



WHERE IS SPRINGBOARD TAKING JOBSEEKERS?

TREND ANALYSIS PART 2
DECEMBER 2014



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HEA

HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to the thousands of Springboard participants and graduates who continue to give us detailed feedback on their experience of Springboard and who help to improve the initiative from year to year.

Thanks also to the higher education colleges and providers who have provided Springboard courses over the past four years and who have provided extensive data for this evaluation publication.

Our thanks to Eustace Patterson and Mitchell Kane Associates for their ongoing support on evaluation, design and presentation.

Skills and Enterprise Engagement team,
Higher Education Authority

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21,042 PEOPLE

HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A SPRINGBOARD COURSE SINCE 2011

- < The Government-funded Springboard initiative was designed to help reskill people who lost their jobs as a result of the recession which hit Ireland in 2008. Springboard offers free higher education courses, leading to awards at certificate, degree and post-graduate level
- < An evaluation framework underpins Springboard and its impact has been continuously monitored since 2011
- < This is Part 2 of a trend analysis on Springboard 2011-2014; Part 1 of the analysis was published in June 2014
- < This Part 2 publication presents data on participant profile, the experience of participants of the initiative and academic outcomes
- < A third part of the trend analysis will be published in the first quarter of 2015 and will present updated information on employment outcomes
- < All Springboard courses are one-year or less in duration. The majority are part-time, with a small number of full-time, accelerated courses in the ICT area
- < Springboard courses aim to reskill people in areas where there are job opportunities in Ireland, including information and communications technology (ICT); high level manufacturing; international financial services; skills to trade internationally; and entrepreneurship and business start up
- < Each year the outcomes of Springboard are reviewed in order to shape the initiative for the following year. The extent to which Springboard is helping people back into sustainable employment is key, and has become the primary criterion of success and of ongoing funding.

42
colleges

Offering
812
courses

98%

of participants
recommend Springboard to
others who wish to
reskill for employment

€85M
Exchequer
funding

HEADLINE TRENDS

DECEMBER 2014

PARTICIPANTS ON A SPRINGBOARD COURSE...



- < are mostly men, but there has been a consistent trend upwards in women participants – 36% of 2014 participants are women compared to 26% in 2011
- < are predominantly between 25-39 years-of-age – 63% of participants in 2014
- < are more likely to be long-term unemployed – 61% in 2014
- < year-on-year have higher levels of previous educational qualifications – only 8% of 2014 participants had no post-secondary qualification.

GENERALLY GET ON WELL AFTER RETURNING TO COLLEGE



- < more are staying the full course and completing Springboard each year. 90% reported positively on the support provided by their college
- < 94% of survey respondents believe that Springboard will give them a more advanced qualification and Springboard has measured well or very well to their expectations
- < more are graduating each year – 76% of 2013-2014 participants are expected to complete their Springboard course
- < nine out of ten participants believe Springboard is having a positive impact on their lives. There is a further increase in the levels of optimism that Springboard will help in getting a job
- < 98% of Springboard participants would recommend the experience to other jobseekers.

....AND VALUE SPRINGBOARD BECAUSE OF:



- < courses being predominantly part-time and flexible, including online and distance education
- < the opportunity to achieve a valued and recognised qualification
- < the fact that work placement is integrated into Springboard courses, with enhanced opportunities for employment as a result
- < the practical links and networks with industry and employers
- < the quality course content that is relevant to the target work environment
- < the range of supports provided, including mentoring, peer study groups, and interactive workshops.

FEEDBACK FROM NEW PARTICIPANTS SHOWS:



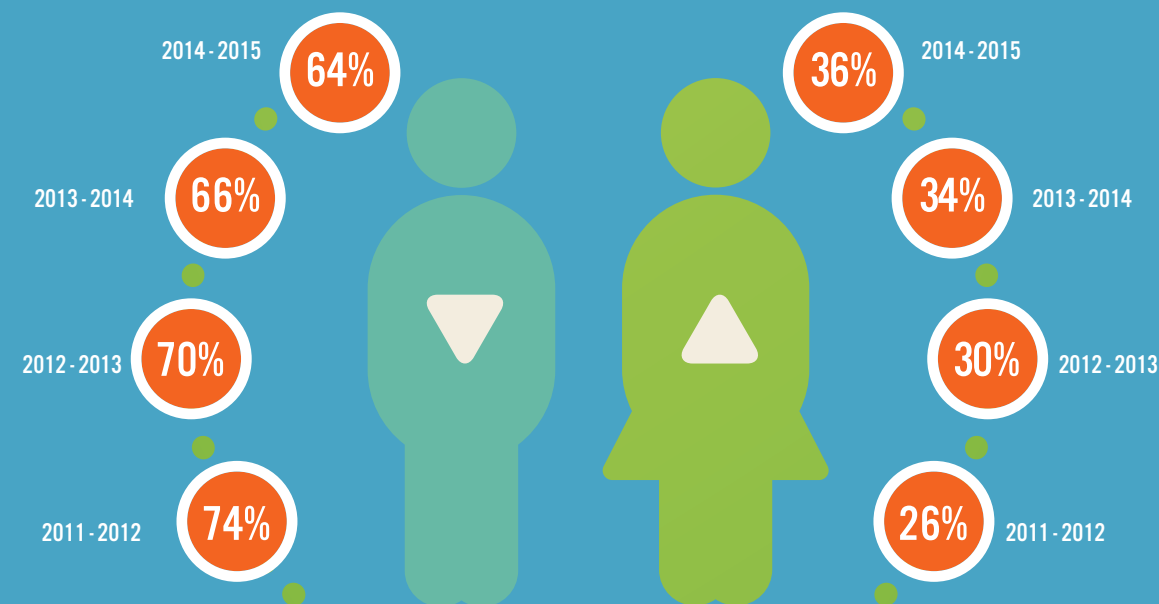
- < the importance of the internet, the Springboard website and word of mouth in getting information about Springboard reskilling opportunities
- < improved efficiency in how applications are processed by colleges
- < improved responsiveness of colleges to participants' needs and expectations
- < growing confidence that Springboard will lead to improved job prospects and enhanced careers.

1 SECTION

TRENDS IN THE PROFILE OF SPRINGBOARD PARTICIPANTS 2011-2015

THE MAJORITY OF SPRINGBOARD PARTICIPANTS ARE MEN, BUT THERE IS A CONTINUING UPWARD TREND IN FEMALE PARTICIPATION

- > The increases in female participants are highest at postgraduate level (National Framework of Qualifications Level 9) and in the skills areas of business/ management, skills to support enterprises to trade internationally, biopharma-pharmachem and cross-enterprise skills. Female participants also have higher levels of previous education compared to male participants – in 2014-2015 65% of women had NFQ Level 8 or higher compared to 53% of men.



PARTICIPATION BY YEAR

THERE IS A CONTINUING UPWARD TREND TOWARDS OLDER AGE GROUPS AVAILING OF SPRINGBOARD. 63% OF 2014-2015 PARTICIPANTS ARE BETWEEN 30-49 YEARS OF AGE. A FURTHER 10% ARE 50 YEARS OR OVER.

The data available for four years of Springboard enrolments show that over half have consistently been between 30-49 years of age. However older age groups, 45 years or older, have grown from 17% in 2011-2012 to 23% in 2014-2015.

AGE	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Under 25	6%	7%	7%	8%
25 to 29	16%	16%	16%	17%
30 to 34	20%	18%	18%	17%
35 to 39	18%	18%	18%	17%
40 to 44	16%	15%	15%	16%
45 to 49	9%	11%	11%	13%
50 to 54	5%	6%	7%	6%
Over 55	3%	4%	5%	4%
Null	6%	4%	3%	2%

THERE IS A CONTINUING UPWARD TREND IN THE NUMBERS OF PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

61% of the 2014-2015 participants who are on the live register are long-term unemployed. This compares to an average of 56% over the previous three years.

An increasing number of participants have been unemployed for six months or less; 31% in 2014-2015 compared to an average of 23% in the previous three years.

LENGTH OF TIME SEEKING EMPLOYMENT



Length of time seeking employment	2011-2012 Numbers of participants	2012-2013 Numbers of participants	2013-2014 Numbers of participants	2014-2015 Numbers of participants
>12 months	58%	54%	56%	61%
6-12 months	22%	17%	17%	8%
0-6 months	19%	29%	27%	31%
Total on live register	4,966 (100%)	5,646 (100%)	5,817 (100%)	4,147 (100%)
Not on live register	-	-	-	462



FROM YEAR-TO-YEAR, SPRINGBOARD PARTICIPANTS HAVE EVER HIGHER LEVELS OF PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

In 2014-2015, 462 Springboard participants were not on the live register. These were mainly on ICT Skills conversion courses.

