

# Postgraduate study in 2024...

What can we *really* expect?

Mark Bennett | Director (Audience & Insight)  
Oliver Brown | Key Account Manager



# Find University - PG Websites & Insights

Find  PhD

Find  Masters

1 Million+ visitors a month



5,000+ Pulse responses a month





## Seeing the wood for the trees...

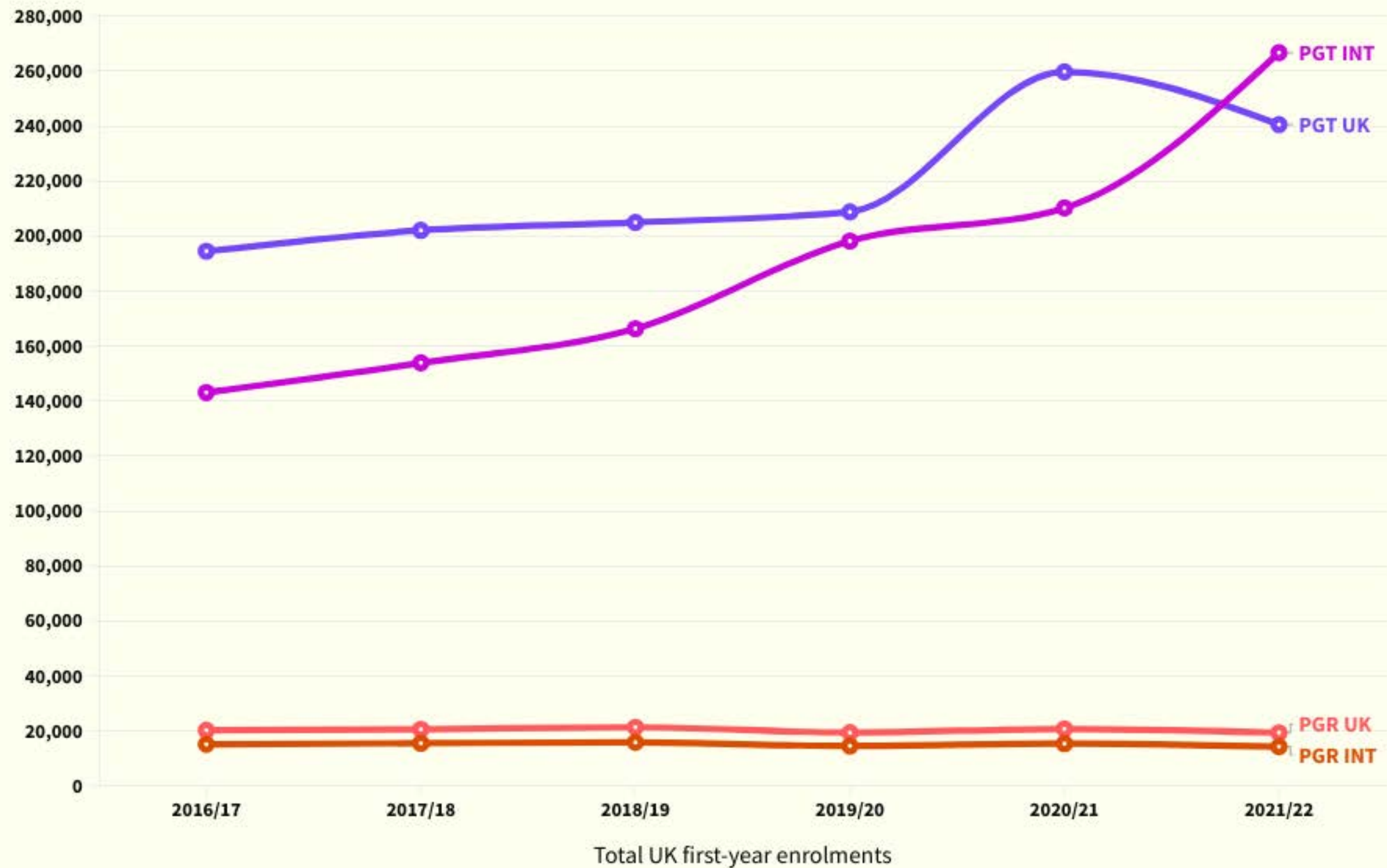
We know there are some big obstacles ahead for PG and the pathway is unclear

So, let's try to:

- Understand **where we are** and **what's coming next**
- Pick out some **audience trends**
- Explore **what *else* matters** to those audiences



# Recent postgraduate trends



Source: [HESA](#)

Find  University

Things were  
looking fairly  
good...

