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How Business Education Shapes Graduate Employability in Times of Disruptions

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CONTEXT

From COVID Shock to GenAI Adaptation

TWO DIFFERENT DISRUPTIONS

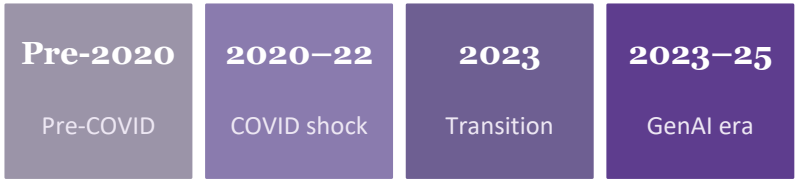
COVID disrupted ACCESS

Remote hiring, broken internships, scarce networking. The question became: can graduates still find work?

GenAI disrupted PREPAREDNESS

AI reshaped what employers expect and what curricula must teach. The question became: are graduates ready for the work that exists?

TWO DISRUPTIONS IN SIX YEARS



In six years, the labor market shifted twice: first toward remote and digital work, then toward AI-augmented work. We asked: *What competencies now matter for business graduates in a GenAI-shaped, globally labor market, and what does that imply for business education?*

2026 SNAPSHOT

Graduates are finding work — but a different kind of work

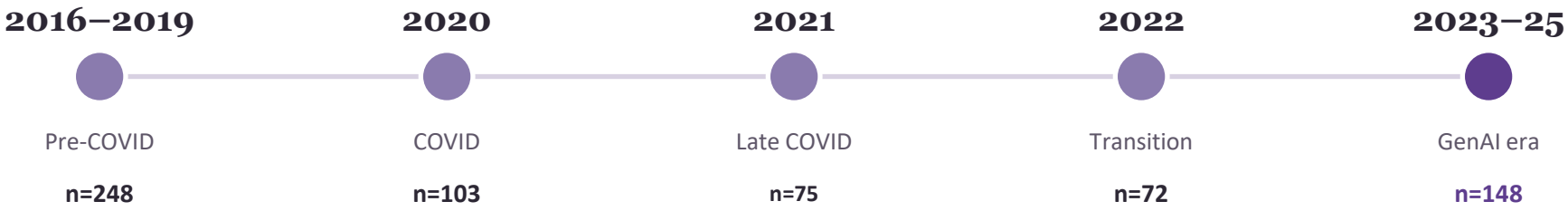
75% working full-time

76% earning $50k+

86% employed within 6 months

70% high degree-job fit (5–7)

FIVE ALUMNI WAVES · N = 646



Graduation-year ranges per wave. Main direct comparisons: three most recent waves.

THE STORY IN ONE SLIDE

COVID disrupted access; GenAI is disrupting preparedness

1

What changed first

COVID appears in job-search difficulty. Harder hiring conditions, digital-skill pressure.

"COVID disrupted access to work."

2

What did not change

Communication, teamwork, work ethic, problem solving remained top across waves.

"The human core still endures."

3

What changed next

AI-related competency importance rose sharply by 2026 — but AI is not yet the top barrier.

"GenAI is reshaping capabilities."

4

What schools should do

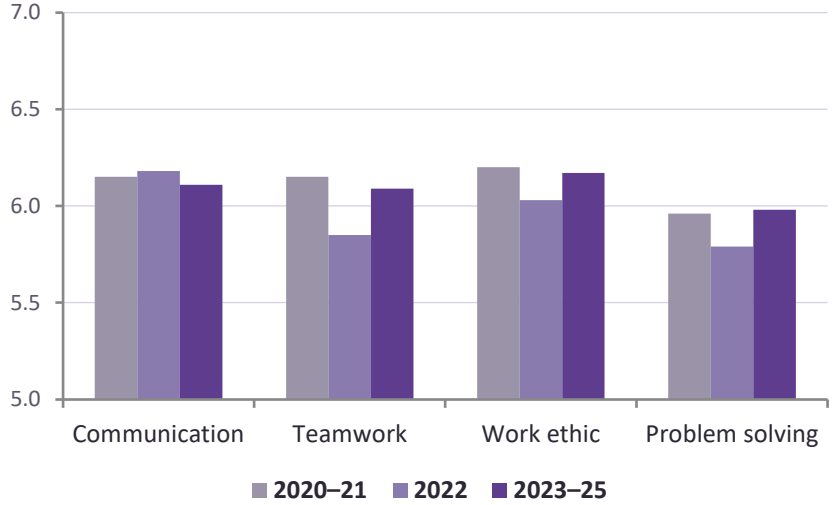
Keep the human core. Add applied AI readiness. Scale experiential learning.

"From crisis response to curriculum redesign."

