



July 2025

Industry Report for Early Careers

Bridging Futures - Employer Insights on Graduate Career Readiness for Hong Kong



香港大學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



cedars

Centre of Development and Resources for Students
學生發展及資源中心

Executive Summary

In response to the growing need to retain top graduate talent locally, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) conducted a comprehensive study from July 2024 to April 2025. This included employer surveys and focus group discussions, with the objective of better understanding employers' expectations, recruitment priorities, and perceptions of graduate performance in the Hong Kong workplace.

This report consolidates insights from a diverse range of employers across key industries who participated in the study, aiming to suggest strategies for enhancing student career preparation and reaffirming HKU's commitment to educational excellence.

It also contributes to broader talent retention efforts, aligning with the Hong Kong SAR Government's initiatives to attract and retain talent – supporting university graduates in their transition to the workforce and strengthening Hong Kong's long-term competitiveness.

Key Focuses of the Report



Employer expectations throughout the job search and application process



Employer priorities for graduate skills



Bridging the gap between industry needs and graduate preparation for all university students in Hong Kong

Key Findings from Employers

Top Skills for Workplace Success



Work Attitude



Interpersonal Skills



Analytical and Problem-solving Abilities

Key Notes for Job Application

- ✓ Tailor Your CV
- ✓ Connect Company Research to Your Story
- ✓ Prepare for Every Stage
- ✓ Demonstrate Business Awareness

Evolving Skill Priorities



Language proficiency's priority has declined



Increased value on digital, analytical, and soft skills

99.4%*

**Employers
Continuing to
Hire HKU graduates**



* Some employers expressed interest but are currently unable to proceed due to hiring constraints like headcount freezes.

Preamble

As rapid technological advancements and evolving economic conditions continue to transform the workforce, upskilling and reskilling have become essential for university graduates in Hong Kong to maintain their competitiveness.

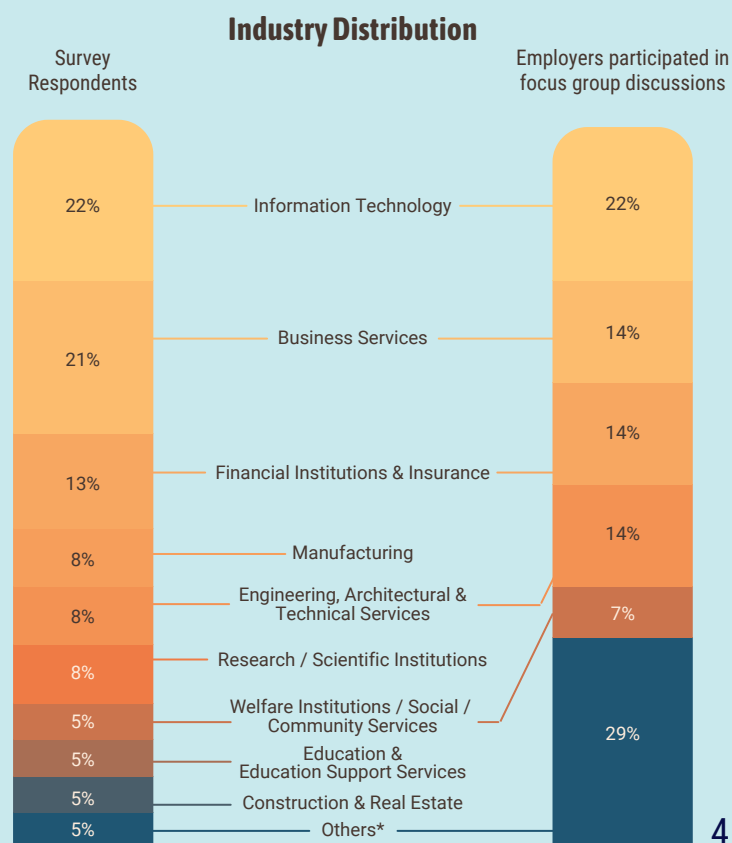
Employers consistently identify skills gaps as a barrier to graduate employability, prompting a strong emphasis on upskilling as a key workforce strategy for the coming decade. According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, a net increase of **78 million new jobs** is projected globally by 2030, while **92 million existing roles may be displaced**. Furthermore, it is estimated that **39% of workers' core skills will require adaptation to remain relevant**.