In the first year of Springboard courses, 68% of participants already had a higher education qualification. In 2014-2015 this has increased to 92% of participants.

Previous education profile	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Graduates (NFQ Level 6 or above)	3,284 68%	4,720 85%	5,077 87%	3,167 92%
Non-graduates (Leaving Certificate or equivalent)	1,528 32%	849 15%	739 13%	293 8%

*Excludes 'null' data

2 SECTION

EXPERIENCE OF RETURNING TO COLLEGE

76% OF PARTICIPANTS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE THEIR SPRINGBOARD COURSE IN 2014

The HEA evaluates the numbers and experience of those who enrol on a Springboard course each year. Information is available on the numbers who complete their course, those who withdraw early, and reasons for participants' choices.

65% of the first group of Springboard participants graduated in 2012; 64% graduated in 2013 and in 2014 it is estimated that 76% will graduate.

Academic outcome	2011-2012	as % of 2011-2012	2012-2013	as % of 2012-2013	2013-2014	as % of 2013-2014
Graduated immediately on completion	2,739	59%	2,857	58%	3,172	61%
Outcome pending – due to graduate	266	6%	303	6%	749	15%
Total graduated	3,005	65%	3,160	64%	3,921	76%
Withdrew early	1,647	35%	1,782	36%	1,241	24%
Total	4,652	100%	4,942	100%	5,162	100%

*The graduation rates in this table include 100% of those who were 'outcome pending' 2011-2012; 2012-2013; 2013-2014



Graduation rates vary by qualification level and by skills area. The highest rates of graduation by qualification level continue to be at post-graduate levels (Levels 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Graduation rates were lower among participants working towards an award at Certificate level (NFQ Level 6) in 2012 and 2013. However these rates improved significantly in 2014, from 56% in 2013 to 69% in 2014.

Graduation Outcome by NFQ	2011-2012	as % of 2011-2012	2012-2013	as % of 2012-2013	2013-2014	as a % of 2013-2014
Level 6	882	58%	702	56%	695	69%
Level 7	783	69%	826	65%	1,074	78%
Level 8	1,012	67%	1,246	67%	1,369	74%
Level 9	328	68%	386	68%	783	85%
Total	3,005	65%	3,160	64%	3,921	76%



Graduation rates across all skills areas have improved over the past three years. All areas are now achieving graduation rates of 65% or more. The highest rates of graduation were in high level manufacturing and cross-enterprise skills.

Skills Area	2011-2012 Cohort who Graduated	as % of 2011-2012 Cohort	2012-2013 Cohort who Graduated	as % of 2012-2013 Cohort	2013-2014 Cohort who graduated	as % of 2013-2014 cohort
High level manufacturing	891	68%	1,037	65%	986	83%
ICT	1,016	58%	1,057	59%	1,214	68%
International financial services	248	73%	269	62%	229	78%
Skills for enterprise to trade internationally	-	-	-	-	308	74%
Cross-enterprise skills	850	68%	797	70%	1,046	83%
Other	-	-	-	-	138	67%
Total	3,005	65%	3,160	64%	3,921	76%

OF THOSE WHO WITHDRAW EARLY FROM THEIR COURSE (24%) IN 2013-2014, SURVEY RESPONSES INDICATE THAT HALF DID SO BECAUSE THEY GOT EMPLOYMENT

- > 28% of the 2011-2012 group withdrew because they got employment
- > 30% of the 2012-2013 group withdrew because they got employment
- > 51% of the 2013-2014 group withdrew because they got employment.

Feedback from participants indicates that one reason for the decline in numbers withdrawing before completing their Springboard course in 2013-2014 is the level and quality of academic and other supports provided by colleges. Ninety percent reported a positive experience of the support they received. The quality and responsiveness of tutors, the practical emphasis in the learning environment, structured interaction with their peers and employment-focused personal development were particularly valued.



