How can business schools support enterprise and entrepreneurship across the whole university student population?

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Executive Summary

This study of student enterprise was commissioned by the Chartered Association of Business Schools’ Small Business Charter Management Board. The purpose of the study was to examine the role that SBC award holding business schools perform in the delivery of enterprise education and entrepreneurship across the university, the benefits they seek in doing so, and the challenges they face. The intended audience for the report includes Deans and Deputy Deans of business schools, university Vice-Chancellors, Associate Deans for Enterprise, in addition to academic and professional service staff involved in the delivery of enterprise and entrepreneurship education across disciplines.

Through a literature review, survey of business schools awarded with the SBC and the development of nine detailed case studies, this study provides an account of how institutions organise for and deliver student enterprise and entrepreneurship education, and the role that business schools perform.

The report highlights how building the skills associated with employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship amongst the student cohort is an increasing concern for universities. The pressures of performance measures such as NSS, TEF and KEF, and the impact of these on funding and league table positions is encouraging senior leaders to place an increasing emphasis on this area of activity. Enterprise is joining teaching and research as one of the strategic pillars to accomplish their mission. Investment in this area is apparent in the breadth of activities associated with student enterprise offered by institutions and the increasing centrality of this within university positioning.

Student enterprise and entrepreneurship is delivered across the institution, embracing all disciplines and usually incorporated in a manner that is suited to the discipline in question. How institutions organise for student enterprise and entrepreneurship differs considerably and is shaped by the geographic location of the institution, its mission, disciplinary arrangements, student recruitment catchment area, and the legacy of its placement and business engagement activity.

How can business schools support enterprise and entrepreneurship across the whole university student population?

This is a highly political area of endeavour, with multiple stakeholders involved, each bringing different skills, knowledge and values. The role played by the business school is highly variable in a rapidly changing environment, and this study provides accounts of the differing roles business schools play and the implications for how student enterprise is conceived in relation to teaching and research, and ultimately delivered.

The ability of the business school to influence the student enterprise agenda within an institution depends on the ability for a shared language to be adopted. Although there is a robust literature behind student enterprise and entrepreneurship, which recognises and respects disciplinary differences, this is not always adopted and adhered to. There is also a concern over the use of ‘business terminology’ in disciplines where an established alternative vocabulary is preferred. Where business schools play a central role in generating student fee income for its institution, the service-led approach to student enterprise can be at odds with the more embedded or collaborative approach seen in other disciplines. To address this, senior leaders need to play a critical role in ensuring formal and informal structures are developed within an institution so that enterprise is visible in decision making forums, approached in a collaborative manner and best practice can be shared across disciplines. Due to the various factors which inform how enterprise is developed within an institution, there is no one-size meets all solution. Instead, a nuanced approach which respects the local context, institutional strengths and structures, and the needs of students and staff is required.
Introduction

This study of student enterprise was commissioned by the Chartered Association of Business Schools’ Small Business Charter Management Board. The purpose of the study was to examine the role that SBC award holding business schools perform in the delivery of enterprise education and entrepreneurship across the university, the benefits they seek in doing so, and the challenges they face.

The goal of the project is to provide business schools awarded with the SBC with a succinct and practical knowledge base of how enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes are made available to students in other subject areas across a university and to examine a business schools’ role in this process and delivery. Key questions the project seeks to address:

1. What published research has been undertaken in the area of cross-university enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes and what lessons can be learnt?
2. To what extent are enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes available to non-business school students in universities with a business school awarded with the SBC?
3. What role(s) do business schools awarded with the SBC perform in the development and delivery of enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes to students from other subjects across the university?
4. What challenges do business schools awarded with the SBC face in encouraging the provision and uptake of enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes across their university?
5. What benefits do business schools awarded with the SBC seek and realise through encouraging the provision and uptake of enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes across their university?

How can business schools support enterprise and entrepreneurship across the whole university student population?
Project Design

After an initial review of the literature, the fieldwork was undertaken over a 4-month period between September 2018 and January 2019. It consisted of a two-stage process, involving a survey and qualitative research.

The online questionnaire was developed and distributed in September 2018 to all 35 award holders of the Small Business Charter. The survey was designed to elicit responses on the following areas:

- Student enterprise, institutional mission and senior leadership engagement.
- The objectives of student enterprise and entrepreneurship education.
- Enterprise and entrepreneurship activities and the curriculum.
- Student participation and measurement of student enterprise and entrepreneurship.
- Organisation and funding of student enterprise and entrepreneurship.

17 responses were received. Analysis of the survey data was undertaken in preparation for the qualitative research, which we anticipated would provide the richness of data required for a project of this nature.

For the qualitative research nine institutions took part across geographic regions, university affiliations and research and teaching orientation of the institution.

The qualitative research was undertaken through desk research and through semi-structured interviews with individuals who had been identified to have a significant role in the delivery of student enterprise and entrepreneurship within the institution. This included interviews with individuals affiliated with and operating outside of the business school.

In advance of the interview the participants were provided with an information sheet on the project, indicative areas of questioning and were asked to sign a consent form. Where necessary and where possible, multiple interviews were undertaken with various participants in an institution.

Drawing on the desk research and interviews, case studies were produced, and these were sent to the participants to review, amend and ultimately approve. To preserve anonymity of the institutions the case studies aren’t included in this report. Instead, the cases were analysed and have been used, alongside the data, to identify common themes, trends, and examples of innovation.

Once approved, the cases were analysed thematically, using themes developed from the literature and the data itself.

