



Agència  
per a la Qualitat  
del Sistema Universitari  
de Catalunya

## EMPLOYERS

# THE OPINION OF EMPLOYERS REGARDING THE EDUCATION RECEIVED BY GRADUATES OF TOURISM







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# **THE OPINION OF EMPLOYERS REGARDING THE EDUCATION RECEIVED BY GRADUATES OF TOURISM**

AQU CATALUNYA, 2019

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Universitari de Catalunya

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	7
INDICATORS ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME IN TOURISM .....	8
■ Basic data on the study programme .....	8
■ Satisfaction of graduates with the university education received .....	9
■ Access to the labour market for graduates .....	10
The opinion of companies regarding the education received by graduates of Tourism .....	12
■ Characteristics of the companies that have recruited individuals who recently graduated in Tourism ..	12
■ Recruitment of individuals who recently graduated in the field of Tourism .....	14
■ Difficulties in recruitment.....	17
■ Skills.....	18
■ Cooperation from the business community with universities.....	21
■ In-company training of individuals who recently graduated in Tourism .....	22
■ Forecast .....	23
CONCLUSIONS .....	24
Data sheet .....	26
Drafting committee.....	27



## INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari (AQU Catalunya) is to **contribute to the improvement of university study programmes in the Catalan university system**. To achieve this, it is essential to benefit from evidence and data making it possible to assess the functioning of each study programme with the aim of making it easier for decisions to be made by the officials in charge of the universities and study programmes and by politicians responsible for universities.

**Evidence-based proposals for improving study programmes**

This report sets out evidence regarding the implementation and delivery of the study programme in Tourism gleaned from the results of the **2018 survey on employers in this sector**. The survey strives to gain an acquaintance of the opinion of companies regarding the education received by the individuals who recently graduated in the field of Tourism who they have recruited, particularly with regard to cross-disciplinary and specific skills which bear substantial margin for improvement, among other issues.

In addition to these results, the report incorporates an initial section with **contextual information on the study programme in Tourism**, setting out **basic data on the study programme** and the main results of the **surveys on the satisfaction of individuals who have recently graduated in Tourism**, as well as the **results of the survey on their access to the labour market**.

*Figure 1. Databases for improving study programmes*



# INDICATORS ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME IN TOURISM

## Basic data on the study programme

The basic data on the study programmes involves administrative data taken from the UNEIX information system.

Figure 2. Indicators on the implementation and delivery of the study programme in Tourism. 2016-2017 academic year

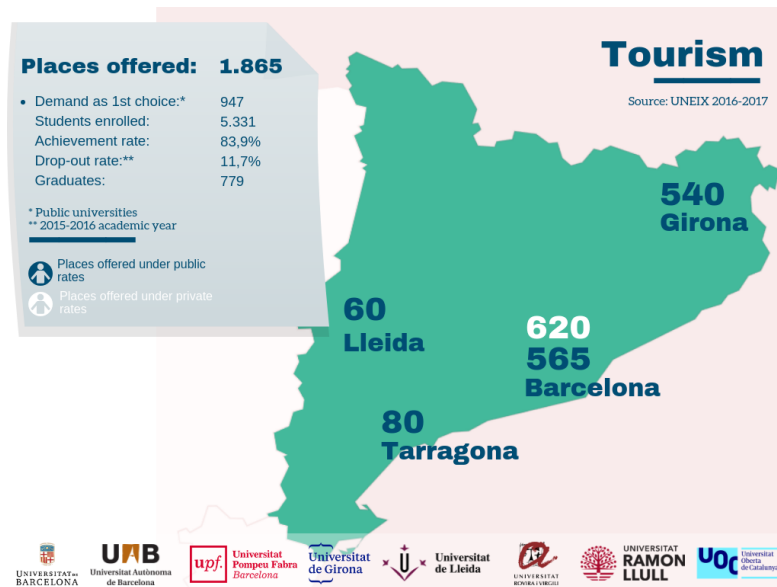
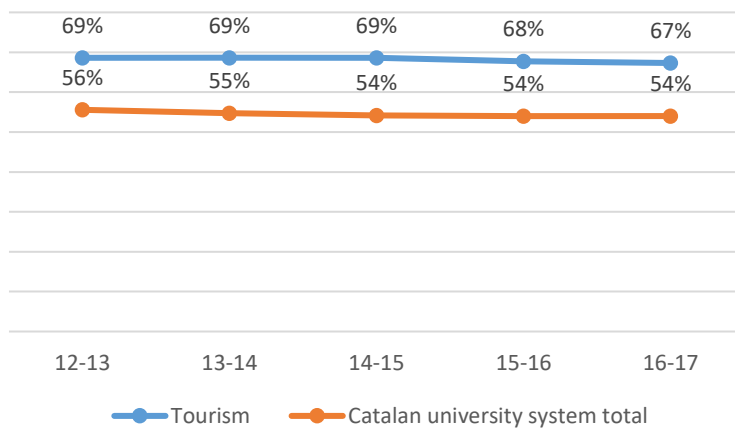


Figure 3. Trend in the percentage of women following the Bachelor's degree in Tourism (%)



### The Bachelor's degree in Tourism is female-dominated

67% of those enrolling on the Bachelor's degrees in the field of Tourism are women. This figure is higher than the average for the study programmes in the Catalan university system.



## ■ Satisfaction of graduates with the university education received

The data regarding satisfaction with the education received stems from the **satisfaction survey** drawn up by AQU Catalunya. It sets out information on graduates' satisfaction with various characteristics of the education delivered in the university study programme they followed. It is an online survey conducted yearly on all the individuals who graduated one year earlier. The results shown are the averages for 2015, 2016 and 2017 in the respective sub-fields and for the Catalan university system as a whole.

