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A' brosnachadh foghlam adhartach agus àrd ìre

# On Track: Class of 2007–Sweep Three

Prepared for the Scottish Funding Council  
by IFF Research

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## 1 Summary of key findings

This report presents the findings of the third ‘sweep’ of the *On Track 2: Class of 2007* research study, conducted by IFF Research on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council. On Track 2 is a longitudinal study providing insight into the outcomes of education by tracking the life choices and careers of the 2007 cohort of qualifiers from Scottish universities and colleges.

Sweep Three of the research caught up with students around three years after completing their course, and aimed to assess the on-going impact of study on individuals’ lives and careers.

This summary provides an outline of key findings, with references to sections within the main report where more detailed information can be found. A table of key findings for the college and university cohorts is also provided at the end of this summary for quick reference.

### **Destinations of 2007 college and university leavers**

When followed up for Sweep Three in late 2010, 98 per cent of 2007 university leavers and 95 per cent of college leavers were in paid employment, education or training, were between jobs or on maternity leave, a gap year or had chosen not to be in paid employment. The majority of 2007 college (73 per cent) and university (81 per cent) leavers were working as a full-time or part-time employee or self-employed (Table 3.1). A further 16 per cent of college leavers and 13 per cent of university leavers were in education or training.

Since Sweep Two there had been a decrease in the number of college leavers in education (16 per cent down from 21 per cent). This decrease was not mirrored by a corresponding increase in employment (either part-time or full-time). Instead, reflecting the tighter job market, unemployment and self-employment/freelance work had increased (both 3 per cent at Sweep Two to 5 per cent at Sweep Three). (Figure 3.2).

Unlike college leavers, a similar drop in the proportion of university leavers in education had led to an increase in employment (71 per cent were in full-time employment at Sweep Three compared with 68 per cent at Sweep Two) and a continued decrease in unemployment (8 per cent at Sweep One, 3 per cent at Sweep Two and 2 per cent at Sweep Three). (Figure 3.3)

The median salary grew between Sweeps Two and Three by 14 per cent to £25,000 for employed university leavers and by 15 per cent to £17,300 for

employed college leavers. This compares with a 4 per cent median increase in UK wages as a whole over the same period.

Nine in ten (88 per cent) of the Class of 2007 who were working as an employee (or on maternity leave) at Sweep Two were still in employment at Three. Half of the Class of 2007 (51 per cent) were working part-time or full-time in the Public Administration, Health and Education sector.

Three quarters (75 per cent) were still working for the same employer while a quarter (25 per cent) had moved on to a different employer. The majority of individuals working for the same employer at Sweep Three had seen increases in pay (82 per cent), job satisfaction (72 per cent), responsibility (75 per cent), prospects (64 per cent) while half feel they have more job security (53 per cent) and a quarter of college leavers (26 per cent) and two fifths (44 per cent) of university leavers had secured a promotion (Figures 3.9 and 3.10). Those changing employers had also experienced a range of benefits and improvements (Figure 3.11).

As shown in Figure 3.14, the majority of the Class of 2007 who were in employment in late 2010 believed their current job was the one they wanted to be working in the longer term (69 per cent of college leavers and 65 per cent of university leavers agree) indicating that majorities of both college leavers and university leavers were content in their current position and can be considered to be 'On Track'. More than half of the Class of 2007 who were in employment in late 2010 however view their current job as a stepping stone to what they want to be doing in the longer term.

More than half the Class of 2007 (56 per cent) had gone on to further learning since their 2007 course. In the majority of cases, this further learning is/was at a higher level than the 2007 course (64 per cent of 2007 leavers' current or most recent learning). Former college students were more likely to have moved on to a higher level course or learning (70 per cent) than university graduates (52 per cent).

## **Debt**

One fifth (19 per cent) of the Class of 2007 had some form of outstanding debt as a result of their 2007 course (Table 5.1). University graduates were considerably more likely to have such debt (35 per cent compared with 11 per cent of college leavers). Around half (47 per cent) of university leavers who were under 25 in late 2008 had outstanding debts.

Among those with debts, a third (34 per cent) had less than £5,000 outstanding, a quarter (23 per cent) had between £5,000 and £10,000 and a

third (33 per cent) had over £10,000 of debt. University leavers with debt were more likely to have had these larger debts (44 per cent had at least £10,000 of debt).

These learners anticipate that it will take them a substantial amount of time to clear their debt: three in ten (28 per cent) of those with debt believe they will be clear within the next two to five years while two fifths (42 per cent) expect it will take them longer than five years to be clear of their debt (Table 5.2).

### **Perceptions of the impact and value of the learning experience**

The Class of 2007 were positive about the long-term impact of their course on their overall career prospects, with over four fifths (83 per cent) agreeing to some extent that these had improved (81 per cent of college learners, 86 per cent of university learners – see Figure 6.1). Two fifths (37 per cent) of college leavers and 24 per cent of university leavers also believed their course gave them the necessary skills to set up a business.

However, the proportion of individuals at Sweep Three who agreed that the course had improved their career prospects (along with their further learning prospects and vocational skills) has fallen since Sweeps One and Two. This may reflect a number of factors: a general drop in confidence in job security and progression opportunities as a result of the recession; an increasing recognition, because of greater employment experience, that college or university qualifications are not the sole driver of career progression; and the fact that more than half the cohort (56 per cent) had gone on to further study, most of which has been at a higher level and vocational in its focus. This further learning is therefore more likely to be seen as beneficial to the learner's career at the expense of the value assigned to the course completed in 2007.

Learners were asked whether they felt three years after completion that the benefits of the 2007 course outweigh the time and effort put in. Across all learners, the results were positive, with almost nine in ten (86 per cent) agreeing that on balance the benefits outweigh the time and effort (see Figure 6.2). Learners were also positive that the benefits of the 2007 course outweighed the associated financial costs – four fifths (79 per cent) agreed (Figure 6.3). Levels of agreement were equal among university and college students

Whilst most of the Class of 2007 felt that on balance their course was beneficial, there was a substantial minority within the cohort who believed that if they had the choice again, they would be likely to choose a different

path (Figure 6.4). Three in five (62 per cent) of the Sweep Three cohort would consider making changes to their 2007 course in terms of subject, qualification type, institution, and entering into learning altogether. College leavers (66 per cent) would be more likely to make such a change than university leavers (55 per cent).

### **Intentions for the future**

The Class of 2007 were most likely to want to remain in their current role with the same employer (45 per cent), continue with (or return to) study or training (27 per cent) or make various changes of employment type (19 per cent).

However, university graduates were relatively more settled in their current job and were less likely to want to make changes to their employment (50 per cent wanted to stay in the same job with the same employer). College leavers remained more keen to move on, for some a reflection of ambitions still to be met.

Further learning had become less of a priority for both groups (a decrease of around 8 per cent compared with Sweep Two). Almost one in 10 (9 per cent), however, anticipated that they would be in education or training in 2012.

Three per cent of both college and university leavers plan to start a new business or to go freelance. These proportions were relatively unchanged from Sweep Two.

Learners' confidence about achieving their ambitions is high, especially amongst those who do not intend to make many changes (93 per cent feel confident). Those who want to find a new job or employer were least confident they will succeed in doing so (70 per cent).

The proportion of learners anticipating one or more barriers to achieving their goals has increased since Sweep Two. Perceived difficulties were largely related to the recent recession (19 per cent mention the current economic climate). College leavers were a lot more likely to expect barriers than university leavers (57 per cent compared with 41 per cent).

Six in 10 university leavers (59 per cent) and nine in 10 college leavers (89 per cent) expect to be based in Scotland in late 2012.

## **The impact of study for different types of learner**

### ***Young college learners***

Young college learners remain a very satisfied group in terms of progress they feel have made to date – only 6 per cent were not satisfied with their progress so far.

They are a group on the move. A third have moved employer since Sweep Two (33 per cent) and they were also more likely to consider their current job as a stepping stone (66 per cent) than their fellow learners.

Further learning is also high on their agenda: six in 10 (61 per cent) had gone on to do more learning since leaving their 2007 course while a further third (36 per cent) would like to continue learning in coming years.

Yet in spite of the evident progress, young college learners have made since leaving their 2007 course, they were the most likely group to imagine making changes to their 2007 learning in hindsight, particularly in terms of subject (37 per cent) and qualification (54 per cent).

### ***Young university students***

Young university learners were the most likely to have realised the ambitions set after completing their course in 2007. Four fifths (80 per cent) were in professional level jobs and nine in 10 (90 per cent) were satisfied with the progress they had made.

While this group was most likely to have outstanding debt, they were also amongst the highest earners (with a median wage of £24,000) and those who had worked for the same employer since Sweep Two had seen significant improvements at work in terms of promotions and pay rises.

They remain ambitious and many were intent on progressing further. Three fifths (61 per cent) of those in work saw their job as a stepping stone to better things (compared with 56 per cent of the overall cohort in work). They expect to be earning the most of all learner types in two years' time – 45 per cent believed they will be earning at least £30,000 in 2012.

With these achievements in mind and the promising prospects ahead, it is no surprise that young university students were the least likely group to imagine making changes to their 2007 course in hindsight.

### *Employer-driven college learners*

This group experienced more stability than most, if not all, the other groups. They were among the most likely to be employed, with many still working for the same employer as at Sweep Two (82 per cent). Hence employer-driven college learners were also the most likely group to want to stay in their current job (80 per cent compared with 67 per cent overall).

Employer-driven college learners' primary ambition upon leaving their 2007 course was to continue working in their existing jobs and their perception of the course in hindsight was very positive because so many of the group had been able to continue and develop in these roles with the help of the course.

They were generally very happy with their 2007 course choices and were the most likely group to attribute career improvements to their 2007 course. Reflecting their achieved ambition to continue and develop in work for their existing employer, they were amongst the most satisfied with their progress to date.

### *Career changers*

Learners who embarked on their 2007 course to facilitate or help with changing career were a little less satisfied with their progress so far (87 per cent compared with 92 per cent overall). To some extent, this reflects the fact that they were among the least likely to be employed full-time and to have experienced improvements at work. They also have the second highest levels of debt.

Many career changers had not yet achieved their ambition of changing career or changing to a different type of work. Indeed, fewer career changers in work at Sweep Three considered their current job to be one they intend to continue with in the long term (57 per cent compared with 68 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall; 80 per cent of employer-driven college learners and 72 per cent of career builders).

However, career changers were more likely to feel their 2007 course has provided them with skills to help change to a different type of work (68 per cent compared with 60 per cent overall), showing that while they might not have achieved their aims yet, the majority feel their course has served its purpose.



### *Career builders*

People who pursued their 2007 course in order to build their career were amongst the most satisfied (95 per cent). Not only were they the most likely to work in management level positions (25 per cent), but they were also the highest paid group with a median salary of £27,000.

Career builders were settled in their current job with almost three quarters (72 per cent) wanting to stay in it long term. They had generally consolidated their career with many in a full-time role with the same employer as in Sweep Two. However, career builders felt least secure in their current roles, a likely reflection of the economic difficulties faced over the last few years.

This satisfaction with their progress so far also means career builders were amongst the least likely to imagine making changes to their 2007 course in hindsight (around 4 per cent lower than the cohort overall).

### *Previously unemployed learners*

Previously unemployed learners continue to struggle the most. As many as one in five were unemployed (19 per cent compared with 4 per cent overall) and many had not achieved their ambition of finding full-time work. For those in work, a third (33 per cent) considered their current employment to be something temporary until a better position becomes available – higher than the 23 per cent found overall among the Class of 2007.

Fewer previously unemployed learners had gone on to further learning by the time of Sweep Three (49 per cent compared with 56 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall) and in turn, six out of 10 (59 per cent) of those who had not gone on to further study stated that they would have liked to have done so – much higher proportion than the two fifths (42 per cent) found overall.

This group was also very likely to imagine making changes to their 2007 course in hindsight (68 per cent – only second to young college learners).

All in all, the previously unemployed group remain the least satisfied with their life and career to date; almost one fifth were not satisfied, compared to only 8 per cent across the 2007 cohort as a whole. It is clear that these learners had not experienced the levels of employment and learning outcomes that other Types had experienced although, even with this group, the majority were satisfied and felt they had progressed.

### *Women returners*

Women returners saw the fewest improvements in work or learning and were also amongst the least satisfied with their progress to date (84 per cent compared to 92 per cent overall).

They struggled to secure full-time work (25 per cent have done so compared with 61 per cent overall) and their median salaries were the lowest among the Class of 2007 (just £12,000 per year).

No doubt in some part due to a lack of progress, women returners were least likely to feel the course had improved their career prospects (77 per cent) and in hindsight over a third (35 per cent) would do something entirely different to study or training.

### *Summary*

The key findings from Sweep Three are shown in the table below.

**Table 1.1 Sweep Three key findings: college and university cohorts**

Base = All 2007 learners (college: 2,359 university: 2,585 overall: 4,944)

<b>Destinations of 2007 college and university leavers</b>	<b>College cohort</b>	<b>University cohort</b>	<b>Overall</b>
When followed up for Sweep Three in late 2010, the majority of 2007 college and university leavers were working as a full-time or part-time employee were or self-employed.	73%	81%	76%
One in seven learners was engaged with further learning or training when followed up at Sweep Three.	16%	13%	15%
Over half of learners had gone on to further learning or training since leaving their 2007 course.	54%	59%	56%

<b>The value and impact of studying at college or university</b>	<b>College cohort</b>	<b>University cohort</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Half of all former learners agreed strongly that completing their college or university course in 2007 had a positive impact on their career prospects.	52%	57%	54%

A third of learners believed that their 2007 course had helped them develop the skills and knowledge needed to set up a business.	37%	24%	32%
Approaching nine in ten learners felt with hindsight that the benefits of taking the course still outweighed the time and effort involved.	85%	86%	85%
Eight in 10 learners felt with hindsight that the benefits of taking the course still outweighed the financial expense involved.	79%	79%	79%
A significant minority of learners said they would be likely to choose a path other than study or training if they were to make the decision again.	34%	19%	28%
One in five learners have some form of debt as a result of undertaking their 2007 course.	11%	35%	19%

## 2 Project outline and research objectives

This report presents the findings of the third ‘sweep’ of the *On Track 2: Class of 2007* research study, conducted by IFF Research on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). On Track 2 is a longitudinal study providing a unique insight into the outcomes of education by tracking the life choices and careers of the 2007 cohort of qualifiers from Scottish universities and colleges. This survey follows on from the first On Track study which focused on a cohort of 2004 qualifiers.

The overall aim of the study is to gauge the impact that an individual’s learning experience has on their subsequent path of study and employment and ultimately the information collected will be used to:

- help both colleges and universities to assess and improve the relevance of their provision and services to learners;
- help learners and potential learners make well-informed decisions about their learning, and career paths; and
- aid understanding of how policy-makers, education providers and employers can work together to improve the employability of learners in Scotland.

The research is also relevant to SFC’s core aims for the period to 2009 as follows:

- ensuring learning provision and programmes are of high quality; and
- ensuring that learning provision is relevant to students’ lives and careers, society and the economy.

The research has tracked the progress of individuals who completed a qualification at a Scottish college or university in 2007 at three points in time:

### **Sweep One**

Sweep One of the research involved an online and telephone survey of c.14, 000 college and university learners, conducted between September 2007 and March 2008. At this early stage following completion of their course of learning, learners were asked about their views of the learning experience, the benefits of the learning in terms of skills developed and the personal and vocational benefits, and the extent to which they had had access to useful careers advice and guidance during their course.

## **Sweep Two**

Sweep Two of the research involved online surveys and structured telephone interviews with 9,160 learners initially interviewed at Sweep One. Sweep Two was conducted between October 2008 and January 2009 (around 12 to 18 months after learners completed their course in 2007).

A key objective at Sweep Two was to obtain more information on the different routes learners take into college or university education. To assess whether learners were 'on track' to meet their goals, we linked outcomes to the learner's situation before starting their course, their reasons for taking the course and their intentions and ambitions following completion in 2007. The information collected was used to construct a typology of learners, with seven categories that have been followed through into the Sweep Three report. Full details of this typology can be found in the methodological appendix to this report.

Sweep Two focused on how the course had benefitted learners and whether they would make any changes in hindsight, the use of careers advice and guidance services, and expectations and priorities for the future – as well as ascertaining learners' motivations and intentions on enrolment and after finishing their course in order to develop the typologies.

Information that was established at Sweep One and therefore not replicated in Sweep Two included demographic information, educational and employment histories, reasons for selecting the 2007 course and satisfaction with specific aspects of the course, tuition and learning experience.

## **Sweep Three**

Sweep Three followed the same fieldwork format as Sweep Two, with 4,944 online and telephone surveys completed with learners interviewed at Sweeps One and Two. Fieldwork took place between October and December 2010 (around 36 to 42 months after learners completed their course in 2007).

New question areas or modifications made for Sweep Three were:

- separately ascertaining whether learners agreed that the benefits of completing the course outweighed a) the time and effort involved and b) the associated costs;
- finding out about the intentions of learners taking time out or on a gap year at Sweep Three;

- finding out why learners who left jobs they were doing at Sweep Two had left;
- finding out more about subsequent study – whether those in learning at Sweeps Two and Three were on the same course or a different course, establishing the relative usefulness of subsequent learning to compare to perceptions of the 2007 course, and finding out whether those who had not entered into further learning since the 2007 course would have liked to have done and why they did not;
- looking separately at the use made of the careers advice services at the 2007 institution and (where applicable) any subsequent institutions; and
- ascertaining whether at Sweep Three learners had any outstanding debt as a result of their 2007 course – and where they did, the amount of debt they had and how long they anticipated it would take to clear the debt.

Questions removed from the Sweep Three survey related to:

- satisfaction with the course and learning experience;
- personal development and skills improvement as a result of the 2007 course; and
- the likelihood of recommending the 2007 course.

### **3 A note on definitions**

Please note that throughout the report ‘universities’ refers to all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

For analysis purposes, in some places in the report the college and university cohorts have been split according to the level of qualification that was completed. In the case of college students, the distinction has been made between those completing an ‘advanced’ qualification (defined as being equivalent to Level 6 or above on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)), and those completing a ‘non-advanced’ college qualification at SCQF Level 1 to 5. The university cohort has been divided into those who completed undergraduate qualifications and those who were studying at a postgraduate level.

## 4 Destinations and progression of 2007 leavers

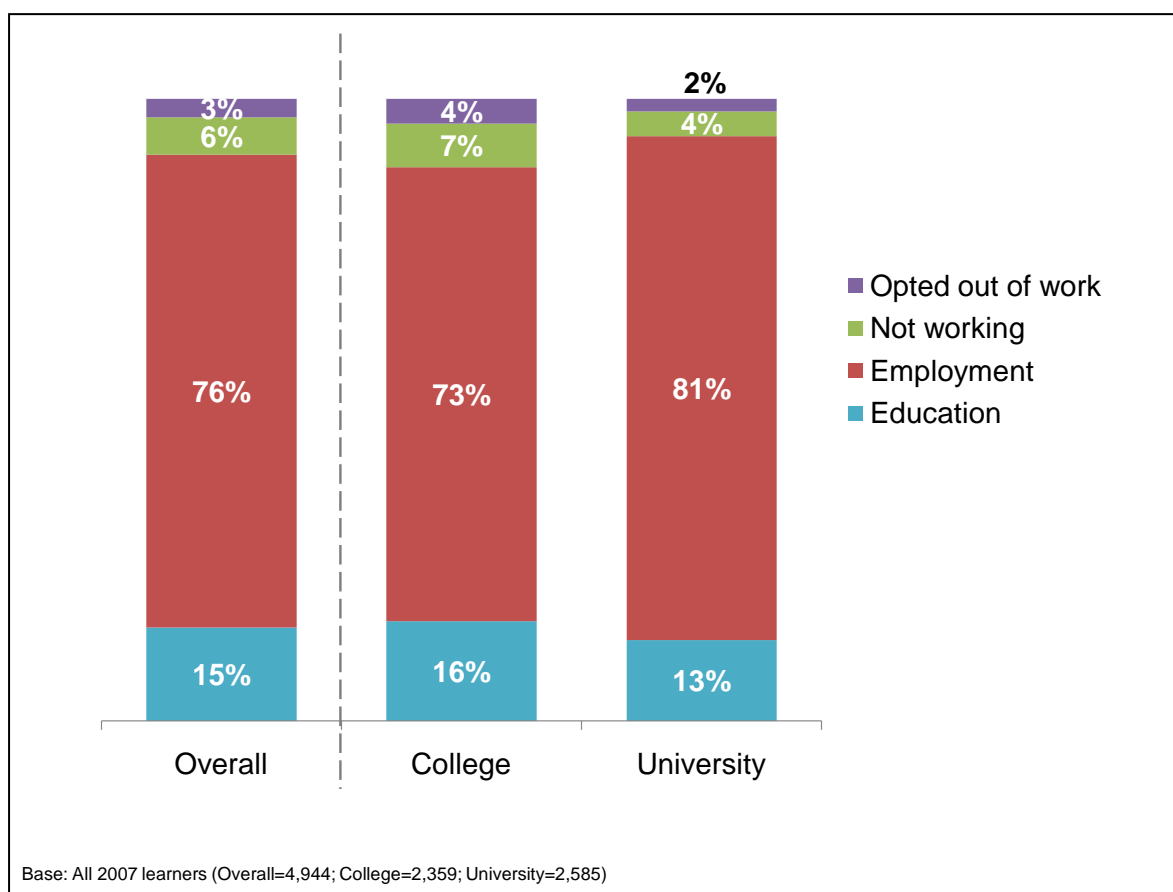
This section looks at the destinations of learners in late 2010, 3 to 3½ years after course completion, focusing on employment outcomes and rates of progression to higher level learning. It gives a picture of the sectors of work college and university leavers were moving into and of their occupations and salary levels.

### Main activity at the end of 2010

Individuals were asked to give their main activity (ie occupies most of their time) at the time of the Sweep Three survey in late 2010, 3 to 3½ years after they completed their 2007 course.

As shown in Figure 3.1, 91 per cent of college and university leavers were in employment or education and 9 per cent not working or opted out of work. The majority of 2007 college and university leavers were in paid employment (73 per cent and 81 per cent respectively). Around one in seven remained in education or training (16 per cent of college leavers, 13 per cent of university leavers).

**Figure 3.1 Main activity at Sweep Three (late 2010) for 2007 college and university leavers – summary**





Nine per cent of college and university leavers were currently not in employment or education, though the proportion of college leavers was slightly higher (11 per cent vs. 6 per cent). This breaks down into 6 per cent of the cohort who were unemployed, in a break between jobs or on maternity leave, or on gap year after education; and 3 per cent who had chosen not to be in work, mainly through retirement or because they were caring for family. Answers of ‘other’ have also been grouped in this category.

Table 3.1 shows the destination profile separately for college and university leavers. University leavers (71 per cent) were considerably more likely to be in full-time employment than college leavers (55 per cent) whereas college leavers were more likely to be in part-time employment (13 per cent compared with 6 per cent of university leavers). Just 2 per cent of university leavers were unemployed, fewer than the 5 per cent found among college leavers.

**Table 3.1 Main activity at Sweep Three (late 2010) for 2007 college and university leavers – detail**

	Overall	College	University
<b>Main activity</b>			
Education	15%	16%	13%
– Full-time education	13%	14%	11%
– Part-time education	2%	2%	2%
Employment	76%	73%	81%
– Working as a full-time employee	61%	55%	71%
– Working as a part-time employee	11%	13%	6%
– Self employed	4%	5%	4%
Not working	6%	7%	4%
– Unemployed	4%	5%	2%
– Gap between jobs or maternity leave	1%	2%	1%
– Gap year after education	<0.5%	1%	<0.5%
Opted out of work	3%	4%	2%
– Carer/looking after family	1%	2%	1%
– Retired	1%	2%	1%
– Other	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%
<b>Base – All 2007 learners</b>	<b>4,944</b>	<b>2,359</b>	<b>2,585</b>

Table 3.2 below shows the Sweep Three cohort’s main activity by level of course undertaken in 2007. Among former university students, undergraduates (14 per cent) were more likely to be continuing in education

or training than postgraduates (10 per cent). The latter obviously have fewer options for further study, at least at a higher level, and instead were more likely to be in work (85 per cent compared with 80 per cent of undergraduates).

Similar proportions of advanced-level (74 per cent) and non-advanced level college students (72 per cent) were in employment at Sweep Three. However, those on advanced courses at Level 6 or higher (57 per cent) were more likely to be working full-time than those on non-advanced courses at Level 5 or below (52 per cent). Advanced-level college students were also more likely to be in education or training (18 per cent) than those on non-advanced courses at Level 5 or below (12 per cent).

Unemployment was particularly high for those on lower-level college courses (8 per cent), and lowest for university postgraduates (1 per cent).

