



Human Resources in Publishing

A research study for
The Publishing Training Centre
conducted by BML

Summary of findings from publishing
course directors

September 2009

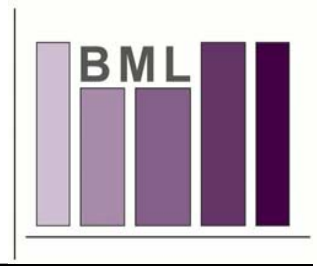


Project background



- PTC is funding a research project to examine in detail how book and journal publishers recruit, develop and retain their staff
- backed by the Publishers Association, Independent Publishers Guild and Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers
- working group from consumer and academic publishers to help steer the research on behalf of the wider publishing community
- Stage 1: research with HR directors
- Stage 2: research with publishing and non-publishing students, course directors, recruitment agencies
- full details of project objectives and methodology provided in Stage 1 report
- this report provides the analysis of the study among directors of book publishing courses

Methodology



- Online study among directors of publishing courses
- 10 responses (from 9 institutions) received and analysed
- Except where stated, all data are shown in numbers

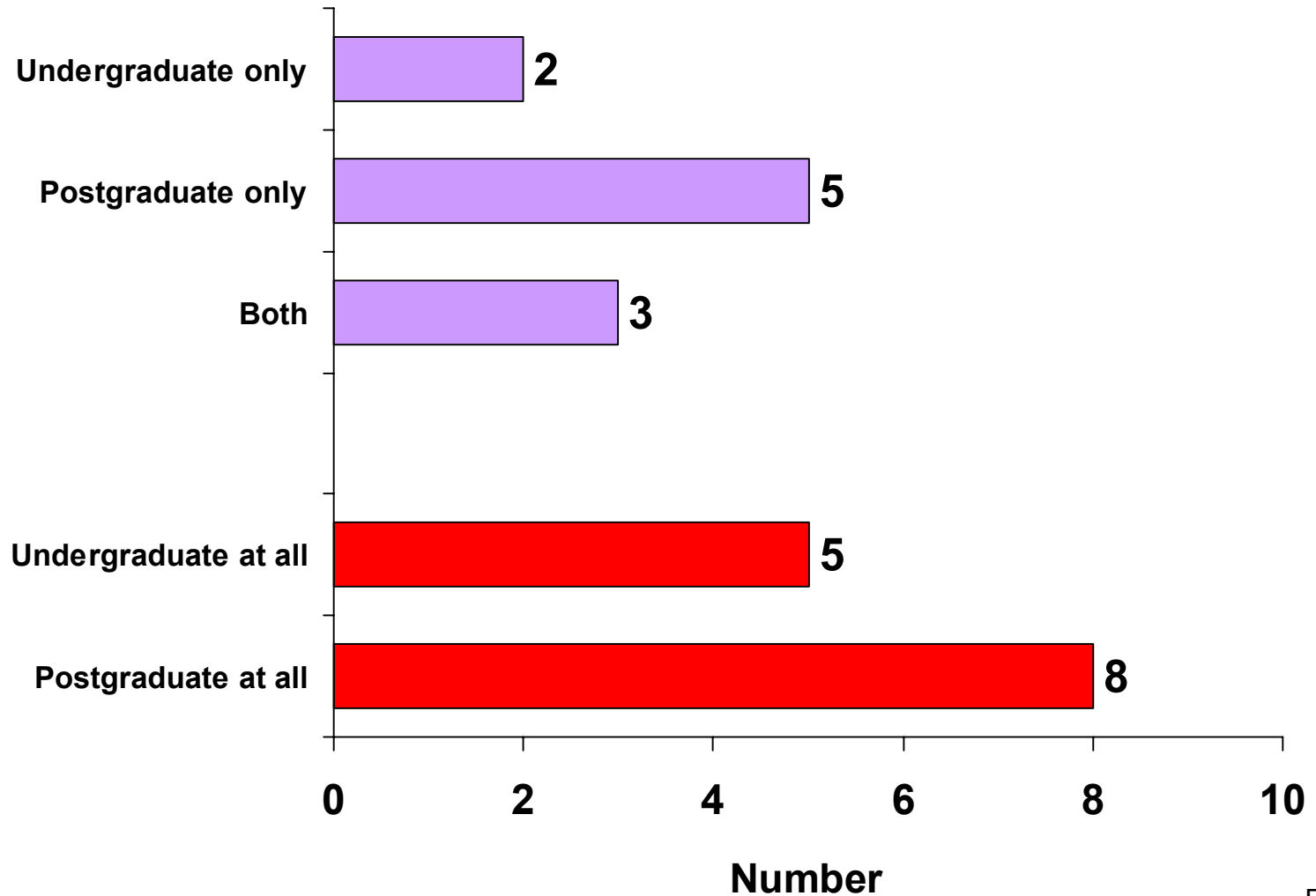
Objectives



- To examine what course directors feel their students think about publishing as a career:
 - why they do or do not decide to pursue such a career
 - how well equipped they feel to pursue such a career
 - what would make publishing a more attractive career
 - significant changes in recent years to eg calibre, problems/issues, etc
- To investigate issues surrounding the design and development of the courses, including:
 - how this is done; how often and how they are reviewed
 - whether there is sufficient input from publishers/employers to design/develop appropriate courses
 - what more help they would like
- To investigate promotion of book publishing as a career:
 - whether and how this is done by courses
 - how promotion to publishing and non-publishing students could be improved

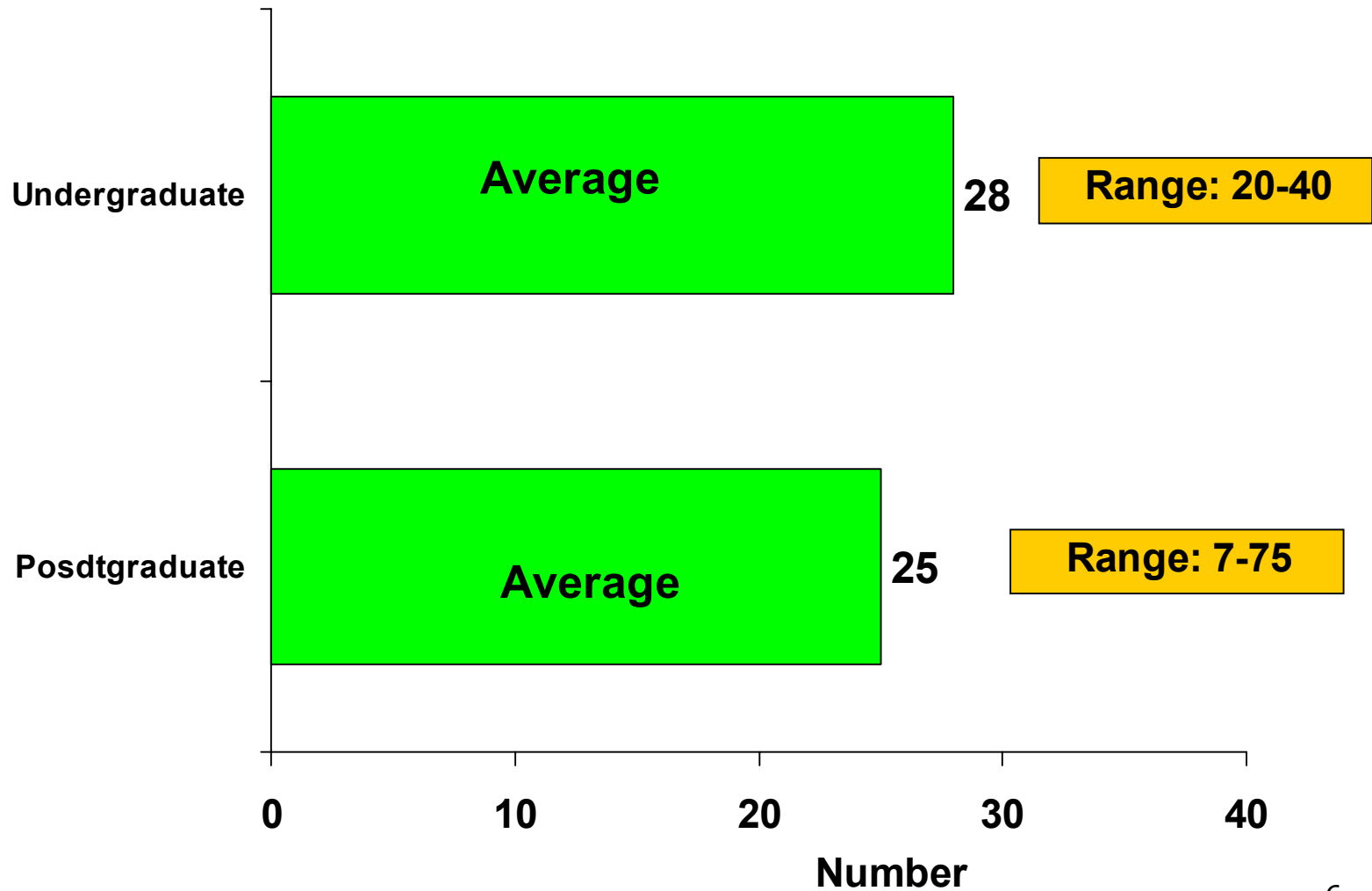
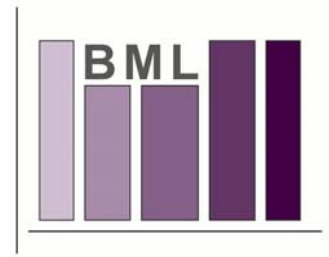
Director sample

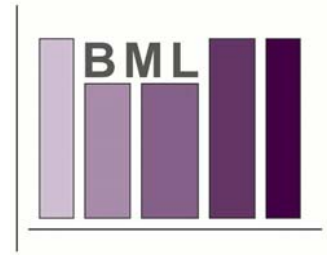
Course details



Course numbers

Approximately how many students at your institution will complete courses involving book publishing in 2009?





