

## HERA Barometer

### HEFCE National Report to DBIS and Other Stakeholders on Higher Education's Response to the Economic Downturn



**October 2009 report**  
**Period covered: July to September 2009**

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## Introduction

This report, compiled by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), is the outcome of a data collection process managed through the Higher Education Regional Associations (HERA) in September 2009. It follows the pilot report circulated on 1 May 2009 and a second report in July 2009. This series of publications to stakeholders is collectively known as the ‘HERA Barometer’.

The aim of the HERA Barometer is to provide Government and other national stakeholders with current information on:

- how the HE sector is responding to the economic downturn
- changes in demand for HE provision and services
- examples of good practice as well as barriers to an effective response

Please note that this report focuses on new or re-purposed activity, so the data herein should be considered additional to that already reported in the 1 May 2009 pilot and July 2009 HERA Barometer Reports.

In this report, recurring themes have been highlighted separately in the ‘Overview’ section below.

## Overview

General issues and trends

<b>Schemes to enhance graduate employability and other support for graduates</b>	Seven of the eight HERAs recorded schemes which have been set up to provide support and enhance the employability of graduates.
<b>Partnerships between HEIs, businesses and JobCentre Plus</b>	All eight of the HERAs have HEIs who have formed strategic partnerships with organisations such as local businesses, JobCentre Plus, Business Link, local

	councils, and many others.
<b>Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship</b>	Six of the eight HERAs recorded schemes which encourage innovation and entrepreneurship for individuals and businesses.
<b>Business start-up guidance and support</b>	Six of the eight HERAs have HEIs which are offering guidance and support on how to start up a business.
<b>Internships and work placements</b>	Seven of the eight HERAs have reported an increase in demand for internship and work placement programmes. In response to this, five of the HERAs are reporting an increase in the number of internships offered.
<b>Careers advice for graduates, unemployed and people recently made redundant</b>	Six of the eight HERAs have reported and increase in demand for careers advice. There are several HEIs across the regions that have increased the level of careers service offered to meet this demand.
<b>Support for SMEs</b>	All eight HERAs have reported HEIs who are supporting SMEs through various schemes and programmes.
<b>Reduced demand</b>	All eight HERAs have reported reduced demand or gaps in existing activity within their region. This includes: a lack of paid undergraduate places for sandwich students; less employer presence on campuses; a fall in the number of placements offered; and a reduction in the funding of large scale training.
<b>Recession to recovery</b>	There is a hint of cautious optimism amongst the HERAs that there are signs of economic recovery. For example a number of businesses are re-expressing an interest in training for leadership and management. The HERAs are re-focussing their efforts towards preparing for the recovery and the future barometer reports will reflect this.

### Data Health Warning

The HERA Barometer is a new data collection exercise and therefore cannot provide the level of robustness and independent verification checks expected of a more established, formal survey.

In terms of the data population:

- 8 of the 9 English regions returned data
- Within each region, some HEIs may not have participated in this round of reporting



## Association of Universities in the East of England (AUEE)

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

### Overview

This Region's HEIs have rolled-out considerable new activity to address the re-training needs of individuals and companies resulting from the economic downturn. These new services, that include internships, are contributing positively to a measurable improvement in the social and economic fabric of the East of England. The following case studies are indicative of this region's activity:

### University of Essex

The University held the first of 3 School-for-Startups in Ipswich in July. The workshops focus on the six key steps that every startup business owner and aspiring entrepreneur should address. The event was attended by 170 people and feedback has been very positive. The next events are in Southend and Colchester.

Essex has launched its internship/work placement programme and 40 graduates have signed up who will be supported by a recruitment/matching officer to help students prepare CVs and visit companies who have expressed an interest in having a student on work placement.

The University is developing a service with Southend Borough Council to deliver a non-accredited course of skills and knowledge development for employed and unemployed people who are, or are interested, in working in the third sector. The programme will be at Levels 3 & 4 and will develop the learners in areas such as employment and HR, interpersonal skills and team building, finance, procurement and QA.

### University of Bedfordshire

The University's 'Enterprise Summer School' successfully engaged with 35 students and others in the community, providing training in self-employment skills: <http://www.beds.ac.uk/news/2009/aug/090804-enterprise>

Bedfordshire's Centre for Personal and Career Development is providing one-to-one careers guidance and workshops to graduates who are under employed. Initially catering for 20 graduates per month, it is expected to lead to interesting developments with the imminent Advancement Service which should play a key role in widening participation as suggested in the recent report from the Cabinet Office on Unleashing Aspiration.

### **University of Hertfordshire**

Owned by the University, Exemplas Ltd has rolled-out a 'beat the recession, plan for recovery' programme to address the effects of the recession on business. Including a series of pragmatic workshops specifically designed to be eligible to draw down the Train-to-Gain Leadership and Management funding stream, themes include:

- Making & Saving Money
- Leading into the Future
- Managing into the Future in a Time of Uncertainty
- Finding & Retaining Customers

### **University of East Anglia**

UEA has launched an Enterprise and Commercialisation service offering advice and financial support to undergraduates and postgraduates considering business start-up. It includes the ability to access Proof-of-Concept funding, mentoring and signposting to external providers.

UEA's Graduate Programme focuses on un-employed or under-employed recent graduates who can access group coaching to raise confidence and improve interview skills. Their Graduate Intern Programme has been launched as a 10 week programme for new graduates to work with SMEs and third sector organizations. Companies receive a £400 grant from the ECIF allocation to support the internship programme cost of £1500. First Graduates have completed their placements – some have been offered full-time positions with their placement companies.

## **B. Increased demand for existing activity**

### **Overview**

Within the East of England, there are many new business-focused support programmes and so some universities are unable to compare demand. However, the overall number of enquiries serviced by HEIs is rising and of these, the percentage received from businesses and organisations requesting support is increasing.

There is considerable interaction between the region's HEIs and other agencies, indicative of which is the University of Bedfordshire's "Supporting Graduates in Employment". This is catering for 100 graduates employed in Bedfordshire SMEs with funding support and partnership of two local unitary authorities. <http://www.beds.ac.uk/knowledgehub/development/supportinggraduates>

Evidence of other cross-regional activity includes the East of England Development Agency £3,000 Innovation Vouchers and the £1,000 Low Carbon Vouchers offered by the 'i10' knowledge exchange. Both have been hugely successful with a strong take-up across the six counties. The following case studies are indicative of activity:

### **Anglia Ruskin University**

Anglia Ruskin has received significantly more SBM national applications than in any previous year and a greater percentage of these are now being received from those made redundant. Over 90% of Health & Social Care undergraduate and pre-registration courses have seen an increase in applications for 2009/10. This is considered likely to continue in future years in response to the Government & NHS demands for nursing at all levels to become a degree-only profession.

### **University of Hertfordshire**

The University's BioPark in Hertfordshire embraces a 7,500 sq m biological and chemical laboratory research centre that now has 17 permanent tenants on site and 6 'virtual tenants'. Occupancy is now approaching 80% and recent companies that have moved in are a life science-related ICT company and a bioscience company. BioPark's second U.S inward investment moved in at the beginning of July. The BioPark is about to commence development of an additional 1,800 sq m of incubation and laboratory space aimed at encouraging the development of new start-up businesses – augmented by a comprehensive business support programme.

### **Writtle College**

Writtle has seen a substantial increase in applications for its undergraduate and postgraduate provision with overall acceptances up 20% on the previous year. Within this increase the College has experienced a 150% higher demand for undergraduate business programmes and a 36% improvement in recruitment for postgraduate business courses.

### **University of East Anglia**

The University has experienced increased demand for Nursing Courses where, for example, a recent round of fast track applications targeted those looking to re-direct their careers. This generated 316 applications which resulted in approximately 40 offers. Additionally, demand for UEA PGCE Teaching Courses is currently 32% above 2008 levels and there is also increased interest for "subject knowledge enhancement" training for teachers.

## **C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity**

### **Overview**

Relatively little information has been received from the AUEE member institutions relating to a fall in demand. However, HEIs are seeking to identify any gaps in existing provision to enable new services to be developed when and where appropriate.

The Association has some concerns about the slow uptake of environmentally sustainable practices by some companies and organisations. Whilst at least two of this region's world class-leading universities are driving forward with new technologies that are helping to address climate change, the regional uptake has been disappointing. Inevitably this may be a direct consequence of the need to address efficiency savings for economic survival. It is recommended that a greater attempt should be made by regional

and central Government to clearly establish and project the link showing how low carbon technologies can assist with company efficiency savings, thus lowering costs.

The following two case studies relate to an apparent fall in demand for some activity:

### **Anglia Ruskin University**

The University reports that Hospital Trust budgets have been tightened and it seems that training funds now need to be provided by individual departments which they are finding very difficult to do. Similarly an ongoing survey of the demand for forensic science training in police forces and crime scene investigators suggests that demand will fall as a result of restricted funding.

Within Life Sciences, Anglia Ruskin has detected that CPD courses specifically identified for and developed for biomedical science have not been taken up as strongly as in the past.

### **Cranfield University**

Cranfield University reports that there has been a downturn in short course demand in some areas. Whilst corporate client relationship building is going well it is now at a slower rate than expected and this is inevitably due to client uncertainty and reorganisations due to the downturn. However, Cranfield has recently launched its re-skilling website: <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/sas/reskill/> that is being widely publicised and should lead to an increase in demand.

## **D. Partnerships and networking**

### **Overview**

The region's HEIs continue to develop and expand their regional and local partnerships, particularly with JobCentre Plus and the RDA. Examples include:

- The "how to grow your business and prosper" event held by the University of Essex that targets local businesses and is jointly organized by COLBEA (local enterprise agency) and Business Link. This University is also working with JobCentre Plus to evaluate the on-line skills assessment tool to be launched on VentureNavigator as part of their economic challenge investment funded projects.
- The Norwich University College of the Arts has been delivering support to disabled graduates, particularly those suffering from dyslexia, with JobCentre Plus.
- At Cranfield there has been an expansion of their established links with JobCentre Plus to assist in increasing awareness of programme availability.
- At the University of Bedfordshire there has been increased interaction with EEDA in relation to potential changes in the local automotive employment landscape.
- Writtle College is working closely with Chelmsford Borough Council on their 'Redundancy Initiative Supporting Enterprise' events and with JobCentre Plus to provide education to the long term unemployed.

## **Case studies:**

### **Anglia Ruskin University**

Anglia Ruskin is providing specific literature and briefing leaflets at all JobCentre Plus offices in the region, focusing on support available to unemployed graduates. Specifically their Faculty of Health & Social Care is increasing partnership activity with these Centres to ensure they are aware of open/taster days and can signpost redundant/unemployed clients to where appropriate.

Within the Anglia Ruskin's life sciences provision an increased range of vocational courses have been developed (e.g. equine, pharmacy etc) in association with the College of West Anglia and Peterborough Regional College. In this context the University has appointed a co-ordinator to harmonise activities in widening participation for all vocational courses.

### **University of Hertfordshire**

Based on the latest research in behavioural and cognitive psychology, Talent Key is a programme to help individuals increase their confidence and self-motivation to make the changes necessary to maximise their own potential. The University is working closely with Business Link to confirm the JobCentre Plus/Department of Works and Pensions pipeline for client referrals into this new programme. Clients will have access to one day workshops and individual follow-up on the second day. As part of the provision the clients will have access to one-to-one support as well as the mainstream Business Link programme. Each programme lasts 16 weeks, during which time the individual receives a supplementary payment of £50 per week from JobCentre Plus. The University also provides taster sessions for JobCentre Plus staff so that they are fully aware of the potential of the programme. An outcome of these sessions will be to tailor a handbook for use by advisers to assist with their referral process.

The University and Exemplas are working with graduates and businesses. The aim is to enhance the resilience of knowledge-based businesses, support their capacity to maintain and grow graduate employment and ensure the SMEs that they have engaged with and are in a position to take full advantage of the economic upturn. Objectives include working with partners to identify, engage with and assess the ability of knowledge-based businesses to adapt to become more sustainable. Also, to provide practical support addressing the business development needs for the current tightening economic climate.

### **University of East Anglia**

UEA's work with the Enterprise Challenge Investment Fund includes signposting graduates looking to start up new enterprises to access the resources of Business Link. The University is working with TCHC – the organisation responsible for skills brokerage – including Leadership and Management, Train to Gain, and Response to Redundancy. UEA identifies with TCHC signposting opportunities and funding that can be used to

support businesses accessing training programmes. They are continuing their ongoing sponsorship of the Norfolk Network and with district councils to deliver courses across the county and therefore ensure accessibility. In this context, Project Evolve has received 300 specific enquires from local authorities in recent months.

Other relevant initiatives at the University include the 'InCrops Project', funded by ERDF and EEDA, which aims to promote crop derived bio-renewable near market research, supply chain development and product development, thus helping local businesses and entrepreneurs exploit opportunities within these sectors.

## E. Other

### **Summary**

The East of England business community embraces an above average percentage of SMEs and it is known from past recessions that entrepreneurial activity and business start-ups tend to increase during such economic downturns. It is therefore essential that this region's HEIs and their associated networks pay due regard to micro and SMEs whilst also servicing the needs and expectations of far larger organisations. The following is indicative of recent developments:

#### **1. Collaborative Activity - AUUE**

The region's network of HEIs continues to seek out collaborative opportunities that will add value to social and economic prosperity. There have been three recent examples of such activity that have been established during the summer months as follows:

1. On behalf of its members and in association with other regional partners, AUUE has been instrumental in the construction of the 'Guide for Graduates' at [www.eescp.org.uk/supportforgraduates](http://www.eescp.org.uk/supportforgraduates)
2. AUUE has outsourced its GradsEast on-line recruitment service to a commercialised company so that GradsEast can continue to grow without making further demands upon funding from either the member HEIs or the Development Agency.
3. On behalf of its members, AUUE has successfully bid for ERDF money to support low carbon SKTPs within the region. This total package amounts to £6m spread over the next three years.

