

## Summary of Demand from Industry for Skills / Training – October 2021

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.

The financial services sector has an ongoing need for staff training, much of which is catered for by various professional bodies (eg accounting/banking/insurance) through ‘Continuous Professional Development CPD’ 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 – (9,900 employed).

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
- Retail Banking – 1,700 employed
- Professional Services (Assurance, Accounting, Taxation, Business Planning) – 2,500

The financial services sector has been resilient in 2020 and 2021 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. Retail banking continues to decline with closures and rationalisations ongoing.

### 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 2021.

#### Roles in demand within the region include:

- Fund Accountant
- Risk & Compliance Professional
- Data Analyst
- Global Payments Specialist
- Management Accountant
- Financial Accountant
- Tax Professional
- Sales & Marketing
- Associate Accounting Roles (eg Technician, Bookkeeper, AR/AP, Payroll)

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

- 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)
- Accounting Technician, AR/AP, Payroll
- Regulation, 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

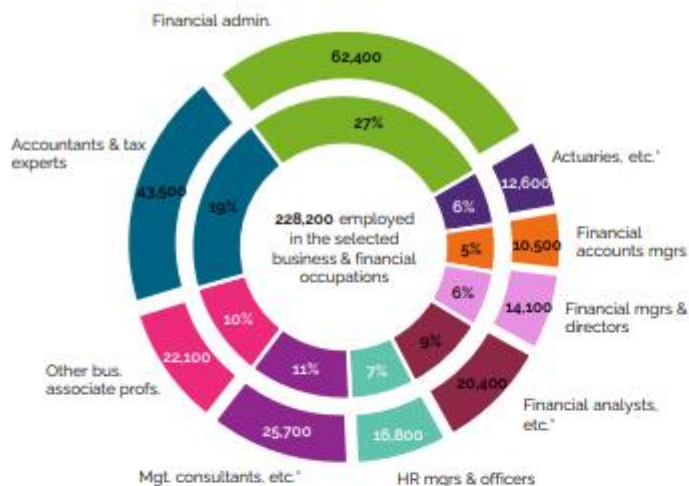
## Extracts from the National Skills Bulletin 2021

### 10.3 Business & Financial Occupations

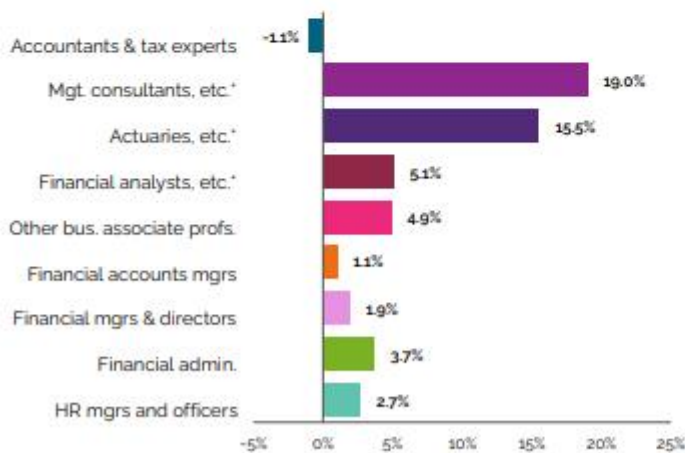
Overall employment: approximately 228,200 persons (57% female) were employed in the selected business and financial occupations, representing 9.9% of the national workforce.

- **Sector:** these occupations were employed across all sectors, with 35% of overall employment concentrated in the financial sector and a further 18% in professional services and 11% in industry
- **Employment growth (5-year):** between 2015 and 2020, overall employment increased by 42,400 (4.2% on average annually compared to 2.2% nationally). The strongest rate of employment growth was observed for management consultants, etc. (19%) during the period
- **Age:** the 25-54 age group accounted for the majority of persons employed, at 80%. The share aged 55 and over was 15%, below the national average of 19%
- **Education:** the share with third level qualifications (80%) was significantly above the national average share (51%), while a further 16% had attained a higher secondary/FET qualification
- **Full-time/part-time:** of those employed in business and financial occupations, 88% were in full-time employment
- **Nationality:** the share of non-Irish workers was below the national average of 17%, while 85% of workers were Irish nationals.

Numbers employed, 2020 (annual average)



Average growth rates (%) 2015-2020



Between 2015 and 2020, overall employment increased by 42,400 (4.2% on average annually compared to 2.2% nationally).

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

## Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Employment increased in the overall business and financial occupational group in the year since 2019 despite the onset of COVID-19. Although a number of those in the financial sector were in receipt of income support payments in 2020, this does not appear to have impacted on these occupations. While the highest share of employment was concentrated in the financial sector, these skills are also required across a range of other economic sectors.

Supply from business and finance related fields of education has continued to grow, with over 24,000 persons gaining third level and/or professional qualifications in 2019.

