



FESW
Future Skills Week



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Outline and Aims of the Report

Report Outline

The report begins with an overview of the entire Future Skills Week experience, followed by an analysis of the collective marketing efforts and the subsequent registrations for the various activities. Next, the “Student & Expert Voice” is contextualised, summarised and discerned with event snapshots. The report continues with an evaluation of the post-event data with emerging themes. A selection of Student Reflections and consideration of the report's aims complete this work.

Report Aims

This report has three key aims including:

- ***Capture the nuance of “The Student Voice”***

We live in a rapidly changing world where one is encouraged to keep their finger on the pulse and be keenly observant to the changes in the world around us. As a university that prides itself on being embedded right across the Northern Irish community, it's crucial to listen to the views of our younger demographic about their hopes, dreams, fears and concerns as they too will soon be influencing and shaping the workplace.

- ***Discern the key tenets of “The Expert Voice”***

An accomplished set of 60 presenters offered insights, guidance and practical direction to our audiences right across Future Skills Week. They distilled their wisdom, summarised experiences and turned challenging times into tangible learnings for our students and graduates. This report seeks to turn that tacit knowledge into explicit information.

- ***Showcase the outcomes of Future Skills Week***

The Employability and Careers team at Ulster University set an ambitious target for delivery and then poured effort into the preparation of Future Skills Week. The team brought together an array of diverse learning experiences, promoted the opportunity to the target market far and wide across Northern Ireland and immersed themselves in the activities during the week itself. It's worthwhile to reflect on the results of the collective time, effort, enthusiasm, money and creativity invested.



For more information or any enquiries about the report, please e-mail Angela Scanlon, Director of Employability (a.scanlon@ulster.ac.uk) or Shauna McCloy, Head of Employability and Careers Services (s.mccloy@ulster.ac.uk)

Future Skills Week Overview

Future Skills Week, hosted by Ulster University was an online five-day programme of skills boosting activities for the University's students and graduates delivered by a range of high-profile speakers and industry experts including The Mind Tribe UK, Enterprise Causeway and Big Motive. The aim of Future Skills Week was to support students and graduates who were transitioning into the workplace at a time of transformational change across all sectors, job roles and the physical working environment.

Future Skills Week comprised a diverse range of content spanning how to identify suitable roles, hone interview skills, connect with professionals across a range of sectors, build resilience, grow confidence, cultivate digital skills and understand the requirements in the workplace of tomorrow. The experience was designed to ensure all participants gained access to information and advice as well as support for finding internship, placement and graduate opportunities that were advertised as part of the week. The five-day programme was supplemented by a range of digital resources that were made available to students before, during and after the event including a podcast series, bespoke career guidance and support and an extensive listing of placement and graduate job opportunities.

Watch the Future Skills promotional video below or at <https://www.youtube.com/user/StudyAtUlster>.

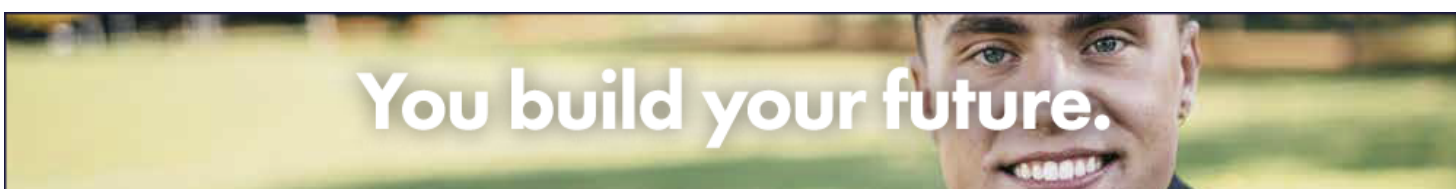


Event Summary

Future Skills Week took place from 24th to 28th May 2021. In light of the public health restrictions in place, the event was hosted virtually by Ulster University and each learning experience took place through an online platform which enabled the initiative to have extensive geographical reach, lever engaging technology and eliminate venue and catering costs. In addition, many of the sessions were recorded which provided students with optimal and flexible access to all content. Each day began with a Careers Cafe and was followed by a full schedule of events following four key themes including “Confidence Building, Resilience and Influencers”, “Planning your Future Career and Building Your Network”, “Acting on your Plan and Selling Yourself in the Workplace” as well as “Digital Boost”.



Over the course of the week, there were 60 different occasions where students and graduates could listen to guest speakers talk about their career journey, understand the reality and opportunity of entrepreneurship, present with impact, refine their personal brand, develop their LinkedIn profile, articulate their unique value in the workplace among so much more. Through the use of Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (primarily), presenters and facilitators shared personal stories, used slides, gave demos through screen shares, invited interaction through chatboxes, led design thinking workshops on Miro, wove audience insights dynamically into the session using MentiMeter and generated realtime findings through surveys. The high-profile speakers and industry experts included Katie Piper, the Northern Irish Senior Women’s Football Team, Billy Dixon, Katie Matthews and James Perry. To coincide with Future Skills Week hundreds of graduate and placement job opportunities were advertised through Ulster’s vacancy management system Handshake.



As part of Future Skills Week, one-to-one expert advice and coaching sessions were made available to support students and graduates move forward with their placement and job search. These sessions were delivered by Employability Advisers from Ulster University and a number of external Career Coaches. To support students and graduates secure jobs and work experience, hundreds of placement and graduate job offerings were promoted to attendees. Prior to, during and following the Week, a range of online learning resources were made available to participants to enhance their employability and improve their competitiveness when applying for jobs.

A total of 529 students made over 3,000 registrations for the various events. High levels of attendance were recorded at sessions throughout the week. Various forms of accreditation were made available to participants including a Certificate of Attendance and accreditation through Ulster’s EDGE Award. Excellent feedback was received from all stakeholders, including students and graduates.

Event Details

Future Skills Week was partly enabled through funding secured from Department for the Economy (DfE) as part of their Safer Learning, Teaching and Research Initiative aiming to directly support students and reduce the negative consequence of the recent global pandemic. The event was hosted by Ulster University and was primarily organised and coordinated by Ulster's Employability and Careers Department. The event was promoted through an extensive three-week marketing campaign which consisted of radio promotion, a billboard campaign throughout Northern Ireland, online advertisements, extensive social media across a range of platforms and direct email and verbal communication to students through the curriculum.

The Future Skills Week website was central to the marketing and organisation of the event. The website provided a visual gateway to the Week's schedule of events, where participants could browse session content and create their own schedule for the week by registering their attendance for events. Automated reminders were subsequently sent to all registered participants alongside a personalised email from Ulster staff. The website also hosted a range of resources that participants could access prior to, during and after the event. These included a Podcast series which included content on the following topics: the Current Job Market- What you Need to Know, Succeeding as a New Graduate during a Global Pandemic, and Career Confidence. These podcasts were delivered by a range of external industry experts, Ulster's Employability and Career Advisors and Consultants, and recent alumni who had successfully navigated the graduate labour market.

The majority of Future Skills Week sessions were recorded and these recordings were made available through the website and via a playlist in the Future Skills Week YouTube Channel. This ensured that participants had access to all content delivered through the Week even if they couldn't participate live.



Throughout Future Skills Week, participants were invited to utilise a range of Ulster's recruitability support platforms including VMock, which provides users with instant feedback on their CV, Interview 360 which supports users in practicing and developing their interview skills, and Handshake, Ulster's vacancy management platform which provides users with access to hundreds of placement and graduate job opportunities. These platforms were all made available through the Future Skills Week website.

In addition to support offered through the programme of events and digital resources, participants could avail of personal bespoke one-to-one advice and guidance from a range of Employability Advisors that specialise in industry sectors. This support was made available through a schedule of bookable appointments at the beginning of each day. To complement this personalised advice service, participants had the opportunity to access expert career coaching from a range of external partners to help overcome barriers they faced in their career journeys. While the vast majority of bespoke support was offered to students during Future Skills Week, a significant offering of support was also made available after the week.

Student Accreditation

Students that participated in Future Skills Week had the opportunity to avail of accreditation through Ulster's Employability Award, EDGE. In addition, eligible participants could also register for an online Certificate of Attendance.

The feedback from the event was extraordinarily positive. The majority of students and graduates reflected that their confidence, resilience, knowledge and skills for the future, personal projection, preparation for the workplace and personal wellbeing were either "much improved" or experienced "significant development". The attendees of the events pointed out that, on a scale of 1 to 10, they described their career motivation as 8.83 and their reflection of Future Skills Week as 8.84. Further, 100% of presenters were very satisfied "with the event(s) overall".



A Future Skills Week Billboard

Future Skills Week in Numbers



50 +

There were 50+ virtual events across **5** days.



60+

Students had the opportunity to learn from over 60 expert speakers on a plethora of topics.

3,226



Future Skills Week saw a total of 3,226 registrations using the Handshake Platform.

69.94%

of registrants identified as female, while



30.06%

identified as male.

77,253

In the week leading up to Future Skills Week, 77,253 social media advertisement impressions were recorded.



49,500

Facebook and Instagram posts reached an audience of 49,500.

Registration Statistics

Highlights



69.94% of registrants identified as **female**, while **30.06%** identified as **male**.



Arts, Humanities and Social Science was the faculty with the highest number of registrations for Future Skills Week,

63.89% of student registrants overall came from courses where DPP is not mandatory.



