



**BRIDGE**  
group

Registered Charity 1162144

**Access Accountancy Report**  
Headline Findings and Recommendations

**September 2018**

# Executive Summary

Access Accountancy is an ambitious collaboration of employers and professional bodies, dedicated to improving socio-economic diversity in the accountancy profession. The Bridge Group has been commissioned to deliver data analysis relating to the programme. This year's analysis (pertaining to data from 2016/17) includes over 3.1 million coded data-points across sixteen firms and professional bodies for the analysis, which includes data relating to 151,258 school leaver, undergraduate and graduate applicants, and 2,948 work experience candidates. This is the most ambitious collation of socio-economic diversity data across a sector ever undertaken to our knowledge.

With respect to recruitment data, we find amongst the nine firms that submitted data that the applicant pool is broadly unrepresentative of the eligible candidate pool (for example, 25% of applicants are from independent schools compared to 7% in the school population), and progress against the previous year is modest.

Considering candidate success rates, candidates from higher socio-economic backgrounds (not eligible for FSM or Income Support) have a success rate that is 10% higher compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds; and those from independent schools have a success rate that is 24% higher compared to those educated in state funded schools.

With regards to the work experience cohort we are able to validate that 743 candidates meet the eligibility criteria for Access Accountancy. With regards to impact, work experience opportunities deliver positive gains for participants, but this varies significantly by skills area. For example, participants experienced significantly positive impact on their communications skills and business awareness, whereas impact on problem solving abilities, and producing a CV (both identified as weaker areas of competence in the pre work experience surveys) were impacted less significantly.

We advocate four key recommendations for future data collection. It has been a great pleasure to work with colleagues at Access Accountancy and the cohort of signatories; special thanks should go to colleagues within firms who prepared the various data sets.

There is much to be celebrated in this work, along with some important areas for development. We look forward to continuing to support this important and influential programme, and commend the continued commitment to supporting socio-economic diversity.

# Methodology

- The work experience data relates to the period between September 2016 and August 2017, and the hire data relates to candidates applying to positions that commenced from September 2017.
- With regards to recruitment, data were received for 151,258 applicants across nine firms.
- Data were received for 2,948 work experience candidates from fourteen firms, 743 of these are validated as meeting the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria.
- A list of the firms that submitted data is available in [Appendix A](#).
- More than 3.1 million data points have been collated, and all variables coded.
- We are currently in liaison with the Professional Bodies about how their data can be most usefully collated and analysed.

# Key Findings

- A. Over 3.1 million coded data-points have been collated across sixteen firms and professional bodies for the analysis**, which includes data relating to 151,258 school leaver, undergraduate and graduate applicants. This is the most ambitious collation of socio-economic diversity data across a sector ever undertaken to our knowledge.
- B. With respect to recruitment data, we find amongst the nine firms with data that the applicant pool is broadly unrepresentative of the eligible candidate pool** (for example, 25% of applicants are from independent schools), and progress against the previous year is modest at best. (See slide 6).
- C. Considering candidate success rates, those from more advantaged have higher success rates.** For example, candidates from higher income backgrounds (not eligible for FSM or Income Support) have a success rate that is 10% higher compared to those from lower income backgrounds (this figure last year, relating to FSM, was 23%); and those from independent schools have a success rate that is 24% higher compared to those educated in state funded schools (this figure last year was 14%).
- D. With regards to the work experience cohort we are able to validate that 743 candidates meet the eligibility criteria for Access Accountancy** (711 placements in 2015/16, and now a total of 2,191 since the inception of AA). The feedback from these placements is positive.



