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# The WAM Programme - Key Facts & Figures from AHEAD

The WAM Programme is the transition to employment initiative of AHEAD. It offers graduates with disabilities the benefit of a minimum 6 month, paid and mentored work placement (internship) with high profile employers. In addition to providing graduates with valuable work experience, WAM works alongside employers to upskill them in best practices in recruitment of people with disabilities.

WAM was established in 2005 and to date has placed over 350 graduates with both private and public sector employers.

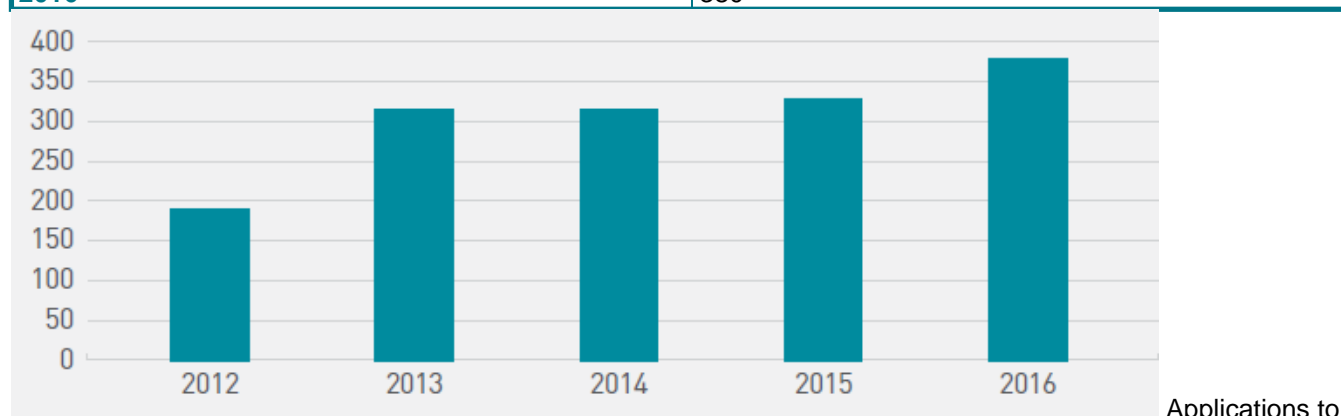
We are currently carrying out research into the last 5 years of the WAM Programme from 2012 - 2016. This research is due to be published in the next few months and this article provides a brief overview of some of the key facts and figures from the research.

## Applications

Over the last 5 years, WAM have processed a total of 1,525 applications.

### Number of Applications to the WAM Programme

2012	190
2013	315
2014	315
2015	330
2016	380



the WAM Programme by Year

When a graduate applies for a WAM placement, they inform us of any interview accommodations they may have, however we found that 79% of applicants did not require accommodations at interview.

### 4 out of 5 applicants did not require any accommodations at interview

The most common type of interview accommodations were a request for an accessible room and format (12%) with the next highest being an Irish Sign Language Interpreter (4%).

## Workplace Supports

When a graduate is successfully placed, a systematic needs assessment is carried out by one of the WAM team. The needs assessment makes recommendations to the employer of any supports to be put in place including any health and safety requirements and additional information.

WAM carried out an analysis of all needs assessments conducted from 2012 – 2016. In this analysis, we categorised supports into five sections;

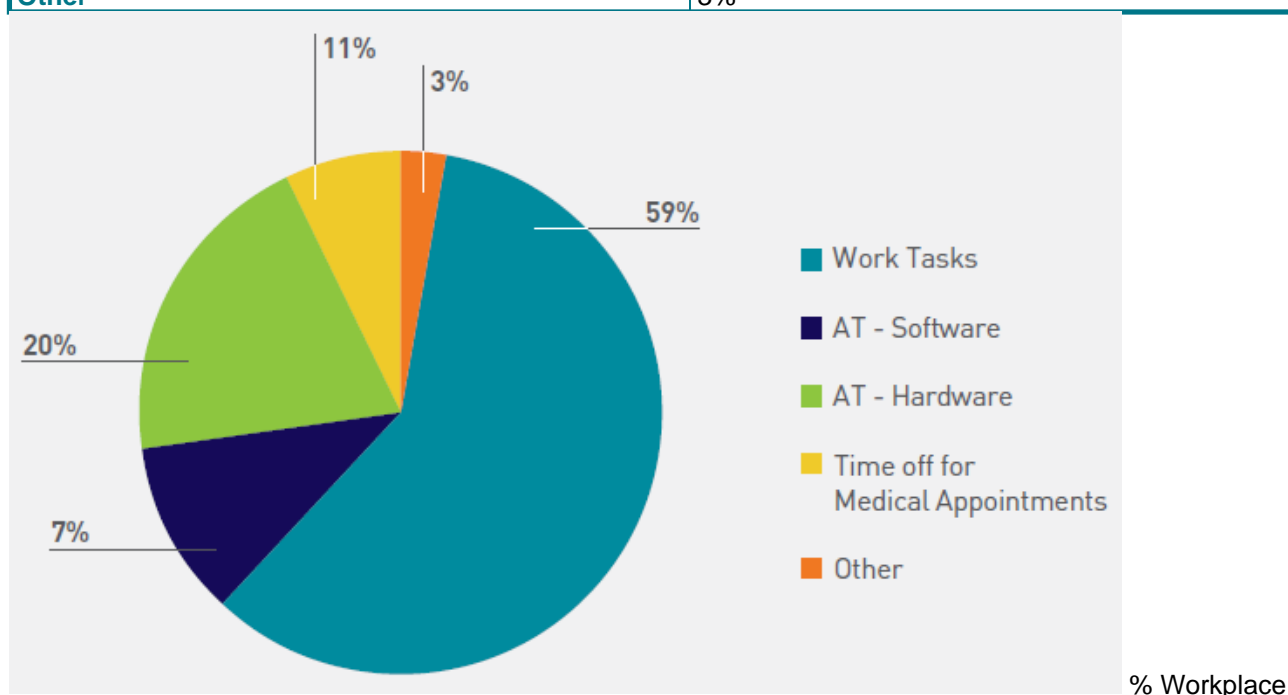
1. Work Tasks – this covered many different elements such as training, feedback, guidance, how instructions are given, extra time, alternative formats etc.
2. Assistive Technology Software – this covered various software applications such as screen-readers, dictation software and spelling and grammar applications.
3. Assistive Technology Hardware – this covered things from basic office equipment such as a headset, a chair or a scanner to building modifications or re-arranging the desk location.
4. Time off for Medical Appointments
5. Other – this included Irish Sign Language interpreters, car parking spaces etc.

