

# The Skills Show – Indian Participants



## A First for Indian Students

A group of Indian students participated for the first time in the UK's largest annual skills and careers advice show. The Skills Show 2015 attracted around 75,000 visitors to the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, giving the Indian students, along with 136 participants from 20 other countries, the opportunity to showcase their skills and compete against some of the most talented young people in the UK.

The Skills Show was inspired by World Skills, which is held every two years in different locations around the world to showcase vocational skills.

The Skills Show is the UK's largest annual skills and careers advice show, organised by Find a Future to give young people access to vocational careers information and hands-on activities. It also provides opportunities for young people to meet employers and industry experts, and compete against one another. It has been held every year since 2011 and research shows that there is a 15% increase each year in visitors' awareness of vocational opportunities and their likelihood of going into some kind of vocational training.

## Showcasing skills

This was the first time that Indian students had taken part in the show and their involvement was thanks to a collaborative partnership between The British Council India and the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), the Indian government organisation that promotes skills and improves employment prospects for young people in India. The two organisations joined together to provide a platform for Indian students with vocational skills to come to the UK to learn from industry experts, to forge contacts and to showcase their skills in a competitive environment. The show is an ideal training ground for World Skills 2017, which takes place in Abu Dhabi.

Leighton Ernsberger, Assistant Director-Skills, British Council, India said:

*“Skill India is one of the Indian government’s top priorities and rightly so. The relationship between the UK and India in the sector tends to focus on developing skills, but there is also a need to create a demand for skills. Skills competitions are an excellent means of rewarding and recognising talent and reaching out to a wide audience. The Skills Show is a great exemplar from the UK and is in tune with many similar efforts at the state level in India and led by the central government.”*

## Inspiring young people

Ben Blackledge, Head of Education and Development at Find a Future, which organises The Skills Show, said:

*“The Skills Show is all about inspiring young people to consider vocational training by allowing them to experience the huge range of careers that are on offer and to interact with employers and industry experts. Each year, overseas participants attend and compete against UK students. This gives young people an opportunity to hone their skills and allows them to experience what it is like to take part in an international competition as a way of preparing for the forthcoming World Skills show.”*

*“The Skills Show is a highly successful model and we are keen to share our learning with other show organisers around the world. We are pleased to be working with The British Council India which seeks to promote skills for employability in the country through cultural exchange programmes like this one.”*





## Regional heats

The Indian students at The Skills Show 2015 represented two important vocational sectors: gems and jewellery; and beauty and wellness. The British Council, along with the National Skill Development Corporation and the respective Sector Skills Councils (Gem and Jewellery Skill Council of India and Beauty and Wellness Sector Skills Council, support by the Confederation of Indian Industries) held regional heats across seven Indian cities. The objective was to select those students who would be sponsored and supported by the British Council to attend the Skills Show in the UK. The six winners were: Ashwini Hemant Tareh (19) and Karishma Sunil Gupta (18) from Pune; Tabassum Sulthana (19) from Chennai; Shweta Singh (20) and Savita Palariya (20) from Uttarakhand and Pooja Rani (20) from Delhi.

## Benchmarking against the best

Ranjan Choudhary of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) said:

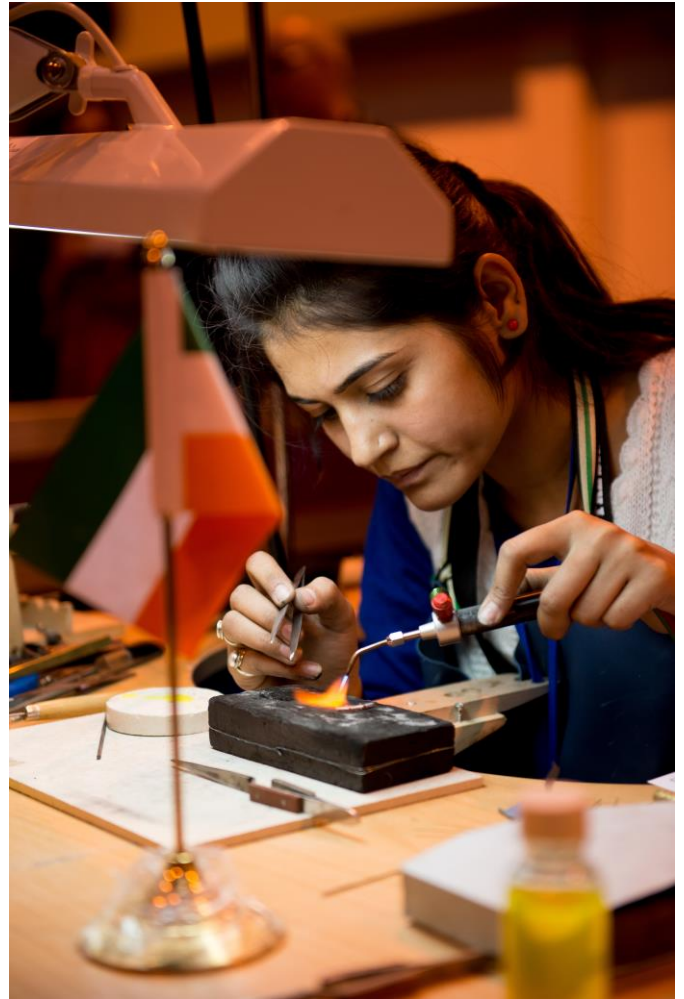
*“There are many advantages for us in participating in The Skills Show. Our students benefit from exposure to contemporary techniques and skills and can benchmark themselves against the best from the UK. Their involvement in the show will have a significant impact on their confidence, skills and employment prospects. They, in turn, will cascade their learning to their peer group and work environment. Our industry experts also benefit from observing best practices and networking with their counterparts from the UK. WorldSkills India and NSDC appreciate the opportunity to participate and being able to interact with Find a Future to learn how we can organise an event of similar size and scope in India.”*

