

Academic & Career Development: Analysis Report

City Students' Union

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Foreword

Fortune Sampson – City Students' Union Deputy President

Students pursue university education with the hope that it improves their personal qualities and increases their chances of getting employed, and succeeding in their employ, business, and practice. In recent times there has been increasing competition for opportunities in the fast-paced and ever-changing job market; the University must therefore adopt an approach aimed at imbuing her students with employability skills so they can succeed in the world of work and their enterprise. The ability to adapt, learn new skills, and stay ahead of the curve has never been more important than it is today hence City University of London is encouraged to develop more practical strategies including organizing industry-specific engagements that can give insights into real-world expectations from employers and experiences that can boost the chances of catching in on the limited opportunities and practically linking students to jobs.

In this report, the Students' Union has drawn on the experiences of students and research done by other universities to provide valuable insights and recommendations that will revolutionise the employability offerings of City University of London for students from their first year to the period after graduation.

I highly recommend that the University does an intense study of this report and executes the recommendations contained therein.

Fortune Sampson – City Students' Union Deputy President

Recommendations

Evidence	Recommendation
25% of students are either not sure or do not know how to access the Careers Hub	Increase advertising of the Careers Hub through email (include in weekly communications to students) and on the SU website, providing clear instructions on how to access the Hub through a step-by-step tutorial/short video
87% of respondents use the Careers Hub services less than once a month	
When questioned about the factors that stopped them from booking a 1-to-1 Careers appointment, 30% of the respondents blamed a lack of available appointments	Improve the 1-to-1 careers appointment booking process: increase the number of available slots, and set aside time each week for urgent bookings that can be made through email (subject to approval)
In the Assembly meeting, students expressed a desire for more tailored career advice, specific to their industry of interest	Provide sector-specific career information through monthly communications and events. This could be run in conjunction with each School
36% of survey participants said they would be motivated to book 1-to-1 appointments if they were more frequently advertised	Increase promotion of the Careers Services by advertising the track record/statistics of alumni landing graduate jobs
	Make better use of social media such as LinkedIn and Instagram to promote the services
The Professional Mentoring scheme received excellent feedback from 75% of past mentees and positive sentiment from almost half of non-participants, indicating significant demand from students for the programme	Increase the accessibility of the Professional Mentoring scheme by reviewing and potentially lowering acceptance requirements
	Connect with more mentors across a wider range of industries
	Provide constructive feedback to rejected applicants to help with future applications
Only 30% of respondents said they were part of an academic society	Improve academic societies by providing leadership training to society leaders
	Provide more funding to societies to enable more events and better advertisement of the societies
	Increase collaboration with the SU and the Careers department to help the organisation of career workshops/fairs etc
Students expressed a desire for more networking opportunities and easier access to internships and micro-placements, especially City-exclusive opportunities	Improve networking opportunities and access to work opportunities by hosting more recruitment events and informal 1:1 coffee chats with employers
	Provide micro-placements for a wider range of courses
	Create exclusive internship opportunities for City students by leveraging the university's reputation

	Email tailored communications to students on how to secure a placement (during term 1?)
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Report headlines

- 1. 25% of students reported feeling unsure of how to access the Careers Hub**
- 2. 87% of students reported using the Careers Hub less than once a month**
- 3. When questioned about the factors that stopped them from booking a 1-to-1 Careers appointment, 30% of the respondents blamed a lack of available appointments**
- 4. 36% of students would be motivated to book 1-to-1 appointments if they were more frequently advertised**
- 5. The Professional Mentoring scheme received excellent feedback from 75% of past mentees and positive sentiment towards the scheme was recorded across almost half of non-participants**
- 6. Approximately 70% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their course prepared them well for the world of work**
- 7. 35% of respondents claimed to have insufficient exposure to industry professionals**
- 8. Only 30% of respondents said they were part of an academic society**
- 9. Students expressed a desire for more networking opportunities and easier access to internships and micro-placements, especially City-exclusive opportunities**

Introduction

Academic & Career Development was set as the Student Union's Bronze priority for the 2022-2023 academic year. Under this priority, the Student Union set out to understand student sentiment regarding the services offered by the Careers Department and each School in order to identify areas for improvement.

What services are offered currently?