Of the 440 undergraduate registrants, **full-time students in years one and two** were best represented across all Future Skills Week events.



148 of the 529 students registered for Future Skills Week events identified as coming from a widening access context.

Marketing Statistics

Website Page Performance



Users
3,029
↑ 3,833.8%



Pageviews
9,860
↑ 505.3%

Website Page Performance

From **3,029 users** within the identified week, the online campaign generated **9,860 page views**. Of those, 1,895 users were **new**.

Website Page Performance

The average time spent by users when visiting the site **doubled** in the leadup to Future Skills Week indicating the engagement of the web visitors to the portal.



Sessions
3,651
↑ 2,210.8%



New Users
1,895
↑ 5,314.3%

Facebook & Instagram Ads Performance

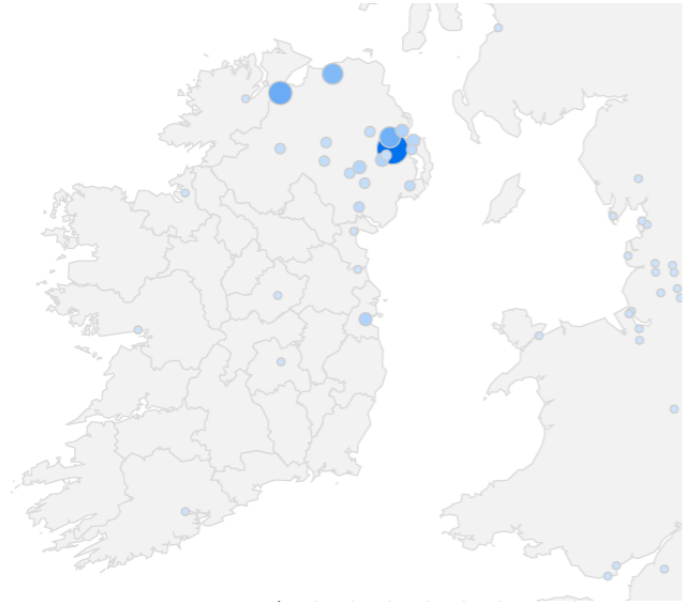
Impressions **77,253** Reach **49,500** Link clicks **406** Link CTR **0.5%** Clicks (all) **1,010** CTR (all) **1.3%** Post engagements **5,597**

Ad name	Impressions	Post engagements	Link clicks	CTR (link click-through rate)	Clicks (all)	CTR (all)
UU Younger Audience & Students Facebook Video	58,498	3,540	331	0.57%	809	1.38%
UU Parents Facebook Video	13,013	1,831	68	0.52%	197	1.51%
UU Younger Audience & Students Instagram Story	4,804	124	7	0.15%	7	0.15%
UU Younger Audience & Students Instagram Video	975	88	-	-	0	0.00%
UU Parents Facebook Story	124	12	-	-	0	0.00%
UU Parents Instagram Video	8	2	-	-	0	0.00%
Grand total	77,342	5,597	406	0.52%	1,010	1.31%

Marketing Statistics

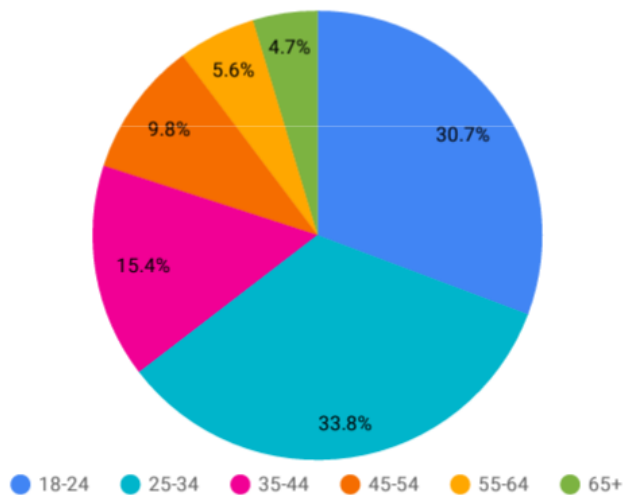
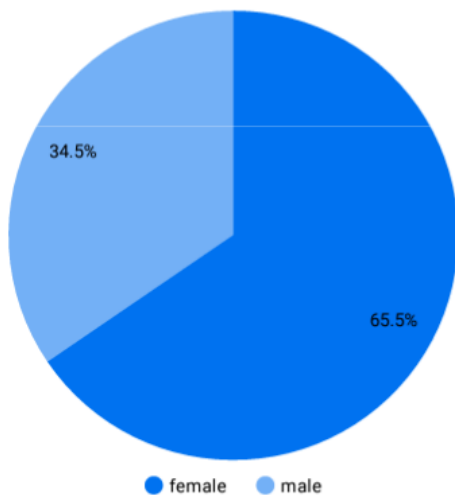
Website Page Users

City	Sessions	Avg. Time on Page
Belfast	582	■
(not set)	345	■
Londonderry	284	■
Glengormley	264	■
Coleraine	208	■
London	169	■
Carrickfergus	85	■
Dublin	83	■
Lisburn	74	■
Glasgow	72	■
Lurgan	65	■
Nottingham	64	■
Bangor	59	■



Women have clicked to the Future Skills Week page most often and **both male and female audiences aged 18-34 have significantly higher visits** than any other demographic group. Women were more likely to visit the site than men in all age groups.

Users by Age & Gender



The Gap to be Addressed

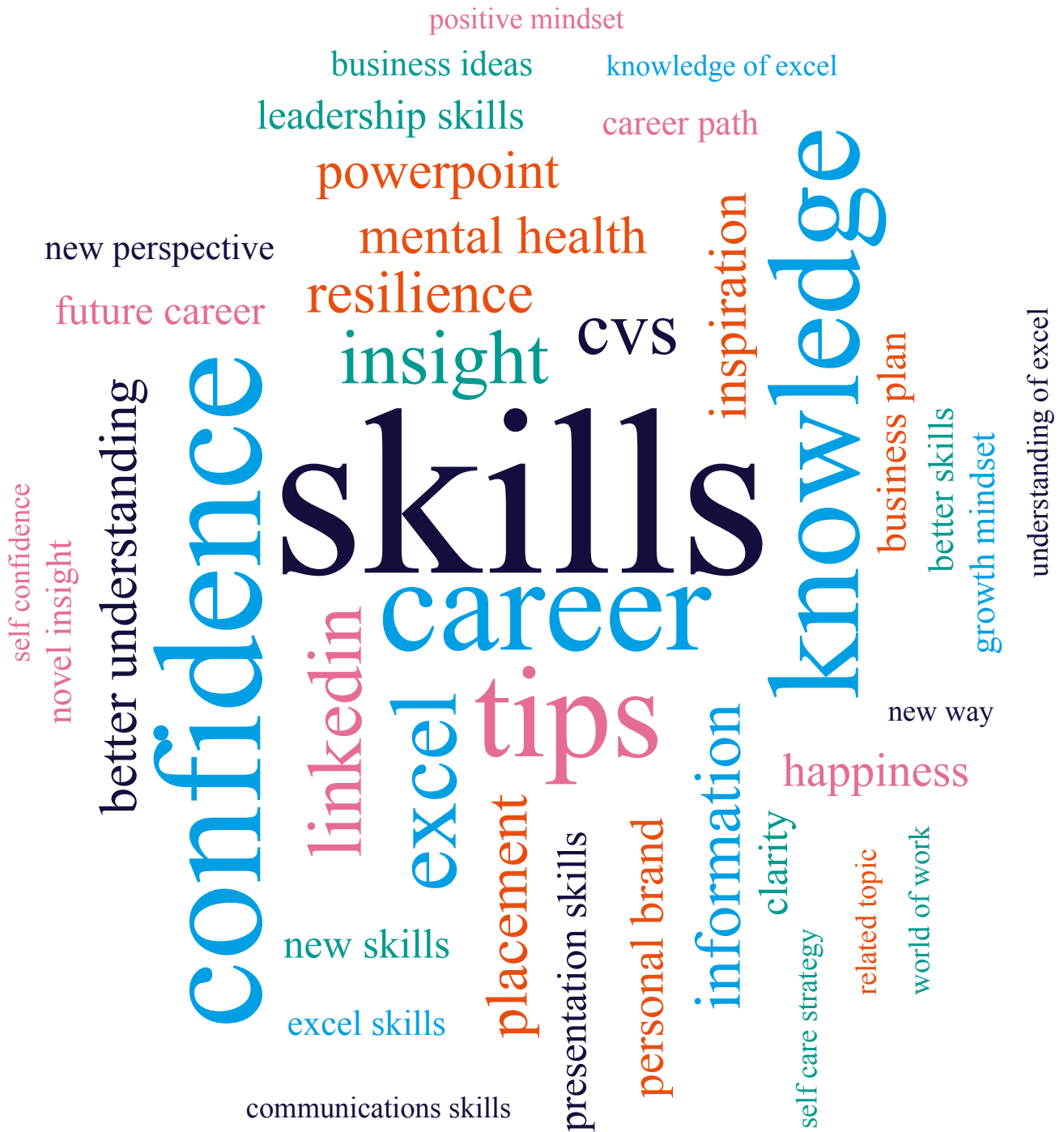
Learning Objectives



We asked students registering for Future Skills Week events to share their motivations for signing up for their events of choice.



