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On Track: Class of 2004 is a longitudinal study which has followed learners who gained a qualification (ranging from the lowest FE qualification in the survey to a PhD) from a Scottish college or university in 2004. It is the only study of its kind to track learners several years after completing their course, looking at what they are doing and how they feel about their progression. We will continue to research the experiences of the 'Class of 2004' until 2009. This study is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI Scotland and Critical Thinking and is funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

The first sweep of the study was conducted in 2004, followed by the second sweep in 2005. In 2007, we completed the third sweep of the study, asking respondents about their current paths of learning and employment. Findings from this study were in line with the positive findings from previous sweeps:

- 70% of respondents have now commenced their chosen career or feel that they are 'on track' to their chosen career.
- 79% of respondents said they would do the same course again and even more (88%) said they would go to the same college/university.
- 79% of respondents are in employment and 70% of those are on permanent or open-ended contracts. Just 3% are unemployed and seeking work.

- Most respondents think that the skills which are 'very important' in their current job were improved during their course.
- 56% agree that their earning potential has gone up as a result of doing their course compared with 16% who disagree.
- 44% think the benefits of studying outweigh the costs of studying compared with 16% who disagree.

This document presents the topline results from the third sweep of the study. Where the same questions were asked in the 2005 and 2004 sweeps, these results are also shown.

In previous years we have provided a full report on the data from each sweep – published in 2004 and 2006 – with the topline results appended. We want to make the findings provided by *On Track: Class of 2004* accessible to a wider variety of audiences, so this year, we have decided to release them in three brief reports focusing on specific research questions that aim to address key issues in further and higher education. These are:

Gaining a further or higher education qualification: Is it worth it?

Back in 2004, respondents had been very positive about their experiences and this has continued through to 2007. This suggests that most respondents think it is worth it – but what other evidence is there about return on investment? The evidence is reviewed in this report.

Part time learners: who were they and where are they now?

This report investigates the characteristics of On Track respondents who chose a part-time route to attain their qualification in 2004. It also explores what they are doing now; satisfaction with their courses and college/university; further study and the extent to which they are ‘on track’ to their chosen career.

HNC and HND students: who were they and where are they now?

This report looks at those who gained an HNC or an HND in 2004: who were they, what were their experiences of studying, and where are they now? It draws comparisons with the Class of 2004 as a whole and with those who had chosen and completed other undergraduate higher education qualifications, specifically an Ordinary degree or an Honours degree.

It is intended that these topline results will be used as an accompaniment to the three reports.

On Track has been ongoing since 2004 so there is already a wealth of data available. The data collected in all sweeps is available on the Scottish Funding Council website, www.sfc.ac.uk. We hope that this research series will encourage further exploration of this data.

On Track explores the opinions of learners/leavers who either passed a course worth four SUMS or more from an FE college in Scotland; or gained a qualification from a Scottish Higher Education institution in 2004.

The third sweep of the *On Track: Class of 2004* study was conducted in the summer of 2007.

- 2,717 postal questionnaires were sent to respondents who had completed both previous sweeps of the survey. 1,635 completed surveys were returned by 14 June 2007.
- 2,294 postal questionnaires were sent to respondents who had completed only sweep one of the survey. 253 completed surveys were returned.

As in previous sweeps, the data was weighted by gender and mode within institutional sector.

An asterisk (*) represents a value of less than one half of one percent, but not zero. Where results do not add to 100% this is due to the inclusion of multiple responses or computer rounding.

Your course – When we refer to ‘your course’ we mean the course you completed in 2004. You were also asked questions about this course in the first two questionnaires entitled ‘On Track: Class of 2004’.

Section 1 – Current Status

Q1 Which of the following best describes your current situation?

	Base: All respondents	
	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Employed full-time work (30+ hrs per week)	49	60
Employed part-time work (1-29 hrs per week)	23	15
Self employed/freelance full-time (30+ hrs per week)	***	2
Self employed/freelance part-time (1-29 hrs per week)	***	1
Doing voluntary or other unpaid work	3	1
Unable to work	1	1
Retired	1	2
Looking after home or family	2	1
Unemployed – looking for work	6	3
Unemployed – not looking for work	1	*
Government sponsored training scheme	*	*
Further study	9	13

*** In 2005 these two categories were combined as ‘self employed/freelance’ 3%

Answer if currently working

Q2 Which of the following best describes your current status?

