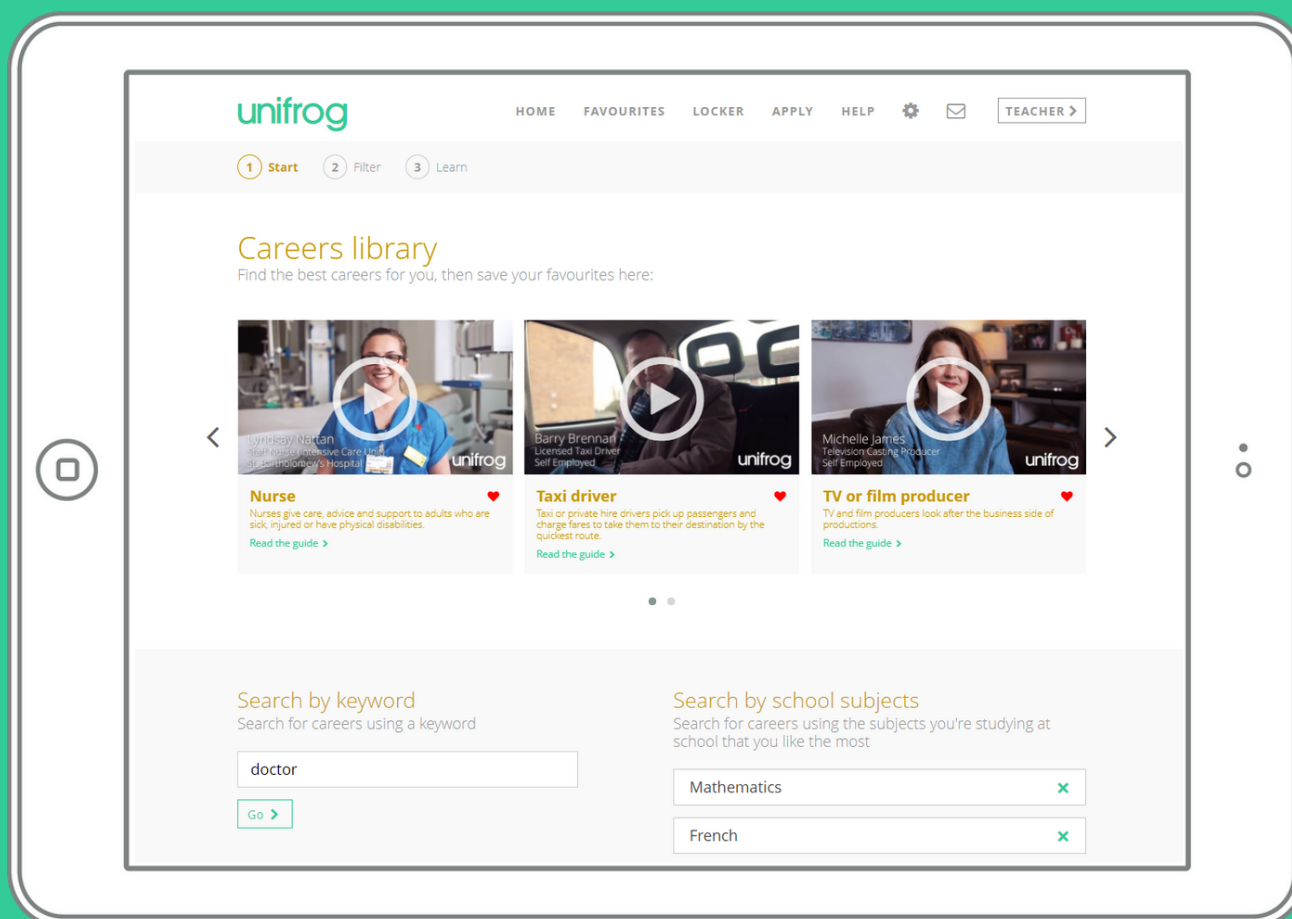


# Skills & Enterprise: International Schools



A report on students' skills development and attitudes towards their future careers in international schools

## KEY FINDINGS

1

**Over half** of students at international schools believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will make it **harder for them to find a job** in the future.

2

**Job security** is the **most important factor** for students choosing a career path with almost **9 in 10 students** rating it as very or quite important.

3

The pandemic has made students **more interested** in career areas that saw growth in 2020 - **technology, science, and healthcare**.

4

**Aiming high** and **creativity** have been the **most logged competencies** during the pandemic.

5

**53% of students** report finding it **more difficult to develop skills** that might be **useful for their career** as a result of the pandemic.

6

Students believe they're **struggling** to develop skills **traditionally reliant on in-person interaction**, especially teamwork and leadership.

7

**One in two** students say the pandemic is making it more difficult to find a **work experience placement**.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1 USE LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Put careers in context and help students anticipate what the world of work may look like in the future with LMI so they can research the best careers for them and develop the relevant skills.

### 2 FACILITATE EMPLOYER ENCOUNTERS

Create opportunities for students to interact with employers wherever possible - even if the encounters are virtual. Encounters get students' buy-in and motivate them,

### 3 TACKLE PERCEPTIONS AROUND IN-PERSON SKILLS

Tackle students' perceptions around skills that are traditionally reliant on in-person interaction. Create opportunities to develop their teamwork and leadership skills by working collaboratively online.

### 4 SCHEDULE TIME TO REFLECT ON AND RECORD SKILLS

Find opportunities for students to practice their skills and schedule sessions throughout the year to reflect on and record their skills to build up a portfolio, ready for Personal Statements and resumés.

### 5 LINK SKILLS TO THE REAL WORLD

Link skills to the real world so that they're relevant to students. This will increase students' awareness of the skills they're developing and why they're important for the world of work.

### 6 PROMOTE VIRTUAL WEX OPPORTUNITIES

Encourage students to explore virtual work experience placements as they offer opportunities that may not have been available previously and demonstrate a student's drive and initiative to future employers.