The AUUE network sees considerable value in collaborative ventures of this nature and further developments will be considered in the coming weeks.

#### **2. Business Support for SMEs – University of Hertfordshire**

The University has launched the EASIER (Environmental Advice for SMEs in the Eastern Region) project. This project is part-funded through the region's ERDF Competitiveness "low carbon" programme, EASIER is designed to support SMEs in the region to reduce their carbon output, and become more energy-efficient and competitive as a result. The project has been developed with Exemplas and the Building Research Establishment with the aim of reducing SMEs' carbon emissions by between 10% and 20%. Eligible

SMEs in the region will receive up to 14 days of specialist, tailored environmental consultancy paid for by the project.

### **3. Added Value – Norwich University College of the Arts**

In the past few years there has been an increase in the range of mentoring services that have been rolled out both nationally and regionally by professional bodies. Increasingly the university sector is developing sector specific dedicated mentoring services and this is typified by work at the Norwich University College of the Arts. Launched in April 2009 their mentoring programme unites students, graduates and industry alongside their Alumni Association.

### **4. Specific Sector Networks - Anglia Ruskin University**

Believed to be one of England's largest providers of health and social care education, Anglia Ruskin University continues to develop their relationships with regional partners, schools and colleges to ensure a seamless progression route for students from FE to HE. Such activity is invaluable in assisting those still at secondary school, as they make their career choices and select the most appropriate courses so that they are fully equipped for the challenges and opportunities that they will encounter.

## **F. Summary remarks**

The East of England's higher education institutions have responded in a proactive and highly professional way in catering for the current and anticipated needs of both individuals and companies as they face the opportunities and challenges caused by the economic downturn. There can be no doubt that the funding supplied by HEFCE under the Enterprise Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) has significantly contributed to the many success stories outlined in this précis of regional activity. Nevertheless, those institutions that failed to benefit from ECIF funding are as fully engaged with the development and introduction of innovative and highly responsive new provision as those that received such support.

Setting aside the recent speculation in the Press that the recession may be coming to an end, there are clear indicators within the East of England that cautious optimism is returning to the business community. This can be demonstrated by an increase in business enquiries being made to the university sector, stronger support by SMEs for involvement with Shell STEP involvement and by the significant engagement with the Innovation Voucher schemes.

The HE sector will need to remain equipped and prepared to cater for the re-skilling needs of an increasing number of people who are likely to experience unemployment in the coming months. Also, the HEIs must continue to provide training provision and new skills to those still in employment, especially where their employers seek to diversify in order to remain competitive. It remains essential that the higher education institutions are adequately funded to enable them to continue to offer support in this way, whilst still able to undertake their various other strategic responsibilities.

There remains profound concern about the three specific groups where the effects of the recession have hit very hard. They are the third sector charities that offer considerable support to local communities, the many qualified eighteen year olds who seek a higher education but who have been unable to secure a place at college/university this autumn and also those who have obtained their first degree but who cannot find employment.



## East Midlands Universities Association

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

The summer has seen few *new* schemes from East Midlands HEIs; most were busy developing and initiating ECIF-funded activities and increasing their efforts to prepare graduates for, and place them into, employment. Much effort has focused on identifying and initiating internship opportunities. Meanwhile, SME-supporting schemes have been shaping up to deliver workshops and seminars to help businesses to survive the recession and prepare for recovery.

**Nottingham Trent University's School of Art and Design** is currently working with a local clothing manufacturer and retailer on a 10 week graduate internship programme which would be accredited by NTU; they are also collaborating with **Skillfast** (SSC) over the development of a national graduate internship scheme.

As part of the Ingenuity Project (a three-way sub-regional partnership between the **Universities of Nottingham, Derby and Nottingham Trent** in collaboration with **Business Link**) the University of Nottingham hosted the first of this autumn's free breakfast events for SMEs at the end of September, addressing the heightened need for strategic thinking and new business ideas (products, services and processes) in the current tough economic climate. The programme is supported by *Nottinghamshire County Council*, the *Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership*, the *Greater Nottingham Partnership* and *emda ERDF*.

The summer also saw the launch of the **University of Leicester's** G-STEP (GMES Space and Technology Exchange Partnership). This GMES accelerator project applies earth observation data from satellite, aerial and ground-based earth observation to enhance business operations and competitiveness through new product developments. Dedicated academic expertise made accessible to most business and public sectors (*funded by ERDF, LeicesterShire Economic Partnership and University of Leicester*).

The **University of Lincoln** is inviting innovative SME bosses to enhance their competitiveness through the new Access Innovation scheme, which matches business students with the SME to work on specific company projects and is part funded by ERDF.

**Case Study: University of Lincoln Access Innovation Scheme – Obam Stairlifts**

Business students Niall McMahon, Stuart Whitfield, Kyle Rusiecki and Vanessa Cooper pictured with clients, Obam Stairlifts, conducted market research into the effectiveness of its advertising strategy.



Kyle said: "Obam became my life for a few months. But it was a great opportunity to meet people and understand a real market research problem."

Obam managers Judi Bucknall and Chris Butroid said they were happy with the students' findings and recommendations and would be acting on them.

B. Increased demand for existing activity

#### **Demand from Students & Graduates:**

In line with the national picture, East Midlands HEIs report a surplus of applications for full-time undergraduate courses and our Careers Services continue to report increased demand for support from students and graduates. The high demand for services, especially for one to one advice, has caused institutions to consider novel approaches to respond to the demand and also provide students with exposure to businesses who are currently reluctant to engage in recruitment fairs that involve any cost to the business.

To address these two issues, **University of Leicester** will be running a new Skills Workshop Programme throughout the autumn term and are inviting employers to deliver key skill seminars as part of the Student Development Employability programme. The

seminars will provide informative, practical sessions to help equip students with the vital skills and information needed to compete in today's competitive graduate market place and provide the businesses with a forum to engage with University of Leicester students. The businesses will be able to promote their organisation, graduate or work placement scheme and distribute literature at the event free of charge.

Meanwhile the **University of Derby** has launched its new **OnetoOne** service, funded by ECIF, which has allowed them to offer enterprise placements (previously only available to undergraduates) to new graduates, as well as offering significant post-graduation careers advice and support. Existing students who make use of the Career Development Centre's offer and facilities will automatically be referred to the OnetoOne service on graduation, to ensure ongoing support from the University. The OnetoOne service is also providing free advice and guidance to all unemployed professionals, managers and graduates (PMG), and to PMG in the workplace who are at risk of redundancy.

A new recruitment initiative from the **University of Lincoln** saw all their new graduates receive a postcard towards the end of the summer holiday season, from the careers and opportunities service, to remind them of the assistance available to recent alumni who might still be searching for their first graduate-level job. A similar postcard was sent out to graduates of **Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln**. Meanwhile, the **University of Northampton's** Career and Employability Service have been running a campaign to remind businesses and organizations that they can advertise all kinds of graduate employment opportunities (including full & part time jobs, KTP vacancies, summer and year-long placements etc.) for free or for very minimal cost, and that on-campus interviews and recruitment is also available.

#### **Demand from Employers:**

Media reports, that we are seeing the beginnings of a recovery from the recession, are supported by increased enquires from businesses to HE. **Derby, Loughborough and Nottingham Trent** universities are all reporting that employers are starting to recognise the need to invest in development to enable them to be more analytical, creative and innovative, believing that this will enable their business to be more responsive, efficient and adaptable to the current economic environment.

**Nottingham Business School (at NTU)** is responding to a growing interest in bespoke leadership and management training. Their **Tailored Leadership & Development Programme** provides a building-block approach to CPD and career progression, dovetailing with future company strategy.

**Loughborough University** reports that the new Shorter Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (sKTP; which last 10-40 weeks) and are part funded by the Technology Strategy Board to address short term, tactical business issues are generating new enquiries from organisations that have either not been eligible for the Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme, or who have not previously engaged with the University. Similarly, the **Pharmacy School (University of Nottingham)** is experiencing a higher

demand from industry in a variety of areas, including research collaboration, consultancy, professional training and use of its technical facilities.

#### C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

East Midlands' institutions are reporting that the decrease in demand from employers for CPD is slowing. Indeed, businesses are beginning to enquire about courses for workforce development with a view to future enrolment. They are, however, very cost-sensitive and this now seems to be the main issue for them; many organisations appear to have frozen budgets for leadership and management development training. This contrasts with the evidence from the two East Midlands studies into the demand for higher level skills, *Known Unknowns* and *Beyond Known Unknowns*, conducted for us last year by CFE Ltd. which found cost of training was low on the list of concerns for employers. It is, however, consistent with the recently published meta analysis published by CFE Ltd, in which they combined the findings of the East Midlands study with those of similar studies undertaken in the West Midlands and Yorkshire regions (funded by HEFCE) where they found cost increasing in importance with each study they undertook. CFE considers this reflects the deepening of the recession as the studies were sequential, rather than reflecting regional differences in the employers' attitude to the cost of training.

**Nottingham Trent University** reports that employers are asking for hard data on the likely return on investment, to help them build the business case for training and, along with some of our other institutions, are seeing the demand for full-cost accredited professional training being adversely affected, causing them to consider a review of their fees structure.

The possible 'green shoots of recovery' in the market for 'soft skills' around enquiries for leadership and management training does not extend to STEM courses.. Here, the surge in applications for full-time undergraduate STEM courses has not been matched by employers, who currently show little interest in technical higher level skills training.

Institutions continue to report difficulties in finding paid undergraduate placements for sandwich students. Nottingham Trent University reports that the position is especially difficult for Life Sciences students and difficulties are also evident for chemistry and forensic sciences undergraduates, although to a lesser extent.

#### D. Partnerships and networking

In view of the diverse nature of the internship schemes offered in the region, EM HEIs have agreed with *emda* to provide a simple, common statement on internships which can be displayed on members'/partners' websites and provides links to guidance for both employers and graduates on the variety of different schemes available in the region.



Other collaborative activities around graduate recruitment included a careers specialist regional event where 36 attendees from a range of businesses, HE and FE College careers staff and *emda* sought solutions for 'hard-to-fill' vacancies. Solutions focused on facilitating engagement of graduates with these sectors and special assistance for SME and micro businesses to engage more easily with careers teams who can supply a range of skilled labour.

**Loughborough, De Montfort and Leicester Universities** are hosting a series of joint Knowledge Transfer Partnership events during October and November, inviting businesses from the Leicestershire region, to give an insight into the benefits of the scheme and how it can be used to develop successful collaborative projects with a University.

**Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln (BG)**, in common with other HEIs in the region, has experienced a marked improvement in the joint working between **Business Link** and **Nottingham Business Ventures** particularly around students engaged on the Enterprise Inc programme. Meetings have also taken place to identify how best to support both students / graduates into self-employment and to consider staff development needs. The BG Business Development Manager has reciprocated by supporting an NBV event in Sleaford. Further events are being planned for Global Entrepreneurs Week.

**bioKneX**, the East Midlands Bioscience Knowledge Exchange, is a collaboration between **Nottingham Trent University, The University of Nottingham and The University of Leicester**. bioKneX (funded by HEIF and ERDF via *emda*) provides a showcase for research and is now an intrinsic component of the *emda*-funded **East Midlands Healthcare and Bioscience iNet**. bioKneX is focused on identifying commercial opportunities and partners for its participating HEIs. Through the expanding bioKneX on-line network, sector contacts and attendance at conferences and exhibitions, bioKneX identifies organizations who have an interest in linking with East Midlands Institutions and acts to stimulate collaboration and commercial interaction. Through bioKneX, the **Pharmacy School** at the **University of Nottingham** has run the 5th Roberts course, 'Career Opportunities in the Pharmaceutical Industry' for UoN Postgraduate students, providing training and placements with local companies.

**University of Derby Corporate** reports increased working with **Business Link, JobCentre Plus and Next Step, Connexions**, through their OnetoOne project. All parties have fed back positively on the service, confirming both its value and a definite ongoing demand. Representatives from the organisations named have also been invited to attend OnetoOne workshops in a number of locations as guest speakers.

The **University of Northampton** is working with *emda* to develop and run a Regional Resource Forum. The key partners are the **RIEP** (Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership), *emda*, **GOEM, EMRA, the Environment Agency** and The University of Northampton. The aim is to bring together all partners involved in waste and resource management to encourage effective stakeholder dialogue and move towards the development of a Regional Resource Strategy. The strategy will encourage more sustainable use of resources within the region and link waste produced to materials demand. The long term aim is to make the East Midlands - as far as possible - self sustaining in terms of material use. The University will provide the secretariat, events support, expert advice and contacts throughout industry

E. Other
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#### **HE Interventions with Wider Economic Impact: Creative & Cultural**

The **University of Derby** took up the lease of the former Derby Playhouse theatre in May 2009, after the theatre went into administration and finally closed in 2008. The University will use the theatre as an experiential learning space for students as well as a facility to showcase graduate talent, and, in a unique partnership with Derby LIVE, part of Derby City Council, it will provide a venue for staging live professional and amateur productions.



The forthcoming Autumn/Winter season's programme of events has been announced and bookings are now being taken. The reopening of the theatre offers the local population the opportunity to enjoy live theatre within the city once again and is also making an important contribution towards boosting the local economy during the current economic downturn.

**NTU School of Art and Design - Film and Media** - *The Nottingham Media Academy* is providing a media portal for jobs from short term production opportunities in the region supported by the regional sector body, **EM Media**. The School of Art and Design and partners are currently working with **Skillset** (SSC) for accreditation of academy status for the Nottingham Media Academy. A new, postgraduate MA Film programme delivered jointly between NTU and Broadway will create the opportunity for local film makers to develop high level professional and work-related skills to support film-making in the East Midlands region. At a recent film debate in the region, the delegates considered that macro-economics doesn't always impact on the creative industries in quite the same way as other sectors, not least because productions have a very particular time frame.

