



**ASDAN**

Employment  
and Skills  
Forum

# Virtual Think Tank

Survey Results • Autumn 2012



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For more information about the ASDAN Employment and Skills Forum, visit: [www.asdan.org.uk/esf](http://www.asdan.org.uk/esf) or email [esf@asdand.org.uk](mailto:esf@asdand.org.uk)

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# Introduction

The survey for the ASDAN Employment and Skills Forum was sent out to schools, employers, education groups and politicians in the form of an online questionnaire.

The aim was to provide interesting and original research on the key issues at the heart of developing students' employability skills and preparing them for the 21st century workplace.



“ If employment skills are not formally acknowledged, they will be marginalised as a low priority ”

*Respondent to the survey*

“ As a nation, there is so much more we can do to improve the life chances of the young and in doing so raise the bar for UK PLC ”

*Respondent to the survey*



# Foreword



The gap between the workplace and the classroom appears to be as wide as ever. The most recent CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey (2012) reported on employer perceptions that have barely changed over the last ten years: for example, 71% of employers still believe that schools, colleges and higher education should be prioritising the development of employability skills. This is in stark contrast to current education policy changes, which appear to be driving a return to traditional subject-based learning and written assessment into the heart of an education system.

ASDAN established the Employment and Skills Forum (ESF) nearly two years ago. The launch event at the House of Lords attracted a powerful and committed group of employers, educationalists and influencers; this report is a reflection of their latest thinking.

By creating a solutions-focused 'virtual think tank', a variety of critical issues around employability and schools were scrutinised, and the results revealed three unequivocal findings:

- The importance of good work experience
- Where schools' responsibilities lie
- The importance of developing leadership and teamwork skills

ASDAN education welcomes the findings, which reinforce the vital need for curriculum planners to consider the wider, whole education of a young person. This broader education experience is in danger of being overlooked and marginalised by an education system that is increasingly influenced by an obsession with traditional, academic views of content and assessment.

Marius Frank, CEO, ASDAN education

“ When we recruit, we look as much at courtesy and ability to work as part of a team as we do at formal qualifications. Clearly, all employers value good literacy and numeracy skills but I am reassured to see from this report that employers value some of those qualities that are not measured or tested in schools even more.

The message that we can take from this survey is a positive one – that character and soft skills are prized highly in the workplace, often just as highly as credentials. Perhaps it's time we used this fact to shape the way our children learn at school – and the way we assess the schools themselves. ”

**Sarah Wrixon, Managing Director, Salix Consulting**  
Co-founder, Uni's not for me: [www.unisnotforme.com](http://www.unisnotforme.com)

Salix provides communications and PR services for the health, education and social sectors

# The value of work experience

Work experience is currently only available in some schools for some students, and varies in structure and effectiveness. In some cases it is also costly and time-consuming. However, the results on this page show a clear indication from nearly all those who responded to the survey: that good-quality, structured work placements would be beneficial for all parties and that work experience should be made available to all students in the future.