Having liaised with the Careers & Employability team, the SU learned of the numerous services offered by the Careers Department at present. These include 1-to-1 appointments for careers advice and guidance; CV, cover letter, and application reviews; mock interviews; Unitemps; access information about upcoming careers events; the Professional Mentoring scheme; careers workshops; and GrAdvantage. City's Careers Hub serves as the 'beating heart', or the 'one-stop-shop' for students to access/learn about these offerings.

School-based and course-specific career opportunities vary widely across City. For example, the City Law School offers several advice services tailored to each programme, where students can receive advice to develop their CVs and applications. Bayes Business School has their own Career and Professional Development Team that provides training and guidance in employability skills. Student sentiment around School-based and course-specific opportunities has also been explored in this report.

Research on Russell Group Universities

Most Russell Group universities offer a similar range of career support services to students, including mentorship; a designated careers website; 1:1 careers advice; CV, cover letter, and application reviews; mock interviews; career fairs; workshops; and placement opportunities. Some of these Universities lack a dedicated Careers and Employability team (as City has), with Careers integrated with their Student Services department; this consequently puts City in a strong position.

There are, however, other services offered at these universities that City might consider implementing more of. These include bespoke internship opportunities that are exclusive to City students, course-specific information and events, and informal 1:1 coffee chats with employers.

Aims of this report

As an important part of the Academic & Career Development priority, this research paper aims to explore the following:

1. Students' awareness and frequency of use of Careers services
2. Students' experiences with the Careers department (including ease of access and suggestions for improvement)
3. Student sentiment on the Professional Mentoring Scheme
4. How academic societies can play a more active role in career support at City
5. Student sentiment regarding School-based and course-specific career opportunities

This report includes both quantitative and qualitative data analysis based on students' responses. Recommendations for the Students' Union and the University have also been provided.

Methodology

Engagement with City Careers & Employability

As a first step, the SU engaged with the City Careers & Employability team to understand the careers support currently offered at the University.

Assembly Meeting

In February 2023, an Assembly Meeting was held with approximately twenty assembly members in attendance. The students were presented with a rundown of City's current career services and then asked to provide feedback on the offerings. Students also discussed and shared what they hoped to see implemented in the near future. All the feedback was recorded by students by hand and later typed up for data analysis.

Survey

In March 2023, an online survey was launched to the wider student body, with the aim of collecting student feedback on the services offered by the Careers department and by each School. The mixed method survey contained more than 30 questions, including multiple-choice, ranking, and open-ended questions. The survey results, totaling 53 responses from City students, provided both qualitative and quantitative data.

The data collected from both the Assembly meeting and the online survey has been analysed in this report.

Demographics

In terms of School distribution, 45% of the respondents were students from Bayes Business School. Students from School of Science and Technology and School of Health and Psychological Sciences each made up 17% of the total responses. The City Law School contributed 15%, followed by the School of Policy and Global Affairs with 4% and the School of Communication and Creativity with 2% of total survey participation.

The respondents' years of study also varied. 19% of respondents were in their first year, whilst 23% were second-year students. Third-year students made up 34% of the total responses, and 4% were in their placement year. 21% of the total respondents were postgraduate students, with 17% full-time and 4% part-time.

The survey received responses from students with different fee statuses. Almost half of the participants – 47% - were home students. 42% were international students, and 11% were EU students.

Survey Analysis

1. Awareness and frequency of use of Career Services

Awareness of how to access the Careers Hub

All of the services offered by City's Careers department can be accessed or learned about through City's Careers Hub – the 'one-stop-shop' for student career support. A lack of awareness regarding the Careers Hub is a key barrier to students receiving valuable support. Therefore, we examined students' awareness of how to access Careers Hub. The majority of participants (75%) said they knew how to access the Hub. 17% were unsure, and 8% claimed they had no knowledge at all of how to do this (Figure 1).

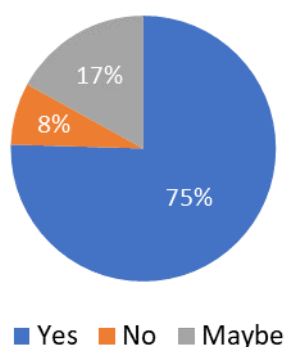


Figure 1. Student's awareness of how to access Careers Hub

Awareness of the careers services offered by the Careers Department

Regarding students' awareness of each service offered by the Careers department, 'CV, Cover Letter/Application review' was the most popular response, with nearly 85% of respondents indicating awareness of the service. 79.2% of the students were aware of careers advice and guidance, whilst the proportion of participants aware of career workshops, Unitemps, and mock interviews was around 60%. The Professional Mentoring scheme, where students have the opportunity to learn from and be mentored by an industry expert, was familiar to around 38% of the respondents. The statistic for GrAdvantage, an employability programme for first-degree graduates from underrepresented or BAME backgrounds, stood at 9.4%. Only 1 participant was unaware of any of the services offered (Table 1).

