Harnessing potential:

Understanding the part-time professional learner and the enterprise upskilling landscape.

21 May 2025

Macro Environment Trends

Macro-Environment Trends

Growth & Participation

Key Drivers

Enterprise Priorities

Skills Revolution
Significant growth in part-time postgraduate programmes globally

Global Executive Confidence
90% of executives plan to maintain/increase L&D investment

Skills Gaps
Digital transformation and leadership

Digital Shift
52% of EU higher education institutes now offer online offerings

AI Literacy Gap
67% see AI skills as essential, but 36% receive institutional support

Practical Focus
"Applied learning" preferred with immediate workplace relevance

90% prioritise learning opportunities for retention

Professional learners.

Survey Sample

Quantitative survey of 750 Irish adults (ROI) with Level 7 education or higher.

Fieldwork conducted from 27 March to 10 April 2025.

Sample weighted to reflect CSO population data. Demographics shown are weighted figures

Gender

56% 44%

Age

29% 49% 22%

20 to 34   35 to 54   55+

Region

- Dublin 33%
- Leinster ex Dublin 25%
- Munster 27%
- Connacht/Ulster 14%

Socio-economic grade

44% 44% 12%

AB   C1C2   DEF

Career stage

20% 54% 23% 4%
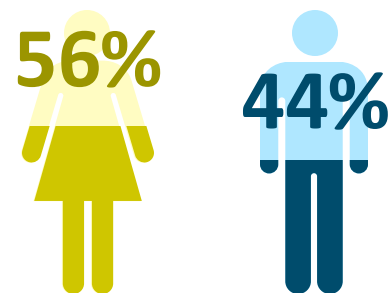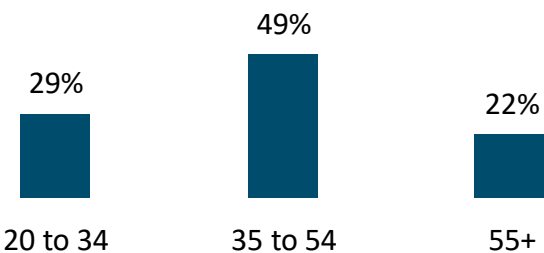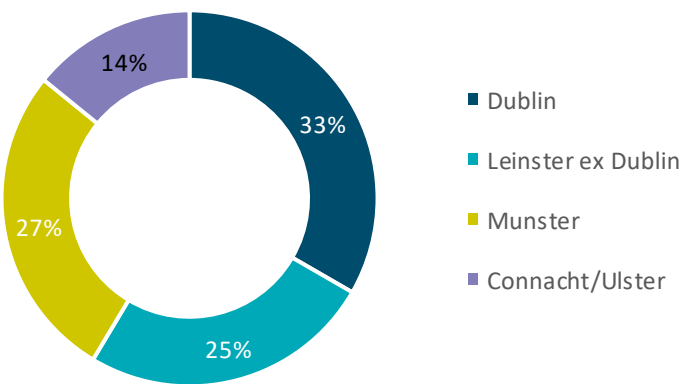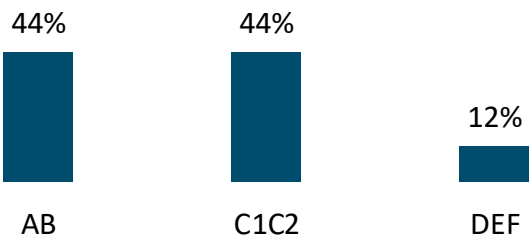
Early   Mid   Senior   Late
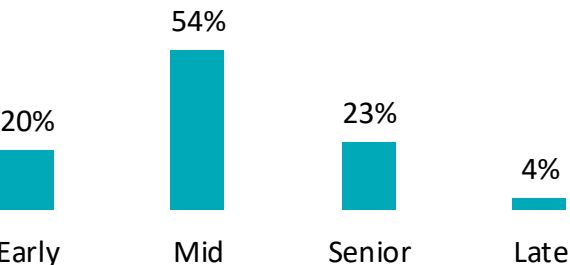
Estimated Market Sizing

