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A new survey from the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) took a snapshot of changes to hiring amongst 179 employers, who shared their insights during the period between 20th April and 4th May. As a group, representing a varied spread across sectors and regions, and even including some smaller employers (small-to-medium enterprises make up a major proportion of graduate destinations for UCL students and nearly 30% of the group surveyed had fewer than 250 employees), their insights show a useful development from our first [Employer Insights Update](#) in April 2020 following March research. This new data explores employers' reactions from a time when the UK was beginning to have discussions about how and when lockdown might potentially come to an end—giving businesses a clearer idea about what sort of recruitment timeline they might be working with.

Where has lockdown had the biggest impact on employers and how?

The greatest impact of the UK lockdown, which began in mid-March, has been notably on small and medium sized employers (those with fewer than 250 employees, and less than 50 million Euro annual turnover). Half of them reported negative responses when asked about the overall impact of the pandemic, with 20% neutral and just 30% positive. Nearly half were most urgently concerned about the financial impact of the lockdown on their ability to survive as a business, and therefore heavily trending towards postponing all hiring plans, or even cancelling job offers, as priorities lie with protecting current staff. Concerns about business sustainability were particularly highlighted in responses from employers in the energy, engineering, and industry sector; the legal and professional services sector; and the retail and FMCG sectors.

What changes to recruitment and on-boarding are being made?

While changes to recruitment plans for all businesses are generally being driven by the financial impact on their business; large employers are also anxious about their ability to support new hires. Some have expressed concern and hesitation about on-boarding new starters and interns completely remotely, whilst they wish to ensure new starters are feel a sense of belonging and students have a meaningful learning experience. Adjustments range from increasing the amount of learning and development available online, to shortening the duration of their learning and development programmes or delaying them altogether.

What are employers plans for recruitment and inductions moving forward?

Despite some firms' misgivings, adapting to online recruitment and inductions may become the new normal, and catalyse longer-term change into more flexible approaches and greater use of technology. We should expect a long-term move from employers to make greater use of

technology in their recruitment processes. Indeed, more than 50% of larger firms actually reported positive reflections on the overall impact of the lockdown! The shorter term picture is now quite clear – firms are reporting drops in recruitment numbers— not as big as initially feared, but still substantial – and internships and placement numbers are the hardest hit. However, graduate roles are seeing less of a negative impact than non-graduate roles such as apprenticeships. Looking forward to next year, it may be that many employers are still not in a position to plan too far ahead. 40% of surveyed employers still don't know what their next intake's numbers will look like, but longer-term changes to their processes of recruitment, and therefore how students should prepare for them, are likely here to stay.