**Table 3.2 Main activity at Sweep Three (late 2010) for 2007 college and university leavers – by level of course**

	College		University	
	Non-Advanced (L1 to L5)	Advanced (L6+)	Undergrad	Postgrad
<b>Main activity</b>				
Education	12%	18%	14%	10%
– Full-time education	11%	16%	13%	8%
– Part-time education	1%	2%	2%	1%
Employment	72%	74%	80%	85%
– Working as a full-time employee	52%	57%	70%	75%
– Working as a part-time employee	15%	13%	6%	6%
– Self employed	4%	5%	4%	4%
Not working	11%	5%	4%	4%
– Unemployed	8%	3%	3%	1%
– Gap between jobs or maternity leave	3%	1%	1%	3%
– Gap year after education	1%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%
Opted out of work	6%	2%	2%	2%
– Carer/looking after family	3%	1%	1%	1%
– Retired	3%	1%	1%	1%

– Other	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%
<b>Base – All 2007 learners</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>1,592</b>	<b>1,891</b>	<b>694</b>

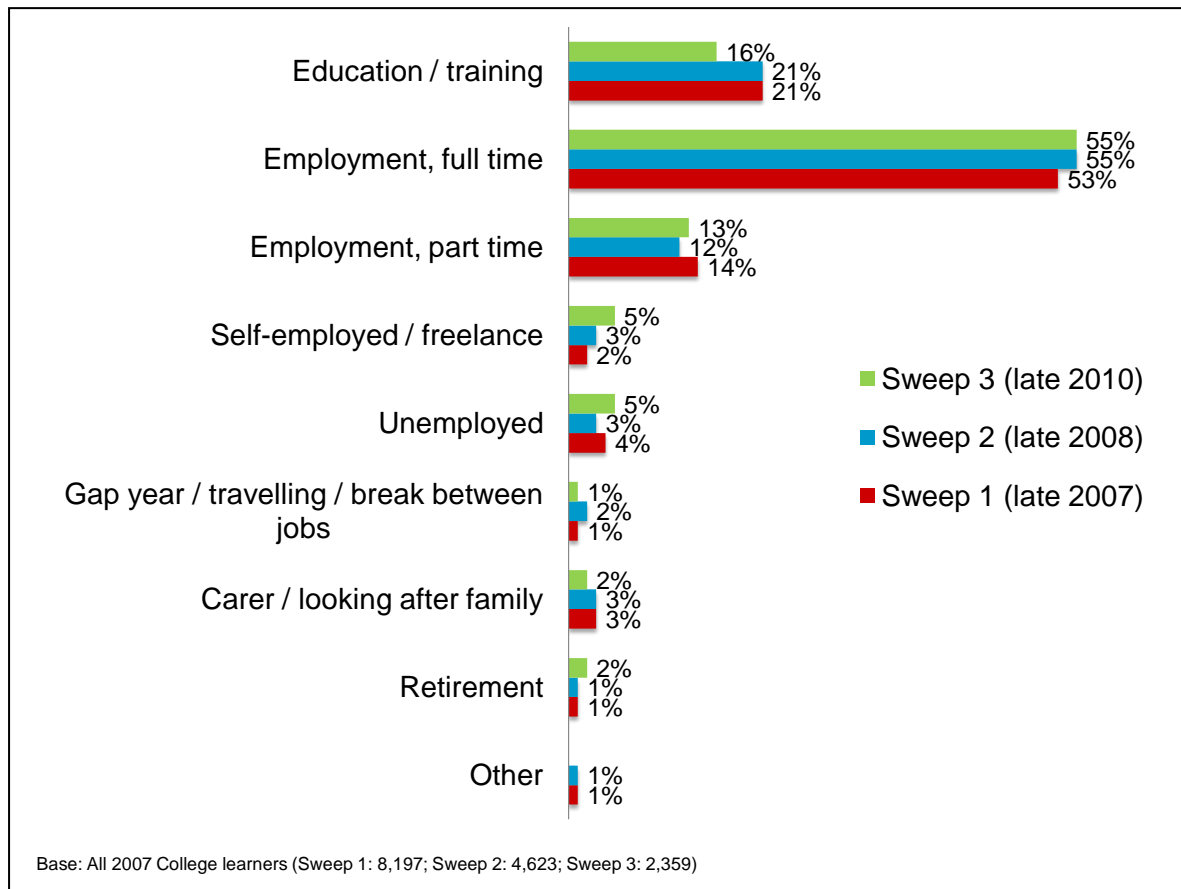
Figures 3.2 and 3.3 compare respondents' current activity at Sweeps One (late 2007), Two (late 2008) and Three (late 2010). The data is shown separately for college and university cohorts.

Figure 3.2. shows that since Sweep Two there has been a decrease in the number of college leavers in education (21 per cent at Sweep Two; 16 per cent at Sweep Three). This is because half (49 per cent) of college leavers who were in education or training at Sweep Two have since moved on to other activities – the majority of this group had left an advanced-level course in 2007 and gone on by Sweep Two to study at a university. A quarter (23 per cent) of college leavers in learning at Sweep Three were doing something other than learning or training at Sweep Two.

The decrease in the number of college leavers in learning since Sweep Two has not been mirrored by a corresponding increase in employment (either part-time or full-time). Instead unemployment and self-employment/freelance work have increased (both 3 per cent at Sweep Two to 5 per cent at Sweep Three). This reflects the tighter job market and difficulties workers have had finding sustainable employment opportunities.

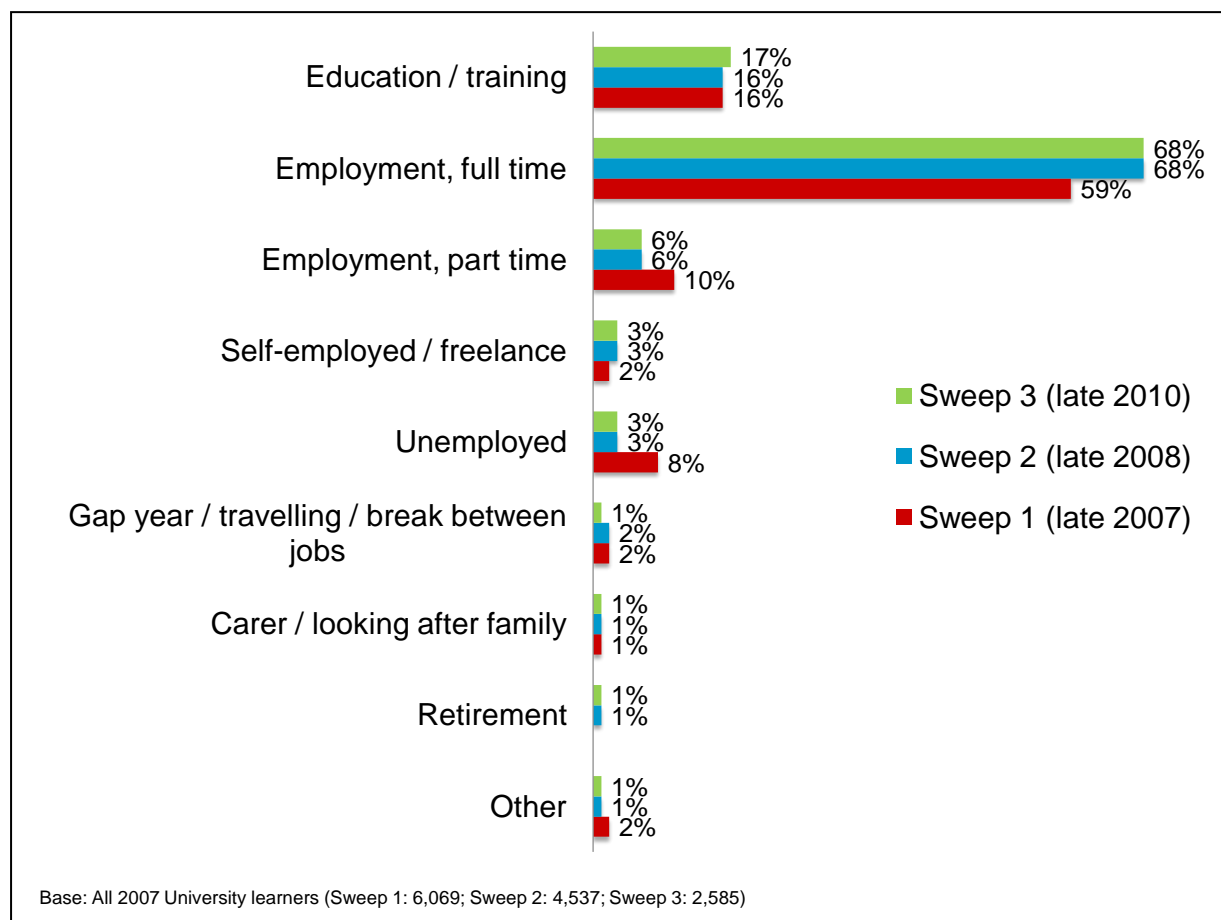
Non-advanced level college learners (8 per cent) were much more likely to be unemployed at Sweep Three than advanced-level learners (3 per cent). The proportion of unemployed non-advanced level learners has increased since Sweep Two (5 per cent at Sweep Two).

**Figure 3.2 Main activity at Sweep One (late 2007), Sweep Two (late 2008) and Sweep Three (late 2010) for 2007 college leavers**



As Figure 3.3 below shows there has, as with college leavers, been an expected drop in university leavers in education from 16 per cent at Sweep Two to 13 per cent at Sweep Three – again this is because half (54 per cent) of university leavers who were in education or training at Sweep Two have since moved on to other activities (42 per cent of those in learning at Sweep Three were doing something other than learning or training at Sweep Two). However, unlike college leavers this has led to an increase in employment (71 per cent were in full-time employment at Sweep Three compared with 68 per cent at Sweep Two) and a continued decrease in unemployment (8 per cent at Sweep One, 3 per cent at Sweep Two and 2 per cent at Sweep Three).

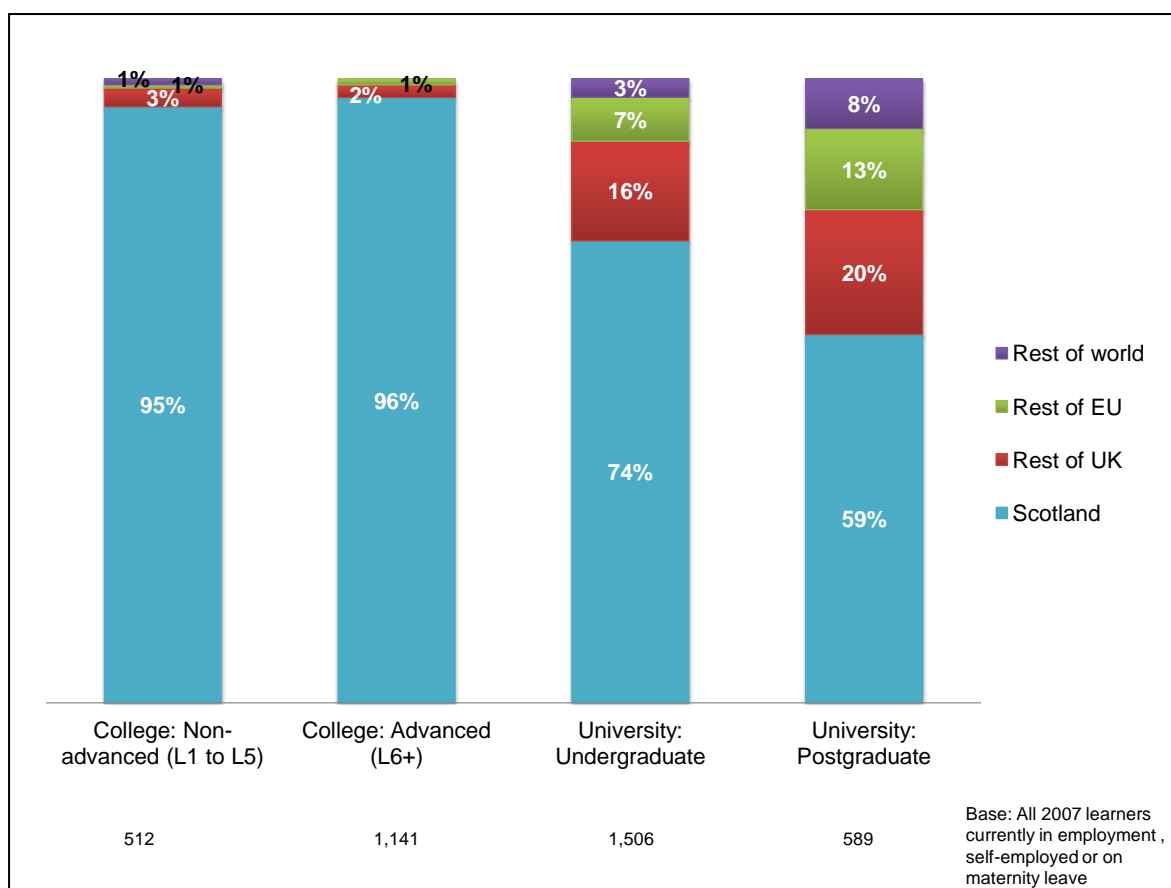
**Figure 3.3 Main activity at Sweep One, Sweep Two (late 2008) and Sweep Three (late 2010) for 2007 university leavers**



### Location of employment

Of those respondents currently in employment, the vast majority (86 per cent) were working in Scotland, though this proportion has dropped slightly since Sweep Two (88 per cent). This figure does vary substantially by the type of course studied, however, as shown in Figure 3.4 below. Results for the two groups of former college students differ by just 1 per cent and very nearly all (96 per cent) have stayed in Scotland after completing their 2007 course. University students were much more mobile, especially postgraduates – who, compared with undergraduates, were more likely to have moved outside the UK and beyond Europe. However, as over a quarter of undergraduates (27 per cent) and more than half of postgraduates (52 per cent) had not been living in Scotland before their course started, this partly reflects students returning home once they had finished studying. In contrast almost all college students (97 per cent) had been living in Scotland before their course started.

**Figure 3.4 Location of current employment – by 2007 course type<sup>1</sup>**



Of the Class of 2007 who were based on Scotland before their course started, as many as 95 per cent have remained to work in Scotland – again this varies between college (97 per cent) and university leavers (91 per cent).

### **Sector of employment**

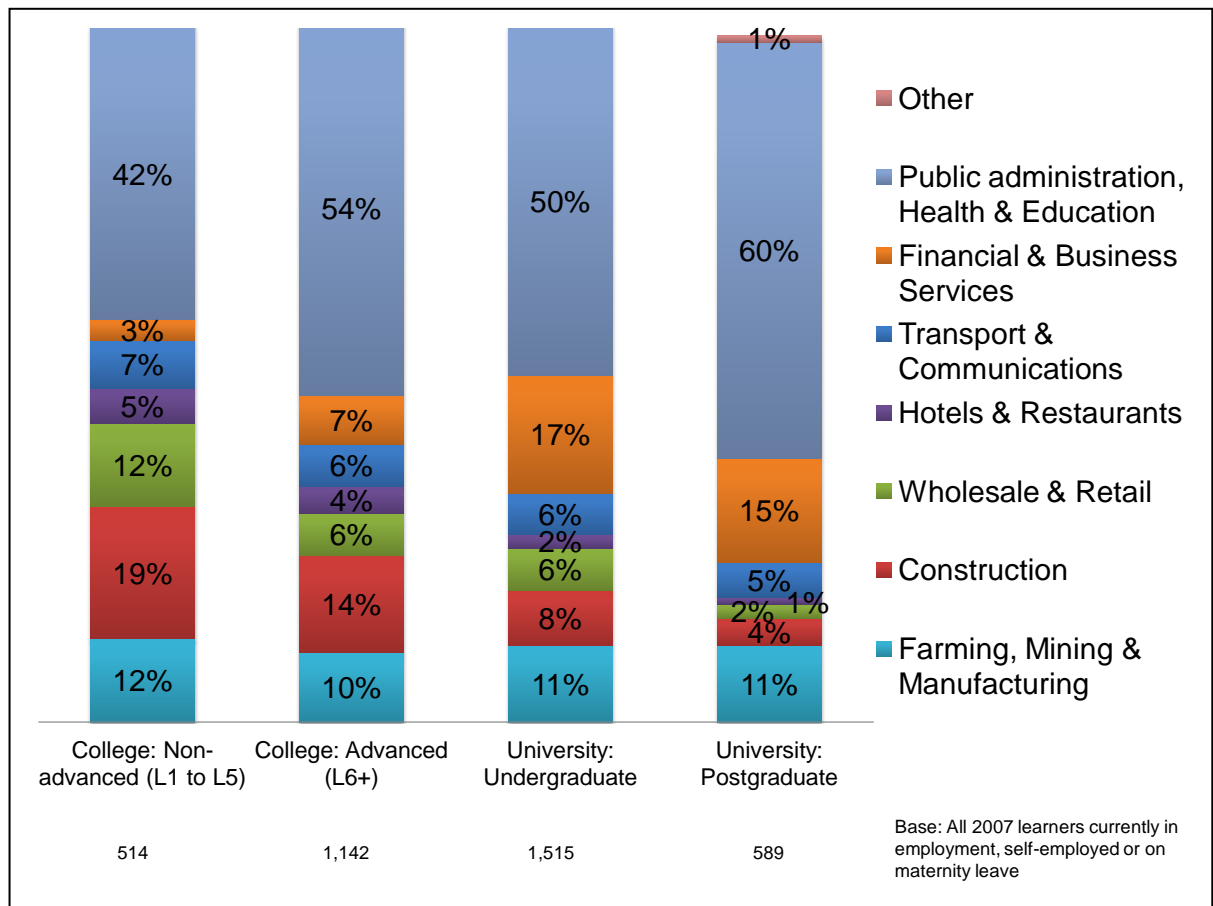
Half (51 per cent) of Sweep Three respondents were in part-time or full-time employment work in the Public Administration, Health and Education sector – the main sector of work across leavers from all course types. The proportion of leavers employed in this sector has increased across all course types since Sweep Two (45 per cent at an overall level), particularly for postgraduates (50 per cent at Sweep Two; 60 per cent at Sweep Three).

Consistent with Sweep Two, Figure 3.5 reveals that other sectors tend to employ students from particular educational backgrounds. For example, Construction employed nearly a fifth (19 per cent) of Level 1 to 5 college

<sup>1</sup> Levels of College learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

leavers who were working, but just 6 per cent of university graduates; while former university students were much more likely than college students to be working in the Financial and Business Services sector (17 per cent compared with 5 per cent). However, these disparities have diminished slightly since Sweep Two, where Construction accounted for nearly a quarter of Level 1 to 5 college leavers in employment (23 per cent), and Financial and Business Services employed a fifth of working university leavers (20 per cent).

**Figure 3.5 Current sector of employment for respondents in full-time or part-time employment<sup>2</sup>**

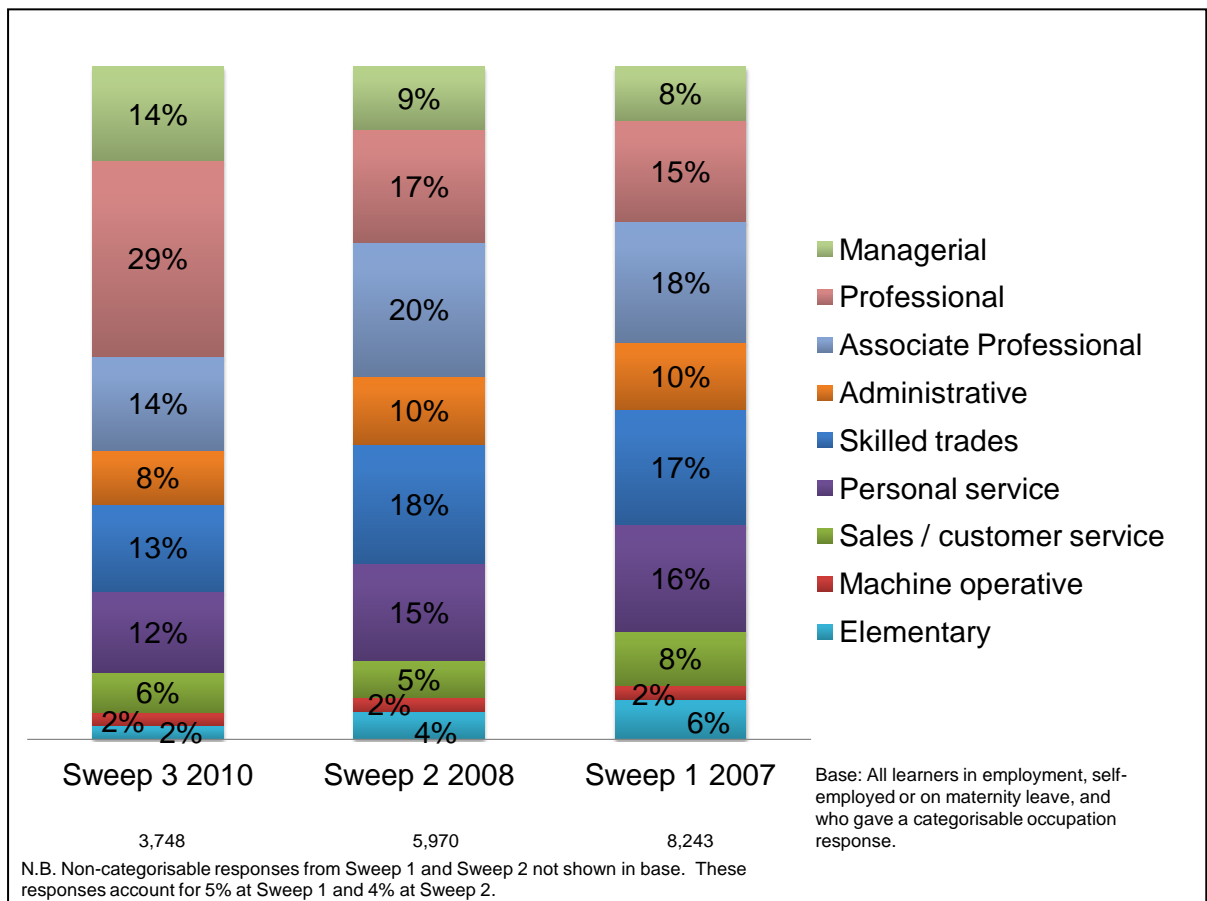


<sup>2</sup> Levels of College learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

## Occupational profile

At Sweep Three in late 2010, respondents were working in a wide range of occupations as detailed in Figure 3.6 below. The highest proportions were employed in Professional (29 per cent), Managerial and Associate Professional Roles (both 14 per cent). The occupational profile has changed considerably from Sweep Two, where Associate Professional (20 per cent) and Skilled Trades (18 per cent) roles were the highest proportions employed. The increase in the proportion employed in Managerial roles is perhaps to be expected given the natural progression employees make within their job role over time whereas the increase in the proportion in Professional roles is partly a result of university graduates and postgraduates finishing their learning and entering employment.

**Figure 3.6 – Occupational profiles of respondents in employment or on maternity leave, Sweep One, Sweep Two and Sweep Three**

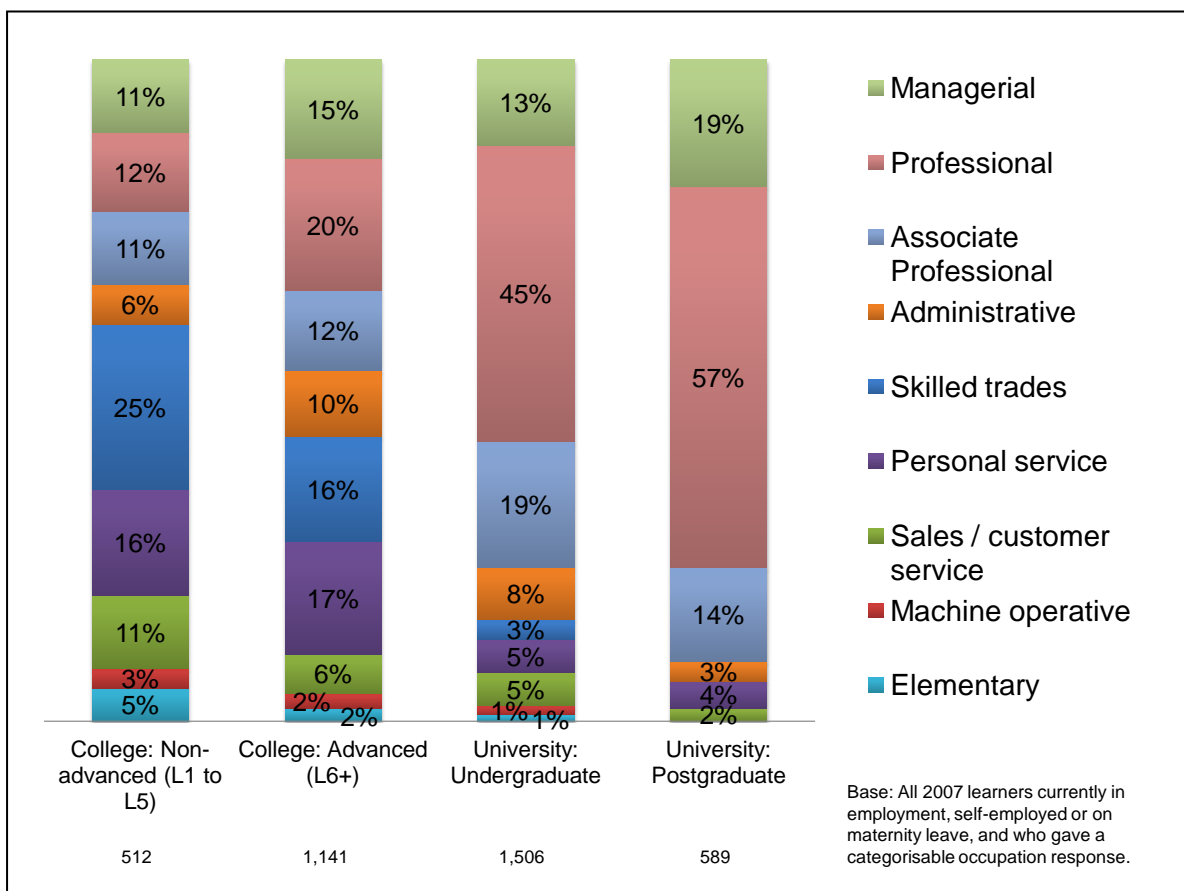




The Sweep Three occupational profile split by type of course studied is shown in Figure 3.7 below. As was the case at Sweep Two, the results are fairly typical: many Professional occupations (such as law, and teaching) require a postgraduate degree, and vocational training for Skilled Trades and Personal Service occupations such as hairdressing and social care tends to take place in colleges rather than universities.

The higher level occupations achieved by individuals with postgraduate qualifications suggests there is added value in this qualification over undergraduate study. A greater proportion of those currently in work who completed a postgraduate degree were in a Professional or Managerial role by Sweep Three (76 per cent, compared to 57 per cent of undergraduate leavers). Although as discussed in the Sweep Two report (when postgraduates were similarly in higher level positions of employment), postgraduates were more likely to have been in full-time work before starting their 2007 course and are typically older; hence as a group they generally have higher levels of prior work experience and as such are likely to have advanced further at work in the time since leaving their 2007 course.

**Figure 3.7 Occupational profile by level of 2007 course studied<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> Levels of College learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

## **Progress of those within employment**

Nine in 10 (88 per cent) of the Class of 2007 who were working as an employee (or on maternity leave) at Sweep Two were still in employment at Sweep Three. Three quarters (75 per cent) were still working for the same employer while a quarter (25 per cent) had moved on to a different employer. Individuals working for the same employer at Sweep Three as at Sweep Two were asked about certain positive changes they may have experienced at work since the previous survey. As shown in Figure 3.9, (Figure 3.10 shows the findings for university graduates), the majority of college leavers working for the same employer reported increased pay (80 per cent), job satisfaction (74 per cent), responsibility (72 per cent) and improved prospects (62 per cent). Half felt they had more job security (53 per cent) and a quarter had secured a promotion (26 per cent). By implication, one in five working for the same employer as at Sweep Two had not seen a pay increase in two years which is likely to be a reflection of the economic landscape over this period. A quarter (24 per cent) of those working in Public Administration, Health and Education (the main employment sector for college leavers) had not seen a pay increase since Sweep Two.

