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Paid, unpaid and 'hidden' internships at six months after graduation: Are some graduates excluded?

Research report

January 2020

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WARWICK INSTITUTE *for*
EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH



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Executive Summary

The role that graduate internships play in social mobility and/or socio-economic reproduction is a subject of considerable debate. There is a dearth, however, of reliable quantitative evidence on the extent to which participation in internships is moulded by social class. Not least because of difficulties identifying and quantifying internships in statutory surveys. Building on previous research (Hunt and Scott, 2018a) this paper examines the extent to which graduates from different backgrounds engage in paid, unpaid and 'hidden' internships (i.e. those reported as 'voluntary' jobs) soon after graduation. In doing so the research contributes to debates about whether those from lower socio-economic groups are disadvantaged in accessing internships and, consequently, in the scramble for graduate jobs.

Employing data from the Destinations of Leavers from higher Education (DLHE) survey for 2016/17, the last such survey to capture graduates' employment situations at six months after graduation, the research finds:

- Graduate internships are a small but significant feature of the early graduate labour market, with 7,560 graduates doing an internship (2.5% of graduates in work). While the number of graduates reporting their main job as 'on an internship' has increased since 2011/12, the number of internships reported as 'voluntary' positions has declined by around a half;
- 36% of internships reported as a main job were unpaid. While this has declined substantially since 2011/12 (from 58%) it is notably higher than the 21% estimated for 2015/16 leavers (Montacute, 2018), although it is not clear whether item non-response was accounted for in their estimate;
- Internships were much more common than on average in some industries and occupations, particularly those associated with the media, publishing, creative and cultural industries, NGOs and membership organisations, and unpaid internships were more prevalent in many of these sectors. While many of these industries and occupations are the same as found for 2011/12 leavers, the proportion that were unpaid has declined in most of these. Exceptions are activities of extraterritorial and member organisations, libraries and museums, and some legal, conservation and sports professions, where the proportion of unpaid internships remains stubbornly high;
- Multivariate analysis shows, firstly, that participation in internships, particularly unpaid ones, is more prevalent among graduates of less vocational subjects with a weaker labour market orientation (e.g. mass communications and documentation, historical and philosophical studies, and creative arts and design), secondly, that graduates with higher grades or from more prestigious institutions are more likely to secure paid internships and, thirdly, that those from a higher socio-economic

background are more likely than less privileged graduates to do unpaid internships.

Together these findings suggest that, while the proportion of unpaid internships is declining, it remains high in certain key sectors and that this may present a barrier to those from less privileged backgrounds in gaining experience in these areas. Whether unpaid internships do actually help improve the chances of gaining graduate jobs in these industries is another question. Particularly as grades and institution prestige was more strongly associated with participation in paid internships than it was with unpaid internships and previous research has shown that paid internships are likely to be more developmental and are more likely to lead to improved labour-market outcomes (Hunt, 2016; Hunt and Scott, 2018a, 2018b; Holford, 2017; Purcell et al., 2012).

Introduction

Graduate internships are one means by which individuals seek to gain advantage in a congested graduate labour market (Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013; Smith, 2010). They are thought to provide valuable workplace experience, developing networks and industry-specific knowledge and skills (Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2010a; Lawton and Potter, 2010), and are widely seen, including by many interns themselves, as a key route into some industries (Roberts, 2017; Siebert and Wilson, 2013; Leonard, Halford and Bruce, 2016). In an increasingly positional labour market where it is one's position relative to one's peers that counts (Brown and Hesketh, 2003; Tholen and Brown, 2018), the mere possession of a degree is no longer enough to guarantee success (O'Connor and Bodicoat, 2017; Tomlinson, 2008; Smith, 2010). Consequently, internships are seen as a 'necessary evil': a way for new aspirants to 'pay their dues' (Shade and Jacobson, 2015; Jacobson and Shade, 2018). Yet, unpaid or low-paid internships are seen as exploitative and as a barrier to accessing key industries and professions for those without the requisite social and economic capital (Milburn, 2009, 2014), and may in fact lead to lower earnings and decrease the chances of having a graduate job in the short to medium term (Halford, 2017; Purcell et al., 2012; Hunt, 2016).

This research focuses on graduate internships: employment experiences, after graduation, of a finite duration, aimed at improving one's chances in the labour market. These 'open market' internships (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018) can be seen as distinct from other types of work experiences such as work placements and voluntary work. Work placements carried out as part of a course are: covered by the normal sources of student finance, supported by the students' institution and may have quite different consequences for employability (Purcell et al., 2012; Hunt, 2016; Pollard et al., 2015). Likewise, while some internships are labelled as voluntary positions there are legal and conceptual reasons for distinguishing these from genuine volunteering for altruistic rather than career reasons, although at times these overlap (Leonard et al., 2016; Gerada, 2013).

Building on previous research (Hunt and Scott, 2018a) and employing data from the 2016/17 Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey – a census of employment and education activities of leavers from UK higher education institutions (HEIs) six months after graduation – the research asks:

- 1) What is the extent of participation in internships and is it rising or declining?
- 2) What proportion of graduate internships at six months after graduation are paid or unpaid and has this changed since 2011/12?
- 3) In which industries and occupations are paid and unpaid internships most common?

- 4) Who does paid and unpaid internships and are some groups more/less likely to access internships?

By answering these questions the research aims to better inform debates about the role internships play as a means of accessing certain industries/occupations and whether some groups are being excluded.

