# Supporting Graduates' Futures through Today's Higher Education

Associate Professor Shelley Kinash
Director of Learning & Teaching
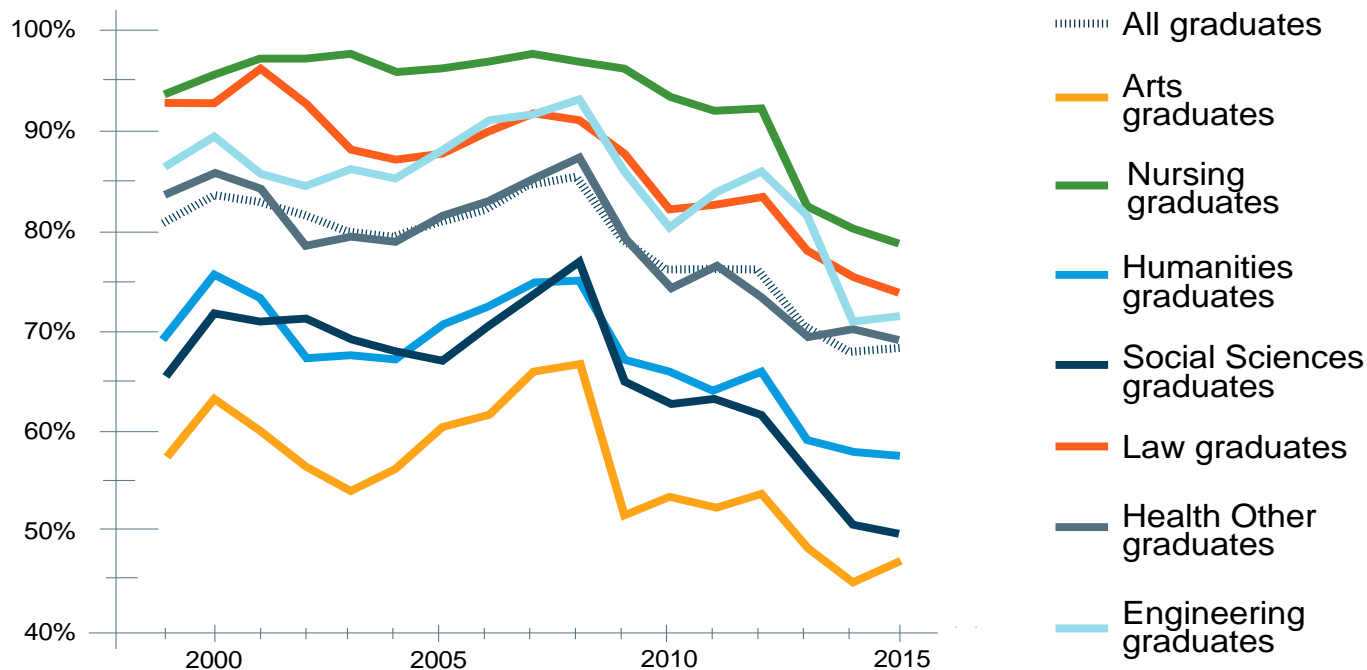Bond University

# Outline

- **What the research tells us**
  - Discrepancy in perspectives
  - Employers dissatisfied
  - Postgraduates pessimistic

- **Industry relevant employability strategies**
  - Work experience
  - Extra and co-curricular
  - Networking

- **Embedding employability in curricul**
  - Develop industry relevance
  - Create authentic assessment
  - Engage employers

# The Problem (for undergrads)...

Low graduate employability.

Graduate Careers Australia reports that less than 70% of undergraduates are employed full-time four months after graduation.



Full time employability of bachelor Degree Graduates 1999 – 2015.

# The Problem (for postgrads)...

Only **14 per cent** (7 people)
who expressed an opinion (51 people)
among interviewed postgraduate
students & university staff
(82 people across Australia)
are **OPTIMISTIC**
that postgraduates
will secure related careers
upon graduation.

