



Higher Education and the Labour Market Perspectives from Maltese graduates and employers

National Team of Bologna Experts 2011-2013, Malta





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National Team of Bologna Experts Malta (2013): Higher Education and the Labour Market. Perspectives from Maltese graduates and employers. Malta. December 2013.

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Research Partners



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

The University of Malta is the highest teaching institution in Malta, publicly funded and open to all those who have the requisite qualifications. Over the past few years, the University has reviewed its structures in order to align itself with the Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area. Conscious of its public role, the University strives to create courses which are relevant and timely in response to the needs of the country.

www.um.edu.mt



The Malta College for Arts, Science & Technology aims to provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy. MCAST offers courses ranging from MQF Level 1 to MQF Level 6.

www.mcast.edu.mt



The Institute of Tourism Studies has an international reputation for developing its students holistically and providing them with the necessary knowledge and competences in the tourism and hospitality sector while ensuring a positive learning experience for all its students. Besides focusing on its curriculum, it also promotes extra-curricular activities, which serve as an added value to learning and promote the area of soft skills development.

www.its.edu.mt



The International Vocational College Malta is a college designed by business for business. All courses at the IVCM are planned and taught by experienced professionals who make an active contribution to the core curriculum, which is accredited by the Malta Qualifications Framework and the international educational body, Edexcel BTEC. These qualifications are recognised as entry requirements to universities worldwide.

<http://ivcm.edu.mt/>

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The Kunsill Studenti Universitarji is the oldest national student union in Europe founded by Arturo Mercieca (later Chief Justice Sir Arturo Mercieca) in 1901. Although times have changed since then, the aims of KSU remain unchanged. Life and University should not only consist in studying, and KSU is an ideal forum where every student can express his or her ideas regarding issues that, strictly speaking, have nothing to do with his or her studies. KSU gives the student the opportunity not only to attend, but also to form part of University.

www.ksu.org.mt



The National Commission for Further and Higher Education is an advisory body on further and higher education in Malta. Moreover, it performs the functions of the Malta Recognition Information Centre; maintains the Malta Qualifications Framework; is responsible for licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of further and higher education as well as for the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal learning.

www.ncfhe.org.mt



The European Union Programmes Agency is the National Agency responsible for the management of the European Union programmes in the field of education & training and for support structures such as the Eurodesk and Euroguidance in Malta. The fields in which the EUPA and the National EUROPASS Centre operate complement each other, which naturally led to cooperation between the two entities.

www.eupa.org.mt

Foreword

As part of its Bologna work programme 2011-2013, the European Union Programmes Agency sought to coordinate and support a crucial research study on the employability of today's recent graduates. The link between the industry and the Higher Education network has long been a subject of debate for the national authorities, particularly with regards to the preparation and quality of training which graduates undergo during their years of study. Being a small nation state with only three public Higher Education Institutions, has surely contributed to a more focused and coherent research process. In this regard, the role of the National Team of Bologna Experts was priceless in promoting and coordinating the survey that was specifically designed to target graduates within their respective institution. This could also be said for the private Institutions and the Chamber of Commerce for their invaluable role in disseminating the survey among leading partner institutes / employers in Malta.

Although this research project could be considered as an entry level study on the employability of graduates, it has shed light upon the different viewpoints which both employers and graduates have towards the skills, competences and preparation required in today's labour market. The study has enabled Higher Education Institutions to clearly assess the expectations of their graduates upon their completion of studies. This should also provide the reader with an opportunity to compare and contrast the perspectives of the labour market with those of the new generation of graduates emerging from the local Higher Education Institutions. Even though this project is a basic study of the graduate employability aspect, its results could be considered as the mainstay for other potential future initiatives within this area of research.

Against this background, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team at EUPA as well as the NCFHE working on this initiative for their sterling collaboration and support.

Robert Debono
National Coordinator

Introduction

One of the focal points of the National Team of Bologna Experts in Malta in the period from 2011 to 2013 has been the employability of higher education graduates. This issue appeared of particular importance in view of the financial crisis and the emphasis it has brought about with regard to the contribution of higher education to economic development. However, to what extent is this political priority met in practice? How strong is the link between higher education and the labour market in Malta? As part of its work programme for the period of 2011 to 2013 the National Team of Bologna Experts sought to explore these questions focusing in particular on what employers look for in today's Labour Market and the obstacles faced by graduates in today's Labour Market. This research exercise was implemented with the administrative and research assistance of the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) and the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).

The present report is the outcome of this research exercise, which looked into the extent recent graduates of higher education have acquired the knowledge, skills and competences required to enter in today's labour market or the obstacles they have faced in this regard. For this purpose the research focused on graduates that completed a programme of higher education equivalent to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 5 or higher in 2011 or 2012 and addressed the following issues:

- To what extent did graduates feel overall prepared for entering the labour market after completing their higher education?
- Which knowledge, skills and competences did graduates find most relevant in their job?
- To what extent did their higher education deliver on these knowledge, skills and competences?
- What aspects do higher education graduates value most in a job?
- Is changing jobs common among recent higher education graduates? and
- What were the main reasons for higher education graduates to change jobs?

Apart from targeting graduates, the research also addressed employers with similar issues to identify their expectations toward the knowledge, skills and competences obtained by higher education graduates. By following this approach, the research aimed to shed light on employers' demands in regard to recruitment and how this is being met by higher education through the skills obtained by higher education graduates. Moreover, it focused on the expectations held by higher education graduates with regard to their future jobs and the extent to which the labour market can satisfy these.

Both higher education graduates and employers were invited to participate in an online survey addressing the issues indicated above. In this regard the representatives of the National Team of Bologna Experts - namely Professor Lauri for the University of Malta; Mr. Maione for MCAST; Mr. Mamo for ITS; and Dr. Gialanze for the private higher education institutions - were responsible for the sampling and invitation of the graduates of the higher education institution or sector they represent as well as for the analysis of the data collected from the respective higher education graduates. Employers were invited to participate in the online survey through convenience sampling, namely with the assistance and support of employers organizations and personal contact established through Dr. Gialanze, who kindly accepted the responsibility of collecting and analyzing the data from this target audience as well. The online survey of both higher education graduates and employers were carried out between February and April 2013 and the following responses were observed among the total target populations of the different entities:

- 156 responses were collected from the University of Malta out of 6,136 graduates in 2011 and 2012
- 103 responses were collected from MCAST out of 1,136 graduates in 2011 and 2012
- 9 responses were collected from ITS out of 44 graduates in 2011 and 2012
- 18 responses were collected from private higher education institutions from an unknown total population of graduates in 2011 and 2012

Thus a total of 286 responses were collected from graduates completing a programme of higher education in 2011 or 2012. This guarantees a margin of error of 5.8% assuming a 95% degree of confidence.

With regard to employers 54 responses were collected from an unknown total population of employers. This guarantees a margin of error of 13% assuming a 95% degree of confidence.

This report is structured in four sections. It sets out with a detailed overview of the main feedback obtained from higher education graduates, with specific foci as decided by the Bologna Experts. These are presented in the form of case studies of the findings collected from the graduates of the different higher education institutions or sectors, which were analysed by the National Bologna Experts representing the respective institutions or sector as indicated above. The second section presents the feedback from employers. This is followed by a section providing a student perspective on the findings obtained by graduates, which were analysed by Mr. Bugeja, President of KSU in 2012/2013, in his role as National Bologna Expert. The report concludes with reflections and recommendations based on a comparative analysis of the responses collected from graduates and employers.

EUPA and NCFHE would like to express their gratitude to the National Team of Bologna Experts for their hard work and dedication to this research project as well as to Robert Debono, Dr. Philip von Brockdorff and Professor James Calleja for their guidance and support. Given that research on the employability of higher education graduates in Malta is still limited, we hope that this research may provide food for thought and serve as a starting point for further work in this area in the future.

Christine Scholz
Commission Officer, NCFHE

Karl Mintoff
Programme Officer, EUPA

II. Feedback obtained from graduates

Employability of graduates from the University of Malta

This section will discuss the responses of male and female graduates from the University of Malta., in particular the five questions which were considered important areas of investigation.

How relevant do graduates perceive the training they received vis-à-vis their present and past jobs?

Respondents were asked to rate the job relevance of 14 aspects of the training they received. Table 1 gives the percentage of University of Malta respondents who rated these aspects of their training as very important or important and those who rated them as either of little or of no importance. The headings are given in order with those rated more important given first.

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
Work in team	81.2%	9.1%
Subject specific	77.8%	13.2%
Multi-disciplinary	75.7%	12.5%
Communication skills	75.0%	13.9%
Autonomy	72.2%	10.5%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	70.8%	13.2%
Argumentation skills	70.1%	13.9%
Gather / interpret data	66.7%	14.6%
Qualification obtained	66.7%	20.1%
Leadership skills	66.0%	9.8%
Reputation of HEI	62.5%	19.4%
Work experience	61.8%	19.4%
Negotiation skills	60.4%	18.1%
Informal / non-formal	38.9%	31.2%

Table 1: How relevant for your current or past job are these aspects of your training?

The aspects of their training which students rated as most relevant to their jobs were the ability to work in a team, subject specific training, multi-disciplinarity, communication skills and the ability to demonstrate autonomy. None of the above assessments differed significantly across gender. Informal and non-formal learning experiences were, by far, deemed to be the least relevant. This finding is unexpected since employers ask HEI to prepare students with a wider knowledge base than that which is provided by the content of their course. It is this demand from employers that instigated university authorities to start initiatives like Degree+, where students have the opportunity for informal and non-formal learning. It is clear that so far students are not appreciating enough the work-related significance of these initiatives.

Did graduates feel prepared for their present jobs?

From the sample of students who answered the questionnaire (n=156), 41.7% felt that they were well or very well prepared whilst 22.4% felt they were little prepared or not prepared at all. There were no significant gender differences in the answer to this question. Although this quantitative research project is important, it is necessary to find out why about 22% of the respondents said that they did not feel prepared for the job they have. Perhaps in future surveys, questionnaires should not be anonymous so that participants who claim that they did not feel prepared for the job could, if they accept, be interviewed and more qualitative and in-depth data can be collected. The next question asks participants to rate how well our HEI are preparing students for the jobs they take up, more specifically regarding the skills given. It seems that when asked about particular skills, respondents felt well prepared in most of the skills listed. We have to try and explain why when asked about particular skills, respondents felt prepared but when asked a general question about how well prepared they felt only about 42% said they do. This could mean that besides the skills listed there are other things which are lacking in the students' courses.

Are our institutions giving the right skills to our graduates vis-à-vis employability?

Respondents were asked to rate how well prepared they were in their employment when fulfilling each of the fourteen aspects of their training listed above.

Table 2 gives the percentage of respondents who rated themselves to be very well prepared or well prepared in each of these aspects and those who rated themselves as either very little prepared or not prepared at all. The headings are given in order, that is, respondents were listed according to how well they rated themselves.

The order of these fourteen aspects in Table 2 is remarkably similar to that in Table 6. This might be a positive thing, indicating that students might consider themselves to be less well prepared in those areas which they deem to be less relevant to their job. Again, there were no significant gender differences amongst these ratings for any of these areas.

