

Understanding and engaging with school- and college-leavers (languages)  
Skills and experiences, attitudes, expectations, intentions and behaviours

Bespoke analysis of Hobsons' 2007 school-leaver data, commissioned by the  
Routes into Languages Steering Group

## Foreword

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This report, commissioned by the Steering Group of the Routes into Languages Programme, details the findings of research into the education-related perceptions and behaviours of school- and college-leavers in the UK. The study is centred on bespoke analysis of data collected as part of Hobsons' 2007 School-leaver survey. The aim of the study was to gain an insight into general attitudes towards languages as subjects of study, to understand how to engage effectively with school- and college-leavers as they plan their future, and to explore the particular perceptions and behaviours of prospective language undergraduates and of students who were pursuing a language qualification at school or college but who did not intend to pursue language study in higher education (HE).

Hobsons' School-leaver Talkback is an independent annual survey conducted by Hobsons in collaboration with its partner company, trendence. Now in its fourth year, the online survey is the largest of its kind, enabling analysis of the views of thousands of school- and college-leavers studying in the UK. The survey looks at school-leavers' career and education choices and, in particular, focuses on students' progression into higher education after school or college.

The 2007 survey was conducted from 8<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007, during which period a total of 15,404 school-leavers took part.

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## Executive summary: Main findings

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### Findings: Attitudes to languages

- Generally, higher education language study is envisaged to be difficult and opinions as to whether it would be enjoyable are strongly divided. Languages are considered to be quite practical subjects, and students generally do not agree that studying them would help to secure their desired career job. Overall, however, the respondents do agree that learning a language will help them get a job in any career area and that they will be able to work anywhere in the world if they study languages at university.
- There is a clear correlation between a number of the statements. A greater affinity to languages can be manifested in higher anticipated enjoyment of the subject, stronger perception that languages are practical and belief that studying them would help secure a desired career job. There is no direct correlation between anticipated difficulty of language study and the degree to which they are thought to be useful in securing a desired career job.
- Female students agree more strongly than their male peers that languages would be enjoyable to study in HE, but otherwise, there are no major differences between the sexes. Students' views appear to change progressively as they get older (from 16 to 18+), with older students demonstrating more of an affinity for language study.
- Among the different ethnic groups, White students appear to have the least affinity to languages, while the Black or Black British student group demonstrates more positive perceptions across the board. Asian or Asian British students, who, across the research series, tend to be more positive than most on perceived enjoyment, only show slight agreement that language study would be enjoyable at university.
- Perceptions of language study do not change progressively as anticipated attainment (by expected UCAS tariff) increases, although the highest achievers are more likely to agree that languages are more practical than theoretical and that they would be an enjoyable university option.
- Unsurprisingly, current (school/college) and future (university) language students are much more likely than the total sample to think that languages would be enjoyable and useful in securing their desired career job, and these variables are often greater than the equivalent variables among (eg) science students. Indeed, even where the variables are small or non-existent for the other subjects in the series, there remain significant differences between current or prospective language students and the total cohort. There is an indication that students of Spanish have a greater affinity to languages than their French or German peers.
- As agreement grows that languages would be enjoyable HE subjects to study, so does the likelihood that students will intend to take this option. Contrary to some of the other subjects, students who do not think that language study would be enjoyable do not pursue the subject in HE. Perceived difficulty does not play such a consistent part. However, as a student's conviction grows that studying language will help secure a desired career job, the likelihood of wishing to study this subject increases dramatically.

## Executive summary: Main findings

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### **Findings: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates**

- Overall, the students surveyed demonstrate high levels of confidence in their skills. Two thirds of the respondents said that they have had casual work experience and almost half said that they had work experience of a career in which they are interested. Current language students were more likely than the average student to have held a position of responsibility, to have been a member of a sports club and to have undertaken voluntary / charity work.
- The majority of the total cohort reported that they 'always knew' that they would go to university, and the current language students were even more likely to say this. Students from London were also much more likely than their peers in other regions to report this view. Over one third of current language students intend to pursue language study, with a dominance of French. Students who have studied Spanish are more likely than their French and German peers to intend to pursue HE language study. The main driver for subject choice is interest, followed by ability and then the subject's necessity for the respondent's desired career area.
- One in ten respondents said that they intend to live at home while at university, while 43% said that the distance between their university residence and their home does not matter. Students from the West Midlands or London are much more likely than students from other regions to plan to live at home. Students from the East or the South West are less likely to express this intention.
- Almost three quarters of the respondents said that they intend to fund their university study through a tuition fee loan and 67% plan to pursue part-time work. Londoners are the least likely group to plan to use government loans or personal savings, or to work part-time. Students from Yorkshire and the Humber or the North West are the least likely to intend to depend on parents.
- When asked to identify the most important university factors, almost every student pointed to good learning facilities and to good reputation for the desired course. 95% of students considered reputation for graduate employment to be important or very important but they placed less importance on competitive tuition fees.
- The majority started collecting information during year 12 (or equivalent). Over a quarter say that they began the process during Year 11. The most common resources used to find out about HE are university websites and prospectuses, although many students also report using their school / college careers service. University prospectus and websites are considered to be the most *useful* resources, but only 18% of the respondents thought that the school / college careers service was useful. Although only half of the students had been to university open days, this resource was thought to be very useful.
- Students often seek advice from their mother, although 'Dad' becomes the most important for guidance on which company to work for. Teachers are also influential, particularly for education decisions. For students in the East of England, 'Mum' is consistently a high influencer, and this contrasts with the Londoners, who are the most likely group to turn to their siblings.

## Executive summary: Main findings

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### Findings: Understanding language-oriented students

- Prospective language undergraduates are more likely than the total cohort to be female and White. They are less likely to report that they are claiming education maintenance allowance (EMA) and a greater proportion of them attend private schools. Students who do not intend to continue language study at university are also more likely to be female and White, but to a lesser degree than prospective language undergraduates. They are even less likely to report claiming EMA and even more likely to be attending a private school.
- Prospective language students are also interested in law, history, English literature and business. They are 1.9 times more likely than the average student to report an interest in studying English language, 1.7 times more likely to select leisure and tourism and 1.6 times more likely to choose history. Students who do not intend to continue with languages wish to study medicine and dentistry, law, English literature, history and mathematics. They are 1.7 times more likely than the average student to select philosophy, 1.6 times more likely to choose politics / government and 1.6 times more likely to select English literature. They are only half as likely to pick computer science.
- Like the total cohort, the subject choices of the two sub-groups are primarily motivated by their interest in the subject. However, the prospective language undergraduates are significantly more likely than the other groups to choose their subject based on perceived ability. They are also less likely than the other groups to be driven by the need to choose that subject for their desired career area but they are more motivated than their peers by the career variety and flexibility which this pathway offers.
- Looking at students from schools with specialist status, 26% of students who intend to study Spanish at university say that they attended a school with a language specialism. It is also interesting that 22% of the specialist school students who intend to pursue HE German attended a Technology College.
- The two language sub-groups are slightly (yet consistently) less likely to live at home and are less likely to be concerned by the distance between university and home. They are also slightly less likely to intend to access a maintenance loan and are more likely to seek financial support from their parents.
- There are few significant differences in the information resources used by these groups, although prospective language undergraduates are more likely than the other two groups to use recommendations / word of mouth, while students who do not intend to continue with languages at university are more likely to use national newspapers. With regard to important university factors, respondents in the language sub-groups shared the views of students generally, although there is a suggestion that they are less concerned with competitive financial packages.
- For A-level, university, career and company decisions, prospective language undergraduates tend to be more likely than the other groups to name their teachers as an important source of advice. For university decisions, they are less likely than the other groups to turn to a careers adviser. The two sub-groups analysed are less inclined than the average student to agree that their careers interviews at school were useful.

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## Section 1: Objectives, Methodology and Report Structure



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### **Objectives**

The study was conducted to provide an insight into general attitudes towards languages as subjects of study, to understand how to engage effectively with school- and college-leavers as they plan their future, and to explore the particular perceptions and behaviours of prospective language undergraduates and of students who were pursuing a language qualification at school or college but who did not intend to pursue language study in higher education.

The principal questions posed during the planning of the research were:

- How do general students perceive languages as a study discipline / career choice, and how much stronger is the affinity of language-oriented students?
- Do students of different backgrounds, situations, and experiences feel differently about studying languages? And do perceptions differ among students with different education or career-related intentions?
- How, in comparison to other student groups, do language-oriented students perceive themselves? Do students who have studied languages leave school or college with different perceived skills than other students?
- What drives students to choose a language course at university? If language students choose alternative subjects, what are the drivers or motivating factors?
- How can the higher education sector best engage with prospective language students and what university factors are important to this target group?

## Section 1: Objectives, Methodology and Report Structure

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### Methodology

It was agreed that the research objectives would be met through bespoke analysis of the data collected in Hobsons' School-leaver Talkback Survey 2007. The methods used to design and undertake the survey as a whole are detailed in the appendix. For the purposes of this project, the approach was to undertake specific analyses of the data already collected.

The analysis was made up of three strands, each of which is described below.

#### Strand 1

**Aim:** Explore general attitudes to language study among school- and college-leavers.

**Activity:** Analyse the responses of the total cohort (and of key sub-groups) to six attitude statements relating to modern foreign language study.

Question design:

In early 2007, Hobsons' researchers worked with the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority to design a series of subject-related opinion statements which could be included in the survey and which centred on six subject areas: Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), English, mathematics, ICT, science and engineering.

These statements were structured across the six subjects in the form of four statements which were common to all the subjects and two statements per subject which were used only in relation to that subject.

*Common statements:*

1. Studying this subject at university would be difficult
2. I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
3. I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
4. Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want

*Subject specific statements – Modern Foreign Languages:*

1. Learning a language will help me get a job in any career area
2. I will be able to work anywhere in the world if I study languages at university

*Subject specific statements – English:*

1. I enjoy analysing the books that I have read
2. I am good at expressing my opinions

*Subject specific statements – Mathematics:*

1. Maths is useful in any job or career
2. Learning about numbers comes naturally to me

## Section 1: Objectives, Methodology and Report Structure

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### *Subject specific statements – ICT:*

1. I enjoy learning to work with new technology
2. Understanding new technology will keep me ahead in the job market

### *Subject specific statements – Sciences:*

1. I enjoy doing experiments in laboratories at school/college
2. I will be able to make a difference to society if I study science at university

### *Subject specific statements – Engineering:*

1. Studying engineering at university will help me turn my design ideas into reality
2. I need to be good at both maths AND science to study engineering at university

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with the statements, and the five answer options available were: strongly disagree (-2), disagree (-1), neither agree nor disagree (0), agree (+1) and strongly agree (+2).

To reduce 'respondent fatigue' within the survey (and a subsequent reduction in rate and quality of response), it was decided that each respondent should not be asked about all six subjects. As such, the subjects were paired (maths and ICT, science and engineering, English and Modern Foreign Languages) and each pair was allocated randomly to one in three

respondents. The final numbers of respondents (post-data cleaning) for each set of subject statements are shown below, based on the highest statement response. The un-weighted figure is shown in brackets.

### **Modern Foreign Languages: 4117 respondents (4180)**

English: 4196 respondents (4264)

Maths: 4382 respondents (4438)

ICT: 4382 respondents (4443)

Science: 4144 respondents (4190)

Engineering: 3987 respondents (3943)

### *Analysis:*

The responses of the total cohort were examined in order to give an idea of how general students (as a whole) perceive language study. These findings were then examined in the context of the sample's responses to the attitude statements for the other five subjects, to explore the relative strength of these perceptions.

The next stage was to break down the data to explore how different variables affect the responses given. Using this method, Hobsons' researchers have been able to investigate how different student groups (e.g. male or female respondents, students of different ethnicities and ages) perceive language study, and the degree to which their perceptions converge or diverge.

## Section 1: Objectives, Methodology and Report Structure

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### Strand 2

**Aim:** Paint a picture of prospective undergraduates, including their university-related perceptions and behaviours, in order to understand how to engage with them effectively.

**Activity:** Report on the total cohort's responses to questions across the survey, and run additional analysis to uncover how these responses differ among specific groups (by region, current language students).

For this strand of the research, Hobsons' researchers looked at the responses of the total cohort (**15,385 respondents**) to all of the questions in the survey. This began with the collation of a 'sample profile', produced (and provided in the report) to outline the demographic, socioeconomic and education-related make-up of the sample in order to contextualise the responses from this group. Following this, the research team analysed the group's responses to questions across the survey, to explore:

- Perceived skills and personality types, and reported experiences
- Intentions, including higher education subject choice and drivers for these choices
- Influencers for GCSE [or equivalent], AS/A-level [or equivalent], career, university and employment decisions

- When and how higher education-related information is collected (including resources used)
- Perceptions relating to fees and funding
- Important university qualities

Where appropriate, the research team also explored how the responses differ among students from different regions, and among students who were currently studying one or more languages at school or college.

### Strand 3

**Aim:** Investigate whether (and if so, in what ways) prospective language undergraduates are particular in their perceptions and behaviours, and identify any consistent particularities of current language students who do not intend to continue with language studies at university.

**Activity:** Analyse and compare the responses of three 'target' groups of respondents.

In addition to the total cohort (**15,385 respondents**) discussed in strand 2, two sub-groups were identified:

1. Respondents who reported that they **intended to study** one or more languages at university (**877 respondents**).
2. Respondents who were **currently studying** one or more languages at school or college and who **did not intend to pursue** a language qualification at university (**1511 respondents**)

The research team analysed these groups' responses to a series of questions across the survey, looking at how they differ from each other and from the total cohort (reported on in strand 2).

### Weighting

Unless otherwise specified, all reported figures are based on data which have been weighted by gender (UK population of young people, based on data from the Office of National Statistics).

## Section 1: Objectives, Methodology and Report Structure

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### Report Structure

The main body of the report is divided into three main sections, to reflect the three strands of activity outlined above. Each of the main sections is broken down into chapters, as shown below.

- Section 2: Attitudes to languages
  - Chapter one looks at general attitudes to languages by analysing the responses of the total cohort to the six attitude statements relating to this subject. These are then compared to the responses given for the five subjects which featured in other studies in the research series. Finally, reporting on an additional level of analysis, the chapter explores the relationship between the subject statements, in order to understand, for example, how students' anticipated enjoyment of languages (statement 2) links to their belief that studying the subject would help them to secure their desired career job (statement 4).
  - Chapter two explores the language-related attitudes of key student groups by identifying how responses vary according to a series of demographic, socio-economic and academic factors. These include gender, age, ethnicity, region, qualification type and anticipated UCAS tariff.
  - Chapter three investigates the ways in which students' attitudes to languages are affected by having studied one or more languages at school or college. To put these findings into context and to understand more about language-oriented students, the differences between language students and the total cohort are then compared to the equivalent differences for the other subjects in the research series (e.g. maths students' attitudes to maths). Next, a similar exercise is undertaken for students who *intend* to study one or more languages at university, so that the extent of their 'affinity' to the subject can be measured against that of their peers who are planning to study English, maths, ICT, engineering or science. The final part of section 2 explores the relationship between students' perceptions of how enjoyable, difficult and useful (for career progression) languages are and their intention to study that subject at university.
- Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates
  - Chapter one gives a profile of the sample, including the gender, age and ethnicity breakdown, as well as factors such as most common subjects studied, qualification breakdown and proportion reporting that they claim education maintenance allowance.
  - Chapter two explores the way in which school- and college-leavers perceive themselves, in terms of their personality types and their skills, as well as looking at where they feel their best skills are / were learnt.

## Section 1: Objectives, Methodology and Report Structure

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- Chapter three reports on the intentions of the young people surveyed, beginning with when they took the decision to go to university. For those who intend to go into higher education, their intended subjects are identified, and the chapter also investigates the reasons behind these choices. After reporting on students' desired (university) distance from home, the chapter ends with a glance at fees and funding, reporting on the sources of funding which students intend to access.
- Chapter four gives a detailed insight into the university-related decision-making processes of the students surveyed. After looking into what university factors are important to students, the chapter highlights *when* and *from where* information is gathered and how useful the respondents have found the resources used. The chapter concludes with a series of findings relating to students' influencers on key education- and career-related decisions.
- Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students
  - Chapter one gives a profile of the two sub-groups, including the gender, age and ethnicity breakdown, as well as factors such as most common subjects studied, qualification breakdown and proportion reporting that they claim education maintenance allowance.
  - Chapter two shows whether (and how) the sub-groups differ from one another and from the total cohort in terms of their future intentions (subjects, funding, distance from home and study abroad) and the drivers of their subject choice (reasons for choosing subjects and specialist school attendance).
  - Chapter three focuses on the particularities and similarities of the three student groups' decision-making processes and perceptions, covering when information is collected, which resources are used (and are found useful), important university qualities and factors, and influencers.

The report has been designed for use as a quick reference tool, with data being presented for each key area researched. Where appropriate, some additional notes have been added to explain or comment on the findings.

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## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

This section focuses on an analysis of a series of subject-related attitude statements. A list of the questions, and a more detailed description of how they were included in the survey, can be found in section 1. They were designed and analysed, in collaboration with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, to give an initial insight into general attitudes towards languages, and also to explore how these attitudes change among different student groups.

The charts which follow are based on a five point scale: strongly disagree (-2), disagree (-1), neither agree nor disagree (0), agree (+1), strongly agree (+2).



## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

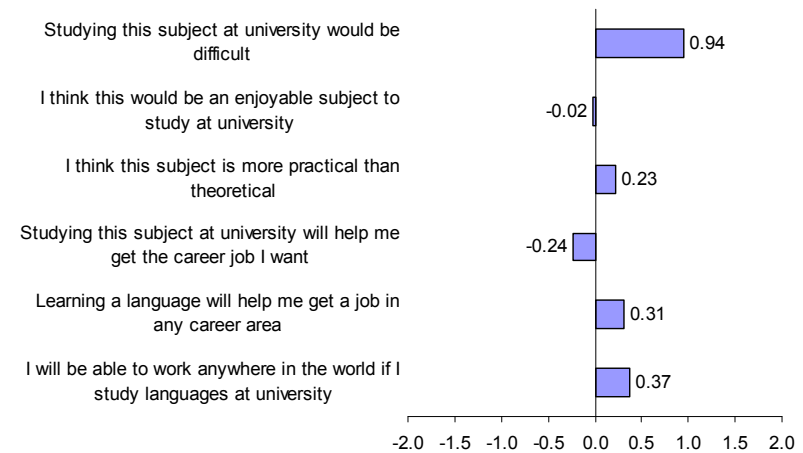
### Chapter 1: General attitudes to language study

#### Total cohort

Overall, languages are perceived to be relatively difficult subjects to study at university and only 10% of those who responded to the question said that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Although the graph might suggest that the students neither agree nor disagree that languages would be enjoyable subjects to study at university, the table overleaf shows that there is in fact a wide spread of opinion, with 40% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 37% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

The respondents tend towards the view that languages are more practical than theoretical, but they do not agree that studying HE languages would help them to get the career job they want. This said, students generally do feel that learning a language will help them get a job in any career area. There is a similar degree of agreement among the students that they would be able to work anywhere in the world if they study languages at university.

**Total cohort attitudes to languages: mean scores**



Total cohort attitudes to languages						
Attitude Statement	Base	Strongly disagree (-2)	Disagree (-1)	Neither agree nor disagree (0)	Agree (+1)	Strongly agree (+2)
		%	%	%	%	%
Studying this subject at university would be difficult	4096	3.0	7.3	15.5	40.5	33.6
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university	4117	14.9	22.2	22.7	29.8	10.4
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical	3906	6.1	19.9	30.5	32.2	11.3
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want	4036	16.1	28.4	27.3	20.2	8.1
Learning a language will help me get a job in ay career area	4062	7.3	18.3	24.9	35.0	14.4
I will be able to work anywhere in the world if I study languages at university	4036	4.1	20.4	23.8	38.2	13.6

## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

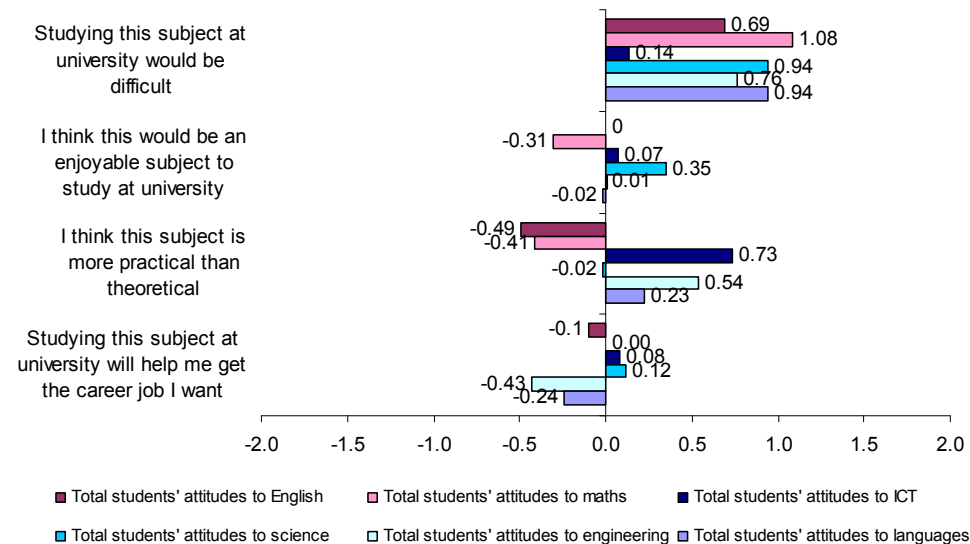
### Comparison with general attitudes to other subjects

Many of these findings have the most significance when compared to the responses of the students who were asked the same question of other subjects. This is shown in the graph below, whereby, for example, the dark blue bar relates to general students' attitudes to ICT and the pink bar corresponds to general students' attitudes to maths.

Generally, all six university subjects are perceived to be difficult, and while languages are among the most difficult, agreement with this statement in relation to ICT is significantly weaker. The students overall do not envisage

that maths would be an enjoyable HE subject, while the reverse is true for science. While ICT, engineering and languages are considered to be more practical subjects, English and maths are seen to be theoretical, and science falls relatively near the mid point. It is also interesting to note that, of all the HE study subjects except engineering, languages are the least likely to be seen to help secure the respondents' desired career jobs.

**Total cohort attitudes to subjects: comparison**



## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

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### The relationship between the statements

In the course of research across all six subject studies, it became apparent that there are clear correlations between some of the four common statements. Analysis was conducted in order to gain precise information about the relationship between the statements, for each subject, and what this means in the context of student attitudes to languages. From this work, it has been possible to explore the 'affinity' that some students have towards the subject, and to understand both how it is manifested in their responses to the attitude statements and how it compares to students' affinities (or otherwise) to other subjects. This analysis has confirmed the following:

1. The more difficult that students envisage HE language study to be:
  - a. the less likely they are to think that it would be enjoyable to study at university;
  - b. the less likely they are to believe that studying this subject at university will help them get the career job they want.
2. The more enjoyable that students expect HE language study to be:
  - a. the less difficult they perceive it to be;
  - b. the more practical they perceive it to be;
  - c. the more likely they are to believe that studying this subject will help them get the career job they want.
3. The more practical that students perceive language subjects to be:
  - a. the more likely they are to think that it would be enjoyable to study at university;
  - b. the more likely they are to believe that studying this subject at university will help them get the career job they want.
4. The more strongly they agree that studying languages at university will help them get the career job they want:
  - a. the less difficult they perceive it to be as a university study subject;
  - b. the more likely they are to think that it would be enjoyable at HE level;
  - c. the more practical they perceive it to be

There is no apparent correlation between anticipated difficulty of HE language study and belief that studying the subject will help to secure a desired career job.

