



# **Business Action on Education**

## **Skills @ Work Evaluation Report 2017**



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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. About the Skills @ Work Programme	4
1.2. Main Findings in 2017	4
<b>2. Student Evaluation</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. Demographic Information	5
2.2. Programme Enjoyment	6
2.3. Programme Benefits	9
2.4. Recommendations	12
<b>3. School Evaluation</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1. Structure & Content	15
3.2. Programme Benefits	17
3.3. Communication, Service & Support	23
3.4. Recommendations	25
<b>4. Company Evaluation</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1. Structure & Content	26
4.2. Programme Benefits	28
4.3. Communication, Service & Support	32
4.4. Recommendations	33

# Section 1

## Executive Summary

Business in the Community Ireland supports students who are at risk of leaving school early. We are delighted to report that Ireland's retention rate has improved from 80% in 2000 to 90.3% today and Ireland ranks third in Europe on school completion. Through our Skills @ Work Programme we provide students with an insight into the world of work. Over a number of sessions, students are provided with assistance to learn about their school's partnering business and to consider career and further study options available to them when they finish school. Sessions include: workplace visits, 'A Day in the Life' talks, CV & interview preparation, mock interviews, company overviews, final wrap up sessions and in some cases an optional session such as social media, work place etiquette or new technologies. Employees from the partnering businesses have the opportunity to share their experiences of life, study and work. Employees also have the opportunity to enhance and develop their presentation and communication skills, while adding diversity to their working day. **36,271** students have participated in this programme to date. One hundred and forty six (**146**) schools and companies completed the Skills @ Work Programme in 2017.

### 1.1. Main Findings in 2017

#### Student Evaluation

- **97%** of students found the programme very enjoyable or enjoyable
- **95%** of students would recommend the programme to another student
- **92%** of students felt the Skills @ Work programme helped them to improve their CV and interview skills while **88%** felt it improved their job searching skills
- **7%** of students were considering leaving school but the programme encouraged them to stay and complete their Leaving Certificate

#### School Evaluation

- **100%** of schools would recommend the Skills @ Work Programme to another school
- **99%** of school coordinators felt the programme helped students improve their CV and interview skills and **99%** also felt it improved students' self-confidence
- **85%** of teachers said that Skills @ Work had a noticeable impact on some students, they identified students whose attitude, confidence, commitment and focus was positively changed
- **Mock Interviews** were identified by the school as the most beneficial session to the students

#### Company Evaluation

- **100%** of companies indicated that making a contribution to the local community was a key benefit to the company, of participation in the programme
- **99%** of companies would recommend the Skills @ Work Programme to another company
- **96%** of companies indicated that it supported their corporate responsibility agenda/ strategy

# Section 2

## Student Evaluation

The **2017 response rate** of students who completed the Skills @ Work Student Evaluation was **82%** which was disappointing as there was an **8%** decrease from the previous year. The feedback students give us during this evaluation is invaluable as it helps us shape the programme for future participants.

Instructions and a link to the evaluations were sent to the coordinating teacher from each school, who was asked to facilitate a short session with a selection of ten students, to complete the online evaluation.

The evaluation form was divided into four sections:

- 2.1** Demographic Information
- 2.2** Programme Enjoyment
- 2.3** Programme Benefits
- 2.4** Recommendations

### 2.1. Demographic Information

Similar to last year, the student evaluation contained basic demographic information. **51% (778)** of respondents were female and **49% (743)** were male. Students were asked to indicate which school year they were currently in along with the Leaving Certificate they were doing or planning to do.

- 73% of students were in their **1st Year of the Leaving Certificate**
- 24% of students were in **Transition Year**
- 3% of students were in their **2nd Year of the Leaving Certificate**
- 59% of students are preparing for the **traditional Leaving Certificate**
- 31% of students are preparing for the **LCVP (Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme)**
- 10% of students are preparing for the **Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)**

## 2.2 Programme Enjoyment

In this section, we asked students to tell us what they liked and did not like about the programme.

### 2.2.1 Overall Enjoyment of Skills @ Work Programme

Students' experiences of the programme were overwhelmingly positive. **97%** of students found the programme **very enjoyable** or **enjoyable** with only **3%** of students indicating that they did not enjoy the programme. **Students commented:**

*It was very enjoyable to see how an international based company works day to day.*

*It was very informative and exceeded my expectations I thought we would be shown around a boring office but it was really bright and quirky.*



*I've really appreciated that Company X staff agreed to do this partnership with our school, and spent hours and days with us. This project helped us a lot, prepared us for a hopefully future interview and future job. We had the opportunity to see what we have to expect in future and to see how a big industry works.*

*I enjoyed Skills @ Work very much. I gained so much confidence especially from the practice interview. I developed in my team work skills and also my communication skills. I would recommend this programme to anyone as it gives you an insight to life after school.*

*The reason why I really enjoyed the skills at work programme was because it showed me how to work as a team and it gave me skills I never thought I had.*

*It was an insightful experience that gave me the opportunity to get a glimpse of how the working world operates and also motivated me to excel in my studies.*



### 2.2.2 Skills @ Work Programme Enjoyment

**88%** of students indicated that they **enjoyed all parts of the programme**. **12%** indicated that there were some elements of the programme which they did not enjoy. Some of the reasons given included: Site visits should be longer and more interactive. Some students felt shy and nervous about public speaking and mock interviews. Others felt that CV and interview prep sessions should be more engaging with fewer presentations and more workshops. Some sessions were considered too long and boring. **Students commented:**

*I enjoyed it all but it should have gone on for longer, maybe gave us more experience like a day where we shadow some of the workers.*

*Personally I didn't like the interviews but that's on my part as I'm relatively shy while in that situation but I liked that the interviewers pushed me to do my best and be comfortable while answering questions.*

*I would like more team building activities or a study skills session.*

*Some of the talks could have been more interactive.*

*I was a bit nervous about getting up and speaking in in front of the class.*



### 2.2.3 Students' Enjoyment of Each Session

Students were asked to rate their enjoyment of each session of the programme. This information allows us to get direct comparisons between the sessions with a view to improving them year on year.

