UK Engagement Survey 2022

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1. Executive summary

As the world returns to a 'new normal', higher education institutions have been exploring whether they continue to deliver their course material online, return to in-person teaching or adopt a blended approach to learning. A review of blended learning, commissioned by the Office for Students (Blended Learning Review Panel, 2022), highlighted that while virtual learning benefited some aspects of students' lives, for example, students were able to choose when they engaged with their course material, students found that their peers did not always attend classes, which hindered group work. The findings from UK Engagement Survey (UKES) 2022 supported this review as they showed that students were more engaged with group work activities in 2022 than 2021.

While there were no full national lockdowns in 2022, students still had to deal with face mask restrictions, self-isolation if they tested positive (UKHSA, 2022) and a new raft of challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and long Covid. The price of everyday products, such as food, fuel, and energy, has increased substantially in the last year, which has likely had an impact on students' finances and their mental health. Mental health is still the main reason why students considered leaving their course and a larger proportion of students have worked for pay in 2022 than in 2021. Students also reported spending more time caring for others. This may be due to a combination of students caring for family members, including those who have Covid-19, and childcare becoming too expensive for them to afford.

Fewer students considered leaving their course in 2022 than they did during the pandemic (23% in 2022 compared to 28% in 2021). This may be due to more students reporting that they received appropriate support, interaction with staff and their course met their expectations.

Overall, student engagement has largely returned to levels seen pre-pandemic. The increased responses on various sections, including enterprise and entrepreneurship, career development and learning opportunities, provide positive indications that there have been increased opportunities in a range of areas.

This report will detail how student engagement has been measured, discuss students' engagement in 2022 and how this varies by mode of delivery and between specific groups. It will then suggest some areas the sector could consider focusing their attention on when trying to improve students' engagement within their institution and their courses.

2. Methodology

2.1 Purpose

The UK Engagement Survey (UKES) is run by Advance HE in collaboration with participating institutions. The survey was developed under license from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)[1] in the United States of America. The aim of the survey is to examine which aspects of their course and wider activities students have engaged with over the last academic year. The survey produces valuable data which indicates where students are spending their time and which activities they are engaging with while at university. This is then combined with data on students' perceptions of their skills development, which provides the sector and institutions with insight into the aspects of university life they should aim to focus attention on.

Institutional results are confidential, as the primary aim is for them to inform the university's practices and highlight where they could improve student engagement. However, Advance HE provides grouped benchmark results to allow institutions the opportunity to understand how their results compare with other providers. This allows institutions to understand the areas where they are performing well and where they could improve activities to encourage student engagement.

2.2 Content of survey

There are five compulsory and two further optional sections that measure engagement. In addition, there are 12 questions which examine skills development, two questions measuring time spent completing academic work and five questions measuring time spent on extra-curricular activities. These sections are optional. Table 1 shows an overview of the themes, question areas, question items and responses from UKES 2022.

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Table 1. Overview of the main body of the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) 2022

Status	Theme	Question area	Question items	2022 sector responses (minimum)[2]
Core	Engagement	Critical thinking	4	10,853
Core	Engagement	Learning with others	4	10,870
Core	Engagement	Interacting with staff	6	10,855
Core	Engagement	Reflecting and connecting	6	10,853
Core	Engagement	Course challenge/ independent learning	2	10,885
Optional	Engagement	Research and inquiry	4	5,220
Optional	Engagement	Staff–student partnerships	3	5024
Optional	Skills development	Learning skills, creative and social skills	12	6,580
Optional	Time spent	Academic work	2	9,534
Optional	Time spent	Extra-curricular activity	5	9,534

2.3 Skills development items

There are 12 questions that examine students' perceptions of their skills development over the last academic year. These questions are categorised into two groups, which can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Overview of the skills development section of the survey

Skills development item	Category
Writing	Learning skills
Speaking	
Thinking critically	
Analysing	
Career skills	
Independent learning	
Being innovative and creative	Creative and social skills
Working effectively with others	
Developing personal values or ethics	
Understanding people of other backgrounds	
Exploring complex real-world problems	
Being an informed and active citizen	

2 Responses vary slightly per question as individual questions in each section are not compulsory.

2.4 Questions asked

UKES is principally concerned with understanding how students spend their time. The questions are focused on asking students to identify the activities where they spend, or are encouraged to spend, their time. There are sections in the survey asking students about the activities their course prioritised. The findings from these sections inform the institution of the areas they can address, if necessary.

Skills development is not measured using a single question; instead, there are a group of questions which ascertain how much the overall student experience has contributed to the development of the 12 skills specified.

The survey also asks students to estimate how much time they spend doing certain activities. These questions ask specifically about the amount of time students spend on academic work or extra-curricular activity.

We have clarified the themes, question areas, scales, question types and how the data is reported for the questions in Table 3.

Table 3. Breakdown of the themes, question areas, scale, question types and data reported within UKES.

Theme	Question area	Scale	Question type	Data reported
Engagement (Core)	Critical thinking	4-point	How much has your course emphasised activities?	Top 2 points in scale – very much/quite a bit
Engagement (Core)	Learning with others		How often have you done activities?	Top 2 points in scale – very often/often
Engagement (Core)	Interacting with staff			
Engagement (Core)	Reflecting and connecting			
Engagement (Core)	Course challenge/ independent learning		How much has your course emphasised activities?	Top 2 points in scale – very much/quite a bit
Engagement (Optional)	Research and inquiry			
Engagement (Optional)	Staff–student partnerships		How much have you been encouraged to do activities?	Top 2 points in scale – very much/quite a bit
Skills development (Optional)	Learning skills, Creative and social skills	4-point	How much has your overall student experience contributed?	Top 2 points in scale – very much/quite a bit
Time spent (Optional)	Academic work	8-point (ranges of hours)	How many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week?	Top 5 points in scale – 11 hours or more
Time spent (Optional)	Extra-curricular activity	8-point (ranges of hours)		Top 7 points in scale – any time spent

2.5 Participation

UKES is a valuable tool for institutions to understand student engagement and address any areas where action may be needed and so the survey has several regular participating institutions. Despite there being fewer institutions taking part in recent years, the participation volumes within institutions remain relatively high. An overview of the number of institutions, responses and average responses per institution can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Overview of the number of participating institutions, responses and average responses per institution

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Institutions	24	29	42	38	31	18	19	16
Participants	24,387	23,198	35,927	34,635	29,784	13,915	11,905	10,915
Average per institution	1,016	800	855	911	960	773	627	682

2.6 How the results are reported

The results will be reported across the three sections which form the core UK Engagement survey: engagement, skills development and time spent learning. The data will be analysed by comparing individual items across the student population and by individual characteristics.

3. Engagement

3.1 Overall

The core UKES uses 29 questions, across seven categories, to measure engagement. The previous seven years of data are also available and allow for comparisons within and between years. This timeseries can be seen in Figure 1.

The findings show that students engaged with more group work and collaboration with their peers in 2022 than they did in 2021 but less than students did pre-pandemic. The findings may suggest that some institutions have returned to in-person group work activities as a recent review commissioned by Office for Students (Blended Learning Review Panel, 2022) noted that students do not always attend their virtual sessions and staff had recognised that this impacted group work. Students also reported similar levels of interacting with staff, course challenge and critical thinking as they did pre-pandemic, which is encouraging as this is an indication of high-quality learning.

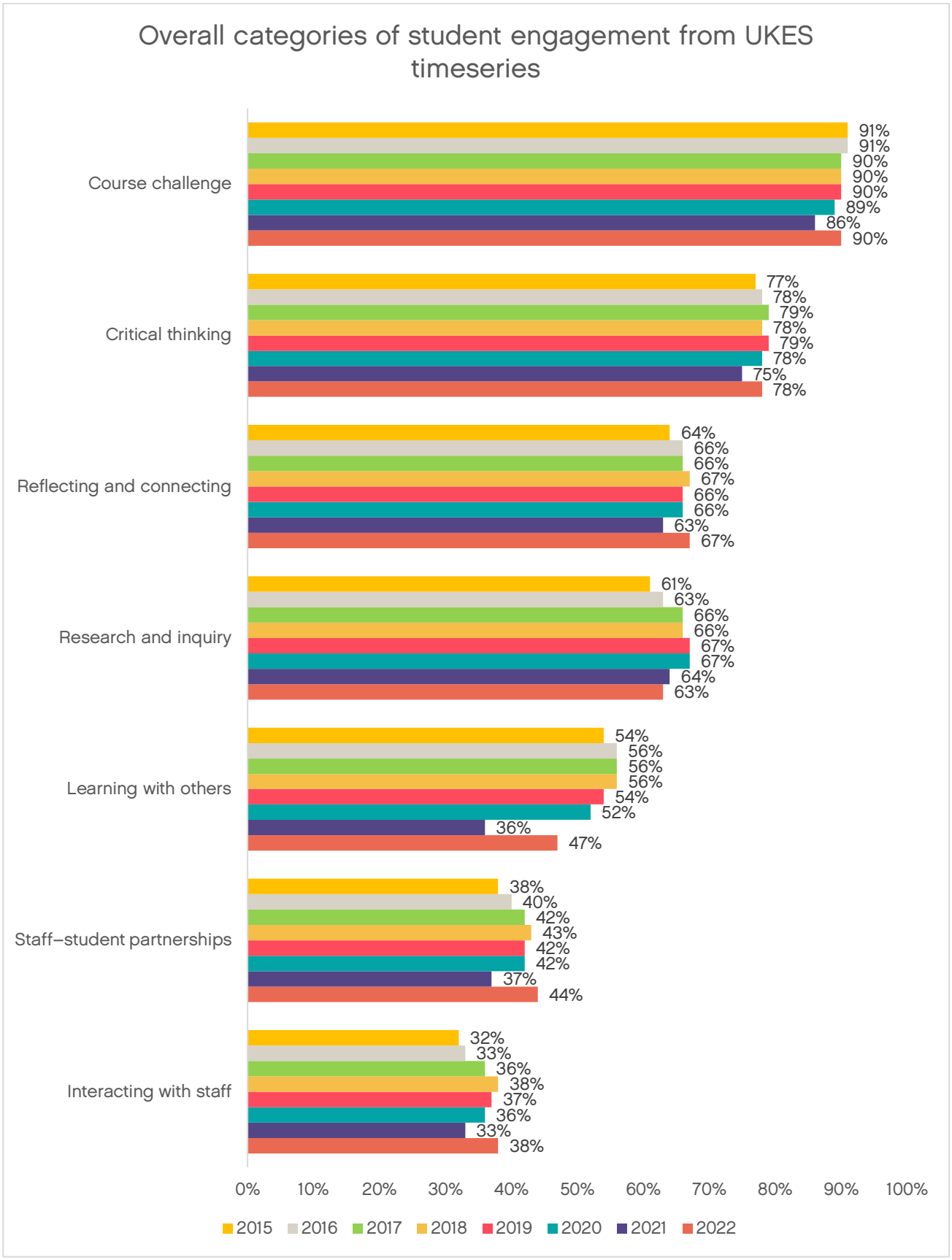

Figure 1. Overall categories of student engagement from UKES timeseries

3.2 Research and inquiry

Students reported marginally lower levels of engagement with research and inquiry in UKES 2022 than they did in recent years. To understand the reasons behind this slight reduction in engagement, further analysis was conducted on the individual question items.