The financial sector has been identified by the ESRI as a sector which is expected to be significantly impacted by Brexit, although this has yet to be evident from the employment data.<sup>39</sup> The closure of retail banks/branches announced in 2021 (e.g. AIB, BOI, KBC and Ulster Bank) will have an impact on staffing requirements in future years. The future demand for skills will also be impacted by changes in the nature of the tasks required to fulfil these financial 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  <b>Shortage: Accountants with industry specific experience</b>	Despite a fall in employment over the five-year period, employment grew strongly in the year since 2019. Over 200 new employment permits were issued, primarily for roles in the financial sector. Vacancies for accountants in the financial sector were also cited as difficult-to-fill in the Recruitment Agency Survey. Demand exists for those with specific industry experience (particularly in the financial sector). Replacement demand alone for such a large occupation will ensure job opportunities will continue even without any significant employment growth.
Mgt. consultants, business 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 LFS methodology in 2017 (resulting in a significant increase for business project management professionals). Almost 700 new employment permits were issued for this occupation in 2020 for roles including business/finance analysts and project managers. Although these occupations appear frequently in the employment permits data, there is no evidence at present to indicate that vacancies for these roles are difficult-to-fill.
Actuaries, economists & statisticians; other business profs.	Employment grew strongly for this occupation over the five-year period, although this in part relates to changes in the LFS in quarter 3 2017. Employment permits issued in 2020 related to roles including actuarial analysts and data scientists. Vacancies for data scientists were also cited as difficult to fill in the Recruitment Agency Survey, relating to roles in the ICT sector. While demand for these roles was evident in 2020, the numbers involved are likely to be small. Increasing provision in the education sector should be sufficient to meet demand in the short-term.
Financial analysts and insurance underwriters	Employment growth was above the national average over the five-year period for this occupation, with employment growing strongly since 2019. A small number of new employment permits were issued in 2020 relating primarily to financial analysts. Despite strong employment growth, there is no evidence at present to indicate that vacancies for these roles are difficult to fill.
Financial accounts managers	Employment growth for this occupation was below the national average for the five-year period, although employment grew strongly in the year to 2020. The data provides no evidence of issues in relation to this occupation.
Other business associate profs. (e.g. accounting technicians, estimators, valuers)	This occupation had strong employment growth over the five-year period, although little growth was observed since 2019. With less than a third of those employed in this occupation employed in the financial sector, employment was spread across most economic sectors. The new employment permits issued for this occupation were for various analyst and financial roles. Vacancies for data analysts were cited in the Recruitment Agency Survey as difficult-to-fill.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.esri.ie/publications/examination-of-the-sectoral-overlap-of-covid-19-and-brexit-shocks>

	While data analysts were in demand in 2020, there appears to be a shift towards data analytics emerging as a component of the required skills set sought by employers for existing occupations, such as regulatory or project managers, which may result in a reduced demand in future years for specific data analysts.
Financial managers & directors	Employment growth over the five-year period for this occupation was below the national average, although growth was strong in 2020. New employment permits issued in 2020 related primarily to financial managers and directors across a number of sectors, but primarily in financial activities and ICT. The restructuring of the banking sector is expected to have an impact on the demand for this occupation, although demand in other areas (both financial and other) may offset any potential declines.
Financial admin.	<p>Employment in this occupation has grown strongly since 2018, although recent job hires in 2020 exceeded employment growth indicating that job churn is a factor for these roles. Difficult-to-fill vacancies noted in the Recruitment Agency Survey related to payroll and accounts payable roles.</p> <p>This occupation is at high risk of automation and any reduction in the workforce in the retail banking sector will likely have a significant impact on these roles. However, those employed in this occupation work across a wide range of sectors, and given the size of the occupation, job opportunities are likely to continue to arise due to replacement demand alone.</p>
HR managers and officers	<p>Despite fluctuations in the intervening years, employment numbers recovered strongly in 2020, with most of the growth in the most recent year relating to HR officer roles. New employment permits issued in 2020 related to various HR roles including recruitment consultants and HR business partners, half of which were for roles based in the ICT sector. This role also featured strongly in the online job vacancy data for associate professionals.</p> <p>Future demand for these roles is likely to be linked to the way in which the workforce adjusts to the changes in work practices as a result COVID-19 (e.g. hybrid or remote working) and the overall recovery in the economy.</p>

\*For detailed table see Appendix A

### 10.3 Business & Financial Occupations

Bulletin description	Number Employed, 2020 (Annual Average)	Annualised Employment Growth Rate, 2015-2020	% Female (Q4 2020)	% Full-Time (Q4 2020)	Aged 55 years and over (Q4 2020)	% Irish Nationals (Q4 2020)	% Third Level Graduates (Q4 2020)	New Employment Permits Issued, 2020 (Number)	SLMRU Recruitment Agency Survey, Oct 2020
Accountants & tax experts	43,500	-11%	50%	93%	16%	81%	95%	245	X
Mgt. consultants, bus. analysts & project managers	25,700	19.0%	42%	90%	-	81%	87%	684	X
Actuaries, economists & statisticians; other business profs.	12,600	15.5%	[44%]	98%	-	92%	91%	70	X
Financial analysts and insurance underwriters	20,400	5.1%	49%	95%	-	84%	86%	41	
Other bus. associate profs.	22,100	4.9%	48%	88%	-	81%	74%	118	X
Financial accounts managers	10,500	11%	[38%]	90%	-	84%	80%	13	
Financial managers & directors	14,100	1.9%	[50%]	98%	-	95%	86%	63	
Financial admin. occupations	62,400	3.7%	75%	75%	17%	86%	61%	6	X
HR managers and officers	16,800	2.7%	74%	92%	-	85%	88%	61	
<b>Total</b>	<b>228,100</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>1,301</b>	

## 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 & Updated by SERSF  
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