	Very well or well prepared	Very little prepared or not prepared at all
Work in team	83.3%	5.6%
Multi-disciplinary	75.7%	11.2%
Subject specific	72.9%	11.2%
Qualification obtained	72.2%	11.2%
Argumentation skills	72.2%	6.3%
Autonomy	71.5%	7.0%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	70.1%	8.4%
Gather / interpret data	69.5%	9.1%
Communication skills	69.4%	11.2%
Reputation of HEI	66.7%	15.9%
Work experience	66.0%	16.6%
Leadership skills	66.0%	12.5%
Negotiation skills	63.2%	13.2%
Informal / non-formal	46.5%	27.1%

Table 2: How well prepared in your job are you in these aspects of your training?

What do graduates consider to be the important aspects of a job they would want to take up?

Respondents were asked to rank 10 aspects about their present job or a job they would want to take up on a five point scale ranging from not at all important to very important. It seems that the five most important aspects were overall job satisfaction (94.9%), opportunity for career development (90.3%), financial benefits such as insurance and allowances (82.7%), relevance of one's studies to the job (77.6%) and high salary (75.6%). In the ninth place was the opportunity for parental leave. Interestingly this is one of the few cases where the results show a significant gender difference. In the case of female respondents, 69.8% said that it is an important aspect while only 43.4% of the male respondents considered this aspect as important. This difference in responses between the genders could be explained by the fact that female students in Malta know that the structures for childcare are not efficient enough to help them have a demanding professional career while bringing up children and, wanting to raise a family they consider this aspect as being important or very important. On the other hand, male respondents at this age may either not be aware of this potential problem in their future married life or they might still consider that childrearing is predominantly the mother's prerogative and therefore do not see it as a problem at all. However it is more difficult to explain why this aspect of a job featured so low amongst the list of preferences. Even females, who rated, for example, job satisfaction (97.8%) as important or very important or opportunity for career development (90.7%) so highly, did not rate parental leave anywhere near these levels. Maybe they are still envisaging that grandparents will be their mainstay support when bringing up children or many of them might already be resigned to sacrifice their career for the sake of raising a family and they do not see this as an important issue.

Is changing of jobs a common practice among our young people who have been through post-secondary education?

Graduates were asked whether they held a job prior to their current one (question 17). Given that 61.3% of the respondents have done so, one may conclude that changing of jobs is a common practice among our young people who have been through post-sec education. This response rate does not differ significantly between genders. In order to estimate whether this is a high rate of job changers one would have to compare with other countries and with what studies on youths in general tell us about this issue.

What are the reasons, young people give for changing jobs? Does this tell us something?

Males reported different reasons for changing jobs than females. For males the three most cited reasons for changing jobs were career development (66.7%), a better contract (55.6%) and better relevance of the job to their studies (51.9%).

For female respondents the three most cited reasons for changing jobs were better relevance of the job to their studies (56.6%), career development such as a position with more responsibility (54.3%) and better hours, possibly for the working hours to be more compatible with their lifestyle or family life (30.4%). This reason was only cited by 22.2% of male respondents.

It seems that for both male and female participants, career development, relevance of the job to their studies or vice versa, relevance of their studies to the job they are doing and better work conditions are considered the most essential reasons why one would want to change a job. These are the reasons which are the most likely why most people not just students in Malta would want to change jobs. In bigger countries, one often cited reason is finding a job for which one does not have to travel for hours. This does not apply to graduates working in Malta.

Another interesting finding is that both male and female respondents reported labour market conditions, such as downsizing or restructuring of the company as being the least common reasons for changing jobs. This is very significant since it seems to imply that the respondents have been successful in keeping the job they opted for. Considering that in many European countries, there is a high percentage of unemployment, this result is worth noting.

Professor Mary Anne Lauri
Pro-Rector University of Malta

Employability of graduates from MCAST

MCAST is a relatively young educational institution but it has generated an appreciable number of graduates at various levels and it is important that the impact that these graduates are having with the world of employment is closely monitored. The scope of this particular study is to find out how graduates from the Higher National Diploma (HND – level 5) and the Bachelor degree (level 6) are adapting to the work environment and if the educational establishment has really prepared them for it.

Graduates' general perception

The respondents were asked if they feel prepared for their present (and past) jobs. Although the overall response is positive with 59.2% saying they were very well prepared or well prepared, it turns out that 13.6% of the respondents feel that the education has got them little prepared or not prepared at all for their jobs. MCAST will have to understand this phenomenon better through further research. This exercise in the meantime gives us the first indications of the general areas that require attention.

How relevant do graduates perceive the training they received vis-à-vis their present and past jobs?

The respondents were asked to grade the relevance of fourteen factors and the results are shown in Table 3.

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
Work in team	84.00%	7.50%
Subject specific	77.60%	13.80%
Multi-disciplinary	74.50%	12.80%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	73.40%	13.90%
Gather / interpret data	70.20%	14.90%
Communication skills	68.10%	11.70%
Autonomy	65.90%	8.50%
Argumentation skills	63.90%	13.80%
Leadership skills	62.80%	12.80%
Reputation of HEI	59.50%	19.10%
Negotiation skills	58.50%	14.90%
Work experience	55.30%	20.20%
Qualification obtained	53.20%	22.40%
Informal / non-formal	31.90%	39.40%

Table 3: How relevant for your current or past job are these aspects of your training?

It is significant to note that three out of the top six factors are very similar to what industry representatives have been regularly requesting. These are the ability to work in a team, the breadth of knowledge shown here as multi-disciplinary skills and communication skills. One particular industry sector namely the Business and Financial services has also repeatedly requested graduates with data analysis skills and we also see that it is given a high level of importance by this group of graduates. It is a bit surprising to see that the perception relative to the qualification obtained is of rather low importance. Possibly the question was not very clear as to whether this relates to the class of degree, level (HND or BSc) or maybe even subject area, although in this latter case it would contrast significantly with the importance given to the subject specific knowledge. It is somewhat disappointing to see the low level of importance given to the informal/non-formal education although we know that formal qualifications are still the only currency of the job market in Malta.

Are our institutions giving the right skills to our graduates vis-à-vis employability?

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of preparedness for the jobs they are doing. This is a direct measure of how well the institutions are preparing them for work. The same fourteen factors as in the previous section are being evaluated. The results are shown in Table 4.

	Very well or well prepared	Very little prepared or not prepared at all
Work in team	80.80%	11.70%
Subject specific	74.50%	13.80%
Qualification obtained	71.30%	10.60%
Gather / interpret data	71.30%	12.80%
Multi-disciplinary	70.20%	12.70%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	69.20%	12.80%
Argumentation skills	69.20%	13.80%
Communication skills	66.00%	10.60%
Reputation of HEI	64.90%	17.00%
Work experience	61.70%	19.20%
Leadership skills	61.70%	17.00%
Negotiation skills	57.40%	18.10%
Autonomy	56.40%	12.80%
Informal / non-formal	41.50%	30.80%

Table 4: How well prepared in your job are you in these aspects of your training?

In this case we immediately see that the qualification obtained is now in the top three factors. This strengthens the argument that the question was not properly interpreted in the previous section and the type of qualification obtained is important to access the job market. It is again not clear why autonomy is scoring so low. If the question is properly interpreted then the response seems to indicate that the graduates of our institution feel unprepared to work on their own. We have in the past made a lot of effort to include and encourage teamwork and this has had a good level of success as we can see in these results. We need to make sure that we do not neglect the importance of initiative, autonomy and the ability to work unsupervised which is a fundamental requirement of higher education. Again we see the importance of data gathering and interpretation. Interesting to note that this was the only case in this section where a statistically significant difference in gender response was noted. Females seem to have given more importance to this factor. Although we cannot be sure of the reason for the difference however we believe that it could be due to the fact that the majority of the MCAST females come from the Business sector and they have always felt strongly about the needs of this type of education, to which MCAST has responded by introducing appropriate units.

What do graduates consider to be the important aspects of a job they would want to take up?

In this part of the analysis we will look at what aspects are considered more important in a job according to our graduates. The questionnaire asked them for a response on ten different aspects and the results obtained are shown in Table 5.

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
Career Development	98.10%	2.00%
Job Satisfaction	97.10%	2.90%
Relevance of Studies	85.50%	14.60%
High Salary	79.60%	4.90%
Financial benefits	76.70%	3.80%
Opportunity for sabbaticals	70.90%	6.80%
Opportunity for international experience	60.20%	18.40%
Flexible hours	58.30%	14.60%
Opportunity for Parental leave	53.40%	23.30%
Teleworking	25.20%	34.00%

Table 5: Importance given by graduates to different aspects in a job

It is interesting to note the level of importance that is given to the potential of advancing one's career, and the data showed no gender differences for this item. Also interesting is the importance given to the relevance of the job to one's studies, although it would be interesting to have a longitudinal study to check whether this perception changes with time and career development. Salary and financial issues are obviously important but not in the top three. One has to comment on the issue of parental leave. Although it is considered important it did not score very highly. Perhaps not unexpectedly this is the only case in this section where one sees a gender difference that is statistically significant, with girls scoring higher (64.1% vs. 46.9%).

Changing jobs and reasons for change

In this last section the focus is on whether our young graduates feel prone to change jobs and the reasons for which they would do so. The data is presented in two Tables namely Table 6 which shows the percentage of graduates who have already experienced job changes while Table 7 gives the reasons and the percentages for each.

	Male	Female	Total
yes	61.1%	51.9%	58.0%
no	38.9%	48.1%	42.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6: Graduates having held a job prior to their current one by gender

	Male	Female
Better contract (e.g. longer duration of the contract; from definite to indefinite contract)	30.3%	14.3%
Better remuneration	33.3%	35.7%
Better hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time; from full-time to part-time)	27.3%	28.6%
Better relevance of the job to your studies	60.6%	35.7%
Career development (e.g. position with more responsibility; more career prospects)	57.6%	35.7%
Career change (e.g. position in a different sector)	24.2%	50.0%
Labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company)	15.2%	7.1%
Personal reasons	15.2%	21.4%
Other	24.2%	28.6%

Table 7: Reasons for changing job by gender

It is clear from the data that changing jobs has really become the norm rather than the exception. There are really no big surprises in the data although it is again interesting to note that the higher level of importance is again given to relevance of the job to the studies and the opportunity of career development while very little consideration is given to labour market conditions.

Concluding remarks

The results of this study are encouraging but there is still a lot of work to be done to give our graduates a better experience and preparation for work. There are no real surprises on the areas that are considered as important and actions have been taken both at curriculum level and student campus life. Now we need to evaluate the effectiveness of some of our actions and to consolidate the areas of success.

Vincent Maione

Director Quality Assurance – MCAST

Employability of graduates from ITS

ITS is the educational institution in Malta which has a special mission to prepare students for the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Therefore, whilst looking at each individual's needs to further his/her career, ITS is duty bound to ensure that such preparation fits industry's needs as well. Through this questionnaire one can deduce whether graduates have acquired the skills and competences required in today's job market.

The percentage of respondents, 20.5%, from those who were eligible to reply was the highest when compared to the other participating institutions. However since the cohort of Level 6 graduates was in fact quite small at 44 and the number of respondents was 9, the statistics need to be viewed in the context of this limitation.

How relevant do graduates perceive the training they received vis-à-vis their present and past jobs?

	Total
Very well or well prepared	88.9%
little prepared or not prepared at all	11.1%

Table 8: How well do graduates feel prepared for the labour market by their higher education institution?

