

Supporting Student Enterprise and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education

December 2023

AGCAS

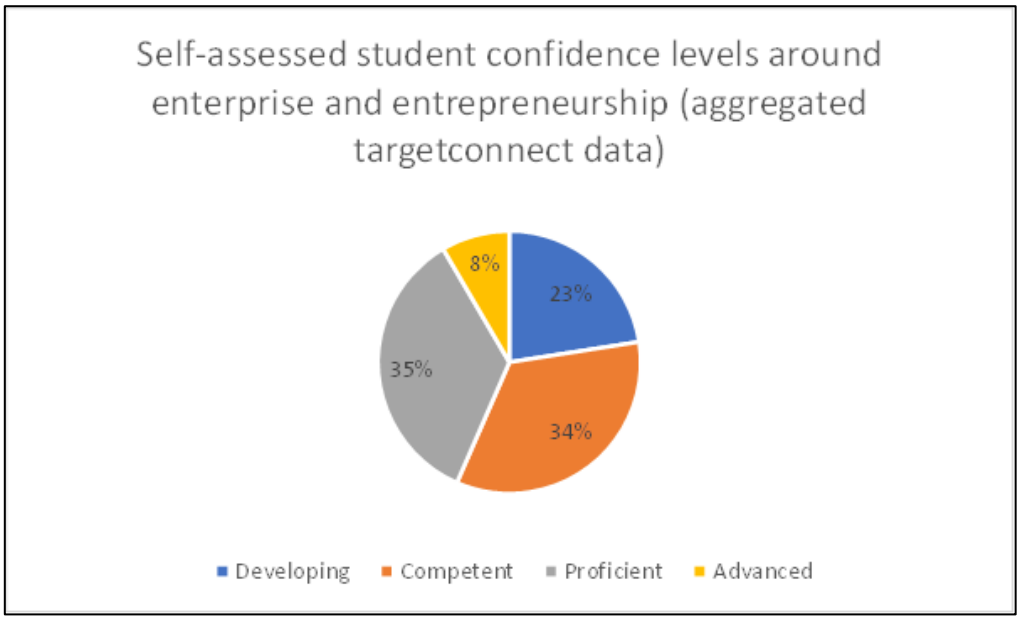
The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

gti

Enterprise and entrepreneurial ambition continues to grow in importance for UK graduates in relation to their career thinking. Latest Cibyl data for 2023 shows that, of nearly 38,000 students surveyed, 11% are already running their own business; and of a further 33,500 students surveyed, 26% agreed with the statement 'I am thinking about founding my own start-up during or straight after my studies' (continuing the trend from the 2022 Cibyl survey referenced later in this report).

Supporting the development of enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, alongside providing practical guidance and accessing support, is crucial in fostering innovation and providing pathways for ideas to flourish. We are delighted to support this research to identify the role that university careers teams play in supporting enterprise and entrepreneurship activities.

Across GTI we have several touchpoints that evidence the importance of the work that AGCAS members undertake to foster entrepreneurial mindsets and behaviours. As well as Cibyl research, Skills Frameworks data from GTI's targetconnect platform gives a clear indication of students' confidence in relation to enterprise and entrepreneurship skill development.



The research in this report indicates that universities seem to be placing more of an emphasis on enterprise and entrepreneurship at an institutional level, with careers services taking on more responsibility in this area. Cibyl and targetconnect data indicates both the importance of supporting students to develop confidence and skills in this area; and that these can be further improved with clear focus and ambition.

We hope this research by AGCAS continues to illustrate the importance of supporting enterprise and entrepreneurship across higher education and the important collaborative role that AGCAS members play in this development.

Mark Mitchell
Chief Education Partnership Officer, Group GTI

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Published by AGCAS in December 2023.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, the AGCAS Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group carried out a survey of careers professionals to find out how enterprise and entrepreneurship activities are supported in their institution, along with how confident they are when providing enterprise and entrepreneurship support to their students. The findings of this survey were published in Phoenix, the AGCAS journal, in February 2020.[1] The survey was repeated in 2023 and this report includes findings from the 2023 survey as well as drawing on the results of the previous survey in 2019, to consider how attitudes have changed over time.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Careers and employability services are taking on more responsibility

- The majority of our survey respondents (66%) said the careers and employability team have responsibility for supporting student entrepreneurship in their institution. This is an increase of 29% from 2019 (37%).
- Careers professionals report higher numbers of students asking for enterprise or entrepreneurship support compared to 2019. We asked survey participants to estimate out of the last 100 students they spoke to how many enquired about entrepreneurship or start-ups. One-third said these topics came up in at least half of their interactions, compared to just 9% in 2019.
- The presence of specialist enterprise/entrepreneurship units in some institutions has persisted, with 40% of survey respondents (in 2019 and 2023) saying they had a specialist team in their institution.

Support for students

- Almost three-quarters (74%) of careers professionals regard enterprise and entrepreneurship as an intrinsic part of careers advice and believe skills in these areas are valuable for all graduates.
- University-provided support for student entrepreneurship appears to have evolved over time, with an increased emphasis on collaboration, customisation and the use of technology to support students' entrepreneurial aspirations.

[1] H. Hook, 'AGCAS Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group', AGCAS Phoenix (February 2020), p. 22. Available at https://issuu.com/agcas_00/docs/phoenix_159_aw_150dpi_single_pages/22.

- While two-thirds of careers professionals were aware of their institution's policy statement on employability, just 22% were aware of a statement on entrepreneurship, 19% were aware of a policy on enterprise education and 23% were not aware of any of these.

Training for careers professionals

- Overall levels of confidence in delivering enterprise and entrepreneurship support are not high and appear to have stagnated since 2019, with just over half of respondents saying they are confident. Confidence levels in Russell Group institutions are slightly higher than the sector average, with 59% of respondents saying they felt confident in comparison to 49% for non-Russell Group institutions.
- Respondents generally demonstrated greater awareness of topics related to enterprise and entrepreneurship even if they did not feel personally confident to provide support.
- Careers professionals would welcome more training, mentoring opportunities and resources to help them support students more effectively. Helping staff to develop an enterprising mindset for themselves was seen as an important step, alongside more practical tips on starting and running businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The growth in careers services taking responsibility for supporting student entrepreneurship coupled with increased demand from students means there is a need to ensure all careers professionals, not just those with an enterprise or entrepreneurship specialism, have access to appropriate training opportunities.
- Existing training courses aimed at careers professionals should focus on developing an enterprising mindset and building practical knowledge of topics affecting entrepreneurs.
- Training providers should review their provision to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of careers professionals.
- Where they do not already exist, policies on student entrepreneurship and enterprise education should be developed by universities and steps should be taken to ensure that staff are familiar with these documents.
- Where enterprise and entrepreneurship support is delivered in multiple settings across institutions, staff should seek opportunities to collaborate more closely with their peers to ensure consistency in delivery across the institution.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2019 the AGCAS Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group carried out a survey of AGCAS members to better understand how student enterprise and entrepreneurship activities were supported within higher education institutions. It was also intended that the survey results would provide insights into how careers services were engaged with enterprise and entrepreneurship and how confident they felt when supporting students.

The findings from this survey included:

- When asked about their confidence in offering guidance to student entrepreneurs, half of our 2019 respondents said they were 'not feeling confident' or were 'undecided'.
- 65% of Russell Group respondents stated their Careers and Employability team had responsibility for enterprise and entrepreneurship activities.
- 51% of non-Russell Group institutions stated they have specialist enterprise/entrepreneurship units.
- 15% of all respondents said no specific department had responsibility for supporting student enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Since our first survey in 2019 there have been significant events and changes in the UK and beyond; Britain has left the European Union, we have experienced the global Covid-19 pandemic and its repercussions, and we are now in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis with high levels of inflation. Recent reports have highlighted the impact of the pandemic on university students. The Sutton Trust found that 76% of students were worried about being able to gain skills and experience needed for employment[2], while the UPP Foundation Student Futures Commission called for universities to offer activities inside and outside the curriculum that build skills, networks and communities to help reverse the damage caused by the pandemic.[3]

These complex and challenging times have put universities and careers services under increasing pressures, particularly in the context of equipping students with the mindset and

[2] The Sutton Trust, "Covid-19 and the University Experience" (2021) https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Covid-19-and-the-University-Experience.pdf
[3] UPP Foundation, "A Student Futures Manifesto" (2022) https://upp-foundation.org/student-futures-commission/news/a-student-futures-manifesto/

skills to navigate this challenging world, subsequent evolving global labour market, and testing conditions for self-employment. There is also a 'renewed recognition, and indeed emphasis, on positively supporting student trajectories through and beyond university by enhancing a range of activities linked to employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship' (Norton and Sear, 2021) and careers services and careers professionals play a critical role in this. However, training for careers professionals currently focuses predominantly on employability, and there is an emerging need to equip careers professionals with the knowledge and skills to deliver enterprise and entrepreneurship education.