Figure 2 shows that there has been a steady decrease in recent years in students conducting their own research projects, either on their own or with staff members. Moreover, students had less opportunity to plan studies in 2022 than during the pandemic. There has been a reduction in student engagement in learning about contemporary research and research methods, despite a slight increase since 2021. These findings suggest that some institutions are focusing less on teaching students how to conduct research and are possibly focusing more on the theoretical underpinnings of research. While learning about research methods is important, it is imperative for students to gain practical experience of applying these methods by conducting their own research projects. The decrease in time spent engaging in these activities is potentially concerning as evidence indicates that students who conduct their own research were more confident problem solvers and self-learners (Hegde and Karunasagar, 2021). These are two competencies required of individuals to be successful in their future career.

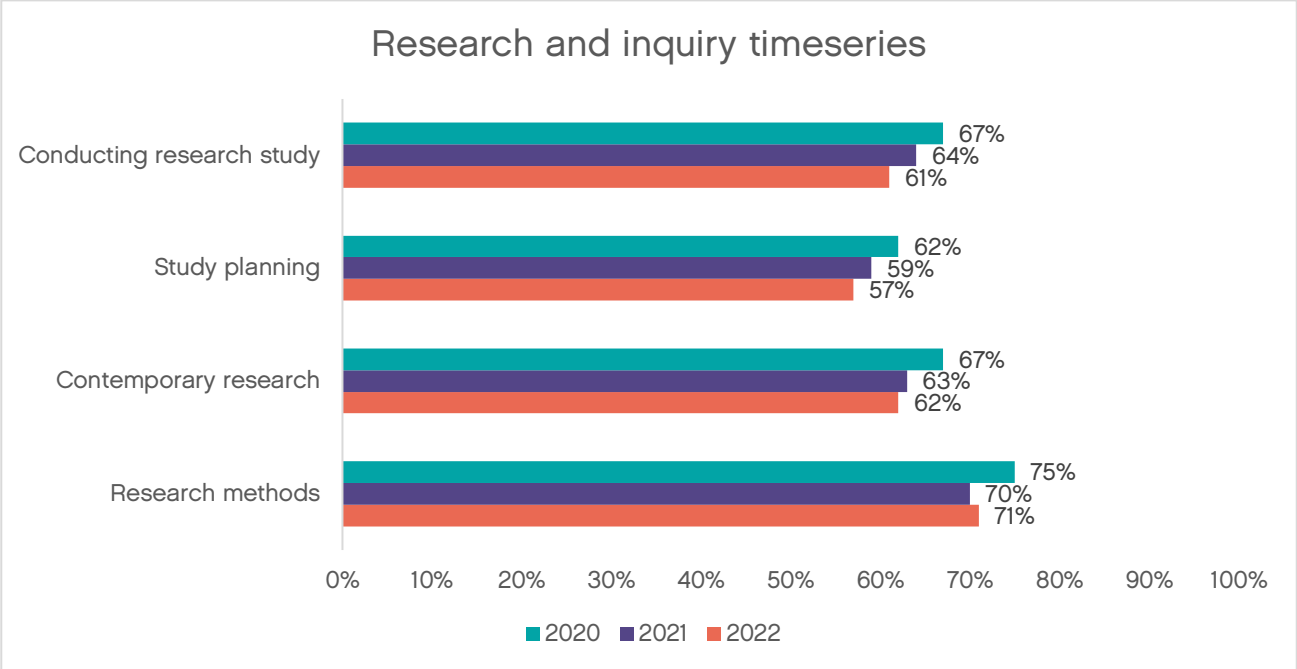

Figure 2. Research and inquiry timeseries

3.3 Interacting with staff

Students from social science and arts subjects reported greater engagement with staff than students who were studying STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects, as seen in Figure 3. There was a 17 percentage point difference between the subject with the highest engagement (business and management) and the subjects with the lowest engagement (engineering and technology and psychology). Less than 50% of students – across all subjects – reported frequently interacting with staff members; and so further opportunities for students and staff to interact with one another could be explored.

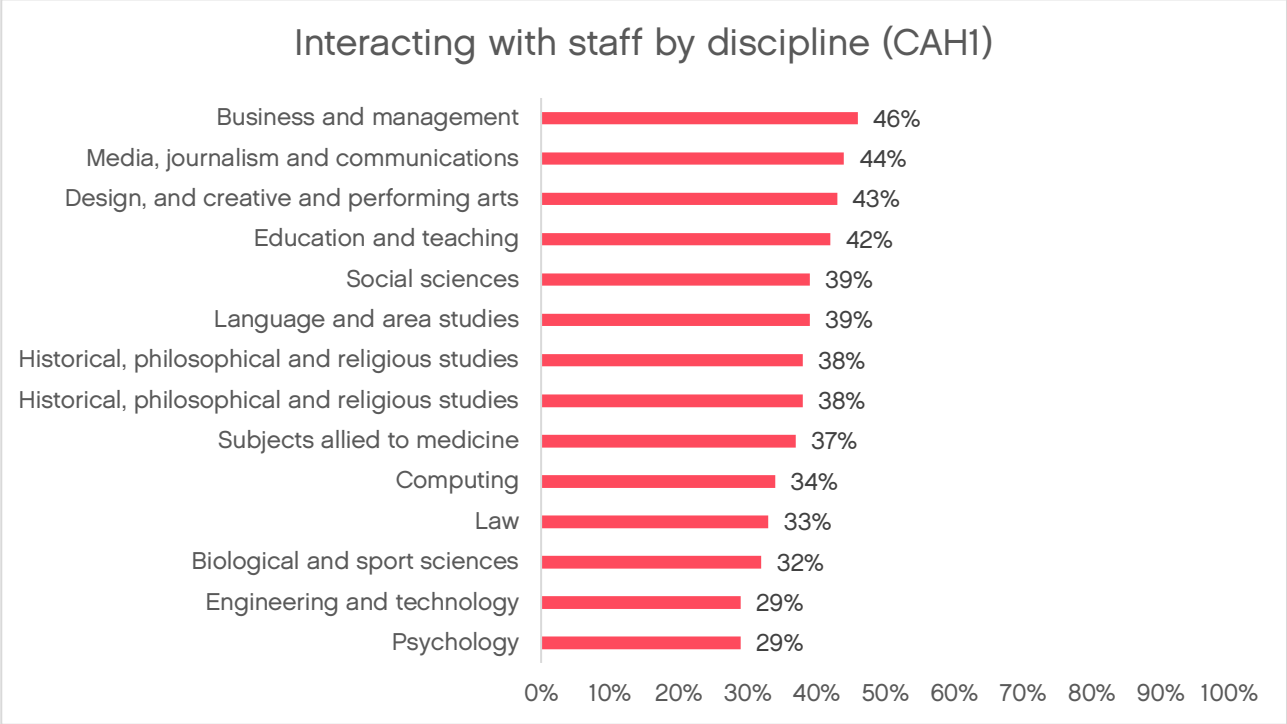

Figure 3. Interacting with staff by discipline (CAH1)

3.4 Learning with others

Learning with other students is an important aspect to examine as students can learn much from their peers through teaching one another and others can learn by observing this interaction (Hendry and Oliver, 2012).

Students reported spending more time learning with others in UKES 2022 than they did in UKES 2021. There was a 14 percentage point increase in students working with their peers on course projects or assignments. There was also a 10 percentage point increase in students' engagement with explaining course material to one or more of their peers in 2022. Peer-to-peer teaching is mutually beneficial as it increases both individuals' understanding of the subject matter and allows both students to take control of their learning (Wagner and Gansemer-Topf, 2005). Student engagement in discussing and receiving help from other students has increased from 2021 to 2022. However, the levels of engagement observed are still lower than that seen in 2020, but the increases are encouraging. These findings can be seen in Figure 4.