**NTU School of Art and Design - Fine Art and Decorative Arts/ Crafts** - Graduates in these disciplines are usually self-employed. The innovative 'Moving On' and 'Culturegen' initiatives encourage collaborative working to create events and exhibitions which would be difficult to realise by individuals working independently. The initiative supports and sustains arts practice in the Nottingham area.

#### **HE Interventions with Wider Economic Impact: Science & Engineering**

The **Environmental Technology Centre (ETC)** at the **University of Nottingham** was founded specifically to help SMEs to adopt more efficient use of resources, promote environmentally friendly working practises and the use of cleaner and more sustainable technologies. Because of the global importance of environmental issues, the ETC receives European Funding allowing university experts to work with qualifying businesses for 2-5 days, free of charge. In recognition of the project's success, the ETC was recently showcased to the European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Huber. The ETC recently ran the **Tackling Waste Conference** at the university, **in partnership with the University of Northampton**

The universities of **Loughborough, Nottingham and Sheffield** have joined forces to set up the pioneering **Centre of Excellence in Customised Assembly (CECA)**. CECA is an excellent example of world leading academics and engineers working together to help boost the competitiveness of UK manufacturing. CECA is an industry driven facility to assist the adoption of new technologies to reduce assembly times and costs, whilst improving quality and productivity. It supports companies to move up the value-added chain to more knowledge-intensive, high-skilled manufacturing, promoting new manufacturing practices that contribute to long-term sustainability. Ceca has three unique technology Centres that provide services to industry such as testing, consultancy, hands-on training and R&D projects. The Technology Centres draw on best practice from around the world and provide industry with an opportunity to see new techniques in action.

**University of Leicester's CityScan Pollution Radar** – is a demonstrator project funded by the university and **emda** that aims to provide real time urban monitoring of fuel combustion waste products to improve the management of such products working with business. Entire cities, previously unmonitored (due to cost limitation of number of monitors deployed in any one area), can now be monitored to identify pollution emissions. Rather than monitoring a single point the CityScan technology will allow large areas to be monitored simultaneously in 3-D over time, allowing city managers to identify how pollution from one area affects non-emitting areas, thus giving them new abilities to manage the urban environment:

- as it currently exists
- how it may exist in the future through planning permissions of new developments, be they roads, factories, shopping centres', schools or hospitals.

The university has also developed the **Embedded Systems Demonstrator Laboratory**, a facility that offers businesses a set of test beds which can be used to develop software for systems such as aircraft, passenger cars, medical equipment, elevators and other embedded systems. Some facilities can be accessed over the web. More details can be found at <http://www.embed-sys-demo-lab.co.uk/>

#### **HE Interventions with Wider Economic Impact: International Students**

The **emda China Desk** and the EM HEI International Student Working Group (a subgroup of the Careers Services Group) ran an International Recruitment Event in June. The aim of the event was to stimulate interest amongst EM Employers for International Student Graduates. Thirty six EM Employers and 750 Chinese Students from across the EM Universities attended. Results to date have been impressive with five vacancies created and further vacancies planned for 2009/2010.

F. Summary remarks
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- Universities in the East Midlands have spent the summer preparing and initiating their ECIF-funded initiatives.
- In common with the national picture, they have seen a surge in applications for full-time undergraduate courses and have done their best to ensure that all available places are filled.
- There has been a pleasing rise in applications for full-time undergraduate STEM courses.
- There is a range of diverse internship opportunities available through the region's HEIs and along with *emda*, the institutions have agreed a common simple statement on internships which is being displayed on our websites to help employers and graduates find information about the different offers.
- The decline in employer-sponsored training may have stabilized, but there is little evidence of renewed enrolment and employers are very cost-sensitive.
- We may be seeing 'green shoots' of renewed interest for future enrolment in 'soft skills' training for management and leadership. It is of concern that this is not matched by employer interest in higher level skills in STEM areas.
- Institutions are still struggling to secure paid undergraduate placement opportunities for sandwich students. This is very worrying for those who have successfully offered these placements over a number of years, who report that employers that have recruited previously cannot afford to fund placement students this year.
- It is very worrying that the dearth of placement opportunities is affecting STEM courses in general and Life Sciences, Chemistry and Forensic Science, especially.

## HERDA-SW

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

- During the period June - August 2009 Universities in the region have delivered the first pilot 3-day intensive courses for Professional and Executive Jobseekers in the Job Centre Plus Western District (Bristol/Bath). The 4 courses, funded by Job Centre Plus, took nearly 100 jobseekers and provided them with an intensive period of coaching. Early indications show that about 50% of attendees were back in employment within 13 weeks of the course. As a result of the pilot scheme, staff from **Jobcentre Plus, HERDA-SW, and the Universities of Bristol, Bath Spa and the West of England (UWE)** met with the **Rt. Hon. Jim Knight MP**, Minister of State for Employment and Welfare Reform and Regional Minister for the SW at UWE on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009.



The Universities in the South West are working with Job Centre Plus to role this activity out across the region or even nationally.

- The **Arts University College Bournemouth (AUCB)** is working to implement a project entitled KISMET, which is designed to assist those workers who have been made redundant access appropriate pathways back into either employment or self-employment. The project is supported by SWREIP funding and is due to start its pilot phase in late September 2009. The project is strongly linked with the sub-region's Multi-Area Agreement and is key element of a strategy of keeping talent workers within the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole sub-region. Job Centre Plus and Business Link are also key partners in this activity.

- The **University of Bath's** Division for Lifelong Learning is extending its pilot 'Experience Technology' workshops into 2009/10 – a series of free technology experiences for students aged 16 - 19. Sessions take place over three days at further education colleges in the region and offer students a unique experience and insight into technology-based higher educational Foundation Degrees in a fun and instructive college environment (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/lifelong-learning/bdp/summerschools.html>). The Division is also offering a new range of CMI-accredited Professional Skills Management Units which can be studied via distance learning. Free taster events were held on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September 2009 to demonstrate the online learning materials (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/lifelong-learning/cmi/>).
- Placements. **Bournemouth Universities** STRIDE graduate placement project helps businesses source talent and skills, feeding innovative ideas into businesses, while providing job opportunities for graduates in the SW. The project has delivered 67 graduate placements and 95 new collaborations with business. For example, the Environment Agency employed a STRIDE Graduate in its Flood Incident Team to develop two databases. This in-house development saved the Environment Agency time and money. Vicky Farwig, Acting Technical Specialist said “without this placement these assignments may have been shelved”. The Project will close down this autumn and similar graduate placement activity will continue with the Shell STEP programme. The **University of Exeter** has won the contract for the South West talent pool on the national Shell STEP scheme which means working closely with this organisation to take on 10 Shell STEP projects from a pool of national graduates and employers providing more opportunities for the individuals.

B. Increased demand for existing activity
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- Creative Enterprise Cornwall (CEC3) is a **University College Falmouth** (UCF) project funded by ESF Convergence grant to provide work placements for students on postgraduate study. There is no direct cost to the business. For the new academic year, the financial offer to students is being increased to allow up to a 105 hours funded placement activity (equivalent to three working weeks) compared to the previous offer of 70 hours. There has been an increase in businesses approaching UCF regarding short-term student placements and demand from students starting courses in October this year has also increased. The funding has been extended from the planned December 2010 end date for a further six months which will enable the project to operate in the 2010/11 academic year.
- In January 2009, the **Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN)** launched a new initiative, LifePilot, to provide those who have recently been, or are still, in employment with information about the option of returning to study (<http://www.life-pilot.co.uk/>).



The website includes video case studies, checklists for returning to study, financial information and contact information for further advice. Since its launch there have been 5,085 visits to the site. The **Open University in the South West** has been working with the WVLLN and the SW TUC to provide flexible support for Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) to assist 'at risk' or redundant members during the recession. The first phase will be participation in two meetings of ULRs that will focus on the support available from the 'Skills for the Future' fund, Job Centre Plus, Nextstep, the OU and WVLLN, the meeting acting as a platform to plan further learners activities in conjunction with ULRs.

- The **University of Plymouth's** highly successful 'Formation Zone', pre-incubation space for the creative industries is now at capacity with an ever increasing demand for incubation support, service signposting, business planning, governance, IP issues and mentoring. The launch of their second pre-incubation space 'Formation2.0', targeted at the STEM subjects is timely given this increase in demand for business start up workspace, advice and support. Business Link has also identified a spike in demand for such services.



- Over the summer months, many of the region's Universities provided regular graduate career development workshops their graduates featuring group sessions and intensive one-to-one support. There has also been 'geographic' demand with Universities offering support to those recent graduates from any University who are based locally, for example, in partnership with Wiltshire County Council, **Bath Spa University** delivered day-long support workshops for

recent graduates from any university who are currently unemployed, though targeted exclusively for those returning to the Wiltshire area. The **University of Plymouth** are supporting needs in the local Plymouth travel to work area by providing dedicated career advisor support, a physical space for individuals to visit the University, underpinned by a tailored programme of careers related guidance sessions with access to specialist diagnostic assessments to identify leadership styles.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

- Since it was established, the **University of Bath** has been committed to the provision of placement opportunities for its students. It organizes over 1,000 placements per year and has longstanding relationships with a network of placement sponsors. The University are now reporting that some sectors that have traditionally offered paid placements have clearly been hit by the recession and have far fewer placement opportunities this year, for example, the automotive and civil engineering sectors. Some UK students also appear more reluctant to consider overseas placements because of the weakness of sterling. Our Foundation Degree in Systems Engineering lost 8 work placements at Honda as a result of the downturn in the automotive industry. The Foundation Degree in Engineering Systems is delivered by Swindon College and is designed to appeal to those students who are interested in training for careers in manufacturing engineering and technologies. The course was developed in collaboration with local manufacturing companies and other industry experts.
- KTPs - At the beginning of the quarter the **University of Exeter** reported having no new knowledge transfer partnerships with some existing ones stalling. Although the story is not of rapid growth, the take up on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships is now remaining constant with those Knowledge Transfer Partnerships closing being replaced by the same number of new applications going in. It has been reported by the **University of Plymouth** that the lead time for developing/ establishing a 'classic' Knowledge Transfer Partnerships is growing as businesses are more cautious with strategic investments in innovation. There is a risk that the growing interest in Shorter Knowledge Transfer Partnerships could compromise the interest and investment into the longer term strategic classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. In addition, the institution has found that sign up by employers to attend high profile campus career fairs is proving more difficult to secure.
- Employer presence on **Bournemouth University's** campus has declined as the year has progressed. This is mainly because many large employers closed their graduate applications early and additional campus activity was a 'nice to do' activity which could no longer be afforded/supported. This reduced the number of employer events BU were able to offer in the Spring and Summer terms. For example, JPMorgan has reduced the number of placement and graduate places on offer both last year and for the forthcoming year. In addition they have pulled

out of sponsorship agreements with BU and also of conducting on-campus events during the last 2 terms.

- **University College Falmouth** has witnessed a slight fall in demand for their specialist photographic print services reflecting the drop in business that their regular customers are seeing. However, demand for specialist photographic equipment and studio hire has increased slightly. This may be due to the fact that this service is quite new and awareness of the facilities continues to increase.

#### D. Partnerships and networking

- The region's Universities (through HERDA-SW) were founding partners of the **SW Manufacturing Advisory Service Ltd (SWMAS)**. SWMAS delivers the regional arm of the national Manufacturing Advisory Service initiated by the BIS (previously DTI) in 2002. SWMAS offer a range of expert services that enable SME manufacturers to improve their competitiveness, productivity and performance through hands-on advice and assistance. The Universities work closely with SWMAS, delivering Advanced Manufacturing expertise to the region's businesses – this comes in the form of KTPs, a Foundation Degree, a Strategic Leadership Programme in Manufacturing and joint business focussed workshops, e.g. **Supply Chain Futures** at the **University of Exeter** on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009, and **Innovation in Manufacturing** at the **University of Plymouth** on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009.



## Supply Chain Futures

A Current View of Supply Chain Management and the Future Impact of Additive Layer Manufacturing.

*The University of Exeter is delighted to be able to host and invite you to this free event for manufacturers in association with SWMAS*

**Thursday 3 September 2009**

University of Exeter Innovation Centre, Phase II

- 17:30 Arrive and Buffet
- 18:00 Introduction – Professor Richard Lamming, Director, University of Exeter Business School
- 18:15 Regional Update – Charles Hill, SWMAS Consultant
- 18:30 A Current view of Supply Chain Management – Martyn Perks, Supply Chain Manager (UK), AgustaWestland
- 18:55 Impact of Additive Layer Manufacturing – Dr Neil Sewell, Exeter Advanced Technologies, University of Exeter
- 19:15 Guided tour of Exeter Advanced Technology – “the technology in action”
- 19:55 Close and depart

SMART SOLUTIONS

- The **University of Bath** now has a total of 5 ECIF-funded graduate internships at various stages of approval. One of their own spin-out companies, Glythera, is supporting two internships. Glythera Ltd., based in Bath, has core expertise in protein/peptide functionalisation and glycosylation technologies. Proteins are the fastest growing class of new drug to emerge from the genomics revolution. Addressing diseases as diverse as cancer, arthritis and viral infection, a major limitation to protein drugs is their short action and immune effects, which mean frequent and expensive dosing, and high production costs. Glythera technology is the basis for a new generation of these 'biologic' drugs, enabling cheaper manufacture, fewer injections and greater efficacy. Two further internships, with GlaxoSmithKline plc and Johnson Matthey Ltd, are at contract stage. The **University of Bath** is also about to re-launch and extend its 'Self Employment Essentials' programme. The programme is designed to guide people through their self employment options and help develop their skills to start a business. The University is now looking to extend the number of locations from which the course is delivered, e.g. they are working with Wiltshire College to explore opportunities presented by its 'weekend college' initiative. The course encourages people to look at the economic downturn as an opportunity to become self-employed by developing their own business.
- The Universities in the region continue to support their Area Action Forces. For example, the **University of the West of England** recently attended a half day support fair for over 500 staff at Royal Sun Alliance who are about to be made redundant. University staff had a stand at the event to support staff with an interest in HE study or in business start up support. Advice was offered on funding opportunities and the possibilities for part-time and distance learning that might fit in with job search or further employment. The most popular areas of enquiry were education, health social work and finance. Overall five major companies have been visited to offer support services in the face of the economic downturn: Quadrics, Royal Sun Alliance, Metso, Hewlett Parkard Labs and Somerfield. **University College Falmouth** are also working with the Area Action Force for Cornwall as part of the AAF toolkit.

