

Corporate Initiative – Employers’ Fairs 2014



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Introduction

The British Council’s Services for International Education Marketing (SIEM) Pakistan has been successfully running the Employers’ Fair since 2012 with an aim to better connect Pakistani employers and international offices at UK universities. This provides opportunities for Pakistani employers to establish long term links with the UK sector in order to facilitate employment opportunities for returning graduates.

Employability remains a major concern for international students from Pakistan. UK institutes have one of the highest numbers of Pakistani students enrolled with them; though the institutes face the challenge of facilitating employment opportunities for students post-graduation under the current visa policies.

The fairs take place alternatively in the UK and Pakistan, providing opportunities to both fresh graduates and experienced alumni of UK institutions to explore possible employment opportunities; the fairs have resulted in successful job placements.

Objective

This initiative was held in collaboration with UKTI and had four objectives as drawn out by the British Council:

1. Pakistani companies to create a presence in the UK and vice versa
2. Companies to interact and possibly employ potential Pakistani candidates from UK institutions
3. Build an alliance between recruitment departments of the companies and partner UK institutions
4. For UK and partner organisations to interact and build long term relationships

The Employers’ Fairs serve as an interface for UK institutes to connect with Pakistani employers and corporate community. The platform provides an opportunity for them to liaise, establish and sustain long term relationships with businesses in Pakistan to develop linkages that are mutually beneficial.

Corporate Initiative - Employers’ Fairs 2014

The delegation for 2014 included Pakistani organisations from various sectors; they participated in the employers’ fair held at three UK institutions.

The host institutes for the fair were:

- [Brunel University](#)
- [The University of Manchester](#)
- [University of Warwick](#).

The participating UK institutions had a significant enrolment of Pakistani students, studying in various programs. Delegates from local companies were taken to the campuses, where they interacted with Pakistani students and provided them with a better understanding of job requirements and market in Pakistan.

The following Pakistani organisations participated in the initiative in 2014:

- [Mitchells](#)
- [SEED](#)
- [United Energy Limited Pakistan](#)
- [Allied Bank Limited](#)
- [Engro Corp](#)
- [Lucky Cement](#)
- [Sidat Hyder Morshed Associates Pvt Ltd](#)
- [Abacus Consultancy](#)
- [Century Publications Pvt Ltd](#)

Media Partner: [Express Tribune](#)

The fairs enabled interaction between students and employers, on-spot recruitment and interviews. This also facilitated increased awareness amongst the students and answered pertinent questions on employability in Pakistan.

Additionally, information sessions for career advisors and international offices were held where the participating corporate partners shared information about their organisation and hiring processes. These sessions have always received positive feedback and have enabled student advisors to connect fresh graduates with Pakistani companies encouraging them to consider Pakistan as an option to explore for job prospects once they have completed their education.

Social entrepreneurship

At each host institute, a guest lecture on ‘Social Entrepreneurship’ was delivered by Faraz Khan, CEO of SEED Ventures. The session was free of charge for all students or faculty to attend and was well received.

Networking events

A series of high profile networking events were organised for the delegates by British Council.

A networking dinner was held at Pakistan High Commission in London which was attended by Pakistan High Commissioner for UK, Mr Wajid Shamsul Hasan, colleagues from the UKTI and members of the Pakistani business community in the UK.

“There are more than 10, 000 Pakistani students studying in the UK currently. This large crop of talented and accomplished youth will be anxious to join their working lives and put their first foot on the ladder of their professional life. It is extremely important for my government to ensure that the youth of Pakistan are encouraged into jobs and given opportunities to join the economic cycle of Pakistan.”

Participating corporate partners were also invited to attend an **INSPIRE Conference** held at Leicester University. INSPIRE is a British Council funded project that aims to significantly strengthen academic and research partnerships between UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and HEIs in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan.



Delegates with the British Council Education team at University of Leicester.

Relevance to recruitment needs

Due to the variety of different sectors that participated at the fair, we found that the objectives were varied. Some employers attended the fair with very specific requirements, for instance, certain technical skills. On the other hand, some had diverse requirements, where they wanted to recruit a variety of concentrations and degrees. In view of these needs, companies were satisfied with the variety of students attending the fair.

