

HERA Barometer

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



1 July 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 June 2009. It follows the pilot report circulated on 1 May 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 HERA Barometer Report.

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

Overview

General issues and trends:

Increase in number of Internships offered	Six of the eight HERAs recorded an increase in demand for internships opportunities from businesses and graduates.
Partnerships with JobCentre Plus / Business Link have increased in number or have been further developed	All eight of the HERAs have identified HEIs with links with JobCentre Plus and Business Link.
Courses are being reshaped to face the economic situation	Four of the eight HERAs have reported HEIs reshaping the structure and content of courses to take account of the economic climate. There is a particular focus on re-skilling, employability, and making courses more accessible by offering part-time and shorter programmes.

Increased demand for courses which provide qualifications seen to be useful in the current environment	All eight HERAs have seen an increase in demand for courses which provide qualifications seen to be useful in the current climate. For example demand for Nursing, PGCE, STEM subjects, courses addressing redundancy, personal development and management training have all had increased demand.
ECIF funding seen as vital	Seven of the eight HERA have reported the importance of ECIF funded projects in addressing the issues of the economic downturn. Projects mentioned included internships, innovation partnerships, secondments, business start up schemes, employability skills services, work placement skills, and links with businesses.
Workshops / seminars to help businesses, graduates and unemployed	Six of the eight HERA have recorded an increase in the number of workshops offered alongside an increase in demand to attend from businesses, graduates and the unemployed. Workshop and seminar topics have been varied including business start up, careers advice, surviving the recession and networking skills.
Increased interest and applications for post graduate and masters courses	Seven HERAs either reported an increase in demand for post graduate and masters level courses or they reported initiatives by HEIs to encourage interest in these courses. These initiatives included offering generous bursaries, loyalty discount schemes, and supporting internships to complete a PhD.
Increased demand for careers advice	Seven HERAs have reported an increase in demand for careers services which has resulted in many HEIs offering enhanced and expanded support to students.

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

Name of regional association:
Association of Universities in the East of England (AUUEE)

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

Returns from the East of England's HEIs indicate considerable activity; the following being indicative:

To address newly redundant people/communities:

University of Hertfordshire:

- UH organized the 'Positive Action' Recession Event which attracted 200 people and included exhibition stands, workshops, a motivational key-note speaker. There was also a Q&A panel session to respond to skills/workforce development, business start-ups and the need for business advice. New range of Workshop programmes for current students and graduates (up to 2 years) e.g. Workshop on 'Recession Proof Your Career.'
- Discussion Forum on UH Alumni portal on how graduates survived last recession. The collated information is shared with current students via Career consultants during 1 to 1 sessions with clients (students, graduates) and also information will be used in workshops to provide IAG to clients.
- FIT {Student} – A personal development programme is designed for students to manage stress and plan effectively to the needs of the market. Currently has over 600 students registered on this programme.
- Graduate Futures colleagues interacted with AGCAS about the recession and attended the training day on 17 April 2009 to discuss Career Crunch and what steps Services are taking to support students.

To address business needs:

University of Essex:

- Human Resources seminar focused on how companies can retain their knowledge base during a downturn. The event was held in Ipswich in partnership with University Campus Suffolk (UCS) and it attracted 47 delegates.
- Agreement with Business Link East to co-host 7 workshops between September 2009 and March 2010.

New/re-purposed internship schemes or other post-graduation support:

Norwich University College of the Arts:

- Internship Project with ECIF funding – 1st June onwards, working with new graduates and industry.
- Range of business start-up workshops and one-to-one coaching.
- Delivery of 'How to Get Work Experience' workshop open to graduates.

University of East Anglia:

- Rolling out of enterprise and commercialisation advice and financial support by UEA's Enterprise and Engagement Office – using the basic offering provided to Academic staff and arranging for this service to be available to all undergraduates and postgraduates considering business start up. Programme will include the ability to access Proof of Concept funding, advice and mentoring and signposting to external service providers.
- The Enterprise and Commercialisation office are developing and supporting teams of Postgraduates to enter the BBSRC Biotech YES & NERC Environment YES entrepreneurship and enterprise awareness programme.
- HEFCE Enterprise Challenge Investment Fund – Recent Graduate Programme – focused at un-employed or under-employed recent graduates who will be able to access a group coaching to raise confidence, interview and recruitment training and business skills.
- HEFCE Enterprise Challenge Investment Fund – Promotion of the Graduate Intern Programme – starting in September 2009 - 10 week intern programme for new graduates to work with SME's and third sector organizations. Companies will receive a £400 grant from the ECIF funding to support the internship programme cost of £1500.
- UEA are providing a £500 subsidy for SME's participating in this year's Shell STEP programme for the first time.

B. Increased demand for existing activity

AUEE has received reports from across the region demonstrating increased demand as typified at the University of Hertfordshire where there has been a 300% increase in applicants to business ideas challenge from 39 to 130. Similarly at the University of East Anglia and at other HEIs there has been a significant increase in the number of students / graduates registering for the Shell STEP programme. The University of Bedfordshire has been one of several HEIs where the uptake of EEDA and i10's (CKE) voucher schemes has been very strong and successful.

Re-skilling needs or workforce development and graduate internships:

University of East Anglia:

- Increased demand for Nursing Courses – a recent round of fast track applications targeted at those looking to re-direct their career resulted in 316 applications which resulted in approximately 40 offers.
- Increased demand for PGCE Teaching Courses – applications up 32% from 2008 levels.
- Increased interest for “subject knowledge enhancement” training for teachers.

Cranfield University:

- Although some ECIF funded programmes are up and running, the majority are scheduled to begin this September. Marketing of these programmes has begun, involving resources from across the University and drawing on a range of external partnerships, which has resulted in significant interest. The recently launched re-skilling website: <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/sas/reskill/> is being widely publicised and should lead to increase demand. The Business Growth Programme is offering tailored provision of particular relevance to SME's that are facing significant challenges as a result of the current economic climate. This has seen significant demand.
- Cranfield's selected Praxis Personal Development programmes have also seen increasing demand. These programmes are designed to provide individuals with enhanced communications skills, helping them when either seeking employment or experiencing challenging conversations due to the pressures of the economic climate on their company. Since March this year enquiries for Masters-level provision have been steadily up on 2008 – overall this year enquires are up 2% on last year.

Addressing business needs:

- Cranfield University reports increased interest and attendance at this year's Venture Day which focused on business growth and start up in the economic down turn. Also, increased demand for the School of Management's Accelerated Talent Development Programme – 3 places has so far been funded through ECIF.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

Some concern has been expressed by several HEIs as typified by this comment from Cranfield University:

'It is particularly difficult to recruit company sponsored participants to short courses and similarly it is increasingly challenging to secure the required industry support for all our Masters provision in terms of student project support etc. The Management School have cancelled their High Performance Business Teams Programme due to lack of interest and are looking to replace it with the 'Employee Engagement Programme' later in 2009.'

AUEE believes that there is some evidence to suggest that "green business" and the social and community aspects for business are slipping in terms of priority for business as they concentrate on survival.

The University of Bedfordshire is not alone in identifying a priority need for effective training opportunities to be offered to graduates who wish to explore and prepare for self-employment. HEIs play an essential role in stimulating business start-ups by graduates and would-be community entrepreneurs.

D. Partnerships and networking

Within the last eight weeks AUEE has hosted an ESRC event to assist business development representatives from member HEIs, worked to strengthen revitalised linkages with London Technology Network, submitted a cross-regional ERDF bid to support Low-Carbon SKTPs and facilitated a KTP Funding Workshop to assist membership HEIs.

AUEE is aware that the University of Bedfordshire has held discussions on further collaboration with JobCentrePlus (JC+) and is now awaiting advice on funding framework from JC+ third party provision unit. Also, the Association has been informed about a number of 'Economic Challenge' workshops that have been held and which are on-going as typified by those at Writtle College. This is where revised and additional networks and partnerships are used to work more closely with County Councils, Borough Councils, Business Link and other partners to provide a cohesive approach to its business customers. Writtle's involvement with the EEDA LandSkills East funding has enabled the College to offer training to meet the needs of their land-based sector which includes people in need of skills development and those who are, or who face, redundancy.

Norwich University College of the Arts:

New connections with the IoD to present outward-facing activities, including Creative Consultancy, Art for Hire and live commissions. This coincides with a marketing campaign for Research and Knowledge Transfer capabilities.

Brains Eden - An event where games companies and education/training providers gave short presentations and discussed new ways to supply the right kind of talent at the right time. The theme for the evening was the creative process, how do good ideas get turned into fantastic games?

Range of Business start up workshops (Business Link) and one to one coaching (Norwich Enterprise Centre).

New short course programme developed and promoted for 2009 / 2010 includes skills-based courses in Photoshop and digital media – to be distributed through The Learning Shop at The Forum in central Norwich.

Mentoring Programme Launch – 30th April 2009 – students, graduates, industry.

Alumnus Association Networking Event – 7th May 2009 – students, graduates and industry

Cranfield University:

Increased contact has been made with local JC+ to assist the University increase awareness of programmes available.

Participated in meetings facilitated by AUUE and attended by EEDA and other regional organizations aimed at developing relations within the region to deliver coordinated and complementary ECIF activity.

Links have been made with the Hertfordshire Job Club and R2R (Response to Redundancy) through Central Bedfordshire Council.

The University was invited to exhibit at Silverstone at the event for those made redundant from Brawn GP.

An increase of 33% month on month on enquiries for Business Incubation Centre, resulting in a steady increase in uptake of Business Link Services.

University of Hertfordshire:

Working with county/borough councils to support with Placement and Work Experience opportunities for University of Hertfordshire students.

Hosted the Positive Action – Recession Event (02/04/09) which involved JC+ as a stand holder and initiated a new working relationship with the organization.

Won a bid through the Economic Challenge Investment to engage with 100 SMEs to raise awareness of and agree bespoke business support action plans, deliver training courses, APEL and CPD programmes to enhance graduate employability, for those in work and unemployed, and the implementation of a business support network.

Hosted the Positive Action Recession Event in April which included Business Link as a partner, who presented a workshop on 'Starting Your Own Business' and ran a stand giving out information to attendees at the event.

Business School partnered with the FSB to provide a series of one day 'Business Fundamentals' training workshops tailored for SME's in Hertfordshire, covering key topics, such as Marketing Principles, Employment Law and the small business and Using New Media.

University of Essex:

Delivered presentation on support available to disabled (in particular dyslexic) graduates with JC+ 'Access to Work' team. Planning to deliver again next academic year.

Increased demand from JC+ to use business facilities for workshops for their clients.

Liaison with JC+ on ECIF activities, specifically developing online skills assessment tools/audits.

