ATHE — ASSOCIATION FOR TOURISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION
The Subject Association for Tourism in Higher Education in the UK

aeme — Association for Events Management Education

CHME — Council for Hospitality Management Education

White Paper:

The Future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events (THE) Education

February 2024

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Abstract

Amidst declining student numbers and fluctuating government policies that affect funding, enrolment, progression pathways, and graduate outcomes, this White Paper reports on the future of Tourism, Hospitality, and Events (THE) Management in UK Further and Higher Education. It explores the current challenges faced by THE Management education providers in terms of recruitment, progression, retention, and employability, as well as those encountered by associated industries in attracting, retaining, and engaging students and graduates. This report comprehensively analyses pre-, during, and post-pandemic student enrolment trends in Further and Higher Education. It assesses the impact of Brexit, the cost-of-living crisis, and education and immigration policies on Further and Higher Education institutions' ability to attract students. The report draws upon a diverse range of sources, including institutional data, centralised reporting, government statistics, and industry news. It is informed by scholarly research and a thorough analysis of direct input from a spectrum of stakeholders, including academics, industry employers, recruiters, students, and graduates.

Despite significant challenges, the findings reveal multiple opportunities for THE Management education to collaborate with industry bodies, employers, policymakers, and the wider community. These partnerships could focus on shifting perceptions, aligning teaching, learning, and assessment strategies with industry needs, attracting diverse students, and shaping the future generation of industry professionals. The report proposes a three-dimensional approach for action to determine the future of Tourism, Hospitality, and Events Management education: (1) increased industry and government involvement, (2) stronger collaboration among stakeholders, and (3) broader recognition of THE education's value, its substantial contribution to the UK economy, and the vast career opportunities available for students and graduates.

Abbreviations

FE   Further Education

HE   Higher Education

HESA   Higher Education Statistics Agency

OfS   Office for Students

PG   Postgraduate

SSA   Sector Subject Area

THE   Tourism, Hospitality, Events

UCAS   Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UG   Undergraduate

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1.   Introduction

1.1. The context of the White Paper

This White Paper is jointly commissioned by the Association for Tourism in Higher Education (ATHE), the Council for Hospitality Management (CHME) and the Association for Events Management Education (AEME). It reports on the future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events (THE) Management education in the United Kingdom (UK), in the context of increased stakeholder pressure and shifting government policy. It outlines implications on the Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) sectors, at various levels, including funding, enrolment, progression pathways, and graduate outcomes.

Despite having faced complex challenges over the past years as a direct consequence of Covid-19, THE industries are major contributors to the UK economy, with the travel and tourism industry alone generating £237.1bn towards UK's Gross Domestic Product in 2022 (Statista, 2023a). The UK event industry is estimated to be worth £42 bn and provides an estimated 775,000 jobs to the economy. (Statista, 2023b). The 'UK Conference and Meeting Survey 2023' (UKCAMS) shows that there were an estimated 1.02 million conferences and meetings in the UK in 2022, up from 0.2 million in 2020 and 0.44 million events in 2021. In 2022, the hospitality industry contributed over £93bn of Gross Value Added directly, and a further £121bn indirectly, being considered the UK's third largest employer, accounting for 3.5m jobs directly in 2022 and a further 3m jobs indirectly (UK Hospitality, 2023). As these industries are gradually recovering, they are now burdened by a sustained recruitment crisis, with increased vacancy rates being recorded across the board as a result of staff and skills shortages that are reportedly exacerbated by Brexit and long-term effects of the Post-Covid19 Great Resignation (Umbrella Training, 2022). Traditionally, THE colleges and universities used to be considered a reliable educational pipeline, constantly delivering workforce to the industry. However, declining trends in undergraduate applications and acceptances over the past five years (Appendix 1) as well as a shift in employers' preference towards more general qualifications, and business management graduates, triggers further concern about the value of THE education and its capacity to deliver graduates that are equipped with the relevant skills, competencies and capabilities required to access, progress, and excel in successful professional careers. Moreover, governments' plans to defund Level 3 Travel and Tourism qualifications in 2025, as well postponing the launch of T-levels in Catering and the lack of T-level qualifications in Events are posing additional concerns, limiting young students' pathways towards THE higher education routes. Within the wider environment, imminent changes in immigration policy as well as long-lasting effects of Brexit and the current cost-of-living crisis are adding additional layers of pressure both on THE industries and education providers. Therefore, there is an impending need to ensure that THE Management education strategy both at FE and HE levels is informed by current changes and development in the sector and the wider environment and is supported by government policy that advances, enhances and promotes THE subjects. This report aims to shed light on the most prominent challenges in THE Management education, through an analysis of applications, enrolments and acceptances numbers and a thorough examination of primary and secondary data,

including interviews and questionnaires carried out with internal and external stakeholders. The report provides directed recommendations aimed to inform and support a successful THE Management education strategy for the future.

1.2. Aim and objectives

This report examines current challenges faced by THE education providers (FE and HE) with regards to recruitment, progression, continuation, and graduate outcomes, as well those faced by the associated industries in attracting, retaining, and engaging students and graduates. The primary focus of this report is to analyse student numbers in Further and Higher Education, and to produce forecasts for the following five years. This includes an analysis of pre-, during and post-pandemic student numbers; skills shortages; disinvestment by colleges and universities; and other such challenges such as Brexit; the cost-of-living crisis; education and immigration policy, as well perceptions and expectations of various categories of stakeholders.

Objectives:

1. To carry out an analysis of THE applications, enrolments, and acceptances in UK further and higher education and provide a forecast for the next five years.
2. To evaluate current THE course content provision in relation to core, optional and elective modules, and map these modules against industry and academic expectations of students'/graduates' skills, competencies, and capabilities.
3. To conduct an evidence-based situational analysis of the UK THE Management education landscape, including trends, challenges, and opportunities for FE colleges, HE institutions, and the wider THE industry.
4. To provide recommendations for further and higher education providers, industry, and regulatory bodies.

1.3. Data collection methods

A mixed method approach using qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis was used for the purpose of this report. Secondary data were collected from a range of sources, including the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Universities and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS), government statistics, and various industry reports. HESA data were only available up to 2021/2022 and included enrolment and acceptance numbers for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (Year 1, Full-time, Home, EU and International). UCAS data was also available up to 2021/2022 and included applications and acceptances figures for undergraduate programmes. For FE courses, data starting with from 2019/20 and up to 2022/23 (where available) was collected by country for England and Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. A content analysis of THE undergraduate courses in UK HEIs was conducted to evaluate current course content in terms of core, optional and elective modules, using data collected from university websites for THE courses starting in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025. The analysis included a total of 145 UG tourism programmes, 85 UG hospitality programmes, and 67 UG events programmes.

Primary data were collected via interviews and questionnaires, between July 2023 and September 2023 from a sample comprising academics, industry employers and recruiters, as well as students and graduates. A total of 57 representatives of education providers delivering THE subjects across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales were contacted directly by email to participate in a semi-structured interview. For interviews, altogether 21 HE institutions participated in the research: 17 from England, 1 from Northern Ireland, and 3 from Wales. In total 25 academics representing THE education in UK HEIs were interviewed: 18 from England, 2 from Northern Ireland, 0 from Scotland and 5 from Wales. Additionally, 3 interviews were carried out with representatives of Further Education colleges in England.

Questionnaires were designed for three different sample sets: (1) industry employers (2) recruitment agencies and (3) students/graduates. In total 81 responses were received for questionnaires: 29 from industry, 8 from recruitment agencies and 44 from students/graduates. Overall, 29 THE employers completed the industry questionnaire. Of these, 21 (72.41%) are working in hotels, 3 (10.34%) in restaurants and 3 (10.34%) in contract catering. A further 6.90% are working in events. In addition to employers, eight recruitment agencies specialised in the THE sector also completed the questionnaire. These agencies operate in multiple sectors, with most in hotels (75%), followed by event management, restaurants, and catering (37.5%), as well as in multiple regions, with 50% of them being based in London. The recruitment is mainly for permanent positions, or a mix of permanent and temporary positions.

In assessing available evidence in relation to THE Management education, employment, and career progressions, it is important to be mindful of the inter-connections between these sectors, the variety of single-sector and joint-sector degrees available, and the definitional ambiguities relating to these sectors as a whole or as various sub-sectors.

1.4. Report outline

The first section presents the context, focus, and scope of the report. This is followed by an analysis of the THE Management education landscape, which includes a review of application, acceptance and enrolment data, a five-year forecast, considerations related to course and curricula development, as well as an overview of the legislative landscape, and an evaluation of trends, challenges, and opportunities for student recruitment, progression, and continuation. The following section provides an analysis of the industry landscape, investigating perceptions and expectations, the skills and recruitment crisis, and the relationship between industry and academia. The final section draws out recommendations for the future development of the THE Management education provision in the UK, including industry engagement, policy implications, and directions for further research.

2. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management Education landscape

The following data analysis and forecasting is based on HESA and UCAS reports (for HE degrees) and government reports (for FE qualifications) which included data for 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 (where available) and further on, from 2019/2020 up to 2021/2022. Data for 2022/2023

were only available for England FE degrees. An external factor that needs to be considered in the data analysis is the worldwide Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, that impacted primarily THE industries (with majority of businesses being closed for various periods of time globally) and subsequently HE providers, as international student recruitment between 2019 – 2021 was limited due to travel restrictions.

2.1. Tourism, Hospitality and Events – Further and Higher Education landscape

In England and Northern Ireland, FE qualifications related to Tourism and Hospitality are categorised in two distinct sector subject areas: Leisure, Travel and Tourism (SSA 8: which includes Sport, Leisure, and Recreation - SSA 8.1 as well as Travel and Tourism - SSA 8.2) and Retail and Commercial Enterprise (SSA 7: which includes Hospitality and Catering – SSA 7.4). A breakdown of specific data for SSA 8.1, SSA 8.2 and SSA 7.4 was not available at the time of writing this report. In Wales, FE qualifications related to Tourism, Hospitality and Events are also classed in two distinct sector subject areas: Leisure, Travel, and Tourism, respectively Retail and Commercial Enterprise. In Scotland, all FE qualifications related to Tourism and Hospitality are included within one subject sector area: Catering, Food, Leisure, and Tourism. Data related to the number of FE colleges, and number of qualifications provided was not publicly available. It should also be noted that Events courses are not currently provided at FE level.

With regards to HE, First Year (Full Time and Part Time) acceptance and enrolment data from 2019/2020 up to 2021/2022 (where available) for a total of 62 HEIs offering courses within THE subject areas was analysed for the purpose of this report. At the time of writing, 53 HEIs in the UK offered courses within the Tourism subject areas (Tourism Management CAH code 100100; Travel and Tourism CAH code 100101 and Tourism CAH code 100875), 38 institutions offered courses within the Hospitality subject areas (Hospitality Management CAH code 100084, International Hospitality Management CAH code 100087 and Hospitality CAH code 100891) degrees, and 44 universities offered courses within the subject area of Events Management (CAH code 100083) (Table 1). One of the main challenges encountered in the data analysis was the high variety of degree naming conventions, with relatively few single-subject degrees on offer (i.e., Tourism Management, Hospitality Management, Events Management etc.). Nevertheless, this shows the strong interdependence of these subjects of study, which also include elements of Business Management, Airline Management, Airport Management, Travel, Transport and, in a few tourism and hospitality related courses, foreign languages. The other challenge was that for Tourism and Events subject areas, only 2021/2022 acceptance data was available. Finally, it should be noted that acceptance numbers do not fully reflect the real enrolment figures, which could in fact be lower. The analysis encompasses all THE subject areas, pathways, and variations, including degrees with Foundation Year, Placement Year and degrees offered as Top-Up.

Table 1. Overview of HE THE Courses and Acceptances by Subject Area

2021/2022 Tourism, Hospitality and Events Acceptances by Subject Areas							
Subject Areas/ CAH Codes	No. of universities	No. of courses	70+ acceptances	%	69-50 acceptances	%	49-30 acceptances	%
Tourism: 100100; 100101; 100875	53	198	1	0.51	2	1.01	8	4.04
Hospitality: 100084; 100087; 100891	38	96	0	0.00	1	1.04	6	6.25
Events: 100083	44	99	2	2.02	4	4.04	7	7.07
Total		**393**	**3**	**0.76**	**7**	**1.78**	**21**	**5.34**

2021/2022 Tourism, Hospitality and Events Acceptances by Subject Areas (continued)							
Subject Areas/ CAH Codes	No. of universities	No. of courses	29-10 acceptances	%	Below 10 acceptances	%	0 acceptances	%
Tourism: 100100; 100101; 100875	53	198	33	16.67	62	31.31	92	46.46
Hospitality: 100084; 100087; 100891	38	96	12	12.50	38	39.58	39	40.63
Events: 100083	44	99	24	24.24	30	30.30	32	32.32
Total		**393**	**69**	**17.56**	**130**	**33.08**	**163**	**41.48**

(source: based on data retrieved from UCAS, 2023)

Overall, it was found that just over 41% of all THE courses analysed have had 0 acceptances for the 2021/2022 period (Table 1), with some now being discontinued or not accepting applicants for the 2023/2024 academic year. This is also reflected in interview findings, as some academics mentioned that they are either withdrawing Events degrees from their portfolios or phasing out several Tourism and/or Hospitality degrees due to low intake numbers or updates made to the curricula. Small acceptance numbers (below 10) were recorded for 33% of courses, whilst at the other end of the spectrum it could be seen that there are few instances where courses had over 50 acceptances.

The analysis of 198 courses on offer within in the Tourism subject area shows that over 46% of them had 0 acceptances for 2021/2022, whilst just over 31% had 10 acceptances or less for the same period. Highest acceptance numbers are noted for an International Tourism and Events Management degree (70 acceptances), followed by International Tourism and Hospitality Management (Top-Up) and Tourism and Events Management courses (both with 55 acceptances, but the latter being no longer offered). All other courses had acceptance numbers between 45 and 10. Tourism Management (100100) and Tourism (100875) courses also included International Tourism Management with languages (French and Spanish) as well as elements of Airline Management, Aviation Management and/or Travel. Some Tourism (100875) degrees also include elements of Event Management. A few niche Tourism courses on offer include International Relations and Tourism as well as Environmental Change and Tourism and Adventure Tourism. Despite more universities offering courses within the three Tourism subject areas, the variety of courses offered is far lower compared to the variety of courses within the Hospitality subject areas (100084, 100087 and 100891). In terms of popularity, International Tourism and Events Management as well as Travel and Tourism courses, appear most popular, followed by Aviation and Tourism, including variations (i.e., Travel, Aviation and Tourism Management), with seven universities offering Aviation and Tourism degrees. On the other side of the spectrum, there are International Tourism with Marketing courses and Tourism with Languages that show lower

acceptance numbers. It should be noted that 48 out of the 198 courses analysed are either no longer being listed or are not recruiting for 2023/2024.

The analysis of 96 courses offered within Hospitality subject areas (Hospitality Management courses CAH code 100084, International Hospitality Management CAH code 100087 and Hospitality CAH code 100891) shows that 40% of the courses offered have had 0 acceptances for 2021/2022, and a further 39% had 10 or less acceptances each. The highest acceptance numbers are noted for an International Tourism and Hospitality Management (Top-Up) course (55 acceptances), followed by International Tourism and Hospitality Management and Hospitality Management (each with 45 acceptances). Variations in Hospitality subject areas include pathways like Accounting and Hospitality, Finance and Hospitality, Hospitality and Event Management and Hospitality with Entrepreneurship degrees. It should be noted that a significant proportion of hospitality degrees that previously included mandatory placement and/or internship routes are now being discontinued. This is partially due to measures being taken during Covid-19, where placements/internships became unavailable. However, statistical data as well as interview findings show a tendency towards discontinuing these pathways or making them optional. Another trend noted for the Hospitality subject area is the recent introduction of Entrepreneurship routes (i.e., Hospitality Management with Entrepreneurship), with an increase in acceptances being noted for 2022. Hospitality Management appears to be a popular naming convention for courses at universities that are offering these routes, and a popular choice for students. Courses titled 'International Hospitality Management' appear to attract more students, with some universities reporting up to 40 acceptances on their course in 2021/22. Hospitality Management with Placement year seemingly has lost popularity. Similarly, as for the Tourism subject areas, Universities that offer Hospitality courses with languages (either a specific one such as French and Spanish or 'Modern Languages') recorded a decline in acceptances. Of the 96 courses analysed within the Hospitality subject area, 10 courses are no longer being listed or are not recruiting for 2023/2024.

