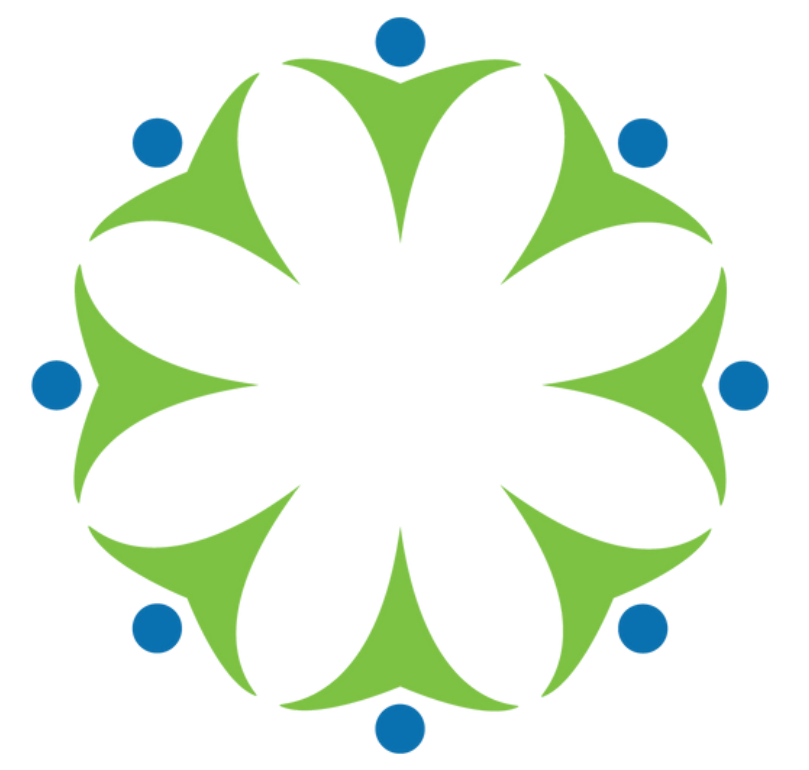


# Putting the global into local business: an employer engagement event



We have become increasingly aware that for many of them finding graduate employment is proving challenging. We are also aware that there still seems to be a lack of understanding of the opportunities available to employers in hiring international students or graduates, particularly around the graduate visa route.

We wanted to organise an event to engage with local SMEs and connect them with other local employers who have already recruited international students. The purpose of this event was to learn from their experience, share good practise, provide information on the logistics and legalities, and create a platform for discussion.

This academic year new roles were created in Career and Employability Services to support the increased numbers of international students. This event also presented an opportunity for these colleagues to network with employers and graduates, raise the profile of their work and encourage further engagement.

We worked together with colleagues from SkillsHouse and their business engagement team to plan and deliver the event which took place 'in person' on Thursday 25th May at the University of Bradford.



## ACTION & APPROACH

Details of the event were shared and promoted through Eventbrite and sent via email to a large number of local businesses in Bradford and the surrounding areas. Working in collaboration with SkillsHouse allowed us to reach out to a wider range of organisations. The event was further promoted using social media.

We opted for a panel-style event, with a few key speakers (both employers and graduates) but wanted to keep the event fairly informal and allow time for questions and encourage further discussion. The event opened with some context from the University and then representatives from Born In Bradford (Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust) and Snave UK shared their positive experiences of recruiting and working with international students, and their experience of sponsoring international graduates, where relevant.

The event was also supported by Paragon Law who joined the session virtually to explain the legal options available to employ an international graduate, ie. through skilled worker sponsorship or via the graduate visa route. They presented detailed information and offered an opportunity for attendees to ask questions. Our alumni then discussed their experiences of securing employment as international students; the challenges, successes and the support received from Career and Employability Services.

## CONCLUSIONS

Work is very much ongoing in this space, to facilitate the recruitment process for international graduates and employers alike. We would like to produce some visual guides to share with employers as well as some video case studies from employers who have positive experiences to share.

The format of the event worked well but it would be great to reach a wider audience if we were to organise something similar in future. There could be some benefit in running a similar event online or as a hybrid event to encourage participation from employers who were unable to attend in person. To increase engagement, we feel that the session could be hosted in conjunction with another event when employers are already on campus, for example as a breakfast event or late afternoon session when a Careers Fair is taking place.

## IMPACT

Total attendee numbers were relatively small and the atmosphere fairly informal which helped to facilitate discussion. The main outcome for employers who attended was the sharing of knowledge and best practise and opportunity to expand their networks. It was an opportunity for international alumni to discuss their career journey with employers and highlight the positive and negative aspects of their experiences to educate employers on such issues. We hoped that this reflection of their own journey would be useful, as well as the opportunity to make connections and expand their networks.

For the University and SkillsHouse the event was a first step into this space and a useful starting point to build on to further engage employers around the recruitment of international graduates. It presented an opportunity to network and learn of some of the issues faced by both employers and graduates to be able to reflect and consider these in future planning. Feedback received around the concept of the event was positive, and participants said they thought it was useful and would be interested in attending similar events in future.