## What should work experience involve?

Acceptable and unacceptable presentation



Good and bad customer service



Telephone skills



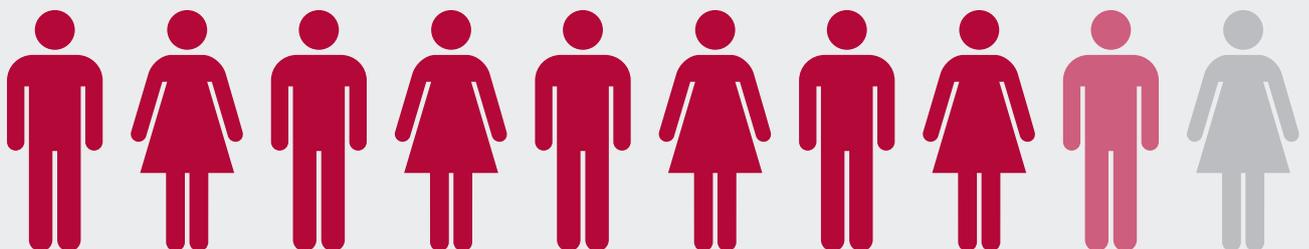
Email etiquette



Overall communication skills



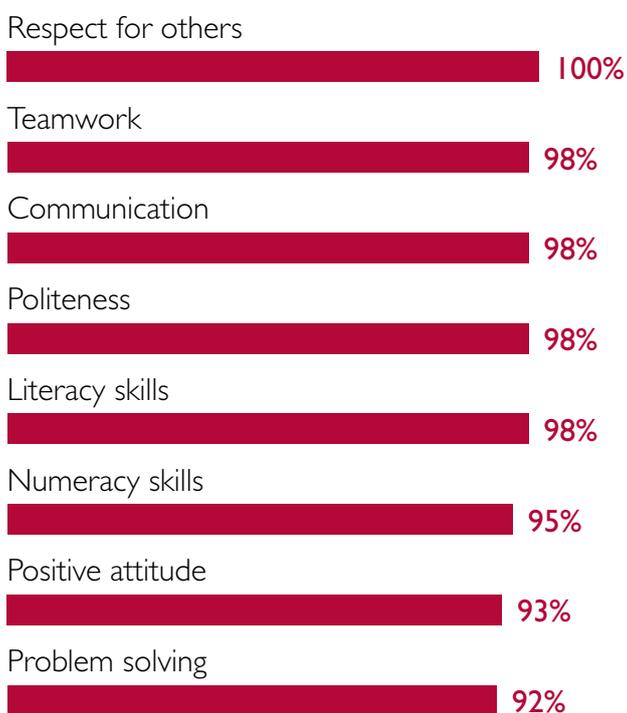
**84%** believe work experience should be made available for **all** school pupils and college students



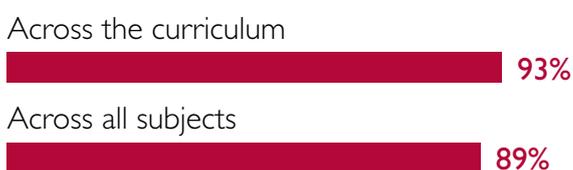
# Schools' responsibilities

There is an increased call for young people to be tested at 14, in line with many other countries, when they will be making important decisions on whether to pursue an academic or vocational pathway. The findings on this page show the importance of discussing the value of employability skills early in secondary education.

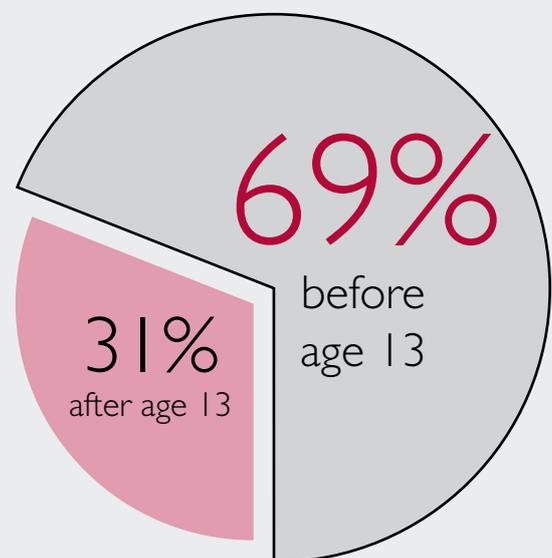
## Which skills should young people develop to a greater extent before entering the workplace?



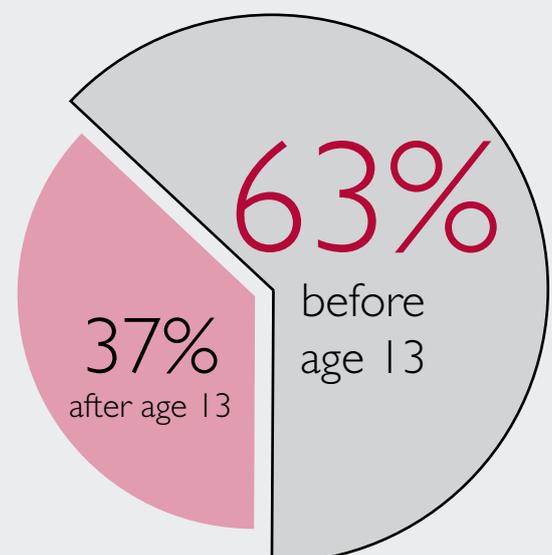
## How should these skills be taught in schools?



At what age should young people first be introduced to the concept of employability skills?



When should adults first start to emphasise the importance of employability skills to young people?



# Leadership and teamwork

In this year of Paralympics and Olympics, it is interesting to see the skills of leadership, teamwork and a positive attitude reflected in the statistics below. It would be useful to take these values and translate them from sporting excellence into skills excellence and raise the gold standard in schools and colleges. Sport and PE are shown to be the key areas in which young people can develop these skills and raise the bar in other subjects.

Top employability skills needed for young people entering their first job, in order of importance:

- 1 Communication skills
- 2 Teamwork
- 3 Positive attitude and initiative
- 4 Literacy and numeracy
- 5 Problem solving

“ Regarding teaching and learning pathways, one size does not fit all ”

*Respondent to the survey*

Which subject areas or enrichment activities could be particularly good for developing a positive attitude?

**40%** in sport

(all other subjects = 60%)

Which subject areas or enrichment activities could be particularly good for developing teamwork skills?

**38%** in sport

(all other subjects = 62%)



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