October 2022

National FE Student Segmentation 2021/2022

Report for Hello Future

CONFIDENTIAL



COSMOS

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RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Research background (1 of 2)

OVERVIEW & KEY OBJECTIVES

Phase 3 of the Uni Connect programme proposes a greater focus on supporting and delivering initiatives for FE students. FE students are not an homogenous group; their needs differ based on demographic, cultural and social values. Key to the success of Phase 3 is having a clear understanding of this student group's perspectives and needs.

A **national FE Student Segmentation Study*** based on attitudinal and demographic metrics was identified as the most appropriate way to:

- Enable providers to **understand FE student needs in much richer detail;** identify where the gaps in provision are and **ensure initiatives are well targeted**
- **Identify and aggregate key groups of students**, so they can be successfully targeted with relevant interventions
- Identify a **needs base for each group**, based on NERUPI framework principles, which can be prioritised depending on which group students align to

* NOTE: Segmentation is a scientific quantitative method that identifies distinct segments within a population based on shared characteristics around relevant geographic, demographic, attitudinal, and/or behavioural variables.



Research background (2 of 2)

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives also needed to be addresses in the research:

- **Exploring what social and economic factors** may affect this group, e.g. parenting/caring responsibilities, existing work, economic constraints (lack of funds generally) and access to finance to ease study
- **Undertaking interrogative analysis** that will identify universal factors (those which are the same for all groups in all areas), and localised/regional factors
- Identifying **students' knowledge gaps** in provision/progression routes
- **Understand existing pastoral and careers guidance provided by FE colleges**, whilst identifying gaps and best practice
- Understanding **how we can support students' transition**/retention to FE/HE
- **Representative sample:** include both standalone Sixth forms as well as FE colleges within any analysis / primary research



Methodology

To address the research objectives Cosmos has carried out a two-phase research programme and this report summarises findings of both phases:

PHASE ONE: Baseline FE Student Segmentation

Analysis of existing CFE data collected from each provider
Identifying distinct segments of students based on the variables/ indicators available in the CFE dataset using cluster analysis*

- The main purpose of this phase was to identify distinct segments within the FE student population and profile them on a basic level in terms of their attitudes to HE and key demographics
- Over 30,000 CFE student surveys analysed, with the focus on waves 2 (survey between May'19 – Jan'20) and (survey between Oct'20 - Feb'21) capturing periods pre- and post- COVID-19
- Sample was representative of a wide range of FE student groups within national FE student population

* More information on the CFE data and Cluster analysis on pages 49-50

PHASE TWO: Testing Segments & Building Profiles

Segments tested via an online survey
Student profiles built on to include FE educational (including apprenticeships), career and activity/ intervention preferences

- The purpose of this phase was to validate the segments identified in Phase 1 and further enrich them by profiling on a range of additional attitudinal, behavioural and demographic characteristics
- Survey fielded in June 2022, with over 1,100 student surveys collected and analysed
- Sample was designed to achieve minimum numbers of surveys per region/ partnership of focus, and weighting** was applied to align segment distribution closer to that established in Phase 1

** More information on Phase 2 weighting on page 51

Total sample

For each phase of the research programme, robust samples of FE students were utilised:

Phase 1 sample: Total n=34,723

		%	n
GENDER	Female	59%	18841
	Male	38%	12398
	Other	3%	964
ETHNICITY	White	86%	27648
	BAME	13%	4109
	Asian	6%	2031
	Black	3%	804
	Mixed	3%	1,011
	Other	1%	263
	Prefer not to say	1%	381
UNI CONNECT	Target	32%	11181
	Unknown	68%	23542

Phase 2 sample: Total n=1,128

		%*	n
GENDER	Female	66%	722
	Male	31%	331
	Other	3%	28
ETHNICITY	White	73%	812
	BAME	27%	269
	Asian	17%	165
	Black	5%	55
	Mixed	3%	30
	Other	2%	19
	Prefer not to say	-	-
UNI CONNECT**	Target	12%	128
	Non-target	57%	675

* Weighted, please see more information on weighting on page 51

** n=325 students completing the survey (32%) were classed as 'Unknown'

NOTE: Sample sizes (n) within a demographic criterion not adding up to the total sample size indicates that not all respondents answered the question

This report focuses on the results relevant to Hello Future

For the purposes of this report, we have analysed responses of:

- **609 FE students as part of Phase 1** (CFE survey data). Note that all waves' data was used to maximise sample for the analysis
- **53 FE students as part of Phase 2** (primary research run by Cosmos)

The samples were split as follows:

	Phase 1: Total n=609		Phase 2: Total n=53	
GENDER	%	n	%*	n
Female	54%	300	61%	32
Male	45%	250	39%	21
Other	2%	9	0%	0
ETHNICITY	%	n	%	n
White	96%	540	74%	41
BAME	3%	18	26%	12
Asian	1%	5	17%	10
Black	0%	2	0%	0
Mixed	1%	6	9%	2
Other	1%	5	0%	0
Prefer not to say	0%	2	-	-
UNI CONNECT	%	N	%	n
Target	27%	167	60%	21
Non-Target	73%	442	-	-

* Weighted, please see more information on weighting on page 51 ** n=21 students completing the survey (40%) were classed as 'Unknown'



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary

Our research shows that, like FE students nationwide, **Hello Future FE students are highly motivated and confident about their abilities**. When it comes to HE, they too show a degree of doubt as to whether HE is for them and whether they would be able to cope with the level of study required, indicating **a need for reassurance and help with confidence**.

Like FE students nationally, **Hello Future FE students' claimed likely take-up of HE is high** – around 4 in 5 students surveyed say they have already applied or are planning to apply to HE* in the future whilst 1 in 5 are either uncertain or considering alternative options. Starting a job is the next most popular choice as an immediate next step post FE followed by apprenticeships.

Overall, **a large proportion of Hello Future FE students understand, and believe in, the benefits offered by HE**. There is a strong relationship between the number of HE benefits students recognise and their likelihood to apply for HE, so **ensuring that students are clear on the benefits of HE is essential to driving its consideration and take-up**.



* NOTE: Phase 2 fieldwork took place in June 2022. The timings of the research could have impacted these results.

Executive summary



Similar to FE students nationwide, **Hello Future FE students' knowledge about the specific aspects of HE is not particularly high and needs improvement** – at least half of Hello Future FE students surveyed say they know little or nothing about each aspect of HE tested in the research.

Areas of HE where Hello Future students' knowledge is particularly lacking are: financial support options, student life (including student accommodation options), application process and types of courses available. These are the aspects that need particular attention when developing interventions, but **all aspects would benefit from a boost in knowledge.**

Executive summary

Aside from knowledge about HE, Hello Future FE students express a desire for support in a number of other areas.

Firstly, **career opportunities and how they link to current and potential future studies** is a support need mentioned by Hello Future FE students a lot spontaneously. Ensuring students have clarity about their desired future career early in their FE studies is crucial to driving confident decision making and minimising the chances of students missing out on their ideal next steps (e.g., not getting the right qualifications/ grades etc.).

There also seems to be **a gap in knowledge when it comes to apprenticeships** which needs to be addressed – whilst Hello Future students show a greater degree of knowledge about these than students nationally, there is still a lot of scope for improvement as a significant proportion claim to know little or nothing.

There is also **a strong appetite for advice on the full range of post FE pathways available with guidance on which one(s) would be the most suitable for students** based on their goals and personal circumstances and help applying for those. Currently, there is a sense amongst some students that some bias exists towards particular post FE options/ pathways, and there is a desire for **more balanced, unbiased advice**.



Executive summary



Overall, the support Hello Future FE students received in the past was considered helpful, with **ongoing and external support activities generally more well received than their opposites**. That said, there is an overall appetite for a **variety of activity types**.

A lot of Hello Future FE students also talk about **wanting more support in general delivered more proactively** rather than leaving the onus on them to seek out support they need. Currently, there is a sense that support provided is somewhat inconsistent.

Executive summary

Whilst there is a fair degree of commonality between FE students in terms of the support they need (e.g., careers advice), our research has identified **four distinct segments of FE students*** nationally via statistical cluster analysis**, to help target interventions:

- **HE Confident** (27% of FE students nationwide)
- **HE Hopeful** (18% of FE students nationwide)
- **HE Maybe** (26% of FE students nationwide)
- **HE Sceptics** (19% of FE students nationwide)

Within Hello Future FE students, we see **the proportion of the most engaged and positive towards HE segment (HE Confident) being greater, whilst the combined proportion of the other three segments is smaller** compared to the national segment distribution. This has some implications in terms of balancing interventions within the partnership***.



* Please refer to PART 2: FE student segmentation for more information on FE student segments
** More detail on Cluster Analysis can be found on slide 50 in the Appendix
*** Please refer to PART 3: Opportunities and ways forward for more detail

PART 1: Understanding FE students & their needs

hello future.

Before getting into the results, let's look at the Hello Future sample profile versus students nationwide, for useful context when interpreting the results

It is important to note that the sample profile of Hello Future FE students was different to the total sample of students in a number of significant ways which is likely to have impacted the way they responded to the survey questions.

Below are the differences that need to be taken into account when interpreting the results in this report are:

Compared to FE students nationwide, Hello Future FE students were more likely to…

- Study in **Sixth forms rather than Colleges**
- Be in the **first year of Sixth Form (or Level 3 College)** / less likely to be at Level 2
- Identify as **White**
- Not be the **first in the family to go into HE**
- Not be a **Uni Connect target**

Source: Relevant questions/ variables from Phase 1 (CFE survey data)



Hello Future FE students are generally highly motivated to succeed and confident about their abilities, but reassurances about HE would help to counter doubts

Overall, **Hello Future FE students demonstrate high levels of confidence and drive to succeed** – there is good foundation for encouraging students to progress into Higher Education.

- 9 in 10 say they are motivated to do well in their studies
- More than 8 in 10 believe they could go to university if they wanted to and get grades needed for further studies

There is, however, **some degree of doubt** around suitability for HE and the academic ability to succeed in HE/ cope with the level of study required.

Overall, however, Hello Future FE students' attitudes are well aligned to those of students nationally.

ATTITUDES TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF SELF, % STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q4. How much do you agree with the following statements? Q11. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (Q4: n=550 / Q11: n=579)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

There is a strong recognition of the HE benefits amongst Hello Future FE students driving high claimed take-up of HE studies

The **majority of Hello Future FE students recognise the benefits of Higher Education**, with the top perceived benefits being: getting challenged intellectually, gaining valuable life skills and broadening horizons.

Hello Future students' attitudes to benefits of HE are overall comparable to those of FE students nationwide.

With many Hello Future FE students recognising the benefits of HE, the claimed take-up of HE studies is also high, with 4 in 5 likely to apply or having already applied for HE*.

81%
Will definitely apply, are very likely to apply or have already applied

50%
Will definitely apply or are very likely to apply

32%
Have already applied

Source: Phase 2, Q33. How likely are you to apply to higher education in future?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

* NOTE: The timings of Phase 2 fieldwork (June 2022) could have impacted these results.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, % AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE
Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q12. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (569)

Similar to the national picture, HE is the most popular next step for Hello Future FE students, followed by starting jobs. Apprenticeships are a less common pathway choice

Similar to students nationally, HE is the most popular choice amongst Hello Future students after current FE studies with around half planning to take this route.

Around 1 in 3 are looking to start a job and around 1 in 5 are planning to do an apprenticeship.

7 in 10 feel confident about their next steps whilst around 3 in 10 are uncertain, broadly echoing the mindset of FE students nationwide.