Research on graduate internships in the UK

Research on graduate internships has come a long way over the last ten years. Qualitative research in a number of sectors in the UK and North America has provided a number of insights into the practice. There is a growing sense among graduates and interns that some form of work experience is increasingly a necessary addition to a degree as a minimum requirement to access paid work in certain sectors (O'Connor and Bodicoat, 2017; Shade and Jacobson, 2015). While there is concern that unpaid internships are exploitative, they are seen as a 'rite of passage' and a 'necessary step' in some industries (Perlin, 2012; Shade and Jacobson, 2015). Some interns are prepared to work up to 1,000 hours for free in order to ingratiate themselves with potential employers for the promise of a paid job (Siebert and Wilson, 2013). This may be particularly true in competitive and glamorous sectors, such as advertising, the music industry and third and creative sectors, where there may be a revolving door of 'stringterns' competing for a permanent, paid role (Frenette, 2013; Jacobson and Shade, 2018; Leonard et al., 2016; McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley, 2011). While the aim of learning while working is seen as the defining feature of internships, this may not always be forthcoming and some employers take advantage of a pool of excess labour (Frenette, 2015). This practice can have a negative impact on existing staff undermining pay and creating work when they are required to spend time training short-term interns and correcting work when things go wrong (Siebert and Wilson, 2013). Yet, employers benefit from young and enthusiastic, productive new recruits that they can screen for more permanent roles (Leonard et al., 2016; Frenette, 2013).

Quantitative research in the UK, however, has provided a mixed and sometimes contradictory picture. Early efforts to quantify the practice struggled with a lack of reliable data, with estimates of the number of internships in 2010 ranging from 35,000, based on evaluations of government-backed internship schemes (Oakleigh Consulting Ltd and CRAC, 2011), to as many as 250,000 (Lawton and Potter, 2010) extrapolating from a non-representative employer survey (CIPD, 2010b). Estimates of the proportion of unpaid internships also varied, from just 5% on the Graduate Internships scheme (a subsidised scheme), to 31% on the Graduate Talent Pool (Mellors-Bourne and Day, 2011) and 37% from another employer survey (CIPD, 2010c). However, the CIPD surveys cited were skewed towards large employers who may employ several interns at a time and government-backed schemes may not be representative of wider practice.

Changes to the DLHE in 2011/12 meant that for the first time internships were captured as a separate employment category enabling estimation of the wider practice. Analysis of this data showed that at six months after graduation 6,300 graduates (2.1% of those in work) were 'on an internship' and that an additional 1,375 of those reporting their job as 'voluntary' were working in industries outside the voluntary or public sector in occupations not usually associated with altruistic or charitable work (Hunt and Scott, 2018a). When these 'hidden' internships were included, the total number of graduates doing an internship as a main job at six months after leaving university rose to 7,675: 2.5% of those in work. Of these, more than half (58%) were unpaid (Hunt and Scott, 2018a). Analysis of the DLHE for subsequent cohorts indicated rising numbers of internships but lower rates unpaid. The Sutton Trust estimated that 31% of interns in the 2012/13 cohort were unpaid (Sutton Trust, 2014) and of the 10,000 in the 2015/16 DLHE that were 'on an internship' just 21% were unpaid (Montacute, 2018). While these figures suggest a decline in the proportion of internships that were unpaid, they do not include 'hidden' internships and do not account for item non-response to the questions on pay in the DLHE. Analysis of HESA data that does account for item non-response found that 7,285 of 2012/13 leavers were 'on an internship' at six months after graduation (44% unpaid), 7,735 in 2013/14 (39% unpaid) (Hunt, 2016).

However, the DLHE only provides a snapshot of participation in internships at a relatively early, albeit crucial, stage in graduates' careers. A survey of creative and mass communications graduates found that 25% had completed at least one internship in the first two years after graduating, 66% of these doing at least one unpaid (Hunt and Scott, 2018b) and a YouGov survey found that 39% of 21-29 year olds had engaged in at least one internship at some stage, with 70% doing at least one unpaid (Cullinane and Montacute, 2018).

While there is some disagreement about the prevalence of paid and unpaid internships in quantitative research, there is less disagreement about the relative quality and implications for fairness. Relative to unpaid internships, paid internships are more structured (Mellors-Bourne and Day, 2011); require a higher level of qualification (Hunt and Scott, 2018a); are seen as more useful and developmental (Hunt and Scott, 2018b); and are more likely to lead to improved labour market outcomes (Holford, 2017; Hunt, 2016; Purcell et al., 2012; Cullinane and Montacute, 2018).

In addition, the majority of the above quantitative studies suggest that access to internships is uneven. Graduates on the GTP were more successful if they were white, from Russell Group universities or had better grades (Mellors-Bourne and Day, 2011). Using DLHE data from 2004 to 2013, Holford (2017) found that interns were more likely to: be from a higher socio-economic group, have studied at a private school, to have better grades, have studied at a prestigious HEI, to have studied a subject with a weak labour-market orientation, or to be from a black or minority ethnic group. Cullinane and

Montacute (2018) found that respondents who had done an internship were more likely to be younger and from London and the South East of England. Hunt (2016) found that graduates were more likely to be doing a graduate internship six months after graduating if they were: younger; EU domiciled or from London or the South East; from a black or minority ethnic background; from a managerial/professional background; had been to private school; studied for a first degree or masters; or studied mass communications, creative arts, languages, or historical and philosophical studies. Thus, it would seem that there is evidence that participation in internships is moulded by study characteristics and patterns of socio-economic (dis)advantage.