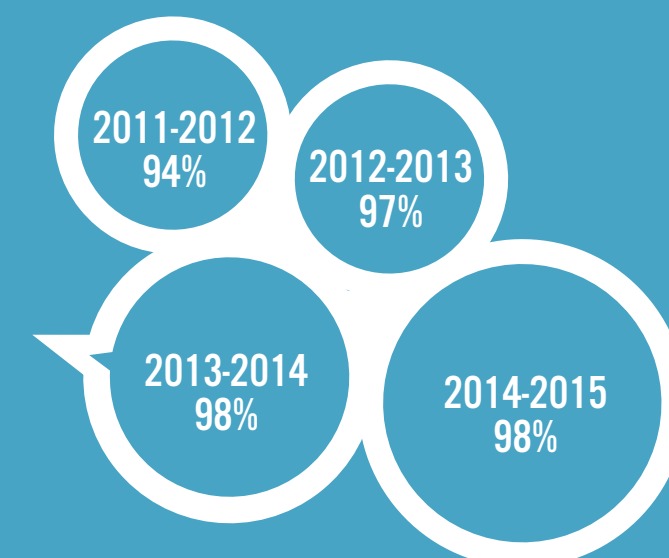
98% OF SPRINGBOARD PARTICIPANTS RECOMMEND THE EXPERIENCE TO OTHER JOBSEEKERS

Surveys of new Springboard participants indicate an upward trend in satisfaction. They were asked the question:

Would you recommend Springboard to an unemployed relative, friend or neighbour?

- 94% of participants 2011-2012 said 'Yes I would' (Survey 1.0)
- 97% of participants 2012-2013 said 'Yes I would' (Survey 2.0)
- 98% of participants 2013-2014 said 'Yes I would' (Survey 3.0)
- 98% of participants 2014-2015 said 'Yes I would' (Survey 4.0)

% OF PARTICIPANTS WHO WOULD RECOMMEND SPRINGBOARD



SPRINGBOARD - WHAT PARTICIPANTS PARTICULARLY VALUE

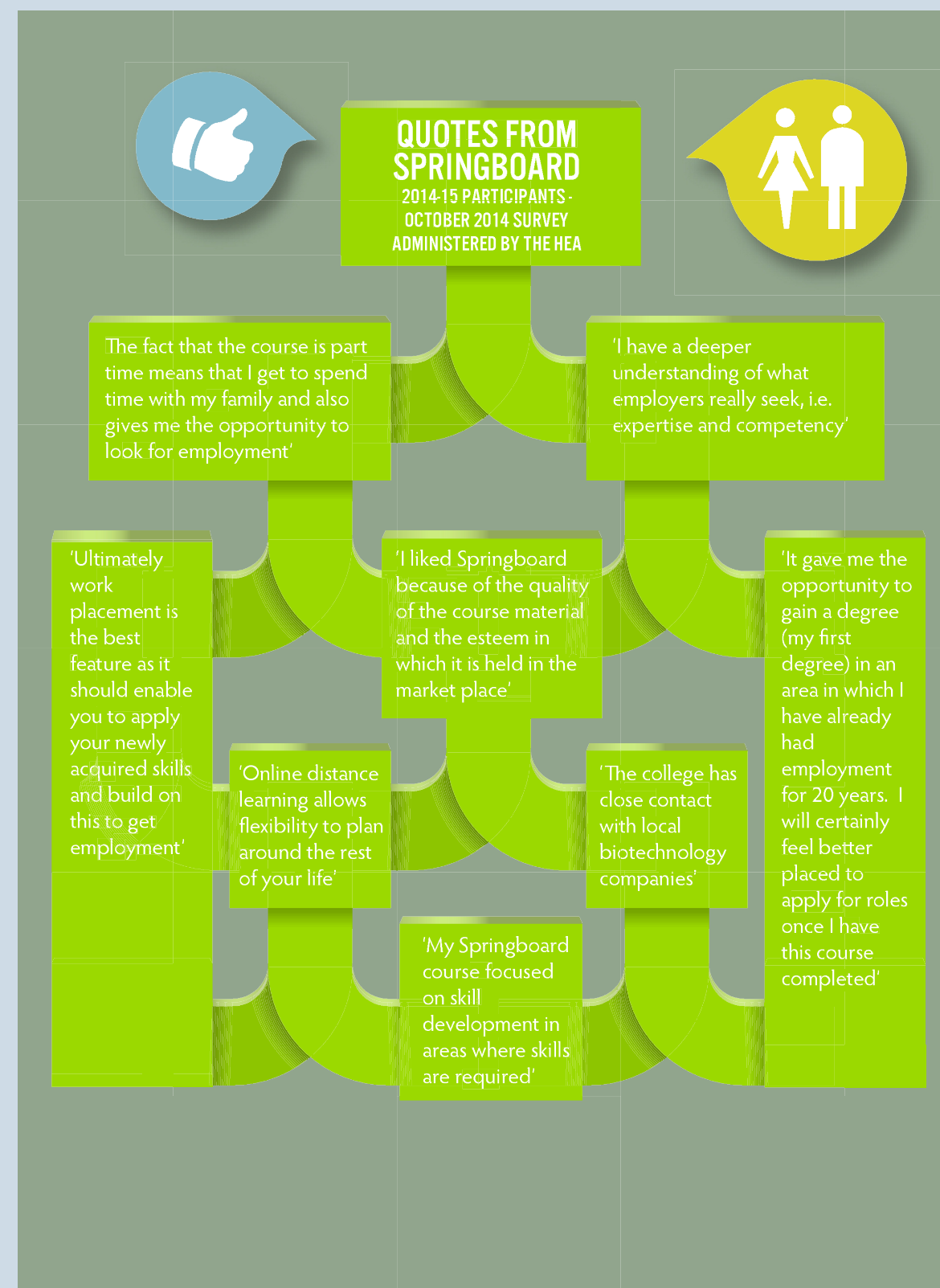
The elements of Springboard that participants particularly value have been evaluated systematically over the past four years. The responses show a consistency over time.