Students' attitudes to working in the book publishing industry

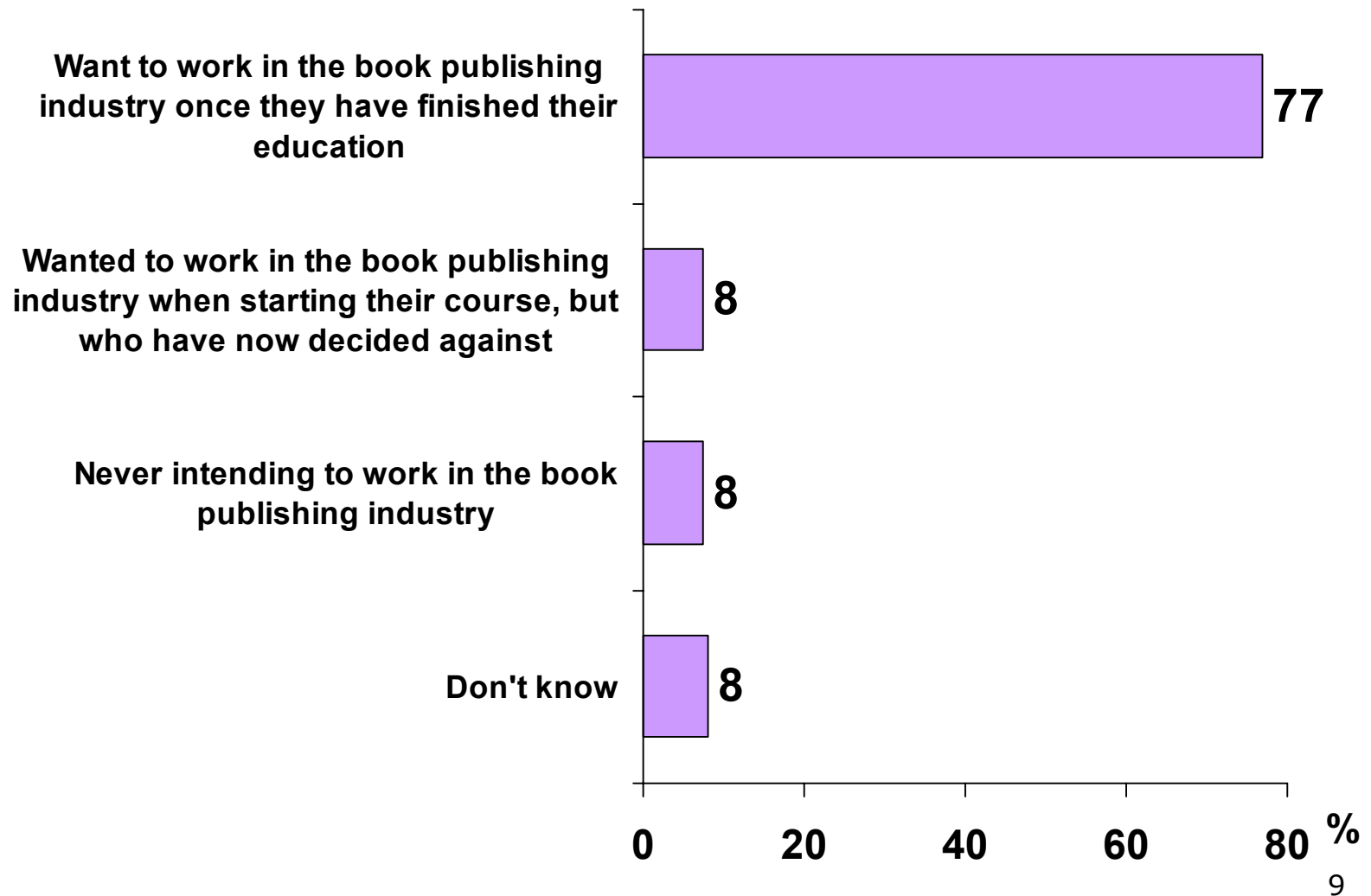
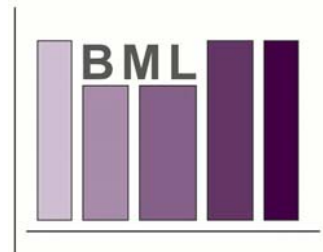
Interest in the book publishing industry



- Course directors estimate that on average 77% of their final year students want to work in book publishing, while 8% no longer wish to and a further 8% never intended doing so
 - postgrads are more committed to the industry than undergrads
- 3 of the directors feel the industry has become less attractive in recent years
 - none think it has become more attractive
- They see their students as attracted to the industry through loving books/reading (9/10), wanting the chance to work creatively (9), and wanting to use their skills/knowledge (8)
- 8/10 course directors see their students as being put off by salaries/benefits, 7 by the difficulty of finding a job and 6 by not finding jobs where they want to live

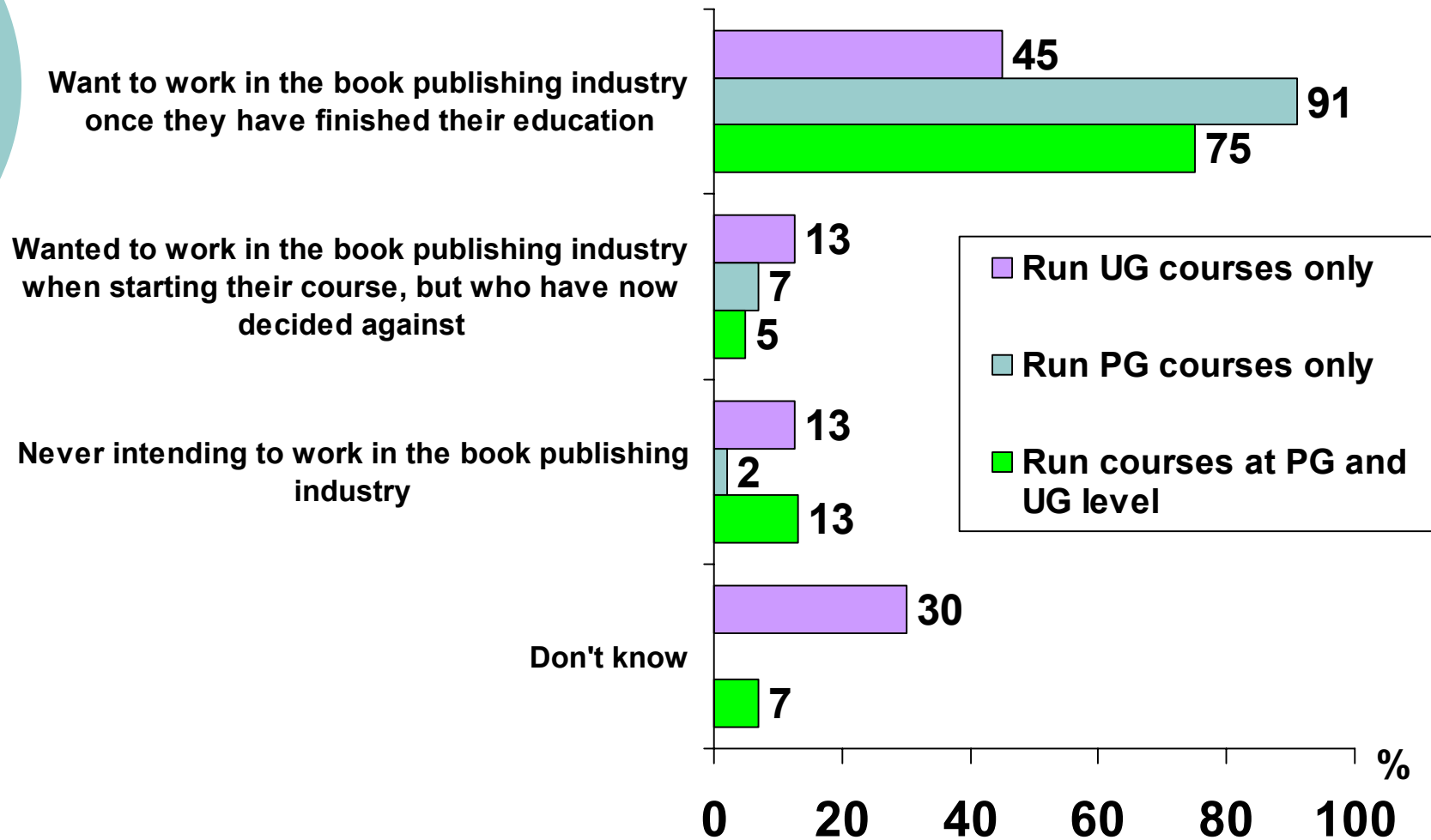
Initial attitude

From your knowledge of the students completing their book publishing courses in 2009 (both undergraduate and postgraduate), what % would you say fall into the following categories?



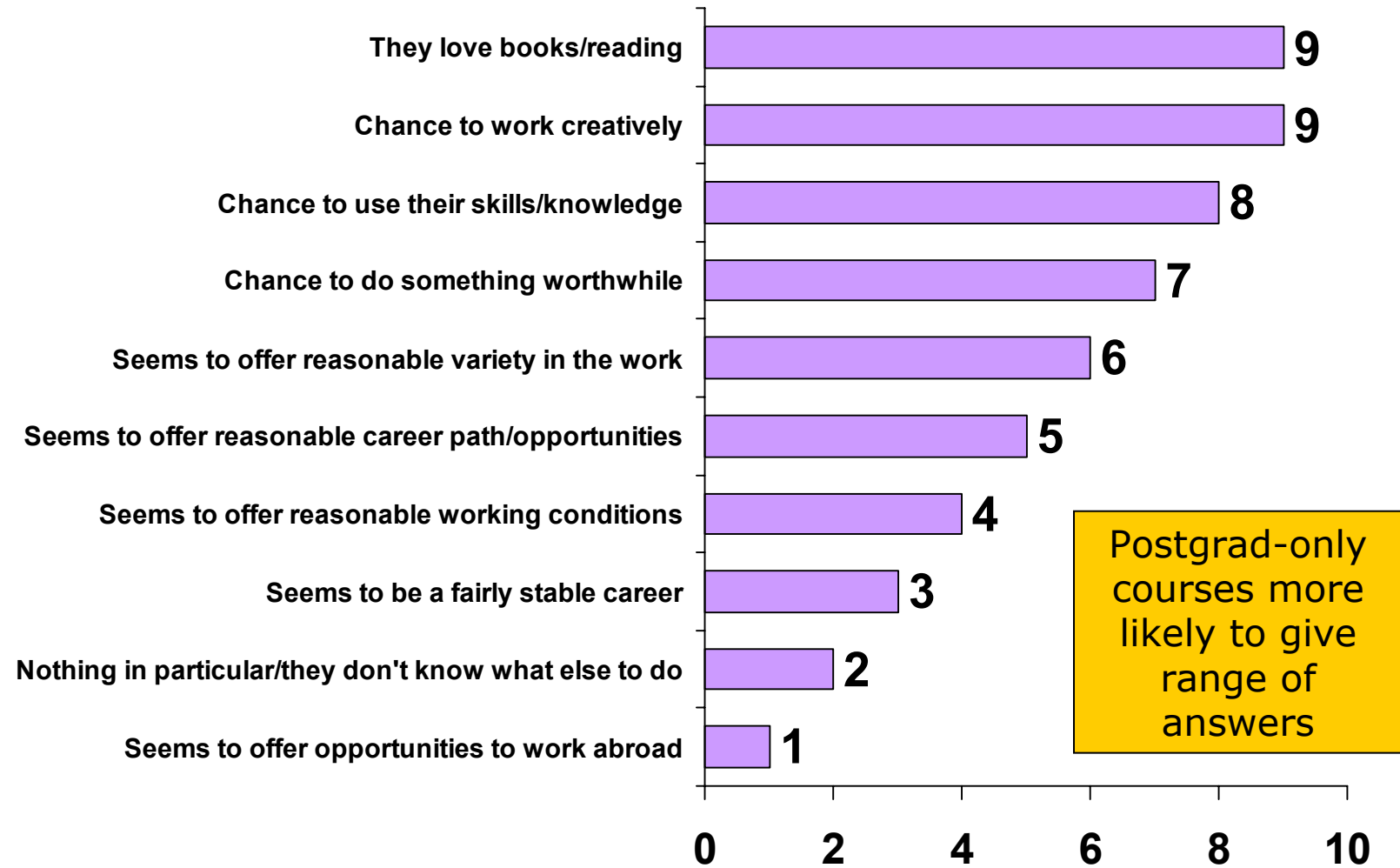
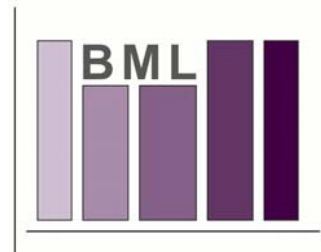
Initial attitude

From your knowledge of the students completing their book publishing courses in 2009 (both undergraduate and postgraduate), what percentage would you say fall into the following categories?