Background: Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

Over the last decade there has been an attempt by professional bodies and quality assurance agencies to harmonise definitions of enterprise and entrepreneurship education. This has involved a concerted effort to redraw the relationship between enterprise and entrepreneurship education and other subject disciplines. This has also been shaped by a recognition that the teaching of business knowledge is not in itself sufficient to develop within students the competences that are sought in the employment market.

The 2018 QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) Guidance distinguishes between employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship. The report also outlines the nuanced nature of employment between micro-businesses and large organisations.

Employability here refers to the alignment in knowledge, skills and attributes of the student with the workplace, community and economy so that the student is more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupation. Enterprise embraces the broad thrust of employability; however it is far more specific, referring to the generation and application of ideas to practical situations. Finally, entrepreneurship is the application of enterprise behaviours, attitudes and competences to generate cultural, social or economic value. The guidance is keen to point out that entrepreneurship "can, but does not exclusively, lead to venture creation" (QAA 2018: 7).

Accordingly, the QAA guidance marks a break with previous understandings of entrepreneurship, by de-emphasising the link to commercial start-ups and re-enforcing the idea of social value delivered in a range of contexts and also within organisations. Within the guidance is a helpful diagram (Gateway Triangle) to outline the distinction between enterprise education and entrepreneurship education, this is represented below for clarity.

Diagram: The Gateway Triangle. (QAA 2018: 16)
The 2018 QAA guidance exemplifies an approach to enterprise education which fosters creativity, innovation and entrepreneurialism within all disciplines and promotes inter-disciplinary collaboration. The QAA report can be read in conjunction with EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (Bacigalupo et al 2016) which provides a pan-EU conceptualisation of entrepreneurship and also offers a tool to build entrepreneurship competence in citizens.

Context

Funding changes in Higher Education, along with changing government policy towards universities, has encouraged university leaders to consider the role their institutions play in society and how they can support innovation and entrepreneurial activity. This re-orientation towards a more commercial and arguably ‘consumer-driven’ outlook is being reinforced through the introduction of new performance measures such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). These need to be appreciated in the context of the increasing significance of ‘impact’ measures in the Research Excellence Framework and the question about learning opportunities with regards to application of knowledge in the National Students Survey. Morley (2001) usefully reminds us that performance measures are not neutral quality indicators but are at a micro level a reference to a shift in broader macro values. Morley summarises this shift neatly in the paragraph below:

“This rise of academic management, together with the rise of consumerism and political concerns with the exchange and use value of higher education, have produced new organisational cultures and professional priorities. Higher education institutions both mediate and manage government policy. Boundaries between the academy, government and business have loosened and been reformulated. Corporate interests play a more powerful role in determining the purposes of higher education. There is a more explicit concern with universities producing new workers and the values of the consumer society are now embedded in educational relationships.” (Morley 2001: 131)

This arrangement between universities, government and business has been labelled as the triple helix (Etzioni, 2003) whereby government policy, exemplified by the Industrial Strategy white paper in the UK (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2017), is presenting enterprise education as a vehicle to hasten the transformation to a knowledge-based economy, promote business culture and enhance productivity. Within this triple helix relationship, is a cultural shift (Rae, 2010).

The media promotion of young entrepreneurs, especially in the technology sector, has sparked interest amongst students in enterprise and entrepreneurial careers (Lahikainen et al, 2018). Peters (2001: 61) refers to this as ‘responsibilising the self’ where individuals are encouraged to invest in their knowledge and skills to enable them to participate in the economic environment. It is an environment in which computer capabilities are challenging traditional skills, especially those which are easy to replicate through artificial intelligence (Elliott 2017), placing a greater onus on the enhancement of creative, emotional and social skills within the workplace. University students, regardless of the subject they are studying, are seeking to learn about entrepreneurship, learning to become entrepreneurial and looking to the university for support to become an entrepreneur (Hytti 2002).

The Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Turn

The extent to which universities have embraced enterprise and entrepreneurship turn is possibly not uniform across the sector. For some institutions, enterprise and entrepreneurship has been seized upon as a point of competitive focus to generate strategic impetus. Here, enterprise and entrepreneurship education is embedded within institutional strategies, forcing changes in governance, structure and administration. Within these institutions research and teaching are geared towards enterprise and commercialisation, with university functions and facilities organised to accomplish this. This unitary or holistic organisational approach is obviously one possibility, arguably the more familiar approach will be the greater involvement in the local business eco-system evident through multiple elements of the institution, with universities contributing to innovation and enterprise through incubators and spin off companies, individual acts of enterprise activity or through enterprise networks (Lahikainen et al, 2018).

Student enterprise and entrepreneurship education will clearly be impacted by the strategic orientation of the university. Streeter et al (2002) examined the impetus for US based university wide entrepreneurial programmes and the administrative models of entrepreneurship education delivery that were used. They note that some entrepreneurial programmes may be focused on particular courses (e.g. MBA) but which may selectively extend beyond the business school to engineering for example. Here focus refers to the exclusivity and membership of staff and students to a particular academic area.

University-wide programmes are designed to be delivered beyond the narrow academic areas, accessible to students from arts and humanities, medicine, sciences and social sciences. The means by which entrepreneurship programmes extend beyond the ‘magnet’ discipline could be through a magnet approach, whereby a single entity (most notably the business school in Streeter et al’s study) delivers the entrepreneurship programmes to the wider institution. This is deemed to be easier to implement due to the focus afforded to a single body which can draw on funds and resources to deliver. The challenge then becomes an issue of attracting individuals from beyond the magnet discipline.

