The complete guide

to student recruitment and development

Institute of Student Employers
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Foreword

When a colleague, friend or family member asks you *'What's your job?'* how do you reply? My 13-year-old son recently asked me this question at the dinner table. As I answered, giving examples of some of the projects early talent professionals are involved in, it occurred to me how much our roles have evolved and expanded over the course of our careers.

When many of us started out in the early careers sector (even less than 20 years ago) diversity and inclusion, mental health, and virtual recruitment and development were not high on the organisational agenda. In fact, they were not on the agenda at all.

What we do is both strategic and operational, often touching every facet of the organisation's infrastructure. Our contribution is mission critical to organisational success because we fuel the future talent pipeline and deal with a microcosm of the wider employee population.

We often have responsibility for, and experience of, every aspect of the employee lifecycle, from attraction, employer branding, assessment and selection to induction, onboarding, training and development. We support graduates, apprentices and interns with mental health concerns while allocating resource and helping our businesses to diversify their succession plan. As a result our roles are wide, varied and interconnected.

And the early talent industry underpins the success of the economy. We help to educate, recruit and develop the lifeblood of organisations, large and small, across every sector.

Whether you are just starting your career as a recruiter or developer of early talent or you have reached the lofty heights of designing your organisation's entry-level strategy, this guide has something to support and enable you in your role.

As the UK's leading independent voice for stakeholders involved in every aspect of student employment, the ISE's vision is that business success is maximised by full access to early talent. We achieve that by bringing together employers, educators and supplier partners to promote best practice, share new insights and drive innovation and collaboration across our sector.

This guide is a brilliant example of a consolidation of member knowledge, expertise and current research to help you and your colleagues develop your technical know-how and strategic thinking. It's a practical starting point for colleagues looking to build knowledge of a new area as well as a specialist resource for those seeking strategic insight to inform their firm's approach to every aspect of student recruitment and development.

Many of our members have been generous with their time and expertise in contributing to this guide, for which we are grateful. To keep pace with the changes impacting our industry, it will evolve annually to incorporate current thinking and showcase best practice. As a practitioner, I would highly recommend that members use this guide as a 'go to' resource and encourage you to share case studies with us for future edition.
Debs McCormack, ISE Chair and Head of Early Talent, Pinsent Masons

Glossary

#

20% off-the-job time is a requirement that all apprentices should spend at least 20% of their contracted time engaged in off-the-job learning activities related to their apprenticeship.

A

A Levels are the main academic qualifications that young people receive on leaving the education system at the age of 18 or 19.

Applicants see *Candidates*

Apprenticeship is a training pathway which combines work with training. Apprenticeships are regulated by the government through the Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education and paid for by the apprenticeship levy. This means that the training an apprentice receives is highly specified through a nationally agreed *apprenticeship standard* (in England) or *apprenticeship framework* (in the other UK nations). Apprenticeships are commonly used as a pathway for school and college leavers, but they can also be taken by graduates and by an organisation's existing staff.

Apprenticeship levy is tax on employers which can be used, by the employer, to fund apprenticeship training. It is payable by all employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million at a rate of 0.5% of their total pay bill.

Apprenticeship provider is an organisation that delivers the training and qualification elements of an apprenticeship.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a computer-based process that can replace (or exceed) activities that would previously have required human input e.g. replacing human judgement in the selection process with computers.

Assessment see *Selection*.

Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) is the former name of ISE. In the past the organisation was mainly focused on graduate recruitment. We transformed into the ISE to recognise the increasing importance of apprenticeships and school and college leaver programmes.

B

BAME (Black and minority ethnic) is used as a catch-all term to describe ethnic minorities.

C

Candidates are students who have applied to your organisation and who are going through a selection process.

Candidate experience is how students experience the process of recruitment and onboarding.

Capabilities describe individuals' skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

Careers leaders have the overall responsibility for careers education and guidance in schools and colleges. They are your key point of contact if you are working with schools or colleges.

D

Data is any information that might be useful to you. Data is usually quantitative (numbers) but can also be qualitative (words and observations). Data will always need to be analysed to make it useful.

E

Employer value proposition (EVP) describes the unique set of benefits that employees receive from an organisation in return for the skills, attributes and experience they bring.

End point assessments (EPAs) are the final assessments that decide whether an apprentice has completed their apprenticeship. EPAs are separate from any qualification that the apprentice is studying and have to be undertaken by an independent EPA organisation *(EPAO)*.

Entry-level staff is a term used to describe all hires at the start of their career (usually for the first two or three years after joining).

Evaluation is a systematic process of reviewing what you did and deciding if it worked and how you might develop it in the future.

Exploding offer is a job offer that expires after a (usually fairly short) period if it is not accepted.

F

FE (further education) colleges are providers of education and training. Some students will start at an FE college at 16, others at 18, but FE colleges have learners of all ages. They are typically involved in delivering a wide range of programmes including academic programmes (A Levels), vocational programmes (including T Levels) and apprenticeships.

G

Gatsby Benchmarks is a framework for careers education and guidance which schools and colleges are encouraged to adhere to. It includes providing pupils with 'meaningful encounters with employers' and 'experiences of the workplace' and so provides a strong rationale for schools to engage with employers.

Graduates are hires who have completed a higher education degree (usually at Bachelor level, but the term can also be used to describe Masters and doctoral graduates).

I

Inclusion the process of making an individual feel accepted and comfortable within your organisation. It is particularly used to highlight the fact that some people, because of their background, ethnicity, gender or other characteristic, might not feel included.

Induction is the process involved in starting new employees in your organisation. This is part of the onboarding process.

Internships are short programmes of work experience that take place during an academic course. Internships often take place in vacation periods and typically last 4-16 weeks.

K

Knowledge describes the information that an individual has learnt and can make use of.

L

Learning needs analysis (LNA) is a systematic process for discovering what training and development new hires need.

Line managers are the people who have direct and day-to-day responsibility for staff. Line managers are particularly important for inducting, supporting and developing new hires.

M

MOU (memorandum of understanding) is a document setting out an agreement between two organisations. It is often used in partnerships and projects to agree high level principles where setting up a formal contract is seen as unnecessary.

O

Onboarding is the process through which new hires are brought into your organisation, introduced to the specific tasks that constitute their job and embedded in your organisational culture.

Ofsted is the quality assurance agency for education in England. Its remit includes inspection of schools (including careers education and guidance) and apprenticeship provision. The equivalent organisations in other parts of the UK are *Education Scotland*, *Estyn* (Wales) and the *Education Training Inspectorate* (Northern Ireland).

Opportunity cost describes what else you could have done and what the benefit of doing that would have been. You can use this as a counter-factual to help you to decide whether your current course of action is correct.

Organisational culture describes what is seen as normal behaviour and expectations within your organisation. Careful attention to your culture can make your organisation a great place to work, but it is important to ensure that the culture is *inclusive* and working for everyone.

P

Partnerships describe a relationship between your organisation and another organisation. This can be on a commercial (paid for) basis or on some other basis e.g. mutual interest, reciprocity, shared rewards.

Placements are extended work experience opportunities. In this book we will normally use this term to refer to nine- to twelve-month *year-in-industry placements* that are often taken by students between the second and third year of their degree.

(Public) policy describes any announcements, actions or initiatives by government. This may include changes in the law, funding or regulation, but can also include softer approaches such as ministerial speeches or recommendations.

R

RAG (red, amber, green) status or rating is an intuitive way to evaluate and report on the progress of a project. RAG ratings are based on traffic lights and so if things are going well they are coloured green, so-so and they are amber and if they are going badly they are coloured red.

Reneging is when a student accepts an offer, but later rejects it or even just fails to show up on the first day of work.

Retention describes your organisation's ability to keep the people that it hires. It can also be used to describe activities which are designed to increase staff's likelihood of staying.

Return on investment (ROI) is an assessment of what you have got back in return for the time, money and resources that you have put into any activity.

Rotation is an approach to the training and development of new hires where they spend their first year or few years in the firm moving between different departments to help them to understand the whole business.

S

School and college leavers are entry level hires who are joining an organisation after leaving school or college. They are typically aged 16-19, but in some cases may be slightly older depending on the course that they have taken and whether they have spent any time unemployed before starting work.

Selection describes the process of deciding who you want to work for your organisation.

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are businesses with fewer than 250 employees.

Stakeholders are anyone who has an interest in an activity. In the context of student employment stakeholders are likely to include the business, candidates, suppliers and educational providers.

Students are anyone who is in education including school, college and university.

Student market recognises all of the students who are seeking work and all of the organisations that are trying to attract them.

Suppliers are organisations or individuals that you pay for particular purposes. In some cases these relationships can be close and ongoing for a number of years.

T

Talent is often used in the student employment work as a noun to describe the candidates that a particular organisation wants to attract.

Theory of change is a description and (often visual) illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It allows you to set down what you are doing (inputs) and what you want to happen (outputs and outcomes) and then to think about what happens between these two points.

T Levels are a new technical alternative to A Levels. They are designed to offer a new vocational pathway for young people between the ages of 16 and 19 and include an extended work placement.

Training needs analysis (TNA) see **Learning needs analysis.**

W

Work experience describes all forms of onsite and work-based activity that a student might participate in before they become a permanent hire. This includes everything from a one-day work visit to a one-year placement. Increasingly organisations are delivering forms of work experience online. This is often known as *virtual work experience*.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Student employment is the pipeline through which organisations find the raw talent that they need for their business. It is also the process through which young people enter the workforce and begin to develop their careers. Hundreds of thousands of professionals are involved in the activity of finding and attracting young people, recruiting and selecting them, and then training, developing and managing them.

In some organisations, student employment is a specialist function undertaken by people with job titles like ‘Head of Student Recruitment’, ‘Apprenticeship Manager’ or ‘Graduate Development Manager’, while in others it will be integrated into broader roles and embedded in the organisation. It will be concerned with school and college leaver programmes, apprenticeships and graduate schemes and will focus on both finding the right talent and maximising their potential. Regardless of how it is organised, student employment is skilled work which requires a clear vision about what you are trying to achieve and what approaches are effective.

This book provides the first ever comprehensive overview of student recruitment and development by the Institute of Student Employers. It encompasses the full range of early talent pathways including school and colleges leavers, all forms of apprenticeship, graduates and interns, placement students and other forms of work experience. It takes a fresh look at the whole field of student employment from the perspective of recruitment and development professionals. It draws on the expertise of the Institute of Student Employers, sets out what good practice looks like in the area, and presents it in an accessible way designed to inform the way student employment works in your organisation.

We hope that this book will be of interest to everyone working in the student recruitment and development field. For those new to the field, it defines the boundaries and clarifies the key elements of student employment practice. For those with more experience it provides insights into best practice, drawing on data and case studies. For those in leadership positions it offers a tool for thinking strategically about student employment as a whole, rather than as a series of component parts.

Why student employment matters

Every year around 800,000 young people leave schools, colleges and universities bound for the workplace. The economy’s ability to successfully integrate these young people and set them on a career path is critical. If young people can be supported to grow, develop and gain in confidence and motivation, both the organisations that employ them and the whole economy benefits. Young workers are the future of the workforce and the start of their career is a crucial time in their development.

The moment of transition from education into employment is a challenging one. Young people must learn about a new set of processes, develop their skills and knowledge, and rapidly integrate into a new culture. Of course, they bring a lot of energy, fresh ideas, and new knowledge built up in the education system, but they also have a lot to learn. The process of transition is not something that happens automatically or by magic - it takes effort from organisations, experienced colleagues and from the young people themselves to make this transition work.

When the transition from education to the workplace fails there are negative consequences for everyone. Youth unemployment is costly for the nation and disastrous for individuals. Even if young people successfully move into work, their transition can be blighted and their talents wasted if they do not find suitable work, if they are not successfully onboarded and developed and if the organisation where they work does not understand the challenges of employing young people.

Student employment professionals are in the middle of all these issues. They are the, all too often unsung, heroes of the global economy. They guard the start of the talent pipeline on which the whole economy depends and ensure that it is working effectively. Given how critical student employment professionals are to the economy and to organisations, we thought that it was time create a comprehensive guide that shows how to do it well.

About the guide

This guide was conceived in the middle of the pandemic. The experience of 2020 changed so much about student employment, but it also transformed the way in which the student employment community engaged with one another. Student employment professionals and organisations became more open than ever, talking about what they do, what worked and what they were unsure about.

At the Institute of Student Employers it reminded us of how much knowledge and expertise exists across the student employment community. It also made us think about the tools that we use to share this expertise. We decided to launch the *ISE Knowledge Hub* as an online hub for news, views, practices and proposals. The response from the community was overwhelming with people writing, reading and discussing the content on our site. There was so much to say about student employment.

However, we realised that amongst all of the discussion and debate it could often be difficult to access the fundamentals of the field. We decided that we needed somewhere that defined what student employment was (and what it wasn't) and set down what we know about how to do it properly. This guide was born out of our aspiration to create a one-stop, comprehensive, and step-by-step account of student employment.

The guide was put together by the ISE team in early 2021 with an enormous amount of help and support from an army of ISE members. We interviewed experts, read any existing good practice guides, mined the ISE's research library, and delved into *ISE Knowledge Hub* to bring together the most cutting-edge description of current practice. Throughout it all we benefited from many conversations with ISE members questioning, challenging, advising and cheerleading our efforts. We are enormously grateful to those members who read chapters in detail.

Although most of the work for the guide took place in early 2021, in many ways it has been in production for more than half a century. When the ISE's predecessor body was formed in 1968 a key aim was to support student recruiters to share practice and improve what they did. Throughout the subsequent 53 years we have been accumulating knowledge, expertise and most importantly an incomparable network of student employment professionals. This guide seeks to gather the collective wisdom of ISE and its members together. We hope that you find it useful.

How to read the guide

The book is divided into eight main chapters which follow this introduction. The chapters have been ordered to reflect the student employment process. If you read them in order it will help you to get an overview of student employment as an end-to-end process. But it is also fine to skip about between chapters as you read this book. You might want to start with the area that you know most about (to check that we know what we are talking about) or dive into the area that you know least about (to open your mind to new possibilities). As you go through you will find lots of cross-links between chapters which remind us that student employment is an integrated process rather than lots of disconnected activities.

Once you have finished this introduction you will find the following chapters.

Chapter 2 looks at **developing dynamic strategy** in student recruitment and development. It asks you to think big and consider: what is your organisation trying to do through its student employment activity? How effective is the approach that you are taking? What challenges are out there for you in the wider environments? And how do you stack up against your competitors?

Chapter 3 explores **building effective partnerships** with other organisations to support your student employment activities. What educational organisations should you be working with? Why do they care about student employment? How should you use suppliers and consultants to support your strategy?

Chapter 4 examines **running impactful campaigns** to attract student talent through your marketing and outreach activities. How do you want students to see your organisation? What approaches are you going to use to reach out to them? How will you know what has worked?

Chapter 5 looks at **designing high-quality assessment** to decide who you want to work for you. What are you looking for from students at the point of hire? How are you going to assess these capabilities? How will you know that you are finding the right people and that your process is fair?

Chapter 6 explores **delivering meaningful work experience,** internships and placement opportunities. What types of work experience are available and in use? Why do employers offer work experience, internships and placements? What ensures that these opportunities are effective for the student and the organisation? How can you use work experience, internships and placements as a pipeline into your main recruitment?

Chapter 7 looks at **supporting candidates from offer to onboarding.** What do students look for in the jobs that they accept? How can you make sure that everyone you hire turns up on the first day? And what do you need to do to ensure that hires are successfully integrated into your organisation?

Chapter 8 looks at **creating a powerful development programme** for student hires once you have employed them. What capabilities do you need to focus on developing? What approaches to development are most effective? How can you assess the impact of the development approaches that you do use?

Chapter 9 turns the focus back onto you and **building a brilliant career.** What does a career as a student employment professional look like? What strategies can you adopt as you develop your career? Where might this field lead you in the short and long term?

Finally, the book ends with a **Supplier directory** which provides you with contact details for all the ISE's supplier members. This invaluable resource will ensure that you can find the right person to help you with any problems that you encounter.

Throughout the book we will provide you with advice on all aspects of student employment. As you read the chapters you should look out for the *case studies* which show you how this works in practice and the opinions which provide the perspective of leading voices in the field. Each chapter will also include a range of *benchmark data* which offers you some hard facts about how the student employment market is dealing with all these issues. All of the statistics that we provide in this book are drawn from the latest ISE research, unless otherwise specified. If you want to find out more about the data just visit the ISE Knowledge Hub and choose 'Reports'. Finally, each chapter ends with a list of resources to aid with further reading and thinking about this area.

A lot of the case studies that we present are ISE award winners. The ISE Awards are an annual competition which is designed to raise standards and showcase best practice. The awards are independently judged by industry professionals and the process is transparent and open, and recognised and respected by the industry. When we started to put together *The complete guide to student recruitment and development* the award winners were a natural first place to look.

Resources

ISE's website *(https://ise.org.uk/)* sits at the centre of the UK student employment universe. Here you will find research, data, jobs, events and lots of other information for people involved in student employment. If you are inspired by the case studies that you read in this book you might want to think about entering the **ISE Awards** *(https://ise.org.uk/page/ise-awards)* yourself.

ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* is our portal for up to the minute news and views on student employment.

Chapter 2

Developing dynamic strategy

Organisations that are exceptional at managing early talent pull together several disparate activities into a cohesive strategy. This doesn't happen by accident. They knit together attraction, selection, onboarding and development approaches to find, hire and retain the talent that is right for their needs.

Student recruitment and development has become more complex in recent years as the area has moved away from its roots in graduate recruitment. Increasingly the Head of Early Talent in an organisation will have to juggle a wide range of different recruitment and development streams. As well as graduates, there are apprentices, school and college leaver programmes and government initiatives like Kickstart. Add to this the growing range of placements, internships and work experience opportunities and the pathway from education to employment looks increasingly complex. Those working in early talent need to take a strategic approach to all of these options to make sure that they are recruiting the right students at the right time and in the right quantity.

What is more, the process of student recruitment and development is complex and costly and the risks of hiring the wrong people are substantial. This is big business and needs to be organised and managed carefully. This chapter will help you to develop a student employment strategy that can guide your work and help you to have the maximum impact within your organisation and the market.

Whether you are hiring ten apprentices on a budget of £25,000 or more than 1,000 graduates for a cost of millions of pounds, the process of creating and executing a student employment strategy is the same. You must both lead and manage change, liaise with and influence other leaders in your business, manage projects, and set and spend budgets.

Not all of this will be in your control, but a strategic approach can help to expand your sphere of influence within the business. This chapter will give you a framework to structure your thinking and build your own early talent strategy.

Graduates, apprentices and school and college leavers

One of the big strategic questions that you are likely to be involved in is considering how your resourcing approach is balanced between graduates and school and college leavers. Wrapped into this question is whether you are going to use apprenticeships as a route to train any or all of these new hires. In the public imagination apprentices are synonymous with school and college leavers, but an apprenticeship is actually a training and development approach that can potentially be used with any staff.

Resourcing questions are likely to involve a wide range of stakeholders from the business in discussions about exactly what blend of talent you need. This will include discussions about the number of school leavers, graduates and interns that you need, but may also involve thinking about when early talent is the right solution and when it is better to recruit experienced hires or outsource a particular function. As the early talent specialist your role is to input your expertise about the process of hiring and developing different types of early talent and helping people to reflect on their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Key questions to ask as you reflect on these resourcing decisions include the following.

- How many staff do we need?
- What do we need them to be able to do?
- How much do we want to pay?
- What training do we want to (or need to) provide?
- How long do we want to keep them?

These are all strategic questions that will help you to think through your resourcing needs and consider the best approach to meeting these needs.

There is a range of external drivers designed to encourage you to recruit and train apprentices. The introduction of the Apprenticeship levy in 2017 was the government's attempt to change the way that employers hired and developed early talent. Although, as with much apprenticeship policy, funding works differently in different UK nations. We will be looking at this in more detail in *Chapter 8*.

The Apprenticeship levy is charged at a rate of 0.5% on annual paybills in excess of £3 million. It can be used to support training with school and college leavers, graduates and existing staff, but the levy comes with certain conditions e.g. the requirement to give apprentices 20% off-the-job time. If employers do not use their levy funds to train apprentices, they lose this money as a tax. A range of other incentives designed to engage employers in apprenticeships includes savings in National Insurance contributions, hiring incentives and encouragement to have apprentices as part of any public sector bidding. See the resources at the end of this chapter and in *Chapter 8* for more information about all of these incentives.

While it is important to pay attention to government policy and incentives and ensure that you spend as much of the levy as you can, it is more important that you recruit the right talent for your needs. Many of these decisions are likely to be unique to your organisation and your particular hiring needs, but some of the following insights might be helpful to you in making the decision about what is the right approach.
- Most ISE employers are recruiting both school and college leavers and graduates.
- Most are using their apprenticeship levy (but on average they are only using *about a third* of it). Yet they are spending around *£3,000* on developing every member of staff they employ and for apprentices this spend could be reclaimed from the apprenticeship levy.

- On average ISE members enrol 13% of their graduates and 87% of school and college leavers onto apprenticeships.
- Graduates typically arrive with more skills and 'polish' than school and college leavers, who are likely to require more support in transitioning into work.
- Graduate roles are typically more competitive (an average of 60 applications per role) than school and college leaver roles (an average of 39 applications per role).
- School and college leavers are typically more loyal than graduates with 67% retained after five years in comparison with 53% of graduates.
- School and college leavers are usually much cheaper than graduates with an average starting salary of £18,450 in comparison to the average graduate starting salary of £29,667.

It is also important to recognise that apprenticeships cover a wide range of programmes and can be used to train staff in a multitude of occupations. An important element of this that you will need to understand as you develop your early talent strategy is the existence of different 'apprenticeship levels'.

Apprenticeship levels describe the relative sophistication of the knowledge and skills that are developed through that apprenticeship. The main types of apprenticeship are as follows.
- **Intermediate apprenticeships** include a Level 2 qualification which means that they are equivalent to five GCSE passes.
- **Advanced apprenticeships** include a Level 3 qualification which is equivalent to two A Level passes.
- **Higher apprenticeships** include a Level 4 qualification which is equivalent to a Higher National Diploma or foundation degree.
- **Degree apprenticeships** include a Levels 5 to 7 qualification which is equivalent to a degree or Masters degree.

Each of these apprenticeship levels can be used with different types and levels of hire. It is also common to view them as a ladder of progression, with apprentices moving through them as they develop their skills and career within your organisation.

We will be discussing the relative benefits of different types of hires throughout the book and thinking about how you need to recruit, develop and support different groups in different ways. But, for now, let's return to our consideration of your overall student employment strategy.

Why is strategy important?

The word 'strategy' is overused and can carry a lot of baggage. But without a clear strategy focused on what you and your team must deliver for your organisation, you risk failing to achieve your aims. A well thought through strategy will increase your authority within your own organisation and support you to influence the direction of your work. A strategy clarifies your destination and provides you with a route map to get there.

The impetus to look at and develop strategy can come from a variety of places. You may have been tasked by senior leaders to lead a full strategic review of student employment in your organisation. Alternatively, you may have an inclination that there are issues to address in your selection process and that solving these issues might lead you on to bigger questions. Either way, as with any task worth doing, it's important you have a clear idea of what you want to achieve as you set out.

Dynamic strategy

A strategy needs to be dynamic rather than fixed. You should expect that changes in society or market forces will force you to rethink, adjust and rework your existing early talent strategy. But just because you need to respond to change should not stop you from being strategic. Making a series of tweaks to your operations is likely to be ineffective and cause you problems. If you are able to continue to think big while change is happening all around you, it will help you to be clearsighted in your response to change. Balancing a long-term vision with an ever-changing present is what strategic thinking is all about.

A recent example can be seen in the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement after the death of George Floyd in the USA. In this case unexpected events in another country that are not directly bound up with your day-to-day business quickly required a strategic response from businesses. A different example can be seen in the introduction of the Apprenticeship levy. This provides a good example of where policy change by government has major implications for business.

Both examples have had a significant impact on our industry, but an effective strategic planner will do more than just respond to these changes with short term initiatives. They will think about how these changes fit into the overall strategy and what they add to it. You should ask yourself why would you need to factor diversity and inclusion (D&I) and/or the Apprenticeship levy into your strategic planning?

In the case of D&I, it needs to be a golden thread that runs through your early talent strategy. For example, to increase the number of Black Heritage students you may need to consider the following:

- **Your attraction strategy.** How is D&I integrated into your marketing plan? Are you targeting the right schools, colleges and universities? Are potential students meeting the right people in your organisation?
- **Selection and assessment.** Is your selection process putting up barriers to Black Heritage students? Is your selection process fair? Are candidates meeting the right people through your selection process?
- **Development.** Are the people you are hiring staying with you in the long term? How inclusive is your development programme?

In responding to the Apprenticeship levy, you need to recognise that the government is using a financial lever (some would say a tax) to incentivise employers into increasing the numbers of apprentices they hire. These changes have potential implications for your whole early talent strategy. So, to make optimum use of the levy within early talent, you could consider the following:

- **Resource planning.** Are there roles in your organisation that are more suited to the apprentice training route, e.g., technology graduates hired via the digital degree apprenticeship? When run alongside a graduate route, will an apprentice programme improve the flexibility and productivity of your workforce?
- **How does it change your talent pool?** Will an apprentice programme give you access to a broader and/or more diverse pool of candidates? How will you integrate an apprentice programme into your recruitment and development activities?
- **Financial implications.** Is the return on investment (ROI) for apprentices too low for your organisation so you would be better off treating the levy as a tax?

Writing a strategy should not be something that you do once a year and present on a PowerPoint deck to a leadership meeting. A good strategy is your lodestar, something you can constantly refer to as new issues such

as those discussed above emerge. It should guide you, but also serve as a check on your operations, if you start to move in the wrong direction. The right strategy will not only drive what you do, but also help you determine what you don't do.

The planning process

There are three key stages you need to go through as you create and implement your strategy.

1 Determine your position

- Use models to structure your thinking
- Gather and analyse evidence – qualitative and quantitative
- Engage stakeholders

2 Develop your strategy

- Determine your mission and vision
- Set your goals
- Generate ideas
- Set your budget

3 Deliver your strategy

- Influence change
- Move to implementation
- Measure and evaluate
- Re-engage stakeholders

To an extent the process is linear but be prepared to loop back, particularly if you uncover additional evidence as you engage stakeholders. Setting boundaries is also important. What are you actually reviewing? Is it your entire early talent strategy or just some aspect of it such as your selection and assessment approach?

Determining your position

To create a strategy, you need to do a thorough analysis of your current situation. Many strategic models and tools exist to structure your thinking. You will also have access to a wealth of internal and external data. Just be wary of falling into the rabbit hole of over-analysis. There are few facts about the future; data analysis can tell you what to fix but won't tell you how to fix it.

Planning models

The following three models are designed to help you to think about your environment, the forces affecting your operation and how you can add value. You may find it helpful to use all of these models or just pick the one that is most useful to your current situation. The first one looks at your position in the market, the second focuses on wider environmental factors and the third asks you to take a look at your own organisation. Combining an evaluation of where you can add value internally with an understanding of the external forces affecting your operations will help you understand where you need to focus your energies.

Assessing your place in the market: Porter's Five Forces

Created by Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter, the Five Forces model is a tool that can help you think about where you sit in a market. It argues that a market is a dynamic system within which things are constantly changing. If you can understand what the main 'forces' are within your market (i.e., what is driving it to change), you can assess the competitive environment you are operating in.

Porter argues that you should attend to five main things (forces) to understand where you sit in the market.

Porter's five forces	Key question	Implications for student employment
Competitive rivalry	Who are your current competitors?	Who are the other student employers competing for similar kinds of students to you?
Threat of new entrants	Who are your potential new competitors?	Is anyone new coming into the market? New market entrants can disrupt a market substantially, so it is important to watch these carefully. For example, when Teach First launched it created a new kind of competitor that graduate employers had to be aware of.
Threat of substitutes	Are you facing any substitute threats?	Substitutes are when students do something completely different. They are not just choosing between you and your competitors but are doing something else. Perhaps you are seeing more students taking a gap year, pursuing apprenticeships, working for SMEs or taking postgraduate study.
Bargaining power of customers	How much market power do students have?	Are there more jobs than students to fill them (students have more power) or more students than jobs (employers have more power)? In some cases, this might be very specific to a job role, for example 31% of employers find it difficult to recruit IT programmers. This gives students with these skills greater bargaining power.
Bargaining power of suppliers	How much power do you have relative to the suppliers that you use? This could also include 'suppliers' of your talent, e.g., universities.	Delivering a student recruitment and development programme will usually involve you bringing in a variety of suppliers and partners (see Chapter 3). The relative need that you have and capacity that your suppliers have will have implications for these relationships.

Analysing the wider environment: PESTLE

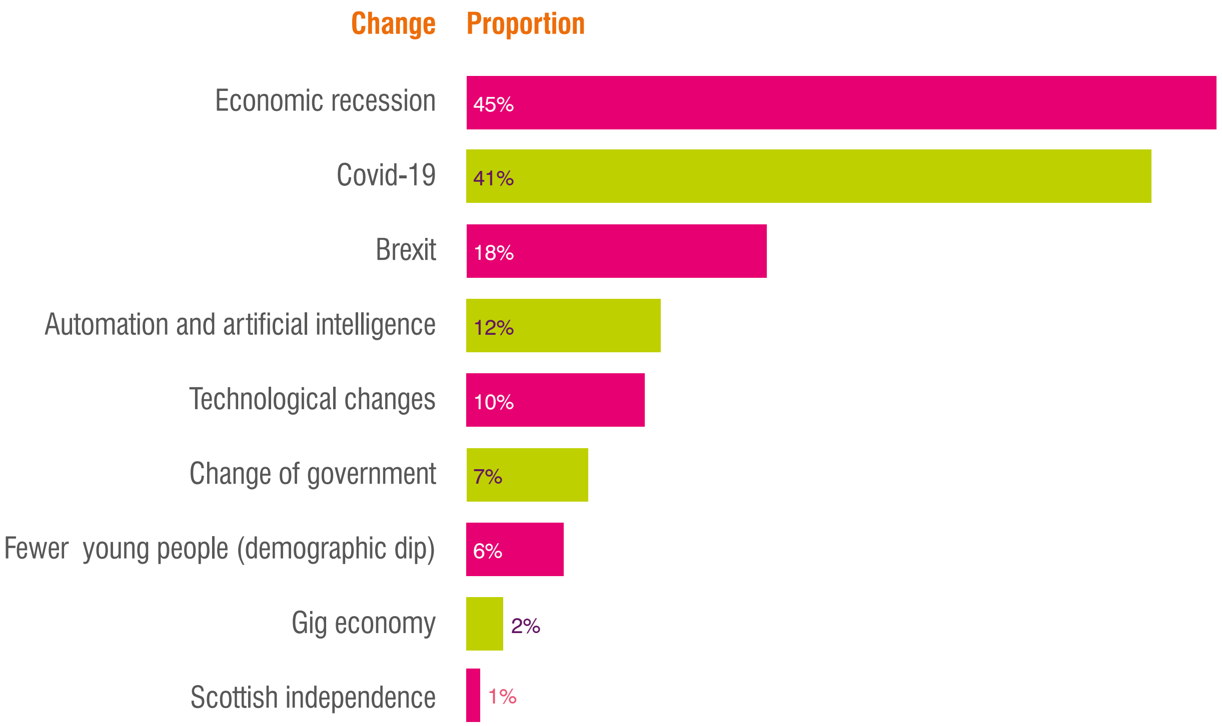
The Covid-19 pandemic reminds us that it is not just things within the student employment market that make a difference to your strategy; it can also be factors outside of this, including things that you didn't expect. No one can predict everything that is going to happen but paying attention to the wider environment will help you to spot what might be coming your way.

If Porter's Five Forces focuses you on the market within which you are operating, PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) helps you to think much more broadly.

PESTLE	Key question	Implications for student employment
Political	What political factors do you need to consider?	Is anything that is happening in the political world (change of government, Brexit, new higher education, apprenticeship, or business policies?) likely to make a difference to your company's business or the student employment market?
Economic	What economic forces are at play?	How is the economy performing? Is employment going up or down? Are particular sectors growing or shrinking? What will this mean for who your organisation and your competitors want to recruit?
Social	Are any social changes affecting your market?	Society is always changing. Public opinion shifts on key issues and can result in new expectations for organisations. This might result in you having to consider new issues around diversity, fairness or business ethics if you are going to maintain your place in the market.
Technological	What new technologies are shaping how you operate?	Technology and employment are strongly linked. The development of new technologies might have implications for your business, for the skills that you need and the approach that you take to the recruitment and development of student hires.
Legal	Are there any changes to laws and regulations that may impact you?	There are lots of ways that changes to the law might affect student employment. Most obviously, shifts in employment law and regulation may change how you recruit and manage students. In recent years there have also been changes to immigration, equalities and data protection legislation that have had a big impact.
Environmental	What health and environment impacts do you need to consider?	The environment within which your business operates can make a big difference to the possibilities for student hiring. Covid-19 has demonstrated how these can have a direct impact. But other issues such as air pollution, rising temperatures and flooding can also shape your business in important ways.

In recent years, the government's focus on vocational education created the Apprenticeship levy. Brexit is changing the rules affecting international students who need a work permit and restricted movement to the UK for EU domiciled students and graduates. Technology has changed how students talk to employers and absorb information. A thorough PESTLE analysis will open up your thinking about external forces that affect you and your organisation.

The proportion of ISE members who are concerned that different issues will reduce levels of student employment



Looking at your own processes: Value Chain Analysis

The previous two models focused on the external factors that might shape student employment. Value chain analysis switches the focus onto your organisation and helps you to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your internal activities and processes.

Value chain analysis starts with you considering what you are trying to achieve (what value you are trying to create) and then thinking about what processes lead you to be able to achieve this (the value chain). In the context of student employment this is about how you identify the talent that you need, recruit students, induct and develop them and then ensure that you have achieved the value that you were aiming to achieve.

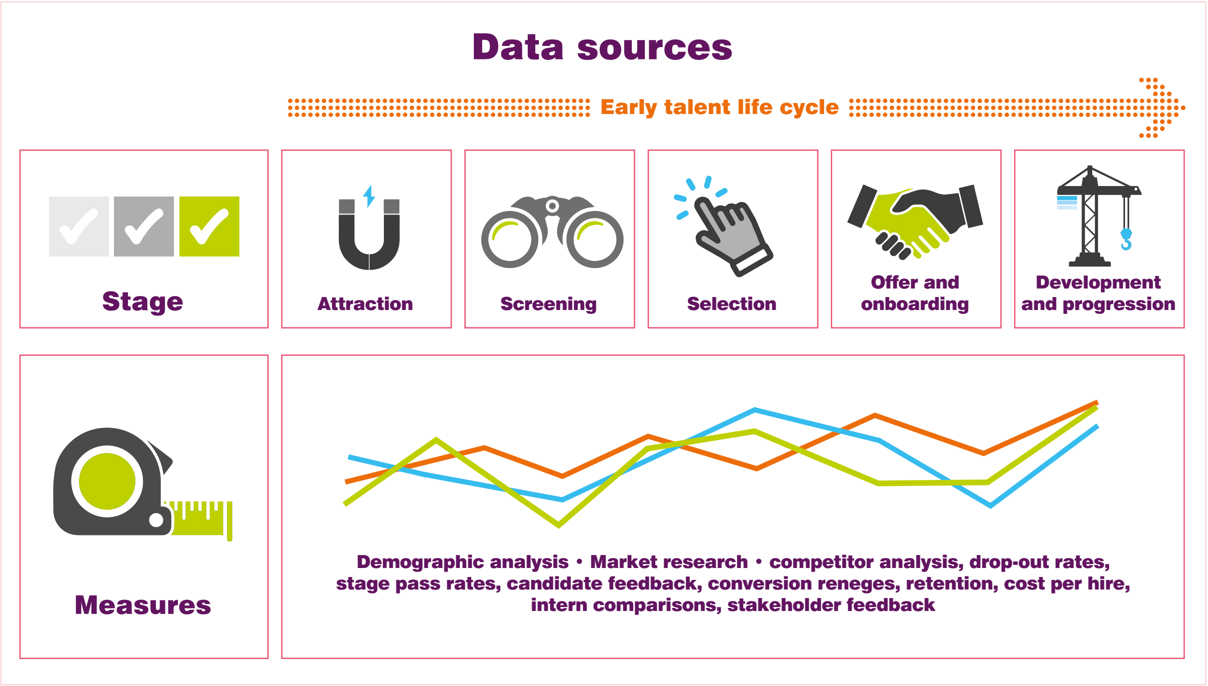
Key areas to reflect on as part of your value chain analysis include:

Areas	Key questions	Implications for student employment
Infrastructure	What barriers and opportunities do the structures that exist in your organisation create? What internal processes do you need to navigate across the early talent life cycle?	Do you have to work with a complex hierarchy of stakeholders? Is part of your selection process outsourced? Are you working regionally and/or internationally?
Human resource	Who are the key people in your organisation who are important to student recruitment? Are you connected to all those who influence early talent in your organisation?	Are you getting your hiring targets in enough time to develop your marketing plans? Are you getting enough insights into the future talent needs of your business so you can develop the right selection tools?
Technology	How competitive is the technology you are able to deploy? Have you tested the user experience recently?	Is your selection process slow and hampered by out-of-date tools? Are your tools helping or hampering your objectives around D&I?
Logistics	How slick are your operations? Are your stakeholders frustrated or do they think student recruitment activities are efficient?	Is your time to hire one of the quickest in your sector? Do you have compliance procedures you must follow? Are too many people involved in the offer decision making process and slowing it down? Are you collating the data you need to manage candidates efficiently?

Gathering data to support your strategy

The models outlined previously are designed to help you to map out your current situation. But all of them, and your wider strategy thinking, will require you to gather a wide range of evidence, insights and data. Whereas marketing pioneer John Wanamaker once had to say, "I know half my advertising dollars are wasted, I just don't know which half," we can all now access a wealth of external and internal data points. Most organisations have data on previous hires, the selection process, plus performance and retention details. You may also have external data such as purchased market research.

To identify your data sources, review your early talent life cycle and look to internal and external sources.



How much analysis you undertake will depend on the boundaries you have set for your strategic review, your time constraints, and the availability of internal historical data.

External data

The UK student population is the most analysed in the world. Government agencies produce demographic data on who goes to university and the career paths they follow on graduation. Market research companies gather analysis on what students think about the career and employer opportunities open to them. Benchmark data exists to evaluate your diversity objectives against.

Employee feedback websites can help you understand if your employer brand is competitive. 'Listen' to LinkedIn and Glassdoor to hear what current employees are saying to future employees. Students join forums on graduate job boards and talk about your opportunities. You may or may not like what they say about your firm. And ask your careers service contacts what is happening on campus, which employers are active and what students are saying.

Your organisation will conduct thorough research and competitor analysis into the markets it is operating in; you should do the same for your market.

See the *Resources section* at the end of this chapter for a range of sources of data and insight that can inform your strategy.

Internal data

As well as resource planning data to assess your recruitment needs, you should also have access to a wealth of data. This is particularly useful when conducting a value chain analysis. The table below gives some examples of internal data and what it may say about your early talent life cycle.

Type of internal data	Examples	Key questions
Application data	30% of candidates don't complete the application form after registering	Is your process putting students off?
Assessment process data	Over 65% of candidates get through the first interview Only 50% of candidates pass the assessment centre Only 45% of female candidates pass the assessment centre Interviewers think that the selection scoring rejects good candidates	Does this mean your success criteria are too weak? Are the wrong students getting to the final stage or is your benchmark set too high? Have you got a bias problem? Have your internal stakeholders lost faith in the selection process?
Acceptance data	Only 70% of offered candidates accept and join 15% of offered candidates renege before joining	Are you too slow to get the offer made? Are you losing touch with candidates once the offer is made?
Internships and placement data	Internship conversion rates below 70%.	Should you put more rigour into your intern selection process?
Candidate feedback	Negative feedback from rejected candidates suggests they think your process is unfair as they don't understand your decisions	Do you need to give candidates feedback so even rejected students have a more positive experience of your organisation? Do you need to offer more explanation on your use of certain selection tools?
Induction	Feedback from new hires suggests they would like to hear more from last year's intake.	Has your induction programme covered the basics as well as the leadership position? Do you need a buddy programme?
Development	Feedback from students and line managers suggest key skills are not being covered.	Do you need to redesign your programme content to reflect changes in the business?
Retention data	3-year retention rate below industry average	Despite all your team's hard work, do your exit interviews show that your staff are leaving to go to your competitors?