# Recommendations

- 1. Undertake qualitative analysis to understand better the factors contributing to the variance between firms with respect to applicant diversity and success rates amongst those from different socio-economic backgrounds.** This would help provide a valuable evidence base to highlight practices and policies that are delivering greater diversity at some firms.
- 2. Deploy Access Accountancy as a platform to collate, analyse and benchmark workforce diversity with respect to socio-economic background.** A few of the firms involved are already collating these data, and benchmarking would help to provide valuable insights into the relative diversity in each firm, and where there are shared challenges in this area.
- 3. Advocate that all firms should use the Bridge Group online survey to capture demographic data about work experience candidates and programme impact.** This would ensure that the data in this area are more complete and consistent, and enable pre and post survey responses to be compared at the individual level.
- 4. Bring together at the October celebration event those colleagues responsible for collating and reporting on Access Accountancy data,** to recognise the importance of their input and to run a workshop on future data collection.



**BRIDGE**  
group

Registered Charity 1162144

## Applicant Diversity

# Main Findings

**Considering diversity in the applicant pool at nine firms, we find that:**

- The application data are almost identical to last year.
- 39% of applicants have no parental experience of higher education.
- 16% were on income support and/or eligible for free school meals.
- 25% of applicants are from independent school backgrounds.

\*Note that all unknown/missing data is excluded from the calculation of percentages throughout.

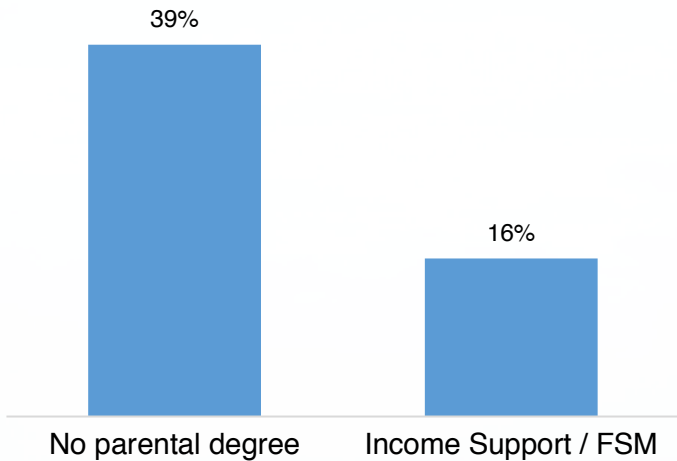
# Applicants by Socio-economic Background (1)

The graph below explores SEB indicators: parental experience of HE (n=129,892); income support and FSM eligibility (n=132,858).

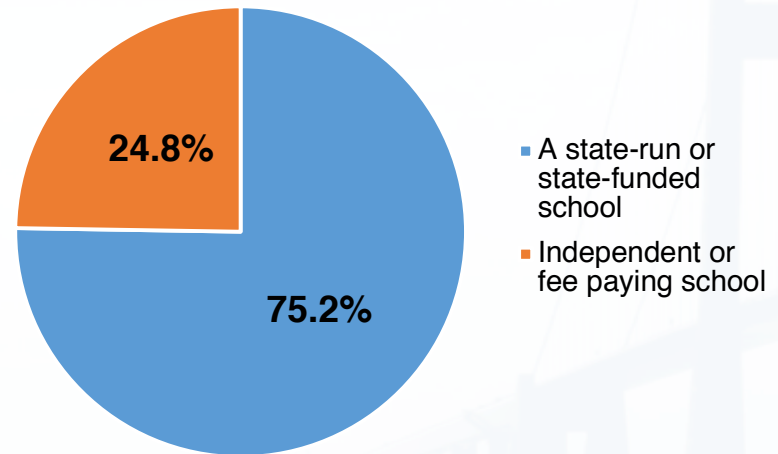
The chart below looks at school type. We have conflated all state schools (selective and non-selective), because some firms did not distinguish between these.

