

Summary of Demand from Industry for Skills / Training – Dec 2020

The SERSF has compiled the following information from feedback from industry, industry clusters/associations and data available from the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) of SOLAS. It is presented for a number of key economic sectors that are of vital economic importance to the region.

In addition to the identified skills shortages / training needs, sectors have an ongoing need for a wide variety of other training which is being met by the various education and training bodies within and outside the region, internal training and private contracted training providers.

Financial Services – (8,200 employed).

This sector includes a range of companies employing over 8,000 staff with concentrations in Kilkenny, Wexford in particular.

This sector includes a variety of companies with the following estimates of employment including:

- Insurance – 2,500 employed
- Funds Administration – 1,200 employed
- Payment Services – 1,200 employed
- Fintech – 800 employed
- Banking – 2,500 employed

The financial services sector has been resilient in 2020 during the public health crisis. Companies were able to migrate quickly to a home working model for significant numbers of their staff and so maintain operations. Some of the multinationals reported increased business as sister sites in other regions of the world were not able to manage remote working (lack of home broadband was a significant barrier). Access to quality broadband has been a problem for some staff residing in rural areas poorly served by broadband.

Availability of Graduates

The Higher Education Authority statistics reveal a strong and growing pipeline of graduates (Note 1) in **'Business, Administration and Law'** graduating in the South East in recent years.

YEAR	TOTAL GRADUATES NATIONALLY	TOTAL IT CARLOW	TOTAL WIT	TOTAL SOUTH EAST	SOUTH EAST AS % OF NATIONAL
2017/18	10,016	540	548	1,088	11%
2016/17	9,921	473	553	1,026	10%
2015/16	9,840	424	439	863	9%

Note 1. Undergraduate honours degrees, ordinary degrees, certs & diplomas awarded in All HEA-Funded Institutions in the Calendar Year by field of study (ISCED): full-time & part-time (including distance and e-learning).

As a result employers have generally been able to source high quality business, finance and accounting graduates within the region.

There is an ongoing requirement to upskill existing staff in digital technologies as their sector continues to experience significant digital transformation.

However, shortages of experienced professionals have been reported within the sector in 2020.

Roles in demand within the region include:

- Information Security Specialist
- Global Payments Specialist
- Risk & Compliance Professionals
- Data Analyst

Identified skills shortages and a need to upskill staff in the following disciplines has been identified:

- Adapting to increasing digitalisation of the insurance process
- Adapting to managing a changing workforce
- Data Analytics, AI, Machine Learning
- Funds Accounting / Administration – for business graduates.
- Professional accountancy qualifications (available from Professional Bodies)
- Risk & Compliance
- Anti-Money Laundering (AML)
- LEAN / Design Thinking
- Client Services, Presentation skills
- Supervisory Management / Team Leaders / Leadership Development.
- Intermediate & Advanced Excel.
- Software Programming – achieving advanced and expert level in various technologies.
- Software Validation / Quality Assurance

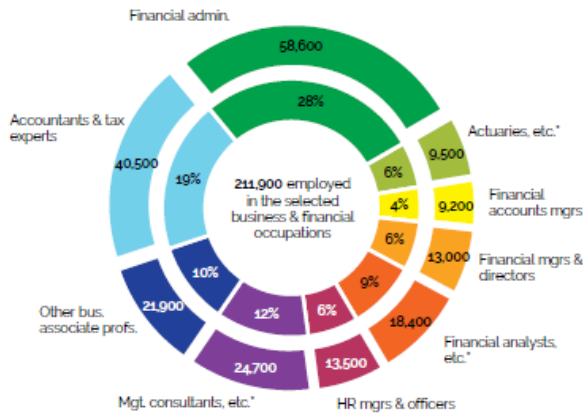
Extracts from the National Skills Bulletin 2020

9.3 Business & Financial Occupations

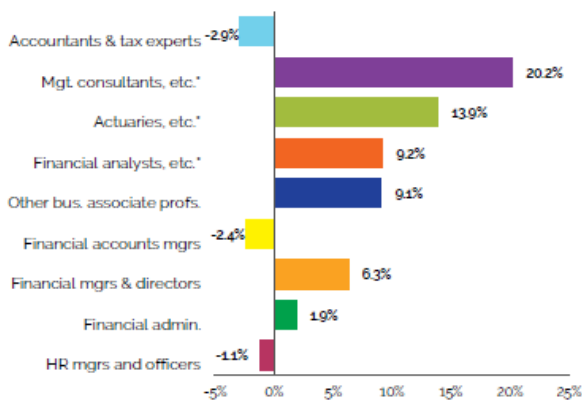
Overall employment: Approximately 212,000 persons (55% female) were employed in the selected business and financial occupations, representing 9.2% of the national workforce.

