First Steps in the Animation Industry

A Review of the Animation VFX and Games Graduate Traineeship Programme 2014 to 2022
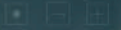
AUGUST 2022

Animation

Skillnet

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Introduction

The Animation, VFX and Games sector in Ireland is gaining a world-wide reputation for excellence. The sector is growing rapidly with Irish studios producing and owning rights to more and more of their own original material. In 2010, there were only 70 people in full-time employment in the Animation sector in Ireland. Since then, the sector has become an integral and important part of Ireland's digital and creative economy. Screen Ireland estimates that there are currently over 1600 full time employees in the sector. Irish animation studios are working with some of the major names in global broadcasting—including Disney, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, and the BBC.

There is a need to create a pipeline of talent to support the potential growth in the sector. Yet, gaining a foothold in the animation industry is difficult for new graduates. While there are a diverse range of certified programmes available to animation students, there is a need for a programme that acts as a bridge between the academic side and the workplace. The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme addresses that need. It allows the trainees from a range of backgrounds to find their way into the industry. It also allows companies to access talented trainees. The placement period allows companies to connect with, engage, develop and where desirable retain the trainees as employees.

Many companies are finding that the market for animators is becoming more competitive. Live action films require animators for CGI or special effects, while the gaming sector uses animators in Game Art, Game Design and Game Development. Animation skills are also in demand in other areas, such as computer systems design, software publishing, advertising, marketing, data visualisation (for example making static charts interactive), and recruitment (for the simulation of workplace scenarios).

Therefore, trainee placement programmes such as the Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programmes are an important way to secure the most talented new entrants and to ensure companies have access to a skilled talent pool.

> "
> The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship has successfully placed approximately 70 trainees in host companies

This report was commissioned to review and evaluate the placement trainee and the placement companies' experience of The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme. This evaluation of The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme is designed to do two things; capture the trainees experience in completing their placement and investigate how the host companies optimised the placement trainee.

The scope of the research is limited to the respondents to the online survey and those who took part in the follow up interviews. This report presents their feedback and suggestions for improving the programme. While COVID-19 did affect the 2020 and 2021 iterations of the programme in minor ways, it is not the primary focus of the research.

Importance of work placement

Taking part in work placement gives trainees the opportunity to explore the real-world working environment. They will have the experience of working in a company where deadlines must be met, quality must be maintained, and problems must be solved. This experience allows them to develop their collaboration skills, to enhance their technical skill set and prepare for their future career. The experience of work placement also allows the trainees to develop employability skills, such as working with others, working to deadlines and time management.

Work placement in a company provides the placement trainee with the opportunity to demonstrate their relevant experience which will allow them to take advantage of future opportunities. The selection process for many roles in the screen industries, places a great deal of importance on potential candidates having a portfolio that demonstrates their work to date. Trainees on this work placement are encouraged by the companies to develop and curate a showreel or portfolio based on their actual work during the placement. These trainees who have an opportunity to create a portfolio, or showreel, will have an advantage when approaching future employers.

Nature of the programme

The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme is supported by Screen Ireland, and Animation Skillnet under the Skills Connect Programme. From 2014 to 2016, the initial Bridge Programme placed almost 50 trainees in host companies. Since the reconfiguration in 2017, The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme has successfully placed approximately 70 trainees in host companies.
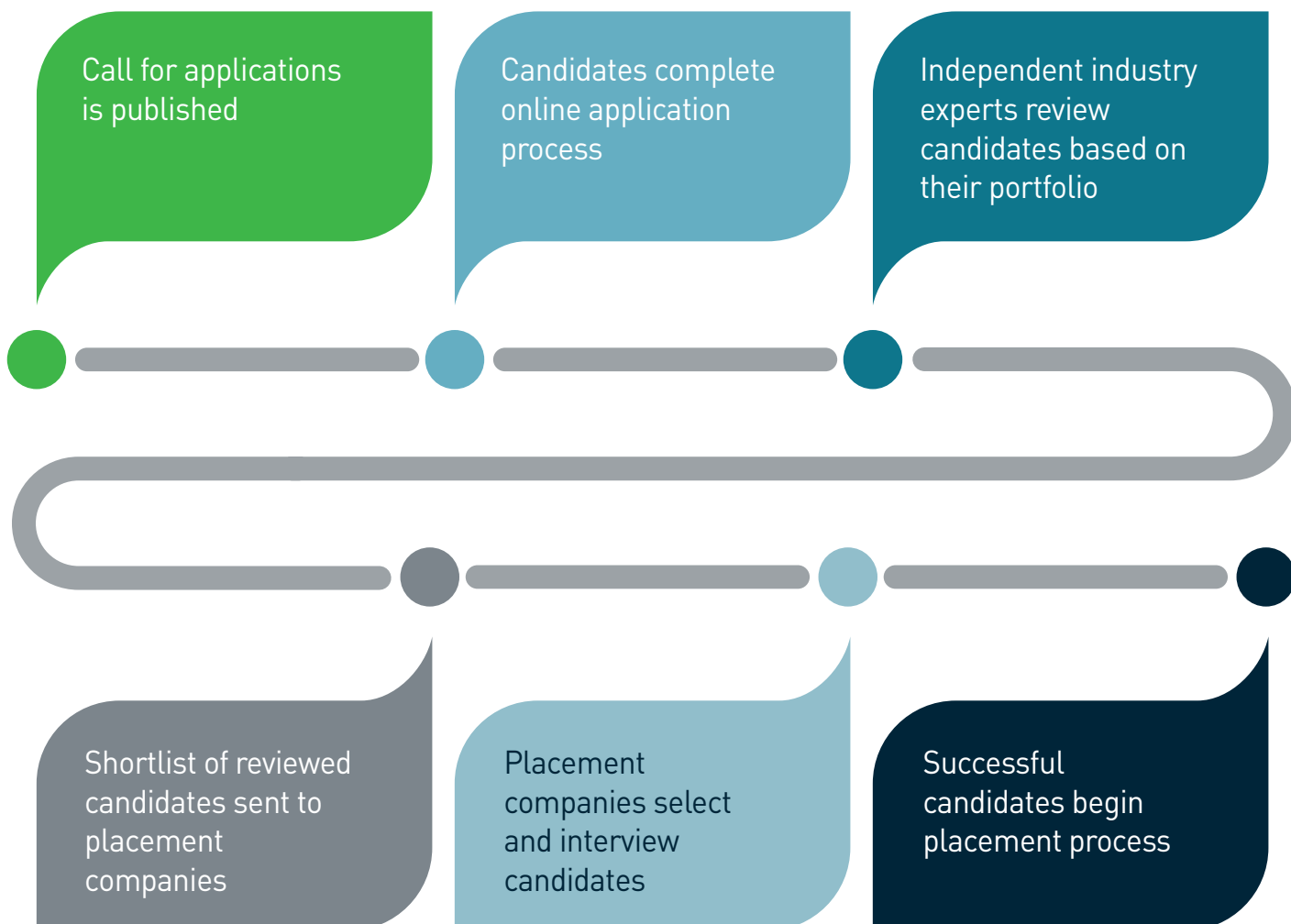
The aim of the programme was to recruit and place approximately 10 trainees for a 6-month period (24 weeks) each year. In 2021-2022 the placement duration was changed to a 3-month period (12 weeks), in response to the many new challenges facing graduates in the sector. Running the programme twice a year facilitated both a wider range of studios and a greater number of potential candidates taking part in the Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme. The change also reflected the project-based nature of the sector and allowed the placement programme to support studios who might have projects suitable for trainees at different times of the year.