Services	Proportion of respondents previously aware of the service
CV/Cover Letter/Application review	84.9%
Careers advice and guidance	79.2%
Career workshops	62.3%
Unitemps	60.4%
Mock interviews	58.5%
Professional Mentoring scheme	37.7%
GrAdvantage	9.4%
None of the above	1.9%

Table 1. Students' awareness of Career services

Utilisation of services

Students were then questioned about which services they had actually used before. The CV/Cover Letter/application review service and career advice and guidance remained the most popular in this regard, with 60% and 40% of participants respectively having used these in the past. The usage of Unitemps, career workshops, mock interviews, and Professional Mentoring scheme then followed (see Table 2). GrAdvantage was not used by any of the survey respondents. Furthermore, 9 students indicated that they had never used any of the services.

Services	Proportion of respondents previously used the service
CV/Cover Letter/Application review	60.4%
Careers advice and guidance	39.6%
Unitemps	35.8%
Career workshops	28.3%
Mock interviews	22.6%
Professional Mentoring scheme	7.5%
GrAdvantage	0.0%
None of the above	17.0%

Table 2. Students' use of Career services

Frequency of use of the Careers Hub services

Respondents were then asked to reflect on their frequency of use of the Careers Hub services. 43% had either never used the services at all or had used them at least once a term. 11.3% reported using the services at least once a month. Only 1 respondent claimed to utilise these services very regularly - at least once every two weeks (Figure 2).

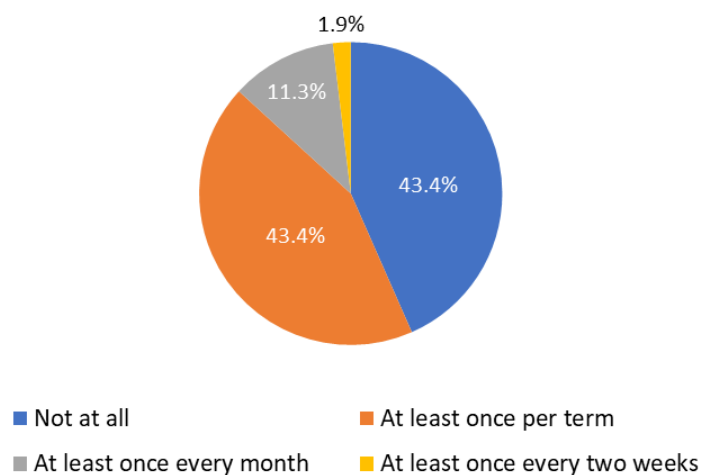


Figure 2. Students' frequency of use – Career services

2. Experience with the Career services

Booking a 1-to-1 Careers Appointment

When questioned about the factors that stopped them from booking a 1-to-1 Careers appointment, 30% of the respondents blamed a lack of available appointments. Students remarked that appointments are overbooked most of the time, and there's also a need to book at least five days ahead which is inconvenient in times of urgency. The second most-popular reason (23.3%) was a lack of awareness: students stated they were unaware of the opportunity or uncertain about who they'd meet in these appointments. 20% of respondents stated that there was nothing discouraging them from booking appointments. 7% reasoned psychological reasons, such as anxiety, fear of judgement, and feeling unprepared. The same proportion of respondents claimed that they did not need the support at the time being. Other reasons included health issues, the short duration of appointments, and misconceptions about appointments being reserved for the Business School (Figure 3).