...for PGT

...two years ago





## PGT Challenges for 2024

**Domestic students:**  
affordability and value

**International students:** visa  
changes (which also impact  
affordability and value)



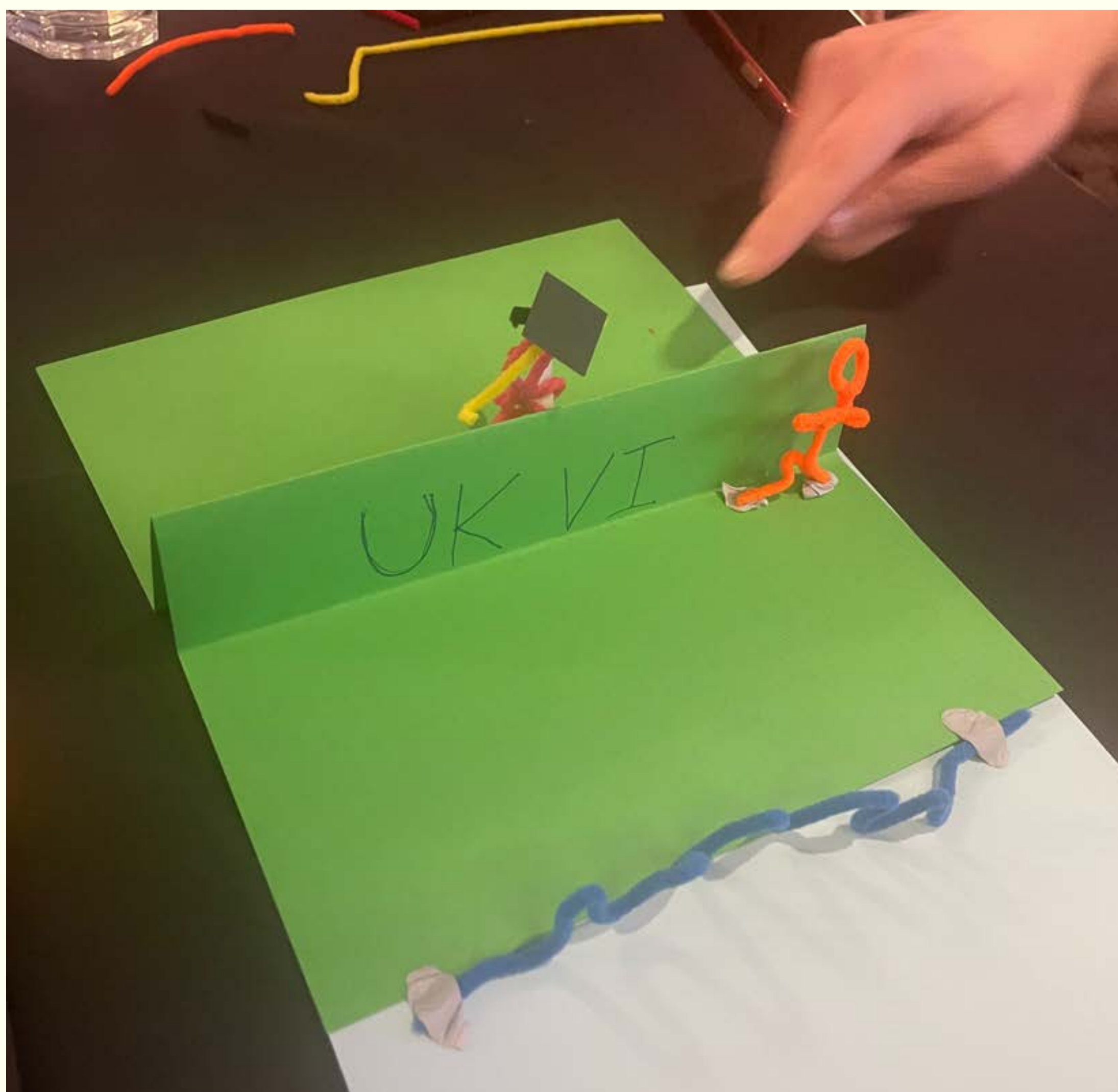


## UK Visa Changes for 23/24

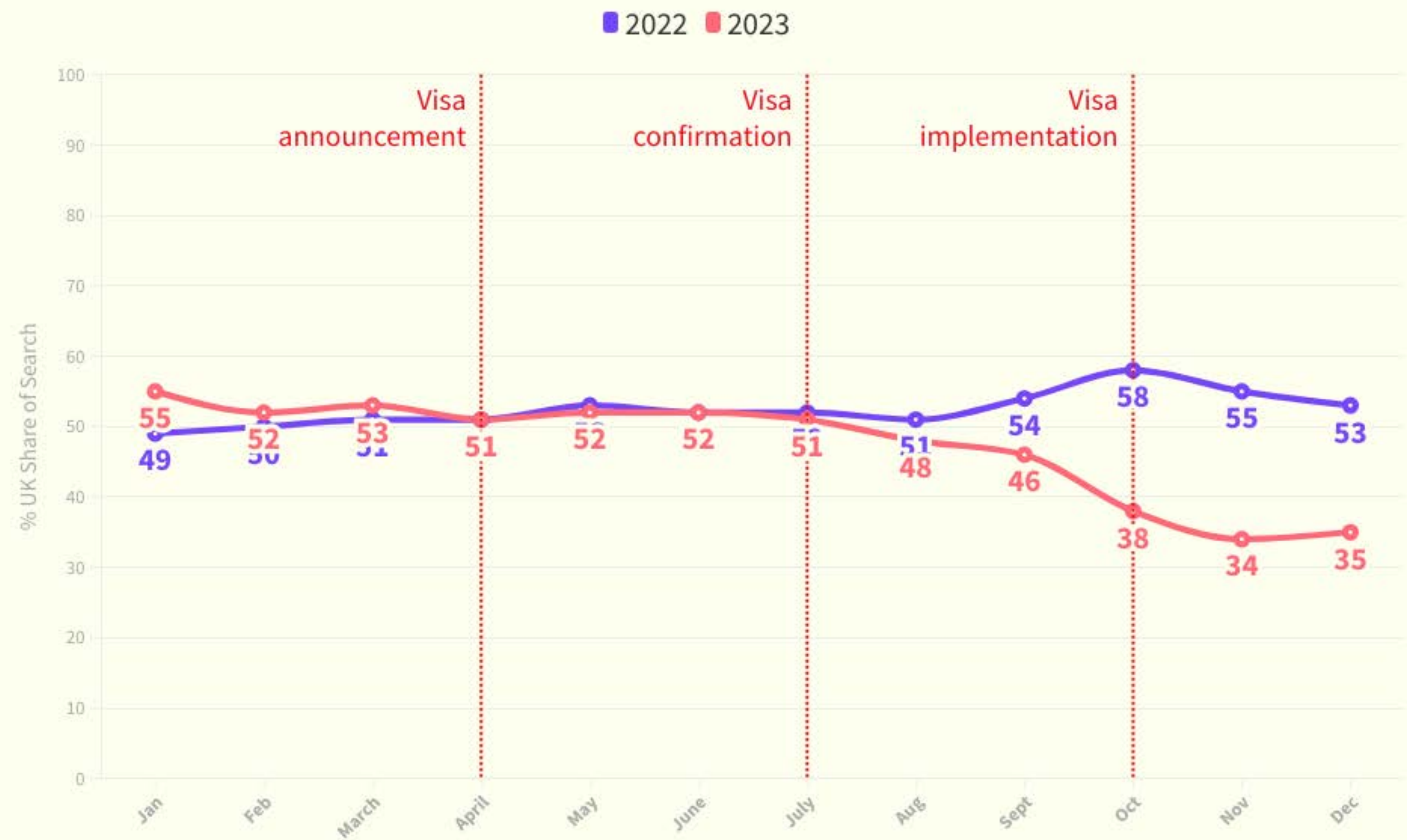
- **17 July:** No in-study switching
- **4 October:** +£127 Student Route fee / +£107 Graduate Route fee
- **1 January:** dependents banned from taught Masters
- (by) **16 January:** +£306 Student Route IHS / +£411 Graduate Route / Skilled Worker IHS
- **TBC:** review of the Graduate Route







# Visa change impact (PGT)



Source: [FindAMasters Share of Search 2022-2023](#)

Find  University

**Here's international interest in UK study across 2023 vs 2022**

**(based on the % of users who search for the UK)**



# This impact isn't even...

■ 2023 ■ 2022



Source: [FindAMasters Share of Search Q3 2023 \(YoY\)](#)

Find  University

Some of the  
biggest  
international PGT  
audiences are  
down  
substantially

Others aren't

Some are growing



# The economics of domestic PGT are now very difficult

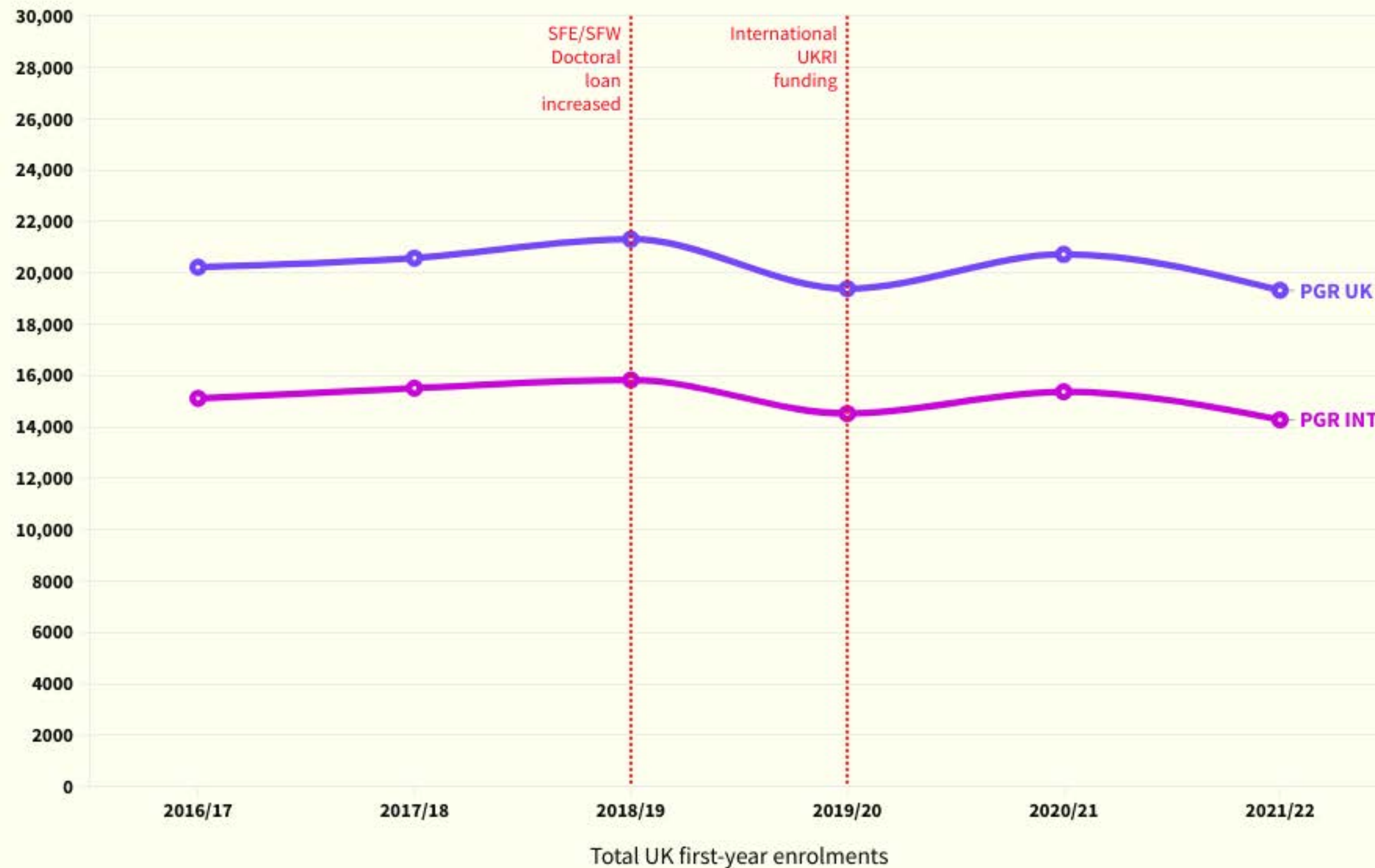
**In 16–17 the SFE PGL left c.£3.5k for living costs**