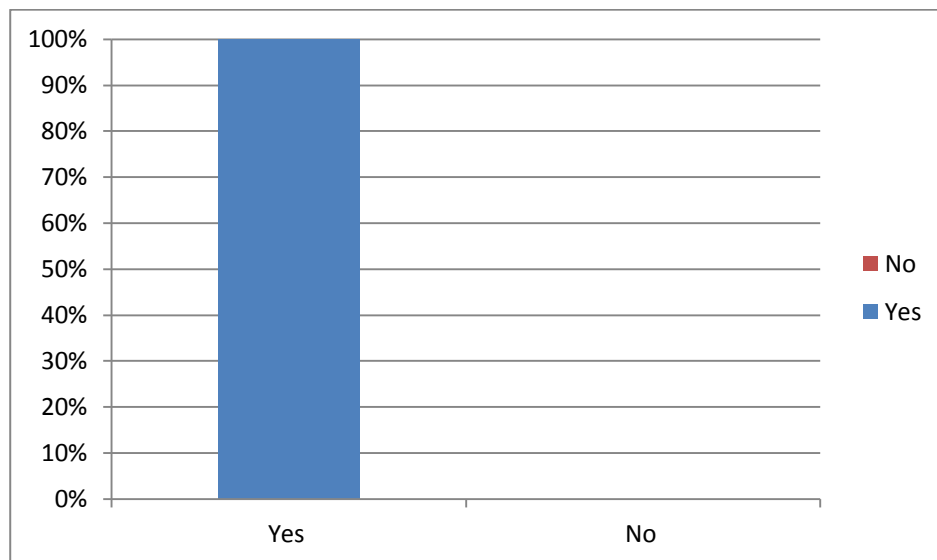
Based on the positive feedback received and success of Corporate Initiative, British Council is launching a new project called the **Industrial Visit** which focuses on sector specific visits to UK institutes. In 2015 a sector specific delegation will be accompanied to the UK to establish linkages with institutes offering specialisation in certain areas. This initiative will focus on developing linkages with UK institutes for employee development and training.

Quantitative feedback

Employer response forms were distributed among the delegation to understand how the initiative was perceived. We asked the employers to rank their experience of working with the British Council, their interaction with student candidates at the fair and if they would like to continue this partnership with the British Council.

As per the survey results:

Would you like to sustain the partnership with British Council?



Mitchell’s Fruit Farms participants found this experience to be very useful:

“Lovely experience of be part of this initiative and really enjoyed learning especially the educational style of reputed British universities and how effectively they inculcate thinking ability and analytical approach.”

The entire delegation responded positively.

Recommendations and comments

Sustainability and continuous feedback to the employers as well as universities is essential in terms of relevant talent requirements, this would enable the universities to be more prepared in terms of specific needs. Overall, a great effort and was heartening to experience similar professionalism, engagement, and diligence level of the British Council team, even though it was a new team. Was a pleasure to partner again.

- *Fatima Asad-Said, Abacus Consulting*

It was a pleasure working with the British Council Education UK team. On a personal level, it was very inspiring for me to see them put in all the effort in bringing a social issue, which is very dear to me, to such a platform. Hoping to work with you in the future on similar endeavours.

- *Zeeshan Gul, Sidat Hyder Morshed Associates*

It is suggested to take more companies on board so it creates a lot of opportunities for students and employers.

- *Kamran Ahmed, Century Publication Pvt Ltd*

This fair shall be conducted when the students are fairly near their graduation not when they are 6 months away. That will allow us better to get hold of the winning talent as they will be available back home on short notice.