**83%** of all sessions were rated as either **excellent** or **very good**. The **workplace visit (89%)** was the most popular with a **2%** increase on the previous year. **Mock interviews (85%)** were identified as the second most popular session, albeit with a slight 1% decrease from 2016 followed by **CV & interview prep (84%)**, with no change from 2016.

Chart 1: Enjoyment of Each Session in the S@W Programme

Answer Options	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Poor	N /A*
Company Information Talk	27%	51%	17%	2%	2%
Day in the Life' Talk	37%	43%	14%	1%	4%
Workplace visit	59%	30%	8%	1%	4%
CV & Interview Prep	47%	37%	11%	2%	4%
Mock interviews	59%	26%	8%	1%	5%
Final Wrap Up Session	44%	37%	13%	2%	5%
Optional Session (e.g. Teamwork, Organisational Skills)	30%	28%	12%	2%	28%

\*N/A means not applicable e.g. if a class didn't have a particular session





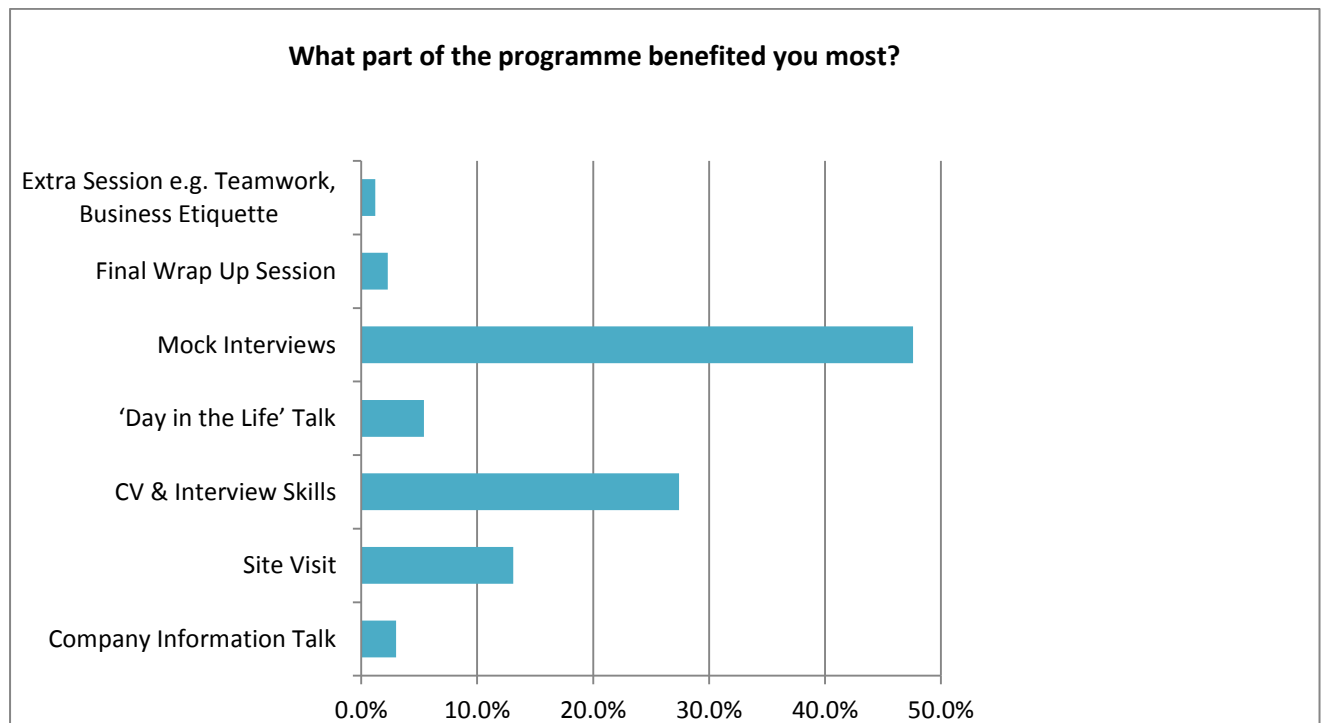
## 2.3. Programme Benefits

In this section, we asked students which part of the Skills @ Work Programme benefitted them the most.

### 2.3.1 Most Beneficial Aspect of Programme

Almost half of the students (**48%**) responded that the **mock interviews** benefitted them the most, followed by **CV & interview skills** (**27%**). These two sessions were also identified as the most beneficial in 2016, 2015 and 2014.

Chart 2: Most Beneficial Aspects of Programme



#### Students commented:

*I previously had trouble with making CVs so this class really benefited me.*

*I like computers and it was good to see what work people do with computers.*

*We saw all the different parts to the company and how it ran from the inside with the dedication of all the employees at the site. It also showed us how much work had to go into each sector to keep it running efficiently.*

*The mock interviews benefited me the most because it gave me a good insight to what a real interview would be like. They told me what not to say and how to expand on my answers. They also gave me pointers on how to present myself and that I should talk with composure.*

*It built my confidence and knowledge.*

*Day in the life talk benefited me the most because I learned what career path they took to reach a position in Company X and it showed me that I would like to work in a busy environment.*

### 2.3.2 Impacts of the Skills @ Work Programme

Students were asked to identify the impacts which the Skills @ Work Programme had on them.