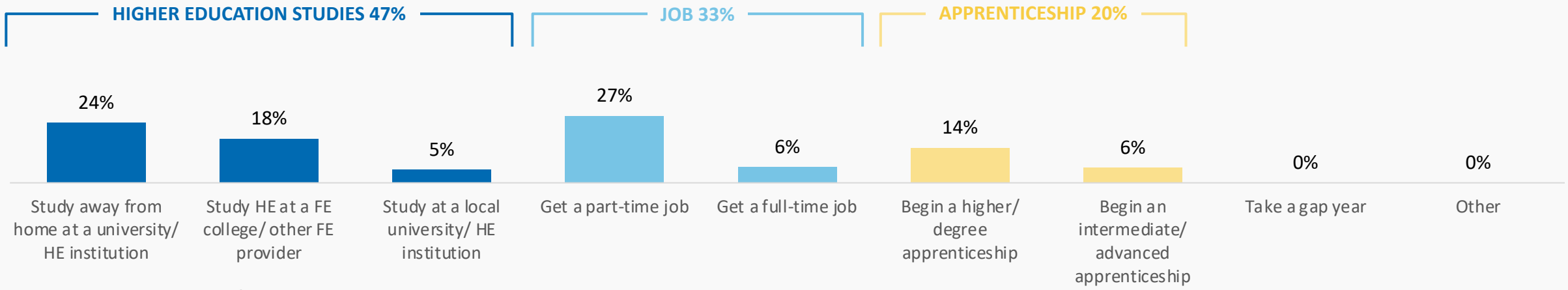
72% Feel confident about their next steps

28% Feel uncertain about their next steps

Source: Phase 2, Q31. How do you feel about your potential next steps?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (52)

FUTURE PLANS AFTER COMPLETING CURRENT STUDIES

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q29. When you finish your current studies, what do you expect to do next?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (50)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

Similar to FE students nationwide, Hello Future students' knowledge about Higher Education is relatively limited, indicating the need for advice and support

Similar to FE students nationwide, **Hello Future FE students' level of knowledge about specific aspects of HE is not very high** – at least 56% of students claim to know little or nothing about each particular aspect tested.

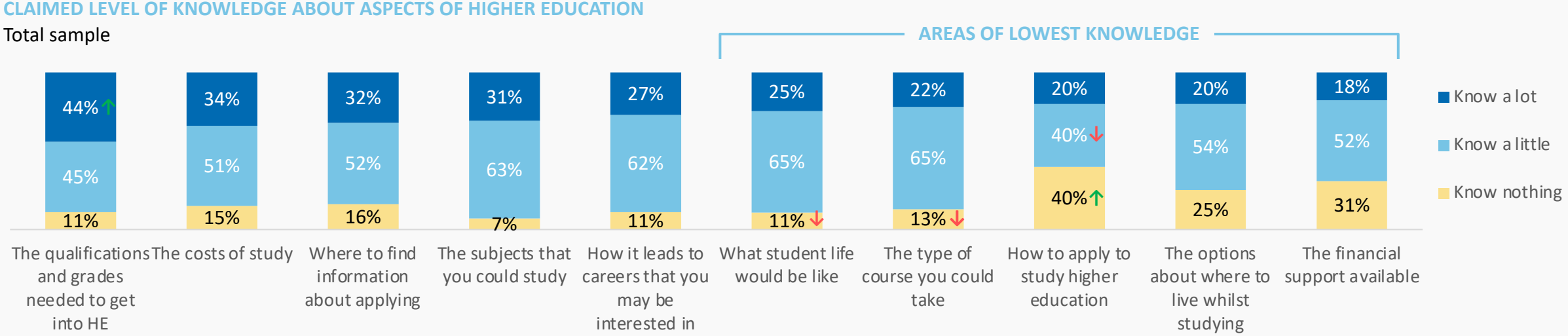
The qualifications/ grades needed to get into HE, costs of study, where to find information about applying and available subjects are aspects Hello Future FE students claim to know more about.

Areas where Hello Future students' knowledge is particularly lacking are: financial support, student life (including student accommodation options), application process and types of courses available. Knowledge about link to careers is also quite poor and would benefit from a boost.

All aspects of Hello Future students' knowledge about HE would benefit from a boost as there is a strong link between knowledge and HE take-up.

CLAIMED LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ASPECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q5/Q6. How much do you know about the following things about higher education?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (Q5: n=600, Q6: n=595)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

Whilst Hello Future FE students' knowledge about apprenticeships is better compared to students nationwide, it is important to continue educating on this pathway

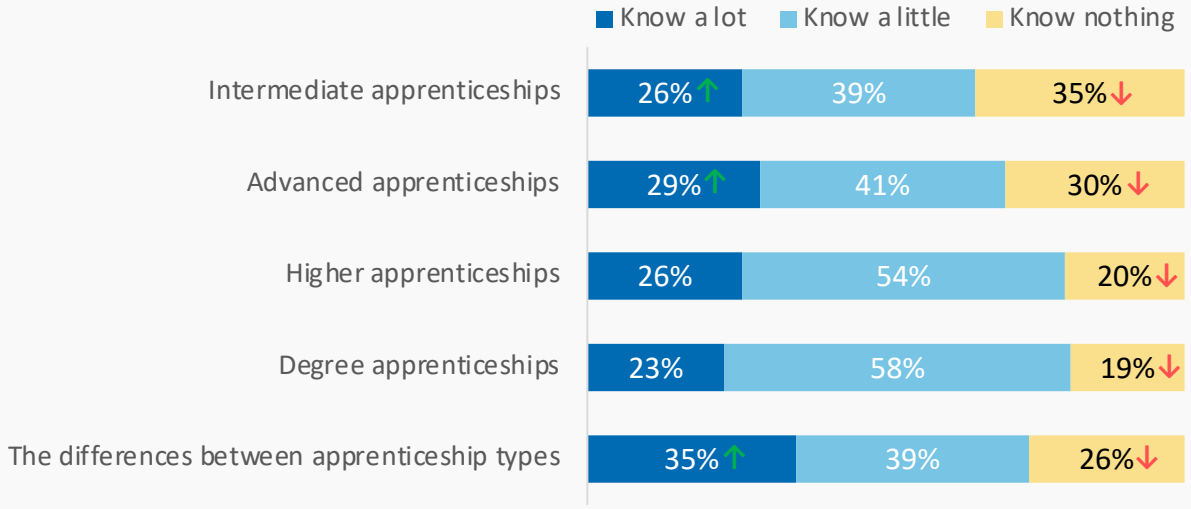
The **level of knowledge about most apprenticeship types** and the differences between them amongst Hello Future FE students is not very high, but **better compared to students nationwide.**

This **higher awareness and understanding of apprenticeships is also leading to their higher likely take-up** amongst Hello Future students.

> *"[I'd like to see] More information and positive attitude toward apprenticeships"*
>
> *Male, Sixth Form - Year 13*

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS

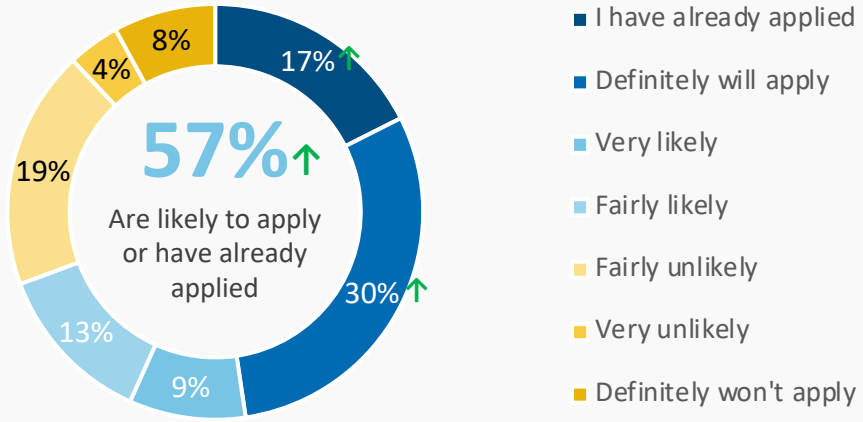
Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q51. How much do you know about these types of apprenticeship?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q34. How likely are you to apply to an apprenticeship in future?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

There is scope to improve FE students' knowledge about apprenticeships and perceptions of this pathway to encourage take-up

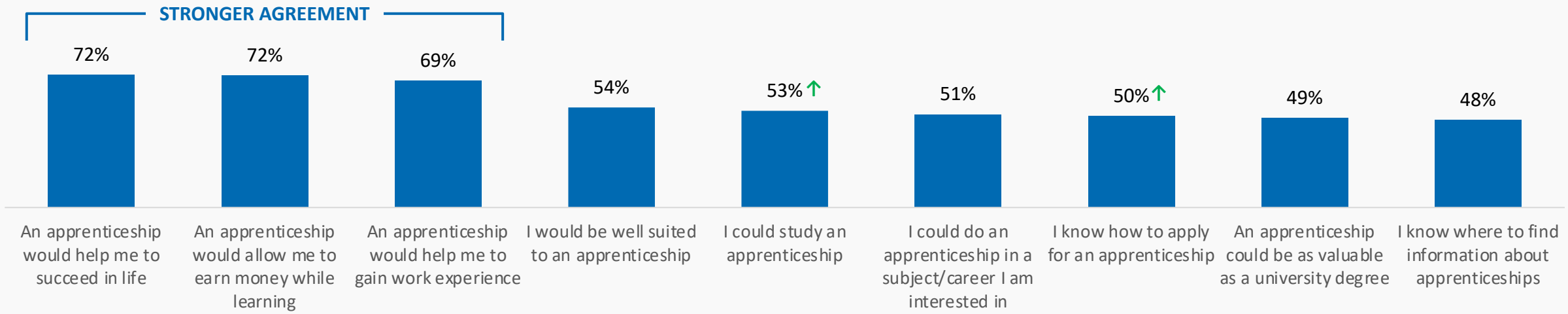
Most **Hello Future FE students agree that apprenticeships provide an opportunity to earn money while studying and gain work experience** and ultimately help to succeed in life.

Some reassurance is needed regarding students' suitability for an apprenticeship, but less compared to FE students nationwide.

There is some uncertainty over whether apprenticeships are as valuable as university degrees and can be done in subjects students are interested in. Knowledge about the application process is also lacking.

Overall, **Hello Future students' perceptions of apprenticeships are comparable (or slightly better)** compared to students nationwide.

AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS, % STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE
Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q52. How much do you agree with these points about apprenticeships?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

Hello Future students' clarity on potential future careers is higher than the national average, but could be further improved to help with decisions on the next steps

Hello Future FE students' clarity about the careers they want to pursue is somewhat greater compared to students nationwide – over 2 in 5 claim to have full clarity, around the same have some clarity but have not fully decided and the rest are still uncertain.

Clarity on future career increases the likelihood of going into HE. Helping students decide on a career path would drive HE consideration and take-up.

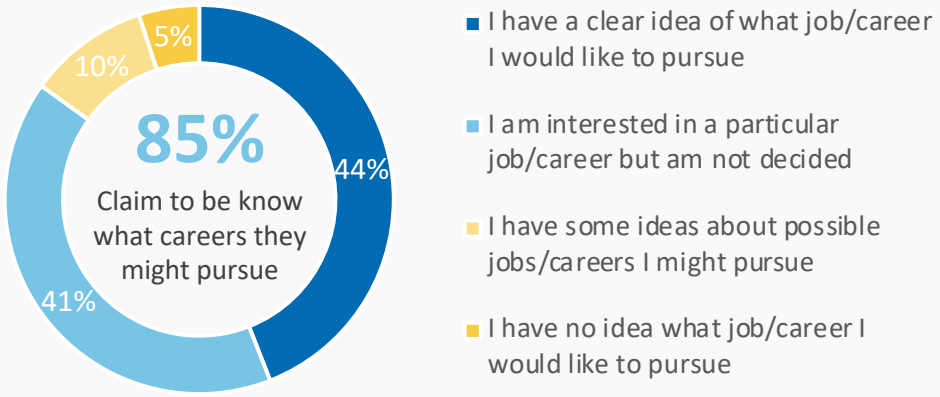
The role of career guidance should not be underestimated.

