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Landscape Workforce and Skills Study

Phase Two: Higher Education and Landscape skills demand

August 2025

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Introduction

From late 2024 to October 2025, the Landscape Institute (LI) commissioned Metro Dynamics (MD) to provide research and strategic support to understand the landscape sector, its workforce and skills demand.

This document represents **Phase Two** of the research**,** which has delivered targeted research on higher education provision for Landscape Architects, to support the LI in pursuing the lines of enquiry set out in the table opposite. This included the collection and analysis of data on the pool of students and graduates studying landscape architecture, as well as comparator courses and an assessment of job advertisements for early-career landscape architects to understand the skills demanded by employers.

This document is split into two sections,

- The first presents the data collected on university courses, including landscape design, presenting the characteristics and demographics of students and applicants, as well as graduate outcomes from key subjects related to Landscape Architecture, like Geography and Architecture.
- The second section then examines the skills demand from employers for landscape architects, through an analysis of a sample of job adverts.

Within Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) coding all Landscape Architecture programmes are classified in the *'Landscape Design'* code and are therefore referred to as such throughout this document.

Phase Two lines of enquiry & research questions

LI line of enquiry	MD research questions
• What is the size and shape of the landscape education challenge within universities? • How can LI and Higher Education providers address this – and increase access to demand for landscape education and training?	• What is the size and shape of the Higher Education student body for the Landscape profession? • How does this compare to Geography, Architecture and Higher Education overall?
• How can the sector address in-demand skills and support the best outcomes for employers and graduates?	• What skills are employers looking for from early career/entry level Landscape Architects?

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Key findings

What is size and shape of the Higher Education student body for the landscape profession? What skills are employers looking for from early career Landscape Architects?

Smaller subject, but signs of increasing demand: In total, 1,240 students were enrolled on landscape design courses in 2023/2024, of which LI-accreditation had significant coverage. Enrolment in the course has not changed significantly in recent years despite various provider reallocations. Enrolment has increasingly been concentrated among postgraduates, with a decline in undergraduate enrolment. However, UCAS data suggested demand did increase from undergraduate applicants and offers in 2024/2025.

Heavy reliance on students from outside the UK: A high proportion of students are from outside the UK, especially postgraduate students. Among students from outside the UK, there is a higher share of students from outside the EU, which poses a potential future risk of visa issues. Acceptance rates are higher for non-UK residents than other courses. Of students from the UK, there is an underrepresentation of those from minoritised ethnic groups. Additionally, there are more successful applicants from less deprived neighbourhoods compared with other courses, which implies that social mobility is worse for landscape courses.

Strong graduate outcomes: Landscape Design graduates are less likely to be unemployed compared to other courses. Only 1% of 2021/22 graduates were confirmed to be unemployed. Additionally, fewer graduates in landscape design enrolled in further study, than those from other courses.

Technical skills are in high demand from employers of Landscape Architects: ‘Hard’ skills are in high demand, with most job adverts asking for technical experience such as Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Software skills are particularly in demand, with many programmes appearing in several early-career job adverts, such as AutoCAD, Revit, SketchUp, Geographic Information System (GIS) software, and Adobe. ‘Soft’ skills are also in demand, particularly teamwork and communication, followed by reporting and presentation skills.

Landscape Courses

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Higher Education data

Data has been collected on university students and graduates for landscape courses. Data has been drawn upon multiple sources, including the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and Discover Uni surveys.

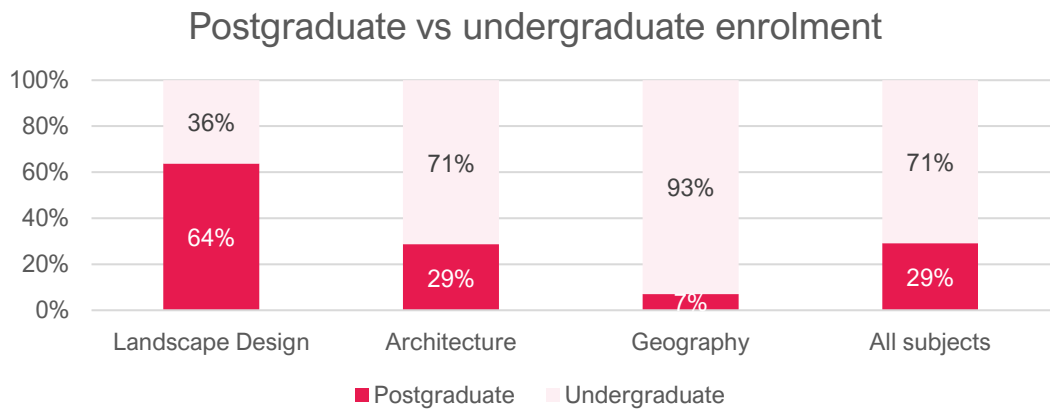
To understand the shape and scale of landscape education at universities, this section draws upon three core datasets to understand the student body in landscape courses:

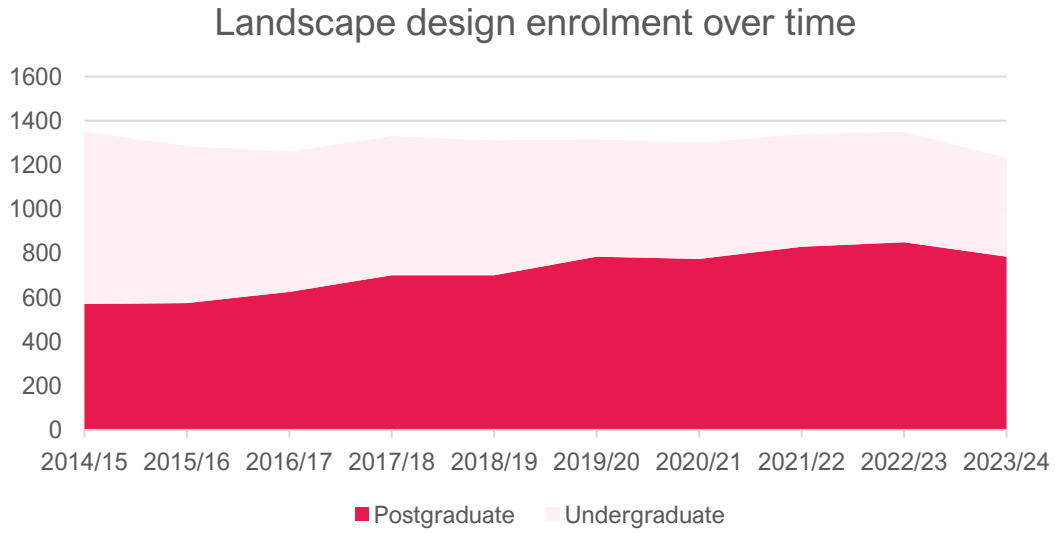
- **HESA:** Collects data from Higher Education institutions across the country to understand the size and composition of HE students across the UK. HESA data has been used to understand students studying individual courses, including personal characteristics and demographics.
- **UCAS:** UCAS run the higher education admissions service for universities, they collect data on the number of students applying for courses and the number of acceptances. Data also includes applications and acceptances by IMD decile, indicating the level of deprivation or social mobility from applicants.
- **Discover Uni (available through HESA):** The Discover Uni dataset is a survey of recent graduates to better understand graduate outcomes from courses, including indicators such as employment.

Each university subject is given a course code. The relevant course code for the landscape sector is CAH13-01-03: Landscape Design. In 2023/2024, there were 1,240 students studying landscape design, 1,190 (96%) of whom are in Landscape Institute-accredited courses. However, these courses are not the exclusive subject of study for landscape architects, who often attract both geography and architecture students. Therefore, these two course codes have also been included in the analysis, all benchmarked against the overall average of all subjects.

To protect confidentiality, all figures are rounded to the nearest 5, meaning that aggregating granular student breakdowns may result in slightly different total figures due to the effects of rounding.

Postgraduate enrolment is high in landscape design





Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

Postgraduate enrolment is particularly high in landscape design, unlike similar courses and continues to grow.

The first chart shows enrolment in each university subject, split by postgraduate and undergraduate enrolment.

The chart shows that the majority of landscape design students are postgraduate students, with **790** students enrolled in the academic year 2023/24, compared to **450** undergraduate students. In contrast, geography has a much lower share of postgraduate enrolment, at just under 10% of total enrolment, whereas the architecture split is similar to the average.

The second chart displays the time series of postgraduate and undergraduate enrolments in landscape design from 2023/24.

The chart shows that whilst enrolment in landscape design has not seen significant change in total, there has been a gradual increase in the number of postgraduate students, and a decrease in undergraduate enrolment which used to be the majority of students at the start of the period in 2014/15.