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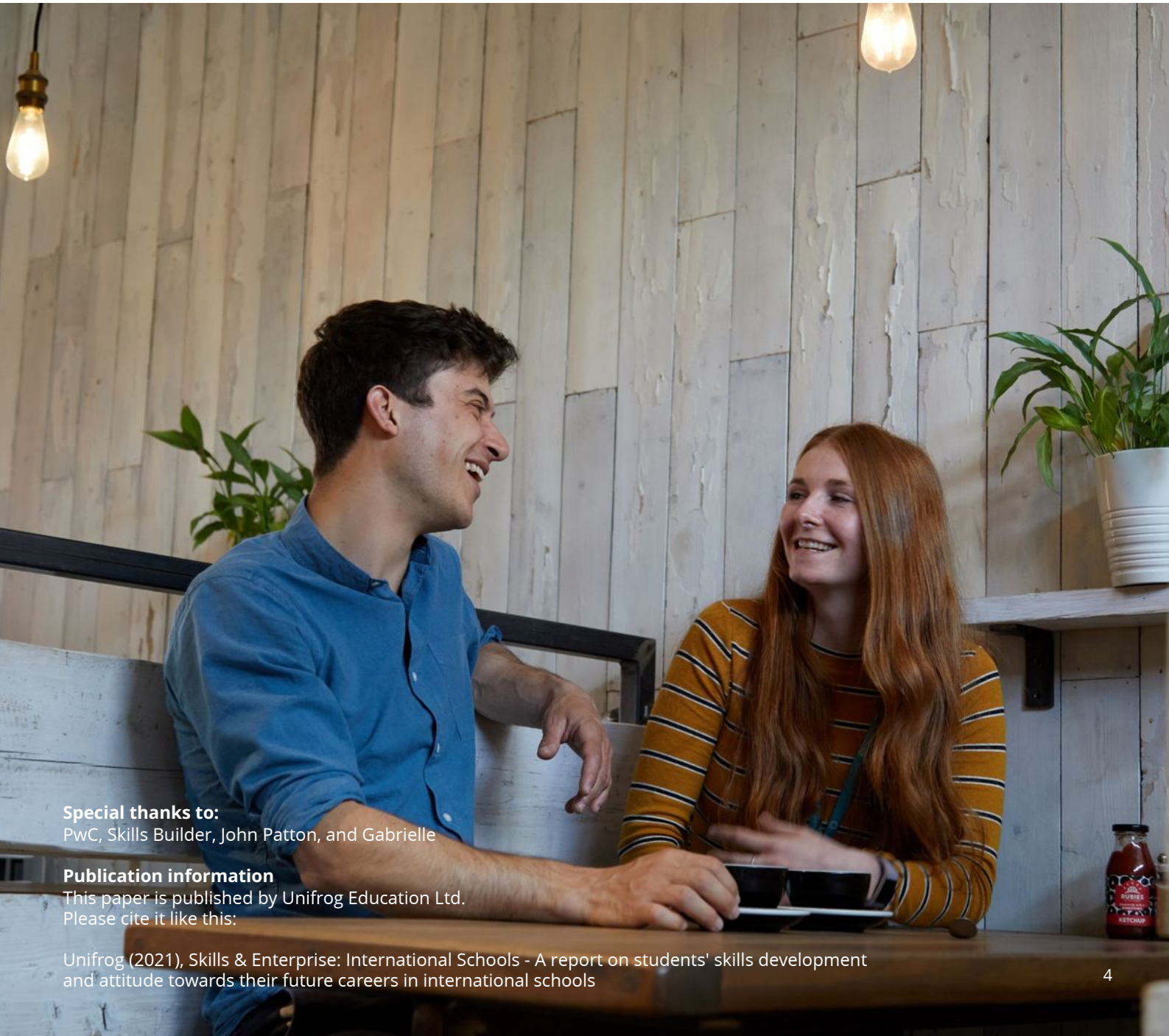
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## INTRODUCTION

As we enter the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we're starting to gain a better understanding of the impact on students' education and next steps. In this report, we focus on the impact on students' skills development, their attitudes towards their future careers, and provide tips for teachers and counselors supporting students.

At Unifrog, we're in a fortunate position to do this. We analysed data from the 64,000 active students at international schools on the platform and surveyed 541 of these students on how they felt about the pandemic, their skills, and future careers. We also gained invaluable insights from teachers and counselors across the world, Skills Builder - the experts in building essential skills into the everyday curriculum, leading employer PWC, and current students.

We start by looking at students' attitudes towards their future careers. For many, the profound changes of 2020 have led to

a shift in thinking. Students are exploring careers in areas that saw growth last year, namely healthcare, tech and science. We look at how students believe the pandemic has impacted their ability to find a job and what's important to them when choosing a career path and researching companies.

In chapter two we examine the skills and competencies that students will need for these future careers. We look at the pandemic's most-logged skills and the misconception among students that the skills that traditionally rely on in-person interaction have been impossible to develop during distance learning. We also explore which skills students believe employers value most highly, the skills they believe themselves to have, and the skills that took the biggest hit in 2020. Our final focus is on how students feel about work experience and whether the shift to virtual placements has opened up new, if different, opportunities for students.



# 1 Students' future careers

For many students, the profound changes of 2020 have caused a shift in how they feel about their future careers. Just over half (55%) of the 541 international school students we surveyed at the end of 2020 believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will make it more difficult for them to find a job in the future. This concern isn't unfounded. The Resolution Foundation<sup>1</sup>, an independent think-tank focused on improving the living standards of those on low-to-middle incomes, argues that evidence from previous economic

downturns indicates that young people's employment is likely to be affected to a greater degree than other age groups. What's more, a quarter of students (25%) say the pandemic has changed what careers they're interested in. In this chapter, we look at how students' career horizons have broadened, the areas that students have become more interested in, and what's important to students when thinking about their future careers.



<sup>1</sup>[www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis)



## PANDEMIC HIGH GROWTH AREAS

Students are becoming increasingly interested in areas that have seen high growth during the pandemic such as technology, science, and healthcare.

When we look at the 25% of students who say the pandemic has caused a change in career interest, 60% of them say they're now more interested in one of these growth industries. With students concerned about future job prospects, it's not surprising that many are seeking out industries that grew during 2020. The hope is that careers in these fields will be resilient to future pandemics or economic downturns.

This underscores the importance of using Labour Market Information (LMI) to provide students with effective careers guidance. Giving students impartial, up-to-date information about the labour market will help them make sense of the changing global economic landscape and allow them to map out where a career could lead.

It will be interesting to see if this trend plays out over the coming years and we begin to see increased competition for roles in these growth industries.

If so, it will be vital that students start to develop the relevant skills to secure a role in one of these fields in what could be a highly competitive environment.

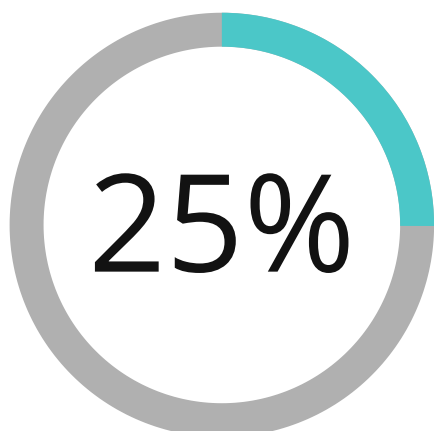


### UNIFROG TOP TIP

Encourage students to research any careers they may be interested in on the Unifrog Careers library and check out the 'Skills required' section of each Careers profile.

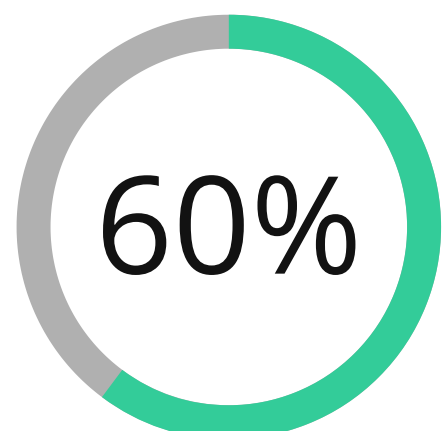
**Figure 1.0**

**What proportion of students say the pandemic has changed what careers they're interested in?**



**Figure 1.1**

**And what proportion of these students are interested in one of the growth industries?**



## WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS?

We've seen that the pandemic has changed what careers students are interested in, but what exactly is it that's important to students when choosing a career path?

