



Scottish Funding Council

Promoting further and higher education

Scotland's Class of '99: the early career paths of graduates who studied in Scottish higher education institutions

Summary report

Scotland's Class of '99: the early career paths of graduates who studied in Scottish higher education institutions

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Background

In October 2005 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published the *The Class of '99'* report, which explored the early labour market experiences of UK graduates. The results were produced from a large survey of a sample from the 1999 cohort of graduates who were surveyed in 2003. Whilst the UK report included graduates from Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs), it did not present much information about regional differences in graduate outcomes². In early 2006 the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) commissioned an analysis of the graduates in the sample who had graduated from Scottish HEIs.

This type of analysis is very useful, as it allows for a better understanding of the dynamics of the transition from higher education (HE) to employment. The survey also explores graduates use of skills and knowledge in the labour market, and their levels of satisfaction with their HE experience and career to date.

In the analysis that follows, where appropriate, comparisons are made between graduates from Scottish HEIs with graduates from HEIs in England and Wales. Comparisons are also made between different groups in the sample of graduates from Scottish HEIs, investigating differences by gender, domicile prior to study, and location of employment.

This paper provides a summary of the principal results from the full report. The full report can be found on the SFC web site³. *Scotland's Class of '99: the early career paths of graduates who studied in Scottish Higher Education Institutions* is a report by Professor Kate Purcell, Nick Wilton, and Professor Peter Elias. During the production of this report, Professor Kate Purcell was Director of the Employment Studies Research Centre (ESRU), Bristol Business School, at the University of the West of England (UWE). From 1 September 2006 she will be based at the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick. Nick Wilton is Research Associate at ESRU, Bristol Business School, UWE. Professor Peter Elias, in addition to his post at the IER, University of Warwick, is currently seconded to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as Strategic Adviser (Data Resources).

¹ *The Class of '99: A study of the early labour market experiences of recent graduates*, DfES 2005 (www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/news/classof99fullreport.pdf)

² For the UK *Class of '99* study over 9,300 graduates were surveyed from 38 Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Around 900 of these graduates attended one of the 5 Scottish HEIs in the sample.

³ *Scotland's Class of '99* report (www.sfc.ac.uk/publications/pubs_other.htm)

Key messages

- *The Class of '99* survey shows that the majority of graduates from Scottish HEIs secure graduate level employment, albeit not necessarily immediately after graduation;
- the vast majority of graduates from Scottish HEIs were happy with their experience of HE, with 96 per cent indicating that, if given the choice again, they would enter HE;
- the majority of graduates from Scottish HEIs stay, and work, in Scotland upon graduation. Graduates who had lived outside of Scotland prior to undertaking their studies accounted for the majority of the graduate flow out of Scotland;
- compared to graduates from England and Wales, graduates from Scottish HEIs were:
 - (i) more likely to indicate that their current jobs were ideal or near-ideal for someone with their skills and qualifications;
 - (ii) as likely to be satisfied with their current job;
 - (iii) earning slightly less on average. However, this difference is driven by the higher earnings of graduates working in London;
 - (iv) less likely to be in debt, and levels of graduate debt were lower. However, for a significant minority of graduates from Scottish HEIs, problems with debt did appear to deter them from further study;
 - (v) subject to a narrower gender pay gap. The difference between average annual wages for male and female graduates is lower in Scotland (a gap of £3,100) than for the rest of the UK (a gap of £3,900); and
- the results of the *Scotland's Class of '99* analysis correspond closely with the findings of Futureskills Scotland's recent study, *The Labour Market for Graduates in Scotland*⁴. The key message, from both reports, is that, in general, graduates are continuing to secure graduate level employment.

⁴ *The Labour Market for Graduates in Scotland*, Futureskills Scotland 2006
(www.futureskillscotland.org.uk/web/site/home/Reports/NationalReports/Report_The_Labour_Market_for_Graduates_in_Scotland.asp)

Section 1: Who are Scotland's Class of '99?

This section examines the broad demographics of *The Class of '99* graduates from Scottish HEIs⁵. Where appropriate, comparisons are made with graduates from HEIs in England and Wales.

Gender

The gender composition of Scotland's graduates in the survey is similar to that for graduates from HEIs in England and Wales.

Age

Eighty six per cent of graduates from Scottish HEIs were 'young' graduates (those who graduated before the age of 24) – a figure which is marginally higher than for the sample of graduates from HEIs in England and Wales.

Social class background

Graduates from Scottish HEIs were most likely to have come from a Managerial and professional occupational background (43 per cent of graduates).

However, compared to graduates from England and Wales, graduates from Scottish HEIs were more likely to have come from the three lowest social class groups (24 per cent of graduates from Scottish HEIs, compared to 20 per cent from HEIs in England and Wales).

Highest qualification of parents

The parents of graduates from Scottish HEIs were more likely, compared to the parents of graduates from HEIs in England and Wales, to have a degree.

Subject studied

The graduates from Scottish HEIs were considerably more likely, compared to graduates from HEIs in England and Wales, to have undertaken a course in medical and related, natural sciences, engineering, and business studies; and they were less likely to have undertaken courses in humanities, social sciences, and education.

⁵ The data are weighted to be representative of the populations from which they were drawn.

Domicile prior to entering HE

Table 1 shows, for all HEIs in the UK, the region of domicile prior to entering HE, showing that:

- 83 per cent of graduates from Scottish HEIs were domiciled in Scotland prior to entering HE; and
- graduates from Scottish HEIs, who lived outside of Scotland prior to entering HE were most likely to have been domiciled in the North of England.