The main sectors that take part in the placement programme are:

1. Film
2. TV
3. Games
4. Immersive entertainment
5. VFX (Visual Effects)

The current traineeship lasts for three months, and the trainees receive a bursary payment to cover out of pocket expenses. All the trainees participating in the programme must be based in Ireland.

Recruitment process for the programme

Call for applications is published

Candidates complete online application process

Independent industry experts review candidates based on their portfolio

Shortlist of reviewed candidates sent to placement companies

Placement companies select and interview candidates

Successful candidates begin placement process

The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship uses a range of techniques to recruit potential candidates for the programme.

Call for applicants: A call for applicants is published on the Animation Skillnet website (www.animationskillnet. ie) and on the Screen Ireland website (www.screenireland. ie). This information is shared and promoted by others including Screen Producers Ireland, and Animation Ireland. This allows Animation Skillnet to reach their target audience. Many producers and stakeholders in placement companies also promote the programme and recommend it to prospective trainees.

Independent review: Once the call for applications is published, the candidates complete the online application process. The candidates submit a portfolio, and this portfolio is reviewed independently by industry experts. This is viewed as one of the strengths of the programme as it ensures a more objective selection process based on defined criteria. A spreadsheet is created containing a database of potential candidates including the industry experts' notes.

Selection process: The database of shortlisted candidates is forwarded to the placement studios. The studios have an opportunity to review all candidates. They also have access to the industry experts notes to guide them in their selection.

The placement studios then select the candidates they would like to interview. They conduct the interviews and tend to hire a trainee who is suitable for the studio's needs. In some selection rounds placement companies may actually compete for particularly skilled candidates. In others the company may select more than one trainee. Once the selection process is completed the trainee then joins the company for the three-month placement after a week-long induction programme.

The placement programme consists of three separate elements

1. Induction week
2. Placement for 3 months
3. Masterclasses

1. The induction week is a recent addition to the programme and was introduced in 2019. The induction week is hosted by Animation Skillnet and Screen Ireland. It covers the essential interpersonal skills and soft skills that can enhance the trainees' employability. The workshops and sessions include topics such as Tax for Freelancers, Emotional Wellbeing, Artist Spotlight: Character Design, Managing Time and Energy, Managing your Career, Online Presence, Personal Projects, Well-Being for the Remote Worker and a Meet and Greet with previous trainees.

2. The placement for three months is usually in the studios' premises and some trainees may need to relocate to take advantage of the placement. There is no requirement from The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship Programme for the placement trainees to work onsite in the company. The issue of sourcing accommodation has been highlighted as an area of concern by the companies and the trainees as a shortage of suitable accommodation can present challenges. This challenge is not unique to the screen sector and is reflective of the housing situation in Ireland.

3. During the placement period the trainees are invited to a series of masterclasses, hosted by Animation Skillnet and Screen Ireland.

Post placement feedback

Once the placement is finished, staff from The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme follow up with the trainees to capture their feedback on their experience. Many of the trainees remain with the studio after the placement period.

The Animation Skillnet staff also speak with the studios. They look for feedback on the selection process and the placement experience. This feedback is used to feed into the planning of the next round of The Animation, Games & VFX Graduate Traineeship.

Some of this feedback was important when introducing the change to the duration of the placement programme. Feedback from some of the studios and trainees was that the trainees had progressed and were work ready after approximately three months. The studios also recognised that having spent three months on work placement, many trainees were contributing as much as any other junior employee, so it made sense for them to be employed on a contract. In some cases, three months was sufficient time for the trainee and the studio to know if the fit wasn't right for either party.

Research Methodology

Trainees' survey

To capture the feedback of the potential sample in this research, an online survey using Survey Monkey was created. The questions were refined using feedback from Animation Skillnet. Once approved, it was sent to all the trainees on the existing Animation, VFX & Games Traineeship database. The response rate was 29% which reflects well against the average online response rate which can range from 5% to 30%. This rate is sufficient to reduce sampling bias and allow us to conduct an effective analysis of the results.

The trainees' survey was followed up by an online interview with 11 trainees. The interviews took place using Zoom technology and those interviews were transcribed.

Placement companies survey

To capture the feedback of the placement companies in this research, a company specific online survey, using Survey Monkey was created. The questions were refined using feedback from Animation Skillnet. Once approved, it was sent to all the selected companies on the existing Animation, VFX & Games Traineeship database.

A sample of six companies based in Dublin and Kilkenny were selected for interview. The companies interviewed represented the different sectors within the screen industry. The interviews took place using Zoom technology and those interviews were transcribed.

Name	Sector	Role of respondent
Daily Madness Productions	Character-focused animation production	Line producer
Algorithm	Creative production studio/ immersive technologies	MD
Piranha Bar	VFX & Animation studio	MD
StoryToys	Edutainment apps for children	Art Team manager
Cartoon Saloon	Animation studio	AD
Lighthouse Studios	Animation studio	L&D

Analysis of results

Key themes from trainee placement interviews

The placement trainees were all appreciative of the placement experience and would recommend the experience to other potential candidates. The trainees in the interviews represented both those who had recently completed the training and those who had completed The Bridge placement process several years ago. They were thoughtful and reflective in their answers and were keen to discuss the impact the placement had made on their career to date.

The discussions with interviewees generated a number of topics broadly focused across three thematic areas:

1. Enhanced employability

2. Value of industry experience

3. Precarious nature of the work

1. Enhanced employability

All the interviewees acknowledged how the placement experience had enhanced their employability. They all recognized the competitive nature of securing a position with an animation or games studio. They spoke of friends, who were not on the placement programme and who had not secured employment since graduation. More than one person felt that the experiential learning on the placement was more valuable than their formal education in college.