We asked students how important different factors were when choosing a career path. Perhaps unsurprisingly given 2020 saw people around the world facing financial uncertainty, job security came out as the most important factor. 86% of students rated job security as very or quite important to them. This was followed by work-life balance and money, with making a difference coming last.

Interestingly, money becomes less important as students get older. It's the most important factor for students in Year 10/Grade 9 (along with work-life balance) whereas it has dropped down to the third most important factor by the time students are in Year 13/Grade 12. This could simply be a lack of awareness among younger students of other factors and their potential importance in the future.

Although it's important that students are realistic and pragmatic when thinking about their future careers, nobody wants to see a generation of young people prioritising job security over trying to find a career they're genuinely passionate about.

One way to get students, especially those in younger years, to think about careers they may be happier in long term is to encourage them to think about their interests and causes they're passionate about.

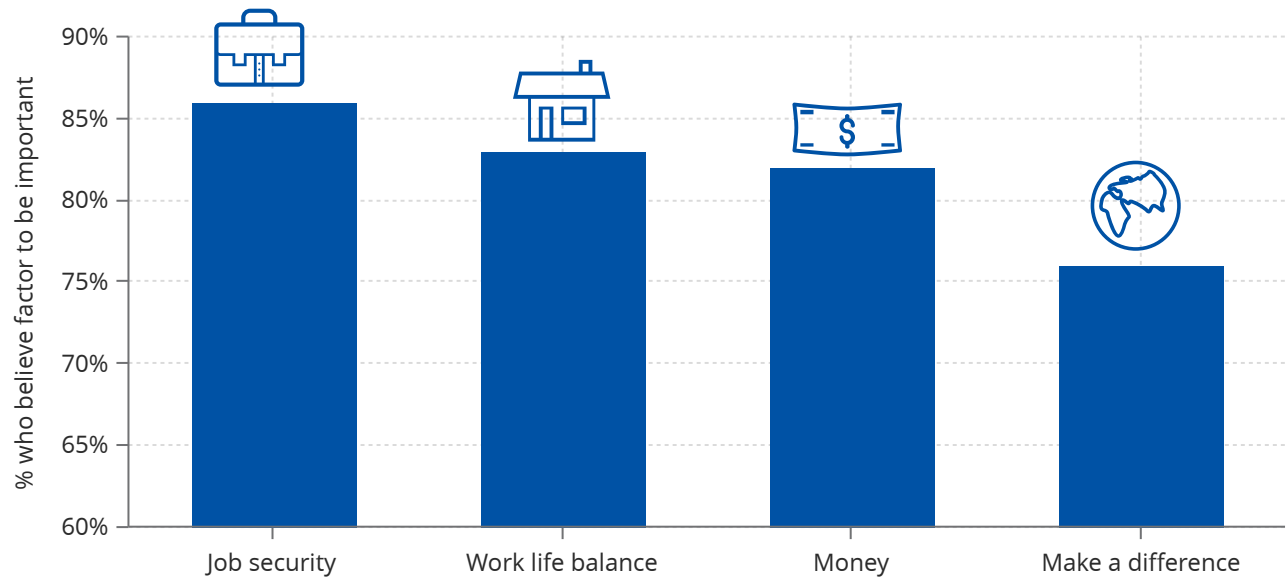
### UNIFROG TOP TIP

On Unifrog, both the Myers-Briggs based Personality quiz and the Interests quiz, based on John Holland's theory of personality and job choices, help students to explore careers linked to their personality type and interests.

It's also worth reminding students that having a diverse set of transferable skills and the ability to learn new skills is as important to job security than the specific career or industry you choose.

In the Open University's 'Bridging the Digital Divide' report<sup>2</sup>, 85% of senior leaders believe it will become necessary to move to a model of lifelong learning in future, where employees are constantly learning and developing new skills, regardless of the industry.

**Figure 1.2** What is the most important factor for students when choosing a career path?





## EXPERT VIEW



St. Gilgen  
International  
School

SALZBURG | AUSTRIA

### John Patton

IBDP Coordinator and University Guidance

#### St. Gilgen International School

St. Gilgen International School is a co-educational boarding and day school in Austria that follows the IB Programme.

## A case study in counselling

Her name was Jenna, and she was passionate about climate activism and Psychology. I remember speaking with her when she was just entering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme two years ago and we discussed her IBDP subject choices and future options.

She was torn because she loved Psychology (even though we did not have this course on offer at our school), and she loved the idea of taking care of our oceans even though she was concerned about taking Biology at Higher Level because she feared she would not score well enough in this subject to earn higher points in the programme.

We spoke at length about some viable options, and I learned more about her other passions. She outlined that she wanted to do something meaningful with her life, something which could affect change.

Two years later, and I find myself speaking with her again about her future university options. This time, the conversation is focused on where and what to study.

Once again, Jenna is torn. She would love to finally pursue her passion of Psychology, but all of her friends and family keep telling her that studying Business will be the fastest track to financial independence and long-term security. What about her stable career options? What about her qualifications to get to universities? What about her purpose? For Jenna, it was too overwhelming, and she was on the brink of tears.

I think, as university guidance counsellors, we have all been here before. A student sits in our office (or on a Zoom call in our current COVID-19 climate), and wonders aloud if they should pursue their passion or the secure option.

Too often young people can become fixated on a few options, and typically this is informed from what their parents do, or what they feel can bring them financial security. One of our greatest challenges as guidance counsellors is helping students broaden their university and career options.

For a long time, I relied heavily on careers books and my own knowledge to lead conversations. Once we invested in Unifrog, the task became far more achievable and enjoyable. By guiding our students through their personality quizzes and walking them through the Careers and Subject library tools, students began to learn about a broader range of careers which could satisfy both their passions, and aims to be financially secure.

One of my favourite ways of engaging our students is when our Mentor Tutors push our students to explore the Careers library tool in a session, and then create a 'two truths and a lie' list.

They read out their career options for the group, highlighting the characteristics of the career, and the group try to determine which one is the lie: the one the student is not really interested in pursuing. It is such a fun and easy way to inform students and their peers about options available to them, and doing so with the Careers library tool keeps it fun, engaging and informative.

Carrying out the task in the safety of the Mentor Tutor group means that students are not only more likely to share their ideas, but also more willing to take on the advice of the others in the room.

It is also fun to change the theme of this game with different prompts like 'create your list as if you were your partner' or 'only consider financially stable options' or 'the list should only include 'risky' career paths.' Doing this helps to push kids outside of their comfort zone and consider options they otherwise would not have done.

