

# COMET: YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Full report February 2017

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## Executive Summary

*“Employers and young people in Auckland both face challenges in the search for the right skills for work.” (Sutton, Tuatagoaloo, and Johnson, 2013, p. 5<sup>1</sup>).*

Successive studies, and high unemployment figures for youth, show that they are in desperate need of support to transition from the secondary school environment into the work force. The consistent message of “no experience” is difficult to counteract when no-one is forthcoming with opportunities for youth to gain such experience. Conversely, businesses are desperate for ‘work ready’ youth, people who can hit the ground running and know how to successfully be part of a workforce.

Challenges of how to bring these divergent groups together in a productive way have been tackled by COMET (Community Education Trust Auckland) who, in collaboration with a range of organisations (business, education, government), developed the Licence to Work programme. This is a programme which focuses on explicit teaching and learning centred on ‘soft skills’ in order to assist youth to become work ready. These skills are known to be what businesses are asking for and are not covered explicitly anywhere else within the school curriculum. These ‘soft skills’ consist of such aspects as positive attitude, communication, problem solving and decision making. Additionally, there are aspects which focus on self-motivation and resilience, areas which are identified as essential for positive mental health in youth. Within this programme, students gain access to explicit teaching of the soft skills, and opportunities to practise them within the school environment and out on work placement. Students learn about the value of being members of their local communities through a component of voluntary work. A further benefit of the programme is the connection to local businesses during the work experience component – a foot in the door, a way to network and gain experience, and conceivably a chance of being considered for part time or full time employment.

The Licence to Work programme completed its second year of piloting in 2016. COMET commissioned this evaluation to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the programme to date and to seek information with which to further improve the programme as COMET looks to scale the programme further throughout New Zealand.

The aim of this evaluation was three-fold:

1. To assess effectiveness of the ‘Youth Employability Programme – A Licence to Work’.
2. To assess stakeholder perceptions of the ‘Youth Employability Programme – A Licence to Work’.
3. To identify areas of improvement for sustainability and scaling.

The following evaluation questions then guided the investigation:

1. How effective is the Youth Employability Licence to Work programme in completing desired outcomes for both the young people and the stakeholders involved in the programme?
2. What adjustments are needed within the Youth Employability Licence to Work programme to ensure sustainability and further roll-out of the programme?

The evaluation was based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from a wide range of perspectives: students, teaching staff, school leaders, parents, business personnel and members of the

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<sup>1</sup> Sutton, A., Tuatagaloa, P., & Johnson, S., (2013). *Enhancing youth employability to support economic growth in Auckland*. COMET Auckland: New Zealand

Youth Employability steering committee. The methods utilised for this were interviews (individual and pair), focus groups, and surveys (online and within class time). This data was analysed using a thematic approach, appreciative inquiry and bivariate analysis.

The findings of this evaluation reveal that all the participants felt positive about the Licence to Work programme, were hugely supportive of the aims of the programme and were willing to endorse the programme to others. All participants agreed with the need to explicitly teach the soft skills of employability and work readiness in order to assist students in being better prepared for the work environment. Business personnel in particular were very positive about students being explicitly taught soft skills prior to experience the work place. It was felt that this was something extremely useful for students as they move into employment. It was noted by business personnel that this was indeed something that they felt was missing currently. Very importantly, students reported significant impact from completing the programme and some had been successful in obtaining employment as a direct result. The qualitative comments captured during interviews encapsulate the levels of success felt by some of the students – for a number of students participating in this programme has been life-changing. Every student spoken with as part of this evaluation stated they would recommend it to peers and siblings.

It was agreed by all those in positions of responsibility that the building of a team of support around this programme is needed. The people involved currently work extremely hard, often giving up their own time, in order to assist the students to be successful. Those involved are passionate and committed to this cause, but the level of effort currently put into running the programme is unsustainable for many and there was a concern that some may withdraw due to burn out. It was noted in this evaluation that the personnel on the ground within COMET will also require greater assistance as the programme continues to grow outside of the Auckland region. It is a recommendation of this report that all aspects of this programme (within schools and within COMET) be supported by a team of people to implement what they are trying to achieve.

A strong message from participants was how supportive and committed COMET as an organisation had been. Participants acknowledged that they had been asked for feedback and that this had consistently been listened to and that COMET had made efforts to act on. A member of the steering committee was adamant that the programme continue to be iterative in its development even as it became a larger entity.

A notable gap reported in the programme implementation within the school environment was the limited connection to whānau/families. Parents had been made aware through a permission letter which was sent home with the students, but for many, this was not enough as the majority of parents were not aware of the programme apart from the work experience component. In order to increase some level of motivation in students, it is advisable to further investigate ways of improving the home/school-programme connection. In order to support the success of these students, a wider range of people needs to be involved, including parents, whānau, iwi and community businesses. The need for improved assessment was a common theme throughout the evaluation. There was a strong message from some participants for the need to confirm NZQA authentication and the addition of NCEA credits to the outcomes of the programme. It is understood that this has been an ongoing discussion during 2016 between COMET and NZQA and that progress towards this is being made. The assessment components within the programme were discussed by a range of participants for this evaluation. Although it is a recommendation that the assessment components be streamlined and revised to ensure clarity and consistency, it is acknowledged that COMET has already been highly responsive to feedback during 2016 and has already begun work on these issues.

The Licence to Work programme is envisaged as a way to ensure smooth transitioning for students between education and the work force. However, at present, there is no precise way of substantiating if the programme enables youth to be supported when transitioning from education to employment opportunities as no clear tracking is currently in place. There is no way of knowing if students have obtained employment during or after completing the programme. In order to seek a greater depth of information regarding the impact of this programme, it is a recommendation of this report that some form of tracking data be collected. This would assist in statistical evidence when promoting/marketing the programme further as expansion becomes a reality.

A finding of this evaluation was that some schools struggled to get businesses involved, despite there being very good business contacts sitting on the COMET steering committee. At present, the Licence to Work programme is not very well known and therefore has not yet built up a strong reputation in the business sector, despite efforts of the steering committee members. Current participants in the programme are certainly happy to spread the word about the achievements and benefits of the programme but a greater audience is needed. By further promotion and marketing and ensuring clarity of understanding around what the programme aims to achieve, a greater level of credibility will be achieved and more businesses will want to become involved. The level of integrity will grow and students having achieved in the programme will be better able to achieve a position over others when they join the work force, thus achieving the third area of focus for the programme.

The findings of this evaluation indicate that the Licence to Work programme is successful in achieving two of the areas of focus it was developed for. Firstly, it provides direct links between business, secondary schools/training facilities and youth; this has been noted in the strong connections being built as the programme grows in capacity and identity. Secondly, it enables the recognition and development of explicit employability skills noted as being lacking, particularly from the business sector; this has been strongly seen throughout the evaluation from all participants, from students through to business personnel. All were extremely positive about the explicit teaching of and the building of soft skills with young people, both within the employability and work readiness skill sets. This is a strongly identifiable aspect of the Licence to Work programme and what sets it apart from all other 'work experience' programmes currently seen in secondary schools.

The findings of this evaluation have also illustrated several areas where refinement can take place in order to ensure success and sustainability of the programme, particularly as it is prepared to scale up throughout the wider country.

## Recommendations

As COMET looks to sustain the good work noted in the current Licence to Work programme and prepares to disseminate the programme to a wider audience across the country, a number of recommendations are presented from this evaluation for consideration:

### **Delivery of programme**

- Involving family/whānau more
  - Investigate ways to further strengthen connections between home and school, integrate parents/whānau into the programme
  - Investigate ways to increase student agency within the programme
- Involving businesses more
  - increase connections with current businesses
  - ensure greater communication and sharing of information between schools and businesses
  - review ways to induct the students into their work placements more effectively
- Flexibility for schools
  - develop greater flexibility in the programme structure for schools (this is tempered with the need for the programme to stay authentic and true to its cause)
- Assessment review
  - Continue to review/revise the assessment components across the programme to ensure consistent measuring scales; clarity of expectations for all; robustness of completion
  - Additional analysis of final assessments by the students would yield interesting information which could be utilised in future programme development.

### **Sustainability and scaling of the programme**

- Build a network of people around the programme
  - Ensure a team of people to run the programme in schools
  - Ensure a team of people within COMET to support & provide admin
- Tracking of success
  - Establish a system for tracking the success of the students to clearly demonstrate students entering and leaving the programme, when components are completed and when employment is achieved during the programme/shortly after the programme or sometime after completion of the programme.
- Promotion/marketing
  - Aggressively promote and market the programme to increase awareness
- NZQA authentication
  - Continue to investigate authentication by NZQA and communicate this journey with schools

## Introduction

*"Secondary schooling marks an important time in the life of a young person. It is a formative time when learners develop a greater awareness of the world and begin to pursue education, training and employment opportunities linked to their future". (Education Review Office, 2013, p.1<sup>2</sup>)*

Ensuring youth make a successful transition from school into further education or employment has become an important focus in New Zealand due to the number of 15-24 year olds who are unemployed. Unemployment rates continue to be noted as consistently higher among youth in New Zealand. Statistics from 2014 show the 15.0% unemployment rate for 15–24 year olds was almost three times that of the next highest age group, 25–34 years (5.9 percent) (Ministry of Social Development, 2016).

For parents, obtaining a qualification, preparing students for a career or work life and preparing students for tertiary study were the most important outcomes of secondary schooling (Wylie and Bonne, 2016<sup>3</sup>). The secondary education sector provides the foundation for students to achieve in higher (post-secondary) learning facilities, but there is also a need for training opportunities in preparing young people to move directly into the labour market (Ministry of Social Development, 2003<sup>4</sup>). It is well documented that young people who leave school with no qualifications are identified as being at greater risk of unemployment. In a 2016 report, Johnson<sup>5</sup> noted 75,000 young workers under 25 were unemployed, unengaged and often with few, if any, marketable skills (p.1). To counteract such situations, it is suggested that greater achievement in the latter stages of secondary schooling is needed. In order to accomplish this, a wider range of people need to be involved in supporting the student to be successful – parents, whānau, iwi and community businesses all need to work together to assist in creating appropriate and productive learning pathways for the student. "A key responsibility for secondary schools is to ensure that a range of effective processes are in place to provide each student with an individual pathway that enables them to be successful at school and well-prepared for future education, training and employment" (Education Review Office, 2013, p.8). It is these pathways that will shape the way students contribute to society as young adults.

Leaving the secondary school system is the beginning of a key transition in a young person's life, therefore secondary schools need to provide programmes which allow youth to transition smoothly into either higher education OR employment. Offering a variety of pathways whilst still completing secondary school curricula provides the key to this opportunity for young people.

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<sup>2</sup> Education Review Office, (2013). *Secondary Schools: Pathways for future education, training and employment*. Education Evaluation Reports, Wellington: New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> Wylie, C. & Bonne, L., (2016). Secondary schools in 2015: Findings from the NZCER national survey. Wellington: New Zealand; <http://dx.doi.org/10.18296/rep.0001>

<sup>4</sup> Hill, J., (2003). Youth Transitions Report Series. Young people not in education, training or employment. Ministry of Social Development.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, A. (2016). *What next? Addressing New Zealand's youth unemployment*. The Salvation Army Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit. Auckland: New Zealand

## Background

COMET identifies as a champion and connector of action and initiatives looking to improve the effectiveness and equity of the Auckland education and skills system for youth. They do not consider themselves providers of educational services but aim to support those schools implementing the Youth Employability Programme, Licence to Work. This programme was created in 2015 in consultation with Auckland Council, Careers NZ and at a later stage, Cognition Education Trust. The methodology and framework aimed to build student employability competencies, leading to increased opportunities for students to get (and keep) a job.

The Licence to Work programme aimed to:

- Provide direct links between business, secondary schools/training facilities and youth.
- Enable the recognition and development of explicit employability skills noted as lacking, particularly from the business sector.
- Enable youth to be supported in transitioning from education to employment opportunities.

These areas of focus were to be achieved through collaboration with business leaders, education, and government, culminating in a five-part project:

- An Employability Framework to align skills developed by youth training providers and in schools with the explicit skills that employers want ('soft' skills<sup>6</sup>).
- An Employability Passport, to attest to young people's skill and character development, based on the skills identified in the framework.
- Capacity building with the range of organisations that support young people, to help them to build the identified skills and to use the Passport as a tool to support skills building and engagement.
- Information, tools and support for parents and community to help them build their teenagers' employability skills.
- Evaluation, review, and dissemination, to refine the programme of tools and processes and to support scale-up and sustainability through communication and policy work.

This report discusses the findings of the Licence to Work programme evaluation 2016 and builds on an evaluation completed in the first year of the pilot (2015). The scope of this evaluation pertained to the students involved in the Licence to Work programme in only the Auckland region, their parents/guardians, the principals/leaders of the schools, the students attending, the representatives from businesses who work with the students and those who facilitate the programme, usually teachers within the schools.

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<sup>6</sup> Soft skills refer to interpersonal skills (communication, team work), Initiative (problem-solving), personal skills (confidence, self-esteem, motivation, self-efficacy), self-management (reliability, positive attitude).



## Rationale for the evaluation

The Youth Employability Licence to Work Programme is currently in the second pilot stage of development and continues to be responsive to feedback from those involved. The rationale behind this evaluation was to seek robust, independent evidence regarding the effectiveness of the programme and to identify any final alterations required for the programme, in readiness for a planned scale-up nationwide in 2017.

The aim of the 2016 Licence to Work Programme evaluation was three-fold:

1. To assess effectiveness of the 'Youth Employability Programme – A Licence to Work'.
2. To assess stakeholder perceptions of the 'Youth Employability Programme – A Licence to Work'.
3. To identify areas of improvement for sustainability and scaling.

The following evaluation questions then guided the investigation:

1. How effective is the Youth Employability Licence to Work programme in completing desired outcomes for both the young people and the stakeholders involved in the programme?
2. What adjustments are needed within the Youth Employability Licence to Work programme to ensure sustainability and further roll-out of the programme?

COMET assisted with some organisation of the data collection phase and analysis of some data.

## Methodology

It was important for COMET that this evaluation clearly show the outcomes of the programme. This went beyond a simple quantitative analysis, but moved further into gaining understanding of the worth of completing the programme for all participants involved. Understanding that a programme had worthwhile outcomes alone was insufficient without having a sense of what contributed to those outcomes. That is why the process evaluation components were very important, giving a well-rounded view of what difference was made and what contributed to this.

Our approach to evaluation was utilization-focused evaluation. With that in mind we designed the methodology to provide COMET with the information it needs to improve and scale the programme. Additionally, as potential funders or others look to become involved in the programme, having information which helps them to see the benefits at both a whole-programme and individual level, will be important. It was for this reason that personal narratives were included which can be used to help others understand the impact of the programme through a more personal lens.

This evaluation was led by Dr Wendy Moore from Evaluation Associates.

## Outline of data collected methods and participants

The 2016 evaluation of the Licence to Work programme gained perspectives from a wide variety of voices – students, parents and whānau, school staff (teachers, site leads, principals, and other staff in leadership positions), business personnel and members of the COMET steering committee. The data collection methods comprised surveys, interviews and focus groups. Each are expanded upon below.