This report presents the findings of the **2024**

Employer Survey, conducted by the HKU Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Evaluation and Measurement Unit (T&LEMU) from July to November 2024. The survey was distributed to **1,821 employers** who have engaged with HKU in the past 3 years, with **352 respondents** across various industries. The findings provide detailed insights into the skills considered essential in today's workplace. Additionally, **16 employers participated in focus group discussions** from March to April 2025, offering further perspectives on current industry trends and employer expectations.

Collectively, these findings deliver timely and actionable guidance for students, graduates, and educators, supporting all stakeholders in preparing for the evolving demands of the future workforce.

Industry Sectors Represented by Surveyed and Focus Group Employers



*Others include: Civil Services, Hospitality, Logistics, Media & Publishing, Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare, Public Utilities, and other industries.

Ready, Set, Succeed

Employer Insights for Job Search and Application Success

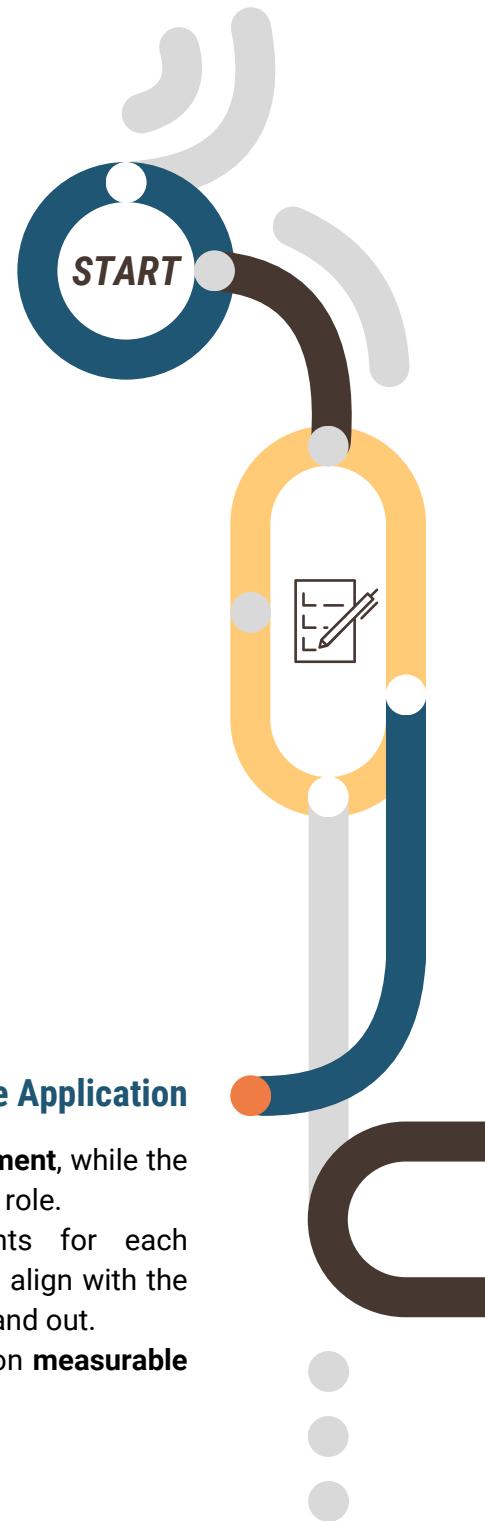
Securing the right job in today's market requires strategic preparation at every stage of the application process.

This report presents exclusive insights gathered from employer focus groups, drawing on the experiences of participants from **16 representable companies** across a wide range of sectors in Hong Kong. Industry leaders have contributed their expertise and practical tips, covering every critical step - from crafting a standout CV to leaving a lasting impression after interviews.

The actionable recommendations highlighted below are designed to guide and inform readers across the talent pipeline, providing a comprehensive view of employer expectations and effective strategies for success at the recruitment and talent acquisition stage.

