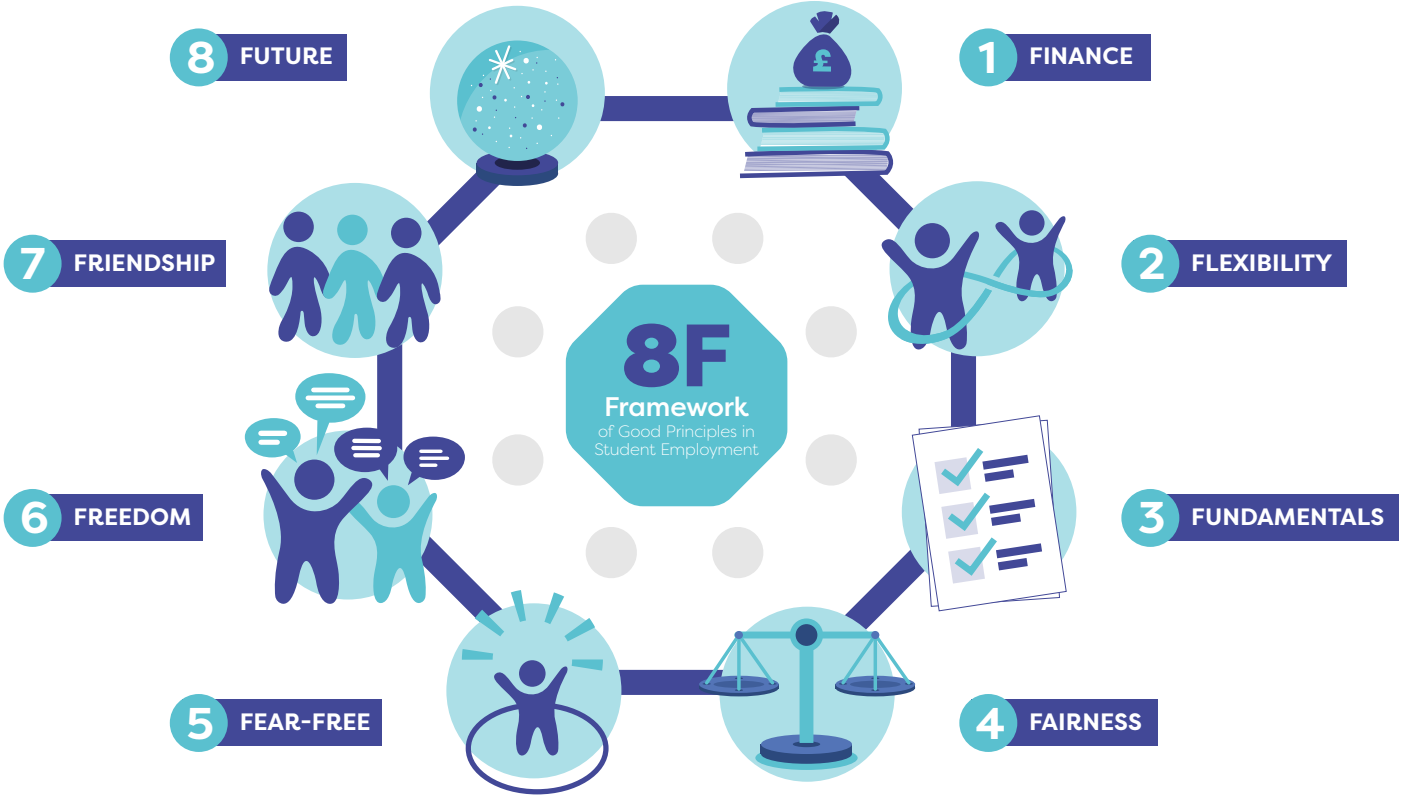
Hospitality Now!