Based on this, and our interpretation of the overall findings, it is appropriate to speak of a student's 'affinity' to languages, and to say that the stronger their agreement that the subject would be enjoyable and that it would be useful in securing a career job, and the stronger their disagreement that HE language study would be difficult, the greater their 'affinity' to the subject.

## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

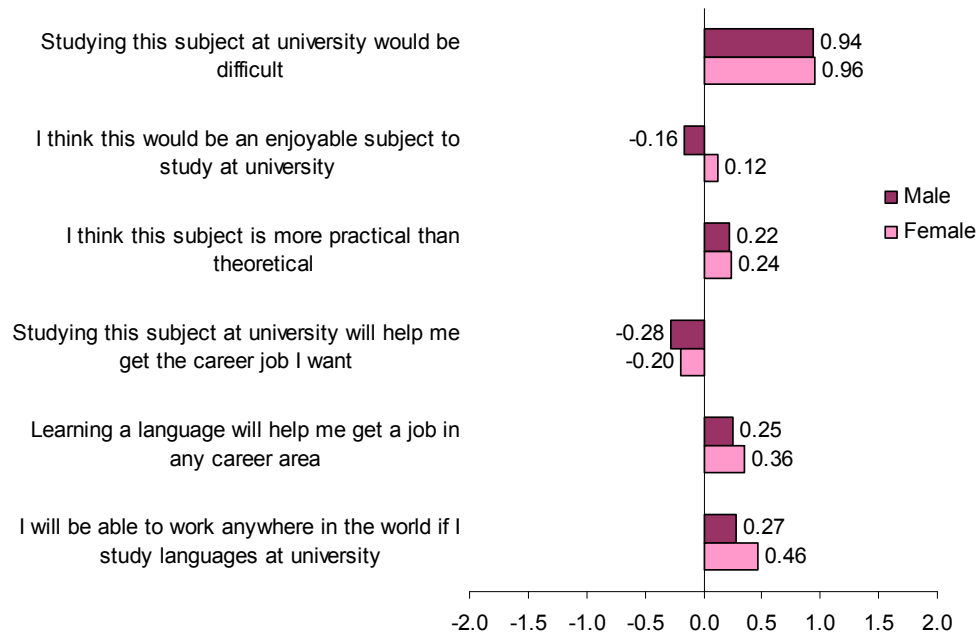
### Chapter 2: Attitudes to languages among key groups

#### Gender

The most significant finding here is that female students generally feel that languages would be enjoyable to study at university, while male students disagree with the statement. There also appears to be greater appreciation among female students of the value of learning a language, although these differences are less significant than one might expect.

Much greater contrasts were found with subjects such as maths (greater affinity among male students) and English (more positive perceptions among female students).

**Attitudes to language study (mean scores by gender)**



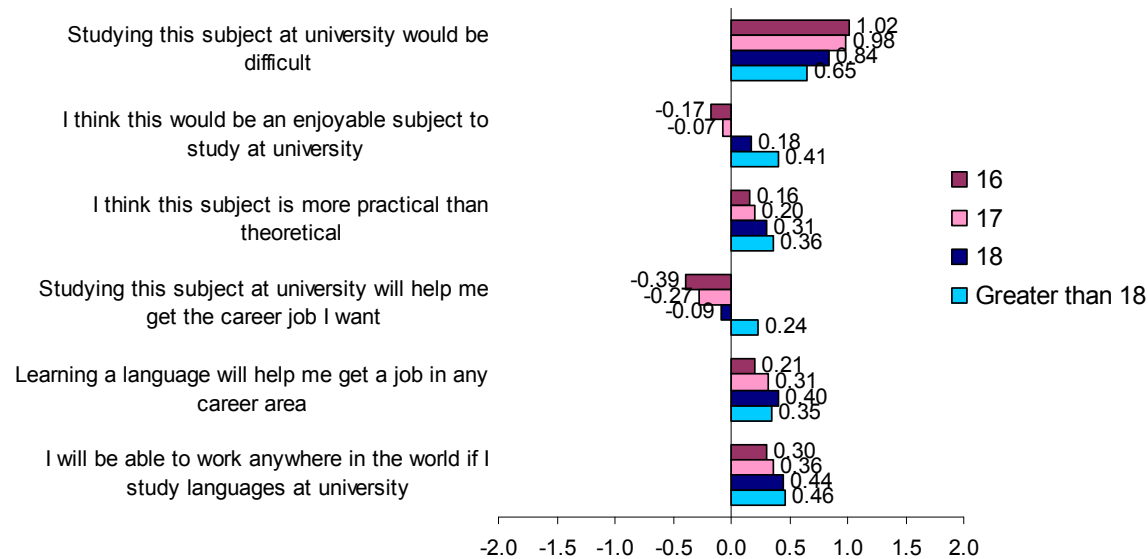
## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Age

It is very interesting that, across five of the six statements, students' views appear to change progressively as they get older. Although languages are envisaged to be difficult subjects to study at university, this view is held less strongly among the older students. Similarly, while the younger students do not tend to see the career-related value of studying languages at university, the over 18-year-olds disagree with this view.

As students get older, they feel marginally more strongly that languages are a more practical subject and are also slightly more likely to see the international job opportunities related to studying languages. Unsurprisingly in the light of these findings, as students get older, they also begin to feel that languages would be an enjoyable discipline to pursue at university.

**Attitudes to language study (mean scores by age)**



## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

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### Region

Students living in different English regions do have different perceptions of language study, although there are few significant, consistent trends. As is shown in the table below, the students from London or the South East are more likely than the other groups to believe that language study would be enjoyable, and their responses to many of the other statements, although not drastically different, do suggest a slightly greater affinity to the subject.

Attitudes to language study (mean scores by region)									
Statement	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Studying this subject at university would be difficult	1.2	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.9
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university	-0.2	-0.2	0.1	-0.3	0.0	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.0
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want	-0.5	-0.3	-0.1	-0.3	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-0.3
Learning a language will help me get a job in any career area	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
I will be able to work anywhere in the world if I study languages at university	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5
<i>Base (average, across the six statements)</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>429</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>273</i>	<i>706</i>	<i>402</i>	<i>245</i>	<i>160</i>

## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

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### **Ethnicity**

When broken down by ethnic groupings, the data yield some interesting findings. Looking across attitudes to all six subjects, Asian or Asian British students tend to be more positive about how enjoyable the subjects would be to study at university, and, along with Black or Black British students, they show a consistently weaker agreement than the other groups that the subjects would be difficult to study at HE level. The White students, on the other hand, are the group which is generally most negative about how enjoyable the subjects would be, and are also consistently less likely than most to feel that studying the subjects at university would help them secure their desired career job.

With specific regard to languages, of all the groups analysed, it is the white students who appear to have the least 'affinity' to the subject. They show the strongest agreement that the subject would be difficult in higher education and are the only group to disagree that it would be enjoyable to study languages at university.

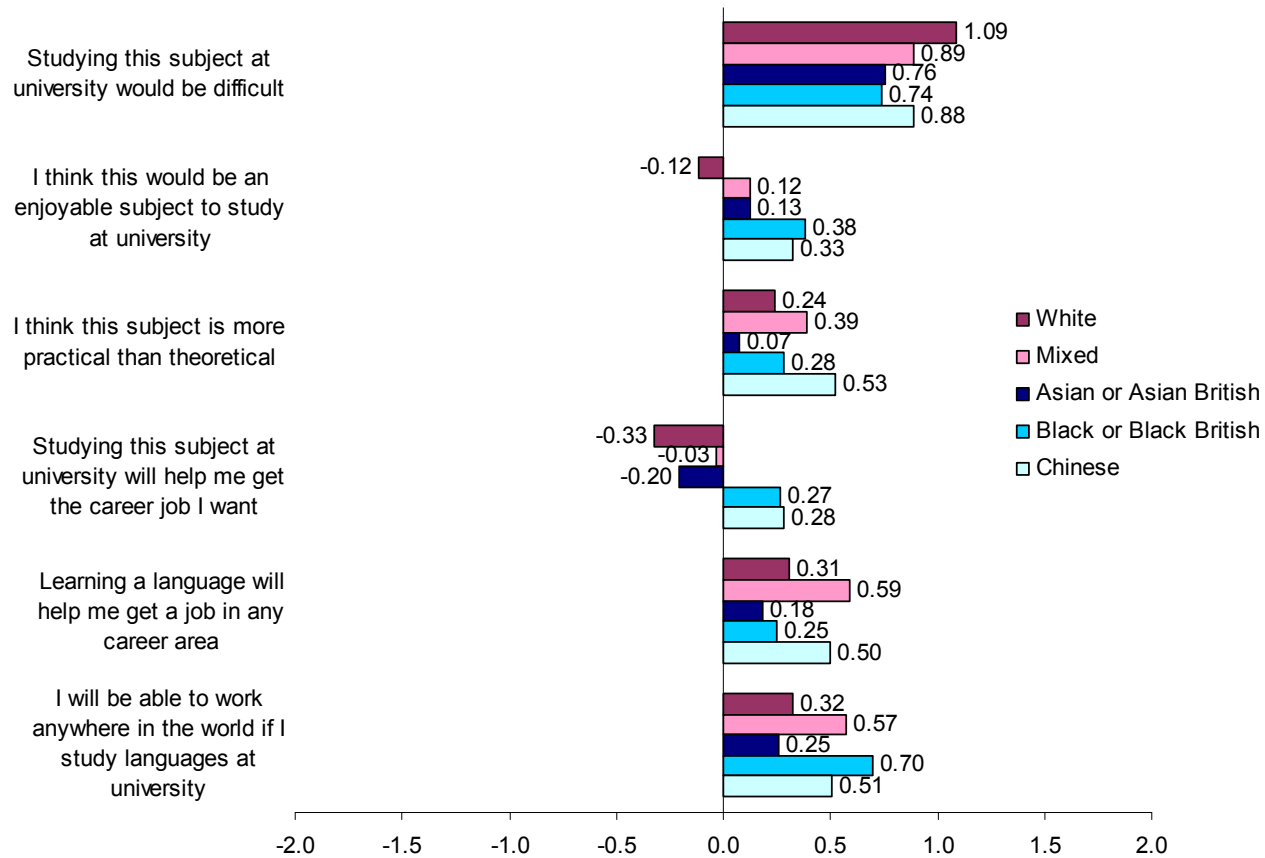
Perhaps even more revealing is the finding that they, along with the Asian or Asian British students, disagree that studying languages at university will help them to secure their desired career job. The Black or Black British student group demonstrates more positive perceptions across the board, including

the strongest agreement on anticipated enjoyment of the subject and, along with the Chinese respondents, on the value of the subject in securing a desired career job.

It is interesting that the Asian or Asian British students, who, across the research series, tend to be more positive than most on perceived enjoyment, only show slight agreement that language study would be enjoyable at university.

## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

**Attitudes to language study (mean scores by ethnicity)**

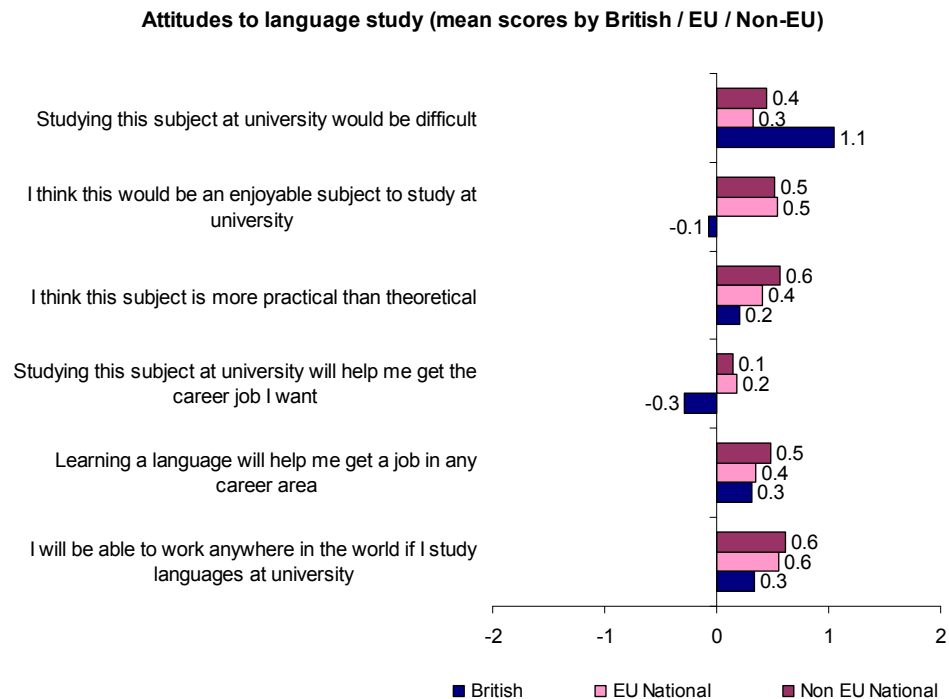




## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Nationality

The graph below demonstrates the notable (if perhaps unsurprising) differences in perceptions between British and 'non-British' school-leavers in the UK. EU Nationals (non UK) and non-EU nationals show a more positive affinity to languages; they perceive them to be less difficult and more enjoyable as subjects of study and also see them as more practical. Their appreciation of the value of languages is shown particularly strongly in their belief that studying languages at university would help them to secure their desired career job.

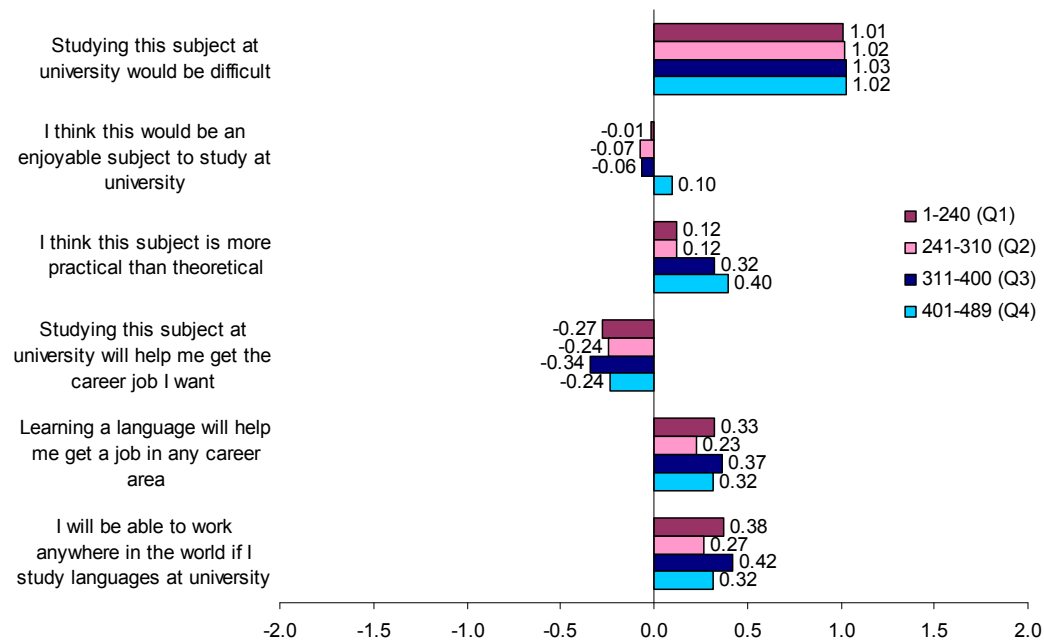


## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Expected UCAS tariff band

In the graph below, the respondents' anticipated UCAS scores have been grouped into four categories, which are based on percentiles (25%, 50%, 75%, 100%) to reflect the expected attainment levels which students report. Interestingly, there is no trend which sees progression towards a particular view point from the lowest to the highest attainment group.

**Attitudes to language study (mean scores by anticipated UCAS tariff)**



## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Chapter 3: The impact of subjects studied and future subject intentions on attitudes to languages

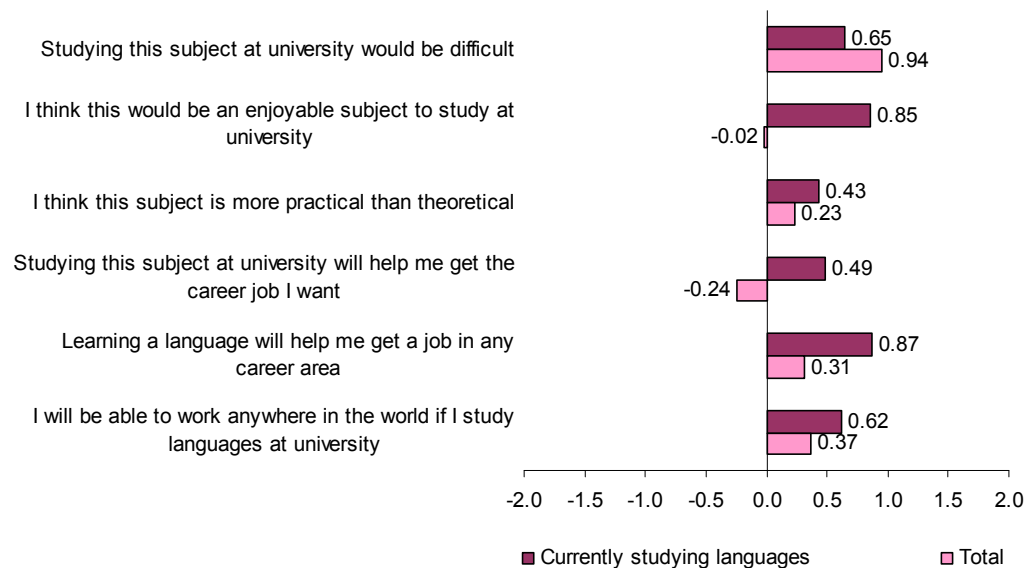
#### Attitudes to languages among current language students

The first chart below depicts the perceptions of students who are currently studying a language qualification, as well as demonstrating how they differ from the total cohort. For the 'current study subject' question, respondents could select as many options as they felt appropriate.

Overall, as one would expect, students who are currently studying one or more languages demonstrate a greater affinity for the subject. They envisage

that HE language study would be less difficult and they agree very strongly that it would be enjoyable (compared to slight disagreement from the total cohort) and that it would be a valuable route to their desired career job.

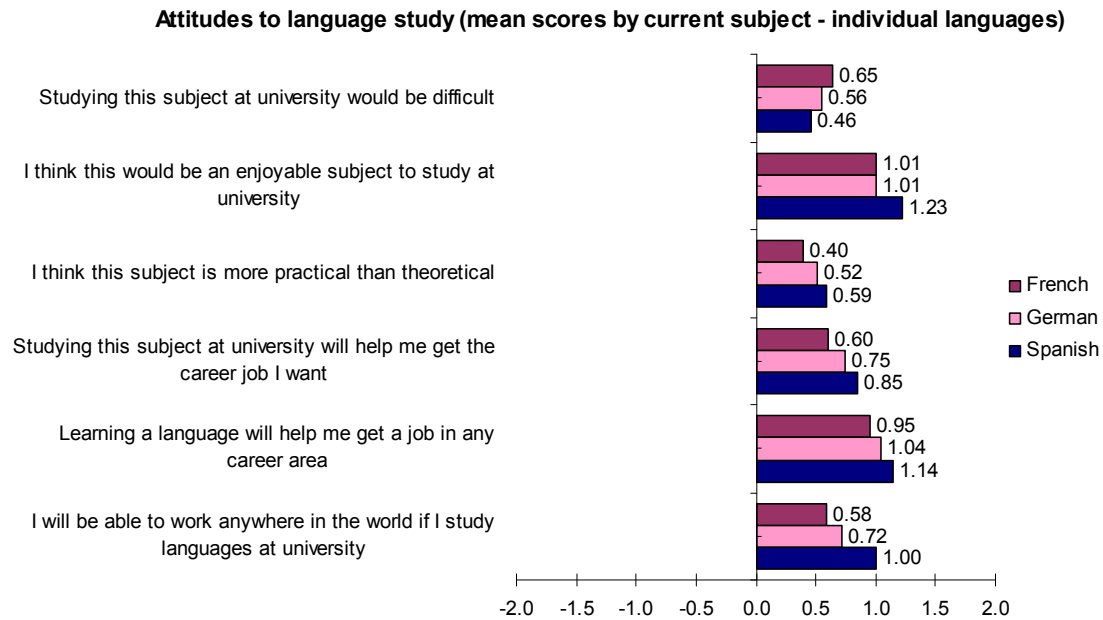
**Attitudes to language study (mean scores: currently studying languages vs. total cohort)**



## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

The second chart gives a breakdown of the perceptions among students studying the most common of the language subjects. Generally, these groups are very similar in their responses, although there is an indication that the 'Spanish students' have a slightly greater affinity to languages than those

who are studying French or German. Although the variables concerned are small, the trend is consistent across all of the statements. (It was decided that the samples of respondents who responded to this question and who were studying Italian, Russian or Portuguese were too small for use here.)



## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

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### **Comparison with other subjects (and students studying those subjects)**

It is unsurprising that, generally, students who are currently studying languages are more predisposed to having 'positive' perceptions of languages (i.e. more enjoyable, less difficult, higher career job influence). Perhaps more revealing is the relative strength of the perceptions, in comparison to the equivalent attitudes towards other subjects (e.g. maths students' attitudes to maths). This is portrayed in the two graphs overleaf.

The main graph focuses on students currently studying one of the key subjects and examines their attitudes to the *corresponding* subject. For example, the dark blue bar relates to attitudes towards ICT among students who are currently studying ICT, while the pink bar illustrates the maths-related perceptions of students currently studying maths. The smaller graph, which also appears on page 18, shows the responses of the *total cohort* to the subjects.

Examined together, these graphs show a number of interesting findings. Firstly, with regard to perceived difficulty (statement 1), it is evident that those who are currently studying languages are less likely than the total cohort to envisage that it would be a difficult subject to study at HE level. The margin, or the difference, between the current language students and the total cohort is -0.29 and is significantly larger than the equivalent margins for students studying science and students studying ICT, which see a variable of -0.04. It could perhaps therefore be argued that studying

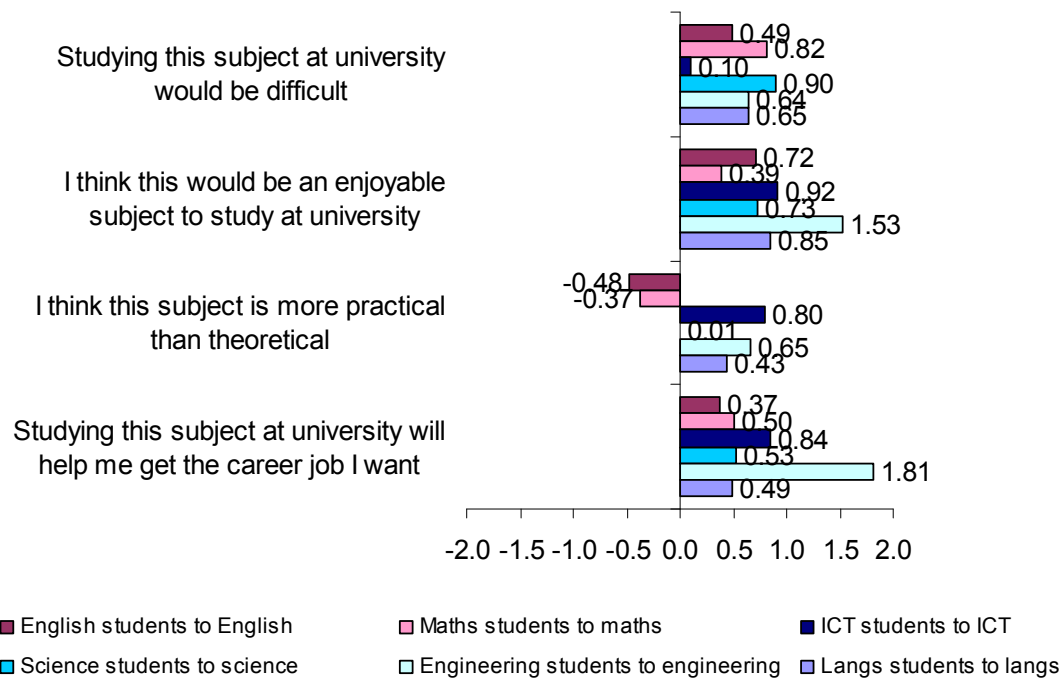
languages at school or college makes students perceive that continuing these studies in higher education would be less difficult, while the same cannot really be said for ICT and science. A similar finding comes when looking at how practical (or theoretical) language studies are perceived to be. While for all the other five subjects, there is no major change, students who are currently studying languages consider them to be even more practical (+0.2) than students in general do.

