.<sup>4</sup> The city has high levels of employment in low-paying sectors, and is perhaps over-reliant upon lower and intermediate service sector employment, despite its highly educated local labour pool. Indeed, there are concerns that the city does not effectively utilise its exceptionally well-educated population, and underemployment of this group will constrain further economic growth for the city. The regional development agency, SEEDA, acknowledge that the South East more generally faces a different challenge to many regions in the UK, in that it has to ensure its graduates are not underemployed rather than try to retain or 'hang on' to its graduates. In addition, the city, as acknowledged in its Economic Strategy, needs to broaden its economic base and attract and retain, and indeed develop, more higher value added businesses.

Average house prices in the city are rising (by 72 per cent in four years, to September 2004), and the city has a shortage of affordable housing. This is illustrated by the fact that whilst the average cost of a one bedroom flat is six times the city's median household income, a traditional mortgage offer is between three and four times one's salary; or that the average dwelling in the city is £220,000, which equates to around seven times the average salary. It has the highest overcrowding rate outside of

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from *Creating the City of Opportunities: A Sustainable Community Strategy for the City of Brighton and Hove*, 2020 Community.

<sup>2</sup> Note there is a £19,000 difference between the average earnings of the best and most poorly paid occupations in the city, as indicated in *Sussex Learning and Skills Review: Brighton and Hove Area*, May 2005, LSC.

<sup>3</sup> Unemployment has risen since 2001 by 1,000 people.

<sup>4</sup> Again, figures taken from the *Sussex Learning and Skills Review: Brighton and Hove Area*, May 2005, LSC.

London, and demand for homes outstrips supply by more than 1,000 per year (based on the 2005 Housing Needs Survey, as reported in the Sustainable Community Strategy<sup>1</sup>). It also has a shortage of suitable business sites and premises. Both are factors which affect individual and company migration and location decisions (increasing the difficulty of attracting and retaining businesses).

### 1.2.2 Graduate migration

As noted above, many of those who study in the city want to, and do, stay on in the city after graduating. Analysis of HESA statistics for the University of Sussex's graduates shows that almost half of the 2005 graduating cohort who were in work after six months, were working in Sussex and over one-third were working in the city of Brighton and Hove itself. Similarly, the University of Brighton estimates that 35 per cent of its students stay in the city.<sup>2</sup>

These patterns correspond with findings from research in other regions. Research in the East Midlands and in the South West<sup>3</sup> found that half of these regions' alumni expect to stay on in the short-term after completing their studies. However, these studies show that propensity to stay is strongly affected by whether graduates were originally from the region, with home-grown graduates (who are also more likely to be female and older) considerably more likely to stay local after graduating. Also the studies showed that although many graduates expect to stay in on in the first few months, the majority expect to move away in the longer term. These studies also show that graduates appeared to be pulled away by a desire (or need) to return home to family and friends, often to benefit from reduced living costs when returning to live with parents, or out of concern that the region cannot offer them the opportunities they seek. Graduates' migration decisions are, therefore, strongly affected by living costs and strategies to cope with these, availability of social and support networks, and perceived availability of and access to graduate-level jobs.

It is therefore important to the university, the city and the region to understand how migration decisions play out for its graduates, and how the quality of life factors and the economic factors in the local area impact on these decisions. Of particular concern is the need to understand experiences and causes of underemployment, accommodation needs and concerns, and support requirements (for example job search and career planning) for those who do choose to stay, particularly beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> *Creating the City of Opportunities: A Sustainable Community Strategy for the City of Brighton and Hove, 2020 Community.*

<sup>2</sup> As noted in Binks J and Clayton N (2006) *Undergraduates and the Brighton and Hove Knowledge Economy: A Scoping Study for Brighton and Hove City Council.*

<sup>3</sup> Pollard et al. (2005) *Graduate Employment Choices in the East Midlands, emda*; Perryman et al. (2003) *Choices and Transitions: A study of the Graduate Labour Market in the South West, HERDA-SW.*

short term. This research explores these issues and provides these stakeholder groups with more detailed information about its graduates in the local labour market.

### 1.3 Next steps

This report presents findings from the initial survey of final year students, but this constitutes only the first phase in a wider study. The research team aim to keep in contact with the responding cohort of University of Sussex 2007 qualifiers to map and measure their experiences further into their careers.

This will involve a number of steps:

- **Analysis of secondary data on graduate destinations and labour market actions.** This will take place during Spring and Summer 2008. The cohort were asked to give permission for the team to link their responses to the initial survey to the data they will provide to the university and HESA as part of the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey, which takes place six months after leaving university, and 89 per cent of the cohort gave permission. In this way we will be able to see what happened to graduates after a few months and explore whether their short-term expectations were met.
- **Qualitative exploration of local 'graduate' labour market experiences.** This will take place in 2008. The team will invite between 20 and 30 employers to share their experiences of recruiting graduates from the university and graduates more widely. The aim is to collect information on what employers look for in new graduates, the types of work graduates are recruited to, and the extent to which graduates are developed and progressed within organisations. In addition, a small number (20 to 30) of graduates from the research cohort known to be working in the city or county (along with graduates from earlier cohorts) will be invited to take part in face to face interviews to explore in greater detail the types of jobs they do (and have done), how their early careers have developed, how they have navigated the local labour market, and the factors that have impacted upon their motivations and experiences.
- **Follow up survey.** This will take place in 2009. The original cohort of responding final year students will be surveyed for a second time in early 2009; this will be approximately 18 months after they graduated from the university. This follow-up survey will explore career experiences and the degree to which their expectations for the labour market and their careers were met, and look at how plans may have changed and what influenced these.

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## 2 Choosing Sussex

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Students tend to come to study at the university from the local area and neighbouring regions, particularly to study professional or technical subjects. However, a substantial group come from further away (outside the South East) and these more mobile students tend to fit the more traditional image of an HE student, and have a bias towards arts and humanities subjects. The university also attracts international students, those from the wider European Union and beyond. These international students tend to come to the university to study at postgraduate level, particularly social sciences, and many of these students are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Feedback from the students describes how providing the right courses and maintaining high teaching quality are key to the university attracting large numbers of high quality students. Making a good first impression is also important, particularly to students who know little about the area or the city. There is an interesting group of UK students who come to the university from outside of the region to study humanities and arts who are particularly attracted to the social life on campus, the quality of life in the city, and the general feel of the university.

Location factors are important to some groups of students, particularly local students, older students and those with no family experience of higher education, indicating a desire or need to study close to home. Generally employability factors, such as track record of the university's alumni and prospects for term-time employment, were of less importance in students' decisions about where to study. However, these aspects were of greater importance to postgraduates and overseas students, and to students from widening participation backgrounds. The university may consider providing different messages to different groups of students, to promote the various aspects of the higher education experience that the university provides.

The university achieves high satisfaction ratings and generates considerable loyalty from its students. In particular it is providing students who are the first in their families to go to university with a positive experience. Students are confident they made the right choice in coming to the University of Sussex. The university could capitalise on these positive feelings, and make use of graduates as ambassadors in outreach and recruitment activities, particularly with groups new to higher education. Almost half would consider further study at the university in the future, so the university could consider promoting learning opportunities as they become available to former graduates.

Before exploring the factors considered to be important when choosing to study at the University of Sussex, it is interesting to examine entry routes into the university and subjects chosen.

Students, undergraduates and postgraduates tended to come to study at the university from the local area and neighbouring regions: 59 per cent of home (from the UK) students were from the South East, 14 per cent from London, ten per cent from the East of England and five per cent from the South West. Local students, those from the South East, had a different profile to those from further away. These students were relatively more likely than those from other areas to be the first in their family to attend higher education, were more likely to have vocational qualifications, more likely to be studying at undergraduate level, to be following courses in professional or technical subjects (these include education, law, social work and business, and maths, informatics, engineering, physics and astronomy), and were more likely to be older (aged 30 or older). On the other hand, UK students coming to the university from outside of the region tended to fit the more traditional image of a higher education student – they tended to be white, young, and have parents who had attended university. They were also relatively more likely than other groups of students to come to the university to study humanities and arts subjects.

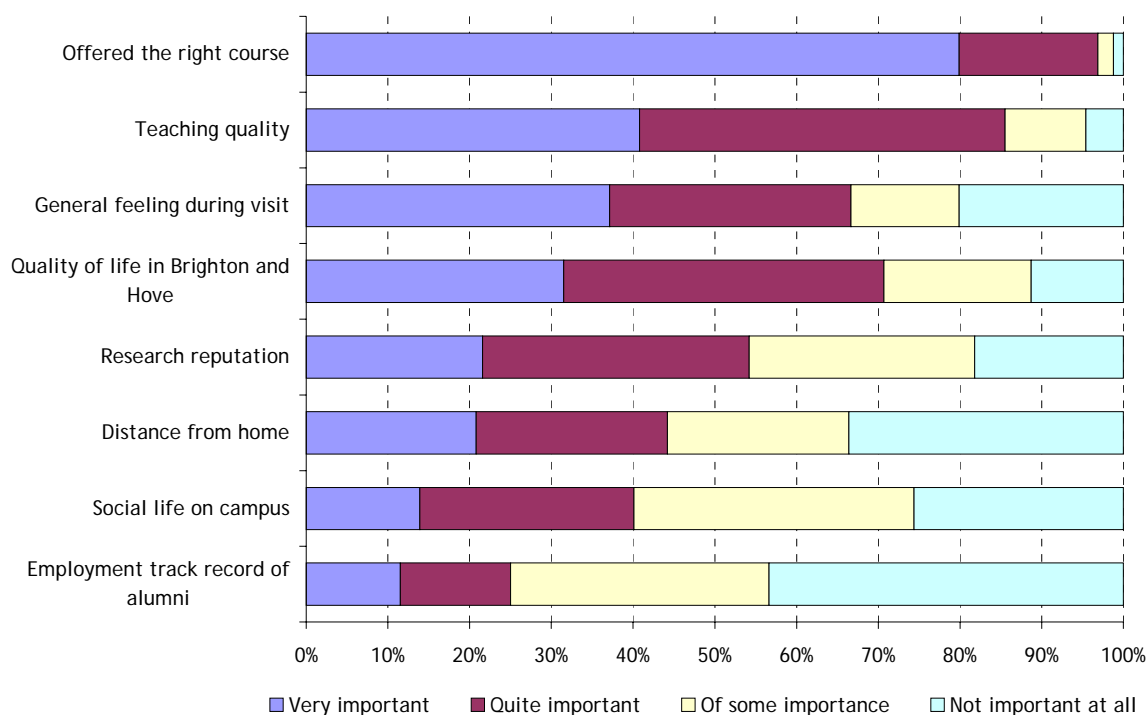
Overseas and other EU students also had a different profile. Students from outside the UK were more likely than students originally from the UK to be studying at postgraduate level and to be following courses in social sciences. Overseas students were much more likely than other students to come from a black and minority ethnic background. Indeed, the vast majority (69 per cent) of students at the university from black and minority ethnic backgrounds were originally from overseas, although a significant minority (19 per cent) of black and minority ethnic students lived in the South East, outside of London, before their studies at the university. Also, the group of overseas students had a more even gender balance (although females still outnumbered males) than found across the entire student population at the university.

The most common subjects studied at undergraduate level were humanities (24 per cent), social sciences (21 per cent) and life sciences (19 per cent), whilst the most common subjects studied at postgraduate level were: social sciences (29 per cent), education (14 per cent) and life sciences (13 per cent). Differences in subject choice were noticed by gender, age and ethnicity. Male students were considerably more likely than female students to study technical subjects (eg maths, informatics, engineering, physics and astronomy), whereas female students were relatively more likely to follow courses in social sciences, life sciences, humanities and arts. Older students were relatively more likely to choose professional subjects (such as education, law, social work and business) and younger students were more likely to study life sciences, humanities and arts. Black and minority ethnic students were considerably more likely to study professional subjects and were much less likely to follow courses in humanities and arts. It is also interesting to note that almost half of

UK-based students who came to the university from outside of the South East, came to study humanities and arts subjects.

## 2.1 Why do they come to the University of Sussex?

Figure 2.1: Importance of factors in choosing Sussex



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

The most important factor when choosing to study at the University of Sussex was considered to be that the university offered the right course, and this corresponds with other work looking at student choices.<sup>1</sup> Almost all respondents (97 per cent) rated this as an important factor, and four-fifths (80 per cent) felt it was a very important factor (see Table 2.1 below). It is interesting to note that UK students from outside of the South East and also female students were much more likely to rate this as important when choosing Sussex.

<sup>1</sup> For example Connor et al. (1999) *Making the right choice: how students choose universities and colleges*, Universities UK.