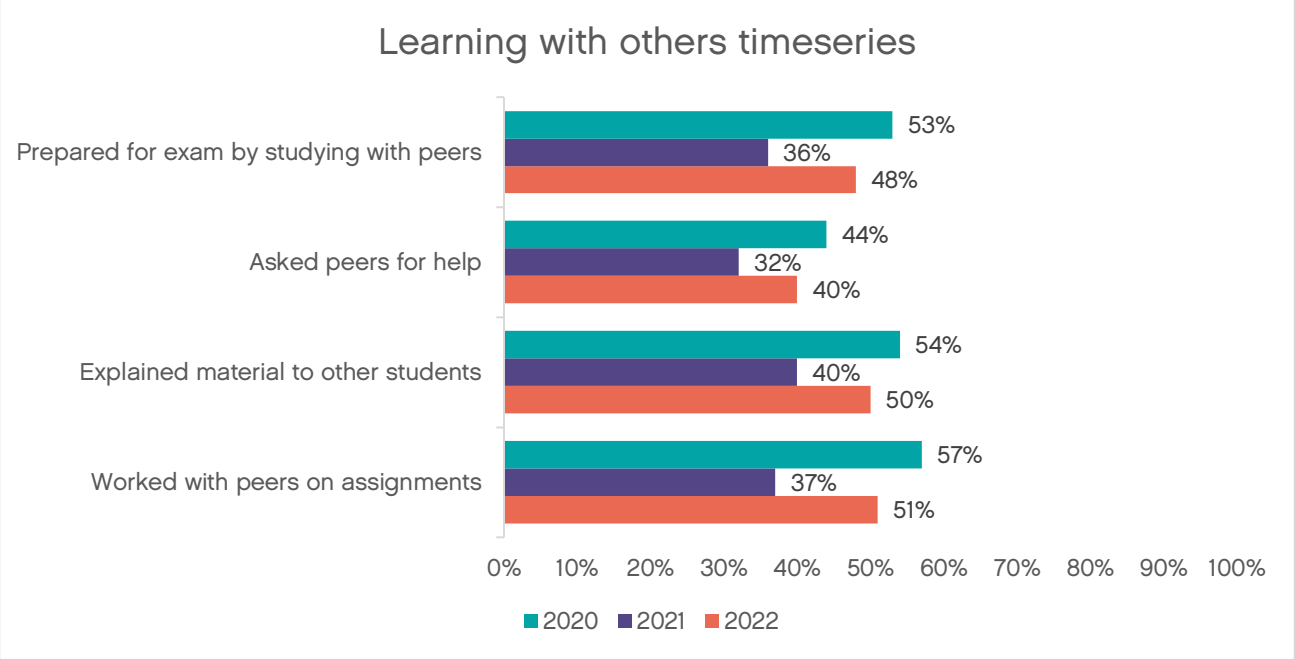

Figure 4. Learning with others timeseries

3.5 Engagement by mode of delivery

During the pandemic, digital delivery provided institutions with a tool to ensure students still had access to the course content. However, research has shown that some students did not feel included and lacked a sense of belonging to the university (Wonkhe and Pearson, 2022). Blended learning is not a completely novel approach – institutions have been exploring this approach since the 1960s (Bersin, 2004). However, it is becoming more popular with institutions as staff and students have experienced the benefits that online learning provides.

Results from UKES 2022 indicate that students who were mostly taught online reported lower levels of engagement in critical thinking than students who were mostly taught in person or using a blend of the two approaches, seen in Figure 5. A recent review (Blended Learning Review Panel, 2022) reported that students felt motivated to learn and concentrate on their work when they were physically present at university compared to being taught online where they may be distracted.

Students who were taught using a blended approach reported greater engagement with research and inquiry activities than students who were mainly taught in person or virtually. This is an interesting finding and could reflect some of the benefits that hybrid teaching gives in that academics from international universities (for example) can deliver research seminars and students can gain practical experience of conducting research in person.

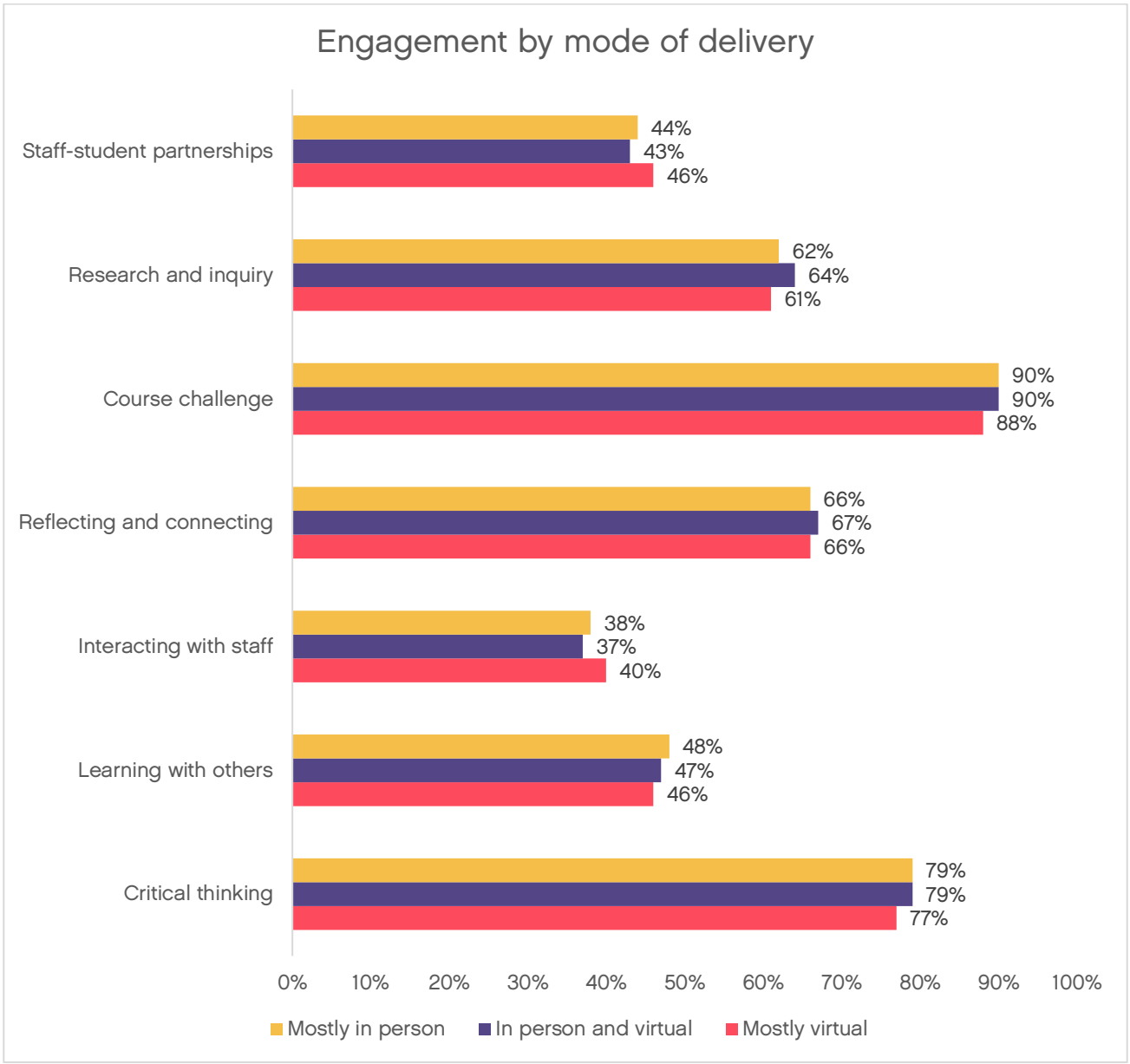

Figure 5. Student engagement by mode of delivery

4. Skills development

4.1 Overall

Encouragingly, students had higher levels of engagement with skills development in 2022 than students in 2021, and similar levels as those reported in 2020, which was partly pre-pandemic. It is likely that the return of some in-person teaching has allowed students to engage in more activities that develop their innovation, analytical and critical thinking skills.

Figure 6 shows that students reported substantially higher rates of working effectively with others than they did in 2021. This ties in with the findings reported earlier in the Engagement section of this report and may be due to the return of face-to-face activities. Students also reported similar rates of critical thinking in 2022 as they did pre-pandemic, and higher rates of critical thinking than they did in 2021.

Students reported the highest level of engagement in career skills in 2022 than they have done since 2019. However, less than 50% of students feel their student experience contributed to their career skill development. Ways in which employability skills development can be directly incorporated into courses could be further explored, to enhance students' experience.

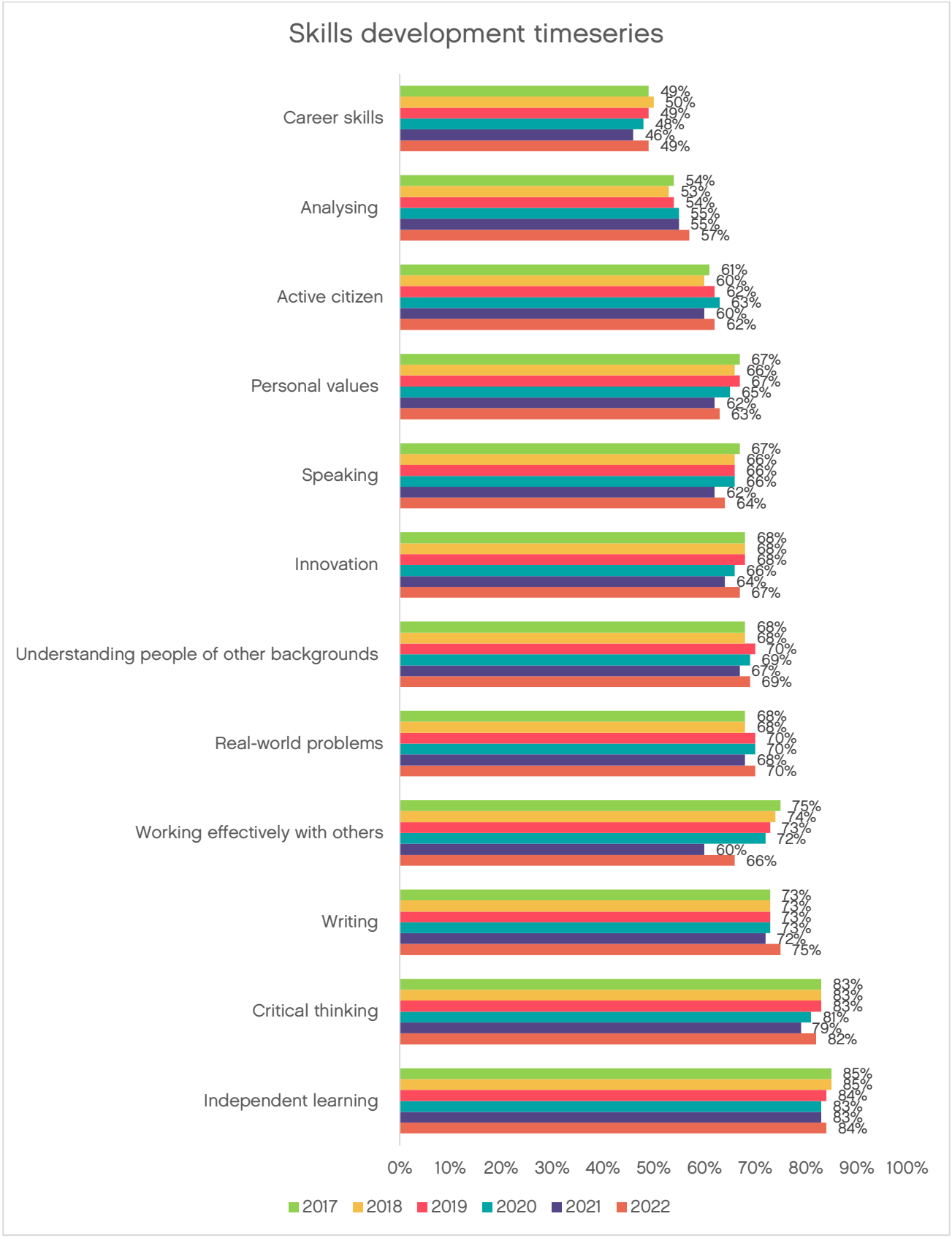

Figure 6. Skills development timeseries

4.2 Learning skills development by mode of learning

The findings shown in Figure 7 show that students who were taught online reported lower levels of critical thinking skill development than students who were taught in person or using a blended approach. This ties in with findings reported in the Engagement section of this report and is supported by a review of blended learning, which noted that students reported physically being at university motivated them to learn as they were free from distractions and other pressures in the home environment (Blended Learning Review Panel, 2022).