Industry attractions

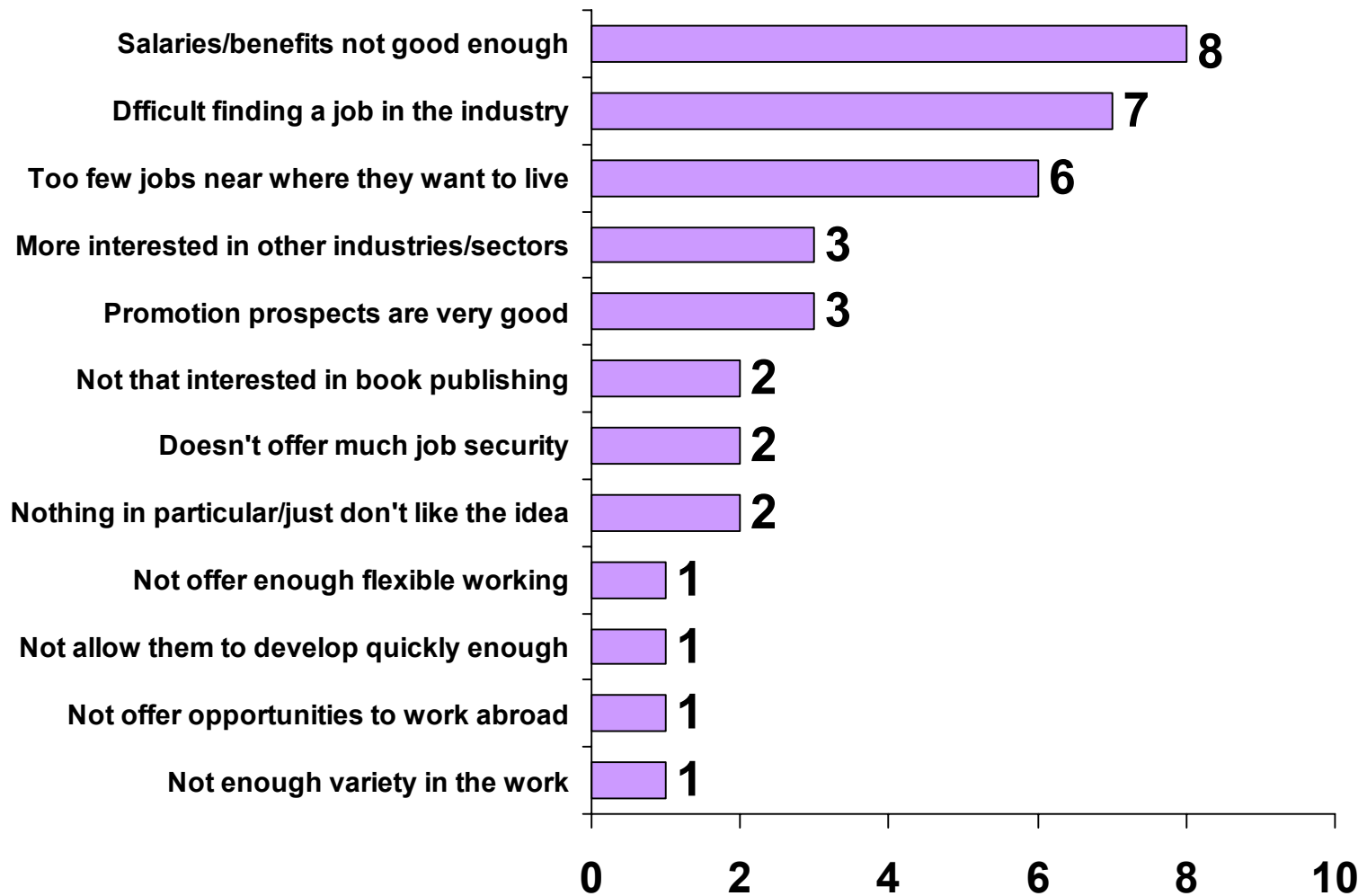
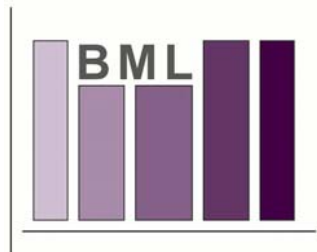
For which, if any, of the following reasons do you feel your students are particularly attracted to working in the book publishing industry?



Postgrad-only courses more likely to give range of answers

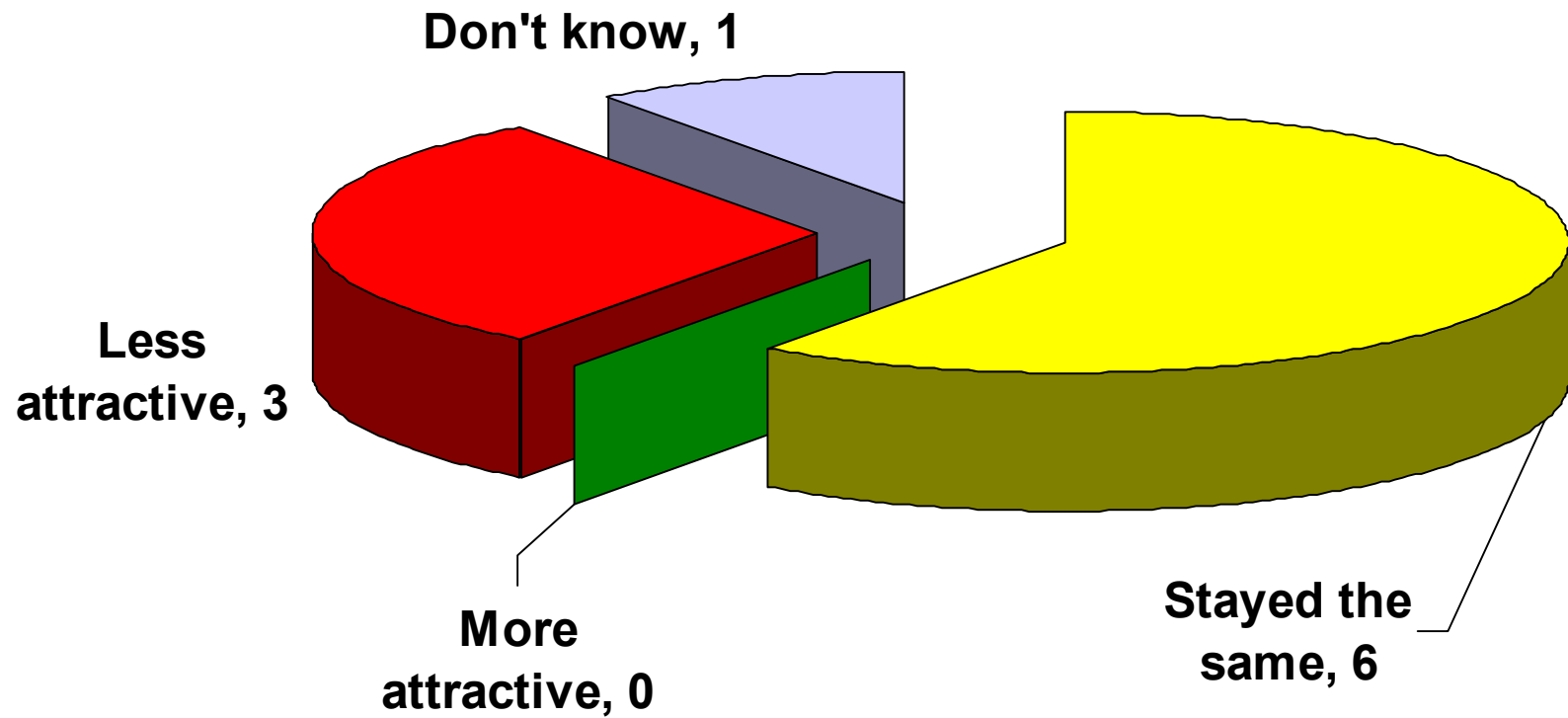
Industry detractions

Which, if any, of the following do you feel put students off/make them think twice about working in the book publishing industry?



Trend in attraction

Do you feel that working in the book publishing industry has become more or less attractive to your students in recent years, or has it stayed the same?



Why less attractive

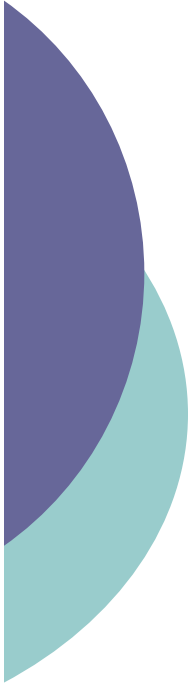
Why do you think that working in the book publishing industry has become LESS attractive to your students in recent years?



A drop in application rate
[run PG courses only]

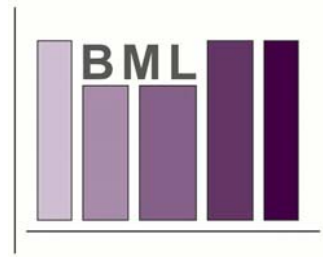
Other more attractive opportunities and industries, within publishing but not to do with book, many more interested in digital media [run courses at PG and UG level]

They are more interested in electronic publishing, videogames and magazines...or they are interested in applying 'publishing' skills to other areas of communications
[run UG courses only]



Student function interest and skills

Function interest and skills



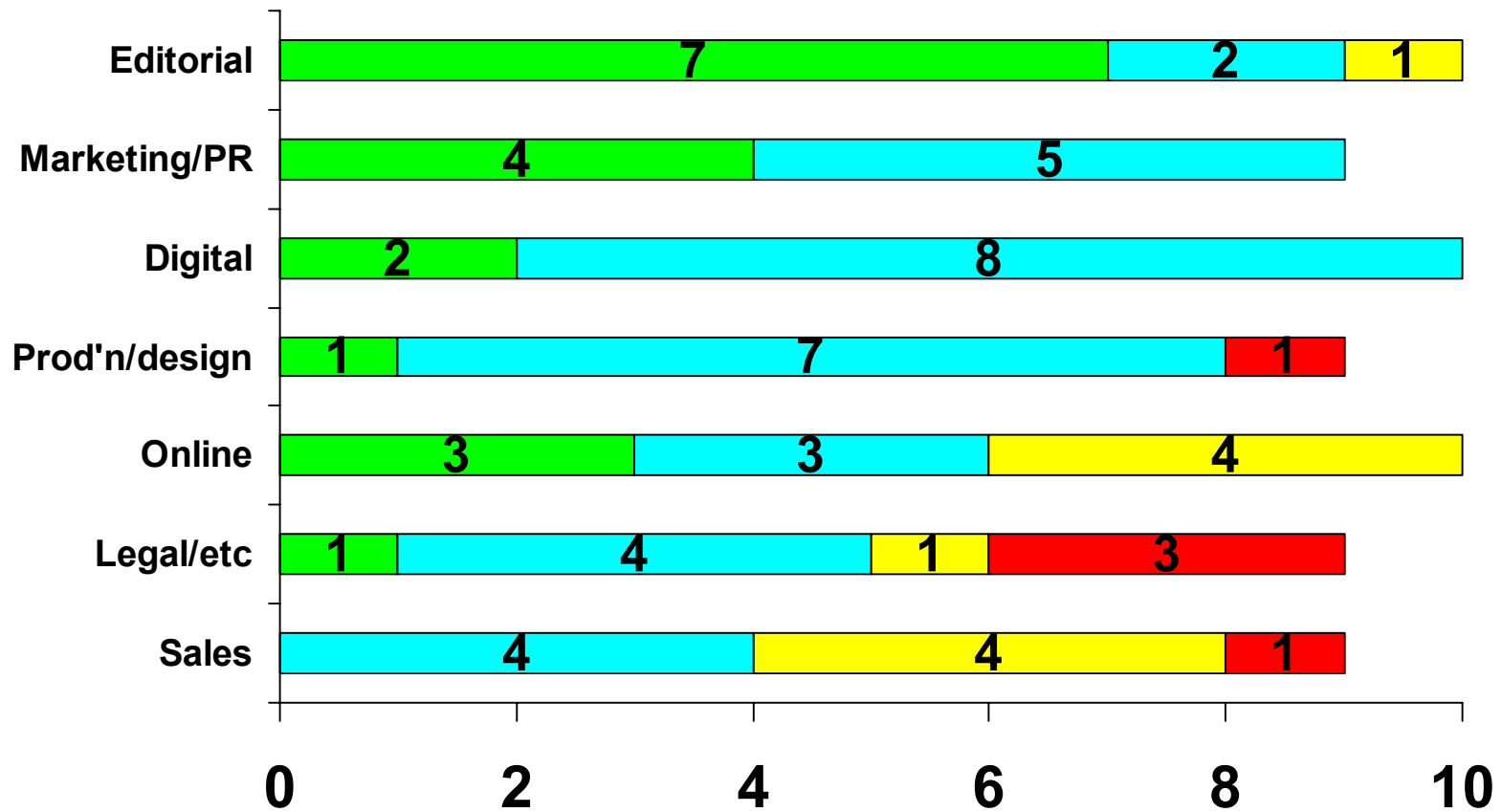
- Directors rate editorial as the function which is the most attractive to their students, ahead of marketing/PR and then digital
 - sales and legal/etc are seen as the least attractive
- They tend to say both undergraduates and postgraduates are at least fairly well equipped for all functions
 - perhaps less so for legal and sales
 - postgraduates considered slightly better equipped for editorial, production, legal
 - tend not to think there are particular gaps/knowledge, bar lack of hands-on experience
- Calibre of students is deemed to have improved (4/10) or stayed the same (4) over recent years

Attraction of functions

How attractive do you feel the following book publishing functions are to your students?