Table 2.1: Factors of importance when choosing Sussex (per cent)

Factor	Quite or very important	Groups most likely to rate factor as important
Offered the right course	96.9	UK students outside SE, women
Teaching quality	85.5	Postgraduates, older, black and minority ethnic students, those with no family experience of HE, those studying social sciences and life sciences
Quality of life in Brighton and Hove	70.7	Undergraduates, UK students outside SE, younger, white, those studying humanities and arts subjects
General feel during a visit	66.6	Undergraduates, UK students outside of SE, women, younger, white, those with no family experience of HE, those studying humanities and arts
Research reputation	64.2	Postgraduates, EU/Overseas students, older, black and minority ethnic students, those studying social sciences and life sciences
Countryside campus	47.0	Undergraduates, men, younger, those with no family experience of HE, those studying technical subjects and life sciences
Distance from home	44.2	Undergraduates, UK students from SE, older (30+), white, those with no family experience of HE
Social life on campus	39.1	Undergraduates, UK students outside SE, younger, white, those studying humanities and arts subjects
Prospects for term-time employment	25.9	Postgraduates, overseas, older, black and minority ethnic students, those with no family experience of HE
Employment track record of alumni	24.5	Postgraduates, UK students from SE and overseas, older, black and minority ethnic students, those with no family experience of HE

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Other factors of importance included: teaching quality (86 per cent felt this was at least quite important), the quality of life in the city (71 per cent), the general feel of the university during a visit (67 per cent) and the research reputation (64 per cent).

Teaching quality in HE has received attention recently with the annual National Student Survey (NSS).<sup>1</sup> This survey of students gathers feedback on the quality of students' courses to help inform the choices of future applicants to HE. The survey covers teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources and personal development. The data from our survey would indicate that students are indeed interested in teaching quality and this is an important factor in their decision making. Groups for whom this aspect was particularly important when choosing to come to the university included students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, those with no family experience of HE (first generation entrants to HE), those who chose to study social sciences, life sciences and business and management studies, older students, and postgraduate students. It is perhaps noteworthy that postgraduate students pay particular attention to teaching

<sup>1</sup> The survey is undertaken annual by IPSOS Mori on behalf of HEFCE, HEFCW and DELNI. The first survey took place in 2005. [www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com).

quality in their decision making but may have limited access to information about this as they are currently not covered in the NSS. A very similar pattern was found when looking at the importance of research reputation, with postgraduate students, those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, those studying social sciences, life sciences and humanities, and older students – along with those originally from outside of the UK (reflecting the postgraduate bias of this group) – finding this aspect particularly important when choosing to study at the University of Sussex. These findings may indicate that postgraduates are a different, more experienced ‘customer’ for the university, as they already have previous experience of higher education and so may have a greater understanding of the value of teaching quality and research reputation.

The quality of life in Brighton and Hove, or the ‘Brighton factor’ was particularly important to younger students (those under 25), students choosing to study humanities and arts courses, and UK students originally from outside of the South East, and was marginally more important to undergraduates rather than postgraduates. The attraction of the city is bringing UK students into the area to study, indeed 85 per cent of students originally from elsewhere in the UK felt the Brighton factor was important in choosing to come to the university and for this group the quality of life in the city was more important than teaching quality. This group, younger students and undergraduates, female students, those with no family experience of HE, and those who chose to study languages and other arts subjects were also more likely to find visiting the university helpful in making their decision.

The location, in terms of distance from home, the campus setting and the social life on campus was important to just around two fifths of respondents (44, 47 and 39 per cent respectively). Distance from home was particularly important to students originally from the South East, indicating a desire to study locally, and location was also relatively more important to older students and those with no family experience of HE, again suggesting that these students may not wish to (or indeed cannot) study too far from their home.

Of considerably lower importance were employability factors – namely the track record of alumni and prospects for term-time employment. However, these factors were relatively more important to postgraduates, students from overseas, older students, those with no family experience of HE, and black and minority ethnic students.

Other factors of importance given by respondents fell into four broad themes, relating to:

- previous experience or knowledge of the local area or university, for example:

*‘I had my undergraduate degree here so I knew it was perfect for me, especially the teaching’*

*‘my father studied at IDS’*

- the academic offering or reputation, for example:

*'My course was one of the best in the country'*

*'it [the university] offered the opportunity to study a joint-honours degree'*

- wider facilities of the university including general atmosphere and attitude of the staff, for example:

*'helpfulness of the staff and the programme convenor'*

*'the library and other facilities eg sports and clubs and housing'*

*'campus not city buildings'*

- and location, for example:

*'being by the sea yet busy small city'*

*'the band I was in moved to Brighton'*

## 2.2 Are they happy here?

The vast majority of students (83 per cent of all, and 85 per cent of undergraduates) were satisfied with their time at the university and felt they had made the right choice in studying at Sussex (85 per cent of all, and 87 per cent of undergraduates). This is greater than the satisfaction level found in the latest NSS, where the overall satisfaction level across all participating institutions and students was 81 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

There was very little difference in satisfaction levels across different groups of students. However, groups that had the highest satisfaction ratings were those students who were the first in their family to attend a university or college of higher education, a key group that the government wants to encourage to consider HE, and engineering students, a subject that the government hopes to encourage applicants to consider in order to provide the right skills to enable the economy to grow.

Some groups of students are not sharing in the overall satisfaction with the university and confidence in decision making. Students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and those who studied social sciences, although still largely positive, had lower satisfaction ratings and were less confident in their decision to study at the university than other students.<sup>2</sup> This may well reflect the higher expectations for HE amongst these groups, particularly in terms of research reputation and teaching quality (as indicated above). The university may need to explore in greater detail the

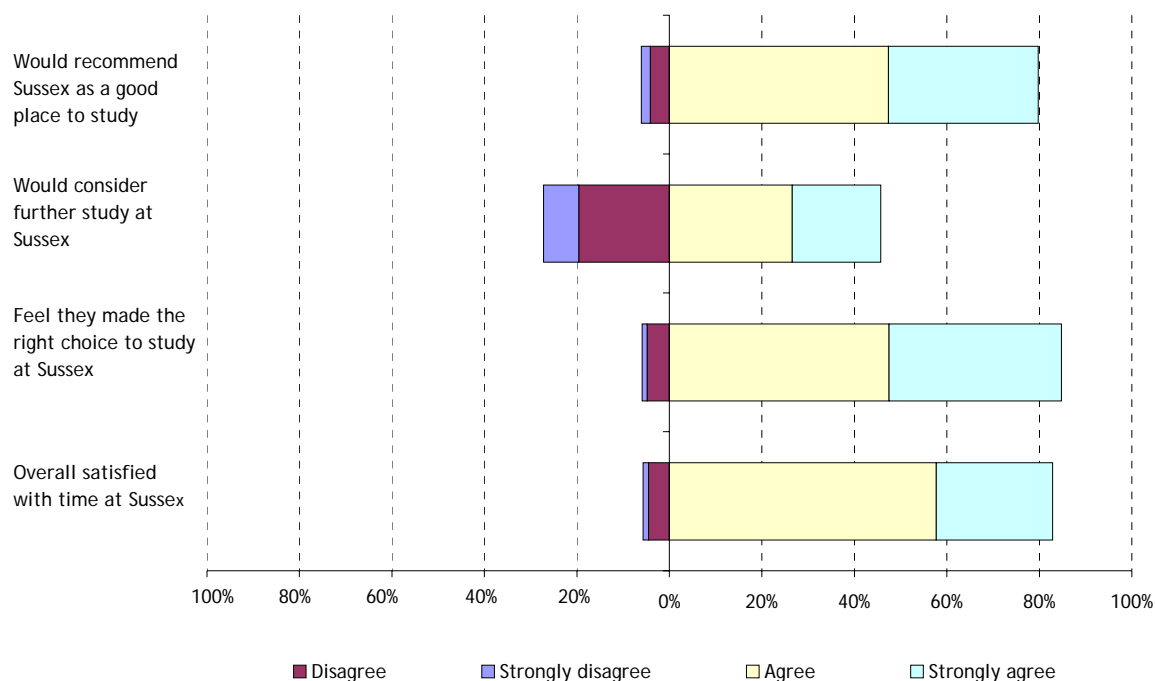
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<sup>1</sup> As noted on the HEFCE website: [www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss)

<sup>2</sup> The vast majority were still satisfied, 70.7 per cent and 78.9 per cent respectively, but other groups of students had relatively greater satisfaction levels.

expectations of these students and how best to understand and manage them realistically during their time at the university.

Figure 2.2: Satisfaction with time at the University of Sussex



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007 (Neutral responses not shown)

In addition, just under half (46 per cent) would consider further study at the university in the future and the university should consider keeping in contact with this group and making them aware of new learning opportunities as they become available. Also four fifths (80 per cent) would recommend the university as a good place to study, in essence to act as ambassadors for the university. Of particular interest here are the group of students who were the first in their family to attend a university or college, this group were much more likely to consider studying again at the university (61 per cent) and were also more likely to recommend the university as a good place to study (86 per cent), suggesting that the university has provided a very positive experience to this group of students.

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## 3 The Future

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Many expect to be employed, especially in longer-term. Initially, a substantial group anticipate being in temporary employment, particularly younger undergraduates, those who had studied arts and humanities courses and social sciences, those coming to the university from further afield and those who plan to stay on in the city after graduating. These students are less confident about obtaining permanent work in the short term and may need support to turn their initial work experiences into stepping stones to career jobs. However, very few students expect to be in temporary jobs three years after graduating, by this time the majority hoped to be in a permanent job. The importance of self-employment, as a realistic career option, increases over time.

There is a wide spread of anticipated occupations both in the short and longer term. Key occupations were teaching or academic roles, creative occupations, working in community development and charitable occupations, and business, financial and legal roles. What stands out is that over time the importance of the creative industries for the University of Sussex's graduates increases, particularly for those planning to stay on in the city after graduating. This is interesting given the growth of small new media companies in Brighton and Hove. Scientific research and development also increases in importance over time as a career goal, as students from life sciences anticipate moving on from their undergraduates studies to postgraduate studies and then into the labour market. Reflecting occupational goals, working in the public sector was a common expectation amongst students, both in the short term (soon after graduating) and further into their careers, as was working in the creative sector and voluntary sector. Generally, students were more decided about their plans for the kind of job they wanted to do than their plans for the sector they wanted to work in.

Students anticipate needing additional work experience to achieve their medium-term career goals, particularly younger undergraduates and those aiming for careers in voluntary/development work, creative work and scientific research and development. Those who studied professional subjects with clear career pathways felt more confident about being able to achieve their goals without requiring further work experience. Postgraduates also felt relatively more prepared for the labour market and their career goals than undergraduates.

A sizeable group anticipate undertaking further study, and further study was a more likely goal amongst international students, those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who

had studied life science courses. For these students, their time at the university has been a springboard to further study.

### 3.1 What do they expect to do when they graduate? And what are their goals for the future?

Students were asked to think about their plans for the future, both their short-term plans and their plans for further in the future. Firstly students were asked what kind of activity they realistically expected to be doing six months after finishing their studies, and for those anticipating some form of employment, what form this would take, what kind of job they would be doing and in what industry or sector. Secondly, students were asked to think about what they hoped to be doing in the future, three years after they graduated.

Perhaps we should note here that six months was chosen for the short-term horizon, as this is also the timeframe used in the national survey of graduate destinations undertaken by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).<sup>1</sup> HESA, working with universities and HE colleges, surveys virtually all UK and EU graduating students to find out about patterns of employment and further study or training six months after completing their studies. This means that we can look at what students realistically expect to be doing and compare this to what they actually do using the destinations data that HESA collect. This will form the basis of the next report.

Table 3.1: Expected activity in the short term and anticipated activity (goal) for the medium term (per cent)

Activity	Expectation 6m on	Goal 3y on
Graduate scheme	16.9	6.6
Permanent employment	29.7	62.9
Temporary employment	30.9	2.5
Self employment	3.4	12.7
Further study (same subject)	22.0	17.1
Further study (different subject)	6.7	6.1
Time out	14.7	8.9
Other	14.7	13.1
Base (N)	645	630

Note: percentages do not add up to 100, as some individuals indicated more than one activity for each time frame - this question was therefore analysed as a multiple response question.

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

<sup>1</sup> This annual survey is known as the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education survey or DLHE, prior to 2003/04 it was known as the First Destinations Supplement or FDS.

Focusing on students' plans, there was some anticipation of getting onto a graduate scheme<sup>1</sup> shortly after graduating, especially amongst younger undergraduates and those who studied technical subjects (such as maths, informatics, engineering, physics and astronomy). However, this diminished in the longer term when students considered their goals, what they hoped to be doing three years after graduating.

In the short term the vast majority (63 per cent) anticipated being employed. Roughly similar proportions anticipated being in temporary work as did being in permanent work. Permanent work was a more common anticipation amongst older students and postgraduates; and also students who had followed professionally oriented courses (such as medicine, education, law, social work and business management) and technical subjects – courses with much clearer career paths. These students are likely to have more work experience and better links with the labour market and so feel more confident about gaining permanent jobs quickly. Younger students and those on undergraduate-level courses were more likely to anticipate a period of temporary work, as were humanities and arts students and those who studied social sciences. It is interesting to note that UK students originally from outside of the South East appeared to be less confident about obtaining permanent work in the short term and were relatively more likely to anticipate temporary working. These groups were drawn to the city and the campus for the quality of life and social life on offer, and many anticipate staying on in the city after graduating. Attitudes towards the local labour market described later in this report suggest that these students think it will be difficult to obtain work locally and so they may have adjusted their expectations already – effectively setting their job aims 'low' and anticipating undertaking less stable work in order to stay on to continue to benefit from the lifestyle the city offers. Similarly, those planning to stay on in the city to live and/or work were more likely to anticipate temporary working in the short term than those planning to move away, whereas those planning to gain work in London were the least likely to anticipate a period of temporary work – effectively setting their job aims 'high'. Looking to the future, however, very few students expected to be in temporary employment after three years. Instead the vast majority (63 per cent) hoped to be in a permanent job and generally in higher level occupations rather than jobs in retail, catering and administration (see below).