There are even more significant variations concerning the 'enjoyment' and 'career job' statements. Language students are more likely than the total cohort to think that higher language study would be enjoyable, and the size of the variable is very similar for attitudes to ICT, English and maths. (As might be expected, students studying engineering are significantly more likely than the total cohort to think that engineering would be an enjoyable subject to study at university, while the difference between science students and the total cohort is smaller than for all of the other subjects).

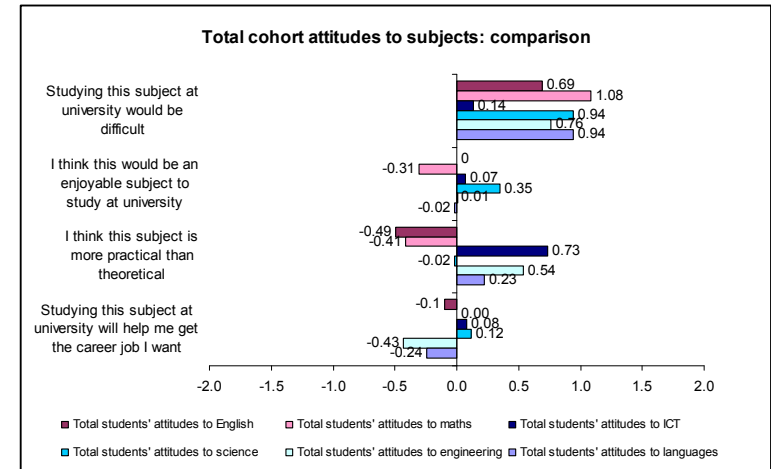
Predictably, students currently studying languages are also more likely (+0.73) to believe that studying languages at university will help them secure the career job they want, and, based on these data, the extent of their agreement with this statement is similar to the other students' attitudes to their corresponding subjects, with the exception of engineering, which is significantly higher (+2.24).

## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

**Attitudes to subjects (among students pursuing that subject): comparison**



**Total cohort attitudes to subjects: comparison**



Larger version shown on page 18.

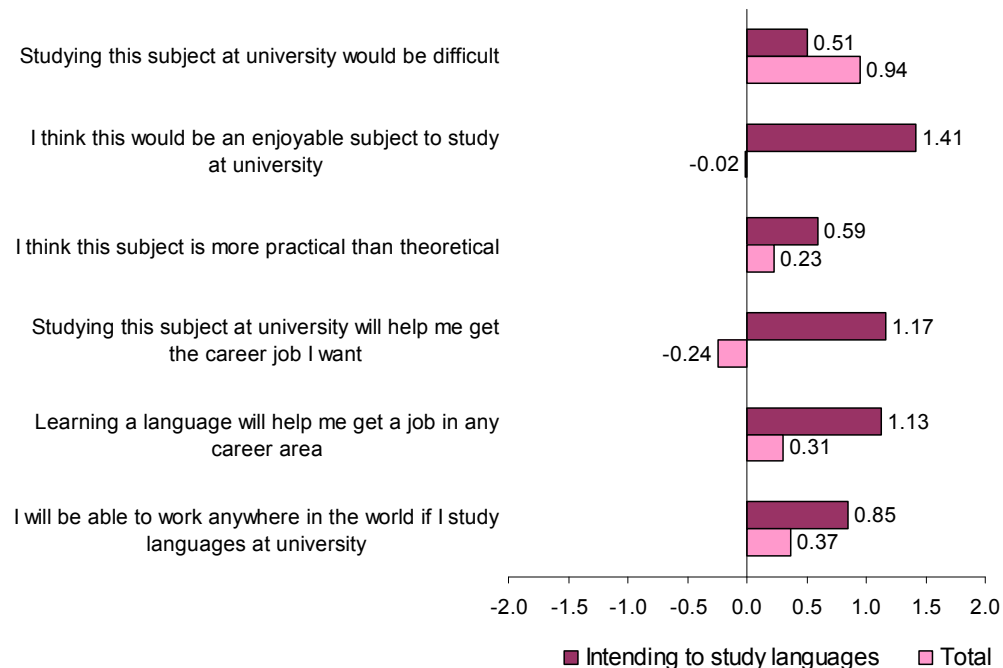
## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Attitudes to languages among prospective language students

This part of the analysis focuses on the attitudes of students who intend to study languages at university, and compares their responses with those of the total cohort. It is unsurprising (and reassuring!) that students who plan to study languages at university, compared with the total cohort, think that language study would be less difficult, much more enjoyable and significantly more useful in securing a desired career job.

They also feel more strongly than the total sample that the subject is more practical than theoretical, and they agree strongly that studying languages will lead to diverse and international career opportunities.

**Attitudes to languages study (mean scores: intending to study languages vs. total cohort)**

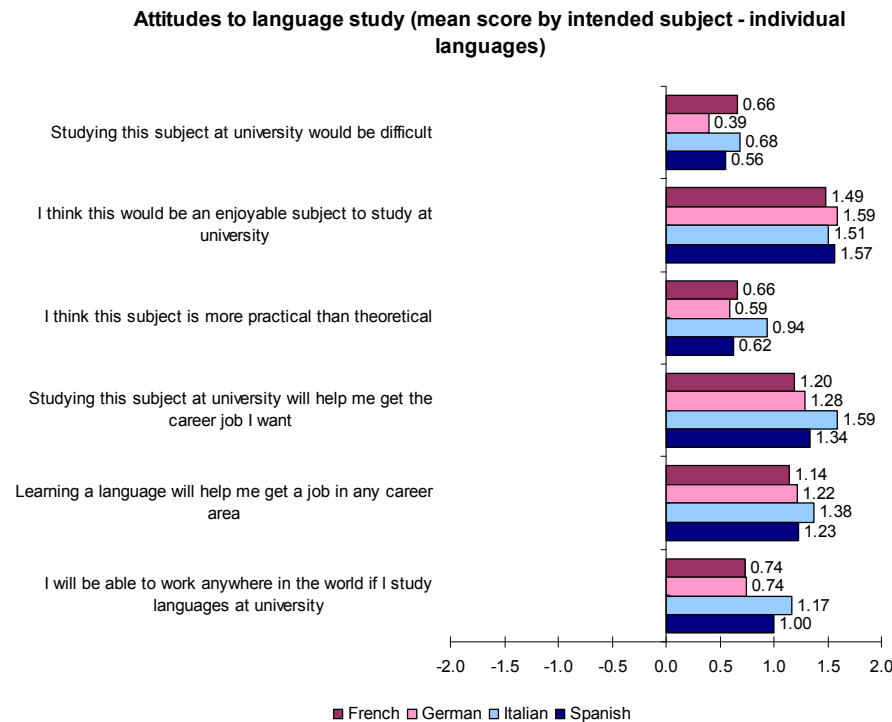


## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

This second graph breaks down the languages group into separate language studies, to demonstrate how perceptions differ among students who are intending to study specific languages at university. (For this break, the samples were sufficiently high to include students intending to study Italian).

These data indicate that the prospective German students are the group which agrees least strongly that studying languages at university would be difficult. It is the Italian-destined students who agree most strongly that

languages are more practical than theoretical, and they also feel strongly that studying languages at university will help them secure their desired career job. Their affinity to the subject is also reflected in the extent of their agreement that learning or studying languages will help them get a job in any career area and will allow them to work anywhere in the world.





## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

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### **Comparison with other subjects (and students intending to study those subjects)**

Similarly to the 'current studies' work above, analysis has been undertaken to assess the relative strength of the perceptions of prospective language students, in comparison with the equivalent attitudes towards the other subjects analysed (e.g. prospective maths students' attitudes to maths). This is portrayed in the two graphs below. The main graph focuses on students intending to study one of the key subjects and examines their attitudes to the *corresponding* subject. For example, the dark blue bar relates to attitudes towards ICT among ICT students who are intending to study ICT, while the pink bars examine the maths-related perceptions of students planning to pursue a maths degree. The smaller graph, which also appears on page 18, shows the responses of the *total cohort* to the subjects. Examined together, these graphs show a number of interesting findings.

Similarly to the findings relating to students currently studying the subject concerned (page 29), the differences between the perceptions of prospective language students and students generally are mostly apparent for statements two (enjoyment) and four (career job), although the variations in the other two statements also merit some discussion. The first point to note is that students intending to study languages expect this discipline to be less difficult than the total cohort does (with a difference in mean score of -0.43), and this trend is also reflected for maths (-0.53). In contrast, there is no significant variable for ICT, engineering or science, indicating that,

irrespective of students' intention to study the subject in higher education, engineering and science are thought to be relatively hard subjects, while ICT is perceived as significantly less difficult.

Analysis of statement three shows that students who intend to study languages at university are more likely than students generally (+0.36) to consider language studies to be more practical than theoretical. This variable is the largest of all of the subject variables for this statement, and contrasts most dramatically with English (-0.01) and maths (-0.04), whereby the fact of intending to study that subject at university does not alter the perception that it is more theoretical than practical.

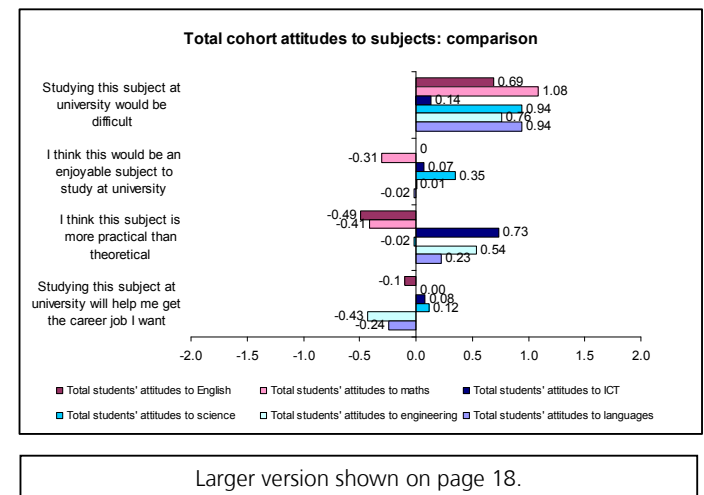
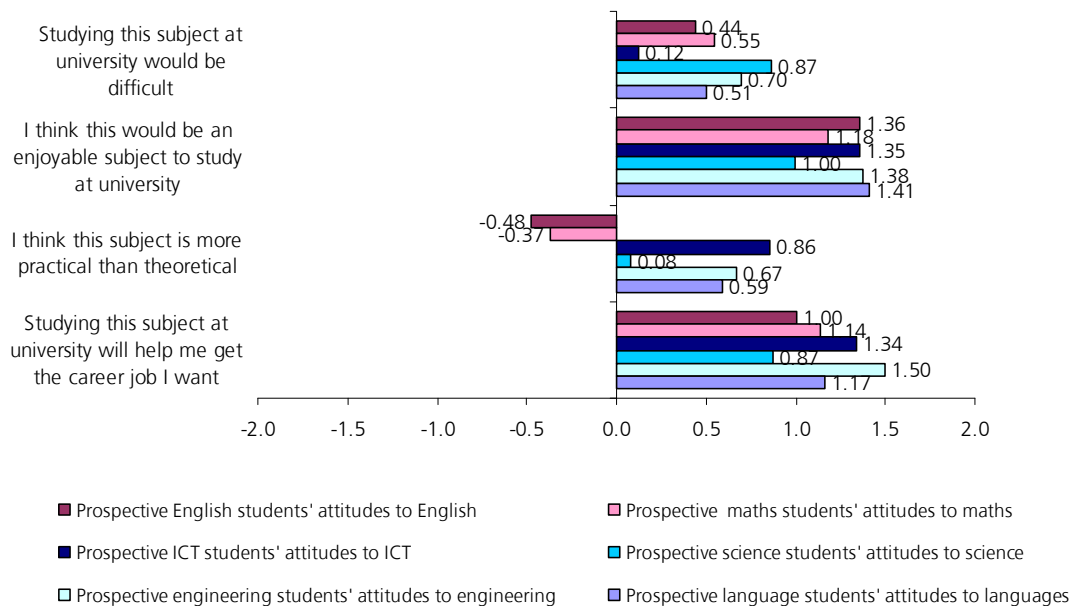
Looking at statement two, it is unsurprising that students intending to study languages at university are even more likely to perceive it to be an enjoyable subject to study in higher education (+1.43), and there is a similar pattern for all of the subjects in the series. This said, the equivalent variable for science is by some way the lowest (+0.65), suggesting that the intended science students do not differ from the total cohort to the same extent as their peers who plan to study maths, English, languages, ICT and engineering. It is important to note, however, that the total cohort of students generally does indicate positive agreement that science would be enjoyable (compared, for example, to maths, which is not at all perceived to be enjoyable among

students generally), and this can be partly explained by the fact that a large proportion of the survey sample intend to study subjects such as medicine and dentistry and biology.

Students who say that they plan to study languages at university are much more likely than respondents generally (+1.41) to think that studying

languages will help them to secure their desired career job. Again, science is the subject for which the least movement takes place (+0.75), and there are also smaller shifts for English (+1.01), maths (+1.14) and ICT (+1.26). The engineering students show the greatest movement (+1.93).

**Attitudes to subjects (among students intending to study that subject): comparison**



Larger version shown on page 18.

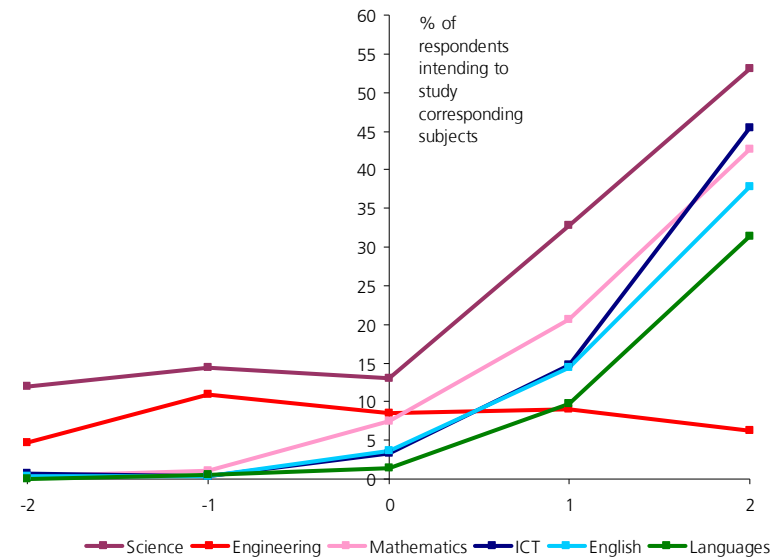
## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Relationship between a students' enjoyment of languages and intention to study the subject at university

The graph below takes each of the scores (-2 to +2) for the enjoyment statement and, for each score, plots the proportion of respondents who intend to study that subject at university. For example, 12% of the students who said they strongly disagree (-2) that science would be enjoyable intend to study science at university, while 53% of the respondents who strongly agreed (+2) with the statement intend to study science at university. The line drawn can then be compared to the equivalent line for the other subjects. By analysing the data in this way, it is possible to explore how perceived enjoyment impacts on intended uptake of a subject.

The graph indicates that, as agreement grows that languages would be enjoyable to study at university, so does the likelihood that students will intend to take languages. Only a minute proportion of respondents who disagree with the statement (0.5% of those who disagree and 0% of those who strongly disagree) say that they intend to take the subject, and only 1.4% of students who neither agree nor disagree plan to study a language qualification at university. A similar pattern emerges for take-up of English and ICT, but this trend contrasts with engineering, where there is no direct pattern, and with science, where a relatively high proportion even of those who disagree do actually intend to study science in higher education.

"I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university"  
(Perceived enjoyment and intended up-take)

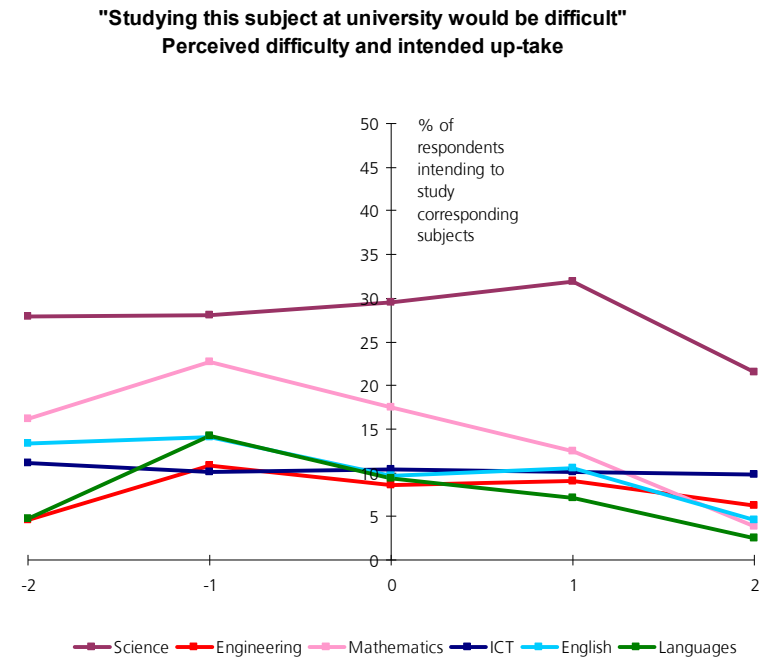


## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Relationship between how difficult a student perceives HE language study to be and intention to study the subject at university

Applying the method above to the statement relating to perceived difficulty of languages gives an idea of how this might affect uptake, and explores further how difficult language studies are perceived to be among prospective language students.

Generally speaking, as the perceived difficulty of languages grows, the likelihood of uptake is reduced, although the curve is not particularly steep. As shown, there is a sharper curve for mathematics, whereby likelihood of take-up decreases more significantly with the perception that it would be difficult. All of this said, looking at the languages data, there is no corresponding trend for disagreement with the statement (i.e. perception that languages would be easy). A relatively high proportion (14.2%) of the respondents who disagree (-1) with the statement still plan to take the subject, while a smaller proportion (4.7%) of the respondents who *strongly* disagree also have this intention. Interestingly, this trend also emerges for all of the other subjects, with the exception of ICT.

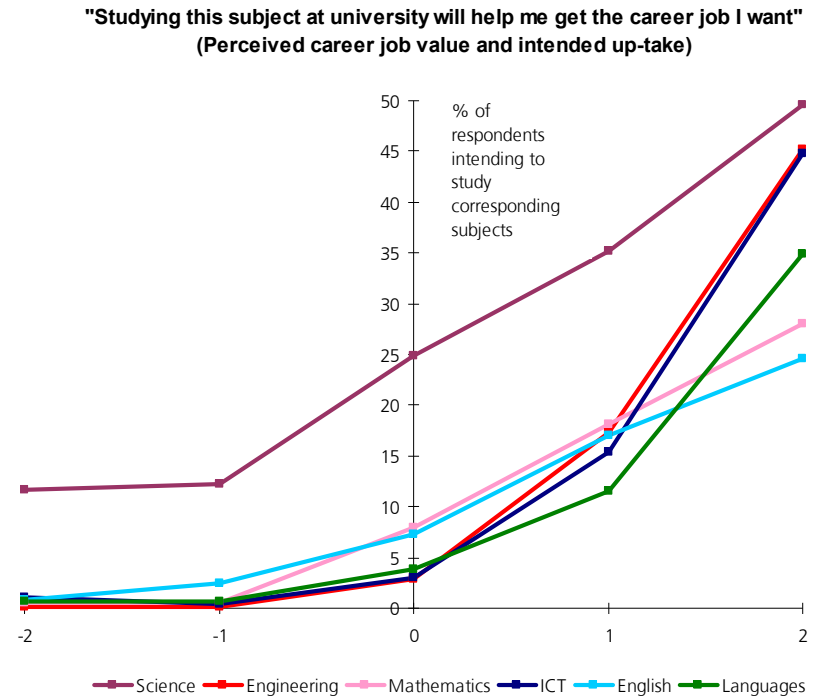


## Section 2: Attitudes to languages

### Relationship between the belief that studying HE languages will help to secure a desired career job and intention to study the subject at university

For the chart below, the same method has been applied, this time to the career job statement. This is an important chart, as it demonstrates the degree to which intended uptake of languages relates to the perception that a languages degree will help to secure successful and appropriate entry into the workforce.

Here, the steep languages curve to the right of the y axis indicates that, as a student's conviction (that studying languages will help to secure a desired career job) grows, the likelihood of intending to study this subject increases dramatically. While only 0.7% of respondents who disagree (and the same proportion of those who strongly disagree) with the statement intend to study languages at university, 11.5% of those who agree, and 34.9% of those who strongly agree, do plan to pursue an HE language qualification. This trend is even stronger for ICT and engineering, while the same can not be said for English and maths, for which the curve is much less steep.



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

This section of the report details the responses of the total cohort to questions across Hobsons' 2007 school-leaver survey. The first chapter features a sample profile, which can be used to better understand the group of students surveyed and therefore to contextualise their responses to the survey questions.

A full list of the survey questions analysed as part of this project is included in the appendix.

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Chapter 1: Demographic and academic profile

The three charts below give a breakdown of the sample of students surveyed.

