

The Use of LinkedIn as a Graduate Career Tracking Tool – a Pilot Case Study from Poland

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Abstract

The article aimed to present a pilot study of collecting and analysing information from publicly available LinkedIn accounts of a group of higher education graduates, with a view to assessing LinkedIn's usefulness as one of the three pillars of graduate career tracking systems, together with a country's central system and graduate career surveys of individual institutions. Both the literature review and the case study showed that LinkedIn can serve as a valuable tool for providing sufficient, reliable, and detailed information on the alumni's employment progress, education, and certified skills. However, a thorough analysis of this data is time-consuming, and there arises a need to create and use information technology solutions. The findings of the study may be useful to higher education institutions in their efforts to build efficient systems for graduate employability tracking and can serve as a basis for future research.

Keywords: LinkedIn, graduate tracking, alumni, employability, higher education.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, one of the main goals of higher education institutions (HEIs) is to provide society with a well-qualified human workforce, equipped with the knowledge and skills highly valued by the labor market. Therefore, acquiring reliable information about the employability and career development of their alumni is an important task of academic institutions (Cieciora et al., 2025). Such knowledge should serve as a basis for decision-making when evaluating and, if necessary, refining the curriculum content, teaching methods, and the overall quality of the studies. Obtaining this information, however, poses a challenge. The most commonly used methods are graduate surveys conducted by individual HEIs and country national graduate tracking systems. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Graduate surveys designed

and distributed by individual HEIs can be customized and contain questions focused on the characteristics, needs, and goals of the HEI. The questions may be quite detailed, concerning the evaluation of specific courses taught at the HEI, graduates' satisfaction with the learning outcomes, and suggestions for improvement. Feedback derived from graduate surveys can be direct and informative. At the same time, it is subjective, as it is personal and opinion-based. And, even more importantly, it is difficult to obtain, as survey response rates are very low throughout the world. Country national graduate tracking systems, on the other hand, provide objective and highly reliable data on the employability, earnings, or job-seeking period of graduates, as they derive data from official sources, such as social insurance institutions or ministries of higher education. The data is, however, quite general and does not provide information on the professional fates of individual graduates, nor can it give insight into the value of specific courses and their content, or the alumni satisfaction with the learning outcomes of the education that they received (Cieciora et al., 2025).

HEIs usually try to combine the data from the two sources of graduate tracking to study the quality and efficiency of their educational offer, and its value on the job market. Quite recently, due to the dynamic development of social media, they were granted an opportunity to use yet another tool of graduate employability tracking – LinkedIn, a business and employment-oriented networking platform, which claims to have “more than 1 billion members in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide” (LinkedIn, 2026). This article aims to find out whether the information provided by LinkedIn can be useful for academic decision-makers in their attempts to track down the professional fates and needs of their alumni. It is intended as a pilot study due to the limited number of graduate records analyzed in the course of the research.

The rest of the article is organized in the following way: first, a concise literature review on the use of LinkedIn in graduate tracking is presented. Then, a case study of an analysis of the graduate tracking of a cohort of 2023 part-time alumni of a management department in a HEI in Warsaw, Poland, is introduced. It is based on data obtained from three sources: the Polish national graduate tracking system, the institution-specific graduate survey, and LinkedIn. Next, the results of the project are discussed, and a concise comparison of the three sources of information is presented. Finally, the conclusions from the study are drawn, along with practical and scientific implications, and suggestions for further research.

2. An overview of the literature review on the use of LinkedIn in graduate tracking

A social network platform, LinkedIn, was created in 2002 (launched in 2003) to, as its mission states, “connect the world’s professionals to make them more productive and successful”, and has been developing dynamically ever since (LinkedIn, 2026). Basically, LinkedIn serves as a place where job applicants can show their positive image to potential employers (Rui, 2018). Therefore, as Badoer et al. noticed (2021), it is one of the essential tools to be used by students