Students indicated that the programme had a number of significant impacts. **92%** indicated the programme improved CV and interview skills while **88%** felt it provided job searching skills and **84%** felt it improved communication skills.

Chart 3: Impacts of the Skills @ Work Programme

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Change	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Increased my self confidence	34%	46%	18%	1%	1%
Improved my communication skills	33%	51%	14%	1%	N/A
Improved my teamwork skills	31%	43%	24%	2%	N/A
Encouraged me to study harder and do better at school	25%	39%	30%	4%	2%
Got me thinking about what I would like to do after school	39%	38%	20%	3%	1%
I got ideas about career choices including some I hadn't previously considered	29%	38%	26%	5%	1%
Helped me with decisions about college courses and further education	25%	37%	32%	5%	1%
Helped me to improve my CV and interview skills	62%	30%	7%	1%	1%
I learned skills that will help me when I am searching for a job	52%	36%	10%	1%	1%
Other	64				

#### Students commented:

*It has made me more open to so many career options as going there I wasn't aware of any of the jobs there and how much work actually goes into them. I am very interested and optimistic about the future and am hoping to get a job in human resources or marketing in the future.*

*I developed my communication skills during the interview and learned about the rules of interviews. I enjoyed the process and I felt as though I have grown as a result.*

*I had recently begun job hunting so it provided many tips on how to ensure success in finding a job.*

*It helped my confidence as well as my public speaking.*

*It allowed my organising skills to improve by pushing myself as a leader in some tasks.*

*I introduced the session and I ended it. I had to welcome everyone and then thank everyone. I think I did well.*

*Yes, the Skills @ Work programme helped me plan and do better in school, to study harder and also increased my confidence.*

### **2.3.3 Influences of the Skill @ Work Programme on Students**

Students were also asked if participation in the Skills @ Work Programme had influenced their attitudes towards the Leaving Certificate. **67%** answered that they had **always intended to stay in school** and complete the Leaving Certificate. **27%** of students indicated that the programme helped them **understand the importance of the Leaving Certificate**, while **7%** (100) of students responded that they had been **considering leaving school but the programme has encouraged them to stay**. **Students commented:**

*I missed a lot of school days but when I came in for this I was always glad.*

*School always frustrated me but now I realise how important it is to get a good education.*

*Before the Skills @ Work programme I didn't really care too much about school, but since then I have realised how important it is to get a job and how much harder my life could be without a Leaving Certificate.*

*I didn't think my Leaving Cert was important but after this programme I see how the Leaving Cert can start my career.*

*I had always intended to complete my Leaving Certificate and attend college but this programme did inform me a little bit more on colleges and I feel I am a little bit more prepared.*

### 2.3.4 Learning about Jobs and Roles within Partner Companies

**89%** of students said that they had learned about jobs and roles within companies and how these companies operated. **Students commented:**

*Interviewing the workers there gave me an insight to the different roles in the business.*

*The 'day in the life' session, gave me an insight into the roles and jobs each person has in that company. I now know more about the company, and have learned that there are many more different jobs within that area, than I thought there would be.*

*I saw how different skills were needed to do different jobs and that people needed to work together to get things done.*

*I learned a lot about what was actually involved in each sector of the company, giving me an insight to each job that you wouldn't usually get.*

## 2.4 Recommendations

In this section, we asked students if they had any recommendations regarding the programme.

### 2.4.1 Programme Changes and Improvements

**79%** of students would make **no change** to the Skills @ Work Programme. This is a slight decrease from **2016** where the percentage was **81%**.

Of the remaining 21% of students, suggestions and improvements related to:

- Opportunities for longer work place visits, work shadowing and work experience
- Conduct a second mock interview
- More group work, brainstorming and interactive sessions
- Deliver longer sessions on the prescribed timetable
- More information on college courses, preparing for work and job searching

**Students commented:**

*More seminars and classes with the link company as I felt we didn't have enough time with them.*

*Add more coding sessions and workshops that are hands on.*

*Get the students more actively involved during the site visit and the presentations.*

*I would have liked more information about how to communicate, behave in a workplace or at an interview and things like that, similar to what we have done in the mock interviews. I would like more of that practical knowledge to replace some theoretical parts, for example about the company or the employee's careers.*

*More work experience and work shadowing.*

*There could be more advice on how many points you'll need and what college courses you need to do to get the jobs we learned about.*

#### **2.4.2      Recommending the Skills @ Work Programme**

**95% of students would recommend the programme to another student. Students commented:**

*It is a brilliant programme that encourages and supports students in achieving the best in school and further education.*

*It's a great experience to go through in school because it lets us know of the variety of jobs that are available in the world and helps us to see what kind of work is put in to different companies in Ireland.*

*I would recommend the Skills @ Work programme to another student because it will encourage them to stay in school.*

*It helped me in my confidence, communication skills and my interview skills. It also made me think about life after school for me. I found this programme very helpful and I'm sure other students would too.*

*It is an interesting way of learning about work life which gets the students involved activities. It teaches students valuable lessons about adult life in ways that textbooks cannot.*

*It gives students a view of the outside world and also improves their organisation skills. It gives them a feel of the real world outside the four walls of the school.*

Students were also asked what they would say to students to encourage them to do the programme.



