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"Employability - making placements work for both students and companies"

- ▶ Companies seek both role-specific and soft skills when hiring
 - ▶ Generally employers are pleased with subject specific skills
 - ▶ There is some criticism of maths and literacy etc
 - ▶ Employers are placing greater and greater emphasis on transferable skills
 - ▶ “If you have a negative attitude, can't get along with others, don't **communicate well**, don't work well as part of a **team**, and aren't able to **think creatively and critically**, it may not matter how well educated and competent you are”





Employers are seeking:

- ▶ Team players
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Effective Communication
- ▶ Problem-solving and resourcefulness
- ▶ Accepting of feedback
- ▶ Confident (not arrogant)
- ▶ Creative thinking



Competition For Jobs Is Fierce!

- ▶ **With work experience students are more likely:**
 - ▶ to be shortlisted for interview
 - ▶ to be offered work related to their degree than academically equal graduates
- ▶ **31%** entry-level positions are filled by graduates who have already worked for their organisations
 - ▶ paid internships
 - ▶ industrial placements
 - ▶ vacation work

Employers prefer students with experience

- ▶ **51%** of graduate-level recruiters say they would be more likely to employ graduates if they had previous work experience
- ▶ **34%** of recruiters warn:
“graduates who have had no previous work experience are unlikely to be successful during the selection process”