It is also important that you take a holistic view of your data. Further assessment of time to hire, cost per hire, retention data and promotion data can inform the entire life cycle of your early talent strategy, from hiring to rotation off a programme. Are your selection criteria helping you hire students with the specific skills, or the potential to develop them, that your line managers require? Are your recent hires telling you the job they are doing doesn't relate to the presentations they heard on campus or at the assessment centre? Poor retention at the end of a development programme can be caused by many factors: misleading marketing, weak selection decisions, poor line management. Be sure to join the dots - the symptom may not be the root cause of the problem you have identified.

A worked example of how to use data to inform strategy

The table below is a hypothetical example that explains why there are fewer candidates than vacancies in the talent pool for professional services opportunities if an employer sets minimum academic requirements. The data demonstrates the need to create a robust attraction strategy to attract candidates to the profession, but also highlights that minimum academic requirements can limit the size of the talent pool.

Graduated with a 1st or 2:1	**240,000** (HESA)
24% have AAB+at A level	**57,600** (UCAS)
Minus 14% going to further study	**49,600** (DLHE)
10% of students interested in professional services	**4,900** (student opinion survey)
Professional services vacancies	**5,300** (ISE)
Candidate shortfall	**-500 students**

On assessing the data, it is clear that there are not enough candidates who meet the basic selection criteria who want to work in professional services. The employers in this sector need to increase the supply of talent by removing or adjusting academic thresholds and/or improving the attractiveness of the sector.

Stakeholder engagement

Recruitment and development are people functions. From senior leaders to the recent hires who attend a careers fair, the people you report to, the line managers who do interviews – everyone has an opinion on recruitment. Leaders at the top of an organisation can set the agenda. You will likely have to influence from the middle which will dictate how much control you have.

Part of your role is about making things happen through people you don't manage. Engaging your stakeholders will help you uncover issues you need to address and help secure their buy-in when you come to implement your ideas. Done properly, stakeholder engagement will build trust in your team and help you set a clear and relevant course. Remember, if you don't involve others in what you are doing, you will likely be ignored.

Conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify your stakeholders, their needs and their levels of influence on your strategy.
- Map your key stakeholder groups and key individuals.
- Establish criteria to prioritise who you need to engage with.
- Focus on what you need to know from your stakeholders.
- Put yourselves in their shoes – what is going to motivate them to talk to you?
- Decide how to talk to your stakeholders – face-to-face meetings or an online survey?

As well as listening to your stakeholders, it's vital that you loop back to them as you develop your strategy and plans. People want to know they have been listened to and that you have addressed their concerns.

Developing your strategy

So, you've analysed your market, captured the opinions of your key stakeholders, and pored over your performance data – what's next? Now it's time to develop and deliver your strategy. The first step is to develop an early talent vision and mission that is right for your organisation. Bentley and Skoda both make cars, but for opposite ends of the market.

Defining your vision and mission

You may think that vision and mission statements are corporate fluff, but that would be a mistake. A well-crafted vision and mission will be the twin pillars that can guide both your strategic and operational thinking. You may have an existing statement that needs sense checking for relevance. You have probably been thinking about your overall goals since you started reviewing your strategy.
- **Vision.** The vision statement is broad and should rarely be revised. It defines what your department does, its reason for being.
- **Mission.** The mission statement is a more practical version of your vision. It sets out what you want to become, how you will achieve your mission, and is future orientated.

Below is an example from NASA.

Your vison might be as simple as to recruit and develop the best early talent for your organisation. But words are important – what does 'best talent' mean? Is 'right talent' a better phrase?

Your mission could focus on how you are going to deliver your services and how you want to work with your stakeholders. Do you want to have the most popular brand in your sector? Do you want to be known for your excellent training programme? Do you want to have the fastest time to hire? If so, why? Remember, your mission helps explain how you are going to achieve your vision.

What you might want to think about:
- **Vision.** What is the vision of your organisation? What do you deliver to serve your organisation's needs? What does the 'best' or 'right' talent mean for your business? Are you explicitly recruiting and developing future leaders or a broad intake across a wide range of roles with multiple career paths?
- **Mission.** What do you need to work on? Are there specific areas of your function that need review/improvements? Are there cultural changes you need to drive?

Setting goals

Once you have set your vision and mission you can set about determining your goals. Your goals will deliver your vision and mission. What projects do you need to deliver and by when to achieve your vision? What do you need the business to do?

Your goals need to be:
1. Driven by your vision and mission
2. Actionable
3. Measurable

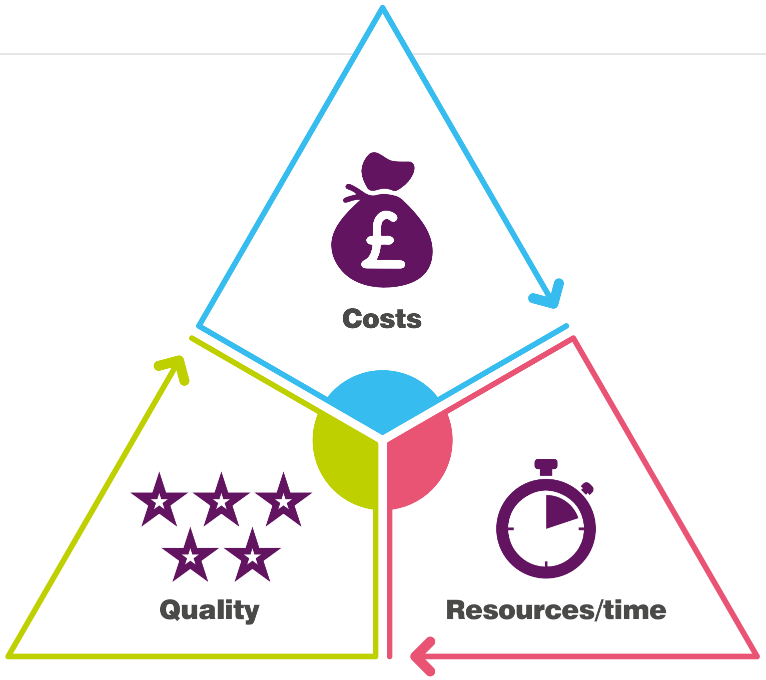
This is the point where you need to be very realistic about the resources, budget and time you have at your disposal and your organisation's appetite for change. Do you have the resources, need and remit to drive significant change or should you focus on incremental change?

Generating ideas

You have a clear idea of what you want to change but now need to generate ideas on how to create change. Here are some approaches that could help.
- **Idealise the future:** What will your function look like in the future? What problems will you have fixed, what will you be doing, what will stakeholders say about early talent in your firm? Use this idea of the future to focus on the solutions you need to create.
- **Use experts:** If your selection approach needs an overhaul you will need the expertise of occupational psychologists to create a process that works for you. If you need to build an employer brand on campus you will need marketing expertise. Suppliers and consultants can be used at all stages of your strategic review, from initial scoping to working with stakeholders to implementation.
- **Use your stakeholders:** Work with your team and stakeholders to not only understand the issues you are facing, but also to create ideas and solutions. Brainstorming sessions, away-days, even informal meetings, can all be used to seek input and solutions.
- **Look externally:** When you reviewed your market and competitors you will have gathered evidence on how others approached similar problems to you. Not all solutions need to be innovative. Don't be afraid to steal ideas and approaches.

Setting budgets

Assuming your project requires additional budget, you need to be aware of your organisation's budget cycle and current attitude to investment. There is no point asking for additional funding when the business is slashing budgets.



Your plans will need to balance three constraints:
- Financial cost of implementation
- Quality levels of output
- Resources and time available

In addition, you will also need to factor in your stakeholders' views. Depending on their perspectives and priorities, they will hold differing views. Part of your role is to find the balance that will secure approval for your plans. When determining your budget and building your business case you should match your budget request to the benefits your strategy will deliver.

It is easier to match budgets to revenues if you are in a business that can match revenue to people, i.e., chargeable hours for a lawyer. But there are other ways to demonstrate the financial benefits of your plans:

Performance improvements
- A faster, more engaging selection process might reduce the number of candidates who drop out, meaning you meet your recruitment targets faster.
- Enhanced selection tools could mean that you make better hiring decisions, improving the performance of your student intakes.
- Improving your employer brand on campus could increase the quality of your applications and promote 'difficult to fill' roles more effectively.

Cost reductions
- Improved retention at the end of a development could mean that your organisation spends less on experienced hires.
- Switching from graduates to apprentices could utilise your levy contributions, reducing cash-outflows from your organisation.

Opportunity cost reductions
Opportunity costs are those costs incurred when people are doing an activity that takes them away from revenue generation, or a particular process incurs a cost that could be reduced by using a different process.

- Making your selection process more efficient could reduce the amount of time line-managers spend on recruitment, increasing the time they bill to clients.
- Improving the quality of your first interviews could improve the quality of those who attend assessment centres, reducing the time you spend rejecting weaker candidates.

The ISE's cost per hire data can also provide a useful benchmark for comparison, particularly if you are underspending or under-resourced. Our recruitment survey shows that the typical ISE member has one member of recruiting staff for every 20 student hires and spends £2,778 to recruit each student and £5,739 to develop them during their early career.

So, if you hire 100 students per year, you would expect your team to be five people strong with a budget guide of £277,800 for attraction and recruitment, and £573,900 for the development programme.

Will your plans result in cost-savings, performance improvements or both? If you have thought your strategy through, the benefits of implementation will ultimately be financial, but often felt by an improvement in quality. Remember, there is also a cost to inaction: do nothing and your competitors may hire better talent than you or your business inefficiencies could get worse.

Delivering your strategy

Influencing change

By gathering evidence and engaging stakeholders, you will have already started to develop your business case and an appetite for change.

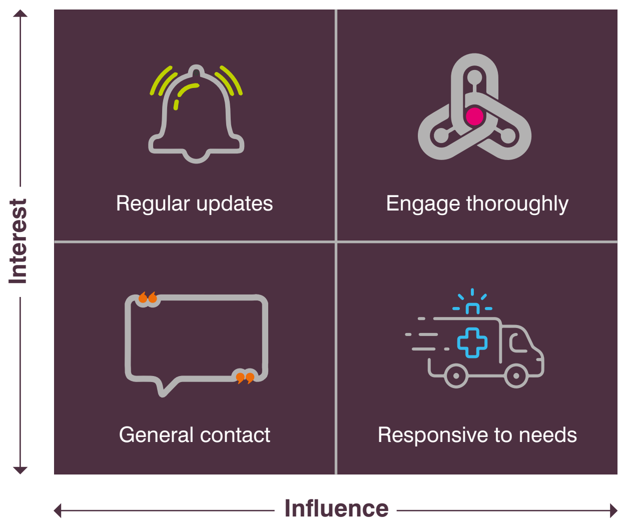
You may need to strike a balance between what your organisation wants to do, what you want to achieve, and your ability to influence the agenda. Is your role to manage gradual improvements to your existing operations or to lead a significant change project? You may believe that your function requires a radical overhaul, but your leadership may have other priorities or be reluctant to invest in your ideas. How you marshal the evidence, build a business case, and influence stakeholders will determine how your plans progress.

Earlier in the chapter we suggested you map your stakeholders in order to engage them. As you progress, you also need to plan how to manage and communicate with them.
When managing your stakeholders ask yourself:

- What are they interested in?
- Why do they need you?
- How do you manage the relationships?

You won't have the time to fully engage with all your stakeholders. Those with the most interest and influence over your function require your thorough attention. Those with less influence but a high interest need regular updates. Those who are influential but less interested need you to be responsive and limit engagement to key points in your process. Your CEO might want to know about and influence your overall objectives but will not need to engage in specifics.

Managing Stakeholders



Also think about how you influence the influencers. They may be others who need to make your arguments for you, a business sponsor for example. Hierarchies are a reality in organisations, so it could be your line manager that has to work with certain stakeholders. If you need to influence and engage with people you have not worked with before, ask advice from those who have.

Measuring and evaluation

Student recruitment and development is under increasing pressure to demonstrate its value and impact. Ultimately your budget and resourcing and even the idea of having an early talent programme at all are dependent on others in your business recognising its value. A key tool that you can use to demonstrate your impact and the impact of the students that you recruit is evaluation.

Evaluation and impact measurement are critical elements in your strategy building and development. As you build your strategy you should be thinking about what it is you are trying to achieve and considering how you will know if you have achieved these aims. Ultimately you need to set up an evaluation process to allow you to check that things have gone how you hoped and gather evidence that you can communicate to others in the business about this.

What to measure

You know the critical ratios and numbers that measure the performance of your function, and what levers to pull if there is a problem.

Be careful to set realistic measures that will help you to manage and assess your strategy. Bear in mind a variation of the happiness formula is the success formula: success is achieved when results meet or exceed expectations.

Success is rarely defined by one measure. To deliver a successful early talent strategy you will have multiple targets to aim for. You can develop these measures and targets through using a *theory of change* approach and manage them through a *balanced scorecard*. Ultimately it is important to produce some kind of summary that you can use to *communicate your value*.

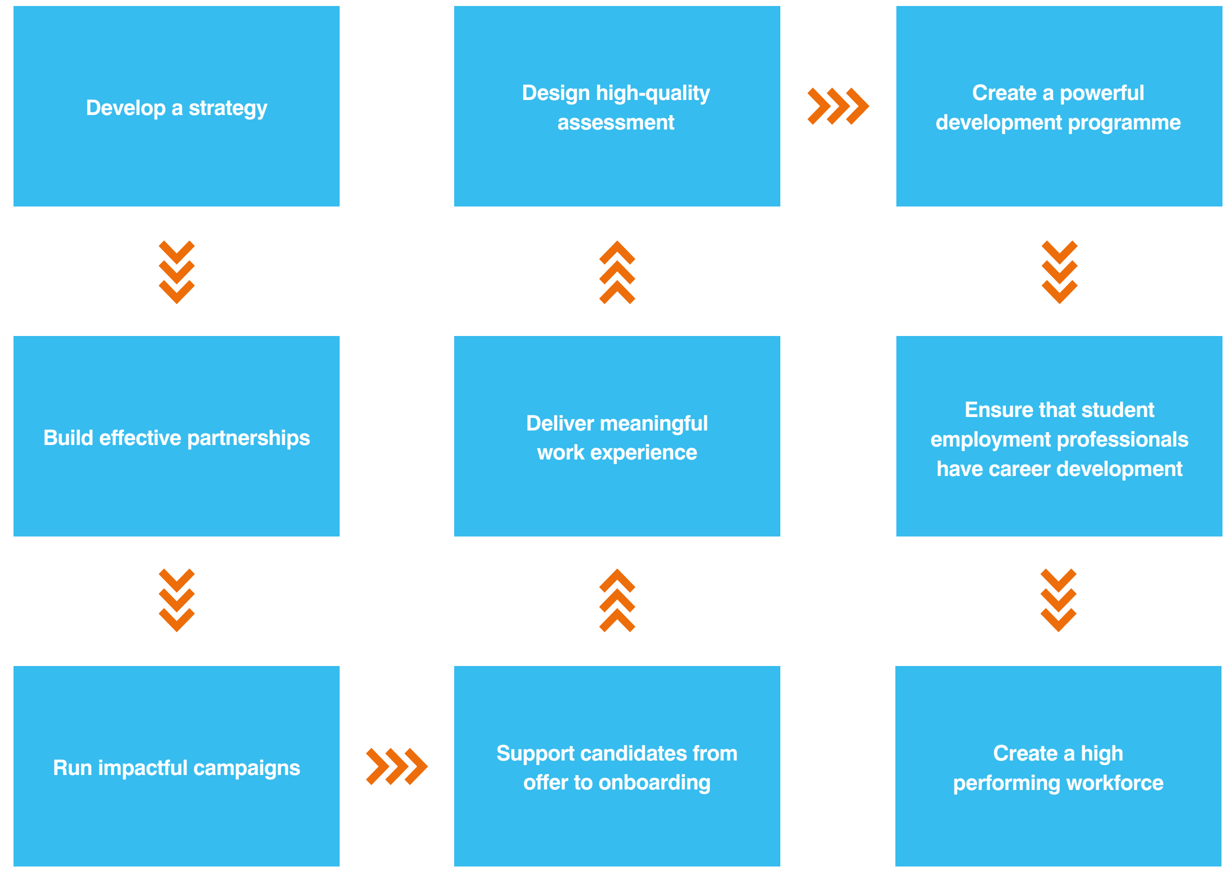
Theory of change

The most important thing to do in any evaluation is to thinking about what you are doing, how you are doing it and what you hope will happen as a result. The whole of this chapter has been devoted to these tasks, but when you start to think about evaluation and measurement you will need to set this down in a way that you can measure and report against. To do this we are going to introduce you to a key tool that evaluators use called a 'theory of change'.

A theory of change is an approach that you can use to think about the relationship between what you are doing (the inputs) and what happens as a result of this (the outputs or outcomes). Building a theory of change is about thinking through what all the intervening stages are. It is usually shown as a diagram. We can illustrate this by creating a simple theory of change for an aspect of your early talent programme (in this case improving retention).

Creating this kind of theory of change is about thinking through what steps are involved in achieving your strategic aims. As you develop more complex and integrated strategies your theories of change are likely to become more complex. But no matter how complex the thing you are evaluating is, a theory of change should still try and capture the main steps that bring about your ultimate aim.

The structure of this book is basically a theory of change for student employment as a whole.



It is important to start with a strong theory because it helps you to think about what you are trying to do and therefore about what you are evaluating against. Once you have this you can think about what data you have available, what you could start collecting and how you could measure each of the stages in your theory of change.

Building a theory of change can be challenging. It is likely to be something that you continue to develop and iterate as you learn more and think about your programme and what you are trying to achieve. But even if it changes it is still critical to define your theory of change if you want to evaluate your programme. A theory of change creates a road map for what you are trying to do and allows you to see if you are on track.

Balanced scorecard

A balanced scorecard is another tool that you can use to structure your evaluation activities. It is a useful operational tool which allows you to measure performance against a number of objectives and manage the interactions between these different objectives.

Balanced scorecard

Strategic focus - Where do you want t make a difference	Mission - What do you want to achieve	Objectives - How are you going to do it	Measures - How will you know it is working	RAG status - Red, amber or green
Attraction				
Selection & assessment				
Onboarding and induction				
Performance				
Employer brand				

When combined with a RAG status, your balanced scorecard will help you identify where you need to focus your energies and spot problems in the making. It is also a tool to help you communicate with your stakeholders and manage performance in your team, with suppliers and with the business.

Communicating your impact

Evaluation is part of strategy development and the management of projects and activities. As a leader and manager you want to know what is working and what is not. But evaluation should also give you a tool to interact with the rest of the organisation and indeed to raise your and your organisation's profile more widely. Evaluation is not just about knowing what works, it is also about telling other people so that they realise that you are doing a good job and that your activities are having a real impact on the business.

Because you want to communicate your impact it is important that your evaluation activities produce some kind of report or output. This might be a very brief summary of what you have found and the recommendations that you have generated in response to it. It could be a set of slides for a presentation. Or it could be a detailed report. However you decide to report, it is important that you spend some time working through your evaluation data and thinking about what it all means. Producing a report provides a focus to your work and forces you to finish your analysis and put it together in a meaningful way.

When you are thinking about how to report on the work that you have done you should work through the following questions.

- **Who is this for?** If you are going to write up what you have done you need to start by thinking about who you are talking to. Is this just for you and your boss or do you think that the CEO should see this? Is this something that your might present at an ISE conference or use as the basis of an ISE Award? Putting yourself in the place of your reader will immediately make you a much better writer.
- **What do you have to say?** A report should not just be about writing down everything that you've found out through your evaluation. You will always have a lot more information than you should put in a report. Focus on the big findings and the things that will be most meaningful to your audience.
- **What are you trying to achieve?** You are writing a report for a reason. Maybe you want the Head of HR to agree to start recruiting school and college leavers. Perhaps you want more resources to improve your programme. Or maybe you just want to convince everyone that you are doing a good job. Think about your rationales for reporting and use these to inform the way that you write it up.
- **How are you going to say it?** There are lots of different ways to produce a report. It could be a one page infographic or an 100 page report. You should think about these questions of genre and format before you start writing. In general, less is more and you should try and report as concisely as possible.
- **How are you going to share this?** Writing a report is only the starting point. If you just attach it to an email and send it round the department it will probably be ignored. So where are you going to present it? Who are you going to schedule meetings with to discuss it? And how can you maximise its impact?

Finally, remember that most people don't read reports in full. The overwhelming majority of people will only read a couple of pages or even a few bullet points. Therefore, if you produce any report that is over four pages long make sure that you include a one to two page executive summary and a one to two paragraph abstract.

Planning for the unplanned

"Events dear boy, events", said former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan when asked what his biggest problem was. Your strategy will unravel if you have not built in the ability to deal with an unexpected turn of events. Avoid trying to eliminate risk by rigidly locking yourself to a long-term goals and plans.

ISE CEO Stephen Isherwood once found out via the radio that his team had to radically rethink their strategy. "Driving to work one morning listening to the business headlines I heard that the company I worked for was now 'in-play'. That very day our recruitment strategy, including a brand new, just about to be launched, internship programme, was scrapped. Our attention now had to focus on retention of the graduates on the programme and giving them the development to survive a fevered period of takeover speculation and eventual merger. But we were still making sure the business made the best use of its graduate intake."

A good strategic plan can be flexed and evolve as circumstances change. Don't be afraid to revisit and revise your goals should the need arise. Covid-19 may well have changed how you operate and could have forced you to change your goals. For some, the pandemic exposed weaknesses in their strategies, perhaps a lack of vision. But if your mission and vision statements are crafted properly, they should still hold true and act to guide your responses to new circumstances.

In conclusion

In this chapter we have explored why it is important you have a clear early talent strategy that meets the needs of your organisation. We have demonstrated how your strategy can, and should, draw together attraction, selection and development into a single coherent approach. We have explained how to structure your strategic thinking and build a new strategy or adapt an existing one.

The most prestigious of our annual awards, and the hardest to win, are the 'Best School Leaver/Apprenticeship Strategy' and 'Best Overall Emerging Talent Strategy' awards. The winners align recruitment and development strategies to fully meet their emerging talent needs. The judges reward strategies that build attraction, recruitment, onboarding and development into a successful overarching strategy; those employers who deliver excellence in early career workforce planning, management and execution.

Resources

ISE resources

ISE's website *(https://ise.org.uk/)* provides you with a huge array of resources that can support strategy. **ISE Knowledge Hub** *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* also has a lot of discussion of strategic issues, particularly in the sector and policy section *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/category/policy/)* which focuses on the big picture issues that are affecting the field. You may also want to download research reports and data from *https://ise.org.uk/page/ISEPublications*

Other resources

If your strategic planning leads you to needing to engage more deeply with apprenticeships, you should have a look at the employer section of the **Apprenticeship** website (https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers). This contains lots of information and employer guides about how to recruit, train and manage apprentices as

M&S
Emerging talent strategy

Case study

ISE AWARDS WINNER

To consolidate its rapid digital transformation in recent years, M&S has made major changes to its strategy for hiring apprentices, interns and graduates – with the aim of developing early talent with leadership skills and bolder commercial vision.

M&S won the ISE Award for Best Emerging Talent Strategy. This was based on its innovative development of a new and more relevant internal emerging talent experience – one that guarantees candidates' expectations meet reality upon joining the business.

CEO Steve Rowe, the HR Leadership and Recruitment teams, and employer branding agency, Radancy, all worked together to conduct research including feedback from the current early careers cohort. M&S then built its strategy upon the crucial points raised by the group.

The strategy's objectives were to:

> deliver on promises made in attraction campaigns to improve retention
> attract candidates from a broader range of degree disciplines to improve diversity of thought
> prevent silos forming amongst graduates on different programmes and give everyone a broader understanding of the business
> remove internal barriers to progression for early careers colleagues

To invite applications from a diversity of degrees supporting specialist skills, M&S redesigned a set of core programmes – such as 'Food Technology', 'Design' and 'Retail'. The brand-new 'Enterprise Programme' was launched to attract 'a new breed of entrepreneurial change agents'.

Additionally, M&S required the whole early careers intake to understand its company-wide vision. So, each individual was given a development manager who supported them in rotating throughout relevant departments. This reduced silos from forming amongst graduates, creating a unified culture.

Across the business, team leaders and senior leadership also received training in tactics they could use to open doors for hard-working early careers colleagues.

With the infrastructure in place, the external strategy centred on 'The Future Needs…' attraction campaign. Designed to appeal to the UK's most ambitious students, it utilised highly disruptive content across social media and beyond.

A smart, UX-driven early careers website matched candidates to programmes. Escape room-inspired assessment tools preceded interviews. And candidates even chatted to current M&S graduates via the website's WhatsApp feature.

Consequently, the appeal, hiring processes and internal programmes at M&S have improved for emerging talent. M&S received over 10,000 applications in 2018 alone and have since hired 20 Enterprise graduates.

Head of M&S Food Online, Sam Hornsby, sums up: "The calibre of early talent has been top-class. All of them have landed well and played big parts in really important initiatives."

well as information about incentives. There is also further information on gov.uk about **Employing an apprentice** (https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice).

The **Chartered Managers Institute** (https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/) offers a range of resources through their insight hub that might be useful to support strategic thinking. We would particularly recommend their guide to stakeholder analysis and management (https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/resource/stakeholder-analysis-and-management/).

If you want access to key data there is a range of official sources you can turn to. The **Department for Education** provides a statistics portal (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics) with a wide range of useful resources including data on apprenticeships (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships). While the **Higher Education Statistics Agency** (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis) provides detailed information on the student and graduate populations. Data collected by HESA is used to create *What do graduates do?* (https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/what-do-graduates-do) which is an annual report on the destinations of graduates.

There is also a range of excellent books that can support you to think more strategically. Jo Owen's ***How to lead*** discusses effective leadership. The latest edition was published in 2018 by Pearson. Michael Watkins' ***The First 90 Days*** is another good book for people just moving up into management and leadership roles. The latest edition was published in 2013 by the Harvard Business Review.

We also touched on the idea of theories of change in this chapter. If you are interested in finding out more about this then the **Centre for Theory of Change** (https://www.theoryofchange.org/) has some useful resources

Chapter 3

Building effective partnerships

Partnerships are at the heart of success in early talent recruitment and development. To transition students through education and into work requires employers, educators and suppliers to work together. There is no way that you can go it alone.

The most effective partnerships ensure that employers find the talent they seek and help students to develop their skills and knowledge for employment. Partnerships can help employers work with schools, tackle diversity issues, strengthen academic links, build efficient selection processes and create brilliant development programmes.

The concept of a partnership suggests a relationship beyond a simple transaction. One where both sides get equal value, and one where there are shared goals and positive outcomes for everyone. It can be the case that the relationship develops gradually – what begins as a simple transactional arrangement grows into something deeper. Or it may be that you set out to actively build a partnership with another organisation or group of organisations. Either way, finding the right partner, managing the relationship and balancing what you both get out of the relationship takes time and effort.

In the context of early talent, your partners are most likely to be suppliers, educational institutions and other employers. Often your strategy might be supported by all three. It is likely that you will have commercial and contractual arrangements with your suppliers, but that doesn't stop you thinking about them as partners.

Whatever type of organisation they are, there are some key principles to consider when thinking about how partners will fit in with your strategy.
- Build trust by doing the small things first.
- Share the strategy and find the common ground/synergy in the middle.
- Play the long game, sacrifice the immediate if you need to.
- Give a bit, don't just take.
- Have a smaller number of deeper relationships; ditch the wide and shallow approach.
- There's no substitute for putting effort in.
- The best partners are not always in the most obvious place.
- Don't throw a partnership away lightly.

Getting started

Partnerships do not just happen by magic. They take some effort to put together and decide what they are for. Early on you can be aware of other individuals or organisations that it would be good to work with, but you need to do more to turn these casual associations into a partnership. In this section we are going to look at why you should partner at all, the different kinds of partnerships that you could form and how you select who to partner with.

Why partner at all?

Elsewhere in *The Complete Guide to Student Recruitment and Development* you will find chapters looking at developing your strategy (*Chapter 2*), the mechanics of marketing, attraction (*Chapter 4*), selection, assessment (*Chapter 5*) and development (*Chapter 8*) of early talent. There is much to do, and to do it well takes a lot of resources – either budget or people. There are several reasons why you might want a partner at some point in that journey:

- **Expertise** You might not have the expertise you need in-house.
- **Reach** A partner might be able to increase the reach of your activities.
- **Efficiency** It may cost less to work with a partner than to try and do it yourself.
- **Creativity** You might want a spark, an insight or to be challenged to consider a new approach.

Once you have recognised the need for external support you can work towards finding the most appropriate people and organisations to work with. As part of this you will need to figure out whether this partnership needs to involve a paid relationship or whether it should be on some other basis.

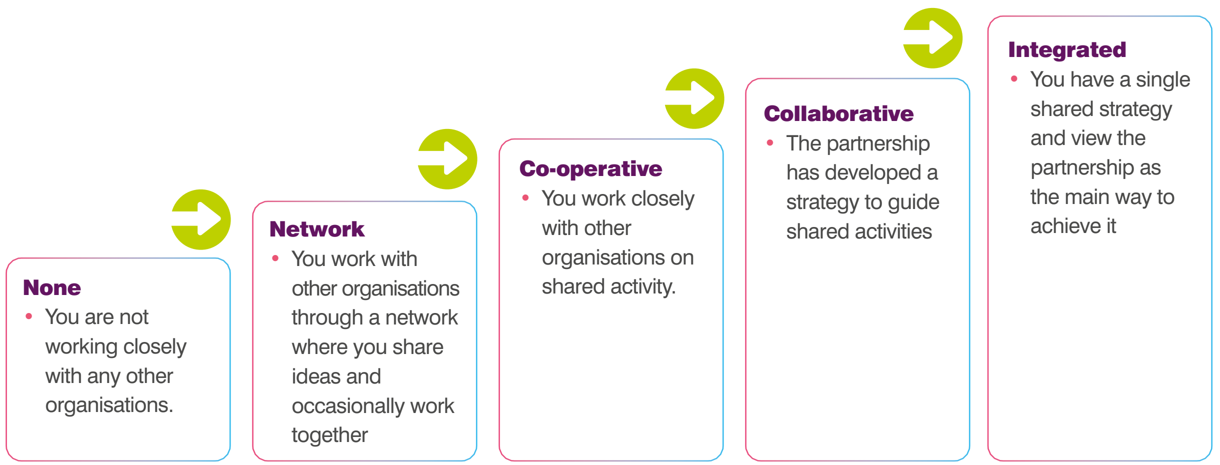
Different kinds of partnerships

Partnerships can take a wide range of different forms. At one end of the scale a partnership can be a very loose informal agreement to work together whenever it seems useful. At the other end of the scale, you might formalise the partnership with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or contract.

Regardless of how formal your partnership is and how many partners are involved, all partnerships need to address the following issues:

- **Purpose**. Why are you partnering? What is it you are trying to achieve? Do all of the partners have the same purpose or are your purposes complementary or in tension? All partners don't have to want the same thing from the partnership, but it is important to understand one another's motivations. Talking through the purpose of the partnership at the start is important.
- **Scale**. Although partnerships are often formed between two organisations, they can potentially be between three, four or even more organisations. Large and complex consortia can achieve much more than a single organisation, but they can also often be challenging to manage and maintain. Typically, you should aim to have as few organisations involved in your partnership as you need to get the job done.
- **Degree**. How closely are you partnering? This will help to shape how you are going to manage the partnership by clarifying things like how often you are going to meet, where you need to consult with each other to make decisions and who has responsibility for what.
- **Duration**. Not all partnerships need to last forever. You should think about whether you are partnering for a month, a year or for the long term. Even if you decide to build long-term partnerships you should still ensure that you create regular review points for your partnership.

It is possible to view different types of partnership as a staircase. They may develop from shallower and less formal partnerships into deeper more formal ones over time. This does not mean that the aim is to make partnerships more and more formal. In many cases a loose partnership will be fine. The aim should be to align the purpose of the partnership with its form and to develop partnerships that are fit for purpose.



During the lifetime of any partnership you may find that you move up and down this staircase depending on the context, your capacity and the issues that you are dealing with at the time.

Finding the right partners

The starting point is to have an honest and clear aim for the partnership. Stating the desired outcome at the starting point will allow you to shape the initial conversations in a way that will ultimately deliver the goals. Step back from the transactional noise that is always present in the cycle of recruitment and development and find the space to work through your requirements. Good questions to ask are:

- What is our organisational strategy?
- Why do we have an early talent programme? and ultimately
- What is the point of partnering?

It is far less about the team at this point and much more about aligning with wider organisational goals. If you know whether your early talent strategy is about future leaders, or bringing in a new creative spark, or needing to respond to a particular challenge such as diversity, then you understand what problems the partner(s) need to solve.

Once you have the purpose you need to scan the market to see what potential partners are out there. You will probably find a mix of organisations that you could pay (suppliers) and those for whom the partnership will be based more on mutual interest than on money. This might include other employers, education providers and networks like ISE. While it is always appealing to create partnerships that don't require money, it is important to remember that all partnerships require some resource. Even if no money changes hands you will be spending time, making use of your employer brand and experiencing the opportunity costs that come with any activity. You will need a process to evaluate potential partners and consider what they have to offer.

If you are engaging a supplier partner you are likely to have a procurement approach in your organisation that sets out how you should do this. The LinkedIn Learning resource on procurement at the end of this chapter provides you with some more detail on good practice in procurement if you are new to it. But if you are engaging a partner on another basis, e.g. deciding what schools or universities to work with, you should still have a process to check them and decide whether they are right for you. It can be good to look around for alternatives and create a shortlist, rather than just going with the first person that you meet. Key things to do in relation to any partner include the following:

- Read up on them to help you understand what they do and check whether they have any skeletons in their closet. A Google search will often reveal a lot!
- Use your network of peers to find out what the organisation is like to work with. You will find that most employers in the ISE network are willing to share experiences.
- Clarify what they are bringing to the partnership (e.g. data, access to key populations, knowledge and expertise) and whether their purpose aligns with yours.
- Ask for evidence for their claims about what they can do, e.g. don't accept at face value that they reach x universities or have a 'large number' of BAME (black and minority ethnic) students.

Case study

NGDP
Coaching Programme with Gradcore

The Local Government Association (LGA) is committed to diversity and inclusion and has recently refreshed the whole recruitment process with a specific focus on improving the overall diversity of the cohort it recruits to its National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP).

This work was commissioned following an extensive internal review of every stage of the process – but there was still more that could be done.

In the pandemic-affected economy, the graduate job market was always going to bear the brunt of the blow – some organisations pausing their recruitment or stopping it entirely, reducing their opportunities to enter the labour market.

The research from The Sutton Trust, looking into the effect of the pandemic on social mobility, suggests that this scarcity of opportunity only serves to exacerbate existing disadvantages felt by graduates from diverse backgrounds.

This would mean increased competition for places on the popular graduate schemes, with NGDP this year receiving more than 9,000 applications.

Working with the award-winning social enterprise Gradcore, the team looked to provide additional support to candidates who are disadvantaged by recruitment processes, focusing specifically on graduates of Black or Asian Heritage, disabled or those who are the first in their family to go to university.

The cohort was invited to complete a diagnostic and sentiment analysis, identifying their current confidence levels and their prior experience of assessment centres. This analysis also helped identify their personal support needs and highlighted any challenges they felt about their forthcoming assessment.

The support was then shaped around the NGDP leadership behaviours sought by the assessment centre, offering the candidates a blend of immersive mock assessment experiences, one-to-one coaching calls and supporting resources – specific to the assessments they would encounter.

The mainstay of the support was delivered during twilight hours, as typically graduates from more diverse backgrounds have many other commitments or are less likely to have dedicated spaces to work or study at home, especially during the traditional working day.

Coaches were carefully selected to be experts in public sector recruitment as well as having extensive experience in higher education and working with students and graduates from diverse backgrounds. It was important to have coaches that reflected the diversity of the candidates they were serving. This was to enable the participants to feel comfortable and confident they were in a safe space to learn and develop.

Each participant received personalised exercise reports containing their indicative scores, their own post-assessment reflections as well as developmental feedback from the coaches to help them succeed in their forthcoming assessments. The workshops received near 100% attendance, all of whom would recommend the experience to a friend. The feedback from graduates has been truly humbling:

"Often times, if this wasn't available, I would just go in blind. I would probably scramble a bit and it would probably hinder my performance. But now, after this experience I know that I can be confident and that will make me so much better in the assessments, and hopefully a much better candidate"

"This was an amazing experience, a new challenging scenario with people you haven't met before – which is exactly what will happen in the real thing apparently – so this was absolutely invaluable to me personally"

gradcore.co.uk

- Meet with them and check that you will be able to work with them. Just like bringing a new individual into a team, ‘fit’ is important. Can you work with them?
- Map out the cultural values of the organisations on the shortlist to find the right mix. In an initial meeting ask if they understand your culture – will they take the time to learn and understand, are they showing an interest in the values of your business?

As you assess possible partners and partnerships you should ask yourself whether this is the right approach. If you just want someone to provide you with some additional resource or short-term advice you want a supplier not a partner. Partnerships are typically more long term and involve a greater level of give and take. Your partner should actively want to influence the outcomes of the partnership and be willing to be adaptable along the way.

Crucially, when assessing take the long-term view. Have more than one meeting. Invest in the right combination of hard and soft criteria and don’t come at it from a cost-first perspective – you will miss out on the added value that grows over time. Price is not always a win.

Finally, throughout the process ensure there is mutual respect, even for those organisations that do not make the final cut. Before the deal is signed, ensure you have had a conversation about responsibility. Creating a short memorandum of understanding (MOU), essentially a document setting out everyone’s expectations, can help. Just writing a short outline of the agreed way of working can be a useful exercise to uncover any misconceptions. Ideally build in a framework of accountability to ensure expectations are matched – it will help if things go awry.

Managing partner relationships

We’ve all been there. You sign up to something and after an initial flurry of activity and interest, the focus wanes. You ignore a phone call or two, delete an email and before you know it you’re saying that you can’t see the value in this particular relationship and you’re hankering after something new. However, taking a more long-term approach to partnerships means that we have a duty to nurture the relationship even in the fallow times. Given how cyclical the nature of early talent recruitment is, it is likely that there will be a point in the year when you are more engaged in working with your partners and others when you have no reason to see them. But you need to keep an eye on the bigger picture throughout the year and make sure that you keep the partnership alive even when you don’t have an immediate need for it. This will ultimately build a relationship that will offer your organisation a lot more value.

That said, it can also be good practice to build trust slowly, gradually moving up that staircase of partnership that we discussed earlier. Start with a light touch and build up to the big stuff. With a university, that might be attending an event; with a supplier that might be a scoping exercise. The key points throughout the relationship are to listen, deliver and review. As you build and evolve the partnership over the longer term you should keep an eye on measuring the return on investment to ensure you are getting tangible results.

Have a plan for engagement over the year and look for points of engagement that add value but do not necessarily take extra time or money. Find opportunities for co-creation and collaboration - your partner may have considerable expertise in areas that are not immediately obvious. For example, many universities have incubation hubs for innovative new start-ups and many of your suppliers might have excellent social media skills.

Regular communication is essential. A conversation over the phone can be worth dozens of emails. In a healthy productive partnership you should feel you can pick up the phone to discuss any relevant aspect of your business or strategy. And do not forget to include your partners in any updates to your strategy. All the work that went in at the start of the relationship to clarify your purpose is wasted if they are not kept up to date.

Managing up and down the line is also important. Senior leaders should be briefed on the context and nature of the partnership so that they can understand the full value. Results might not appear in the first year, particularly for challenges such as increasing the diversity of hires. If junior members of the team are taking the HEI targeting decisions, it might be easy to dismiss the investment made in year one as a waste of time and move on to another university. It might also be the case that they move on to another role and take the relationship with them.

Finally, a note on international partnerships. Building trust across borders may be more difficult, and results are often less immediate. You will find yourself needing to make some judgement calls and taking some risks early on to kickstart a productive relationship.

Ending a partnership

Inevitably there will come a time when walking away from a partnership is the most sensible thing to do. It might be that an interim review reveals gaps in delivery, it might be that the initial term of agreement has come to an end and there is no longer any common ground on which to continue. Everything has to end at some point and if this is well managed it does not have to be a problem.

In some cases, you will be considering ending a partnership because something significant and seemingly irrecoverable has gone wrong. Before you walk away it is worth thinking about whether you could do anything to salvage the partnership. It is usually a good idea to take the emotions out of it and allow some cooling-off time before making any major decisions. Good communication is important when things go wrong or circumstances change. Make sure the reasons why the decisions have been made are understood. When things go wrong, be honest, recognise where things could be better and use expertise to fix them. Sometimes it makes a big difference if you say sorry and rectify what has gone wrong. Arguing about whose fault something was is rarely helpful. Ultimately you need to respect the differences within the partnership and try not to take it personally if partners walk away.

Sometimes things can be brought back around by improving your communication. It is always a good idea to check that there are no language barriers. This is obviously an issue when you are working across borders, but it is also an issue when you are working with different types of institution. It is well recognised that business and education communicate in a different vernacular at times so be sure the problems aren’t down to misunderstandings.

