

# Signposting career opportunities in cosmetics

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The cosmetics and beauty industry is a dynamic environment where science meets creativity at every level in every profession. It employs over one million directly or indirectly in the UK,<sup>1</sup> is worth several billion to the UK economy and is part of a vast economically resilient global marketplace. However, the science, scientists, engineers, and creativity required for the launch of every new product are not always recognised or appreciated by students or those early in their careers.

Our sector is rarely top-of-mind in discussions that dictate a future career path of someone in school or higher education. Nor is the industry represented in the types of career fairs that attract top students into and beyond university. Many people working in the sector say the pathways into jobs and careers in the cosmetics and beauty industry were not well described or signposted during their formative education.

Furthermore, students and consumers of cosmetic and beauty products are generally ignorant of the many, varied and rewarding jobs in the cosmetics and beauty industry and how these are deployed in the production of the myriad of products they use every day. So, the UK's first and only business cluster for the cosmetics and beauty industry – Cosmetics Cluster UK (CCUK)<sup>2</sup> – set about trying to find out why this is. Following two industry surveys by CCUK, three years apart, here I assess the current state of play.

## The survey says

In relation to the question addressed above, CCUK's Education and Skills project was established in 2018 with five partner organisations representing cosmetic science, training and education and industry advocacy.<sup>3</sup> The group's focus was to survey the career journeys into cosmetic science jobs, to test the



hypothesis that the cosmetic and beauty industry does not have adequate career signposting, to gain insights into why this is and to generate data to influence change in relation to how careers in this industry are introduced and promoted from schools up.

Our first survey findings showed us that awareness of careers in cosmetic science while in full-time education was poor, courses training for jobs in the sector were few and that over two-thirds of respondents said they 'fell into their career' in the industry.<sup>4</sup>

The survey was re-run again three years later post Covid-19, given that the industry was in the spotlight with its swift pivoting to make hand sanitiser products, yet took a big economic hit, according to a beauty and wellbeing sector workforce report from the UK government.<sup>5</sup>

Our second survey was widened to include more partners and questions were included that targeted non-technical roles in the industry.<sup>5</sup> Of the 160 responses (Figure 1), 80% were women<sup>6</sup> and 62% left full time education over ten years ago.

Six out every ten had worked in only one or two companies, indicating a loyal workforce borne out by highly positive scores for this industry being 'a good place to work'. Some 24% worked in a larger company (over 500 employees) and 28% in a micro business (under ten employees).

We analysed our survey by qualification level. It is not a surprise that qualification levels are high in our industry, with 60% Level 5 and above and with most with PhDs in the over 55s age group.<sup>7</sup> The survey showed a wide diversity

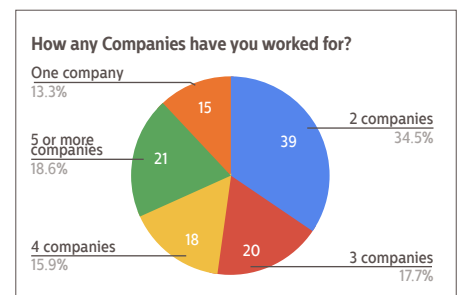
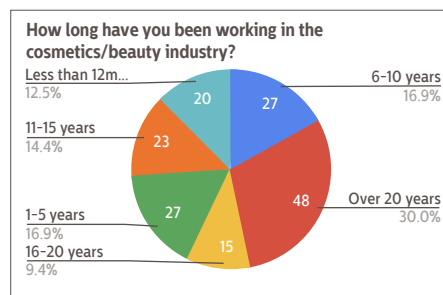
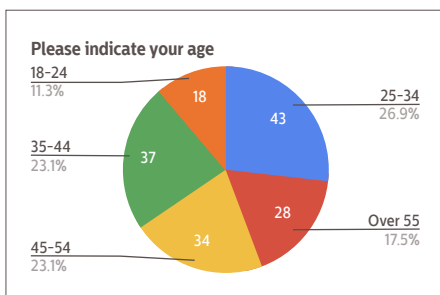


Figure 1: Survey responses to age/time spent working in the industry/number of companies worked for

with over 80 different educational institutions represented, however, only 12% had completed a specific cosmetic science or beauty qualification.