## Lead institution:
Bond University

## Partner institutions:
James Cook University

University of Southern Queensland

Australian Council for Private Education & Training

## Project leaders:
Associate Professor Shelley Kinash (skinash@bond.edu.au)
Associate Professor Linda Crane (lcrane@bond.edu.au)

## Project manager:
Madelaine-Marie Judd,
Bond University (mjudd@bond.edu.au)

## Project team
Dr Cecily Knight, James Cook University
(cecily.knight@jcu.edu.au)

Professor David Dowling, University of Southern Queensland
(David.Dowling@usq.edu.au)

Kirsty Mitchell, Bond University
(kimitche@bond.edu.au)

Matthew McLean, Bond University
Professor Sally Kift, Critical Friend

## Evaluators
Dr Grace Lynch, Dr Garry Allan, and Geoffrey Edlund
RMIT University

## Lead institution:

Bond University

## Partner institutions:

Victoria University

University of Southern Queensland

Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations

## Project leaders:

Associate Professor Shelley Kinash (skinash@bond.edu.au)
Associate Professor Linda Crane (lcrane@bond.edu.au)

## Project manager:

Madelaine-Marie Judd,

Amy Bannatyne
Bond University

## Project team

Associate Professor Gary Hamlin

Associate Professor Bill Eckersley

Professor Helen Partridge

Professor Ken Udas

Dr Sarah Richardson

Harry Rolf


Professor Sally Kift, Critical Friend

## Evaluators

Helen McLean, Dr Grace Lynch,
Dr Garry Allan,
RMIT University

# What the research tells us…

Defining Graduate Employability

Graduate employability means that higher education alumni have developed the capacity to obtain and/or create work.

Furthermore, employability means that institutions and employers have supported the student knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce.

# What the research tells us...

## Discrepancies in Employability Strategies

**Students:** Which of these employability strategies are you using or do you plan to use?

**Educators:** Which of these employability strategies are you able to provide/support for students?

**Graduates:** Which of these strategies did you use to improve your employability?

**Employers:** Which of these strategies influence recruitment?

# What the research tells us...

## Discrepancies in Employability Strategies

| Strategies | Students | Graduates | Higher Education | Employers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capstone | | | | |
| Careers Advice | ✔ | | ✔ | |
| Extracurricular | | | ✔ | ✔ |
| Intl Exchange | | | | |
| Mentoring | | | | |
| Networking | | ✔ | ✔ | |
| PT Work | ✔ | ✔ | | |
| Portfolios | | | | |
| Prof Assocs | | | ✔ | |
| Social Media | | | | |
| Volunteering | | ✔ | | ✔ |
| Work Experience | ✔ | ✔ | | ✔ |

Checkmarks in the figure were inserted when 50% or more of the stakeholder grouped selected the strategy.

Observed discrepancies demonstrate a need for strategic awareness-raising among students.