**In 21–22 it left c.£2k**

**Meanwhile, the cost of living has also increased.**



## ...what about PGR?



Source: [HESA](#)

Find  University

**PGR hasn't really grown at all...**

**Doctoral loan take-up hasn't increased domestic enrolments**

**UKRI funding has become more generous, but more competitive**



# On the plus side... international PGR interest is robust



Source: FindAPhD Share of Search 2022-2023

**PGR search is more obviously cyclical**

**There may have been some policy impact in summer, but interest is back up in line with funding deadlines**





**International PGT is becoming more expensive, less attractive and less trustworthy**

# Domestic PGT is becoming harder to afford (and justify)

# PGR has steady demand but constrained supply





## What can we do?

We can't remove economic or policy obstacles to study

But we can understand **how** audiences are approaching those obstacles, **where** they're trying to get to, and **why**



# Domestic study preferences are shifting slightly towards blended

■ On Campus ■ Blended ■ Online

PGT

PGR



Domestic audiences are typically an even split for study preferences

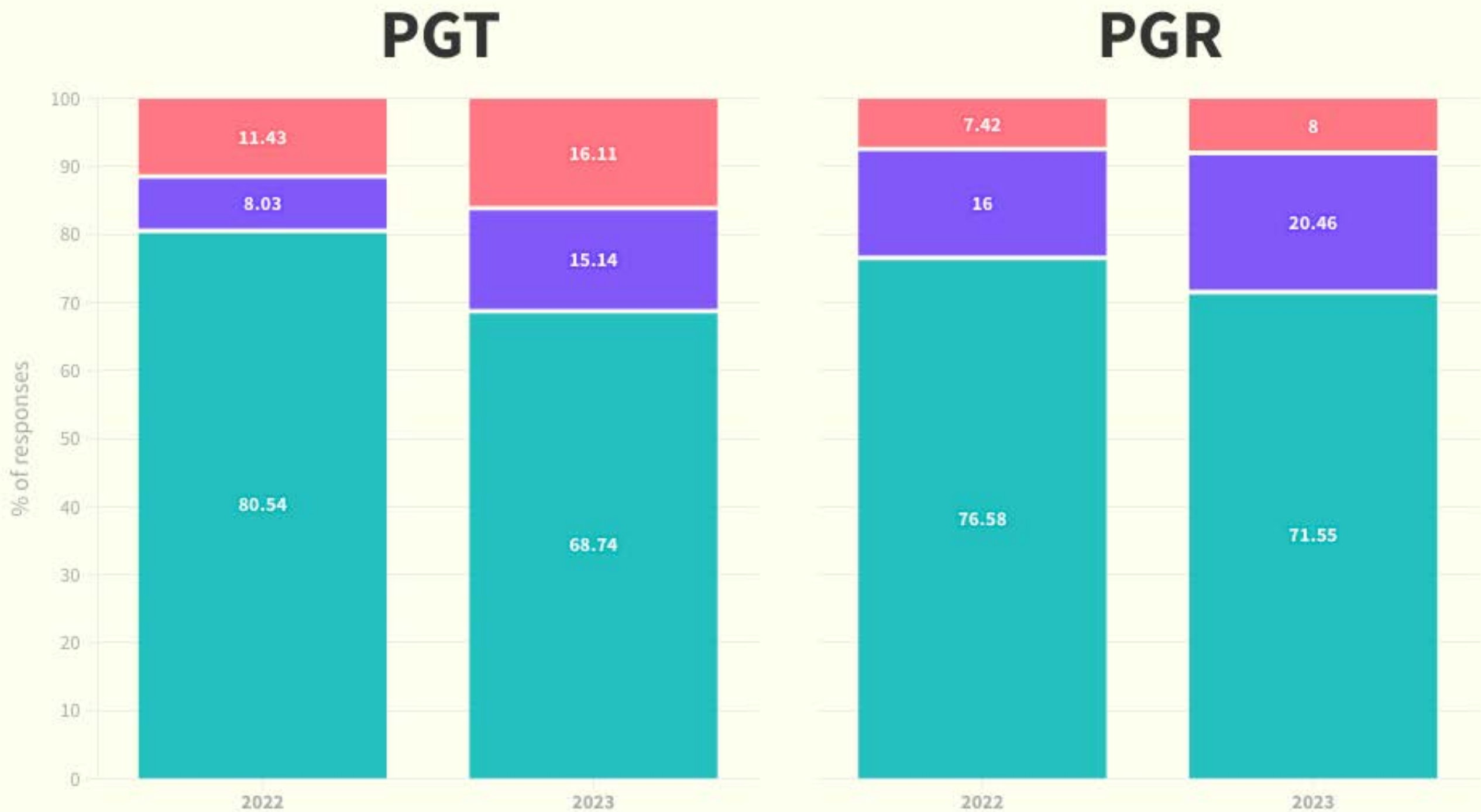
But we're seeing a shift towards blended

Source: FindAUniversity Pulse Q3 2022 vs 2023

Find  University

# International study preferences are shifting too...

■ On Campus ■ Blended ■ Online



Source: [FindAUniversity Pulse Q3 2022 vs 2023](#)

Find  University

**International PGT audiences are 10pp more interested in flexible study**

**The swing is smaller at PGR and is mostly towards blended**



# What does study flexibility actually mean to PGT?

**There's an obvious correlation between study mode and timetable**

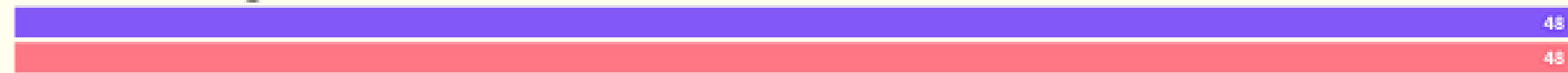
**But c. 1/2 of On Campus students prefer flexibility**