Table 1: Region of domicile prior to entering HE, by location of study

		Region of Study					
		Scotland	London & South East	South West & Wales	Midlands	North	Northern Ireland
Region of domicile prior to study	Scotland	82.5%	0.3%	0.3%	1.1%	1.5%	0.1%
	London & South East	3.3%	62.5%	25.4%	30.2%	20.5%	0.7%
	South West & Wales	1.0%	11.4%	50.7%	9.9%	8.2%	0.2%
	Midlands	1.7%	18.8%	15.1%	39.2%	20.5%	0.4%
	North	6.4%	5.1%	7.0%	18.0%	47.7%	0.6%
	Northern Ireland	3.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	95.8%
	Outside UK	1.9%	1.4%	1.4%	1.1%	1.0%	2.3%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Section 2: What happened after graduation?

The Class of '99 cohort was sampled around four years after they graduated. This allows for a better understanding of the dynamics of the graduate labour market, and graduates progression into 'graduate level' employment.

Type of employment four years after graduation

Seventy per cent of graduates from Scottish HEIs were in full-time employment related to their long-term career plans at the time of the survey; a slightly higher proportion than that of graduates from HEIs in England and Wales (67 per cent of graduates in this category).

Graduates from Scottish HEIs were most likely to be working in the other public services⁶ (29 per cent), business services (12 per cent), and banking, finance, and insurance (11 per cent) sectors.

Graduates from Scottish HEIs were more likely than those from HEIs in England and Wales to be working in the agriculture, mining, and quarrying sector, as well as Other public services sectors, and less likely to be working in the Business services, and Education sectors.

Graduates from Scottish HEIs were most likely to be working in professional occupations (43 per cent of graduates) or associate professional and technical occupations (31 per cent of graduates).

Graduate level employment

In order to better classify occupations into those that are of 'graduate level', ie where the entry requirement is a degree, and those occupations that are non-graduate, the SOC⁷ (HE) occupational classification was developed⁸.

This classification distinguishes between the following types of graduate jobs:

- traditional graduate jobs – established professions for which a degree has historically been required (eg doctors, solicitors, and architects);
- modern graduate jobs – a range of newer professions requiring graduate level qualifications, that emerged following the

⁶ Includes local government employees, civil servants, etc.

⁷ Standard Occupational Classification

⁸ *SOC (HE): A Classification of occupations for studying the graduate labour market*, Peter Elias and Kate Purcell 2004 (www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/current/7yrs2/rp6.pdf)

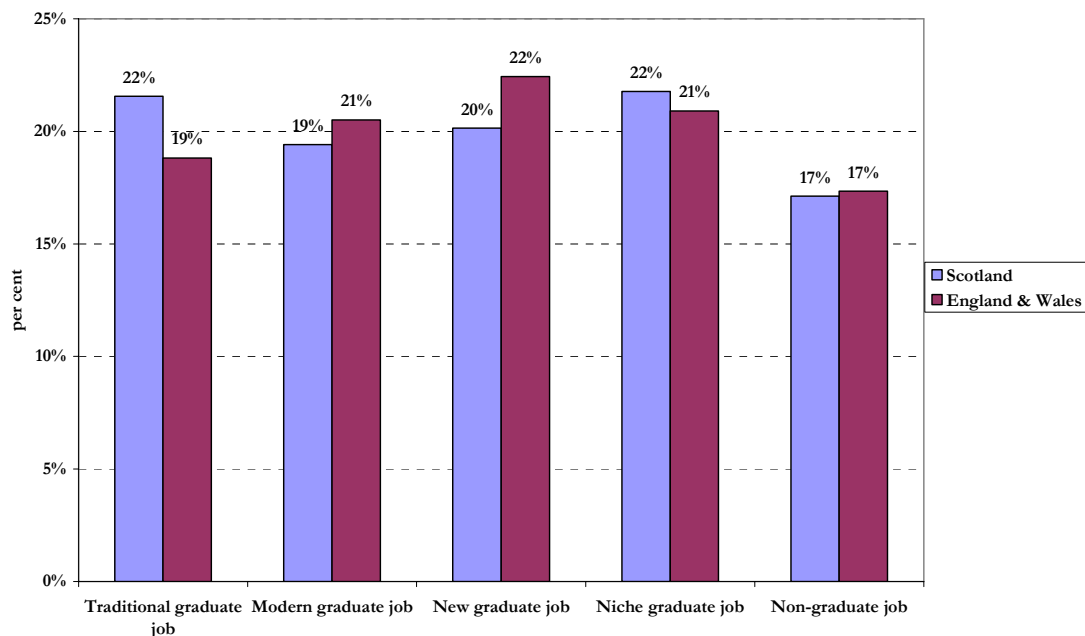
expansion of HE in the 1960s (eg software programmers, journalists, and primary school teachers);

- new graduate jobs – occupations that did not traditionally target graduates, but have, in recent years, developed graduate level entry routes (eg physiotherapists, management accountants, and marketing and sales managers); and
- niche graduate jobs – occupations where the majority of employees are not graduates, but within which there are specialist niches where graduates are employed (eg nurses, retail managers, and leisure and sports managers).

Figure 1 shows the proportions of graduates from Scottish HEIs who fall into each of those categories, and compares the outcomes to those graduates from HEIs in England and Wales. Figure 1 shows that:

- compared to graduates from HEIs in England and Wales, graduates from Scottish HEIs were more likely to be in a traditional graduate job, and less likely to be in new and modern graduate jobs.