Within the Events Management subject area (HESA CAH code 100083), a total of 99 courses were offered in 2021/2022 at 45 universities - with over 32% of these courses recording 0 acceptances, and a further 30% of courses recording 10 acceptances or less. The highest acceptance numbers have been noted for a Business and Events Management course (75 acceptances) followed by an International Tourism and Events Management course (70 acceptances). Events courses linked to Design, Entertainment and Performance as well as Live and Technical Events appear to have gained in popularity, with the latter recording 30 acceptances in 2021/2022. Less popular courses include Events Management and Marketing Management, which recorded low acceptance numbers. Twenty five out of the 99 courses analysed are either no longer being listed or are not recruiting for 2023/2024. It is also worth noting that some of the universities changed the names of their courses (e.g. from Events Management to Events Management and Innovation at one institution).

2.2. Tourism and Hospitality Further Education - data and forecasts

A year-on-year comparison (Table 2) of FE in-year enrolments by subject area and region shows a decline in all subject areas for England, and a minor decline for Catering, Food, Leisure, and Tourism

in Wales. A significant increase of 55.2% is noted for Hospitality and Catering subject area in Wales, followed by a 21.9% increase for the Retail and Commercial Enterprise subject area in Northern Ireland.

Table 2. Further Education In-Year Enrolments Data and Comparison

Further Education Student Numbers Comparison 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 (and 2022/2023 for England only)							
England	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**Number Change**	**% Change**	**2022/2023**	**Number Change**	**% Change**
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	52,080	47,130	-4,950	-9.5%	42,570	-4,560	-9.6%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	169,250	166,100	-3,150	-1.9%	152,710	-13,390	-8%
Wales	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**Number Change**	**% Change**			
Leisure Travel and Tourism	4,990	5,545	555	11.1%			
Hospitality and Catering	3,670	5,695	2,025	55.2%			
Scotland	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**Number Change**	**% Change**			
Catering, Food, Leisure, and Tourism	5,774	5,755	-19	-0.3%			
Northern Ireland	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**Number Change**	**% Change**			
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	1,093	1,204	111	10.2%			
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	4,406	5,371	965	21.9%			

(source: based on data retrieved from Department for Education, Scottish Funding Council, Northern Ireland Department for the Economy, and Welsh Government, 2023)

In England, data collected from the Department for Education (2023) show a slow decline in aim enrolments for Leisure, Travel and Tourism (Table 3) as well as for Retail and Commercial Enterprise (Table 4) FE courses offered for 2022/2023 as compared to previous years. The downward trend is also noted for aim achievements in Leisure, Travel and Tourism subject area, whereas a slight increase is noted for the Retail and Catering subject area. It should be mentioned that aim enrolments as well as aim achievements counts include component aims for each academic period, therefore students are counted for each aim they achieve, so can be counted more than once. A trend analysis (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3) also suggests a slow decline both for aim enrolments and aim achievements for Leisure, Travel and Tourism and for Retail and Commercial Enterprise in England (Appendix 4 and Appendix 5) for the next 5 years. This may be further exacerbated by Level 3 Tourism courses losing Government funding after 2025.

Table 3. Subject - In-year - Enrolments, Achievements by Sector Subject Area for Leisure, Travel and Tourism in England between 2019/20 and 2022/23

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Aim Enrolments	81,540	52,080	47,130	42,570
Aim Enrolments Percentage	2.3%	1.6%	1.4%	1.2%
Aim Achievements	34,080	18,880	20,390	19,030
Aim Achievements Percentage	2.9%	2.0%	2.1%	1.6%

(source: Department for Education, 2023)

Table 4. Subject - In-year - Enrolments, Achievements by Sector Subject Area for Retail and Commercial Enterprise in England between 2019/20 and 2022/23

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Aim Enrolments	200,680	169,250	166,100	152,710
Aim Enrolments Percentage	5.6%	5.2%	4.9%	4.3%
Aim Achievements	69,650	52,270	48,790	48,990
Aim Achievements Percentage	5.9%	5.6%	4.9%	4.2%

(source: Department for Education, 2023)

Similar declining forecasts in FE courses are being noted for Scotland (Catering, Food, Leisure, and Tourism sector areas – Appendix 6) Northern Ireland (Leisure, Travel and Tourism sector area – Appendix 7), and Wales (Leisure, Travel and Tourism sector area - Appendix 8). More positive trends are being seen in the Hospitality and Catering subject area for Wales (Appendix 9). The main challenge encountered in data availability for FE courses was the lack of detailed breakdown for specific Tourism, Hospitality and Caterings subjects, making a more in-depth analysis impossible.

2.3. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management Higher Education - data and forecasts

The following analysis of Undergraduate and Postgraduate enrolment numbers is based on latest HESA reports that included data up to 2021/2022. HESA data for 2022/2023 was not released at the time of writing. An overview of all HE THE (UG and PG) enrolments for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 (Table 5) showcases a decline in EU student enrolments across the board, except for Hospitality UG subject area, which has increased by 42.9%. UK student enrolments also recorded a decline across the board, whereas an increase in international student enrolments is noted for all Tourism, Hospitality and Events PG courses.

Table 5. Higher Education THE Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses Data Comparison

Higher Education Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Number Comparison 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 (First Year Full-Time)											
2020/2021					**2021/2022**				**Variation**		
Tourism	UK Students	EU Students	International Students	Totals	UK Students	EU Students	International Students	Totals	+/- UK Students	+/- EU Students	+/- International Students
Undergraduate	1,560	275	235	**2,070**	1,295	25	235	**1,555**	-265	-250	0
Tourism UG (notes): *UK* student population decreased by 17%. *EU* student population decreased by 90.9%. *International* student population remained the same. **Overall: 24.9% decrease.**											
Postgraduate	185	55	385	**625**	110	15	730	**855**	-75	-40	345
Tourism PG (notes): *UK* student population decreased by 40.5%. *EU* student population decreased by 72.7%. *International* student population increased by 89.6%. **Overall: 36.9% increase.**											
Hospitality	UK Students	EU Students	International Students	Totals	UK Students	EU Students	International Students	Totals	+/- UK Students	+/- EU Students	+/- International Students
Undergraduate	3,555	280	555	**4,390**	3,510	50	545	**4,105**	-45	-230	-10
Hospitality UG (notes): *UK* student population decreased by 1.3%. *EU* student population decreased by 82.1%. *International* student population decreased by 1.8%. **Overall: 6.5% decrease.**											
Postgraduate	85	35	470	**590**	75	50	515	**640**	-10	15	45
Hospitality PG (notes): *UK* student population decreased by 11.8%. *EU* student population increased by 42.9%. *International* student population increased by 9.6% **Overall: 8.5% increase.**											
Events	UK Students	EU Students	International Students	Totals	UK Students	EU Students	International Students	Totals	+/- UK Students	+/- EU Students	+/- International Students
Undergraduate	1,655	225	125	**2,005**	1,350	35	125	**1,510**	-305	-190	0
Events UG (notes): *UK* student population decreased by 18.4%. *EU* student population decreased by 84.4%. *International* student population remained the same. **Overall: 27.4% decrease.**											
Postgraduate	170	45	260	**475**	115	20	355	**490**	-55	-25	95
Events PG (notes): *UK* student population decreased by 32.4%. *EU* student population decreased by 55.6%. *International* student population increased by 36.5%. **Overall: 3.2% increase.**											

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Enrolment data analysis shows a minor decline in 2021/2022 for all Tourism, Hospitality and Events UG Year 1 (Full Time and Part Time) student numbers, as compared to 2020/2021 (Figure 1). However, it should be noted that 2021/2022 UG student numbers for Hospitality subject areas are higher than in 2019/2020. This could be partly explained by the relatively earlier reopening of the Hospitality sector post-Covid19, as compared to the Tourism and Events sectors. Part Time enrolments are following the same declining trend, except for the Events subject area, which records an increase in 2021/2022 as compared to the previous year, but still below 2019/2020 levels (Appendix 10). Postgraduate courses on the other hand recorded an increase in Year 1 (Full Time and Part Time) enrolment numbers, for Hospitality subject areas and particularly for the Tourism subject areas, with a small decline in Events subject areas (Figure 2). PG First Year Full Time enrolments recorded an increase across all three clusters, and again, a more prominent growth is seen for Tourism subject areas (Appendix 11). For PG First Year Part Time enrolments, there is a decline in numbers for Tourism and Events subject areas and a stagnation for Hospitality subject areas (Appendix 12).

Figure 1. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Undergraduate Degrees – Year 1 Full Time and Part Time Enrolments
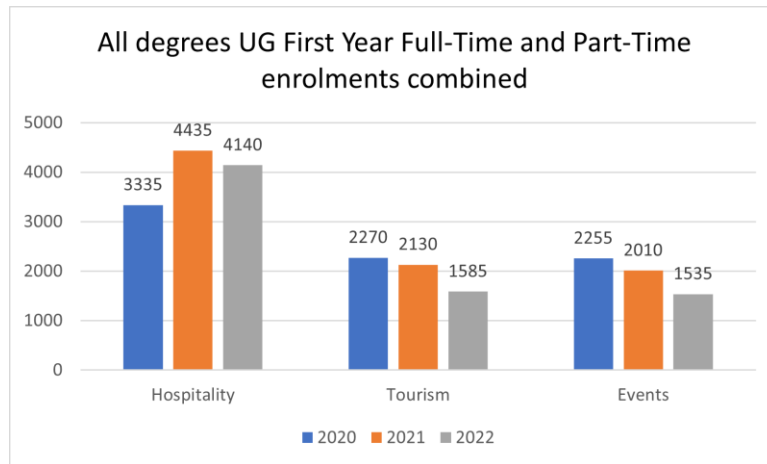
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Figure 2. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Postgraduate Degrees – Year 1 Full Time and Part Time Enrolments
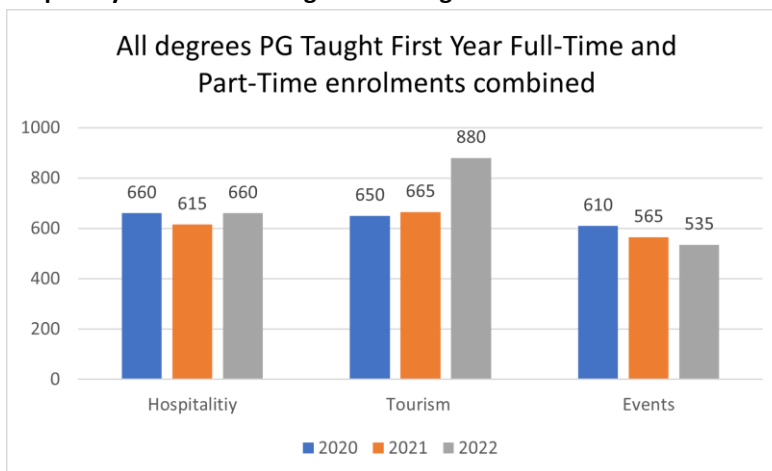
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

2.3.1. Tourism Higher Education subject areas – data and forecasts

The trend analysis for all Undergraduate Tourism subject areas shows a decline for all Full Time and Part Time Year 1 students, including UK, international and EU enrolments, and the trend is set to continue for the next five years (Figure 3). On a more granular level, the international market shows an upward trend between 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 for UG Full Time Travel and Tourism subject areas (CAS code 100101) (Appendix 13). The forecast for UG Full Time Tourism Management (CAS code 100100) subject area shows a decline for international enrolments over the next 5 years, despite a slight, but insufficient increase in enrolment numbers for 2021/2022 (Appendix 14)

Figure 3. Tourism Undergraduate Courses First Year Full Time and Part Time Data and Forecast
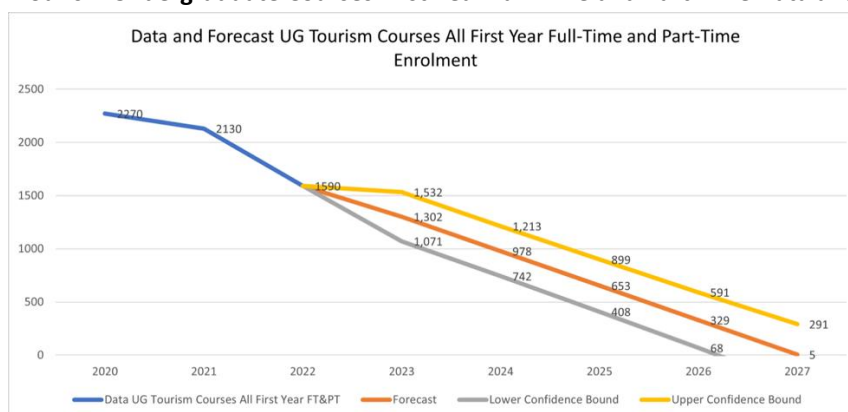
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Enrolments for Full Time and Part Time First Year Postgraduate courses in all three Tourism subject areas (Figure 4) are forecasted to increase despite EU enrolment numbers having significantly reduced.

Figure 4. Tourism Postgraduate Courses First Year Full Time and Part Time Data and Forecast
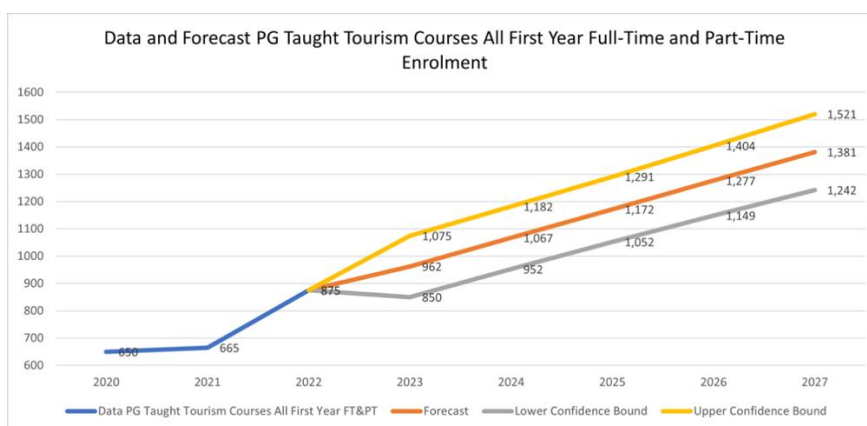
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

On a more detailed level, forecasting shows a slight increase in Full Time home students on the Upper Confidence Bound whilst the increase is more significant for international students, where numbers are projected to grow throughout the whole forecast series between 2022/2023 and 2026/2027 (Appendix 15 and Appendix 16). A slightly increasing trend is noted for PG home students in Tourism Management and Tourism subject areas in 2020/2021 followed by a decline in

2021/2022. The five-years forecast shows an increasing trend in these subject areas as compared to 2021/2022, with numbers expected to reach 2020/2021 levels within the next five years on the Upper Confidence Bound (Appendix 17 and Appendix 18).

