

UCAS

UCAS CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY

What students look for – and how universities, college and employers can respond together.



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WHAT WE DID: A PRE-APPLICANT SURVEY

- Online survey with students looking to start university in Sept 2026 and registered on UCAS Hub
- UK and International students aged 16-19
- Fieldwork 24 April -15 May 2025
- 1,692 responses

EMPLOYABILITY IS A CORE DECISION DRIVER

Importance of future employability when deciding on:

A university



A course to study



Not at all important Not very important Neither / nor Quite important Very important

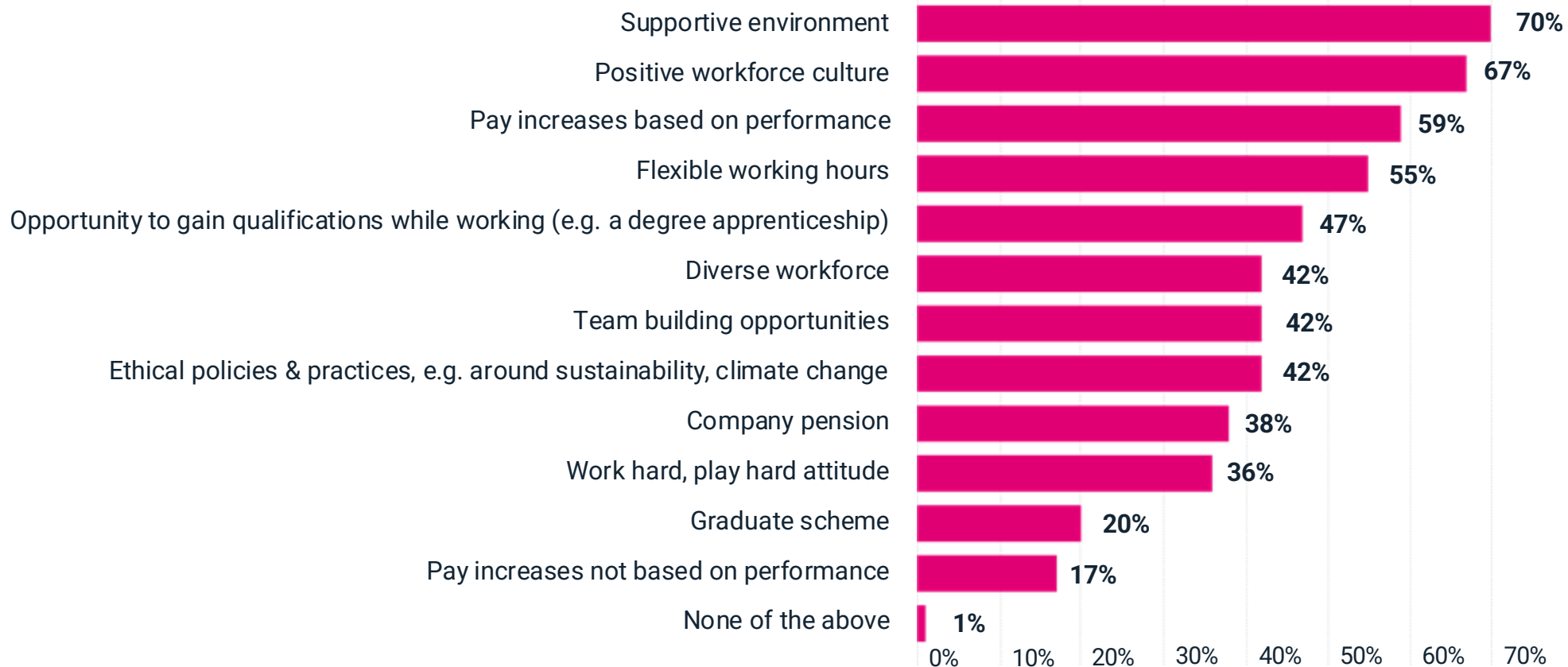
FAMILIAR EMPLOYERS DOMINATE EARLY CAREER IMAGINATION



Q: If you could work for any company, which would it be? And why? (Open comment) Base 1174 who commented

