



An International Symposium on Policing and Evidence-based Practice
How can the UK benefit from insights from other countries and cognate professions?

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**What is the evidence that graduates make
better police officers?**
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Drivers towards HE

- Cultural reform-antidote to corruption
- Efficiency and effectiveness-changing patterns of policing tasks
- Legitimacy-improve public confidence
- Enhanced status-professionalization of allied occupations
- Academic entrepreneurialism-bums on seats

Assumed qualities of “graduateness”

- **Glover, Law and Youngman (2002)**
 - broadened horizons
 - curiosity and imagination,
 - foster intellectual confidence
 - capacity for self-directed learning
 - Higher order written and verbal communication
- **The QAA statement of bachelor degree holder’s capability**
 - apply methods
 - consolidate and extend their learning
 - critically evaluate assumptions
 - frame appropriate questions
 - communicate ideas to non-specialist
- **Stanislas (2014)**
 - liberalising environment
 - exposure to diversity of ideas and people
 - greater tolerance of difference
 - more effective human relationships
 - greater understanding of multi-cultural society

Some indicative evidence

- **Glover, Law and Youngman(2002) survey of final year graduates**
 - 22% had difficulties in numeracy
 - 11% in managing stress
 - 14% appreciated the wholeness of their university experience
- **Lancee and Sarrasin (2015)survey of Swiss students**
 - more negative attitudes towards migrants as they passed through the educational system
- **Sleath and Bull (2015) survey of students and police officers**
 - university students had more negative attitudes toward victims of sexual violence in that more endorsed the belief that the victim “asked for it” or the perpetrator “did not really mean it” compared to police officers

Desired graduate attributes in policing (1)

- awareness of social context
- improved management, operational, communication, problem solving and writing skills
- less authoritarianism, greater flexibility
- better attendance (less sickness absence)
- more innovation
- better knowledge of CJS, police departmental procedures and court preparedness
- less use of force
- fewer discipline infractions and citizen complaints
- better at building trust and decreasing distance between police and the community

Desired graduate attributes in policing(2)

- transforming police from law enforcers to catalyst for community self help
- less cynicism
- better report writing skills
- better at critical thinking and informed analysis
- more proficient in using technology
- higher ethical values
- less cognitive bias
- better use of discretion
- managing uncertainty

Potential measurement artefacts (1)

- Small sample sizes, lack of adequate controls, single outcome measures
- Statistical findings explaining little variance suggestive of influence of non-measured factors and small effect sizes (some of which disappear when controlling for gender, age or length of experience)
- Variable ways of scaling educational level
- Poor operationalising of performance and directionality- are fewer arrests a good or a bad indicators of police of proficiency or ethical practice
- Different attitude scales used making comparison difficult
- Subjective measures (self-report or supervisor ratings)

Potential measurement artefacts (2)

- Use of student CJ majors with/out police career intentions to infer future impact on policing
- Not partialling out socialisation effects of police occupational culture once employed in a police force
- Much evaluative research American and difficulties in translating across jurisdictions with different policing arrangements e.g. routine arming of officers
- Use of bespoke instruments without reporting psychometric properties and not used in replication or comparative studies
- Many studies somewhat dated and prone to the variability in quality of academic courses as itemised below

Potential pedagogic/andragogic artefacts (1)

- The rapid growth in university programmes has been ad hoc without concerns about academic credentialing
- Lacking rigorous discussion about which best undergraduate programme for police officers (e.g. social science based, liberal arts, based, professionally based)
- Curricula not based on empirically tested hypotheses
- University too entrepreneurial and not ready to properly scope or adapt courses for police
- Dubious quality of early courses for police officers

Potential pedagogic/andragogic artefacts (2)

- Disagreements about the value of pre/post-entry or in-service graduate education
- A waxing and waning for enthusiasm for university level education
- The body of knowledge is incomplete and remains in development
- Lack of professionalised police educators within the HE sector to provide practice led learning and negotiation between academia and the police
- Tensions between competency learning models and reflective practice
- Degree inflation-2 years of College in 1990s equivalent to high school diploma of the 1960s
- Potential negative effects on student values through neoliberalism in Universities

Review of the literature favourable towards graduate police officers

- No systematic reviews located
- One literature review Paterson 2011

So notwithstanding the variable quality of research and the potential confounds, of the 48 empirical studies located some trends may be observed by looking at the direction these studies report in terms of being:

Postivel

Negative

Equivocal

Trends (1)

Personality

- Authoritarianism-less
- Cynicism- more
- Conservatism- more
- Open- more
- Flexible-more

Trends (2)

Skills

- Interpersonal—more
- Writing-better
- Admin-better
- Problem solving-better

Trends (3)

Attitudes towards

- Minorities-worse
- Women officers-worse
- Community- equivocal
- Authority- equivocal

Trends (4)

Performance

- Overall-equivocal
- Use of force-equivocal
- Arrest rate-equivocal
- Use of discretion-equivocal
- Ethical-better

Unintended consequences

- Greater turnover rate-equivocal
- Less job satisfaction-equivocal
- Greater frustration-more
- Stress resistant-equivocal
- Diversity-equivocal

Questions

- antidote to corruption?
- More efficiency and effectiveness in changing patterns of policing task?
- Greater legitimacy in public trust and confidence?

Questions

Do we need

- All graduate profession
- Graduates for supervisory ranks
- Graduates for managerial ranks
- Graduates for policy and strategic ranks
- Voluntary HE qualifications