Positive Prospects
Careers for Accounting & Finance Graduates and
Why Number and Data Skills Matter

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POSITIVE PROSPECTS
CAREERS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE GRADUATES AND WHY NUMBER AND DATA SKILLS MATTER
Overview for all social sciences

• Prospects
  – Employment, Sectors & Occupations, Earnings, Institutions
• Futures
• Pathways
  – AS/A level maths, impact of number & data skills on earnings
• Conclusions
What we’re NOT saying

• This is NOT a full causal analysis
  – Self-selection of students, complex pathways
  – Most important, IMMEDIATE employment outcomes
• NOT saying ALL students need same level of number and data skills
• But ARE saying we need more social science undergraduates with these skills
• BUT this does not seem to be an issue for accountancy and finance students
Almost 4 out of 10 students graduate from university with a *social science* degree.*

Just 7% of social science graduates, or 3% of all graduates receive accounting and finance degrees.
Accounting and finance graduates have very good employment prospects.

One year after graduation:
- 69% in work in the UK or abroad
- An additional 11% in a combination of work & study
- An additional 10% in further study alone

In other words: 89% are in some form of work and/or study
Destinations of full-time graduates 2015/16

Accounting
- 67% in UK Work
- 9% in Further Study
- 12% in Work & Further Study
- 2% in Overseas Work
- 6% Unemployed
- 4% Other

Finance
- 64% in UK Work
- 12% in Further Study
- 9% in Work & Further Study
- 4% in Overseas Work
- 7% Unemployed
- 4% Other
Accounting and finance graduates’ immediate employment rates are high in comparison to the rest of the social sciences disciplines.
Other social science graduates go on to work in a wider range of sectors than many finance and accounting graduates, who tend to concentrate on those industries where their number and data skills are in highest demand.
Finance and accounting graduates go on to a range of occupations, but most gravitate to one of three categories.

- **Finance**
  - Business & public service assoc. professionals: 44%
  - Business, media and public service professionals: 26%
  - Administrative occupations: 17%
  - Corporate managers and directors: 3%

- **Accounting**
  - Science, research, engineering & technology professionals: 37%
  - Sales occupations: 37%
  - Other managers and proprietors: 16%
  - Customer service occupations: 2%
  - Elementary administration and service occupations: 1%
  - Science, engineering & technology assoc. professionals: 1%
14% of global leaders have an undergraduate degree in a business field.

14% of global leaders have an MBA.

Business graduates account for significant percentages of those in leadership globally.
Accounting and finance graduates do very well in terms of earnings relative to many other social science disciplines.

Likely due to the level of professionalisation of these degrees, and the fact that accounting and finance graduates have strong number and data skills.
Finance and accounting students graduating from Russell Group universities do better on average—and at the lower and upper quartiles—than others in reported earnings one year after graduation.

Notably, this effect appears to be bigger for social science disciplines where students are expected to have number and data skills—like economics, finance, and accounting—than for some other social science disciplines like politics and sociology. Selection effect, network of recruiting or what is taught?
Social science graduates generally have analytical skills making them valuable to employers.

But as the nature of work changes in the context of the digital revolution, graduates with strong number and data skills – like accounting and finance graduates – may have a distinct advantage over those that do not.

These skills will help them successfully compete in tomorrow’s job market – even if they choose to work outside of accounting and finance.

But (not in our report) many number-based tasks can be automated, so need other skills as well.
The numbers of social science undergraduates who have completed AS or A levels in mathematics varies by the subject of their degree.

Over half of finance and accounting students in the UK had an AS, A, or IB level in mathematics.

**Business & Administrative Studies Undergraduates with AS, A, or IB level mathematics**

- **Finance**: 57%
- **Accounting**: 54%
- **Management Studies**: 20%
- **Business Studies**: 15%
- **Marketing**: 8%
- **HR Management**: 6%
- **Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, …**: 5%
Conclusions

• There is about as much variation in STEM employment and earnings as there is in social sciences.
• Accounting & finance students have very good prospects
• These are enhanced if students can show number and data skills, but need other skills as well
• This is an issue for undergraduate teaching development