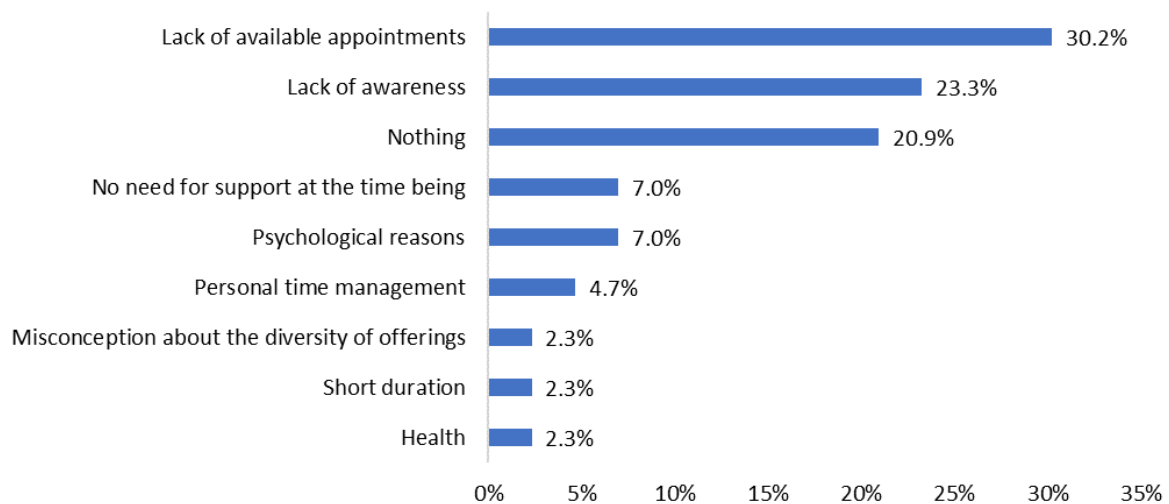


Figure 3. Factors discouraging students from booking 1-to-1 appointments

When asked what would encourage them to book 1-to-1 appointments, nearly 36% emphasised the clarity of information or advertisements. Specifically, students mentioned they would like to see more communication about the service, for example, where and how these appointments work and what kind of assistance would be provided. 22.6% of respondents stated that good quality of service would draw them in; some of them put emphasis on an extensive network with employers, diversity in offerings across courses, and advice from specialists in specific fields. Almost 19% of respondents claimed that they would only be motivated to book appointments if the need arose for something like a mock interview. Reduced waiting time or more available slots in the booking process were mentioned as effective methods of encouragement by 10% of respondents (Figure 4).

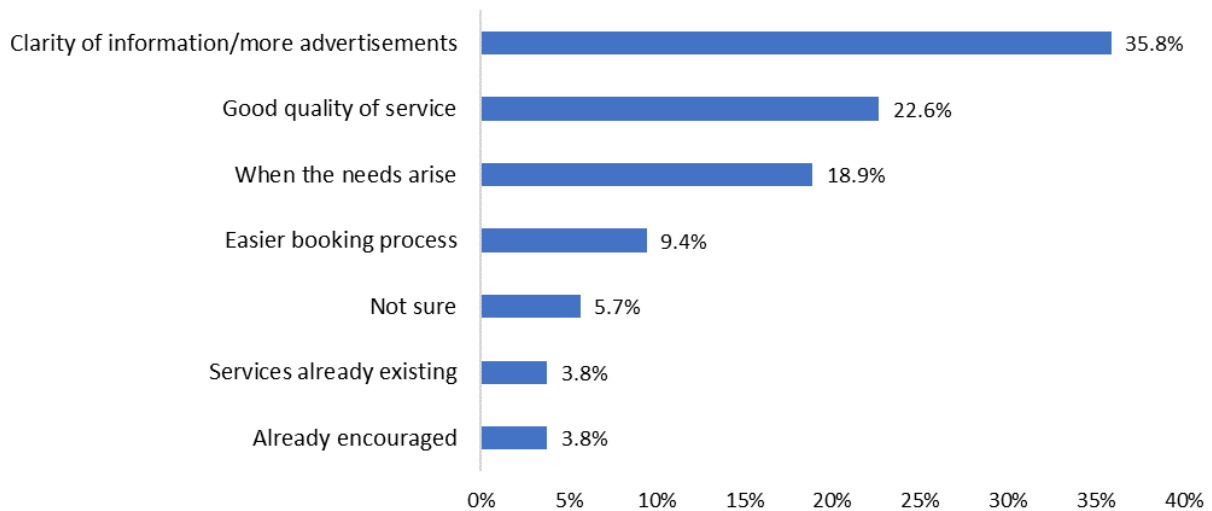


Figure 4. Factors encouraging students to book 1-to-1 appointments

Future use

Previous users of the Career Services were asked about their plans to increase their use in the near future. The majority (75.9%) stated they would use the services more in the next one to three months. Almost half of the respondents reasoned they'd do so due to nearing the end of the course, or needing to apply for other degrees, internships, placements, and graduate jobs. 17% of respondents were uncertain about future use; only 2 students said they would not increase their use of the services, as they had either already secured a graduate job or had been a very frequent user (Figure 5).