100%
All those with a level 7 education

1,140,686

34%
Very or extremely open to PG study in the next 5 years

387,833

**75,000 people
would consider TU Dublin**
for a postgraduate qualification in the next 5 years.

* estimated based on research
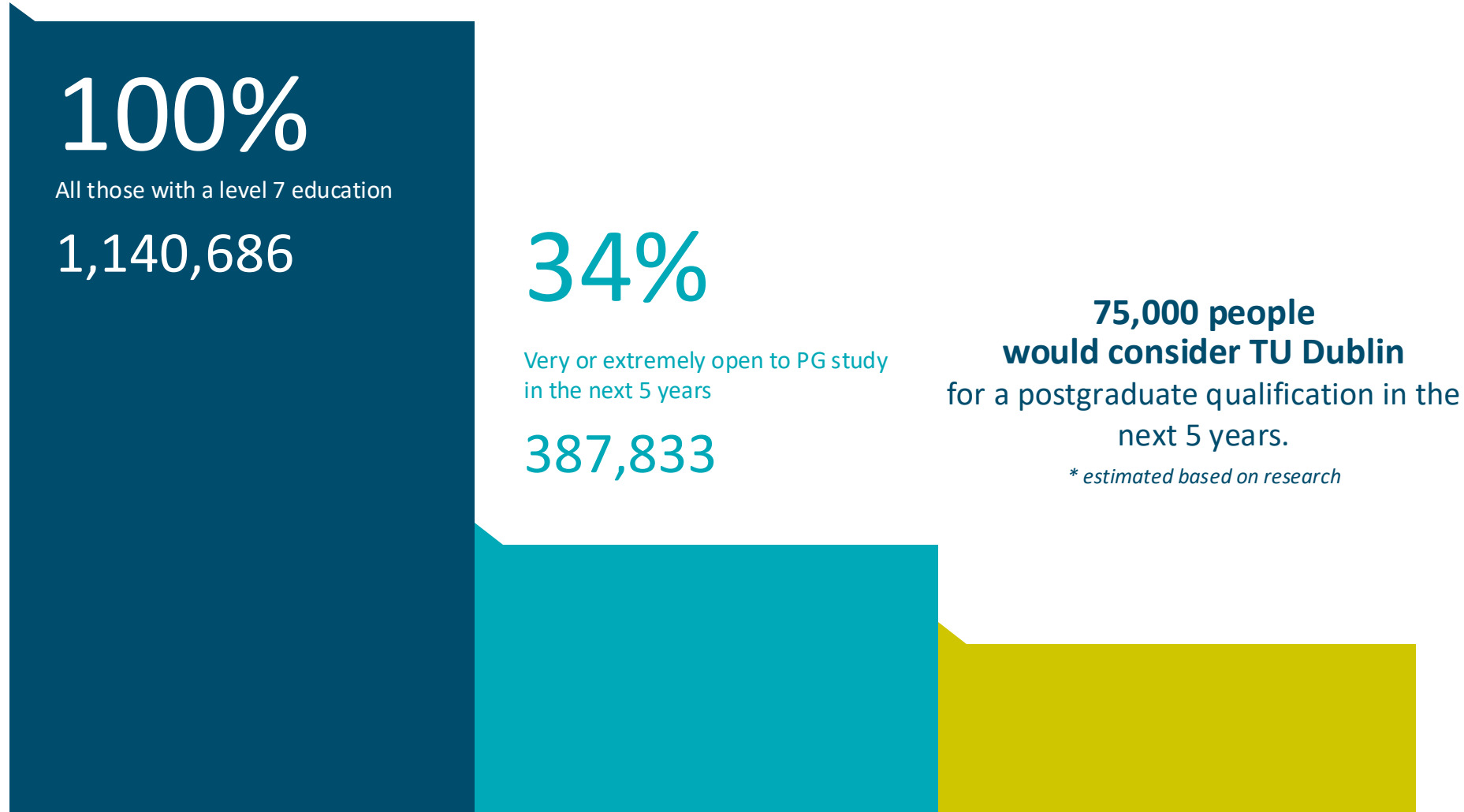
Targeting Considerations to Attract Learner Participation

Openness To Postgraduate Education

Implication

- Life-stage pressures leading to a desire for flexibility
- Helpful markers when designing and positioning courses