E. Other
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- **Bournemouth University's** Media School has been working with Dorset County Council, Poole Borough Council, West Dorset Council and Connexions to produce a Careers video to encourage young people to stay in Dorset and develop their careers and training in this region, ***Whoever You Want To Be***. The video was used for the Skills Festival, is used in schools across the region, and is available on-line.
- Working to increase its understanding of the future needs of the local business community is a high priority for the **University of Bath**. Although they have many points of contact with the local business community, they believe that it is valuable to have representation on groups discussing the future shape of the

local economy. For example, their Head of Corporate Relations is an executive member of the Bath Chamber of Commerce and chairs its 'City and Economic Development Committee'. One the goals of this committee is to encourage a broadening of the base of the local economy in order to reduce the reliance on the retail and tourism sectors. This goal is consistent with the University's own contribution to increasing the diversity of the local business base through nurturing new business ventures in its Innovation Centre in the City.

- Procurement - the **University of Plymouth** has worked closely with Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust to create a 'Sell2Plymouth' partnership aiming to enable micro and small enterprises enhanced access to the public sector procurement opportunities (valued up to £20K) at a one stop information point, supported by both the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. With lead investment from the University, the new system managed through the website [www.sell2plymouth.co.uk](http://www.sell2plymouth.co.uk), was officially launched at a high profile event hosted by the University in July 2009 and is attracting great interest from local businesses who are seeking to secure contracts.



The **University of Exeter** Procurement team has been working closely with their suppliers to review payment plans to ensure that all payments are made within the 30 days to ensure that suppliers are receiving payment in a timely fashion. The institution has also working closely with Exeter City Council to ensure that the smaller businesses in the region are being given the best possible chances for competing for the opportunity to supply the University.

- **Bournemouth University** hosted the South West Science and Industry Council's "Innovation Forum 09" event in June 2009. 75 delegates registered for this free event. The forum highlighted the different ways businesses can access more than £1 billion of funding to help turn innovative ideas into commercial success. Presentations were given and experts were on hand from a number of agencies. Delegates received advice on how to access the support that is available, as well as hearing inspirational success stories from South West companies that have used public funding to develop innovative products, along with a special preview of Bournemouth University's Festival of Design & Innovation.

F. Summary remarks
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The region's Universities have already developed a strong working relationship with Job Centre Plus in the south west and innovated the potential for a national model of cooperation. This initiative was 'embedded' in the original Regional HERDA-SW ECIF bid

which was unsuccessful but is now flourishing as part of those institutional bids that recognised its value.

Universities in the SW are committed to their vacancy service [gradsouthwest.com](http://gradsouthwest.com)



The service, originally launched in 2001, has advertised over 10,000 vacancies and attracted over 100,000 student and graduate jobseekers. It currently has over a 1,000 live vacancies and enjoys an enviable 'hit rate' when compared to similar commercial sites. Gradsouthwest.com is increasingly working with the national Graduate Talent Pool to further support the region's businesses in identifying opportunities and enhancing the number of appropriate vacancies available to graduates in the South West.

The recent announcement that the South West of England has been identified as the UK's first Low Carbon Economic Area has stimulated a rapid response from HERDA-SW who are now working very closely with partners in Government and business to make a substantive impact in this key area for economic activity.

It is intended that the alignment of HERDA-SW's (soon to be Universities South West) new Strategic Plan with the regional priorities will further build on ECIF related activity and be central to the Association's Annual Conference in November 2009, themed around 'Renewal and Revival'.



## London Higher

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

### **1. To address newly redundant people/communities or skills/workforce development needs**

#### **Birkbeck, University of London**

Campaign to raise awareness on benefits of acquiring HE qualifications and transferable workplace skills.

#### **City University**

Virtual Incubator launched in September 2009, funded by HEIF and ECIF, to support the development of high-growth innovations through consultancy projects run by student teams, coupled with an on-line community.

#### **Kingston University**

On-going activities in the ECIF-funded Graduate to Business (G2B) project included seven 'boot-camp' events for 100+ graduates on employability skills and work to support redundant professionals (see previous report).

#### **Royal Veterinary College**

On-going ECIF-funded ORBIS programme (Overcome Recession: Bioscience Investment in Skills). As part of the programme, interns will receive 12 days of bio-business training at The Royal Veterinary College and The London BioScience Innovation Centre.

#### **St. George's, University of London**

Small awards to support students undertaking work experience placements in the UK and overseas. New schemes include the Medical Management Skills Training and Student Elective Trophies which will be launched in 2010 and are supported through HEIF.

#### **Thames Valley University**

- The FutureSkills project aims to determine future skills requirements by employers in West London and the Thames Valley. See <http://www.tvu.ac.uk/futureskills/index.htm>
- The new Foundation Degree in "Enterprise and Entrepreneurship: Business Start Up" has received a high number of applications, see

[http://www.tvu.ac.uk/the\\_university/news/news\\_story.jsp?ID=3231&Main\\_title=Building](http://www.tvu.ac.uk/the_university/news/news_story.jsp?ID=3231&Main_title=Building)

- On-going work with Business Link Berkshire & JobCentre Plus providing a gateway project into self employment.

### **University of East London**

Exploring an opportunity to lease space in Canary Wharf with Canary Wharf Group and other partners. The location will make it easier to offer services to employers and potentially/newly redundant individuals in the financial services and related sectors. It will also enhance the employability offer to our students/graduates.

## **2. To address business needs**

### **City University**

Non-accredited short course, including business start up skills training, will be launched in October 2009 for ca. 3,000 students. Participation in the Knowledge Connect "innovation voucher" scheme for SMEs.

### **Royal Veterinary College**

On-going work in ORBIS will involve ca. 50 bioscience companies based primarily in London and the south east of England. For each intern, a company will be able to send two employees on a subsidized programme of six days in bio-business training.

### **University of East London**

- Programme of additional accredited qualifications for students. For instance, more than 2,000 students have now successfully completed the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) qualification for IT skills and competencies
- The Petchey Centre for Entrepreneurship has been relaunched. The Centre provides purpose-built space and facilities for local start-ups. The Centre is funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation and works in close collaboration with our Knowledge Dock and Business School.

## **3. To address internship or other post-graduate support schemes**

### **City University**

ECIF-supported internships for recent graduates to work in the Virtual Incubator (see A1).

### **Kingston University**

- London Innovation Placement Programme (LIPP) matches talented students and graduates with London SMEs. Because of the downturn there is a £500 subsidy from the London Development Agency for businesses participating regardless of how long a project lasts. The normal cost was £250 per week.
- Innovation Association Programme (IAP) is a ERDF-subsidized programme for businesses with six week student/graduate placements and academic support.

### **London South Bank University**

- The Enterprise Associate Scheme is providing support to 10 entrepreneurial students for two years to develop their initiatives for start-ups. Associates also study for an MSc in Enterprise by Learning.

- Plans are underway to launch a Graduate (and Undergraduate) Consultancy scheme for services to local companies. The consultants will be employed by the University and supported by our Business Development Managers.

#### **Royal Veterinary College**

ORBIS will provide 60 paid 26 week long internships. Around 50% of internships will be for recent graduates with limited workplace experience and 50% will be for unemployed bioscience graduates.

#### **St. George's, University of London**

HEIF-supported internship scheme launched in September 2009. Up to nine salaried internships are available, each for three to six months duration, to enhance graduate employability and help keep qualified scientists working in science.

#### **University of East London**

Paid internship programme with Brunswick Group LLP aimed at increasing the diversity of workers in the PR industry. A total of six internships will be funded by Brunswick in 2009-10.

B. Increased demand for existing activity
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#### **4. To address re-skilling needs or workforce development and graduate internships**

##### **Birkbeck, University of London**

Large increase in interest from prospective students in 2009 compared with July 2008:

- a) Enquiries from prospective students increased 14%
- b) Open Evening attendance increased >50%
- c) Applications for degree courses (undergraduate and postgraduate) increased 12%.

##### **City University**

- Increased demand for short courses in practical / professional computing
- Increased demand in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships from students to enhance employability and work experience skills.

##### **Royal Veterinary College**

ECIF-funded ORBIS programme has had over 400 internship registrations from a mixture of new graduates and the recently unemployed. A marked increase in registrations was noted between July and August when individuals graduated from their university studies.

##### **Thames Valley University**

- considerable increase in applications to Hospitality Tourism and Leisure vocational courses, see [http://www.tvu.ac.uk/the\\_university/news/news\\_story.jsp?ID=3232&Main\\_title=Students](http://www.tvu.ac.uk/the_university/news/news_story.jsp?ID=3232&Main_title=Students)

- large increase in numbers of students/graduates requesting assistance from Careers Advisors during January to July 2009.

### **University of East London**

Large number of applications for the Foundation Degree in Professional Development.

### **5. To address business needs**

#### **Royal Veterinary College**

Since the start of ORBIS in April 2009, over 25 companies have registered and some would like to offer placements to more than one intern because of higher costs in other similar internship programmes.

### **University of East London**

Continued strong demand for the on-going Innovation for Growth programme which has a target of projects with 75 SMEs by 2011. Currently there are projects with 17 SMEs ranging from identification of new markets to materials analysis for a new product.

The Innovation Associates programme involving six week supervised student projects has been working with eight businesses.

### **Case Study**

#### **Knowledge Connect innovation voucher scheme**

Jointly funded by the London Development Agency and ERDF since 2008. Vouchers of £3,000 or £10,000 are available for match-funded projects enabling SMEs to connect to expertise in London's HEIs. For more information see <http://www.knowledgeconnect.org.uk/>.

Examples of demand include:

- **City University** - receiving more requests from SMEs looking for help with basic business skills such as marketing (especially for work on websites and general electronic media)
- **Kingston University** - increased interest in this programme with two new projects running and a number in the pipeline
- **London South Bank University** - around 20 projects underway ranging from food product development, product testing, testing the noise exposure of musicians and developing new online marketing tools and techniques.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity
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### **6. Fall in demand/gaps in activity**

#### **Birkbeck, University of London**

Slight decline in applications for Foundation Degrees starting in January 2010 and situation being monitored to see if it persists.

#### **City University**

- Marked drop in demand for Executive Development, face to face and bespoke/tailored professional development training in professional support firms (e.g. accountancy and solicitor practices)

- The current economic conditions represent the most difficult trading environment for providers of Executive Education over the last 60 years and some leading providers are indicating a significant fall in demand (with ranges of between 30 and 50% often quoted), particularly for new programmes
- At the Cass Business School we are now seeking business outside traditional City markets, particularly in Healthcare
- Conversely there has been a greater take-up in what is perceived to be inexpensive open access CPD courses. In response to client demand City is actively designing training that can be delivered more cheaply such as modules by podcast or e-learning.

### **Kingston University**

The number of summer placements in the long-standing Shell Step programme (partly funded by Shell Oil) has decreased from 37 in 2007 and 30 in 2008 to 15 in 2009. Some of the reasons include: potential employers discouraged because of part-funding salary costs; businesses reducing or scaling back on certain activities, and competition with other subsidized placement programmes (e.g. LIPP and IAP, see A3).

### **London South Bank University**

A planned scheme to provide conversion courses for non-cognate graduates in the area of Quantity Survey, tailored to the needs of a particular company, was suspended when the company cancelled its graduate intake this year.

### **Royal Veterinary College**

We have noticed an increase in demand for physical laboratory and office space at the London BioScience Innovation Centre. A gap in provision remains funding to support these nascent bioscience businesses and ready access to affordable business consultancy.

### **Thames Valley University**

Anecdotal evidence indicates that it has become increasingly difficult to achieve our commercial targets, and TVU is having to work harder and smarter to sustain its business activities.

D. Partnerships and networking
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## **7. HEIs and JobCentre Plus and/or with companies on graduate internships**

### **Royal Veterinary College**

ORBIS is working closely with the National Skills Academy to assess the skills needs of the host companies and a skills audit of some companies was conducted in July. Additionally, NSA and ORBIS has been working with training providers to develop bio-business training for programme interns.

### **Thames Valley University**

On-going work with Job Centre Plus in West London and Business London to complete a university funded project on unemployed professionals in the region.

## **8. HEIs, RDA Skills, JobCentre Plus and other skills partners**

### **Birkbeck, University of London**

- Outreach and Widening Participation team has increased work with external partners in the last 12 months covering unemployed service users in libraries, Train to Gain, NEET and parent support organisations.
- Because of established links with the TUC and UnionLearn we will soon be signing a MoU to support the transition of union members into HE to secure or change their career paths.

### **London South Bank University**

As a member of the South Bank Employers Group (SBEG), LSBU is working with the Waterloo Job Shop, a local job brokerage facility, which also involves JobCentre Plus and the London Borough of Lambeth. The Job Shop offers pre-employment training courses to improve skills and all available administrative and manual jobs at the University are now promoted via this Job Shop.

### **Royal Veterinary College**

ORBIS has contacted JobCentre Plus and alumni groups to identify potential interns from unemployed graduates.

## **9. HEIs and RDAs/Business Links and other business support and innovation partners**

### **City University**

Promoting Business Link Train to Gain initiative within the creative and cultural sector.

### **Kingston University**

Handling Knowledge Connect referrals from Business Link.