Shortly after graduating very few students anticipated being self-employed (three per cent). It was a more common expectation amongst those who studied social science or humanities and arts subjects, male students and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Despite high levels of self-employment in the city, there was no greater tendency towards self-employment amongst those planning to stay on in the city after graduating. The proportion hoping to be self-employed increases substantially after

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted here that graduate development schemes, although they have not changed in absolute number terms, now make up a much smaller proportion of graduate jobs.

three years for these groups of students (13 per cent), and in the longer term it became a more common goal for older students and those who studied technical subjects.

A sizeable group (29 per cent) anticipate undertaking further study in the short term, and a greater number expect to continue in the same area of study than to move direction or undertake study in another subject. However, there is an indication that older students may be more likely to study in a different direction than younger students. Further study of any kind was a particularly prevalent expectation amongst EU and overseas students, students from BME backgrounds (reflecting original domicile but also corresponding with findings from other studies<sup>1</sup>), and students from life science courses – for these students their time at Sussex is a springboard to further study. The proportion hoping to study changes little over time (23 per cent), and again it was students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and life science students that expected to be studying in the longer term, although students from technical subjects and older students were also more likely to hope to return to study in the longer term (after three years) – this may indicate that these groups of students anticipate a need to continue to update their skills (and are lifelong learners in the making) or that they suspect they may be at a disadvantage in the job market without a higher degree.

A small group (15 per cent) expect to take some time out from work or study shortly after graduating – these tended to be more traditional higher education students, ie younger, white and those at undergraduate level. Few (nine per cent) expect to be taking time out three years after graduating.

### 3.2 What jobs do they want to do?

Of those anticipating working after graduating, approximately one in ten (ten per cent) were unable to say what kind of job they thought they would be doing. A very similar proportion (nine per cent) were unable to say what job they hoped to be undertaking in three years' time – it could be argued that at the time of completing their studies this group effectively had no real career goal.

Amongst those who were able to indicate the jobs they expected to be undertaking in the transition period after graduating, the most commonly expected roles included: teaching or academic jobs (16 per cent), working in administrative, clerical or secretarial roles (12 per cent, reflecting the high proportion anticipating working in temporary positions), business, financial and legal occupations (nine per cent, again reflecting anticipated temporary working), creative occupations (nine per cent), and working in community development and charitable occupations (nine per cent).

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Connor et al. (2004) *Why the Difference: A Closer Look at Minority Ethnic Higher Education Students and Graduates*, DfES Research Report 552.



Jobs that students aspired to in the longer term were commonly teaching and academic roles (20 per cent), creative occupations (16 per cent), business, financial and legal occupations (12 per cent), community development and charity work (12 per cent) and scientific research and development (eight per cent, reflecting the anticipated move from study to work in the longer term for those who studied life sciences). Over time, there was an increase in the number and proportion of students hoping to work as 'creatives'. There was also a large fall over time in the proportion anticipating working in administrative and clerical roles and in retail jobs, roles which require lower levels of skill and are often undertaken for short period of time. This reflects the fall in the proportion anticipating working temporarily further into their careers (as noted above). It is perhaps worth noting here that 'temporary work' can be defined by contractual status (in that an individual is employed for a short limited period) or by the job holders plans (a person may be employed on a permanent contract but does not intend to continue in the role indefinitely), and it is likely that students are referring to their intentions to stay being temporary rather than their contractual status.

As would be expected anticipated occupation, both in the short term and in the longer term, was strongly associated with subject of study, and thus indirectly to other background factors such as gender, ethnicity, age and level of study (which are linked to subject of study).

- **Teaching** was a more common expectation for those who had followed professional subjects and for those who studied at postgraduate level – this is likely to be PGCE students. Reflecting the profile of PGCE students, teaching was therefore a more commonly anticipated destination for female students and older students.
- **Business, finance or legal** roles were more commonly anticipated amongst students who had studied technical subjects, social sciences and professional subjects (including law and business) but in the longer term fewer students from technical subjects anticipate working in these roles, which suggests that these are seen as transition jobs for this group of students. These roles were also more commonly anticipated amongst male students and, soon after graduating amongst younger students, those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and those planning to leave the city after graduating. The latter finding may indicate that students perceive that these jobs are not available in the city.
- Anticipating working in **development, charity or community work**, both after graduating and further into one's career, was more common for those from social sciences courses, and, therefore, for overseas students, postgraduates, female and older students
- Those anticipating working in **creative roles** such as working as media professionals, designers and artists, were more likely to have studied humanities and arts subjects. Correspondingly, this was a more common expectation amongst

younger undergraduate students, and became a more common anticipation in the longer term amongst white students and UK students who came to the university from outside of the South East in particular. This also appears to be a longer term goal amongst those planning to stay on to live or find work in the city.

- Anticipating working as **scientific research and development** professionals was largely confined to those who had followed courses in life sciences and those originally from outside of the UK (ie wider EU or overseas). This was a more common career goal in the longer term (three years after graduating) for black and minority ethnic students and postgraduate students.

As noted above, a sizeable group of students anticipated working in the few months after graduating in administrative roles or retail roles, particularly those who had studied at undergraduate level, those from life sciences and humanities and arts courses, female students and younger students. Those anticipating staying on to find work in city after graduating were also more likely than those anticipating leaving to work in administration and retail roles, again reflecting the relatively greater expectation for temporary working amongst this group of students. These students may be acting strategically, expecting to take up more junior roles as a way to gain a foothold in the labour market, or they may be acting more reactively, perhaps continuing with the same employment they had during their studies to provide a space to consider career options and to begin to earn money to pay back debts accumulated whilst at university. However, these graduates may need help to turn these kinds of jobs into stepping stones to career jobs, to make links to other work opportunities in the local area and to understand and market the skill development gained from these experiences.

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**Table 3.2: Expected occupation/job in the short-term and anticipated occupation/job for the medium term (per cent)**

Occupation	Expectation 6m on	Goal 3y on
Teaching/academic	16.0	19.8
Administration/clerical/secretarial	12.3	1.7
Business/finance/legal	9.1	11.5
Creative (media design/arts)	8.7	16.4
Development/community/charity work	8.5	11.6
Health/social care	7.6	7.0
Retail/catering/bar work	6.1	1.1
ICT	5.5	3.8
Scientific R&D	5.4	8.1
Local government/civil service	4.5	5.7
Marketing/sales/PR/advertising	4.1	2.9
Engineering	1.6	1.6
Sports/leisure/travel	1.1	0.7
Police/army/fire brigade	0.5	0.9
Construction/building/manufacturing	0.2	0
Other	8.9	7.4
Base (N)	336	393

Note: Those expecting to be in work only

Note: Those answering don't know/unsure to anticipated occupation have been excluded.

*Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007*

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### 3.3 And in what sectors?

Students were generally less decided about the sector they expected to work in than the type of job they wanted to do, with 15 per cent unable to indicate which sector they realistically expected to be working in, in the few months after graduating. However, looking further into the future, students were more sure about where they were heading, with only eight per cent unable to say which sector they would hope to be working in.

Similar to the patterns noted above for occupation, as occupation is strongly linked to sector, by far the most commonly anticipated sector to work in after graduating was the public sector, with almost one-third (32 per cent) of students expecting to work for organisations in this sector. Other frequently anticipated sectors included the creative industries (13 per cent, reflecting the desire to work in creative roles), the voluntary sector (eight per cent, reflecting the bias towards development, community and charity work), science and biotechnology (six per cent), financial services (seven per cent), information and communications technology (ICT, five per cent) and business and legal services (five per cent). In the longer term, a greater proportion hoped to be

working in the creative industries, and in the business and legal services sector but there were falls in the proportion hoping to work in sectors dominated by lower level occupations (ie food and drink, retail and sports and leisure).

Again, as with occupation, there was a significant subject of study influence on expected and desired sector.

- Those who had studied professional subjects were relatively more likely to anticipate work in the **public sector** (a key sector for Brighton and Hove), as were postgraduates (although the difference between undergraduates and postgraduates in this respect disappeared over time), female, older and white students. Those originally from the South East (before their studies at the university) were also relatively more likely to anticipate working in the public sector.
- Anticipating working in the **creative sector** was more common amongst humanities and arts students, and, therefore, reflecting the profile of this group, was a more common expectation amongst younger and undergraduate-level students. In the short term it was also more common amongst those planning to live or work elsewhere (ie outside of the city) but in the longer term the pattern reversed, indicating this sector may be a longer term career goal for those planning to stay on in the city. Although there was very little difference in early expectations for work in the creative industries between white and black and minority ethnic students, white students were considerably more likely to aim for this sector in the longer term than black and minority ethnic students (this would fit with the widespread concerns in the industry about lack of diversity<sup>1</sup>).
- Working in the **voluntary sector** was most commonly anticipated (both in the first few months after graduating and after three years) amongst students from social sciences courses, and, therefore, also female students, older students, postgraduates and those from overseas. Although this sector was a relatively more common anticipation amongst white students in the short term, it was a more common career goal in the longer term for black and minority ethnic students.
- The **financial service** sector was a more common anticipation amongst students from technical subjects and social sciences, amongst male students, those from black and minority backgrounds and UK students originally from outside of the South East. Again, this is a key sector for the city.
- Anticipating working in the **science and biotechnology** sector was more common amongst students who had followed courses in life sciences. In the short term this sector was also a relatively more common expectation amongst male, younger and undergraduate-level students, but these differences had largely disappeared in the longer term.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Success Through Diversity and Inclusion*, UK Film Council.

- The **ICT** sector was more common, in terms of short term work experience and long-term goal, amongst students from technical subjects, male students and students originally from overseas. It was also a more common expectation amongst those planning to stay on in the city after finishing their studies (particularly in the short term). The city may be perceived to have a good supply of these jobs and provide a way for students to stay on after graduating.
- Lastly, those who had studied professional oriented courses (which included business, management, and law) were more likely to expect and to plan to work in the **business and legal services** sector. Also, students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds were relatively more likely to aim to work in this sector in the longer term.

Table 3.3: Expected industry in the short term and anticipated industry for the medium term (per cent)

Industry	Expectation 6m on	Goal 3y on
Public service	32.4	33.5
Creative industries	13.1	19.8
Voluntary/not for profit/charity	8.4	7.5
Financial services	7.1	4.1
Science/biotechnology	5.6	6.1
ICT	5.3	3.4
Business and legal services	5.2	9.4
Retail/wholesale	4.9	0.7
Food and drink	2.3	0.6
Engineering/advanced engineering	2.1	2.2
New media	2.1	1.4
Environment	1.9	3.6
Leisure/tourism/hospitality	1.3	0.9
Other	8.1	6.7
Base (N)	305	394

Note: Those expecting to be in work only

Note: Those answering don't know/unsure to anticipated sector have been excluded

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

### 3.4 How do they get there?

Of those hoping to be in permanent employment three years after leaving the university, the vast majority (83 per cent) of students felt they would need additional work experience and a smaller proportion (60 per cent) felt they needed additional qualifications to achieve this goal. Those who had followed courses in professional oriented subjects such as medicine, education, law, social work, and business and

management, were much less likely to feel that they needed additional work experience to achieve their employment goals, although a significant subgroup did feel that they would have to gain additional qualifications. Students from life sciences courses were also much more likely than other students to feel they would have to gain additional qualifications to attain their goals. This is reflected in their anticipated activities after graduating, as life science students were much more likely to anticipate undertaking further study in the short and medium term. Many large pharmaceutical companies and Research and Development organisations, key destinations for life sciences graduates, look for individuals with higher level qualifications, particularly PhDs, and so these students appear to understand this requirement for further study.

Undergraduates also were more likely to anticipate the need for further development to achieve their goals, in terms of work experience but particularly in gaining further qualifications. This would indicate that postgraduates feel relatively more prepared for the labour market (and their career goals) than undergraduates. This corresponds with findings from another piece of research that focused on postgraduates' careers.<sup>1</sup> This other research showed that key drivers to postgraduate study were personal interest combined with a desire to enhance career prospects, and indeed the majority of postgraduates found work relevant to their postgraduate studies by the time they graduated or immediately after graduation. Undertaking postgraduate study was felt to have had a positive impact on both life, giving a sense of personal achievement, and on future career prospects through developing knowledge and skills that employers consider to be important. Although, some postgraduates felt employers were unaware of the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate-level skills.

