

University of Hertfordshire

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“In accelerating our ambitions to work with employers in new and creative ways, we will embody a new model of a university - a university which has the agility and strength to thrive in the new global economy. “ (Professor Tim Wilson Vice-Chancellor, University of Hertfordshire)

“The university (of Hertfordshire) is receiving funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England for its 'UHEvolution' project, which is engaging employers in a variety of ways and which may in due course result in improved employment outcomes for its graduates”. (Bill Rammell, written answer to question by Oliver Heald, MP North East Hertfordshire – September 2007)

"Hertfordshire university has already positioned itself strategically as a business facing university" (Times Higher Education Supplement – September 2007)

According to the premises, in the future learning will be driven by the needs of employers and learners so it's really indicated to create a business-faced approach focusing on students', staff's, alumni's and employers' expectations.

In early 2007 the **UHEvolution** project (January 2007 – December 2008) was launched with financial backing from the **Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)**. Focused on six key areas, it is enabling the university to lead the way in developing a model of a business-facing university. All areas of the university have increased their engagement with businesses, employers and professional bodies in a wide range of ways, relating their unique strengths to the needs of external organisations. The UHEvolution project focuses on helping everyone involved with the university to move forward together to achieve the plan's goals in these six key areas:

- **UHExcel** – developing a flexible blended learning environment for graduates, alumni and businesses
- **UHFit for the Future** – simplifying internal processes and systems in line with the new agenda

- **UHIInnovative Solutions** – ‘hot-housing’ new solutions to business problems
- **UHInvest** – supporting early business start-ups
- **UHMindset** – embedding a business-facing culture amongst staff
- **UHTalent** – enhancing students’ employability and entrepreneurial abilities

To bring these plans to fruition more quickly and to become an exemplar for other universities, the university was selected by the HEFCE to deliver a **£4.2 million project** aimed at driving employer engagement. It received the highest funding of the five higher education institutions to be granted awards.

Through **UHIInnovative Solutions**, the university has accelerated the development of a new dynamic multifunctional hub at the heart of the University called the **Centre for Entrepreneurial Development (CfED)**, which stimulates enterprise and innovation and supports the embedding of entrepreneurship education campus wide. Several interrelated strands provide a range of opportunities for students, staff and alumni to develop and apply innovative and enterprising skills; the key ones are:

- The **Graduate Consulting Unit (GCU)** is a pioneering service that matches outstanding graduate talent with the strategic needs of its business clients. Short-term commercial research and design projects are undertaken by graduates, mentored by experienced business professionals and leading academics. Expert solutions are provided at affordable rates, whilst graduates are given exposure to the commercial world, boosting their future employment prospects. The GCU is currently recruiting talented and entrepreneurial students. Undergraduates, Post Graduates and PhD students are all eligible to apply. Only a limited number of applicants are successful in the highly competitive recruitment process.
The unit goes from strength-to-strength and has now generated **fees of over £200,000**, undertaken **56 projects** and engaged **over 50 students** in those projects with the support of UHEvolution.
- **Enterprise Spotlight** brings inspirational speakers to the University to share their wisdom, knowledge and expertise. These motivational sessions are guaranteed to empower students and staff with an enterprising spirit. These monthly events also offer an opportunity for networking, bringing together students, practicing professionals and businesses to share experiences and to collaborate on new projects.

- The **Enterprise Wednesday** workshops focus on a different aspect of enterprise each week. These series cover a wide range of topics, including *Business Start-Up*, *Business Planning* and *Pitching Your Idea*. All workshops are delivered by expert trainers and business professionals. It is increasingly recognised that enterprising skills are vital for all, so students and staff can attend all sessions.
- CfED manages the **Business Intelligence** website which aims to support and inform senior management and will enable users to access relevant information to support business development activities.
- A new group of professionals has been recruited to support enterprise at the university. Six **Business Development Coordinators** have been recruited to create a dedicated service between UH's business-to-business client base and academic expertise at faculty level. This new team will work with their Sector Partner Champions, Marketing Executives and Knowledge Transfer team to accelerate their business-facing activities and encourage cross-faculty solutions to private and public organisations.
- **Flare** is the Business Ideas Challenge at the University of Hertfordshire. It's a competition, which involves three rounds. The first simply requires the competitor(s) to submit a business idea; the second round requires the writing of a business plan (with full support); the third round involves preparing a short elevator pitch and a question and answer session with the judging panel. The competition is open to full or part-time students (undergraduate or postgraduate), members of staff at the University (including tenants of the Innovation Centre) and alumni. There is no age limit to the challenge.

