

# The Role of Universities in Influencing Tomorrow's Economy – Graduate Employability

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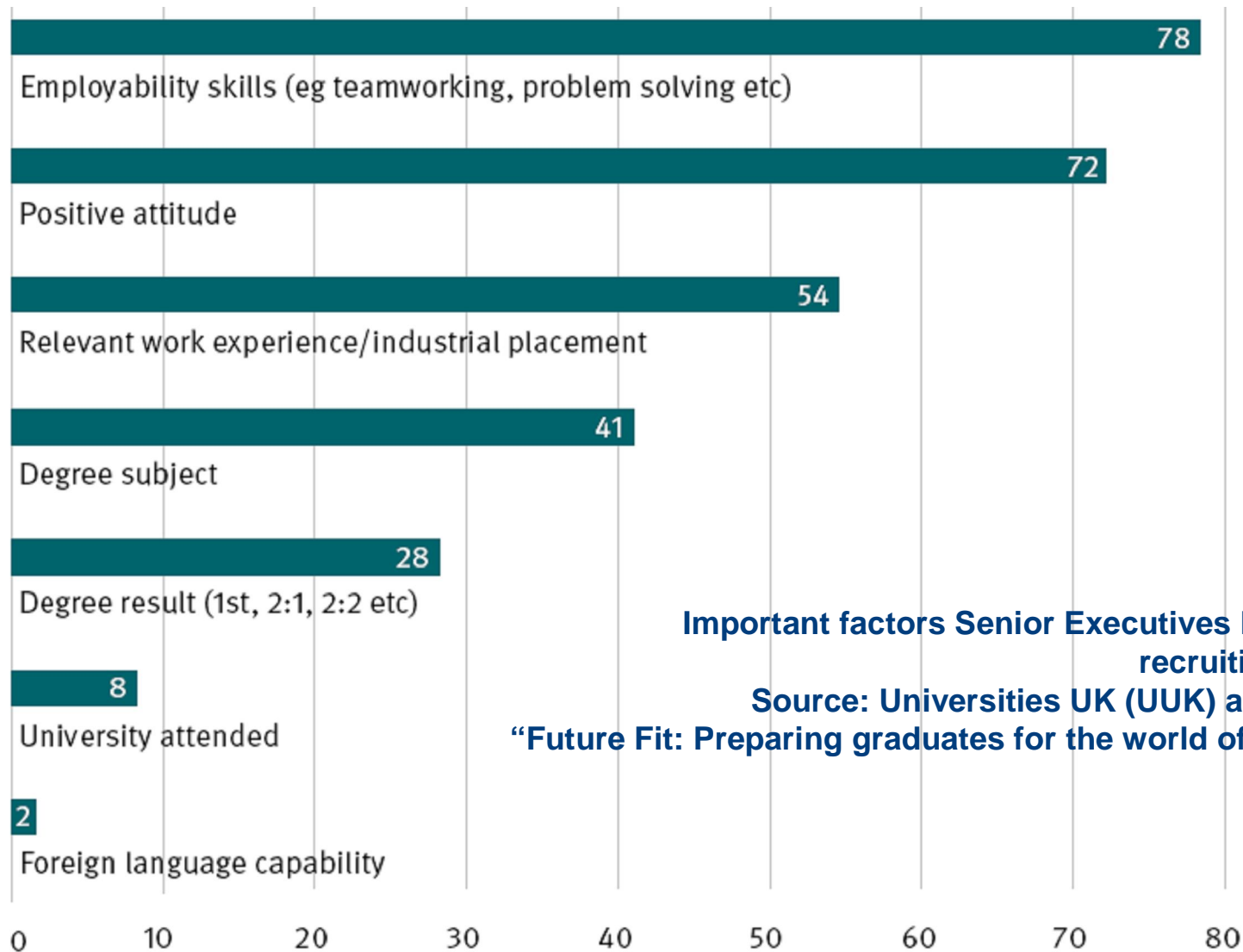
National Conference. Graduate Employability. Going Beyond the BA  
30th March 2011