Finally, if you have to agree to disagree do it fairly and professionally. It is a small industry – you are very likely to bump into the same people in another context, so don’t burn your bridges.

Different types of partners

All of the principles and approaches that we have discussed so far are relevant for all of the different partners that you might work with. But of course there are some important differences between different types of partners. In this section we are going to focus on the main types of partners that you might want to work with and think through what some of the issues might be.

Suppliers

ISE supplier members cover a vast range of services, from full applicant tracking system solutions to supporting social mobility. They are all experts in their field, but if you are new to early talent it can be a daunting task to navigate your way through. Depending on your internal organisational protocols, if you are looking to enter a commercial arrangement you may have a defined tender process. However, sometimes the most productive partnerships start with a chance meeting in a networking environment. Often this is because you are talking to the right person at the right time, you have a problem to solve, and they know just how to do it.

Spare a thought for other suppliers who might not know when the right time is for you. If you are approached at a point that is not that helpful in your recruitment or development cycle, taking the time to ask some key questions could prove fruitful down the line.

- **What is the nature of their product/service?** If you don't understand the details, ask more questions.
- **How long have they been operating?** Start-ups can be exciting, they may be using new technology to solve old problems, but understanding where they are in the evolution of their business will help you shape an idea of whether they might be a good fit to work with.
- **What other clients are they working with?** You might be comforted to know if they are working with others in your sector, or you might prefer to be first to the table.
- **What regions or demographics do they cover?** Are they going to be a good fit for your business – and are they willing to stretch into new areas for the right partner?

Asking questions is important, but so is giving information. Let them know when you might be open to a future discussion, or if you'll be willing to 'keep warm' the relationship. Explain the direction of travel for your strategy – what the challenges are that you're trying to solve. You don't need to hand over commercially sensitive information but do remember the 'give and take'.

Apprenticeship training providers

In the world of early talent recruitment there are several key partnerships that are critical to success and apprenticeship providers are one of these. An apprenticeship training provider is an organisation that delivers education and training programmes to apprentices. They can take a wide range of different forms from small local providers specialising in a particular type of training, to big national providers, to further education (FE) colleges and universities. There is a link to the government's guidance to choosing a training provider at the end of this chapter; from here you can access the 'find apprenticeship training service' as well.

Before you start procuring an apprenticeship provider you need to think about the apprenticeship standard (in England) or framework (in the other UK nations) that you want to use. An apprenticeship standard is a description of what an apprenticeship should cover and there will probably be one that is focused on the job that you need an apprentice for. The government's *hire an apprentice* site is really useful (see the resources at the end of this chapter).

If you just starting with apprenticeships, the procurement process for an apprenticeship training provider can be complex, especially if you do not have the experience and knowledge in-house. Bringing in an apprenticeship expert to guide you through these initial stages will help you make the right decisions and save you time and money.

During your procurement you need to do your due diligence and use your network and the ISE community to find out about potential providers. Apprenticeships can be delivered by a wide range of different providers. These include large and small organisations and national, regional and local providers. It also includes independent training providers, further education colleges and universities. Each provider is likely to be different and it is useful to talk to them about what they can offer, in what area and to think about their culture and ethos and whether it fits with yours.

Use the *Register of apprenticeship training providers* (see the resources at the end of the chapter) to look into the track record of different providers. You should particularly pay attention to their completion rates (what proportion of their learners finish their apprenticeship) and their Ofsted reports (which provide an external quality assessment of their provision).

Even if your programme is small, or you have limited resources, run a mini procurement exercise: ask the providers that you have contacted to give you a business case and a proposal, beyond the standard offer, to more closely support you and help you understand the regulatory landscape. Each apprenticeship is based on an apprenticeship standard or framework which says what needs to be covered in the programme, but there is still the possibility to develop bespoke elements for programmes that particularly fit your needs. If you have a cohort of ten or more apprentices you may find that you can run your own apprenticeship with the provider rather than participating in a broader programme with other employers.

You may have to choose between finding a provider than can work across the whole of your needs (delivering across multiple standards or frameworks and across your different sites) or one that is more specialist. Depending on the size and geographical coverage of your organisation and the diversity of the apprenticeships that you need, you may find that you are working with multiple providers. While, in general, it is easier to manage fewer providers, in many cases it will be necessary to work with a number of different training providers. This is particularly the case if you are recruiting apprentices in more than one UK nation as the apprenticeship systems are different. Once you have got a provider on board they should be a fount of knowledge that you can tap into about all things related to apprenticeships. They may be able to help you to develop your apprenticeship strategy, understand how to spend your levy, how to target and attract candidates, assess the capabilities of school leavers, and manage apprentices. Working with a provider that has a structured account management process will make things easier.

Consider how much internal engagement within the business you need to do, and whether you want your partner to lead or assist you on this. Some examples of internal engagement activities might be to:

- identify key stakeholder groups
- create a strategy and a document detailing the organisation-wide benefits of working with this partner
- champion apprenticeships to different divisions, increasing their appetite to take on apprentices
- talk to line managers to dispel myths and increase understanding about the level of support needed, and
- break down the barriers that people identify to taking on apprentices. For example, by helping to find solutions about how the organisation can deal with the 20% off-the-job times required as part of apprenticeship training.

Schools

A growing number of businesses have decided that there are strong reasons for engaging with schools. These include corporate social responsibility and taking a long-term view of candidate relationship management (see *Chapter 4*). But there are over 4,000 secondary schools across the UK and they are notoriously difficult to engage with. So, how do you build a partnership with a school?

All schools have a statutory requirement to deliver 'career guidance'. In practice this is interpreted as meaning that they have to meet the *Gatsby Benchmarks* which are a list of eight benchmarks for good careers guidance that schools have to meet in their careers programmes. This includes a requirement to provide 'meaningful encounters with employers' and 'experiences of the workplace'. So, this gives schools a strong reason to want to talk to employers, but the careers agenda is still a small part of what they do.

All schools in England should have a Careers Leader who will be your main point of contact for anything do with careers. Their details should be available on the school's website. Schools in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland operate in a slightly different way, but there should still be a key point of contact in each school. If in doubt approach the head teacher (although they are likely to be busier and so more difficult to work with).

Your key question should be '*How can I build this school into my outreach and recruitment activities without involving extra work for them?*' Firstly, look at their strategy and think about how what you do could support this. All schools are different, they have different demographics, targets and foci. Statutory guidance requires that schools post their careers programme, and contacts for the careers leader, on their website, so this is a good place to start.

Teachers are often firefighting, so they need to want to work with you. Remember, what schools want is not necessarily what you want to deliver. Take the burden off them and produce materials to help them save time and they will be more likely to want to give you access and recommend your business or initiative to their students. And reassure them that you are in it for the long term. Your strategy may well be loss-making during the first couple of years so if you approach it as a quick fix you are unlikely to succeed.

Some key points to consider:

- Translate your industry language (jargon!) into plain English. Do not expect the teachers to understand your terminology.
- For younger year groups it is more important to talk about your sector, profession and importance of thinking about a career than it is to focus on recruitment.
- School will be nervous about what they perceive as 'hard sell' recruitment.
- Consider when it is best for you to engage. Schools and young people will not necessarily be working to the same cycle as you. Talk to the school to make sure that you get it right.

If approaching schools directly seems daunting, a good place to start is with *The Careers & Enterprise Company* which is a national organisation that oversees careers provision in schools and colleges. The Careers & Enterprise Company maintains a series of Careers Hubs across the country that can be a good place to start. It is also worth considering building partnerships with other employers to help you to engage with more schools collectively. Another option is to search the directory of the *Association of Education Business Professionals* to find intermediaries to partner with (see the resources at the end of this chapter).

Sometimes, unlike other partnerships, when a relationship goes badly with a school it is likely to result in unresponsiveness. Teachers may not have the time or inclination to engage with you and may just have moved on to something easier.

Colleges

Further Education Colleges can often get overlooked in engagement strategies. Of the 244 colleges in England, 168 are further education general colleges, offering a range of vocational and academic programmes, including apprenticeships. Many students at the 51 sixth form colleges will be looking to progress to university. In total, 137,000 students at colleges are studying higher education, so they are a rich ground for early talent. In fact, according to an Association of Colleges study, 68% of employers viewed college leavers as well prepared for work.

Some of the principles of working with colleges are the same as for schools. However, they are more likely to have a dedicated careers person/team as a point of engagement. The vocational nature of some of the education that takes place in colleges is also likely to mean a more structured way of working with employers. But there is still a need to be clear about goals and to be able to articulate those in ways that careers leaders and tutors will understand. Why is your organisation/your strategy/your talent requirement different to another employer's?

The wide range of levels of courses at colleges can mean engagement at T Level, apprenticeship at multiple levels, and A Level. Obvious opportunities are experiences of work to support the qualifications, but even if these aren't right for your business, engagement with the students on skills and career pathways will be welcomed by the careers team and tutors alike.

The larger colleges are complex organisations with considerable influence at a local and regional level, and in the same way as for universities (below), there may be multiple ways to engage in a strategic way. Be open-minded and prepared for collaborative conversations.

Universities

Partnerships with universities, like all relationships, work best when you are clear on what you are looking for and the university is clear on what it can offer. Explain why you want to engage and be ready for suggestions as to the most effective approach.

While it would make life easy if all universities and all university careers departments were structured in the same way, this is far from the case. Universities are highly complex organisations. You may be dealing with different departments or directorates inside and outside the careers service. Use the careers service as an initial way into the institution and encourage them to broker introductions to other key contacts. Ultimately you may need a multi-relationship approach with the institutions that you partner closely with. For example, talking to the regional engagement team about a local skills agenda, the business engagement team about knowledge exchange or enterprise, the student recruitment department about your social mobility or widening participation (WP) agenda, the careers service about recruitment and employability – taking time to understand this will make communications easier. Support your relationship by offering to present to the wider team, including non-engagement staff, so that everyone understands your goals. This is particularly important if the strategy changes over the course of your partnership.

Consider opportunities that will benefit your wider business and work together to help facilitate them. For example, engaging with the public affairs team may support your business's policy work. Find out more about how the university is developing their future strategy – there might be synergies that are not immediately obvious that could both deepen and broaden the relationship. Working with the Careers Service to help map the internal landscape of the university and identify key senior staff to target is a useful exercise. Another opportunity often overlooked is working directly with the Students Union – a place where many students develop key employability skills.

Some of the most effective tactics that employers can use in combination with the above to fulfil their strategic needs are:
- skills workshops
- employer talks
- internships/shadowing programmes.

Finding the right combination for your needs between quality of conversations and volume of interactions is key.

Invite the careers team to assessment centres and insight days, as well as into the office. You want them to really get to grips with who you are, how you operate and what their students can expect. Their perceptions of the industry may not match the reality, no matter how many times you've been to a careers fair or presented to students before forming your partnership. Take the time to engage and it will be repaid many times over.

Finally, consider joint activity with multiple universities within one region. It may well save you time and money, and you may be surprised how open universities are to this approach.

University of Lincoln

Employer partnerships

Case study

Careers & Employability University of Lincoln

At the University of Lincoln Careers and Employability Service, working collaboratively with employer partners is key to its supportive and engaging service. At the centre of the employer offer is a flexible and innovative approach to student and graduate talent access. The small and friendly team is constantly evolving and sharing inspiration with employers.

With a wealth of experience, the university is passionate in facilitating relationships between employer partners and students and alumni, at no cost to the employer. Its CareerLinc vacancy platform enables the free advertising of employment and developmental opportunities to the university's student and graduate population.

To encourage business growth, the university supports employers to inject fresh ideas or specialist skills through the recruitment of recent graduates. Its internship programme, available to any sized business across the UK, supports employers financially via funding and delivers a quality, tailored package removing barriers to recruitment. Many graduate interns quickly prove themselves to be invaluable and go on to be offered permanent roles with the company.

There are many events and activities employers can engage with across the academic year. The annual 'How to get a graduate job with...' event series provides the Guardian's 300 UK employers access to a captive audience of students and graduates keen to explore their career opportunities. The university organises, promotes and facilitates the series, engaging more than 1,000 students and graduates in the last academic year.

Further opportunities include collaborative working within its employability framework, The Lincoln Award. This award provides employers with the opportunity to feature in mock assessment centres and provides an invaluable opportunity to meet future talent. This is demonstrated by previous assessment centres, which resulted in job offers for students. Furthermore, the university's Find Your Feet Careers Fair is attended annually by many employer partners and attracts students and graduates across all disciplines seeking development opportunities.

Though the university has established many successful partnerships, its collaboration with Santander over recent years has generated significant interest around the company's early careers opportunities from the university's community.

Regularly taking part in the annual Find your Feet Careers Fair, 'How to get a graduate job with series...' and mock assessment centres has contributed to successfully raising Santander's profile and recruitment.

Current University of Lincoln student Naomi Ngondi was recently successful in securing a place on Santander's Black Inclusion programme, an opportunity that Naomi felt would be invaluable to her career development.

Commenting on its partnership with the university, Santander said, "We have worked with the University of Lincoln successfully over recent years. In 2020, despite the pandemic we were able to provide employment presentations and contribute to the Lincoln Award. The partnership between Santander and Lincoln continues to strengthen and we look forward to seeing what the students have to offer in 2021."

In raising the career aspirations of students and graduates, the university is continually seeking to build collaborative partnerships with employers.
uolcareers.co.uk/employers
careers@lincoln.ac.uk

Resources

ISE Resources

The **ISE website** *(https://ise.org.uk/)* has many resources that might be useful as you think about partnerships. Perhaps most importantly it can help you to connect to other people in the industry through events, WhatsApp is the main framework groups and other online opportunities.

ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* offers news and views from a wide range of potential partners. It includes regular articles discussing effective working with universities (e.g. *https://insights.ise.org.uk/policy/blog-how-effective-is-employer-and-university-engagement/)* and schools (e.g. *https://insights.ise.org.uk/apprentices-and-school-leaver/blog-5-ways-to-attract-school-students-virtually/*).

Other resources

For further information about apprenticeships start with **Choosing an apprenticeship provider** *(https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers/choose-training-provider)* which is a set of guidance from the government about how to choose a provider to work with. You can then move on to **Hire an apprentice** *(https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers/)* which is the government's main apprenticeship advice site for employers. You will also want to look at the **Register of apprenticeship training providers** *(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers)* as part of your evaluation of different training providers.

The Careers & Enterprise Company *(https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/)* is the national organisation supporting schools and colleges to deliver careers programmes. They have a range of programmes designed to connect employers to education. They have worked with the CBI to produce a useful guide to working with schools for employers *(https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/careers-enterprise-cbi-employers-guide-schools.pdf)*.

The **Association of Education Business Professionals** *(http://theaebp.co.uk/directory/)* gives you another route to find an intermediary who can help your organisation to work with schools and colleges.

The Gatsby Benchmarks *(https://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/)* is the main framework that schools and colleges use for their careers provision.

If you want to find out more about **further education colleges** then the Association of Colleges key facts document *(https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/AoC%20College%20Key%20Facts%202019-20.pdf)* is a good place to start.

LinkedIn Learning's course on **Procurement** *(https://www.linkedin.com/learning/project-management-foundations-procurement-2)* provides a very useful starting point for engaging with procurement issues.

Chapter 4

Running impactful campaigns

To find the right student talent you need to make sure that students know that your organisation exists. They also need to know what you do, who you are looking for and how to apply. Just as importantly they need to feel that you want them and that they will fit.

Your organisation's brand is the key to attraction. In this chapter we will make a distinction between your overall corporate brand, which describes how people see your organisation in general, and your employer brand which describes your culture and what it is like to work at your organisation. This employer brand is the foundation of everything that you do to appeal to early talent and should be at the heart of all your student recruitment campaigns.

This chapter will examine how you can think strategically about your campaign by building on your organisation's brand and insights from the market, and looks at some of the key techniques and approaches that you can use in your campaign.

Your brand is everything

> *Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room.*
> ***Jeff Bezos, Founder of Amazon***

Some organisations have amazingly strong brands. We all know that Coke is the real thing and that Nike just does it, but branding is about a lot more than having an eye-catching logo and a nice slogan. Branding is about how people think about your organisation, what they assume about you and expect from you. We might define a 'brand' as follows…

> *The set of physical attributes of a product or service, together with the beliefs and expectations surrounding it. It is a unique combination which the name or logo of the product or service should evoke in the mind of the audience. A brand name can create and stand for loyalty, trust, faith, premium-ness or mass-market appeal, depending on how the brand is marketed, advertised and promoted.*

Your organisation will already have spent time defining its purpose, values and mission and will have developed a brand that reflects and enhances these things. The *corporate brand* is likely to specify how your organisation should be represented (the tone of your marketing) and to set out things like your visual identity and the kind of language that you can use. The corporate brand will also include some thinking about how you relate to groups of stakeholders differently. Within this employees and prospective employees are an important group that your organisation's brand will address.

In thinking about how it relates to its employees and prospective employers, your organisation will develop an *employer value proposition (EVP)* which describes the unique set of benefits that employees receive in return for the skills, attributes and experience they bring. This articulates why the person you want to hire should want to work with you, rather than anyone else. Your employer brand describes how this EVP is communicated to your employees and prospective employees. This then informs the campaigns that your organisation runs both to improve employee engagement and to recruit new staff.

As someone involved in student recruitment you are unlikely to have much of a say about your organisation's overall brand, and you may not even have much influence over the employer value proposition or the employer brand. So, your target value proposition for students must align with your overall employer value proposition and any campaign work should use your visual identity and brand guidelines.

Brands and student recruitment campaigns

As we have already seen, your brand is critical in shaping students' perceptions of you and their desire to work for you. For example, your corporate brand might be that you are a centuries-old bank that is safe and reliable, your employer brand may be that you offer long-term, well rewarded stable employment for high quality people. Building on this, your student campaign could emphasise the opportunities that you can offer to students for a long-term career. The key is to align your campaign with the organisation's branding so that everything is working in harmony.

In the simplest cases there is strong brand recognition amongst students for an organisation. They know what it does and, in many cases, will have direct experience of its products. But many student employers are more complex and it may take more time and effort in your campaign to explain the relationship between the organisation and its brand. Clearly it can be more difficult to develop a clear student campaign if you have a weak or unfamiliar corporate or employer brand. There are many high quality, large-scale organisations that are invisible to end consumers.

There are two main strategies that complex organisations use in relation to branding. The first is known as the *branded house* strategy. In this approach the focus is on a single over-arching brand, with multiple sub-brands sitting underneath. For example, the BBC is a very strong over-arching brand, but underneath there are multiple sub-brands denoting different products and sub-sections of the organisation (BBC1, BBC2, BBC America and so on).

In contrast a *house of brands* draws together multiple brands, and it may not be apparent to the end user that they are linked. For example, Unilever has multiple brands within its 'house' including Magnum, Persil, Toni & Guy and Ben & Jerry's. For consumers each of these brands is more important than the over-arching house or corporate brand, but the corporate brand becomes much more important when you are developing an employer

brand as people will be working for the whole organisation rather than one of its products. From 2009 Unilever started putting its logo on consumer products to foster customer loyalty to the overarching company. This may also have had an impact on its employer value proposition as well as it raised the profile of Unilever itself rather than the various brands within its house.

It isn't important here to understand the various reasons why organisations develop different branding approaches. As a student marketing professional, you just need to be aware of these different approaches and be sure that your student campaigns align with your organisation's overall approach. In all cases you are trying to ensure that students have a good understanding of what your organisation does. Ideally explaining this needs to start a long while in advance of when you are hoping to recruit (see the section later on *Taking the long view*).

A strong student campaign will allow you to position yourself in the student recruitment market. It will help students to understand who you are, what you are looking for, how to succeed in the recruitment process and ultimately increase their understanding about why they want to work for you. Key goals associated with a strong student value proposition and an effective campaign are to:

- ensure that your organisation is clearly visible to students as a potential place to work
- establish a strong reputation for your organisation as a high quality student employer
- encourage students to choose your organisation over other potential employers
- provide greater clarity about who should apply, reducing the number of inappropriate applications you receive
- increase the suitability, quality and speed of applications
- improve understanding about how your recruitment process works, leading to reduced drop out
- strengthen engagement with your organisational values and mission, increasing the uptake of job offers.

There are lots of advantages to developing the right student value proposition and running an effective campaign. To do this you need to pitch it right and create a strong narrative about why a student would want to work for your organisation. But it is also important to ensure that your campaign is well aligned with the reality of your organisation so that students recognise the value proposition that they have signed on for once they actually start.

Designing a student recruitment campaign

A student recruitment campaign should engage with who students are and what they are looking for from employment, and position your organisation in a way that relates to this.

To achieve this you should work through the following stages:

- **Understand your organisational context**. Your student campaign needs to align with your organisation's broader approach to branding. You should start by gaining a strong understanding of the organisation's brand, its employer value proposition and the employer brand. These provide you with the framework within which you can develop your campaign.
- **Gather insights about students and the student employment market.** Once you understand your own organisation you can look outwards and build your understanding of the market. The more insights you can gather the better. It should help you to understand what students want and are interested in, who your competitors are and what they are offering. It should also help you to understand what students think about your organisation and its offer (if they think about you at all).

- **Make the connection.** The next stage is to build a relationship between what your organisation is offering and what the audience wants. This is about articulating your employer value proposition and employer brand in a way that will engage and resonate with the student audience.
- **Develop an engagement strategy**. You now know what it is that you want to communicate and so it is time to work out how you are going to engage with students through a student recruitment marketing campaign.

Building your insights

You should make use of all of the available evidence and data as you develop your branding marketing and attraction processes. There are three main kinds of evidence that you should look at as you develop and revise your process: your evidence; evidence from the market; and evidence on what works.

Your evidence

- What does your organisation need?
- How has marketing and attraction been organised in the past?
- What has worked and not worked?

Evidence from the market

- What information is available on the students that you are trying to recruit? Who are they? Where are they? What do they want?
- What are other organisations (competitors) doing differently from you?
- How do students perceive your organisation?

Evidence on what works

- What do we know about what marketing and attraction approaches work?
- What kind of return on investment will different approaches give you?

There is a wide range of sources that you can consult to learn more about the market you are recruiting in and about how effective different approaches to marketing and attraction are. *ISE Knowledge Hub* is a brilliant place to start and the resources section at the end of this chapter offers more places to look.

It is a good idea to use all the available evidence that is out there. But you should also be aiming to build up new evidence and data based on how your own campaign is working. Ideally you should be looking at what you were hoping to achieve through your campaign, recording the steps that you took and the activities that you undertook and asking yourself what happened as a result.

Looking at the *Benchmark data* presented throughout this chapter and the rest of *The Complete Guide to Student Recruitment and Development* will give you some pointers on what you should be looking at as well as providing insight into how your competitors are behaving. However, you ultimately need to develop a theory of change for your own campaign. For more on theories of change see *Chapter 2*.

Ideally you should create an annual opportunity to review and evaluate your campaign. This might take the form of an annual meeting with key internal stakeholders. You should ask the following questions:

- What were we hoping to achieve at the start of the year?
- Did we achieve it?
- How much time and money did we spend?
- What happened that we did not expect?
- What have we learnt?
- What do we want to achieve next year?
- Are we collecting the right data and evidence?

Ultimately the question that you are seeking to answer is about whether the different things that you are doing are giving you the right return on your investment. Key to this is thinking about the counter-factual; what would have happened if you hadn't done anything? It is also about trying to understand the relative value of the different approaches you are using.

The most obvious way to measure return on investment is to think about the marketing cost per application or cost per hire. Yet both statistics are only partial measures of the impact of your campaign. You might also want to look at other things, such as how your retention compares to that of your competitors, and ask yourself whether your campaign is offering candidates a realistic idea of the job they are moving to and leading to a good organisational fit. You might also be interested in the impact that different approaches have on longer term perceptions of your employer brand. For example, activities that you run in primary schools are unlikely to lead directly to applications, but they might be having a big impact on how people view your employer brand. You should talk to your employer brand team about how they measure brand awareness and think about how you might embed this kind of measurement into your activities.

Campaign strategy

When you are developing your student recruitment campaign you need to form a core idea which underpins your campaign. This core idea links your organisation's brand to the insight that you have about the market and allows you to shape your campaign in a way which will be engaging to your audience.

Your campaign therefore starts with a campaign strategy which informs everything that you do. This includes the visual identity you use, the narrative arc you create, your thinking about the candidate journey and the way in which you execute this campaign - including things like straplines, creative templates, adverts, social media and print publications.

Internal engagement within your organisation is key to the success of a campaign. This means ensuring that everyone - from senior stakeholders to marketing, to the people who will provide content and staff for the campaign - understands what you are trying to achieve and what they can do to support you. Most importantly everyone needs to be able to articulate the campaign whenever they talk to a student.

Ultimately your student campaign needs to be communicated to your internal and external stakeholders. To do this, you are likely to create some or all of the following collateral:

- A clear articulation of the core campaign idea which both aligns with your organisation's brand and builds on your insights and research. This should set out what it is that you want to communicate, what it is that students want to hear, the journey that you want them to take through to application, and how you are going to reach them.
- An internal launch campaign including internal training and presentations to engage your staff, particularly those who are actively involved in recruiting, selecting and managing entry-level staff.
- A marketing and communications strategy which identifies what channels and approaches you are going to use to engage students.
- Marketing materials, assets and content which reflect your brand strategy and can be used as part of your campaign.
- We will be looking in more detail at how you translate your approach into a marketing strategy in the next section. But the key challenge is to ensure that your over-arching student employer brand strategy is the golden thread that runs through everything that you do.

Benchmark data
62% of ISE employers have a target to recruit more diverse students.

Ensuring diversity

Many organisations have targets to increase the diversity of their hires. In each sector and indeed in each company, the focus is likely to be on diversity issues. In general, there is good evidence to suggest that a diverse workforce is more flexible and productive, but there are also likely to be important organisational and sectoral drivers for broadening the kind of students that you attract and recruit.

The government has identified nine protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010 that it is illegal to discriminate against and important to monitor the representation of within your recruitment processes and your organisation. The key characteristics that are likely to be relevant to early careers recruitment are disability, transgender, non-binary and intersex, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation. The same legislation also prohibits discrimination on the grounds of age, marital status and pregnancy and maternity. Finally, there is a growing movement to recognise discrimination and remove barriers to people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and to avoid your organisation being socially and educationally homogeneous.

Diversity and inclusion is likely to be an agenda which influences a wide range of aspects of your organisation, including shaping the employer brand and wider recruitment campaigns with experienced hires. In this case it is important that your student recruitment campaign aligns with wider policies, activities and campaigns around diversity. Your approach to diversity in student recruitment should not be tokenistic, but should rather inform your thinking about the whole campaign. Some good questions to ask yourself include the following:

- Who are we struggling to reach and why are we finding this difficult?
- What are the groups that we want to attract interested in? And is this something that we can engage with?
- Is there anything about our student campaign that is likely to appeal to certain types of students or people from a particular background?
- Is there anything that we could change about our campaign that might attract the groups of students that we are targeting?

- Have we tested our brand approach with staff, applicants and potential applicants who come from the groups that we are targeting?
- What are our competitors doing on diversity and is there anything that we can learn from them?
- What is our distinct offer to diverse students? Is there anything that might make us particularly attractive?

Engaging with diversity requires you to think carefully about the different ways that you can communicate more effectively with different groups. There is no single approach that will work for women, black and ethnic minority students, neuro-diverse students and other groups that you may be interested in targeting. A one-size-fits-all 'diversity campaign' is unlikely to be effective and so you will need to do your research and focus on the specific groups that you are targeting.

Benchmark data
89% of ISE employers are changing their marketing and attraction approach to attract more diverse students.

Most importantly, always ask yourself whether your campaign is designed for the hires you want to attract or whether you are designing an approach for people like yourself and those who you have recruited in the past. It is easy to assume that your own perspective on the world is shared by everyone else, but this is rarely the case. Seek evidence from diverse sources and listen to the voices of people from the groups that you are targeting.

There are many very practical decisions that you can make during the attraction phase of recruitment that will help to increase the diversity of the cohort of students you attract. Some of the approaches that employers are adopting to attract diverse candidates include the following:

- **Target under-represented groups**. If you find that any group is under-represented in your applicant pool the obvious thing to do is to actively target that group. Use social media micro-targeting, visit institutions where they are well represented and engage with the media that they watch and listen to. You may find it useful to run outreach events aimed at particular groups. It may just be that your message is not getting out to the under-represented groups and that making additional efforts will address this.
- **Change the universities, colleges and schools that you visit.** Sadly, education in the UK remains strongly stratified by background. If you only visit private schools and elite universities you are likely to get a far less diverse group of applicants. Broadening or changing the places you recruit from will have a big impact. Running virtual events and increasing your use of social media will also help to broaden the range of students you can engage with.
- **Use diverse staff in your marketing campaign**. Who are the staff you are showcasing in your brochure or on your website? Who are the staff that are giving talks, attending careers fairs or welcoming virtual interns? People tend to want to join organisations where they can see people like them and where they feel that they will fit in. If all the staff you use in marketing campaigns are white, male and middle-class, you will probably attract more of the same.
- **Work with advocacy groups, specialist consultancies and student unions and societies**. If you are struggling to address inequalities in your recruitment approach you may need to involve someone else. It is particularly difficult if you do not have any representation in your current staff. In this case working with

an advocacy group or a diversity specialist might help you to understand what you are doing wrong. Another option is to build a relationship with a student union or relevant student society and use this relationship both to help you to understand that community better and as a channel for engagement.
- **Change the balance of your recruitment away from graduates.** If you are strongly focused on graduates you are inevitably dealing with the more privileged half of the population. Whatever else you do to address diversity, if you only recruit graduates you will clearly have an organisation that is made up of people with one sort of educational experience. What is more, the people who attend higher education are not representative of the wider population and so this will skew your cohort further. Given this, there are strong reasons to consider developing an apprenticeship programme aimed at school and college leavers as an alternative route into your organisation. Developing a different pathway into your organisation is likely to increase its diversity.

Implementing your recruitment strategy

Once you've designed your student recruitment campaign you will need to work out a detailed plan for how you are going to implement this in a way that engages students and encourages applications. A marketing and communications strategy would typically include target audiences, the channels that you are going to use and the materials you need to meet specific objectives e.g. around diversity.

Some good questions to ask yourself as you develop your marketing and communications plan are as follows:
- **What kind of role(s) are you recruiting students for?** Are they graduate roles, internships, or school and college leaver positions? Will the candidates be enrolled on an apprenticeship after they start? What is the focus of the role, e.g. will it be office based or on the road, and what parts of the business will it work with? What salary and rewards package is on offer?
- **Who is your ideal candidate?** What kind of person are you trying to recruit? Are you recruiting for potential or trying to get someone who is already able to do everything? Are you looking for particular skills, attitudes and competences? And how far do you think that qualifications and educational performance are good indicators of the kind of people that you want to recruit?
- **How will you try and reach these candidates?** Will you be going onto campus or into schools? Will prospective candidates be able to talk to you e.g. at careers fairs or visit your offices? Or, as is increasingly the case, will your campaign be more digital? In this case what websites, media, social media and online channels are you planning to develop a presence in? What assets and resources are you going to produce? Where are you going to advertise the role? How will you balance tried and tested versus new and innovative approaches?
- **Who is part of your recruitment team?** Who will students communicate with when they are thinking about applying, but also when they are moving through the recruitment and hiring process? Are you going to use student ambassadors, recent hires, professional recruiters, consultants and freelancers or outsource an element of your process? If you are recruiting people to an apprenticeship programme, how are you going to work with your apprenticeship provider to recruit candidates who can complete the apprenticeship as well as do the job?
- **How are you going to manage the recruitment process?** How are you going to ensure that the selection and hiring process is positive and in tune with your student employer brand? How are you going to manage rejections so that they don't damage your brand? What is your approach to providing information and engaging with students? How are you going to manage the pre-boarding and onboarding experience in a way that ensures a positive experience for candidates?

Benchmark data
ISE employers spend an average of 57% of their total student recruitment budget on marketing and attraction activities. This typically means spending around £1,500 annually on marketing and attraction for every student that they hope to hire.

Budget and resourcing

A key part of designing your marketing approach is thinking about how you are going to resource all these activities. Marketing does not just happen. It requires you to have the people and budget to undertake all the activities that you have planned. Things that you need to spend money on include:
- **Staff.** How many people do you need in your team to design and implement your marketing approach?
- **Agencies, suppliers and consultants and freelancers.** Who are you going to build partnerships with and bring in on contracts to support your activities?
- **Systems costs.** What data collection, data management and communication software do you need to build your talent pool and underpin your marketing?
- **Online marketing costs.** What websites and online content are you going to create? Are you going to buy targeted email lists or use paid-for social media micro-targeting?
- **Print and physical marketing cost.** What are you going to print or create to support your campaigns?
- **Events.** What face-to-face and virtual events are you going to run to attract candidates and what are the costs associated with these activities?
- **Travel and accommodation.** How much travel and accommodation is going to be involved in your campaign?

When you are managing a recruitment campaign you are always in the process of trading off between time, costs and resources. The more time, money and resources that you have, the easier it is to produce a high-quality campaign. We can see this as tension between doing things well, doing them quickly or doing them cheaply. Normally it is difficult to have all three at once.

The good/fast/cheap dilemma is one of the perennial issues in budgeting. If you want fast and good, it won't be cheap. Whereas if you want fast and cheap it won't usually be very good. As you plan your budget and your campaign you will need to think about all these things and how you balance them off against each other.

Working with agencies

Depending on your in-house capability you may want to get some help to support you with your student recruitment campaign. In some cases, this will be about supplementing your capacity to build and deliver a student campaign at scale and at speed. In others, working with an agency or specialist consultant will bring expertise, experience and new ideas that may be beyond what you have in-house. In the *Supplier directory* at the back of this book you will find a list of ISE supplier members who may be able to help you with your student recruitment. We have already covered partnership working in *Chapter 3*. But it is worth reiterating the main point in relation to engaging a marketing agency.

An effective relationship with an agency is a partnership. Of course, it is important for you to spend time thinking about what you are looking for before you engage them. But it is also important to build briefs that allow you to make use of the expertise of your suppliers and allow them to point out things that you might have missed.

Key areas where working with an agency might be useful include:

- giving you help and support in understanding your business and working out what your strategy should be
- reviewing your approach to ensure that it supports your aims
- conducting market and competitor research to provide you with the data you need to understand how your employer brand is currently perceived and how to develop this
- providing support and expert advice in the development and communication of your brand
- creating assets, content and resource in tune with your brand.

Once you have found a good agency to work with you will need to spend time inducting them into your business, introducing them to your organisational brand, employer brand and all the thinking that you have done so far. Recognising that this is a partnership is crucial. This means that as well as money, you also have to contribute your time and expertise to the partnership to ensure that the agency will be able to deliver the kind of results that you are looking for.

Taking the long view

Inevitably some student recruitment marketing is about telling people that you have jobs and that they should apply for them. But suddenly erecting a neon sign with a flashing arrow saying ‘jobs here’ is not going to be that effective if that is the first time that students ever hear about your organisation. It is important to take the long view and think about how people will gradually learn about your organisation and your employer brand. Key elements of this include the following:

- **Engaging with schools.** You need to introduce your student employer brand to young people before they even start to think about the workplace. Engaging schools through providing resources, giving talks or offering work experience allows students to find out about who you are, what you do and what it is like to work for you. Some organisations will be recruiting school leavers directly, but for many engaging with schools is more long-term. In many cases it will be as much about building understanding of your sector and the kind of jobs available within it as it is about specifically marketing your organisation.
- **Contributing to the curriculum**. Schools, colleges and universities are all primarily focused on teaching the curriculum. If you can contribute to this, you can engage on a new level with students and help them to make the connection between what they are currently studying and the opportunities available within your organisation. It will take time to engage with learning organisations at a curriculum level. They will want you to make a long-term commitment often extending over many years. There are substantial rewards for this kind of close collaboration, but you will have to invest substantial amounts of time to realise these benefits.
- **Connecting to careers services**. Within educational establishments there is usually at least one person who has a focus on careers and transitions. In a school this is a careers leader, in a college or university this is usually a careers department or service. Making a connection with the people who are focused on careers is critical as it gives you a bridge into the organisation and someone who will talk about your company even when you are not there.
- **Developing brand ambassadors and relationships with student societies**. Many organisations build ongoing relationships with students outside the context of recruitment. This might be about recruiting brand ambassadors whom you pay to hand out flyers, promote your events/company and organise posts on social media. Another alternative is to sponsor relevant student societies, for example finance firms may find it helpful to sponsor a university’s economics society as a way of building a long-term relationship with students.

- **Internships, placement students and work experience.** One of the most powerful ways to market your organisation is to bring students into it. By creating internships and placement opportunities you can give students a real experience of your organisation. Meanwhile you get the opportunity to 'try before you buy' and assess the suitability of the candidate. This can even work for a variety of short-term work-related learning opportunities such as work visits, work shadowing and work experience, which build students into your pipeline before they have made firm career plans. Increasingly, many of these experiences of the workplace are taking place online. If you decide to deliver some of your work experience online it is important to remember that these opportunities need to offer students an opportunity to learn about you and you an opportunity to learn about them. See *Chapter 6* for more information on this.
- **Being consistent throughout the recruitment and selection process.** Even after people have applied to work in your organisation, it is still important to continue to market to them. Many students will be applying for more than one company and so you need to continue to engage with them throughout the process. If people have a good candidate experience which gives them an insight into working for you, they will be more likely to accept the role if you offer it to them. This also important for those candidates you reject. Rejected candidates may still be future employees, suppliers or customers and so it is important to ensure that they have a positive experience when they engage with your organisation. See *Chapter 5* for more information on this and on pre-boarding and onboarding.
- **Pre-boarding and onboarding**. Even once you have made a formal offer to someone you need to continue to engage with them in a way that aligns with your brand. The period between getting an offer and starting work (sometimes known as the pre-boarding period) should be an opportunity for them to discover more and start to feel part of your organisation. Once you induct them and they start working for you (onboarding) they need to find that they are entering the organisation that you have sold to them, otherwise they will be disappointed and less likely to stay.

A lot of your organisation's activities with schools will be part of its corporate social responsibility and its wider contribution to the community. But this kind of engagement earlier on in a student's life also serves the purpose of creating a relationship with future candidates.

In an ideal world you would already know everyone who might apply for your jobs before you open for applications. Therefore, it is important to take a long view and engage with the education system early on. Every time you engage with education providers you can collect data and build up a 'talent pool' of interested students who know who you are and who may be interested in applying for the roles you have available.

This approach can be described as a candidate relationship management (CRM) strategy. It is about building a long-term relationship with future candidates in which they build their understanding of your employer brand, while you gradually understand more about them. This allows you to market to them in ways that they will value and provide them with content that aligns with their interests. In this approach you are gradually building closer relationships with a growing number of candidates in ways that increase mutual understanding.

In practice the data you gather through candidate relationship management can exist in a variety of forms. It could be a mailing database that you develop specifically for this purpose, followers on social media or something more formal, such as your interns, brand ambassadors and student societies. Some of these approaches, such as building a database of students you have interacted with, will raise data protection issues

that you will need to consider, particularly if you are holding information on young people. However, others are less complex to administer, for example building up social media followers. In general, the more control you have over the data that you are collecting as part of your candidate relationship management, the more careful you will have to be. The government's data protection site provides some useful guidance on these issues (see the resources section at the end of this chapter).

Effective candidate relationship management requires regular and purposeful communication. You need to communicate with your candidates through the channels that they use and about things that they find interesting and useful. To do this, you need to have built up good insights about your candidates. But because candidate relationship management is a two way process it also gives you opportunities to build up more knowledge about your candidates. What topics and channels are they responding to, what proportion are engaging regularly and what kind of questions and responses are you receiving?

Running your campaign

Once you have thought clearly about your brand and developed a strategic and long-term marketing vision you need to go out and seal the deal. This is the attraction phase of your campaign where you are trying to maximise the direct impact of your activities and start to see the applications rolling in.

Benchmark data
ISE employers typically receive 60 applications for every graduate they want to hire, 39 applications for every school and college leaver, 42 applications for every internship and 50 applications for every placement student. But it is usually more important to focus on the quality of your applications than on the quantity.

When does attraction happen?

Every company will have a different set of needs and resources that will influence when their attraction campaign takes place. However, what you need and when you need people to start working for you is only part of the picture. You also need to understand what students are doing at different points in the year. Even though many recruitment activities have moved online since the pandemic, the basic academic calendar remains important. You need to understand what students are doing to ensure that you are targeting your campaigns in the right way and at the right point.

The academic year starts at the end of the summer (usually August or early September for schools and colleges, but for some universities this can be as late as the start of October). It runs until June or July, although in practice many university students and some school students will start to drift away after they have completed their exams (this could be as early as mid-May). Typically, the academic year is divided into three terms running from August/September to Christmas, the New Year to Easter and Easter to June or July. Toward the end of the academic year students are typically preoccupied with exams.