There are still very few UK university courses available with UCAS listing 12 courses with cosmetic or cosmetic and pharmaceutical science,<sup>8</sup> compared with say chemistry where there are over 1200 according to UCAS.

When we asked the question about knowledge of specific courses/qualifications to enter a job in the industry, most replied that they had no knowledge of what qualifications were needed while they were in full time education (Figure 2). This awareness improved with time working in the industry.

So, although people already in our industry are very well educated and to a high level, we still feel that this is not because specific relevant courses are being promoted at school or provided in higher education, and the pathways remain unclear. It is also true to say, that with such courses being few, employers generally see a degree in science as a good start.

When we analysed the respondent's motivation to undertake specific training courses by age group, we found that younger respondents did more work to research what courses/training/jobs were available and went on to access these, versus older groups who were much less self-directed and older respondents again said they 'fell into' their career (Figure 3).

The younger age groups were somewhat underrepresented in the survey (11% under-25s and 45% under-35s), but we found that around half of under-35s said they had researched their career choice, indicating that those starting in jobs more recently were more likely to have (or to have sought out) some prior knowledge of the sector. The biggest factor driving their research was personal passion.

This is great news for the industry as it shows that motivations are strongly led by a passion for the sector with younger age groups actively researching how best to enter careers in this sector. Recurring themes were wishing to help people feel good, very interested from a young age and the link between science and creativity

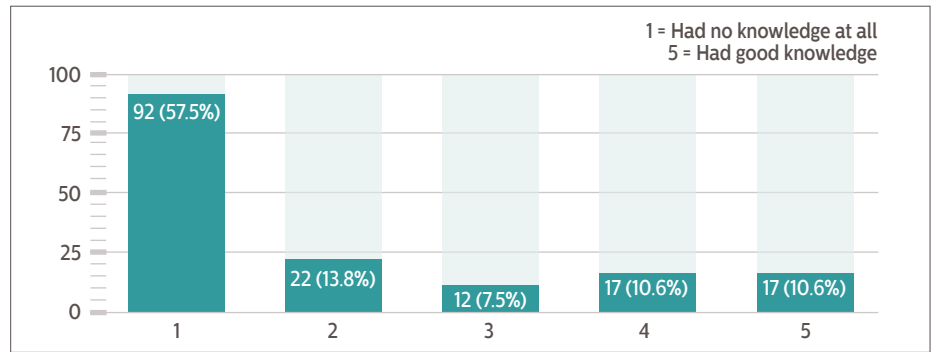


Figure 2: Awareness of qualifications required for jobs in the cosmetics and beauty sector

### Need to support young people

So, our first actionable insights from the survey were that we need to support young people to choose a career pathway in the industry by i) resourcing their research; ii) increasing their awareness of educational/training options and iii) by opening their eyes to the types of jobs offered. This latter point is being addressed in a project being run by the British Beauty Council called Future Talent,<sup>9</sup> recently launched in the UK.

Our survey results showed that the top skills gap mentioned was 'availability of specific training courses'. We do need to monitor this trend to see whether the introduction of more relevant and accessible information and expansion of the college and university courses on offer will help signpost careers in the industry. Programmes like Future Talent will help generate interest, but, as said earlier, there are still few degree-level courses focused on training this future talent.

Interestingly, when we asked about awareness of current qualifications on offer, there was better awareness amongst younger respondents (Figure 4) but this was still much less than the awareness of specific education routes when already working in the industry.

This demonstrates that those working in the sector could really help to promote signposting of careers and suggests that partnering between companies and schools/universities will continue

to be helpful to future generations.

Many companies actively do this with STEM programmes,<sup>10</sup> but efforts are not yet nationally coordinated, comprehensive, or targeted – for example at girls, with careers in personal care in mind. Thus, we still need to do more work to promote cosmetic science careers to those taking the more generic science and technology subjects at school and in higher education, such as chemistry, biology, physics and engineering and pharmaceutical sciences.

### Signposting career opportunities

An encouraging take-home message from the survey is that awareness of careers in the industry before employment is improving, and when younger people are already passionate to get into the industry, they will do more to research options for training and future careers. However, this means there remains a need to reach out to those young people who may not have even considered that a career in the industry is something for them.