Data from Cibyl (2022) revealed that 11% of UK university students ran their own business, while a further 27% were considering it. Given the change in circumstances from 2019, the AGCAS Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group wanted to understand how student enterprise and entrepreneurship activities are being supported within higher education institutions now (2023), in comparison to 2019. A subsequent re-run of the 2019 survey was undertaken and this report presents not only the findings from 2023, but a comparison to 2019.

In undertaking this latest iteration of the project, our aim is to make recommendations that will increase the scale, scope and effectiveness of enterprise and entrepreneurship education and support undertaken by careers professionals in UK higher education institutions.

1.2 Methods

1.2.1 Survey

AGCAS members were invited to complete a survey exploring how university careers services and in particular careers professionals deliver enterprise and entrepreneurship activities for students. The survey ran from 13 February 2023 until 5 March 2023 and received 101 responses, whereas the original survey in 2019 received 97 responses.

Breaking the responses down by country, we received 89 from England, 5 for Wales, 3 for Scotland and 2 for Northern Ireland. One further response was received from an institution that operates across the UK and another was submitted anonymously and so it is not possible to ascertain where their institution is located.

Looking at mission groups, we received 22 responses from staff working across 14 Russell Group universities. A total of 78 responses were received from staff working in 47 non-Russell Group universities.

1.2.2 Interviews

Following the survey, members of the AGCAS Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group conducted three in-depth interviews with careers professionals to add depth and detail to the survey data.

2. SUPPORTING ENTERPRISE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: RESEARCH FINDINGS (2023)

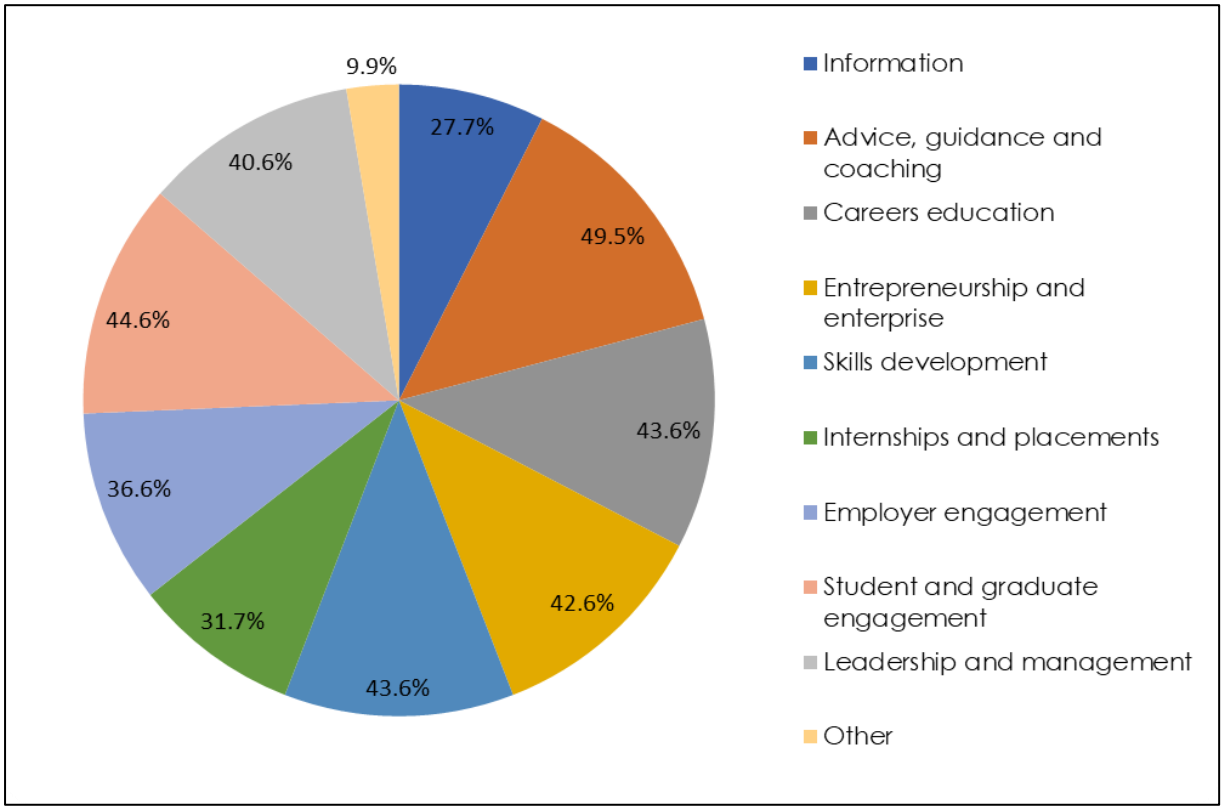
This section outlines the survey findings from the 101 respondents to the 2023 survey, supplemented by findings from our interviews with careers professionals. We compare these latest findings with the results of the AGCAS 2019 enterprise and entrepreneurship survey and the Cibyl 2022 student data.

2.1 Current role

Of the 101 respondents to the 2023 survey the majority worked full time (76%) and had been working in the profession for 10 years or more (55%), with equal numbers of participants having worked in the profession for 5-10 years, 2-5 years, and 0-2 years (15% each). Like the 2019 survey, the majority of respondents also worked full-time (78%), but only 39% had been working in the profession for 10 years or more, 10% for 5-10 years, 22% for 2-5 years, and 19% for 0-2 years. This implies that experienced individuals have left the careers and employability profession since 2019, with those that were early career or new to the profession in 2019, remaining in post to 2023.

In 2019 we asked respondents to indicate their job role. However, it has since been acknowledged that job titles do not always reflect the full range of responsibilities an individual undertakes in their role. So, in 2023 we asked respondents to identify the various facets of their role. The results show a variety of facets were identified indicating breadth and diversity in the role of the careers professional. Within this mix, enterprise and entrepreneurship (43%) features strongly sitting alongside traditional facets of the careers professional such as advice, guidance and coaching (50%), student and graduate engagement (45%) and careers education and skills development (both 44%). It also features more strongly other significant facets such as employer engagement (36.3%) and internships and placements (31.68%). This indicates that enterprise and entrepreneurship is a significant area of responsibility for careers professionals and is as, or perhaps more, important than many of the traditional facets of the role.

Figure 1: Which of the following describe the facets of your role? Select all that apply (2023)



