

University to Workplace Transition

Supporting Graduate Transition into the Workplace

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Foreword

The transition from university to the workplace is a pivotal moment in any graduate's life. It can be filled with promise and potential, but for many, especially those navigating mental health conditions, neurodiversity, or disability, it can also be a time of significant challenge. AGCAS welcome this report on the University to Workplace Transition (UWT) programme, which explored how graduates navigate this transitional period, and what more can be done to deliver meaningful, evidence-based support. By using the OneSpace Passport and specialist mentoring to empower graduates during their transition, the UWT programme highlighted the potential for positive impact on emotional resilience, workplace readiness, and the ability to communicate support needs effectively.

AGCAS report on the graduate disability employment gap through our long running research report series, What Happens Next? Our research shows that the graduate disability employment gap has existed for over two decades and is present at all levels of qualification. Our most recent report also highlighted that ethnicity and gender affect the size of the disability gap with some graduates experiencing additional disadvantage as they try to move into the workplace. We welcome collaborative work that tackles this inequity and looks to find approaches and solutions that brings students, graduates, educators, employability experts and employers together to create a better future with truly inclusive, supportive environments from day one. We commend the graduates, mentors, universities, and partners who made this work possible. Their voices and experiences are the heart of this report and provide the catalyst for change.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

UMO developed Phase One of the University-to-Workplace Transition (UWT) programme to provide structured support for a small number of graduates moving from higher education to employment. This includes the use of the OneSpace Passport to transfer data, with a specific focus on mental health, neurodiversity, disability, and overall wellbeing. The programme was created in response to the increasing economic participation of graduates, particularly those facing challenges related to mental health, neurodiversity, wellbeing, or disability.

Young adult economic inactivity is now at its highest level in 10 years, compounded by the ongoing mental health crisis ([The Times, 2024](#)). The UK government's focus on growth, employability, and reducing economic inactivity among young people highlights the essential role of the graduate population, including disabled students, in achieving these objectives.

The Office for National Statistics ([2022](#)) highlights the importance of tackling economic inactivity among young people. It emphasises equipping all graduates with the skills needed to meet the evolving demands of the labour market. By addressing skills gaps, fostering inclusivity, and improving employability, the graduate population plays a vital role in driving economic growth, reducing inequality, and supporting sustainable development across the UK.

Recent graduates, particularly those with mental health, neurodiversity, wellbeing or disability challenges, face significant difficulties transitioning from higher education to the workplace. Unlike the robust support systems in universities, this interim space is void of support.

The transition period is characterised by a lack of resources specifically designed to address the needs of new graduates, which exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and creates additional challenges ([National Audit Office, 2021](#); [Student Minds et al., 2022](#)). Research highlights that students with disabilities and those experiencing mental health challenges are particularly affected during this transition, as the structured support they relied on in higher education is often absent in workplace environments ([Tomlinson, 2017](#); [Madhavi & Adnan, 2020](#)).

The University To Workplace Transition (UWT)

To address these challenges, UMO developed the University-to-Workplace Transition (UWT) programme. This initiative provided structured support and use of the use of the OneSpace Passport to transfer data for students moving from higher education to employment, with a focus on mental health, neurodiversity, disability and overall wellbeing. Key features included:



Specialist Mentoring

Offering 5-7 tailored sessions during the transition to address challenges, build confidence, and set goals. Mentors offer practice support and advice, working with the student to help them meet their goals.



Passport (OneSpace)

The Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport is a holistic resource outlining the individual's support needs, strengths, and strategies for managing mental health, which can be shared with employers to facilitate workplace adjustments.



Bridging the data gap

A significant challenge for graduates with mental health conditions, neurodiversity, and disabilities is the lack of a standardized way to transfer essential support information from university to the workplace. This gap can result in inconsistent accommodations, repeated self-disclosure, and a lack of continuity in support.



Seamless Data Flow

The OneSpace Passport will become a critical tool for graduates. They will complete and use the passport during job applications and onboarding to communicate their needs to employers. This ensures that necessary accommodations and support systems are in place from day one.

The Purpose Of The Passport

The Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability, and Wellbeing Passport supports a smooth transition from education to employment. Graduates use the Passport to communicate their support needs and adjustments during job applications and onboarding - reducing the need to repeat personal information and ensuring employers are prepared to offer appropriate support from day one.

They remain in full control of what they share and when they share it, ensuring a smooth transition into the workplace. The OneSpace Passport ensures seamless data flow by allowing this important information to be easily shared with employers during the job application and onboarding stages

The Passport enables a secure, consistent, and user-led way to share essential information, helping both individuals and employers to build inclusive, supportive work environments quickly and effectively. Employers benefit from receiving the information in a consistent, accessible format that aligns with best practice in equality and workplace inclusion. The Passport supports smoother onboarding, early support planning, and helps foster a more understanding and productive work environment.

This digital continuity not only empowers individuals but also bridges the communication gap between education and employment, contributing to better outcomes and greater retention for diverse talent.

Phase 1 UWT was designed to support a small number of graduates as they transition from university to the workplace, a critical period filled with both opportunities and challenges.

Objectives To Test

1. How the passport bridges the data gap that graduates may experience at transition out of university into employment

The aim is to pilot the use of the passport, as a comprehensive record of the graduate's support needs, ensuring continuity and enabling smoother communication with future employers and helping to mitigate challenge

2. How it enhances Employer-Graduate Communication

The aim is to promote open dialogue between graduates and employers regarding mental health needs, encouraging mutual understanding and the development of supportive workplace practices.

3. How it provides a Safe and Supportive Environment

The aim is to create a welcoming space where graduates can openly discuss their uncertainties, aspirations, and challenges, enabling them to reflect on their personal and professional goals with guidance and peer support.

4. How it meets the need for Transitional Guidance

The aim is to assist graduates in navigating the complex transition from the structured environment of university to the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of the professional world, helping them build resilience and adaptability.

5. How it encourages Purposeful Career Development

The aim is to inspire graduates to identify and pursue career paths that align with their values, interests, and skills, fostering a sense of purpose and long-term satisfaction in their chosen professions.

6. How it builds Confidence and Readiness

The aim is to equip graduates with essential tools for success, including workplace readiness, self-care strategies, and practical confidence to handle real-world challenges effectively.

7. How it champions Mental Health Awareness and Sustainability

The aim is to advocate for sustainable mental health support systems within workplaces, aiming to reduce stigma and foster an inclusive culture where individuals feel empowered to seek help without fear of judgment.

Key Partners

The UWT will provide an holistic approach so graduates have the necessary support for their transition, fostering clear communication among the HEP and the employer, with UMO as the facilitator. While employers were not key collaborators in Phase 1, their role in supporting graduates during the transition remains crucial, particularly in creating work environments that prioritise mental health and wellbeing, and will be foregrounded in Phase 2.

Universities

Universities, including Queen Mary University of London, University of Manchester, Imperial College London, London Metropolitan University, and King's College, London, played a vital role in the initiative by providing participating students with individualised mentoring sessions. Funded by their respective institutions, these sessions offered tailored support to address personal, academic, and professional challenges faced by recent graduates. Universities also facilitated collaboration with UMO to ensure a seamless transition for students from academia to the workforce, providing a supportive environment throughout the process.

Graduates

The participants were all recent graduates when the mentoring started from the above five institutions, navigating the critical transition from academia to professional life.

Demographics

- **Disability:** All graduates participating identified as experiencing a disability, mental health condition, neurodiversity, or a wellbeing challenge. This included mental health conditions, neurodiversity (such as ASD, ADHD, dyslexia), physical, sensory, or chronic health disabilities, learning differences, and long-term health conditions.

Key Partners

- **Academic Disciplines:** The participants came from diverse fields including Life Sciences, Film Studies, Politics and International Relations, Chemical Engineering, Medicine, and History.
- **Age:** The majority (13) were aged 21 to 24, but a notable proportion (5) were mature students aged 25 and older.
- **Gender:** 65% identified as women, and 35% comprised men and individuals identifying outside the gender binary.
- **Ethnicity:** The survey collected data on participants' ethnic backgrounds, with respondents self-identifying across multiple categories, including White, Black, Asian, Mixed, and other ethnic groups.

Employers

Companies and organisations employing recent graduates play an important role in supporting their early-career workforce, particularly in understanding and addressing the mental health needs of graduates.

While not directly involved in the collaboration, employers' efforts to foster inclusive work environments, promote open communication, and integrate sustainable practices contribute to a smoother transition from university to employment. Their support of graduate wellbeing is integral to long-term career success ([Brown, 2022](#), [NACE, 2022](#)).

UMO

UMO, a dedicated service provider with over ten years of expertise in mental health mentoring

Key Partners

and other related support in the HEI and workplace sectors, played a central role in delivering specialised mentoring and guiding the graduate through the use of the OneSpace passport.

UMO's personalised approach addressed the unique needs of recent graduates, drawing on its extensive experience in supporting students through periods of transition and uncertainty.

This approach ensured graduates received comprehensive support, bridging communication between universities and the employers and thus creating a supportive ecosystem for mental health and career development.

Support and Collaboration

The work was enhanced by the contributions of Student Minds, TASO, Nightline, UMHAN, Thrive London, and Good Thinking. Each organisation played a distinct role:

Student Minds provided insight into mental health challenges in higher education.

TASO supported the Theory of Change development at the beginning of the evaluation process

Nightline and **UMHAN** contributed expertise in peer support and mentoring services.

Thrive London and **Good Thinking** enhanced the program's focus on mental health resilience and digital wellbeing resources.

Ultimately, UWT will provide an holistic approach so that graduates have the necessary support for their transition, fostering clear communication among the HEP and the employer, with UMO as the facilitator. While employers were not key collaborators in Phase 1, their role in supporting graduates during the transition remains crucial, particularly in creating work environments that prioritise mental health and wellbeing, and will be foregrounded in Phase 2.

Recommendations & Next Steps

The following three recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the UWT Programme while addressing critical areas for graduates, employers and universities.

1. Phase Two: Expanding the Reach of the UWT Programme with Graduate Employers

- The next phase of the UWT programme aims to extend its reach by involving more universities and engaging a broader demographic of at least 1,000 students. Expanding the research will deepen our understanding of the challenges graduates face during the transition from university to employment.
- By incorporating more institutions, the programme can connect with a diverse group of graduates, ensuring its benefits are accessible across regions and academic disciplines.
- Additionally, integrating graduate employers into this phase will provide a 360-degree perspective, offering valuable insights into employer expectations, skill gaps, and the evolving job market. This collaboration will help bridge the gap between education and employment, ultimately improving outcomes for both graduates and employers.

2. Prioritising Diversity: Advancing Equity for Graduates from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds

- Expanding the programme into Phase 2 with a specific focus on engaging student graduates from diverse ethnic backgrounds (black, asian and minority ethnic groups) will help uncover the unique challenges they face in transitioning to employment. This insight will enable employers to adapt their practices, fostering more inclusive workplaces and providing better support for these graduates as they enter the workforce.

Recommendations & Next Steps

3. Centre OneSpace: user controlled seamless data transitions

- Deploy the OneSpace app to tackle data transitions, ensuring it plays a central role in the next phase of the programme enabling graduates to easily access and manage the support they need as they transition from university to the workplace. By providing a platform where graduates can seamlessly share relevant information about their needs, including adjustments for neurodiversity, mental health, or wellbeing, the app ensures the necessary support is in place from the outset. This proactive approach helps prevent burnout and ensures graduates can confidently manage their mental health and wellbeing throughout the transition, making the process smoother and more sustainable.

Conclusion

The UWT initiative begins to provide an understanding about the critical gap in the transitional support system for graduates entering the workforce as well as the use of how data via OneSpace can support students during this period.

By fostering a collaborative network that brings together universities, employers, and graduates, with UMO playing a critical role in connecting stakeholders, this initiative can be scaled and sustained. It will not only benefit individual graduates but also help create healthier, more inclusive professional environments, ultimately reducing graduate economic inactivity.



FULL REPORT

**Supporting Graduate Transition Into
The Workplace**

Introduction & Setting The Scene

The transition from university to the workplace (UWT) presents significant challenges for graduates, particularly concerning mental health, neurodiversity and wellbeing support. While universities often provide robust mental health services, these support systems are not consistently extended into the space between leaving university and moving into the workplace, leaving graduates vulnerable during this critical period.

Recent data underscores the growing mental health crisis among students. Reported mental health problems among university students have almost tripled in recent years, with the share of undergraduates experiencing mental health difficulties rising from 6% to 16% between the 2016/17 and 2022/23 academic years ([TASO](#)). Additionally, a 2021 survey revealed that 37% of first-year students reported symptoms of depression and anxiety, a rate significantly higher than the general population of 16 to 29-year-olds ([The Wave Clinic](#)).