	(2,194)	(1,453)
	2005 %	2007 %
Base: All respondents currently working		
Permanent or open ended contract	65	70
Fixed term contract	14	10
Probationary period prior to confirmation	3	3
Self employed	4	3
Temporary – through an agency	3	2
Other temporary	4	3
Voluntary/unpaid work	2	*
Other	2	1

Answer if currently working

Q3 How long have you been in this current job?

	(1,453)
	2007 %
Base: All respondents currently working	
Less than a year	30
Between 1 year and less than 2 years	19
Between 2 years and 3 years	23
Over 3 years, but not since before I began my course	8
Since before I began my course	15

Answer if currently working

Q4 Which sector is your current employment in?

<i>Base: All respondents currently working</i>	(2,194)	(1,453)
	2005 %	2007 %
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	2	2
Fishing	*	*
Mining and quarrying	*	*
Manufacturing	5	5
Electricity, gas, water supply	3	3
Construction	4	4
Wholesale and retail trade; repair trades	13	8
Hotels and restaurants	6	2
Transport, storage and communication	4	3
Banking, finance, insurance	5	5
Real estate, renting and business activities	2	2
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	5	7
Education	15	18
Health and social work	18	19
Other community, social and personal service activities	10	10
Private households with employed persons	1	*

Answer if currently working

Q5 Which of the following best describes where you work?

<i>Base: All respondents currently working</i>	(1,453)
	2007 %
Private sector organisation/Self employed	35
Public sector organisation	51
Charity/voluntary organisation	7

Answer if currently working

Q6 Approximately how many people work in the entire organisation in which you are currently working (ie all branches, departments etc)?

Base: All respondents currently working	(1,453)
	2007 %
1-49	20
50-249	13
250 or more	51
Don't know	9

Answer if currently working

Q7 Which (if any) of the following were the key factors influencing your decision to work in your current job?

Base: All respondents currently working	(2,194)	(1,453)
	2005 %	2007 %
It was exactly the type of work I wanted	35	40
I wanted to work in this locality/region	37	38
To broaden my experience and develop more general skills	37	33
It offered interesting work	28	32
The salary level was attractive	23	27
Other conditions of employment were attractive	20	25
To gain experience in order to obtain the type of work I want	25	22
I was offered a permanent contract	16	21
It provides good opportunities for progression to do what I want within the organisation	21	21
It wasn't really what I wanted but it was the best option available	36	16
I was already working for this employer	25	15
I just wanted to be working	25	14
It is better than being unemployed	25	14
To see if I would like this type of work	12	9
To pay off debts	15	6
It was the only option available	10	3

Answer if currently working

Q8 How important, if at all, are each of the following in your current job?

Base: All respondents currently working

(1,453)

	Very important %	Fairly important %	Neither %	Not very important %	Not at all important %	Don't know %
Good grammar and spelling	39	39	7	7	2	–
Good general business sense	23	31	17	14	7	*
Problem solving	49	34	6	5	1	–
Report writing skills	35	32	11	8	7	*
Initiative	58	29	4	2	1	–
Working constructively with others	68	23	1	1	1	–
Ability to work under pressure	64	24	4	2	1	–
Organisational ability	53	33	4	3	1	–
Giving presentations/speeches	15	24	20	16	18	1
Verbal skills	54	32	4	2	2	–
Ability to analyse complex issues	37	34	10	6	5	1
IT/Office skills	26	39	14	8	6	*
Budgeting/managing money	14	20	23	15	20	1

Answer if currently working

Q9 How appropriate do you feel your job is for someone with your level of qualifications/skills?

Base: All respondents currently working

(6,101)

(2,194)

(1,453)

	2004 %	2005 %	2007 %
Very appropriate	39	39	42
Fairly appropriate	22	25	30
Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	12	11	8
Not very appropriate	9	10	8
Not appropriate at all	11	11	5
Don't know	7***	3***	*

***In 2004 & 2005 the option was for 'not stated' 3%

Answer if currently working

Q10 How closely related is your current work to the content of the course of study you completed in 2004? By content we mean the subject matter of your course.