% Open to starting or continuing post-graduate study

Legend: ■ Not at all open ■ Somewhat or moderately open ■ Extremely or very open

	Total	Early Career	Mid-Career	Senior or Late Career	Gen Zs	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Pre-family	Family	Post-family	Co-residing family
Extremely or very open	34%	46%	31%	41%	47%	43%	28%	9%	39%	43%	18%	34%
Somewhat or moderately open	54%	46%	62%	46%	47%	50%	63%	57%	55%	50%	59%	55%
Not at all open	11%	7%	7%	13%	7%	7%	9%	34%	6%	7%	23%	11%

Career Stage | Generation | Life Stage

S2Q1A: How open are you, if at all, to the idea of starting or continuing post-graduate study, which can include anything from micro-credentials, post-graduate certificates to diplomas or Master's degrees etc., in the next 5 years? Unweighted Base: 56-750

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Motivations For Postgraduate Education

Implication

More holistic framing to increase relevance and appeal - not just career advancement but personal growth motivations

% Tell us that they:

68% are motivated by investing in their growth, learning out of passion and curiosity or pushing themselves

70% are motivated by progressing their careers, standing out in the job market and figuring out what they really want to do

S2Q2A. Which of the following if any would be likely to motivate you to start or continue post-graduate study?
Unweighted Base: Early or Mid-Career Professionals under 44 years old (n=338)

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Compromises & Barriers

Implication
To enable learner participation consideration could be given to flexibility, support structures & financial structures

% Willing to taking on the following challenges

63%	58%	47%	29%	12%
Time & Balance Demands	Emotional & Psychological Demands	Multiple Deadlines & Inflexibility	Financial Strain	Lack of Support

Support & Funding

Implication

Gen Zs (<27) are less likely to have funding and rely on self-financing. Explore financial barriers and supports.

% Have the following available for study

Legend: Gen Z, Millennial

	Gen Z	Millennial
Support	70%	71%
Money	50%	55%
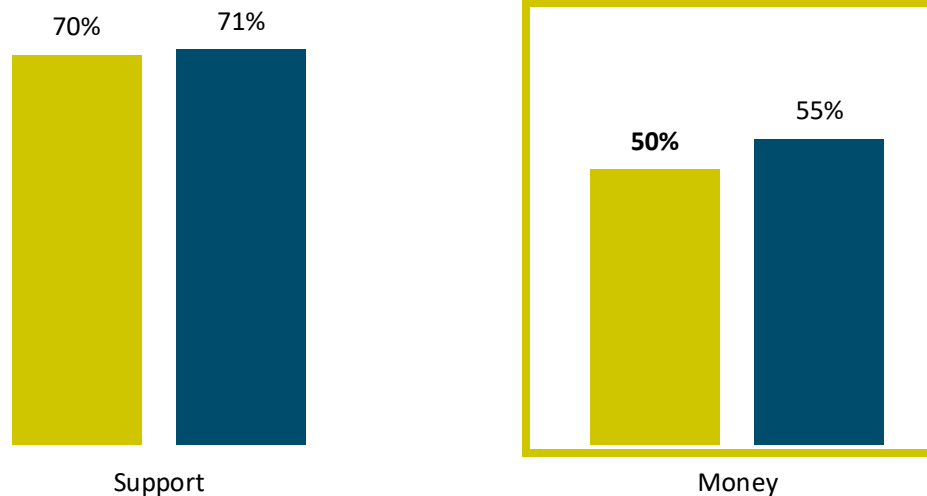
% Most likely funding scenario

	Gen Z	Millennial
I would pay for it myself	68%	55%
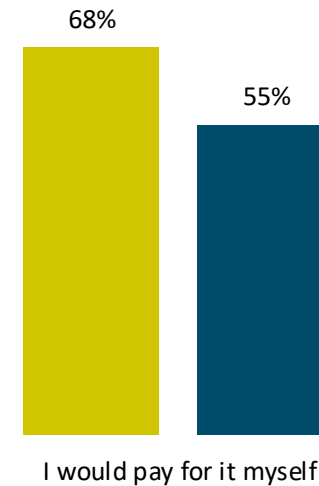
S3Q5. And thinking about your life now, please rate the following on how much you feel you have or don't have for studying
S4Q1: When it comes to funding a potential post-graduate course, which scenario would be most likely for you?
Unweighted Base: Gen Z (n=128), Millennials (n=374)

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Perceptions Of Provider Types