Craft Your Signature Application

- Employers stress that the CV is the **primary document**, while the cover letter demonstrates a specific interest in the role.
- **Customisation is key**: Tailor both documents for each application, showcasing relevant experiences that align with the role's requirements. Generic applications fail to stand out.
- Keep the CV **professional, concise**, and focused on **measurable achievements** rather than exaggerated claims.





Seize Your Opportunity Early

- Employers note that many job openings, especially for **competitive fields** like Management Trainee, begin **a year in advance**. Early preparation is critical for these roles.
- With **rolling admissions**, applications are reviewed as they arrive, so submitting early increases your chances.
- **Track deadlines carefully**: Missing timelines is a common mistake. Maintain an organised application schedule with key dates for each role.

Understand the Company Inside and Out

- Employers value candidates who dig deeper than **surface-level research**. Understand the company's mission, culture, and goals, and assess how the role aligns with your strengths.
 - **At recruitment events**: Gain a general understanding of the company's services and culture to ask thoughtful questions.
 - **For interviews**: Show detailed knowledge of the role and connect it to your skills. Referencing **recent projects or initiatives** demonstrates alignment and passion.
- Use **social media** and **peer networks** to gather insights.
- Employers are impressed by candidates who weave research into personal narratives, showing authenticity and enthusiasm.



Be Screening-Ready

- Multinational companies and large local corporates, for example, will invite students to complete aptitude tests and video interviews shortly after applying (typically within 1-2 weeks), if they passed the first round AI-aided application screening.
- They should complete these tests by the assigned deadlines and monitor their emails and phones for updates.



Engage with Confidence and Clarity

- Students should showcase their unique perspectives, curiosity, and passion for the role. Employers value candidates who demonstrate how their strengths and passions **align with the company's mission and values**.
- They should go beyond technical skills by showing knowledge of **current industry trends** and **commercial awareness**, as this reflects their commitment to the role and industry.
- Pay attention to interview etiquette:
 - **Virtual interviews:** Stay focused and avoid reading from a script.
 - **In-person interviews:** Greet appropriately and be mindful of body language.
- Employers note that while many students excel in technical skills, there is often room for improvement in their **awareness of current affairs and business knowledge**. Taking the time to strengthen these areas can set them apart.



Leave a Lasting Impression

- Students should take the initiative to follow up after interviews.
- Sending a thank-you email within 1-2 days leaves a positive impression and shows enthusiasm for the role.
- **Demonstrating genuine passion** and reflecting on how their strengths align with the role can differentiate them from other candidates.