In this analysis, n= 111,267 (removing those educated outside of UK and not known)

### % Applicants by SEB

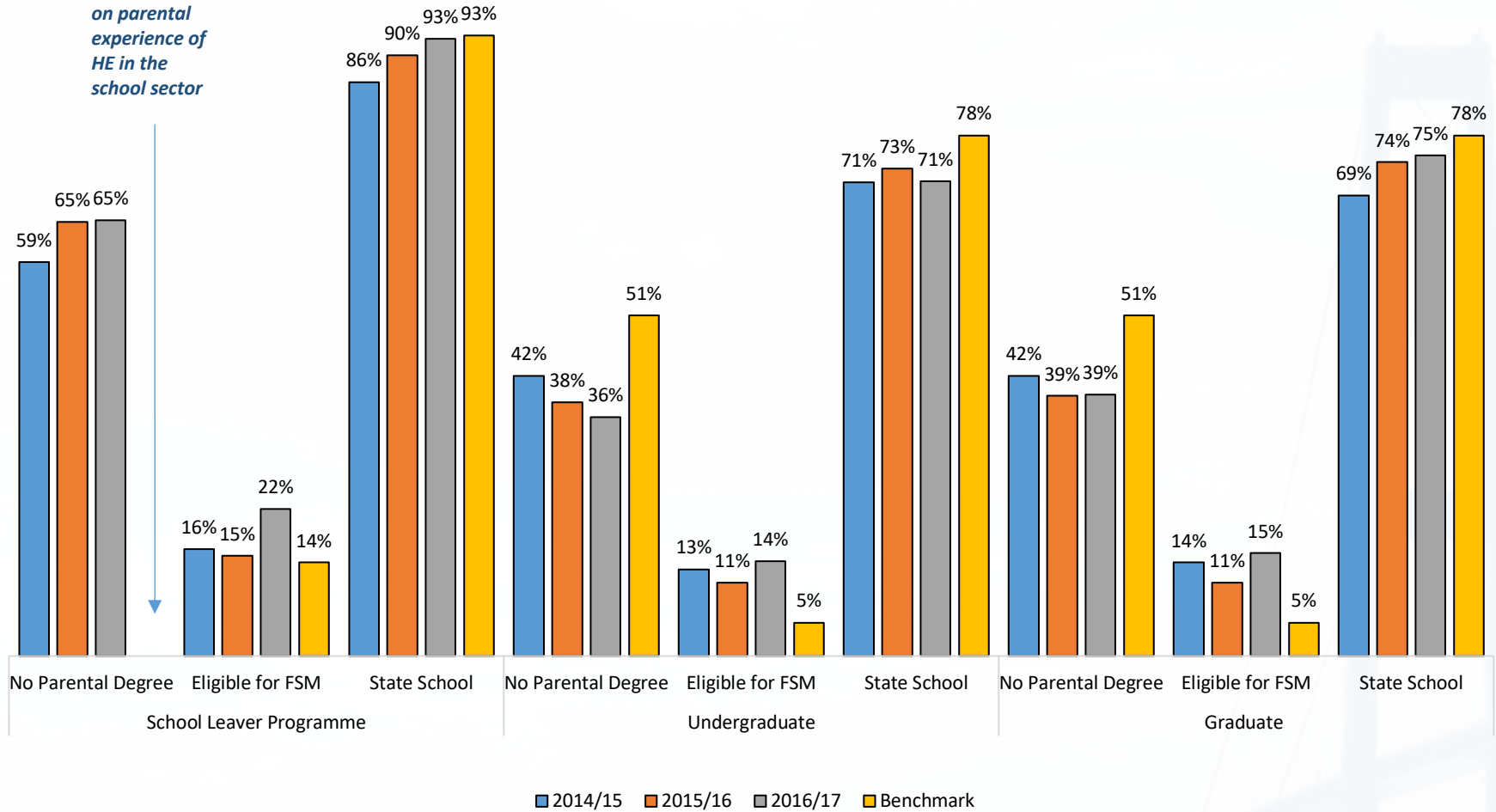


### % Applicants by School Type



# Applicants by Socio-economic Background (2)

*There are no available data on parental experience of HE in the school sector*



- The methodology used to establish the eligible populations is available in Appendix B.
- Note that in this year's data, FSM and eligible for Income Support are conflated.