From the response (Table 8) it is quite evident that the majority of responding students following a course at ITS feel that they are very well prepared to enter the employment market. One respondent (equivalent to the 11.1% indicated in the Table) indicated that s/he was little prepared or not at all. There could be several reasons for such a response which could be investigated further since it could be an indicator of a wider perception in the general cohort.

Did graduates feel prepared for their present jobs?

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
Work in team	100.0%	0.0%
Reputation of HEI	100.0%	0.0%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	100.0%	0.0%
Communication skills	100.0%	0.0%
Gather / interpret data	88.9%	0.0%
Work experience	88.9%	0.0%
Negotiation skills	88.9%	0.0%
Subject specific	88.9%	0.0%
Multi-disciplinary	88.9%	0.0%
Argumentation skills	77.8%	0.0%
Leadership skills	77.8%	0.0%
Qualification obtained	77.8%	11.1%
Autonomy	55.6%	0.0%
Informal / non-formal	55.6%	11.1%

Table 9: How relevant for your current or past job are these aspects of your training?

Table 9 is a good indicator. The response to the first four questions is overwhelming (100%) whilst it is very encouraging indeed to note that with the exception of 2 questions, none felt that the training they received was either of little or no importance and the majority felt that they were well prepared.

One respondent (equivalent to the 11.1% indicated in the Table) felt that the qualifications obtained were of little or no importance. Another one respondent felt the same way for informal/non-formal (training).

Table 10 below has a similar pattern of responses.

Are our institutions giving the right skills to our graduates vis-à-vis employability?

	Very well or well prepared	Very little prepared or not prepared at all
Work in team	100.0%	0.0%
Work experience	100.0%	0.0%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	100.0%	0.0%
Qualification obtained	88.9%	0.0%
Multi-disciplinary	88.9%	0.0%
Subject specific	88.9%	0.0%
Communication skills	88.9%	0.0%
Leadership skills	88.9%	0.0%
Argumentation skills	88.9%	0.0%
Gather / interpret data	88.9%	0.0%
Reputation of HEI	77.8%	11.1%
Negotiation skills	77.8%	0.0%
Autonomy	55.6%	0.0%
Informal / non-formal	44.4%	11.1%

Table 10: How well prepared in your job are you in these aspects of your training?

What do graduates consider to be the important aspects of a job they would want to take up?

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
job satisfaction	100.0%	0.0%
opportunity for career development	100.0%	0.0%
high salary	88.9%	0.0%
opportunity for international experiences	88.9%	11.1%
relevance of studies to the job	77.8%	0.0%
opportunity for parental leave	77.8%	0.0%
opportunity for sabbaticals	77.8%	0.0%
flexible working hours	66.7%	0.0%
financial benefits	66.7%	0.0%
opportunity for teleworking	44.4%	0.0%

Table 11: Importance given by graduates to different aspects in a job

Table 11 clearly shows that the majority of graduates give high importance to practically all points raised. This also shows that the compulsory international placement is one of the major strengths of the Institute of Tourism Studies. Indeed, ITS students have to undergo a compulsory 6-month international internship as part of their course to enable them to obtain their Diploma (Level 4) and/or Higher National Diploma (Level 5). One student did not give value to this international experience.

Is changing of jobs a common practice among our young people who have been through post-secondary education?

	Total (from 8 respondents)
yes	87.5%
no	12.5%

Table 12: Graduates having held a job prior to their current one

Based on Table 12 it is quite evident that ITS graduates adapt themselves to the exigencies of the Tourism and Hospitality industry, where job mobility is quite common. Most of them get a job the moment they leave the institute as graduates, if not before, in order to enable them get additional experience to the practical sessions they have to undergo during their studies. One graduate answered in the negative – it could be that s/he could have followed a course which is not directly connected to the catering side of the industry (e.g. Tour guiding).

What are the reasons, young people give for changing jobs? Does this tell us something?

	Percent of cases (from 7 respondents)
Career development (e.g. position with more responsibility; more career prospects)	100.0%
Better contract (e.g. longer duration of the contract; from definite to indefinite contract)	85.7%
Better remuneration	71.4%
Better hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time; from full-time to part-time)	57.1%
Career change (e.g. position in a different sector)	42.9%
Better relevance of the job to your studies	28.6%
Other	28.6%
Personal reasons	14.3%
Labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company)	0.0%

Table 13: Reasons for changing job

Table 13 clearly shows that the ex-ITS students who responded this are very career minded. The main reason for them to change jobs is career development (100%). On the other hand, job security is sought by the majority (over 85%) in the sense that they rather seek indefinite contracts than definite ones. This could be interpreted that they are not in for a fast buck but rather seek to remain loyal to the same employer. At the same time they prefer job security to taking unnecessary risks. As expected, a good percentage (71.4%) changed their jobs for better remuneration whilst just over half of respondents did so for better hours, be it a change from part-time to full-time employment or quite acceptable, vice-versa in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Less than half changed their career to a different sector or to improve the relevance of their job to their studies; meaning that the majority feel that their studies have been relevant to their career. What is encouraging to note is that none of the respondents changed jobs due to labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company).

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Director – ITS

Employability of graduates from private higher education institutions

The response from graduates from private higher education institutions was low. With fewer than 18 graduates responding, this data may only be taken as indicative.

How relevant do graduates perceive the training they received vis-à-vis their present and past jobs?

With this question the results indicate that half the students surveyed feel well prepared for the work place, it would be of interest to delve further into this perception and ask in which aspects they felt well prepared or not. As 16.7% felt not prepared and it would thus be pertinent to understand why they did not feel well prepared and address this need within our preparation of these graduates for the work place.

	Total
Very well or well prepared	50.0%
little prepared or not prepared at all	16.7%

Table 14: How well do graduates feel prepared for the labour market by their higher education institution?

Did graduates feel prepared for their present jobs?

Students feel that acquiring skills such as working in a team, autonomy and argumentation to be of paramount importance when preparing for a job. They additionally believe that employers look for work experience when employing staff, 77.8% stated so. In fact the importance of work experience rated at the same level as the qualification obtained at 77.8% respectively.

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
Work in team	88.9%	5.6%
Argumentation skills	83.3%	5.6%
Autonomy	83.3%	5.6%
Subject specific	77.8%	5.6%
Multi-disciplinary	77.8%	11.1%
Gather / interpret data	77.8%	5.6%
Leadership skills	77.8%	5.6%
Qualification obtained	77.8%	11.1%
Work experience	77.8%	5.6%
Reputation of HEI	66.7%	16.7%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	66.7%	11.1%
Communication skills	61.1%	11.1%
Negotiation skills	44.4%	5.6%
Informal / non-formal	27.8%	33.3%

Table 15: How relevant for your current or past job are these aspects of your training?

Are our institutions giving the right skills to our graduates vis-à-vis employability?

This question is central as it addresses the issue of whether we are preparing our students to gaining successful employability after they leave our educational institutions. When addressing the issue of standards of qualifications obtained (94.4% well prepared) and the ability to work in a team (88.9% well prepared), the results indicate that this is being done well according to the respondents. It would seem that further development would be needed to be looked into within the areas of informal/non-formal skills (55.6% well prepared) and Negotiation skills (55.6% well prepared).

	Very well or well prepared	Very little prepared or not prepared at all
Qualification obtained	94.4%	5.6%
Work in team	88.9%	5.6%
Argumentation skills	83.3%	5.6%
Reputation of HEI	83.3%	5.6%
Gather / interpret data	83.3%	5.6%
Work experience	77.8%	11.1%
Multi-disciplinary	77.8%	5.6%
Subject specific	77.8%	11.1%
Communication skills	77.8%	11.1%
Autonomy	77.8%	5.6%
Leadership skills	77.8%	5.6%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	72.2%	11.1%
Negotiation skills	55.6%	11.1%
Informal / non-formal	55.6%	22.2%

Table 16: How well prepared in your job are you in these aspects of your training?

What do graduates consider to be the important aspects of a job they would want to take up?

Respondents indicated that they consider the most important factors when taking up a job to be job satisfaction (100%) and opportunity for career development (100%). With regards to this response further investigation should be sought to understand what their perception of job satisfaction is and also if this response would vary at specific ages. Of little or no importance was the opportunity for teleworking, at 38.9%. Here a factor to consider is whether the graduates had experience of teleworking and had seen it being implemented successfully, allowing employees to continue work uninterrupted at various stages of their lives.

	Very important or important	Of little or no importance
Job satisfaction	100.0%	0.0%
Opportunity for career development	100.0%	0.0%
Flexible working hours	83.3%	5.6%
Financial benefits	77.8%	11.1%
High salary	77.8%	0.0%
Relevance of studies to the job	66.7%	0.0%
Opportunity for international experiences	50.0%	27.8%
Opportunity for parental leave	50.0%	22.2%
Opportunity for sabbaticals	38.9%	27.8%
Opportunity for teleworking	11.1%	38.9%

Table 17: Importance given by graduates to different aspects in a job

Is changing of jobs a common practice among our young people who have been through post-secondary education?

Graduates are aware of the need to change job and the continuous professional development needed within the work community. 83.3% of graduates are prepared for this eventuality. The preparation for their constant career and personal development following their post-secondary education should accompany this common practice.

	Total
yes	83.3%
no	16.7%

Table 18: Graduates having held a job prior to their current one

What are the reasons young people give for changing jobs? Does this tell us something?

The primary motive for our graduates to change job seems to be for further development of their career at 80% this factor was clearly marked as the most important indicator. The least important factor with regards to the graduate's perceptions would be the labour market and the economy of the Maltese islands, whereby only 13.3% consider this factor when changing their jobs.

	Percent of cases
Career development (e.g. position with more responsibility; more career prospects)	80.0%
Better remuneration	60.0%
Better relevance of the job to your studies	46.7%
Better contract (e.g. longer duration of the contract; from definite to indefinite contract)	26.7%
Career change (e.g. position in a different sector)	26.7%
Better hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time; from full-time to part-time)	20.0%
Personal reasons	20.0%
Labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company)	13.3%
Other	0.0%

Table 19: Reasons for changing job

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Chief Executive Officer - International Vocational College Malta

III. Feedback obtained from employers

Do employers feel that graduates are prepared for the labour market?

As can be seen from Table 20 below, only 2.4 per cent of employers who responded to this questionnaire feel that students are not prepared at all for the labour market, also the data collected indicates that 64.3% feel that they are somewhat prepared, whilst 21.4% only responded that they are well prepared for the requirements of the labour market. Further detailed analysis of the qualifications required by employers and whether these are adequately met by graduates, would be a recommendation that emerges from this study, which is just a preliminary generic one.

	Prepared for the labour market
Not Prepared at all	2.4%
Little Prepared	11.9%
Somewhat Prepared	64.3%
Well Prepared	21.4%
Total	100.0%

Table 20: Prepared for the Labour Market

How relevant do employers perceive certain aspects for employability in the labour market?

The relevance of the level qualifications that the students achieved before entering employment is 81% very important/important or somewhat important. Indicating that this was a priority for the employer, whilst the reputation of the University where these qualifications are achieved, is somewhat important at 35.7%. During this survey the level of qualifications required by the employer was not requested nor if they should be industry specific. In Malta higher level qualifications are structured in a way which fully respects the Bologna three cycle system of tertiary qualifications, whereas this survey concentrated on the achievement of undergraduate degrees. Furthermore, data emerged whereby the importance of work experience for the employer was highlighted in the data analysed. Table 26 gives the percentage of importance that the respondents rated aspects of employability.