Data was analysed using either qualitative or quantitative approaches as were pertinent to the information. The variety of participants and data collection methods ensured triangulation of the information collected.

### **Survey**

- All students were asked to complete an initial and concluding self-reflection of their skill levels using a given scale, and to complete open ended questions.
- All teachers were asked to complete initial and concluding assessments rating their students' skill level using a given scale, and to complete open ended questions.
- Businesses who had worked with students on work placements were asked to complete a concluding assessment regarding the skill level of the students who had been with them, using a given scale, and to complete open ended questions.
- Supervisors who had worked with students during the community work component of the programme were asked to complete a concluding assessment regarding the skill level of the students who had been with them, using a given scale, and to complete open ended questions.

### **Interviews**

Focus groups and group/pair interviews were utilised with several groups of participants which resulted in a richness and depth of information, as participants (particularly the students) bounced ideas off one another.

- 22 students (individual/pair/group) – students were asked a range of questions pertaining to their thoughts about the programme, best/most significant and most challenging parts of the programme, and their thoughts about the individual components of the programme (in-school work, community experience, work placements). Students were also asked to comment on what they thought needed changing to improve the programme, if they would encourage others to do the programme and what benefits they felt they had gained from completing the programme, and if it had impacted on anything else at school. They were also asked to discuss how this programme might help them in the future. Additionally, students were asked to comment on how their teachers had taught the programme and the messages they had received during the in-school component and were also asked about family involvement and thoughts on the programme.
- Four parents – parents' names were given to the evaluator as potentially effective candidates to speak with about their child's involvement in the programme. All parent interviews were conducted via phone calls during evening hours. Parents were asked if they were aware their child was completing this programme, what they knew of the programme and how information had been shared with them. Parents were asked to comment on what impact had been noted in the home (if any), their thoughts on this type of programme, its purposes and its effectiveness. Parents were also asked for suggestions to improve the programme and if they would recommend it to other families.
- Seven teachers – teachers spoke with the evaluator in their school environments. Questions for this cohort included their impressions of the programme (design, structure, implementation and delivery), their thoughts on the effectiveness of the programme, what challenges they faced with programme and if any alterations were need. Teachers were also asked to discuss the impact of the professional development and mentoring they had received.
- Three site leads – site leads spoke with the evaluator in their school environments. Questions for this cohort were similar to those of the teacher but also included discussion of

successes/challenges of implementing and ensuring smooth running of the programme. The site leads were often the people who were 'in charge' of the programme in the school.

- Three principals – principals spoke with the evaluator in their school environments and provided their impressions of the programme, successes and challenges of running the programme in their schools, impact of the programme on their students, connection with families of students in the programme and any suggestions they may have had for improving and scaling the programme.
- 18 businesses – a contact list was obtained from COMET of people in the businesses who had supplied work experience for the students. These people were contacted by phone and asked their impressions of the programme and the communication of information about the programme, their thoughts about working with the students and the impact of the programme on the students they worked with and on their businesses. Business contacts were asked what they considered were the strong components of the programme and if there were any recommendations for changes. Lastly, these contacts were asked if they would recommend the programme to others and why. We felt the use of phone interviews for businesses was most respectful of their time and also allowed for more participants to be canvassed than if we had travelled to each and carried out a 1:1 interview. This option also allowed business personnel to dictate the time of the interview, should they be busy when called.
- Six stakeholders – the stakeholders were contacted individually and interviewed in face-to-face meetings. The stakeholders comprised steering group members from WorkChoice, EMA, Cognition Education Trust, GETBA and two of the key personnel at COMET. These participants offered information about the value of the programme, why they are involved, the design/structure/implementation of the programme, challenges/successes of the programme from their perspectives and their business contacts. The stakeholders were also asked for their consideration of what was working well about this programme from a 'big picture' perspective (as in the steering group) and what they thought could be altered to improve the programme. Lastly the participants commented on their thoughts about the future of the programme and the desire to scale up nationally.

### **Focus Groups**

- Two mentoring groups – the evaluator was invited to two of the mentoring groups which were held regularly for school personnel involved in the programme. An educator from Cognition Education Trust facilitated the meetings and was considered part of professional support/development for teachers. As part of the focus group for this evaluation, discussion points were focussed on implementation challenges and successes, design and structural components of the programme and the overall impact on students and the schools running the programme.

### **Narratives**

- Stories from four students were collected (two students who completed the programme in 2015 and two from 2016). The students' stories discussed personal experiences of participating in the Licence to Work programme and offered great insight into the outcomes of the programme but also (and maybe more importantly), the impact completing the programme had on these students. Five personnel from the businesses involved with the programme were also approached (two from 2015 and two from 2016) and were asked to share personal stories regarding their experiences of working with the Licence to Work programme. These stories were completed using an appreciative inquiry model. This data then formed narratives which were used to further triangulate the primary data, demonstrate the value of the programme

through offering clear student voice and personal experiences of businesses which had been involved.

## Analysis of data

Interviews and focus groups were recorded via digital voice recorder and reviewed as completed. Notes were transcribed to Word documents and stored in digital folders. For the phone interviews, notes were recorded on Word documents, reviewed to ensure completeness, and stored in digital folders. Survey information was secured, stored and analysed by COMET.

Data was analysed over the months of data collection, using a thematic approach where patterns in responses were noted and recorded. Anomalies in responses were also noted and referred to during further data gathering for greater depth and triangulation of evidence. Toward the end of the data collection phase, all evidence was reviewed and early findings recorded against the evaluation questions guiding this investigation. Any additional evidence needing to be gathered was completed during final interviews.

After all data collection by this evaluator was concluded, the full analysis was completed. The evidence was collated into categories of cohort: Students / Parents / School / Businesses / Steering committee, and information pertaining to each evaluation question was recorded. A condensed report encapsulating the key findings of the evaluation was constructed for COMET. This was presented at the Steering Group committee meeting in November 2016.

Further analysis of data from the concluding survey was completed in January after receiving this information from COMET.

## Findings

The findings of the COMET Youth Employability Licence to Work programme evaluation 2016 are presented in relation to the aims of the project (stated earlier in this report in the Rationale for the evaluation).

### Evaluation question 1: Is the Youth Employability Programme effective?

All participants spoke extremely positively about the Licence to Work programme and what it was attempting to achieve. Additionally, all spoke of the value in such a programme being available for secondary students toward the end of their schooling years. Confidence in the programme was noted in all discussions, participants stated support for the programme as a whole, and felt the content of the programme addressed the well identified gap (the teaching of soft-skills) for students transitioning into employment. Through this evaluation, we were able to verify that the Licence to Work programme is successful in two out of three areas of focus:

- Providing direct links between business, secondary schools/training facilities and youth;
- Enabling the recognition and development of explicit employability skills noted as being lacking, particularly from the business sector.

The third area of focus (enabling youth to be supported in transitioning from education to employment opportunities) is yet to be corroborated. This point will be expanded upon below. The qualitative

comments of all participants, from student voice through to the businesses, those who are new to the programme or who have been involved for the two years since its inception, support the effectiveness of the Licence to Work programme. The reliability and validity of the more 'hard' data in support of the success of the programme as a whole is more difficult to ascertain.

In order to be able to categorically state the success of the third area of focus for the Licence to Work programme, that of youth being supported in transitioning from education to employment opportunities, we sought evidence from the range of assessments undertaken. Due to a multitude of reasons, assessments completed by businesses and within the school environment were not completed adequately, effectively, or in some cases at all. Some of the explanations given for this were time issues / computer issues / lack of clarity / misunderstandings / personnel issues among others. In addition to the above challenge, clear tracking systems are needed within schools to ensure there is firm data consistently identifying and tracking students within the programme (particularly as they join and withdraw) and upon their completion of the programme, noting their successes. This data is needed to ascertain quantitative data about students who obtained employment during the programme, as a consequence of completing the programme, and to track those who obtained employment within a certain period of completing the programme. This will categorically substantiate if the Licence to Work programme is successful in its final aim: enabling youth to be supported in transitioning from education to employment opportunities. Without this data, identifying if students have obtained employment during or after completing the programme, this intention cannot be verified. Data of this nature is currently not available from any source (schools or COMET). The complications and challenges surrounding assessments of students by students and others, are not unknown to COMET and as a result of the 2015 evaluation and being responsive to the feedback of all concerned, it is understood that much work has gone into ensuring these challenges are resolved for 2017. This current evaluation highlights that there remains work to be done particularly in the area of tracking the success of the programme with students, and this is noted as a recommendation of this evaluation.

Lack of consistency of rating scales within assessments and clarity around these were a noted challenge for schools and businesses. There was confusion as to what exactly the rating scales meant and confusion surrounding a different scale for the student and business assessments compared with the assessment scale for teachers. In addition, a focus on ensuring robust assessments are completed and tracked by those at the school base is imperative.

What can be ascertained from the data are the student retention and completion rates. At the beginning of the year, nine schools were recruited to participate in the Licence to Work programme. This involved 204 students from a variety of schools, including higher decile schools, rural based schools, and a demographic mix of students. By the end of the year, one school (13 students involved) had decided to withdraw, leaving eight schools still registered in the Licence to Work programme. Additionally, some students within the eight schools left the programme and others joined – this again needs careful tracking by the school bases. Of the eight remaining schools, 122 students graduated with a certificate of achievement, having completed all components of the Licence to Work programme (the skills training, community work and work experience). As well as the students graduating with a certificate of achievement, 18 students also graduated with a certificate of participation (having completed the skills training but not the community work or work placement components of the Licence to Work programme). This equates to 64% of graduating students having completed the full programme and 9% of students graduating as participants of the programme.

As part of completing the programme, student assessment information (where possible) was obtained. Collated data pertained to students' development in each of the employability skills (Table 1) and work readiness skills (Table 2) as outlined below.

**Table 1: Employability Skill**

- A good attitude and positive self-esteem
- A friendly approach and is polite
- Is enthusiastic to contribute and to continue to develop personally
- Can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)
- Actively listens and understand the messages and ideas of others
- An understanding of speaking etiquette to adults/employers/customers
- Can organise and clearly express their own thoughts both verbally and in written form
- Can ask for help and is able to seek further instructions when unsure
- Can work confidently in a team to achieve a common goal
- Respects authority and can follow direction
- Has an enthusiasm for, and is prepared to learn new information and skills
- Accepts advice or feedback and acts on that accordingly
- Is honest, reliable and shows 'stickability'
- Can be a productive member of a team
- Has the determination to get things done
- Can set goals and work through tasks to completion
- Shows initiative when required
- Can recognise problems
- Can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution
- Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision
- Can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action
- Can take on responsibility and can manage their own time.
- Is the type of person who will be at work on time, with the appropriate equipment and nutrition to complete a work day
- Exhibits responsibility and self-control
- Can cope with and participate in changing situations
- Has a sense of self-belief and adaptability when faced with a challenge
- Demonstrates tolerance and positivity

**Table 2: Work readiness skills**

- Can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role
- Uses a variety of sources to access employment and training information
- Understands the employee/employer relationship including legalities
- Can identify and manage expectations of the role
- Understands workplace communication and customer service skills
- Understands accepted "norms" of work situations
- Can be relied on to complete tasks diligently
- Accepts advice, supervision and criticism, and shows perseverance
- Can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information
- Has a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)
- Can assess and manage risks associated with online information
- Has support person/people to act as a mentor to help resolve workplace issues if required.
- Has a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition
- Has a good level of personal hygiene and presentation
- Has an awareness of the importance of safety in the workplace
- Is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required

- Understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability
- Has reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport
- Has an alternative plan for getting to and from work
- Understands that you must have enough money to get to and from work every day
- Understands the process for communicating lateness to an employer
- Have done different kinds of work experience such as paid employment and voluntary work for community activities, sports teams, clubs, etc.
- Has competent and numeracy skills
- Has proven school or further study results
- Proof of effort and 'stickability' in the classroom or other activities

Students completed a self-assessment against the employability skills/behaviours and work readiness skills/behaviours during the initial stages of the programme and again at the concluding phase of the programme. These assessments were carried out using an online survey tool, with a scale of: always, very often, sometimes, rarely, never, not applicable.

In school, teachers rated each student's employability skills/behaviours and work readiness skills/behaviours. They rated the level at which the students were learning and displaying the skills within the class environment. These assessments used a scale of: excelling, capable, developing, engaged, not interested, not applicable.

Business personnel were asked to rate the frequency with which students displayed the employability skills/behaviours and work readiness skills/behaviours in the work place. These assessments utilised a scale of: always, very often, sometimes, rarely, never, not applicable. As discussed earlier, the challenges around utilising the differing assessment rating scales was raised by participants.

In order to evaluate this data we have grouped the responses into four main categories

	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Capable</b>	<b>Excelling</b>
Student rating	Rarely Never	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Teacher rating	Engaged Not interested	Developing	Capable	Excelling
Business rating	Rarely Never	Sometimes	Very often	Always

There was also a not applicable option and we have reported on this separately below.

Data for each skill was coded, averaged and then analysed to give a total for each criterion. These were then calculated to show percentages of students at the different levels for each criterion. From this analysis, we are able to present the proportion of students at each of these four levels as perceived by the three groups (student, teacher and business personnel).

The data from the employability skill and the work readiness assessments will be discussed in terms of the student, facilitator and then business assessments. Each cohort (students, teachers, business personnel) has data presented to illustrate levels of attainment.

## Students

### *Employability skill assessments*

*Students thought that they were, on average at a developing level for 15% of the skills, and at a capable level for 85% of the skills.*

	Beginning 0 – 1.00 rating	Developing 1.01 – 2.00	Capable 2.01 – 3.00	Excelling 3.01 – 4.00
Students overall average rating		15%	85%	

**Highest rating skills:** On average students rated themselves most highly for the skills listed in the table below. Of note is that all of these average ratings fell in the ‘capable’ range. The students did not, on average perceive themselves to be excelling in any of the capabilities.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
I respect authority and can follow direction	2.44
I can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)	2.39
I am honest, reliable and I show “stickability”	2.38
I have a friendly approach and am polite	2.35
I can accept advice or feedback and act on that accordingly	2.30
I have good attitude and positive self-esteem	2.29

Of note is that all of these average ratings fell in the ‘capable’ range. The students did not, on average perceive themselves to be excelling in any of the capabilities.

**Lowest rating skills:** On average, students rated themselves lowest for the following skills, all of which were at the ‘developing’ stage.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
I can organise and clearly express my own thoughts both verbally and in written form	1.99
I can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution	1.97
I can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	1.92
I can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action	1.84

### *Work readiness skills*

The student’s ratings were averaged overall.

	Beginning 0 – 1.00 rating	Developing 1.01 – 2.00	Capable 2.01 – 3.00	Excelling 3.01 – 4.00
Students overall average rating		24%	76%	



The students rated the following skills the highest. These were all in the capable range.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
I am aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	2.58
I have an awareness of the importance of safety in the workplace	2.45
I understand that I must have enough money to get to and from work every day	2.42
I understand the process for communicating lateness to an employer	2.39
I understand that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	2.37
I accept advice, supervision and criticism, and shows perseverance	2.33

The students rated the following six work readiness skills as the lowest. All these six skills were rated, on average, at a developing level. Interestingly three of these skills related to IT skills and capabilities.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
I have a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)	1.83
I can assess and manage risks associated with online information	1.90
I use a variety of sources to access employment and training information	1.93
I can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information	1.97
I have a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition	1.99
I can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role	1.99

## Teachers

### *Employability skill assessments*

The teachers also rated individual students against each of the capabilities. It is interesting to note that the average score from the teachers was markedly lower than the student's self-assessment as shown in the table below.