<i>Base: All respondents currently working</i>	(1,453)
	2007 %
Very closely related	40
Quite closely related	25
Not at all related	16
Not very closely related	12
Don't know	*

Answer if currently working

Q11 As far as you are aware, which of these factors were important to your employer when you gained this employment?

<i>Base: All respondents currently working</i>	(1,453)					
	Formal requirement %	Important %	Not very important but helped %	Not important %	Don't know %	N/A %
The level of qualification I obtained in 2004	26	27	19	14	2	5
The subject I studied	22	30	17	17	1	4
The final grade or class of degree/other qualification I obtained	12	25	24	22	2	6
Qualifications I obtained after the one I got in 2004	11	16	13	19	2	29
Relevant work experience from previous employment	16	44	15	9	1	7
Skills I developed as a result of other activities (e.g. clubs, voluntary work, hobbies, family life)	6	30	25	19	3	8
Specific occupational knowledge	20	41	14	9	3	4

Answer if currently working

Q12 What is your annual salary (ie how much do you earn before tax is deducted)?
If you work part-time, please give your actual salary and we'll work out the full-time equivalent.

<i>Base: All respondents currently working</i>	(2,194)	(1,453)
	2005 %	2007 %
£0-£5,000	19	5
£5,000-£9,999	14	11
£10,000-£14,999	20	18
£15,000-£19,999	18	20
£20,000-£24,999	11	17
£25,000-£29,999	5	10
£30,000-£34,999	3	5
£35,000-£39,999	2	4
£40,000+	2	4

In 2005 question wording was 'If you are currently undertaking any employment or self employment – what is your gross annual pay, before tax?'

Q13 Since qualifying in 2004, have you ever been unemployed and seeking work?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)
	2007 %
Yes	25
No	72

Answer if you have ever been unemployed

Q14 How many different periods of unemployment lasting one month or more have you had?

<i>Base: All respondents who have ever been unemployed</i>	(467)
	2007 %
I have only been unemployed for less than a month at a time	15
One	45
Two	16
Three	7
Four	2
Five	2
More than five periods	11

Answer if you have ever been unemployed

Q15 In total, how many months would you say this/these periods of unemployment add up to?
Please write in number of months.

<i>Base: All respondents who have ever been unemployed</i>		(467)
		2007 %
Up to 6		63
7-12		12
13-18		4
Over 18		10
Not stated		10

Q16 Have you done any of the following since qualifying in 2004? Please exclude any courses that were less than five days study in total.

<i>Base: All respondents</i>		(1,862)
		2007 %
An external training course through work		23
An internal training course through work		29
A full-time course at a higher education institution/university		24
A full-time course at a college		8
A part-time/block/distance learning course at a higher education institution/university		10
A part-time/block/distance learning course at a college		8
Taken 6 months or more out to travel abroad		3

Answer if you have undertaken further study since 2004

Q17 Which of the following qualification/s have you gained since the course you completed in 2004, which are you currently studying towards and which did you start to study towards but did not complete?

Base: All respondents who have undertaken further study since 2004

(1,296)

	Gained %	Currently studying towards %	Started to study towards but did not complete %
General Standard Grade, Intermediate 1, SVQ 1	3	*	–
Credit Standard Grade, Intermediate 2, SVQ 2	3	*	*
National Course or Unit in a vocational (job related) subject, SVQ 3	5	3	*
National Course or Unit in a non-vocational (academic) subject, Higher	4	1	*
Advanced Higher	1	–	*
Higher National Certificate	8	1	1
Higher National Diploma, SVQ 4	6	1	1
SVQ 5	*	*	–
Certificate/Diploma of Higher Education	3	1	*
Ordinary/Bachelors/General/Pass Degree	7	6	1
Honours Degree Third Class	1	1	–
Honours Degree Lower Second Class	1	2	–
Honours Degree Upper Second Class	3	3	*
Honours Degree First Class	2	4	*
General Certificate/Diploma	6	2	*
Masters	5	3	1
Doctorate/PhD	*	3	*
Other	10	5	1

Answer if you have undertaken further study since 2004

Q18 What was the main reason you decided to undertake further study or training?