Implication

Industry network, connection to enterprise, and applied learning continues to be a distinguishing factor for TU Dublin

Tailored course work

Real-world case studies and practical work

Tutor support, discussions and networking

Well-established industry network in Ireland and beyond

S4Q4. And which of the following statements do you feel describes the providers you're aware of?
Unweighted Base: Aware of TU Dublin (n=653)
(TUs include TU Dublin, MTU, SETU, ATU and TUS)

Programme Types That Are Motivating for Learners

Subject Area Considerations

Implication

Significant opportunities to offer courses which deepen professionals' expertise

This chart shows the percentage of students who would consider postgraduate study in the same subject as their undergraduate degree (e.g. 78% of Healthcare & Life Science graduates would consider a related postgrad).

	Studied at Undergraduate Level							
Most likely to pursue at post-graduate level	Healthcare & Life Science	Science & Technology	Creative Arts & Media	Education	Business & Management	Engineering & Built Environment*	Social Sciences & Humanities	Law & Governance*
Healthcare & Life Science	78%							
Science & Technology		69%						
Creative Arts & Media			67%					
Education				62%				
Business & Management					56%			
Engineering & Built Environment						55%		
Social Sciences & Humanities							50%	
Law & Governance								49%

S3Q3. If you were to start post-graduate study, what subject area or areas would you be most likely to pursue? Unweighted Base: n=30-203 *CAUTION: LOW BASE

Subject Area Considerations

Implication
Significant cross-disciplinary opportunities

This chart shows consideration of different postgraduate subjects based on undergraduate subject chosen (e.g. 20% of Science & Tech grads would consider a postgraduate in Business & Management)

		Studied at Undergraduate Level >= 15%							
		Healthcare & Life Science	Science & Technology	Creative Arts & Media	Education	Business & Management	Engineering & Built Environment*	Social Sciences & Humanities	Law & Governance*
Most likely to pursue at post-graduate level	Healthcare & Life Science		8%	8%	15%	8%	7%	14%	5%
	Science & Technology	18%		15%	11%	12%	29%	10%	18%
	Creative Arts & Media	1%	5%		17%	9%	2%	19%	15%
	Education	17%	14%	5%		13%	13%	19%	4%
	Business & Management	8%	20%	22%	6%		30%	24%	20%
	Engineering & Built Environment	3%	12%	6%	5%	3%		2%	2%
	Social Sciences & Humanities	12%	7%	22%	21%	14%	2%		17%
	Law & Governance	4%	6%	6%	3%	9%	0%	6%	
	Transversal Skills	3%	16%	17%	7%	14%	11%	17%	15%

S3Q3. If you were to start post-graduate study, what subject area or areas would you be most likely to pursue? Unweighted Base: n=30-203 *CAUTION: LOW BASE

Preferred Course Format

Implication
Flexible, online course formats are favoured enabling learners to choose the model that best fits their needs

