



# Cisco Social Impact Report

2014-2016



## Objectives

Since November 2014, Cisco has delivered a work experience programme, now known as 'Pathway to Your Future'. Nearing its 500th participant, the programme is available for students aged 14-16 and aims both to raise their career aspirations and to inspire the next generation to pursue careers in IT.

Specifically, the programme aims to increase participants':

- ✔ Confidence
- ✔ Motivation
- ✔ Understanding
- ✔ Knowledge
- ✔ Aspiration

Cisco organises a range of activities to introduce young people to the world of work, give them a taste of the opportunities it provides and increase their confidence and knowledge so they can successfully apply for jobs within the IT sector.

## About the programme

**The week of work experience involves a range of activities. Students attend:**

- Presentations from Cisco employees about the day-to-day activities and challenges they face in their work. These aim to expand students' understanding of the interesting, varied and highly skilled nature of work completed by workers in the IT sector.
- Mock interviews, which help them to improve their interview skills.
- Workshops where they design and pitch a product within a 'Dragons' Den' environment.
- Group-work activities, where they can work with their peers and network with Cisco employees.
- Practical sessions, where they gain hands-on experience of taking computers apart. This teaches them about the complexities of IT hardware.
- Walking tours around the Cisco offices to better understand what office life entails.

The programme has been running since November 2014 at two Cisco offices: Green Park, Reading and Bedfont Lakes, Feltham. At each location, two different activity programmes are offered to the students; a Technical and a Business stream. The first focuses on introducing the students to technical activities performed by staff in the IT sector, and the second focuses on all of the other roles that running a business requires. The week-long activities are targeted to the relevant stream.



# Srihitha Konreddy

## discovers her passion

Stream: **Technical**  
Participated in November 2014

“My work experience at Cisco has provided me with a fascinating insight of the IT industry and how much it can influence our daily lives. As a consequence, I have decided to study computer science at A level. It was a truly unforgettable opportunity.”

### 1. What are you doing at the moment?

I'm doing A levels in maths, computer science and English literature. I've also applied for further technology work experience programmes and a summer programme at Cambridge University.

### 2. What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact them?

Before my work experience at Cisco I was never really keen on working in the tech industry, and I would hardly pay attention in my computer science lessons as I found them quite tedious. The Technical stream of the work experience really opened my eyes to the different opportunities available to me. During the work experience we spent a day with a range of Cisco employees and took part in a speed networking session. We were able to talk to them all and find out what their job titles really meant. Everyone was really friendly and helpful and I left really excited about some of the roles open to me!

### 3. What are your future ambitions?

I'm really interested in going into the technology sector. I'd like to complete my A levels and go

to university to study Computer Science.

### 4. What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience?

I really enjoyed the final presentation as it really pushed me out of my comfort zone; during the week we worked in groups with Cisco employees to put it together. I went back to school and couldn't stop talking about it for ages. The work experience definitely made me realise that I want to continue studying computer science.

### 5. What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience e.g. on CVs or application forms?

I wanted to find out more about programming and how it's used in the real world. I spoke about the experiences at Cisco when applying for summer school at Cambridge. In their follow-up call they asked me more about this and I was able to demonstrate my skills and knowledge. I found out recently that I've been accepted on to the programme!