# Universities and Economic Prosperity



- **Universities generate £59 Billion a year of output for the UK economy**
- **Universities have a key role to play in creating a sustainable economy through:**
  - > being a key provider of a higher skilled workforce**
  - > innovation and knowledge exchange to the wider society**
  - > the development of new ideas, products and services from research**
  - > continuing to raise the education levels of citizens**

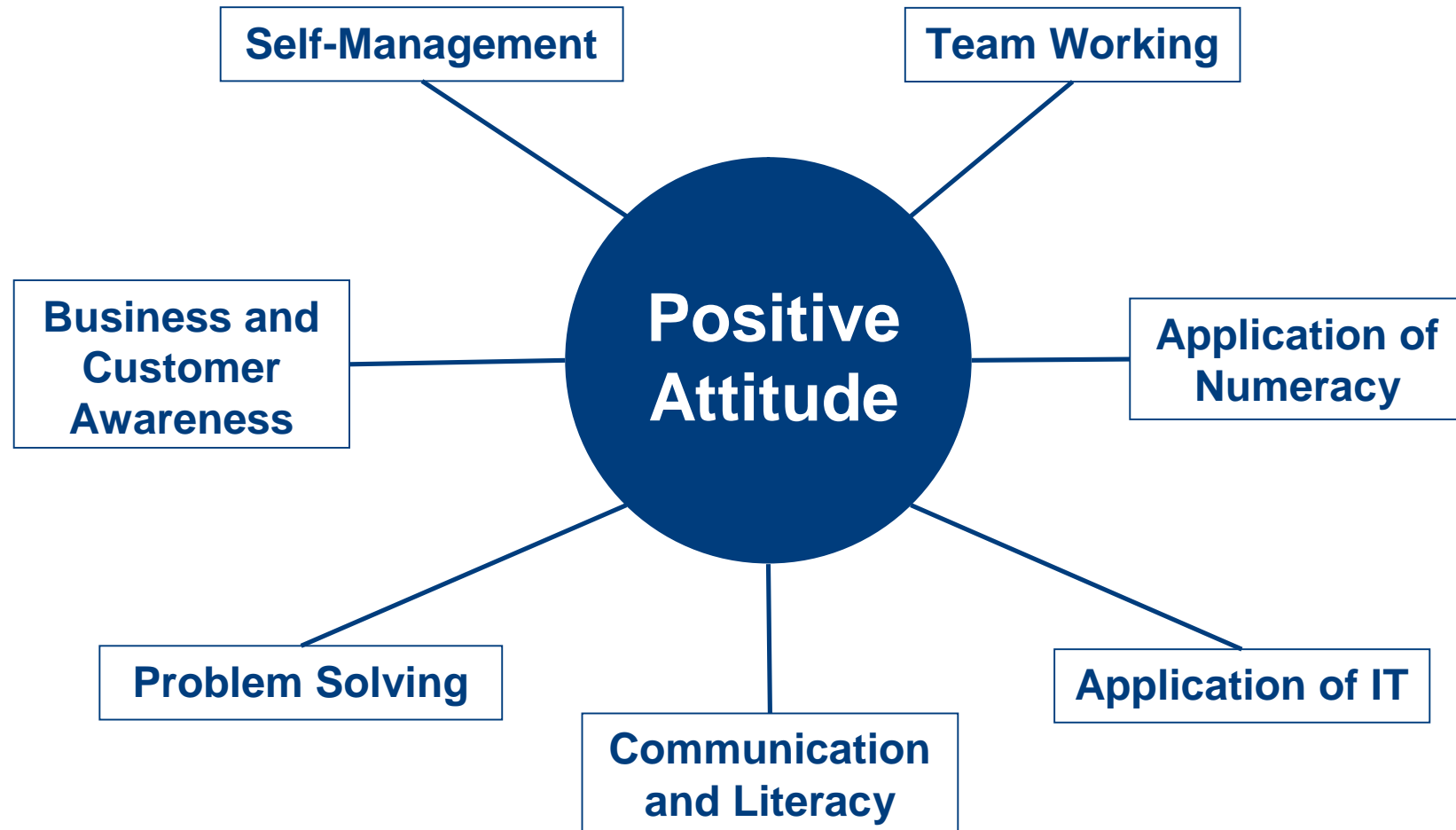
# Understanding What Employers Seek



**Important factors Senior Executives look for when recruiting graduates**

**Source: Universities UK (UUK) and CBI report  
“Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work” (2009)**

# Employability Skills Businesses Need



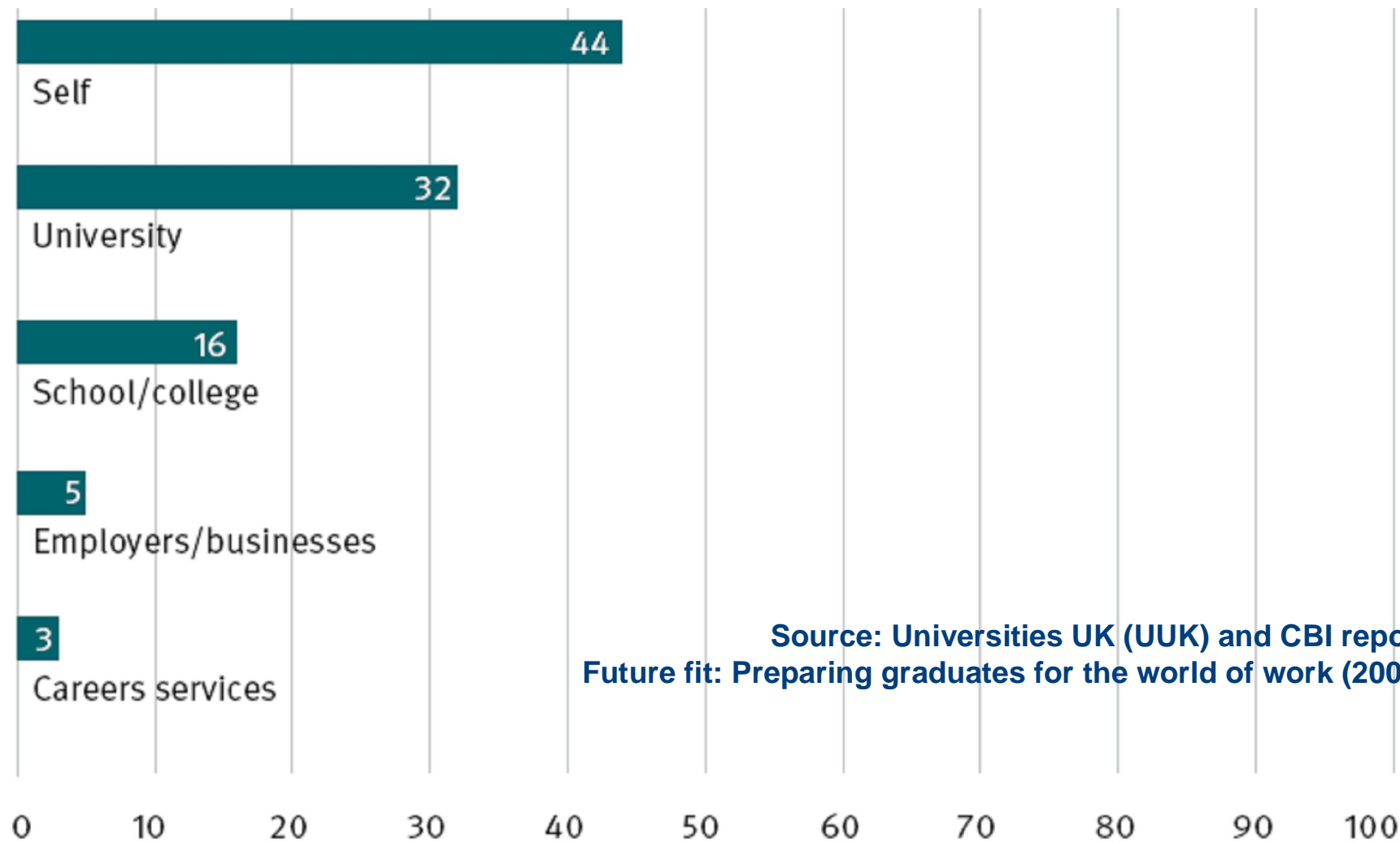
Source: "Time Well Spent" a report by the CBI for the Department of Education and Skills (2007)