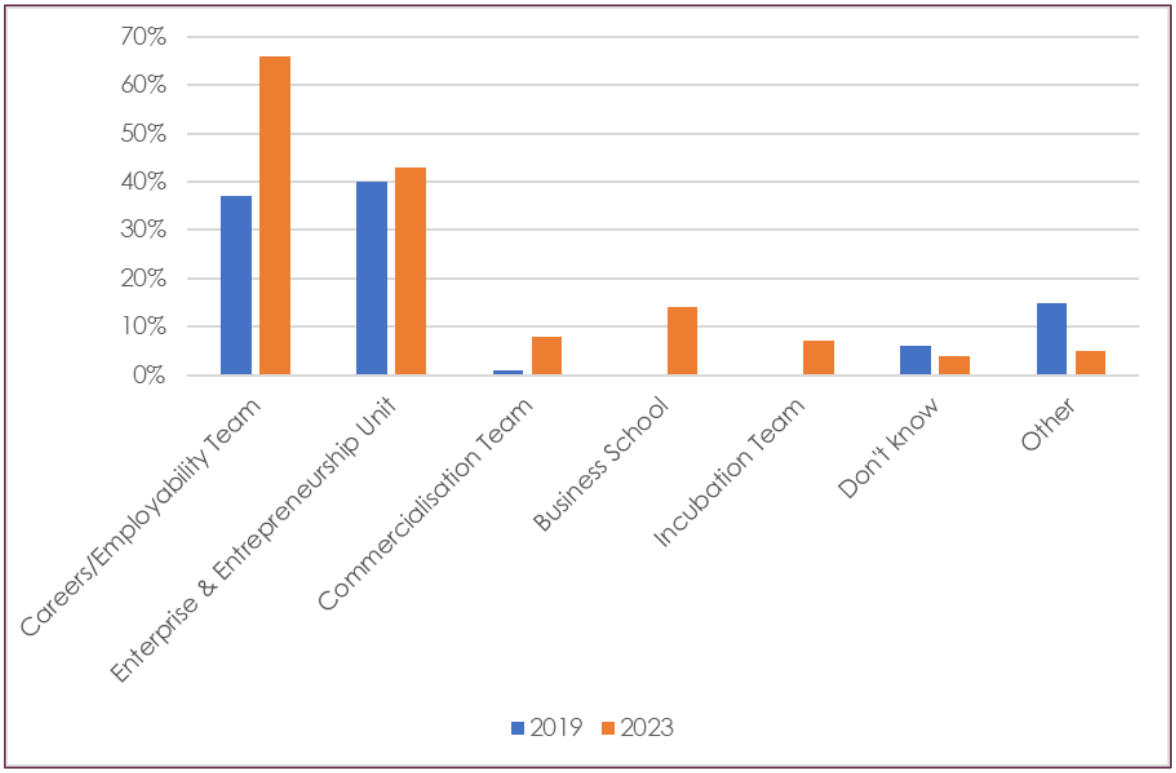
Due to the charge in focus of this question in 2023 the results are not directly comparable with those from 2019. What we can infer from the 2023 results is that the role of careers professionals is multi-faceted, with potentially multiple areas of responsibility. Our report demonstrates that entrepreneurship and enterprise is an intrinsic part of a career professional's remit.

2.2 Involvement in student entrepreneurship

In both surveys we asked which departments are responsible for student enterprise and entrepreneurship. In 2023 the majority indicated that the careers and employability team held responsibility (66%), a significant increase from 37% in 2019.

In 2019 most participants said that an enterprise/entrepreneurship unit (40%) held responsibility for student entrepreneurship. This figure rose to 43% in 2023 suggesting that these teams retain an important role in delivery across the sector but potentially alongside their careers and employability teams.

Figure 2: In your organisation, which department has the main responsibility for student entrepreneurship? If this is evenly split please select all that apply



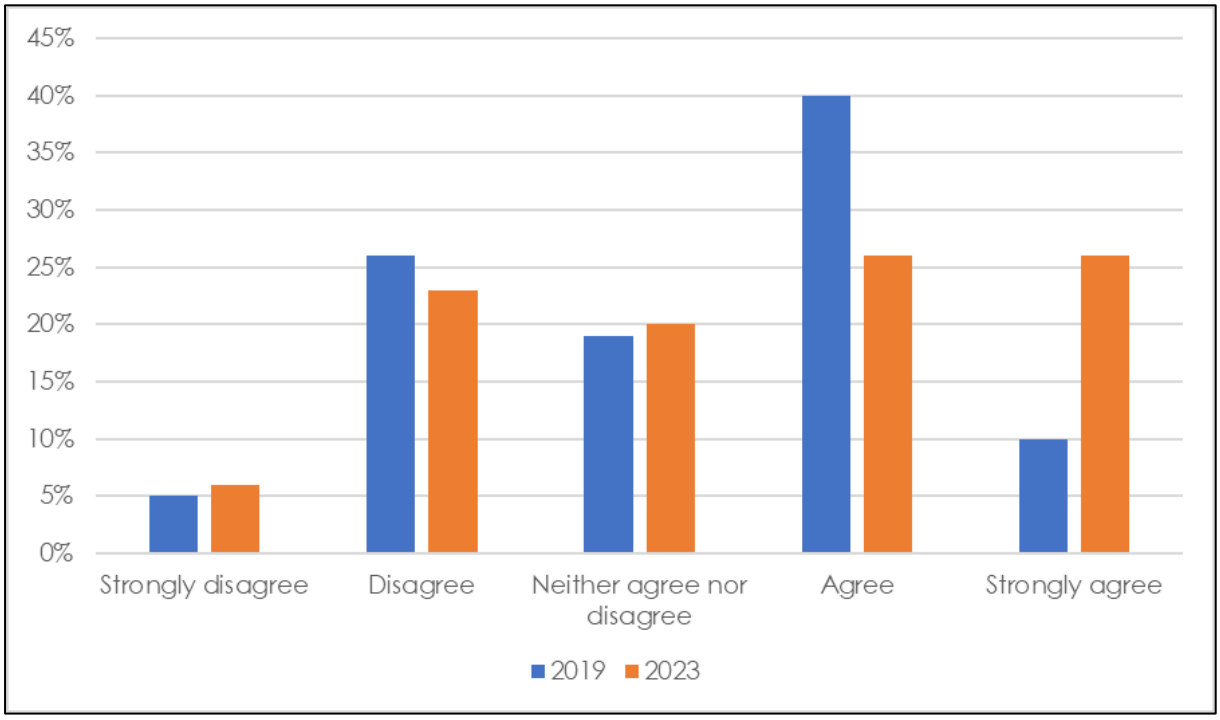
The latest survey results also show that specialised commercialisation or incubation teams have taken on more responsibility in this area, as have business schools. Most 'other' responses in 2019 either noted that support was provided on an *ad hoc* basis as no department held specific responsibility or that several different departments were involved, so the decline in the 2023 results is mostly likely due to a formalisation, or in some cases centralisation, of institutional support.

2.3 Perceptions of enterprise and entrepreneurship

In both the 2023 and 2019 surveys we asked to what extent participants agreed with the following statements:

1. I feel confident offering guidance to student entrepreneurs
2. Enterprise and entrepreneurship are an intrinsic part of careers advice
3. Enterprise skills are important to all graduates
4. Entrepreneurship skills are important to all graduates
5. Entrepreneurship is an occupation
6. Entrepreneurship is just about start-up

Figure 3: I feel confident offering guidance to student entrepreneurs



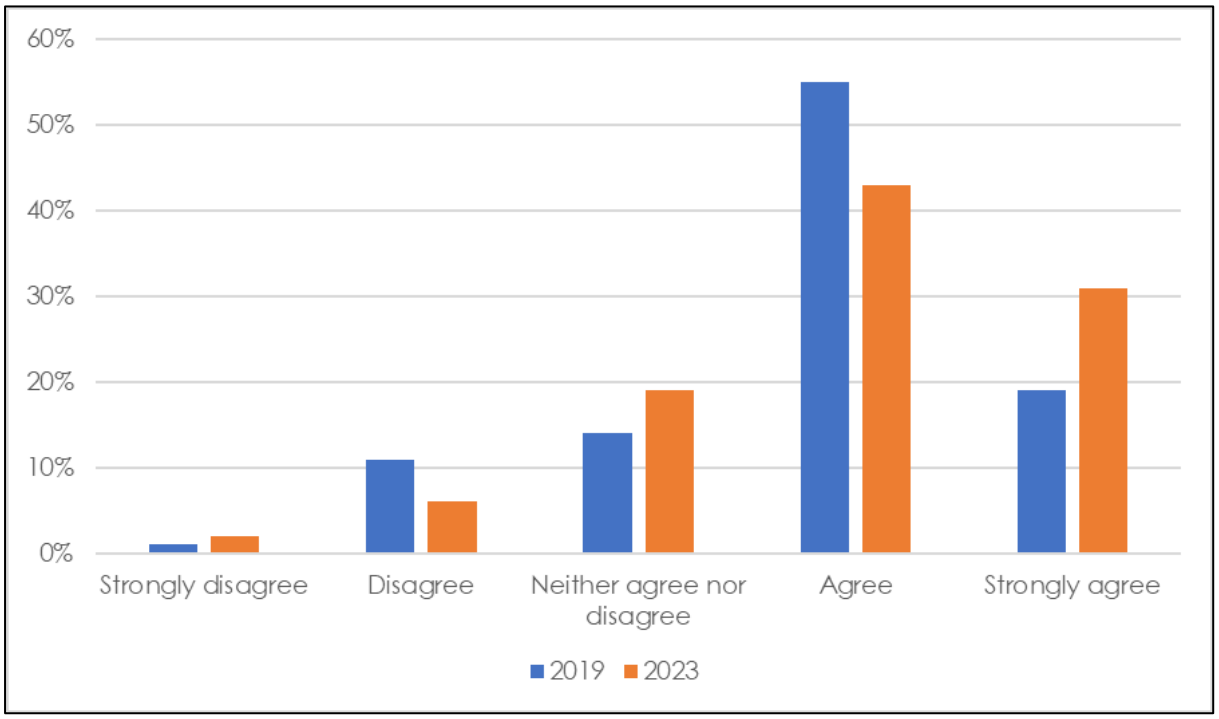
The responses to statement 1 show a slight increase in the overall agreement from 2019 to 2023, but as Figure 3 shows, the proportion of respondents saying they strongly agreed increased notably. Caution should be exercised here, as not everyone completed both surveys, but these results may suggest that some careers professionals have gained confidence in offering guidance to student entrepreneurs. However, this should be weighed against the fact that the proportion of respondents who said they were not confident has largely stayed the same, which demonstrates that more work is needed to equip careers professionals to provide support in this area.