However, there were much higher levels of engagement in students developing their career skills when they were taught online in comparison to being taught in person or using a blended approach. On the face of it, this may be seen as a surprising finding. However, virtual delivery may allow students extra time to concentrate on strengthening their CV and direct career credentials. Overall, Figure 7 implies that both virtual and in-person teaching can enhance various skills and hence a blended approach to learning could have real advantages.

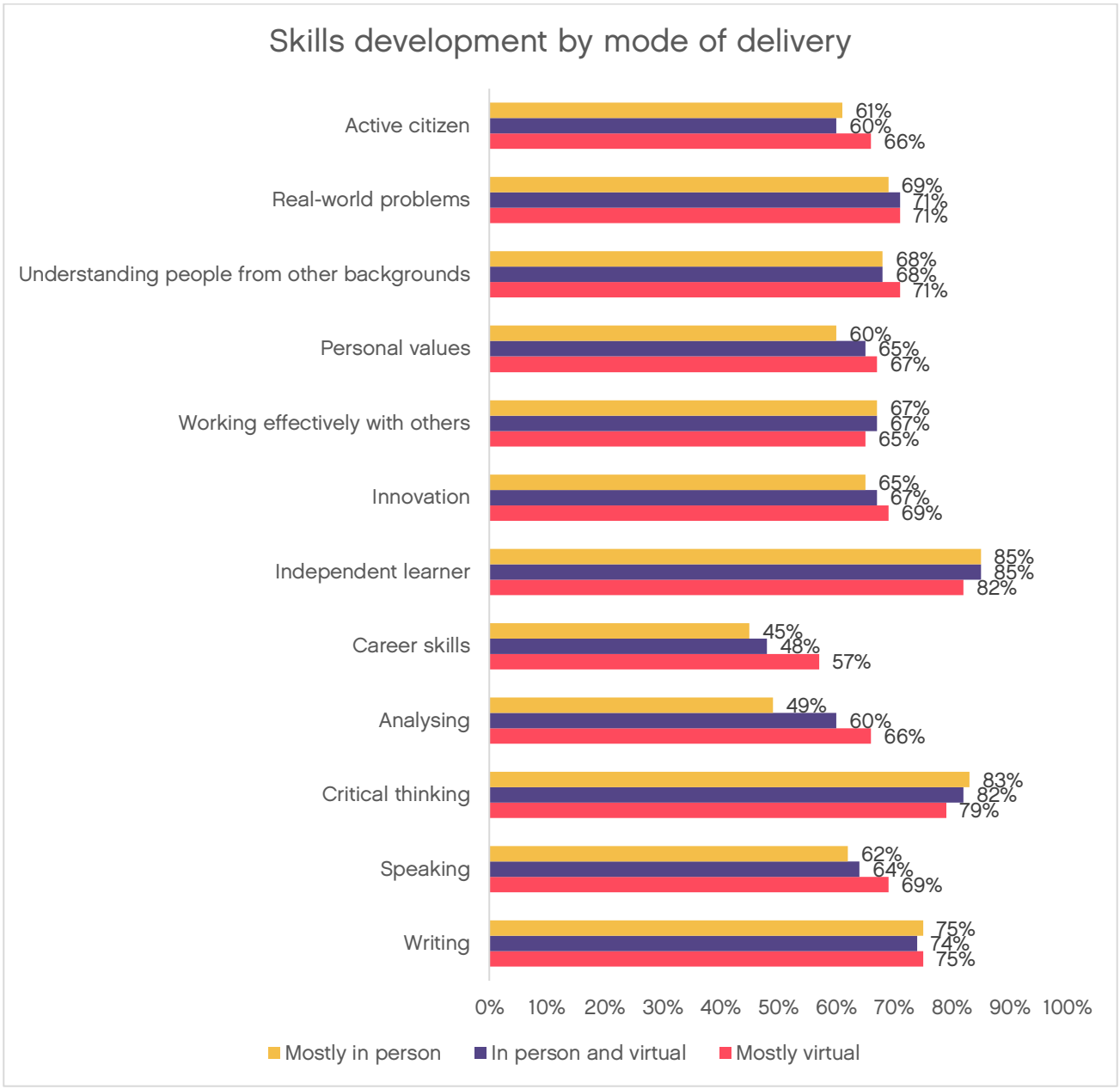

Figure 7. Skills development by mode of delivery; n = 694 – 2,575

4.3 Skills development by discipline

There are some disciplines where students report similar levels of engagement in activities that develop both their learning and their creative and social skills.[3] Subjects allied to medicine are likely to have several different types of activities to develop the personal and practical skills that are required to practice in society. As can be seen in Figure 8, disciplines such as computing and biological sciences have lower levels of engagement with creative and social skills.

Creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication are essential skills for any individual entering the workforce after graduation. Employers require individuals to be well-rounded and expect individuals to interact with other colleagues, stakeholders and resolve issues with creative solutions (Rohm, Stefl and Ward, 2021). Disciplines could explore ways in which they can develop their course material and assignments to further facilitate students' learning and creative and social skills development.

[3] See the section 'Skills development items' above for a definition.

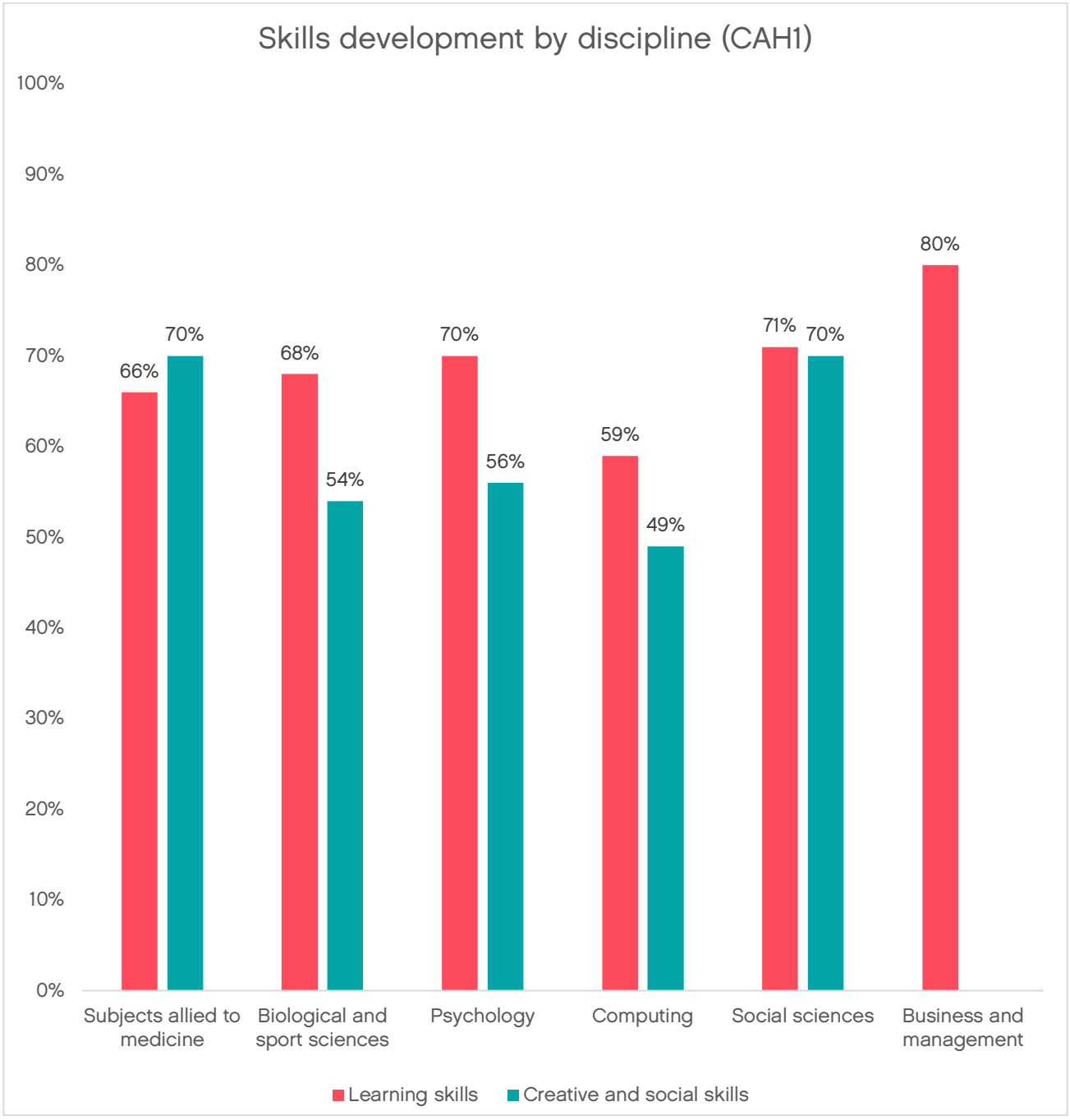

Figure 8. Skill development by discipline (CAH1). The figure for business and management creative and social skills has not been reported as the majority of responses came from one institution and so the value has been suppressed.

5. Time spent learning

5.1 Overall

The pandemic forced nearly all learning online and so the nature of students' learning changed. In 2022, students reported lower levels of independent study and higher rates of taught study than in 2021, as seen in Figure 9. This is supported by the findings from the Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES) in 2021 and 2022 (Neves and Brown, 2022).