# International Employers

- **International Employers rate high employability skills but also look for a higher calibre of employee with:**
  - > **overseas professional work experience – 65% of international employers believe this makes graduates more employable**
  - > **a good degree classification – 70% value this highly compared to 52% of companies with no international dealings**
  - > **language skills – 26% of multinational employers place importance on language skills among new graduates compared to 5% of UK-only companies**

Source: CIHE Survey Report  
“Graduate Employability: What do Employers think and want?” (2008)

# Students View: Who is Responsible for Helping Them Acquire Employability Skills



Source: Universities UK (UUK) and CBI report  
Future fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work (2009)

# Universities and Employability Skills: UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

## What Works

- **Recognising that employability needs embedding in the curriculum**
- **Co-ordination across the university – possibly through a team with responsibility for employer engagement**
- **Investment in methods to increase student participation such as communication and marketing**
- **Use of Reflective Learning, building on student personal development planning**
- **Additional effort to engage local and regional employers, e.g. involving them in core activities**

Key findings from UUK and CBI report  
“Future Fit: Preparing Graduates for the World of Work” (2009)  
[www.surrey.ac.uk](http://www.surrey.ac.uk)

## How Can Business Help

- **80% of employers surveyed by CBI are satisfied or very satisfied with the employability skills of graduates**
- **Employers need to increase engagement with universities by:**
  - > **offering high quality placements and work experience**
  - > **supporting university programmes which encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship**
  - > **working with local universities to share knowledge and experience through lectures or workshops**
  - > **providing interview training and application process advice**
  - > **contributing to careers advice services**
  - > **contributing to curriculum content through involvement in advisory boards**



## Case Study

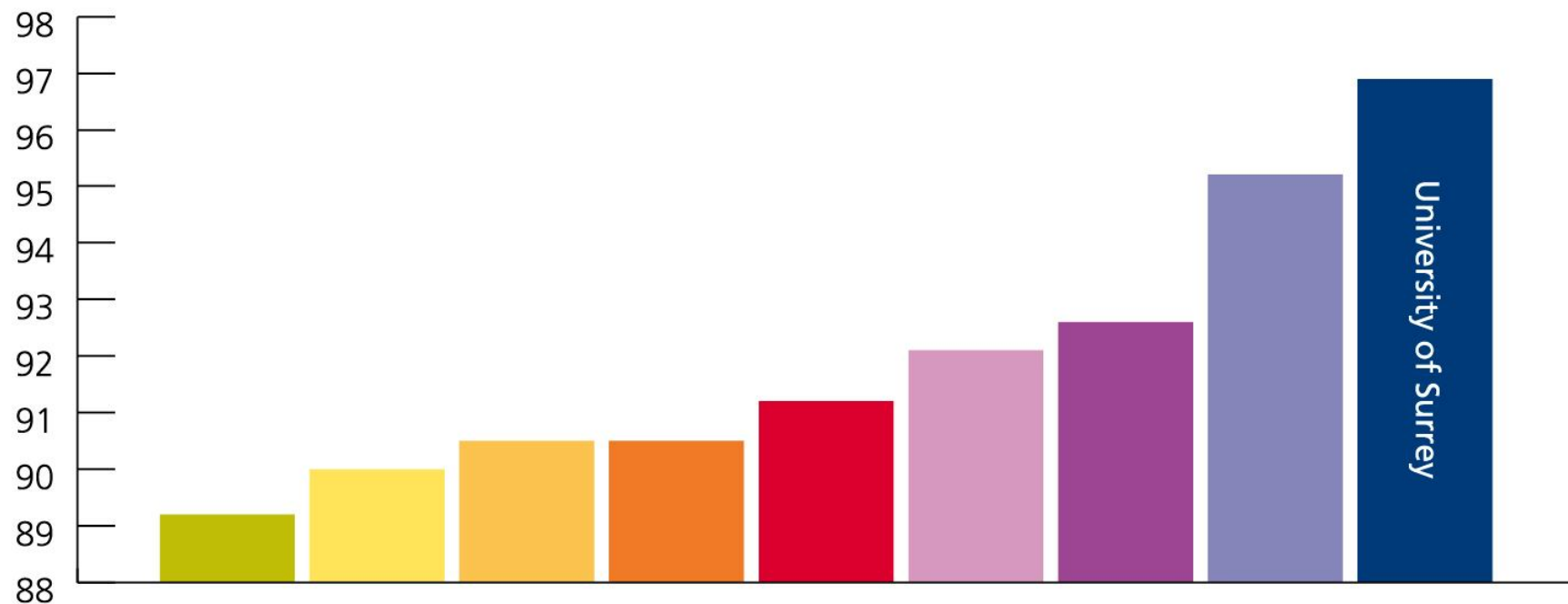
**The University of Surrey**  
**Working with Business to give Students**  
**a Competitive Edge for the Future**

