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Report to

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Consultative Review of Ireland's Graduate
Outcomes Survey

June 2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Project

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory agency responsible for the effective governance and regulation of the higher education system in Ireland. A part of the HEA's remit includes measuring graduate outcomes. To this end, the Graduate Outcomes Survey is distributed, nine months after their graduation, to all graduates of NQF Level 6 to 10 courses, inclusive of international students, that are offered by higher education institutions (HEIs) under the remit of the HEA. The survey is intended to highlight current opportunities and challenges facing graduates and therefore to inform future policy developments in response to this at both the institutional and national levels.

In 2017, the Council of the European Union recommended improving the availability and quality of data about the activities of graduates, including making progress on establishing graduate-tracking systems. To that end, a report entitled *Mapping the State of Graduate Tracking Policies and Practices in the EU Member States and EEA countries*¹ was prepared for the European Commission in 2020. This report indicated that Ireland was a lead performer in this area and is recognised internationally as a leader in graduate tracking.

Crowe was appointed by the HEA through competitive tender in February 2024 to conduct a consultative review of Ireland's Graduate Outcomes Survey, to provide recommendations for the future development of the survey. The purpose of this review was to take stock of developments in the last eight years to solidify the national approach to graduate tracking for the next decade.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The HEA set out five key principles that provide purpose and govern the conduct of the review, which were:

- **Reflect the higher education landscape, now and into the future:** The higher education system continues to evolve and graduate tracking should be future-proofed to meet the needs of all stakeholders;
- **Be of the highest quality:** Ireland should continue to lead internationally by expanding on a reliable and accurate evidence base for policymakers, HEIs, prospective students, and other stakeholders;
- **Be obtained as efficiently as possible:** The methodology and operation of graduate surveying should be fit for purpose and efficient, enabling high-value, well-structured, timely, and robust data to be collected;
- **Be accessible and joined up:** Those interested in graduate data should be enabled to obtain information that is freely available and easy to understand, taking into account the range of data sources within the higher education system; and
- **Support policy frameworks:** Graduate survey data should support the higher education System Performance Framework and other national policy frameworks.

¹

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/93231582-a66c-11ea-bb7a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

We met the following Terms of Reference for the review:

- Conduct consultations with relevant stakeholders, including HEIs, graduates, employers, and government representatives, to gather input and feedback on the content of the review;
- Assess the existing survey questionnaire, its relevance and alignment with the evolving higher education landscape;
- Evaluate the survey's data collection processes and analysis methods to ensure quality and efficiency;
- Examine the operational aspects of the survey, including timelines, data submission, and reporting mechanisms;
- Review the data collection and analysis processes for quality, accuracy, and efficiency;
- Analyse data collection methods, response rates, and data validation procedures;
- Suggest improvements to enhance the survey's effectiveness;
- Summarise findings of the review process;
- Develop clear and actionable recommendations for improving the Graduate Outcomes Survey;
- Prioritise recommendations based on their potential impact and feasibility;
- Prepare a comprehensive report that includes the review findings, stakeholder feedback, and recommendations; and
- Include data analysis, charts, and visual representations to support the findings.

1.3 Conduct of the Review

1.3.1 Overview

The consultative review was a comprehensive assessment of the National Graduate Outcomes Survey, drawing on both primary research conducted by the review team, mainly through stakeholder engagement, and secondary research using information generated by the HEA, as well as publicly available information.

The review was conducted between February and May 2024, and involved four broad sets of tasks:

- Reviewing information relating to the Graduate Outcomes Survey, including international research to support comparative analysis and benchmarking;
- Gathering information relating to the survey and its performance through engagement with a variety of stakeholders, including HEIs, employers, and government representatives;
- Rigorous analysis of information and data gathered through our desk-based review and engagement with stakeholders; and
- Development of draft and final reports for delivery to the HEA.

1.3.2 Project Initiation

The purpose of this task was to formally initiate the project with the HEA. During this task, our project team met with HEA representatives to agree on the terms of reference and the overall approach to the assignment. The project initiation meeting involved the following key activities:

- Agree on any refinements to the proposed overall approach, if required;
- Agree on the project organisation and reporting arrangements;
- Agree on the project timetable and relevant deadlines;
- Identify any relevant documents/contacts that may help our research and analysis; and
- Agree on a stakeholder map for stakeholder engagement.

We used the project initiation meeting as a forum to support the “context-setting” of this assignment, ensuring our project team fully understood the HEA’s expectations for this assignment.

1.3.3 Desk-Based Review

This task comprised a detailed documentary review of a range of relevant documentation relating to the Graduate Outcomes Survey and the broader higher education landscape. The objective of the documentary review was to deepen our familiarity with the Survey and the current landscape in which it operates, to inform subsequent consultation exercises.

The review of documentation provided by the HEA and of documentation that was freely accessible through online sources supported the team in assessing the current position of the Survey and taking stock of progress since its inception to develop a picture of the Survey’s current position. Additionally, our thorough analysis of documentation and information allowed us to approach stakeholder engagements with a strong understanding of the “as-is” picture of the Survey, and any areas that may be of particular relevance to stakeholders.

1.3.4 Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout this task, we employed a variety of engagement methodologies to gather information from stakeholders, to inform our findings and subsequent recommendations. This engagement allowed us to gather primary data and information from those directly and indirectly involved with the survey, supporting evidence generated during other tasks.

All stakeholders that the HEA identified were invited to engage in this consultation process. We undertook one-to-one engagements and focus groups to capture a broad range of views from these stakeholders. A list of stakeholder groups that participated in the process is included in Appendix A.

1.3.5 Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this task was to triangulate our findings from the preceding tasks and formulate evidence-informed recommendations for the HEA to support future iterations of the Graduate Outcome Survey.

Having generated a significant volume of data and information through primary (stakeholder engagement), and secondary (desk-based) research, this task involved drawing together all of the information generated and conducting a rounded analysis across all themes set out in the Terms of Reference for this assignment.

1.3.6 Reporting

During this task, we compiled all research, findings, and recommendations gathered and generated in the previous tasks together into this comprehensive report, addressing the Terms of Reference of this assignment. The initial draft report was shared with the HEA for review and feedback for incorporation in this final report.

2 Graduate Outcomes Survey Overview

The Graduate Outcomes Survey is an important component of the HEA's mandate as outlined in the Higher Education Authority Act 2022 (the Act)². Enacted to ensure the effective planning, coordination, and development of higher education in Ireland, section 34, subsection 3 (d) (vii) of the Act grants the HEA responsibility for collecting and disseminating data regarding graduate outcomes from HEIs.