From Recruitment to On-the-Job Performance

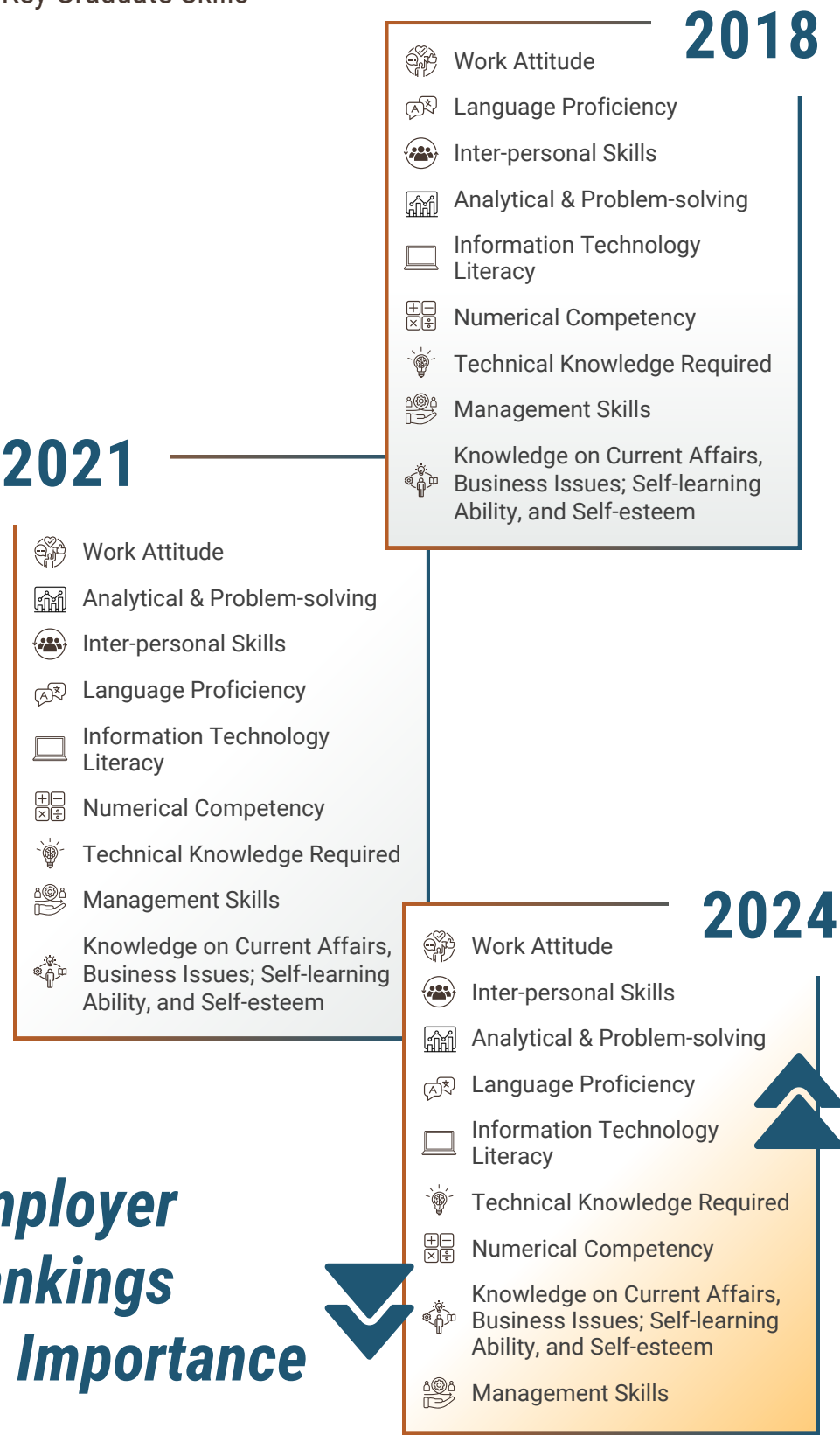
Trends in Employer Priorities for Key Graduate Skills

Employers emphasise that career success does not end with securing a job – it is sustained by demonstrating strong on-the-job performance across a range of essential competencies. This perspective is reinforced by the findings from our Employer Surveys. The surveys assessed graduates’ on-the-job performance in **nine key generic skills**, as identified by the Education Bureau in the “Survey on Opinions of Employers on Major Aspects of Performance of First Degree Graduates” conducted since 1998.

Across the three HKU Employer Survey cycles from 2018 to 2024, employer expectations for graduates from **all universities in Hong Kong** have shown both consistency and subtle shifts in the perceived importance of various skills.



Employer Rankings on Importance



Top Graduate Attributes and Industry Trends Valued by Employers



Work Attitude

Remained the **most important skill** from 2018 to 2024, underlining its critical role in graduate employability and workplace success



Interpersonal Skills

Teamwork and communication have seen a **gradual rise** in importance among employers, underscoring their critical value across industries



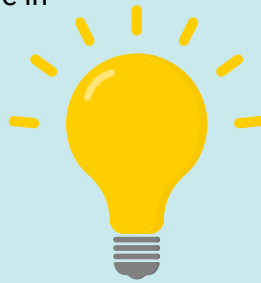
Analytical and Problem-Solving Abilities

Consistently ranked in the top three, highlighting the growing complexity of job roles and the need for graduates to tackle challenges effectively



Language Proficiency

Language proficiency has experienced a slight decline in relative importance, possibly reflecting the growing adoption of **AI-assisted communication tools**