## Better employment prospects

Parag Vyas, Expert in Gems and Jewelry, has spent 20 years creating fine jewelry in his home region of Northern India. He commented:

*“It is great for our students to come to the UK to compete. They get to experience new tools, new ways of working with metals and different cultural styles. They also have to overcome multiple challenges, including understanding a different language, different requirements and even coping with the British weather.”*

*“At The Skills Show 2015, our students learned a lot about finishing techniques and piercing during the show and they are bringing these new skills back to India with them. Their employers have already reported an improvement in the quality of their work and, for the young people themselves, the long-term impact of coming to the show is likely to be better employment prospects and the chance to earn a higher salary.”*



*“When students learn from people in different cultures, they learn new ways of doing things that are outside their traditional approaches. Although a big part of The Skills Show is the competition, actually what I witnessed is a great deal of co-operation and the sharing of knowledge and experience. It is this that is of greatest value for the students, in my opinion.”*

## Improved training

The event also benefits the industry experts who share experiences and judge their individual heats, as well as the host and visiting countries. Vaishali Shah, Expert Beauty and Wellbeing, said:

*“I was really impressed by how friendly and supportive my fellow industry experts were. As a trainer, I am constantly sharing my expertise. Having a greater knowledge of international standards will help to improve my training and will enable me to share what I’ve learned with colleagues.”*

Valerie Kay, Expert Beauty and Wellbeing added: *“Things change very rapidly in the health and beauty industry and education tends to be slow to keep up. To learn from one another and to compete on an international platform is a great way for students to learn.”*

## What the participants said....

*“It was a great experience. It gave me more confidence and helped me to develop my skills, including improving my English.”*

Savita Palaria, student of jewellery design

*“It teaches you to remain focused when there are lots of distractions. I learned new massage techniques and technical skills, such as how to improve my time management so that I complete my treatments on time.”*

Karishma Sunil Gupta, student of beauty therapy

## Far-reaching benefits

Participating in the Skills Show has far-reaching benefits for vocational students and their employers, educators, industry experts and the countries that take part. These include:

- **For students** – exposure to new skills and techniques; the chance to benchmark their skills against some of the best; improved employment prospects; improved reputation leading to more profitable job opportunities; greater confidence as a result of performing under competitive conditions.
- **For their employers** – students returning from the competition with greater levels of competence, new skills and increased confidence; the prestige of employing staff who have competed on an international platform; the opportunity to promote this as part of their business offer.
- **For educators** – the chance to network with fellow educators from overseas; an opportunity to refresh their knowledge and learn about cutting edge techniques and processes,
- **For industry experts** – the chance to network and share with overseas counterparts; the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise outside traditional boundaries, the reward of seeing students develop their skills and confidence; the opportunity to hold regional heats as a way of identifying the most talented students in their sector.
- **For participating countries** – the introduction of proven skills and expertise from overseas; an effective way of broadening the scope of key industries and driving up standards; the opportunity to learn from Skills Show organisers in order to host their own skills shows; the chance to pressure test students for the World Skills competition.

## What the sponsors said...

*“Jewellery making is a problem-solving craft. It is about working with a client to turn a 2D design into a 3D object and it takes time to develop the skills and expertise to do that. By competing in a very different environment, students develop transferable skills that enable them to do this more effectively. The Skills Show bridges the gap between fantastic craftsmen and aspiring makers.”*

*“It is not just a one-way process, however. It is fascinating to see the different skills that international participants bring. It broadens the scope of the industry and helps young people to realise that the world is a far smaller place than it was. When you’re learning a craft like this, you’re learning an international language.”*

Chris Oliver, Curriculum Leader, The Goldsmiths Centre