This year UH had a spectacular £20,000 prize fund! There were some prizes available including cash, training and consultancy providing aspiring entrepreneurs with the opportunity to develop an idea and kick-start a real business.

Additionally all competition entrants receive a wide range of benefits including access to exclusive training events.

Mentors are specially selected for their experience and insight into a particular area. Each Flare finalist are also allocated a one-2-one mentor who they can call on to assist with their business plan production and elevator pitch preparation. Support is also offered by The Centre for Entrepreneurial Development in the form of Enterprise Wednesdays and Enterprise Spotlights which are open to all Flare entrants.

The judging panel consists of a mixture of professionals and practitioners of different ages and genders. All judges are asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement, which serves to protect the participant's idea(s).

It's a good way for students finding out about the CfED through an initiative. Lots of people know about the Flare and through Flare they find out that the university actually has a centre which can help them supporting their entrepreneurial intentions.

- **Business Challenge Day:** Aspiring entrepreneurs from schools in Hertfordshire were put to the test at the University of Hertfordshire in an exciting Dragons' Den style – it's a famous TV show in the UK, where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas for financial support - competition. The collaborative event, run by the university's Business School and Centre for entrepreneurial Development saw 177, Year 12 students from 15 schools go head to head to impress a team of judges with their business ideas. Throughout the day, teams were able to benefit from the expertise of tutors from the university and members of the Institute of Directors, who were all on hand to provide feedback and advice on everything from marketing and promotion to finance and equity stakes. It was a great success and the university is already planning for next year.
- Saracens rugby club squad members participated in a **bespoke introductory course on entrepreneurship** designed by the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development. The course explored what is involved in creating a business, and encouraged squad members to think wider about the skills and experience they have. By the end of the course, squad members had produced a selection of viable business ideas that they could go on to launch in the future.

Marketing@UH is an innovative programme run by the UH Business School. Designed to help businesses and organisations develop their marketing activity, teams of students work with clients to formulate marketing plans.

Working in teams – as part of 'Marketing planning in practise' module - the students undertake four linked assignments - identifying a research problem and designing research relevant to their organisation's business needs, developing a new product or service based on their primary research findings and producing a marketing plan to deliver agreed strategic objectives. Clients get a fresh perspective and new thinking for their business combined with an opportunity to undertake business specific market research in a cost effective way.

This year (2008) 17 clients were working with student teams on 23 different projects covering a diverse range of sectors including IT/technical, creative/media, manufacturing, services, not for profit and voluntary organisations. Each project has a different brief relevant to the specific needs of the client. Students find it really inspiring and useful.

The ***UH Innovation Centre*** is a purpose built three storey office complex comprising 41 office units and provides any SME whether a start-up or well established a unique environment within which to grow their business. Access to top level expertise and wide-ranging facilities are key attractions for growing companies seeking a base within the Hertfordshire and North London region. The three-storey building on the main Hatfield Campus aims to nurture established businesses that are still in their growth stage. It's the perfect environment for knowledge-based companies looking for space to grow physically and in expertise through a relationship with the University.

The ***Business Partnership Office (BPO)*** is a business unit established within the University of Hertfordshire to act as a conduit between the academic community on site and the external business community. The Business Partnership Office acts as a first-stop shop for businesses wishing to access the University's expertise and facilities, and to develop more extensive links between the University, industry and commerce.

As mentioned above, ***UHInvest*** aims to extend the university agenda for entrepreneurship by supporting early stage companies involving their students and staff in partnership with the alumni and close business associates. By building a portfolio of successful investments, this UHEvolution project intends to create a firm and sustainable platform for all future UH business ventures using high calibre managers, processes and structures. One experimental venture, Restaurant Innovations Limited, has been launched already. The company has its offices in the UH Innovation Centre and the Computer Science staff are providing system and software development services. A new biotechnology venture is also in the making. Both ventures will benefit from marketing services supplied by the Graduate Consulting Unit. In April 2008 UHInvest supported CfED ***Enterprise Summer School***.