	Very important or important	Of little importance or not important at all
Work in team	92.9%	2.4%
Autonomy	83.3%	2.4%
Leadership skills	83.3%	2.4%
Subject specific	81.0%	2.4%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	81.0%	0.0%
Multi-disciplinary	81.0%	0.0%
Qualification obtained	81.0%	9.5%
Gather / interpret data	78.6%	2.4%
Communication skills	73.8%	2.4%
Work experience	73.8%	7.1%
Argumentation skills	69.0%	2.4%
Negotiation skills	66.7%	7.1%
Informal / non-formal	42.9%	19.0%
Reputation of HEI	35.7%	21.4%

Table 21: Aspects of employability

It is significant to note in the above Table the importance given by the employers to the relevance of the ability to evaluate learning needs and update skills, in addition to the multi-disciplinary knowledge needed at the work place.

Do graduates hold the right skills?

Respondent employers again highlighted the importance of the graduate being able to work well in a team as may be seen from Table 22 below. On the other hand it is some graduates' perception that informal/non-formal education is seen to be of less importance, at 31.90%, as indicated in Table 8. 69 % of respondents indicated that the expected level of qualification achieved was important or very important, whilst this was true for 50% of respondents with respect to the reputation of the institution where the qualification was achieved.

	Meeting it fully or well	Meeting it very little or not at all
Qualification obtained	69.0%	4.8%
Work in team	54.8%	7.1%
Reputation of HEI	50.0%	7.1%
Gather / interpret data	35.7%	19.0%
Autonomy	33.3%	14.3%
Subject specific	31.0%	26.2%
Argumentation skills	31.0%	16.7%
Leadership skills	31.0%	35.7%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	28.6%	19.0%
Communication skills	26.2%	19.0%
Multi-disciplinary	23.8%	28.6%
Informal / non-formal	23.8%	11.9%
Negotiation skills	19.0%	38.1%
Work experience	16.7%	23.8%

Table 22: Employers' opinion of the graduate skills

What do employers believe graduates consider as important aspects in a job?

From the convenience sample of students who participated in this research it would seem that Job satisfaction rated overall the most important factor. It would be interesting to verify student's perception of what constituted job satisfaction. At this initial stage, it would seem that from the data that emerged below financial considerations as well as the opportunity for career development were rated the highest

	Very Important or Important	Of little or no importance
Job satisfaction	81.0%	0.0%
Opportunity for career development	81.0%	4.8%
High salary	73.8%	7.1%
Relevance of studies to the job	71.4%	7.1%
Financial benefits	64.3%	9.5%
Flexible working hours	54.8%	16.7%
Opportunity for international experiences	50.0%	26.2%
Opportunity for parental leave	38.1%	33.3%
Opportunity for sabbaticals	28.6%	38.1%
Opportunity for teleworking	23.8%	45.2%

Table 23: Employers' opinion of what graduates value at the work place

Do employers meet these expectations?

It is interesting to note that the question of job satisfaction again got the highest response with 83.3 % of the respondents indicating it the most important. Whilst the opportunities for teleworking in the cohort of graduates' who responded to the survey indicated that it was not achieved as 19 % indicated that it was met fully or well.

	Meeting it fully or well	Meeting it little or not at all
Job satisfaction	83.3%	0.0%
Relevance of studies to the job	64.3%	9.5%
Opportunity for career development	59.5%	4.8%
Financial benefits	57.1%	19.0%
Flexible working hours	47.6%	19.0%
Opportunity for parental leave	47.6%	11.9%
High salary	40.5%	14.3%
Opportunity for sabbaticals	33.3%	40.5%
Opportunity for international experiences	33.3%	35.7%
Opportunity for teleworking	19.0%	66.7%

Table 24: Employers' opinion on whether the graduates' needs at the work place are met

This survey has sought to present an understanding of what employers look for in today's labour market. There was negligible difference between genders when answering the questions. The main indicators that emerged from this is that employers consider the following factors of paramount importance; the relevance of multi-disciplinary knowledge, the relevance of the ability to evaluate learning needs and update skills and the expected level of qualification achieved from their studies. On the other hand, graduates consider their job satisfaction as the key factor when looking for employment in addition to opportunities for career development.

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IV. The student perspective on the research findings

Introduction

The interpretation that follows of the data gathered through the graduate surveys aims to shed light on some patterns and pointers which can be elicited through an interpretation of the graduates' answers and their views regarding Higher Education and its link to employability. In some cases, trends reveal a difference in the frame of mind of students from different higher education institutions, especially when comparing ITS, MCAST or the University of Malta which undoubtedly appeal to a different set of students, with diverging priorities and opinions.

In writing the students' perspective of this study, every effort was made to present an unbiased and objective interpretation of the data and numbers garnered following the graduate surveys, this leading us to discover a number of interesting observations found below.

Did students feel prepared for their past and present jobs?

The first question asked to the graduates is one which sheds light on a number of issues and which also shows a clear distinction between institutions. In this case, it is evident through the replies that as a general trend, MCAST graduates felt much more prepared for their jobs, in comparison to graduates from the University of Malta. With 59.2% of MCAST graduates saying they felt well prepared or very well prepared, as opposed to 41.7% of University of Malta graduates, it is clear that for some reason or another, the majority of MCAST graduates felt that their education and training left them more prepared for the jobs they took on.

This could obviously be attributed to the vocational nature of MCAST instruction, which undoubtedly offers a more hands-on approach as opposed to the University of Malta which in its nature is more theoretical in its approach. With 35.19% claiming that University of Malta left them somewhat prepared and another 18.6% saying they felt little prepared, University of Malta graduates are clearly unsure about how well-prepared they were when facing the job industry. In University of Malta's defence, such a trend can also be naturally excused with the reason that university courses by their nature are not all directed towards one kind of employment, but towards a more generalist education, with graduates ending up working in fields which are very different from the one's taken up during their university formation. This is especially true for courses which don't lead to a specific profession (law, architecture, medicine) such as the Bachelor of Arts degrees which lead graduates to finding jobs in a number of areas, which aren't necessarily directly correlated to the undergraduate degree undertaken.

Nonetheless, the statistics being what they are, it is evident that University of Malta administration would do well to take note of this conclusion, to ensure that the preparation given to students is more in sync with the needs of the workplace especially in fields which have seen drastic changes over a short period of time.

How relevant do graduates perceive the training they receive vis-à-vis their past and present jobs?

When asking graduates what they perceive to be relevant skills needed at their workplace, the question was split in a number of factors (see Table 25).

	Total	
	Very important or important	Of little importance or not important at all
Work in team	83.4%	7.9%
Subject specific	78.1%	12.5%
Multi-disciplinary	75.8%	12.1%
Communication skills	72.5%	12.5%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	72.5%	12.8%
Autonomy	70.2%	9.1%
Gather / interpret data	69.4%	13.6%
Argumentation skills	69.1%	12.8%
Leadership skills	66.0%	10.2%
Qualification obtained	63.0%	20.0%
Reputation of HEI	63.0%	18.5%
Work experience	61.5%	18.1%
Negotiation skills	59.6%	15.5%
Informal / non-formal	36.2%	33.6%

Table 25: Relevance of various aspects in a job

Upon analysing the graduates' answers by looking at the share of graduates which classified the factors as very important or important, one could come up with a list of the factors and their relevance to the students answering the survey. By looking at the share of 'very important' and 'important' classification garnered by every factor, one can conclude that graduates ranked such factors in the following order: the ability to work in a team (83.4%), subject specific knowledge (78.1%), multi-disciplinary knowledge (75.8%), communication skills (72.5%), evaluate and update skills needs (72.5%), autonomy (70.2%), gather and interpret data (69.4%), argumentation skills (69.1%), leadership skills (66.0%), qualification obtained (63.0%), reputation of the higher education institution (63.0%), work experience (61.5%), negotiation skills (59.6%), and informal and non-formal experiences (36.2%). The figures in question can lead us to draw a number of significant conclusions, some encouraging, and others inherent in the system in place in our country.

Firstly, it is encouraging to note that the most relevant factor graduates deem relevant, is the ability to work in a team. This clearly highlights the difference between formal education; where individual work, study and progress are the order of the day, and the workplace; where a well-oiled team of people working well together to achieve one aim is more important than personal performance.

Graduates answering the questionnaire also gave a lot of importance to 'Communication skills', 'ability to gather/interpret data' and 'ability to demonstrate autonomy' – clearly showing a trend in favour of soft skills which might be shunned aside in formal education, but which are then needed once the student enters the workplace.

A salient feature of this analysis is the relatively little importance given by respondents to 'work related experience' and the 'reputation of the higher education institution'. In the case of 'work related experience' graduates gave it varying importance with answers ranging from 'somewhat important' to 'very important'. A reason for this result could be the relatively limited availability of work-related internships and traineeships, especially for students at the University of Malta which takes a more formal approach compared to ITS and MCAST.

When it comes to the 'reputation of the higher education institution' with only 19% of MCAST and 25% of University of Malta graduates classifying it as 'very important', this low classification could be attributed to the fact that Maltese students have little to no choice when it comes to choosing their higher education institution. Students tend to choose their higher education institution according to their career path: ITS (tourism) MCAST (vocational) University of Malta (academic). There is hardly any competition in most subject fields. Thus the reputation and ranking of a higher education institution are not as important as they would be if students had to choose between competing higher education institutions in the same field.

The relevance of the level of qualification achieved by a student also provides us with very valuable insight. First of all, University of Malta graduates clearly attributed more importance to the level of qualification in comparison to MCAST graduates with 66.7% of University graduates ranking the 'level of qualification' as 'very important or important' as opposed to 55.3% of MCAST graduates doing the same. This could be a natural reflection of the fact that the University of Malta is the only Maltese higher education institutions which can lead to a Level 8 Doctorate qualification.

Preparation for various aspects in a job

The survey also investigated to what extent graduates felt prepared for the various job aspects discussed above (see Table 26).

With 83.3% of University of Malta and 80.9% of MCAST graduates saying that they were well prepared or very well prepared, this is a positive signal, which shows that our HEI are clearly preparing students to work in a team, which is of vital importance to the workplace. The majority of graduates from both MCAST and University of Malta also felt well prepared in Subject Specific knowledge, Multi-disciplinary knowledge, and argumentation skills, which are all undoubtedly important to graduates once they finish formal education and enter the workplace.

In the case of autonomy, 71% of University of Malta graduates felt very well prepared or well prepared, as opposed to 56.4% of MCAST answering the same question. Whether this is a significant sign of the current environment at MCAST and the University of Malta is another issue, however through this survey MCAST graduates appeared less confident in being prepared to face their new job as autonomous individuals. 'Leadership skills' and how well prepared graduates felt to lead in the workplace, received limited positive feedback from graduates. With 66% from University of Malta and 61.7% of MCAST graduates saying they had acquired the necessary leadership skills, the rest of the graduates were unsure about how well trained and well-prepared higher education institutions left them for their future job.