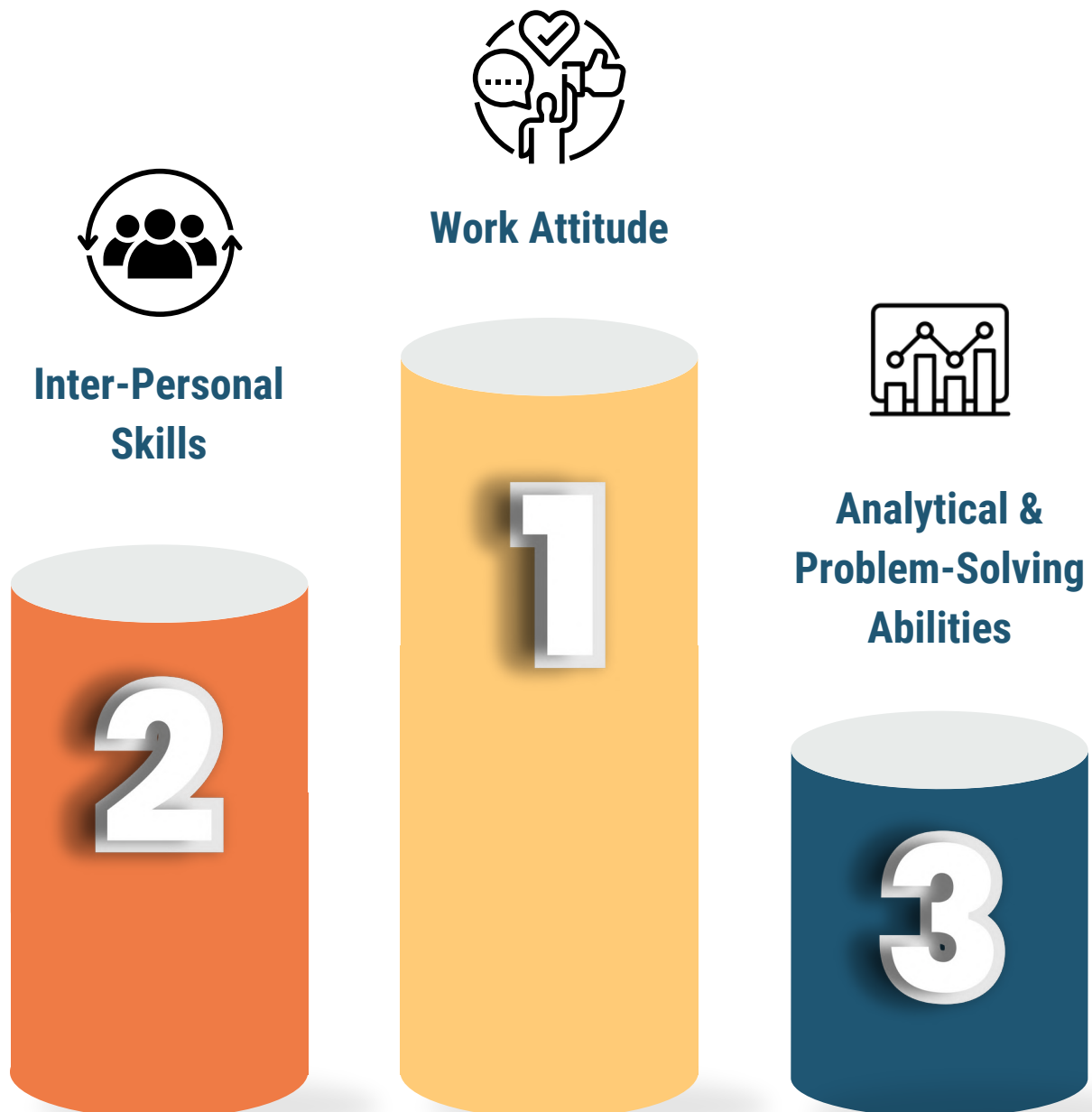


Key Drivers of Graduate Success

In-depth Look into the Latest Employer Perspectives

In our recent survey, employers rated the importance of key skills for graduate positions as follows: work attitude at 88.1%, interpersonal skills at 83.3%, and analytical and problem-solving abilities at 82.9%.

These percentages reflect the high level of importance employers place on these competencies for roles held by graduates. This underscores the need for graduates to excel in these key areas, as recruiters and hiring managers are likely to prioritise these elements during the talent acquisition process.