Landscape design has more female students

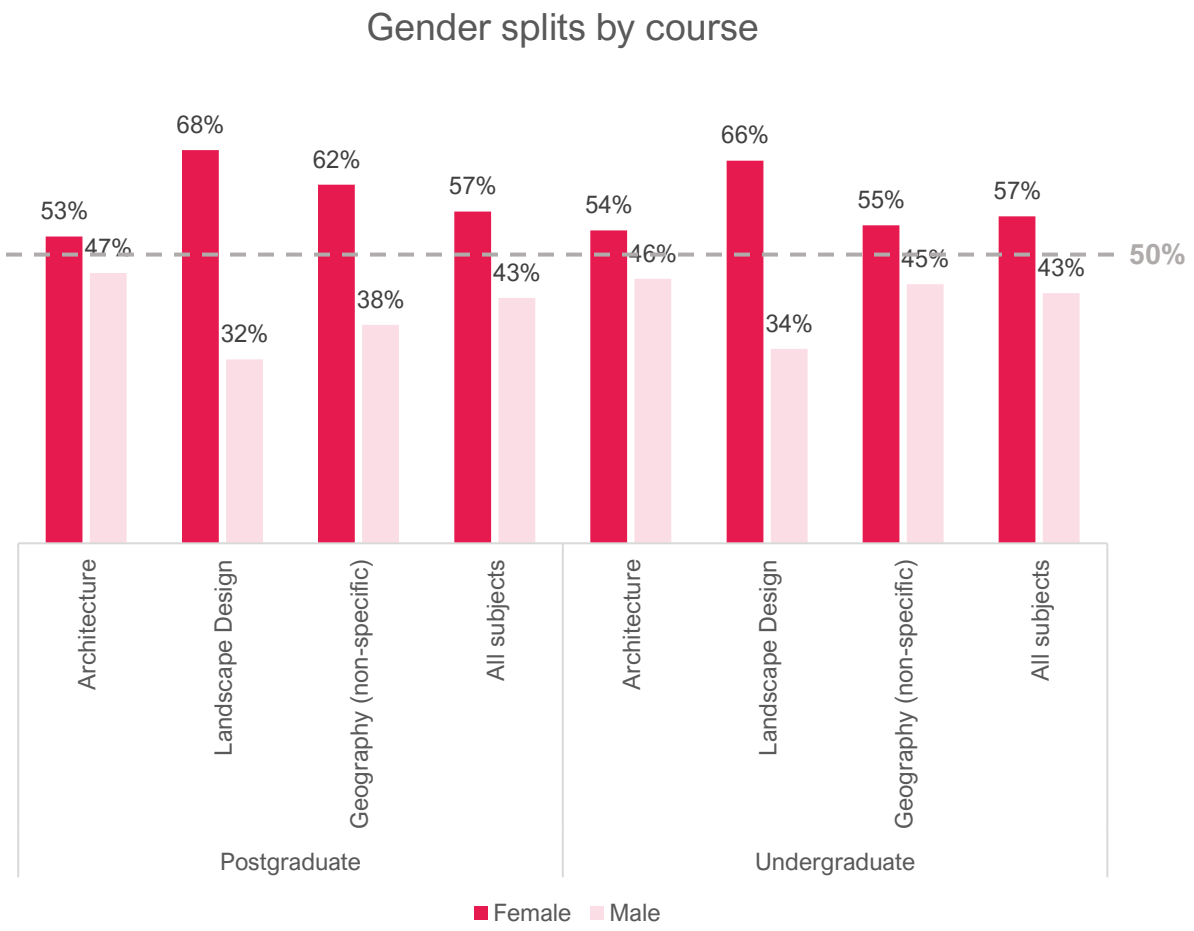
Around two thirds of students in landscape design are female, a higher share than all other subjects analysed.

This chart shows the share of students enrolled by gender for both postgraduate and undergraduate students.

Female students represent 68% of postgraduates and 66% of undergraduates, making it the course with the highest female participation of those analysed.

Although less pronounced than in landscape design, female enrolment is higher than the average across all subjects. However, both architecture and geography have a slightly higher share of male enrolment compared to all subjects.

Both landscape design and geography have a higher share of female students at the postgraduate level than the undergraduate level, which is the opposite for architecture.



Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

Landscape design students are more likely to be 21-24

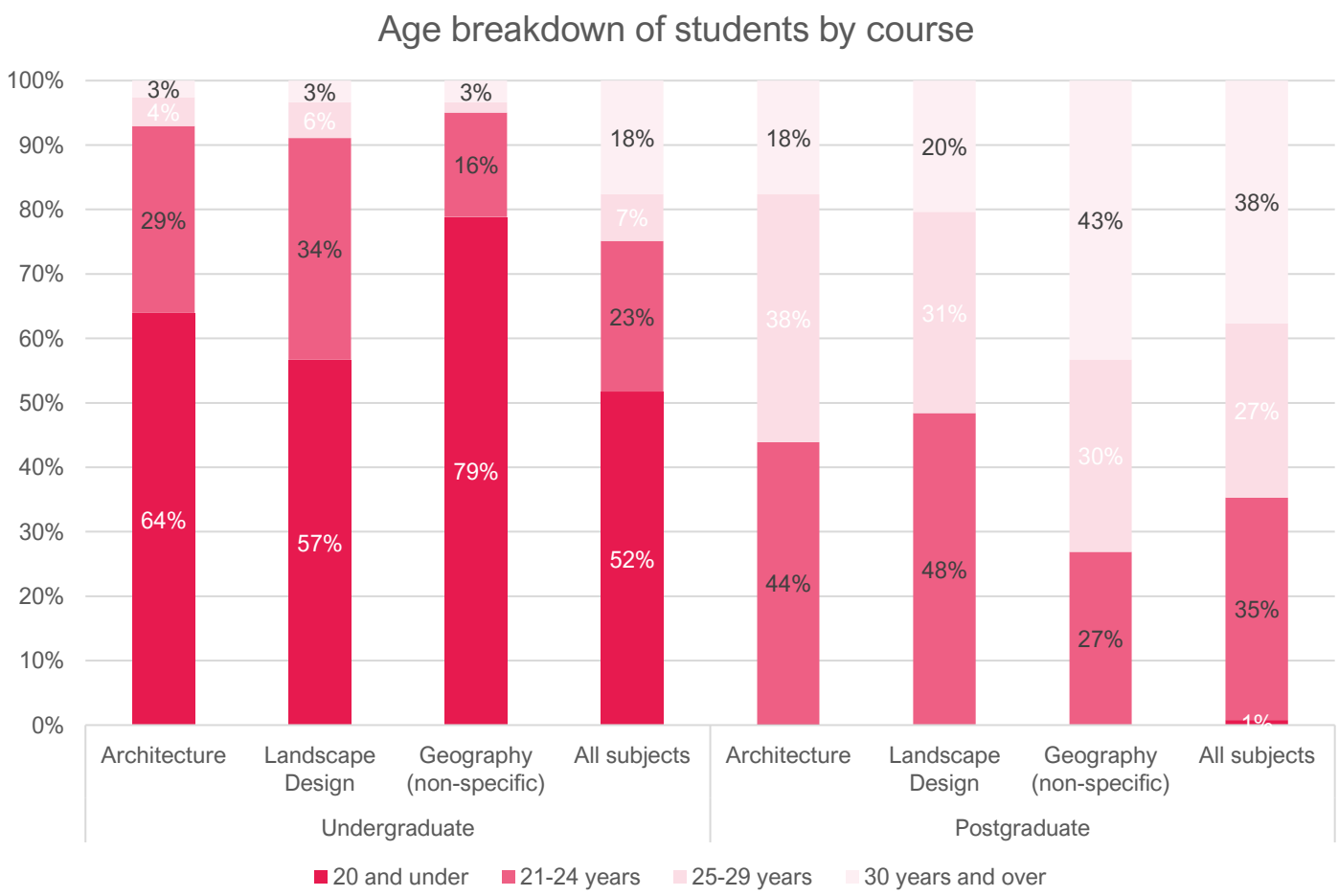
For both undergraduate and postgraduate enrolment, landscape design has a high share of students aged 21 to 24 years old.

This chart shows the age breakdowns of students enrolled in each subject, split by undergraduate and postgraduate students.

On the whole, landscape design students are generally older with a much higher share of students aged 21-29. However, this is driven by the higher share of postgraduate students in landscape design.

For undergraduates, landscape design still has fewer students aged 20 and under than architecture and geography, but more than the total benchmark, which sees higher enrolments from those aged 30 and over.

However, postgraduate enrolment is generally lower than other subjects, with almost half of students younger, aged 21-24, which is lower in other comparators.



Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

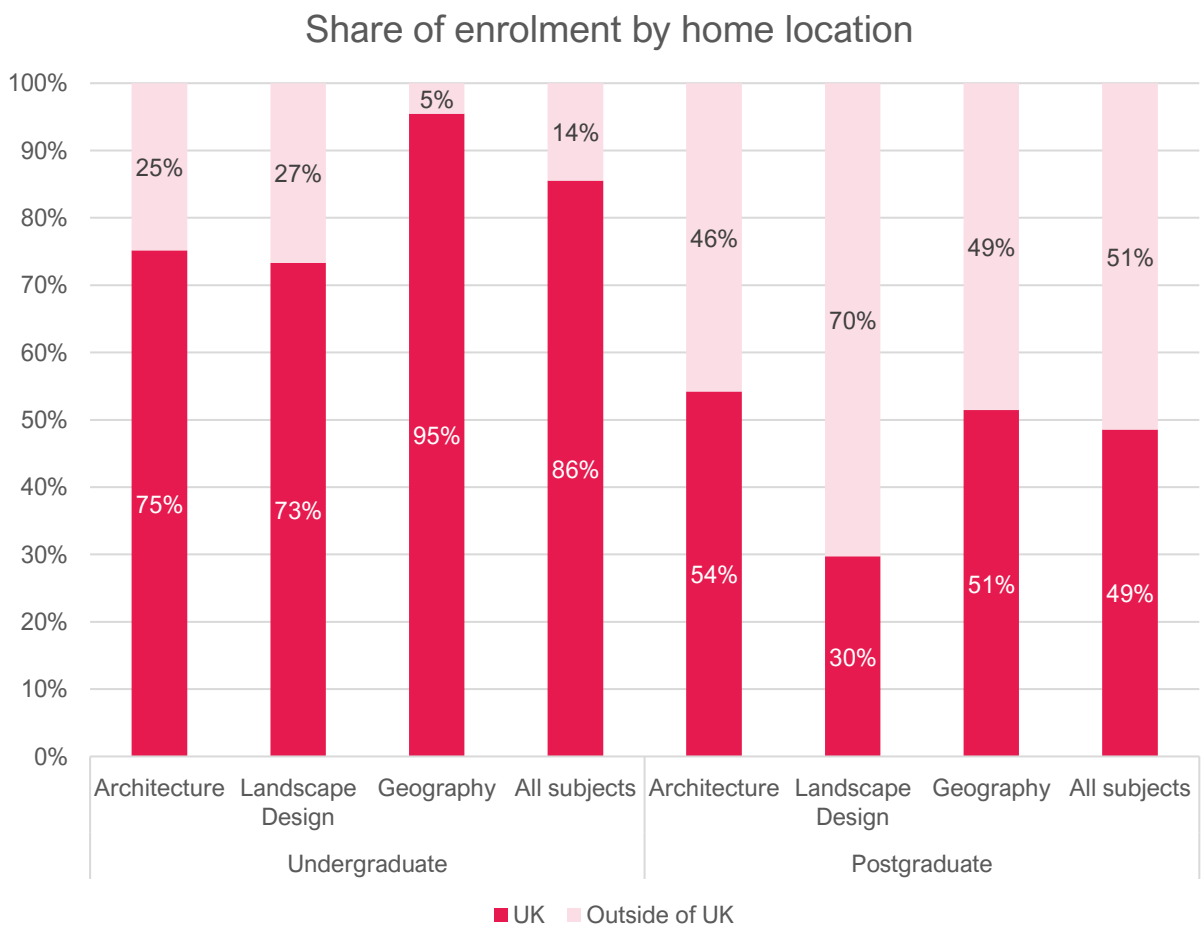
Students are more likely to be international

Landscape design sees a much higher share of students from outside the UK, especially amongst postgraduate enrolment.

This chart shows student enrolment by level of study and permanent address, indicating whether they reside in the UK or outside of the UK.

For undergraduate students, landscape has a similar composition to other courses, with a higher share of students who live in the UK at 73% of total undergraduate enrolment. However, in landscape design this is a lower share than comparators, with the total benchmark figure being 86%. Architecture sees a similar breakdown, but geography students are almost all from the UK, accounting for 95% of undergraduate enrolment.

Enrolment composition changes significantly for postgraduates across all subjects, in which the share of students living in the UK decreases. This is a particularly large difference in landscape design, where just 30% of students enrolled are UK domestic students, whilst for other subjects this figure hovers around the 50% mark.



Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

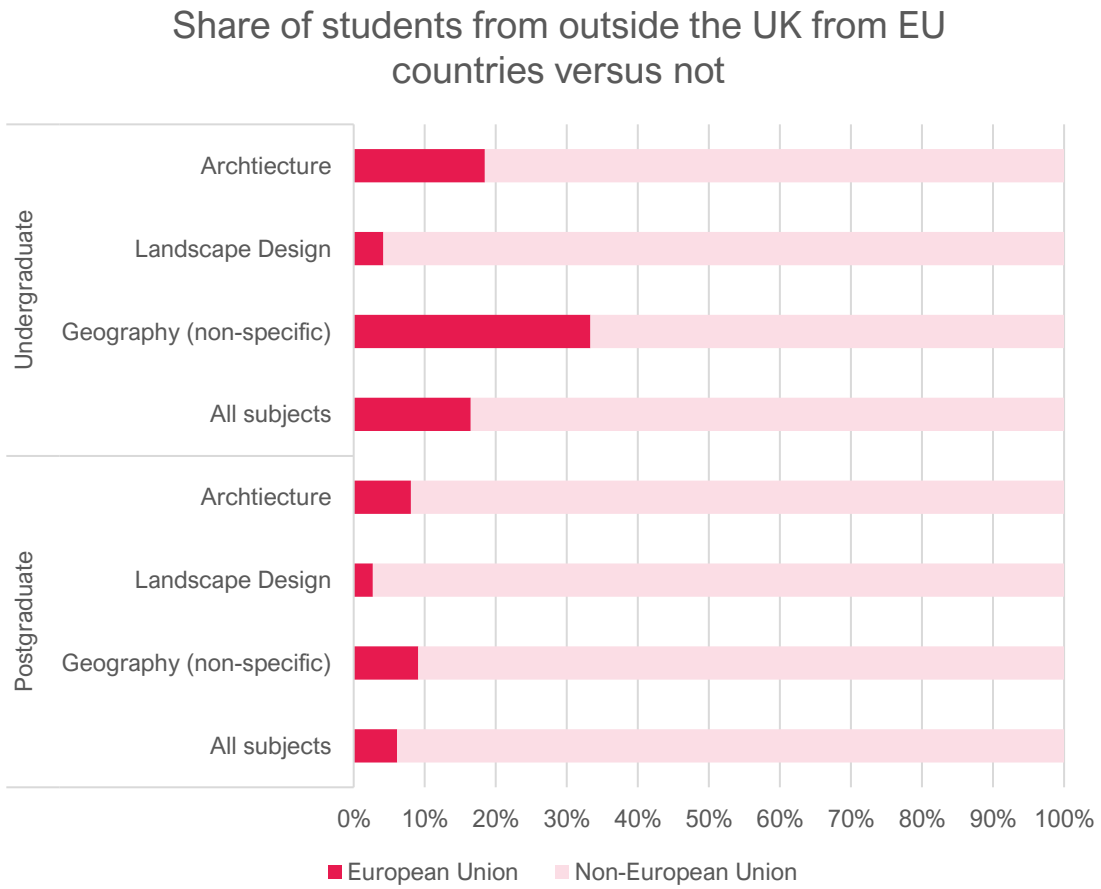
International students are also likely to be from outside the EU

Landscape design has an exceptionally high dependence on students from outside the European Union.

This chart provides a further breakdown of students that are from outside the UK, demonstrating the share of students from EU versus outside the European Union.

Across all sectors, including landscape design, European Union enrolment is higher for undergraduates than postgraduates. However, in landscape design more students enrol from outside the EU across both postgraduates and undergraduates.

In postgraduate enrolment, just 2.7% of students from abroad live in the EU, compared to 6% across all subjects. For undergraduates, this is 4.2%, against 16% across all subjects. EU enrolment is higher for geography students, accounting for a third of all undergraduate students from abroad.



Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

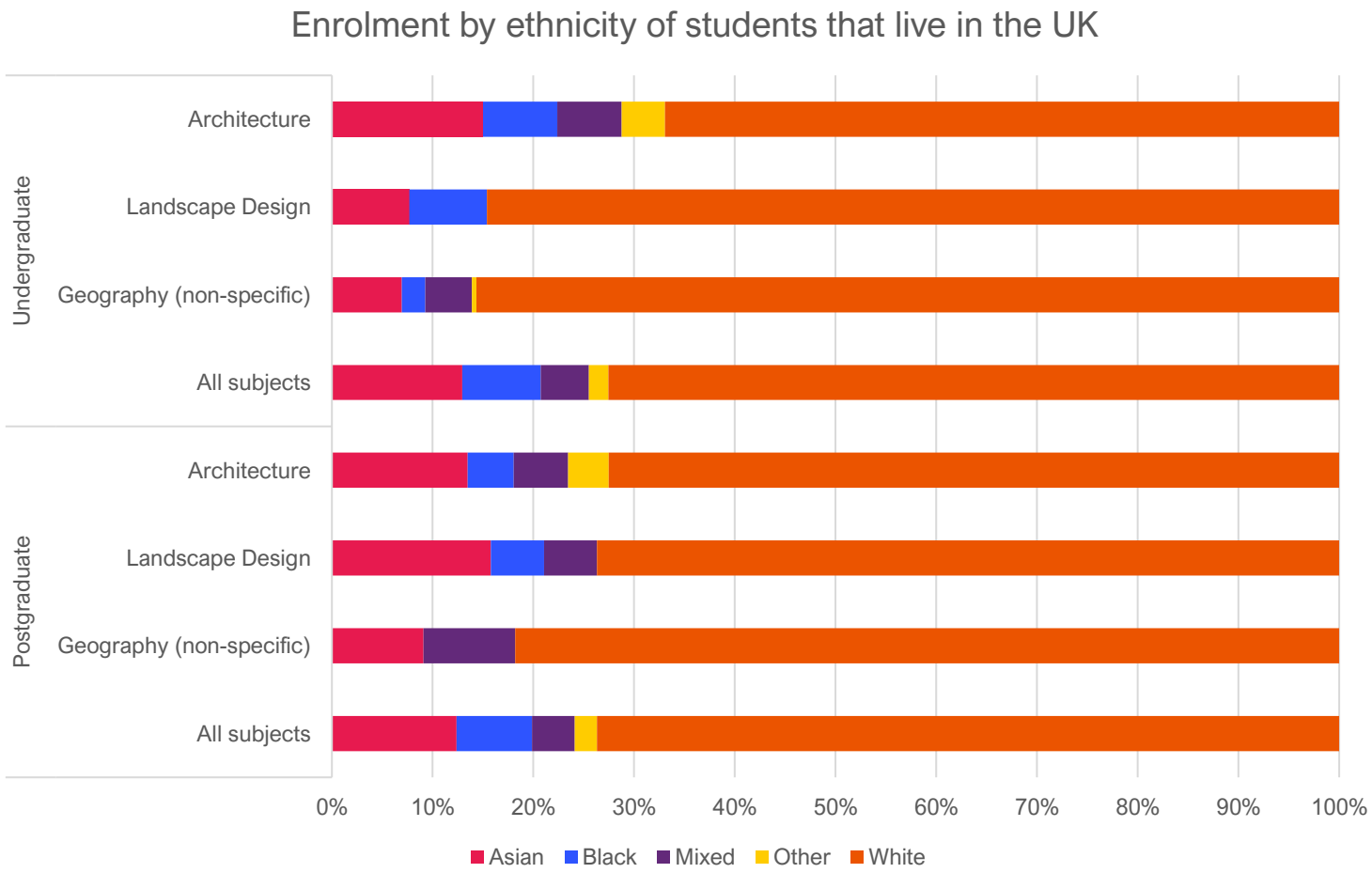
Less ethnic diversity in landscape courses

Although there is a high proportion of international students, the ethnic diversity of UK domestic students is below average.