It is also worth noting that staff working in Russell Group institutions were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree (59% overall) with this statement than their peers elsewhere in the sector (49%).

In our interviews with career professionals there was a recognition that the Covid-19 pandemic "opened up lots of new possibilities for entrepreneurs or students with an entrepreneurial mindset" and this shifted expectations. While one careers professional felt they were getting more confident as they gained more experience in this new environment, another said the pace of change made them feel less confident in providing support. Some respondents also highlighted the importance of institutional backing, with one commenting

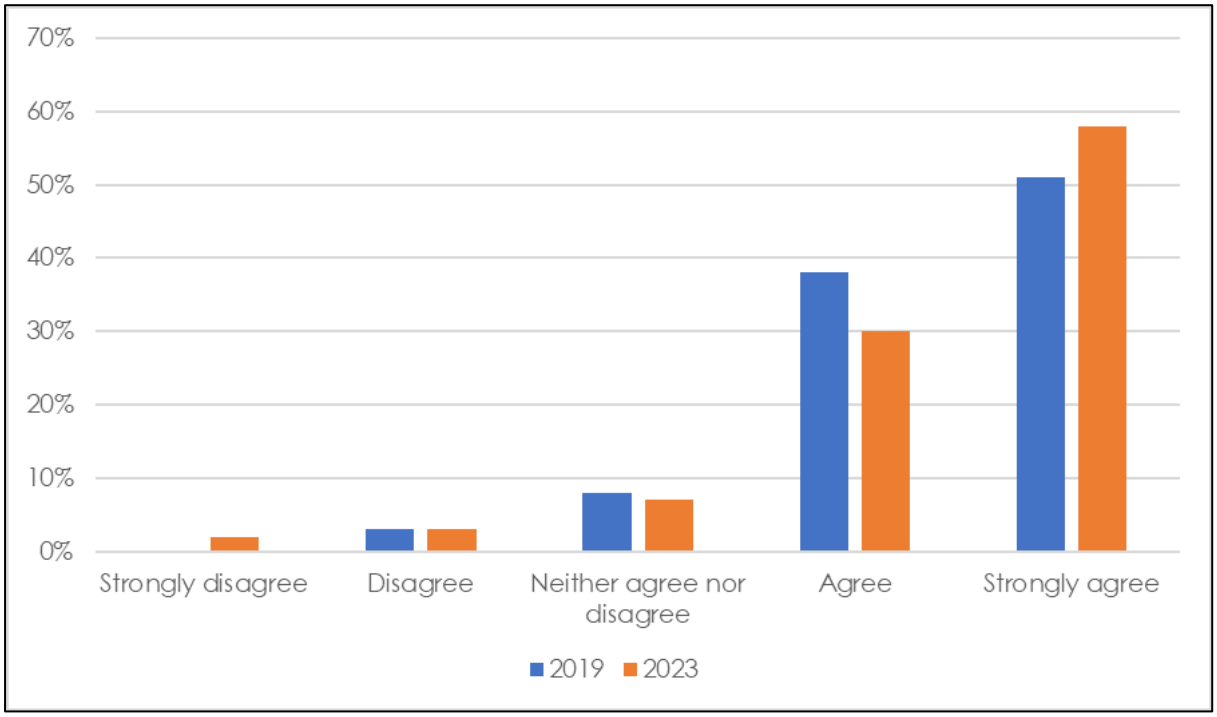
that "all of this is just so much easier in this particular institution where it's a much higher priority."

Figure 4: Enterprise and entrepreneurship are an intrinsic part of careers advice



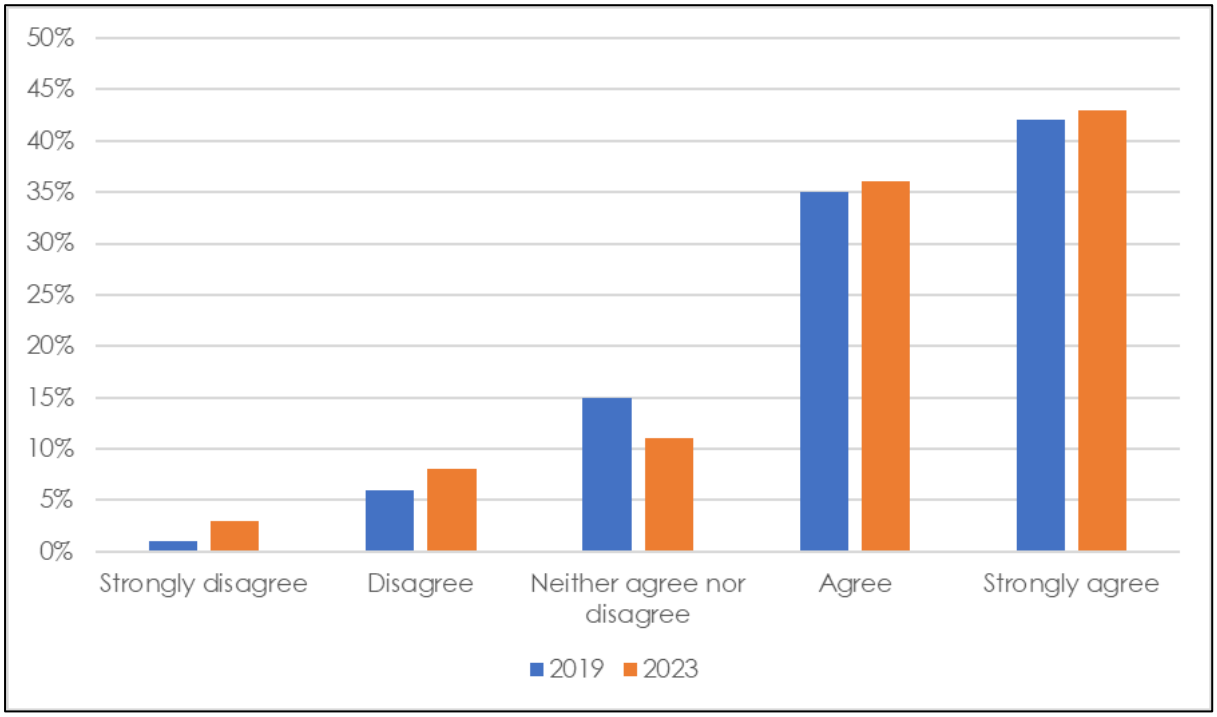
The responses to statement 2 show no change in overall agreement since 2019 but the balance of responses is more heavily weighted towards strongly agree in 2023, while fewer people overall disagreed with this statement in 2023 when compared with 2019. These trends suggest that attitudes towards enterprise and entrepreneurship within the careers advice landscape have improved and there are now more strong advocates within the sector.