**Students commented:**

*Get involved, get as much as you can out of it, keep your options open about career choices and ask plenty of questions. It's an amazing experience and boosts your confidence.*

*It is a very good programme for you to develop skills and build confidence. You also gain great information and knowledge for the future on things like interviews; your CV and presenting in front of a crowd.*

*This programme could help you find your passion and improve your skills (communication, confidence etc.). Also, you get constructive criticism from a professional.*

*The best advice I could give is to really give it your all and to participate because you seriously will not regret it. I loved every minute of it and I'm sure you will too.*

*Get involved from the start; make sure you attend every session, read through your CV and application form before going into interview. Make sure you use everything you learned to apply for a job in the future. It's really worth while doing!*



# Section 3

## School Evaluation

Of the **146** completed Skills @ Work programmes this year, **143** schools completed their online evaluation – that is a **98%** response rate and an increase of 7% on last year's figures. This is evidence of the importance we place on governance and impact measurement in BITCI. We have sought the honest feedback and recommendations from every school.

The evaluation was divided into four key sections:

- 3.1** Structure & Content
- 3.2** Programme Benefits
- 3.3** Communication, Service & Support
- 3.4** Recommendations

### 3.1 Structure & Content

School coordinators were asked to rate the company's preparation and presentation throughout the programme, the relevance of the material delivered throughout the programme and the insight the company gave the students into their business or industry.

#### 3.1.1 Company's Preparation and Presentation

The company's preparation and presentation was rated by school coordinators as:

- **Excellent – 88%**
- **Very good – 12%**
- **Fair – 1%**
- **Poor – 0%**

**School coordinators commented:**

*Perhaps a more simplified version of what Company X does would help the students during the initial first meeting.*

*The programme was very well organised and ran very smoothly. A lot of preparation was done in order to ensure this. At every stage of the programme, the presentations were very good with particular attention paid to the target student group.*

*Excellent preparation and very student focused.*

*We are so pleased with the company's very comprehensive input into the programme. They have put so much time, effort and staff into all the strands of the programme including flying a HR manager over from the UK to deliver a CV workshop which was excellent. Our students were looked after so well and it is a credit to the team for their excellent work.*

### 3.1.2 Relevance of Material Delivered

**99%** of school coordinators rated the relevance of the material delivered by the company as either **excellent** or **very good**. **School coordinators commented:**

*It's very relevant and current. The focus on student progression was very positive and reinforced student self-confidence.*

*The material delivered throughout the programme was very relevant. In class, students are learning about CV Preparation, Interview Skills and options after the Leaving Certificate. The programme is a great opportunity to apply this learning in a very practical way.*



*The content satisfied a significant number of learning outcomes in the Leaving Certificate programme.*

*Material was appropriate for the students' needs and was always engaging.*

*Very applicable to our students, especially those looking for summer jobs. It prepares them so well.*

### 3.1.3 Insight into Company Business & Industry

**99%** of school coordinators rated the insight given by the company into their business and industry as either **excellent** or **very good**, (a **3% improvement on last year's rating**). **School coordinators commented:**

*Students were given an in-depth insight into how a multinational company works and its set up for career prospects and the opportunities available to up skill and move up the corporate ladder.*

*The company helped the students see the many roles involved in the company by providing them with role models who were engaging and encouraging.*

*It was a fantastic eye opener to our students about the diversity and range of careers within the business and how big Company X are as an organisation.*

*The company gave the students a thorough insight into their business. They had a range of employees speak to the students about the business. The tour by the company of their site was extremely interesting. I have gone on many tours of sites and this was by far the best one I have been on. It really opened the student's eyes to the world of work.*

*Many of the managers and staff were available to talk to the students; they made the visit very interactive which helped to keep the students focused.*

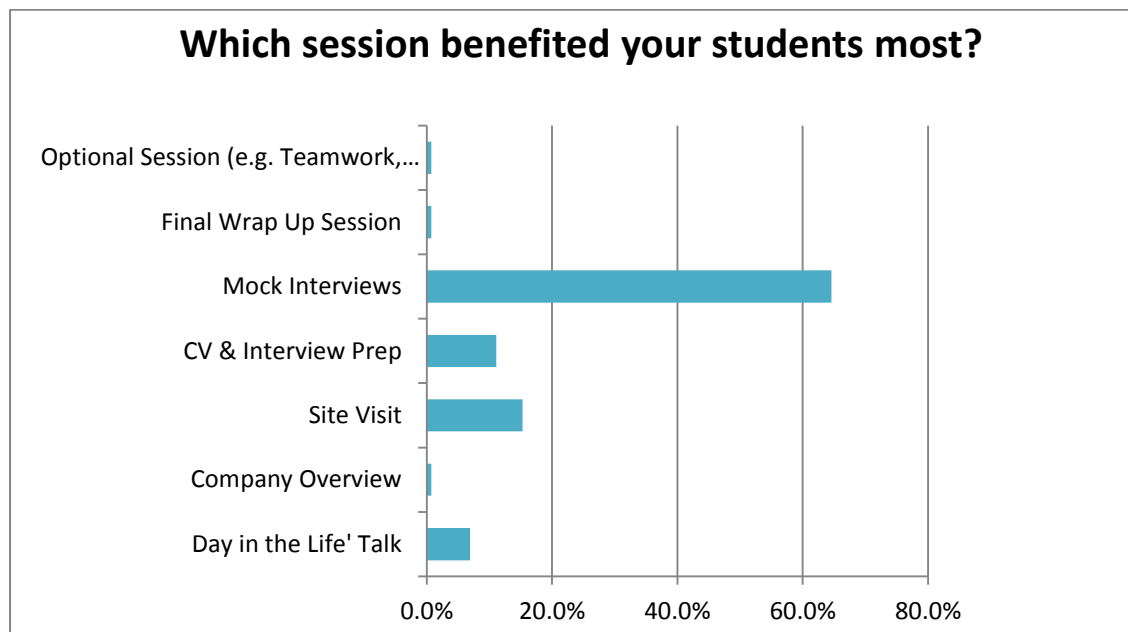
## 3.2 Programme Benefits

In this section school coordinators were asked to identify the session which they felt benefitted their students most, what the main benefits were to the school and students and, where possible, to consider the impact of the programme on the students.