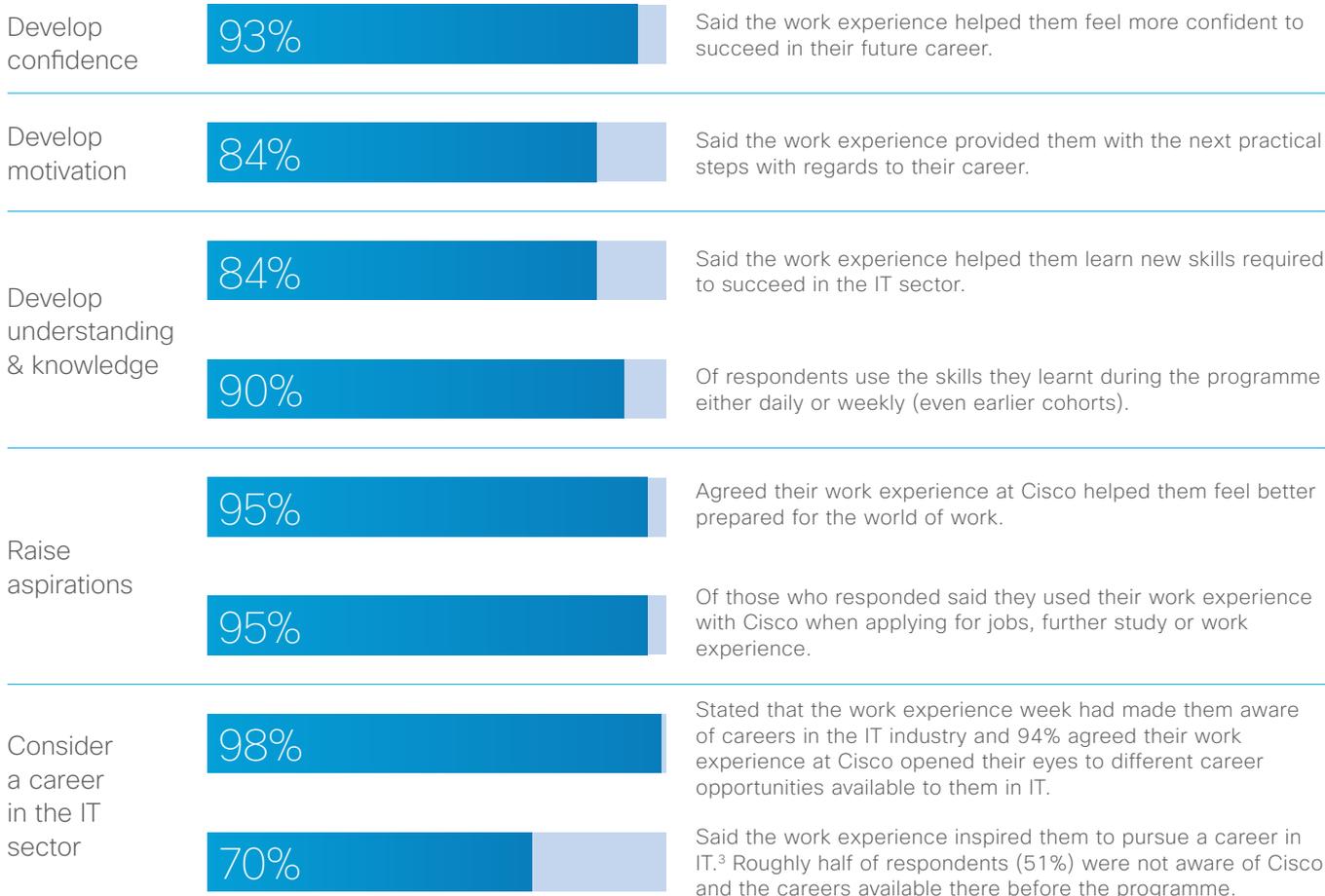
# Key findings

The programme has now run for three years with nearly 500 young people. Over this time, an impressive 95% of participants say they used their work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, further study or work experience.<sup>1</sup>

This report explores findings from both a survey and feedback forms completed by young people who have been involved in the work experience programme. The survey asks about the key aims of the programme, whether it raised their aspirations and whether it inspired them to enter into a career in the IT sector. The feedback forms ask past participants (who are now entering further education or leaving school) about the difference the work experience made to their long-term aspirations.

**420** young people were contacted for the survey (by email or telephone<sup>2</sup>) resulting in 164 responses – a response rate of **39%**

**372** young people responded to the feedback forms.



# Michael Donkor finds his focus

Stream: **Business**

Participated in November 2014

“I feel like I’ve now got a much better understanding of marketing and how to engage an audience. The team were really inspiring and I’d love to work with people like them in the future.”

## 1. What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact them?

Before the work experience I didn’t really know what I wanted to do. The work experience helped me realise that I have a real passion for business. Because of my experience with Cisco I had a better idea of what A levels to choose and I am now studying business, economics and product design.

## 2. What are your future ambitions?

I am really interested in business and marketing and feel as if they are something I could enjoy and do well in, so I now plan to go to university to study Business Management. In five years’ time I’d love to work for Cisco!

## 3. What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience?

I really enjoyed hearing what the Cisco staff do day to day, especially the marketing team. I feel like I’ve now got a much better understanding of marketing

and how to engage an audience. The team were really inspiring and I’d love to work with people like them in the future.

