

Summary of entrepreneurship education at University of Lincoln



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The University of Lincoln currently has a total of 60 world-class professors; educating more than 50 different nationalities; was ranked 2nd in the UK for 'value for money for students' in a survey in The Guardian; achieved the highest possible rating in its two recent Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) inspections; in 2004 opened the Great Central Warehouse Library which won the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) East Midlands Regeneration Award in 2005.

It was the pro-vice chancellor, **Professor Andrew Atherton**, who introduced entrepreneurship education in the university at the beginning of this century (2002), with focusing mainly on the theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship. Since 2006, when the admitted researcher and educator, **Professor David Rae** joined the university as the director of Enterprise Research & Development Unit (ERDU) and professor of enterprise, a more practical approach is dominating. He calls it **Opportunity-Centred Entrepreneurship** – published even a book on this approach (Rae, Entrepreneurship - from opportunity to action, 2007) –, which is an active-learning process, indicating that becoming an entrepreneurial person involves 4 dimensions: **personal enterprise; creating and exploring opportunities; planning to realise those opportunities and then acting on the opportunities**. It's about creative thinking in the sense of generating ideas, looking at problems. The students are taught how to distinguish between an *idea* and an *opportunity*.

An opportunity has customer **demand**, people will pay for it; it's **innovative**, because you're doing something different, not just the same as other people; it's **feasible**, as you can actually do it by bringing together the resources and make it happen; and it's **attractive** to you because you want to do it and to customers/investors/other stakeholders with different interests.

So what they did here is that they **developed a supporting methodology, a supporting toolkit** to go with the learning process of entrepreneurship. They take the people through a process of creating and exploring opportunities, planning to realise those opportunities and then acting on the opportunities.

Focusing very much on which skills, attitudes, capabilities an entrepreneur needs is not as important as getting real experience, through which people can build their **practical (personal) theory** on what works and what works not for them; how it works; where it works etc. Of course it's useful to a certain degree to be explicit and to be aware of. Putting the theory into practice and learning by doing– that's what it is all about, stated Dr Rae.

In 2007 the university hosted the **Energising Enterprise in Education (3Es)** event, which is a resource for educators trying to make enterprising exciting. One of the speakers was a finalist of the very popular TV program in the UK, The Apprentice.

They also hosted an NCGE's (National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurs) initiative, the event called '**Flying start**' for student entrepreneurs, with about 200 students.

The university follows the **focused approach** of entrepreneurship education in terms of offering 3 optional modules on enterprise ("**Entrepreneurship**", "**Entrepreneurial management**" and "**Start a venture**") for undergraduates and one also optional module ("**Entrepreneurship**") for graduates in the Business School. They've got three professors on entrepreneurship and/or enterprise - **Atherton (Andrew), Rae (David), Fuller (Ted)** -, **McElwee (Gerard)**, the reader of the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and two lecturers on entrepreneurship - **Breslin (Dermot), Blanchard (Kevin)**. The university has just started on the tough way towards a university-wide approach, aiming a rather more radiant type of entrepreneurship education in longer terms, where they intend to reach all students from all studies and levels of education.

The **Enterprise Action Group** - chaired by Dr Rae, consisting of one person coming from each faculties, normally it's the business development manager from each faculty, one person from the Careers Center, one person from Sparkhouse, the student representative and a person from the student union as well – was designed to run a program of enterprising events across the university and also to develop the enterprise education.

Based on the above written, the university introduced several university-wide initiatives last year, such as the **Futures** event, open for all the university's students, staff and alumni, offering them evening programs, such as lectures and workshops led by guest speakers, outside experts, entrepreneurs. These evening activities are intended to spread the entrepreneurial mindset all across the university. The Futures is connected to people's careers, what they want to do in life, being creative. In the second week - what they call the "fresher's week" - they ran the first event and did one in every month afterwards, with about 30-80 participants, mainly students – they registered the participants by arriving – on each of these events.

They also launched a '**Winning ideas competition**'. It's promoted as INNOVATIVE, NOT as BUSINESS ideas competition as the latter could deter for example students from non-business studies from participating, stated Professor Rae. So what they have to do is develop the best ideas that can be creative, business, community or practical ideas. The university's got some prizes and looking for the best, the greatest community or business idea. The idea can be literally anything but they have to be ideas that students can implement, that they actually can make happen.

The rules: the idea has to be new; has to come from Lincoln students; needs to be legal, safe and ethical. So in terms of: what's the idea, or the opportunity, or the problem; what will you do and for who, so who are the customers and what are their benefits; how will you make it happen; what resources do you need etc. These are the kind of criteria the university set up for the participants and judge them according to these. So they are looking for innovation, creativity and expressing, communicating it, practical benefits, it's realistic and they show personal enterprise.

They had 28 entries, shortlisted 11 of the best ones and chose the 4-5 awarded ones, who had to make a presentation in the final. For all the ones, who didn't get to the first some, feedback was given.

For example, one of the ideas was from some health students, who intend to provide a kind of a '*be friending service*' for pregnant women from outside the UK, to help those women to make friends with a mother, who is from the UK. There is no business dimension to it but it's focusing on a need for expected mothers, whose experience of becoming a mother could be much worse if they don't know someone. So it's about social networking. In terms of practical benefits for the community, it's innovative; it meets a need and some other benefits from doing that.

Another group wants to project images onto big areas of open space, such as the area in front of the university to create a kind of public art work, it's a creative display.

What Dr Rae was quite pleased about is that they got people entering ideas that are much broader, than 'just' entrepreneurship, business idea, business start-ups. They're making much more other connections, which they do need to because it's about taking 'being enterprising' out of the subject of business and management, it doesn't belong into the business school, it's much wider than that.