Figure 5: Enterprise skills are important to all graduates



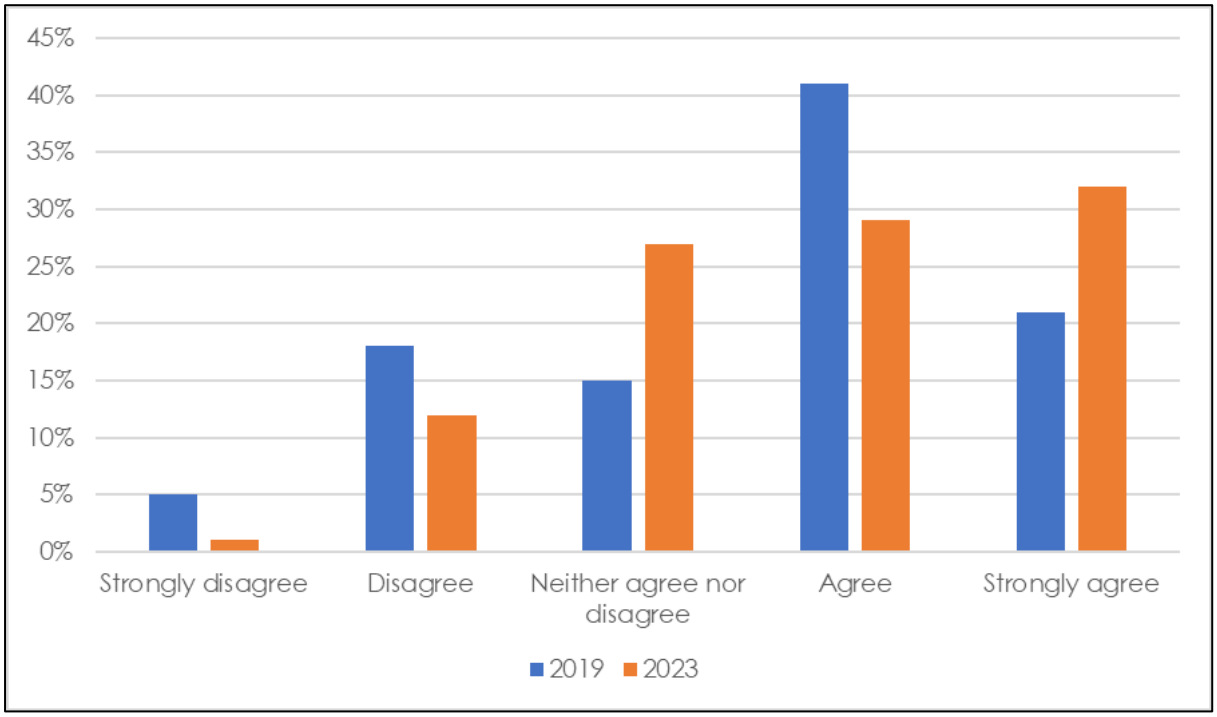
The majority of respondents (88%) agreed overall with statement 3, that enterprise skills are important to all graduates. While this is almost exactly the same as the response in 2019 (89%), respondents in 2023 were more likely to strongly agree with the statement. In line with the findings from other questions, this suggests that enterprise is increasingly seen as an important topic by careers professionals.

Figure 6: Entrepreneurship skills are important to all graduates



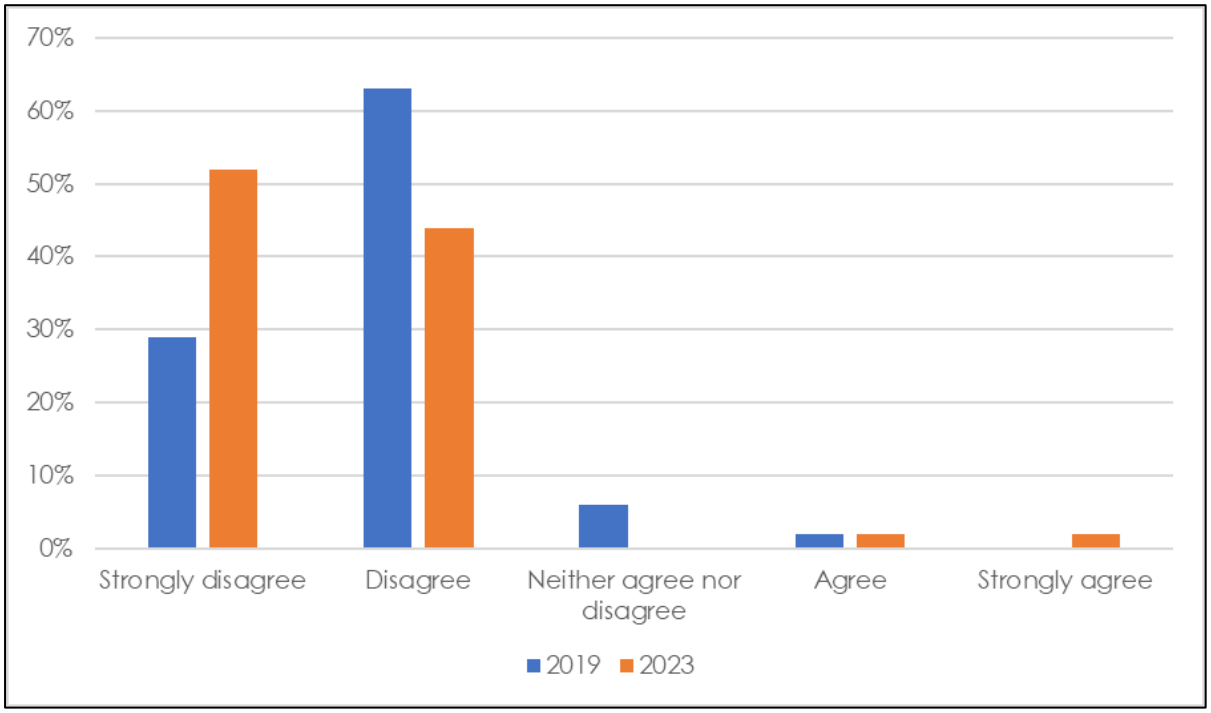
A similar picture emerges when we look at the results of statement 4, which asked respondents whether they agreed that entrepreneurship skills are important to all graduates. The results in 2023 are similar to those in 2019, which shows that this continues to be regarded as an important area by careers professionals.

Figure 7: Entrepreneurship is an occupation



The overall levels of agreement for statement 5 have remained steady between 2019 and 2023, but the proportion of those who disagreed overall fell by 10% in this time. Meanwhile, the numbers of those who neither agreed nor disagreed increased by 12% over the same period. These trends may indicate that entrepreneurship has gained more acceptance as a valid choice for students, but perhaps there is uncertainty around whether it counts as an occupation or might more accurately be described as a mindset or process.

Figure 8: Entrepreneurship is just about start-up



For statement 6, 96% strongly disagreed (52%) or disagreed (44%) that entrepreneurship is just about start-up. In 2019 this was 92% so a slight increase in the numbers who disagreed with this statement from 2019 to 2023.

In summary, a comparison of the results from 2019 and 2023 suggests that careers professionals have gained some confidence in providing support to students. Among the profession itself, staff appear more likely to advocate for the importance of enterprise and entrepreneurship support to students both in terms of supporting those who wish to start their own businesses and also equipping the wider student body with the skills and attitudes required to succeed in the world of work. While many careers professionals regard entrepreneurship as an occupation there is some level of uncertainty here among some staff, which suggests that further training may be required to help better inform the sector.

We spoke to several participants to understand their perceptions on enterprise education in more detail. All agreed that enterprise education is valuable and should be embedded within the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone activity. Done in this way, it can be used to help students develop an enterprising mindset and the right attitudes that will benefit them in their careers.

These follow-up conversations also revealed that universities have become more comfortable with digital delivery models in the last few years and this has been beneficial for students. There was also a recognition that institutions are generally more willing to support

enterprise and entrepreneurship than in previous years, but one challenge is that many academics lack capacity to support new initiatives.

2.3.2 Interviewee awareness of institutional policy statements

We also asked participants what their awareness is of policy statements on student entrepreneurship, enterprise education and employability in their institutions.

In 2023 66% were aware of a policy statement on employability, 22% of a statement on entrepreneurship, and 19% of a statement on enterprise education. 23% were not aware of any of these.