Figure 1: SOC (HE) category of job held at time of the survey, by location of study¹



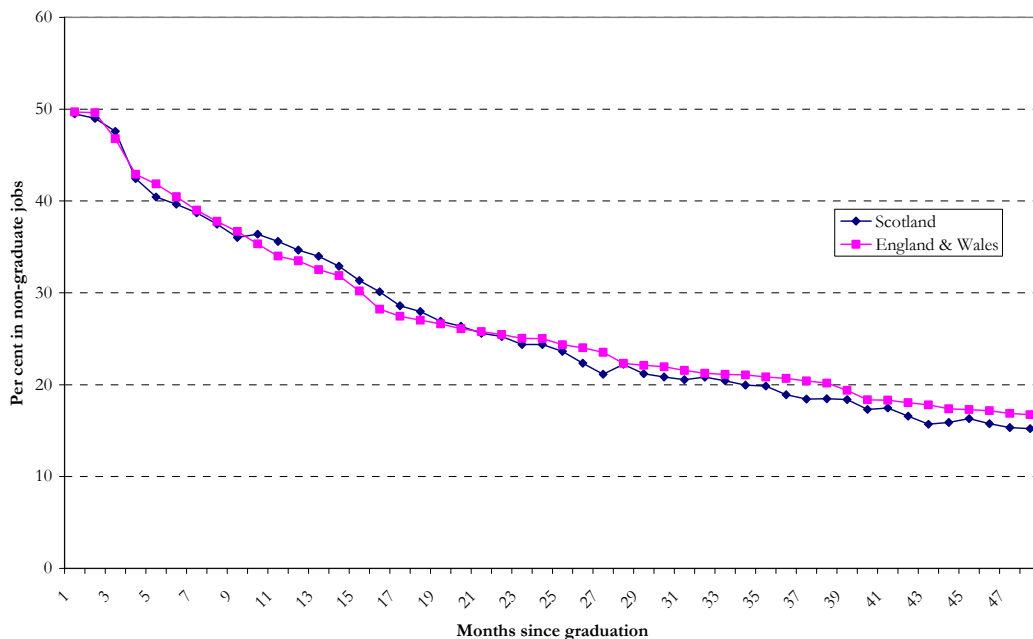
¹Figures in the chart have been rounded.

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

The survey asked respondents to provide an overview of their work history since graduation. This enables analysis of the length of time taken by graduates to secure graduate level employment. Figure 2 provides a timeline of the movement out of non-graduate employment for graduates from Scottish HEIs, and compares this to the timeline for graduates from HEIs in England and Wales. From this it can be seen that:

- although initially following graduation around 50 per cent of graduates were in a non-graduate job, this figure rapidly declined, as graduates obtained graduate level employment; and
- the pattern of movement from non-graduate to graduate level employment is very similar for graduates from Scottish HEIs and graduates from HEIs in England and Wales.

Figure 2: Movement out of non-graduate employment by location of study



Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Appropriateness of job

The evidence presented so far has indicated, by job classification, that the majority of graduates in this report are finding graduate level employment. However, the survey also captured graduate’s own, personal perspectives, on how appropriate they believed their current jobs to be, taking into account the qualifications that they had achieved. Graduates were asked to rate the appropriateness of their current job using a scale of one to seven, where one indicated ‘very inappropriate’ and seven indicated ‘ideal’. The results are

presented in Table 2, which shows that:

- the majority of graduates rate the appropriateness of their job at level four (the mid-point of the scale) or above (82 per cent), suggesting that they are in appropriate employment; and
- graduates from Scottish HEIs were more likely than graduates from HEIs in England and Wales to rate the appropriateness of their current job as ideal or near-ideal (48 per cent compared to 43 per cent).

Table 2: Appropriateness of current job, taking into account qualifications achieved (on a scale of 1-7)

	Scotland	England & Wales
1 - Very inappropriate	4.2%	7.4%
2	4.5%	6.7%
3	7.7%	9.0%
4	15.2%	10.6%
5	18.7%	19.4%
6	25.8%	24.2%
7 - Ideal	22.1%	20.8%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Where do Scottish graduates work?

The Class of '99 survey permits examination of the mobility of graduates in the period between graduation and completion of the survey four years later. This analysis shows where (geographically) graduates are employed. Table 3 shows the region where graduates from HEIs in the various regions of the UK were employed immediately after graduation, indicating that:

- the majority of graduates from Scottish HEIs (over 75 per cent) were employed in Scotland immediately after graduation.

Table 3: Region in which employed immediately after graduation, by location of study

		Region of Study					
		Scotland	London & South East	South West & Wales	Midlands	North	Northern Ireland
Region first employed after graduation	Scotland	75.4%	0.2%	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%	0.4%
	London & South East	8.8%	74.9%	28.0%	39.2%	26.4%	2.5%
	South West & Wales	1.5%	6.7%	52.0%	6.6%	5.5%	0.8%
	Midlands	2.9%	14.1%	11.2%	39.3%	13.6%	0.7%
	North	4.8%	2.1%	5.1%	11.2%	49.0%	1.2%
	Northern Ireland	1.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	85.2%
	Outside UK	5.0%	1.9%	2.8%	2.7%	4.1%	9.2%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Table 4 provides a follow-up by showing the region of employment at the time of the survey. This information reveals that:

- the majority of graduates from Scottish HEIs remain in employment in Scotland four years after graduation, albeit a few more graduates find employment outside of Scotland during this period;
- of those graduates who find employment outside of Scotland, the majority are employed in London and the South East;
- tables 3 and 4 show that the proportion of graduates from Scottish HEIs who find, and stay, in employment in Scotland is very similar to the proportions of graduates from HEIs in London and the South East who find, and stay, in employment in London and the South East; and
- the majority of the movement out of Scotland consists of graduates who were previously domiciled outside of Scotland, as they were more likely than other Scottish HEI graduates to have moved to employment elsewhere (at the time of the survey only 24 per cent of non-Scots graduates were employed in Scotland).

Table 4: Region in which employed four years after graduation, by location of study

		Region of Study					
		Scotland	London & South East	South West & Wales	Midlands	North	Northern Ireland
Region employed at time of survey	Scotland	71.5%	0.7%	0.4%	1.0%	1.6%	2.0%
	London & South East	13.2%	71.0%	32.2%	43.5%	33.7%	3.5%
	South West & Wales	1.4%	9.1%	46.1%	7.3%	6.0%	1.0%
	Midlands	2.8%	13.9%	11.7%	36.5%	12.5%	1.4%
	North	5.5%	3.4%	6.4%	9.2%	43.8%	1.3%
	Northern Ireland	1.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	85.2%
	Outside UK	4.0%	1.7%	2.9%	2.3%	2.1%	5.6%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Section 3: Employment outcomes for graduates

The analysis so far has provided a general overview of the outcomes for the whole of *The Class of '99* cohort. However, *The Class of '99* cohort is not a homogenous group, and there are considerable variations in the outcomes for different types of graduates. This section provides an overview of some key differences in outcomes for various groups of graduates.