	Beginning 0 – 1.00 rating	Developing 1.01 – 2.00	Capable 2.01 – 3.00	Excelling 3.01 – 4.00
Students		15%	85%	
Facilitators		81%	19%	

**Highest rating skills:** The teachers rated five skills at the beginning of the capable range. The remainder of the skills (22 skills) were rated at the developing level.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
A friendly approach and is polite	2.26
Respects authority and can follow direction	2.16
Can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)	2.07
Can be a productive member of a team	2.03
Is honest, reliable and shows "stickability"	2.01

**Lowest rating skills:** Teachers rated students at a developing level for 60% of the skills (as compared to the students who rated 24% of skills at a developing level).

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	1.51
Can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action	1.54
Can organise and clearly express their own thoughts both verbally and in written form	1.56
Can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution	1.61
Has a sense of self-belief and adaptability when faced with a challenge	1.66
Can take on responsibility and can manage their own time.	1.69

### *Work readiness skills*

**Highest rating skills:** On average teachers rated the students most highly for the skills listed in the table below. Of note is that all of these average ratings fell in the mid to lower 'capable' range.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Has a good level of personal hygiene and presentation	2.42
Understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	2.29
Is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	2.29
Has an awareness of the importance of safety in the workplace	2.20
Has a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition	2.13

Of note is that all of these average ratings fell in the 'capable' range. The students did not, on average perceive themselves to be excelling in any of the capabilities.

**Lowest rating skills:** Teachers rated students at a developing level for 60% of the skills (as compared to the students who rated 24% of skills at a developing level).

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Uses a variety of sources to access employment and training information	1.68
Can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role	1.77
Has competent and numeracy skills	1.79
Has an alternative plan for getting to and from work	1.81
Has proven school or further study results	1.82
Has reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport	1.82

## **Business personnel**

### *Employability skill assessments*

Business personnel also rated individual students against each of the capabilities. It is interesting to note that there was a strong degree of correlation between the average scores for each skill between business personnel and students. We believe that this is because both students and business personnel

found the assessment criteria and scales challenging, whereas teachers felt they had a greater understanding of these due to professional discussions with one another and with facilitators.

	Beginning 0 – 1.00 rating	Developing 1.01 – 2.00	Capable 2.01 – 3.00	Excelling 3.01 – 4.00
Students		15%	85%	
Facilitators		81%	19%	
Business personnel		15%	85%	

**Highest rating skills:** Business personnel rated the following skills most highly. Note that none of these are in the excelling category.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Respects authority and can follow direction	2.45
A good attitude and positive self-esteem	2.42
A friendly approach and is polite	2.41
Can work confidently in a team to achieve a common goal	2.37
Can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)	2.33
Is honest, reliable and shows “stickability”	2.32

**Lowest rating skills:** Business personnel rated the four lowest skills at the developing level. It is interesting to note that these are all related to problem-solving in different ways.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	1.72
Can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution	1.84
Can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action	1.90
Can recognise problems	1.96

### *Work readiness skills*

**Highest rating skills:** On average business personnel rated the students most highly for the skills listed in the table below.

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	2.84
Proof of effort and “stickability” in the classroom or other activities	2.83
Understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	2.78
Has a good level of personal hygiene and presentation	2.74
Has proven school or further study results	2.68
Has an alternative plan for getting to and from work	2.65

**Lowest rating skills:** Business people rated all of the work readiness skills in the capable range. The lowest rated of these were the following:

Skill	Average rating (out of 4)
Uses a variety of sources to access employment and training information	2.04
Can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role	2.15
Understands the employee/employer relationship including legalities	2.18
Can identify and manage expectations of the role	2.24
Can be relied on to complete tasks diligently	2.25

### Comparisons across the groups

Across the employability skills, the students and business personnel's average ratings were very similar to one another. However, there were some interesting differences within the work readiness skills which saw employers rating students significantly more positively than they did themselves for the following:

Skill	Average student rating	Average business rating	Difference
I understand that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	2.37	2.78	<b>-0.41</b>
I can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information	1.97	2.38	<b>-0.41</b>
I have support person/people to act as a mentor to help resolve workplace issues if required.	2.07	2.50	<b>-0.43</b>
I have a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition	1.99	2.46	<b>-0.47</b>
I have a good level of personal hygiene and presentation	2.22	2.74	<b>-0.53</b>
I have competent and numeracy skills	2.03	2.57	<b>-0.54</b>
I have proven school or further study results	2.11	2.68	<b>-0.57</b>
I have a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)	1.83	2.48	<b>-0.65</b>
I can assess and manage risks associated with online information	1.90	2.58	<b>-0.68</b>
I show effort and "stickability" in the classroom or other activities	2.13	2.83	<b>-0.69</b>

In all cases, teachers gave a lower rating than students for each employability skill and for 23/25 of the work readiness skills. The areas where there are larger discrepancies between the student's perceptions and the teachers are interesting to explore. These may be areas that teachers wish to focus more in future years to help students understand these particular criteria more fully.

Work readiness skill	Average student rating	Average teacher rating	Difference
I have/had an alternative plan for getting to and from work	2.26	1.81	<b>0.45</b>
I have/had reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport	2.22	1.82	<b>0.40</b>
I understand the process for communicating lateness to an employer	2.39	2.00	<b>0.40</b>
I understand the employee/employer relationship including legalities	2.23	1.85	<b>0.38</b>
I understand that I must have enough money to get to and from work every day	2.42	2.06	<b>0.37</b>
I accept advice, supervision and criticism, and shows perseverance	2.33	2.01	<b>0.32</b>

Employability skill	Average student rating	Average teacher rating	Difference
Can ask for help and is able to seek further instructions when unsure	2.23	1.72	<b>0.51</b>
Actively listens and understand the messages and ideas of others	2.23	1.76	<b>0.47</b>
Accepts advice or feedback and acts on that accordingly	2.30	1.83	<b>0.47</b>
Can take on responsibility and can manage their own time.	2.14	1.69	<b>0.45</b>
Can organise and clearly express their own thoughts both verbally and in written form	1.99	1.56	<b>0.43</b>
Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	1.92	1.51	<b>0.42</b>
Has the determination to get things done	2.21	1.80	<b>0.41</b>

The teachers rated the students lower in all employability and work readiness skills than the business personnel did.

### **Not Applicable ratings**

We note that there is a very high proportion of Not Applicable ratings being given by the business personnel for the work readiness skills. For example 66.7% rated 'understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability' was not applicable and 64.8% rated 'can assess and manage risks associated with online information' and 'is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required' was not applicable. See table below.

When reviewing these criteria, it is not difficult to understand why an employer may not have felt that they were in a position to be able to make a valid rating. Our recommendation is to review which criteria that business personnel can best respond to.

<b>Work Readiness Skills</b>	<b>% of business personnel selecting n/a</b>
Understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	66.7
Is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	64.8
Can assess and manage risks associated with online information	64.8
Has proven school or further study results	59.3
Proof of effort and “stickability” in the classroom or other activities	57.4
Uses a variety of sources to access employment and training information	57.4
Understands that you must have enough money to get to and from work every day	57.4
Can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information	51.9
Has a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)	50
Have done different kinds of work experience such as paid employment and voluntary work for community activities, sports teams, clubs, etc.	50
Has competent and numeracy skills	48.1
Has support person/people to act as a mentor to help resolve workplace issues if required	48.1
Has reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport	46.3
Has an alternative plan for getting to and from work	46.3

Reviewing this data alone does not demonstrate the depth of feeling that the students, in particular, had about completing this programme. In interviews and focus groups, students talked enthusiastically of gaining more confidence in themselves and in their ability to work with others, particularly with adults in their work placements, and this is at times reflected in the data above. Students shared their appreciation of the need to develop the ‘soft’ skills and were extremely positive about the explicit teaching of these. 81.3% of students self-assessed as being enthusiastic to contribute and to continue to develop personally very often or always. The majority spoke of very passionate and dedicated teachers, who greatly assisted with not only skill development at school but were also integral in the success students felt out in work placements. 82.5% of students self-assessed as very often or always being able to accept advice or feedback and act on this accordingly.

Students could reflect on their experiences (particularly on the work placements) and discuss their new-found perspectives of what it meant to be ‘work ready’.

*“It’s taught me what I need to have in the big world, to prepare myself for working.”*

*“This programme has moulded me into a whole different person!”*

*"It taught me the expectations – I had some idea of them but not a full understanding until now."*

They discussed understanding the 'realities' of being employed and that this would now help them to be better prepared when applying for jobs and to be successful at sustaining employment.

*"I reckon this helps us learn what to do and what not to do in the workplace, you know doing the work and not just rocking up when you want to."*

*"It made me understand how work is in reality."*

*"Has helped me get to know just what employers want and expect."*

*"I learnt about the attitude of work and resilience."*

The students recognised the opportunities the programme offered and were hugely supportive of advocating for the programme to continue.

*"This programme has helped me learn the skills to go out and get my own job now."*

*"I liked getting to know lots of different people – finding out what it's like to be an adult!"*

*"I'm much more confident now and not afraid to take the opportunities offered to me."*

*"Made me step out of my comfort zone – just had to get on and do it."*

*"I enjoyed everything; good experience that programme."*

*"Helped me be a role model and set an example for the little ones."*

A change in attitude toward school was noted by several students who felt the Licence to Work programme had helped them see the worth of school, convinced them to actually stay in school and there was a noted transfer of soft skills into their everyday school experiences (motivation, resilience, time and self-management). Additionally, some students were excited to share that because of the opportunities offered by the programme, they had been able to secure offers of part-time/full time employment as a direct result of the work experience component (this was noted from interview data only).

*"This has made school more worth-while."*

*"Helped me in the rest of my school work too – helped me be more motivated to get my work finished."*

*"I got offered employment – they liked my attitude. This programme helped my attitude a lot! Wasn't like this before doing the programme. I wasn't that keen on being careful, changed my life a bit actually. Wasn't keen on working, didn't know what to do next year."*

*"They offered me an apprenticeship for when I finish school! My parents are so proud!"*

*"Feedback from 'X' business is that they are going to employ some students in trades."*  
(Principal)

In order to demonstrate the movement in skills attained by the students throughout the programme, matched data of those students who started and ended the programme, and who had completed initial and end-point self-assessments was collated. The data was averaged for each employability skill and this data was then transferred into a radar graph, as seen in Table 3. This graph allows a visual snap shot of how the students perceived their skills at the beginning and end of the programme.

From this graph, 22 out of 27 skills show improvement by the students. The biggest improvement is noted in the 'I respect authority and can follow direction' employability skill, which increased from 4.97 to 5.47. The skills which showed decreases were 'I have a friendly approach and am polite' and 'I can demonstrate tolerance and positivity' (both noting a minimal decrease in average of 0.06). Decreases could be the result of a better understanding of the skills at the end of course, and a sounder self-assessment against those skills. Three skill sets remained the same, showing no improvement or decline over the course of the programme. These were 'I have good attitude and positive self-esteem' and 'I can ask for help and am able to seek further instructions when unsure'.

In comparison, the same analysis method was used for teacher assessments of the students and this is displayed in Table 3. This graph allows a visual snap shot of how the teachers perceived students' skills at the beginning (time one) and end of the programme (time two) and shows the growth teachers noted in student attainment. The two graphs show interesting comparisons of the differing perceptions of skill attainment. The biggest improvements noted by teachers were the 'Can be a productive member of a team', 'Can recognise problems' and 'Can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution'; all showing a shift in average of 0.93. This is in comparison to the skills showing the least shift for student attainment as recorded by teachers. These were 'Demonstrates tolerance and positivity' with 0.46 shift in average and 'Can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action' with a 0.43 shift in average. There were no skills rated as decreasing from initial to concluding assessments.

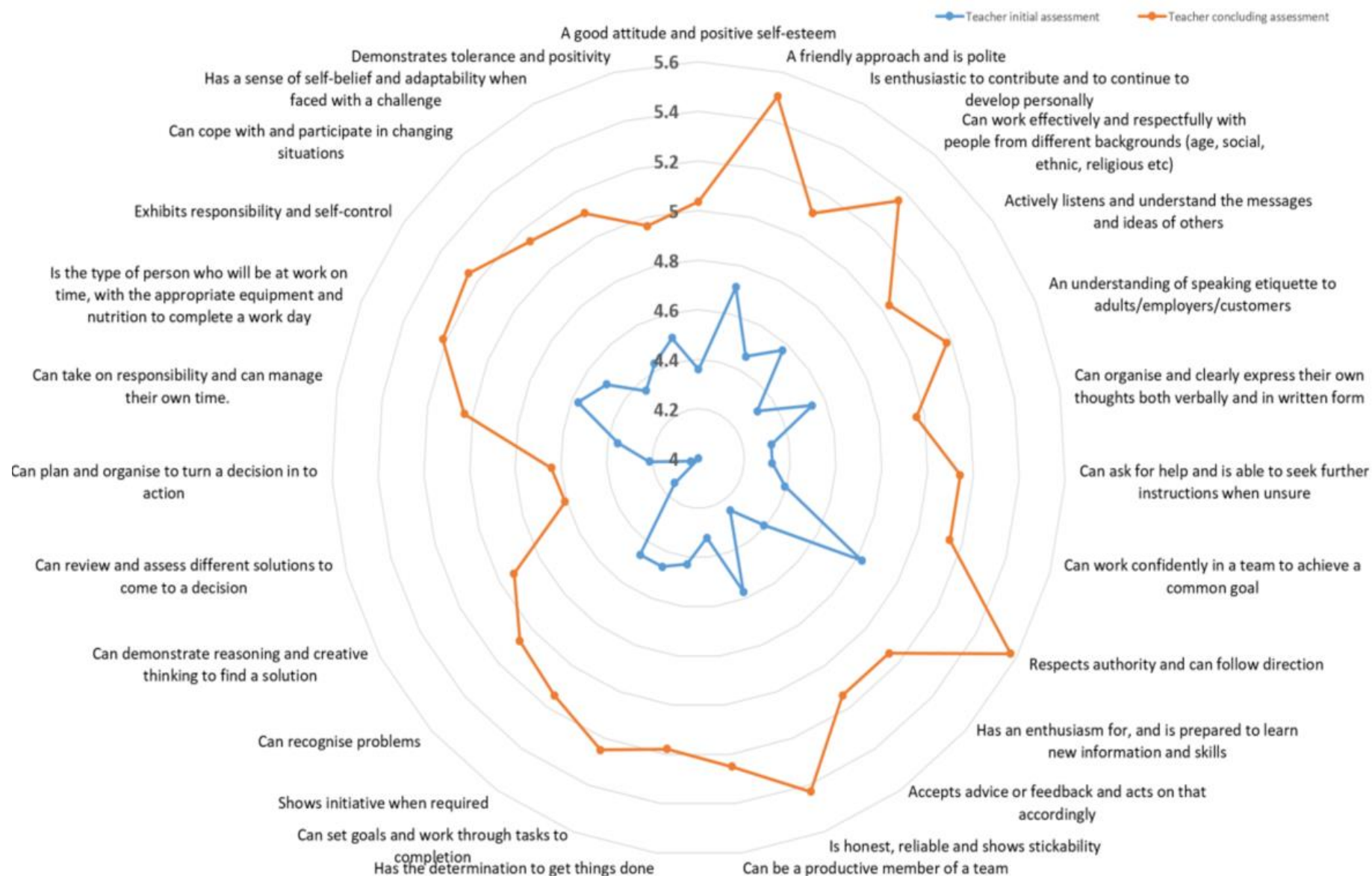


**Table 3** Comparative data of matched initial and concluding student self-assessments of employability skills



Table 4

Comparative data of matched initial and concluding teacher assessments of student's employability skills



We believe that the evidence we have gathered shows that the programme, for students can be deemed inspirational, creating greater aspirations for many of the students. Students themselves noted a change in attitude, from considering leaving school or having no thoughts of working, to now enthusiastically discussing what type of job they would now like to pursue and how they had seen their pathways change from this experience. Discussions in interviews with the students centred on how the programme had helped them to see themselves as successful, that they now thought they could aspire to greater opportunities and that they wanted to inspire others when they became members of the work force – this is particularly evident in two of the narratives collected from the students (see appendices).

