



# Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates

Briefing Note 4  
March 2008

NESTA



## Summary Note from Panel Meeting 1

The first meeting provided an opportunity for the panel to meet each other and the project team, discuss the detailed Terms of Reference for the scope of the project and deal with the five themes covered in the first round of Briefing Notes sent to panel members in advance of the meeting.

### Five strategic themes

The meeting was framed around the five themes outlined in Briefing Note 1 that will inform the development of the specification of requirements as the outcome from the project, and will focus on:

1. What **policies** should be adopted at a national, regional and institutional level?
2. How do we ensure **institutional support** in universities to champion entrepreneurship education with a clear vision and clarity about its outcomes, impact and value?
3. What models and **modes of engagement** for staff and students are needed to ensure that the design of the educational experience allows for innovative pedagogy and a diversity of learning outcomes?
4. How do we address the current **fragility of funding** and resources needed to mainstream this activity across campus at all universities nationally?
5. How do universities attract, train and reward **entrepreneurship educators** to ensure appropriate learning outcomes are achieved?

This note provides a synopsis of the Panel Meeting No. 1, and serves not as a minute of discussions but a summary of the key themes covered and issues raised at the meeting.

### Project objectives

The current body of evidence shows several *dimensions of variation* in the configuration of entrepreneurship education in the university sector. The objective of the DEG project is to develop a pilot specification for encouraging the development of more entrepreneurial and enterprising graduates at UK universities.

The outputs for the project will include: (1) a fully populated specification of requirements for entrepreneurship educators to implement a campus-wide strategy in their university (2) a summary note for Vice Chancellors on the specification (3) a report addressing the five strategic issues noted above for government policy makers and other stakeholders.

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## Overall purpose of the project?

The discussions highlighted two possible leverage points around which to frame the specification of requirements being developed:

- Addressing institutional culture change – a framework for university Vice Chancellors to consider the university of the future as the entrepreneurial university.
- Addressing the student learning experience – a framework focused on students and helping them create their own futures.

Regarding culture change, who must change – the government or universities as institutions? If the project is about culture change the most obvious intervention point is at a faculty level – they are the institutional memory of universities, they ‘stay forever’. If the project is about students, then we need to pitch the argument at the teaching and learning environment and develop evidence to bring about change to the practice of teaching and learning, to the role and contribution of universities to developing entrepreneurial (new venture focused) and employable (intrapreneurial) graduates who are innovative, creative thinkers, knowledge centred and entrepreneurial.

## Taking a student centred approach

“Develop the person, develop the mind” a mantra proposed to ensure changes are centred around the student – this requires changes to teaching approaches, quality assurance (QA) protocols, pedagogy, assessment and grading systems to cultivate the types of skills and experiences that will develop more entrepreneurial graduates.

**Table 1: Contrasting learning approaches**

<b>Learning-focused</b>	<b>Knowledge-focused</b>
Personal development	Off-loading academic expertise
Problems-based approaches	Compliance with QAA protocols
Team learning	Influenced by reward/promotion structure
Real world	
Experiential	

The central challenge for the student learning experience – encourage students to re-learn from experience, explore theory and practice and focus on commercial awareness and new venture creation skills – focus on experimental, discovery, lab-based approaches with strong links to practitioners via studio, experiential and effectuation models.

Experience from KaosPilots has shown that the student types that are entrepreneurial are generally not business studies students. Very often ‘business’ per se is often alien to typical KaosPilots students – they find purpose in something that offers a gateway to their future, and that in turn requires them to be entrepreneurial. Hence it was suggested that traditional business school models are not relevant and do not generate entrepreneurial characteristics as they often involve *academics off-loading business models* on students as ‘packets of knowledge’. This theory-based approach often means students do not experience the ‘lifeworld’ of the entrepreneur through meeting real entrepreneurs on their course work or being practically exposed to them through projects, placements and credit bearing internships.

