

University Challenged

Summary

- A new breed of Elite Apprenticeships is set to challenge the traditional University degree as the default path to a great career
- Elite Apprenticeships provide school leavers with the opportunity to earn a salary (and avoid tuition fees) while studying for a degree or degree-equivalent qualification
- Many of the UK's most successful businesses are already looking to recruit the best and brightest school leavers and with the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, the number of these "Earn while you Learn" opportunities is going to grow significantly
- There are no existing channels through which schools and employers can interact to ensure schools are aware of which elite apprenticeship options are right for their students and employers can find the right students for their apprenticeships
- Created by Excelerator Group, **The Excelerator Programme** is a new online platform that uses psychometric testing and online training and mentoring to help school leavers understand the types of elite apprenticeship roles they are best suited to and to prepare and apply for those roles
- Excelerator Group is a specialist consultancy focused on helping employers understand the impact of the Apprenticeship Levy on their business and developing the right strategy in response

The Excelerator Programme 2016

If you were given the choice between a University degree and £50,000 of debt or an equivalent qualification, no debt, £60,000 of salary and 3 years of work experience, which would you choose?

A growing number of elite apprenticeships are challenging the status quo by providing an alternative and in many ways more attractive and effective route to a successful career – a recent Sutton Trust report showed that elite apprentices will, on average, make more money in their careers than the majority of graduates, while the Edge Foundation found that only 40% of graduates had secured a professional job within 6 months of graduating.

Many of the UK's most high-profile employers already offer high-level school leaver programmes and the Government's new Apprenticeship Levy will result in an increasing number of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships becoming available. As a result, more and more of the best and brightest school leavers, particularly those from lower income backgrounds, will opt out of traditional higher education and the battle for the best employees will move from the dreaming spires of Oxford to the playing fields of Eton and the common rooms of secondary schools and sixth form colleges.

Clarissa Farr, High Mistress of St Paul's Girls School said *"The sacred esteem of the old institutions is going to go. Far fewer of these brilliant youngsters are going to go to university in the long term...I expect to see 18-year-olds being snapped up...and being trained and developed as employees"*

This is new territory for both employers and schools and at present there is little infrastructure in place for schools to learn about elite apprenticeship options and employers to find the most suitable students. All schools want to ensure their pupils have access to the best opportunities but finding out about these elite apprenticeships and differentiating them from the noise around Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships is hard work. All employers are looking for diversity as well as the gifted and talented, but reaching out to secondary schools and sixth form colleges on a national basis is not economically viable...

Neil Ross Russell, Managing Director, The Excelerator Group
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Neil Ross Russell, Managing Director of Excelerator Group says: *"There are a large number of motivated, intelligent individuals out there who would excel in the workplace rather than spending three more years in full-time education, but aren't aware of the apprenticeship opportunities available. At the same time, there are an increasing number of employers looking for motivated, intelligent individuals but not sure how to find them...matching the right individuals with the right roles is where **The Excelerator Programme** comes in".*

Launching on Monday 1st February, **The Excelerator Programme** is a free service providing impartial support and advice to young people, enabling them to explore their own motivations and potential careers and ultimately make an informed decision as to which is the most suitable path for them.

The Excelerator Programme will be promoted directly to school leavers via a series of presentations and assemblies at leading schools. The Programme features a range of activities designed to help students think about their strengths, suggest potential roles, and provide training support and mentoring, so that when the candidates meet with prospective businesses they are ready, directed and differentiated from the crowd.

Activities include:

- Psychometric testing: designed by Team Focus to help students understand their own motivations and the sorts of roles that they are likely to find most fulfilling
- Online training: A range of online courses to help develop Job Search skills, Work Readiness skills and Job Specific Skills in key areas such as marketing, finance, operations, customer support, coding, etc
- Online mentoring: Personal feedback from **The Excelerator Programme's** expert team to help students create the perfect CV
- The chance to win work experience: Those students who complete **The Excelerator Programme** get the chance to win work experience with a number of our employer partners
- Excelerator Live!: **The Excelerator Programme** "Graduation Ceremony" where students come together for a series mock interviews, workshops etc and a chance to meet potential employers

The Excelerator Programme has been developed by Excelerator Group, a specialist consultancy helping employers generate the maximum return on their investment into Elite Apprenticeship Programmes. The Apprenticeship Levy represents a very significant shift in the way young people are trained and ultimately recruited. Many of the details were only announced in November (many are yet to be announced) and as a result, most employers are just beginning to consider the implications. Excelerator Group is working with employers across a number of industries to ensure they are well-prepared for the introduction of the Levy in April 2017 and are able to generate a return on the investment the Levy represents.

A return on an investment into apprentices comes not when the student joins the company, but many years down the line when they have become a successful and valuable member of the team. To achieve that, employers need to identify the right people as well as provide the right training, ensuring a good culture and personality fit with the organisation. Key elements of **The Excelerator Programme**, such as the psychometric testing and online training, have been designed to enable employers to identify those students who will be a good match for the organisation, thereby helping to boost productivity and reduce the risk of churn.

The Excelerator Programme is supported by Good Business, a leading consultancy and Future Foundations, an award winning youth training company recognised by the Department for Education for developing character among young people.

Giles Gibbons, Founder and CEO, Good Business, says; *"**The Excelerator Programme** will offer young people an aspirational platform to help them gain a real insight into their career options and provide them with alternative information and access to elite apprenticeships. Our aim is to create real value for employers*

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through reduced risk and increased work force diversity and for society through improving work-readiness, reducing youth unemployment and increasing social mobility."

Jon Harper, CEO of Future Foundations, says; *"We are excited to support the launch of **The Excelerator Programme**, which we believe has a big role to play in offering an alternative and aspirational route for school leavers so that they have a real choice, and are supported with the information they need and connected with good employers offering exciting and rewarding positions for school leavers".*

The Excelerator Programme has also gained support from Nick Boles, Minister for Skills who said:
"[The Excelerator Programme], which will engage with students at a crucial time in their lives when they are starting to think about careers and their options, will be beneficial for a large number of young people...Your project fits with our policy aims in this area which are to inspire young people to decide upon a suitable career and provide the high quality careers advice that they need to help them make that decision"

Notes for Editors

For more information or to take part in The Excelerator Programme 2016, Year 12 (2017 school leavers) and employers should visit www.excelerator.life

The Excelerator Group

Set up by Neil Ross Russell (CEO) and Giles Gibbons (Chairman), The Excelerator Group, working with strategic partners, City and Guilds, Future Foundations and Good Business, is a timely addition to the labour market ensuring that apprenticeships become an effective and efficient way to utilise young people in our workforce.

Good Business

At Good Business, we believe that the most successful organisations are those that are both of their times and contributing to their times. These are progressive organisations: open and outward-looking, ready to embrace change not fight it. People both want and need them to be around. We work with some of the world's leading companies, and for organisations ranging from start-ups and schools to foundations and charities.

Future Foundations

Future Foundations (FF) is a UK-based training organisation committed to inspiring young people to achieve their full potential and become leaders in their lives so they can contribute their skills, talents and passion to society. We work closely with schools, the government, private sector and third sector organisations to deliver a range of youth leadership programmes.

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