### **London South Bank University**

The London Knowledge Innovation Centre is a joint venture between LSBU and Business Extra, the Southwark Enterprise Agency, and is working with Southwark Council to support local residents with innovative business ideas.

Interested applicants attend a “tycoon bootcamp” and then pitch their business ideas to a panel of business experts. Successful candidates receive up to a year’s free office space and business support.

### **Royal Veterinary College**

ORBIS offers bio-business skills training and/or intern placements. It is partnered with the London BioScience Innovation Centre and working with the London BioScience Network, Oxfordshire BioScience Network and the Eastern Region Biotech Initiative.

## **10. Any other significant regional events or activities**

### **Kingston University**

Email shots to contacts in university business database promoting innovation programmes as a way to beat the “credit crunch”.

### **Thames Valley University**

Growing number of requests for academic staff to speak at events on the challenges and opportunities for SMEs in the recovery period.

E. Other
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## **11. Other comments including good practices or barriers**

### **Birkbeck, University of London**

The summer edition of the Birkbeck Briefing contained editorial case studies on the role of university in times of recession.

### **City University**

Some suppliers to universities have commented there has been a negative impact on purchasing due to cuts and efficiencies by HEIs, more stringent tendering and less being spent.

### **London Business School**

Joint project since Spring 2009 with YouTube, Google and the Daily Telegraph called "Survival of the Fastest". Short video clips have been posted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/survivalofthefastest> providing business advice and insights. The Trends section has a barometer gauging consumer sentiment which can be compared with indicators such as GDP and unemployment rate.

### **London South Bank University**

We are working closely with our two closest local authorities, Southwark and Lambeth, and are represented on the Local Strategic Partnership and Enterprise Board of both authorities, and the Economic Development Partnership of Lambeth Council.

As such we have been involved in discussions on local actions to address the effects of the economic downturn, and in partnership bids for funds such as the Future Job Fund aimed at creating jobs for young people.

We are also working on a project with Southwark Council to train economically inactive adults as Teaching Assistants.

### **Royal Veterinary College**

Some of the interest in ORBIS is because companies have no funds to take on interns, sandwich year placements and recent graduates in other placement schemes where they are exposed to the full costs of taking on individuals.

### **Thames Valley University**

Thames Valley University is working on a proposal to secure funding for an entrepreneurship postgraduate scheme across the region.

It is anticipated that 100,000 graduates will be looking for work in London this summer and up to 50,000 are expected to remain unemployed by December 2009. Hence, Thames Valley University is planning to form a consortium of HEIs across London to

stimulate graduate entrepreneurship and support these unemployed graduates during the recession.

### **London Higher**

London Higher is participating in a recently established working group to coordinate a public sector response to the economic downturn in the London region. The group includes representatives from the following six agencies: LSC, Jobcentre Plus, ACAS, Nextstep, Business Link London and the London Development Agency.

The group is exploring how it can:

- raise awareness of the different “response to redundancy” offers available to individuals and employers
- increase take-up and effectiveness of different services
- present coordinated information to individuals and employers on the members
- encourage cross-referrals between the different organisations involved.

A leaflet is being prepared drawing together information and advice available from the members with contact details.

F. Summary remarks
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### **The Sample**

1. Of the 41 HEIs who are members of London Higher, we have partial information or completed returns from 8 HEIs.
2. A total of 15 HEIs have provided full or partial returns for the July and September London Higher Barometer reports.
3. Hence this is not a comprehensive summary of all activities being undertaken by London’s HEIs in response to the recession.
4. It should be noted that of our 41 members, 20 can be described as “small specialists” in e.g. healthcare, postgraduate institutions or the creative and cultural arts. Small specialist HEIs have no resources for completing the HERA Barometer, particularly the 11 institutions in the creative and cultural sector and especially in late August/early September when registration and enrolment of students is a priority.
5. A workshop was organised by London Higher to support the Barometer initiative in early September and was attended by representatives from nine HEIs and HEFCE.

### **Headlines**

6. In regard to the headline findings we note the following general trends (noting the small sample size):
  - Turnover in HEI-business engagement with a decline in historical or long-standing businesses (e.g. links with companies formally partnered with HEIs under pressure), but the volume of engagement has been maintained by new relationships being generated (largely through new money/initiatives). Long-term viability depends on: (1) will new relationships endure? and (2) will discontinued links be re-established as the recession recedes?

- HEI activities can be classed as either highly focused projects in a specific sector or more general work, largely on student/graduate employability, applicable to more than one sector.

## Universities for the North East

### Summary statement

In our last report we identified 17 new schemes and initiatives introduced by the Region's universities and their partners or stakeholders alongside 7 additional or re-purposed schemes. In this report we highlight an additional 8 schemes not previously reported, providing brief case studies on these and those not showcased in the last report. We also provide a brief commentary on the current economic climate in the NE Region drawn from a range of national and regional sources.

This report effectively completes the review of new and significantly re-purposed schemes initiated by the sector and its partners. In the next report (December) we will of course highlight any further new initiatives but anticipate that the tenor of the report will begin to focus more on the outcomes and impacts of the schemes we have identified in this and the previous report.

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

Case studies 1 to 7 below illustrate the breadth of schemes primarily targeting individuals - both up-skilling schemes for those already in employment and those initiatives targeted at graduates - either to assist them into the world of work; to encourage them to consider self-employment as a career option or to engage in post-graduate studies with regional businesses.

The latter two case studies highlight activity relating to capital developments and support for other sectors.

### Case study 1 – Northumbria University - Enterprising Futures

Northumbria University will provide 90 places on the innovative Northumbria '**Enterprising Futures Programme**' which offers a set of linked professional development opportunities, delivered over 5 stages. The Programme presents learners with the range of opportunities available in the current economic climate and promotes awareness of 'independent' careers around self-employment and the importance of being 'enterprising' in all employment contexts. This builds upon the work of Northumbria's Enterprise Campus Team, who are experienced in facilitating and nurturing new business start-ups. Success will be measured in terms of individuals' progression to business start up and other forms of enterprise engagement in the local economy.

### **Case study 2 – University of Sunderland – Manufacturing & Automotive Support**

Aimed at supervisors and managers, the University and Gateshead College will offer a package of flexible provision to the region's manufacturing and automotive sector. Programmes will be delivered on employers premises to enable participation by individuals on different shift patterns and support credit accumulation. The project will offer a pick and mix approach depending on the needs of employers. It will provide up-skilling and enhanced knowledge to over 600 key staff to enable them to meet the demands of a lean and more streamlined business model and develop staff capable of leading change.

### **Case study 3 – North East Studentship programme**



In the North East Studentship (NESt) programme, co-ordinated by Newcastle University, postgraduate students from across the region are funded to work with companies on new and ground-breaking projects while they are studying. Designed to bring new ideas and innovation to local businesses while nurturing the talent emerging from higher education, the scheme is funded by the regional development agency One North East. Post-graduate students from the universities of Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside have all spent time in industry as part of the NESt programme.

### **Case study 4 – Newcastle University - Six-point plan to help graduates seeking work**

New measures to help recent graduates find work will be funded by the ECIF scheme to help tackle the effects of the economic downturn. Recent graduates and postdoctoral researchers who are looking for work or who want to start up in business will be the main beneficiaries of a six-point action plan drawn up by the University. Newcastle University's six-point plan makes provision for:

- Widening access to the Careers Service's Information, Advice and Guidance service for graduates.
- Extending the Graduate Apprenticeship Programme.
- Enterprisers' Courses.
- Business Start-up grants.
- Business Start-up advisers
- Coaching Postdocs for Commerce.

#### **Case study 5 – Teesside University - Higher-Level Management Development**

Higher Level Management Development in firms affected by recession who need to implement change programmes. (Teesside Cast Products, for example, has identified a need for a non-accredited programme for significant numbers of staff). As well as business training, this programme will offer specialist expertise from the highly-regarded Teesside Manufacturing Centre.

#### **Case Study 6 – Northumbria University – Enhanced Information, Advice and Guidance**

The University will provide HE-level information, advice and guidance (IAG) and associated HE taster courses to 1200 individuals in the local community via FE Colleges and the Newcastle City Council Futures Resource Centres. This will comprise a mixture of IAG interventions, including one-to-one guidance interviews, University taster courses and student shadowing sessions.

#### **Case study 7 – University of Sunderland – Software City Hatchery scholarships**

The Software City Postgraduate Scholarships and the Applied Sciences Postgraduate Scholarships have a combined value of £3.5m, and will offer the cream of UK and EU graduates the opportunity to work with employers on real projects that will revolutionise industry in the NE region.

Sunderland Software City Postgraduate Scholarships are part of an ambitious initiative designed to create a vibrant software sector in Sunderland. They, along with the Applied Science Postgraduate Scholarships, are funded by the regional development agency One North East. The primary aim of the scheme is to increase the performance of regional organisations through applied research and knowledge transfer activities.

#### **Case study 8 - Durham University estates development**

Durham University has submitted a planning application for a landmark development in the City. The high-profile £48m Gateway scheme, part of a £60m estates programme has been planned for land on the edge of the University's Science Site. The plans have been submitted after 18 months of consultation. The Gateway symbolises an important development for the University and the City, which would see an under-utilised and disjointed University site redeveloped with an environmentally sustainable scheme of high quality. Its construction is predicted to stimulate the city economy and create and sustain more than 200 jobs across a regionwide industry supply chain.

#### **Case study 9 – Durham University - The Phoenix Project**

In September 2008, Durham introduced Phoenix, its community outreach and engagement programme, co-funded by the regional development agency OneNE. Phoenix has been able to respond quickly to the adverse economic conditions through offering support to regional voluntary and community sector organisations that form the crucial 'third sector' beyond the private and statutory sectors. Phoenix aims to provide the infrastructural support necessary for Durham University to be more effective in a regional context, both by providing new ways – and a central portal - for groups and organisations within the region to engage with the University, and for members of the University to engage with the region.

**B. Increased demand for existing activity**

The following example illustrates both rising and falling demand and confirms and characterises two widely reported trends being experienced across the HE sector viz. a reduction in the number of graduate vacancies accompanied by an increased appetite by employers and graduates for work experience or graduate placement opportunities.

**Case study 10 - Newcastle University Careers Service**

Activity	07-08 Total	08-09 Total	Change %
Students/grads attending employer fairs/presentations	5382	5613	+4.3%
Notification of regional/national/international graduate vacancies	2594	2370	-9%
Employers notifying regional/national/international graduate vacancies	1327	1130	-15%
Notification of work experience opportunities	854	1039	+22%

There are emerging recession related issues affecting the capacity of businesses to accommodate student placements of which we are becoming anecdotally aware. For those companies for whom the recession has necessitated re-structuring they comment that they would wish to implement this restructuring prior to engaging in placement activity and whilst they are still eager to discuss and pursue placements they are postponing firm commitment for the time being. Similarly, some businesses for whom re-structuring has led to redundancies comment that they no longer have the supervisory capacity to manage and oversee student placements. Whilst we have no evidence to date one of the very obvious issues that could arise is displacement or substitution of the existing workforce via subsidised work experience or graduate placement schemes. We will continue to monitor this situation closely.

### C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

As in the previous report, using data from Knowledge House, the regional business facing service, as a proxy to estimate the decline in demand, the incoming enquiry rate is 23% down over the last 6 months compared with the same period for the previous year. The figures are 49% down on the same period in 2007.

Incoming enquiries are a leading indicator of activity. Income generation, essentially a lagging indicator, is down 66% and 70% respectively on the equivalent periods in 2008 and 2007. Anecdotal evidence would not necessarily support this data as activity levels appear to be holding up well but perhaps are not progressing to formal registration of company enquiries.

New research released by OneDoor (highlighted in the next section), the higher-level training network in the Tees Valley, has shown over half of businesses are finding it difficult to focus on staff training and development during the recession - increasing concerns the downturn could dramatically slow opportunities for up-skilling the Tees Valley workforce.

The research, conducted by the Department of Academic Enterprise at Teesside University, discovered that 57% of the 300+ respondents admitted to wanting to deliver staff training and development, but that it wasn't a financial priority during the recession.

### D. Partnerships and networking

#### **Case study 11 – Teesside University and college partners with Business & Enterprise NE (Business Link)**

**ONEDOOR** OneDoor, a partnership between Teesside University and five further education colleges was recently launched to provide a helping hand for businesses and individuals looking to access higher-level training, innovation support, business mentoring, careers guidance and financial subsidies. The network can provide businesses with funds of up to £10,000 and individuals with up to £500, to help meet the financial costs of training and innovation.

OneDoor was established in conjunction with One North East and Business & Enterprise North East (BE-NE) to safeguard the continued development of the local workforce. OneDoor is a partnership between Teesside University, Redcar and Cleveland College, Darlington College, Stockton Riverside College, Hartlepool FE College and Middlesbrough College.

#### **Case study 12 – Teesside University & Entrust - European backing for local graduates**

North East businesses are being offered a further chance to take advantage of the knowledge and skills of recent graduates. Entrust's 'Graduates for Business' programme has secured £724,000 from the European Regional Development Fund through One North East. The project is delivered in partnership with the University of Teesside, and aims to diagnose the needs of individual businesses and offer solutions by sourcing graduates with appropriate professional capability. As well as supporting work placements, the additional ERDF funding will allow the continuation of the 'GradHouse' North East graduate recruitment fair.

#### E. Other

##### **Case study 13 – University of Sunderland – Digital Factory**

A new £500,000 investment from the European Union is to help 65 design and manufacturing firms to generate new business through innovative digital engineering technologies. Sunderland University has secured the contribution from the European Regional Development Fund 2007-13 to extend Digital Factory, the training and technology transfer project delivered by the Institute for Automotive and Manufacturing Advanced Practice (AMAP). The project is assisting a range of design, engineering and manufacturing firms with innovative processes and state-of-the-art facilities and equipment to increase productivity and win new business. It brings to the table technologies that would otherwise be out of the reach of SMEs, including 3D scanning, rapid prototyping, specialist CNC machining and access to software technologies used in concept product design through to factory simulation, indeed the whole product lifecycle.