We know that signposting to information on education and careers in the cosmetics and beauty industry is not currently part of the mainstream careers resources in the UK's schools. The national curriculum at Level 3 and 4 science covers the human body as well as chemistry.

Thus the importance of the products we use every day for health, hygiene and wellbeing would make an interesting topic for discussions about the industry and its products and the insights into formulation sciences would demonstrate materials science and be the basis for some discussions on careers.

Many companies already do excellent work in schools as part of the STEM ambassadors programmes. We as an industry would like to be able to deliver nationally recognised resources for use in all schools, something echoed by the comments from the survey on 'ideas and suggestions' and the ambitions of the Future Talent programme.

In the UK, the sector is one of the largest employers, ranging from R&D through to salon and retail. Training and working in cosmetic science is also seen as a route to supporting other high value careers such as the pharmaceutical sector.

### Comparison with Europe

Those in the sector that have worked through Brexit agree that employee mobility into the UK from the EU has been affected. Whilst this

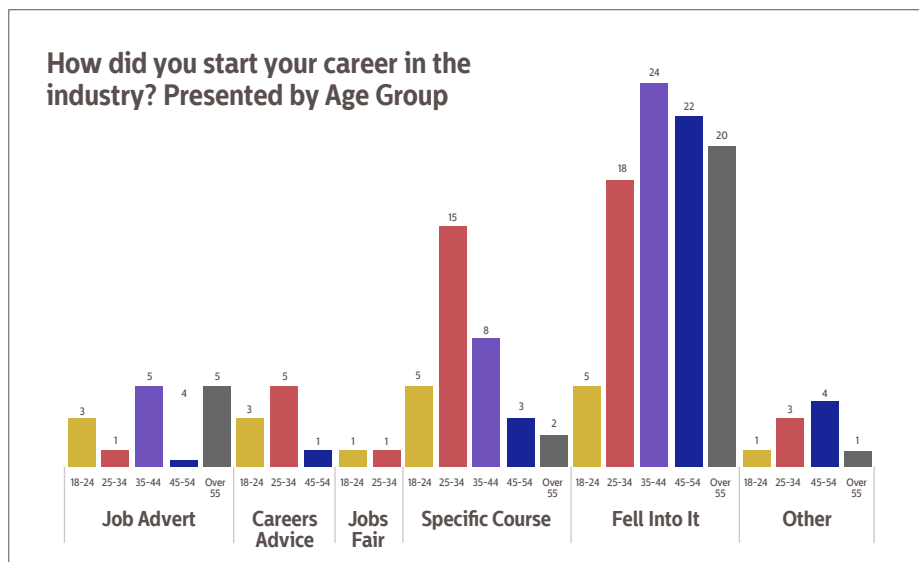


Figure 3: We asked how those employed in the industry had started in their career and analysed this by age group

means that UK businesses will look to home grown talent, the education system in the EU generally produced graduates with wide-ranging and relevant skills that are now less available to companies in the UK.

According to Cosmetics Europe, the trade association of the cosmetics industry in the EU, the cosmetics industry makes a significant social and economic contribution to the EU, with a value of €29 billion and supports, either directly or indirectly, over two million jobs in Europe including over 30,000 scientists.<sup>11</sup>

Thousands of SMEs drive growth and innovation in this sector, with hundreds of specialist ingredient manufacturers. Thus, in both UK and EU the cosmetics and beauty sector has high economic value, is investable, drives the STEM agenda and touches the lives of every citizen every day.

So, generally, how discoverable are the training courses for jobs in the cosmetics and beauty industry? A search of web-based information on education and training options across the UK and Europe includes UCAS as well as some good websites. For example, the EU Europass website serves as a resource for Europeans seeking either education/training or jobs abroad and is searchable for cosmetic science,<sup>12</sup> but does not now cover the UK, which may affect influx of potential employees into the UK from a wider European base.

Other sites such as Educations.com cover EU, UK and well beyond and list cosmetic science and beauty related training courses. CCUK is a founder member of the Global Cosmetic Cluster, and we welcome collaborations and initiatives from other countries in the EU.

### Conclusion

What does this mean going forward? We advocate a UK-wide joined up approach to increasing awareness of careers in the cosmetics and beauty industry, especially for those taking STEM subjects.

