

# WHERE NEXT?

IMPROVING THE  
JOURNEY TO  
BECOMING AN  
APPRENTICE



ALMOST A THIRD (31%) OF STUDENTS SAID IT WAS 'VERY EASY' TO ACCESS INFORMATION ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION COMPARED TO JUST 6% WHO SAID THE SAME ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS

Helping people make the best decision for them on their next step in education or training is in our DNA at UCAS. Each year we support around 700,000 people from across the world to connect to UK education.

At the heart of our strategy, **Discover Your Future**, is our vision to connect people to their future. We aim to inspire and empower people to make aspirational choices and enhancing our apprenticeships offer is key to this. In February, we polled year 12 and 13 students, about their attitudes to higher education and apprenticeships, as well as their experience in exploring these options<sup>1</sup>. Key findings include:

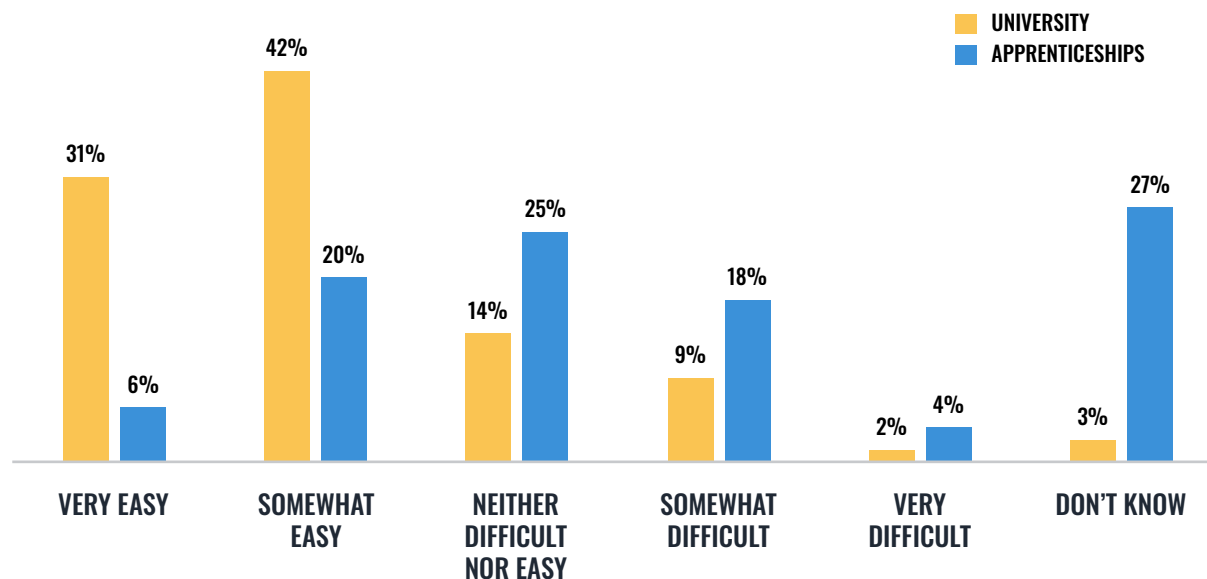
**STUDENTS ARE INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN APPRENTICESHIPS, BUT FIND IT HARD TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT THEM**

We ask all our applicants certain questions when they apply to UCAS. Over half of those who are interested in applying for entry in 2022 have registered an interest in apprenticeships. The most common subject preferences for an interest in apprenticeships are Engineering (65.6%), Computer Sciences (65.2%) and Architecture, Building, and Planning (65.2%).

These students are more likely to be from areas with the least participation in higher education: 46.3% from the most disadvantaged areas<sup>2</sup> were interested in apprenticeships, compared to 40.9% from the most advantaged areas.

Despite this increased interest in apprenticeships, students still struggle to find information about them. Equally, as noted in our **Where Next? – What influences the choices school leavers make?** report, one-third of students do not receive any information about apprenticeships from their school or college. This compares to three-quarters of students reporting it being easy to find information about higher education.

**HOW EASY OR DIFFICULT DO YOU FIND ACCESSING INFORMATION FOR APPLYING FOR THE FOLLOWING?**



MORE THAN ONE IN FIVE SAID IT WAS 'SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT' OR 'VERY DIFFICULT' TO GET INFORMATION ON APPRENTICESHIPS

<sup>1</sup> UCAS surveyed 1,165 applicants and responses were then weighted by age, gender, socio economic status, school type, region of UK (England only) in line with the proportions on the UCAS database, for which the data was taken from UCAS Undergraduate Sector-Level End of Cycle Data Resources 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Based on POLAR4 quintiles .

STUDENTS REPORT THAT **THE ABILITY TO GET A JOB IS AN IMPORTANT OUTCOME FOR POST-SCHOOL OR COLLEGE OPTIONS**. 87% OF APPLICANTS THINK A UNIVERSITY DEGREE IS IMPORTANT TO GETTING A JOB COMPARED, COMPARED TO 57% WHO THINK THE SAME FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Encouragingly, UCAS is the most cited source for information for applicants across both higher education and apprenticeships, highlighting the desire of students to view both pathways in a single location. This supports previous research, commissioned by UCAS, from Youthsight where 89% of students said it would be useful to have a centralised platform that offers a help/advice service when it comes to finding and applying for apprenticeships.