When speaking of the placement, many trainees who were retained after placement ended said that the transition to employee was seamless. They felt that the experience gave them access to a network of connections and contacts that enabled them to hear about and take advantage of more opportunities.
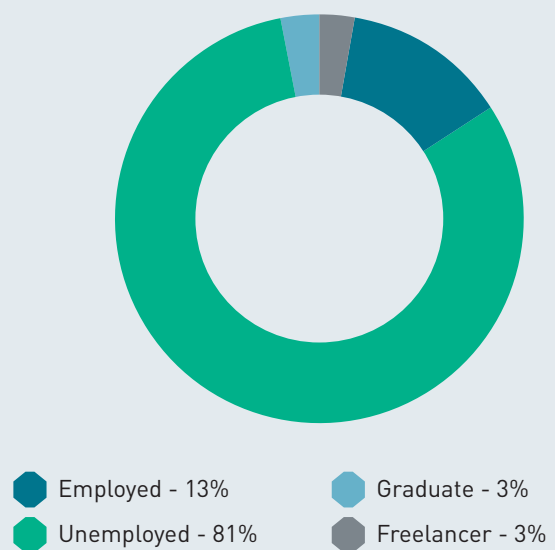
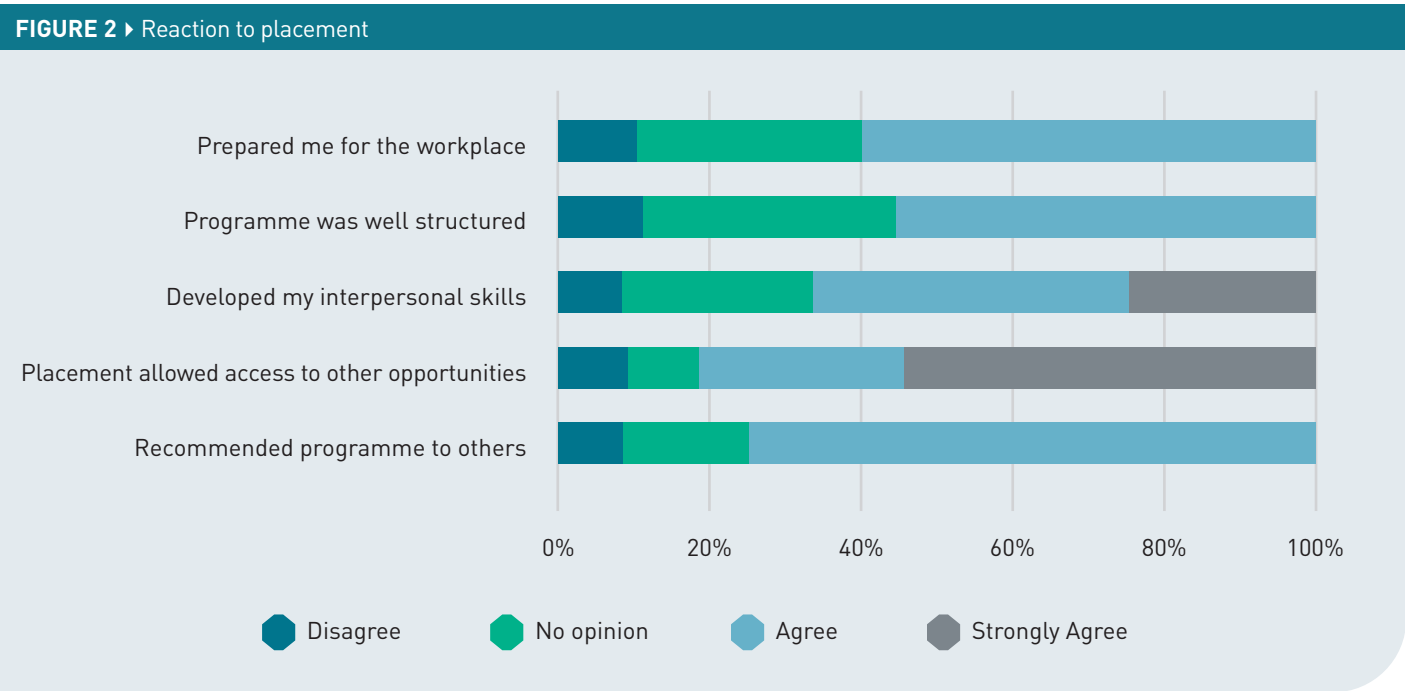One trainee spoke of how he gained knowledge of the importance of the user experience in developing apps.

Another of the trainees mentioned that he felt he was selected for the skills he already had and therefore did not greatly increase his skills levels. Although he did admit that the placement enabled him to add to his portfolio and secure his current position.

Many of the trainees from earlier programmes spoke of their need to develop their business or people management skills. They have been working in the sector for several years and felt that this type of training would be crucial to moving into more supervisory or management positions in future roles.

Most of the recent trainees mentioned taking part in the masterclasses, especially the session on Tax as a Freelancer. They felt this type of training would make their career in such a project-based industry more professional and enable them to be tax compliant.

FIGURE 1 ▸ Trainee Status Prior to Placement

Employed - 13% Graduate - 3%

Unemployed - 81% Freelancer - 3%

FIGURE 2 ▸ Reaction to placement

Prepared me for the workplace
Programme was well structured
Developed my interpersonal skills
Placement allowed access to other opportunities
Recommended programme to others

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

● Disagree   ● No opinion   ● Agree   ● Strongly Agree

2. Value of industry experience

Working with the studios allowed the trainees to experience the dynamic nature of working for award winning studios, under production pressures. This, while daunting at first, enabled them to develop confidence and competence to work in the sector.

The ability to share work they had completed in the studio as part of their portfolio, (subject to conditions) was seen as an advantage in securing future employment. They also mentioned the value of receiving constructive feedback on their work from the perspective of the studio rather than as an academic assessment.

Many of the trainees discussed the steep learning curve in using the animation tools, for instance using Adobe Photoshop as part of a work process rather than as part of a college task or assignment. They also spoke of the value of experiencing and understanding the Pipeline as something only working in the studio could provide.

Most of the trainees had access to a mentor and in some cases multiple mentors. As work placement trainees they had access to a range of supports that an entry level employee might not have. They were encouraged to take part in training and to contribute to team projects. They found this very beneficial and a key support in developing new skills on the job.

3. Precarious nature of the work

Many of the placement trainees remained with the company after the placement period was completed. Trainees from earlier Bridge programme shared how they had progressed within the placement studio and have been promoted into more senior roles. Others have chosen to leave the original placement company and were working in other studios on different projects.

FIGURE 3 ▸ Remained at host company after placement

● Yes - 66%   ● No - 27%   ● Other - 7%
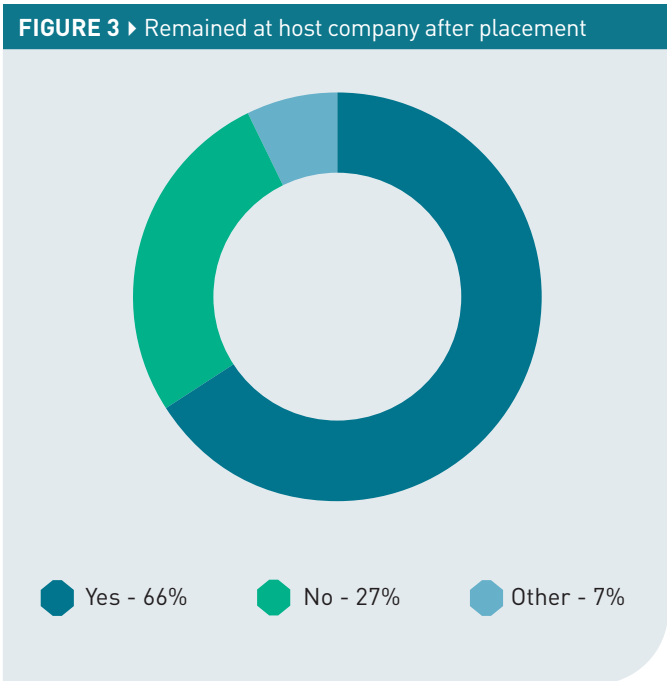
Some of the interviewees spoke of the precarious nature of the work and the prevalence of short-term contracts. They also spoke about having completed the placement they might experience a period of unemployment before securing work. However, they did accept that this was the reality in the sector.