2.3.2. Hospitality Higher Education subject areas – data and forecasts

Overall, the forecast for all First Year Full Time and Part Time UG and PG numbers for all Hospitality subject areas shows an upwards trend for the next 5 years, with a more significant increase being projected for UG courses (Figure 5). A positive trend in enrolments for UG UK home students is projected for the next five years (Appendix 19), whereas the EU market has had a significant drop, and the forecast suggests that this trajectory will continue for the next 5 years (Appendix 20). The decline in UG international students does not seem as steep as for the EU students (Appendix 21). However, it should be noted that there was a sharp decline in international student enrolments between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, which could be attributed to world-wide lockdown restrictions during Covid-19, with numbers then recovering in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

Figure 5. Hospitality Undergraduate UG Year 1 Full Time and Part Time Enrolments Data and Forecast

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

**Figure 6. Hospitality Postgraduate Courses First Year Full Time and Part Time Data and Forecast**
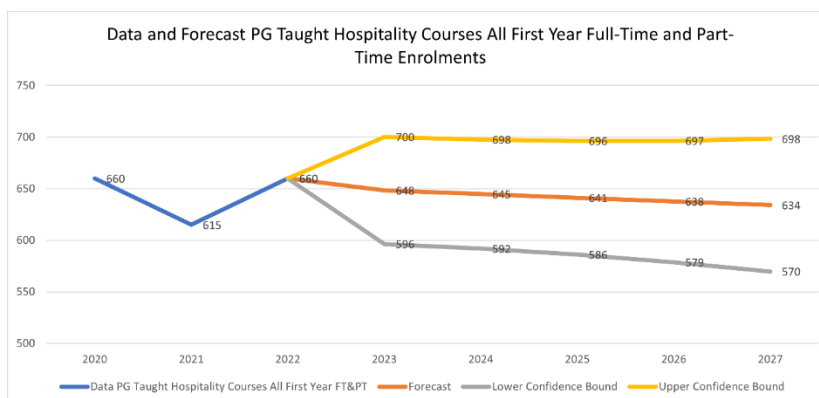
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA reports, 2023)
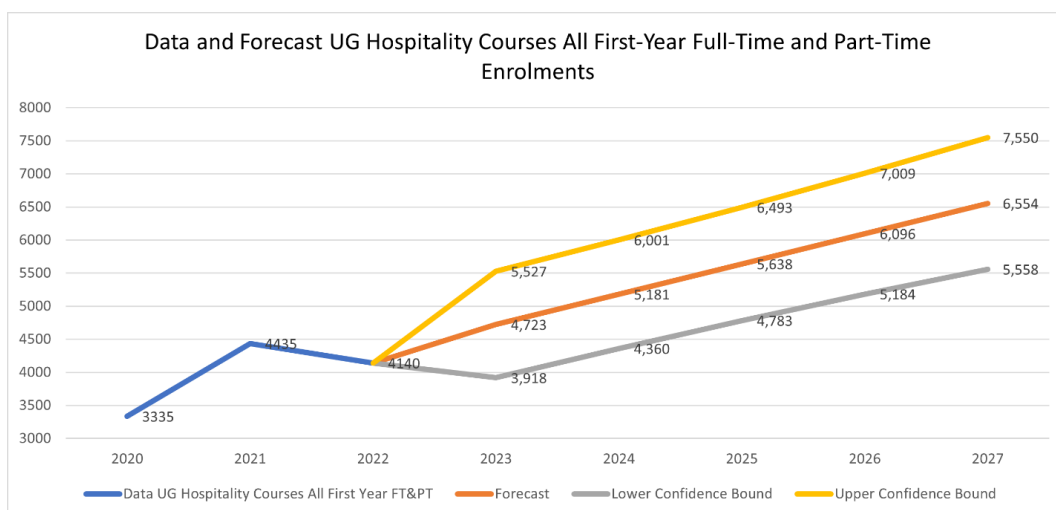
Forecasts for all Hospitality Full Time and Part Time Postgraduate students are positive on the Upper Confidence Bound (Figure 6) with a more significant increase on the same Bound being noted for UK home and for international markets (Appendix 22 and Appendix 23).

2.3.3. Events Higher Education subject areas – data and forecasts

The Events subject area has recorded a steady decline both for UG and PG courses over the past three time periods and this trend is expected to be maintained, particularly with regards to EU students. This trend was also confirmed by interviews with academics who noted a steady decline in student enrolments both at UG and PG level. A breakdown shows that the decline in Events UG numbers (Figure 7) is projected to be steeper than that in PG numbers (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Events Undergraduate UG Year 1 Full Time and Part Time Enrolments Data and Forecast

Data and Forecast UG Event Courses All First Year Full-Time and Part-Time Enrolments
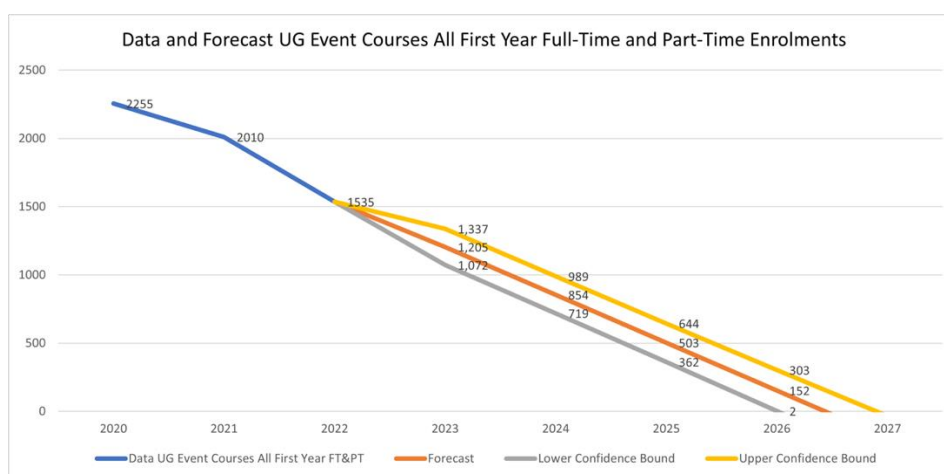
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Figure 8. Events Postgraduate Courses First Year Full Time and Part Time Data and Forecast

Data and Forecast Event PG Taught Courses All First Year Full-Time and Part-Time Enrolments
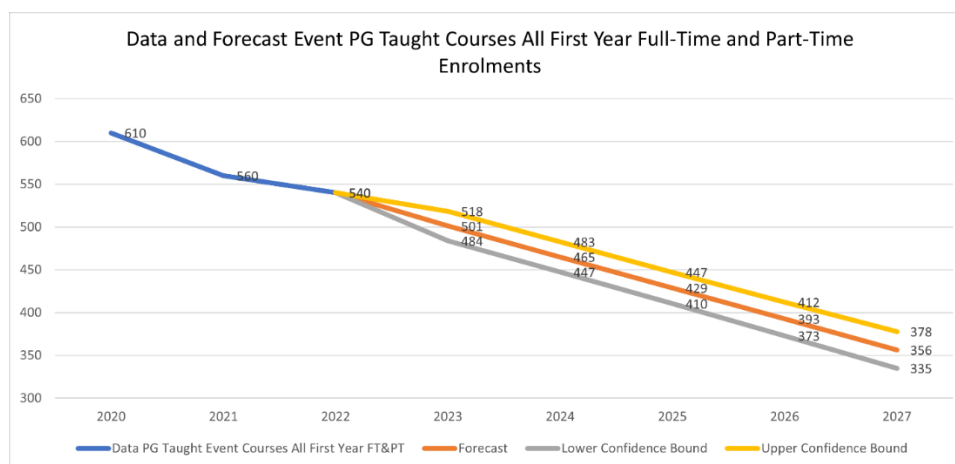
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

For UK home students (1ˢᵗ Year Full-Time) in the Events subject areas there was a slight increase in student numbers in 2020/2021, whereas enrolments for international students in that year declined slightly. The EU student numbers have shown a steady decline from 2019/2020 onwards. Enrolment

numbers for international students picked up again in 2021/2022 and the trendline reflects that by steadily going up for the next time periods from 2022/2023-2026/2027 (Appendix 24).

2.4. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management Education – the political landscape

The current THE Management HE and FE legislative landscape is shaped by concerns about Level 3 Travel and Tourism courses losing government funding after 2025 (Travel Weekly, 2023) and the impact that this might have on FE as a gateway for young students to access HE sphere. Further implications of defunding these Level 3 courses are to be expected in relation to the available workforce within a sector that is already struggling with recruitment. Industry experts and professional bodies are urging the government to reconsider their position on THE education reforms, ABTA's Head of Education and Career Development states "ABTA strongly disagrees with government plans to scrap travel and tourism qualifications for 16- to 19-year-olds. There is still high demand for these courses, and they are an important career path for many people" (Travel Weekly, 2023). It should also be noted that apart from catering (which has now been postponed, pending confirmation), there are no other related T-level courses listed for provision, which again limits the FE pathways to HE and further into industry employment. The 2025/2026 scheduled launch of new catering and hospitality HTQs as an alternative to apprenticeships is an opportunity to further attract students into higher education. However, the Department for Education does not mention any plans for introducing Tourism and Events related HTQs in this offer, restricting further pathway opportunities to higher education. Additional limitations are noted in relation to Apprenticeship standards set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), due to the fact that standards for hospitality qualifications only go up to Level 4, those for travel related qualifications only go up to Level 3, and there are no qualification standards for events (although one is being explored by various industry stakeholders). This is of particular concern, as despite large organisations having to pay the apprenticeship levy, there is only a limited range of qualification standards in THE subject areas reducing the opportunity for such apprenticeship schemes to be delivered and for the employers to make the most of this opportunity.

The effects of Brexit have been noted across the entire UK HE sectors, with a sharp 40% decline in undergraduate applications from EU countries in 2021/2022, and a further 50% decline in acceptances (House of Commons, 2023). This poses major concerns and has a significant impact on student recruitment from European Union countries, which have traditionally provided high numbers of THE students. This has been repeatedly highlighted in primary data collected through interviews, where most of the academics noted a decline in THE European students and a clear trend in increased application and enrolment numbers from international students, particularly from Asian regions. As the following academics note the challenges of Brexit on student recruitment:

> *'[…] we used to have a lot of EU based students coming in studying our courses, but obviously that has reduced significantly because of Brexit.'*

> *'For the tourism course, I think it suffered from Brexit and the loss of the European students. We've had a huge cohort of excellent European students that joined our courses and they've gone and they're not going to come back, and I think... the event management course was*

domestic UK. So, I don't think it suffered from the Brexit effect, but certainly the tourism and in terms of the hospitality course we used to have 60% UK and European and 40% international. That's shifted completely where I now have 90% international students on the hospitality course.'

Changes in migration policy, particularly with reference to restricting international students from bringing dependants with them from January 2024 is likely to have a further negative impact on both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, particularly on those that have been strongly reliant on international markets, and for those programmes that recorded a high increase in such enrolments within the past few years. Representatives of the UK higher education sector emphasise that this decision will disproportionately impact students from countries such as Nigeria and India (which are both noted as 'priority countries' in the UK International Education Strategy), and female students, who are more likely to bring dependants with them (ICE Monitor, 2023).

Government support for THE industry is perceived as insufficient by 72.41% of employer respondents, as it was suggested by our respondents that THE industries need to be "*seen as a critical business that contributes heavily to the UK economy*". The lack of government recognition and support for THE is voiced by HEI academics when questioned about the future of THE education in the UK, noting impacts and implications for THE degrees:

'[…] this current government isn't recognising the value in the professionalisation of these [THE] *industries, which I think is a complete misunderstanding of them. It's not just… sort of evening work behind the bar or it's not just seasonal work at a seaside town or in a holiday camp. You know, these are very real industries, very complex industries.'*

'I think what needs to happen is for it [THE] *to be recognised as an important element within the economy because if we look at these industries they are a significant contributor to GDP and, in terms of employment and I think that needs to be recognised not just from a university perspective, but also even from a government perspective... and I think that recognition was put out there and solidified, I think we would have, you know, courses and demand for course that people would recognise at the moment.'*

2.5. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management education: course content analysis

2.5.1. Undergraduate Tourism courses

In the 2023/2024 academic year, 48 universities in the UK are delivering UG tourism courses, with a range of specific titles such as Tourism Management, International Tourism Management, Travel and Tourism Management, joint honours with related sectors such as Airline, Aviation, Events, Hospitality, Leisure or Sport, combined honours with subjects such as Accounting, Business, Languages, Psychology or Marketing, and niche provision with Adventure, Coastal, Heritage, Marine or Sustainable in the course title. In total, a content analysis of 145 UG Tourism courses took place comprising Foundation Year, Placement Year, Study Abroad Year, Top-up, standard three- or four-year honours degree, which included an analysis of modular framework in terms of core, elective and optional modules. It should be noted only module titles formed part of the content analysis – not the module curriculum / syllabus. The content analysis of UG tourism course modules was

aligned to a number of themes: (i) set of skills (Digital/ICT, Green, Social, Human Resources, Organisational, Financial, Management, Leadership, Marketing, Customer Service) drawn from PANTOUR - Pact for Next Tourism Generation Skills using the Next Tourism Generation (NTG) Toolkit for Industry and Education, (ii) languages (iii) study abroad, (iv) work experience (includes placement), (v) related subjects (business, events, hospitality / hotels, destination or tourism development / planning / management, and (vi) other modules (for those that did not 'fit' into the identified themes).

The review of modules for UG tourism courses in the UK shows a bespoke curriculum delivery with the majority of core, elective and option modules weighted towards tourism-specific topics and closely aligned to the content analysis themes noted in the paragraph above. The relationship with related industries such as events, hospitality, hotels, and leisure/sport is also evident in the modular framework of UG tourism courses with a range of core, elective and option modules in these subject areas. Core, elective and option modules are also dominated by business-orientated subjects, such as accounting, consultancy, entrepreneurship, finance, human resource management, marketing, and strategy, especially for portfolios with combined honours in business topics – this is also common where UG tourism degrees and tourism departments, faculty or institutes are housed in Business Schools. The main research findings show alignment of UG tourism modules with skill sets such as digital/ICT (e.g. modules in digital media, technology for tourism, data analytics/management, e-tourism), environmental awareness (e.g. covering sustainable tourism, ecotourism, tourism impacts, environmental law), social awareness (e.g. includes community, inter/cross-cultural management, heritage tourism, CSR), human resources (e.g. modules in HRM in tourism, talent management, volunteering, employee relations), organisational management (e.g. covering organisational behaviour, strategy/strategic management, tourism operations, tourism supply chain), financial acumen (e.g. includes finance planning for tourism, revenue management, numeracy skills, tourism economics), management (e.g. modules in management skills, tourism management, international tourism management, project management), leadership (e.g. covering leadership for tourism, change management, coaching/mentoring, management and leadership), marketing (e.g. includes social media, destination/tourism marketing, marketing experiences, tourism marketing strategy); work experience (e.g. placement, internship, work-based learning, sandwich year modules), business (e.g. covering the tourism business environment, entrepreneurship, business projects, consultancy), events (e.g. includes event impacts/legacy, business tourism/events, festivals, sport event tourism), hospitality/hotels (e.g. modules in hotel operations, food and beverage management, gastronomy, managing service), destination/planning (e.g. includes tourism destination development, crisis management, tourism policy, sustainable destination management), and others (e.g. covering dissertation, contemporary issues in tourism, academic skills, field trips). There are however gaps in module provision that have been identified in customer service, and study abroad (as option module), which can be considered in future course developments to enhance the tourism curriculum.

2.5.2. Undergraduate Hospitality courses

In the current academic year (2023/24) 35 universities in the UK are delivering UG hospitality courses, with a range of specific titles such as hospitality management, international hospitality management, hospitality operations, joint honours with related sectors such as hotel and hospitality

management, hospitality and tourism management, event and hospitality management, combined honours with subjects such as accounting, business, entrepreneurship. In total a content analysis of 85 UG hospitality courses was conducted comprising of Foundation Year, Placement Year, Sandwich Year, Top-up, standard three- or four-year degree, which included an analysis of modular framework in terms of core, elective and optional modules. It should be noted that only module titles formed part of the content analysis – not the module curriculum/syllabus. The content analysis of UG hospitality course modules was aligned to a number of themes: (i) set of 'in-demand' skills (business management, events management, financial management, hotel operations management, marketing, restaurant and food service management drawn from EAB Hospitality Skills Assessment (Prepared for Buckinghamshire New University, May 2023), (ii) hospitality (to capture related sectors), (iii) languages, (iv) study abroad, (v) work experience (includes placement), and (vi) other modules (for those that did not fit into the identified themes).

The review of modules for UG hospitality courses in the UK shows a broad curriculum delivery with most of the core, elective and option modules weighted towards financial management, marketing, hospitality, work experience, and other (e.g., covering tourism, technology, academic skills, and research). In event management, hotel operations and restaurant and service management, where hospitality is a key component, the provision of modules was relatively low on UG hospitality courses. The modular framework for UG hospitality courses is housed in hotel and or hospitality schools/colleges, business schools, and institutes as part of their portfolio of courses, however this appears to have little impact on the provision of core, elective and option modules as a wide-range of subjects are available – unless the hospitality degree has a major business component to it. The analysis shows extensive alignment with business management (e.g., modules in business planning, international business management, entrepreneurship, leadership), financial management (e.g. includes financial management for hospitality, revenue management, hospitality analytics, finance and accounting for hospitality), marketing (e.g. covering marketing and communications for hospitality, services marketing, branding, principles of marketing), hospitality (e.g. modules in hospitality operations, contemporary issues in hospitality, global hospitality, sustainability in hospitality), work experience (e.g. includes placement year, hospitality internship, training, work-based learning), and other (e.g. covers the tourism product, academic skills, consultancy, future issues). There are however gaps in module provision that have been identified in events management, hotel operations management, restaurant and food service management, and study abroad (as option module). These present opportunities to work in partnership with industry, investment in hotel, event, and restaurant facilities on- or off-campus for hospitality courses, to establish funds for study abroad and short- or long-term student global exchange/mobility hospitality initiatives.