This remains a challenge for many universities – where they are not situated in the domain of engaging with business, or where they are, this knowledge exchange often does not permeate into the student learning experience as its contained within the knowledge transfer and research domains. The experience of business very often does not inform module design, assessment regime, and the transfer of tacit knowledge through links to the world of work. There is a structural disconnect between business and the learning aspects of higher education. Perhaps there are lessons to be learnt from the creative industries where learning is often

situated within the workplace through student projects in the curriculum that focus on 'live issues' from client studios.

### **Disconnecting entrepreneurship and money**

As an aside, it was noted that the KaosPilots programme has disconnected entrepreneurship and 'money' through embedding the learning of entrepreneurship in 'values'. In addition, adopting a broad definition of entrepreneurship – *defined as opportunity identification and value creation* – students are not disengaged by an open-ended articulation of the concept. By centering attention on the broader aspects of the definition, i.e. describing it as 'channelling creativity and innovation to create value in the community', students are able to take a values-based approach. This situates their learning within a framework that allows them to shape the meaning of it for themselves.

Lessons – we need to encourage UK universities to adopt broad approaches such as this, and thus allow for an evolutionary change in the impressions of entrepreneurship and the place of entrepreneurship education at the centre of the university and its relevance in all academic departments. We need to find and use **examples of academic entrepreneurship** to illustrate and situate entrepreneurship as it is relevant to a range of different subjects by case studies, pictures, storytelling relevant to philosophy, bio tech, drama etc.

### **Requirements for a student centred approach**

If we develop a model that is framed around the student experience there are any number of factors we have to take account of. Briefing Note 1 highlighted the importance of identifying clear modes and model of engagement for academic faculty and students to ensure that the design of the educational experience achieves these required outcomes. Experience from Sweden, Denmark, the US and the UK shows that securing visible institutional support from the Vice Chancellor and senior university management sends a strong signal to the campus as a whole. Beyond this, ingredients for such an approach would need to address the following issues, among others:

- Allow for experimentation, discovery, practice, theory, peer to peer co-learning – here is it important for both academic staff and students to be involved in the assessment process, e.g. students are required to record their experiences from learning in practice and to demonstrate the knowledge and learning they have acquired.
- Use multi-disciplinary approaches to ensure cross-learning – involve students and faculty from a range of departments.
- Ensure the learning contract is flexible so that the diffusion of learning allows students to reconfigure their knowledge, juxtapose different approaches, be adventurous, be playful, and adopt self-directed styles of learning.
- In order to achieve culture change, a comprehensive cross-campus model will rely on students being engaged in the design and propagation of the same set of principles that define the learning of entrepreneurship and thus avoid academic 'turf wars'.
- **Situate or contextualise entrepreneurship around the notions of innovation, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving rather than solely focused on the notions of new venture creation.**

The panel highlighted the importance of **visible leadership** from the institution as a key ingredient to achieving a change in the cultural values of the university as an institution. Hence the framework specification needs to develop:

- a) evidence of the importance of this agenda for university Vice Chancellors;
- b) a singular message about the relevance of entrepreneurship education to the student experience as a fundamental outcome of a university qualification; and
- c) practical mechanisms to embed the broad experience of the 'lifeworld' of the entrepreneur, an understanding of business, and the generic employability skills for the

workplace, i.e. team working, communication skills, commercial awareness and problem solving.

