

**Press release**

**Embargo: Wednesday 28 March 2018, 00:01**

**ISE calls for work experience boost as research shows internships help tackle skills gaps**

The [Institute of Student Employers \(ISE\)](#) annual Development Survey found that graduates who have undertaken an internship are more likely to have honed the skills businesses need.

The report, which launches today (28 March 2018) at the [ISE Student Development Conference](#), found that 63% of employers believed graduates who had undertaken work experience had the required soft skills, yet less than half (48%) thought this of graduates in general.

The five most common graduate skills gaps<sup>1</sup>:

- Managing up (5% of employers believed graduates had this skill)
- Dealing with conflict (12%)
- Negotiating/influencing (17%)
- Commercial awareness (23%)
- Resilience (31%)

The [ISE Development Survey 2018](#) analysed responses from 173 employers who hired 19,630 graduates in 2017 and were estimated to spend more than £95 million on their training and development.

Closing skills gaps is a priority for businesses with 74% of employers taking specific actions to tackle the issue in 2017. Changes to recruitment and on-the-job training were the most common actions and 16% of organisations improved their internship development programmes specifically to close skills gaps.

Employers are also investing more in on-the-job skills training. Graduates typically receive 11 days of soft skills training on structured development programmes – up from eight days in 2015. Classroom-style training continues to be the most common but there is a trend towards digital methods. Nearly a third (31%) of employers changed the way they use technology in training.

Despite work experience improving candidate readiness for work, young people are less prepared for jobs than they have been in the past. The Office of National Statistics shows just 21% of 16-17-year olds had some form of employment while at secondary school in 2017, compared to 42% in 1997.

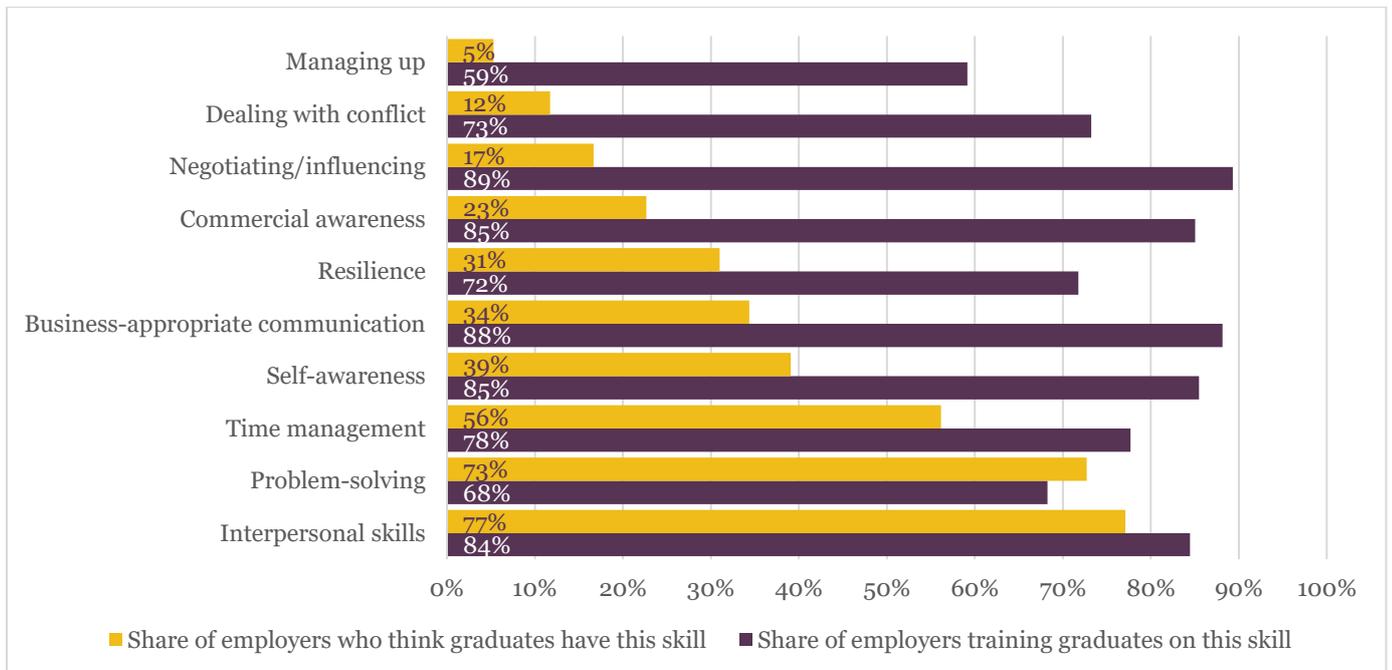
Stephen Isherwood, Chief Executive at the ISE said: “These findings strengthen the business case for starting, expanding and improving work experience opportunities. Interns are not only better prepared for work, but they also tend to perform better and stay longer.

“A decline in work experience means that the learning curve that many graduates go through is steeper than in the past, and employers may need to invest more time and effort to bring these hires to their required levels of performance. Companies need to be prepared for this investment. Better skilled graduates mean a more productive workforce.”

Julie Broad, Company Graduate Development Manager at Rolls Royce said: “Graduates who have internship experience tend to be better prepared for a business environment when they start a graduate programme. We feel that they have better soft skills and can transition into the business faster than those graduates who do not have any prior work experience.”

## Ends

<sup>1</sup> Figure 1: Graduate soft skills gaps and training



### Media enquiries, preview copy of the report and interviews:

Clare Tregaskis, ISE press officer, [clare@ise.org.uk](mailto:clare@ise.org.uk), 07792 429227

### Notes to editors

#### ISE Development survey

The ISE Development Survey is an annual research project of how employers are approaching graduate training programmes. The 2018 survey analysed responses from 173 employers who hired 19,630 graduates in 2017 and were estimated to spend more than £95 million on their training and development. Responses to this survey were collected between November 2017 and January 2018.

#### Institute of Student Employers

The Institute of Student Employers (ISE), [formerly the Association of Graduate Recruiters \(AGR\)](#), is an independent, not-for-profit member organisation that was established in 1968.

As the UK's leading independent voice for student employers, the ISE's vision is that the success of every business is maximised by full access to student talent.

The ISE achieves this by bringing together employers, the education sector and supplier partners, providing leadership and support in all aspects of student recruitment and development.

ISE activities include:

- Promoting excellence and innovation in the resourcing, assessment and development of emerging talent including school leavers, apprentices and graduates
- Providing expert information and insight to ISE member organisations, creating engaged communities for professional networking and sharing of best practice
- Delivering comprehensive research on a range of issues affecting graduate, intern and apprenticeship recruitment and development, including current and future trends and benchmarking data
- Investing in the professional development of members to enhance their skills and knowledge, maximising their career opportunities within the profession
- Influencing key policy areas affecting student employment and the education sector
- Building a strong professional organisation with the right structure and team capabilities to deliver the services and support members require to fulfil their objectives

**For further information:**

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