

The ESTnet Skills Survey 2013

This is an overview of the key findings and recommendations from the 2013 ESTnet industry skills survey.

The ESTnet is the electronic and software technologies industry network for Wales. Companies within its footprint design, develop, manufacture and integrate some of the world's most advanced technologies. It includes over 520 companies, a workforce of about 24,000 and has an estimated annual turnover in Wales of £7billion.



520
companies

24,000
workforce in Wales

£7billion*
turnover in Wales

*estimated



Labour Demand

The overall demand is expected to rise slightly in the next twelve months and three years. Particularly the industry will require more technicians, software professionals, engineers and IT professionals.

Business Drivers and Future Skill Requirements

Collectively, electronic and software skills, intrinsic knowledge and the size and dynamics of the technology industry in any country will strongly influence its potential for economic growth.

New technologies and the economic climate were ranked as the most important business drivers within the industry, particularly new technologies such as Internet of Things and Big Data.

Future skill requirements reflect the long term shift in Wales from high volume, low cost manufacturing to low volume, high-end/ high-value manufacturing, with likely demand for small run technologies and integrated technologies and processes.

Prominent training needs to support this included Supply Chain Management training for leaders and managers, and Information Management and Security for Software Professionals.

Resourcing, Training and Education

The industry prefers to recruit those who have experience in the industry and are already skilled, although three quarters of those surveyed consider new graduates an important source for recruitment. Most participants work with schools (60%), colleges (60%) and universities (60%), 39% employ apprentices. The most popular activities in conjunction with universities include undertaking joint research and development projects, participating in Industrial Advisory Panels and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

There is some satisfaction with the skills and attitudes of school leavers, apprentices and graduates, particularly in areas of IT, problem solving skills and positive attitude.

Traditional qualifications such as HND/HNC, GCSE's, Masters Degrees and particularly Bachelor Degrees are held in high regard by employers. Nevertheless there are areas of dissatisfaction with current skills, particularly in literacy, numeracy, self management, and business/ customer awareness.

Many employers would be encouraged to take on more apprentices if qualifications were more relevant, this relates particularly to the software technologies companies.

A majority are not satisfied with the quality of careers advice on offer, and hold a perception that it lacks an understanding of what the industry requires

Recommendations

The electronic and software technology industry is vital to the advancement of society, the economy and is an enabling technology across all markets. Whilst it is a well qualified industry companies need to ensure their employees have access to knowledge of the current and future global technology trends. The report indicates a demand for an increasing level of skill over the coming years and therefore there is a need to develop qualifications further to ensure companies remain competitive for a sustainable future. To support this, the report recommends:

Employers are provided with direct funding from Government to undertake training and development in priority areas.

A productive relationship between education and industry is essential to ensure synergy between the skills taught and those the industry demands. The report recommends:

Employer input into the structure and content of university courses in Wales.

“A year in business programme” which will address perceived weaknesses in self-management skills, business and customer awareness skills identified by the report.

Continued and increased investment in apprenticeships, particularly at a higher level, and that modules are relevant to the needs of the industry.

To ensure that school leavers, apprentices and graduates satisfy the skill demands of the industry, more should be done to increase the attractiveness of the industry to the best candidates, and to increase industry understanding of those who advise young people.

The report recommends:

Consider reducing tuition fees for students who choose to study STEM subjects at Welsh universities.

Industry visits by Careers Advisers from Careers Wales and others who advise young people on their options to increase understanding of potential careers in electronic and software technologies and the skills required.