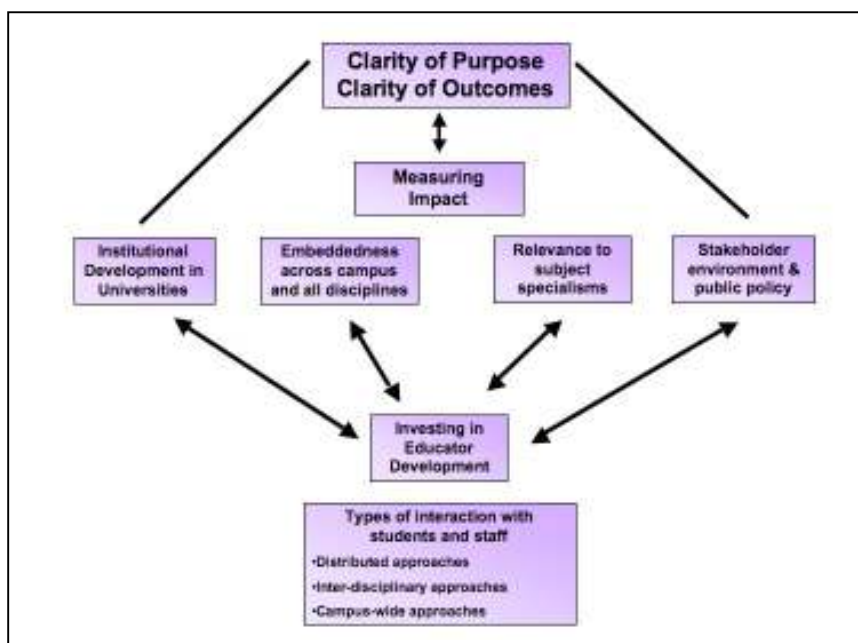
The key message for universities is that adopting the ‘entrepreneurship education mantra’ is crucial to help **reposition the role of universities in the knowledge economy** regionally, nationally and globally. The DEG project may wish to consider developing a checklist for university Vice Chancellors of what constitutes the ‘entrepreneurial university’ and what key how to’s need to be considered when designing an institutional approach.

It is common knowledge that providing student placements with local companies as part of the curriculum (a) enhances the student learning experiences (b) provides universities with a vehicle to build links with business and (c) over time builds a community of practice of companies, academics, students and the university to build local and regional economies. Notwithstanding this, there may be a need to give consideration to a more fully rounded re-conceptualisation of the principles and values attached to higher education, and hence change our understanding of the university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge intensive economy.

### Key challenges for the design brief

Having outlined a number of tactical and operational aspects related to a possible framework specification for entrepreneurship education in UK universities, the panel members considered a number of overarching themes which would govern the design brief for the next stage of the project. Although discussed in great length at the first panel meeting, the summary below provides an indication of the some of the outstanding issues to be covered in the ongoing deliberations of the panel:

**Figure I: A proposed design brief**



- Positioning entrepreneurship education in HEIs – the key challenge is one of ensuring **parity of status** for entrepreneurship educators, many of whom sit at the interface of theory and practice, and thus as ‘praxitioners’ they have no status in universities. Changing this through reconfiguring staff award and remuneration systems is needed to achieve a step-change in how universities value these types of staff in the institution.
- Of the five challenges outlined in Briefing Note 1 the issues of greatest primacy in the design process has to be – **can universities deliver this agenda?** Is it an activity that can be central to the raison d`etre of the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century university in an environment in which these institutions are already faced with many other pressures?

Related to this is the question of scale – if one considers the current levels of activity across the UK, the lessons from the Kauffman pilot campuses in the US, and the experiences from Scandinavia (35 students on the KaosPilots programmes), is this activity scalable?

- Given that designing entrepreneurial organisations takes vision, leadership and active management, how do we go about ensuring that university Vice Chancellors **understand the framework requirements** for a cross-campus approach to entrepreneurship education at a strategic, tactical and operational level? How do we equip them with the tools to drive this agenda into the ethos and culture of the organisation so as to encourage entrepreneurial behaviour by students and staff?
- Given the experience from the US which shows that bringing key members of faculty on board is a crucial requirement for a cross-campus approach, how do we frame entrepreneurship education so that it demonstrates its **relevance to academic faculty**? How do we go about changing the reward and remuneration frameworks within higher education to recognise the entrepreneurial behaviour of academic faculty and (business facing) practitioners? How do we ensure the economic impact indicators adopted by the UK Research Councils (RCUK) accommodates entrepreneurial outcomes? There is also a need to give greater recognition to academic links with industry and realise that very often these links can take any variety of forms – using university research to develop solutions to industry specific problems, spin-outs and licensing of university technology, research contracts, business relationship management, student placements (Knowledge Transfer Partnerships). How do we give entrepreneurs status in universities – as academic adjuncts, as visiting fellows, as entrepreneurs in residence? Also, how do we ensure academics go on placements as industry fellows to ensure knowledge exchange operates in both directions?
- Finally, there is the issue of ensuring that the **curriculum is linked with industry** and reflects the iterative and complex manifestations of entrepreneurial behaviour – we need to move the experience of entrepreneurship beyond the business plan. How do we adopt the approach found in the education sector for the creative industries which creates links to curriculum development and the student experience through ongoing engagement with business (a relationship based approach)? This approach provides the student and the academic with ‘real’ exposure to the creative industries, ensures that the learning of a craft or skill is directly related to its application and weaves a seamless interface between theory (academic curriculum) and practice (entrepreneurial action).