Career/ job opportunities is the 2nd priority for Hello Future FE students when deciding on their next steps after enjoyment/ interest in the subject.

Overall, there is a lot of consistency between Hello Future FE students and students nationwide in terms of the factors they consider important when deciding on the next steps, including career opportunities.

CLAIMED DEGREE OF CLARITY REGARDING FUTURE CAREER

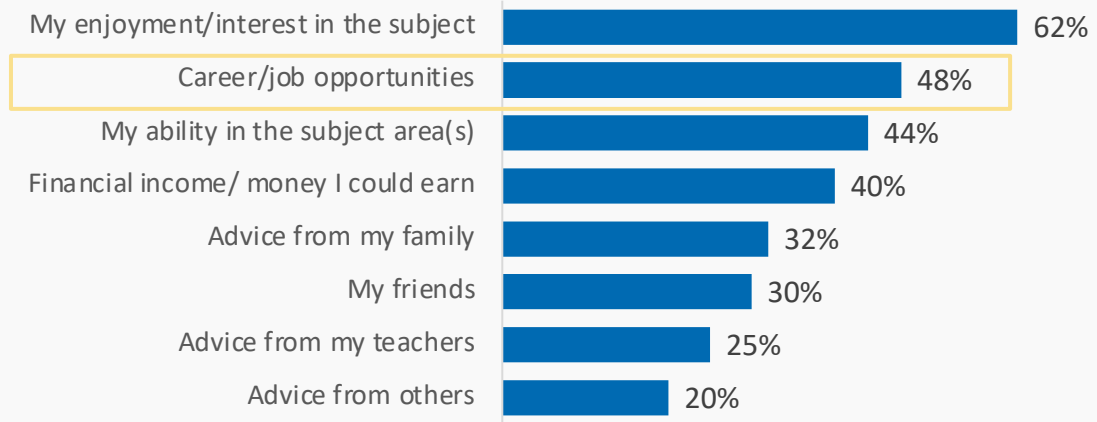
Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q35. And how would you describe your plans for your future job/career?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS WHEN DECIDING ON THE NEXT STEPS/ FUTURE PLANS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q40. How important are each of these in your future plans e.g. whether to go on to university or an apprenticeship, what job to do…? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

There is a need for careers advice and support for Hello Future FE students – currently as just over half claim to have received personal careers support in the past

Hello Future FE students' responses to the Gatsby statements highlight students' need for advice and support around careers.

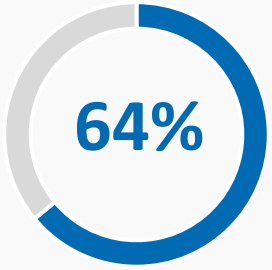
Around 3 in 5 students know how their current and/or future studies could lead to future careers and what jobs they would be suited to, meaning that 2 in 5 are uncertain.

Around a half have received personal support from their sixth forms or colleges to help them with their future careers and claim to be aware of the opportunities within different careers/ job. **Fewer have spent time with people/ in workplaces related to careers they might be interested in.**

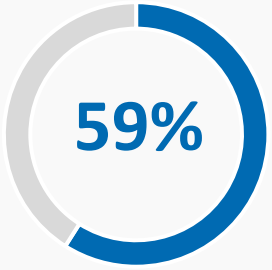
Overall, Hello Future FE students Gatsby statements responses are on a par with those of students nationally.

AGREEMENT WITH THE GATSBY STATEMENTS, % STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE

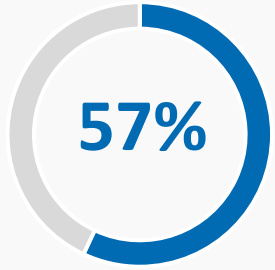
Total sample



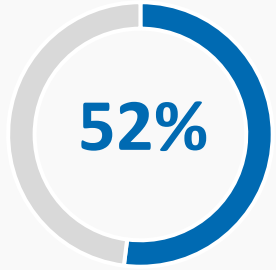
I know how my future studies could lead to future careers



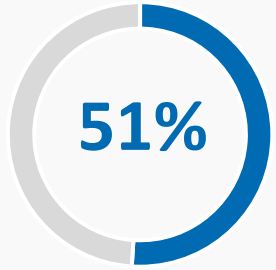
I know how my current studies could lead to future careers



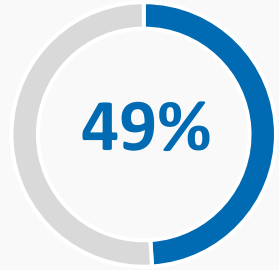
I know which jobs/career(s) I would be suited to



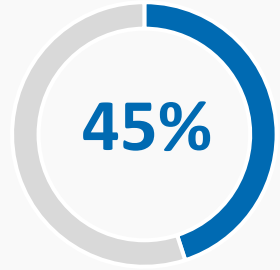
I have received personal support from my sixth form/ college, to help me with my future career



I am aware of the opportunities available in different jobs/careers



I have spent time with people in careers I am interested in



I have spent time in workplaces I may be interested in working in

Source: Phase 2, Q42. How much do you agree?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

Careers support is also a topic mentioned spontaneously by a significant number of Hello Future students, along with wanting more support in general

Career advice is also a topic that Hello Future students frequently mentioned spontaneously when asked about the type of support they would like to see more of.

> *"I need a lot more support regarding possible careers that would link to my current studies. Beyond lawyer, doctor, teacher, careers aid is extremely vague"*
>
> *Female, Sixth Form – Year 13*

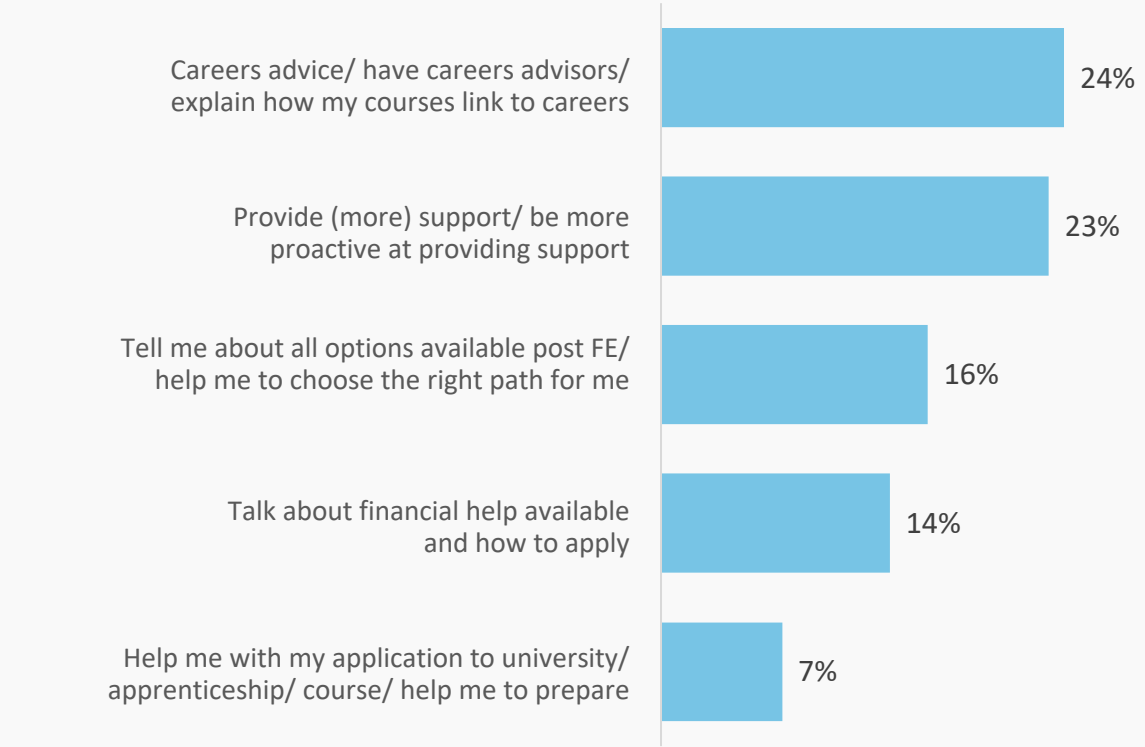
Hello Future FE students also talk about **wanting to receive more support in general**, provided proactively rather than leaving the onus on students to seek support they need.

There is also a **good appetite for learning about the full range of post FE pathways available** and how to choose the most suitable one.

Some students also mention wanting to **find out more about financial support available** to continue studies and how to apply for it.

Finally, there is also a need for **support with the application process** and help with preparing for it.

SPONTANEOUSLY MENTIONED SUPPORT NEEDS, ANYTHING >7% SHOWN
Total sample

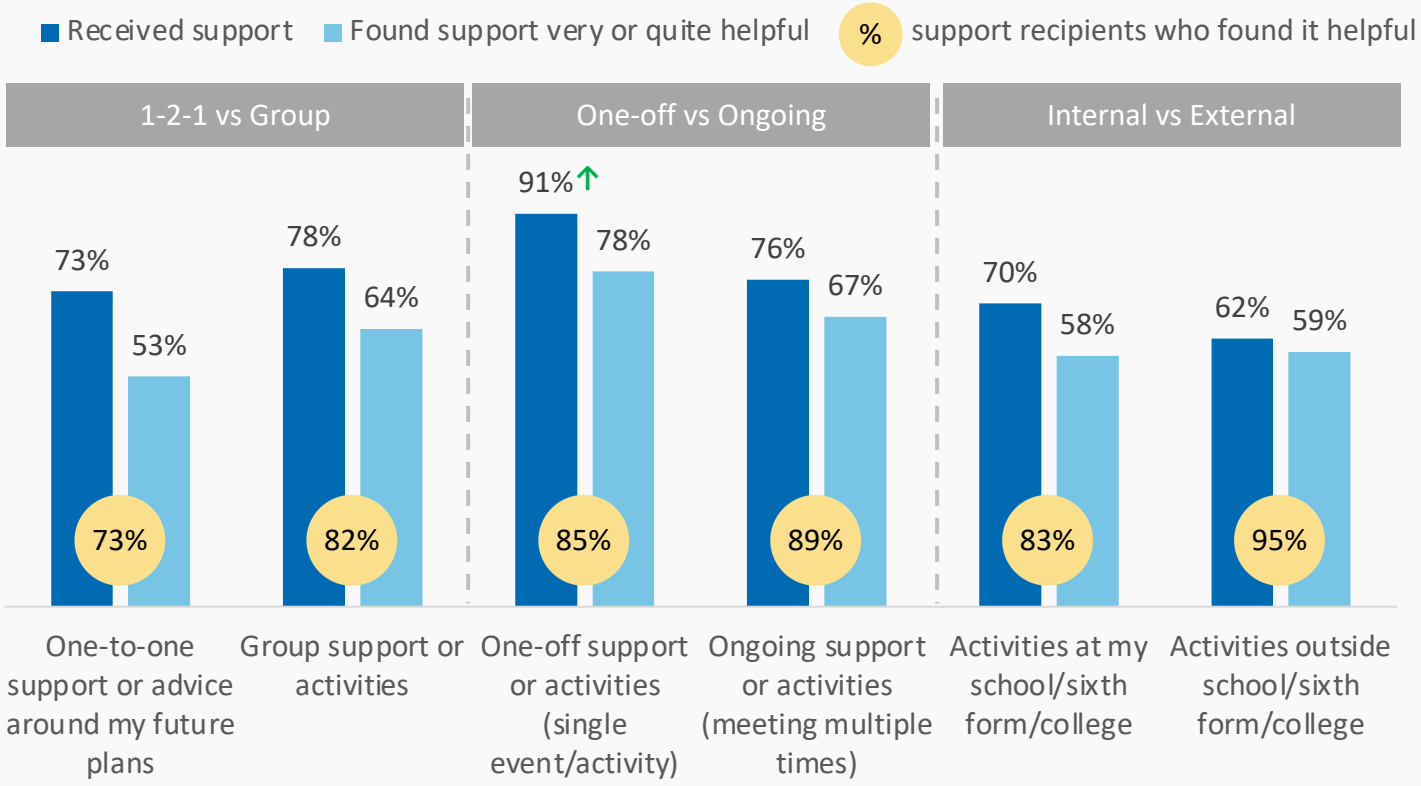


Source: Phase 2, Q67. Finally, if there was one thing your sixth form/college or anyone else could do to help you with your future study or career plans, what would that be?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (20) VERY LOW BASE, TREAT FIGURES AS INDICATIVE ONLY