## Evaluation question 2: What are the stakeholder perceptions of the Youth Employability Programme?

The stakeholders for the Licence to Work programme were noted as schools who ran the programme, the parents of the students participating in the programme, business personnel who worked with students on work placement and the steering group for COMET, who consisted of a range of representatives associated with youth training opportunities and businesses.

The perceptions of each cohort will be examined individually. Recommendations from each will be addressed at the conclusion of this section.

### Parents

As part of the Licence to Work programme, schools sent home with students an information and permission letter for parents/whānau to review, sign and return to school. Interestingly, many students during interviews stated that they had not included their parents/whānau in this activity and that the majority of their parents/whānau did not know they were participating in the Licence to Work programme. Their reasons for not discussing the programme with family were varied – some just didn't see the point, some stated they didn't know about the permission forms, others were more candid.

*“Nah, I didn't tell them – I have to be independent.”*

*“My teacher told them – they knew about the work experience though.”*

*“I didn't think it was relevant to them; don't want to rely on my parents, as I get older I have to rely on myself.”*

*“My family is supportive of whatever I do so I didn't tell them about the programme.”*

As a result, limited information made its way into the homes of the students. This was reflected in the conversations with parents during data gathering. Very few knew about the Licence to Work programme as a whole or understood what their child had been explicitly covering within the programme. After outlining the programme for them, all of the parents spoken with were very positive about the concept of such a programme, the aims and methods of delivery, stating that they saw a need for the explicit teaching of 'soft' skills. They were very positive about the work experience component and stated that they felt there had been a high level of engagement in this from their child. Parents were adamant that there needed to be such pathways/programmes for students who were ready to leave school or for those where a heavy academic focus did not work. Interestingly only one parent had noticed a transfer of skills from school to home – most found this suggestion quite humorous, stating that their children were still behaving 'like teenagers normally do'.

*“This is great! Something that he needs – school is not doing good for him.”*

*“Come to the end of what school can do for them, give them opportunity to do something else, encourage them into something.”*

*“Gives them real chance to see what is happening out in the field, rather than just listening; hands on experience.”*

*“Does want to do part time work now but it (the skills) hasn’t flowed through to home.”*

Although parents were highly interested in what their children had been doing on the programme, they did not see how they might be further involved apart from offering to support their child in their endeavours. Some had been assisting with getting their child to and from work placements and they acknowledged that this had caused strain on themselves (timewise) but also for their child, who thought they should be more independent. It seems that in reinforcing the skill of independence, students have taken this on board as needing to cope on their own, not needing others to assist them to be successful. Additionally, it could be that the students wanted to show that they were ready for adulthood, didn’t want to inconvenience their parents/whānau and so attempted to cope on their own.

Some teachers attempted to engage family/whānau more by speaking to the parents individually but found this quite difficult in terms of time and accessibility of the parents. One school in particular was already discussing ways they felt they could integrate family/whānau into the programme more readily. Their idea was to run an ‘open evening’ where students could/would have to bring along family/whānau to hear about the Licence to Work programme. Another school had decided on a similar theme but would run an ‘information evening’, where students who were to participate in the programme had to attend with their family/whānau, and it would be during this evening that the permission forms would be signed.

Engaging parents in the world of their secondary students can be challenging. Students can act more independently and in ways which distance their parents as they begin the journey of transitioning away from school. It is important that parents are aware of the options being offered to their children and the theory behind these. The support of family/whānau is an important factor in students being successful – one of the teachers shared that a student had been unsuccessful in the programme due to limited/no family support during work placement times. The student was not motivated to be ready for work (get up on time), nor did he have effective role models to instil a work ethic message. It became easier for the student to just drop out of the programme.

Parents stated that they want greater interaction/knowledge/connection particularly with reference to the Licence to Work programme, and school personnel are also in favour of this taking place. The challenge now is to find ways that this can happen and still keep the students motivated. Therefore, a recommendation of this evaluation is that schools and COMET investigate ways in which parents can be more readily engaged with the Licence to Work programme. Further to this recommendation, schools need to carefully track if permission has been given for student participation as many students were adamant they did not return a permission form to be involved in the Licence to Work programme.

#### **School** *(Stakeholder perceptions of the Youth Employability Programme)*

School personnel involved in the Licence to Work programme consisted of the class teacher/facilitator, the head of department (HoD) (usually Careers or Trades), sometimes the deputy principal and principal. The latter personnel were more involved in a managerial, wider-school perspective. The teacher/facilitator and HoD were the most closely involved, running the day to day logistics and

teaching load within the programme. At times, there were other staff noted as being involved, usually for assisting with placing students within businesses for work placement.

As stated in the previous section, school personnel were very supportive of the aims of this programme and agreed strongly with the need to create a bridge from school into employment for young people. All were extremely passionate about assisting students to transition into a meaningful 'next step' once they completed their time in the secondary system – to them, it was all about the kids.

*"I saw opportunity within the programme for the expectations of employers and students to be brought together; the soft skills were strongly highlighted – team work, punctuality; this is a curriculum tailored to supporting this area and I could see that it could be integrated into what we are already doing - to supplement/support what we are already doing." (Principal)*

*"It forced some of our students to try out work experience."*

*"We were very conscious of the mismatch between employer's expectations and student understanding of the expectations; soft skills are always covert, they've never been obvious in any unit standards."*

For some of the students, completing this programme was quite a challenge. Schools were needing to find creative ways to assist to ensure the students were successful in the programme. From locating equipment and sometimes uniforms (such as work-site compliant shoes), the teachers involved in the Licence to Work programme were at times under a lot of self-imposed pressure to assist, borne out of care and concern for their students. Although not expected to, many discussed giving up quite a lot of personal time to make sure students could meet the demands of the programme, particularly during the work placements. Many of the principals/DPs knew of this extra effort but appeared to consider this was just part of running that department – no assistance/compensation was sought or offered. Some leaders closest to the teaching personnel did mention needing to keep an eye on just how much their teachers were putting into the programme, as they acknowledged that such circumstances were unsustainable for a teacher. Although the teachers discussed feeling overworked and for some, feeling close to being burnt out, they were adamant someone had to be there for the students and to make sure they had a successful outcome in the programme. They felt that if they didn't offer these extras, the students would be highly likely to fail/drop out of the programme. For these teachers, getting their students through the programme was the most essential thing and they would do whatever it took – even getting up at 5am to collect students and drop them off at their work placements or giving up holiday time to go along to work placements with more reticent students. The teachers' passion and commitment to their students was an unwavering thread throughout all interviews.

*"We're here for the students so we will make it work. Impact is not on rest of school, just us in Careers. We just had to make it work."*

Teachers acknowledged that at times they were up against entrenched beliefs about ways of living, where students came from homes with a perpetual cycle of not working being the only model. This became a common concern throughout data gathering that wider societal challenges were strongly felt within this programme. The situation with non-working generations within families was perceived to be reflected in limited motivation from students to participate and be successful during school but also work placements, which some parents perceived as the most valuable component for their child – it was noted as the way they would get a job. Some families found it difficult to support students to get to their placements and to be consistent in attendance. This was caused by limited financial resources, limited transport options and sometimes, time away from the family (some students took on home roles to support their parents). For those students who were successful in gaining part-time employment or to be offered full time employment, there was then a pressure of bringing in money for

the family, rather than staying at school. Assisting with financial resources was a very clear necessity for some students; they felt the pressure of helping to support the wider family. Once offered employment, which became the most important role for them. School took a back seat.

*“There’s the societal issue – real need for families to have students bringing in money, employers need to understand the necessity of students completing school.”*

One principal discussed pleading with a family to allow their son to stay at school part-time to finish his education after he had been offered employment from a work experience completed as part of the Trades pathway. The parents saw no need for continued education as they needed the financial assistance, and this was what their son needed to do – support the family. The principal was annoyed at the employer for offering the job without stipulation that the student complete his school work as well.

A further challenge noted by one school in particular was continued rejection for work experience placements once some businesses realised where their school was located in Auckland. The teachers perceived that deficit thinking regarding some suburbs of Auckland was behind these rejections. The challenge of finding placements for their students was exacerbated by these rebuffs, and the consequence that staff became quite disappointed in their communities. Teachers noted it took much longer than anticipated to find and place students, and this was time they really didn’t have available.

Whilst most teachers involved in running the programme were part of the Careers, Trades or Transition pathway departments, it must be acknowledged that these teams were usually very small – often two teacher teams. Participants in this evaluation stated very clearly that for any school to run the Licence to Work programme in the future, it was essential that a team approach throughout the school was taken and that senior leaders (including the principals) were fully aware of, but more importantly, were much more active participants in the programme. For most schools involved in the evaluation, this was not their reality. Evidence from the evaluation shows that most principals knew of the programme running in their schools, but had little to no idea of what this actually entailed. The common response was that it was a worthwhile programme, a needed entity within their school but that the wider responsibility was delegated to their DP or whoever was working with timetabling and that they (the principals) would hear if something was going wrong; there had been no complaints to them regarding the programme.

Teachers felt that they were quite isolated and that the rest of the staff could certainly benefit from not only knowing about the programme and what it was aiming to achieve, but that the rest of the staff could utilise components of the soft skill work within their own subjects, thus capturing a greater number of students.

*“It’s lonely on my own.”*

*“A team of people is definitely needed. The amount of work is phenomenal! Totally see the value in the programme but need to look at delivery.”*

One way the teachers running the programme found some support and the opportunity to share their experiences with like-minded others was during the mentoring sessions, run by a Cognition Education facilitator. The ongoing mentoring sessions throughout the year prompted a mostly positive response from teachers. These were usually seen as useful and teachers reported that the facilitator was very personable. Teachers shared that there had been some opportunities for across-school networking and the sharing of ideas had strengthened the programmes within their own settings. This was a definite positive for the teachers. A suggestion arose from this that much more time was spent on allowing the sharing of what had gone well; for some too much of the mentoring session was used for teachers to

'off-load' about issues rather than celebrating and sharing what was going well. They acknowledged the learning that had eventuated from sharing with colleagues and that they would value much more time to do this in the future. A challenge with this was timetabling; releasing teachers had been problematic for many and it was hoped that this may be addressed in the future but by whom the teachers did not know.

*"Sharing time was the best; building network of programme teachers."*

As well as mentoring sessions, teachers were offered a training opportunity at the beginning of the year, run by Careers NZ. The teachers' experience of this training was brought up regularly during data collection. Some very strong messages were shared, that the training had been poorly presented, did not meet their needs and that for some, it had been a waste of their time, time that they just didn't have to spare. Several teachers were still quite angry about the nature of material presented, that it was "stuff they already knew" and that they perceived the presentation style was condescending and did not connect with them as trained teachers in any way.

*"It was as if they didn't realise we were actually teachers with a whole range of experience – why talk to teachers about pedagogy?"*

Although the depth of feeling presented during this evaluation cannot be ignored, a few teachers did acknowledge that some of the group may not have been experienced teachers, some may be very new to the programme and that it could not be assumed that all the teachers in the room were effective pedagogical practitioners. Further, it was suggested that in teaching, it was always good to get a refresher. It must be acknowledged that COMET has planned to change the provider to Cognition Education for 2017 which is anticipated will bring greater consistency of message and delivery.

Even though teachers acknowledged challenges in running the programme, the consistent message throughout this evaluation was that they felt there was true worth in the programme, it was absolutely needed in schools and that the components of the programme fitted together to ensure a positive outcome for the students. School staff clearly identified student growth both in an interpersonal sense and in the students' ability to be successful in a work place situation and directly attributed this to participation in this programme.

*"Group work and open conversations are essential in the teaching sessions, especially when they come in from work experience; it helps them to talk about their experiences and we help them figure it all out."*

*"We believe the impact of running the programme is a bigger retention of students; convinced that this programme is keeping students longer at our school."*

Teachers openly discussed adapting the delivery of the programme within their schools in order for it to be successful for their students and for their communities. They felt this flexibility was essential for the programme to continue in their setting. Additionally, teachers outlined their thoughts about improving the programme by expanding the time allocated for students to complete the programme, explaining the stress that had been experienced and the feeling of having to rush through. A number shared confidentially that they had altered the original programme structure and some components to get students through, and to alleviate some of the pressure/stress they felt as teachers of the Licence to Work programme. These teachers insisted that what they were sharing remain confidential, that their name wasn't shared, as they felt they would 'get in trouble' or that they were letting someone down by altering parts of the programme.

*“We just haven’t followed the rules with the programme – we made it work for us.”*

*“The work readiness skills at the back – haven’t touched them – just ran out of time.”*

Concerns about the assessment components was a common theme. The key points raised were that these were time consuming, challenging to navigate, too many in nature, and that it was unrealistic to expect so much assessment from such a programme (referring to a work placement programme).

*“Too much assessment, taken up heaps of time; needs to be less and better organised.”*

*“Not sure the assessments currently work; some employers just sign them off as being brilliant on the first day, some don’t have time, some don’t know the students well enough as it’s the supervisor who does the paperwork and they haven’t even worked with the student.”*

One teacher shared her new interpretation of the Licence to Work assessment for students, how they had reworked it for their school:

*“Assessment over pages and pages, gee we didn’t do it, we just condensed into one spreadsheet for the students to use.”*

As discussed in evaluation question one, the challenges of some assessments not being completed adequately, effectively, or in some cases at all, take on a new light when seen from a teacher’s perspective. They are resolute about doing the best for their students and sometimes the nature of the programme just didn’t work for them. Many participants felt that they needed greater flexibility within the delivery of the programme. A suggestion raised by a few participants was changing the programme to a two-year timeframe or having a rolling structure, thus allowing greater depth to the teaching, being able to go deeper with the material and reducing the stress of completing all components of the programme within a few terms. Developing greater flexibility in the programme structure is a tentative recommendation from this evaluation – it is tempered by the need for the programme to stay authentic and true to its cause. If schools are given free rein to do as they feel is necessary with the programme, it may be in jeopardy of losing its integrity.