Some had decided to become freelancers and move from project to project, gaining valuable experience from each position. From their perspective, success in freelancing required more than a technical skillset. It also required a network of contacts to build a sustainable freelance career. They believed that their work placement was key in developing that network.

Impact of COVID on trainees' experience

COVID- 19 impacted on the animation sector as it did in other creative enterprises. However, some companies were able to continue with production.

FIGURE 4 ▸ Workplace support during COVID-19

According to the Focus on Audiovisual 2020 report, remote working has been most successful in the Animation, Games & AR/VR sectors.

Some of the trainees who were placed during COVID were working remotely. While they admitted it was not ideal, they spoke of the support offered by the company. They were invited to take part in early morning team meetings, which helped them to feel part of the team. They also were facilitated by studios who provided access to software and supports during this time.

One of the trainees spoke of the difficulty of having to relocate to a different county and still be working remotely, not in studio. While this was a challenging situation for him, it was not limited to trainees as all the other employees were working in the same way.

Key themes from the placement company interviews

The interviewees were overwhelmingly positive regarding the contribution of the placement scheme to their own company and to the wider industry. They realise that some trainees will move on to other companies and that such movement can only serve to improve the talent pool and skills development in the entire sector.

The change from six months to three months was viewed differently by companies depending on the context and the sector. Some felt that three months was ideal and allowed both the trainee and the company to establish if there was a "good fit". Some studios preferred the original six months placement as this allowed the trainees to experience all aspects of the organisation.

The companies in the research sample operate within the broad Animation, VFX, and Games sector. Their work ranges from producing children's edutainment to creating immersive visual experiences to becoming an Oscar nominated 2D and 3D focused studio. It was apparent in this research that each sub sector required some very specific skills, which varied across genres e.g., animation technical skills are quite different to immersive technology technical skills.

Working with companies from each different segment allows The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship to offer a choice of placement roles reflective of the employment opportunities in the sector.

Many of these companies are transitioning into larger, global companies, with a more diverse workforce. That provides more opportunities for the trainees but also puts a little more pressure on them to fit into the workflow schedules, achieve the required quality levels and work with a more diversified team.

One of the companies who spoke of the opportunities offered by the VFX sector, suggested that skills such as compositing would become more important in the future. They also spoke about how the gradual usage of gaming software in VFX would increase the competition for talent between both sectors. One of the companies mentioned the increased competition for talent driven by both the next generation of exponential technologies, such as AR/VR, and the trend for traditional businesses to use animation in their content marketing strategies.

The discussions with interviewees generated a number of topics broadly focused across three thematic areas:

1. Availability of talent

2. The work-readiness of the trainees

3. Creating learning opportunities

1.   Availability of talent

Regarding the availability of talent, some of the interviewees mentioned difficulties in securing their preferred candidate during the selection and interview process. They recounted how the most sought-after trainees would be "instantly snapped up" and mentioned the usefulness of a "live" document that would illustrate candidates who had been placed or who had exited the process. They also mentioned that there might be a battle to secure the desired trainee if they had received offers from another studio. While this can be frustrating for the company it does reflect on the calibre of the placement trainees and their potential benefit to the studios. It also re-enforces the competitive nature of securing talent in all areas of the Screen sector.

Most of the interviewees mentioned current staff members who had been through The Graduate Traineeship placement process, who had been retained, promoted, and were

now acting as mentors to trainees. They spoke about how trainees quickly become core staff members, who the studio wants to "develop, grow and hold onto". Many saw the placement programme as their way of accessing a talent pipeline that might not otherwise be available to them.

Many interviewees spoke of their intention to retain the trainees after the placement, but some admitted that their ability to retain the trainee as an employee depended on the needs of the department. In departments such as screen preparation, if production was tapering down, as the placement was ending, it was not always possible to retain the trainee. However, these interviewees suggested that they would contact the trainee if another opportunity arose.

The difficulty in securing talent was mentioned, especially by those outside the Dublin area. While some companies had a scheme such as crew houses in place, they acknowledged that it was difficult for the trainees to secure accommodation, especially as the trainee did not know in advance if their employment would continue beyond the three months. This is a situation that could be handled more effectively by the studios and is outside the remit of the Traineeship programme.

During the restrictions of COVID-19, the placement trainees worked remotely as did most of the staff in the studios. Although this was not ideal the company participants felt that it worked well and gave the trainees an opportunity to join meetings, take part in training and avail of more formal and informal mentor supports. While it was a little early to say how the future hybrid models of work will be managed in the sector, the companies were eager to ensure that the trainees had the same experience as their existing staff.

On the broader issue of talent, some of the companies mentioned the need for a more diverse range of trainees. They mentioned in particular the areas of Information Technology, Software and Finance. The companies believe there is an opportunity to source and develop people with these skillsets and to use their existing technical knowledge within the context of the creative industries. This need has been identified in the Animation, VFX, and Games sector and within the broader Screen sector.

2.   The work-readiness of the trainees

Many of the companies spoke of the optimism and positive attitude of the trainees. While they did mention that many were not workplace ready, they also did acknowledge that it often required the immersive experience to "get up to speed with the show or even understand what the show was about". They felt that this was an essential part of the placement. The desire to provide this type of experience was hindered if the production was coming to an end, where the focus on training reduces and the deadlines become more important.

Many of the interviewees spoke of the change in the trainees as the placement progressed. The trainees became more confident about approaching supervisors and other crew, more likely to speak up in meetings. Most of the interviewees stressed that their attitude to trainees was designed to unleash their potential and give them access to human or technology resources.

They spoke about the importance of the trainees taking ownership of their own experience during placement. "The trainee will do the work we ask them to do but what about the work that they want to do? They need to find that space, to speak up and grab that chance to grow". The studios supported this ownership by encouraging the trainees to develop their own showreels or portfolios while on placement.

The mentoring process varied from company to company. In some cases, trainees were assigned a specific mentor, in others there were a number of people who acted as mentors at various stages of the placement. The assignment of mentors is managed by the companies and depending on their size, stage of maturity and culture, the" on the job learning experience" may vary.

3.   Creating learning opportunities

The interviewees all spoke of the value in workplace learning where trainees are part of the production team and learn by doing. But they also acknowledged the challenges of making time for training on a busy production. Some supervisors acted as mentors, and some had more structured training events. All the trainees spoke of the formal and informal training opportunities offered by the studios.

Some of the companies felt that the three months limited the amount of training that could be offered to the trainees. However, most of the studios provided access to training during the placement and encouraged the trainees to attend the masterclass series of events.

Impact of COVID-19

During COVID-19, many of the placement interviews took place online. This was not a difficulty for the studios as they had already begun to use online interviews when hiring other staff.

The restrictions imposed during COVID-19 did impact the typical "organic training or mentoring" that occurs when people are in a studio working together. However, the studios developed opportunities to allow the trainees to meet with other team members in the virtual space.