Advice and support can be delivered in a range of formats, with students finding ongoing and external activities more helpful than their opposites

SUPPORT EXPERIENCED AND HOW HELPFUL IT WAS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q62. Which of these types of support have you experienced? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)
Q64. How much have these helped you in the past? Base: All who received each type of support, varying CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES, TREAT DATA AS INDICATIVE

Support provided to Hello Future FE students was welcome and considered helpful.

Support types particularly well received are e**xternal activities outside sixth form/ college** (considered helpful by 95% of those who received them) and **ongoing activities** (considered helpful by 89% of those who received them).

Activities received are broadly on par with the national average, with Hello Future FE students being somewhat more likely to receive one-off support activities.

Whilst there is a preference for ongoing and external activities, students' spontaneous responses indicate there is an appetite for a variety of support formats.

> ***"[I'd like] Meetings, different options, aptitude tests, trained professionals who know all different areas of work and study"***
>
> *Female, Sixth Form - Year 13*

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

PART 2: National FE student segmentation

Cosmos carried out a national segmentation of FE student and identified four distinct segments, each with a unique set of traits and support needs

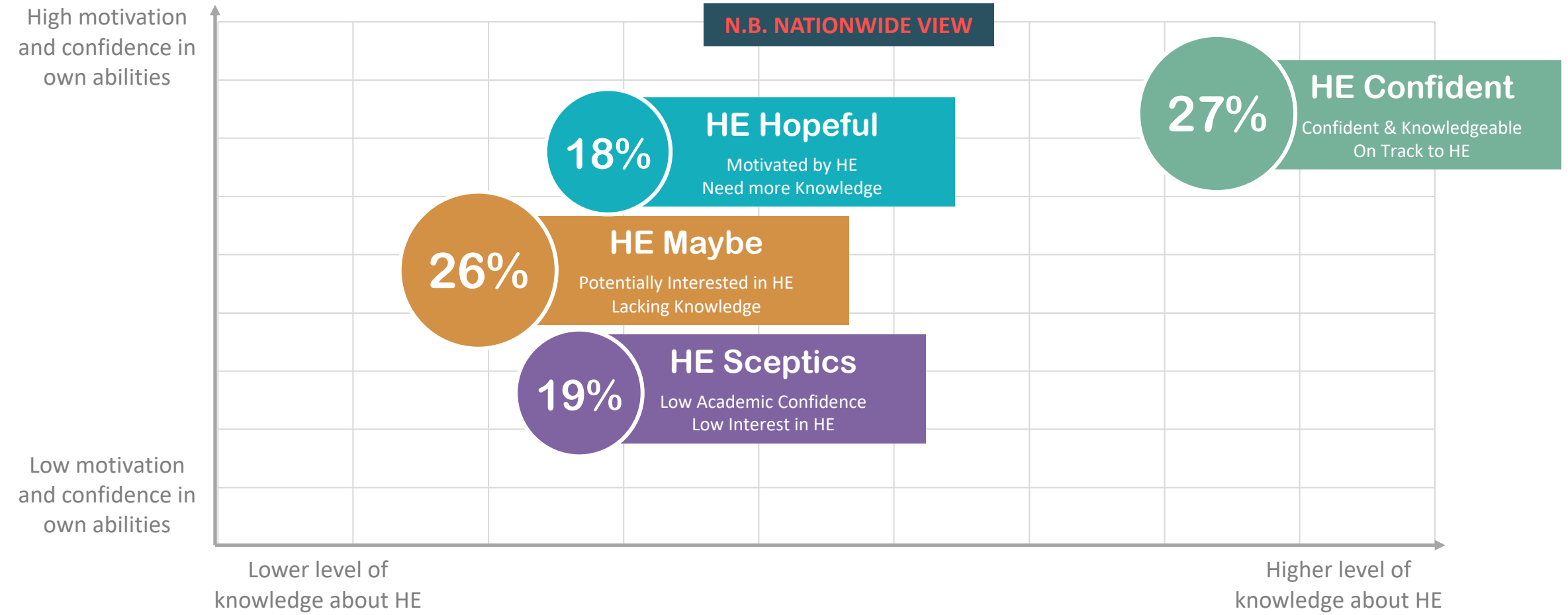
The national segmentation is the result of analysis of over 30,000 FE student responses to the CFE student survey. We used a statistical technique called cluster analysis to identify how students grouped or 'clustered' based on their common responses to key HE knowledge and attitude theme statements (23 in total) i.e., on which statements students tended to align or differ.

The cluster analysis offered a range of solutions from three segments up to seven, all of which were statistically correct and merely grouped or distinguished clusters at varying degrees of detail. We reviewed these outputs and the characteristics of segments in each of these solutions, before settling on the four-segment solution.

We believe that the four-segment solution provides a clear narrative and approach to identifying and supporting FE students nationally, with our Uni Connect partners expressing positive feedback on this approach following our dissemination of Phase 1 segmentation findings.



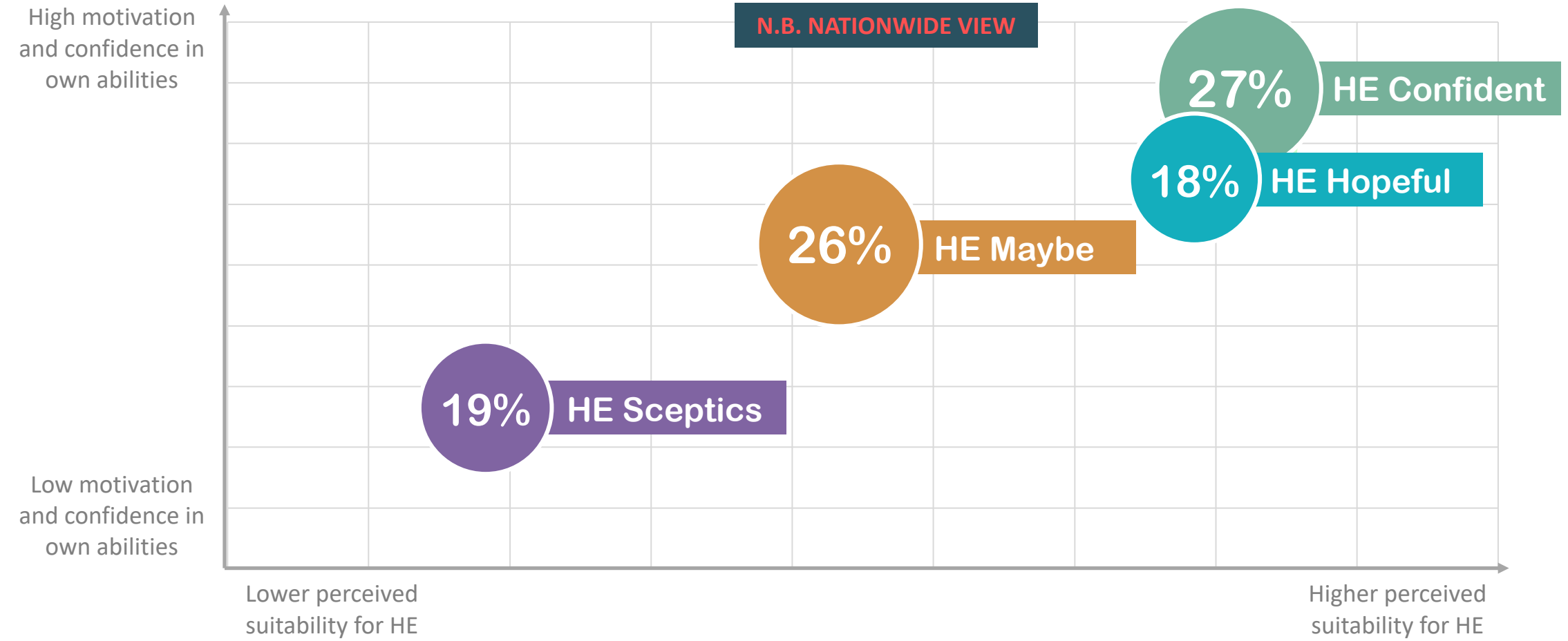
The four segments identified each represent a significant share of the FE student population. Their in-depth understanding is essential for support targeting



Source: Phase 1 of research (CFE survey)

N.B. 10% of FE students were unassigned to a segment due to incomplete CFE survey responses. Statistical cluster analysis requires participants to complete all questions of interest in order to be included.

Segment mapping against motivation and confidence and perceived suitability for Higher Education



Source: Phase 1 of research (CFE survey)

N.B. 10% of FE students were unassigned to a segment due to incomplete CFE survey responses. Statistical cluster analysis requires participants to complete all questions of interest in order to be included.

