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Evaluation of the Graduate Talent
Pool Internships Scheme

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1. Executive Summary

The Graduate Talent Pool was launched in July 2009 to improve the long-term employability of recent UK graduates from higher education, offering the graduates enhanced access to internship vacancies available from UK employers across a range of employment sectors.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate graduates' experiences of the Graduate Talent Pool (GTP) and associated internships, in terms of developing their employability skills and assisting their transition to long-term employment.

The information collected within an online survey conducted in March 2010 and subsequent interviews provide an understanding of graduates' participation in the Graduate Talent Pool (GTP), their experiences and a measure of its impact. Particular emphasis was placed on the experiences of those who undertook internships through the scheme. The research took place with those who registered in the first six months of the scheme, during which it was still developing in terms of its coverage of sectors and regions, so respondents were to some extent 'early adopters'.

Progress within the Graduate Talent Pool

- Overall, 22% of respondents secured and undertook an internship, which would suggest up to c.1440 actual internships were undertaken by graduates who registered in the first six months of the GTP scheme.
- Just under two fifths of respondents applied for internships but were not successful. They reported receiving little feedback from employers but perceived there was strong competition for internships and that employers could therefore differentiate on grounds such as relevant work experience, despite the aim of the scheme being to provide such experience, as well as other criteria.
- A further two fifths of respondents had registered with the scheme but did not apply for any internship vacancies through it. They had either not found vacancies to match their needs (by sector mainly, but also location, both of which could have been limitations of the range at this early stage of the GTP) or had obtained work in other ways, as most were using multiple channels to apply for long-term work or internships.

Outcomes and experiences for graduates who obtained internships

- The vast majority of respondents who undertook an internship through the scheme had a very positive experience and believed that they had gained substantially from it in terms of employability and skill development.
- Their principal aim had been to gain working experience which they could

evidence in future job applications, either generally or as part of a specific experience portfolio, and this seems to have been achieved.

- In-depth interviews revealed that many felt exceptionally positive after their internships, reporting dramatic rises in self-confidence and outlook.
- Many saw the experience as their first step along the road to their career, which they might not have taken without the kick-start of securing the internship.
- Around a third of those who had completed internships gained long-term employment with their internship employer, and not only those who had been in paid posts; by extrapolation from the survey results, of the c.1440 internships that took place by time of survey this would equate to c.480 graduates.
- A significant number of others reported that the experience had already helped them gain long-term work with other employers, even in the relatively short time after their internship, suggesting that they were now more readily employable.
- Most interns received training and reported substantial development of many employability-related skills, particularly some of the commercially-related skills most in demand by employers.
- Over 80% of interns (whether paid or unpaid) would recommend the experience and scheme to others; fewer than 10% reported negative experiences.

Nature of the work and remuneration

- Although many respondents would like to have seen all vacancies paid, issues relating to the presence of around one third of the internships available being unpaid were of much lower significance than recent press reports would suggest.
- Many graduates adopted a strategy of applying for unpaid or paid posts where they were close to parental home, but would only apply for paid positions, and of longer duration, if they involved relocation.
- The unpaid posts were mostly either in sectors where there has traditionally been strong graduate competition (such the media, arts or fashion) or within charities; in the latter support, training and development could be very strong.
- The type of work undertaken was almost universally appropriate for graduates, although the environment and structure varied widely. In a few cases it was discrete project work carried out remotely from the employer.
- Most internships were of either 3 or 6 months duration; some were part-time positions and a minority required working from home, but in all cases the interns appreciated the experience for their CV.

Limited benefits for those who did not undertake internships

- The positive outlook and attitudes now held by the interns contrasted sharply with some of the personal situations related by graduates who had not been successful in obtaining internships.
- Despite multiple applications to the GTP scheme, in parallel with other job

searching, lack of forward progress left several of them depressed about their futures, although some were taking alternative, pragmatic career pathways as a result.

- Nonetheless, a significant proportion (30%) of 'unsuccessful' applicants reported some positive outcome from participation in the scheme, believing the process had given them additional confidence for future employment applications.
- Two thirds of 'unsuccessful' applicants continued to think positively about the scheme, and many would recommend it to others, even though it had not worked optimally for them personally.

Who was participating?

- Overwhelmingly the Graduate Talent Pool participants were 2008 or 2009 graduates of UK domicile, who were either unemployed or in temporary work when they registered, i.e. the target group for the scheme at that time.
- The majority were seeking experiences of work to bolster their CVs, rather than using an internship as a 'foot in the door' to a particular employer; this also reflects the stated objectives of the scheme.
- Participants tended to be rather high achievers academically; two thirds of them had 'good' (1st and 2.1) degrees and many had studied at Russell Group and similar universities. In terms of degree subject, proportionally rather fewer were in the STEM disciplines than of the national graduating cohort.
- Many had very limited or no formal work experience, and possibly lower levels of work experience than average for graduates within the national cohort, although comparative evidence is rather unspecific about the nature of the work experiences undertaken by students and graduates.
- If the scheme had been expected mainly to cater for 'weaker' graduates, that did not seem to be the reality at this stage at least, as the profile of participants largely matched that of the 'stronger' graduates who might normally be the targets for graduate recruiters. Whether these strong graduates were simply 'early adopters' of the scheme, or whether this was simply a temporary but direct function of a very weak graduate employment market, is unclear and this will benefit from further monitoring.
- The scheme seems to have strong appeal to ethnic minority graduates, who were considerably over-represented in relation to their proportion within the HE cohort.

Profile of successful applicants

- Although graduates' decisions whether to make internship applications or not seemed not to vary with measures of graduate academic 'quality', those with higher degree classes and from Russell Group type institutions were more successful in their applications. This might suggest the employers were applying the same recruitment strategies and criteria in selecting from internship applicants

as they use in their full graduate employment processes.

- The extent of structured work experience already undertaken by graduates did seem to be taken into account by employers during selection.
- These findings reinforce the impression that the scheme, at this time, was supporting many relatively higher 'quality' graduates, rather than those with weaker backgrounds who might need it even more.
- There was some evidence that applicants of ethnic minority background were less successful as applicants, which may merit further and deeper study.
- No genuine measures of 'application quality' were attempted, but participants varied widely in the effort and number of applications made; possibly the very number of vacancies listed on the site encouraged a higher quantity of applications, made online, conceivably at the expense of the quality of those applications.

Perceptions of the scheme and the vacancies offered

- There was consistent feedback that the GTP scheme offered a better range of vacancies than any other internship website or scheme, and represented certain sectors (including the arts, cultural and creative posts, and the public sector) better than any other multi-sector scheme.
- Those not making applications chiefly chose not to because there were few vacancies in their desired employment sector, and to a lesser extent their desired location; an early predominance of employers in London and the South East was noticeable and may correlate with a greater participation by graduates based in those regions. These trends may well change as the scheme matures.
- Many interns were full of gratitude for the scheme, while in contrast a number of others bemoaned the presence of unpaid vacancies in particular; many felt it unfair that (they thought) employers demanded experience, which the scheme was designed to provide, and treated applicants somewhat harshly in not making personalised responses to unsuccessful applications (or giving no response at all).

Overall impact

- From registration with the scheme to time of survey, the proportion unemployed fell from 52% to around 22% for both those who had completed internships and for unsuccessful applicants (who presumably had more time meanwhile to make job applications, but had missed out on the positive internship experiences).
- Of those registrants who obtained an internship, long-term employment was secured directly or rapidly afterwards by around 40%. Roughly a third of those who had completed an internship were offered a long-term job by the internship employer.
- Over 90% of interns felt more employable and the majority reported significant

development of the sort of skills demanded by employers, some of which it has been established that HE does not readily provide.

- Beyond those individual outcomes, it is hard to differentiate the unique benefit of this particular scheme for some participants as many were making use of several parallel channels in their efforts to obtain employment including internships.
- The extremely positive comments made by respondents and interviewees provide strong supporting evidence that the experiences were positive for large numbers of participants, and that they felt the scheme had clearly benefited them.

Recommendations and further research options

- The scheme has helped many graduates improve their long-term employability, and directly assisted some into sustained employment; on this basis it is recommended that the scheme continues to support graduate employability development.
- Almost all the interns, and many who had not been successful, expressed support for continuation of the scheme.
- In order to extend the potential benefit to graduates more widely, a greater spread and balance of internship vacancies geographically would be beneficial (which may in part have ensued already, since survey, as the scheme has evolved).
- In parallel, continued widening of the scheme in terms of employment sectors and employer types would be beneficial to maximise opportunities for graduates.
- Continued and targeted promotion of the scheme across the entire range of HE institutions could further broaden the range of participants.
- The website was praised by the vast majority of participants but some further development would be welcomed by some, in particular more sophisticated vacancy search functionality, such as the ability to search for vacancies by geographical distance from location, or by 'fuzzy' search where a sector or subject does not have to be exactly specified, or Boolean searching (combining terms with "and", "or", "not").
- More applicant support material, and potentially information in terms of expectation management (i.e. success rate trends), could be provided on the website, given the current high level of competition for vacancies. The apparent trend for some graduates to make large numbers of, quite possibly sub-optimal, applications, could be countered with more advice on how to make strong applications. Publication of more case studies demonstrating the variety of applicant types and career strategies used by graduates in the scheme could also be useful.
- The timing of the survey in relation to many graduates' registration with the scheme may have contributed to the similarity of the proportions of graduates who had recently completed an internship who were now unemployed and those who had not undertaken an internship and were still unemployed. This issue

merits further investigation, which could be addressed through longitudinal research to track graduates who had obtained internships, and some who had not, into employment, which could also reveal the comparative 'quality' of the jobs they secured. It would be valuable to re-survey GTP participants periodically as the scheme develops, potentially leaving more time between graduates' registration and survey, to assess more fully how many have gained employment after completing their internships.

- At this early stage of operation of the GTP, conducted during the economic downturn, the scheme seems to have been taken up by many 'mainstream' graduates, as opposed, perhaps, to types of graduate who might need it most. The research was not able to distinguish fully the range of types of graduate whom it will particularly serve well in future, when economic conditions change. Further research into the value of the GTP for different types of graduates, such as those of ethnic minority origin, from different regions, or for specific degree subjects, and how this relates to different employment sectors, could be very valuable once larger samples are available for study.
- Understanding better for whom the GTP provides particular support, as it develops, will be valuable in determining its long-term positioning. It appears to present a very sustainable model of internship promotion, and thereby employability and skill development, potentially at a lower ongoing cost than some of the work placement or internship schemes supported by HE. Research across these different schemes, into their respective values and the types of student or graduate they each support best, will determine their respective merits and potential positions.

2. Introduction: The Graduate Talent Pool in Context

2.1 Work experience and higher education

Work-based learning has long been a feature of UK higher education (HE) and planned periods of industrial placement can be traced back to recommendations made for engineering undergraduate courses in the 1950s (Harvey and Little, 2006). What we now think of as work experience for HE students exists principally in two forms, between which there are some conceptual differences:

- A *work experience placement* is a specific period of work experience related to the participant's course of study, organised either by the educational institution or the individual, and which may be paid or unpaid. The purpose is the gain of skills by the participant, particularly relating to their potential employability, and this may be assessed.
- An *internship* was considered, originally, as a sponsored trial by an employer of the 'work readiness' of a potential employee. Within the USA, this remains the primary mechanism used by major 'graduate employers' to recruit graduates, unlike in the UK although here too this is a growing trend. However, the term *internship* is increasingly used, particularly by employers, for any temporary work placement, especially for HE students and graduates. This is perhaps partly to distinguish such placements from the statutory work experience undertaken by school-age pupils. Equally, the 'sponsoring' aspect could be seen to be altering, as a significant number of current internships are unpaid.

2.1.1 The value of work experience

Although the distinction between these types of work experience seems increasingly to be blurred, there is almost universal acceptance of its value. The 'Dearing Report' in 1997 recommended that all HE students should have some form of work experience before they graduate. This was in part a response to employer reports that many graduates leave university with little understanding of the world of work. The Lambert Review (2003) subsequently observed: "*work experience was universally regarded as an important way of developing employability skills and business awareness*".

The high value of work experience to the HE student or graduate has been widely recognised in terms of improving employability in a competitive graduate labour market. From the graduate's point of view, the need for employability was placed at the heart of

the previous government's 'Higher Level Skills Strategy' (DIUS 2008), which stated that an individual's employability provided the best possible foundation for their future prosperity in a changing economy. However, the value of work experience in relation to career understanding and development is also becoming known. In its own research, CRAC (2007) found that engineering students considered work experience to be the most important external influence upon them when considering their career.

The ability to demonstrate development of graduate employability is increasingly seen as a significant potential differentiator between HE institutions, not least in their efforts to attract both UK and overseas students. The current Universities and Science Minister, David Willetts MP, has asked HEIs to provide public statements on what they do to promote employability, to encourage them to improve the job-readiness of their students and to do better at getting their students into internships, work experience and work (Willetts 2010). Increasingly the employment outcomes associated with particular courses or institutions are seen to be important to prospective students.

Business and industry also attest to the value of work experience. The CBI Higher Education Taskforce (CBI 2009) has stated that *"to ensure all graduates have employability skills, all businesses should provide work experience, internship and live project opportunities for school and university students"*.

There is an additional dimension to the value of work experience in relation to social mobility. The previous government's response to Alan Milburn MP's 'Fair Access to the Professions' panel enquiry (BIS 2010a) included several specific recommendations in relation to internships and work experience, reflecting the Panel's belief that work experience and tasters in a professional setting could help a wider variety of young people to aspire to professional careers, and that internships could be key to them securing a professional job. Although the Panel had principally considered work placements for young people prior to higher education, the recommendations included the establishment of a fair and transparent system of recruitment of students by employers into internships, if necessary backed by legislation.

The potential value of work experience, within an internship or work placement, seems then to be almost universally recognised. However, its benefit at the current time is enhanced by a number of environmental and other factors.

2.2 The current context for work experience

2.2.1 Reduction of sandwich courses

There is a perception that sandwich courses are in decline (BIS 2009a) and, although there is rather mixed statistical evidence, it seems that a decreasing proportion of undergraduates are undertaking work experience by this route. This is most likely due to

students being increasingly concerned to complete their degrees more quickly in the face of rising annual costs to them, and therefore preferring course of shorter duration. Any future rise in the costs of higher education for students would most likely have a further impact on the numbers undertaking work experience by this route, if prospective students continue to feel under pressure to limit their financial outgoings.

2.2.2 Recession, economic growth and employer demand

The Government's '*A strategy for sustainable growth*' (BIS 2010b) recognised that a highly educated and skilled workforce is an essential component of the UK's economic growth potential. Current concerns are expressed that recovery from recession in the jobs market may be slowing and that skills gaps in the workforce could restrict the ability of companies to take advantage of the economic upturn. Under the previous government, a series of policy documents, including *Innovation Nation* (DIUS 2008a) and *Building Britain's Future – New Industry, New Jobs* (BIS 2009b), underlined the importance of continuing to maintain and develop the pipeline of high-level skills in driving forward a modern economy for the UK, of which graduate skills were a key part.

In its most recent Education and Skills survey, the CBI reported that 81% of employers believed ensuring graduates possess sufficient employability skills should be a priority for higher education (CBI 2010). While employers were generally more satisfied with the employability of graduates, than of school or college leavers, they felt significant problems remained, indicating some mismatch between their expectations and the skills gained by UK graduates during HE. In particular, significant proportions were dissatisfied with the level of customer- and commercially-related skills.

The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE 2008) has identified the biggest 'satisfaction gaps' of this kind to be in commercial awareness, analysis and decision-making, and in communications. Such skills mismatches are not limited to the UK. In 2005, research underpinning the European Framework for Work Experience reported differences between the expectations of employers across Europe and the reality of their experience in respect of graduates' skills. Problem-solving, communication and customer awareness were identified as areas of weakness in graduates' skill-sets in every country (EFWE 2005). The opportunity to build employability skills of this nature, through work experience schemes, was thought to be highly beneficial in finding employment in a globalised labour market.

2.2.3 The current and ongoing needs of graduates

The most recently published *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education* survey (HESA 2010a) reported the unemployment rate amongst (2008/2009 cohort) graduates six months after graduation to have risen by 2% over the previous cohort. In terms of student perceptions, in the recent High Fliers 2010 research report up to 45% of

students believed their job prospects were very limited, reflecting a decrease of 18% in graduate vacancies amongst leading graduate employers and a wider decrease of 25% amongst a wider spectrum of graduate employers (High Fliers Research 2010). These trends have been confirmed by the Association of Graduate Recruiters which considers that the state of the 'graduate market' remains weak and is the most challenging for graduates for many years (AGR 2010).

The challenging environment for graduates entering the labour market is a combination of a reduction in job opportunities due to the recession and economic slowdown, set against a rising number of graduates qualifying after several years of HE student population growth. In addition, the rising concerns amongst students of their financial indebtedness add further pressure. The combination of these factors has led to the term 'generation crunch', coined by CfE for the current cohorts of graduates (CfE 2010).

2.3 The Graduate Talent Pool

Providing work experience has been a part of both the previous and current governments' initiatives to create employment, improve workforce skills and boost economic competitiveness. In July 2009 the previous government launched the "Backing Young Britain" campaign, in which Ministers announced £40 million to fund over 20,000 additional internships. Prior policy documents, such as *Innovation Nation* (DIUS 2008a) and *Building Britain's Future – New Industry, New Jobs* (BIS 2009b) had underlined the government's recognition of the importance of high-level skills in driving forward a modern economy for the UK. Maintaining the flow in the pipeline of graduate talent entering key sectors of the UK labour force was seen to be critical.

The Office for Graduate Opportunities (OGO) was set up by the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2009 to provide a range of services to assist graduates in the face of the global economic downturn. Its aim, in partnership with the Department of Work & Pensions, university careers services and others, was to maximise the chances of the 2009 cohort of graduates either to find work or take up other opportunities – including internships – to build their employability skills.