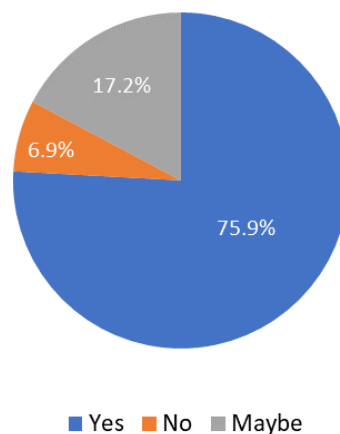


Figure 5. Students' intentions to increase their use of Career services

Amongst students who had never previously used the services, 40% stated they did not plan to start using them in the next one to three months. The most popular reason given was that they are not looking for work nor did they need support at the time being. 32% of these students were uncertain, while a definite plan to start utilising the Career services was reported by 27% who reasoned that they need to find work opportunities and kickstart their careers (Figure 6).

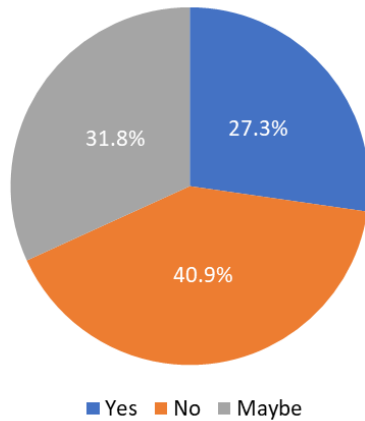


Figure 6. Non-users' plan to start using Career services

Perceived ease of receiving support

Students were also asked about the ease in receiving support from the Careers department. Approximately 41% of the respondents stated it was neither easy nor difficult, while 34.7% found it somewhat easy. Some difficulty was encountered by 4% of the students when they tried to book an appointment with the consultants. Overbooking seemed to be a common reason (17.5%) among students who did not find it extremely easy to receive support. The respondents who did feel it was extremely easy (18.4%) reasoned that the department is approachable and provides helpful feedback (Figure 7).

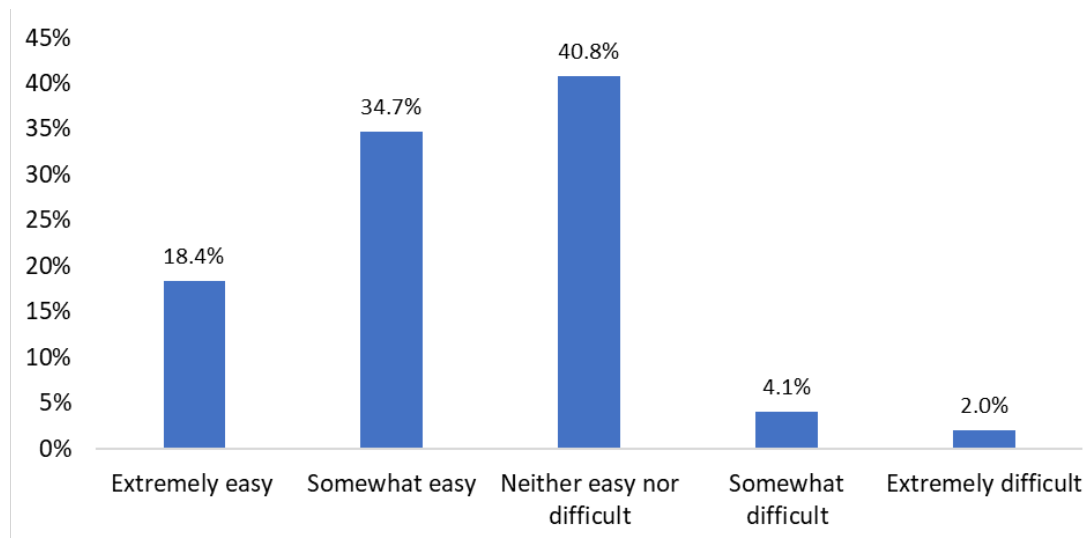


Figure 7. Students' sentiment around receiving Career support

Student-suggested improvements to Career Services

Students were asked what more they wished to see in terms of the academic and career support provided by the Careers department. The most popular response at 19% was more networking and career workshop events, closely followed by better advertisement of work