Entrepreneurship programmes could be diffused across the institution and delivered locally (radiant approach). This is more challenging to implement due to the need for enterprise champions to be found in each participating discipline and the tensions over funding and co-ordination of administration. Often the motivation for this is the belief that entrepreneurial programmes are more effective when embedded in the student’s own discipline. This simple dichotomy, which Streeter et al presented as a spectrum of centralisation, contains a number of related issues such as the flow of funds, administrative infrastructure and faculty involved in delivery. There are also implications for research, alumni and outreach work.

These ideal types are extremes of delivery, it is anticipated that variants are evident across different institutions, with the possibility of multiple magnets or mixed model, where focused entrepreneurship programmes co-exist within a wider radiant approach. As Streeter et al note, although there are instances where institutions nationally fall into a category, many institutions are far more ambiguous, sometimes due to being in a process of transition, sometimes because funding or resource is not available in parts of the institution. Additionally, it should be noted that Streeter et al are focused on in-curriculum programmes, ignoring the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that are encompassed within an enterprise and entrepreneurship offer for students.

Whether a radiant, magnet or hybrid approach is taken, the question of the academic discipline is central to discussions over student enterprise. Sir George Cox’s 2005 Review of Creativity in Business emphasised the need for universities to incorporate creativity into the curriculum at all levels. Whether the enterprise and entrepreneurship education take off from different disciplines together for the benefit of the economy. Within the enterprise and entrepreneurship literature there has been considerable discussion over the form that this disciplinary transcendence can take (i.e. inter, multi or trans disciplinary study) and how it can be achieved. There is however also recognition that any shift in disciplinary boundaries must confront the challenge of the embeddedness of academic practices and culture within a university and the difficulties of bringing about short-term change.

Inter/multi/trans disciplinary work not only challenges fundamental epistemological and ontological questions within the originator disciplines, it also needs to overcome disciplinary boundaries embedded within performance measures such as REF and funding streams. In a study of multi-disciplinary institutes, Mosely et al (2012) adopted an organisational ecology approach to examine the regulatory (the rules by which the institution operated), normative (how things are done) and cognitive (values shared by organisational members) transformations which enabled or constrained these units. Their study identified that multi-disciplinary units
incorporated four elements:

1. **Taught** component, with one or more modules;
2. A **business-planning** component, which can include business plan competitions and advice on developing a specific business idea;
3. An **interaction with practice** component, which can include talks from practitioners and networking events;
4. A **university support** component, which can include market research resources, space for meetings, a pool of technology with commercial potential and even seed funding to student-teams.

The intended outcomes of the two forms of education also differ, whilst the business school is presented to be concerned with outputs which demonstrate knowledge acquisition ‘about’ the subject, enterprise and entrepreneurship education is designed to demonstrate knowledge and skills ‘for’ its subject. This distinction between ‘about’ and ‘for’ and the link to curriculum design was outlined in ‘An Education System fit for an Entrepreneur’ (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Micro Businesses, 2014) and is exemplified through the National Occupational Standards for Enterprise (IOEE) and SFEDI award qualifications.

The debates on knowledge and competences within curriculum design and assessment for entrepreneurship education have been well documented. Komarkova et al (2015) provide a helpful review of teaching methods and learning environments to foster entrepreneurship competences. In their review of UK and US assessment methods for entrepreneurship competences, Pittaway and Edwards (2012) bemoan the reliance within business schools on assessment methods which focus on assessment of knowledge at the expense of more experiential or divergent approaches.

**Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education and Impact**

The issue of outcomes returns us to the earlier discussions about the values surrounding enterprise education, higher education and the triple helix. With the expansion and extension of entrepreneurship programmes and the costs associated with these investments, considerable attention has been focused on the types and indicators of impact of these programmes on participants.

Assessing the impact of entrepreneurship programmes has however been difficult and evidence of the impact success (or otherwise) of programmes has been equivocal (cf. Martin, McNally, & Kay, 2013). This is partly due to the latency between programme delivery and outcome, but also involves the consideration of wider social and economic benefits that might accrue. This has meant that researchers have tended to concentrate on short term measures such as attitude and intention (Nabi et al, 2017) rather than venture creation. This is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the connection between enterprise education pedagogy and evaluation is often overlooked. Neck and Corbett, 2018 remind us that whilst enterprise education is most usually framed through pedagogy rather than andragogy. The former promotes a transmission view of learning whilst, andragogy, or adult learning, is more concerned with facilitating learning through heutagogy for example. Secondly, there is limited research on the transition between disposition and behaviour, and the exogenous influences on intentions like skills and demographic factors.

These limitations have led the European Commission (EC) to commission a project entitled ‘Evaluation of Entrepreneurship Education Programmes in Higher Education Institutions and Centres’ which aims to produce a tool kit for entrepreneurship education which connects the participant, intended outcomes and learning design.

**Conclusions**

Enterprise and entrepreneurship education is at the epicentre of a multitude of interlacing macro and micro debates in higher education. At the macro level, successive governments have sought to influence the values within HE institutions to foster a knowledge economy, by introducing a utilitarian calculation to university operations that are heavily influenced by commercial priorities. This should not however be seen as a simple question of government control and influence over higher education. With the introduction of student fees, priorities for students (and their parents) are changing, with many viewing higher education as an investment to secure future earnings. There is an expectation that university will prepare the individual for their life of work after graduation. Forms of knowledge that were previously found in business schools are in disciplines with strong applied components, are emerging into disciplines across the university. For business schools, this can either be a challenge or an opportunity, depending on the orientation and attributes of the business school. The ability for a university to incorporate enterprise across its student body poses significant issues around its mission, disciplinary arrangements, approaches to organising, and funding. The question for the business school is how best it can accommodate the new demands on enterprise and entrepreneurship education across the university and the nature of the challenges it faces.
Findings from the Survey

In Autumn 2018 a survey was distributed to all 35 Small Business Charter business schools which explored the role of the business school in encouraging employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship across the whole university student population.