Communicating with Confidence and Managing Conflict networking event attended by 38 people from business organizations in the East of England region.

E. Other

The following is indicative of much good practice across the region of HEIs working with suppliers, cultural events etc,

University of Essex:

Professional Development Studies submitted a bid under the Southend Borough Council Economic Partnership Programme 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 is at Levels 3 and 4 and will develop the learners in areas such as Employment and HR, Interpersonal Skills and Team Building, Finance and Procurement and Quality Assurance.

Writtle College:

The College is hosting a summer programme of 34 "Economic Challenge" workshops targeting local businesses. These feature networking opportunities, guest speakers focusing on economic downturn issues and solutions, access to expertise and a "Business Crisis" where struggling businesses can receive relevant and practical assistance.

Cranfield University:

Four dedicated programmes have been introduced aimed at re-skilling staff from local businesses.

Eight tailored short management and personal development courses introduced for those individuals who are newly redundant.

University of Bedfordshire:

The University's Intellectual Property Advisory Service has been operating since November 2008 with emphasis on supporting new and existing knowledge-based businesses.

University of East Anglia:

The UEA based InCrops Project is an established ERDF/EEDA funded project which is promoting crop derived bio-renewable near market research, supply chain development and product development helping local business and entrepreneurs exploit opportunities within these sectors. Progress to date is well ahead of target that the totally inclusive approach to partners is impressive.

F. Summary remarks

The East of England is a diverse region with a wide range of HEIs from small specialist institutions such as the Norwich University College of the Arts and Writtle College (land-based) though to large universities with global reputations. Whilst all institutions have actively cooperated in joint ventures for many years, their willingness to work together to mutual advantage has improved still further since the start of the economic downturn. Complementary expertise is being used to support a range of projects that reach-out to the business community, many of which engage with JC+, Business Link and other cross-regional organisations.

AUEE continues to facilitate a range of services and networks to support the collective membership and these interactions range from events organised to enable Research Councils to project opportunities though to a representation of views via membership to the Board of Directors of the Institute of Knowledge Transfer.

Member HEIs are not only seeking out innovative and highly responsive ways of bringing support and re-skilling to those made or facing redundancy; they are also bringing into play far greater levels of support for their summer graduates. All institutions recognise that economic downturns tend to increase the number of business start-ups and that, with added support, the failure rate of new businesses can be substantially minimised.

It is widely accepted that past graduates who now face redundancy from positions in sectors not immediately related to their original qualification can, with specific up-skilling, stand a far greater chance of early re-employment within different sectors. Additionally, those staff in local businesses experiencing reduced working hours can be equipped with additional higher level skills to fully prepare them for the opportunities that will result from an upturn in the region's economy.

Name of regional association:
East Midlands Universities Association (EMUA)

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

The East Midlands HEIs responded robustly to the call for bids to address the current economic climate (ECIF) with a range of diverse activities, reflecting their diverse missions. Five were successful and their ECIF-funded activities are currently being implemented.

One of these schemes comes from the **University of Leicester**, which has developed Innovation Partnerships (ECIF-supported 'Industry into University' Secondments). These part-time secondments into the University of Leicester allow company employees to gain innovation-based knowledge and skills, and practical support for innovation projects, to help boost their company's business through R&D in preparation for the economic upturn. The scheme covers the salary costs for the secondee reducing the salary burden on the company and easing cashflow.

Outside of ECIF, our institutions have been reshaping their courses and business services to take account of the economic climate, with a particular focus on re-skilling, employability and entrepreneurship. For instance, **Nottingham Trent University** is working with employers to identify skills gaps and is shaping short course provision to meet these needs, while Loughborough University will use EPSRC Knowledge Transfer Account funding to encourage industry/academic exchanges to stimulate the formation of communities of practice and refreshed research/exploitation opportunities.

Support for entrepreneurship is evident both within our institutions, and for down-sizing businesses; **University of Lincoln** is recruiting a 'Graduate Enterprise Intern' to support greater engagement of the student population in the enterprise agenda and the development of a student enterprise club, whilst the Faculty of Business, Computing and Law's "Start up and Go" Project at University of Derby will offer business start-up opportunities for people who have been made redundant.



At the **University of Northampton** the RDA-funded Business Link Start-up Service (BLSS: which the University delivers for Northamptonshire) has been re-positioned specifically to target the 'newly redundant' in the county. The BLSS team have been called in by Brawn UK F1 racing team (who used to be Honda) to provide business start up advice and guidance to the staff they are making redundant (as at 13/5/09).

CASE STUDY: Nottingham Trent University Languages & International Studies Programmes



Languages and International Studies (LIS) Programmes

The business need:

LIS works with employers' representative, local authorities and the EU to identify skills gaps and (re)training in languages and intercultural communication. Short courses provide local businesses with access to university accredited and/or supported training, and opportunities to increase student employability.

Our approach:

Working with the EU, industry and other strategic partners, LIS has delivered awareness raising events, identified funding and developed short courses drawing upon the extensive experience of its staff.

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/hum/business/consultancies/international_training/index.html.

Impact and Results:

Businesses have benefited by gaining access to university knowledge and skills and students have gained real work experience through internships.

NOTTINGHAM
TRENT UNIVERSITY



More than a dozen new/re-purposed initiatives have been reported to EMUA since the last report, and it is clear that this does not represent the full scope of our HEIs' activities.

B. Increased demand for existing activity

Across the region we have observed a marked increase in applications from individuals to business skills degrees, with two of the region's business schools reporting a rise in applications of more than one fifth, and an increase in demand for STEM courses. This is coupled with a higher demand for careers services from those about to graduate, as students recognise the need to acquire and clearly demonstrate they have business-relevant employability skills, in order to achieve permanent employment in a highly competitive jobs market. In teaching, there is increasing interest in the Graduate Teacher Programme scheme, students finding this the most cost-effective route, which means competition for the available places is very high. EMUA members also report a strong demand for the region-wide ERDF-funded Enterprise Inc. bursary scheme, which support students to gain experience of self-employment.

Case Study: University of Leicester Graduate Success Programme



The Graduate Success Programme

Graduate Services Workshops 2009

The University of Leicester is addressing the needs of its 2009 graduates through a programme of events as part of its Graduate Success programme. The programme offers a series of **employer-led workshops** which address various aspects of securing graduate positions in the current economic climate.

We believe Leicester is one of the few Universities offering specific events for finalists; attendance at these workshops has notably increased in 2009.

The picture of demand from businesses seems to be polarising, with EMUA institutions seeing an increased demand for some very specific and targeted training, consultancy and/or innovation support, but a decline in training by businesses generally (see next section). Thus, the **University of Derby** has experienced increased demand for short, full-cost, creative industries-related courses including video editing, digital photography, flash animation, website design, vector design and Apple technical support and **The University of Nottingham** experienced high demand for a 'need-to-know' workshop on new soil contamination guidelines, in January (see case study). **De Montfort University's** Regional Design Support Programme, which supports businesses by providing access to improved design and innovation, is experiencing very high demand and our universities report that demand for KTPs continues to grow, buoyed by the enhanced support for SMEs to engage in this scheme.

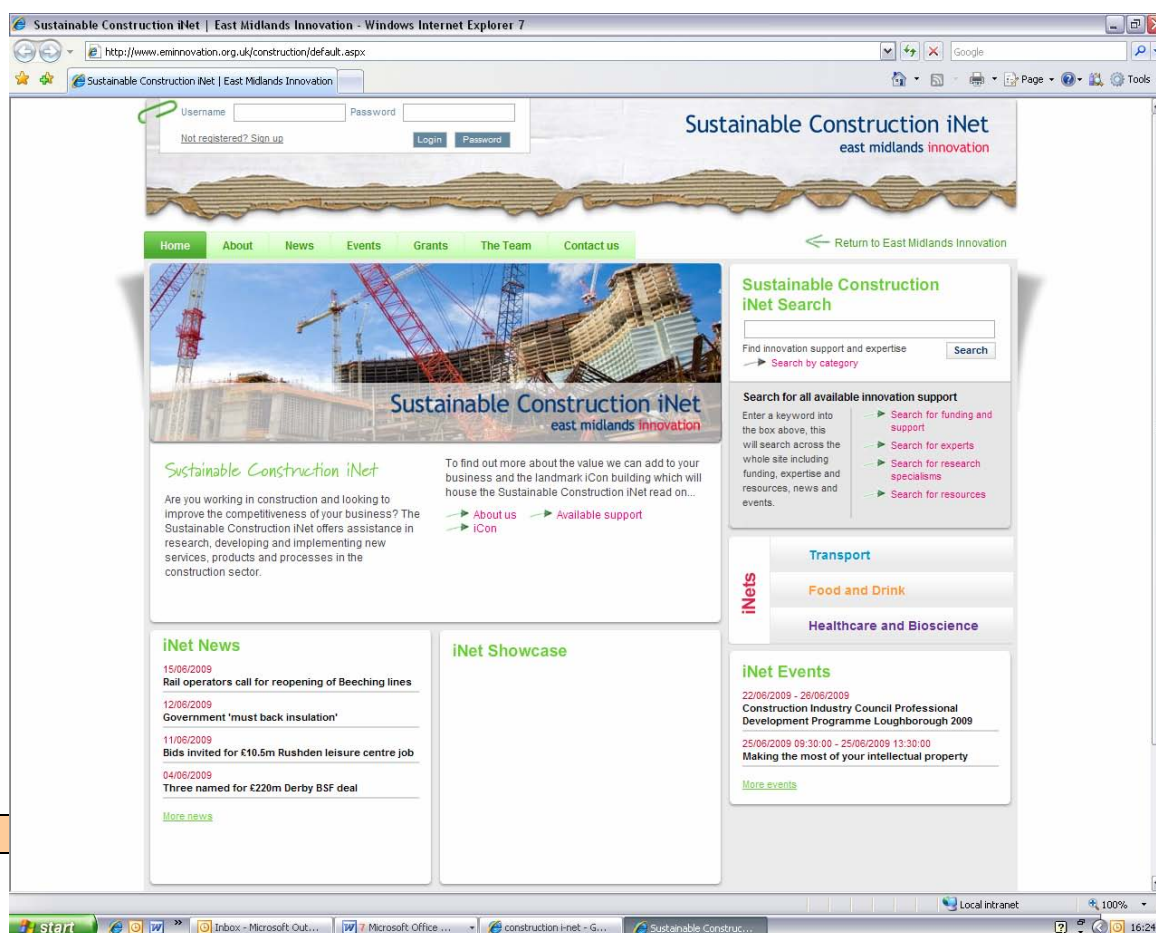
CASE STUDY: The University of Nottingham Workshop & Specialist Coaching



University of Nottingham staff, working with colleagues from local SME Land Quality Management Ltd. and with the support of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, ran a workshop in January of this year to help develop new soil screening levels compatible with guidance released by the Environment Agency only a few days before.