# No 1 for Graduate Employment

## Selected universities

University of Surrey: 96.9%  
University of Cambridge: 95.2%  
University of Oxford: 92.6%  
University of Exeter: 92.1%  
University of Southampton: 91.2%

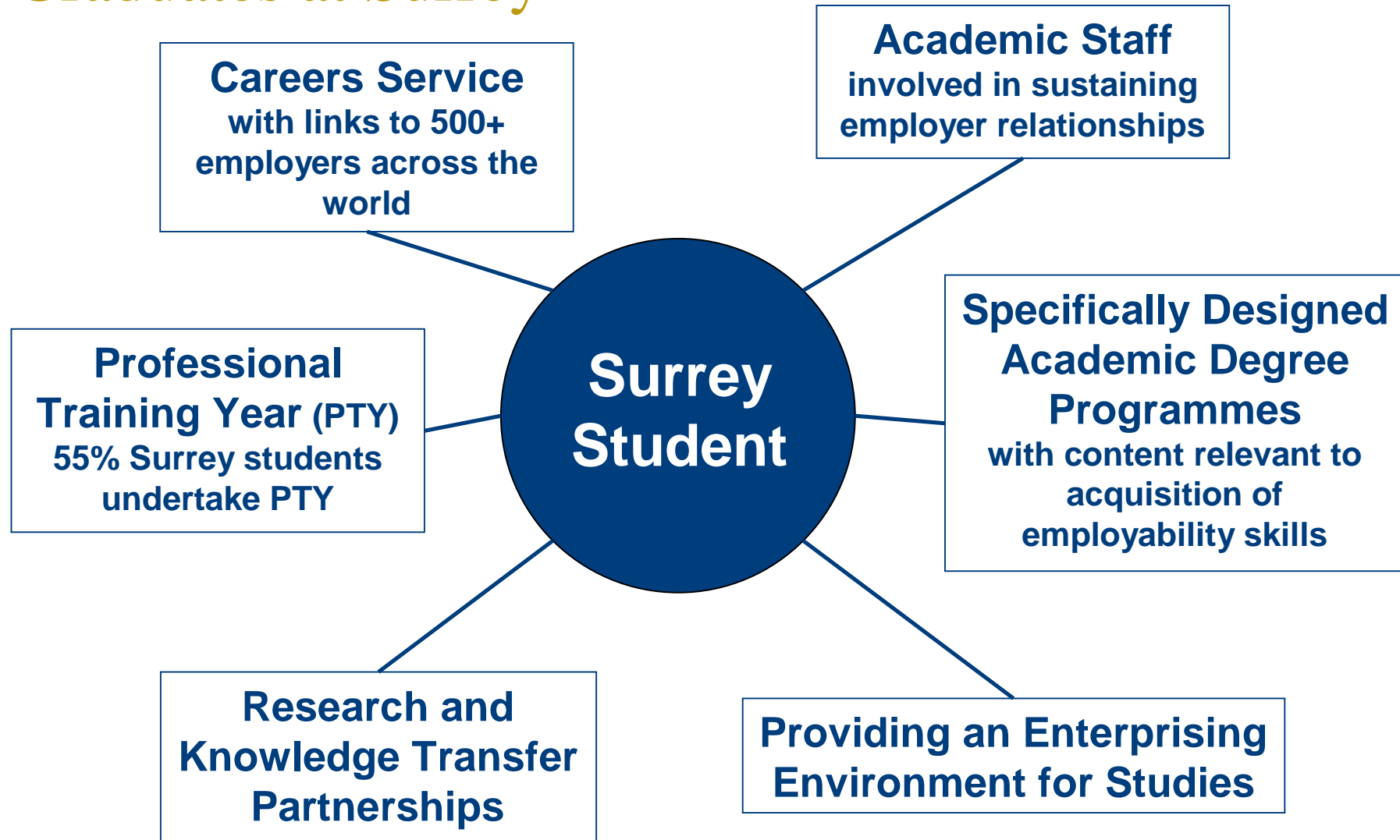
University of Bath: 90.5%  
Loughborough University: 90.5%  
Imperial College: 90%  
University of Warwick: 89.2%