SECURITY, CULTURE AND PROGRESSION MATTER EARLY

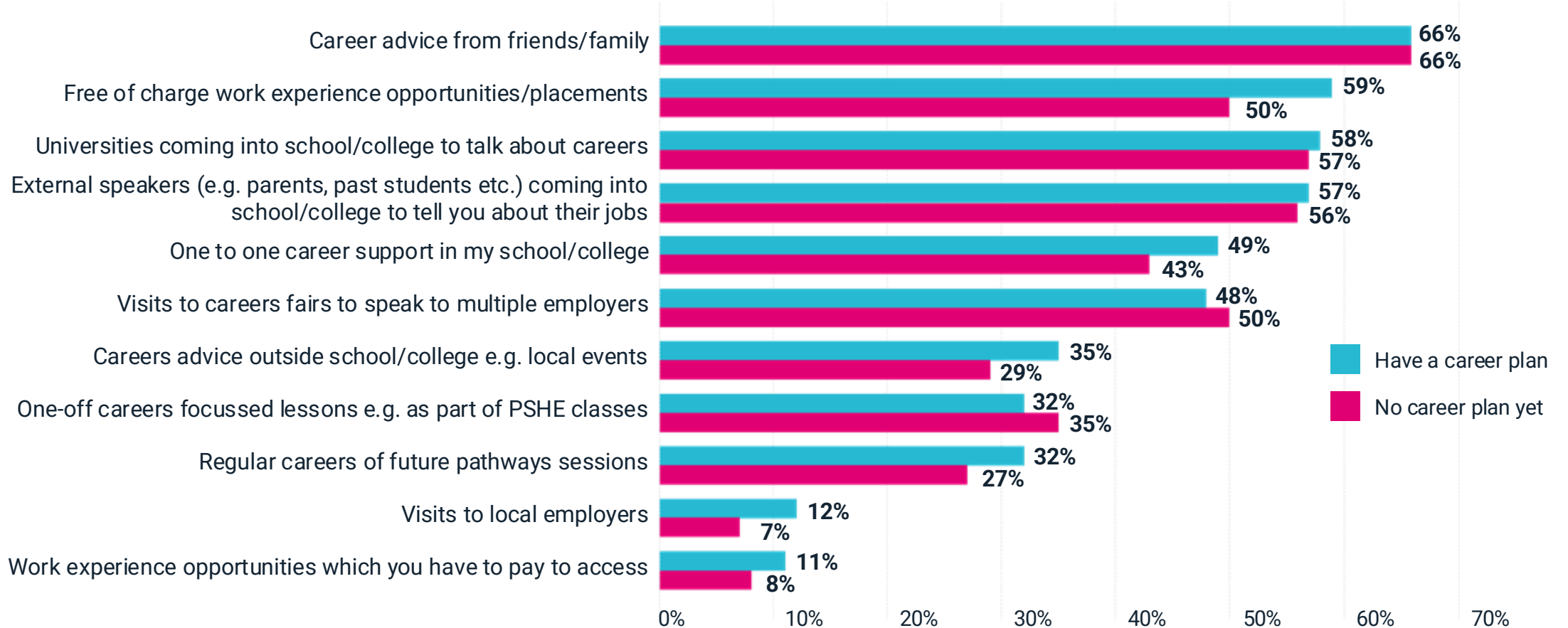
Important attributes of a future company to work for



Q: Thinking about the type of company you'd like to work for in the future, which, if any, of the following are important? Please select all that apply. Base 1,668

ACCESS TO CAREERS ADVICE IS HIGH – IMPACT VARIES

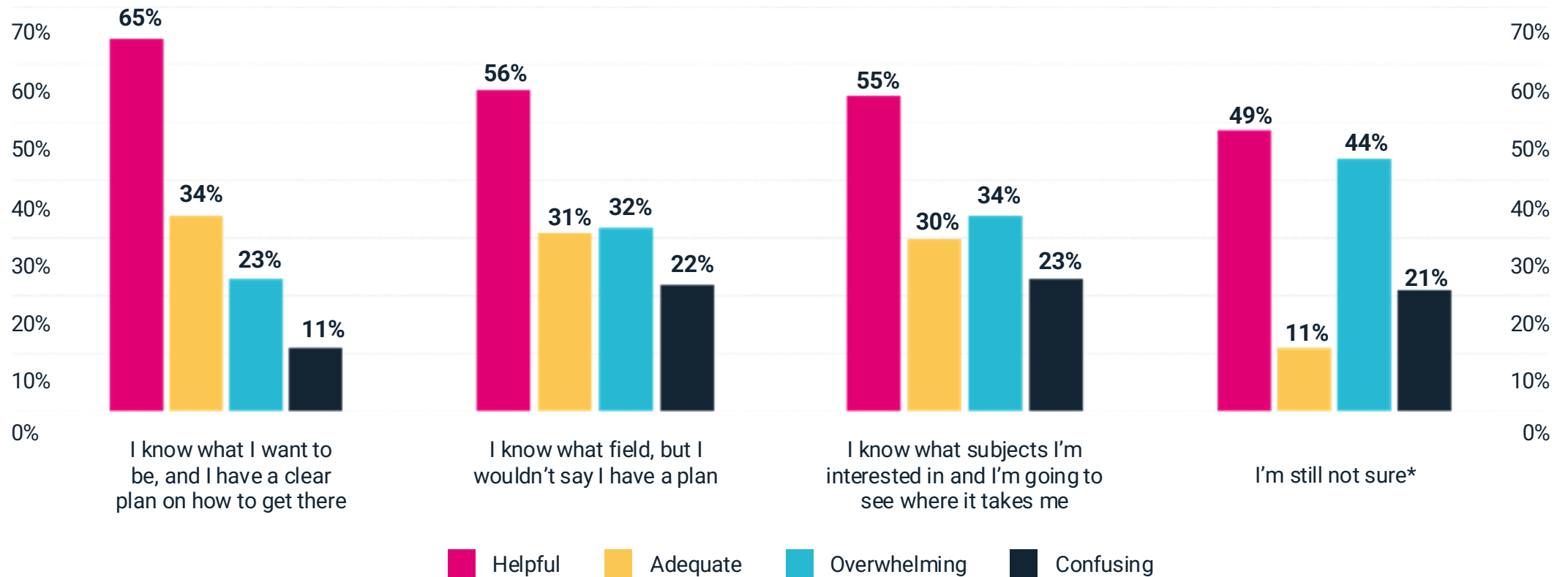
Sources of career advice received, by career plan