**And c. 1/3 of Blended students would prefer a 'traditional' study schedule**

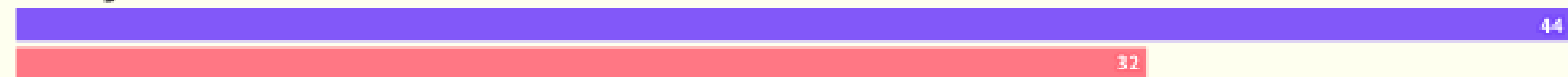
# Motivations for PGT study

2023 2022

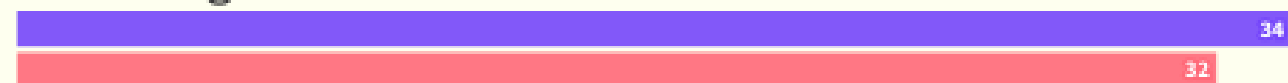
Career Progress



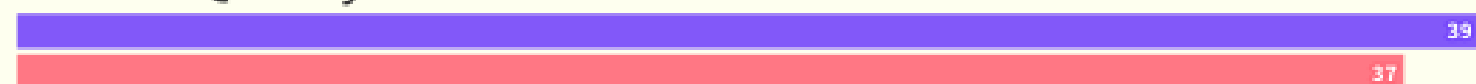
Subject



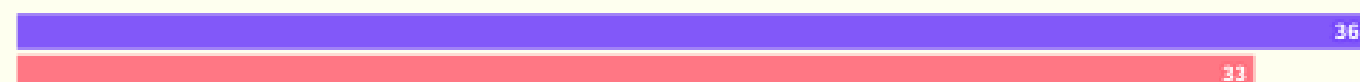
Challenge



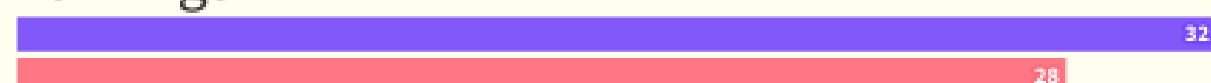
Career Qualify



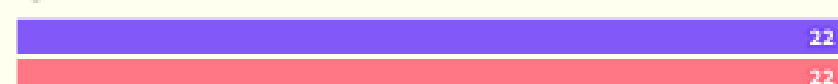
Skills



Earnings



CV



Source: [FindAPhD Pulse October-December 23](#)

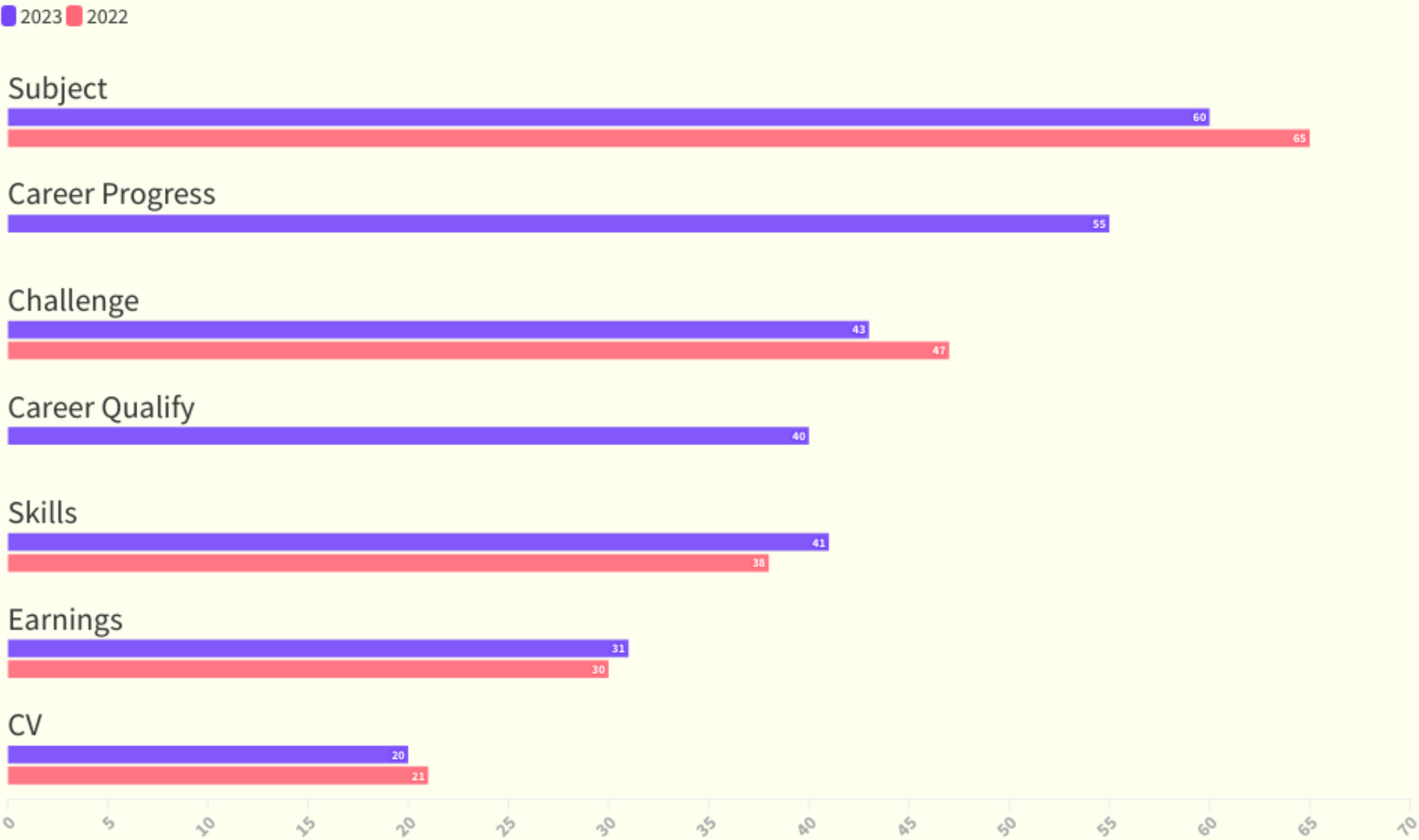
Find  University

Subject interest is up year-on-year

Career qualification, skills and earnings are also up



# Motivations for PGR study



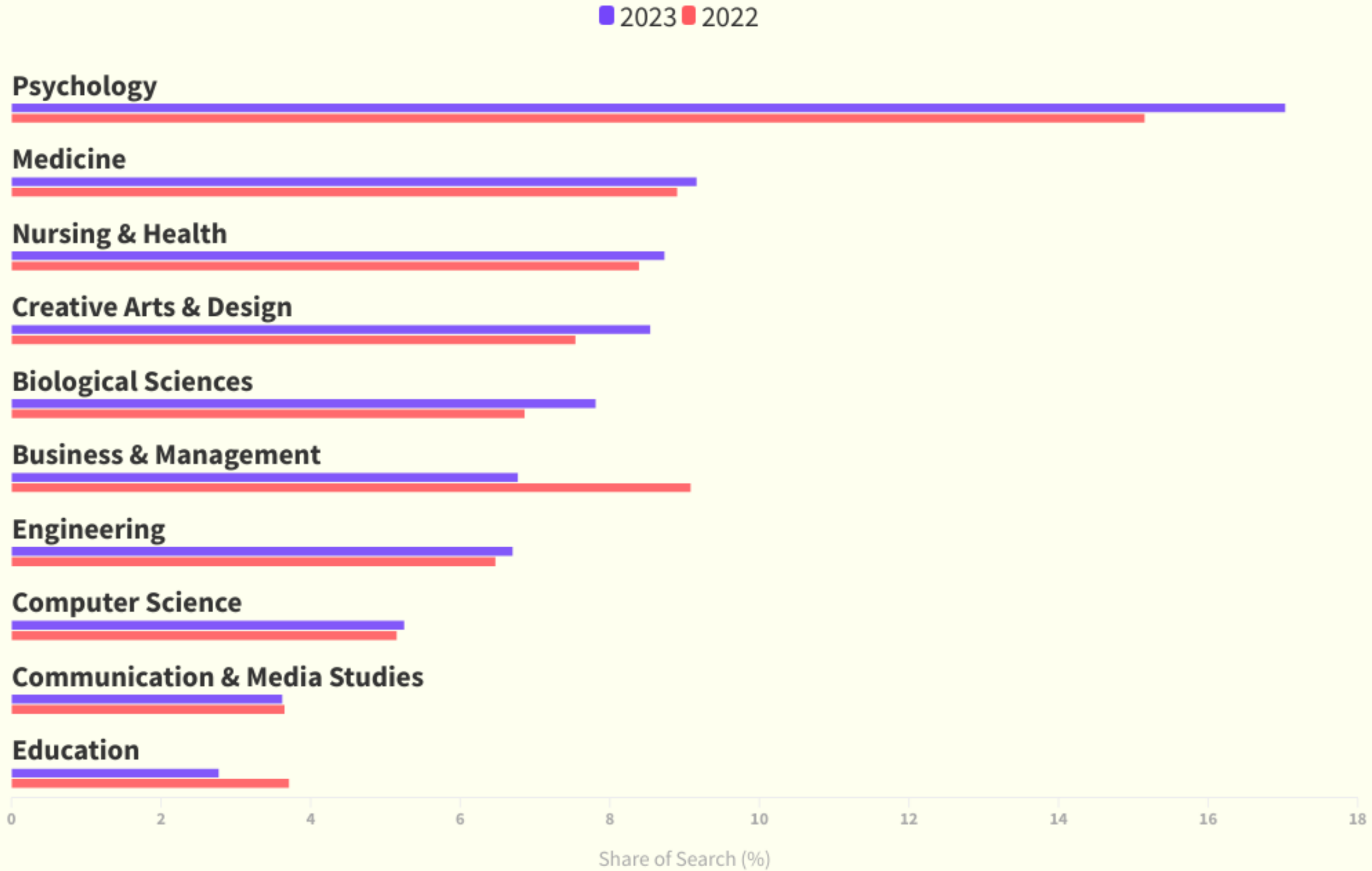
Source: [FindAPhD Pulse October-December 23](#)