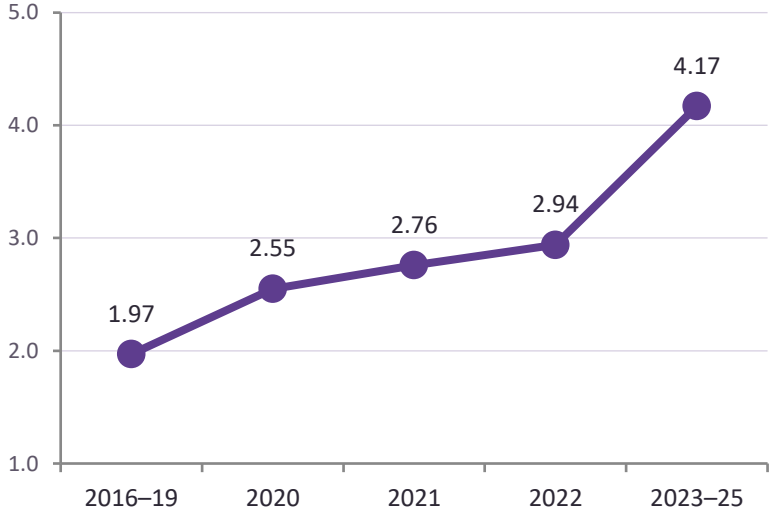
FINDING 1

Human skills held the top — and a new #1 emerged

What stayed stable — top human skills



What changed — AI / GenAI importance

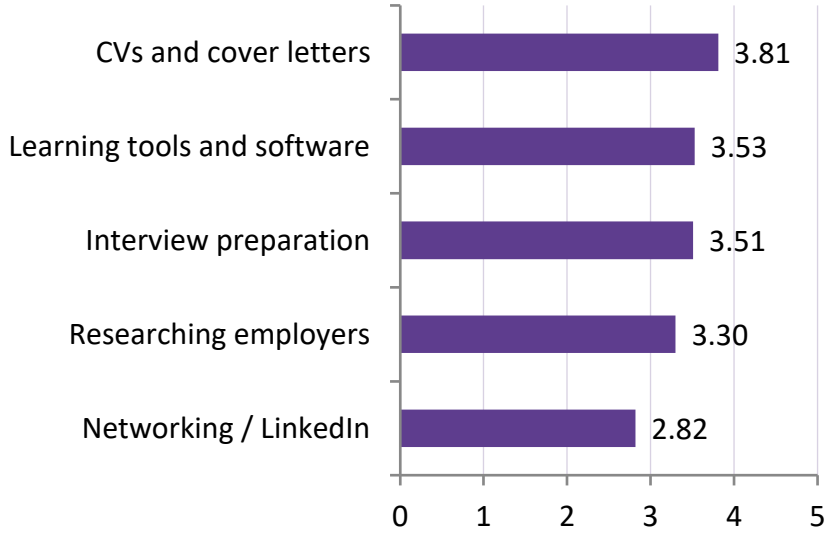


"Ability to learn quickly" entered as the new #1 in 2026 at **6.37 / 7**. AI did not replace human skills — it elevated adaptability.

FINDING 2

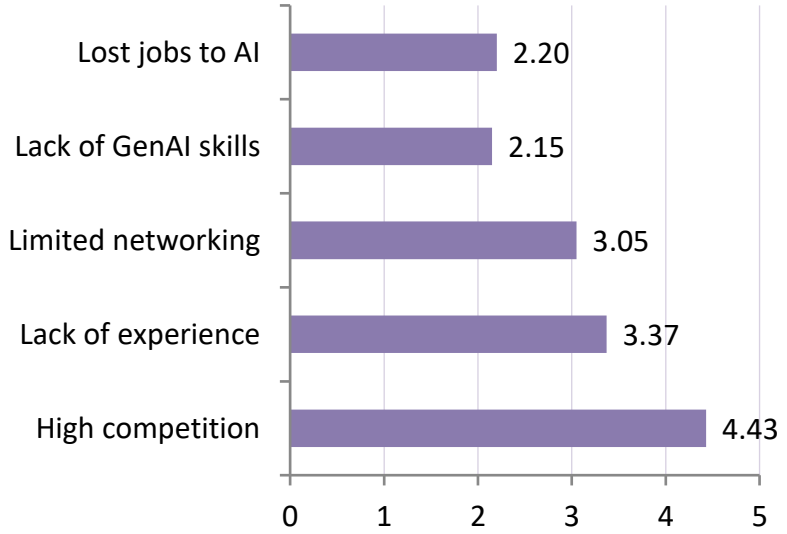
AI is used in transition — but is not the top barrier

HOW GRADUATES USED GenAI (mean, 1–7)



GenAI is already embedded in the school-to-work transition.

TOP BARRIERS TO FIRST JOB (2023-25)



The digital shift is AI-specific, not generic IT. Traditional barriers still dominate.