Figures from HESA (Higher Education Statistical Agency)

[www.surrey.ac.uk](http://www.surrey.ac.uk)

# Creating Highly Employable Graduates at Surrey



# Understanding Employer Needs

- **The Careers Service at Surrey has successfully increased employer engagement through activities such as:**
  - > **Recruitment Fairs in both the Summer and Autumn**
  - > **Informal networking evenings in response to employer and student demand**
  - > **Employer-led skills programme for students i.e. interview workshops**
  - > **Friday CV clinics delivered by employers**
  - > **Experienced University Entrepreneur in Residence engaged to review employer brochure**
  - > **Engaging with employer networks and events to alert employers to the benefits of recruiting surrey graduates**

# Providing Valuable Work Experience



- **Surrey has been pioneering Professional Training since 1940s**
- **The Professional Training Year (PTY) is integral to degree programmes**
- **Students work in business and other organisations in a professional capacity**
- **Over 55% of students choose to do a Professional Training placement per year**
- **Students interests, academic strengths and career ambitions are matched to employer requirements**
- **We have placements in all major companies, research institutes, charities and hospitals in the UK**



ARUP



Harrods



YOUR M&S



CPS

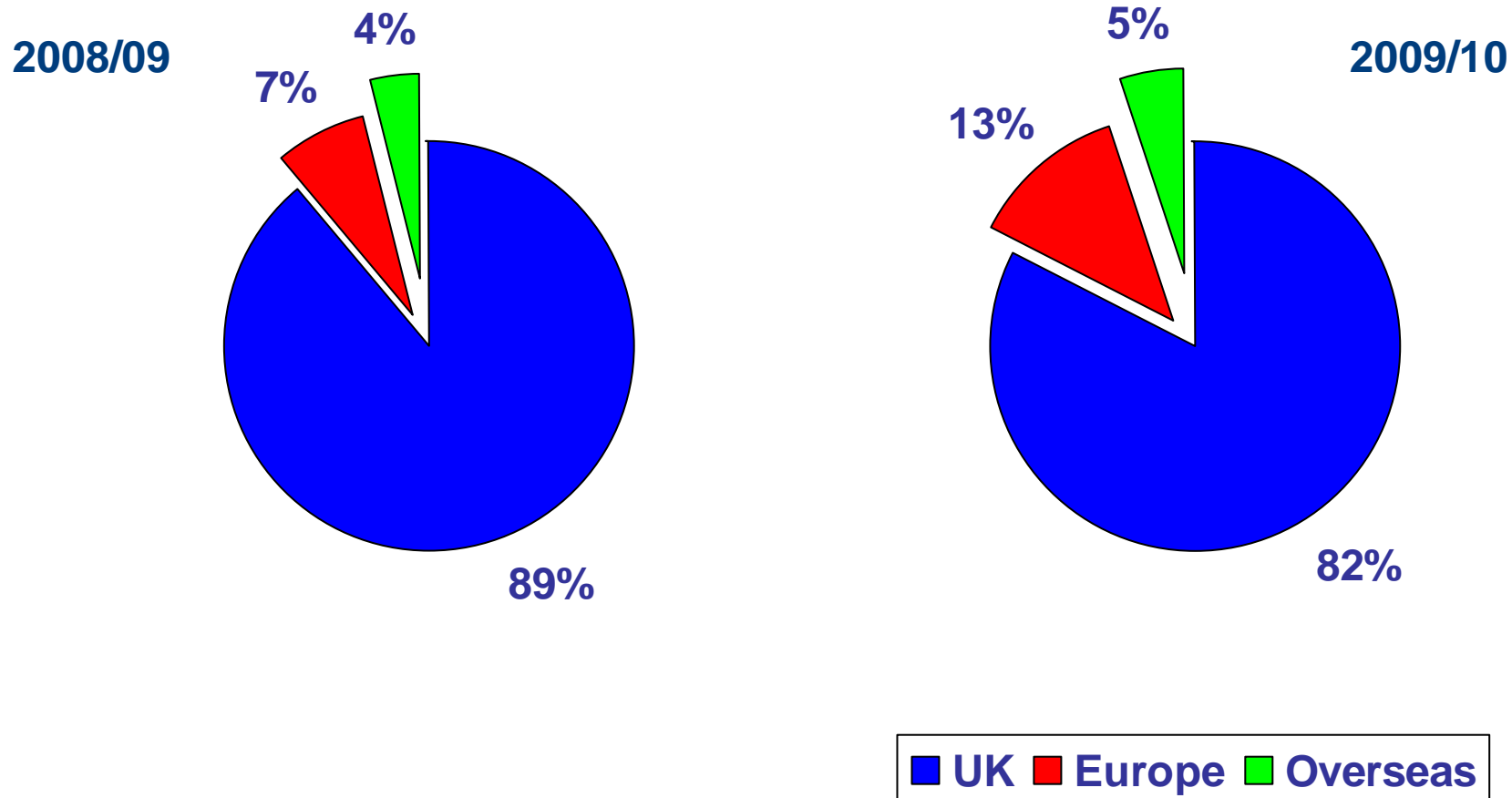


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# Location of PTY Placements



International PTY student mobility has been increasing year on year according to annual survey of 876 final year students who have undertaken PTY placements at Surrey

## Why It Works

- The benefits of PTYs for students:
  - > gaining confidence, maturity and motivation