This brief summary of the data focuses on two key research questions:
- What to what extent are enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes available to non-business school students?
- What benefits do business schools awarded with the SBC seek and realise through encouraging enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes across their university?

**MISSION GROUP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MillionPlus</td>
<td>1 6% 8 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-affiliated</td>
<td>9 53% 13 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Group</td>
<td>2 12% 6 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Alliance</td>
<td>5 29% 8 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 35</td>
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**REGION**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>3 18% 5 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>0 0% 1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 5% 1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>2 12% 4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>1 5% 1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>2 12% 5 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1 5% 4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East</td>
<td>1 5% 2 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West</td>
<td>1 5% 1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>1 5% 2 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>1 5% 5 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and The Humber</td>
<td>2 12% 4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>17 35</td>
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**INSTITUTIONAL SIZE** (source HESA)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
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<tr>
<td>Min</td>
<td>10,995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>23,878</td>
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**PROPORTION OF STUDENTS STUDYING BUSINESS & ADMINISTRATION** (source HESA)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Min</td>
<td>7.21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
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**INSTITUTIONAL ORIENTATION**

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<th>Population</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Led</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Focused</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Teaching</td>
<td>12</td>
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**DISCIPLINARY ARRANGEMENTS**

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<tr>
<td>Inter-disciplinary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-disciplinary</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

From the population of 35 institutions, 17 completed surveys were returned, a response rate of 49%. The key institutional characteristics of the sample are outlined in table 1. With a relatively small sample, there were few discernible trends which connected these characteristics in the responses received pertaining to organisation, leadership, delivery and funding of student enterprise. These issues will be explored further in the qualitative analysis.

For the majority of participants in the study, the proportion of students participating in enterprise education is seen to be ‘significantly increasing’ (8) or ‘increasing’ (6). The remaining institutions either reported that it was ‘staying the same’ (2), or noted a ‘significant decline’ (1).

**Table 1: Institutional characteristics of the sample**

**Table 2: Who within your university is primarily responsible for leading student enterprise initiatives across the university?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business school</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enterprise division</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers service</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation hub/unit</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student service division</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can business schools support enterprise and entrepreneurship across the whole university student population?

Although business schools frequently take a role in the delivery of enterprise programmes, a wide variety of other units of the university are involved, as outlined in table 2. The role of the business school in delivering student enterprise across the institution is also seen to be ‘increasing’ (10) or at least staying at the same level (6), there was 1 no response.

For those three institutions adopting the ‘magnet’ approach to organising, all three ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that “Within my university it is clear who is responsible for delivering student enterprise across the institution”. In two of the three institutions, student enterprise was the specific responsibility of a senior leader of the university (e.g. Pro-Vice Chancellor). In contrast, the fourteen other institutions were less

Table 3: Which unit within your institution is primarily responsible for leading student enterprise initiatives across the university?
universal in their agreement with the statement. Of these fourteen institutions, two did not have a senior leader responsible for student enterprise, three saw the responsibility split across portfolios and the remaining nine had an individual for whom student enterprise was part of their responsibility. A breakdown of all of the responses to the statement is presented in Chart 4.

Of the four participants who viewed themselves as trans disciplinary, three did not have a senior leader with a responsibility for student enterprise as part of their portfolio.

Funding
The method of funding student enterprise varies across institutions, with university core funds being the dominant means of funding student enterprise. The pattern of funding by mission group is worth noting, with Russell Group universities relying less on university core funds due to endowments and sponsorships. In contrast, University Alliance members, drew more heavily on university core funds. The significance of this is difficult to ascertain due to the small sample size.

Chart 5: How is student enterprise funded within your institution? Please identify the approximate percentage contribution from each of these funding sources. Figures are average %.

Institutions which have adopted a ‘magnet’ approach are often less reliant on university core funds, relying instead on endowments, sponsorships or other forms of funding.

Chart 6: Sources of Funding By Organisational Approach to Student Enterprise. Figures are average %.

Examining the funding of student enterprise highlights some variability by organisational mission, this may however be connected to the relative strength of the alumni offer:
- Russell Group institutions draw comparatively less on university core funds, instead relying on HEIF, EU, sponsorship and endowments.
- The MillionPlus institution surveyed was 90% reliant on ‘other sources of income’, but these were not stated.
- University Alliance institutions relied comparatively more on core funds and private funding.
- Non-Affiliated institutions, drew on a wider variety of sources, which included a significant amount of core funding.

Chart 7: Sources of Funding By Organisational by Mission Group. Figures are average %.

Magnet organised institutions are also less likely to draw on university core funds and instead are more likely to rely on unspecified other funding.
Institutional Mission & Student Enterprise

All seventeen participants viewed student enterprise as either extremely important (14) or very important (3) to their university’s strategic vision or mission. In all cases, student enterprise was available to all members of the university. For sixteen of the participants the enterprise education offered was adapted to meet the specific needs of students in each distinct discipline, with seven participants strongly agreeing with the statement “Enterprise education in my university is adapted to meet the specific needs of students in each distinct discipline”, the remaining nine participants ‘somewhat agreed’.

