



Fair access to the professions

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Summary

- "Fair Access" to the professions means bright people from all backgrounds should have opportunities to work towards professional careers, without facing financial obstacles and social and cultural barriers. This is beneficial to society and beneficial to unlocking talent for our profession.
- The CII has a history of actively encouraging fair access. We promote the profession in schools, and to non-graduates and career-changers via apprenticeships. Our aim is to create a diverse and inclusive profession.
- As a body actively promoting higher standards of professionalism in financial services, we support the government taking a more active role in initiatives to raise the profile of professionalism.
- We welcome government initiatives, policies, or programmes to broaden flexible and non-graduate routes to the professions. This can be through creating and communicating opportunities such as work placements, 'tasters', and internships for young people.
- We also aim to educate the industry of the benefits of these initiatives both to employers and the wider profession.

Policy Background

The professional sector is the largest employer in the UK, with 11.5% of total employment, equivalent to 3,465,000 jobs.¹ In an increasingly service-orientated economy, the sector is forecast to see strong employment growth. Professional and managerial roles will make up over 90% of total jobs growth to 2020.

Fair and equal access to the professions is a key part of the government's strategy to improve social mobility.² An expert panel chaired by Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP reported earlier this year that many of Britain's professions have become socially exclusive and made recommendations to address this 'closed shop' mentality.³

Up to seven million more professionals are likely to be needed in Britain by 2020 as the global economy expands. A new focus is therefore needed, the report says, to unleash aspiration in all children and make social mobility the number one social policy priority for this and future governments.

CII Position

As the leading professional body for insurance and financial services, the CII has been heavily involved in the ongoing fair access debate, and remains committed to promoting the profession to talented individuals from all backgrounds. Although professions have made much progress over the years; social mobility and access to the professions remains an ongoing concern. The UK ranked near the bottom in a 2005 study of social mobility in the US and Europe.⁴

¹ IER 2006/SSDA Sector Skills Matrix 2008

² The New Opportunities White Paper sets out this agenda: <http://www.hmg.gov.uk/newopportunities.aspx>

³ Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 21 July 2009 http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/accessprofessions.aspx

⁴ *Intergenerational Mobility in Europe and North America* April 2005 <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/about/news/IntergenerationalMobility.pdf>

- **Focus on merit:** the CII has for years focused its existence on the principle of merit, whereby the professional advancement of its members is based largely on examination performance. The objectiveness of its course design and examination assessment practices, including their sensitivity to diversity issues such as accessibility, remains under regular review. We recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that clear, meritocratic entry standards.
- **Talent comes from all backgrounds:** We agree with the Insurance Industry Working Group report's recommendation that the industry should work together, and with the relevant government and other interest groups such as ourselves and the ABI, to develop and attract the best talent to ensure that there is a deep pool of insurance professionals with the right skills in technical and managerial disciplines.⁵ We believe that bringing more talent into our sector must go beyond those educated in private schools and Russell Group universities. Also, in critical relation to the first point, the professions must help individuals from all backgrounds reach those highest standards.
- **Focus on alternate entry routes:** The search for talent does not begin and end at university. We are keen to emphasise non-graduate routes to the professions, and would welcome government initiatives, programmes or policies to broaden these routes, such as work experience and apprenticeships, and, importantly, to communicate these opportunities and erase any lingering negative perceptions about non-university routes to the professions.

CII work to promote fair access to the professions

- **Raising the profile of insurance and financial services:** The CII is working hard to raise the profile of insurance and financial services in order to attract talent into the industry, collaborating with firms, universities, FE colleges, and schools. Our work to promote careers in our sector has recently been extended beyond universities to cover schools, colleges and Apprentices. This includes visits, information materials, and an advanced web proposition.
- **Promotion of Apprenticeships & help to navigate funding system:** We work closely with Apprenticeship providers and employers to bring together supply and demand so as to best meet the needs of our profession. At present there are Apprenticeships both in insurance⁶ and financial services⁷ that contain CII qualifications. We also provide information to our members to help them navigate the funding system.
- **Inter-professional collaboration:** The CII is a member of several inter-professional groups, and has been working together with these and other professional bodies to develop initiatives to broaden access to the professions. Working with the group Equally Professional and the Professional Associations Research Network,⁸ we were able to submit a group response to the Panel's Call for Evidence in March 2009, resulting in a united view to government with a clear and powerful voice.
- **Ongoing research agenda:** We will continue our work to encourage a truly diverse and inclusive profession through our research agenda. Upcoming research will explore the perceptions of students towards careers in different professions, with a particular focus on the insurance industry. Through this research the CII seeks to ascertain, among other things, what the industry can do to encourage more diversity within its employment market.

The Chartered Insurance Institute is the world's leading professional organisation for insurance and financial services, with over 93,000 members in 150 countries. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of technical expertise and ethical conduct in the profession through research, education and accreditation. Our Charter remit is to protect the public by guiding the profession.

For more information on the CII and its policy and public affairs function, including examples of the range of issues in financial services and insurance that we cover, please see: www.cii.co.uk/policy.

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⁵ The IIWG report, Vision for the insurance industry in 2020, is available here: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/fin_insurance_index.htm

⁶ <http://www.cii.co.uk/generalinsurance/apprenticeships/apprenticeship.aspx>

⁷ http://www.cii.co.uk/financialservices/apprenticeships/apprenticeship_about.aspx

⁸ <http://www.parnqlobal.com/>