Hover over text to reveal frequency.
(if viewing this online)



The Student & Expert Voice

Introduction

The Employability & Careers team invested time and resources into capturing the sentiment of the students as well as the key takeaways shared by the presenters, trainers and facilitators.

This section examines:

- The registration data for each of the four key themes
- The sentiment shared by students
- A summary of insights gleaned from the speakers

As students register for their chosen event, they cast a vote of their preference, their needs and their wants. As they participated in the sessions, they expressed thoughts, fears, hopes and dreams through the Chat, Questions & Answer pods and interactive tools. At every single event, at least one member of the Employability & Careers team was tasked with discerning a practical summary.



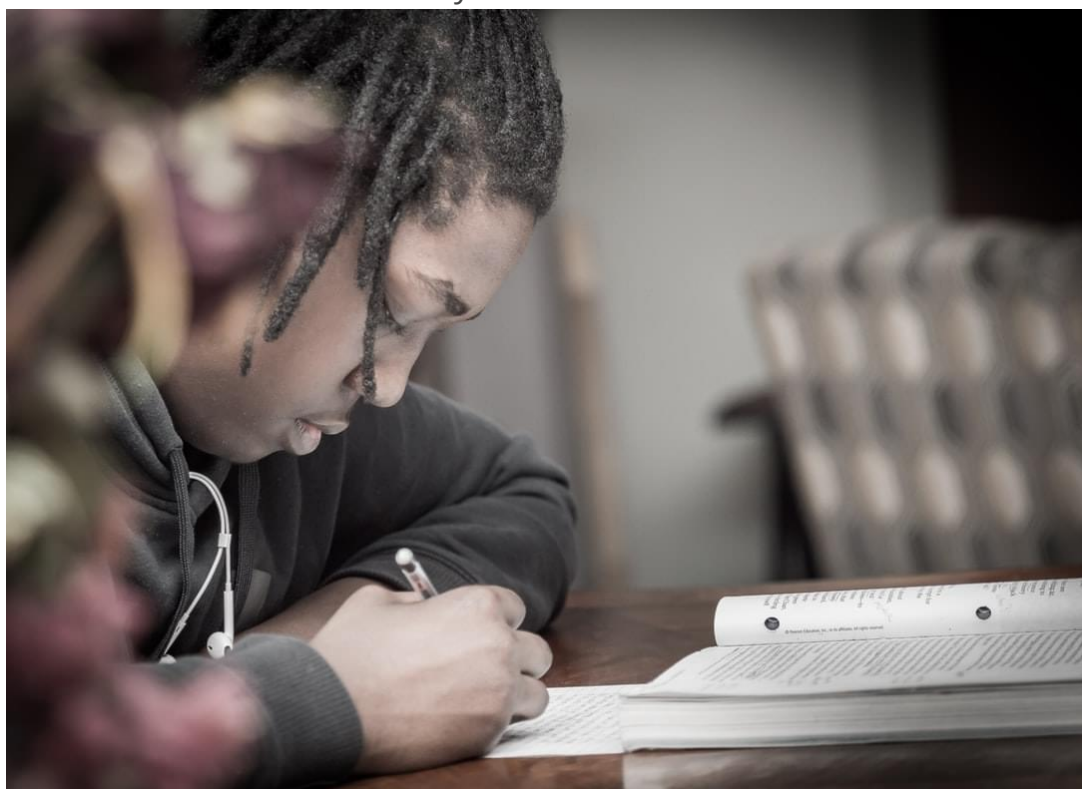
Event Insights

Confidence Building, Resilience and Influencer Events

It is clear that there was significant demand for ways to grow confidence, strengthen resilience and generate inspiration from people who had walked the walk, given that there were 1,037 registrations over 20 events. Strikingly, there was a particularly high representation of female representation with over 75% of people who registered for these events identifying as female - this is not just disproportionately higher than the university average, but even higher than the average registration for the events (i.e. 69.94%).

Third level students have had a tough year of involuntary learning online, the absence of a campus based experience and trying to make sense of a rapidly changing world of work. During the interactions with the speakers, students reflected that they sometimes struggle to pick themselves up when bad things happen, or when negative thoughts kick in. On many occasions across the events in this category, they expressed lack of confidence, fear of failure and anxiety around interviews. They stated high sensitivity to professional rejection and often took it personally. Many students experience anxiety around applying for and having the right skill set for tomorrow's employment landscape. In many cases, students felt unprepared on a personal level for the transition from higher education to the world of work.

Students are open to learning new ways to nourish their mental health. During the sessions, they shared that they practise many techniques including exercise, a balanced diet, talking to others, seeking out help and taking care of each other. They are well versed, encouraging of others and vocal about their emotional literacy.

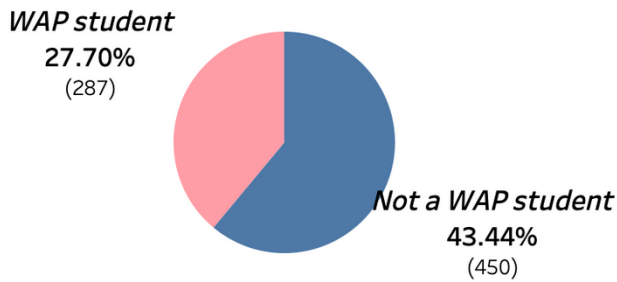


Registration Data

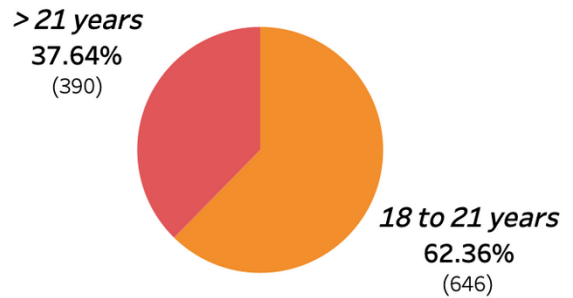
Confidence Building, Resilience and Influencer Events

(1,037 Registrations)

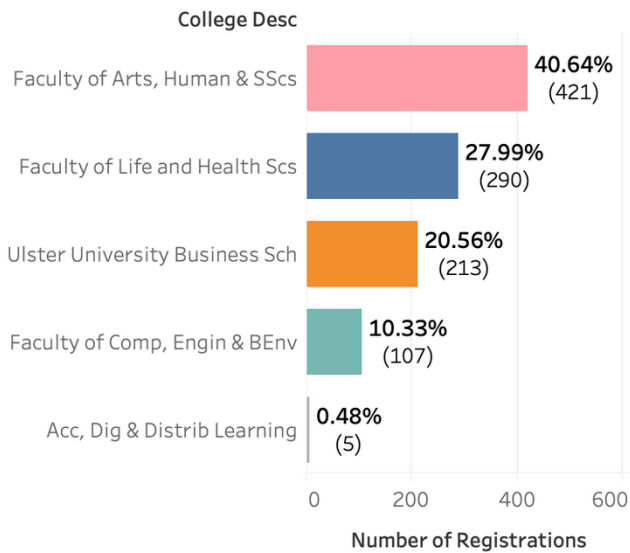
Widening Access & Participation Analysis



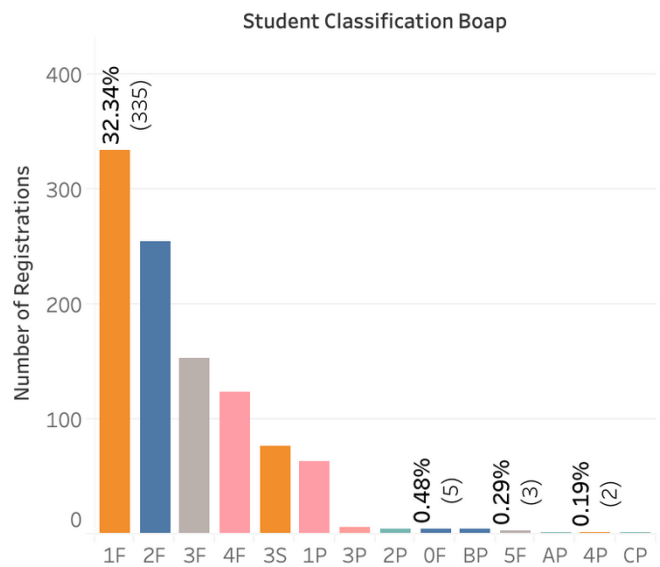
Maturity Analysis



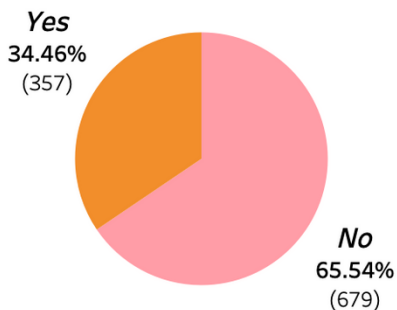
Faculty Analysis



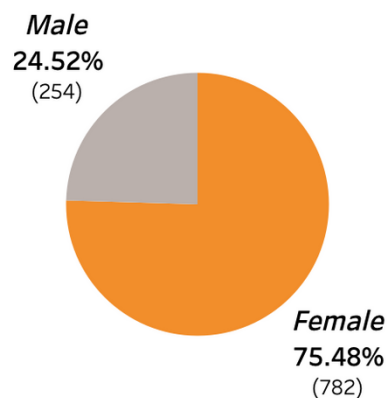
Undergraduate Year Group



Analysis of students registered onto a placement embedded course (DPP)



Gender Analysis



Key Takeaways

Confidence Building, Resilience & Influencer Events



1. Humility is so important for building self-awareness.
2. It's important to understand how imposter syndrome affects people and develop strategies to deal with negative thoughts.
3. A challenging experience can lead to good things; treat failure as a learning opportunity.
4. Step out of your comfort zone and follow whatever it is that you are passionate about.
5. Self-belief is vital.
6. Develop self-awareness and focus on what you can control. Accept the present and the reality that you have, then you can rationally look forward to the future by mapping reality to expectations.