Embedded within this legislative basis, the Survey serves as a strategic instrument for fulfilling the HEA's statutory obligations by systematically evaluating the post-graduation pathways of individuals who have completed higher education programmes across Ireland. By capturing comprehensive data on graduate outcomes, the survey enables the HEA to fulfil its mandate of promoting excellence, relevance, and accessibility within the higher education sector. The Graduate Outcomes Survey serves multiple purposes aligned with the HEA's overarching objectives:

- **Informing Policy Decisions:** The survey provides policymakers with robust evidence regarding the effectiveness of higher education programmes in preparing graduates for the workforce or further study. By analysing trends in employment rates, salaries, and career trajectories, policymakers can formulate evidence-based policies to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education provision.
- **Improving Educational Practices:** Institutions utilise survey data to assess the efficacy of their programmes in facilitating successful graduate outcomes. By identifying areas for improvement, such as curriculum enhancements or career support services, institutions can enhance the overall student experience and ensure alignment with industry needs.
- **Supporting Student Decision-Making:** Prospective students benefit from the Survey by using the results to gain insights into the employment outcomes and career paths of past graduates. This information empowers students to make informed decisions regarding their choice of programmes and institutions, aligning their educational pursuits with their career aspirations.
- **Enhancing Accountability and Transparency:** The survey promotes accountability and transparency within the higher education sector by providing stakeholders with access to comprehensive data on graduate outcomes. Through annual reports and data dissemination efforts, the HEA ensures that stakeholders, including students, parents, employers, and policymakers, are informed about the performance and impact of higher education programmes.

The survey employs a robust methodology to collect data from recent graduates across all higher education institutions in Ireland. The Graduate Outcomes Survey is a national survey distributed to all graduates of higher education institutions under the remit of the HEA approximately nine months after graduation. The survey encompasses a range of variables, including employment status, further study pursuits and salary levels.

The response rate to the survey is consistently monitored and optimised to ensure the representativeness and reliability of the data. The 2023 Graduate Outcomes Survey had an overall response rate of 49.6% and demonstrated that 77.2% of honours degree graduates were working or due to start work nine months after graduation.

² <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/act/31/enacted/en/html>

3 Desk Research

3.1 Overview

As part of our desk research for this assignment, we reviewed survey reports, guidance material for HEIs, survey questionnaires, previous review reports, and data sets generated from previous Graduate Outcomes Survey.

In addition to the documentation reviewed relating to the Graduate Outcomes Survey in Ireland, we undertook an international research process, during which we reviewed material relevant to graduate tracking, and assessed the method of graduate-tracking surveys in other regions. The outcomes of this desk-based research are set out in the following sections, and specific elements are broken down elsewhere in this report.

3.2 Outputs from Desk Research

3.2.1 Survey Questionnaire

The most recent iteration of the survey questionnaire published by the HEA is for the class of 2023 graduates. The survey contains six sections under the following headings:

- Your Current Situation;
- Employment;
- Further Study and Training;
- Unemployed/Looking for work and Other Activity;
- Experience in Higher Education; and
- Contact details.

The response of graduates in Section 1 of the survey guides the subsequent sections that are available for respondents to complete. Each option in Section 1 corresponds to a different section in the Survey; for example, if the respondent selects that they are “working full-time” in Section 1, Section 2 will become available, allowing them to answer questions surrounding employment.

Section 5 of the survey seeks to understand the experience of graduates in higher education, comprising five separate questions, one of which is compulsory while the remaining four free-text response questions are optional. The final section of the survey gives the option for respondents to provide their contact details for contact in subsequent years as part of a follow-up survey.

Our key findings in relation to the efficiency of the current structure of the survey are set out in Section 5 of this report.

3.2.2 Career Tracking Working Group

The National Framework for Doctoral Education³ (NFDE) aims to underpin excellence in all forms of doctoral education in Ireland, in line with international and European standards,

³

[National Framework for Doctoral Education 2023.pdf \(myphd.ie\)](#)

through a set of principles for doctoral education, recognising the diversity of the higher education system in Ireland.

In 2020, a review of the National Framework was commissioned by the NFDE Advisory Group⁴, which is co-chaired by the HEA and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), leading to a final report that recommended that career tracking should be further developed. This led to the establishment of the Career Tracking Working Group, consisting of members of the Advisory Forum, which was tasked with carrying out a scoping exercise to develop a proposal for the development of a national postgraduate researcher career-tracking project.

3.2.3 Reports Published

HEIs provide the data generated by the Graduate Outcomes Survey to the HEA, which then audits and analyses the data to produce and publish the information through various means to illustrate the graduate outcomes. Annually, the HEA publishes the Graduate Outcomes Survey reports in interactive form. This allows for the broad range of data to be manipulated by those seeking to understand specific information.

Alongside the annual reports, the HEA publishes additional reports utilising the survey data focusing on graduates from specific backgrounds, which includes graduates with a disability⁵ through linking the survey data and Equal Access Survey data, and graduates of varying socio-economic backgrounds⁶, by linking the survey data to the Small Area Deprivation Index Scores. Additionally, throughout the academic year, the HEA utilises the data generated by the survey to produce various “deep-dive” short reports called info-bytes, which generally focus on specific policy-relevant areas, such as doctoral graduates and international students.

Our assessment of the quality and efficiency of the data generated and reported on by the HEA is set out in Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

3.3 Comparative Research

3.3.1 Overview

This section of the report sets out the findings of our assessment of international material relating to graduate tracking and the process of comparative graduate surveys. During this process, we reviewed a wide range of material, including and relating to:

- HEA Graduate Surveys Review of International Practice⁷;
- European Commission Publications;
- The European Network of Graduate Tracking;
- The European Graduate Tracking Survey (EUROGRADUATE); and
- The UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Graduate Outcomes Survey.

The key findings of our review of these materials are set out in the following subsections.

⁴ https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EUA-Solutions-report_HEA_QQI_IUA_THEA.pdf

⁵ <https://hea.ie/statistics/graduate-outcomes-data-and-reports/graduate-outcomes-for-access-groups/1-graduate-outcomes-for-graduates-with-a-disability-foreword/>

⁶ <https://hea.ie/statistics/graduate-outcomes-data-and-reports/graduate-outcomes-for-access-groups/2-foreword-gosdis-2020/>

⁷ <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/Graduate-Surveys-Review-of-International-Practice.pdf>

3.3.2 HEA Graduate Surveys Review of International Practice

In October 2015 the HEA published a review of international practice in relation to graduate surveys. This report provides an overview of the Graduate Survey in Ireland and proposed changes, an overview of international comparative surveys, key European approaches to measuring graduate outcomes, a review of existing longitudinal graduate studies, limitations and challenges of graduate surveys, and a summary and conclusion of international approaches.