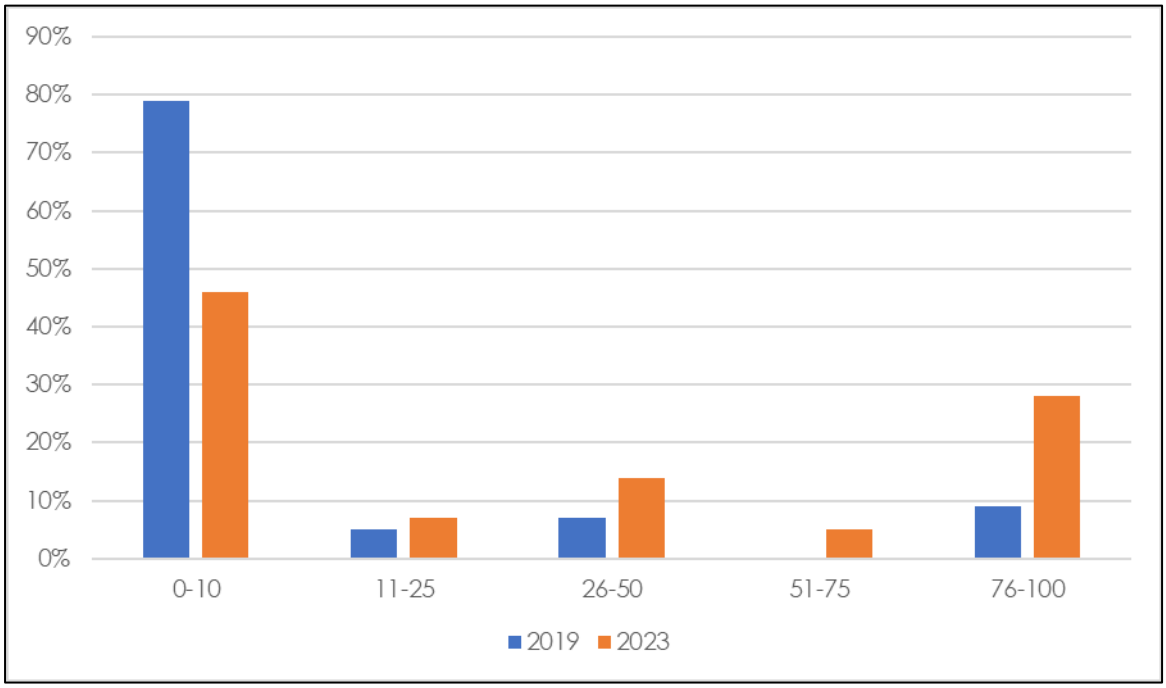
There is a slight increase in each of these since 2019 when 60% were aware of a policy statement on employability, 19% of a statement on entrepreneurship, and 15% of a statement on enterprise education.

2.4 Careers and employability support for enterprise and entrepreneurship

2.4.1 Student demand

Our survey asked respondents to estimate of the last 100 students they advised, how many enquired about entrepreneurship or start-ups.

Figure 9: Of the last 100 students you advised, please estimate how many enquired about entrepreneurship or start-ups



Reponses to this question (Figure 9) in 2023 were wide ranging and included 100% of their students enquiring about it right down to 0%. Unpacking the advice given to these students, respondents reported that student interest in entrepreneurship or start-ups focused on freelancing, self-employment, or social enterprises. Some respondents mentioned that their role does not involve student advising or that the question is not applicable to their role.

Comparing the 2023 and 2019 responses shows that careers professionals have noticed a significant increase in students seeking guidance from them in relation to entrepreneurship and start-ups.

2.4.2 Approaches to student support

In 2019 and 2023, respondents were asked to outline their main personal and professional considerations when supporting student entrepreneurs. This was an open survey question which allowed respondents to write open qualitative responses. Thematic analysis of these comments highlighted key areas of personal and professional consideration when supporting student entrepreneurs. In 2023 these included:

1. Providing tailored and confidential advice based on the individual student's needs, motivations, and circumstances.
2. Ensuring students have access to accurate, relevant, and up-to-date resources and guidance.

3. Encouraging the development of entrepreneurial skills and mindset, regardless of the intended career direction.
4. Assessing the viability of the student's business idea, including market research, finances, and competition.
5. Ensuring equal quality of service for all students, regardless of their chosen path.
6. Recognising personal limitations in knowledge and expertise, and signposting students to specialised resources and support services when necessary.
7. Encouraging resilience, self-awareness, and self-sufficiency in student entrepreneurs.
8. Maintaining professional integrity, honesty, and impartiality while providing advice and guidance.
9. Understanding the importance of financial sustainability and cash flow management.
10. Promoting inclusivity and empowering students to make informed decisions about their entrepreneurial journey.

21% of respondents mentioned they don't feel confident in advising students on entrepreneurship or that it's not applicable to their role, and in such cases, they refer students to internal specialised support and services e.g. innovation coaches, enterprise advisers and specialist enterprise teams.

Figure 10: When supporting student entrepreneurs, what are your main personal and professional considerations? (thematic analysis)

Response themes	Prevalence in 2019 responses	Prevalence in 2023 responses
Offer direct support	26%	**50%**
Signposting	**42%**	39%
Business planning	16%	**25%**
Skill development	7%	**25%**
Lacking confidence to support	17%	**21%**
Entrepreneurial mindset	9%	**17%**
Manage expectations	14%	**15%**
Encouragement	**16%**	15%
Tailored support	1%	**12%**
Equal access	Nil	**6%**

Comparing the overall responses from 2023 with those from 2019 shows the following trends:

1. **Awareness and Confidence:** In 2019, respondents displayed more uncertainty about their knowledge, expertise, and ability to interpret the question. In 2023, the respondents appeared more confident and aware of their role in supporting student entrepreneurs. While a greater proportion of respondents in 2023 said they lacked confidence to support students (21% compared to 17% in 2019), these respondents also demonstrated higher levels of knowledge about enterprise and entrepreneurship, and how best to signpost students for further support.
2. **Support and Resources:** In 2019, there was a heavier focus on signposting and referring students to appropriate support networks and resources. In 2023, respondents still mentioned referrals but also emphasised the importance of developing students' skills and connecting them with mentors, events, and funding opportunities.
3. **Entrepreneurial Mindset:** The 2019 responses had more of a focus on understanding the students' entrepreneurial mindset and encouraging their ideas. In 2023, respondents focused more on building students' entrepreneurial skills and providing practical guidance.
4. **Individualised Support:** In 2019, there was more of an emphasis on tailoring support to individual student needs and helping students explore their ideas. In 2023, respondents emphasised personalising support and understanding students' motivations, values, and skills.
5. **Realism and Expectations:** The 2019 responses often mentioned managing student expectations and helping them research their ideas realistically. In 2023, respondents placed more emphasis on helping students set realistic goals and plan for potential challenges.

Overall, the 2023 open responses showed more confidence, awareness, and focus on practical guidance and skill-building, while the 2019 responses highlighted signposting, encouragement, and managing expectations.

Despite the earlier quantitative survey question which asked participants how much they agreed with the statement that they felt confident offering guidance to student entrepreneurs not showing much change from the 2019 survey, the qualitative open comments on personal and professional considerations when supporting student entrepreneurs do show differences in confidence.

There were more signs of awareness of different roles and the ways they can support student entrepreneurs. This suggests that careers professionals might not consider themselves more confident than in 2019 but there are subtle differences in how they approach supporting student entrepreneurs that do reveal some more confidence.

Respondents were also asked what their course of action would be if a student asked them about entrepreneurship. Analysis of responses can be summarised as follows:

Figure 11: If you had a student ask about entrepreneurship, what would be your course of action?

Response themes	Prevalence in 2019 responses	Prevalence in 2023 responses
Signposting – internal	65%	**69%**
Discuss their ideas	34%	**42%**
Provide guidance	21%	**25%**
Encourage participation in events and workshops	15%	**16%**
Signposting – external	**15%**	12%
Connect with adviser's own network or alumni	**3%**	2%

The key differences between the 2019 and 2023 survey responses to this question are:

1. **Terminology:** In 2019, respondents referred to resources and support teams as "Enterprise Team", "Entrepreneurship Team", "Centre for Entrepreneurship", "Enterprise lab", and "Propeller". In 2023, the terms used were "Start-up Support Team", "Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centre", and "Innovation Lab".
2. **Emphasis on collaboration:** The 2023 responses mention more instances of collaboration with the entrepreneurship support teams and colleagues, while the 2019 responses focus more on referrals to these teams and resources.
3. **Types of support:** In 2019, the respondents mentioned support such as workshops, mentoring, funding, business competitions, and local enterprise resources. In 2023, the support types include pitch events, hackathons, incubator programs, and accelerator programmes.
4. **Online resources:** The 2023 responses place a greater emphasis on digital resources like online learning platforms and remote consultations, reflecting the increased use of technology for education and career support in recent years.

