

The Ultraversity undergraduate degree is a 100% online, full-time, programme that leads towards an award of BA (Hons) Learning, Technology and Research in just 3 years. The approach to study is not typical of most undergraduate degrees in that there are no subject specific modules with pre-determined content. Ultraversity uses action research and reflective practice as its approach to learning to enable undergraduates to inquire into their work role and that is why we call them 'researchers'.

To be successful, researchers need to be capable of self-directed study with their learning coming from their structured examination of their work role in their own work context. However, this is only part of the story, as Ultraversity researchers also need to work collaboratively in online learning communities. It is in these communities that they meet other researchers to, share research findings, peer review and critique each-others work, discuss ideas and issues, and offer each other support socially.

Learning facilitators who are University lecturers work with researchers to negotiate a personal pathway of action research relevant to their particular needs and work context. Guest 'expert witnesses' also join the communities to bring additional practitioner knowledge to support the learning process.

Towards the end of the programme, instead of undertaking a dissertation, researchers develop an exhibition in an appropriate work context. This may be their actual workplace or some other suitable setting. The purpose of this is for researchers to promote learning beyond themselves in organisations and individuals, and to gain evaluative feedback on the research they have undertaken.

Although not designed as a programme that employers sign up to on behalf of their staff, the Ultraversity degree does aim to provide access to higher education for people who are committed to developing themselves in their work role. The programme is designed to develop researchers' confidence to influence and improve practice within their work setting through developing their ability as articulate, critically reflective problem solvers.

www.ultraversity.net

The Ultraversity Project is the invention of Ultralab, a research centre at Anglia Ruskin University. Its globally respected team offers major expertise in e-learning through facilitated community online, e-assessment, mobile learning, action research, work-based learning, new software tools, digital creativity and strategic consultancy.

Ultralab enjoys working with partners and is sponsored by governments, charities and companies. We are not-for-profit, but seek sponsorship to sustain and develop our research.

Ultralab has a vision to enhance participation and delight in learning with technology, guided by a shared set of learning concepts and values. We have a proven track record inventing small and large-scale projects to explore our ideas. We have been growing since 1988 and are based in Chelmsford and all over the UK, with strong international links, especially in New Zealand.

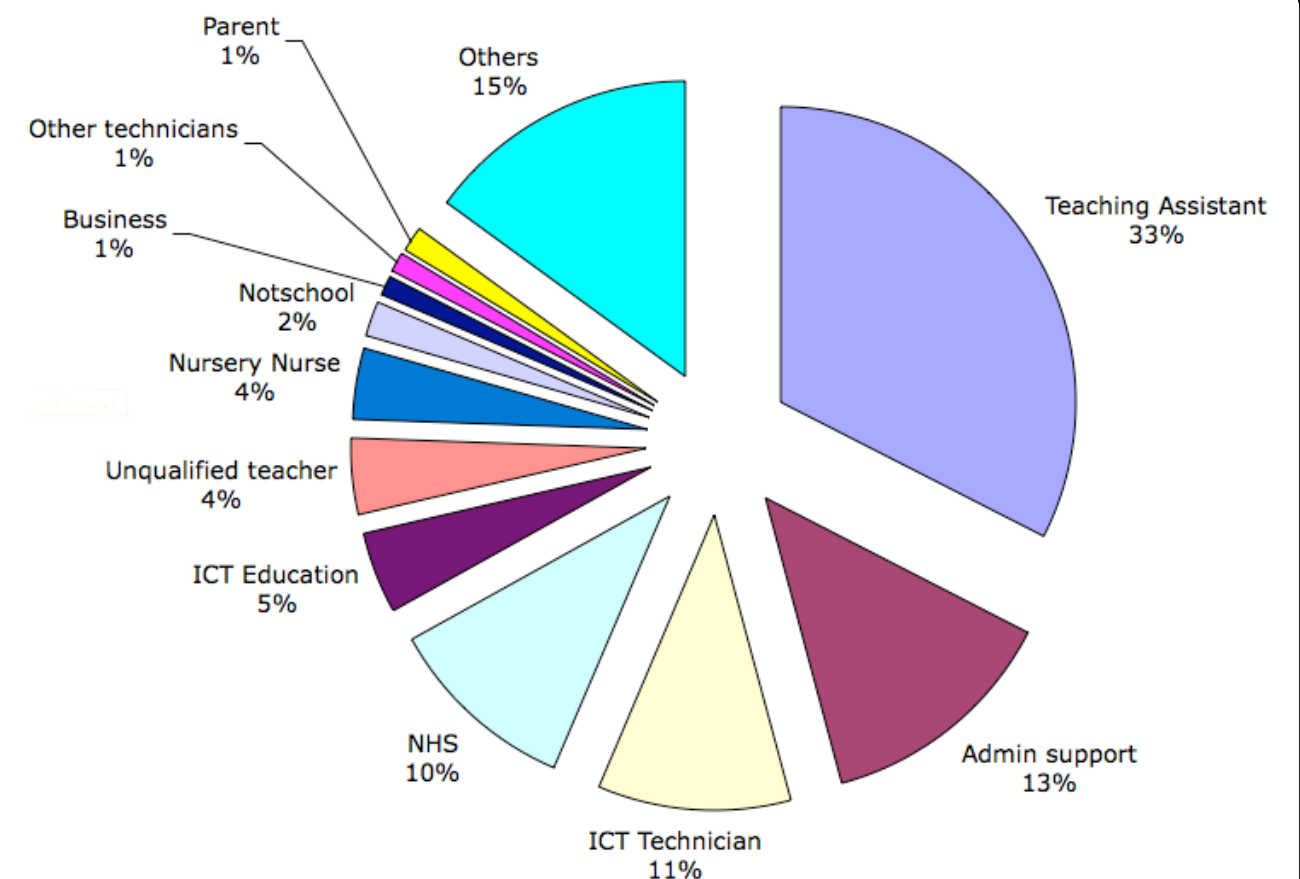
U L T R A L A B
learning • technology • research