THE 8F FRAMEWORK

The 8F Framework

of Good Principles in Student Employment

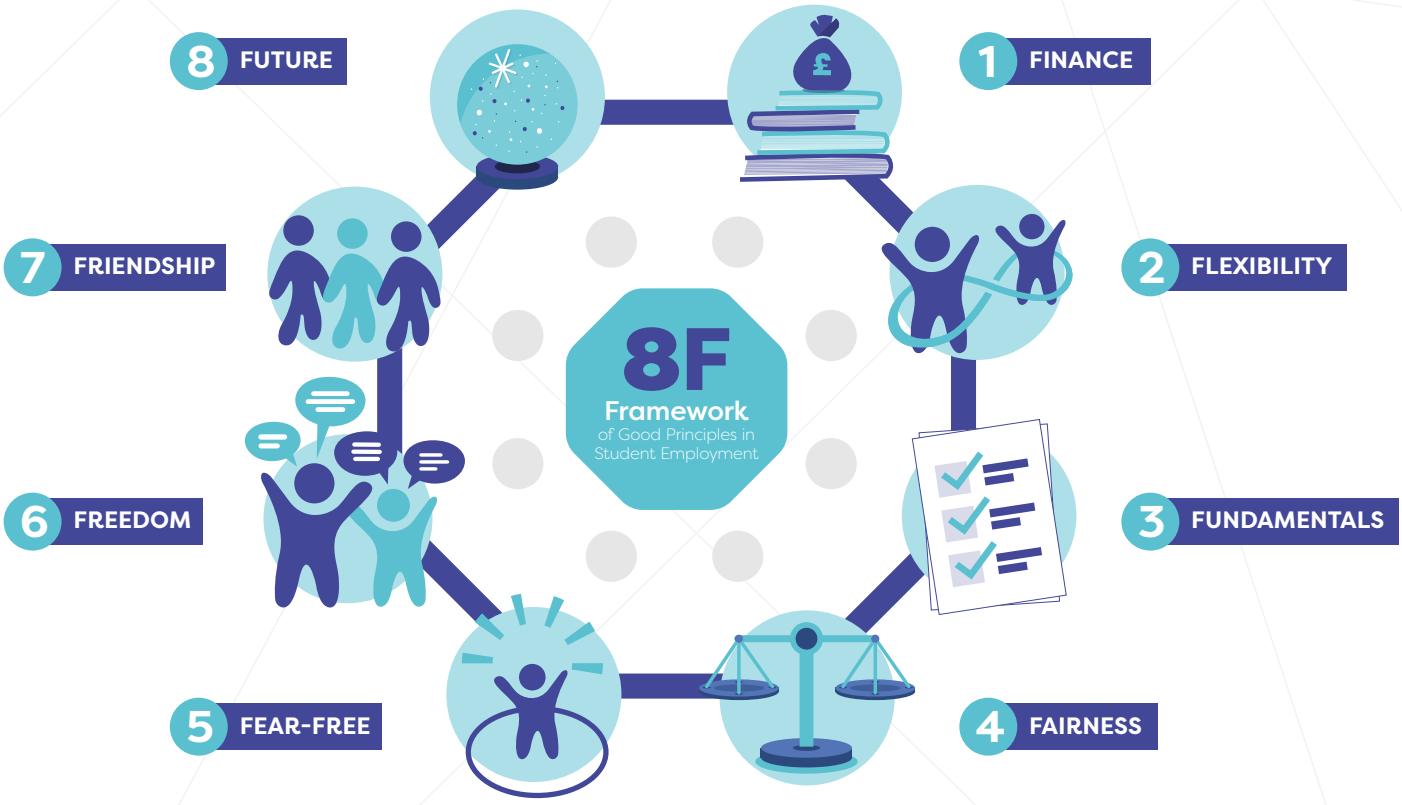


We've done research with students in customer service roles. Many students had very positive experiences of working, developed excellent relationships with employers and stayed several years in one workplace.

However, there were also many students who really struggled. They found it difficult to combine work and study. They struggled because it was their first-ever job and they had limited experience. They found it difficult to effectively communicate their needs to employers and had issues with understanding employer expectations. Overall, many students found it challenging to navigate new workplaces, and this affected their well-being and their studies as well as their commitment to work.

Based on our research, we've identified the key challenges that students face in workplaces. We mapped these into the 8 Principles of Good Student Employment which we have called the 8F Framework.

Next, you will learn about each of these 8 Principles and how these could be adopted within your organisation. Our students will tell you more about their own experiences.