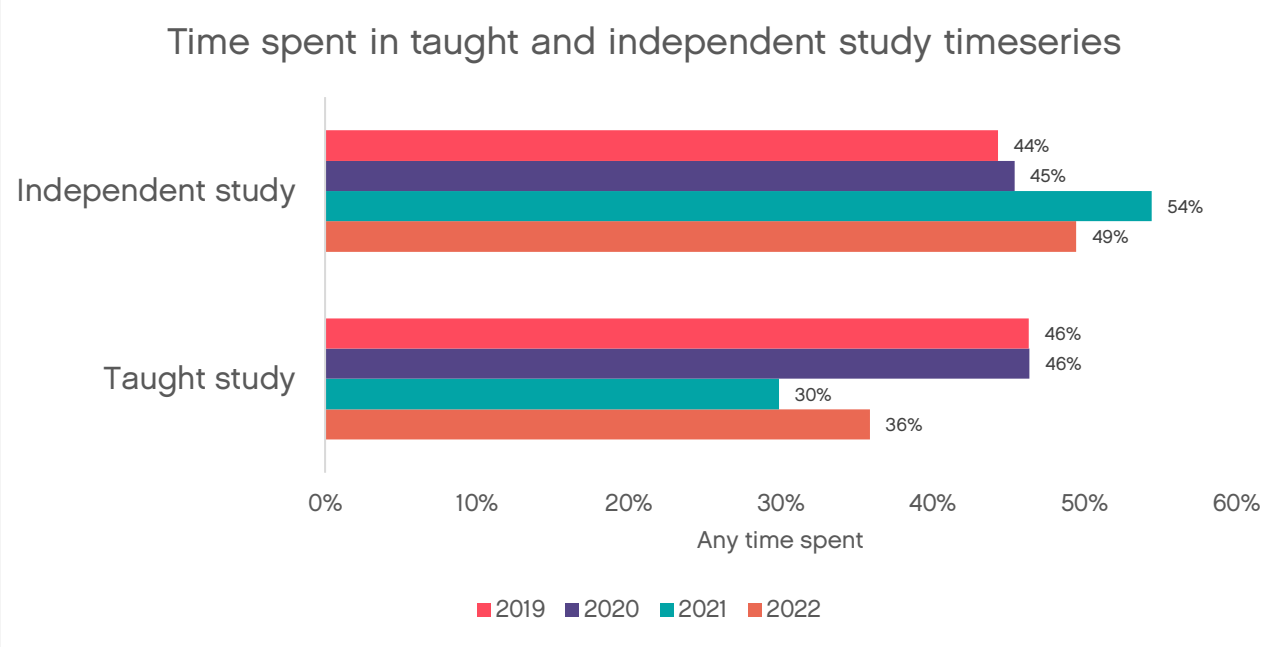

Figure 9. Time spent studying timeseries

5.2 Time spent learning by year of study

Final year students engaged in more independent learning than students from other years, which may be due to there being more of an onus placed on students to become independent and critical thinkers in preparation for their future career. In contrast, students who were not in their final year engaged in more taught sessions. These findings can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Proportion of students who spent 11+ hours in taught and independent study by year of study

		Year of study	
		Not final year student	Final year student
Studying	Taught study	**36%**	25%
	Independent study	49%	**55%**

Significant differences (95% confidence level) are boldened; n = 115 – 4,686

5.3 Time spent learning by mode of delivery

The findings from UKES 2022, shown in Table 6 indicate that students who were taught online spent significantly less time in taught sessions than when the course was delivered in person. The recent review of blended learning commissioned by the Office for Students (Blended Learning Review Panel, 2022) noted that, regardless of mode of delivery, students should still receive high-quality teaching and be taught the same content.

Interestingly, students who were taught using a blended approach spent more time studying independently than those who were taught online or in person, which may be an indication that blended learning increases engagement with course material outside of taught sessions.

Table 6. Time spent studying by mode of delivery

	Mostly in person	In person and virtual	Mostly virtual
Taught study	39%	35%	33%
Independent study	49%	51%	47%

n = 2,210 - 4,504

6. Extra-curricular activity

6.1 Overall

Figure 10 shows that students engaged in sports clubs and societies to a similar extent as pre-pandemic. Volunteering has also returned to previous levels. This kind of change is logical due to there being fewer government restrictions during the 2021-22 academic year, making it easier for students to access sports clubs or societies and volunteer within the community.

The findings show that students spent more time working for pay in 2022 than they have done since 2015. This may in part be due to the cost-of-living crisis. In between September 2021 and September 2022, the level of inflation was 11.1% (ONS, 2022). This is a large increase and is likely to be having a huge impact on students' engagement and wellbeing. The Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES) 2022 (Neves and Brown, 2022) examined which costs students were most concerned about. The options were: cost of living at university, cost of tuition fees or cost of learning resources. The findings showed that 52% of students were most concerned about the cost of living at university. SAES 2022 also asked students why they had a job during higher education. The options were: to supplement their living costs, gain work experience, explore possible career paths, provide financial support to family and friends or other. The main reason students worked while studying was to supplement their living costs. Some students try to live off the money they receive from student finance, which is on average £485 per month. The National Student Money survey 2022 found that, on average, students spend £924 per month. This has led to students using alternative support, such as asking parents for money, getting a part-time job, and becoming a social media influencer to earn money to bridge the ever-growing gap between how much they receive in student finance and their expenditure (Brown, 2022).

In a similar way, students reported spending considerably more time caring for dependents in UKES 2022. There is an increase of almost 20 percentage points between 2015 and 2022 and an increase of seven percentage points in the last year. It is possible that this is partly due to students needing to look after family members or friends who were suffering with Covid-19 or long Covid. In addition, a recent annual childcare survey by Coram (Coleman, Shorto and Ben-Galim, 2022) reported that the cost of childcare has increased by 2.7%, on average, in the last year. Some of the individuals, especially mature students, may need to schedule their learning around their childcare and caring for family member responsibilities.

It is important to understand and recognise that students have external pressures, such as employment and caring commitments. These responsibilities should be considered when deciding how students will receive their course content and when communicating changes to their timetables.

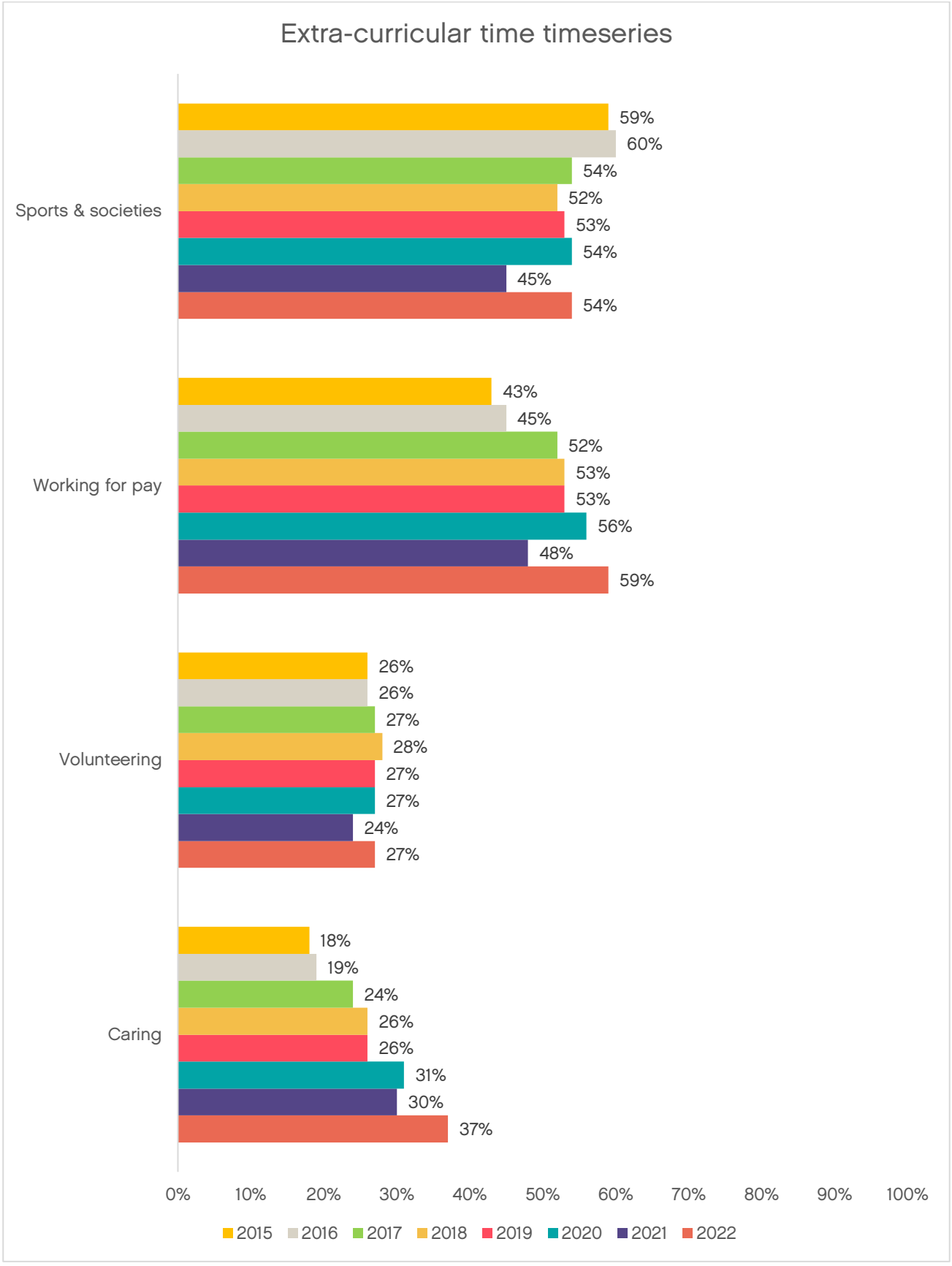

Figure 10. Time spent completing extra-curricular activities timeseries

6.2 Extra-curricular activity by age of the student

It is important to understand the barriers that mature students face when studying in higher education. They typically have greater demands placed on them and have been referred to as managing tripartite time; academic, professional, and personal responsibilities. Trying to manage this time and meet these responsibilities places huge pressure on students and often leaves them suffering physically and mentally, as well as suffering family resentment and lower academic grades (Fragoso et al, 2013).

The findings from this survey, shown in Table 7, have found that mature students[4] spent more time working for pay and caring for others than other students. Mature students are an underrepresented group within higher education and so courses could be made more accessible by ensuring lectures are recorded and available online for students to catch up on if they cannot make the lecture in person. Wherever possible, last minute timetable changes should be avoided to reduce disengagement from the course.