The Graduate Talent Pool (GTP) was a specific OGO policy to help 2008 and 2009 graduates who were entering the labour market during the recession by enabling them to gain work experience through internships. For graduates, the intention was to provide a national scheme (principally for England) to make finding, applying for and starting an internship as easy as possible, through a 'one-stop shop' entry-point with a dedicated website on the Government's *direct.gov* web platform. The website would essentially provide a national matching service, connecting employers with internship vacancies to relevant graduates seeking an internship.

The initiative aimed to help employers to create, offer and promote graduate internships, to add to those internship programmes and websites which already existed. It was believed that creating new and additional internships could offer participating employers a new injection of talent into the workplace at relatively low cost, in addition to helping graduates kick-start their careers.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Research

The principal aim of the research was to evaluate graduates' experiences of the Graduate Talent Pool (GTP) and associated internships, in terms of developing their employability skills and assisting them to gain long-term employment. The research was conducted in parallel with a separate research study with participating employers, and taken together the studies should help BIS to develop an understanding of the overall value of the initiative.

In meeting the principal research aim, there were two main research objectives:

- To assess the experiences of those who gained an internship through the Graduate Talent Pool and its impact on them so far, including whether they had gained long-term employment with the employer providing the internship or another employer, and a measure of their gain in employability-related skills;
- To assess the experiences of those who registered with the Graduate Talent Pool but did not take up an internship, for whatever reason, and to understand those reasons.

This meant seeking to evaluate the impact that participation in the initiative had played in the development of the graduates' skills and employability, for both groups. In addition, for both groups, specific outcomes which resulted from the experience – such as gain of employment, taking up new education or training or making other career-related decisions – would be assessed.

The Graduate Talent Pool was one of a number of current initiatives involving work experience which were introduced in support of graduates and also employers in the economic downturn and recession. HEFCE, in particular, has funded a series of schemes in HE institutions with the aim of increasing the number of internships and work placements available to students and graduates. These included a graduate internships scheme focused on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and employers within certain target economic sectors (particularly those identified in BIS, 2009b). It has also stated aspirations to widen the range of students participating in internships, in support of an agenda for increased social mobility.

For those internship schemes, HEFCE has adopted a “supported” model, where the HE institution plays a role in selecting the student or graduate, and matching them to employer, as well as providing some ongoing support. The Graduate Talent Pool, on the

other hand, can be considered to be more “market-based”, where graduates and employers interact without specific HEI support. Although this study only aims to address graduates’ experiences of the Graduate Talent Pool, it is hoped that the information obtained will also contribute to any future comparison of differing models of operation of internship schemes. Between the two models of scheme, and possibly others, there may well be resultant differences in both the types of graduate participant and their experiences of the internship opportunities available, which would contribute to some indication of their respective merits in meeting the broad goal of increasing the employment and employability of graduates.

4. Methodology and Samples

The experiences of graduates participating in the Graduate Talent Pool were investigated using a mixed method which combined two approaches: a quantitative survey of graduates who had registered with the Graduate Talent Pool, and a series of telephone interviews with selected participants to provide in-depth understanding and to generate case studies.

4.1 Online survey methodology

In order to obtain information on the experiences of a sample of graduates who had participated in the Graduate Talent Pool (GTP), a quantitative online survey was devised. A single online questionnaire was created to collect responses from the graduates, designed to accommodate responses irrespective of the extent of graduates' progress within the scheme or their outcomes. In addition to closed questions, a number of open-ended questions were included to invite free-text comments on particular issues.

The questionnaire was tested using a single phase of cognitive piloting with a selection of graduates registered with the GTP, prior to launch. The maximum number of questions that could be answered was 26, and testing showed that graduates took 10-20 minutes to complete the questions. The survey was launched on 8 March 2010 and remained open for responses until 28 March 2010. The questions are reproduced in Appendix B.

E-mails were sent to graduates inviting participation in the research, via a hyperlink to the online survey site, offering a prize draw as an incentive. These were issued to the database of graduates who had registered with the Graduate Talent Pool from its launch in July 2009 until 31 December 2009, which comprised 6668 registrants. A similar e-mail invitation was sent to a much smaller number of graduates (<100), identified during separate research by BMG with employers participating in the scheme, who had agreed to be contacted. The majority of these were within the registrants database (but about 20 were not¹). Two repeat e-mails were issued to the database of registrants during the survey period.

It was decided to restrict the research to those graduates who had registered during the first six months of operation of the scheme (i.e. July to December 2009 inclusive). E-

¹ During the early operation of the scheme, it was not compulsory to register, hence the involvement of some graduate participants who were not on the registration database. Registration was made compulsory soon after launch in July 2009.

mail contact data was available for a further c.9000 graduates who had registered with the scheme after 31 December 2009, but these were excluded. Although restricting the research to the smaller number of 'early' registrants was likely to result in a smaller number of responses than could be achieved if all available registrants were contacted, two benefits were expected. First, more time had ensued for the 'early' (2009) registrants, so there was more chance that they would have secured an outcome from the scheme by the time of survey in March 2010. Secondly, it was felt that there would be benefit in a more tightly constrained evaluation of a defined period of operation of the scheme, albeit its first six months or so, than an evaluation at larger scale across a longer time period during which the scheme was evolving significantly and which included graduates who would have had little time to participate or progress.

4.2 Online survey responses

In total, 668 responses were received to the online survey, just over 10% of the 6668 graduates who had registered with the GTP scheme before 31 December 2009. From e-mail system data, it was known that roughly 25% of the graduates receiving the e-mail had opened it, from which it can be estimated that the 'click through' rate to participation in the survey was approximately 40% of those who opened the e-mail.

Of the 668 total, responses from those who had not completed the survey were removed (most of whom had answered only early sections), as were 3 duplicate entries and 1 by a parent on behalf of a graduate. This left a dataset of 579 complete responses as the final sample on which analysis was conducted, the findings of which are presented in this report.

The size of this 'final' sample, in comparison with the total graduate registrants sampled, leads to a confidence interval of around 3% at 95% confidence level (i.e. 95% of cases should fall within a c.3% 'error bar' for a particular data point).

During the early stage of operation of the GTP scheme (July-December 2009), the only information collected about graduates when they registered on the GTP website was their e-mail address, along with the date of registration. The earliest registrants had registered on 28 July 2009. Analysis of the dates of registration for the 6668 registered graduates showed that the majority (77%) registered in the months of August, September and October (2009), with fewer in November and December. Applying the same analysis to the survey respondents showed that 72% of them had registered in that period of August-October. This gives some indication that the final survey respondents were broadly representative of graduates in the scheme in terms of when they registered (i.e. there was no particular bias towards a particular registration period). The analysis of registration dates also demonstrates that, at the time of survey, more than five months had elapsed since registration for over 80% of the respondents, which should have been sufficient time for them to have participated within the scheme and for

outcomes to have become evident. As such, the survey should present a reasonable 'snapshot' of the experiences of this early cohort of GTP registrants. A comparison of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and consideration of how those relate to respective characteristics of the relevant national student cohort, is provided in Chapter 5.

4.3 In-depth interviews

To understand the personal circumstances and experiences of graduates participating in the scheme more fully, a semi-structured interview was devised. Twenty interviews were carried out by telephone with graduates who had obtained and undertaken internships, selected from respondents to the online survey who had indicated that they would be prepared to undertake an interview. When selecting graduates from this subset of potential interviewees, the choice was not random as it was felt beneficial to include a range of graduates in relation to gender, ethnicity, degree subject and employment sector. A further five graduates who had not obtained an internship were also interviewed, using a modified interview structure, also selected from survey respondents. The interviews were conducted over a period of 10 days, just under two months after the survey.

All interviews were conducted by telephone, partly for logistical reasons, not least the short timeframe for this aspect of the project, impacted by the General Election. At the time of selection the potential interviewees had only provided their e-mail address and telephone number (mostly mobile), so there was no information on their current location. As a result it could have been very time-consuming to attempt to set up and conduct face-to-face interviews; telephone interviews presented a much more efficient mechanism to obtain the desired in-depth information in the time available.

4.4 Data presentation

Data from the online survey are presented in the remainder of this report in tabular and graphical format, together with sample response sizes (N) and descriptions. The 'final' overall sample was selected to be all those who had completed the survey questionnaire, having removed duplicates ($N=579$). All data are unweighted.

Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, the totals of a column or row in a table may not sum to 100%. Any percentage figures below 1% are shown as *%.

Data from the in-depth interviews are mostly presented as corroborative information and/or observations to support and deepen understanding of the online survey data, including some verbatim quotations. Nine short case studies are interspersed within the report as illustrative examples of graduate experiences, to illuminate the findings.

5. Research Results

5.1 Respondent characteristics

5.1.1 Demographic information

A summary of basic demographic characteristics of the respondents is given in Table 1, with corresponding figures for 2008/09 full-time undergraduates in higher education in the UK, for comparison (HESA 2010b).

The respondents were almost exactly evenly split by gender, with 50.4% female, and 31% identified themselves to be of ethnic minority origin. A full breakdown of respondents by ethnicity is given in Appendix A, Table A1. Four per cent of respondents stated that they had a disability of some kind. The mean age of all respondents was 24.3 years, with the majority of age 22 or 23 years but 7% over 30 years of age. This is very much the age range that would be expected for those graduating in 2008 and 2009, i.e. the graduates to whom the scheme was targeted.

By domicile, 89% were UK nationals, of whom 93% were from England (equivalent to 83% overall). There were respondents from all the regions of England but 46% of the UK nationals were from the London and South East regions (42% overall). Respondents from outside the UK were from 31 different countries; 5% overall were from EU countries and 6% from non-EU countries (especially India and Pakistan). A breakdown of all respondent domiciles, including by English regions, is given in Appendix A, Table A2.

	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>	<i>% of UK cohort*</i>
Gender: female	579	50	56
Ethnicity: minorities	563	31	21
Nationality: UK	579	89	82
Domicile: England	579	83	90
Home region: London & SE	579	41	Unknown

*UK cohort refers to 2008/09 data from HESA (2010b)

5.1.2 Higher education information

In terms of their highest qualification type, 77% of respondents had Bachelor-level degrees and 20% higher-level qualifications (which were almost entirely at Masters level). Three quarters (75%) had graduated in 2009, 19% in 2008 and 6% prior to 2008. By degree class, 67% obtained a 1st class or 2.1 degree, 18% obtained a 2.2 and 15% other classes.

Respondents indicated their degree discipline using free-text responses, which were then coded to JACS Subject Groups. Due to the relatively small sample size, these were then grouped into very broad subject groupings for comparative purposes as shown in Table 2. Using this broad categorisation, 42% had studied social- or business-related subjects, 30% STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects, and 28% arts, humanities or creative subjects. At the JACS Subject Group level, the two most 'popular' categories were Business & Administrative (18%) and Social Studies (12%) courses. A full breakdown of respondents' degree subjects by JACS Subject Group is provided in Appendix A, Table A3.

Table 2. Qualification information and institution type (all respondents)			
	Number of respondents	% of respondents	% of UK cohort*
Degree class:	577		
1 st & 2.1		67	62
2.2		18	28
other		15	12
HEI type:	579		
Russell Group		34	21
Other UK HEI		63	79
non-UK		3	-
Subject grouping:	579		
STEM		30	42
business & social		42	36
arts/creative/humanities		28	22

*UK cohort' refers to 2008/09 data from HESA (2010b)

Table 2 also summarises information on the type of institution where the graduates undertook their degree. A full list of the 121 different UK higher education institutions (HEIs) from which they graduated, and the number of respondents from each, is presented in Appendix A, Table A5. For simplicity, in Table 2 these institutions have been grouped into Russell Group, other UK HEIs and non-UK HEIs. This reveals that 34% of respondents had studied at Russell Group institutions, 63% at other UK HE institutions and 3% at HE institutions outside the UK.

The individual institutions from which the highest number of respondents came were the universities of Manchester (21 respondents), Leeds and Nottingham (20 each). Nine of

the top 12 institutions by respondent number were Russell Group institutions, and these nine comprised 29% of respondents.

For comparative purposes, Table 2 includes corresponding percentages for full-time undergraduates in the UK in 2008/09, except for degree classes which are extracted from classified first degree qualifiers in 2008/09 (both from HESA, 2010b).

5.1.3 Observations

Other than apparent good representation of their date of registration (section 4.2), there is no independent evidence for how representative the sample obtained of survey respondents is of the population of GTP participants. However, based on this and the confidence interval (3%), it seems reasonable to suggest that the survey respondents are roughly representative of all those who registered with the GTP scheme. With that assumption, the following observations can be made about scheme participants (i.e. those who registered on the GTP website in July-December 2009):

- Female graduates were somewhat less prevalent than in the overall graduating population (50% compared with 56%);
- A significantly higher proportion of GTP participants were of ethnic minority status than in recent higher education cohorts (31% compared with 21%);
- A higher proportion were UK nationals (89%) than in the overall cohort (82%), perhaps unsurprisingly given the stated targeting (on the website) of the scheme to UK and EEA graduates. Although some graduates came from all English regions, London and the South East were particularly strongly represented;
- Two-thirds of GTP participants achieved first or upper second class degrees, a slightly higher proportion than overall (62% of qualifiers in 2008/09);
- Over a third had graduated from Russell Group universities (in comparison with c.21% of concurrent first degree graduates overall);
- Somewhat higher proportions of the GTP respondents had studied social/business courses and arts/humanities, and fewer had studied STEM subjects, than overall.

Taken together, these comparisons seem to indicate that GTP participants were relatively high achievers academically, many of whom had studied at the Russell Group universities typically targeted by employers attempting to recruit 'good' graduates. There was some bias towards those with degree subjects other than in STEM disciplines, which could reflect a greater confidence by STEM graduates of their potential chances in the graduate labour market. Ethnic minority graduates were particularly highly represented in the scheme.

Although the GTP scheme was not overtly launched to support 'weaker' graduates in terms of their academic attainment, the scheme (at least in this early period studied)

seems to have been taken up by many relatively 'strong' graduates, academically, rather than by mainly middle-ranking or weaker students that might have been expected to participate. These academically 'strong' graduates would seem to represent the very type conventionally targeted by major employers recruiting graduates. Their abundance within the scheme could either reflect particularly difficult conditions for graduate recruitment, or that they more quickly recognised and acted upon the opportunity that the scheme presented (i.e. they could be the 'early adopters'), or that they were relatively deficient in their experiences of work. The latter is considered in the next section of results.

Case study: Vinod, London

Vinod graduated in 2008 with a 2.1 from Nottingham University in economics and had been unemployed since, although with periods spent travelling and tutoring students. He had no experience in his desired vocation of financial services, and had got nowhere with applications for either graduate schemes or recruitment agencies. He felt he was at a massive disadvantage having no relevant work experience.

His 3 applications through GTP were all for paid roles in London, so that he could live at home. After a formal interview and competency test, he secured a 9-month post with Ofsted, paid on a regular grade at £23K. His work was on civil servant remuneration packages and to implement a software system update. As well as initial workplace and specific training, he asked for formal project management training, which he undertook during the evenings.

When interviewed, Vinod reflected that his communication and negotiation skills improved markedly at Ofsted, and that his formal project training would look good on his CV. Meanwhile his contract had been extended, he had started a CIMA qualification in his spare time and his confidence and perceived employability rose to such an extent that he began to look beyond the employer for even bigger roles.

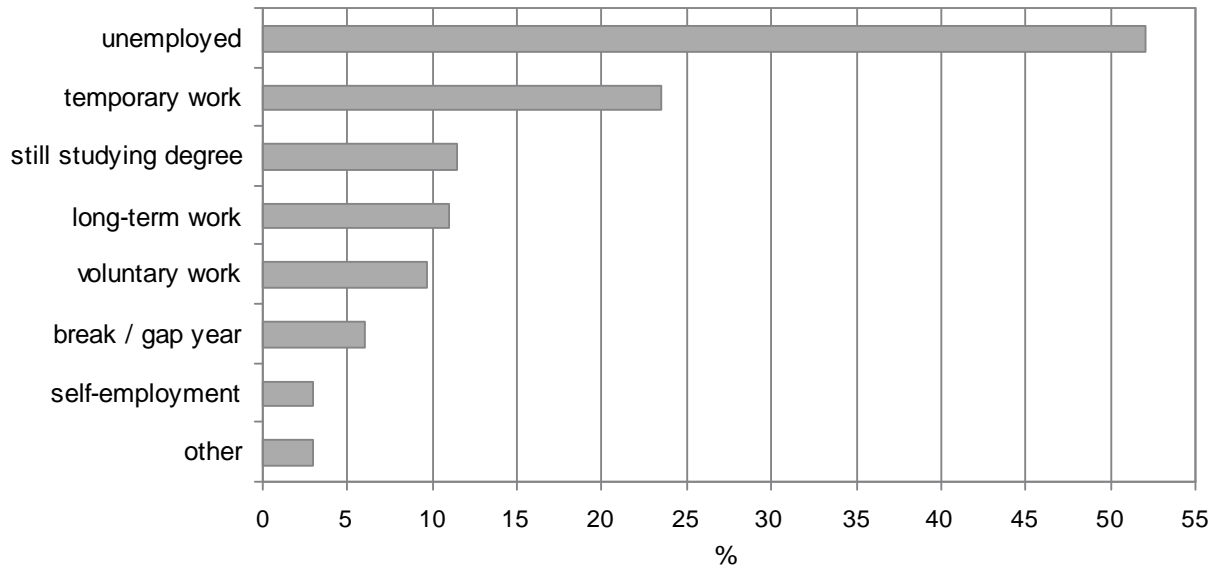
5.2 Why they joined the Graduate Talent Pool

5.2.1 Survey response data

Respondents were asked about their employment circumstances at the point they had registered with the scheme; their responses are illustrated in Figure 1. From this it can be seen that 52% considered themselves to be unemployed, 24% in temporary work, 11% in long-term work and 10% undertaking voluntary work. Just over a tenth had still been studying for their degree at that time while 6% were

taking a break such as a gap year (note that multiple responses were permitted, so percentages in Figure 1 sum to over 100).

