



## EMPLOYABILITY OUTCOMES OF IMQP ALUMNI:

### DETAILED ANALYTICAL REPORT BASED ON THE JANUARY 2026 SURVEY DATASET

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This report analyses 60 alumni responses collected through the IMQP employability questionnaire. The purpose is to describe, interpret, and contextualise alumni employment outcomes after completion of the programme, using a set of graphical summaries derived directly from the dataset. The report maintains an analytical perspective, focusing on what the data show, what the patterns plausibly mean in employability terms, and what limits should be kept in mind when interpreting the evidence.

#### 1. Dataset structure, completeness, and interpretability

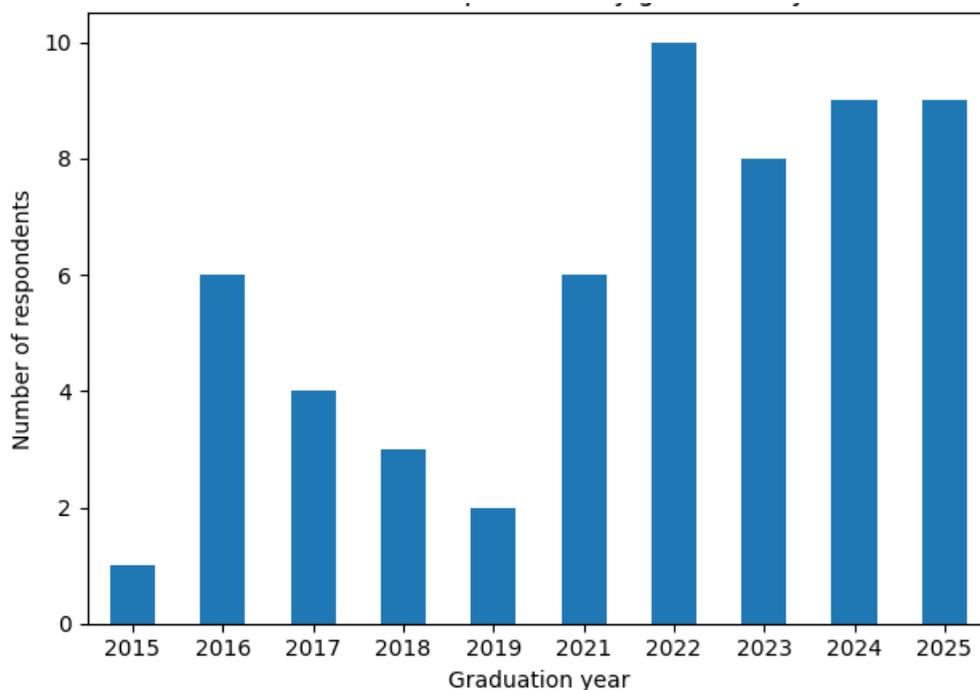
The dataset contains 60 completed questionnaires, each including graduation year, nationality, thesis area, current position, and a self-reported evaluation of the extent to which the IMQP Master influenced the respondent's current professional situation using a 1 to 10 scale. Two respondents did not provide an influence score, so analyses of the influence question rely on 58 valid numeric values. Most variables are recorded as text, which means that interpretability depends on harmonising equivalent answers written with slightly different wording, especially for current position. For the employment analysis, positions were therefore grouped into consolidated categories that preserve the intent of the original response while allowing a



coherent overview of outcomes. The grouping is conservative, it simply aggregates responses that clearly refer to the same type of professional situation.

## 2. Distribution of respondents by graduation year

The sample includes respondents graduating between 2015 and 2025. The distribution shows the following pattern: very small numbers for the earliest cohorts, with a clear concentration from 2021 onwards and a peak in 2022, followed by high representation in 2023, 2024, and 2025 (Fig. 1). This confirms that the dataset is dominated by relatively recent graduates, while still retaining a limited number of respondents with longer post-graduation trajectories.



*Fig. 1: Distribution of respondents by graduation year.*

This distribution provides the baseline for interpreting employment rates by years since graduation, ensuring that all subsequent calculations rely only on reliable chronological information.