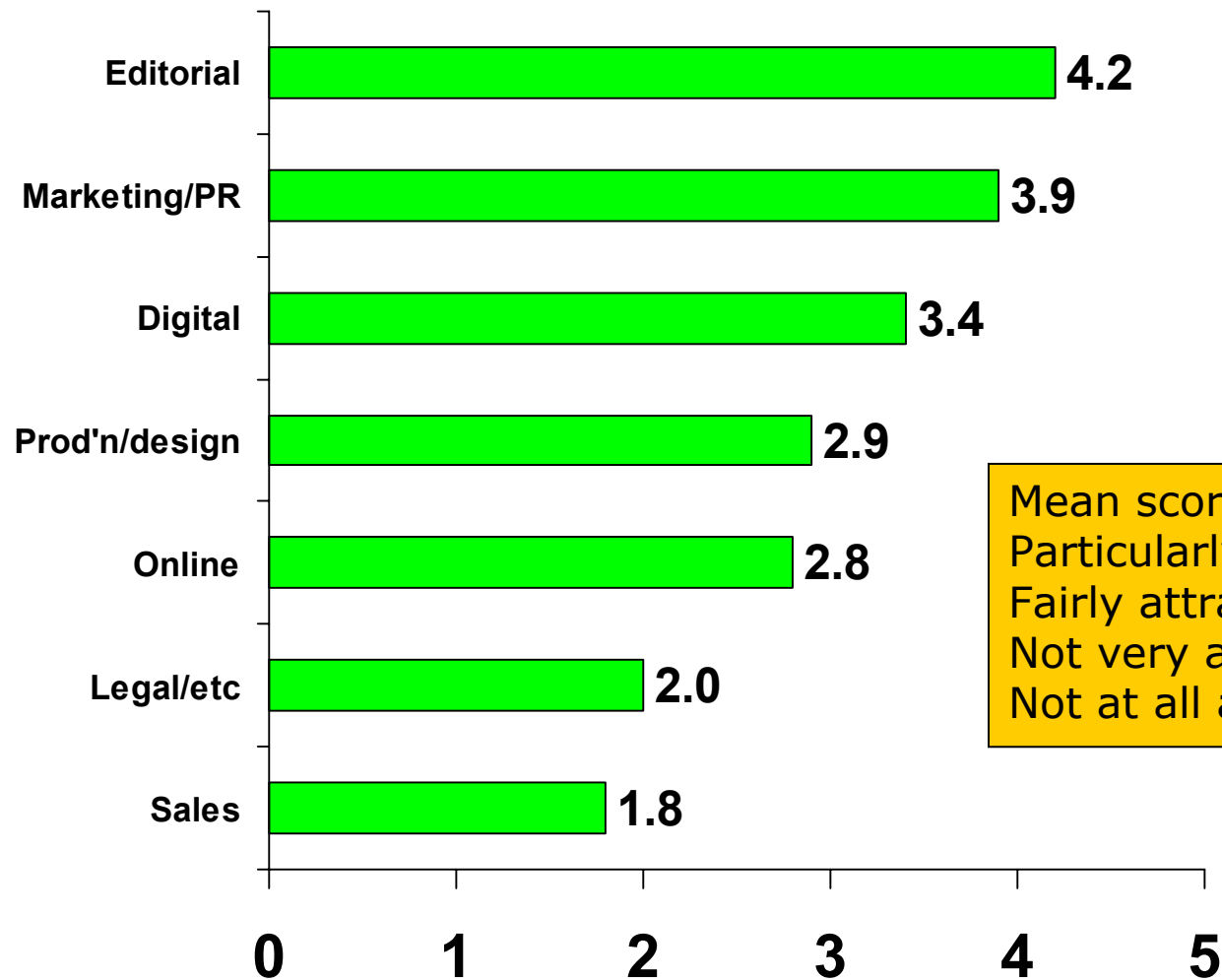


■ Particularly attractive ■ Fairly attractive ■ Not very attractive ■ Not at all attractive



Attraction of functions

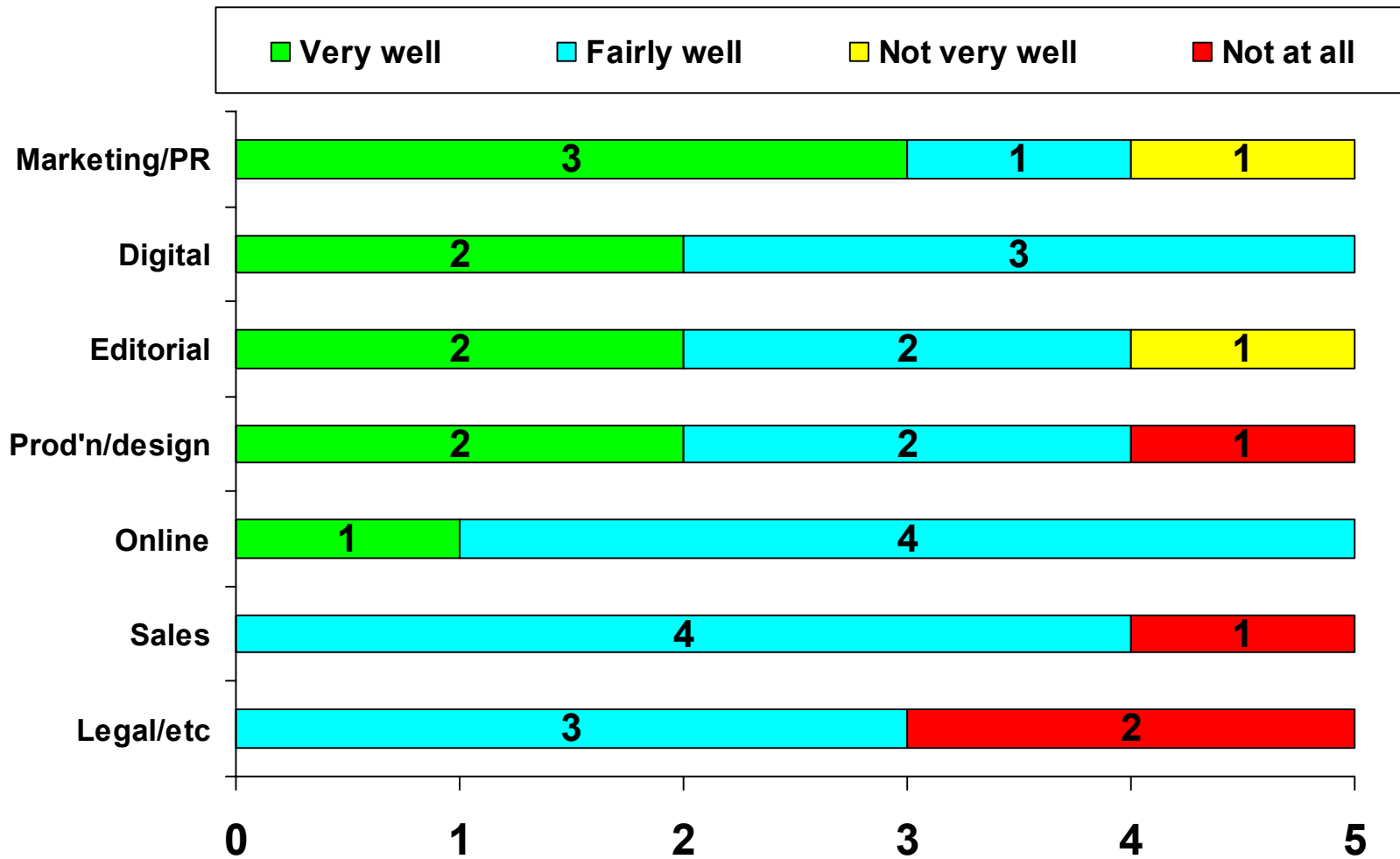
How attractive do you feel the following book publishing functions are to your students?



Mean score:
Particularly attractive = 5
Fairly attractive = 3
Not very attractive = 1
Not at all attractive = 0

Undergrad qualification

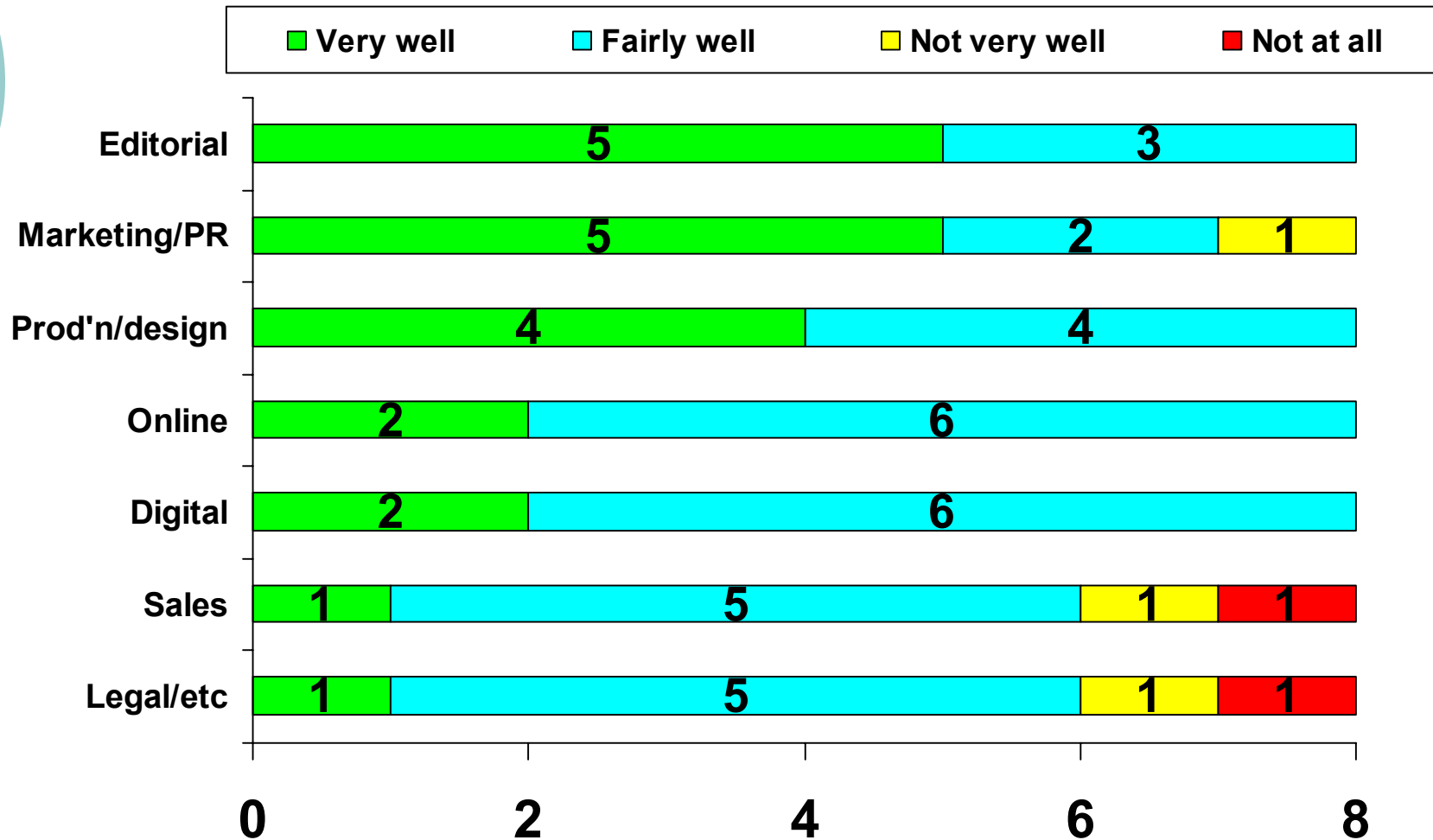
In general, how well equipped do you feel your students are to work in each of the following areas within the book publishing industry, once they have finished your undergraduate course(s)?