Despite these concerning trends, there is currently no formal provision to support students during the UWT. This gap can exacerbate existing mental health issues, as graduates lose access to most university support systems without adequate replacements in this space. In some cases, students transitioning from university directly enter long-term sickness or unemployment, further highlighting the need for comprehensive support (The Times, The Resolution Foundation).

While many UK university careers services offer support for a defined period of one to three years post-graduation, recent AGCAS research ([2024/25](#)) shows that this varies significantly: 41% of services now offer lifetime access, 9% extend support for five years, 49% for one to three years, and 1% for four years. The exact duration and nature of this support can vary depending on the institution. Yet this does not provide the support needed for some more vulnerable students.

Furthermore, there is no standardised tool that seamlessly captures and transfers a graduate's

Introduction & Setting The Scene

mental health, wellbeing, neurodiversity, and disability data from university to the workplace. This gap creates challenges for both graduates and employers, as essential support needs may not be effectively communicated or accommodated during the transition. Without a consistent system, graduates often have to repeatedly disclose their conditions and advocate for necessary adjustments, which can be stressful and impact their confidence in the workplace.

A universal framework or transferable record could help bridge this gap, something proposed by a focus group of graduate students to ensure that employers have the necessary information to provide appropriate support from the outset. Such a tool would promote continuity of care, streamline workplace adjustments, and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable employment landscape.

Indeed, while some passports exist, they tend to be two-dimensional and fail to comprehensively address all aspects of a person's needs, particularly in areas like wellbeing, mental health, and neurodiversity.

UMO's UWT initiative aims to address this gap by empowering individuals to take ownership of their mental health. By using OneSpace as well as specialist mentoring as a means to encouraging open communication about mental health, neurodiversity, disability and wellbeing issues, recognising personal signs of distress, and identifying necessary support, graduates can better navigate the transition and achieve their professional goals.

The effectiveness of continued mentoring for mental health and well-being is supported by research. [UMO's White Paper](#) on the The Role And Impact Of Specialist Mental Health Mentoring On Students In UK Higher Education Institutes reports that 92% of students felt that the Sustainable Mental Health Models (SMHM) provided them with a more positive outlook on their future, and 82% felt better prepared for the workplace as a result.

Addressing graduate economic inactivity is also critical. The National Audit Office ([NAO](#)) has

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highlighted concerns regarding the effectiveness of current youth unemployment policies ([see Employment support: The Kickstart Scheme, 2021 and The New Deal for Young People, 2022](#)). Young adult economic inactivity is now at its highest level in 10 years, compounded by the ongoing mental health crisis ([The Times](#)).

In conclusion, bridging the support gap during the university-to-workplace transition is essential. Implementing structured mental health, neurodiversity and wellbeing frameworks via the OneSpace passport and the effective use of AI alongside mentoring can significantly enhance graduates' well-being and professional success, while also addressing broader concerns related to youth unemployment and economic productivity.

Challenges Faced By Graduates In The Transition

Graduates encounter a complex set of challenges when transitioning from university to the workforce. These difficulties stem from shifts in environment, responsibilities, and the absence of support systems that were previously in place. Key challenges include:

Loss of Structured Support Systems

University Environment: Universities typically offer structured mental health and academic support services, including counselling, mentoring, and accommodations for disabilities.

Workplace Gaps: Most workplaces lack equivalent support systems, leaving graduates, particularly those with mental health challenges or disabilities, to navigate these changes independently.

Impact of Transition on Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Transition Stress: Graduates often struggle with the uncertainty of job searches, adapting to new routines, and balancing increased responsibilities, which can heighten stress and anxiety.

Loneliness: Leaving behind established social networks and the familiar university environment can lead to feelings of isolation.

Data Transition

Currently, no standardized tool exists to consolidate and transfer a graduate's mental health,

Challenges Faced By Graduates In The Transition

well-being, neurodiversity, and disability data from university to the workplace.

Lack of Career Readiness

Skills Gap: Graduates can feel unprepared for professional expectations, particularly in soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Career Guidance: Graduates not confident entering the workforce and struggle to meet the challenges from employers.

Financial Pressures

Student Debt: The burden of repaying loans can create additional financial stress during the transition period.

Uncertainty of Income: Graduates often face prolonged job searches or start with low-paying entry-level positions, affecting their financial independence and stability.

UWT: The Programme

To address the challenges associated with the transition from university to the workplace, UMO developed the University-to-Workplace Transition (UWT) programme. This initiative is designed to provide structured, personalised support for students navigating the shift from higher education to employment, with a specific focus on mental health, neurodiversity, and overall wellbeing.

It is also testing the perceived importance of graduates needing to share data with their employers thus creating inclusive workplaces by addressing their needs and possible adaptations from the outset. This aims to foster support, reduces stigma, and boosts retention and productivity.

The UWT programme bridges the gap between the robust support systems available in universities and the, often limited, provisions in workplace settings. By equipping graduates with the tools, knowledge and confidence to manage their mental health, wellbeing and neurodiversity, the programme seeks to reduce vulnerabilities and promote professional and personal success.

Moreover, the use of the OneSpace Passport creating a secure platform for graduates to share data about their needs with employers is crucial for fostering inclusive and supportive workplaces. By understanding challenges such as mental health concerns, accessibility requirements, or even career development aspirations, employers can implement targeted initiatives that enhance well-being and job satisfaction.

This proactive approach not only reduces stigma but also ensures that graduates feel valued and empowered, ultimately leading to higher retention, productivity, and a more diverse workforce.

Key features of the UWT include the following:

UWT: The Programme

Specialist Mentoring

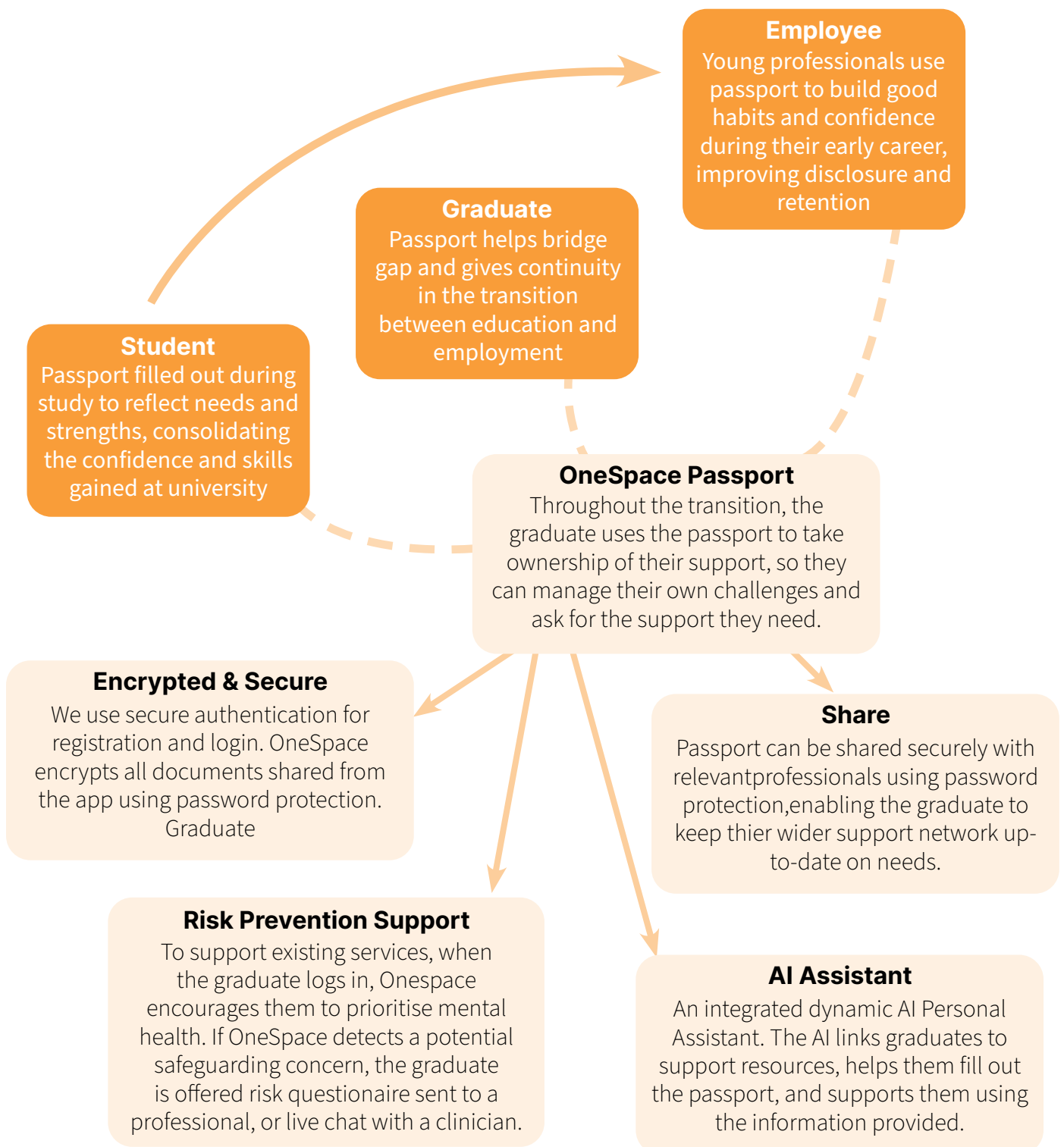
Graduates receive 5-7 one-on-one mentoring sessions tailored to their unique circumstances. These sessions are designed to:

- Identify and address specific challenges during the transition, such as adjusting to new work environments, building routines, and managing stress.
- Develop confidence in communicating needs and navigating professional relationships.
- Set clear, achievable personal and career goals that align with the graduate's strengths and aspirations.
- Mentors—trained professionals with expertise in mental health, wellbeing and neurodiversity—provide a safe and supportive space for graduates to explore their concerns and develop actionable strategies.

Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport (OneSpace)

- This holistic and personalised Passport is co-created during the mentoring process to serve as a roadmap for the graduate and their employer. Key components include:
- A detailed outline of the graduate's mental health, wellbeing and neurodiversity needs.
- Strategies and accommodations that empower the graduate to thrive in the workplace.
- Strengths and skills the graduate brings to their role, emphasising unique contributions.
- Guidance for employers on implementing adjustments and fostering an inclusive work environment.

UWT: The Programme



UWT: The Programme

The OneSpace passport ensures that the information regarding the graduates or new employee's mental health, wellbeing and neurodiversity challenges are appropriately shared and subsequently, proactively addressed, creating a smoother integration into professional life.

Students and graduates have full control over their OneSpace Passport, which captures information around mental health, neurodiversity, disability, and wellbeing. When they're ready to share it - for example, during job applications or onboarding—they can generate a secure, time-limited link for employers, who can access it without needing an account. They can update their Passport anytime, with changes reflected instantly in shared links, or revoke access altogether, ensuring their data stays current, accurate, and under their control.

OneSpace uses an AI Personal Assistant that guides the user through the process and uses AI-driven prompts and Natural Language Processing to help them articulate their needs clearly and confidently. This is especially helpful for those who may find communication challenging. The AI supports clarity and accessibility but never makes decisions -students lead the process entirely.

Aims Of The UWT

The University-to-Workplace Transition (UWT) initiative is designed to proactively address the complex challenges graduates face as they navigate this critical phase of life. With a focus on mental health, wellbeing, neurodiversity, and professional development, the programme seeks to empower graduates, enhance their wellbeing, and create a pathway for sustained success in the workforce by not only providing support but also using digital technology to help with the transfer of data to ensure appropriate adjustments are in place at the start of the graduates career. The refined aims of the programme include:

1. Facilitate a Smooth Transition from University to Employment

Guide graduates through the often-overwhelming shift from higher education to professional life by addressing the emotional, mental, and logistical hurdles they encounter during this period.

2. Bridge the Data Gap Between University and Employment

Pilot the OneSpace passport as a tool to ensure graduates' support needs are clearly documented and carried forward into employment settings. This enables continuity of reasonable adjustment, reduces the need for repeated disclosures, and helps employers offer early, informed support.

3. Enable Practical Employer-Graduate Communication

Use the OneSpace passport to open direct conversations between graduates and employers about required workplace adjustments, creating a foundation of trust, clarity, and mutual understanding.

4. Encourage Meaningful and Fulfilling Career Paths

Support graduates in identifying career options that resonate with their individual strengths, passions, and life goals. This tailored guidance promotes career satisfaction and personal growth, ensuring that graduates embark on professional journeys that align

Aims Of The UWT

with their values.

5. Equip Graduates with Practical Workplace Skills

Support graduates in mastering time management, collaboration, adaptability, and professionalism to help them thrive in diverse work settings.

6. Build Confidence and Mental Wellbeing

Foster emotional resilience, self-care habits, and interpersonal confidence so graduates can face challenges with assurance and self-awareness.

7. Champion Long-Term Mental Health Sustainability via the Passport

Position the OneSpace passport as a driver of inclusive HR practices, reducing stigma and embedding proactive mental health culture in organisations.

8. Provide a Safe and Supportive Space for Graduates

Create a mentoring environment where graduates feel encouraged to openly discuss their uncertainties, challenges, and aspirations. This safe space builds self-awareness, boosts confidence, and helps graduates gain clarity about their immediate and long-term goals.

9. Build Resilience for Long-Term Success

Help graduates develop resilience and the ability to navigate challenges independently, laying the foundation for sustained mental well-being and professional achievement throughout their careers.

10. Drive Cultural Change in Mental Health and Neurodiversity Awareness

Encourage broader cultural shifts in how mental health and neurodiversity are perceived and addressed in professional environments. By normalising open conversations and proactive measures - such as the use of the OneSpace passport - the programme aims to cultivate inclusive and empathetic workplaces that prioritise employee well-being.



Aims Of The UWT

Through these enhanced aims, the UWT initiative seeks not only to support individual graduates but also to contribute to a broader transformation in how mental health and neurodiversity are integrated into the professional landscape.

Key Stakeholders: A Detailed Analysis

Graduates

The UWT Programme targets recent graduates from institutions, including [Queen Mary University of London](#), [The University of Manchester](#), [Imperial College London](#), [London Metropolitan University](#), and [King's College London](#). These universities provided funding to ensure graduates received individualised mentoring sessions tailored to their specific needs and the use of the OneSpace Passport.

This initiative emphasises the importance of addressing mental health, well-being, and neurodiversity as critical factors in the transition from higher education to working life. By offering structured and personalised support and seamless data flows, the programme enabled graduates to build resilience, enhance workplace readiness, and confidently embark on their careers.

Graduates benefited from a tailored approach that acknowledged the unique challenges faced during this pivotal period, equipping them with the skills necessary to succeed in the modern workforce as well as the opportunity to share their individualised passport with employers to ensure the right support was provided from the off set.

Universities

Universities played a foundational role in the UWT Programme by facilitating access to resources and mentoring for recent graduates and the use of the OneSpace passport. Institutions such as [Queen Mary University of London](#), [The University of Manchester](#), [Imperial College London](#), [London Metropolitan University](#), and [King's College London](#) funded bespoke mentoring sessions designed to address the personal, academic, and professional challenges faced by graduates. It also gave the opportunity for graduates to use the OneSpace passport, enabling

Key Stakeholders: A Detailed Analysis

them to pass on data efficiently to their employer and organise adjustments, if needed.

These universities collaborated closely with UMO, the service provider, to ensure graduates transitioned seamlessly from academic to professional environments. This collaboration encompassed not only logistical support but also the integration of mental health and wellbeing strategies to provide a holistic safety net for graduates navigating this critical phase.

Support and Collaboration

The programme was strengthened by contributions from key organisations:

Student Minds provided expertise on mental health challenges specific to higher education.

TASO supported the Theory of Change development at the beginning of the evaluation process.

Nightline and UMHAN offered valuable peer support and mentoring insights.

Thrive London and Good Thinking brought a focus on resilience-building and digital mental health resources.

This multi-stakeholder collaboration ensured that graduates received comprehensive support. The integrated approach bridged communication between universities, UMO, and employers, creating a cohesive ecosystem for mental health and career development.

Employers

Although employers were not direct collaborators in the UWT programme, their role in supporting recent graduates is of course critical. Companies employing graduates significantly

Key Stakeholders: A Detailed Analysis

impact the early career experience by shaping workplace environments that prioritise mental health and inclusivity. Including employers directly will be a part of Phase Two of the UWT programme.

Research indicates that graduates frequently face heightened anxiety and stress during the transition to professional life (2019, Østertun Geirdal, Nerdrum & Bonsaksen). Employers can address these challenges through initiatives such as:

Supportive onboarding programs to ease transitions into the workplace.

Clear communication about expectations and responsibilities.

Accessible mental health resources and a workplace culture that values wellbeing (Brown, 2022; NACE, 2022).

UMO

As the lead organisation, UMO leveraged its extensive expertise and capacity, developed over more than a decade, in providing mental health mentoring and support services to students nationally. UMO's contributions included:

Delivering high-quality mentoring services tailored to graduates' specific needs.

Developing innovative tools, including the mental health, wellbeing, neurodiversity and disability passport OneSpace, an interactive tool to bridge the gap between academia and employment.

Using digital AI natural language technology to help with a seamless transfer of data to ensure appropriate adjustments are in place at the start of the graduate's career.

Key Stakeholders: A Detailed Analysis

Conducting ongoing evaluations to ensure the program remains adaptive and effective in addressing the evolving needs of graduates and workplaces.

Through its evidence-based approach, UMO not only addressed immediate transition challenges but also contributed to the long-term mental health and professional success of the graduates involved in the programme. Its leadership in creating an integrated framework positioned the UWT programme as a model for addressing the multifaceted challenges of the university-to-workplace transition.

Intervention & Outcomes

The UWT initiative is structured to achieve both immediate and long-term positive impacts for graduates, particularly those with mental health, wellbeing challenges or neurodiversity needs. Through tailored interventions and the use of OneSpace the programme aims to foster lasting improvements in graduates' professional and personal wellbeing. The intended outcomes of the programme can be categorised as short-term, intermediate, and long-term.

Short-term Outcomes

These outcomes focus on the immediate benefits graduates will experience through the intervention. By addressing their most pressing concerns, the programme sets the stage for a smoother transition into the workforce.

- **Improved Confidence and Self-Esteem**

Graduates will develop greater self-assurance in their abilities, reducing feelings of doubt and anxiety. This boost in confidence will empower them to take proactive steps in their career development and workplace integration.

- **Clearer Understanding of Career Goals and Steps to Achieve Them**

The UWT initiative will help graduates clarify their career aspirations and provide a structured roadmap to help them identify realistic goals and the concrete steps needed to achieve them.

- **Awareness of External Support Systems for Mental Health and Career Guidance**

Graduates will become more knowledgeable about the various support networks available to them, both within the workplace and externally, for ongoing mental health care and career advice. This knowledge will help them seek assistance when needed,

Intervention & Outcomes

ensuring they have continuous support throughout their career journey.

- **Ability to pass on crucial information to the employer in terms of what works for them**

ensuring adaptations are made in the workplace and/or the graduate starts their career keeping in mind the strategies that work for them so they can implement from the moment outset.

Intermediate Outcomes

In the medium term, the initiative will promote a more active and informed approach to career planning, mental health management, and workplace integration.

- **Graduates Actively Use University Career Services**

Graduates will be empowered to leverage career services offered by their universities, such as job search support, networking opportunities, and career development workshops. This will increase their ability to navigate the job market effectively.

- **Seamless Data Flow via the use of OneSpace Passport During Job Applications and Onboarding**

The Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport (OneSpace) will become a critical tool for graduates. They will complete and use the passport during job applications and onboarding to communicate their needs to employers. This ensures that necessary accommodations and support systems are in place from day one.

- **Improved Self-Care and Mental Health Management**

Graduates will develop personalised strategies for managing their mental health, including tools for stress reduction, coping with workplace challenges, and promoting

Intervention & Outcomes

overall well-being. This leads to better mental resilience and a more sustainable work-life balance.

- **Greater Sense of Preparedness and Optimism About Entering the Workforce**

With the guidance and support provided, graduates will feel more prepared and optimistic about transitioning into the workforce, reducing the anxiety that often accompanies this major life change.

Long-term Impact

The ultimate success of the UWT initiative lies in its lasting impact on graduates, their careers, and broader societal outcomes.

- **Ensuring Seamless Data Transfer with the OneSpace Passport in Job Applications and Onboarding**

The OneSpace Passport provides a streamlined solution for graduates to transfer essential support information during job applications and onboarding. By consolidating key details on accommodations, mental health, and neurodiversity into a single, secure record, it enables graduates to seamlessly share their needs with employers. This tool promotes a more inclusive, efficient hiring process, ensuring that necessary adjustments are made from the outset and easing the transition into the workplace.

- **Increased Employability and Job Satisfaction for Graduates, Especially Those with Mental Health Challenges**

Graduates who engage with the programme will experience higher rates of employment and job satisfaction. The initiative's tailored support for those with mental health

Intervention & Outcomes

challenges will help ensure they can thrive in the workplace, contributing meaningfully to their organisations.

- **Reduced Dependency on state benefits**

By improving employability and workplace integration, the programme will reduce graduates' reliance on social security benefits. This will not only empower graduates but also contribute to productivity, growth and social cohesion.

- **Enhanced Equality and Social Mobility Through Tailored Support for Underrepresented Groups**

The UWT initiative will play a critical role in promoting social mobility by providing underrepresented groups - such as graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with neurodiversity or mental health challenges - with tailored support that enables them to overcome barriers to employment. This will contribute to greater diversity and inclusivity in the workforce.

Through these outcomes, the UWT initiative aims to create a transformative impact on both the individual graduate and the wider professional landscape, fostering more resilient, supported, and diverse graduates who contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic workforce.

Methodology

To ensure its effectiveness, the UWT programme integrates structured support with a clear methodology rooted in the Theory of Change (ToC). This methodology provides a comprehensive approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating the program, ensuring alignment with desired outcomes and enabling continuous improvement.

Programme Design and Implementation

The UWT programme provides a multi-faceted intervention that targets key challenges faced by university graduates, with a focus on emotional resilience, mental health, neurodiversity, and career readiness along with seamless data flow from the graduate to the employer.

Universities Involved In The Programme

The survey gathered responses from graduates formally enrolled at seven universities, representing a diverse range of academic environments and student demographics. These institutions include:

- **Imperial College London (total student population: 17,035):** A world-renowned institution specializing in science, engineering, medicine, and business, with a highly competitive student body that includes a significant proportion of international students.
- **King's College London (total student population: 41,000):** Known for distinguished reputation in the humanities, law, the sciences (including a wide range of health areas) and social sciences including international affairs. King's has a diverse student population that includes a high number of non-traditional students and a broad representation of socioeconomic backgrounds.

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- **London Metropolitan University (total student population 14,039):** A public university with a focus on providing access to higher education for a diverse student body, including mature students and those from underrepresented ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- **Queen Mary University of London (total student population: 32,000):** Located in the heart of East London, Queen Mary has a diverse student demographic, with a significant number of students from international and working-class backgrounds.
- **University of Manchester (total student population: 40,000):** A leading research institution, known for its diverse student body drawn from across the UK and internationally. It includes students from a range of disciplines, with strong representation from first-generation university students and underrepresented groups.

These universities collectively reflect a wide spectrum of academic disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and student experiences, contributing to the breadth of data and perspectives collected in the survey.

Graduate Participants

A total of 20 graduates were referred to the programme in May 2023. The referral process was facilitated through collaboration with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which identified students in need of transitional support post-graduation. These graduates were recognised as individuals who had completed their university studies but had not yet secured employment or received any job offers. Participants were identified through HEIs' own assessment processes, ensuring those selected were graduates most likely to benefit from the intervention.

Methodology

Demographics

Disability Demographics

A principal focus of the programme was to ensure that all graduates participating in the survey identified as experiencing a disability, mental health condition, neurodiversity, or a well-being challenge. This inclusion criterion was fundamental to the study's aim of understanding the unique pressures and experiences faced by individuals navigating higher education and the transition to the workplace under such circumstances.

Participants self-reported across several disability categories:

- **Mental Health Conditions (diagnosed by GP or psychiatrist):** The largest represented group included graduates with mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and other related conditions. Questions were designed to capture the impact of these challenges on their academic experiences, personal lives, and career readiness.
- **Neurodiversity:** Respondents included individuals identifying as neurodiverse, with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyslexia. The survey sought to understand their specific needs and the barriers they encountered.
- **Disability:** Graduates with physical, sensory, or chronic health conditions also participated, providing insights into accessibility issues and their influence on educational and professional pathways.
- **Learning Differences:** Challenges such as dyslexia were taken into account, recognising that individuals with learning differences may face unique obstacles when transitioning from university to the workplace.

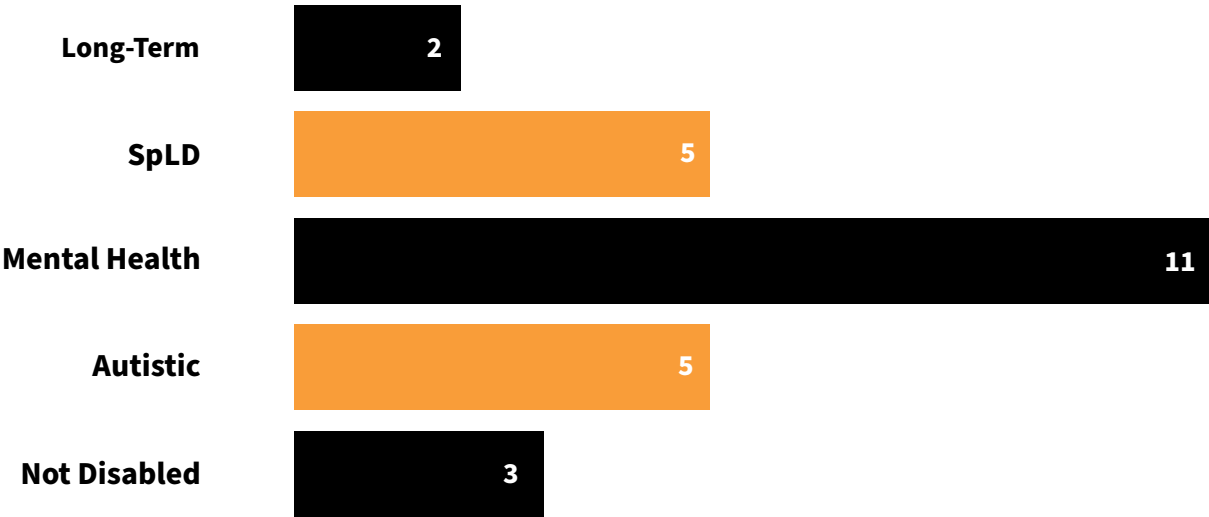
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- **Long-Term Health Conditions:** Experiences of participants with long-term health conditions were documented to provide a clearer understanding of their challenges, including the impact on their transition to employment, workplace accessibility, and overall well-being.

The survey design ensured that participants could self-identify across multiple categories, reflecting the intersectional nature of these challenges.

This focused methodology provided a foundation for analysing the experiences of graduates facing these challenges, ensuring that the study was centered on their voices and perspectives as a core component of its objectives.

Participant Disability Status



Academic Disciplines

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The graduate participants represented a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, underscoring the interdisciplinary scope of the study. The participants were drawn from diverse fields, including:

- Life Sciences
- Film Studies
- Politics and International Relations
- Chemical Engineering
- Medicine
- History

This diversity highlights the inclusion of students from both STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and non-STEM fields, as well as those from professional and humanities-oriented disciplines. Such representation captures the varied experiences and challenges faced by graduates from distinct academic and institutional contexts. This interdisciplinary approach strengthens the generalizability and richness of the findings, offering a comprehensive understanding of the transitional obstacles encountered during the progression from higher education to employment.

Age Demographics

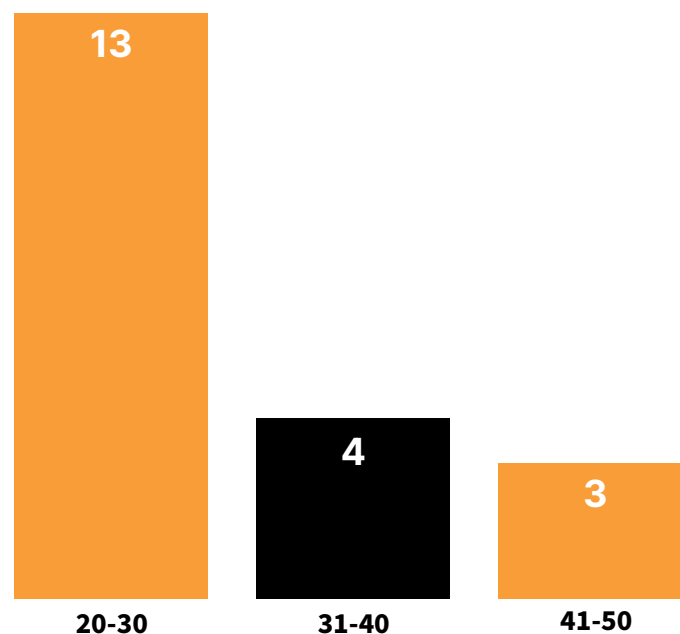
The graduates surveyed in this study represented a wide range of age groups, reflecting the diverse pathways students take to higher education. While the majority (13) of participants were in the traditional graduate age bracket of 21 to 24 years, a notable proportion (5) comprised

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mature students aged 25 and older. This demographic diversity highlights the varied trajectories students follow, encompassing those who transition directly from secondary education to university and those who pursue higher education later in life due to career changes, family commitments, or other personal circumstances.

The inclusion of mature graduates added significant depth to the survey findings, as their experiences often differed markedly from those of younger graduates. Older participants frequently reported juggling academic responsibilities with external obligations, such as full-time employment or caregiving roles. These factors not only shaped their academic journeys but also influenced their perspectives on transitioning to the workplace, where many anticipated challenges in balancing existing commitments with new professional demands.

Respondent Age Group



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By analysing the experiences of graduates across different age groups, the survey offered a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse pressures faced by students. This demographic variability underscored the importance of designing support systems that address the specific needs of both traditional-age and mature graduates, ensuring that interventions are inclusive and effective across the full spectrum of the student population.

Gender Demographics

The small survey included a diverse sample of graduates, with a notable gender distribution: 65% of participants identified as women, while the remaining 35% comprised men and individuals identifying outside the gender binary. This gender split reflects broader trends in higher education, where women often represent a significant majority in many disciplines. The higher proportion of female participants allowed for a more detailed examination of the unique pressures they face, particularly in relation to mental health, emotional resilience, and career preparedness. Women in the study frequently reported heightened levels of stress related to academic performance, balancing multiple responsibilities, and navigating gendered expectations in their prospective careers. These insights contribute to a nuanced understanding of the gendered dimensions of student well-being and career transitions.

While men and non-binary participants made up a smaller proportion of the sample, their inclusion remains critical to capturing a broader picture of the experiences and challenges faced by graduates. In a larger study, comparisons between gender groups would allow the study to identify areas where interventions might need to be tailored, ensuring that support mechanisms address the needs of all students equitably.

In phase two, a gender-based analysis would enrich the findings of the survey, highlighting the importance of considering intersectional factors in understanding the pressures faced by

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graduates. The insights gained would emphasize the need for targeted and inclusive strategies to support students across different gender identities during their transition from university to the workplace.

Respondent Gender Distribution



Ethnicity Demographics

The survey collected demographic data on participants' ethnic backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive representation of graduates. Respondents were asked to self-identify their ethnicity across multiple categories, including White, Black, Asian, Mixed, and other ethnic groups. This approach allowed for a broad and inclusive dataset that reflects the diversity of the university population.

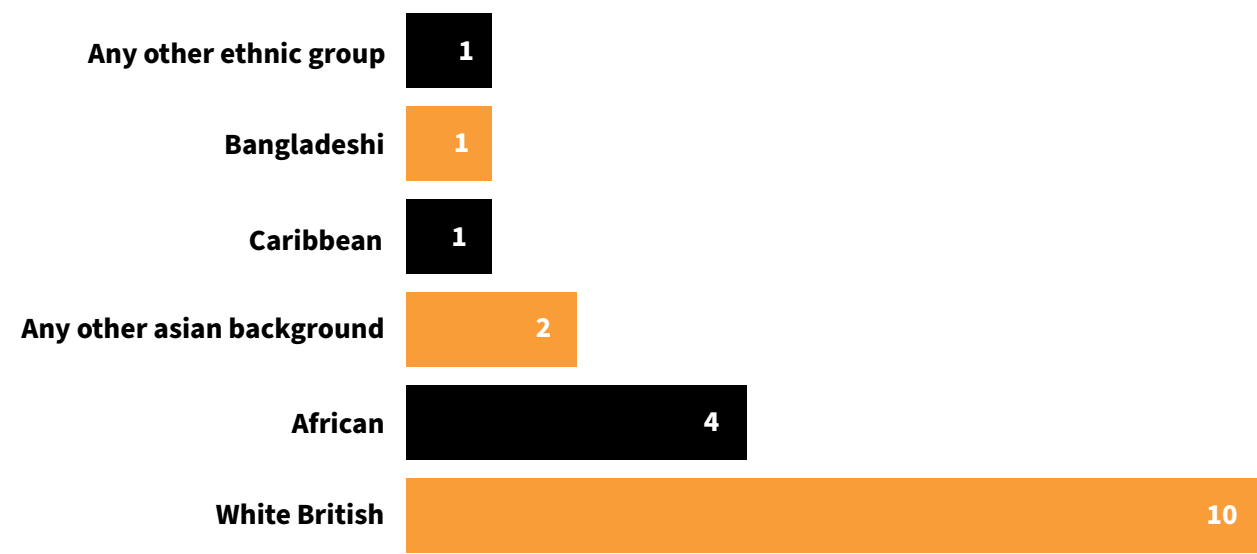
Efforts were made to ensure that the sampling strategy captured a wide range of ethnic groups to provide insights into their experiences. The inclusion of this demographic variable aimed to

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facilitate further analysis of how ethnicity might intersect with other factors, such as academic discipline, mental health, and career preparedness. Data collection procedures adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure confidentiality and encourage accurate and honest responses.

By incorporating ethnicity as a key demographic factor, the methodology aimed to support a more detailed examination of the varied experiences of graduates within the sample, while maintaining consistency with the study’s broader objectives of inclusivity and representation ¹.

Respondent Ethnicity



¹ **Recent UK graduate employment data by ethnicity (2023):** Graduates in sustained employment or further study:

- White graduates: 89.4%
- Indian graduates: 88.3%.
- Black African graduates: 86.2%.
- Pakistani graduates: 84.9%.
- Bangladeshi graduates: 87.3%.
- Chinese graduates: 82.8%.
- Black Caribbean graduates: 65.3%.
- Black other graduates: 58.3%.
- Mixed white and black African graduates: 60.9%.

- Mixed white and black Caribbean graduates: 64.6%.
- Arab graduates: 80.1%.
- Other ethnic group graduates: 82.8%.

Earnings:

- Chinese graduates: £24,200.
- Indian graduates: £23,800.
- White graduates: £21,600.
- Black other graduates: £19,400.
- Black Caribbean graduates: £19,800

(UK government, 2023, Prospect 2024)

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Sample Size

The sample size for this project was 20 participants, which naturally limits the generalisability of the findings. However, this scale is appropriate for a feasibility study, allowing us to explore the potential of the intervention and gather meaningful initial insights.

Limitations

One key limitation of the University to Workplace Transition (UWT) project is the narrow institutional scope of participating HEIs. With the exception of one, all partner institutions were Russell Group universities and primarily based in London. This limits the cultural and geographic diversity of the student cohort and may reduce the generalisability of findings to other university contexts. Additionally, Russell Group institutions typically have a lower proportion of disabled students compared to post-92 or regional universities, which may mean the project did not fully capture the breadth of experiences and needs among disabled graduates nationally (The Times, 2025).

Data Collection and Outcome Measures

To evaluate the effectiveness of the University to Workplace Transition (UWT) programme, UMO implemented a structured mixed-methods approach, collecting data at three key stages: before the programme began, midway through, and at its conclusion. These online surveys were designed to capture changes in students' confidence, mental health self-management, and career readiness over time. They included a combination of Likert-scale items and open-ended responses, allowing for both measurable outcomes and rich, qualitative insights. Key

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areas of focus included students' awareness of support systems, their ability to articulate workplace needs, and their clarity around future career direction.

Recognising the limitations of existing tools, the UMO team adapted the Darling Mentoring Scale (2005, 2002) specifically for this initiative, ensuring that it reflected the themes most relevant to the mentoring sessions. The revised scale integrated structured quantitative measures with reflective qualitative prompts and included targeted questions to assess engagement with the OneSpace passport. While the surveys themselves were developed in-house and not formally validated, they were informed by widely used frameworks in wellbeing, self-efficacy, and career transition. Designed to be accessible and time-efficient (10–15 minutes), the surveys provided a nuanced view of the programme's impact and offered a strong foundation for future evaluation with larger cohorts.

Data Analysis Approach

A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate the impact of the UWT programme, combining quantitative and qualitative data to capture both measurable outcomes and deeper participant insights.

- **Quantitative** data was collected through pre- and post-programme surveys. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse changes in confidence, career clarity, and wellbeing, providing an overview of shifts in participant self-perception and readiness. Where appropriate, comparisons were made across cohorts to identify trends.
- **Qualitative** data was gathered through open-ended survey responses and written reflections. An inductive thematic analysis approach was applied to this data. Responses were coded manually, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data rather than

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being pre-imposed. This enabled the identification of recurring themes such as resilience, confidence-building, challenges in navigating the job market, and the value of personalised support tools like the OneSpace passport.

Together, the mixed methods design allowed for a nuanced understanding of both the effectiveness and lived experience of participants in the programme.

Initial Phase: Starting Point Survey

The initial phase of UMO's survey was dedicated to capturing baseline data from university students spanning a wide range of academic disciplines and demographic backgrounds. This diverse cohort included a significant proportion of participants who reported experiencing challenges with their mental health, reflecting the broader struggles faced by students in contemporary higher education environments. By incorporating input from individuals across varied fields of study and personal circumstances, the survey aimed to present a nuanced and representative picture of the pressures encountered by students during their academic journeys.

This stage of the survey was carefully designed to explore the unique stressors students faced while pursuing their degrees, including academic expectations, financial pressures, social dynamics, and the uncertainties associated with their transition to the workplace. In particular, the survey sought to uncover how these challenges affected students' emotional resilience, mental wellbeing, and overall preparedness for the post-university phase of their lives.

A critical focus of this phase was understanding the anxieties surrounding the shift from academia to professional life, an area often marked by uncertainty and apprehension. Students expressed concerns about securing employment, adapting to workplace cultures,

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and balancing personal and professional responsibilities, highlighting the need for targeted support during this pivotal transition.

The findings from this phase formed the cornerstone of the University-to-Workplace Transition (UWT) Programme. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the factors impacting students' mental health and readiness for post-university challenges, this data informed the development of tailored interventions. These interventions aimed to address the lived experiences and specific concerns of students, ensuring that the support mechanisms designed were both relevant and impactful.

This baseline data not only offered critical insights into the pressures faced by students but also underscored the importance of integrating mental health considerations into broader discussions about academic success and career readiness. By grounding its approach in empirical evidence and student experiences, UMO sought to contribute meaningfully to enhancing the wellbeing and resilience of students during one of the most transformative periods of their lives.

End Point Survey

The final stage of UMO's survey process was instrumental in gathering detailed insights and feedback from participants who had graduated and were navigating the early stages of their post-university lives. These graduates were either actively employed, in the process of job applications, or exploring career opportunities.

This stage focused on assessing the long-term impact of UMO's Specialist Mental Health Mentoring (SMHM) on their transition from university to the workplace. Graduates were encouraged to reflect on their experiences with the program, providing qualitative and quantitative data on how the mentoring sessions influenced their emotional resilience, confidence, and ability to manage workplace challenges.

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Key themes explored included:

1. Transition Challenges Addressed

Participants shared how mentoring had helped them navigate the shift from an academic environment to the professional world. This included developing strategies to manage stress, improve self-care, and adapt to new routines and expectations.

2. Career Readiness and Goal Clarity

Graduates evaluated the extent to which the mentoring sessions had enhanced their career readiness, including setting achievable goals and building the confidence to pursue them.

3. Support Tools Utilised

Feedback highlighted the effectiveness of tools like the Mental Health, Neurodiversity, and Wellbeing Passport (MHNDWP) in facilitating communication with potential employers about reasonable adjustments and support needs.

4. Perceived Long-Term Benefits

Participants reflected on how the program contributed to their overall well-being, workplace readiness, and ability to maintain mental health practices after graduation.

The data collected during this final phase provided actionable insights for refining the UWT Programme. Graduates' reflections not only underscored the program's immediate benefits but also highlighted areas for improvement, ensuring the initiative continues to meet the evolving needs of students and young professionals.

Ethical Protocols

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Given the sensitive nature of the study, particularly involving graduates with mental health conditions, disabilities, and wellbeing challenges, ethical considerations were central to the research design. The study adhered to rigorous ethical protocols to ensure the rights and well-being of participants were respected and safeguarded throughout the research process, in line with established ethical standards (British Psychological Society, 2018; World Health Organization, 2019).

- **Informed Consent:** All participants were provided with a clear, detailed informed consent form, outlining the purpose of the study, the types of data to be collected, and the use of their information. In accordance with ethical research guidelines ([Nuremberg Code, 1947](#)), participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The consent form was designed using plain language to ensure accessibility and comprehension for participants, including those with disabilities or mental health challenges ([National Institutes of Health, 2020](#)).
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** To protect participants' privacy, all collected data were anonymized, with personal identifiers removed to prevent any possibility of identifying individual participants. The confidentiality of responses was maintained through secure data storage practices ([Data Protection Act, 2018](#)). This step was particularly crucial for participants sharing sensitive information related to mental health or disability, ensuring their privacy was respected ([American Psychological Association, 2017](#)).
- **Sensitive Data Handling:** Recognizing the sensitive nature of the data, additional measures were taken to ensure participants' comfort and autonomy throughout the survey. Participants were explicitly informed that they could skip any questions they did not wish to answer and were encouraged to only share what they felt comfortable with. Ethical guidelines ([American Educational Research Association, 2011](#)) emphasize the importance

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of minimizing participant distress, and these provisions aimed to mitigate any potential discomfort for those discussing personal challenges.

- **Support and Resources:** To further safeguard participants' well-being, the study provided information about available mental health and support services, including contact details for counseling and psychological support resources. This was in line with ethical practices for conducting research involving vulnerable populations ([British Psychological Society, 2018](#)), ensuring that participants had access to professional support should the process evoke emotional distress ([World Health Organization, 2019](#)).
- **Ethical Review and Oversight:** The study design and methodology were reviewed and approved by an institutional ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards and guidelines for research involving human participants ([Social Research Association, 2003](#)). This oversight ensured the study adhered to ethical principles, safeguarding participants' rights and welfare at all stages of the research process.

By adhering to these ethical protocols, the study ensured a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for participants, allowing them to share their experiences while protecting their privacy and well-being. These ethical practices were crucial for collecting meaningful and valid data while safeguarding participants from potential harm.

Theory of Change Framework

To ensure that the UWT initiative is effectively addressing the needs of graduates and achieving its long-term goals, the programme is grounded in the Theory of Change (ToC). A ToC maps out the pathway from activities to outcomes, clarifying how the intervention will lead to the desired changes. The key components of the ToC for the UWT initiative are as follows:

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Inputs

The resources and inputs required to implement the UWT programme include:

- **Mentoring Expertise:** A team of trained mentors with experience in mental health, neurodiversity, and career coaching, who provide tailored support to each graduate.
- **Collaboration with Universities:** Partnerships with universities that help identify eligible students and facilitate access to mentoring and support services.
- **Development of the OneSpace Passport using UMO's in-house team:** The use of the Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport, which acts as both a personal tool for students and a communication aid with employers.

Activities

The core activities of the UWT initiative include:

- **Specialist Mentoring Sessions:** Graduates participate in 5-7 one-on-one sessions with trained mentors, which focus on mental health management, career planning, and workplace readiness.
- **The Creation of the OneSpace Passport:** Graduates create their personalized Passport, which documents their mental health, disability, wellbeing and/or neurodiversity needs and strategies for managing these challenges in the workplace.

Outputs

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The immediate outputs of the programme are:

- The number of graduates mentored throughout the program.
- The number of OneSpace Passport created and actively used by graduates in their job applications and onboarding processes.

Outcomes

The outcomes of the UWT programme are categorised into short-term and intermediate outcomes:

Short-term Outcomes:

- **Improved Confidence and Self-Esteem:** Graduates report a significant increase in their confidence and emotional resilience, helping them navigate the challenges of the transition to the workforce.
- **Clearer Career Goals:** Graduates gain clarity regarding their career aspirations and the steps required to achieve them.
- **Awareness of Support Systems:** Graduates are more aware of external support services for mental health and career guidance.

Intermediate Outcomes:

- **Increased Utilisation of University Career Services:** Graduates actively engage with their university's career services, utilizing the resources available to support their job search and career planning.

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- **Completion and Use of the Passport:** Graduates successfully create and the use of the Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport, OneSpace, during job applications, interviews, and onboarding processes, ensuring their mental health and neurodiversity needs are communicated to employers.
- **Improved Self-Care and Mental Health Management:** Graduates show better management of their mental health and wellbeing, using strategies learned through mentoring and the use of OneSpace.
- **Preparedness for Employment:** Graduates report feeling better prepared for the workforce, both in terms of practical skills and emotional resilience.

Impact

The long-term impact of the UWT initiative includes:

- **Increased Employability and Job Satisfaction:** Graduates experience higher levels of employability, job satisfaction, and professional success, particularly those who may have faced mental health challenges during their education.
- **Reduced Dependency on Social Security:** Graduates who successfully transition into stable employment contribute to a reduction in reliance on social security systems, enhancing their financial independence ([The Times, 2024](#)).
- **Enhanced Social Mobility:** By providing tailored support to underrepresented groups, the programme helps enhance social mobility, offering equal opportunities for success in the workforce.

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- **Reduced Stigma Around Mental Health:** The programme aims to reduce stigma in the workplace related to mental health and neurodiversity, creating more inclusive and supportive work environments.

Conclusion

By integrating the Theory of Change framework into the design and implementation of the UWT initiative, UMO ensures that each stage of the programme is aligned with clear objectives and measurable outcomes.

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UWT: Theory of Change

Situation		Aims	
<p>Graduates with mental health conditions, neurodiversity, disabilities or broader wellbeing needs face a cliff edge when transitioning from university into employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth worklessness in the UK is now at a 10-year high, exacerbated by the mental health crisis (The Times, 2024; ONS, 2022). HEI support often ends at graduation, leading to worsening outcomes for students already at risk. APP targets and equality of graduate outcomes remain unmet across many institutions. 		<p>UMO's UWT programme supports inclusive graduate outcomes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending tailored, specialist support beyond graduation Increasing graduate agency and confidence Creating new channels for employer collaboration Strengthening HEI delivery against APPs and frameworks including TASO, UMHC, and Step Change 	
Input	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Specialist Mentoring: 5-7 sessions, 50 min, 1:1 support</p>	<p>Mentor supports new graduate to feel more confident in the workplace</p>	<p>Short-Term: New graduate attends and engages with UWT sessions</p>	<p>New Graduates feel supported during the UWT</p>
<p>The Passport: Mentor guides the student to use the passport and work together to support graduate</p>	<p>The Passport helps facilitate a conversation between employer and employee to support graduate needs</p>	<p>Intermediate: New graduate is aware of their mental health, neurodiversity, disability or wellbeing needs. They build on strategies to set health boundaries and increase emotional resilience.</p>	<p>New graduates the passport as a resource they can access whenever needed.</p>
<p>Partnerships: Graduate, Mentor, HEIs, Employers</p>	<p>UWT sessions and Passport increase new graduate's awareness of their mental health and wellbeing needs</p>	<p>Long-Term: Once employed, new graduates feel confident in applying knowledge, strategies and the passport in the workplace.</p>	<p>Increased mentoring in the UWT for all students in need.</p>
<p>Frameworks: Research aligned with ToC and UMHC</p>	<p>Evidence-based strategies are built on previous mentoring</p> <p>The trusting mentoring relationship supports the student to engage with passport and UWT sessions</p>		<p>New Graduates secure employment in a role that supports their wellbeing</p>

Results

Key Themes

Students participating in the UMO University-to-Workplace Transition (UWT) programme identified several key areas of impact. A major theme was the development of emotional resilience, as students learned to manage stress and uncertainty more effectively. This was closely linked to increased confidence and self-esteem, with participants feeling more empowered to advocate for their needs.

Other common themes included:

- Navigating the job search, including support with CVs, interviews, and identifying suitable roles
- Career clarity, with students gaining a better understanding of their goals and the steps needed to achieve them
- Disclosure of mental health or neurodiversity needs, using tools like the OneSpace passport to communicate support needs confidently
- Transition anxiety, with mentoring support easing the move from university to the workplace
- Together, these insights highlight the importance of targeted, holistic support in helping graduates manage both the emotional and practical demands of entering the workforce.

Pre-Programme Survey: Results

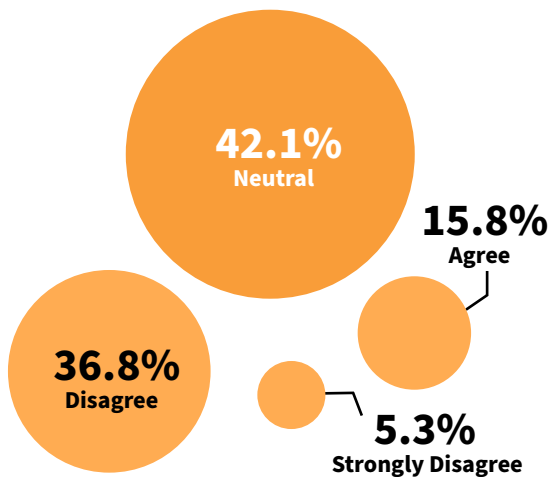
As part of the study, a pre-programme survey was conducted to assess students' baseline emotional resilience and feelings of overwhelm before engaging in the mentoring program. The survey included qualitative and quantitative components to provide a comprehensive

Results

understanding of participants' well-being and mental preparedness for academic and career transitions.

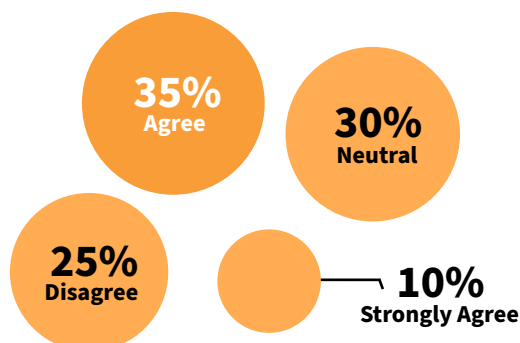
Next Steps And Feeling Prepared

I Feel Prepared For The Workplace



The pre-programme survey results, combined with qualitative feedback from graduates, shed light on the significant challenges faced by individuals transitioning from university to the workplace. **42.1% of respondents** reported feeling unprepared for the demands of professional life. Many cited a lack of practical skills, limited industry exposure, and uncertainties about career paths as primary factors contributing to this sentiment. These concerns were amplified by the perceived gap between academic learning and real-world application, leaving graduates feeling under-equipped to meet workplace expectations.

I Have A Positive View Of My Future



Additionally, **25% of participants** expressed a lack of optimism for their future. This lack of confidence was often attributed to anxieties about securing stable employment, financial pressures, and a competitive job market. Several respondents highlighted the emotional toll of navigating these uncertainties, describing feelings of self-doubt, fear of failure, and a general sense of disconnection from clear career trajectories.

Results

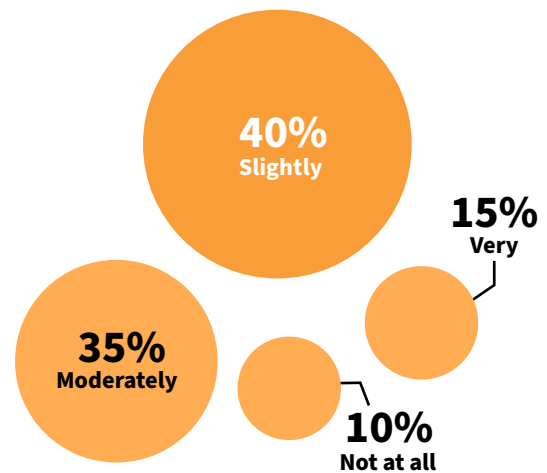
Emotional Resilience

Graduates reported a significant improvement in emotional resilience following the mentoring. Prior to the intervention, only **50% of participants** felt moderately to very emotionally resilient.

This figure increased to **70.5% post-intervention**, reflecting the program's impact in fostering resilience. Through personalized support and practical strategies, graduates developed stronger coping mechanisms, enhanced stress management skills, and greater confidence in addressing the challenges of transitioning to the workplace.

This marked growth underscores the program's effectiveness in equipping graduates to navigate both personal and professional demands with increased stability and assurance.

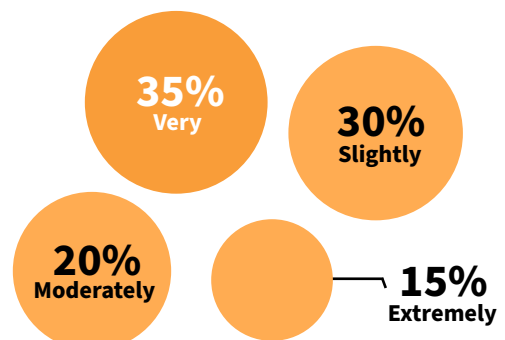
How Emotionally Resilient Do You Feel?



Feelings Of Being Overwhelmed

Participants were also asked about their levels of overwhelm, with the question, "How overwhelmed do you feel?" Responses ranged from "not at all" to "extremely," providing insights into the mental and emotional pressures faced by the group before mentoring began.

How Overwhelmed Do You Feel?



Results

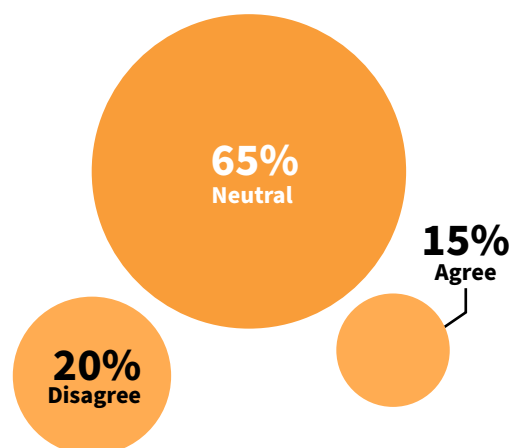
50% of participants indicated they felt “extremely” or “very” overwhelmed prior to mentoring.

This statistic underscores the intense emotional and mental strain experienced by half the participants

Strategies To Improve Emotional Resilience

85% of graduates reported lacking effective strategies to support their emotional resilience, highlighting a significant gap in resources and guidance needed to navigate post-university challenges.

I Have Strategies To Improve My Emotional Resilience



Pre-Programme Survey: Qualitative Data

The pre-programme survey provided valuable qualitative insights into the apprehensions graduates experience as they transition from university to full-time employment. When asked about their thoughts on starting work after graduation, participants highlighted several themes that underscored their concerns about adapting to the professional environment:

Results

Graduates Concerns About Starting Employment After Leaving University

Key concerns about transitioning to the workplace, including challenges with:

“Interacting and socialising with colleagues, physical and mental demands of full-time work, burnout, and requesting reasonable adjustments.”

Many highlighted apprehension about adapting to workplace dynamics, managing professional responsibilities, and maintaining wellbeing. These insights underscore the need for targeted support to address the complexities of starting full-time employment, particularly for those with mental health or accessibility needs.

Graduates Concerns About Entering the Workplace

Graduates expressed significant anxiety about securing suitable employment after university, with particular concerns raised by international students. One participant noted:

“That it’ll be hard to look for a suitable role since I am not well trained and I am an international student, which might hamper my choices.”

This statement reflects a broader sentiment among graduates who feel underprepared for

Results

the job market due to perceived skill gaps or limited professional experience. International students, in particular, highlighted additional challenges, such as navigating visa restrictions, understanding local job markets, and overcoming potential biases. These concerns emphasize the need for tailored career support that addresses both skill development and the unique barriers faced by diverse graduate populations.

Mental Health Concerns and Workplace Readiness

Mental health challenges were a recurring theme among graduates as they contemplated entering the workforce. One respondent shared:

“The lack of mental health support and awareness over the effects of anxiety. The idea that anxiety will hold me back when compared to other people within the workplace. I feel at risk of being left behind by taking a job I can get, rather than one I want due to the nature of the competitive workplace. I feel like my concerns will not be heard within the workplace.”

This sentiment reflects a broader fear among graduates that mental health issues, such as anxiety, could hinder their performance and career progression in a competitive job market. Many expressed apprehension about finding supportive work environments where their concerns would be acknowledged and accommodations provided. These insights highlight the critical need for workplaces to prioritise mental health awareness, offer robust support systems, and foster inclusive environments to ensure all employees can thrive professionally.

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Workload Pressures and Disclosure Challenges

Graduates also voiced concerns about managing workplace pressures and the stigma surrounding disability disclosure. One participant reflected:

“Being overwhelmed with the workload. Also, disclosing my disability as I felt discriminated [against] when I disclosed at placement.”

This highlights the dual challenges of adapting to demanding workloads while navigating fears of discrimination or bias. Many graduates stressed the importance of workplaces fostering an inclusive culture where disclosure of disabilities or mental health conditions is met with understanding and support, rather than judgment.

Results

Post Programme Survey: Results

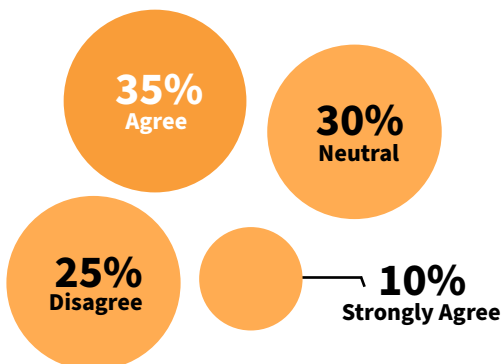
Post-Intervention Quantitative Comparison

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Improvement in Participant Wellbeing Post Intervention

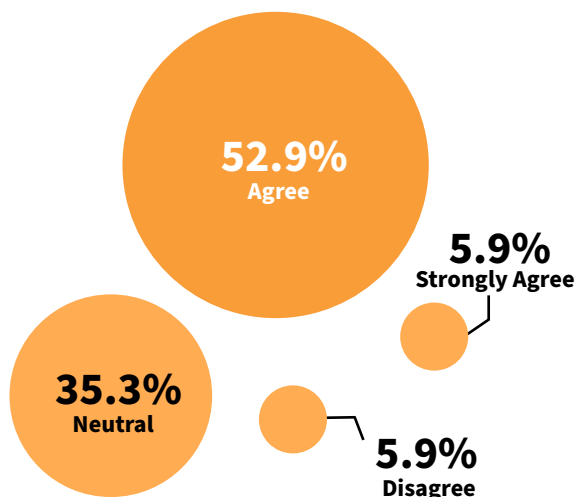
PRE-MENTORING

I Have A Positive View Of My Future



POST-MENTORING

I Have A Positive View Of My Future

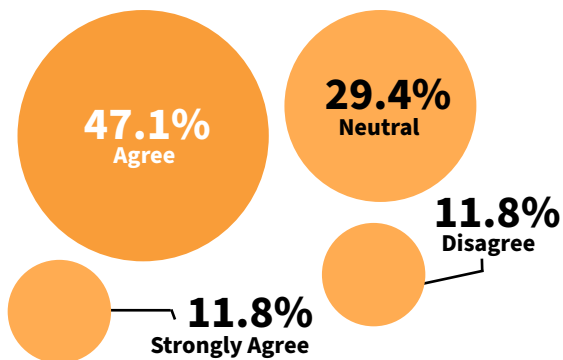


The intervention showed a marked improvement in participants' outlook on their future. After the program, **58.8% of participants** reported a positive view of their future, compared to 45% prior to the intervention. Additionally, the proportion of participants who initially disagreed with having a positive outlook on their future dropped significantly, from 25% to just 7%. These results highlight the effectiveness of the intervention in fostering optimism and enhancing participants' wellbeing.

Results

Strategies To Improve Emotional Resilience

POST-MENTORING I Have Strategies To Improve My Emotional Resilience



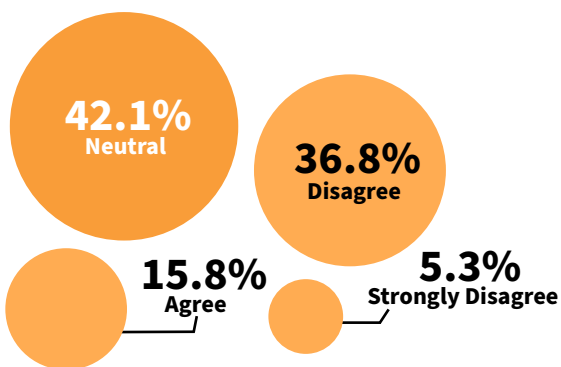
After engaging with OneSpace and mentoring, **58.9% of graduates** reported gaining effective strategies to strengthen their emotional resilience.

Results

Improved Workplace Readiness Post-Intervention

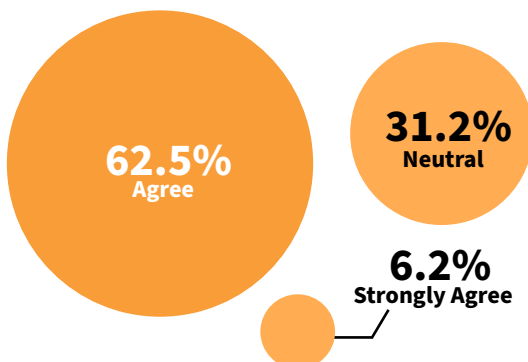
PRE-MENTORING

I Feel Prepared For the Workplace



POST-MENTORING

I Feel Prepared For the Workplace



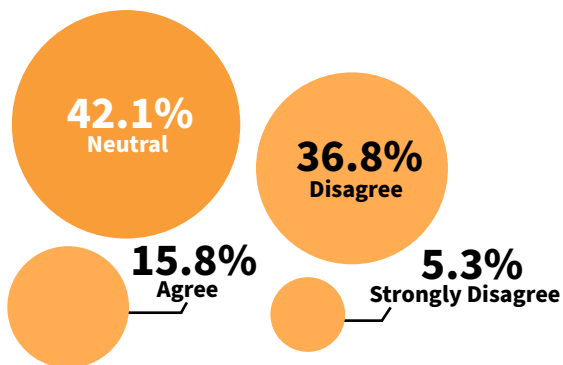
Graduates reported a significant increase in workplace readiness following the mentoring program. Before the intervention, only **15.8%** of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt prepared to enter the workplace, while **42.1%** stated they did not feel ready at all. Post-intervention, **68.7%** of graduates agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more workplace ready, marking a substantial improvement. The tailored support provided through one-on-one sessions equipped participants with essential skills, including effective communication, self-care strategies, and practical tools for navigating professional environments. Additionally, many graduates gained clarity on career goals and a deeper understanding of workplace dynamics. This enhanced preparation fostered greater confidence and readiness, positioning graduates for success as they embark on their professional journeys.

Results

Confidence In Securing Employment

PRE-MENTORING

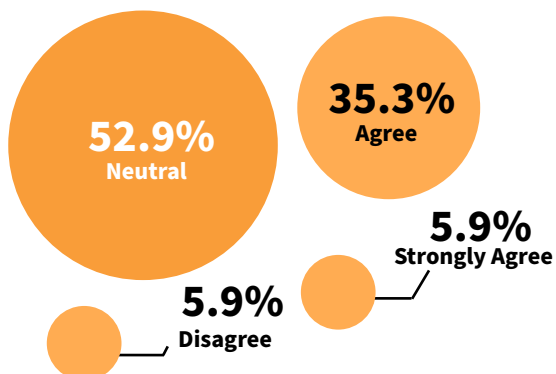
I Feel Confident In Securing Employment



Before starting the UWT programme, **only 10% of graduate participants** felt confident in their ability to secure employment, highlighting the need for targeted support in career readiness and job attainment.

POST-MENTORING

I Feel Confident In Securing Employment



Results

Improved Needs Being Met Post-Intervention

Post-mentoring, students overwhelmingly expressed that the intervention effectively addressed their needs. They reported feeling supported in key areas such as emotional resilience, mental health management, and career readiness. The tailored approach of the program, including personalized mentoring sessions and practical tools like the MHNDWP, was highlighted as instrumental in meeting their individual challenges and providing a foundation for a smoother transition into the workforce.

Post UWT Mentoring: Reported Benefits

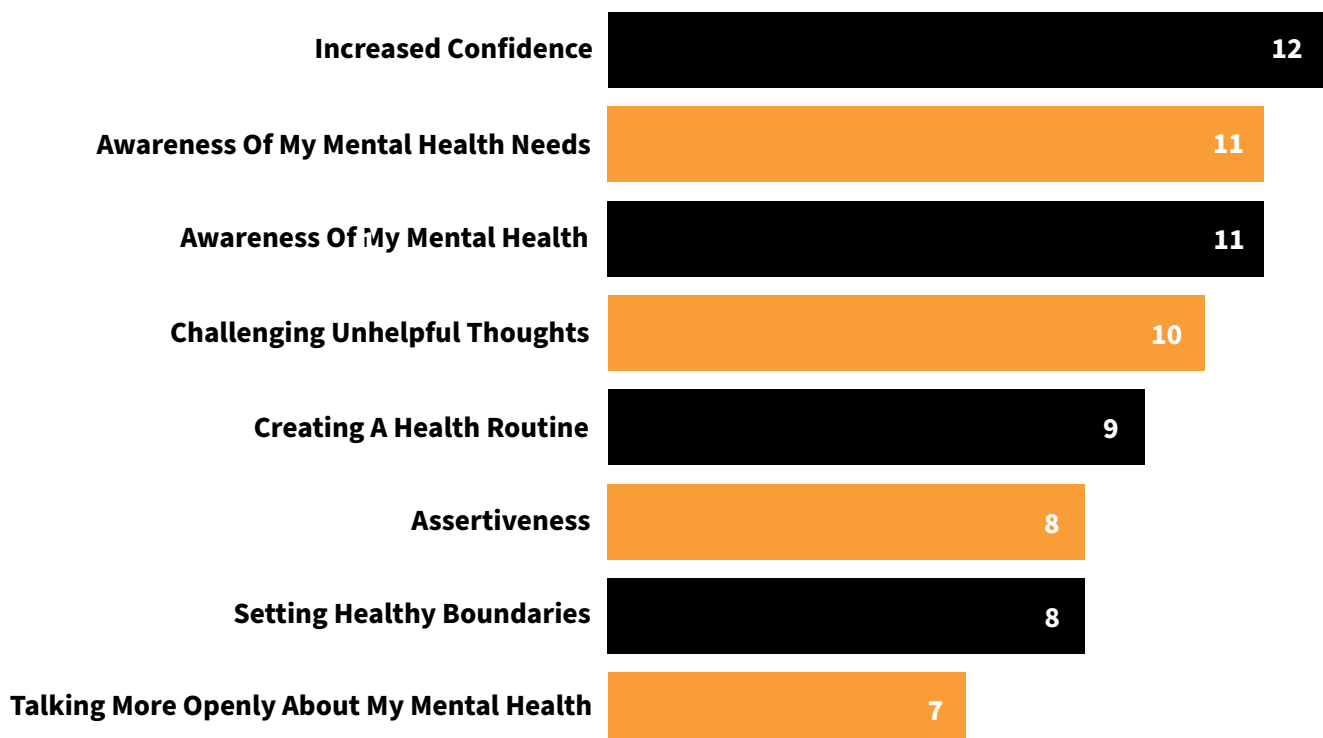


Results

Graduate Skills Developed Post Intervention

Students reported gaining a range of valuable skills through the intervention program, including setting healthy boundaries, being more assertive, and building confidence. Participants noted that these skills enhanced their ability to navigate the professional environment with greater competence and adaptability. The tools acquired during the program were recognised as essential for long-term career success.

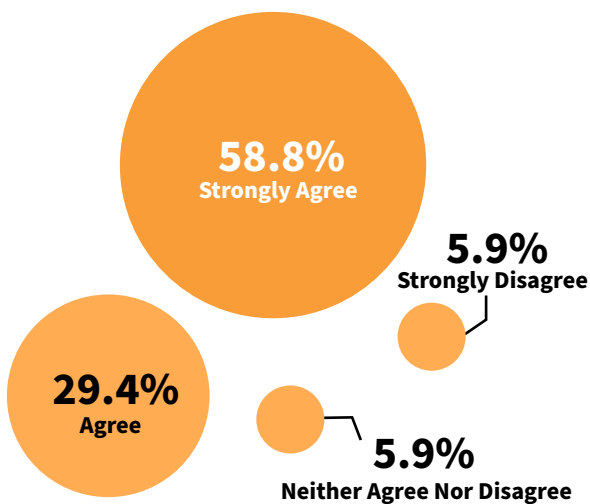
Skills Learnt During UWT Sessions



Results

Importance Of UWT Being Available For All Graduates

UWT and MHWP Support Should Be Accessible To All Students



88.2% of participants emphasized that the UWT programme should be accessible to all university graduates, regardless of whether they face mental health, neurodiversity, or disability challenges. This underscores both the effectiveness of the UWT and the broader need for additional support during this critical transition period.

Results

Qualitative Responses Post Intervention

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Qualitative Results On The Experience Of Receiving Support Via OneSpace and Mentoring

Post-intervention feedback highlighted the meaningful impact of the mentoring program on participants' experiences and perceptions of support. One participant shared:

"[My Mentor] has a genuine interest in supporting me to achieve my goal of getting into employment. The program presents the opportunity to have professional support guiding me through the employment process, and on how to create a compelling curriculum vitae."

This response reflects the value graduates placed on the personalised and practical guidance they received. Participants emphasized the importance of tailored advice, including assistance with CV preparation, job applications, and interview strategies, which significantly enhanced their confidence in pursuing employment opportunities.

Another participant remarked:

"I hope other students living with disabilities can have access to the OneSpace passport to even the employment space."

This statement underscores the program's role in addressing inequalities faced by graduates with disabilities, ensuring they receive the targeted support necessary to overcome barriers

Results

and compete on equal footing in the job market.

The OneSpace data-transferring system played a crucial role in supporting graduates during their transition to employment by addressing

The feedback demonstrates the program's effectiveness in not only equipping graduates with essential tools for employment but also fostering a sense of inclusivity and empowerment, which participants recognized as critical for their professional growth.

Qualitative Results on the Impact of the UWT on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Participants highlighted the profound positive impact of the University to Workplace Transition (UWT) sessions on their mental health and overall wellbeing. One graduate shared,

"The sessions helped with the management of my everyday struggle with mental health. I truly appreciate the professional support from [my mentor]."

This feedback underscores the importance of having dedicated, compassionate mentors who provide tailored strategies to address individual challenges.

Graduates frequently emphasised how the sessions equipped them with practical tools to manage stress, build emotional resilience, and maintain a healthier balance in their daily lives. Many credited the program with creating a safe space to openly discuss their mental health, fostering a sense of understanding and empowerment. The personalised support from mentors

Results

not only alleviated immediate struggles but also helped participants feel more confident and prepared to manage future challenges in both personal and professional settings.

Furthermore, the UWT played a vital role in helping graduates navigate the often overwhelming job search process. One graduate shared:

“It can be overwhelming scouting for job opportunities even without a medical condition, but having a professional support my journey lessens the worries.”

The programme helped build confidence in job applications and interviews, with another participant noting:

“I gained confidence in myself and my abilities”

While others found it useful in:

“Learning how to communicate”

And:

“Researching for a suitable job.”

Beyond job applications, the programme also provided crucial support for emotional well-

Results

being and time management. One graduate described struggling with:

“Lack of confidence in interviews, intense fears over my future, and the lack of employment options out there”

While another appreciated the assistance in:

“Dealing with feelings of burnout from being overworked and how to handle adult-life stresses such as rent issues.”

The programme also helped graduates overcome barriers in networking and employer engagement, with one stating:

“I had difficulty making contact with prospective employers and pursuing opportunities.”

By offering structured support, career resources, and emotional reassurance, the programme not only improved job search strategies but also empowered graduates to manage their transition with greater confidence and clarity.

This qualitative feedback reinforces the value of integrating mental health support into transitional programs, ensuring participants have the resources needed to thrive during and beyond the critical shift from university to the workplace.

Results

Impact Of The UWT And The OneSpace Passport On The Transition Experience

Participants shared that without the support of the UWT and Mental Health and the OneSpace passport, their transition from university to the workplace would have been far more difficult and overwhelming. One graduate expressed:

"I think I would have been overwhelmed with the point of job searching process a LOT more to the point of severe mental health issues returning again. And then once in work, I would have struggled with coping with the transitions into working life."

This highlights how critical the programs were in providing timely and practical support to manage not only the job search but also the ongoing demands of transitioning into full-time employment.

Another participant shared:

"I doubt the university claims to support graduates with disabilities, as there is no genuine commitment to help the University to Workplace Transition in similar circumstances as myself."

This comment reflects a broader concern that institutional support for graduates with disabilities is possibly insufficient. Without the targeted assistance offered by UWT and the OneSpace passport, many graduates felt that they would have faced increased stress and

Results

potentially experienced setbacks in their mental health.

Overall, participants emphasized the sense of relief and empowerment provided by these programs, which helped mitigate the overwhelming nature of job searching and the challenges of adapting to workplace expectations. This qualitative feedback underscores the vital role of such programs in ensuring that graduates, particularly those with disabilities or mental health challenges, have the tools and support needed to transition successfully into the workforce.

Concerns Without The UWT In Place

Graduates reflected on the critical role of the UWT in their transition to employment, with many acknowledging the potential negative outcomes had the program not been available. One participant shared:

“[Lack of confidence] in getting jobs probably would be close to giving up/ending up at rock bottom.”

This response underscores the overwhelming impact of self-doubt and uncertainty that many graduates experience when seeking employment, particularly those facing mental health or neurodiversity challenges.

Another Graduate commented specifically about the transition space:

“...it was difficult because I didn’t know what I wanted to go into and given I graduated late a lot of grad schemes had closed. But I appreciated having the meetings and support because it’s quite intimidating and lonely having just graduated and being thrown into the world.”

Results

This quote highlights the challenges of transitioning from university to employment. The graduate struggled with career uncertainty and missed opportunities due to late graduation, as many graduate schemes had already closed. They also found the process intimidating and isolating but appreciated the support and guidance, which helped ease the transition.

Without the structured support provided by the UWT, participants expressed that their job search would have been marked by significant anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and a lack of direction. The absence of tailored guidance, the use of OneSpace and mentorship, they believed, could have led to a cycle of frustration, diminished self-esteem, and ultimately disengagement from the job market altogether. The support helped build confidence, provided practical application advice, and clarified personal skills and career needs as expressed by one graduate:

“It was extremely valuable in gaining confidence in the application process, and preparing for interviews. I received a lot of practical advice for various application stages - presenting my abilities and behaving professionally. It also reassured me that I have the skills to find a job in the sector I was interested in and allowed me to have a better understanding of what skills I have and what are my needs.”

This feedback highlights the transformative impact of the UWT in instilling confidence, providing practical strategies, and fostering a sense of empowerment among graduates. The program was seen as a crucial safety net that not only prevented participants from reaching a breaking point but also helped them build the resilience needed to pursue meaningful employment opportunities.

Discussion

Challenges in the University-to-Workplace Transition

The transition from university to the workplace represents a significant period of change and uncertainty for many students. The findings from UMO's surveys, complemented by research from organisations such as Student Minds and the National Audit Office (NAO), underscore the challenges faced by students, particularly those with disabilities or mental health concerns. This transition often brings heightened stress and anxiety, with many students struggling to manage the demands of this shift.

Pre-graduation anxiety plays a central role in shaping how students experience this transition. Concerns about securing employment, adapting to professional environments, and managing workplace expectations can lead to overwhelming feelings and self-doubt. According to Student Minds (2022), nearly one in three students reported that university negatively impacted their mental health. This trend becomes even more pronounced as graduation approaches, when the realities of entering the workforce begin to set in. The anxiety surrounding the future, compounded by the pressures of academic performance and the uncertainty of employment prospects, can significantly affect students' mental health and overall well-being, hindering their ability to succeed academically and transition smoothly into professional life.

Students with disabilities and mental health conditions are especially vulnerable during this period. As noted by the National Audit Office (2021), many students with additional needs experience heightened stress as they face the loss of the structured support systems they relied on during their academic career. Without adequate workplace accommodations or understanding, these students may encounter additional barriers to entering the workforce. This situation highlights the need for targeted support interventions that address both the emotional and practical challenges faced by these students.

Discussion

National data reinforces these challenges. The [AGCAS What Happens Next? 2025 report](#), based on the Graduate Outcomes Survey, shows a total employment gap of around 11% for disabled graduates compared to their non-disabled peers, with the gap in full-time roles typically between 8–10 percentage points. It also highlights a 2-point difference in agreement with statements such as ‘My current activity is meaningful’.

Research by Tomlinson (2017) further emphasizes the critical nature of this transition, particularly for students from marginalized groups or those with additional needs. As they move toward adulthood, these students are disproportionately affected by the pressures associated with entering the workforce. Thus, tailored interventions are essential to ensure their success in navigating the challenges of the professional world. The UWT programme plays a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by offering specialized mentoring, raising awareness of mental health issues, and providing students with the tools necessary for managing their transition into the workforce.

Insights

Pre-Programme Survey: Emotional Resilience And Overwhelm

The results from the programme survey provide valuable insight into the emotional and psychological state of students as they approach graduation. At the outset of the program, 50% of the evaluated students reported feeling either “not at all” or “just slightly” emotionally resilient. This indicates a significant level of concern about their ability to manage the pressures of university life and the impending transition to the workplace. In parallel, 50% of students expressed feeling “extremely” or “very” overwhelmed, highlighting the widespread sense of emotional strain that many students experience during this critical period. These findings suggest that many students face considerable challenges in coping with the demands of their academic work, mental health, and future career prospects, which may impact their overall

Discussion

academic performance and mental well-being.

In terms of career readiness, **42.1% of graduates** reported feeling unprepared to enter the workforce. This highlights a notable gap in the support provided to students with disabilities as they approach graduation. The transition from academia to employment is often marked by uncertainty, and many students are not equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, or confidence to succeed in the workplace. Moreover, 25% of students indicated that they did not have a positive view of their future, which may reflect anxiety about entering the workforce, concerns over career prospects, and the overall challenges of adult life. This lack of optimism, coupled with the emotional and mental health challenges students face, can significantly hinder their ability to pursue fulfilling careers after graduation.

Concerns Regarding Employment

The qualitative data from the pre-programme survey further highlights the specific concerns voiced by students regarding their transition to the workforce. For instance, one graduate expressed anxiety about “interacting and socialising with colleagues, the physical and mental demands of full-time work, burnout, and requesting reasonable adjustments.” These concerns are consistent with broader research indicating that graduates with mental health challenges or neurodiversity often face greater difficulties during the transition to employment ([Student Minds, 2022](#)). Additionally, another graduate noted that “it will be hard to look for a suitable role since I am not well trained and I am an international student, which might hamper my choices.” This comment underscores the compounded challenges faced by international students and those who feel inadequately prepared for the workforce.

Insights

Discussion

Post-programme Survey: Positive Shifts in Wellbeing and Career Readiness

After participating in the UWT, graduates reported significant improvements in various aspects of their well-being and readiness for the workplace. One of the most notable outcomes was a marked increase in emotional resilience. Many graduates reported feeling more capable of managing stress, building stronger coping mechanisms, and handling both personal and professional challenges with greater confidence. This improvement in emotional resilience highlights the effectiveness of the UWT in equipping graduates with the mental fortitude necessary to navigate the uncertainties and pressures associated with entering the workforce.

Additionally, graduates reported feeling significantly more prepared to enter the workplace. The tailored support provided through one-on-one mentoring sessions, coupled with the use of tools such as the Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport (OneSpace), helped graduates improve their workplace readiness. These tools enhanced graduates' communication skills, ability to manage work-related stress, and overall sense of self-care. The increased confidence and preparedness reported by graduates reflect the program's success in addressing key gaps in career readiness and emotional resilience.

Graduate Skills Development And Long-Term Impact

The UWT program also contributed to the development of essential workplace skills. Graduates reported gaining valuable skills such as effective communication, problem-solving, stress management, and the development of a strong work ethic. These skills not only prepared them for the immediate challenges of entering the workforce but also positioned them for long-term success in their careers. The tailored sessions empowered participants to develop the tools and strategies necessary to navigate professional environments with greater competence and

Discussion

adaptability.

Graduate Needs And The Impact of UWT and OneSpace

Graduates expressed high levels of satisfaction with the support provided through the UWT. Many participants emphasised that the intervention effectively addressed their individual needs, particularly in areas such as emotional resilience, mental health management, and career readiness. Several graduates acknowledged that without the UWT, their transition to the workplace would have been significantly more challenging. In particular, graduates noted that the structured support helped alleviate concerns regarding their mental health and eased the process of navigating the demands of professional life.

Data Transition

The OneSpace passport played a crucial role in ensuring a seamless transfer of important data from university to employment, reducing the administrative burden on graduates and employers alike. Participants highlighted how this support eased their transition into the workplace, helping them manage adjustments and workplace expectations. Without it, many felt they would have struggled significantly, with one graduate noting, *“I think I would have struggled with coping with the transitions into working life.”* By streamlining the sharing of essential information, the OneSpace passport enabled graduates to focus on sustaining employment, reinforcing the need for integrated, long-term support systems.

Referring Back To The Theory Of Change (TOC)

Discussion

The outcomes of the UWT programme align closely with the Theory of Change model, demonstrating strong achievement across short-term, intermediate, and long-term impact goals. In the short term, the programme effectively boosted graduates' confidence, emotional resilience, and awareness of mental health support—meeting key foundational aims. Intermediate outcomes, such as increased use of university career services, adoption of the MHNDW Passport via OneSpace, and improved self-care practices, indicate that graduates translated this foundational support into meaningful action. Long-term goals, including enhanced employability, reduced reliance on social security, and increased social mobility, are also well supported by the data, especially for students with additional needs. The programme's contribution to reducing stigma and normalising mental health disclosures in employment contexts further demonstrates its alignment with the Theory of Change and its potential for sustained, systemic impact.

Recommendations And Next Steps

The findings from the UMO University to Workplace Transition (UWT) programme highlight the significant challenges university students, especially those with disabilities or mental health concerns, face as they move from higher education into the workforce. Based on these insights, the following recommendations are designed to address these challenges and establish the essential support systems needed for a successful transition across universities.

These recommendations aim to strengthen the effectiveness and long-term impact of the UWT programme while tackling key areas of concern for graduates, employers, and universities.

1. Phase Two: Expanding the Reach of the UWT programme with Graduate Employers

- **Target audience:** Universities and Employers

Discussion

- Phase Two of the UWT programme seeks to broaden its scope by engaging additional universities and reaching a more diverse pool of at least 1,000 graduates. This expansion will enhance our understanding of the obstacles graduates encounter during their transition from university to employment.
- By including more institutions, we can ensure the programme connects with a wide range of graduates from various regions and academic disciplines, making its benefits more universally accessible.
- Furthermore, involving graduate employers in this phase will provide a comprehensive, 360-degree view of the employment landscape, offering valuable insights into employer expectations, skill gaps, and the evolving job market. This collaboration will bridge the divide between education and employment, leading to improved outcomes for both graduates and employers.
- Findings from the AGCAS (2025) report offer a compelling rationale for this phase of the programme. The report highlights systemic disadvantage for disabled graduates and underscores the need for workplace reform and inclusive graduate support.

2. Prioritising Diversity: Advancing Equity for Graduates from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds

- **Target audience:** Universities
- In Phase 2 of this programme, our focus will shift to understanding the specific challenges faced by graduates from diverse ethnic backgrounds in their transition to the workforce. By gaining deeper insights into these experiences, we can equip employers with the tools to refine their recruitment and onboarding processes. This will not only promote more inclusive workplaces but also ensure better support for these graduates,

Discussion

ultimately fostering a more equitable and diverse workforce.

3. Leverage Data & Technology: Enhancing Graduate Transitions with OneSpace and Specialized Mentoring

- **Target audience:** Employers and Universities
- The OneSpace app is a vital tool in addressing data challenges and will be central to the next phase of the programme. By enabling graduates to seamlessly access and manage the support they need as they transition from university to the workplace, OneSpace ensures that essential assistance is in place from the outset. The platform allows graduates to share relevant information about their needs, including necessary adjustments for neurodiversity, mental health, and wellbeing, fostering a proactive and supportive system. This approach not only helps prevent burnout but also empowers graduates to confidently manage their mental health, making their transition into employment smoother and more sustainable.
- A key component of this support system is the integration of the Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability, and Wellbeing Passport (OneSpace). The OneSpace Passport has proven to be an effective tool for students to disclose their mental health or neurodiversity needs in a structured and supportive manner, ensuring that appropriate adjustments and accommodations are made. By embedding the OneSpace Passport into university support systems, students are better equipped to manage their mental health while maintaining academic progress, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and supportive transition into the workforce.

Conclusion

Discussion

The findings from the pre-programme and post-programme surveys demonstrate the significant impact of the UWT program in supporting graduates during the critical transition from university to the workplace. The improvements in emotional resilience, workplace readiness, and skill development underscore the importance of providing targeted, individualized support during this phase of a graduate's life. The results also highlight the vital role of mental health and wellbeing frameworks, such as the Mental Health, Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Passport (OneSpace), in preparing students for the challenges of the professional world. Moving forward, these findings emphasize the need for continued support and the implementation of such interventions to ensure a smoother, more successful transition for all graduates, particularly those who face additional challenges related to mental health, neurodiversity and disability.

The transition from university to the workplace represents a significant challenge for many students, particularly those with mental health concerns or disabilities. The findings from the UMO UWT programme demonstrate the positive impact of tailored mental health support and specialised mentoring programs in preparing students for this transition. By broadening recognition of the challenges students face, ensuring the sustainability of transition programs, fostering open dialogue, reducing stigma surrounding mental health, and further integrating the OneSpace Passport and mentoring into university life, institutions can create a more supportive and effective framework for students. Such initiatives will not only enhance students' and graduates' wellbeing but also promote their long-term success in the workplace, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and resilient workforce.

Despite the limited size, the outcomes provide encouraging evidence that the approach has value and impact - particularly in supporting students through the transition from university to the workplace. These findings indicate that a larger-scale evaluation would be worthwhile to further assess effectiveness across a broader and more diverse population.

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