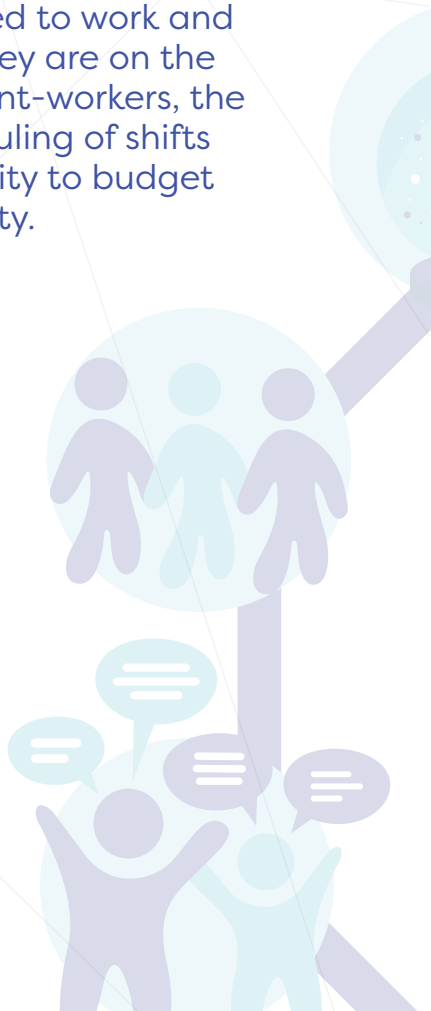
1. Finance – Stability of income allows student-workers to plan ahead, buy food and pay bills without worry.

> *My grades would be better [if I didn't work]. I would have more time for studying. But financially this is not an option.*
>
> *- Student Worker*

Principle 1 of the 8F Framework is Finance: The practice of providing working students with greater stability of income within a flexible working arrangement.

When employers offer more stable and predictable hours to students, this helps students meet their study and financial needs, while businesses benefit from greater worker loyalty, improved worker well-being and commitment to the employer.

The research we conducted shows that students seek employment in hospitality, tourism and events because of the sector's flexible working arrangements, and believe in the potential of flexible working. However, once in the sector, working students often find it difficult to combine work and study, and report experiencing income instability due to limited predictability in terms of the hours/shifts per week students are allocated to work and the days on which they are on the rota. For many student-workers, the unpredictable scheduling of shifts can impact their ability to budget and can cause anxiety.



Tips for Employers

Try to get to know your student-workers and their needs better. Are they in a difficult financial situation? Do they need a certain amount of shifts per week to be able to pay for their bills and food?

Within the context of your business and what your business situation allows, is there scope to provide more stability of income or more predictable shift patterns or to use a multi-week rota?

Where business needs allow, is there greater scope to accommodate the working hours or patterns that students request? Doing so can help them with planning ahead and help alleviate money worries as well as increase their commitment to you as their employer.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

When student-workers have a more stable income and can plan their spending and work schedule, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and stay longer with their employer. This can result in reduced turnover and increased productivity, benefiting the employer and the sector as well as the student.

2. Flexibility – Flexibility of working hours enables students to balance work with study.

Principle 2 of the 8F Framework is Flexibility: The practice of scheduling shifts more collaboratively with student workers.

We will now explore additional challenges that shift scheduling practices can inadvertently cause for working students. While there is some overlap with Principle 1, the focus here is not on financial insecurity but on the nature of shift scheduling and how students can perceive this.

When employers take a more collaborative approach to shift scheduling, the relationship between student-worker and employer improves. By involving student-workers more in the decision-making around shifts, planning shift allocation early, and considering their university commitments, employers can enhance retention of student-workers and gain more loyalty from them.

Hospitality jobs are often the first-ever jobs for young people and students see these jobs as valuable for their future careers and as experience that increases their employability. Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that as many as 260,000 full-time students worked on zero-hour contracts in 2021, representing 25% of all such contracts in the UK. Students seek jobs in hospitality, tourism and events because of flexibility. In general, these jobs are a good match for students, and in principle, flexible working can work very well. For students, the ability to work evenings and weekends helps with meeting university commitments, and students learn new skills to enhance their CV.

In practice, student-workers often have limited capacity to influence their working times and not all workplaces can give students the flexibility they require to be able to meet university and other commitments. Many students find themselves unable to shape their schedules, which can have a negative impact on their university commitments (e.g. they miss classes and rush assignments) and general well-being (being too tired to perform well). Often, students are asked to do more shifts than they can manage or have their shifts suddenly reduced or increased. They are also worried about refusing shifts because they do not want to lose their jobs.

Tips for Employers

Consider if shift scheduling is done in a collaborative enough way and if there is a need or scope to make it more collaborative.