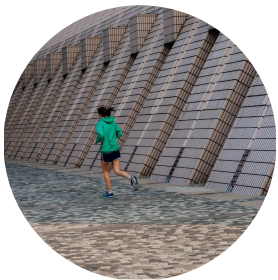


7. Exercise and re-charging are critically important.

8. Differentiate between mental health & mental illness. Mental illness is likely to increase by 300% due to the pandemic.

9. There are a range of things we can do to recognise and combat stress and burnout; setting boundaries, saying no, switching off from work, removing ourselves from toxic people, digital detoxing and breathing mindfully.

10. We can live without lots of things, water, food etc., but not hope!



Event Snapshot

Resilience

The following insights are from a sample of students who attended the 'Become Immune to Rejection' event.

Students recognised and shared some of the things that help to build their resilience



Hover over text to reveal frequency.
(if viewing this online)



Event Insights

Planning your Future Career and Building your Network Events

This category was designed to help those at the planning stage of their career. It received the second-highest number of registrations of 665 registrations across 16 events. The highest percentage of WAP (Widening Access and Participation) i.e. 29.9% of students noted their interest in this area out of all categories.

As students and graduates plan for the next phase in their journey, there can be an overwhelming number of options available which leads to ambiguity around the way forward. During the interactions with presenters in Future Skills Week, students highlighted their fear of the unknown and valued the tools that can help unpack their thinking on career direction.

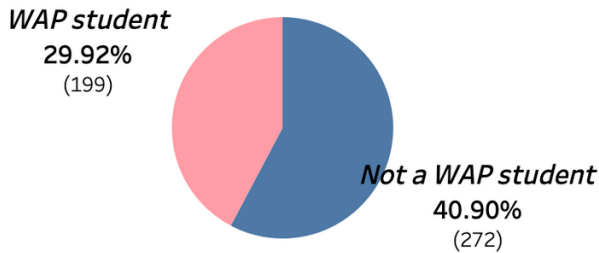
Many students are entrepreneurial or have an interest in being intrapreneurial. While they have many ideas, they expressed a need for help and advice around finance, funding, regulations, intellectual property etc. These students were intrigued to hear more about how to achieve the dual nature of these responsibilities i.e. wanting the flexibility of being their own boss while being passionate about their subject and wanting to run this as a business; being motivated to make a difference to society whilst understanding risks of business ownership.



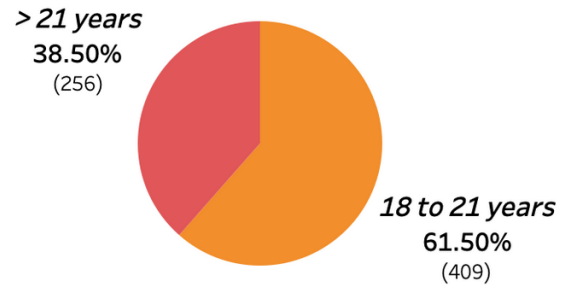
Registration Data

Planning your Future Career and Building your Network Events
(665 Registrations)

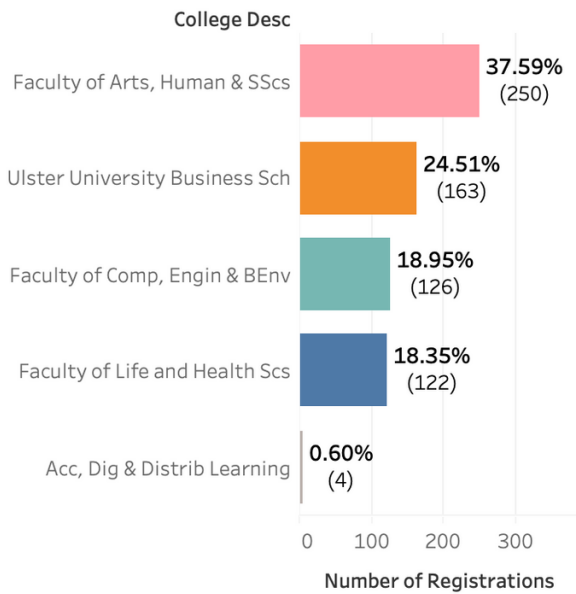
Widening Access & Participation Analysis



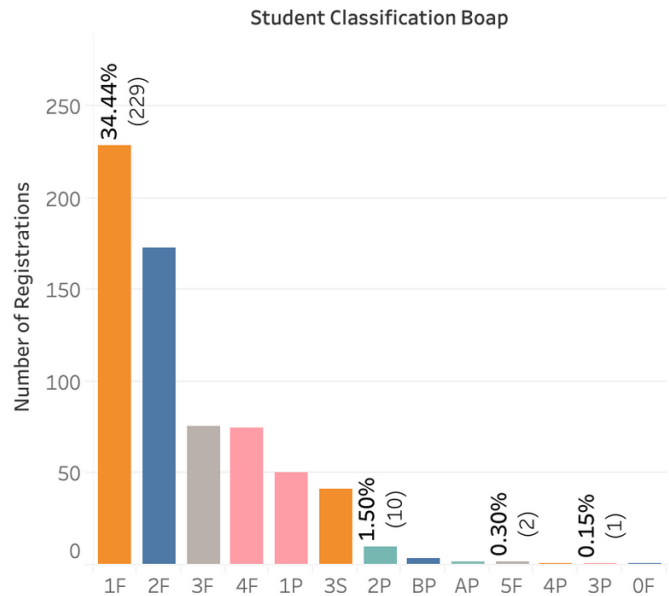
Maturity Analysis



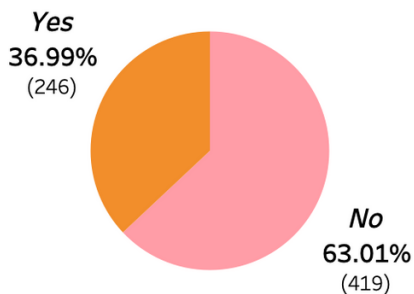
Faculty Analysis



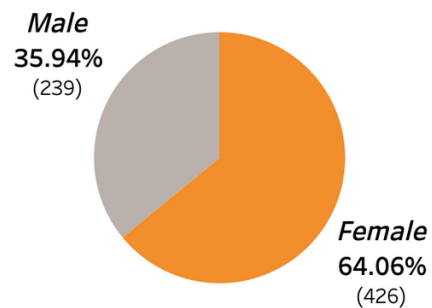
Undergraduate Year Group



Analysis of students registered onto a placement embedded course (DPP)



Gender Analysis



Key Takeaways

Planning your Future Career and Building your Network Events



1. Passion is key to your success, not talent.
2. There are many ways to control nerves and engineer confidence, such as relaxing your jaw/tongue, breathing, pinching, having good posture, maintaining eye contact, changing your tone of voice, having a strong handshake and developing your conversational skills.

3. The critical importance of a strong LinkedIn profile; building your reputation, targeting your sector and reaching out to employers.

4. Grow your network meaningfully through effectively communicating with others.

5. Collaborative working is growing in importance in today's workplace.



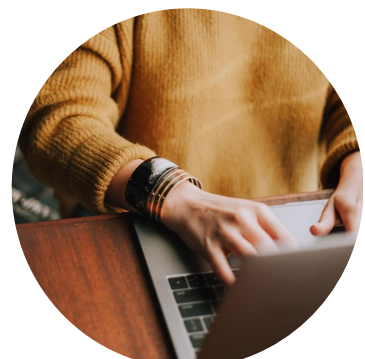
6. Understand entrepreneurial characteristics and skills to pursue the opportunities and support networks needed to explore new ventures.

7. The future will continue to change so rather than fear it, embrace it.

8. Be as adaptable as you can to achieve your goals, turn rejection into learning.

9. The career journey can be fluid. You don't need to know what you want to be from a young age, it's about the journey, not the destination.

10. The lifecycle of a digital skill is 3 years - students need to be agile and flexible.



Event Snapshots

Ambition and Workplace Values

The following insights are from a sample of students who attended the 'Boost Your Ambition' event.

Students reflected on what ambition means to them

Most students said that doing more interesting work with more impactful results best reflected what ambition meant to them.