Figure 4. The extent to which the education delivered has improved in terms of the following factors (from 0 to 10)

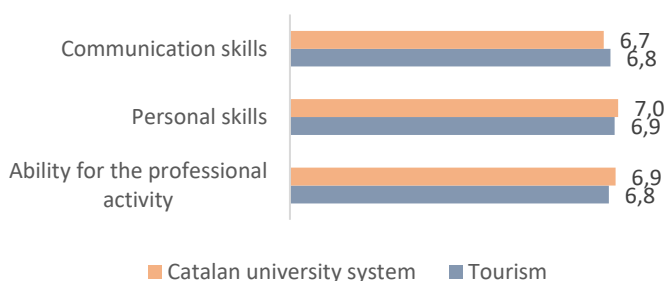


Figure 5. Usefulness of external training placements and Bachelor's degree final-year projects (from 0 to 10)

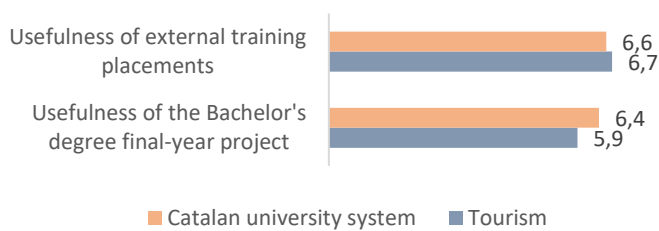


Figure 6. Overall satisfaction with the study programme (from 0 to 10)



### The valuation of the improvement in learning outcomes from Tourism is somewhat positive

The rating given by graduates to the improvement in communication skills, personal skills and their ability for the professional activity stands at close to 7, similar to the average for the study programmes in the Catalan university system.

### External training placements have been somewhat useful when it comes to applying the knowledge acquired during the study programme

On the other hand, the Bachelor's degree final-year project is rated at 5.9, below the Catalan university system average (6.4).

Overall satisfaction with the study programme in Tourism is assessed at 6.5, below the Catalan university system. average

## Access to the labour market for graduates

The survey on access to the labour market is conducted every three years with the aim of finding out what the experience of graduates is when it comes to access to the labour market three years after completing their university programmes. The results shown relate to the most recent survey from 2017 and are broken down according to university and study programme. In addition, the results for the Catalan university system show the average for all degree programmes taught in Catalonia.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 7. Employment rate of graduates in 2017 (%)

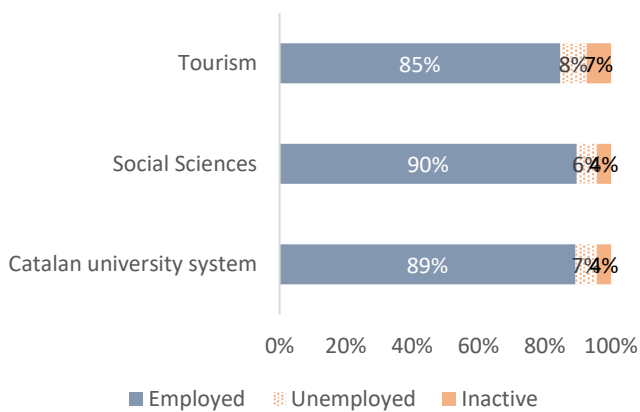
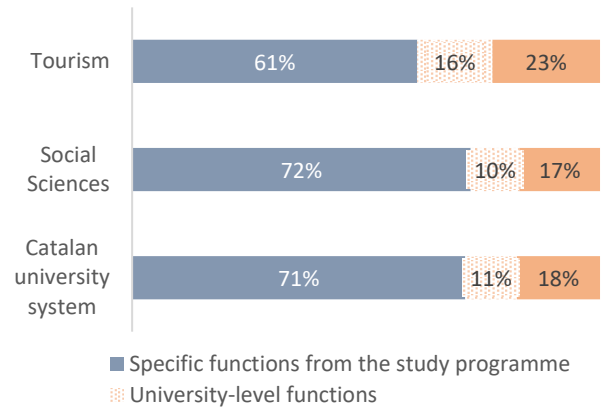


Figure 8. Functions performed at work in 2017 (%)



### Employment among graduates of Tourism is 5 percentage points below the average for study programmes in the Social Sciences

85% of those who graduate in Tourism are in work 3 years after obtaining their qualification, while the average proportion for graduates of the study programmes in the Social Sciences is 90% and the figure for the Catalan university system average for all study programmes is 89%.

### Only 6 in every 10 are performing functions specific to the study programme in Tourism

To be precise, 61% perform specific functions from the study programme in Tourism, while this percentage is far higher for study programmes in the Social Sciences overall and indeed the Catalan university system average; namely, 72% and 71%, respectively.

On the other hand, 23% of graduates of Tourism work in jobs where they do not perform university-level functions. The incidence of over-qualification is less widespread among the other study programmes in the field of Social Sciences (17%).

<sup>1</sup> The results are weighted by a factor that corrects possible proportional variations in the sample.