This chart shows the breakdown of students enrolled from the UK by broad ethnic group.

The chart shows that for undergraduates, ethnic diversity is lower than other courses, at 79% of the student body being white, compared to 66% for all students. For geography and architecture, these figures are 82% and 60% respectively.

For postgraduate students, ethnic diversity in landscape design increases, as the share of white students decreases to 64%. This is equivalent to the all subjects average.



Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

Sheffield enrols the most landscape students

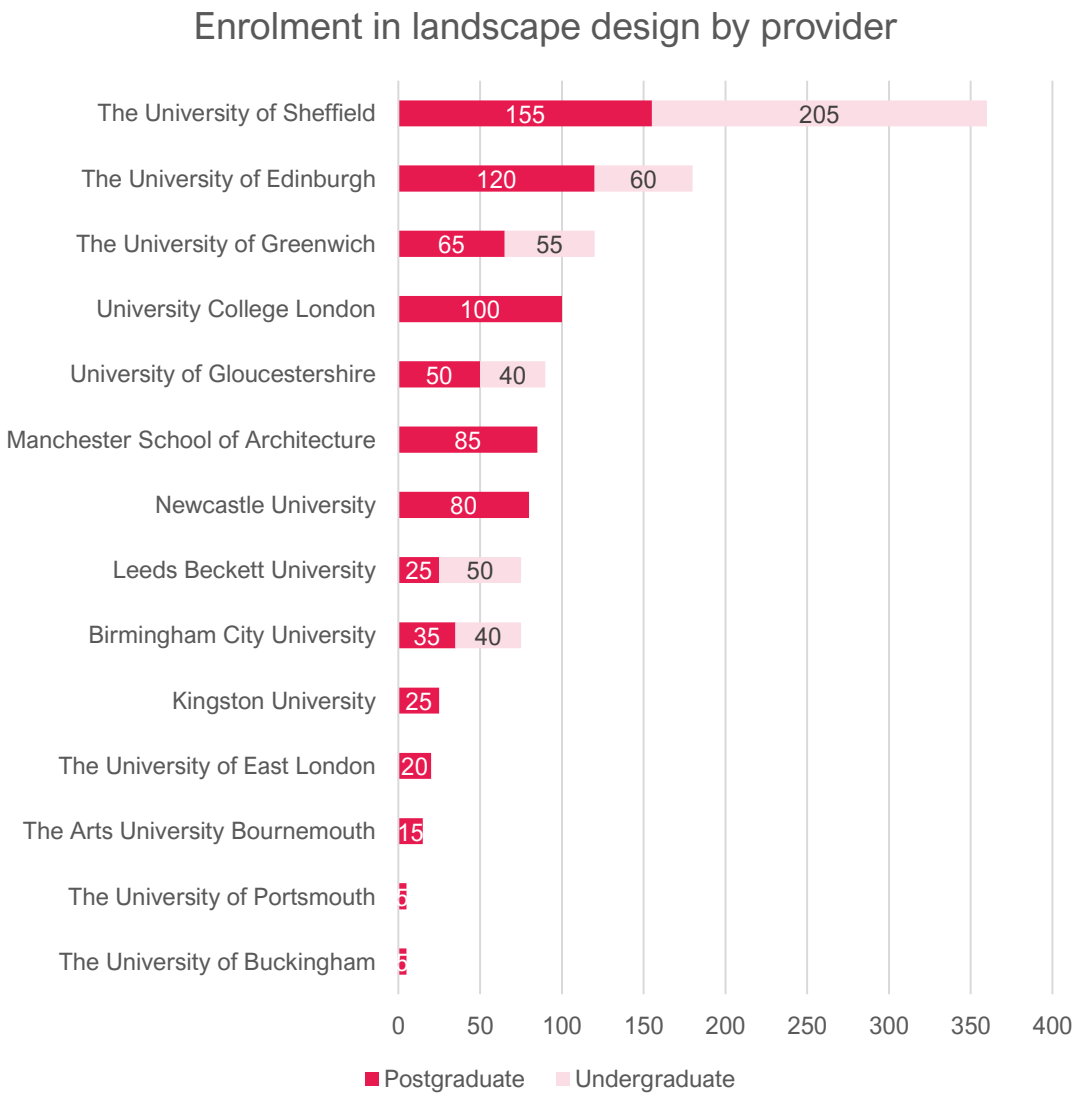
14 universities deliver landscape courses, all of which include postgraduate courses, but some smaller courses are not LI-accredited.

This chart shows the postgraduate and undergraduate enrolment in landscape courses by university provider.

The chart shows the University of Sheffield enrols the most students in Landscape Design, providing Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Landscape Architecture, all of which are accredited by the Landscape Institute. All of the top 11 universities in the UK for landscape enrolment provide courses accredited by the Landscape Institute.

All universities provide postgraduate landscape design courses, but only six provide undergraduate courses. Only the University of Sheffield, Leeds Beckett and Birmingham City have larger undergraduate enrolment in landscape design than postgraduate.

The largest postgraduate courses are provided by the University of Sheffield, The University of Edinburgh and University College London, all of which are accredited by the Landscape Institute.



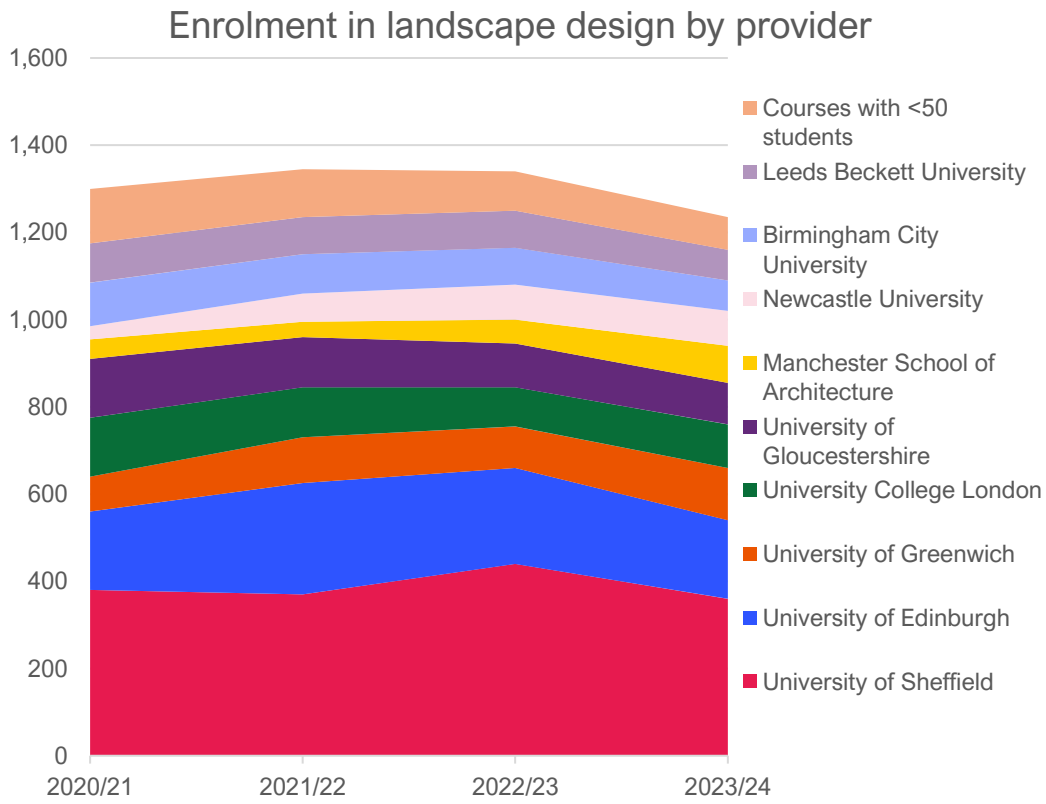
Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

Landscape course enrolments have declined modestly since the pandemic

Enrolment in UK landscape design courses has fallen slightly over the past four years, with closures in some smaller courses.

This chart shows the change in student enrolment in landscape design courses by university from 2020/21 to 2023/24. Universities that enrol fewer than 50 students in total are grouped into one.

Total enrolments across landscape design courses have decreased from 1,300 in 2020/21 to 1,240 in 2023/24 – a moderate contraction of around 5%. Much of this decline is concentrated in smaller courses with fewer than 50 students, which together have reduced from 135 to 90 over the period due to the withdrawal of courses at the University of Cambridge, University for the Creative Arts, and Writtle University College across the period.