This collaborative effort involved over 80 participants from public and private sector organisations from across the country both benefited from specialist coaching during the workshop and contributed their own time and effort in reviewing information on contaminant toxicity, fate and transport.

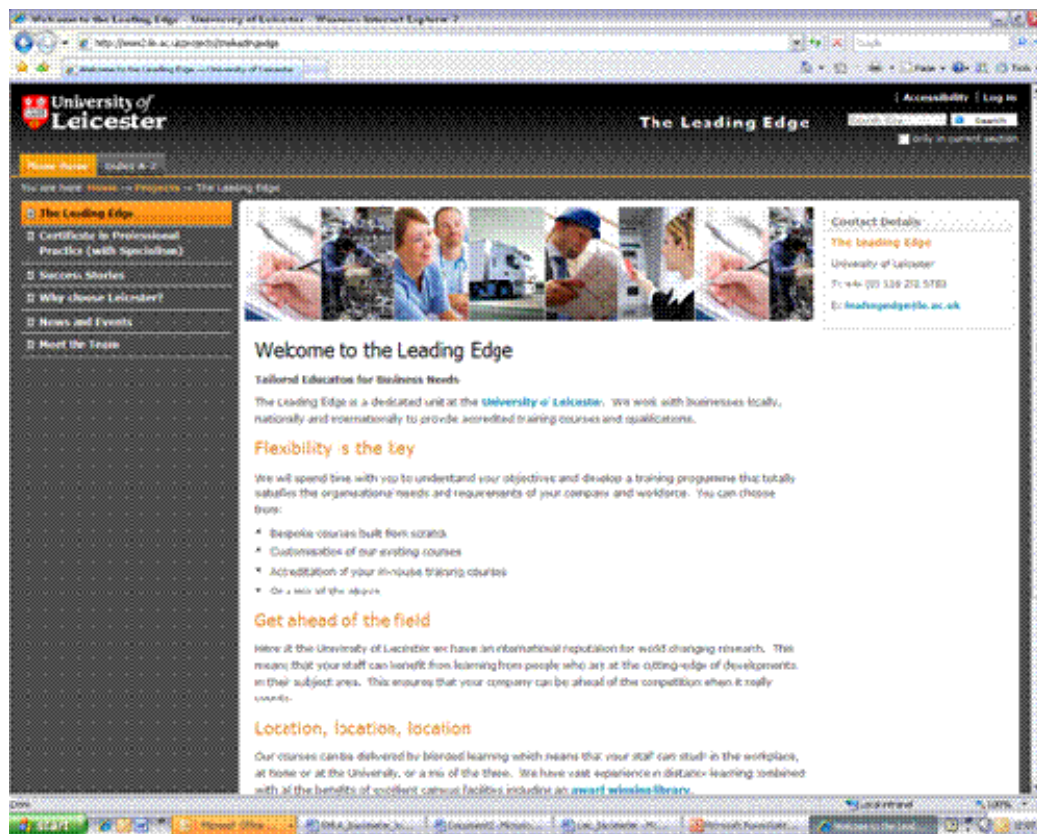
The region's Sustainable Construction i-net, managed by the University of Northampton and funded by *emda*, is experiencing strong demand for its Innovation Support funding programmes and its events programme, which aims to encourage the development of innovation skills and the dissemination of innovative technologies and processes



EMUA members continue to report a fall in demand for paid placement students, withdrawal of placement offers and existing placement students being made redundant, owing to the recession. Nottingham Trent University is particularly concerned about the impact of reduced placements for STEM students, especially in Life Sciences and Chemistry. Employers are concerned about the legal, ethical and workforce-morale implications of employing placement students when they are down-sizing. In other cases, they have employed a graduate to undertake work that previously would have been undertaken by a student.

Businesses, especially SMEs, appear more limited than usual in terms of the time and human resources they can commit to new initiatives. A major barrier to engaging businesses at the moment is the cost of consultancy and bespoke courses.

The **University of Leicester's** HEFCE-funded Employer Engagement project, The Leading Edge is seeing a lower than anticipated uptake of tailored courses for business as companies review their training provision because of the economic downturn.



Likewise, Bishops Grosseteste University College Lincoln reports the response to short, non-accredited, vocational courses has been extremely patchy with cost in the current climate stated as the primary reason when people have made initial enquiries. The uptake of adult learning opportunities is similarly down – their course 'Exploring Ancient Egypt' was cancelled due to a total lack of uptake, coincident with the reduction in the number of people taking overseas holidays.



In contrast to the increased demand for courses in the Creative Industries sector, the **University of Derby** reports demand for other bespoke courses has reduced. For example, an Advanced Diploma in Quantity Surveying developed in collaboration with a major construction group to address the shortage of quantity surveyors within the company, trained 14 graduates last year to be Assistant Quantity Surveyors, all of whom were subsequently employed by the company. The company indicated that they would be committed to running the course again during 2008/09 but, due to a number of factors, including the economic downturn, they have delayed delivery of a further course until 2009/10. Furthermore, interest in workshops offered through the University's Ingenuity Programme which require a financial contribution from the business - that previously have been well subscribed – is down; the fee, although small, has been a barrier to uptake. It seems that whilst enterprises are seeking improved skills and knowledge to support sustainability and growth in the difficult economic environment, their ability to pay for this is reduced. There is also some evidence that employers are less willing/able to sponsor students for professional programmes (e.g. part-time MBA, CIMA, CIPD) and students are unsure whether employers will continue to sponsor them for the next stage of their programme.

In summary, all EMUA members are seeing falls in the demand for provision from businesses, especially SMEs, related to the economic downturn. Cost is cited as the primary reason for not engaging. Difficulties in finding appropriate degree-related placements are growing and the situation is exacerbated by the pressure for internship positions, with considerable anecdotal evidence of deadweight displacement of undergraduate placements.

D. Partnerships and networking

EMUA submitted written evidence to the East Midlands Regional Select Committee and was subsequently invited to give oral evidence to the committee during their enquiry into the performance of the regional development agency, emda. EMUA is not currently represented on the Region's Economic Cabinet and emda acts as our conduit to them. The committee members were surprised to hear about the scale and scope of EMUA member's contribution to the region's economy, the depth of our engagement with emda and the ability of our institution's to align other funding with emda 'single pot' and ERDF, for the benefit of the East Midlands. EMUA will continue to seek to inform and influence regional strategy during the downturn through all appropriate channels.

EMUA was requested to undertake some rapid qualitative research into the state of the Graduate Recruitment market in the East Midlands by the region's Skills and Productivity Partnership (esp Partnership) through the EMUA Careers Services Group. The resulting report, Graduate Futures -The Impact of the Recession on Graduate Recruitment in the East Midlands, published recently (http://www.emua.ac.uk/downloads/graduatefutures03_09.pdf) includes in-depth comment from all 10 member HEIs.

The EMUA Employer Engagement & Skills Strategy Group is developing new strategic relationships with key partners in the esp Partnership, such as Jobcentre Plus and the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, to ensure there is a consistent approach to engagement of the region's HEIs, without compromising relevant local relationships. This group is also working closely with HE & FE partners and Business Link, to respond to the newly instituted regional Beyond Brokerage Higher Level Skills Service, which is sponsored by emda.

Universities in Leicestershire (De Montfort University, University of Leicester & Loughborough University) are working together on the 3 Universities for Business initiative which seeks to engage businesses within

Leicestershire to highlight the wealth of opportunities available through Universities. A breakfast seminar (business and financial services) was held in March (attended by >60 businesses) and further themed events are planned for 2009.

All EMUA HEIs were active and supportive during the recent East Midlands Innovation Festival sponsored by emda, by hosting events, contributing case studies, showcasing services and attending/exhibiting.

Most EMUA HEIs are involved in delivering training and networking events to SMEs. For example, the Ingenuity Programme (University of Derby, University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University, in partnership) delivered a Showcase event aimed at SMEs focusing on recession busting advice - held during January 2009. Meanwhile, the University of Lincoln and Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce have held a "Showcase, Market and Sell" event and a "Selling to the Public Sector" event to stimulate procurement links between the public sector and the local supply chain.

Universities in the Greater Nottingham sub-region are piloting postgraduate student placements. The Graduate School at the University of Nottingham is facilitating, brokering and delivering, in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University, 372 placements into SME businesses in the Greater Nottingham area. Placements are short, typically one to six week periods where postgraduate students are placed into a business for specific projects and work activities. This project for the first time establishes a coherent, managed, access and facilitation service across the sub-region for placement activity. It is addressing key barriers to successful placements, including having a managed, quality orientated process and identifiable point of contact/referral for business support agencies, those working with businesses and the businesses themselves

In summary, EMUA members continue to develop partnerships both with each other and with external agencies, to exchange intelligence about the impact of the recession on the regional economy, as well as to provide training, knowledge transfer opportunities and enterprise & innovation support to businesses, to help them prepare for the recovery. Where possible, these activities are aligned in order to leverage funding from sub regional and regional agencies.

Best Practice

Case Study: Nottingham Science City Education & Training Group



The business need:

Working with the Nottinghamshire STEM industry to promote STEM careers and supporting skills development.

Our approach:

The Group, formed in 2006, has a membership of twenty Nottinghamshire stakeholders, including local authorities, economic development agencies and training providers. The Group provides an ongoing assessment on the supply and demand of future skills needs and is building a flexible educational framework to better enable entry into STEM careers & employment.

Impact and Results:

A study is currently investigating future skills needs for Life Sciences in Nottinghamshire and is seeking to identify opportunity for more collaborative provision.

The **University of Leicester's** 'Graduate Employability Stick' is provided to graduates from the University and last year won national publicity through the THES. Leicester continues to ensure that graduates receive this USB stick, which contains a wealth of information on securing employment and this year has been updated to reflect the current economic climate.

Events with Significant Economic Impact:

Case Study: Loughborough University signs Olympic agreement with Japan



Loughborough University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Japanese Olympic Committee to host the team as it prepares for competitions in Europe, culminating in 2012 Olympic Games. Japan has initially indicated that 15 sports, including athletics, hockey, tennis, triathlon, badminton, basketball and weightlifting will use Loughborough University's (and selected regional) facilities, commencing with the IAAF Athletics World Championships taking place in Berlin in August.

emda supported Loughborough's efforts to secure a major team to use its facilities because this will result in additional economic benefits to the East Midlands. Athletes and their support staff will stimulate the regional economy through tourism and retail activity.

http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/publicity/news-releases/2009/65_Olympic_Announcement.html

Accelerating Investment Projects:

The **University of Derby** has accelerated a £1m project to upgrade of one of its Halls of Residence.