<i>Base: All respondents currently working</i>		(1,296)
		2007 %
To change or improve my career options		32
To develop a broader range of skills or knowledge		11
To develop a more specialist set of skills or knowledge		13
Because I was interested in the content of the course		5
I wanted to continue studying		5
I had been unable to find a suitable job		2
My employer sent me		3
Because I had enjoyed my first course		2
Other		3

Section 2 – Looking Back to Studying

Q19 With hindsight, if you had your time again, would you choose the same course?

<i>Base: All who passed their course/gained a qualification in 2004</i>		(2,739)	(1,862)
		2005 %	2007 %
Yes, I would do the same course		80	79
No, I would do a different course		17	17
No, I would not do a course at all		2	2

Q20 And would you choose the same college/university again?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>		(2,739)	(1,862)
		2005 %	2007 %
Yes, I would go to the same college/university		85	88
No, I would go to a different college/university		12	9
No, I would not go to college/university at all		1	1

Q21 Have you been contacted in the last year by the college/university where you qualified from in 2004 with any of the following?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
A prospectus/course guide	25	13
A request to update your contact details	13	10
A request to donate money to the university/college	10	12
A credit card application that donates to the college/university	4	3
A request to go back to university/college to speak to existing students about your experience	4	4
A survey/questionnaire about your time at college/university	21	12
A newsletter	23	25
Other	4	6
No, I have not been contacted	36	49

* In 2005, question read 'Have you received any of the following correspondence in the last year from the college/university where you studied?'

Q22 Since you qualified in 2004, have you contacted the college/university where you studied? If so, what was your reason for contacting your institution?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)
	2007 %
Career Guidance	5
Advice from lecturer/tutor	12
To request a prospectus	7
To request a reference from a lecturer/tutor	19
Other	11

Q23 During your time at college/university, did you spend any time studying or working outside the UK (not necessarily as part of your course)?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)
	2007 %
Yes	8
No	89

Section 3 – Money Matters

Q24a The money I spent/am spending on my education is a good investment in my future

Base: All respondents	(6,101)	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2004 %	2005 %	2007 %
Agree	59	70	72
Neither	17	11	10
Disagree	3	5	5
Not applicable	17	10	10

Q24b I am seriously worried about the debts I owe/am going to owe as a result of taking my course

Base: All respondents	(6,101)	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2004 %	2005 %	2007 %
Agree	24	31	24
Neither	17	16	17
Disagree	16	25	26
Not applicable	36	21	28

Q24c I would like to take more courses but the debts I would incur puts me off

Base: All respondents	(6,101)	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2004 %	2005 %	2007 %
Agree	27	35	33
Neither	12	15	13
Disagree	17	25	25
Not applicable	36	18	24

Q24d The benefit of gaining a qualification outweighs the costs of studying to gain it

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(6,101)	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2004 %	2005 %	2007 %
Agree	37	44	44
Neither	25	25	26
Disagree	10	16	16
Not applicable	20	9	8

Q24e I feel my earning potential has gone up as a result of doing this course

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)
	2007 %
Agree	56
Neither	17
Disagree	16
Not applicable	6

Q25 Do you currently have debts as a result of studying?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)
	2007 %
Yes	47
No	50
Don't know	1

Q26 Roughly how much debt do you have? Please write in.

<i>Base: All respondents who have debts as a result of studying</i>		(1,862)
		2007 %
Up to £2,500		14
£2,501-£5,000		18
£5,001-£7,500		9
£7,501-£10,000		16
£10,001-£15,000		15
£15,001-£20,000		13
£20,001+		4
Don't know		11

Section 4 – The Future

Q27a I work to live, not live to work

<i>Base: All respondents</i>		(2,739)	(1,862)
		2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree		45	33
Agree		37	42
Neither		12	15
Disagree		4	6
Strongly disagree		1	1

Q27b I want to be self employed/be my own boss

<i>Base: All respondents</i>		(2,739)	(1,862)
		2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree		11	12
Agree		16	18
Neither		37	30
Disagree		29	28
Strongly disagree		4	7

Q27c I am extremely ambitious

	<i>Base: All respondents</i>	
	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	19	16
Agree	34	37
Neither	28	27
Disagree	15	14
Strongly disagree	2	2

Q27d My career is the most important thing for me

	<i>Base: All respondents</i>	
	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	7	7
Agree	19	21
Neither	27	27
Disagree	39	35
Strongly disagree	6	5