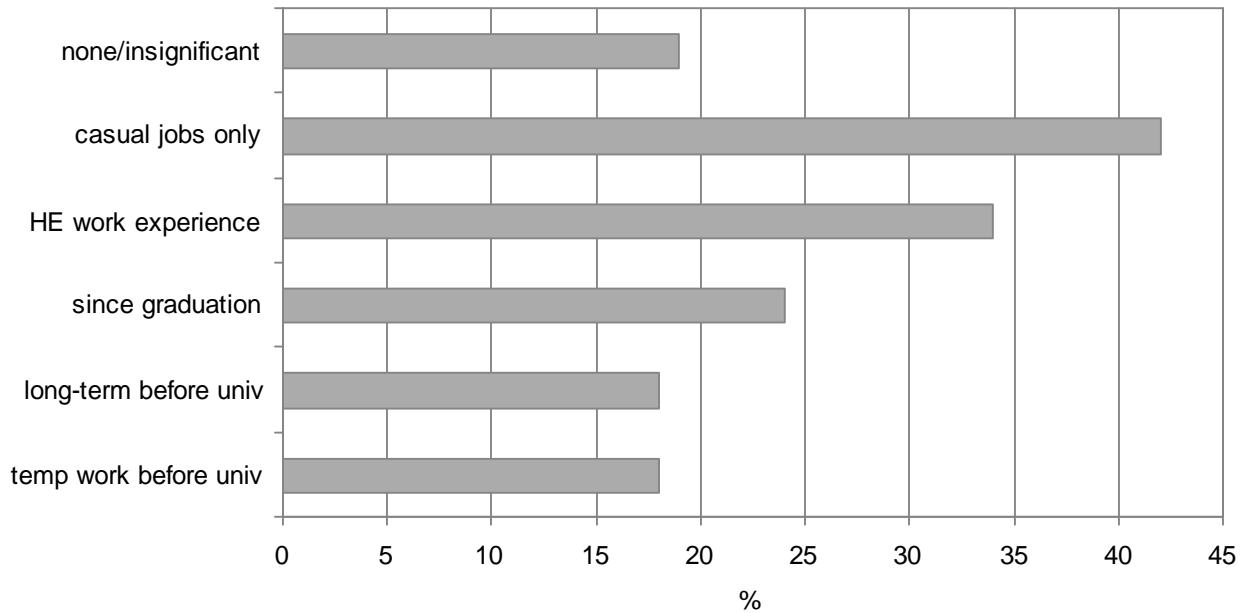
Figure 1. Employment circumstances at registration (all respondents; N=579)



The majority had already started looking (81%) or applying (74%) for long-term employment when they registered, while 57% were also looking for (and 49% had applied for) short-term or temporary employment. However, at this point fewer than 4% had been offered a job relating to their long-term career plans.

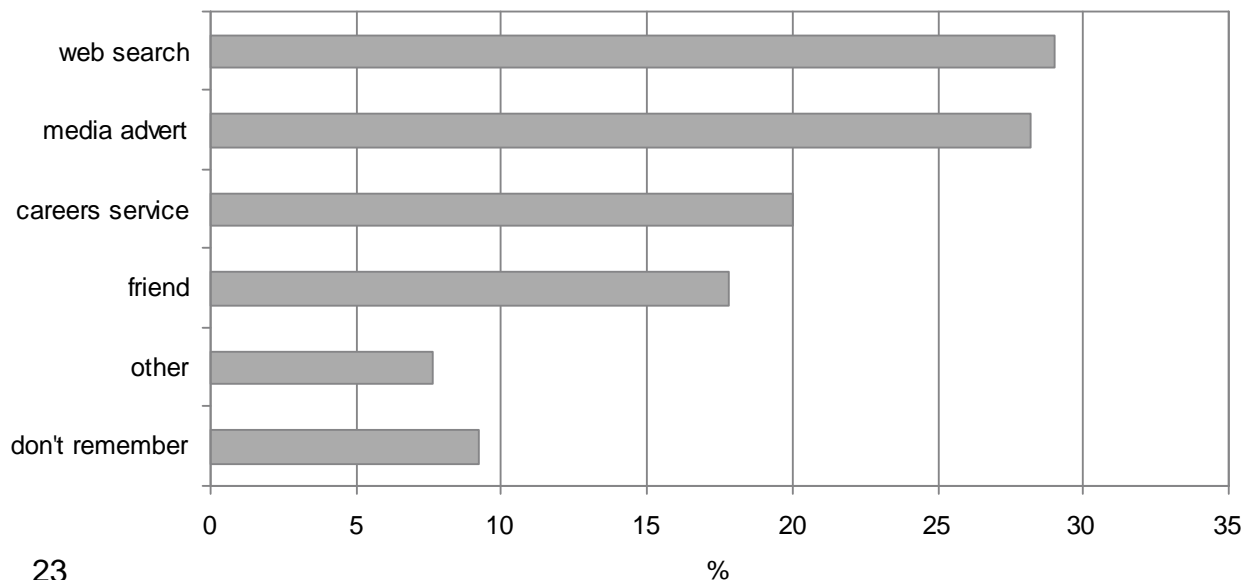
In order to provide an understanding of the extent of their experiences of work, they were asked to indicate their working experience before, during and since university (Figure 2). One fifth (20%) had worked long-term prior to university and 18% short-term. During university, 34% had undertaken periods of work experience. Since graduating, 24% had undertaken some kind of work. In terms of the type of work of which they had experience, 42% had only ever done casual work (such as working in a bar) and 19% had either never worked at all or had not done any work of significance.

Figure 2. Extent of experiences of work (all respondents; N=579; multiple responses allowed)



The mechanisms by which respondents had first been attracted to visit the GTP website are summarised in Figure 3. The most popular means were through personal online searching of the web (29%) and through media advertising (28%). One fifth (20%) had been referred to the GTP site on recommendation of their university careers service and 18% had been recommended by a friend.

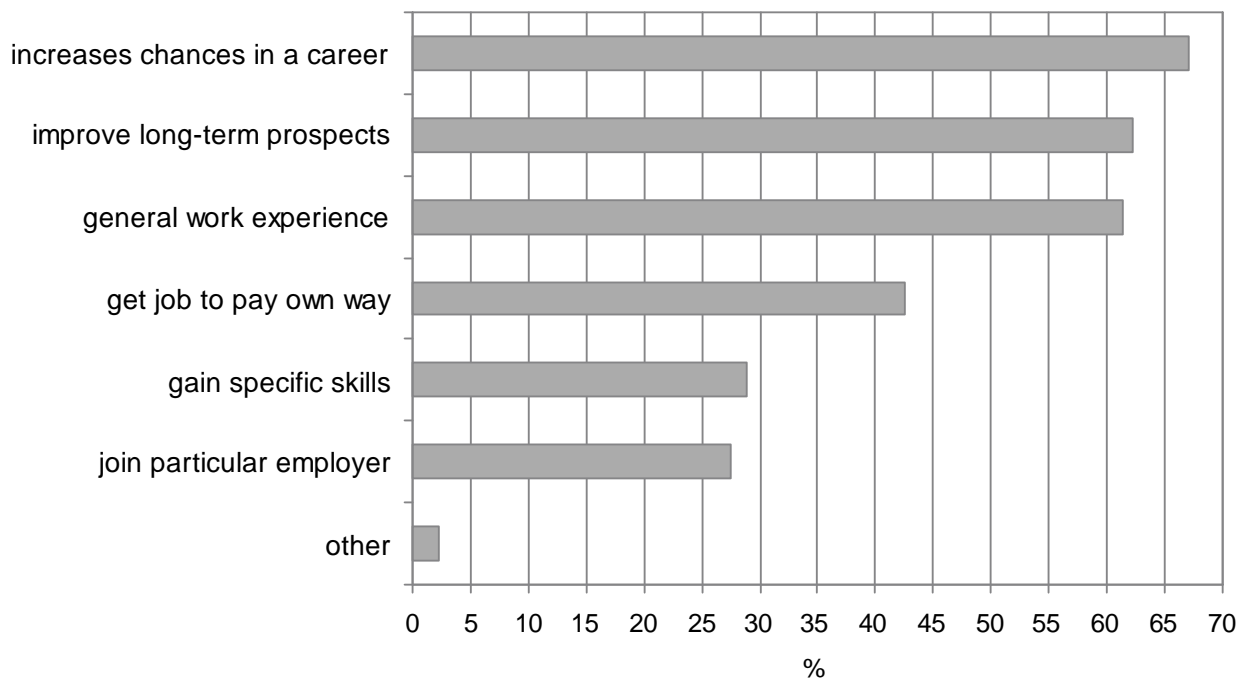
Figure 3. What prompted first visit to the GTP website (all respondents; N=579)



The respondents' aims in participating in the GTP scheme were somewhat varied (Figure 4). Over two thirds (67%) sought to increase their chances of gaining employment in their desired career area, although a much smaller proportion (28%) were aiming to use an internship as a method of joining a specific employer. More generally, 62% wanted to gain experience which would improve their overall career prospects and 61% sought some work experience to make them more employable, while 29% aimed to gain a specific skill through the experience. The simpler desire to get a job to pay their way was cited by 42% as a reason for registering with the Graduate Talent Pool.

From the interviews it also became clear that a minority of graduates were using internship opportunities in a more planned manner, in order to construct a varied set of experiences of different kinds of work as a portfolio.

Figure 4. Aims in registering with the GTP (all respondents; N=579; multiple responses were permitted)



5.2.2 Contextual insights from the interviews

Further insight into graduates' experiences around registration was revealed in the graduate interviews. Most interviewees had been living in their parental home since graduation, although a few had remained in their student towns in order to live with university friends. Most were making large numbers of applications for long-term and temporary jobs. They tended to see an internship as a possible first step on the road

towards long-term employment and a career, although the precise direction of that first step for many of them appeared not to be very important.

Considerable variation was evident in the amount of prior work experience held by the interviewees. Some had undertaken work experience during vacations and other work placements, while others had no substantive experiences at all as they had focused almost entirely on their degree. Uniformly, above all they wanted to gain experience through the GTP scheme, perceiving that working experience was what they lacked and was what employers were demanding (many thought somewhat unreasonably given that they were new graduates). Brief quotations below, extracted from the interviews, give an idea of the context for several individuals.

“Getting work experience during uni didn’t really occur to me. I didn’t know what an internship was. I thought getting a job would be a piece of cake once I had my degree”

“I made 75 job applications across publishing, education, media and retail. I got four interviews.”

“... literally hundreds of job applications for technology jobs, and through recruitment sites and agencies; you rarely even get a personalised reply”

“A lot wanted experience and that [was what] really held me back – I realised I needed experience to get anywhere at all”

5.2.3 Observations

- The various promotional methods employed to market the GTP scheme all seemed to have had some effect, including search engine optimisation and media advertising, although referral by university careers service was nearly as effective (which, interestingly, indicates that at least 25% of these graduates were still in touch with their HEI careers service months after graduation);
- Over half the respondents had been unemployed when they registered with the GTP scheme and the vast majority were seeking long-term jobs (and many seeking short-term or temporary work in parallel as an alternative);
- Only a quarter had found work since graduation;
- A small proportion were already in long-term employment, but presumably saw an internship as a way to gain employment of higher ‘quality’ or in a more attractive career sector (possibly graduates who had accepted earlier, lower quality job offers for financial reasons) – notably only 4% overall said they had job offers relating to their career plans;

- Although 20% had worked prior to university (presumably including mature and part-time students), the majority had little serious work experience, but this varied greatly on an individual basis and some had a full portfolio of relevant experience gained at every opportunity;
- Most were seeking more generic gains from the scheme, i.e. increased employability and/or better career prospects in the long-term, rather than trying to get a 'foot in the door' of a particular employer;
- Overwhelmingly, respondents perceived the key issue to be the gain of working experience, which they currently lacked and they believed employers demanded, even of new graduates.

It would be useful to compare the extent of the experiences of work of the GTP participants against national HE student or graduate figures, to assess whether they were particularly deficient or strong in terms of work experience prior to participation in the scheme. The figure of 34% of respondents with work experience during university seems somewhat lower than anecdotal estimates (perhaps 50%) or higher figures for certain cohorts (e.g. two-thirds of engineers, CRAC, 2007). Data within the *Futuretrack* research study suggests around 70% of students undertake some paid employment during their university years, and perhaps half of these during vacations, but does not distinguish whether this is structured work experience or casual employment (HECSU, 2009). The Student Income & Expenditure Survey 2007/08 (DIUS 2009) records that 53% of full-time students did some form of work during term-time, but this excludes work placements during vacations. A tentative inference could be that GTP participants have had rather limited work experiences compared with other new graduates. However, more robust comparison would require further research, but this would be valuable to determine whether the GTP is particularly effective in supporting those with limited work experiences.

Case study: Jack, West Yorkshire

Jack had only ever worked in a bar by the time he graduated in 2009 with a philosophy degree from Hull. He needed to start paying his way but also to gain work experience; his previous job applications in both private and public sectors had rarely even elicited replies. He came across the GTP during intensive job and internship seeking, and made a handful of applications for paid public sector roles, of which there seemed to be a good range.

After a telephone interview Jack obtained a 5 month paid internship with the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills in Sheffield, commutable from his parents' home, as an executive officer in Higher Education. His main work was on the Government's response to the National Students Forum. Jack's manager gave him lots of practical on-the-job help and he quickly took on responsibility, which grew and grew. He also enjoyed the support and company of two other interns in different teams in the office.

Jack's experience totally exceeded his expectations; he researched, wrote and delivered a submission to Ministers in Westminster, and with his manager took questions from Lord Young and his civil servants. He identified dramatic rises in his skills around business awareness, influencing and negotiation, as well as in his understanding of management.

During the internship Jack had moved out to set up home independently and when it ended he applied for more posts, and is now doing in an internship for a different department in Leeds. He now thinks he will apply for graduate entry to the Civil Service Fast Stream; his new confidence and perceived employability have risen so much that he expects other opportunities will also arise.

5.3 First impressions of the site and internship vacancies

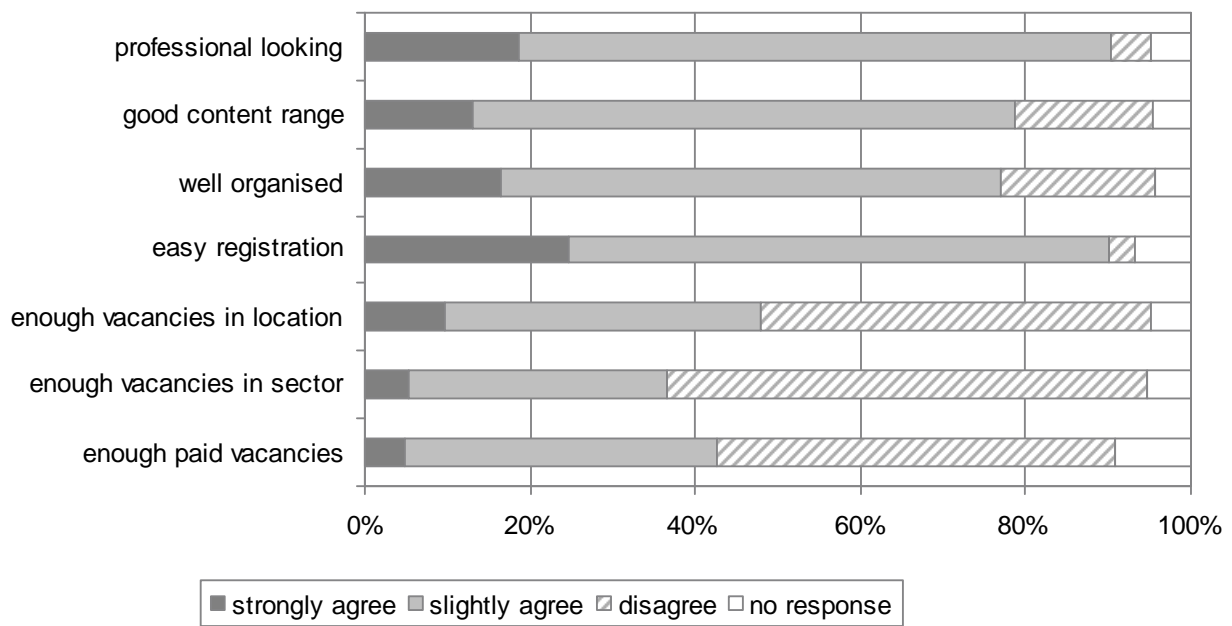
5.3.1 Survey responses

Respondents' first impressions of the GTP website were very favourable, with 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the site looked professional, 79% that it held a good range of information/content and 77% that it was well-organised and easy to navigate. Although somewhat predisposed to answer positively, as all respondents had successfully registered on the GTP site, 89% agreed that the registration process was easy. These impressions are shown in Figure 5 along with, perhaps more critically, their perceptions of the internship vacancies available through the site at that time.

About half of respondents (47%) agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough vacancies in their desired location, and a similar percentage disagreed. This was different for respondents from London and the South East, of whom 66% thought that there were enough vacancies in their desired region.

Rather fewer (36% overall) agreed that there were enough vacancies in their desired line of work (but 58% did not) although 63% felt that the range was good. Two thirds (66%) felt the vacancies were of the right duration, and 42% felt there were sufficient paid vacancies (but 47% felt there were not).

Figure 5. Impressions of the website and vacancies available: percentages indicating levels of agreement with descriptive statements about site (all respondents; N=579)



5.3.2 Qualitative responses

Open-ended survey questions invited free-text comments in relation to vacancies and this drew a substantial number of responses. A significant number of individuals commented that, amidst the headline total of around 6000 vacancies within the GTP, there were too few vacancies in their desired career or subject area (which could sometimes be a very narrow niche). Other popular comment types related either to the existence of too many unpaid vacancies or that there was something of a London/South-East bias in the number of vacancies. There were also a number of

specific recommendations about possible ways to improve the vacancy search functionality on the website. A brief analysis of the free-text comments is provided in Appendix C, from which the following are extracted as examples.