There are differences in opinion amongst college leavers on the extent to which the course contributed to the positive changes experienced by those staying with their Sweep Two employer. For example, less than half of those who had seen a pay increase attributed this to their 2007 course (29 per cent thought the course helped, and 17 per cent believed it to be a direct result of the course), but over six in ten believed that the increase in job satisfaction was either directly or partly because of the course (42 per cent considered it related, and 20 per cent believed it to be a direct result of the course).

**Figure 3.9 – Changes at work for college learners**

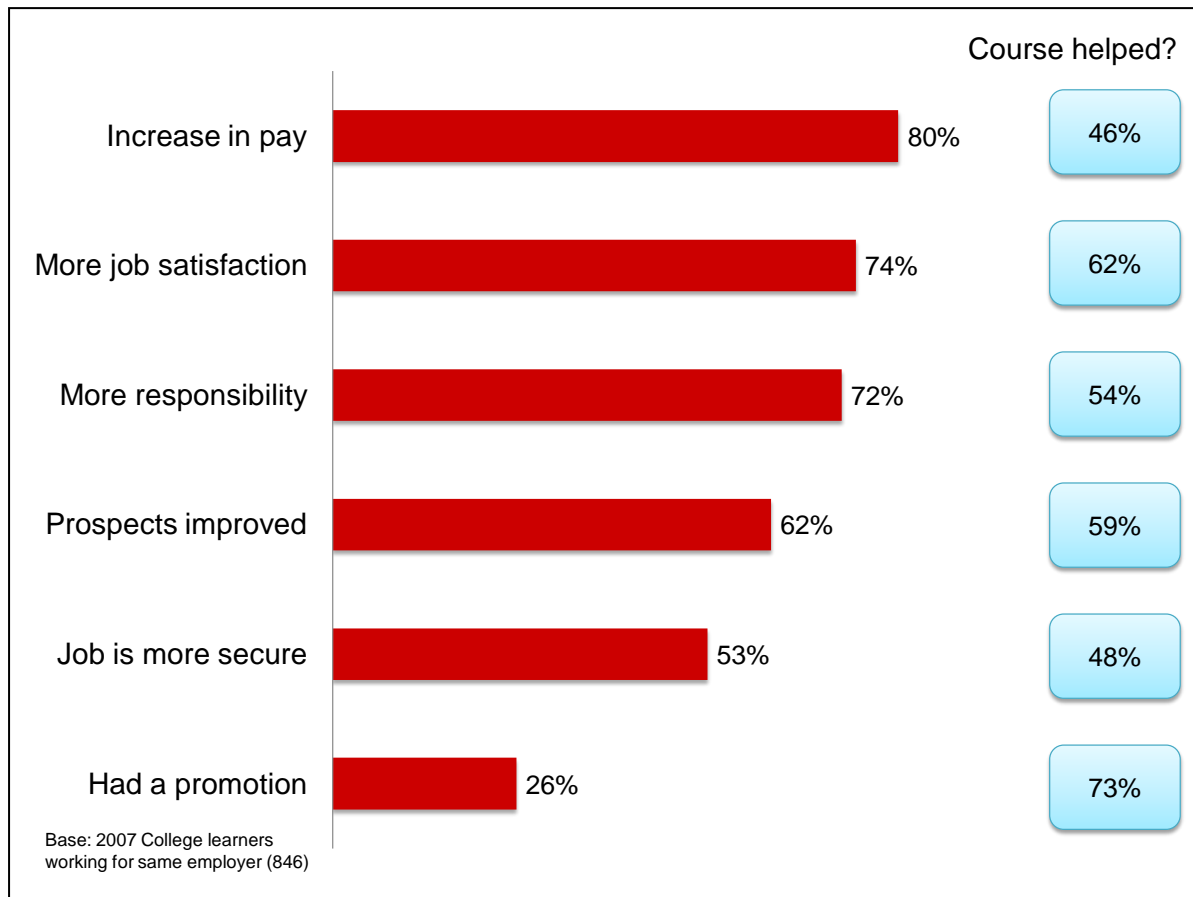


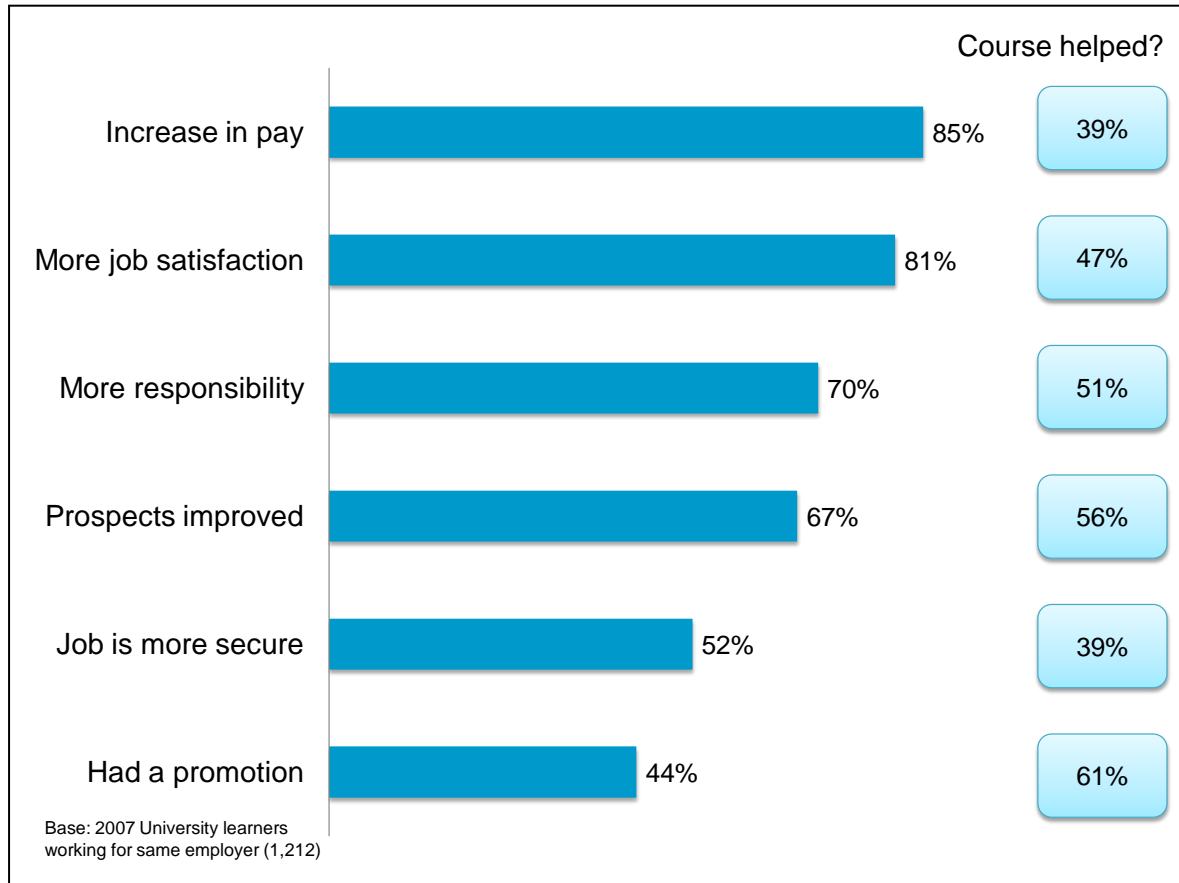
Figure 3.10 shows the changes that university leavers experienced at work since Sweep Two. Compared to college learners, university learners were more likely to have had:

- an increase in pay (85 per cent vs. 80 per cent);
- greater satisfaction (81 per cent vs. 74 per cent);
- an improvement in prospects (67 per cent vs. 62 per cent); and
- a promotion (44 per cent vs. 26 per cent).

Like the college cohort, university leavers attached varying levels of importance to the influence of their course in relation to these changes. Only four in 10 believed that their course was related to their increase in pay (29 per cent thought the course helped, and 10 per cent believed it to be a direct result of the course). In contrast, over six in 10 considered their course to have played a part in their promotion (51 per cent thought the course helped, and 10 per cent believed it to be a direct result of the course). Broadly speaking, university learners tended to be less likely than college learners to agree that their course contributed to positive changes in their

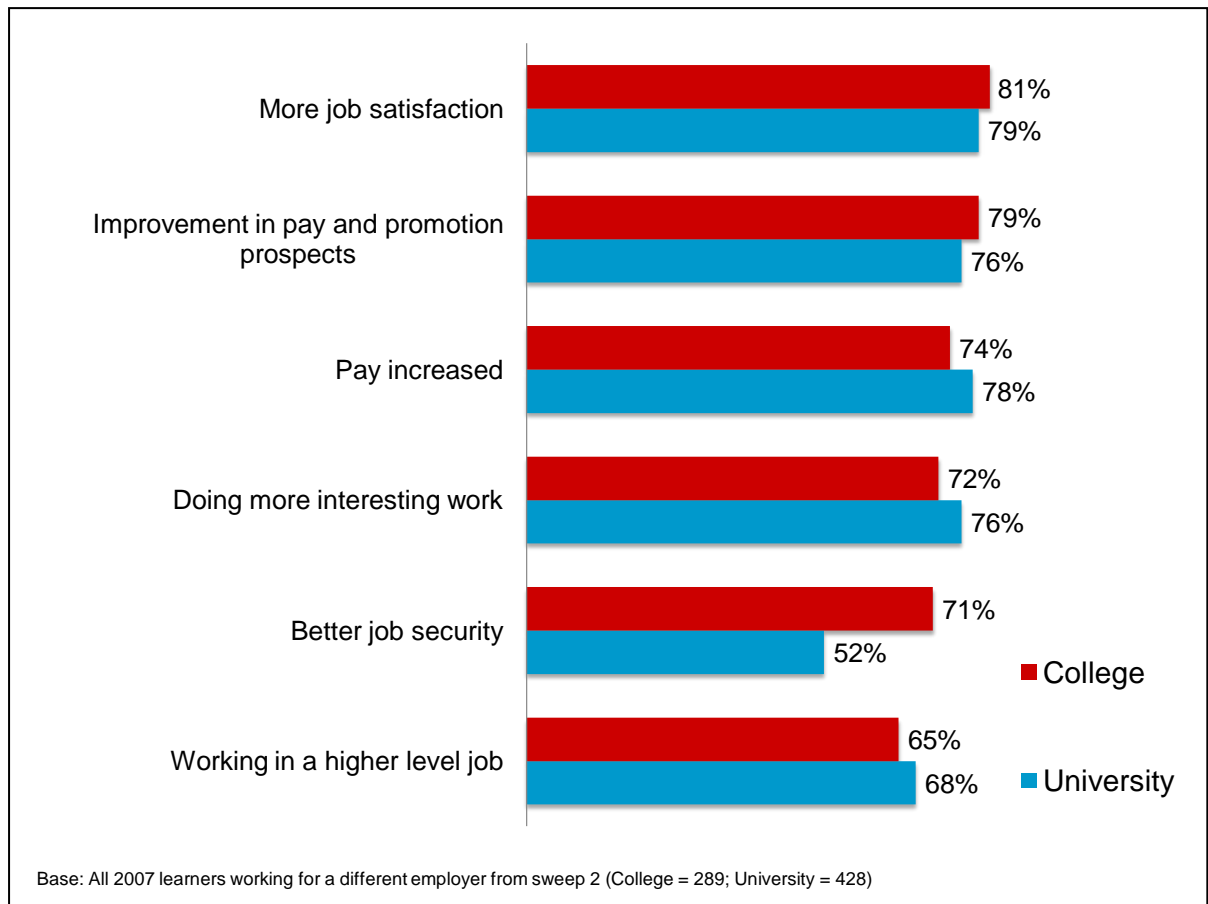
work, despite their generally higher propensity to have achieved such improvements.

**Figure 3.10 Changes at work for university learners**



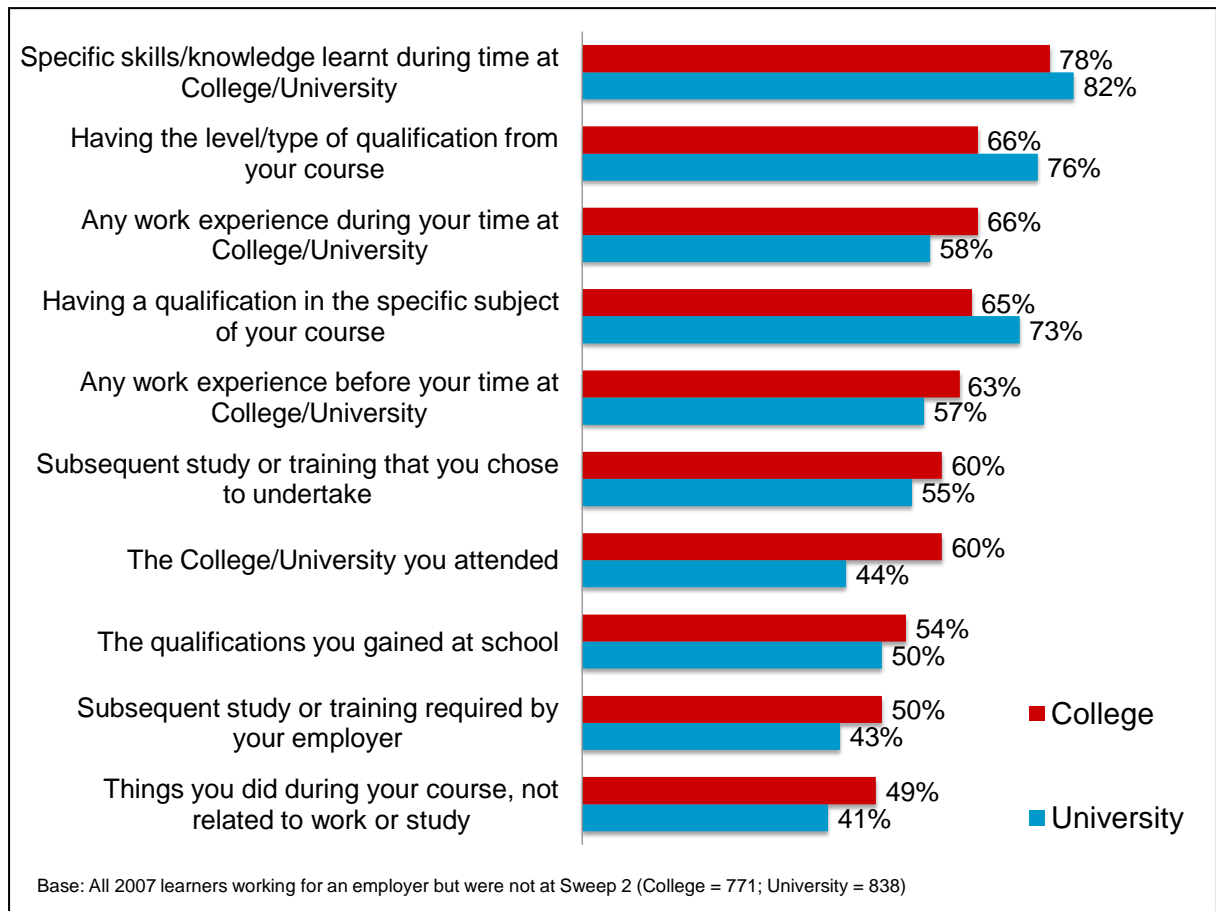
Individuals working for a different employer at Sweep Three compared to Sweep Two were also asked about a similar range of positive changes they may have experienced at work since the previous survey. Figure 3.11 shows the proportion experiencing these changes for both college and university learners. There were few significant differences between the two cohorts, although college learners who had moved jobs were more likely to feel they have better job security than university leavers (71 per cent vs. 52 per cent).

**Figure 3.11 Changes at work for learners that have moved jobs**



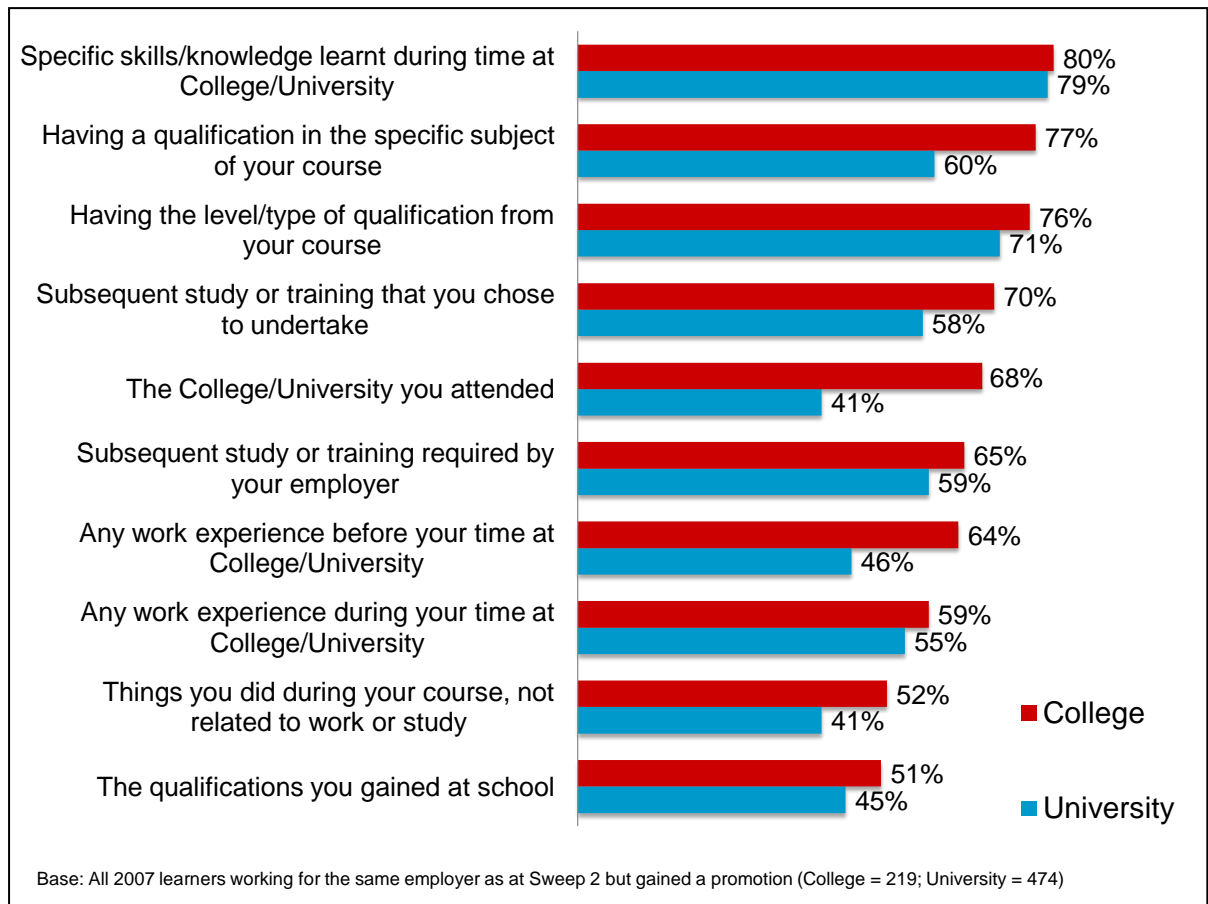
As shown in Figure 3.12, both college and university leavers that were previously not working at Sweep Two but had found employment by Sweep Three were asked about the importance of certain factors in getting their job. Specific skills learnt during their time studying were considered the most important factor in getting their job by leavers from college (78 per cent) and university (82 per cent). University leavers were more likely to consider their specific qualification of importance, while college leavers tended to attach greater significance to previous work experience: three quarters of university leavers (76 per cent) believed the level/type of qualification was important in them getting the job compared to two thirds of college leavers (66 per cent), while two thirds of college leavers (66 per cent) considered any work experience gained during their time at college to be important, compared to six in 10 university leavers (58 per cent). College leavers were also more likely than university leavers to consider the institution they attended to be important in their getting the job (60 per cent vs. 44 per cent).

**Figure 3.12 Importance of certain factors in getting a job**



Individuals who worked for the same employer as at Sweep Two and had achieved a promotion were also asked about what was important to them in reaching a more advanced position. As detailed in Figure 3.13 below, like the Class of 2007 who had found employment since Sweep Two, the specific skills/knowledge learnt during the 2007 course was felt to be the most important factor in achieving a promotion by both college (80 per cent) and university leavers (79 per cent). Generally speaking, university leavers were less likely than college leavers in each instance to attribute their promotion to factors linked to their 2007 course.

**Figure 3.13 Importance of certain factors in achieving a promotion**



### Perception of current employment

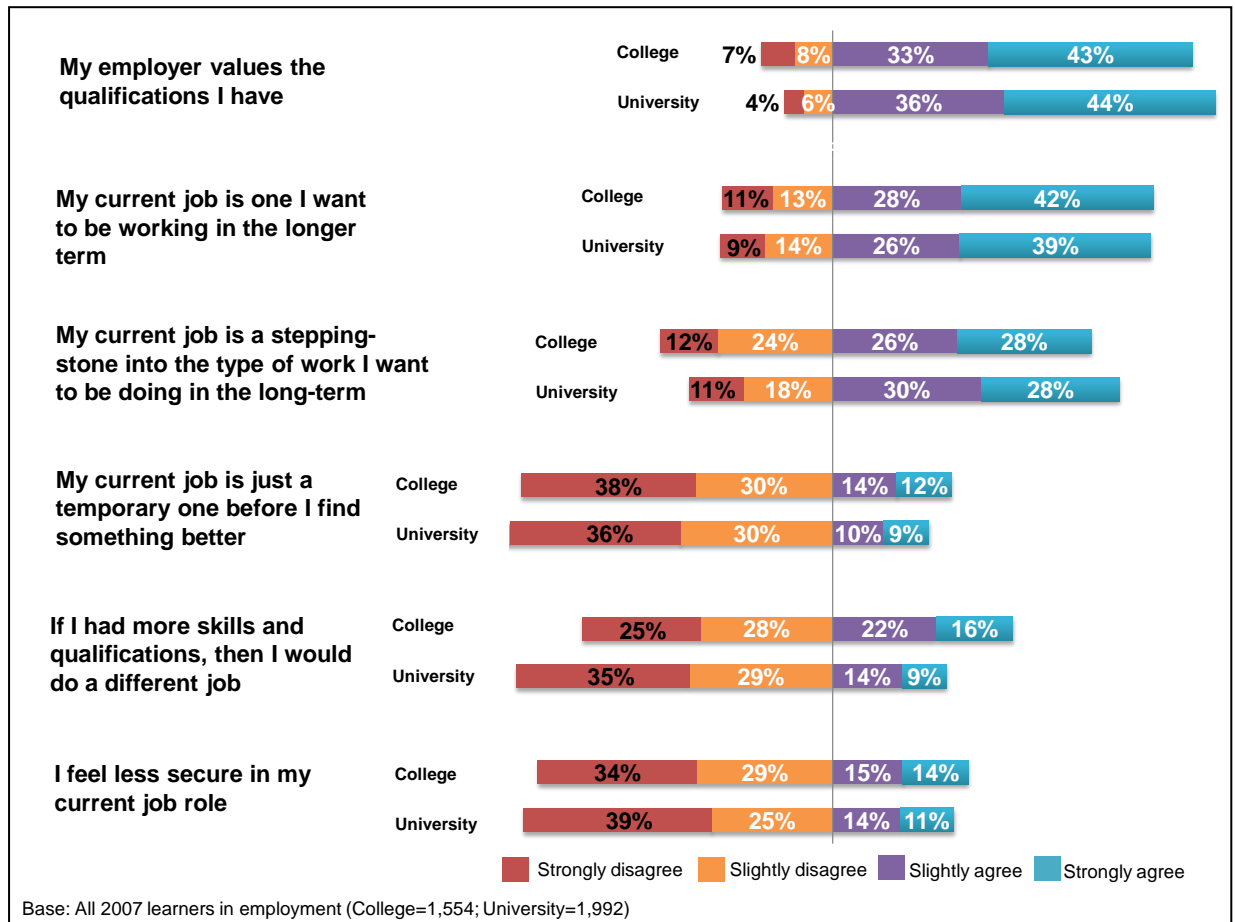
Employed individuals were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements relating to perceptions of their current employment in areas such as career intentions and job security. As shown in Figure 3.14, the majority of the Class of 2007 who were in employment believed their current job was the one they want to be working in the longer term (69 per cent of college leavers agree; 65 per cent of university leavers agree) indicating that majorities of both college leavers and university leavers (albeit to a slightly lesser extent) were content in their current position and can be considered to be ‘On Track’.

It is interesting to note that despite economic uncertainties at the time of the survey only 29 per cent of college and 25 per cent of university leavers reported that they felt less secure in their job role than when last interviewed in 2008, towards the beginning of the recession.

However, a quarter (23 per cent) of the working cohort considered their Sweep Three employment to be a temporary role they were in until something better comes along. College leavers (26 per cent) were more likely

than university leavers (19 per cent) to agree that this is the case. Among college leavers, those working in the Hotels and Restaurants and Wholesale and Retail sectors were most likely to agree that their current role is temporary (60 per cent and 54 per cent respectively agree).