2.5.3. Undergraduate Events courses

In the current academic year (2023/24) 36 universities in the UK are delivering UG event courses, with a range of specific titles such as events management, international events management, global events management, joint honours with related sectors such as international tourism and events management, hospitality, tourism and events management, events and leisure management, combined honours with subjects such as business, entrepreneurship, marketing. In total a content

analysis of 67 UG event courses were reviewed comprising of Foundation Year, Placement Year, Accelerated, Year Abroad, Top-up, standard three- or four-year degree, which included an analysis of modular framework in terms of core, elective and optional modules. It should be noted only module titles formed part of the content analysis – not the module curriculum / syllabus. The content analysis of UG event course modules was aligned to a number of themes: (i) knowledge domains (administration, design, marketing, operations, risk) drawn from the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK), (ii) event types, (iii) languages, (iv) study abroad, (v) work experience (includes placement), (vi) tourism, (vii) hospitality, (viii) business, (ix) digital/ICT, and (x) other modules (for those that did not 'fit' into the identified themes).

The review of modules for UG Events courses in the UK reveals curricula that includes core, elective and option modules mainly weighted towards administration, design, marketing, operations, event types, and a range of event specific modules. There is little in terms of distinct event risk modules, despite risk management and assessment being of importance and priority when planning and staging events. Events courses are housed in the portfolio of business schools, hospitality / hotel schools, institutes or in their own department alongside tourism, hospitality, leisure, and sport courses, however regardless of its academic 'home' in a university, UG Events courses have a heavy business content in terms of modules. The main research findings show alignment with administration (e.g. modules in HRM, finance, volunteering, data analysis), design (e.g. includes event design, event experience, theming, event production), marketing (e.g. covering public relations, marketing communications, digital marketing, event sponsorship), operations (e.g. modules in planning and managing events, event operations, venue management, event logistics), event types (e.g. includes MICE, festivals, sport events and virtual/hybrid events), business (e.g. covers consumer behaviour, the business of events, leadership, entrepreneurship), digital/ICT (e.g. modules in digital media, events technology, digital skills, data management), work experience (e.g. includes live event projects, placement, internship, work-based learning), other (e.g. covers event impact/legacy, sustainability, research project, contemporary issues in events). There are however gaps in module provision that have been identified in industry-related skillsets, which are central to event education. Similar to recommendations noted earlier for tourism and hospitality, events education could secure funding for study abroad or global mobility event initiatives, increasing core, elective and option choice in tourism and hospitality modules with a distinct event element (e.g., event tourism, sport event tourism, events and hotel, themed menu design).

2.6. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management education: trends, challenges and opportunities

2.6.1. Recruitment, progression and continuation

Recruitment trends in Further Education show a downward trajectory for England (both in Leisure Travel and Tourism and in Retail and Commercial Enterprise subject areas) and Scotland (Catering, Food, Leisure, and Tourism subject areas), as reflected in enrolment data cited in the previous chapter. The downward trend is also reflected in the aim achievements in England for the Leisure, Travel and Tourism subject areas, whereas a slight increase is noted for Retail and Commercial enterprise. Progression and continuation data was not publicly available, however, interviews

carried out with FE representatives in England confirm the downward trend in enrolment, with one respondent noting that '*the size of the cohorts are now at 50% as compared to five years ago*'.

For the HE sector, the sharp decline in home student recruitment, particularly regarding EU students in UG programmes, is evident both from HESA data analysis and primary data resulting from interviews with academics. Although HESA data for 2021/2022 shows an increase EU student recruitment for the Hospitality PG subject area, recent interviews with academics suggest that for the 2022/22023 academic year the trend is declining, with numbers shifting more towards international students. Whereas UK and EU recruitment markets are projected to continue declining, and an increase in student recruitment from the EU market appears unlikely, there is an opportunity here to identify strategies aimed towards shifting the focus to the UK home market. The increase in international student recruitment is clearly seen across the board, and it is also strongly emphasised by academics during interviews. However, it could be argued that this varies across the subject areas and sectorial alignment. As some academic interviewees noted:

> '*Now, the tourism degree is very much home students, there's very few international students on that. The hospitality management degree is very much, I would say, 85%-90% international students, a mix of students from India, from China, Nepal are our biggest recruitment areas.*'

> '*But just in the last couple of years, the hotel and hospitality management courses have attracted more international students, and so the actual numbers that are supposed to be coming onto the courses on the international hotel and hospitality management courses are actually going higher than event management at the moment. But there's a bit of a caveat with that as they don't all arrive.*'

Other factors cited as contributing to the increase in international student applications and enrolments included government student mobility policies, increased agent presence (especially for Asian markets), boom in THE industries in international locations and change in course titles. Several academics explained:

> '*We saw an increase in international students after Covid. We've had an influx from India this last year.*'

> '*Also, we've got to remember, the tourism and hospitality industries in those* [international] *countries, they are really booming and for many countries tourism is the number one strand of where income is coming from. So, a lot of our students are like, OK, we're on this course because we know we're going to get a job afterwards. It's going to be an industry that's growing. We're going to have loads of opportunities.*'

> '*Hospitality has gone up. I think I have a theory. We had a complete revamp of our courses last year* [2022]. *So, this only the second year they've run, and we changed the name* […] *and that seems to be attracting an international market particularly an Indian market.*'

Interview responses related to student progression and continuation suggest that generally, HE institutions have strong central student support services in place, including academic writing services, as well as mental health support, bursaries and scholarships, and robust tutoring strategies aimed at identifying students' need for support as early as possible, and setting adequate measures in place. One theme that emerges in relation to reasons for non-progressing is related to students struggling with complex personal circumstances, some related to financial/cost of living issues, but also to illness or care responsibilities.

> *'There's a huge amount of support centrally and then obviously at the module and course level, the module leaders, tutors, and myself, are there to support the students. We also have a very robust personal tutorial system and that also helps us to flag up students that might be struggling. We pick up students that are not attending very quickly […] so we engage with them. We have an engagement team that's going to call them and see what's going on.'*

> *'Well, the biggest one is mental health. And then we asked our students to tell us why they're leaving, and we give them a list and they pick one item from it. But The thing is it's a matrix, isn't it? So, cost of living can impact on mental health for instance. So, then they might say mental health is the reason, but there's probably some cost of living in there as well.'*

In relation to continuation and graduate outcomes, the key theme emerging from interviews with academics is related to the way in which THE graduate outcomes are measured by the Office for Students (OfS) particularly in relation to job titles, with most early-career management positions not being classed as graduate roles from the OfS perspective. Salary brackets classed as graduate outcomes have also been criticized, both from an OfS and industry perspectives, with some industry employers arguably intentionally downplaying job titles to justify lower pay brackets. Finally, the low response rate to graduate outcome questionnaire was also cited as a reason for overall low graduate outcomes.

> *'Frustratingly, the graduate outcomes are a lot less than what they should be. One, because of the titles that they're given when they go into these positions. Two, because what we what we have with a lot of the Chinese students that we get in, they're going back into family businesses. So, they're going into management, they're going into a director position. But because of the title of it and because of what's come back, it's not counted as a graduate outcome as well. A restaurant team leader position for example was not classed as a graduate position.'*

> *'I think the reason for that is twofold. One is the response rate and secondly is the fact that a student who's working in hospitality and who's managing staff or timetables, or stock is not classed as working in a managerial role? Is in a management job, but they don't necessarily have the title, so when they get the survey call, they're not ticking the box of I am a manager and that is in my job title. I think […] definitely they're going on to work in either supervisory, and as they move forward in in senior management roles.'*

> *'I was in industry when [hotel organisation], went through the whole remit of changing the descriptions of the job titles. So rather than it being a restaurant manager, it was a restaurant team leader, it was a restaurant supervisor et cetera, et cetera. The OfS don't see them as being graduate outcomes because of the title.'*

Related to student continuation and progression is retention of students on THE courses in the HEI sector. There are a range of factors impacting on student retention and at course/department level university-wide strategies are in place to address the challenges associated with student retention. The reasons suggested by academics for students withdrawing from their studies include course content not being bespoke enough for the study of THE, students not adapting to university study, financial incentive of work versus study, trouble at home, complex student needs, balancing other responsibilities such as childcare and caring duties, mental health, local students living at home therefore not integrating into the university community, and cost of living crisis. Often there are a spiral of factors that impact on retention, therefore trying to isolate them can be rather difficult:

> *'Well, the biggest one is mental health. And then… but see we asked our students to tell us why they're leaving, and we give them a list and they pick one item from it. But the thing is it's a matrix, isn't it? So, cost of living can impact on mental health for instance. […] Then they might say mental health is the reason, but there's probably some cost of living in there as well. So, you never really get a definitive answer from students. I think it's really tough.'*

The retention issues are common amongst 'non-traditional' students (e.g., low-income households, mature students, first-generation university students), which are the main recruitment target markets for some of the universities interviewed, given their commitment to widening participation especially considering that many of HEIs delivering THE education are post-92 establishments. To mitigate the challenges presented by student retention, universities enhanced their provision in financial support such as hardship funds, flexible payment plans, free breakfast; increased pastoral care and services in THE departments such as academic advisor/personal tutor system, Level 5 and Level 6 students mentoring Level 4 students, extra support sessions; and integration of other practices to develop academic and professional practices, for example academic tutors, collaboration with graduates working in the THE industries, networking events with professional bodies, working with health and well-being teams.

2.6.2. Curriculum design and development

THE Management curricula plays an essential role in education and has a significant impact on the quality of workforce entering the industry. In the UK, it is advised that THE programmes meet QAA subject benchmark statements for accreditation purposes and in addition, it is widely agreed that THE curricula should reflect both expectations of students and needs of the industry. The current benchmark statements applicable to the events, hospitality, travel, leisure, and tourism (EHLST) subject clusters define these programmes as not merely vocational, but as integrated technical, management and scientific disciplines, with strong connections to the industry (QAA, 2019). The 2019 EHLST QAA subject benchmark statement recognises the value of interaction between employers and higher education as a fundamental part of the curriculum design, suggesting that

students need to develop a critical, innovative and entrepreneurial mindset to succeed as future industry professionals. On the one hand, QAA EHLST benchmark was praised for suggesting that Leisure and Tourism subject clusters expand their scope to economic and business management and that Events and Hospitality subject clusters embrace a broader scope to understand events and hospitality as a social phenomenon with policy implications (Letho et al., 2022). However, academics and industry professionals suggest that a benchmark update is necessary to reflect the ongoing changes in the industry, which further impact in changes on industry's expectations related to students'/graduates' skills and capabilities. Literature review supports the idea that the triangular relationship between students' expectations, academic rigour and industry's needs should be reflected in THE curricula (Thompson et al., 2017, Kim et al., 2023; Anderson and Sanga, 2018; Lugosi and Jameson, 2017). Most authors agree on the importance of a professional skills-led curricula, although additional recommendations also include focusing on relational/communication skills, along with reflective/critical and erudition/plasticity skills (Alexakis and Jiang, 2019). Interview results suggest a tendency towards phasing out old programmes and validating new programmes, with an enhanced and more up-to-date curricula, but also as a response to student feedback asking for more industry-focused modules. Several academics stated that they plan to revalidate THE programmes within the next 2-3 years. However, these plans appear to be triggered mainly by internal regulations related to revalidation periods, rather than by changes and developments within THE industries. This represents a potential threat for curricula enhancement, which, considering the above analysis should continuously be revised to ensure alignment with industry needs. Concerningly, although the importance of industry collaboration is strongly emphasised by most academics, interview data suggest that in fact, industry engagement with curriculum design and enhancement is lacking.

> *'I think we really needed to update them and change the course content and move away from things like sales and marketing to digital marketing because you know the world has moved on, we have a sustainability course module. We have a module at level 4 called the guest experience. So as the industry changes, we need to change the courses we offer as well. In terms of the trends, we're obviously looking, and we've incorporated this into the curriculum. Sustainability is a big trend. Technology's a big trend. Being service minded, guest service is another big trend. So, we've really incorporated those. We're also at levels five and six incorporating revenue analytics, problem solving skills. So those are really the things that we embed, implicitly and explicitly in the in the curriculum.'*

> *'Students were constantly asking for more tourism content, and we did have students who would drop out because they felt that they weren't getting a full tourism course because they had more generic content [...] Previously, the tourism management programme had been sharing a lot of modules with our business management programme… Students were asking for more bespoke modules… They'd apply to study tourism at university. They wanted tourism management modules right the way through…we certainly wanted to offer as much bespoke as we could because we recognised that's just what the students were hungry for, they wanted more tourism.'*

A notable trend regarding higher education curricula is the tendency to discontinue additional pathways, which was noted particularly in Hospitality and in Tourism subject areas, and in respect to internship/placement modules. This was partly justified by lockdown measures set in place during Covid-19, which rendered internships and placements untenable, and as such, placements and internships did not appear to be reinstated afterwards. Another aspect cited by academics was the low uptake of these pathways from the students' side:

> *'The course has a placement which is voluntary. So, it's either a 3-year course without placement, or a four-year course with placement. Now it's very interesting because we have very, very few students taking up the placement option.'*

Whilst a low uptake could partly justify phasing out placement pathways, this poses a significant concern both from a student career opportunity perspective and from an industry engagement perspective. Scholars have repeatedly emphasised the value that placements and internships add not only to the overall student experience but also to employability and further on, to graduate outcomes. This is also being recognized by the industry – however, when it comes to offering placements/internship schemes, industry representatives stated that these are difficult to implement within the organisation, and often get overlooked.

2.6.3. Industry engagement

Although most academics value and recognise the importance of industry engagement, it is evident from the interviews that this is mostly reduced to guest talks and field trips. The majority of the academics cited industry engagement with assessments in the sense of incorporating industry case studies in assessment tasks, consultancy projects, co-assessment marking with industry. Whereas this could be considered a form of engagement, it should be noted that engagement could go beyond just case studies, and take the form of assessment centres, mock interviews and industry being part of assessment panels in evaluating the viability and practical applicability of students' ideas, solutions, and recommendations. However, this was classed by some academics as 'too much work' and justified the decision of not engaging industry in assessment at this level due to time constraints such as high volume of other administrative work associated with marking and reporting assessment outcomes. Nevertheless, assessment centres had been praised as being highly valuable both for students and industry, as one academic outlines:

> *'I've seen that students value that because then the feedback that they take, they take it away and they digest it and utilise it again to see how they improve. And interestingly, some of the students that do exceedingly well are invited in for real job interviews. They're offered mentorship, they're offered, you know, potential jobs. So again, it's it benefits the students in terms of their study. It benefits them in terms of the assessments. But it also benefits them in terms of, you know, employment post study. So ultimately, I think there's a lot to be gained by working with practitioners in the industry.'*

Despite recognising the value of industry input, at curricula validation level this varies across HEIs, with some academics stating that there is no such involvement:

> *'We just got an ongoing process of engaging with industry through our partners. What we don't have a panel or anything like that. So, they were not involved in the validation or in creating assignment well assessments no.'*

Industry engagement was also linked to the authentic assessment strategy adopted by some institutions, although this was reduced to the use of '*authentic, industry-based case scenarios*' or '*organising live events as part of their [Events students] assessments*' and did not appear to go beyond this. Nevertheless, there are other various dimensions of authentic assessments, including the use of industry specific software and simulations, as well as replicating real-world case scenarios in more practical, hands-on type of assessments. Performance-based assessments are hardly mentioned, despite these playing a key part in skills development and employability outcomes.