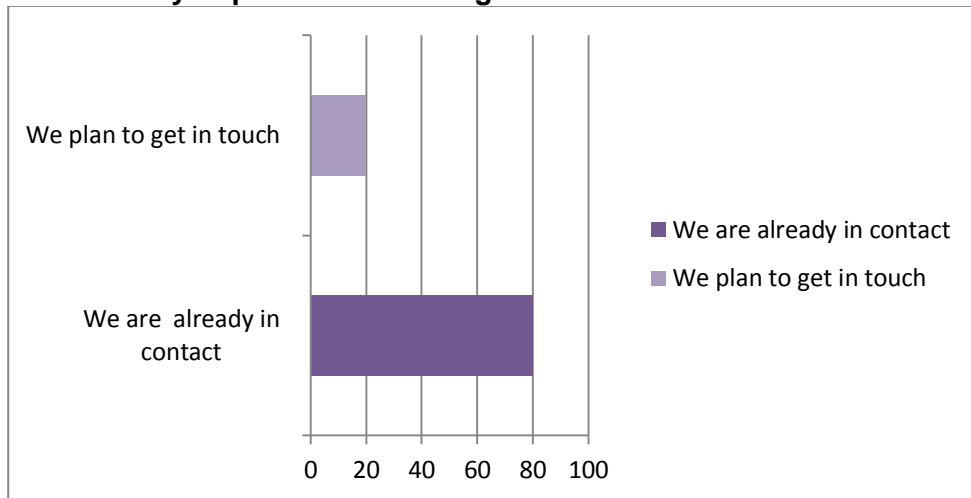
- *Alina Shoaib, Abacus Consulting*

Phase II survey – impact assessment

The phase II survey was carried out in July 2014 to gauge the impact of the Corporate Initiative on employability of UK graduates in the local market.

As per Phase I of the survey, 80% of the universities had found their interaction with students to be good, with 20% suggesting that it was an excellent experience. We further confirmed this by following up with employers and enquiring whether they had actually reached out to these candidates. The feedback suggested we were successful in developing relations between employers and candidates. 80% of the employers had already made contact with students by July 2014 and 20% were planning to make contact.

Do you plan on contacting candidates met at the fair?

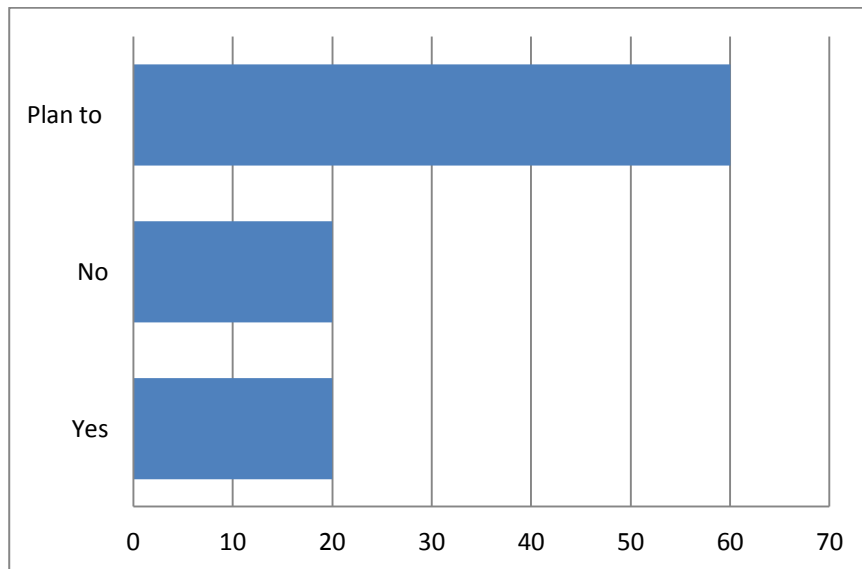


There were no employers who were not planning to get in touch with candidates. This suggests they had met graduates of high intellect and ability who would prove to be positive additions to the organisations’ teams.

One of the important objectives of phase II of the survey was to quantify the success rate of the Corporate Initiative fairs. However, with varying recruitment cycles in Pakistan compared to the U.K. and differing graduation dates, this is an on-going process. The Corporate Initiative Fair was held in February 2014, whereas, many graduates finish their degree courses in September 2014. Hence, there may be need for a phase III survey to be carried out later in the year.

As suggested below, we found that 20% of the employers had hired full-time employees or taken on interns. On the other hand, 20% did not hire any candidates at all. We found that 60% of the employers were positive and planned on hiring the graduates they had met and interviewed.

Have you hired any candidates met at the fair?



We were pleased to learn that all participants were happy with the quality of students present at the fairs.