Q: Which if any, of the following have you had access to? Select all that apply. Have a career plan 608, No career plan 1076

QUALITY OF CAREER ADVICE AND IMPACT ON CAREER PLANS

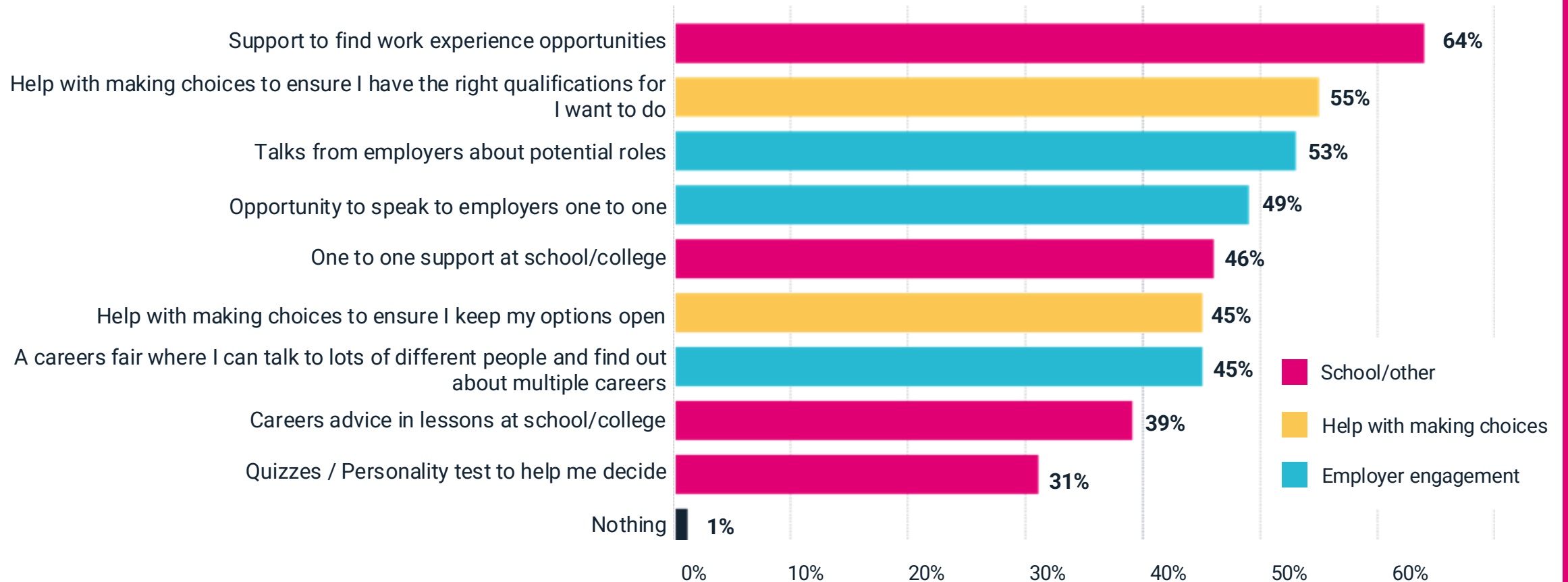
Keywords describing the career advice and support received so far, broken down by career-planning stage:



Q: Thinking about the career advice and support you have received so far, which of the following words would you use to describe your experience? *low base

WHERE EMPLOYERS CAN MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE

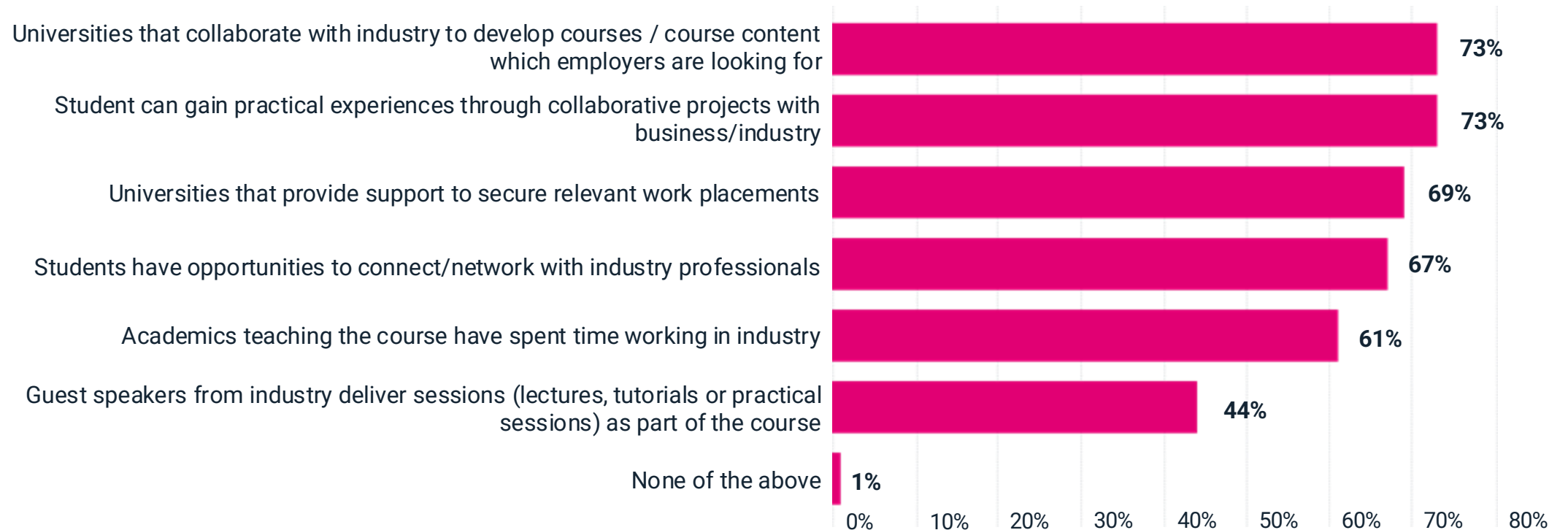
Future career advice and support which would be helpful



Q: Thinking about future career advice and support, what do you think would be helpful? Select all that apply. Base 1,693

THE EMPLOYABILITY FEATURE STUDENTS FIND MOST APPEALING

Appeal of university employability 'offers'



Q: Which, if any, of the following are appealing to you? Please select all that apply. Base 1,674

PLACEMENTS ARE VALUED – BUT NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD

81%

Work experience opportunities

55%

Short term work placements e.g. as part of a university course

49%

A placement year

46%

Part-time work

WHAT 'INDUSTRY LINKS' MEANS TO STUDENTS (AND WHERE GAPS APPEAR)

Career opportunities post graduation

"Industries that have close ties to the university and a high employer percentage from the university."

"What links to businesses the university has, like a partnership for example. Offering its graduates jobs."

"Where the university will open doors to professional work, accredited bodies and job opportunities."

Connections

"Links to employers, possibly higher possibilities of getting a job once you graduate due to connections at your university."

"Continuation straight after uni course to the specific industry."

"Its relationship with people in hiring positions from companies related to your career."

NOT ONE STUDENT MINDSET: FOUR PLANNING STAGES

38%

I know what field,
but I wouldn't say
I have a plan

36%

I know what I want
to be, and I have a
clear plan on how
to get there

21%

I know what subjects
I'm interested in and
I'm going to see where
it takes me

4%

I'm still not sure



Universities & colleges

Put placement support where students look (course and subject pages)

Define “industry links” plainly; show how collaboration appears in learning

Signpost for Planners and Explorers on the same page

Employers

Make pathways visible early (what roles are, what they lead to)

Prioritise collaboration formats students find most meaningful (embedded, practical)

Offer entry points for explorers, not only “career-decided” students

Shared

Co-create clearer experiences: live briefs, authentic projects, realistic insight into roles



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THANK YOU