In line with this thinking, at times there was quite a bit of confusion as to what was meant by the Licence to Work programme – it was not a name widely identified with. Schools in their efforts to integrate another programme into a full timetable, had to some extent assimilated the Licence to Work programme into their Gateway pathway/programme. This had been done so well that the programme was in jeopardy of losing its own identity. Many times during this evaluation, students, teachers and other school personnel needed further explanation of the name, and some used Licence to Work interchangeably with Gateway without realising they were different programmes running within the school. Some did make a correlation to the Gateway programme due to this programme being funded and offering students credits for completion of work experience (although not often explicitly teaching soft skills).

The Licence to Work programme not being accredited by NZQA, not having credits attached and therefore no perceived funding mechanism became a central theme throughout this evaluation. The call for accreditation was strong from both staff and students, who wanted recognition in terms of NCEA, for the work they had completed in the programme. Interestingly though, the programme not having funding and credits attached was less of a problem for a number of principals.

*“This programme supports the underbelly of the credits – skills are more important than the credit.” (Principal)*



*“Holistic building of the character of the student is, and should be, much more than just gaining credits.” (Principal)*

They stated that their belief in what the programme was trying to achieve went beyond attaining NCEA credits, this was a life skill which they acknowledged every secondary student should learn. The few principals who knew about the programme, discussed how they would love to roll it out throughout their senior secondary classes but timetabling and other organisational components would be difficult.

### **Business personnel** *(Stakeholder perceptions of the Youth Employability Programme)*

As previously discussed, all participants in this evaluation agreed with the need to support youth to transition into employment and that the explicit teaching of ‘soft skills’ was essential in providing this pathway. As yet, the name of this programme, Licence to Work, is not well known enough, nor do some participants have full understanding of what it consists of. This may prove difficult as students attempt to connect with businesses after leaving school, and the businesses do not know the value in their completing this programme. As with many of the principals discussed earlier, business personnel spoken with as part of this evaluation were not fully aware of the Licence to Work programme; they believed that this programme consisted of just the work placement. Very few understood the full nature of the programme. Further to this, most believed that the work placement they had participated in was part of a Gateway programme. The name Licence to Work was unknown to the majority. Additional marketing and increasing awareness of the programme is a recommendation of this evaluation.

After hearing an overview of the programme, all participants were positive and could identify with the aims of the programme.

*“School’s not for everyone, schools need to change, not everyone learns from a book; real world learning and experience is what they need.”*

*“Kids have to get experience somewhere, business have to be the ones to give it; we need to give this sort of opportunity for these kids.”*

Business personnel believed that the work placement provided a great opportunity for students to gain the experience they needed to fully understand the work place and for young people to realise that their starting position would not be in management.

*“Some have a romantic vision, eyes are shut, then it’s a bit of a bump into the real world; they can be a bit precious sometimes.”*

*“Understand they are young, green some of the time. Any experience is good.”*

*“Teaches them how it’s different in the adult world – different from school.”*

The realities of being in a job and working with others were just some of the benefits identified from completing the work placement component of the programme. Time management, learning how to be self-sufficient, accountability and a chance to start to understand the expectations from business personnel were noted as positive aspects of this programme. Table 5 illustrates just what skills the students achieved and which skills were less identifiable by business personnel working with the students. The most identified skill by business personnel was ‘Respects authority and can follow direction’. The least identified skill was ‘Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision’.

In addition to students showing greater attainment of some skills, notably in attitude and respecting authority, business personnel felt that work placement had a significant impact on students. They considered the work placement helped students decide if the work was actually what they wanted to do when they left school.

*“Getting youth out in front of employers, showing them responsibilities, helps them to see the operation at an adult level and gives them insight into the real world.”*

The work placement offered businesses insight into a potential workforce for employing. This was an important consideration for some areas of business where shortages were noted. Some felt that this was exacerbated by parents who would not allow students to experience trades or other work experience opportunities – their child was going straight to university.

*“Parents can be a barrier – they get upset if their child isn’t going to university; let them have a gap year in trades; adapt the programme to include parents more - get their understanding of what we/you are trying to achieve.”*

Parents were also noted by business personnel as being the possible cause of students rushing into any form of employment they could, without really considering what it was they wanted to do/could be capable of doing, possibly having the time to consider something that could turn into a solid career.

*“Family pressure for making money rather than work experience, some students lost to menial jobs to bring money in for the family, rather than sticking it out for a real position with a future.”*

For some businesses, the possibility of finding students who could then become employees came to fruition, with students gaining part time or full time employment. Business personnel discussed the value of having students within their work force, and that these young people brought enthusiasm and energy (on the whole) and often inspired other workers around them.

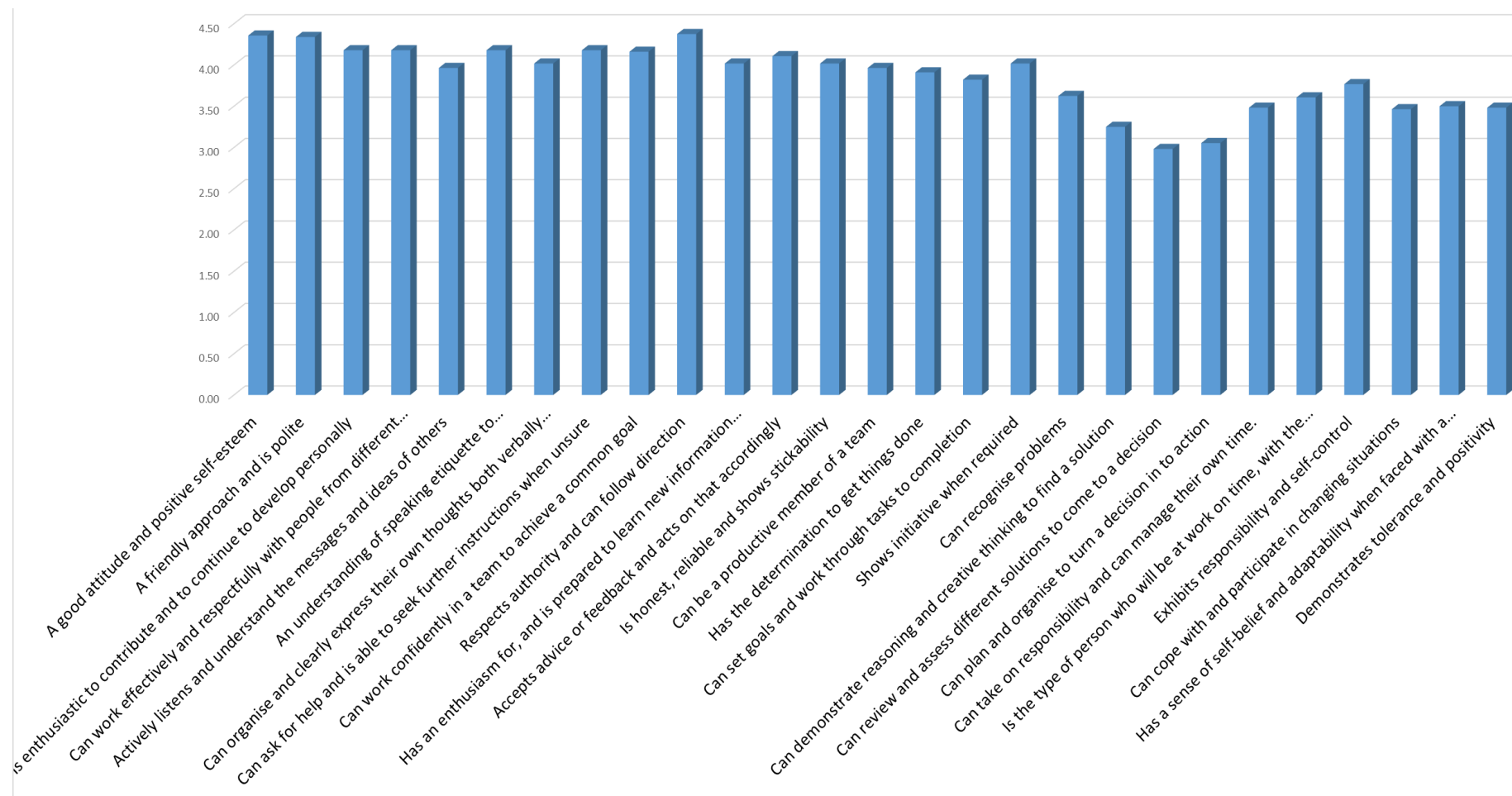
*“Enhanced our business so much we’re taking on one student full time next year.”*

Additionally, there was a sense that the businesses were doing something good for their communities, that this programme was a way to give back as well as take.

*“We know youth unemployment is a big thing, we are wanting to give back, we realise the importance of helping out.”*

Table 5

## Business personnel assessments of student's employability skills (end of programme)



The social responsibility of helping youth into employment was notably felt by businesses. There was agreement that this type of opportunity was important, that as businesses they needed to be socially responsible and responsive to the needs of their communities. This was particularly noted by the larger companies who had worked with the Licence to Work programme. All stated that they would endorse the programme when speaking with other business owners but a number of suggestions were also offered for future development based on their experiences. One continual message was the need for greater clarity about the programme right from the beginning of the school/business connection, and the need for clearer communication with businesses about expectations. Personnel were wanting to be further involved and requested further insight into the full outline of the programme. Further, business personnel asked for greater initial connection with the students. This was felt a better form of induction for the students but also the business personnel as well.

*“It felt very rushed – just given students. Better communication prior to getting them would be good – maybe what they want to do when leaving school so we can pre-empt roles.”*

*“Definitely try and make sure there is more interaction with student first – it’s scary for them to just turn up on the first day.”*

*“Some need bit more guidance than others – it would be good to know that.”*

A further consideration regarding communication was the lack of clarity about the Licence to Work programme as a whole, including important components such as student assessment. This has been highlighted in previous sections but was raised again by a number of business personnel.

*“Never told the rules, we made rules up as we went along, we just did what we thought was best for the guys – it was good to have flexibility.”*

*“No formal reporting to do. No stress, no liability for business.”*

*“Initial set up could be better; explain the full programme at beginning to help us understand/appreciate.”*

Feedback from businesses involved in the Licence to Work programme was positive, particularly with reference to the work experience component. It will take time for the name of the programme to filter out to the wider businesses community, but further marketing and promotion will certainly assist with this programme being greater defined. As one principal shared:

*“Needs more marketing for businesses to identify it.”*

In a world where transition pathways are becoming more sought after, it is in the best interests of the programme to share its successes and the aims of what it is trying to achieve. There remain some areas where additional development can be achieved. Reviewing ways to induct the students into their work placements more effectively and ensuring greater communication/sharing of information to the businesses involved are recommendations of this evaluation.

#### **Steering committee (Stakeholder perceptions of the Youth Employability Programme)**

As members of this committee, these participants brought varying perspectives from a range of organisations, with some members being involved from the programme’s inception. A commonality across the committee was the high degree of support for the Licence to Work programme. All members of this committee affirmed the need of the programme and were highly supportive of the

design/structure and delivery model currently presented. The programme was seen to be ‘fit for purpose’.

*“This programme gives students the feeling they are armed with a toolbox of skills and expectations so that they can go out into the workforce and feeling like they have a shot.”*

*“Businesses want someone to be up and running with the soft skills in place – they don’t have time to train in this sort of thing.”*

*“The problem in the past is the lack of engagement between the school and employers.”*

*“The programme gives the vocational pathway a bit more structure.”*

COMET was seen as a “small organisation attempting big things”, with passionate and committed people, who understood industry and the need for supporting transition pathways for young people who did not choose to attend higher education facilities.

*“They see the social responsibility; believe in the programme, see the necessity; empathise with the cause; people involved are so focussed and engaged in it.”*

*“The project energises me because of its value; I really like the people. They’re not out to make money, they are out to make a difference!”*

Although praises were sung regarding what the programme was aiming to achieve and how the programme was constructed, there was acknowledgement that the programme had complexities regarding organisation, that further streamlining was needed from resources through to communication.

*“There’s a definite need for the programme – all parties want it but resources limited”  
“She hit the ground running but was overwhelmed.”*

*“I understand there was limited time, but emails and spreadsheets are not the best approach – we need someone on the ground to build relationships and be open to ideas. Schools need to own it as well, they have just tried to follow a book.”*

*“I try to help them stay positive and motivated but I feel what they are going through; the programme needs a lot of support! Schools loved the idea but didn’t realise the amount of work involved - there’s only one of me and they do need extra help.”*

Committee members discussed the constraints of working within a structured schooling system. On one hand, it was felt that this was the best place for the programme due to working with the students prior to them exiting education but on the other, schools presented further challenges that were not really expected. From personnel to timetabling, the extra support many of the schools were noted as needing presented a huge pull on the available resources in COMET.

*“Careers get it but the challenge is working with the wider school systems. Being creative and open to what might this look like?”*

*“A lot of uncertainty about who’s doing what in the programme - confusion between parties creating a lot of noise.”*

*“I think the programme is amazing but needs a lot of resources behind it to make sure that it is delivered properly. Senior leaders signed up for the programme not realising the amount of work needing to be done on the ground level.”*

The above comment correlates with school personnel expressions about the challenges of running the programme. Anxiety exists regarding the amount of work this programme takes to run on the ground, within school and the amount of support that is available. Some committee members outlined plans to encourage a form of brokerage between businesses and schools, thus alleviating pressure of school personnel spending time attempting to find work experience placements.

*“The area of brokerage needs support/tidying it up – maybe regional organisation. Online tool shared between employers and schools/youth would be great but it would need to be local.”*

*“Work experience is what is going to help make the difference; just doing the work in the schools is not enough, that’s why we need to be involved.”*

Some committee members went further to describe how they would support another company with greater resources (both financial and personnel) taking the reins of the Licence to Work programme but all stipulated that COMET must still be involved at a strategic level, should this ever come to fruition.

*“See the value in this programme but how to do this in a structured way.”*

*“Co-ordination aspect needs to be well funded and resourced, possibility of someone else taking it over. Wouldn’t like to see it subsumed into something else.”*

*“Best scenario would be to pass it to someone who can run it, who has the money, has the resources. Whoever runs it need to understand the ‘on the ground’ stuff, in school, they need to get out there and see the people.”*

Calls for additional support correlate with comments about the administration heavy and resource dependent nature of the programme. Although it was acknowledged categorically that each year had seen improvements, reflective of feedback from businesses and schools, better coherence was sought for the programme to be highly effective. Many areas of the programme had already been adjusted at the time of this evaluation and further modifications were already planned for 2017. One of these changes was that a new handbook was being developed for schools to ensure greater consistency and clarity.