Nottingham Trent University – £8.9m brought forward capital spend from 2010-11 - NTU is currently in the process of a radical transformation of its estate. They have been able to accelerate a number of these works which will have a significant impact on employment and the economy during this period of economic downturn.

Van Geest Research Centre – Total project cost £4.8m (£2m brought forward)

The University Quarter – Total project cost £3m (£1.6m brought forward) is at the heart of NTU's regeneration plan for the City campus and will re-orientate safe student access to key buildings and the NTU tram stop.

Development of Nottingham Law School – Total project cost £4m (£0.3m brought forward)

Extensions to the main Sports Centre – Total project cost £6m (£5m brought forward)

Concerns:

It is evident that many key policymakers, both regionally and nationally, have an inadequate understanding of the HE sector.

EMUA members are reporting that students are experiencing difficulties in supporting themselves during their courses due to the reduced availability of part-time and vacation work, or the redundancy of their sponsors (parents or partners). Those studying for work-based degrees (especially Fds) also have to leave their courses when they are made redundant by their employers.

There is widespread concern that new graduates who fail to secure graduate level jobs will become a 'lost generation' and that some students are questioning the 'value' of their qualifications in the current climate for graduate recruitment.

Barriers:

The University of Derby had to withdraw draft contracts from a number of companies for training at Level 2 because of the freeze on LSC funding for Train to Gain.

A number of other barriers have been identified by our HEIs, here are examples of issues raised more than once:

"The main barrier facing HEIs at the moment is that with a 'cap' on increasing student numbers, and the mandatory reduction in HEFCE funding imposed last month, the focus has been 'inward looking' and there has been a pre-occupation with cost cutting – which inevitably puts jobs at risk – and other measures to ensure future long-term sustainability. A further implication is that as the economy tightens and internal resources deplete, it becomes much tougher to find the 'match funding' that external funding providers (e.g. ERDF) require applicants to put in place... so externally funded projects, which leverage monies into UK plc from Europe, become unviable, or the risk factor falls outside that with which Universities are historically comfortable."

"A major barrier remains the lack of clarity for businesses on the funding support which they can receive and what it can actually fund. Businesses want funding if the solution it pays for makes the required impact - the majority of requests are for improving business activity, strategy, customer service and reducing costs."

EMUA has also noted that the lack of co-ordination between departments, coupled with the short-timeframe for tendering for national and regional projects to address the economic downturn and the gold-plating of the regional ERDF programme, makes collaboration and/or match-funding difficult to achieve.

On HEI responses to the economic climate:

- HEIs in the East Midlands continue to engage individually and collectively with regional partners and stakeholders to mitigate the effects of the recession on the region's economy.
- New provision to address the difficulties faced by individuals and businesses is being developed throughout the region.
- The diverse initiatives reported in this document reflect the varied missions of the region's institutions.
- The biggest barrier to businesses and individuals availing themselves of the help on offer is cost. Even heavily subsidised training and innovation support is still too expensive for SMEs with cash flow difficulties. The financial barriers for individuals who already have higher level qualifications or wish to study part-time, are considerable.

On the impact of the economic climate and government policy on EMUA members:

- The cap on student numbers, the negative impact of the recession on business engagement and the lack of funding for retraining individuals with existing, but out-of-date higher level qualifications, are creating a climate of financial uncertainty for HEIs.
- All EMUA members are experiencing difficulties in identifying an adequate number of degree-related student placements.
- Knee-jerk policy initiatives, such as the national internship scheme, have not been properly considered for their impact on existing activity, either as 'deadweight displacement' for current schemes, for their negative impact on existing HEI-employer relationships, or that they conflict with the Business Support Simplification programme.
- The lack of understanding of the sector by some key policy makers/influencers means HEIs are often not invited to participate in forums and initiatives where they could make an important contribution.
- The capacity and competence of local authorities (LAs) to understand, engage with, and utilise the region's HEIs as a resource for economic development is unclear. That these responsibilities are to be newly discharged by LAs at a critical time for the recession/recovery is an additional concern.

Name of regional association:

HERDA-South West

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

A number of new schemes have been introduced and others re-purposed in the South West to address the economic downturn – these are spread across the region, regardless of the outcomes of the bidding process/receipt of ECIF funding – with Institutions aiming to support their local and regional economy in any way they can. However, a number of institutions highlighted activity which would have been introduced had their ECIF bids been successful. This said, more than half of the 13 HEIs in the south west reported activity under this section, for example:

- A new pilot scheme delivering 3-day intensive support for Professional and Executive jobseekers in the Western District (Bristol/Bath area) of the SW has been conceived and developed by **HERDA-SW** and **Jobcentre Plus**.
- The first course (of four), run by **UWE**, had a total of 23 clients attending the workshop at the beginning of June, out of 25 originally booked, and all 23 attended each day. Feedback was exceptionally positive and **Bath Spa University** and the **University of Bristol** will be providing similar workshops in the Bristol/Bath area over the summer.
- Delegate quote: “I thought it was a very good course... Probably the most positive thing the Jobcentre Plus have done... passed the problem onto the professionals.”
- This demonstrates evidence of demand from professional and executives who are unemployed or under notice of redundancy for such targeted courses from HE. With this ‘pilot’ proving successful, and if resource can be secured the intention is to roll this provision out across the South West.
- Delegate quote: “It was indeed good to meet and realise you're not the only one in this situation.”
- The **University of Bath** are proactively contacting organisations that they know are making redundancies and offering provision that would be of value to employees facing redundancy. For example, they have recently contacted Virgin Media and Wessex Water offering support in the form of their Self-Employment Essentials course to their staff. The **University of Bath** has also arranged its first graduate internship funded through ECIF. This internship is in partnership with Eatec Ltd who are located in Yate near Bristol and are a firm of Engineering Consultants specialising in the provision of engineering services to clients who are engaged in the development of new products, resolution of engineering problems, or undertaking research. (More information available on request.)
- **Bath Spa University** has strengthened its relationships with two major city-wide support and networking organisations: Creative Bath and Federation of Small Businesses (Bath Branch). Recent events have included two networking events exclusively for network members and Bath Spa students and recent

graduates to promote internships and placements as a mutually-beneficial way to support businesses whilst providing work-based learning opportunities.

- 4 employers have engaged with the **University of the West of England (UWE)** ECIF project in the past month seeking careers, further study and business start up support for staff about to be made redundant, including one major financial institution who are losing up to 500 staff.

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the URL <http://rbi.uwe.ac.uk/Internet/business/eis.asp>. The page is titled "Solutions4Recession at UWE" and is part of the "ECIF Initial Services" section. The header includes the UWE Bristol logo and the slogan "The power of Ideas Research, Business and Innovation". A navigation menu on the left lists various services such as "Research, Business and Innovation", "Business & Community", and "Other RBI Websites". The main content area features a banner with the text "UWE > RBI > Business & Community > ECIF Initial Services" and "Solutions4Recession at UWE". Below this, it states: "UWE has secured funding through HEFCE's Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) to find ways of helping individuals and businesses during the current economic downturn. The resulting services are available from Monday, 29th June, 2009 - please download a brochure to find out more:". Two columns of services are listed: "Services for Businesses:" and "Services for Individuals:". Each column includes a small image and a "Download PDF" link. The right-hand sidebar contains contact information for the "Solutions4Recession team", including a telephone number (0117 32 86688), an email address (solutions@uwe.ac.uk), and a physical address in Bristol. It also includes a "Data privacy" link and a "Related information" section with a link to the "UWE+Jobcentre Plus initiative".

B. Increased demand for existing activity

Of those institutions that reported new data under this section, there was evidence of increased demand for schemes addressing both the needs of individuals and businesses. However, there is also evidence that businesses are looking for discounts and larger subsidies from HEIs.

The University of Exeter has seen a significant increase in demand for schemes helping recent graduates looking to enter the job market - a high demand for their Graduate Business Placement Scheme; a 300% increase in the number of Mock Interviews taking place through the Careers and Employment; and a

substantial volume increase in the number of students attending summer careers fair looking to engage with employers

At **Bournemouth University**, with support from **HERDA-SW/SWRDA** and working with local business link agencies, a programme using work experience graduates to undertake website review/development was undertaken with local businesses to help them to maximise the business opportunity offered by their website. In the period since the previous report (Apr 09) a total of 95 business websites were reviewed, each businesses being issued with a comprehensive report detailing problems, issues and solutions.



- As part of **Bournemouth University's** undergraduate degree programme, approximately 1400 students are about to embark upon their placement year. BU is re-positioning this programme as an opportunity for businesses to gain highly skilled individuals on a fixed term contract basis.
- The **Universities of Exeter and Plymouth** have increased opportunities for and the promotion of shorter KTPs to SMEs. At the **University of Exeter** a 75% discount is being offered to SMEs until March 2010 on normal Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

So far, the experience of HEIs working with businesses during this recession is mixed. In general, HEIs are experiencing higher demand for full time undergraduate and postgraduate study routes. They are also witnessing an increase in demand from businesses for students for placement year experience. HEIs are however finding that businesses are keen to talk to them about services provided, but are less keen to commit to projects or agreements that are; longer than 10 months, have less defined outputs or have higher cost implications, e.g. a decrease in new high value consultancy projects from January 2009 has been seen by some, alongside an increase in the number of consultancy and contract research projects stalling and even being 'pulled' with the reason being cited - 'economic climate'.

In 2008 the **University of Exeter** Business School had a significant portfolio of customised programmes (management and leadership development) for specific organizations (e.g. 3i) or professional sectors (e.g. doctors). Since autumn 2008 there has been a massive fall in demand for this type of professional development from the commercial sector. Existing contracts are not being renewed and one contract has been terminated early.

In the last two months the **Arts Institute Bournemouth** has had to cancel an event with the RIBA for architects' personal development due to a lack of individuals being prepared to spend a day developing new knowledge of ICT, because of what appears to be an emerging consensus view that businesses/individuals will only commit to things which bring in immediate income (i.e. they are in survival mode).

D. Partnerships and networking

Following a very well received paper from **HERDA-SW** to the Regional Economic Task Group Chaired by Ben Bradshaw MP a number of new business groupings have recognised the efforts HEI's are making with regard to business engagement within the downturn and the increasing necessity and potential benefits of long term collaboration. Discussions in and around joint activities relating to ECIF, ERDF and ESF are developing with a wide range of new and emerging regional business groupings and forums with whom the individual HEI's have at present only partial or 'silo' relationships. The Executive Director of **HERDA-SW** will present a paper 'Farewell to Ivory Towers – Universities and the bottom line' to the newly formed **South West Chambers Consortium** in July 09 as the first stage of a unifying strategy aligning regional businesses with regional HEI representatives. This follows directly on from an emerging re-naming and new Strategic Plan being developed by **HERDA-SW**, two strands of which are to enhance its 'outreach' by developing a more pro-active out-facing profile and evolving a stronger focus on relationship management by identifying new 'players' to partner with.