Employment rates were calculated for graduates between 1 and 6 years after graduation. Respondents outside this temporal window were excluded from this specific analysis in order to avoid very small cell sizes and to maintain interpretability.

The resulting employment rates are shown in figure 2.

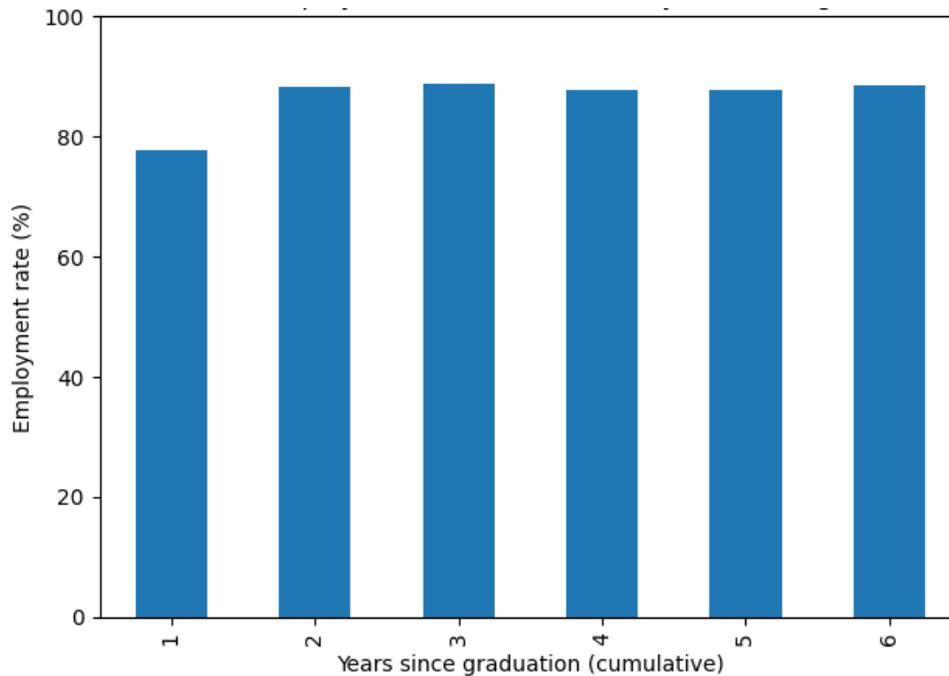


Fig. 2: cumulative employment rate within 1 to 6 years since graduation

These values show consistently high levels of employment across all observed time points. While some fluctuation is visible there is no evidence in the dataset of a systematic decline in employment with increasing time since graduation. On the contrary, employment rates remain high from the second year onwards, reaching full employment in the observed samples at 2 and 6 years after graduation. The data clearly indicate that the large majority of IMQP graduates are employed within a relatively short time after completing the programme, and that employment is generally maintained in the years following graduation. Thesis area profile and its relevance for employability narratives

The chart Most frequent thesis areas among respondents shows a strong concentration in a limited number of thematic areas, with a long tail of less frequent fields. The top 3 thesis areas are Paleoanthropology with 14 respondents, Lithics with 14 respondents, and Archeozoology with 9 respondents. These 3 areas alone account for 37 respondents, which corresponds to 61.7% of the sample. The next most frequent fields are Palinology, Usewear Analysis, and Rock Art, Micromammals Palaeontology and Bones industry, Dating and Vertebrate Palaeontology.

This distribution has 2 major interpretative consequences. First, it indicates which disciplinary profiles are most strongly represented in alumni responses, meaning that the employment picture will be especially reflective of the career pathways typical for those profiles. Second, it implies that interpreting employability in a thesis area specific way becomes statistically fragile beyond the largest groups, because the numbers quickly become too small to separate meaningful patterns from random variation. For example, a single respondent in a niche field can shift percentages dramatically without indicating a structural programme effect. The thesis



area chart therefore functions primarily as a descriptive frame: it clarifies that the survey outcomes are likely to reflect a research oriented disciplinary core in which doctoral progression is a natural continuation, especially in the most represented areas.