Source: HESA, 2023/24 enrolment.

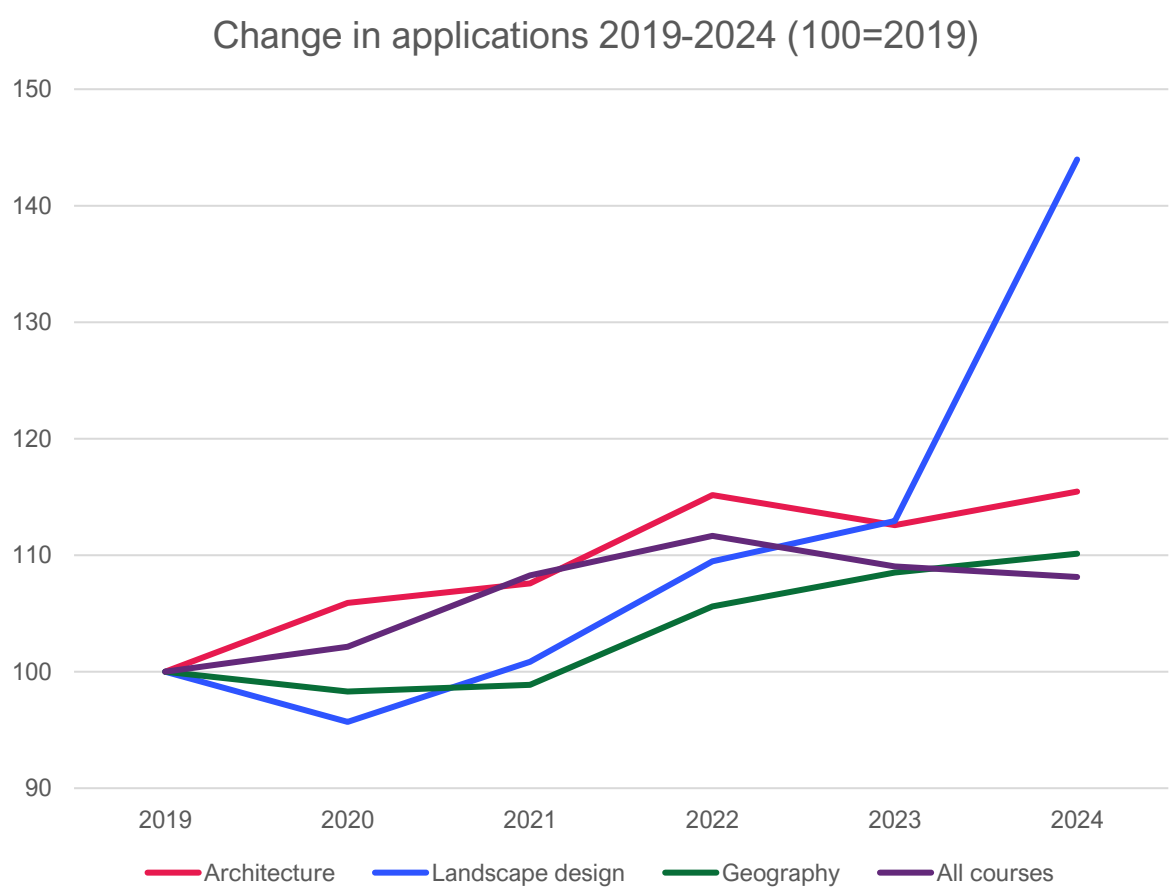
Undergraduate landscape applications are increasing

Applications in landscape design have increased in recent years from 580 in 2019 to 835 in 2024.

This chart shows the change to the number of undergraduate applications indexed to 2019.

In 2019, there were 580 undergraduate applications for landscape design. This has gradually increased over time to 13% higher by 2023, equivalent to other courses. However, the number of applications increased from 2023 to 2024, from 655 to 835, representing a 27% increase, or 44% more than in 2019.

Landscape design has seen the largest increase in applications out of all courses analysed. However, between 2019 and 2024, the number of applications in architecture was also consistently above the rate seen by the total of all courses. Geography applications have increased by a similar amount as all courses.



Source: UCAS, 2024.

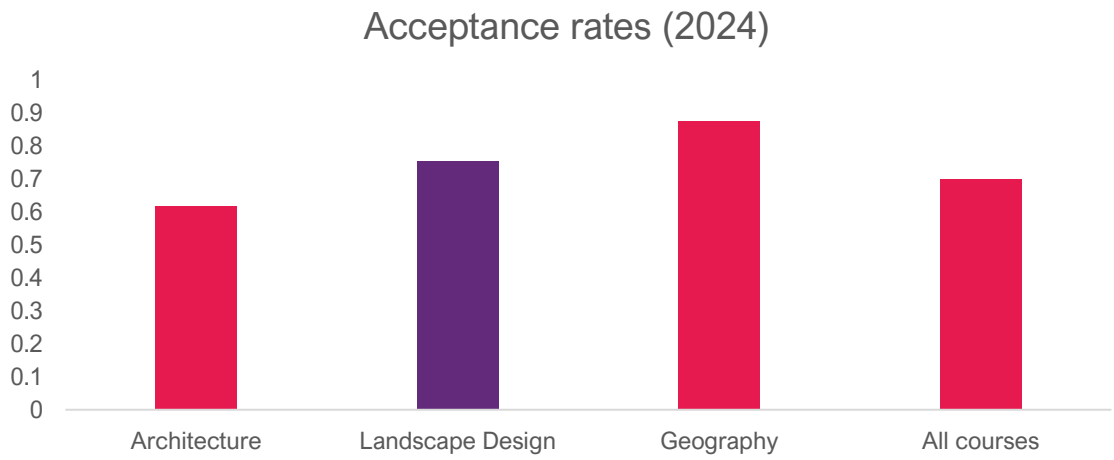
Undergraduate acceptance rates are slightly higher

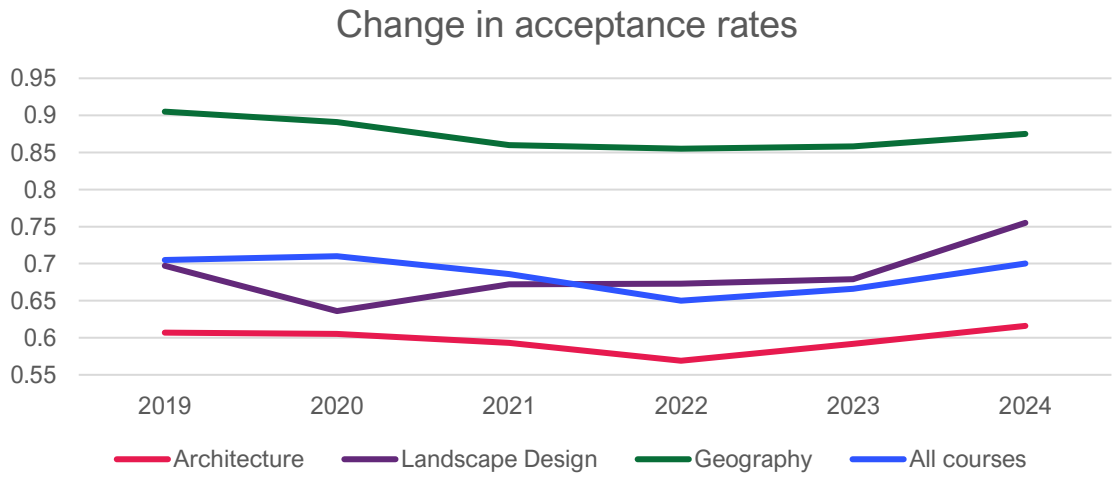
The number of successful undergraduate applicants in landscape design has slightly increased, but is similar to the average across all courses.

The following slides provide analysis of acceptance rates from 2019 to 2024, which refer to the number of applicants who were placed onto a course in a given UCAS cycle, expressed as a percentage of the total number of applicants to that course or institution.

Out of the 835 applications for landscape design in 2024, 630 were accepted, resulting in an acceptance rate of 0.76. This is slightly above the total acceptance rate across all courses of 0.7. The line chart shows that the acceptance rate of landscape design applications has not differed significantly from the average of all courses but has gradually increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Combined with the increase in applicants for the subject previously highlighted, this suggests that undergraduate enrolment has increased in landscape design.

For other courses that landscape architects often study, acceptance rates differ from landscape design. For architecture, acceptance rates are lower hovering around the 0.6 mark, whilst for geography, most applicants are successful, with just under 90% of applications being accepted in 2024.