This could take the form of bespoke designed tool kits for schools/colleges, as recently launched in the Future Talent



programme, by the British Beauty Council; a dedicated industry careers fair to be held annually to showcase careers in the industry, and generally to improve the online information and resources to help in the promotion of the sector as a great place to work.

These initiatives will require resourcing and CCUK will continue to work with its partners to set goals and objectives to implement such initiatives.

### Acknowledgements

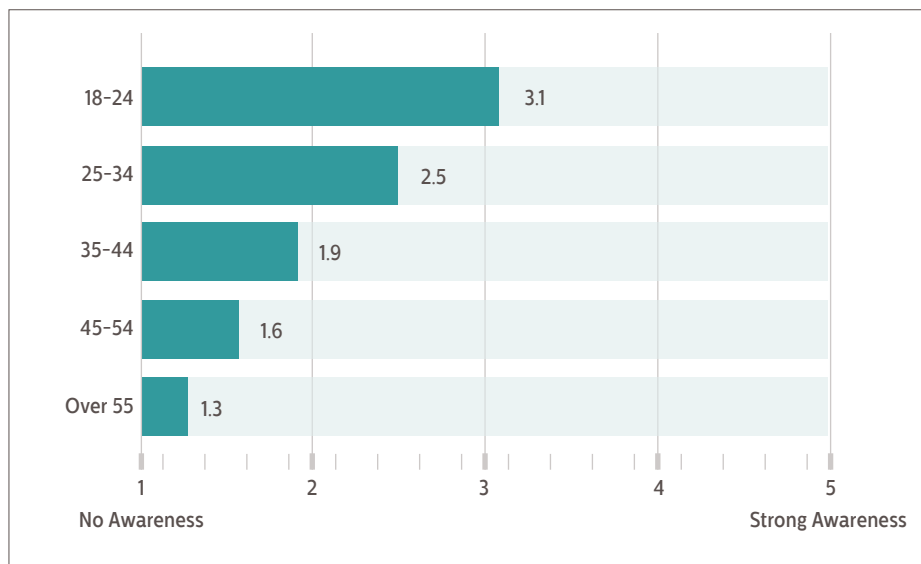
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2. Cosmetics Cluster UK is a business cluster

located in the UK, and a member of the Global Cosmetic Cluster organisation. <https://www.cosmeticsclusteruk.com/>

3. Survey partners included Society of Cosmetic Scientists SCS, London College of Beauty Therapy, CATCH Skills, Cosmetics Executive Women CEW-UK, and the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association CTPA
4. Westgate G, Evison J. The science underpinning the UK cosmetics industry – an education and skills review. *Household and Personal Care Today*. September/October 2019
5. Beauty and wellbeing sector workforce report, 2021. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2021-0097/CDP-2021-0097.pdf>
6. Partners in the second survey include: The Society of Cosmetic Scientists (SCS), Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfumery Association Ltd (CTPA), London College of Beauty Therapy (LCBT), Croda, Arthur Edwards, Estée Lauder Companies, Cosmetic Executive Women UK (CEW UK) and the British Beauty Council
7. Level 5 is a qualification level in the UK equivalent to foundation degree or higher national diploma
8. UCAS = Universities and Colleges Admissions System. <https://www.ucas.com/>
9. The British Beauty Council is dedicated to ensuring clear and diverse beauty career pathways are promoted to young people. The Future Talent STEM Learning and Careers and Enterprise are collaborating to develop the first dedicated beauty-related resource for secondary schools, showcasing and demonstrating the enriching careers across the beauty and STEM sector
10. STEM = science, technology, engineering, maths <https://www.stem.org.uk/STEM-ambassadors>
11. Socio-Economic Contribution of the European Cosmetics Industry. [https://cosmeticseurope.eu/files/4715/6023/8405/Socio-Economic\\_Contribution\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Cosmetics\\_Industry\\_Report\\_2019.pdf](https://cosmeticseurope.eu/files/4715/6023/8405/Socio-Economic_Contribution_of_the_European_Cosmetics_Industry_Report_2019.pdf)
12. Europass is a free, personal searchable tool for learning and working in Europe <https://europa.eu/europass/en/find-courses?keyword=cosmetics>



**Figure 4:** Awareness of roles in the industry before employment is improving but could be much better. Average scores on a Likert scale of 1-5 with 1=not aware and 5=strongly aware