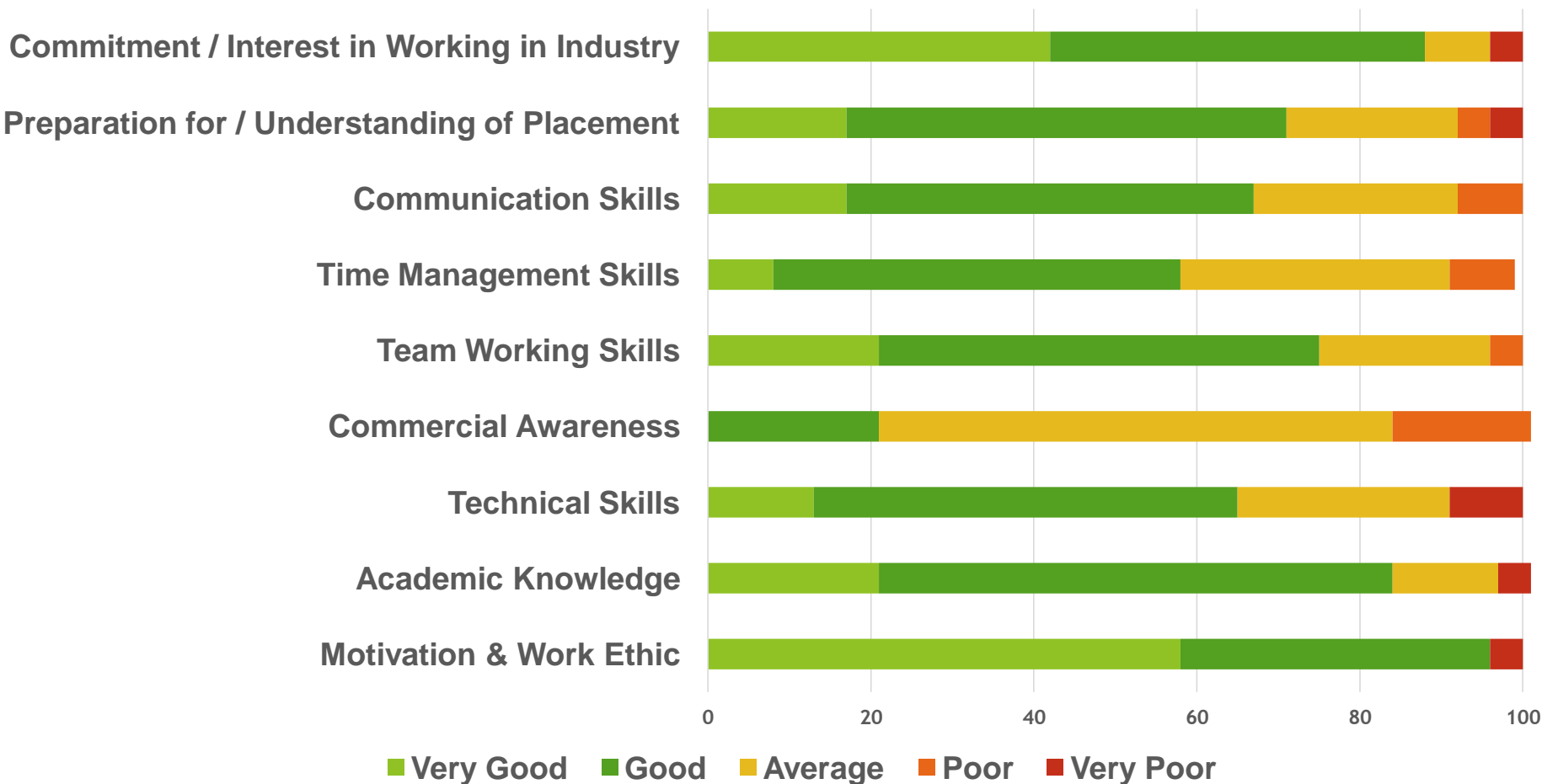


(Universities Scotland, 2013)
(High Flyers Research Ltd. 2017)



IN SEARCH OF GAME CHANGERS

Companies' Experience of Students Taken on Placement (% of Employers, n=24)





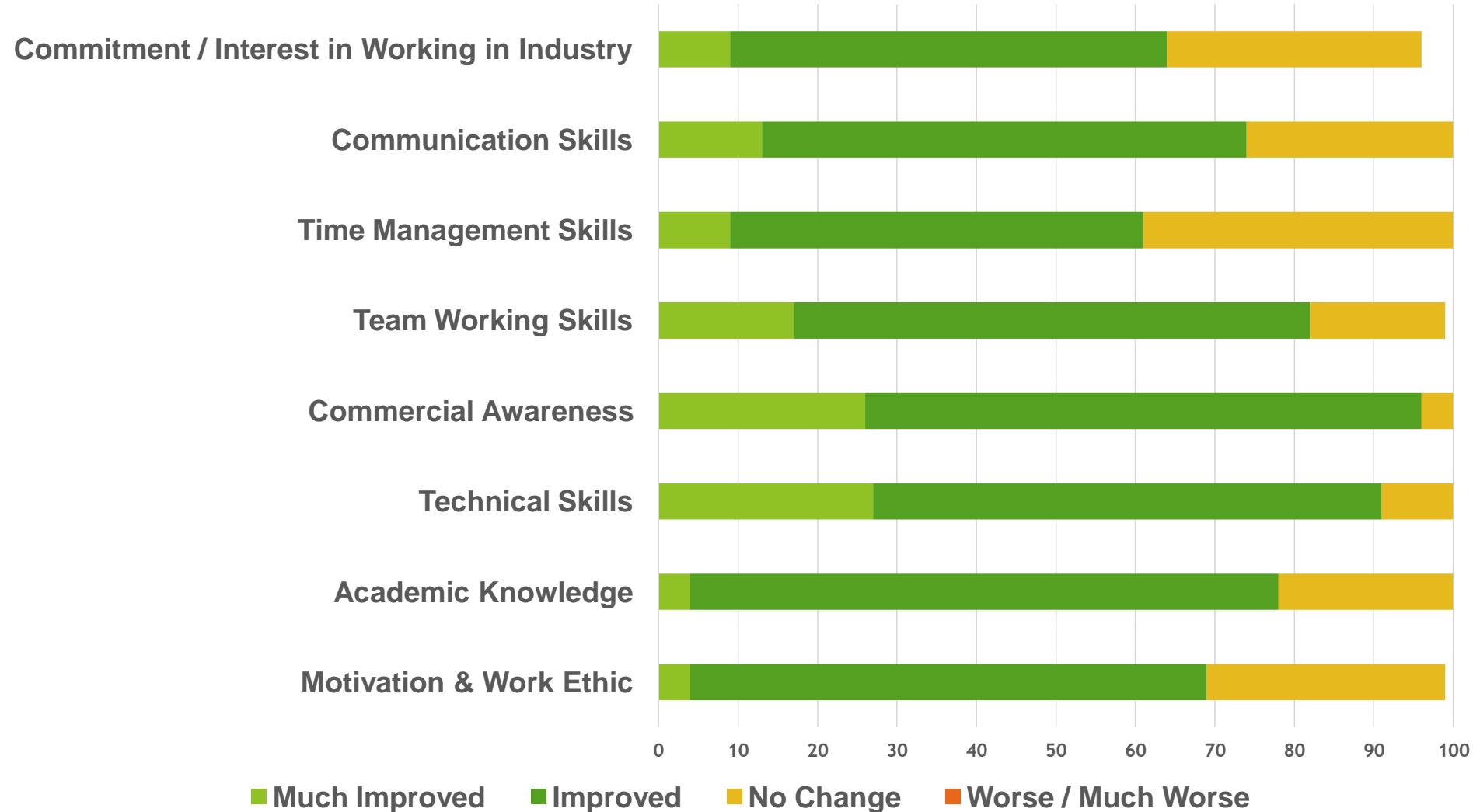
IN SEARCH OF GAME CHANGERS

- ▶ Companies are generally very happy with the students they take on placement
- ▶ The majority of students are enthusiastic and well prepared for the placement
- ▶ However, one aspect which many companies reported they found to be lacking in students was their commercial awareness
 - ▶ “graduates without the ability to integrate science and business pose a considerable challenge in today’s market”

