

## Education New Zealand Briefing

<b>Title:</b>	'Employer Perceptions of Hiring International Graduates' research summary
<b>Date:</b>	26 June 2019
<b>Priority:</b>	Low
<b>Security level:</b>	In Confidence
<b>ENZ ID no:</b>	1819-225

### Action sought

Addressee:	Action sought:	Deadline:
Minister of Education	<p><b>Note</b> that Education New Zealand will release research on 'Employer Perceptions of Hiring International Graduates' at the Global Internship Conference in July 2019.</p> <p><b>Agree</b> that this briefing is proactively released as part of the July 2019 release</p>	1 July 2019
<b>Enclosure:</b>	No	<b>Round robin:</b> No

### Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name:	Position:	Telephone:	Cell phone:	1 <sup>st</sup> contact:
Angela Meredith	Accountability Manager	Withheld under s9(2)(a) of the OIA	Withheld under s9(2)(a) of the OIA	x
Grant McPherson	Chief Executive	Withheld under s9(2)(a) of the OIA	Withheld under s9(2)(a) of the OIA	

### The following departments/agencies have seen this report

<input type="checkbox"/> ERO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MBIE	<input type="checkbox"/> MFaT	<input type="checkbox"/> MoH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MoE	<input type="checkbox"/> MSD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NZQA	<input type="checkbox"/> NZTE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TEC	<input type="checkbox"/> TPK	<input type="checkbox"/> Treasury	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Minister's office to complete

<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Declined	<input type="checkbox"/> Noted	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs change
<input type="checkbox"/> Seen	<input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events	<input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn

**Comments:**

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### Recommendations

#### We recommend that the Minister of Education

- a. **note** that Education New Zealand will release research on 'Employer Perceptions of Hiring International Graduates' at the Global Internship Conference in July 2019

Noted

- b. **agree** that this briefing is proactively released as part of the July 2019 release

Agree /  Disagree



Grant McPherson  
Chief Executive  
Education New Zealand



Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
28/6/19

Proactively released

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## Purpose

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1. This paper summarises research on 'Employer Perceptions of Hiring International Graduates' that Education New Zealand (ENZ) will present at the Global Internship Conference in Auckland in July 2019.

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## Delivering excellent international student experience

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2. Delivery of an excellent overall international student experience is a goal of the [New Zealand International Education Strategy 2018-2030](#), and the [International Student Wellbeing Strategy](#) aims to ensure that international students enjoy a high-quality education and are valued for their contribution to New Zealand.
3. Previous student experience research commissioned by ENZ<sup>1</sup> confirmed that employability is a key driver of student experience, and that New Zealand is perceived by international students to be underperforming in this area.
4. In response to this identified need, ENZ commissioned a national qualitative study on employer perceptions of hiring New Zealand-educated international students. Priorities for the study were to:
  - Gain deeper insight into the value proposition for New Zealand employers to employ New Zealand-educated international talent.
  - Educate employers, using employer champions to tell the story, on the value of international talent and the benefit that diversity brings to business.
  - Break down the perceived and real structural barriers to hiring New Zealand-educated international talent.
  - Give regional economic agencies deeper insight into regional workforce planning needs. This would enable international education providers to design courses to better meet those local workforce needs, increasing local employability.
  - Amplify best practice resources that prepare students for future employment whether they choose to work in New Zealand, their home country, or somewhere else in the world.
5. A draft report was delivered to ENZ in May 2019 and ENZ is currently finalising the report for presentation at the Global Internship Conference in Auckland in July 2019.

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## Employer Perceptions of Hiring International Graduates

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6. ENZ worked in close collaboration with research partner TRA to develop a robust research methodology to investigate New Zealand employer perceptions of hiring New Zealand-educated international graduates. The study included a literature review, employer and expert interviews, proposition validation interviews with employers and students, and a workshop with employers and experts.
7. Despite employers experiencing a significant skilled talent shortage, there has been limited engagement with New Zealand employers on the value that New Zealand-educated international talent can add to their businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> ATEED/ENZ 'Student Experience Auckland' project and Kantar TNS 'Understanding the International Student Experience in New Zealand'.

8. The study focused on SMEs because they comprise 97% of enterprises in New Zealand and employ 30% of the workforce. Larger businesses have more complex hiring policies, which are often predetermined by offshore global mandates.
9. A key theme identified for SME's was the importance of employees being the right 'fit'. In larger companies, one wrong hire is unlikely to impact the entire workplace. Because SME employers have a smaller workforce they are more concerned about the negative impact that one employee can have on the mood and productivity of their whole team.
10. The key findings were:
  - International graduates tend to be seen as a risk by those employers who haven't hired them before, yet they are seen as an asset by those employers who have hired them.
  - In a New Zealand cultural context, earned success is highly prized. Some business owners stereotype international students as getting an easy ride through life with support from rich families.
  - Evidence of earned success in a New Zealand workplace significantly helps international graduates' future employability. This can include a part-time job, an unpaid internship or volunteering.
  - Demonstration of soft skills in addition to academic grades also helps international graduates' employability.
  - Businesses reported significant benefit in the two-way cultural exchange that occurs when employing international graduates.
  - New Zealand employers generally believe in the value of diversity, but there are other types of diversity they think of first before thinking about hiring for international multi-culturalism (i.e. women, Māori and Pasifika, and LGBTQI+).

### Redefining the value of international graduates in the eyes of employers

11. The study tested several broad value propositions with employers and found that the more direct the business benefits, the stronger the value proposition is for employers. The two core concepts to emphasise with employers are:
  - a **positive contribution to work outputs**. This highlights international graduates' earned success in being unafraid to take on the challenge of study in a new country and solve new problems, adapting to Kiwi culture and persevering in attaining a new qualification or language skill.
  - a **positive contribution to workplace morale**. This aims to reposition the perceived risk of an international graduate not fitting in into a benefit highlighting the multi-cultural energy and new perspectives that international graduates bring to the workplace.



12. Employers are more likely to see the benefits of hiring international graduates if they hear about them from other employers, rather than through stories told from the students' perspective. It is also important that international graduates understand how to highlight their work eligibility and skills when applying for jobs with New Zealand employers.

### Next Steps

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13. The full study is currently being finalised for presentation at the Global Internship Conference, and publication on ENZ's IntelliLab.
14. The findings from this research will support ENZ's discussion with stakeholders and inform actions to support improved employability for international students as part of ENZ's wider work towards delivering an excellent student experience.

### Proactive release

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15. ENZ proposes to proactively release this briefing as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Proactively released