2.7. Students'/graduates' perspectives

2.7.1. Perception of Tourism, Hospitality and Events industries

Students'/graduates' perception of THE industry is shaped by several discourses related to unsociable working hours, low pay, relatively poor working conditions and limited career progression paths. Barriers to entry also include problematic perceptions of some THE careers, often seen as 'stepping-stone' jobs, or short-term jobs as opportunities for social networking and earning some extra money. Scholars also agree that overall hospitality as a career has a weak image among students, mostly due to unrealistic work expectations, while also indicating that students may not receive sufficient information about various career paths that are available for them (Nachmias et al., 2017). This is further supported by primary research findings, where students/graduates ranked work-life balance, long working hours, and job insecurity as the top three challenges as being a THE employee. Studies carried out within the events higher education sector highlight that students demonstrate a lack of knowledge and several misconceptions about what Events Management Education is and what a career in Events Management entails (Fletcher et al., 2021). This view is also shared both by academics and industry professionals within tourism and hospitality fields. As one academic notes about students' job perceptions in hospitality:

> *'So again, is there a stigma there attached with the hospitality industry? Is it still seen as a sort of, you know, I'll get a job until I get a real career.'*

Fletcher et al. (2021) further note that current Events Management course marketing strategies tend to present a relatively narrow view of degrees, underselling and arguably 'over-vocationalising' the subject. Wider perceptions of the value and career opportunities in events management are also influenced by a lack of prior educational reference point, as the subject is not being taught at pre-university level. Prospective events and hospitality students have also been reported to struggle with explaining such a career choice to parents and teachers, who tend to direct them towards more easily recognisable educational pathways.

2.7.2. Motivation to study

In academic literature, motivation to study varies from novelty, a vocational-focused approach, opportunities for creativity and 'working with people' for the Events Management subjects (Fletcher

et al., 2021). Hospitality and Tourism focused studies cite friends' influence, previous industry experience and the practical approach of these subjects, making them 'easier to study' (Rahimi et al., 2016). On the other hand, primary data emerging from questionnaires suggests that for Hospitality subjects, motivation for study is strongly linked to passion for the industry and working with people, whereas for Tourism studies, the main motivation is related to a desire to travel and '*see the world*'.

HEI academics interviewed also noted that motivation to study ranges from wanting to work in the industry or students already working in the industry wanting to advance their academic knowledge or those having studied a tourism or hospitality qualification at FE level, to primary socialisation into the sector from an early age with family members running or owning THE businesses and with a desire to transfer their degree level skills to these organisations and an excitement for the industry.

> '*The students who are joining all want to work in the tourism industry. That's why they're studying in the first place… because it is such a specific course you have to want to work in the industry to do it.*'

> '*So many of them* [international students] *have done a hospitality course at college level and I've had so many of my students with that hospitality background and then they come into the degree programme, but they've had that focus on hospitality.*'

> '*[…] for the vast majority it's because of the excitement of the industry, but I think across the board, with the help of the industry lead bodies we need to be selling that more. We need to be selling our industry, the passion for our industry and the job opportunities.*'

2.7.3. Expectations of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management education

Students' expectations of THE degrees vary from a strong focus on practical learning activities, to opportunities to travel and work in the industry, and take part in internship/placement schemes (Fletcher et al., 2021). However, when asked if they feel that their degree had or is preparing them for a career in the industry, only 58% of students/graduates said yes. A further exploration of qualitative negative answers suggests that some students feel that '*the qualification alone is not enough for a career*' and that '*[university] prepares you for what to expect, but not how to put skills into practice*'. "*I am not using the theory studied at university*' – states one student, whereas another express disappointment that there were very few industry engagement opportunities, stating that '*over two years we had a few guest speakers, but only one field trip to a local cathedral which is a 2-minute walk from campus, and was repeated both years*.' Whereas these answers do not reflect the majority, they still raise significant concerns towards the varied levels of employability and industry engagement at some THE programmes. Finally, when asked to rate the most important factors when choosing a university, students ranked course content at the top, followed by location, ranking, industry connections and internship/placement opportunities, with friends/family recommendations ranked last. This showcases the high importance that students put on course

content and may serve as a strong indicator for education providers to prioritise it as part of their marketing and recruitment strategies.

2.7.4. Graduate outcomes

A 2023 JISC/AGCAS analysis of graduate outcomes reported by HESA highlights that 61.1% of hospitality, leisure, tourism, and transport graduates are currently working full time in the UK, whilst 14% are working part time. A further 5% are reported to be in further study - majority of them studying at Masters level, followed by postgraduate diploma/certificate and professional qualifications. It should be noted that only 6.1% of graduates have reported that they are unemployed – and the figure includes those who are about to start work, whilst 7.7% are currently working and studying. Data related to type of work graduates that are in employment paints a mixed picture, with 20.7% going into the 'retail, catering, waiting, and bar staff' category, and a further 18.3% going into the 'business, HR, and finance professionals' category. It should be noted that 'event managers and organisers' is ranked first in the top 10 professional jobs, with 'restaurant and catering establishment managers and proprietors' ranked 5th and 'hotel and accommodation managers and proprietors' ranked 7th. The above data includes responses from UK-domiciled first-degree graduates who completed their studies in 2019/20. This set of data presents a series of limitations, including, but not limited to: a change in HESA methodology, which did not allow for a comparison to previous Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) survey; the use of the new Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS), which could not be compared to previous editions using the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS); and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions that may have led to a shift in perception related to the attractiveness of tourism, hospitality and events jobs.

The average salaries reported by hospitality, leisure, tourism, and transport graduates appear to be the lowest across all business and administrative studies graduates - averaging around £21,500, with marketing graduates close behind, and economics graduates at the top (averaging above £31,00). An industry survey (Rotaready, 2023) partially supports this data, outlining that 28% of hospitality workers have a salary of £30,00 or less. As noted by the JISC/AGCAS report (2023), this could reflect the different size of employers within these sectors, and potentially lower numbers of graduate schemes available for THE graduates. This is in line with data emerging from industry and students/graduates' questionnaires, where only 14% of graduates stated that they are taking part in a graduate scheme, and only 6 out of 29 employer respondents stated that they are currently operating a graduate scheme. Interview findings also reveal that graduate schemes in the tourism, hospitality and events subject areas are relatively scarce, despite most academics stating that they have strong industry connections. However, it appears that industry engagement is mostly limited to guest talks, field trips and some involvement with assessment design, as further detailed in the following chapter. On the other hand, students'/graduates' questionnaires reveal that only 58% of them feel that their degree had or is preparing them for employment, and 34% stated that they are in fact working in an industry sector other than tourism, hospitality, or events. This is despite more than 75% of respondents stating that their career aspirations upon enrolment were to work in these sectors. The disconnect between pre-enrolment aspirations and post-enrolment/post-graduation career orientation shows a distinct opportunity for education providers to work more closely both

with employers and with career departments to support students towards achieving their goals with respect to working within THE industries.

3. The Tourism, Hospitality and Events industry landscape

3.1. Industry expectations and perceptions

Despite the consensus on the pivotal role of Higher Education providers in developing the future tourism, hospitality and events professionals, there is an increased pressure on education providers to produce both marketable and market-ready graduates (Ruhanen, 2005; Barron and Ali-Knight, 2017). Although most authors agree that employability is a key driving principle in hospitality and tourism courses (Jennings et al., 2015; Whitelaw & Wrathall, 2015; Lugosi and Jameson, 2017), some studies suggest that there is a lack of agreement between industry's and students'/graduates' views on expectations and assumptions of desired attributes for hospitality employees (Harkison et al., 2011; Durao et al., 2022). Whilst industry's views seem to be shifting towards behaviour and attitude when it comes to desired graduate attributes, students and graduates tend to value theoretical input and acquisition of industry-specific skills. This is supported by primary findings emerging from questionnaires, where there is a strong disconnect between what employers and recruitment agencies are expecting from students/graduates and what the latter are expecting from their degrees. A common concern shared by different stakeholders in tourism, hospitality and events education is that the further and higher education might not produce graduates that are well prepared, in line with industry expectations, with some earlier studies arguing that an academic qualification is not sufficient to secure a graduate job (Walsh and Taylor, 2007). Quantitative primary data shows that a specialist THE degree is ranked last by employer respondents, in the order of importance for a successful career in these industries, whilst attitude/core attributes are ranked first. Similarly, only 10.35% of employer respondents consider that a specialist THE degree is essential in the recruitment process, with one of the respondents stating that *'A degree in hospitality/events/tourism is preferred, however, students that hold other degrees with hospitality related experience are also eligible (especially for the back of house roles)'.* When asked if they are hiring for skills or for attitude/competencies, 51.72% of employer respondents stated they are hiring for both, with the rest clearly stating that they are primarily hiring for attitude/core attributes. Further qualitative answers clearly highlight the overwhelming industry view that a degree is not as important as attitude, experience, and personality – especially in relation to operational roles. However, some respondents do note that a degree is desirable and/or beneficial when recruiting for management positions, although the general view is that this is not essential, as the below quotes suggest.

> *'We're looking for experience and/or the right attitude. We'd love to have more applicants who study THE, but we don't seem to get any.'*

> *'We're hiring for an individual's ability to do the job at most levels, a degree would be considered beneficial but not essential unless we were hiring into a role that specifically required it such as legal or finance.'*

'I think a degree is great, and it obviously was my route into the industry, but we are just interested in experience when recruiting at a management level. If we get a graduate/fast track management training programme in place, I think graduates will be the target.'

'While specialist degree is very much appreciated, it is very rare and not crucial. However, it's attitude and experience in particular discipline that matters during hiring process.'

Similar views are emerging from recruitment agency questionnaires, where only 25% of respondents stated that none of their applicants hold a THE undergraduate degree, and a further 25% stated that most or some of their applicants hold a non-THE undergraduate degree. A notable distinction in relation to requesting or not a graduate/postgraduate degree was made here between permanent and temporary positions. Only 37.5% of recruitment agency respondents stated that vacancies for permanent positions do not specifically request a THE undergraduate degree, and the percentage goes up to 50% when it comes to postgraduate degrees. Understandably, the request for an undergraduate or postgraduate degree for temporary positions is significantly lower – due to the nature of temporary positions which tend to be mostly unskilled or low-skilled. The distinction between industry's stated desirability of specialised THE degrees at operational-level roles and management-level roles is essential here. Whereas statistically it may appear evident that THE degrees are considered as desirable/beneficial, but not essential, it is also widely known that within the THE industries the number of management-level positions is relatively lower than that of operation-level positions. Notably, although more than a quarter of hospitality and tourism jobs having been estimated as supervisory and/or highly skilled positions, the industry is considered as having a low barrier to entry, with jobs perceived as unskilled, or low skilled. This could be explained by hotel industry's tendency to 'define roles as unskilled in order to justify low pay, despite the acute need for higher skilled staff'. It should also be noted that some industry employers may be sceptical about formal higher qualifications, as they may not be seen as a guarantee of good performance (Nachmias et al., 2017). This is also in line with previous findings outlining a shift of graduate degree requirements from a clear focus on hospitality degrees before 2020 to a wider focus on 'any business degree or business experience' and a 'passion for hospitality' post-2022 (Ali et al., 2022). However, as primary data suggest, despite most employer respondents considering that a degree is not essential, 65.52% of them stated that in fact some of their employees currently hold a THE degree at undergraduate level, while 41.38% of employers stated that some of their employees are currently studying for a THE degree at the same undergraduate level. In relation to postgraduate THE studies, 34.48% of employers stated that some of their employees currently hold a THE degree, with 31.03% stating that some of their employees are currently studying for one. This comes to show that THE degrees both at undergraduate and postgraduate level are still valued to some extent by employers, recruitment agencies and students/graduates – although more research is needed to clearly understand the distinction between the level of importance at operational and management roles.

3.2. The skills gap

The audit of core skills, industry-specific skills and personal attributes, including views of students/graduates, employers and recruitment agencies showcases the differences between different stakeholders' perceptions both in relation to what skills are expected and what skills are being considered as important or relevant. Looking at core soft skills expected from THE graduates, employers list communication as the most important skill, followed by a good work ethic, teamwork, social skills and positivity - whereas recruitment agencies consider teamwork and positivity as being the most important, followed by communication, good work ethic, flexibility, and emotional intelligence. The least important soft skills for both respondent groups are language, networking, and conflict management. Although communication was listed as most important soft/transferable skill both by employers and recruitment agency respondents, only 51.72% of employers and 50% of recruiters stated that graduates have communication skills. A soft skill gap is noted with regards to emotional intelligence – which is set as an important expectation both from employers and recruiters but appears to score relatively low in graduate skills as assessed by employers and was not mentioned at all by recruiters as a skill that graduates possess. Other soft skills that were missing from recruiters' assessment include leadership, languages, conflict management, cultural intelligence and multitasking. This could potentially be explained by the recruiters' profiles, as 50% of them stated that they are recruiting both for permanent and temporary positions. Soft skills that scored low in employers' assessment also include networking, conflict management, languages, self-awareness, time management and critical thinking. The skills gap is also evident form the course content analysis explored in chapter 2.5., where despite an evident alignment with general business management and operation skills, there is more opportunity for industry specific skills, such as customer service, languages, and conflict management to be embedded in course content.

Further skills gaps had been noted in relation to core industry-specific skills, where both employers and recruiters listed planning and operations as the most desirable skill, followed by customer relationships, business/commercial acumen, and data analysis. The planning and operation skill was ranked 3rd in students'/graduates' assessment of skilled gained through education, whereas business/commercial acumen and data analysis were ranked significantly lower. Higher ranking skills as assessed by students/graduates are presentation skills and marketing. The lowest ranking skills cited as being expected both by employers and recruiters are risk analysis, social media management, marketing, and sales. This again shows the disconnect between industry's expectations and perceptions of desirable hard skills on the one side, and perception of students/graduates of skills gained through education on the other side. When asked what industry-specific skills THE graduates have, employers as well as recruiters listed a formal degree, IT literacy and administrative skills as most common. Lowest ranking skills in employers' assessment include risk analysis, performance management, stakeholder management and human resource management – and it should be noted that these skills have not been ranked at all by recruitment agency respondents. Finally, expectations of graduates' core personal attributes appear relatively similar both from employers and recruitment agency respondents' perspectives, with can-do attitude and willingness to learn at the top, and curiosity, ambition, goal-oriented and tenacity scoring slightly lower. When assessing the personal attributes that graduates currently have, highest

ranking attributes from the employers' perspective included passion/enthusiasm, a can-do attitude and respect for others, whereas recruitment agency respondents ranked highest attributes related to willingness to learn, ambition/determination and self-confidence. The above primary findings are also supported by secondary data, with studies suggesting that event professionals perceive Events Management graduates to lack key knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to enter the industry (Kashef, 2015 and Ledger, 2013). This could partly be extended to Tourism and Hospitality graduates, which tend to be perceived as insufficiently prepared for the real-world challenges that these industries are facing.

3.3. The recruitment crisis

According to the House of Commons (2023), the total UK vacancies in September-November 2022 accounted for 1.19 million. The same report outlines that the 'accommodation and food service' sector had the most vacancies per 100 employee jobs, with 6.5 vacancies for every 100 jobs. The same figure is also being reported for the December 2022 – February 2023 period by Office for National Statistics (2023). It is also estimated that 24% of representatives from the accommodation and food service sector are experiencing worker shortages compared to only 12% for all other industries. Furthermore, 10% of those experiencing staff shortages had to pause some of their business or reduce business hours as they were unable to meet demand, reducing the business earning potential across these sectors. Staff shortages in hospitality alone have reportedly led hospitality businesses to reduce menu options as well as trading hours, and trading days, generating an estimated £22bn loss in economic activity (Hughes, 2022). The number of vacancies in the accommodation and food service sector has reached 123,000 by July 2023. This figure is 33% higher than pre-Covid19, suggesting that despite a post-Covid19 increase in business demand, the recruitment crisis persists and even deepens. The tourism sector is also reported to face a 20% vacancy rate (Taylor, 2023). Despite some studies reporting that staff shortages appear to be easing, these are still twice as high as pre-Covid19 levels (Fahy, 2023). The events and conferencing industry is also suffering of a sustained recruitment crisis, with 76% of organisations reporting staff vacancies during this year (Mintel, 2023). Industry reports also note that just over 50% of events businesses state that vacancies are primarily due to current staff shortages, whilst 47% of them highlighted a sustained skills shortage, despite advertising higher salaries as compared to 12 months ago (Meetings Industry Association, 2023). The same report cites events businesses looking at investing in apprenticeship schemes and creating synergies with educational institutions with an aim to nurture the new generation of professionals.

As outlined in the Tourism Recovery Plan (Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, 2023) the government had set in place various measures aimed at getting people back into employment, including schemes to support a growth in apprenticeships and traineeships, and a national Kickstart programme focussed on supporting 16–24-year-olds on Universal Credit to gain skills and experience. Although staff shortage is recognised as a major issue in the Tourism Recovery Plan through the measures set in place related to getting people back in employment and support for apprenticeships there is no planning to include the role of THE HE and FE education in delivering skilled graduates that could contribute to reducing the staff shortages. Similarly, there is no mention

of how staff shortages are being tackled for events, despite Objective 6 being a major part of the Recovery Plan. Similar issues are noted in the Hospitality Strategy: Reopening, Recovery, Resilience report (2023), where despite recognising the significant value-added contribution of hospitality to the UK economy, and the above-all-sectors vacancy rate, there is no mention of government-industry-education partnerships aimed at supporting further and higher education providers to train and educate the new generation of hospitality professionals.