Improvements to the process

The use of the "spreadsheet" received mostly positive responses. Most companies felt it was a convenient way to assess the applicants and recounted how they and their colleagues would work as a cross functional team to review trainees and assess their suitability. Many said that taking the time to review the potential trainees often allowed companies to identify a trainee with the desired skills, who may not have been highly rated by the initial reviewers. Particularly in the area of commercial animation where the studios are keen to hire people with a different skillset or perspective.

A minority believed that the spreadsheet had become unwieldy as they worked their way through the placement selection process. They stated that the task of reviewing up to 200 candidates was time consuming. The reality is that two hundred applicants for placement roles is an indication of how many graduates, freelancers and under employed animators are trying to "get their foot in the door".

One of the companies mentioned the possibility of including more IT trainees, trainees more skilled in pipeline software or technology such as Shotgrid. It might be possible to encourage applications from these disciplines in future programmes.

Recommendations

The Animation sector in Ireland is gaining a world-wide reputation for excellence and is growing rapidly with Irish studios producing and owning rights to more and more of their own original material. Creating a talent pipeline that gives studios access to skilled trainees is crucial to meeting the needs of the sector.

In common with other sectors, the screen sector graduates including the Animation, VFX & Games trainees may lack some of the "work readiness" expected by industry (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2018). Therefore, there is a need for programmes such as The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship programme that offers a short, sharp, bridging path from graduate to working in a studio.

There is also a need to provide new entrants with access to studios once they have completed their formal studies. It is evident from the online survey and the feedback from the placement interviewees that many people working in the Animation sector want to upskill, want to improve how they work, and take advantage of opportunities available to them.

The recommendations in this report are focused on three areas:

1. Sustaining the current programme

The current programme has evolved since its first inception as the Bridge Programme in 2014. Each year the Graduate Traineeship programme seeks feedback from the placement trainees and the placement companies. This feedback informs the next iteration of the programme. The feedback indicated that the introduction of the induction week was well received by the placement trainees.

COVID-19 also impacted on the delivery of the induction week and the masterclasses. The placement trainees engaged with the online experience and were keen to see this format continue.

The programme ran for two separate sessions in 2021. This was also well received and addressed the continuing need for such programmes. If the Traineeship is to sustain this level it may need more funding and more resources.

2. Broadening the scope of the company base

The call for applications for The Animation, VFX & Games Graduate Traineeship is recognised as an attractive and valuable route into the Animation, VFX & Games sector. It is oversubscribed and not every applicant achieves a placement.

Based on current developments in the use of animation skills in systems design, software publishing, advertising, marketing, and data visualisation there may be an opportunity to include a broader range of organisations in the database of placement companies. One such cohort of companies might include start-ups on the Enterprise Ireland New Frontiers programme or other business incubators. These early-stage companies are already seeking to attract such graduates to their organisations to develop commercial interactive web resources. This would also give the trainees the experience of how commercial SMEs need to be able to turn around new projects. It would expose them to commercial operations and workflows, client briefs and allow them to contribute to the success of SMEs.

It would also give them an indirect link to more creative opportunities as many of these commercial animation companies work with organisations such as RTE, IKEA, Guinness etc

3.Broadening the scope of the applicant base

This placement programme is an important enabler and connector between the trainees and the companies. It is recognised both by the trainees and the studios as an effective support to those who work or wish to work in the Animation, VFX, and Games sectors. The participant companies in this research mention the need to attract applicants with a broader skillset such as IT systems and finance. They felt that it would be a useful way to give people from the non-creative background an opportunity to develop industry specific skills. The shortage of such candidates has been highlighted in other research on the Screen sector.

Appendix

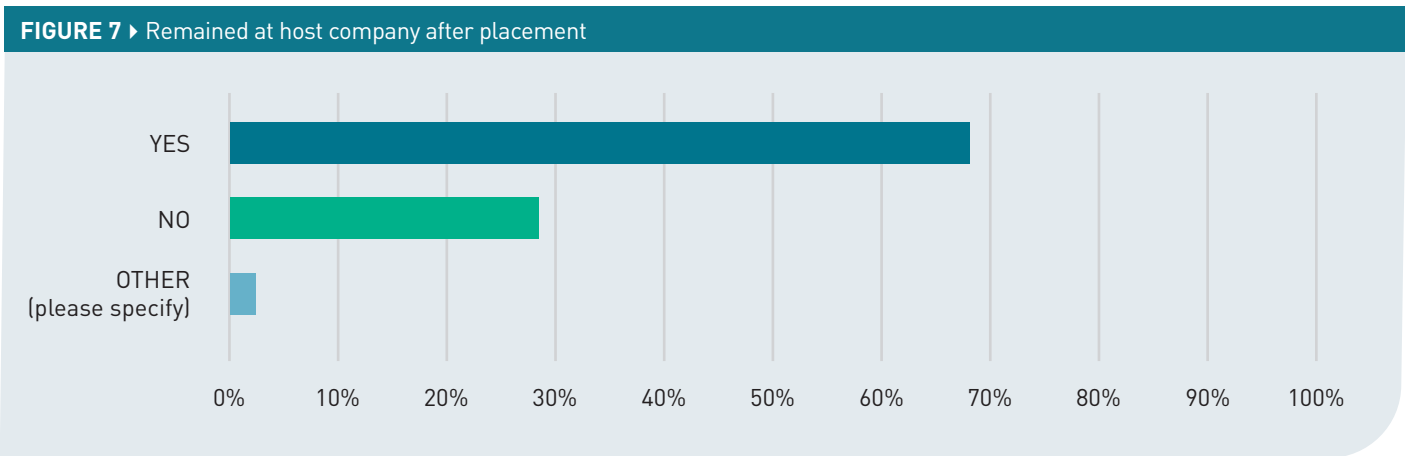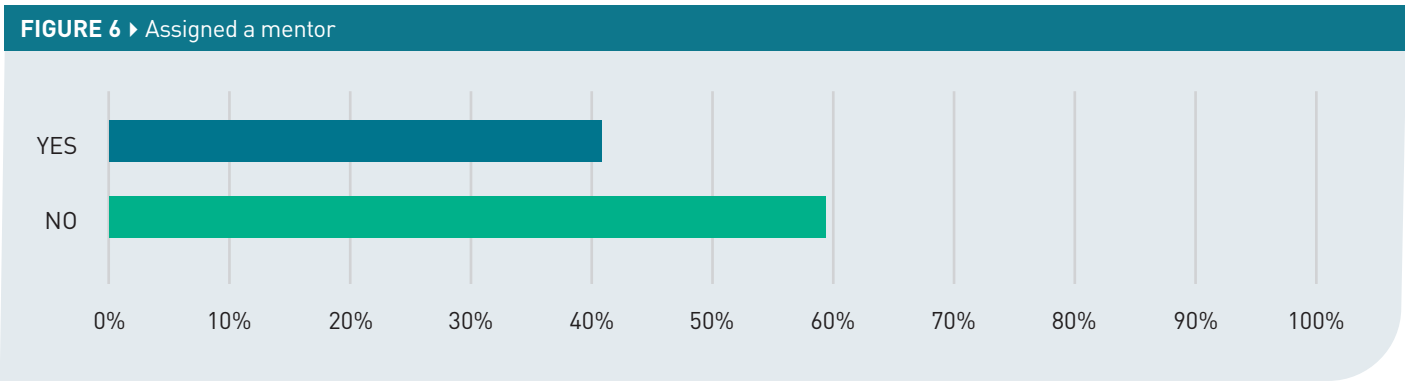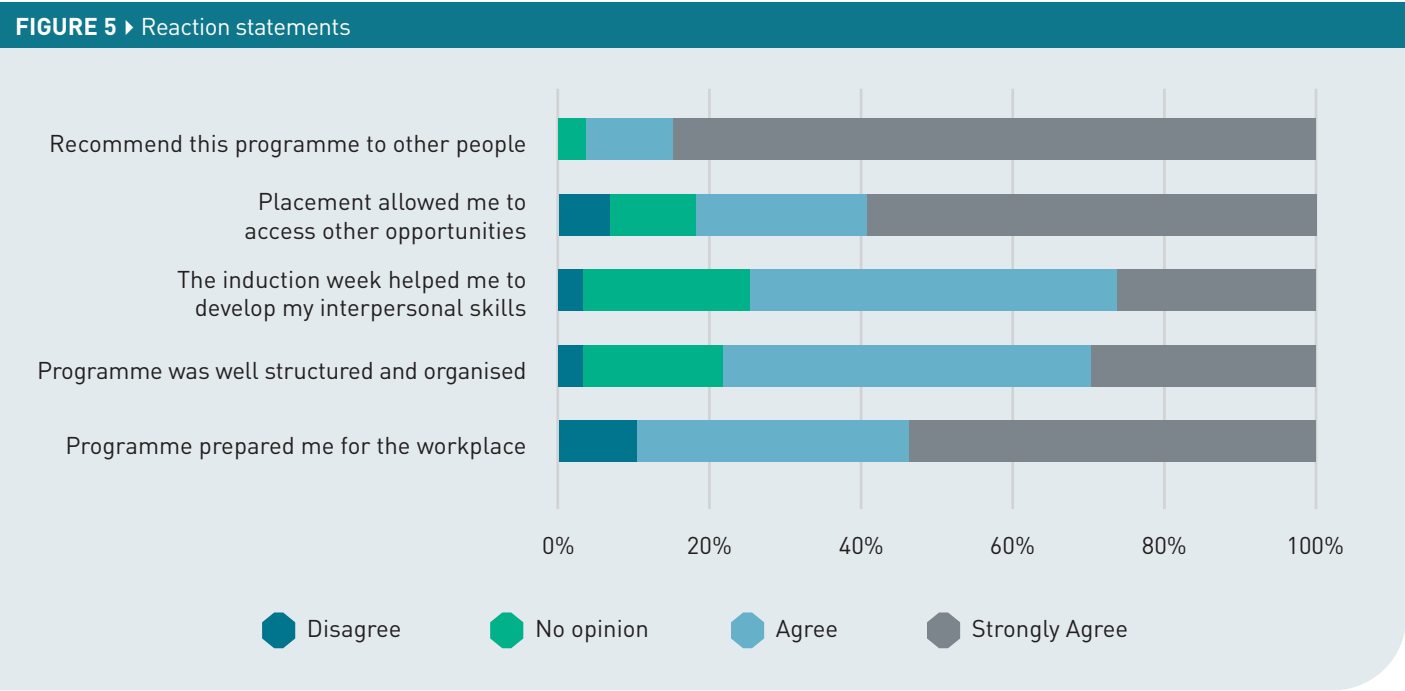# Trainees' results from online survey