Base: 5 respondents

Postgrad qualification

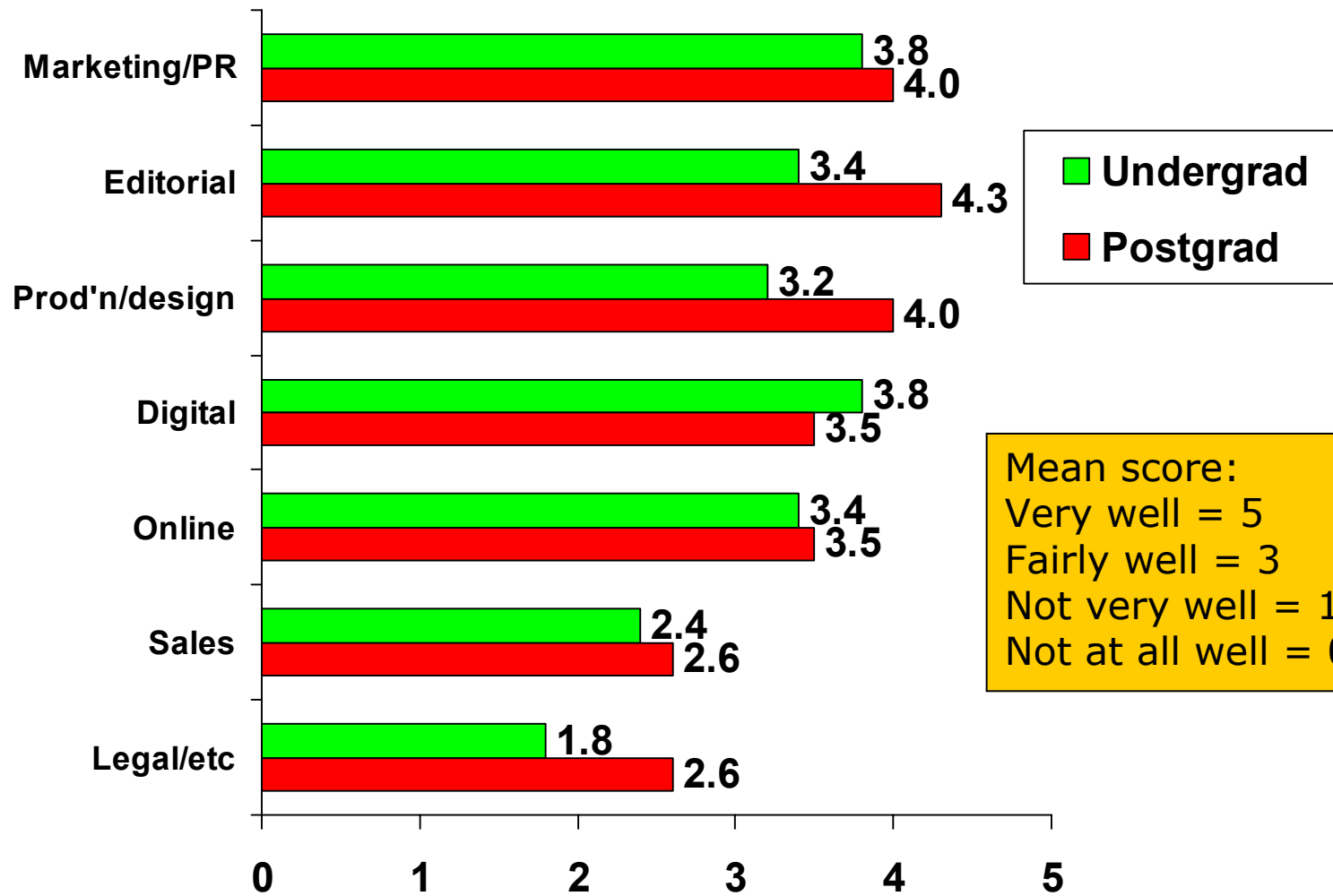
In general, how well equipped do you feel your students are to work in each of the following areas within the book publishing industry, once they have finished your postgraduate course(s)?



Base: 8 respondents

Undergrad vs postgrad

In general, how well equipped do you feel your students are to work in each of the following areas within the book publishing industry, once they have finished your undergraduate/postgraduate course(s)?



Mean score:
Very well = 5
Fairly well = 3
Not very well = 1
Not at all well = 0

Missing skills

What, if any, other or particular skills/knowledge do you feel your students tend to lack in terms of working in the book publishing industry, once they have finished their studies? [3 no response]



Our degrees offer a broad range of skills and understanding of the industry [run courses at PG and UG level]

Well rounded [run PG courses only]

Experience in the industry [run courses at PG and UG level]

I don't think they are lacking at all. They are far better equipped than anyone entering publishing straight from university at undergraduate level. Their knowledge and understanding is superior. I reckon it is the equivalent of accumulating knowledge over a period of about 4 years from a standing start, if one had entered straight from university. They will acquire skills through working on placements. However, the course ... has project work operating at quite a deep level, which is designed to help them develop skills while they are with us. Fundamentally, of course, the skills/experience issues only really develop once they start work. But many graduates tell us that when they actually go into full time work in publishing, they quickly notice how much broader their understanding is of publishing compared to their peers who have come straight from an undergraduate degree [run PG courses only]

None except working in an office environment [run PG courses only]

The strongest of them, who gain placement experience throughout the year alongside their studies and engage wholeheartedly with the course, and who have both office experience and excellent interpersonal skills, are extremely well set up to get a job. Those who rely on our five-week assessed placement alone, who lack other prior/office experience, and whose interpersonal skills or interview/presentational skills are weaker, struggled more [run PG courses only]

We don't claim to cover all areas comprehensively, as it is not a vocational degree, we don't for example cover production/design in detail...and we combine with other areas of book publishing and with critical media studies so many go on to do media MAs for example [run UG courses only]

Trend in student calibre

How, if at all, do you feel the calibre of students on your book publishing courses has changed in recent years?



	Run UG courses only	Run PG courses only	Run courses at PG & UG level	Total
Improve	1	2	1	4
Same		3	1	4
Other			1	1
No answer	1			1

Trend in student calibre

How, if at all, do you feel the calibre of students on your book publishing courses has changed in recent years? [1 no response]



It seems to improve year by year, and we can be more selective in recruitment [Runs courses at PG and UG level]

Same [Run PG courses only]

Remained fairly even, generally a good standard of student [Run courses at PG and UG level]

We have changed the course to a 'with Journalism' course at undergraduate level, and of course this has affected the career aspirations of some of the students [Run courses at PG and UG level]

I think that the calibre is remarkably consistent. They are hardworking, committed and eager to take up opportunities offered them. Culturally, however, they are much more at home with the notion of 'business'. They are also digitally highly adept, but that is a general reflection of our times [Run PG courses only]

Slightly improved [Run UG courses only]

No change really [Run PG courses only]

Even the younger students are now more aware of the need to use the MA year to build their career prospects, and to do more than the MA itself in order to compete successfully for jobs. The overall academic level of our students seems to keep going up and up - for 2009-10 I have about one-third of a large group with 1st or near 1st-class degrees [Run PG courses only]

It's improved. As the course becomes more popular we are able to be more selective [Run PG courses only]



Student challenges when searching for jobs / making book publishing more attractive as a career

Job searches



- The main problem/challenge facing students when looking for jobs is seen as the (increasing) competition, particularly in a time of recession
- Directors most commonly suggest improving salary/pay as the way to make the industry more attractive to their students
- Placements/internships are also mentioned

Job search challenges

What problems/challenges do you imagine students face when looking for work in the book publishing industry, and how, if at all, have these changed in recent years?



- The main issue is seen as the competition for jobs, particularly in a time of recession

The recession is obviously having an impact, making recruitment a slower process [Run courses at PG and UG level]

It's always highly competitive, and with the recession going on, will be more so. Evidence (anecdotal) shows, however, that the possession of an MA in publishing is pretty much guaranteed to get graduates immediately onto the short list for an advertised job [Run PG courses only]

More competition [Run PG courses only]

It has always been and remains extremely competitive. The employers can pick and choose, and tell me they want committed, bright and commercially aware entrants. Increasingly, they also want people who need next to no training - a natural response to times of recession [Run PG courses only]

Fewer jobs in a changing industry [run PG courses only]

Job search challenges

What problems/challenges do you imagine students face when looking for work in the book publishing industry, and how, if at all, have these changed in recent years?



- The other comments were varied

Entry via placement [Run PG courses only]

First job and the fairly low paid salary in comparison to the cost of living [Run courses at PG and UG level]

Our students usually have to move in order to work in the industry. These days they have to move first and then look for work [Run courses at PG and UG level]

The biggest challenge for students is knowing what the publishing roles are and where they might best fit. The industry can accommodate a range of abilities and preferences (editors need to be detail people, production process and team people, sales commercial and active and travelling people); the challenge for our students is working out where they have the best chance of getting a job they'll enjoy and want to build a career in [Run PG courses only]

Also, our students don't tend to draw from the traditional publishing background - eg reasonably well off white middle class women. [Ours] is a genuinely multicultural university (with over 50% of students coming from non-white backgrounds), unlike many of our competitors. Therefore, despite the skills our graduates have, they aren't necessarily as well versed in the social mores as some other graduates, which really still counts for so much (too much?) in the industry [Run PG courses only]

Also, some students get offered jobs as the result of a successful placement at a publishing house [Run PG courses only]

How to attract

What could the book publishing industry do to make it a more attractive career for your students, and/or to make sure that the best candidates look for work in the industry?