A major recruitment challenge is linked to shortage of skilled THE workers not being fully acknowledged by the UK Government. Despite industry-led lobbying activities and petitions, occupations related to THE industries are not included within the Skilled Worker Visa Shortage Occupation list, forcing employers to fully rely on the home market. Whilst this creates an opportunity for industry to recruit skilled workforce from the home market, more support is needed for education providers in developing and funding apprenticeship schemes, higher technical qualifications and creating meaningful pathways to higher education across all THE subject areas.

Primary data findings show that both employers and recruitment agencies in THE industries agree that there is an issue with recruiting staff in general and the issue is more prominent with experienced/skilled staff. On the one hand this has led to experienced staff potentially coming at a premium and increased salaries are needed to guarantee retention. On the other hand, it has also led to lowering expectations in order to fill positions.

Private initiatives such as Hospitality Rising are gaining increased support and recognition from industry professionals, industry bodies, and major employers, for their sustained effort towards attracting new talent to the industry. A focused campaign generated 250,000 job applications, reaching more than 50% of people under the age of 30. This shows that there is a great potential for addressing some of the ongoing challenges faced by the hospitality industry, particularly in relation to improving its image as an appealing industry to work in. However, there is further scope here for such initiatives to gain government support and enhance their contribution towards solving the recruitment crisis.

3.4. The industry-academia bridge

As noted in previous chapters, the close relationship between industry and academia is essential in THE education, to ensure employability and enhance graduate outcomes. When asked if any of the organisations operate an internship/placement/graduate scheme, 37.93% of the employers stated that they operate an internship, 44.83% operate placements and 48.28% have a graduate scheme, whilst 24.14% of the respondents do not offer anything. The reasons given for not running any of the above included lack of resources, not being in the position to support a scheme, organisation is too small, and a lack of collaboration with universities. Only 50% of the recruitment agencies have been involved in curriculum development (both at FE and HE level) in the past, and 25% are involved now. Involvement includes guest talks, site visits, and at a lower scale curriculum design, mentoring, case studies, competitions, and assessments. Reasons given for non-involvement include not having had the opportunity to do so. This mirrors the answers that employers gave for the involvement in both FE and HE curriculum design. Furthermore, 51.72% of employers have never been involved in

HE curriculum development, whilst 31.03% were involved in the past and only 17.24% are currently involved. For this group of respondents, lack of opportunity, knowledge and never having been asked were the most common answers for non-involvement.

Data emerging from employer questionnaires suggests that involvement at FE and HE level includes predominantly guest talks, mentoring and site visits. Employers' involvement in curriculum development remains relatively low and the same can be said for industry projects, case studies and assessments. Employers were also asked what they need from education providers. They suggested that there needs to be more collaboration with providers and that the understanding of the industry needs to be deeper. This also included the focus on more realistic and practical modules, partnerships to prepare students for the real world – such as mentoring schemes, real world experience, internships, and placements. Additionally, they suggested that sector specific skills need to be taught, the industry needs to be promoted and students should have more opportunities to meet with employers. Linked to the above is also the question whether education is meeting the needs of the industry. Most of the answers suggest that education is only partially meeting the needs of the industry, with some respondents suggesting that universities don't always keep up with industry changes, and that key issues such as sustainability are only being taught at a theoretical level and miss on the opportunity to prepare students on a practical level. Some respondents note that '*there is work to be done on the practical experience'* and *'students are basing all their knowledge on theory'.* As another respondent notes: '*sustainability practices, organisational effectiveness [..] managing people – the knowledge is there but often at theoretical level and do not include practical applications.'* Comments were also made with regards to Covid-19 having taken away a lot of the practical aspects of the courses. Additionally, reduced working hours in Real Work Environments (RWE) were reported by FE interviewees, as a result of cutting budgets and funding – and with a direct impact on student experience and skills development. Overall, this paints a concerning picture in relation to the value that THE education provides towards employability, suggesting that there is still a lot to be done to ensure that students and graduates are gaining industry-relevant skills during their studies.

4. The future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management education: opportunities and recommendations

4.1. Recommendations and policy implications

4.1.1. Recommendations for Higher and Further Education providers

Recommendations for FE and HE education providers emerging from the above analysis include working together with industry and wider stakeholders towards shifting the negative perceptions of THE industries, especially in relation to career paths and career development opportunities; continuous enhancement and development of THE curricula and stronger engagement with industry, to align education provision with sector specific requirements.

A more in-depth understanding of students' and graduates' perceptions related to various career pathways within THE industries and the wide opportunities for career-building and career progression would support universities in repositioning their degree offers on the market and

attracting a broader range of applicants. Broadening efforts to illustrate the value and credibility of THE degrees and promote diverse career opportunities beyond traditional 'manager' positions would also be of great benefit both for further and for higher education providers. A more balanced approach between practical learning opportunities and theoretical input could support education providers in repositioning THE degrees alongside more easily recognisable degrees such as business studies or business management.

THE curricula development and enhancement, as well as teaching, learning and assessment strategies both in FE and HE should consider a more balanced approach between the vocational nature of these programmes, the integration of technical, management and scientific disciplines, and the deeply rooted need for industry input and collaboration. A key requisite of THE curricula is to ensure bridging the skills gap, especially in relation to soft/transferable skills (i.e., leadership, conflict management, time management and critical thinking), but also industry-specific skills (i.e., planning and operations, customer relationships, business/commercial acumen, and data analysis), considering the fast-paced changes occurring in these industries. This could be achieved through integrating advisory boards, round table consultations, industry panels and other forms of engagement. Continuous engagement with industry is therefore recommended, noting that this should not only occur at the curricula design stage, but also at all stages of course/module development/enhancement. Further recommendations for aligning students' expectations and industry realities within the academic curricula include a stronger emphasis on internships and field experiences and a work-integrated experiential curriculum. This could be achieved through integration of technology-based modules, performance-based assessments, and through enhanced opportunities for study abroad and integrated placement both as mandatory at module level, and as year-long placements. Curricula enhancement through inclusion of other disciplinary influences is also recommended. Finally, a revision of teaching, learning and assessment strategies is recommended so that it reflects industry needs, particularly in relation to developing hard skills and capabilities. This could be achieved through a wider adoption of authentic assessment strategies that should go beyond real-world, industry case studies and should also incorporate industry specific software and simulations, as well as replicating real-world case scenarios in more practical, hands-on type of assessments.

4.1.2. Recommendations for Tourism, Hospitality and Events industries

Recommendations for industry are three-fold. First, there is an acute need for industry to develop more robust internship, placement, and graduate schemes that have the potential to attract and train talent from further and higher education. Consultations with education providers in developing such schemes would benefit both parties, and particularly industry employers who could gain a better understanding of the further and higher education environment at curricular and extracurricular level. Second, stronger connections between industry and academia should be developed with the aim of bridging the gap between industry's expectations of students'/graduates' skills (both with regards to soft skills and hard/ industry-specific skills) and academics' perspectives on what skills should students/graduates have. As the primary data suggests, there are significant disconnections in relation to skills development and expectations and these should be addressed as

a matter of priority, Finally, whilst the research found that there are varied levels of industry engagement, with most academic reporting that there are frequent guest talks and field trips organised with the industry, two issues are of particular concern: the relatively limited involvement of industry with curricula development, and the reduced engagement with assessments. These constitute two missed opportunities: one, for the industry to provide relevant input at a very early stage, during curricula design/development, and two, for the industry to actively engage with real-world, truly authentic assessments, either through taking part in assessment centres, assessment panels, or through contributing to the design of industry-specific case scenarios.

4.1.3. Policy implications

In terms of policy implications and opportunities for reform, a range of measures are recommended to be taken into consideration. The QAA benchmark statements need to be updated, to fully reflect the speed of development in the industry and align skills development to contemporary industry requirements. OfS Graduate outcomes should also be revised in relation to job roles and salary brackets to reflect the complexity and diversity of managerial roles available in THE industry as well as the reality of pay rates in these industries, which could be lower as compared to other industries. A revision of Apprenticeship Standards for tourism, hospitality and events is also needed to enhance opportunities for employers as well as for students to access subject-specific education.

The value of THE education and the role FE and HE institutions play in producing a qualified and skilled workforce for THE industries needs to be recognised by policy makers, especially considering that THE industries (directly and indirectly) are major contributors to the UK economy.

4.2. The Future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management education

As outlined in the above analysis, the major challenges faced by the Tourism, Hospitality, and Events education are underlined by an overarching downward trend in student recruitment particularly from EU and UK home markets. Whereas recruitment from international markets appears to be on the rise across the board, further concerns are being raised by imminent changes in immigration policy which may limit international student intake. This may constitute an opportunity for education providers to shift their focus towards the UK home market, by rethinking course marketing strategies, enhancing their efforts to showcase the value and viability of THE careers, and developing a more balanced curricula that fully integrates practical learning and assessment, industry input and academic rigour. The relatively limited industry engagement with curricula design, as well as with teaching, learning and assessment strategies poses a significant challenge in relation to students'/graduates' employability and skills development. There is an opportunity here for education providers to develop more meaningful relationships with industry practitioners, to rethink their engagement strategy to go beyond guest talks and field trips, and to include more prominent industry involvement in curricula enhancement and development, as well as in authentic assessment design. Bridging the skills/talent gap emerges as an ongoing challenge both from an educational and from industry perspectives. Whilst academics and industry practitioners agree on the value of their collaboration, there is an opportunity for both parties to work together more closely, to build and develop more meaningful partnerships aimed at ensuring that students and

graduates have skills that are relevant and in line with industry expectations. The future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management education, therefore, is shaped by a three-dimensional need for increased industry and government involvement, a stronger collaboration between education providers, industry professionals, industry bodies and policy makers, and a wider recognition of the value of THE education, the significant contribution of THE industries to the UK economy, and vast career opportunities that are available for students and graduates.

5. Limitations and opportunities for further research

This report has investigated Tourism, Hospitality, and Events Management education both at Further and at Higher Education level, considering statistical data as well as views, perceptions, and expectations of various stakeholders, including academics, industry professionals, recruiters, students, and graduates. The relatively low response rate to students/graduates, industry employers and recruiters' questionnaires suggests that some results could not be fully generalised. The same can be said in relation to academic interviews representative of Further Education, where only 3 interviews were carried out. It should also be noted that due to no response/no availability, there were no interviews carried out with Higher Education academics from Scotland. Statistical data related to acceptance and enrolment numbers in Higher Education was only available up to 2021/2022. The same can be said for Further Education aim enrolment and aim achievement figures, except for England, where data was available up to 2022/2023. Additional limitations of Further Education data analysis are related to the broad categorisation of subject areas, which rendered an in-depth, subject-based analysis impossible. Due to limited access, statistical data analysis did not include a breakdown of age, gender, and ethnicity.

Further studies could investigate at more granular level aspects related to motivation to study Tourism, Hospitality and Events both at HE and FE level, and particularly from the perspective of UK home students. This could provide more insight to potentially inform further curricula development and course marketing strategies. A more in-depth skills analysis could be carried out, by investigating perceptions, expectations, and realities from students/prospective students, industry, and academic perspectives. On this note, consequent studies could also explore graduates' length of stay in the industry and potential measures that could be taken at education and/or industry levels to ensure higher length of stay and subsequently lower turnover rates. Scholars could also investigate the rise of alternative degrees offering, with a particular focus on challenger brands and accelerated degrees offerings, as these may pose a potential threat to traditional, 3-years long degrees. As this is a UK-based study, future research could be conducted at an international level for the purpose of comparison in terms of industry engagement, education strategy, policy, and students/graduates' perspectives. Finally, scholars could further investigate aspects related to relationship building, particularly between schools, colleges, and other education providers, with an aim to identify additional pathways to THE higher and further education.

6. Funding and statement of interests

7. References

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Variations in undergraduate applications and acceptances between 2016/2017 and 2021/2022

Course Name	Applications	Acceptances
Tourism Management	-75%	-70%
Event Management	-74%	-74%
Tourism and Hospitality Management	-72%	n/a
International Event Management	-62%	-76%
Hospitality and Tourism Management	-60%	n/a
Events Management	-58%	-56%
Leisure and Events Management	-57%	-62%
Tourism and Events Management	-55%	10%
International Hospitality Management	-54%	-65%
Hospitality Management	-51%	-30%
Arts and Festivals Management	-47%	-60%
Creative Events Management	-45%	-50%
Events Management (3 Years or 4 Years including Foundation)	-43%	-46%
Tourism and Travel Management	-36%	n/a
International Tourism Management (3 Years or 4 Years including Foundation)	-33%	50%
Events Management (Foundation)	-32%	-66%
Outdoor Adventure Education	-31%	-33%
Outdoor Leadership	-30%	-50%
International Tourism Management	-24%	-35%
International Festival and Event Management	-24%	-43%
International Tourism and Hospitality Management	-23%	133%
Outdoor Adventure Leadership	-23%	-25%
International Tourism and Airline Management	-18%	-40%
International Hospitality and Tourism Management	-13%	-33%
International Tourism and Hospitality Business Management	-9%	-33%
International Hospitality Management and Festival & Event	50%	20%
International Hospitality Business Management	105%	100%
International Tourism Management with Foundation Year	144%	n/a
Events Management (with Foundation Year)	500%	100%
International Tourism and Events Management	n/a*	n/a*
International Tourism & Hospitality Management	n/a*	n/a*
Events Management with Foundation Year	n/a*	n/a*
Events and Festival Management	n/a*	n/a*
Air Transport Management (Airline and Airport Specialist)	n/a*	n/a*
International Event Management with Marketing	n/a*	n/a*
Air Transport Management with Air Transport Pilot Licence (frozen)	n/a*	n/a*
International Tourism Management (Foundation Year)	n/a*	n/a*
Business and Management (Festivals and Events) - Professional Placement Year	n/a*	n/a*
Global Hospitality Management	n/a*	n/a*
Int Hosp Mgmt (3Yrs or 4 Yrs inc FdN)	n/a*	n/a*
Event Management (with optional placement year)	n/a*	n/a*

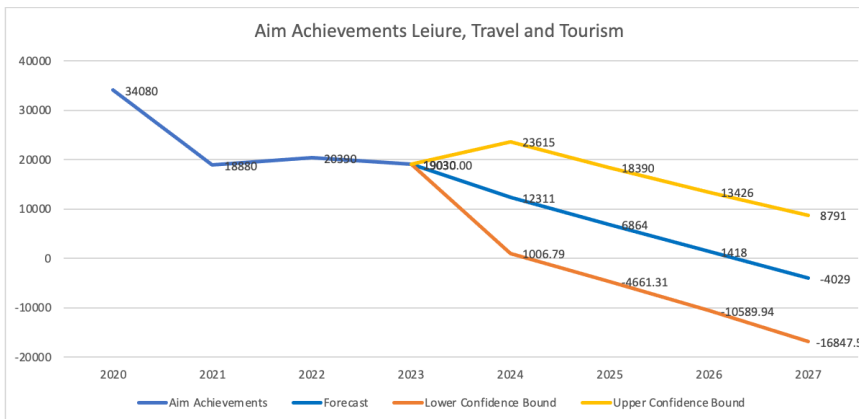(source: based on data retrieved from UCAS, 2023)

*n/a - data was not available for the 5 years period.