“Good to see a range of creative and cultural internships as opposed to solely finance and legal internships that seem to dominate most graduate job sites.”

“Only criticisms I would make are that most vacancies appear to be in London and are unpaid”

“There's a definite lack of product/industrial design internships. The majority of searches I made bring back results for design engineer, graphic [design] and web [design]”

“I found no vacancies for, or recognition of, the heritage and archaeology sector and therefore could not use GTP to find a job/internship”

The graduates interviewed corroborated these impressions, several mentioning their perception of a bias towards posts in London. A number thought it unreasonable that many internships were unpaid. Most had investigated or made applications through local, regional or other national schemes as well as GTP, and Gumtree (a multi-purpose online directory) was mentioned by several. Based on that comparative experience, many interviewees felt that the range of vacancies within GTP was better than the others, and particularly good for graduates seeking work in the arts/cultural/creative areas and across the public sector, which tended to be poorly served on other internship websites.

5.3.3 Observations

The GTP scheme was in its very early stages when these respondents registered, and many employers had not yet enrolled and posted vacancies. Given that situation, respondents' perceptions of the range of vacancies were perhaps surprisingly positive, although it is possible that they recognised that the scheme was new and would take time to develop. There was a fairly widespread impression that the range of vacancies by employment sector accessible through the GTP was better than in other internship sites/schemes, with coverage of certain sectors that many other schemes did not offer.

There was some evidence of a perception amongst participants of a weighting towards more vacancies in London and the South East. Analysis of GTP scheme management information for the nearest available period (the last quarter of 2009) provided a separate indication; although information was not available on the location of individual

vacancies, the location of employers participating in the scheme is shown by region in Appendix A Table A2. While this is an imperfect proxy for vacancy distribution, the observation that 50% of employers were in London and the South East could well suggest that there was a relatively high proportion of vacancies these regions.

What did seem to be clear was that the overwhelming majority of participants considered that the website itself was professional, informative and functional, although a few felt that further enhancements could be made to the vacancy search functionality which would make the site even better.

5.4 Internship applications

5.4.1 Information about internship applicants

Overall, 62% of respondents (360 graduates) had applied for an internship through the GTP scheme and 38% (219) had not. Given the centrality of this issue to the evaluation, it was investigated using cross-tabulations with responses to certain other questions, especially those providing demographic characteristics. Table 3 shows the proportion of respondents with certain key demographic characteristics who applied for an internship, where this appeared to differ from the overall proportion of 62%.

<i>Table 3. Proportion of respondents who made applications for internships, with various demographic characteristics, compared with 62% proportion overall (N=579)</i>		
	Number of applicants	% of respondents
Overall	360	62
Gender:		
female	169	58
male	192	67
Ethnicity:		
white British	202	58
minorities	148	69
Home region:		
London & SE	161	67
other regions	199	58

The comparisons reveal that a higher proportion of male respondents applied (67%) than females (58%), and of ethnic minority respondents (69%) than white British (58%). The numbers of respondents in individual ethnic groupings was insufficient for analysis but there was some evidence that graduates of Asian ethnicity may have had the highest proportion applying. By region, a somewhat higher proportion of respondents from London and the South East made applications (67%) than from elsewhere, but numbers were insufficient to analyse by individual region.

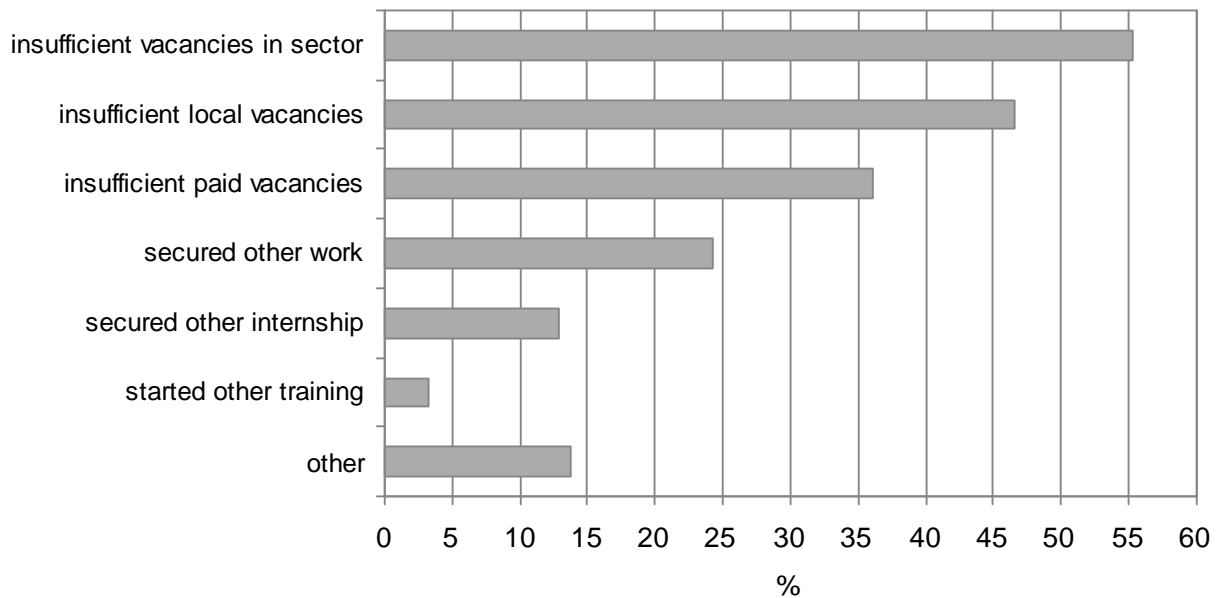
There did not appear to be significant differences in the proportions applying for internships through the scheme, or not, between those who studied at different types of institution (Russell Group vs. other UK HE institutions), by their class of degree or by their degree subject grouping.

According to their response to this question (i.e. whether or not they had applied for an internship), logic within the online questionnaire presented respondents with different sets of subsequent questions.

5.4.2 Why some graduates did not apply

The 219 respondents (38%) who had not made any applications for internships were asked why they had not done so. Of these, more than a quarter had found work through other means (24% cited other employment, and 13% an internship via another scheme/method). However, over half cited shortfalls in the internship vacancies on offer as the reason, with 55% identifying that there were insufficient vacancies in their desired line of work to merit applications, 47% insufficient vacancies in their location and 36% insufficient paid vacancies. These are summarised in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Reasons for not applying for internships (non-applicants; N=219; multiple responses permitted)



5.4.3 Observations and further analysis

Interesting variations were seen in the proportions of different types of respondent who had applied for internships through the GTP scheme, in comparison with the overall proportion of 62%. More of the male graduates appeared to have applied,

proportionally, than of the female participants, and a higher proportion of the ethnic minority participants than of participating white British graduates.

The higher proportion of applicants amongst those from London and the South East (compared with those from other regions) would seem logical if, as suggested from qualitative feedback, a high proportion of the vacancies had been in those regions. Management information received from Graduate Prospects Ltd, which manages the website and vacancies, suggests that during the fourth quarter of 2009, half of the employers participating in the scheme were located in London and the South East (Table A2 in Appendix A). Although this is only an imperfect proxy for and not the real regional variation of the number of vacancies, and assuming that the number of vacancies was roughly proportional to the number of employers, this could well explain why proportionally more graduates from those regions were making applications in the period studied. However, applicants were present from all regions of England, and small numbers from the other nations of the UK, suggesting that the scheme was operating across its target range. Of course, this comparative analysis also ignores the expected willingness of many graduates, and the potential attraction for some, to change location in order to take up an internship.

No major variation was observed in the proportions making applications by degree class or type of institution, which suggests that graduates were making applications irrespective of their academic 'strength'. There appeared to be very little variation by degree subject, which is perhaps surprising given the somewhat uneven range of vacancies by employment sector that was probably evident at this early stage of the scheme. Given this, and the rather restricted sample size (360 applicants responding), it was not feasible to undertake analysis at the level of JACS Subject Group.

Over half of those who did not apply for internships put this down to not finding suitable vacancies, particularly in relation to their desired employment sector. It is noteworthy, however, that around a quarter had found other employment in the meantime (presumably since first registration with the scheme) which reflects the parallel channels that graduates were using in their attempts to secure work.

5.5 Outcome of applications

5.5.1 How many and who were successful?

The outcomes resulting at the time of survey for the 360 graduate respondents who had made applications are shown in Table 4. By that time, 39% of applicants (142 individuals) had been 'successful' in having been offered at least one internship. Of those successful applicants, 60 had secured and completed an internship, 60 more were currently undertaking an internship, 5 had received an offer and were waiting to start, and 17 others had received an offer but were not pursuing it. Expressed as a

proportion of all respondents, rather than applicants, this means about 22% of all GTP participants (i.e. registrants) actually secured and undertook an internship by the time of survey.

	Number	% of applicants
Secured internship, completed	60	17
Secured internship, underway	60	17
Secured internship, yet to start	5	1
Offered internship, but declined	17	5
Awaiting outcome	61	17
Unsuccessful	159	44

Table 4 also shows those who reported that they had been ‘unsuccessful’, in so far as they had not received an offer of an internship when surveyed (44% of applicants). A further 17% were still awaiting the outcome of their application at the time of survey. It is probably fairer to consider that these were also unsuccessful in terms of an outcome given that, for most, many months had passed since they made their applications, and from knowledge elsewhere in this study it is clear that in many cases many employers did not issue rejections.

To investigate this further, the 61 respondents who were ‘awaiting outcome’ were re-contacted 2 months after the survey. Very few of them (less than 1 in 10) had received an offer in the meantime, confirming the interpretation above, that is to say around 60% of applicants were not successful.

It was therefore considered more robust, and also simpler, to make any judgement of whether respondents had been ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ based on their position at the time of survey, rather than to extend the time to include possible later decisions. Further analysis on outcome was therefore conducted on this basis.

Although the sample size for ‘successful’ applicants was small (142 respondents), the variation of success rate was investigated against certain key characteristics, for comparison with the overall success rate of 39% of all applicants. These variations are summarised in Table 5. Although caution needs to be exercised due to the limited sample size, there is evidence that graduates of the Russell Group of HEIs were more successful than the group of ‘other’ institutions, and those with ‘good’ (1st and 2.1) degrees more than those with lesser degree grades. White British respondents appeared to be more successful than those with an ethnic minority background. Those

who had undertaken work experience placements during university appeared to be more successful than those who had not.

Little difference was seen in the percentage success rate by gender, by degree subject grouping (i.e. STEM, social/business or arts/humanities/creative) or by region of domicile.

Table 5. Proportions of 'successful' applicants with different characteristics, compared with overall figure of 39%		
	Number successful	% of applicants
Overall	159	39
HEI type: Russell Group other UK	67 75	53 32
Degree class: 1 st & 2.1 other	112 34	46 30
Work experience: at univ	64	52
Ethnicity: white British minorities	78 38	45 31

A specific analysis was conducted to investigate whether there was any correlation evident between successful application for an internship and date of registration with the scheme, in case early registrants were proportionally more successful as they could have encountered much less competition for vacancies, or with greater elapsed time since applications. This was undertaken by comparison of the distribution of dates of registration of successful interns with registration dates overall. However, this analysis did not reveal any correlation, so the date of registration can be discounted as a possible success factor for participants.

Twenty of the interviews conducted were with successful graduates and five with graduates who had not been successful in their applications. There was great variation between the individuals in many of the characteristics, for both the unsuccessful and successful graduates, in terms of prior work experience, degree subject and other demographic characteristics. This was partly a function of targeting within the sampling, as the interviews were aimed to be illustrative across a wide range of graduates and circumstances rather than representative of scheme participants.

5.5.2 Observations

In overall terms, assuming that the survey sample was representative of participants in the GTP, 39% of applicants (which would equate to 22% of all GTP registrants) were successful in obtaining an internship, at least by the time of survey, which for the great majority was well after any applications would have been processed. Certain sub-populations of participants with particular characteristics appeared to have been more successful than others:

- Those with 'good' degrees, more than those with lower degree classes;
- Those from Russell Group universities, more than those from other HE institutions;
- Those who had undertaken work experience while at university, more than others (but apparently this was quite specific and not just any experience of work);
- Those who were of white British ethnicity, more than those with an ethnic minority background.

The first three of these are perhaps not surprising as they seem to reflect the characteristics that many employers would conventionally seek in their recruitment of graduates. This could suggest that employers recruiting graduates to internships within the GTP scheme were using similar recruitment strategies, and similar assessment criteria, to their mainstream graduate recruitment. As observed in a previous section, this seems to reflect that the GTP was operating very much in the mainstream, in terms of graduates and graduate recruitment.

However, a larger sample size would be needed to investigate these trends in more robust fashion, and especially the somewhat troubling observation of a possible variance with ethnicity. This would seem to offer potentially important scope for further work.

Were the survey results to be representative of all participants in the scheme, the figure of 22% of participants obtaining an internship is useful in two ways. First, university careers services and others referring graduates to the scheme might find it useful to manage graduates' expectations i.e. that around 1 in 5 scheme participants were ultimately successful in achieving internships. Second, it enables comparison with any known information about the number of internships available or being taken up. The 22% figure, corresponding to 125 actual internships, would be extrapolated up to c.1440 actual internships overall (using the ratio of the 579 respondents to 6668 registrants), i.e. 1440 internships are likely to have resulted from the first six months of operation of the scheme.

Management information for the scheme gave a figure of around 6000 vacancies during this period. There could be a range of reasons for the difference between this figure and the total number of internships secured (1440) extrapolated from this survey data:

- The headline number of vacancies (c.6000) could have counted some vacancies more than once, due to the presence of recruitment agency sites and other schemes within the GTP in this period which may well have offered the same vacancies multiply (i.e. the number of unique vacancies was less than 6000);
- Some of the vacancies may not have been 'real' posts but could have been 'aspirational' thinking on behalf of the employers, to which they never actually recruited graduates despite initial intention to do so;
- Poor quality of applicants or applications could have led to a proportion of vacancies remaining unfilled (although the results here suggest that applicant 'quality' was relatively high at least in academic terms);
- There could have been a substantial time lag in the scheme such that many vacancies had yet to be filled at the time of survey, although this seems somewhat unlikely;
- The survey results may not be representative of scheme participants, despite the reasonably sound response rate (in fact those with positive experiences might be expected to be *more* likely to respond than less, which would give a variance in the opposite direction).

The available data did not offer any conclusive proof for any one or more of these possibilities, so further research could be useful to 'close' – or prove – this possible gap between the different views of the scheme.

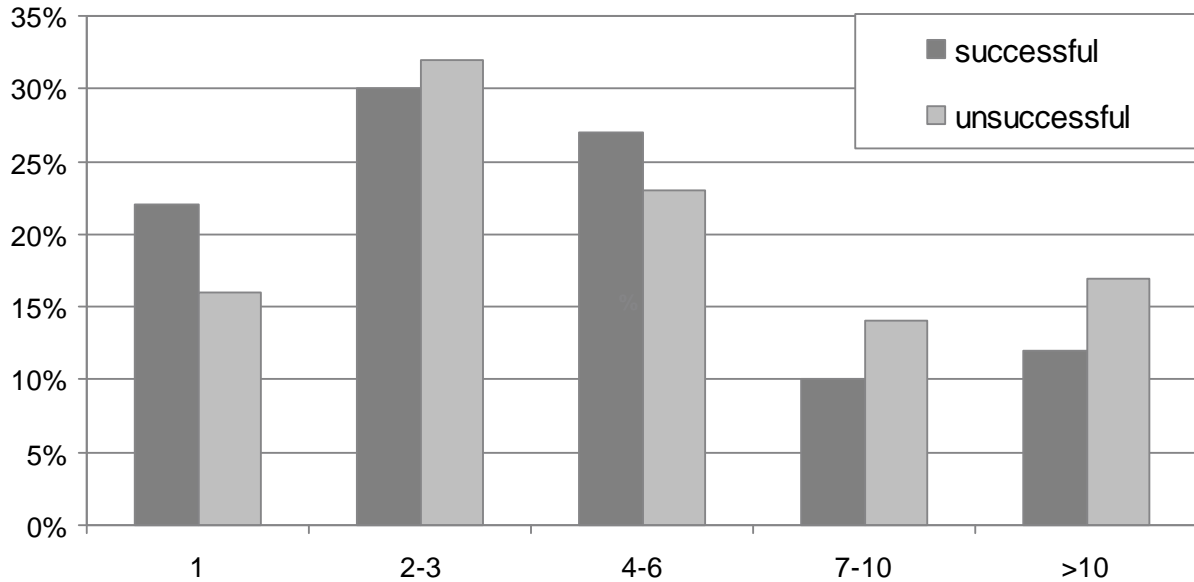
Responses to the question on outcome of applications determined the subsequent questioning put to respondents within the survey. Particular emphasis was placed on the 120 respondents who had actual experience of an internship, while the number of questions asked of those who had not undertaken an internship was much more limited.

5.6 Detail of applications and employer responses

5.6.1 Application strategies by graduates

The number of applications made by applicants varied considerably; 18% made only 1 application, 49% made more than 3, while 14% made 10 or more. There was some evidence to suggest that successful applicants made rather fewer applications than those who were unsuccessful, see Figure 7.

Figure 7. Percentage of respondents making different numbers of applications, for respondents with differing application outcomes (N=360)



Over 90% of the applications made were for vacancies in applicants' desired or possible long-term career sector. A breakdown of the employment sectors within which the applications were made is provided in Appendix A, Table A4. The restricted sample size limits the analysis but this would seem to indicate that posts in marketing, advertising and public relations (PR), and also in the public sector, were particularly sought after, along with IT and financial / professional services. Some mismatch with the relative proportions of vacancies available at the time is evident, as the most vacancies were in the public and third sectors (at that time). However, the available data from applicants is insufficiently large to facilitate a robust analysis of applications made against availability for individual sectors, nor yet for differential rates of success in those applications.