*“Clarity of roles outlined in the handbook – the whole programme looks and feels more professional; the programme is worthy and we are wanting the Ministry of Education to support it more, even though positioning of programme needs a lot of consideration.”*

*“Flexibility will be outlined in the handbook, but needs to be stressed that it can’t be watered down too much. We need to keep the integrity of design/process/systems.”*

As noted with other participants, the area of assessing the programme came up during interviews with the steering committee members. It was noted that for some businesses, what was being asked of them regarding assessments was just unrealistic. To expect the same response to completing student assessments from perhaps a small owner-operator business with few employees compared to an HR manager very adept with things like performance reviews was seen as impractical. The challenges in assessment practices were openly acknowledged as an area of focus for the future.

*“Evaluation of students needs work – at the moment there are two different rubrics being used to do this; there are challenge with the rating scales (what is engagement etc.), survey monkey trying to rate a number against the skills – quite subjective. Everything needs to be more aligned.”*

*“What was desired and what has actually happened there’s quite a big gap – but there is tension between making it simpler but still useful for young person.”*

An additional area of comment noted by a few of the committee members was the notion of marketing and promoting the programme further. It was seen as being undervalued by some businesses and committee members recognised that unless businesses knew and respected the programme, the third area of focus for the programme would be more difficult to achieve (enable youth to be supported in transitioning from education to employment opportunities).

*“Raise the profile of the programme. COMET’s done a great job but inward looking view, we want to get the council to publicise it more. Want people to hear how awesome it is, which will help with employers coming on board, which will then help students get jobs.”*

Lastly, a major area of discussion came from the proposal of scaling up the programme and taking it nationwide. Although all committee members were in support of this happening, there was much trepidation and worry about how exactly this would be able to happen. The main restrictions appeared to be the resourcing of the programme – both the hard copy resources and the personnel on the ground for schools. Additionally, there was anxiety by the steering committee members about how to keep the integrity of the programme but also allow greater flexibility and greater support for within schools. It was stated that a central agency would be better placed to assist with the programme on a wider scale but an absolute commitment from all that COMET should still be involved at a more strategic level. It was felt that this would ensure commitment to the original aims of the programme and lessen a watering down effect.

Stake holder perceptions of the Licence to Work programme were in alignment both in understanding the need for such a programme to be placed at senior secondary schooling and in support for this particular programme itself (even if some did think it only consisted of a work experience component). Everyone acknowledged the work that had gone into developing the programme and saw benefits in the students who had completed it. Additionally, the stakeholders were also in alignment about their recommendations to further improve the programme. Communication, consistency and clarity, particularly with regards to ‘school to home’ and ‘school to business’ were common themes throughout and will be further addressed in the recommendations section of this report.

### **Evaluation question 3: What needs to be focussed on for sustainability and scaling of the Youth Employability Programme?**

In order to ensure sustainability and to successfully scale up the programme, various elements within the structure of the programme and aspects regarding the resourcing of the programme would benefit from being revisited and revised. Many areas of the programme have been reflected on and modifications either made or planned for 2017; it must be acknowledged that COMET has been extremely responsive to feedback given by schools, and appears to be passionate about continuing this responsiveness. Even though changes have been made and are planned to continue, members of the steering committee in particular, were concerned about future development of the programme and

scaling to a nationwide audience, due to particular issues of resourcing both at an 'on the ground' level through to resourcing within COMET.

The difficulty in handling hard copy resources for schools and having enough resources pertaining to the people on the ground in support of the programme were highlighted during this evaluation. Additionally, it has already been noted that for many the timing of the programme did not work. Schools want the resources earlier and want to begin the programme earlier. They would also like flexibility around how long to run the programme for and for some, greater flexibility to the structure of the programme components. Although this sounds relatively easy enough to hand over to schools, the desire to retain the consistency and keep the integrity of the programme intact (particularly stated by the steering committee members), makes the option of greater flexibility that bit harder to be realised.

*“Design is right, content is good; the structure of running it and the delivery is not the way they want; schools want flexibility to run programme as they need - freedom to do it the way they want to fit student’s needs.”*

As the programme begins to be offered/run in a variety of settings not necessarily just within a school environment, there will be a growing need for more people to ensure oversight of what is happening 'on the ground' with programmes. By having a way of checking in with those running the programmes, there is better chance of retaining some control/quality assurance of how programmes are organised and administered.

*“Big quantum leap of resources, time and commitment to actually do that (scale the programme); keeping the quality and the process of implementation so that it doesn’t fall over once you lose control is the challenge. It’s important that COMET is fully involved in this still.”*

The next aspect which requires greater consideration pertains to resourcing of people involved in supporting the programme, often being the lynch-pin between COMET and schools and at times, also businesses. As it stands during this evaluation, there was one support/administration person to look after/support nine schools running the programme. It was clearly articulated by a number of participants that this was just not enough to support the schools, particularly for those schools running the programme for the first year, and that this one person was at times completely overwhelmed (her own words, that of school personnel and some members of the steering committee). Due to the pressures felt, there was a perceived lack of clarity regarding organisation of the programme, at times mixed messages being relayed and issues regarding an over-abundance of emails. Although much of the communication was well intentioned, the nature of school structures meant that some schools were very confused and a little disillusioned with the processes and structures.

*“Need someone to spearhead the wrap around.”*

In order to be successful in the future, it will be necessary to have more 'on the ground' people available for schools/institutions/facilities to access if and when needed, and to undertake the administration side of running the programme as part of COMET. One member of the steering committee also talked of the need to have a team of people in support of the programme, roving teachers or such, who could assist with schools and businesses when required but could also keep track of how the programme was being implemented. As one principal offered:

*“Build a network of people around the programme.”*

Within the proposed network there would need to be a greater number of businesses that are on board with the programme. Schools and COMET found it challenging to find businesses who were eager to be



part of the Licence to Work programme despite having such well-known business leaders/associations represented on the steering committee. In order to develop the programme further and take it nationwide, there will need to be greater 'buy-in' from the business community, the programme will need to be aggressively promoted so that it becomes well known throughout the business community and stories of how it has changed students' lives should be shared, thus increasing its selling power.

In consideration of sustainability and scaling, closer connection to the businesses involved in the programme will become even more important. As mentioned earlier in this report, business personnel are seeking to engage further with the programme as a whole. They would like to have some form of induction prior to the students turning up at their workplace and they want to know about the aims and processes imbedded in the programme. Greater understanding and clarity for businesses would only be beneficial for sustaining current business interest and possibly attracting others for the future.

To ensure the structural integrity of the programme, it is essential that there is understanding and agreement of assessment components and alignment throughout the programme. Throughout this evaluation, businesses and schools called for greater clarity of expectations and further refinement of the assessment component. Particular discussion centred on who is charged with assessing the student when on work placement. Often it is an owner or CEO who agrees to offer students work experience, but the person who actually works with the student has not had all of the prior information needed to fully understand the programme and therefore the assessment component. For example, there were stories of students being signed off by the person they worked with on the very first day. Therefore, in the name of clarity, consistency and greater communication, it would be timely to address the concerns pertaining to the assessment components within the programme prior to it being further expanded.

A further structural component which requires additional attention is the tracking of students within and on completion of the programme. In order to categorically analyse and discuss the success of the programme, some way of tracking of students needs to be developed offering data on numbers who have obtained employment during and after completing the programme. This data could then be utilised as a marketing tool for new businesses and also as a way to show prospective funders the value of the programme from an end-point success rating.

Sustainability of the programme will need to be a team focus, that team being COMET, businesses, schools, families/whānau and the students. The missing link at present is the lack of engagement by family/whānau. The desire of parents to be more aware of and integrated into the programme structure was discussed in an earlier section of this report. It would be timely prior to further roll-out of the programme that this aspect of the structure of the programme was reconsidered. Greater connection with parents/whānau of the students would ensure clear understanding of what the programme is attempting to achieve. If there is no 'buy-in' from home, then student ownership is not as prevalent. Issues of students showing commitment to complete the programme and to own the process, rather than heavily relying on their teachers may also be addressed by increasing the home connection. The promotion of greater student agency would be beneficial to the student, the parents and the businesses with whom they work, but most of all greater student agency would benefit the teachers. Having staff spending a lot of extra and personal time propping up students through the programme is unsustainable, and without teachers' support of the programme, it will falter.

The suggestion of sustainability and scaling up the programme throughout this evaluation was met with tentative positivity from all cohorts. It has huge potential, the programme is known to be successful but there are various aspects which require further attention in order for this success to continue and to be further developed across the country.

## Additional themes that arose from the discussions

The business personnel who had very positive experiences with the Licence to Work programme were very forthcoming with additional ideas for expanding the programme further. One suggestion arose from discussing challenges of having students participate in work experience one day a week. It was felt that they were having to reintroduce students to their roles each week before they could continue, which was time consuming and limited productivity. It was suggested that a 'block course' approach would be much more successful, where students could experience the role in a fuller capacity, be part of the actual team at work and feel that 'day to day' reality of going to work. Additionally, business personnel could then develop the skills of the student over a longer period and be more specific to their needs, thus creating a stronger bond, hopefully leading to an offer of employment.

*"Wanting to dig deeper, connect with the material and see that they have really got it. A longer block of time or maybe a follow-up programme afterward."*

A spin off from the programme for businesses was that many would now look at their own practices and would look at ways to improve their own places of business, particularly focussing on soft skills development. As one employer stated being part of the programme had -

*"Given me time to reflect on how I can grow my business, be more productive in the workplace, be a better employer and support my employees."*

An additional spin off from participating in this programme was that employers had become more aware of growing in-house leadership potential. The thinking around this arose from having work experience students and seeing the potential in other employees which had not been noticed before. The potential capacity for leadership was seen as their employees mentored and trained the students, looked after them and *"showed them the ropes of being on site"*. If it had not been for this experience working with secondary students in the work place, such leadership potential may have remained untapped.

As noted above the potential for learning new things is not just relevant to the school sector. Throughout this evaluation, there was much discussion regarding the placement of the programme - that there may be places other than schools that might benefit from running the programme and may be better positioned within the community. Other spaces thought appropriate for the programme were marae, adult education and family support groups. With the acknowledgement of generational non-working families being a challenge, it was felt that this programme may be a way to bring families together and support them all into employment opportunities.

## Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation indicate that the Licence to Work programme is successful in achieving two of the areas of focus it was developed for. Firstly, it provides direct links between business, secondary schools/training facilities and youth; this has been noted in the strong connections being built as the programme grows in capacity and identity. Secondly, it enables the recognition and development of explicit employability skills noted as being lacking, particularly from the business sector; this has been strongly seen throughout the evaluation from all participants, from students through to business personnel. All were extremely positive about the explicit teaching of and the building of soft skills with young people, both within the employability and work readiness skill sets. This is a strongly identifiable aspect of the Licence to Work programme and what sets it apart from all other 'work experience' programmes currently seen in secondary schools.

The findings of this evaluation have highlighted the positive impact the Licence to Work programme is having and the significant gains it has caused for some students; particularly noticeable in the student narratives. The findings of this evaluation have also illustrated several areas where refinement can take place in order to ensure sustainability of the programme, particularly as it is prepared to scale up throughout the wider country. These are encapsulated in the Recommendations section of the Executive Summary at the beginning of this report.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Employability skill overview – by Students

**Employability skill overview - Students percentage of the frequency each skill was performed at the end of the programme**

Employability Skill	Not Applicable	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
I have good attitude and positive self-esteem	3.75	0	0	15	38.75	42.5
I have a friendly approach and am polite	3.75	0	0	13.75	35	47.5
I demonstrate enthusiasm to contribute and to continue to develop personally	3.75	0	1.25	13.75	53.75	27.5
I can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)	3.75	0	1.25	10	35	50
I can actively listen and understand the messages and ideas of others	2.5	0	0	11.25	52.5	33.75
I have an understanding of speaking etiquette to adults/employers/customers	2.5	0	2.5	22.5	40	32.5
I can organise and clearly express my own thoughts both verbally and in written form	2.5	0	2.5	21.25	48.75	25
I can ask for help and am able to seek further instructions when unsure	2.5	0	0	18.75	37.5	41.25
I can work confidently in a team to achieve a common goal	3.75	0	1.25	13.75	38.75	42.5
I respect authority and can follow direction	3.75	0	0	7.5	38.75	50
I have an enthusiasm for, and is prepared to learn new information and skills	3.75	0	0	20	42.5	33.75
I can accept advice or feedback and act on that accordingly	3.75	1.25	1.25	11.25	37.5	45
I am honest, reliable and I show “stickability”	3.75	0	0	10	40	46.25
I can be a productive member of a team	5	0	1.25	16.25	41.25	36.25
I have the determination to get things done	2.5	0	0	18.75	40	38.75
I can set goals and work through tasks to completion	2.5	0	1.25	22.5	41.25	32.5
I show initiative when required	3.75	1.25	1.25	13.75	46.25	33.75
I can recognise problems	3.75	0	1.25	20	42.5	32.5
I can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution	3.75	0	3.75	26.25	35	31.25
I can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	3.75	0	5	25	38.75	27.5
I can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action	5	1.25	7.5	25	33.75	27.5
I take on responsibility and can manage own time.	3.75	0	3.75	17.5	36.25	38.75
I am the type of person who will be at work on time, with the appropriate equipment and nutrition to complete a work day.	3.75	0	1.25	20	30	45
I exhibit responsibility and self-control	3.75	0	3.75	12.5	33.75	46.25
I can cope with and participate in changing situations	5	0	2.5	21.25	41.25	30
I have a sense of self-belief and adaptability when faced with a challenge	5	1.25	3.75	17.5	40	32.5
I demonstrate tolerance and positivity	5	1.25	3.75	12.5	38.75	38.75

## Appendix 2: Work readiness skill overview – by Students

*Work readiness skill overview - Students percentage of the frequency each skill was performed at the end of the programme*

Work Readiness Skill	Not Applicable	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
I can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role	12.5	0	0	23.75	41.25	22.5
I use a variety of sources to access employment and training information	13.75	0	2.5	23.75	37.5	22.5
I understand the employee/employer relationship including legalities	13.75	0	0	18.75	28.75	38.75
I can identify and manage expectations of the role	16.25	1.25	1.25	15	32.5	33.75
I understand workplace communication and customer service skills	13.75	0	1.25	13.75	33.75	37.5
I understand accepted “norms” of work situations	13.75	2.5	1.25	15	35	32.5
I can be relied on to complete tasks diligently	12.5	0	0	16.25	31.25	40
I accept advice, supervision and criticism, and shows perseverance	12.5	0	2.5	12.5	26.25	46.25
I can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information	12.5	0	7.5	16.25	35	28.75
I have a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)	13.75	0	5	30	26.25	25
I can assess and manage risks associated with online information	13.75	0	5	23.75	32.5	25
I have support person/people to act as a mentor to help resolve workplace issues if required.	13.75	1.25	3.75	15	35	31.25
I have a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition	13.75	0	5	22.5	27.5	31.25
I have a good level of personal hygiene and presentation	13.75	0	2.5	16.25	27.5	40
I have an awareness of the importance of safety in the workplace	13.75	0	1.25	7.5	28.75	48.75
I am aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	16.25	0	2.5	2.5	22.5	56.25
I understand that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	15	0	0	13.75	26.25	45
I have/had reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport	16.25	1.25	2.5	16.25	21.25	42.5
I have/had an alternative plan for getting to and from work	17.5	0	2.5	12.5	28.75	38.75
I understand that I must have enough money to get to and from work every day	17.5	0	1.25	8.75	26.25	46.25
I understand the process for communicating lateness to an employer	17.5	0	0	10	30	42.5
I have done different kinds of work experience such as paid employment and voluntary work for community activities, sports teams, clubs, etc.	17.5	1.25	1.25	13.75	28.75	37.5
I have competent and numeracy skills	17.5	2.5	1.25	20	28.75	30
I have proven school or further study results	18.75	0	1.25	16.25	36.25	27.5
I show effort and “stickability” in the classroom or other activities	16.25	1.25	1.25	11.25	42.5	27.5