Where possible, consider allocating shifts as early as possible so that student-workers have maximum notice of when they need to work and try to avoid making last-minute changes to the rota.

Regular communication with student-workers makes them feel more like part of the team and that their needs matter.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

Addressing the needs of working students through a more collaborative shift scheduling process can lead to multiple positive outcomes for employers and the hospitality sector. Student-workers who have some say in their schedule are more likely to feel valued and committed to their employer, resulting in improved staff retention and better staff satisfaction for the employer.

3. Fundamentals – Meaningful inductions and on-the-job training increase student-workers' confidence.

> *We started working straight away and we needed to learn while working. I was quite nervous because obviously I didn't want to do things wrong. I haven't done that before. They kind of threw me in at the deep end*
>
> *- Student Worker*

Principle 3 of the 8F Framework is Fundamentals: The practice of getting the basics of employment right for this worker group.

For many students, hospitality/tourism/events work is their first-ever employment experience and the experiences they have — both experiences good and experiences bad — working in these roles form an important part of their socialisation to work and understanding of workplace norms.

While student-workers are keen to learn new skills and improve, they often find the training and induction provided by their employers not quite enough.

Offering effective induction and meaningful on-the-job training increases student-worker confidence, enhances students' ability to perform the job well and increases their commitment to the employer.

Tips for Employers

To ensure students feel supported and can do their jobs well, consider:

Introducing a more detailed induction programme that meets the needs of young people in their first-ever jobs.

Providing training opportunities on a regular basis to update skills, increase confidence and reduce mistakes.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

Student-workers who receive the necessary training feel more confident and capable in their roles, leading to them providing a better customer experience.

4. Fairness – Recognition of student-workers' contributions through equitable remuneration and in-work benefits increases loyalty and retention.

> *There were a lot of situations with my boss ... she would ring me up and ask me to come in last minute and I'd kind of had plans for the day, but I'd still go in and cancel my day*
>
> *- Student Worker*

Principle 4 of the 8F Framework is Fairness: The practice of seeking to bring more equity in work relations.

35% of hospitality workers are aged 24 and under. Our research shows that, for these young workers, relationships with employers can have a profound impact on student-workers, the way they perform their roles and their commitment to that employer. Two things are key:

The extent to which student-workers feel that they are treated fairly
The ways in which they feel they are differentially treated compared to other worker groups.
Through addressing the above, employers can improve their reputation as a good place for students to work, retain their student-workers over a longer period and increase the attractiveness of the sector for students to work in while studying and to build their career in post-graduation.

Our research shows that despite working hard and taking shifts at short notice, student-workers can feel differentially treated and miss out on rewards available to other worker groups, which can make them feel under-appreciated.

Those students who feel their contributions are recognised and valued by their employer, work harder for their employer, contribute more and stay longer.

Tips for Employers

Reflect on whether in your workplace working students are treated the same as other workers in terms of pay and recognition.

Consider whether working relations and communication as relates to this worker group could be further improved.

Communicate your expectations clearly to students but also, where possible, reward them for their contribution.

Look at whether your student-workers are remunerated fairly with their experience and skills taken into account rather than just based on the minimum wage level for their age group.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

Working to bring in more fairness with student-workers can help make the hospitality sector more attractive for them post-graduation and be beneficial for the sector's reputation as a good place to work.

5. Fear-Free – Cultivation of a safe working environment and a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment increases staff wellbeing and improves performance.

> *I just feel harassed. There were some guys who were pretty nasty, and some were literally my dad's age, and I don't feel comfortable with them saying certain things to you.*
>
> *- Student Worker*

Principle 5 of the 8F Framework is Fear-Free: The practice of cultivating a safe working environment and zero-tolerance towards harassment of student-workers.

A recent government consultation found that over 50% of women are sexually harassed in UK workplaces and sexual harassment is particularly prevalent in the hospitality sector, with young workers, female workers and ethnic minority workers more likely to experience sexual harassment. Our research similarly found that not all students feel safe at work. This is due to their young age, inexperience and the nature of customer-service workplaces. Many student-workers — commonly young, predominantly female — reported experiencing sexual harassment and anti-social behaviour at work, which affected their well-being and confidence. Working students, can feel that their employers do not support them to the extent they need in dealing with difficult customers and anti-social behaviour.

