



TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS UNIVERSITIES AND APPRENTICESHIPS

August 2022

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FOREWORD

There is excellent value in a higher education degree and that is the right choice for so many students. But all could benefit from clarity and much greater information about the full range of post-18 pathways.

It is hard to find anyone who does not think apprenticeships are a good thing. The old chestnut that they are 'for other people's children' seems very much an attitude of the past. Apprenticeships represent a paid job opportunity that comes with structured training and, usually, a qualification outcome. As Chair of the Dyson Institute, I can see the tremendous opportunity this route represents – undergraduate engineers at Dyson start a job with a good salary and no student finance loan; they get a BEng degree, work rotations in Dyson's renowned R & D department, and have a guaranteed job offer at the end.

Not all degree apprenticeships are as attractive and prestigious as this. However, they do offer the same basic structure – the chance for young people to study for an undergraduate degree while gaining real on-the-job experience and all the while earning a salary and no student loans to pay back over the next 40 years.

With an offer like that it is a shame, as this report shows, that all teachers aren't fully confident in advising their students about apprenticeship opportunities. Just as importantly, students need to understand that there are also some risks in the apprenticeship offer.

First, students applying for apprenticeships need to be very sure about within which sector, indeed which employer, they want to start their career. At age 16 or 17, many young people are still not ready for this. Most students going to university can keep their career options open longer as they mature and gain wider perspectives on the world of work.

Secondly, signing up to a degree apprenticeship means signing up to a first job that you think you can stick with for three, four or more years to complete your qualification. This is a huge commitment for a young person, and many of us have experience of people changing jobs quite frequently during their early careers if they find they don't like their industry, or their boss, or that the job is not quite what they thought it would be, or for personal reasons connected with family, relationships, or moving house, for example. As an apprenticeship is essentially an employment contract, the apprentice employee is also at risk if the company fails, makes redundancies, or indeed terminates the contract for poor performance. Finally, because these are jobs-with-training, they don't always have start dates that synchronise with the academic year in the way that university applications do.



With these risks offsetting the undoubted attractions to apprenticeships, it is crucial that young people get good advice about choosing this route. And it is perhaps unrealistic to think that teachers would want to take on this level of responsibility, let alone would all have the knowledge to give clear advice. It will need more than the 'Baker Clause' to fix this and I support this report's recommendation that a network of professional careers advisers is developed to support schools.

This is not the first report to advocate for a centralised repository and application service for apprenticeships – as a former CEO of UCAS I remember the steady stream of people calling for a "UCAS for apprenticeships". This is more complex than the university admissions service because it involves a job application that will not be standardised in the way that university applications are. Nevertheless, if we want young people to consider apprenticeships as an attractive alternative to traditional university courses, we need to make it easy for them, and indeed, it has been good to see UCAS increasingly very much involved in this space.

In fact, PLMR's data from teachers chimes with UCAS' data from students, which found [one-third](#) of students say they do not receive any information about apprenticeships from their school or college whilst three-quarters of students report it being easy to find information about higher education, with [two in five](#) students saying more information and advice would have led to them making better choices. UCAS' positive strides in this space means more students are discovering apprenticeships, with 343,000 out of 750,000 telling UCAS this year they're interested in apprenticeships – highlighting these resources to teachers will be crucial.

This report provides important new evidence about the paucity of advice to support progression to apprenticeships compared to university. It also exposes some worrying regional and demographic differences and points out the current asymmetry of supply and demand. These are serious barriers to making apprenticeship opportunities widely available to the right people and ensuring that they have the support they need to choose and apply for apprentice opportunities.



Mary Curnock Cook CBE

**Member of the Board of Trustees, Higher Education Policy Institute
Chair of Governing Body, Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology
Former CEO, UCAS**

INTRODUCTION

Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, society has experienced a radical shift in the way we live our lives. Work, school, wellbeing, relationships and how we interact with each other have been affected, and while the full extent of these ramifications may not ever be understood, what is clear is that the impact on young people's education and employment prospects is likely to reverberate for years to come.

It is often said that the future world of work is comprised of many jobs that have not even been invented yet. And thanks to a myriad of factors, including the pandemic, Brexit, technological developments and climate change, many jobs that do already exist may be forever changed – automated, for instance, or replaced with more environmentally sustainable options.

This all, alongside an increasingly competitive job market and the likelihood that the impact of the pandemic on education inequality is very likely to have long-term implications for inequalities later in life (as [stated](#) by the Institute for Fiscal Studies), means it is more vital than ever to ensure the education system is working as one to best support young people in fulfilling their potential. This includes making it as easy as possible for young people to understand their options for education or training, so that whichever path they choose fits their capabilities, interests and capacity to adapt and succeed. This will empower young people to remain competitive and thrive throughout their lives.

Powered by data from Teacher Tapp, this report captures how confident teachers feel in helping students pursue various post-18 options and makes recommendations – both quick wins and longer-term solutions – to further strengthen the education system and make sure the right opportunities are available to all young people, regardless of their background.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T Beck'.

Tiffany Beck

Head of Education, PLMR Ltd



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Given the likely far-reaching impact of the pandemic on young people's education, wellbeing and future career prospects, it is now more important than ever that students receive as much support, advice and guidance as possible to make informed choices for their next steps in education or training. Supporting young people in making these decisions will not only help demystify the various options available but will ensure they can make a choice that best suits their aptitude, skills and, importantly, their aspirations, and gives them the best chance to succeed.

The sector is already doing so much to support students in making these important decisions. However, with university places becoming [increasingly competitive](#), [calls](#) for greater collaboration between colleges and higher education (HE) on Higher Technical Qualifications, and the Government's Levelling Up agenda emphasising the importance of further education and apprenticeships, it is vital to examine any gaps in the system and investigate how these could best be addressed to support young people's successful progression. This is further bolstered by the Government's recent [consultation in HE and discourse regarding the potential](#) impact on disadvantaged and lower-achieving students' access to HE.

The Levelling Up White Paper confirmed these trends, while also setting far-reaching goals for the future which will impact every facet of education and skills. While the Government's primary focus has been increasing skill levels to drive opportunity and regional prosperity, higher education also plays a pivotal role in creating an educational ecosystem to support every type of learner.

With the [Careers Guidance in Schools Bill](#) receiving Royal Assent in March this year, schools across the country will be tasked with providing careers advice to pupils from the age of 11. This could provide schools and trusts with the opportunity to become more confident in supporting students to know what type of further or higher education choices are available. The ongoing Education Select Committee inquiry into careers education is set to scrutinise what is already in place for students, opening an undeniable opportunity to create a holistic advice structure which can support every type of learner.

Further, in a recent [speech](#) to Policy Exchange, then-Minister for Skills Alex Burghart MP said he 'wouldn't be surprised' to see more people pursuing apprenticeships over the next ten years, and therefore fewer going to university. The former Minister reaffirmed the importance of a university education, but said that, during his time as a lecturer, it was clear to him that not every single student was well suited to higher education.

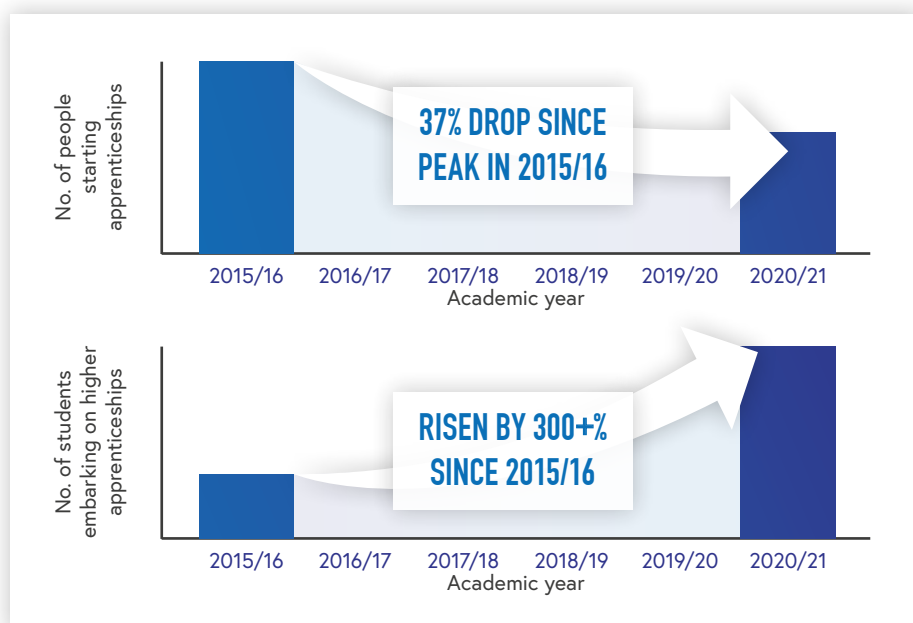
As such, in this report PLMR looks at how schools, trusts, colleges, universities and the Government can work as collaboratively as possible to help teachers support students to identify the most suitable option for them.

**WHILE THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY
FOCUS HAS BEEN INCREASING SKILL
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EVERY TYPE OF LEARNER.**

Utilising data from this academic year from Teacher Tapp, a daily survey app of more than 7,000 teachers in England, this report provides some important recommendations to empower teachers to help raise students' awareness of the range of options and opportunities available to them. The Education Select Committee's recent [inquiry](#) into careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) for children and young people aimed to explore whether current careers advice provides young people with sufficient guidance about career choices, employment, training, and further and higher education opportunities. It also looks at how arrangements for CEIAG could better support disadvantaged or under-represented groups to access career opportunities that may otherwise not be available to them. Our recommendations help serve these aims.

Our recommendations also support what Social Mobility Commissioner Katherine Bibalsingh said in her debut [speech](#) in June 2022, about how the Social Mobility Commission wants *"to champion a fresh approach, which sees social mobility as the process of enabling everyone to find and apply their talents in ways that they enjoy and gives them purpose, and for our wider society and economy"*.

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, the 2021/22 academic year saw a record number of students [choosing](#) higher education. Meanwhile, the [number](#) of people starting apprenticeships fell year-on-year from its peak in 2015/16 through 2020/21, rising in 2021/22 by about 14 per cent. The number of students embarking on higher apprenticeships actually rose by more than 300 per cent in the same time period to the available data 2020/21. In the 2021/22 academic year, higher apprenticeships contributed towards [nearly](#) a third of total apprenticeship starts in England.



Teachers would like to see more students considering apprenticeships. Data from the Teacher Tapp panel shows 86 per cent of teachers self-reported they believe **too few students are taking up the opportunity of apprenticeships**. This view of apprenticeships exists **across teachers in all subjects**, even those traditionally seen as more academic. Further, 75 per cent of teachers said they would feel positive if their top-achieving students, the type who might more often be expected to apply for a place at a leading university, were to undertake an apprenticeship.

Meanwhile, 39 per cent of teachers self-reported they think **too many young people currently go to university**, while only **38 per cent of teachers agreed that university provides excellent future opportunities for attendees**, compared to nearly 70 per cent of teachers when considering apprenticeships. **Many teachers feel university is not the right fit for some of their students**, with nearly half (49 per cent) reporting they have supported students applying to university despite thinking that may not be the route with the best chance of success for them.

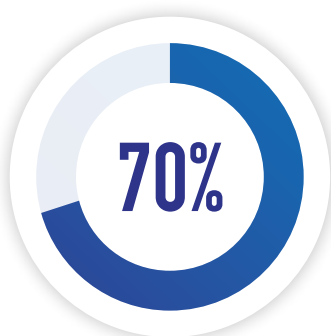
Despite having a favourable view of apprenticeships, **teachers self-reported they are far less experienced in helping students with apprenticeship applications** compared to university applications. Furthermore, teachers also self-reported a **lack of confidence** in helping students apply for apprenticeships. Just 24 per cent of teachers in schools in the lowest quartile (as in the lowest amount of eligible pupils)

for free school meals (FSM) self-reported being confident in advising students how to apply for apprenticeships, while only 29 per cent of teachers in high FSM schools said the same. In contrast, 86 per cent of teachers in low FSM schools and 85 per cent in high FSM schools say they are confident helping students apply for university.

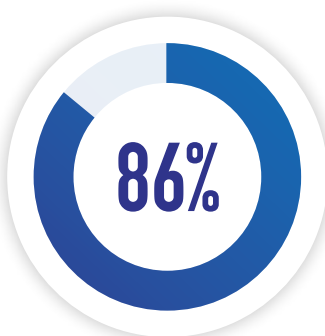
TEACHERS SELF-REPORTED THEY ARE FAR LESS EXPERIENCED IN HELPING STUDENTS WITH APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATIONS

Teachers in London are the least confident when supporting students to apply for apprenticeships.

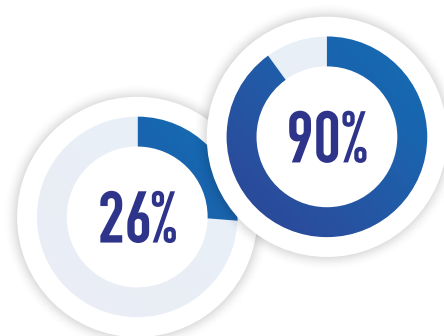
Our findings suggest some relatively quick wins to help Level Up, particularly given the potential ramifications of the Government's consultation on Higher Education reforms, with former Universities Minister Michelle Donelan MP [claiming](#) the 'shake up' to lifelong learning in particular will boost growth across the UK.



Almost 70% of teachers agree apprenticeships secure good future opportunities for students



86% of teachers want to see more students taking apprenticeships



Only 26% of teachers feel confident advising students about how to find an apprenticeship versus 90% for a university place

So what is most important is supporting students to find the pathway most suited to them. Based on our findings, we recommend:

- Make it a requirement that all apprenticeships are listed on [ucas.com](#), with employers given the option to opt out
- Increasing awareness of different post-18 opportunities for students through careers advisers
- Creating simple resources which make it easier to boost confidence in understanding apprenticeships

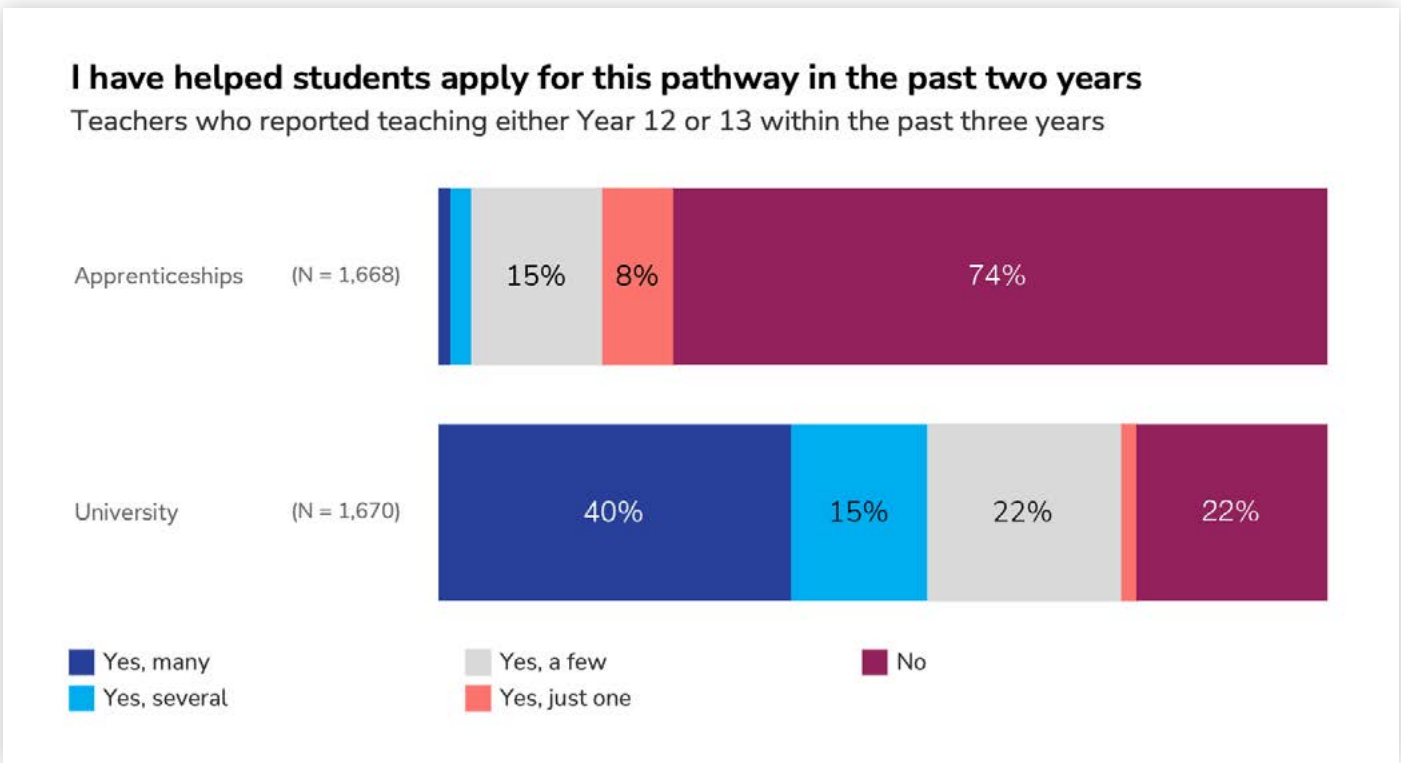
Of course, there is more work needed to drill down into who is best placed to take ownership and drive forward each aspect, and how it could best be funded, but this is intended to be a useful starting point for conversation in the sector about creating a more integrated and effective post-18 system.

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE SUPPORTING APPRENTICESHIP AND HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICATIONS

Teacher Tapp data shows teachers are less experienced helping students apply for apprenticeships than applying for university. Teachers were asked six questions about their experience with both university and apprenticeship applications.

While questions on experience were asked to all secondary school teachers, it is often sixth form teachers who most help students with applications to university and degree apprenticeships. Headline results from these sections of the report only include teachers who have said they have taught either Year 12 or 13 within the past three years.

Overall, responses from sixth form teachers show they are far less experienced helping students apply for apprenticeships than they are for university places. **While 78 per cent of sixth form teachers say they have helped students apply for a university place in the last two years, only 26 per cent of teachers say the same about students and apprenticeship places.**



Furthermore, just one per cent of these teachers self-reported they have helped many students over the past two years apply for apprenticeships, compared with 40 per cent of teachers helping with university applications.

The difference in the percentage of teachers who self-reported helping students apply to university and apprenticeships is not surprising. First, there are many more students starting university each year than starting apprenticeships, with more than 400,000 new [undergraduates](#) under the age of 20 in the 2020/21 academic year but just 4,200 [higher apprenticeship](#) starts from students in the same period under the age of 19 (with a further 23,000 between the ages of 19 and 24).

Secondly, teachers have a lived experience of going to university – with more than 95 per cent of the teaching workforce having attended university themselves. This is a natural pool of experience they can draw from when advising students on applying to university. However, it is less transferable to apprenticeships.

Notably, then-Secretary of State for Education Nadhim Zahawi referred to this same challenge in recent oral evidence to the Education Select Committee, saying: *"When I talk to apprentices and ask them what their experience was at school... the nugget that comes out is that teachers are obviously more confident talking about their own experience, which is going to university, and less confident talking about apprentices. So one of the things that we are doing is giving teachers the tools so that they are as confident of being able to talk about the world of skills as they are about other parts of the education system."*

"WHEN I TALK TO APPRENTICES AND ASK THEM WHAT THEIR EXPERIENCE WAS AT SCHOOL... THE NUGGET THAT COMES OUT IS THAT TEACHERS ARE OBVIOUSLY MORE CONFIDENT TALKING ABOUT THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE, WHICH IS GOING TO UNIVERSITY, AND LESS CONFIDENT TALKING ABOUT APPRENTICES. SO ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WE ARE DOING IS GIVING TEACHERS THE TOOLS SO THAT THEY ARE AS CONFIDENT OF BEING ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THE WORLD OF SKILLS AS THEY ARE ABOUT OTHER PARTS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM."

Former Secretary of State for Education Nadhim Zahawi

Whilst he did not given any specifics on what these tools may be, our research demonstrates why it is important to do so. Our recommendations will also help support his aim.

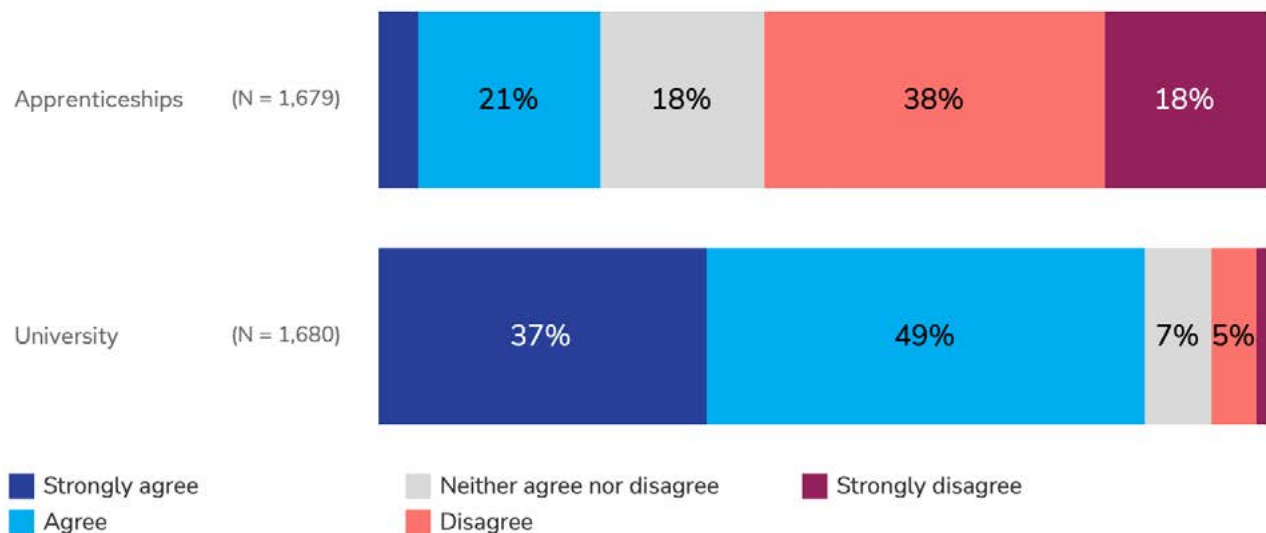
TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS' POST-18 DECISIONS

As well as having more experience in providing university advice, teachers self-reported feeling significantly more confident helping with university applications – more than 85 per cent of sixth form teachers self-reported they feel confident helping students apply for this pathway.

Confidence was significantly lower when asked about apprenticeships, however. Just 26 per cent of teachers reported they feel confident advising students who are considering this route.

I feel confident in advising students on how to apply for this pathway

Teachers who reported teaching either Year 12 or 13 within the past three years

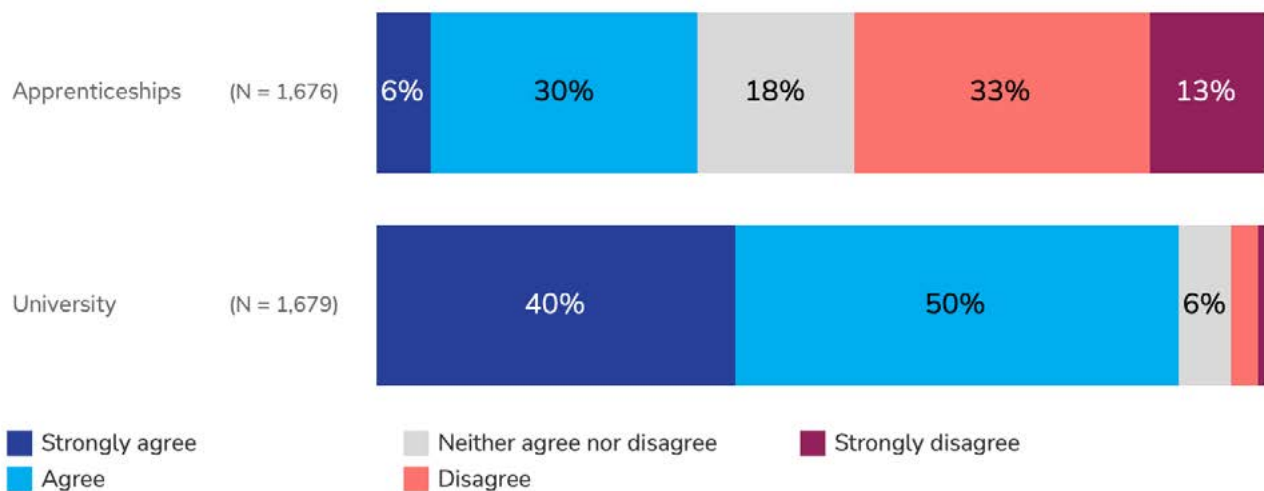


Furthermore, only 36 per cent of Year 12 and 13 teachers say they would know how to advise students on how to find a suitable apprenticeship, compared to 90 per cent of the same teachers who would know how to advise them on finding a suitable university option.

But it is not only their own personal and prior experience of university that teachers can draw on to help students. They also have access to a large central resource in UCAS, which provides an excellent one-stop-shop that teachers can use to get and share information about universities and the application process.

If a student were interested in applying for this pathway, I would know how to help them find a suitable option

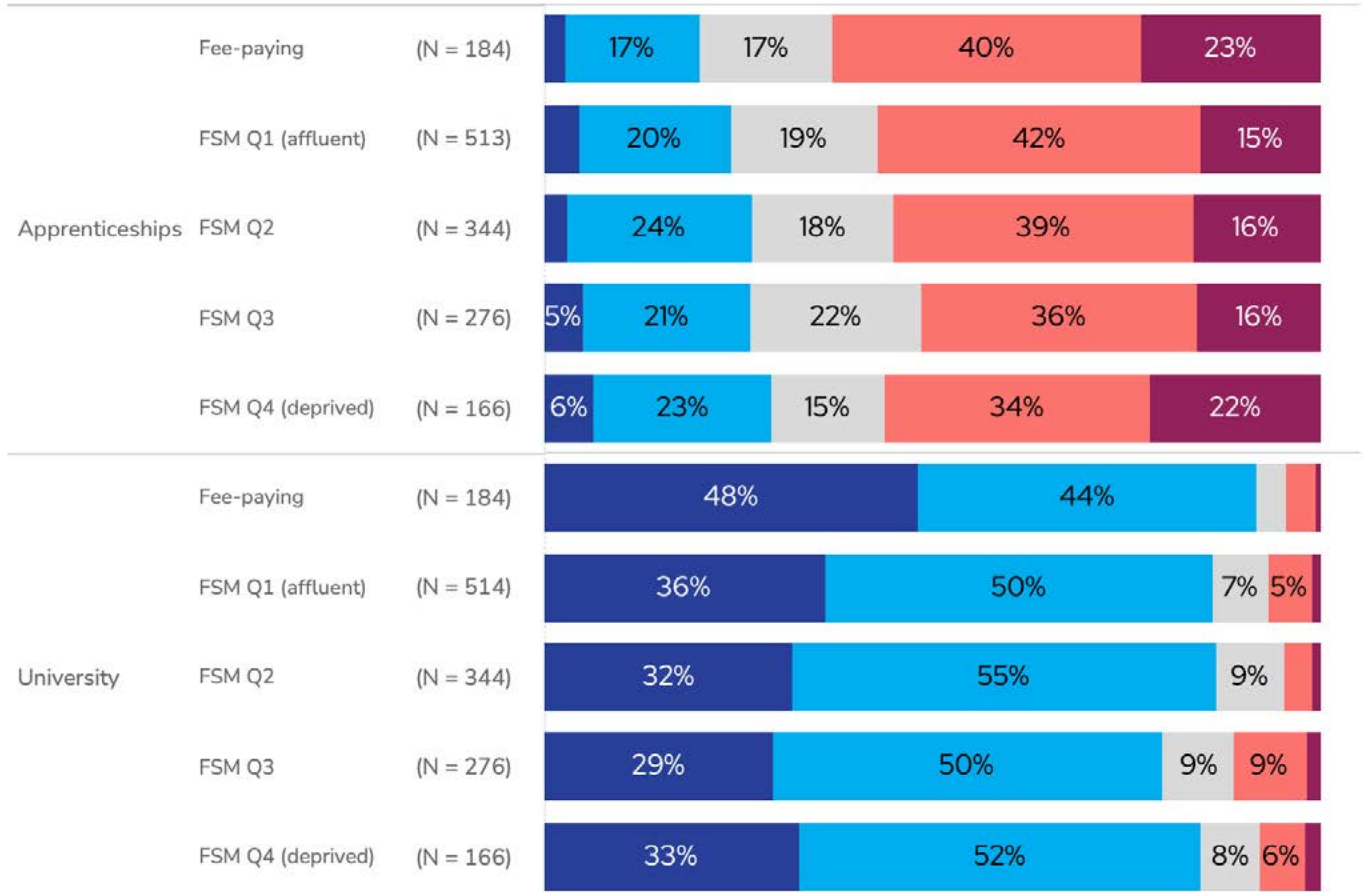
Teachers who reported teaching either Year 12 or 13 within the past three years



On the other hand, while UCAS and some other providers offer some apprenticeship advice, it is not as extensive as UCAS' university offering (though UCAS' growing apprenticeship offer is continuing to build towards that), nor as well-marketed. There is also no central resource available: both UCAS and gov.uk, for example, list apprenticeships to apply for. However, the two resources do not entirely align, indicating that neither is exhaustive. To increase teachers' confidence, it is clear more work needs to be done to improve the resources available and make teachers aware of the currently available resources.

I feel confident in advising students on how to apply for this pathway

Teachers who reported teaching either Year 12 or 13 within the past three years



Teachers are divided into four quartiles based on the proportion of students in their school eligible to receive free school meals (FSM). The cut points for secondary schools are 11.6%, 18.6% and 28.2%.

■ Strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Strongly disagree
■ Agree ■ Disagree

TEACHERS IN MORE DEPRIVED SCHOOLS REPORT THEY ARE MORE CONFIDENT THAN THOSE IN AFFLUENT SCHOOLS IN HELPING WITH APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATIONS

Teachers in more deprived schools report they are more confident than those in affluent schools in helping with apprenticeship applications, a result which may be expected given more students from these schools elect to pursue further education routes. This disparity is not reflected for university places.

It is worth noting that frequently changing policies may mean teachers are still building understanding and confidence in these areas, which is why more signposting, for example through increased marketing of the UCAS apprenticeship service, could be helpful.

What is evident from the survey data is that, on the whole, teachers do not know enough about apprenticeships to be able to properly advise students about these options.

As a result, it is clear something needs to change in order for students to be as well-informed as possible about the options available to them for post-18 education. This could come in the form of additional resources for teachers to upskill, or build further on the school careers adviser approach to help students make informed decisions about their future.



REGIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF APPRENTICESHIP AND HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICATIONS

Experience, confidence and know-how of apprenticeship and university applications track similar patterns to the numbers of students who end up taking each route in the region.

Teachers from the South West and North West report being the most knowledgeable about how to advise their students on finding suitable apprenticeships if needed. The North West, in particular, saw 43 per cent of teachers report that they would know how to advise finding a suitable apprenticeship if students were interested.

However, London teachers in particular report having the least knowledge of this process, with just 30 per cent saying they would know how to advise their students on finding a suitable apprenticeship.

There are a variety of factors which may explain these differences in responses from sixth form teachers – not least the fact that generally higher GCSE and A level [attainment](#) on average across London and the South East results in [more](#) students choosing university, meaning teachers would less often need to draw upon their understanding of the apprenticeship route.

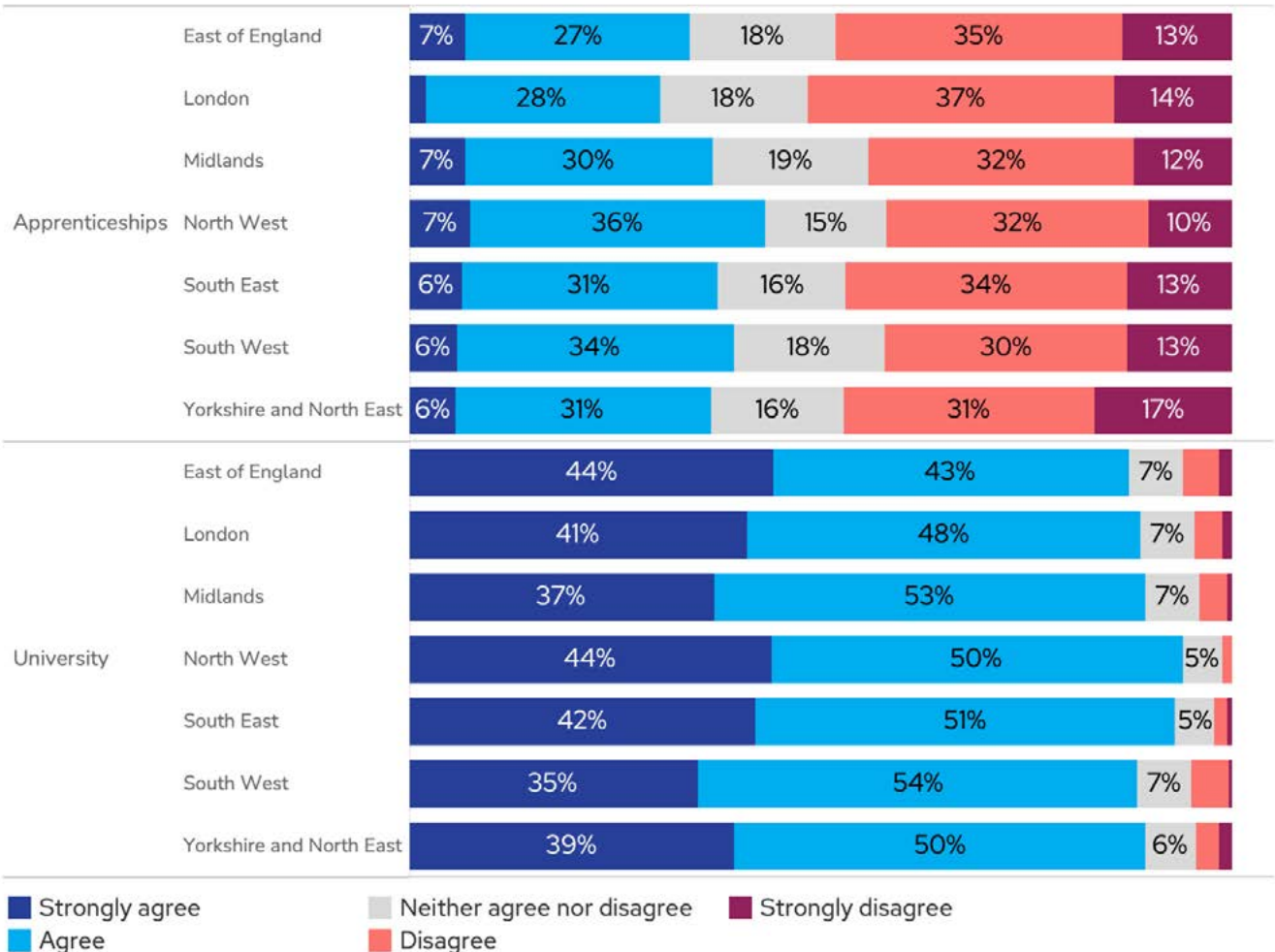
The fact remains, however, that if you are a student in London wanting to undertake an apprenticeship, then you are less likely to encounter a teacher who says they are confident in advising you on how to find a suitable option.

NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE IN THE COUNTRY, TEACHERS HAVE CONSISTENT UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS. HOWEVER, THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID FOR APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATIONS, WHERE THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL DIFFERENCES.



**If a student were interested in applying for an apprenticeship or university,
I would know how to help them find a suitable option.**

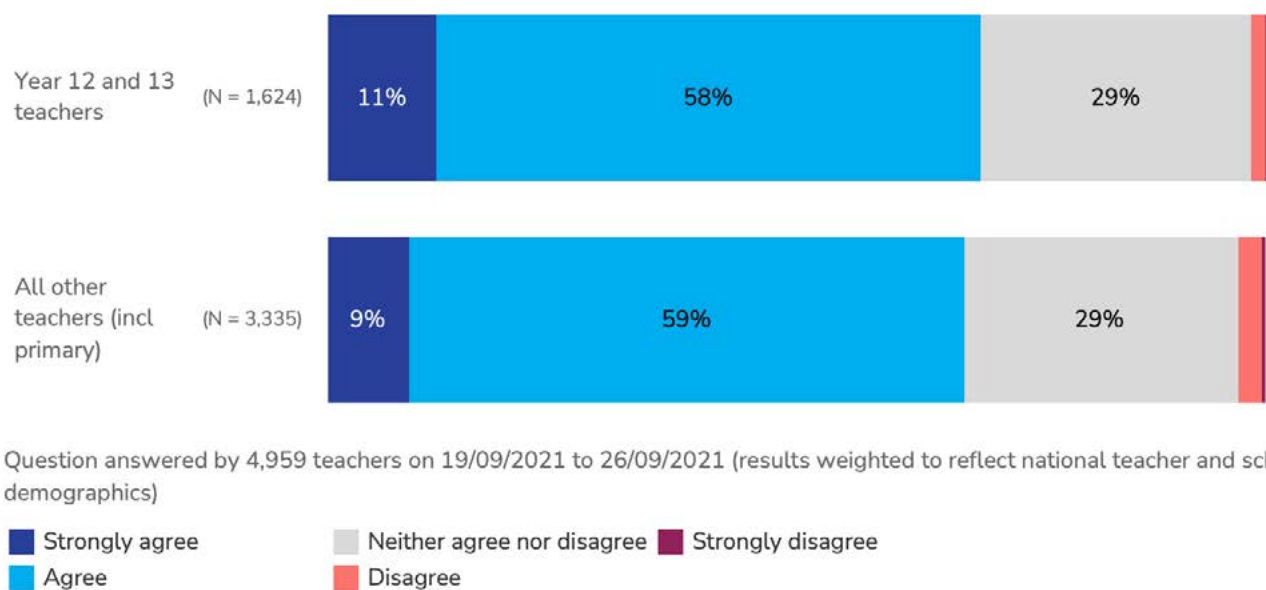
Teachers who reported teaching either Year 12 or 13 within the past three years



POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF APPRENTICESHIPS

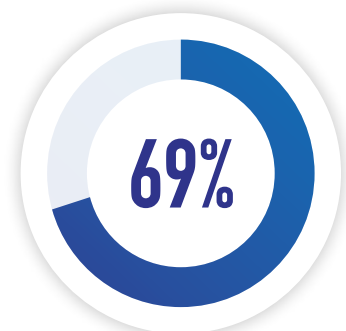
Throughout this research, teachers were also asked seven questions to build a picture of their perceptions about apprenticeships and universities. As these questions were asked to all teachers, it may be the case that some teachers were considering apprenticeships as a whole, rather than just degree apprenticeships when answering. Therefore, Year 12 and 13 responses are split out from other responses to make fair comparisons.

'Apprenticeships secure excellent future opportunities for the young people who do them'



69 per cent of sixth form teachers (and 68 per cent of other teachers) agreed that apprenticeships secure good future opportunities for those who undertake them. Just two per cent of teachers thought that apprenticeships were not worth it.

This strong positive perception that teachers have, could be because teachers can see the clear careers that apprenticeships will lead to, and so picturing future prospects is much easier.



69 per cent of sixth form teachers agreed that apprenticeships secure good future opportunities for those who undertake them

It was not just the regions of England in which more students typically complete apprenticeships that were positive either.

TEACHERS FROM ALL REGIONS WERE POSITIVE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY APPRENTICESHIPS.

'Apprenticeships secure excellent future opportunities for the young people who do them'



Question answered by 4,317 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 26/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Strongly disagree
■ Agree ■ Disagree

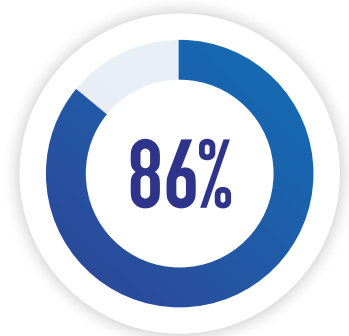
TEACHERS' GROWING INTEREST IN APPRENTICESHIPS

Just one per cent of teachers believe that too many young people are taking apprenticeships and, in fact, **most teachers (86 per cent) would like to see more students taking them.** This is particularly true for Year 12 and 13 teachers, where more than 90 per cent believe that too few young people are taking apprenticeships.

It is clear therefore, **despite teachers' lack of experience and confidence in helping students apply for apprenticeships, teachers' perceptions of them and what they can offer are positive.**

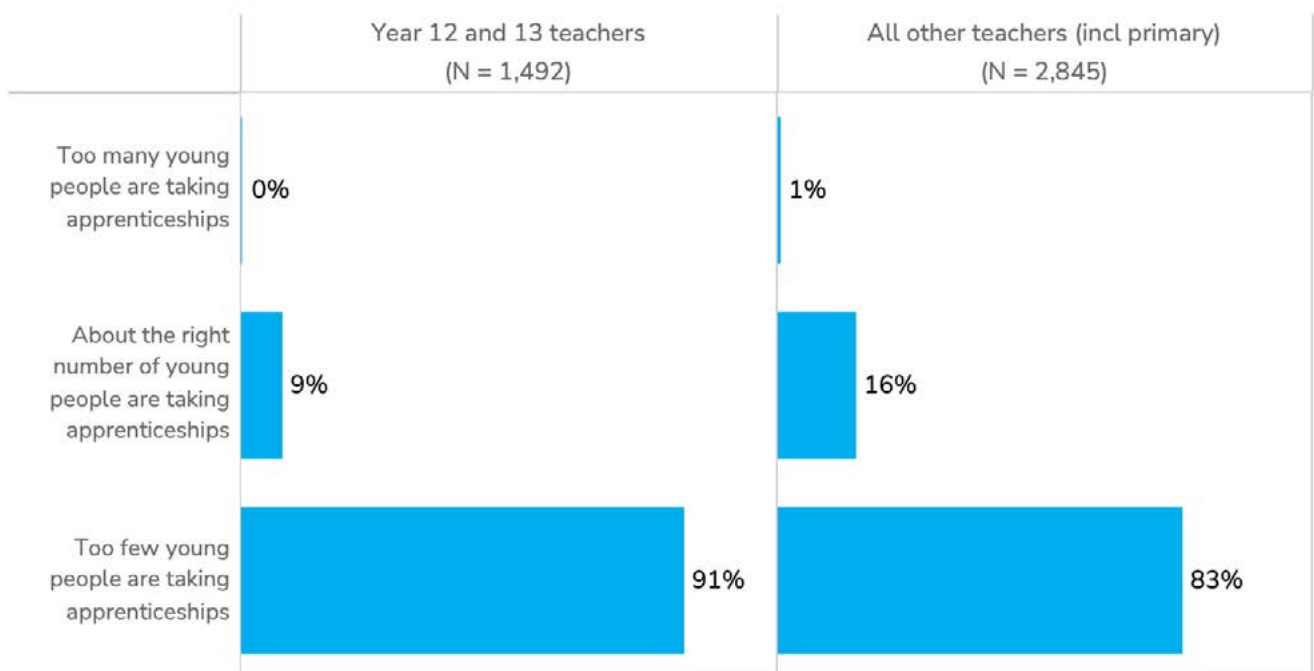
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86% of teachers want to see more students taking apprenticeships

Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?



Question answered by 4,337 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 27/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

One question is whether teachers of more traditionally 'academic' subjects feel that apprenticeships are less worthwhile. In part, this is true.

Teachers of arts and physical education (PE) responded more positively than those who teach an EBacc subject when asked how they would feel if a top-achieving student was going to undertake an apprenticeship. However, teachers of all subjects were still positive about apprenticeships - 77 per cent of sixth form non-art and non-PE teachers self-reported that they would feel positive if one of their top students went to do an apprenticeship.

'I would feel positive if one of my top-achieving students said they were going to undertake an apprenticeship after leaving school'



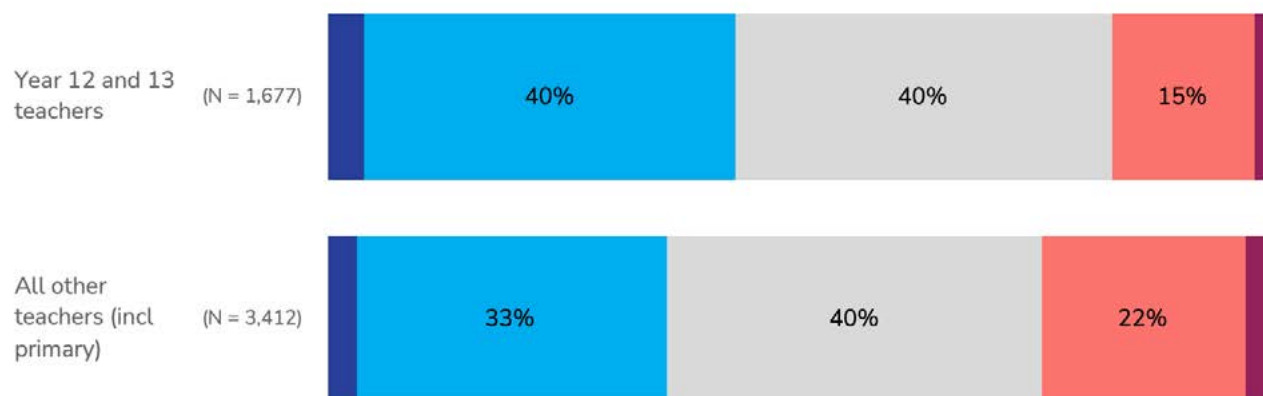
Question answered by 3,394 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 20/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Strongly disagree
■ Agree ■ Disagree

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The future opportunities from universities are viewed less favourably overall by teachers than those presented by apprenticeships. **Just 44 per cent of sixth form teachers agreed that university secures excellent future opportunities for their students.**

'University secures excellent future opportunities for the young people who go'



Question answered by 5,089 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 27/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

This was particularly demonstrated by primary school teachers (28 per cent), who are of course several steps further removed from the process than their secondary colleagues. Yet...

42% of secondary teachers thought university provided excellent opportunities.



As mentioned, this could be due to the future career path following an apprenticeship being clearer than for a university degree. This suggests universities can do more to improve this image amongst teachers across all phases, perhaps by more heavily promoting the range of careers and achievements of their successful alumni who studied areas with less obvious pathways than medicine or law, for example.

UNIVERSITIES CAN HELP IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE OPPORTUNITIES DEGREES LEAD TO BY MORE HEAVILY PROMOTING THE RANGE OF CAREERS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL ALUMNI WHO STUDIED AREAS WITH LESS OBVIOUS PATHWAYS THAN, FOR EXAMPLE, MEDICINE OR LAW.

As our data later in this report shows, teachers also think too many students are going to university, including those for whom they do not think it is the right fit, which may be swaying the perception of whether university secures excellent opportunities for students. If more is done to demystify the apprenticeship route, more students may choose a pathway better suited to their needs and interests, leading to greater success in either direction, subsequently boosting the perception of post-university opportunities.

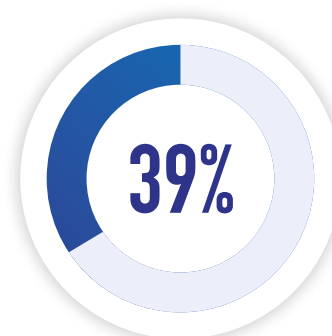
A first step towards clarity could come from a concise, accessible and well-designed guide outlining the who, what, when, where, why and how of apprenticeships, provided by the Department for Education to schools, colleges and trusts for teachers and students.



PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' SUITABILITY FOR UNIVERSITY

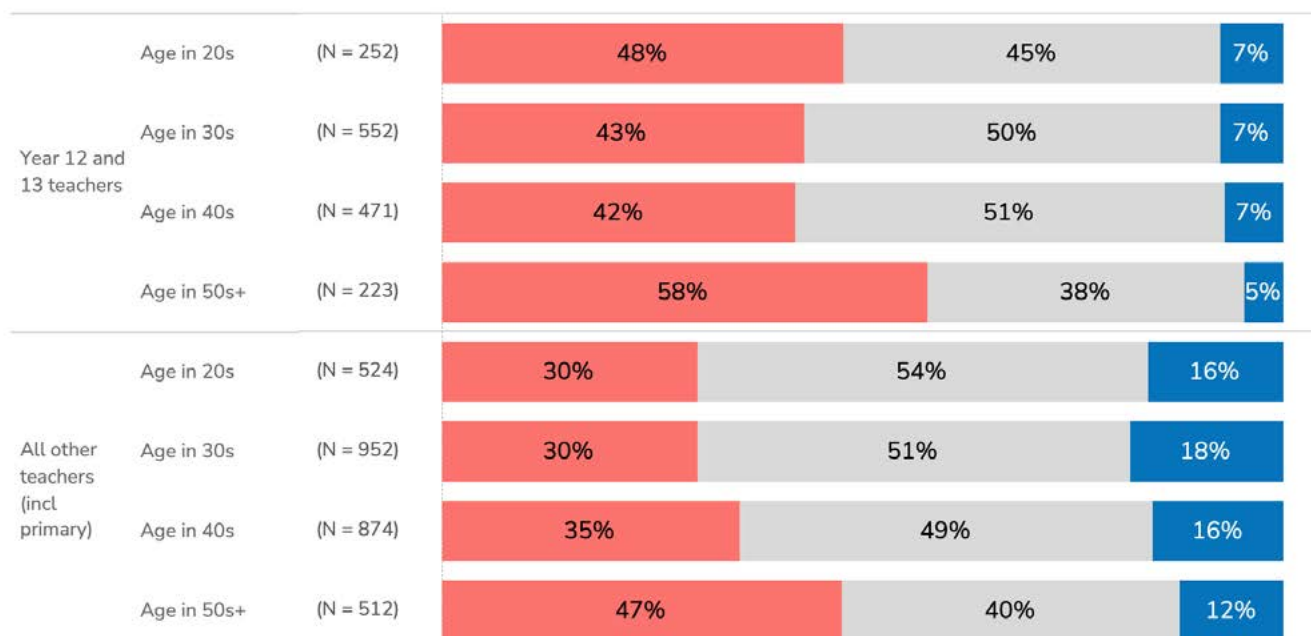
Almost half of teachers think just the right number of students are going to university – but **39 per cent of teachers say that too many students are going**. Sixth form teachers believe most strongly that too many students are going to university.

Older teachers believe most strongly that too many students are going to university – with 51 per cent of teachers aged 50+ responding as such, compared to around 35 per cent of their younger colleagues.



39 per cent of teachers say that too many students are going to university

Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?



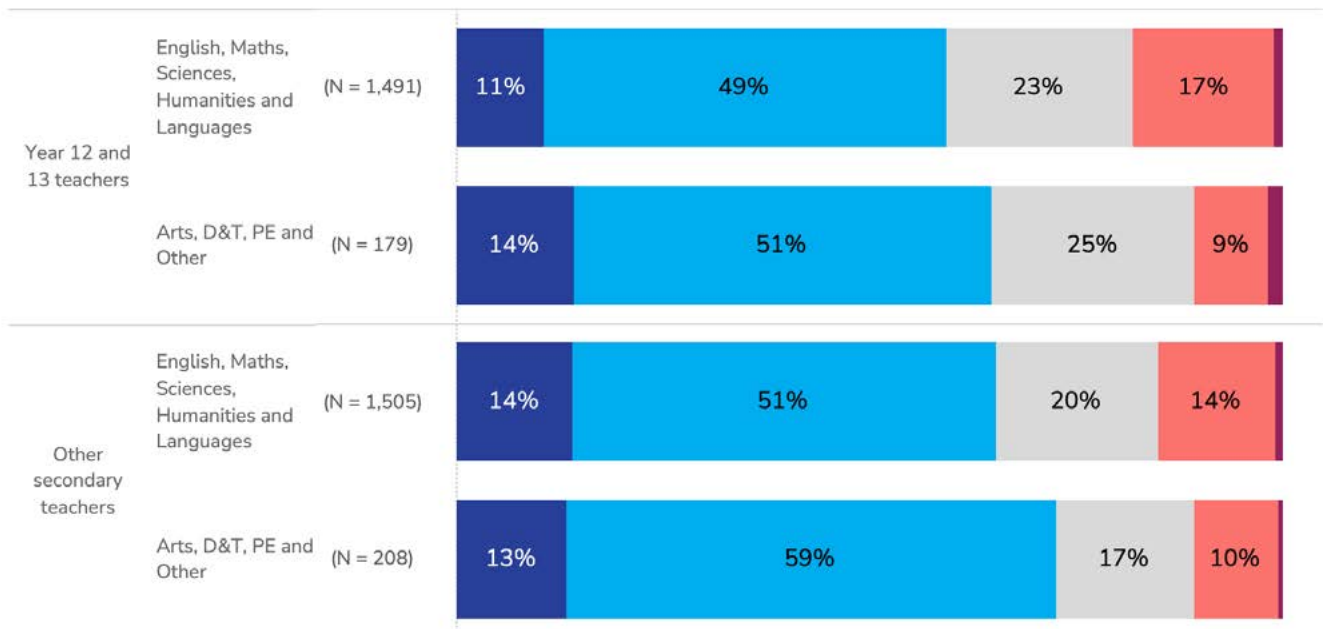
Question answered by 4,360 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 26/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- Too few young people are going to university
- About the right number of young people are going to university
- Too many young people are going to university

This result may be expected, as older teachers' perceptions of who should go to university would be benchmarked by their experience and the kinds of students going to university when they were applying to go. Free tuition fees before 1998 may have at that time led to more students attending university who may have otherwise studied a different pathway.