**Figure 3.14 Perceptions of current employment**

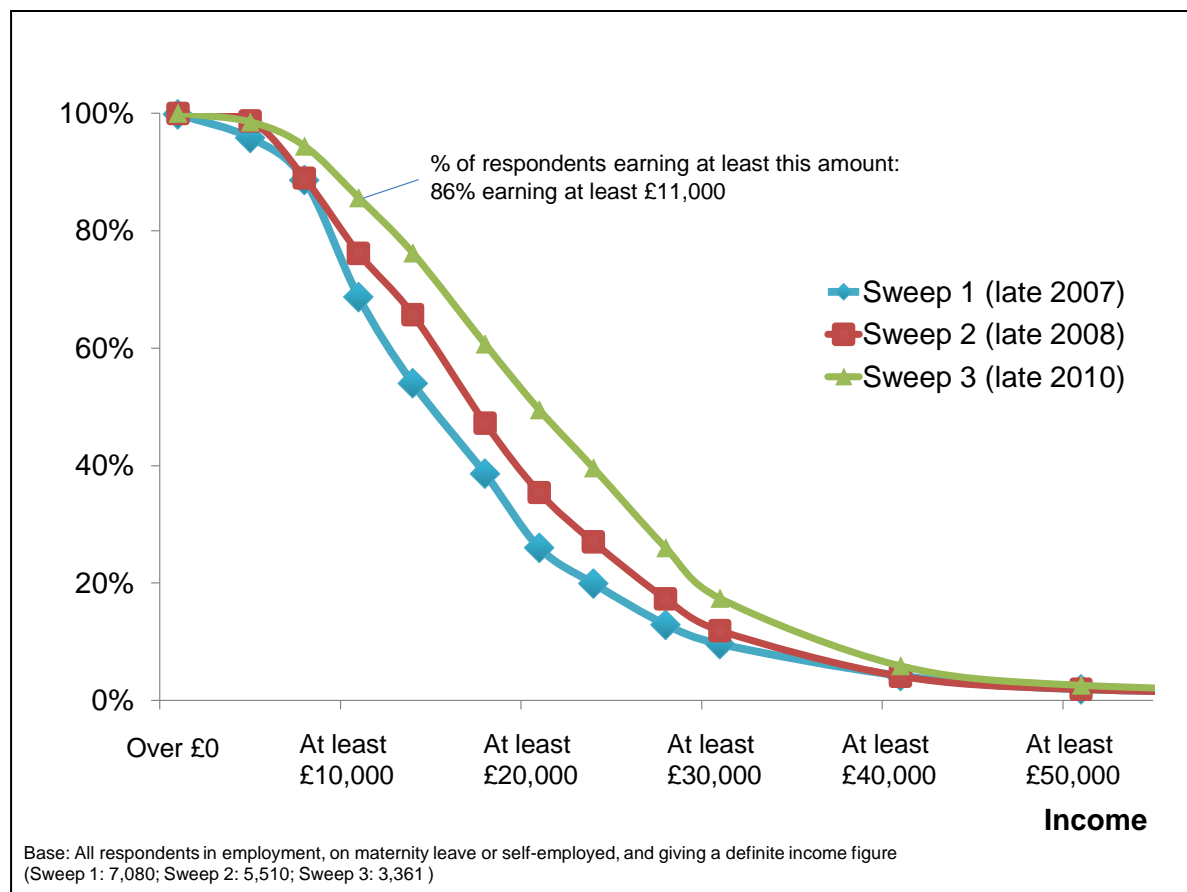




## 5 Salary levels

The salaries of those respondents in employment who were able to give a definite income figure in late 2010 are shown in Figure 3.15 below. Just 1 per cent of respondents earned £51,000 or more at all three sweeps<sup>4</sup>. Salaries have been assessed as annual full-time equivalents, so part-time employees' earnings have been multiplied up. Figure 3.15 shows the proportion of respondents earning at least a certain amount; therefore, all respondents (100 per cent) are included in the first point as they all earn something. Reading from left to right, the chart then shows the diminishing proportions of respondents who were earning at least £10,000, at least £20,000 etc. until the final points showing that less than five per cent of respondents earned £50,000 or more.

**Figure 3.15 Wage curve: Sweep Three (late 2010) against Sweep Two (late 2008) and Sweep One (late 2007)**



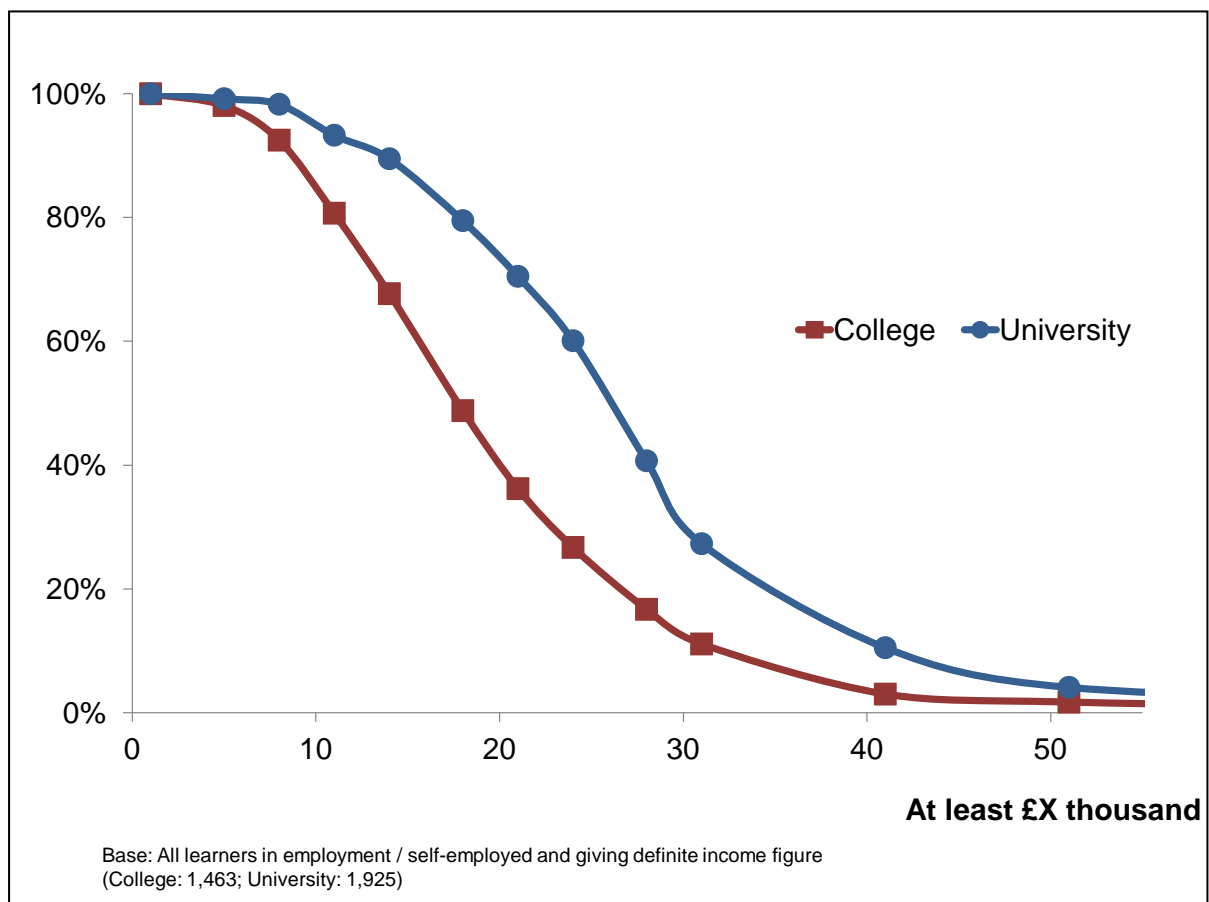
As would be expected over the three year period since respondents left their university or college course, earnings had increased. At Sweep Three, in late

<sup>4</sup> Details of this 'long tail' of high earners have been left off the chart so that average wages can be seen more clearly.

2010, the middle half of working respondents (the 25th to 75th percentiles) were earning between £14,000 and £28,000. The equivalent range at Sweep Two, in late 2008, was between £11,000 and £25,000 per year; and between £10,000 and £21,000 at Sweep One in late 2007. Median earnings can be estimated at £20,200 at Sweep Three up from £17,500 at Sweep Two and £15,000 at Sweep One – increases of around £2,500 in each instance.

Figure 3.16 compares the salaries of former university and college students in employment at Sweep Three in 2010. Again, the distribution of earnings of £51,000 or higher has been left off the chart – around 2 per cent of university graduates and one per cent of college leavers earn over this level. As was the case at Sweep Two, the wage premium associated with going to university is substantial: median wages were around £25,000 for university graduates (up from £22,000 at Sweep Two) and around £17,300 for college leavers (up from £15,000 at Sweep Two). Again as was the case at Sweep Two, the steeper college curve shows that college leavers' wages are more tightly clustered: more than two fifths (45 per cent amongst all employed) earn between £11,000 and £21,000, whereas university graduates show a greater range.

**Figure 3.16 Wage curve: university against college students**



Nine in 10 (87 per cent) university leavers who gave a definite income figure earn at least £15,000 which is the threshold for repaying student loans which applies to 2007 college and university leavers. This equates to 65 per cent of all university leavers with earnings above the repayment threshold. The profile of 2007 university leavers earning at least £15,000 broadly matches that of the overall university cohort ( 45 per cent were male and 55 per cent female compared with 43 per cent and 57 per cent respectively of all university leavers), and 53 per cent were aged 20 to 25 (compared with 55 per cent of all university leavers).

Table 3.3 below shows the distribution of median salary by subject studied. College and university leavers with qualifications in Science and Maths earned the most in late 2010 with a median of £24,000; around £4,000 above the average for a college or university leaver (£20,200). Those completing a Humanities, Social Sciences and Law course in 2007 were also earning more than the average college or university leaver (£23,000) as were Business and IT (£22,200) and Construction, Industry and Engineering graduates (£21,000). As was the case at Sweep Two, Leisure and Tourism graduates earned the least: their average of £13,000 was more than £7,000 below the median across all college and university leavers.

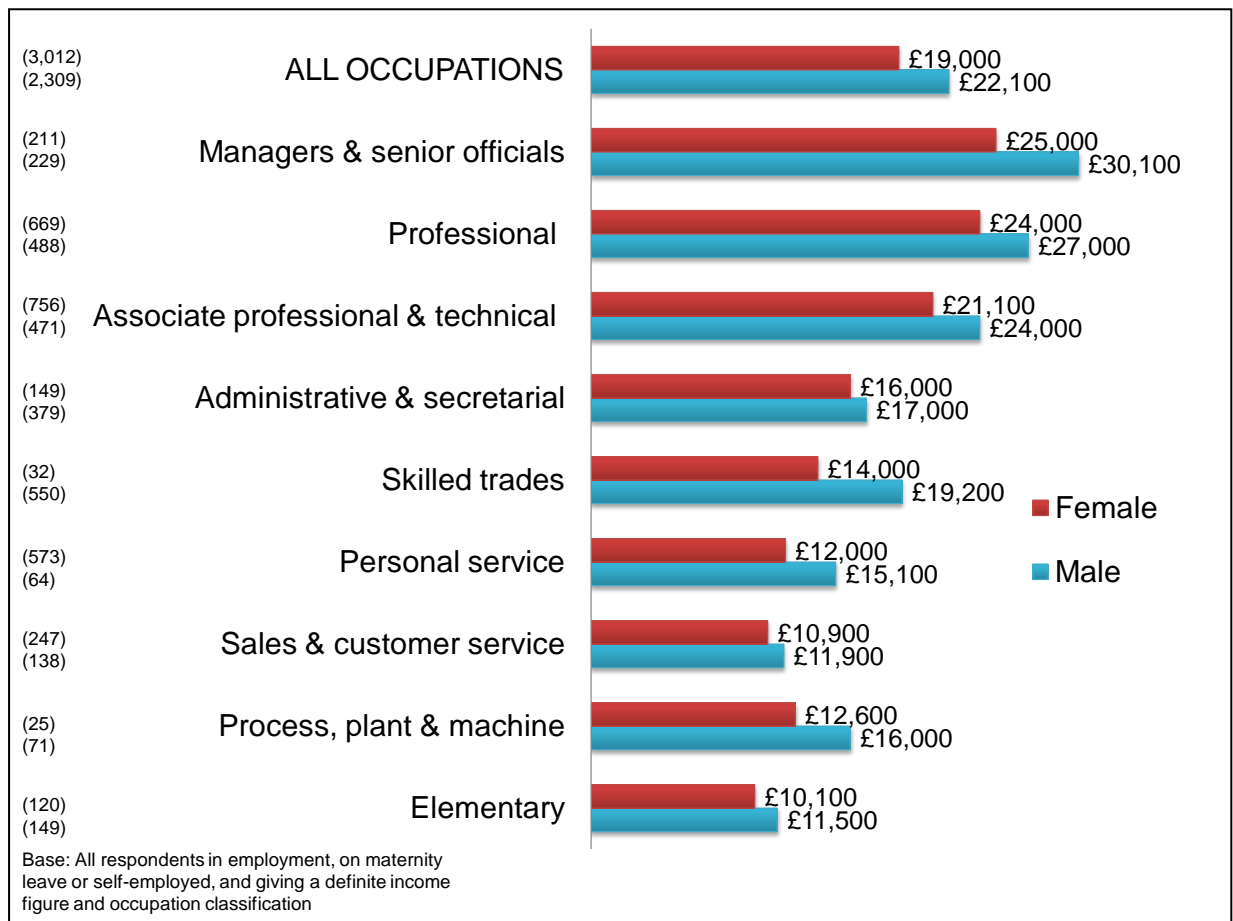
**Table 3.3 Median earnings by subject studied**

	<b>All leavers</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>University</b>
<b>All subjects</b>	£20,200	£17,300	£25,000
Science and Maths	£24,000	£18,000	£26,600
Humanities, Social Sciences and Law	£23,000	£17,600	£24,000
Business and IT	£22,200	£19,000	£27,100
Construction, Industry and Engineering	£21,000	£19,200	£27,000
Health and Social Care	£20,000	£16,400	£26,000
Creative Arts and Design	£15,000	£12,000	£18,000
Education	£14,400	£12,600	£28,000
Leisure and Tourism	£13,000	£12,000	£18,500
<b>Base: All learners in work giving a definite income figure</b>	<b>3,361</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>1,925</b>

Just as at Sweep Two, there was a salary gap between male and female graduates in the Class of 2007 at Sweep Three in late 2010. The pattern is consistent across subject area studied, industry sector of employment and occupational classification – although the gap is greater between men and women in managerial and senior official occupations as shown below in

Figure 3.17. This wage difference cannot straightforwardly be attributed to other clear demographic differences correlating with gender<sup>5</sup>. Rather, female graduates in the class of 2007 have followed less consistent education and career patterns, such as having been in part-time work or caring for family before the course (20 per cent compared with just 5 per cent of male graduates) or being in part-time work, with its associated lower levels of pay, since the course (17 per cent were working part-time at Sweep Three compared with 4 per cent of men).

**Figure 3.17 Median wages by occupational classification: differences by gender**



<sup>5</sup> As discussed at Sweep Two, if anything, women are slightly more likely than men to have studied at university or on a higher-level college course, and to be working in professional or associate professional occupations; all factors associated with higher wages rather than lower.

We can compare our cohort's earnings to the UK median income, which in 2010 was £25,950<sup>6</sup>. While it is not surprising that the majority of college leavers and around half of university leavers were earning less, as most are towards the beginning of their working lives, it is clear that the Class of 2007 saw a large increase in their earnings since 2008 relative to the national average. Since 2008, the national median wage had risen by roughly 4 per cent (£24,900<sup>7</sup> up to £25,950 in 2010), whereas in the same broad timeframe the earnings of Class of 2007 had risen substantially more: roughly 14 per cent among university leavers (£22,000 at Sweep Two up to £25,000 at Sweep Three) and 15 per cent among college leavers (£15,000 at Sweep Two up to £17,300 at Sweep Three).

### **Progression pathways into further learning**

In total, since leaving the 2007 course, more than half of the Class of 2007 had, by late 2010, gone on to further learning or training (56 per cent). University graduates (59 per cent) were more likely to have done so than college leavers (54 per cent). In the majority of cases, this further learning is/was at a higher level than the 2007 course (64 per cent of 2007 leavers' 2010 or most recent learning). Former college students were more likely to have moved on to a higher level course or learning (70 per cent) than university graduates (52 per cent).

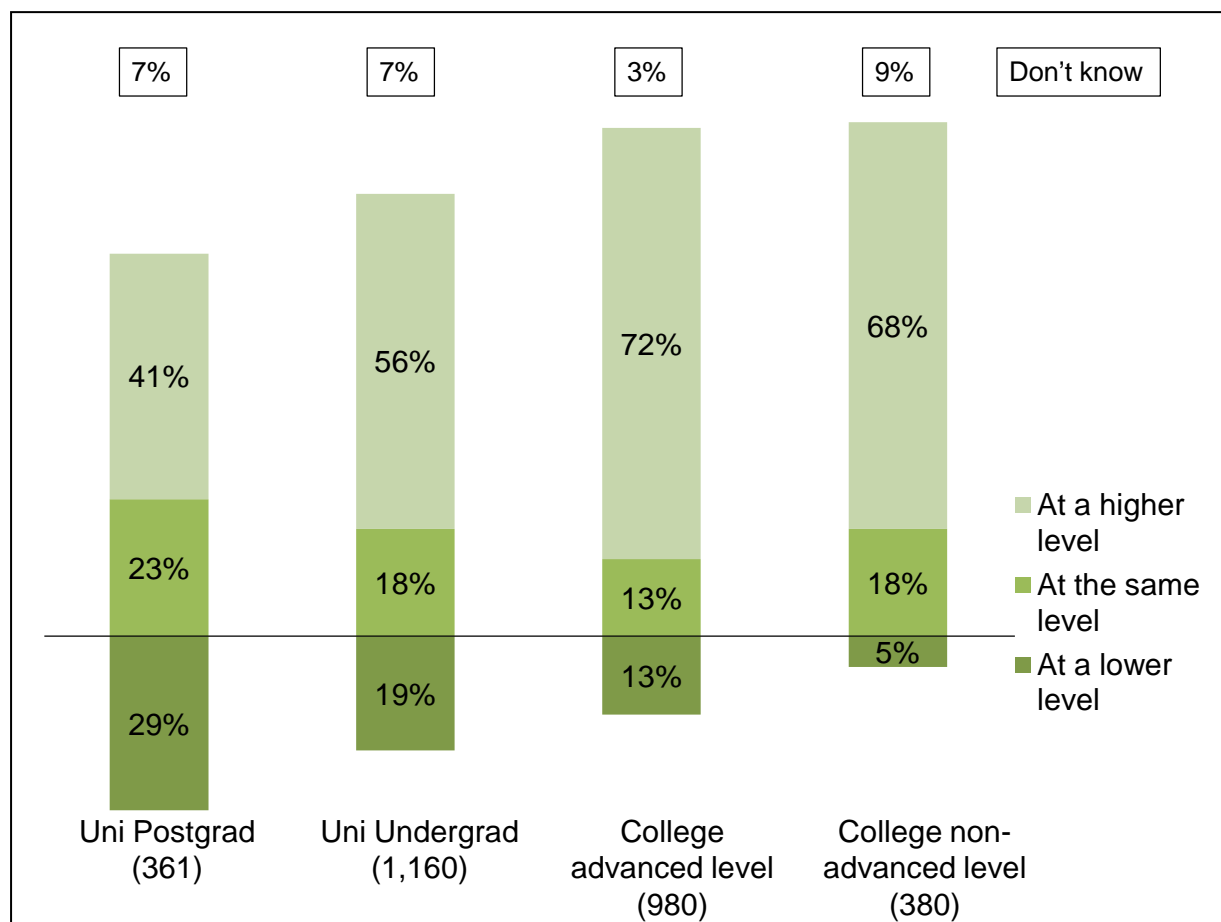
Figure 4.1 below looks in more detail at how those in the Class of 2007 who went on to further learning had progressed in terms of their level of study. This chart compares the level of university and college leavers' 2010 or most recent course against the broad level of their 2007 course.

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<sup>6</sup> Office of National Statistics gives a 2010 median weekly wage of £499, which multiplies up to £25,948 per year. [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2010-results/stb-ashe-2010.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2010-results/stb-ashe-2010.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Office of National Statistics gave the 2008 median weekly wage of £479, which multiplies up to £24,908 per year. Taken from Sweep Two report.

**Figure 4.1 Comparative level of 2010 or most recent learning by type of course studied in 2007<sup>8</sup>**



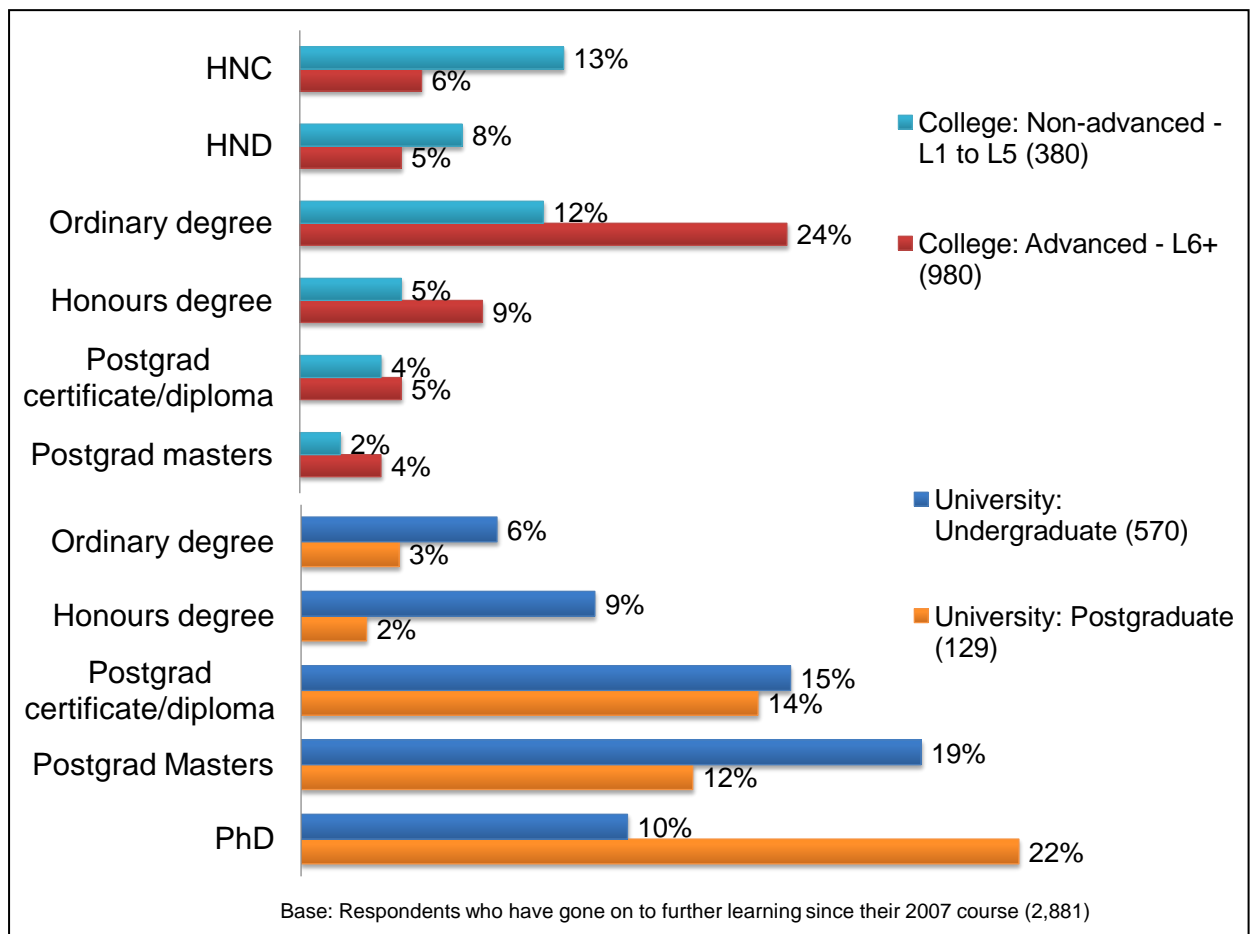
As discussed above, college leavers were more likely to have progressed to a higher level course than university graduates. Advanced level college leavers who have gone on to further learning (72 per cent) were more likely to have progressed to a higher level course than those whose course was at a non-advanced level (68 per cent).

As would be expected – because there is more scope for upwards progression – further learners whose 2007 course was at university undergraduate level were more likely to have moved on to a more advanced level in their current or most recent learning than those whose 2007 course was postgraduate (56 per cent vs. 41 per cent). Interestingly, almost a third (29 per cent) of these 2007 postgraduate learners have since moved on to a lower level course of learning.

Figure 4.2 sheds more light on this by detailing the intended qualification of further learners' 2010 or most recent course.

<sup>8</sup> Levels of College learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

**Figure 4.2 2010 or most recent qualification by qualification gained in 2007<sup>9</sup>**



Two fifths (44 per cent) of further learners who left a university undergraduate course in 2007 had since moved on to study at postgraduate level (in their 2010 or most recent course). A further 9 per cent had moved up to Honours level undergraduate study. A quarter of university postgraduate leavers going on to further learning studied for a PHD as their 2010 or most recent course.

Two fifths (42 per cent) of further learners who left an advanced level College course in 2007 had progressed to a degree level course, typically an ordinary degree (24 per cent), in their 2010 or most recent learning. Non-advanced level college leaver further learners were less likely to have progressed to degree level but despite the journey from Levels 1-5 to Level 9+ being further, a quarter had done so in their current or most recent course (23 per cent). A fifth (21 per cent) of these non-advanced college

<sup>9</sup> Levels of college learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

leavers had progressed to an Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Certificate (HND) in their 2010 or most recent course.

There is evidence that Class of 2007 university leavers, as well as pursuing further undergraduate and postgraduate courses, have been building upon their base of academic qualifications in order to hone their skills for the workplace: 55 per cent of 2007 university undergraduate further learners and 62 per cent of postgraduate stated that their current or most recent course related directly to the employment sector they were currently working in (at the time of Sweep Three). These further learners were also commonly registered at non-academic institutions for their current or most recent learning (30 per cent attended a private training provider or learned through a professional body). This accounts for the large proportion (29 per cent) of postgraduates who have gone on to further learning at a lower level than their 2007 course – while a handful (5 per cent) of these 2007 postgraduate further learners have returned to degree level, presumably to change subject or re-train, many have entered into specific work-related vocational training that will clearly not be at such a high level as their previous postgraduate study.

Looking specifically at learners who completed an HNC or HND in 2007 (an unweighted base of 1,149), three fifths (58 per cent) had gone on to further learning since – broadly in line with the Sweep Three cohort overall (56 per cent). Two thirds (67 per cent) of these further learners had progressed to a level higher than their 2007 course in their 2010 or most recent learning – again, broadly in line with the Sweep Three cohort (64 per cent). Two fifths (43 per cent) of 2007 HNC/HND leaver further learners had moved upwards in academia to undertake an undergraduate (39 per cent) or postgraduate (5 per cent) degree course in their 2010 or most recent learning. This equates to roughly a quarter (25 per cent) of Class of 2007 HNC or HND students that have gone on to study for a degree. Three quarters (75 per cent) of those in learning at Sweep Three and three fifths (61 per cent) of those who had gone on to further study since their 2007 course, but were not in learning at Sweep Three, felt that the 2007 course had helped them get on their 2010 or most recent course. This suggests that respondents' education or training has progressed, and in some cases continues to progress, and that the 2007 course has enabled this progression for the majority of further learners.