The analysis that follows, aims to contribute to the above picture by providing up-to-date and generalisable evidence on participation in paid and unpaid internships at six months after graduation, a critical point in graduates' early careers. This is particularly timely as, the recent change to the 'Graduate Outcomes' survey means that, going forward, only internships engaged in at 15 months after leaving university will be captured, missing any completed before this time point (i.e. the majority). The 2016/17 DLHE presents the last chance to investigate trends in participation in paid, unpaid and hidden internships since the 2011/12 cohort and the extent to which they are a feature in early transitions from education to employment. In doing so the research also reveals the extent to which employers have responded to concerns levelled at unpaid internships, that they are exploitative and a barrier to social mobility.

Data and methodology

The research employs data from the 2016/17 DLHE.¹ Carried out from 2007/08 until 2016/17 by HEIs on behalf of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the DLHE was a census of UK and EU domiciled leavers (undergraduate and postgraduate) from UK HEIs, capturing data on employment and education activities six months after graduation. The survey for 2016/17 leavers could be completed by post, telephone or online and achieved a response rate of 77.3%. It provides a reliable and generalisable snapshot of graduates' employment situation at a key stage in their early careers, although response rates were slightly lower for EU leavers and leavers from part-time courses.²

The analysis followed the approach established by Hunt and Scott (2018a) who found that a substantial number of DLHE respondents reporting their basis of employment (Q5) as 'doing voluntary work' (25%) did not work in industries or occupations normally associated with the sort of 'work for good causes' that the 'voluntary worker' exception of the National Minimum Wage regulations were intended to preclude (Pyper, 2015). Such industries (2-digit Standard Industrial Classification [SIC] system) included: publishing; financial services; legal and accounting activities, activities of head offices, management and consultancy; architectural and engineering activities; advertising and market research; and creative, arts and entertainment. Occupations (4-digit Standard Occupational Classification [SOC]) included: web design and development professionals; conservation professionals; legal professionals; management consultants and business analysts; journalists; PR professionals; architects; and artists. These occupations and industries have more in common with typical conceptions of internships than altruistic or charity work, and so were classified as 'hidden' internships, as they would otherwise be hidden within statutory reporting on graduate destinations.

In the current analysis, graduates were classified as interns if they reported their main job on the census date as 'On an internship/placement', or reported their job as 'Voluntary work' and were *not* working in one of the industries (2-digit SIC) or occupations (4-digit SOC) listed in Appendix A. This refined definition using the 2016/17 data excluded an additional 17 occupations (4-digit SOC) from the definition of 'hidden' internships that were not found in the 2011/12 analysis, including: social services managers/directors; residential, day and domiciliary care managers/proprietors; sports coaches and officials;

¹ HESA DLHE Record 2016/17. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited. Neither the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited nor HESA Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information supplied by HESA Services.

² <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/destinations-2016-17/introduction>

farmers and horticultural workers; and elementary occupations in SOC major group nine (1-digit SOC).

Once interns could be more accurately identified in the data, a bivariate analysis was conducted to look at which groups are more or less likely to do internships. A multinomial logistic regression (a multivariate analysis technique) was also carried out to investigate which factors predict participation in paid and unpaid internships (including social class, ethnicity, age, gender, grades and type of institutions studied at) while holding other characteristics constant. The following sections examine:

- 1) The extent of participation in paid and unpaid internships, including the occupations and industries where they are most commonplace;
- 2) Patterns of participation in paid and unpaid internships, and which groups are more or less likely to engage in these;
- 3) Which personal and study characteristics predict participation in paid and unpaid internships after controlling for other characteristics.

Where possible, the analysis also compares how the situation has changed since the 2011/12 graduating cohort. As the DLHE is a census significance tests and inferential statistics are not used in this analysis, because: a) central limit theorem, on which such statistics are based, only applies to random or probability samples, and b) the statistics presented are the population estimates and so estimates of statistical certainty are not needed.

Results

Extent of participation in graduate internships

Of the 400,920 UK and EU leavers in the 2016/17 graduating cohort, 303,295 were in work six months after graduation (inc. work and study). Of these, 7,520 were engaged in an internship in their main job: 6,070 'on an internship/placement' and 550 'hidden' internships (Table 1). While the number 'on an internship' increased slightly compared to the 2011/12 cohort, the overall number of interns declined slightly (after first having risen in 2012/13 and 2013/14) largely due to a decline in the number of 'hidden' internships, which halved over the period, and partly due to a decline in the number of graduates in work. Overall, the proportion of 2015/16 graduates in work who were doing an internship six months after graduation was same as found in 2011/12 at 2.5%.

The proportion of unpaid internships also declined over the period from 58% in 2011/12 to 36% in 2016/17. While the figures for 2012/13 and 2013/14 are not directly comparable, as they do not include hidden internships, the figures are suggestive of a general decline in the prevalence of unpaid internships reported as a main job, as identified elsewhere (Sutton Trust, 2014; Montacute, 2018). However, despite the decline, unpaid internships are much more common than the 20% reported by Montacute for the 2015/16 cohort. This is most likely due to those failing to answer either of the two questions about pay (a non-response) being treated as paid in that analysis.