Do employment outcomes vary by gender?

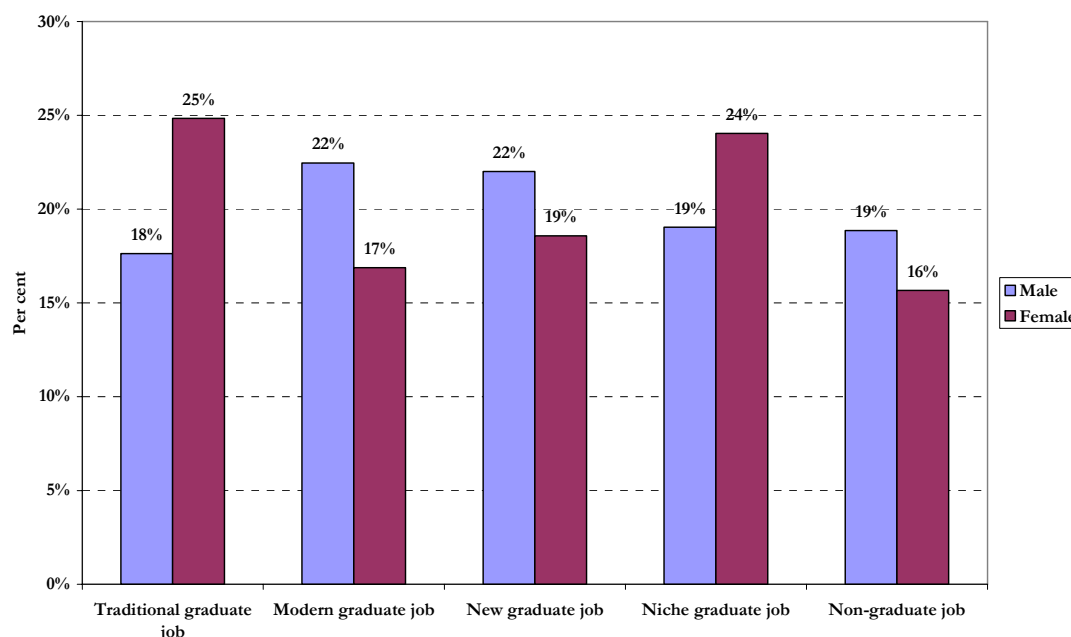
SFC has recently published a report examining gender issues in HE in Scotland⁹. This report shows that the subject choices of men and woman are often considerably different, and, as a result, it would be reasonable to expect that these differences will lead to varying employment outcomes. Based on an analysis of *The Class of '99* cohort the following points are noteworthy:

- when comparing the sectors of employment for male and female graduates from Scottish HEIs, women are considerably more likely to work in the other public services, and education sectors, whilst men are more likely to work in the business services, and banking, finance, and insurance sectors;
- Figure 3 shows the types of graduate jobs that male and female graduates from Scottish HEIs were employed in at the time of the survey. Female graduates were considerably more likely to be employed in traditional and niche graduate jobs, reflecting the inclusion of teachers and nurses in these categories, whilst male graduates were more likely to be employed in modern and new graduate jobs;
- Figure 3 also shows that male graduates were more likely than female graduates to be employed in non-graduate jobs (19 per cent of males, compared to 16 per cent of females); and
- finally, comparison of responses to questions about job quality, using an index developed by the researchers¹⁰ shows that female graduates rated the quality of their jobs slightly more highly than male graduates (48 per cent of females gave a score of four – the mid-point of the scale – or more, compared to 45 per cent of males).

⁹ *Gender in Scottish higher education: What's the issue?*, Scottish Funding Council 2006 (www.sfc.ac.uk/publications/SFC_Gender_Report_July_2006.pdf)

¹⁰ The six job characteristics used to produce the index of job quality are: competitive salary; continual skills development; interesting and challenging work; long-term security; working in a progressive and dynamic organisation; and working with people you enjoy socialising with.

Figure 3: Graduates from Scottish HEIs current occupation at time of survey by SOC(HE) and gender



Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Do employment outcomes vary by the geographic location of graduate's current job?

The cohort can be split by the geographic location of Scottish HEI graduates current job; the cohort is split into those employed in Scotland, and those employed elsewhere. It is found that, relative to Scottish HEI graduates employed outside of Scotland, those employed in Scotland were:

- less likely to be working in manager and senior official occupations (nine per cent of Scottish HEI graduates employed in Scotland, compared to 15 per cent employed elsewhere);
- less likely to be working in traditional graduate jobs (19 per cent of Scottish HEI graduates employed in Scotland, compared to 27 per cent employed elsewhere);
- more likely to be working in niche graduate jobs (25 per cent of Scottish HEI graduates employed in Scotland, compared to 16 per cent employed elsewhere); and
- considerably less likely to rate the quality of their job at four or above (45 per cent of Scottish HEI graduates employed in Scotland, compared to 52 per cent employed elsewhere).

Section 4: Are graduates using the skills and knowledge that they developed during their degree?