	University of Malta		MCAST		ITS		Private Higher Education Institutions		Total	
	(Very) well prepared	Very little or not prepared	(Very) well prepared	Very little or not prepared	(Very) well prepared	Very little or not prepared	(Very) well prepared	Very little or not prepared	(Very) well prepared	Very little or not prepared
Work in team	83.3%	5.6%	80.9%	11.7%	100.0%	0.0%	88.9%	5.6%	83.4%	7.5%
Multi-disciplinary	75.7%	11.1%	70.2%	12.8%	88.9%	0.0%	77.8%	5.6%	74.3%	10.9%
Subject specific	72.9%	11.1%	74.5%	13.8%	88.9%	0.0%	77.8%	11.1%	74.3%	11.7%
Qualification obtained	72.2%	11.1%	71.3%	10.6%	88.9%	0.0%	94.4%	5.6%	74.0%	10.2%
Argumentation skills	72.2%	6.3%	69.1%	13.8%	88.9%	0.0%	83.3%	5.6%	72.5%	8.7%
Gather / interpret data	69.4%	9.0%	71.3%	12.8%	88.9%	0.0%	83.3%	5.6%	71.7%	9.8%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	70.1%	8.3%	69.1%	12.8%	100.0%	0.0%	72.2%	11.1%	70.9%	9.8%
Communication skills	69.4%	11.1%	66.0%	10.6%	88.9%	0.0%	77.8%	11.1%	69.4%	10.6%
Reputation of HEI	66.7%	16.0%	64.9%	17.0%	77.8%	11.1%	83.3%	5.6%	67.5%	15.5%
Work experience	66.0%	16.7%	61.7%	19.1%	100.0%	0.0%	77.8%	11.1%	66.4%	16.6%
Autonomy	71.5%	6.9%	56.4%	12.8%	55.6%	0.0%	77.8%	5.6%	66.0%	8.7%
Leadership skills	66.0%	12.5%	61.7%	17.0%	88.9%	0.0%	77.8%	5.6%	66.0%	13.2%
Negotiation skills	63.2%	13.2%	57.4%	18.1%	77.8%	0.0%	55.6%	11.1%	61.1%	14.3%
Informal / non-formal	46.5%	27.1%	41.5%	30.9%	44.4%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	45.3%	27.5%

Table 26: Extent to which graduates feel prepared by their training for various aspects in their job

	University of Malta		MCAST		ITS		Private Higher Education Institutions		Total	
	(Very) important	Of little or no importance	(Very) important	Of little or no importance	(Very) important	Of little or no importance	(Very) important	Of little or no importance	(Very) important	Of little or no importance
Job satisfaction	94.9%	5.1%	97.1%	2.9%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	96.2%	3.8%
Opportunity for career development	90.4%	3.8%	98.1%	1.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	94.1%	2.4%
Relevance of studies to the job	77.6%	5.1%	85.4%	4.9%	77.8%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	79.7%	4.5%
Financial benefits	82.7%	5.1%	76.7%	3.9%	66.7%	0.0%	77.8%	11.1%	79.7%	4.9%
High salary	75.6%	7.1%	79.6%	4.9%	88.9%	0.0%	77.8%	0.0%	77.6%	5.6%
Opportunity for sabbaticals	70.5%	9.6%	70.9%	6.8%	77.8%	0.0%	38.9%	27.8%	68.9%	9.4%
Opportunity for international experiences	71.8%	10.9%	60.2%	18.4%	88.9%	11.1%	50.0%	27.8%	66.8%	14.7%
Flexible working hours	60.9%	12.2%	58.3%	14.6%	66.7%	0.0%	83.3%	5.6%	61.5%	12.2%
Opportunity for parental leave	59.6%	20.5%	53.4%	23.3%	77.8%	0.0%	50.0%	22.2%	57.3%	21.0%
Opportunity for teleworking	30.8%	40.4%	25.2%	34.0%	44.4%	0.0%	11.1%	38.9%	28.0%	36.7%

Table 27: Importance given by graduates to different aspects in a job

Importance given to different aspects in a job

When asked about the different aspects in a job, and the importance graduates attributed to such aspects (see Table 27), job satisfaction proved to be the most important aspect for both University of Malta and MCAST graduates with 94.9% and 97.1% respectively concluding that this was very important or important. The opportunity for career development came a close second, showing that Maltese graduates are increasingly ambitious and career-driven.

Financial benefits are obviously an important factor, which can be one of the salient incentives for students to continue to further their education. This is evident in the graduates' answers where 82.7% of University of Malta and 76.7% of MCAST graduates believe that financial benefits are important or very important, as well as 75.6% and 79.6% giving the same importance to a high salary as part of their package.

The relevance of their studies to the job they take up later also features high on the graduates' choice, and this shows clearly that graduates obviously see their higher education experience as a way and a means to landing a job in their chosen career, profession or field. In this light, the connection between their job and their studies is vital, and this is clearly seen in the graduates' answers.

At the lower end of the spectrum, one can find the opportunity for sabbaticals and parental leave as well as the opportunity to work flexible working hours or to telework, which are obviously less important when compared to salaries, career opportunities or job satisfaction.

An important point of note is the evident difference in the answer between female and male graduates with regards to the importance of having parental leave. In case of University of Malta graduates 46.9% of females said that parental leave was very important as opposed to 16.7% of male graduates. In a similar fashion 41% of female MCAST graduates said that parental leave was very important as opposed to 14.1% of male graduates from the same higher education institution. This clearly shows that despite the changing trends in our society, females still play a very important role as parents, and this is clearly evident in the importance they give to the availability of parental leave, especially when compared to the lack of importance evidenced in the answers of their male counterparts.

Do graduates tend to change jobs rather than sticking to the same one for a long time?

When asked whether graduates held other jobs prior to the current one, the great majority of all respondents answer in the positive, with 63% of graduates affirming this reality. The incidence of an answer in the affirmative was greater in ITS with 87.5% of graduates claiming they had a previous job, as opposed to 61.9% among University of Malta and 58.8% among MCAST graduates. However the answers from all higher education institutions clearly show that the great majority of graduates tend to change jobs possibly looking for better working conditions or for jobs which are more in synch with their previous studies.

When graduates change their jobs, what are the main reasons for this decision?

	University of Malta	MCAST	ITS	Private higher education institutions	Percent of all cases
Career development (e.g. position with more responsibility; more career prospects)	58.9%	51.1%	100.0%	80.0%	60.6%
Better relevance of the job to your studies	54.8%	53.2%	28.6%	46.7%	52.1%
Better remuneration	31.5%	34.0%	71.4%	60.0%	37.3%
Better contract (e.g. longer duration of the contract; from definite to indefinite contract)	31.5%	25.5%	85.7%	26.7%	31.7%
Career change (e.g. position in a different sector)	30.1%	31.9%	42.9%	26.7%	31.0%
Better hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time; from full-time to part-time)	27.4%	27.7%	57.1%	20.0%	28.2%
Personal reasons	17.8%	17.0%	14.3%	20.0%	17.6%
Other	13.7%	25.5%	28.6%	0.0%	16.9%
Labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company)	6.8%	12.8%	0.0%	13.3%	9.2%

Table 28: Graduates' reasons for changing job

When asked for the reasons as to why the graduates chose to change their job (see Table 33), the great majority of graduates mentioned the same 3 factors as being the most influential: career development, better relevance to studies and better remuneration. With 60% of all graduates claiming that their move is fuelled by the opportunity for career development and opportunities – this continues to reaffirm the Maltese graduates' growing ambition, with such graduates being more work-oriented and career-driven following long years of study. It is especially interesting to note that 100% of ITS graduates claimed that this was the main reason for their job move, which might be for reasons inherent in the hospitality and tourism markets.

The fact that graduates also took into consideration the relevance of their studies to their job also shows the graduates willingness to bridge the gap between their formal education and the workplace, looking at their education as a means to an end, with the end clearly being a better-paid job with better working conditions, where they can use the knowledge and skills learnt to full use.

Better remuneration also makes it in the top sector of the list of reasons given for a job change. In this case 37.3% of graduates give 'better remuneration' as a reason for their job change. It is interesting to note that 31.5% of University of Malta graduates and 34% of MCAST graduates give importance to a better pay, as opposed to 60% of graduates from private institutions and 71.4% of ITS graduates, where it seems that a higher number of respondents give more importance to financial remuneration as opposed to their counterparts in other higher education institutions.

Conclusion

In light of the facts and figures elicited through the graduates' answers, it is clear that today's graduates look at education and employability as undeniably linked; with education being seen not only as a way to improve one's education and knowledge holistically, but also with higher education being seen as an increasingly required tool which leads to the acquiring of both knowledge and know-how, soft skills and experience, which will ultimately make graduates more employable once he or she enters the workplace.

Education and employability should complement each other, rather than work for different objectives. Higher Education is an essential tool for employability, but it should not be only seen as a means to an end. Doing this would endanger higher education in its pure form, and subjects or areas which might be seen as being less 'useful' such as the classics, arts, literature, and other studies which might not be the trendiest or the latest niche market in our economy. A balance needs to be struck, between higher education as a tool for the graduate's employability, and higher education in its classical form as a means to broaden horizons, encourage discussion, foster debate, cultivate thinkers and open up further lifelong learning opportunities. Keeping this in mind will ensure that higher education in Malta continues to play the vital role it should be playing in the development of our society.

Thomas Bugeja

President – KSU

Reflections and findings

Reflections and findings

This research examined the extent to which higher education adequately prepared graduates for the labour market and which aspects were of particular importance in this regard. Moreover, it investigated key aspects graduates value in a job; to what extent higher education graduates have changed jobs and what reasons they report for having done so. These issues were addressed both to recent higher education graduates as well as to employers to identify to overlap or mismatch between graduates' and employers' expectations in terms of graduate skills and labour market opportunities.

Labour market preparation of graduates

It appears that while higher education graduates feel generally prepared to take on the duties and responsibilities they are met with in the labour market, with 50.0% considering themselves (very) well prepared, employers are much less positive about graduates' capabilities (see Table 29). Only 21.4% were of the opinion that higher education graduates were (very) well prepared for their work responsibilities.

	Total feedback by graduates	Total feedback by employers
(very) well prepared	50.0%	21.4%
little or not prepared	18.5%	14.3%

Table 29: Graduates' preparedness for the labour market

This difference in response may be a reflection of graduates' perception that a higher education qualification improves their chances in the labour market, instilling in them the confidence of feeling prepared for positions of responsibility.

At the same time it is interesting to note that the share of graduates, who felt little or not prepared for the world of work (18.5%) also exceeded that of employers (14.3%). As was noted also in the case studies, further research is needed to investigate further the reasons for this negative perception of graduates.

There are also some notable differences with regard to the skills and competences considered as relevant in today's labour market (see Table 30). It appears that employers value soft skills much more than graduates with teamwork; autonomy and leadership skills being the top three competences employers consider important in a job. In contrast, graduates believe subject specific and multi-disciplinary knowledge as much more relevant in their current job, while regarding autonomy or leadership skills as less important. This may be a reflection of graduates perceiving the acquisition of expertise to be at the centre of higher education, which leaves graduates to value these aspects of their training and consider them more important than soft skills in their workplace. Therefore, despite the efforts of the University of Malta to respond to employers' emphasis on soft skills and provide students with more informal and non-formal learning experiences through initiatives such as Degree+, these efforts appear to be still not valued enough by graduates.