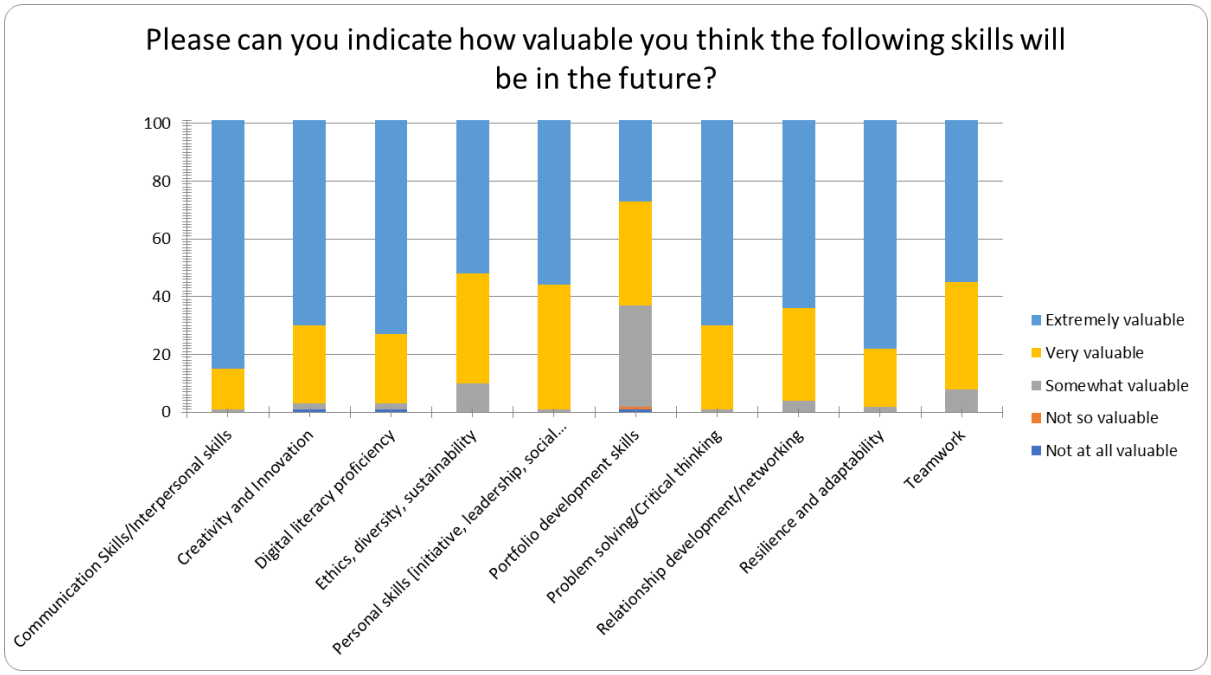
5. **Personal experiences:** In the 2019 responses, some respondents mentioned providing advice based on their own experiences, while this is not mentioned in the 2023 responses. This could be due to a shift in the focus of career support, or simply a difference in the respondents themselves.
6. **Customisation of support:** The 2023 responses seem to focus more on tailoring support to individual students' needs and exploring their ideas in depth, while the 2019 responses appear more geared towards general guidance and referrals.

These differences suggest that career support for entrepreneurship has evolved over time, with increased emphasis on collaboration, customisation, and the use of technology to support students' entrepreneurial aspirations.

2.5 Skills of the future

We asked respondents to indicate how valuable certain skills will be in the future and compared their answers to those given by students in the Cibyl 2022 data.

Figure 12: Respondents' views on the future of skills (2023)

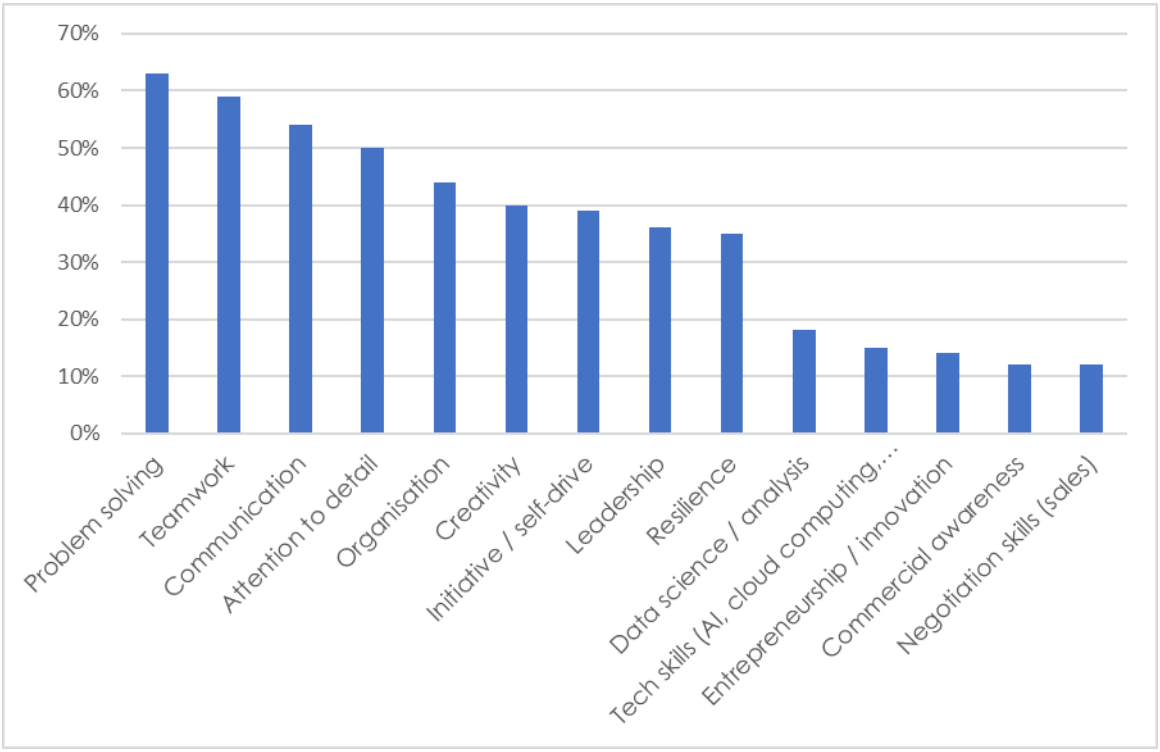


Cibyl data from 2022 tells us what students think are the most important skills. A total of 43,284 students were asked to list their top five. These results are outlined below and compared with the answers given by respondents to the AGCAS survey in 2023.

Table 1: Skills (rank) - top 5 ranked by total (Cibyl 2022) compared with responses from careers professionals (AGCAS 2023)

Cibyl 2022		AGCAS 2023	
Problem solving	63%	Communication skills/interpersonal skills	99%
Teamwork	59%	Personal skills (initiative, leadership, social intelligence, personal branding)	99%
Communication	54%	Problem solving/critical thinking	99%
Attention to detail	50%	Resilience and adaptability	98%
Organisation	44%	Creativity and innovation	97%
Creativity	40%	Digital literacy proficiency	97%
Initiative / self-drive	39%	Relationship development/networking	96%
Leadership	36%	Teamwork	92%
Resilience	35%	Ethics, diversity, sustainability	90%
Data science / analysis	18%	Portfolio development skills	63%
Tech skills (AI, cloud computing, coding)	15%		
Entrepreneurship / innovation	14%		
Commercial awareness	12%		
Negotiation skills (sales)	12%		

Figure 13: Skills (rank) - top 5 ranked by total (Cibyl 2022)



Comparing our survey results with the Cibyl data we can see there are clear areas of common ground, with problem solving, teamwork and communication skills highly valued by most respondents. However, students do not place the same value in skills such as creativity, resilience or knowledge of technology as careers professionals. This may suggest that careers professionals need to do more to raise awareness of how important these skills are.

2.6 Designing CPD for careers professionals

At the end of the survey, we asked respondents to share their views on continuing professional development (CPD) for careers professionals to help them support entrepreneurs. Overall, 73% of respondents were interested in finding out more about enterprise and entrepreneurship training. We also asked what the CPD should include and what should be avoided and their responses are outlined below.

2.6.1 What should it include?

Survey respondents suggested a wide range of topics, noting that it was important to provide entry-level training for those who are new to enterprise and entrepreneurship support to help them understand the key terms and concepts. Practical skills for entrepreneurs were also highlighted by survey respondents and in the interviews we conducted too. Respondents suggested that the following areas should be included: business planning, financing and tax, market research, prototyping and growth strategies. Other topics raised by respondents included social enterprise, innovation, creativity, networking skills and personal branding.