## Appendix 3: Employability skill overview – by Teachers

**Employability skill overview – Teachers percentage of the frequency students were learning/displaying skill at the end of the programme**

Employability Skill	Not Applicable	Not Interested	Engaged	Developing	Capable	Excelling
A good attitude and positive self-esteem	0.0	2.7	1.8	25.7	41.6	28.3
A friendly approach and is polite	0.0	0.0	3.5	7.1	49.6	39.8
Is enthusiastic to contribute and to continue to develop personally	0.9	1.8	4.4	26.5	32.7	33.6
Can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)	0.0	0.9	2.7	23.9	34.5	38.1
Actively listens and understand the messages and ideas of others	0.9	2.7	8.8	26.5	35.4	25.7
An understanding of speaking etiquette to adults/employers/customers	1.8	2.7	7.1	26.5	34.5	27.4
Can organise and clearly express their own thoughts both verbally and in written form	0.0	3.5	8.8	37.2	32.7	17.7
Can ask for help and is able to seek further instructions when unsure	0.0	2.7	12.4	23.9	34.5	26.5
Can work confidently in a team to achieve a common goal	0.9	0.9	6.2	22.1	40.7	29.2
Respects authority and can follow direction	0.9	1.8	0.9	18.6	38.1	39.8
Has an enthusiasm for, and is prepared to learn new information and skills	0.0	0.9	6.2	30.1	29.2	33.6
Accepts advice or feedback and acts on that accordingly	0.0	0.9	6.2	33.6	28.3	31.0
Is honest, reliable and shows "stickability"	0.0	1.8	5.3	20.4	37.2	35.4
Can be a productive member of a team	0.0	0.9	2.7	22.1	42.5	31.9
Has the determination to get things done	0.0	3.5	5.3	35.4	23.0	32.7
Can set goals and work through tasks to completion	0.9	2.7	5.3	33.6	23.9	32.7
Shows initiative when required	0.9	1.8	8.0	20.4	36.3	32.7
Can recognise problems	0.9	0.9	8.0	28.3	35.4	26.5
Can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution	0.9	1.8	11.5	32.7	32.7	20.4
Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	1.8	3.5	9.7	41.6	23.9	19.5
Can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action	1.8	6.2	7.1	42.5	18.6	23.9
Can take on responsibility and can manage their own time.	0.0	3.5	9.7	32.7	25.7	28.3
Is the type of person who will be at work on time, with the appropriate equipment and nutrition to complete a work day	0.9	2.7	5.3	26.5	30.1	34.5
Exhibits responsibility and self-control	0.0	3.5	4.4	31.0	25.7	35.4
Can cope with and participate in changing situations	0.9	1.8	8.0	38.1	22.1	29.2
Has a sense of self-belief and adaptability when faced with a challenge	0.9	1.8	8.0	38.9	25.7	24.8
Demonstrates tolerance and positivity	1.8	2.7	1.8	34.5	30.1	29.2

## Appendix 4: Work readiness skill overview – by Teachers

*Work readiness skill overview – Teachers percentage of the frequency students were learning/displaying skill at the end of the programme*

Rating	Not Applicable	Not Interested	Engaged	Developing	Capable	Excelling
Can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role	8.0	1.8	6.2	31.0	26.5	25.7
Uses a variety of sources to access employment and training information	8.8	0.9	9.7	27.4	32.7	19.5
Understands the employee/employer relationship including legalities	8.0	0.9	5.3	23.0	38.1	22.1
Can identify and manage expectations of the role	8.8	1.8	4.4	24.8	28.3	30.1
Understands workplace communication and customer service skills	8.8	1.8	4.4	22.1	29.2	31.9
Understands accepted “norms” of work situations	8.8	1.8	2.7	21.2	32.7	31.0
Can be relied on to complete tasks diligently	8.0	1.8	4.4	19.5	29.2	36.3
Accepts advice, supervision and criticism, and shows perseverance	8.0	2.7	2.7	23.0	28.3	34.5
Can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information	7.1	0.9	1.8	28.3	37.2	22.1
Has a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)	7.1	0.0	0.9	31.9	32.7	24.8
Can assess and manage risks associated with online information	11.5	0.0	1.8	27.4	37.2	19.5
Has support person/people to act as a mentor to help resolve workplace issues if required.	9.7	0.9	5.3	25.7	33.6	23.9
Has a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition	8.0	0.9	3.5	16.8	32.7	37.2
Has a good level of personal hygiene and presentation	8.0	0.0	0.9	4.4	41.6	44.2
Has an awareness of the importance of safety in the workplace	9.7	0.0	0.9	10.6	47.8	30.1
Is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	8.8	0.0	0.0	10.6	42.5	37.2
Understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	8.8	0.0	0.0	11.5	40.7	38.1
Has reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport	8.8	0.0	4.4	28.3	35.4	21.2
Has an alternative plan for getting to and from work	8.8	0.0	5.3	27.4	37.2	20.4
Understands that you must have enough money to get to and from work every day	8.8	0.0	1.8	23.9	31.0	32.7
Understands the process for communicating lateness to an employer	8.0	2.7	5.3	20.4	26.5	36.3
Have done different kinds of work experience such as paid employment and voluntary work for community activities, sports teams, clubs, etc.	8.0	0.9	6.2	23.9	26.5	32.7
Has competent and numeracy skills	6.2	0.9	6.2	29.2	31.0	23.9
Has proven school or further study results	6.2	0.9	5.3	28.3	32.7	23.9
Proof of effort and “stickability” in the classroom or other activities	6.2	3.5	6.2	25.7	21.2	34.5

## Appendix 5: Employability skill overview – by Business personnel

***Employability skill overview – Business personnel percentage of the frequency students performed each skill at the end of the programme***

Employability Skill	Not Applicable	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
A good attitude and positive self-esteem	1.9	0.0	0.0	11.1	35.2	51.9
A friendly approach and is polite	1.9	0.0	0.0	13.0	31.5	53.7
Is enthusiastic to contribute and to continue to develop personally	1.9	0.0	0.0	16.7	38.9	42.6
Can work effectively and respectfully with people from different backgrounds (age, social, ethnic, religious etc)	3.7	0.0	0.0	16.7	31.5	48.1
Actively listens and understand the messages and ideas of others	3.7	0.0	1.9	25.9	27.8	40.7
An understanding of speaking etiquette to adults/employers/customers	1.9	0.0	0.0	16.7	38.9	42.6
Can organise and clearly express their own thoughts both verbally and in written form	5.6	0.0	0.0	16.7	38.9	38.9
Can ask for help and is able to seek further instructions when unsure	1.9	0.0	0.0	18.5	35.2	44.4
Can work confidently in a team to achieve a common goal	5.6	0.0	0.0	13.0	33.3	48.1
Respects authority and can follow direction	1.9	0.0	3.7	7.4	27.8	59.3
Has an enthusiasm for, and is prepared to learn new information and skills	5.6	1.9	0.0	16.7	33.3	42.6
Accepts advice or feedback and acts on that accordingly	1.9	1.9	3.7	11.1	40.7	40.7
Is honest, reliable and shows “stickability”	7.4	1.9	3.7	9.3	27.8	50.0
Can be a productive member of a team	7.4	0.0	5.6	11.1	29.6	46.3
Has the determination to get things done	5.6	0.0	3.7	20.4	31.5	38.9
Can set goals and work through tasks to completion	7.4	1.9	1.9	18.5	33.3	37.0
Shows initiative when required	3.7	1.9	1.9	18.5	33.3	40.7
Can recognise problems	9.3	0.0	5.6	16.7	44.4	24.1
Can demonstrate reasoning and creative thinking to find a solution	16.7	0.0	5.6	24.1	31.5	22.2
Can review and assess different solutions to come to a decision	20.4	3.7	7.4	22.2	24.1	22.2
Can plan and organise to turn a decision in to action	22.2	1.9	0.0	24.1	31.5	20.4
Can take on responsibility and can manage their own time.	14.8	1.9	3.7	14.8	33.3	31.5
Is the type of person who will be at work on time, with the appropriate equipment and nutrition to complete a work day	13.0	0.0	3.7	16.7	33.3	33.3
Exhibits responsibility and self-control	11.1	0.0	0.0	16.7	37.0	35.2
Can cope with and participate in changing situations	16.7	0.0	0.0	20.4	31.5	31.5
Has a sense of self-belief and adaptability when faced with a challenge	14.8	0.0	0.0	22.2	33.3	29.6
Demonstrates tolerance and positivity	16.7	0.0	0.0	18.5	31.5	33.3



## Appendix 6: Work readiness skill overview – by Business personnel

*Work readiness skill overview – Business personnel percentage of the frequency students displayed each skill at the end of the programme*

Rating	Not Applicable	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
Can identify work options and assess own suitability for different role	38.9	0.0	0.0	16.7	18.5	25.9
Uses a variety of sources to access employment and training information	57.4	3.7	1.9	5.6	13.0	18.5
Understands the employee/employer relationship including legalities	37.0	0.0	0.0	18.5	14.8	29.6
Can identify and manage expectations of the role	31.5	0.0	0.0	13.0	25.9	29.6
Understands workplace communication and customer service skills	33.3	0.0	0.0	9.3	22.2	35.2
Understands accepted “norms” of work situations	29.6	0.0	0.0	13.0	20.4	37.0
Can be relied on to complete tasks diligently	27.8	0.0	1.9	11.1	25.9	33.3
Accepts advice, supervision and criticism, and shows perseverance	25.9	0.0	0.0	7.4	27.8	38.9
Can use computer/digital devices to access, produce and present information	51.9	0.0	1.9	3.7	16.7	25.9
Has a range of basic IT skills (word processing, spreadsheets and Internet/email)	50.0	1.9	0.0	1.9	16.7	29.6
Can assess and manage risks associated with online information	64.8	0.0	0.0	1.9	11.1	22.2
Has support person/people to act as a mentor to help resolve workplace issues if required.	48.1	0.0	0.0	5.6	14.8	31.5
Has a reasonable level of personal fitness and understands the importance of good health, including nutrition	35.2	0.0	0.0	7.4	20.4	37.0
Has a good level of personal hygiene and presentation	27.8	0.0	0.0	1.9	14.8	55.6
Has an awareness of the importance of safety in the workplace	27.8	0.0	0.0	7.4	18.5	46.3
Is aware of and willing to undergo drug and alcohol test as required	64.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	29.6
Understands that convictions and ongoing police intervention will affect employability	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.4	25.9
Has reliable transport to get to work, e.g. has a driver licence and a car or easy access to public transport	46.3	0.0	1.9	1.9	14.8	35.2
Has an alternative plan for getting to and from work	46.3	0.0	1.9	1.9	9.3	40.7
Understands that you must have enough money to get to and from work every day	57.4	0.0	1.9	3.7	7.4	29.6
Understands the process for communicating lateness to an employer	29.6	0.0	1.9	5.6	13.0	50.0
Have done different kinds of work experience such as paid employment and voluntary work for community activities, sports teams, clubs, etc.	50.0	0.0	0.0	7.4	13.0	29.6
Has competent and numeracy skills	48.1	0.0	0.0	3.7	14.8	33.3
Has proven school or further study results	59.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0	27.8
Proof of effort and “stickability” in the classroom or other activities	57.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.4	35.2

## Narratives

### 2015 students

#### Student Narrative (two students told their stories together)

Seti and Nelson\* are Year 13 students at a large secondary school in South Auckland, who completed the COMET Youth Training Programme 'Licence to Work' in 2015. The story below is taken from an interview with the boys as they completed their final year at school. These are their experiences from their own words.

We were in Year 12 when we did this programme; it was part of our Trades pathway last year (2015). It taught us heaps, like different skills, how to approach the boss/manager and how to talk to them, all about safety on work sites, confidence, having a good attitude, making eye contact, creating CVs ... and we got to go out on work placement! The theory part of the programme was a bit hard coz we didn't have any of our own understanding before we did the work placement but after, it all made sense. Our teachers made it real, they gave us information then we had discussions. They taught us about commitment, working hard, team work – we even had rugby leaders stop by to inspire us! It helped us get to know new people, heaps of different people in different places – good networking; it opened our eyes!

We had to step out of our comfort zone, especially for the work placement. It was scary coz everyone looked at you. We just had to get into it, work as a team but also try and manage by yourself, pick it up yourself. Some workers would help because we were new from school, but some were focussed on their work and would go and do their own stuff. Everyone works fast on the job and we didn't want to muck up. The work placement showed us how it actually is on a work site – the real world, the outside world, and that we won't always have someone to come and help us. So, this programme really helped us go onto work sites, talk to bosses. It helped at school too – our time management got better, started coming to school early to get stuff done.

After doing the Licence to Work programme I (Seti) got an apprenticeship for when I finish school! I couldn't have done it before doing this programme. I have stepped out this year to become a role model for others, I can stand up in front of audiences and talk, giving them advice, share the knowledge and commitment/team work from the programme with others. I encourage them – you have a dream, go get it! We were taught it is not all about us, we have get to action and build teamwork. I (Nelson) say to other students - do not miss the opportunity of coming onto the programme. Take the opportunity while it's there, cause these opportunities don't last long, they come and go. I was really shy, didn't really speak up, and didn't like doing speeches. After I did this programme, I stepped out of my comfort zone and did a speech in front of Mayor Len Brown ... just because of doing this programme. I tell people to take this pathway and go through this programme coz going out to the outside world won't be as hard. You won't learn this stuff anywhere else – we would be different people if we hadn't done the programme!

Seti: Now, I want to improve what I aim to be in the future. I was going to be a project manager, I know I have to start from the bottom, get to know what's going on. But since doing the programme I want to run my own business! All the skills they have taught me on this programme, I can pass on to the employees who work with me when I own my business.

Nelson: Yeah, it's given me a lot more confidence – now I want to be more than just be a plumber, but I want to own my own business. This programme has taught me leadership, how to step up and be a leader for everyone and how to work together. I enjoyed everything about it – it was a real good experience that programme! \* Name has been changed

## 2016 students

### Student Narrative (1)

Fassi\* was a Year 12 student at a large secondary school in South Auckland. She was part of the COMET Youth Training Programme 'Licence to Work', which was being run for the second time at this school. Sir Edmond Hillary Collegiate was one of the first schools to integrate the programme into their curriculum. The story below is taken from an interview with Fassi as she was nearing completion of the programme. These are her experiences from her own words.

The best part of this programme was just being able to work, to get the feeling of working. This programme taught us ... actually, it started with ourselves really. We had to improve within ourselves, then we were able to learn so much from the classwork. The book work, team work, leadership skills ... we learnt all this in class before we went out into the work field. Then we could connect all the dots and all work together to get everything done.