At the same time, the presence of multiple smaller areas is relevant for programme identity. It shows that the programme attracts and trains a diverse range of methodological and thematic interests, which can be a strength in terms of versatility and interdisciplinarity. From an employability perspective, this diversity implies that a single employability narrative may not fit all graduates equally.

### 3. Current employment status: dominant pathways and secondary outcomes

The distribution of current employment status highlights a strongly research oriented employability profile among IMQP alumni (Fig. 3). The most prominent outcome is enrolment in doctoral programmes, which accounts for approximately two fifths of all respondents. This confirms that progression to PhD training represents the dominant immediate post-graduation pathway and reflects the research intensive nature of the IMQP Master.

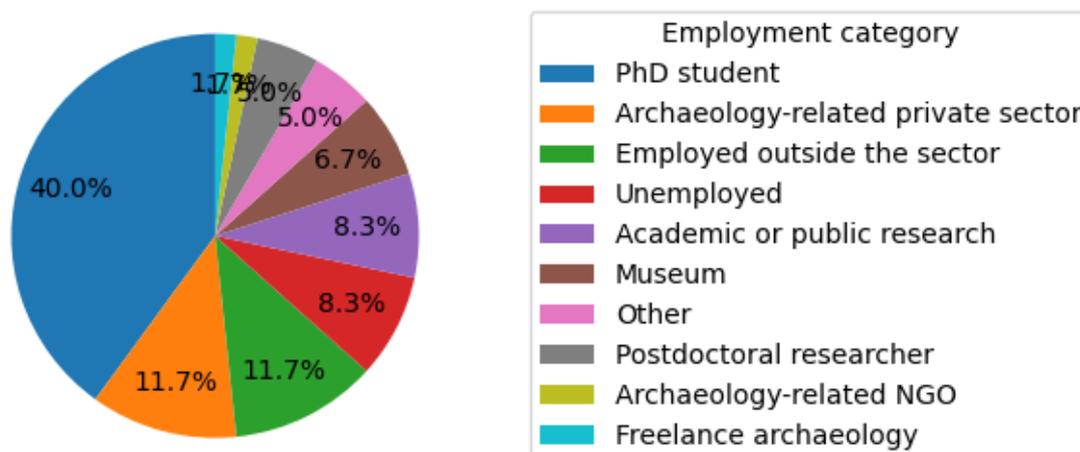


Fig. 3: Current employment status of IMQP alumni.

Beyond doctoral enrolment, a second cluster of outcomes is distributed across archaeology related private sector employment and employment outside the sector, each representing a similar share of respondents. The presence of graduates in the private archaeology sector indicates that the programme also provides competences that are applicable in professional contexts beyond the university, particularly where analytical skills, methodological rigour, and interdisciplinary training are valued. At the same time, the comparable proportion of respondents employed outside the sector suggests that a segment of graduates either temporarily or structurally enters broader labour markets, where the link between academic specialisation and professional tasks may be less direct.



Employment in academic or public research positions, excluding PhD and postdoctoral roles, represents a further meaningful share of outcomes. This indicates that the programme does not only function as preparation for doctoral training, but also supports access to early research and teaching roles within universities and public institutions. Museum employment forms another distinct component of the employability profile, reflecting the relevance of IMQP training for heritage and cultural institutions, although this pathway appears less frequent than strictly academic trajectories.

Postdoctoral positions, while numerically limited, are a significant indicator of longer term academic progression, as they imply successful completion of doctoral training and continued integration into the research system. The presence of this category among respondents reinforces the interpretation that IMQP contributes to sustained academic careers, not only to initial doctoral access.

A smaller proportion of respondents report unemployment at the time of the survey. In the context of a sample dominated by recent graduates, this outcome is best interpreted as part of early career transition dynamics rather than as a definitive employability failure. Similarly, the residual “Other” category captures heterogeneous situations that do not fall neatly into predefined employment types, without materially altering the overall distribution.

Overall, the employment pattern is strongly consistent with the objectives and structure of the IMQP Master. The predominance of doctoral and research related outcomes indicates that the programme effectively fulfils its core mission as a research oriented Erasmus Mundus Master, while the presence of graduates in applied, cultural, and non-sector specific roles points to a degree of skill transferability beyond academia. The distribution therefore supports the conclusion that IMQP primarily generates academic employability, while also enabling a range of alternative professional trajectories, particularly in the early stages following graduation.