experience opportunities and more information on career trajectories and working in industry. Students also voiced a desire for better advertising of what career services are on offer and a need for more support with the various stages of job applications like scenario-based assessments. Greater availability of appointments with career advisors was also mentioned in the students' responses (Table 3).

What more do you want to see in terms of the academic and career support provided by the career services?	Responses
More networking and workshopping events	19%
Better advertisement of work experience opportunities (part-time roles, internships, placements)	15%
More information on course-specific career trajectories and working in industry	15%
Greater advertisement of what's on offer	11%
More support with applications (e.g. scenario-based assessments)	7%
Greater availability of appointments with Careers staff	7%
Other (N/A)	26%

Table 3. Student suggestions for academic & career support provided by their course

3. Popularity of Professional Mentoring scheme

Students aware of the Professional Mentoring scheme were asked for their opinions on the programme. Among those who had never participated in the scheme, almost 40% considered the scheme a great idea or planned to apply later on. One recommendation from a rejected applicant was that feedback on applications should be provided. Most of the previous mentees (75%) complimented the scheme, listing benefits such as boosting confidence and helping them to be career-focused. One mentee recommended more face-to-face interactions with mentors. On the other hand, one participant did not have good experience with the scheme, stating that their mentor was not interactive throughout the programme (Figure 8).

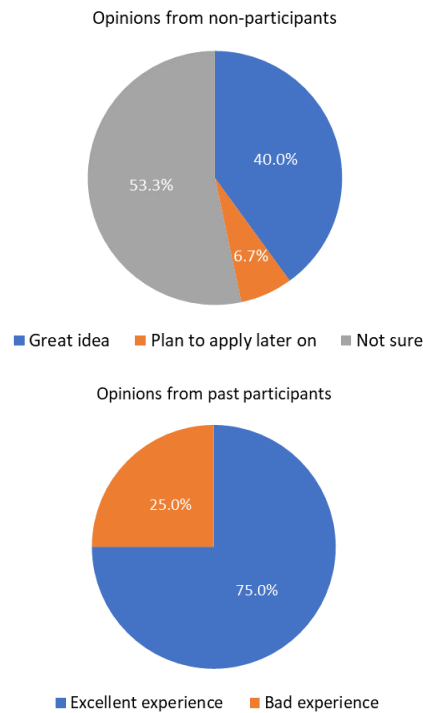


Figure 8. Opinions on the Professional Mentoring scheme

4. Academic societies

Close to 70% of respondents stated that they were not part of any academic society at City. The reasons behind this varied. Whilst some students stated that there was no academic society for their course, others remarked that they were simply too busy to join a society, or had no interest in joining one as they failed to see the benefit of an academic society.

When students were asked what academic societies could do better, the most popular response was for academic societies to put on more events in order to better engage students. The second most popular response was for better advertising of the academic societies, as students lacked awareness of which societies actually existed. One student remarked that they'd also like to see 'more structure', as in a complete plan for the society's activities over the academic year (Table 4).

What can academic societies do better?	Responses
More events & engagement	47%
Advertising/increase awareness	26%
Free entries to events	3%
Make them more student driven	3%
Other (N/A etc.)	21%

Table 4. Student suggestions for academic societies

5. Student sentiment regarding School-based and course-specific career opportunities

Preparedness for the world of work

When students were asked if they felt their course prepared them well for the world of work, approximately 70% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that this was the case. These students had a common belief that their course content was applicable to the 'real world' and they also expressed appreciation for work placement opportunities. Respondents who neither agreed or disagreed, or outright disagreed with the statement, reasoned that there was an insufficient amount of practical experience and that they would also like greater exposure to industry and more interaction with employers (Figure 9).