Find  University

**Subject interest is the main motivation for PhD study, but it's actually down on last year**

**More 'tangible' outcomes are increasing in importance**

# Top PGT disciplines (Q3 2023)



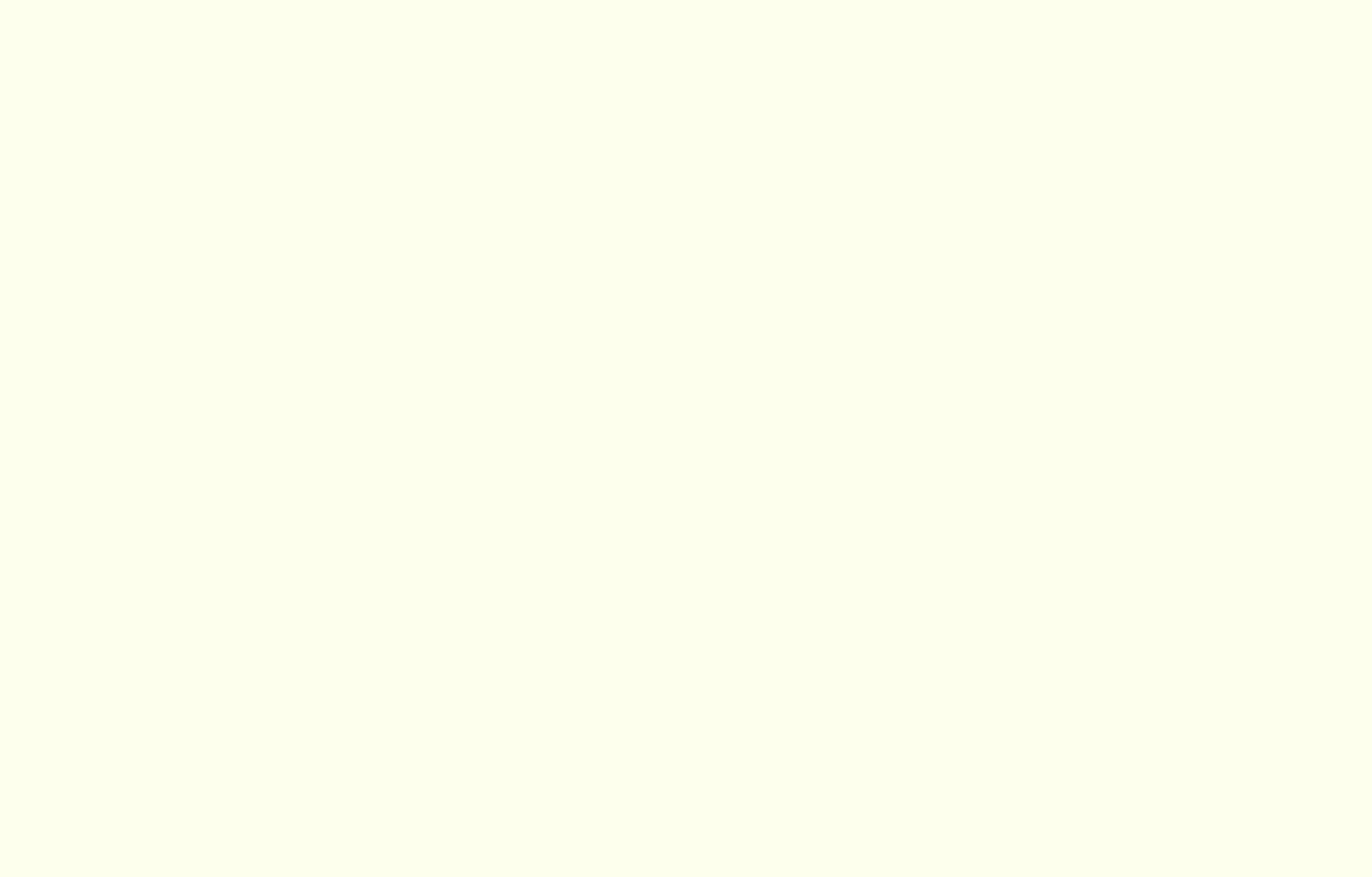
Source: [FindAMasters Share of Search October-December 2023](#)

Find  University





# Top PGR disciplines (Q3 2023)



UK



1

Biological Sciences

2

Engineering

3

Psychology

4

Medicine

5

Chemistry

INDIA



1

Biological Sciences

2

Engineering

3

Chemistry

4

Medicine

5

Business & Management

CHINA



1

Biological Sciences

2

Engineering

3

Business & Management

4

Computer Science

5

Medicine

USA



1

Biological Sciences

2

Engineering

3

Medicine


4

Computer Science

5

Psychology

EU



1

Biological Sciences

2

Engineering

3

Medicine

4

Computer Science

5

Chemistry





## Summing up these trends

- A shift towards PG **flexibility** may be linked to **affordability** and **practicality**
- **Motivations** for PG are becoming more **outcomes-focussed**
- **Professional** subjects are popular, but interest is moving from **Business & Management** towards subjects like **Engineering** and **Computer Science**





## PREVIEW – What else matters most?

Asking prospective students to rank *non-economic* factors as **first, second** and **third** significance