Work Attitude

Employers consistently identify a positive work attitude as the most crucial attribute for graduate employability and long-term career success. This essential quality lays the foundation for adaptability, sustained performance, and professional growth in today's dynamic workplace.



Graduates who consistently display these qualities are best positioned to excel in fast-paced environments and are highly sought after by employers seeking reliable contributors and future leaders.



The Cornerstone of Professional Excellence



Employers across industries in Hong Kong value graduates who

Take Ownership

Deliver high-quality results with integrity, taking full responsibility for both successes and setbacks, and actively seeking opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Show Proactiveness

Go beyond assigned tasks by anticipating needs, seeking opportunities for improvement, and adding value to their teams.

Resilience and Persistence

Remain motivated and adaptable amid challenges, sustaining enthusiasm and composure, and effectively navigating demanding or uncertain situations.

Interpersonal Skills



**Employers
value
graduates
who**

In today's interconnected and fast-evolving workplace, strong interpersonal skills are essential for graduate employability and career progression. Employers in Hong Kong consistently highlight the importance of graduates who can collaborate seamlessly, communicate across cultures, and build meaningful professional relationships.

Collaborate Effectively

Work constructively within teams by sharing ideas openly, listening actively, and keeping colleagues informed to support group objectives and build trust.

Build Professional Networks

Develop strong connections across all organisational levels, opening opportunities for mentorship, learning, and advancement.

Adapt to Workplace Culture

Adjust readily to diverse communication styles, workplace norms, and cultural dynamics, ensuring smooth integration and effective collaboration in multicultural environments.

Balance Assertiveness with Empathy

Engage in productive dialogue, respectfully address differing opinions, and resolve conflict while remaining sensitive to diverse perspectives.



**Catalysts for
Employability and
Organisational
Success**



Graduates who excel in these areas not only strengthen team performance but also enhance their prospects for leadership and advancement in a competitive, global workforce.

Analytical and Problem-Solving Abilities

Employers in Hong Kong increasingly prioritise graduates who demonstrate robust analytical and problem-solving abilities - core competencies for navigating complexity and delivering innovation in fast-changing industries. These skills enable graduates to add immediate value and adapt to evolving business needs.



Driving Innovation
and Value



Graduates who excel in these areas are highly valued for their ability to contribute to organisational growth, foster innovation, and remain agile in a rapidly changing business environment.



Employers seek graduates who can

Define and Analyse Problems

Break down complex issues into manageable components, identify root causes, and use evidence and data to inform decisions.

Present Effective and Result-Oriented Solutions

Move beyond problem identification to propose creative, practical responses, demonstrating initiative, responsibility, and resourcefulness.

Leverage Technology

Utilise digital tools, such as data analytics and AI platforms, to enhance analysis and drive innovative solutions, while recognising when to seek expert input.

Apply a Macro View with Attention to Details

Ability to see the big picture while maintaining attention to details, without overlooking critical components or executional accuracy.

Employer Voices: Keys to Graduate Success

Insights and Advice from Focus Group Discussions
with Industry Leaders



While there may be some struggles during job search, it is always better to equip yourself for making the most of the opportunity when it comes.

Civil Service Bureau

Claudia Chan
Career Development Manager



Students should recognise the value of participating in career events early in their university years. These events enhance networking opportunities and foster self-awareness, helping them make informed decisions about their future.

AECOM

Asia Company Limited

Ryan Yan
Executive Director



When applying for roles, students should conduct thorough research on the firm and the job function—going beyond just the buzzwords. It's essential for students to assess whether the role genuinely aligns with their interests early on.

Deloitte

Georgiana Yeung
Talent Acquisition and Campus
Hires



Expectations of proactiveness don't end with the interview. We expect interns and fresh graduates to remain proactive by reaching out to colleagues and expressing their opinions on tasks, just as they do during the interview process.

Unipec

Asia Company Limited

Mandy Ng
Section Manager, Talent Acquisition and Development Team Leader
(Human Resources Department)





Fresh graduates should be aware of the shift in mindset from being interns to becoming permanent staff. This transition involves taking ownership of their self-development and being proactive. As their roles evolve, so too do the expectations placed upon them.