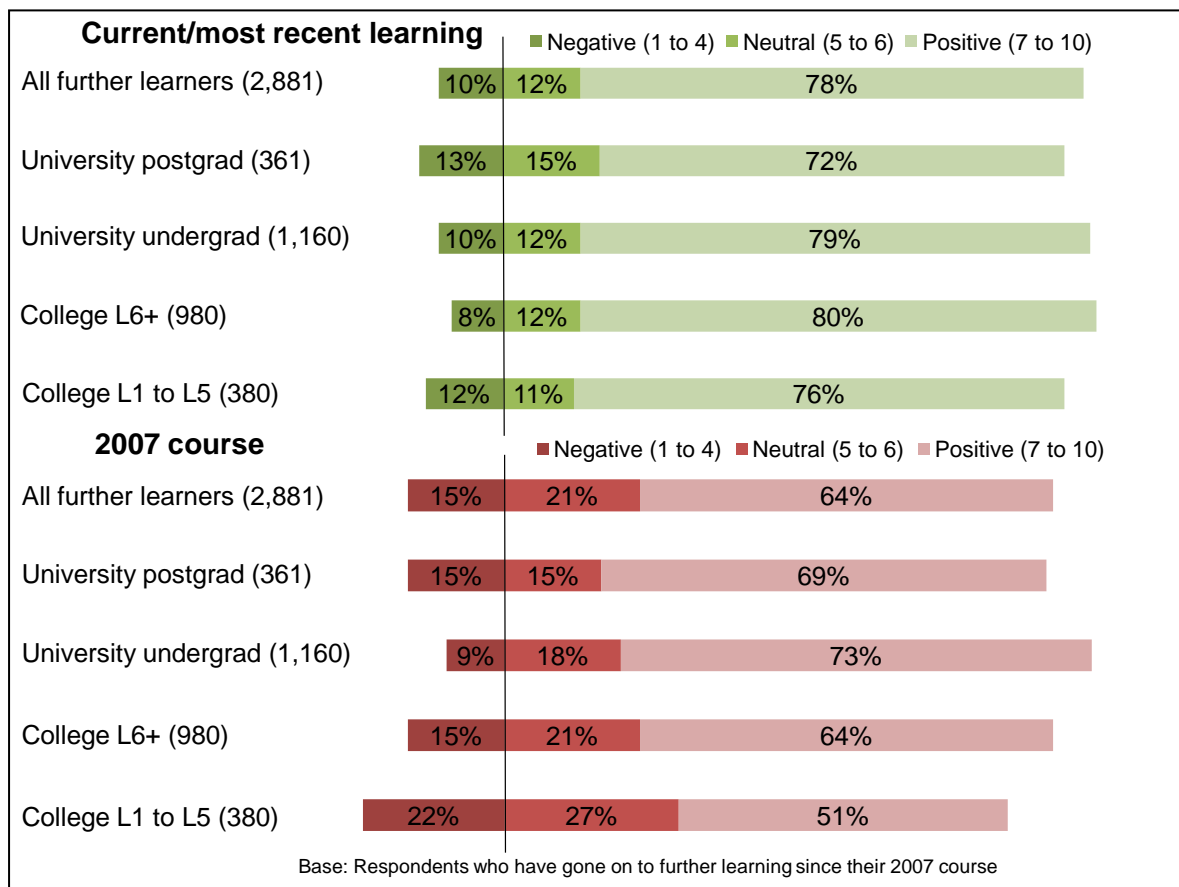
Further learners tended to agree that the benefits of their current or most recent course outweighed the costs involved with completing it (76 per cent agreed or agreed strongly). The same question was asked of the Class of 2007 at Sweep One and Sweep Two about their 2007 course; at Sweep One (up to one year after completion) 63 per cent agreed that the benefits



outweigh the cost and at Sweep Two (18 months to two years after completion) this had increased to 83 per cent. This puts further learners' ratings of the benefits of their current or most recent course somewhat higher than their rating of the 2007 course at Sweep One. Furthermore, learners' perception of the current or most recent course's benefits is likely to increase over time considering the positive shift in perception of the 2007 course between Sweeps One and Two described above. University postgraduate leavers in 2007 were the least likely to feel that the benefits of their current or most recent course outweighed the costs (69 per cent). Although the majority of these further learners are positive about their subsequent study, it is possible that a minority are experiencing 'learning fatigue' after what will in most cases be a long period of time in learning.

At Sweep Three, further learners were asked to rate the extent to which they believe their current or most recent learning had improved or will improve their long-term career prospects. The results are shown below in Figure 4.3

**Figure 4.3 Extent to which 2010/most recent course and 2007 course has or will improve career prospects<sup>10</sup>**



<sup>10</sup> Levels of College learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

The upper section of Figure 4.3 shows that four fifths (78 per cent) of further learners were positive (ie gave a rating of seven or more out of 10) about their 2010 or most recent course. This varied little between 2007 college (79 per cent) and university graduates (78 per cent) overall, although 2007 postgraduates were again the least positive (72 per cent). This may be another sign of possible fatigue although clearly the majority are still positive about their long-term benefits of their current or most recent learning.

The lower section of Figure 4.3 reports further learners responses to a request to rate their 2007 course on the same terms. Three years down the line, two thirds (64 per cent) of Class of 2007 further learners felt that their 2007 course had improved or will improve their long-term career prospects – significantly lower than the rating given for their 2010 or most recent learning (78 per cent). University graduates (72 per cent) were more likely than college leavers (60 per cent) to rate their 2007 course as beneficial to their long-term career prospects by Sweep Three. This is an emerging trend that will be looked at more closely (in terms of the overall perception of the 2007 course in hindsight) in chapter 6. Indeed, non-advanced college leavers were the least positive about their 2007 course in this respect (51 per cent were positive). This is perhaps to be expected as non-advanced college leavers were the youngest of the four groups (40 per cent were aged 15 to 19 at Sweep One) and were therefore more likely to be at the ‘beginning’ of their journey in education and career more generally. They are more likely to have progressed on to higher level learning which will be more important to their current or future careers.

As discussed in chapter 3, a lower proportion of the Class of 2007 were in learning at Sweep Three (15 per cent compared with 19 per cent at Sweeps One and Two) and a higher proportion were in employment (76 per cent compared with 72 per cent at Sweep Two and 69 per cent at Sweep One).

There are two clear signs here and within the nature and levels of further learning that indicate the cohort are steadily leaving behind education and moving into work:

Firstly, the majority of the cohort has gone on to some form of further learning, three quarters of which is described as either a professional or vocational qualification related to their current employment sector (50 per cent of all further learners) or future/intended employment sector (24 per cent of all further learners). By implication, the next step after such work-focused (further) learning is to enter into or continue in employment rather than continue in education.

Secondly, at Sweep Three it was primarily younger learners whose main activity was education or training (33 per cent of those aged 15 to 19 at Sweep One). Clearly these younger learners had further to travel and some were by late 2010 continuing to progress in learning whereas older and higher level learners (university graduates and advanced level college learners) had generally reached or were approaching the end of their time in learning.

## 6 Debt

In the Sweep Three survey, the Class of 2007 were asked whether in late 2010 they had any remaining debt as a result of their 2007 course. This debt could include the following expenses associated with studying:

- tuition fees;
- accommodation and living costs;
- travel costs to and from the place of study;
- childcare while studying; and
- exam fees.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 below show the proportion of the Class of 2007 with outstanding debt at Sweep Three and, amongst those with such debts, the amount in question and how long these learners expect it will take to clear these debts.

As can be seen in Figure 5.1, one fifth (19 per cent) of university and college leavers surveyed in Sweep Three still had some form of debt as a result of their 2007 course. University graduates were considerably more likely to have such debt (35 per cent compared with 11 per cent of college leavers). This higher level of debt is driven by younger university leavers – almost half (47 per cent) of university leavers aged under 25 at the time of leaving their course had some form of debt whereas among university leavers aged over 25, who were more likely to have been in work prior to their course, 17 per cent had such debt. Of course it is worth noting here that the proportion of leavers who would have had debt upon leaving university, and indeed college, would have been greater but in the last 3 to 3½ years some of these will have paid off this debt

**Table 5.1 Proportion of university and college leavers with outstanding debts as a result of their 2007 course**

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>University</b>
Have outstanding debt as a result of 2007 course	19%	11%	35%
Do not have outstanding debt	80%	88%	64%
<b>Base – All 2007 learners</b>	<b>4,944</b>	<b>2,359</b>	<b>2,585</b>

As shown in Table 5.2, of those with debts, a third (34 per cent) had less than £5,000 outstanding, a quarter (23 per cent) had between £5,000 and

£10,000 and a third had over £10,000 of debt. University leavers were more likely to have incurred these larger debts – well over two fifths (44 per cent) of university leavers with debt stated that the amount in question was at least £10,000. Fewer college leavers (20 per cent of those with debts) had debts of £10,000 or more.

**Table 5.2 Amount of outstanding debt and expected duration of debt among university and college leavers**

	Overall	College	University
<b>Amount of outstanding debt</b>			
Less than £5,000	34%	47%	26%
£5,000 to £10,000	23%	22%	23%
Over £10,000	35%	20%	44%
<b>Time it will take to pay off outstanding debt</b>			
Within the next six months	3%	3%	3%
Within six months to one year	4%	4%	4%
Within one to two years	10%	12%	8%
Within two to five years	28%	33%	25%
Not within the next five years	42%	34%	47%
<b>Base – Learners with debt as a result of their 2007 course</b>	<b>1,776</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>1,187</b>

A minority of university and college leavers with debt believed they should be out of the red in the next one (7 per cent) or two years (10 per cent) but most took a dimmer view – three in 10 (28 per cent) stated they should be clear of their debts within the next two to five years while two fifths (42 per cent) feared it will take them longer than five years to be clear. Half of university leavers with debt (47 per cent) believed it will take longer than five years to have finished paying off the debts incurred during their 2007 course.

Chapter 6 in this report will consider how, if at all, levels of debt among University leavers affects attitudes towards the 2007 course and current employment.

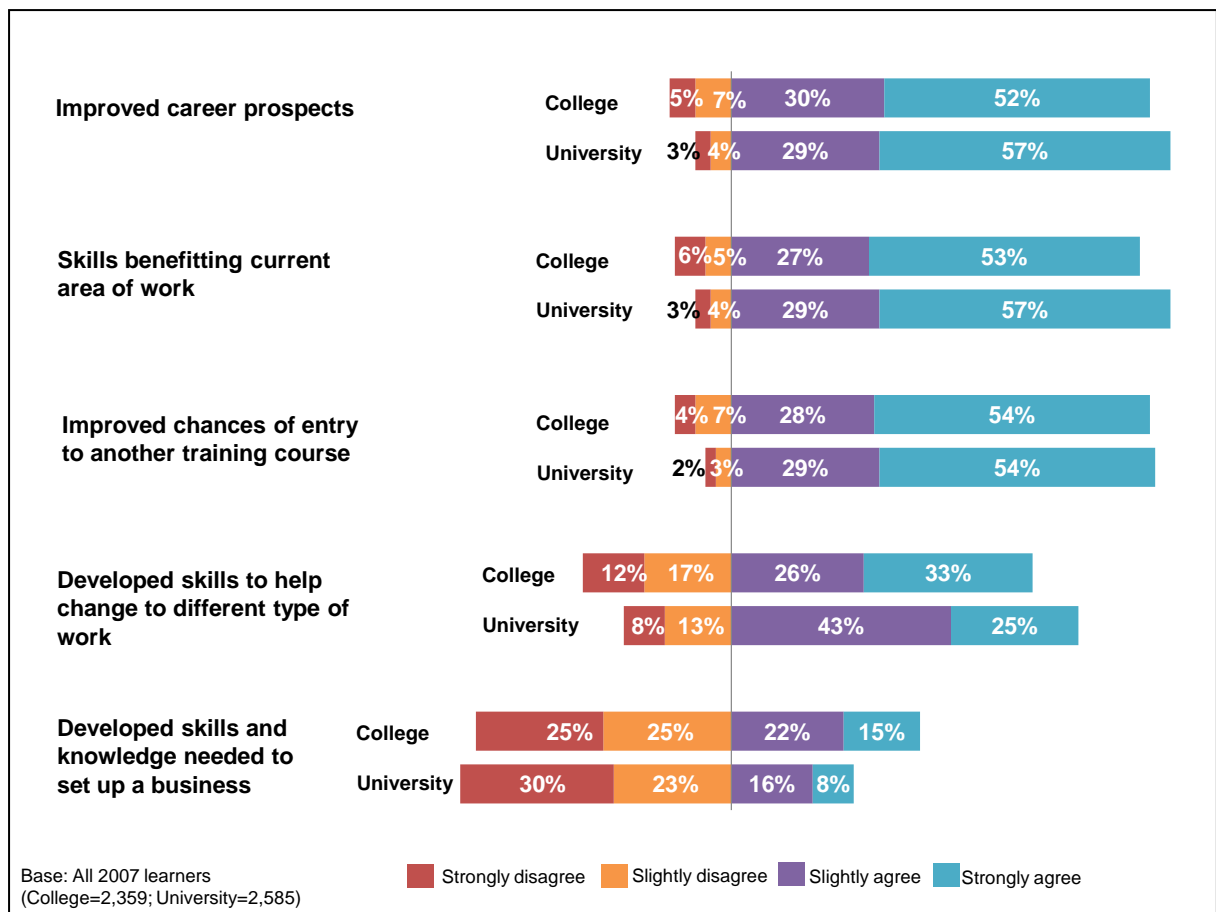
## 7 Perceptions of the impact and value of the learning experience

Individuals were asked to look back on the course completed in 2007 and to evaluate the benefits of completing the course in terms of their skills and personal development. Other measures of satisfaction with the learning experience included were whether they would have chosen to undertake the same course of study if they could ‘go back in time’.

### Perceived benefits of course in terms of development of vocational skills and improved career prospects

The class of 2007 were generally positive about the impact their 2007 course has had on their career and professional development. As Figure 6.1 below shows, the majority believed that it had had a positive impact on their career prospects with university leavers (86 per cent) more positive than college leavers (81 per cent).

**Figure 6.1 Extent of agreement that 2007 course has resulted in improvements in career prospects and skills with vocational relevance**



More than four fifths (83 per cent) of former students agreed they had acquired skills during their course that could be used in their current area of work. University graduates (86 per cent) were again more likely to agree than college graduates (81 per cent). The Class of 2007 were rather less positive that their 2007 course had equipped them to change to a different type of work. Six in 10 (60 per cent) believed their course had helped them develop the skills necessary to change to a different type of work. However, changing to a different type of work would not necessarily have been an intention for many learners. Moreover, many courses are directly relevant to a specific vocational area only, so in this respect the finding can be viewed positively.

Two fifths of college leavers (37 per cent) believed their course had given them the necessary skills to set up a business whereas only a quarter (24 per cent) of university graduates feel similarly equipped. This is consistent with a higher proportion of college leavers than university leavers working in skilled trades where self-employment is more likely to be an intended aim.

When asked whether the 2007 course will help in accessing further education or training, the cohort were very positive: four fifths believed that completing their 2007 course had improved their chances of entry to further courses (82 per cent of college leavers and 83 per cent of university leavers).

These questions have been asked at all three Sweeps and a downwards trend is apparent over this period. While 90 per cent of the cohort agreed at Sweep One that their course had improved their career prospects, this figure was at 87 per cent at Sweep Two and has decreased further to 83 per cent at Sweep Three. Similarly, fewer of the Class of 2007 felt at Sweep Three that they had:

- learned skills for their current work (83 per cent – down from 85 per cent at Sweep Two);
- developed skills to change to a different type of work (60 per cent – down from 66 per cent at Sweep Two);
- developed skills/knowledge to set up a business (32 per cent – down from 34 per cent at Sweep Two); and
- improved their chances of entering another training course (82 per cent – down from 84 per cent at Sweep Two).

This negative trend is likely to reflect a number of factors:

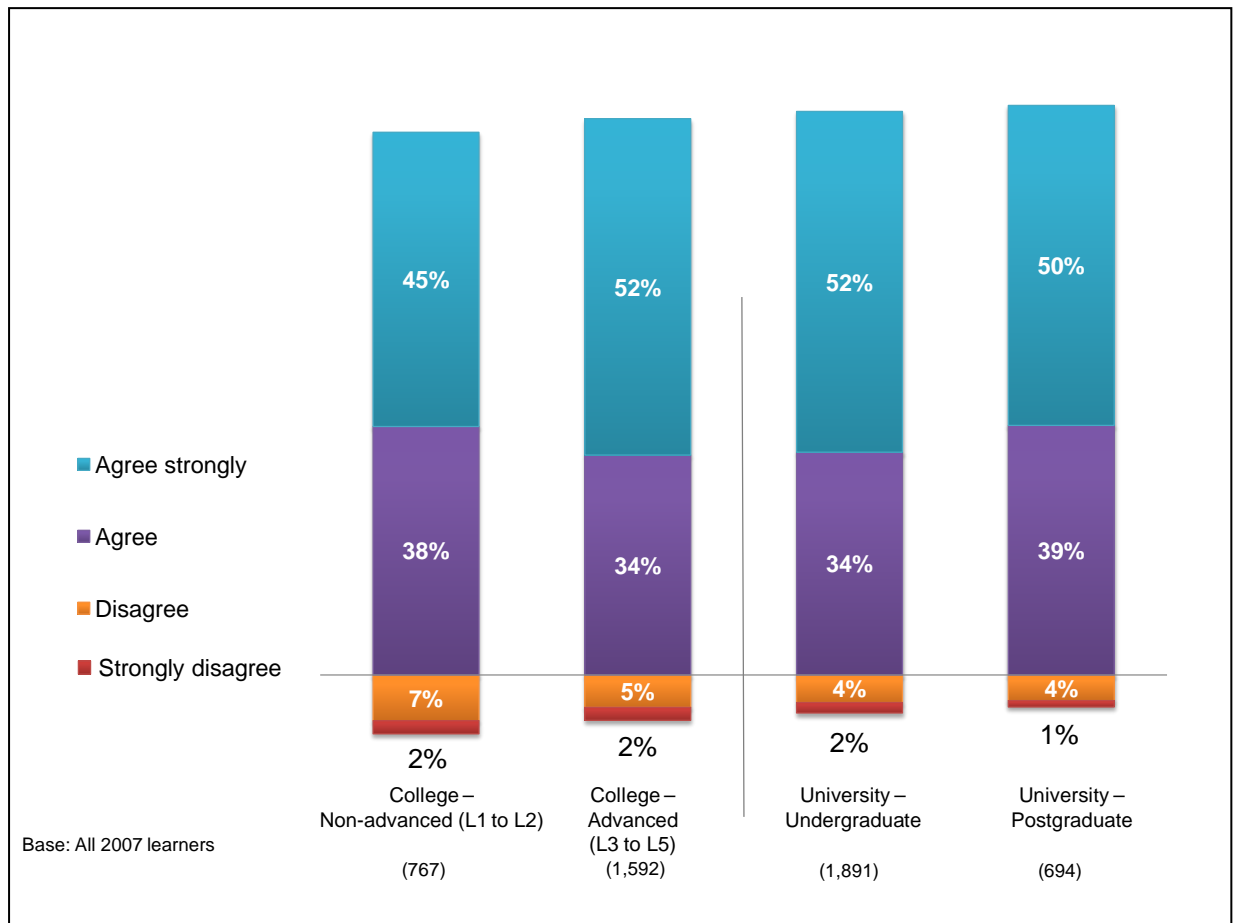
- a general drop in confidence in job security and progression opportunities as a result of the recession;
- an increasing recognition, because of greater employment experience, that college or university qualifications are not the sole driver of career progression; and
- the fact that more than half the cohort (56 per cent) have gone on to further study, most of which has been at a higher level and vocational in its focus. Further learning is therefore more likely to be seen as beneficial to the learner's career at the expense of the value assigned to the course completed in 2007.

### **Perceptions of overall value of course in relation to time, effort and cost**

At Sweep Three, leavers were asked whether they felt the benefits of doing their course outweigh the time and effort put in. Both college and university leavers were very positive and almost nine in ten (86 per cent) agreed that this was the case. Levels of agreement were very similar among university (86 per cent) and college leavers (85 per cent). Similarly the levels of agreement were relatively similar by level of course: 86 per cent of Undergraduates and 88 per cent of Postgraduates agreed that the benefits of their course outweighed the time and effort put in while 83 per cent of non-advanced level and 86 per cent of advanced level college leavers agreed.



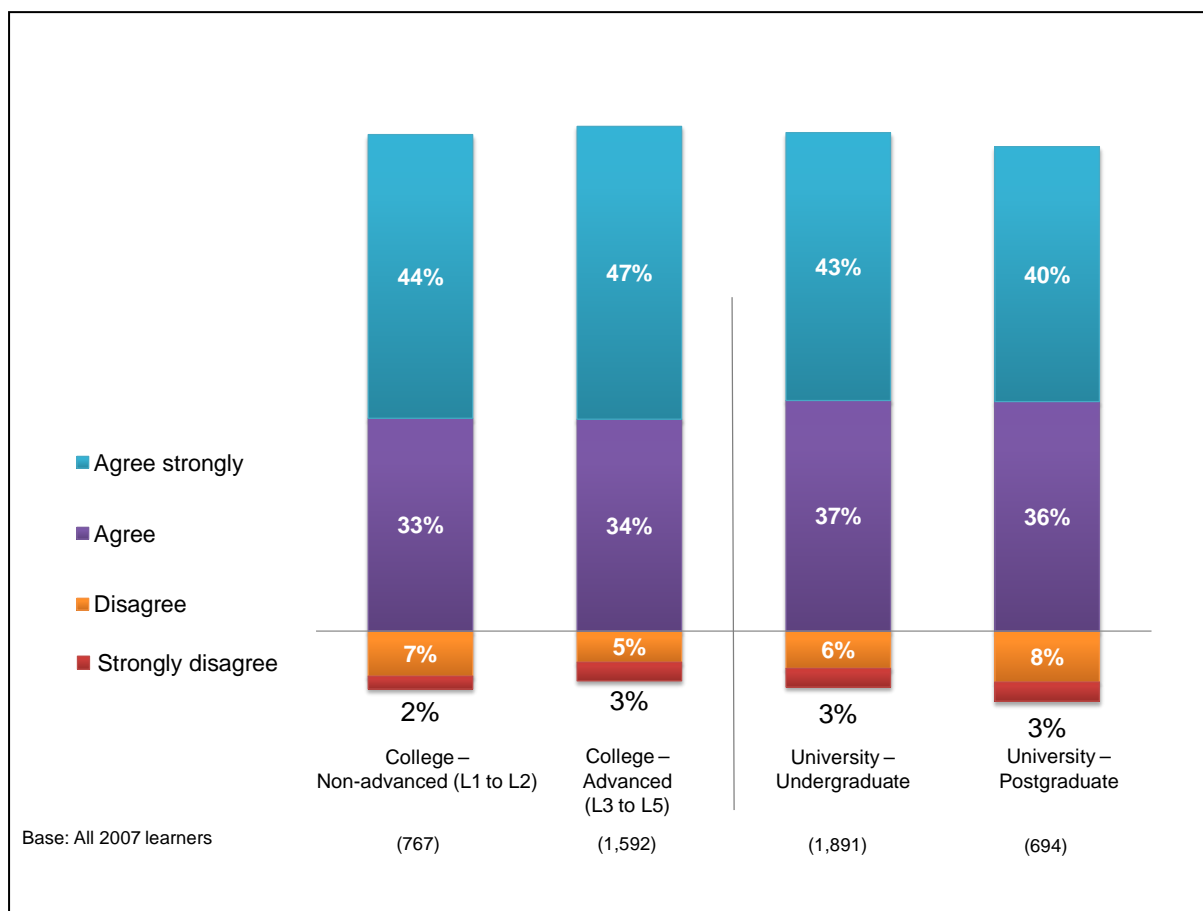
**Figure 6.2 Extent of agreement that the benefits of the 2007 course outweighed the time and effort put in – by level of study<sup>11</sup>**



University and college leavers were also asked to consider whether the benefits of undertaking their 2007 course outweigh the associated financial costs. Overall, the Class of 2007 were positive – four fifths (79 per cent) agreed that the benefits outweighed the costs. Levels of agreement were equal among university and college students although college students were more likely to agree strongly (46 per cent compared with 42 per cent of university students). There was also little variation by level of course taken as Figure 6.3 shows.

<sup>11</sup> Levels of college learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

**Figure 6.3 Extent of agreement that the benefits of the 2007 course outweighed cost involved with completing it<sup>12</sup>**



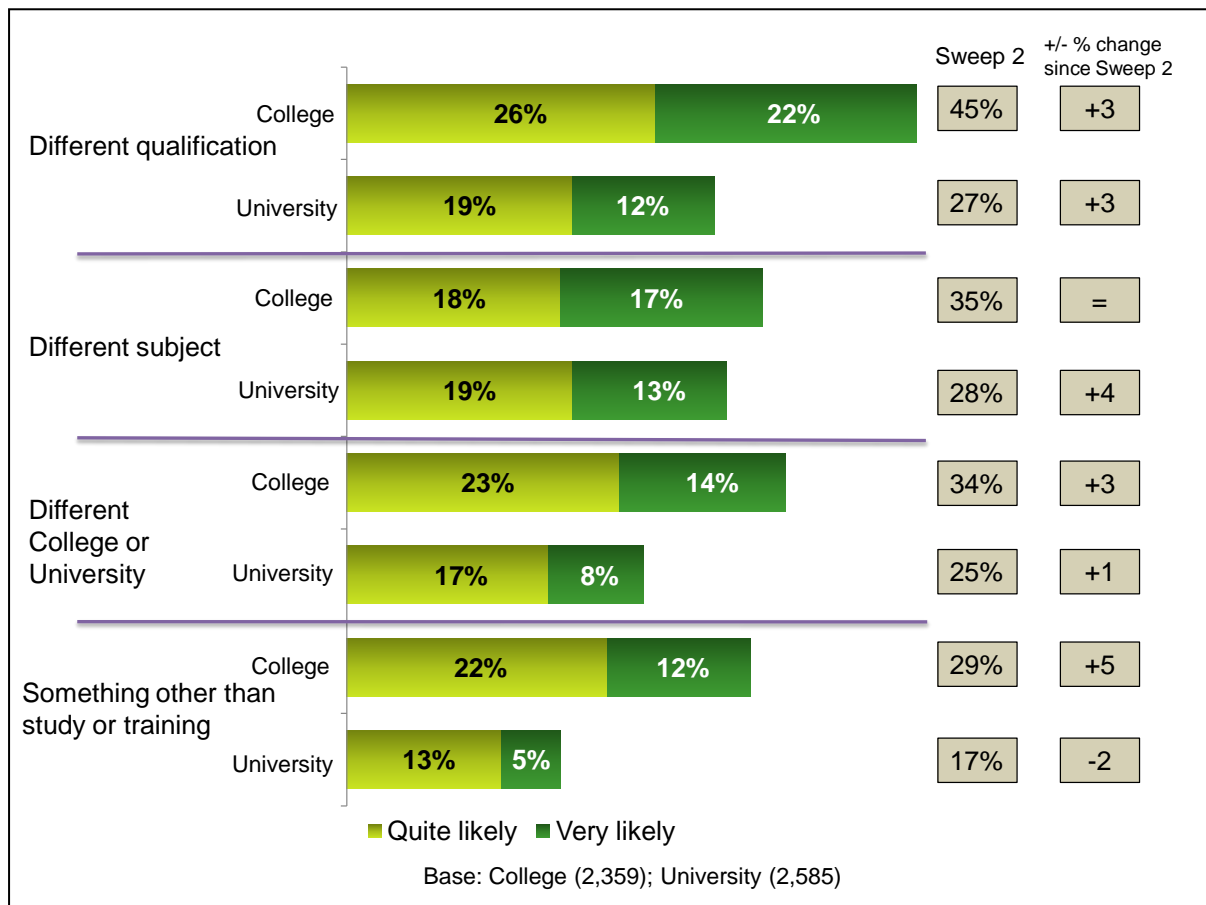
To further investigate perceptions of the value of the college or university course undertaken, respondents were asked whether they felt they had made the right decisions about what and where to study. While most were positive about the impact of their course on their career and the vast majority felt the benefits outweighed any associated costs, with hindsight, a significant proportion of leavers would change some part of their learning experience. More than six in ten (62 per cent) of the cohort would make at least one of the following changes:

- learning a different subject;
- studying towards a different qualification;
- attending a different institution; and
- doing something altogether different to study or training.