Tips for Employers

Consider whether your business has good processes in place for workers to report incidents at work.

Have clear guidelines for workers on what to do in different situations.

Consider introducing training for workers on how to deal with challenging situations and how to report harassment. Take harassment reports seriously and try to resolve issues promptly.

If no harassment policies are currently in place, consider introducing a policy specifically addressing worker harassment. Here is a link to UK Hospitality resources for employers on how to prevent sexual harassment at work.

Provide support for workers who are affected. Do communicate to your workers that this issue is important and who they can speak to get support.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

By creating a safer fear-free work environment, employers can provide better working conditions for student-workers and create the conditions for fostering student-workers who stay with them over a longer period.

6. Freedom – Freedom for student-workers to voice concerns and opinions increases levels of engagement with work.

> *I felt like [as a young woman and student] I didn't have the respect that I need in that job to fulfil it appropriately ... I think we need to be given more trust and more support in what we do.*
>
> *- Student Worker*

Principle 6 of the 8F Framework is Freedom: The practice of encouraging student voice at work.

Brexit and pandemic-induced challenges have left 30% of hospitality businesses struggling to fill vacancies and the sector with staff shortages of 400,000. Despite the availability of roles and the need of employers to hire, attracting and retaining staff can hampered by the sector's long-standing reputation for poor working practices.

One aspect of this is worker voice. Our research shows that students can feel not listened at work due to a combination of young age and their status as part-time workers. Student-workers are keen to be able to share their perspectives and contribute their ideas to their workplace.

Providing formal and informal outlets for student-worker voice can lead to better retention of the student workforce.

Tips for Employers

Identify what formal and informal outlets you currently have for student-worker voice and the effectiveness of these.

Consider the extent to which your student-workers are consulted about workplace changes in comparison to other worker groups.

Make time to talk to your student-workers about their needs and do seek their feedback.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

Currently, due to a lack of outlets for student-worker voice, to create a change in their personal situation, this group often chooses exit (to switch employer and workplace). Providing a meaningful outlet for student-worker voice can increase retention and reduce churn of the student workforce.

7. Friendship – Inclusion of student-workers in work social events and outings increases feelings of worth and belonging.

> *The kitchen staff all went out for a meal that was funded to boost team morale. We've [part-time student-workers] never had that ... if you are going to give one [team] money to go out you should do it for all of them ... That makes you a little bit demotivated.*
>
> *- Student Worker*

Principle 7 of the 8F Framework is Friendship: The practice of creating a sense of workplace belonging for your student-workers.

Student-workers want to feel part of the team and to have meaningful social interactions at work. They seek an environment where they can build friendships, establish connections, and feel valued as integral members of the team. For young workers, especially those who are in their first-ever jobs, the social aspect of work is crucial for them and can help them develop a sense of belonging to the employer as well as gaining confidence.

By making student-workers feel part of the team, creating a sense of workplace belonging for your student-workers and encouraging more meaningful social interactions, employers can improve staff retention, job satisfaction, and overall workplace culture. Student-workers, on the other hand, will experience a more positive socialisation into the world of work and be more likely to stay longer with an employer where they feel content.

Tips for Employers

Reflect on whether you currently include student-workers in social events and team-building activities.

Consider the extent to which you encourage students and other co-workers to socialise and get to know each other, to make work about more than work.

Look to see if there are any divisions at work between student-workers and other worker groups, and, if so, whether there is potential to mitigate these more effectively.

Take time to get to know your student workforce and find out if they feel part of the team.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

When student-workers feel part of a team and have positive social interactions, it enhances the overall workplace atmosphere which can lead to improved student-worker retention, higher job satisfaction and increased productivity and engagement. Additionally, creating positive and inclusive work environments can help change the sector's reputation and make it a more attractive sector for students to work in longer term and to seek to build their careers in.

8. Future – Development and promotion of student-workers facilitates socialisation into work and helps develops future leaders and professionals in the field.

Principle 8 of the 8F Framework is Future: The practice of seeing student-workers as potential future long-term employees and developing them for a career in the industry.

There are 1.2 million student-workers in the UK workforce. Many work in hospitality, tourism and events while studying and for many it's their first-ever job. These early employment experiences are key to shaping worker identity and career choices post-graduation.