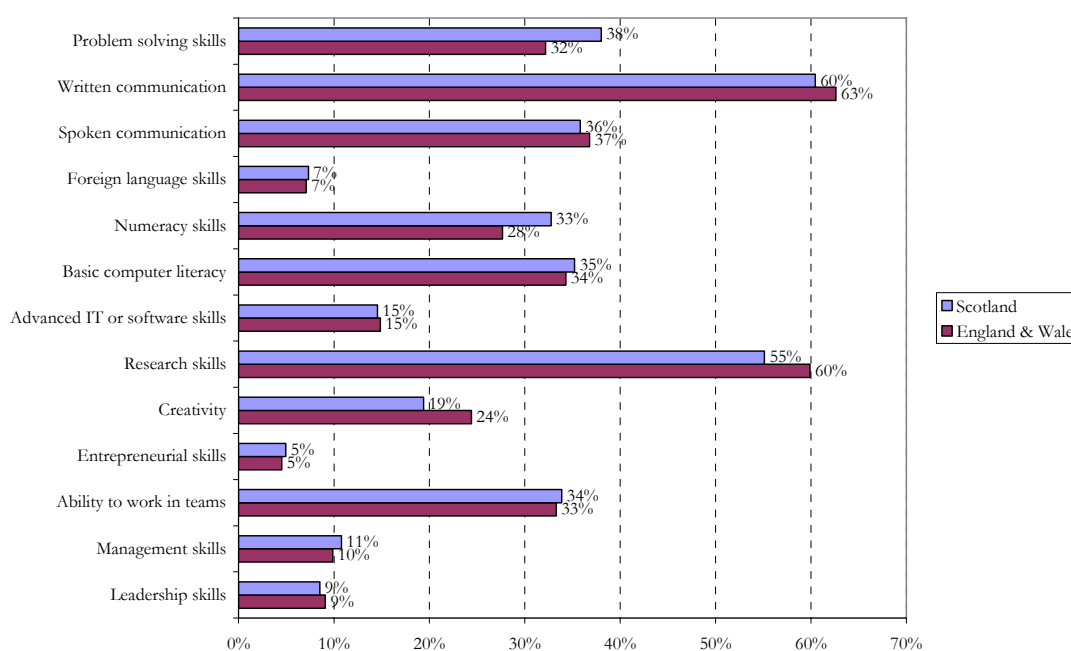
The Class of '99 survey asked graduates to describe the skills that they developed on their course, and the skills and knowledge which they find themselves using in their current employment. The survey also explored how these, and new, skills were developed through further training opportunities.

What skills did graduates develop on their degree course?

Figure 4 illustrates the skills that graduates who were employed at the time of the survey indicated that they developed 'a lot' on their degree course, showing that:

- graduates from Scottish HEIs, generally, showed a similar distribution, to graduates from HEIs in England and Wales, in terms of the skills that they developed 'a lot'; and
- Scottish graduates were more likely to report developing problem solving skills and numeracy skills 'a lot', although this possibly reflects differences in subject distribution between graduates from Scottish HEIs and HEIs in England and Wales.

Figure 4: Skills developed 'a lot' on 1999 degree, by location of study (employed graduates only)



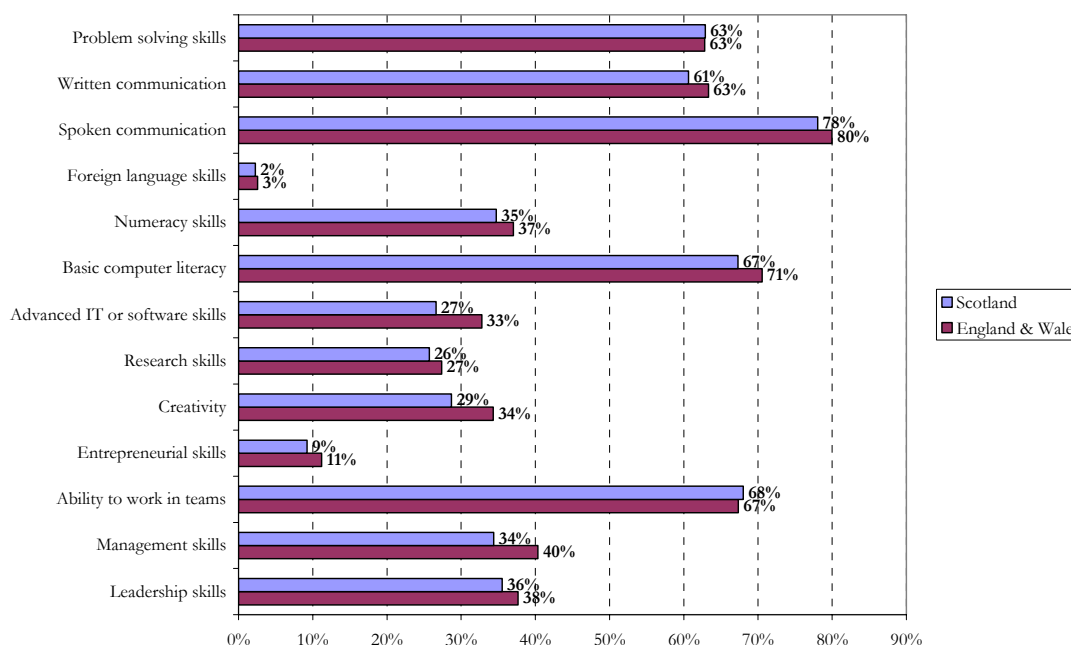
Source: *The Class of '99* survey

What skills are graduates using in their jobs?

It is also possible to explore the skills that employed graduates have used ‘a lot’ in their job. Figure 5 shows that:

- generally, there is not much difference in the skills used ‘a lot’ by graduates from Scottish HEIs and HEIs in England and Wales in their jobs at the time of the survey; and
- the noticeable differences that do occur are in management skills, creativity, and advanced IT or software skills, which are all more likely to be used ‘a lot’ in the jobs of graduates from HEIs in England and Wales.

Figure 5: Skills used ‘a lot’ in job at the time of survey, by location of study (employed graduates only)



Source: *The Class of '99* survey

What type of further training and development do graduates undertake?