	Total feedback graduates		Total feedback employers	
	(Very) important	Of little or no importance	(Very) important	Of little or no importance
Work in team	83.4%	7.9%	92.9%	2.4%
Autonomy	70.2%	9.1%	83.3%	2.4%
Leadership skills	66.0%	10.2%	83.3%	2.4%
Subject specific	78.1%	12.5%	81.0%	2.4%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	72.5%	12.8%	81.0%	0.0%
Multi-disciplinary	75.8%	12.1%	81.0%	0.0%
Qualification obtained	63.0%	20.0%	81.0%	9.5%
Gather / interpret data	69.4%	13.6%	78.6%	2.4%
Communication skills	72.5%	12.5%	73.8%	2.4%
Work experience	61.5%	18.1%	73.8%	7.1%
Argumentation skills	69.1%	12.8%	69.0%	2.4%
Negotiation skills	59.6%	15.5%	66.7%	7.1%
Informal / non-formal	36.2%	33.6%	42.9%	19.0%
Reputation of HEI	63.0%	18.5%	35.7%	21.4%

Table 30: Relevance of various skills and competences in the labour market (top five shaded in grey)

When analyzing the extent to which higher education prepares graduates for these various aspects (see Table 31), both graduates and employers believe that one of the main aspects delivered by higher education institutions is the desired level of qualification. Apart from that, both graduates and employers appear to consider higher education to prepare graduates well for working in a team.

Having said that, graduates appear to be generally more convinced that higher education delivers on the knowledge, skills and competences required in today's labour market, given their overall more positive rating of the different aspects, when compared to employers. More specifically, they highlight the contribution of higher education to their knowledge and expertise with 74.3% of respondents stating that they consider themselves (very) well prepared with regard to the subject specific and multi-disciplinary knowledge required in the labour market. It is interesting to note that graduates consider these three aspects, namely working in a team; subject-specific knowledge and multi-disciplinary knowledge as most relevant in the labour market. They also felt most prepared for them through their higher education programme. This further supports the finding above that graduates consider themselves generally well prepared for the labour market. At the same time it stresses the need to investigate further why a considerable share of graduates consider themselves little or not prepared for the labour market, despite this strong overlap in the knowledge, skills and competence reported by graduates as required in the labour market and their positive assessment of higher education delivering on these aspects.

In contrast, a review of employers' satisfaction with those aspects they considered to be of key importance, namely autonomy and leadership skills, suggests that higher education contributes only to a limited extent to the development of these skills and competences. Only one third of employers consider graduates (very) well prepared to work on their own initiative and 31.0% believe that graduates are (very) well prepared to assume a leadership role.

Overall these findings of the knowledge, skills and competences required in the labour market and delivered by higher education as reported by graduates and employers indicates a mismatch in two respects. First of all it suggests a mismatch in the perception of graduates and employers with regard to the knowledge, skills and competences required in the labour market. Further research could prove useful in better understanding the reasons for this difference in perception. Secondly, and more specifically, this mismatch appears to be based on graduates emphasizing the academic knowledge they have acquired, while employers highlight the need for soft skills, which they consider underdeveloped among graduates. Bearing this in mind, it might be worthwhile to consider how both aspects, namely academic knowledge and soft skills, may be better integrated in higher education programmes in the future or how existing programmes focusing on the development of soft skills, such as Degree+ could be further promoted among students in the future.

	Total feedback graduates		Total feedback employers	
	Meeting it (very) well	Meeting it very little or not at all	Meeting it (very) well	Meeting it very little or not at all
Qualification obtained	74.0%	10.2%	69.0%	4.8%
Work in team	83.4%	7.5%	54.8%	7.1%
Reputation of HEI	67.5%	15.5%	50.0%	7.1%
Gather / interpret data	71.7%	9.8%	35.7%	19.0%
Autonomy	66.0%	8.7%	33.3%	14.3%
Subject specific	74.3%	11.7%	31.0%	26.2%
Argumentation skills	72.5%	8.7%	31.0%	16.7%
Leadership skills	66.0%	13.2%	31.0%	35.7%
Evaluate / update needs/skills	70.9%	9.8%	28.6%	19.0%
Communication skills	69.4%	10.6%	26.2%	19.0%
Multi-disciplinary	74.3%	10.9%	23.8%	28.6%
Informal / non-formal	45.3%	27.5%	23.8%	11.9%
Negotiation skills	61.1%	14.3%	19.0%	38.1%
Work experience	66.4%	16.6%	16.7%	23.8%

Table 31: Extent to which higher education prepares graduates for various skills and competences in the labour market (top five shaded in grey)

Labour market expectations of graduates

Apart from investigating the expectations of employers with regard to the knowledge, skills and competences held by graduates entering the labour market, the research also looked into the expectations of graduates with regard to key aspects they value in a job they would wish to take up (see Table 32).

In this regard graduates considered job satisfaction (96.2%) and the opportunity for career development (94.1%) as most important in a job. It appears, therefore, that recent higher education graduates are very keen to develop a career in their previous area of study that delivers both on job satisfaction and on opportunities for career progression. In comparison, graduates accord substantially less importance to parental leave (57.3%) or teleworking arrangements (28.0%). Although females consider these aspects as significantly more important than male respondents, parental leave and teleworking

arrangements still feature far below other aspects on their list of preferences. Only 68% of females consider parental leave arrangements as (very) important compared to 46.5% of males and only 35.5% of females hold teleworking arrangements to be (very) important compared to 20.4% of males.

Various reasons may be considered to explain this finding. It may suggest that recent higher education graduates, who have just started their working life are more focused on developing their career rather than on family planning and are, thus, placing less importance on family friendly measures in the workplace. Moreover, as Professor Lauri suggested in the analysis of graduates' responses from the University of Malta, this finding might indicate that female graduates count on the support of grandparents in helping with childcare duties or may intend to prioritize their family over career development and thus do not consider family friendly measures in the workplace as an important concern.

Interestingly, this seems to conflict with the employers' perception of what graduates value in a job. Employers seem to believe that graduates consider family friendly measures as one of the most important factors in a job with 81.0% of employers being under the impression that graduates particularly appreciate parental leave arrangements in the workplace. At the same time, employers believe that graduates value the opportunity for international travel as part of their job (81.0%), while giving less importance to job satisfaction (38.1%) or the opportunity for career development (50.0%). Employers, therefore, seem to be under the impression that recent higher education graduates are more focused on combining work and family responsibilities, rather than emphasizing career development.

This difference may suggest that graduates are more focused on establishing a career, rather than considering a balance between family and work responsibilities in the long-term given that family planning may not be playing a role in their lives as yet. Employers on the other hand may have experienced the priorities of their employees adjusting in the long-term to combine both work and family responsibilities. Nevertheless, it appears that there is a mismatch in the expectations of graduates with regard to their opportunities for career development in their place of work and the focus given to this aspect by employers, which appear more focused on the long-term priorities of employees, rather than their medium term goals.

	Total feedback of graduates		Total feedback of employers	
	(Very) important	Of little or no importance	(Very) important	Of little or no importance
Opportunity for parental leave	57.3%	21.0%	81.0%	0.0%
Opportunity for international experiences	66.8%	14.7%	81.0%	4.8%
Opportunity for sabbaticals	68.9%	9.4%	73.8%	7.1%
Financial benefits	79.7%	4.9%	71.4%	7.1%
Relevance of studies to the job	79.7%	4.5%	64.3%	9.5%
Opportunity for teleworking	28.0%	36.7%	54.8%	16.7%
Opportunity for career development	94.1%	2.4%	50.0%	26.2%
Job satisfaction	96.2%	3.8%	38.1%	33.3%
High salary	77.6%	5.6%	28.6%	38.1%
Flexible working hours	61.5%	12.2%	23.8%	45.2%

Table 32: Aspects graduates consider as important in a job (top five shaded in grey)

Job change of graduates

Most graduates have held other jobs prior to their current one, with 63.1% declaring that they have changed jobs. The by far most important reasons they report for this transition are opportunities for career development and to find positions that are more closely related to their studies. This suggests that higher education graduates are very keen to develop their career and pursue opportunities for development in line with their chosen career path, which is also in line with the aspects graduates considered important in a job and the mismatch between graduates and employers in this regard. It appears, therefore, plausible that these aspects, namely job satisfaction and career development, have also been the main driving forces that have led them to change jobs. Therefore, if employers wish to retain valued staff, they may need to reconsider and improve on these aspects.

Financial and contractual conditions appear to be less prominent, but still important factors influencing higher education graduates' decision to change their job. Moreover, it is good to note that labour market conditions, such as redundancies, affect only 9.2% of higher education graduates, suggesting that higher education graduates enjoy a fairly high level of job security.

	Percent of all cases of graduates
Career development (e.g. position with more responsibility; more career prospects)	60.6%
Better relevance of the job to your studies	52.1%
Better remuneration	37.3%
Better contract (e.g. longer duration of the contract; from definite to indefinite contract)	31.7%
Career change (e.g. position in a different sector)	31.0%
Better hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time; from full-time to part-time)	28.2%
Personal reasons	17.6%
Other	16.9%
Labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company)	9.2%

Table 33: Reasons graduates report for having changed job

Conclusions

The comparison of the responses collected from graduates and employers highlight a number of differences in their perception of graduate skills and labour market opportunities. While most graduates felt (very) well prepared to take on their work responsibilities, employers were less satisfied with graduates' preparation for the labour market. At the same time a substantial share of graduates also considered themselves little or not prepared for entry into the labour market, suggesting that further research is needed to investigate the reasons for this assessment.

This is true even more so in view of the strong overlap in the knowledge, skills and competences reported by graduates as required in the labour market, namely working in a team; subject-specific and multi-disciplinary knowledge, and their very positive assessment of the contribution of higher education to these aspects. In contrast, a review of employers' satisfaction with those aspects they considered to be of key importance, namely autonomy and leadership skills, suggests that higher education delivers only to a limited extent to these aspects. Moreover, the knowledge, skills and competences required in the labour market and delivered by higher education as reported by graduates and employers indicates a mismatch in perceptions and priorities. While graduates emphasise the academic knowledge they have acquired, employers stress the need for soft

skills, which they consider underdeveloped among graduates. Bearing this in mind, it might be worthwhile to consider how both aspects may be better integrated in higher education programmes in the future or how existing programmes focusing on the development of soft skills, such as Degree+ could be further promoted among students.

Mismatches are also noticeable with regard to key aspects graduates value in a job when compared to employers' perception on the same issue. Graduates appear to value opportunities for career development in their chosen subject area, while focusing less on family friendly measures. In contrast, employers appear to consider the latter to be of key importance to employees. This may be based on their experience that the priorities of their employees change in the long-term to reconcile both work and family responsibilities. However, bearing in mind that most graduates reported to have changed job in order to further their career in their chosen subject area, employers wishing to retain valued staff may need to reconsider and improve on these aspects.

While providing some interesting insights into the subject of skills supply and demand, the research also highlighted a number of issues that require further investigation. In fact, the monitoring of graduate employability and skills needs in the labour market are both a quality assurance criteria in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and a recommendation resulting from the EQAVET project, implemented by the NCFHE between 2011 and 2013 and aimed at developing a quality assurance framework for the vocational education and training sector in Malta. Bearing this in mind, the present research may hopefully serve as a basis for future research on graduate employability in Malta encompassing the entire further and higher education sector to inform policy development and provide guidance to further and higher education institutions; students and their families as well as employers.