# Employer Quote

'I look for a resume that almost looks like they've been working for four years in addition to studying. They've been working part-time, volunteering or doing community work. I like to find people that look like they've been busy and have a full life, that they're doing lots of things apart from just studying and sitting in their room.'
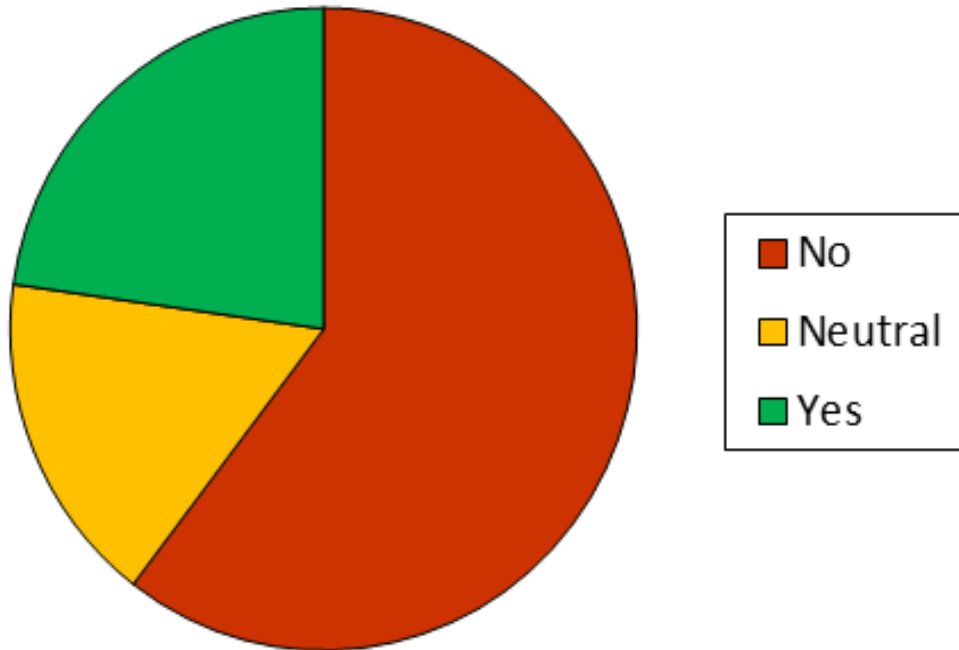
# What the research tells us...
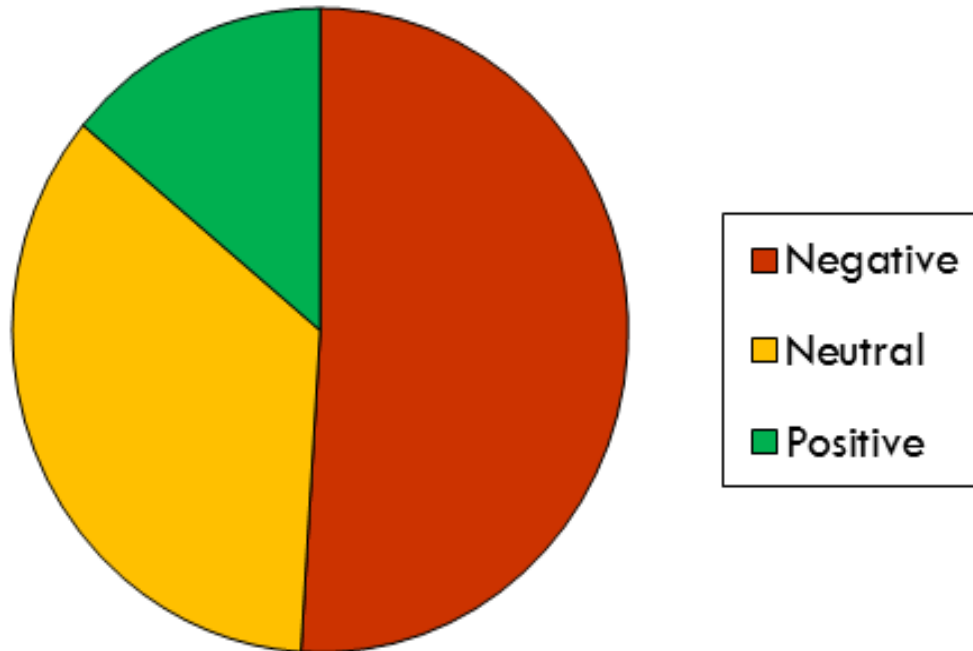


Only 14% (7 people) who expressed an opinion (51 people) among interviewed postgraduate students and university staff (82 people across Australia) are optimistic that postgraduates will secure related careers upon graduation. 51% are pessimistic and the others neutral.

Legend:
- Negative
- Neutral
- Positive

# What the research tells us...



61% (of the 71 people who expressed an opinion) believe that Australian universities need to improve postgraduate employability supports.