##### **Case study 14 – Digital placement programme**

Codeworks' Digital Placement Programme places North East England's brightest and most talented students and recent graduates into digital companies within the region. The programme, which was launched in 2004 and runs throughout the year, aims to halt the so-called 'brain drain' of talented technology graduates out of the North East, and to encourage students and graduates to consider digital technology and media companies as a strong first career choice. Over the past few years, the scheme has placed hundreds of students and graduates into North Eastern companies, proving a huge hit with students, graduates and employers alike. The scheme has also proven tremendously successful in achieving its goals. To date, around 85% of graduates taking part have secured a position as a direct result of their placement – keeping the very brightest and best in North East England. Companies taking part in the scheme receive a subsidy towards the student or graduate's salary.

### **Case Study 15 – Investment “superfund”**

A £125M ‘superfund’, announced last month by Regional Development Agency One North East (ONE), is the first of its kind in England. It is anticipated to create more than 5,000 jobs and support 850 firms, and will be monitored by a “talented” team of financiers. The Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises Initiative, or JEREMIE fund, has £62.5m worth of backing from ONE and is matched by £62.5m from the European Investment Fund (EIF). Any return on investment will go back into the JEREMIE fund, enabling continued investment in the region, and will be spread across three specific areas: new start-ups, technology-based businesses and growing smaller businesses. The fund is due to start in January, at a time when other initiatives come to an end, and will “simplify the North East public sector investment funds landscape”.

### **Case study 16 – Talent Challenge**

Talented individuals affected by the recession are being encouraged to take advantage of a unique service set up to help deal with the effects of the economic downturn. One North East has initially approved funding of £1.4m to develop Talent Challenge, a project which supports the region’s talent pool. The initiative is aimed at people who have leadership, managerial and professional experience and expertise as well as those who are highly skilled technical staff (NVQ level 4 or above) within priority or growth sectors – such as process industries and manufacturing - who face the possibility of redundancy, have recently lost their job or have been put on short-time working. The project is aiming to ensure that their skills and experience are retained within the region. Talent Challenge is being carried out on behalf of the Skills and Employment Response Group (SERG), which comprises One North East, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Jobcentre Plus and Government Office for the North East and is part of the region’s ‘Real Help for Business and People’ campaign.

### **F. Summary remarks**

In overview, the general picture would appear to be one of cautious optimism amongst businesses that the decline in economic activity has slowed or stopped however there is significant ground to recover. There is perhaps less optimism in the short to medium term regarding employment opportunities particularly, from the HE sectors perspective, for graduates although also more generally for the 18-24 year old cohort. There is also a concern that the full impact of the recession on the public sector has yet to be felt and that there may be a “second wave” of economic challenges over the next 18 months.

People:

- graduate vacancies are down 13.5% on 2008 (High Fliers Research) with many national companies (Corus, Innocent Drinks, BT) cutting or scrapping their graduate recruitment programmes

- nationally, university applications are up 9.7% (UCAS, July) most especially in the >25 year old age group (18.8% increase)
- demand for placement opportunities from both individuals and businesses is increasing
- the Open University is reporting a 36% increase in course registrations in the 18-21 year old age group compared to the same period last year
- unemployment among 18-24 year olds in Newcastle has leapt up by 56% in the last year to its highest level in 12 years (Prince's Trust/University of Sheffield)
- regionally, one third of job-seekers allowance claimants are aged between 18 and 24 (LSC North East)
- The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey indicates a significant rise in projected hiring intentions for Q4 2009. This is higher in the North East than in any other UK region
- job appointments for permanent positions in the UK in June declined at the slowest rate for over a year (Recruitment & Employment Federation/KPMG)

#### Business:

- Export revenues for NE companies are down 25% in Q2 from the previous quarter. Nationally exports are 17.5% down for the same period (HMRC)
- The latest Quarterly Survey of Small Business in Britain (OU Business School/Barclays Bank/ACCA) indicates cautious optimism. While 49% of SMEs reported lower sales – most notably in manufacturing and construction - 62% have not changed employment levels over the last year and almost half expect to expand in the next year.
- In the latest CBI Industrial Trends Survey 32% of manufacturers expect output to fall – 27% expect an increase. The small fall in the balance of output (-5%) is the least negative prediction since June 2008.
- The latest NE Business Barometer (NE Chamber of Commerce) reports that the decline in domestic sales is slowing and firms are more positive about plant investment and staff retention.
- business confidence levels are increasing according to the Business Confidence Monitor which went from -28.2 to +4.8 in Q2 – the largest quarterly jump since 2003 (Inst. Chartered Accountants in England & Wales)

## North West Universities Association (NWUA)

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

The universities in the North West continue to dedicate significant resource to responding to the needs of the economic downturn. Many initiatives are funded in part by the HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF). However, universities across the region are responding to the economic downturn regardless of receipt of ECIF funding with additional finance sourced from the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and the European Programme.

In addition to new and specifically repurposed activity, the marketing and delivery of the mainstream university offer is in many instances now also being tailored for and framed within the context of the economic downturn. The following case studies provide a snapshot of regional activity.

### **HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund**

In the North West, nine universities<sup>1</sup> were successful in securing funding from the £27.6 million national HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund. Together, the projects bring nearly £3 million into the region. Several ECIF projects are now up and running providing support to both individuals and businesses affected by the recession. The **University of Bolton** is offering a variety of CPD, APEL and short courses in subjects including job seeking, health and safety, CAD and international road haulage. **Liverpool Hope University** is offering a voucher scheme to off-set the cost of HE provision for businesses and individuals affected by the recession and the **University of Chester** is delivering a Business Skills and Innovation course encompassing a five week no cost business placement.

### **School Leaver Information Seminars**

**Energus**, a centre for the provision of vocational skills in the nuclear, carbon-free and environmental restoration industries and an integral part of the **University of Cumbria's** Energy Coast campus, held a series of information seminars for school leavers to boost the long-term job prospects of young people entering the job market. Cumbria Higher Learning informed attendees about the range of higher education opportunities in the area in a bid to contribute to a reduction in unemployment numbers and boost skills in the energy sector, identified by the NWDA as vital for the economic recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, Liverpool John Moores University, University of Bolton, University of Central Lancashire, University of Chester, University of Cumbria, University of Liverpool, University of Manchester.

### **Learning and Enterprise Centre**

The **University of Chester** has opened the £3 million Tucker Building at its Warrington campus to house a new Learning and Enterprise Centre (LEC) which offers professional development courses to local businesses and individuals to enhance work-place progression and employability. The centre assists businesses with economic growth, and many courses are fully funded and offered to participants free of charge. Much of the university's ECIF activity will be delivered via the new centre. The NWDA has contributed just over 80 per cent of the cost.

### **Short Courses in Convergence Journalism**

**Edge Hill University** has launched an intensive short Convergence Journalism course to enable journalists to broaden their skills into online technology. The course is aimed at print journalists whose role has widened to embrace electronic media. It has been devised as a response to changes in the media industry, accelerated by the economic downturn, where advances in technology demand a new breed of multi-skilled journalist. The course will set students on the road to a postgraduate qualification, providing academic credit at Masters level.

B. Increased demand for existing activity
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**Jobcentre Plus** (JCP) has reported an increasing demand for support from people with graduate level skills affected by redundancy. In August it was estimated that c. 18 per cent of JCP clients in the region had graduate level skills. Whilst JCP and Next Step/Connexions are able to offer some support for this client group they are keen to link into support provided by the universities' Careers Services. Many universities have opened up their services to include limited access to graduates of other universities but it raises a clear capacity issue if demand extends beyond their own students and alumni.

In the North West, **11 HEIs**<sup>2</sup> are designated knowledge providers for the **NWDA Innovation Voucher Scheme** which provides SMEs with a £3,000 grant to engage with the knowledge base. In the previous HERA Barometer we reported increased demand for the scheme for the second round of voucher allocations (12<sup>th</sup> January 2009 – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009). Round three (6<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009) subsequently resulted in a further 10 per cent increase in applications to the scheme. The highest demand has been generated in the information and communications and manufacturing sectors. More information is available at: <http://www.nwdabusinessfinance.co.uk/innovation-vouchers>.

With more people choosing to spend their holidays in the UK during the recession, **Manchester Metropolitan University** is responding to high demand for qualified professionals in the leisure industry by working with the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure to offer National Governing Body training and assessment courses in canoeing, paddle sports, safety boating and mountain leadership.

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<sup>2</sup> Liverpool Hope University, University of Manchester, University of Central Lancashire, University of Bolton, Manchester Metropolitan University, Liverpool John Moores University, University of Liverpool, Lancaster University, University of Salford, University of Cumbria, University of Chester.

**Edge Hill University** has seen a 32 per cent rise in applications to study teaching, compared to last year with the biggest increases being in maths, science, design & technology, music and those wishing to teach sixth form pupils. It is thought that applicant numbers for the main route into teacher training in England have hit their highest level in at least eight years due to career changers affected by the credit crunch. Incentives for trainee teachers include training salaries, Golden Hello grants for some subject of up to £5,000 and flexible courses, some of which start at different times throughout the year.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

Partners in the North West region have identified a gap in **graduate support** for those with graduate level skills who are at risk of redundancy or have been made redundant, and for new graduates returning to the region having studied elsewhere. Whilst new graduates automatically have the support of their university careers service, those returning 'home' and away from their place of study may find it difficult to access this support. Similarly, those already in employment may fall outside the traditional client group of university careers services. Efforts are being made to extend support to graduates of other universities and those who graduated more than three years ago but, given that universities are reporting a significant increase in demand from their own graduates, resource capacity to deliver an extended service is limited.

D. Partnerships and networking

The HE sector continues to be represented in both strategic and political processes in the North West region through joint working with partners including the NWDA, the Joint Economic Commission, Jobcentre Plus and the Regional Skills and Employment Board.

The exploration and support of interventions to counter graduate unemployment is central to the **NWUA's** Response to the Economic Downturn project. Following the submission of an NWUA paper on the graduate support offer in the region to the Regional Skills and Employment Board (RSEB) Chairs Group on 21st August NWUA has worked closely with the NW Heads of Careers Services, Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council (Next Step/Connexions) to align activities. As a result of this the following actions have been agreed:

- JCP and NWUA have agreed a Joint Working Protocol
- NWUA to accompany JCP on visits to companies announcing large scale redundancies to present the HE sector offer to individuals affected
- NWUA to provide briefings to JCP and LSC/Nextstep advisors on the HE offer
- JCP and NWUA to hold bimonthly progress meetings
- LSC/Nextstep tailor promotional literature to target graduates.

The **University of Manchester** has used the Economic Challenge Investment Fund to augment its Pathfinder project which is being delivered in partnership with private sector partner A4e. Established by Corridor Manchester, the Pathfinder will help people living in

the Oxford Road area of the city progress into work. Anyone living in the areas nearby to the University can take advantage of the initiative regardless of their benefit and job seeker status. The project will work with individuals to direct them either to job opportunities or relevant training and education.

**Edge Hill University** delivered a free Talent Management and Networking event in partnership with top business leaders to help members of the North West business community learn new skills. The event was specifically designed to explore how businesses can develop skills and enhance individuals' CVs at no cost at a time when staff training budgets have been cut. The event was open to former students and any members of the business community.

As part of the **Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network**, the University of Central Lancashire, Lancaster University, the University of Cumbria, Edge Hill University and the Open University in the North West have signed an agreement with thirteen further education colleges to work together to promote educational progression for vocational learners into and through higher education. The new initiative is targeting employers within six specific employment sectors, identified as crucial to the county for economic recovery, and will enable educational partners to work more closely with each other, employers and prospective students. The six priority employment areas are: Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing; Construction; Digital and Creative Industries; Environment and Sustainability; Health and Social Care; Tourism and Leisure.

E. Other
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### **Reduced Course Fees**

**The Open University in the North West** has developed two new CPD modules in Practical Leadership in Construction and Effective Collaboration in Construction for work based learners. The courses were funded by the Higher Level Skills Partnership managed by the NWUA. The sector skills council SummitSkills and the Open University are now collaborating to reduce the cost of these online CPD modules to 25 per cent of the standard cost for those enrolled by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009. The employer will pay an Open University reduced fee for which SummitSkills will reimburse the employer to the sum of 50 per cent thereby reducing the final cost to 25 per cent of the Standard Charge.

### **Additional STEM Places**

North West universities received over 1200 of the 10,000 additional STEM places announced by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills in July. **Manchester Metropolitan University** received the largest allocation nationally with 519 extra student places, with the **University of Central Lancashire** close behind with the 10<sup>th</sup> largest allocation of 234 additional places. The places are aimed at easing pressure on the university admissions system, which has seen record applications this year because of the recession.

## Limitations to University Responsiveness

Whilst the universities in the North West are fully engaged with regional efforts to respond to the economic downturn both individually and collectively through the NWUA, the sector continues to face a number of limiting factors in relation to university responses to the economic downturn.

- **ERDF/ESF supported activities:** In the North West European funding has been an important source of funding to develop university support to businesses (ERDF) and individuals (ESF). However, universities have been struggling to access funds in the latest round (2007-13). Currently, most universities are reporting significant delays in the approval of ERDF projects, and, in some instances, negative appraisals in relation to activities of a type supported under the previous ERDF programme. ESF has a very limited higher level skills component and some institutions are reporting difficulties in accessing match funding that may prevent maximisation of ESF utilisation. Furthermore, the universities are engaged in a complicated dialogue with the NWDA (administering the European Programme) about appropriate funding sources for graduate placement (business benefit) and work experience (individual benefit) type activity.
- **Careers Service Information, Advice and Guidance**  
As identified in Section C above, regional stakeholders have identified an increased demand for graduate careers information, advice and guidance from individuals falling outside the traditional client group of the university careers service (i.e. university alumni within three years of graduation). The main function of university careers services is to meet the advice needs of those studying at the university in question. Whilst there is scope for increased interchange between Careers Services and Jobcentre Plus (and NWUA is facilitating this), any enhanced service to graduates will require additional resources.