Figure 9. Contract type in 2017

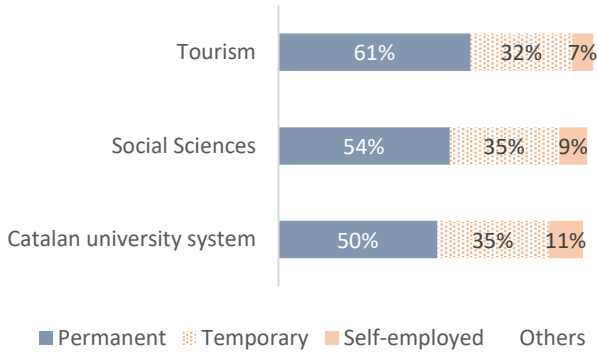
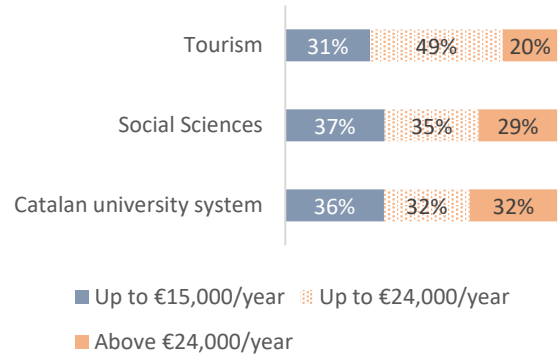


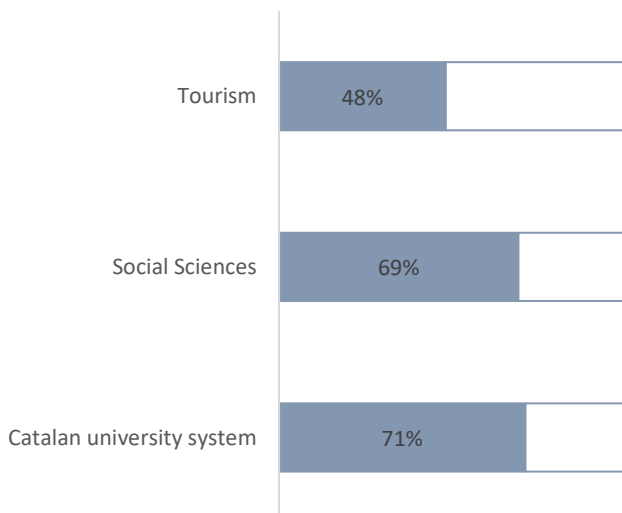
Figure 10. Salaries in 2017 (%)



### Graduates of Tourism who are in work benefit from greater job stability and better salaries

61% are on a permanent contract, a figure that is 11 pp higher than the Catalan system average. The proportion earning €15,000/euros a year or less is below the Catalan system average (31% vs. 36%).

Figure 11. Percentage of graduates willing to take the same study programme 3 years later (%)



### Nonetheless, a low proportion of individuals would take the same study programme again

Only 48% of graduates would take their Bachelor's degree in Tourism again (making it one of the study programmes with the lowest percentage).

# THE OPINION OF COMPANIES REGARDING THE EDUCATION RECEIVED BY GRADUATES OF TOURISM

## ■ Characteristics of the companies that have recruited individuals who recently graduated in Tourism

Figure 12. Classification of companies according to the number of workers (%)

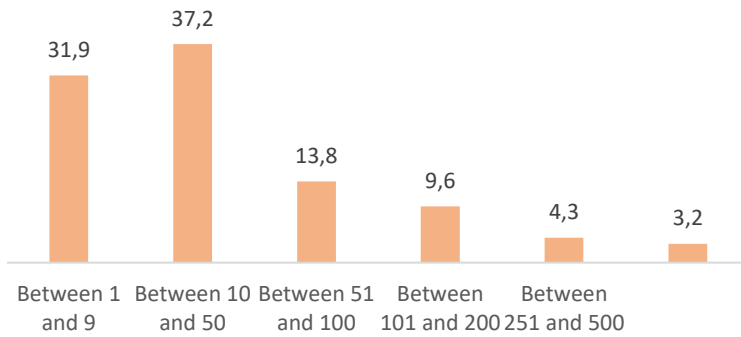


Figure 13. Classification of companies according to the percentage of workers with a university qualification (%)

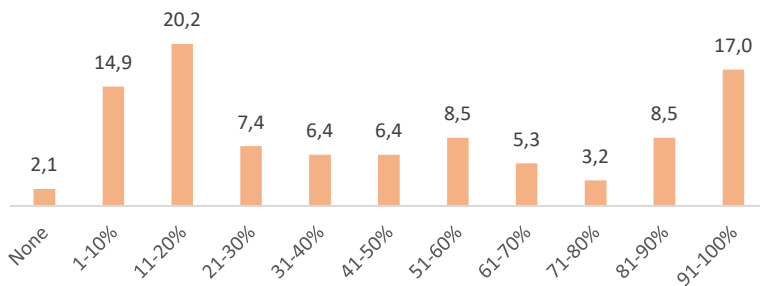
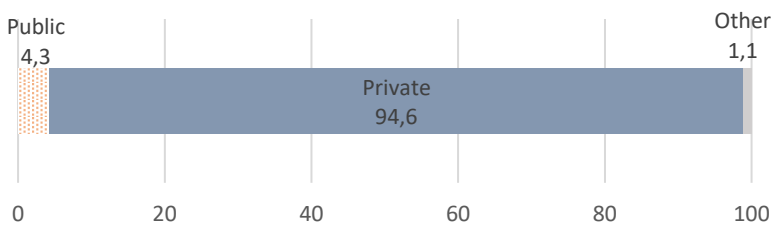


Figure 14. Companies according to ownership (%)

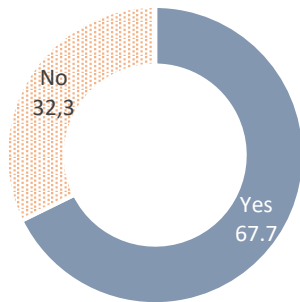


**Companies hiring individuals who recently graduated in Tourism are SMEs**

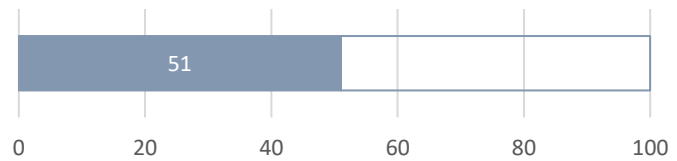
32% of companies are small (fewer than 10 employees) and 37% are medium (between 10 and 50 employees).