**BRIDGE**  
group

Registered Charity 1162144

## Relative Success Rates

# Main Findings

## Considering candidate success rates:

- **We focus on the success rate ratios (or odds ratios), which enables to understand the effect on the success rate of particular background characteristics.**
- **Overall, 5.2% of candidates are offered positions across the nine firms.** This is the overall success rate for all candidates, and is the same compared to last year.
- **Candidates from Independent Schools are more likely to succeed, and this advantage has increased compared to last year.** Candidates from Independent Schools have a success rate that is 24% higher than state school candidates (6.8% vs 5.5%). Those from Independent Schools have a greater advantage compared to last year (where the ratio was 14%).

# Main Findings

- **Candidates from higher income backgrounds (not eligible for FSM or Income Support) have higher success rates than those from lower income backgrounds, and this advantage is smaller compared to last year.** The success rate for those from higher income backgrounds is 10% higher compared to those from lower income backgrounds (5.0% vs 4.5%). In last year's data, this figure for FSM was 23%.
- **Candidates whose parents have a degree have a success rate that is 9% higher than those who do not (5.3% vs 4.8%).** This is very similar to last year.



**BRIDGE**  
group

Registered Charity 1162144

## Work Experience

# Main Findings

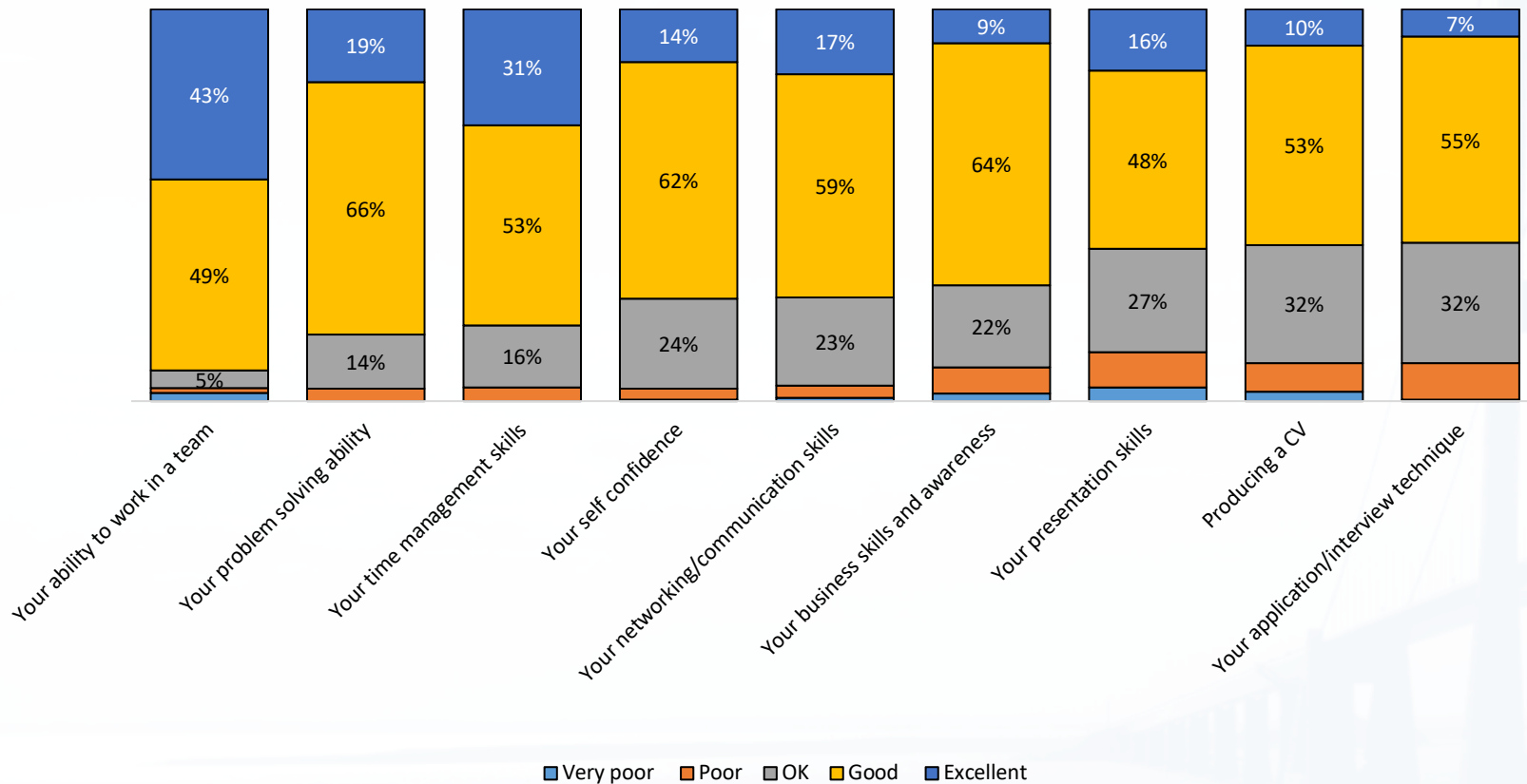
- **As with the hire data, signatories were asked to submit data in a template designed by the Bridge Group and the Data Group to help ensure consistency in responses. Considering eligibility, 743 have been validated as meeting the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria.**
- Work experience data is drawn from both the survey responses completed by work experience candidates (338 pre work experience surveys submitted by BDO, Blick Rothenberg, GT, KPMG, Mazars, RSM, PwC and NAO; and 436 post work experience surveys submitted by BDO, Blick Rothenberg, PwC, Deloitte, GT, KPMG, Mazars, RSM and NAO) and from the application and hire data.
- Some firms provided more data than others (e.g. two firms did not provide parental degree data); rates of available data are thus computed from those who did provide these data.