Cambridge & Chelmsford

"I don't always feel that people have time to consider any thoughts/ideas or questions in my workplace, but I get great support and encouragement from being part of the online community"

What jobs do student researchers in Ultraversity do? - the value of learning in a mixed workforce community.



Data collected by Tim Williams, Lindsey Wingate, Rex Wingate, Mark Constable, Greta Mladenova. Analysed & presented by Tim Williams May 2006.

Work Role	No.
Teaching Assistant	212
Admin support	87
ICT Technician	69
NHS	68
ICT Education	30
Unqualified teacher	27
Nursery Nurse	25
Notschool	12
Business	8
Other technicians	8
Parent	8
Other support staff	7
Family Support Worker	6
Learning support assistant	6
FE/HE	5
Local Authority	5
Civil Servant	4
Bursar	3
Childminder	3
Librarian	3
Pre-school supervisor	3
Project Development	3
Armed Services	2
Community Media Arts Officer	2
Data Security Engineer	2
Freelance Software Developer	2
IT Manager	2
Advisory Teaching Assistant	1
Airline ground staff	1
Assistant Headteacher	1
Behaviour Support Team	1
Caretaker/cleaner in charge	1
EFL Teacher	1
Human Resources	1
ICT Manager	1
ICT Training	1
Inclusion co ordinator	1
Laboratory Technician Education	1
Learning Mentor	1
Library technician	1
Marketing	1
Non-education sector	1
Outreach Practitioner	1
Project Manager	1
Pupil Services Coordinator	1
RNIB	1
School Sports Co-Ordinator	1
Teaching ECDL	1
Training Manager	1
Unqualified teacher - FE	1
Voluntary work	1

Work roles of student researchers registering for Ultraversity cohorts 1-3

The school workforce has contributed the highest numbers - Teaching Assistants, Administrators and ICT support. The second key sector has been the National Health Service.

Factors which have encouraged this pattern of recruitment include:

- In Cohort 1, marketing for the new degree was particularly aimed at school support staff generally and teaching assistants specifically.
- The National Health Service University funded 100 NHS based researchers for their first year during Cohorts 1 and 2.
- For Cohort 2, the DfES supported marketing to ICT technicians in schools.

There are significant numbers of researchers from work roles outside of the education sector including the IT industry, commerce and local government.

Cohort 3 recruited a number of researchers who focus their study on parenting.

Cohort 1 was recruited in July 2003, cohort 2 in February 2004 and cohort 3 in September 2004.

Work Role comparisons Cohorts 1-3