Table 1 – participation in internships at six months after graduation

	2011/12	2012/13*	2013/14*	2016/17
All internships	7,675 (2.5%)	-	-	7,560 (2.5%)
- 'On an internship'	6,300 (2.1%)	7,285 (2.2%)	7,735 (2.3%)	6,970 (2.3%)
- 'Hidden internships'	1,375 (0.4%)	-	-	650 (0.2%)
- % unpaid	58%	44%	39%	36%
Volunteers (vol/public sector)	3,970 (1.4%)	-	-	2,335 (0.8%)
All in work	309,550	327,185	329,945	303,295

Source: HESA DLHE Record 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14, 2016/17;

Base: All in work; *In employment (HESA definition); Note: Numbers in parenthesis are % of those in work

Industries with the highest participation in internships include many commonly associated with internships (Table 2): activities of extraterritorial organisations (e.g. European Commission, United Nations, International monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development); activities of membership organisations (which would include unions and political parties); industries associated with fashion; publishing; and management consultancy. While these are the same industries as those found to have

the highest rates of internships in the 2011/12 cohort, with the exception of activities of extraterritorial organisations, the proportion of graduates working in these industries has declined slightly. Occupations with the highest incidence of internships were also familiar and included: conservation and environmental professionals and associate professionals; media professionals; design occupations; librarians and related professionals (which includes archivists and curators); and sales and marketing associate professionals. Again, whilst many of these occupations are similar to those found with high incidence of internships among the 2011/12 cohort, with the exception of conservation and environmental occupations, the rate of participation in internships has declined slightly.

Industries where the vast majority of internships were unpaid (Table 2), were: activities of extraterritorial organisations (92%) and membership organisations (70%), libraries and museums (69%) and programming and broadcasting (69%). While the proportion of internships that are unpaid is considerably higher in these industries than the average (36%), it has declined since 2011/12. For example:

- Creative arts and entertainment (57% compared to 83% in 2011/12);
- Film, TV and music production (54% compared to 76% in 2011/12);
- Publishing (51% compared to 73% in 2011/12);
- Programming and broadcasting activities (69% compared to 81% in 2011/12).

Exceptions to this pattern were activities of extraterritorial organisations where the proportion of internships that were unpaid rose from 62% to 92%, and activities of membership organisations and libraries, archives, museums and cultural activities that had only declined slightly (from 76 to 70% and from 73 to 69% respectively).

Occupations with a high proportion of unpaid internships included: legal associate professionals (69%), sports and fitness occupations (67%), conservation and environmental associate professionals (67%), librarians and related professionals (inc. archivists and curators) (66%) and government and related administrative occupations (inc. NGOs) (63%). While not directly comparable to the 2011/12 cohort, the proportion of unpaid internships appears to have declined among:

- media professional (43% unpaid, compared to 79% of journalists and 67% of PR professionals in 2011/12);
- design occupations (37% unpaid, compared to 67% of graphic and 76% of product, clothing and related design interns in 2011/12);
- business, research and administrative professions (32% unpaid, compared to 67% of media, national security and research interns in 2011/12).

While it seems there have been efforts to address the issue of unpaid internships in some sectors and occupations, others buck this trend.

Table 2 – Industries (2-digit SIC) and occupations (3-digit SOC) where internships are most prevalent and with highest proportion of unpaid internships

Industries with high participation in internships	Interns, %	Base, N	Occupations with high participation in internships	Interns, %	Base, N
99 Activities of extraterritorial organisations	46.7	370	355 Conservation and Environmental ass. profs	17.4	260
94 Activities of membership organisations	12.2	2,525	247 Media Professionals	11.6	3,265
14 Manufacture of wearing apparel	11.1	315	342 Design Occupations	9.1	5,000
58 Publishing activities	10.2	2,555	245 Librarians and Related Professionals	8.3	660
15 Manufacture of leather and related products	9.1	35	354 Sales, Marketing and Related Ass. Professionals	7.2	17,345
70 Acts. of head offices; management consultancy	7.4	2,720	214 Conservation and Environment Professionals	7.0	1,000
39 Remediation and waste management services	6.5	60	353 Business, Finance and Related Ass. Professionals	6.2	14,135
73 Advertising and market research	6.4	4,505	352 Legal Associate Professionals	5.7	2,680
91 Libraries, archives, museums, cultural activities	6.4	1,895	341 Artistic, Literary and Media Occupations	5.4	10,555
59 Film, video and TV production, sound recording and music publishing	6.2	3,185	312 Draughtspersons and Architectural Technicians	5.1	2,050
Industries with high rates of unpaid internships*	Unpaid, %	Base, N	Occupations with high rates of unpaid internships*	Unpaid, %	Base, N
99 Activities of extraterritorial organisations	91.5	60	352 Legal Associate Professionals	68.9	90
96 Other personal service activities	76.5	35	344 Sports and Fitness Occupations	66.7	40
94 Activities of membership organisations	70.3	235	355 Conservation and Environmental ass. professionals	66.7	35
91 Libraries, museums and other cultural activities	69.1	80	245 Librarians and Related Professionals	65.6	30
60 Programming and broadcasting activities	68.9	45	411 Administrative Occs: Government and Related	63.0	25
93 Sports, amusement and recreation	66.1	125	612 Childcare and Related Personal Services	61.8	35
72 Scientific research and development	60.9	90	241 Legal Professionals	60.0	40
69 Legal and accounting activities	57.9	180	421 Secretarial and Related	58.8	35
14 Manufacture of wearing apparel	56.0	25	214 Conservation and Environment Professionals	57.7	50
59 Film, video and TV production, sound recording and music publishing	54.0	125	415 Other Administrative Occupations	52.7	110

Base: All in work; *Interns; Source: HESA DLHE Record 2016/17

Groups more/less likely to do internships

Graduates were more likely than on average to be engaged in internships (Tables 3 and 4) if they:

- Had been to a private school;
- Were first degree leavers;
- Studied at a Russell Group or 1994 Group institution;³
- Studied mass communications and documentation, languages, law, historical and philosophical studies, or creative arts and design;
- Graduated with a first or upper second class degree (first degree graduates);
- Were from a managerial/professional socio-economic background;
- Were from a Black and Minority Ethnic background.