The industry needs to address the issues of pay and career progression [Run courses at PG and UG level]

Being paid better [Run PG courses only]

More basic paid positions even if these were 3 month work experience type placements, difficult to get entry position for many students, plenty of work experience available but in London this can be any expensive way to improve their CVs [Run courses at PG and UG level]

Offer more attractive salaries! [Run courses at PG and UG level]

I don't think that book publishing has too much of a problem with attractiveness. It is still seen as a desirable profession. It is impossible to know about bright young people who simply do not go to work in it because, for example, they see it as too low paid. We don't get to meet them! I would say, however, that publishing could suffer from non-completion rates because the industry is gradually becoming more risk averse, and more bureaucratic [Run PG courses only]

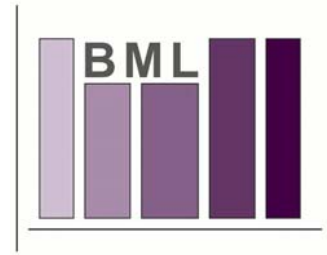
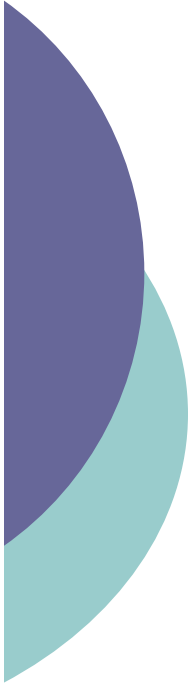
Be more willing to offer placements [Run UG courses only]

Pay more [Run PG courses only]

Those of my students who decide to look elsewhere in the course of the MA world have been: disenchanted with the commercial nature of the industry (I'm thinking of alums who've gone into teaching or HR); unwilling to take a starting role at £14K upwards when they have over five years' experience, either related (eg teaching, or IT) or in publishing elsewhere (eg India or France); or frustrated at not being able to gain a toehold in the publishing sector of their choice, especially literary, children's or magazine publishing [Run PG courses only]

More initiatives such as the Arts Council's ones to increase students from non-white backgrounds to enter publishing [Run PG courses only]

We have had good results with internships and with schemes run by publishers such as Penguin [Run UG courses only]



Course design

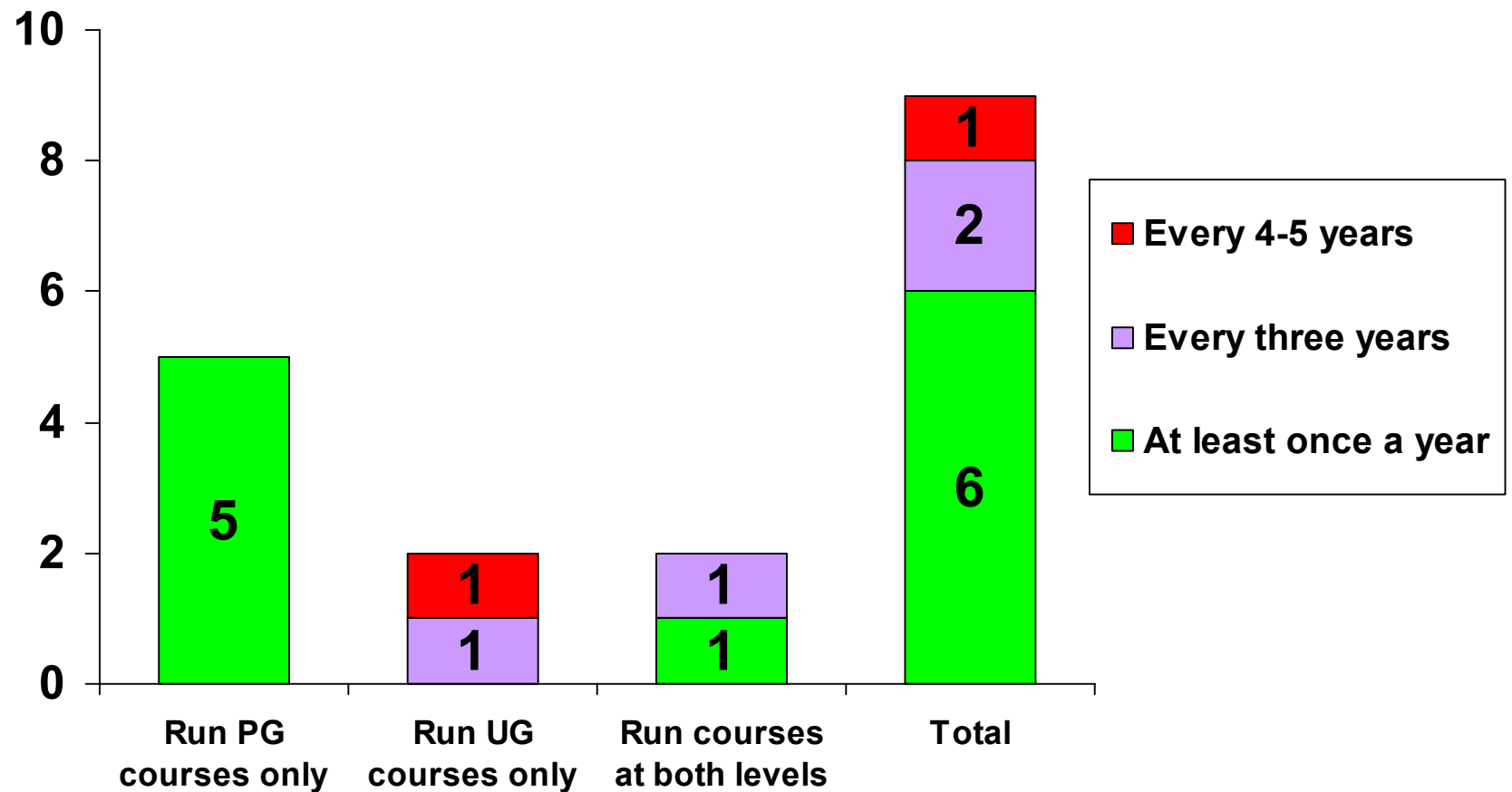
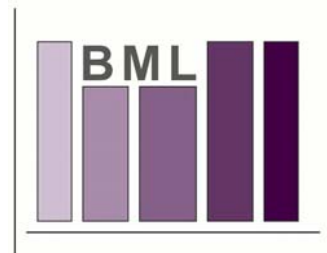
Courses



- Postgrad course are subject to revision every year, undergrad ones perhaps less often
 - recent changes tend to relate to digital and online aspects
 - future changes may follow industry trends, or may involve reduction in content
- 7/10 course directors say they have a very clear idea of the needs of potential employers
 - the others have a fairly clear idea
- Course directors learn of employer needs from informal conversations (9/10), conferences/seminars (9), having industry personnel on advisory boards (8) and having specific discussions with publishers (7)
 - 9/10 feel they get sufficient input from the industry
 - more guest speakers might be a help

Course revisions

Approximately how often do you revise your book publishing course(s) in terms of the skills/subjects covered?



Recent course changes

What, if any, changes have you made to your book publishing course(s) over the last few years, e.g. in terms of content and skills taught, level and method of teaching, etc?



Digital is at the heart of everything and we also have created a separate degree in digital publishing [run courses at PG and UG level]

Changed each year in small amounts [run PG courses only]

More digital production, esp. new media technologies [run courses at PG and UG level]

Course content has changed to reflect the ongoing changes in the industry, in particular with reference to electronic publishing, ebooks, ecommerce, etc. [run courses at PG and UG level]

The content is becoming more and more practically oriented. It is heavily supplemented with a full programme of visiting speakers from the industry plus a series of workshops at publishing houses. There is, of course, a swing in the direction of digital delivery- production, marketing and editorial. It is quite difficult to teach digital content creation as there are few established models. You can only teach models, otherwise lectures would simply be speculative. But overall, I would say that the course has become much more skills and practice oriented. This is strongly supported by our project work, which at [our institution], is much more demanding than on other courses [run PG courses only]

Greater emphasis on electronic materials and less on production [run UG courses only]

More on e- publishing [run PG courses only]

Tons, but then I only took over in 2006 7 for example: - we now use problem based learning in every module, with 'challenges' from industry visitors/sponsors, addressed throughout the year in small groups- I've introduced a publishing 'project' requiring the development of print and e concept, in small groups- we increasingly assess progressive, reflective learning relating to interpersonal skills such as group work as well as industry skills- we introduced a Digitisation and Publishing module in 2008 9 with great success- we use interactive learning more and more: an e course, the university's learning support environment (eg for discussions and to revisit audio and video of our 50 or so annual visitors as well as to access lecture handouts etc), groupware to run global visiting lectures, and an e portfolio environment to run a group Placement Blog as well as create individual student webfolios as Placement Report submissions- this MA has had five ~~wek~~ placements since it was [run PG courses only]

More on digital developments and more on the legal side would be good. But we can't cover everything [run PG courses only]

We focus less on books and more on other areas of 'content delivery' [run UG courses only]

Future course changes

What, if any, changes do you expect to make to the skills/subjects covered by your book publishing course(s) over the next few years eg in terms of content and skills taught, level and method of teaching, etc?



We continue to track changes in the industry [run courses at PG and UG level]

Skill recognition [run PG courses only]

I am afraid that the courses are being cessated [run courses at PG and UG level]

Clearly, we shall become much more digitally focused, although ... we are looking at trying to make production work more attractive because we have been told by publishers that they have difficulty in recruiting into production work [run PG courses only]

We shall follow industry leads on this [run PG courses only]

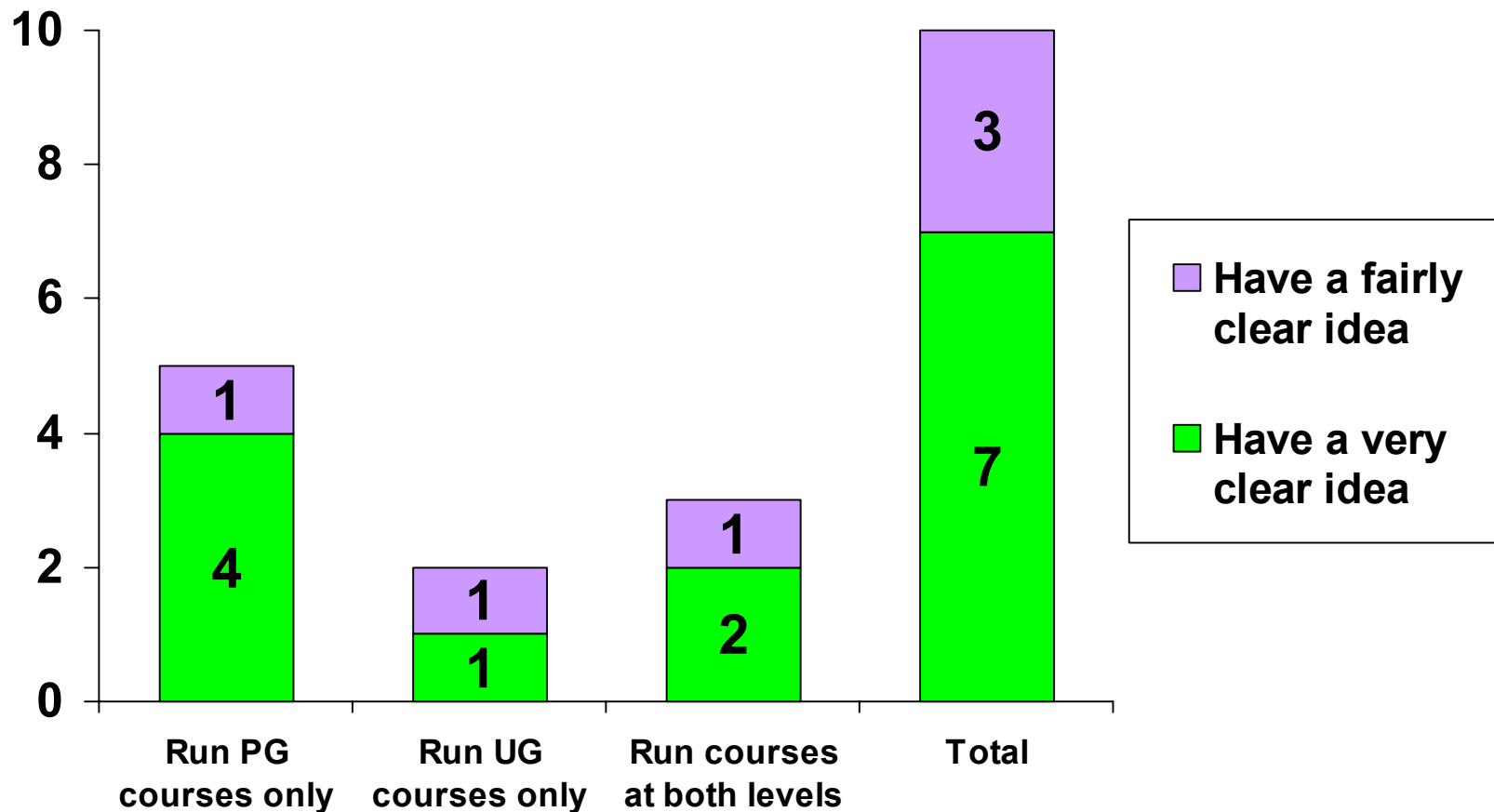
These MAs have a tension, always, between education and training. Our Digitisation and Publishing module, for example, is primarily a business strategy module - as are most of our modules. I'm introducing more and more publishing skills-based sessions (editing, Nielsen Bookscan data analysis..., InDesign; and in 2009-10, I plan radio and TV basics, using the City facilities) - but we are offering education not training, a big difference. Whatever area the students want to specialise in, they need to gain their own skills outside the classroom, as things stand. And a lot of people want to enter the industry and can't afford an MA - we're perpetuating the meritocracy/lack of diversity in the industry just through our fees. If there were some way of accessing skills training of high standard, which all of the UK courses could encourage their students to complete, that would be super; and especially if that allowed others, not doing a formal course, to access skills too [run PG courses only]