**Are you satisfied with postgraduate employability supports & services?**

# Postgraduate Quote

'I've had to make my own opportunities. There essentially was no career development that takes you from your degree into academia. Other than pushing someone off a cliff.'
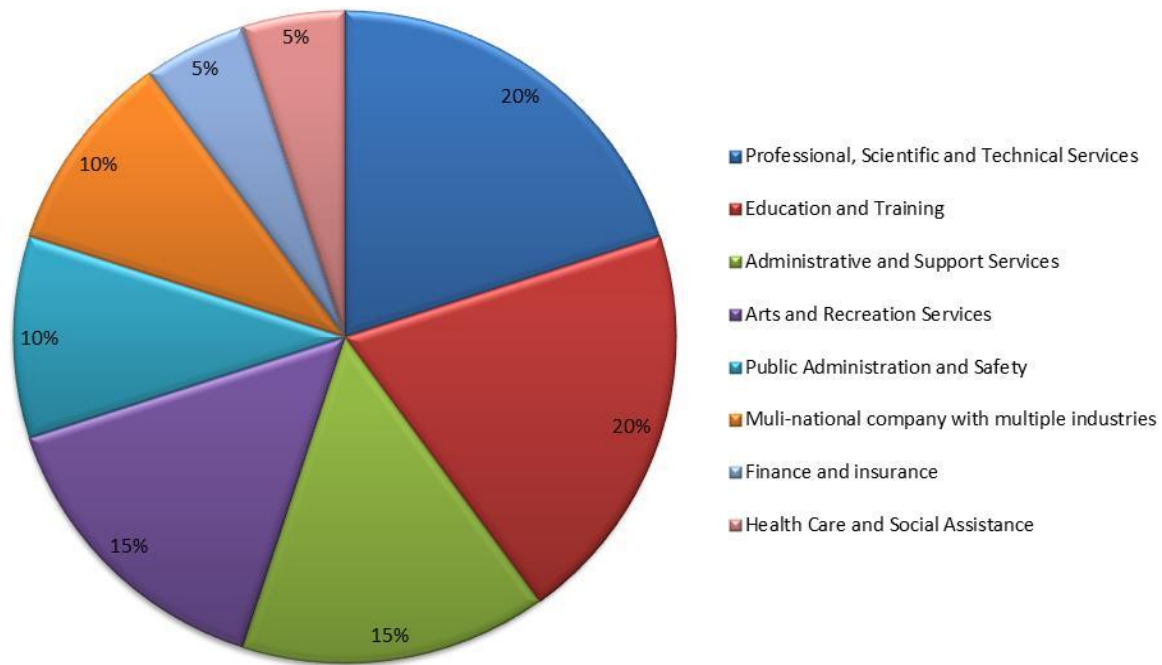
So what can we do with this information to further  support new graduates?

# Industry relevant employability strategies

**Employer Industrial Classification of Interviewees**



- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Education and Training
- Administrative and Support Services
- Arts and Recreation Services
- Public Administration and Safety
- Muli-national company with multiple industries
- Finance and insurance
- Health Care and Social Assistance