In nearly all cases, participation levels were strikingly similar to those found in the 2011/12 DLHE (Hunt, 2016). Exceptions to this were that participation among those from private school was slightly lower for the 2016/17 cohort (4.4%) compared to 2011/12 graduates (5.1%), as was participation among masters graduates (2.7% compared to 3.2%).

The rate of unpaid internships varied considerably depending upon a range of personal and educational characteristics. Interns were more likely to be unpaid if they were:

- Educated at private school;
- From an EU country outside of the UK, from London or the south west of England;
- Were Masters leavers;
- Graduated with a third class degree or lower (first degree graduates only);
- Studied Law or Historical and philosophical studies.

Interns from a managerial/professional socio-economic background were more likely than those from an intermediate or Routine/manual background to be unpaid (34% compared to 29 and 25% respectively). White and mixed race interns were also more likely to be unpaid than were interns from other ethnic groups.

These patterns were remarkably similar to those found for 2011/12 cohort, although the proportion of unpaid interns had decreased over the period. However, while the proportion of unpaid internships had declined for all subjects, it had declined much less

³ The Russell Group and 1994 Group are two university 'mission groups' that represent some of the most prestigious and research-intensive universities in the UK.

among law graduates. Similarly, while the proportion of UK domiciled interns that were unpaid dropped from 60% in 2011/12 to 33% in 2016/17 among UK domiciled graduates, it actually rose among EU domiciled interns during the same period (from 46% to 56%).

Table 3 – Participation in internships and proportion of these that are unpaid (personal characteristics)

		Internships, %	Unpaid, %*	Base, N	
Gender	Male	2.5	31.9	123,225	
	Female	2.4	37.5	179,980	
	Other	2.3	-	85	
Domicile	North East	2.2	20.8	10,705	
	North West	2.1	22.4	30,895	
	Yorkshire and Humber	1.8	37.4	20,405	
	East Midlands	2.8	21.6	18,545	
	West Midlands	2.0	29.9	24,800	
	East of England	2.5	35.2	25,540	
	London	3.1	37.2	44,290	
	South East	2.2	39.6	39,910	
	South West	1.8	42.1	22,090	
	Northern Ireland	1.9	36.4	10,520	
	Scotland	1.6	26.1	22,975	
	Wales	1.5	38.0	14,025	
	All UK (inc. Islands)	2.2	33.0	286,170	
	Other EU	6.7	56.1	17,125	
	Social-economic class	Managerial/Professional (1-2)	3.1	34.2	85,695
		Intermediate (3-4)	2.7	29.4	35,225
Routine/Manual (5-8)		2.5	24.7	45,570	
Ethnicity	White	2.0	34.6	228,805	
	Asian	3.3	25.0	25,885	
	Black	3.0	29.0	15,740	
	Other (inc. mixed)	3.0	37.3	12,220	
	All Black and Minority Ethnic	3.2	28.6	53,845	

Source: HESA DLHE Record 2016/17

Base: Graduates with any evidence of work; *Interns

Overall, the bivariate analysis fits in with the dominant discourse that highlights concerns about unequal access to unpaid internships (e.g. Milburn, 2009, 2014; Lawton and Potter, 2010) and findings presented elsewhere (Mellors-Bourne and Day, 2011; Holford, 2017; Cullinane and Montacute, 2018), with participation in internships higher among graduates from London, with better grades, from more prestigious universities, and from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, while the proportion of internships that are

unpaid appears to have declined for most groups, they are still more prevalent among those who are white, from managerial/professional backgrounds, went to private school, are from London or the EU, live in London, although the subjects where unpaid internships are most common appear to have changed slightly.

Table 4 – Participation in internships and proportion of these that are unpaid (study characteristics)

		Internships, %	Unpaid, %*	Base, N
POLAR	Low participation neighbourhood	1.8	29.4	31,025
	Other neighbourhood	2.3	33.2	253,150
School type	Private school	4.4	38.7	15,170
	State school	2.6	30.3	187,505
Qualification obtained	First degree	3.1	31.7	195,145
	Other undergraduate	0.8	50.5	20,255
	PGCE ⁴	0.4	5.2	16,815
	Masters	2.7	56.0	43,715
	Doctorate	0.3	-	8,635
Subject area of study (JACS3)	Medicine & dentistry	0.4	28.0	9,325
	Subjects allied to medicine	0.6	25.4	43,205
	Biological sciences	2.7	46.4	26,720
	Veterinary science	2.6	-	725
	Agriculture & related	1.6	43.4	2,660
	Physical sciences	2.5	31.0	10,390
	Mathematical sciences	2.4	21.1	4,450
	Computer science	2.4	16.8	11,105
	Engineering & technology	1.9	22.8	17,065
	Architecture, building & planning	2.4	27.5	7,955
	Social studies	3.4	37.6	27,540
	Law	3.9	54.0	9,230
	Business & admin. studies	2.8	26.1	37,425
	Mass comms. & documentation	5.0	39.2	7,185
	Languages	4.9	38.6	12,265
	Historical & philosophical studies	4.9	46.3	10,265
	Creative arts & design	4.7	37.0	26,070
	Education	0.5	17.5	38,255
	Combined	2.1	-	1,470

⁴ Postgraduate Certificate of Education – a qualification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales leading to qualified teacher status.