### **3.1 Perceived influence of IMQP on current position: overall distribution and meaning**

The figure 4 shows how strongly alumni believe the programme contributed to where they are now professionally. Among 58 valid scores, the mean is 7.586, the median is 9, the 25th percentile is 6, and the 75th percentile is 10. The most frequent value is 10, reported by 26 respondents. This means that 44.8 % of valid respondents gave the maximum influence score. Scores of 8, 9, and 10 together account for 40 of 58 valid responses, which corresponds to 69.0 %. Scores of 5 to 7 account for 7 of 58 responses, which is 12.1 %. Scores of 1 to 4 account for 11 of 58 responses, which is 19.0 %.

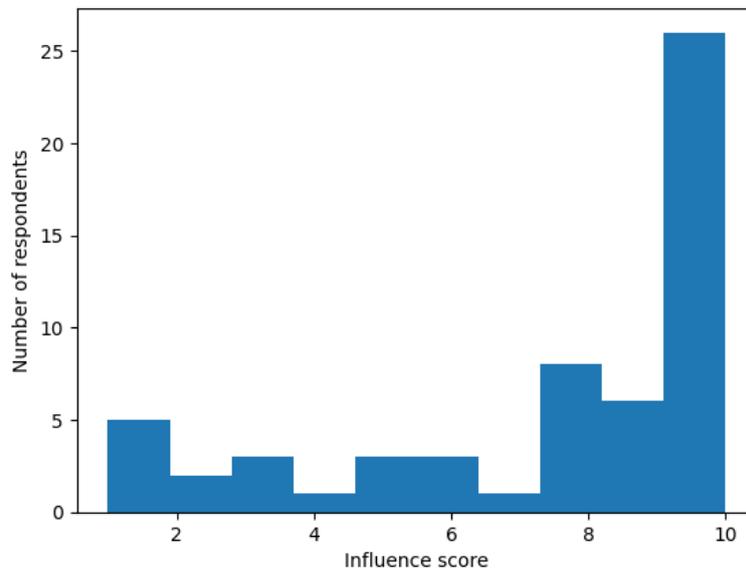


Fig. 4: perceived influence of IMQP on current position.

The distribution therefore has a pronounced concentration at the top end, implying that most alumni perceive a strong causal link between IMQP and their current position. In employability evaluation language, this supports the interpretation that the programme has high perceived relevance and that alumni see its training, prestige, network, and skill formation as important drivers of their career entry or progression.

At the same time, the presence of a meaningful low score group is also important for an honest reading. A non-negligible minority of respondents assigned low influence. This does not necessarily mean the programme had no value for them. It can also mean that their current job is not directly linked to their IMQP profile, that they prioritise other experiences as more decisive, or that their current position is temporary and not yet aligned with their long term field. Nonetheless, in employability analysis, a low influence group is often a signal that certain pathways, particularly outside academia, may require additional programme level scaffolding to make alumni feel that their training translates clearly into professional advantage.

### 3.2 Influence score by employment category: evidence of differentiated programme impact

The figure 5 provides a clearer view of how perceived influence varies across employment outcomes. Even with small category sizes, the pattern is informative.

