



FUTURE PROOFING THE WORKFORCE a white paper

The Institute of Hospitality Round Tables are designed to bring Institute members and the wider hospitality community together to discuss regional challenges and produce a white paper on a specific topic that presents a problem and provides a solution.

The Continuing Professional Development Round Tables are held nationally, outside London, allowing our members to participate in critical discussions.

WITH FUNDING FROM



FUTURE PROOFING - EDUCATION IS AT THE HEART

Universities and culinary colleges in Wales provide excellent tutoring, with a variety of relevant and productive courses. But Wales plans to up its game

Hospitality education in Wales is a targeted, well-constructed provision. At the University of Wales Trinity St. David (UWTSD) alone, students can choose from six undergraduate degrees, several diplomas, plus an MBA in hotel management. Better still, these are created in collaboration with local businesses so that the degree content matches the requirements of employers; and placements are an inherent part of all hospitality programmes, ensuring hands-on experience.

However, Wales suffers a dismal lack of potential talent and for the reasons evident across the UK - perception and the mistaken belief that a job in hospitality is to fill in time before starting a career in law, medicine or engineering. It is seen as a low-end job with no career opportunities but in reality, someone can join a property as a pot wash or bar worker, move through disciplines that vary from customer-facing reception positions to marketing or accountancy, and have responsibility for a team within a couple of years.

Much misconception harks back to the days when a 50-hour week was the norm. This has long gone, and operators take a flexible approach to ensure the hours are covered, but the reputation endures. And organisations that do not look after their employees far the rest of the industry, further compounding the problem.

This does not influence students alone; parents still do not understand that hospitality provides a profession, a career path, and a fulfilling vocation.

"We need to move away from the myth that hospitality isn't a profession," says academic director for UWTSD Jayne Griffith Parry. "It is ever-changing - no two days will be the same - and the opportunities are global." As chair for IoH Cymru Thomas Ferrante MIH points out: "We should ensure we refer to hospitality as a profession; it is important to use the right language in connection with what we do."



APPRENTICESHIPS

The dynamism and flexibility of the industry are reflected in how education is delivered, responding to the fact that most students are earning and learning; they no longer attend university five days a week and degrees can be provided over two days. Degrees at UWTSd are written with versatility in mind and all students spend the first two years studying gastronomy, culinary skills, front-of-house management, entrepreneurship, marketing, finance, active communication, business consultancy, training within the workplace; in the third year, they choose a path, and every module is focused on that.

But more is required, and a degree-level apprenticeship would transform the offering; it would make it more relevant to both students and employers and would rocket Wales into a different hospitality league.

At the moment, the university has to balance exposing students to entrepreneurial skills, HR, and finance – all constituent parts of the degree, with the hospitality components. Spending more hours working in the sector would ensure students are steeped in those factors, underpinned by academic learning – creating an inexorable force.

So far, there are apprenticeships and degrees but 'never the twain' shall meet. One reason for this is that the Welsh government has focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, also known as STEM subjects, and the provision in that area is first class, comprising apprenticeships at Levels II, III, IV and degree level, with a computer science degree embedded in the structure; students spend four days in employment and are released for one day at university. Hospitality does not provide anything like this.





The Institute of Hospitality (IoH) supports the drive for degree-level apprenticeships and to that end, sits on the board of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE). There is no professional route for hospitality and every other profession has one. Hospitality apprenticeships stop at Level 4 and students can't even do a foundation degree; Level 5 is for operations, a departmental manager, which is not hospitality specific. The IoH is encouraging universities in England to provide university apprenticeships.

"The push for change needs to come from the sector; it would be marvellous to recruit numbers into the sector like we recruit student numbers and to retain them in hospitality in Wales," says Parry. "We need to think more imaginatively."

This could take many forms, including combining elements of related programmes to ensure a broader outlook. For example, the Town & Country Collective is considering providing apprenticeships based on ILM Level 4 leadership, responding to the number of people doing business degrees while working in hospitality. Leadership and IQ skills are as important as technical know-how.



Also addressing the need for hands-on experience to back up education, Celtic Manor Resort will be inviting four post-graduate students to take up a paid placement to help with the opening of another property in the group. The property has already taken an innovative approach to training and the F&B team has also been trained to check people in or out at the front desk, ensuring maximum qualified people in the right place when demand is high.

Government support is a salient factor and with that, cluster hotel manager at Celtic Manor Resort James Hayward MIH points out he could take on “dozens of apprentices”. Although these opportunities are valuable to employers and employees, they are no mean financial feat, being paid placements that involve guaranteed 1-2-1 time.