In January 2008 UHInvest linked up with ***UH Angels*** to connect with alumni entrepreneurs. UH Angels act as a bridge between alumni investors and entrepreneurs to help develop strong products or ideas. The entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to the UH Angel requesting a capital sum in exchange for a percentage of the company. There is no target age group for either those pitching ideas or the UH Angels, it is open to all alumni. This is an innovation in the sector as there are no other alumni offices in the UK running such a competition.

The university is a member of the **Enterprise Educators UK network**– for more details on this network see Chapter 2.

The university currently has two modules more closely related to entrepreneurship education:

Employability and entrepreneurship

The module is for *undergraduates in 2nd year, consisting of two parts:*

- **5 weeks for employability:** preparing of a **written report of 2,000 words** demonstrating an awareness of the knowledge, skills and experience required by a recent graduate to enter an area of graduate employment takes the assessment.
- **5 weeks for entrepreneurship:** completing the weekly mission **weights 20% and** generate a business idea **and** create a poster presentation **outlining the key elements of the business idea weights 80% of the assessment**

The aims of the E&E module are to enable students to:

- - enhance their employability;
- - practice and develop enterprising skills;
- - gain a better understanding of how to start a business.

StudyNet is being used extensively in support of this module; **lecture notes are uploaded in advance**, as well as the **weekly mission and task**, so they can download it and it contains a link to various **market research sources**.

Each student has one hour lecture and one hour tutorial per week.

At the moment it's a compulsory module and there are approximately 500 students each semester, it means ~1000 students a year coming through this module, so it's a large module.

The students are allocated according to the program: in Semester A people on the marketing, business studies and in Semester B the others in Business School. The university has 24,000 students; even in the Business School the 1,000 is challenging to get through.

They run a game alongside the module, that is optional to participate in: it's about trading with really anything, such as exchanging knowledge or offering services to each other and „pay” buy a virtual money, that is registered through StudyNet, the

online portal for students. So they help each other for a certain amount of virtual money. Trading can happen online (email, StudyNet) or even face-to-face. The idea is, that **at the end of the module, who has the most credits gets a reward**. If they do it face-to-face they can arrange it online afterwards.

Small business and entrepreneurship

The module is for undergraduates in 3rd year, and it's optional. It does cover elements of entrepreneurship but it also looks quite heavily at small business operations, so it's not a pure entrepreneurship module, but it does touch on some of the different skills and knowledge that you might need.

That's a double module. So it's taught in Semester A and B as well; approximately 24 weeks of teaching with having about a 180 students.

It's more **knowledge-based**; it's about understanding the characteristics of an entrepreneur and the growth in entrepreneurship.

There is a task for their coursework. The students have to run a charity and events. So they parallel with running a business and running events, so it's a real life project. The students choose the charity and they decide they are going to run an event, like for example football events or going to sell something. It's a very good example of *experiential learning* for entrepreneurship.

The assessment for the **first semester** is **an essay about a question set up by the student** in connection with what (s)he learnt and for the **second semester** there is the **charity and running an event**, they have to do a **presentation, a report** and an **exam question** about it.

Students love the module, they choose it because they want to learn about small business and entrepreneurship and the feedback is highly positive.

The university intends to synchronise the mentioned two modules in order to avoid repetition and support a more efficient learning.

The Business School is keen on having a portfolio of modules at different levels, so that when the students come through the levels they are given a different element or more specialised knowledge, if they want to.

Currently the university is following a **rather focused approach** of entrepreneurship education, as it's offering it's programs to students at business and economic studies in the Business School. However, it's not a pure focused approach

– as usually there are no pure models in practise -, rather on its way towards the university-wide concept, as the entrepreneurship centre (CfED) is not located in the Business School, though organising its initiatives through the Business School; the ‘Entrepreneurship’ module for undergraduates is compulsory for all business and economic students, and there are several initiatives targeting the whole university.

As part of ***UH Evolution and the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development*** are looking at the curriculum development and ***how to roll out best practise across the university***. The university’s got pockets of expertise and commitment from the vice-chancellor; ***it’s in the university’s strategic document that entrepreneurship will be taught***.