## 4. What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience e.g. on CVs or application forms?

The Cisco work experience was a real learning curve for me as it really opened my eyes to what a real working environment is like and really fuelled my passion for business, specifically marketing.

It has definitely impacted my future decisions and has also given me the drive and motivation to achieve the grades I need in order to secure a job with a business like Cisco.

# Who responded to the survey?

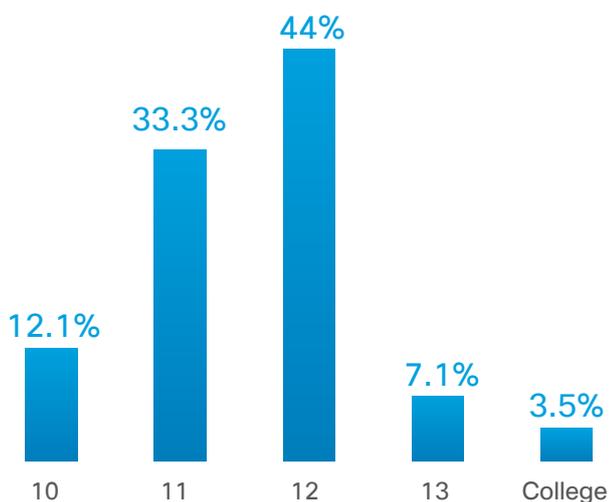
An online survey was emailed to over 420 past participants of Cisco's 'Pathway to Your Future' work experience programme. MyKindaFuture followed this with 30 targeted telephone calls to increase response rates for particular cohorts who were less responsive to the email (the November 2014 and July 2015 cohorts).<sup>4</sup>

This paid off as **22%** of the November 2014 cohort (the first cohort) responded. Overall, **164** young people responded by either email or telephone; a **39%** response rate.

## Cohort

There is generally an even spread of responses from the different cohorts.

44% of respondents are from the two most recent cohorts. There are also quite a lot of respondents from the first cohort, the November 2014 cohort, which is likely due in part to the targeted telephone communication.



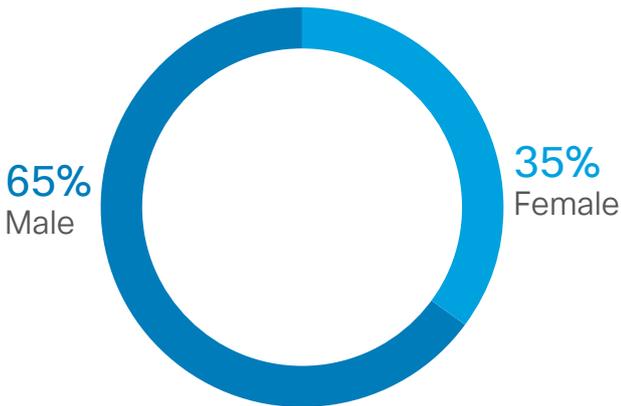
## Year Group

We heard more from students who have been involved in the programme more recently.

Over three-quarters of responses came from students who are currently in year 11 or year 12.

Participants who were in the November 2014 cohort would now be in years 12 or 13, and participants who were in the November 2016 cohort would currently be in years 10 or 11.<sup>5</sup>

23 participants didn't tell us which year group they were in.



### Gender

Nearly double the number of males responded compared to females.

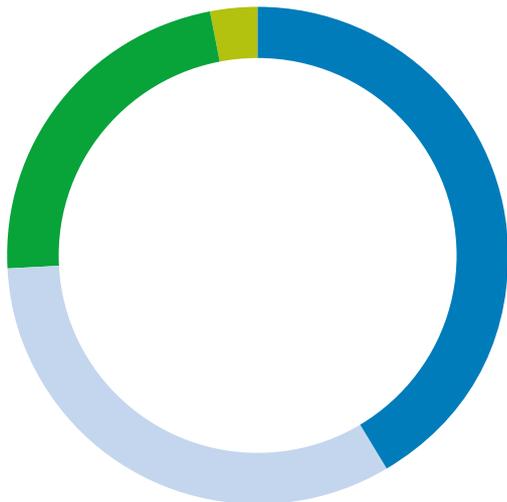
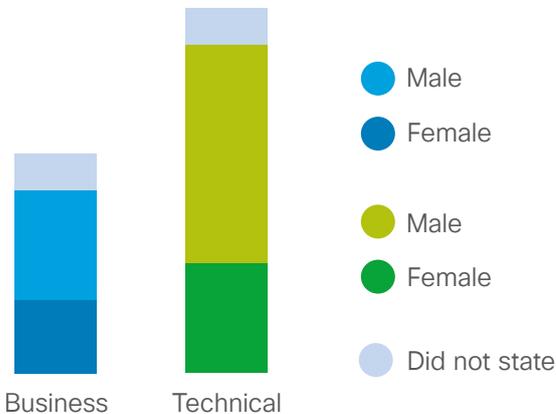
Almost twice as many males as females answered the survey and told us their gender. This is similar to the programme, where males outnumber females.