The qualifications of the employees of these companies vary: some companies employ mainly individuals whose education is below university level, while other companies employ mainly individuals with a university qualification.

**Figure 15. Companies that have operated in the international sphere (%)**



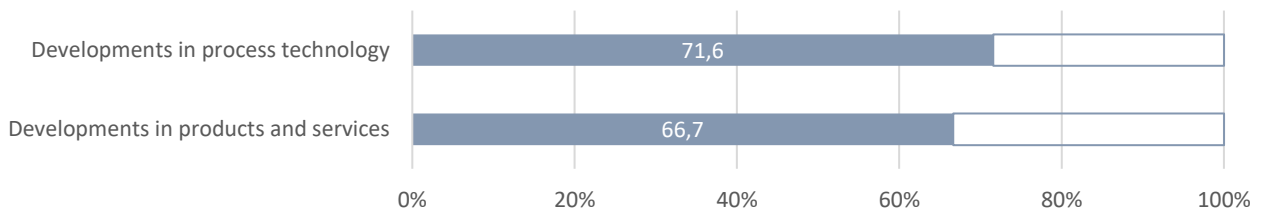
**Figure 16. Percentage of sales and services in the international sphere compared to the total**



### **68% of companies that have recruited individuals who recently graduated in Tourism operate in the international sphere**

Companies engaging in relations in the international sphere state that, on average, the international market accounts for 51% of their total sales and services.

**Figure 17. Companies that have introduced developments in process technology and/or in products or services (%)**



Note: “Developments in process technology” refer to major changes in process technology: new machinery or software, new forms of management (just-in-time production, quality and/or knowledge management). Also, “developments in products or services” refer to products or services that are completely new on the market or to the company (substantially enhanced products or services).

### **Almost 3 in every 4 companies surveyed have innovated**

72% state that they have incorporated major changes in their process technology, i.e., new equipment or software and/or new forms of management.

Moreover, 67% have released new products or services onto the market or incorporated them into the company.

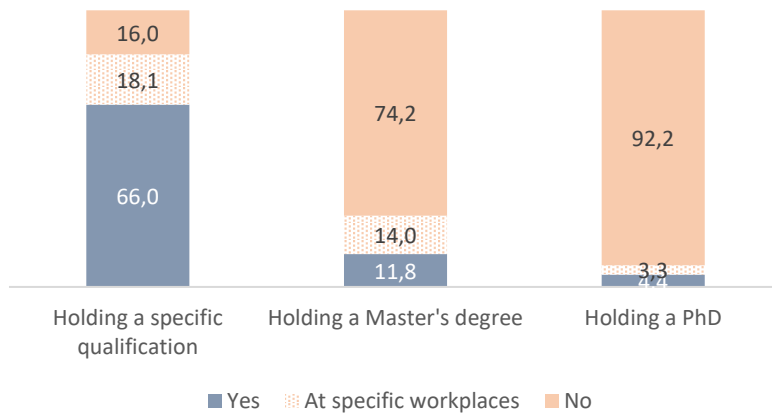
## Recruitment of individuals who recently graduated in the field of Tourism

Table 1. Business activity of companies recruiting individuals who recently graduated in Tourism (%)

	Total
H. Transport and storage (49-53)	1.1
I. Hospitality (55-56)	57.4
J. Information and communications (58-63)	2.1
K-L. Financial and insurance activities / Real estate activities (68)	2.2
M. Professional, scientific and technical activities (69-75)	2.1
N. Administrative activities and ancillary services (77-82)	18.1
O. Public Administration (84)	2.1
P. Education (85)	2.1
R. Artistic, recreational and entertainment activities (90-93)	5.3
S, T, U. Others (94-99)	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Companies that recruit individuals who graduated in Tourism primarily belong to the hospitality and administrative activity (travel agencies) sectors

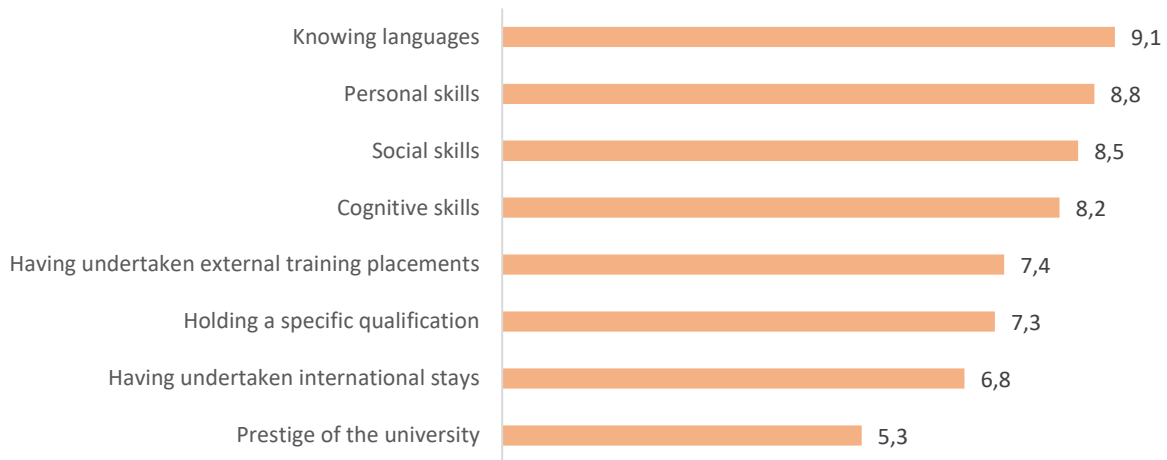
Table 2. Relevance of higher education in the recruitment of individuals who recently graduated (%)