Classification of Degree (first degree only)	First class	3.3	27.6	52,465
	Upper second class	3.6	32.8	92,135
	Lower second class	2.5	35.1	32,265
	Third class/Pass	1.8	46.3	6,205
	Unclassified	0.7	17.3	12,075
Mission group	Russel/1994 group	3.4	37.2	90,080
	Other	2.1	33.8	213,210

Source: HESA DLHE Record 2016/17

Base: Graduates with any evidence of work: *Interns

Characteristics that increase or decrease the chances of doing a graduate internship

While the findings of the above analysis are informative, such bivariate analyses cannot account for interrelationships between different personal and study characteristics.

Therefore, a multinomial logistic regression analysis was carried out in order to examine the extent to which different personal and study characteristics help predict the chances of being in a paid or unpaid internship relative to being in any other form of employment.

Variables included in the analysis were: subject of study, HEI mission group, classification of degree, type of school attended, socio-economic group, age at graduation, ethnicity, gender, and region of domicile. The analysis focused on first degree graduates only, as previous grades were not known for graduates of other HE courses, and excluded non-UK EU graduates for whom data on ethnicity was not available.

Table 5 shows the odds ratio and 95% confidence interval for each variable included in the analysis. For categorical variables the odds ratio can be seen as an estimate of the proportional change in the odds of being in a paid (or unpaid) internship relative to being in any other form of employment. As the DLHE is a census estimates of uncertainty are not applicable and so significance values are not displayed and confidence intervals should be interpreted as a measure of dispersion.

Broadly, relative to those who studied engineering and technology (a subject area with roughly average participation rates in internships) subjects can be seen as falling into three groups:

- Those that decrease the odds of doing any kind of internship (medicine and dentistry, subjects allied to medicine, veterinary sciences and agriculture, maths, and education);

- Those that decrease the odds of doing an unpaid internship but increase the odds of doing a paid internship (computer sciences and architecture, building and planning);
- Those that increase the odds of doing a paid internship, but increase the odds of doing an unpaid internship more biological sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, languages, historical and philosophical studies, creative arts and design, and mass communication and documentation).

Exceptions to this pattern are: business and administrative studies where both paid and unpaid internships are slightly more common than for the reference group, and law where unpaid internships are much more common than the reference group but paid internships are not.

In terms of broader personal and educational characteristics, at six months after graduation, when controlling for other factors in the model:

- Male graduates were slightly less likely to do unpaid internships compared to women, but no more or less likely to be doing a paid internship;
- Graduates who were younger were more likely than older graduates to be doing internships (paid or unpaid);
- Relative to white graduates being black or Asian increases the chances of being on an unpaid internship by around a half to two thirds, and of being on a paid internship by a factor of more than two;
- Being from a Russell Group or 1994 Group university increases the odds of being on an unpaid internship by around a third and of being on a paid internship by around a half, compared to being from any other type of HEI;
- Graduates with an upper second class degree were slightly more likely than those with a 2:2 or lower to be on an unpaid internship. However, having graduated with a first or upper second class degree increased the odds of having a paid internship by a greater margin (47 and 67% respectively);
- Compared to being from a routine/manual socio-economic background, being from a managerial/professional or intermediate background increases the odds of having an unpaid internship (by around a quarter to a third) but not a paid one;
- Having studied at a private school increased the odds of being on an unpaid, but not a paid, internship compared to having studied at a state school;
- Finally, being from London increased the chances of being on an unpaid, but not a paid, internship (relative to being from the East of England, the reference group), while being from the North East, North West, or the East Midlands increases the odds of having a paid, but not an unpaid, internship.

Overall, the findings confirm socio-economic biases identified in much of the literature with those from higher socio-economic groups and/or who have studied at private school more likely to access unpaid internships. Interestingly, while graduating with better grades increases the odds of doing an unpaid internship, it increases the odds of doing a paid internship by a much greater margin, supporting the premise that paid internships are more selective and sought after (Hunt and Scott, 2018a, 2018b). The fact that being from London increases the odds of doing an unpaid internship is likely to reflect that London is a centre for many industries and occupations where unpaid internships are commonplace, such as fashion, the media and cultural sector, and so graduates from London may be more able to forgo wages while living in the family home. It is not clear why the odds of doing an internship (paid or unpaid) are higher among Black and Asian graduates, compared to white graduates, even after controlling for subject of study, social class and region of domicile, but it may reflect ethnic differences in occupational preferences.

Table 5 – Propensity to engage in paid and unpaid internships (multinomial logistic regression)