### Stream

More respondents were involved in the Technical stream than the Business stream.

Out of those who told us which stream they were in, 58 were in Business and 102 were in the Technical stream.

Males were slightly more likely to be in the Technical stream (67%) compared to females (62%). Conversely, females were more likely to be in the Business stream (38%) compared to males (33%).



### Current Situation

Nearly all participants are still in full-time education at a school or college.

Only 6 out of the 164 respondents stated they were 18 or under and not in full-time education or training. Of those, 4 gave more information explaining that the programme had been a positive experience for them.

Because the majority of the students are still in full-time education or training, we cannot know for certain which career they will choose, but we have asked questions to try and get as accurate an indication as possible.

- Completing GCSEs or equivalent
- Studying one or more IT-based subjects at college/sixth form
- Studying other subjects at college or sixth form
- Other

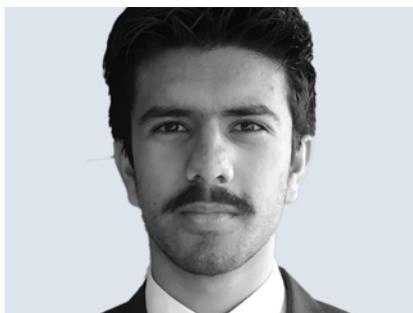
# Results

“The process has greatly improved and enhanced many of my future decisions which will greatly impact my life.”

The results are exciting. The vast majority of students have an increased awareness about the different career opportunities available to them once they finish studying. Furthermore, they feel more prepared for the world of work generally, and have practical next steps for developing their career – crucial for taking action. Nearly all have used their work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, further study or work experience and seven out of ten pupils said that the

work experience inspired them to pursue a career in IT. In addition, not only do the participants have increased knowledge and understanding, but they also feel more confident to succeed, which is vital to advancing their careers.

The results are impressive and the feedback shows that the programme helps raise students' career aspirations and inspire the next generation to pursue careers in IT.



# Aadil Awan shares his experience

Stream: **Technical**  
Participated in July 2016

“I now feel more confident working with people and presenting to strangers.”

### 1. What are you doing at the moment?

Sixth form – A levels in Maths, Geography and Economics.

### 2. What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact them?

Cisco made me realise it's not all about the degree you do, you can still study what you enjoy at university and then go on to other sectors and careers. I've always loved maths and economics so wanted to study accounting at university, but I am also really interested and excited about opportunities available to me in the technology industry.

During the work experience I really enjoyed learning about how technology has changed our everyday lives, for example how we communicate and how we present ourselves online. I liked finding out about online security and how important it is to maintain!

### 3. What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience?

I enjoyed working in teams for the final presentation. It allowed me to meet people from different

backgrounds and I was glad to share the experience with them. I now feel more confident working with people and presenting to strangers. The experience allowed me to meet people outside of school and college that I wouldn't have met otherwise and I've kept in touch with quite a few of them!

### 4. What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience e.g. on CVs or application forms?

The work experience programme gave us insights into different departments of Cisco and how it all comes together to run this amazing company. I met a lot of Cisco staff who hadn't studied an IT-based degree at university and it made me realise that even if I do not study an IT-based degree at university, I could still work in technology. They taught us that it's all about your passion and drive.

## What was the most memorable part of your work experience?

“Being treated as an adult and put in situations to drive me towards my goals in life.”

“Everything, but developing a presentation in the team and fast interviewing were the best bits for me.”