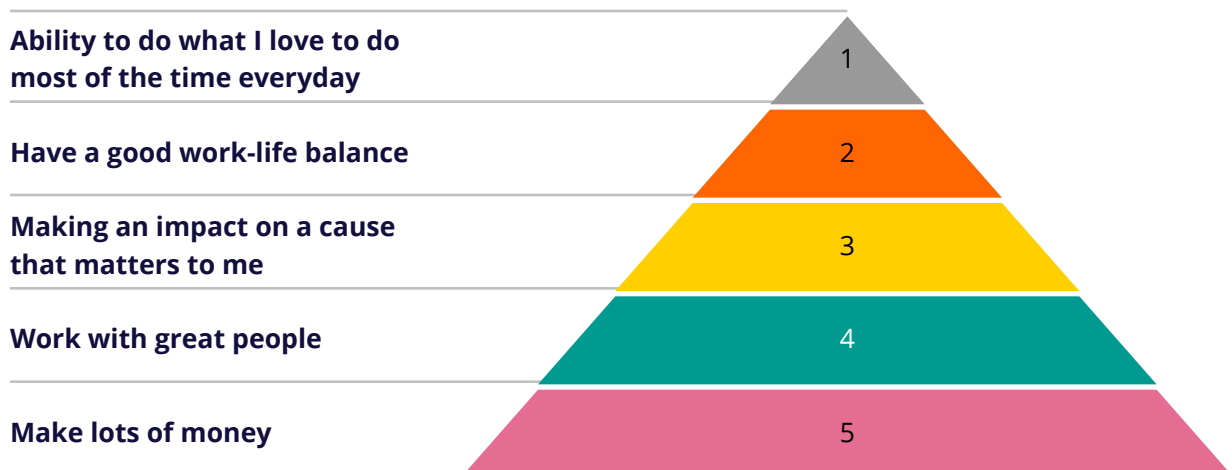
Not a single student chose "pressure" as a synonym for ambition.



What does ambition mean to you?	Votes
Doing more interesting work with more impactful results	18
Becoming more senior and having more responsibility	2
Having more choice over what I do	3
Earning more to work less	2
Pressure, so I would rather be comfortable than ambitious	0

Students went on to decide what was important to them in the workplace

The ability to do what you love is of paramount importance to our participants.



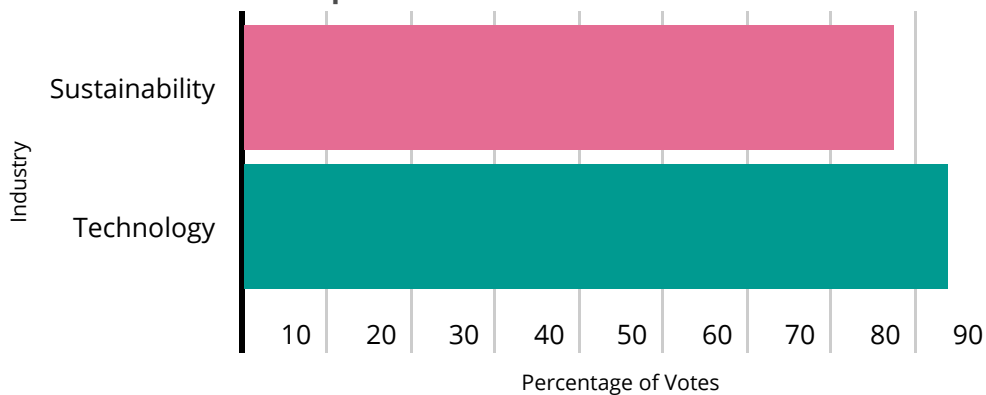
Event Snapshots

Future of Business - Tech and Sustainability

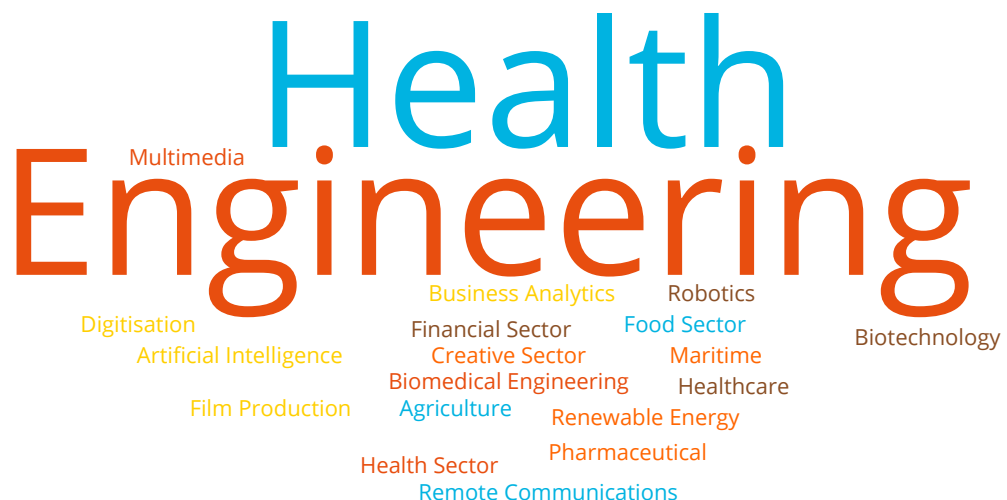
The following insights are from a sample of students who attended the 'Future of Business - Tech and Sustainability' event in association with Ulster University Business School

During the session, they shared their insights into where they felt employment growth is likely to come from

More people expect technology to offer more employment growth than sustainability but more than three quarters of the audience expect job prospects to be more plentiful in both industries.



Students suggested other industries that they expect to see increased job opportunities in the future:



Event Insights

Acting on your Plan and Selling Yourself in the Workplace Events

This category focused on empowering people as they were ready to turn their plan into action. The registration profile for this theme was closest to the average in terms of gender, age, WAP participation, placement, faculty etc. There were 368 registrations across 11 events. This smaller number, in comparison to the confidence-building and planning categories, underlined the role of the Employability & Careers team in progressing students from overcoming fears to targeted planning before they take action.

As students interacted with the presenters and trainers, they were interested in what they should do to make more successful applications for jobs, how to answer the question relating to salary expectations and the price of subcontracted work, practical ways to cultivate their social media profile and understand how to build their personal brand.

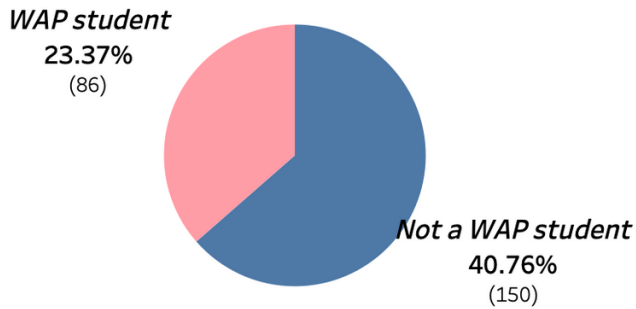
Rhyming with other category sessions, the participants shared that they were fearful of failure and rejection. They particularly referred to their lack of confidence and experience around presentations, but pointed out that real world challenges incorporated into their higher education learning experience offered value, confidence and discussion points in interviews.



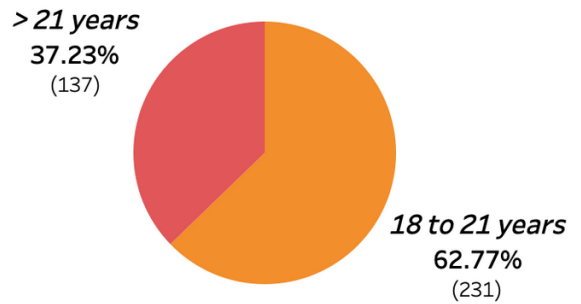
Registration Data

Acting on your Plan and Selling Yourself in the Workplace Events
(368 Registrations)

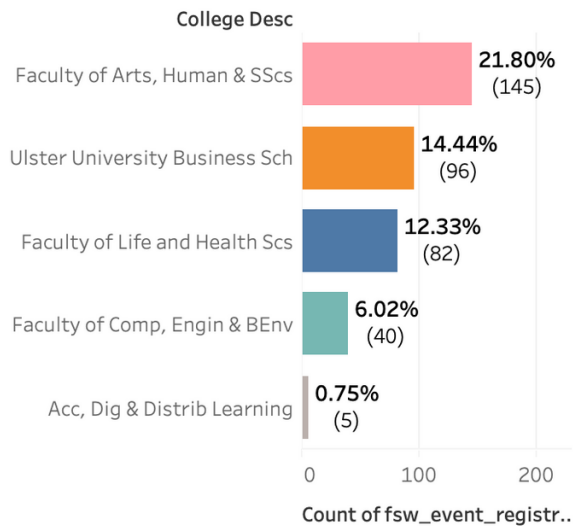
Widening Access & Participation Analysis