# Industry relevant employability strategies

**Research on employers of new graduates…**

- The attributes and characteristics that were articulated across the highest number of *employer* interviews were:
    - Communication
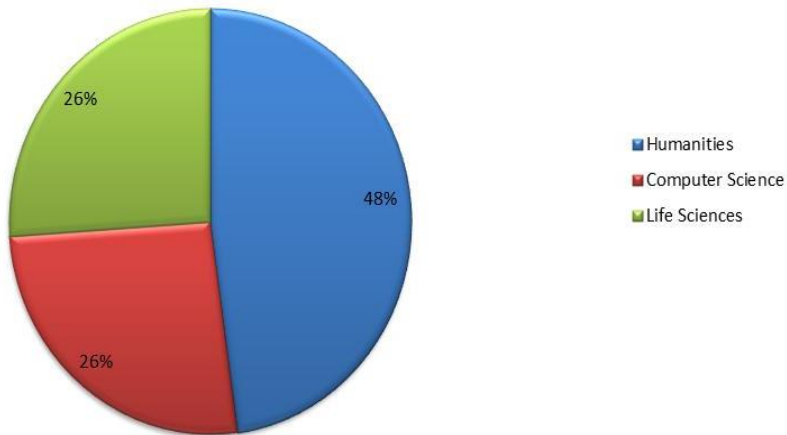    - Motivation / Initiative
    - Leadership
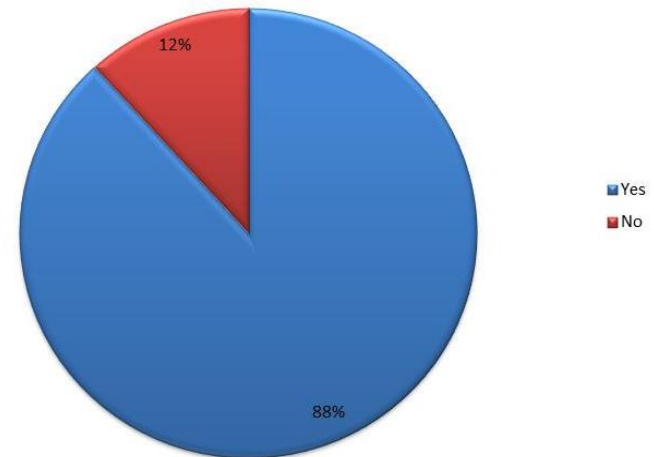
# Industry relevant employability strategies
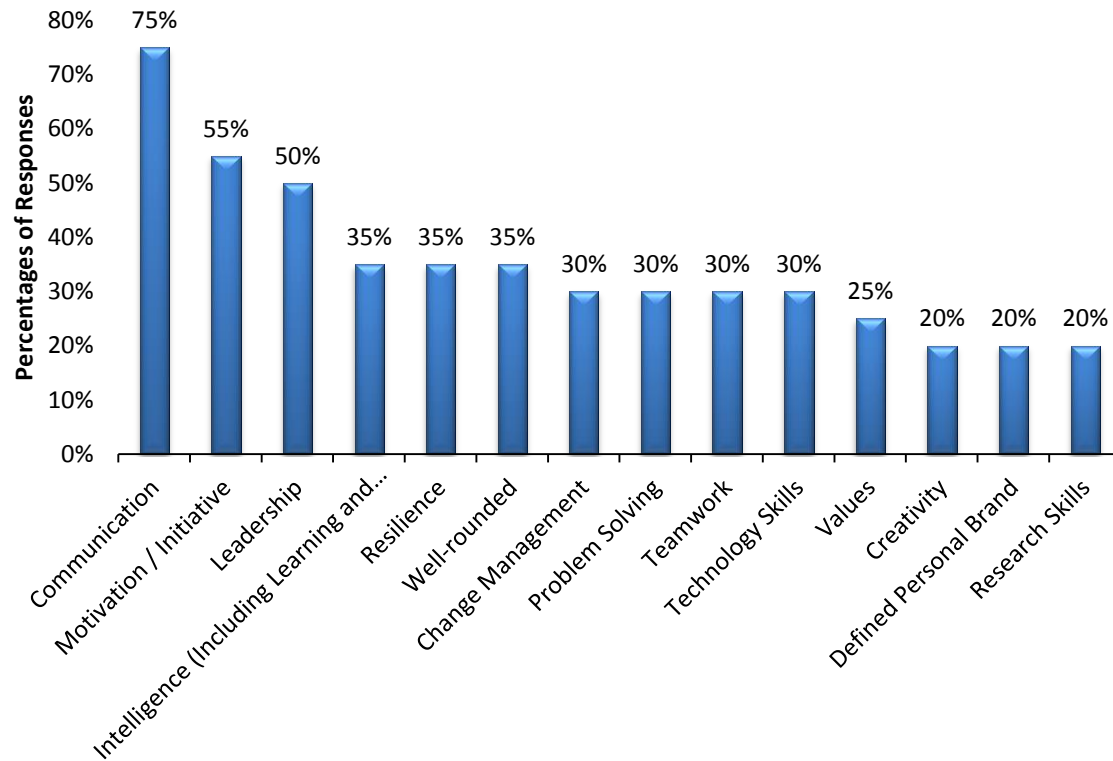


Graduates' Attributes and Characteristics Expected by Employers

# Industry relevant employability strategies

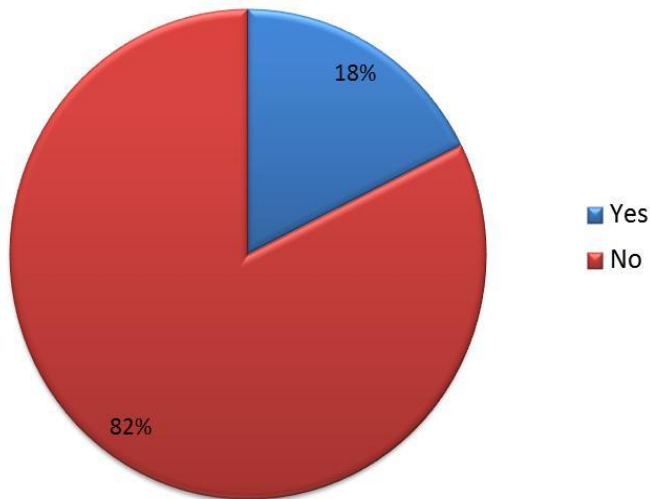**Willingness to Hire Graduates from Generalist Degrees (Survey Data)**