F. Summary remarks
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The universities continue to be an important pillar in the region wide response to the economic downturn by offering a wide range of business support, retraining, careers advice and knowledge transfer activities. Furthermore, they are recognised as such by key regional partners as evidenced by a significant HE sector presence in the North West Regional Select Committee Report.<sup>3</sup> As part of a complex picture of support, a key strategic issue for the region is continuing to ensure that activities across multiple agencies are adequately aligned.

The Barometer demonstrates that the universities have successfully introduced a number of new and repurposed activities specifically to meet the short term needs of the economic downturn. However, it is important to highlight also the long term contribution

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<sup>3</sup> House of Commons North West Regional Committee, The impact of the current economic situation on the North West and the Government's response, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

of the universities to the economic prosperity and recovery of the region. All of the region's universities now have strategies in place to maximise their impact on the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the region. Far from being separate from their short term responses to the economic downturn, reported here, these strategies and the wider activities that support them should be viewed as an integral part of it.

The universities have a major impact on the communities that surround them in terms of the physical environment, property values and use, transport infrastructure, labour patterns and the skill base. Universities generate global knowledge networks of academics, entrepreneurs and financiers that support the movement of capital, knowledge and talent into the cities of the North West. It is these broader and longer lasting activities that are likely to generate the greatest contribution to economic recovery.

## Higher Education South East (HESE)

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

### Summary Statement:

HESE members, generally, are actively supporting organisations and businesses to make sure the SE economy is well placed to make the most of the upturn when it comes

Returns from South East based Universities indicate considerable activity. ECIF projects are well represented in the South East and delivery of individual projects is now well under way.

### Case Study: Schemes to support the community

- **University of Chichester** in partnership with Arun District Council to develop scheme to use vacant shops in Bognor Regis town centre to provide premises for high value new start-ups linked to university activity. **University of Chichester** is currently working with local schools in West Sussex and Hampshire who are being recommended for academy status.
- **Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)** in collaboration with Kent Enterprise Trust has developed and delivered a bespoke Project Management Training course for the voluntary sector
- **The University of Winchester** – ECIF funded Voluntary Internship Scheme

### Case Study: schemes to support business needs

- *Henley Business School* at the **University of Reading** is running a “Survive and Thrive” Workshop Series to businesses covering the following topics: *Managing Talent in the Recession; Agile Strategy; Liquidity and Risk in a Recession; Optimising Customer Relationships and Creating a Positive Workforce.*
- ECIF collaborative project “**Business First**” led by **Canterbury Christ Church University**. Other partners include the **University for the Creative Arts, Greenwich and Kent University**. This new scheme provides businesses with free graduate level help, delivered through in-company placement projects [www.kube.ac.uk](http://www.kube.ac.uk).
- **Buckinghamshire New University** launched two new incubation centres in Aylesbury Vale and High Wycombe. Both Centres are specifically geared to individual; and businesses vulnerable in the recession. A website has also been

launched with bite-sized learning modules for business and individuals funded under ECIF [www.open4businessbucks.com](http://www.open4businessbucks.com)

- **Oxford Brookes University** ECIF funded programme 'Trading in Difficult Times' and 'Business for Starters'.
- **University for the Creative Arts** ECIF funded business support [www.ucreative.ac.uk/creativeadvantage](http://www.ucreative.ac.uk/creativeadvantage)

### **Case Study: Schemes to support post-graduate support**

- **Oxford Brookes University** HE internship programme. This programme shows how the running of a university could create an interesting and varied career. Twenty successful applicants at Oxford Brookes have been accepted on to the programme. The length of internships is between 6 and 12 months. Benefits include, on the job training experience and access to a training programme similar to the one offered to middle management at the University. Reported response rate: 5:1 of applicants to internships.
- **The University of Kent Graduate School Scholarships.** The scholarship is available to all 2009 graduates who have earned a Bachelors degree with honours and registered for a postgraduate degree at the University in the 2009/10 academic year.
- Under ECIF the **University of Reading** in collaboration with the **University of Surrey** is recruiting for 20 graduate internships. Internships will last approximately 11 months. The number of applications received to date is in the region of 500. The project involves the recruitment of Industrial Fellows from the newly redundant or at risk of redundancy. Links are being established to JCP networks aiming to support senior professional who are seeking new roles following redundancy.
- Under ECIF **The University of Sussex** in collaboration with Wired Sussex is offering the Sussex Internship Programme which will provide 100 short-term grant-supported internships at a wide variety of games, web, software development and animation, TV, e-learning, music, film and advertising companies [www.wiredsussex.com/internships](http://www.wiredsussex.com/internships)
- **CCCU** working with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Kent County Council and NGCE the University organised an Ideas Creation Workshop for graduates. The participating graduates were offered insights into innovation and entrepreneurship and how to develop these skills for the future employment
- **University of Brighton** - Newly qualified graduates seeking work have been invited to join Action Learning Sets which will enable groups of 5-6 graduates to support and encourage each other to find work through structured meetings from

June to December. These groups will be facilitated by staff from the Business School and Careers Centre.

## B. Increased demand for existing activity

Data from regional partners show that the South East region has seen an increase in Train to Gain's popularity this is in part due to the relaxation of the funding rules. Train to Gain advisors in the South East have reported wide spread demand for management and leadership courses due to the new availability of funding for courses in this area. Although there is strong growth in the number of Train to Gain starts related to the management, professional and associate professional occupations, the majority of Train to Gain course starts remain in personal services, elementary, process occupations and skilled trades.

However, data provided by Skills South East shows that of the 2,500 plus customers which they have engaged with on Leadership and Management there have been 40 clients who have chosen to start a course with a University. The level of courses ranged from management courses to Master level courses in Managing Change, HR Management and Executive MBAs.

Student placements and Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTPs) are still popular with companies as they are seen as good value for money.

- **The University of Chichester** has stepped up its activity to promote shorter KTPs as a means to address shorter term-tactical business issues.
- The **University of Greenwich** has appointed nine specialist research staff to the School of Science, based at Chatham Maritime.
- **University of Portsmouth** due to an increase in demand for service under the Creative Industries Business Advice Service [www.port.ac.uk/research/cibas](http://www.port.ac.uk/research/cibas) a new of post of Creative Industries Business Advisor has been established. The new advisor will be based at the **University of Winchester**.
- Within the STEM University Enterprise Network, the **University of Reading** is working with Microsoft, the NGCE and partner universities to develop a menu of placement opportunities to pilot to Microsoft's network of partner organisations.
- **University of Surrey** reports strong interest in its ESPRC Knowledge Transfer Account (which aims to increase collaboration with business in order to deliver economic and social impacts) and its two EPSSRC funded industrial doctorate centres. 1) Industrial Doctorate Centre in Micro and Nano Materials and Technologies and 2) Industrial Doctorate Centre in Sustainability for Engineering and Energy Systems
- **University of Portsmouth** – provision of accredited training for fraud investigators with KPMG professional services. Accreditation for the Department for Work and Pensions training for fraud investigators and the development of a relevant higher education learning pathway.

- **University of Greenwich reports a sustained interest in KTPs.** It intends to promote KTPs heavily to Kent and Medway businesses through the SEEDA funded Innovation and Growth Team.

#### C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

Under the auspices of the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance (RSPA) SEEDA recently commissioned The Institute of Employment Studies based at the University of Sussex to produce a report for stakeholders on the Impact of the Recession on the Labour market in the South East. Gaps identified by employers were not new and included continuing efforts by providers to develop training courses which are cheaper and shorter. This kind of provision is heightened during a recession due to employers seeking smaller customised training inputs and reduced budgets. The funding of large scale training is less attractive. High level skills shortages persist in scientific occupations such as medical, pharmaceutical and engineering roles.

HESE members, including the University of Reading report adverse impacts on their Corporate Learning business. This year to last year has seen a marked decrease. In some cases corporate clients are deferring deliveries and some are cancelling altogether.

#### D. Partnerships and networking

HESE is aware that SE based HEIs, individually and collaboratively are working with Job Centre Plus, local government and SEEDA funded organisations to support businesses and individuals during the recession. There is evidence to show that through ECIF funds universities are forming new consortium or joining new business networks. For example the Kent ECIF Consortium is forming a new stakeholder group with Manpower Service and JCP

#### **Case study JCP collaborations:**

- Coastal West Sussex Skills Group (West Sussex County Council, SEEDA, JCP, Arun District Council, Adur District Council, University of Chichester, Chichester and Northbrook College) discussed collaborative approaches between FE partners and the university in the areas of Business and Management and Enterprise with a view to stimulating business start-ups. In addition, JCP reported considerable progress in engaging with the **University of Chichester's** GraduateOn project funded under ECIF.
- The 'Steps to Success' one day event led by Graduate South in partnership with **Southampton Solent University, the University of Southampton, the University of Winchester** and JobCentre Plus aims to help up to 11,000 graduates from the three supporting universities into successful employment.

- **Portsmouth Business School and the Portsmouth Centre for Enterprise** have worked in partnership with JCP and Portsmouth City Council to design and implement a half day event aimed primarily at unemployed middle managers/executives with a good knowledge and experience of business who are interested in finding out more about starting their own Business/Company. An immediate outcome has been collaboration with Business Link to develop a programme of short courses aimed at Start Up businesses covering topics such as Staff motivation, [www.port.ac.uk/staffessential/whatson/events/eventdetails/](http://www.port.ac.uk/staffessential/whatson/events/eventdetails/)

In relation to higher level skills, at the sub-regional level there is evidence to show that individual members are engaging (where these exist) in the new local skills and employment commissions. For example

#### **Case study: Gosport Employability Board.**

The **University of Portsmouth** has been working in partnership with the LSC, Gosport Borough Council and JCP to develop the Gosport Employment and Skills Partnership Board. The purpose of this Board is to provide strategic leadership in the planning, delivery, and monitoring of community, family and work-based adult Employment and Skills provision in the Borough of Gosport, and to facilitate partnership working between public, private community and voluntary organisations. An action plan has been developed. As a consequence, the University is targeting its education and outreach programme to develop and raise aspirations in difficult areas and to identify skills gaps in the job market, which will in turn, inform curriculum development and knowledge transfer programmes

In other cases SE based universities are proactively engaging with existing networks such as the Lifelong Learning networks.

#### **Case Study: Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs)**

The **University of Surrey** is actively engaging with Progress South Central (partnership between **University of Surrey, Bucks New Uni, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Reading**). The main purpose of the network is to develop and deliver progression routes during the economic downturn into and through the higher education sector for vocational students.

Regionally the Learning at Work Information Services (LAWIS) [www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk](http://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk) - a service funded by the LSC; SEEDA and the SE LLNs and hosted by the **University of Brighton** - are supporting the work of the sub-regional SE LLNs via a dedicated SE regional Information and Guidance website and through the development of tailored sub-regional brochure material to promote access to higher education in each of the four sub-regions [www.learning-opportunities.org.uk](http://www.learning-opportunities.org.uk)

In addition, Skills South East Train to Gain brokers are working with the Sussex Learning Network and Lawis to update the HE reference guide for Train to Gain brokers on how to access HE.

New internal academic networks are developing and some existing networks are expanding their client base in order to extend their support beyond their pre-recession client base.

### **Case study: Business Networks**

In response to business needs the **University of Kent** is developing a new programme which will operate across academic schools. ICE (Using Innovative Networks to Achieve Success) – the ICE approach will focus on the needs of business to inspire collaboration across Schools to produce a multidisciplinary range of services that may be offered to the wider community through inter-linked networks. ICE will also join up existing networks, creating a global innovation ecosystem to promote the benefits that the University of Kent can offer to enterprising organisations.

ProfitNet is a business collaboration network designed by the **University of Brighton**. It is the latest development in facilitated learning groups whose methodology has been developed over the last 12 years. ProfitNet harnesses existing networks and services such as the South East Manufacturing Advisory Service, Enterprise Hubs and Business Links to ensure a comprehensive approach to business development.

The evolution of ProfitNet is marked by the development of a range of versions building on the experiences of the original programme which use the same proven methodology to look deeper at, for example, major operating issues and organisational change.

A shorter version is being designed to assist companies who in the expected economic downturn need to make significant transformations of their businesses to both survive and meet new challenges caused by changing market conditions, a series of workshops from ProfitNet and the Collaborative Training Centre are currently on offer to businesses in the Sussex area. Topics covered include – *Essential skills for maintenance and growth in a challenging environment; How to survive the recession; Why are my competitors getting in the papers; Steering your boat in difficult times; Competitor Intelligence and Identifying and Winning new business.*

### **Events listing:**

- **CCCU** – The 2009 Healthy Business Programme focuses on achieving success and growth in turbulent times.
- Student Enterprise Conference at Broadstairs including panel from UKIP office; CCCU's Business School
- **The University of Kent's Centre for Employment, Competitiveness and Growth** is running a series of peer group networking and development sessions

for manufacturing related companies. All sessions are jointly facilitated by Manufacturing Advisory Service South East and the Business School.

- **University of Greenwich** in Partnership with the Medway Innovation Centre, to provide high-growth coaching advice and access to university specialist knowledge, to micro and start up companies.
- West Sussex Coastal Skills Group is hosting an Enterprise Event in October to support start-ups.
- **University of Portsmouth** – Business Breakfast Briefings – targeted at local companies and the professional services sector. Previous topics included: ‘*Managing Innovation and New Product Development*’ – Dr Paul Trotte. School of Biological Science and ‘Bringing New Research and development to industry: an example from bionanotechnology – Dr Keith Firman – School of Biological Sciences
- **CCCU**- Public Lecture Series ‘An all-age career guidance service for England’,
- **The University of Winchester** is working with Business Link and Winchester City Council to deliver Business Link’s free start up workshop programme
- **University of Surrey and the University of the Creative Arts** co-sponsored an Enterprise Summer School. A total number of 30 students and 20 business guests attended.