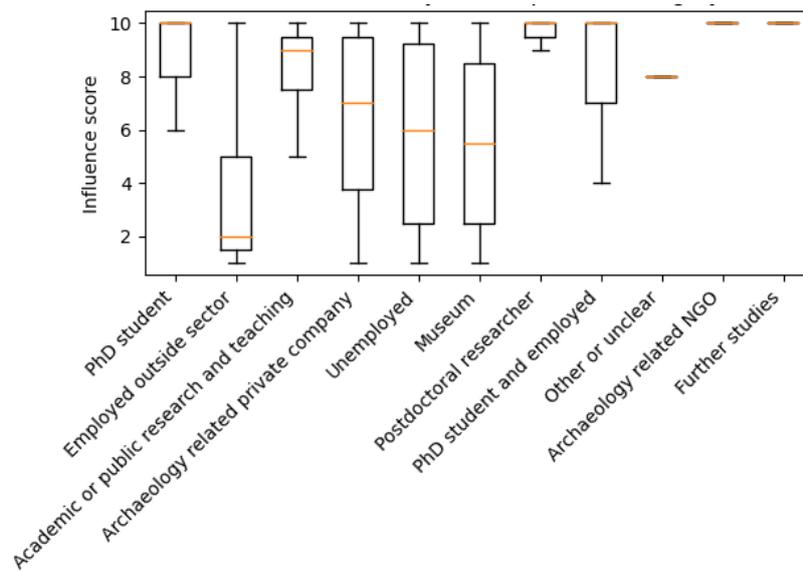


Fig. 5: influence score by current position category.

Among PhD students, the average influence score is 9.143 based on 21 valid scores, with values ranging from 6 to 10 and a median of 10. This indicates that those who continued into doctoral research generally view IMQP as highly influential, which is consistent with the programme’s research training purpose. In practical terms, this suggests that IMQP is perceived as effective in building the academic profile needed for doctoral selection, including methodological training, research design, international academic exposure, and recommendation network formation.

Among Postdoctoral researchers, the average is 9.667 based on 3 valid scores, with a median of 10 and a range from 9 to 10. Although the number is small, the pattern is coherent: postdoctoral roles typically require a strong research foundation, and those respondents attribute major influence to their Master training. This is an important message for programme positioning, because it suggests that the programme contributes to trajectories beyond PhD entry, at least for some alumni.

Among Academic or public research and teaching, the average is 8.286 based on 7 valid scores, with values from 5 to 10 and a median of 9. This distribution is slightly broader than for PhD students, which can plausibly reflect diverse academic roles, differences in contract stability, and varying national systems of academic employment. Nonetheless, the influence remains high, indicating that alumni in university and public research contexts largely consider IMQP a strong determinant of their professional placement.

In Archaeology related private company roles, the average influence score is 6.333 based on 6 valid scores, with a wide range from 1 to 10 and a median of 7. This spread is analytically significant. It suggests that the programme’s perceived impact in private sector archaeology is uneven. Some alumni see strong relevance, while others see little. In programme evaluation



terms, such dispersion can result from differences in employer expectations, national licensing and regulatory requirements, the practical orientation of specific jobs, and the degree to which alumni had opportunities during IMQP to gain applied experience and professional networking in private contexts. The large spread also implies that alumni in this category are not experiencing a uniform translation of IMQP training into perceived employability advantage.

In Museum roles, the average influence score is 5.5 based on 4 valid scores, with a range from 1 to 10. Again, the spread is large. Museums often include very different job families, from collections management and conservation to education and outreach. Without additional role detail, the dataset cannot separate these pathways. However, the variation suggests that some museum jobs may be seen as strongly supported by IMQP training while others are perceived as requiring additional specialised competencies or credentialing. If museum employability is a strategic objective, this pattern indicates that the programme may benefit from articulating museum aligned skill sets more explicitly and supporting structured contact with museum employers.

In the Unemployed category, the average influence score is 5.75 based on 4 valid scores, also with a wide range. This can be interpreted as evidence that unemployment status does not map directly to a judgement that the programme was low quality. Some unemployed respondents still gave high influence scores, which is consistent with the idea that unemployment may reflect timing and opportunity constraints rather than perceived training irrelevance. In employability research, this is a crucial distinction because it implies that alumni can feel well prepared yet still experience labour market barriers.

In Employed outside sector, the average influence score is 3.714 based on 7 valid scores, with a median of 2 and a range from 1 to 10. This is the lowest mean among the main categories. The low median indicates that most individuals in this group see IMQP as having limited direct influence on their current job position, although the range shows that a few still perceive high influence, possibly through transferable skills. This category therefore represents the clearest area where programme support for broader career translation could be strengthened, not necessarily by changing academic content, but by making the transferability of skills more visible and operational for job searching.

