**Written evidence submitted by CIBT Response (BYC051)**

**Importance of work experience now**

1. Employers in the construction industry value work experience, and see it as a key factor in getting good recruits into the industry. Research conducted on behalf of CITB found that 24% of employers said lack of work experience was a barrier to recruiting people from college, with 15% saying it was the main barrier.
2. Work experience helps to develop the soft skills people need to excel in the workplace. These include an understanding of time keeping and team working – skills employers value. In addition, work experience can help to develop the practical skills candidates need to apply knowledge developed in the classroom to real world settings.
3. The value construction employers place on experience limits their recruitment. When asked what type of employees they had recruited over the last three years, 8% reported that they had recruited from FE, and 8% from university. Unsurprisingly the most common routes of recruitment had been experienced construction workers (35%) followed by apprentices (30%), but the next most common route was people new to construction but who had worked in another sector (18%). This suggests that employers value work experience without construction knowledge more highly than they value construction knowledge without work experience.

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| **Recommendation:**Schools and education providers should work with employers to provide young people work experience, improving their opportunities to enter rewarding careers. |

**Why work experience will be more important in the future**

1. There will be an increasing need for work experience placements in the future with the introduction of T levels. These new courses will include a mandatory 45 day work placement as part of the two year course. This will allow candidates to apply their skills in the workplace, and choose which specialism within their industry they want a career in. Employers have previously highlighted a key disadvantage of the FE system being that candidates do not complete their courses ‘work ready’ – that is, able to contribute fully to their roles from day one. By including a substantial work placement, candidates should be better prepared to start their jobs.
2. The opportunity to try a variety of roles in construction before deciding which area an individual wishes to focus on will also improve the breadth of people’s skills. With the modernisation of our industry and the greater use of techniques such as off-site manufacture, we will need a different skills mix for the construction workforce of the future. This is likely to include more people with a wider range of skills than at present. By having a broad based experience in a variety of roles through work experience, people will be better equipped for these multi-skilled roles of the future.

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| **Recommendation:**The Government should work with employers to develop work experience opportunities that provide the best possible introduction to the industry, allowing candidates to make informed choices on their future careers. |

**Difficulties in accessing work experience**

1. Construction employers are broadly supportive of providing work placements, but may not have the capacity to provide the volume of placements needed. The placements are required to last a minimum of 45 working days, and are intended to run between the first and second years of the course. In recent research commissioned by CITB, only 36% of employers had offered work experience in the last 3 years. In the future, 40% of employers surveyed were likely to run offer experience. However, around 4 in 5 expected to offer placements shorter than the 9 weeks required for T levels.
2. Currently, about 30,000 people start full time level 2 and level 3 FE courses. This potentially means trying to find 30,000 work placements across the construction industry during the summer – typically the busiest two months of the year. The small and micro enterprises that make up over 97% of construction employers may not have the capacity to take on work experience candidates. Many will lack the administrative capacity or man-hours necessary to ensure a beneficial experience for the student. Equally, those who are able to take on a student for a work placement may not be able to ensure they will be able to provide a worthwhile experience for the student for the entire 3 month duration of the placement. Construction businesses often move large distances across the country from job to job, and may experience unpredictable workloads, with slow periods of work not being uncommon.
3. Where there are placements available, there is no clear mechanism to connect learners to the businesses providing them. Schools often rely on employers that have provided placements in the past. This means there is a relatively limited pool of placements available, and learners after specialist placements may have difficulty finding them through their school. Likewise, employers who have not previously offered work experience opportunities may be happy to do so but not know how to go about it. Local government needs to work with employers and schools to coordinate work experience opportunities in their area.

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| **Recommendations:**To help smaller employers offer work experience, there is a need for smaller employers to come together to share placements. A learner could be sponsored by one employer, but could attend placements at a variety of different workplaces. This would mean many employers would be more willing and able to take on students, owing to the less significant commitment.  |

**About CITB**

1. CITB is the Industrial Training Board (ITB) for the construction industry in Great Britain (Scotland, England and Wales). CITB uses its research and labour market intelligence to understand the sector’s skills needs, and works with industry and government to make sure construction has the right skills, now and for the future.

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