More on contexts. We intend to offer two pathways: one more practical and one directed towards students who may wish to pursue further postgraduate study [run PG courses only]

We are cutting back in this area, as students are more interested in other areas [run UG courses only]

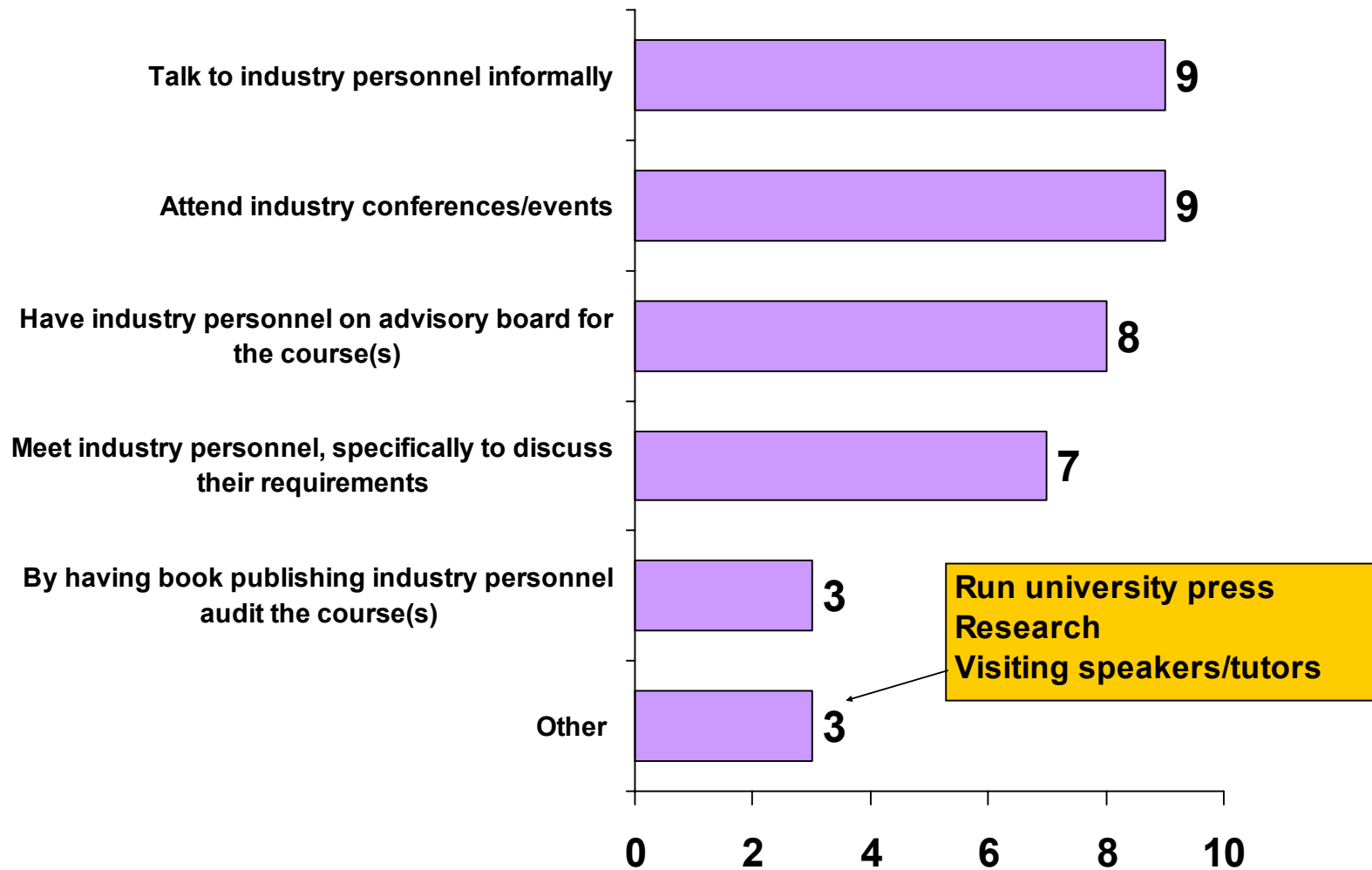
Awareness of needs

Do you feel you have a clear idea of what potential employers in the book publishing industry are looking for from your course(s)/ graduates, in terms of student skills, attributes and knowledge?



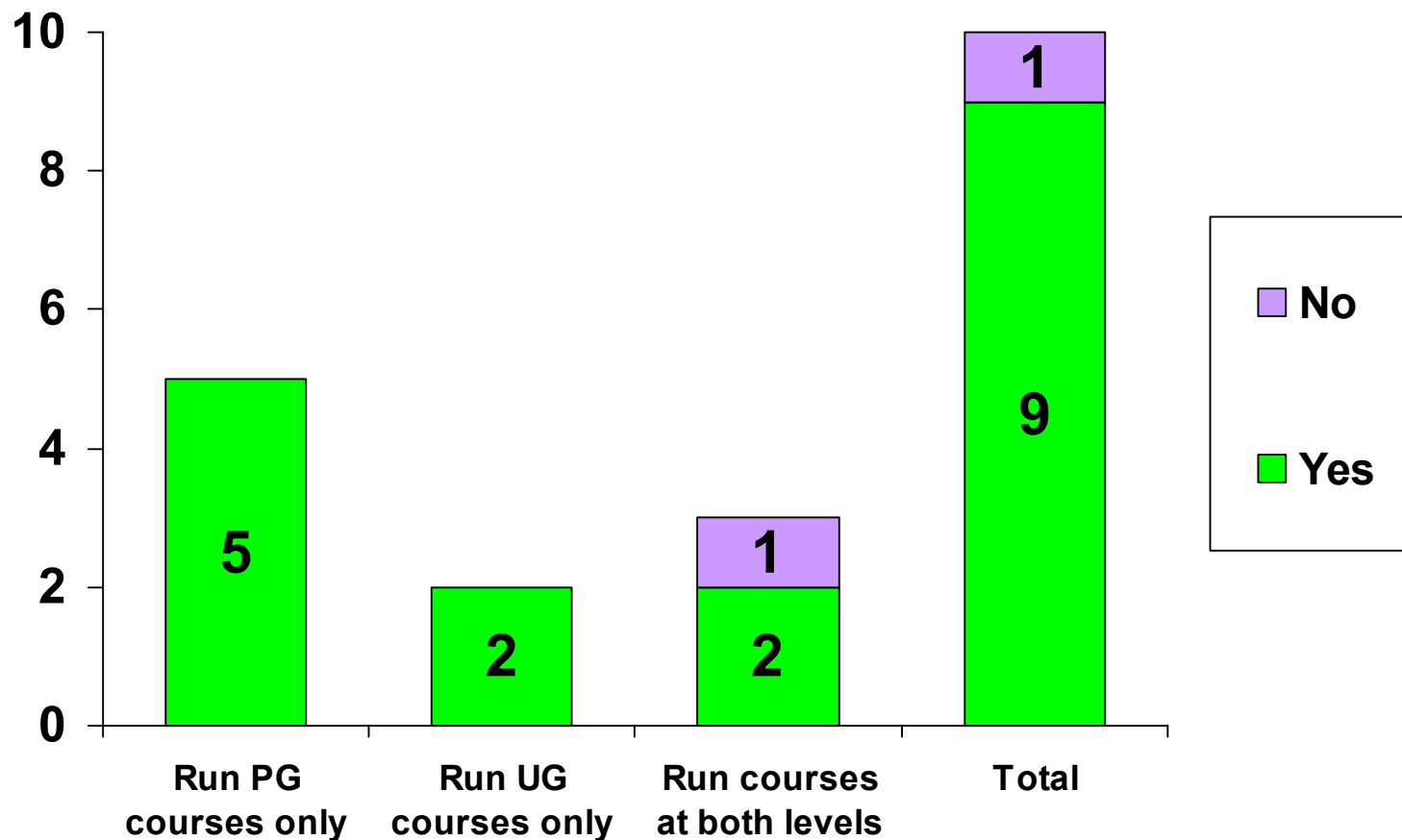
How learn of needs

How, if at all, do you find out what potential employers in the book publishing industry are looking for from your course(s)/ graduates, in terms of student skills, attributes and knowledge?



Level of input

Do you feel you get sufficient input/advice from potential employers in the book publishing industry about what they are looking for from your course(s)/graduates, in terms of student skills, attributes and knowledge?



Industry input

In what, if any, ways could the book publishing industry be of greater help to you when you are developing/revising your book publishing course(s)?



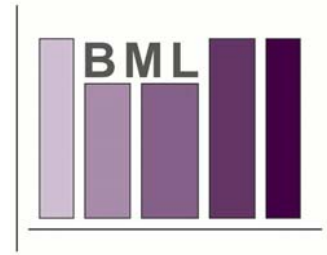
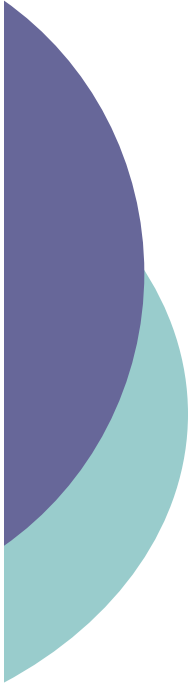
- Most say they are happy with the support they get
- 2 of the 10 would like more guest speakers
- 1 wants an improvement to the Book House website

Offer more guest speakers

We use the Publishing Competencies (on the Book House website) as one of the knowledge resources for the skills base needed for different publishing roles. Some of those involved in drawing them up acknowledge that they were a first shot at a complex area, and beg revision. They also predate the digital shift in the industry. An accurate map of roles in the industry, backed up with detailed and constantly updated case histories, would be a real help. I'd be very happy to help with this, by the way

We invite feedback from publishers and are now trying to formalise this process more with the advisory board.