Aim to understand what else helps **select** and **distinguish universities**

As well as what we should be **supporting / communicating**





## PREVIEW – What else matters most?

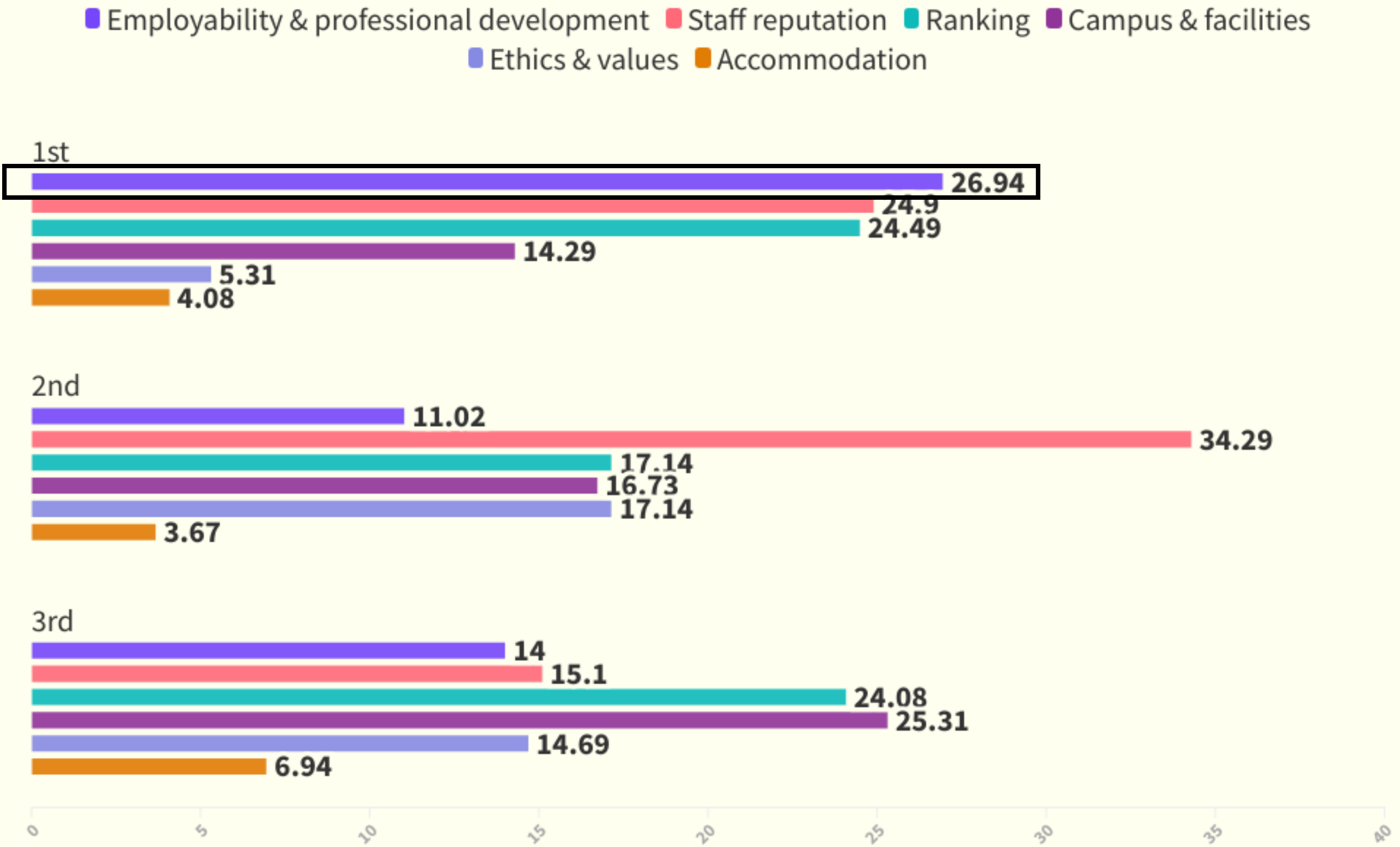
[www.sli.do](http://www.sli.do)