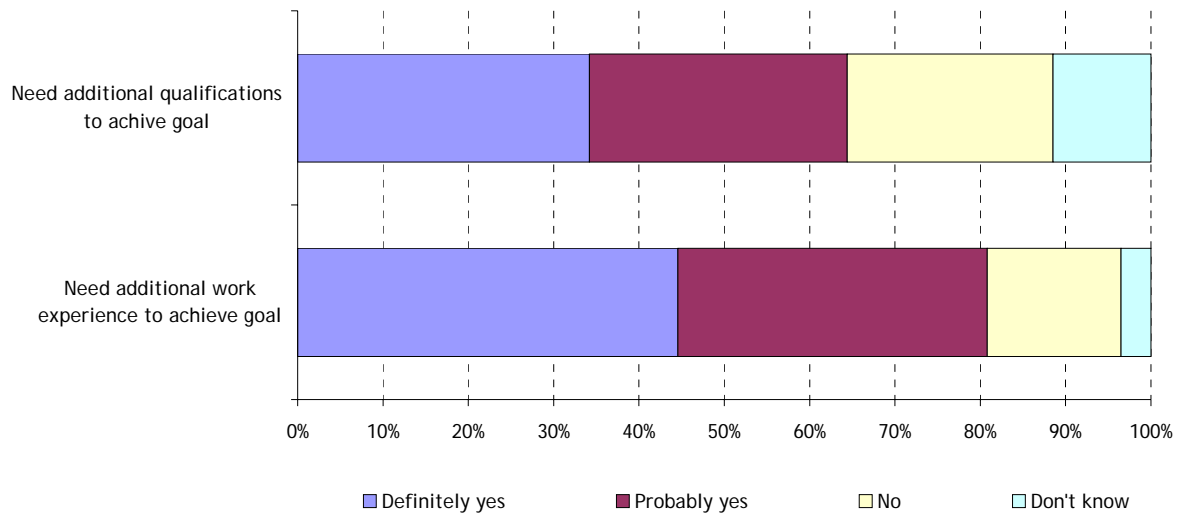
Other patterns noticed were that female students, non-UK students, students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and younger students were relatively more likely to feel they needed additional qualifications to achieve their goals. Younger students were also more likely to feel they need additional work experience.

Looking at career goal (and focusing on most commonly anticipated roles only), it is interesting to note that those aiming for scientific research and development roles, development, community and charity work, and creative roles were more likely to say they would need additional work experience than those aiming for teaching or business, finance or legal roles. Similarly those hoping to work in the creative industries, the voluntary sector and in business and the legal services sector were more likely to feel they would need additional work experience than those hoping to work in the public sector. However, these findings are indicative only due to the small numbers of students at this detailed level of analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Pollard et al (2005) Higher Degrees of Freedom, IES Report.

Figure 3.1: What do students need to achieve their medium-term career goals?



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

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## 4 Choosing an Employer

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It would appear that students are getting the message about wider opportunities for graduates, beyond the traditional graduate schemes in large blue-chip companies which now make up a smaller proportion of the jobs that graduates do. Few anticipate starting their careers through a graduate entry scheme and size does not appear to be an important factor when looking for an employer to work for. However, working alongside other graduates appears to be relatively more important to postgraduates and black and minority ethnic students.

Instead students making the transition to the labour market are looking to work for a reputable and responsible company that can challenge them, give them opportunities to develop and reward them appropriately. Having a sound ethical and environmental policy was also considered to be important, particularly to those who had studied social sciences and to those who plan to stay on in the city to live or work after graduating.

### 4.1 What do they want from an employer?

The most important factors students reported they would look for when choosing an employer were that the employer offered interesting and challenging work (97 per cent) and training and development opportunities (85 per cent). Just under three-quarters of students would consider the financial package, reputation within the industry and the geographical location of an employer when choosing who to work for (73, 71 and 70 per cent respectively). These findings fit with other research<sup>1</sup> which suggests that, although financial package is important, for new graduates the key consideration is finding a job that will challenge and also develop them. Previous research shows that new graduates have realistic expectations of the labour market and expect to work their way towards a career job through several opportunities or positions. It is interesting to note that students who plan to stay on to work in the city

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<sup>1</sup> Pollard et al. (2005) *Graduate Employment Choices in the East Midlands, emda*; Pollard et al. (2004) *Next Choices: Career Choices Beyond University*, IES; Perryman et al. (2003) *Choices and Transitions: A study of the Graduate Labour Market in the South West*, HERDA-SW.



after graduating place significantly less importance on financial package than those planning to gain work elsewhere (particularly those planning to gain work in London, or elsewhere in the South East). The group planning to stay on in the city also place less importance on reputation within the industry than those planning to gain work in London. This strongly suggests that individuals were planning to move to London in search of high-paying jobs with well-known companies.

For some students, the geographical location of the employer was of particular importance, these include students who had studied professional subjects and also undergraduates, UK students and white students. These groups may have a greater tendency to be operating in a local rather than national labour market.

Having a sound ethical and environmental policy was also considered to be an important factor when choosing an employer by 68 and 62 per cent respectively. These are particularly important to those wanting to stay on in the city after graduating, considerably more so than to those intending to gain work in London; and were also more important to those who had studied social sciences. Being a graduate recruiter (either employing other graduates or offering formal graduate entry schemes) was considerably less important to students (26 and 37 per cent respectively), although was relatively more important to postgraduates and black and minority ethnic students, which indicates that these groups value working alongside those with similar qualifications and skills. Similarly, the size of the company had little influence on their decisions (only 20 per cent considered this would be very or quite important). It would appear that some students are getting the message about wider opportunities for graduates, beyond the traditional graduate schemes in large blue-chip companies. Instead they are looking to work for a reputable and responsible company that can challenge them, give them opportunities to develop and reward them appropriately.

Students could also list other factors that they would consider important when choosing an employer. These other factors fell under four broad themes relating to:

- how well the company 'fit' with the individual's values, for example:

*'if I was comfortable with the role, not having to do something I disagreed with'*

- the flexibility that the company could offer, for example:

*'flexible options for work for example job share or working from home'*

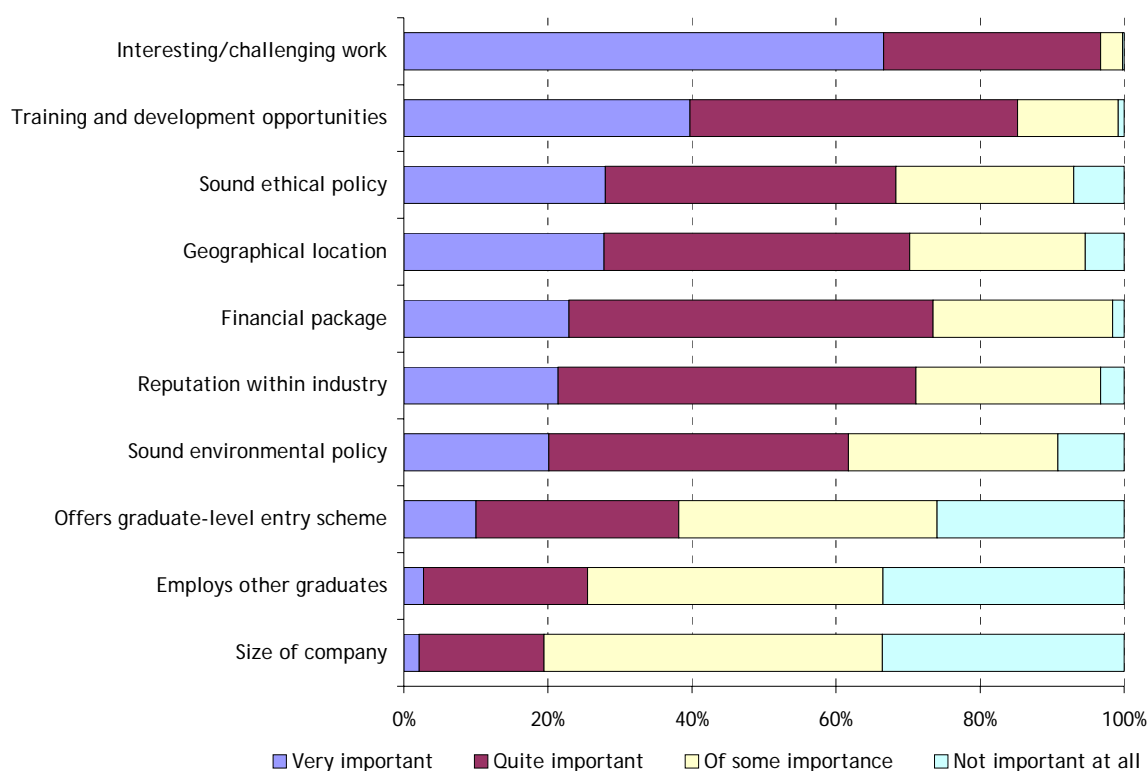
- how friendly and welcoming the company was, particularly to minority groups, for example:

*'how a Muslim employee is treated'*

- and the wider opportunities on offer, for example:

*'the chance to work abroad'.*

Figure 4.1: Importance of factors when choosing an employer



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Table 4.1: Factors of importance when choosing an employer (per cent)

Factor	Quite or very important	Groups most likely to rate factor as important
Interesting and challenging work	96.7	Those studying social sciences, UK students from outside SE white, no family experience of HE (less important to overseas)
Training and development opportunities	85.3	Those studying technical subjects; black and minority ethnic students; no family experience of HE (less important to humanities and arts)
Financial package	73.4	Those studying professional subjects and technical subjects; black and minority ethnic students; those who want to work outside of the city
Reputation within the industry	71.1	Black and minority ethnic students; those who want to work outside of the city
Geographical location	70.2	Undergraduates; those studying professional subjects; UK students; white
Sound ethical policy	68.4	Women; those studying professional subjects and social sciences; black and minority ethnic students (less to technical subjects)
Sound environmental policy	61.7	Those studying social sciences, older students; those who want to work in the city (less important to technical subjects)
Offers graduate-level entry scheme	36.9	Those studying professional subjects; black and minority ethnic students
Employs other graduates	25.5	Those studying professional subjects; black and minority ethnic students
Size of company	19.5	Black and minority ethnic students (less important to those studying life sciences)

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

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## 5 Location Aspirations

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Students contemplate a range of factors when making decisions about where they would like to locate after finishing their studies. When thinking about where to live, they are looking for a friendly atmosphere, availability of affordable housing, a place with good public transport and that has good social facilities and healthcare. Social facilities are relatively more important to younger students, as is affordability of housing. International students are more concerned with environmental and support factors such as healthcare, air quality, safety and transport.

When thinking about where to work, a pleasant environment is particularly important, but students are also looking for somewhere that offers many graduate opportunities and high salary levels. Places that are perceived to have many graduates chasing few higher level jobs and where salary levels are low will, therefore, be considerably less attractive. Small companies may offer graduates a good way into the labour market and a good foothold on their career, and undergraduates, younger students and those wanting to stay on in the city after graduating are more likely to take the number of small companies into account when thinking about where to locate in the future.

More than one-third of all students plan to stay on to live in the city after graduating, and just over a quarter of all students anticipate staying on to work in the city. Although those originally from the South East are more likely to anticipate staying on (to live and/or work), the University is particularly successful at retaining home (UK-based) students from outside the South East (based on intentions). It is also successful at retaining those from technical subjects and from arts and humanities courses. The key reasons for planning to stay on are quality of life factors. Students like the city and the local area and feel it is a nice place to live, they like the atmosphere (a key factor in location decisions) and the quality of life on offer, and they like the seaside location. Many students also have or develop links to the city whilst at the university and want to stay on close to family and friends to benefit from these social and support networks.