- Humanities
- Computer Science
- Life Sciences

26%
48%
26%

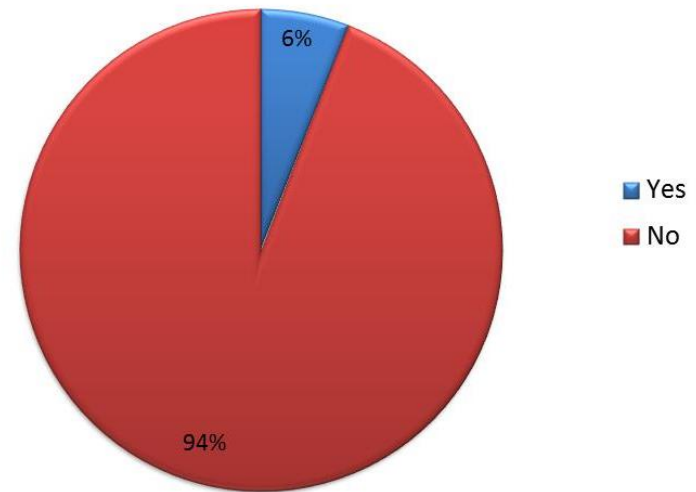**Employers Who Would Hire Graduates With Generalist Degrees (Interview Data)**

12%
88%

- Yes
- No

# Industry relevant employability strategies



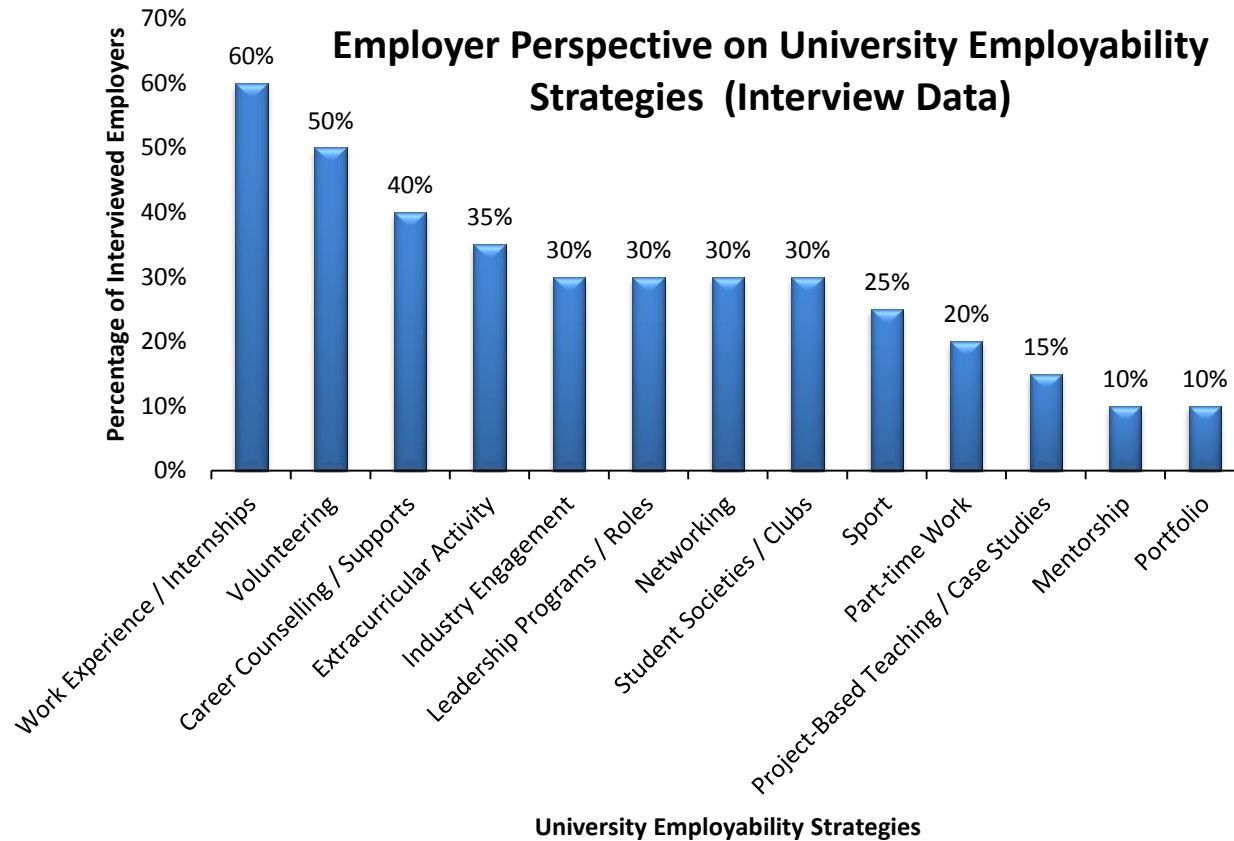**Employers Who Have Preferences for Graduates from Particular Universities**