When asked what the most memorable part of the work experience was, participants responded with a range of answers that broadly related to the following:

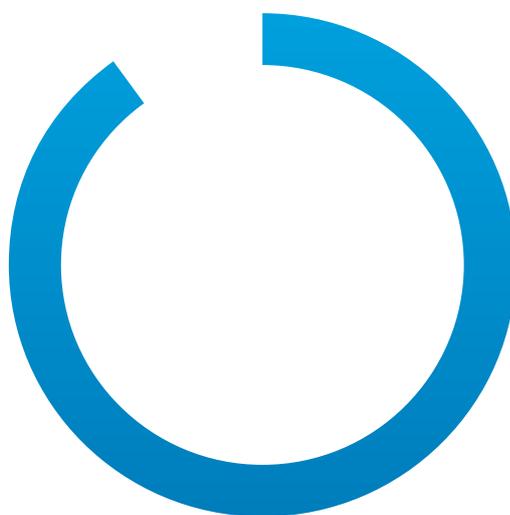
- Learning what different people and teams do in the organisation and sector
- Meeting new people and working with others in teams or groups
- Listening to presentations/talks
- Practising:
  - Pitching products
  - Giving presentations
  - Interviews
- Practical experience, e.g. of programming or taking computers apart to learn about hardware.

## How often would you say you use the skills you learnt on the Cisco work experience?

“Cisco work experience has helped me to develop my skills ready for the working environment and displayed a huge range of job aspects. The employees at Cisco have motivated me to do the best I can as well as pursue a higher qualification in IT.”

Over half of respondents (52%) said they use the skills they learnt on the Cisco work experience daily and over a third (38%) said they use the skills weekly. This amounts to 90% using the skills on at least a weekly basis.

An important point to note is that those who were involved in the work experience programme in earlier cohorts still use the skills they learnt on a daily or regular basis. Interventions frequently experience a reduction in the changes they create as time passes, but what is particularly impressive here is how the skills learnt by earlier cohorts are still being used by them now.



90% using the skills on at least a weekly basis.

# Exploring differences between the streams

There is a small difference between the two streams.

A higher proportion of students in the Business stream stated their eyes were opened to the different career opportunities available to them in IT. However, a higher proportion of those in the Technical stream stated they had learnt new skills required to succeed in the IT sector. Overall, in both streams, 95% said they used their work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, further study, or work experience.

A higher proportion of respondents who were in the Business stream stated that the work experience programme:

**Opened their eyes to different career opportunities available to them in IT**



98% Business stream  
92% Technical stream

**Made them feel more confident to succeed in their future career**



96% Business stream  
91% Technical stream

**Inspired them to pursue a career in IT**



74% Business stream  
68% Technical stream

We hypothesise that students in the Technical stream may already know more about the potential career opportunities or are considering a career in IT already, whereas those in the Business stream may not yet have decided in which direction they want to take their career. If this is correct, this would explain the slight discrepancy between the two streams.

A higher proportion of respondents in the Technical stream stated that the work experience programme:

**Helped them to learn new skills required to succeed in the IT sector**



86% Technical stream  
81% Business stream

This is likely to be because the Technical stream's work experience is more tailored to the IT sector and therefore participants are more easily able to see how directly applicable the skills they have learnt are to working in the IT sector.

# Which skills have you developed because of your work experience with Cisco?

“The most memorable part of my Cisco work experience was the presentation day. I was able to gain new skills such as communication and problem solving, and the presentation proved this.”

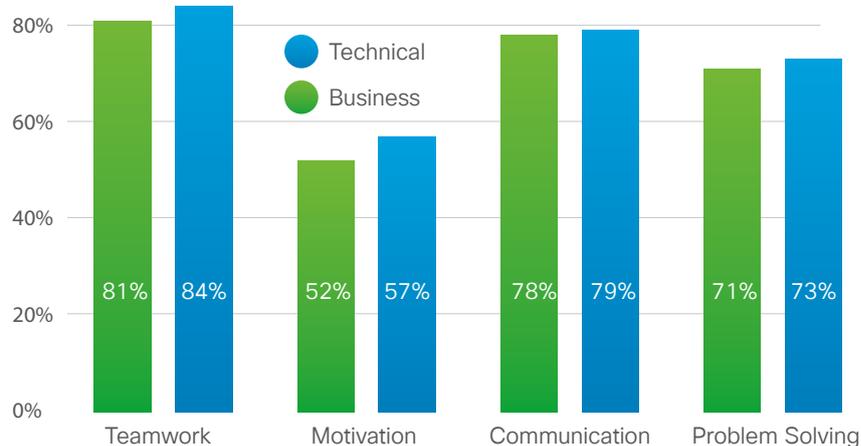
“During my time at Cisco, I was able to learn new skills, meet new people and learn more about the IT industry. Now in my school projects and presentations, I am able to use these skills in order to do well.”