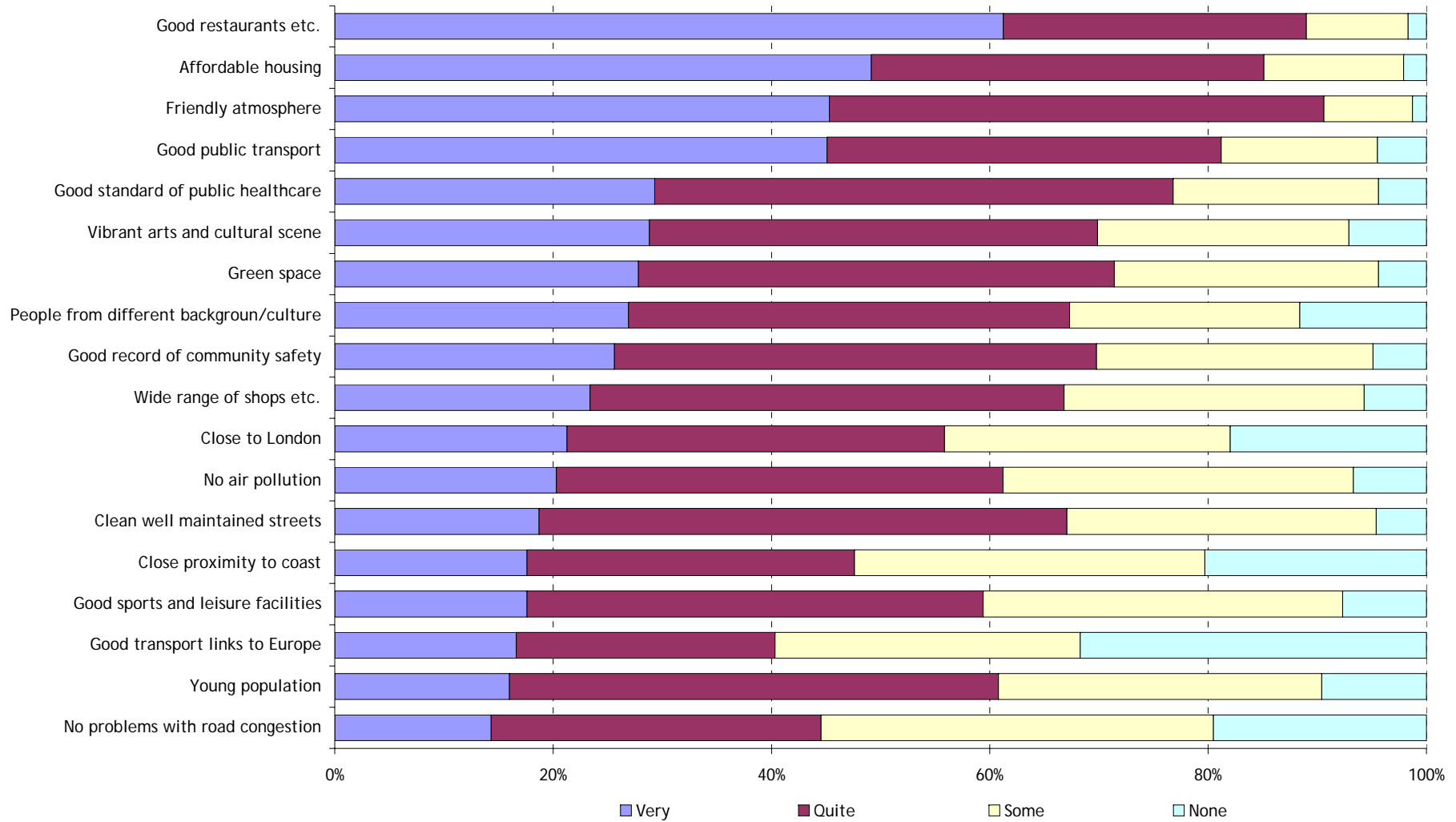
More graduates come and plan to stay on in the city after graduating than plan to move away, which provides the city with a pool of talent. Indeed, the economic and social impact of the University of Sussex is considerable for the city of Brighton and Hove. However, there is clear evidence that some students are planning to move to London in search of high-paying jobs with well-known companies, something they perceive to be lacking in Brighton and Hove.

At the time of completing the survey, students were coming to the end of their courses and would be making decisions about where they plan to locate, whether they planned to stay on in the city or the surrounding area after graduating or to move away – possibly back home. In making these decisions, students may contemplate not only where they want to establish themselves but also what they would be looking for when making this decision – essentially what would attract them to a particular location either to live or to work.

## 5.1 What do they want from a city?

Students were asked about the factors they would consider when making decisions about where they want to live and work when they finish their studies. The most important factors for choosing where to live were friendly atmosphere, availability of affordable housing, good public transport, good restaurants, cafes, bars and clubs, and a good standard of public healthcare. These aspects were quite or very important to more than three-quarters of students.

Figure 5.1: Importance of quality of life factors when choosing where to live



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Table 5.1: Factors of importance when choosing where to live (per cent)

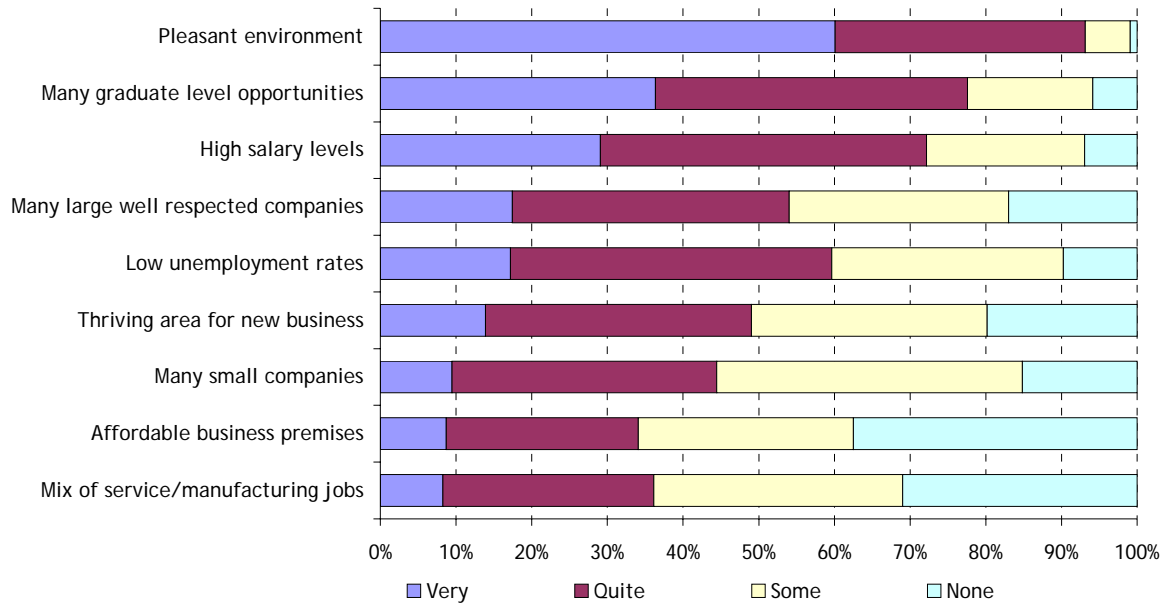
Factor	Quite or very important	Groups most likely to rate factor as important
Friendly atmosphere	90.6	Women; those who want to live in the city
Availability of affordable housing	85.2	Younger; those studying life sciences, humanities and arts subjects
Good restaurants, cafes, bars and clubs	82.3	Undergraduates; UK students; younger students; those who want to live in the city
Good public transport	81.2	EU/overseas students; women; black and minority ethnic students; those studying professional subjects
Good standard of public healthcare	76.8	EU/overseas students; black and minority ethnic students; those who want to live elsewhere
Plenty of green space/open countryside	71.4	Older; those who want to live in the city
Vibrant arts and cultural scene	69.8	Those who want to live in the city; those studying humanities and arts subjects
Good record of community safety	69.7	Postgraduates; overseas students; black and minority ethnic students
People from different backgrounds/cultures	67.3	EU/overseas students, women; black and minority ethnic students; those studying humanities and arts subjects
Clean/well maintained streets	67.0	Overseas students; men; black and minority ethnic students
Wide range of shops, boutiques	66.8	Undergraduates; UK students; women; younger; black and minority ethnic students
No air pollution	61.2	Postgraduates; EU/overseas students; men; older; black and minority ethnic students
Young population	60.8	Undergraduates (reflecting age bias); younger; those who want to live in the city
Good sports and leisure facilities	59.4	Postgraduates; black and minority ethnic students; those studying professional subjects
Close to London	55.9	Black and minority ethnic students; those studying professional subjects
Close proximity to the coast	47.6	Those who want to live in the city
No problems with road congestion	44.5	Postgraduates (reflecting age bias); overseas students; older; black and minority ethnic students
Good transport links to Europe	40.3	Postgraduates (reflecting overseas bias); EU students; older; black and minority ethnic students (reflecting overseas bias); those studying professional subjects and social sciences

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Undergraduates, UK students and younger students were more concerned with social aspects of a location when making decisions about where to live, for example eateries and shops. Younger students were also more concerned about the availability of affordable housing, reflecting their likely position of trying to get onto the property ladder. This is less of a concern for older students, who are more likely to have established accommodation (ie mortgage, as indicated in the reasons given for planning to stay on as described below). Overseas and EU students, and also black

and minority ethnic students (reflecting their overseas profile), were most concerned about structural support factors such as healthcare, air quality, safety and transport issues.

Figure 5.2: Importance of quality of employment factors when choosing where to work



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

The most important aspects when choosing where to locate for work were: a pleasant environment, that the area offers many graduate-level opportunities and high salary levels. Again, these factors were quite or very important to around three-quarters of students. Of considerably lower importance were whether the area offered affordable businesses premises or a mix of service and manufacturing jobs. These aspects were important to around one-third of students. The lower importance placed on aspects associated with entrepreneurship and self-employment (affordable business premises, thriving area for new business, and many small companies) would indicate that entrepreneurship was not at the forefront of students’ minds when thinking about the near future (as reflected in the expected short-term activities).

Table 5.2: Factors of importance when choosing where to work (per cent)

Factor	Quite or very important	Groups most likely to rate factor as important
Pleasant environment	93.2	
Many graduate-level opportunities	77.6	Younger; those who studied technical subjects
High salary levels	72.2	Overseas/EU students; younger; those who want to work elsewhere (particularly London)
Low unemployment rates	59.7	Younger; those who studied technical subjects and humanities and arts subjects (less social sciences)

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Factor	Quite or very important	Groups most likely to rate factor as important
Many large, well respected businesses	54.0	Overseas/EU students; those who want to work in London
Thriving area for new businesses	49.0	Overseas students; men; younger; those who studied technical subjects
Many small companies	44.5	Overseas; undergraduates; younger; those who want to work in Brighton
Mix of service and manufacturing jobs	36.1	Overseas/EU students; men
Affordable business premises	34.1	Overseas/EU students; men

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*Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007*

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Overseas and EU students were more likely than UK students to rate these factors as important when choosing where to locate, indicating that these individuals may be more concerned with employability and with understanding the labour market than UK students (as indicated in the earlier section describing influences on choosing to study at the University of Sussex). Undergraduates appeared to be relatively more concerned than postgraduates about the numbers of small companies in an area, perhaps as these can offer new graduates good opportunities for a wide range of experiences. This was highlighted in research undertaken in the South West. In this study, interviews with new graduates showed that smaller companies, although generally not offering formal graduate training, provided individuals with good opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and confidence. Graduates in these smaller companies reported that they had often been expected to take on higher level tasks which resulted in a more holistic view of the business and its activities.<sup>1</sup>

Generally, younger students were more concerned about these potential 'quality of employment' factors than their older peers. This may be because younger students are less well established in the labour market and in their careers, and also because they may have less constraints on their mobility. The first explanation means they *should* consider a wider range of factors when planning where to move to find work, and the second means they *can* consider a wider range of factors in the location decisions.

Male students were more concerned about affordability of business premises, and mix of service and manufacturing companies. This pattern is likely to be driven by their greater likelihood to consider self-employment (as described above) and reflects their subject choice bias toward subjects that could lead to jobs in the manufacturing sector (eg technical subjects such as engineering).

It is also interesting to note that students planning to find work in London (compared to those planning to stay on to work in the city) placed significantly more importance

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<sup>1</sup> Perryman et al. (2003) *Choices and Transitions: A study of the Graduate Labour Market in the South West*, HERDA-SW, section 5.6.5.



on high salary levels and numbers of large, well respected businesses in choosing where to work. This corresponds with findings noted above, focusing on important aspects in choosing an employer, adding weight to the hypothesis that individuals were planning to move to London in search of high-paying jobs with well-known companies.

## 5.2 Do they want to stay on in Brighton and Hove?

Table 5.3: Plans for location after finishing studies at the University of Sussex

Area	Plan to live in ...	Plan to work in ...
Brighton and Hove	36.2	29.4
London	16.7	23.8
Elsewhere in Sussex	11.6	11.3
Wider South East	6.7	6.1
Elsewhere	28.9	29.4
Base (N)	641	619

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

### 5.2.1 Staying on?

Over one-third (36 per cent) of students from across all levels of study, courses and original domicile were planning to stay on and live in Brighton and Hove after they graduate. This was a slightly greater proportion than who planned to stay on and find work in the city after their studies (29 per cent). However, the majority of those who plan to stay on and live in the city also plan to find work in the city (75 per cent). A further 12 per cent anticipated staying on in the county to live, and seven per cent in the wider South East (particularly neighbouring counties such as Kent, Surrey, Essex and Hampshire, reflecting the catchment for the university). The proportions for work location were very similar, at 11 per cent planning to work in Sussex (beyond the city) and six per cent in the wider South East region.

Location decisions were significantly associated with original location (where students lived before they began their studies at the university), and this fits with findings from previous migration research.<sup>1</sup> However, the university is particularly successful at retaining UK students originally from outside the South East. Indeed, of this group of students approximately half plan to stay on the city after their studies (51 per cent plan to stay on to live, and 43 per cent to work), and approximately three-quarters plan to stay on in the South East or London. Of those originally from the

<sup>1</sup> Pollard et al. (2005) *Graduate Employment Choices in the East Midlands*, emda; Pollard et al. (2004) *Next Choices: Career Choices Beyond University*, IES; Perryman et al. (2003) *Choices and Transitions: A study of the Graduate Labour Market in the South West*, HERDA-SW.

South East, approximately two-fifths plan to stay on in the city (40 per cent plan to stay on to live, 31 per cent to work). Generally those from EU or overseas do not anticipate staying on either to live or work, only about a quarter plan to stay on in the city; over half anticipate leaving the South East.