<sup>12</sup> Levels of college learners' courses refer to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Two thirds of college leavers (66 per cent) would consider making one or more of these changes in hindsight compared with 55 per cent of university leavers. Indeed, a higher proportion of college leavers would be likely to change each aspect of the 2007 course than university leavers. Figure 6.4 below shows how college and university responses broke down for each potential change to the 2007 course. Figure 6.4 also shows the proportion of college and university learners who felt they would be likely to make these changes in hindsight at Sweep Two in 2008.

**Figure 6.4 Likelihood that learners would make different choices if they could make the decision to study again**



The Class of 2007 would be most likely to change the type of qualification they took in their 2007 course. This is the case for half of college leavers (48 per cent) and one third (31 per cent) of university leavers. University leavers who completed a postgraduate course in 2007 (25 per cent) would be less likely than those who completed an undergraduate course (33 per cent) to change their type of qualification.

A third (34 per cent) of learners would be likely to choose a different subject. Former college students would be more likely to do so (35 per cent) than former university students (32 per cent). Leavers who

studied a Business related subject were the most likely to feel they might change their subject (40 per cent) whereas those who studied Science and Maths subjects were the least likely (28 per cent).

A third (33 per cent) of the cohort felt they would probably study at a different institution if given the choice again. College leavers were a lot more likely to regret their choice of institution (35 per cent) than university leavers (25 per cent).

Three in 10 (28 per cent) of the Class of 2007 would consider making the most fundamental change, not to go to college or university at all. Former college students were almost twice as likely to feel that with hindsight, they might not have gone into training, study or research (34 per cent compared with 19 per cent of former university students).

Comparisons with results from Sweep Two show that, while the general patterns of 'regret' remain the same (ie that college learners would be more likely to make changes than university graduates), the Class of 2007 as a whole would be more likely, with hindsight, to make each change at Sweep Three than at Sweep Two:

- learning a different subject – 34 per cent at Sweep Three up from 32 per cent at Sweep Two;
- studying towards a different qualification – 42 per cent up from 39 per cent;
- attending a different institution – 33 per cent up from 31 per cent; and
- doing something altogether different to study or training – 28 per cent up from 25 per cent.

The vast majority of the Class of 2007 remain positive about the impact of their course on their career progress and further learning but as discussed earlier in the chapter, the Class of 2007 have become less likely over time to agree that their course had helped/will help their career and professional development. Probable reasons for this include the recession, the realisation that qualifications are not the only key to success and the impact of subsequent learning. Clearly, over time, the cohort is also becoming less positive about their decision to enter learning and/or their 2007 subject, qualification type and institution. It is probable that the reasons for this increased likelihood to 'regret' are similar and equally it must be easy for learners to see with hindsight that they could have made better decisions several years ago as their career/progress pans out.

## **Impact of levels of debt on key indicators of satisfaction and employment situation**

As discussed in Chapter 5, one in five 2007 leavers (19 per cent) still had outstanding debt incurred as a result of their 2007 course in late 2010.

University graduates (35 per cent) were considerably more likely to still be in debt as a result of their course than college leavers (11 per cent). A third (35 per cent) of those with outstanding debt were £10,000 or more in the red (44 per cent of university leavers with debt; 20 per cent of college leavers). Two fifths (42 per cent) believed it would take at least five years to finish paying it back (47 per cent of university leavers and 34 per cent of college leavers with debt).

Looking specifically at university leavers, who were much more likely to be in debt as a result of their 2007 course, we explored whether having debt affected perceptions of the course in hindsight and any employment decisions made.

Earlier in this chapter we considered the Class of 2007's perception of the impact and value of their learning experience looking at the following indicators:

- the benefits of the course in terms of the development of vocational skills and improved career prospects;
- whether the benefits of the course outweigh the time and effort and the associated costs;
- whether with hindsight changes would be made to the 2007 course in terms of:
  - i Subject
  - ii Qualification type
  - iii Institution
  - iv Not entering into training or study at all.

University leavers with some form of debt as a result of their course were less positive than those without debt in the following ways:

- fewer believe the benefits of their course outweigh the time and effort involved (84 per cent compared with 87 per cent of those without debt);
- fewer believe the benefits of their course outweigh the associated costs (74 per cent compared with 81 per cent); and

- a greater number would consider taking a different subject in their 2007 learning if able to make the choice again (36 per cent compared with 30 per cent).

However, university leavers with debt were more positive than those without. They felt that:

- their 2007 course had improved their career prospects overall (88 per cent compared with 85 per cent of those without debt); and
- their 2007 course had improved their chances of getting onto learning or training courses (86 per cent compared with 81 per cent).

This sends out mixed messages about the impact of debt on university leavers' perceptions of their 2007 course. As might be expected, university learners with debt were considerably more negative about the relative benefits of their course in terms of the associated costs but were more likely to believe that their course has or will help their career progress and learning progress. It is possible that university leavers with debt were more inclined to think about the longer term consequences of their 2007 course because of their current debt - being positive about career and learning progression may enable these learners to put their debt into perspective as a means to an end; i.e. that their future prospects justify the financial outlay.

Much has been written lately about the graduate premium, especially in light of recent changes to tuition fee arrangements in England and changes to higher education funding models more generally. A recent report by ONS, for example, validates the idea that spending money on a university education will be worth it in the long run – the report shows that in 2009-10 university graduates in the UK earned £12,000 more per year on average than non-graduates.<sup>13</sup>

That said, there is evidence from Sweep Three of this research to suggest that university leavers with debt as a result of their course were less likely to be “on track” in terms of their current employment. All 2007 leavers in work at Sweep Three were asked whether they agreed with a series of statements about their current job. A comparison of responses between university leavers with outstanding debt and those without is telling:

- three fifths (59 per cent) of university leavers with outstanding debt agreed that their current job is one they wish to continue in long

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<sup>13</sup> ONS Report on UK Graduate earnings 8 April 2011 found at [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2010-results/stb-ashe-2010.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2010-results/stb-ashe-2010.pdf)

term (compared with 68 per cent of university leavers without debt); and

- a quarter (23 per cent) agreed that their current job is just a temporary one until they find something better (compared with 16 per cent of university leavers without debt).

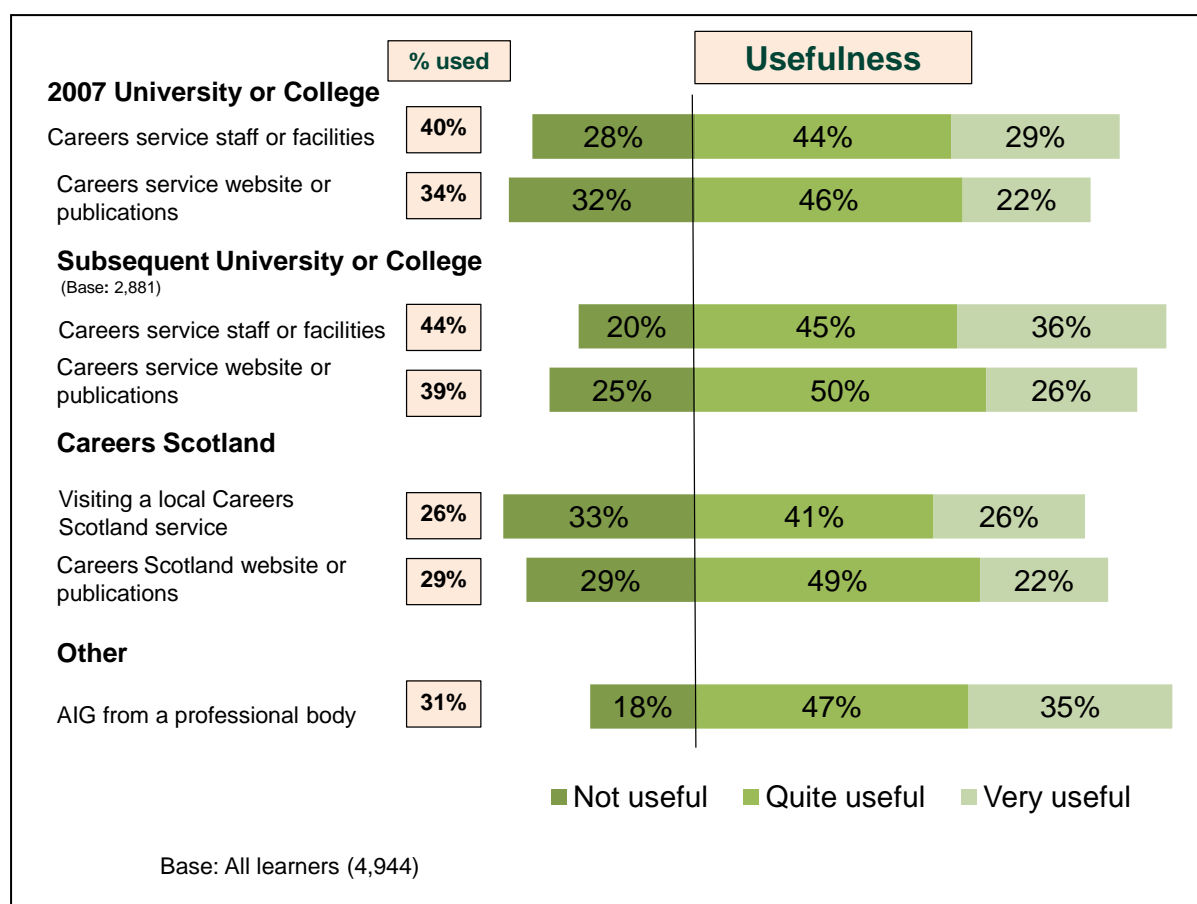
It is difficult to surmise that having debt is the reason for these differences without asking more questions. However, it is plausible that these university leavers with debt were more likely to have taken up 'any' job as they could not afford to turn work down or perhaps to do work experience in their desired field for little or no money.

### **Use of university and college careers services during and after the course and their usefulness**

Two thirds (66 per cent) of the Class of 2007 had sought advice, information or guidance (AIG) since completing their course in 2007. Former college students were slightly more likely to have sought advice than former university students (67 per cent of college leavers and 64 per cent of university leavers).

Figure 6.5 below shows the proportion of college and university leavers that have used certain types of careers service and the relative usefulness of each (among those who have used the service).

**Figure 6.5 Usefulness of careers services used**



As Figure 6.5 above shows, those in the Class of 2007 who had gone on to further learning were more likely to have used the careers services provided by a subsequent institution: 49 per cent of further learners used the careers services at their subsequent institution while 45 per cent of the Class of 2007 used the services of their 2007 institution. The services at these subsequent institutions were considered to have been more useful than those at the 2007 institutions:

- two fifths (80 per cent) of further learners who visited the careers staff or facilities at their subsequent institution found this useful, compared with 72 per cent of the Class of 2007 who did the same at their 2007 institution; and
- three quarters of further learners (75 per cent) who accessed the careers website and/or publications of their subsequent institution found this useful, compared with 68 per cent of the main cohort who used their 2007 institutions website or publications.

As mentioned earlier, college leavers (67 per cent) were more likely to have sought some form of AIG since leaving their 2007 course than university



leavers (64 per cent). College leavers were also more likely to have found the services of their 2007 institution useful than university leavers (76 per cent found the staff and/or facilities useful and 70 per cent found the website and/or publications useful compared with 66 and 64 per cent of university leavers).

A quarter (26 per cent) of the Class of 2007 had visited a local Careers Scotland service and 29 per cent had used the Careers Scotland website or read its publications since leaving their 2007 course. Careers Scotland's website and/or publications were considered to have been more useful by users than a visit to a local branch (71 per cent found the website/publications useful compared with 67 per cent who found their visit useful).

Around a third (31 per cent) of the cohort had sought AIG from a professional body since leaving their 2007 course. As might be expected, these sources have been the most useful (82 per cent rate them as useful) as a professional body can be expected to give the most accurate and relevant information for an individual whose chosen career is in that particular field.

### **Satisfaction with the progress made in life and career to date**

The vast majority of the Class of 2007 were satisfied with the progress they had made so far in their life and career (92 per cent). College (92 per cent) and university leavers (91 per cent) show similar levels of satisfaction, although college leavers were more likely to be 'very satisfied' with their progress (44 per cent compared with 41 per cent of university leavers). The levels of satisfaction with progress made were very similar to those found at Sweep Two when 93 per cent of the cohort was satisfied.

## 8 Intentions for the future

All respondents were asked about their ambitions for the coming year (2011). As shown in Figure 7.1 below, the Class of 2007 were most likely to plan to stay in their current role with the same employer (45 per cent), continue with (or return to) study or training (27 per cent) and/or make various changes of employment type such as to job role, employer and sector (19 per cent).

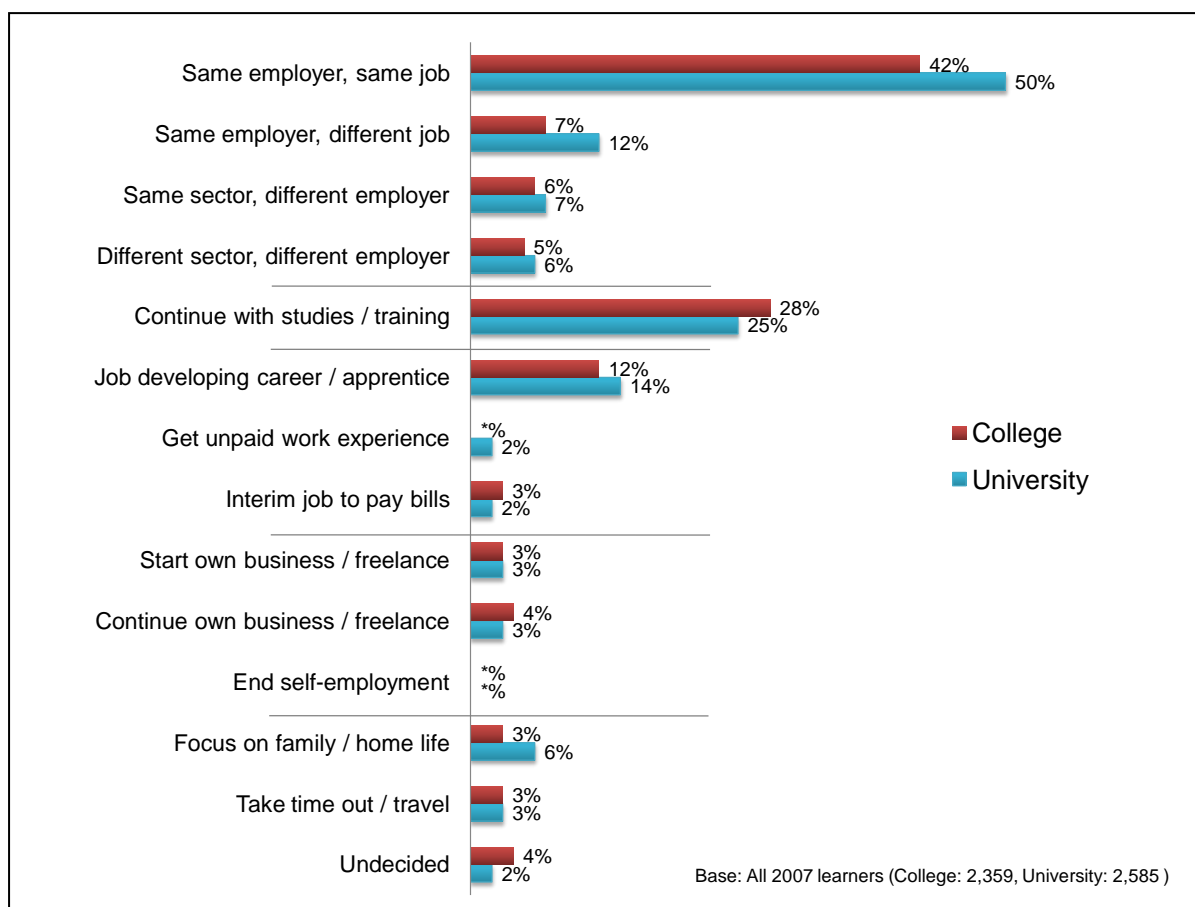
Compared to the cohort's ambitions at Sweep Two (in late 2008), it is clear that university leavers' employment plans had changed whereas college leavers' had not:

- at Sweep Three half of university leavers (50 per cent) planned to stay in the same job with the same employer – an increase of 11 percentage points since Sweep Two (39 per cent). Two fifths (42 per cent) of college leavers planned to do the same, a figure relatively unchanged since Sweep Two (41 per cent);
- university leavers were less likely to intend to make changes to their employment than at Sweep Two in terms of:
  - i changing to a different job at the same employer (12 per cent at Sweep Three – down from 15 per cent at Sweep Two)
  - ii changing to a different employer within the same sector (7 per cent – down from 10 per cent)
  - iii changing employer and sector (6 per cent – down from 9 per cent); and
- in contrast, college leavers were at least as likely to plan to make changes to their employment as at Sweep Two.

Reflecting earlier findings, this suggests that university graduates are increasingly comfortable and settled in their current (ie at Sweep Three) employment and had made more progress in achieving satisfactory employment outcomes since Sweep Two than college leavers.

A trend apparent among both university and college leavers was a reduction in those intent on continuing to study or train in the coming year. Around a quarter of university (25 per cent) and college leavers (28 per cent) planned to continue in education in 2011, significantly lower than the proportions who planned to do so in the following year at Sweep Two (33 per cent of university and 37 per cent of college leavers).

**Figure 7.1 Plans and ambitions for the coming year<sup>14</sup>**



The vast majority of university (88 per cent) and college learners (89 per cent) felt confident about achieving these plans or ambitions.

As would be expected, learners were most confident about ambitions that would involve making the fewest changes. As many as 93 per cent of graduates who wanted to stay in the same job or continue being self-employed or studying/training were confident that they would accomplish their goal. Those who were looking to stay with their employer but in a different capacity were also very confident that this was attainable (87 per cent). However, university and college leavers who wanted to pursue a job in a different sector with a new employer (ie make significant changes to their employment) were least confident about achieving their ambition (70 per cent were confident).

While the Class of 2007 generally felt very confident about achieving their ambitions for the coming year at Sweep Three, a higher proportion anticipated one or more barriers to achieving these ambitions. At Sweep

<sup>14</sup> \*% indicates a figure above zero but below 0.5%

Two, two thirds (64 per cent) did not anticipate any barriers, but only half (52 per cent) of the Sweep Three cohort shared this sentiment. This figure was significantly lower among university graduates (41 per cent) than college leavers (57 per cent).

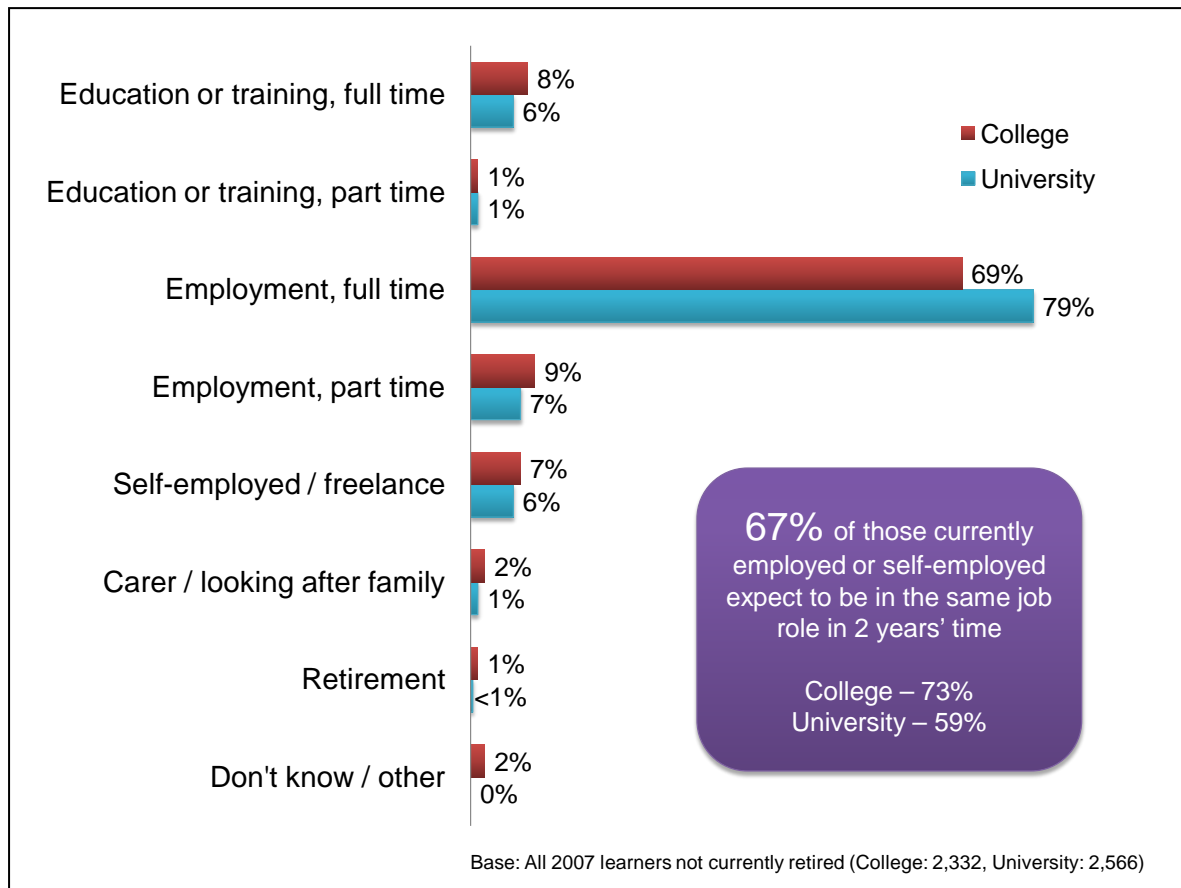
The majority of perceived barriers relate to the recent recession:

- one fifth (19 per cent) mentioned the economic climate. university graduates (28 per cent) were twice as likely as college leavers (14 per cent) to perceive this as a barrier to their progress;
- around one in seven (13 per cent) of all learners feared a lack of finance may stand in the way of their ambitions; and
- one in ten (11 per cent) of university and college leavers believed they would have to overcome a lack of jobs and placement opportunities in the market.

### **Anticipated main activity in two years' time**

As shown in Figure 7.2 below, when asked what they expected their main activity to be in two years' time (late 2012), the vast majority of learners saw themselves in full-time employment (73 per cent). This proportion is considerably higher among university leavers (79 per cent) than college (69 per cent). Around one in 10 (9 per cent) of the cohort saw themselves in education in 2012.

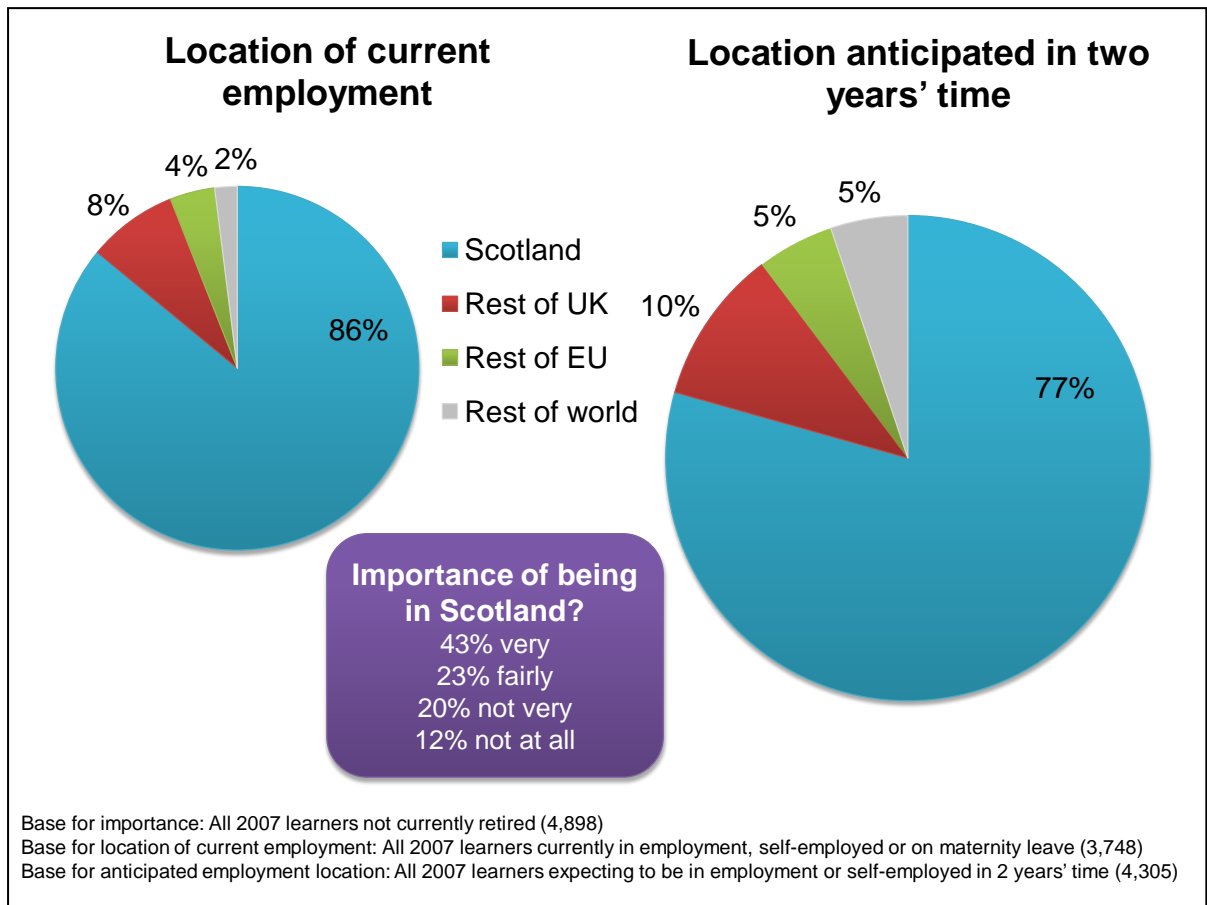
**Figure 7.2 Anticipated main activity in two years' time (late 2012)**



As Figure 7.3 below shows, of those currently in employment just under nine in 10 (86 per cent) were working in Scotland at Sweep Three. However, only three quarters (77 per cent) of those who anticipated being in work in two years' time expected that they would be based in Scotland.