Table 7. Time spent completing extra-curricular activities by age of student

		Age of student	
		21 years and under	22 years and older
Extra-curricular activities	Sports and societies	**62%**	47%
	Working for pay	46%	**71%**
	Volunteering	24%	**29%**
	Caring	16%	**56%**
	Commute to the campus	**81%**	75%

Values which are significantly different (95% confidence level) are boldened.

[4] Mature students are those who were 22 years and older.

7. Retention

Encouragingly, fewer students have considered leaving their course in 2022 than have done since 2019. These findings are shown in Figure 11. The adoption of blended learning approaches may be driving this finding as students are given greater flexibility to choose when they study, and it allows students to learn at their own pace without losing the benefits of face-to-face teaching and support.

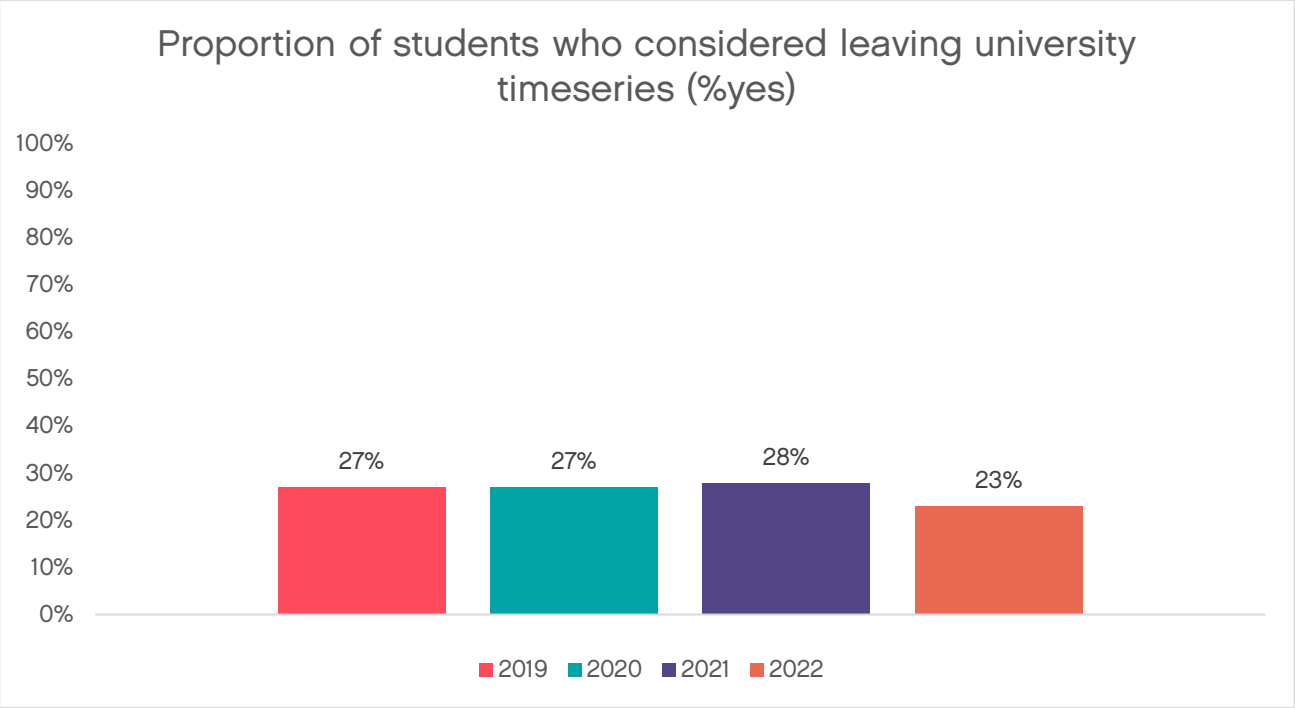

Figure 11. Proportion of students who considered leaving university timeseries (% yes)

7.1 Retention by mode of delivery

Personal, institutional, and situational factors and a lack of support with studies have all been cited as reasons why students leave university (Tran and Nguyen, 2022). In 2022, there were fewer students who considered leaving university after being taught using a blend of approaches than mostly online, as seen in Table 8. This finding indicates that blended learning allows students to reap the benefits of both approaches and be less inclined to consider leaving. Blended learning allows students greater flexibility to fit their learning around their personal lives, which may reduce the number of students who disengage and ultimately leave the course.

Table 8. Proportion of students who considered leaving university by mode of delivery (% yes)

	Mode of delivery		
	Mostly in person	In person and virtual	Mostly virtual
Proportion of students who considered leaving (%yes)	24%	22%	25%

n = 605 - 1135

7.2 Reasons for leaving

The main reason students gave for considering leaving higher education was their mental health and emotional difficulties, as seen in Figure 12. The proportion of students who reported this as a reason they considered leaving is marginally lower than in 2021. There is still substantial anxiety around the consequences of Covid-19. Some students may be worried about the implications of catching Covid-19 on their or another's health, others may be anxious about returning to in-person teaching after being taught online for approximately 18 months. A recent study examined students' anxieties around returning to face-to-face teaching post Covid-19. Approximately half (47%) said they felt uncomfortable going to social events in college and 40% said they felt uncomfortable speaking to their teacher (Rashid et al, 2022). Some groups of students may not have had the chance to meet their peers due to being taught online in 2021. Some groups of students may find returning to in-person teaching intimidating and so other options could be explored to make this less of a worrying proposition for students, for example meeting in smaller groups.

Students should be encouraged to access financial and wellbeing support whenever needed. The above analysis showed that students were spending more time working for pay than they have done in recent years. The cost-of-living crisis is likely to worsen in 2023 and so institutions could explore providing guidance and advice to students at this time. It is also important to be understanding of students' circumstances and a blend of in-person and

online learning could be used to ensure students do not disengage from their course due to not being able to afford the commute or through needing to work.

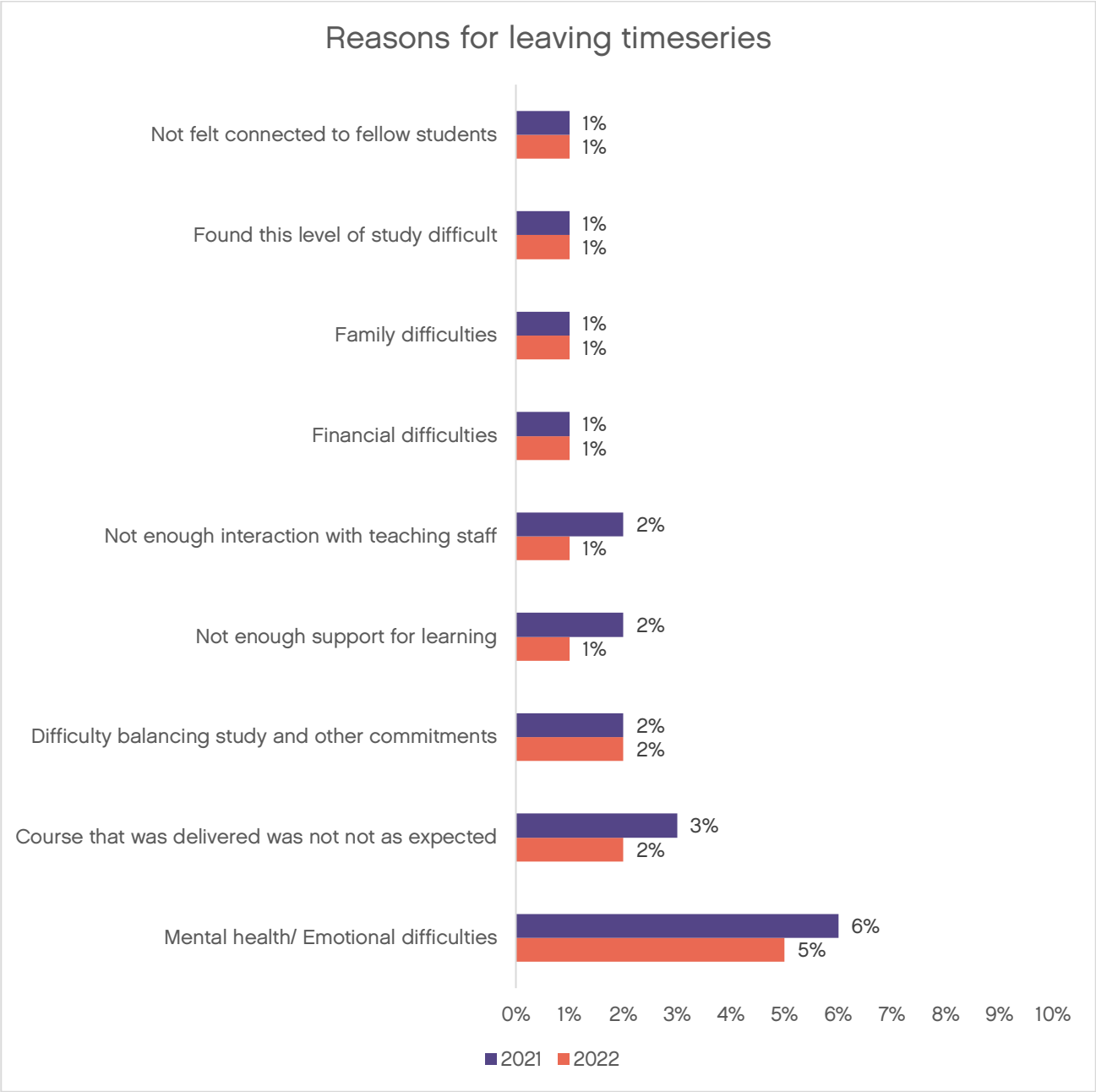

Figure 12. Reasons for leaving university timeseries.

8. Career prospects and my course

8.1 Purpose

UKES is focused on understanding where students spend or are encouraged to spend their time. One of the key goals for higher education is to prepare students for their future career and improve their employability. Some skills related to future employability, such as critical thinking, are assessed within the long-established sections of UKES. To supplement these established sections, an employability scale has been developed using Advance HE's (2019) framework on embedding employability. The questions aim to measure whether institutions are equipping students with the knowledge and skills required by employers.