The in-depth interviews revealed that graduates had gone about their applications in different ways. Most of the successful interviewees had made a handful of applications via the GTP scheme (in many cases in addition to applications made through other routes). The five unsuccessful applicants interviewed had made very different numbers; one had made just a single local application but two had made 40-50 applications, seemingly happy to be 'doing something constructive' and taking advantage of the wide range of vacancies available through this single site.

The amount of effort graduates had put into an application also showed great variation. Some claimed that an application only took around 30 minutes, just 'tweaking' their CV to cut and paste into the desired form, while others said they treated internship applications as they would a full job application and took 3-4 hours over each. There

was no correlation evident between the amount of effort and whether it resulted in success, based on those interviewed. Some had made their applications consistently over a period of up to two months, while others had made a handful of applications in a single burst of effort in a short space of time.

The application strategy articulated by most of the interviewees, not unreasonably, was that they applied only for paid posts where relocation would be required, but were more likely to apply for both paid and unpaid posts in locations where they could remain living at home. In addition, where they would have to relocate, the length of the internship under offer was an issue, as the effort and cost of relocation would not be merited for a very short internship.

While some of the graduates applied for paid posts irrespective of location, some restricted their applications only to posts within their local region, usually both paid and unpaid. However, due to their home circumstances, several of the graduates said that they were only able to apply for local paid positions, as they needed to maximise the net income they would derive.

5.6.2 Employer responses to applications

The manner of response to applications by employers also varied considerably, although most interviewees reported that many employers had not responded at all to unsuccessful applications. Several reported that where employers had replied to unsuccessful applications, they had used impersonal (“Dear applicant”) responses. One unsuccessful interviewee reported receiving just two impersonal replies from over 40 applications submitted.

For those who did receive offers, the rate of response from employers varied considerably, from a matter of days to many weeks. Two interviewees applied through GTP to regional internship schemes which had their own entry procedures and then circulated short-listed candidates’ details to several employers. One made a single application to a recruitment agency (although he did not realise it was that) which circulated his details, resulting in several calls to interview from different employers within a week, although this appears to have been exceptional. For those who did receive positive responses, the next stage was either a face-to-face interview or, in many cases, an interview by telephone.

The (159) applicants who considered that they had been unsuccessful in their applications through the GTP scheme were asked in the survey if they had been given a reason by the employer/s. Two thirds claimed that no reason had been given, but this could include those who received no response from the employer/s as well as those who received a rejection but without a specific reason. At least 30% of these unsuccessful applicants presumably received some notification of rejection(s), however,

because 30% reported they had been rejected on grounds of insufficient experience/skills, while 20% said their rejection was due simply to a surfeit of applicants.

One of the more common free-text comments made by online survey respondents was annoyance that employers replied so rarely to their applications, and/or where they did so it was impersonal. The graduates perceived unfairness when employers acted this way, whilst (they assumed) expecting graduates to put considerable effort into applications.

Case study: Andrew, West of England

Andrew had been unemployed for 3 months since graduation from Lincoln University, with a degree in games computing, when its careers service alerted him to the GTP site. He'd had little experience of work but was keen to be a computer games tester, a heavily oversubscribed occupation. Andrew had made applications and obtained interviews, but had now exhausted all the main companies he knew about.

The GTP site listed several games companies offering vacancies for graphical artist roles rather than games testers. Thinking this could be a different route into the industry he made one application, actually to an agency which forwarded his CV on to several companies. Within a week he had three replies, then quickly secured a role with a small 'serious games' company in the West Midlands.

Two months in, he said he was "being paid to do his hobby". Life in the tiny company gave him huge creative freedom, although little training or management. He learned to focus, organise and prioritise and, crucially in this sector, gained experience of cutting-edge software applications, and a portfolio of his own design work. When interviewed he thought there was a good chance the company would offer him a long-term contract.

Without the internship he would have given up on the industry, because he was aiming far too narrowly. Now, however, he was in and was confident about his future.

Interviews with unsuccessful applicants

Although the five interviews with unsuccessful applicants cannot possibly represent the large proportion of applicants who failed to gain internships, some observations may be helpful:

- Two were ‘first-generation’ HE students, whose expectations were unrealistic, not helped by their schools’ naïve advice (for example that choice of degree subject was unimportant)
- None had used their university careers service, some because they believed it would be unhelpful to “people like them”
- Working experiences varied from extensive to none at all: one had worked for a major technology company which thought his digital sound technology degree would be a passport to a job; working never occurred to others who claimed that nobody at university even mentioned it might be useful
- Some had made very large numbers (50 or even >100) of full job applications, to most of which they had not received any reply
- While some were applying for jobs in a narrow niche to pursue a dream, others were pragmatic and applying widely including to mainstream sectors
- For some GTP was just one of several schemes they were using in parallel to make applications for internships
- Some had made many applications through GTP, both paid and unpaid, locally and nationwide, but others used it very selectively
- Response rates from employers to applications within GTP were poor, but this was perceived to be same as everywhere else too
- Two had now given up applying for what they considered to be graduate jobs and had changed direction completely, now applying to retrain (one for children’s nursing, another for primary teaching)
- Two now regretted going to university and, quoting separate reasons, were thinking about emigration essentially to improve their career prospects

5.6.3 Observations

From the data obtained, it was not clear that any particular application strategy on the part of graduates (i.e. the number of applications or the amount of effort for each) had resulted in greater success, and no information was available on the ‘quality’ of applications made. However, some of the unsuccessful graduates had made large numbers (>50) applications, which (from the interviews) seemed to be a kind of displacement activity from unemployment, and based on the effort they reported they

made it is likely that these were not high quality, bespoke applications. It could be that they had made large numbers of applications because they could do so, quite easily, as a result of the large number of vacancies open to them at this single site.

Making large numbers of applications for jobs, or internships, compared with previous graduate cohorts, may well now be commonplace amongst graduates and final-year students. The AGR has reported almost 70 applicants as an average for major graduate vacancies (AGR 2010), which may well be a result of the trend towards employers demanding online applications for their graduate schemes. Faced with an entirely online initial application stage, it may be tempting for applicants to 'cut and paste' existing applications into new online forms, potentially at much reduced effort compared with making genuinely bespoke applications on paper. A result may be that more applications are made partly because it is easier to make them. Future research with employers may demonstrate whether there is any 'weakening' in the quality of applications as a result of this trend, although it is probably too early yet to tell.

A fairly consistent application strategy was seen, however, as most interviewees had applied for paid positions irrespective of location, while restricting any unpaid applications to posts which were local to their home. Most graduates, but not all, seemed therefore to be considering employment sector first, and location and remuneration second.

The presence of recruitment agencies' internship listings, and other internship schemes, within the GTP vacancy range at this early stage of the scheme was evident in graduates' experiences. GTP policy has since changed in respect of such agencies, so the GTP site no longer accepts recruitment agency listings of internships. Some employers' lack of response to applications, or use of impersonal responses, did annoy many graduates, who felt that the balance was stacked in favour of the employers. Seen through graduate eyes, some employers appeared to be offering unpaid positions, demanding experience (despite the purpose of the scheme being to provide that very experience) and then not bothering to reply to those graduates who did make the effort to apply.

Case study: Mary, London

Mary gained her degree in media and communication locally in London, living at home. She sought a job in marketing or advertising but felt this remained a pipedream as the limit of her prior work experience was as a supermarket cashier, and employers were demanding relevant experience. Somewhat desperate, she made about 10 applications through the GTP. Most of the posts she really wanted were unpaid, reflecting the attractiveness of this sector to graduates, but her circumstances did not enable her to pursue those, so she persevered for paid roles.

Mary obtained a 3-month paid position working in the communications team of a charitable foundation, writing articles, generating newsletters and organising events. The organisation had a 'permanent' internship post, and as the current intern she gained varied experience and lots of feedback on her work. This dramatically improved her practical communication and IT skills, using industry design software, and she learned how to work in a team and with a manager.

After the internship, Mary felt more realistic about her prospects, understanding that she needed to build experience in relatively lowly positions first. Having lodged her updated CV with an agency, she noted that their interest was much higher than before, so she felt that she had at least taken the first steps on her chosen career road.

5.7 Nature of the internships secured

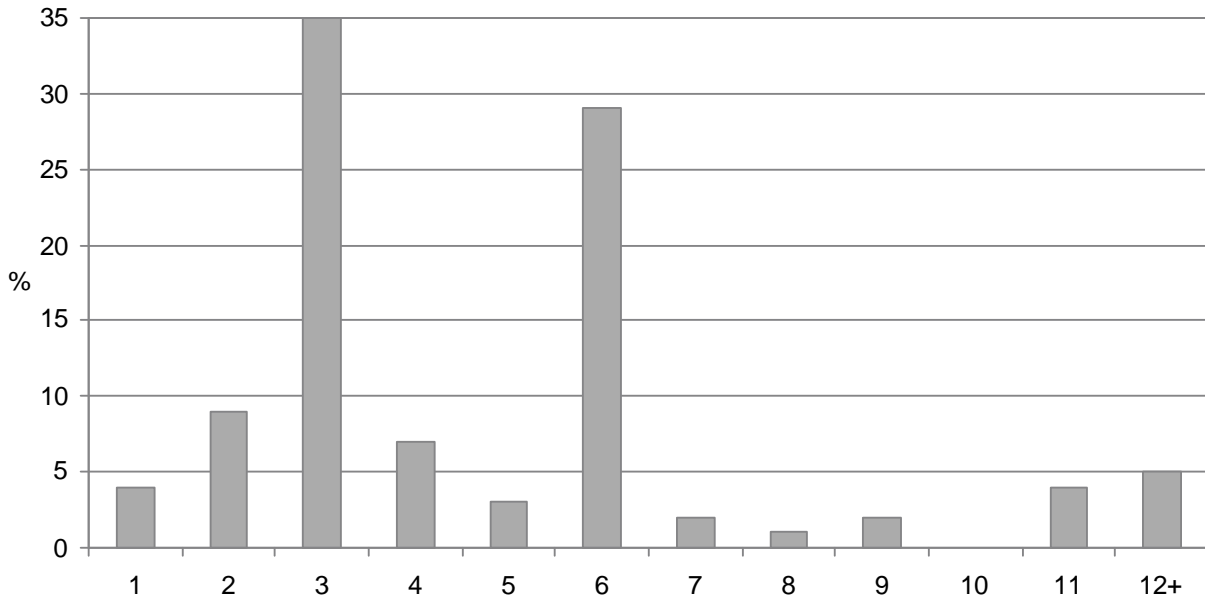
5.7.1 Length, remuneration and status

The length of the internships secured by respondents encompassed a range from 1 month to over 12 months (the distribution is shown in Figure 8). The mean length was 4.8 months, with most internships of either 3 or 6 months duration; 49% were of 3 months duration or shorter, and only 14% were longer than 6 months.

The issue of whether internships should be paid is currently topical. Of the internships secured by respondents, 64% were paid positions, 31% were paid expenses only and 5% were wholly unpaid. This compares well with management information for GTP vacancies in this period of 64% of vacancies being paid positions. An analysis of the proportion of paid vacancies in different sectors, using that management data, is given in Appendix A Table A4. This shows that Government and private employers in some sectors almost always offered paid vacancies, while charities largely offered posts

unpaid or with expenses only, but private employers in certain other sectors were very mixed in their remuneration strategy.

Figure 8. Duration of internships secured, in months (N=142)



The interviews corroborated these findings and offer additional insight into the issue of remuneration. Of those interviewed, all who had worked for central Government or elsewhere in the public sector had been paid, while all but one working for charities were unpaid but could claim expenses. The situation for interns within the private sector varied considerably, depending on the sector and also the individual company, but most were in paid positions.

Where there was remuneration, it ranged from £1500/month for some Government vacancies in London to one example below statutory minimum wage level in a small private firm (although this appears to be technically legal for an internship). Many employers seemed to be paying in the range £900-1200/month, which is equivalent to or a little above the level of the minimum wage (then £5.80/hour for adults over 22) but well under the mean starting salary for graduates starting work (£20,500/yr, HESA 2010a) or more specifically long-term ‘graduate jobs’ (about £25,000/yr, according to AGR, 2010).

From the interviews it was clear that several internships were part-time, and some were undertaken at home with only rare visits to employer premises. The latter was the case for a graduate working in the fashion-related media and for several others whose internship was a discrete or stand-alone project, offered by a charity or other third-sector organisation.

In general, the interns interviewed reported that the work was appropriate for a graduate, and only one felt that he was purely another 'pair of hands' (in a very small company). Where there had been several interns in an organisation, the interviewees had appreciated the chance for mutual support and to socialise, particularly where they had relocated to undertake the internship.

Although this was dependent on the length of the post, in some cases the interns reported significant progression within the internship, gaining greater responsibility with time and taking on new types of work. Much appeared to depend on particular local circumstances and the individual manager, rather than organisational planning for the internship. Some of the case studies provide good examples of progression by the graduate interns, either planned or opportunistic.

Case study: Steph, West Midlands

Having left school at 16 to work in the administration office of an energy company, after 5 years Steph was bored and went to university locally to study fashion design, which was her real passion. Graduating in 2009, she realised that through a series of internships she could build a credible CV and accumulate the personal portfolio of work necessary to stand a chance of entering the fashion industry.

She made 2-3 applications for internships through the GTP scheme, as well as many others, both paid and unpaid, nationwide, treating them as seriously as full job applications. Through GTP she obtained an unpaid post locally, working as a copywriter for a small company running a fashion website. The internship was also supported by the Shaw Trust, which provided supervision and personal development support. Working part-time, mostly from home, she could claim expenses when she visited companies or shows, or attended company meetings. Although interviewed while still an intern, Steph already felt her writing skills (which built on a journalism module within her course) had developed enormously, along with practical IT skills, and her self-belief was rising fast. She had just set up a personal website to showcase her design work and was already starting to make new applications through the GTP for a future internship in styling work, in order to gain another element of her fashion/design portfolio.

With her experience of office work before university, Steph did not need to develop generic employability skills like many graduates, but found that internships could enable her to build the more specialised skills and experience portfolio she needs to enter a fashion career.

Steph's internship was the only example we came across within the interviews of a "supported" placement, in the sense that her development and learning were monitored and supported by a third party rather than purely by the employer. In this respect it somewhat resembles an HE work experience placement rather than an internship, although the support was not provided by an HE institution.

5.7.2 Training and support

Training relating to the particular role was provided to just over 60% of all respondents who had undertaken internships, while 48% received more generic workplace training; and only 17% did not receive any formal training. This did not seem to vary greatly in relation to whether the internship was paid or not (see Table 6).

Table 6. Availability of training, during paid and unpaid internships (N=120)		
	% Paid	% Unpaid or expenses only
Role-specific training	61	60
General workplace training	51	43
No training offered	17	19

Detailed information from the interviewees revealed that the internships within Government and charity employers tended to be better managed and structured than some in the private sector (particularly in smaller companies), although the style and level of induction and training varied, including between different Government departments. Charities which had ‘permanent’ internship positions (i.e. a constant position filled by a succession of interns) seemed to have provided particularly well-structured support.

There was evidence that some internships offered by charities were very discrete projects, effectively undertaken as unpaid freelance commissions, which required the intern to work from home, and these were much less well supported. In these cases the graduates reported that the work could be very isolated, and the practical work experiences they gained – and skills they were able to develop – were more limited as a result. These internships offered more limited benefit to the interns but, nonetheless, the graduates undertaking them still valued the opportunity as it enabled them to cite the project experience on their CV. From the limited interview data available, internships of this nature appeared to be a minority amidst the charity positions, but they do exemplify the wide variety of work type and environment encompassed by the internship positions on offer.

Case study: Femi, London

A mature student graduating from London Metropolitan in public management and social policy, Femi was just about surviving on part-time work in London, while making streams of applications for jobs in social research and community development. His experience before university had largely been manual and low-skilled jobs, and he felt he lacked “professional” working collateral. He made just three applications through GTP in the hope that this would begin to build that aspect of his CV, restricting his search to 3 month posts as he could not afford to work unpaid for longer.

Femi was taken on by a charity promoting social enterprise, on an expenses-only basis, which meant he continued his previous part-time work to pay his bills. His single task was to update the organisation’s manifesto in readiness for the 2010 General Election, supervised by the CEO. Although his colleagues were friendly, they were very occupied with their own longer-term work and he felt somewhat isolated in his research task within the organisation.

Femi received little formal training but appreciated the chance to learn what it is like working in this environment; however, given the narrow focus of his project he felt he was not able to gain broader work-related skills. His impression was that the employer never had the capacity to take on an additional post long-term, so was largely using the internship as a temporary additional staff resource. Nonetheless, he valued the experience and soon secured a second internship for a university social research unit.

5.7.3 Observations

The issue of unpaid internships has received considerable media attention (for example, “Third of interns exploited, claims TUC”, *People Management*, 8 April 2010), with perceptions that the GTP and other schemes promote employers that are exploiting graduates as free labour. A university organisation has lately come under particular criticism for offering unpaid vacancies within its own workforce. The findings here corroborate other data to suggest that just under two thirds of the internships within the GTP scheme were paid, the majority at or above a level equivalent to the statutory minimum wage for adults of their age. Only one graduate interviewed reported that he had been paid at less than this rate, working for a very small company, while the interns working for charities were almost all unpaid (but could recover expenses, such as travel to certain workplaces). Crucially, these interns did not report feeling exploited in working

unpaid. They seemed to have rationalised the position as a pragmatic trade-off, that is to say their free labour in return for the ability to cite experience on their CV.

In almost all cases, the type of work was appropriate for the graduates, but the management and support varied considerably and was often down to the individual manager rather than organisational strategy or structure. A guide for employers on hosting internships has been published (CIPD, 2009) which sets out best practice, against which actual arrangements could be assessed. However, the majority of interns (both paid and unpaid) received training and some of the unpaid charity positions were particularly well managed, offering mentoring and other developmental support.