Table 5.4: Plans for location after finishing studies at the University of Sussex (UK domiciled students only)

Area	From South East/London		From outside South East	
	live in ...	work in ...	live in ...	work in ...
Brighton and Hove	40.1	31.1	50.9	43.1
London	17.6	27.9	13.0	25.5
Sussex/Wider South East	34.3	32.2	11.1	7.8
Elsewhere	8.0	8.8	25.0	23.5
Base (N)	289	283	108	102

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Some subject patterns were also noticed in relation to location decisions. Students from technical subjects and those who had studied humanities and arts subjects were relatively more likely than those who had studied other subjects to anticipate staying on in the city to live and work. Those with no family experience of HE were also more likely to plan to stay on in the city but this reflects their profile, in that they were also more likely to have come from the local area (as noted earlier). Younger students were also more likely to anticipate staying on in the city to find work, which fits with the young image and lifestyle offered by the city. Older students had a relatively greater propensity to plan to find work in the wider South East (ie outside of the city but still nearby).

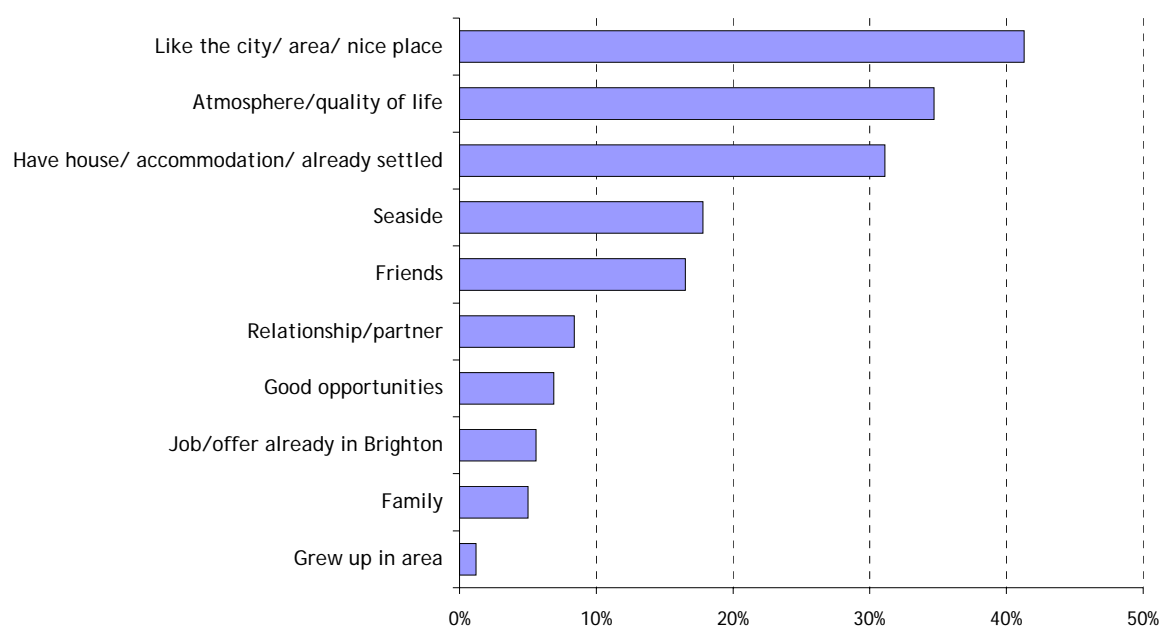
Regression analysis<sup>1</sup> confirms the significant relationship between original location and subject of study and whether a student planned to live and/or work in the city. Students originally from the UK were significantly more likely to wish to stay on after graduating than overseas students, and students from outside of the South East had the highest odds of staying on. Students come to the city and want to stay! The regression model also indicated that studying social sciences had a negative association with staying on in the city and this group were more likely to leave after graduating (even when taking account of original domicile).

The key reasons given for planning to stay on in or near the city to live and/or find work were, in the main, quality of life factors. Students liked the city and local area and felt it was a nice place to live (41 per cent); they liked the atmosphere and the quality of life offered in the city (35 per cent); and they appreciated the seaside

<sup>1</sup> Regression analysis holds a set of baseline characteristics constant in order to identify factors associated with a particular outcome; in this case the outcome is planning to stay in the city after graduating.

location (18 per cent). Other common reasons for staying were around having links to the city either through students having established themselves in the area with a house and family (before or during their studies, 31 per cent), or to remain close to friends (17 per cent). Few mentioned they were intending to stay on because they felt the city offered good opportunities or because they already had a job or job offer in the city. This corresponds with findings noted above, that in the short term those planning to stay on in the city to live or work were much more likely to anticipate a period of temporary work.

Figure 5.3: Reasons for staying in Brighton and Hove



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Local students, those originally from the region, were more likely to cite their family as a reason for staying but were less likely than those from further away to cite quality of life, seaside location and good opportunities. UK students from outside the South East were relatively more likely to cite friends, and also (along with overseas students planning to stay on) seaside location and because they liked the city and area. For these students the 'Brighton Factor' is key – both to attracting them to the university and in retaining them as graduates. Those who had studied professional subjects (such as education, law, social work and management) were relatively more likely to stay on because they had a job or job offer in the city and were less likely to say they were staying on because they liked the city (this group appeared to be linked in to the local labour market). Male students were relatively more likely than females to cite quality of life factors as reasons for staying, and females were relatively more likely to cite their partner as a reason for staying. Older students were more likely to comment on family and having established themselves in the area as reasons for planning to stay, whereas younger students were relatively more likely to comment on quality of life and that they liked the area.

Overall, the university contributes a net inflow of skilled individuals (and their earnings) to the region as more students planned to stay on to live in the South East after they graduate than were originally from the region (227 rising to 275). Approximately eight in every ten (83 per cent) students who lived in the South East prior to their studies at the university planned to remain in the region once they graduated, only 17 per cent planned to leave the region. Of those originally from outside of the South East, more than half (54 per cent) plan to stay on in the region after their studies.

Table 5.5: Graduate flows (through the University of Sussex) to and from the SE region (UK domiciled students only)

		Planned living location		
		South East	Elsewhere	
Original domicile	South East	190 (83%)	37 (17%)	227
	Elsewhere	85 (54%)	72 (46%)	157
		275	169	384

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

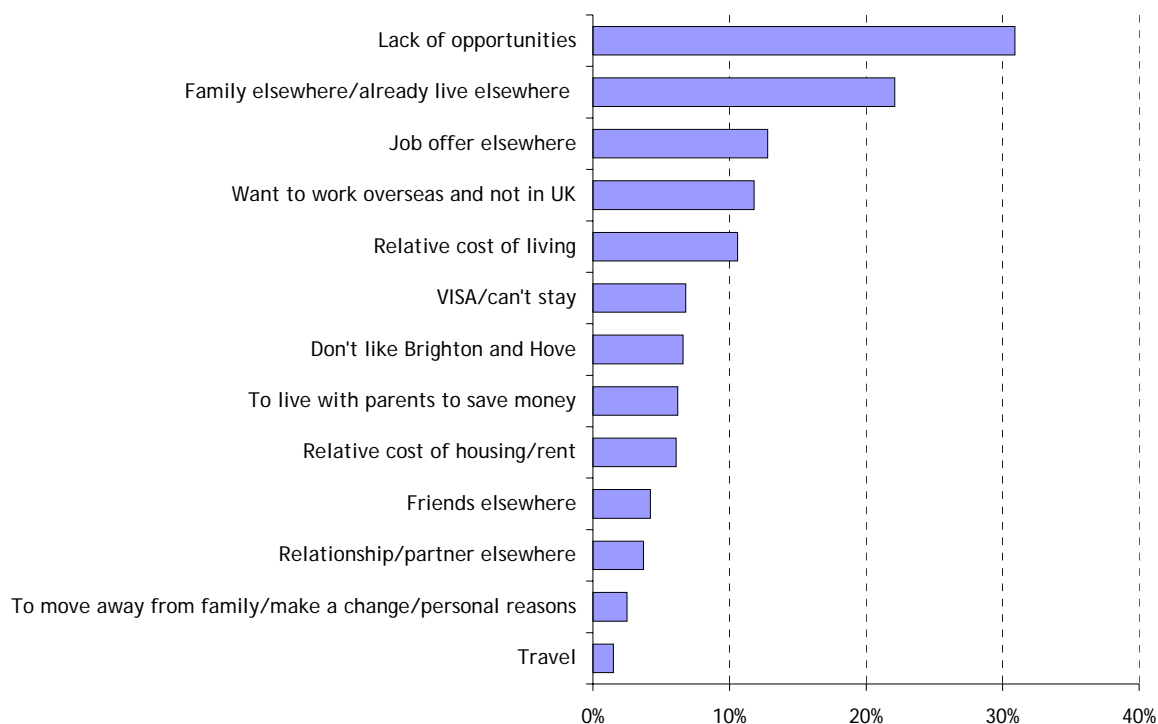
### 5.2.2 Moving away?

Almost one-fifth (17 per cent) of students anticipated moving to London to live, and a higher proportion, almost a quarter (24 per cent) anticipated working there. It is interesting to note that one-fifth (20 per cent) of those planning to work in London intend to make Brighton and Hove their home. Younger students were more likely to anticipate living and/or working in London. This fits with other migration research which suggests that younger graduates are more geographically mobile and, therefore, able to chase the most prestigious jobs – jobs which students often perceive to only be available in London. Those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds were also more likely to anticipate leaving for London or beyond the South East, as were those who had studied social sciences (which may reflect their overseas bias).

Whilst almost three-quarters (71 per cent) anticipated staying on to live or work in the South East after finishing their studies, 29 per cent anticipated moving away. The most common destinations given were the South West, the EU and US/Canada, again reflecting the student profile in terms of original domicile.

The key reasons given for planning to move away from the city were due to a perceived lack of opportunities in the area (31 per cent, this increases to 51 per cent for those planning to locate to London), to return home (22 per cent), to take up a job offer elsewhere (13 per cent), out of a desire to work overseas (12 per cent), or due to the relative cost of living in the area (11 per cent). Very few planned to move away because they didn't like the city.

Figure 5.4: Reasons for leaving Brighton and Hove



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Those anticipating moving away to look for work in London were considerably more likely to cite lack of opportunities in the city as the reason for making the move (or not staying). Those who studied technical subjects were the most likely to have had a job offer elsewhere, whereas humanities and arts students were relatively more likely to move back home, particularly to their parental home to save money. This group were also the most likely to cite the high cost of living in the city as a reason for planning to move away, and (along with social sciences students) more likely to cite lack of opportunities as a reason for leaving. Undergraduates were more likely than postgraduate students to talk about having family elsewhere and/or returning home to live with parents (and save money) and to mention the cost of living in the city. Younger were more likely than older students to cite lack of opportunities as a reason for moving away. Male students were also more likely to move away because of a perceived lack of opportunities, and female students were more likely to cite family and the need to return home to save costs as reasons for moving away.

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## 6 The City - How Does it Measure Up?

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Students feel that the city of Brighton and Hove provides them with a friendly atmosphere, a seaside location with plenty of green space (countryside being a high level priority in location decisions), easy access to London, a good range of social facilities (again of greater importance in location decisions) and a vibrant arts and cultural scene. However, they are concerned about the affordability of housing and the road congestion in the city; and, to a certain extent, standards of healthcare and air quality in the city. Whilst many students were able to rate the city in terms of its quality of life factors, far fewer were able to rate the quality of employment offered in the city, and where students did offer their opinion they tended to be negative (rather than positive) - particularly in terms of numbers of graduate-level opportunities, large reputable companies and salary levels (aspects key in work location decisions).

The social aspects offered by the city acts as a huge attraction for graduates, yet many individuals expect to leave without really investigating what employment opportunities are open to them. There is a strong attraction to the city for UK students originally from outside of the South East but these students are the most pessimistic about the job opportunities on offer in the city.

Support mechanisms are available to students and graduates, but they may need to be encouraged to access these. This support helps graduates to identify suitable opportunities within the city and its surrounds - ones that provide them with the interest, challenge and development opportunities that they seek. However, the city may also need to grow more jobs at suitable levels to retain these individuals in the longer term.

### 6.1 How important is the Brighton Factor?

After examining factors influencing decisions about where to live and work after graduating, it is interesting to see how well the city of Brighton and Hove performs against these factors.

### 6.1.1 Does it deliver quality of life?

Generally students were most satisfied with the proximity to the coast and to London, the green spaces and countryside in the city and nearby, the friendly atmosphere and young population, the arts and cultural scene, restaurants, cafes etc. and shops. However, they were least satisfied with availability of affordable housing (considered a top priority in location decisions) and road congestion. Other areas of lower satisfaction included standards of healthcare and air pollution in the city (although on balance more students reported they were satisfied with these aspects of the city than reported dissatisfaction).