The segments at a glance

	HE Confident Confident & Knowledgeable On Track to HE	HE Hopeful Motivated by HE Need more Knowledge	HE Maybe Potentially Interested in HE Lacking Knowledge	HE Sceptics Low Academic Confidence Low Interest in HE
Segment size	27%	18%	26%	19%
Segment summary	▪ Highly motivated and confident in their ability to succeed ▪ Strong believers in the benefits of HE, but are less 'wowed' by it than HE Hopeful, see HE as 'expected' ▪ High level of knowledge about HE, but some could still improve specific knowledge, e.g. link to careers, student life/ accommodation etc. ▪ Most likely to have family who have been to HE	▪ Highly motivated to do well in studies and confident about own abilities ▪ Highest agreement with benefits of HE compared to the rest of the segments ▪ Significantly lower HE knowledge compared to HE Confident, possibly due to being younger/ earlier in their education journey ▪ Less likely than HE Confident to have family who have been to HE	▪ Quite motivated but lacking in confidence ▪ Mostly positive attitudes towards HE but less so than HE Confident and HE Hopeful ▪ The least knowledgeable segment when it comes to HE, possibly due to being younger and having more time before making the decision about their next steps ▪ Less likely than HE Confident to have family who have been to HE	▪ Low confidence and motivation - don't believe they can succeed in HE ▪ Mostly disinterested in HE, despite greater reported HE knowledge than HE Maybe ▪ Could be challenging to convince about HE/ more suitable to other pathways ▪ The least likely of the segments to have family who have been to HE
Openness to HE	VERY HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Openness to apprenticeships	VERY LOW	VERY LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
Support required	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH

Source: Phases 1 and 2 of research

The segments have varying degrees of confidence and motivation to succeed academically which impacts their perceived fit with Higher Education

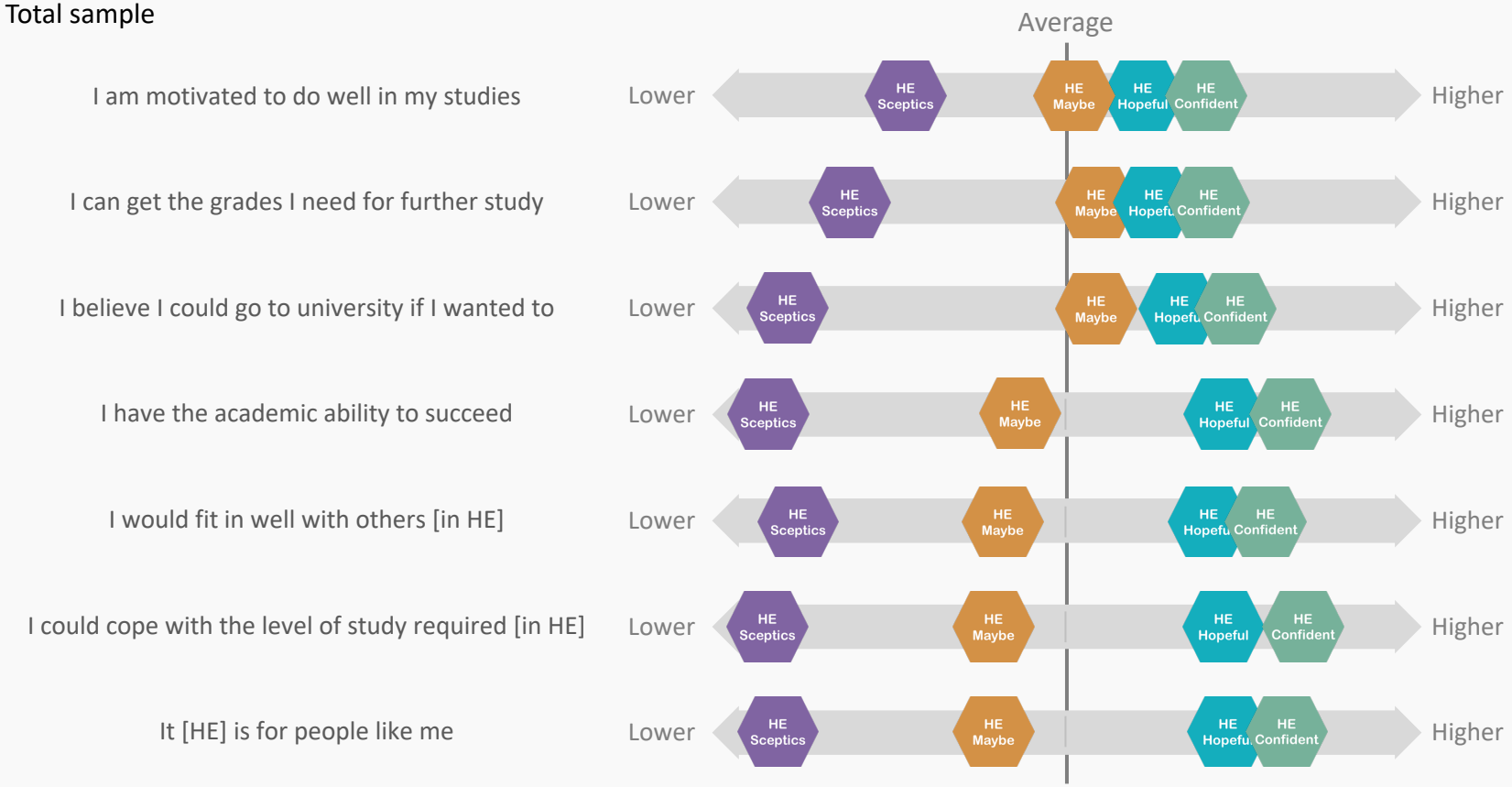
HE Confident and **HE Hopeful** demonstrate a greater degree of confidence, self-belief and motivation to succeed, particularly when it comes to higher education. They are also more likely to see themselves fitting well in the HE environment than the other two segments.

HE Maybe show 'middling' levels of motivation and confidence in their academic abilities. When it comes to Higher Education, they are likely to have doubts about their fit with this environment.

Whilst some degree of motivation and self-believe is there for **HE Sceptics** more broadly, they are the segment that is the least likely to believe they can go to a university if they wanted to or see themselves as fitting well with the Higher Education environment.

ATTITUDES TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND SELF-PERCEPTION BY SEGMENT

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q4. How much do you agree with the following statements? Q11. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? Base: All respondents (HE Confident n=9106/9395, HE Hopeful n=6062/6320, HE Maybe n=7478/8907, HE Sceptics n=6078/6575)

Most segments recognise the benefits of Higher Education, with HE Sceptics being the segment where most work is needed to get the benefits across

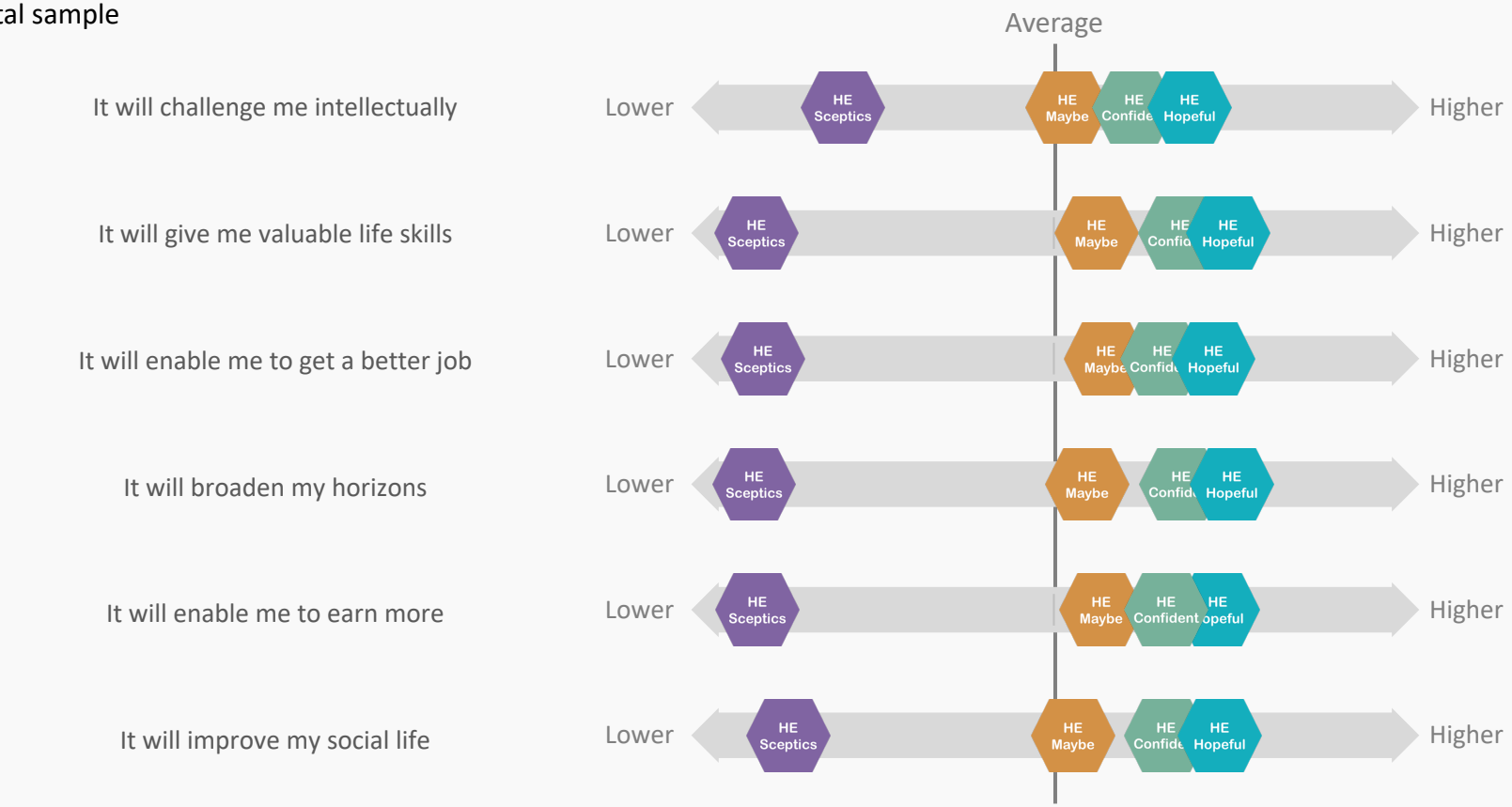
HE Confident, **HE Hopeful** and **HE Maybe** all recognise the benefits of the Higher Education to a similar degree, with **HE Hopeful** in particular being most convinced of the benefits of going into Higher Education.

HE Maybe's recognition of HE benefits is strong, but lower compared to **HE Confident** and **HE Hopeful**, suggesting the need for more convincing.

HE Sceptics are significantly less likely to recognise the benefits of Higher Education – this is the segment where most effort is needed to communicate the benefits in a powerful and convincing way.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY SEGMENT

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q12. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education?
Base: All respondents (HE Confident n=9388, HE Hopeful n=6318, HE Maybe n=8,908, HE Sceptics n=6,575)

Besides HE Confident, the level of knowledge about aspects of Higher Education amongst the other three segments is low, so proactive communication is key

HE Confident demonstrate the highest levels of HE knowledge across all key aspects, particularly qualifications/ grades required, subjects available and application process.