Our research shows that students who work in the sector want to develop and grow at work; not all see the job as just a temporary role. Many student-workers in our study saw these jobs as a gateway to a potential career opportunity. However, they largely did not feel that there were many opportunities for them to develop their skills and get promoted. These early experiences of work were key in shaping their perception of the sector as a desirable place in which to develop their careers.

Seeing your student-workers as potential long-term workers who are worth investing in and offering development opportunities can lead to the creation of a better-skilled and committed workforce for your business. The sector as a whole can benefit from acquiring a more positive image where more student-workers will want to stay beyond graduation.

Tips for Employers

Consider the extent to which there is scope in your business to invest more in the development of your student workforce. Is there more that can be done to develop their skills further?

Reflect on the extent to which you know your student workforce in terms of their broader ambitions and plans for the future.

Work to build relations with your student-workers and check in with them if they are considering staying in the industry, and consider making them aware of upcoming roles and any promotion/development opportunities that may be available.

For those student-workers who indicate that a career in the sector could be for them, consider introducing a mentoring scheme where the student-worker is buddied with a more permanent or senior member of the team.

Encourage students to see their roles as developmental and encourage them to reflect on the skills they develop at your workplace, and how you could further develop their skills.

Envisaged outcomes for employers and the sector

Changing the way student-workers are seen and developed can help create a more positive image of the industry, lead to the retention of a better skilled and more committed workforce that develops from student-workers to graduate-level roles in the industry.

The 8F Framework	The challenges student-workers face	What this worker group needs	Benefits for employers	Benefits for student-workers
Finance: Providing stability of income within flexibility.	The ways in which shifts are sometimes allocated can result in students being unable to plan ahead and can cause income insecurity and anxiety.	Students seek greater stability of income within flexibility.	Improved staff retention and satisfaction.	You will enable them to experience less income instability which will help them plan their spending better and reduce anxiety around financial pressures.
Flexibility: Scheduling shifts collaboratively	Students can find themselves unable to shape their schedule, which can impact their commitment to both work and their studies.	To the extent that business needs allow, students would like to be more included in shift allocation.	Student-workers become more committed to the employer. Employers can then benefit from improved staff retention (reduced stress for student-workers).	You will enable these young workers to more effectively combine work and study, and some of the detrimental impacts on their university performance can be alleviated.
Fundamentals: Getting the basics right	Students can struggle with doing their job well when they received limited formal training.	Students desire more meaningful training opportunities and detailed induction.	Better trained staff, improved staff morale and improved customer service.	Increased confidence and improved skills.
Fairness: Ensuring equity in work relations	Even though many student-workers have several years of experience in the sector, some feel their employers perceive them as transient and that they are treated or rewarded differently to other staff.	Students would like to be recognised as valued workers whose contributions are appreciated and are renumerated according to experience.	Improved image of the sector and better student-worker retention.	Improved self-esteem through greater employer appreciation.
Fear-Free: Ensuring safety at work	Student-workers can be particularly vulnerable to harassment. As young workers, they can feel that they do not quite get the level of support from employers they need to feel comfortable and perform their roles well.	Student-workers would benefit from more training on how to manage difficult situations at work and from employers bringing in clear processes for managing harassment that can happen in the workplace.	Safer workplaces, happier workers and better experiences at work.	Improved wellbeing from feeling safer at work.
Freedom: Encouraging student voice at work	Student-workers report having limited outlets to share their perspectives.	An outlet for worker voice and for employers to take students' perspectives more into consideration.	Better student-worker retention and job satisfaction.	Increased confidence and greater engagement at work.
Friendships: Making students feel part of the team	Student-workers can struggle to feel part of the team. This can lead to them taking a more instrumental approach to work and showing limited commitment.	The social aspect of work, in particular interactions at work with managers and co-workers, is very influential for young workers and shapes their sense of belonging to their employer.	Enhanced workplace culture and improved staff retention.	Enhanced feelings of belonging and enhanced work relations.
Future: Developing future workers and citizens	Student-workers feel their employers do not always see them as potential future workers to be developed and invested in.	Students are interested in development and promotion opportunities.	More positive image and perception of the industry, creation of a better skilled and committed workforce, and increased student-worker retention.	Better work identity development as well as personal and professional development. More meaningful relations with employer that go beyond the transactional. Overall, a more positive experience of socialising into the world of work.

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Students for Hospitality, Hospitality for Students

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