These types of group-based games, informed by the Unifrog tools, serve as great starting points for better discussions with Mentor Tutors about options. When the students meet with me, one to one, it can be a great opener just asking about the many different career options that have come up on their lists. Once I know these things, it becomes far easier to pair up students with employers in our area for job shadowing opportunities or other types of work experience.

Though we may do all we can to provide a wide array of options for our students, the task of helping a student discover their purpose is not a hard science, and it can be frustrating watching a student flounder between options and not take on advice.

In these moments, I am encouraged by our role as counsellors. We are there to guide and offer direction, but the students ultimately make their own decisions. What has been enjoyable, is seeing more and more students discover their passions through the tools and resources available through Unifrog, and witnessing our Mentor Tutors flourish as mentors to each students' personal discovery of their strengths and purpose.





## HOW DO STUDENTS RESEARCH COMPANIES?

We asked students what they would like to know about when researching a company. In a similar vein to their pragmatic approach to choosing a career path, 9 out of 10 students want information about the actual work they would be doing. This was followed by information about salaries and company culture.

Students say they're least interested in information about the company's mission and stories from current employees. This is interesting as both seem to be the focus of a lot of graduate and school leaver recruitment. You only need to take a look at the recruitment pages of some of the top international graduate employers to see their mission and videos of recent hires at the forefront.

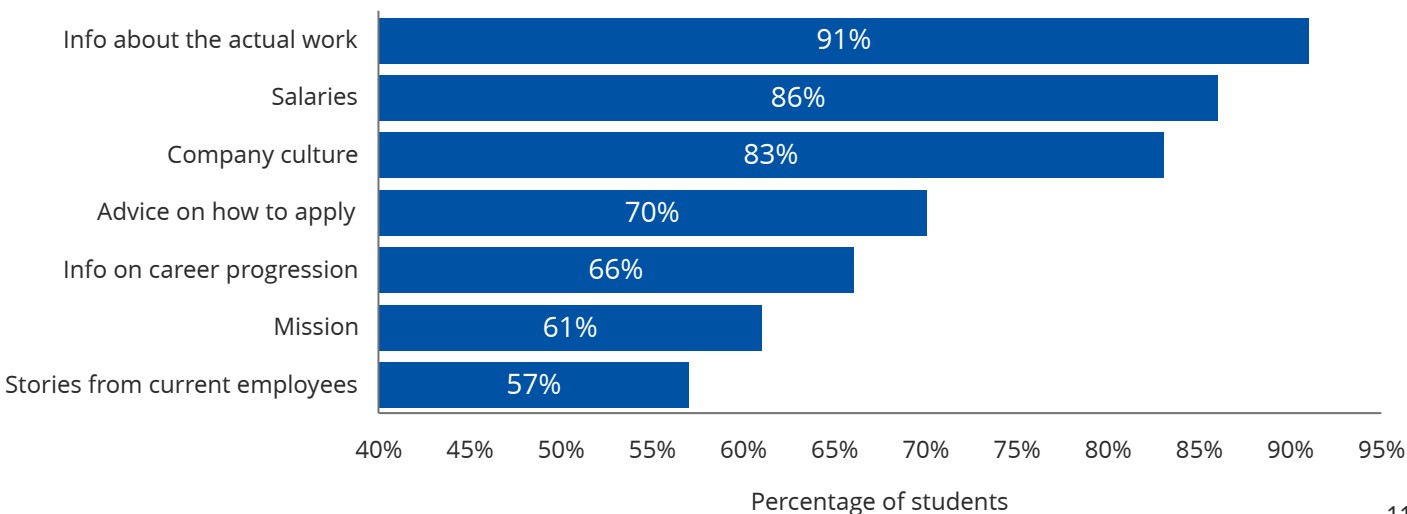
Disinterest in a company's mission may stem from a lack of understanding among students about what this means in practice. It's worth educating students about how many people find it fulfilling to work for a company whose mission they fully support. A 2019 Glassdoor study which analysed millions of employee reviews from around the world found that the culture and values of an organisation are the strongest predictors of employee satisfaction.

One way to inspire students to think about companies they may find it rewarding to work for is to work out what causes they personally feel invested in and then seek out companies whose mission and values align.

### UNIFROG TOP TIP

Point students towards the PSHE section of the Unifrog Know-how library so they can engage with topics including anti-racism and the climate crisis to inspire them to find causes they feel passionate about.

**Figure 1.3** When researching companies, what do students want to know about?



## KEY ACTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS

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1

Encourage students to check out the 'Skills required' sections on the Unifrog Careers library to make sure they're developing the specific skills they'll need to stand the best chance of securing a job in their chosen field.

2

Make sure that younger students interested in a growth industry are aware of and developing the relevant skills to secure a role in what's likely to be a highly competitive environment in the future.

3

Help students to find a career that aligns with their interests and values - the strongest predictors of job satisfaction - rather than focusing purely on job security by using the Unifrog Careers library and Personality tools.

4

Use LMI to put careers in context to help students anticipate what the world of work may look like in the future so they can tailor their skills development accordingly.

## KEY ACTION FOR UNIFROG

---

1

We want to help students discover the causes they're passionate about and to explore related careers they feel invested in. We're committed to building out our Know-how library to make sure all students are aware of current issues such as anti-racism and the climate crisis to make sure that job security isn't the only consideration when choosing a career.



## 2 The skills to succeed

As we saw in Chapter One, students are considering new and diverse careers. To stand the best chance of success, they'll need a diverse skill set to match in order to remain competitive across different roles.

However, the number of skills and competencies logged on the Unifrog Competencies tool fell from March to November 2020, across all age groups. Students use the Competencies

tool, based on the Skills Builder Universal Framework, to reflect on and record the key skills that employers and universities look for, ready to use in applications.

In this chapter we look at the skills students have recorded during the pandemic, the skills that students and employers believe are most important, and which skills were hardest hit in 2020.



## EXPERT VIEW



The Skills Builder Partnership is a not-for-profit social enterprise that brings together more than 700 organisations around the world including Unifrog towards a common mission: that one day, everyone will build the essential skills to succeed. The Partnership unites educators, employers and organisations by a shared language, principles and outcomes in developing the eight essential skills which feature in this report.

## Our Analysis

It is clear from the data that the development of essential skills is vital for young people to have the best chance of success in the future. There are also clear needs to develop these skills in a more tangible way for learners, as well as highlight new ways that individuals can develop skills during lockdown.

The Skills Builder Universal Framework was created to ensure there was alignment and a common vocabulary for schools, colleges, universities, employers and employees in terms of essential skills.

The backing and engagement of the CIPD; the CBI; the Gatsby Foundation; Business in the Community; the CEC and the EY Foundation shows the vital role the framework has to play in the meaningful development of these skills.

## Our recommendations for schools

We have learned a lot over the last decade about how to best build essential skills. We know that to have a real impact, the skills must be taught with consistency and focus, just like numeracy and literacy are.

We've developed and refined our approach to make it easy for teachers and students to build essential skills through our six simple principles, whatever the setting:

### 1. Keep it simple

A consistent focus on the essential skills helps ensure everyone's shared understanding and makes building these skills as tangible as possible. Using the same language all the time makes a big difference.