A key deadline if you are working with schools is the UCAS deadline (in 2021 this is in the middle of January for most courses, although Oxford, Cambridge and some medical courses have a deadline in early autumn). The UCAS deadline is when young people choose which universities they are applying for. Schools will be working with year 13 students throughout the autumn term prior to this to assist them with university choices, their UCAS personal statement and alternative options. If you are hoping to attract students who are likely to be applying to university (perhaps onto a high-quality school leaver programme or degree apprenticeship) you may want to align your deadlines with this UCAS deadline. It can be more difficult to get students to consider alternatives to university if they have already made their choices.

For other school and college leaver programmes, including level two and three apprenticeships, recruitment can often happen a bit later in the year (for example between March and August). But the exact timelines are likely to vary depending on the apprenticeship scheme, the business's needs and the level of interest in the market.

Most student employers design their recruitment around the academic year. The table below shows when most employers open their campaigns, make the most offers and close their campaigns.

Recruitment campaign timetables

	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep
Graduates				
Opened campaign	**80%**	5%	2%	13%
Made the most offers	24%	**52%**	13%	11%
Closed campaign	18%	**34%**	**28%**	20%
School and college leavers				
Opened campaign	**57%**	33%	3%	7%
Made the most offers	13%	**45%**	26%	16%
Closed campaign	7%	**35%**	**36%**	23%

Ideally students should have encountered your organisation long before the year in which you are trying to recruit them. You should already have built a relationship with these candidates so that you can start to guide them through the application process during their final year in education. But in many cases you will also be running some last-minute attraction activities alongside your recruitment activities to deal with any shortfalls, changes in demand from the business or reneges.

You should have a clear campaign calendar setting out what you are going to be doing and what content you are going to be providing during every week of the recruitment season. Ideally it should have a line on it for the staff that you are hoping to recruit this year as well as lines for marketing activity aimed at students earlier in their studies.

How do organisations attract candidates?

There are many different ways in which you can try and engage with students in the attraction phase. Broadly these break down into four main categories:

- **Digital.** Creating online resources, content and campaigns to engage students.
- **Print.** Creating brochures, flyers and other print resources or advertising in magazines and student handbooks.
- **Face-to-face.** Going to meet with students through the curriculum or at careers events.
- **Social.** Using your existing staff and contacts to reach out to current students and encourage applications.

There are two important trends you should be aware of as you are developing your approach to attraction and choosing which channels to use.

First, the candidate relationship management approach discussed above means that marketing is becoming increasingly targeted and bespoke to different groups and even to individuals. It is normally much more efficient to spend time and energy identifying the candidates that you want to engage with and building a relationship with them than it is to blanket bomb everyone using mass media. Digital channels give you various ways to ensure that the messages that candidates receive are bespoke and targeted, but the principle of creating efficient and targeted approaches to candidates also applies to other channels.

Second, it is important to recognise that Covid-19 has driven a major shift in the approach that many organisations are taking to their student recruitment campaigns. It is not clear where this will end up as the landscape is still evolving. ISE's research suggests that the future is likely to look significantly more blended with ever more integration between digital, print, face-to-face and social channels.

ISE surveyed employers during 2020 to find out what activities they were using to attract applications. In 2021 there has been a rapid rise in the importance of online and virtual attraction activities due to the Covid-19 crisis. While 2020 was clearly an unusual year, it has probably accelerated the existing direction of travel towards more digital, blended and integrated approaches. The following list offers the top-ten activities which employers reported were the most effective:

1. **Company website.** It is important to have the basics in place. Having a good company website which sells your organisation and facilitates applications is a critical building block on which the rest of your attraction strategy rests.
2. **External job boards.** Listing opportunities on websites and apps that advertise jobs.
3. **Social media marketing.** Using social media platforms to target and engage students.
4. **Careers fairs (face-to-face).** Visiting careers fairs in universities, colleges and schools and running a stand to allow direct face-to-face contact with large numbers of students.
5. **Insight / open days.** Inviting students to visit your office and get an experience of what it is like to work for you.
6. **Giving talks and workshops.** Giving a short talk about your organisation for students who are considering working for you, or contributing to activities like CV workshops that allow you direct contact with students who may never have heard of you.
7. **Visits to universities.** As well as being on campus for careers fairs and workshops you may also want to be on campus for other reasons including running stands, holding events, handing out flyers and meeting with careers and academic staff. Developing an understanding of campus life will help you to target your marketing effectively.
8. **Targeted emails to students.** Many educational organisations will allow you to send targeted emails to groups of students (e.g. all law students in their second year of study). Such access usually comes at a price, but can be an effective way to get directly into students' inboxes.
9. **Campus representative or ambassadors**. Some organisations will identify (and usually pay) a small group of students to work as representatives or ambassadors for them. These ambassadors will be used for a variety of purposes ranging from leafleting to organising and marketing events. But perhaps most powerful is the fact that having a group of current students on your side allows you to leverage existing peer social relationships and create 'word-of-mouth' marketing around your organisation. It is also possible to build strong relationships with schools and colleges, but these are more likely to be a close relationship with a supportive member of staff than using students as representatives.
10. **Visits to schools and colleges**. Just as organisations are building a presence on campus, they are also building engagement with schools and colleges. Usually getting into a school or college will be a little more complex than visiting a university due to the safeguarding of minors. You will have to work closely with the school or college to work out the best way for you to engage.

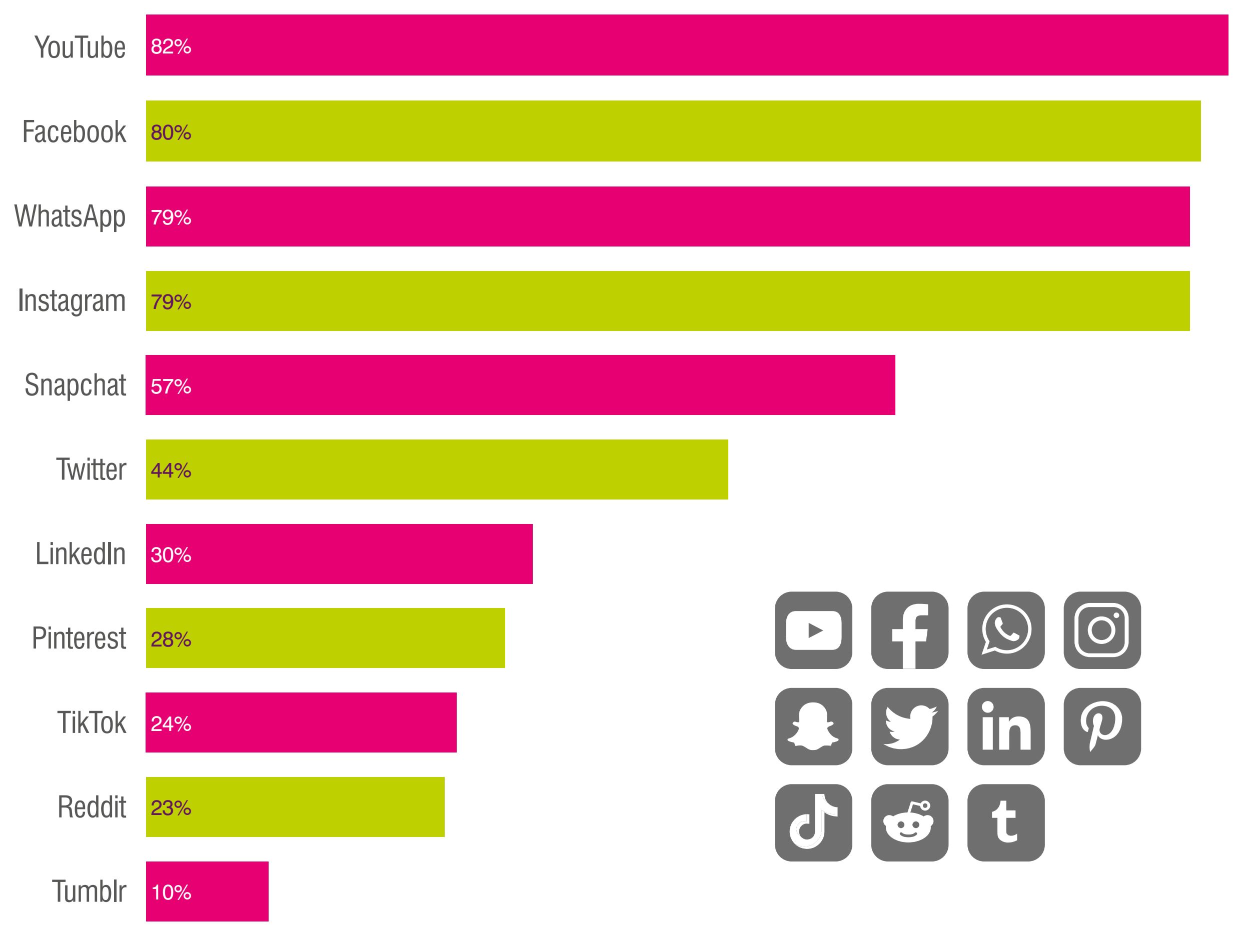
The exact balance of attraction activities that you will want to do is likely to change from year to year as your brand gets better known and your recruitment targets change. Your budget will also shape what it is possible for you to do. As we have already noted, during 2020/2021 companies have also had to make changes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. This has seen a shift away from face-to-face activities towards online activities and may lead to some long-term rebalancing in the way that attraction activities work.

Making the most of social media

Social media is one of the most important tools available to student recruiters. It is central to the way in which young people (and indeed many of us) engage with the world around us. If you are trying to build your brand and attract young people you need to be using social media.

Proportion of young people (aged 15-25) using different social media in 2020

(Data from www.statista.com)



You don't necessarily have be active in all of these different social media platforms, but you should at least have investigated all of them and thought about why you are engaging or not engaging. Social media is not an add-on - it should be embedded into your wide branding, marketing and attraction strategy. Many of the top tips for social media recruiting are essentially restatements of existing principles that you should be applying across your whole campaign.

It is also important to recognise that social media recruiting requires time, expertise and often financial resources.

Top tips!

Top tips for social media recruiting

- **Think about what platforms to engage with**. Social media covers a vast and growing array of different platforms. You need to think about which are worth engaging with. You don't necessarily want to always follow the most popular. For example, building a TikTok campaign might create a tension with your brand and is probably not where your candidates are expecting to hear from you. But it may also offer an opportunity as just targeting people on career specific platforms like LinkedIn might make it more difficult to distinguish yourself.
- **Create great content**. Social media speaks for itself. Whether it is a Tweet, a YouTube video or a LinkedIn job advert, it needs to be carefully designed to be engaging to your target audience. Remember you are generally not trying to create a viral meme, but produce content that is informative about your organisation and why people should apply for it. If you can also include career top tips and guides on getting hired you are really providing people with something useful. An effective strategy is making use of your current employees to talk directly to candidate and potential applicants. This kind of authentic content is much more effective than corporate puff pieces.
- **Use tools to target your audience**. Most social media tools allow you (for a price) to target the kind of people you want to engage with. Make use of these tools and evaluate their effectiveness. Firing stuff out into the darkness is unlikely to work - even if you manage to get an audience for your content (which is difficult) it may not be the right one.
- **Be willing to pay (when it adds value)**. There is a tendency to see social media as open, democratic and free. This may lead some organisations into thinking of social media student marketing as a low-cost alternative to going on campus, and result in a reluctance to pay. While you can achieve much through organic (free) social media marketing, a willingness to pay can allow you to target specific groups of students, acquire new follows and ensure that the content you offer is relevant. There are many different business models and approaches to paid-for social media marketing and so it is worth talking to the different platforms, to the marketing and branding agency you are working with and to other employers through to the ISE to obtain information that can help you to decide what offers value for money.
- **Think long term.** Social media is a good way to build up a long-term relationship with your candidates. If you take the long view you will gradually build up your connections with students over several years. This means that when you are trying to recruit, you have a ready-made audience who you can target directly.
- **Use the data you gather.** Social media tools give you rapid feedback on what you are doing. You can see how many people have viewed something over a 24-hour period and responded to it. Monitor this data in real time and make sure that your social media strategy is sufficiently responsive to be able to rethink things that don't work and do more of what does work.

Case study

Lloyds Banking Group

Single purpose attraction campaign

ISE AWARDS WINNER

Lloyds Banking Group (LBG) created the #MoreThanOneWay campaign focusing on student mental health, which won an ISE award for Single Purpose Attraction Activation.

LBG wanted to encourage conversation, reassure students that they're not alone, and share advice on the importance of looking after mental health. This supports LBG's focus on mental health, highlighted by its partnership with Mental Health UK and the Get The Inside Out campaign.

Working with its media agency, LBG wanted students to appreciate there is always more than one way to see things, feel and tackle life challenges. They should not feel pressured – it is about finding what works for them. This is where #MoreThanOneWay was created.

Following research into colour therapy, colour and relatable characters were used to help guide students in exploring their own mental health. It was important that the stigma was treated sensitively and appropriately. Authenticity was key, and so LBG worked closely with Mental Health UK throughout.

Numerous multiple media interactions were created to encourage and reassure students to look after their own mental health:

- **Instagram Story Spinner:** For those struggling to de-stress and in need of a little inspiration, Instagram Stories was used to create an interactive idea generator. Options were provided depending on the time available (1min, 15mins, 1hour) and students were encouraged to find a new technique e.g 'Dance like crazy', 'Have a healthy snack' or 'Watch a funny movie'.
- **Study Style Quiz:** Featured on the Emerging Talent Careers website, the quiz encouraged students to experiment with different study techniques.
- **Uni Myth Busting animations:** Five animations focused on #MoreThanOneWay to do university, reassuring students that there were multiple ways to experience university and that feelings of doubt – 'I'm doing it wrong' – are quite common amongst **students.**
- **Animation videos:** In partnership with MHUK and Young Champions through the Step Up Programme, videos were created using characters. Focusing on 'dealing with stress and anxiety during exam time' and 'the power of talking: speaking to someone', the animations featured real student stories and encouraged viewers to talk to a loved one or seek advice on the MHUK website.
- **Campus:** Three LED seesaws were taken to 10 universities across the UK, which allowed students to take time out of their day to enjoy themselves and share positivity. Inspirational quotation cards were distributed, with the hope of making students smile, and posters around the university encouraged students to visit the experience.

The campaign demonstrated LBG's focus on wellbeing as part of its culture and invested time in students during a difficult and pressured time in their lives. This was a highly successful campaign producing positive results aligned to the original objectives, including a wide reach, significant increase in ROI and overwhelmingly positive feedback from students.

The campaign has continued into 2021 by updating media interactions and altering campus activities to a virtual platform 'Feel Good Fest'.

Opinion

Stem the tide on netpotism

Dimitar Stanimiroff, GM EMEA at Handshake, calls for fair and effective recruitment in a digital world.

We can all agree that the last 12 months have been challenging for students and employers alike. Campuses have closed their doors, exams have been cancelled, recruitment has slowed and opportunities for work experience and internships have quickly diminished.

But, despite the challenges, for many the pandemic has acted as a catalyst for positive change – and we have seen both universities and employers adapt at speed. And, positively, the quick adoption of digital tools has meant that employers and graduates can now interact – and conduct interviews – wherever they are in the world. What's more, as remote or hybrid working looks set to continue for the long term, geographic location, or place of study, is no longer a stumbling block to employment.

With these positive changes comes additional responsibility for employers though. While tech can be a huge leveller for the industry, there is a risk that it is used merely to replicate existing ways of recruiting students and recent graduates that were already well past their sell-by date. Business leaders relying heavily on existing contacts, word of mouth and where candidates went to school to fuel recruitment pipelines, ought to be a thing of the past and equal access of opportunity should finally be a reality.

But Handshake's newest report into the market has found that the pandemic has seen many employers swapping one closed network with another, relying on existing contacts, friends, family and colleagues to connect and meet potential employees, even online.

Enabling employers to reach candidates more directly, based on their suitability for the job above all else, will be a key component in making the long-term shifts brought about by the pandemic positive for everyone, rather than the lucky few.

And while there's often an assumption than anyone under 25 is equipped with all the best tech and knowledge available, digital exclusion remains an issue across the board – and has been having an impact on the interview and recruitment process too for students and recent graduates.

This means that the government, wider technology industry and universities need to work together to tackle the digital divide once and for all, ensuring that potential recruits have access to the tools which are now driving recruitment.

Indeed, our research revealed that 22% of students don't have the technology required to access careers services since they moved online. One key step to improving equality of access, therefore, is to make sure offerings are mobile-optimised at a minimum (mobile device penetration is at 98% among the 16-24 age group) and to add support for mobile-based third-party platforms.

Our mission at Handshake is to stem the tide of this 'netpotism', and ensure quality of access for all. The Handshake community already includes 17 million students and young alumni at over 1,000 universities, connecting up-and-coming talent with more than 500,000 employers.

Handshake is democratising opportunity and ensuring students have the support they need to kick-off a meaningful career regardless of where they study, what they choose as a major, and who they know. We understand that a diverse and inclusive workforce is one that ultimately thrives, and limiting the recruitment pool isn't just unfair – it's bad for business and economic growth too.

Read the Netpotism Research Paper (joinhandshake.co.uk/netpotism) joinhandshake.co.uk

Opinion

Time for change

Jackie Grisdale, Youth Marketing Strategist at SMRS, explains why the pandemic has gifted us with an opportunity to shift the dial on attracting under-represented groups.

After the last year, change may be the last thing on your agenda, but stick with me and I'll tell you why I think we have a real opportunity to change for the better.

Improving diversity within our apprentice and graduate cohorts has been on the agenda for some time. We understand the need, the importance and the benefits for businesses through ensuring diversity within our cohorts. But for me, what's even more important is the positive impact this can have on the futures of those young people who remain under-represented. They are the ones who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, the ones who face an uncertain future ahead and for whom the gap may have widened even further.

And while we continue to consider diversity important, more so than ever before according to High Fliers' recent Graduate Market report, there continues to be an ongoing narrative about a struggle to attract talent from under-represented groups.

That's why now is the time to change.

We've been gifted an opportunity to be brave and take a fresh approach to the 2021/22 season and beyond. An opportunity to be more targeted, to engage with and nurture talent from under-represented groups, to ultimately be more effective in our efforts to ensure diversity.

2020 taught us that we don't have to do what we have always done, but it also put into focus the strategies that work and create real impact. A smart approach will be embracing a hybrid model, harnessing digital technology and all its advantages, while targeting face to face activities where it will have the most impact. Data will help drive decisions. But I implore you to focus those highly influential attraction activities on those who would most benefit - those who, with a bit of support, may gain the confidence they need to apply and succeed, and those studying at universities where you might not have traditionally had an on-campus presence.

We are already seeing an increase in applications and as a result we must be much more targeted in 'where' we focus our efforts, to balance volume and composition. Whether it's through digital campaigns or on-campus and in-school/college activity, the intelligent use of data and insight and performance tracking will be essential to understanding where to find those under-represented young people you are looking to attract.

Finally, a long-term early careers strategy will be essential for future success - one that focuses on engagement just as much as attraction. Gaps have widened as a result of the pandemic; confidence has been knocked and priorities have changed. Understanding the challenges and barriers of under-represented groups and their perception of you and your industry will be key. Strategies to engage with talent much earlier, at a younger age, are equally important. And don't underestimate the power of delivering an ongoing programme of richer, more meaningful engagement to generate and nurture a ready talent pool over the long term, especially when it comes to shifting the diversity of your apprentice and graduate cohorts.

smrs.co.uk

Resources

ISE resources

ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* is full of useful ideas and case studies. It has a category devoted to **attraction and marketing** *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/category/attraction-and-marketing/)* which is likely to be particularly useful in relation to this chapter.

You will also find lots of data, reports and other resources available through the **ISE website** *(https://ise.org.uk/)*. You may also want to contact us to be added to ISE WhatsApp groups which is where much of the up-to-the-minute discussion on these issues goes on.

ISE supplier directory. At the back of this book you will find a detailed directory of all of the ISE supplier members who can help you with attraction and marketing.

Other resources

If you want to read up on attraction and marketing there are a couple of books that offer a good place to start. Richard Mosely & Lars Schmidt ***Employer branding for dummies,*** published by John Wiley and Sons in 2017, is still a great introduction to employer branding. While Josh Wellman's ***The Recruitment Bible,*** published by Obex Publishing in 2020, offers a comprehensive companion to all aspects of recruitment.

You could also download the Society for Human Resource Management's guide to **Recruiting and attracting talent** *(https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/special-reports-and-expert-views/Documents/Recruiting-Attracting-Talent.pdf)*. Or enrol on the Open University's free course on **Recruitment and selection** *(https://www.open.edu/openlearn/money-business/human-resources/human-resources-recruitment-and-selection/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab)*.

There is a wide range of marketing industry publications that are worth checking regularly for ideas on marketing, including **Ad age** *(https://adage.com/)*, **Campaign** *(https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/)* and **Marketing Week** *(https://www.marketingweek.com/)*.

There are also some sources of information that are more specifically focused on recruitment including **HR grapevine** *(https://www.hrgrapevine.com/)*, **Recruiter** *(https://www.recruiter.co.uk/)*, **Recruitment Marketing** *(https://www.recruitmentmarketing.com.au/)*, **Undercover recruiter** (https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/) and the **CIPD** *(https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/recruitment/)*.

If you are looking for information on the market it can be useful to explore recruitment-focused websites like **Glassdoor** (https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/) to understand who is recruiting and what candidates are saying about the market. But you should also look at official statistics such as the government's **apprenticeship data** *(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships)* and the **Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)** *(https://www.hesa.ac.uk/)* as well as the commentary provided by organisations like the **Institute of Employment Studies** *(https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/)* and **Prospects** *(https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/)*.

Chapter 5

Designing high-quality assessment

Deciding who you want to bring into your organisation is one of the most important aspects of student employment. People are both the greatest assets and the biggest costs in most businesses. So, choosing who to hire and who to reject will have a major impact on the business.

This chapter will describe the process of selection and assessment by taking you from defining your requirements to reviewing your processes after implementation. In most cases you are unlikely to start from scratch and are much more likely to be involved in reviewing, developing and refining the selection and assessment approach.

Defining your requirements

Before you set out on any journey you need to find your north star, the fixed point you are aiming for which gives you clarity about the right direction to move in wherever you find yourself. For selection and assessment, this fixed point is deciding on what you are actually looking for. An effective process can only ever be as good as the requirements you set for yourself. You must know what you want to achieve and who you want to find before you start any selection activities.

To select from a pool of candidates you need to know who you want in your business and what you want them to be able to do. This ultimately needs to fit with the aims of your business, its brand, and the strategic business plan. While there is always talk about 'finding the best talent', talent isn't abstract, it is specific. A brilliantly talented tennis player is probably of little use to you. You need to find people who have the talents, interests and values that will make them the right hires for your organisation. The first step in this process is figuring out what those talents, interests and values are and how much of each you need.

Developing the requirements you can select against will usually involve:

- **Immersing yourself in the business.** When you are finding talent you need to start by talking to people within the business to figure out what it is they are looking for. Are they looking to recruit apprentices, graduates or experienced hires? In some cases, managers and leaders in your business will have detailed specifications for the people they want, whilst in others they will only have a general idea and will look to you for help in translating their ideas into a specification against which it is possible to assess. Start by seeking out informal conversations with business leaders and get a feel for what they are looking for. Recognise that the requirements in different parts of your business might be very different. This process of immersion shouldn't be a one-way process where you just do what you are told. It is important for you to ask some difficult questions and challenge the way things are done when necessary.

- **Considering the market**. The flip side of thinking about what people want is building an awareness of what the labour market can realistically provide. The more specific your requirements are, the more competitive the labour market is. For example, if you only want to recruit Maths graduates it is useful to know that out of the 350,000 students graduating in England each year only about 7,000 of them get a Maths degree (around 2%) (see the *HESA website* in the resources at the end of this chapter, to access this kind of data). That is probably plenty for your needs, if you can get them, but it shows how even specifying one characteristic puts you into a much more competitive market. At this point you might want to consider whether you do really need to be this specific or whether you should fish in a bigger pool (e.g. by looking for students who have strong numeracy, but who may not have studied Maths). When you add in diversity targets and the need to recruit people to work in particular areas, what looks like a big pool at first glance can quickly dry up.
- **Responding to policy and public opinion**. As a hiring manager your first duty is to the business, but you are also likely to find that the wider world influences who you want to hire and how you go about doing it. Governments, for example, often have initiatives that businesses need to respond to. This might include changes to immigration requirements, pleas to 'level up' and address social mobility or drivers on gender equality such as the requirement to publish your organisation's gender pay gap. Similarly press and public concerns about equality and representativeness might also shape who you are looking for. All of this reminds us that to be an effective student employer you need to pay attention to the world outside your business.
- **Job role analysis.** In most cases you will be recruiting students to do work in specific business areas. In this case you need to analyse the roles they are going to work in and use this to inform the picture of the capabilities you need to recruit for. There is a variety of ways to conduct a job role analysis, ranging from simply interviewing their line manager to more technical processes often using a detailed methodology and standardised lists of skills.
- **Looking at data**. You will need to become familiar with the data available and use this to inform the setting of your requirements. A key source of data that you should seek out from the business is anything that describes the performance of the hires you have brought in over previous years. Who is performing well and not so well, and is there anything in your selection process that might have predicted this?
- **Gathering feedback**. Most of the time you will be building on previous rounds of recruitment. Talk to people in the business about how last year's recruitment round went. Hiring managers may highlight things that they (unexpectedly) found useful about recruits or gaps in skills that have been a problem as well as giving you feedback on the process. It is also worth talking to the candidates themselves and getting their feedback on what they have found easy and difficult since they started work.

Once you have been through the research process described above you will need to develop a process to formally capture the requirements from the business. This means setting up a data capture process (e.g. sending out a form or survey) to ask the line managers and departments in your business to specify how many people they want you to recruit for them and asking them to clarify the key skills, values and competencies.

Once you have formally captured these requirements, you will have a mass of data and insights. You should draw these together and set them down simply, stating:

- how many people you are looking to recruit
- what skills, strengths, values and interests you are looking for
- any targets around demographics and diversity, and
- any other factors that the process has identified as important.

Ideally you should be able to express this on no more than one page and identify some clear quantitative targets that you and your team can work to.

Benchmark data
The average ISE member spends around a third (27%) of their recruitment budget on selection and assessment.

Selection process design

Your selection process is a tool for finding the people you want. We have already considered how you might want to go about defining your requirements. Once you have these you will need to design or develop your selection process to give you the result you want.

A selection process is a complex system made up of many different parts. When you are developing your process it can be easy to focus on a particular aspect, but you always need to try and think about the whole process as you design and develop it. Ideally the whole process should be more than the sum of the parts as together all the different elements are assessing your candidates holistically and identifying which one you want to hire.

Developing or redeveloping a recruitment process is a complex project. It requires careful management and governance. You need to think about how the project is going to be managed, what milestones you are going to set and who needs to be involved in the decision-making. In some cases, you will want to formalise this through developing a detailed project plan and establishing a reference group or stakeholder board (perhaps including key leaders in the business who receive entry level staff from you).

As you design your selection process you will also need to think about how this process interacts with your employer value proposition (see Chapter 4). You should design a process that not only gives you the talent that you need, but also does it in way that supports the employer value proposition. This is about focusing on candidate experience, but also on how your selection process looks to the outside world.

Key design principles for your selection process

- **Less is more.** Try not to overload candidates with tests. Every additional test or stage that you add into your recruitment process increases the cost and makes the candidate experience potentially worse. Longer, more complex, selection processes are also likely to have a negative impact on diversity.
- **Select for potential**. Student recruitment should be focused on assessing for potential rather than for pre-existing skills and knowledge. If you get the right candidates you will be able to teach them what they need to know. Don't expect everything to be in place during recruitment.

- **Ensure relevance.** You should design exercises that are relevant to the role. Assess people on things they will need for the role. This improves the validity of your assessments (that your tests actually measure candidate capability) and the candidate experience (people are much happier when they can see that what you are testing connects to the job they are applying for).
- **Attend to the candidate experience**. Applying for a job does not have to be a super-fun party. But it should not be a miserable or humiliating experience. Think about how the tests and stages of your assessment process will be experienced by the candidate and how you will actively seek feedback, measure their experience and respond to issues that emerge. It is worth putting yourself through them from time to time to see how it feels. One thing that repeatedly comes up from candidates is how much developmental feedback is valued. If you can provide any feedback as part of your process it will help candidates to feel positive about participating. Ideally this should give them ways to improve their performance for future opportunities. If it is appropriate you may also encourage them to apply again for other roles that you have available or for future recruitment rounds. Remember that rejected candidates are your future customers, clients, suppliers and perhaps - later in their career - employees.
- **Selection is a two-way street**. It is easy to get focused on your decision about whether a candidate is good enough. But you also need to remember that candidates are deciding whether they want to work for you. Ideally a candidate should have the opportunity to learn about your organisation and the job they are going to do through the selection process. Providing a clear insight into your culture and working practices is important information for candidates to use in their decision-making. Ideally this is about allowing candidates to understand the reality of what working for you will be like and check that it aligns with their expectations. Being honest is important as offering an unrealistically positive view of working for your organisation risks disappointment and long-term retention problems.
- **Generate and capture data**. Selection processes should generate data that you can use to make decisions on candidates, refine your assessment process and learn about the market. Consider carefully what data you are producing, how you are going to capture it and what you are going to do with it.

Many employers can identify a philosophy that underpins their assessment approach. These philosophies can be summarised as follows:
- **Competency based** assessment processes specify what organisations are looking for and then test candidates against those competencies.
- **Strengths based** assessment processes explore what a candidate enjoys doing and is good at (their strengths) and relates that to the strengths the organisation needs.
- **Values based** assessment processes explore what a candidate believes and how they behave, to identify whether they will be a good fit for the organisation.
- **Technical** assessment processes explore whether a candidate has the skills and knowledge required for particular job roles. In many ways this is a sub-set of competency-based assessment, but is particularly used when technical skills are essential for a job.

More than half of ISE members report that their assessment approach is informed by a mix of different philosophical approaches. So it is not necessary to pick just one approach, but it is useful to think through what you are doing and identify what underpins those decisions.

One reason why a selection process is complicated is that it is typically made up of many different elements. Some of these elements will depend on accessing cutting-edge technology (e.g. utilising virtual reality assessments), whilst others will be dependent on the involvement of key people in the business (e.g. final stage interviews). The purpose of creating a clear design for the whole process is to hold all these elements together whilst ensuring that they are in tune with your overall objectives and fit with your brand.

Setting thresholds

Once you have decided what you are looking for you can start the process of developing an approach to assessing these attributes. A key aspect of this is deciding what thresholds or pass marks mean that someone gets through your process and ultimately gets hired. To do this you will need to decide whether you are seeking to identify an *objective* or *relative* threshold.
- An **objective threshold** is a minimum standard. In this case you might set a threshold that means that anyone below it will not be recruited, whereas anyone above it will get through to the next stage. For example, you might want candidates who have ‘a strong ability to communicate in writing’, but beyond demonstrating competency in this, the brilliance of their prose might not matter. So, while you don’t want to appoint anyone who is illiterate, you don’t have any interest in finding the next Shakespeare.
- A **relative threshold** is about finding the best candidates in the field. So, it may be that all your candidates can stand up and give an adequate presentation, but you are interested in which of them can do it best. In this case it is important to be able to benchmark their performance against other similar candidates.

The thresholds that you develop for measuring these attributes will need to be carefully calibrated. This may be an ongoing and iterative process. For example, you may find that you have set them too high and that no or too few people are getting through. Making repeated subtle adjustments helps to address this.

It is also important to calibrate by looking at different demographic characteristics. Are you finding that particular assessments or stages of your process are disadvantaging one group over others? In this case it is important to look at why and think about how you can address this without undermining your recruitment process.

Setting thresholds is key to your assessment process. It is unlikely to be something that you get right first time. You should monitor the performance of your thresholds closely, perhaps receiving daily reports during busy times. These should allow you to see who is and is not getting through the process. You can then tweak the thresholds to address problems. This process of ongoing tweaking is an important part of running a selection process, but it does not replace the importance of doing a more systematic review or evaluation.

Making use of external help

Selection processes are one of the most technical aspects of student employment. Because of this it is often useful to bring in some external expertise to help you to design your process. There are many useful organisations listed in the *Supplier directory* that you might want to look at and we have already discussed the process of forming a new partnership with a supplier in *Chapter 3*.

If you decide that you do need to bring in external expertise you have to decide what aspects you want help with. Are you bringing in a consultant to help you to design your assessment process or are you looking for a delivery partner who can assess candidates for you, perhaps by running assessment centres or conducting first stage interviews? Making this decision will depend on your need and on the internal expertise and capacity within your organisation.

There is no right answer about how best to use external contractors and suppliers, but there is a general trend towards more automated selection systems that are less dependent on human resources and the use of artificial intelligence to assess and select candidates. If you are moving in this direction, you are more likely to want help in setting up new systems which will then require much more limited human resources to actually run.

Things to think about when you are identifying partners:

- **Be clear about what you want.** Start by thinking about what you want to achieve and developing a good specification. It is easy to be influenced by the tools offered by suppliers, but you need to be sure that they meet your needs.
- **Be flexible.** As you talk to suppliers you are likely to learn more about what is possible and come up with ideas about how to develop your specification further. Suppliers are experts in what they do, and you should make sure that you have the opportunity to learn from them and take their ideas on board.
- **Check out your competitors**. It is always interesting to look at who is working with your competitors. You do not have to do what they do, or work with who they are working with, but their decisions provide intelligence about the market and ideas about what to do (and not to do).

Making use of new technologies

Increasingly organisations are trying to automate their selection processes and using more and more technologies in the delivery of assessment. Done well, making use of technology will:

- save time and resource
- allow you to deal with larger volumes of candidates
- create a more objective assessment approach which avoids bias and human error
- allow you to assess things that it would have been difficult to test in the past
- allow you to assess more students at a distance
- offer greater consistency in candidate experience, and
- offer a more streamlined candidate experience.

Not all new technologies are about automating assessment. Many just provide new forms of communication or different ways to assess students and collect and store information.

It is important to recognise that just because an assessment process is automated and involves a computer does not necessarily mean that it is fair. Ultimately the criteria that AI assesses against, and the assumptions that are baked into them, came from a human being. This places greater responsibility on you to think about the criteria that you are using and the validity of the assessment process.

This raises the question as to whether the tools you use should be off the shelf or bespoke. Bespoke tools are more likely to fit with your brand and be tailored to your jobs, but they also place a greater burden of validation onto you.

Making use of your people

Even if you are using new technologies, you will still need human beings to manage and administer your selection process, support candidates and be involved in actually assessing them.

Managing the process

At the heart of all assessment processes is an individual or a team managing assessment for your organisation. The size of this team and the key expertise within it will vary from organisation to organisation. So, for example, some organisations will employ an organisational or occupational psychologist to design and administer assessments. In other organisations this function might be done by a supplier who is able to bring in more expertise. But it is important that someone from the organisation has an overview of the selection and assessment process and has ownership of how it is working and accountability for whether it is delivering what the organisation hoped.

Providing support

With lots of selection and assessment activities moving over to AI there is a danger of losing the human touch. So some organisations are putting in place additional opportunities for candidates to interact with staff as part of the process. Formalising these interactions and managing them carefully will also help to reduce the number of ad hoc queries that you receive.

Examples of support processes that organisations have put in place include providing opportunities for candidates to:

- engage with staff (often recent hires still in early career) to find out more about the organisation
- participate in workshops and advice sessions with staff directly involved in the assessment process to maximise their chances in the process.

Conducting assessments

Most organisations still want a human being to be involved in making a judgement about candidates' suitability at some point. Although AI has reduced the amount of staff time needed for making assessment of candidates, there are still occasions, usually towards the end of the process, when employers want to interact directly with a candidate. Reasons for this may include assessing inter-personal skills, checking for organisational fit and in some cases exploring detailed technical skills and knowledge with a technical expert within the organisation.

It has become common to bemoan the fallibility of human beings in assessment processes. Humans are prone to bias (both conscious and unconscious), influenced by the likeability of the candidate and by their similarity to the assessor or to other people in the organisation. We can never turn human beings into robots; indeed, we are probably keen to use them in the assessment process precisely because they are not robots. But we can use a number of strategies to make their judgements about candidates more reliable and fair:

- **Appoint your assessors**. Assessing candidates is a difficult job. Not everyone is equally good at it; make sure you have a process for figuring out who you want to be doing the assessment.
- **Have diverse assessors**. For reasons of maximising fairness and also to present more representation, you should seek a diverse assessor group that reflects the population you are aiming to select. A mix that reflects different genders, ethnicities and other groups may therefore be important.
- **Train your assessors**. People need to be trained to help them to understand the assessment process and to recognise that it is not just about finding candidates they like.

- **Provide tools and criteria.** Assessors need to have clear instructions about how they should be assessing, against what criteria and how they should record their decisions. Ideally these should be self-explanatory and anchored in observable behaviour.
- **Triangulate and benchmark.** Check that all your assessors are assessing to the same standards by comparing them with each other and with objective standards (benchmarking) and looking at how their judgements compare to those made by AI and objective tests (triangulating).

The more people involved in your assessment the more important it is to manage and quality assure the judgements made by your assessors.

Benchmark data
The overwhelming majority (87%) of ISE members have made some changes or tweaks to their selection and assessment process to improve the diversity of the cohort they are recruiting.

Diversity by design

There is a clear moral case for increasing the diversity of your organisation. Organisations should conduct assessment processes fairly and will want to be seen to be fair. There is also a clear business case for diversity to help organisations to avoid group think and connect to a wider range of customers. However, it is very easy for organisations to design their assessment process in a way that creates clones of existing staff during the assessment process. If you are not careful existing staff and the existing culture will define what success looks like and so it is important that you allow opportunities for other ways of doing things to still enable success in your assessment processes. In many cases it will be useful to bring in external help to support you to review your assessment process and to design them with diversity in mind.

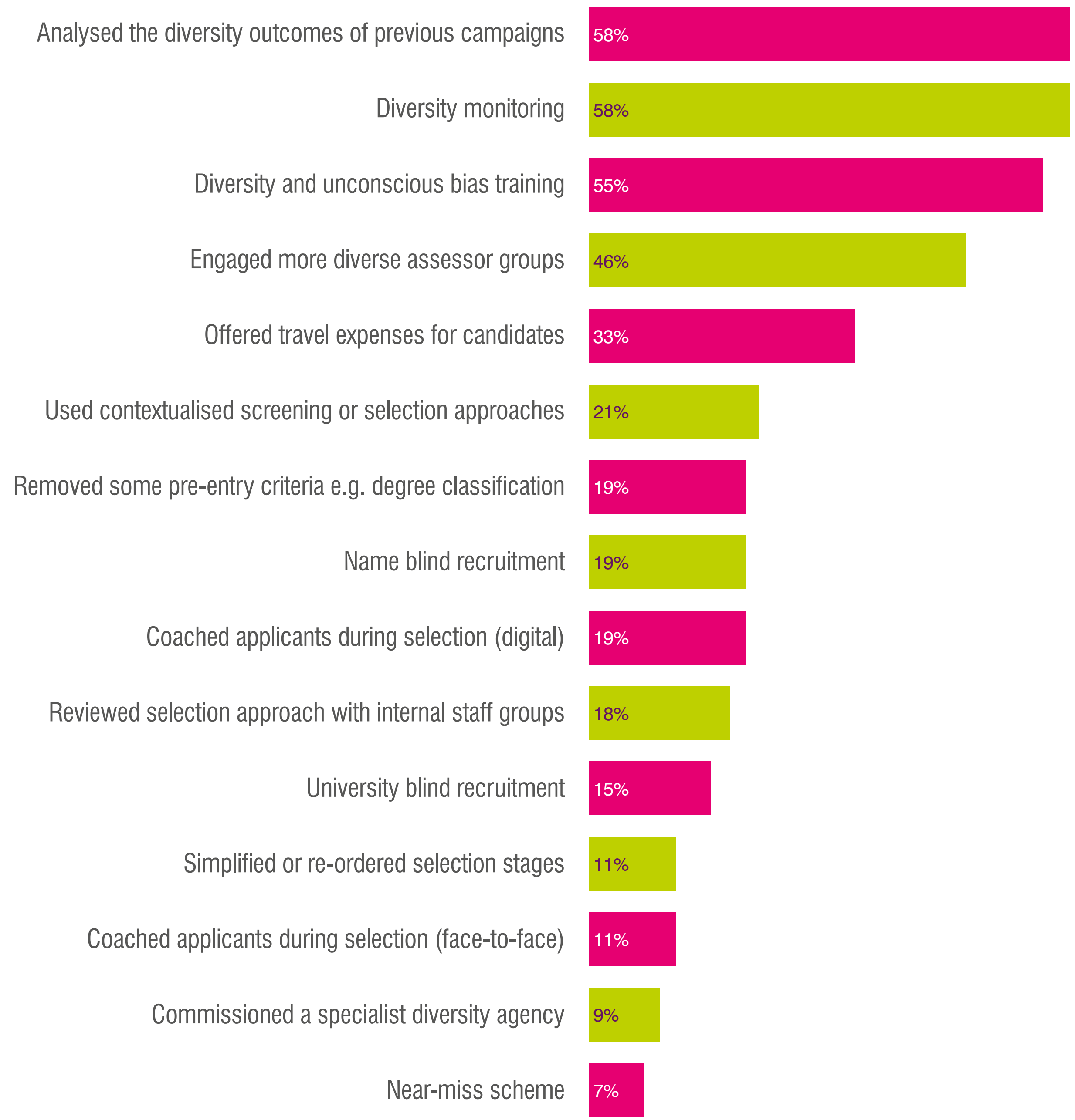
Effective assessment processes subject their assumptions to careful scrutiny. Central to doing this is having access to good, real-time, data that allows you to see how different cohorts of students are doing at different stages of your assessment process. There is much research that demonstrates that different groups tend to excel in different kinds of assessments. For a useful summary of this research have a look at the *Marc Bendick and Ana Nunes* article in the resources at the end of this chapter which discusses how to avoid bias in hiring. It is also important to be aware of the way in which different characteristics interact (intersectionality), meaning that people with multiple diversity characteristics might be at a greater disadvantage.