- **Sector:** These occupations were employed across all sectors, with 35% of overall employment concentrated in the financial sector and a further 20% in the professional services sector
- **Employment growth (5-year):** Between 2014 and 2019, overall employment increased by 35,000 (3.7% on average annually compared to 3.2% nationally). The strongest rate of employment growth was observed for management consultants, etc. (20.2%) during the period
- **Age:** The 25-54 age group accounted for the majority of persons employed, at 78%. The share of employees aged 55 and over was 15%, below the national average of 19%
- **Education:** The share who had attained third level qualifications (77%) was significantly above the national average share (48%) while a further 18% had attained a higher secondary/FET qualification
- **Full-time/part-time:** Over 87% of business & financial workers were in full-time employment
- **Nationality:** The share of non-Irish workers was below the national average of 16%, while 86% of workers were Irish nationals.

Numbers employed, 2019 (annual average)



Average growth rates (%) 2014-2019



Between 2014 and 2019, overall employment increased by 35,100 (3.7% on average annually compared to 3.2% nationally).

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO data
 *See detailed occupation description in table below

Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Although overall employment growth over the five-year period for business and financial occupations was above the national average, some occupations experienced a contraction in numbers employed. The financial sector accounted for over a third of employment in these occupations in 2019, although business and financial skills are required across a range of economic sectors. Supply from business and finance related fields of education is strong (18,500 graduates in 2018) and is one of the largest fields in terms of number of graduates in the further and higher education sectors each year.

As a result of COVID-19, employment in these occupations is expected to fall by 6% in 2020 (annual average), representing 13,000 persons; recovery in employment will be dependent on the performance of the economy for many of these occupations. The future demand for business and financial skills is also likely to be affected by the impact of Brexit and by changes in the nature of the tasks required to fulfil these roles due to technological change, with financial administrative roles identified in particular as being at high risk of automation.

Occupation	Economic summary
Accountants & tax experts	Employment fell in this occupation over the five-year period, although numbers have remained relatively static in the last two years. Despite this fall in employment, there were almost 6,000 recent job hires in 2019, indicating that job churn may be an issue for this occupation. However, replacement demand alone for such a large occupation will ensure job opportunities will continue even if an overall decline occurs. Demand exists for those with specific industry experience (particularly in the financial sector), as evidenced by the 300 new employment permits issued in 2019 and the numerous mentions in the Recruitment Agency Survey. The lack of commercial activity during quarter 2 of this year as a result of COVID-19 is likely to have seen a reduced demand for accountancy/tax services; however, a recovery, at least partial, is expected as business activity resumes.
Mgt. consultants, bus. analysts & project managers	This occupational group experienced strong employment growth over the previous five years, although this is in part related to changes in the Labour Force Survey methodology in 2017 (resulting in a significant increase for business project management professionals). Over 700 new employment permits were issued for this occupation in 2019 (for various analyst roles). The employment outlook for these occupations post COVID-19 is very much dependent on the performance of the economy as a whole.
Actuaries, economists & statisticians; other business profs.	Employment growth was strong for this occupation over the five-year period. Employment permits issued in 2019 related to actuarial analysts, and a difficulty in filling vacancies for data scientists was mentioned in the Recruitment Agency Survey. These occupations were unlikely to have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.
Financial analysts and insurance underwriters	Employment grew strongly over the five-year period. Vacancies that occurred for this occupation in 2019 related primarily to financial analysts as did many of the new employment permits issued. Those employed in these occupations are not expected to have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.
Financial accounts managers	There was an overall decline in employment over the five-year period. The impact of COVID-19 for this occupation is unknown.
Other bus. associate profs. (e.g. financial/accounting technicians, estimators, valuers)	This occupation had strong employment growth over the five-year period. Vacancies in 2019 related primarily to data analysts. Demand for these skills occurred across most economic sectors. Those employed as data analysts are not expected to have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, although the outcomes for other roles within this group are less certain (e.g. estimators, valuers, accounting technicians).
Financial managers & directors	Employment grew at almost double the rate of the national average over the five-year period. Although there were over 100 new employment permits issued in 2019, a third are related to intra-company transfers and, therefore, not new job opportunities. The financial sector does not appear to have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 to date; as such, the number of those employed in these occupations is not expected to have been significantly affected.

Financial admin.	Although overall five-year employment growth was low when compared to the national average, year-on-year growth since 2018 was strong for this occupation. Financial administrative occupations have a slightly older age profile than the national average; they are also at high risk of automation and any plans to reduce the current workforce in the retail banking sector as a result of COVID-19 will likely have a significant impact on this occupation.
HR managers and officers	Employment in this occupation fell over the five-year period. However, demand for these skills continued in 2019 with a high number of vacancies occurring; new employment permits issued primarily related to those in senior roles. On the one hand, the work of those employed in HR roles is likely to have intensified during the COVID-19 crisis; however, a lower number of people in employment economy-wide could translate into reduced demand for these roles.

**For detailed table see Appendix A*

From P88 of [National Skills Bulletin 2020](#)

Compiled by SERSF
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