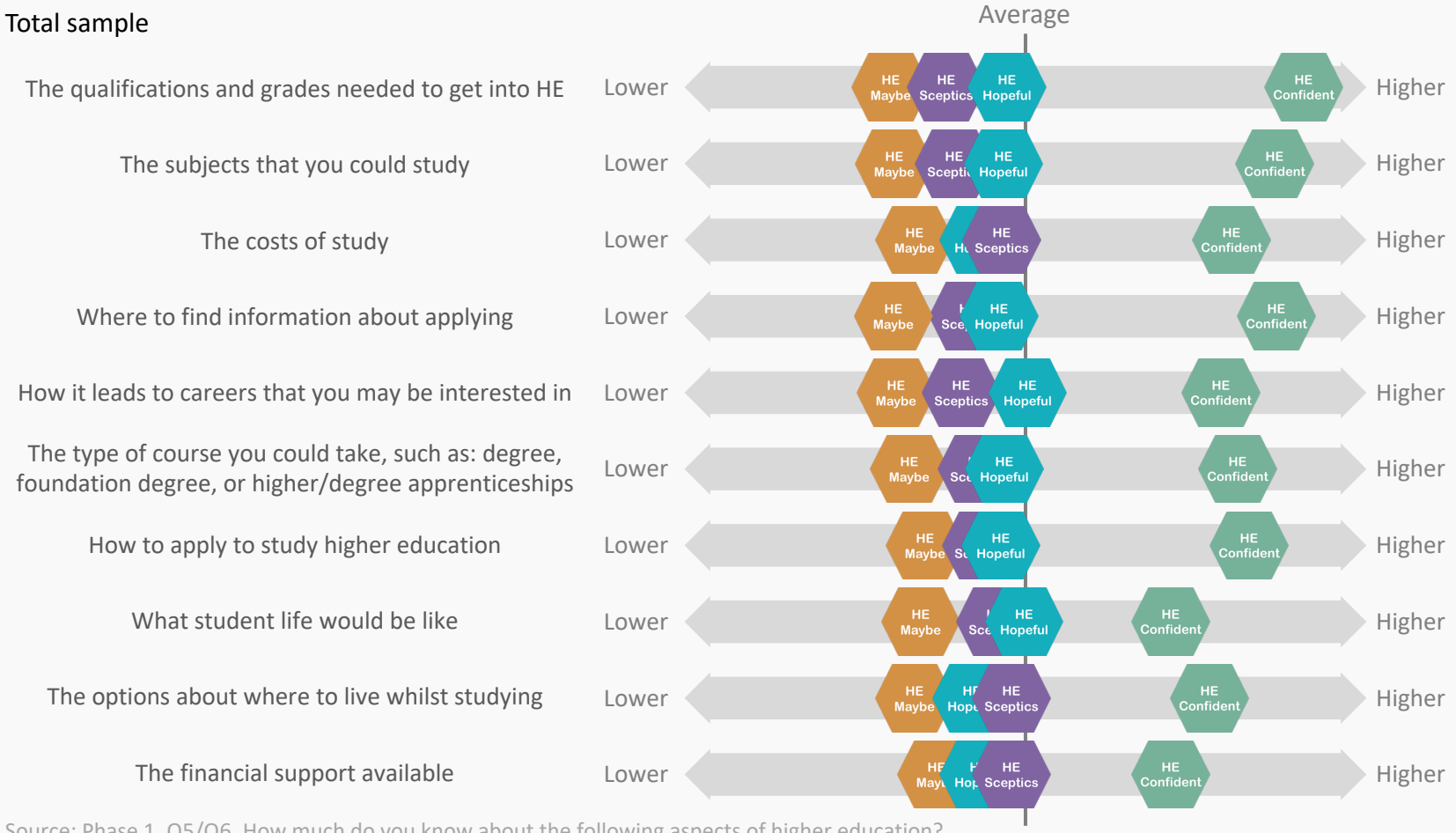
HE Hopeful have a significantly lower level of knowledge compared to **HE Confident**. **HE Hopeful** are particularly behind **HE Confident** in terms of knowledge around qualifications/ grades needed and application process.

HE Sceptics' knowledge about HE is significantly lower than **HE Confident**'s and slightly lower but comparable to **HE Hopeful**. They slightly outperform **HE Hopeful** on knowledge about costs, financial support available and accommodation options.

HE Maybe's HE knowledge is the lowest across all key areas including those that should be investigated early on i.e. qualifications/ grades required, subjects available and what is involved in application.

CLAIMED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION BY SEGMENT

Total sample



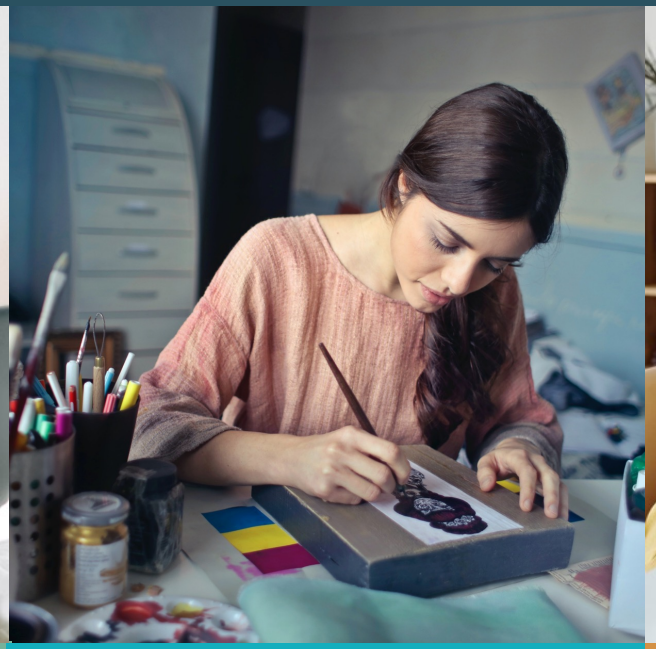
Source: Phase 1, Q5/Q6. How much do you know about the following aspects of higher education?
Base: All respondents (HE Confident n=9356, HE Hopeful n=6312, HE Maybe n=8899, HE Sceptics n=6565)

On top of the attitudes the segmentation was built on, there are other criteria the segments differentiate on. Let's deep dive into each of the segments in more detail…



HE Confident

CLICK HERE TO GO TO SEGMENT PROFILE



HE Hopeful

CLICK HERE TO GO TO SEGMENT PROFILE



HE Maybe

CLICK HERE TO GO TO SEGMENT PROFILE



HE Sceptics

CLICK HERE TO GO TO SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Confident

Overview



SIZE

27%

OPENNESS TO HE

VERY HIGH

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females
- Representative in terms of ethnicity
- Slightly older (19 y.o.)
- Often in the last year of the Sixth Form
- Most likely of the segments to have family who have been to HE
- More likely to currently study more 'traditional' subjects (e.g. Science, Social Science, Maths, History, English)

"I know what I want to do and I have what it takes to succeed. I'm confident about my choices, but a sounding board would be useful"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

Highly motivated to do well and the most confident of the segments about their academic abilities (reflected in their overall higher GCSE and expected A Level grades).

See themselves as highly suited for HE.

HE BENEFITS

Strong believers in the benefits of HE but are somewhat less 'wowed' by it compared to HE Hopeful; they are more likely to see HE as a given.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

Highly knowledgeable about HE, particularly the aspects related to applying as they are more likely to have applied already or looking to apply.

The most confident of all segments about their next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to smoothly transition into HE and settle in e.g., information about student life, accommodation options, student finances.

Future careers advice/ helping them to discover professions they can pursue with the degrees they are considering/ have chosen.

HE Hopeful

Overview



SIZE

18%

OPENNESS TO HE

HIGH

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females
- Representative in terms of ethnicity, with a mild BAME skew
- Slightly younger (17 y.o. or less)
- Typically, in the penultimate year of the Sixth Form or in Level 3 College
- Average likelihood to have family in HE
- More likely than other segments to be currently studying Arts/ Design and Law

"I feel like I know what I want to do and I feel confident I can succeed. I want to go into HE, but I still need to do a lot of research about it"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

Highly motivated to do well and very confident in their academic abilities (reflected in their second highest GCSE and expected A Level grades).

See themselves as highly suited for HE.

HE BENEFITS

The strongest believers in the benefits of HE of the segments and are particularly more likely to link HE to better jobs, higher earning and and improved social life.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

Are somewhat lacking knowledge about HE – including the topics that are useful to learn about early on. This could be due to the stage in their education journey (slightly earlier on compared to HE Confident).

Have average (61%) level of confidence about next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to understand what pathway is best for them and guiding them through the steps of getting there (e.g. support with the subjects/ qualifications needed, application process).

Future careers advice/ helping them to discover professions they can pursue based on the subjects they like/ are good at.

HE Maybe
Overview



SIZE

26%

OPENNESS TO HE

MEDIUM

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females
- Representative in terms of ethnicity
- Slightly younger (17 y.o. or less)
- More likely to be in Year 12 of Sixth Form or Level 1 of College
- Slightly less likely to have family in HE
- More likely than other segments to be (interested in) studying Health/ Social care

"I want to do well and would like to go into Higher Education, but I'm not sure it'll be a good fit for me... There's a lot I still don't know about HE"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

Quite motivated to do well in studies, but are somewhat doubtful about their academic abilities, (reflected in their lower GCSE and expected A Level grades compared to HE Confident and HE Hopeful).

Uncertain about their suitability for HE.

HE BENEFITS

Are likely to recognise the benefits of HE but are less certain about those compared to HE Confident and HE Hopeful segments.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

Are the least knowledgeable of the segments in terms of all aspects related to HE, including such essential areas as qualifications and grades needed, costs, subjects available and how to apply. This could partially be due to their stage in the education journey (slightly earlier on).

Have average (62%) level of confidence about next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to discover options available (whilst ensuring they understand the benefits of HE), identify those that are best suited based on their interests and guiding them through the process.

Future careers advice/ helping them to discover professions they might be suited to based on their interests and abilities/ strengths.

HE Sceptics

Overview



SIZE

19%

OPENNESS TO HE

LOW

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females, with a mild skew towards Males
- Slightly more likely to identify as White
- Slightly older (19 y.o. or older)
- Often in the last year of Sixth Form or College
- Less likely to have family in HE
- More likely to be into practical subjects (e.g. Business, Art/ Design, Engineering)

"I'd like to do well in my current studies, but I'm not sure if HE is the right pathway for me. I don't think it'll be that beneficial or suited to me"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

The least motivated of the segments and most doubtful about their academic abilities (which is also reflected in the lowest GCSE and expected A Level grades compared to the other three segments).

Strongly doubt their fit with HE.

HE BENEFITS

Are the least likely of the segments to believe in the benefits of HE, including that it will enable them to get better jobs and have better earnings.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

They are lacking knowledge about HE but know more compared to HE Maybe, which could be a factor of them being slightly older/ further down in their education journey.

They are the most uncertain segment when it comes to next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Help them to understand the benefits of HE and accurately assess their suitability.

If HE is not the most suitable option, help them to identify the best alternatives based on their interests and abilities/ strengths, and guiding them towards those.

Future careers advice/ helping them to identify potential jobs they could pursue based on their interests and strengths.

Now that we understand the segments in more depth, let's summarise their mindsets and top needs

	HE Confident	HE Hopeful	HE Maybe	HE Sceptics
Mindset	*"I know what I want to do and I have what it takes to succeed. I'm confident about my choices, but a sounding board would be useful"*	*"I feel like I know what I want to do and I feel confident I can succeed. I want to go into HE, but I still need to do a lot of research about it"*	*"I want to do well and would like to go into Higher Education, but I'm not sure it'll be a good fit for me... There's a lot I still don't know about HE"*	*"I'd like to do well in my current studies, but I'm not sure if HE is the right pathway for me. I don't think it'll be that beneficial or suited to me"*
#1 need	**Reassure/ sense check** Reassure me that I'm on the right track – help me to confirm I've chosen the right course/ university	**Reassure/ sense check** Help me to confirm that HE is the right path for me	**Show me my options** Help me understand if HE is right for me or if I might be better suited to a different pathway	**Reassure/ sense check** Help me to confirm that the pathway I'm considering is right for me given my goals, interests and strengths
#2 need	**Student life guidance** Tell me about what HE student life will be like – what to expect, where to live etc. – to help me prepare	**Help to prepare for HE** Tell me about all aspects of HE, particularly course/ universities available and what I'll need to apply	**Help get the grades** Help me to ensure I have sufficient grades to apply to HE if I want to; help me with my confidence/ self-esteem	**Help me to succeed** Help me to pursue the chosen path, be it apprenticeship or job, with relevant advice/ give me access to resources
Common need #1	**Career guidance** – Help me to explore career paths available early on to ensure that I choose the right qualifications to obtain, the right course/ subject to study. As part of this, explain to me how different careers link my individual strengths (e.g. analytical, creative, leadership, people skills etc.) to help me understand what careers I'll have the best chance of succeeding in. Once ideal career path is identified, help me to ensure I have the tools/ access to information to successfully get on that path			
Common need #2	*Not a need or considerably less of a need for this segment*	**Post FE pathway guidance** – help me to discover all my options post FE, including HE, different types of apprenticeships as well as employment and explain the pros and cons of each, so I can choose what I think will work best for me		

It is important to keep in mind that the segments are not permanent, and students can flow between segments backward and forward

Depending on the interventions, we see four possible 'segment flow' options:

Higher probability/
relatively low effort required to achieve

1. HE Hopeful → HE Confident

Medium probability/
medium effort required to achieve

2. HE Maybe → HE Hopeful → HE Confident

Lower probability/
high effort required to achieve

4. HE Sceptics → HE Maybe → HE Hopeful

3. HE Maybe → HE Sceptics

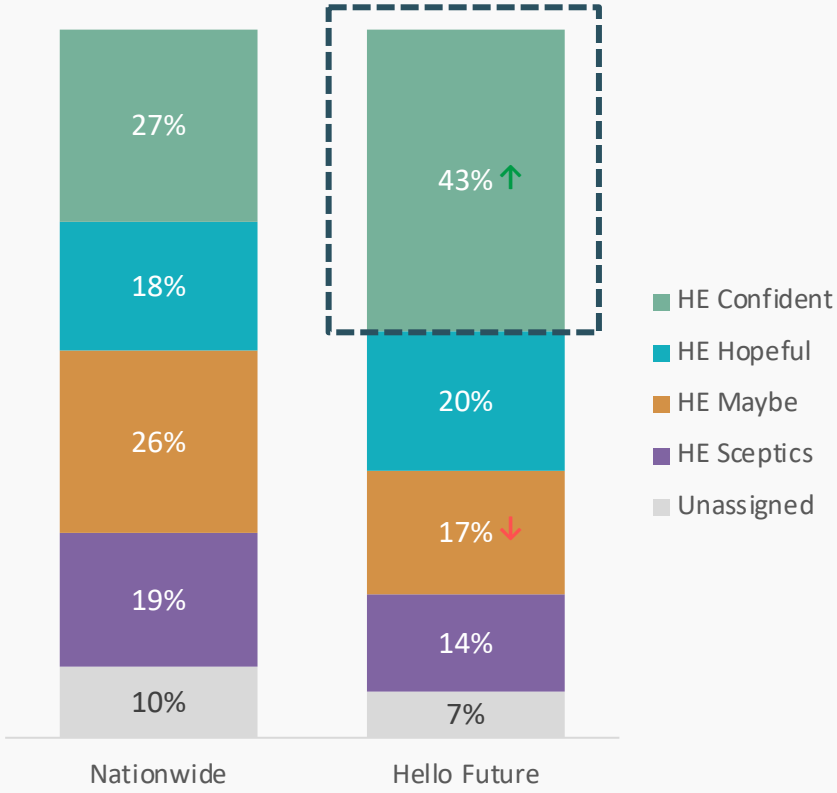
**we recognise that this may not be a desired outcome for partners, but is a possibility*

PART 3: Opportunities and ways forward

In order to develop interventions appropriately, it is important to understand the segment distribution amongst Hello Future FE students compared to students nationally

SEGMENT DISTRIBUTION WITHIN HELLO FUTURE VS NATIONWIDE

Total sample



Source: Phase 1 of research (CFE survey), Waves 2&3 only

Within Hello Future students, the proportion of **HE Confident**, the most engaged and positive towards HE segment, is greater compared to students nationwide. The size of this segment might warrant a greater focus when prioritising interventions.

It is overall good news for Hello Future as **HE Confident** have very much decided on university as their next step, and at this point need support in achieving this goal. Depending on the stage in the journey they are in, they will need the following types of support:

1) **Decided to go to university, but not sure which one / what to study** – provide support around potential future careers based on students' interests and what courses/ subjects could help lead to those (and universities where these can be studied with pros and cons of each)

2) **Decided on course/ university, but have not applied** – sense check the qualifications studied for will enable entry to the university/ course of choice, advice on grades needed, direct to relevant resources on the application process, help prepare for application

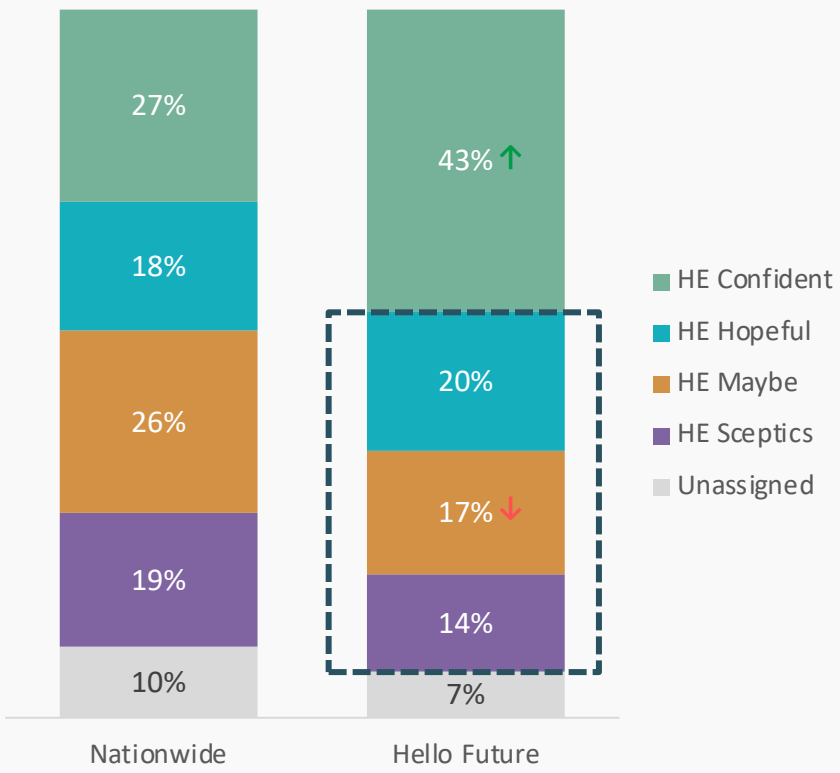
3) **Decided on course/ university and applied** – prepare for the transition into HE including providing information about student life, where to live, part-time work options, how to manage finances etc.

Even if students are quite far down the process with applying to HE, it is beneficial to proactively sense check those choices against desired future careers.

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs students nationally on the 95% confidence level

It is important not to forget about less dominant student segments as they are the ones that require most support

SEGMENT DISTRIBUTION WITHIN HELLO FUTURE VS NATIONWIDE
Total sample



Source: Phase 1 of research (CFE survey), Waves 2&3 only

Whist **HE Confident** is currently the biggest segment within Hello Future students, the remaining 57% is made up of segments that are less knowledgeable about HE and needing more advice and support.

HE Maybe, being the least knowledgeable and certain segment, first and foremost need advice on the options available post FE and help in choosing the most suitable path for themselves. Once the pathway chosen, they will require comprehensive information about it, and support with pursuing it.

HE Sceptics, as the least positive about HE segment, will not be easily convinced to consider HE. It is important to start a conversation with them from understanding their goals and career aspirations, and sense checking their chosen pathway against those. If a better alternative option is available, they will require comprehensive information about it, and support with pursuing it.

HE Hopeful, being very positive overall about HE and convinced about its benefits, need more information about all aspects of HE, from types of course and subjects available (and how those link to desired future careers) to universities where these can be studied, their costs and application requirements/ processes to the full range of topics related to student life.

ABOUT COSMOS

hello future.

Our project team



Sarah Dirrane

Director, Research & Strategy

- **Trained researcher** – Masters in Research Methodology at University of Leeds
- Experienced in delivering **multi-method research programmes** across both qualitative & quantitative research methods
- Led on **evaluation & Impact programme** for Uni Connect consortiums and access/outreach initiatives
- Delivered research & evaluation services in the **education, HEI and public sectors**
- **Developed Access & Participation Plans** – deep understanding of the wider access and outreach context
- **Knowledge & understanding of the HEI sector** – led the research & Intelligence Team for 5 years at a large HEI

Senior Research Associates

- Cosmos has a **wealth of experience within its team**, with **only accomplished and experienced researchers** making up the project team.
- The team consists of Senior Research Associates that have **extensive experience** across a plethora of research methodologies, in many cases **10+ years experience**.
- Experience ranges from project management, directing research departments, teams of researchers and a large portfolio of research projects



Sean Dirrane

Managing Director

- **Significant knowledge** of the HEI sector
- 10-year career at Leeds Beckett University, **Widening Participation Practitioner & WP Manager: Research & Evaluation**
- **Engagement & Training** - specialist in the Education and Social Care sectors
- Works with a range of WP audiences and has relevant and extensive experience **working with school & college stakeholders**
- **Works closely with a number of Uni Connect networks** delivering work which is highly focussed on supporting and developing disadvantaged and marginalised groups, primary focusing on supporting young disadvantaged men through the Marginal Gains programme
- Has also developed a number of other initiatives working with the Social Care sector and Uni Connect networks

Our clients

We have extensive experience working in the Uni Connect space. Our clients include…



















Appendix A: Methodology detail

Phase 1: CFE data

Office for Students (OfS) commissioned CFE Research to undertake an impact evaluation assessing the changes that have resulted from Uni Connect interventions. Since this work was commissioned, CFE Research have run several waves of research amongst learners of various ages nationally via a survey distributed by the participating partners.

Some of the data collected for FE students specifically was shared with Cosmos under the GDPR guidelines for analysis and development of an attitudinal FE student segmentation. The data shared included a range of socio-demographic indicators as well as students' responses to a range of attitudinal statements around:

- Level of motivation to do well in studies and confidence (e.g., to go to a university, get the grades required for further studies etc.)
- Perceived suitability for HE/ fit in the HE environment
- Perceived benefits of HE
- Level of knowledge about various aspects of HE etc.
- Likelihood to apply to HE in the future

Cosmos' analysis focused on Waves 2 & 3 of the CFE research which covered both pre and post Covid periods and included over 30,000 student surveys.



Phase 1: Cluster Analysis

The national segmentation is the result of analysis of over 30,000 FE student responses to the CFE student survey. Cosmos used a statistical cluster analysis to identify how students grouped or 'clustered' based on their common responses to key HE knowledge and attitude theme statements, i.e. on which statements students tended to align or differ.

The cluster analysis offered a range of solutions from three segments up to seven, all of which were statistically correct and merely grouped or distinguished clusters at varying degrees of detail. Cosmos reviewed these outputs and the characteristics of segments in each of these solutions, before settling on the four-segment solution as shown. It was felt that the three-segment solution was too broad and provided limited benefit, while solutions of five segments and more were too detailed and only served to dilute the differences between segments that were clear in the four-segment solution, as well as being more difficult to recall and utilise.

Another benefit of the four-segment approach is the size or prevalence of the segments, ranging from 18% to 27% nationally. While the exact proportion or distribution of segments varies at a regional level (regional figures have been shared with each of our Uni Connect partners), having just four segments ensures that there are a significant number of students of each segment within each region – allowing partners to identify, differentiate and target the needs of their students accordingly. Having four segments also made it easier for Cosmos to acquire sufficient sample sizes for each segment, to facilitate robust comparison and insights included in this report. All the benefits above may have been lost, or significantly impeded, by the use of five or more segments.

Cosmos believe that the four-segment solution as shown and discussed throughout this report provides a clear narrative and approach to identifying and supporting FE students nationally, with our Uni Connect partners expressing positive feedback on this approach following our dissemination of Phase 1 segmentation findings.

Phase 2: A note on weighting

As the Phase 2 sample was not designed to be representative of the UK FE student population and instead used a pragmatic approach with minimum quotas per region/ partnership (without further quotas on study level or demographics), the segment distribution achieved in Phase 2 was quite different to that identified in Phase 1 (CFE survey data).

Our view was that the segment distribution observed in Phase 1 was closer to reality considering the robustness of the sample size (30,000+ records). Hence, the decision was made to weight Phase 2 data on segment for analysis and reporting purposes, aligning the distribution as close to that of Phase 1 as possible.

Weighting factors between 0.45-3.0 were applied on each survey response – the table on the right summarises the final approach.