Christine Scholz

Commission Officer, NCFHE

Annex - Questionnaires used

Questionnaire for Graduates

The scope of this research is mainly to study, whether Higher Education Institutions (HEI) graduates have acquired the skills and competences required to enter in today's labour market. This shall be made by basing our study on quantitative and qualitative data that will encompass both newly HEI graduates as well as leading employment companies within the labour market. In this light, this research shall bring about a scrutiny both on the employers' demands when it comes to recruitment and preferences as well as that of HEI graduates, particularly the obstacles the latter face when seeking employment. Your input to this research is highly appreciated. Thanks for your time and attention.

Which higher education institution did you attend during the last academic year ending in 2011 or 2012? *(Single choice. If you attended different institutions in 2011 and 2012, please refer to the institution, where you have completed your current highest qualification.)*

- University of Malta → **please continue with question A**
- MCAST → **please continue with question B**
- ITS → **please continue with question C**
- A private higher education institution → **please continue with question C**
- I did not attend a higher education institution during the last academic year 2011 or 2012.
→ **Thank you for answering this questionnaire.**

A. Did you graduate from the University of Malta at the end of the academic year ending in 2011 or 2012? *(Please select the diploma or degree that you graduated from during 2011 or 2012. If you have graduated from more than one programme in 2011 and 2012, please only indicate the highest qualification you have obtained.)*

- Yes, I graduated and received an Undergraduate Certificate
- Yes, I graduated and received an Undergraduate Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with a Bachelor degree
- Yes, I graduated with a Bachelor (Honours) degree
- Yes, I graduated with a Postgraduate certificate
- Yes, I graduated with a Postgraduate diploma
- Yes, I graduated with a Master's degree / Doctor of Medicine / Doctor of Laws
- Yes, I graduated with a Doctorate degree
- No, I am still studying the degree that I followed in the last academic year
- No, I did not graduate and am not currently studying.
→ **please continue with question 1**

B. Did you graduate from MCAST at the end of the academic year ending in 2011 or 2012? *(Please select the diploma or degree that you graduated from during 2011 or 2012. If you have graduated from more than one programme in 2011 and 2012, please only indicate the highest qualification you have obtained.)*

- Yes, I graduated and received the MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with an AAT Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with an MCAST Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with a Bachelor (Honours) Degree
- No, I am still studying the degree that I followed in the last academic year
- No, I did not graduate and am not currently studying.
→ **please continue with question 1**

C. Did you graduate from ITS at the end of the academic year ending in 2011 or 2012? (Please select the diploma or degree that you graduated from during 2011 or 2012. If you have graduated from more than one programme in 2011 and 2012, please only indicate the highest qualification you have obtained.)

- Yes, I graduated with a Higher National Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with a Bachelor (Honours) Degree
- No, I am still studying the degree that I followed in the last academic year
- No, I did not graduate and am not currently studying.

→ please continue with question 1

D. Did you graduate at the end of the academic year ending in 2011 or 2012? (Please select the diploma or degree that you graduated from during 2011 or 2012. If you have graduated from more than one programme in 2011 and 2012, please only indicate the highest qualification you have obtained.)

- Yes, I graduated and received an (Undergraduate) Certificate
- Yes, I graduated and received an (Undergraduate) Diploma
- Yes, I graduated and received a Higher National Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with a Bachelor Degree
- Yes, I graduated with a Bachelor (Honours) Degree
- Yes, I graduated with a Postgraduate Certificate
- Yes, I graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma
- Yes, I graduated with a Master's Degree
- Yes, I graduated with a Doctorate Degree
- No, I am still studying the degree that I followed in the last academic year
- No, I did not graduate and am not currently studying.

→ please continue with question 1

General Information

The following questions provide us with some general information about you.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. How old are you? (Please indicate your age in years.) _____

3. Where do you live? (Please choose the locality where you live from the list below.)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> H'Attard | <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Mellieħa | <input type="checkbox"/> Ta' Xbiex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Balzan | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Imġarr | <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Belt Valletta |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Bidnija | <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Mosta | <input type="checkbox"/> Ix-Xgħajra |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Birgu (Vittoriosa) | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Imqabba | <input type="checkbox"/> Haż-Żabbar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birkirkara | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Imsida | <input type="checkbox"/> Haż-Żebbuġ (Malta) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birżebbuġa | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Imtarfa | <input type="checkbox"/> Iż-Żejtun |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bormla (Cospicua) | <input type="checkbox"/> In-Naxxar | <input type="checkbox"/> Iż-Żurrieq |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had-Dingli | <input type="checkbox"/> Raħal Ġdid (Paola) | <input type="checkbox"/> I-Fontana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Fgura | <input type="checkbox"/> Pembroke | <input type="checkbox"/> Ghajnsielem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Furjana | <input type="checkbox"/> Tal-Pietà | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Għarb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Gharghur | <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Qormi | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Għasri |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Ghaxaq | <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Qrendi | <input type="checkbox"/> Ta' Kerċem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Gudja | <input type="checkbox"/> Ir-Rabat (Malta) | <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Munxar and Ix-Xlendi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Gżira | <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Safi | <input type="checkbox"/> In-Nadur |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Hamrun | <input type="checkbox"/> San Ġwann | <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Qala |
| <input type="checkbox"/> L-Iklin | <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Luċija | <input type="checkbox"/> Ir-Rabat (Gozo) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Kalkara | <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Venera | <input type="checkbox"/> San Lawrenz |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Kirkop | <input type="checkbox"/> L-Isla (Senglea) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ta' Sannat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Lija | <input type="checkbox"/> Is-Siġġiewi | <input type="checkbox"/> Ix-Xgħajra |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Luqa | <input type="checkbox"/> Tas-Sliema | <input type="checkbox"/> Ix-Xewkija |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Il-Marsa | <input type="checkbox"/> San Ġiljan | <input type="checkbox"/> Iż-Żebbuġ (Gozo) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marsaskala | <input type="checkbox"/> San Pawl il-Baħar | <input type="checkbox"/> Marsalforn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marsaxlokk | <input type="checkbox"/> Is-Swieqi | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> L-Imdina | <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Tarxien | |

Information on special needs

The following questions give us some information regarding any special needs you may have.

4. Please indicate if you have a disability, long standing health problems or functional limitations.
- yes
 - no → please continue with question 7

5. Please indicate your disability, long standing health problems or functional limitations.

(Multiple answers are possible.)

- Chronic diseases
- Mental health problems
- Mobility impairment
- Sensory impairment (vision or hearing)
- Learning disability (ADHD, Dyslexia)
- Other long standing health problems

6. To what extent does your disability affect your chances on the labour market? (Please select the option that best reflects your situation.)

Not at all important	Of very little importance	Important to some extent	Important	Very important
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Information on importance of various aspects in a job

The following questions are related to various aspects in a job and your opinion of their importance for you.

7. How important are the following aspects for you in a job? (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion for each of the following aspects.)

	Not at all important	Of very little importance	Important to some extent	Important	Very important
High salary					
Relevance of your studies to your job					
Overall job satisfaction					
Opportunity for career development					
Flexible working hours					
Opportunity for teleworking					
Opportunity for parental leave					
Opportunity for sabbaticals (e.g. for study; internships; etc.)					
Opportunity for international experiences (e.g. work related travel; international secondments)					
Financial benefits (e.g. pension; health / life insurance; allowances for telephone, internet or fuel, etc.)					
Other, namely: _____					

8. Thinking back to the time when you graduated from higher education, to what extent did you feel prepared to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities assigned to you in your subsequent job? (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion.)

Not prepared at all	Very little prepared	Prepared to some extent	Well prepared	Very well prepared
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9. Are you currently working? (Please select the option that best fits your current situation from the list below.)

- I am working full-time. → please continue with question 10
- I am working part-time. → please continue with question 10
- I am working in occasional jobs. → please continue with question 10
- I am unemployed and looking for a job. → please continue with question 18
- I am not working and not looking for a job. → please continue with question 18

Information on the current job for employed persons

The following questions relate to your current job, the skills and competences required for it, and your satisfaction with various aspects of that job.

10. When did you start this job? (Please write down the year in which you have started your current job in the box below.)

11. What is your current occupation? (Please select the type of job you hold that best fits your current position from the list below.)

- Managers** (e.g. chief executive; senior official & legislator; manager; etc.)
- Professionals** (e.g. professional in science & engineering; health; teaching; business & administration; information & communication; legal, social & cultural)
- Technicians & associate professionals** (assistant worker in professional occupations)
- Clerical support workers** (e.g. general clerk; customer service clerk; etc.)
- Service & sales workers** (e.g. personal service worker; sales worker; personal care worker; protective services worker; etc.)
- Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers**
- Craft & related trades workers** (e.g. building & related trades worker; metal & machinery worker; handicraft & printing worker; electrical & electronic; food processing; wood working; garment or other trade worker; etc.)
- Plant & machine operators, & assemblers** (e.g. stationary plant & machine operator; assembler; driver & mobile plant operator; etc.)
- Elementary occupations** (e.g. cleaner & helper; assistant in agriculture; construction; manufacturing; transportation; food preparation; street vendor; waste worker)
- Armed forces occupations**

12. How relevant are the following aspects for your current job? (Please rate each of the following aspects according to your opinion.)

	Not at all important	Of very little importance	Important to some extent	Important	Very important
Level of your qualification as an entry requirement for your position					
Reputation of the higher education institution, where you obtained your qualification					
Relevant work experience in your field of study (e.g. internships, jobs, voluntary work)					
Informal and non-formal learning experiences (e.g. voluntary work; sports clubs; band clubs; etc.)					
Demonstrating and applying subject-specific knowledge to problem solving					
Demonstrating and applying multi-disciplinary knowledge to problem solving					
Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to specialist and non-specialist audiences					
Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems					
Gather and interpret relevant data					
Evaluate own learning needs and develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques					
Ability to demonstrate autonomy					
Ability to demonstrate leadership skills					
Ability to demonstrate negotiation skills					
Ability to work in a team					

13. How well do you feel prepared to fulfill the following aspects in your current job? (Please rate each of the following aspects according to your opinion.)

	Not prepared at all	Very little prepared	Prepared to some extent	Well prepared	Very well prepared
Level of your qualification as an entry requirement for your position					
Reputation of the higher education institution, where you obtained your qualification					
Relevant work experience in your field of study (e.g. internships, jobs, voluntary work)					
Informal and non-formal learning experiences (e.g. voluntary work; sports clubs; band clubs; etc.)					
Demonstrating and applying subject-specific knowledge to problem solving					
Demonstrating and applying multi-disciplinary knowledge to problem solving					
Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to specialist and non-specialist audiences					
Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems					
Gather and interpret relevant data Evaluate own learning needs and develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques					
Ability to demonstrate autonomy					
Ability to demonstrate leadership skills					
Ability to demonstrate negotiation skills					
Ability to work in a team					

Information on previous jobs held

The following questions relate to a job held prior to your current one, the skills and competences required for it, your satisfaction with various aspects of that job and the reasons for changing job.