### 3.2.1 Most Beneficial Session

**Mock interviews (64%)** were identified by the school coordinators as the most beneficial session to students. **Workplace visits (16%)** and **CV & interview skills (11%)** were also identified as beneficial. Mock interviews were also identified as the most beneficial session in 2016, 2015 and 2014.

Chart 4: Most Beneficial S@W Session to Students



**School coordinators commented:**

*The mock interviews were particularly important because, for most of the students, this was their first interview experience. The feedback afterwards indicated that their confidence got a significant boost. Also the feedback given allowed those to improve their CVs and to be better prepared to perform well at their next interview.*

*It opens their eyes to a world many of our students aren't familiar with and feel perhaps they don't belong in. It can break down barriers and show them potential routes into different industries.*

*It gave excellent insight into the whole range of opportunities across different career sectors presented by a pharma company. Very motivational.*

*Overall the benefit is immeasurable including interview skills, confidence building, assisting with portfolio assessment. Meeting staff from the company and getting the chance to take part in team building as well as team work.*

*We did a presentation for the staff of Company X on what we learned using IT. It allowed students revisit the activities and review them, in retrospect. Each and every student had something to contribute at the presentation, and this allowed them to actually see what they learned and gained through the initiative.*



### 3.2.2 Main Benefits to Students

The coordinating teacher was asked to comment on the main benefits of the programme to their students.

School coordinators indicated that the Skills @ Work Programme had a number of significant benefits to students. **99%** strongly agreed or agreed that the programme improved students' CV and interview skills and **99%** also indicated the programme helped students increase their self-confidence. While **95%** felt the programme informed students about roles and responsibilities in their link company and provided students with skills that will help them when searching for employment.

Chart 5: Main Benefits to Students

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Increased self confidence	61%	36%	1%	N/A	N/A
Improved communication skills	58%	41%	2%	N/A	N/A
Improved teamwork skills	38%	48%	13%	1%	N/A
Encouraged students to study harder and do better at school	25%	53%	21%	1%	N/A
Motivated students to think about what they would like to do after school	52%	43%	5%	N/A	N/A
Informed students about roles and responsibilities in their link company and give insight into work practices	64%	32%	4%	1%	N/A
Presented students with a variety of careers including some they hadn't previously considered	48%	40%	10%	2%	N/A
Helped students with decisions about college courses and further education	25%	49%	21%	4%	N/A
Helped students improve their CV and interview skills	82%	17%	1%	1%	N/A
Provided students with skills that will help them when searching for employment	63%	32%	4%	1%	N/A
Other (please specify)	6%				

Of the 6% (9 coordinators) who indicated 'Other' the benefits included:

- Encouraged students to think about owning their own businesses
- Improved their ability to relate to people in positions of authority
- Provided work experience
- Provided opportunity to see how companies offer training and promotional prospects

**School coordinators commented:**

*Improves their ability to talk and relate to people in a position of authority.*

*Students appreciated how hard and responsible one must be in the world of work. They also saw that flexibility was a big factor and skill to have.*

*Improves their ability to talk and relate to people in a position of authority.*

*This was very good for some students who may not be pursuing third level. They could see that there are promotion prospects and training provided by various departments in Company X. They learned how completing their Leaving Cert could be beneficial here and helped to motivate some of these more sceptical students.*

### 3.2.3 Main Benefits to the School

Following on from the above question, we asked school coordinators to comment on the benefits of the Skills @ Work Programme to the school.

**99%** of school co-ordinators strongly agreed or agreed that **developing a valuable relationship with a local business** was a main benefit to the school. Similar to earlier questions, **96%** of school coordinators strongly agreed or agreed that **providing assistance with mock interviews** was also seen as beneficial to the school along with **improved participation among the class group (86%)**.



**School coordinators commented:**

*This programme contributed to a positive feeling about school and education. We had a group this year with many challenges. The programme provided them with an opportunity to feel good and positive about themselves and about school.*

*I feel our partnership and bond with Company X is getting stronger and we very much value them as part of our school community. They provide support in abundance to our school and students.*

*This programme is of huge benefit to the LCVP students. All students enjoyed the course. CV preparation, Presentation Skills, Interview Seminar and Mock Interviews had a huge impact on the students. They were nervous at first but gradually became more confident and self-assured.*

Chart 6: Main Benefits to School

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Developed valuable relationship with a local business	82%	17%	1%	N/A	N/A
Improved attendance among the class group	13%	36%	43%	8%	N/A
Provided assistance with mock interviews	81%	14%	4%	1%	N/A
Improved participation among the class group	35%	54%	10%	1%	N/A
Improved behaviour among class group	20%	39%	37%	4%	N/A
Provided the opportunity for work experience for students*	33%	21%	34%	8%	3%
Provided valuable assistance with LCA/LCVP modules or programmes**	61%	16%	20%	2%	1%
Other	12%				

\*Only some companies were in a position to provide work experience

\*\*Not all schools participating in the programme facilitate LCA/LCVP Programmes

### 3.2.4 Programme Impact on Students

There is strong evidence that the Skills @ Work Programme positively influences students with regards to attitude and commitment generally; evaluation results also show that the programme impacts positively on school retention.