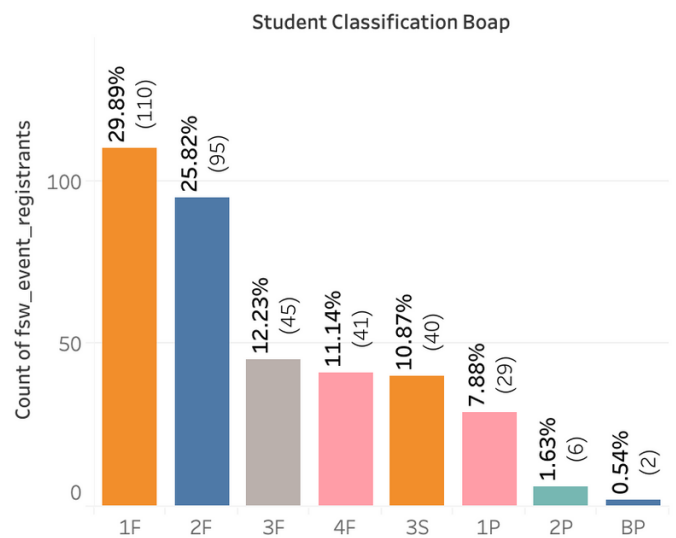
Maturity Analysis



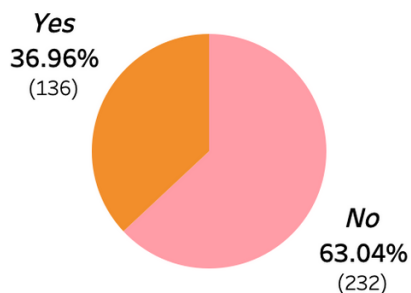
Faculty Analysis



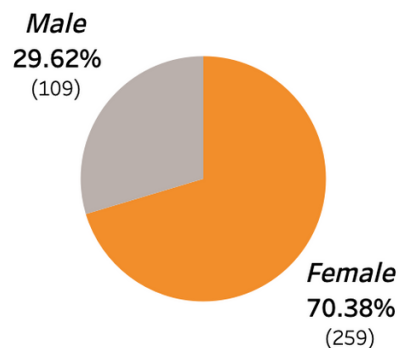
Undergraduate Year Group



Analysis of students registered onto a placement embedded course (DPP)



Gender Analysis



Key Takeaways

Acting on your Plan and Selling Yourself in the Workplace Events

1. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

2. It's critical to know the purpose of your presentation, make a connection with the audience, and communicate clearly and simply when putting ideas forward to the audience.

3. There are a plethora of ways to manage time and overcome procrastination available for students today.

4. 'Self-management' is key to success.

5. Cultivate your personal brand.

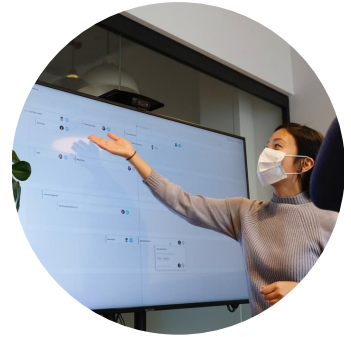
6. Specialise, don't generalise.

7. Work towards happiness, not money.

8. Set yourself apart from others by understanding and articulating your "unique selling points".

9. Constantly develop yourself. Be excited about doing so!

10. How to present with confidence - Becoming a confident presenter and adopting a positive mindset.



Event Snapshots

Assumptions about the Workplace

The following insights are from a sample of students who attended the 'Workplace Mythbuster' event.

Students documented their assumptions around the working environment of the future

Students used Google Sheets to collaboratively interrogate their assumptions and consider the consequences with their peers. Further, they brainstormed how they could control their worries through mindset and action.



I assume that...

environmental consultancy will be more in demand in the future



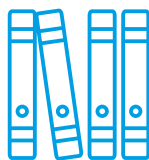
I assume that...

there is increasing time pressure in the workplace



I assume that...

there will be more global hiring in future



I assume that...

roles will become more interdisciplinary



I assume that...

jobs will start requiring increased tech skills as use of computers and automation increase

Event Snapshots

The Importance of Self-Reflection

The following insights are from a sample of students who attended the 'Future of Business - Tech and Sustainability' event.

Our students shared some of the things that make their generation uniquely great

We have the ability to speak our mind in numbers.

We have a deep awareness of environmental challenges.

We place importance on the environment and work-life balance.

We are not afraid to break societal expectations and forge our path.

We have a wide variety of opportunities at our fingertips.

We represent many different experiences, backgrounds and views.

They then shared some aspects they wish people of other generations would understand about how the world works

Not all social media is anti-social.

That we are constantly learning new things that change our mindset frequently.

We have so many ideas to better the world.

We have our own challenges too.

We want to focus on being proactive and not reactive.

Technological advancements open novel solutions in different realms.

Event Insights

Digital Boost

Future Skills Week participants were keenly aware of the importance of digital skills when applying and interviewing for jobs as well as adding value when they join the workplace. While the number of people registering for these events was the lowest of all four categories (i.e. 337 expressions of interest across 12 events), the profile was strikingly different. Almost half came from those who had an embedded placement on their course. More than 43% were mature students, 30% were from Ulster University Business School.

Specifically, students were interested in Excel, Word, Outlook and PowerPoint. Further, there was an appetite for broadening one's use of technology, gaining insight into what the tech needs of tomorrow's workplace contain and how to develop practical skills from creating a video CV to formatting Excel spreadsheets to presenting slick slide decks.

There was a tangible need to build confidence and familiarity with new concepts and tools. Students shared that they were excited to use what they had learned, both with presentations and presentation nerves. In the workshops, students expressed appreciation of how practical these workshops were and how immediately implementable tech tips and tricks could be for everybody.

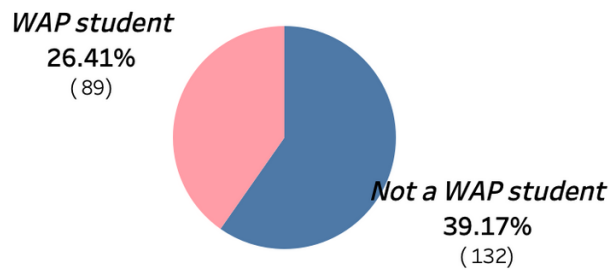


Registration Data

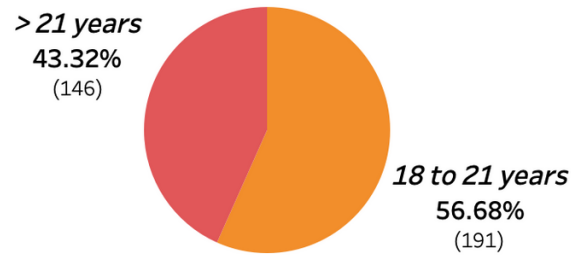
Digital Boost Events

(337 Registrations)

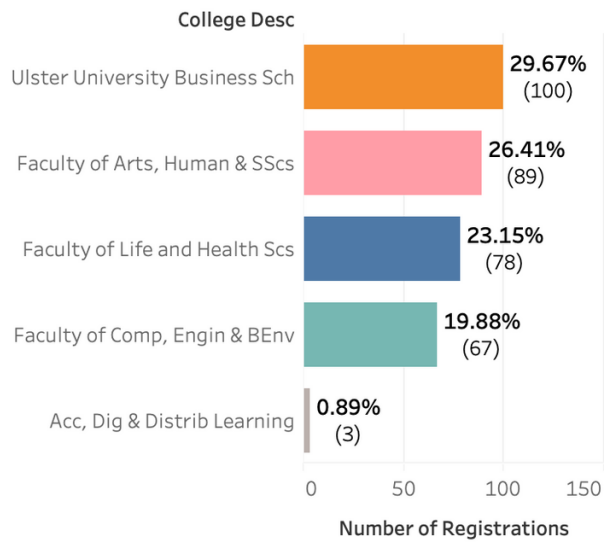
Widening Access & Participation Analysis



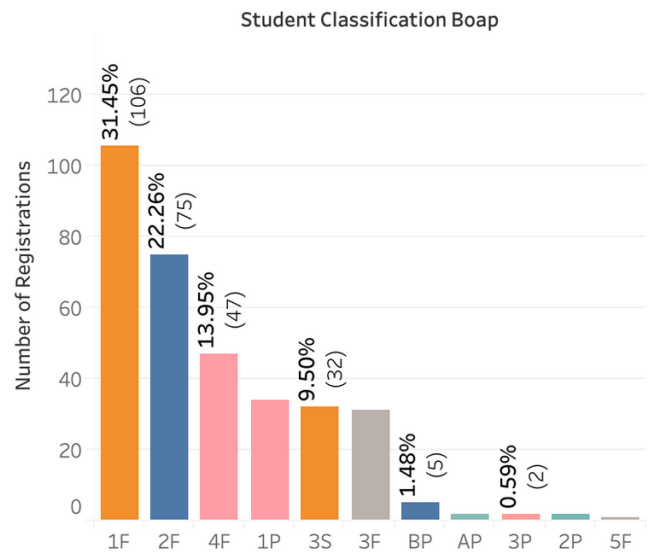
Maturity Analysis



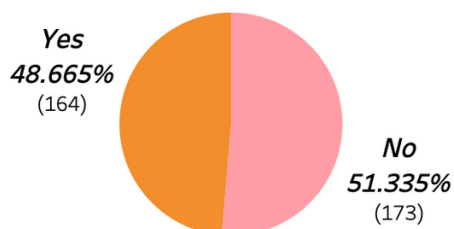
Faculty Analysis



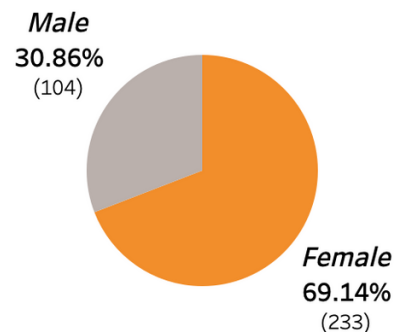
Undergraduate Year Group



Analysis of students registered onto a placement embedded course (DPP)



Gender Analysis



Key Takeaways

Digital Boost

1. Excel offers countless ways to shortcut useful functions.
2. Students can gain time through learning a variety of Microsoft Word functions when creating documents.
3. It's helpful to build your understanding of navigation, formatting, printing etc on Excel.
4. Many companies require strong IT skills, especially in software packages like Excel, as it's a frequently used program in many businesses and companies.
5. Presentations can be better designed and offer a more exciting experience when Design Ideas, animations and transitions are used.
6. It's worthwhile to consider interesting and useful 365 apps, but also important to consider the user experience of the mobile and desktop versions of same.
7. There is a growing amount of functionality and terms that students will need to be aware of when they enter the workplace for placement or graduate jobs.
8. Today's workplace has set the expectation that applicants may be asked to present a PowerPoint in an interview and thus proficiency in the programme is very helpful.