The objective for students when engaging with student enterprise was mainly to improve employability, with the focus being to “improve skills and behaviours for the workplace” or “develop awareness amongst students of self-employment”. Table 9 below outlines the responses.

Table 9: What are the main objectives of the student enterprise initiatives in your university?

Objective | % | No.
--- | --- | ---
To improve skills and behaviours for the workplace | 88% | 15
To develop awareness amongst students of self-employment | 88% | 15
To promote resilience and a growth mindset amongst students | 82% | 14
To generate a positive attitude towards self-employment | 82% | 14
To provide resources to support self-employment | 76% | 13
To increase students’ intention to pursue self-employment | 59% | 10

The least frequently identified objective was to “To increase students’ intention to pursue self-employment” however in open text, two further objectives were identified, namely “to start high value scalable start-ups in tech and social innovation” and “to increase students career development potential, whether in employment or self-employment”.

The benefits for the business school of engaging with student enterprise broadly align with the objectives outlined above. With the most important benefits in order of ranking being:

• Improving student employability;
• supporting the NSS/TEF;
• improving business engagement and supporting student recruitment.

Direct financial benefit from student enterprise was perceived to be the least important.

Delivering Student Enterprise

Student enterprise education can be delivered within the curriculum, outside of the curriculum (extra-curricular) or alongside the curriculum (co-curricular). Amongst the participants, all three approaches were evident, with no particular approach being dominant. Due to the wording of the question, which asked participants to identify the most commonly used approach, it is possible that all three approaches co-exist in an institution. This point is to be explored further through the qualitative analysis.
An enterprise offer to current students and alumni is provided across all participating HEIs regardless of context (teaching/research or disciplinary orientation, student proportion, institutional size). The scale of the offer to current students does however vary. A list of thirteen employability and enterprise activities were presented to participants, six of which were employability focused, with the remainder focused on enterprise and entrepreneurship. The list and their availability to current students and alumni is outlined in Chart 11.

Only five institutions offered a fully comprehensive package of employability and enterprise support activities, with two institutions offering less than 50% of the outlined activities. With the offer to alumni, only one institution offered a comprehensive employability and enterprise package, with eleven offering a package which was less than 50% of the full package, however eleven institutions offered at least 50% of the seven alumni focused enterprise activities listed (e.g. incubators etc).

The enterprise/employability and entrepreneurship offer between the different mission groups varies slightly, with the MillionPlus and Russell Group institutions having a wider variety of offer, particularly for alumni. Magnet organised institutions are also likely to have a marginally wider variety of activities, however the low sub-group sample limits generalisations.

The number of start-ups and graduate outcomes are the most frequently used measures, closely followed by attendance and student satisfaction surveys. Only three participants adopted a longitudinal approach, two of whom were magnet organisations.

In two instances a single measure was adopted, either number of start-ups or graduate outcomes, however three to four measures were the norm.

The Local Context
Student enterprise in each of these institutions has evolved in very different ways, influenced by the geographical location of the institutions, the local economic context within which they operate and a range of structural and organisational issues distinct to that institution.

To these variables, we also need to add the composition of the students they recruit and the student fee funding arrangements. The two institutions which are based outside of England and where students do not pay fees to attend university draw a high proportion of their students from the local region. This is thought to foster a strong connection with the community, with students being familiar with the dynamics of the local economy and are perceived to as having an affinity with the local area. The perceived financial situation of the students at the point of graduation may also differ due to the pressures associated with repaying student loans of being different to those with free tuition outside England.

Amongst the case studies there are several English universities which recruit a large proportion of their students from the local region. For one university, the draw on the local community also meant that many of their students were from ethnic minority backgrounds, mature learners and a high proportion of state school leavers. Structural arrangements in performance measurement however mean that one university in particular is concerned that their data from the local community may be counterproductive in the student outcome evaluation, due to the relatively lower salaries these students are able to command.

The local context is also important to understand because it has significant implications on how student enterprise is approached by the institution. The ability of the institution to be sufficiently agile to respond to changing dynamics within the local economic environment may be partly by chance. For example, one university in our sample has developed a focus on social enterprise following student union activity. For other universities we found it may be more deliberate to respond to apparent shifts in the requirements of local big employers. This ability to adapt is however largely dependent on the formal and informal structures in place, the leadership of the institution and the ability to align the various parties involved.
Student enterprise operates across a number of boundaries, with various stakeholders involved and multiple (and overlapping) performance measures. The result is that student enterprise within an institution (and arguably across institutions) can be a highly political issue potentially creating friction and tension between individuals and teams. These boundaries are multifaceted and can include the following:

- **Subject and discipline boundaries** – these can be the differences in the way student enterprise is conceptualised and approached between subjects within a broad discipline (e.g. economics and business), or between disciplines (e.g. social sciences and life sciences). These differences are manifest through the language used and the type of support offered. Where professional accreditation is associated with a discipline, this also introduces constraints on the student enterprise offer that can be delivered.

- **Academic and professional service** – student enterprise is often delivered through both academic and professional service staff and units. These individuals and groups can be subject to different line management structures, values and performance measures.

- **Academic and practitioner** – this is exemplified by the idea that academics teach, whilst practitioners support. Or a simple distinction between theory and practice. This was a recurring theme in the field work. Both practitioners and academics carefully navigate their sense and presentation of identity in the performance of student enterprise. This identity can see individuals emphasise or de-emphasise particular attributes of their skills, competences and experience.

- **Enterprise professionals and Careers professionals** – these are distinct groups, with their own professional bodies, knowledge sets and approaches to delivery.