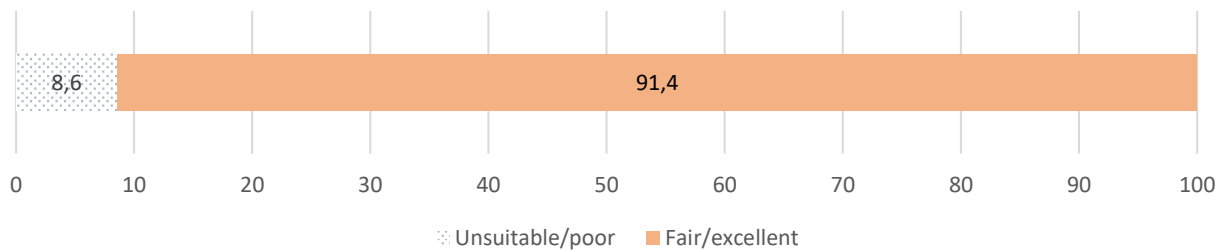
Holding a Master's degree is relevant for only 12% of the companies surveyed, while holding a PhD is not relevant

On the other hand, holding the qualification for the study programme in Tourism has been essential to 66% of recruiting companies and, indeed, it has been important at specific workplaces for 19%.

**Figure 18. Relevance of certain factors in the recruitment of individuals who recently graduated (from 0 to 10)**



**Figure 19. Suitability of individuals who recently graduated in Tourism to the needs of the workplace (%)**



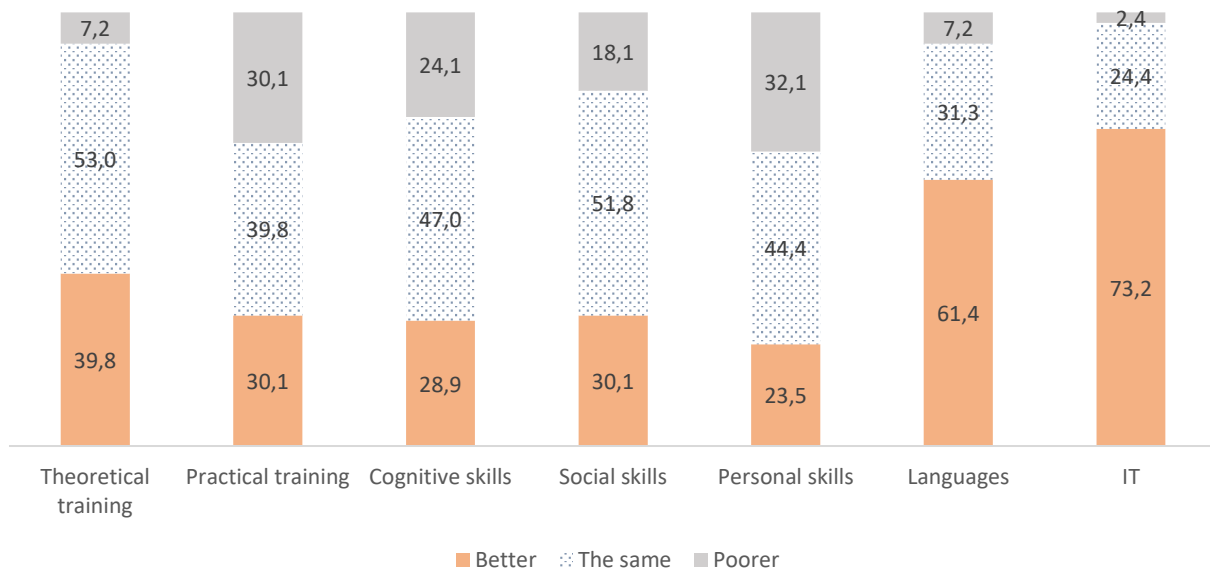
### **Knowing languages is the most highly valued factor when it comes to recruitment**

This is followed by personal, social and cognitive skills, rated at 8.8, 8.5 and 8.2, respectively. The prestige of the university is not a decisive factor in an individual's recruitment.

### **Individuals who graduate in Tourism are suited to the workplace**

9 in every 10 companies surveyed consider that the individuals graduating in Tourism they have recruited in recent years are suited to the needs of the workplace.

**Figure 20. Trend in the current education received compared to that received 5 and 10 years ago (%)**



### **The education received in terms of languages and IT has improved in study programmes in the field of Tourism in recent years**

73% of companies consider that IT skills have improved while 61% consider this to be true of languages.

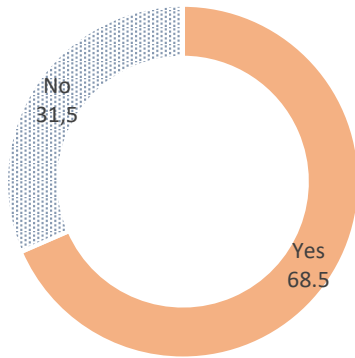
Furthermore, most of the companies surveyed feel that the education received by graduates of Tourism in terms of theoretical and practical training and cognitive skills (problem solving, critical thought, creativity, etc.), social skills (adapting to a working group, emotional intelligence, etc.) and personal skills (responsibility, initiative, autonomy, etc.) has remained constant.

It is also noteworthy that 40% of companies consider that the theoretical training has improved in recent years.