- Do all staff and students use consistent language when referring to the skills?

### 2. Start early, keep going

Starting as young as possible allows more time for mastery. The skills are not just about employability, but about thriving in all aspects of life.

- Could you introduce these skills earlier on?

### 3. Measure it

Take time to reflect on the skills of young people – by observing or by self-assessment. This gives a balanced understanding of strengths and weaknesses, highlights progress and shows next steps.

- Do you use assessments at the beginning and end of a year?

## EXPERT VIEW



## Lockdown opportunities

During lockdown, there are still opportunities for students to practise, apply and reflect on the essential skills:

- Support students to find opportunities to practise and reflect on the skills as part of everyday life. Do they use Problem Solving with parents? Leadership with younger siblings? Teamwork when working on a group project online?
- Visit the full interactive version of the Skills Builder Universal Framework to find more information and ways that you can build each step as an educator.

## 4. Focus tightly

Building skills should build upon a young person's previous learning and skill attainment. It should allow dedicated time just to explicitly build the skill.

- Do you make time just to focus on explicitly teaching skills?

## 5. Keep practising

To accelerate progress in the essential skills, they should be used and reinforced as often as possible – whenever you have the chance with those young people.

- Is there regular opportunity to actively reflect on the skills and how they have been developed?

## 6. Bring it to life

Ensure young people see the relevance of these skills by linking them with the real world and by bringing real-life problems and challenges to work on.

- Do you use links to employers to support building these skills?



## LOCKDOWN SKILLS

Although fewer competencies are being logged, the pandemic certainly hasn't stopped students' skills development altogether. Since the start of the pandemic, aiming high has been the most logged competency among students at international schools, making up 12% of all competencies logged. This is followed by creativity (12%) and staying positive (11%).

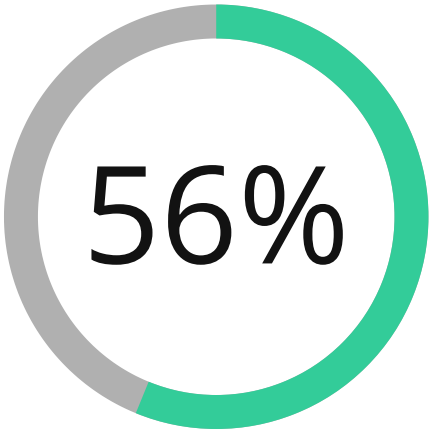
The most logged competencies are all individual skills that students have been able to continue to develop easily even if they have experienced school closures or lockdowns.

In the survey, we asked students if they believed that skills we've all used during lockdown (such as looking after family, helping out in the community, and using technology to work from home) were valuable to employers. Over half (59%) said 'yes', they believed these skills were valuable to employers.

It's important we remind students about the importance of reflecting on and recording skills to inform future job and university applications. Reflection is a useful skill in itself - essential for resumés, interviews, and performance reviews in the future. Getting students to consider the skills they may have developed during the pandemic and any periods of remote learning is a fantastic opportunity to start learning how to reflect on their own progress.

Figure 2.0

What proportion of students believe skills used during lockdown are valuable to employers?

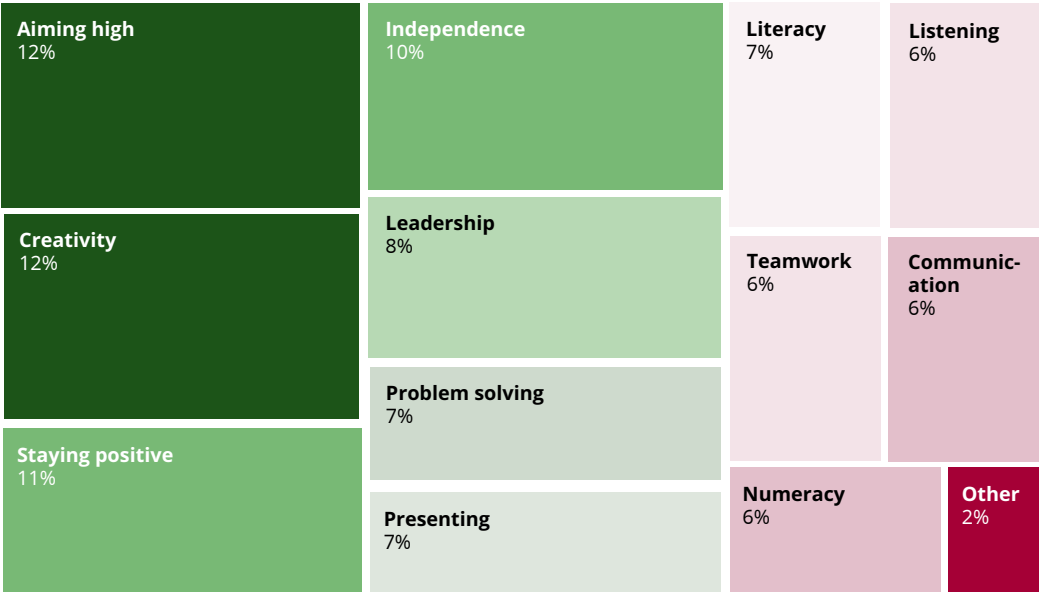


UNIFROG TOP TIP

Encourage students to log their new skills on the Competencies tool so they have a record for future applications and to help frame the pandemic as an opportunity to develop skills in new and creative ways.

Figure 2.1

Which competencies did students at international schools log most from March-November 2020?





## EXPERT VIEW



### Hannah Thompson

Careers and University Guidance Counsellor

**EtonHouse International School Orchard**

EtonHouse Orchard is an international school in the heart of Singapore, with secondary students from 11-18 following the IGCSE and IB Diploma programmes.

### Whole school approach

We focus on developing our students' skills from Year 7 through to their graduation. All students have two hours of mentor time (our equivalent of form time) each week, which gives students time to reflect on the skills they're gaining.

### Unifrog Year Plan

We use the Unifrog Year Plan to help structure our careers programme. We find having it segmented by year groups really helpful as it makes sure all students have sessions and activities tailored to their age group.

### Careers Week

This year we've linked our in-school Careers Week with Unifrog's Skills and Enterprise Week. Last year, our Careers Week focused on hearing from professionals directly. This year, we've broadened the range of activities, in order to focus more specifically on skills - and the skills that students will need to succeed in their chosen careers.

### Use parents to make skills relevant

Our Year 7-9s are taking part in the Unifrog start-up challenge, coming up with an innovative start-up idea and putting together a business plan which they'll present to the class. We've also adapted the Unifrog Skills bingo session to feature videos of EtonHouse Orchard parents talking about the skills they need for their own jobs to help students see skills in real world settings.

### Hear from employees themselves

Amongst other activities, our Year 10-12s will join online sessions delivered by a range of professionals from industries including tech and law - from early professionals through to Director level.