Event Snapshots

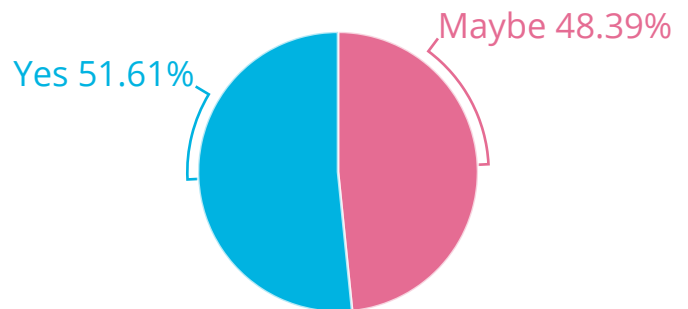
Digital Literacy

The following insights are from a sample of students who attended the 'Future of Business - Tech and Sustainability' event.

Students shared how comfortable they feel about using technology and some of the reasons they feel that way

While some students were not as confident with using technology, 100% of participants believe they have at least some digital literacy.

Do you feel that you are "digitally literate"?



<i>I am a computer science student- tech savvy!</i>	<i>I feel I am capable using a range of technology and digital items as I use technology daily.</i>	<i>I've had experiential learning since 1990s.</i>	<i>I use various IT systems in work and for UNI - mostly Microsoft Office.</i>	<i>I don't feel I am as literate as I should be!</i>
<i>I feel completely literate in some areas but not all.</i>	<i>I use technology on a daily basis, whether it is for school or personal work.</i>			
<i>I am doing a computing course, I've always had an interest in and been good with tech.</i>	<i>I study computer science and have learnt the importance of how to teach myself and pick up new technology as it is constantly changing.</i>	<i>My skills are probably better than average, but I'd like to be able to manage it even better.</i>	<i>I have been comfortable using computers through study and various other activities.</i>	

Post Event Evaluation



136

Post Event Surveys



120

E&C Summary
Submissions



141

EDGE Award
Accreditation Forms



9

Presenter Reviews

Using 400 pieces of data, the report evaluates the major themes emerging from the post-event analysis with a view to addressing the key aims of the report, provide reflection for the internal team and glean insightful feedback for future events.



Post-Event Evaluation

Emerging Themes

Theme 1

There were consistent references to the variety of content and experiences on offer. From mental health to presenting with impact to LinkedIn tips and tricks, the participants could truly choose what they wanted and were interested tailored to their own stage of their career journey.

Theme 2

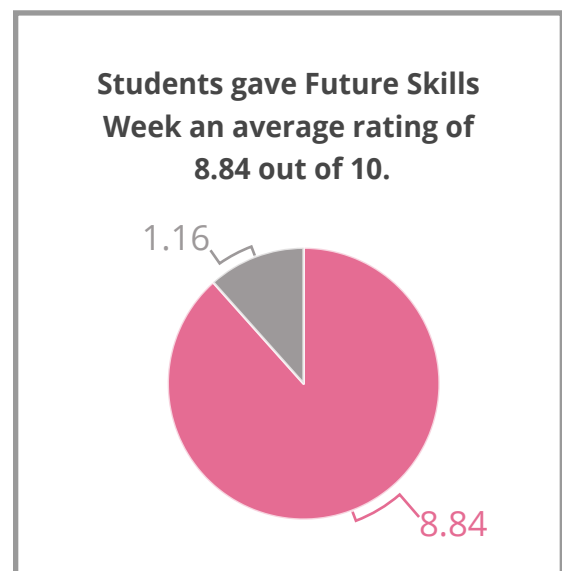
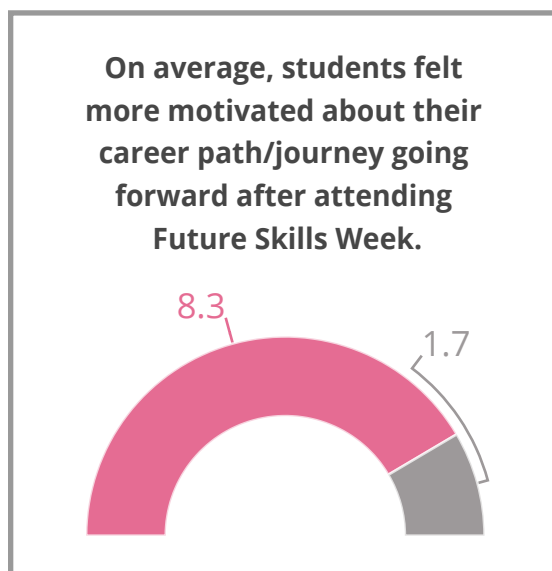
There was a sense of gratitude for the mental health conversations throughout the week. Students reiterated the need for honest insights, practical steps and authentic communication around the theme and this corroborated with the reasons people expressed when registering in the first place.

Theme 3

Many pointed out that a growth mindset was pervasive throughout the week. The confidence-building events brought this right to the fore. Additionally, the planning, upskilling and networking events were built on the premise of a growth mindset. Therefore, many events reinforced the importance of adopting this perspective and it was well acknowledged in the participant feedback.

Theme 4

Future Skills Week participants valued the practicality of the wisdom and direction shared. They were able to implement lots of what they learned instantly after learning of new tools, self-development techniques, time-saving features on Microsoft 365 or even other opportunities within Ulster University.



Post-Event Evaluation

Emerging Feedback

Theme 5

Future Skills Week offered people an opportunity to reflect on their own goals, aspirations, fears, worries and plans. The EDGE data, in particular, revealed that many participants might not have taken this time out for themselves at any other stage of the academic year, and they felt it was time very well spent.

Theme 6

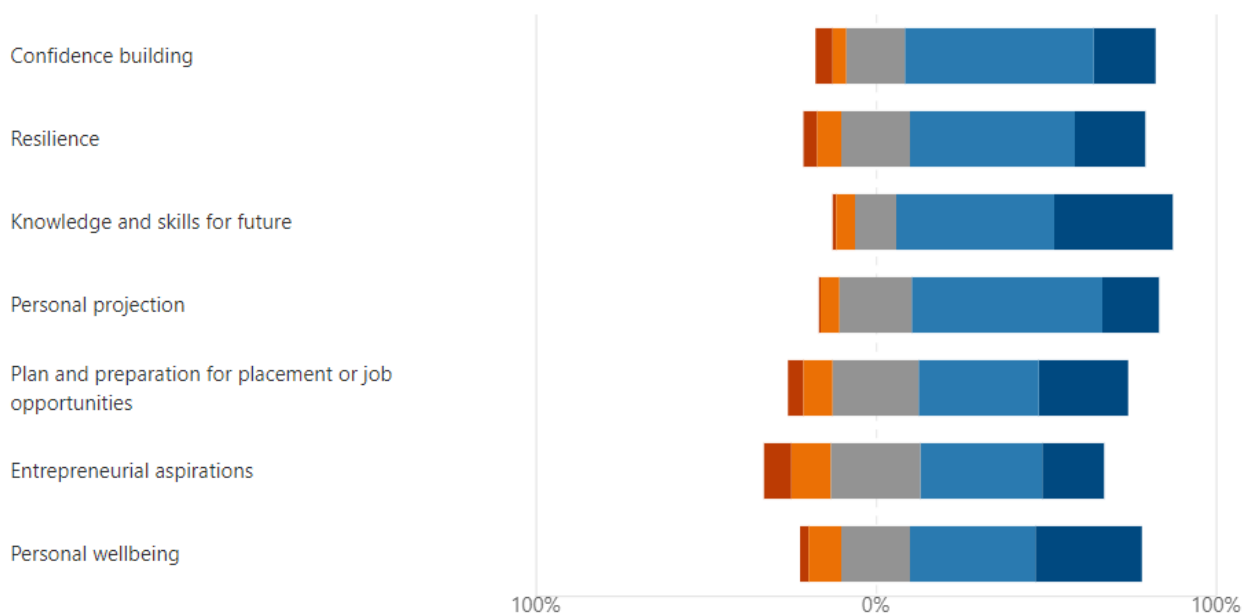
A strong message that came through the data was that Future Skills Week empowered students to believe in themselves more. Many commented that they felt more confident, capable, motivated, inspired and simply more able to move forward.

Theme 7

There was a sense that many areas of the world of work were demystified, i.e. setting up your own business, how to interview virtually or remotely, the skills that today's employers are seeking out, how to become comfortable in using professional language, where to find opportunities and how to hone one's personal brand.