Post event, a database including the resumes of all student candidates was shared with the participating employers. According to feedback, employers found this very useful as a post event resource as it helped them in contacting and hiring candidates.

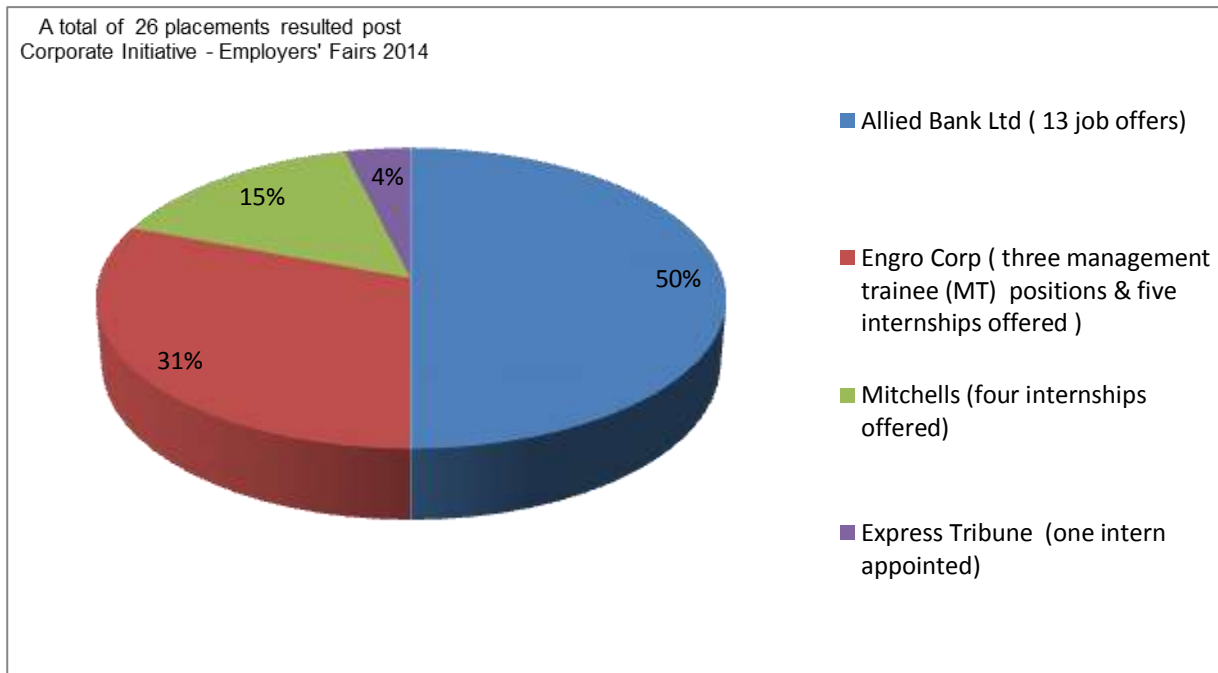
Recommendations and comments – phase II:

Through this fair, valuable academic connections were made in terms of research work. One of the local companies was approached by a university student, who wanted to do their thesis on the company. The company was very happy as they felt this would create awareness of the local market and the company itself in the UK Universities.

Some companies suggested that the British Council undertake a more focused Corporate Initiative in the coming year. They suggested that we arrange similar visits for prospective employers to meet with student candidates specialising in specific fields. The visits would be more sector focussed in that regard.

Successful placements

The fair resulted in internship and employment opportunities for UK graduates.



Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd came up with a unique concept to engage with the students they met at the fairs. The idea was to assign dissertations to those students who were interested in working with them. The dissertations focused on identifying and developing ethnic-markets at leading retail outlets for South Asians in the UK (Indian/Pakistani/Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi). The students were asked to develop plans for ready-to-serve canned meals, pastes and juices. This exercise is an example of how the corporates engaged with and tested the students' abilities and initiative.

Mitchell's later selected the four cities of Bristol, Manchester, London and Leicester for exploring data and business generation possibilities for Mitchell's sales growth and positioning in UK. They decided to offer this project to the students who had worked on their dissertation for Mitchell's. It was also decided that those working on this research will be offered aside from a stipend, job opportunities or percentage of volume sold in different cities once the exporter or distributor was developed in the UK.