Alongside the above, **HERDA-SW** is through its Research and Business Engagement Groups considering a wide range of potential 'inputs' into Public Policy Development and is rapidly evolving plans in partnership with the **Government Office South West (GOSW)** in areas like 'What will the economy look like – post recession', 'Public Services', 'Demographics', 'Housing' 'Logistics', Transport Infra-structure' and the 'Sustainability/Low Carbon Economy'.

The regional coordination between HEIs is maintained through **HERDA-SW's** Careers and Business Engagement Groups, and the region-wide projects: Knowledge Escalator, Graduates for Business (which currently supports gradsouthwest.com) and Higher Skills. Individually, and sub-regionally HEIs are also working with a variety of partners, including **Jobcentre Plus, Business Link, Train to Gain, Connexions, Next Steps** and many others. The unfortunate decision not to fund the regional ECIF bid has hampered the 'joined-up-ness' of some of the regional work as identified above and specifically with **Jobcentre Plus**, but this is still being developed wherever possible. The potential positive 'impacts' and coordination of activities continue to be undertaken but would have been 'front-loaded' rather than 'retrospective' had the Regional bid been granted.

The screenshot shows the Gradsouthwest website. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation tabs for Academics, Employers, Students, Graduates, and Careers. A quote from a woman says, "Gradsouthwest is our prime recruitment source - we invariably recruit high calibre graduates through it." Below this, there are sections for "Welcome to Gradsouthwest", "Worried about the Recession?", "Support for Professionals and Executives", and "Postgraduate Bursaries". The "Now Recruiting!" section contains a table of job openings.

Job Title	Location	Salary
Online Editorial Assistant	Bristol	£14,500
Young People's Advocate	Somerset	£22,860
Research Assistant	Exeter, Devon	£16,991
Marketing Assistant	Poole, Dorset	£11,500
Communications Graduate Management Training Scheme	South West	£21,733
Web Marketing Executive	Poole, Dorset	£20 - £23K
HR & Training Administrator	South Gloucestershire	Unspecified
Business Development Co-ordinator	Cornwall	£16K
Piano Tutor	Bath	£30/hour

HEFCE have coordinated a regional meeting of all ECIF fund holders, in conjunction with **HERDA-SW**, **SWRDA**, **Jobcentre Plus** and the **SW RESP** (SW Regional Employment and Skills Partnership) – to provide opportunities for HEIs to add value by making stronger connections with each others' activities and add value to regional priorities and projects.

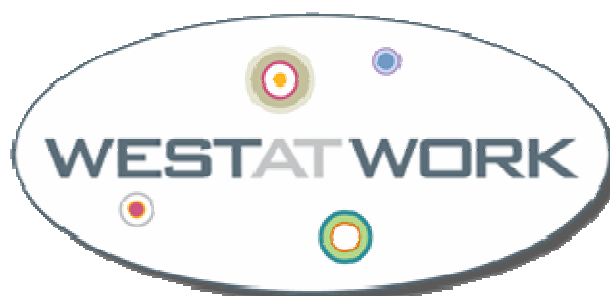
Further examples are given here:

The **Arts Institute at Bournemouth** have met with **Jobcentre Plus** as part of a sub-regional project being developed to support professional and executive workers.

The **University of Bristol** is part of a South West region collaborative expression of interest to HEFCE under the Leadership, Governance and Management (LGM) Fund. The **University of Exeter** is leading this bid, which also includes the **University of Plymouth** and **University College Falmouth**. The main aim of the proposal is to ensure staff are well equipped to help institutions tackle the distinctive challenges of the new economic climate. This will be done by drawing two key strands together to optimise long term sustainability, firstly identifying emerging practice in Higher Education and other sectors on how staff can best approach the management of an efficiency-driven financial environment, and secondly applying that practice to specific challenges.

Bath Spa University's Business Support Office has a close, reciprocal relationship with the **University of Bath's** Innovation Centre and is discussing the potential for joint offering of specified CPD/short courses to the business community that bring together the specialisms of each HEI.

The ECIF project **UWE** is leading on is working with the **West At Work partnership** involving all the key local public bodies (including the Council, LSC, Jobcentre Plus and education providers) and major business intermediaries. This body has an action group, in which **UWE** are a key player, working with companies making significant numbers of staff redundant over the next 6-9 months. The ECIF project is able to provide support for the business and the individuals concerned.



E. Other

There are many activities that HEIs in the South West are undertaking that are relevant to supporting the current economic situation. The following examples are directly relevant:

The **University of Exeter** is bringing forward building projects to generate demand in the construction sector.

Bournemouth University has published 11 newspaper features offering businesses key recession busting knowledge and advice:

26 May - Safeguarding the future of your business knowledge

12 May - Nestors and Investors: Five ways to understand house price indices

28 April - Sorry Darling, that's not a budget!

14 April - The winning formula for project management

31 March - Grow your business through franchising

17 March - Placing yourself ahead of the competition with BU students

3 March - And the winner is...

17 Feb - Managing risk during the credit crunch

3 Feb - Surviving the Recession: An Internal Perspective

20 Jan - Marketing in a Recession

6 Jan - An Ill Wind.

The HEFCE and Legacy Trust funded Relays project (www.herda-sw.ac.uk/relays) business fellow, based at **UWE**, has created a business engagement framework of the economic and social opportunities for business involvement with the 2012 Games. The framework of opportunities signposts businesses to the opportunities offered by HE, LOCOG, community networks (arts and sport) and Relays, and will include a series of business engagement events to be held in the SW Northern Arc (which covers the West of England, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset).



F. Summary remarks

HERDA-SW is now formally represented by its Executive Director on the SWRDA's Regional People, Employment and Skills Group for the South West which facilitates higher skills representation and proactive engagement with other regional bodies such as the **SWRDA, GOSW, Jobcentre Plus, TUC, ACAS** etc. to ensure a 'seamless' approach to the current volatile economic environment and recognises the role universities have as generators of knowledge, research, scholarship and skills to respond to or to mitigate the worst effects of the recession whilst simultaneously 'laying the groundwork' for closer educational and business alignment in anticipation of the recovery. **HERDA-SW's** new strategic plan will 'dovetail' with the regional priorities by emphasising:

- The need to continue to build on leading edge technologies and therefore contribute to the region's ambitions to be enterprising, science driven and innovative;
- The facilitation of business support by providing research, skills and training thereby assisting and attracting inward investment, talent retention and seed-bedding new micro and SME business activity through 'spin out', IP and R&D;
- The generation of £ 2.9 billion of the region's GDP, over 50 company start ups with a turnover of circa £20m and over 295 patents.

Name of regional association:
London Higher

Introduction

1. We attach the findings of our survey of London HEIs conducted in June 2009.
2. A synthesis of *all* the returns is presented in the grid that follows. From this we have selected a small number of case studies which we feel are instructive. These are presented at the end of this document (hyperlinked from the grid). Below we set out some introductory comments.

The Sample

3. Of the 41 HEIs contacted we received responses from 11 institutions. It is therefore not a comprehensive summary of the totality of activity undertaken by London's HEIs response to the recession.
4. Although meeting our requirement, the response rate is nonetheless low. This was because in order to meet the deadline we were only able to give London HEIs less than two weeks notice. We are aware that a number of HEIs wished to return data but were unable to do so in time. We expect a larger sample in the next submission.
5. It has been difficult to synthesize the submissions because they varied in appropriateness, length and quality of information. We plan to hold a workshop for our core group later in the summer during which we hope to clarify some of these points for future submissions.

Headlines

6. In regard to the headline findings we note the following general trends (noting the small sample size):
 - ECIF funded projects are well represented in the London sample
 - Funding for innovation (from banks and venture capital) seems to be an issue for some of the members who responded
 - London HEIs appear to be making good use of their regional partnerships to address the downturn

Further information

7. *Contact:* Paresh Shah (020 7664 4841) or paresh.shah@londhigher.ac.uk.

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

HEI	new/re-purposed schemes/skills	new/re-purposed schemes/businesses	new/repurposed internship schemes
University of East London (UEL)	Programme to encourage self-employment; Foundation Degree in work-based learning	“Remaining competitive” programme for entrepreneurs; innovation opportunities and advice	With SMEs, FE college, Anglia Ruskin and regional bodies; another programme with Knowledge East network
U. Arts London	-	ECIF funded IP training for businesses; events/CPD courses for creative sector for SMEs and self-employed	Part time courses for new graduates leading to work placements or business start-ups
City University	-	-	ECIF funded internship programme
Kingston University	ECIF funded project for employability skills to any graduates in the borough and to professionals made redundant in banking and finance	SME engagement coordinator for SME and third sector organisations	Internships from a few days to six months
Thames Valley University (TVU)	-	Three business-related foundation degrees and three CPD courses set up	-
Royal Veterinary College (RVC)	ECIF funded programme for paid internships in biosciences (ORBIS)	ORBIS involves bioscience companies for R&D and business training	-
Middlesex University	Workforce skills in the media sector for employed and self-employed	SDF-funded work-based learning for business; bespoke MBA programmes extended for industry and commerce	-
Queen Mary, Univ. of London (QMUL)	Part-HEFCE/part-QMUL funded new programme for skills training to employed/unemployed graduates	EPSRC funding to support KT to industry	-
London Metropolitan	ECIF funded programme for employability training for	Incubator centre providing business training and	-

HEI	new/re-purposed schemes/skills	new/re-purposed schemes/businesses	new/repurposed internship schemes
	graduates and recent alumni; business training expanded to include self-employment	surviving under a recession	
University College London (UCL)	ECIF and UCL funding for employment-orientated skills; employment readiness training gives entrepreneurship training and coaching programme for graduates	-	Mini-KTP for employment experience internship programme (funding from UCL, ECIF, six private companies and TSB)
University of Westminster	ECIF funded project to support professionals in the built environment; Masters course in Business school includes internships	Business development network for creative and media sectors; leadership development with NHS	Careers service access extended to three years post-graduation; employment programme for unemployed/underemployed graduates

B. Increased demand for existing activity

HEI	increased demand: individuals	increased demand: businesses
UEL	-	Take-up for employer engagement event
U. Arts London	30% increase in students and alumni using on-line enterprise services; 30% increase in use of careers service	-
City University	Increase in student demand for KTPs for work experience	
Kingston University	Easier to recruit students for KTPs	
TVU		
RVC		Strong demand for ORBIS internships
Middlesex	Demand for work-based learning	
QMUL		Research demand holding up as industry partners see R&D into new products as opportunity when recession ends but looking for public funding to do this
London Met	Careers service has increased demand from final year students and recent alumni	Increased demand for recession survival courses from digital media businesses
UCL	Employment skills programme	