(Nugent and Lindburg, 2013)

In general students LOVE placements!

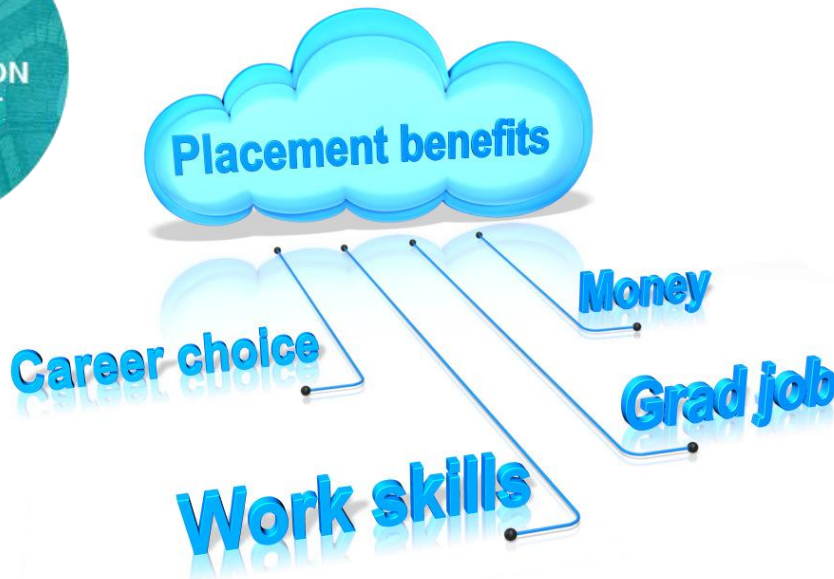
Impact of Placements on Students (% of Employers, n=23)



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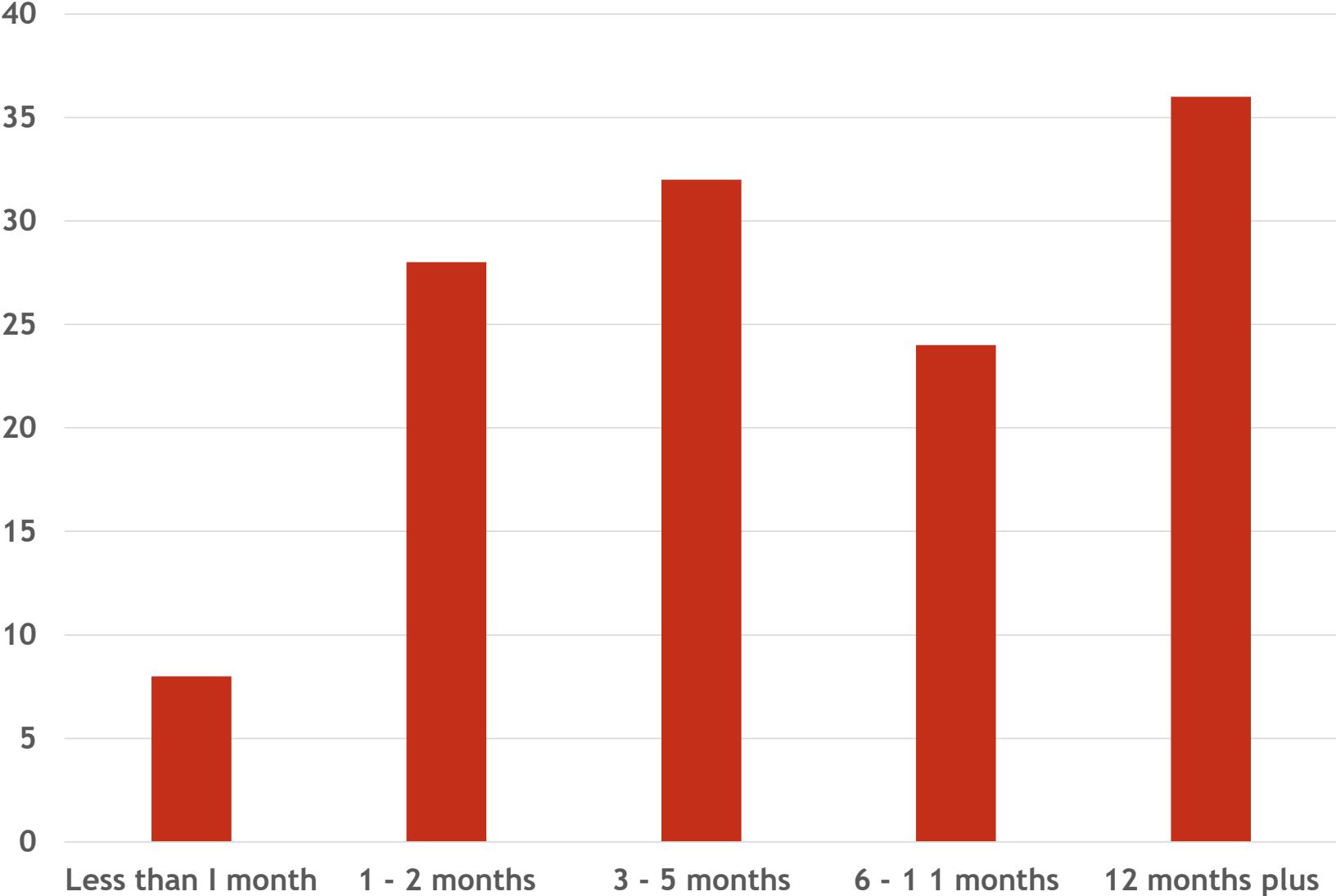