The majority of respondents reported developing teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills as a result of their work experience with Cisco.

Only about half reported they developed motivation from the work experience. This might be because some of the participants were already motivated, and did not consider the programme to have increased their motivation. In order to take part in this work experience programme, participants have to complete an online application form. This suggests a certain amount of baseline motivation on their part.

Other skills participants reported developing included public speaking/ presentation skills, interview skills, working with others and increased confidence.

Which skills have you developed because of your work experience with Cisco?



# Hafsa Tahir tells her story

Stream: **Technical**  
Participated in November 2016

“I’d like to work in technology and would like to find out some more information about Higher Apprenticeships.”

## 1. What are you doing at the moment?

I’m doing my GCSEs and going on to do A levels in biology, chemistry, English and psychology.

## 2. What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact them?

I’d like to work in technology and would like to find out some more information about Higher Apprenticeships.

The Cisco work experience was the first time I’ve ever really done anything like this and it’s not something that’s really taught in schools. Cisco really opened my eyes to some of the different paths I could take in technology.

## 3. What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience and what impact, if any, did it have on your confidence and career aspirations?

I really enjoyed working with my group in the team tasks. I used to be more cautious, whereas now I participate rather than shying away from challenges. On the first day we were put in groups and asked to disassemble a computer. We really bonded over the task and were able to support each other. From being placed in a group with strangers, to presenting in front of judges, to speed interviewing, all

of these activities made me feel more prepared and confident in my abilities. They don’t seem as scary now especially knowing that I have my peers to support me.

## 4. What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience e.g. on CVs or application forms?

I wasn’t really sure of what to expect. I thought it would just be sitting in front of a computer and coding but it was so different. It really opened my eyes to all the opportunities available to me in technology. Cisco has impacted my future decisions by allowing me to see and also experience the different jobs they have to offer, such as cyber security, networking, working with servers and many more. These have certainly helped me choose a job or decide which direction I will want to perhaps go in the future. Cisco didn’t just let me see the different jobs, it also made me experience them which was of massive help as I really had a new perspective on how jobs work, and also what my potential future job would be. Overall, Cisco has assisted me greatly and impacted both me as a person and also my future decisions.

# Overview and next steps

Over 160 students, more than half of whom will be leaving full-time education in the next two years, responded to our survey. As summarised, the Cisco work experience programme has had a very positive effect on their intended destination, with seven out of ten agreeing that their work experience at Cisco inspired them to pursue a career in IT.



The programme has achieved its aims of raising career aspirations and inspiring the next generation to pursue careers in IT. Most importantly it has developed participants' confidence and motivation which are crucial if participants are to be successful in their future career. It has been extremely well received by nearly every participant who responded and 92% would recommend the programme to others.

It is too soon to tell whether these young people will end up working within the IT sector, but early indications suggest that they very well might.

## Looking forward:

Cisco will continue to run its two work experience programmes for 14-16 and 16-18 year olds.

Having previously piloted a programme for 18-24 year olds who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET), Cisco will build upon its success and offer Traineeships from 2017.

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## References

- 1) Based on 164 responses from the survey.
- 2) Where the response rates were too low for particular cohorts, MKF undertook targeted telephone calls to improve response rates for those particular cohorts.
- 3) All percentages reported are of those who responded.
- 4) There were not enough responses to do significance testing on the results. For 420 participants, 201 would have had to have responded to the survey on a random basis for these tests to be done (with 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level and 50% response distribution).
- 5) Number of responses for each year group: year 10 = 17, year 11 = 47, year 12 = 62, year 13 = 10 and college = 5. These figures only include those respondents who told us which year group they were in.



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