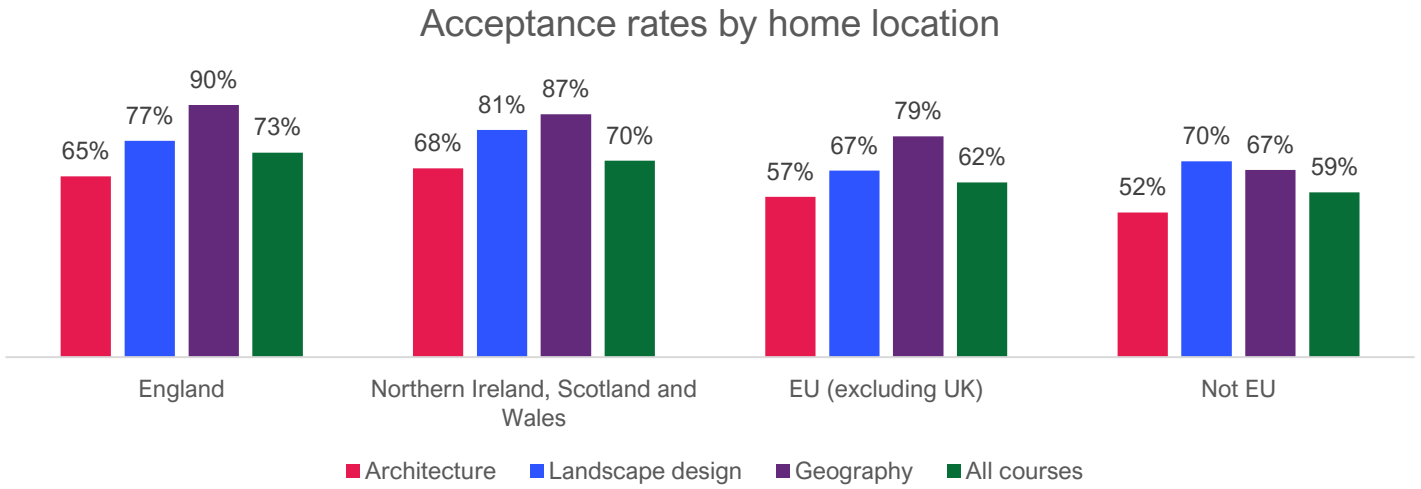


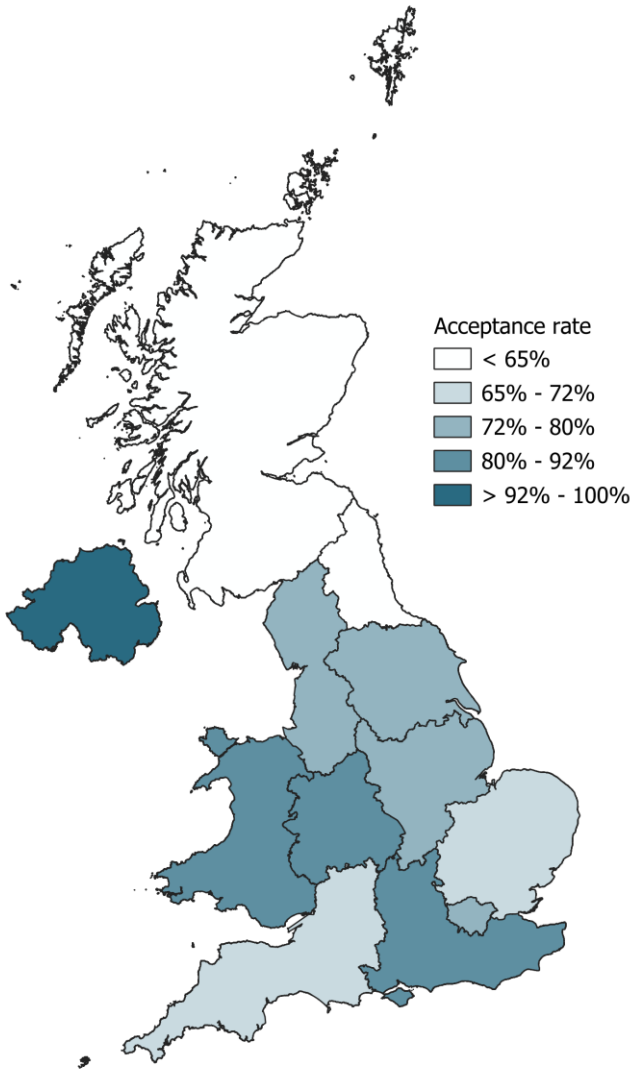
Source: UCAS, 2024

Acceptance rates vary by location

Whilst applicants from the UK are more successful across the board, the acceptance rate of applicants from outside the EU are higher in landscape design than other subjects.

The chart below shows the acceptance rates of students applying for courses by their home location. The chart shows that across all courses, acceptance rates are higher for applicants from the UK. For architecture and landscape design, applicants from England are less successful than those from the other three nations, which differs from the geography and the average across all courses. For applicants from outside the UK, applications from the EU are more likely to be successful for all courses analysed, except for landscape design, which has a higher acceptance rate for applicants from outside the EU than for all other courses.





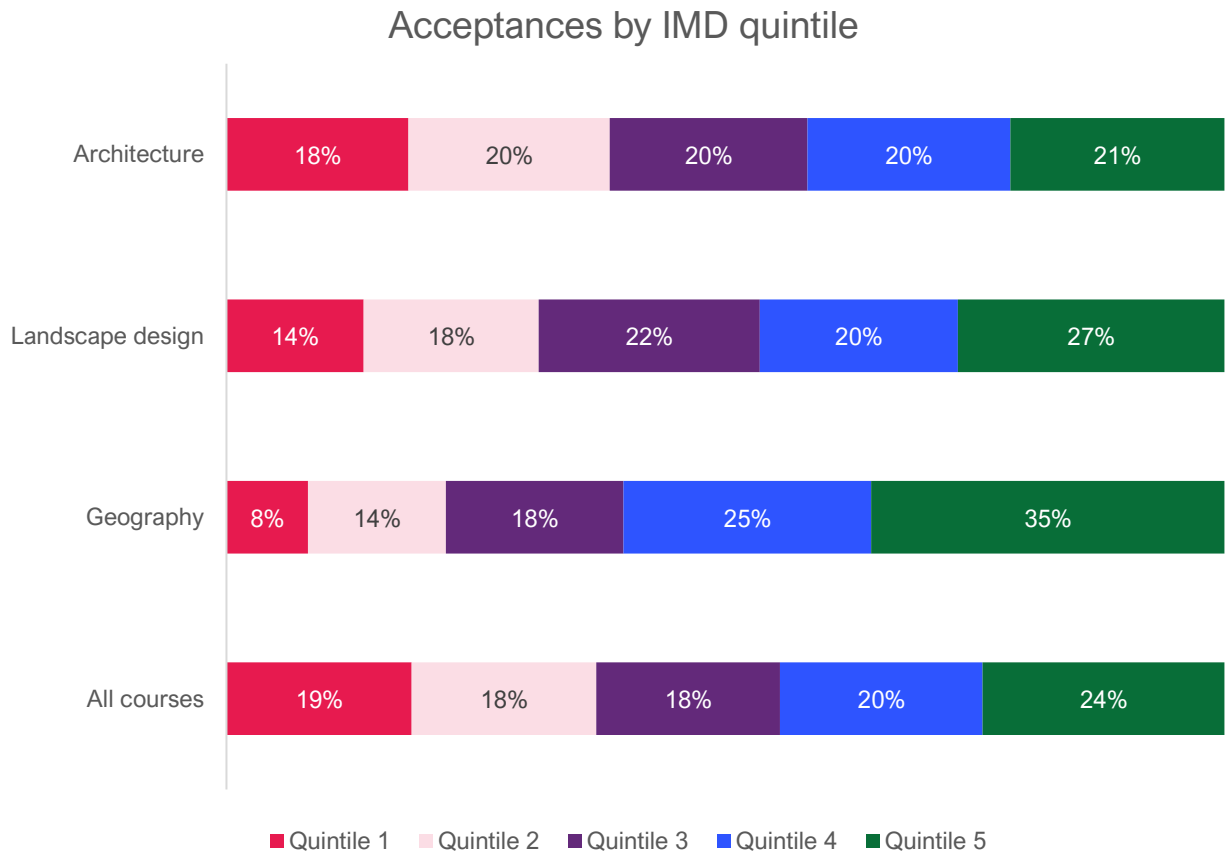
Source: UCAS, 2024.

Landscape design sees fewer undergraduate acceptances from the most deprived neighbourhoods

Landscape design has fewer student acceptances from more deprived neighbourhoods than other courses, indicating that social mobility is slightly less in landscape courses.

The chart explores the number of students accepted into each course by the level of deprivation of their home neighbourhood. This is measured by using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which aggregates various deprivation measures into a single ranking of every neighbourhood nationally. Quintile 1 refers to the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods, whilst Quintile 5 refers to the 20% least deprived.

The chart shows that across all courses more students are from the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods. However, landscape design has a higher concentration of acceptances from less deprived neighbourhoods than the average, with 27% of acceptances living in the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods and just 14% from the most deprived. The concentration of acceptances in more deprived neighbourhoods is even lower for geography, but architecture shows almost an equal distribution of acceptances by the deprivation levels of applicants.



Source: UCAS, 2024.