8.2 The content

The employability scale is optional and comprises 21 question items categorised into five sections. The scale was developed by Advance HE in 2020. Each section refers to an aspect of the Advance HE embedding employability framework (Advance HE, 2019). For further information on how the scale was developed please refer to UKES 2021 report (Rowan and Neves, 2021). Table 9 details the question items, question areas, number of items and responses for 2022.[5]

[5] Full question wording is available to institutions participating in UKES.

Table 9. Overview of the employability scales by question item, question area, question items and number of responses for 2022

Employability sections			
Question item	Question area	Question items	2022 responses
Applying learning to future tasks	Knowledge and soft skills	4	5,238
Communication skills			
Leadership skills			
Complex problem-solving skills			
Responding to real-world challenges	Enterprise and entrepreneurship	5	4,767
Connecting with ideas from different modules			
Connecting your studies to external environments			
Self-reflection			
Developing networks with business/industry			
Couse content related to the workplace	Career preparation	5	5,373
CV development			
Job interview skills			
Clear career goals			
Monitored career preparation			
Understand your actions impacting on others	Wider context	4	1 institution – not reported
Extra or co-curricular activities			
Adapting to changing environments			
Developing confidence in your skills for future career			
Direct contact with employers	Networks	3	1 institution – not reported
Work placement opportunities			
Developing links outside the UK			

8.3 The responses

In total,11 (out of 16) institutions ran the knowledge and soft skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship and career preparation sections. Most of the responses for the Wider context and Networks sections were collected from one institution and so, in the interests of keeping students' responses anonymous, these results will not be reported. The scores reported in this section are based on the proportion answering the top two options out of four available – "very much" or "quite a bit".

8.4 Overall

Employability skills were developed throughout the years of the course. Figure 13 suggests that students developed their knowledge and soft skills in the first and second years of their courses. They built on and used these skills in the second and third years of their courses by engaging in activities designed to build their entrepreneurship skills and prepare them for their careers.

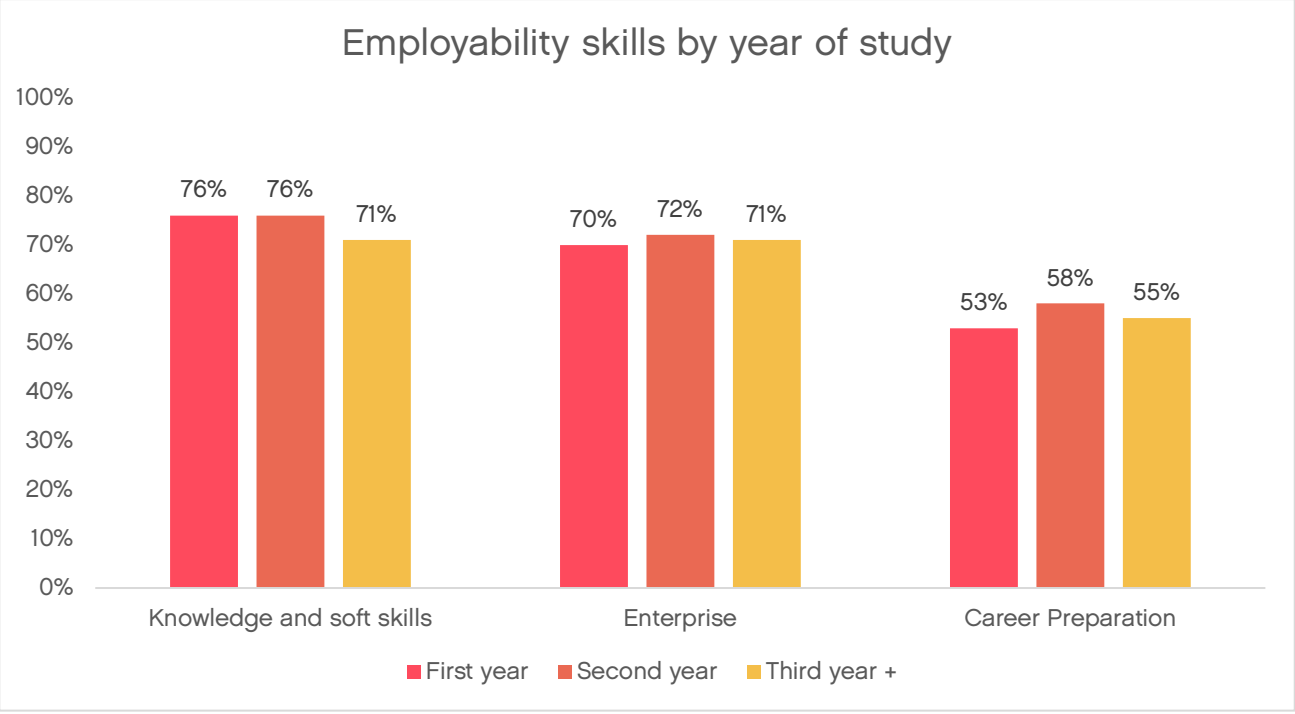

Figure 13. Employability skills by year of study.

8.5 Knowledge and soft skills

Knowledge and soft skills are critical for an individual to have a successful career as employers seek individuals that possess skills that increase efficiency (Gill, 2018). Across the board, students reported higher levels of engagement in 2022 with developing their knowledge and soft skills, as can be seen in Figure 14.

There has been a 10 percentage-point increase in students developing their leadership skills since 2021. There has been a seven percentage-point increase in students developing their communication and applying learning to future tasks skills and a six percentage-point increase in students developing their problem-solving skills. These skills are not tangible assets, they are skills that increase an individual's efficiency in a task. In-person interactions may facilitate the development of these skills, which may explain the increase between 2021 and 2022.

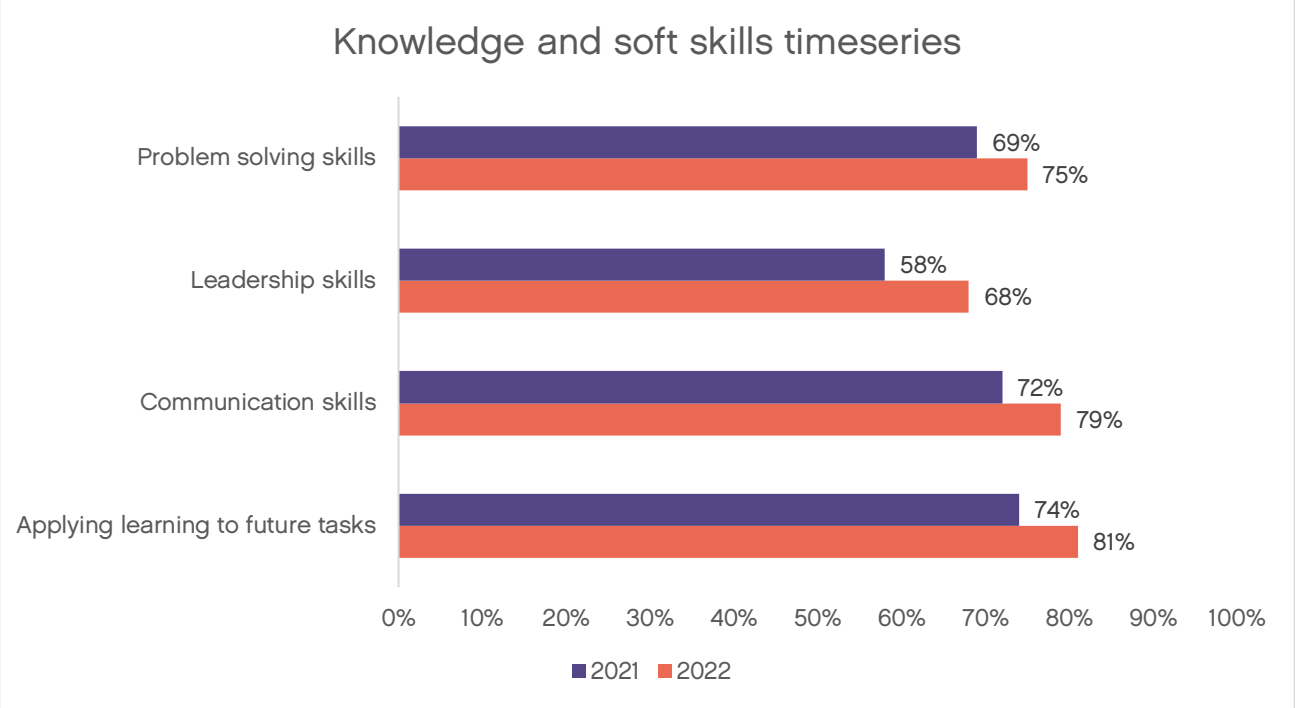

Figure 14. Knowledge and soft skills timeseries

8.6 Enterprise and entrepreneurship

Students have also reported higher levels of engagement with developing their enterprise and entrepreneurship skills in 2022 than in 2021. These findings can be seen in Figure 15. Most strikingly, students reported higher levels of engagement with developing networks with business and industry and responding to real-world challenges. These skills prepare individuals for their future careers and have been reported as being critical for a successful career (Jackson, 2021).