This report provides a breakdown of the approaches to graduate tracking across 30 countries in Europe, highlighting disparities in the level of surveying undertaken. It was found that 13 countries used some form of graduate surveying, of which two countries conducted once-off surveys, three countries carried out between one and three surveys, and the remaining countries conducted regular graduate surveys. It is noted that although 17 of the countries did not undertake any surveying of graduates, four of those countries employed a methodology of linking data to other Government data sources.

Additionally, there was some variation in the timescales in those countries that utilised a graduate-tracking survey. In the majority of countries, an initial survey was conducted within one year of graduation, while those countries that adopted longitudinal follow-up surveys commonly conducted them one, two, or five years post-graduation.

The report sets out four of the main limitations and challenges associated with graduate surveying, along with suggestions to overcome these issues. These are briefly outlined below:

- **Response rates:** Achieving a high response rate in graduate surveying is a time-consuming process, with specific issues in surveying longitudinally. It is suggested that those countries that adopt a mixed-method approach to contacting graduates and that offer incentives attain a higher response rate.
- **Representativeness:** Ensuring that the cohort responding to the survey is representative of both the general student population and specific groups of graduates. It is suggested that the dual method of contacting graduates would support the mitigation of this by enhancing response rates and giving an accurate depiction of the graduate population.
- **Annual versus longitudinal surveying:** Annual survey data tends to produce short-term outcomes at a particular point in time, which may not provide an accurate depiction of graduates' outcomes. The report suggests the use of longitudinal surveying of the same cohort, which would allow for career trajectories and patterns to be analysed.
- **Survey data decoupled from administrative data:** Survey data was criticised for providing data in isolation of other variables such as socio-economic backgrounds, and it was suggested that linking the data to other administrative sources would support these issues and allow for a broader use of the survey data.

The report concludes by providing the key steps in devising the new Graduate Outcomes Survey in Ireland, utilising the ideas and insights set out in the report on how best to reform the Irish graduate survey.

3.3.3 European Union Publications

In 2017, the Council of the European Union set out a series of 14 recommendations⁸, eight of which pertained to Member States, and the remaining six related to the European Commission. These recommendations relate to a variety of topics that relate to graduate tracking, including availability and quality of data, the content of data to be collected, longitudinal graduate surveys, European cooperation, dissemination and exploitation of results, funding, and reporting.

Following the 2017 European Council recommendations that EU Member States, with the support of the European Commission, should commit to collecting information on higher education and Vocational Education and Training graduates, a European Commission expert group on graduate tracking was established to monitor progress on the development of graduate-tracking systems in Member States. This expert group was divided into four task forces, each with a specific focus on four distinct topics including Vision and Options, Mobile Graduates, Administrative Data, and VET Learners. The final report of the expert group, setting out recommendations based on the work of the task forces, was published in early 2021.

3.3.4 The European Network of Graduate Tracking

Based on the work of the aforementioned expert group on graduate tracking, and the recommendations set out in their final report, a European Network of Graduate Tracking was established by the European Commission to support EU Member States with the implementation of the Council Recommendations on tracking graduates⁶.

This Network consists of:

- National graduate-tracking reference points nominated by EU Member States and EEA countries;
- Representatives from the European Commission – the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), Eurostat, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP); and
- European-level stakeholders and social partners representing students, higher education and vocational education and training institutions, teachers, and workers.

The purpose of the Network is to foster cooperation and co-creation, providing a forum for mutual learning of countries in the European Graduate Tracking Initiative. This is done so through annual meetings discussing progress and outcomes, peer-learning activities on common challenges, and thematic working group meetings and webinars.

3.3.5 European Graduate Tracking Survey (EUROGRADUATE)

The EUROGRADUATE survey aims to create and implement a regular, comprehensive, comparable, and longitudinal European collection of data on higher education graduates across all countries in the European Economic Area (EEA), as part of the European Graduate Tracking Initiative of the European Commission. The survey is funded by the Erasmus+ programme, coordinated by the German Centre for Higher Education Research in Science Studies, and is carried out by international organisations that specialise in survey projects in the higher education field.

⁸

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H1209%2801%29>

The survey aims to monitor the short-term and mid-term development of graduates, collecting data from graduates one year and five years post-graduation of Level 6 and 7 programmes. Level 5 programmes can be included should they be classified as higher education on national levels, and Level 8 programme graduates may be surveyed for national data collection.

The sampling strategy is determined by the consortium in close collaboration with each country to ensure the achievement of an adequate response rate to allow for reliability. A master questionnaire, as well as support for setting up and conducting the data collection process, is provided in all countries. The countries are responsible for programming the online survey and implementing the data collection process.

The survey is distributed into three distinct modules of questions, including personal and social backgrounds, educational career, transition to work and work history, skills, job satisfaction, and social outcomes. The first module is essential and identifies graduates' socio-demographics and higher education and employment information. The second module is recommended and covers topics such as detailed background information, study details, skills, competencies, and match of education and employment. The final module covers the social outcomes experienced by graduates and is optional.

3.3.6 *The UK HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey*

The UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has delivered graduate surveying since 1994/95. In 2016, a review was undertaken by HESA of the then-graduate survey, which led to the creation of the Graduate Outcomes Survey. This led to an extension of the timelines for when graduates were surveyed, to 15 months following graduation, allowing for more insightful information on graduates' outcomes.

The survey seeks to understand the position of graduates following graduation and gain insights into the experience they had and the extent to which their qualifications played a part in this. The survey is designed to support the Government, charities, and other stakeholders in understanding the higher education sector and the state of the graduate labour market and to help higher education providers fulfil their legal requirement to report on the outcomes of higher education to the funding and regulatory bodies.

The survey is delivered directly by HESA on behalf of the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies working with higher education institutions. They employ three methods of contacting graduates whose information is supplied to HESA by universities and colleges working in collaboration with the Agency. The HESA directly contacts graduates through the email address provided and provides a link to complete the survey, along with text messages and phone calls that are carried out by IFF Research, appointed by HESA.

3.3.7 *Summary of Comparative Research*

The comparative research conducted looked at international publications and publicly available material relating to graduate surveying. Alongside this, we also examined comparable surveys that provided insight into the current processes in graduate tracking internationally and provided useful insights and context for us to draw upon throughout this review.