Demographic Profile	Total students (%)
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	51
Female	49
base	15012
<b>Age</b>	
16	32
17	32
18	32
Greater than 18	4
base	15108
<b>Region</b>	
South East	23
London	14
South West	13
North West	10
East Midlands	7
West Midlands	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	6
Wales	4
North East	5
Northern Ireland	4
East of England	5
Scotland	3
base	9986
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	78
Asian or Asian British	12
Chinese	3
Mixed	2
Black or Black British	4
base	9606
<b>Education Maintenance Allowance</b>	
No	65
Yes £30 per week	25
Yes £10 per week	5
Yes £20 per week	5
base	10180

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

Academic profile	Total (%)	
<b>Current activity</b>		
Studying	95	
On a gap year/year out	2	
Other Work	2	
Other	1	
Working for a company on a training/apprenticeship programme	1	
Unemployed	0	
base		14990
<b>Current school type</b>		
6th Form College	51	
Fee Paying Private School (independent)	13	
State Secondary School (no fees)	17	
Grammar School (Selective/no fees)	10	
Further Education (FE) College	7	
School outside the UK	1	
Academy	1	
base		14178
<b>Specialist school</b>		
Yes	35	
No	65	
base		10135
<b>Current year of study</b>		
Year 12 /1st year of 6th form or FE College /Secondary 5 (Scotland)	63	
Year 13 /2nd year of 6th form or FE College /Secondary 6	29	
Year 11 (or equivalent)	3	
Other	3	
Year 14 (Northern Ireland)		1
base		14726

Academic profile	Total (%)	
<b>Current qualifications</b>		
AS levels	64	
A levels	34	
AS levels in applied subjects	6	
Vocational qualification (eg NVQ, BTEC)	5	
GCSEs	4	
Other	4	
A levels in applied subjects	3	
Scottish higher/ Higher stills	2	
Not currently studying	2	
Advanced extension award	1	
GCSEs in vocational subjects	1	
GNVQs	1	
Scottish Advanced highers	1	
Extended projects	0	
base		13028
<b>Expected UCAS tariff band</b>		
1-240 (Q1)	33	
241-310 (Q2)	23	
311-400 (Q3)	30	
401-489 (Q4)	13	
base		7521
<b>Current subject (top 6)</b>		
Mathematics	41	
Biological Sciences (inc. Biology)	30	
Chemistry	26	
English Literature, Classics and related	23	
Physics	21	
Psychology	19	
base		14383



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

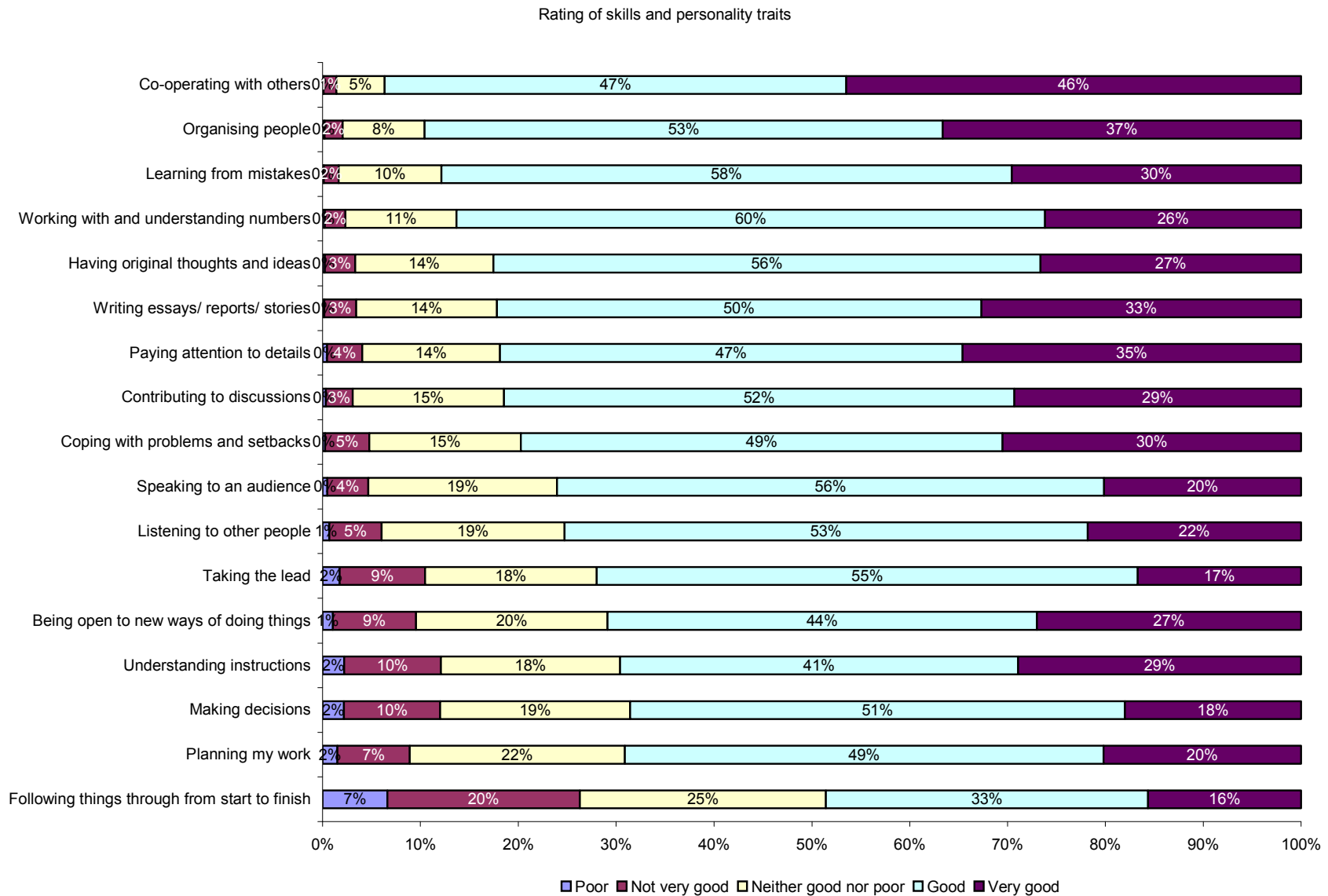
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### **Chapter 2: Perceived skills, personality types and experience**

#### **Perceived skills**

The graph overleaf suggests that, on the whole, students have relatively high levels of confidence in their skills. They are particularly likely to consider themselves to be good or very good at co-operating with others, organising people, learning from mistakes and working with or understanding numbers. They are however significantly less likely to consider themselves to be good at following things through from start to finish and, to a lesser degree, making decisions and planning their work.

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates



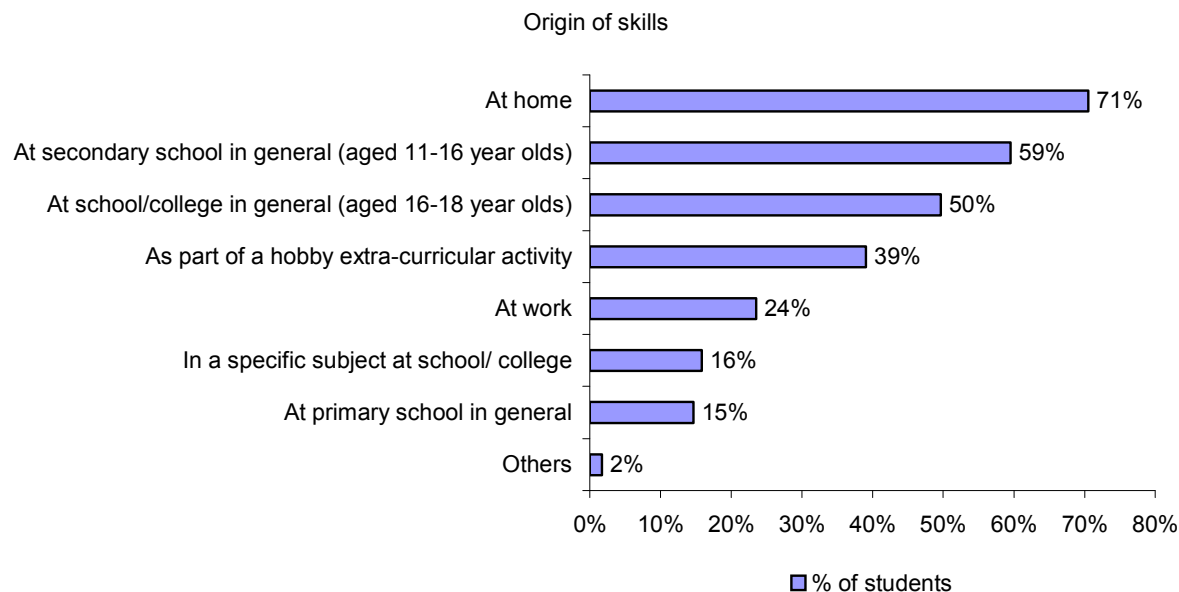
## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Skills development

For this question, the respondents were asked to report where they feel they mainly learned their 'best skills'. They could select up to three of the answer options available.

Approximately one in four of the total respondents selected 'at work'.

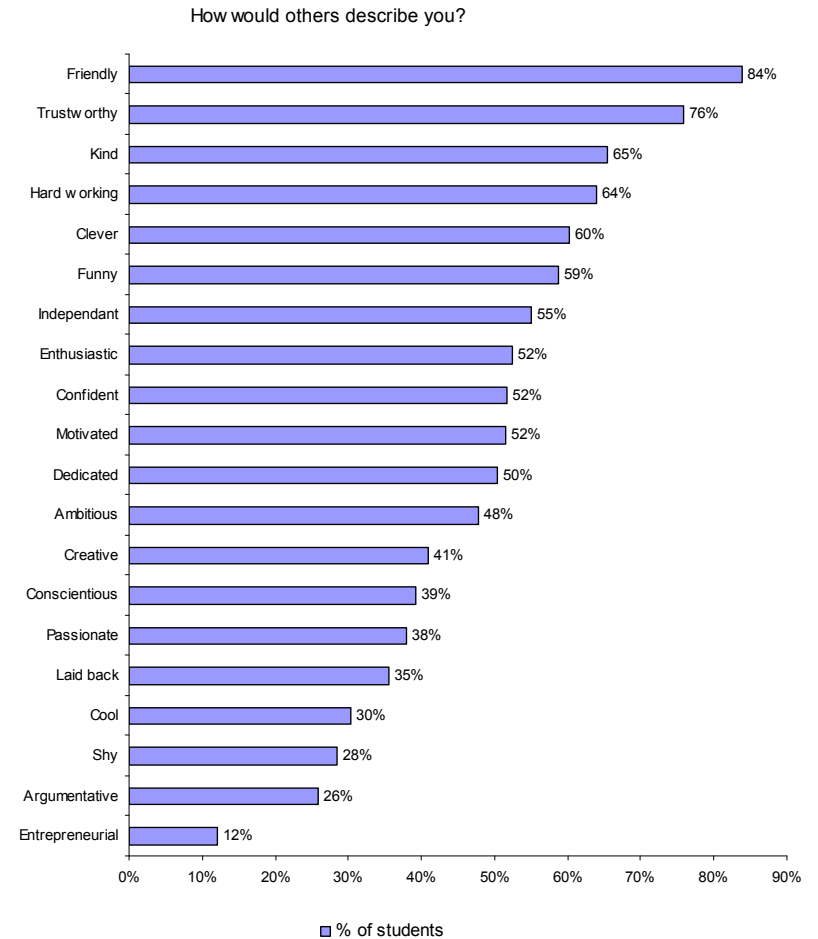
It is clear that students most readily report that they learned their best skills either at home or, to a lesser degree, at school. They are much less likely to feel that they learned them at primary school or in a specific subject at school or college.



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Personality types

Next, students were asked how they think other people would describe them. The most common responses among the total sample are 'friendly', 'trustworthy' and kind, and by far the least reported characteristic is 'entrepreneurial'. It is thought that this latter finding may be attributed, at least in part, to students' limited familiarity with the term, since many of the students do consider themselves to be 'creative'.



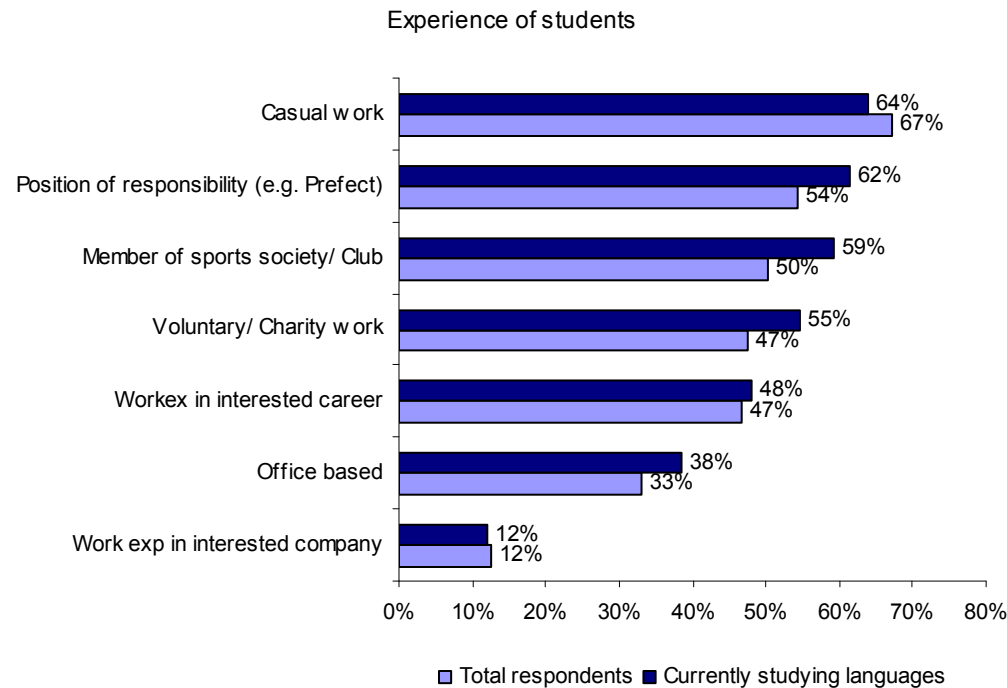
## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Experience

The respondents were asked to indicate which types of experiences they have had or have undertaken. The graph below demonstrates that students generally are most likely to have experienced casual work and to have had a position of responsibility, while they are least likely to have had work experience in a company for which they are interested in working, as well as office-based work experience.

It is encouraging that almost half of the students surveyed had undertaken work experience in a career area in which they are interested.

Current language students are more likely to have held a position of responsibility, to have been a member of a sports society / club and to have undertaken voluntary / charity or office-based work.



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

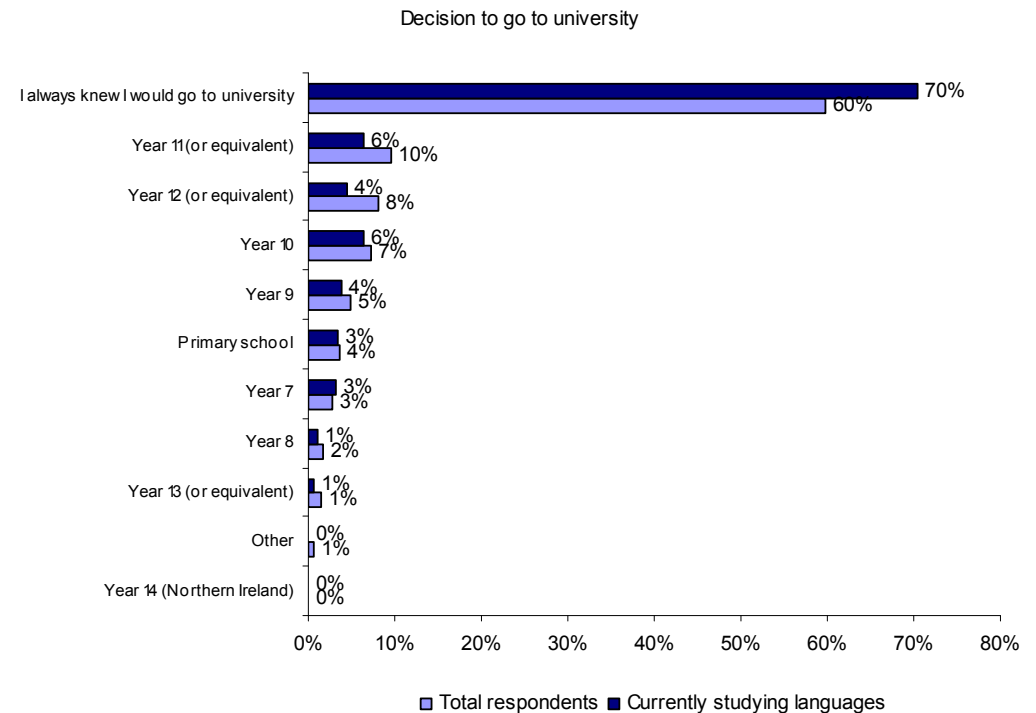
### Chapter 3: Future intentions and drivers of choice

#### Decision to go to university

Over 70% of the respondents in the survey reported that they intended to go to university after completing their current course. These students were then asked when they had taken the decision to enter higher education. As shown in the graph below, six in ten respondents reported that they 'always knew' that they would go to university. This reflects the anecdotal evidence about students' choices after school and college, and may indicate that many students are not actively taking a decision to go, or weighing up the merit of alternative pathways.

These findings contrast with research into the decisions of students intending to go straight into work, who tend to report taking the decision at a much later stage.

The graph also demonstrates that students who are currently studying one or more languages at school or college are even more likely (70% versus 60%) than the total cohort to say that they always knew that they would go to university.



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Decision to go to university (regional trends)

When the research team grouped the respondents by the region in which they live, and compared the responses of these groups, it became apparent that there are differences in the timing of students' decision to go to university. Interestingly, students from London are significantly more likely

than students from other regions to report that they always knew that they wanted to go to university. Further analysis reveals that the London student group contains a greater proportion of Asian students, and perhaps this ethnicity factor is playing a part.

When decision to go to university was made										
Response	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
I always knew that I would go to university	59.80%	52.79%	55.18%	70.51%	56.39%	60.17%	62.87%	54.18%	58.26%	56.93%
Primary school	3.63%	4.27%	4.02%	3.50%	2.50%	3.49%	2.68%	4.09%	2.75%	4.40%
Year 7	2.75%	1.90%	2.65%	3.15%	2.88%	2.31%	2.33%	2.80%	4.83%	3.39%
Year 8	1.73%	2.04%	1.38%	1.25%	2.94%	1.26%	1.03%	2.24%	1.79%	1.89%
Year 9	4.89%	7.89%	5.54%	3.14%	8.53%	5.01%	4.77%	5.27%	5.44%	5.56%
Year 10	7.19%	8.29%	9.81%	4.07%	8.14%	6.87%	6.39%	6.97%	8.65%	8.07%
Year 11 (or equivalent)	9.62%	14.26%	11.22%	6.17%	7.02%	10.79%	8.84%	12.15%	9.51%	9.31%
Year 12 (or equivalent)	8.10%	7.22%	7.08%	6.69%	9.41%	7.85%	8.74%	10.27%	6.22%	8.04%
Year 13 (or equivalent)	1.47%	0.80%	1.64%	1.00%	2.06%	1.81%	1.84%	1.34%	1.88%	1.01%
Year 14 (Northern Ireland)	0.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other	0.69%	0.56%	1.49%	0.47%	0.12%	0.44%	0.51%	0.70%	0.67%	1.40%
Base	10,744	604	359	1,173	417	857	1,794	951	575	447

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

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### **Future HE subject intentions**

For the survey question about intended subjects, students could give as many answers as they wished.

The most common subjects which the respondents intend to study at university are shown below (on page 49), along with the most common languages which students plan to pursue. Page 50 features a table which demonstrates how current language students' HE subject intentions differ depending on the particular language they were studying at the time of the survey.

The first thing to note is that 7% of the total sample intends to study languages at university. Among these respondents, the more popular choices are medicine and dentistry (14%), business/administrative studies (11%),

biological sciences (11%), law (10%), mathematics (10%), psychology (10%) and computer science (10%).

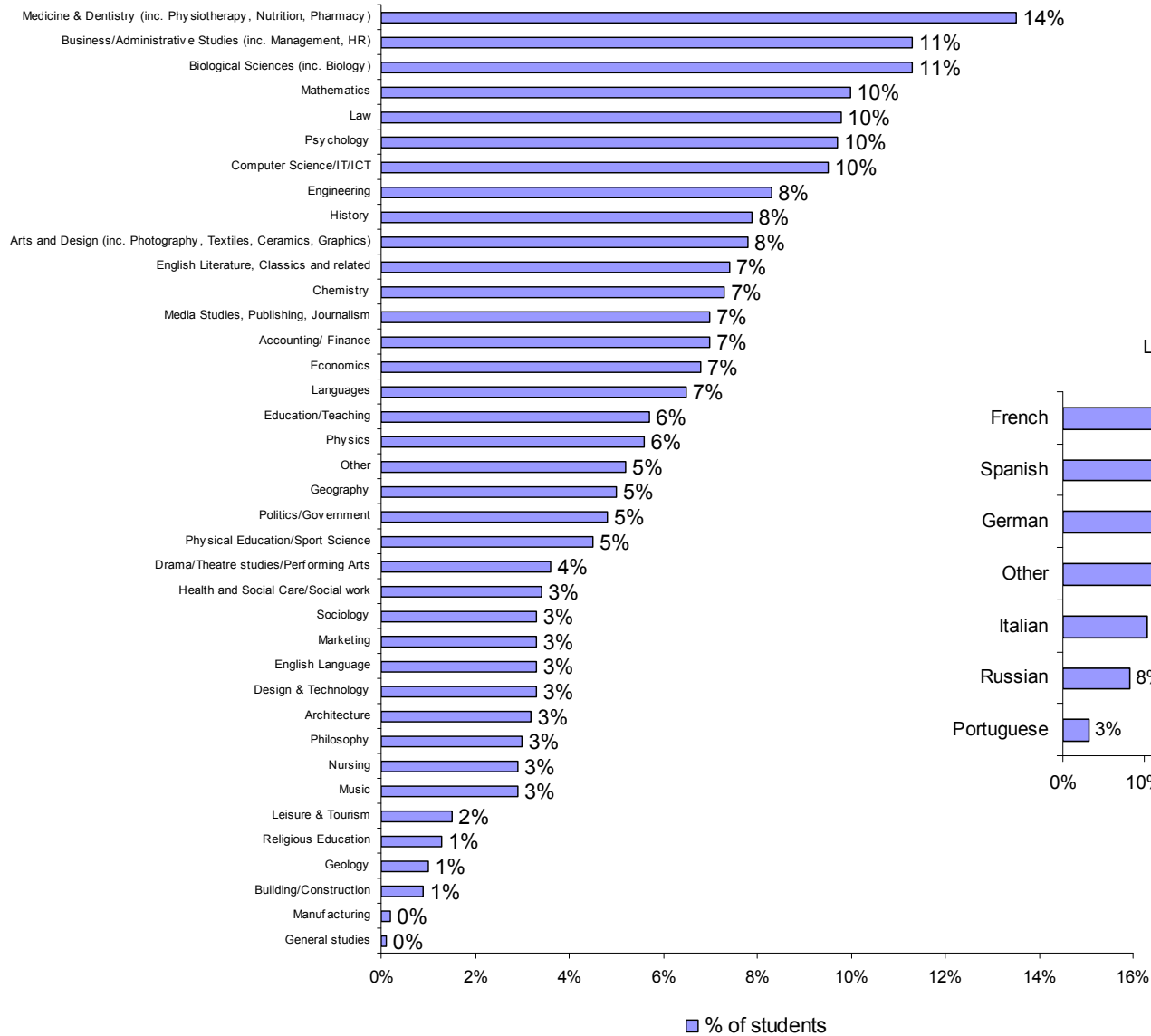
It is unsurprising that French is the most common option for language students, followed by Spanish and German.

The table on page 50 shows that for students of French, German and Spanish (the most commonly studied languages), the seven most preferred university subjects are similar. However, students who have studied Spanish are more likely than the French and German respondents to intend to pursue HE language study, as well as English Literature, but are less likely to select mathematics.