Chart 7: Programme Impact on Students

Impact on Students	2017	2016	2015	2014
Attitude, commitment & focus positively changed	84%	87%	86%	85%
Contributed to retaining a student likely to leave before completing Leaving Cert *	38%	43%	42%	49%

\* Ireland's current retention rate stands at 90.3%

#### 3.2.4.1 Attitude, Commitment & Focus

**84%** of school coordinators were able to identify students whose attitude, commitment and focus has been **positively changed** as a result of participating in the programme.

**School coordinators commented:**

*One student who has attendance issues participated in all stages of the programme and wanted to present a piece on the final presentation day which would not be usual for that student.*

*One student stood out as really grasping the opportunity provided by the link company. He has increased his work-rate in school and seems very driven to succeed within the work placement being offered to him. Another student developed greatly in terms of confidence having received positive feedback and affirmation he was visibly become more interested in the subject and seems more outspoken in the class than before.*

*Overall the entire group has built confidence within them and are now more eager to complete team work. It's woken them up to the working world and what skills are required. The students have become more focused on their school work since completing this programme- matured.*

**3.2.4.2 School Retention****School coordinators commented:**

*There were two students in the Skills @ Work Programme who were at risk of dropping out of school. We feel the Skills @ Work Programme has motivated them to stay in school and to complete their Leaving Cert.*

*Various students attended school specifically to take part in the programme. I believe it strongly improved attendance.*

*Yes, one student was wondering about leaving after 5th Year, but I feel the programme has encouraged him to see the benefits of staying in school and getting a level 4 qualification.*

*One student in particular, in care and going through difficulty, remained in school, enjoyed and participated in the programme. This student shines in these situations.*

*Some of the students who find school challenging have a better understanding of the importance of staying in school and completing their Leaving Certificate.*

## 3.3 Communication, Service & Support

School coordinators were asked to rate and comment on the service received from the BITCI coordinator, as well as the partnership with the company coordinator and to describe the partnership between the school and the company. Similar to previous years, the service levels provided were rated highly.

### 3.3.1 Service Provided by BITCI

The service provided by the BITCI coordinator was evaluated as **excellent** by **82%** of schools and **very good** by a further **16%** of schools. **School coordinators commented:**

*Dedicated, friendly and has the best interests of the students in mind at all times.*

*Highly organised and extremely accommodating in all her engagements with us.*

*Coordinator X is an excellent link person, very much involved in getting the most out of the programme. She has a fantastic way with students and most encouraging at all times. Her advice and experience helps us to put together a programme that is very worthwhile for all involved. Her presentation to the students is always encouraging and motivating. The material she delivers is excellent and the students are always highly engaged.*

*Coordinator X has always been so supportive of our school and our students. Every session has always been so well organised by her and well planned in advance. If, ever we had a query for her, she was always back to us ASAP and always displayed the highest elements of professionalism at all times. She has been a pleasure to work with during the last two years and we are already looking forward to working with her next year.*

### 3.3.2 Partnership with Company Coordinator

**99%** of schools rated the partnership with the company coordinator as either **excellent** or **very good**.

**School coordinators commented:**

*Very friendly and accommodating. The programme was very well organised and the insight into the professional world benefited many of the students. At all times a visible and genuine interest in the students' future was in evidence.*



*Coordinator X is a consummate professional and she is an excellent example of Company X's high quality staff. Nothing is ever too much trouble for X. She is virtually unflappable. Her levels of professionalism are extraordinary. She always gives some of my T.Y. students the opportunity to do their work experience in Company X and these students are always afforded the best of work experience. I am eternally grateful for all the work she puts into preparing for this programme. My T.Y. students benefit in so many ways from listening to and learning from her.*

*I found the coordinators to be extremely friendly and facilitating to our students throughout the year. They went out of their way to help our students and caterer from their needs. The coordinator always responded quickly to any queries I had.*

### 3.3.3 Partnership Between the School and Company

The partnership with the link company was evaluated as **exceeding expectations** by **82%** of school coordinators which shows an increase in ratings of **5%** on 2016. A further **17%** of schools indicated that the partnership **met expectations**. **School coordinators commented:**

*It far exceeded my expectations. I have never received this type of engagement before. They do not pay lip service to this initiative. They go beyond what I would expect and really deserve tremendous credit, especially those dealing with us but also at the top levels as well.*

*Excellent! Company X were so enthusiastic to want to be involved from informing the students about the various roles in work, to working on mock interviews. They really made both myself and the students feel so welcome.*

*Having been involved with this programme for several years, we have high expectations regarding content, access to information and the skills of the people involved, each year they continue to meet or exceed our expectations, they even agreed to do an extra work shop this year.*



## 3.4 Recommendations

In this section of the evaluation school coordinators were asked for any recommendations or changes they would make to the programme.

### 3.4.1 Recommendations, Changes or Additions to the Programme

**72%** of respondents would make **no changes** or additions to make to the programme.

Of the remaining **28%** most recommendations related to:

- Workplace visit (31%)
- Student interaction & engagement (25%)
- Day in the Life (25%)
- Programme Timetable (23%)
- Mock Interviews (21%)

#### **School coordinators commented:**

*Possibly try to have sessions closer together. We have discussed this after our wrap up. We hope to try this next year.*

*Longer time needed at the company to see more.*

*I think it might be an interesting addition if the students were to undertake a small research project on the company before the initial meeting as it would make the visit an introduction more meaningful. Possible headings might include jobs, qualifications necessary, remuneration, work experience availability, a small history of the business.*

*More opportunity to spend time on site as part of a day in the life. Also the opportunity for students to be given feedback after completing their mock interviews-verbal and maybe some written feedback.*

### 3.4.2 Recommending the Skills @ Work Programme

**100%** of respondents would recommend the Skills @ Work programme to another school.

# Section 4

## Company Evaluation

There were **146** companies who completed the Skills @ Work programme throughout the country in 2016 – 2017. **130** companies completed the evaluation form, representing **89%** of the companies involved. This very positive response rate was an improvement of 4% on 2016 figures.