Smaller categories such as Archaeology related NGO have 1 valid score, both equal to 10. These single cases cannot be generalised, but they highlight that highly positive programme influence is possible beyond the university pathway, depending on the nature of the role and the individual trajectory.

### **3.3 Integrated interpretation of employability performance**

The most dominant early career outcome is doctoral enrolment, and the perceived influence of IMQP is extremely high within research oriented pathways. This alignment between



employment status and perceived influence is analytically important. It suggests that the programme's strongest employability performance lies in academic capital formation, meaning that alumni feel the programme directly shaped their ability to access, and succeed in, research trajectories.

At the same time, the employment status chart confirms that the alumni population also includes a substantial set of non doctoral outcomes, with meaningful shares in private sector archaeology, museums, and employment outside the sector. For these groups, the influence score distribution becomes more heterogeneous. The programme is therefore not experienced in the same way across all labour market destinations. This is not inherently negative, since labour markets differ in how they value international research degrees, and some roles depend on national qualification structures that a European joint Master cannot fully control. However, heterogeneity in perceived influence is practically relevant, because it indicates where alumni may benefit from additional bridging mechanisms, such as clearer employer facing articulation of competencies, structured applied training opportunities, and stronger career guidance for non-academic pathways.

Another important integrated point is that the dataset composition, dominated by recent cohorts, likely amplifies transitional states. Categories like unemployed and employed outside sector may reflect early career adjustment rather than stable long term divergence from the discipline. A follow up survey focused on time to stable placement could complement this snapshot. Still, the current evidence already highlights where alumni feel the programme is directly translating into work, and where that translation is less visible.

#### **4. Qualitative feedback: analysis of free comments and suggestions to the consortium**

In addition to structured questions, the survey invited respondents to provide open ended feedback through two qualitative fields: free comments about current occupation and suggestions to the consortium. These qualitative responses add an essential interpretative layer to the quantitative results, as they help explain how alumni understand their professional trajectories and how they position the IMQP Master within those trajectories.

Out of 60 respondents, 34 provided non empty free comments on their current occupation, while 27 contributed suggestions addressed directly to the consortium. Although the wording and length of responses vary considerably, clear thematic regularities emerge when the comments are read collectively and interpreted in relation to employment status and perceived programme influence.



#### 4.1. Free comments on current occupation

The free comments largely confirm and nuance the patterns observed in the employment status and influence score analyses. A substantial proportion of comments come from alumni currently enrolled in PhD programmes or engaged in academic research. These respondents frequently describe their position as a continuation of the academic path initiated during the IMQP Master, often emphasising continuity rather than rupture. In these narratives, IMQP is implicitly or explicitly framed as a formative phase that consolidated research interests, methodological competence, and academic self-confidence. The comments do not merely state that the respondent is pursuing a PhD, but often contextualise this choice as a natural progression made possible by the skills, networks, and intellectual orientation developed during the Master.

Several comments stress the role of IMQP in helping respondents identify a research direction, refine a research question, or acquire technical and analytical skills that later proved decisive in doctoral applications. This qualitative evidence aligns closely with the high influence scores observed among PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. Importantly, the comments suggest that the perceived influence of IMQP is not limited to formal credentials, but extends to less tangible dimensions such as academic identity formation, exposure to international research environments, and familiarity with interdisciplinary research cultures.

Comments from respondents employed in museums, private archaeology, or other heritage related contexts show a more varied tone. Some explicitly underline the usefulness of specific skills acquired during IMQP, particularly analytical methods, critical thinking, and the ability to work in international and multidisciplinary teams. In these cases, the programme is described as providing a strong conceptual and methodological background, even when the daily tasks of the job differ from academic research. This supports the interpretation that IMQP contributes to transferable competences that can be mobilised beyond strictly academic roles.

However, other comments from nonacademic contexts point to a partial mismatch between training and employment realities. Some respondents describe roles where local regulations, professional certifications, or practical experience requirements play a stronger role than academic training. In such cases, IMQP is not rejected as irrelevant, but is framed as one component within a more complex professional trajectory that also depends on national labour markets and institutional frameworks. These comments help explain the wider dispersion of influence scores observed in private sector and museum categories, as alumni experiences differ depending on how directly their training connects with job specific requirements.