Q27e I work hard to generate a high standard of living for myself/my family

	<i>Base: All respondents</i>	
	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	19	21
Agree	50	53
Neither	20	16
Disagree	8	6
Strongly disagree	1	1

Q27f I do not expect to get my main fulfilment from work

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	14	10
Agree	45	42
Neither	22	23
Disagree	15	18
Strongly disagree	2	3

Q27g I prefer to work in a small company and make a big impact

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	9	9
Agree	23	24
Neither	47	46
Disagree	18	16
Strongly disagree	2	1

Q27h I prefer to work in a large company where there is a clear career structure

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	7	4
Agree	23	24
Neither	45	44
Disagree	19	20
Strongly disagree	2	3

Q27i Having the opportunity to be promoted in the work place is very important

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	21	20
Agree	47	47
Neither	20	20
Disagree	9	8
Strongly disagree	1	1

Q27j I expect to change career several times in the course of my working life

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
Strongly agree	10	10
Agree	26	29
Neither	28	26
Disagree	28	26
Strongly disagree	6	6

Q27k&l How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)				
	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %
I feel it is important to be involved in local community issues	13	42	32	8	1
Having the opportunity to gain international experience is very important	11	28	35	19	4

Q28 Which of the following applies to you?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,739)	(1,862)
	2005 %	2007 %
I am living in Scotland and plan to stay here for at least the next few years	77	79
I am living in Scotland but plan to move away at some stage in the next few years	11	10
Originally, I only planned to stay in Scotland for my course but I have ended up staying in Scotland	N/A	1
I am living outside Scotland, but plan to move back at some point in the next few years	2	3
I am living outside Scotland, and do not have any plans to move back	5	7
Other	3	3

Answer if you do not currently live in Scotland

Q29 Why did you move away from Scotland?

<i>Base: All who do not currently live in Scotland</i>	(259)	(182)
	2005 %	2007 %
I could not find a job in Scotland that I wanted	22	18
I always planned to move out of Scotland after I completed my course	34	30
I moved because my partner wanted to move	9	11
I moved to increase my chances of employment	17	24
I was offered work elsewhere and decided to take it	21	29
Other	25	28

Q30 And finally... which of these following statements best describes you?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(1,862)
	2007 %
I have now commenced my chosen career	36
I am on track to my chosen career although I am not quite doing the job I want yet	34
I have not yet chosen a career but I am happy to wait	8
I do not know what my chosen career is yet and I find this frustrating	9
I am not looking for a career	5
Don't know/not applicable	7

Answer if you have undertaken further study since 2004

QA Please indicate below the level of qualification, if any, you gained in 2004?

<i>Base: All respondents</i>	<i>(1,868)</i>
	%
General Standard Grade, Intermediate 1, SVQ 1	3
Credit Standard Grade, Intermediate 2, SVQ 2	5
Higher, National Course, or Unit, SVQ3	16
Advanced Higher, National Course or Unit, Higher National Certificate	17
Higher National Diploma, SVQ 4	10
SVQ 5	*
Certificate/Diploma of Higher Education	3
Ordinary/Bachelors/General/Pass Degree	6
Honours Degree Third Class	1
Honours Degree Lower Second Class	4
Honours Degree Upper Second Class	11
Honours Degree First Class	4
Graduate Certificate/Diploma	4
Masters	6
Doctorate/PhD	1
Other	6
Qualification not stated	4
I did not gain a qualification	*
I did not pass the course	*

Section 5 – Demographics

Gender

	%
Male	43
Female	57

Age

	%
15-19	5
20-25	39
26-30	10
31-35	8
36-40	10
41-45	11
46-50	9
51-59	5
60+	2

Ethnic origin

	%
WHITE	97
Scottish	80
Other British	15
Irish	1
Any other white background	1
MIXED	1
Any mixed background	1
ASIAN	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	14
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	*
Any other Asian background	*
BLACK	*
Caribbean	-
African	*
Any other black background	-
Any other background	*
Not stated	*

Country of birth

	%
Scotland	78
England	16
Wales	1
Northern Ireland	1
Not stated	4

Disability

	%
Yes	7
No	93

Carer

	%
Yes	3
No	96

Children in household

	%
Yes	24
No	20
Not stated	55

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कृपया संपर्क करें: communications@sfc.ac.uk

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