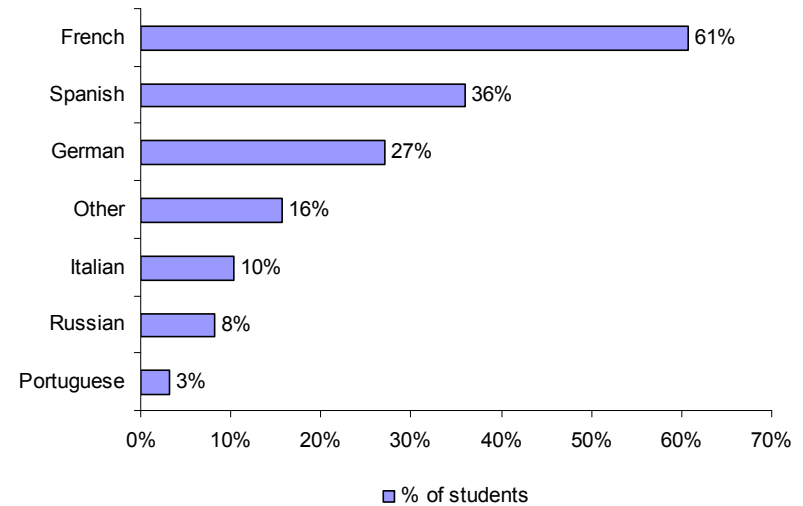


## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

Subjects most likely to study at university



Likely Language to study at University



### Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

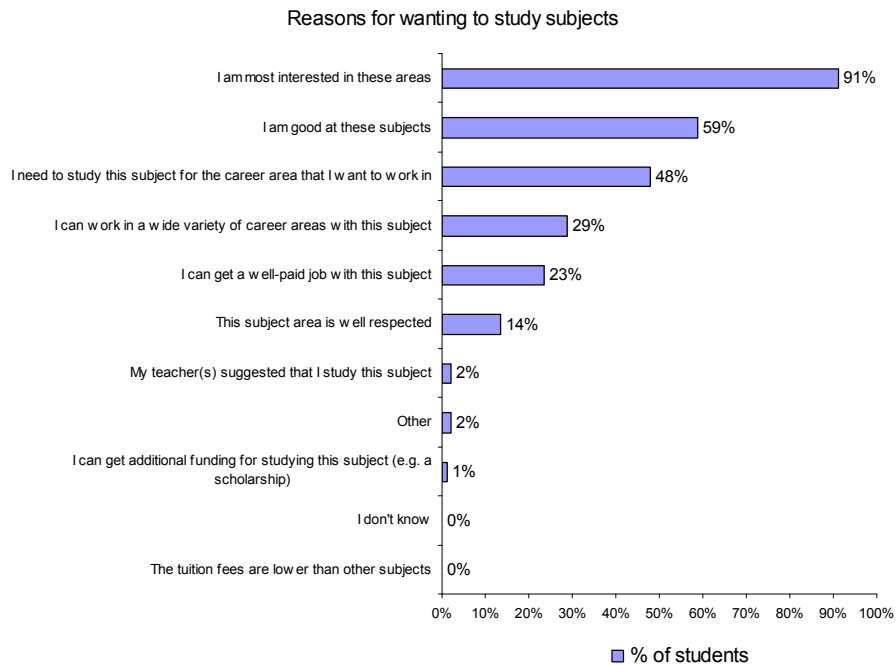
Intended subjects among current language students (specific language breakdown)			
	% of current French students who selected this subject	% of current German students who selected this subject	% of current Spanish students who selected this subject
Languages	45%	44%	55%
Law	15%	12%	14%
English Literature, Classics and related	12%	10%	11%
History	11%	11%	12%
Business/Administrative Studies (inc. Management, HR)	11%	12%	12%
Medicine & Dentistry (inc. Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Pharmacy)	10%	10%	10%
Mathematics	8%	11%	5%
Biological Sciences (inc. Biology)	7%	7%	8%
Politics/Government	7%	9%	8%
Economics	7%	9%	7%
Psychology	6%	5%	6%
Geography	6%	5%	4%
Arts and Design (inc. Photography, Textiles, Ceramics, Graphics)	6%	3%	4%
Media Studies, Publishing, Journalism	6%	4%	5%
Chemistry	5%	7%	5%
Accounting/ Finance	5%	3%	2%
English Language	5%	5%	4%
Education/Teaching	5%	5%	5%

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Reasons for choosing subjects

As the graph below illustrates, students report that they choose their intended subject(s) primarily based on interest in the subject area, followed by perceived ability in the subject. Very few link it to a suggestion from their

teachers. Approximately one in two students says that they choose their subjects because they are necessary for the career area in which they wish to work.

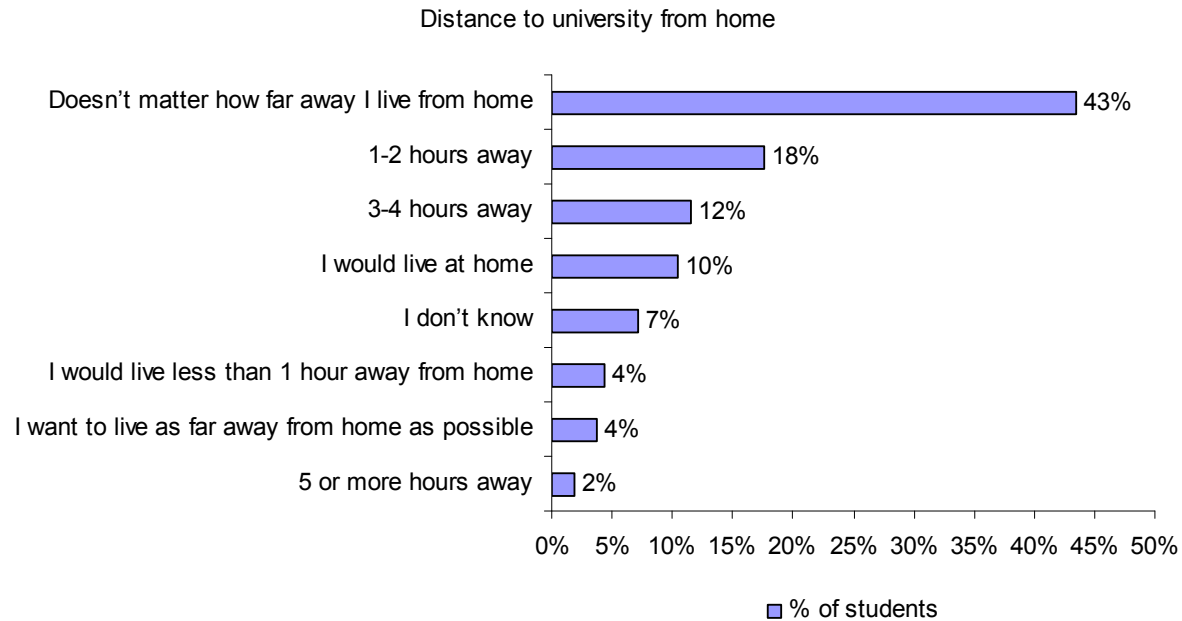


## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Intended distance from home

It is worth noting that 43% of the students surveyed said that it does not matter how far away from home they live when they go to university. This said, almost a third of respondents intend either to live at home (10%) or to

live under two hours away (4% less than one hour away; 18% one to two hours away).



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Intended distance from home (regional trends)

Interestingly, students from different regions appear to have different preferences with regard to the distance between their university and their home. A relatively large proportion of students based in the West Midlands (17.2%) and London (16.7%) say that they would live at home, and they are

also more likely than the other regional groups to report that they would live less than one hour away. Conversely, students from the East of England or the South West are less likely to intend to live at, or very close to, home.

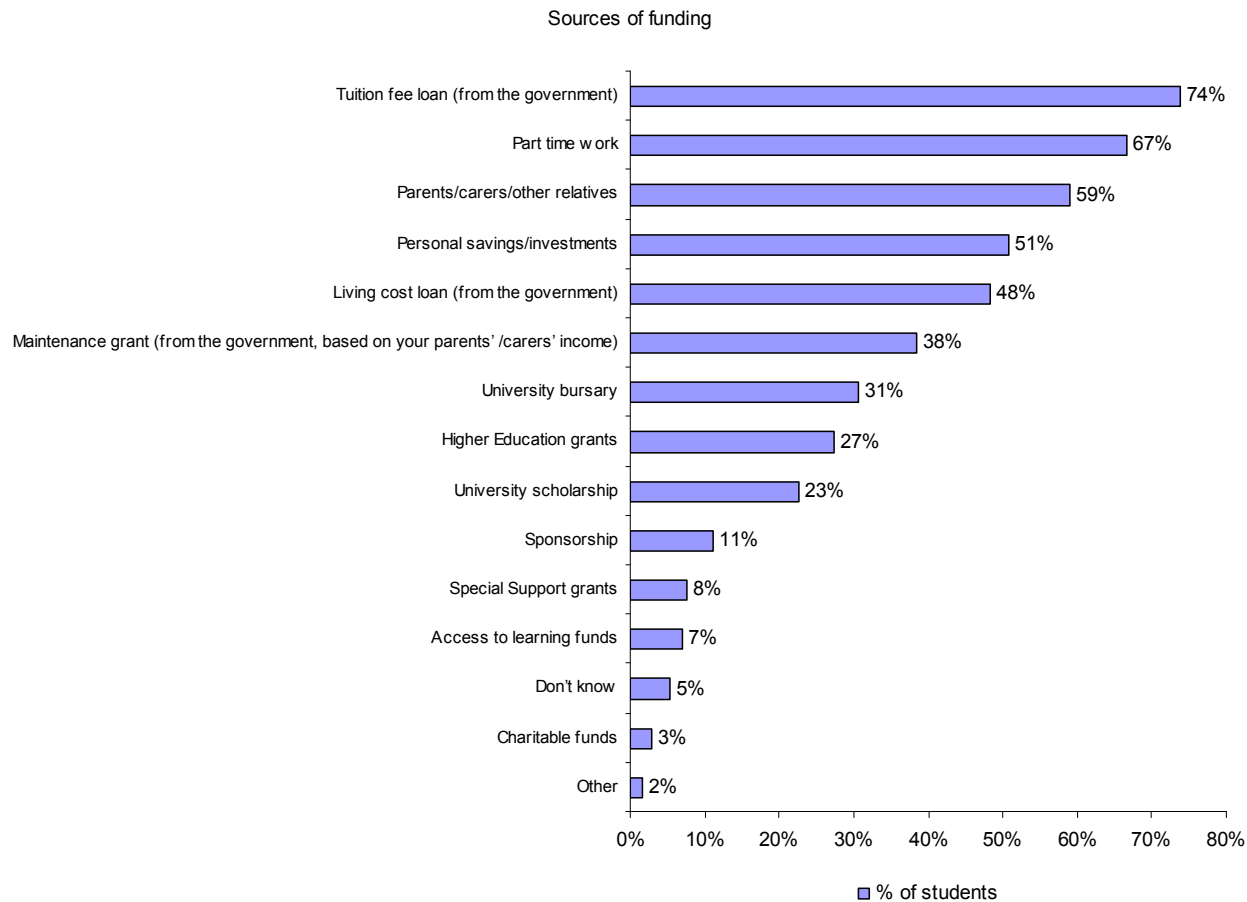
Distance from home										
Response	Total (%)	East Midlands (%)	East of England (%)	London (%)	North East (%)	North West (%)	South East (%)	South West (%)	West Midlands (%)	Yorkshire and the Humber (%)
I would live at home	10.40	9.11	5.43	16.67	12.27	12.38	7.48	6.01	17.18	10.36
I would live less than 1 hour away from home	4.30	4.29	2.34	6.24	4.00	5.24	3.11	2.74	4.57	5.23
1-2 hours away	17.59	20.56	17.83	17.72	16.65	16.76	19.57	17.37	16.22	17.82
3-4 hours away	11.53	9.43	17.13	8.06	13.37	10.15	13.30	15.88	8.91	12.13
5 or more hours away	1.81	1.18	2.11	1.31	3.31	1.38	1.19	2.72	0.67	2.59
Doesn't matter how far away I live from home	43.44	45.37	44.74	38.03	35.90	42.42	46.10	46.15	42.26	38.98
I want to live as far away from home as possible	3.81	2.73	4.64	3.45	5.54	4.39	2.73	2.85	3.64	5.24
I don't know	7.12	7.33	5.79	8.52	8.96	7.29	6.52	6.27	6.54	7.65
Base	10,303	736	465	1,410	507	995	2,272	1,261	720	549

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Sources of funding

Almost three quarters of the respondents said that they intend to fund their university study by accessing a tuition fee loan, and 67% reported that they

intend to pursue part-time work. It is interesting that 38% intend to access a maintenance grant.



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Sources of funding (regional trends)

The chart below demonstrates how the region variable affects the sources of funding that they say they intend to access. Londoners are the least likely regional group to report that they intend to access government loans, to work part-time or use their personal savings and investments. This contrasts with students from, for example, the East of England, who are much more

likely to intend to access government loans and to use their personal savings to fund their degree. Respondents from Yorkshire and the Humber and from the North West are the least likely to express an intended dependence on their parents or other relatives.

Sources of funding										
Response	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Tuition fee loan (from the government)	74%	79%	78%	69%	76%	80%	75%	73%	77%	73%
Part time work	67%	71%	67%	61%	68%	67%	67%	66%	68%	69%
Parents/carers/other relatives	59%	53%	59%	58%	60%	54%	61%	59%	61%	54%
Personal savings/investments	51%	53%	59%	44%	52%	47%	52%	52%	51%	55%
Living cost loan (from the government)	48%	53%	57%	43%	53%	51%	49%	50%	52%	49%
Maintenance grant (from the gov't, based on parents' income)	38%	46%	41%	42%	42%	41%	33%	36%	42%	44%
University bursary	31%	34%	33%	30%	31%	32%	26%	31%	36%	32%
Higher Education grants	27%	28%	23%	30%	26%	29%	25%	27%	31%	28%
University scholarship	23%	24%	25%	27%	20%	18%	21%	22%	20%	20%
Sponsorship	11%	13%	13%	13%	9%	10%	10%	12%	12%	8%
Special Support grants	8%	8%	6%	10%	7%	7%	7%	8%	5%	10%
Access to learning funds	7%	7%	6%	9%	10%	6%	6%	7%	6%	9%
Don't know	5%	5%	3%	6%	6%	5%	5%	7%	4%	7%
Charitable funds	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%
Other	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Base	10,270	733	466	1,402	505	992	2,267	1,254	720	550

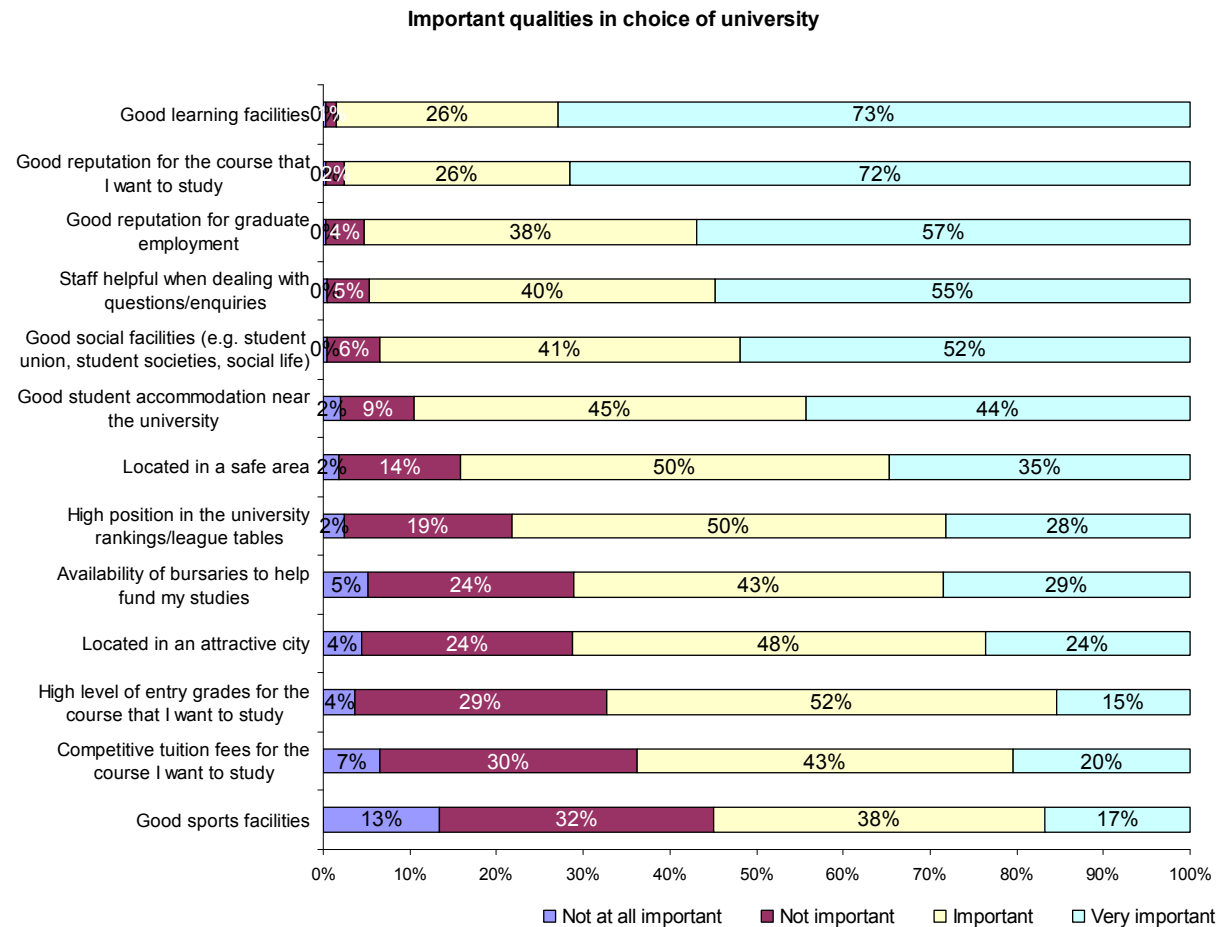
## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Chapter 4: University-related decision making

#### Important university qualities and factors

When asked to name the most important qualities in a university, almost every student pointed to good learning facilities and to good reputation for his or her desired course. An impressive 95% of students considered reputation for graduate employment to be important or very important and

the same proportion reported that helpfulness of staff is an important factor. It is revealing that students were less likely to consider competitive tuition fees to be very important.





## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Important university qualities and factors (regional trends)

The table below gives the mean scores (-2 = not at all important, +2 = very important) by region. It is valuable to note that students from different regions tend to prioritise similar university qualities. This said, there are some differences. Students in the North East, for example, are less likely to consider a university's league table position to be important, while Londoners are more likely than all of the other groups to name this factor. The Londoners

are also the most likely group to consider good sports facilities to be important, while students in the South East appear less concerned than the other regional groups about financial support.

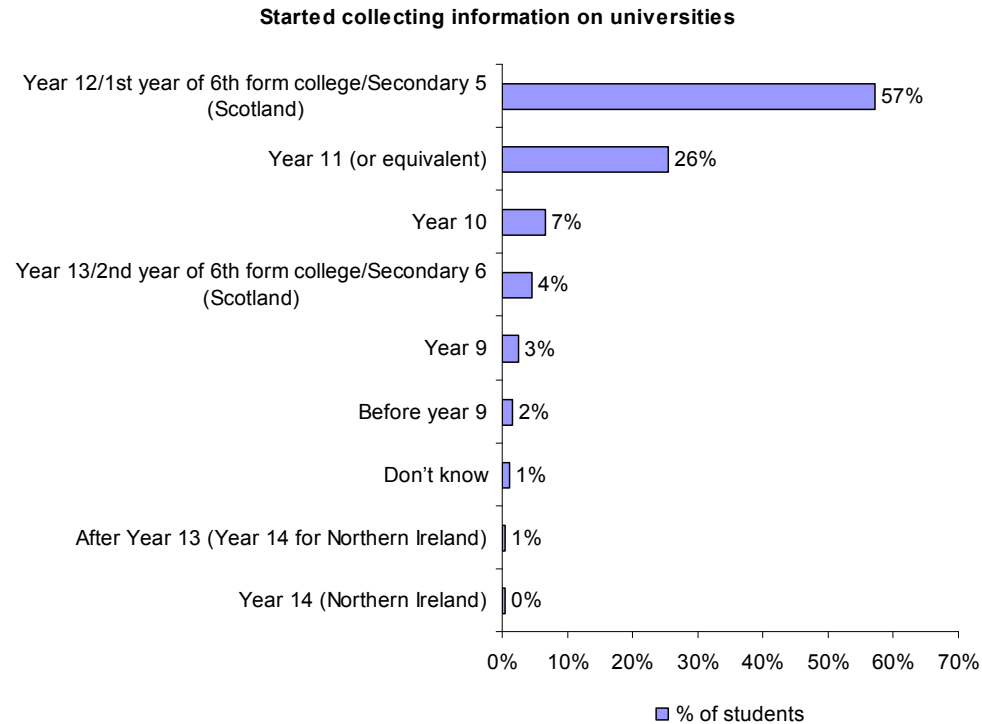
Important university qualities and factors									
	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Response	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Good reputation for the course that I want to study	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6
Good learning facilities (e.g. libraries, computer rooms)	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Good reputation for graduate employment	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4
Staff helpful when dealing with questions/enquiries	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4
Good social facilities (e.g. student union, student societies, social life)	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4
Good student accommodation near the university	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1
Located in a safe area	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1
High position in the university rankings/league tables	0.8	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8
Availability of bursaries to help fund my studies	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7
Located in an attractive city	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.5
Competitive tuition fees for the course I want to study	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5
High level of entry grades for the course that I want to study	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Good sports facilities (e.g. football pitch/gym)	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0	-0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### When students begin collecting university-related information

The majority of the students surveyed start collecting university information during Year 12 or equivalent, while over a quarter begin the process in Year 11. Although no graph has been included here, additional analysis reveals that 27% begin collecting their information during the first term of year 12

(or equivalent). Meanwhile, 25% start the process during the second term of this year, and 8% report that they begin earlier, during the summer holidays of year 11 (or equivalent).



## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

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### **Information resources used (and found useful)**

The most common resources used to find out about higher education are university websites and prospectuses, although a significant proportion of students also report using their school/college careers service and a number of other resources.

When asked which resources they found most useful, university prospectuses and websites still came out on top but university websites fell below prospectuses. Despite students' use of the school or college careers service, this is only seen to be useful by 18% of the respondents. Conversely, the conversion rate from 'used' to 'useful' is positive for university open days, suggesting that they are an important resource for those who access them.

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

Information resources used and found useful			
Resource	Total students (%) who used	Total students (%) who found useful	% of users of the resource who found it useful
University websites	79	43	54.4
University prospectuses	79	55	69.6
Careers service (school/college)	64	18	28.1
Education directories (e.g. UCAS Directory)	60	20	33.3
Education websites (e.g. springboard.co.uk, s-cool.co.uk, getsmaart.co.uk, UCAS.com)	59	14	23.7
Recommendations/word of mouth	55	18	32.7
University open days/visits	50	31	62.0
Education events/fairs (e.g. UCAS Education Conventions)	46	16	34.8
Careers & Education magazines	41	7	17.1
University presentations	28	8	28.6
Direct contact with the university by phone and/or email	20	5	25.0
Emails from education/careers websites (e.g. springboard.co.uk, s-cool.co.uk, getsmaart.co.uk)	20	3	15.0
Newspapers (national)	18	3	16.7
Social networking websites (e.g. myspace.com, facebook.com, youtube.com)	11	2	18.2
CD Roms	9	1	11.1
Local careers centre	8	1	12.5
Newspapers (school/college)	7	3	42.9
Television advertisements or programmes	6	1	16.7
Outdoor advertisements (e.g. on public transport)	6	0	0.0
Newspapers (regional)	5	1	20.0
Radio advertisements	4	0	0.0
Cinema advertisements	3	0	0.0
Other	4	N/A	N/A

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Sources of advice

As part of the survey, the respondents were asked who they would be most likely to turn to for advice relating to a number of education- and career-related decisions. As illustrated below, 'Mum' is by far the most influential figure for students taking decisions about GCSEs or equivalent qualifications, and she retains an important role for all the other decisions, although the respondents are most likely to turn to their father or male carer for advice

relating to the company to work for! The respondents' teachers are also seen to be key advisers for most of the decisions, and particularly for advice relating to qualifications at level 2 and 3, and to university choices. Interestingly, career advisers are not seen to be influencers for qualifications and subject decisions at school or college.