# Work Experience – Impact Analysis (1)

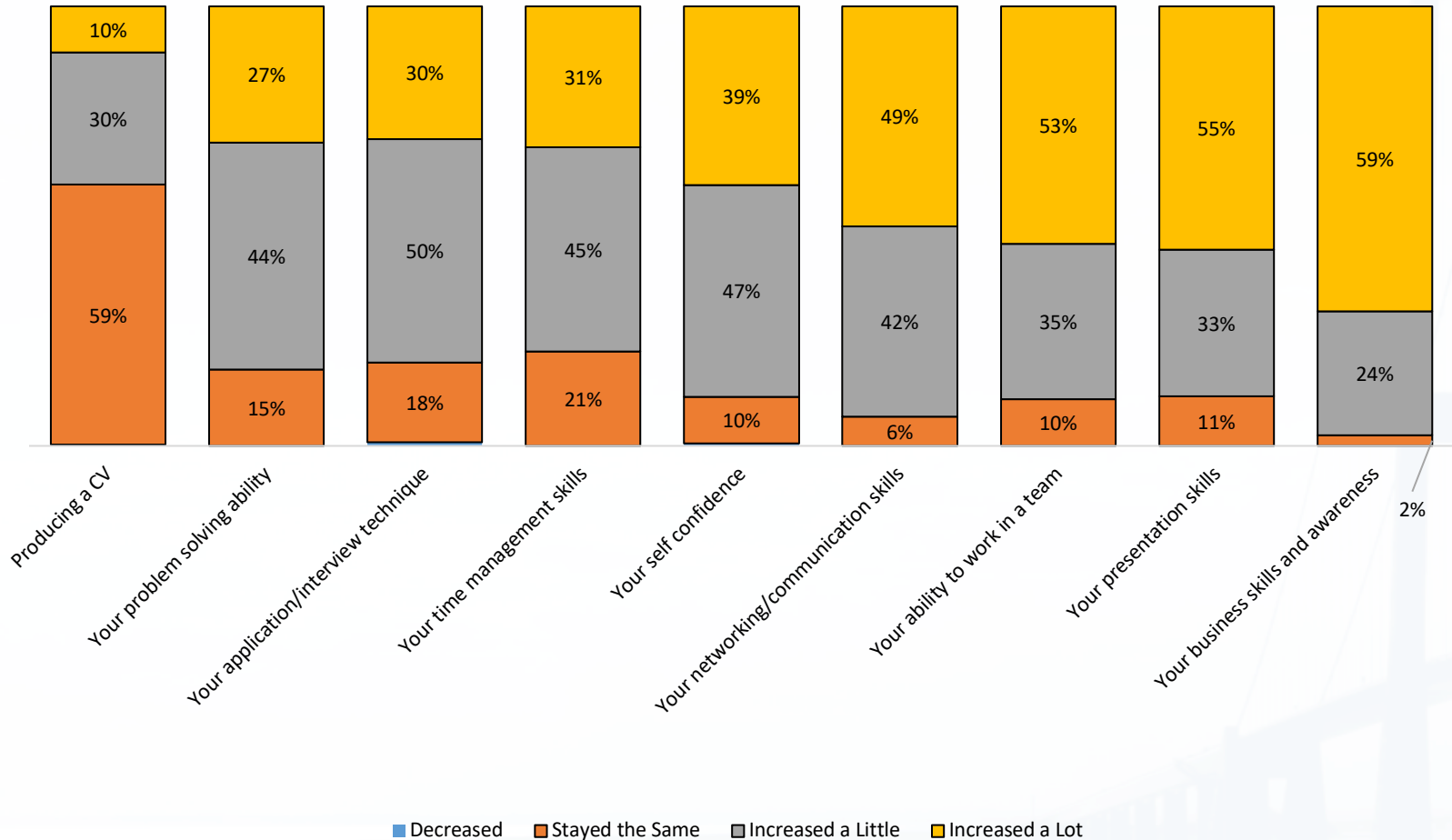
256 work experience candidates completed the pre-experience survey and 338 candidates completed the post-experience survey.