This research provided context for graduate tracking across Europe, drawing on recommendations set out by the Council of the European Union and the establishment of the European Commission expert group on graduate tracking, which in turn led to the European Network for Graduate Tracking.

In Subsections 3.3.5 and 3.3.6, the current structure and operation of international graduate tracking surveys were assessed. This provided an opportunity for us to compare the operations of the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey to international comparators. It is evident that the methodologies employed internationally differ and we assess that there is no universally accepted method for graduate outcomes surveying. This indicated that there was no single clear benchmark upon which we could directly compare and contrast the HEA's performance in this respect. For this review, the main comparator we used was the UK's HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey. This was due primarily to proximity to Ireland as well as the distinct differences in the timelines and methodology of data collection seen elsewhere across Europe.

4 The Higher Education Landscape Context

4.1 Overview

As mentioned in Section 1.2 of this report, the higher education system is continuously evolving and graduate tracking must be future-proofed to meet the needs of all stakeholders. This section outlines considerations that the HEA should be cognisant of for future iterations of the Graduate Outcome Survey to ensure that the data generated is representative of the current and future demographics of graduates.

4.2 Key Findings

4.2.1 *Changes in Surveying of Graduates*

Currently, the Graduate Outcomes Survey is distributed to all graduates of levels 6 to 10 courses, including international students, of HEA higher education institutions. The survey is live nine months after their graduation to highlight current opportunities and challenges facing graduates and therefore inform future developments in response to this.

The tracking of graduate outcomes in Ireland began in 1982 through the First Destinations Survey, which was replaced by the Graduate Outcomes Survey following Steering Group approval in 2015. The survey in its current form was piloted in 2016 and was distributed to institutes of technology in 2017. Since 2018, the survey has been implemented across all universities, technological universities, and one private college, Dublin Business School.

4.2.2 *Graduate Values and Experiences*

Since the 2016 iteration of the survey, the world of work has changed dramatically, in particular, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in remote working arrangements. Furthermore, the pandemic has had implications for the experience of graduates while undertaking their studies in higher education. Many graduates have now completed some or most of their studies online, and it is, therefore, reasonable to assume that this will have an impact on their expectations of the working world. This is not currently being captured in the survey questions. The survey does not capture what the values of graduates are, and what influences them when seeking employment opportunities. There is potential for the survey to include questions regarding the values (or motivations) of graduates to better understand how a changing higher education landscape is influencing and driving changes in the working world, and in the decisions graduates make about their career trajectories and further studies.

4.2.3 *Micro-credentials*

In recent years there has been an increase in the prevalence of micro-credentials being offered by HEIs, reflecting a significant change in attitudes and approaches to CPD and mobility into and out of educational programmes. Micro-credentials are small, accredited courses designed to meet the demands of learners, enterprises and organisations. This type of learning provides opportunities which offer a highly flexible, bite-sized and accessible way of upskilling and reskilling. As these types of courses become more commonplace and graduates from these courses proliferate in the market, it must be decided if, and how, their experience will be captured. Currently, these graduates are not surveyed as part of the

Graduate Outcome Survey. However, the experiences of these graduates and the impact they have on the workforce will be an important metric by which the success of these courses will be measured. Therefore, the HEA needs to consider the value of including graduates from these courses in the survey from a policy perspective, and if agreeable, at what exact point these graduates should be surveyed. Due to the compact nature of these courses, individuals may decide to do several micro-credential courses over a short period. Therefore, if implemented the HEA must decide if graduates are surveyed after every micro-credential course they complete, or if they are surveyed after they completed a certain number of courses. Questions surrounding the surveying of micro-credential graduates were raised by a number of stakeholders during our consultation process.

Similar questions were raised during our discussions regarding graduates of apprenticeships and other such courses which are not of the standard undergraduate or postgraduate journey but are becoming more prevalent in the higher education landscape.

4.2.4 Private Higher Education Institutions

As previously mentioned, the current iteration of the Graduate Outcomes Survey only includes one private HEI, Dublin Business School. Throughout our engagement with sectoral stakeholders, it was indicated that more than 10% of students in Ireland are currently in education in private colleges, suggesting that a large cohort of the graduate population in Ireland is not currently being considered in the results of the Graduate Outcomes Survey. This poses the risk that the survey data generated does not adequately depict the outcomes of the graduate population as a whole.

It was suggested throughout our engagements that the HEA could consider the expansion of the survey to ensure that these institutions, where they provide programmes leading to NFQ awards are included in the survey, thus providing a more accurate picture of the entire graduate population.

We note that the HEA Act 2022 (Section 54) includes a provision for the designation of institutions of higher education. The Graduate Outcomes Survey, should in future apply to all designated HEIs under the Act, which may, in future include private HEIs.

4.2.5 Graduate Tracking Mismatch

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, a number of individuals highlighted issues surrounding the Survey not currently adequately capturing the educational mismatch through the questions posed.

Educational mismatch refers to a situation where the education qualifications obtained by graduates do not match the qualifications required by the employment they are in. There are two forms of educational mismatch: horizontal and vertical. A horizontal mismatch is a situation where the level of the graduate's qualification is the correct level for their role, while the qualification itself is not correct. The graduates are therefore working in a different area to the one they are qualified in. On the other hand, a vertical mismatch refers to a situation where the graduate's level of qualification is not the same as that required for their role. Therefore, this makes the graduates overqualified for their roles.

In Section 3.3.5 of this report, we examined the current iteration of the EUROGRADUATE survey. This report poses direct questions to graduates which assesses whether they

consider themselves mismatched, either vertically or horizontally. This differs from the current system of measuring mismatch in Ireland which does not ask similar questions but rather utilises the graduates' field of study for comparison. For this method, the sector in which they work is used for horizontal mismatch analysis and their field of study with their occupation and salary is used for vertical mismatch analysis. However, it is noted that this methodology is not a detailed process and lacks specificity about how this is achieved. Therefore, it is suggested that the HEA could consider new approaches to measuring this mismatch through the survey.

5 Survey Efficiency and Effectiveness

5.1 Overview

We evaluated the efficacy of the survey to assess whether the methodology and operation of graduate surveying is fit for purpose and efficient and whether it enables high-value, well-structured, timely, and robust data to be collected, in line with the key principles set out for this assignment. The following section illustrates our key findings under a number of themes.

5.2 Key Findings

5.2.1 Data Collection

The method of collecting data is at the discretion of the individual HEIs who deploy the Survey in line with the guidelines set out by the HEA. Based on discussions with various stakeholders, in particular, those working directly on the Survey in careers offices in institutions, a mixed methodology is employed to collect data utilising both the online survey tool and phone calls.