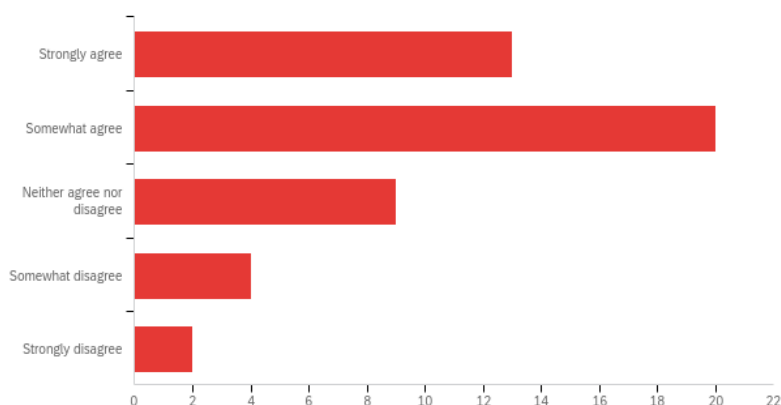


Figure 9. Opinions on feeling prepared for the world of work

Exposure to Industry Professionals

Students were also questioned about whether their course provided sufficient exposure to industry professionals. Approximately 65% of the respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they did have enough opportunities to interact with industry professionals. For the remaining 35%, exposure to industry professionals was, in their opinion, somewhat lacking, and this highlights an area for closer inspection. Most of these students were from the Bayes Business School (6 of 17 students), closely followed by The City Law School (4 of 17 students).

Academic and Career Support from Students' Courses

In free-text form, students were asked what more they wished to see in terms of academic and career support from their course. The two most popular answers were 1) more networking opportunities and events to give students the chance to engage with alumni and industry professionals, and 2) greater access to internships and micro-placements, with students mentioning a desire for City exclusive internship opportunities (Table 5).

What more do you want to see in terms of the academic and career support provided by your course?	Responses
More networking opportunities & events (with alumni and professionals)	27%
Greater access to internships and micro-placements	21%
Changes to tutorials (more frequent/longer/more industry-focused)	15%
General course support (e.g. help with applying for a research degree)	12%
Greater industry insights	9%
Career fairs	3%
More field trips	3%
More encouragement/advertising from staff	3%

Other (N/A)	6%
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Table 5. Student suggestions for academic & career support provided by their course

From an academic standpoint, some students expressed their desire for more tutorials or longer tutorials. Students also voiced that they would like to see more industry insights included in their courses.

Assembly Analysis

Booking a 1-to-1 Careers Appointment

Students present at the Assembly meeting were also questioned about what stops them from booking a 1-to-1 appointment. Students reasoned a lack of knowledge about the service, a lack of available slots and feeling dissatisfied with past support they had received as they felt the advice was too generic.

When asked what would encourage them to book a 1-to-1 appointment, students said they would consider doing so when trying to find a job. One student said they'd appreciate the option of having the appointment online or in person, although this is something already offered by the Careers department; this indicates a lack of sufficient promotion of these appointments. On top of this, students expressed a desire for a more 'personalised' approach, with company-specific advice and employer insights.

Mentorship programme

When asked for their thoughts on the mentorship programme, the students were of the opinion that it's a 'good idea' but also felt the scheme lacks sufficient publicising. The most popular response from the students was that the programme is 'too selective' and needs to be more accessible.

Academic societies

Students were asked whether they were part of an academic society and why or why not. The majority of students present at the meeting stated they were not part of one and reasoned that the societies are either very inactive or do not exist. When asked what academic societies could do better, students expressed a need for the societies to be more active and said they'd want to see more networking events (with alumni and with industry professionals) and greater SU involvement.

Overall view of Careers Support at City (School-specific and Careers Department)

Students present at the Assembly meeting were asked for their opinion on the overall careers support available at City, whether provided by their School and/or the Careers Department. Students were complimentary about the mentorship scheme, appreciating the availability of one-on-one guidance, and they also expressed appreciation for mock interviews offered by the Careers Department. VMock, GoinGlobal and GrAdvantage were also mentioned as valuable resources. More specifically, Law students expressed their affinity for the Pupillage Advisory Service.

On a less positive note, students once again called out the selectivity of the mentorship scheme and also mentioned the limited number of available appointments with the Careers Department. They also expressed a desire for more tailored advice and better guidance about alternative career paths. Additionally, a desire for more internship opportunities being incorporated into course programmes was voiced. Students from the School of Science and Technology also complained about a lack of academic societies applicable to them.