Apart from the above, students pursuing engineering qualifications received internship offers from Pharmagen (Pharmaceutical Company) and Packages Limited by the Manager HR at Mitchells.

Media coverage

The official media partner for the project was Express Tribune. The events were covered daily in the newspaper. Prior to the event a two page supplement was released in which the details of partnering UK institutions and the corporate delegation were mentioned.



Online coverage

Employer fair: Pakistani firms meet students at Brunel

Andrew George says Brunel is proud of its strong ties with Pakistani student population which is both large and active. PHOTO: FILE
The first event in the series of three fairs under the British Council Education UK Corporate Initiative Employers Fair 2014 was held at Brunel University, London.

In the first session Pakistani companies Engro Corporation, Abacus Consultancy, Allied Bank Limited, Sidat Hyder Morshed, and Mitchell’s presented their company profiles and recruitment procedures to the career counsellors and Pakistani students.

Many Pakistani students showed keen interest in returning to their country. In his welcome address, vice principle of the university Prof Andrew George thanked the British Council in facilitating the important initiative and working closely with Brunel’s placement department. He also highlighted that Brunel is proud of its strong ties with Pakistani student population which is both large and active.

Published in The Express Tribune, Online Edition, February 25th, 2014.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/675807/employer-fair-pakistani-firms-meet-students-at-brunel/>

Corporate Initiative 2014: Warwick welcomes Pakistani companies

A second event from the three-day fair held under British Council and UK Trade and Investment’s (UKTI) ‘Corporate Initiative Employers Fair 2014’ was organised at University of Warwick.

The event was inaugurated by Warwick’s Director International Office James Kennedy, who thanked the Pakistani companies participating in this event and highlighted that Pakistani students are in their top ten international student group.

“We have over 165 Pakistani students studying at Warwick for a wide range of degrees including economics, law, engineering, medicine, politics and international studies,” he said, adding that Warwick was proud of the support offered to Pakistani students and alumni through their Pakistan office, which not only recruits student but also helps to connect graduates with employers.

At the event, Social Entrepreneurship Chief Executive Officer Faraz Khan also addressed the students. He said his company served as a platform for the development and facilitation of entrepreneurship in Pakistan. Approximately 116 students – from Aston, Bristol, Coventry universities also attended the fair and showed keen interest in returning back to Pakistan.

Published in The Express Tribune, Online Edition, February 26, 2014

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/676356/corporate-initiative-2014-warwick-welcomes-pakistani-companies/>

Employers’ Fair 2014: Manchester University hosts Pak firms

The third event in the series of three day UK Corporate Initiative Employers’ Fair 2014, organised by the British Council was held at the Manchester University. Consul General of Pakistan Zahoor Ahmed attended the event. In the opening speech Mike Gibbons -director of student recruitment and international development wished Pakistani companies of finding the required talent. In today’s event around 100 students turned up from different universities. Students from University of Leeds and University of Sheffield were also present. Students were of opinion that they wanted to be offered jobs in many other disciplines like medicine, mass-communication, tele-communication, telecom which offered more promising career options.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 27th, 2014.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/676676/employers-fair-2014-manchester-university-hosts-pak-firms/>

Snap shot - British Council web campaign.

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Brunel, Manchester, Warwick

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Interview with Peter Upton, Country Director of the British Council in Pakistan

Pakistan is at a 'very interesting moment' in terms of seeking to improve the quality of education, says Peter Upton, Country Director of the British Council in Pakistan.

Upton says the British Council has been active in Pakistan since 1946. In the United Kingdom, it is an independent, non-profit organisation that supports international education and cultural relations.

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...one of those things which if you can do the alignment and get the positive things going, you get the education that you need. But Pakistan is still 'struggling' with the quality of education. Upton says the British Council has been active in Pakistan since 1946. In the United Kingdom, it is an independent, non-profit organisation that supports international education and cultural relations.

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MESSAGE

Fatima Asad-Said
British Business Capital Executive
Khalifa Consulting

I've looked at Pakistan's education system and I think it's a very interesting moment. The British Council is doing a lot of work in Pakistan and I think it's very important. I think it's a very interesting moment.