## ■ Difficulties in recruitment

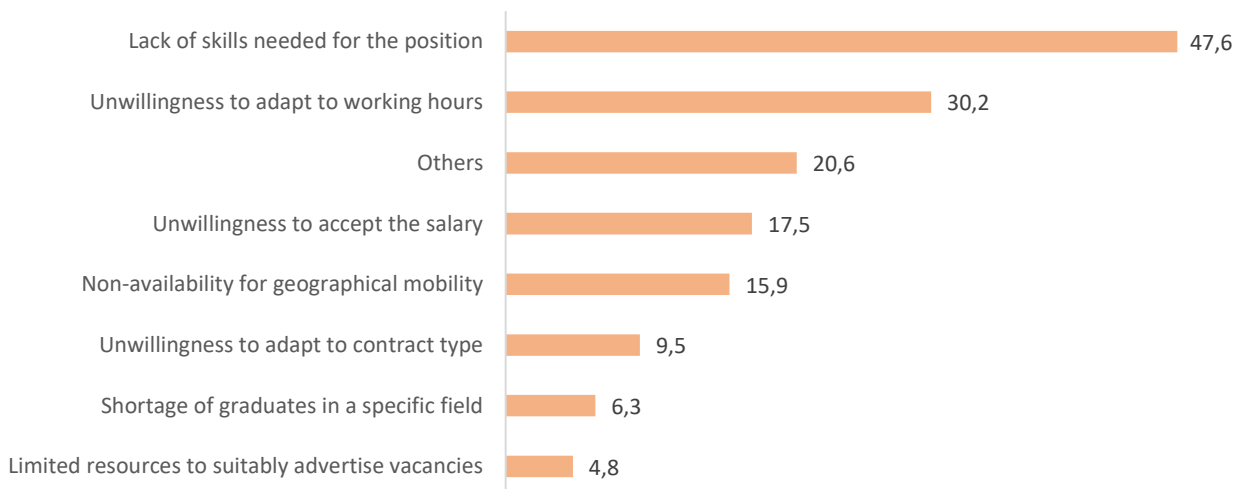
Figure 21. Companies that encountered difficulties in recruiting staff with suitable profiles (%)



### 7 in every 10 companies state that they encountered difficulties in recruitment

This statistic is far higher than the value obtained in the employers' study from 2014 for the production sector overall, which showed that 42% of employers encountered difficulties in recruitment.

Figure 22. Reasons for difficulties in recruiting staff with suitable profiles (% of companies)



### Lack of skills needed for the position

Half of companies that encountered difficulties in recruitment state that the candidates lacked the necessary skills for the position, in all likelihood due to lack of language skills (which is the most highly valued factor in an individual's recruitment) while 30% encountered difficulties due to candidates being unwilling to adapt to the working hours.

## ■ Skills

**Table 3. Cross-disciplinary skills that should be improved in study programmes in Tourism (% of companies)**

	% of companies
Theoretical training	3.4
Documentation	3.4
Negotiation skills	6.8
Use of most common IT tools	13.6
Written expression	13.6
Oral expression	20.3
Leadership	22.0
Negotiation skills	23.7
Team work	27.1
Capacity for learning and self-learning	27.1
Ability to offer new ideas and solutions	40.7
Responsibility at work	42.4
Practical training	45.8
Autonomous work	45.8
Languages	50.8
Problem solving and decision-making	61.0

### **There is substantial scope for improvement in acquiring skills in the education received in Tourism**

61% of companies consider improvements to be necessary in problem solving and decision-making in Tourism education, while 51% state that this is true of languages.

It should be pointed out, however, that substantial improvements tend to be reported as necessary with regard to autonomous work, practical training, responsibility at work and the ability to offer new ideas and solutions.

On the other hand, the teaching methodology is suitable for most skills, such as theoretical training, IT, and oral and written expression, among other examples.

**Table 4. Specific skills that should be improved in study programmes in the field of Tourism (% of companies)**

	% of companies
Recognition of the key agents directly involved in the tourist market	15.1
Understanding of the impact of tourism on a spatial, social, cultural, legal, political, labour and economic level	16.4
Ability to understand the multicultural dimension of tourism	17.8
Application of the principles of management and administration in tourist activity / organisation	19.2
Possession of an interdisciplinary vision of the sector and of the required environmental, social and economic sustainability	21.9
Achievement of excellence in relations with the consumer of tourist services and products	28.8
Preparation and review of results arising from the management of the tourist activity / company	28.8
Identification of the potential of a tourist resource, service or product	32.9
Knowledge of all dimensions of the service/product, and of the processes for its production and sale	37.0
Analytical capacity to understand the behaviour and the trend in demand in the sector	37.0
Analytical capacity to interpret data	39.7
Concern for continual improvement of the processes involved in a tourist service	43.8
Ability to work in complex, intense and unforeseeable situations	63.0

**Noteworthy among the specific skills to be improved is lack of ability on the part of recently graduated individuals to work in complex, intense and unforeseeable situations and a lack of concern for continual improvement**

63% of companies report that there is a need to improve in terms of the ability to work in complex, intense and unforeseeable situations, while 44% consider that improvement is imperative when it comes to concern for continual improvement of the processes involved in a tourist service.

They also observe huge room for improvement in analytical capacity: to interpret data; to understand the behaviour in demand in the sector; and to be knowledgeable of all dimensions of the service/product and of the processes for its production and sale.

**Figure 23. Satisfaction of employers with the skills of individuals who recently graduated in the field of Tourism (from 0 to 10)**



**Despite there being scope for improvement in the education received, employers are satisfied with the skills of graduates of Tourism**

Their overall level of satisfaction stands at 7.4.