Table 6.1: Satisfaction with quality of life aspects of the city (per cent)

Factor	Satisfied (dissatisfied)	Groups most satisfied (least satisfied)
Close proximity to the coast	92.0 (1.9)	UK students; white
Good restaurants, cafes, bars and clubs	85.5 (2.2)	UK students; undergraduates; women; younger; white students
Close to London	81.8 (3.5)	
Young population	81.4 (5.0)	Undergraduates; younger; white students
Wide range of shops, boutiques	80.1 (2.8)	UK students; undergraduates; women; younger; white students
Friendly atmosphere	75.4 (5.5)	Women; younger; white students
Vibrant arts and cultural scene	74.7 (5.1)	UK students; undergraduates; women; younger; white students
Plenty of green space/open countryside	70.0 (6.7)	Overseas students
People from different backgrounds/cultures	68.2 (8.6)	Overseas and EU students
Good public transport	64.4 (15.8)	UK students; women (EU students)
Good transport links to Europe	48.0 (12.7)	Postgraduates; older students
Good sports and leisure facilities	45.9 (15.4)	UK students; women
Clean/well maintained streets	41.6 (19.7)	Overseas students; black and minority ethnic students (EU students)
Good record of community safety	40.2 (12.4)	Black and minority ethnic students
Good standard of public healthcare	35.7 (16.4)	(EU students)
No air pollution	35.6 (19.5)	Overseas students; postgraduates; men; black and minority ethnic students
No problems with road congestion	18.5 (43.9)	Overseas students; black and minority ethnic students (local students; undergraduates; women; white)
Availability of affordable housing	15.2 (53.3)	(EU students; white)

Note: students could also say that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, so the proportion satisfied and dissatisfied may not total 100 per cent

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Comparing importance with satisfaction gives us an insight into the aspects where the city could be said to exceed expectations and also aspects where it perhaps under-delivers. Areas where satisfaction scores exceeded importance<sup>1</sup> included: green space (a high priority), coastal location (low), proximity to London (low) and access to Europe (low), young population (low), arts and cultural scene (medium), restaurants, bars etc. (high), shops (medium), and diversity (medium). Areas where the city under-performed included: availability of affordable housing (a high priority), friendly atmosphere (the highest priority), public transport (high), road congestion (low), safety (medium), clean streets (medium), healthcare (high), and air pollution (medium).

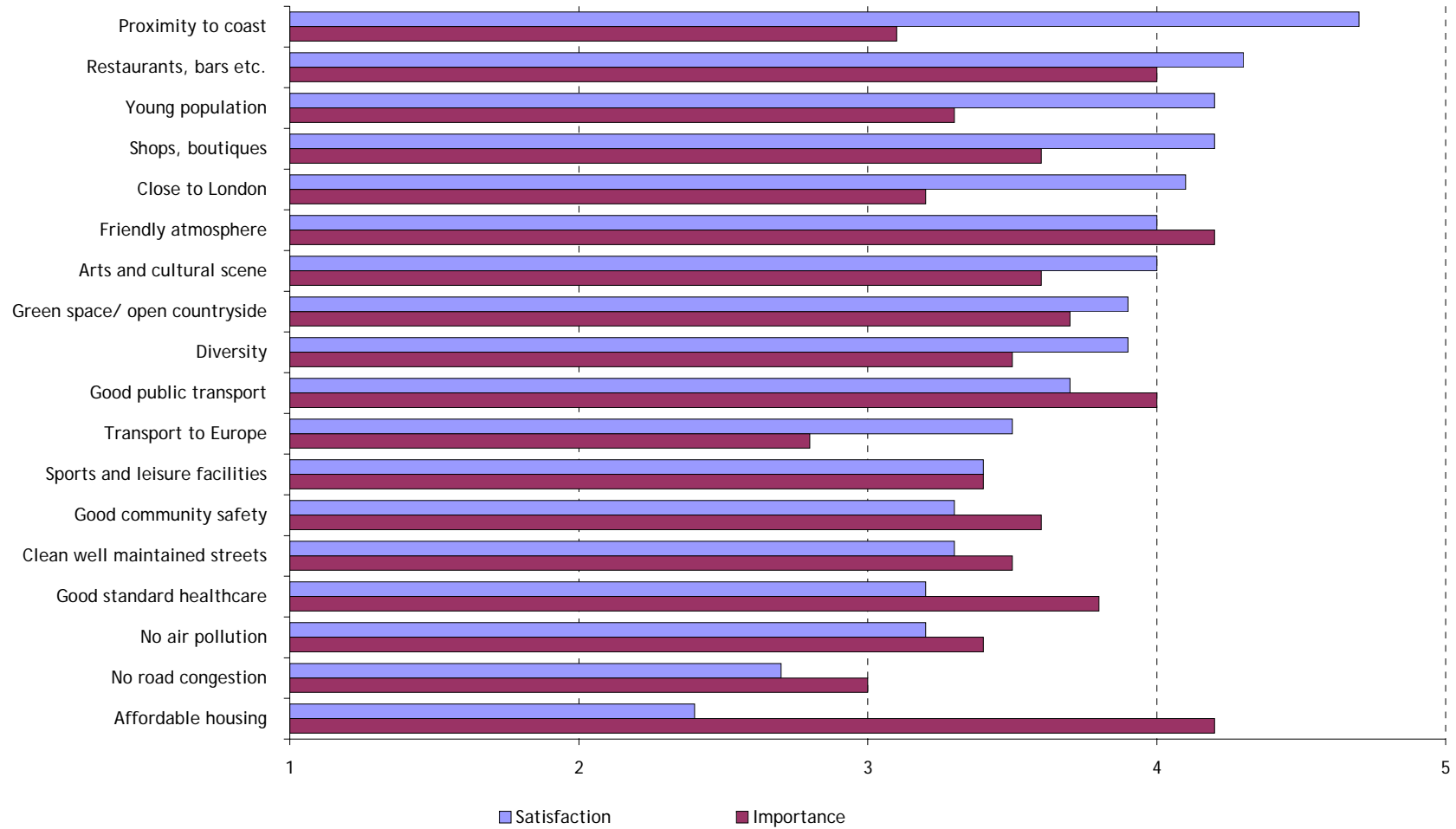
The generally high levels of satisfaction with the city were reflected in the finding that the vast majority, 86 per cent, of students would recommend the city as a good place to live. There was very little difference in this respect across students; however, UK students from outside of the South East and younger students were marginally more positive.

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<sup>1</sup> Note the importance scores have been adjusted to provide a compatible scale with satisfaction.



Figure 6.1: Comparison of importance score with satisfaction score for quality of life factors



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

### 6.1.2 Does it deliver quality of employment?

Firstly, it is interesting to note the high levels of neutral responses when questioned about how well the city delivers against employment factors, in that students did not feel able to either agree that the city did deliver or disagree and say the city did not deliver. This would indicate that students do not know about these aspects of the city. They felt more able to rate the city on quality of life aspects but were much less confident about rating it in terms of quality of employment.

Students were generally satisfied with the pleasant environment that the city offers and, on balance, more were satisfied than dissatisfied with the numbers of small businesses, the new business scene, the low unemployment rates, and the mix of service sector and manufacturing companies. However, they tended to be dissatisfied with numbers of large, well respected employers, affordability of business premises, salary levels and, in particular with the availability of graduate-level opportunities.

Table 6.2: Satisfaction with quality of employment aspects of the city (per cent)

Factor	Satisfied (dissatisfied)	Groups most satisfied (least satisfied)
Pleasant environment	74.8 (2.1)	Younger; white
Many small companies	39.8 (11.1)	Local students/overseas students; undergraduates
Thriving area for new businesses	30.1 (15.1)	Undergraduates
Low unemployment rates	22.3 (20.2)	EU/overseas students (UK students)
Many large, well respected businesses	22.3 (29.5)	Overseas students (EU students; postgraduates)
Mix of service and manufacturing jobs	21.3 (2.1)	Overseas students (EU students; postgraduates)
High salary levels	20.0 (24.5)	(Postgraduates)
Many graduate-level opportunities	19.9 (35.0)	
Affordable business premises	10.6 (29.8)	Overseas students; black and minority ethnic students (EU students; women)

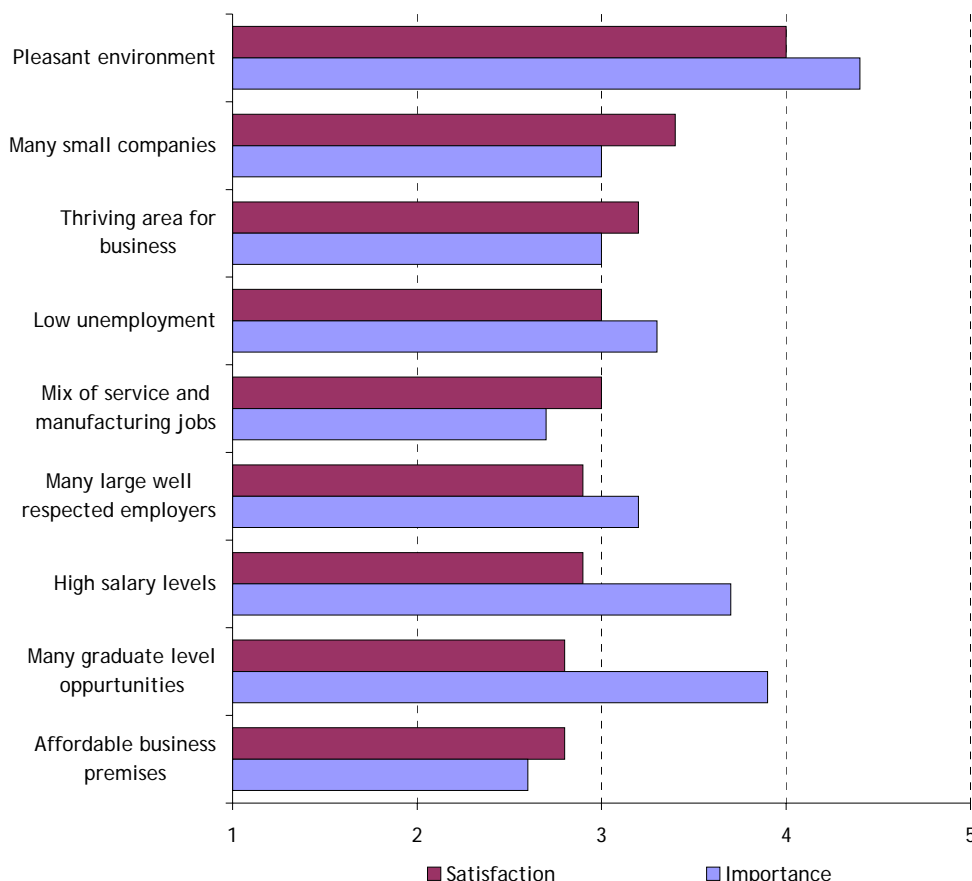
Note: students could also say that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, so the proportion satisfied and dissatisfied may not total 100 per cent

Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

Areas of potential mismatch, when comparing location priorities with how well the city performs, indicate that the city under-performs on many of the quality of employment factors: unemployment rates (a medium priority), graduate-level opportunities (high), numbers of large and well respected employers (medium), high salaries (high) and providing a pleasant environment (high). However, areas where satisfaction scores exceeded importance tended to relate to entrepreneurial factors, factors which tended to have lower priorities for students. The city outperforms in terms of it being a thriving area for new business (a medium priority), having many small companies (low), availability of affordable business premises (low) and offering

a good mix of service and manufacturing jobs (low). It should be noted, however, that generally those planning to stay on to work in the city were more positive about the employment aspects the city offers than those planning to move away (but many aspects still fell short for those planning to stay on).

Figure 6.2: Comparison of importance score with satisfaction score for quality of employment factors (mean score)



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

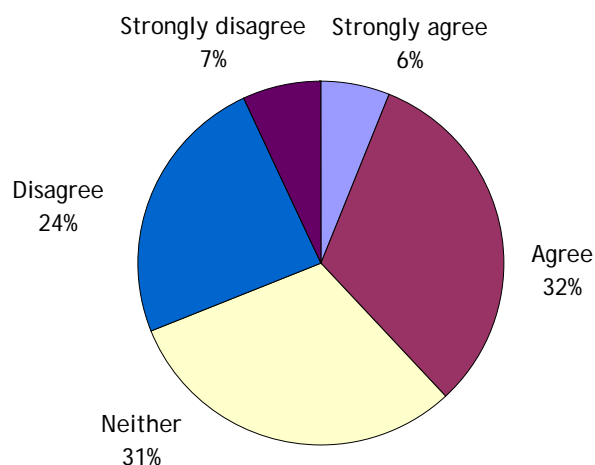
Students were asked if they felt they could find a job in or near the city that would match their level of qualification and also whether they would recommend the city as a good place to gain graduate-level employment. A slightly greater proportion of students felt they could find such a job in the city than felt they could not – 38 per cent compared with 31 per cent. The groups of students who were most positive in this respect were local students (those originally from the South East). The higher confidence amongst this group may be due to a greater awareness of the opportunities on offer and better links to the local labour market. UK students from outside of the South East were the most pessimistic, yet this group were the most likely to plan to stay on after graduating. There is a strong indication that these students need to be supported in making links in the labour market and identifying suitable opportunities to ensure that they stay in the longer term and to encourage those that may plan to return home to consider staying on. Undergraduates were

marginally more positive than postgraduates, and those who studied professional subjects, technical subjects and life sciences were most positive about opportunities in the city. Students from social science courses were the most pessimistic (and as noted above, this group were the most likely to plan to leave the city after graduating), and humanities and arts students were the most undecided.