- 18% Yes
- 82% No

**Employers Who Recruit Only Graduates with Top Grades**
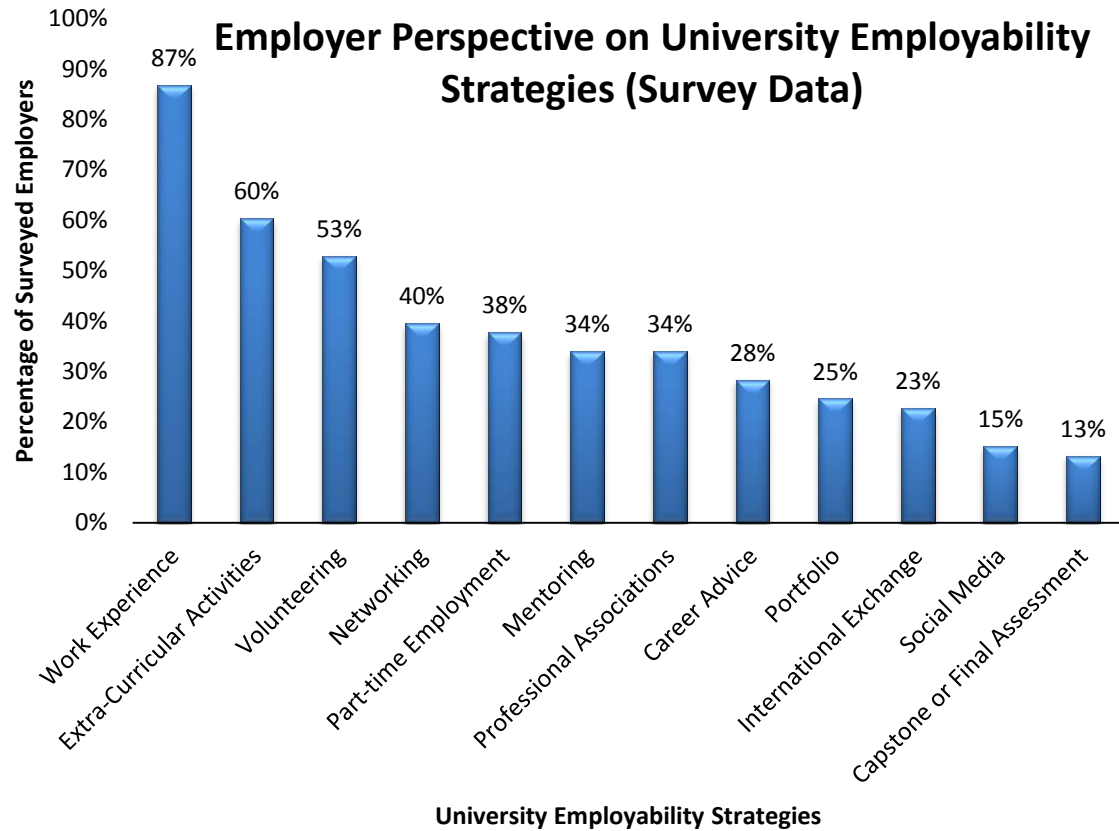
- 6% Yes
- 94% No

# Industry relevant employability strategies



**Employer Perspective on University Employability Strategies (Survey Data)**

Percentage of Surveyed Employers:
- Work Experience: 87%
- Extra-Curricular Activities: 60%
- Volunteering: 53%
- Networking: 40%
- Part-time Employment: 38%
- Mentoring: 34%
- Professional Associations: 34%
- Career Advice: 28%
- Portfolio: 25%
- International Exchange: 23%
- Social Media: 15%
- Capstone or Final Assessment: 13%