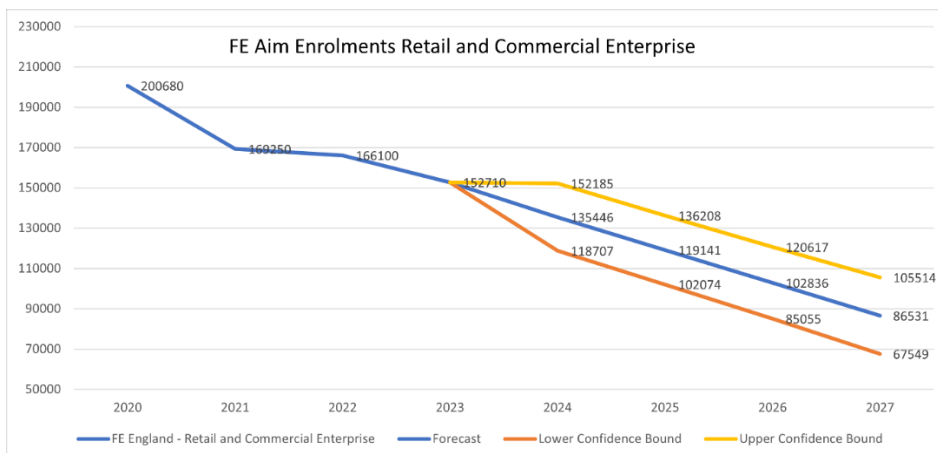**Appendix 2. England FE Aim Enrolments for Leisure, Travel and Tourism**
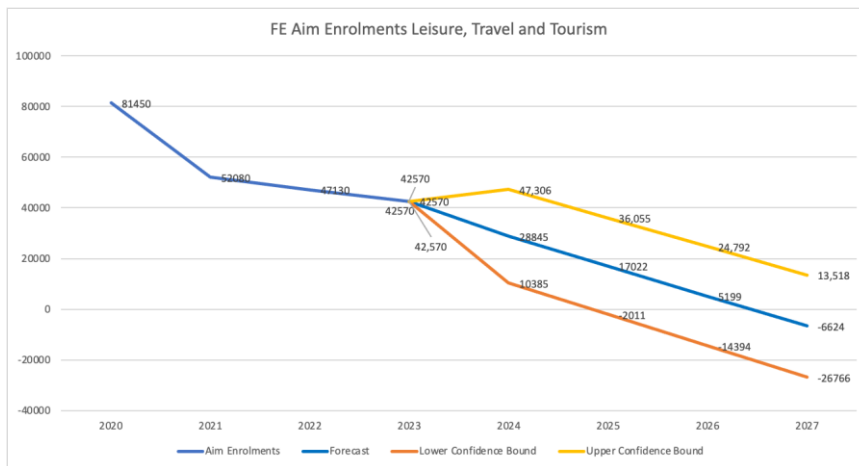
(source: based on data available form Department for Education, 2023)

Appendix 3. England FE Aim Achievements for Leisure, Travel and Tourism
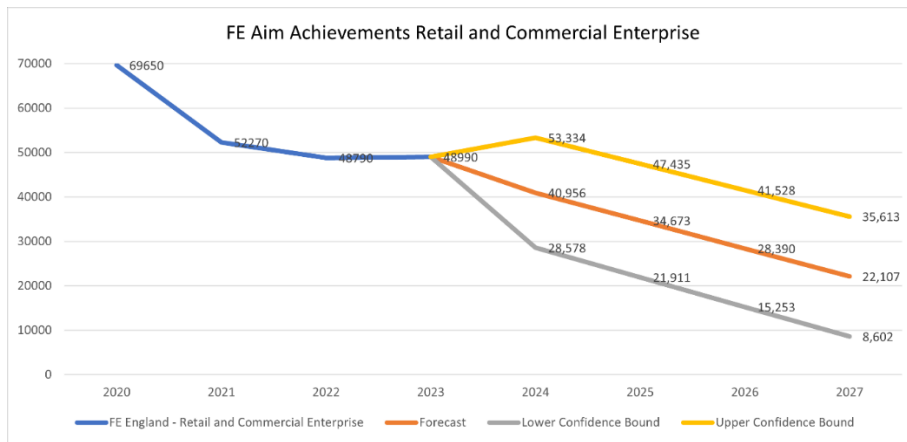

(source: based on data available form Department for Education, 2023)

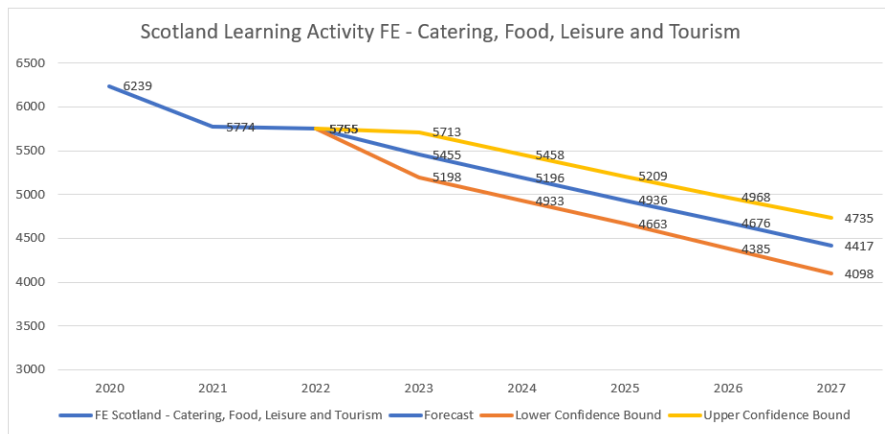**Appendix 4. England FE Aim Enrolments for Retail and Commercial Enterprise**

(source: based on data available form Department for Education, 2023)

Appendix 5. England FE Aim Achievements for Retail and Commercial Enterprise

(source: based on data available form Department for Education, 2023)

Appendix 6. Scotland FE Catering, Food, Leisure, and Tourism

(source: based on data retrieved from Scottish Funding Council, 2023)

Appendix 7. Northern Ireland FE – Leisure, Travel and Tourism
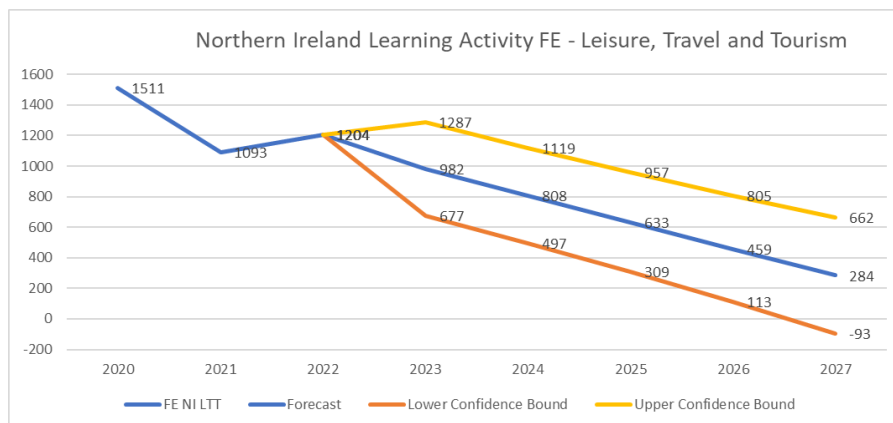
(source: based on data retrieved from Northern Ireland Department for the Economy, 2023)

Appendix 8. Wales FE Leisure, Travel, and Tourism

Wales Learning Activity FE - Leisure Travel and Tourism

6110
4990
5545
6012
5682
5375
5095
4846
5046
4697
4348
3999
3650
4080
3712
3322
2904
2454

— Wales LTT FE Activity — Forecast — Lower Confidence Bound — Upper Confidence Bound
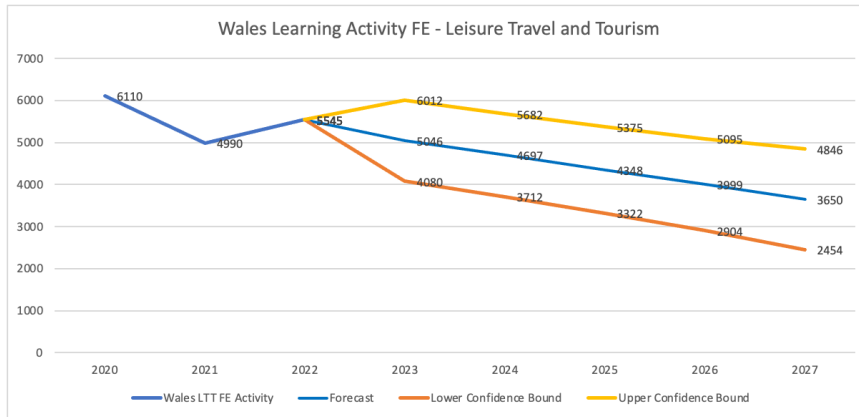
(source: based on data retrieved from the Welsh Government, 2023)
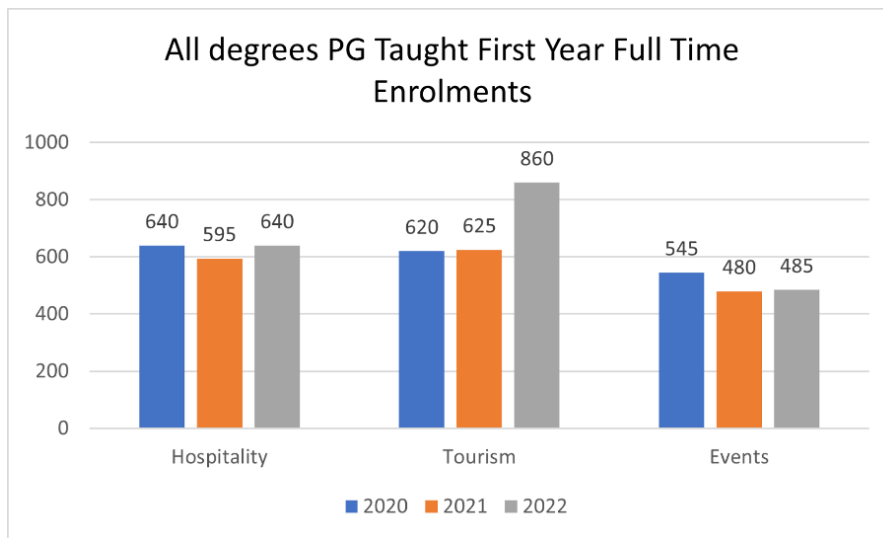
Appendix 9. Wales FE Hospitality and Catering

Wales Learning Activity FE - Hospitality and Catering

4675
3670
5695
7561
7986
8450
8965
9537
5814
6203
6593
6983
7373
4066
4421
4736
5001
5209

— Wales Hosp Catering FE Activity — Forecast — Lower Confidence Bound — Upper Confidence Bound
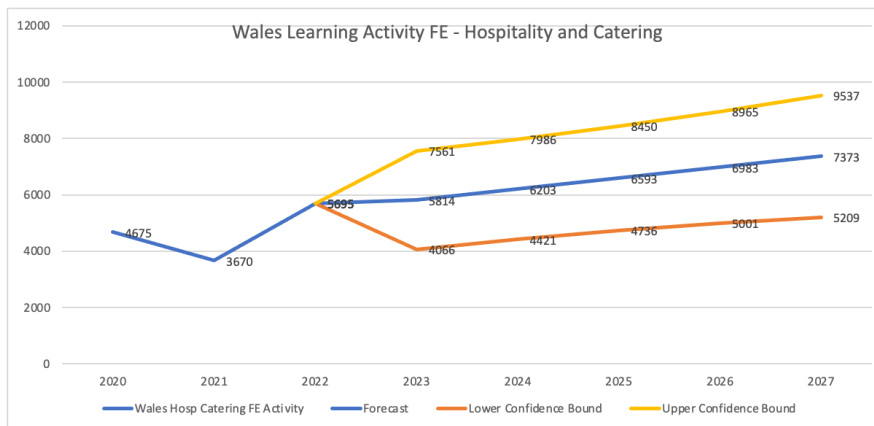
(source: based on data retrieved from the Welsh Government, 2023)

Appendix 10. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Undergraduate Degrees – Year 1 Part Time Enrolments

All degrees UG First Year Part-Time Enrolments

Hospitality: 75, 45, 35
Tourism: 50, 60, 35
Events: 35, 5, 25

■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022
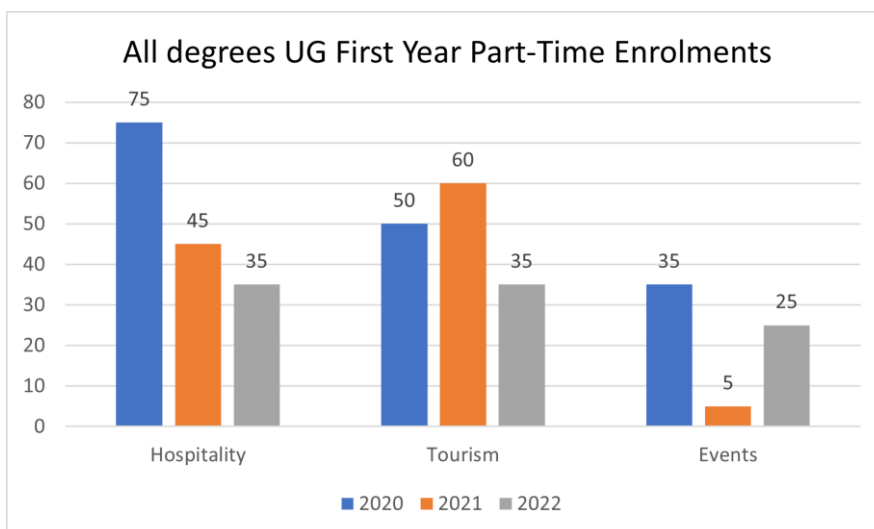
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

**Appendix 11. Tourism, Hospitality and Events Postgraduate Degrees – Year 1 Full Time Enrolments**

All degrees PG Taught First Year Full Time Enrolments

Degree	2020	2021	2022
Hospitality	640	595	640
Tourism	620	625	860
Events	545	480	485

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Appendix 12. All Tourism, Hospitality and Events Postgraduate Degrees – Year 1 Part Time Enrolments

All degrees PG Taught First Year Part-Time Enrolments

Degree	2020	2021	2022
Hospitality	20	20	20
Tourism	30	40	20
Events	65	85	50
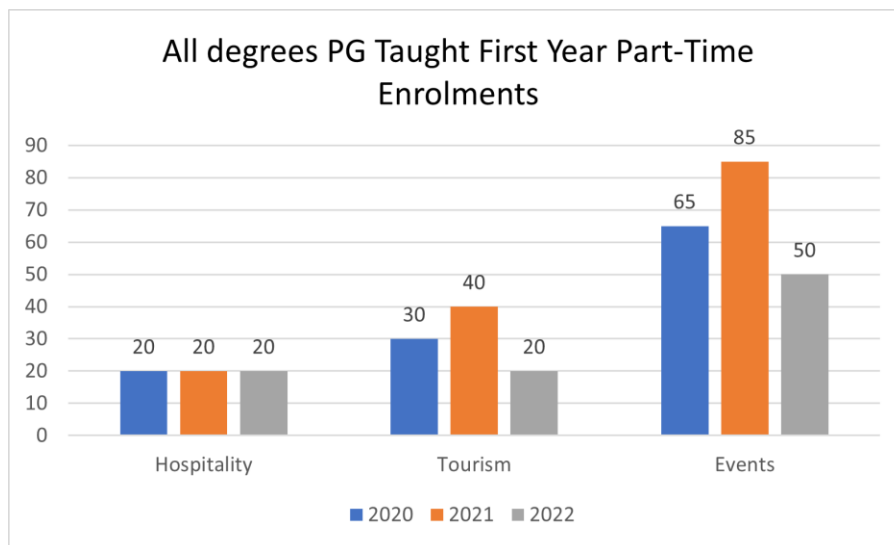
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Appendix 13. Data and Forecast UG International Students Travel and Tourism (CAS code 100101) First Year Full-Time Enrolments

Data and Forecast UG International Students Travel and Tourism First Year Full-Time Enrolments
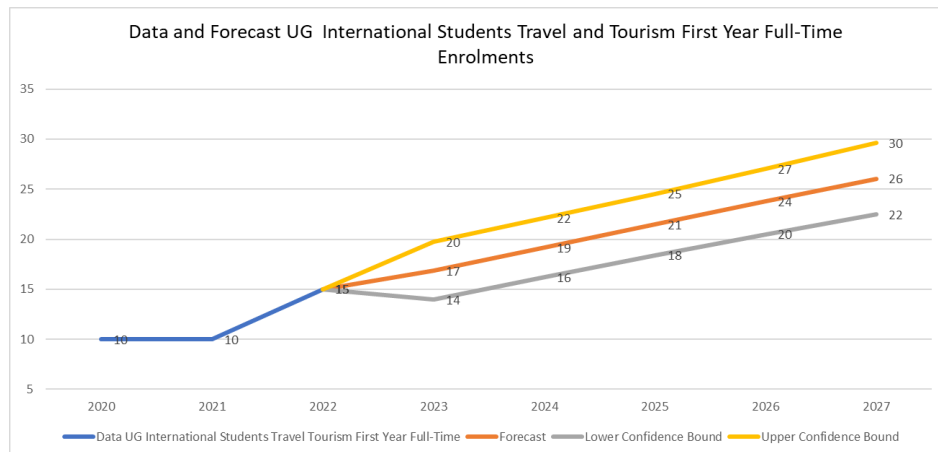
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA reports, 2023)