Elements which are consistently most valued are as follows:

- > Springboard is free and affordable to unemployed people
- > courses are predominantly part-time and flexible, including offering learning online and via distance education
- > the opportunity to achieve a valued and recognised qualification
- > the fact that work placement is integrated into Springboard courses, with enhanced opportunities for employment as a result
- > the practical links and networks with industry and employers
- > the quality course content that is relevant to the target work environment
- > the range of supports provided, including study skills, responsive mentoring and coaching (group based and one-to-one), interactive workshops, practical support to develop CVs, LinkedIn profiles, practice interview techniques.

Analysis of the most recent survey (October 2014) confirmed the above feedback but also provided insights in additional features that are now proving attractive. These included:

- > the strong currency/applicability of Springboard courses in the jobs market
- > the quality of course content and of lecturers
- > supports provided by college staff
- > the opportunity to network and meet new people.



DRIVE FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

While the analysis shows continued improvement in the delivery of Springboard and the experience of participants, the drive for excellence continues.

Features of Springboard that some new participants found challenging include:

- < The time commitment required for some courses. Participants commented that some courses felt rushed, that they contained too much material with insufficient time to absorb it and the workload was too heavy
- < Extra costs involved in accessing their Springboard course for which there is no support, e.g. travel and subsistence costs. Some participants are travelling considerable distances to attend their courses
- < On some courses class sizes are too large
- < Managing and taking part in group work can be challenging and not adequately organised or managed by lecturers
- < In some courses, the quality of lecturers and/or course content was considered to need improvement
- < In a small number of cases, there was no work placement available or a vagueness around what work placement would entail. Some participants also expressed concerns that they would not be paid for work placement or internship
- < A small number who had been out of education for a long time felt that colleges have insufficient supports in place to help them reintegrate back into education.