### The role of government?

Research by the NCGE has found that the institutional behaviour of HEIs is driven fundamentally by government funding. Policies adopted by government departments and the university funding councils are crucial to the end product – the student experience. Hence ensuring *a positive unifying role for government* as a catalyst of the end objective (embedding entrepreneurship education in universities) must be clearly articulated for the DEG project to achieve its objectives. This may require a statement from the project of its ‘common thoughts’ about entrepreneurship education and how it contributes to the high level purpose/role of universities in society. This will require (a) a clear articulation of the purpose and outcomes of entrepreneurship education; (b) a demonstration of how it fits with the raft of current higher education funding objectives; and (c) a clear illustration of the link with government policy. If this was based on the assumption that the objective is for all students to have the opportunity to experience entrepreneurship education, then there are a range of challenges to address:

- We need more entrepreneur educators, more training for educators and a vibrant network of entrepreneur educators.
- We need to embrace curricular innovation from other subject disciplines. To date there is little agreement about the pedagogy of entrepreneurship education, with the

NCGE having, for example, mapped out 36 different pedagogies. Greater effort is required to learn from the Higher Education Academy Subject Centres and the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs).

- We need institutional leaders to champion entrepreneurship education as a cross-campus opportunity available to all students and academic faculty.
- We need to address the issue of scalability and the level of change in institutional culture which is realistically achievable. Here the panel considered 3 possible models: (1) small-scale change (at faculty level) to offer the experience to more students; (2) high level awareness change (using the Times Higher award for entrepreneurial university of the year) to change perceptions of the relevance of entrepreneurship education; and (3) structural change through changing the research assessment framework (RAE/REF), benchmark quality assurance statements on entrepreneurship education (QAA); and changing funding council models for allocating funding to universities (HEIF/RCUK).

### Ingredients for the specification framework

The Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates (DEG) project requires the expert panel and the DEG project team to develop a statement of requirements for entrepreneurship education in UK universities. Aside from exploring the five themes from Briefing Note 1, the panel also discussed the constituent parts of the framework:

- **Institutional development** – tactics for embedding entrepreneurship education as a cross-campus endeavour and as a part of the institutional culture. Linked to this are both learning modes and learning outcomes and the need for educator development and capacity building.
- **Institutional scope** – applicable to both students and academic faculty, to the research and teaching domains and outwards to the local and regional economy.
- **Stakeholder engagement** – key to the success of the project is positive endorsement from government policy – the latest iterations of policy on innovation, science and enterprise have provided both policy support and funding for this agenda in the education system.
- **Clarity of purpose and clarity of outcomes** – greater consideration is required of what outcomes, what outputs, what impact is expected from this activity and what metrics will be used to measure impact.

### Next steps

- DEG project team to develop the next series of Briefing Notes for the expert panel to consider – the focus will be on (1) taking forward the discussions from the first panel meeting and (2) developing an outline of the statement of requirements for the design brief for the next panel meeting.
- Expert panel to identify 3 to 4 articles or reports that they have authored or which they consider authoritative in the area of entrepreneurship education in their country and field of experience to *email to Keith at the DEG project team*.
- Expert panel to provide input to DEG project team to populate the draft specification of requirements – to be outlined in Briefing Note 5.
- DEG project team to develop a summary map of the higher education system to identify and explain the key stakeholders in the system, to help the expert panel understand the UK system.