14. **Did you hold a job prior to the current one?**
 Yes → please continue with question 15
 No → please continue with question 23
15. **How many jobs did you have prior to the current job?**
 up to 3 other jobs
 3-5 other jobs
 more than 5 other jobs
16. **How long (on average) did you stay in these jobs?**
 up to 6 months
 more than 6 months up to 1 year
 more than 1 year up to 3 years
 more than 3 years
17. **What were the main reasons for you to change jobs?** (Please select all reasons that apply to you from the list below.)
 Better contract (e.g. longer duration of the contract; from definite to indefinite contract)
 Better remuneration
 Better hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time; from full-time to part-time)
 Better relevance of the job to your studies
 Career development (e.g. position with more responsibility; more career prospects)
 Career change (e.g. position in a different sector)
 Labour market conditions (e.g. downsizing in previous job; oversupply of labour in the field; restructuring of company)
 Personal reasons
 Other, namely: _____
 → please continue with question 21

Information on previous jobs

The following questions relate to your last job, the skills and competences required for it, and your satisfaction with various aspects of that job.

18. **Have you ever had a job?**
 Yes → please continue with question 19
 No → please continue with question 23
19. **When did you start this job?** (Please write down the year in which you have started your current job in the box below.)

20. **What was your occupation?** (Please select the type of job you hold that best fits your current position from the list below.)
 Managers (e.g. Chief executive; senior official & legislator; manager; etc.)
 Professionals (e.g. professional in science & engineering; health; teaching; business & administration; information & communication; legal, social & cultural)
 Technicians & associate professionals (assistant worker in professional occupations)
 Clerical support workers (e.g. general clerk; customer service clerk; etc.)
 Service & sales workers (e.g. personal service worker; sales worker; personal care worker; protective services worker; etc.)
 Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers
 Craft & related trades workers (e.g. building & related trades worker; metal & machinery worker; handicraft & printing worker; electrical & electronic; food processing; wood working; garment or other trade worker; etc.)
 Plant & machine operators, & assemblers (e.g. stationary plant & machine operator; assembler; driver & mobile plant operator; etc.)
 Elementary occupations (e.g. cleaner & helper; assistant in agriculture; construction; manufacturing; transportation; food preparation; street vendor; waste worker)
 Armed forces occupations
21. **Thinking about your previous job, how relevant were the following aspects for your previous job?** (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion for each of the following aspects.)

	Not at all important	Of very little importance	Important to some extent	Important	Very important
Level of your qualification as an entry requirement for your position					
Reputation of the higher education institution, where you obtained your qualification					
Relevant work experience in your field of study (e.g. internships, jobs, voluntary work)					
Informal and non-formal learning experiences (e.g. voluntary work; sports clubs; band clubs; etc.)					
Demonstrating and applying subject-specific knowledge to problem solving					
Demonstrating and applying multi-disciplinary knowledge to problem solving					
Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to specialist and non-specialist audiences					
Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems					
Gather and interpret relevant data					
Evaluate own learning needs and develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques					
Ability to demonstrate autonomy					
Ability to demonstrate leadership skills					
Ability to demonstrate negotiation skills					
Ability to work in a team					

22. Thinking about your previous job, how well did you feel prepared to fulfill the following aspects in your previous job? (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion for each of the following aspects.)

	Not prepared at all	Very little prepared	Prepared to some extent	Well prepared	Very well prepared
Level of your qualification as an entry requirement for your position					
Reputation of the higher education institution, where you obtained your qualification					
Relevant work experience in your field of study (e.g. internships, jobs, voluntary work)					
Informal and non-formal learning experiences (e.g. voluntary work; sports clubs; band clubs; etc.)					
Demonstrating and applying subject-specific knowledge to problem solving					
Demonstrating and applying multi-disciplinary knowledge to problem solving					
Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to specialist and non-specialist audiences					
Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems					
Gather and interpret relevant data					
Evaluate own learning needs and develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques					
Ability to demonstrate autonomy					
Ability to demonstrate leadership skills					
Ability to demonstrate negotiation skills					
Ability to work in a team					

23. Do you have any further comments? (Please feel free to provide us with any comments you may have related to your previous studies and its contribution to your employability in the box below.)

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Questionnaire for Employers

The scope of this research is mainly to study, whether Higher Education Institutions (HEI) graduates have acquired the skills and competences required to enter in today's labour market. This shall be made by basing our study on quantitative and qualitative data that will encompass both newly HEI graduates as well as leading employment companies within the labour market. In this light, this research shall bring about a scrutiny both on the employers' demands when it comes to recruitment and preferences as well as that of HEI graduates, particularly the obstacles the latter face when seeking employment. Your input to this research is highly appreciated. Thanks for your time and attention.

General information

The following questions provide us with some general information about you and your company.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. What is your age? (Please indicate your age in years) _____

3. What is the highest level of formal education you have achieved? (Please select the highest qualification you have obtained from the list below.)

- General Education (Secondary School Certificate and Profile) - MQF Level 1
- Vocational Education and Training Introductory Certificate - MQF Level 1
- Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) Grades 6 to 7 - MQF Level 2
- Vocational Education and Training Foundation Certificate - MQF Level 2
- ESTS Apprenticeship - MQF Level 2
- Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) Grades 1 to 5 - MQF Level 3
- Vocational Education and Training Diploma - MQF Level 3
- Vocational Education and Training Certificate - MQF Level 3
- Matriculation Certificate (MATSEC) Intermediate Level - MQF Level 4
- Matriculation Certificate (MATSEC) Advanced Level - MQF Level 4
- Vocational Education and Training Extended Diploma - MQF Level 4
- Vocational Education and Training Diploma - MQF Level 4
- Higher Education Certificate - MQF Level 5
- Undergraduate Certificate - MQF Level 5
- Undergraduate Diploma - MQF Level 5
- Vocational Education and Training Higher National Diploma - MQF Level 5
- Bachelor Degree - MQF Level 6
- Bachelor (Honours) Degree - MQF Level 6
- Postgraduate Certificate - MQF Level 7
- Postgraduate Diploma - MQF Level 7
- Master's Degree - MQF Level 7
- Doctor of Medicine / Doctor of Laws - MQF Level 7
- Doctorate Degree - MQF Level 8

Information on your company

The following questions provide us with some information on your company / the company you work for.

4. **How many persons does your company employ?** (Please select the bracket that best reflects the size of your company.)
- 1 – 9 persons employed
 - 10 – 49 persons employed
 - 50 – 249 persons employed
 - 250 or more persons employed
5. **In which sector does your company operate?** (Please select the sector that best reflects the main activity of your company.)
- Agriculture, hunting & forestry
 - Fishing
 - Mining and quarrying
 - Manufacturing
 - Electricity, gas and water supply
 - Construction
 - Wholesale & retail trade; repairs of motor vehicles, motorcycles, personal & household goods
 - Hotels & restaurants
 - Transport, storage & communication
 - Financial intermediation
 - Real estate, renting & business activities
 - Public administration & defence; compulsory social security
 - Education
 - Health & social work
 - Other community, social & personal service activities
 - Private households with employed persons
 - Extra-territorial organisations and bodies
6. **How long have you been employed with your company?** (Please indicate the duration of your employment with your company in full years.)
- _____

Information on the recruitment process in your company

The following questions provide us with some information on the recruitment process in your company / the company you work for.

7. **Are you involved in the recruitment process within your company?**
- yes, I am responsible for the recruitment process (e.g. final decision on the recruitment etc.)
→ please continue with question 8
 - yes, I am participating in the recruitment process (e.g. taking part in the pre-selection; interview panel, etc.)
→ please continue with question 21
 - no
→ please continue with question 21

8. **How helpful do you find the following recruitment strategies for finding suitable applicants for positions in your company?** (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion for each of the following aspects.)

	Very helpful	Helpful	Of little help	Not helpful at all	Don't know/ can't judge
Recommendations					
HR consultancy firms					
Advertising in the local media					
ETC					
Other, namely: _____					

Information on important aspects for positions in your company

The following questions provide us with some information on skills and competences required for positions in your company and to what extent graduates meet these expectations.

9. **How important are the following aspects for jobs in your company?** (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion for each of the following aspects.)

	Not at all important	Of very little importance	Important to some extent	Important	Very important
Level of qualification of applicants as an entry requirement for positions in your company					
Reputation of the higher education institution, where applicants obtained their qualification					
Relevant work experience (e.g. internships, jobs, voluntary work)					
Informal and non-formal learning experiences (e.g. voluntary work; sports clubs; band clubs; etc.)					
Demonstrating and applying subject-specific knowledge to problem solving					
Demonstrating and applying multi-disciplinary knowledge to problem solving					
Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to specialist and non-specialist audiences					
Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems					
Gather and interpret relevant data					
Evaluate own learning needs and develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques					
Ability to demonstrate autonomy					
Ability to demonstrate leadership skills					
Ability to demonstrate negotiation skills					
Ability to work in a team					

10. From your experience, to what extent are new graduates from higher education, applying for positions in your company, prepared to fulfil the tasks and responsibilities assigned to them in their position? (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion.)

Not prepared at all	Very little prepared	Prepared to some extent	Well prepared	Very well prepared
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11. How much do applicants for positions in your company meet these aspects? (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion for each of the following aspects.)

	Not meeting it at all	Meeting it very little	Meeting it to some extent	Meeting it much	Meeting it very much
Level of qualification of applicants as an entry requirement for positions in your company					
Reputation of the higher education institution, where applicants obtained their qualification					
Relevant work experience (e.g. internships, jobs, voluntary work) Informal and non-formal learning experiences (e.g. voluntary work; sports clubs; band clubs; etc.)					
Demonstrating and applying subject-specific knowledge to problem solving					
Demonstrating and applying multi-disciplinary knowledge to problem solving					
Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to specialist and non-specialist audiences					
Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems					
Gather and interpret relevant data					
Evaluate own learning needs and develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques					
Ability to demonstrate autonomy					
Ability to demonstrate leadership skills					
Ability to demonstrate negotiation skills					
Ability to work in a team					

Information on importance of various aspects in a job

The following questions provide us with some information on the expectations of graduates regarding various aspects in a job and to what extent positions in your company fulfill these expectations.

12. From your experience, how much do applicants for positions in your company value the following aspects? (Please choose the option that best reflects the importance applicants allocate to each of the following aspects based on your experience.)

	Not at all important	Of very little importance	Important to some extent	Important	Very important
High salary					
Relevance of applicants studies to the job in your company					
Overall job satisfaction					
Opportunity for career development					
Flexible working hours					
Opportunity for teleworking					
Opportunity for parental leave					
Opportunity for sabbaticals (e.g. for study; internships; etc.)					
Opportunity for international experiences (e.g. work related travel; international secondments)					
Financial benefits (e.g. pension; health / life insurance; allowances for telephone, internet or fuel, etc.)					
Other, namely: _____					

13. How much do you believe that positions in your company meet the following aspects? (Please choose the option that best represents your opinion of the extent to which your company meets each of the following aspects.)

	Not meeting it at all	Meeting it very little	Meeting it to some extent	Meeting it much	Meeting it very much
High salary					
Relevance of applicants studies to the job in your company					
Overall job satisfaction					
Opportunity for career development					
Flexible working hours					
Opportunity for teleworking					
Opportunity for parental leave					
Opportunity for sabbaticals (e.g. for study; internships; etc.)					
Opportunity for international experiences (e.g. work related travel; international secondments)					
Financial benefits (e.g. pension; health / life insurance; allowances for telephone, internet or fuel, etc.)					
Other, namely: _____					

14. Do you have any further comments? (Please feel free to provide us with any comments you may have related to the employability of higher education graduates in the box below.)

Thank you for participating in this survey!

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This publication has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