AVERAGE
 £16,000 PAID ON
 PLACEMENT



“My industrial placements helped me gain invaluable experience at an early stage, which gave me a leading advantage in getting a job after graduation.”

Placement Length Offered By Employers (% of Employers, n=25)



The logo for Placement Scotland features a stylized starburst graphic on the left, composed of several overlapping triangles in shades of yellow and purple. To the right of this graphic, the words "Placement" and "Scotland" are stacked vertically in a bold, purple, sans-serif font.

Placement Scotland

- ▶ **38%** of employers (n=53) agree that placements should be at least 11 months
 - ▶ to be fully trained in the job and then
 - ▶ work autonomously for a few months
 - ▶ return to the company for their investment
- ▶ Students often see laboratory-based placements as their only options
- ▶ To understand that different types of placement are available requires appropriate preparation of students by Universities

(TERU, 2015).

Roles Carried Out By Placement Students

- ▶ Research & Development
- ▶ Administration
- ▶ Business Development
- ▶ Quality Control
- ▶ Customer Service / Communications
- ▶ Finance
- ▶ Sales & Marketing
- ▶ HR



Employers' Opinions

Reasons for providing placements

- ▶ Good for industry
- ▶ Allowed a specific project to be carried out in a set timescale
- ▶ An ideal way to 'trial' students for potential future employment
- ▶ Cover short-term recruitment need
- ▶ Ideal staff development tool
- ▶ Build relationship with University for research
- ▶ Access to grant income

Reasons for not providing placements

- ▶ No suitable work for student
- ▶ No resources to supervise student
- ▶ **Not approached by university**
- ▶ **Not approached by students**
- ▶ **Do not know who to contact to arrange placement**



Actions That Would Encourage Employers To Take (More) Students On Placement In The Future	% of Employers (n=55)
Well prepared students	62
Wage costs paid or subsidised	60
Access to online student placement advertising and recruitment website	33
Greater employer involvement in university / college courses and curricula	33
Single point of contact in Scotland to coordinate student placements	31
More student support from university / college during placement	31
More employer support from university / college during placement	31
More information on how to organise student placement	27
More information on the value / benefit of student placements	18

How Are Students Recruited onto placement?	% of Employers (n = 24)
Students contact company	42
University contacts company	25
Company approached university	21
Employee asked on behalf of friend / family	13
Via Research Council	4
Erasmus Plus Traineeship	4
ScotGRAD	4
STEP Programme	4
Other	17



UNIVERSITY
OF ABERDEEN

- ▶ More support from university during placement
- ▶ Greater employer involvement in university courses and curricula
 - ▶ More business and commercial training in Universities
 - ▶ Bio-business at Aberdeen now taught from 1st to 5th years
 - ▶ Currently “business savvy” training
 - ▶ Aspiration to include business “start-up” too
- ▶ More information on how to recruit students

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