A centralised system using Banner Self-Service has been developed for institutes of technology and technological universities; however, it is at the institution's discretion whether to use this or any other system they deem most appropriate for the administration of the survey. The Banner system allows the survey to be distributed electronically to graduates, who can use their existing log-in details to log in and complete the survey. The majority of HEIs also operate a phone call service to contact graduates, manually filling in the survey based on these discussions.

A notable element arising throughout our discussions with stakeholders was the current individualised approach to data collection by institutions when contrasted with a possible centralised data collection system. It was evident through our discussions that the current collection system is resource-intensive, dependent upon individuals within, and called upon by, careers offices to contact graduates through emails and phone calls to ensure an adequate response rate for the data to be deemed valid. Additionally, in some cases, stakeholders noted difficulties in contacting graduates through student emails, with graduates no longer having access to, or not checking these email accounts after graduation. In addition, it was noted that many current graduate-age respondents are disinclined to answer phone calls from unrecognised numbers, which poses an additional barrier for institutions seeking to contact graduates.

Notwithstanding these issues, there was a high degree of support for the continuation of the individualised system of data collection. The primary factor in favour had to do with the level of trust among graduates of their institutions as opposed to contact being made from an unknown centralised collection system, with the perception of many stakeholders being that the high response rates received were attributable to the contact being made by institutions. This was furthered by points made around the shift in the UK graduate-tracking system to a centralised approach for the 2017/18 academic year, which resulted in a drop in the response

rate to approximately 47%⁹ down from an overall response rate of 77%¹⁰ among the UK and other EU graduates in the previous year.

It was also noted from a data collection perspective that the current level of promotion of the survey does not adequately encourage graduates to undertake the survey, which therefore impacts the response rate. From our review, it is evident that the promotion of the survey is at the discretion of the individual HEIs, with some running media campaigns, offering incentives, and informing graduates in advance of the completion of their studies.

It was noted that some HEIs do not have the available resources and budgets to operate such intensive marketing campaigns, therefore making it more difficult to increase the level of responses acquired. This led to some suggestions that there is potential for the HEA to support a centralised promotion system, and assist HEIs in marketing the survey.

5.2.2 Survey Structure

As set out in Section 3.2.1 of this report, the current structure of the survey is broken down into six separate sections, including an array of questions ranging from free-text responses to questions indicating respondents' level of agreement. Additionally, some questions within the survey are optional and data in relation to these are not returned to the HEA.

Throughout the course of our engagements with stakeholders, when queried, there was no indication of any redundant questions within the Survey, although there was some mention of potential refinements to questions to ensure that they are adequately understood by survey participants. An example of this is the first question of the Survey, which asks graduates to indicate the main activity they are engaged in and any additional activities. It was reported to us that this caused some confusion among specific groups such as those completing professional exams post-graduation, i.e., accountancy and law.

Another key point raised during our consultations surrounded the optional reflective questions in Section 5 of the Survey, which provide an open-text opportunity for graduates to reflect on their experiences in higher education. It was reported to us that these questions generate valuable insights from respondents, which can support the institution in identifying any improvements that could be made in relation to course provision. Additionally, it was noted in our stakeholder interviews that these reflective questions are of high importance from a policy development perspective, and several respondents expressed the opinion that the survey questions concerning this reflection should be mandatory.

From our review, it was made clear that during the pilot year of the Survey, these responses were returned to the HEA. It was suggested that the return of this data to the HEA would increase the resources required in the data-cleansing process. It was clear based on discussions that there is an appetite for more to be done with the reflective questions, and that there could be potential for these responses to be returned to the HEA, requiring strict guidance and rules in place for institutions to ensure that the data is adequately cleaned for this return.

Additionally, it was reported to us that the current focus is on posing short and factual questions to graduates to reduce the cognitive load and time involved in its completion. This point was furthered by support from various stakeholders to not increase the length of the

⁹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/31-05-2023/sb266-higher-education-graduate-outcomes-statistics>

¹⁰ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/28-06-2018/sfr250-higher-education-leaver-statistics>

Survey, which could potentially reduce the level of interest graduates have to complete the Survey.

5.2.3 Survey Timeline

The current iteration of the Graduate Outcomes Survey has a single return date of 31 March each year to capture the activities of graduates approximately nine months following their graduation. The data return file is required to be submitted to the HEA by the first Friday of September. There is a data-sharing agreement in place between the HEA and HEIs, which sets a final date for sign-off by the HEA on the third Friday of September. This provides time for the HEA to conduct the data-auditing process as previously discussed, ensuring that the data is valid, and should any amendments be required, that institutions can make these amendments. It is noted that the upload facility for data returns is opened in advance of the set deadlines, allowing HEIs to submit returns throughout the summer months, and ensuring that internal scrutiny and sign-off are completed within HEIs in advance of submission.

Throughout our engagement with stakeholders, we posed questions surrounding the timelines of the Survey to assess the consensus of whether the timelines are fit for purpose and provide an adequate picture of graduate outcomes. There were mixed views on the current timelines, with some respondents suggesting that the current process does not adequately capture what graduates' outcomes following graduation may be, and others suggesting that it allows for data to be collected at a reasonable point.

A key finding concerning the Survey timeline is that stakeholders external to HEIs perceived the survey period as suboptimal and not providing an accurate depiction of the graduate's trajectory post-graduation, but rather providing a snapshot at a point in time. This was illustrated using an example of individuals who may be working part-time in a field that does not relate to their course of study or those who may choose to change careers following a period of experience. This links directly to the challenge relating to annual versus longitudinal surveying highlighted in the HEA Review of International Practice discussed in Section 3.3.2 of this report.

On the other hand, HEIs suggested that the current timelines are efficient for data collection purposes. The timelines provide for data to be collected throughout the summer months when current students are not participating in lectures and exams and careers offices are generally quieter. Additionally, the contact details for graduates remain active in most instances and the level of familiarity with the institution is relatively fresh, which can provide an opportunity for the graduates to be contacted for survey completion, in turn driving the response rate.

The current timeline also allows students currently participating in postgraduate studies to be surveyed in advance of completion of their postgraduate course. It was mentioned that should the timeline for surveying graduates be extended, this may confuse this cohort as to which higher education experience they are being questioned about.