Respondents were asked if they had undertaken any further full-time or part-time work-related or career-related courses lasting one month or more since graduating. Graduates from Scottish HEIs had a similar likelihood to have undertaken this type of training as graduates from HEIs in England and Wales (57 per cent and 56 per cent respectively). Table 5 shows the types of postgraduate training and education undertaken by graduates. Relative to graduates from HEIs in England and Wales, graduates from Scottish HEIs were:

- more likely to have undertaken a postgraduate research degree; and
- less likely have undertaken a short course(s) to develop job-related skills, a postgraduate certification in education (PGCE) or a professional qualification programme.

Table 5: Type of postgraduate training and education, by location of study (those who indicated having undertaken such training only)

	Scotland	England & Wales
Short course(s) to develop job-related skills	23.8%	26.8%
Undergraduate degree course	5.2%	2.7%
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	10.2%	13.6%
Other postgraduate certificate/diploma	23.1%	16.5%
Professional qualification programme	24.5%	28.0%
Taught Masters' degree	19.0%	20.9%
Postgraduate research degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil)	13.2%	7.7%
Other	8.2%	9.2%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Those respondents who undertook further training and education were asked why they had done so. Table 6 highlights the reasons given, and shows that:

- graduates from Scottish HEIs were more likely, compared to graduates from HEIs in England and Wales to indicate that their reasons for undertaking further training were: to develop a broader range of skills/knowledge; they thought that it would improve their employment prospects; and that they had been unable to find a suitable job.

Table 6: Type of postgraduate training and education, by location of study (those who indicated having undertaken such training only)

	Scotland	England & Wales
To develop broader range of skills/knowledge	46.4%	39.7%
To develop more specialist skills/knowledge	53.5%	58.3%
To change my career options	22.5%	21.1%
I thought it would improve my employment prospects	53.7%	45.8%
I had a particular career in mind and needed this course	38.6%	44.7%
My employer requested/required me to do so	21.7%	23.3%
I had been unable to find a suitable job	11.1%	7.3%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Section 5: How much are the Class of '99 earning?

Respondents were asked to state the gross annual pay for their current job. This allows for an examination of differences in the earnings of differing types of graduates. Table 7 compares the average annual earnings, and weekly hours worked, of male and female graduates from Scottish HEIs and HEIs elsewhere in the UK, and shows:

- the gender earnings gap for graduates from Scottish HEIs (a gap of £3,100) was lower than was found for graduates from HEIs in the rest of the UK (a gap of £3,900); and
- male graduates from Scottish HEIs earn less than their counterparts from HEIs in the rest of the UK, whilst female graduates from Scottish HEIs earn more than their counterparts from HEIs in the rest of the UK.

Table 7: Average annual earnings and weekly hours of 1999 graduates in full-time employment or self-employment in 2002-03, by location of HEI and gender

Location of Study	Male graduates		Female graduates	
	Average annual earnings	Average weekly hours	Average annual earnings	Average weekly hours
Scotland	£25,800	42.7	£22,700	41.5
Elsewhere in UK	£26,400	43.2	£22,500	41.3

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

While it is a positive result to find that the gender pay gap is, in general, lower for graduates from Scottish HEIs, it is important not to lose track of the fact that the pay gap still persists. However, more detailed analysis of the male and female graduates from Scottish HEIs identifies considerable variation in the size and direction of the pay gap.

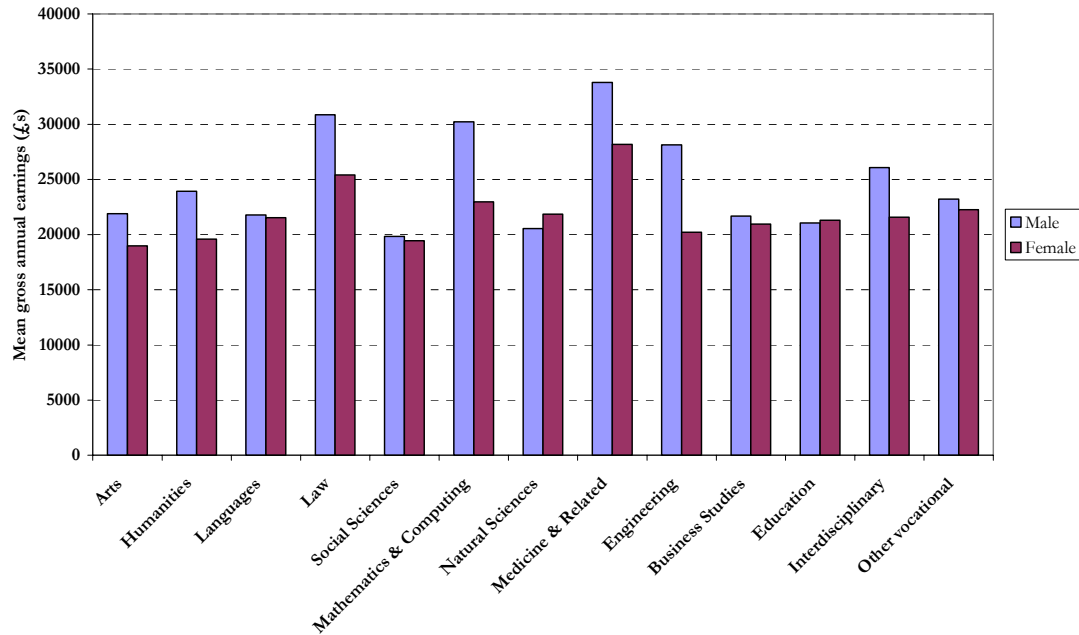
Earnings by gender and subject studied

Figure 6 shows the average earnings of male and female graduates from Scottish HEIs. In particular:

- male graduates in law, mathematics and computing, medicine and related subjects, and engineering had, on average, considerably higher earnings than female graduates in this area; and

- the gap was reversed for graduates from certain courses, with female graduates in natural sciences and education earning, on average, slightly more than male graduates from these disciplines.