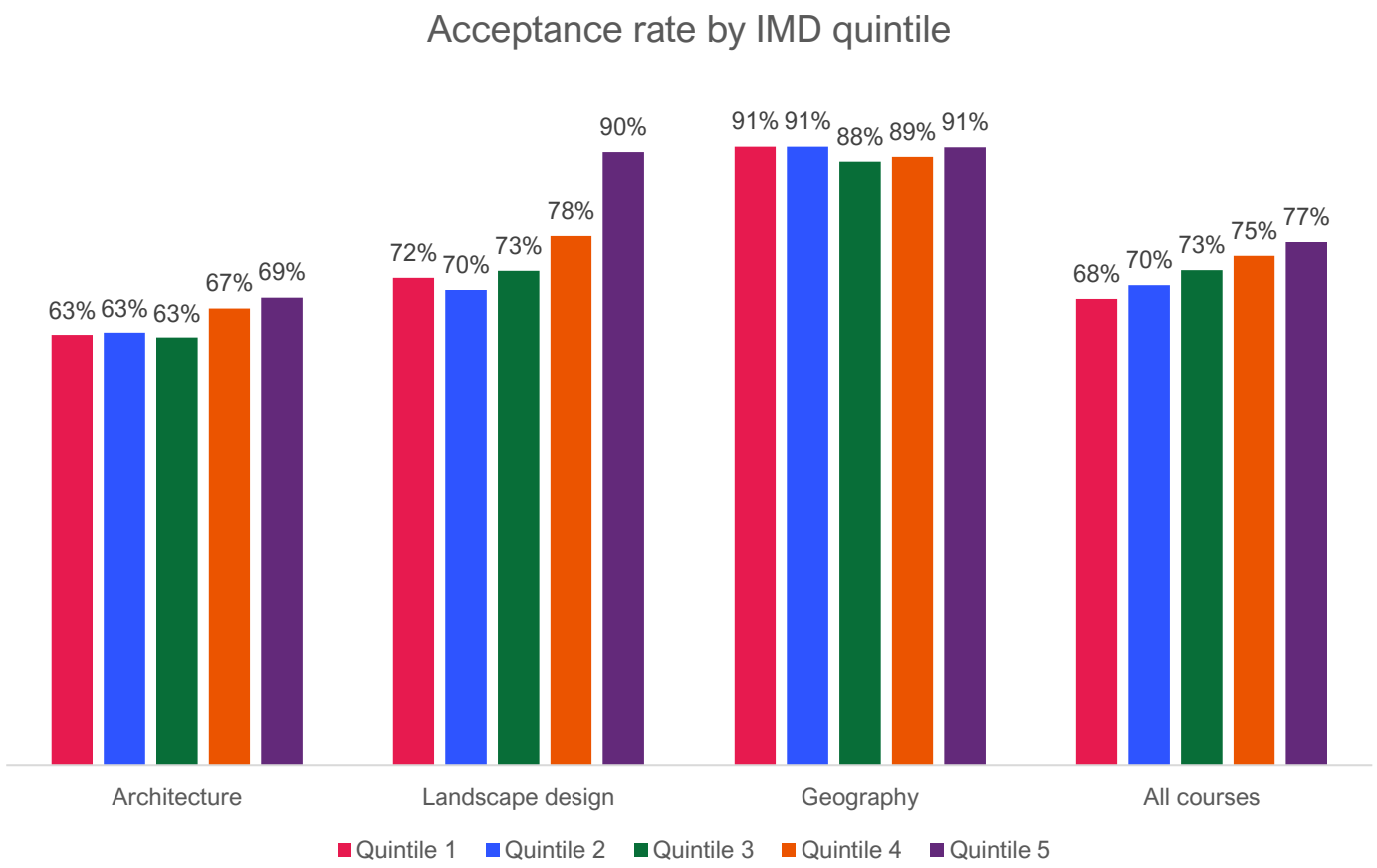
Acceptance rates are lower in more deprived areas

Acceptance rates vary based on deprivation levels, with landscape design applicants being most successful in the least deprived areas.

This chart examines the share of applicants accepted by course code and deprivation quintile.

The chart shows that for architecture and landscape design, there is a higher acceptance rate of applicants from less deprived neighbourhoods in quintiles 4 and 5, aligning with the average across all courses. However, the range between acceptance rates in the least and most deprived neighbourhoods is greatest for landscape design, with 90% of applicants from the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods being successful, compared to 70-72% for the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods.

This implies that entry to the profession is much harder for applicants from more deprived neighbourhoods – there is an almost 20 percentage point gap in acceptance rate between the least and most deprived areas.



Source: UCAS, 2024

Graduate outcomes

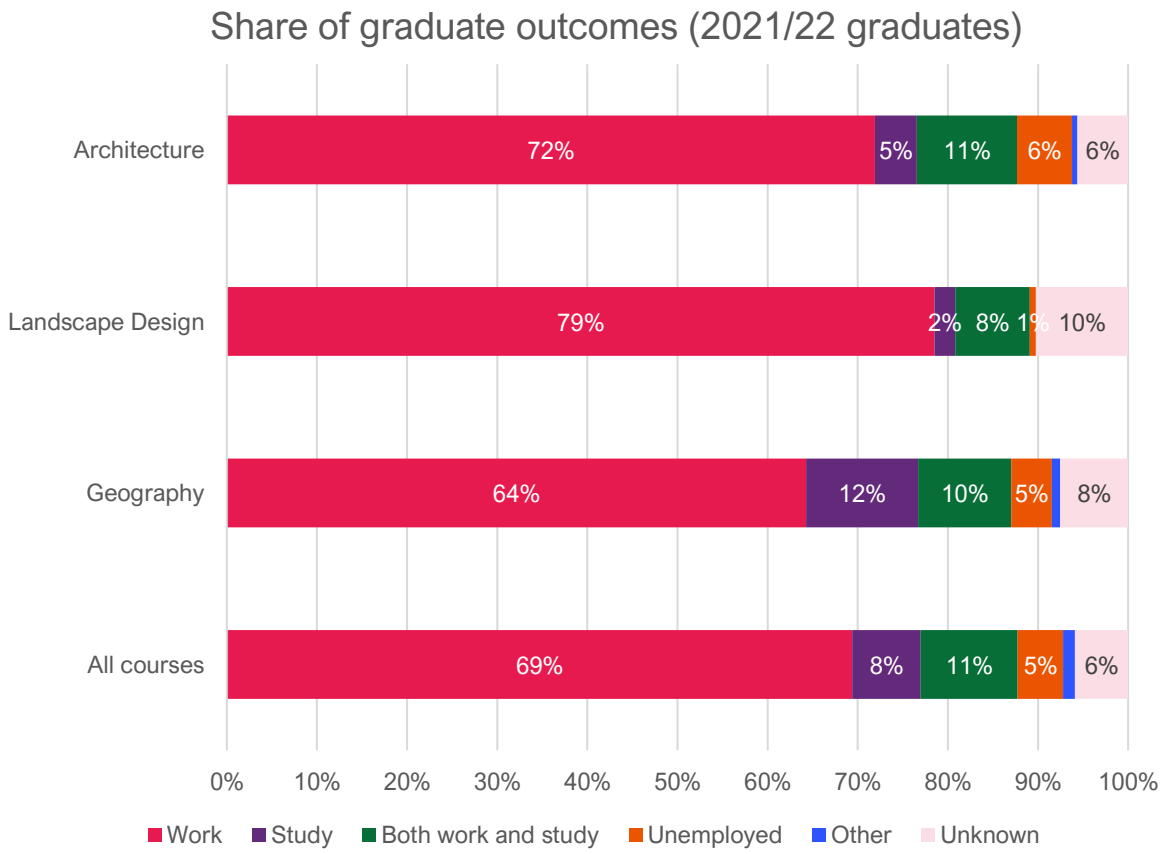
Landscape design graduates are most likely to enter the workforce, with low unemployment rates.

This chart shows the graduate outcomes of both postgraduates and undergraduates from the 2021/22 academic year, 15 months after graduation, by whether they were employed, in further study or in other activities.

The chart shows that for landscape design graduates, 79% of all graduates entered the workforce post-graduation. This is the highest of all the subjects analysed. Only 1% of 2021/22 graduates were confirmed to be unemployed. Additionally, fewer graduates in landscape design enrolled in further study, than those from other courses.

Architecture graduates have a lower share going into further study, but also a higher unemployment rate.

In comparison, geography graduates are most likely to enrol in further study, as well as having the lowest share of graduates entering the workforce.



Source: Discover Uni dataset, 2021/22 graduates.

Landscape Architecture skills demand

Job adverts in landscape architecture

This section examines skills demand for landscape architects, via web-scraping of public job advert boards hiring landscape architects.

Phase One highlighted that job vacancies in the broader landscape sector are often hard to fill due to skills gaps. Therefore, this section aims to better understand the key skills employers are looking for, to explore what skills the existing pools of graduates may need to provide.

The approach has been to analyse job adverts for early-career landscape architects to understand the roles on offer and what skills they require. Landscape architect job advertisements were web-scraped from **Reed, LI's job board, LEAD Careers, Adzuna,** and **Landscape Architecture jobs.** Some websites, such as Public Practice, were unable to be scraped. Part of the sample analysed also includes data provided directly by LEAD Careers, a large recruiter for landscape architects.

Following a procedure of cleaning and removing duplicates, a sample size of 391 job advertisements for landscape architects was produced, 88 (23%) of which were identified as early-career job advertisements relevant for graduates.

The following analysis is focused on early-career skills demand.

Early-career job adverts are highest in London

Early-career demand is not equal across the country, with a larger concentration in the South of England, and a modest but relatively balanced level of recruitment across the rest of England.