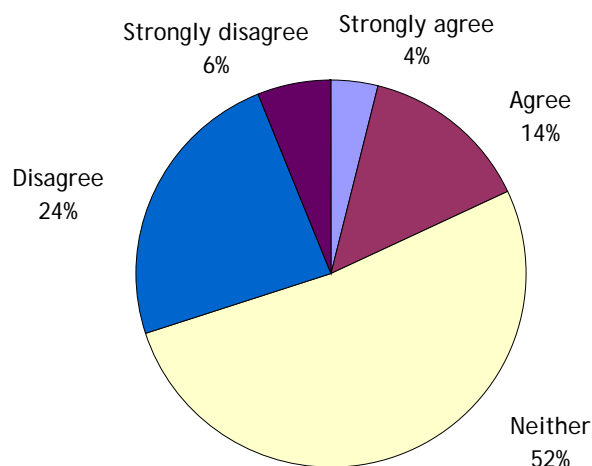
Generally students were pessimistic about recommending the city as a good place to find graduate-level employment – around one in five (19 per cent) said they would recommend the city in this respect, but 30 per cent would not. The most positive groups of students were local and overseas students, whereas UK students from outside the South East were again most negative. Those who studied professional subjects were also more positive about graduate-level employment in the city, but students from courses in social sciences were once again the most negative.

Figure 6.3: Agreement with statements about quality of graduate employment in Brighton and Hove

Could find job in Brighton and Hove that would match qualifications:



Would recommend Brighton and Hove as a good place to find graduate-level employment:



Source: IES/CDEC Survey, 2007

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## 7 Conclusions

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There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn even from this **initial** phase of the research that has focused on the aspirations (rather than concrete experiences) of the University of Sussex graduates, and these conclusions will have particular resonance with different groups of stakeholders:

- Graduates and students considering their employment choices – the aspirations and plans of a wide range of students will provide an insight into making career decisions.
- The university – the drivers behind choosing to study at the university will provide an insight into the key factors in attracting students, and the plans and perceptions of soon to be graduates will provide an insight into what might happen to the university's graduate output and how they may best be supported to achieve their goals.
- The city – the motivations behind location decisions of students as they come to the end of their studies will provide an insight into the factors that contribute to the retention of highly skilled 'talent' and what factors need to be addressed to make the best use of this talent and to stop it leaking away.

Before outlining these initial conclusions, it should be remembered that the key aim of this research was to provide a sample of graduates to track over time, to examine their progress in the labour market and to see whether graduates find the work they want and are using the skills and knowledge gained whilst at university in the local labour market. Therefore the next stages of the research will be critical in understanding what really happens to graduates, how they navigate the labour market and their early careers, and whether the aspirations detailed in this report are met.

### 7.1 Conclusions for graduates

- **Big is not always best.** Smaller companies may offer the best mix of factors that graduates seek in employment – interesting and challenging work and

development opportunities. Formal graduate entry schemes still exist but make up a small proportion of the opportunities open to graduates.

- **Keep in contact.** Graduates may want to study again in the future in order to reach their career goals, keep their skills up to date or to follow an interest, and many graduates want to study again at the University of Sussex. Former students should keep in touch with the university to see what opportunities are available and what discounts are available to alumni. They should also let the university know what sorts of learning opportunities they would like as this could lead to new courses and flexible study options being developed. Former students could also involve their employers in discussions about learning opportunities at the University as higher education now has a strong remit to engage with employers.
- **Do some research.** Many students do not feel confident about the employment opportunities available in the city and although they may wish to stay on in Brighton and Hove to continue to benefit from the quality of life offered in the city, they feel the jobs they want are elsewhere. There is information about the labour market in the city and nearby that can help graduates make more informed decisions about where to look for work, and there is support available to help them to undertake their own research. Students could be made more aware of these facilities and encouraged to access them earlier in their studies. Are you really sure that the job you want is *not* here? Are you really sure the job you want *is* available here?

## 7.2 Conclusions for the university

- **Target the message.** Students are attracted to the university for a number of reasons, but across all student groups subject is key followed by teaching quality. The university needs to continue to promote these aspects, making sure that the course offerings continue to appeal to students. This could be argued to be somewhat at odds with the demand-led policy direction, where demand-led has tended to focus on the needs of employers rather than the needs of individuals. Outside of course and teaching quality, different factors are important to different groups of students and the university could consider targeting marketing accordingly. For example, international students and postgraduates are particularly attracted by research reputation; home students from beyond the South East and those new to higher education are attracted by the feel of the university, so it is important to encourage these groups to visit the university; and those from widening participation groups are attracted by employability factors – they want to be reassured that they will be able to find work whilst they study and to gain work after graduating.
- **Use students and graduates as ambassadors.** The university could capitalise on the positive feeling generated amongst its students and alumni. They enjoy their time at the university, feel they made the right decision in coming here and would

recommend it as a good place to study. Students and graduates could act as ambassadors promoting the University of Sussex experience to others, particularly promoting the experience to those who potentially would be the first in their family to go to university where satisfaction ratings were the strongest.

- **Capitalise on customer loyalty.** Three out of five final year students think they will need additional qualifications to achieve their medium-term career goals, and approximately half of final year students say they would study again at the university. The university should continue to keep in contact with former students, letting them know about further learning opportunities, and also should research what sorts of courses and qualifications this group would like so that the university can provide for these. As graduates move into the labour market their additional study needs could also provide a way to link in with employers' requirements.
- **Provide work experience and other transition opportunities.** The majority of final year students (83 per cent) feel they will need to gain additional work experience to achieve their career goals. This is particularly the case for undergraduates, younger students, those aiming for careers in scientific research and development, development/charity/community work and creative roles, and also those aiming to work in private sector. What more can the university do to help students and graduates access these experiences, either in the local area or beyond the South East? The University of Sussex's Career Development and Employment Centre (CDEC) engaged with seven hundred new employers in 2006/07 and invites over 250 employers onto the university campus each year. The CDEC vacancy database promoted a range of on-line vacancy opportunities including: over 500 jobs for finalists and graduates in either the city of Brighton and Hove or broader county of Sussex and a further 700 part-time work, vacation work or voluntary work opportunities in the local region; almost 600 jobs for finalists and graduates that were based in London; and 270 in the wider South East. Are there perhaps other transition opportunities, like internships to bridge the gap between graduation and employment, that could be developed with the support of other agencies? In general there are implications for the university in terms of continuing to broker links between the university and local employers, particularly those in sectors and offering jobs that students aspire to work in.
- **Recognise self-employment as a slow burn.** Few graduates anticipate self-employment as a way into the labour market (in the first few months after graduating). Self-employment appears to be a longer-term career aspiration but one that perhaps the city can deliver upon, as it is regarded as being a thriving area for new business and having many small companies (although affordability of business premises may be an issue). This has implications for the university in terms of how it directs energy into enterprise initiatives and how well it keeps in contact with its alumni.

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- **Help graduates to link up with each other.** A key driver in graduate retention for the city centres around the development and maintenance of support networks. If former students can remain in touch with each other and the university through the alumni society and perhaps keeping their university email address, it may help them to stay on after graduating.
  - **Raise awareness about the local labour market.** Many final year students felt unable to rate the city in terms of the quality of employment on offer but could and did rate the city in quality of life terms. Where students did comment on employment factors, they tended to be pessimistic about what the city could offer them. Of key concern to final year students when thinking about where to find work were numbers of graduate-level opportunities, high salary levels and a pleasant work environment and, for those thinking of moving away, Brighton and Hove could not meet these needs. The university may need to explore methods to raise awareness of the local labour market, including dissemination of local LMI and encouraging (and supporting) students to undertake their own research. This will enable students to make more informed decisions about where to locate for work.

### 7.3 Conclusions for the city

Finally, what are the potential implications for Brighton and Hove as a city? Our research (added to work focused on University of Brighton graduates) tells us that approximately one-third of the city's annual graduating population (which equates to 2,300 people per annum) plan to stay in the city in the short term and hope to in the longer term. We know that the University of Sussex graduate cohort hope to find medium-term employment in four key areas (occupations). These are: teaching/academic (20 per cent), creative (16 per cent), not-for-profit related activities (12 per cent) and business services (12 per cent). However, our results also suggest that more than one-third (34 per cent) wish to work in the public sector. So how does this map onto the actual business landscape? Can the city offer graduates the jobs they want (both transition jobs and career jobs)?

In terms of the potential labour force currently resident in Brighton and Hove, nearly 29 per cent have a graduate-level qualification (much higher than the average for England which is 19.9 per cent). At the occupational level, 32.2 per cent of the workforce could be said to be in occupations that graduates might aspire to (senior management, higher professional occupations, lower level managerial or professional occupations). This suggests that there is an implicit balance in the city, as we have roughly comparable numbers of graduates and higher level occupations. Yet we also know that graduates from the University of Sussex have specific concerns about the labour market in Brighton and Hove in terms of meeting their aspirations. These are, most notably, the existence of enough graduate-level job opportunities and pay. In both cases expectations are high and graduate satisfaction does not match these



expectations. Importantly, a perceived lack of graduate opportunity is the main reason for leaving the locality. Only 40 per cent of graduates agree that they could find a job in Brighton and Hove that matched their qualifications and only 18 per cent would recommend it as a good place to find suitable employment.

But Brighton and Hove has a quality of life pull that appears capable of (at least partially) over-riding employment concerns for a substantial proportion of its graduates. Graduates are very demanding in that they expect good public services (specifically health care and public transport) and a good environment (friendly atmosphere, good restaurants, bars, green spaces etc.), and Brighton and Hove meets these high expectations. Where Brighton and Hove falls short is in terms of housing affordability, which graduates rate as very important, and this causes considerable dissatisfaction. This is hardly surprising as the average dwelling in the city is £220,000, which equates to around seven times the average salary. Graduates have indicated that in the short term they are happy to remain in their current accommodation, but this is probably unsustainable in the medium-to-long term.

So what does this all mean for Brighton and Hove? And what could the city do to change the path it is on, if it chose to? Brighton and Hove can take one of several paths.

- **Import educated people:** It could accept that it cannot fulfil graduates' employment aspirations, and act as a net importer of educated people who then have to work in London to meet the high housing costs in Brighton and Hove and their job expectations. This would mean that the only action the city has to take is to ensure that it maintains its high quality of public services. Economically, and socially, this is an attractive proposition in many ways. Economically, it means that the city benefits from 'foreign' earnings of its resident population which then may stimulate local economic activity through their spending on local goods and services. Of course, this net increase in the graduate stock of the city may enhance the already high 'friendliness' of the city. To the unitary authority it is a low cost option too, as it implies marginal annual increase in the budget for key public services to reflect the small net annual increase in population. However, not all the income that Brighton and Hove's graduate commuters generate will remain in the city, and so in the long term, it is better to build up the local economic base.
- **Market graduate opportunities:** Alternatively, Brighton and Hove could say that there is actually a mismatch between the negative perceptions of the city – in terms of not being able to meet graduate employment expectations – and the reality, and that this is a market failure in the most basic and traditional sense (ie an information gap). In this case the city would need to market its graduate employment opportunities to the student population more forcefully and form relationships with local employers (public and private sector), employment services and other key stakeholders to push this message. This would require more careful and sophisticated local economic and labour market analysis to establish a

clearer picture. If perceptions and reality were indeed mismatched, a concerted effort to bridge the information gap would be relatively low cost and have a fairly high chance of success as graduates appreciate the quality of life that the city offers.

- **Attract in graduate employers – large reputable companies that can pay high salaries:** Longer-term economic plans might include a variety of measures and strategies. For example, the existence of a large and growing highly educated workforce puts the city in a very strong position to meet the challenges of the future as the UK seeks to manage the transition from a relatively low skill equilibrium in an expanded service sector to a high value added service (and to a lesser extent manufacturing) economy. Simply marketing Brighton and Hove as a location for inward investment in high value added sectors (requiring highly educated workers) might pay good dividends. However, it is probably the case that Brighton has too few world-leading, internationally recognisable businesses or public sector institutions at the moment. A recent, and positive, example would be the very successful move of the Meteorological Office to Exeter. Lessons could be learnt from cities that have had successful and less successful inward investment experiences. It does appear that Brighton and Hove has the capability to provide a high class workforce, and this can only increase over time. But the drag on the pace at which this happens is the speed at which large, high value added employers can be encouraged to locate their activities in the city.
- **Look at housing:** Finally, a note on the idiosyncrasies of the local housing market. Brighton and Hove does have a smaller than average stock of owner-occupied dwellings and the housing market is somewhat distorted by wealthy Londoners owning second homes in the city. This has a negative supply-side impact (fewer dwellings available) and also introduces a price rigidity in the sense that Brighton and Hove prices reflect London wages to a degree, which impacts upon the ability of local people to afford local houses. To what extent this can be addressed at a local level is unclear, but until it can Brighton and Hove is likely to be characterised by a transient graduate population who leave the city when their housing requirements change with their social and personal circumstances.