University graduates who anticipated being in work in two years' time were less likely to see their future in Scotland compared with college leavers (59 per cent compared with 87 per cent). Postgraduates were the least likely to expect to be based in Scotland in two years' time (49 per cent of those who anticipate to be in work in two years' time). Indeed, three quarters of all college leavers (75 per cent) rate being in Scotland as an important factor in the lives over the next two to five years, whereas just half (51 per cent) of university leavers rate this as important.

**Figure 7.3 Anticipated location of employment in two years' time (2012)**



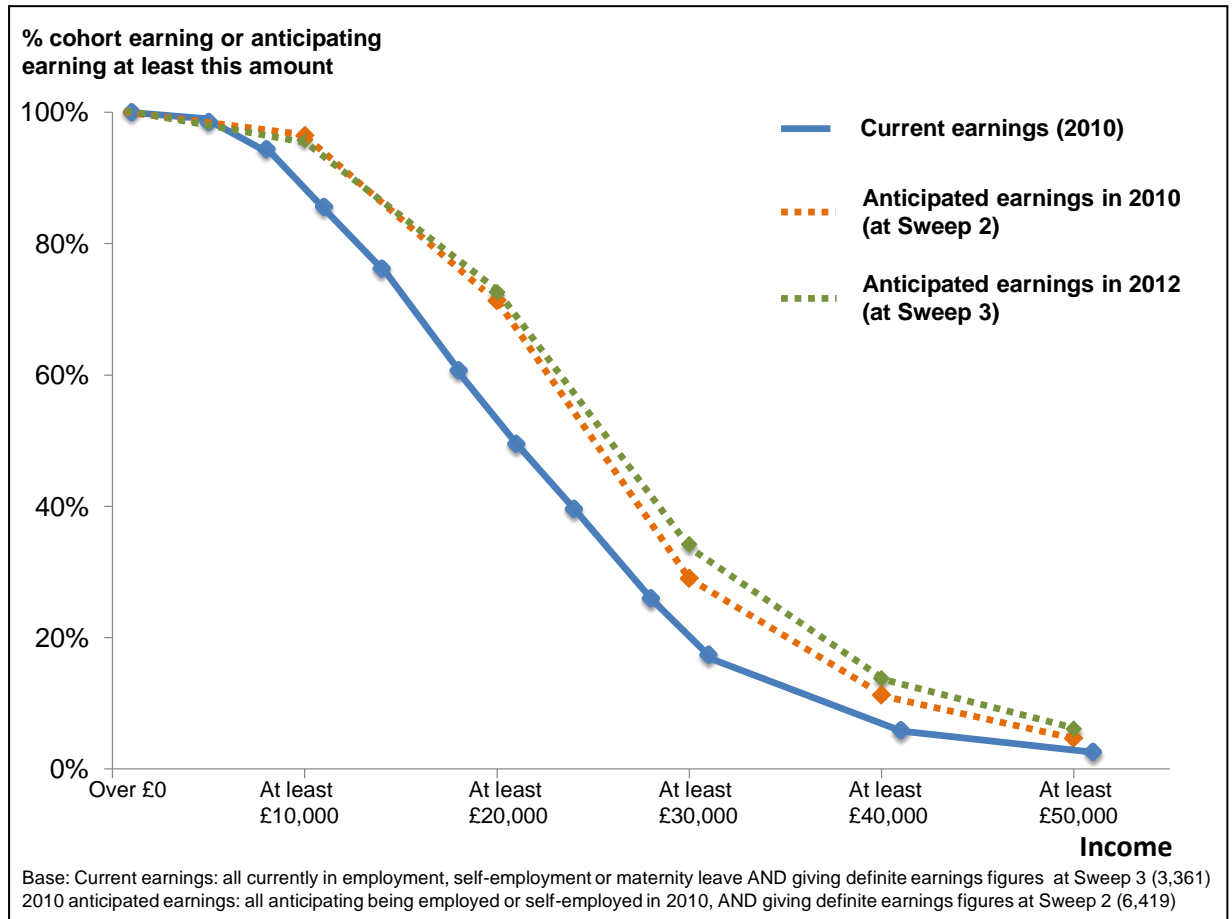
University and college leavers who anticipated being in employment in two years' time were asked how much they expect to earn by then. This group expect a median wage of just over £25,000 – an increase of roughly 25 per cent over a two year period on the current median wage of £20,200.

Looking back to those leavers who anticipated being in work in 2010 at Sweep Two and comparing projected earnings with current earnings, it is clear that they were overly ambitious with their projections, even though the Class of 2007 has actually experienced quite significant increases in earnings since Sweep Two (14 per cent among university and 15 per cent among college leavers' median incomes). To some extent this reflects that learners are often focused on achieving a relatively fixed target that is based on an 'ideal income' rather than their likely earnings progression. The recession will also have had a dampening effect on the level of income the Class of 2007 will have actually earned since Sweep Two.

As Figure 7.4 below shows, leavers expect earnings in two years' time at a similar level to what was anticipated by the equivalent group at Sweep Two

(when looking ahead to their 2010 earnings). Therefore, although this is still a steep increase, it does seem to be a slightly more realistic projection.

**Figure 7.4 Current and anticipated earnings**



## 9 Outcomes of learning for key student groups

A key objective of the research is to gather insight on the different routes learners take into college or university education in order to assess whether they are ‘on track’ to meet their goals. Learners’ situations before starting the course, reasons for taking the course and intentions and ambitions following completion in 2007 can be linked together to construct a typology of learners as shown below in Table 8.1. The typology groups together learners with similar backgrounds and intentions and covers 92 per cent of the Sweep Three cohort. Note there is no overlap between the groups.

Table 8.1 gives the total number of learners interviewed at Sweep Three by type and the proportion of the weighted population that this type accounts for. The average age of learners on completion of their 2007 course is shown along with information on the gender balance within each type.

**Table 8.1 Summary of learner typology**

Type	N	% weighted data	College or university	Average age	Predominant gender
Young college students	886	22	College only	20	Male (57%)
Young university students	1,259	19	University only	23	Female (54%)
Employer-driven college learners	329	15	College only	34	Male (55%)
Career changers	795	12	College and university	33	Female (68%)
Career builders	830	18	College and university	38	Female (64%)
Previously unemployed learners	166	3	College and university	37	Female (51%)
Women returners	191	3	College and university	39	Female (100%)

In the rest of this chapter we describe these seven groups in more detail, providing information on:

- key characteristics;



- aims, intentions and ambitions upon leaving the 2007 course;
- outcomes and situation at Sweep Two;
- progress made by the time of Sweep Three;
- perception of the course in hindsight at Sweep Three; and
- satisfaction with life and career to date (by Sweep Three).

More detail on the characteristics of the learner groups is given in the methodological appendix at the end of this report.

## **Type one – young college students**

### *Characteristics*

This group of students

- left a Scottish college in 2007, at an average age of 20;
- were in full-time or part-time education at school, college or university, or taking time out or a gap year after full-time education, immediately before starting their course; and
- had never been in employment at any stage before starting their course, or had only been working alongside their study or during the holidays. None had had a period out of full-time education when they were in work.

### *Aims, intentions and ambitions upon completing the 2007 course*

The primary aim for this learner group on leaving college was to continue to build on their skills base. On leaving their college course, over half of all these young college students planned to continue their studies or training (56 per cent). For just over one third (36 per cent), the intention was to find a job that would develop their career. Far fewer (7 per cent) were looking for interim employment that would support them in the short term, rather than a job that would be relevant to a long-term career.

### *At Sweep Two*

At Sweep Two, young college learners (Type One) were the most likely group to feel satisfied with their life and career to date. Many were looking to continue their studies or training after completion of their initial course in 2007, and there had been a high progression rate amongst this group, including into HE. This group was particularly likely to say that studying at

college had improved their confidence, independence and their ability to work constructively with others.

### *At Sweep Three: Progress following completion of course*

Young college learners had continued to make progress in work and learning since Sweep Two and it is clear that the majority were successfully pursuing their ambition of furthering their education. Three in ten (30 per cent) were in learning at Sweep Three and six in ten (61 per cent) had gone on to further learning at some point since leaving their 2007 course – higher than the 56 per cent found among the Class of 2007 overall. These further learners were among the most likely to have gone on to learn at a higher level than their 2007 course (71 per cent had moved up in level compared with 59 per cent overall). There is evidence that young college learners aren't finished in education yet either – over a third (36 per cent) intended to continue learning in the coming year.

Young college learners had also been progressing in work since Sweep Two – a third (33 per cent) of those in work at Sweeps Two and Three had changed employer during this period, whereas a quarter (25 per cent) of the equivalent overall cohort had done so. Those in work at Sweep Three were also keen to keep moving and progressing; two thirds (66 per cent) saw their job as a stepping stone and one third (35 per cent) were waiting to find something better (compared with 56 per cent and 23 per cent respectively of the overall cohort). Young college learners' median wage is around £15,000 – among the lowest earned by the class of 2007.

Those who have stayed in the same job were likely to have seen improvements and developments at work (although they were the least likely to believe that the course played a part in such improvements):

- nine in ten (89 per cent) saw a pay increase in the job held since Sweep Two – compared with 82 per cent of the equivalent overall cohort;
- four fifths (82 per cent) were getting more job satisfaction – compared with 72 per cent overall;
- four fifths (81 per cent) had improved their career prospects – compared with 64 per cent overall; and
- three quarters (72 per cent) had greater job security – compared with 53 per cent overall.

### *Perception of the course in hindsight*

In spite of the evident progress young college learners have made since leaving their 2007 course, they were the most likely group to imagine making changes to their 2007 learning programme in hindsight – as many as 71 per cent (compared with 62 per cent among the cohort as a whole) would be likely to make some form of change. The two main changes considered were:

- two fifths (37 per cent) would consider changing their subject – compared with 34 per cent overall;
- over half (54 per cent) would be likely to take a different type of qualification – compared with 42 per cent overall.

That said, young college learners were no less likely than the Class of 2007 as a whole to believe that their 2007 course has improved their career prospects (83 per cent among young college leavers and the cohort overall) or to believe that the benefits outweigh the time and effort involved (84 per cent of young college leavers – 85 per cent of the overall cohort).

### *Satisfaction with life and career to date*

Young college students were one of the most satisfied groups in terms of the progress they felt they had made with life and career to date. Only 6 per cent stated they were not satisfied with their progress to date.

As discussed at Sweep Two, this is a young cohort who had a longer journey ahead after leaving their 2007 course in terms of reaching their career goals. Indeed the majority are still on this journey: many were still in learning and many plan to be in learning in the coming year or so while many of those in work were looking to move on and develop. In turn, young college learners' positivity remains undaunted as they continue their journey.

## **Type Two – young university students**

### *Characteristics*

This group of students have the same defining characteristics as the Type One individuals, except that they completed a course at a university in 2007 rather than a college. Type Two learners:

- left a Scottish university in 2007, at an average age of 23;

- were in full-time or part-time education at school, college or university, or taking time out or a gap year after full-time education, immediately before starting their course; and
- had never been in employment at any stage before starting their course, or had only been working alongside their study or during the holidays. None had had a period out of full-time education when they were in work.

Two-fifths (41 per cent) were mainly resident outside of Scotland in the three years before starting the course.

### *Aims, intentions and ambitions*

The intentions Type Two learners had on leaving their course in 2007 can be seen as representing a reverse pattern to that described above for Type One learners. A greater proportion of young university learners than young college learners mentioned that their plan was to find a job in order to start developing their career (59 per cent compared to 36 per cent of Type One learners). Conversely, a lower proportion were planning to continue with their education or training (32 per cent, compared to 56 per cent of Type One learners). Only one fifth of Type Two students who had been studying at a postgraduate level were interested in engaging with further study (21 per cent).

Whilst it was the case that most learners were focused on developing their career in the year following the course, a substantial minority were just interested in finding an interim job not necessarily linked to their long-term career plans (12 per cent) or taking time to consider their options (7 per cent).

### *At Sweep Two*

At Sweep Two, a high proportion of young university leavers were in employment although many saw this work as a stepping stone for the future. The majority believed that university had given them skills relevant to their Sweep Two employment. These skills were typically advanced, professional skills such as report writing, analysing complex issues, verbal skills and the ability to work under pressure.

### *At Sweep Three: progress following completion of course*

Young university learners' ambitions upon leaving their 2007 course were primarily focused on achieving employment outcomes and developing their career. At Sweep Three, it is clear that the majority had realised these

ambitions. Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of Type two learners were working full-time (compared with 61 per cent of the overall cohort). A further 5 per cent were working part-time.

Those in work were highly likely to be in professional level jobs – four fifths (80 per cent) work in managerial, professional or associate professional roles. In turn their median wage of around £24,000 is among the highest earned by the Class of 2007.

Those who have remained at the same employer had seen significant improvements at work since Sweep Two:

- half (52 per cent) had been promoted – compared with 33 per cent of the equivalent cohort overall;
- nine in ten (91 per cent) had seen a pay rise – compared with 82 per cent overall; and
- three quarters (74 per cent) had improved their pay and promotion prospects – compared with 64 per cent overall.

In spite of these higher level jobs and earnings and evident improvements at work, Type two learners are ambitious and many were intent on moving onwards and upwards. Three fifths (61 per cent) of those in work at Sweep Three saw their job as a stepping stone to better things (compared with 56 per cent of the overall cohort in work).

Young university learners were the most likely to have outstanding debt as a result of their 2007 course (45 per cent did compared with 19 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall). However, these university leavers also expected to be earning the most of all learner types in two years' time – 45 per cent believed they would be earning at least £30,000 in 2012.

### ***Perception of the course in hindsight***

Young university learners were the least likely group to state that they would make changes to their 2007 course in hindsight (58 per cent would be likely to make a change compared with 62 per cent overall). Indeed, nine in 10 Type two learners believe the 2007 course had improved their long term career prospects (compared with 83 per cent of the cohort overall).

### ***Satisfaction with life and career to date***

Nine in 10 (90 per cent) young university learners were satisfied with the progress they had made in their life and career to date. This is a very

ambitious group and even though significant inroads had been made into the world of work, these learners were keen to continue progressing.

### **Type Three – employer-driven college learners**

#### *Characteristics*

This group of college learners completed vocational training in 2007 that was linked directly to their work before the course and prompted by their employer at the time. The specific defining characteristics for Type Three learners were that they:

- left a Scottish college in 2007, at an average age of 34;
- were working as an employee full-time (83 per cent) or part-time (17 per cent) immediately before starting their course;
- were prompted to take the course because it was part of their work or a work-based training scheme or because completion of the course was required by their employer; and
- almost all were studying on a part-time basis (97 per cent).

#### *Aims, intentions and ambitions*

Two thirds of Type Three learners (67 per cent) intended to stay with their employer after finishing their course in 2007. This proportion is considerably higher than other groups who were working prior to their course (career changers and career builders) which is not altogether surprising given how this group is defined. A further 11 per cent planned to stay with same employer but in a different job role while 6 per cent intended to stay in the same field or sector but move to a different employer. A quarter (25 per cent) intended to continue with their studies or training.

#### *At Sweep Two*

At Sweep Two, the majority of employer-driven college learners were working for the same employer they had been working for since before their 2007 course (73 per cent of all Type Three learners – compared to 81 per cent of those in employment at Sweep Two). These learners had commonly experienced improvements at work in terms of pay, promotion and job satisfaction and were likely to believe that the 2007 course had played a part in these improvements.

### *At Sweep Three: progress following completion of course*

Employer-driven college learners carried on in the same vein between Sweeps Two and Three. The group were therefore among the most likely to be employed (77 per cent were in full-time employment compared with 61 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall). Four fifths (82 per cent) of those working at Sweep Three and at Sweep Two were still with the same employer compared with 75 per cent overall. Accordingly, Type Three learners were the most likely to see themselves staying in their current job in the long term (80 per cent of those employed compared with 68 per cent overall). Employer-driven college learners' median wage is roughly £18,000.

### *Perception of the course in hindsight*

As mentioned, employer-driven college learners' primary ambition upon leaving their 2007 course was to continue working in their existing jobs and their perception of the course in hindsight is very positive because so many of the group have been able to continue and develop in these roles. For example, the vast majority believe their course had given them skills relevant to their current job (91 per cent compared with 83 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall); and where these Type Three learners had seen improvements at work (in the same job as at Sweep Two), they were the most likely to attribute the improvements to the 2007 course – four fifths (79 per cent) of those who had achieved a promotion believed the course had played a part (compared with 67 per cent overall) and six in 10 (58 per cent) who had received a pay increase felt what they learned on the course was influential (compared with 43 per cent overall).

### *Satisfaction with life and career to date*

As many as 95 per cent employer-driven college learners were satisfied. This puts this group among the most satisfied with their life and progress to date. This is not surprising as the group are succeeding in their ambition to continue and develop in work for their existing employer. Indeed Type Three learners were the most likely to intend staying at their current employer in the coming year (either in the same role or in, presumably, a higher level role) – 69 per cent intended to do so (compared with 54 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall).

## **Type Four – career changers**

### *Characteristics*

This group of 'career changer' learners were defined as follows:

- left a Scottish college (67 per cent) or university (33 per cent) in 2007 at an average age of 33;
- were working as an employee full-time, part-time, on maternity leave or considered themselves to be in a gap between jobs immediately before starting their course; and
- reported that their most recent employment before starting the course was not related to their long-term career aims, indicating a desire to change career or type of work.

Although not an eligibility criterion for this group, the majority (72 per cent) also said that their specific aim in taking the course was to help them change career or move to a different type of work. Also the majority (89 per cent) said that they were looking primarily to the course to give them new skills rather than developing their existing skills.

### *Aims, intentions and ambitions*

Type Four learners' intentions upon completing their course generally reflected a desire to change career or change their type of work. On leaving their college or university course, two fifths of all these young college students intended to continue their studies or training (41 per cent compared to 37 per cent across all learners). Considering that all of this group were employed or considered themselves to be in a gap between jobs immediately before starting their course this highlights the importance that this group attaches to continued learning in getting them where they want to be, namely a different career.

### *At Sweep Two*

At Sweep Two, career changers were split between those who had succeeded in changing to a different type of work and those who had not – the former were invariably more positive than the latter. Two fifths of those in work at Sweep Two (64 per cent of career changers) had managed to achieve their ambition of changing career and had experienced significant improvements in their new work:

- 62 per cent claimed to have better job security;
- 69 per cent were working in a higher level job role;
- 71 per cent claimed to have better pay and promotion prospects;
- 76 per cent were paid more than they had been in their old job;
- 83 per cent were doing more interesting work; and



- 83 per cent had more job satisfaction.

Type Four learners who had stayed with the same employer had experienced far fewer improvements. For example, only 14 per cent of those who stayed had achieved a promotion as result of the course and only 14 per cent had received a pay rise.

### *At Sweep Three: progress following completion of course*

Career changers were among the least likely to be in full-time work at Sweep Three (56 per cent compared with 61 per cent of the Class of 2007 as a whole). In fact, they were noticeably less likely to be in full-time work at Sweep Three than the other two Types that were mainly in employment before starting their 2007 course (77 per cent of employer-driven college learners and 78 per cent career builders) were in full-time work at Sweep Three career changers' median wage is around £18,000.

Three quarters (77 per cent) of career changers in work at Sweep Three were working for the same employer as at Sweep Two. These learners were less likely than other equivalent groups to have experienced improvements at work during this time:

- three quarters (27 per cent) had achieved a promotion – compared with 33 per cent overall;
- two fifths (43 per cent) felt more secure in their position – compared with 53 per cent overall; and
- half (53 per cent) felt their pay and promotion prospects had improved – compared with 64 per cent overall..

Second only to young university learners (Type One), career changers had the highest levels of outstanding debt among the Class of 2007 – 27 per cent had unpaid debts as a result of their course at Sweep Three. This includes 16 per cent of all career changers who had at least £5,000 of debt as a result of their 2007 course (compared to 5 per cent of the rest of the Class of 2007 excluding young university learners).

### *Perception of the course in hindsight*

Career changers were no more likely to 'regret' any aspect of their course nor were they less likely to believe that the benefits of the course outweigh the time and effort or associated costs. They were though less likely to agree that their course has given them skills to use in their current work (76 per cent compared with 83 per cent overall) and more likely to agree that

the course gave them skills to help change to a different type of work (68 per cent compared with 60 per cent overall). As the latter was the original intention for this group, it is a positive that a relatively high proportion agrees that the course has helped or will help.

### ***Satisfaction with life and career to date***

Career changers were among the least satisfied with their life and career to date – 87 per cent were satisfied (compared with 92 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall). Although this is relatively low in comparison to the cohort as a whole, it is important to remember that this still represents almost nine in ten who were satisfied with their progress.

What may explain this lower level of satisfaction is that many career changers have not yet achieved their ambition of changing career or changing to a different type of work. Indeed, fewer career changers in work at Sweep Three consider their current job to be one they intend to continue with in the long term (57 per cent compared with 68 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall and 80 per cent of employer-driven college learners and 72 per cent of career builders). Career changers' ambitions involved making more fundamental changes than other groups who were in work at the time of starting their 2007 course – employer-driven college learners and career builders – so in this sense it is not surprising that fewer have achieved their ambitions and in turn that fewer were satisfied with their progress to date. As mentioned above, Type four learners were likely to believe that their course gave them the necessary skills to change to a different type of work, so over time more are likely to achieve their ambition.

### **Type Five – career builders**

#### ***Characteristics***

All learners categorised as career builders are linked by the fact that they:

- left a Scottish college or university in 2007; and
- were working as an employee full-time, part-time, on maternity leave or considered themselves to be in a gap between jobs immediately before starting their course.

The group encompasses:

- both college and university learners who reported that their most recent employment before starting the course was related to their

long-term career aims (thus distinguishing them from the Type Four career changers group); and

- learners who were prompted to take the course because it was part of their work or a work-based training scheme, or because completion of the course was required by their employer, but who studied at university rather than college and who are therefore distinct from the ‘Type Three employer-driven college learners’ group.

These two sub-groups were brought together in this category because of the similarity in their background, study patterns and intentions in studying. The predominant motivations for undertaking learning for this group were a hope that the course of study would help them progress within the organisation that they were working for at the time (51 per cent) or to help them find a new job in the same area of work (35 per cent). Therefore, this group can be further distinguished from the career changers group discussed above, the majority of whom said that their specific aim in taking the course was to help them change career or move to a different type of work.

### *Aims, intentions and ambitions*

Just as career builders’ motivations for taking the course focused on building a career and progressing within their sector of employment, the most common ambitions or intentions amongst this group on completion of learning reflected a desire to stay within the same type of work. One third intended to remain working in the same role for the same employer they had before (and often throughout) their course of learning (36 per cent), and one fifth (22 per cent) wanted to move or progress to a different job role within their organisation. One in six (15 per cent) intended to remain in the same sector or type of job role but progress to a new employer organisation. Only two per cent were considering a move to a different field of employment.

On completion of their course, more than a quarter of learners (27 per cent) intended to engage in further study or training. Of these, many (32 per cent) were intending to do this whilst continuing in their existing job role, or in conjunction with a move to a new role within their employer organisation. Overall, one in six career builder learners (15 per cent) stated that continued study or training was their sole plan on completing their course, indicating an intention to move to full-time study.

### *At Sweep Two*

At Sweep Two, the majority of career builders were in full-time (76 per cent) or part-time employment (11 per cent) mostly for the same employer as at

the start of their 2007 course. Most had achieved their goal to either move to a new employer or to move upwards with the same employer. Most career builders were very positive about the impact the course has had for them professionally – nine in 10 agreed that the course had given them skills to use in their current work and a similar amount (87 per cent) believed the course had improved their career prospects generally.

### *At Sweep Three: Progress following completion of course*

Just as at Sweep Two, career builders were among the most likely to be working full-time at Sweep Three (78 per cent). The vast majority of those in work at Sweep Three as well as at Sweep Two have stayed at the same employer (85 per cent compared with 75 per cent of the equivalent cohort overall). Career builders were the most likely type to work in management level positions – a quarter (25 per cent) of those in work were in these higher level positions (compared with 14 per cent overall). Accordingly, career builders earned the highest median salary, £27,000 (higher than the £20,200 Sweep Three median).

Approaching three quarters (72 per cent) of career builders in work at Sweep Three viewed their job as one they want to be working in long-term and just 16 per cent saw it as a temporary position to fill until something better comes along (compared with 23 per cent among all those in work across the Sweep Three cohort). However, among those working for the same employer as Sweep Two, career builders were the least likely to believe they had greater job security since Sweep Two. Two fifths (39 per cent) feel more secure at Sweep Three compared with 53 per cent overall. This may well reflect the knowledge that in a recessionary time, middle management positions are often at risk.

### *Perception of the course in hindsight*

Career builders were positive about the impact the course has had on their work, nine in 10 (88 per cent) believed that they had learned skills beneficial to their current work (compared with 83 per cent of the Sweep Three cohort overall). They were among the least likely (along with young university learners) to think themselves likely to change any aspect of their 2007 course in hindsight. For example:

- three in ten (29 per cent) would consider taking a different subject – compared with 34 per cent overall among the Class of 2007;
- three in ten (29 per cent) might attend a different institution – compared with 33 per cent overall;

- less than four fifths (38 per cent) would study towards a different qualification – compared with 42 per cent overall;
- a quarter (24 per cent) would do something different altogether – compared with 28 per cent overall.