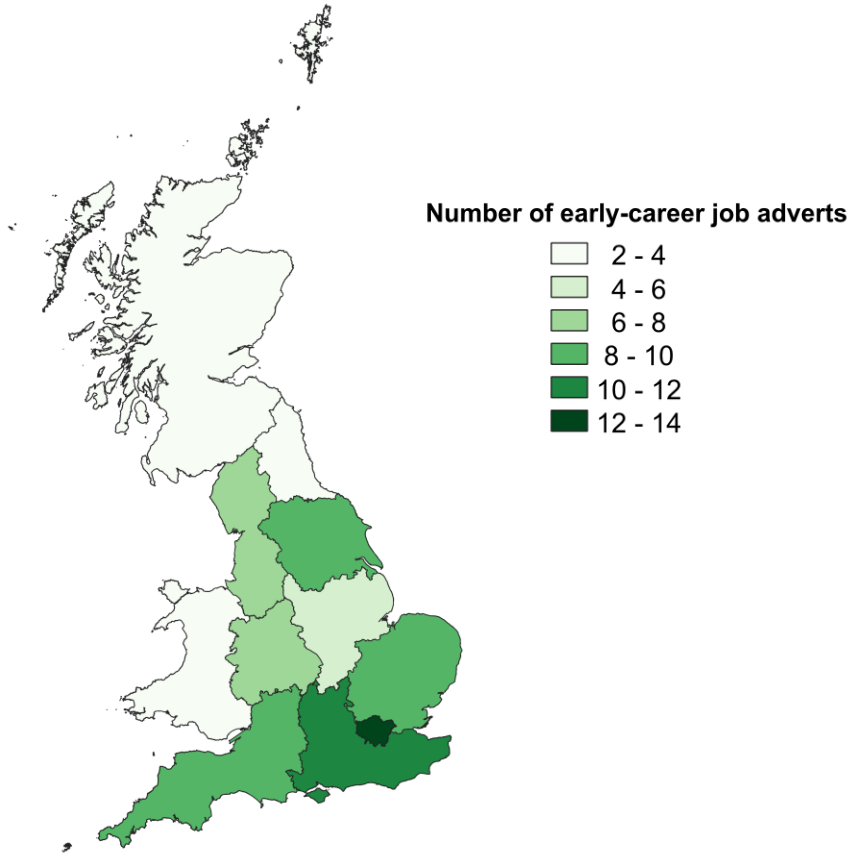
This map shows the number of early-career job adverts for landscape architects by region, based on 88 adverts reporting a location.

The South of England hosts the majority with 35 adverts – nearly 40% of the total – across London, the South East, and the South West.

In contrast, opportunities are far fewer in the devolved nations, with only four adverts in Scotland, three in Wales, and none in Northern Ireland.

Across the Midlands (14), Yorkshire and the Humber (10), and the North West (8), adverts are more evenly spread, together accounting for roughly a third of all vacancies.

Our engagement reported a national shortage of candidates with the technical and report-writing skills needed.



Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of early-career landscape architect job adverts, compiled from multiple public recruitment websites

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Key skills appearing in early-career adverts

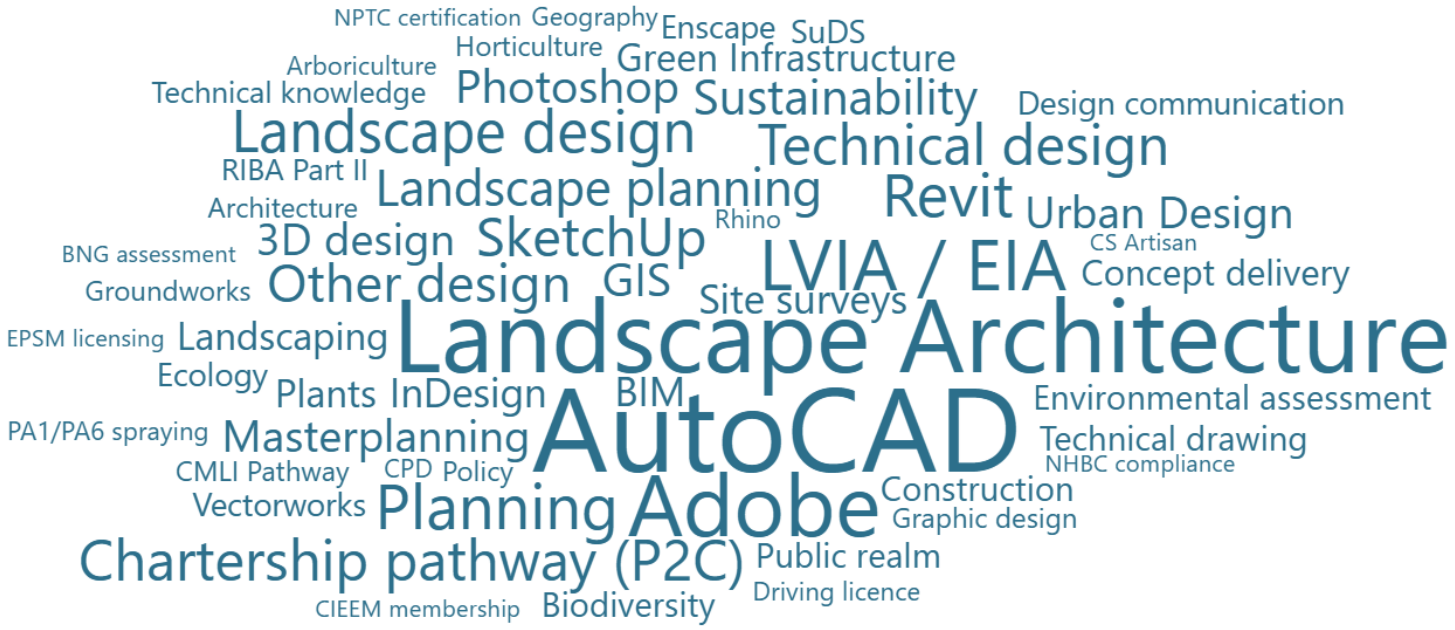
The following pages show the results of word counts that illustrate the skills most frequently mentioned in job adverts for entry-level landscape architect roles.

These have been extracted and categorised into:

- *hard skills,* such as technical competencies, design software proficiency, and environmental assessment experience, and
- *soft skills*, including communication, teamwork, and project coordination.

The resulting word clouds highlight the relative prominence of each skill type across recent adverts, providing an indicative view of the core capabilities sought by employers at the early-career stage.

Technical and design software skills feature most prominently as ‘hard’ skills



AutoCAD is the most frequently requested skill, appearing in over half of all adverts (53%), followed by Adobe software (35%) and SketchUp (18%), underlining the importance of digital design proficiency for new entrants. **Planning (23%) and LVIA/Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) (27%) are also common.**

Revit (22%) and GIS (14%) appear in a smaller but still significant share of adverts, while more specialised tools such as Vectorworks, Rhino, and Enscape are referenced in only around 5-6% of cases. Professional development mentions are present but not universal, with Pathway to Chartership (P2C) mentioned in roughly one-fifth of postings.

Practical or site-based competencies – including site surveys, construction, and planting – are far less frequently specified, each referenced in fewer than one in ten adverts.

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Early-career hard skills frequencies (n = 88)

Hard skill	Occurrence
AutoCAD	47
Landscape Architecture	39
Adobe	31
LVIA / EIA	24
Planning	20
Revit	19
Landscape design	18
Technical design	17
Chartership pathway (P2C)	17
SketchUp	16
Other design	15
Landscape planning	14
Sustainability	13
Photoshop	12
GIS	12
Urban Design	11
Masterplanning	11
3D design	11
InDesign	9

Hard skill	Occurrence
Site surveys	9
Building information modelling (BIM)	9
Landscaping	8
Plants	8
Green Infrastructure	8
Concept delivery	7
Biodiversity	6
Public realm	6
Construction	6
Technical drawing	6
Environmental assessment	6
Sustainable drainage system (SuDS)	5
Design communication	5
Vectorworks	5
Enscape	5
Ecology	5
Royal Institute of British Architects Part II	4
Architecture	3

Hard skill	Occurrence
Groundworks	3
Horticulture	3
Chartered Membership of the Landscape Institute Pathway	3
Policy	3
Graphic design	3
Geography	2
Rhino	2
PA1/PA6 spraying	2
Arboriculture	2
Driving licence	2
CS Artisan	1
National Proficiency Tests Council certification	1
National House Building Council compliance	1
European Protected Species Mitigation licensing	1
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management membership	1

Strong emphasis on communication, teamwork and client-facing skills as ‘soft’ skills

Teamwork (55%) and communication (52%) are the most frequently requested soft skills, indicating that new entrants are expected to operate effectively within teams and contribute to collaborative project work. **Reporting (47%) and presentation (32%)** are also common.

Project management and delivery (30%) appear regularly, suggesting that early-career professionals are engaged in coordination and project support tasks. **Stakeholder liaison (22%) and collaboration (17%) further point to the outward-facing nature of the role**, with engagement across clients, communities and multidisciplinary teams forming a core part of early responsibilities.

Creativity (13%), visualisation (11%) and attention to detail (11%) are referenced less often, likely reflecting baseline expectations rather than differentiating criteria in recruitment.

Landscape Institute
People, place and nature

Early-career soft skills frequencies (n = 88)

Soft skill	Occurrences
Communication	46
Reporting	41
Presentation	28
Teamwork	48
Flexibility	15
Project management and delivery	26
Collaboration	15
Leadership	4
Time management	9
Research	3
Attention to detail	10
Organisation	7
Creativity	11
Visualisation	10
Stakeholder liaison	19
Drawing	6

Soft skill	Occurrences
Contracts	6
Environmental awareness	4
Problem solving	4
Data and analysis	6
Professional development	7
Microsoft Office	3
Writing	3
Travel	2
Fieldwork	4
Health and Safety	4
Business development	2
Mentorship	6
Customer service	2
Coordination	3
Social responsibility	3

At Metro Dynamics, we **care** about places, our clients, and our colleagues.

We are an **independent** organisation, **curious** about our work, and **collaborative** in our approach. We strive to **make a difference** in all that we do.

10 Years
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