	Unpaid internship		Paid internship			Unpaid internship		Paid internship	
	Odds ratio	C.I.	Odds ratio	C.I.		Odds ratio	C.I.	Odds ratio	C.I.
Medicine & dentistry	0.000	[0.00;0.00]	0.113	[0.049;0.26]	Managerial/ Professional (1-2)	1.355	[1.133;1.62]	0.961	[0.862;1.073]
Subs. allied to medicine	0.245	[0.131;0.456]	0.383	[0.282;0.52]	Intermediate (3-4)	1.267	[1.027;1.562]	1.038	[0.913;1.18]
Biological sciences	2.429	[1.606;3.672]	1.157	[0.899;1.488]	<i>Routine/Manual (5-8)</i> <i>(ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]
Veterinary science, agriculture & related	0.787	[0.289;2.143]	0.873	[0.485;1.569]	21 and under	1.475	[0.778;2.796]	1.523	[1.059;2.192]
Physical sciences	1.678	[1.033;2.727]	1.169	[0.871;1.569]	22-25	1.386	[0.732;2.624]	1.282	[0.892;1.842]
Mathematical sciences	0.512	[0.214;1.225]	0.895	[0.61;1.313]	26-35	1.071	[0.502;2.284]	0.835	[0.536;1.301]
Computer science	0.79	[0.427;1.462]	1.446	[1.093;1.914]	36+ <i>(ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]
Architecture, building & planning	0.791	[0.353;1.773]	1.923	[1.379;2.681]	Asian	1.531	[1.212;1.934]	2.206	[1.930;2.521]
Social studies	1.537	[0.998;2.366]	1.306	[1.020;1.671]	Black	1.664	[1.248;2.218]	2.239	[1.860;2.695]
Law	2.225	[1.357;3.648]	1.031	[0.739;1.437]	Other (inc. mixed)	1.146	[0.850;1.545]	1.192	[0.965;1.473]
Business & admin.	1.171	[0.757;1.813]	1.287	[1.014;1.634]	<i>White (ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]
Mass comms. & doc.	4.065	[2.557;6.464]	2.387	[1.787;3.188]	Male	0.91	[0.79;0;1.050]	1.045	[0.951;1.149]
Languages	2.484	[1.603;3.85]	1.807	[1.392;2.346]	<i>Female (ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]
Historical & philosophical studies	3.335	[2.154;5.161]	1.837	[1.399;2.413]	North East	0.632	[0.376;1.064]	1.591	[1.245;2.034]
Creative arts & design	3.984	[2.659;5.969]	2.392	[1.889;3.028]	North West	0.873	[0.642;1.188]	1.458	[1.216;1.75]
Education	0.416	[0.201;0.861]	0.662	[0.464;0.946]	Yorks. and Humber	0.998	[0.720;1.384]	0.854	[0.681;1.072]
<i>Eng. & tech. (ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]	East Midlands	0.924	[0.656;1.302]	1.571	[1.291;1.911]
Russel/1994 group	1.383	[1.179;1.624]	1.537	[1.384;1.706]	West Midlands	0.934	[0.681;1.28]	0.962	[0.783;1.182]
<i>Other (ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]	London	1.438	[1.108;1.868]	1.095	[0.915;1.31]
First class	1.095	[0.881;1.361]	1.67	[1.447;1.927]	South East	1.112	[0.857;1.443]	0.866	[0.720; 1.042]
Upper second	1.247	[1.03;1.509]	1.478	[1.294;1.688]	South West	1.107	[0.818;1.499]	0.736	[0.583;0.927]
<i>2:2/3rd/ungraded (ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]	Northern Ireland	0.927	[0.583;1.474]	0.659	[0.470;0.924]
Private school	1.249	[1.015;1.538]	0.982	[0.841;1.146]	Scotland	0.741	[0.499;1.100]	0.847	[0.658;1.092]
<i>State school (ref. cat.)</i>	1.0	[., .]	1.0	[., .]	Wales	0.921	[0.614;1.382]	0.839	[0.633;1.113]
					East Eng (ref. cat.)	1.0	.	.	1.0

Source: HESA DLHE Record 2016/17; Base: UK domiciled first degree graduates with any evidence of work;
 Note: Pseudo R²= .013 (Cox and Snell), .059 (Nagelkerke), .053 (McFadden). Model $\chi^2(80)= 1,697.88, p< .0005$

Discussion and conclusion

With the move from the DLHE, which captured graduates' work situation at six months after graduation, to the Graduate Outcomes survey, which will only capture work at 15 months after graduation, the 2016/17 DLHE presents a timely opportunity to take stock of how the situation has changed since 2011/12. The analysis presented in this report contributes to debates about graduate internships by providing much needed quantitative evidence and makes four main findings.

First, internships remain a small but significant feature of the graduate labour market. While the number and proportion of graduates doing internships six months after graduation is the same as for 2011/12 leavers (after a rise in interceding years) the number of those reporting their main job as 'on an internship' has increased slightly since 2011/12 the number of 'hidden internships' has declined. The decline in hidden internships may suggest that employers are less inclined to use the voluntary exception to circumvent minimum wage legislation than previously. This proposition is supported by the second main finding, which is that despite the relative stability in the number of internships engaged in at six months after graduation, the proportion of these that are unpaid has declined substantially during the period from 58% to 36%, which again is suggestive of a move away from unpaid internships and labelling of such experiences as voluntary. However, the proportion of internships that were found to be unpaid in this research is still higher than has been estimated previously (Sutton Trust, 2014; Montacute, 2018), and the proportion experiencing unpaid internships is likely to rise during the first two years after graduation (Hunt and Scott, 2018a; Cullinane and Montacute, 2018).

The third main finding is that, while many of the industries and occupations with the highest incidence of internships are the same in the 2016/17 cohort as found for the 2011/12 cohort, the proportion of these that were unpaid had declined substantially in most. Industries include: creative arts and entertainment; TV and film production and publishing. Occupations include: media professionals (e.g. journalists and PR professionals), design occupations, and business, research and administrative professions. However, in some industries and occupations the proportion of unpaid internships remains stubbornly high: activities of extraterritorial and member organisations, libraries and museums, legal associate professionals, sports and fitness occupations, conservation and environmental associate professionals and library and related professionals (inc. archivists and curators). The decline in unpaid internships in some sectors such as journalism and PR, may reflect efforts by unions and professional bodies in these sectors to reduce the use of unpaid internships, while the high proportion of unpaid internships among extraterritorial organisations may reflect differing regulations in other national jurisdictions. However, the high level of unpaid internships in many industries/occupations may still prove a barrier to some graduates.