Case study: Dogan, South East

Dogan had been unemployed since graduating in 2009 from Kent in accounting and finance, living with his girlfriend at her parents' house, and both claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. He had worked as a shop assistant while at university but had no serious business experience, which he felt was hindering his job applications for management accounting jobs or other positions in accounting firms. Not knowing about internship opportunities, he considered he was lucky to receive an e-mail from his university which prompted him to visit the GTP site.

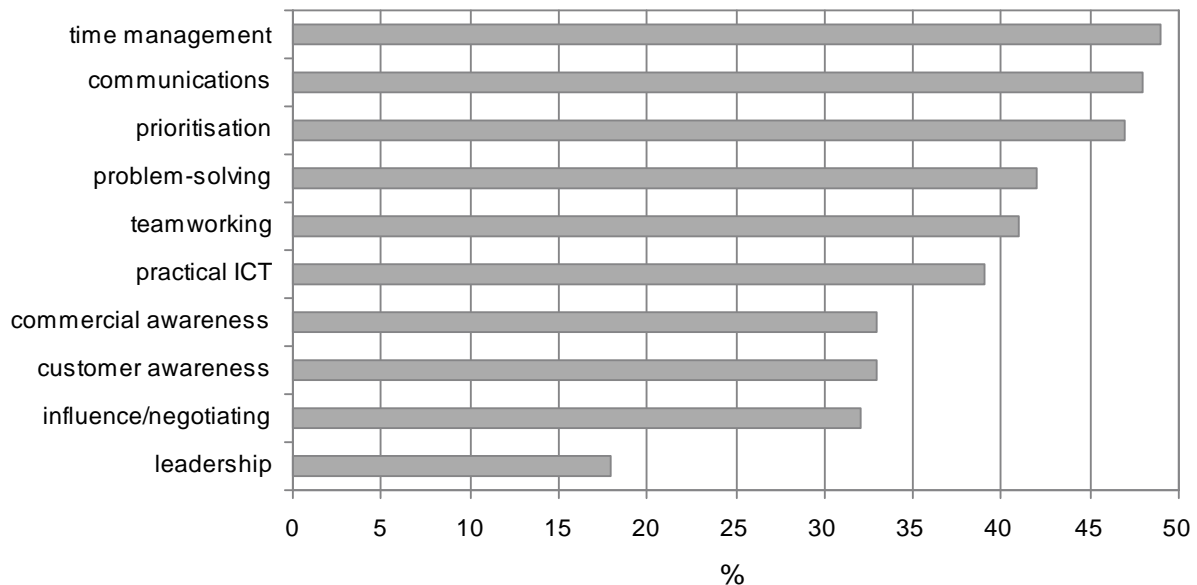
After making about 10 applications through GTP, mainly for paid accounting roles in different businesses in London, he was offered a position with a new driving school. This recent start-up business comprised the two founders and two interns. Although warmly welcomed, there was no training or structure and he worked on all sorts of tasks, from gathering data to making sales calls. As the business grew, he helped to recruit and manage new instructors, as well as the financial management activity he was actually hired for.

At the end of 3 months they invited him to carry on, open-ended, although he felt he was gaining little more experience with diminishing returns other than a reasonable salary. When interviewed he was again making applications for accountancy posts. Although the experience was not really what he had hoped for, he felt his commercial acumen and many workplace skills had developed immensely, not least his confidence as he was forced to make many decisions himself. He is now somewhat more confident that he will eventually secure a long-term job.

5.8 Skill development

Those respondents who had undertaken an internship were asked how much they had developed a range of work-related skills during their internship, using the skills identified in the European Framework for Work Experience (EFWE 2005), itself based on research with employers across Europe into the skills most in demand from graduates. The percentages of survey respondents who believed that they had developed these skills “a great deal” are illustrated in Figure 9. Over 40% believed they had developed skills by that extent in time management, communications, prioritisation, problem-solving and team working, with significant percentages (18-39%) for all the other skills listed.

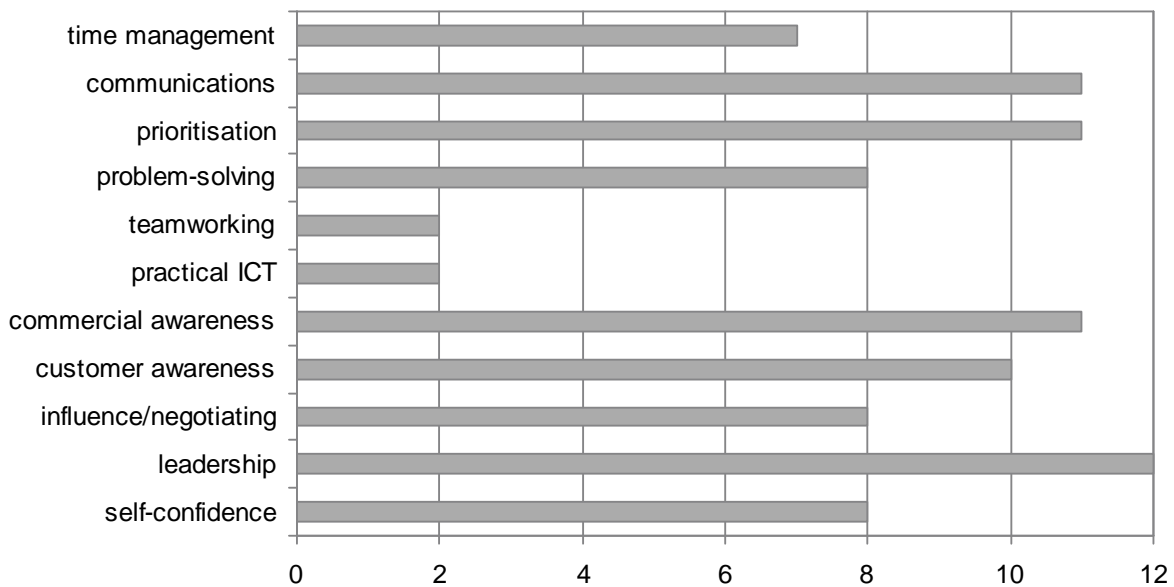
Figure 9. Percentage of interns who believed they had developed work-related skills “a great deal” (all interns; N=120)



Graduate interns’ perceived skill development was also investigated in depth in the interviews, by asking interviewees to rate their skill levels before and after the internship for each skill in the EFWE framework. The number of interns interviewed who perceived a relative skill rise of over 20% during the internship is shown for each skill in Figure 10. The three skills they rated as having been their strongest *prior* to the experience were practical ICT skills, team working and time management. All (20) interns reported significant increases in some skills with the biggest reported advances in commercial awareness, customer awareness and an understanding of leadership. This seems to accord well with the more commercial skills, reported in Chapter 2, which employers have felt are particularly deficient in many graduates, which higher education may not be well placed to provide. After taking into account improvements during their internship, the three skills they ranked uppermost *after* the experience had shifted to prioritisation, time management and self-confidence.

Several graduates reported that they believed they had also gained particular benefit during the internship by using certain industry-specific software applications, notably those working in computing-related and media roles. They believed their experience of using such applications would differentiate them from other graduates when they came to apply for jobs in future.

Figure 10. Number of interns interviewed who rated >20% skill rises (N=20)



5.9 Indications of the impact of the scheme

5.9.1 Perceived impact reported by respondents

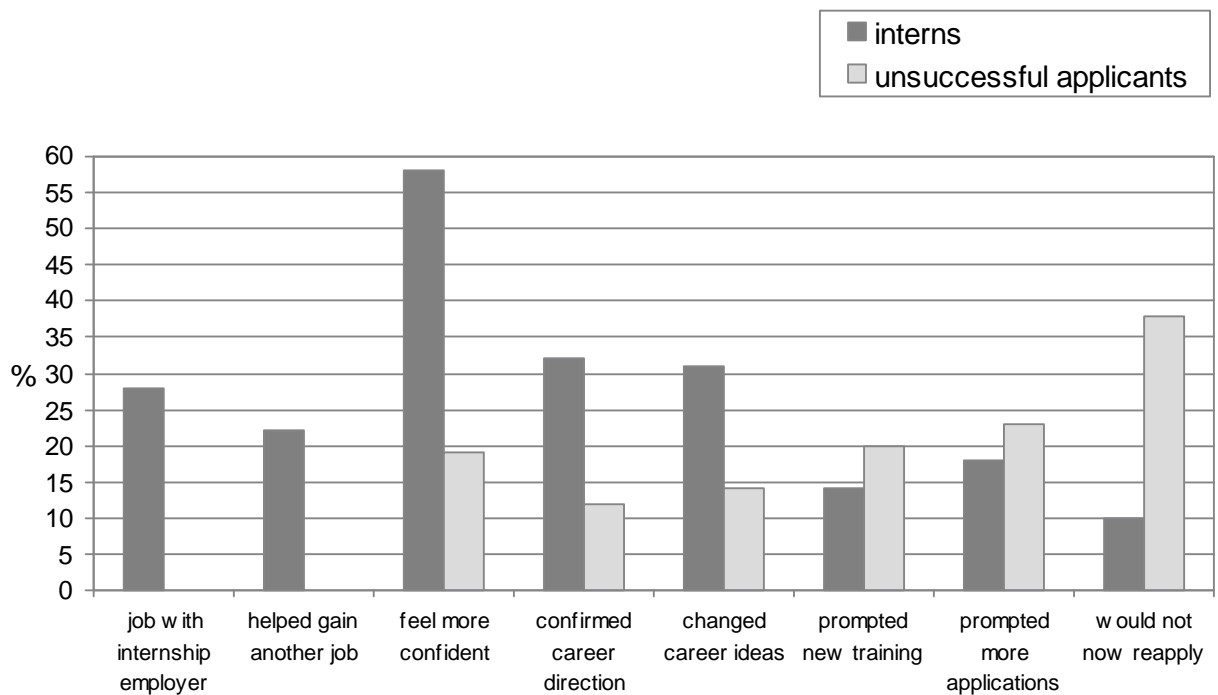
The percentage of those surveyed who had undertaken an internship who believed that they were now more employable, as a result of the internship, was a striking 93%.

However, all those who made applications were asked in the survey about the experience and impact of applying for internships within the scheme, while those who had undertaken internships received questions with additional options. From this it was clear that some of those who had not succeeded in securing an internship had gained some benefit, although much less than the interns. For example, 31% of unsuccessful applicants and 70% of the successful applicants (i.e. interns) responding reported that they now felt more aware of particular skills they wished to develop in order to improve their career prospects. Invited to specify the nature of those skills, the most commonly cited skills were communications-related, as well as certain rather specific software applications.

The reported outcomes and impacts for these two groups of participants – interns and unsuccessful applicants – are shown in Figure 11.

Of those who had been unsuccessful in their internship applications, 19% reported that they now felt more confident in making job applications as a result of their (unsuccessful) participation in the GTP scheme. Although the experience had prompted 23% of them to apply for more internships, 38% said the experience had put them off applying for more internships, while 14% said that they were changing career direction and 5% said that it had put them off applying for long-term employment. About 20% said the experience had resulted in them applying for work-related training or other study.

Figure 11. Outcome of participation for interns (N=120) and 'unsuccessful' applicants (N=159); multiple responses permitted



Of those who had secured and undertaken an internship, 58% now felt more confident about future job applications. It had impacted on the career thinking for over 60% of them, although as many reported that they were changing career ideas (32%) as those for whom it had confirmed their intended career direction (31%). Fewer (14%) of the interns, than of the unsuccessful applicants were now going to apply for training or further study, while 18% would now apply for more internships. Less than 10% regarded that they had been ‘cheap labour’ for their employer (notably this was not purely those in unpaid positions) and very few (4%) felt that the experience had been a waste of their time.

Perhaps most important, half of these interns reported that the experience had helped them into employment – 28% had gained a job with the internship employer and 22% with a different employer. This group (the interns) was made up of about half who had completed their internship and half who were still undertaking it when surveyed; the latter might well yet be offered long-term work by the employer. Of those who had completed their internship prior to survey, a somewhat higher percentage (33%) had entered long-term work with the internship employer. By no means all those who had secured long-term employment with their internship employer had been in paid internship positions.

Case study: Amy, East Anglia

Amy graduated in French from Exeter in 2009. She was unclear about what she really wanted to do in life but critically aware she needed a job. Obtaining a 2.2 she realised that many graduate schemes were closed to her, but she was also worried about committing herself for years in an unknown industry. Internships appealed to her as she could gain work experience without that long-term commitment, buying her some time and the opportunity to learn which sector might suit her.

An agency picked up one of her GTP applications and she soon landed a 6-month project officer post in a Local Authority education department, working on adult learning as part of a regeneration scheme. After a formal induction, her training included full participation in the Authority's online staff development programme. The Authority was downsizing, so she was seconded to work in other teams as well as on her main project, in which she regularly deputised for her project manager, gaining a lot of experience.

Amy felt that the Authority would have taken her on long-term had it not been downsizing, but she had taken opportunities to network with clients and suppliers, and quickly got a job in research with the Authority's HR outsourcing partner, a top recruitment firm in London. Amy felt the internship not only kick-started her working life but developed her self-confidence, commercial awareness and communication skills. She is now pretty sure that long-term she will work in the public sector eventually, but wants to enjoy life working in London for a few years first.

The interns interviewed presented an even more positive picture of their experiences, some of which are detailed in the case studies. Of those who had completed their internships (15 of the 20 interns interviewed), over half now had long-term jobs with the

internship employer or a different employer, while several had started further internships and two had applied for specific career-related training for areas they would not have considered before. Even for those who had not secured long-term employment directly, they felt that they had effectively tested the water in a job or sector about which they may have been unsure previously and felt energised now that they had taken a step forward.

Case study: Ellie, Humberside

Graduating with a good degree in physics, her best subject at school, Ellie had been unclear what to do after university and took time out to decide. Her careers service had tried to steer her towards graduate schemes, but she felt these were not for her, and instinctively erred towards doing something with people or in social care. However, she had no idea whether that was a feasible direction for a career.

Referred to GTP by her careers service, Ellie applied for various positions in the South West so that she could live with her student friends. She obtained an expenses-only position for a health charity, a discrete project to set up and manage a new regional scheme. After technical and workplace training, and time shadowing community workers, she progressed fast and in the second half of her six-month contract she rolled out the scheme across the region. She felt she had quickly acquired several skills, especially thinking about the end user (customer) and gaining understanding of how an organisation works, as she had only ever done casual work before. Ellie was offered a job with the charity but declined it as it was not in the region in which she wanted to live.

The internship experience confirmed for Ellie that the health sector was right for her and when interviewed was applying for an internship in mental health, to build experience towards her newly formulated long-term plan to enter the NHS and there obtain applied qualifications.

Above all what was noticeable was the positivity and self-confidence of most of the interviewees; they remarked that their confidence had risen sharply and many perceived radical step changes in their employability. Some short quotation extracts exemplify those positive feelings:

“I wouldn’t have got this job without the internship”

“I had a fantastic time, a brilliant experience... It was a huge boost to my career... I am now 100% more employable. I didn’t think I was good enough before”

“I think it was absolutely brilliant – a real life saver for me”

“Professional confidence – I am now able to sell myself”

Such positive comments were not restricted to the interviews; the following are a sample of free-text comments within the online survey:

“Personally my internship was fantastic giving me practical skills, insight and experience in my work sector, and directly contributed to gaining paid employment.”

“My employer focused on my development as much as their gains; they were true to their organisational values”

“I was lucky enough to get an internship with an employer where my manager and other staff went out of their way to give me access to projects which would round out my experience and where I wanted to gain practical knowledge”

“I could not have had a better internship. I hope everyone else who has gone through the GTP has had as good an experience as I have.”

Over half (56%) of all respondents said they would recommend the GTP scheme to others, and less than 10% would not, with over 30% likely to re-apply. Of those who had been interns, over 80% of those in paid positions and 77% of those unpaid said they would recommend the GTP scheme to others. It is perhaps notable that as many as 47% of those who had not been successful reported that they would recommend the scheme to others.

Taken together, these figures suggest that the experience of participating in the scheme was positive to some degree for most participants, and very positive indeed for almost all who had secured an internship.

It was noted that the interviews with successful interns were dramatically different from those with the graduates who had not been successful. The interns were almost all very positive, upbeat and confident about their futures, while the few unsuccessful applicants interviewed presented some extremely sorry tales, depressing experiences and some held very negative views about their futures.

5.9.2 Impact based on outcomes for participants

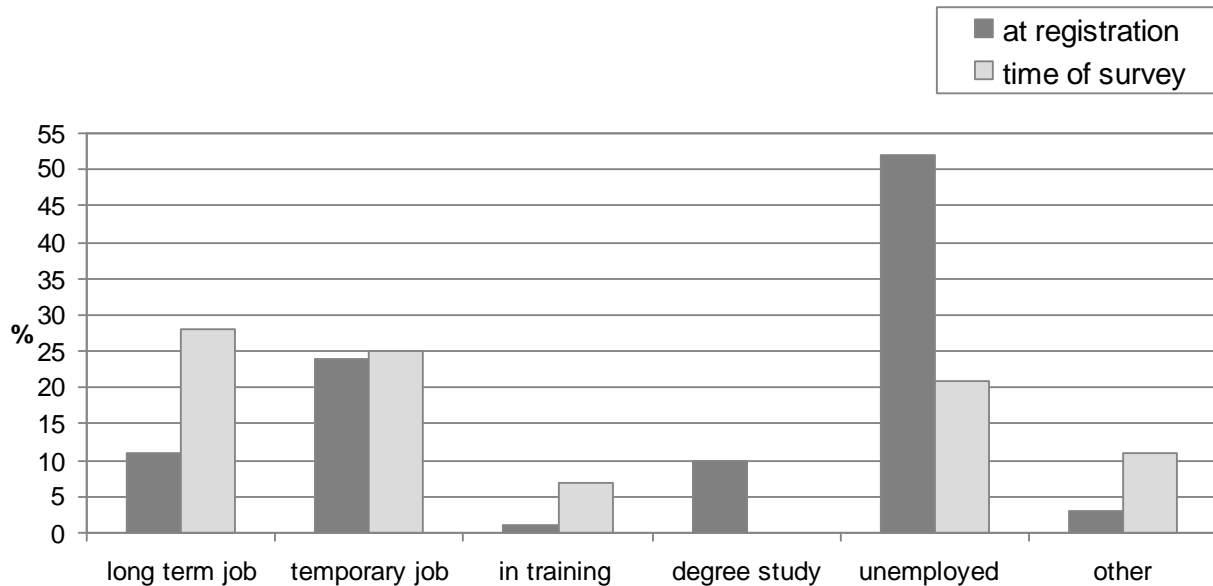
It was hoped that objective evidence for the impact of the scheme could be derived by comparing the employment circumstances of respondents before and after participation in the scheme, and comparing how that varied for different categories of participants.