We've asked our speakers to talk specifically about the skills they needed to secure their job, the skills they use on a day-to-day basis, and the skills they believe are most important in their industry. In a similar way to Skills bingo, students will be making notes on the skills they hear come up and reflecting on those which were highlighted most often.

### Integrate careers in each curriculum area

Our long term aim is to gradually merge careers into the curriculum with careers and skills-focused sessions inbuilt into the core curriculum areas. Not only will this help us to raise the profile of careers within the school but will help us meet the Gatsby Benchmarks as well.

## WHICH SKILLS DO STUDENTS BELIEVE EMPLOYERS VALUE?

We asked students which skills they believe are most important to employers. Students were most likely to state that communication and problem solving skills were most important to employers, with 29% of students selecting one of these skills. This was followed by teamwork (11%) and leadership (10%).

It’s notable that three of the four skills students believe to be most prized by employers - communication, teamwork, and leadership - are skills that have been challenged by lockdowns and remote learning.

We then split students by which skill they believe to be most important to employers to see if this affected their perspective on whether the pandemic had made it harder to develop skills that will be useful for their future careers. Those who believe creativity and technical skills to be most important to employers, believed the pandemic to have had the least impact on their ability to develop useful skills.

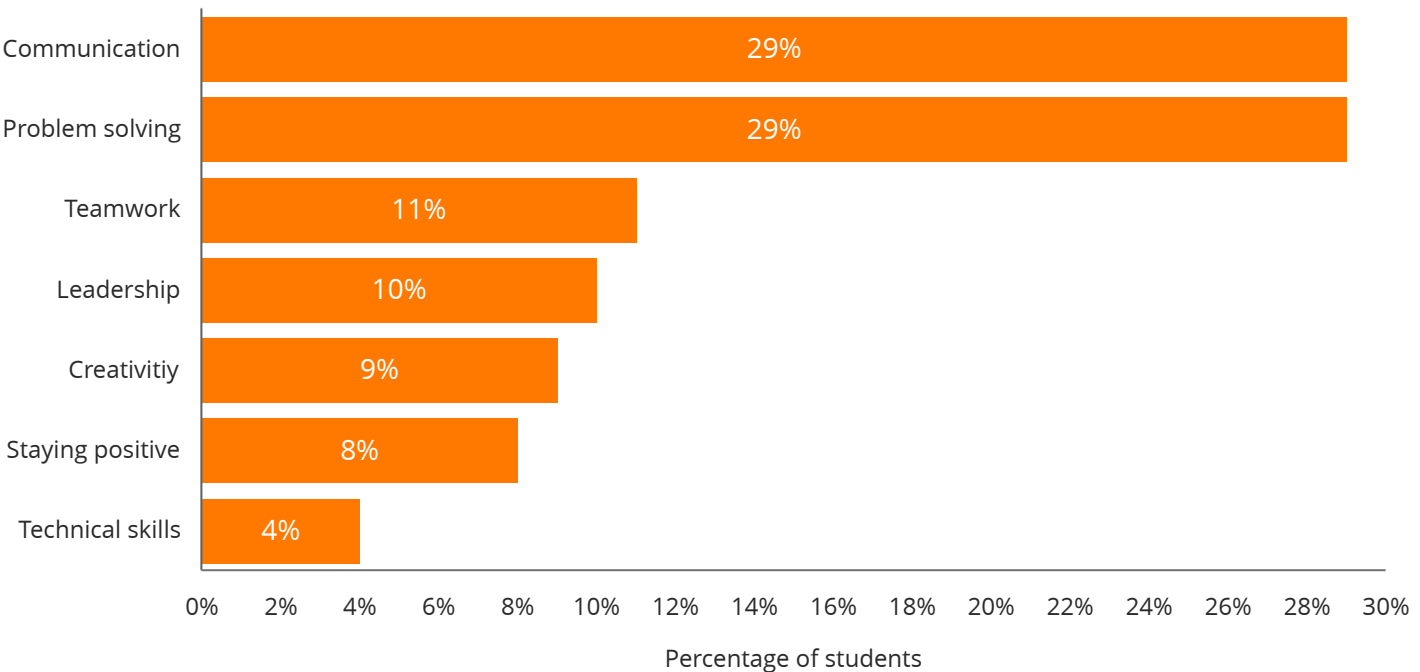
This helps inform us about which skills students may have



found it easier to work on during the pandemic. Technical skills such as computer programming can easily be learnt remotely while those students who believe creativity to be most valued may have found that the lack of teacher contact time allowed them to spend more time on their own creative projects.

Figure 2.2

Which of these skills do students think is most important to employers?



## EXPERT VIEW



PwC offer a variety of programmes for school leavers and graduates with a focus on skills and passions, not just degrees and education. These are the five skills they look for in new recruits.

### Leadership

This is about both leading yourself and supporting others. This doesn't need to be leadership in the obvious sense, e.g. captain of the netball team. It could be having caring responsibilities, or leading a group on a project, taking charge of a travel expedition, and much more.

### Technical Skills

Employers are often looking for students to show a detailed understanding of the role they are applying to, and of the organisation. This includes thinking about the wider industry as a whole, and how the business compares to its competitors.

Students should aim to research beyond an employer's website, and where possible, be proactive in speaking with employer staff ambassadors by attending their events.

### Business Acumen

We look for students who demonstrate a commercial mindset in understanding how an organisation operates, considering both the micro and macro factors facing that organisation.

Students also need to consider times when they have applied this commercial thinking in everyday life (e.g. through involvement in school projects, via work experience and/or any situations that have exposed them to consider the ROI from the work they're doing).

### Relationship Building

Being able to work with others from all backgrounds and build a strong relationship is a key skill; particularly when your colleagues share a different point of view or adopt a different communication style. Students should be ready to share examples where they've done this, and how they've overcome a challenging relationship.

### Networking

Students should aim to have a 'global mindset' so that they are thinking beyond the role they're applying to, considering the bigger picture. It's also important to have an open mind when considering all opportunities available to them, and to ensure they leverage their own network (and continually build on this) to gain the most from their career.

Every new contact is a potential new opportunity (for you and for them) so students should ensure they keep in regular contact, and take advantage of all networking opportunities.

## WHAT SKILLS DO STUDENTS THINK THEY ALREADY HAVE?

Overall, communication and problem solving were the two skills students were most likely to believe they had with 70% of students believing themselves to have these skills.

One possible reason for this is that any students who have experienced a period of remote learning will have had to use both these skills. Video calls - both academic and personal - require strong communication skills as the nonverbal cues we use in-person are just as important when we're communicating virtually.