A smaller number of comments come from respondents who are unemployed or working outside the sector. These comments are particularly important for interpretative balance. Rather than expressing dissatisfaction with the programme, many of these respondents



describe transitional situations, such as searching for doctoral opportunities, navigating funding constraints, or temporarily accepting work outside the field. In several cases, the comments suggest that unemployment or sectoral misalignment is perceived as temporary rather than definitive. This qualitative evidence reinforces the idea that lower influence scores in these categories should not be automatically interpreted as negative evaluations of programme quality, but rather as reflections of structural or temporal constraints affecting early career transitions.

Overall, the free comments provide strong qualitative confirmation that IMQP is widely perceived as academically formative and professionally meaningful, while also highlighting that the translation of this training into employment can vary depending on sector, geography, and timing.

#### **4.2 Suggestions to the consortium**

The suggestions addressed to the consortium are forward looking and generally constructive in tone. They rarely question the academic quality of the programme. Instead, they focus on how the existing strengths of IMQP could be complemented or better articulated to support employability in a broader sense.

A recurring theme across many suggestions is the desire for more explicit and structured support for career development. Alumni often implicitly assume that IMQP is highly effective in preparing students for academic research, but they also express interest in clearer guidance on how to navigate professional pathways both within and beyond academia. This includes advice on job searching, understanding different career options, and translating academic skills into professional profiles that are legible to nonacademic employers. The presence of this theme is consistent with the quantitative finding that perceived influence is lowest among respondents employed outside the sector.

Another prominent theme concerns contact with professional environments outside the university context. Several suggestions point to the potential value of stronger and more systematic links with museums, heritage institutions, laboratories, and private sector organisations. Rather than asking for a fundamental change in programme orientation, respondents often suggest complementary activities such as internships, applied workshops, guest lectures from professionals, or clearer information about how IMQP competences relate to specific job families. This reflects a desire to reduce the gap between academic training and employment realities without diluting the programme's research focus.

Suggestions also frequently refer to the importance of networking and alumni connections. Respondents highlight the potential benefits of a more visible and active alumni network, both as a source of information about career opportunities and as a platform for professional exchange. This aligns with the international and interdisciplinary nature of the programme,



which many alumni view as a major strength. The suggestions imply that maintaining structured contact among cohorts could enhance employability indirectly, by facilitating mentoring, collaboration, and access to informal knowledge about different labour markets.

Finally, alumni implicitly recognise that IMQP develops competences such as critical analysis, data interpretation, project management, and intercultural communication, but they suggest that these skills could be more explicitly framed in employability terms. This observation is particularly relevant for graduates who move into nonacademic roles, where the relevance of a research oriented Master may not be immediately evident to employers.

#### **4.3 Contribution of qualitative feedback to overall employability assessment**

When integrated with the quantitative results, the qualitative feedback paints a coherent and nuanced picture. The free comments reinforce the conclusion that IMQP is highly effective as a research training programme and as a gateway to doctoral and academic careers. At the same time, the suggestions highlight that alumni do not necessarily seek a different programme identity, but rather additional support mechanisms that help translate existing strengths into a wider range of employment contexts.

The qualitative data therefore do not contradict the high influence scores observed in the survey. Instead, they contextualise them, showing that high perceived influence is strongly associated with academic trajectories, while lower or more variable influence is linked to sectors where the connection between academic training and professional practice is less straightforward. From an employability perspective, the comments and suggestions provide valuable guidance on how the programme could enhance its impact without compromising its core mission.

### **5. Methodological limits and how they shape the strength of conclusions**

The analysis is based on 60 responses, which is substantial for a programme level snapshot but still limited for fine grained subgroup inference. When categories are split by thesis area or by specific job type, counts become small quickly, making percentage comparisons unstable. The influence score is a subjective measure and reflects perception, not an externally verified causal estimate. Despite these limits, the convergence of multiple indicators, especially the dominance of doctoral pathways combined with very high influence scores for research aligned categories, makes the core conclusion robust: IMQP is perceived as highly effective in supporting research continuation and early academic employability.