Ideally you are looking for assessment processes where demographics and background are not strongly predictive of someone's ability to do well in those assessments. Where you find that inequalities emerge in relation to assessment methods, they often point to bigger problems with the validity of the test you are using. In other words, they show that you might not have been monitoring what you thought you were.

Where you do find inequalities in performance, but it is difficult to change your assessment e.g. in relation to key competences or technical expertise, you should consider what kind of support to put in place for the candidates who are under-performing. You should also consider what kind of support to put in place for groups who are under-performing. Finally, you might need to recognise that some tests are unsuitable for some groups, particularly those with disabilities and specific learning needs, and consider whether you really need these tests or if an alternative can be found.

ISE members reported undertaking a wide range of different initiatives to increase the diversity of the cohorts that they select.

Approaches taken by organisations to improve diversity in selection



Mitsubishi and SRS

Digital assessment centre

Case study

srs. Recruitment and Employability Experts

This year SRS launched assess.digital, a seamless and easy-to-use digital assessment centre platform that can help universities and employers take their student and candidate assessments online. The platform executes personal and accurate digital assessments of any size, as well as streamlining and improving the experience of in-person assessment centres - when they're finally able to go ahead again!

The platform has been used by Mitsubishi Chemical Europe to turn a traditional in-person assessment centre into a bustling and efficient online process, which involved interviews, presentations and a group exercise – all with bespoke activities based on their own scoring criteria.

Several consultations with Mitsubishi enabled SRS to understand the requirements and really pinpoint what they wanted to get out of the day. SRS created all the supporting materials and activities to accompany the day, as well as pre-event communications to introduce all stakeholders to the system – ensuring everyone was confident and informed before the day itself.

Whether you're a tech wizard or a complete computer novice, the software is so user friendly that it made the training easy. Whether they were candidates, assessors or admins, all the users gave positive feedback on how accessible the platform is.

The assessment centres were run in November and December and were a huge success. However, there were a few challenges that had to be managed, including:

- Being an international business, there were multiple time zones, different languages and line managers from various departments in various countries all accessing the system on the day of the event.
- Mitsubishi required exercises to be marked by multiple assessors, which was easily accommodated by the platform.
- All the different stakeholders needed training, which was undertaken in multiple sessions with admins and assessors prior to the event.

A major benefit of Mitsubishi using assess.digital was that all the materials and schedules were populated in one place, and all of the candidate marking could be done quickly and easily.

Anna Garcia, Senior Manager HR, Mitsubishi Chemical Europe said: "It was surprisingly easy to move our assessment centre online, even the group exercises. We received really positive feedback from both the assessors and the candidates regarding how easy it was to use the system. The assessors got to receive an automatically generated feedback report for their candidates, which saved them a lot of time and eliminated a lot of paperwork. The candidates seemed to find the process seamless. They had their own schedule and knew where they needed to be at any one time. We will definitely use virtual assessments again in the future, particularly for graduate recruitment."

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Rolling out the selection and assessment process

This section will explore the whole process of selection and assessment from application to decision. We begin by looking at setting minimum requirements, move on to the application stage, and then look at approaches you can use to narrow the field and make your final decision. This is not to suggest that selection and assessment processes need to have all these as distinct stages. In some cases employers will create multi-stage selection processes, whilst in others the stages may be combined to produce a much more streamlined process.

Benchmark data
Most employers (83%) set some minimum requirements for graduates.

Minimum requirements

The process of selection begins before anyone starts completing an application form. *Chapter 4* has already discussed the way in which your attraction process should help candidates discover whether they are right for you and if you are right for them.

Some firms choose to set and communicate some minimum requirements to avoid getting inappropriate applications. The rationale for setting minimum requirements is that it saves time for candidates who will not be a good organisation fit and saves time for recruiters by limiting the field to higher quality candidates.

The most popular minimum requirements for graduates are requiring candidates to have a 2:1 degree classification or above, or sometimes a 2:2 or above. Some organisations also specify A Level grades or UCAS points.

For apprenticeships, minimum requirements are usually closely linked to the entry requirements for the apprenticeship standard or framework and are often developed in conversation with an apprenticeship provider. In many cases it will not be necessary to set any minimum requirements for these roles.

Benchmark data
The typical ISE member received 60 applications for every job they have available

Minimum requirements have been criticised by some advocates of diversity and social mobility. The danger is that they exclude people based on factors which are not directly relevant to the job and that this penalises people who had less educational advantage earlier in life. For example, there is little evidence that demonstrates that people with 2:1s consistently perform better than people with 2:2s in the workplace. As with all aspects of your recruitment process the key thing is to ensure that your assessments are relevant to the jobs you are recruiting for.

Application forms

Most candidates recognise that they have entered a recruitment process at the point when they start to fill in an application form or submit a CV. Evaluating application forms used to be a very time-consuming element of recruitment processes, but most

organisations have increasingly moved towards structured application processes which minimise the need for much human judgement. Student recruitment is a mass process and requires systems to be in place that allow all applications to be considered and then a fair judgement to be made of them. Sometimes, though, the application form can be quite brief and mostly about personal background issues – with online tests used instead.

Key things to think about in designing application forms are as follows:

- **Avoid too many open questions**. They are time consuming to read and score and are much more subjective to mark. Where you do ask open questions it is good to explore candidates' motivation for the job rather than their experience or skills, which are easier to measure more objectively.
- **Don't ask for things that don't matter or you don't need to know**. If you don't really care about someone's GCSE results, don't ask for them. Think about what information you really need to gather at this stage in the process.
- **Think about what information is really telling you**. Is the information that you are gathering really telling you about the candidate's potential or just about their life experience to date? For example, you should be critical of the idea that more work experience or better academic results unproblematically signal potential.
- **Focus on the candidate experience**. No one loves filling in forms. Candidates will thank you for application forms that are shorter and which have been usability tested before they go live.
- **Recognise the range of devices (including those who don't have a device)**. You can't assume that people will be filling in the application form on a desktop computer. It is increasingly important to make sure that your application forms are mobile-enabled and tested on a range of devices. You should also be aware of digital poverty and think about how people who don't have easy access to a device can engage with your process.

Narrowing the field

Once people have applied you will want to start to assess them to see if they are suitable candidates. In some cases this stage of the process is combined with the application form, so candidates complete the application, and then move straight on to do some tests. The downside is that it can result in very long initial applications that increase the difficulty of giving a good candidate experience. In other cases, candidates who are successful at the application stage are then contacted and invited to participate in the next stage, with different forms of assessment delivered as a series of separate stages.

Many organisations view assessment as a funnel with a large volume of candidates being gradually thinned out until you are left with the candidates you want to appoint. At the start you may be dealing with large numbers and so are likely to want to use efficient mechanisms to assess the candidates. Although it is worth saying that an effective approach to marketing and attraction should help you to attract a smaller but highly relevant field of candidates and ultimately save you time during the selection phase (see Chapter 4).

The tools that employers think are most effective at this stage to narrow the field are:

- Psychometric tests
- Automated video interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Online assessment centres
- Online interviews

As you put candidates through these stages it is important to provide them with information and support about what they are doing and why. School and college leavers are particularly likely to find a complex, multi-stage recruitment process intimidating. If you provide them with support through this process you will be able to see more clearly what they are capable of.

Benchmark data
Most ISE members (58%) use psychometric tests as part of their assessment process. Many combine several tests together, with the typical ISE member using a battery of two tests to assess candidates.

Psychometric tests and other online assessments (sometimes bundled and presented as an online assessment centre) are particularly key as they offer an approach that it is possible to fully automate. The psychometric tests that employers are using include numerical reasoning, critical or logical reasoning, situational judgement, verbal reasoning, strength-based assessments, personality questionnaires, learning agility tests and spatial reasoning. Many candidates find these tests intimidating so it is important to think carefully about what tests you need and to avoid overloading candidates.

This phase of the assessment process can also be used as an opportunity for the candidates to come to understand the business and the job more clearly. Ideally the process they go through is a mix of assessment and learning. If they are selected, they should have a good idea of what their job is going to be.

Final stage assessments - Choosing who to appoint

The final stage of the process is usually where organisations involve more staff or consultants as part of the assessment. When you are thinning the field you are likely to use a computer to help make most of the judgements, but at the point of making a final decision about who to appoint you are likely to want to have human beings involved to make more subtle evaluations.

Because the final stages of your process are most likely to be resource intensive you want to make sure that you are using these resources effectively. This usually means that most of the people who make it to this stage are potentially suitable to be hired and you are using the final stage to choose the best, check for organisational fit and weed out any mistakes. Ideally you are probably recruiting a high proportion (perhaps anywhere between 30% and 80%) of the people you bring into your assessment centres and other approaches for final selection.

The approaches to making final decisions that employers rate at the most effective are as follows:

- Face to face assessment centres
- Online assessment centres
- Face-to-face interviews
- Online interviews
- Case studies

> The digital approach is often, but not always, cheaper and does not require students to travel to engage with it, but it may also lack the human element t hat has been key to the value of assessment centres

Assessment centres typically bring together a range of other techniques and combine them into a single holistic approach. Ideally these should be immersive and relevant to the job. Many will include some form of interview.

During Covid-19, assessment centres and other final stage approaches that were previously delivered face-to-face have shifted online. This is likely to remain the case for the short to medium term and it is possible that large scale face-to-face interactions may still be difficult during 2021/2022. Given this, it raises the question as to whether we will ever return to traditional assessment centres. The digital approach is often, but not always, cheaper and does not require students to travel to engage with it, but it may also lack the human element that has been key to the value of assessment centres.

Providing feedback

While candidates are engaging in your selection process you will need to provide them with some feedback. This is particularly important if they are unsuccessful as it can help them to learn from the experience and view their engagement with you positively. At the very least you should let them know whether they have been successful, in which case you will be moving into making offers and onboarding (see *Chapter 7*), or unsuccessful.

If they have been unsuccessful candidates will want to know why. Providing individual feedback is likely to be too time-consuming, but in automated assessments it is often possible to provide some standardised feedback, explaining at which stage of the process they were eliminated and potentially providing them with some links to help them to develop in this area.

Ideally candidates should feel that they have learnt something from the process about their suitability for this kind of job and understand why they failed to progress. If an unsuccessful candidate can walk away from the process feeling that they have a better chance in the next job they apply for, they will feel much more positive about your assessment process and your organisation.

Case study

Accenture
Assessment process

ISE AWARDS WINNER

Accenture's global purpose is to deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity and this applies to the way it engages candidates as much as it does its work with clients. Each year the company hires approximately 600 apprentices, interns and graduates across more than 20 programmes.
Accenture won an ISE Award for its assessment and selection process, which it transformed to:
- eliminate bias by design
- provide candidates with real insights into work and culture
- deliver an excellent candidate experience
- create a future proofed and differentiated approach.

Success Analysis engaged stakeholders with interviews, surveys and focus groups to identify qualities, behaviours and strengths they believed a successful joiner should have now and in the future. This huge volume of data was analysed to develop a Strengths Framework against which assessments are measured.

At application stage diversity software was incorporated, including a contextual recruitment algorithm that allowed evaluation of a candidate's achievements in the context they were achieved, enabling a more diverse pool of talent to be progressed into the process. Real time analytics gave detailed insights into Accenture's pipelines, allowing it to quickly identify any individuals/groups that might need further support or encouragement.

The company introduced The Accenture Discovery Portal, an untimed immersive online assessment experience that candidates can complete in multiple ways, choosing how they watch and read source materials before answering (cognitive and behavioural) assessment questions with a range of response options. The embedded narrative communicates the company's work, culture and values by weaving in diverse characters and realistic storylines.

At Assessment Centre stage, virtual reality assessments (these switched to online immersive exercises in Spring 2020 to accommodate the need for a fully virtual experience) were combined with a strengths-based approach. Short micro-exercises, undertaken individually and in pairs, simulate Accenture scenarios and challenge candidates to demonstrate their natural behaviours in coping with different situations. The whole assessment is designed to give a view of potential rather than evaluating ability by asking about past performance.

At every stage candidates are put in control of how they explore and complete assessments e.g. a self-scheduling tool. Digital chat sessions offer advice to help candidates feel confident as they prepare. They also receive bespoke feedback after each stage.

In 2019/20 Accenture processed 31,000 applications, conducted 5,235 online assessments and had 800 candidates attend its Assessment Centre. The hiring demand was met, achieving strong results across diversity focus areas and a 2.5% uplift in hiring candidates from a lower socio-economic background.

The majority (75%) of stakeholders felt that quality of work of recent hires was much better than previous years. Candidates enjoyed the newly transformed process too, giving 90%+ satisfaction scores and an overall NPS of 90+.

Accenture continues to review and innovate its end-to-end process to ensure it stays aligned to strategic objectives.

Reviewing the process

Ideally you will be in a cycle of constant iterative review of your selection and assessment processes. We have already discussed the importance of constantly reviewing and adjusting your thresholds and explained why this needs to be an ongoing process. In busy periods you should be reviewing the data weekly to look at how your thresholds are working for the whole cohort and for different diversity groups.

In addition to the ongoing tweaks and refinements of your process you should also set regular review points - e.g. annual, bi-annual, every three years - for a more substantial review of your assessment approach. The first question to ask yourself in any review process is whether your objectives have changed. If what the business wants or what the market can provide has changed, you may need to rethink how you approach assessment.

You should also be thinking about how predictive your assessment process is. In other words, is doing well in your assessment process a good predictor of whether people are good at their jobs? Working with colleagues in HR and line managers can help to establish how your student hires are performing and whether they are staying in the business and being promoted. Gathering qualitative feedback on this will generate a lot of insights, but it is also useful if you can gather data points like what proportion of each cohort are still employed after three or five years and what proportion have been promoted. ISE data can be used to benchmark these figures with the wider sector (see *Chapter 8* which focuses on development and retention).

Many of the tools you use for evaluating your assessment approach are similar to those you used in the initial research for your assessment process. They include the following:
- Data analysis - particularly looking at the relationship between performance in assessment and performance on the job
- Reviewing candidate feedback
- Seeking feedback from managers e.g. through focus groups
- Using mystery shoppers to test out your process
- Usability testing
- Meetings with suppliers to debrief on the relationship and the performance of the tools
- Longitudinal tracking of candidates. What happens to them over the longer term, do they stay, perform well or get promoted. Is there anything in your assessment that is predictive of this?

Sometimes it can be useful to bring together everyone involved in the assessment process into a single review workshop to look at the process holistically.

You might also want to bring in a supplier or external partner to support you with reviewing your assessment as they will have more objectivity. You may particularly look for a supplier with more advanced analytical skills.

Covid-19 dramatically changes contextual recruitment

Opinion

David Steel, Employer Partnerships Manager at upReach, considers the impact of the pandemic on using school performance to contextualise academic achievements.

For decades, universities have implemented contextual admissions to make lower conditional offers to students from less advantaged backgrounds, typically those from low performing schools, low-income households or areas where few go to university. For employers, school performance data is a key input into the contextual recruitment systems that a growing number use to identify disadvantaged students who've outperformed their peers academically.

However, in a world where Covid-19 has caused school closures, loss of learning and cancellation of examinations, contextualising candidates using school performance data in the same way as in prior years is problematic for two primary reasons.

First is that school and subject performance data that allowed for contextual comparisons to be made between individuals isn't going to be published for those receiving grades in 2020 or 2021.

Second, due to overall A Level grade inflation and inconsistencies across schools in how they award grades, using awarded grades to compare candidates is more imperfect than ever. A candidate with an A grade in 2020 is likely to be at a lower standard in terms of what they learnt than a 2019 A grade candidate. Equally, two candidates awarded A grades in 2020 (or 2021) may be of very different standards, and even be below that of a B grade candidate in the same year at another school where their assessment methods were more conservative. Note that disadvantaged candidates are statistically more likely to outperform their teachers' prediction in an exam.

Employers using typical contextual recruitment platforms that use school performance data, or that filter out students by A Level grades should strongly consider re-evaluating their process. Failing to do so would mean disadvantaged, high potential candidates are disproportionately filtered out due to an arbitrary, unreliable measure of ability.

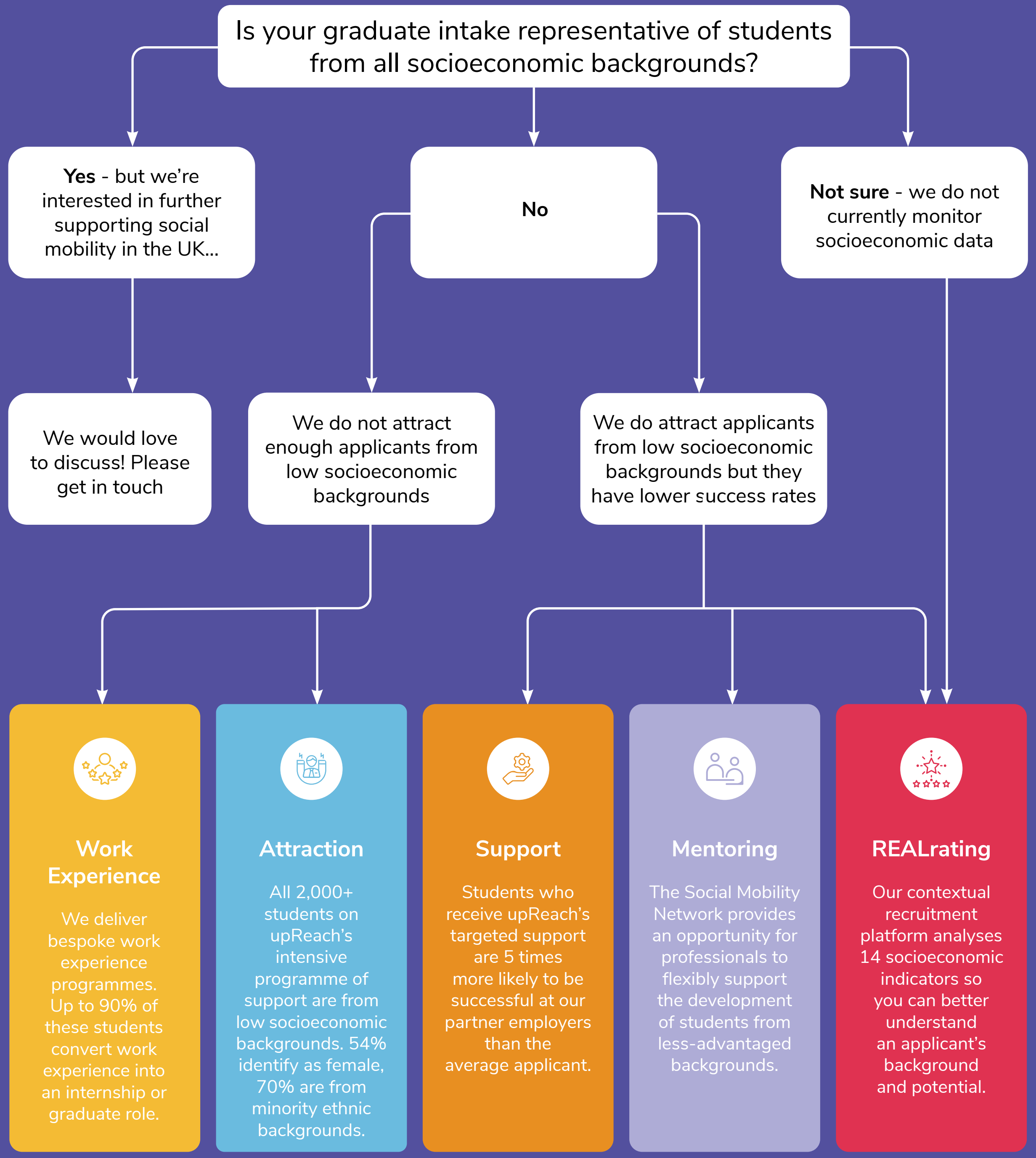
At a time when Covid-19 is exacerbating existing inequalities, considering an applicant's achievements in context is more important than ever. However, it must be done in a way that takes into account the fact that disadvantaged candidates statistically outperform their teachers' predictions, as well as the lack of up-to-date school performance data and the incomparable nature of grades awarded pre and post 2020.

With this in mind, upReach have enhanced their contextual recruitment platform, REALrating, to provide the optimal solution. These enhancements have been informed by our work with the Department for Education, as well as our A Level grade research, published by all major media in August 2020, which successfully challenged the government's decision to award A Level grades via the controversial Ofqual algorithm.

Specifically, REALrating draws upon the analysis of 14 different indicators of socio-economic disadvantage to provide a research-backed and data-driven net indicator score between 0 and 24; the higher the score, the more obstacles a candidate has had to overcome. The indicators include home postcode data (IMD / IDACI / POLAR4), over a decade's worth of school performance data, as well as individual data such as their prior eligibility for free school meals or experience in care.

This overcomes the barrier of using single indicators or problematic A Level grades as a direct comparison for Covid-19 cohort students, whilst allowing employers to easily identify the most disadvantaged applicants, continue monitoring socio-economic data and ensure their application processes elevate less advantaged outperformers, rather than discriminate against them.

upreach.org.uk



5 Proven Ways to Improve Diversity

upReach is a social mobility charity that works in close collaboration with employers and universities to support undergraduates from less-advantaged backgrounds.

Contact us: partnerships@upreach.org.uk

upReach Transforming Social Mobility

www.upreach.org.uk

Four fundamentals for inclusive assessment

amberjack

Amberjack has always focused heavily on inclusivity and the optimisation of diversity, but has felt an increasing level of responsibility and accountability for supporting student employers in raising the bar further to confront what are very complex but hugely important issues. It's evident why we should do it, but 'how' is sometimes what's missing. Here are four key fundamentals to designing inclusive assessment:

1.
Design a selection process free from direct discrimination

Before you start to design your selection process, challenge the criteria of the role and understand where that's coming from. Is it because you have the analysis to show what's very predictive of successful performance or it is because that's the way it's always been done? If you want to create change, it's likely you're going to have to change the criteria by which you're bringing people into the business. We recommend thorough job analysis to understand the requirements of success in the role and to test against legitimate criteria.

2.
Design selection tools which will not advantage one group over another

If you are basing design on your high achievers and it's based on one demographic, it's unlikely you're going to get diversity of thought through your job analysis. It's critical to ask the business for the right representation. You may not necessarily need to speak directly to individuals in under-represented groups, but you can ask stakeholders if there are other ways to achieve the outcome. You can also work with a consultancy, such as Amberjack. In terms of piloting or testing selection tools, if you have introduced a new exercise it important to test it on the different demographics you are hoping to bring in. You can use this data to see if adverse impact is present. If it is, then further analysis will be required to see whether this is from the whole tool or a particular question or criterion and determine what needs to change and when.

3.
Monitor effectiveness

Even if you follow steps 1 and 2 perfectly, you will need to monitor the rates of selection for all groups to ensure that your process is selecting minority groups at the same rate as majority groups. It is important to look at the whole process. Often people focus on final outcomes, but we need to look at who is getting those job offers as well as whether each stage (and each element of each stage) is selecting all candidates at an equivalent rate. This is referred to as adverse impact analysis and an area where support from specialists like Amberjack can really help. True inclusivity is usually the result of continual improvement and careful monitoring.

4.
Raise the bar

Look at the selection rates for each minority group (Black applicants) rather than grouping them together (BAME) as different groups experience different outcomes and the selection rate of one can mask issues with another. Also, when using automated assessments, don't use adjusted benchmarks to achieve equal selection rates, but look at each individual question to ensure that the selection rate is fair.

Download the ***Optimising Diversity in Future Talent Recruitment Insight Paper*** at weareamberjack.com

Resources

ISE resources

ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* includes a dedicated section focused on **selection and assessment** *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/category/selection-and-assessment/).*
The **ISE website** *(https://ise.org.uk/)* also provides you with access to resources, research and events that will support your selection and assessment activities. A key resource is the annual recruitment survey.

Other resources

For regular news and views on issues relating to the recruitment of young people, it is worth checking **Personnel Today** *(https://www.personneltoday.com/recruitment-retention/recruitment-of-young-people/).*

The CIPD's resources on **Selection methods** *(https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/recruitment/selection-factsheet#gref)* are a useful starting point. As is the Society for Human Resource Management's publication on **Selection assessment methods** *(https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/special-reports-and-expert-views/Documents/Selection-Assessment-Methods.pdf).* You could also look at the British Psychological Society's detailed guidance on **The design and delivery of assessment centres** *(https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Member%20Networks/Divisions/DOP/DOP%20The%20Design%20and%20Delivery%20of%20Assessment%20Centres.pdf).*

If you want to dive in even deeper there are a couple of books that we recommend. First, Robert Edenborough's ***Assessment methods in recruitment selection and performance***, published in 2007 by Kogan Page, provides a detailed introduction to the more technical aspects of assessment and selection. As a more recent alternative Ioannis Nikolaou and Janneke Oostrom's ***Employee recruitment, selection, and assessment***, published in 2015 by Routledge, provides a comprehensive, if somewhat academic, look at the area.

If you are interested in research and data in this area then Marc Bendick and Anna Nunes' article **Developing the research basis for controlling bias in hiring** *(https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/189687547.pdf)* provides a useful summary of the evidence base around diversity and recruitment. While the **Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)** *(https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis)* provides data on the composition of the student cohort that is likely to be useful as you think through your strategy.

Chapter 6

Delivering meaningful work experience

Most organisations provide a variety of short-term work experience and employment opportunities with which students can engage. These include everything from experiences that take place during a single day, to temporary jobs that last for a year. Both employers and students have a range of motivations for engaging with these different opportunities, with one of the most important being the desire to find and recruit talent early. This chapter is going to explore why they do this, what forms this work experience takes and how to organise it effectively for everyone involved.

The terminology in this area can be confusing. Terms like 'internship' or 'work experience' can be used in different contexts to mean quite different things. There are some differences in the way work experience is described and operates in schools, colleges and universities. We are going to cover all the different options but will try and be as clear as possible about when we are specifically referring to schools, colleges or universities. Many of the basic principles are the same for all stages of education, but there are also some important differences.

We will use 'work experience' as the over-arching term, covering all the different kinds of experience of the workplace that students might engage in. We will then mainly focus on two of the most common types of work experience used in higher education: internships, which are short, usually paid, work experience opportunities that take place during a university vacation; and 'year in industry' placements which take place between two years of a degree (usually between year 2 and year 3). We will also touch on a range of types of work experience that are commonly used in schools and further education colleges.

Many of the principles outlined in this chapter will be relevant for other early career hires. The relationship between learning and work, that is essential for effective work experience, is also invaluable when you are developing graduates and apprentices. However, in this chapter we are focused on short term hires. We will explore some of the same issues for graduates and apprentices in *Chapter 8*.

Benchmark data

78% of ISE members say that graduates who have completed an internship or placement are more skilled.

55% of ISE members agreed that school and college students who have completed a work experience placement are more skilled.

Why offer work experience, placements and internships

Bringing new people into your organisation takes time, money and energy. You have to recruit and supervise them as well as ensure that the experience works for both them and you. Given the fact that it takes up resources, it is important to think about why organisations do this.

- **Identify talent early and build your pipeline.** Many organisations are keen to create a pipeline of potential hires for the future. Students who have visited your offices and spent some time working with you are at the centre of your talent pool. They have learnt about you and decided whether they share your values and fit into your culture. As well as engaging students, work experience also gives you the opportunity to 'try before you buy' and identify candidates who would fit into your organisation.
- **Access talent and resources.** The temporary hires that you engage through various types of work experience can make a concrete contribution to your business. In the case of longer-term placements (who perhaps join your organisation for nine months or a year), you can treat them in many ways like any other kind of hire. With shorter work experience opportunities you might not want to involve them in your main operations, but you can get them to do project work. In general, the shorter the placement the less useful work you will get out of a hire and the more energy it will take you to manage them.
- **Increase your understanding of the student market.** Bringing current students into your business will increase your awareness about the student market and provide you with a ready-made focus group for your ideas about student recruitment and development. They can also go on to act as ambassadors for your organisation within their peers.
- **Develop the skills base.** Employers often complain about the disconnect between education and employment. Providing work experience offers a powerful way to influence the skills that emerge from the education system and opens up a dialogue with educators.
- **Contribute to the community.** Providing work experience can be viewed as part of your corporate social responsibility. It supports young people and allows you to be seen positively by the community in which you are based.

All these reasons can be in play when organisations decide to engage with work experience. They show that it is not just a question of finding a few students to get some work done. Rather an effective work experience programme is a strategic investment on behalf of your organisation, which simultaneously builds a bespoke pipeline of talent who are engaged with your culture and positions you as a good corporate citizen. Given this, it is important to spend time thinking about why you are engaging with work experience and designing programmes that fit with your strategic aims.

Different types of work experience

There is a wide range of different types of work experience, for example:

- **Workplace insights** are where a student or group of students visit a workplace to see the environment, watch examples of work being done (if possible) and meet staff. This approach is often used with school students as part of career education.
- **Work shadowing** is an opportunity for a student to follow a particular member of staff for a short period (usually between 1 and 3 days) to see how they work. In this case the student is not actually doing any work, but they are getting a real insight into the workplace.
- **1-2 week work experience placements** are common in many schools and colleges. Often encouraged by schools in year 10 (when students are 14-15 years old), the idea is to give students an insight into a particular workplace and an idea of what work is like. Often it is difficult to give students much real work experience during one or two weeks and so these placements can be a mix of talks, work shadowing, insights and small work-based tasks.
- **T Level placements** are a new form of work experience. T Levels are the technical equivalent to A Levels and include a work placement of 45 days. There are a range of ways that this may be delivered that you will have to discuss with the college where the student is studying.
- **Consultancy projects** are a form of work experience which do not necessarily require the student to be on site. Employers will often provide students with a real business problem and ask them to develop a solution, usually culminating in a presentation to the business. This kind of approach can offer a substantial learning opportunity for students whilst minimising the commitment from the organisation.
- **Gap year placements** are extended placements that take place in the year before a student goes to university. In some cases, they may result in students taking an alternative pathway e.g. joining an apprenticeship scheme rather than going to university.
- **Internships (sometimes called vacation schemes, particularly in the legal sector)** are temporary work placements which are typically aimed at higher education students. They normally take place in the summer or Easter vacations and so are typically limited to something between 4 and 16 weeks.
- **'Year in industry' placements** are extended work placements where students take a year out of their studies to work. These typically last between 9 and 12 months. In many ways a student on one of these placements can be treated like any other member of staff.

Covid-19 has substantially disrupted all forms of work and work experience over the last year. As a result, employers and their partners have developed virtual alternatives to all the different types of work experience. It is highly likely that at least some of these forms of virtual work experience will continue once we move into the post-Covid-19 phase.

Some employers view the different forms of work experience as a kind of ladder of engagement. Some students will participate in multiple experiences during their time in education. Each experience helps them to understand your business better, whilst you gradually get to know them and decide whether they are a possible future hire. This process of ongoing engagement, which steadily ramps up in terms of the length and level of responsibility, fits with the idea of building a talent pool that you can recruit from in the future.

Benchmark data
The typical ISE member paid interns and placement students the equivalent of £19,000 per year.

Should work experience be paid?

The different types of work experience outlined above are on a spectrum. At one end (a workplace visit) there is no question of paying students, while at the other (the year in industry placement) most students are paid. But where is the dividing line and why should you pay candidates?

There has been a lot of debate in the political world about the problem of ‘unpaid internships’. In essence this is about employers providing opportunities for students to work and gain experience and either providing no pay or very limited pay (e.g. a ‘living allowance’ that is below the minimum wage). This has raised concerns because these opportunities are unregulated and they can be seen as ‘slave labour’. Even where they do offer good opportunities to build a career, these opportunities are only open to those who can afford to work for free, which raises concerns about them acting as a barrier to social mobility and equity.

Paying students for longer work experience is not just in the interest of the student. Many employers feel that paying interns and placement students helps to clarify the relationship, engage the hire, and ensure that everyone on site is covered by health and safety regulations, insurance and so on. Not paying students could also be illegal due to minimum wage legislation. Of course, in a competitive market, those employers who pay more are likely to be more attractive to students and will find it easier to recruit high quality talent.

Many careers and placement services as well as websites like *RateMyPlacement* (see resources at the end of the chapter) have policies not to promote roles that are unpaid. This can make it more difficult to find the candidates that you need for your roles if you take the decision not to pay them.

For all these reasons and more it is important to have a clear policy on what should and should not be paid.

The *government’s guidance on payment for work experience* (see the resources at the end of the chapter) highlights that participants in work experience should be entitled to the minimum wage unless:

- they are not doing any work (e.g. work shadowing)
- they are designated as a ‘volunteer’
- the work experience is a compulsory part of their course (and is less than a year), or
- they are still in compulsory schooling.

The government’s position is the minimum standard that all employers should adhere to. Good practice would go somewhat further and indeed some educational institutions and careers services have rules about not advertising exploitative unpaid internships. In general, we would suggest that **work placements of more than two weeks should normally be paid**. Indeed, it is useful to ask yourself if access to any of the work experience opportunities that you offer is limited by an individual’s financial background. If it is, you might want to consider paying them for it.

Benchmark data
The typical ISE member received 42 applications for every internship and 50 for every year in industry type placement.

Getting the candidates that you need

Once you have decided that you want to engage with work experience and thought about the kinds of work experience that are relevant to your organisation you will need to attract candidates. Much of what we have already discussed in *Chapter 4* on attracting student hires also holds true for attracting short term hires, particularly internships and year in industry placements.

One decision that you will need to make is the timetable for your recruitment of interns and placement students. If you are mainly focused on either summer internships or year in industry type placements, you may be able to run your recruitment alongside the normal recruitment cycle. If you are recruiting at other times of year, e.g. Easter placements, you may find it more difficult to align the recruitment with your normal cycle.

As students are likely to be doing work experience as part of, or alongside, their studies, it is even more important to build a relationship with the educational institution as part of your attraction activities. We have already discussed some of the issues related to partnership with educational organisations in *Chapter 3*, but it is useful to revisit some of them here with a particular focus on their role in supporting various kinds of work experience.

Working with schools

We have already discussed the importance of schools’ careers provision in *Chapter 3*. As we noted there, schools have a statutory responsibility to deliver career guidance to their students which they interpreted through the framework of the eight *Gatsby Benchmarks* (see the resources at the end of this chapter). Two of these are directly relevant to employers (Benchmark 5, which is about ensuring that young people have encounters with employers, and Benchmark 6, which is about ensuring that they have experiences of the workplace).

Most schools will have a work experience programme. The most common form is a one to two- week placement in the summer term of year 10 (when students are 14 or 15). However, there is no reason why they can’t deliver work experience in different ways and for different year groups. Talk to the careers leader about what they do and what works for your business.

Working with colleges

Colleges are much more likely to be actively looking for ways to work with businesses than schools. Most colleges offer vocational learning programmes which typically involve some form of placement. The introduction of the T Levels (vocational alternatives to the academic A Levels) has placed even greater emphasis on the importance of work placements.

Like schools, colleges should have a careers leader who should be identifiable from their website. They may also have an employer engagement department, although this is often focused on the provision of apprenticeships rather than shorter work placements. Finally, if you know what you are looking for it might be better to approach teaching staff in the departments you are interested in. So, if you would like to offer work experience for students studying construction, you might find that the best person to talk to would be a lecturer in the college's 'built environment' department.

Colleges are likely to have a wide range of learners at very different levels. This could include everything from 14-year-olds to advanced professionals retraining later in life. It is important to talk to the college to discuss your needs and think about the best way to access students and organise your placements.

Working with universities

University students are adults who do not necessarily need to inform their institution about the work experience they are involved in. At one end of the spectrum you may find that you can wrap recruitment for Easter and summer placements into your general graduate recruitment activities without any formal involvement with the university. At the other end of the spectrum some organisations sponsor degree programmes or students and build work experience into these programmes. In the middle are things like a 'year in industry' which might just require the university to agree that a student can participate or may be more embedded into their degree, perhaps requiring the student to write an assessed report on their work experience. In these more formal approaches, you may want a tripartite agreement that sets out the responsibilities of the university, the learner and your organisation.

In most universities there will be no single point of contact, nor a single approach to work experience. Each department may have its own approach, for example the geology department might have close relationships with the oil industry and use this to arrange work experience. At the centre of the university, the careers service is also likely to organise some work experience and work with employers to publicise opportunities. It is probably a good idea to start by building a relationship with the careers service and then use this to bridge out and make more specific departmental contacts.

Assessing work experience candidates

Once you have attracted candidates for work experience you need to decide what kind of assessment process you want to put them through before they join your business. As ever this is something of a balancing act between how robust your recruitment process is and how inclusive and developmental.

Some employers argue that the recruitment process for more substantial work experience (e.g. internships and year in industry placements) should be just as robust as your normal student recruitment. In some cases, employers even use the same selection process. This approach works well if you are thinking of your work experience placement students as a part of your recruitment pipeline. If you have assessed them as robustly as any other hire, you are free to hire the ones that you like at the end of their placement.

On the other hand, some employers emphasise that internships and placements offer an alternative, more inclusive route into their organisation. In some cases, these opportunities might even be actively targeted at groups that you typically find difficult to hire. In this case, the placement offers you a low-risk way to try out hires who might not meet your normal criteria. In essence you are viewing the placement as a kind of extended assessment centre. This both serves to improve your organisation's diversity and to stress-test your normal assessment criteria. If candidates who don't meet a particular criterion perform just as well on the job, perhaps that criterion needs to be re-examined.

Clyde & Co

Bright Futures Programme

Case study

In December 2019 Clyde & Co reconfigured its Bright Futures Programme to focus directly on attracting and recruiting students from lower socioeconomic status groups. Through the programme it wanted to offer genuine career development opportunities to a diverse population, allowing individuals who may not typically apply to a law firm, or gain commercial experience, to learn more about the legal profession and the business world.

The programme which won an ISE Award for best work experience, aimed to help raise students' aspirations, improve their employability skills and widen access to the legal profession.

The programme, which recruited according to certain criteria, was expanded from one week to nine months, recognising the importance of providing ongoing coaching, mentoring and structured development opportunities for this demographic. Following the week's work experience, the students could draw on a dedicated trainee buddy, associate supervisor and mentor across the following months. Post-completion, three re-engagement events built on key commercial knowledge and skills training, and helped participants prepare for their application and assessment centres.

In the inaugural 2019/20 programme, Clyde & Co received over 150 applications from across 47 universities, for only 10 places. The majority (80%) of these applications were state school educated, 67% were first generation university attendees and of these applicants, 60% had a social mobility flag identified via the RARE contextualised recruitment system. The 2020/21 programme received over 300 applications. By partnering with Aspiring Solicitors, Clyde & Co has been able to take its coaching and mentoring to the next level.

The programme brought significant benefits by generating a diverse talent pipeline for the firm and aligning with the firm's broader Global Corporate Responsibility and Inclusion strategy. Attracting talent from a broader demographic is key to the future of the business and changing its approach to attraction is instrumental in supporting this.

The scheme also enabled people to participate in volunteering opportunities that not only allowed them to make a difference, but also develop their own skills. Crucially, it offered an opportunity for key stakeholders to directly engage with participants from more diverse backgrounds, helping them to better understand some of the issues students from lower socially economic backgrounds may face and how to better support them and create an inclusive workforce internally.