% Prefer
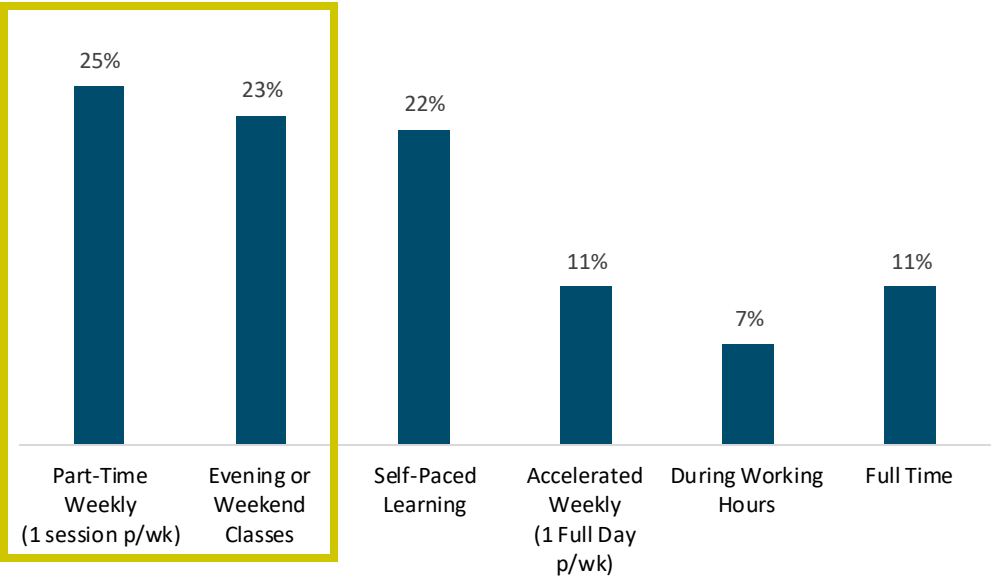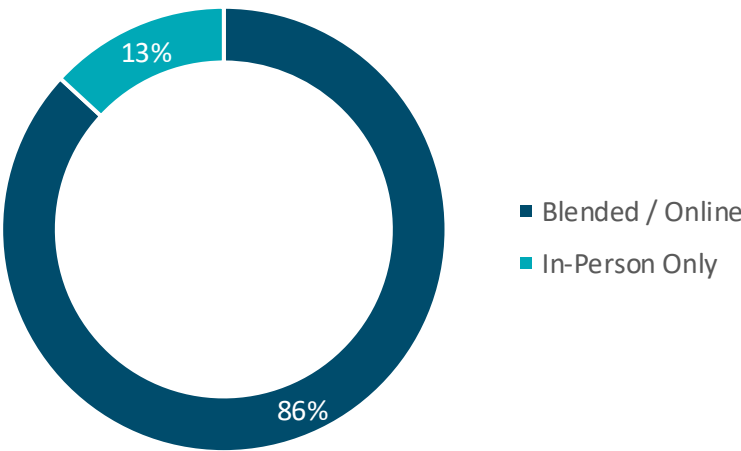
- Blended / Online
- In-Person Only

86%
13%

25% Part-Time Weekly (1 session p/wk)
23% Evening or Weekend Classes
22% Self-Paced Learning
11% Accelerated Weekly (1 Full Day p/wk)
7% During Working Hours
11% Full Time

Preferred Programme

Implication

- Micro-creds & PG certs appeal to mid-career professionals
- Master's Degrees appeal to early-career professionals

% Prefer

Legend: ■ Total Open ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Mid-Career Professionals

	Total Open	Early Career Professionals	Mid-Career Professionals
Micro-credentials	36%	27%	37%
Post-graduate Certificates	31%	27%	34%
Master's Degree	25%	42%	21%
Doctoral Degree (PhD)	4%	2%	3%
All of these	3%	2%	4%
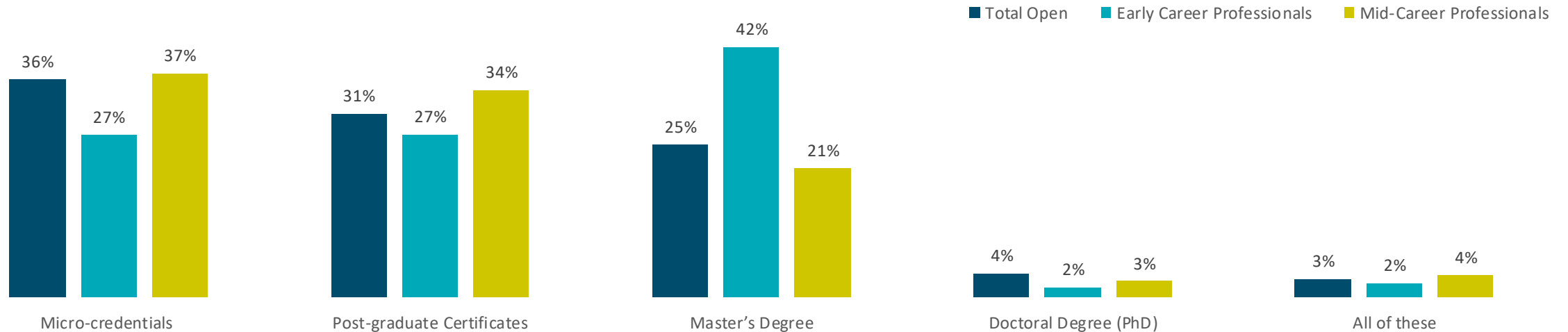
S2Q1C: You told us that you are at least somewhat open to the idea of starting or continuing post-graduate study in the next 5 years. Thinking about the different post-graduate options you could consider, which of the following would be you most likely to choose? Unweighted Base: Total (n=750)

What Constitutes an Excellent Learner Experience?