FINDING 3

The preparedness gap: confidence ahead of curriculum

STUDIES PREPARED ME FOR GenAI

2.83 / 7

n = 124

CONFIDENT I CAN ADAPT

4.93 / 7

n = 124

READ THE GAP

Students do not feel helpless. Their confidence is ahead of formal preparation.

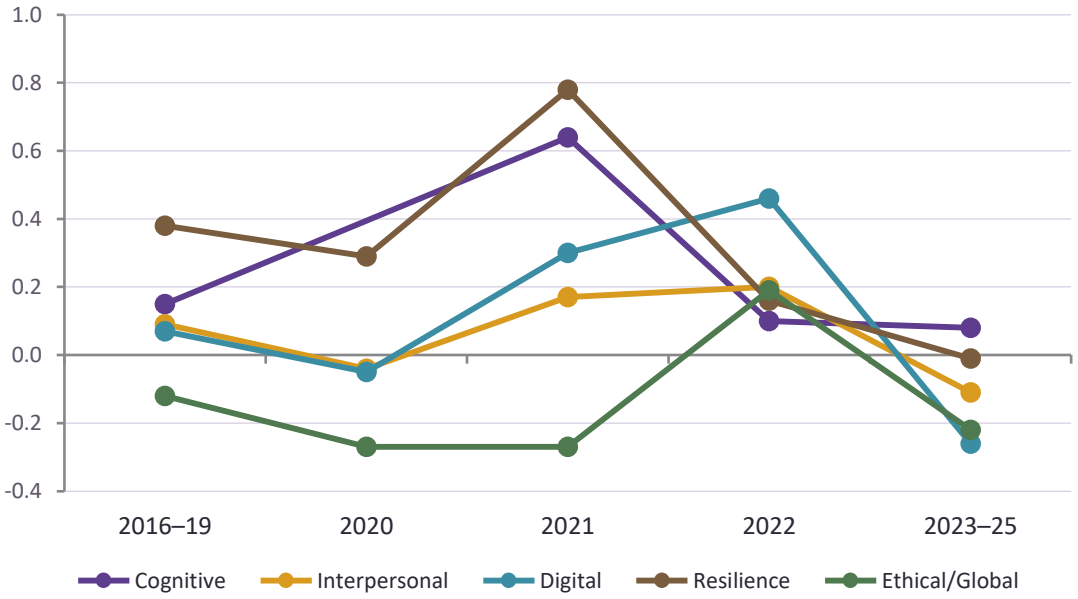
Paired comparison: $t = 11.66$, $p < .001$

> *Focus on human skills mainly… things that AI can't replace.*
>
> — *2025 graduate*

Slide takeaway: AI importance is rising faster than curricular preparation.

FINDING 4

The gap is broader than GenAI — and converging



READ THE PATTERN

Positive = feel under-prepared
Negative = feel over-prepared

2021 peak:

Pandemic grads reported the largest shortfalls across every domain.

2023-25 flip:

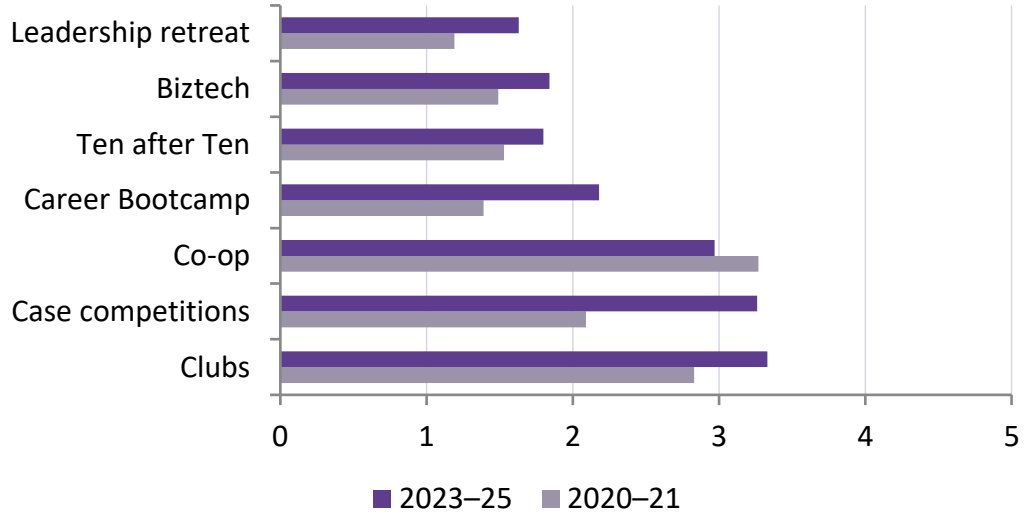
Every domain's gap is now at or below zero. Graduates feel on track — even as AI importance climbs.