The students who participated in the 2019/20 programme provided overwhelmingly positive feedback. An anonymous survey (with a 100% response rate) found that all would strongly recommend the scheme to future participants, with 96% rating the quality of the work as very good or excellent and 92% rating the quality of supervision as very good or excellent.

Making the most of your interns and placement students

Interns and placement students will bring a lot of potential and fresh ideas, but they are likely to need some training and development. The difficult thing is balancing the training that they need with the amount of time that you have someone for. If you have a student on a four-week placement, it is not in your interests nor the student's for all that time to be spent in training. This is about considering the time you have, the tasks you want that student to be involved in and the support they will need to get there.

Ultimately it is important to be realistic about the number of work experience placements your organisation can handle. While interns and placement students bring a lot of benefits, they also require resources to manage and develop appropriately and then more resources for keeping in touch and ensuring that you can bring them back when you need them. It is better to slightly under-estimate your capability to manage interns and build up slowly, than to over-estimate and end up with a year where interns have a bad experience that may be damaging to your recruitment pipeline and your employer brand.

Effective management

At the heart of students' experience is the relationship that interns and placement students have with their manager. They are likely to be a bit rawer than your normal hires. So, it is important that they have good access to a manager and that the manager understands their need for support and challenge. You should pick the managers who are going to be responsible for interns and placement students carefully. It also helps to set out your expectations and provide some training for these managers.

Although managers need to understand the importance of being supportive and developmental, they also need to think carefully about what work they can get the students to do. The shorter the placement the more difficult this task is. Nonetheless it is still important to focus on real business outcomes as the placement is going to be cheapened for the student and devalued for the organisation if it is seen as a 'make-work scheme'.

For short-term hires it is probably a good idea to specify their work very tightly and give them discrete project-based work. With all but the longest placements it is probably best to view the work that they do as outside the core activities of your business. Use short-term interns to do those developmental projects that you never quite get round to, rather than placing them at the heart of your business's deliverables.

The best approach to managing interns and student hires will vary from organisation to organisation and indeed from student to student. But providing support, structure, development and opportunities for feedback and reflection on the experience are always a good idea.

Training and development

As with wider development programmes it is important not to fall into the trap of thinking about development just in terms of formal training programmes. There are lots of ways to support and develop your interns and placement students that do not require formal training.

Beyond the relationship that they have with their manager there is a wide range of approaches that you can put in place to support and develop your interns and placement students. *Chapter 8* discusses how you can build

a training needs analysis for your early talent programmes. A key element of this has got to be creating a training needs analysis and development programme for your temporary hires.

If you are in a larger organisation that is bringing in multiple interns or placement students you have the advantage of having a cohort of students to work with. Use this cohort to support all your training and development activities as it will increase the students' resilience and capacity for peer learning. Beyond this there is a variety of approaches to the training and development of interns and placement that you can employ.

- **Induction and onboarding** help students to understand your organisation and their role.
- **Buddy programmes** match up students with an existing, but often fairly junior, member of staff. They provide an opportunity for the student to build their network within the organisation as well as offering them the opportunity to learn from someone who is closer to their own career stage. This kind of buddy opportunity can also be developmental for the 'buddy' for whom it can offer an initial insight into managing others.
- **Mentors and career coaches involve** allocating students with an adviser, usually either drawn from the HR department or from more senior staff who are not directly involved in their line management. This provides students with an opportunity to get personalised input on their career.
- **Training courses** develop the necessary skills for the work that they are going to do.
- **Networking and social events** help students to build contacts within your organisation and come together as a cohort.
- **Volunteering day(s)** provide an opportunity for team building and to showcase corporate values.

Benchmark data
The average ISE member recruited 50% of their former interns or placement students into a graduate job.

Work experience as a talent pool

Many organisations' primary reason for engaging with work experience is to build a talent pool that they can later use to recruit from. Hopefully, every engagement with a student makes them more likely to want to work for you (if the fit is right) and gives you more insights about whether they are right for your organisation.

Recruitment is expensive and, even with the best assessment and selection processes, always includes some risk. Bringing back a student you have worked with over weeks or even months to join an apprenticeship or graduate scheme reduces this risk and your cost-per-hire.

It is important that you have a clear process for making a judgement on interns' performance and fit with your organisation. Most work experience placements are successful, but some highlight students you do not want to bring back. You need to establish assessment and record-keeping processes that make sure that this kind of outcome informs future hiring decisions and is fed back to the student in a developmental way.

The end of placements

The end of each of your placements is a critical moment when you have to say goodbye (at least for a while) to the students you have been working with. As this is the last memory they will have of you, it is important to make it a good one. Remember that you add students to your talent pool one experience at a time. If they leave feeling disappointed, they are unlikely to come back.

Effective elements at the end of placements include the following:

- **Exit interviews** explore what they learnt and help them to consider how to use this learning as they develop their career.
- **Farewell dinners and celebration events** are about doing something positive and social as a reward for your students' efforts. Simply taking them for dinner and giving a speech about what they have contributed can make a big impression. If you want to approach this more formally, perhaps for larger programmes, then you could turn this into a more formal celebration event.
- **Awards** which can be given to one or more of the participants on your programme. Being identified as 'intern of the year' or something similar can be a highly coveted honour for some students and is something they could add to their CV or LinkedIn profile.

Keeping in touch

If you are going to use work experience to build your talent pool it is important to keep in touch with students who participate in your various work experience programmes, so make sure that you have a database of their contact details. Examples of activities include creating a newsletter or regular mailing informing them of key developments, creating Facebook groups, encouraging students to link with staff and corporate social media accounts and holding reunion events in your offices or on campus.

It is also possible to view your interns as ambassadors for your organisation and brand. You might even decide to pay them to act as campus ambassadors who encourage their peers to attend events and apply to your organisation. Building this kind of formal and ongoing connection can be a powerful way to continue to engage your interns and placement students after they have left your offices.

Finally, it is always important to remember that the personal touch is very effective. Students are likely to respond very positively to being contacted by a former manager or colleague to encourage them to reapply or come back. You may need to oversee this process and prompt managers to get in touch at key moments.

Fast tracking to permanent roles

We have already highlighted that intern and placement assessment can be just as robust as the process used in recruiting for permanent roles. Given this, organisations may find a way to fast-track work experience participants onto permanent roles.

The nature of this fast tracking will vary depending on the length of work experience, the recruitment approach used for work experience and the candidate. In general, the longer the work experience and the more robust the original recruitment, the faster a candidate will get fast tracked.

At one extreme this can mean that successful work experience placements (particularly on vacation internships and year in industry placements) can be hired at the end of their placement without any further assessment. At the other extreme, candidates might still have to go through the normal process but are able to use the insights they gained through work experience to perform better in this process. In the middle, some employers may allow candidates to skip initial stages of recruitment, perhaps by going straight to the assessment centre.

These different approaches remind us that all forms of work experience are a way of building your talent pool and creating a pipeline which ensures that you find the best talent early and channel it into your organisation.

All forms of work experience are a way of building your talent pool and creating a pipeline which ensures that you find the best talent early

Evaluating work experience programmes

Hopefully, this chapter will give you some ideas for ways to improve your work experience programmes. As with many of the other activities in this book, we would encourage you to reflect on what you do at least annually and consider how you might improve them. Gathering data on how the work experience went is key:

- **Read your reviews**. Student will leave reviews about your company and the work experience you offer on a range of different ratings sites. You may not agree with everything they write, but it is important that you review this spontaneous feedback systematically as part of your evaluation process.
- **Seek feedback** from a wide range of stakeholders involved in your programmes including the students themselves, their educational institutions, your staff and their line managers.
- **Look at what your competitors are doing** to see if there is anything that you can learn from their approach.
- **Reflect on your (re)hiring rate -** is your work experience programme creating the kind of pipeline of talent that you hoped?
- **Check your diversity -** is your work experience programme attracting diverse participants and are these participants then going on to join your organisation? If not, why not?

Vodafone
Work experience with schools

Case study

Like many other organisations, Vodafone had to unexpectedly halt upcoming programmes and events in response to the coronavirus outbreak. However, the pause in activity presented a unique opportunity – a chance to entirely rethink the company's work experience strategy and programme offering.

The first step was to understand how the new climate was impacting student attitudes and beliefs about work experience. Using a combination of research and direct insight from schools, it was abundantly clear that:

- A lack of work experience was believed to be the biggest barrier to gaining employment
- Students were calling for increased opportunities to develop skills and careers education
- Individuals from low social mobility and ethnic minority backgrounds were amongst the highest groups lacking access to work experience opportunities

Using this insight, Vodafone developed a new agenda focused on supporting students with gaining employability skills and careers awareness. The strategy also paid attention to uplifting representation of females, ethnic minorities and students from low social mobility backgrounds in technology and on youth programmes.

With a defined vision in place, Vodafone needed a pandemic-proof solution that could withstand the uncertainty of lockdown restrictions. With the help of Springpod, an online careers platform connecting students with employers, Vodafone developed Innovators – the company's first virtual work experience programme.

Designed to spark an interest in technology, the programme offered students the chance to work on developing an Internet of Things device whilst learning about the variety of business areas involved in the process. Students attended a series of live webinars, panel discussions and modular learning content with daily business-related assignments such as concept ideation, product pricing, and social media advertising.

Unlike in-person experiences pre-pandemic that typically offered exposure to a one-job role, Innovators was able to provide a breadth of experience across 12 business areas, including technology, digital, marketing, commercial and consumer services. In addition, students experienced careers workshops to develop employability skills, such as personal branding, mastering an interview and building a CV that stands out.

The one-week programme, launched in February 2021, saw huge demand, with over 1,000 applicants from across the UK applying for 250 selected positions. Hosting the event virtually also removed some of the existing geographic barriers, allowing Vodafone to reach students outside traditional city hubs.

This supported uplifting representation of different groups, with attendees being 54.6% female, 59.6% ethnic minority and 22.3% from low social mobility backgrounds. The programme received a rating of 8.7/10, in addition to 98% of students subsequently considering a career in technology, and 97% interested in joining Vodafone.

Not only has Innovators paved the way for operating in a new paradigm, it has completely reimagined work experience. What was once job shadowing, perhaps organised by a school careers-leader, is now students taking ownership of their future pathways, and having access to countless career experiences at their fingertips.

Key learnings include the need to respond to the changing times, listen to your audience, and be bold in your delivery. Virtual work experience no longer seems like a 'pandemic solution', but perhaps a vision for future careers education.

Resources
ISE resources

The **ISE website** *(https://ise.org.uk/)* is as always a good starting point.
ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* contains many useful news and views, including articles focused on **internships** *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/tag/internships/)* and **work experience** (https://insights.ise.org.uk/tag/work-experience/).

Other resources

A good place to start is the **government's guidance** on paying students for work experience placements *(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-minimum-wage-work-experience-and-internships).*

The Gatsby Benchmarks *(https://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/)* are the main framework that schools and colleges use for their careers provision and so provide the key context for work experience for school students.

There is a wealth of useful advice and insights on the **RateMyPlacement** website *(https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/)* and some very useful examples of work experience programmes on the **Springpod** website *(https://www.springpod.co.uk/virtual-work-experience-programmes/).*

If you want to dive into this more deeply then The Careers & Enterprise Company has produced a summary of the research on **Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits** *(https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-research/work-experience-job-shadowing-and-workplace-visits-what-works).*

Chapter 7

Supporting candidates from offer to onboarding

In this chapter we will explore the candidate experience from the point when you decide to make an offer to a time when they are successfully integrated into your organisation and their career is fully under way. All aspects of the candidate journey influence what your new hires think about your organisation and how well they adapt into their new role. But the period when you are hiring candidates and then inducting them into your organisation is particularly critical.

As with many subjects covered in this guide, your onboarding strategy should knit into other aspects of your recruitment and development strategy. The messages you send your new hires, and what you ask of them, should build on those signalled to them through the attraction and recruitment phases. Your onboarding programme will also transition into your development programmes.

Transitioning into their first role is inevitably a period of learning and exploration for new hires. Nonetheless, you should be careful what you leave them to figure out for themselves. A successful onboarding process will help candidates to settle in more quickly, to understand the culture of their new organisation better and to have a clear idea where they should focus their efforts. In other words, managing this process of transition can help your hires to become productive faster.

Benchmark data
Around 7% of job offers to graduates are rejected. A further 5% are accepted and then later reneged on. For school and college leavers the acceptance rates are higher with 4% rejected and 3% reneged on.

The offer stage

You have chosen the candidate, now they need to choose you. Do not take for granted that everyone you make an offer to, or even all those who accept, will be present on day one of your induction.

It is important that your offer process is efficient and creates a positive impression of your organisation.

You may work for on organisation that makes an offer conditional against additional criteria, e.g., a health check or specific academic results. It is important you make this clear to offerees to avoid confusion and problems closer to the start date.

Who makes the offer?

Give some thought to who makes the offer, when they make it and how the offer is made. The most common practice is for the final interviewer from the department or function the student will join to phone the offeree. This is then followed up by an email, and perhaps another call, from the recruitment team with the offer details.

At the final stage of the selection process, you should tell candidates when they will hear your decision. The sooner candidates are told the better. The candidate may have another offer deadline to meet so needs to know your decision. A prolonged offer period can lead to uncertainty in a candidate's mind and leave a negative impression. If you cannot give candidates a prompt answer, explain your reasons and tell them when they will hear the outcome.

Benchmark data
The median annual starting salaries offered by ISE members are £29,667 for graduates, £18,450 for school and college leavers and £19,000 for interns and placement students. However, there are considerable regional and sectorial variations to these salaries that can be found by looking at the most recent ISE recruitment survey.

Offer pack

Your organisation is likely to have a formal offer letter, employment contract, and a process all new joiners need to follow. As well as complying with employment law, you may also have professional body or regulatory requirements to meet, e.g., credit checks in the banking sector. When hiring students, you will need to think about any additional requirements that apply and additional information your candidates will need. The legal and formal requirements you will need candidates to comply with are likely to include:

- formal acceptance deadlines
- right to work details including any visa conditions
- conditional requirements
- checks with apprenticeship providers that the candidates meet the requirements, and
- references.

You may not be able to confirm salary details at the time you make the offer. If this is the case, it is good practice to tell students the salary of recent joiners and inform them as soon as you know what their salaries will be.

The offer pack should also contain additional information that will help your new hires navigate the joining process, including:

- an employee handbook setting out benefits and key policies
- an overview of your organisation and its history
- information about the unit or department that the candidate will join
- key contact details, and
- information about the induction and onboarding process.

Most employers use a new joiner portal to provide many of the details in place of hard copies.

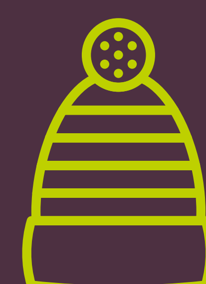
Offer deadlines and exploding offers

Over recent years, organisations have reduced the grace period they allow students to decide on whether to accept an offer. This is sometimes called an 'exploding offer' as it explodes (is withdrawn) after a specific date.

But you should balance your need for a decision with the candidate's need to make the right choice and consider other offers. You have made your decision, now allow your candidates enough time to seek additional guidance and make their decision. Forcing their decision unnecessarily could lead to higher renege rates as offer acceptances are not legally binding.

Offer deadlines will be dependent on a number of factors. When the start date is close, you will need a quick decision. A longer period could also slow down your recruitment process for other candidates. How quickly you need to confirm a start date could also be driven by your internal process requirements. Reference checks and even IT set-up can all take time. You might have to manage a tight turnaround if you are making offers late in the season.

Benchmark data
Most (71%) ISE members run pre-boarding activities with candidates before they officially start working for the organisation.



Keeping candidates warm

Student recruitment is unique in that there is often a long period between you making the offer and the point the candidates start work. The legal sector, in particular, has a lengthy recruitment cycle. In some cases your internship offers may not start for over a year or you may allow candidates to defer start dates to go travelling. You need to ensure that you keep candidates engaged through this period for three reasons:

1. They are less likely to keep looking at alternative roles and accept a competitor's offer.
2. You will influence the candidates' perception of your employer brand, building engagement as the start date approaches.
3. The candidate's transition from education to work will be smoother, making your onboarding process more successful.

As with any communication strategy, plan your approach and use multiple channels and approaches to engage with your candidates. Effective strategies include the following approaches:

- **Buddies**. Ask an employee currently on your development programme to act as guide through the joining process and as a point of contact for any questions.
- **Social media**. Create a WhatsApp or Facebook group for a new intake. This works particularly with apprentices and intern and placement student cohorts.
- **Social events**. Run social events either at locations that are familiar to the students already or at your locations. During Covid-19 organisations have run social events online.
- **Newsletters**. Email regular news updates about your organisation. You could repurpose existing company materials and use them to help your hires to feel involved.
- **Induction updates**. Keep candidates informed on start date and induction details – let them know you are keen for them to join your organisation.
- **Line managers**. Ask line managers to make contact with new hires and give them a call in the week before they start. The personal touch will make a big difference to how included new hires feel.

Be sure to track candidates throughout this period. If you don't hear from candidates it could be a signal that they are disengaged, or have changed their plans. Unfortunately, many employers report that some candidates renege and do not turn up on their start date, despite accepting the offer.

Many employers make use of new-joiner portals. Make sure you understand the facilities your system provides. As well as an efficient means of disseminating required information and tracking the joining process, portals can contain engaging content. Use your systems to gain the information you require, but also to access new joiners and communicate with them. It is important to track engagement. If a candidate isn't engaging with any communications or content, it could be a sign that they may renege on your offer.

Induction and onboarding

All the work you have done through the offer process should lay the groundwork for a successful onboarding experience for your new hires. A poor onboarding programme will result in weaker employee performance, increased absence and turnover, and damage your brand. If you get onboarding right your new hires will integrate quickly and smoothly into their new role and realise their potential.

People sometimes confuse induction and onboarding. Induction is the term used to describe the technical aspects involved in starting your new employees, usually an event when employment commences. Onboarding is a broader term that describes your programme to integrate new employers into your organisation. Onboarding overlaps both induction and your development programme. It's about how new hires realise their potential in your organisation.

Onboarding

Onboarding covers the candidate's journey from the offer stage through to the point you consider your new hires fully integrated into your organisation. Your recruitment approach should lay the groundwork for a successful onboarding experience. A well organised onboarding process will help your new hires to become productive employees.

Some important points to remember when developing your onboarding programme are as follows:

- Onboarding starts as soon as your candidates receive an offer. It can't wait until their first day in the office.
- Your organisation's brand and its employer value proposition should be the thread that runs right through your onboarding programme.
- The wider business, particularly line managers, should have an active role in designing and delivering the onboarding programme.
- Include social elements to encourage informal learning and networks. Even during Covid-19 induced lockdowns employers created online social events. One ISE member created an online music event.
- Make as much use of immersive, learn-by-doing, activities as possible. Endless streams of presentations have a negative impact on energy and comprehension levels.
- You don't need to cover everything on day one. Split the onboarding programme into manageable and digestible chunks.
- One goal of the onboarding process is to create the right level of independence amongst your joiners. They need to learn how far they will be expected to self-manage and lead their own development. The early stages of onboarding will be more directive, but as time progresses your programme should help new employees become more knowledgeable and confident.
- Identify the point at which onboarding has ceased and new hires are considered to be integrated into your organisation's employee population.

Keeping onboarding on brand

You no doubt made use of various platforms and channels to promote your brand and employer value proposition through the attraction phase (see *Chapter 3*). Continue working with the core messages you want to deliver through your onboarding programme. This will help to ensure that what you provide aligns with candidates' expectations. If this is difficult for you to do it suggests that there is a disconnect between appearance and reality. You should ask yourself the following questions:

- What impression do you want to give to your new hires about your organisation's culture and work environment?
- What do you want them to feel and say about their new job?

One mistake some organisations make is to over-promise. Are there any jobs that aren't dull or difficult at times? Is every organisation's culture perfect? Using engaged line managers will help you pitch your content with a good balance of persuasion and reality.

Your brand is what people say about the organisation in the bar at the end of day one; it's what new hires say to their friends about their new job. And some of those friends may still be on campus.

Engaging line managers

In most cases your new hires have joined as trainee managers, accountants, lawyers, developers, marketeers, rather than as part of the recruitment or HR team. Yet, so far you will have had the most contact with them. By engaging line managers in the design and delivery of the onboarding programme you will help ensure that the new hires learn what they will need to know in the parts of the business that they are actually going to be working in. This will help them to become established and productive in the shortest possible time.

It is a good idea to train line managers effectively before their new hires join. Make sure they understand what is required of them, and where early careers hires may need more support than experienced hires. They should also have a full understanding of the development programme structure and how it works. There are several ways to engage and involve line managers including asking them to be involved in the:

- design of key messages and relevant content for new hires
- delivery of training sessions
- network building sessions, and
- mentoring of new hires.

Existing employees can be the strongest advocates for your organisation and the early talent programme. They will also ensure the onboarding programme is grounded in the reality of your organisation's culture and work.

The structure of your early talent programmes and organisation will determine exactly how and where the 'business' should be engaged. Rotational development programmes often have an element of central HR ownership; non-rotational programmes are sometimes owned entirely by the relevant business unit.

Measurement and feedback

Throughout the onboarding period you should be getting feedback. This feedback serves three main purposes:

1. Practical feedback will help you to plan future content and spot any omissions to be corrected.
2. Early warning feedback will help you to help spot employee performance issues.
3. Dissatisfaction feedback will highlight issues that need to be addressed.

You should seek feedback from both new hires and their line managers at various points along the onboarding journey. New hires may not know what they don't know and it is the line managers who are most likely to spot this.

Early performance and dissatisfaction issues will often be addressed through line manager and business unit relationships. But the early talent development team is often also involved, particularly on rotation programmes.

In his book, *Employer Branding for Dummies*, Richard Mosley (see the resources at the end of this chapter) highlights three measures that determine the overall success of the onboarding experience:

- engagement
- retention
- speed to performance.

Retention is the most straightforward to measure and compare year-on-year. Engagement and speed to performance less so. Pass rates for professional exams, performance appraisal results, productivity measures, and qualitative comments, all provide useful measures.

Benchmark data
The average length for an induction programme run by an ISE member for new hires (both graduates and apprentices) was eight days. But it is important to recognise that these may not be delivered as eight consecutive days.

The induction

Now you have a clearer understanding of the broader onboarding process, it's time to think about the specific ingredients you need for a successful induction. Early talent hires are likely to require a more detailed induction than your lateral hires. They have less experience of the workplace and will need a thorough introduction to your organisation.

First impressions count, and the induction event is one of the key first interactions that will establish how your new employees perceive your organisation. Creating hassle-free access to the maze of systems and policies you use will make a lasting, positive impression on the candidates. Do the opposite and you will establish a negative impression that you find difficult to build on.

Most employers run early talent induction events that last more than one day. During the pandemic, these were held online. Before the pandemic they were often held off-site at a training venue, or an appropriate internal space. Some employers break the induction into more than one event. Large intakes may need to be staggered. You may arrange a corporate induction, then separate inductions where your new hires join different business units.

Your offer pack will have included all these details and, assuming your process are efficient and the candidates reliable, your new hires will turn up at the right venue, at the right time, raring to start.

Think clearly about how you capture and build on this enthusiasm. Launching your new employees straight into detailed IT training and compliance briefings might not be the most engaging way to start an induction event. The best approach is to set out clearly what your induction needs to cover over what period, with a structure designed to maximise delegate engagement.

Whether they last a couple of days or are delivered in intervals over a longer period, most inductions share several common features.

If you have previous interns or apprentices in your intake, they may already understand some of the induction content and so you may allow them to opt out of certain elements. However, it is likely they will have forgotten aspects, or policies could have changed. For the sake of comprehensiveness and group cohesion, it is better for all the inductees to go through the complete process and explain to those with previous experience why this is the case.

Induction contents	
The organisation	Strategy briefing Culture and values Organisation structures The importance of early talent
Their role	Outline their role Learning and development programme Line management and mentoring Introduction to their team and manager(s)
IT	Distribution of laptops and ancillary equipment Training in IT policies and protocols Software training
HR practice and policy	Performance appraisals Mental health and wellbeing Employee benefits Employee handbook explanation Pay, expenses and tax Pension schemes
Facilities	Health and safety briefing Site guides: car parks, canteens, toilets etc

Strategy, culture and values

If you want your new hires to be fully engaged, they need to buy into your organisation's strategy, its values, its mission and vision. And they need to see how their new role plays a part in delivering the organisation's objectives.
Involving senior leaders at this stage has three benefits:

1. Leaders are those closest to the organisation's strategy creation so adept at bringing it to life.
2. When leaders deliver culture and values messages they reinforce their importance to the organisation.
3. Involving the leadership in student inductions signals that they are personally invested in the early talent agenda.

Done properly, new hires will start to get a feel for 'how things get done around here'.

Their role

Throughout the recruitment process your candidates should have developed a clear idea of the job they have been hired to do. But, with their limited experience of work, they will lack detailed knowledge of their role in practice. This will take weeks, if not months, to develop fully. A good induction will speed up this process.

As well as the broader organisation's strategy, you should also cover the role of their business unit and give them an understanding of where their role fits into the organisation. This will help them understand the part they play in the overall success of the organisation.

Previous student intakes should take part in the programme and could even design core induction content. They have valuable first-hand experience of joining your organisation. Their insights will help provide clarity for the new hires, ensure the content is relevant, and provide them with an opportunity to build networks.

What success looks like and how progression works should be included alongside the detail of their learning programme.

Practices and policy

Although dry in content, your new hires need to know about policies that affect them and those they need to comply with.

How payroll works, holiday allowances and other benefits need to be explained. It's also highly unlikely that your new hires will know much about corporate pension policies. You will need to cover any legal requirements alongside details of your organisation's scheme.

This could be the point you decide to include content on the policies and networks within your organisation focused on diversity and inclusion. Initiatives such as mental health support should also be covered.

You may also need to include regulatory elements in the induction such as compliance requirements, anti-money laundering training and professional body memberships. If any of your intake are going to study professional qualifications as part of their employment, you will need to ensure the key details are included as part of the induction. In some organisations study commences straight after the initial induction; a second induction takes place at business unit level after trainees have completed their first phase of study.

IT training

Although the incoming students are likely to be tech savvy, they may have had limited exposure to corporate software, and certainly won't have used any bespoke internal software products. Security systems, online protocols and workplace IT customs could also be new concepts for them.

Your IT team probably has an existing programme for new joiners and this can be adapted for your early talent hires. IT plays such a crucial role in our working lives, the sooner people are set up on systems with access to networks and email the better. Having laptops and logins set up on day one creates a great first impression.

This is also the time to reinforce IT behaviour policies. Even if the new joiners have some corporate experience, your policies will be different in some way. Again, their relative lack of work relevant experience means that you will need to explain concepts like email etiquette thoroughly.

Newton
Graduate onboarding process

Case study

ISE AWARDS FINALIST

Newton's graduate onboarding process recognises the importance of ensuring graduates feel fully invested in its values and culture and first contact is an important part of the process. For example, Newton's hand-delivered 'welcome packages' have proven to be highly engaging during the pandemic as a personalised introduction to the brand and a way of helping alleviate the feeling of isolation that can come with working from home and starting a new role virtually.

Following on from this, Newton's Review Days are integral to ensuring new recruits successfully make the transition from higher education to employment. All offer holders are invited to attend an Offer Holder Review Day where current junior consultants speak about their journey and experiences with Newton during the first year. Offer holders are encouraged to take part in workshops designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills to succeed in their role and make connections within the company.

Newton's programme acknowledges the need to empower graduates with adequate knowledge and skills to successfully transition from higher education into a client-facing, solutions-based consulting role. To support this transition, graduates are assigned a personal development manager alongside a line manager. While line managers may change according to the projects, it is the role of the development manager to act as a constant adviser, guiding and supporting the individual's development and performance throughout their career.

As well as professional development, the programme is designed to assist with personal development. Newton's buddy programme ensures candidates receive consistent, high-quality advice from someone with recent first-hand experience of the job role. A buddy is a previous graduate recruit with one to two years' consulting experience at Newton, matched to new joiners with similar interests. The buddy scheme is extremely valuable in building confidence, helping new recruits feel welcomed and supported and ensuring they are well prepared to begin their career at Newton.

One of the most successful things about Newton's on-boarding process is the speed at which new recruits can progress. By the third week of onboarding, recruits are working hand-in-hand with clients, owning and delivering areas of a project, solving real problems and delivering tangible results.

James Hepher, a consultant coming up to his first year anniversary with Newton, says: "I would have never guessed a year ago, I would be working on the scale and size of the problems that we're helping to solve today. The fact that I've made incredibly close friends, and have been trusted to help solve problems that multi-billion-pound companies are struggling with, is unprecedented among my peers - even the ones in consulting."

Newton is an operational consultancy brimming with people who have a passion for cracking really tough challenges. The consultancy is continuously featured in The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers list, which is a particularly important measure of success as the ranking is determined by interviews with over 19,000 recent graduates demonstrating that efforts to become the consultancy of choice for graduates are paying off for Newton.

NFU Mutual Graduate onboarding programme

ISE AWARDS FINALIST

Case study

Graduates are potential future leaders of the business and making them feel part of the NFU Mutual community even before they join is really important.

From the time of offer through to the first day they start work, NFU Mutual engages graduates in various activities to ensure that they feel part of the organisation from day one. It also puts them in touch with the fantastic network of graduates - over 150 individuals from across the business.

'Getting to know you days' offer graduates opportunities to meet one another, get to know their people manager and start learning more about the business and culture. This links with a required behavioural quality - business awareness.

Graduates also get involved in fun activities, helping to create an important bond between the cohort, whilst at the same time aligning to a long-term business objective – a great place to work.

Mark Dinnage, IT graduate, said: "The onboarding at NFU Mutual was great, we had regular communication from both the talent team and IT. We met the IT Director, Tim Mann, and discovered more details about the scheme and the business."

The WhatsApp group for graduates helps them to get to know one another before starting work. If they're relocating, it's a useful way to share information and even find potential flatmates.

When graduates start work, the most important thing is that they feel valued. In addition to the above, the company runs various sessions prior to them starting to ensure they are ready to hit the ground running including:

- stakeholder management sessions
- meet and greets with placement/line managers
- 'meet other graduates' on/off scheme

Rebecca Symmons, a customer service graduate, said: "The contact with NFU Mutual was really great, with the opportunity to develop important career skills from day one."

During a two-week formal induction, graduates continue to create great relationships and a fantastic network around the business. Activities include:

- Q&A sessions with CEO and divisional directors
- completion of a project
- a team fun day
- various other sessions such as, learning styles and ways of working, personal brand and engagement

The first three months includes:

- personal awareness training along with coaching
- completion of a Certificate in Insurance to provide basic knowledge required to work in the insurance industry
- the start of a relevant professional qualification
- creation of a bespoke personal development plan
- in role development, adding value and making a difference from the outset
- getting involved and driving extra-curricular and charity events.

In 2020 over 8,000 graduates applied for one of 20 places on the scheme and since 2010 NFU Mutual has employed 168 graduates. It has 87% retention rates for graduates on scheme compared with an average of 72% for other organisations (Institute of Student Employers 2020) and 71% retention rates for graduates off scheme (in a permanent role) with an average of 57% for other organisations (Institute of Student Employers 2020).

NFU Mutual graduates are not just a number, they are valued for their individual contributions and strengths. And as with all employees, the company actively supports graduates to develop their careers and fulfil their potential to be the best they can be.

Resources

ISE Resources

The **ISE website** *(https://ise.org.uk/)* offers a portal to all things to do with student employment.
ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* offers news and views including specific sections on **onboarding** *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/tag/onboarding/).*

Other resources

The CIPD have a useful resource setting out **how to run inductions** *(https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/recruitment/induction-factsheet).* It includes a checklist that you can use to review your induction approach. Acas have also produced guidance on **inductions** *(https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-guide-to-staff-induction).*

The pandemic has seen a massive increase in online and virtual onboarding. You may be interested to read Robert Walters **Guide to remote onboarding** *(https://www.robertwalters.co.uk/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/RW-Remote-Onboarding-Guide.pdf).*
It may also be worth returning to Richard Mosely and Lars Schmidt ***Employer branding for dummies*** published by John Wiley and Sons in 2017, in the context of your onboarding activities.

Chapter 8

Creating a powerful development programme

Early career staff are usually hired for their potential, so developing them in the right way is critical. After all, your graduate or apprentice programme will only survive if those people are developed properly to meet business demands. The main challenge is how to create the right combination of development opportunities in the context of your organisation.

This chapter turns the spotlight on how you can best support and develop young people early on in their careers. It will help you to design a programme with objectives and measures for success as well as help inform the kind of approach and techniques that may work best for your organisation.

Benchmark data
A typical ISE member spends £3,054 on the learning and development of entry-level staff

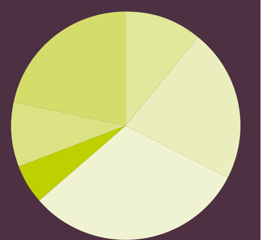
Why run a development programme?

Entry-level staff are not the finished article on the first day they arrive at your organisation. Having little or no experience of work, they bring with them particular challenges that are best addressed through some kind of structured development programme for the first one to three years of their employment.

Most large companies make significant investment in the learning and development of school and college leavers, usually through apprenticeship programmes, and graduates. Investing in the development of your entry-level hires is not only a way of ensuring you get the best out of them, but also offers a valuable attraction proposition for top talent.

Benchmark data
80% of ISE members run a graduate programme for all of their graduate hires

ISE members enrol 87% of their school and college leavers onto apprenticeships and 13% of their graduates onto apprenticeships



A holistic approach

The majority of ISE members invest in development programmes for graduates and school and college leavers. Most programmes for school and college leavers are apprenticeships, but a minority of graduates are also enrolled on apprenticeships.

It is important to consider how each programme supports and interacts with the other. For example, an intern programme will typically feed a graduate programme. This means that someone who has interned will have different development needs to someone fresh out of university with no experience or with knowledge of another organisation. Similarly, there will be crossover with onboarding, so ensure that your programme aligns.

There may be distinct development requirements for graduates and apprentices in some areas. However, there may also be opportunities to bring them together such as for training in behavioural skills. This approach can have additional value, helping to ensure that your apprentices and graduates feel an equal sense of status and belonging.

Benchmark data
Average size of an ISE member's team is 10 people, but a more typical student development team is three people.

On average each member of development staff is responsible for 29 early career hires each year.

Resourcing - Managing your programme

Someone in the organisation needs to take responsibility for overseeing the development programme.

While management of the programme may sit within HR, perhaps with a team or person dedicated to entry-level hires, some programmes are deployed into the business to manage. This depends upon the size of the organisation but can also be a reflection of the company's commitment to early career talent and their development.

Those responsible for the development programme should have a good understanding of the employer value proposition (see *Chapter 4*) and should work alongside the recruitment team. This helps to ensure that the promises made during recruitment are met and that recruiters don't over-promise. It is important to align the expectations of your hires with the reality. A close working relationship between recruitment and development teams also allows issues and concerns to be fed both ways.

The number of staff who are primarily involved in the development of entry-level hires varies substantially across different firms.

Managing the development of entry-level talent can be time consuming. As well as programme management, time has to be built in for regular contact and, as new hires benefit from knowing that they have a point of contact, someone they feel they can go to for support. This has further complications for those managing global programmes.

The commitment required to run an effective development programme is reflected in the ISE data, which shows that around three quarters of firms bring in external contractors to support them, from developing programmes to running events or even helping out with admin. On average these firms are spending about a third of their budget on external contractors.

ISE's annual *Student Development Surveys* can be useful for helping you to build a business case for your team (see the resources at the end of this chapter).

Planning your programme

An ideal planning process would include five key stages.

1. Research and analysis

Analyse learning needs

A learning needs analysis (LNA) can be undertaken for individuals, a team or the whole organisation; it involves understanding your organisation's current and future skills and knowledge needs as well as what currently exists.

The challenge is how to balance individual demands for training with organisational needs. Your learning needs analysis is not just about giving everyone access to the training courses they want, it is also about assessing what the organisation really needs. Training and development supports both individual career development and organisational goals. The ideal training and development programme should seek to satisfy both of these at the same time.

Gathering, analysis and reporting of information and data should involve people across the organisation. A combination of methods is ideally used to gain insight, such as surveys, existing data and team meetings or hiring external consultants.

The gaps identified through your analysis can help shape your development and training priorities and plans. For example, an LNA might identify the need to improve behavioural skills if there are gaps in some of the more human skills. Likewise an LNA might identify that specific technical expertise is required, such as data science expertise; the programme would thus be much more focused on developing the technical skills and aptitudes required.

In the ISE's *Student Development Survey 2021* we identified four categories of skills:

- Attitudes and behaviours such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience
- Technical skills such as basic IT skills, data analysis and job-specific tech skills
- Transferable skills such as time management, writing and problem solving
- Workplace skills such as career management, managing up and leadership

You may find it useful to use these categories to structure your learning needs analysis and think about the key areas of focus for your programme.

Diving into more detail, the ISE's most recent Development Survey identified the 10 skills that employers are most likely to be focusing on in their development programmes.

The top 10 skills that employers focus on

Graduates	School and college leavers
1. Resilience	1. Job-specific technical skills
2. Presentation skills	2. Business-appropriate communication
3. Teamwork	3. Teamwork
4. Taking responsibility for their work	4. Problem-solving
5. Job-specific technical skills	5. Time management
6. Self-awareness	6. Interpersonal skills
7. Interpersonal skills	7. Resilience
8. Problem-solving	8. Presentation skills
9. Commercial awareness	9. Basic IT and digital skills
10. Business-appropriate communication	10. Taking responsibility for their work

Assess existing training provision and resources

Part of your initial scoping exercise should include an assessment of what training resource is already available and the approach your organisation tends to follow.

It can be useful to review feedback at this point to help inform how effective existing provision is. All your analysis will help you to determine volume and type of supplementary training required.

Does your organisation have a strong coaching or formal learning culture that you need to align with? Your organisation's training philosophy is part of its employer value proposition and should manifest itself in your programme design. For example, if your company promotes self-directed learning, could early hires benefit from an online learning platform, enabling them to dip in and out in their own time?

Existing programmes could be complemented by bi-annual events to support people on areas that more experienced hires won't need.

Make sure you're aware of existing resources too. If you are part of a large organisation with thousands of employees, there may already be lots of activities and materials as well as existing training programmes that may be appropriate for your entry-level staff. Also consider external resources such as those provided by industry bodies or other providers such as LinkedIn Learning.

For example, existing programmes could be complemented by bi-annual events to support people on areas that more experienced hires won't need. 'Development Days' would bring your cohort together to focus on specific skills relevant to them at a certain point in their journey. People remember the impact of initial and last experiences, so it is common for employers to bookend development programmes with kick-off and roll-off events.

Engage stakeholders

Identifying key stakeholders and involving them in your programme design will be critical to its success. They can help you to identify problems and motivations as well as establish who should be part of the support network for your graduates and apprentices.

Another crucial role for stakeholders is to champion the programme, both in order to get wider organisational support for it, and to secure graduate/apprentice buy-in to the value of the programme. Having a range of stakeholders, and from different levels of seniority, clearly indicates the business commitment to the programme. As people learn best when they appreciate the value of what they are learning, this can be the difference between the success and failure of your programme.

As well as setting the direction and tone of your programme, if you can persuade the executive team to take support roles, then engagement will branch out across the organisation.

You can read more about stakeholder engagement in *Chapter 2*.

2. Setting objectives

Objectives should align with your business strategy; they should be focused with clear milestones and they should be measureable.

When setting your programme's objectives you need to be clear about:

- the business goal the training supports
- the roles and responsibilities of your staff in achieving that goal, and
- the kind of training needed to ensure those people are able to perform those roles and responsibilities.

Ensure that your programme objectives are clearly recorded and shared with key stakeholders to ensure everyone understands what your programme is designed to achieve.

Align with talent spotting goals

How people are recruited and developed needs to be underpinned by the same framework and wider business strategy.

When setting objectives, examine the purpose of your programme: Why did you recruit those people in the first place? Why do you need them in your organisation? What business need are they there to address?

Whether your recruitment was set out to develop future leaders, address a diversity issue or meet a skills gap, ensure that these are accounted for.

People goals

Your programme's success will also depend on meeting the needs, wants and abilities of your early talent as well as the project and/or team that they are joining.

Different roles will have different needs, for example an IT consultant or tax adviser will require certain technical skills. In student recruitment we are often recruiting for potential rather than pre-existing skills, but this idea then requires that organisations build on this potential through their development programmes. Regardless of role, business skills will always be required to ensure they perform well and to launch them on their future career.

Think about what business skills you need to cover as part of your programme as well as where you want your entry-level talent to be in two or three years to ensure they are competent to do their job.

Map out what skills you want them to learn and when. This will depend on what's appropriate to the stage they are at in their career and knowledge journey as well as what the business requires. For example, are there professional qualifications or industry requirements that must be achieved by a certain point? Bear in mind that their needs may change along the way and people learn in different ways as well as at different paces.