Overall, the proportions of respondents in long-term employment, short-term or temporary work, unemployed or in other situations are shown in Figure 12, at the time of registration with the GTP and at the time of survey. For most of them, a period of at least 5 months had elapsed between these two points (for a few it was 8-9 months, for a few others 3-4 months).

Overall (i.e. for all respondents), the percentage unemployed had fallen from 52% to 21% at time of survey, while the proportion in long-term employment had risen from 10% to 27%, and those in temporary work had risen slightly to 25%, while 17% were still undertaking an internship. All had ceased studying for their degree when surveyed (previously 10%) but 7% had commenced further training or study, and 11% were undertaking other activities.

When analysed by outcome of their participation in the GTP, of all the interns 25% were now in long-term employment, 48% were undertaking an internship and 13% were unemployed. This includes both those who had completed and those still undertaking their internship. However, the more critical sub-group were those who had completed their internship when surveyed; although the sample size was limited (60), 40% were now in long-term work, 7% in a subsequent internship, 22% in other temporary work and 22% unemployed.

Figure 12. Employment circumstances at registration and at time of survey (all respondents; N=579; multiple responses permitted)



The proportions of both non-applicants and unsuccessful applicants who were unemployed were each about 21% when surveyed, while around 26% now had long-term employment, rather similar to the respective proportions for those who had been or were now interns. Somewhat more of the ‘unsuccessful’ respondents and non-applicants reported that they were in temporary work or were now undertaking further training or study, compared with those who had undertaken internships.

The most positive evidence, in terms of impact, is the high percentage of those who had completed internships and who had now entered long-term employment (40%), albeit of a small sample. Over half of these (22%) were now employed long-term by their internship employer and the other 18% by other employers. From the higher proportion who had indicated, in a separate question, that they had secured a long-term job with the internship employer (33% of completed interns), it is clear that not all had yet started that long-term job, so the proportion who obtained resulting long-term employment is actually higher still than the 40% currently in those jobs at the time of survey.

A potential measure of the overall impact of the scheme might be to compare the fall in the proportion unemployed, from outset to the time of survey, for participants with different outcomes. However, the proportion of completed interns who were unemployed was very similar (in fact slightly higher, at 22%) than the proportion of non-applicants or unsuccessful applicants (21%). For all these groups the proportion had

dropped from over half at the outset (i.e. registration with GTP) to below a quarter at time of survey. What this seems to indicate is that about half of those initially unemployed who had not obtained an internship had managed to find a long-term job during the period that the successful graduates were undertaking their internship. For the latter, it could be that the interns were focusing on their work rather than applying for other long-term jobs and, given the length of most of the internships, would not have had much time since to apply for or obtain other work. This could explain why the proportion of the completed interns who were unemployed was as high as for the other groups and not lower.

5.9.3 Interpretation

The change in the proportion of respondents who were unemployed between scheme registration and the time of survey did not seem to provide a good indicator of the overall impact of the scheme, probably due to the different strategies adopted in relation to job-seeking by the different groups. During that period, which for most was 5-7 months, roughly a quarter of the graduates who did not obtain internships managed to obtain long-term employment one way or another. However, the nature of work and level or 'quality' of those jobs is unknown. In that same period, those who undertook internships gained work experience and skill development, and some directly obtained long-term jobs, but many may have slowed or ceased their job-seeking in the meantime, so the proportion unemployed was no lower than for the other group.

However, the high proportion of completed interns who directly or subsequently entered long-term work (approaching 50%) seems to confirm the value of the internship experience to them in terms of a practical outcome, although subsequent re-contact would be necessary to compare their longer-term outcomes or progress.

Meanwhile, there is powerful evidence from the perceptions held by the majority of those undertaking internships that they had improved their employability, many of the work-related skills sought of graduates by employers, and especially their self-confidence, through their experiences. The qualitative information from the interviewees corroborated this, providing further extremely positive and potentially powerful supporting evidence.

6. Overall Findings

The information collected within the online survey conducted in March 2010 and interviews two months later have been combined to give some understanding of the manner in which graduates were participating in the Graduate Talent Pool, their experiences and a measure of the impact for them. Particular emphasis was placed on the experiences of those who obtained and undertook internships through the scheme. It should be remembered that the period under investigation was the first six months of operation of the scheme, during which it was evolving, and that the respondents could therefore be regarded as 'early adopters', and might not fully represent the body of graduates who would use the scheme once it matured.

6.1 Defined outcomes

- Overall, 22% of respondents obtained and undertook an internship, which potentially extrapolates to c.1440 actual internships in this period across the scheme.
- Over 40% of those who had completed an internship secured long-term employment by the time of survey, which for many was soon after completion; the majority (33%) of these secured a long-term job with the internship employer and this was not restricted to those who had been in paid posts.
- Despite the short time for many between completion of internship and survey, which would have been available for sustained job applications, other 'completed' interns had also obtained long-term jobs, suggesting that they were now more readily employable.
- From registration with the scheme to time of survey, the proportion unemployed fell from 52% to around 22%, for those who had completed internships and also unsuccessful applicants.

6.2 Experiences of the interns

- The vast majority (93%) of interns felt more employable as a result of their experience; half believed the GTP had helped them secure a long-term job and more reported a positive impact on their career thinking.
- Fewer than 10% reported negative experiences, apparently irrespective of whether they were paid or unpaid.
- Interns reported substantial increases in perceived levels of many employability-related skills, particularly commercially-related skills in demand by many employers.
- Self-confidence levels had risen dramatically for many, and all reported forward momentum along their chosen or a revised career path.
- Over 80% of interns (whether paid or unpaid) would recommend the experience

and scheme to others; only a tiny minority felt they had been exploited by the employer.

6.3 Benefits for other participants

- A significant proportion (30%) of those who were unsuccessful in applications were now more aware of skills they needed to augment and 20% were prompted to undertake work-related training as a result.
- Nearly 1 in 5 believed just their activity within the GTP, i.e. making applications for internships, had given them more confidence in future job searching.

6.4 Exploitation or invaluable experience?

- The issue of around one third of internships being unpaid appeared to be of lower significance to the participating graduates than press reports would lead us to expect.
- Many graduates were prepared to apply for and undertake unpaid posts provided they were close to parental home, seeing the potential benefits of the experience they would obtain as fair in relation to working unpaid. However this might have restricted the scheme's value in terms of any aid to social mobility, as not all potential applicants would be able to benefit from living cost-free in the parental or another home.
- Those graduates in unpaid posts were mostly either in sectors with strong competition from graduate applicants (such the media, arts or fashion) or within charities, where support, training and development could be very strong.
- The proportion of unpaid posts in most other commercial sectors was low, with a few exceptions particularly in very small companies.
- Roughly 60% of interns received training and the type of work they undertook was almost universally appropriate for graduates, although the working environment varied widely.

6.5 Graduate 'quality' – who was using the scheme and why?

- Overwhelmingly, GTP participants were 2008 or 2009 UK graduates either unemployed or in temporary work at registration, precisely the stated target group.
- The majority were seeking experiences of work to bolster their CVs and increase their chances in long-term job applications, rather than using an internship as a 'foot in the door' to a particular employer; this also very much reflects the stated objectives of the scheme (i.e. increased employability rather than short-term employment gain).
- Many graduates had limited or no formal work experience, and possibly lower levels of work experience than average for the cohort, although national

measures with which to correlate this fully are not available.

- Many participants tended to be relatively high achievers academically and had studied at Russell Group universities (proportionally more than in the national cohort), with some differential bias towards subjects outside the STEM disciplines.
- If the scheme was designed or expected to cater especially for 'weaker' graduates academically, that did not appear to be realised at this early stage at least, as the profile of participants seemed to match that of traditionally 'strong' graduates who would be normally be targeted by graduate recruiters. Whether these strong graduates tended to be the 'early adopters' or whether this trend continues will require further monitoring.
- Ethnic minority graduates were considerably more highly represented in the scheme, in terms of participants and applicants for internships, in relation to their proportion within the higher education cohort.
- Although there were participants from right across the UK, there was greater participation by graduates based in London and the South East, probably reflecting the high proportions of the early internship vacancies in those regions.
- No genuine measures of 'application quality' were attempted, but participants varied widely in the effort and number of applications made. It is possible that the very range of vacancies on the site encouraged greater quantities of applications to be made by graduates, conceivably at the expense of quality.

6.6 Profile of successful applicants

- Although the decision whether to make applications tended not to vary with traditional measures of graduate 'quality' used by employers (such as degree class, institution or relevant work experience), more of the graduates who were successful in obtaining internships had higher degree classes and came from Russell Group universities. This suggests that employers were using the same recruitment criteria in their selection processes as they would for long-term graduate employment.
- At this early stage of the scheme, it therefore appeared to be supporting many of those who might normally enter graduate recruitment schemes with employers, rather than any 'lower tier' of graduates, although this could be a reflection of a very difficult recruitment market. Whether this position will adjust as the graduate recruitment market improves, or not, will be interesting to observe in future.
- There was some evidence that applicants of ethnic minority background were less successful as applicants, which may merit further and deeper study.

6.7 Perceptions of the scheme

- There was consistent feedback that the GTP scheme offered a better range of vacancies than any other internship website or scheme, and represented certain

sectors (particularly the arts/cultural/creative work, and the public sector) better than other multi-sector schemes.

- Those not making applications had chiefly chosen not to because they perceived there to be few vacancies in their desired employment sector, and/or to a lesser extent in their desired location; this may have related to something of an early predominance in the scheme of employers in London and the South East.
- The website itself was praised, with a few recommendations for introduction of more sophisticated vacancy search functionality (see section 6.8).
- While a large number of the successful interns were full of gratitude for the scheme, a significant number of others bemoaned either the presence of unpaid vacancies at all or too high a proportion of unpaid vacancies.
- Some unsuccessful participants felt it unfair that (they thought) employers demanded relevant work experience, which the scheme was of course designed to provide, and treated applicants somewhat harshly in not making personalised responses to unsuccessful applications (or making none at all).
- University careers services were significant in referring graduates to the scheme from a wide range of HE institutions, which suggests good awareness on their part of the potential value of the GTP. It is perhaps also noteworthy that at least a quarter of the graduates were still in contact with their university careers service, or at least receiving and acting on information supplied by it, several months after they had graduated.

6.8 Recommendations

- The underlying aim of the Graduate Talent Pool is to improve the long-term employability of recent graduates, and to assist their passage into sustained employment within the labour market. Almost all the interns, and many who had not been successful, directly or indirectly expressed support for the scheme to continue.
- In order to extend the potential benefit to graduates more widely, a greater spread and balance of internship vacancies geographically would be beneficial (which may in part have ensued already, since survey, as the scheme has evolved).
- In parallel, continued widening of the scheme in terms of employment sectors and employer types would be beneficial to maximise opportunities for graduates.
- Continued and targeted promotion of the scheme across the entire range of HE institutions could serve to broaden the range of participants; it is hoped that some of the case studies presented here may be useful material within such work.
- Some further development of the website would be welcomed by some users, in particular more sophisticated vacancy search functionality. For example; the ability to search for vacancies by distance from location, by 'fuzzy' search so a

sector/subject does not have to be specified exactly, or Boolean searching (combining terms using “and”, “or”, “not”) could be useful. Other requests for higher levels of functionality, such as tracking of application progress, and application document management, would require linkage with employer processes, likely to be beyond potential future scope.

- A limited amount more applicant support material, and potentially information in terms of expectation management (i.e. success rate trends), could be provided on the website, given the high level of competition, currently, for vacancies. The apparent trend for some graduates to make large numbers of, quite possibly sub-optimal, applications, could be countered with more advice on how to make strong applications. Publication of additional case studies showing the variety of applicant types, and strategies of graduates using the scheme, could also be useful.
- Although in an ideal world all employers would respond personally to all applications, this is perhaps unrealistic and barriers to participation for employers need to remain reasonably low; an alternative strategy could be supply more explanatory information by which to manage the expectations of applicants in this respect.
- Further removal of duplicated vacancies could give a more accurate picture of number of the actual number of vacancies (this will partly have been achieved already with the barring of recruitment agency listings from the scheme).

6.9 Recommendations for future research

One of the key issues the research was unable to address fully quantitatively was the scheme’s effectiveness in terms of the gain of long-term employment. Quite possibly an artefact of the particular timing of the survey in relation to many graduates’ registration with the scheme, the proportion of graduates who had recently completed an internship but were now unemployed was quite similar to the proportion who had not undertaken an internship but were still unemployed. Although there was much supporting and qualitative evidence of the value of the scheme in improving long-term employment outcomes, it would be helpful to investigate this issue further in either or both of the following ways:

- An element of longitudinal work could be useful to track samples of graduates who had obtained internships, and some who had not, through into employment, which could also reveal the ‘quality’ of the jobs they secured.
- In any subsequent snapshot survey of participants, extending the period of time between registration with the scheme and survey could be beneficial both in terms of reducing the proportion of graduates “awaiting outcome” (of applications) but, probably more critically, more fully assessing how many gained long-term employment after completing their internships.
- Periodic re-survey of participants would be valuable to assess the value to

graduates as the scheme develops, as this first evaluation survey took place with graduates who participated very early in the development of the GTP. As it develops to maturity, a better picture of the range of employment sectors, locations and types of participant it will serve in the long term should emerge.

At this early stage of operation of the GTP, conducted during the economic downturn, the research has not been able to distinguish fully the range of types of graduate whom it particularly serves well, in comparison with other activities to support increased employability and the transition to employment. A number of avenues for further study would address this issue more fully:

- The GTP scheme seemed to have strong appeal to graduates of ethnic minority origin, based on the proportions participating and making applications for internships, but the data in this study appeared to show that the results of those applications were markedly less successful. This would seem to merit further research with a larger sample in order to investigate the issue more deeply.
- The data was too limited to assess whether there were significant variations between participation, and/or success in obtaining internships, according to geographical region or by specific degree subjects, and how this might relate to different employment sectors. Again, study with a larger cohort of participants, as the scheme grows, might enable better understanding of such variations, and closer linkage with employer data would enhance investigation of differential application and success rates within different employment sectors or regions.
- The survey did not attempt to make any assessments of the quality of applications, which would also be useful in terms of future assessment of the types of graduate who were served particularly well by the GTP.
- Further work to address the extent, and especially type, of prior work experience of students prior to graduation would be helpful in addressing whether the scheme was particularly effective in supporting those with relatively limited experiences of work. This is likely to involve wider study than merely with GTP participants.
- The socio-economic background of the graduates was not sought directly in the survey. Should future work seek to address the value of the scheme in terms of supporting policy to widen entry to certain professions, and/or other social mobility concerns, such enquiry might need to be incorporated in more robust fashion.
- Repeating evaluation and/or survey work in future years, when the graduate employment market might well be different, would be beneficial to see if some of the trends observed in this study are due mainly to the economic downturn, or whether they sustain into different economic conditions.

7. Conclusions

The underlying aim of the development of the Graduate Talent Pool was to improve the long-term employability of participating graduates, rather than to try to offer a route to immediate employment. The model underlying the scheme facilitates a straightforward transaction directly between employers offering vacancies and the graduates who apply for them. Unlike some other work placement schemes, it is not a “supported” model, i.e. one that includes mediation in the sense of either assisted recruitment or the provision of embedded learning support. However, the model requires little ongoing financial support from Government and therefore has the potential benefit of greater commercial sustainability.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate graduates’ experiences of the scheme and associated internships, in order to assess the scheme’s effectiveness in delivering its outcomes, particularly the development of employability skills and support for graduates’ potential or actual entry to the labour market.

It seems clear that the vast majority of respondents who obtained an internship through the scheme had a very positive experience and believed that they had gained substantially from it in terms of employability and skill development. This seemed largely not to depend upon whether they had been paid or not. Graduates aims in taking part were principally to gain working experience which they could evidence in future job applications, and these seem to have been achieved. In-depth interviews revealed that many felt exceptionally positive after their internships, reporting dramatic rises in self-confidence and perceived employability. Many saw the experience as their first step along the road to their career, which it appeared they might not have taken without the kick-start of the internship.

Those positive experiences and outlooks contrasted sharply with the situations related by graduates who had not been successful in obtaining internships. Despite multiple applications to the GTP scheme, in parallel with other job searching, lack of forward progress in terms of getting either an internship or a long-term job had several of them depressed about their futures, although some were taking alternative career pathways as a result. However, a significant proportion (30%) of these ‘unsuccessful’ applicants reported obtaining some positive benefit in their participation in the scheme, believing that the process had given them additional confidence for future employment applications.

In terms of hard outcomes, around one third of graduates who had completed their internships gained long-term employment with their internship employer. Provided that the research sample was reflective of all participants who registered in the first six months of the scheme (c.6600), an estimate can be derived of c.1440 actual internships

having taken place by time of survey, and hence that c.480 graduates would have obtained long-term jobs directly with those employers. A significant number of others reported that the experience had already helped them gain long-term work with other employers, in the relatively short time after their internship.