Sources of advice (total students)					
Influencer	GCSE (or equivalent) advice (% of total respondents)	A/AS level (or equivalent) advice (% of total respondents)	University advice (% of total respondents)	Career advice (% of total respondents)	Company advice (% of total respondents)
Mum / Female carer	37	28	21	24	19
Teacher	25	27	21	15	9
Dad / male carer	16	18	14	21	23
Brother / sister	8	7	10	4	4
Friend	8	6	12	10	12
Career adviser	5	10	17	19	18
Other relative	2	2	4	6	7
Employer	0	0	1	2	8
<i>Base</i>	<i>10,478</i>	<i>10,456</i>	<i>10,344</i>	<i>10,256</i>	<i>10,042</i>

## Section 3: Painting a picture of, and planning for effective engagement with, prospective undergraduates

### Sources of advice (regional trends)

A comparison of the responses of students living in different regions reveals some interesting variables. While there are no major trends which occur across all of the decisions, it is clear that the students in different regions are turning to different people for advice. For students in the East of England, Mum is consistently a high influencer, and she is also a particularly important

source of advice for students in Yorkshire and the Humber when they make university, career and company decisions. It is interesting that she is less likely to be seen as influential among Londoners, who are the most likely group to turn to their siblings for guidance.

Sources of GCSE (or equivalent) advice – by region										
Influencer	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Mum/ Female carer	37%	37%	45%	31%	40%	35%	40%	37%	34%	34%
Teacher	25%	27%	26%	24%	23%	27%	23%	26%	24%	26%
Dad/ Male carer	16%	16%	11%	16%	18%	17%	18%	19%	13%	15%
Friend	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%	8%	7%	9%	10%	9%
Brother/ Sister	8%	7%	5%	12%	5%	7%	7%	5%	11%	9%
Career adviser	5%	4%	3%	6%	6%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Other relative	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Employer	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Base	10,478	734	464	1,398	502	993	2,256	1,244	714	549

Sources of AS / A level (or equivalent) advice – by region										
Influencer	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Mum/ Female carer	28%	29%	34%	25%	29%	24%	32%	29%	23%	28%
Teacher	27%	30%	27%	26%	25%	28%	25%	32%	30%	25%
Dad/ Male carer	18%	17%	20%	16%	21%	21%	19%	18%	19%	15%
Careers adviser	10%	8%	6%	11%	11%	11%	8%	9%	10%	13%
Brother / sister	7%	6%	5%	11%	6%	7%	7%	5%	9%	10%
Friend	6%	7%	5%	8%	7%	7%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Other relative	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Employer	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Base	10,456	732	464	1,401	499	986	2,257	1,244	713	549

Sources of university advice – by region										
Influencer	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Teacher	21%	23%	20%	23%	20%	21%	20%	26%	23%	20%
Mum/ Female carer	21%	22%	25%	18%	23%	23%	22%	18%	23%	25%
Careers adviser	17%	14%	14%	16%	18%	17%	17%	17%	18%	15%
Dad/ Male carer	14%	15%	18%	12%	13%	15%	15%	14%	14%	14%
Friend	12%	11%	13%	13%	13%	11%	12%	13%	8%	13%
Brother/ Sister	10%	10%	6%	12%	9%	11%	10%	7%	11%	10%
Other relative	4%	4%	3%	6%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%
Employer	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Base	10,344	724	460	1,386	490	975	2,237	1,228	712	540

Sources of careers advice – by region										
Influencer	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Mum/ Female carer	24%	25%	25%	21%	25%	25%	25%	19%	23%	27%
Dad/ Male carer	21%	21%	19%	20%	19%	22%	22%	20%	20%	18%
Career adviser	19%	20%	13%	19%	23%	19%	18%	16%	18%	19%
Teacher	15%	16%	14%	12%	13%	15%	14%	22%	18%	15%
Friend	10%	7%	15%	11%	7%	9%	9%	11%	9%	11%
Other relative	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Brother/ Sister	4%	3%	4%	8%	3%	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%
Employer	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Base	10,256	715	447	1,383	488	966	2,204	1,224	708	531

Sources of company advice – by region										
Influencer	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Dad/ Male carer	23%	21%	25%	22%	22%	23%	26%	22%	22%	19%
Mum/ Female carer	19%	20%	21%	15%	18%	20%	20%	16%	19%	23%
Career adviser	18%	19%	14%	18%	22%	20%	17%	17%	19%	17%
Friend	12%	12%	14%	14%	11%	11%	11%	12%	12%	10%
Teacher	9%	11%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%	14%	10%	11%
Employer	8%	7%	8%	7%	8%	8%	7%	10%	8%	9%
Other relative	7%	8%	6%	8%	7%	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%
Brother/ Sister	4%	4%	4%	8%	2%	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%
Base	10,043	699	444	1,350	484	936	2,175	1,197	692	518



## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

Following the exploration (in section 3) of the perceptions of students generally, this section of the report gives the main findings from a comparative analysis of three groups of students. These are:

1. Total cohort (**15,385 respondents**)
2. Respondents who reported that they intend to study one or more languages at university (877 respondents). We will call these students '**prospectives**'.
3. Respondents who were currently studying one or more languages at school or college and who did not intend to pursue a language qualification at university (1511 respondents). We will call these students '**decliners**'.

The responses of these groups were analysed, in order to explore the degree to which they are homogeneous and to identify ways in which their behaviours, experiences, perceptions and intentions differ. In this section, the most notable findings are drawn out and presented.

A full list of the survey questions analysed as part of this project is included in the appendix.

## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Chapter 1: Demographic and academic profile

The respondents who intend to study languages at university (i.e. prospectives) are more likely to be female and, as a group, they are slightly younger than the total sample. There is also a greater proportion of white students (and fewer Asian or Asian British students) in this sub-group, and they are less likely to be claiming education maintenance allowance. These students are also more likely than the total cohort to be studying at a fee-paying private school and less likely to be attending a further education or 6<sup>th</sup> form college.

Current language students who do not intend to pursue languages at university (i.e. decliners) are similar in many ways to the prospectives described above, but the differences between them and the total cohort are not often as great. They are, however, less likely than both of the other groups (total and prospectives) to report claiming education maintenance allowance and are the group which is most likely to be attending a fee-paying private school. Interestingly, they have higher predicted academic attainment than both the total cohort and the students who intend to study languages at university.

Demographic Profile	Total students (%)	Intend to pursue languages at university	Currently studying languages but do not intend to pursue at university
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	51	37	44
Female	49	63	56
base	15012	873	1503
<b>Age</b>			
16	32	36	39
17	32	35	33
18	32	27	26
Greater than 18	4	2	2
base	15108	877	1511
<b>Region</b>			
South East	23	22	26
London	14	14	16
South West	13	14	12
North West	10	12	9
East Midlands	7	7	7
West Midlands	7	7	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	5	5
North East	5	5	4
East of England	5	4	4
Wales	4	5	6
Northern Ireland	4	4	3
Scotland	3	2	3
base	9986	668	1052
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White	73	80	74
Asian / Asian British	12	4	8
Black / Black British	4	4	3
Chinese	3	2	3
Mixed	2	3	2
base	9606	676	1103
<b>Education Maintenance Allowance</b>			
No	65	71	74
Yes £30 per week	25	20	17
Yes £10 per week	5	5	4
Yes £20 per week	5	3	4
base	10180	679	1108

## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

Academic profile	Total students (%)	Intend to pursue languages at university (Prospectives)	Currently studying languages but do not intend to pursue at university (Decliners)
<b>Current activity</b>			
Studying	95	97	97
On a gap year/year out	2	2	1
Other Work	2	1	1
Working for a company on a training / apprenticeship programme	1	0	0
Other	1	0	1
Unemployed	0	0	0
base	14990	876	1511
<b>Current school type</b>			
6th Form College	51	42	36
State Secondary School (no fees)	17	20	20
Fee Paying Private School (independent)	13	22	24
Grammar School (Selective/no fees)	10	12	16
Further Education (FE) College	7	2	2
School outside the UK	1	1	3
Academy	1	1	0
base	14178	849	1464
<b>Specialist school</b>			
Yes	35	34	34
No	65	66	67
base	10135	677	1107
<b>Current year of study</b>			
Year 12 (or equivalent)	63	67	65
Year 13 (or equivalent)	29	26	27
Year 11 (or equivalent)	3	4	6
Other	3	2	2
Year 14 (Northern Ireland)	1	1	1
base	14726	871	1509

Academic profile	Total students (%)	Intend to pursue languages at university (Prospectives)	Currently studying languages but do not intend to pursue at university (Decliners)
<b>Current qualifications</b>			
AS levels	64	70	62
A levels	34	32	27
AS levels in applied subjects	6	5	4
Vocational qualification (eg NVQ, BTEC)	5	3	2
GCSEs	4	8	6
Other	4	6	12
A levels in applied subjects	3	2	1
Scottish higher/ Higher stills	2	2	2
Not currently studying	2	2	2
Advanced extension award	1	1	2
GCSEs in vocational subjects	1	0	1
GNVQs	1	0	0
Scottish Advanced highers	1	1	0
Extended projects	0	0	1
base	10211	683	1108
<b>Expected UCAS tariff band</b>			
80 or below	2	1	1
81-120	3	3	1
121-180	6	5	4
181-240	19	20	17
241-260	4	3	2
261-300	16	14	12
301-320	6	5	4
321-360	15	13	14
361+	29	36	45
base	8485	582	953
<b>Current subject (top 6)</b>			
1	Mathematics: 41%	Languages: 91%	Languages: 100%
2	Biological Sciences: 30%	English Lit, Classics and related: 35%	Mathematics: 52%
3	Chemistry: 26%	Mathematics: 30%	English Lit, Classics and related: 37%
4	English Lit, Classics and related: 23%	History: 27%	Chemistry: 32%
5	Physics: 21%	Biological Sciences: 19%	Biological Sciences: 31%
6	Psychology: 19%	English Language: 17%	History: 27%
base	14410	869	1511

## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

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### Chapter 2: Future intentions and drivers of choice

#### Future HE subject intentions

For the survey question about intended subjects, students could give as many answers as they wished. Since many of the students did select more than one option, it is possible to explore the clusters of subjects which are popular among different respondent groups.

The two tables below list the most common intended subjects among prospectives (table 1) and decliners (table 2). Since these figures are influenced by the intentions of the total sample surveyed, they should be considered in relative terms. As such, both tables include a column giving the proportion of the total cohort which intends to pursue each subject.

#### Table 1:

The most popular additional choices of prospectives (table 1) are law, history, English literature, classics or related, and business. Conversely, they are generally less likely to opt for STEM-related subjects.

It is important, however, to keep in mind that these findings are naturally subject to the weighting of the intentions of the total sample (e.g. high number of pro-business students in the sample may lead to a high[er]

number of pro-business students among the prospective group). As such, it is perhaps useful to confirm that, as a group, prospectives are also (in comparison to the average student):

- 1.9 times more likely to select **English language** (6.2% versus 3.3%)
- 1.7 times more likely to select **leisure and tourism** (2.6% versus 1.5%)
- 1.6 times more likely to select **history** (12.5% versus 7.9%)
- 1.4 times more likely to select **English literature, classics and related** (10.5% versus 7.4%)
- 1.4 times more likely to select **law** (13.6% versus 9.8%)

Conversely, although 5% of this student group intends to study **medicine and dentistry**, they are only 0.4 times as likely as the average student surveyed to select this subject.

## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

Subject	% of prospectives who selected this subject	% of total cohort intending to study this subject
Languages	100%	7%
Law	14%	10%
History	13%	8%
English Literature, Classics and related	11%	7%
Business/Administrative Studies (inc. Management, HR)	11%	11%
English Language	6%	3%
Media Studies, Publishing, Journalism	6%	7%
Politics/Government	6%	5%
Psychology	5%	10%
Arts and Design (inc. Photography, Textiles, Ceramics, Graphics)	5%	8%
Economics	5%	7%
Education/Teaching	5%	6%
Medicine & Dentistry (inc. Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Pharmacy)	5%	14%
Biological Sciences (inc. Biology)	4%	11%
Geography	4%	5%
Mathematics	4%	10%
Computer Science/IT/ICT	4%	10%
Philosophy	3%	3%
Sociology	3%	3%
Music	3%	3%
Drama/Theatre studies/Performing Arts	3%	4%
Accounting/ Finance	3%	7%
Leisure & Tourism	3%	2%
Marketing	2%	3%
Physical Education/Sport Science	2%	5%
Chemistry	2%	7%
Engineering	1%	8%
Physics	1%	6%
Architecture	1%	3%
Religious Education	1%	1%
Design & Technology	1%	3%
Nursing	1%	3%
Health and Social Care/Social work	1%	3%
Geology	0%	1%
General studies	0%	0%
Building/Construction	0%	1%
Manufacturing	0%	0%
<b>Base</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>13505</b>

## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

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### Table 2:

Looking at decliners (table 2), the most common intention is to study medicine and dentistry. Again, this finding should be considered in the light of the fact that this subject is also the most popular among the total cohort. Perhaps of greater interest are the subjects for which we see strong popularity *relative to* the perceptions of the total cohort.

Seen in this way, decliners are (in comparison to the average student):

- 1.7 times more likely to select **philosophy** (5.1% versus 3%)
- 1.6 times more likely to select **politics / government** (7.8% versus 4.8%)
- 1.6 times more likely to select **English literature, classics and related** (12% versus 7.4%)
- 1.5 times more likely to select **economics** (9.9% versus 6.8%)
- 1.5 times more likely to select **law** (14.2% versus 9.8%)
- 1.4 times more likely to select **history** (11% versus 7.9%)
- 1.4 times more likely to select **chemistry** (9.9% versus 7.3%)

Conversely, although 5% of this student group intends to study **computer science**, they are only half as likely (compared to the average student surveyed) to select this subject.

## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

Table 2: Intended subjects among decliners (versus total cohort)		
Subject	% of decliners who selected this subject	% of total cohort intending to study this subject
Medicine & Dentistry (inc. Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Pharmacy)	16%	14%
Law	14%	10%
English Literature, Classics and related	12%	7%
History	11%	8%
Mathematics	11%	10%
Biological Sciences (inc. Biology)	10%	11%
Business/Administrative Studies (inc. Management, HR)	10%	11%
Economics	10%	7%
Chemistry	10%	7%
Politics/Government	8%	5%
Psychology	7%	10%
Engineering	7%	8%
Geography	6%	5%
Other	6%	5%
Accounting/ Finance	6%	7%
Arts and Design (inc. Photography, Textiles, Ceramics, Graphics)	6%	8%
Media Studies, Publishing, Journalism	6%	7%
Philosophy	5%	3%
Physics	5%	6%
Computer Science/IT/ICT	5%	10%
Education/Teaching	5%	6%
Architecture	4%	3%
Marketing	3%	3%
Physical Education/Sport Science	3%	5%
English Language	3%	3%
Sociology	3%	3%
Music	3%	3%
Drama/Theatre studies/Performing Arts	3%	4%
Nursing	2%	3%
Health and Social Care/Social work	2%	3%
Design & Technology	2%	3%
Religious Education	2%	1%
Leisure & Tourism	1%	2%
Building/Construction	1%	1%
Geology	1%	1%
General studies	0%	0%
Languages	0%	7%
Manufacturing	0%	0%
<b>Base</b>	<b>1395</b>	<b>13505</b>

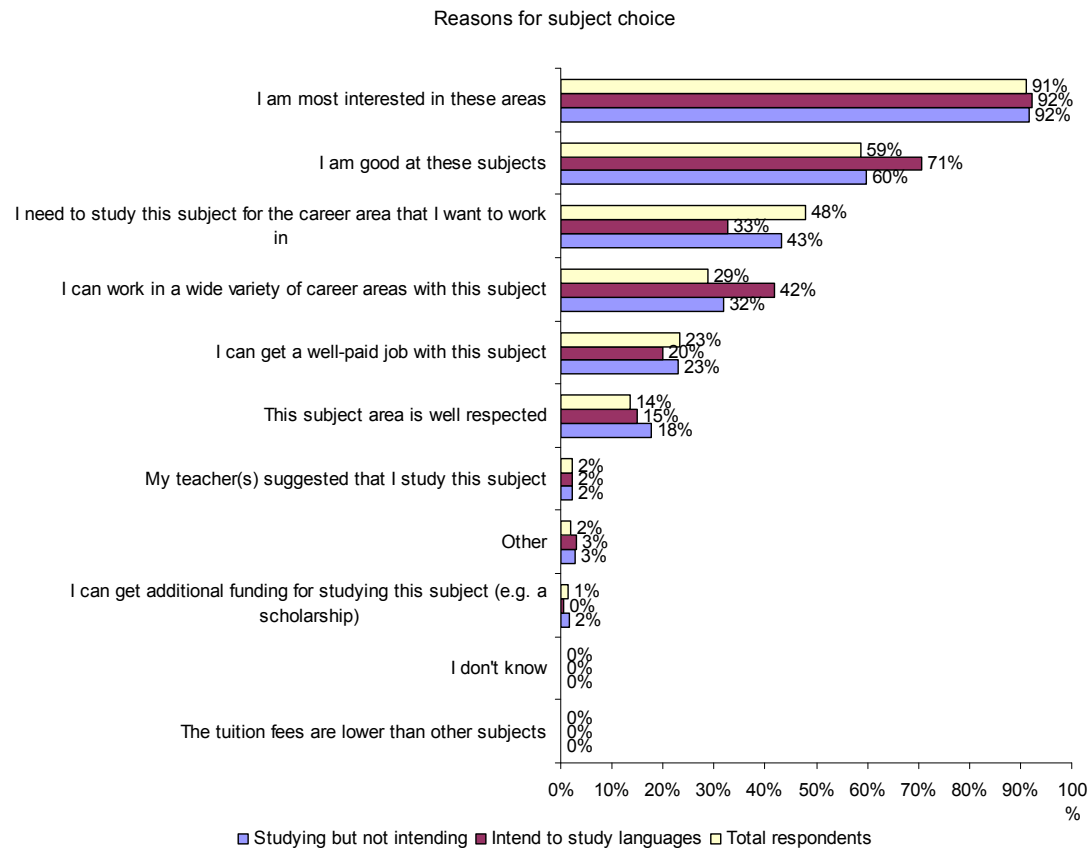
## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Reasons for choosing subjects

Clearly, the prospectives and the decliners share the view of the total cohort that the key driver of their subject choice is their interest in the area.

However, a fascinating finding is that prospectives are significantly more likely than the other groups to have chosen this pathway based on their

(perceived) ability. Of equal note is the finding that, while they are less driven by the need to study languages for their desired career area, they *are* motivated (and are more motivated than the other groups) by the career variety or flexibility which this pathway offers.



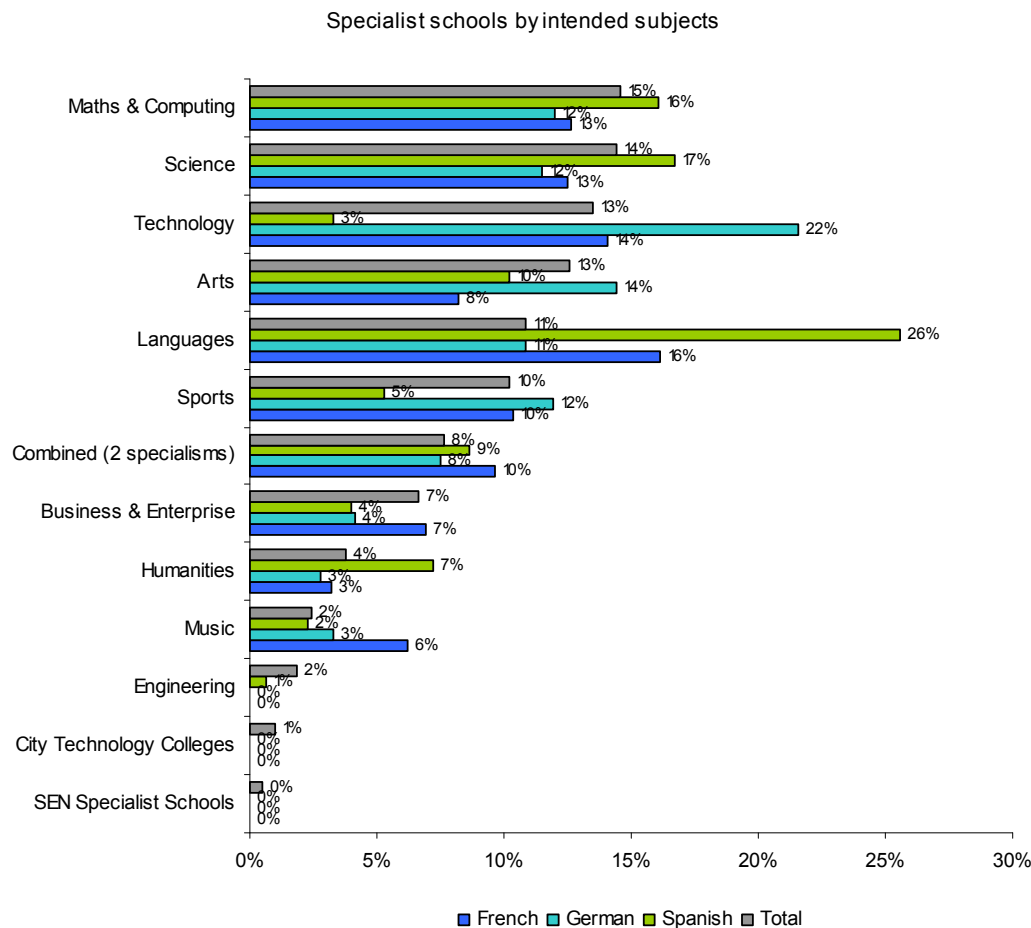


## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Specialist schools attended by prospectives

The graph below looks solely at students from schools with specialist status and shows the proportion of prospective French, German and Spanish undergraduates attending each type of school. The most significant finding is that 26% of students (from specialist status schools) who said that they

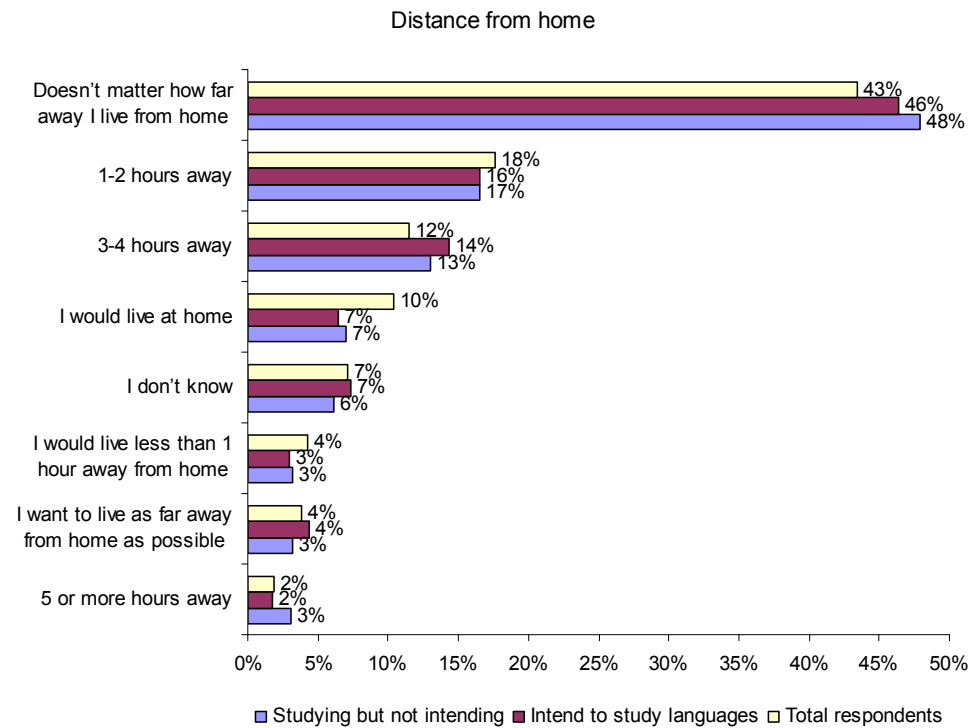
intend to study Spanish at university report that they attended a school with a language specialism. This is a much higher proportion than for the other subjects analysed. It is also interesting that 22% of the specialist school students who intend to pursue HE German came from a Technology College.



## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Intended distance from home

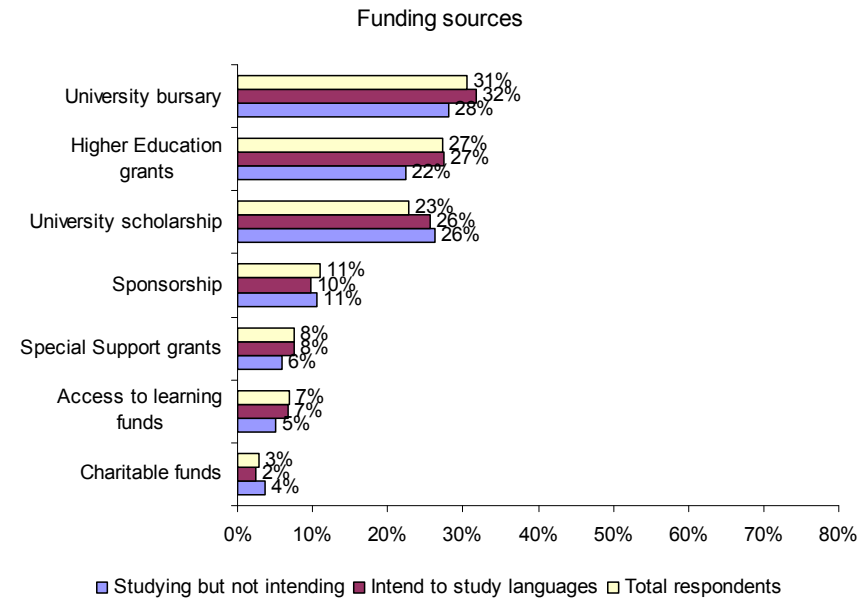
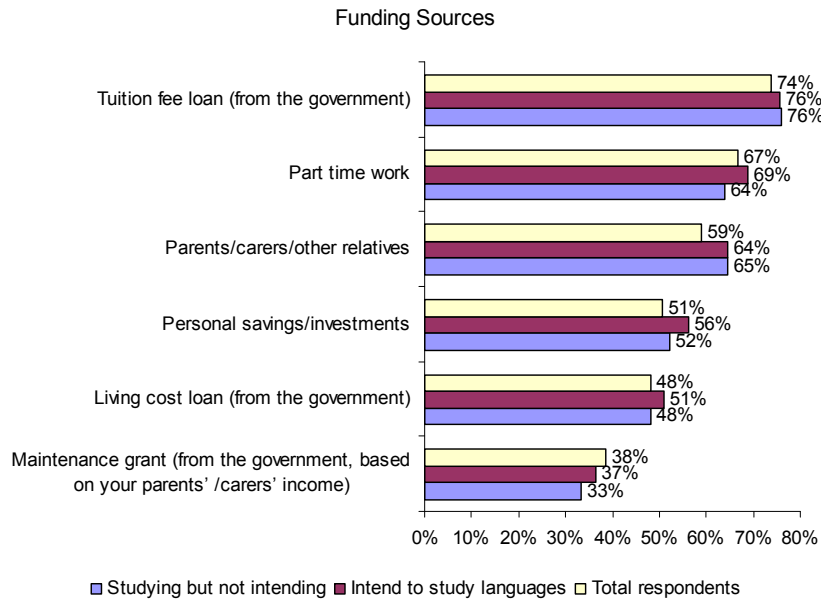
The graph below illustrates a general trend which sees prospectives and decliners being less likely to live at home and less likely to be influenced by the distance between their university and home.



## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Sources of funding

Given that prospectives and decliners tend to be less likely to claim education maintenance allowance, it is perhaps unsurprising that these groups are slightly less likely to intend to access a maintenance loan for university, and are more likely to rely on their parents.

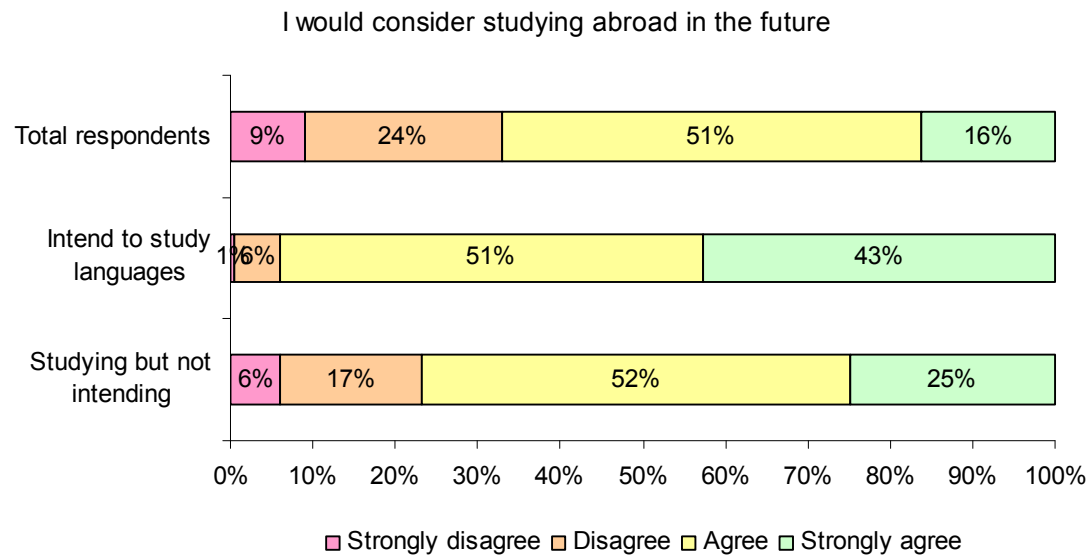


## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Study abroad

As part of the survey, we asked the respondents to confirm the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement: I would consider studying abroad in the future. The chart below shows that, as a group, irrespective of their current or intended study subjects, 67% of students agree or strongly

agree that they would consider studying abroad. This agreement is even more common (and expressed even more strongly) both by decliners (77%) and, predictably, by prospectives (94%).



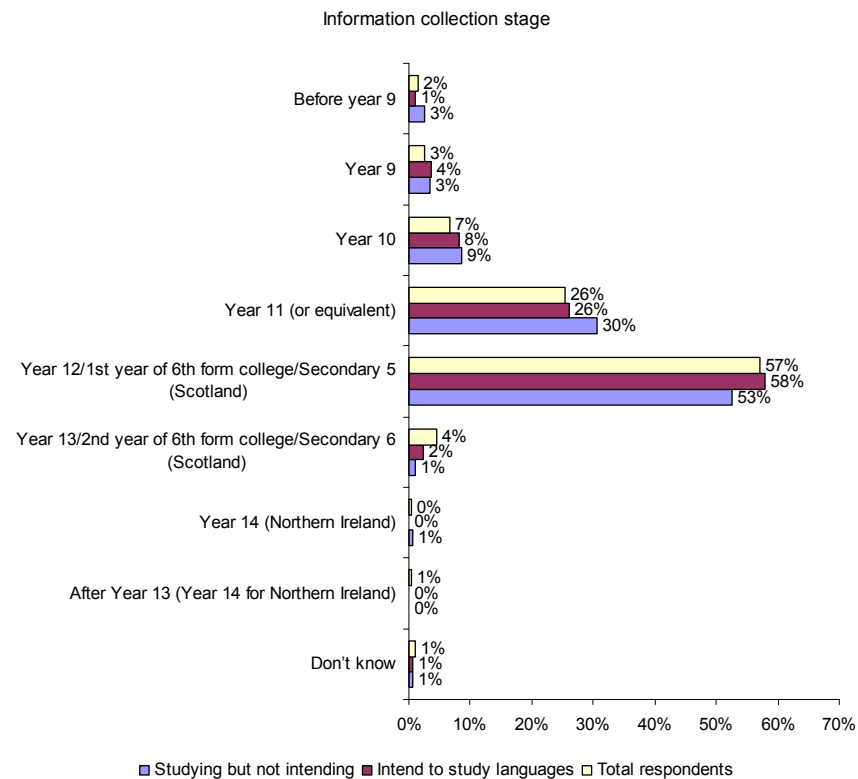
## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Chapter 3: University-related decision making

#### When students begin collecting university-related information

The graph below demonstrates the fact that the groups analysed are quite similar in terms of when they start collecting information. There is particular consistency between prospectives and the total cohort, while there is an

indication that decliners are more likely to begin gathering information at an earlier stage.

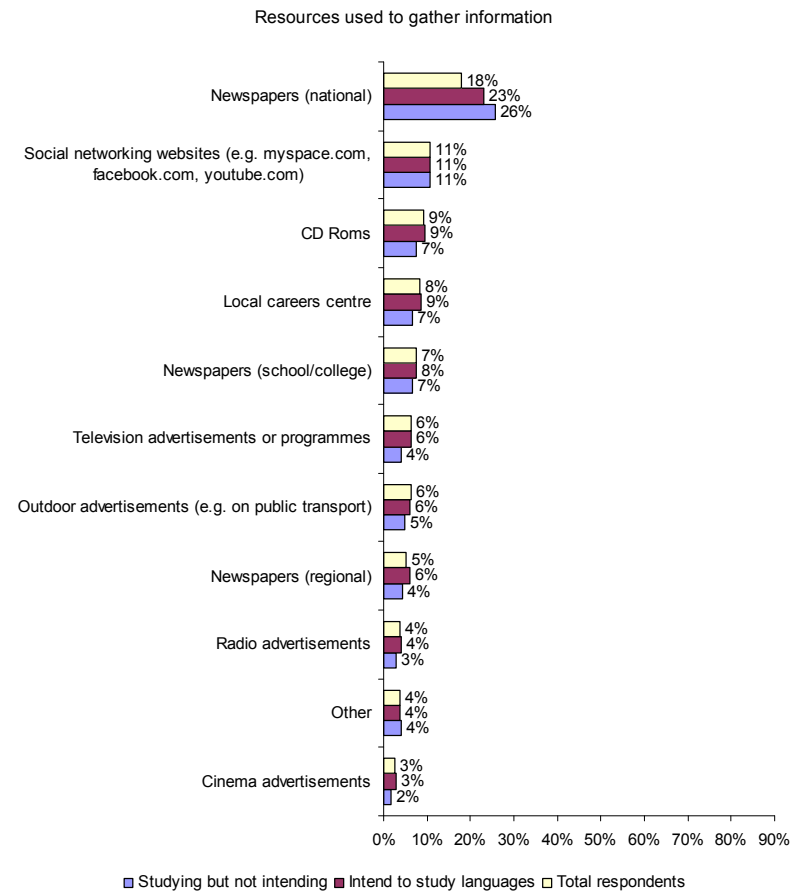
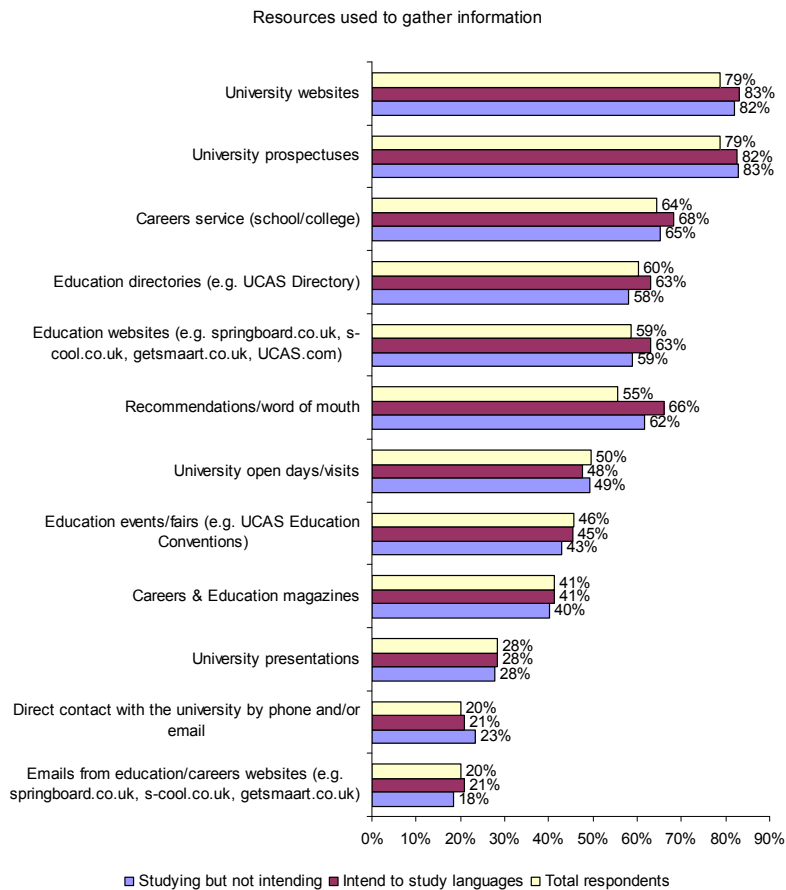


## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Information resources used (and found useful)

There are few significant differences in the resources used by these groups, although prospectives are more likely than the other two groups to use

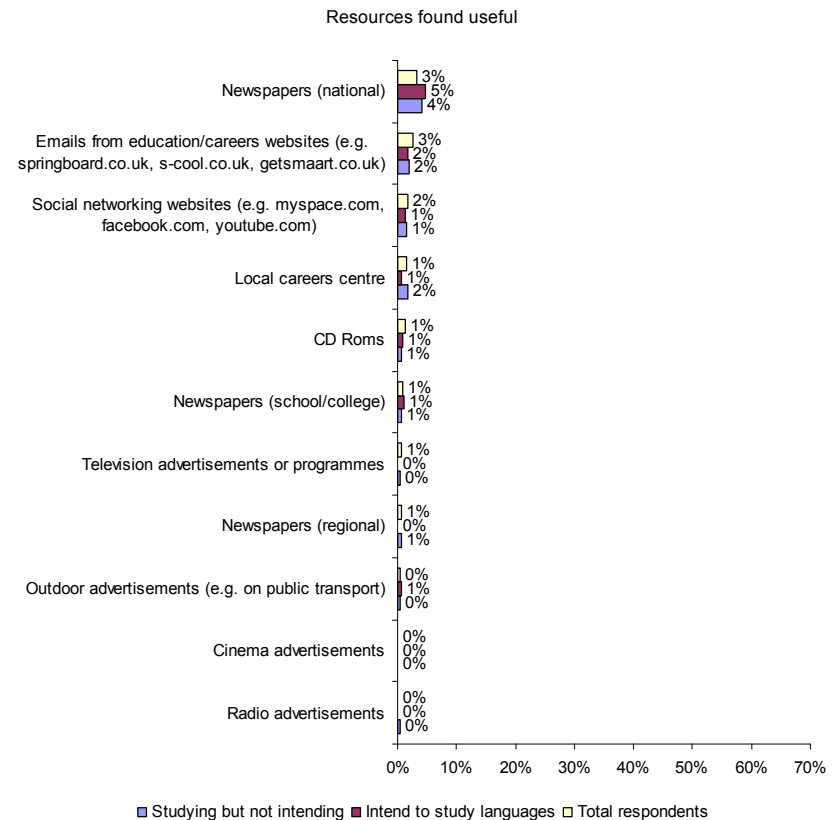
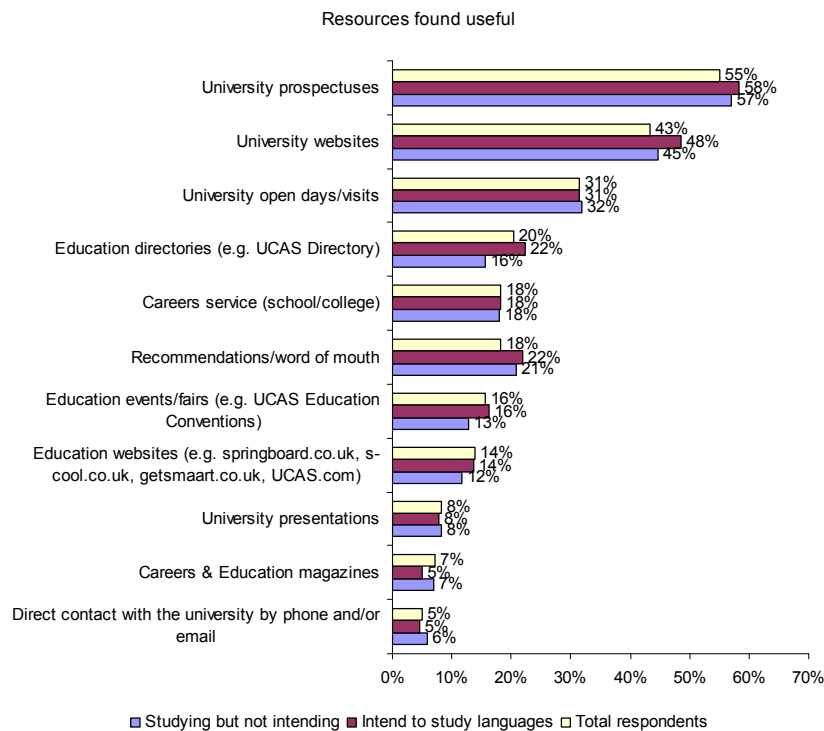
recommendations / word of mouth, while decliners are more likely to use national newspapers. This contrasts particularly with the total student group.



## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

There is an indication that prospectives are slightly more likely than the other groups to find university websites and prospectuses useful. It is interesting that students who do not intend to continue with their language study are

less likely than those who do intend to continue to find education directories (e.g. UCAS) useful.



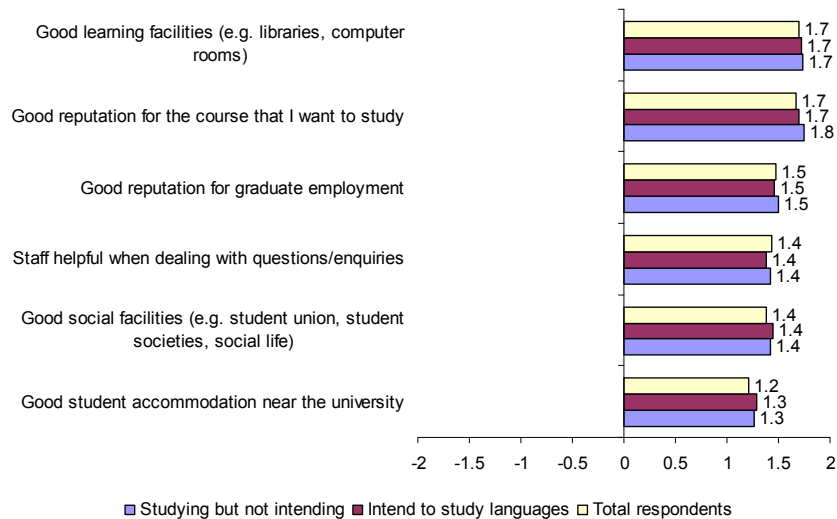
## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

### Important university qualities and factors

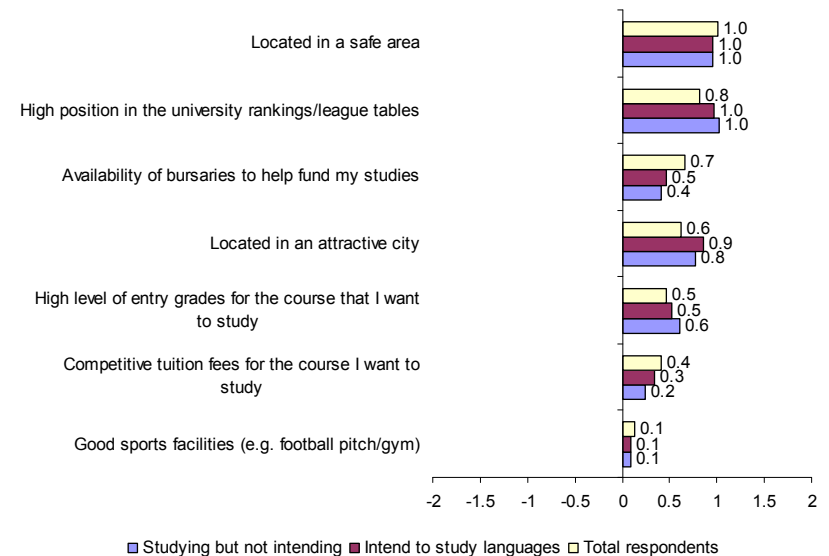
As is demonstrated below, these student groups do not differ greatly in their preferred university qualities. Although the variations are small, there is a suggestion that language-oriented students (whether they intend to study

the subject at university or whether they are simply pursuing the course at school or college) are less interested than students generally in competitive financial packages (tuition fees / bursaries).