Define the expected level of performance in your objectives, ensuring there are milestones and opportunities for feedback.

3. Programme design

Development programmes vary in terms of their framework and there is no magic formula. Ultimately, it will depend on what's already available and what budget you have to supplement it.

For effective programmatic design, you should consider the content in terms of your LNA - what skills do you need to meet your objectives? And what you can feasibly deliver; it is pointless designing a seven-week face-to-face programme if you don't have the budget or resource to get people together.

Benchmark data

The duration of development programmes varies between different employers, from one to 40 months.

The average graduate programme runs for two years (24 months) and has an average of 23 days of training in each year.

The average school and college leaver programme (often an apprenticeship) is three years (36 months) and has an average of 52 days of training in each year. Although apprenticeships can be as short as a year. In some cases employers may be developing school and college leavers through more than one level of apprenticeship.

Duration and intensity

When you are designing your development programme you need to think about both duration (how long it is going to go on for) and intensity (how often training is going to happen). There are many different answers to these questions, although all apprentices are required to spend at least 20% of their time in off the job training.

When designing the duration and intensity of your programme you need to consult with your business carefully. If the wider business does not buy into the training and development approach you are using, it can be difficult to get staff away from their day jobs.

Understanding the process of learning

Learning seeks to develop people's knowledge and skills. Ultimately, we can see whether it is successful by whether their behaviour changes and they put their knowledge and skills into practice within the business. But achieving behavioural change isn't easy. To help ensure that your programme will develop the required skills and attributes, it's important to understand how people learn. There are a couple of foundational models that are helpful in thinking about this.

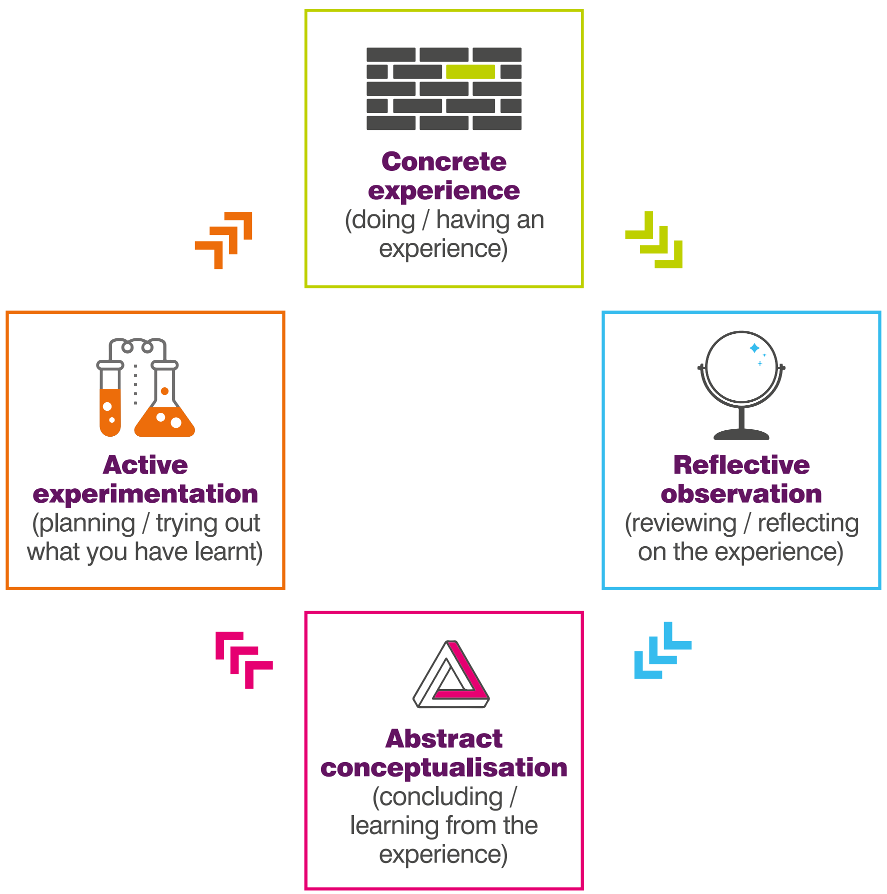
First, in a survey of nearly 200 executives, *Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger* showed that the executives believed that they learned:

- 70% from job related experiences (learning 'on the job")
- 20% from working with others (networking, buddies, peer-to-peer)
- 10% from formal learning (online classrooms, workshops)

This is sometimes referred to as the 70:20:10 model and it can be helpful in thinking about how to structure development programmes. See the resources at the end of the chapter for further information on this.

Second, *Kolb's Learning Cycle* explores the process of learning more deeply and also emphasises the role that experience plays in helping people to learn. This cycle divides learning into four distinct stages:

- **Concrete experience**. When we do things such as a game, problem solving or practical exercise.
- **Reflective observation**. When we think about how an experience went such as writing about an experience or reflection over lunch.
- **Abstract conceptualisation**. When we think about what the experience means and consider how it might change the way in which we see the world or behave in the future.
- **Active experimentation**. When new ideas are applied to an experience, which could involve an action plan.



Kolb's Learning Cycle explores the process of learning more deeply and also emphasises the role that experience plays in helping people to learn.

While these approaches provide a strong foundation for all development programmes you are likely to find various other theories, models and approaches out there. Many suppliers will have their own unique approach. Learning and development is complex and so there are lots of different ways to think about it. But whatever approach you go with, bear in mind the following four core principles:

1. **Engage people with their learning**. Ensure that they understand the skill and that development is in their best interest.
2. **Provide practical tools**. Offer something tangible that they can do.
3. **Contextualise the learning**. Ensure it's relevant to their role.
4. **Hold learners accountable**. Use line managers to ensure that skills are applied as this is the key to behaviour becoming habitual.

Training methods

From formal classroom learning and workshops to mentoring and self-directed study there are a multitude of ways your entry-level talent can develop their skills.

The *CIPD* (see the resources at the end of the chapter) categorises learning methods as follows:

- Formal or informal
- Internal or external provision
- Team or individual
- Digital or face-to-face
- Created or curated resources
- Formal course or a series of accessible resources on a given topic
- Learning directly at the place of work or outside the workplace

Start with the learning outcomes that are generated by your learning needs analysis. You can then use this to shape how you design your training approach. The methods you use should flow from the outcomes you are trying to achieve, not be chosen at random. So if you want to develop staff's interpersonal skills you will probably want a training approach that includes the use of lots of interpersonal skills. On the other hand if something is more knowledge-based it might be more appropriate to deliver it through a series of videos. It is about finding the right tool for the right job.

Benchmark data
71% of ISE members offer a rotation as part of their graduate programme.

A key decision you will need to make is whether your programme is rotational, which will depend on your business and skills needs:

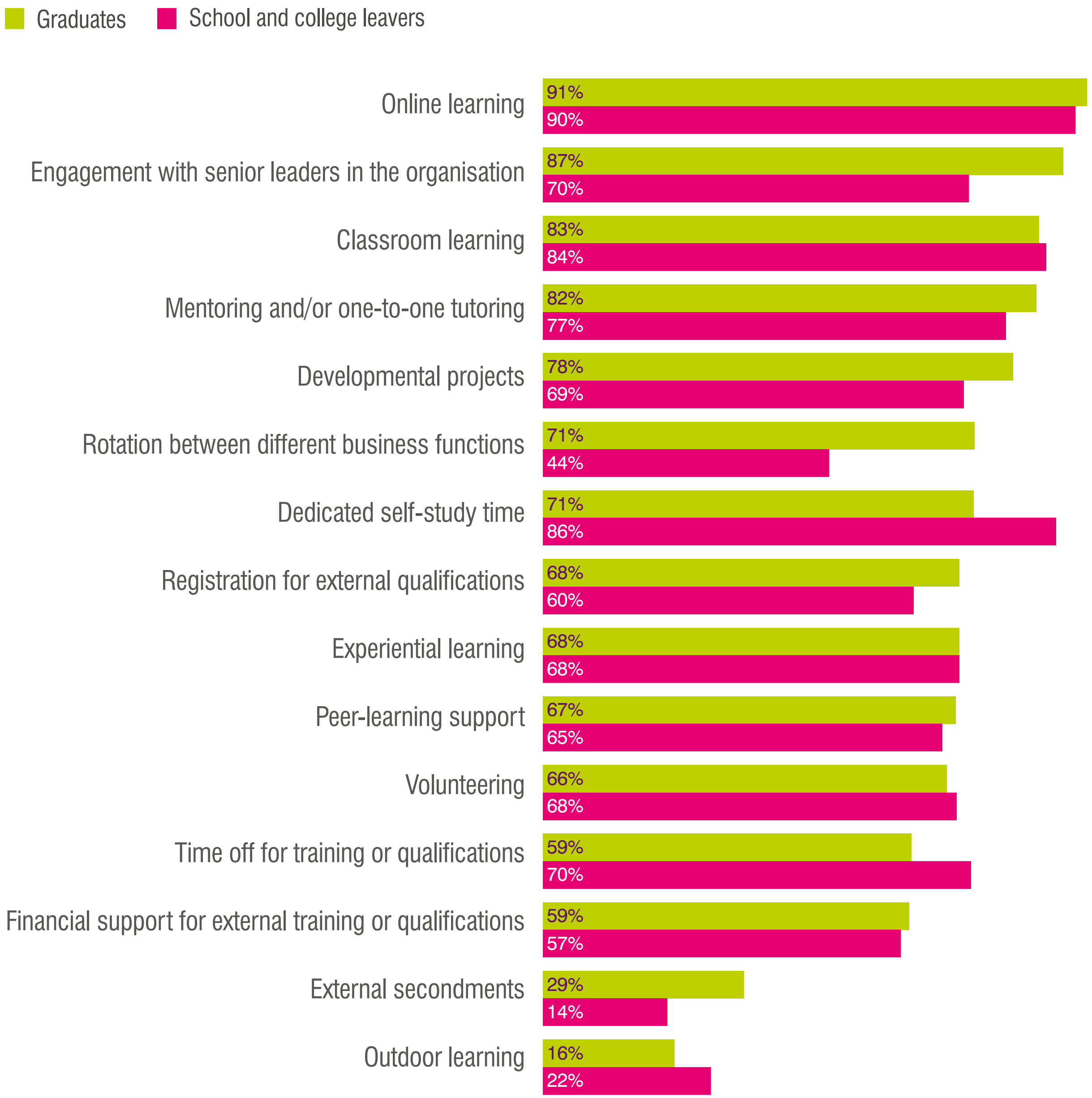
- Someone hired as a trainee on a rotation would build a varied skillset, changing roles every six to 12 months until they complete their programme. At this point they secure a permanent role in the organisation.
- If you've hired straight into a job then they would be more likely to have a structured programme to support them while they undertake their role.

As you can see from the following chart, ISE's *Student Development Survey 2021* shows that employers tend to apply a blended approach to develop their hires. Unsurprisingly 2020 saw online learning take over as the most popular approach to delivering development programmes and outdoor learning fall to be the least popular approach.

In general, employers use similar approaches in the training of graduates and school and college leavers. However, they are more likely to use rotations between different business functions with graduates and provide opportunities for graduates to engage with senior leaders and go on external secondments. On the other hand,

Proportion of respondents using a range of different development approaches

(140 graduate responses, 77 school and college leaver responses)



they are more likely to provide school and college leavers with dedicated self-study time and give them time off for training and qualifications - perhaps because of the requirements for 20% off the job time for apprentices.

The ISE *Development Survey 2021* also identified which methods are most impactful. It shows that rotations, mentoring, experiential learning and engagement with senior leaders were identified as the most impactful approaches. Online learning was only identified as the most impactful approach by a quarter (25%) of respondents despite the fact that it has become widely used due to Covid-19.

There may be value in considering whether you should be giving greater priority to the delivery of the most impactful approaches.

The proportion of respondents identifying different development approaches as impactful

(137 responses)

Given the impact of the pandemic on how employers developed hires, it’s important to consider these findings with a long-term view. The overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) expected to continue with some of the approaches that they employed during the pandemic well after the pandemic. The most popular reason for this was the flexibility of online and blended learning. They reported a range of benefits including being able to bring together participants from across different locations and to offer more bite-sized learning modules rather than having to deliver programmes in whole day blocks.

Despite the overwhelming sense that the pandemic had driven innovation in development programmes, some participants also highlighted the loss of human interaction, networking and happenstance encounters and learning.

As we can see from the ISE survey findings, one size does not fit all and, when considering the training methods to apply to your programme, speaking to your peers and looking at other organisations as well as listening to what students and graduates want will help you to build your ideas. Ultimately, choosing methods will depend on:

- resources available, priorities and expectation
- effectiveness of methods used previously
- where the learner is on their journey and existing skillset.

4. Support for entry-level talent

Effective programme design is not just about offering training programmes. Development is something that you ideally build into the culture of an organisation, so that all interactions and experiences are developmental.

Development is an endeavour undertaken by the whole firm, not just the central learning and development function. If your early career staff do not have a network of people to support and champion their development, then your programme is more likely to fail. An effective support network will ensure that your early talent doesn't just survive but that they stay and thrive.

As part of your support planning, consider any training requirements for support staff. ISE data shows that 92% of firms provide training to help line managers manage new graduates, and 90% provide training to help them to manage non-graduates.

Belonging and inclusion

Evidence from *BetterUp* shows that when people do not feel they belong in an organisation, do not feel that they can 'bring their whole selves to work', they are less likely to want to join in the first place, and less likely to want to stay. See the resources section at the end of the chapter for more on this research.

This makes sense - because when we do not feel we belong, we cannot perform to our best. The evidence demonstrates the link between performance and having a psychologically safe culture where people from all backgrounds feel they belong. When people feel they belong, they have better health and wellbeing outcomes, reducing the number of sick days and staff turnover, while performance and employee engagement go up. The evidence supports that creating an inclusive culture is good for the individual and for business. So, it is critical that you think about your wider inclusion strategy (see *Chapter 2*).

Remember that visibility is important to helping everyone feel an equal sense of inclusion and belonging – if you can't see people like you, if there is nobody like you in the senior team, then you are less likely to feel that you fit in or that you can progress. Review your support network; can you make people with similar interests and backgrounds available? Ensure Employee Resource Groups are visible and encourage new groups to be formed.

Wellbeing and mental health

Another area where employers have continued to recognise that support is necessary is wellbeing – particularly around mental health. The majority of respondents (61%) to the ISE *Development Survey 2021* reported that the demand for mental health support had increased during the pandemic.

Transitioning into the workplace can be a stressful time and stress can lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Young professionals are among the most vulnerable in today's workforce. According to *Deloitte*, they are twice as likely to suffer from depression and more vulnerable to taking leave to catch up on their work (leaveism), burnout and financial worries. Between 2017 and 2020 the costs of poor mental health to UK employers increased by 16%, now costing up to £45 billion. Conversely, good wellbeing usually means happy and motivated staff as well as increased productivity. There is a link to this research in the resources section at the end of the chapter.

Resilience has been a key skill that employers have been concerned new student hires have lacked over the last several years, and all evidence suggests that, not least because of the impact of Covid-19 on the young, students will continue to need support in this area. See the resources at the end of this chapter for further information about student mental health.

To promote wellbeing among early hires, employers should consider support networks and dedicated resources (see the next section on different types of support). The majority of ISE members provide mental health support. However, some have highlighted the way in which homeworking and the disruptions associated with the pandemic have made providing support more difficult. According to new research from Deloitte, investing in mental health support makes an average return of £5 for every £1 spent.

> When people feel they belong, they have better health and wellbeing outcomes, reducing the number of sick days and staff turnover…

Support types

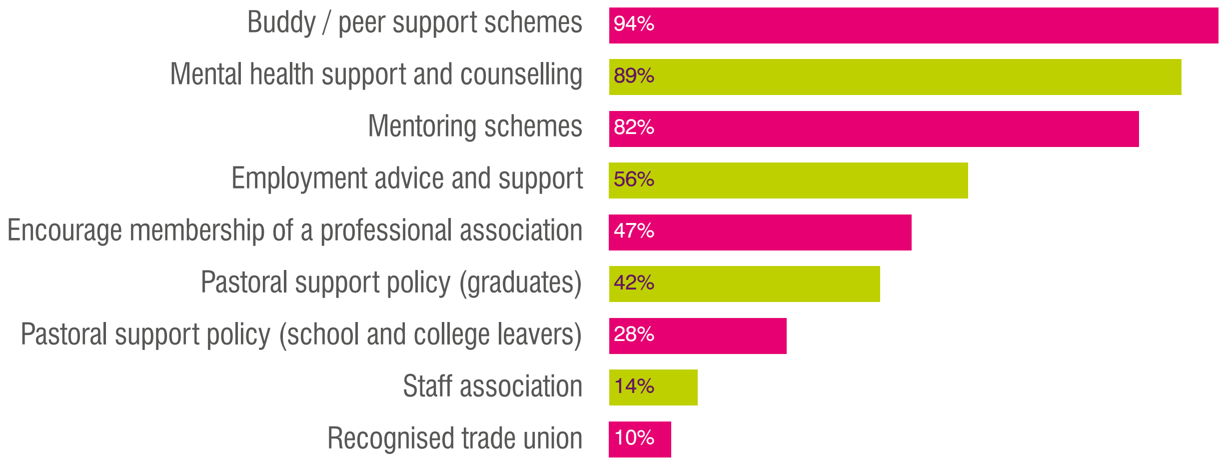
The different types of support identified in the table below could all exist independently or coexist. Resourcing constraints and size of organisation will primarily drive what you apply.

Different types of support

Support type	Who it is	What they do
Peer support or buddy system	More experienced graduates/interns/ apprentices support the incoming cohort. Look for those who have experienced and value your programme.	Offers someone to talk to and can be particularly useful in the first few weeks. They can also be part of a more unstructured way to develop skills and knowledge.
Mentors	Someone more senior. They can be offered as an optional or mandatory support source. Some employers dictate a match, while others leave it up to the employee to choose.	A mentor can be used as a point of contact or as someone to help achieve a person's development goals. Typically these are more useful when graduates have been in the organisation for long enough to have specific needs.
Professional coaches	Coaches can be internal or external.	A coach would provide a structured approach to achieving goals. Focus is on helping to learn rather than teaching.
Sponsor	Senior executive.	Typically this person would guide and influence a person's progression in the organisation.
Mental health resources	From employees trained to support basic mental health issues to experts who can be made available and apps like Headspace or Happify.	Helps to know that there is a range of resources available if the pressures mount.
Reverse mentoring	Entry-talent mentors someone more senior.	An exchange of skills and knowledge. Origins in a way of educating older employees on tech. Mentors benefit from access to leaders and benefit from broader business advice and insights.
Pastoral care	Specialists such as counsellors or people within the business with an interest.	Support for personal issues. A challenge to appointing pastoral care as a 'side of desk' role is that it can drop off as a priority.
Employment advice and support	External specialists.	External help for legal and employment advice.
Industry groups	Trade unions and professional bodies.	Recognising and encouraging membership of trade unions and industry associations.
Employee Resource Groups	Staff-led groups formed around a common interest, background or bond.	Help to create a positive experience and inclusive environment for everyone.

The most common approaches to support are identified in the ISE's *Student Development Survey 2021.*

Proportion of respondents providing a range of support for early career hires (140 responses)



5. Evaluation

Given the resources that firms are allocating to learning and development programmes it is important to ensure that they are having an impact and to identify areas where they can be improved. In this way you can justify your budget, and possibly make the case for gaining more (and certainly defend it from future challenges).

It is important to plan your evaluation before you start your programme as you will need to establish what baseline measures you need to capture and when. Once your programme has commenced, the opportunity to benchmark will have expired. You should consider gathering data before, during and after the training – all three are necessary for the *Philips Return on Investment (ROI) model* outlined below.

Best practice in evaluation planning is to apply the *Kirkpatrick model* with Philips ROI. Not all organisations will be able to evaluate at all the levels, but it's important to understand what data you can capture from your organisation to use against the various levels.

Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model

1. **Reaction.** The degree to which trainees find the training agreeable, relevant and engaging. Feedback forms or post-training surveys are commonly used.
2. **Learning.** The increase in knowledge and capability experienced by the student. Comparing skills and knowledge before and after through tests, interviews or observation.
3. **Behaviour.** The degree to which students apply their learning on the job. Usually over a period of time, line manager participation is helpful.
4. **Results.** The impact that the learner's performance has on the business or working environment. Directly linked to an improvement in an organisational metric.

The expanded version of Kirkpatrick's model is Philips ROI, which adds ROI as the fifth level of evaluation. Measuring ROI is the holy grail of training as evidenced in ISE's *Development Survey 2021*, which showed it is the least common method of evaluation. It can be challenging to identify and calculate the baseline figures required.

The Philips ROI model uses cost-benefit analysis to determine the value of the programme. It involves capturing data such as process, productivity or profit improvements. This can then be compared to the training cost. You can then apply the standard ROI formula for training:

ROI = (Net benefits of training / Costs of training) x 100

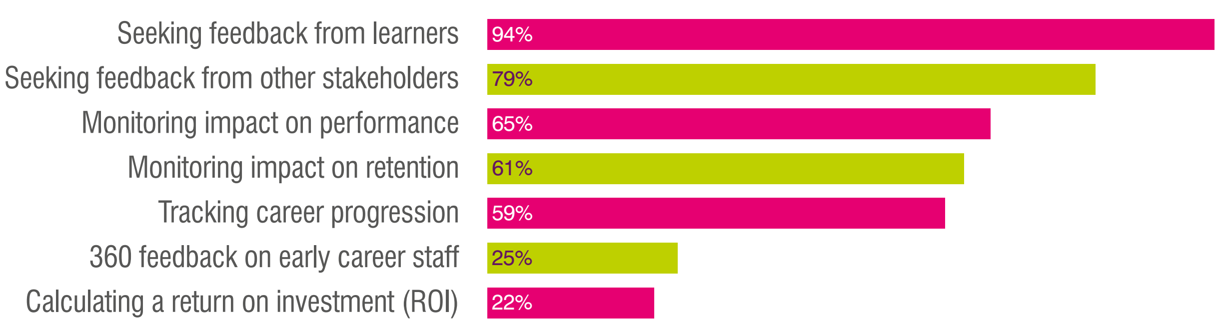
Evaluation methods

ISE's *Student Development Survey 2021* reported that almost all respondents (97%) evaluated their development programme in some way. Here are some of the measures you can put in place:

- **Student feedback**. Surveys don't always get the best response rates so consider supplementing them with focus groups and interviews.
- **Exit interviews**. What can you learn from people who have left your organisation?
- **Stakeholder feedback.** Gather feedback from stakeholders from line managers and senior executives to training providers.
- **Increased retention**. Reducing staff turnover will save costs of hiring and onboarding new people.
- **Progression post programme**. Based on the number of moves someone has undertaken and their progression, both horizontal and vertical.
- **Performance**. Has learning improved performance or productivity?

The most popular approaches to evaluation are shown in the following chart. Seeking feedback from learners and other stakeholders are the most common approaches. The average respondent was combining four different approaches to evaluation.

Proportion of respondents reporting the different approaches to evaluation of development programmes
(140 responses)



Don't assume that the purpose, techniques or approach remain the same, year in year out. The pandemic has taught us how quickly change can come about, so it is important to reflect on whether your programme remains fit for purpose.

Case study

RWE
Graduate development programme

RWE and Development Beyond Learning (DBL) won an ISE Award for redesigning their graduate development programme.

RWE hires highly analytical graduates with strong technical capabilities. Yet the pressures of their roles and the agility required for international rotations meant graduates needed to develop core soft skills. The programme was designed to develop the skills required to confer speed to value to the organisation and join the business resilient and ready to thrive.

The solution is a blended, evidence-based, 24-month global graduate development programme. While DBL was responsible for the design, delivery and programme management, RWE provided organisational context, measurement, feedback and support with logistics.

The programme has three key elements:

1. DBL's expertise in instructional design, behavioural science and psychology, combined with contextualising content to the reality at RWE.
2. Blended learning modes throughout the programme, integrating RWE L&D resources with relevant virtual and in-person workshops and on-the-job-tasks.
3. Involvement of senior leaders, managers and sponsors, exposing graduates to role models, building strong relationships and supporting application of new skills.

The programme design addressed several challenges:

Different cohorts, different needs: A key finding over five years is that each cohort is different. Using feedback from programme managers, graduates and trainers, the context has been tailored throughout the programme - both to RWE and to the experience of each cohort.

Graduate buy-in to the relevance of soft skills: Applying cutting-edge research from psychology and behavioural science ensured that graduates recognised the relevance of the skill and understood how to leverage that skill. Trainers were upskilled so they understood the research and could bring it to life.

Continuous improvement: The programme was regularly and robustly tested and evolved for each cohort. Whilst the start and end of programme reviews were critical, so too were pre and post session check-ins after each intervention. Whenever the evidence suggested changes would improve the programmes, these were made – be they to the content, activities, delivery style or medium.

Stakeholder engagement: Business stakeholders were spread across geographic and time zones in Europe and Asia. A steering group, including senior RWE leaders and previous graduates, guided context, design, local execution, trainer briefings, feedback, and continuous improvement. Leaders promoted the importance of soft skills in becoming an effective and impactful leader.

The programme is a success story over five consecutive years. It has supported 103 graduates across five business areas in three countries, delivering 18,952 hours of live learning, 2,472 hours of virtual learning and 2,266 on-the-job learning tasks.

The positive perception of the graduate programme has resulted in investment in 30% more graduates year-on-year, the addition of a fifth department to the programme and a 126% increase in graduate applications. The 2019/20 cohort scored the programme as 6.6/7 (94% satisfaction).

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are becoming an increasingly important part of all employers' training and development activities. Apprenticeships enable employers to bring valuable skills into their organisation with government support and funding. As such they have specific requirements.

This chapter will mainly focus on the apprenticeship system in England (although the basic principles are the same wherever you employ apprentices). However, there are important variations in the apprenticeship systems of the four UK nations. The resources section at the end of this chapter provides you with guidance to more information about the apprenticeship systems of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as further information about the English system.

Apprenticeships combine on-the-job training with classroom learning; they require staff who understand the apprenticeship system and levy system as well as enlisting a training partner (see the 'partnerships' chapter for more information). Apprenticeships are suitable for new hires or upskilling existing staff and, in England, can be at four different levels which are equivalent for increasingly advanced academic qualifications.

Level	Qualification equivalent	Typical duration
Intermediate	Five good GCSEs	One year to 18 months
Advanced	Two A Levels	Two years
Higher	First stages of higher education e.g. Foundation degree	Three to six years
Degree	Bachelors or Masters degree	Three to six years

How apprenticeships are implemented and managed will vary greatly and mainly depend on size of organisation and cohort as well as any history of apprentices.
There are six key steps to consider when planning your apprenticeship:

1. Align your apprenticeship approach with business needs.
2. Understand the funding available for apprenticeships.
3. Map your skills requirements against apprenticeship standards or frameworks.
4. Find a training provider.
5. Work with the training provider to design your provision.
6. Set up appropriate support and management structures.

We will discuss each of these stages in more detail below.

1. Align with business needs

All early talent strategy needs to align with your organisation's business needs and its broader people plan (see *Chapter 2*). Ideally you need to consider all your early talent hiring together and consider the inter-relationships between the different elements (e.g. graduates, apprentices and interns). So you should be part of organisation-wide discussions on skills and labour requirements. You should also be doing more detailed research in the

business and talking to line managers and department heads. One key thing to remember is that apprentices do not necessarily have to be new staff and that apprenticeship programmes can be used to upskill existing staff. So it is important to discuss whether you can meet the business's skills needs through using apprenticeships as a developmental programme rather than through new hiring.

Benchmark data
The average ISE member is spending 32% of their apprenticeship levy.

2. Apprenticeship funding

Apprenticeships are funded in different ways in each of the UK nations. Before you start recruiting apprentices it is important to read up on the funding arrangements to check that you are accessing what you are entitled to. Apprenticeships in the devolved nations are funded from government (although the way this works varies between countries). There is more information for employers on the apprenticeship system in each of the UK countries at the end of this chapter.

All UK employers pay the apprenticeship levy. This is a tax on employers which can be used, in England, to fund apprenticeship training. It is payable by all employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million at a rate of 0.5% of their total pay bill. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), with a pay bill of less than £3 million, do not have to pay the levy but instead have to pay 5% of the costs of training the apprentice, with the government paying the rest.

While the levy is a significant cost for your business, it is designed to drive employers to invest in the development of new skills. So if you were going to do this anyway, you may find that you are able to recoup most or all of the levy. However, there are many restrictions regarding how the levy can be spent and understanding what training is covered and what is not will be an important part of your research and cost analysis. Some organisations have specialist staff to lead and support this process. It is also important to speak to your organisation's finance team to ensure that they are aware of the levy and can help allocate funds.

In addition to the levy there is a variety of other incentive payments for employing apprentices. For example, at the time of writing employers receive a £3,000 incentive payment for every apprentice they take on and an additional £1,000 for any apprentices who are under 18 (or 25 if they have an education, health and care plan). But some of these arrangements are only in place temporarily as part of the government's Covid-19 employment stimulus. In general, with all questions of apprenticeship funding it is important to be up to date and check the relevant government website. Funding in this area is highly dependent on policy, and policies change all the time. Your apprenticeship provider should be able to advise you on how the funding arrangements work.

3. Map skills requirements against apprenticeship standards or frameworks

An apprenticeship standard (in England) or framework (in other UK nations) is a nationally recognised training programme mapped to a specific role within a huge range of industries. With employers at their heart, standards are developed in England by Trailblazer groups of employers and based on occupations. The standard you choose will be dependent on the skills and level required for your organisation and the role you want the apprentice to do.

If there isn't a relevant standard for the job that you are focused on, it is possible to get involved with the Trailblazer groups through the *Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education* (see resources at the end of the chapter) and to develop a new standard.

New standards are being developed and approved all the time. For more information or to find an appropriate standard visit the *Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education*. As well as showing the level and direction of the apprenticeship, it will also show the employers involved in creating it: if those employers are in your industry then you know that it is relevant.

4. Find a training provider

We have already discussed working with apprenticeship providers in *Chapter 3*, but as this is one of the key decisions that you will make it is worth revisiting it here. The choice of apprenticeship provider will make a big difference to your business. It will also shape the experience of the apprentices and so it is worth investing the time needed to choose carefully. One of the key questions is thinking about how effectively your apprenticeship provider will be able to work with your organisation's learning and development function and link into the training and development that takes place in-house.

If your organisation has a history of running apprenticeships then it's likely that you'll already have a training provider that you could discuss any new requirements with. These are likely to be a local educator such as a college or university or an independent training specialist. Although if you decide to recruit or train new apprentices or to do so in a different area, you may need to involve a new provider. To find a new apprenticeship provider you can visit the government's *Find apprenticeship training websites* (see resources). This will help you to identify a range of possible providers.

Another option is that your organisation can become a training provider in its own right. This means that rather than working with a training provider you will train your own apprentices. If you have a strong learning and development function within your organisation this might be something that you want to consider. Running your own apprenticeship programmes can give you control, but it also comes with a lot of responsibilities and compliance requirements. If you want to move in this direction you will probably want to talk to other employers that have done this, and get some help from the government and from a specialist consultant.

5. Work with the training provider to design your provision

You will need to talk to your training provider to agree the approach that they will take to apprenticeship provision. If you have a small cohort you will be likely to place them on an existing programme which is shared with other companies. If you have a larger cohort then you can work with your provider to design a programme especially for your organisation. This means that all participants on the programme are colleagues, not just fellow students. In this case the apprenticeship becomes an extension of your workplace with an opportunity to build in corporate values and goals.

A bespoke programme gives you ownership of which modules your apprentices learn alongside the minimum required. The number of discretionary models will depend on how much you want to invest as well as striking a balance between the bare minimum and what your organisation/apprentices require or want.

6. Support and management

You will need the right structure and staff in place to support your apprentices. Consider whether staff require any training to effectively support and manage apprentices. Line managers are critical in supporting all early career hires and their role is likely to be particularly critical where you are recruiting young people directly from school or college.

The right support network will be essential to ensuring everything is in place to complete the End Point Assessment (EPA) – the final assessment that will ensure that your apprentice can do the job they have been training for. The EPA will be delivered by an EPA organisation (EPAO), but it is important that you have a good understanding of what is required. The EPA is separate to any qualification that may be undertaken as part of the programme and your apprentice will not be accredited unless the EPAO approves their assessment. See the resources at the end of the chapter for more information about EPAs.

Support on an apprenticeship programme typically includes the following:

- **Training provider**. As well as providing training and development programmes, your training provider would also allocate a work-based learning mentor to monitor apprentices' progress.
- **Apprenticeship manager**. The person within your organisation who oversees the management of the programme and the progress of all apprentices.
- **Employer mentor (usually the line manager)**. Your organisation needs to identify someone to support the apprentice in their workplace learning. This will normally be their line manager as they direct their work and are likely to know them and their work well.

A key part of the provision of support for apprentices is to hold regular tripartite meetings which bring together the apprentice, their line manager and the work-based learning mentor from the training provider. These meetings monitor the apprentices' compliance with programme requirements e.g. whether they are spending 20% of their time in off the job learning. And they also provide an opportunity for discussion of progress in the workplace and on the training programme as well as the discussion of any other issues that have emerged and the provision of pastoral support.

Case study

Capgemini

Apprentice development programme

Capgemini won an ISE Award for its apprentice development programme, which it started in 2011 in response to the demand for technical graduates becoming increasingly competitive. It recognised the need to have a different approach to entry-level recruitment and no longer be limited to just recruiting graduates. It also wanted to achieve better gender balance while increasing social mobility.

Capgemini created attractive apprenticeship opportunities for people who had the potential to grow and who were looking for an alternative to a full-time university degree or higher education. The apprenticeship combined distance, classroom and blended learning with on-the-job experience to develop the skills required to launch a career in the digital sector.

In 2015 they were one of the first employers to launch a Digital Degree Apprenticeship, which was developed with Aston University. Capgemini has since continued to diversify the range of apprenticeships and uses them to close skills gaps and develop its talent of the future.

In 2017 Capgemini became the first UK employer in the technology industry to deliver degree apprentices. 170 apprentices have since graduated from the programme with 88% achieving a 2:1 or above and 40% achieving a first. This clearly demonstrates that the combination of academic study and applied learning in a supportive workplace can produce great results, while adding real value to an organisation and society as a whole.

Since the launch of the apprenticeship levy, many of Capgemini's clients have been interested in collaborating. For example, Anglian Water created a degree apprenticeship programme with Capgemini's support. Today degree apprentices from Capgemini and Anglian Water are working and studying together on projects that will benefit both sectors.

The volume of apprentices continues to rise at Capgemini with more than 115 joining in 2021 across a range of programmes. Apprenticeships have helped Capgemini increase the volume of entry-level offers to females - from 27% in 2015 to over 50% in 2020.

As well as creating their own industry-leading technologists and closing the skills gap, apprenticeships are enabling Capgemini to open up new digital career opportunities for talented people who otherwise may not have had the chance. Today, Capgemini runs 20 apprenticeship standards across England, Scotland and Wales, throughout levels 3 to 7, and has continuing plans for expansion and development of their existing programmes.

5 tips for employers considering starting an apprenticeship

1. Understand why you are investing in apprenticeships and have a clear, leadership-backed strategy to support your plans.
2. Take time to understand the training providers available for the programmes you want to run and be clear on your expectations of them in terms of flexibility, bespoking and creativity.
3. Invest in a strong support structure internally – a passionate team to guide the apprentices throughout their experience and managers who nurture and are committed to developing talent.
4. Have a clear pay and progression model to fast track high potential employees so that you continue to keep pace with their career expectations and the external market to manage retention.
5. Celebrate apprentice successes throughout the programme - not just at its conclusion.

Effective progression

When staff roll-off their development programme there can be a 'falling off a cliff' moment as they come to the unnerving realisation that they are stepping out of the safety of the environment they have become accustomed to. In some cases, the end of the programme is also linked to the end of a fixed-term training contract and a decision about whether that individual will stay with the organisation. In others the end of the programme is linked to promotion and progression. All these different approaches have the potential to change the stakes of completing a training and development programme and raise additional challenges in managing this moment. However this is organised, it is important to try and manage it in a way that is transparent, ensures a positive and developmental experience and gives hires access to ongoing support if they are to continue with you.

The majority of ISE employers continue to provide ongoing support for hires after the initial development or apprenticeship programme is complete. This could be networking, mentoring, events and more and will be dependent on your resources. Consider what support was effective in your development programme as part of your post-programme design.

One area where many firms take proactive action is in identifying high performing hires and future leaders during their initial training. This process of 'talent spotting' allows firms to actively manage some of their best hires and ensure that these staff are offered a range of progression opportunities.

Relationship between progression and retention

Employers make a substantial investment in the development of staff and hope to retain them until this initial outlay is recovered. The ISE *Student Development Survey 2021* shows that around a quarter of entry-level staff leave after three years. The most common reasons for staff to move on relate to finding new opportunities in another organisation either proactively (identified by 46% of employers) or by being 'poached' (22%).

Median salaries after three years

Bear in mind that salary should not be considered in isolation. Staff care about a range of things including progressing to more senior and challenging jobs, having the opportunity to shape their work, improving work/life balance and/or work that accords with their interests and values.

ISE data shows that employers find it harder to retain women, Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) hires and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. To address this, you should listen and respond to feedback to identify any specific development needs and ensure that any groups with worse retention levels have an inclusive support network.

To retain your hires, it is important that you are open, transparent and realistic about their career progression throughout their development programme. This should be related to objectives and meet any expectation set out during the recruitment process. If your hires aren't at the level they should be then you need to explain why and be prepared to let them go.

Median salaries after three years

	Graduates		School and college leavers	
	On hire	After 3 years	On hire	After 3 years
Legal	£38,250	£70,000	£16,950	£25,000
Digital & IT	£31,500	£47,500	£18,750	£30,000
Finance & Professional services	£31,425	£45,000	£19,250	£27,500
Health & Pharmaceuticals	£29,125	£39,000	£15,750	£21,000
Energy, Engineering & Industry	£28,000	£35,000	£15,700	£27,000
Built environment	£27,500	£35,000	£19,000	£24,500
Retail & FMCG	£27,500	£35,000	£16,750	£21,500
Charity & Public sector	£26,000	£37,500	£18,000	£25,000
All sectors	£29,667	£40,000	£18,450	£26,000

HSBC
Post-programme

Case study

The strategic intent for HSBC UK's Emerging Talent programmes is to provide diverse, high potential talent that reflects and serves its customers and communities, helping to build a sustainable business.

HSBC UK won an ISE Award for its post programme alumni network, ConnectUs, which it launched to support its ambition to make people feel proud, help them progress their career and increase diversity within HSBC while ensuring staff retention.

ConnectUs is a graduate and apprentice network run by alumni, for alumni. It provides the support alumni need to transition from their development programme and take control of their personal and professional development. Members are validated annually to ensure engagement with an active population of alumni.

The objectives of ConnectUs are to ensure graduate and apprentice alumni are connected, self-leading, empowered and that they have a growth mindset.

ConnectUs key principles:

- Network. Diverse and inclusive networking platform, allowing members to interact with emerging talent alumni with different levels of experience to broaden opportunities in the future.
- Discover. Help members discover what they want for themselves and their career and development.
- Connect. Provide a variety of events, tailored to the needs of the community, facilitating continuous development for alumni.

There are five pillars that make up ConnectUs and which are owned by members of the Committee and endorsed by its Global Graduate Sponsor and senior leader Ambassadors:

1. Membership. New members are invited to a congratulations event to celebrate their accomplishment, learn about the proposition, participate in an exchange session and hear from motivational business speakers.
2. Event Runway. Monthly activities include panel discussions, breakfast meetings, skills masterclasses, wellbeing initiatives and CSR events. There is also an annual conference.
3. ET Ambassadors. Alumni become accredited Graduate/Internship Assessors and promote Emerging Talent programmes by being part of the Graduate Attraction Team.
4. Mentorship. Existing members are matched to mentors based on career aspirations/experience and personal interests.
5. ConnectUs Hub. An online community to enable better communication, networking and collaboration. A fantastic example of social learning with member-generated blogs/vlogs, forums and a forthcoming job board.

Positive feedback from participants and stakeholders has enabled ongoing funding. Results have included improved post-programme performance, enhanced career trajectories onto its International Manager Programme and increased retention.

Opinion

Development in a socially distanced world: What have we learnt?

gradconsult

Rebecca Fielding, Founder & MD of Gradconsult and an ISE Fellow, reflects on the past year and how what we have learnt is driving development design in 2021 and beyond.

2020 was finally the year we saw the accelerated, mass adoption of digital learning embedded into early careers. But as life slowly starts to return to something resembling normality it's time to ask what we have learnt, what has worked and what is here to stay in the design and delivery of future talent development programmes.