FIGURE 5 ▶ Reaction statements

Recommend this programme to other people

Placement allowed me to access other opportunities

The induction week helped me to develop my interpersonal skills

Programme was well structured and organised

Programme prepared me for the workplace

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

⬡ Disagree   ⬡ No opinion   ⬡ Agree   ⬡ Strongly Agree

FIGURE 6 ▶ Assigned a mentor

YES

NO

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

FIGURE 7 ▶ Remained at host company after placement

YES

NO

OTHER (please specify)

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

FIGURE 8 ▸ Acquired new skills during placement
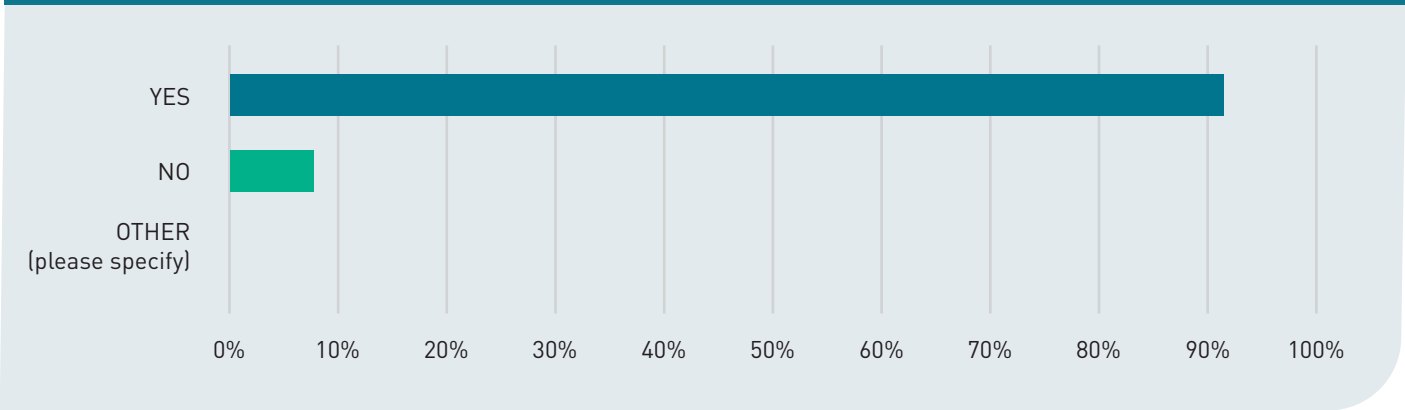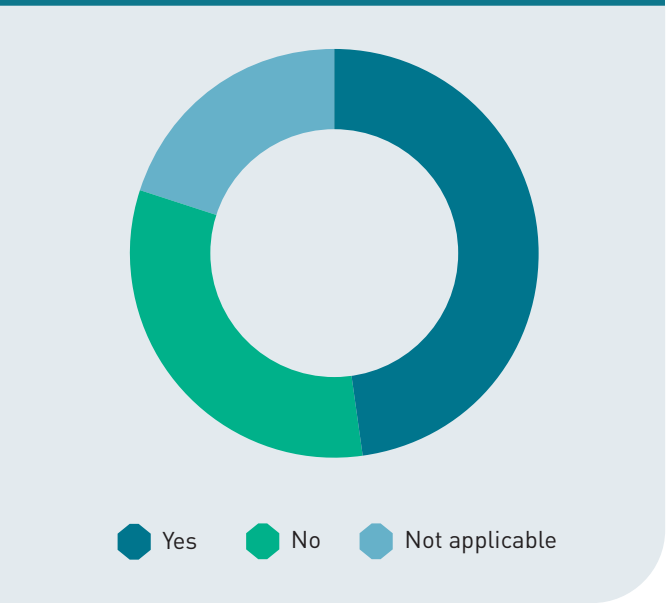