to enhance graduate employability. Quite surprisingly, there is a relatively small body of literature on the use of LinkedIn in graduate tracking – a search conducted on the 15th of January, 2026 on the Scopus database, based on (Article title/Abstract/Keywords) search defined as [LinkedIn AND tracking AND (graduate OR alumni)], restricted to articles and final versions of conference papers published in the last ten years in the English language, resulted in 8 articles, which, after a further scrutiny, narrowed down only to 4 relevant results. Most of the articles that dealt with the interconnection of “LinkedIn” and “graduate tracking” topics were devoted to attempts made by particular HEIs to track down their alumni career development with the use of the LinkedIn platform. And so, Howard et al. (2025) described a project of finding and examining the data of over 14 thousand Australasian public health alumni using LinkedIn data. It is worth noticing that the tool they used was a recently added functionality of LinkedIn, i.e., the LinkedIn alumni tab, or LinkedIn Alumni Function (LAF), which can be found in the institutional pages of particular schools. The researchers got access to LinkedIn pages for 36 of the 37 institutions that they wanted to examine (one institution did not have a LinkedIn page), and were able to find out and compare information concerning “what the alumni do, where they live, where they work, and what they are skilled at” of public health alumni of particular HEIs (Howard et al., 2025). A similar study, also based on the use of LAF, was conducted by Lee et al. (2025) on employment outcomes of over 18 thousand Australian Biomedical Science graduates. It is worth mentioning that the authors of the study pointed out a weakness of the otherwise useful LAF – namely, it only presents the top 15 results across the fields of search output. Consequently, this means that in case of huge numbers of alumni, the number of identified alumni profiles does not equate to the total number of alumni of the studies under consideration who are registered on LinkedIn (Lee et al., 2025). A few years earlier, Heydenrych and Case (2018) used a more traditional method of manually (name by name) searching the LinkedIn profiles of chemical engineering graduates from the bachelor’s program at the University of Cape Town (UCT) over the years 2006–2012. They stressed the following advantages of the methodology they adopted: first, that once one has connected to several graduates, the LinkedIn search engine prioritizes others from the same program, and second, that the information on LinkedIn is publicly available, thanks to which one does not have to require graduates to specifically connect with either the researchers, or any other group for the sake of the study. In their case study, about 70% of the graduates had LinkedIn profiles. The authors of the study concluded that using LinkedIn for tracking graduate destinations was much less time-consuming and much more effective than using the traditional survey-based methods, even though they did not manage to reach a small proportion of graduates due to their absence on the LinkedIn platform (Heydenrych & Case, 2018). A similar case was presented by Lee et al. (2025), who used the manual search method to track down the career paths of Monash University Physiology major alumni of the years 2017-2028, trying to find them name by name on the LinkedIn platform. They managed to identify 63% of the 286 graduates of the Australian university, which was a very good result in comparison to the 38,7% response rate of the

national Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS). Although the researchers admitted that the manual search was quite time-consuming and that some LinkedIn profiles did not contain complete data, they expressed the opinion that the public display of information on the platform results in the presentation of more honest and valid records than in the case of traditional offline resumes (Lee et al., 2025).

3. A comparison of information on graduate professional careers and educational outcomes

A pilot study was conducted to gather and combine information on the career progress of alumni from a cohort of all graduates of part-time second-cycle Information Management studies at the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology in Warsaw, Poland, who completed their studies in 2023. Their total number amounted to 30. The three sources of information the authors of the study used were: the Polish national graduate tracking system (ELA), a HEI graduate tracking survey, and LinkedIn.

3.1. ELA - the Polish national graduate tracking system

The Polish Graduate Tracking System (ELA is an acronym of the Polish name of the system, i.e., Elektroniczne Losy Absolwentów) has been developed for the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland (ELA). ELA analyzes graduate employment data obtained from the Social Insurance Institution and POL-on, an IT system of the Polish Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN) that collects data on science and higher education in Poland. The information on graduates' employability, together with various reports containing comparisons on, among others, the job-seeking time, earnings, work experience, and place of residence of graduates of all faculties in Polish HEIs, is publicly visible and obtainable for free. The most important information that was derived from the ELA source with a view to analyzing the Information Management second-cycle part-time 2023 graduate cohort was as follows:

- The median average monthly earnings from all sources in the first year after the diploma were **12,553.7 PLN** – significantly higher than the same variable of other graduates in the field of Engineering and technology, which amounted to **6,417.51 PLN**;
- The graduate's salary from all sources in the first year after the diploma in relation to the average earnings at his place of residence was **1.45** (values over 1 mean that, on average, graduates earn above the average salary at their place of residence);
- The percentage of graduates who had work experience before starting the second-cycle studies: **80.0%**.

ELA also enables its users to create comparisons or rankings of the selected fields of study, on the basis of the variables presented above. Therefore, it was quite easy to find out that the 2023

part-time studies graduates of the second-cycle studies of Information Management earned more than their 2023 full-time studies counterparts, who earned **8,706.55 PLN**. This is a valuable piece of information, as the curriculum is the same for both types of studies. It means that other factors have a significant impact on the height of graduates' salaries. They may include, e.g., work experience before the onset of studies – in the case of the second-cycle full-time studies, graduates of 2023, this figure came up to only **46.7%**.

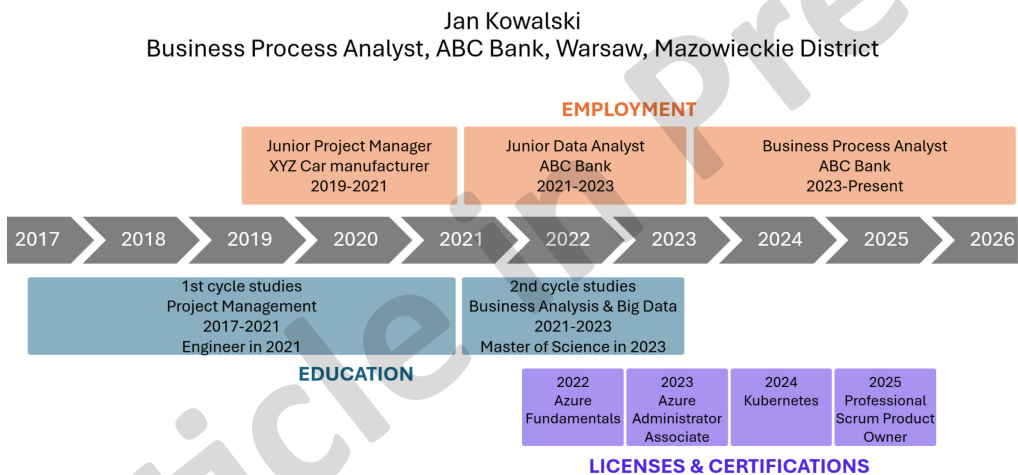
3.2. A HEI graduate tracking survey

In 2023, the authorities of the Faculty of Information Management (FIM) conducted a survey-based analysis of the educational outcomes of their second-cycle studies (Cieciora et al., 2025). The survey focused on the perceived impact of the studies on the career development of the graduates, the level of their satisfaction with the quality of the curriculum, the evaluation of the performance of teaching and administrative staff, the quality of the facilities and laboratory equipment, as well as suggestions for the development of the Faculty's educational offer. As far as the response rate of the 30 graduates of part-time studies who completed their studies in 2023 is concerned, it amounted to 40.0%, as 12 of those graduates decided to fill in the survey. They provided quite detailed information concerning the companies they worked for, their positions, and some of them even revealed their (high) salaries. All of them seemed to be satisfied with the studies they completed (though they put forward a few suggestions for improvement concerning the curriculum and organization of studies), and most of them (10 out of 12) would welcome an opportunity to come back to the Academy to continue their education at postgraduate studies or certification courses. They specified the fields of the courses they would be interested in, e.g., the use of AI in project management, Business Intelligence, Big Data, Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud Platform, or Scrum.

3.3. LinkedIn

The analysis of LinkedIn information was planned in two phases: the first would use the LinkedIn Alumni Function, and the second would be based on a manual search for graduates of the 2023 part-time second-cycle in Information Management. The attempt to use LAF resulted in obtaining a very limited amount of valuable data. First of all, LinkedIn uses only the English name of the HEI, which means that one could analyze only the data of the organization titled as "Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology (PJAiT)", and not "Polsko-Japońska Akademia Technik Komputerowych (PJATK)", which is the original Polish name of the HEI, used by students and graduates in their profiles in the Polish language. Next, the Alumni Function on the Academy's page did not contain in its "What they studied" section the name of the studies analyzed, i.e., "Zarządzanie Informacją/Information Management". After writing the keywords "Zarządzanie Informacją" and "Information Management", the search results showed some aggregate information concerning 541/867 alumni, respectively. Most of them (532/724)

lived in Poland, in Warsaw (460/604), and their main skills included Project management (281/430) and SQL (235/335). The LAF function did not enable the authors of the study to limit the search results to the cohort of the 2023 part-time cycle studies. The second attempt at a LinkedIn search, which consisted of a manual, i.e., name-by-name tracking down the selected group of alumni on the platform, was much more successful. The researchers managed to find 25 graduates (the remaining 5 did not have LinkedIn accounts), which means that the success rate was about 83%, significantly higher than the survey response rate (40%). The information they showed publicly allowed for collecting the following types of information: the graduate's present job (the title/position and the company), their previous positions and employers, together with the start and end dates of employment, acquired skills, education, and licenses & certifications – also provided with the dates of obtaining the qualifications, and the certification bodies. Figure 1 presents a simplified example of a graduate profile based on the information from the LinkedIn account. The data was anonymized in order not to reveal the identities of the individual graduates. The name of the graduate is a fictional one.



SKILLS: Project Management, Business Analysis, Business Intelligence, Scrum, Jira, Creative Problem Solving, English

Figure 1. A profile of an exemplary graduate, Jan Kowalski. Source: own elaboration.

Now, the researchers were in a position to follow up on the information obtained and supplement the data with other information easily accessible on the Internet, such as the salaries typical of the positions listed in Jan Kowalski's work experience, or the skills required for the positions. For example, when he was a junior project manager in a car manufacturing company, he probably had to manage project documentation and support agile supply and delivery processes. And as he became a junior data analyst, he most likely analyzed and visualized business data and built dashboards. The chronology of obtaining various certificates and

matching them with the consecutive steps in the career could give a lot of insight into the education students might find attractive from the point of view of their career development. They could also compile the data from LinkedIn and the graduate survey. The amount of information that was worth analyzing gradually amounted, however, to a huge pile. The researchers realized that studying it manually would be too time-consuming. Therefore, they decided to start planning a project to create HEI-customized software for processing and synthesizing the data acquired.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

An attempt to collect and compare information on graduate career development from three different sources, which was conducted as a pilot study on a cohort of 30 graduates of the second-cycle part-time program of Information Management of 2023 at the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology in Warsaw, Poland, led the authors of the study to reach a few conclusions. The most important one is that acquiring and combining information from the graduate survey, ELA, and LinkedIn creates a source of reliable, comprehensive, and supplementary information that can serve as a solid base for analysis of the quality of the studies and their educational outcomes. Both the literature on the subject and the course of the case study showed that the three sources of information differ from one another with respect to: (1) response rate (the highest in the case of ELA, quite high in the case of LinkedIn, quite low in the case of a HEI specific survey); (2) objectiveness of the data (ELA: fully objective, LinkedIn: quite objective, HEI survey: highly subjective); and (3) depth and detailedness of information (ELA: quite low, LinkedIn: quite high, HEI survey: very high). The data they provide, however, complement each other, and the information derived from two of these sources (e.g., from ELA and the HEI survey, or from ELA and LinkedIn) can, at least to some reasonable extent, make up for the lack of data from the remaining one, still allowing the researcher to make a thorough, data-based analysis. The quite new and still developing tool for providing information on graduate career progress – LinkedIn seems to be of particular and growing importance. It has some of the key advantages of both the central graduate tracking systems, as most accounts are publicly visible, which makes the information easily accessible, and of HEI-specific graduate surveys, because the scope of information is wide and detailed at the same time. One can find chronologically arranged data on the current employment status, previous employment experience, education, certifications, and skills, together with the dates, names of organizations, and titles of certificates. And the data is not anonymous. Therefore, even though LinkedIn also has a few disadvantages, as the LAF function seems to need some further development, and a small number of graduates do not have LinkedIn accounts, which means that one cannot access them through this channel of communication, its usefulness in graduate career tracking is noteworthy. And since analyzing the data manually is resource-consuming, the challenge now

is to try to create IT-supported tools to enable analyzing and synthesizing the data available. This is an important issue for both future practice and research.

While providing some valuable insight into the topic of tracking down graduate employability, especially the role of the LinkedIn platform, this study is not without limitations. Its main weakness is the small size of the sample. Therefore, it can serve as a pilot study, and a natural progression of this work is to analyze bigger cohorts of graduates of other HEIs. Further studies regarding the correlations between the content and educational outcomes of particular academic courses and the skills and qualifications needed by graduates throughout their professional careers would also be worthwhile. Another limitation of the proposed approach is that social media profiles, including LinkedIn, may reflect a degree of image optimization and strategic self-presentation, which can affect the accuracy and objectivity of the data on graduates' skills and career trajectories.

In spite of its limitations, the authors believe that the study has added to the growing body of knowledge on graduate employability and the role of LinkedIn and suggested venues for both practical use and future research.

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