

# Vacations and Vocations:

## Learning from Our Students' Summer Experience Survey

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### Overview

Careers Service-led research was carried out to discover the types of activities returning undergraduates engaged in during the summer 2016 vacation period. Research was carried out via an online survey, focus groups and student-authored case studies.

The main aims of the HECSU-funded research were to:

- Understand how these experiences impacted on students' employability.
- Explore potential new ways to recognise, reward and support students' wider summer learning.



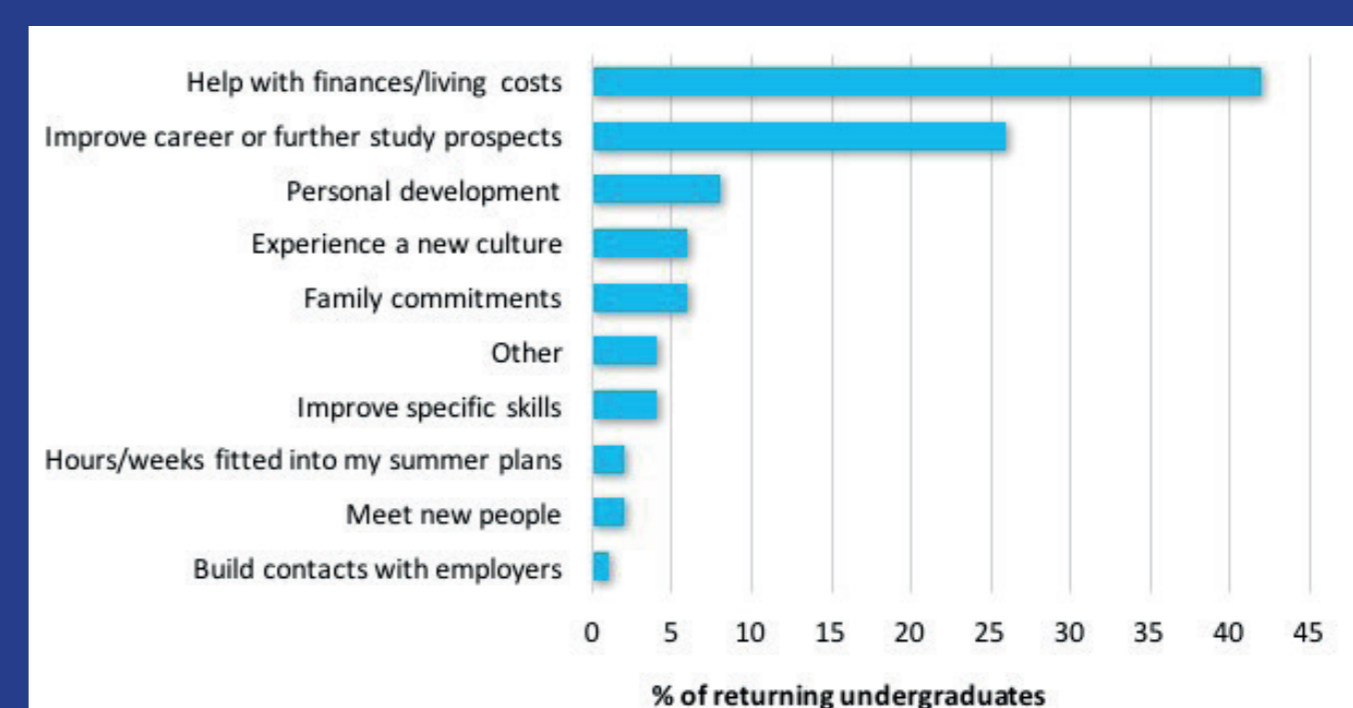
### Key Findings

477 students completed the Survey: 34% 2nd years; 41% 3rd years; 19% 4th years; 6% 5th years. Respondents were mainly full-time students aged 18-24.

Fig. 1: Students' main summer activity.



Fig. 2: Students' primary motivation for completing their summer activity.



#### How did students identify activities?

- Personal contacts, including family and friends: 28%
- Already worked there: 17%
- Employer's website: 9%

#### What were the students' opinions regarding the University recognising their wider learning?

*"I would have appreciated some credits, but oh well."*

**4th Year Student, School of Languages, Literature, Music & Visual Culture**

*"I don't think I need rewarded [...] I think it's a normal thing to do and wouldn't expect [...] some incentive to do so."*

**Focus Group Volunteer, School of Social Science**

#### What impact did students' summer activities have on their employability?

*"Learned how to deal with stressful situations and built my business knowledge."*

**3rd Year Student, School of Natural & Computing Sciences**

*"There is a lot of pressure of balancing work experience and spending time with parents as they don't see me for half a year while I'm at university."*

**3rd Year Student, School of Engineering**

#### Why did 7% of students not engage in any activity?

Reasons included: family commitments, health issues, needing relaxation time and inability to secure an opportunity.

#### Research findings have:

**Provided benchmark information to use with academic Schools to offer more tailored employability support.**

**Offered insights regarding the challenges students can encounter in securing and undertaking summer activities.**

**Confirmed interest in establishing a credit-bearing course to recognise students' wider learning.**