#2211117





# What else matters most? – Domestic PGT

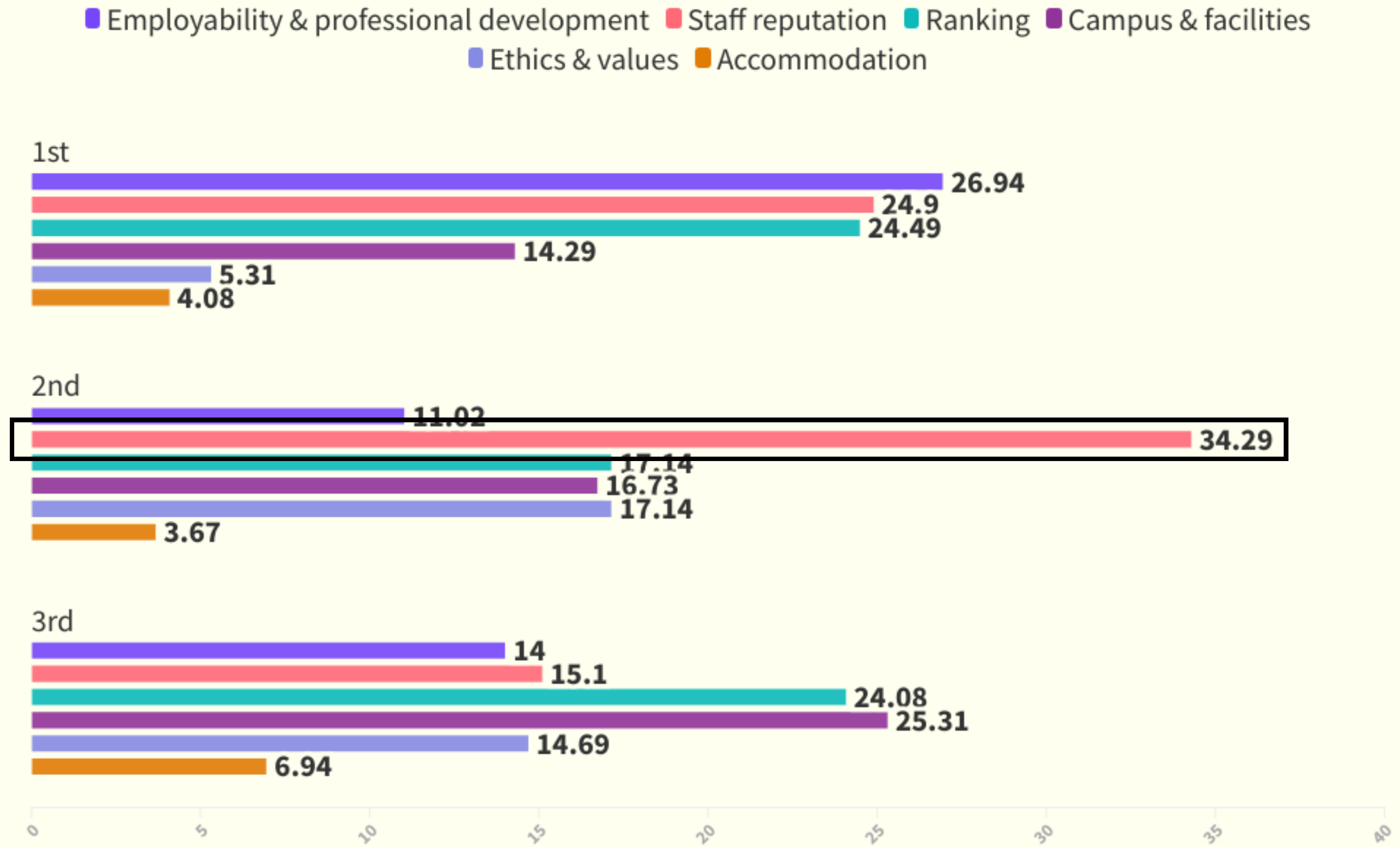


**Employability is the most important 'other' factor for UK students choosing a postgraduate course**

Source: [FindAUniversity Pulse](#) October-November 2023

Find  University

# What else matters most? – Domestic PGT



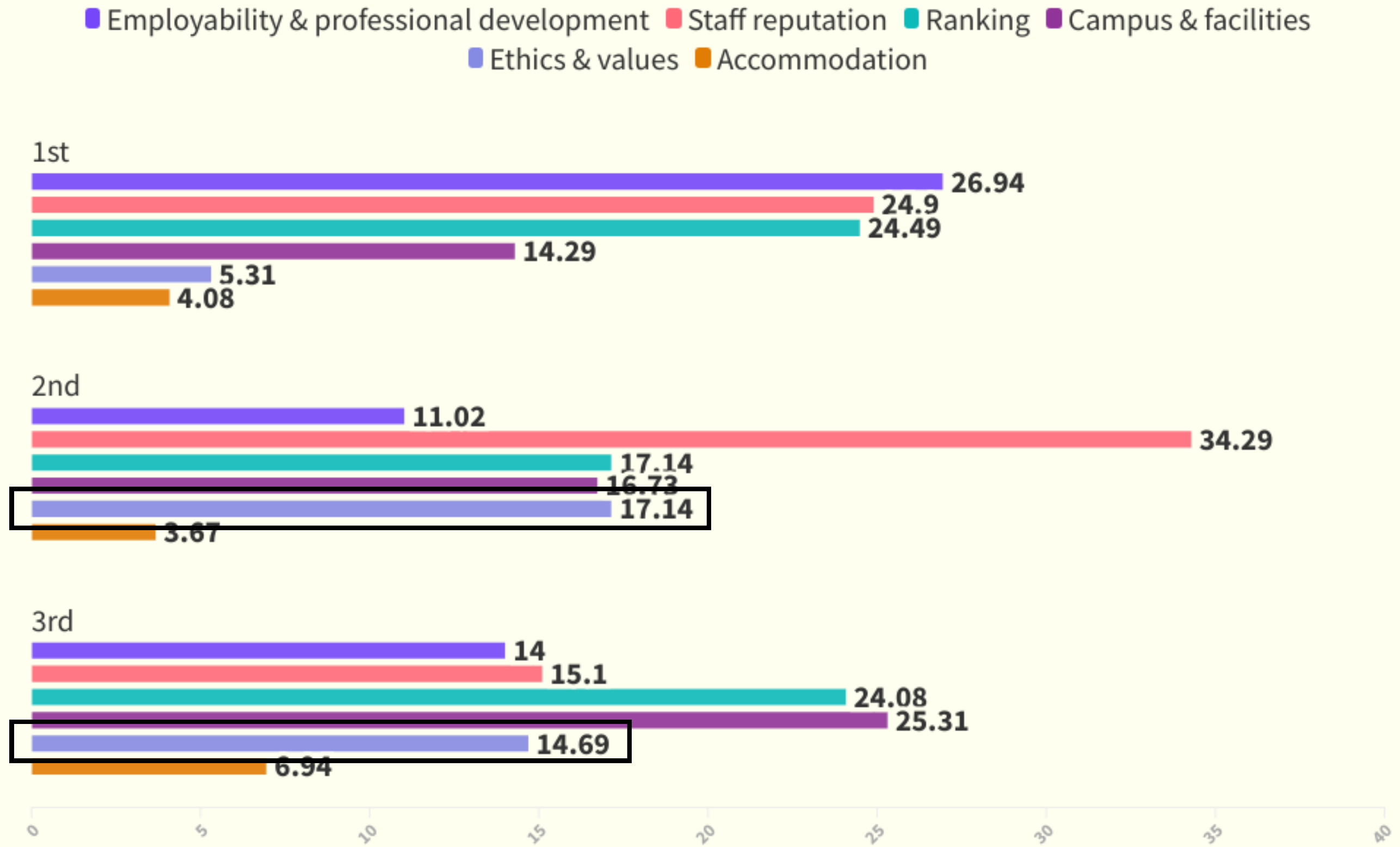
**Staff reputation is the most popular T1 choice (and beats rankings at T1 and T2)**

Source: [FindAUniversity Pulse](#) October-November 2023

Find  University



# What else matters most? – Domestic PGT

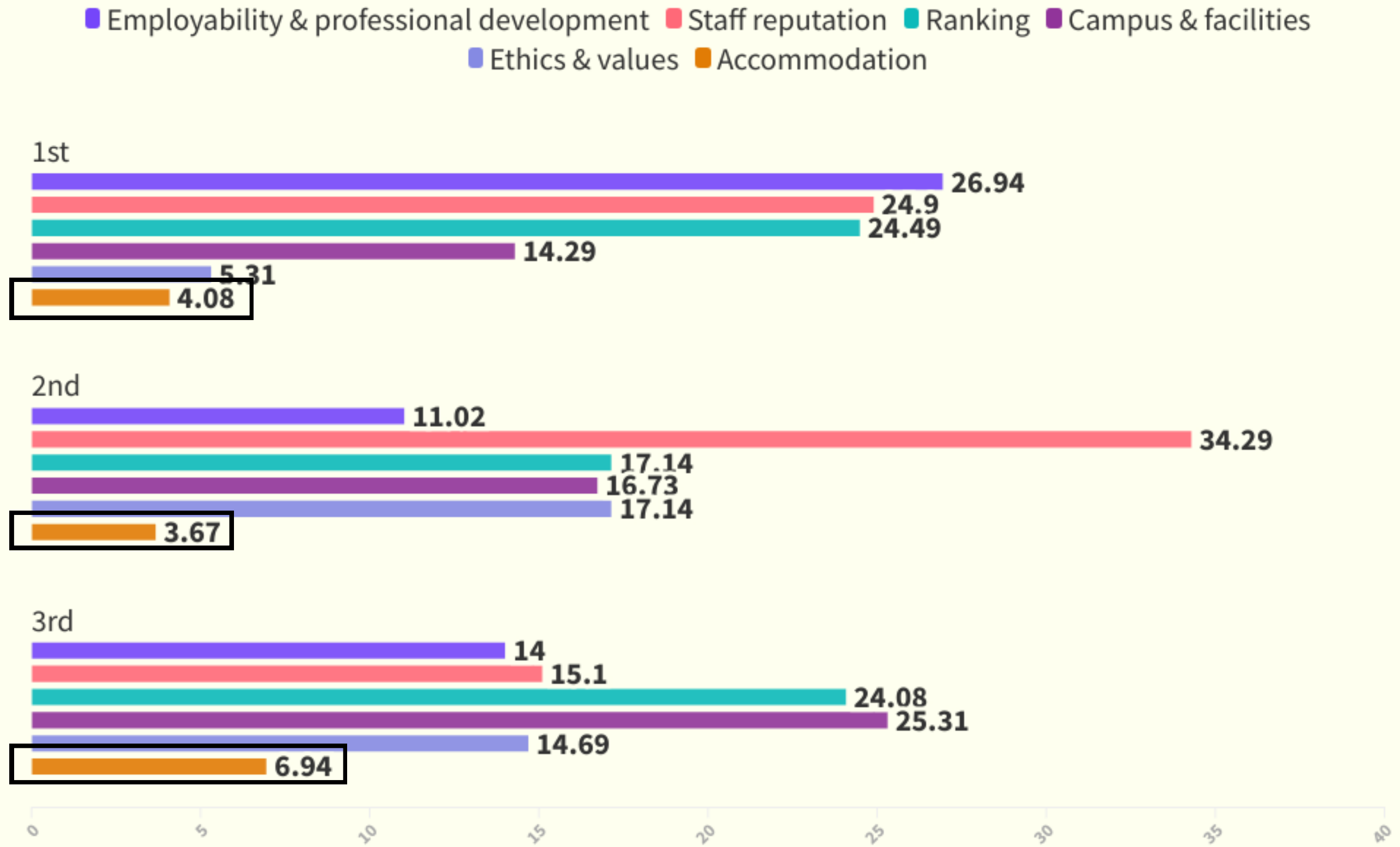


Ethics and values aren't first-choice factors, but they *do* matter *within* a consideration set

Source: FindAUniversity Pulse October-November 2023

Find  University

# What else matters most? – Domestic PGT



Source: [FindAUniversity Pulse](#) October-November 2023

Find  University

Accommodation  
doesn't matter as  
much as we might  
think it should...