In response to the points noted concerning the Survey not providing a more longitudinal view of graduates' outcomes, it was suggested that the current Survey has the potential to be viewed in conjunction with more longitudinal data available, such as that provided by the CSO. This approach utilises administrative data sets to form a longitudinal view of graduates' outcomes through data collected from relevant public-sector bodies such as the Revenue Commissioners, allowing graduates to be tracked up to 10 years post-graduation.

Throughout the comparative research in Section 3.3, we analysed the timelines associated with graduate surveying in eight other regions to assess whether there is a common timeline adopted internationally. Our findings of this assessment are illustrated in Figure 1 below, indicating that only two countries survey their graduates less than six months post-graduation, whilst only one country conducts their graduate survey between seven months and one year, which is Ireland. The remaining five countries conduct their graduate surveys over one year following graduation, though it should be noted that the period varies across these countries from one to five years. Based on our assessment of these surveys, we found that there is inconsistency across international comparators and generally no universally accepted timeline for graduate surveying.

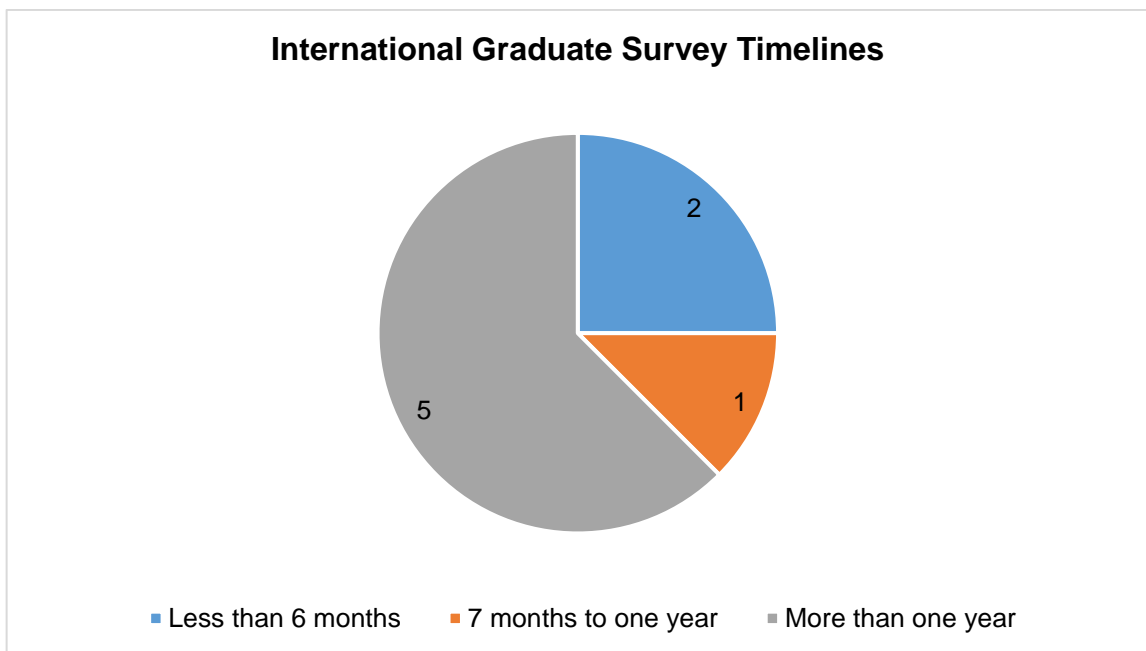


Figure 1: International Graduate Survey Timelines.
The Graduate Surveys included in this comparison include surveys from Ireland, the UK, Germany, Italy, Austria, and two EU-funded surveys.

5.2.4 Overall Survey Efficiency and Effectiveness

Based on our assessment of the various elements of the survey set out in the preceding subsections, we have concluded that the Survey, in its current form, is operating to a high degree of efficiency. In relation to the current data collection process, although there was a suggestion that a centralised approach to the collection would offer some benefits for institutions and data comparability purposes, we found that the individual approaches across institutions provide for a methodology that allows for the most flexibility but still supports a strong response rate.

The current structure of the Survey adequately obtains the information that the Graduate Outcomes Survey sets out to generate. There could be some refinements to the questions within the Survey to ensure that they are properly understood among respondents and that the survey is in line with Universal Design for Learning principles, allowing for equality among cohorts such as graduates with a disability.

The current timelines of the survey, in our view, provide for satisfactory data to be generated. Throughout our engagements, there was a suggestion that the data did not provide for

meaningful, longitudinal outcomes to be captured. Our assessment, on the other hand, found that the timelines supported the data collection process and allowed graduates to be contacted in a reasonable time frame, while careers offices were experiencing a less busy period. Additionally, the current timelines allowed graduates who have entered post-graduate studies to complete the survey in advance of completion of these studies.

6 Data Quality

6.1 Overview

We assessed the quality of the data from the Survey. The HEA has acknowledged that Ireland should continue to lead internationally by expanding on a reliable and accurate evidence base for policymakers, HEIs, prospective students, and other stakeholders. In assessing the data quality, we reviewed the process involved in auditing the data and maintaining the data validity.

6.2 Key Findings

6.2.1 *Audit and Validity Assessment*

As discussed in the previous section, the data collection of the survey is at the discretion of the institutions under guidelines from the HEA. As a result, the institutions employ a mixed methodology to collect the data, using online survey tools and phone calls. This raises questions regarding maintaining the quality and validity of the survey data; however, the HEA has in place a process of auditing the data to ensure the data quality.

The institutions are required to return their data submissions to the HEA by the first Friday of September each year. The upload facility is open well in advance of the deadline so that submissions can be made during the summer if the institutions can do so.

Following the data submission from the institutions, the HEA audits the data, which is to be finalised by the third Friday of September. In this process, the HEA reviews the submissions to ensure that the data is correctly coded, in line with expectations based on knowledge of the institution and graduates from the previous year's data return and that there is no missing or incomplete data.

The HEA sets a minimum response rate target of 30%. Any institution with a response rate of 30% or less will have additional audit reviews carried out due to the difficulty in reporting on a reduced sample size, and implications for the representativeness of the data. It should be noted that nearly all institutions currently exceed this 30% threshold, with a national average response rate of 49.6%.

Furthermore, a data validity assessment is carried out to ensure the accurate weighting of the data. This process is done by comparing a subset of the survey data against data from the student records system. The subset of data relates to those who responded to the survey and stated they were in further study. The declared institution of further study from the survey data is compared with the actual institution of enrolment listed in the student record system. This analysis based on the 2023 Graduate Outcomes Survey data shows a 92.2% match rate, with 7.8% not having a match for the named institution in the survey data.