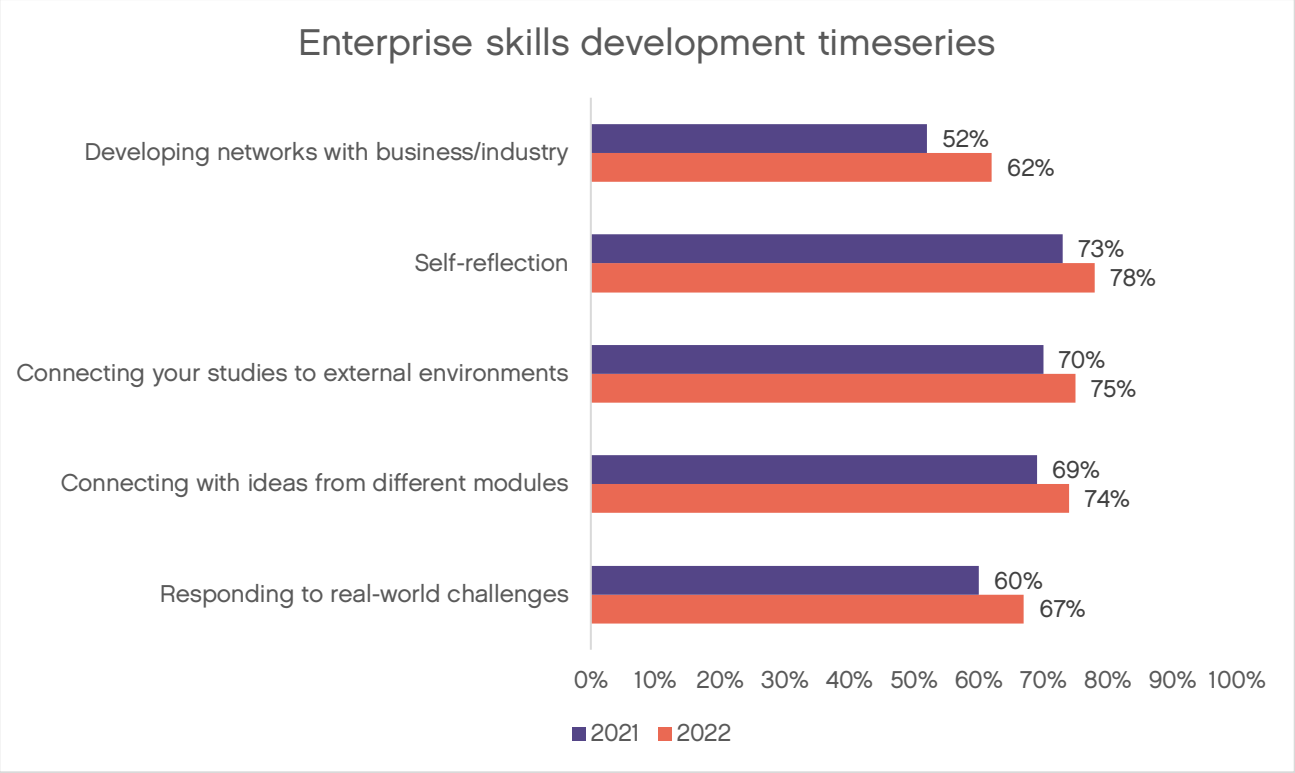

Figure 15. Enterprise skills development timeseries

The findings from Table 10 indicate that students who were taught in person and virtually developed more networks with businesses and industries than students who were taught in person only. Students may have become more computer literate as a result of being taught (at least partly) online. Staff and students needed to become familiar with various platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This may have increased some students' confidence with using these tools to connect with local businesses and organisations.

Table 10 also shows that mature students[6] were more engaged with the entrepreneurship activities than younger students. The motivations for mature students to progress to higher education are different to those of younger students. A report by Office for Students (2021) noted that mature students may progress to higher education because they did not have the opportunity when they were younger and wanted to have wider employment opportunities. Whereas younger students may enter higher education because they wanted to meet their family's expectations, peer pressure and to prove people wrong (Schmidt et al, 2014). The findings may suggest that mature students were more focused on engaging with activities that enhanced their entrepreneurial skills than younger students were.

Table 10. Proportion of students who responded 'Very much' or 'Quite a bit' for each entrepreneurship question items by mode of delivery and age of student.

	Mode of delivery		Age of student	
	In person and virtual	In person	21 years or younger	22 years or older
Responding to real-world challenges	65%	63%	59%	**71%**
Connecting with ideas from different modules	73%	73%	69%	**78%**
Connecting your studies to external environments	74%	75%	70%	**79%**
Self-reflection	77%	76%	71%	**83%**
Developing networks with business/industry	**60%**	56%	53%	**67%**

Significant differences (95% confidence level) are boldened; n = 937 – 2,411

[6] Mature students are those who were 22 years and older.

8.7 Career preparation

Career preparation skills are somewhat different to knowledge and soft skills and enterprise and entrepreneurship as these are assets that can be taught, and some universities build modules around these skills. Scott et al (2019) reported that students found their careers skills module, which aimed to improve students' CV writing, job seeking and interview skills, to be beneficial. It is likely that students are being encouraged to engage with activities aimed at preparing them for their career as the findings from UKES 2022 are considerably higher than they were in 2021, as seen in Figure 16. There was a 13 percentage-point and 11 percentage point increase, from 2021 to 2022, in students preparing for their career by engaging with course content related to the workplace and monitoring their career preparation, respectively. All the increases in students preparing for their career are very encouraging as many, if not all, of these activities could be conducted virtually and so this would suggest that institutions have expanded their provisions for these activities in the last year. An exploration of how career preparation opportunities and resources could be made more available to students may further enhance student engagement and their career prospects.

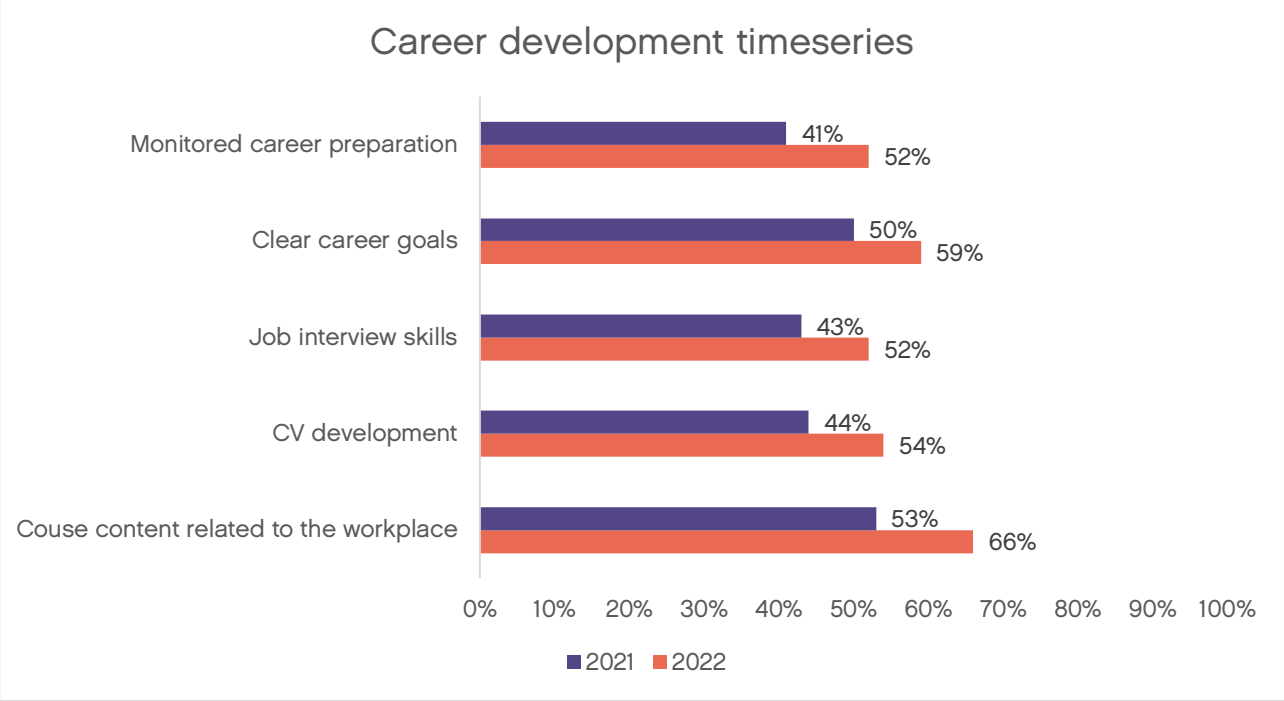

Figure 16. Career development timeseries

As can be seen in Table 11, students who were taught using a blended approach reported higher levels of engagement with developing their career skills. There was a nine percentage-point difference in job interview skills between students who were taught using a blended approach and those taught in person. Students who were taught using a blended approach also reported setting clear career goals, developing their CV and being taught course content related to the workplace more highly than students who were taught in person.

Table 11 also shows that more mature students reported being more engaged with career development activities. There was a 22 percentage-point difference between younger and mature students[7] engaging with job interview skills. Mature students also reported developing their CV, being taught course content related to the workplace, setting clear career goals and monitoring their career preparation more highly than younger students. As described above, the motivations of mature students are somewhat different to those of younger students (OfS, 2021; Schmidt et al, 2014). This may mean that mature students were more focused on the importance of developing their career skills during their time in higher education and so were more engaged with activities that would develop their career than younger students.

[7] Mature students are those who were 22 years and older.

Table 11. Proportion of students who responded with either 'very much' or 'quite a bit' for the career development question items by mode of delivery and age of student.

	Mode of delivery		Age of student	
	In person and virtual	In person	21 years and younger	22 years and older
Monitored career preparation	65%	62%	58%	**70%**
Clear career goals	**53%**	45%	42%	**60%**
Job interview skills	**51%**	42%	38%	**60%**
CV development	**58%**	52%	46%	**66%**
Course content related to the workplace	**51%**	44%	40%	**59%**

Significant differences (95% confidence level) are boldened; n = 630 – 2,523

9. Considerations for the sector

The findings from this report provide evidence that a blend of in-person and online learning is linked to enhanced student engagement within higher education. Blended learning approaches allow students greater flexibility around when they undertake their learning. The balance of in-person and virtual learning will vary by institution and by discipline. This report has indicated that online and in-person teaching is linked to the enhancement of various skills. It is important to listen to students' feedback about which elements work and which need further improvement.

This report showed that there is a larger proportion of students who are working for pay and caring for others than in previous years. With the cost-of-living crisis likely to worsen in 2023, it is important that all students, regardless of their external commitments and pressures, can access their course content to avoid disengagement.

Finally, the findings from this report indicate that students have been more engaged in activities aimed at boosting their employability. Further ways in which students' career prospects and employability can be developed could be explored.

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11. Appendix A

Category	Characteristic	UKES 2022
Sex	Female	67%
	Male	30%
	Prefer not to say	3%
Age	21 years and younger	50%
	22 years and older	50%
Disability	Disabled	15%
	Not disabled	79%
	Prefer to not say	6%
Ethnicity	White	71%
	Asian	10%
	Black	13%
	Mixed	4%
	Other	2%
Mode of delivery	Mostly/ completely virtual	22%
	Blended learning	47%
	Mostly/ completely in person	31%
Mode of learning	Full time	96%
	Part time	4%
Year of study	Foundation year	8%
	First year	43%
	Second year	38%
	Third year +	11%
Domicile	UK	86%
	European Union (EU)	4%
	Non-EU	10%

Note: For all sample profile items, base sizes vary as data was not provided for all respondents – percentages are based on all respondents for whom an answer category was provided.

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