In school, we would go over the workbook once a week and go through the whole booklet together. We needed to learn the skills we would need before going out into the work field. Being able to go out and get the confidence to work, knowing that this was going to help me in the end (get a job) was really motivating. I felt the teachers really helped us get ready. Whaia knew how to get along with us, she was really good. She knew when we are getting bored and gave us fun things to do; she was really cool! Working through the booklet, talking to everyone, working together as a team, talking about that stuff made it interesting.

My parents and family supported me, they were 100% behind me doing this programme. Mum was so happy for me. She didn't think I would get any experience, that I would get the chance to get work experience through my school work. The first time I told my parents I was going to work in the library, my mum was surprised I was going to be actually working, so I had to tell her it was for school. She said good luck, good luck on your first day. She made me so nervous!

When my teacher first told me I'd be working there, I was like, oh no ... boring! But, I got to know them and be part of the work there and know how their system works. Now I really enjoy it. I went there every Monday and I looked forward to going there to work. Working at the Otara Library was a cool experience. It taught me a lot – how to look for books in the library, I had to shelve them, know which section they were in.

I was so scared on my first day coz I didn't know what to do. But I was shown stuff by the people that worked there and they were really nice, ... but when I got to do it by myself, it was really hard. I had to read all the numbers and put the books in order but I got the hang of it. I really enjoy doing it now.

This Licence to Work programme has taught me communication skills – they have taught us to go up to customers and see if they need help. I actually had a chance to practise this; it was the first time I remembered where the books were - one customer came up to me and asked "Do you know where the books on Rotorua are?" And I could say "Yes – I've just finished shelving those books." So I helped her and she looked really relieved (I think she was studying and she needed the books for her exams). I felt so helpful that I was actually helping someone! I wouldn't have been able to do that before this programme – I'm not a person who could actually go up to someone, I'm like, really shy! I'm a really shy person! This programme has helped me a lot with this actually. It has given me confidence so that I could go out to the community and help; being able to work as a team with my team mates so that we could all get our work done.

The programme has helped in the rest of my school work too – helped me to be more motivated in getting my work finished. It's given me my confidence. The experience of going out and working during school, it's going to hopefully help me get a job – I will have the skills that they've taught me, like going to work, being on time for work and never be late.

Working in the library has just been amazing; work placement has been the best bit of the programme – just being able to work, to get the feeling of working in the library has been the best. I'm going to be helping out with the holiday programme even though we're not assigned there, I volunteered to do that. I just want to help out with the kids that go there, even though I don't get paid for it, I just wanted to volunteer. I'm just so proud of myself that now I can go up to people and talk to them!

The worst part of the Licence to Work programme? There's never been a worst part – there's nothing about the programme I didn't like! Even though we don't get credits for NCEA, I don't think it needs credits for this programme. It's not like school where we have to over think everything ... have to get credits for this and credits for that! The programme gives us a bit of release and time to just not think of school and all the subjects and credits we have to gain.

Definitely run the programme again! Give students the opportunity to go out and experience the work place and experience what we've experienced. Everyone would love it! It takes you to the highest peaks you've ever known, then back down ... to school! Working through the workbooks, and the work experience and the community work, I reckon it's all worth it. I wouldn't change anything about it – I've told my little sisters that they have to take it. I want them to go through the experience I've gone through. I've been encouraging my little ones to go through the pathway I've gone through ... just the good ones!

*\* Name has been changed*

## **Student Narrative (2) (two students told their stories together)**

Jaz and Mary\* are Year 12 students at a secondary school just south of central Auckland, who were part of the COMET Youth Training Programme 'Licence to Work' in 2016. The story below is taken from an interview with the girls as they neared completion of the programme. These are their experiences from their own words.

When we first heard about this programme, we thought that it sounded boring, like doing a driving licence, but it really wasn't like that. We learnt about time management, what we need to have in the big world, and it prepared us for working experience. It made us understand how work is in reality, the expectations. This was really good to learn - we knew some idea of it but we didn't have a full understanding of it.

Our teachers used slideshows, scenarios and questions to get us thinking. They helped put ourselves in that situation, show us real life; they always gave us quotes about life to motivate us. They helped make the workbook relate to ourselves and they got other people to come in and explain to us about other companies. It made us realise that it is will be a challenge keeping up with what is expected in the real world and that I have to pick up my act.

Doing this programme helped in other parts of school too, especially with my time management. I got to school earlier, paid more attention to when assessments were due and made sure to hand it in before, not leave it to the last minute. We reckon our people skills got way better – we had the confidence to mingle with others.

The work experience was really good, it looks good when going for a job, can be seen as sort of qualification. The Licence to Work programme will help us get a job coz we know the expectations, the work place stuff, what to do and what not to do in the workplace, you know ... doing the work; not rocking up whenever you want!

We have been telling all the others to do the programme too; it's really good!

*"This programme has moulded me into a whole different person. It's made me more thoughtful about myself – I have to sit and think, and take it into myself. It's just a real good programme."*  
(Mary)

*\* Names have been changed*

## 2016 Business

### Business 1

This business is located in central Auckland, is a very large and busy place of work. The site contains a vast array of departments. The person interviewed was the manager for one department and had been responsible for working with the students on work experience. The following is a discussion of what led her to take the students into the work place and her thoughts on the Licence to Work programme.

When a relation of mine heard that COMET was looking for employers to offer work experience to youth, I was really interested. I decided that I wanted to help out. I was offered the opportunity to have work experience when I was young so helping youth was important to me. I just thought it would be a neat thing to do - to give that opportunity to someone else.

I believe this type of programme (the Licence to Work programme) is essential for the young people of today. The work experience allows them to gain insight into that particular work place/employer/industry that they might be interested in pursuing. They get to see the reality, which may in fact be different to their perceptions, for one example, work is full of monotonous routines. A programme like this teaches students about the structure and process of a working environment, how it all comes together. Students are usually looking outward, this gives them the opportunity to look in, to see the intricacies of how it all works.

As well as insight into the work place, work experience teaches them personal boundaries, more self-discipline and awareness of relating to others. In my department, the student had to learn to take on what someone was teaching her but we worked with her as we would a colleague, our staff considered her a temporary contractor rather than a student – we never belittled her. This way she understood that there was a lot more expected of her and that developed greater self-responsibility.

For my department, it was a wonderful thing to have a student working with us. We were really proud of her – knowing a student had shown they could go to work, be on time, that they had been making the effort, been able to be part of a team, it was really encouraging for her too I think.

Being part of the programme has definitely opened avenues to use my role in facilitating, so it has been beneficial for me too on a personal level. My goal for next year is to take on another student so I can continue to develop as a manager. I think it has helped the people I work with too – we sometimes forget youthful exuberance, candour, the fun factor, and having the student has brought this back into our department. Although we work hard and it is serious work, we were reminded that a little bit of fun/positivity can go a long way. The students are young, fresh and have a different way of looking at the world and this can be infectious! Although there were times when having the student with us created a little more work for us - time to make sure things were there for her to do, having someone showing her things this really wasn't a big issue - she added value to our department if anything! The Licence to Work programme has built the foundation skills needed to succeed in the work place, getting real day-to-day experience, seeing real people-problems, the realities of employment - who's involved/what's involved. This is so important and allows them to see connections to people actually doing the job.

I would highly endorse the Licence to Work programme – I sing its praises whenever I can. I tell other departments to do it! The more that young people have the opportunity to some real-life experience, the better – they get to determine where their career might lead to, who they are as individuals, gives them a glimpse into the real work world. There is nothing better than practical experience!

## **Business 2**

This business is a very well known, centrally located, hospitality business in Auckland CBD. It contains many different departments, is large in scale both in size of premises and in the amount of people who work there. It is known to be a very busy place to work. The person interviewed was the manager for one of the large departments and had been responsible for organising and working with the students who are placed there on work experience. The following is a discussion of what lead her to take the students into the work place and her thoughts on the Licence to Work programme.

I believe the benefits of the Licence to Work programme are obviously getting them ready for work – it's a big push for 16/17 year olds but it's also about giving the students the opportunity to open their eyes to what they can do. It's not just leave school and sit, there's heaps of options particularly in this industry. A taste of a job is quite a nice opportunity and it gets them keen on things they don't know about. I think it is a massive benefit for kids who may not get such a break in their lives.

This is our second year taking students from the Licence to Work programme and we are even seeing students returning – they are really keen. The best bit is just seeing the growth over their time with us. They are so excited and so positive, even though he is at the bottom of the barrel in terms of skill level, that positivity is infectious! He is always keen; sometimes a little bit more proactivity would be good but I think that only comes with age and experience. He's always up for learning and everything is always like "wow"! I think we lose that perspective after being in the business so long and it's just great to have that freshness, it's a fresh pair of eyes, so I love watching them develop. There is always that hope that maybe he might go, "yeah I want to do this when I leave school!"

I make it my business to touch base with him and see how he's getting on. I believe it is our role to be there for them; we need to motivate them, show them, and help them. One of the hardest things is blurring that line between school and work. Initially our students didn't realise they still needed to come in, even though it was officially school holidays; we need to make sure we are all on the same page. School holidays don't mean anything to us. So, everyone needs to be involved, we can't just bring the kids in and then drop them over there and say yup, great. The kids need someone hands on, they need guidance, need to be able to approach people if they have questions and if you're not going to be welcoming, they're not going to come near you and it's going to be a complete waste of time. Everyone needs to join together and make it work; both parties need to be on board.

I definitely encourage other departments and other institutions to work with students, I tell them to get involved. It's remembering it is all for the kids; it's not about the businesses, we can hire anyone we choose at any time, so it's not for us, it's for them. If we want to increase the business, encourage people back into the business, programmes like this may just help us. So it is a win-win for everyone! I have definitely enjoyed having him here and working with him! Bring on our next student!

### **Business 3**

This company is very well known, operates throughout Auckland and contains many different departments. The scale of the home premises is very large and there is a large amount of personnel working there. It is known to be a place that supports work experience. The person interviewed was the HR manager and had been responsible for organising and placing the work experience students within departments. The following is a discussion of what lead her to take the students into the work place and her thoughts on the Licence to Work programme.

As an employer, we are extremely committed to creating some diversity in our workforce, our employment brand, doing what we can to do the right thing externally and internally. We joined the Auckland youth employer pledge which supports that too. One of the big things for us is having the school work with us. We met with teacher and students, got the feeling of enthusiasm, that they were keen to work and that the programme was well run. It seemed like a good fit for us.

I believe the students bring a different flavour to our business, youth ideas. It also gives our staff opportunities to be in supervisory roles where they may normally not be able to be given this chance. By having the students experience what we do, it increases awareness of us as a company and also of our brand. So, it can be reciprocal.

The students get some knowledge of us as a company, more than just what is known from the outside. They get to experience a workplace and this may help them decide on what they want to do, their career choices. We immerse them in a work environment, they get a true understanding what it's like. We can offer diversity in what they experience, the different roles and different departments. We ensure they get input from their supervisors too. We believe we can impact on student's future - helps them make a well informed, right decision for their career choices, whatever that might be.

The Licence to Work programme has really useful concepts, the soft skills are up front. We know this is a clearly identified gap between school and employment. The community work great part of the programme is a really nice element, it is about giving back. This makes it different to other programmes out there.

We would certainly endorse the Licence to Work programme, it has been great for our company! Programmes like this are needed out there – University is not for everyone. It is great that schools are looking at alternatives for students; pushing everyone in the same direction is not the idea. Programmes like this help society too, for companies to do some social good and adds to the positivity of young people – there are some sad perspectives of youth out there and this programme helps to turn that around. Definitely recommend it to others.



#### **Business 4**

This business is extremely well known, is large in scale and employs a vast array of personnel to work in their different departments. This business has a very established reputation and is known to be of high quality. The person interviewed was the HR manager and had been responsible for organising and placing the work experience students within departments throughout this business. The following is a discussion of what lead her to take the students into the work place and her thoughts on the Licence to Work programme.

This was the first time I had dealt with the Licence to Work programme and I saw it as a great way to connect with the schools. It was also a good chance to promote hospitality as a career path, for students to see possibilities within the hospitality industry. Additional to this, I thought it would be a good chance to give youth an opportunity. There is an image out there of student's known/perceived behaviours and sometimes this gives them a bad reputation. I thought the Licence to Work programme was a way to give them a chance and let them prove themselves in society.

Due to the nature of our business and the customers that the students would be interacting with, we ensured they were well prepared, that they understood the business and how to conduct themselves, what general good conduct meant to us. They had to know what was expected of them. For some it was quite a reality check, learning that the expectations are so different to school and home. A couple were really fantastic, very committed and these are the ones we offer opportunities to be employed into part time/casual work within the business. They develop a level of commitment to industry and see how they can be supported by school and employers.

So I see the Licence to Work programme as offering the opportunity for students to look into a career path and see if it's really what they want, to see all the bells and whistles, to have some fun, but also experience that in our business, its lots of work too. It is a good programme to develop the foundation skills for any career path. It's a good opportunity for our business to be helpful, give the young people an opportunity – they have got to get experience somehow, and this can be a foot in door.

## **Business 5**

This business is a very well known, centrally located, hospitality business in Auckland CBD. It contains many different departments, is large in scale both in size of premises and in the amount of people who work there. This department in particular, is known to be a very busy place to work and has a lot of contact with the general public. The person interviewed was the manager of one of the 'front of house' departments and had been responsible for organising and working with the student who was placed there on work experience. The following is a discussion of what lead him to take the student into his department and his thoughts on the Licence to Work programme.

I believe if kids are exposed to the industry early, then they can see what it is actually like before maybe going into a tertiary component and realising oh, it's not for me. So, this gives them a sample to begin with. I have noticed that the work experience in this programme is a longer duration than some which are just one day or two and the student is bounced around departments. The Licence to Work programmes gives a more realistic view of what the industry is like.

I see this as our opportunity as a business to step up and help our community. As a business of this scale, we should be stepping up in all departments. I see it as my duty – not just for the business but for the community as well. I wanted my student to see this as a good opportunity and that there is room to move around the departments here. But people need to put the time and effort in for the students; you have to remember that the kids are nervous as anything! Being there for my student didn't impact on my role at all; I see the potential of educating and mentoring someone definitely; he's a humble kid. I hope to meet others like him. I see him as a valued part of the team now, he comes in and he's diligent, does his job and he does it well. It's quite rewarding to see him excited to come to work. Feels like I've contributed somehow but mostly because I want to give him the opportunity to be able to step up when he leaves school. The younger generation need mentors in their lives – a lot of them don't have this, parents are busy working, so it can be hard for them to spend quality time mentoring their kids particularly when they are getting toward the end of their schooling. This is when they need opportunities most. I've offered my student a casual contract, working around his school schedule. There's a job for him if he wants it over summer; he's got a good head on his shoulders. I'm happy to get involved where I can, I want to support him wherever I can. He's a great kid who has worked hard with a good attitude!

I would definitely encourage other companies to take on this programme – definitely see value in it. When I'm recruiting, I look for someone who is passionate to work, not just in the industry, but in any job. Some kids are quiet and just need the opportunity to blossom. The Licence to Work programme gives them that opportunity.