PARTICIPANTS' OUTLOOK ON THEIR CAREER PROSPECTS SHOWS STEADY IMPROVEMENT

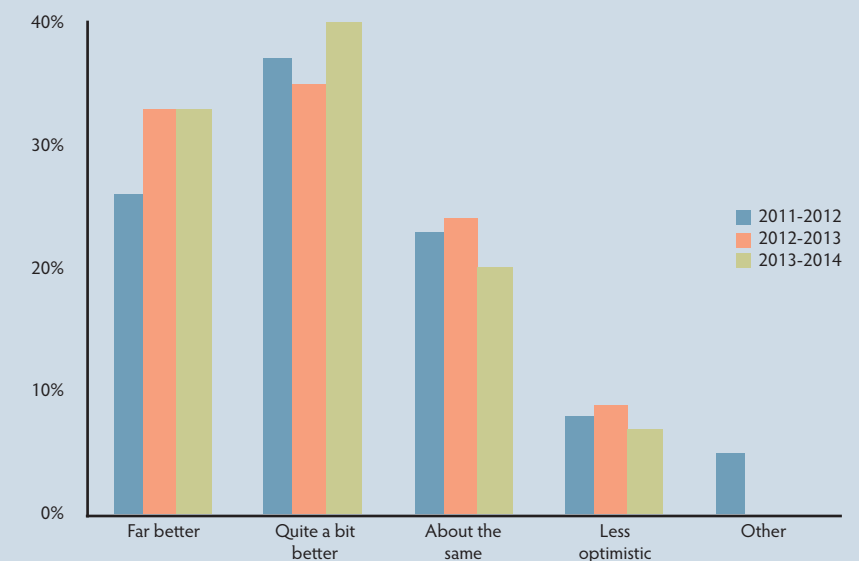
A survey of participants six weeks after finishing their course indicated that

68% of the 2011-2012 group indicated that their outlook on their career prospects was better

and **73%** amongst the 2013-2014 group.

this rose to **71%** among the 2012-2013 group

SPRINGBOARD PARTICIPANTS' OUTLOOK AND LEVEL OF OPTIMISM ABOUT THEIR CAREER PROSPECTS



3 SECTION

INSIGHTS FROM NEW PARTICIPANTS

New participants to Springboard have been surveyed each year for the past four years (2011-2014). The results have been broadly positive each year with a trend upwards across a range of indicators including participants' expectations of Springboard, their positive experience of support and the impact that Springboard has on their lives.

SPRINGBOARD CONTINUES TO MEASURE UP TO PARTICIPANTS' EXPECTATIONS

82%
2011-2012



94%
2013-2014

Springboard measures up well to my expectations

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
82%	90%	92%	94%

CONFIDENCE HAS GROWN THAT SPRINGBOARD WILL LEAD TO A JOB AND/OR ENHANCED CAREER PROSPECTS

82% of participants 2014-2015 said the prospect of getting a good job after the course was a strong reason for applying for a Springboard place compared to 68% of participants 2011-2012.

79% of participants 2014-2015 said enhancing their career prospects in their current field was a strong reason to apply for a Springboard place compared to 74% of participants 2011-2012.

Confidence that Springboard will lead to a job

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
68%	87%	74%	82%

SPRINGBOARD IS HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

There has been a continuing upward trend in participants' reporting a positive impact on their lives as a result of Springboard, including their experience of returning to higher education, work placement and contact with employers. 78% of survey respondents reported a positive impact in 2011-2012; this has risen to 93% in 2014-2015.

Percentage of participants reporting that Springboard is having a positive impact on their lives

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
78%	91%	92%	93%

GOOD EXPERIENCES OF SUPPORT ARE IN EVIDENCE

Participants report an increasingly positive experience of support from their college (from 84% in 2011-2012 to 92% in 2014-2015). This strengthening of the supports experienced by Springboard participants is reflected in the threefold increase in positive feedback between 2011-2012 and 2014-2015. The quality of mentoring, coaching, practical job search support and interview skills practice, interactive workshops and positive interaction with tutors/lecturers receive most positive mention.

Positive feedback about college supports

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
84%	90%	90%	92%



'There was a great mix of theory and practical'

'I liked the hands on approach of the lecturer, the supportive structure and career focus'

'I like the engagement, the team activities, the interaction and support'

'I have very helpful, enthusiastic and supportive lecturers'

'I value the support from other students and encouragement from lecturers and support around how to target a job and prepare and position yourself to get it'