University Employability Strategies

# Industry relevant employability strategies

# Industry relevant employability strategies

**Conclusions from *Employer* Interviews/Surveys**

- Importance of well-rounded student experience
- Emphasis on extra-curricular activities
- Embedding employability strategy throughout the university
- Greater industry integration into university curricula
- Use of critical analysis and higher-order thinking

Given the discrepancies between what employers want and what career supports universities provide, how can we further embed employability into university curricula?

# Embedding employability into curriculum

Educator recommendations to enhance graduate employability

1.  Support increased opportunities for student work experience, placements and internships.

2.  Explicitly articulate the relevant graduate employability skills in the learning outcomes for every subject.

3.  Design authentic assessment activities, aligned with industry practices, standards and approaches.

4.  Know your disciplines' career options and outcomes and be explicit about career pathways.

# Strategic planning & goal setting

## Align University Initiatives
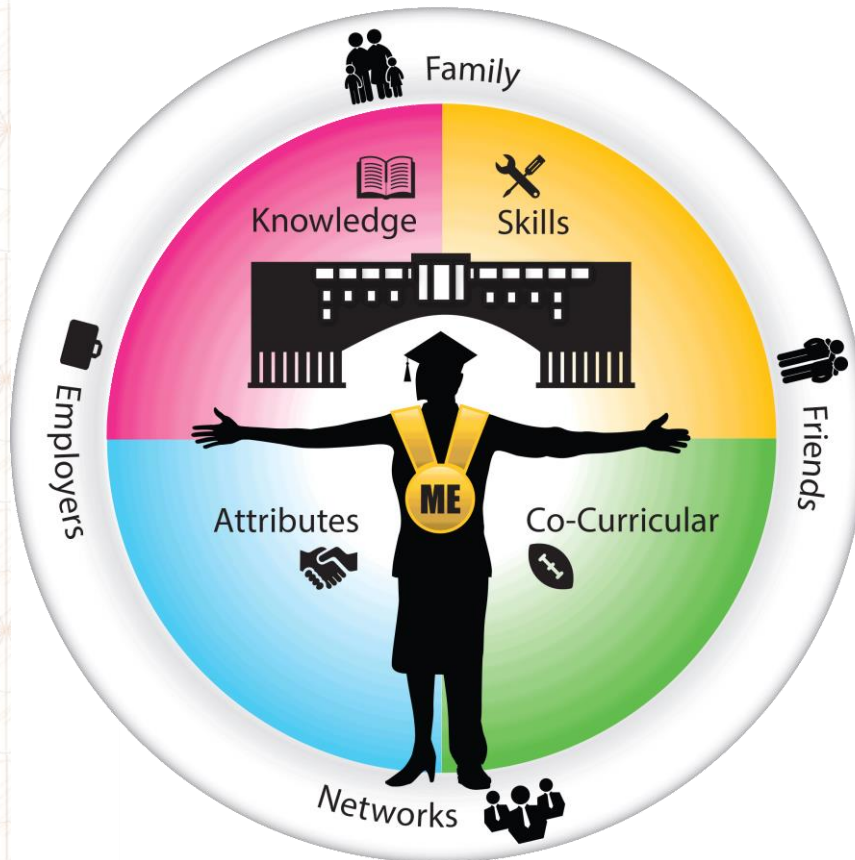


Graduate Employability Framework

This framework is designed for students, graduates, employers, higher education academics and career development professionals based on the data from over 700 surveys and 85

# Employer Quote & Stat

'Some universities do a good job of teaching people to think and that's the skill you actually need. A good degree should teach you how to think, should teach you how to critically analyse information and how to present options, and to argue with the silly thing that someone else said in the meeting.'

'...a university degree is good for employability, with more than three in four people with a post-school qualification employed (82 per cent) – compared to 61 per cent of those without a post-school qualification'

OECD

Please check out [www.graduateemployability.com](www.graduateemployability.com) for more information and thank you for your participation today!