Beyond these defined outcomes for certain graduates, it is more difficult to differentiate the unique benefit of this particular scheme for other participants, as most were making use of a range of parallel channels to search for employment including internships, of which the scheme was but one. However, the positive comments made by both respondents and interviewees provide excellent evidence that experiences were beneficial for large numbers of participants.

Certainly, registrants within the scheme were largely those it had targeted, that is to say UK graduates in 2008 and 2009. The nature of those graduates at this early stage appeared to be academically quite 'strong' and precisely the type of graduates whom graduate recruiters might normally target, although possibly somewhat short on work experience. There was no evidence that the scheme was particularly supporting any conceptual 'second tier' of weaker graduates. This could have been due to the weak recruitment market in 2009/10 or because these stronger graduates were motivated to be the 'early adopters' of the scheme.

Those who made unsuccessful applications recognised that there was strong competition; some perceived that employers were able to differentiate between applicants on the basis of the very experiences that the scheme was aiming to provide, amongst other criteria.

In summary terms, approximately one in five of those who registered with the GTP scheme obtained an internship; the others were roughly evenly split between two fifths who applied but did not secure a post, and two fifths who did not make any applications. Those who obtained internships benefited strongly. The strongly competitive position is probably a direct reflection of the weak graduate employment market in the economic downturn, in which the scheme was launched to assist graduates. Only continuation of the scheme and future research will reveal whether this competitive environment is sustained in evolving economic conditions, or whether with those evolving labour market conditions the scheme itself begins to play a different role in assisting different types of graduate, such as a 'second tier', those with limited experiences of work, or those who would particularly benefit from support. Should it do so, it could be well placed as a sustainable mechanism to support the continued development of graduate employability, through which it could potentially support several different policy agendas.

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Appendix A: Additional Data Tables

Table A1. Ethnicity of respondents (N=563)		
	Number	%
Asian/Asian British:		
Bangladeshi	8	1
Indian	49	7
Pakistani	19	3
Other	5	1
Black or Black British:		
African	32	6
Caribbean	7	1
Other	3	*
Chinese	18	3
Mixed:		
White/Asian	8	1
White/Black African	1	1
White/Black Caribbean	2	*
Other Mixed Background	10	2
	13	2
White British	348	62
White Other	39	7
TOTAL	563	100.0

Table A2. Domicile of all respondents (N=579). Percentages of employers are based on the number of employers participating in the scheme September-December 2010 (the closest available report period), using data from Graduate Prospects Ltd.			
	Number	%	% of employers
England:			
North West	62	11	8
North East	14	2	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	35	6	5
East Midlands	25	4	8
West Midlands	41	7	8
East of England	24	4	6
London	137	24	32
South East	102	18	18
South West	42	7	11
TOTAL (England)	482	83	98
Scotland	16	3	2
Wales	15	3	*
Northern Ireland	5	*	*
Other EU Country	27	5	-
Other Country (non-EU)	34	6	-
TOTAL	579	100	100

Table A3. Degree subjects of respondents, using JACS Subject Groups (N=579). Corresponding UK cohort percentages are for first degree qualifications obtained in 2008/2009, normalised to account for absent categories (e.g. medicine, education)			
	Number	%	% UK cohort
Subjects allied to Medicine	2	0.3	10.3
Biological Sciences	32	5.5	10.1
Veterinary Science / Agriculture	9	1.6	1.0
Physical Sciences	30	5.2	4.4
Mathematical Sciences & Computing	53	9.2	6.6
Engineering	37	6.4	6.8
Architecture, Building and Planning	13	2.2	2.9
Social Studies	70	12.1	13.3
Legal	34	5.9	5.0
Business & Administration	102	17.6	15.5
Mass Communications & Documentation	37	6.4	3.2
English and Related Studies	36	6.2	} 5.4
European and Related Studies	26	4.5	
Other Languages and Studies	5	0.9	
Historical & Philosophical Studies	44	7.6	5.4
Arts and Creative	49	8.5	11.3
TOTAL	579	100.0	100.0
Broad groupings:			
STEM	177	30.4	42.1
Social/business	243	42.0	35.6
Arts/humanities/creative	160	27.6	22.1

Table A4. Upper: Number and proportion of internship vacancies by employment sector, and percentage of them paid, Sept-Dec 2009 (information from Graduate Prospects); Lower: Respondents making applications (N=360) and internships secured (N=142) by sector.

	No. of vacancies	% of all vacancies	% of vacancies paid
Finance/professional services	543	8	58
IT & communications	755	12	65
Manufacturing & engineering	255	4	85
Charity	1585	24	14
Media-related	253	4	44
Marketing/advertising/PR	254	4	65
Built environment	108	3	78
Creative & cultural	210	2	37
Retail & logistics	469	7	79
Leisure & tourism	161	3	58
Government & public admin	626	10	98
Health/education/social care	1039	16	76
Other	298	3	56
TOTAL	6556	100	

	% of applications	% of internships
Finance/professional services	12	6
IT & communications	11	8
Manufacturing & engineering	8	6
Charity	5	8
Media-related	9	8
Marketing/advertising/PR	14	15
Built environment	3	1
Creative & cultural	9	4
Retail & logistics	2	3
Leisure & tourism	1	1
Government & public admin	15	25
Health/education/social care	4	5
Other	8	9
TOTAL	100	100

Table A5. Universities and HE institutions of respondents, by number

Name of University	Number of responses
Aberdeen	1
Aberystwyth	1
Aston	2
Bangor	3
Bath	4
Bath Spa	3
Birkbeck, University of London	2
Birmingham	10
Birmingham City	4
Birmingham University College	1
Bolton	6
Bournemouth	6
Bournemouth Arts	2
Bradford	2
Brighton	2
Bristol	9
Brunel	7
Bucks New University	1
Cambridge	19
Canterbury Christ Church	4
Cardiff	6

Name of University	Number of responses
Cass Business School, London	1
Central Lancashire	9
Chelsea College	1
City University London	4
Coventry	6
Cranfield	1
De Montfort	9
Derby	2
Dundee	1
Durham	7
East Anglia	6
East London	3
Edge Hill University	2
Edinburgh	7
Essex	6
Exeter	10
Falmouth University College	1
Glamorgan	2
Glasgow Caledonian	1
Glasgow	4
Gloucestershire	2
Glyndwr	1

Name of University	Number of responses
Goldsmiths, University of London	2
Greenwich	3
Heriot-Watt	2
Hertfordshire	3
Huddersfield	4
Hull	8
Imperial College London	2
Institute of Education, London	1
Keele	5
Kent	9
King's College London	6
Kingston	8
Lancaster	7
Leeds	20
Leeds Community College	1
Leeds Metropolitan	7
Leicester	5
Lincoln	5
Liverpool	10
Liverpool College	1
Liverpool John Moores	6
London College of Fashion	1
London Metropolitan	5
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)	9

Name of University	Number of responses
London South Bank	2
Loughborough	7
Manchester	21
Manchester College	1
Manchester Metropolitan	7
Middlesex	5
Napier (Edinburgh)	1
Newcastle	9
Northampton	1
Northumbria	5
Norwich City College	1
Nottingham	20
Nottingham Trent	6
Open University	1
Oxford	11
Oxford Brookes	3
Plymouth	4
Portsmouth	11
Preston	1
Queen Margaret (Edinburgh)	1
Queen Mary, University of London	14
Reading	4
Robert Gordon (Edinburgh)	2
Roehampton	2

Name of University	Number of responses
Royal Holloway, University of London	5
Salford	4
Sheffield	8
Sheffield Hallam	7
SOAS	4
Southampton	3
Southampton Solent	3
St Andrews	1
St Mary's	1
Staffordshire	3
Strathclyde	5
Sunderland	2
Surrey	1
Sussex	6
Swansea	2
Swansea Metropolitan	1
Teesside	2
Thames Valley	1
University College London	10
University for Creative Arts	4
University of the Arts	3
University of the West of England	6
University of the West of Scotland	1
University of Wales Institute	3

Name of University	Number of responses
Cardiff	
Warwick	13
Westminster	6
Winchester	2
Wolverhampton	3
York	6
Total (UK)	566
Total (UK)	566
Non-UK (EU)	9
Non-UK (other)	7
TOTAL	579

Appendix B: Online Survey Questionnaire

Welcome

The purpose of this survey is to understand your experience of the Graduate Talent Pool internships scheme. The research is being conducted by CRAC, a careers charity, for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, which runs the scheme. Survey responses are confidential and will only be seen by the research team at CRAC; no individuals will be identified without prior permission.

Everyone completing the questionnaire and giving their e-mail address will be entered into our prize draw to win a high-spec digital SLR camera or an i-phone 3GS worth around £500.

Please answer every question if you can. Questions marked with an asterisk () are compulsory. Once you have completed a page you cannot go back and change your answers, although you can go back to review them. Completing the survey should not take you more than 15 minutes at most.*

*If you have any queries about the survey please contact emma.day@crac.org.uk
Thanks for taking part.*

About your higher education

This information about your university degree will help us to compare the situation of different groups of respondents. (If you have a higher degree, answer on the basis of that last experience.)

*1(a). At what university did you study (e.g. York)?

*1(b). What was your degree subject (e.g. Economics)?

*1(c). For what type of qualification/degree were you studying?

BA, BSc or other Bachelors

MA, MSc or other Masters

PhD or equivalent

Other higher education (please specify)

*2(a). In which year did you graduate?

Before 2008

2008

2009

2(b). What was the class of your degree?

1st

2.1

2.2

3rd

Pass

Other (please specify)*

When you registered

This section asks about your personal circumstances when you first came to the Graduate Talent Pool website/scheme.

*3. What were your employment circumstances when you first visited the Graduate Talent Pool site?

(Tick all that apply)

In long-term work (full or part time)

In temporary work (full or part time)

Self-employed (full or part time)

Doing voluntary work

Unemployed

Taking a break / gap year

Still studying for degree

Undertaking another course / training scheme

Permanently unable to work

Temporarily sick or caring for home/family

Other (please specify)

Previous working experience

4. What experiences of work had you had prior to coming to the Graduate Talent Pool site?

(Tick any that apply)

Worked/self-employed since graduation

Worked/self-employed long-term prior to attending university

Undertook temporary work prior to university (e.g. gap year)

Undertook work experience during university (vacation/sandwich/placement)

Did casual jobs only (bar work etc)

No substantial experiences of work

Other (please specify)

Why the Graduate Talent Pool scheme?

We are keen to learn more about how you came across the scheme/website and why

*5. What prompted you to visit the Graduate Talent Pool website?

(Tick all or any that apply)

- Recommendation of a friend
- Recommendation of a tutor / faculty member
- Recommendation of university careers service
- Media advert
- Personal search (e.g. Google)
- Don't remember
- Other (please specify)

*6. What were your aims in registering with the Graduate Talent Pool scheme?

(Tick all that apply)

- To increase my chances of getting a job with a particular employer
- To increase my chances of employment in my probable career area
- To gain experience to improve long-term career prospects
- To gain specific skills for work
- To gain some work experience to improve employability
- To gain employment generally (i.e. to pay your way)
- Other (please specify)

7. When you registered, what else had you been doing to find a job?

(Tick all that apply)

- Started looking for long-term employment
- Started looking for short-term/temporary employment
- Applied for jobs related to your long-term career plans
- Applied for short-term jobs
- Been offered a job related to your long-term career plans
- Other (please specify)

First impressions

We'd like you to recall your impressions of the Graduate Talent Pool website when you first used it and/or applied for an internship.

8. What was your impression of the Graduate Talent Pool website?

Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't remember / Not applicable

- Professional looking
- Good range of information/content

Well organised and easy to navigate

Easy registration process

Other comments?

Internship vacancies

9. What did you think of the internship vacancies available?

Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't remember / Not applicable

Sufficient number of vacancies in my desired location

Good balance of vacancies in different locations

Sufficient number of vacancies in my desired line of work

Good range of types of work available

Vacancies available of the right duration

Sufficient number of paid vacancies

Good balance of paid and unpaid vacancies

Any other comments?

*10. Did you apply for an internship within the Graduate Talent Pool?

Yes

No

Your internship application/s

We'd like to know how your application/s turned out.

*11. What was the outcome of your application/s?

I secured and have completed an internship

I secured and am currently undertaking an internship

I was offered an internship but have not started it yet

I was offered an internship but did not accept it

I applied for internship/s and am waiting to see if successful

I applied for internship/s but was not successful

Your internship

*12(a). In what line of work was/is your internship?

Please select the employment sector from the drop-down menu

12(b). Was/is this an area of work (or type of job) in which you thought you might want a long-term career?

Yes

Possibly

No

12(c). How many applications for internships did you make in total?

- Only 1
- 2-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- More than 10

13(a). When did your internship start?

Please write the month as mm and year as yyyy

- Starting month
- Year

*13(b). How long was/is the internship?

Please state length in whole months

*13(c). How was/is the internship remunerated?

- Paid
- Expenses only
- Unpaid

13(d). Did you (or do you expect to) complete the internship?

- Yes
- No
- If no, please briefly specify why not

[only for those who did not accept internship offer/s]

[13(f). Why did you not accept the offer?

(Tick all that apply)

- Took up other employment
- Took up other training opportunity or further study
- Internship was in unsuitable location
- Internship was insufficiently paid
- Internship was too short
- Internship was not really the desired sort of work
- Other (please specify)]

14. During the internship, what sort of training did you receive?

- Training specific to the job role
- More general workplace training
- None

The value of your internship experience

*15. Have you developed any of the following skills during your internship?

A great deal / Partly / Slightly / Not at all / Not applicable

- Commercial awareness
- Communications
- Customer awareness
- Influencing/negotiating
- Leadership
- Practical ICT skills
- Prioritisation
- Problem-solving
- Teamworking
- Time management
- Other skills improved (please specify)

16(a). Has the experience made you aware of particular skills you wish to enhance in order to improve your career prospects?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify skill type

*16(b). Do you think you are now more employable as a result of your internship?

Yes

No

If no, tell us why not; if yes, specify the biggest benefit

The long-term value

*17. What has been the impact of the internship experience for you?

(Tick all that apply)

- The employer has offered me a longer-term job
- It has helped me gain employment elsewhere
- I now feel more confident in making job applications
- It has confirmed my intended career direction
- It has changed my ideas of the sort of work I want to do
- It has prompted me to apply for work-related training or other study
- It has prompted me to apply for more internships
- It wasted my time by delaying my entry to the labour market
- I was treated as cheap labour and did not really benefit
- It has put me off long-term employment
- Nothing yet
- Other (please specify)

[only for those who did not make any applications]

[*18. For what reason did you not make any applications for an internship?

(Tick all that apply)

- Secured other employment
- Applied for or secured internship through another route
- Secured other training opportunity or entered further study
- Insufficient vacancies in my desired location
- Insufficient vacancies in my desired line of work
- Insufficient paid vacancies
- Insufficient vacancies of the duration I desired
- Other (please specify)]

Your current situation

*19. What is your employment/training position now?

(Tick all that apply)

- Undertaking my first internship
- Undertaking a subsequent internship
- Awaiting outcome of internship application
- Awaiting outcome of other job application/s
- In long-term employment with internship employer
- In other long-term employment or self-employment
- In temporary work
- Undertaking work-related training or further study
- Temporarily sick or caring for home/family
- Unemployment
- Taking a break from work
- Permanently unable to work
- Other (please specify)

Reflection on the Graduate Talent Pool scheme

*20. Would you do or have you done any of the following:

(Tick any that apply)

- Recommend/ed other people or friends to use the scheme?
- Make/made subsequent applications for more GTP internships?
- Suggest/ed to other people or friends that they should NOT use the scheme?
- None of these?
- Not applicable
- Other (please specify)

21. Are there any other comments that you would like to make based on your experience?

Background information

In order to help us understand your views, we would like to know something about you. These questions are for statistical purposes only and no one will be identified in any report we make.

*22. Are you:

Male?

Female?

*23. How old are you?

(Please give your age in years)

*24. Where are you from?

[dropdown list of English regions, UK nations, EU / non-EU]

If from outside the UK, please specify nationality

25. Which group best describes your ethnic origin or descent?

26. Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long-term health condition that could affect your employment prospects?

Yes

No

If yes, what is the nature of your disability/health condition

Please give your name and email address if you want to be included in the prize draw.

(Your email address will not be used outside this research project)

Name:

Email address:

Would you be prepared to be interviewed in more detail by telephone? If so, please give us the best number on which to contact you, and your email address if not given above.

No

Yes

Telephone number & e-mail

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix C: Analysis of Survey Free-text Responses

Over 200 of the respondents made free-text comments of varying kinds, either to specify the nature of an “other” response, or in response to an invitation more broadly to comment on their experiences. Thematic analysis of the responses which contained specific information, opinion or recommendations, was undertaken and is summarised below. The number of responses (*N*) is given for each category. However, it should be remembered that these are not representative data, but solely indicative of the responses of this subset of respondents.

Positive experiences and attitudes

Response theme	<i>N</i>
Positive experience of internship	10
Positive experience of GTP scheme	8
Improvement of skills and experience	7
Range of vacancies on offer	7

Negative experiences and attitudes

Response theme	<i>N</i>
Lack of response to applications	15
Range/number of vacancies available	12
Presence of unpaid internship positions	10
Disappointing outcome of GTP scheme participation	5
Employer response demanded experience	4
Negative experience of internship	4

Internship opportunities available

Response theme	N
Lack of opportunities in specific desired employment sector	20
Lack of opportunities in desired geographical location	14*
Insufficient paid vacancies	10
Good range within GTP scheme	7

* includes 4 outside England

Specific recommendations

Response theme	N
Introduce more sophisticated search capability	8
Widen eligibility to other graduates (pre-2008, also non-UK)	5
Introduce employer vetting (type of work, recruitment process)	4
Remove recruitment agency offers	3*
Narrow eligibility by restriction to only 1 internship per graduate	1

* Commercial agencies were barred after early months

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