This is echoed in the final main finding of this research, from the multivariate analysis, that those from more privileged backgrounds or from London appear to be more likely to

access internships, particularly unpaid ones. This shows that social class and geography are important factors in determining who can access internships (Milburn, 2009, 2014; Lawton and Potter, 2010). That graduates with higher grades and from more prestigious universities were more likely to engage in paid internships in particular, fits in with previous findings that suggest that paid internships are more selective and desirable (Hunt and Scott, 2018a, 2018b). While the fact that those from less-privileged backgrounds were less likely to access unpaid internships but not paid ones fits in with some existing research (e.g. Holford, 2017) but contrasts with findings from a survey of creative and mass communications graduates where it was the more prestigious paid internships that working class graduates struggled to secure (Hunt and Scott, 2018b). However, it is possible patterns of (dis)advantage in accessing internships may operate differently in different sectors. Further analysis with subsets of graduates is needed to investigate this.

As found elsewhere (Holford, 2017) participation in internships was also found to vary by subject of study, with participation in internships generally, and unpaid internships in particular, higher amongst less vocational subjects with a weaker labour-market orientation, such as biological sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, languages, historical and philosophical studies, creative arts and design, and mass communication and documentation. Whereas, for more vocational subjects or subjects with a stronger labour-market orientation (e.g. medicine and dentistry, subjects allied to medicine, veterinary sciences and agriculture, maths, and education) internships are much less common. This may indicate that graduates of these less-vocational subjects may be more likely to feel the need to engage in internships in order to accumulate an additional credential or the hard and soft currencies that will help set themselves apart in the scramble for graduate jobs (Tomlinson, 2008; Brown and Hesketh, 2004).

While the analysis presented here only provides a snapshot of internships engaged in as a main job at six months after graduation, and not those carried out at a later stage or as a second job, the analysis provides much needed quantitative evidence on graduate internships. The research shows, that while participation in internships has not grown substantially over the last five years and the proportion that are unpaid appears to be declining, those from less-privileged backgrounds are less likely to do unpaid internships, which may act as a barrier to gaining experience in industries and occupations where these are still commonplace. While these findings suggest that some progress appears to have been made in reducing the number of unpaid internships, more could be done to further to reduce this unevenly distributed and potentially exploitative unpaid practice. For example, more could be done by employers to ensure that entry-level positions are paid and that recruitment is transparent and unbiased. HEIs have a role to play in this by ensuring that internships they promote are paid and involve formal recruitment practices. Finally, given the evidence of uneven access there are strong arguments for legislation to bring internships explicitly within minimum wage and wider employment regulations.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Defining ‘hidden’ internships in the DLHE

Hidden internships are those that might otherwise be misclassified as voluntary positions and missed in standard reporting of graduate destinations. They were defined as jobs that were reported as ‘voluntary’ but were not in the industries or occupations listed below. First, respondents who reported their employment basis as ‘voluntary’ and who were in the industries listed were excluded from the definition of hidden internships. Any remaining ‘voluntary’ works who were working in the listed professions outside of these industries were also excluded from the definition of internships. No new industries were added to the list of exclusions to the definition of hidden internships in the current analysis. However, there were a number of occupations were added to the list of exclusions where it was considered they those reporting as volunteers might genuinely be considered to be volunteering. These are highlighted yellow in the table below.

This is not an exhaustive list of industries and occupations that might be considered as ‘voluntary’, but rather just represents a list of industries and occupations excluded from the definition of interns that were found amongst graduates within the dataset.

Industries (two-digit SIC codes)
(47) Retail trade, except for motor vehicles and motorcycles
(84) Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
(85) Education
(86) Human health activities
(87) Residential care activities
(88) Social work activities
(91) Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities
Occupations (four-digit SOC codes)
(2211) Medical practitioners
(2212) Psychologists
(2215) Dental practitioners
(2216) Veterinarians
(2217) Medical radiographers
(2219) Health professionals n.e.c.
(2221) Physiotherapists
(2222) Occupational therapists
(2223) Speech and language therapists
(2229) Therapy professionals n.e.c.
(2231) Nurses

(2232) Midwives
(2311) Higher education teaching professionals
(2312) Further education teaching professionals
(2314) Secondary education teaching professionals
(2315) Primary and nursery education teaching professionals
(2316) Special needs education teaching professionals
(2317) Senior professionals of educational establishments
(2318) Education advisers and school inspectors
(2319) Teaching and other educational professionals n.e.c.
(2442) Social workers
(2443) Probation officers
(2444) Clergy
(2449) Welfare professionals n.e.c.
(3218) Medical and dental technicians
(3219) Health associate professionals n.e.c.
(3231) Youth and community workers
(3233) Child and early years officers
(3234) Housing officers
(3235) Counsellors
(3239) Welfare and housing associate professionals n.e.c.
(3311) NCOs and other ranks
(3312) Police officers (sergeant and below)
(3315) Police community support officers
(3319) Protective service associate professionals n.e.c.
(4112) National government administrative occupations
(4113) Local government administrative occupations
(4114) Officers of non-governmental organisations
(1184) Social services managers and directors
(1242) Residential, day and domiciliary care managers and proprietors
(3442) Sports coaches, instructors and officials
(3443) Fitness instructors
(5111) Farmers
(5112) Horticultural trades
(5113) Gardeners and landscape gardeners
(8231) Train and tram drivers
(9111) Farm workers
(9120) Elementary construction occupations
(9134) Packers, bottlers, canners and fillers

(9219) Elementary administration occupations n.e.c.
(9233) Cleaners and domestics
(9241) Security guards and related occupations
(9244) School midday and crossing patrol occupations
(9249) Elementary security occupations n.e.c.
(9251) Shelf fillers