Huatai International

Hiring Manager



It's crucial for students to understand the importance of building connections with peers and senior colleagues. We encourage interns to proactively reach out and establish these relationships, which are vital for professional growth and success.

EY

Kiwi Siu

Hong Kong and Macau Campus Recruitment Leader



A curious mindset and knowing where to seek help are key to overcoming challenges. With abundant online resources, they could easily learn and leverage new technology or approach to solve the issue.

Merck Pharmaceutical

Tony Cheng

General Manager and Managing Director - HK/Macau

Additional Recommendations from Employers

Employers highlight the importance of student participation in internship programmes, with 87.3% of employers expressing agreement in the survey. Furthermore, 70.3% of employers also agreed on the significance of employer engagement in curriculum development.



Student Participation in Internship Programmes



Employer Engagement in Curriculum Development

HKU Graduates Strengths

The Competitive Edge of HKU Graduates

According to the latest employer survey results, HKU graduates are especially recognised for their strengths in key skill areas: **language proficiency, information technology skills, technical knowledge,** and excelling **diversity and inclusion.**

Employers' feedback on these core strengths reflects strong confidence in HKU graduates' readiness to take on professional roles and make immediate contributions in the workplace. These findings reinforce HKU's reputation for educational excellence and highlight the strong career prospects of its graduates in today's competitive job market.



Language Proficiency

HKU graduates excel in both written and oral English and Chinese, making them highly competitive in both local and global markets.



Information Technology Skills

Graduates demonstrate strong digital literacy and the ability to use IT tools effectively.



Technical Knowledge

Their solid understanding of job-specific requirements enables them to meet performance expectations.



Diversity and Inclusion

Graduates demonstrate strong international outlook and cross-cultural adaptability.

99.4%

Employers Continuing to Hire HKU Graduates



HKU
Graduates

95.8%

Exceeding or Matching the On-the-Job Expectations



Looking Ahead

This report provides a practical guide to employer perspectives across Hong Kong, highlighting the growing importance of adopting effective strategies to help university students stand out in the competitive local market.

Moving forward, HKU will build on these findings to further enhance its career programmes and employer partnerships, ensuring that our students remain well-prepared, adaptable, and future-ready.

HKU remains committed to empowering graduate career success, nurturing talent in alignment with local workforce needs, and strengthening the talent pipeline to support long-term development of Hong Kong, and the region beyond.

Key Areas of Focus



Enhancing Programmes and Training

Shaping training and workshops around emerging skills and those highly valued by employers - especially in **AI, digital, and soft skills** - through close collaboration with faculties and industry partners.



Student-Led Initiatives

Empowering students to **take ownership** of their career development through projects and active engagement with Industry.



Industry-University-Student Partnerships

Deepening employer collaboration through company visits, co-developed workshops, and **continuous dialogue** to ensure graduates are equipped for a dynamic job market.



Shaping Talent with Purpose and Principle

Developing well-rounded individuals who excel beyond academics - fostering a **strong work ethic, integrity in action, and confidence grounded in humility** to lead, collaborate, and grow with authenticity.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all **352 employers** who contributed to this report by participating in the employer survey and focus group discussions. We are especially grateful to the **16 employers** who joined our focus group discussions. Companies are listed alphabetically below; please note this list does not include all focus group participants.

- AECOM Asia Company Limited
- ATAL Engineering Group
- Avnet Technology Hong Kong Limited
- ByteDance
- Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong
- Civil Service Bureau
- Deloitte
- Deutsche Bank
- EcoFlow
- Ernst & Young
- Huatai International
- Merck Pharmaceutical (HK) Ltd
- New Media Group Publishing Limited
- Unipac Asia Company Limited

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We appreciate the commitment and support of all contributors in highlighting critical insights for the benefit of graduates and employers alike.

Finally, we acknowledge the assistance of ChatGPT (version 4.1) and DeepSeek, both AI language models, in preparing this document. These tools supported research, data analysis, and drafting. All AI-generated content was reviewed, edited, and curated by the author to ensure accuracy and integrity. Human oversight and judgment were paramount in interpreting and validating the AI's contributions. The final product is the result of a human–AI collaboration.

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Contact Us

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