HEI	increased demand: individuals	increased demand: businesses
	over-subscribed	
Westminster		Increased demand for KTPs by industry

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

HEI	falling demand/ gaps in activity
UEL	Some tenants moving out of incubator facilities because of falling commercial rents
U. Arts London	Some reduction in bookings for “leisure”/personal development courses
City University	Drop in demand for professional development training but greater demand for cheaper open access CPD courses
Kingston University	
TVU	
RVC	Major gap is high quality responsive business training in bioscience and bio-veterinary sectors
Middlesex	Firms reducing or postponing research and innovation collaborations because of budgetary pressures
QMUL	
London Met	
UCL	
Westminster	Fall in demand for short courses in media/creative sectors

D. Partnerships and networking

HEI	for graduates	skills/workforce	businesses	regional events
UEL	Internships through Thames Gateway London Partnership/ Knowledge East	As previous	Knowledge Connect voucher scheme for SMEs	Hosting Olympics supplier event for SMEs
U. Arts London			CPD courses on business sustainability	Creative industries festival –

HEI	for graduates	skills/workforce	businesses	regional events
				networking/work shops
City University			Business Link Train to Gain for creative sector	Event at Inst. of Directors on role of Non-Executive Directors in recession
Kingston University		Kingston Borough, Kingston Chamber of Commerce, Kingston College and JobCentre Plus		
TVU			Working with business community and self-employed through local agencies to, Chambers of Commerce and Business Link	
RVC	National Skills Academy, Innovation Central, London University Careers Service, RVC alumni	JobCentre Plus		
Middlesex	-	LDA, LLN, Train to Gain, FE colleges, private sector	Knowledge Connect and new work funded by ESRC with third sector	Regional Chamber of Commerce events
QMUL	JobCentre Plus	LDA and Linking London	LDA and Linking London	
London Met	London First, East London Business Alliance, Grange Hotel Group	East London JobCentre Plus, Financial Services Sector Skills Council, FE colleges	LDA, Business Link	
UCL		Camden Borough, LDA, Federation of Small Businesses, E-Skills		
Westminster	Westminster City Council		AEA Group; NHS	Hosted Funding for Technology in Health event; taking part in Skills and Business expo June 2009

Section E. Other

HEI	best practice	barriers
UEL	Processing supplier invoices through electronic scanning reducing delays in payment	Lack of financing by high street banks to provide SMEs with working capital to launch or complete orders for products
U. Arts London	Graduate week - annual event for final year students for employability and enterprise skills	Business Support Simplification Process (BSSP) is too restrictive for creative industries
City University	Collective promotion of business services by all London HEIs could add value	Suppliers indicate less being spent by HEIs during recession
Kingston University		
TVU		Unemployed professionals feel exposed to age discrimination in applications, think they are over-qualified and cynical about JobCentre Plus services but also tend to retain unrealistic salary expectations
RVC		Bioscience companies struggling to access fresh venture capital due to lack of liquidity in financial markets
Middlesex		
QMUL		
London Met	Involvement with borough-level Strategic Partnership Boards and economic development groups to develop recession survival plans	
Westminster	Enterprise Club to develop entrepreneurial skills in graduates with social networking site	Careers service noted a dramatic decline in paid vacancies but rise in employers advertising unpaid vacancies termed work experience which are actual jobs and contravene national minimum wage legislation

Case Studies

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

University of East London

Be your own Boss. Programme aimed primarily at supporting insecurely or under-employed individuals into self-employment, because such individuals have better access to credit than the unemployed and can sustain a new business through a development period. We are also repurposing some materials from this programme to provide a Keeping your Company Competitive during a Recession programme aimed at existing entrepreneurs. We are redesigning course materials to offer on-line delivery and to use social networking technologies to allow entrepreneurs to network and support each other.

Kingston University

Graduate to Business (G2B) funded HEFCE ECIF. G2B is a partnership project with Royal Borough of Kingston, Kingston Chamber of Commerce and Kingston College. Free services to graduates (of any institution) resident in the borough who have either been made redundant or are at threat of redundancy include: practical workshops covering careers, enterprise, innovation and employability skills development. Those using the service also have access to the G2B internship/project service.

A second facet of G2B is **Executive Futures** delivered through the Chamber of Commerce and supports professionals living in the Borough who have been made redundant from for example the banking and financial sector. Identified by Job Centre Plus as appropriate candidates, referrals are passed to the Chamber who offer the following: one to one interviews followed by free access to a series of workshops and seminars on subjects such as self-employment, change management, turning a creative hobby in to a job, interim management, CV and interview techniques, how to start a business etc. Suitable candidates will also be considered for consultancy work via the intern/project scheme.

London Metropolitan

Accelerator, LondonMet's incubator centre and service, has adapted the range of business training it provides to include content appropriate for businesses under pressure from the recession. SMEs will be offered expert business survival training and product and process innovation advice. The virtual incubation services will be increased and offered at preferential rates.

University of Westminster

Increased access to careers advice. In March 2009 the University's Careers and Students Employment (CaSE) service extended free access to all its facilities to graduates up to 3 years post graduation (up from 2 years post graduation). CaSE have introduced a new 10-week programme for unemployed and underemployed graduates in which to review their job search campaign, refresh their skills and rebuild their motivation and confidence.

B. Increased demand for existing activity

University of the Arts London

The **Enterprise Centre for the Creative Arts**. (HEIF – funded) project provides enterprise-related skills and knowledge for the university's students and graduates who are planning to, or who have already, set up in business. There has been a significant increase of 30% of both students and graduates registering for the online service and also seeking one to one advice. Also, the university careers service has seen a 30% increase for the online careers resources and vacancy bulletin.

Queen Mary, University of London

In general we are observing that demand for research from our industry partners is holding up well in the recession. In particular, our partners see R&D from Universities as being a way forward into new products when the recession ends, but are looking to lever public sector contributions to the cost.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

Royal Veterinary College

There are numerous gaps in provision in the bioscience and bioveterinary sectors. High quality responsive business training (rather than technical training) for technically and/or clinically competent bioscientists, vets, vet nurses etc. remains a neglected area.

D. Partnerships and networking

City University

City held an evening event with the Institute of Directors for 50 members and leading academics on how to make use of Non Executive Directors in a recession.

Thames Valley University

TVU has established a dedicated outward facing unit 'Future Skills' as part of an £8m HEFCE funded initiative to address the needs of the business community in West London and Berkshire. Future Skills has developed a network of partnerships with local agencies who are already proactive with the business community. We have implemented partnerships through outreach centres such as Action Acton and Park Royal Workforce. We have recently engaged with the Chambers of Commerce in West London. One project specifically working with the self employed is the FDA Enterprise & Entrepreneurship which deals primarily with the self-employed mainly through Heathrow City Partnership & Brent Business Ventures.

Middlesex University

The [MODNet programme](#) for work-based learning is a very significant response from Middlesex to regional skills needs, and has involved consultation with a wide range of skills partners (including LDA) through the regional LLN. The MODNet network will work through, and with, a range of skills brokers (including T2G) and regional partners (including private sector providers and FE college partners) to deliver this new programme of work.

Section E. Other

University of East London

The lack of activity amongst high street banks towards debt-financing continues to be a major problem that does not appear to have been helped by the recent injections of liquidity into the banking system.

Case study: A incubator centre tenant in the environmental technology sector has a newly launched product (developed using University expertise and RDA funding) and is successfully generating sales interest but is severely hampered in fulfilling orders due to a lack of working capital to finance manufacturing (despite firm orders from blue-chip companies). It is frustrating that HSBC is unable to agree to finance and we are now approaching Barclays.

Royal Veterinary College

Through our close involvement with the London Bioscience Innovation Centre (owned by RVC) we are well aware of the need to support bioscience sector companies who are struggling to access fresh venture capital due to lack of liquidity in the financial markets.

University of Westminster

Westminster Enterprise Entity, the University's Enterprise Club, develops and support students' and graduates' entrepreneurial interest and abilities. It has recruited over 50 members in various stages of setting up their own business. The WestEE social networking site has 300 members. Events like the Start your Own Business workshop, the Business Combat competition and Speed Networking have contributed to the development of enterprise skills and stronger networks.

Name of regional association:
Universities for the North East (UNIS4NE)

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

We have identified 17 new schemes or programmes being introduced by the Region's Universities under the auspices of the ECIF alongside the Newcastle College Student Internship Scheme. In addition there are 7 additional or re-purposed schemes.

Of these 10 address newly or potentially redundant individuals or workforce development; 8 address business needs and 5 address internships or post-graduation support. One addresses all categories.

Case study 1 – Focusing on individuals – Durham University – The Durham Industrial Bridging Fellowship Scheme

This is a flexible, rapid-response partnership with regional industry aimed at both mitigating *and* taking advantage of the present economic downturn. Using selected employees with recently-released resources of time to work with university teams in the short to medium term.

The project will prepare the company with new technology, characterisation tools and business, management and finance skills to ready the enterprise for emergence from the recession with a competitive advantage.

The broad scheme might be viewed as a "reverse Knowledge Transfer Partnership" as it places people from industry into HE to the mutual benefit of both HE and the private sector.

The scheme will target regional employees who are at risk of redundancy or short-time working, or are recently unemployed, optimised to match science, technology and business opportunities in the University and industry. Activity is flexible and will be between 3 to 12 months per individual.

Case study 2 – Focusing on individuals – University of Sunderland - Associate & Fellowship Scheme.

The associate and fellowship programme will offer a managed package of experience and support to unemployed individuals. It will offer individuals an opportunity to be part of a group of associates/fellows of the University and provide a supported approach to career planning and knowledge and skills development, to position them to secure the most appropriate employment in the future.

Case study 3 – Focusing on businesses – Northumbria University – Business Support Solutions

The project is targeted at a range of regional businesses reliant on their graduate and higher skill workforce and who are in danger in the immediate future of not being able to sustain and refresh this to support their future development and growth. The project will provide 70 places on flexible post-graduate programmes for recent graduate recruits in the Construction/Property, Legal Services and Transport Sectors and 15 Diplomas in Management for the Financial Services sector.

Case study 4 – Focusing on sectors – Teesside University – Bridging Programme for Modern Apprentices in the Process Industry.

This programme will provide opportunities for 20 people to strengthen their employability and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to progress to a Foundation Degree. This has been delivered with help from both COGENT and the NE Process Industries Cluster (NEPIC).

B. Increased demand for existing activity

Whilst most partners report declining demand there are exceptions. There is evidence of increasing demand for graduate placements and Collaborative Innovation Partnerships (effectively sKTPs). Understandably, in a declining labour market, graduates are themselves contributing to this however business demand is also increasing.