We also conducted a review of whether there was an additional cost in hiring a person with a disability in terms of purchasing additional equipment and found that two-thirds of the needs assessments analysed did not incur any cost to the employer.

### Two-thirds of accommodations do not incur a cost to the employer

#### Workplace Accommodations

<b>Work Tasks</b>	59%
<b>AT - Software</b>	7%
<b>AT - Hardware</b>	20%
<b>Time off for Medical Appointments</b>	11%
<b>Other</b>	3%

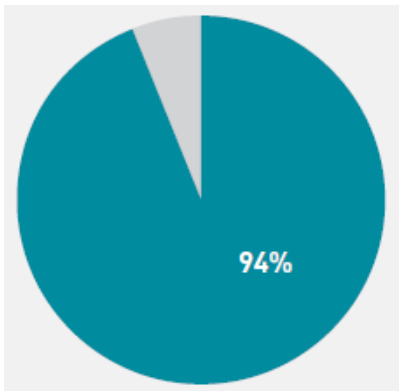


Accommodations

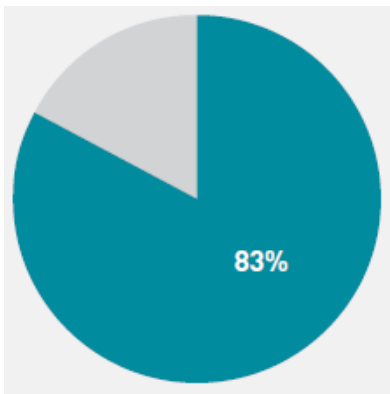
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## Graduates' Experiences

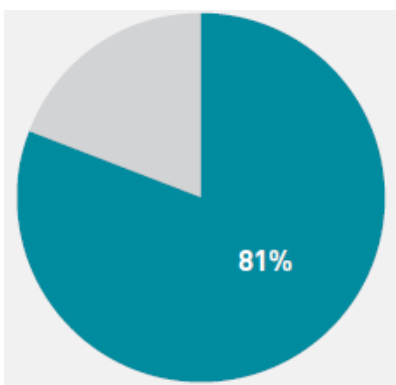
In addition to analysing applications and needs assessments over a five year period, we also carried out a survey with graduates who completed a WAM placement. We had an 89% response rate to the survey.



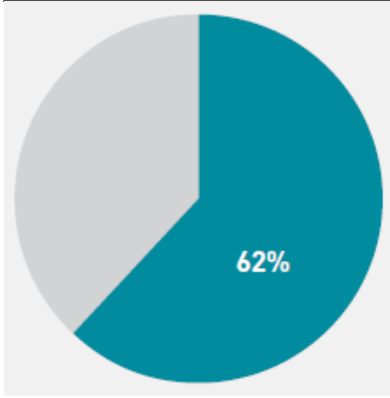
94% of graduates gained confidence in their ability to work in a mainstream environment



83% had a better understanding of what supports they need in the workplace



81% benefited from having a dedicated in-house trained WAM Mentor



62% felt more confident to disclose their disability to employers

## What happened after their WAM Placement?

We asked those who responded to tell us if they secured employment after their WAM placement. 77% of graduates who completed a WAM placement secured employment either by remaining within the company, getting a job elsewhere or securing a contract extension. Only 11% were still looking for work opportunities while 10% went back to study.

**77% of WAM placed graduates secured employment as a direct result of their WAM placement**

## Conclusion

This is only a preview of what to expect from our research, the released publication will have more in-depth analysis and more key findings from the survey which we carried out.

If you have any questions in the interim, you can contact The WAM Programme by emailing [wam@ahead.ie](mailto:wam@ahead.ie) or visit our website – [www.ahead.ie/wam](http://www.ahead.ie/wam).



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Caroline oversees AHEAD's projects relating to the transition to employment for students and graduates with disabilities, namely GetAHEAD and The WAM Programme which is a work placement programme. Caroline holds qualifications in Deaf Studies, Irish Sign Language Teaching and Equality Studies. Caroline has over 15 years experience of working and volunteering within the disability sector and various organisations within the Deaf community.

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This article appeared in the AHEAD Journal. Visit [www.ahead.ie/journal](http://www.ahead.ie/journal) for more information

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