By providing more speakers who are prepared to donate time to visit and give lectures



Promoting the industry

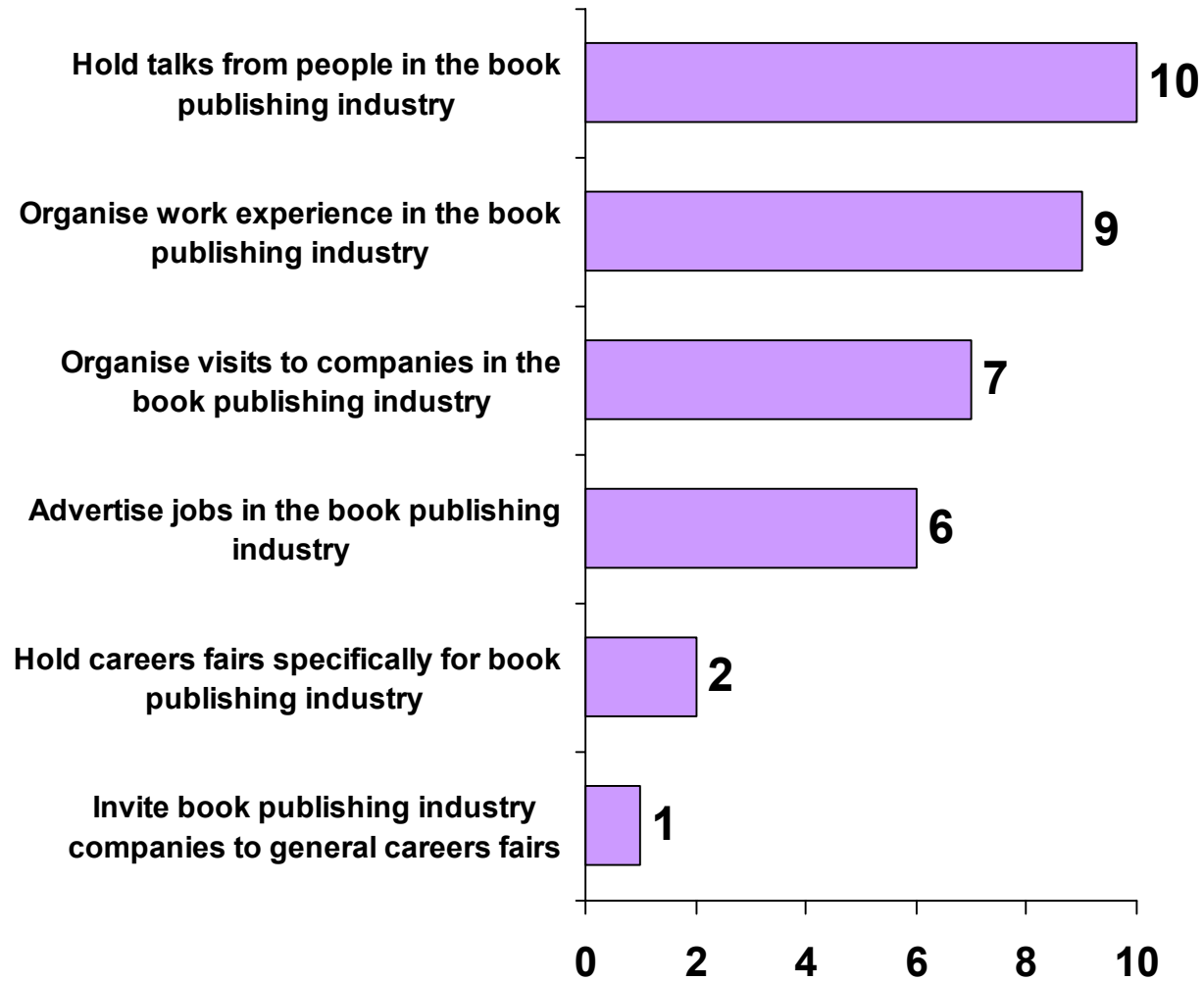
Promoting the industry



- Institutions promote the industry by holding talks from industry personnel (10/10), organising work experience (9), organising visits to publishers (7) and advertising relevant jobs (6)
- 5 of the 10 say the talks from industry personnel are open to all students (regardless of course)
 - 4 say the work experience is open to all
- 8/10 think that students of literature may also be interested in book publishing
 - 7 say this of media/PR students
 - 6 creative/arts and 6 education
- Directors feel that to attract non-publishing students, publishers should promote themselves more, at different educational levels, and outside publishing courses
 - in schools
 - to business students
 - to students in science and education subjects

How promote career

What, if anything, does your institution do to help promote the book publishing industry as a career among its students?

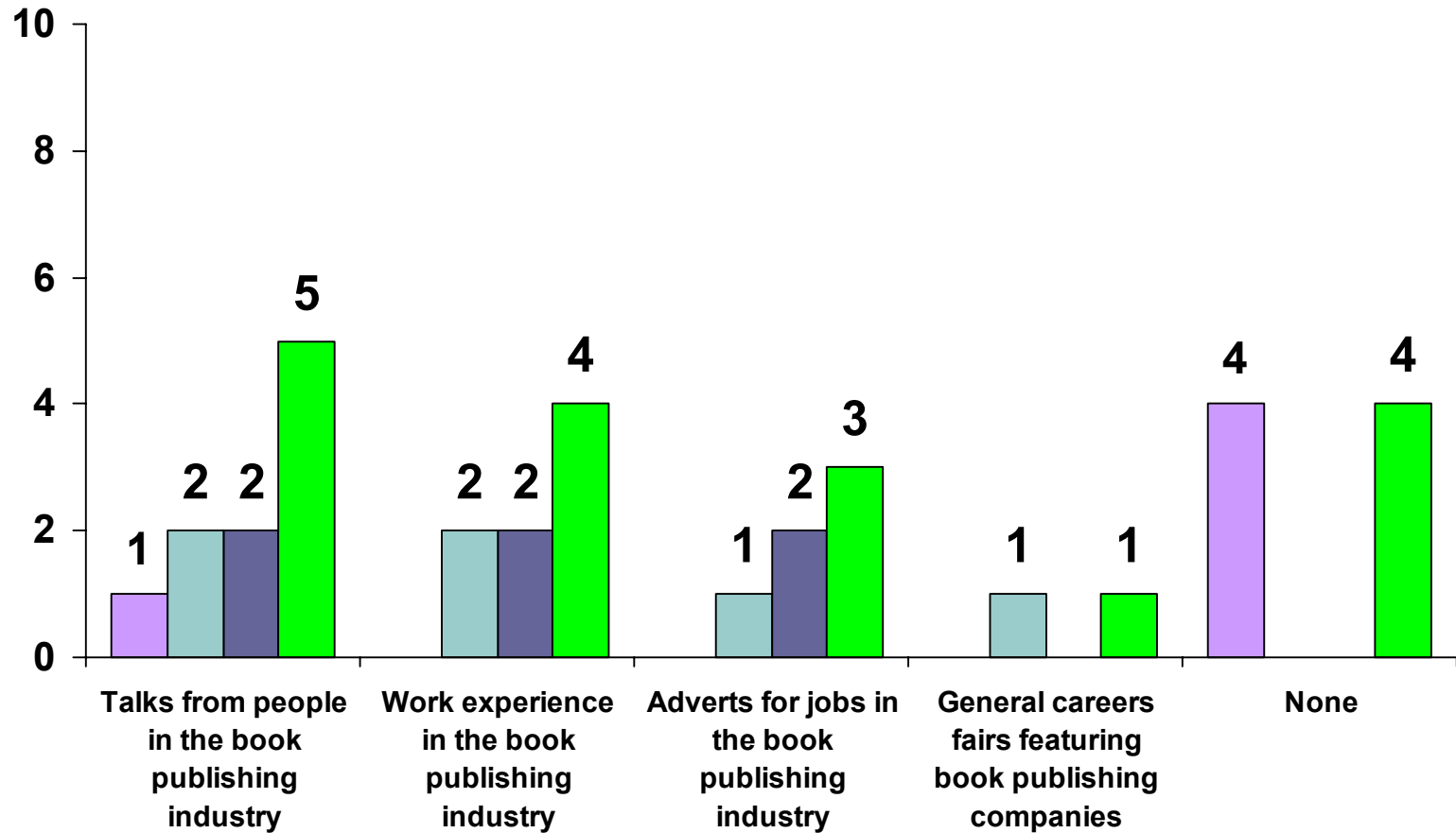


Promote to other students

Which, if any, of these are advertised and/or open to students who are not on book publishing courses?

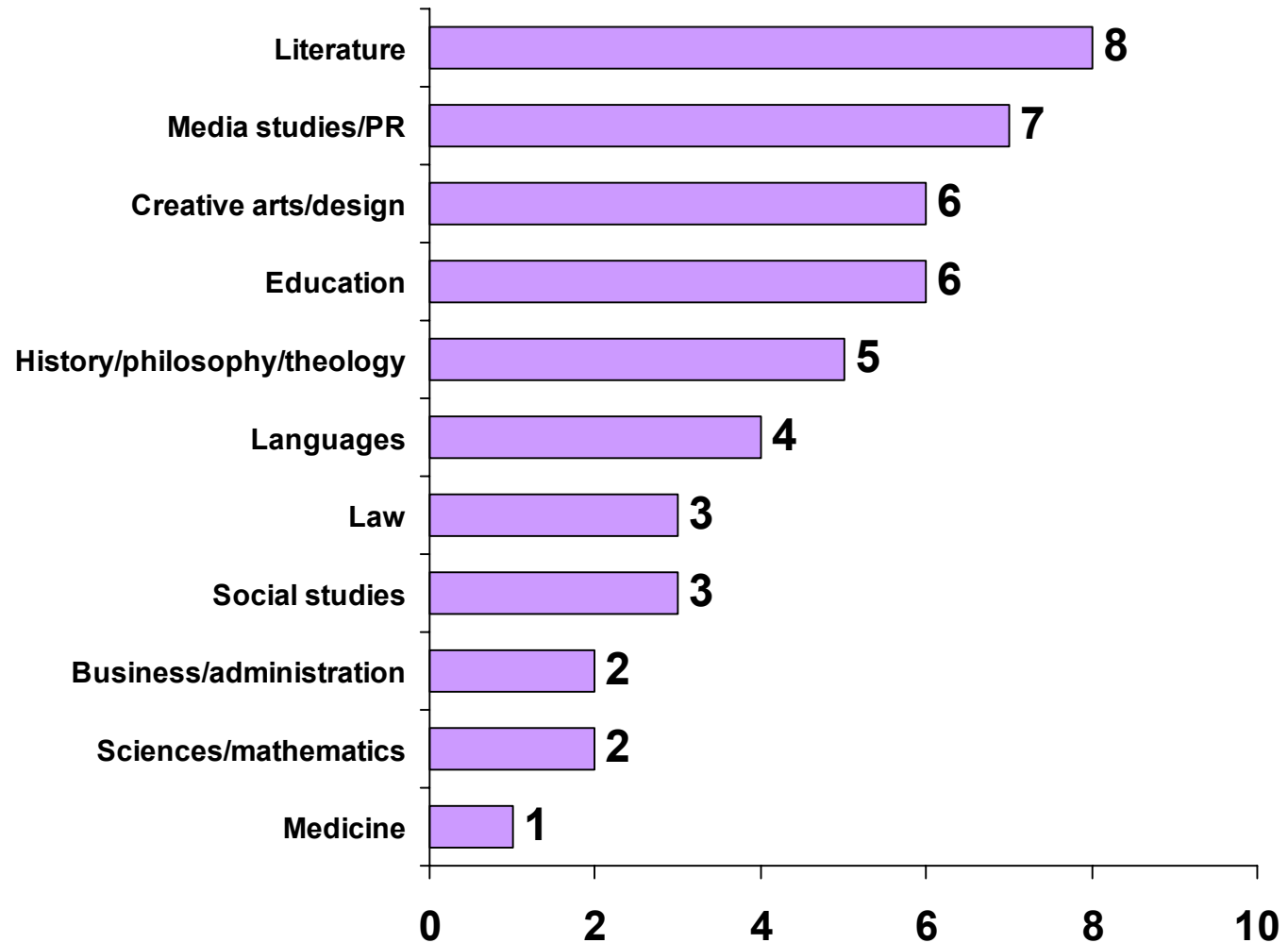


■ Run PG courses only
 ■ Run UG courses only
 ■ Run courses at both levels
 ■ Total



Other student interest

Apart from those on book publishing courses, what type of students (in terms of subjects areas) do you feel are most interested in working in the book publishing industry?



Promote to other students

What, if anything, do you feel the book publishing industry could do to make sure that students who are not studying book publishing consider it as a career?/ ... make it a more attractive career for students who are not studying book publishing?



- Essentially publishers should promote themselves more, at different educational levels, and on courses outside the publishing arena

Regular careers talks

At postgraduate any degree is applicable to a career in publishing

They need to sell publishing as a career to schools. Publishing is seen as middle class and white, and some even think that you can only work in publishing if you want to write! The industry needs, therefore, to sell itself to young people at an earlier stage of their lives

Careers talks

The areas that seem most keen to attract talent are production and sales, and specialist publishing areas. Production and sales could both promote themselves to business courses (which don't currently think of publishing), offering placements; and the industry would do well to launch promotional activities at science and education conferences - there are bright candidates there, I suspect, who don't currently consider publishing - though I'm pleased to have lots of scientists for next year at City

Academic or specialist subject publishers could target postgrads on specialist courses

They could have clearer entry routes and graduate recruitment schemes

Work experience and money...? Plus career 'case studies'/role models?