One scheme which appears to have stimulated significant demand is the Newcastle University Business Vouchers Scheme (Case study 5 below). The recently launched scheme has already received almost 80 applications and 36 grants have already been awarded.

Case study 5 – Newcastle University – Business Vouchers

The Newcastle University Business Voucher Scheme is part of the University's ten-step action plan to help boost the North East regional economy.

Newcastle University will provide a voucher worth up to £5000 to small and medium-sized businesses and organisations, which can be redeemed against a wide range of University provided activities and services.

The voucher is available to eligible organisations and is funded by the University directly, from its savings on the recent decrease in the VAT rate. The Scheme will run from 1st February 2009.

The range of services include: consultancy and commercial services; commercial research; accredited and non-accredited training courses; analytical and testing services; product design and development, R&D ; electronics and electrical development services; manufacturing - processes, quality, design and management; life sciences and environmental services; and business & management services.

This would lead to the conclusion that the national Business Link Innovation Voucher Scheme is likely to help stimulate demand. Our experience indicates that the scheme is rather slow to come into effect with many delays in applications from our referred clients. We would therefore urge that the Business Links franchises do everything in their power to accelerate and implement this scheme.

Case Study 6 – University of Sunderland - Careers & Employability Services

In response to increasing demand this ECIF project will provide additional support to undergraduate students and recently qualified graduates through themed packages via the University's careers and employability services. This will include: an enhanced careers & employability service to all current students, recent graduates, associates/fellows and alumni; study support for those on the Associate and Fellowship programmes and an expansion of the University's Business Bridge programme providing a range of placement opportunities for student and graduates with regional companies.

Whilst not an initiative necessarily introduced by the partners themselves directly in response to the downturn we have received reports that there is increased demand from contractors seeking opportunities to tender for capital works. The same is true of the level of interest being shown by external consultants seeking to be appointed to assist in the design, specification and management of capital programmes. This at least indicates that the HEFCE strategy of accelerating capital programme funding is likely to achieve the desired effect.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

Most partners report falling demand for consultancy services –particularly where these are non-subsidised and specifically in the manufacturing sector.

Using data from Knowledge House, the regional business facing service, as a proxy to estimate the decline in demand, the incoming enquiry rate is 40% down over the last 6 months compared with the same period for the previous year. The figures are 53% down on the same period in 2007.

Incoming enquiries are a leading indicator of activity. Income generation is down 67% however we would observe that this is a lagging indicator, indeed some partners have reported increased income, and it is likely to be several months before the comparative income figures could be considered to be robust.

We have not yet identified any specific gaps in provision specific to the downturn. Clearly we are aware however of potential skills shortfalls in key regional strategic industries for example technical skills in the process industries (see, for example, Case study 4).

Case study 7 – the NE HLS Pathfinder

The demand for training programme development funds from the NE HLS Pathfinder is now showing some interesting patterns. Demand from the private sector has been lower than expected, most especially in the later rounds of development fund applications. Conversely demand from the public sector (LAs and the NHS) has been much higher than anticipated.

Of the total applications for development funds almost half (44%) are from the public sector.

One of the key elements in business engagement is mitigating barriers sufficiently to facilitate the initial “conversation” with a potential client. This often entails offering a “product” which is sufficiently attractive to elicit interest. This conversation may identify a range of client issues or problems and HE solutions but is a critical first step.

The Newcastle University Business Vouchers Scheme (Case study 5) appears to have succeeded in this regard as indeed has the University of Sunderland Internship Programme. This ECIF supported Programme is already heavily over-subscribed by both companies and graduates.

Case study 8 – University of Sunderland internship Programme

The project will aim to place 30 individuals in 3 cohorts of 10 over the 18-month project period. Graduates will be recruited from across the University and individual projects will encompass science & technology, engineering, marketing, HR, finance, software application, design, journalism and law. The interns will work on a series of projects for businesses in a shared workspace in the university’s Business Gateway. Interns will remain with the scheme for 6-months or until they secure graduate level employment.

Clearly the fall in demand for graduates presents difficulties this year with the AGR predicting a 5.4% fall in graduate vacancies (up to 28% in the banking sector). Durham University Careers Service has produced a “Guide to Graduate Employment in a Recession” and given that this reduction in vacancies is leading to increased interest in post-graduate study Durham have taken further steps to offer support.

Case study 9 – Durham University – “Class of 2009” postgraduate scholarship scheme

Durham University has pledged £200,000 to help its graduates compete for jobs more effectively in a tougher economic climate. More than 100 top home and overseas students will be in line for a new £2,000 scholarship for a one year taught postgraduate course for October 2009 entry.

D. Partnerships and networking

Most observers (including the OECD) conclude that the NE Region is well networked – perhaps because of its relatively small size and population - and as a result partnerships and collaborative endeavours are not uncommon.

There are several major (primarily economic) initiatives in the Region involving partnerships between the HE, public and private sectors. Whilst not initiated specifically as a response to the downturn these are beginning to come on stream at a particularly propitious moment in the current context.

These are initiatives of potentially global or national significance and represent significant regional investments in science and technology including the Low Carbon Vehicle (LCV) Programme; the Design Network North and the Newcastle Science City.

Case study 10 – Newcastle Science City

This initiative is supported by Newcastle University, Newcastle City Council and One North East and forms part of the national Science Cities Programme. Economic impact and multiplier effects are anticipated through the investment in world-class science facilities and activity in key strategic disciplines. Its importance in the current context is that full development of the infrastructure and exploitation of its potential is to some extent dependent on private sector investment the absence of which could threaten its success. The founding partners have recently agreed to jointly support the first phase of this development in the hope that this will attract future private sector investment. Revenue activities continue unabated notably with the development and launch of the “Newcastle Innovation Machine”.

Many other organisations outwith the HE sector are introducing initiatives targeted at the down turn which involve the sector directly or indirectly. An example is the Leadership Enterprise Opportunity Programme due for imminent launch by NRG a private sector, Newcastle based, recruitment business.

Case study 11 – the Leadership Enterprise Opportunity programme

The intensive 4 week programme will help participants to analyse their skills and consider the opportunities available to them which could include starting their own business or moving into a new sector. The programme is accredited by the Universities of Northumbria and Teesside.

The LEO programme is supported by the CBI, the NE Chamber of Commerce and the Entrepreneurs Forum.

Clearly our Universities are also working closely with others, either to create new partnerships or re-focus existing arrangements:

Case study 12 - Teesside University and JobCentre Plus

Teesside University has an agreement with the local JobCentre Plus to ensure that their own vacancies are accessible to unemployed people. Furthermore the University has met with the local JC and agreed specific measures to be implemented throughout the economic downturn. For example the detailed sharing of market intelligence about imminent job losses and sectors in difficulty and also University representation on the JC’s Local Economic Forum.

Teesside University is also collaborating with Darlington Council on a bid to the Future Jobs Fund which will extend subsidised graduate placements for companies in the Darlington area.

Raising awareness of HE programmes is a vitally important component of the response to the downturn (and equally vital to the ongoing relationship with businesses). As a result of a meeting between Richard Lambert and the Vice-Chancellors at the end of 2008, Unis4ne, working with the regional CBI, have engaged external PR consultants to re-examine the priority needs of regional businesses and produce “user friendly” information on the HE offer and points of access.

This work enhances and extends the work we are already undertaking with the RDA and Business & Enterprise NE (the regional Business Link franchise) in connection with both the Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) and the ongoing issue of the relationship between HE and Business Link.

Unis4ne and its representatives from partner institutions have been heavily engaged with both the review of business support in the NE Region, resulting in the single regional Business Link franchise, and also the implementation of the BSSP outcomes. Two separate, but closely linked, activities are currently underway. Firstly, via our Knowledge House service, we are mapping the provision offered by the partner institutions against the “Solutions for Business” product portfolio. This will include the provision of more detailed supporting information available to Business Link staff via their “Service Knowledge Tool”. The second, associated, activity is a programme of joint training events and briefings for HE and BL staff.

E. Other

Perhaps the most relevant observation would be that our partner universities are responding to the current economic situation in a strategic manner and not simply implementing a range of new initiatives. This response does of course include specific initiatives, many of which are supported by the ECIF, but these are commonly part of broader strategies designed to maximise the contribution to the Region’s economic, cultural and social wellbeing many of which are being re-focused to address the present economic situation.

Moreover they are not doing this in isolation but are sharing information with each other and a range of other partners to help facilitate a co-ordinated response. An example would be the summary of ECIF supported activities from each of the partners (available on request) which they have agreed to share.

Case study 13 – Strategic planning – Newcastle University “10 point plan”

1. Make it easier for people in the region to work productively with the University as suppliers or clients
2. Secure hundreds of construction jobs by maintaining the University’s current £200m programme of investment in its campus.
3. Bring forward other significant capital projects
4. Accelerate the programming of maintenance and improvement works on our outdoor estate.
5. Invest in improvements to the energy efficiency of the University’s residential properties.
6. A business voucher scheme for small and medium-sized companies in the region

7. Arrange subsidised access to courses to help re-skill people who have been made redundant, and expand the University's curriculum provision to better meet the training and development needs of employees in regional companies.
8. Reduce average payment times to all suppliers by nine days.
9. Expansion of the University Career Service's successful Newcastle Work Experience scheme.
10. Expand our provision of free cultural and educational activities for the benefit of families on a tight budget.

Case study 14 – Strategic planning – Teesside University – “16 point plan”

The university's 16 measures to help businesses include halving invoice turnaround time to help suppliers with their cash flow, running future management master classes to help companies cope with the recession and offering generous bursaries to post-graduates and those new to higher education.

Case study 15 – Strategic investment – Northumbria University – Strategic Investment Fund

One of the biggest contributions that the University is making in academic year 08/09 that will mitigate some of the effects of the downturn to the regional economy is the three year £17.8 million *Strategic Investment Fund* and a major recruitment drive to attract 70 high quality academic staff to the North East, as part of the continuing development strategy of the University. This was launched in February and demonstrates a real commitment to the future growth and development of the University as an employer and a business, coupled with a determination to raise the performance standards of the organisation even higher.

F. Summary remarks

- Employer confidence in the region remains negative. The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey remains negative for Q3 2009 and a net employment outlook of minus 2% is reported. 5% of employers forecast increased headcount and 6% plan to reduce staff numbers (the balance anticipates no change). This represents an 8% decline since a year ago.
- Whilst there is little doubt that the downturn is indeed a global crisis this has been confirmed in a recent OECD report (June 2009) which reported that 34% of the 500 companies surveyed were planning to spend less on R&D as cash assets have diminished.
- The region's universities have mobilised quickly and strongly in response to the downturn as evidenced by the quality of the ECIF proposals and the subsequent awards.