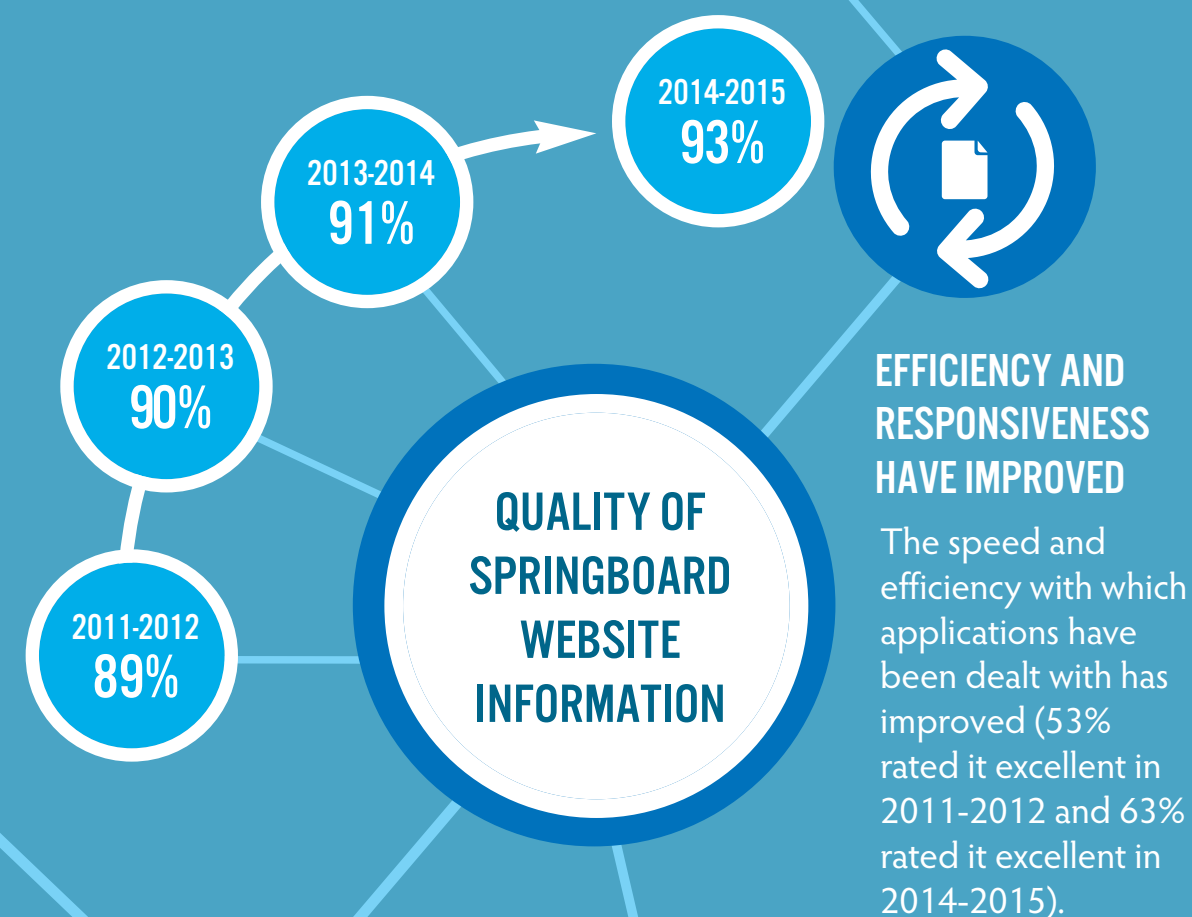


The quality of information on the Springboard website was considered excellent by **93%** of survey respondents in 2014.

THERE IS AN UPWARD TREND IN RELIANCE ON ONLINE INFORMATION SOURCES FOR SPRINGBOARD

Online information, including in particular the Springboard website has grown as a source for prospective Springboard participants (38% in 2014-2015). Word of mouth is another important source of information. Traditional media such as radio and newspapers have declined in importance.

Main sources of information about Springboard				
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Online	*	30%	35%	38%
Word of mouth – family/friends	23%	20%	22%	25%
Advertising/Springboard publicity	43%	25%	18%	13%
Other, e.g. Intreo, colleges	34%	25%	25%	24%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%



Rating of speed and efficiency of responses from colleges to applicants				
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Excellent	53%	57%	61%	62%
Good	30%	32%	29%	31%
Fair	10%	8%	7%	5%
Poor	7%	3%	2%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

METHODOLOGY

This Part 2 trend analysis draws on data gathered over four years from the online Springboard database which includes academic and employment-related outcomes for Springboard participants; six-monthly surveys of participants, including a survey of Springboard participants who enrolled in Autumn 2014; and additional qualitative evaluation work with participants, employers and participating higher education colleges.

Part 3 of the analysis, which is due to be published before the end of Q1 2015 will present updated data and trends on employment and related outcomes.



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