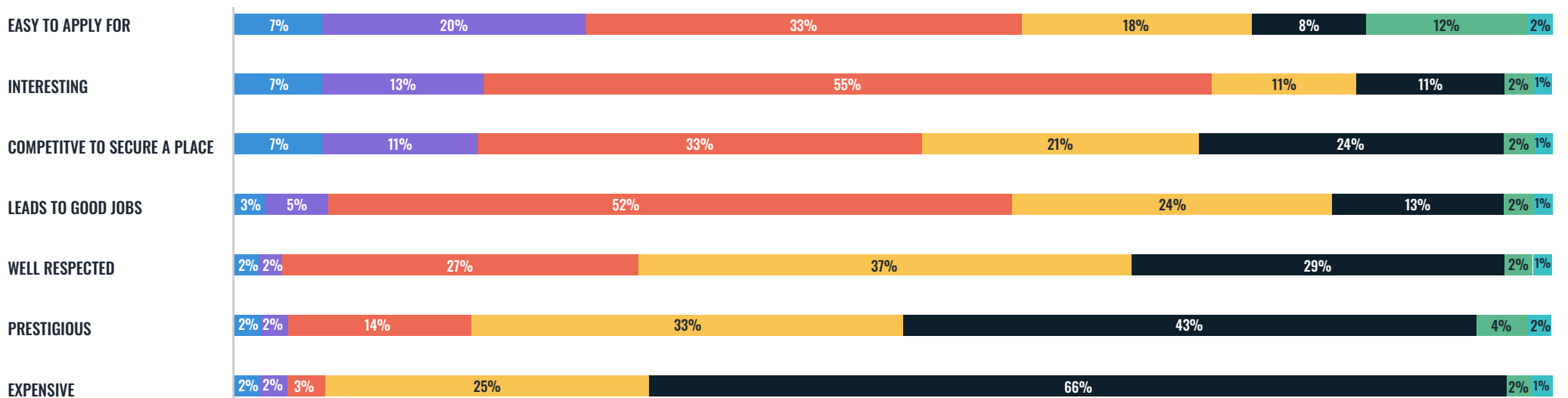
But it is not just students that require this support. Our recent survey of parents and carers found that almost one in three were unaware that you can apply for a degree apprenticeship alongside an undergraduate application. Unsurprisingly, parents who had taken an apprenticeship themselves are twice as likely to encourage their child to follow in their footsteps rather than choose an undergraduate degree.

**MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ARTICULATE THE BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIPS**

To improve how people navigate the world of apprenticeships, we need to change how they are perceived. While most people appreciate that apprenticeships are there as an option, they are not sure either how to get information on them or indeed where they can lead.

THE WORD 'PRESTIGIOUS' WAS ASSOCIATED WITH UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY 76% OF THOSE POLLED COMPARED TO JUST 4% FOR APPRENTICESHIPS – A FURTHER 14% OF RESPONDENTS RATED THEM EQUALLY PRESTIGIOUS.

**FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING, PLEASE INDICATE WHETHER YOU ASSOCIATE IT MORE STRONGLY WITH APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES OR UNIVERSITY DEGREES**



■ Much more strongly associate this with apprenticeships    
 ■ More strongly associate this with apprenticeships    
 ■ Associate this with both of them equally    
 ■ More strongly associate this with university degrees  
■ Much more strongly associate this with university degrees    
 ■ Do not associate this with either    
 ■ Prefer not to say

CONCERNINGLY, ONLY 8% ASSOCIATED DOING AN APPRENTICESHIP WITH **LEADING TO GOOD JOB.**

This suggests a need to better explain what an apprenticeship is – a job with training – and it is an opportunity to promote degree apprenticeships as a hybrid between apprenticeships and undergraduate study to raise the prestige of apprenticeships overall.

### THE BAKER CLAUSE IS STILL NOT BEING IMPLEMENTED CONSISTENTLY

The Baker clause is an amendment to the Technical and Further Education Act which, since January 2018, has required secondary schools and colleges in England, by law, to allow other education and training providers access to their pupils to inform them of technical and vocational qualifications or apprenticeships. This regulation is known as the Baker clause after its author, former education minister Lord Baker.

We know teachers and advisers are working hard to inform students about their options. But despite their best efforts our research found that the clause is not being implemented consistently across all schools and colleges.

Of a self-reported sample, only around a third of students reported receiving their legal entitlement to information from apprenticeship providers or FE colleges – and only around half of those currently studying in FE colleges. This shows that students are still not alert to the full range of options available to them and may be ruling out opportunities unknowingly.

We have a clear ambition to act as a 'digital Baker Clause', providing comprehensive information, advice, and content tools to help students make informed and aspirational choices about the full range of post-secondary options in a single location. This will be complemented by improving pupils' understanding of how qualification and subject choices at GCSE, applied generals, or National 5s, T-levels and other post-16 options affect their opportunities later in life.

### NEXT STEPS

We are working hard to improve our apprenticeships offer. Our goal is for our service to be as strong for would-be apprentices as it is for prospective undergraduates, allowing students to explore their options side by side in a truly comparable manner.

We are not starting from scratch in this space, with the strong foundation of our Career Finder tool to build upon. Indeed, apprenticeships listed on Career Finder were viewed over 1.2 million times in the past 12-months. We acknowledge that there is so much more we can do as we seek to realise our ambition to be the go-to place for students to explore all their post-secondary options.

We also recognise that there are a lot of private and public sector apprenticeship matching services and we are not seeking to simply duplicate what is already out there. Rather we want to add value to this space, address fragmentation, and ensure the 700,000 prospective students and apprentices that come to UCAS each year see all the options available to them. We are a trusted and independent organisation and supporting people to make informed choices about their futures is key to meeting our charitable objectives.

We will be following up our ***Where Next? – What influences the choices school leavers make?*** report with a deep dive on apprenticeships in the autumn.

54% OF STUDENTS STRONGLY AGREED OR SOMEWHAT AGREED THAT IT WAS 'ESSENTIAL' TO HAVE A UNIVERSITY DEGREE TO GET A WELL-PAID JOB.



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