Appendix 14. Data and Forecast for UG International Students Tourism Management (CAS code 100100) First Year Full Time Enrolments


Data and Forecast UG International Students Tourism Management First Year Full-Time Enrolments
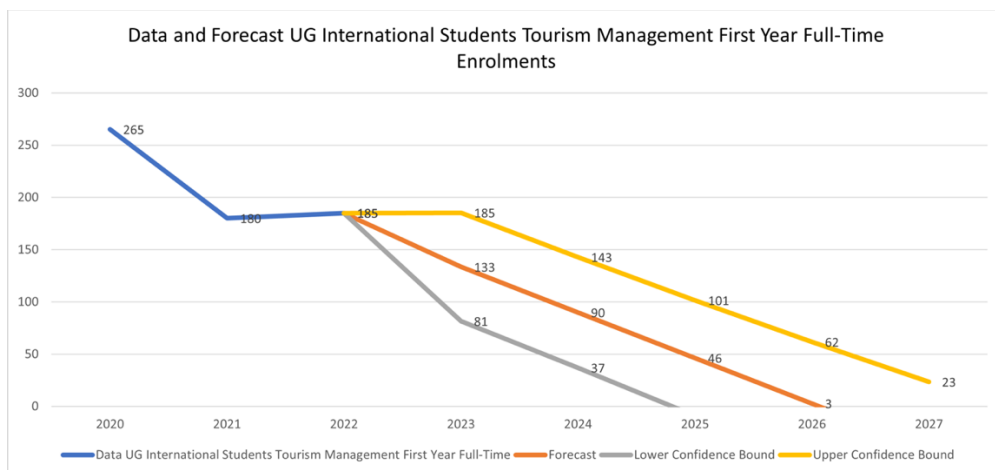
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA reports, 2023)

Appendix 15. Data and Forecast for All Tourism Courses PG Home First Year Enrolments

Data and Forecast All Tourism Courses PG Taught Home Students First Year Full-Time Enrolments
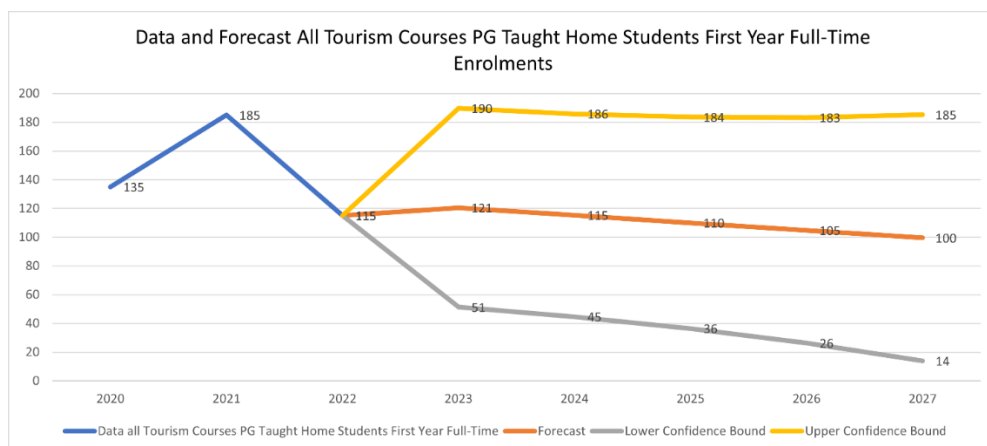
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

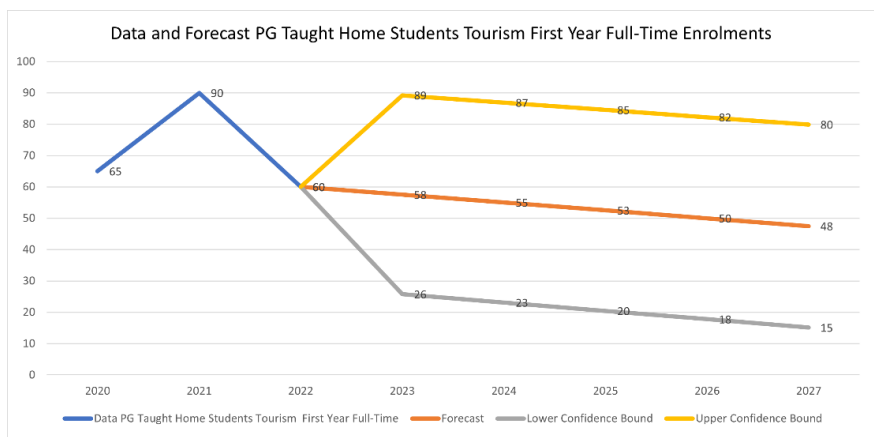**Appendix 16. Data and Forecast for All Tourism Courses PG International First Year Enrolments**
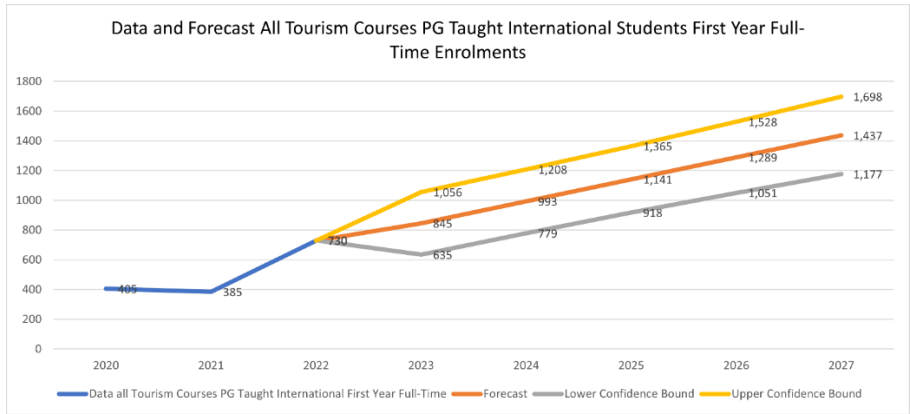
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Appendix 17 Data and Forecast for Tourism Management Courses PG Home First Year Enrolments
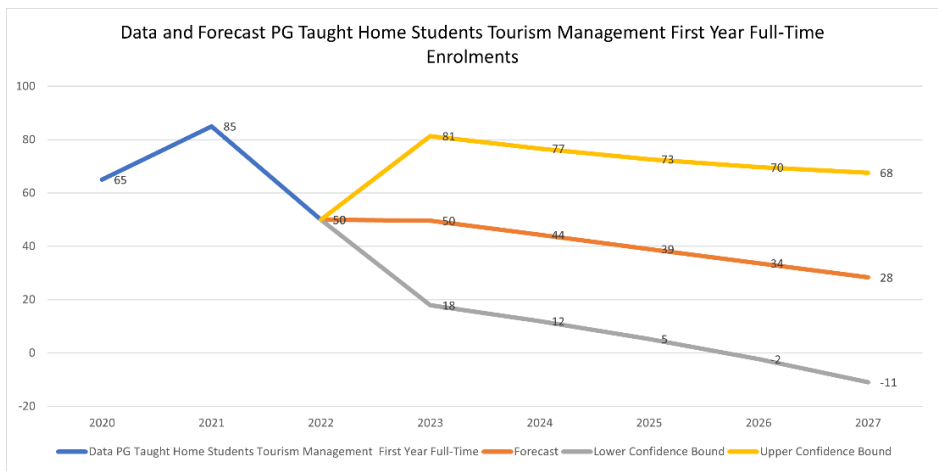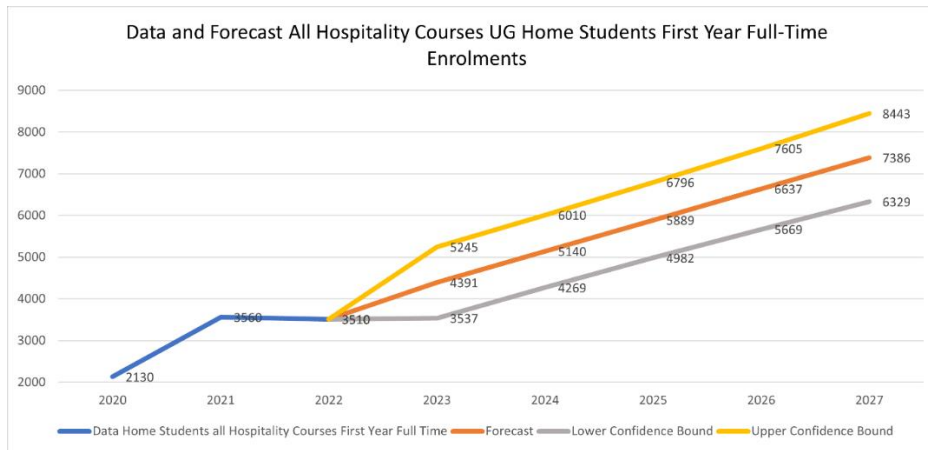

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Appendix 18 Data and Forecast for Tourism Courses PG Home First Year Enrolments
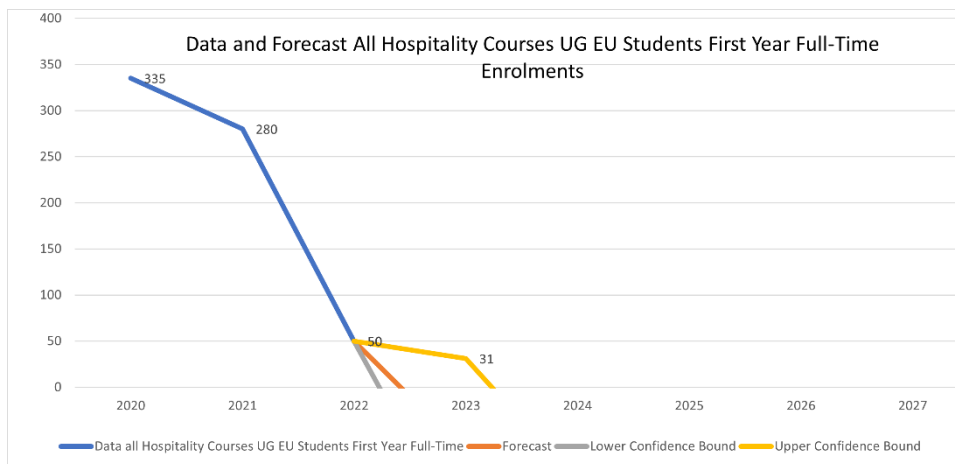

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

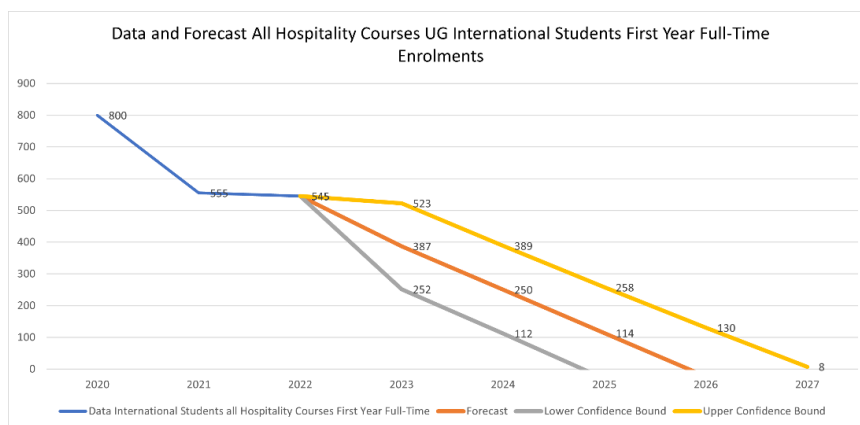**Appendix 19. Data and Forecast for All Hospitality Courses UG Home First Year Enrolments**

Data and Forecast All Hospitality Courses UG Home Students First Year Full-Time Enrolments

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Appendix 20. Data and Forecast for All Hospitality Courses UG EU First Year Enrolments
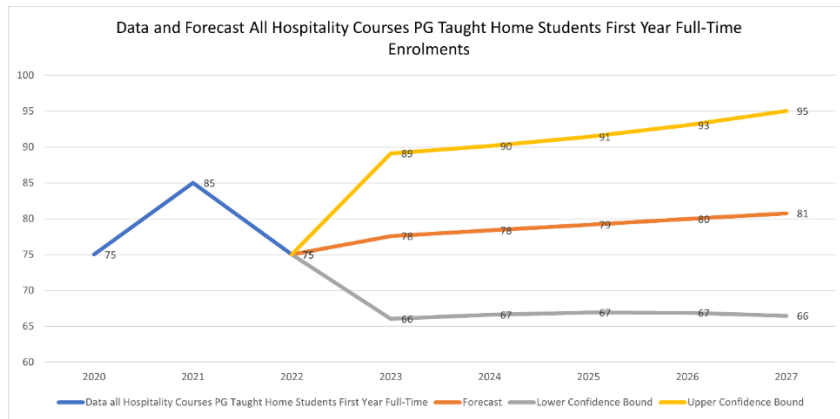

Data and Forecast All Hospitality Courses UG EU Students First Year Full-Time Enrolments

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

Appendix 21. Data and Forecast for All Hospitality Courses UG International First Year Enrolments


Data and Forecast All Hospitality Courses UG International Students First Year Full-Time Enrolments

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA, 2023)

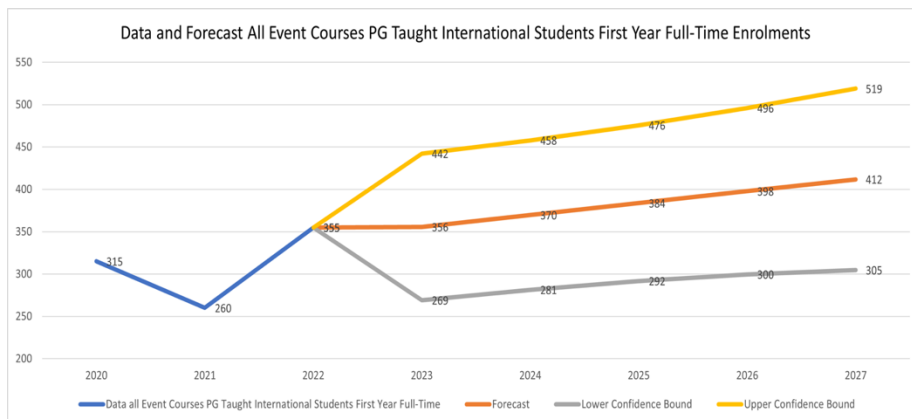**Appendix 22. Data and Forecast for All Hospitality Courses PG Home First Year Enrolments**

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA reports, 2023)

Appendix 23. Data and Forecast for All Hospitality Courses PG International First Year Enrolments
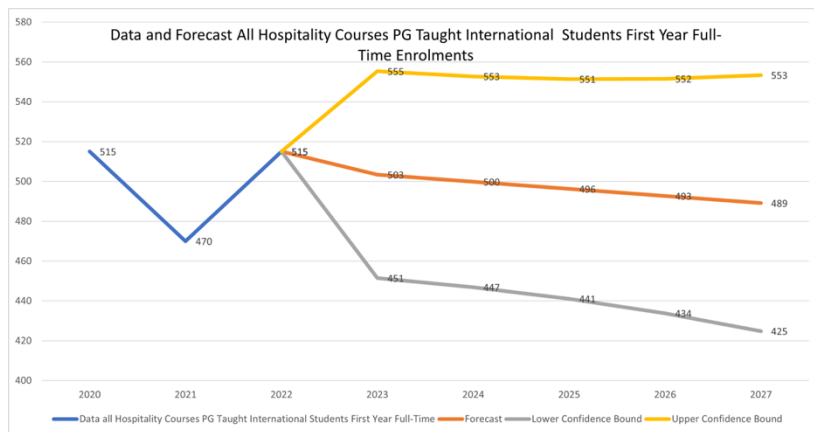
(source: based on data retrieved from HESA reports, 2023)

Appendix 24. Data and Forecast for All Events Courses PG International First Year Enrolments

(source: based on data retrieved from HESA reports, 2023)