## Cooperation from the business community with universities

Figure 24. Extent to which companies cooperate with universities according to the type of activity (%)

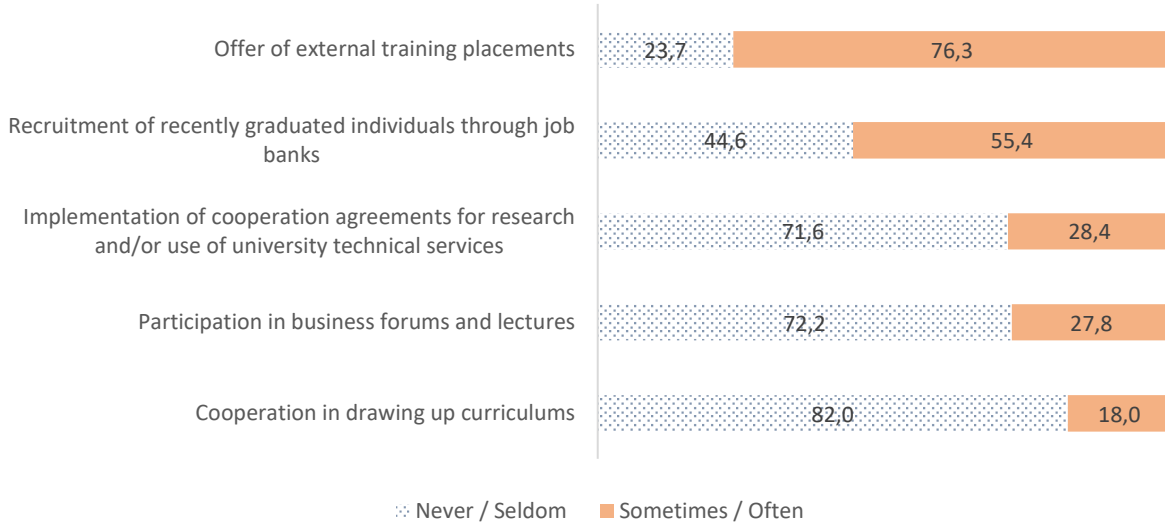


Figure 25. Areas for improvement in job banks or training placements organised by universities (% of companies)

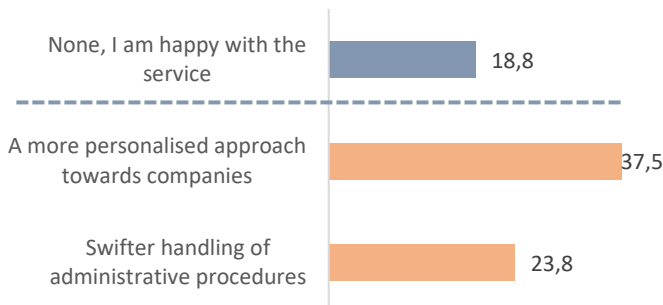


Figure 26. Satisfaction with job bank services or training placement services (on a scale of 0 to 10)



### The main area in which companies cooperate with universities relates to the offer of training placements

The activity in which companies and universities are most closely engaged relates to training placements during programmes: 3 in every 4 have cooperated with universities on this activity. Moreover, half of the organisations surveyed have recruited individuals through the university job bank service.

### High degree of satisfaction with the job bank and training placement service

The level of satisfaction among those who used these services stands at 7.1; even so, they do believe there is scope for speeding up administrative procedures and for gaining a better acquaintance of companies' needs.

## In-company training of individuals who recently graduated in Tourism

Figure 27. Companies funding training for individuals who recently graduated (%)

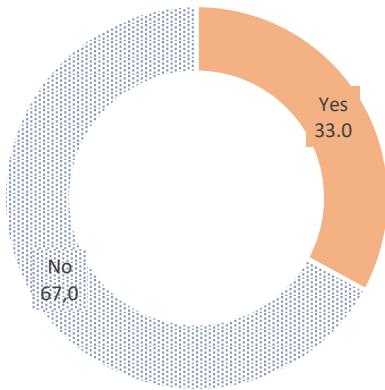
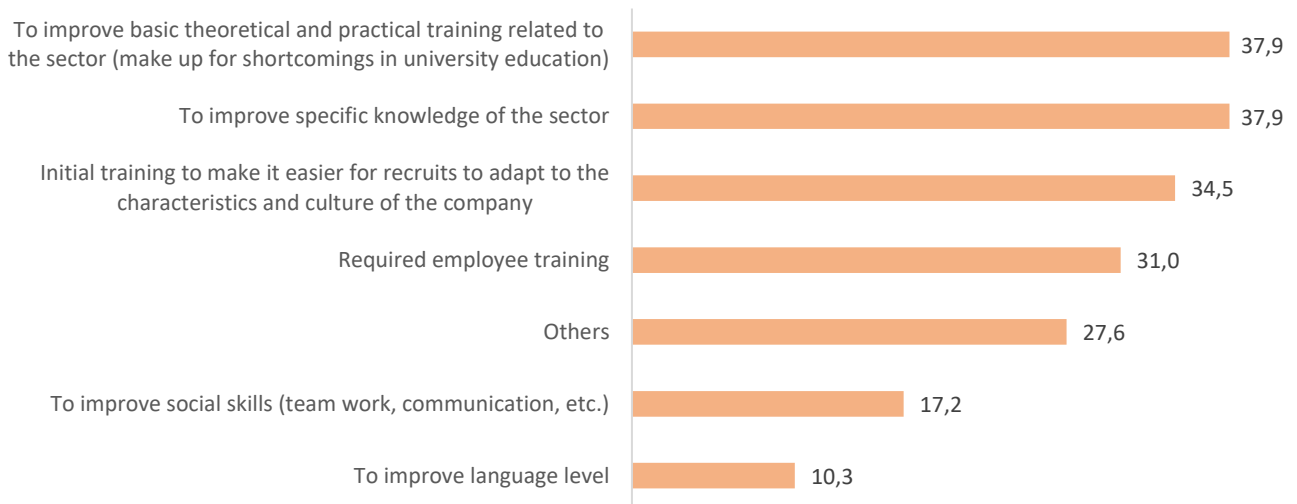


Table 5. Type of training funded by companies (%)

Type of training	%
On-the-job training	72.6
Training during working hours	75.9
Off-the-job training	34.5

Figure 28. Reasons for funding training (%)



### Only 1 in every 3 companies fund training for individuals who recently graduated in Tourism

By and large, this training is on-the-job and during working hours. The goal of this training is to improve their specific knowledge, along with their basic theoretical and practical training relating to the sector.