There was a recognition from survey respondents and interviewees that enterprise and entrepreneurship training should be integrated into more mainstream career and employability training courses. Respondents saw this activity as a key part of the profession and one interviewee said it should not be treated as a separate specialism.

Many responses also emphasised the importance of developing an enterprising mindset as a careers professional, allowing it to change your personal perspective. One interviewee said training should aim to make participants "a more entrepreneurial careers adviser, because if you can practice the value of an entrepreneurial mindset in a profession you are familiar, qualified in and comfortable with, then you start to see how you can help others."

Respondents highlighted the need for effective mentoring programmes to support professional development, alongside the availability of supporting resources and funding.

2.6.2 What should it avoid?

Several survey respondents emphasised that they would prefer training to avoid stereotypical portrayals of entrepreneurs. In addition to this, further feedback included:

- Avoid training which covers generic start-up advice
- Avoid training which focuses solely on Graduate Outcomes
- Avoid training which focuses on jargon and definitions because this can become confusing, especially when talking to academics

2.6.3 Key differences between 2019 and 2023 responses regarding CPD requirements

Reviewing both surveys, the key differences between the responses from 2019 and 2023 regarding what should be covered in CPD training for entrepreneurship are:

2019 responses:

1. A stronger focus on practical aspects of starting a business, such as legal aspects, copyright, business jargon, business plans, pitching skills, and funding support.
2. Emphasis on personal qualities and skills for a successful entrepreneur and using case studies of successful graduates.
3. More suggestions for specific topics like personal branding, resilience sessions, and networking practice.
4. A call for more resources and support materials for one-on-one sessions with students and web resources.
5. The inclusion of information on agencies and resources for referral purposes.

2023 responses:

- A focus on adaptability, mental well-being, and communication skills in the entrepreneurial journey.
- Emphasis on technology and its role in business, with topics like AI, big data, and social media marketing.
- Greater concern for sustainability, ethics, and social impact in entrepreneurship.
- A call for more collaboration between academia, industry, and entrepreneurs for better support and learning.
- An emphasis on the importance of networking and mentorship in entrepreneurial success.

Overall, the 2023 responses show a shift towards recognising the importance of technology, mental well-being, adaptability, and ethical considerations in entrepreneurship, while the 2019 responses had a stronger focus on practical aspects of starting a business and personal qualities of a successful entrepreneur.

3. SUMMARY

The results of our survey demonstrate that enterprise and entrepreneurship support have become increasingly common areas of responsibility for careers professionals, perhaps corresponding to the rise in careers and employability services taking on greater levels of responsibility for this area in their own institutions.

While careers professionals are now more involved in enterprise and entrepreneurship support than in 2019, many do not feel any more confident in offering advice to students. Although staff working in Russell Group institutions reported higher levels of confidence than those in the wider sector.

However, when we asked respondents to describe their approach to supporting students, we found people did in fact appear to be more confident and displayed greater awareness of the practical guidance they could offer students. In comparison, the responses from 2019 focused instead on signposting students to places where they could find support, general encouragement, and expectation management.

One possible explanation for careers professionals underestimating their confidence levels could be the pace of change within the sector. Our survey shows that careers professionals are seeing more students come to them for support with enterprise and entrepreneurship than in 2019. This trend is backed up by the Cibyl 2022 student data, which revealed that 11% of UK university students ran their own business, while a further 27% were considering it. Entrepreneurship is a key area of interest for many students.

It is therefore not surprising to see clear demand from careers professionals for more training to support them in this increasingly important area of their jobs. Besides practical tips on starting and running businesses, our survey respondents said they would value mentoring schemes and the creation of resources to help them deliver support to students more effectively. Many also suggested that careers professionals should be supported to develop an entrepreneurial mindset for themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The AGCAS Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group have a number of recommendations which will be explored to meet the needs of our careers professional community across the higher education sector:

- The growth in careers services taking responsibility for supporting student entrepreneurship coupled with increased demand from students means there is a need to ensure all careers professionals, not just those with an enterprise or entrepreneurship specialism, have access to appropriate training opportunities.
- Existing training courses aimed at careers professionals should focus on developing an enterprising mindset and building practical knowledge of topics affecting entrepreneurs.
- Training providers should review their provision to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of careers professionals.
- Where they do not already exist, policies on student entrepreneurship and enterprise education should be developed by universities and steps should be taken to ensure that staff are familiar with these documents.
- Where enterprise and entrepreneurship support is delivered in multiple settings across institutions, staff should seek opportunities to collaborate more closely with their peers to ensure consistency in delivery across the institution.

4. APPENDIX

4.1 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Survey 2023

1. Introduction

AGCAS is collaborating on a new research project with GTI exploring the ways UK careers services deliver enterprise and entrepreneurship.

The project seeks to build on insights first gathered in 2019 to examine any changes that have occurred in the delivery of enterprise and entrepreneurship support to students and graduates. The research will help to inform our broader understanding of how recent developments in the sector and economy have led to changes in enterprise and entrepreneurship education and practice within university careers services. It will also surface the changing role of careers and employability professionals in helping students and graduates recognise and develop the entrepreneurial mindsets and behaviours required to navigate the current labour market and economy.

This survey has been designed by AGCAS' Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Group.

The survey is open to all AGCAS members and should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. T**he survey will close at 23:59 on Sunday 5th March 2023.**

AGCAS will own the data collected through this survey. All responses are confidential and will be fully anonymised by AGCAS before results are shared. Only members of the AGCAS staff team will have access to the raw data. Please contact Florence Reedy, AGCAS Policy and Research Manager at florence.reedy@agcas.org.uk, if you have any questions about the survey or how AGCAS intends to use and share the data collected.

*1. I have read the survey invitation message above and consent to participate in this survey. **

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

*2. Which institution do you work at? **

Please select (if you wish to manually input your institution's name, select the first option):

Institution name (in alphabetical order)

Input the institution name manually if you prefer:

*3. Which of the following describe the facets of your role? (select all that apply) **

- [ ] Information
- [ ] Advice, guidance and coaching
- [ ] Careers education
- [ ] Entrepreneurship and enterprise
- [ ] Skills development
- [ ] Internships and placements
- [ ] Employer engagement
- [ ] Student and graduate engagement
- [ ] Leadership and management
- [ ] Other (please specify):

*4. What is your current working FTE? **

- [ ] Full time

- [ ] 0.8 / 4 days per week
- [ ] 0.6 / 3 days per week
- [ ] 0.4 / 2 days per week
- [ ] 0.2 / 1 day per week

*5. How long have you worked within the profession? **

- [ ] 0-2 years
- [ ] 2-5 years
- [ ] 5-10 years
- [ ] 10 years or more

*6. In your organisation, which department has the main responsibility for student entrepreneurship? (If this is evenly split please select all that apply) **

- [ ] Careers/Employability Team
- [ ] Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Unit
- [ ] Commercialisation Team
- [ ] Business School
- [ ] Incubation Team
- [ ] Don’t know
- [ ] Other (please specify):

*7. In my institution I am aware of: (select all that apply) **

- [ ] A policy statement on student entrepreneurship

- [ ] A policy statement on enterprise education
- [ ] A policy statement on employability
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other (please specify):

*8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements **

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident offering guidance to student entrepreneurs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enterprise and entrepreneurship are an intrinsic part of careers advice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enterprise skills are important to all graduates	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrepreneurship skills are important to all graduates	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrepreneurship is an occupation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrepreneurship is just about start-up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. If applicable to your role, of the last 100 students you advised please estimate how many enquired about entrepreneurship or start-up?

*10. Please can you indicate how valuable you think the following skills will be in the future? **

	Not at all valuable	Not so valuable	Somewhat valuable	Very valuable	Extremely valuable
Communication Skills/Interpersonal skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creativity and Innovation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Digital literacy proficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ethics, diversity, sustainability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal skills [initiative, leadership, social intelligence, personal branding]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Portfolio development skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem solving/Critical thinking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationship development/networking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Resilience and adaptability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teamwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please specify any additional skills that you believe will be valuable

*11. When supporting student entrepreneurs, what are your main personal and professional considerations? **

*12. If you had a student, ask about entrepreneurship, what would be your course of action? **

13. If you were designing CPD for careers and employability professionals to help them support entrepreneurs, what would it cover and what would it avoid?

14. Are you interested in finding out about enterprise and entrepreneurship training?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not applicable