



# Global Horizons: how international graduates can help businesses

The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) has recently submitted a report to the Government on how businesses can improve their global competitiveness and enhance the quality of the experience that international students get from studying in the UK.

This report is the fourth in our series on Global Horizons and how universities and businesses can work together to develop more globally aware graduates. It was commissioned by the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI2) which wanted to find out how more businesses, and especially small companies, might offer more international students a quality work placement and recruit more international graduates into their workforce. We see this as important in building:

- a more open and informed society;
- in helping organisations across the UK be more globally aware and connected;
- and in making the UK a still more attractive location for internationally mobile students and post-graduates.

The quality of the student experience is enhanced if there is a rich diversity on campus.

Our previous work has shown that while international students appreciate the high quality of the UK's higher education system, they do not feel they are integrated enough on campus or have their employability sufficiently developed. Both can act as a brake in making the UK a preferred location for internationally mobile students. Universities, businesses and Governments across the UK must do more to address these issues and this report makes recommendations to each of these parties. The report reflects an analysis of existing evidence, gathers the views of a wide range of employers both through semi-structured interviews and through a sample survey and insights gained from a range of partners.

## **Benefits to businesses**

The report shows that there are clear benefits to businesses of employing international graduates or students at UK universities. They can bring:

- specific skills and knowledge about different countries, languages and cultures that businesses need in order to develop new markets;
- help businesses understand and deal more effectively with overseas customers/suppliers;
- broaden the outlook of a company's workforce and can make the business more receptive to new ideas.

*"...I find overseas students bring interesting insights and experiences, they have benefited from travel and they have different ways of looking at things".*

Managing director of a small information consultancy business

*"...the value of recruiting from different backgrounds produces more creative teams... if they have moved to different countries then they are likely to be more mature".*

Graduate recruitment manager, investment bank

*"We need international students and graduates to help us exploit overseas market opportunities, we need an international mindset".*

Global recruitment manager, large consultancy firm.

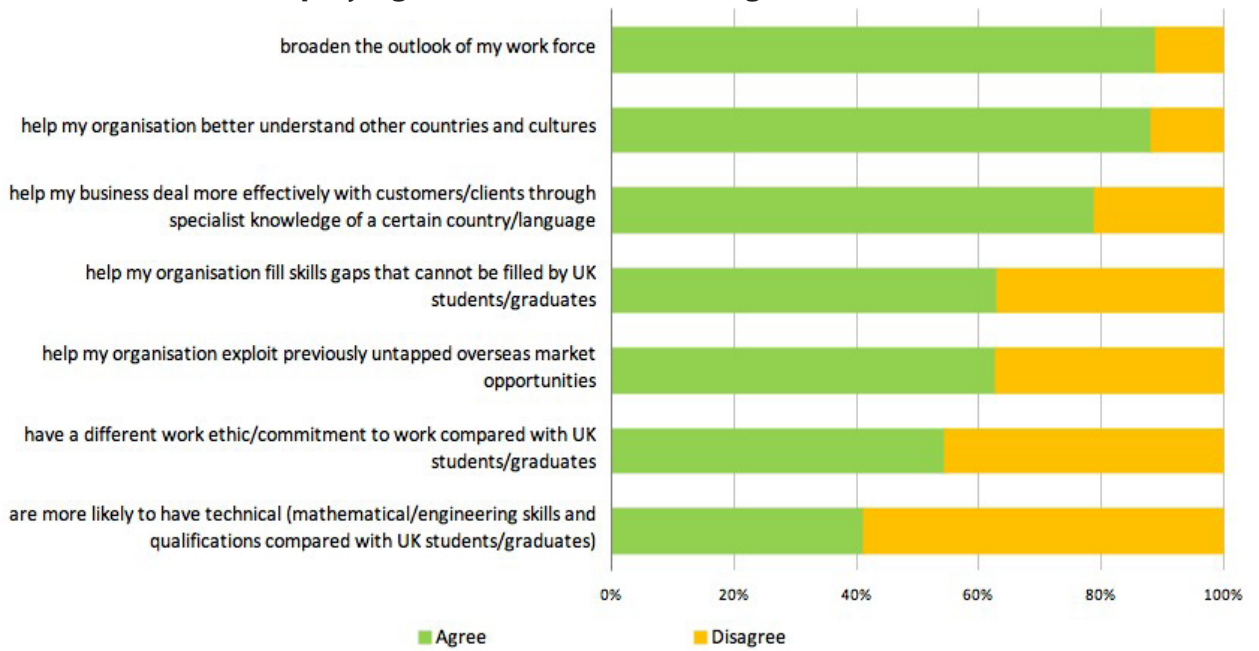
*"It's a pool you can't ignore - we know long term there is going to be a demographic downturn... International students can overcome shortages especially if they have specialist skills and experience".*

International business consultancy.

Written by:  
Richard Brown  
CIHE

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## Benefits to employing international students/graduates



Source: i-graduate Employer Insights Questionnaire

### Perceived difficulties

But businesses are confused about the new arrangements governing the employment of international graduates and students, and feel there are too many and often conflicting sources of information. A few employers think that some international students and graduates lack good English language skills and are not culturally aware enough of British workplace and business practices. We make recommendations on how these and other concerns can be addressed.

It is important that the Government recognises through a consistent set of policies and practices the value that international students bring to the UK, to our universities and to our economy and society. They enrich the student experience on campus and in our society as well as help our businesses be more internationally competitive. As our economy repositions itself to emerge from the recession, an international awareness and an ability to do business globally will be even more important. International graduates can help all organisations in the public, private and third sectors build bridges across the globe. We need to be open internationally and welcoming in the messages we give and practices we adopt.

Openness has been a hallmark of Britain over many centuries. But it can all too easily be threatened by short-termism and short-sightedness especially when times are tough. If we are to build for the future, we need to continue to benefit from the skills, drive, experiences and the differences that international students and graduates bring to us in this ever more globally connected and interdependent world.

The CIHE is now developing a short brochure for small businesses that will be launched later this year. We will distribute this widely with help from a range of business organisations. Universities and their careers services can help spread the messages. So can the Government and its agencies. We need positive messages and an openness of vision if our economy and society are to successfully face the global challenges ahead.

The report "Global Horizons: Recruitment of International Students and Graduates from UK Universities" by Richard Brown and Helen Connor is on the CIHE website: [www.cihe-uk.com](http://www.cihe-uk.com). The brochure will be finalised later this year.

**A full list of CIHE publications can be found and ordered through our website  
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Studio 11, Tiger House, Burton Street, London, WC1H 9BY  
Tel: 020 7383 7667 Fax: 020 7383 3433  
[cihe@cihe-uk.com](mailto:cihe@cihe-uk.com) [www.cihe-uk.com](http://www.cihe-uk.com)

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