SPEED (Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education) is a project with the leadership of Wolverhampton University, and University of Lincoln is one of its 13 partner universities¹. It's promoting some financial support and tutorial and other support for students that want to start their own business, as work experience. The students are given a ~£4500, divided into 3 equal parts, and they get the first

¹ SPEED <http://www.speedproject.ac.uk/>

part at the beginning, then the same amount for expenses (e.g. marketing, equipment) and finally the same amount of money again that buys them support within the university.

Mentorship (coaching) is provided for SPEED participants, two hours long once a month, which is quite few, said Dr Rae. They intend to be more proactive with coaching, by having regular coach meetings in the future, according to a real-time basis. Mentoring provides learning when the students go along (pull module of learning); help them through to move their business idea to the next stage.

The SPEED program is a good example of learning through practise. It's difficult for universities, because universities work with structures, modules, programs and push module of learning, but the SPEED module is different. Students are actually doing it as a workplace, as a practical learning.

SPEED is delivered through **Sparkhouse Studios**, which is an *incubator*. Its purpose is to support and to host start-up businesses. It's a practical, rather than an academic part of the education. Some of the businesses there are for undergraduates and some of them for people, coming outside of the university with an idea that has an advantage of having a connection with the university.

The maximum time the companies can spend in the incubator is currently 3 years, but there will be an extension of the building - that hasn't been started to built yet - and then maybe the time-interval will be supervised.

They have a spin-off company, called 'Stan', which has been created by two university architects, located in Sparkhouse Studios.

If we're looking at the organisation itself there are ERDU and Enterprise@Lincoln departments that are responsible for entrepreneurship stimulation at University of Lincoln. Lincoln is quite a small university in the UK, with 8000 students. That's an important point.

The **ERDU** is focusing on research projects, finding and undertaking funded research projects in enterprise, e.g. enterprise policy, enterprise education etc. It's located in the Business School. Bringing in money is the first – they are applying for EU funding as well as UK national funding, a range of different financial sources – then doing funded research, which builds a profile.

Enterprise@Lincoln is a new brand, that is intended to bring together Sparkhouse Studios, the Careers Office and the Researching Commercial Partnerships Office. It's willing to provide support service for student enterprise, for business start-ups, for careers and for employers to engage with the university.

So it's the name of the strategy but also an organization bringing together a number of service departments. Professor Atherton is responsible for this concept. When the

new Sparkhouse building will be ready they will move in there, so there will be a physical location as well.

They ran a **careers event** bringing together about 40 employers and 1400 students. It was very successful, it's the second time they've done it. So it's the ERDU taking the innovator role by implementing new, innovative initiatives to the organisation, but doesn't intend to be responsible for further operating.

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

What they are trying to develop at Lincoln is a practical approach, a practical application of enterprising skills in all entrepreneurship courses and in much longer terms all courses as well. Last year they revalidated their undergraduate programs, this year they will revalidate the postgraduate ones. The approach to personal skills development, employability and career development, and enterprise are defined as the kind of skills that should be included in every degree program, but they can be included differently in different ones, stated David Rae. They are planning to embed or insure that enterprise related skills are included in all of the degrees in the future, but in different ways and to different levels.

About the examined modules:

Start a venture

Teaching team: Gerard McElwee

<i>Supported Learning</i>	<i>60 Hours</i>
<i>Directed Learning</i>	<i>180 Hours</i>

Optional module for undergraduates in the Business School, on level 3, with two semesters.

This unit is practically based. The overall aim of the unit is for participants to go through the process of generating ideas with a view to establishing a new venture.

The unit is facilitated rather than led, and involves course participants taking a business idea through to the launch stage. In some cases it is envisaged that the course participants will actually create a new business venture. This venture may well be a company project, which would necessitate a significant business plan or it can be a new venture in a **private, public or third sector organisation**.

Intensive support is provided, but in essence it is envisaged that it is driven by the course participants themselves.

This 24-point unit is so designed to run alongside the other taught units. The theoretical underpinning and practical application will be provided by the content of these units.

Assessment:

1. An individual commentary on an interview with an entrepreneur (*Max 2000 words*)
50%
2. A complete appraisal of a new business venture (*Max 4000 words*)
50% (25% Proposal, 25% Presentation)

The teams are expected to meet at regular weekly meetings and the students are expected to present their ideas at each meeting.

The groups may have a maximum of 4 and a minimum of 2 members.

The strong point of this course is that it's **handsome, one of the few things that's really practically focused**; on the other hand **there are problems with people understanding the language (language barriers)**.

Entrepreneurship

Teaching team: Dermot Breslin, Kevin Blanchard

Optional module for undergraduates in the Business School, on level 3. It's a two semesters module:

- **Semester A** is more theoretical based mainly on academic papers, that students have to read at home and they discuss them in small groups on the seminars. The assessment takes the form of a **4000 word essay due at the end of semester A - this year's topic was a set question**, like "Discuss the role of the entrepreneur into the society" or "Entrepreneurs are born and not made",
- **Semester B** is more practical in terms of that they adopt the **behavioural approach to entrepreneurship, so teaching theories on behavioural entrepreneurship and using case studies with practical examples**. The assessment is according to an analysis, performed by the students, which must identify a key entrepreneurial issue facing the company, particularly with regard to management processes, entrepreneurial skills, strategy and organisational structure. Based on this critical analysis suggestions should be made in 3000 words regarding courses of action open to the company.

The core text is **Entrepreneurship and Small Firms**, Deakins, D. & Freel, M., 2003, 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, London and also a recommended

reading list is given to the students. The whole module contains 60 teaching hours, with one hour lecture and one hour seminar each week, during both semesters.