  - > providing focus for their final year of study
  - > confirming their career path
  - > opening their eyes to new opportunities
  - > experiencing jobs that they may not otherwise be considering
  - > 40% of Surrey students receive direct or conditional job offers from their placement provider



*“My placement has given me an inside view of a company and really helped me understand theoretical concepts from my course.”* Joanne Herd (BSc Business Management). Placement at Marks and Spencer



# Why It Works

- The benefits of PTYs to employers:
  - > valuable contribution to the workforce
  - > opportunity to engage with the universities
  - > access to high-level skills and innovative ideas
  - > potential to recruit talented and experienced graduate

*“It can be a massive culture shock coming from an academic environment to a busy sales floor. Graduates who return to us after a placement year understand the culture of the organisation and the nature of the job. They’re less likely to leave again.”* Helen Alkin.  
Graduate Recruitment Manager, Marks & Spencer



## In Conclusion

- The role of universities in the economic recovery is not to train people for jobs but to develop the skills and education to meet tomorrow's challenges for a skilled workforce and increase their capacity to innovate
- It's vital that Universities achieve very high levels of graduate employability
  - > to meet interests of student
  - > by achieving a high level of employability skills
  - > by understanding what employers seek

**But ...**

- We mustn't lose sight of the real purpose of why HE exists – as a place of learning to broaden knowledge and to develop transferable skills for life

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