## Forecast

Figure 29. Trend in qualified employment in the sector (%)

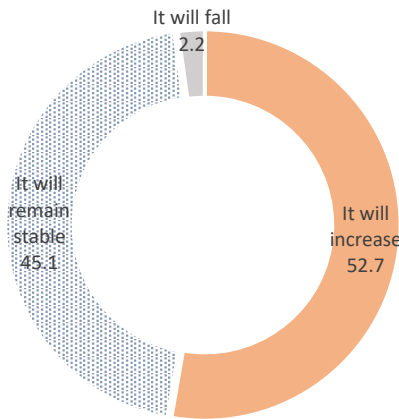


Figure 30. Skills that will gain importance in the field of Tourism\*



Figure 31. Most important areas of employment in the field of Tourism\*



Table 6. Reasons for the increase in employment (%)

Reasons	%
Company expansion	68.2
Staff rotation	18.2
Organisational or technological changes	15.9
Others	13.6

Note: multiple response

### Good prospects for companies in the tourism sector

68% believe employment will increase owing to the expansion of the company (increased business).

The most sought-after skill relates to ICTs (new technologies, digital marketing, etc.) and languages.

The most important areas of employment are linked to customer service, more qualified professions and marketing, while the prevalence of employment relating to administrative management is in decline.

Figure 32. Least important areas of employment in the field of Tourism\*



\* These are open questions. Responses with the same meaning have been grouped into categories. Categories referred to more than 3 times are shown.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The level of satisfaction among graduates of Tourism with the improvement in their abilities during the study programme and with the usefulness of external training placements is good. Satisfaction with the usefulness of the Bachelor's degree final-year project is lower and, indeed, below the Catalan university system average.
- Access to the labour market among graduates of Tourism is slightly below the Catalan university system average. It is noteworthy that a low percentage of graduates are performing functions related to the study programme (61% compared to the Catalan system average of 71%) and that over-qualification is prevalent (23% compared to the Catalan system average of 18%). Moreover, it is concerning that only 48% would take the Bachelor's degree in Tourism again compared to the Catalan university system average of 71%.

Companies that recruit graduates of Tourism have the following characteristics:

- Most companies are SMEs and the proportion of qualified staff they employ depends on the company (some employ virtually no qualified staff while most workers in others are all qualified).
- Around 70% operate in the international sphere and 3 in every 4 have incorporated innovations (in terms of technology and products or services).
- They largely belong to the hospitality sector, although they are also present in the administrative activities and ancillary services sector (for instance, travel agencies).
- When it comes to recruitment, they value whether the individuals hired possess a specific qualification (though holding a Master's degree or PhD is less relevant) and they also value the personal, cognitive and social skills of their candidates. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the foremost factor in the recruitment of graduates of Tourism is knowledge of languages, a distinguishing factor in this sector.
- Almost 3 in every 4 companies surveyed have encountered difficulties in recruiting staff with suitable profiles, primarily on account of the fact that candidates lacked the necessary skills for the position.

With regard to university education:

- The improvement in education received by graduates of Tourism in recent years in terms of IT skills and languages stands out (as is the case with most study programmes).
- In terms of cross-disciplinary skills, problem solving, decision-making and languages are areas where improvement is needed. This is also true of autonomous work, practical training, responsibility at work and the ability to offer new ideas and solutions.
- In relation to specific skills in the field of Tourism, 6 in every 10 companies state that there are shortcomings in education when it comes to the ability to work in complex, intense and unforeseeable situations. 4 in every 10 report that there are shortcomings in the following areas: concern for continual improvement, ability to interpret data, analytical capacity to understand the behaviour in demand in the sector, and knowledge of all dimensions of the service/product.
- Despite the need for improvements, employers are satisfied with the skills of the recently graduated individuals they have recruited (at 7.4 out of 10).
- 76% of companies have cooperated with universities by offering students the possibility of undertaking external training placements. Moreover, 55% of companies have hired graduates through job banks. Their degree of satisfaction with these services stands at 7.1 out of 10.



*The opinion of employers regarding the education received by graduates of Tourism*

- Skills that will become more important in the tourism sector are related to ICTs (new technologies, digital marketing, etc.) and languages.
- In terms of the trend in jobs, those related to customer service, qualified employment (technicians) and marketing will increase in number while those relating to administrative management will decrease in number.

## DATA SHEET

### **Survey for employers of individuals who graduate in Tourism**

Population	Organisations that may have potentially recruited individuals who recently graduated from universities in Catalonia in the past 3 years <sup>2</sup>
Survey period	Online survey: from 26/02/2018 to 16/03/2018 Telephone survey: from 27/06/2018 to 5/07/2018
Survey type	Online and over the telephone
Average time taken	Telephone survey: 14'59''

	Population	Sample	Response rate	Sample error rate
Organisations potentially from the tourism sector (hotels, campsites, travel agencies, etc.)	5,210	94	1.8%	10.2%
All organisations	30,018			

### **Survey on satisfaction (2017)**

	Population	Sample	Response rate	Sample error rate
Graduates in Tourism in 2015-2016-2017	1,676	251	15.0%	5.7%

### **Survey on access to the labour market (2017)**

	Population	Sample	Response rate	Sample error rate
Graduates in Tourism in 2013	736	234	31.8%	5.4%

<sup>2</sup> Most contacts with organisations stem from Catalan universities' job banks.

# DRAFTING COMMITTEE

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