Blended learning

We have all adopted a blended learning approach to our development programmes. From fully immersive MS Mesh to apps, menti to miro, videos to VR, a plethora of technology has been used to fully replace or supplement the more traditional classroom-based approach. Blended learning has proven effective and impactful so we're not going back. Amongst an abundance of learnings, two big things stand out for me.

The first is that it's about the people not the platform. Whether it's a £250K world-leading VR environment, £100K app or free to use platform is irrelevant. What really matters is that it is easy to use, accessible, relevant, participative and impactful for the learner. Secondly, mobile-first matters. Mobile technology use is almost 100% within the under 25 demographic (ONS Data), with more people owning a smartphone than a laptop or computer. This is especially true for people from BAME and lower social economic backgrounds (Deloitte.com). Having all become acutely aware of the impact of digital poverty and links to social mobility, many have shifted learning platforms and user design methodology to a mobile-first approach.

Community and belonging

Creating a sense of community and belonging in a socially distanced, primarily digitally delivered, development programme has been placed at the forefront of our programme design. Employers have adopted a wide variety of mechanisms such pecha kucha, shared soundtracks and totemic swag. Shared language, experiences and carefully crafted memorable moments that matter help create a sense of meaningful connection and have been key.

Only time will tell how effective these methods have been, but one thing I think we have all learnt is how critical embedding community and belonging into our design process is, not only for organisational performance/retention but also for the new joiner experience.

Mental health and wellbeing

The pandemic has affected everyone in society differently, but students and young people have faced significant challenges. Overlay this with the normal mental health and wellbeing challenges of transitioning from education into employment and it's no surprise that 61% of respondents in the recent ISE Development Survey reported an increase in demand for mental health support. These topics were highly prominent at the ISE Development Conference. From on-demand talking therapy to psychology podcasts, blogs, apps and more, 2020 has seen this topic become a cornerstone of any early careers development programme now and for the future.

But like all good development professionals, after a year of seismic change and innovation, I am keen now to pause, reflect, listen, learn and evaluate. As a wealth of real-time sentiment and more longitudinal impact/evaluation data starts to amass, now is the time for us to listen to our learners and leaders, hear from colleagues across the sector and continually seek to improve as we step into yet another uncertain year. One thing, however, is for certain – future talent development will never be the same again!

gradconsult.co.uk

Resources

ISE resources

The **ISE website** *(https://ise.org.uk/)* includes data, resources and events related to development. In particular we publish the Development Survey annually with all of the latest benchmarking data.
ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* features an array of news and views and includes a dedicated development section *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/category/development/).*

Other resources

There is a range of places where you can get additional information and resources for development. The **CIPD** offers *(https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/development)* factsheets, reports and podcasts. More specific training can be found on **LinkedIn learning** *(https://www.linkedin.com/learning/).*

There are also lots of sites that offer training materials and information like **Business Balls** *(https://www.businessballs.com/).* **Mindtools** *(https://www.mindtools.com/)* is another useful site which includes many resources for training and development. It includes a summary of **Kirkpatrick's four-level training evaluation model** *(https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/kirkpatrick.htm).* Building on this Kodo offer a complete tutorial on the **Philips ROI model** *(https://kodosurvey.com/blog/complete-philips-roi-model-tutorial-beginners).*

If you want to read some of the classic texts in learning and development then Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger's ***The Career Architect Development Planner***, published in 1996 by Lominger, is a good place to start. This is where the 70:20:10 model that we discuss in this chapter comes from. David Kolb's ***Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development***, published in 1984 by Prentice Hall, is another classic of the genre.

A strong focus on mental health and wellbeing has become increasingly embedded in development practice. **Mind's guide to student mental health** *(https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health/)* is a good place to start in understanding some of the key issues. **The Mental Health Institute** *(https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/)* is another key source of information.

Deloitte has recently published **Mental health and employers: refreshing the case for investment** *(https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/consulting/articles/mental-health-and-employers-refreshing-the-case-for-investment.html)* which provides a strong ROI case for investment. While BetterUp's research on **The value of belonging at work** *(https://www.betterup.com/en-us/resources/reports/the-value-of-belonging-at-work-the-business-case-for-investing-in-workplace-inclusion)* looks at wellbeing from another direction.

If you are looking for information on apprenticeships you should visit the relevant government webpages in: **England** *(https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers/),* **Scotland** *(https://www.apprenticeships.scot/),* **Wales** *(https://gov.wales/apprenticeships)* or **Northern Ireland** *(https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships).* For further information about EPAs and EPAOs see the **Register of EPAOs** *(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-end-point-assessment-organisations).*

In England you should also look at the **Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education** *(https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/)* and the government's website for finding apprenticeship providers *(https://findapprenticeshiptraining.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/).*

Chapter 9

Building a brilliant career

There is no question that when you talk to people who have worked in this sector for most or all of their careers, they are still passionate about its impact and opportunities – for themselves as individuals, and for the young people they are working with. It's that passion that has kept them there, year after year. This chapter will explore the roots of this and suggest aspects to consider if you are looking to further your own career.

Work that makes a difference

Working in early careers offers the opportunity to work across a heady combination of exciting and important roles. Student recruitment and early career development is the gateway to the workforce. As we discussed in *Chapter 1* this process of inducting and supporting people into employment has big implications for the whole economy.

And the sector is not just important to the economy, it also matters to wider society. In the era of #BlackLivesMatter, #EverydaySexism and #LevellingUp the entry point to the workforce is a key moment where discrimination happens and where it can be challenged. As someone working in early talent recruitment and development, you have the opportunity to make a difference. Whatever your role, you are part of a sector that makes decisions on who gets hired. The narrative on social mobility, diversity and inclusion and fairness has ramped up significantly over the last decade or so, and none of the desired change can happen if early talent recruiters and developers, and the wider network beyond them, aren't wholly focused on making that change.

You are likely to be high profile within your organisation, even in a junior role. There can be frequent interaction with senior stakeholders, which means you will build your network and grow in influence. You can think and work at a strategic level as we discussed in *Chapter 2*. As an early talent professional you should be thinking big and asking 'What does the business need more of?', 'What is the long-term strategy?' and 'Where are the skills gaps?'

From the start of your career the content of the work very quickly becomes interesting. You are often thrown in at the deep end and close to the decision-making, with a relative amount of freedom. In other sectors it can take a while before you are that involved at the heart of the business. You can get to do the more sexy, edgy, new and fun stuff e.g. online recruitment, experimenting with social media, learning about psychometric testing and trialling AI. What is more, as you become more experienced, you might decide to focus on one of the areas that we have profiled in this guide.

The sector as a whole is collaborative and creative and this is something that we see first-hand at ISE. People are open to sharing and working on challenges together, both within their sectors and across the whole industry. This collective effort and spirit keeps people fired up and focused.

Reflections on student employment

"Student recruitment has given me a career I can be proud of. I still get up every morning with a sense of pride for what I have managed to achieve, I'm still loving the work I do and get excited about the interactions I will have with students that day. No day is ever the same, I have never been bored, we get paid pretty well for what we do and the people you meet, work and grow up with become lifelong friends and colleagues, what else could you want in a career!"
James Darley, CEO Transform Society

The key to success

Working in early talent can be exciting and worthwhile, but it clearly is not for everyone. In this section we are going to look at the skills quality and knowledge that helps people to be successful in this field.

Many early talent teams are run internally as a discrete business unit and this can mean that the effective early careers professional needs to be something of an allrounder. There is the opportunity to develop entrepreneurial skills in areas such as strategy and finance. This means that after you have been working in early talent for a while you will have built up an array of skills, as well as a specialist expertise in early talent.

Successful people in the sector are problem solvers. At a junior level, this might translate into figuring out how a candidate can get to an interview, how you can support with reasonable adjustments, how you can use social media. These are fun problems to solve – not systems or processes, they are people. As you progress, the significance of the problems increases, as does the range of stakeholders you'll be engaging with. And then of course there are bigger aspirational problems, including social justice, and the transition from education to work. Finding the right solutions lies at the heart of most roles in early talent.

There are other transferable skills that evolve as the diversity of the work you are involved with increases. This list is not exhaustive but really illustrates how the breadth of work translates into a considerable skills requirement:

- Managing significant budgets
- Creativity
- Stakeholder management and relationship building
- Presentations and public speaking
- Campaign planning
- Project management
- Candidate engagement.

Plus you will very likely be looking ahead to what can be a long time horizon, planning next year's three years on programme at the same time as tracking those hires who left your programme two or more years ago. It is hard to find a career that tops all of that.

Perhaps most importantly effective early talent professionals are lifelong learners. This is where there are benefits to the cyclical process of recruitment and development. Every year you get to do it all again, but each time you have the opportunity to build up your knowledge base, and figure out the most effective way to apply your expertise. Students change, the market changes and your organisation changes and this means that your experience in the early part of your career, or even when you were a graduate yourself, becomes less useful. People who are really effective in student employment are able to read these changes, keep learning and develop their practice in response them.

One of the keys to building a successful career is to take a holistic approach and consider student employment as an end-to-end process. Some find it difficult to see how attraction fits to onboarding, to development, to progression planning and people strategy. People who understand the whole process are likely to be more valuable to organisations and more able to move up in an organisation. On the other hand, you might find a niche that is a perfect fit and have a desire to become an expert in that field. There are lots of specialisms in early talent including marketing, assessment and selection and learning and development. This can be another way to direct your career as the industry needs both depth and breadth.

The recipe for success extends beyond a pure skills perspective though. Rebecca Fielding - MD of Gradconsult and ISE Fellow refers to the 'candidate empathy cycle'. When you first move into the sector, empathy levels are high; you're potentially not long out of the process yourself and can really identify with the challenges candidates are going through. As understanding of the process builds, some of that can be lost, often quite quickly. The people who love the sector, and are most successful, rekindle that compassion and have a solid balance of pragmatism and experience with candidate care. You have an emotional connection and a sense of stewardship that continues as you progress. It is really important to recognise the impact you are having on other people's lives, which is often why people stay with it.

Reflections on student employment

"No one grows up wanting to work in Student Recruitment. Many of us find ourselves here via a plethora of different routes. But once in the sector I think you quickly gain a sense of the positive difference it can make to individuals' lives. As you become more senior the scale of this becomes more evident as you are able to see our work as an engine for genuine political, educational, social and cultural change. As a sector we hold some of the keys to solving systemic problems like equity, social mobility, market dysfunction or racial justice over the course of many years or even decades."
Rebecca Fielding, Founder and Managing Director, Gradconsult.

Thinking about what you want

So far, we have been talking about makes a great early talent professional. But when you are thinking about your career it is also important to think about what your strengths are, what aspects of the job you particularly enjoy, what you are good at and what is valued in your organisation.

Some people have a thirst for being an important member of the organisation, getting great exposure, getting seen and set their ambitions more broadly. Some of these may focus on broadening and developing their skills with the aim of moving up to become an HR director or partner. Other people might have a passion for early talent and want to pursue a career that keeps them close to young people.

Edgar Schein, a former professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management, argued that everyone needs to identify their 'career anchors' to help them to manage their career. Schein said that you should think about which of the following things are most important to you.

Are you happiest being…

- **technically good at things?** Do you love being an expert in recruitment or marketing, mastering the jargon and getting things done?
- **in charge?** Do you enjoy leading projects and teams, setting strategy and thinking long term?
- **left alone?** Are you a lone wolf who is best off when you can make your own decisions and run your own projects?
- **secure**? Are you looking for a safe, secure and predictable work-life?
- **creative and entrepreneurial**? Do you like to experience and come up with new ways to run early talent programmes?
- **able to make a difference?** Are you excited by working to improve diversity, supporting social mobility and generally making the world a better place?
- **stretched and challenged?** Do you love it when you are up against a deadline and trying to deliver the (almost) impossible?
- **not at work?** Is work just a way to achieve your wider lifestyle and interests?

Reflection on these questions will hopefully help you to think about what you are looking for from a career in early talent (if indeed that is where you want to spend your career). A key point to reflect on is that career development does not always mean getting promoted and climbing the corporate ladder. Having said that, it is useful to think about how you can move upward if that is what you decide that you want to do.

Building a network

It can be easy to think about your career in an individualistic way. After all this is your life, and you need to decide how you want to organise it. But careers are built alongside other people and in organisations; given this, it is important to spend some time thinking about how you build a network, relate to other people and work within and across organisations.

There is loads of research highlighting that people who have strong networks are more effective in their roles and more successful in their careers. The truth is that you can't know everything yourself, and so you often have to rely on someone else who knows more than you do about a particular area of student employment, about

what opportunities are available in your career, or even about where is the best place to get a drink after work. These are all examples of the way that a strong network provides you with resources that make you more effective.

You may have heard the term *social capital* to describe the kinds of resources that you can access through having a strong network. Social capital is the idea that social connections give you resources that have an equivalent value to that of money (financial capital). The more social capital you have the better off you are. Research on social capital also makes the important point that social capital is not just good for you. Effective networkers believe in *reciprocity* and give back as much as they benefit from their network. Increasing social capital is good for the individual, for other people in their network, for the organisation where they work and for the country that they live in. There is more information about the research on social capital in the resources at the end of this chapter.

The first component of your network is the people that you work with. An organisation is first and foremost a network of people. You need to devote time to building relationships with your colleagues. Effective early talent professionals have connections right across the business and at all levels. These relationships are social, operational and professional and may often be focused on the giving and receiving of practical help and support, but there also needs to be an element of advocacy. You need to talk about the value you bring to the organisation and what graduates, interns and school and college leavers can bring. You are not just networking for yourself, but also evangelising for the value of early talent. Of course, the advocacy element of networking needs to be subtle and shouldn't become a hard sell, but it is particularly important in your interactions with senior staff.

The second component of your network is building effective external relationships with others in the same field. An external network gives you a host of things that an internal network cannot. The colleagues that you meet through ISE and other industry networking opportunities give you the opportunity to benchmark your practice, find out about how things work elsewhere, hear about suppliers, partners and products and of course discover jobs and training opportunities. As your career progresses you are likely to move organisations and sector-wide networks become increasingly important as they endure beyond a particular role or organisation. External networks are built up through a mixture of attending events, meeting people for coffee, emails and phone calls. As with all relationships you need to devote some time and energy to them and remember that effective networking is characterised by give and take (reciprocity).

Finally, networking is increasingly taking place online. The importance of this form of networking has become even greater during the pandemic. You have an embarrassment of online tools available to you including email, videoconferencing, Zoom and WhatsApp, but the social networking tools such as LinkedIn and Twitter are likely to be particularly useful. So, make sure that you have thought about how you are presenting yourself online, that your accounts and profiles are up to date and that you post useful and interesting things. As with all other forms of networking it is important to put something into the network as well as take useful things out of it. There are more resources on online networking at the end of the chapter.

How to reach the top

There is no single or clearly structured career path for early talent professionals. Unlike some professions that have clear progression based on qualifications, the opportunity here is to create your own journey. However, it is very likely that your organisation has a framework that will explain how you can progress your career within that organisation. So, a good first step is to find out more about how career progression works in your organisation and what some logical, and more creative, steps to the top might look like.

As we discussed in the last section, career development does not necessarily have to be about following a logical and linear path to the top of your department or company. The fact that there isn't a well-established career pathway with obvious qualifications to take means that you need to be creative and align your ambitions and interests with what the organisation can provide. While the most obvious target might be to try and become Head of Student Recruitment (or whatever title your boss has) there are also many other options. For example, there are some global graduate recruitment roles in the industry, which allow you to maintain your specialism while becoming more senior. Some of them will keep a strong connection to early career, whilst other might take you in another direction.

It's helpful to maintain a 5-10 year horizon on your own career, keeping some agility and flexibility as you go forward. Be responsive to, and where possible lead, the change. These opportunities increase the more senior you become, but keep your eye on the change-makers and learn from them. And keep a sense of how important this is. The sector is part of something really big, even if your organisation never tells you that. Find the affirmation yourself - this is what your network is for. Intuitively people think they are doing a good thing working in the early talent space. The more senior you get the more you realise quite how big a difference the sector could and does make.

Increasingly we talk about 'career management' rather than 'career planning' because everyone knows that no one's career ever goes fully to plan. While it is a good idea to have an objective in mind, a lot of the real skill in managing your career comes from seizing opportunities when you see them and rolling with the punches when they come. Nonetheless there are things that you can do to ensure that you are more likely to be able to make the most of the opportunities you do have:

- **Build your network**. We've already talked about the value of networking above, but this becomes particularly critical when you are looking to shift up a level.
- **Talk to more senior people in the field**. Ask them how they moved up through student recruitment and development and see what you can learn. You may even be able to get one of them to mentor you.
- **Build a breadth of expertise**. Make sure you read up on the latest news, research and theory from the industry. This will extend your influence and expertise. Make yourself invaluable. You will develop gravitas within your organisation and beyond.
- **Engage with professional development**. There is much relevant learning within the sector and taking the time to think through your key areas of interest and how they relate to your career aspirations will be time well spent. ISE runs tens of events each year where you can hear from like minds, colleagues and leaders in your field.
- **Take a qualification**. Once you have been working in the field for a while you are likely to have more ideas about where you want to specialise. Taking a post-graduate qualification in HR, marketing, management or another area can help you to up your game.

You may also have to be willing to move organisations, perhaps a number of times as you develop your career in student recruitment and development. Moving to a bigger organisation might open up more opportunities, while moving to a smaller organisation might give you more opportunity to get involved in strategy and oversee more areas. While loyalty is valued, so too is experience from other places, so keep an eye on opportunities in your competitors. This is yet another area where your ISE membership will serve you well as it will allow you to hear about the wider industry and build a network beyond your organisation.

Reflections on student employment

'They say the biggest steps in life are getting your first job, buying your first home, getting married and having children. I can't think of a more rewarding way to spend a career than helping young people make that first step.'
Rob Fryer, Director of Student Opportunity, University of Leicester

Moving on and moving out

Effective career management is often about being creative. If you only ever think of yourself as an early talent professional you are cutting off some opportunities. As we discussed above, early talent does not have a straightforward linear career path. Even if you stay within it and become a Head of Student Talent or something similar, you will probably still find that your next move takes you into something broader.

Within an organisation it can sometimes be possible to move role in a different area. Sometimes this will be part of a promotion but at other times it will be a lateral or even downward move. All career moves still provide you with new experience and more opportunities. But what if you want to be more daring still and perhaps move out of your organisation altogether to a very different kind of employer? Sometimes people might make these kinds of bigger career shift in part to continue to work in an area that they have a passion for, like early careers, but that they don't see many opportunities for within their organisation.

A common career trajectory for early talent professionals is to move into a university or other educational organisation. Careers services will often be keen to recruit people with experience of recruitment and working in the kinds of sectors where their students often go. The opportunity to move from being poacher to gamekeeper is always an appealing one and doesn't necessarily have to be a one-way trip. As a former recruiter, you will bring valuable experience in preparing students for employment.

Another opportunity is to move into consultancy or working for a supplier. You have lots of expertise about how to manage student recruitment and early talent programmes. You could potentially use that to help multiple employers. Suppliers are often brought in when things are going horribly wrong, or to give a fresh look or perspective. If you love that ability to shape, create, and start from scratch then this might be a good opportunity for you.

Finally, you might want to make a complete change at some point in your life. Just because you have been in early talent for five, ten or 20 years doesn't mean that you can't ever do anything else. Normally people make a career shift to areas that are related, but different, but sometimes the decision to retrain as a teacher, open a pub, start your own business or join the circus might just be the right one for you. Talk it over with friends, family and a careers adviser, think about the implications, but just do it if it is the right decision for you.

Ultimately in your career there is no such thing as a wrong choice. You are free to do what you want, whenever you want, as long as you can make it work. In the words of Sir Dominic Cadbury, the former chief executive and chairman of confectionary giant Cadbury,

there is no such thing as a career path – it's crazy paving and you lay it yourself.

Career stories

In this chapter we have tried to give you a sense of why working in early careers can offer you a brilliant career. We have suggested a range of strategies that you can use to advance your career in early talent and encouraged you to think broadly and keep your options open. There may be no such thing as a career path as we are moving forwards, but when we look back it is much easier to see the path that we have taken. That is why we wanted to finish this chapter with some real career stories from early career talent professionals.

Bob Athwal, Senior Talent Manager, Skyscanner

I am fortunate to have worked across the industry as a vendor, a university senior leader and as an employer of early careers talent in three very differing sectors. My development and the ability to have such impact within organisations has been fantastic and I have worked with amazing colleagues along the way. I love the fact that so many students and graduates that I have helped are leading and flourishing in their own right. The best bit of early careers is watching them grow, develop, and lead themselves and others.

I didn't set out to work in early careers. Like many happenstances, it was never planned. It just happened! I was good with selling, being target driven and influencing and negotiating with people at all levels. In addition, I had a vague interest in HR and the rest is history. I have worked for some incredible brands and learnt at all the organisations where I have applied my craft including some of the painful ones.

During my career there have been a number of people that have mentored and shaped me. A number of the old AGR board colleagues as well as one of my bosses Claire Thompson at RWE npower. She was absolutely amazing. I was and still am always curious to learn from others. My network has been the key to my success. Whenever I have needed my network, they have shown up for me and the ISE has helped to make that possible. Build your networks, ensure that they are diverse and you will be successful. This business is all about relationships.

The best decision that I made in my career was going to the University of Leicester to lead careers there. The worst decision was allowing myself to be told that you can't progress as a high potential employee (HiPo) unless you become a generalist and work in HR. This led to the worst two years of my life along with working in another organisation full of bad leaders.

I have a passion to help students and graduates and love the people across the industry, not just employers but those in higher education too along with the partners to our industry. This is what has kept me engaged in this area. Our industry has so many good people with the right intentions that it's amazing to watch. The downside is that we have allowed 'the early careers process' to become more transactional than transformational. We must address that, and there lies the opportunity.

When I think about what makes people successful in this industry, I think that you need to have ambition and the ability to dream and ask why something is not possible? Really effective people are able to break it down problems, solve them and achieve what needs to be done. You should also think about your strengths and thinking about how you can use that best. Finally, hard work is everything, nothing is easy, but it is the challenge that helps us to learn and grow and be better.

For other people in this industry I would say, do the right thing! Learn about the lifecycle of our industry and be a leader in thought and action. Know the operations and do it well but also help your organisation to move forward. We all need to be thinking about the social and racial justice aspects as part of our practice in early careers. Ultimately this will mean that we make better hiring decisions. Finally, continue to develop yourself and the people around you and ensure that you don't just become a cog in the process.

Kate Croucher, Global Lead Talent Sourcing, FDM

I am global lead for Talent Attraction (Graduate Recruitment) at FDM Group, a FTSE 250 company working in IT services to build a diverse pipeline of tech talent for the future. Before FDM I was a higher education careers professional, most recently working at Brunel University where I managed the Careers Service.

It was a natural progression from the world of student careers into a role where I could use my previous knowledge and experience of the university sector in a more fast-paced and commercial environment. To be honest it was as much about the organisation as the job itself. Whatever I did next had to be focused on helping graduates reach their potential and in a sector with growth potential so FDM was perfect. It was the best career decision that I've ever made, and I wish I hadn't taken so long to do it.

I have continued to work in early talent because FDM has always provided me with personal growth opportunities and no year has been the same. The business is ambitious and everyone believes strongly in what we do and this keeps me focused and engaged. There is always a new challenge and with it a new opportunity to do something different which I haven't had in every organisation I've worked in.

Knowing there are go-to people in my network to ask a question of, explore an idea with or share a G&T with has been invaluable. I've had some great managers and colleagues over the years. From the colleague I used to bash a tennis ball around with after work to the current crew at FDM who are some of the smartest people I have ever worked with. And the most fun on a night out.

I would advise other people working in this field to make sure that they understand everything that's going on in their business because somewhere down the line it will impact recruitment. Don't be territorial, engage those from outside your immediate department who are interested, sometimes it can help to share the odd risk too. If you want the wider business to take you seriously, understand and share your recruitment data – drill down so you're making evidence-based decisions that make sense to the rest of the organisation.

You should be ambitious, but not if it's at the expense of those around you or the good of the department. Your credibility is earned by being good at what you do, learning from your mistakes and putting the hours in.

Stephen Isherwood, CEO, ISE

I am currently CEO of the ISE but have worked in student recruitment for over 20 years. I went to university a little later than usual after starting my career in retail management. When I graduated, I joined the recruitment team at Coopers & Lybrand, which became PwC. Before taking over at the ISE I was head of student recruitment at EY.

To be honest, I fell into graduate recruitment via a secondment to cover a maternity leave. I was supposed to go back into HR but liked the graduate role so much I stayed. I was attracted to the range of things I could get involved with and I like the mix of external and internal responsibilities. I like the breadth of our industry, from working with school kids to people rolling off training programmes into management positions.

Back in the day, our team was led by a partner, Ian du Pré, who was a great mentor to me. People joined Coopers just because they had met Ian. Even when I joined EY I came across partners who remembered Ian recruiting them into their first job. He remembered everyone's name, signed off every offer and led every campus presentation.

I would encourage people working in early talent not to just focus on the operational aspects of their role. Become knowledgeable about all aspects of our sector but also know how what you do contributes to your organisation's bottom line. Being able to inform business leaders about the broader market increased the credibility of my team and helped get support for what we wanted to achieve. And build your networks, as others can and will help you in so many ways.

Being successful in this field sometimes requires a bit of resilience. I've been through phases where I really haven't enjoyed my job because I wasn't in quite the right role. But grit your teeth at times like this, have a bit of patience and persistence and you'll be all right. A real interest in students and the whole recruitment and development process helps, as does a good dose of self-awareness. There are lots of areas you can specialise in so find one that best suits your abilities.

Vanessa Soames, Head of EMEA Brand and Attraction at AMS

I have worked in student recruitment for over 20 years. I am currently Head of EMEA Brand and Attraction at AMS where I provide strategic consulting advice for clients. After university I started in student promotions at ACCA, I then came out of the industry for a few years before returning to student marketing at KPMG. While at KPMG I did a variety of employer brand and recruitment roles and my last role there was Head of Graduate Recruitment. I have also headed up marketing and graduate recruitment at Police Now and was Global Graduate Recruitment Head at Barclays.

I was originally attracted to work in early careers because I loved working with my age group, and then as I got older, I loved that I stayed working with the youth sector. To do well and actively engage with this audience we have to be innovative, and so the role and techniques used continually evolve, making it an industry of much opportunity. I enjoy the responsibility and giving back to people on this first step into their career. As I have become more senior, it has also been the international nature of the industry that's appealed. I have enjoyed understanding and immersing myself in different cultures.

The best career decision that I made was taking the role with Police Now. Seventeen of us started on day one not knowing each other, and together we grew the proposition and brand to put neighbourhood police officers and detectives on the street. To build something from scratch and to work with such inspirational police officers was amazing.

I have been incredibly fortunate to have had many mentors in the industry. At ACCA I had Louise Gillard; Keith Dugdale brought me in to KPMG and gave me some brilliant opportunities and projects as well as coaching me at key stages of my career. I've also learnt from Alison Heron, both from working with her at KPMG and through ISE, and from James Darley both from being on the board of Police Now and working with him on Transform. I have a huge number of people who have coached me and who I worked with at various stages at ACCA, KPMG or Police Now who I continue to connect and share best practice with. My network has been invaluable. All my success in each role has been down to the partnerships of people I had in my network or people from my network introduced me to.

I've stayed in the field partially because of the variety of the work. It has been fascinating to see the way that tech and data allow us to do the job so much better every year. But I'm also still involved because it is a joy to help people to find fulfilling careers.

I would advise people moving into this field to take risks and ask questions. Everyone else is thinking it, so be the one to ask or do it. If you want to be successful in this field, you will need to work hard and have talent but the key thing is being willing to take risks. Sometimes you are pushed into the new thing, other times you go looking for it, but one thing I have learnt is always take the risk even if the outcome was not what you thought. The learning that you get from these new experiences will always pay off.

Resources

ISE resources

As ever the ISE website *(https://ise.org.uk/)* is a fount of resources for the early talent specialists. Make the most of the events that we run (both virtual and face to face) and get involved in your sector group. We are always interested in talking to members who want to work more closely with us, perhaps by joining an advisory group, becoming a sector champion or joining the board. And of course we also advertise jobs within the early talent field.

ISE Knowledge Hub *(https://insights.ise.org.uk/)* should be your regular guide to the latest news and views within the industry. Reading the articles on this site every week will mark you out as a serious expert with your finger on the pulse of the industry.

Other resources

There are lots of relevant jobs boards and careers sites that you can use to scope out opportunities. **LinkedIn** *(https://www.linkedin.com)* is pretty essential for people working in early talent and its job posting are getting better and better. You can find jobs in recruitment on most jobs sites including **Reed** *(https://www.reed.co.uk/),* **Indeed** *(https://uk.indeed.com/)* and many more. If you are interested in moving to the education sector you might want to try **jobs.ac.uk** *(https://www.jobs.ac.uk/)*.

There are many resources that can be helpful to you in your career. **Monster**'s careers resources are pretty strong *(https://www.monster.co.uk/career-advice)* and they are also a jobs board. **The Guardian's careers** site *(https://www.theguardian.com/careers)* has a lively mix of news and views (as well as more jobs). You can also get access to free careers advice through the **National Careers Service** *(https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/)* or find a careers professional for a more in depth consultation through the **Career Development Institute**'s professional register *(https://www.thecdi.net/Professional-Register-)*.

ISE Supplier Directory

Bridge Group
The Bridge Group is a non-profit consultancy that uses research to promote social equality. We do this by supporting organisations of all kinds with independent expertise, research and practical know-how to enable them to make real and lasting impact on socio-economic diversity and social equality. The Bridge Group conducts rigorous, evidence-based research to ensure that policy-making and practice are built on sound and sustainable principles. We also offer consultancy and advocacy services.

www.thebridgegroup.org.uk
07717 727068

Development Beyond Learning
Development Beyond Learning delivers human skills development for your future workforce, informed by behavioural science and an unparalleled heritage in early talent development. Winner of the Institute of Student Employer's 2020 'Best Employer/Supplier Partnership Award', DBL are on a mission to support 1 million young people each year by 2025.

www.developmentbeyondlearning.com
44 (0)207 193 7556

Group GTI
Our mission is to help students realise their potential in the world of work. To do this, we partner with employers, universities, colleges, schools and other technology providers We support universities in delivering world-class career management and student services. We offer employers student research, attraction, virtual platforms and recruiting services. Brands include TARGETconnect, TARGETjobs, gradireland, Recruiting Solutions and Cibyl. Today the GTI network includes 1.6+ million students and recent graduates, 80 education institutions and 100,000 employers.

www.groupgti.com

Highfliers
High Fliers Research is at the forefront of graduate recruitment research at UK universities. Our annual student survey, *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* is based on face-to-face interviews with up to 20,000 final year students and has been used by over 150 major national & international employers to review, assess and develop their graduate recruitment strategies. It provides recruiters with a unique insight into finalists' career expectations & aspirations and identifies the promotions, events & resources that students use during their graduate job search. The research is used to produce *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers and The Times Graduate Recruitment Awards.*

www.highfliers.co.uk
020 7428 9000

MyKindaFuture
MyKindaFuture are an award-winning HR tech company specialising in supporting underrepresented talent get into work, thrive once in role, and feel like they belong there. We work with employers to attract, place and retain overlooked and diverse talent from all backgrounds through our candidate and employee engagement platform, Connectr.

www.mykindafuture.com
020 7620 4463

Not Going To Uni
Not Going To Uni are the UK's leading website dedicated to helping school and college leavers make informed decisions about their future by showing the opportunities that exist outside of the traditional university route. These can include apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships, gap years, traineeships and jobs.

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk
020 3691 2800

RMP Enterprise
You might know us best for our flagship product RateMyPlacement.co.uk, known as 'the TripAdvisor for work experience'. Offering cost-effective student recruitment solutions, we're proud to deliver 100% hires for employers such as Warner Media, SAP & Lidl. We also have On-Campus Promotions in our portfolio to create digital and face-to-face attraction campaigns for employers, and RateMyApprenticeship.co.uk, a review-based job board that helps employers attract school and college students.

www.rmpenterprise.co.uk
020 3056 7700

Soukias Jones Design
Making your graduate and student attraction campaigns work harder. Firms often look similar, and say similar things. Can be hard for students to pick a winner. Achieving distinctiveness however, is more than using appealing visual codes, it's about unearthing stories to communicate your messages in a way that is compelling, authentic and truthful. Whether targeting graduates or school leavers, Soukias Jones creatively combines your visual and verbal communications across online and offline applications to make your communications work harder.

www.soukiasjones.co.uk/credentials/early-talent-attraction-campaigns
07961 357358

University of Bath
University of Bath graduates are highly valued and sought after by leading graduate employers. Two thirds of our students choose to do a placement or study abroad, helping them prepare for their careers through real-world experience. This is why we are ranked 5th for graduate prospects by The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020. The University of Bath is proud to collaborate with business through research partnerships, graduate recruitment, enterprise and innovation.

www.bath.ac.uk

Uptree
Uptree is a professional network connecting young people and employers. Our main focus is democratising careers education and levelling the playing field. By bridging that gap between education and employment through our education outreach, industry events such as work experience days, application masterclasses and our online platform. Allowing students from underrepresented backgrounds to make those key connections with professionals. We are on a mission to be the leading careers education and work experience platform championing diversity, inclusion and equality.

uptree.co
07717 727068

Supplier directory

Specialty Focus

		Attraction and marketing	Development	Internships, placements and work experience	Managing partnerships	Onboarding	Recruitment and selection	Staff development (for student employment teams)	Strategy	School and college leavers	Apprentices	Graduates
106 Communications	www.106comms.com	✓				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
a-Maze Consulting Limited	www.a-mazeconsulting.com	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
AAT	www.aat.org.uk	✓								✓	✓	
AllAboutGroup	www.allaboutgroup.org	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Alpha Development	www.alphadevelopment.com		✓					✓			✓	✓
Amberjack	www.weareamberjack.com	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
AMS	www.weareams.com/solutions/early-careers-and-campus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Aon's Assessment Solutions	https://assessment.aon.com/en-us						✓			✓	✓	✓
Blackbridge Communications	www.blackbridge.co.uk	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
Bowles Learning & Development	www.bowles.rocks/learning-and-development		✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
BPP Education Group	www.bpp.com		✓				✓		✓		✓	✓
Brathay Trust	www.brathay.com		✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
Bridge Group	www.thebridgegroup.org.uk				✓							✓
Bright Network	employers.brightnetwork.co.uk	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓
Cappfinity	www.cappfinity.com		✓			✓	✓				✓	✓
Careermap Limited	www.careermap.co.uk	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cogency Labs	www.cogencylabs.co.uk				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Cohesion Recruitment	www.earlytalent.careers	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Corndel	www.corndel.com		✓		✓					✓	✓	✓
Debut	www.debut.careers	✓		✓					✓		✓	✓
Developing Talent	www.developingtalent.co.uk		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Development Beyond Learning	www.developmentbeyondlearning.com		✓	✓		✓		✓				✓
Discovery	www.discovery-graduates.com	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
Enabling Talent	www.EnablingTalent.com		✓				✓					✓
Equitas	www.equitas.ai						✓					✓

Supplier directory

Specialty Focus

		Attraction and marketing	Development	Internships, placements and work experience	Managing partnerships	Onboarding	Recruitment and selection	Staff development (for student employment teams)	Strategy	School and college leavers	Apprentices	Graduates
Experience	www.experience-event.com	✓								✓	✓	✓
Femi Bola Consulting	www.linkedin.com/in/femibola		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fitch Learning	www.fitchlearning.com		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Fledglink	www.fledglink.com	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	
Forage	www.theforage.com	✓	✓	✓			✓					✓
Futureboard	www.futureboardconsulting.com	✓		✓			✓					✓
Gen Healthy Minds Ltd	www.genhealthyminds.co.uk		✓								✓	✓
Generation Success	www.generation-success.com		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
GF Job Assessment Experts	www.graduatesfirst.com						✓			✓	✓	✓
Gradconsult	www.gradconsult.co.uk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gradcore	www.gradcore.co.uk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Gradfuel	www.gradfuel.co/students	✓		✓			✓					✓
GradTouch	https://employers.gradtouch.com/	✓										✓
Graduate Ambitions	www.strategicambitions.com	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓
Graduate Recruitment Bureau (GRB)	www.grb.uk.com/employer-services	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Graduate Transitions Ltd	www.graduate-transitions.co.uk	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Group GTI	www.groupgti.com	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Handshake UK	www.joinhandshake.co.uk						✓					✓
Havas People	www.havaspeople.com	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
High Fliers Research	www.highfliers.co.uk	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
Hire STEM Women	www.hirestemwomen.co.uk	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓			✓
HireVue	www.hirevue.com						✓					✓
Hype Collective	www.hypecollective.co.uk	✓			✓					✓		✓
Interaction Learning and Development	www.interaction-LD.com		✓					✓		✓	✓	✓
INTO University Partnerships	www.INTOfuture.com		✓							✓		

Supplier directory

Specialty | Focus

		Attraction and marketing	Development	Internships, placements and work experience	Managing partnerships	Onboarding	Recruitment and selection	Staff development (for student employment teams)	Strategy	School and college leavers	Apprentices	Graduates
Investment20/20	www.investment2020.org.uk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
KB Graduate Solutions Ltd	www.kbgraduatesolutions.com	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
Legal Cheek	www.legalcheek.com	✓		✓			✓			✓		✓
Meet & Engage	www.meetandengage.com	✓				✓				✓	✓	✓
Milkround	www.milkround.com/	✓					✓					✓
Motability Operations	www.motabilityoperations.co.uk/careers/	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
MyKindaFuture	www.mykindafuture.com	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
MyPlus	www.myplusconsulting.com	✓						✓				✓
Not Going To Uni	www.notgoingtouni.co.uk	✓					✓			✓	✓	
Pathway CTM	www.pathwayctm.com	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
People and Their Brilliance	www.thebrilliance.co.uk	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Petrus	www.petruscommunications.com	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
ProjectSet Limited	www.projectset.com			✓						✓		✓
Prospects	www.prospects.ac.uk	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Radancy	www.radancy.co.uk	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Rare Recruitment	https://www.rarerecruitment.co.uk/	✓		✓			✓			✓		✓
Resource Solutions	www.resourcesolutions.com	✓				✓	✓					✓
RMP Enterprise	www.rmpenterprise.co.uk	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
Sanctuary Graduates	www.sanctuarygraduates.co.uk/employers/recruit-graduates	✓		✓			✓					✓
Slync	www.slync.com	✓					✓			✓	✓	✓
SMRS	www.smrs.co.uk	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
Sonru - A Modern Hire Company	https://modernhire.com/sonru/			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Soukias Jones	www.soukiasjones.co.uk/credentials/early-talent-attraction-campaigns	✓									✓	✓
Sova	www.sovaassessment.com		✓				✓			✓	✓	✓
Springpod	https://partners.springpod.co.uk	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	

Supplier directory

Specialty Focus

		Attraction and marketing	Development	Internships, placements and work experience	Managing partnerships	Onboarding	Recruitment and selection	Staff development (for student employment teams)	Strategy	School and college leavers	Apprentices	Graduates
SRS - Smart Resourcing Solutions	www.smart-resourcing-solutions.com						✓	✓				✓
STEM Women	stemwomen.co.uk	✓										✓
Sten10 Ltd	www.sten10.com		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Success at School	www.successatschool.org	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	
talentsmoothie Ltd	www.talentsmoothie.com	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓
The Adecco Group	www.adeccogroup.co.uk		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
The Branding Man	www.thebrandingman.co.uk	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
The Early Talent Consultancy	www.theearlytalentconsultancy.com	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Emotional MBA	www.linkedin.com/in/ruth-kitchen-phd-812a4818		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
The Outward Bound Trust	www.outwardbound.org.uk		✓								✓	✓
The Smarty Train	www.thesmartytrain.com	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
The Social Mobility Foundation	www.socialmobility.org.uk			✓	✓					✓		✓
The Student Job Coach	www.thestudentjobcoach.co.uk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Whitehall & Industry Group	www.wig.co.uk		✓	✓				✓			✓	✓
TheTalentPeople	www.thetalentpeople.co.uk	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
ThirtyThree	www.thirtythree.co.uk	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
TMP	www.Tmpw.co.uk	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tonic	www.tonic-agency.com	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
TopScore	www.topscoretech.com						✓			✓	✓	✓
UCAS Media	www.ucasmedia.com	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
upReach	www.upreach.org.uk	✓		✓			✓					✓
Upskill Me	www.upskillme.io	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	
Uptree	www.uptree.co	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
We Speak	www.wespeak.co		✓							✓		✓
WildHearts Talent	www.wildheartsgroup.com/micro-tyco-2/		✓									✓
ZOERENTALS LTD	www.zrntls.eu/	✓										✓

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