Figure 6: Mean gross earnings of Scottish HEI graduates, by subject of study and gender

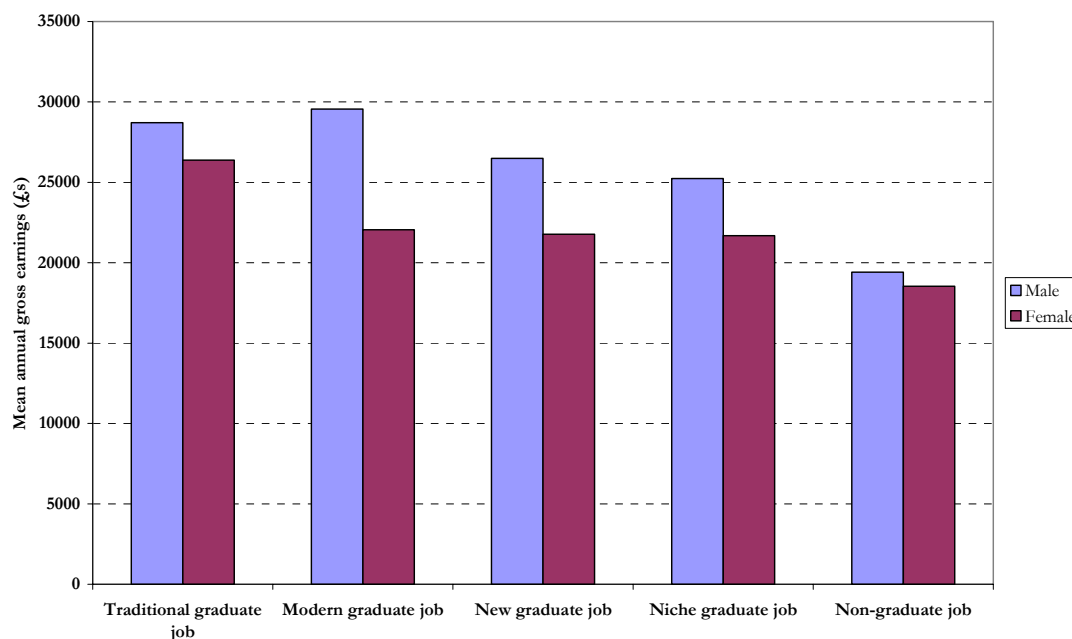


Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Earnings by gender and type of job

Figure 7 shows the average earnings of male and female graduates by the type of job they were doing four years after graduating. Figure 7 shows that whilst male graduates, on average, earn more than female graduates in each type of graduate job, the gap is greatest in modern graduate jobs.

Figure 7: Mean gross annual earnings of Scottish HEI graduates, by SOC (HE) classification of job at time of survey and gender



Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Earnings by gender and industry of employment

The differences in the earnings of male and female graduates were also explored by industry of employment. From this analysis it was found that:

- whilst the earnings gap, in favour of male graduates, is evident across all sectors, it is most prevalent in the agriculture, mining and quarrying sector; the construction sector; the transport and tourist services sector; and the banking, finance, and insurance sector; and
- the earnings gap is narrowest in the electricity, gas and water supply sector; and in the education sector.

Have Scotland's Class of '99 been held back by student debt?

Respondents were asked about whether or not they had left their course with repayable debt, and if so, how much did they owe, which allows for an exploration of the impact of debt on graduate outcomes. The general analysis of debt shows that:

- for those graduates who reported having an amount of repayable debt at the end of their studies, the average amount repayable was

slightly lower for graduates from Scottish HEIs than for those from HEIs in England and Wales (£5,735 and £6,171 respectively);

- graduates from the lower social class backgrounds were most likely to leave their course with repayable debt, but the average amount repayable generally increased the higher the social class background of graduates;
- female graduates were more likely to finish their course with repayable debt than males, and they were also more likely to owe a higher amount; and
- Scottish-domiciled graduates were less likely than graduates who had been previously domiciled elsewhere to have left their course with repayable debt, and where they had incurred debt the amount was, on average, lower.

Graduates who had completed their courses with repayable debts were asked if this had influenced their early career options. The results, by location of study, are presented in Table 8, and show that:

- having left their course with debt was less likely to have limited the options of graduates from Scottish HEIs than those from HEIs in England and Wales.

Table 8: Impact of debt by location of study

	Scotland	England & Wales
No, my options were not limited by my debts	78.7%	73.4%
Yes, wanted postgraduate study, didn't want to add to debts	11.1%	12.7%
Yes, turned down low paid job, wanted to repay debts	1.5%	3.7%
Yes, had to accept job didn't want in order to repay debts	2.1%	4.3%
Yes, in some other way	7.8%	9.8%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

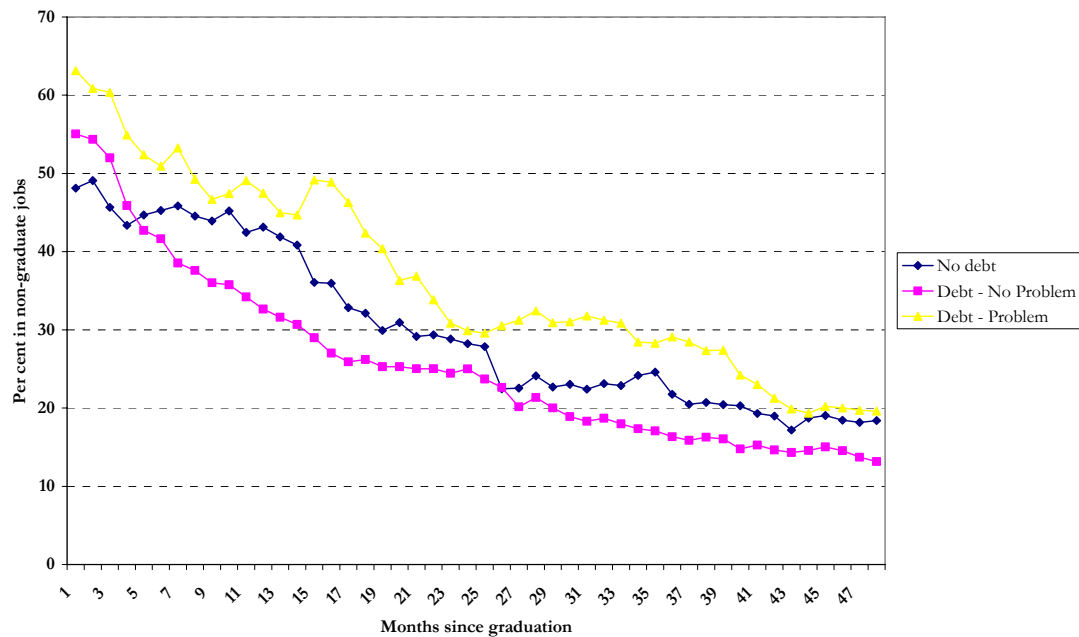
Another perspective can be gained on the impact of debt by examining the length of time that it took graduates with varying degrees of debt problems to secure graduate level employment. In Figure 8 the cohort is split into graduates with no debt; graduates with debt who reported that it had not affected their options; and graduates with debt who reported that their options had been limited by debt. Figure 8 shows that:

- graduates who considered that they were handicapped by debt were more likely to have immediately entered non-graduate

employment after graduating and after four years remained more likely, relative to graduates with no debt, and those who said that their options had not been restricted by their debts, to be in non-graduate level jobs; and

- graduates who had debt, but did not regard it as a restriction, were the least likely to be in non-graduate employment four years after graduating.

Figure 8: Proportion of Scottish HEI graduates in non-graduate employment in the four years following graduation by debt status



Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Section 6: Was it worth it?

Graduates were asked what, in hindsight, they would change about their undergraduate studies and, indeed, if they would still enter HE if they had the choice again. Table 9 presents the results, and shows that:

- 96 per cent of graduates from Scottish HEIs would, if given the choice again, enter HE; and
- 22 per cent of graduates from Scottish HEIs would, if given the choice again, have undertaken a different course.

Table 9: What graduates would change about their HE, by location of study

	Scotland	England & Wales
Do the same course at the same place	65.8%	65.4%
Do a similar course at a different place	7.9%	9.2%
Do a different course	22.1%	20.7%
Choose not to enter higher education	3.6%	3.2%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey

Just over 3.5 per cent of respondents from Scottish HEIs indicated that they regretted their decision to enter HE. Graduates who indicated this regret were more likely to:

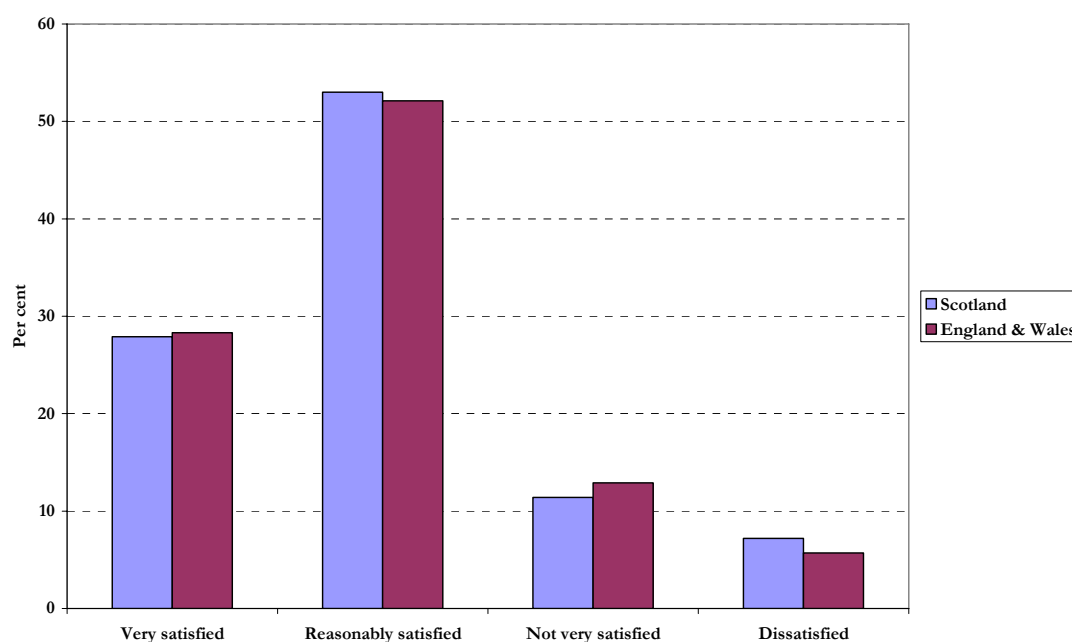
- be male;
- be 'young' graduates;
- have studied arts, social sciences, engineering and 'other vocational' subjects;
- have achieved lower second or third class degree;
- have attended post-1992 universities;
- have come from 'intermediate' occupational backgrounds; and
- have indicated that one of the reasons for entering HE was that they thought that it would improve their employment prospects.

How satisfied are graduates with their career to date?

Respondents were also asked about how satisfied they were with their career-to-date. The results, by location of study, are shown in Figure 9, which shows that:

- levels of career satisfaction were very similar for graduates from Scottish HEIs, and graduates from HEIs in England and Wales.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with career-to-date, according to location of study



Source: *The Class of '99* survey

However, it is also possible to examine levels of career satisfaction of Scottish HEI graduates by their employment location. The results, shown in Table 10, indicate that:

- graduates employed in Scotland are more likely, compared to graduates employed elsewhere, to be either 'not very satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' with their careers.

Table 10: Satisfaction with career to date, by location of employment at time of survey (graduates from Scottish HEIs only)

	Employed in Scotland	Employed elsewhere
Very satisfied	25.2%	35.0%
Reasonably satisfied	54.4%	49.6%
Not very satisfied	11.7%	10.6%
Dissatisfied	8.3%	4.7%

Source: *The Class of '99* survey