How each of these boundaries manifest differs by institution. The extent to which these boundaries support or challenge student enterprise depends very much on the leadership, structure, culture and interpersonal relationships within an organisation.

**Conceptualising Enterprise**

Frequently a conjoined approach to employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship was explicitly adopted. Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship are largely approached from a skills-based perspective. The skills associated with these terms (e.g. ingenuity, creativity, innovation etc) are seen to be essential for employment in contemporary organisations, regardless of whether this is preparation for a start-up or a role with a graduate employer.

These skills are either delivered in-curriculum or extra-curriculum, dependent on the institutional setup. Two institutions in this study offer an institution-wide enterprise award which builds employability and enterprise skills for all students through the curriculum. This award is managed through, or supported by, a central careers service and embedded at a local level by academic departments. This is however unusual amongst the case studies presented, where the careers service is often far less involved in enterprise and entrepreneurship.

There is an increasing recognition within the institutions involved in this study that the pressures of student recruitment and performance measures such as student experience (NSS), graduate outcomes (TEF) and start-ups (KEF) require an institution to place a stronger emphasis on enterprise, employability and entrepreneurship. Several of the participants in this study highlighted that each of these measures takes a particular focus on elements of student enterprise, none however make student enterprise the primary focus.

For some institutions these pressures have pushed enterprise up the agenda to join research and teaching as one of the key pillars of the institution’s mission. There appears to be an increasing recognition within HEIs that they have a responsibility to build the skills base required for employment after graduation and so student enterprise is becoming a core aspect of the overall student offer.

The means of incorporating it within the ‘offer’ is frequently running parallel to (or in tandem with) the academic student journey from registration to graduation, and can be referenced as an enterprise ‘journey’ or ‘pathway’. Although the imagery and wording draw from this idea, all of those involved were keen to emphasise that very few students engage with enterprise in this way. Alternative similes were used, including that of a jigsaw, to reference how the disparate elements come together, but not always in a linear or structured way. Many students pick and choose the elements of the enterprise support they feel they need from the offer available. These elements are fairly standard across the institutions, workshops, accelerators, incubators and mentors etc. The extent to which these elements are incorporated within an overall coherent ‘system’ however varies by institution.

**The Role of the Business School**

For all of the institutions in this study, the business school performs strongly in recruiting a high proportion of students relative to the overall student population of the institution. In several instances, the term ‘cash cow’ was referenced by participants when referring to the business school. With this volume of student recruitment comes the challenge of supporting these students, maintaining or increasing numbers year on year, and the resources needed to achieve this whilst conscious of the pressures of the NSS and TEF.

Academics are also under pressure with the REF cycle to ensure that their research outputs are in sufficient number and at a required level. This demand on academic time and the pull of teaching and research leaves less time for enterprise, something that can be exacerbated when research is not clearly aligned to enterprise. Institutional workload models do not always factor enterprise into their calculations and so leave academics with insufficient time for this area of activity.

The role that enterprise plays in academic promotions needs to be factored in, with teaching and research achievements emphasised at the expense of enterprise. There are a couple of notable exceptions to this - in one prominent example, promotion was often faster for those who operated within the enterprise centre in comparison to academics outside of the centre.

Amongst the institutions involved in this study, we can see a number of broad ‘models’ for student enterprise in play.

In several universities studied the business school plays a lesser role, with one or more university central services organising and delivering enterprise activity across the institution. In one university, enterprise was led by an incubator unit with support from careers; in another it was delivered by an enterprise unit, and in one case through an innovation centre with careers.
Two universities in our sample refer to significant institutional upheaval, with the loss of key staff and a lack of clear senior leadership in the area of student enterprise. In both cases there are multiple lines of responsibility and a fragmented structure for the various facets of enterprise. In these situations, the overall business school’s contribution to student enterprise may simply be in delivery of an optional module or delivery of an institutional enterprise programme within the curriculum. This is not to suggest that the business school is not involved in student enterprise, it is just that in these instances, it is the individual academics within the business school that contribute, rather than the school as a whole. The ‘gravitas’ of business school involvement in enterprise and entrepreneurship through supporting research was noted in these cases.

Three universities consulted have business schools which engage with university wide student enterprise, through discrete elements within the school. These are usually supported by central service provision. In the case of one institution, an enterprise unit which previously existed outside of the business school and which serviced the university was brought back into the business school when funding ran out. The transfer from a ‘central’ approach to a more ‘networked’ approach was possible because the university has established a robust formal and informal infrastructure, incorporating senior decision makers, within which this small team are able to influence and deliver enterprise support. This contrasts with another university, where individuals within the business school managed to achieve some small-scale successes with inter-disciplinary enterprise, however institutional structures, especially around funding and curriculum planning, prevented expansion.

Senior leadership within this university has initiated significant changes to address this and the business school is potentially well placed to develop their role in collaboration with central services. The third of these three universities features a business school with research and teaching expertise in entrepreneurship, but also features a non-core funded central enterprise unit. The latter delivers support across the institution for entrepreneurship, helping academics to embed enterprise into modules and offering individual tailored support to students, regardless of academic discipline. In contrast, the business school offers modules to programmes across the university, in addition to delivering a BSc programme on entrepreneurship. The relationship between the academic and central service is not formalised through structures, and leadership of student enterprise falls between teaching and external engagement.

Another group of three institutions analysed are possibly closest to the conventional magnet approach referenced earlier. All of these institutions have developed a student enterprise offer which draws heavily on the business school. Importantly this is reinforced by the business school undertaking specialist research in the areas of enterprise and entrepreneurship and this research is recognised through a research centre.