Expected Learning Experience

Implication

Opportunities in programme design and communications around:

1. Instructor-led online delivery

Expect post-graduate courses to have a [] focus:

Left		Right
Theoretical		Practical
Self-directed		Instructor-led
Research-based		Applied
Fast-paced		Self-paced
Structured		Flexible
Discussion-based		Lecture-based
Challenging		Accessible
Personal and interpersonal abilities		Technical skills
Global		Irish
Analytical		Creative
Independent		Collaborative
Inter-disciplinary		Niche
Executive		Entry-level
Online		On-Campus
Specialised		Generalist

S3Q4. If you were to start post-graduate study, please indicate the focus that you would expect the course to have.
Unweighted Base: Total (n=750)

Expected Learning experience

Implication

Opportunities in programme design and communications around:

1. Instructor-led online delivery

2. Build independent thinking with interpersonal and executive skills.

Expect post-graduate courses to have a [] focus:

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S3Q4. If you were to start post-graduate study, please indicate the focus that you would expect the course to have.
Unweighted Base: Total (n=750)
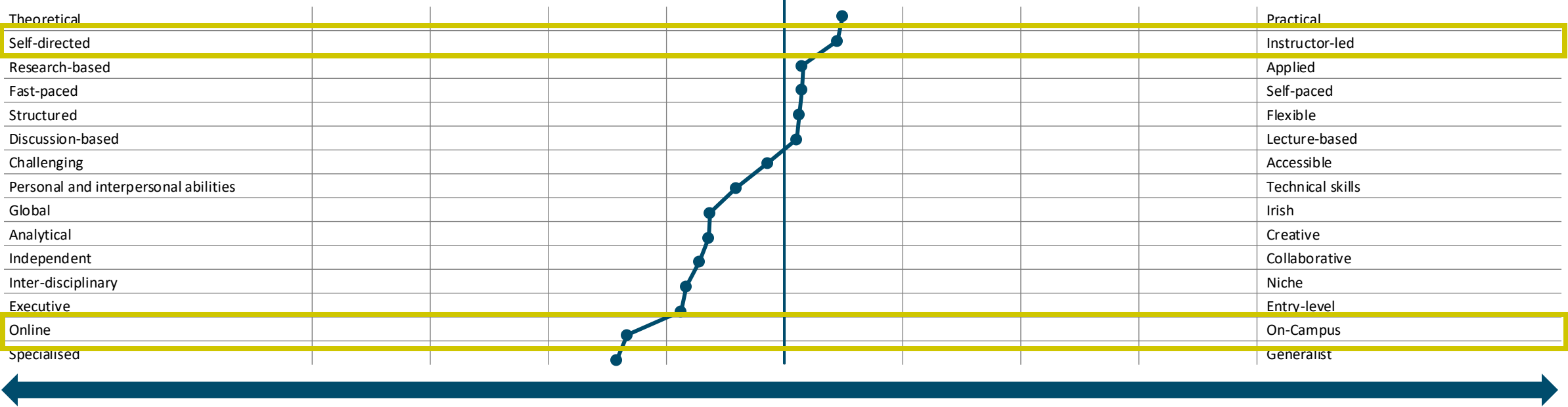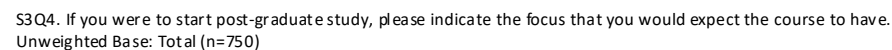
Expected Learning Experience

Implication

Opportunities in programme design and communications around:

1. Instructor-led online delivery

2. Build independent thinking with interpersonal and executive skills.

3. Showcasing international partnerships that help promote a global outlook

Expect post-graduate courses to have a [] focus:

Left		Right
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S3Q4. If you were to start post-graduate study, please indicate the focus that you would expect the course to have.
Unweighted Base: Total (n=750)

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In Summary

Increase upskilling opportunities by removing barriers to part-time professional learning

Provide flexible offerings, with suitable support structures to enable participation

Opportunities not only for deepening expertise but for cross-disciplinary upskilling

Need for applied, practice-based education for immediate work-place relevance

Creating a culture of part-time professional learning increases retention in the workplace

Thank You.