The evaluation form was divided into four key sections:

- 4.1** Structure and Content
- 4.2** Programme Benefits
- 4.3** Communication, Service & Support
- 4.4** Recommendations

### 4.1 Structure & Content

In this section company coordinators were asked to rate the school's general preparation throughout the programme, the overall satisfaction with each session as well as the most enjoyable session.

#### 4.1.1 Student Engagement & Participation

Companies found that the students' engagement and participation was at a very high level with **94%** of company coordinators rating the engagement as either **excellent** or **very good**. Only **6%** (8) of respondents indicated that the level of engagement was fair while none of the coordinators found it poor. **Company coordinators commented:**

*The level of engagement this year stood out to us, the students were interested, professional and represented their school very well.*

*Student engagement was very good, in particular during the Mock interviews, where it was most evident.*

*This year's group were very interactive and extremely well prepped by their teachers.*



#### 4.1.2 Company's Satisfaction of Each Session

Company coordinators were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the programme sessions.

**94%** of companies rated the **site visit** as either **excellent** or **very good**; similarly **'Day in the Life' Talks** were highly scored at **95%**. **Mock interviews** were rated at **94%** with the **wrap up** session regarded as either **excellent** or **very good** by **90%**.

Chart 8: Company's overall satisfaction of each session

Answer Options	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
'Day in the Life' Talk	56%	39%	2%	N/A	4%
Company Overview	45%	48%	3%	1%	4%
Workplace visit	64%	29%	2%	N/A	4%
CV & Interview Prep	50%	40%	4%	1%	5%
Mock interviews	69%	22%	6%	N/A	3%
Optional Session (e.g. teamwork, business etiquette skills)*	32%	20%	1%	N/A	46%
Final Wrap Up Session	62%	27%	1%	1%	8%

\*Not all companies were in a position to offer an optional session



## 4.2 Programme Benefits

This section examined the benefits of participation in the programme, both to the employees and to the company.

### 4.2.1 Benefits of Participation to Employees

**86%** (121) of company coordinators felt **being able to make a difference in a young person's life** was the most beneficial aspect of the programme to company employees. **79%** indicated that it gave them a feel good factor, while **an opportunity to be involved in a project outside of normal work duties was rated at 76%**.

**Of the 7% who indicated 'Other' reasons given included:**

*We used trainee section managers and for them it gave them confidence and of course the feel good factor.*

*People were happy to share their working experiences describing their path to a particular position.*

*It increased the employee's awareness of the high standard of students in this school.*

*It improves employee relationships.*

**Company coordinators commented:**

*I used this programme to develop the company's future managers and leaders; they can work on their presentation skills and interview skills in a low risk environment.*

*We are never short of volunteers as they all find volunteering worthwhile, rewarding and most importantly fun.*

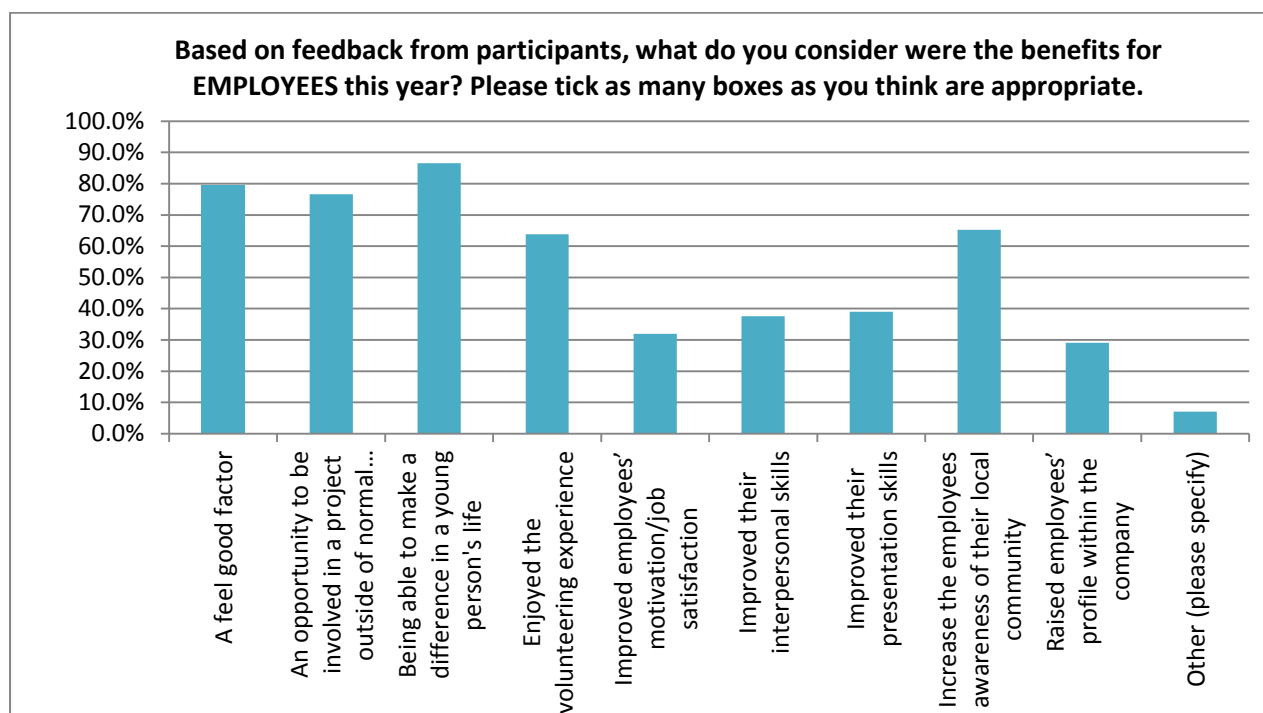
*There was a definite feel good factor in the office and it is nice to get away from the day to day and give something back.*

*It gives the employees great satisfaction to be able to help and perhaps make a difference in a student's life and life choices. It is something that they enjoy and are proud to be a part of.*

*Great to be able to give something back to the community in which we operate.*



Chart 9: Programme Benefits to Employees



#### 4.2.2 Benefits of Participation to the Company

Company coordinators were asked to rate the different benefits to the company of participation in the Skills @ Work Programme.