Some universities surveyed however go further than the radiant and magnet models and approach the enterprise offer more broadly. It is the development of a “systems” approach which differentiates this group of institutions in this study. Whilst many of the institutions in the study reference the tangible aspects of enterprise, it is usually framed through the lens of the institution and their activities directed towards students, graduates or external organisations. There is a point of separation between the internal and the external, moreover there is a representation of the user as a consumer of a service. The knowledge exchange ecosystem approach adopted by these universities blurs these distinctions and to some degree presents all parties to be co-producers in the process.

These institutions conceptualise student enterprise as part of a wider knowledge exchange eco-system. This eco-system extends beyond the university to incorporate and involve other key stakeholders in the region or further afield. At the core of the ecosystem is a vision or mission to enable knowledge exchange to take place. This is often underpinned by the vision of the institution, whether that is creating useful practical knowledge or serving the local business and civic community. The activities in this ecosystem draw heavily from the research undertaken within the institution, research which is often inter-disciplinary in nature but critically it is research which is deemed valuable by those involved in the process. Student enterprise operates within this ecosystem, but it does not drive it. Instead the various elements of knowledge exchange build connections which facilitate a range of activities which include placements, start-up support, mentoring, venture funding and in-curriculum or extra-curriculum modules.

Although these groupings emerge from the research, this is not to suggest that these groupings provide a linear development model for student enterprise, or offer any commentary on the efficacy (or relative performance of student enterprise) in each of these groupings. There is insufficient commensurable data to enable such a conclusion to be drawn and each institution analysed reveals the difficulty of collecting data on enterprise outcomes. They simply show alternative ways that institutions have organised for student enterprise.

A question arises from this. What enables an institution to develop a knowledge exchange ecosystem and is this a suitable model for all business schools?

These approaches do not appear ready formed, they have evolved, often over decades. In many cases the enterprise offer has evolved from the incorporation of placement years in undergraduate degrees, with many early adopters of placement years having the external connections and experience of working in a boundary spanning capacity. Whilst a small number of institutions have benefited from sizeable donations from alumni or local entrepreneurs, this alone does not facilitate a knowledge exchange ecosystem. For example, one university received funding which enabled it to establish an enterprise centre, however once the funding ran out, the staff and elements of their activities returned to the business school. One university in the ecosystem grouping also did not receive a large amount of private funding to establish a centre, instead it was reliant on public funds such as ERDF with matched sums from the university. The ability to sustain activity once external funding has expired is a challenge many institutions are forced to tackle.

Many of those within the study also received ERDF monies. So, funds, in themselves are not an adequate explanation, it is how these institutions deployed their funding and the infrastructure this enabled them to develop to become independently sustainable. For some universities it is the central pillar of research which underpins their activity and the ability to assemble a strong research grouping to support this. The development of a reputation for an area of activity, coupled with an ability to draw upon funds from multiple sources, including student fees, appears to be critical to sustain activity.

Other factors also need to be considered. It could be argued that these factors include senior leadership support, either at the formation or following the proven ‘success’ of the activity. This senior leadership support, when entwined with a clear institutional mission may help to ensure that the governance structures and culture within the institution enable it to work towards an ecosystem approach by supporting the activity in the face of the barriers of institutional regulations, bureaucratic structures, internal financial exchange, competing internal providers and disciplinary boundaries.
Conclusions

This study was commissioned to explore the role of business schools in designing and delivering student enterprise across a university. Although not representative of all business schools, it does begin to indicate that the role performed by business schools varies markedly between institutions. Pressures from a range of performance measures, coupled with greater acceptance by senior leaders within universities that higher education needs to incorporate employment outcomes, is encouraging institutions to ensure all student cohorts, regardless of discipline are better prepared for life after graduation. A drive to embed enterprise within the curriculum and to ensure opportunities exist beyond the curriculum to stimulate enterprise and entrepreneurship amongst students and graduates is evident in all of the case studies.

The extent to which a business school is a key player in this process depends upon the leadership, resources and structures within the institution. Student enterprise is a highly political arena with many stakeholders. Where a business school is able to demonstrate relevant research expertise and has resources to support this research through teaching and external engagement, the business school is well placed to be a key contributor to a broader knowledge exchange eco-system. In a climate where business schools are a key contributor to a broader knowledge exchange eco-system, of which the university is a part. The connection with these communities is often long-standing and many universities mission statements reference the purpose of the university is to improve the future for these communities and the generations that follow. Many universities are large institutions, a key employer in many towns and cities, generating considerable revenue and occupying significant physical estate. The breadth of the organisations’ activities affords it the ability to work with a wide and disparate range of stakeholders. This is an enviable position, but one which places considerable responsibilities on it to evidence its relevance to these stakeholders. The resources available to a university are limited and the pressures on it to evidence performance in a broad range of areas through multiple measures mean that these resources need to be deployed in an efficient manner. Student enterprise is but one element of this complex arrangement, and when considered beyond a discrete area of activity within an organisation, it offers the potential to align itself with the broader institutional mission. This affords it the benefit of drawing from and contributing to the wider ecosystem, of which the university is a part.

What the universities in this study illustrate is that whilst performance measures are introduced relatively quickly, the infrastructure needed to deliver on all of the elements, takes considerable time, money and experience to develop. In reaching the end of this report you are possibly asking what practical tools or insights can be taken away from the analysis offered.