### *Satisfaction with life and career to date*

Career builders learners were among the most satisfied with their life and progress to date – 95 per cent were satisfied (92 per cent overall among the Class of 2007). It is clear that the 2007 course had enabled this group to build on an already solid base of work experience and at Sweep Three they had achieved (or maintained) high employment rates, be it with their original employer or a new employer.

### **Type Six – previously unemployed learners**

#### *Characteristics*

This group encompasses all learners who reported that they were unemployed immediately before starting the course they completed in 2007. This excludes those individuals whose main activity at this time was being a carer or looking after family, maternity leave, in a gap between jobs with confirmed employment pending, and those who were retired. One quarter of this group (25 per cent) have a long-standing health problem or disability.

Nine out of 10 previously unemployed learners studied at a college rather than a university.

#### *Aims, intentions and ambitions*

Around half of previously unemployed learners (53 per cent) were looking to move into work on completion of their course. The career goals of this group were varied with significant numbers intending to go in the following directions:<sup>15</sup>

- over two fifths (45 per cent) whose intention was to find a job that would allow them to develop their career;

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<sup>15</sup> Note that a small number of the plans of some individuals encompassed more than one of these elements, and so the bulleted figures add to over 53%.

- a smaller proportion (7 per cent) who were planning to find an interim job that was not what they would want to do in the long term but that would pay the bills; and
- one in twenty (4 per cent) who were interested in starting their own business, or working on a freelance or self-employed basis.

The higher proportion of individuals who had been looking to find a job to develop their career rather than just looking for something temporary after finishing their course is perhaps indicative of the confidence these individuals have in their skillset and ability to move into meaningful employment.

Just over two fifths of previously unemployed learners (42 per cent) were looking to progress into further study or training on completion of their course in 2007. In most of these cases (38 per cent overall) individuals did not indicate that they were also planning to look for work, indicating that they were focused purely on continuing their education.

### *At Sweep Two*

At Sweep Two, half of previously unemployed learners were in full or part-time work and a quarter were in learning. Those in work were more likely than other types to be working in administrative or secretarial, sales and customer service, or elementary occupations and were also more likely to view their position as something temporary until a better job came along. Previously unemployed learners were positive about the impact of their course though and were particularly likely to feel that the benefits of completing it outweighed the associated costs. The group were also particularly likely to report improvements to core skills such as IT and spelling and grammar. However, previously unemployed learners were on balance the least satisfied with their life and progress so far at Sweep Two.

### *At Sweep Three: progress following completion of course*

As a group, previously unemployed learners had not succeeded in achieving their main ambitions of finding work and/or continuing in education. At Sweep Three, just a quarter (25 per cent) of previously unemployed learners were working full-time (compared with 61 per cent of the Class of 2007 as a whole) and a third (33 per cent) considered their current employment to be a something temporary until a better position becomes available – higher than the 23 per cent found overall among the Class of 2007. One in 10 (11 per cent) was working as self-employed or freelance at Sweep Three (compared with 4 per cent overall). Whilst being freelance or self-employed may be a positive choice for some, worryingly, one in five (19 per cent) was

unemployed at Sweep Three. This is much higher than the one in 20 (4 per cent) found across the Sweep Three cohort overall.

Fewer previously unemployed learners had gone on to further learning by the time of Sweep Three (49 per cent compared with 56 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall) and in turn, six out of 10 (59 per cent) of those who had not gone on to further study stated that they would have liked to have done so – much higher than the two fifths (42 per cent) found overall. They were mainly restricted by financial concerns or personal circumstances.

Previously unemployed learners' ambitions for the coming year reflected these low employment and further learning rates: Three in 10 (28 per cent) Previously unemployed learners planned to find a job that will develop their career (compared with 13 per cent overall) and two fifths (37 per cent) plan to enter into further study or training (compared with 27 per cent overall). Previously unemployed learners' median wage of £15,000 was among the lowest in the Class of 2007.

### *Perception of the course in hindsight*

Previously unemployed learners were no less likely to agree that the benefits of the course outweighed the time and effort involved and the associated costs than the Class of 2007 at an overall level. However, by Sweep Three, only Type One (young college learners) were more likely to imagine changing one or more aspects of their 2007 learning (68 per cent of previously unemployed learners would consider making changes to their course compared with 62 per cent overall).

Of the previously unemployed learners group:

- two fifths (40 per cent) would be likely to change their subject compared with 34 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall;
- two fifths (38 per cent) would be likely to attend a different institution compared with 33 per cent overall;
- more than half (53 per cent) would probably work towards a different qualification compared with 42 per cent overall.

### *Satisfaction with life and career to date*

The previously unemployed group remained the least satisfied with their life and career to date; almost one fifth (19 per cent – unchanged since Sweep Two) were not very satisfied or not at all satisfied, compared to only eight per cent across the 2007 cohort as a whole. It is clear that these learners had

not experienced the levels of employment and learning outcomes that other Types had experienced and this is clearly a factor in the (comparatively) low proportion who were satisfied.

It should be noted that learner satisfaction levels inevitably reflect to some degree the experiences of individuals in their life before they engaged with study. Therefore, it is likely that there is at least some effect of these learner's previously unemployed status on their assessment of their success. In particular, their personal and/or financial circumstances prior to undertaking the 2007 course may well be a contributing factor in the lower levels of this cohort progressing to further learning and being less likely to realise their goals.

## **Type Seven – women returners**

### ***Characteristics***

This group is made up of women returning to education, whose main activity immediately before starting their course was being a carer or looking after children or family. They had an average age of 39 on completion of their course. Most of this group completed a course at college rather than university.

### ***Aims, intentions and ambitions***

The course of learning women returners completed in 2007 clearly led to an enthusiasm and appetite for lifelong learning and training. The most common intention or ambition that these learners had on leaving their course was to go onto further studies or training (cited by 49 per cent). One in seven of these (15 per cent) were also planning to look for a job.

Overall, two fifths (38 per cent) were looking to find a job to develop their career, and one in ten (10 per cent) were looking to find a more temporary job that was not necessarily linked to their career objectives.

One in 10 (10 per cent) intended to focus on family or home life.

### ***At Sweep Two***

At Sweep Two, a far greater proportion of women returners were working part-time (24 per cent) compared to the Class of 2007 as a whole (10 per cent). This is likely to reflect the fact these individuals had on-going family commitments which precluded or discouraged them from working full-time. Indeed one quarter (27 per cent) of the women returner group



had returned to being a carer or looking after the family as their main activity following completion of the course of learning. Those in work were most commonly working in Personal Service or Administrative or Secretarial occupations. At Sweep Two, women returners were positive about the impact of their course: they were highly likely to state that they had improved their confidence by taking their 2007 course and the vast majority believed that they had improved their career prospects.

### *At Sweep Three: progress following completion of course*

At Sweep Three, women returners, like previously unemployed learners, had seen the fewest developments or progression in work or learning. Women returners were the least likely group to be in full-time work (25 per cent compared with 61 per cent among the Class of 2007 overall). In fact these learners were much more likely to be working in temporary jobs (26 per cent of women returners in work at Sweep Three compared with 5 per cent of the overall working cohort). Just as at Sweep Two, women returners were more likely to be working in Personal Service (27 per cent of those in work compared with 12 per cent overall) or Administrative or Secretarial occupations (19 per cent compared with 8 per cent overall). Reflecting this, women returners had the lowest median earnings of the Class of 2007 – just £12,000 per year compared with £20,200 overall.

More than half of women returners (55 per cent) had gone on to further study since leaving their 2007 course which is broadly in line with the Class of 2007 overall (56 per cent) – but considering the prevalence of further learning as an ambition for Type Seven learners, this is a relatively low proportion.

### *Perception of the course in hindsight*

Looking back on their 2007 course, women returners were the least likely to believe that the course has improved their career prospects (77 per cent compared with 83 per cent of the Class of 2007 overall). Somewhat worryingly, more than a third of women returners (35 per cent) would consider doing something altogether different to study or training if they were able to make decisions about their 2007 course again (compared with 28 per cent overall).

### *Satisfaction with life and career to date*

While the majority (84 per cent) of women returners were satisfied with their life and progress to date, only previously unemployed learners (81 per cent satisfied) were less satisfied. This represents a four percentage

point decrease in satisfaction since Sweep Two – the most significant decrease in satisfaction across all Types within the Class of 2007. This is likely to reflect a number of issues discussed above including high prevalence of temporary work, employment in lower level occupations and relatively low salaries. It may also reflect the pressures of juggling a variety of roles for those with caring responsibilities.

## 10 Methodological Appendix

This chapter details the methodology of the third ‘sweep’ of *the On Track 2: Class of 2007* research study, conducted by IFF Research on behalf of SFC.

On Track 2 is a longitudinal study providing insight into the outcomes of education by tracking the life choices and careers of a cohort of qualifiers from Scottish universities and colleges. This survey follows on from the first On Track study focusing on a cohort of 2004 qualifiers.

Sweeps One (September 2007 to March 2008) and Two (October 2008 to January 2009) of the research involved an online and telephone survey of over 14,000 and 9,000 college and university learners respectively. Full details of the Sweep One and Sweep Two methodology are contained within the relevant reports found at the web address below:

[www.sfc.ac.uk/skills/ontrack](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/skills/ontrack)

### Sampling and response

#### *Sample profile*

The survey was designed to allow reliable longitudinal comparisons to be made between Sweeps One, Two and Three and as a result, we can be confident in our conclusions regarding the changes between the three survey points.

Table 9.1 details the demographics of the learners who participated in the On Track study at Sweep Three, split according to whether they completed a course at college or university in 2007. The ‘raw’ un-weighted (unwtd) profile of interviews is shown, along with the profile after weighting to the characteristic demographics of the cohort population (wtd).

**Table 9.1 Sweep Two sample profile – college and university learners**

	College			n	University	
	n	Unwtd %	Wtd %		Unwtd %	Wtd %
<b>Total</b>	2,359	48	65	2,585	52	35
<b>Mode of study</b>						
– Full-time	1,438	61	23	2,043	79	65
– Part-time	921	39	77	542	21	35
<b>Gender</b>						
– Male	974	41	46	1,027	40	43
– Female	1,385	59	54	1,558	60	57
<b>Domicile</b>						
– Scotland	2,317	98	97	2,007	78	66
– Elsewhere in the UK	24	1	1	303	12	10
– Outside the UK	18	1	2	275	11	24
<b>Age</b>						
– 15 to 19	477	20	28	14	*	4
– 20 to 25	769	33	22	1311	51	55
– 26 to 35	314	13	14	549	21	18
– 36 to 50	631	27	29	557	22	18
– 51+	168	7	9	154	6	4
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
– Scottish	1,917	81	80	1,574	61	54
– Other White	356	15	16	818	32	37
– Mixed	14	1	1	28	1	2
– Asian	34	1	1	66	3	3
– Chinese	5	*	*	23	1	1
– Black	11	*	*	39	2	2
– Other	2	1	1	37	1	2
* = <0.5%						

Table 9.2 compares the sample profile for individuals taking part in Sweeps One, Two and Three of the survey. As is clear from the un-weighted figures, university students were more likely to be followed up for Sweeps Two and Three than college learners, as were older learners aged 36 years or over. The differences in the age profile in the three sweeps is small, however, and overall there were hardly any change in the gender, ethnicity, or domicile profile of the two samples, which gives us confidence that, whilst we could not re-survey everyone, we have not dropped any key groups in Sweeps Two and Three. In any case, any small biases in gender, age, ethnicity and domicile of the sampled learners compared to the population of leavers as a whole have been corrected for through the weighting strategy. We were also able to use the weighting strategy to correct for the over-representation of university and full-time learners at Sweep Three.

**Table 9.2 – Sweep One and Sweep Two sample profile**

	Sweep One			Sweep Two			Sweep Three		
	n	Unwt %	Wtd %	n	Unwt %	Wtd %	n	Unwt %	Wtd %
<b>Total</b>	14,266	100	100	9,160	100	100	4,944	100	100
<b>Study institution</b>									
College	8,197	57	65	4,623	50	65	2,359	48	65
University	6,069	43	35	4,537	50	35	2,585	52	35
<b>Mode of study</b>									
Full-time	10,281	72	38	6,638	72	38	3,481	70	38
Part-time	3,985	28	62	2,522	28	62	1,463	30	62
<b>Gender</b>									
Male	6,098	43	45	3,825	42	45	2,001	40	45
Female	8,168	57	55	5,335	58	55	2,943	60	55
<b>Domicile</b>									
Scotland	12,314	86	88	7,787	85	86	4,324	87	86
Elsewhere in the UK	882	6	5	631	7	4	327	7	4
Outside the UK	1,070	8	7	742	9	10	293	6	10
<b>Age</b>									
15 to 19	3,150	22	19	1,617	18	19	491	10	19
20 to 25	5,809	41	34	3,764	41	33	2,080	42	33
26 to 35	2,337	16	16	1,549	17	15	863	17	15
36 to 50	2,402	17	23	1,797	20	25	1,188	24	25
51+	568	4	7	433	5	7	322	7	7
<b>Ethnicity</b>									
Scottish	9,874	69	70	6,369	70	71	3,491	71	71
Other White	3,005	21	20	2,048	22	21	1,174	24	23
Mixed	106	1	1	74	1	1	42	1	1
Asian	542	4	4	299	3	2	100	2	2
Chinese	226	2	1	109	1	1	28	1	1
Black	209	1	1	138	2	1	50	1	1
Other	304	2	2	123	1	2	59	1	1

## Weighting

Samples at all three Sweeps have been weighted to be representative of the 2007 leaver population. This means that the findings at all are representative of all university and college leavers, and the changes between the three sweeps can be taken as representative of the progress of this entire cohort. The factors most likely to affect key measures (such as the proportion of leavers in employment or the proportion that have gone on to further study) have therefore been controlled for. We can be confident therefore that changes are not the effect of response bias.

The weighting strategy adopted for Sweeps Two and Three was slightly different to that used at Sweep One principally because of the lower base number of interviews conducted with leavers from each college/university.

At Sweep One we weighted by gender and mode of study within individual institution and then corrected for over-sampling from particular colleges and universities and also of international students. This process led to an under-representation of young university learners and therefore we adjusted the weighting within a small number of institutions to increase the overall proportion of 15-25 year old university students.

Because of close similarities in the demographic profile of respondents interviewed at both Sweeps, weighting by gender and by mode of study had a similar impact this time round, and therefore an additional age with higher education weight was applied to match the age profile of leavers from university.

In Sweep Two there were quite a few colleges and universities where the base number of interviews was below 50 (and in some cases less than 10), and therefore weighting by gender and mode of study within these institutions became problematic. In light of this, we constructed an interim level categorisation between the individual college/university level and the broad university/college divide and weighted by gender and mode of study within these new categories:

- colleges – Size (large vs. others);
- universities – whether established or gained university status pre or post 1992 or whether a ‘specialist’ university<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Survey data suggested that the post-92 universities have a lower proportion of students aged 25 or under, a lower proportion of students from outside Scotland, and more part-time students, which means that they have a more similar profile to Colleges than the pre-92 universities. Specialist Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) again have different profiles and their graduates are more likely to have distinctive career paths.

The same weighting matrix was used at Sweep Three.

**Figure 9.1 Sweep Two and Three weighting strategy**

		Colleges		Universities		
		Large	Not Large	Pre-92	Post-92	Specialist
STUDY MODE	Full time					
	Part time					
GENDER	Male					
	Female					
DOMICILE	Scotland					
	Rest UK					
	EU					
	Outside EU					
AGE	15-19					
	20-25					
	26-35					
	36-50					
	51+					

### Statistical confidence

The large numbers of respondents interviewed at each sweep, and the number of interviews conducted with key sub-groups, mean that there is a high level of statistical reliability in the survey findings. Table 9.3 shows the maximum statistical margin of error at the 95 per cent confidence level, associated with a finding of 50 per cent on key bases. Based on all learners at Sweep Three, the margin would be +/- 1.4 per cent, meaning that we can have confidence that the true finding lies within plus or minus one per cent of the survey finding.

Wherever differences between respondent sub-groups are described in the report, differences between the percentage or mean figures are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated.



**Table 9.3 Statistical accuracy of survey findings for key bases**

	Sweep One		Sweep Two		Sweep Three	
	n	Statistical margin of error*	n	Statistical margin of error*	n	Statistical margin of error*
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>14,266</b>	<b>+/- 0.8</b>	<b>9,160</b>	<b>+/- 1.0</b>	<b>4,944</b>	<b>+/- 1.4</b>
<b>Study institution</b>						
– College	8,197	+/-1.1	4,623	+/-1.4	2,359	+/- 2.0
– University	6,069	+/-1.3	4,537	+/-1.5	2,585	+/-1.9
<b>Gender</b>						
– Male	6,098	+/-1.3	3,825	+/-1.6	2,001	+/-2.2
– Female	8,168	+/-1.1	5,335	+/-1.2	2,943	+/-1.8
*Based on a survey finding of 50%						

### **Details of student typology**

The following section gives further details on the demographic characteristics and types of learning undertaken by the different types of students discussed in Chapter 5.

#### ***Type One – young college students***

These students are young, with an average age of 20 on leaving their course in 2007. Almost all (94 per cent) were aged 25 years or less on completion. The ratio of male to female students in this group is higher than in other groups, and higher than the average across the college leaver population; three-fifths of Type One learners are Male (59 per cent), compared to a figure of 46 per cent across the college Class of 2007 as a whole. Almost all of these leavers (98 per cent) were resident mainly in Scotland for the three years before starting the course, and eight in 10 (83 per cent) described their ethnicity as Scottish.

Although none of these students were working immediately before starting their course, around two thirds (64 per cent) did take on some kind of employment during their course, employed either on a full-time (27 per cent) or part-time (39 per cent) basis during term time.

Three fifths (62 per cent) were studying on a part-time basis. Included in this are around one quarter of all Type One students who were studying on day release (13 per cent) or block release (12 per cent) from employment.

With the exception of Scottish Vocational Qualifications at Level 2, the most frequent qualifications undertaken by these students were qualifications at an advanced level (SCQF Level 6 or above):

- Higher National Certificate (HNC) (21 per cent);
- Higher National Diploma (HND) (11 per cent);
- SVQ Level 2 (9 per cent) and Level 3 (11 per cent);
- National Qualification Higher (7 per cent).

Overall, three in five of these learners (59 per cent) were undertaking advanced level college course, with the remainder (41 per cent) studying on a course at Level 1 to 5. Approaching two-fifths of these learners were studying in the field of Construction, Industry or Engineering (38 per cent). The next most frequent course subject was Business and IT (11 per cent).

### *Type Two – young university students*

As would be expected by the fact that these individuals were all in education before starting their course, these students were generally young, with an average age of 23 on leaving their course in 2007. A slight majority are female (56 per cent). Two-fifths of this group were mainly resident outside of Scotland in the three years before starting the course (41 per cent). Type Two has the highest proportion of ethnic minority learners, although these learners only account for 17 per cent of the group. One half (48 per cent) describe their ethnicity as Scottish, with a further 35 per cent being from another white ethnic group.

Almost all of these young university students were studying full-time (93 per cent). One per cent were engaged with part-time distance learning, and two per cent were studying on day or block release from employment. In total, seven per cent engaged in some employment during term time.

The majority of young university students (80 per cent) were studying on an under-graduate course, with 20 per cent working towards a post-graduate qualification.

The key qualification types undertaken by Type Two learners in 2007 were:

- Honours degrees, such as MA, MChem or MEng (46 per cent)
- Ordinary degrees – BSc or BA (25 per cent)
- Post-graduate Masters degrees (15 per cent)
- Higher National Certificate (HNC) (4 per cent).

Just one in 50 Type Two learners (2 per cent) was completing a PhD in 2007.

There were a wide range of subjects studied by these learners, with the most frequent being Humanities, Social Sciences and Law (28 per cent), Business and IT (19 per cent) and Science and Maths (17 per cent).

### *Type Three – employer-driven college learners*

The average age of these learners on completion of the course in 2007 was 34. This group is almost evenly split between female (46 per cent) and male (56 per cent) learners. Only 3 per cent of these learners were from a black or minority ethnic group.

Almost all of these employer-driven learners (97 per cent) were studying on a part-time basis, largely to fit study round their work commitments. Over two-fifths mentioned specifically that they had been studying at college on day release (27 per cent) or block release (18 per cent) from employment. A small minority (3 per cent) said that the training and assessment had mainly been delivered in their workplace. Nine in 10 (90 per cent) were employed during their course in term time, 75 per cent on a full-time basis.

A significant proportion of these learners were studying for ‘non-advanced’ qualifications, most commonly a SVQ Level 2 (17 per cent of all Type Three learners). Two-thirds (60 per cent) completed an ‘advanced’ college course at SCQF Level 6 or above, mostly SVQ Level 3 (27 per cent), or Higher National Certificate (HNC) (20 per cent) qualifications.

As would be expected given that learners were undertaking their course as part of a work requirement, the most common course subject choices amongst this group were Construction, Industry and Engineering (37 per cent) and Health and Social Care and Personal Services (26 per cent).

### ***Type Four – career changers***

These individuals are likely to have been in work for some time before embarking on their course, having an average age of 33 on completion. Female learners make up two-thirds (66 per cent) of this group.

Where Career Changer learners were studying at college, this was most likely to be on a part-time basis (61 per cent) and for the following qualifications:

- Higher National Certificate (HNC) (25 per cent);
- Higher National Diploma (HND) (13 per cent);
- SVQ Level 3 (7 per cent); and
- SCE Higher Grade (7 per cent).

Where the course of learning had taken place at a university, a greater proportion studied full-time (52 per cent) and the most frequent courses undertaken were Honours (32 per cent) or Ordinary (22 per cent) degrees, or Postgraduate Masters courses (26 per cent).

The most common subject areas of courses completed in 2007 by Type Four learners were:

- Business and IT (22 per cent);
- Humanities, Social Sciences and Law (17 per cent, 26 per cent amongst those who studied at university);
- Health and Social Care and Personal Services (15 per cent); and
- Education (10 per cent).

Almost all Type Four learners who took an Education course to try to change career were women.

The course completed in 2007 was very unlikely to have been undertaken on release from employment (only 3 per cent) reflecting the fact that these courses were mostly undertaken to help the individual move into a different type of work.

### ***Type Five – career builders***

Three fifths of the ‘career builders’ group are female (61 per cent). The average age across both male and female learners is 38, making this the second oldest group after the women returners group (Type Seven).

This group is evenly split between learners who were looking to develop career through studying at college (49 per cent) and university (51 per cent). Those who studied at a college for their 2007 course were more likely to have studied on a part-time basis than those who studied at a university (91 per cent did so), although university students were still much more likely to study on a part-time basis than make a full-time commitment (79 per cent part-time).

The career builder group were particularly likely to have studied through distance learning, with around a quarter (23 per cent) having done so, compared to the average of 11 per cent across the whole 2007 cohort. One third (34 per cent) of the university students in the career builder group had studied via this method.

Almost nine in 10 career builder learners were working either full-time (67 per cent) or part-time (23 per cent) during term time of their course of study in 2007. Around one in six (15 per cent) had studied on either day release or block release from this employment.

As for other learner types, there was a wide range of qualification types undertaken by the career builder group. The most common amongst those who studied at college were HNC (36 per cent) and SVQ Level 3 (10 per cent). The most common types of university-level qualifications undertaken by this group were postgraduate Masters degrees (28 per cent), Ordinary degrees (BSc or BA) (19 per cent) and Honours degrees, such as MA, MChem or MEng (13 per cent).

The vocational subject areas chosen by these learners for their course of study included:

- Business and IT (27 per cent);
- Health and Social Care and Personal Services (24 per cent);
- Construction, Industry and Engineering (11 per cent); and
- Education (10 per cent).

### ***Type Six – previously unemployed learners***

The average age of learners in this group on completion of the course in 2007 was 37. There is an almost equal balance between males and females in this group (48 per cent to 52 per cent ratio).

A key characteristic of this group is the much higher than average proportion of individuals who describe themselves as having a long-standing health problem or disability which leads to substantial difficulties doing day-to-day activities. One quarter of previously unemployed learners (25 per cent) have such a disability, compared to an average of five per cent of learners across the cohort as a whole. The fact that some of this group may not be able to work should be taken into account when assessing the employment outcomes of learning for this group.

Only a small minority (14 per cent) of previously unemployed learners reported that the course of study or training that they had completed in 2007 had been arranged through a Government-led scheme such as New Deal, Train for Work or Skillseekers. This would indicate that many of the previously unemployed learners are making quite a big commitment in funding their course of study themselves.

Nine in 10 previously unemployed learners (90 per cent) studied at a college rather than at a university. The majority of learning was undertaken on a part-time basis (71 per cent).

One quarter of learners (25 per cent) said that they did undertake some work during the term time period, even though they were unemployed before starting the course. One in 20 (5 per cent) said that they studied on block or day release from employment during the course of their study.

The most common levels or types of qualification completed by this group were:

- Higher National Certificate (HNC) (19 per cent);
- SVQ Level 2 (11 per cent) and Level 3 (9 per cent);
- National Certificate (9 per cent);
- Higher National Diploma (HND) (8 per cent); and
- European Computer Driving License (7 per cent).

### ***Type Seven – women returners***

This is the oldest group of the seven described in this report, with the average age of Women returner learners being 39 years. Over one in 10 (13 per cent) of these women reported having a long-standing health problem or disability which leads to substantial difficulty in carrying out everyday activities, significantly higher than the five per cent figure across the entire Class of 2007 cohort.

Most of this group (88 per cent) completed a course at college rather than university. In one in 10 cases (10 per cent), the course of training had been arranged through a Government-led scheme such as New Deal, Train for Work or Skillseekers.

The most commonly undertaken qualification types undertaken by women returners were:

- Higher National Certificate (HNC) (22 per cent);
- National Certificate (10 per cent);
- European Computer Driving License (7 per cent); and
- Higher National Diploma (HND) (6 per cent).

The most common subject areas studied were Education (27 per cent), Business and IT (24 per cent, mostly on the IT side) and Health and Social Care and Personal Services (18 per cent). These fit with the career destinations of these learners following the course, as described below.

The majority (73 per cent) of women returner learners studied part-time, presumably in some cases to allow them to balance their study with their family or carer commitments. Over one fifth (22 per cent) were also working on a part-time basis in term during their course. A substantial proportion of this group studied through Distance Learning (18 per cent). Reflecting the fact that none of these Type Seven individuals were working immediately before starting their course, very few (just 2 per cent) undertook any part of the course on block or day release from employment.