As with previous years, **making a contribution to the local community (99%)** was regarded as a key benefit to the company. **Contributing to the company's CR strategy (96%)** and **promoting educational opportunities to young people (95%)** were also seen as top benefits.



Chart 10: Programme Benefits to the Company

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A link for potential employment	15%	40%	36%	9%	1%
Contributes to our corporate responsibility agenda / strategy	59%	36%	4%	N/A	N/A
Making a contribution to the local community	71%	28%	N/A	1%	N/A
Mechanism for employee development within the company	24%	48%	24%	4%	1%
Promoting educational opportunities to young people	51%	43%	4%	1%	N/A
Public Relations Benefits	23%	44%	29%	4%	N/A
The company profile was raised locally	25%	50%	24%	1%	1%
Other	4%				

Of the 4% (5 coordinators) who indicated 'Other' the benefits included; improved employee relationships; opportunity to work with students and improve employee's awareness of the high standards at the link school; opportunity to share details of employee's career paths with students.



**Company coordinators commented:**

*This programme is a win-win, we get the opportunity to develop young people, and also develop our employees at the same time.*

*We have expanded this programme to include work experience over the Easter holidays. This has exposed the entire team to the programme/students and it has generated a feel good factor across the team and added energy to the office for that period.*

*Most importantly this increases the company's contribution to the community. The benefit is also that there will be future employees.*

*It is a great way to create links with the school and potentially inspire some young people to apply.*

*It's excellent for raising our profile and giving back to the community.*

*I think we need to be doing more in the local community, and this was a great link.*



## 4.3 Communication, Service & Support

Companies were asked to rate and comment on the service received from the BITCI coordinator, as well as the communication with the school coordinator and the partnership between the company and the school.

### 4.3.1 Service Provided by BITCI

**97%** of companies evaluated the service provided by the BITCI Coordinator as either **excellent** or **very good**.

**Company coordinators commented:**

*Coordinator X was very organised, efficient and approachable - brilliant at co-ordinating the whole programme.*

*Coordinator X always provides clear communication and information around all aspects of the programme.*

*Great support and enthusiasm.*

*Coordinator X was exceptionally professional, great leader of the programme.*

*Coordinator X is a true professional with excellent guidance and support provided.*

### 4.3.2 Communication with School Coordinator

Communication with the school coordinator was rated **excellent** or **very good** by **93%** of respondents.

**Company coordinators commented:**

*Always pleasant and accommodating to deal with and certainly did her best to get the students engaged.*

*I think the communication is excellent. There's regular contact and updates during the programme and I think that's reflected in the fact that things usually run very smoothly.*

*School coordinator is passionate about the programme, with passion comes everything else.*

*Teacher X was enthusiastic and interested in the programme, really engaged and made us feel like it was very important to the school and to him.*

### 4.3.3 Partnership between Company and School

The partnership between the company and their link school was evaluated as either **excellent** or **very good** by **96%** of the respondents. **Company coordinators commented:**

*Communicating with the school is very easy and would gladly work with them in the future.*

*It's an excellent partnership, continuing upward curve.*

*There is a strong partnership bond between the company and the school and we are looking forward to the next year already.*

*This is very important to the company and we believe that it has gone from strength to strength over the last four years.*

*We are delighted with our partnership and look forward to continuing it!*

## 4.4 Recommendations

### 4.4.1 Recommendations, Changes or Additions

**71%** of respondents would make **no changes** to the programme for the next academic year.

The remaining **29%** identified the following aspects of the programme for recommendations:

- Programme Timetable **(26%)**
- CV & Interview Prep **(26%)**
- Mock Interviews **(21%)**

Of those who ticked 'Other' **(35%)** some of the recommendations included:

- Exposure to different aspects of workplace, new technologies and demonstrations
- Use teambuilding at the beginning of the programme as an icebreaker
- Increase the number of students participating, ensuring that as many as possible avail of opportunity
- Include an additional session on public speaking



**Company coordinators commented:**

*It's a good programme but it's always good to take a fresh approach, we try and bring something different each year to improve the experience for the students.*

*Perhaps we could schedule the programme to start a little earlier in the year so that we do not suffer a time crunch towards the end.*

*It is probably now relevant to move away from traditional CV and interview techniques and look at more digital options - Skype interviews, CV uploads etc.*

*More engagement with students in the presentation skills module, focussing on preparation, brainstorming, idea organisation, story-telling rather than actual skill of presentation. It would be more suitable for the audience demographics.*

*I'd like to update the CV and Interview prep session to include LinkedIn profiles, or more modern techniques for job searching.*

*We continuously work to amend the programme where required. We look forward to feedback from the school staff and participants so that we can make any necessary changes for the 2017/2018 academic year.*

#### **4.4.2      Recommending the Skills @ Work Programme**

**99% of respondents would recommend the Skills @ Work Programme to another company.**








## Find out more

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