Many of the respondents who did not have a match gave the name of their original institution from their previous year of study. This suggests that the graduates incorrectly responded with the original institution rather than the institution of further study. Furthermore, this may suggest that the structure of the survey questions may be confusing to the graduates and result in a small percentage of incorrect data being collected.

Finally, the HEA has recently undertaken a data validity exercise with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) comparing the Graduate Outcome Survey with the CSO Educational Longitudinal Database. From this exercise, the key findings were that the Graduate Outcome Survey data is robust and representative of the population being surveyed.

6.2.2 Stakeholder Perspectives

Stakeholders within institutions have acknowledged that there is an advantage of a centralised approach to data collection in ensuring the quality of survey data. They acknowledge that while the current approach to data collection demands significant resources from institutions to collect and submit data to the HEA according to its requirements, it is their preferred method. Stakeholders believe this approach enhances response rates compared to a centralised data collection approach.

During our stakeholder interviews, concerns were raised within both institutions and the broader sector regarding the HEA's ability to maintain the quality of the data through the current process. Some individuals were unaware of the auditing process that follows data submission to the HEA. This lack of familiarity may affect the data's potential usability if it causes stakeholders to lack confidence in the data's quality.

Overall, we find that the HEA's processes for ensuring data quality are robust while allowing institutions the flexibility to collect data in a manner that suits them locally. This balance enables the HEA to maintain confidence in data quality while pursuing strategies to improve survey response rates. However, there is a clear imperative for the HEA to communicate effectively about its data quality processes to ensure all stakeholders and potential data users have increased confidence in the quality of the survey data.

7 Data Accessibility

7.1 Overview

This section of the report assesses the accessibility of data generated from the Graduate Outcomes Survey, evaluating the extent to which those interested in graduate data are enabled to obtain information that is freely available and easy to understand, taking account of the range of data sources within the higher education system.

7.2 Key Findings

7.2.1 *Accessibility of Data*

As set out in Section 3 of this report, the HEA reports and publishes data through various means to illustrate graduate outcomes, including annual reports of the data in interactive form, reports focusing on specific graduate cohorts, and “deep-dive” short reports called info-bytes focusing on specific policy-relevant areas.

Throughout our engagement with various stakeholders, we sought to assess the accessibility of data generated through the Graduate Outcomes Survey and understand the context in which it is used by various groups. A key point that was raised by a number of individuals was the lack of awareness surrounding the availability of the data through online sources. It was suggested that although this data is publicly available on the HEA website, not many stakeholders are aware of this information, indicating that the benefits of generating these detailed reports and dashboards are not widely marketed. Some suggestions to address these issues included the HEA operating a wider marketing campaign to ensure that the data is more widely acknowledged across HEIs for current students, or engaging directly with industry representatives to increase awareness, which in turn could result in increased usage.

Additionally, it was suggested that these reports, which are produced in interactive form, could be more user-friendly to allow individuals seeking to understand the data, or specific elements of the data, to manipulate the datasets more easily. There were numerous suggestions to overcome these issues, such as including a guidance manual or video guidance on the HEA website to inform individuals seeking to manipulate the data and support them in doing so. It was also suggested that the HEA, upon publication of the data, could provide guidance to stakeholder groups to whom the information would be most relevant, simultaneously increasing awareness, while simultaneously increasing awareness.

It was also reported that the current system of data manipulation poses difficulties for some individuals who may be interested in accessing the data, specifically those with disabilities. It was suggested that the current system could be assessed to ensure that these issues are mitigated. Additionally, as previously mentioned, there is potential for additional guidance to be provided to ensure that the data is understood, allowing those seeking to analyse the data to do so in a seamless manner.

It was noted that the published reports that focused on specific cohorts, with particular reference to the report on graduates with disabilities, provided a useful breakdown that was utilised extensively. Respondents suggested that those reports supporting organisations and policy developments be continuously developed on an annual basis.

Furthermore, it was noted based on the data validity assessment undertaken with the CSO that the survey was considered to be accessible as there was no significant variation in the response rates between individuals who received a disability allowance and those who were not. This would indicate that graduates with a disability are as likely to take and complete the survey as graduates who do not have a disability.

7.2.2 Knowledge of Data Availability

To understand the level of access to data among stakeholder groups, we posed a number of questions to stakeholders to understand whether prospective and current students are aware of the Survey and its data and whether employers use the survey data to look at trends, for instance. There were varying responses as to the usage of the data generated across all stakeholder groups, indicating that it is not a universally used data source, and presents scope for increased usage.

One key finding that arose from our stakeholder engagements was that students in higher education institutions in Ireland did not appear to be aware of the survey outcomes, which in turn suggests that the information generated by the Survey may not be reaching a large proportion of current students. Throughout these discussions, it was suggested that there is scope for closer collaboration between the HEA and students and student representatives surrounding the use and dissemination of the survey outcomes, which stakeholders perceived to be an important tool for current students.

Additionally, discussions with stakeholders indicated that prospective higher education students do not, typically, use Graduate Outcomes Survey information, or even know about it, as a means of informing their choices about higher education programmes. This indicates that these future students were not interacting with the data to levels that would be expected to highlight opportunities for them in guiding their future paths.

On the other hand, it was reported that the information generated was used by governmental bodies and other organisations to help inform policy, specifically in combination or comparison with other data such as the National Employer Survey, which provides information on employer activities and views on the subject of recruitment from the higher education, and further education and training sectors. This suggestion, of utilising the data in collaboration with other sources thus providing a more useful outlook on the information, was raised by a number of stakeholders throughout our engagements. This point links directly to the challenge of linking survey and administrative data outlined in the HEA Review of International Practice, discussed in Section 3.3.2 of this report.

8 Policy Frameworks

8.1 Overview

It is noted by the HEA that the graduate data should be used to support the higher education System Performance Framework and other national policy frameworks. During our review, we assessed stakeholder's use of the data in informing policy, both within institutions and the wider higher education sector, and also in other areas of society.

8.2 Key Findings

8.2.1 *Current Use*

We reviewed the use of the Survey's data and outcomes in shaping policy frameworks at a national and local (typically institutional) level. It became apparent that institutions extensively employ this data for quality assurance reviews, showcasing the progression of graduates. Moreover, the data serves a pivotal role in the design, creation, and validation of new courses, facilitating the identification of employment trends across various sectors in which graduates are active. Consequently, the survey data enables HEIs to pinpoint the relevant skills that graduates will need for certain sectors, thereby enabling the design of courses tailored to ensure graduate readiness for these dynamic fields.