FIGURE 9 ▸ Work placement impacted by Covid-19

● Yes ● No ● Not applicable

FIGURE 10 ▸ Support from Animation Skillnet during COVID-19
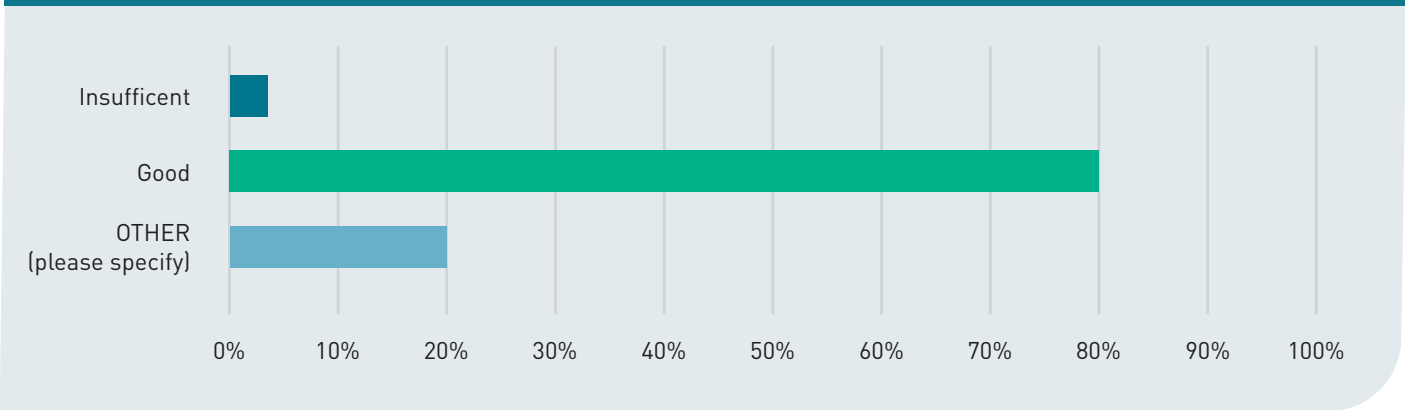
FIGURE 11 ▶ Support received from workplace during COVID-19

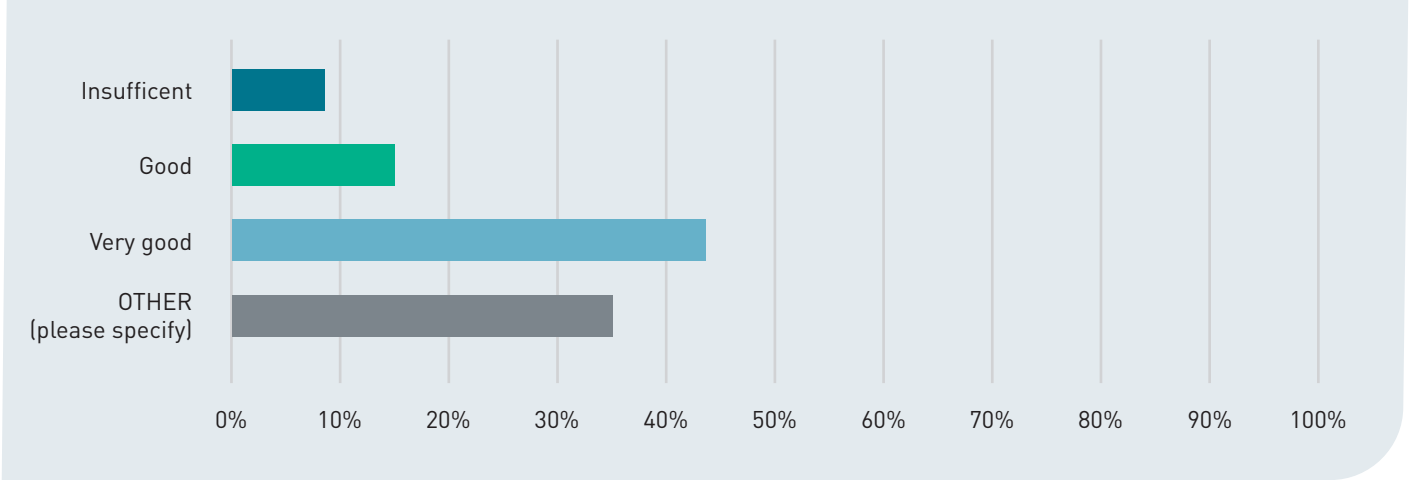| Category	Value
Insufficent	~8%
Good	~15%
Very good	~44%
OTHER (please specify)	~35%

(Horizontal axis: 0% to 100% in 10% increments)

FIGURE 12 ▶ Currently working in Animation, VFX or Games sector

● Yes - 92%   ● No - 8%
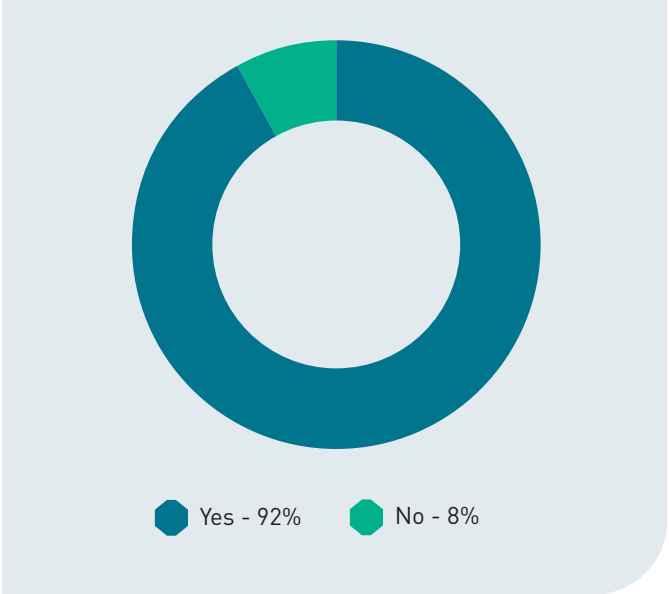
FIGURE 13 ▶ Based in Republic of Ireland

● Yes - 81%   ● No - 19%
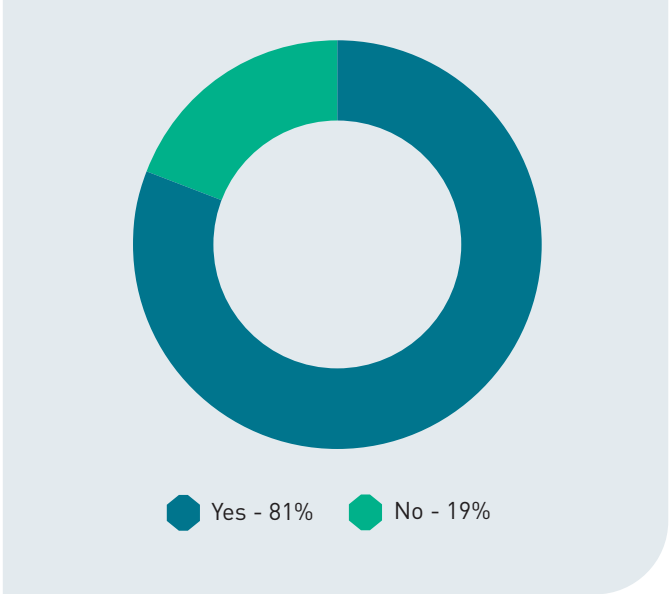
FIGURE 14 ▶ County for work