Despite this, teachers still self-reported they would feel positive if a "middle"-achieving student said they were going to go to university. While these are lower than the positivity rates reported for apprenticeships, this is likely to be because apprenticeships are seen so positively by teachers.

'I would feel positive if a student likely to get three Cs at A Level said they were going to attend university after leaving school'



Question answered by 3,397 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 20/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Strongly disagree
■ Agree ■ Disagree

Almost half of teachers have self-reported supporting a student to go to university despite thinking that it might not be the best pathway for them. Of all teachers surveyed, this was most prevalent amongst those working in an independent school (64 per cent of respondents).

This could be, in part, due to some schools viewing university as the "gold standard" next step for their students or because teachers working in independent schools are the most confident in supporting their students with this type of application (52 per cent strongly agree).

Further, not only are apprenticeships less well-known than universities to many teachers, they are often advertised after the university application process has concluded, perhaps leading some students to discount them as they will have already applied for university. Aligning the application windows may enable students to try for both options.

'I have supported students going to university despite thinking they may fail due to lack of skills'

Teachers who reported teaching either Year 12 or 13 within the past three years



Question answered by 1,409 teachers on 19/09/2021 to 20/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Strongly disagree
■ Agree ■ Disagree

RECOMMENDATIONS



1 Make it a requirement that all apprenticeships are listed on ucas.com, with employers given the option to opt out

While UCAS already provides an apprenticeships service, which incorporates all of those listed on the English government portal (as well as Wales, Northern Ireland, and plans for Scotland too), a requirement for all Levy funded apprenticeships to be listed would ensure a comprehensive, one-stop shop for information and applications for both universities, colleges, and apprenticeships is available and help to increase the confidence and awareness of apprenticeships. This would allow teachers to confidently know where to go for information about apprenticeships and better support their students with information for their future. Effective promotion will help raise awareness of both apprenticeships and the service. Given each of our UK nations have their own apprenticeship systems, this presents a tough task to join apprenticeship admissions up, however, a starting point would be for the English Government to make Levy funded apprenticeships visible via UCAS. Some employers may, for specific reasons, only wish to advertise locally or internally, but making it an 'opt-out' system would still grant flexibility whilst helping demystify apprenticeships and making them more accessible for young people and adults. Aligning the application windows for both higher education and degree apprenticeships may also encourage more students to consider both pathways equally.



2 Increase awareness of different post-18 opportunities for students through careers advisors

As the data shows, most teachers do not know enough about apprenticeships to be able to thoroughly and confidently advise students who wish to pursue this route. There has not been a coherent national careers service since the closure of Connexions in 2012. Having a dedicated careers adviser, either per school or shared between schools, would allow students to receive informed advice about the options available to them when leaving school. This should lower the number of students who may have been better suited to undertake an apprenticeship because they did not have adequate advice or support. Careers advisers would also be able to positively promote the successful careers that are available after university.



3 Create simple resources which make it easier to boost confidence in understanding apprenticeships

It is vital to ensure all students, but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have full information about both pathways so they can make an informed choice and 'level up'. Although the emphasis from the Department of Education (DfE) is that there should be independent careers guidance, many teachers are still involved in the destination process for many of their students. A simple, accessible and well-designed concise guide outlining the who, what, when, where, why and how of apprenticeships, provided by the DfE to schools, colleges and trusts would help inform teachers before students talk to careers advisers. This would start boosting understanding of apprenticeship pathways in line with understanding of university pathways, creating a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the options available to students.

NOTES ON DATA AND METHODOLOGY

THE TEACHER TAPP PANEL

The Teacher Tapp survey panel comprises teachers across the state and independent sectors in England who download a mobile app, provide valid teacher credentials and allow it to notify them of new questions at 3:30 pm. Teachers are recruited to the panel via social and traditional media, promotion at CPD events, and via word of mouth in schools. All questions asked are multiple and single response questions.



CALCULATION OF TEACHER TAPP PANEL WEIGHTS

Teacher Tapp applies post-stratification weights to the Teacher Tapp panel responses to ensure they reflect the demographic characteristics of teachers in England, using the following procedure:

1. Dropping the results of all teachers for whom Teacher Tapp cannot find a valid school identifier (Unique Reference Number) for the free text school name and postcode provided.
2. Only retaining teachers if they provide Teacher Tapp with valid information on their gender, age and job post since these are the characteristics used for matching against the population in the School Workforce Census and Independent Schools Census.
3. Calculating population shares in census data for 48 groupings of teachers who are allocated according to their phase, funding, gender, age and job post.
4. Calculating sample shares in the Teacher Tapp valid responses for each question, which yields sample weights as the ratio of population to sample share.

SURVEY QUESTIONS ASKED

Teacher Tapp surveyed the thirteen questions presented here to a sample of teachers over several days. The full roster of questions and responses are outlined below.

SURVEY QUESTION	TARGET	TRAIT	DATE	RESPONSES
I have helped students apply for apprenticeships in the past two years	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
I have helped students apply for university in the past two years	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
If a student was interested in applying for an apprenticeship, I would know how to help find them a suitable one	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
If a student was interested in applying for university, I would know how to help them find a suitable one	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
I feel confident in advising students on how to apply for an apprenticeship	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
I feel confident in advising students on how to apply for a university place	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?	Secondary teachers	Attitude	19/09/21	3461
	Primary teachers	Attitude	26/09/21	1656
Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
	Primary teachers	Experience	26/09/21	1656
University secures excellent future opportunities for the young people who go	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
	Primary teachers	Experience	26/09/21	1656
Apprenticeships secure excellent future opportunities for the young people who go	Secondary teachers	Attitude	19/09/21	3461
	Primary teachers	Attitude	26/09/21	1656
'I would feel positive if one of my top-achieving students said they were going to undertake an apprenticeship after leaving school'	Secondary teachers	Attitude	19/09/21	3461
'I would feel positive if a student likely to get three Cs at A level said they were going to attend university after leaving school'	Secondary teachers	Experience	19/09/21	3461
I have supported students going to university despite thinking they may fail due to lack of skills	Secondary teachers	N/A	19/09/21	3461

ABOUT PLMR



Working with multinationals, FTSEs, public sector, charities, trade bodies, SMEs and disruptor start-ups, PLMR delivers results which make an impact. From our successful campaign to save early years education funding, to our work to secure the funding for the extension of London City Airport, we are experts in understanding commercial priorities and aligning these to a bespoke communications programme.

PLMR's award-winning education team makes us the UK's leading education communications consultancy. Our team specialises in PR and media relations, stakeholder engagement and public affairs, reputation management, campaigns, strategy and digital marketing, with a wealth of experience in supporting universities, further education colleges, academy trusts, schools, education charities, awarding bodies, edtech developers and more. As co-founder and Chair of Trustees for a growing academy, our Head of Education Tiffany Beck has in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing education organisations around the country.

For details, visit

plmr.co.uk

or email our Head of Education Tiffany Beck at tiffany.beck@plmr.co.uk

ABOUT TEACHER TAPP



Teacher Tapp is a daily survey app where thousands of teachers answer daily questions so their collective opinions can be heard and used to inform school leaders, media, policy makers and organisations creating products for schools. Over 7,000 teachers in the UK take part each day because they love answering questions and seeing the results!

teachertapp.co.uk



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