Stakeholders, both within the higher education sector and in other sectors, expressed a general awareness of the survey data. However, it was noted that while the data is occasionally referenced in the development of new policies, it is not commonly regarded as the primary source of information. Additionally, stakeholders emphasised that when the survey data is utilised in policy creation, it is seldom used in isolation. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of integrating this data with other sources, such as information from the CSO, to enrich policy formulation.

Beyond its direct relevance in higher education and employment/skills policy frameworks, institutions also recognised the value that the data has in discussions with students regarding their post-graduation expectations. The data empower institutions to demonstrate to students the sectors and types of employment that previous graduates of their courses have pursued. Furthermore, stakeholder interviews revealed that the survey data, when used, has proven beneficial for those interacting with second-level students, aiding them in making informed decisions regarding their college courses.

8.2.2 *Areas for Improvement*

In our exploration, we identified several critical factors that could enhance the utilisation of the survey within policy frameworks. Firstly, stakeholders expressed a significant lack of familiarity with the survey and its breadth of insights available via the HEA website. Many of these stakeholders represent organisations that could benefit from this data. This underscores the potential necessity for the HEA to enhance communication regarding survey findings with their key stakeholders. Among these stakeholders, greater awareness of the dashboards available on the HEA website could potentially amplify the integration of survey data into these organisations' policy directions.

Moreover, stakeholders highlighted the value of optional questions in providing nuanced insights from a graduate perspective. They noted that these questions tend to be more reflective than mandatory ones, offering richer insights that could inform policy decisions. Many stakeholders expressed eagerness for the HEA to report on these optional questions, believing that they could provide valuable insights for shaping policy direction.

Additionally, stakeholders pointed out that some of the employment field classifications may be somewhat outdated or lacking in specificity. This limitation impedes their ability to utilise the data in more nuanced ways, as they perceive the information to be insufficiently detailed.

Addressing these concerns could enhance the relevance and applicability of the survey data within policy contexts.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Overview

Over the course of this review, we engaged with stakeholders including HEI leads, officials from Government Departments, and student and employer representative bodies. These engagements involved a series of individual one-to-one engagements and focus groups to generate an understanding of and inform our findings concerning the Graduate Outcomes Survey. This exercise complements the research we undertook on existing literature and reports surrounding the surveying of graduates both in Ireland and Internationally.

Our recommendations range from short-term quick wins to longer-term developments for the Survey to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and future-proof over the forthcoming years.

Our overall finding is that the HEA is delivering a robust and efficient survey of third-level graduate outcomes. The survey generates high-quality data, while also delivering a strong response rate, ensuring flexibility in the methodology for institutions to collect meaningful response rates. We have identified three areas that we believe will strengthen the survey's structure and potential influence, and ensure the impact of the survey in the future.

9.2 Recommendations

- It is recommended that the HEA enhance communication and promotion strategies for the Graduate Outcomes Survey, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are fully informed and engaged with both the Survey itself and its resulting data.
- It is recommended that the HEA conduct a comprehensive review of the Survey's structure, with a focus on aligning questions to accurately reflect the contemporary demands of the professional landscape graduates are entering.
- It is recommended that the HEA, in light of the dynamic nature of higher education, implement strategic decisions in relation to the changing landscape of Higher Education to future-proof the Graduate Outcomes Survey, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness amid evolving educational and employment trends.

9.3 Implementation

Recommendation		Actions Involved	
1	<i>It is recommended that the HEA proactively enhance communication and promotion strategies for the Graduate Outcomes Survey, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are fully informed and engaged with both the Survey itself and its resulting data.</i>	i	Increase communication regarding the survey data, its meaning, and how it can be used by all stakeholders, including third-level students, student representatives, employer representatives, and organisations working with second-level students.
		ii	Increase communication with external stakeholders such as employer bodies about the availability of the complementary alignment of the Graduate Outcomes Survey with the CSO Higher Education Outcomes data as well as increase awareness of the validity of the survey data based on analysis with the CSO Educational Longitudinal Database.
		iii	Given the ever-increasing difficulty in maintaining a meaningful response rate, the responsibility for promoting the survey and boosting the response rate lies primarily with the institution. To support this effort, the HEA will provide additional guidance and support to assist institutions in their promotional activities.
2	<i>It is recommended that the HEA conduct a comprehensive review of the Survey's structure, with a focus on aligning questions to accurately reflect the contemporary demands of the professional landscape graduates are entering.</i>	i	Form a sectoral reference group with representatives from institutions and other bodies such as AHEAD and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) to agree upon changes made to the survey questions by the HEA, to ensure that the HEA is in the best position to capture quantitative and qualitative data.
		ii	Utilising the sectoral reference group, the HEA should ensure that principles of universal design for learning are incorporated into the survey structure to ensure that the Survey is accessible to all graduates.
3	<i>It is recommended that the HEA, in light of the dynamic nature of higher education, implement strategic decisions in relation to the changing landscape of Higher Education to future-proof the Graduate Outcomes Survey, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness amid evolving educational and employment trends.</i>	i	In light of the prominence of students engaging in new and emerging modes of provision of higher education, the HEA must decide if and when these graduates will take the survey.
		ii	The HEA should support institutions likely to become designated institutions of higher education in line with expected amendments to the Higher Education Act 2022 to prepare for their involvement in the Survey.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement

All stakeholder groups identified by the HEA as relevant for this review were invited to participate in one-to-one engagements or focus groups as part of our stakeholder engagement process during this project. This appendix provides a record of stakeholder groups and organisations that opted to partake in these engagements.

Stakeholder Groups	Name of Organisation
Project Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Higher Education Authority (HEA) ■ Central Statistics Office (CSO)
HEI Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Atlantic Technological University (ATU) ■ Dublin Business School (DBS) ■ Dublin City University (DCU) ■ Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) ■ Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT) ■ Irish Universities Association (IUA) ■ Maynooth University (MU) ■ South East Technological University (SETU) ■ Technological University of Dublin (TUD) ■ Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) ■ The Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) ■ The Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) ■ The Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) ■ Trinity College Dublin (TCD) ■ University College Cork (UCC) ■ University College Dublin (UCD) ■ University of Galway (UG) ■ University of Limerick (UL)
Government Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) ■ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)

Stakeholder Groups	Name of Organisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) ■ SOLAS ■ Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) ■ Enterprise Ireland (EI) ■ IDA Ireland
Student Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Union of Students in Ireland (USI)
Employer Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) ■ The Irish SME Association (ISME)
Other Key Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AHEAD ■ The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC)