

## ISE Manifesto 2017

### Introduction

We are producing and employing more graduates than ever before. New graduate employees add at least £1bn to the UK economy every year. It is clear that those who continue into higher education are more likely to be employed, earn more and create a more skilled and flexible workforce. Yet too often employers report they cannot find enough talent to meet their business needs. Applicants can lack either the technical skills or rounded life skills. 49% of ISE employers report that graduates generally lack the soft skills expected of them at the point of hiring. A recent survey also reported over 700 unfilled vacancies in 2016. That's 700 more people who could have been employed on a structured graduate programme.

The UK student recruitment market is arguably the most sophisticated and competitive in the world. Graduate vacancies are at record highs. Because 82% of ISE members do not specify what degree an applicant must have, UK students have a diversity of career options unavailable in most other countries. Only in the UK can a geographer become a lawyer, an engineer an accountant or a historian a social worker. Yet there are untapped talent pools, and all too often it is the already disadvantaged who are unable to achieve their potential.

Tuition fees have encouraged our universities to focus on the student experience and employment opportunities. A growing number of institutions embed employability within their courses and student services, yet too many employers report difficulty in engaging meaningfully on campus. Transparency of outcomes is critically important to help students make more informed choices about what and where they study.

Many employers are now looking at graduates in the context of broader early talent strategies, combining graduate programmes with apprenticeships, higher apprenticeships and school-leaver options to meet their resource needs. Additional pressure is being placed on schools to deliver the resources that can connect their pupils with the right opportunities. Employers who are experienced in dealing with universities struggle when faced with over 4,000 secondary schools to target. Much focus is placed on the percentage of young people who go into higher education, but what about the 50% who don't?

Our manifesto sets out what employers, universities, government and students themselves can do to make the student recruitment market function more effectively providing better outcomes for all. We have a number of asks for each stakeholder at the end of this document. But if each could do one thing that will make the UK even more competitive they are:

**Government:** demand that schools give greater priority to careers education

**Employers:** provide more opportunities for meaningful work experience for students at school and university

**Educators:** embed work-related learning across institutions in course design and through student support services

**Students:** get work experience and actively engage in career related development from an early age

## Manifesto

### 1. More students need paid work experience as part of their education experience

Students who have undertaken structured work experience are more likely to be employed in graduate level work. Students need to be encouraged to get work experience, universities need to facilitate more placements and employers need to provide more opportunities. And work experience placements lasting more than one week must be paid.

### 2. Young people need to be inspired and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential

Employers and universities are often tasked with correcting problems caused by lack of aspiration, lack of career awareness and lack of social capital that can lead to better career outcomes. If a person's life chances can be predicted by the time they are four years old we need to be working harder as a country to develop young people for the world of employment before they have to make crucial decisions that will affect their long-term success. This means better careers advice in schools. It means more exposure to world of work for pupils. It means schools and employers helping young people who don't have the influencers or social capital that will help them reach their full potential. It means employers working harder to understand the talent it needs and where it can come from.

### 3. The country needs better enterprise education

Whether a graduate works for a business, in the public sector or sets up on their own, they need the enterprise skills to match their academic skills. This means that employers and universities must collaborate more to ensure students understand the world of work, the behaviours employers look for and the commercial skills they need to successfully contribute to the workplace or start their own business. Work experience helps, but students need a framework to understand their learning, the tools to reflect on their experiences and guidance on the opportunities available to them.

### 4. The UK needs to be seen as an attractive place for international students to study and work

International students provide income to universities and add a vibrancy to campus life, exposing our home students to different cultures and networks. Employers hire international students to plug talent gaps, often in STEM related occupations, and aid their global competitiveness. The current system of work visas is cumbersome and costly for employers to administer and sends out the wrong message to prospective international students. If we don't send out a positive message, we will recruit fewer and fewer international students to other countries' advantage

## Calls to Action

### The next Government should:

- Give greater emphasis to strengthening university-business partnerships and underline its commitment by widening the UK's Performance Indicators for HE to include a measure for university engagement with employers and business

- Signal the importance of the enterprise agenda by continuing to fund the development of enterprise education in schools and universities
- Provide tax breaks for employers to provide meaningful, paid work experience
- Champion the contribution which international students make to both universities and employers in a global market place
- Simplify the student visa process for employers and make it easier for international students to remain in the UK after graduating from a UK university with a job offer
- Challenge Ofsted to be more rigorous in reviewing how well schools are delivering their obligation to provide independent careers advice and require all schools to use the DfE's Destination Measures to assess school performance in preparing their students for their next transition
- Introduce a Social Mobility Benchmark to enable all students to compare the true 'labour market added value' delivered by universities

#### **Universities should:**

- Set strategic objectives that give greater recognition to the wider contribution which employers can make both to university employability programmes and wider curriculum change
- Be more pro-active in building genuine partnerships with employers and make greater use of meaningful industrial boards to help shape employability programmes across all courses
- Be required to publish an annual scorecard which makes transparent the actual levels of employer engagement and employment outcomes both at an institutional and course level
- Formally recognise the value of all forms of work experience in their own Graduate Awards
- Work in partnership with employers to develop real life case studies and business projects to provide work-related learning to all students across all courses

#### **Employers should:**

- Understand the role employers have to play in building a strong, vibrant pipeline of talent by making long-term investments in schools and universities
- Provide more work experience opportunities to pupils and students and ensure that all work experience over one week in duration is paid at the legal minimum wage
- Re-double their efforts to build genuine partnerships with universities based upon a deeper understanding of the changing university landscape. Encourage universities to build employability into the curriculum and set up meaningful employer boards.
- Make greater efforts to understand and tap into diverse talent pools through working in closer partnership with schools and universities in support of outreach programmes and join the Social Mobility Compact
- Explore new strategies to tackle social mobility to enhance the quality of talent hired: review their selection processes, use contextualised data, increase the diversity of universities targeted

**Students should:**

- Invest time and effort in career related learning and experiences at all stages of their education building their employability skills
- Be proactive in getting work related experience whether it's an internship, part-time work, volunteering or work experience.
- Reflect on that experience to develop transferable skills and knowledge
- Consider a broad range of employers, large and small and in locations throughout the UK