Students ranked the following attributes based on how well they developed each one

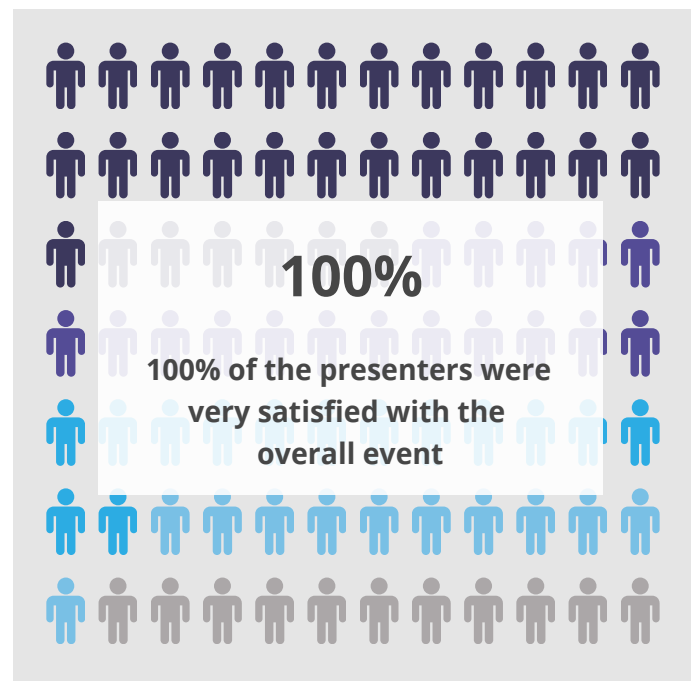
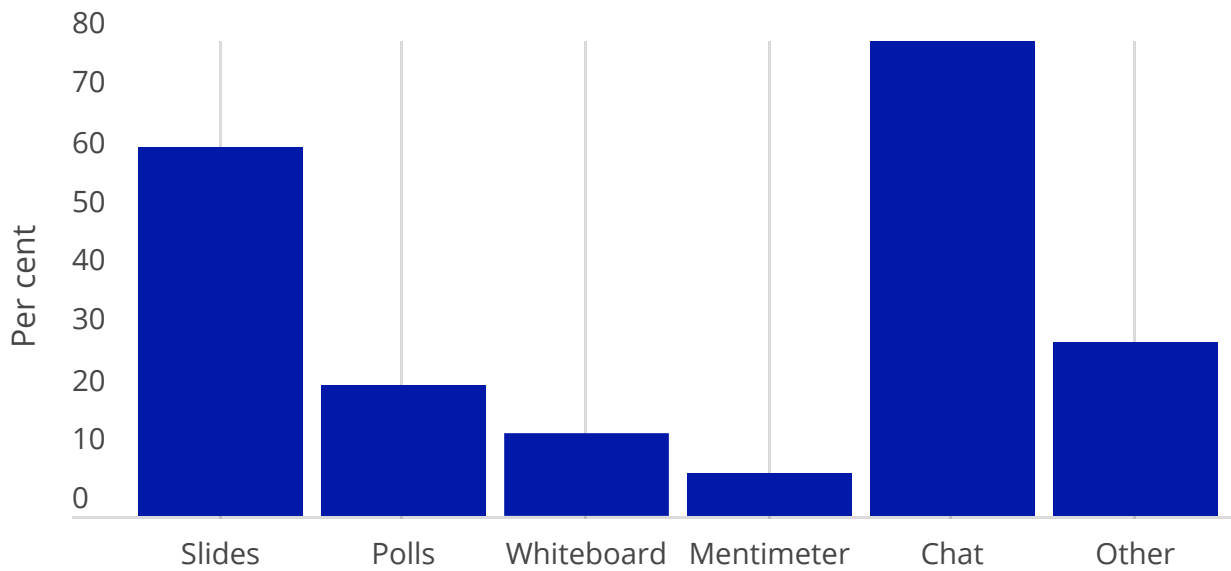
■ No change ■ Neutral ■ Marginal Change ■ Much Improved ■ Significant Development



Post-Event Evaluation

Interactivity in a Virtual Environment

Given that each and every event took place in a virtual environment, many presenters chose to use some interactive tools. Some were incorporated into the video conferencing and webinar platforms used to stream the sessions while others were externally accessed by the students using a link, QR code or other means. The following graph showcases the tools presenters used and the frequency at which these tools were seen throughout the week.



 [Click on a logo to learn more](#)

Student Reflections

In their own words

As part of their feedback, many students shared how they felt about Future Skills Week overall. Here are some of their inspiring words.

"This week has given me a confidence boost to believe in my own ability and to keep going despite life's hardships."

"Overall, a great experience was had this week through the sessions. Positivity and motivation have been instilled in me again after a challenging year."

"I really enjoyed Future Skills Week and the fact that there was such a range of workshops, something for everyone!"

"Overall, I can say my confidence in communication and presenting effectively has significantly improved."

"As a whole, the sessions helped me to develop insights into creating a more positive attitude towards situations that are not within my control and to worry less about areas of my life that are going to fluctuate with external unavoidable factors."

"The week increased my confidence tenfold and I will always be grateful to Ulster University for providing the opportunities to students. Thank you!"

Conclusion

This report sought to achieve three key outcomes arising from the collection and analysis of data collected during Future Skills Week.

Capture the nuance of “The Student Voice”.

This report has captured the nuance of “The Student Voice” through registration data, event interactions with speakers, post-event evaluations and the EDGE Award submissions.

There is a strong appetite on the part of students for personal development skills including building confidence, cultivating resilience, taking care of one’s mental health, planning for careers and building digital skills. The “Confidence Building, Resilience and Influencer” category was the most in-demand of Future Skills Week by some distance with more than 1 in 3 registrations for this theme alone. This series of events tapped into an extraordinary level of worry and anxiety intensified by the social isolation and lifestyle disruption experienced by students.

Students today are proactive about seeking out role models and inspiration. They welcome authenticity and look up to those who are willing to share their vulnerabilities as well as their achievements. They want to improve how they conduct interviews and job searches so that they can broaden their career prospects. There is a broad appreciation for the importance and role of LinkedIn. Furthermore, students are concerned about how they market their skillset to employers through professional social media and other channels.

Conclusion

Discern the key tenets of “The Expert Voice”

This report discerned the key tenets of “The Expert Voice” through observations shared by the Employability & Careers staff, student evaluations and post-event survey sent to all speakers, facilitators and presenters.

In essence, the experts encouraged students to have a growth mindset and to seek out the learnings in challenging situations. They recommended techniques for cultivating resilience, giving self-care the time and energy it deserves and shared anecdotes of times this worked for them.

The presenters highlighted self-awareness tools for planning your career and gave practical direction regarding developing your personal brand. They demystified the current status of a dynamic workplace in Northern Ireland today and painted a picture of the skills and competencies of tomorrow.

The facilitators used a plethora of interactive tools to offer students real and dynamic learning opportunities. The majority used slides and invited the participants to interact and submit questions throughout the Chatbox function. The Digital Boost speakers used shared screens to walk the audience through technology features and other mechanisms to tailor their sessions in realtime.

Conclusion

Showcase the outcomes of Future Skills Week

This report showcases the outcomes of Future Skills Week in terms of a number of events, quantity of registrations, the detail behind the demand, the marketing reach of the promotion, the hopes and fears of the participants, the content disseminated through the presenters, the range of interactive technologies used to improve engagement, the post-event evaluation and the emotion in the student voice.

There was a pervasive sense of gratitude that Future Skills Week took place at the time, through the medium and with the array of content that it was executed. The tone of the messaging was soft, encouraging and invited students to go on a self-directed journey through a very well designed map.

Type something

The entire student body and graduate community were offered an opportunity to interact meaningfully with the Employability & Careers team in an interactive, outcome-focused way that blended right into their schedule, stage and state of mind.

In this unique set of circumstances where in-person events were impossible, Future Skills Week enabled participants to join what was relevant to them, when it was possible for them, through a globally accessible medium in an encouraging way as well as to meet students and graduates where they were at.

This report records many metrics around the Future Skills Week which can be compared against for other interventions in the future.

The Last Word

In conclusion, thanks to the powerful knowledge shared between speakers, students and Ulster University alumni and staff, Future Skills Week exceptionally reached out and delivered to hundreds of people in countless ways. The series of events enabled students to network, upskill using actionable advice and build their confidence for their future careers.

Many Future Skills Week sessions continue to be available online so that the value continues to be on offer for people who want to personalise their Employment and Career journey.

As the world moves from an enforced remote learning environment into a new normal, there are many decisions to take to shape the future of how the University community interacts with each other as well as it's external stakeholders.

As Northern Ireland makes ready a new Skills Strategy with an emphasis on 'better jobs and better wages for all our people', collaboration and codesign of solutions is critical to this ambition. The focus of creating a culture of lifelong learning, maximising Northern Ireland's competitive advantage as a region and working to make a real difference in people's lives, will require renewed thinking and reform in the approach made to careers education, the support for personal and professional skills and transition to professional life. It is critical that the University prepares its student and graduate talent base to grow confidence alongside an appetite for lifelong skills development and learning that will enable them to meet the future needs of working in a transforming society and economy. Areas identified within this report and through Ulster University's Future Skills Week has enabled a well-informed readiness for the ambitions that are being established through emerging regional and institutional strategies. Future Skills Week 2021 has established both a present benchmark and future direction in setting that agenda.



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