

The SOC(HE)_EP and SOC(HE)_GH classifications share more similarities than differences regarding what type of job is classified as a 'graduate job', and overlap with one of the proposed measures for the Teaching Excellence Framework – students in 'highly skilled employment', SOC 2010 major groups 1-3 (see SOC(HE)_GH slides for a comparison of different classifications). While using SOC 1-3 gives a broadly similar (but not identical) indicator to using the SOC(HE)_EP and SOC(HE)_GH, doing so overlooks the differences within the occupational major groups and the changing nature of graduate jobs. In contrast, the SOC(HE)_EP and SOC(HE)_GH classifications look at occupations at the 4-digit and 3-digit level respectively, and highlights the variation within SOC major groups. The speakers were particularly concerned with being able to produce *the best* kind of graduate job indicator.

The SOC(HE)_GH classification categorises jobs into either 'graduate' or 'non-graduate', whereas the SOC(HE)_EP classification differentiates between different types of graduate jobs: Expert, Orchestrator, Communicator, and non-graduate. Which classification is most useful depends on what type of question we are asking. Are certain jobs, such as technicians, teaching assistants, and estate agents, graduate-level jobs? Another issue is credential inflation and job title inflation: are jobs changing to require the use of graduate skills, or changing in name only? Evidence for job upgrading (where a non-graduate job changes to become a graduate-level one) is limited, although not completely absent. Other factors related to thinking about graduate job classifications were that using graduate earnings as an indicator was limiting as it did not take the graduates' use of skills and knowledge into account, nor regional variation in graduates' salaries.

For careers services provision, an important question was what kind of advice could be given to university students. Can graduates work their way up into graduate jobs from non-graduate jobs, and, if not, what factors hold them back? Overall, evidence appears to suggest that there are limited routes for progression into graduate jobs from non-graduate jobs. A recent report by IER's Dr Heike Behle for HEFCE investigated some of the factors associated with this issue – for example, the beneficial role of work experience.

The Keynote presentation from Dr Charlie Ball, 'What is a graduate job?' put the debate about graduate employment into an historical perspective, then went on to highlight key trends specific to the recent developments in the labour market: notably the erosion of semi-skilled work and the growth in lower-level service work. The discussion highlighted trends to watch in the future, such as further (unprecedented?) automation of mid-to-high skill level jobs, and the developments of the HE system, such as the new degree apprenticeships.

This seminar brought together people from academia, policy, and practice, to discuss the implications of what classifications of graduate jobs can tell us about graduate employment in a context of substantial changes in higher education and the labour market. The speakers were united in their endeavour to continue monitoring graduate employment, and analysing the changing nature of jobs, and highlighted the importance of financial support for collecting quality data to be able to do so. Ample opportunities were discussed for bringing the research and practice around graduate jobs closer together, both for careers services practitioners giving advice to students and for the government's university outcomes metrics, as well as establishing links for further research and collaboration within the academic community. Let's carry on this important conversation!