# What *else* matters most? – International PGT



**Employability still  
matters most**

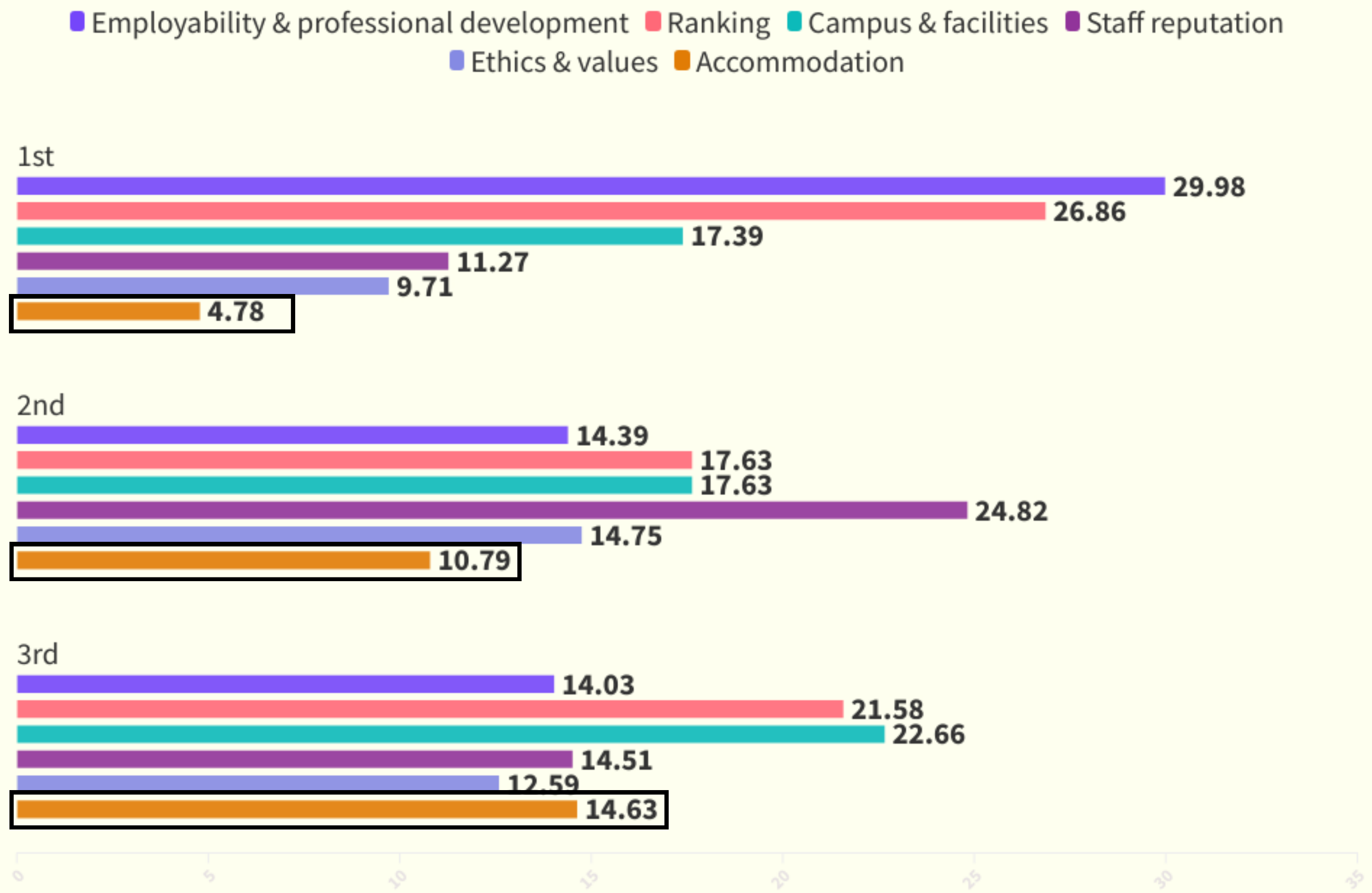
**But Rankings beat  
Staff Reputation at  
Tier 1**

# What *else* matters most? – International PGT

**Campus and  
Facilities are  
slightly more  
important at Tier 1  
& Tier 2 (vs UK)**



# What else matters most? – International PGT

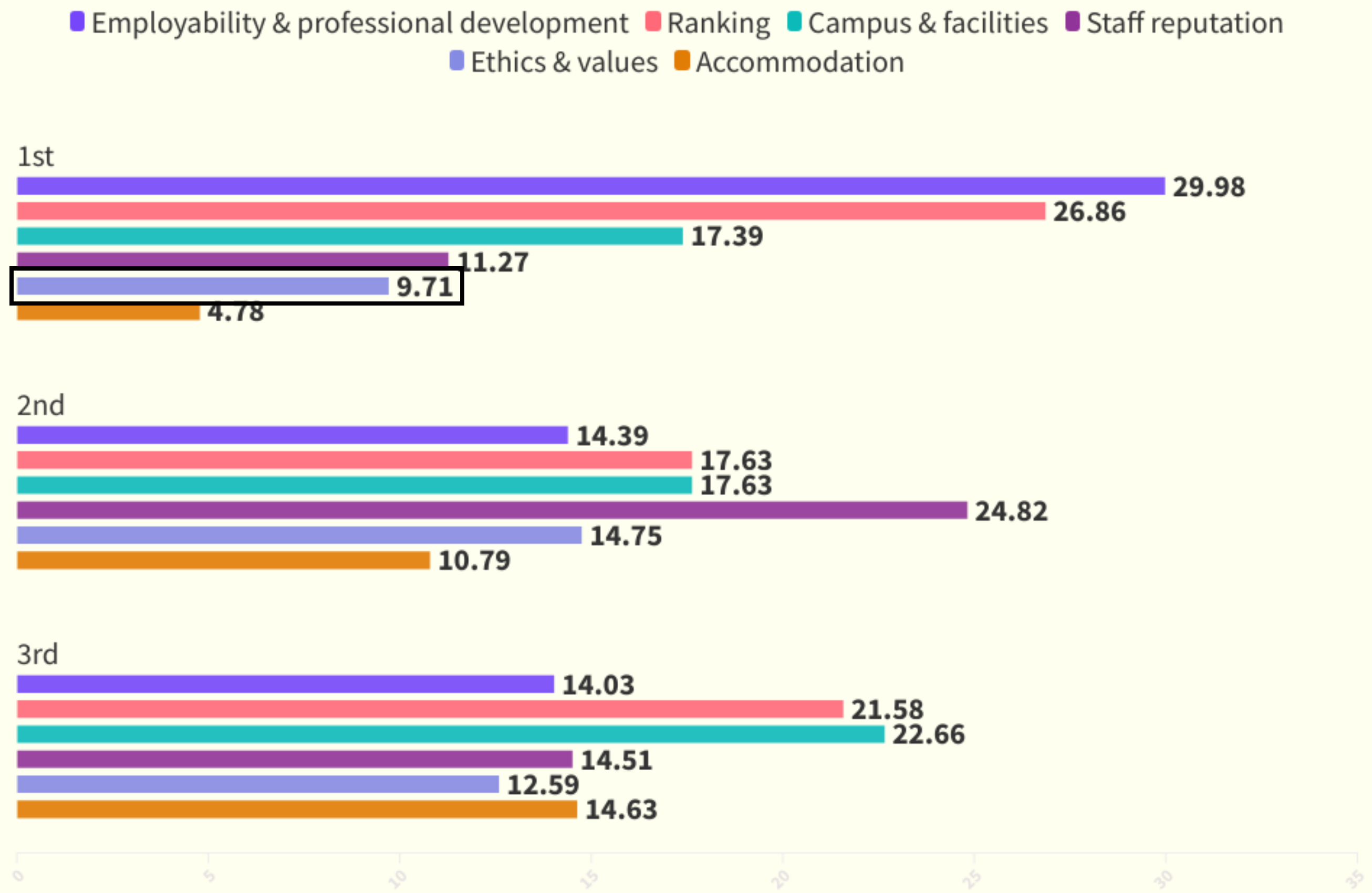


**Accommodation still isn't a T1 factor, but it's twice as important at T2 and T3 (vs UK)**

Source: [FindAUniversity Pulse October-November 2023](#)

Find  University

# What else matters most? – International PGT



**Ethics & Values  
are twice as  
important at T1 (vs  
UK)**

Source: [FindAUniversity Pulse](#) October-November 2023

Find  University





## Conclusions – What else matters most?

**Employability** is the most important overall factor

Domestic audiences value **Staff Reputation** over rankings; it's the inverse for international

**Ethics & Values** matter most at T2/3, but are more important at T1 for internationals

**Accommodation** doesn't matter as much as it probably should for domestic, but is T2/3 for international

**Campus & Facilities** matter more for international





**More FAU data & insight:**