The preparedness gap isn't a GenAI problem alone — it's a pattern that appeared during COVID and has now resolved, while AI importance keeps climbing.

FINDING 5

Experiential learning translates education into work

Which activities helped graduates get their first job



WHAT EL SEEMS TO DO

- Professional self-presentation
- Relationships and confidence
- Degree-to-job fit (not salary)

Internship because you really get the feel of the real worklife. Learning theory and applying it are very different.

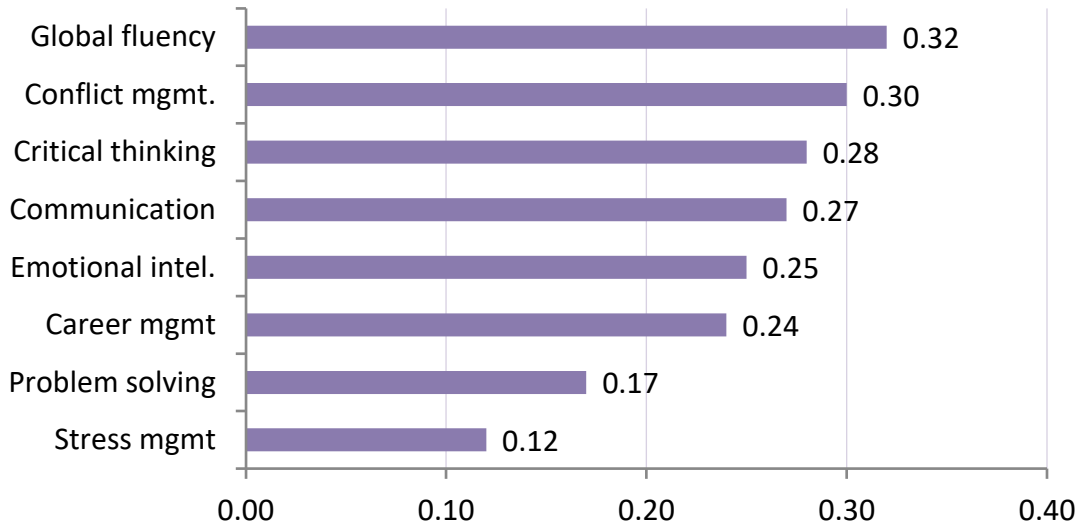
— 2025 graduate

Clubs, case competitions and co-ops consistently rank highest across cohorts. The pattern held through the pandemic.

FINDING 6

GenAI is a complement, not a substitute

GenAI confidence × human-skill confidence (2023-2025)



Complement, not substitute

Every correlation positive.

Students confident with GenAI also report stronger human skills.

Strongest: global fluency (.32), conflict mgmt (.30), critical thinking (.28).

No negative correlation anywhere — AI is not displacing foundational competencies.

2026 cross-sectional correlations (N = 87–93). Reverse causality cannot be ruled out.

IMPLICATIONS

One practical agenda for curriculum redesign

KEEP

The human core

Communication, teamwork, work ethic, problem solving, and adaptability remained on top across every wave.

"Human skills continue to be the core."

ADD

Applied AI readiness

Teach GenAI use in real business contexts. Emphasize ethical use, judgment, and AI-human collaboration.

"AI importance is rising, but curricular preparation is lagging."

SCALE

Experiential learning

Clubs, case competitions, co-ops and client projects lead the activity rankings. Every program has a scalable lever.

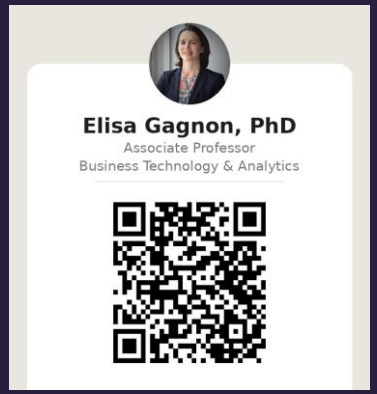
"Experiential learning turns education into outcomes."

Business education should help graduates not just adapt to the future — but shape it.

THANK YOU

Questions and discussion

“Disruptions change what schools must emphasize — but not the importance of helping students become capable, adaptable, and able to translate learning into work.”



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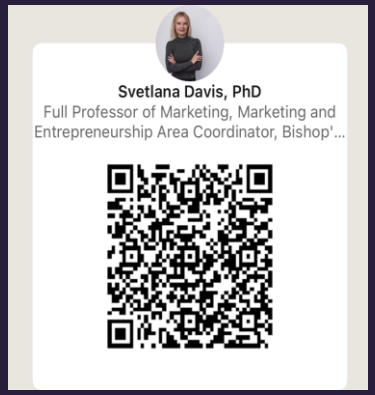

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