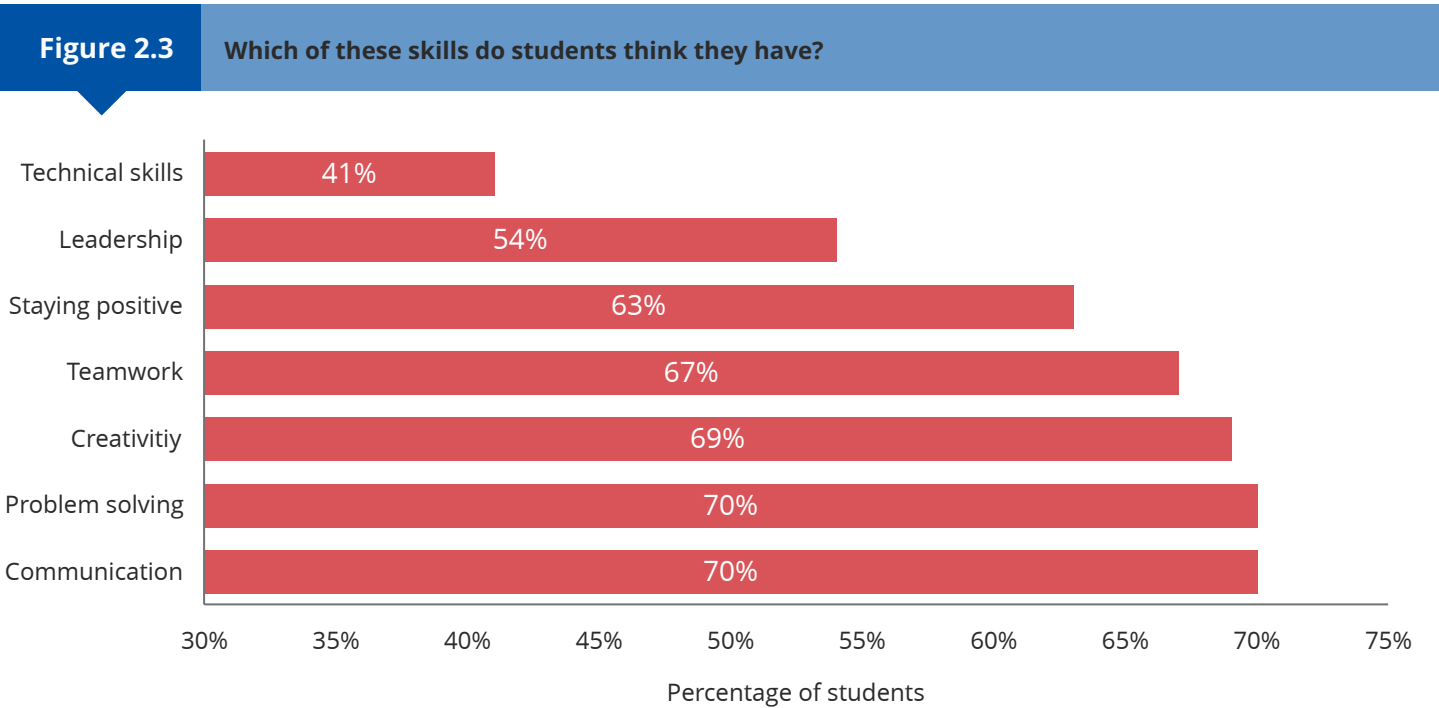
In a similar way, our increased reliance on technology - relying on home wifi and learning new systems - has required a fair amount of problem solving over the past year with students often having to come up with creative solutions to technology issues.

The two skills students were least likely to say they had were technical skills (41%) and leadership (54%). This is backed up by these being the skills students say they want more support with, with 48% of students saying they want more support with technical skills and 45% with leadership.

As challenging as it is in the current climate, we need to help students to both develop and learn how to evidence these



skills. An easy win is for students to reflect on the digital skills they've developed during remote learning and log these as technical skills. These skills will serve them well in future job applications as digital skills are increasingly essential in the world of work. The Open University's 'Bridging the Digital Divide' report in 2019<sup>5</sup> found that 88% of organisations were lacking in digital skills, with many expecting this to increase in the next five years.



<sup>5</sup> The Open University, 2019. The Open University Bridging The Digital Divide.



## WHICH SKILLS HAVE BEEN MOST IMPACTED?

The majority of students (53%) we surveyed believe the pandemic has made it more difficult to develop skills that might be useful for their future career.

As aforementioned, students logged fewer examples of each competency during the pandemic but the two competencies which saw the greatest decline were teamwork and leadership. There was a 76% drop in the number of teamwork competencies logged, and a 71% fall in leadership competencies. Arguably these are the two competencies traditionally most reliant on in-person interaction and as a result, students are struggling to demonstrate them.

It’s important to help students realise that, while they may not be able to demonstrate some skills in the traditional way, they’re still using and developing them in other ways. Just as we have all had to learn new ways of working as part of a team and leading others while working remotely, students have adapted in the same way.

For example, any online collaborative projects will involve students using their teamwork skills as well as leadership abilities if the project requires someone to coordinate it and make sure it’s successful.

Equally, many students have been using their communication and listening skills to support friends who may be struggling during the pandemic.

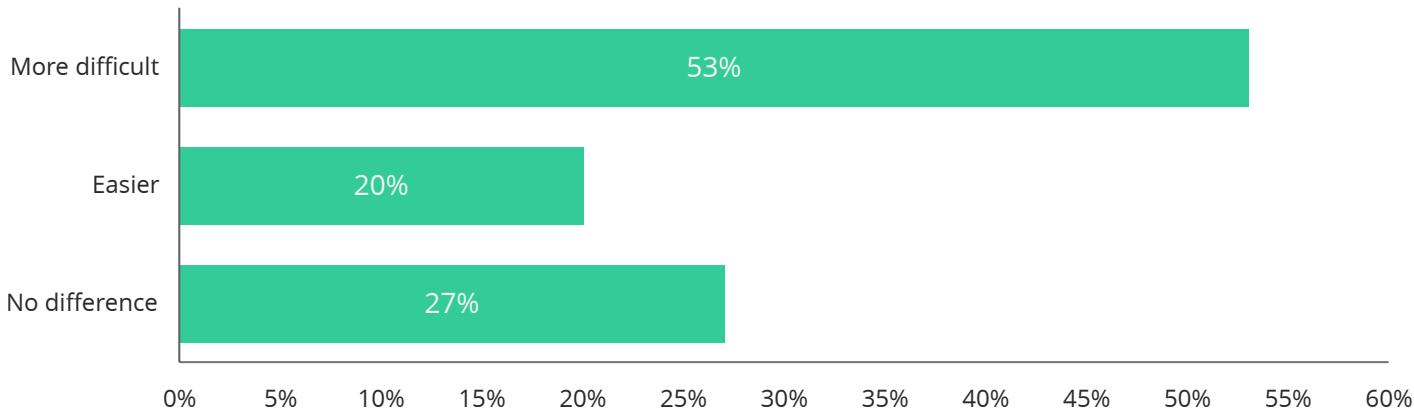
Figure 2.4

How did the number of times each competency was logged in March-Nov 2020 change from 2019?

Competency	% change
Staying positive	-34%
Creativity	-43%
Aiming high	-45%
Independence	-47%
Problem solving	-51%
Literacy	-55%
Listening	-58%
Communication	-59%
Numeracy	-59%
Presenting	-65%
Leadership	-71%
Teamwork	-76%

Figure 2.5

What proportion of students believe the pandemic has impacted their ability to develop useful skills?



## VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE

As well as having the necessary skills and qualifications, another element that often plays a big role in helping students secure employment after school is relevant work experience. A 2017 survey of business leaders<sup>7</sup> found that over two thirds (68%) believe work experience helps get young people ready for the world of work and over half (57%) believe it helps instil a good work ethic.

Unfortunately, one in two students surveyed say the pandemic is making it harder for them to find a work experience placement. Workplace closures, financial constraints, and safety concerns have led many work experience placements to be cancelled.

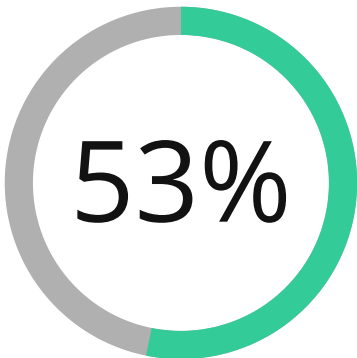
Students identified not knowing where to find placements as the biggest issue, with 67% of students facing this problem. Reassuringly, only 23% of students reported that their school doesn't have enough time to help them to find a placement, highlighting how Teachers and Counselors remain focused on helping students seek out these opportunities in new and creative ways.

34% of students state that they don't want to do an online work experience placement, but it's important that students are aware of the upsides of virtual placements. Top global companies such as PWC, JP Morgan, and KPMG are running placements which they're able to make available to many more students than usual. Not only this but students can complete the placements in their own time, without the need to be based in a specific location.

Not only is a virtual work experience placement a valuable experience in itself but securing a placement in what future employers will appreciate are challenging circumstances shows real initiative!

Figure 2.6

What proportion of students believe the pandemic is making it more difficult to find WEX?

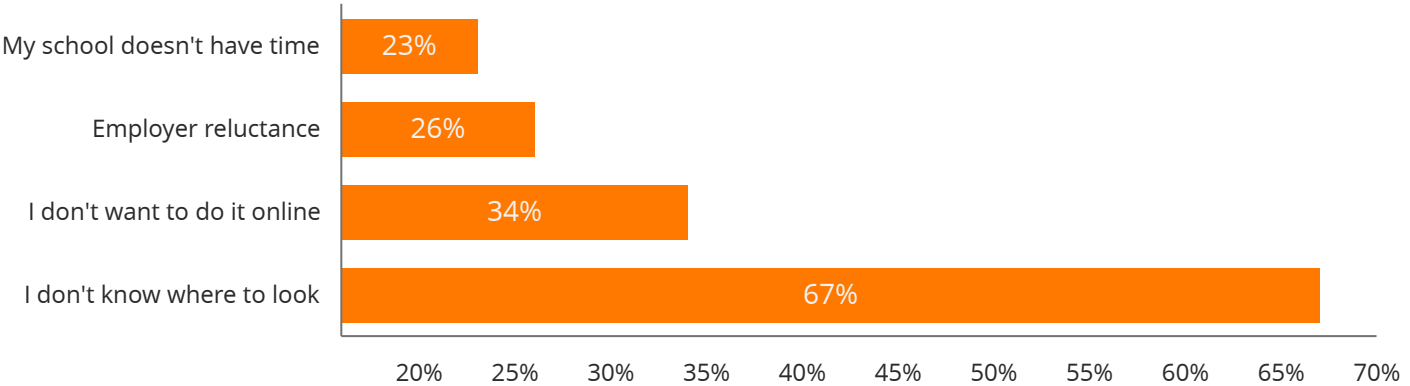


### UNIFROG TOP TIP

The Unifrog Special opportunities tool has a comprehensive list of virtual work experience placements around the world which students can use to search, rank and filter opportunities to find the perfect one for them.

Figure 2.7

How many students agree with the following statements about why they're finding it difficult to find a WEX placement?



## EXPERT VIEW



## Gabrielle

**Year 13/ Grade 12 student**

**Melton Vale Sixth Form**

Gabrielle is a current Year 13/ Grade 12 student at Melton Vale Sixth Form who did a virtual work experience placement (VWEX) with Unifrog over the summer.

## Lessons learnt

- **Resilience** – I was set a very big data project, which I didn't think I would be able to complete so felt quite defeated about it. But I managed to and was very proud of myself.
- **Inspiration** - All the employees gave us amazing advice when they spoke to us. Learning about their past working experience and how they got to where they are now was really inspiring for me.
- **Teamwork** – I learned how to work together with two students from different schools that I didn't know to complete tasks. We all challenged each other as well to produce the best work as a team.

## Skills gained

They made me feel like I am prepared for the future, especially with the unknown of who I will be working with. It's amazing to see how comfortable you get once you know the situation you're going into and I learnt that my perceptiveness is a skill that will benefit me. I feel ready to take on anything!

## Ready for the world of work

I got a lot of advice from everyone I spoke to and contacts who have offered to help me in the future that I will take with me through my career. I got to see first-hand what it was like to be a part of a business and to see jobs in action that really inspired me. It also allowed me to prepare for the type of tasks I could get asked to do as well as what it felt like to be a true member of a team.

## Remote benefits

I wouldn't have been able to do this placement if it wasn't virtual due to travelling!

Also, I feel that we had more opportunities being virtual than in person as we managed to speak to at least one person in every area of the business and to sit in on meetings with schools, which wouldn't normally be possible. The two other students doing the placement with me were from completely different areas of the UK so when we spoke to each other about our A-Levels and the pathways we want to go into it was interesting to get other people's perspective.

## Advice to others

Take notes on everything, especially the bits of the placement that are areas of interest that you want to go into. Also, be present - when doing work experience, you're treated like part of the team, so do the same. Engage with the people you are talking to, ask lots and lots of questions and be extremely attentive towards everyone you're speaking to.

Complete the tasks that were set in the same way you would complete schoolwork. Lastly, don't be nervous and enjoy it. It really was one of the best experiences I have done in reflection and I am grateful for the opportunity.

## KEY ACTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS

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1

Re-frame the pandemic as an opportunity for students to develop new skills and further existing ones such as digital literacy by getting them to reflect on the skills developed during distance learning.

2

Support students to find opportunities to practise their skills as part of everyday life. Do they use Teamwork when working on a group project online? Leadership with younger siblings? Problem Solving with parents?

3

Use consistent language when talking about essential skills to build shared understanding between staff and students and make the skills relevant to students by linking them to the real world.

4

Help students to realise that VWEX placements offer opportunities that may not have been previously available to them, such as the chance to work for a company in a different country.

5

Get students to create a shortlist of VWEX placements using the Unifrog Special opportunities tool to help them see that there are still opportunities out there for those who use their initiative.

## KEY ACTIONS FOR UNIFROG

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1

We will create additional remote teaching resources to run with students to help them develop the skills that the pandemic is making it difficult for them to demonstrate, including technical skills and leadership. We'll also continue to make sure that we bring together all the available virtual work experience placements we can find on the Special opportunities tool to make it easy for students to find the perfect opportunity for them.