Hayward is an excellent example of how fast careers can move in hospitality: “Two years ago I was head of rooms division at the Collection and had never checked a guest in; now I am running a 400-room hotel,” he says.

Students who work abroad see different attitudes to hospitality and bring back excellent skills. In the USA, for example, the sector recognises that it thrives on people who do a second job and that gives them transferable skills. Hospitality is respected there, and operators attach great value to bringing people in and training them, something that needs working on here.



CHARTING PROGRESS

The Institute of Hospitality's push for chartership would validate the sector and those in it, so that it could sit proudly alongside the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD), the Association of Chartered Accountants (ACCA), and more. It would give hospitality the professional clout it deserves.

At the moment, members of the IoH are graded according to experience and qualifications – associate, member and fellow. “We require that all our members do a minimum of 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) per year; we track it but don’t regulate it, it is self-policed,” says the IoH’s head of professional development Sam Coulstock MIEP FIH.

However, “When we become chartered, that will be mandated so no one can be a chartered member or fellow unless they have done the required 30 hours of CPD and can prove it. Keeping a record of it not only focuses the mind but also underlines that you are in a valuable profession. And with that commitment comes improved working and employment practices; people will have to be accountable. This will elevate the work environment and with that, professionalism of the sector,” he says.

Crucially, “It will change the image of the industry; it will make a massive contribution to parents’ and educators’ views, and that will influence which careers young people and returners to work will choose. With chartership, working in hospitality will be of a status equal to a doctor or chartered accountant, which is as it should be,” says Coulstock.



FRAGMENTED

Perception problems apart, hospitality does not help itself. It is fragmented – pubs, restaurants, hotels, theatres and more – and no one needs a licence to operate, which sets the bar depressingly low; anyone can open an outlet without any experience or training, and without background checks. The upside is that the industry is diverse and inclusive, the downside is an element of the Wild West.

The IoH is working with other bodies to standardise entry-level expectations for employees and employers. When established, this will mean someone can move from McDonald's to a hotel group or an independent property with a consistent and documented level of training.

WISE COUNSEL

Meanwhile, experienced people in hospitality have a lot to offer those starting and mentoring is an excellent way of doing that; it also opens many doors for mentees. The industry recognises and practises that, and members of the IoH can do a six-month pairing with experienced hospitality professionals, including 25 Master Innholders of Great Britain St. Julian Scholars.

CONCLUSION

Opportunities in hospitality are legion but the breadth of experience available to those in the industry is not known or understood. Degree apprenticeships would not only promote these prospects to students, but they would also shore up the reputation and standing of the industry and give learners a powerful combination of hands-on experience backed by academic learning.

Education institutions in Wales have shown in other areas that they have the creativity, dedication, and resilience to provide that breadth of education. It is now the turn of hospitality. Government support of the sector would be a statement of intent and a vote of confidence that would bolster Wales's reputation as a hospitality provider and make it a compelling option for job seekers. It is time to take action.



FURTHER READING

State of the Workforce 2023

New research has been released by People 1st International to examine the changing skills and labour market across the UK visitor economy sector. The research highlights the need to prioritise leadership and management skills to help businesses recruit, retain and develop employees more effectively, and to take action to close the skills gap to help grow an internationally competitive industry.

Showcasing approaches employers are taking to alleviate the recruitment and retention challenges faced, the findings aim to help employers across the sector to better address their workforce needs, directly informing the decisions they make concerning skills development.

How can hospitality help create sustainable jobs in social mobility cold spots White Paper.

As part of the IoH's DEIB strategy, the IoH's Round Table in Liverpool discussed social mobility, why it matters and what the hospitality industry can do to help solve the issues.

ReWAGE report: Work, wages and employment in the UK hospitality sector

ReWAGE's new report calls for a radical overhaul of the hospitality sector to tackle crisis-level staff shortages, with recommendations including better pay, terms and conditions for employees, including the enforcement of tipping rights, legislation to reinforce employer duty-of-care responsibilities for workers travelling to and from work and more flexibility to employ seasonal workers from within the EU and beyond.

eHotelier's The industry's Future Skills Needs report

With the hospitality industry navigating uncharted territory in a post-pandemic world, eHotelier's Skills Survey has tackled an important question: What skills will our dynamic field need to thrive, and what education and training paths can help equip us?

The research findings in the 'Future Skills Report', published by e-Hotelier and supported by the IoH, emphasise that recruitment and retention will remain one of the biggest issues facing the industry over the next five years. Making professional development a critical part of a business's strategy.



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