Important qualities in your choice of university (mean scores)



Important qualities in your choice of university (mean scores)



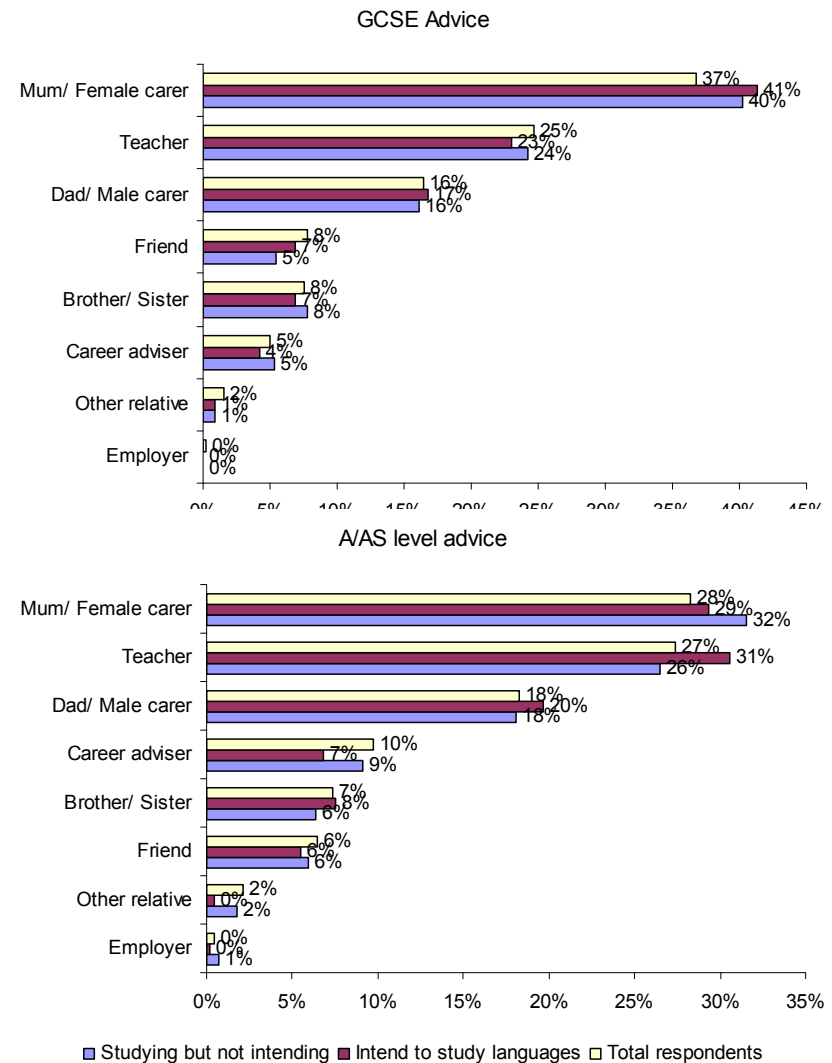


## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students

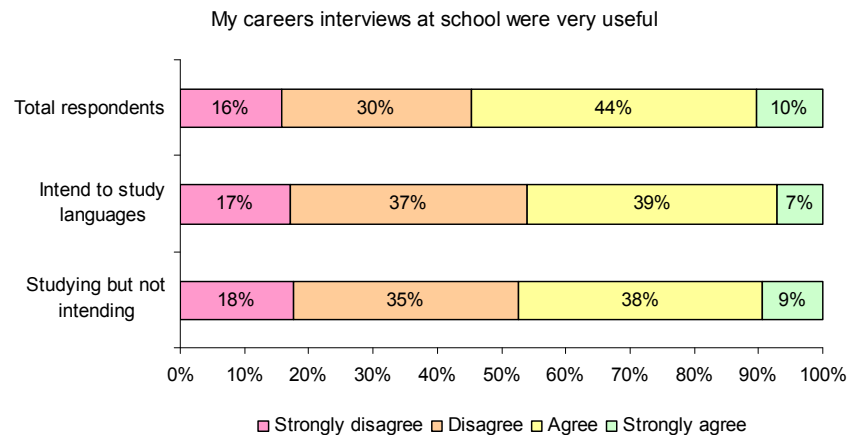
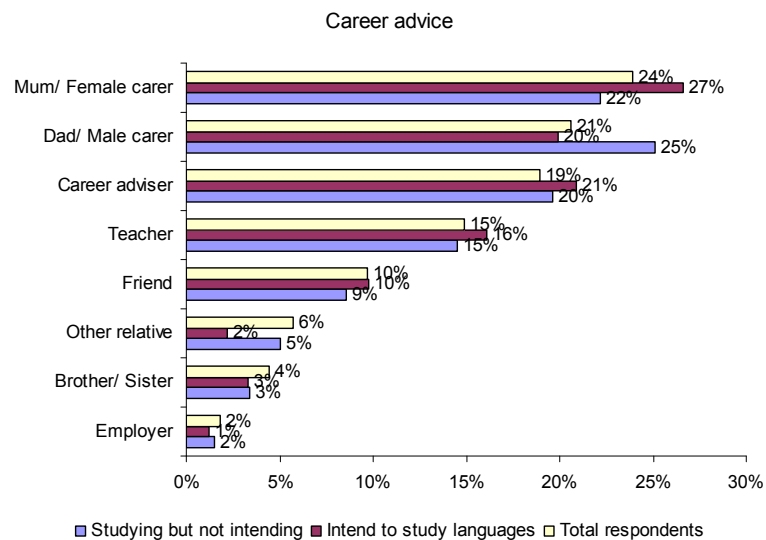
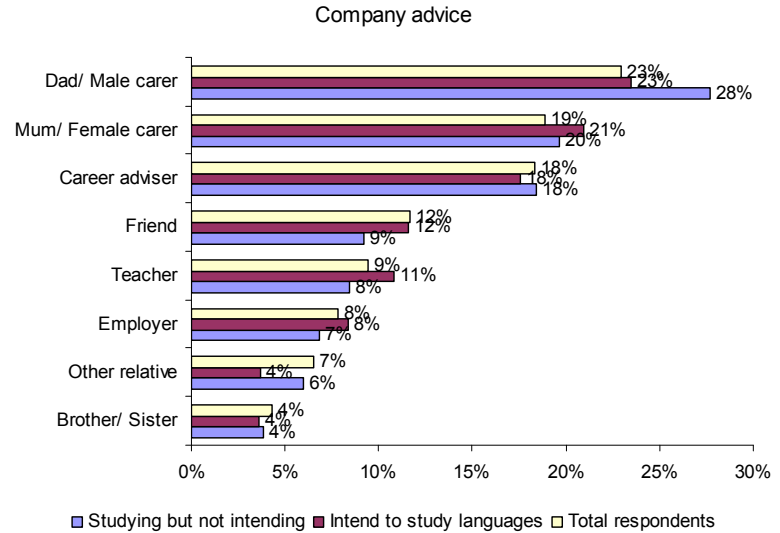
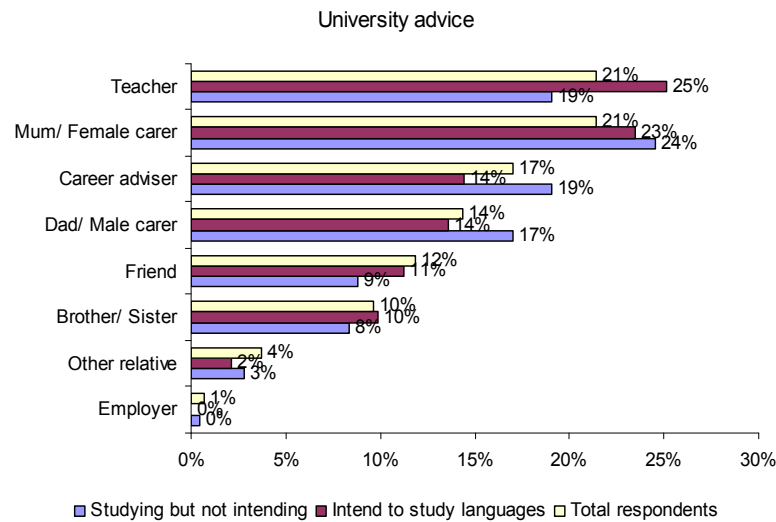
### Sources of advice / careers interviews

It is interesting to note that prospectives, for all of the decisions apart from GCSE (or equivalent), tend to be more likely than the other groups to name their teachers as an important source of advice. In terms of university decisions, they are less likely than the other groups analysed to turn to a careers adviser, and particularly so compared with decliners. For university decisions, students in this latter group are less likely than the other groups to be influenced by their teachers and are the most likely group to turn to their fathers.

It is revealing that prospectives and decliners are less inclined than the average student to agree that their careers interviews at school were useful.



## Section 4: Understanding language-oriented students



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## Appendix

Contained within the appendix is a section on the overall methodology employed for the Hobsons School-leaver Talkback 2007, followed by an extract from the survey questionnaire listing all of the questions which were analysed for this study.

# Appendix

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## **Hobsons School-leaver Review 2007: Methodology**

School-leavers were invited to take part in the online questionnaire via an email which contained a password-protected hyperlink to the questionnaire. The e-mail explained the aims of the study and emphasised that participants' anonymity would remain guaranteed throughout.

To show our appreciation to the students for their willingness to participate and encourage a higher response rate, we offered participants the opportunity to enter a prize draw. All students who completed the questionnaire could indicate their interest in the prize draw on a separate web page.

The field phase of the study ran from 08.03.2007 to 30.03.2007. After closing the study, we were able to include the responses from a total of 15,404 UK participants in the analysis. In addition to our own database of young people, Hobsons partnered with a number of other organisations to achieve the sample of school-leavers within the UK. As the primary resource, Hobsons sent a mail shot to UCAS's pre-applicant database, which is comprised of young people entering Year 12 and Year 13, who may go on to apply for university or college. An announcement and link to our survey was also published in an e-newsletter sent out by Student Travel Authority (STA), a UK travel website for students and young people. We also had a presence on The Student Room website, hosted by Acumen PI, the UK's largest online student community.

After closure of the field phase, a process of data cleaning took place to ensure all responses included in the analysis were valid. To further ensure the reliability of the results, statistical analysis was conducted for charts where the results were surprising or of particular importance.

## **Questionnaire design**

Hobsons developed a 25 minute online questionnaire orientated towards the specific issues that students take in to consideration when leaving school or college and progressing to university. The key themes are shown below.

### 1. Biographic/demographic information

Students were asked some basic biographic and demographic questions: gender; year of study; ethnicity; age; and personality traits.

### 2. Current study and skills

Students were asked about their academic background: current qualifications, current course, expected grades; type of institution currently studying at; personal assessment of skills sets; other experience.

### 3. Future studies

Students were asked about their interest in going to university, what they mainly plan to do after their current course, their preferred university courses,

## Appendix

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sources of information used to research universities; who they consult regarding decisions.

### 1. University rankings and customer relationship management

Students were asked which institutions they have heard of, would apply to, and which they consider their top choices; which universities they have made enquires to and their satisfaction with feedback received.

### 2. Funding

Students are asked questions about tuition fees, how much they expect to pay, and how they might fund themselves through the duration of their courses.

Questionnaire length is an important issue in empirical research. There exists considerable potential for conflict between the aims of obtaining as comprehensive an insight as possible into the specific characteristics of the investigated population and the time taken to complete the questionnaire. If the questionnaire is too short, it cannot serve as an effective instrument for obtaining the desired information and the investigation does not achieve its purpose. If it is too long, the respondent loses interest in answering the questions carefully and conscientiously, reducing the quality of data collected. Our experiences have enabled us to find a balance that we are convinced guarantees both the quality of the data and the achievement of our aims.

An advantage to us in finding this balance was the fact that the form of data collection employed, via the Internet, permitted the use of a 'dynamic' or 'adaptive' questionnaire. For instance, only students studying engineering-related subjects were presented with the further question asking them to specify which engineering subject they were taking within their course. Thus, by using complex filtering and rotation systems, we were able to gain a much deeper insight into students' thought processes and obtain more robust data.

## Appendix

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<b>UK School leaver Survey 2007</b>
<b>Extract from questionnaire: Full questions (reported in this document)</b>
<b>Are you...?</b>
Male
Female
<b>How old are you?</b>
Age
15 or under
16
17
18
Over 18
<b>Where are you currently studying?</b>
State Secondary School (no fees)
Fee Paying Private School (independent)
Grammar School (Selective/no fees)
6th Form College
Further Education (FE) College
Academy
School outside the UK
University/ Higher Education College
<b>What year are you in?</b>
Year 9 or below
Year 10
Year 11 (or equivalent)
Year 12 / 1st year of 6th form or FE College / Secondary 5 (Scotland)
Year 13 / 2nd year of 6th form or FE College / Secondary 6 (Scotland)
Year 14 (Northern Ireland)
1st year of university
Other year at university
Other (please specify):
<b>Which of the following subjects are you currently studying?</b>
Accounting/ Finance
Arts and Design (inc. Photography, Textiles, Ceramics, Graphics)
Biological Sciences (inc. Biology)
Building/ Construction
Business/ Administrative Studies (inc. Management)
Chemistry
Computer Science/IT/ICT
Design & Technology
Drama/Theatre studies/Performing Arts
Economics
Education/ Teaching

Engineering
English Literature, Classics and related
English Language
General studies
Geography
Geology
Health and Social Care/ Social work
History
Languages
Law
Leisure & Tourism
Manufacturing
Mathematics
Media Studies, Publishing, Journalism
Medicine & Dentistry (inc. Nursing, Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Pharmacy)
Music
Physical Education/ Sport Science
Philosophy
Physics
Politics/ Government
Psychology
Religious Education
Sociology
Other (please specify):
<b><i>Which of the following have you ever done?</i></b>
Casual work experience (e.g. shop assistant, paper round)
Office-based work experience
Work experience in a career area that you are interested in
Work experience with a company you are interested in working for
Voluntary/ Charity work
Been a member of a sports society/ club
Held a position of responsibility (e.g. prefect)
None of the above
<b><i>Which of the following languages are you currently studying?</i></b>
French
German
Italian
Portuguese
Russian
Spanish
Other (please specify):
<b><i>When did you decide that you wanted to go to university?</i></b>
<i>I always knew I would go to university</i>
<i>Primary school</i>
<i>Year 7</i>
<i>Year 8</i>
<i>Year 9</i>
<i>Year 10</i>
<i>Year 11 (or equivalent)</i>

Year 12/ 1st year of 6th form college/ Secondary 5 (Scotland)
Year 13/ 2nd year of 6th form college/ Secondary 6 (Scotland)
Year 14 (Northern Ireland)
Other (please specify):
<b>What subjects are you MOST likely to study if you go to university?</b>
Accounting/ Finance
Architecture
Arts and Design (inc. Photography, Textiles, Ceramics, Graphics)
Biological Sciences (inc. Biology)
Building/ Construction
Business/ Administrative Studies (inc. Management, HR)
Chemistry
Computer Science/ IT/ ICT
Design & Technology
Drama/ Theatre studies/ Performing Arts
Economics
Education/ Teaching
Engineering
English Language
English Literature, Classics and related
General studies
Geography
Geology
Health and Social Care/ Social work
History
Languages
Law
Leisure & Tourism
Manufacturing
Marketing
Mathematics
Media Studies, Publishing, Journalism
Medicine & Dentistry (inc. Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Pharmacy)
Music
Nursing
Philosophy
Physical Education/ Sport Science
Physics
Politics/ Government
Psychology
Religious Education
Sociology
Other (please specify):
Other (please specify):
<b>Which language (s) are you most likely to study if you go to university?</b>
French
German
Italian
Portuguese
Russian



Spanish
Other (please specify):
Other (please specify):
<i>Which specific engineering discipline(s) are you most likely to study if you go to university?</i>
General Engineering
Civil Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Aerospace Engineering
Electrical/ Electronic Engineering
Production & Manufacturing Engineering
Chemical, Process & Energy Engineering
Other (please specify):
Other (please specify):
<i>What are your MAIN REASONS for wanting to study these subjects at university?</i>
I am most interested in these areas
I am good at these subjects
I need to study this subject for the career area that I want to work in
I can get a well-paid job with this subject
I can work in a wide variety of career areas with this subject
My teacher(s) suggested that I study this subject
The tuition fees are lower than other subjects
I can get additional funding for studying this subject (e.g. a scholarship)
This subject area is well respected
I don't know
Other (please specify):
<b><i>Tell us how much you agree or disagree with these statements regarding SCIENCE.</i></b>
<i>strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, I don't know</i>
Studying this subject at university would be difficult
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want
I enjoy doing experiments in laboratories at school/college
I will be able to make a difference to society if I study science at university
<b><i>Tell us how much you agree or disagree with these statements regarding ENGINEERING.</i></b>
<i>strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, I don't know</i>
Studying this subject at university would be difficult
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want
Studying engineering at university will help me turn my design ideas into reality
I need to be good at both maths AND science to study engineering at university
<b><i>Tell us how much you agree or disagree with these statements regarding MATHS.</i></b>
<i>strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, I don't know</i>
Studying this subject at university would be difficult
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want

Maths is useful in any job or career
Learning about numbers comes naturally to me
<b>Tell us how much you agree or disagree with these statements regarding ICT.</b>
<i>strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, I don't know</i>
Studying this subject at university would be difficult
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want
I enjoy learning to work with new technology
Understanding new technology will keep me ahead in the job market
<b>Tell us how much you agree or disagree with these statements regarding ENGLISH.</b>
<i>strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, I don't know</i>
Studying this subject at university would be difficult
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want
I enjoy analysing the books that I have read
I am good at expressing my opinions
<b>Tell us how much you agree or disagree with these statements regarding MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES.</b>
<i>strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, I don't know</i>
Studying this subject at university would be difficult
I think this would be an enjoyable subject to study at university
I think this subject is more practical than theoretical
Studying this subject at university will help me get the career job I want
Learning a language will help me get a job in any career area
I will be able to work anywhere in the world if I study languages at university
<b>How important are the following qualities in your choice of university?</b>
<i>Not at all important, not very important, quite important, very important</i>
Good sports facilities (e.g. football pitch/ gym)
Good learning facilities (e.g. libraries, computer rooms)
Good social facilities (e.g. student union, student societies, social life)
Good reputation for graduate employment
Good reputation for the course that I want to study
Competitive tuition fees for the course I want to study
Good student accommodation near the university
Staff helpful when dealing with questions/ enquiries
Availability of bursaries to help fund my studies
High level of entry grades for the course that I want to study
High position in the university rankings/ league tables
Located in a safe area
Located in an attractive city
<b>The next few questions ask you to think about your skills and personality traits. How would you rate your skills in the following areas?</b>
<i>Not at all good, not very good, neither good nor bad, good, very good</i>
Taking the lead
Listening to other people
Having original thoughts and ideas

Writing essays/reports/stories
Understanding instructions
Speaking to an audience
<b>Thinking about the skills which you are best at, where do you think you mainly learned these skills?</b>
At home
At work
At primary school in general
At secondary school in general (aged 11-16 years old)
At school/college in general (aged 16-18 years old)
In a specific subject at school or college
As part of a hobby/ extra-curricular activity
Other (please specify):
<b>The next few questions ask you to think about your skills and personality traits. How would you rate your skills in the following areas? )</b>
<i>Not at all good, not very good, neither good not bad, good, very good</i>
Planning my work
Co-operating with others
Contributing to discussions
Learning from mistakes
Following things through from start to finish
<b>Thinking about the skills which you are best at, where do you think you mainly learned these skills?</b>
At home
At work
At primary school in general
At secondary school in general (aged 11-16 years old)
At school/college in general (aged 16-18 years old)
In a specific subject at school or college
As part of a hobby/ extra-curricular activity
Other (please specify):
<b>The next few questions ask you to think about your skills and personality traits. How would you rate your skills in the following areas?</b>
<i>Not at all good, not very good, neither good not bad, good, very good</i>
Making decisions
Organising people
Being open to new ways of doing things
Paying attention to detail
Working with and understanding numbers
Coping with problems and setbacks
<b>Thinking about the skills which you are best at, where do you think you mainly learned these skills?</b>
At home
At work
At primary school in general
At secondary school in general (aged 11-16 years old)
At school/college in general (aged 16-18 years old)
In a specific subject at school or college
As part of a hobby/ extra-curricular activity
Other (please specify):

<i>How do you think other people would describe you?</i>
Cool
Confident
Trustworthy
Conscientious
Clever
Motivated
Kind
Independent
Argumentative
Enthusiastic
Hard working
Dedicated
Creative
Shy
Laid back
Ambitious
Passionate
Friendly
Entrepreneurial
Funny
<b>Have you started collecting information on universities yet?</b>
Yes
No
<b>When did you first start collecting information on universities?</b>
Before year 9
Year 9
Year 10
Year 11 (or equivalent)
Year 12/ 1st year of 6th form college/ Secondary 5 (Scotland)
Year 13/ 2nd year of 6th form college/ Secondary 6 (Scotland)
Year 14 (Northern Ireland)
After Year 13 (Year 14 for Northern Ireland)
Don't know
<b>When exactly did you first start collecting information on universities?</b>
1st term, 2nd term, 3rd term, summer holidays
List element: Before year 9
List element: Year 9
List element: Year 10
List element: Year 11 (or equiv)
List element: Year 12 /1st year of 6th form college /Secondary 5 (Scotland)
List element: Year 13 /2nd year of 6th form college /Secondary 6 (Scotland)
List element: Year 14 (Northern Ireland)
List element: After Year 13 (Year 14 for Northern Ireland)
List element: Don't know
<b>What have you USED to find out about different universities?</b>
Careers & Education magazines

Careers service (school/ college)
CD Roms
Cinema advertisements
Direct contact with the university by phone and/ or email
Education directories (e.g. UCAS Directory)
Education events/ fairs (e.g. UCAS Education Conventions)
Education websites (e.g. springboard.co.uk, s-cool.co.uk, getsmaart.co.uk, UCAS.com)
Emails from education/ careers websites (e.g. springboard.co.uk, s-cool.co.uk, getsmaart.co.uk)
Local careers centre
Newspapers (national)
Newspapers (regional)
Newspapers (school/college)
Outdoor advertisements (e.g. on public transport)
Radio advertisements
Recommendations/ word of mouth
Social networking websites (e.g. myspace.com, facebook.com, youtube.com)
Television advertisements or programmes
University open days/ visits
University presentations
University prospectuses
University websites
Other (please specify):
<b>What have you found most USEFUL to find out about different universities?</b>
<b>Who would (did) you MAINLY turn to for advice about the following?</b>
<i>Mum/female carer, dad/ male carer, brother/ sister, other relative, career adviser, teacher, friend, employer</i>
Choices at GCSE (or equivalent)
Choices at AS/ A level (or equivalent)
Which university to study at
Which career area to work in
Which company to work for
<b>If you were to go to university, what source (s) of funding would you use?</b>
Tuition fee loan (from the government)
Living cost loan (from the government)
Maintenance grant (from the government, based on your parents' / carers' income)
Special Support grants
Higher Education grants
Part time work
University bursary
University scholarship
Sponsorship
Personal savings/ investments
Parents/ carers/ other relatives
Access to learning funds
Charitable funds
Don't know
Other (please specify):
<b>If you were to go to university, how far away from home would you like to live?</b>
<i>I would live at home</i>

<i>I would live less than 1 hour away from home</i>
<i>1-2 hours away</i>
<i>3-4 hours away</i>
<i>5 or more hours away</i>
<i>Doesn't matter how far away I live from home</i>
<i>I want to live as far away from home as possible</i>
<i>I don't know</i>
<b>Which of the following qualifications are you currently studying?</b>
GCSEs
GCSEs in vocational subjects
AS levels
A levels
AS levels in applied subjects
A levels in applied subjects
Extended Project
Advanced Extension Award
Scottish Highers/ Higher Stills
Scottish Advanced Highers
GNVQs
Vocational Qualification (eg NVQ, BTEC)
Not currently studying
Other (please specify):
<b>We would like to know what UCAS points you expect to get for the qualifications that you are currently studying, excluding general studies.</b>
<b>In what region do you live?</b>
<i>East Midlands</i>
<i>East of England</i>
<i>London</i>
<i>North East</i>
<i>North West</i>
<i>South East</i>
<i>South West</i>
<i>West Midlands</i>
<i>Yorkshire and the Humber</i>
<i>Scotland</i>
<i>Wales</i>
<i>Northern Ireland</i>
<i>I live outside the UK (please specify country):</i>
<i>I live outside the UK (please specify country):</i>
<b>Is your school a specialist school?</b>
Yes
No
<b>What area does your school specialise in?</b>
Arts
Business & Enterprise
Engineering
Humanities

Languages
Maths & Computing
Music
SEN Specialist School
Science
Sports
Technology
Combined (2 specialisms)
City Technology College
<b>Do you, or did you claim Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) whilst studying at school or 6th Form college?</b>
No
Yes £10 per week
Yes £20 per week
Yes £30 per week
<b>Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?</b>
<i>White</i>
<i>British</i>
<i>Irish</i>
<b>Mixed</b>
<i>White and Black Caribbean</i>
<i>White and Black African</i>
<i>White and Asian</i>
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>
<i>Indian</i>
<i>Pakistani</i>
<i>Bangladeshi</i>
<i>Other Asian</i>
<b>Black or Black British</b>
<i>Caribbean</i>
<i>African</i>
<i>Other Black</i>
<b>Chinese</b>
<b>Other Ethnic group (please specify):</b>
<b>I do not wish to have an ethnic group recorded</b>
<b>What is your nationality?</b>
<i>British</i>
<i>Other European Union national</i>
<i>Other Non-EU Foreign national</i>
<b>Here are some things that young people have said about work and university. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.</b>
<i>Strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree</i>
<i>I would consider studying abroad in the future.</i>
<i>My careers interviews at school were very useful</i>

## Contact details

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For more information on the Hobsons School-leaver Review please contact

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