APPROACH TO PHASE 2 DATA WEIGHTING

	Raw/ unweighted Phase 2 segment distribution	Phase 1 segment distribution (CFE survey data)	Proposed weights (including upper caps of 3.0*)	Final Phase 2 segment distribution
HE Confident	59%	27%	0.45	26%
HE Hopeful	6%	18%	3.00*	17%
HE Maybe	11%	26%	2.57	28%
HE Sceptics	21%	19%	0.92	19%
Unassigned	3%	10%	3.00*	10%

As the table shows, in Phase 2 data:

- **HE Hopeful, HE Maybe and Unassigned** segments were up-weighted
- **HE Confident segment** was down-weighted
- **HE Sceptics'** proportion remained broadly the same

* IMPORTANT: An upper cap of 3.0 was applied to weighting factors to ensure the extent of weighting is within an acceptable range and does not undermine reliability of the data.

Appendix B: Additional data

Top knowledge needs of Hello Future FE students in relation to Higher Education

Student life and costs of study are the top areas of interest for Hello Future FE students when it comes to HE knowledge.

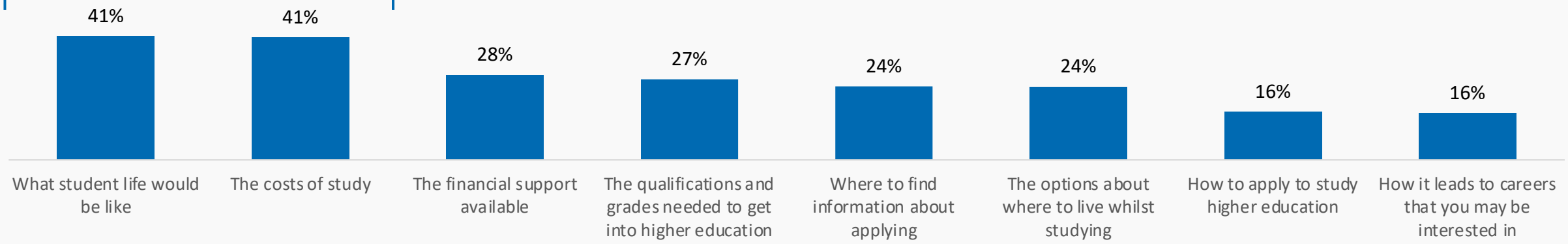
Around 1 in 4 would like to learn more about the financial support available, the qualifications/ grades needed, where to find information about applying and student accommodation options.

NOTE: Base size of this question is insufficient to reliably compare Hello Future FE students' responses to students nationally.

DESIRED INFORMATION ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

Total sample

TOP INFORMATION NEEDS ABOUT HE



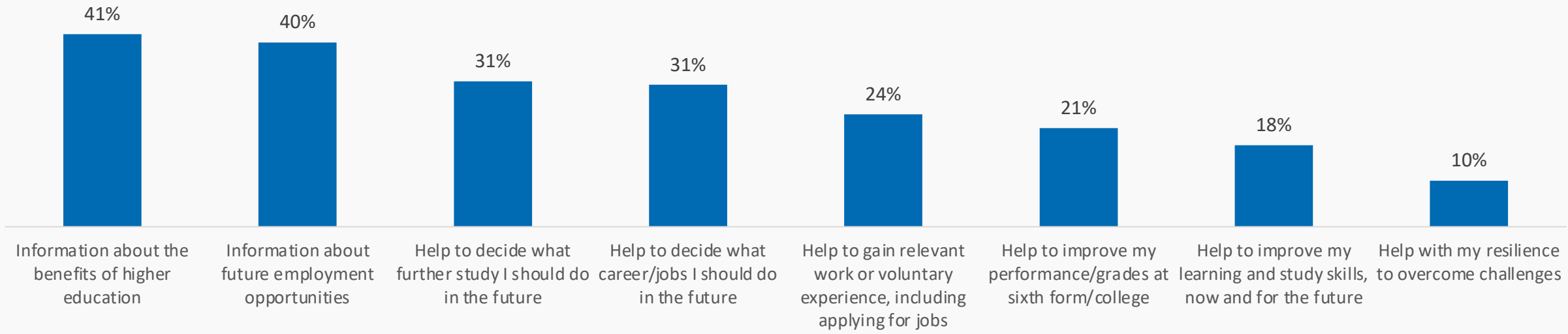
Source: Phase 2, Q47. Which of these would you most like to find out more about, about higher education?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (45) CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES, TREAT DATA AS INDICATIVE

Top broader support needs of Hello Future FE students

Hello Future FE students' broader support needs are comparable to those of students nationwide, with strong appetite for learning (more) about the benefits of HE and future employment opportunities.

BROADER SUPPORT NEEDS

Total sample



Source: Q65. Which of these would be most helpful for you now or in future, to work out and prepare for your future plans?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (53)

Identifying students' interests and passions and their personal abilities in those subject areas should be a key component of the careers advice and guidance

To provide most relevant and useful advice, it is important to understand FE students' interests and academic leanings.

More practical subjects such as Arts & Design and Engineering & Construction are the most attractive/ desired subject areas for Hello Future FE students with around 1 in 5 of all students being interested in studying or doing an apprenticeship in these in future. These subjects are favoured directionally more by Hello Future FE students compared to FE students nationwide.

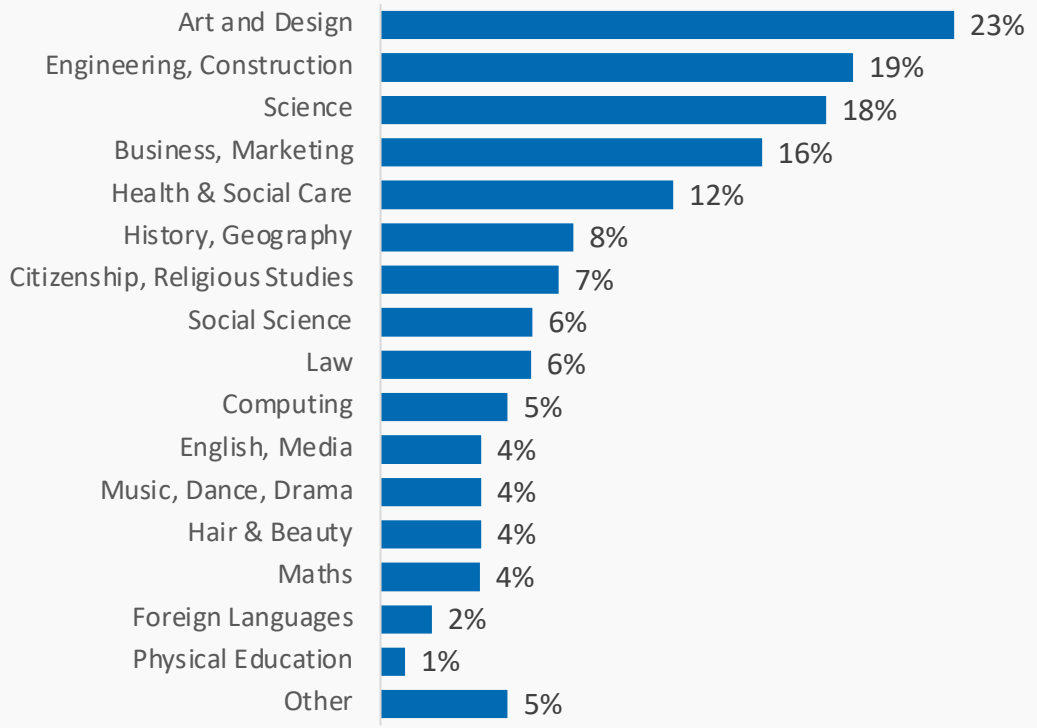
Science, Business & Marketing and Health & Social make up the rest of the top 5 subject areas students are interested in pursuing.

However, it is important to remember about and support students choosing less common subjects as they can feel neglected / given lower priority over students choosing more traditional subjects.

> ***"Discuss a broader range of career paths / study options as it is focused on STEM careers which is very demoralizing"***
>
> *Female, Sixth Form – Year 12*

FE STUDENTS' SUBJECTS OF INTEREST

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q37. Which of these subjects are you interested in studying (or doing an apprenticeship in), in the future? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (51)

Covid-19 is likely to have interfered with most Hello Future FE students' learning experiences and plans. Understanding these effects will help provide better support for students

A large proportion of FE students claim to have been impacted by Covid-19 in one way or the other.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the shorter term experiences are most likely to have been negatively impacted i.e.:

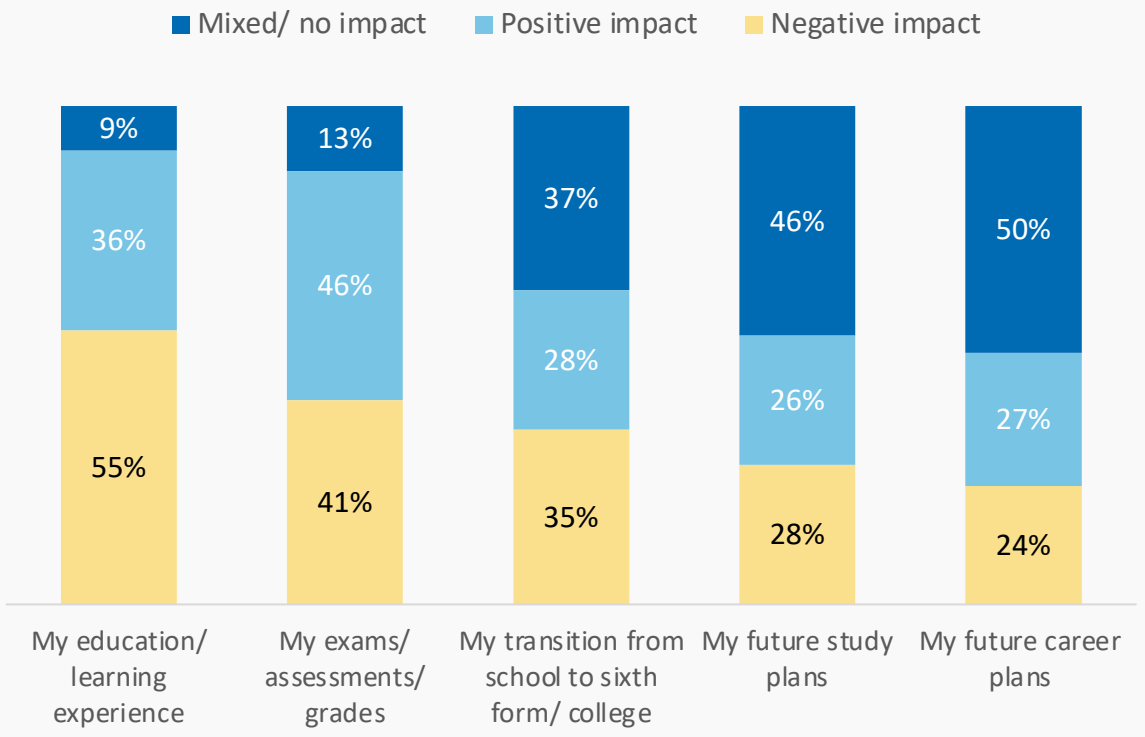
- Education/ learning experiences
- Exams, assessments and grades
- Transition from school to sixth form/ college

Longer term plans – study or career – are more likely to have remained unchanged or been impacted in a positive way.

It is important to better understand the effects Covid-19 has had on FE students' lives and future plans, to better help them get back on track.

REPORTED IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION AND FUTURE PLANS

Total sample



Source: Q66. And how have your education and future plans been impacted by COVID-19, if at all?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (52)

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