E. Other
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Sub-regional partnerships to support business growth are strongly supported by SEEDA through a new organisation called South East Business Growth Teams (SEBIG) [www.innovationgrowth.co.uk](http://www.innovationgrowth.co.uk)

Most SE universities are or will be involved in these new teams. The reorganisation of the delivery of business support products through Innovation Growth Teams (IGTs) targets high growth companies. Key clients to universities are now requesting meetings to discuss developing projects and collaborations in anticipation of the economic upturn. These businesses are aware of the need to innovate in order to maintain a competitive advantage and thus projects that were put on hold a year ago are now receiving approval for investment and progression.

Requests for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are also bearing up well in the economic climate.

In addition, through IGTs many HESE members are actively cultivating partnerships links with a wider range of business groups and networks to spread the message that there is valuable support on offer and to reach more businesses. The SEEDA funded Innovation and Growth teams are a good example of the unique role universities can play at the sub-regional level, as an organisation that can bring diverse groups together to work jointly on solutions to problems/challenges in their local economy.

## Yorkshire and Humber

A. Schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn

**Case study examples of new or re-purposed HE activity for the period August – October 09 additional to ECIF programmes are detailed below:**

**York St. John University** is expanding its Acorn Programme for start-up businesses to attract anyone affected by the economic downturn that is committed to starting up their own business. It is an established and acclaimed start-up programme with local business leaders acting as mentors and advisors. The peer network developed through the Acorn programme means businesses are well equipped to succeed and can become more resilient to the current economic climate after the nine month programme. The programme is delivered in two phases: phase 1 comprises 15 evening sessions led by small business owners taking a practical look at a range of business topics and phase 2 provides practical assistance with business planning, networking to build a client base and mentoring to support entrepreneurs to grow their businesses further.

**Sheffield Business School** has recently launched a 'Women in Business' group for women entrepreneurs and managers offering free support and advice to those who want to develop their businesses. The business school has extended the initiative because of the response from women wanting to join.

The support group aims to bring together a group of like-minded female business owners and managers in SMEs who will work together, along with a facilitator, to resolve issues they may face and to learn from each other's experiences. The programme is made up of four sessions, delivered over approximately four months and will allow participants to build a new business support network, as well as develop strategic problem solving skills.

Due to the high demand for the programme, the Northern Leadership Academy has doubled its sponsorship from funding an initial eight free places to sixteen for women business owners.

The **University of York** is leading on a major research project examining the nature and consequences of an economic system that prospered as a result of easily available credit. The research team will conduct confidential interviews with people struggling with debts of all types, to establish both the reasons for their financial situation and possible routes out of indebtedness. The content of the interviews will depend on individual

situations but are likely to consider the availability of credit, the funding of consumer lifestyles, the psychological impact of debt and experiences with debt collectors and debt advice services. The research will aim to shed light on the hidden side of credit availability. It will provide detailed case studies that the Citizens Advice Bureau and other organisations may use to highlight the plight of their clients. It will also provide raw data to influence policy both on the road out of recession and the effective management of debt in the economy.

## **B. Increased demand for existing activity**

### **Undergraduate, post-graduate and part-time programmes**

Universities in the region are reporting a considerably higher number of applications for undergraduate, post-graduate research and taught programmes (home, EU and overseas). Some institutions did not enter places for clearing due to fully subscribed programmes and many have offered a reduced number of available places for clearing compared to last year.

The region's universities are offering higher tariff scores than the previous year and have a higher number of people taking up insurance offers. From this we can deduce that the HE sector overall is oversubscribed with institutions resorting to offering less flexible grade offers and more applicants being unable to obtain places.

There is an increased interest from applicants in professional programmes (e.g. pharmacy, chemistry, management), STEM subjects and other provision, which leads to more immediate employment prospects (e.g. education and teaching).

### **Graduate internships**

There is high demand for graduate internship and employment opportunities in the region. Graduates Yorkshire, a graduate recruitment company in the region, has 26,161 graduates registered (a significant increase from the 19,195 registered this time a year ago). Competition for internships is very high with applications for internships on the regional Graduates Yorkshire scheme ranging from 18 to 55 depending on the internship opportunity. There is also strong demand from the region's employers for graduate talent. Following a recent media release on the internship scheme, 12 companies signed up to the scheme in just one week.

Additional internship opportunities have been created by Sheffield Hallam University's e-skills internship scheme available for its IT graduates to help develop their business skills and prepare them for employment. Employers involved in the scheme include IBM, Network Rail, British Airways and Google.

### **Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) programmes**

Feedback from ECIF programmes which have begun delivery, identify strong demand from employers and individuals for short, sharp interventions. There is demand from many SMEs for short, low cost, non-accredited training interventions to meet immediate skills and knowledge gaps. Individuals are taking advantage of short skills interventions (e.g. IT training) to quickly enhance their employability skills and help improve their employment prospects.

For businesses and many individuals accessing ECIF interventions (e.g. career changers), the programmes are helping to increase their understanding of the scope of the HE offer. This is especially evident for individuals who have not been in HE for some time or who have had no previous experience of HE.

Fifteen [Leeds Metropolitan University](#) graduates are taking advantage of 3 months sponsored membership (with ECIF funding) of the Northern Technology Institute's co-working space and a whole range of training and business support services to help them get started in the world of creative and digital business.

In response to redundancies made by the steel maker Corus, ECIF Programmes in the region (Rotherham College and the Universities of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam, Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield) have developed an integrated package of careers guidance and job seeking support. These interventions delivered by the institutions' careers services comprise a bespoke offer specific to the needs of Corus employees facing redundancy. Corus identified psychometric testing as a key requirement for the support package and the universities were able to rapidly respond to meet this need. The HE sector offer provided Corus with additional and specialist support over and above the mainstream support available from Jobcentre Plus and Next Step provision.

#### **C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity**

Feedback from admissions staff suggests that overall HE provision is over-subscribed.

It is perhaps more useful to focus on areas where there is an opportunity to upscale to meet the gap between existing provision and an increased need for enhanced support. Enterprise is an area where there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is an increased interest and an opportunity for additional collaborative activity between institutions and other organisations to meet this demand.

For some institutions in the region, there is an opportunity to expand post-graduate provision and the foreign student market to meet the increase in demand for HE.

#### **D. Partnerships and networking**

### **Coordinating the offer from Higher Education (HE)**

Yorkshire Universities (YU) is continuing to connect with organisations leading on, and involved in delivering services responding to the recession to align the HE offer with other public-sector funded support packages provided for businesses and individuals.

YU recently met with Jobcentre Plus and other organisations involved in the response to the recession (Yorkshire Forward, LSC, Lifelong Learning Networks, Graduates Yorkshire) to review offers for professionals and graduates to identify any issues or gaps in provision and to improve communication and coordination of national and regional initiatives. Actions from this meeting include (i) development of a single site on the Graduates Yorkshire website holding information (organised by sub-region) for graduates and employers on recession-time support to improve sign posting and (ii) updating of intelligence on graduates by YU to support enhanced targeting of provision.

Yorkshire Universities and Graduates Yorkshire recently submitted a paper on graduate support in the region to the Economic Delivery Group chaired by the Regional Minister outlining priority actions and recommendations for strengthening delivery and access to internships and other graduate employment support measures. Universities are also collaborating outside of ECIF initiatives, to provide flexible, bespoke recession-response help to employers (e.g. Corus redundancy support careers package).

### **HE collaboration with business and industry**

As well as developing specific recession response interventions supported by ECIF, the HE sector as part of its core activity provides key economic and social contributions to the region through employer collaboration and partnership working. Universities in the region work with businesses and public sector organisations in a number of different ways: consultancy services, knowledge transfer, help to access funding opportunities, business development, collaborative and applied research, networking opportunities, IP and licensing, and access to facilities and services.

Case study examples of employer collaboration and partnership activity (for the period Sept-Oct 09) are detailed below:

#### **University of York IBM Partnership**

The University of York has enhanced its links with industry by joining IBM UK's University Relations Program. The aim is to expand the scope of the resources and experiences offered to students, better preparing them for the careers of tomorrow with skills that will stimulate growth and drive innovation.

IBM experts drawn from its UK workforce of over 20,000, including master inventors and distinguished engineers, will give guest lectures and seminars, support curriculum development, work as visiting professors and undertake collaborative research activities with staff and students. Students and academic staff will also have free access to IBM software through its Academic Initiative programme to complement teaching activities

and to aid research. The program is designed to help develop high value jobs and knowledge-based growth in the region.

### **Universities of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam Innovation Leaders Project**

Businesses in the Sheffield City Region are to benefit from a £3m leadership and executive management programme aimed at promoting innovation. The project, 'Innovation Leaders', will be managed by Sheffield Business School at Sheffield Hallam University and the Management School at the University of Sheffield with the funding coming from the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The main aim of the Innovation Leaders programme is to build regional competitiveness (across priority sectors) through developing future leaders - with SMEs to benefit the most. The programme will establish innovative models of engagement between HE, the Universities of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam, and employers, to deliver collaborative learning to enhance individual and organisational business performance. Learning will be enquiry driven, flexible and responsive, peer and mentor supported, facilitated by academics, and will target managers, executives and future leaders.

### **University of Hull Destination Innovation Event**

Destination Innovation is a unique event being held by the University of Hull to encourage cross business sharing of ideas. Run in collaboration with Castleton Consulting, the University of Hull, Yorkshire Water and the Environmental Technologies Centre of Industrial Collaboration (ETCIC) at the University, the project will involve more than 75 delegates taking part in open space technology sessions designed to enable diverse groups to address complex, important and sometimes controversial topics to achieve meaningful results quickly. Each delegate will be able to pitch their challenge to the group, looking outside their own organisations and industries for innovative ideas which could help deliver benefits for their own business.

<b>E. Other</b>
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Case study examples of other types of HE activity relevant to the economic downturn (for the period Sept-Oct 09) are detailed below:

### **Community Cohesion**

A team of health and nutrition experts at **Leeds Trinity & All Saints** have launched a new project designed to create the perfect recipe for promoting community cohesion through cooking. The "Cooking Communities" project, based in Leeds, will offer after school clubs where "cooking champions", older people recruited locally, will teach practical cooking skills to pupils who will be encouraged to share their new found skills by cooking for their families and neighbours.

In the longer term, the project team will develop a toolkit enabling teachers and volunteers to roll out the cookery clubs across the city, and will promote initiatives to bring people together to share food from different cultures and communities. The All Saints Educational Trust, which supports work in nutrition education, is funding the project through its All Saints Saxton Fellowship.

### **Innovation in Recession**

The Northern Technology Institute, part of **Leeds Met University**, recently held an “Innovation in Recession” Symposium. Over 60 delegates were encouraged to define the key issues for Yorkshire’s businesses and to come up with innovative ideas and pitches to deliver cost savings, efficiencies and bigger profits in their own workplaces. The symposium was led by [Herman Gyr](#) and [Laszlo Gyorffy](#) from the Enterprise Development Group in Silicon Valley who brought a wealth of experience to the table to show delegates how powerful innovation can be, even in the current economic climate. The event was supported by [Leeds Metropolitan University](#) and [CIDA International](#), the Creative Industries Development Agency. Combining theory and practical workshop sessions, the event delivered highly original thinking and guidance in the field of innovation to promote action among delegates that would have real impact for their own businesses.

#### First-ever PhD scholarship between a University and Refuge

The recruitment process for a talented graduate is underway for what will be the first-ever PhD scholarship between a university and Refuge, the national charity supporting women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

The studentship, with the **University of Huddersfield**, will be called the Patrick Stewart / Refuge Scholarship for the Study of Children and Domestic Violence. The world-famous actor, who is both a patron of Refuge and the Chancellor of the University of Huddersfield, was honoured to be asked to give his name to the scholarship.

The scholarship offers a great opportunity for a researcher considering doctoral study in the area of children and domestic violence. It will be offered with a fee waiver for three years and an annual bursary of £12k to £13k.

Refuge, which operates a national network of safe houses for women and children, along with a range of other domestic violence services, was approached by the University’s Professor Adele Jones, the Director of the Centre for Applied Childhood Studies, to consider creating the scholarship. The Centre is one of the leading research units in its field and is nationally and internationally renowned for its work relating to children and their families.

## **F. Summary remarks**

### **Recession-response support measures/services**

- There is now an opportunity for re-focussing of effort from immediate, short-term recession-response initiatives to preparing for recovery and the future economy.

Sound, evidence-based policy and leadership on priority skills for the future will be central to the region's economic recovery.

- Clarification on eligibility requirements regarding match funding for ECIF recession programmes is ongoing. Partners are keen to ensure that delivery is shaped to meet need and that the funding should facilitate this.
- There is anecdotal evidence which indicates that some people with degrees are wishing to engage with the response to redundancy and programmes for the longer-term unemployed and are not able to do so or else are not interested because the courses are below level 3.

### **Graduate internships and employment opportunities**

- The wide range of internship opportunities available for graduates and employers in the region must be coherently aligned and marketed to avoid confusion, particularly where the offers differentiate in terms of eligibility, the levels of support available and varying cost to the employer.
- Communication and cooperation between the two regional programmes in Yorkshire is considered positive with practical steps in place to target marketing and connect with public sector referral mechanisms.
- We are aware however that there has been limited consultation, to date, between the national scheme, Graduate Talent Pool and other regional graduate job sites in the UK.
- It is important that the main thrust in the promotion of graduate opportunities centres on paid work. Unpaid internships still have a place in terms of creating opportunities for graduates to gain initial work experience. However, an over-emphasis on unpaid internships may potentially skew employer choice and could have a longer-term negative impact on the perceptions of both employers and future students on the value of a graduate education.