County	Value
Carlow	~1
Dublin	12
Galway	~3.6
Kilkenny	7

(Horizontal axis: 0 to 14 in increments of 2)
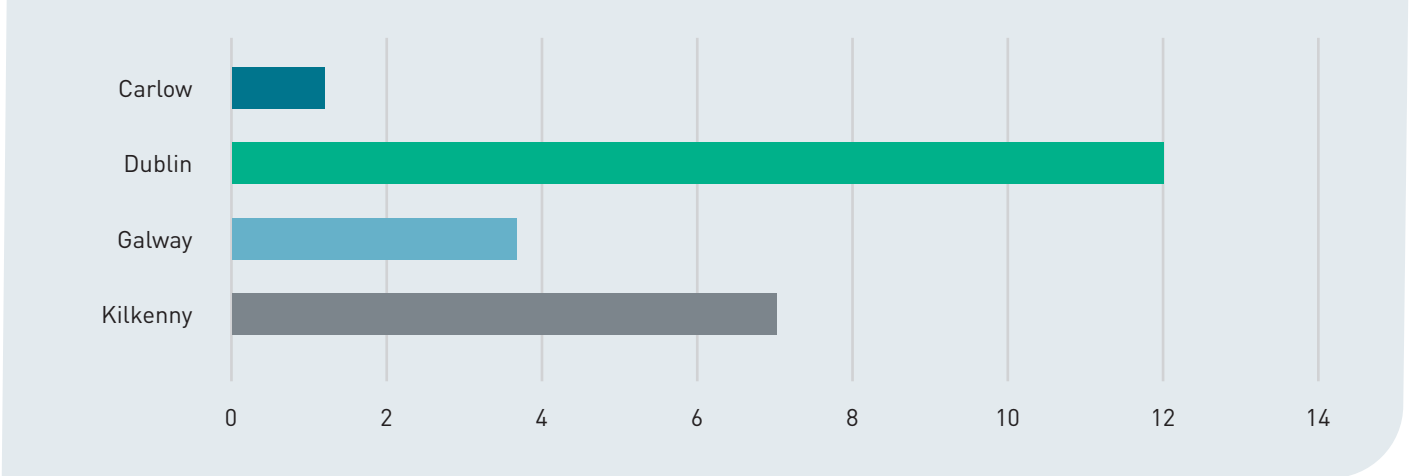
**FIGURE 15** ▸ Availed of Skillnet training

● Yes - 68%   ● No - 32%
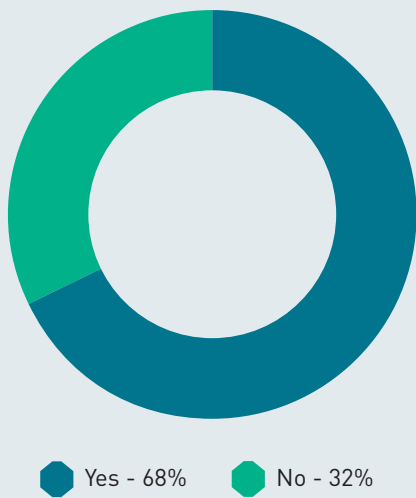
Types of training to support CPD

The trainees listed several different types of training to support them in their role.

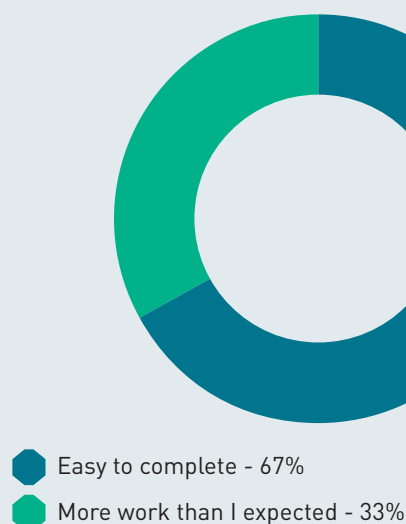| Management skills	Technical skills	Creative skills	Transitioning skills
Writing or Business courses	Game engine introduction courses	Scripting in animation software	Anything to do with VFX compositing
Team management	Advanced ToonBoom, MoHo	Principles of design such as composition, storytelling	Any CGI course
Business focused training	Shotgun training		Solo short film production
	Nuke Training		

Placement companies results from online survey

FIGURE 16 ▸ Breakdown by sector

● Animation - 50% ● Immersive - 17%
● Games - 17% ● VFX - 17%
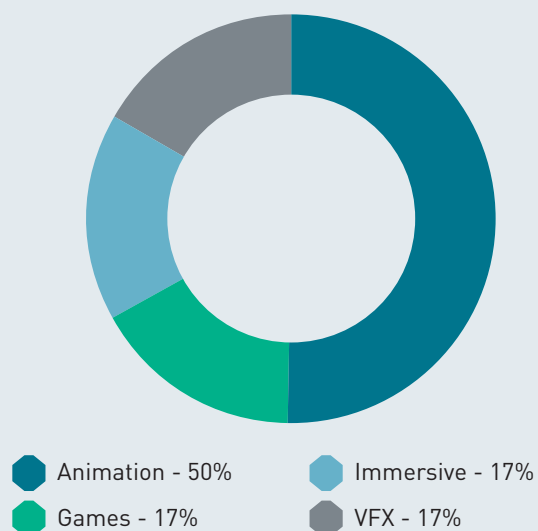
Process of selecting a suitable candidate

FIGURE 17 ▸ Selection process

● Easy to complete - 67%
● More work than I expected - 33%

Suggested improvements to selection process

Comments on improvements included:

▸ Process although time consuming, works well

▸ More feedback from Animation Skillnet on applicants

▸ Need to organise or group candidates into categories or groupings

▸ Samples of work linked to trainee names

▸ So many applicants to review but colour coding is very helpful

▸ Helpful document, easy to share with colleagues

Formal onboarding or induction

FIGURE 18 ▸ Onboarding process

● Yes - 83% ● No - 17%

Employ the trainee after placement

All except one company employed the trainee once the placement was completed.

Additional support from The Animation Skillnet

Comments on additional supports included:

▸ More places on training courses

▸ We were supported throughout with plenty of contact when needed

Changes to placement experience

Comments on improvements included:

▸ Flexibility with start dates

▸ Option of remote working could be beneficial

How does the programme meet the needs of the sector?

Comments on meeting sector needs included:

▸ Easy way to identify talent

▸ Financial support is important

▸ For our current work in TV commercials, it's perfect. For bigger VFX projects, it will not be sufficient

▸ Fairly well although some students only at intern level

▸ We are keen on hiring people at junior level and helping them build a career path with us. This programme allows us to see a greater diversity of talent

▸ Essential stepping stone into industry

▸ Happy to accommodate placements but timing does not always suit production pipelines

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