The chart below illustrates how candidates felt about their skills in particular areas prior to undertaking work experience.



# Work Experience – Impact Analysis (2)

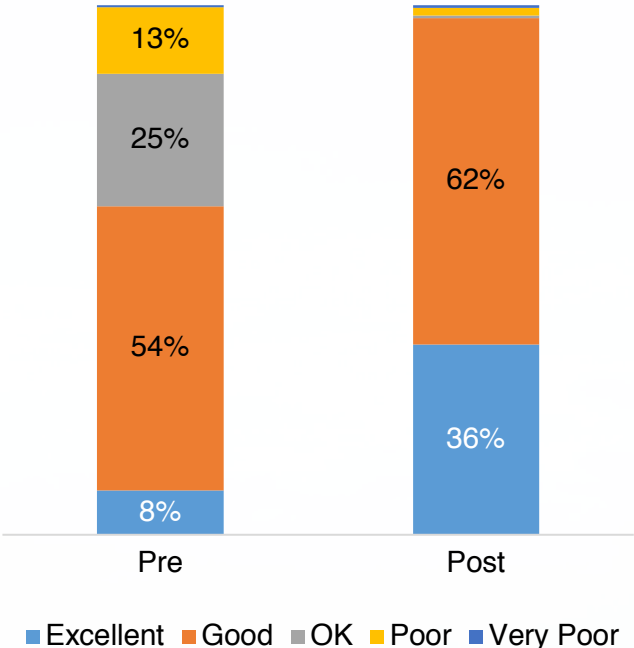
The charts below and overleaf illustrate candidates' responses to the post experience questionnaire.



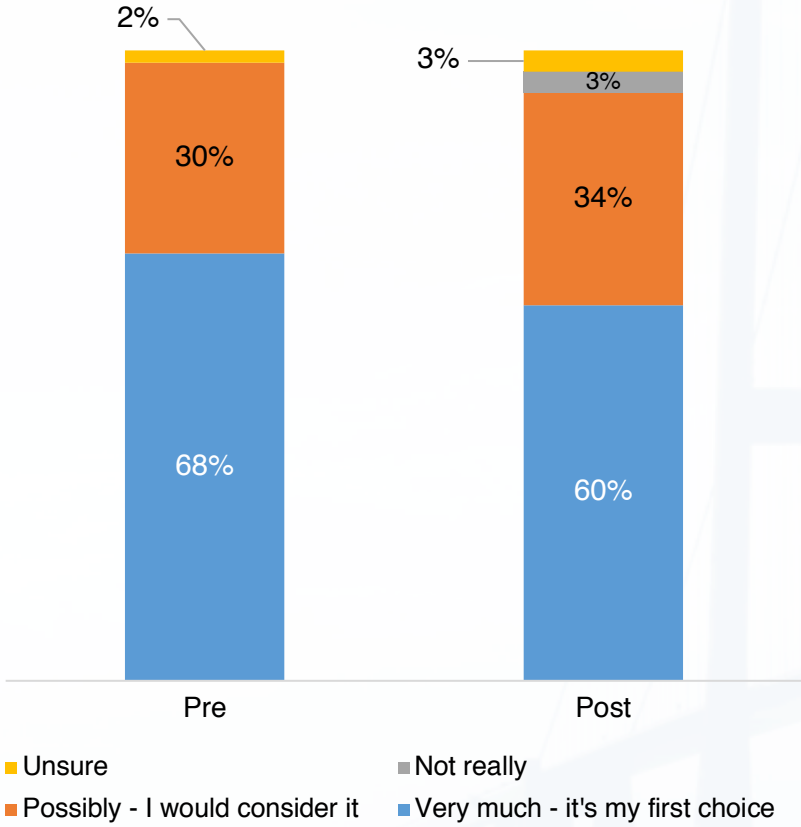
# Work Experience – Impact Analysis (3)

The chart below looks markedly different compared to last year: a far higher proportion of work experience candidates this year felt that their awareness of the profession was only poor or OK (38% this year compared to approximately 25% last year)

How would you rate your awareness of careers in professional services/accountancy?



Are you interested in a career in professional services/accountancy?





**BRIDGE**  
group

Registered Charity 1162144

# Appendices

# Appendix A: Firms Submitting Data

Signatory Name	Recruitment	Work Experience
Grant Thornton	X	X
BDO	X	X
Duncan and Toplis		X
PWC	X	X
EY	X	X
NAO	X	X
MHA MacIntyre Hudson	X	X
Mazaars		X
Blick Rothenberg	X	X
KPMG	X	X
Deloitte	X	X
Moore Stephens		X
CafCass		X
RSM		X



# Appendix B: Methodologies for Establishing SEB benchmarks

Benchmark	Notes	Source
<b>Parental degree status within the school population</b>	There are no data on this	
<b>FSM eligibility within the school population</b>	Pertains to students who are EVER6, i.e. those who have been eligible for FSM at any point during their secondary education, to ensure parity with the question asked by AA	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2016">www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2016</a>
<b>School type within the school population</b>	7% for 11-16 year olds. This increases quite significantly post-16 (to around 18%) We use the former figure, since applicants are asked for their school type at age 11-16.	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2016">www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2016</a>
<b>Parental degree status within the higher education population</b>	There is no data on this metric in the higher education sector, however a number of large scale surveys enable us to make reasonable estimates. These indicate that approximately 51% of students in higher education do not have parents with experience of higher education <sup>4</sup> . This data point should be regarded as a rough estimate, and not used for analytical purposes.	Trendence Graduate Study 2016, sample of 18,157 final year students
<b>FSM eligibility within the higher education population</b>	7.7% of the higher education population was eligible for FSM. This figure reduces to 4.6% if only the top third of HEIs when ranked by mean UCAS score are considered.	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/free-school-meals-pupil-progression-to-higher-education">www.gov.uk/government/statistics/free-school-meals-pupil-progression-to-higher-education</a>
<b>School type within the higher education population</b>	Within the general HE population, 11% attended an independent school. Amongst the top third of selective universities this figure is 22%.	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2015">www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2015</a>



# BRIDGE group

Registered Charity 1162144