- **Universities are core parts of the communities in which they are based.** The connection with these communities is often long-standing and many universities mission statements reference the purpose of the university is to improve the future for these communities and the generations that follow. Many universities are large institutions, a key employer in many towns and cities, generating considerable revenue and occupying significant physical estate. The breadth of the organisations’ activities affords it the ability to work with a wide and disparate range of stakeholders. This is an enviable position, but one which places considerable responsibilities on it to evidence its relevance to these stakeholders. The resources available to a university are limited and the pressures on it to evidence performance in a broad range of areas through multiple measures mean that these resources need to be deployed in an efficient manner. Student enterprise is but one element of this complex arrangement, and when considered beyond a discrete area of activity within an organisation, it offers the potential to align itself with the broader institutional mission. This affords it the benefit of drawing from and contributing to the wider ecosystem, of which the university is a part.

- **Universities with senior leadership who champion student enterprise have better integrated offerings.** Due to the size of universities and breadth of activity undertaken, bureaucratic structures have necessarily developed and unless student enterprise is visible within these structures, it can become isolated or detached within the institution. Representation and championing of student enterprise at senior leadership levels can help avoid this risk and promote co-ordination of effort and delivery.

- **Individuals involved in student enterprise are often very passionate and committed.** Expertise in delivering support for student enterprise is critical to ensure interventions are helpful for those involved. The ability to broaden the appeal of student enterprise to the wider audiences within an institution through a shared language is critical. The individuals involved in this are often committed to developing the relevant knowledge and skills amongst staff, students and graduates. In some of the cases presented here, this has been attempted through terms of reference which are not explicitly drawing on what some might see as ‘business terminology’, for example through words such as ingenuity, creativity and innovation. These are terms which have cross-disciplinary resonance.

- **Enterprise can be viewed as a service for students, graduates and staff.** In presenting student enterprise in this way there is tendency to adopt a ‘customer’ or ‘client’ perspective. Here the provider frames the service in terms of a user experience and adopt a process model to structure the experience. Alternative approaches exist with students, graduates and staff becoming partners in the knowledge exchange process and adopting a co-producer role rather than that of a consumer. This report has not focused on the pedagogical debates surrounding enterprise and entrepreneurship education, however the findings point towards a need for business schools to re-consider how it is conceptualising enterprise and entrepreneurship education. The QAA definitions, coupled with contemporary approaches to self-directed learning, may provide business schools with an answer, however this poses a challenge when the business school is a significant cash generator due to the volume of students it recruits. Learning from other disciplines, especially ones where experiential learning is embedded in curriculum design.

- **Both formal and informal structures are valuable.** These need to be harnessed within an institution to bring the various people involved in student enterprise together. The examples offered in the case studies presented here of groups of interested people from various disciplines, from both professional services and academics, simply coming together to share experiences help encourage inter-disciplinary and inter-service collaboration.

- **Business schools play an important role within student enterprise.** They can do this through leading in this area, or being a contributor through education, research or business engagement. Where alignment is established between the research interests of the business school, student enterprise and business engagement, and where multiple funding streams are harnessed, this leadership role can be a powerful means of shaping, driving and championing student enterprise across the institution. In three of the universities within this study, the benefits of this alignment in terms of efficiently addressing education, research and business engagement are apparent. In the absence of one or more of these elements, the business school is but one of many elements within the network, and needs to consider its strategic intent and the wider institutional expectation of the business school within the institution.
Action Points

Drawing from the data, the analysis and the conclusions, we propose the following key action points for business school Deans, university Vice-Chancellors, and policymakers.

- **Share best practice within and between disciplines.** Student enterprise takes many forms and it is organised in a myriad of different ways by various parties. Sharing practice within and between disciplines and institutions offers a means for learning to take place and enable the most suitable student enterprise offer to be developed within the local context.

- **Personalise enterprise and entrepreneurship offerings.** There needs to be recognition of differing factors which shape student enterprise within an institution. This means there cannot be a single model which suits all circumstances. Policy in this area needs to support but not direct the student enterprise offer to ensure that activity remains relevant to the specific student body, the institution and the local economy.

- **Student enterprise is integral to the student and graduate offer.** To enable student enterprise to respond to the changing demands of employers and the wider economy, a sustainable model of funding is necessary. If student enterprise is considered a core element of the student experience, it should be factored into core institutional funding arrangements.

- **Senior leadership need to champion student enterprise and promote an integrated offer.** To avoid student enterprise becoming lost within institutional bureaucracies, it needs representation at senior levels to help promote a co-ordinated effort across disciplines and service areas.

- **Clearly define what data needs gathering to measure performance.** Reporting on student enterprise for many of the institutions is shaped by the demands of the various external bodies. The means of gathering this data are not standardised. With the introduction of the Knowledge Exchange Framework, a standard set of performance metrics to measure student enterprise and its impact need to be developed. Clearer guidance on what data needs to be gathered and the methodology would greatly assist institutions.

Areas for Further Research

This project was not funded and the limitations of this study in terms of scope, scale and representativeness has been noted above. A wider study, beyond Small Business Charter award holders, would provide a useful insight into the sector as a whole. The project does however touch upon areas which would merit further, more detailed research. These might include research which address the following questions:

- To what extent do national student funding arrangements impact on student start-up activity, during and following their studies?
- How do institutional workload models impact on enterprise activity, and how do institutions incentivise staff to engage with enterprise activity or support staff who select not to?
- What are the consequences on enterprise curricula and research agendas when knowledge exchange ecosystem approaches are adopted?
- How do knowledge exchange eco-systems impact the organisational forms that a university engages with?
- To what extent are business schools focused on assessing knowledge of enterprise rather than assessing for enterprise?
References


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How can business schools support enterprise and entrepreneurship across the whole university student population?