- The response from the sector includes both strategic and specific plans and activities – frequently in collaboration with other partners from the public sector or private sector representative organisations.
- Well publicised and subsidised schemes targeting both businesses and individuals are proving extremely popular and some are already over subscribed.
- We are observing increased demand for graduate placement schemes (from both graduates and employers) including KTPs and shorter schemes such as Collaborative Innovation Partnerships and *ad hoc* programmes.
- Partners have reported increased interest from contractors and external consultants seeking opportunities relating to capital programmes
- We are experiencing a significant reduction in demand for consultancy and related services.
- Easy to access subsidised consultancy services appear to buck this trend and we believe that rapid and effective implementation of the Business Link Innovation Vouchers Scheme could have a positive impact
- We have not yet received quantitative reports however the reduction in graduate vacancies has increased demand for PG study and subsidised business placements or projects.



Name of regional association:

North West Universities Association (NWUA)

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

The universities in the North West have dedicated significant resource, both individually and collectively, to responding to the needs of the economic downturn. Activities recently announced include loyalty discount schemes for postgraduate study, employability training, business breakfasts and enhanced careers Information Advice and Guidance (IAG). This amounts to significant additional activity targeted at supporting businesses and new and old graduates in the economic downturn. The following case studies provide a snapshot of regional activity.

Graduate Plus

The North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA), in partnership with the North West Universities Association (NWUA), launched a graduate bursary scheme 'Graduate Plus' on 23rd June. The scheme offers graduate bursaries for students studying taught Masters courses relating to the region's growth sectors. 200 bursaries up to a value of £1250 will be allocated across the **15 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** of the North West.¹ The scheme is designed to retain talent in the region by offering an alternative to seeking employment in a depressed job market, up-skill the region's workforce in key sectors and align highly skilled graduates to growth sectors.

Talent@MMU

Manchester Metropolitan University has launched a new campaign to raise awareness amongst employers of the skills of its graduates, encourage more vacancies to be flagged directly to the university and facilitate work placements. A new website 'Talent@MMU' has been developed to serve as a one-stop shop for employers, graduates, students and staff. As part of the initiative, 'Talent Plus' has been developed in partnership with private sector business support and training provider Blue Orchid to provide graduates with a structured period of work experience up to 12 weeks, at no cost to the employer.² Across the university around 3,500 students are currently on placement in commerce, industry and the professions. The campaign is being promoted around campus, through e-marketing to employers and via the media. More information is available at: <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/talent>.



¹ University of Bolton, University of Central Lancashire, University of Chester, University of Cumbria, Edge Hill University, Lancaster University, The University of Liverpool, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, Liverpool John Moores University, The University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, The Open University in the North West, University of Salford, Royal Northern College of Music.

² Employers are expected to reimburse candidate travel costs.

WoW at Liverpool John Moores University

The **Liverpool John Moores University** Graduate Development Centre has launched 'Recession Buster 09' through its employer backed World of Work (WoW) programme to develop the employability skills of its graduates. Throughout the summer WoW Boot Camps will be delivered providing graduates with the opportunity to conduct audit and gap analysis on their existing employability skills, access IAG and provide specific support on CV and personal statement writing. Students are assigned a coach to guide them through the process which results in a WoW certificate. More information is available at: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/wow>.

LEAD Programme

On May 27th, NWDA launched the Leading Enterprise and Development (LEAD) programme following a successful pilot project at Lancaster University. The £9.5 million learning and development programme will be delivered by a network of providers to businesses in the region. **Manchester Metropolitan University**, the **University of Salford**, **Lancaster University**, the **University of Central Lancashire**, the **University of Liverpool**, and the **University of Cumbria** will all be learning providers. The programme is one of a package of business support announced by the NWDA in response to the current economic downturn.

B. Increased demand for existing activity

As would be expected in the economic downturn, demand for graduate careers services has increased. **Lancaster University's** Centre for Employability Enterprise and Careers reports that 3,135 'career information' enquiries have been received, an increase of 34% on this time last year. The recent 2009 DLHE survey also indicates that the number of students securing post graduate places has risen by approximately 8%. This may be because graduates are assuming that there is no point searching for employment in a depressed graduate labour market. The North West Heads of Careers Services Group has also reported an increase in student enquiries for work experience.



The University of Cumbria has reported an increase in the number of companies, across all size bands, sending their staff to the university for a wide range of part-time courses and training programmes. Many are exploiting the slow trading period to encourage their employees to update qualifications whilst excess capacity exists.



In the North West, **11 HEIs³** are designated knowledge providers for the **NWDA Innovation Voucher Scheme** which provides SMEs with a £3,000 grant to engage with the knowledge base. Demand for the scheme has increased with the second round of voucher allocations (12th January 2009 – 6th February 2009) oversubscribed by 85 businesses, compared to 25 businesses in the first round. A further increase in demand is expected for the latest round of voucher allocations between 6th April and 1st May 2009. More information is available at: <http://www.nwdabusinessfinance.co.uk/innovation-vouchers>.

³ 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.

In addition to considering the demand level for HEIs services it is also worth considering the impact of the economic downturn on *the way in which* services are developed. For example, HEFCE has strongly promoted employer engagement in the development of courses through the Higher Level Skills Pathfinders and the Employer Engagement programme. Does this appetite for engagement with the HEIs continue in the economic downturn? The NWDA funded **North West Higher Level Skills Partnership**⁴ demonstrates that, whilst employer engagement has not increased significantly, it has remained robust across all sectors (with a few isolated exceptions detailed in Section C below) and projects are confident that they will be able to recruit work based learners onto their programmes.



The recent sector panels assessing bids for development funding indicate that higher level skills are still firmly on the agenda for many businesses that recognise the importance of keeping staff highly trained to help their business survive and grow. Despite the economic downturn, HEIs have continued to secure employer support for the development of new provision across all seven sectors covered by the HLSP.⁵ However, there is evidence that HEIs now need to engage with businesses differently. In the past, businesses have demonstrated a willingness to come onto campus to sit on steering groups. In the context of the economic downturn, HEIs are required to be increasingly flexible, going out to employers to engage on a one to one basis to fit in with increasing time constraints.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

Whilst the **North West HLSP** has provided evidence for robust business demand for higher level skills across all of its sectors (as described in Section B above) there is isolated evidence of declining demand in some sub-sectors. For example, within the construction sector, new build housing is suffering and some students working for employers in this area have failed to complete HLSP courses due to being made redundant. However, other construction sub-sectors are not suffering to the same extent with robust employer interest in HLSP courses being developed relating to building services engineering and sustainable buildings.

The University of Chester, alongside local authorities in Cheshire and Warrington, has identified the lack of support for underemployed graduates as a gap in existing activity. With early indications that a fall in graduate level vacancies will increase the number of graduates beginning their careers through 'temping' and casual work there will be a growing need to support these individuals to utilise their talent and potential through progression to graduate level employment. If graduates remain in 'under-skilled' jobs the value for money of educating them to a high level is undermined and the labour market for lower skilled jobs remains congested.



D. Partnerships and networking

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 HE sector has been represented in both strategic and political processes through joint working with partners including the NWDA, the Joint

⁴ An extension to the HEFCE funded Higher Level Skills Partnership which ran from 2007 – 2009. For more information on the HLSP go to www.nwua.ac.uk/HLSP

⁵ Advanced Engineering and Materials, Business & Professional Services, Construction, Creative & Digital, Energy and Environmental Technologies and Food & Drink.

Economic Commission, Jobcentre Plus and the Regional Skills and Employment Board. Some key case studies of collective HEI engagement are presented below.

HLSP Redundancy Response Fund

NWUA (on behalf of 14 NW HEIs) has agreed with NWDA that £250,000 of the NWDA funding provided for the development of new higher level skills provision will be used to provide a HLSP Redundancy Response Fund. The fund will be used to commission the development of CPD provision to meet the needs of those at risk of redundancy, those recently made redundant and new graduates unable to find employment. The commissioning panel includes delegates from the

Trade Union Congress, unionlearn, Jobcentre Plus, NWDA, the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, Train to Gain, the Regional Skills and Employment Board and the Chambers of Commerce. NWUA is currently working with partners to ensure that the scheme will effectively dovetail with the Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Fund, the LSC Response to Redundancy Programme and the NWDA Leadership and Management Fund. The possibility of extending the project with the European Social Fund is also being explored.

NW Heads of Careers Services – Jobcentre Plus

The NW Heads of Careers Services Group, which includes the Heads of Careers Services from all 15 NW HEIs, has developed a joint working protocol with NWUA and Jobcentre Plus to maximise joint working specifically in relation to the economic downturn. The protocol includes a commitment to sharing information of mutual relevance and establishes new communication channels between sub-regional Jobcentre Plus External Relations Managers and their closest HEI careers services.

Joint Economic Commission

NWUA prepared a paper for the Regional Joint Economic Commission (JEC), the organisation convened to help steer the North West through the economic downturn. Presented by NWUA Chair, Professor Tim Wheeler, at its meeting on 5th May, the paper provided information on current university responses to the economic downturn and highlighted the areas in which the HE sector can contribute with demonstrable economic impact. Limitations to maximising the HE response were also highlighted and the JEC will be invited to comment on action that might be taken to remove or reduce those limitations identified. At this meeting GONW requested two summary documents outlining NW HEIs activities in areas relating to the digital & creative and renewable energy sectors. Intended for the Regional Minister and the Regional Director of GONW, all NWUA members have been given the opportunity to comment and provide content for these papers.

Regional Skills and Employment Board

NWUA is a member of the Regional Skills and Employment Board's (RSEB) Regional Employability Group and has provided input into the NW Joint Regional Response Action Plan for the Regional Response to the Economic Downturn. NWUA is leading on 11 actions and is currently preparing a paper on the region's 'Graduate Offer' with a view to identifying gaps and opportunities for joint working. All NWUA members have been given the opportunity to comment and provide content for these papers.

E. Other

In the North West, the HE sector workforce is around 36,000 making it a significant regional employer. As such, the HEIs can have a significant impact on the worklessness and workforce skills agendas in their

capacities as employers. A significant amount of work is being done to ensure that the region's universities are engaged in this agenda.

HEIs as Employers

NWUA represents the HE sector on the Public Sector Apprenticeships Group which has been established to promote and co-ordinate the uptake of **Modern Apprenticeships** in the public sector. The HE sector already employs around 40 apprentices and has committed to increasing the number it hosts. The North West Heads of Human Resources Group⁶ is now taking this forward with an Apprenticeship Working Group. A representative from the National Apprenticeship Service is attending the next meeting of the group to explore different models for hosting Apprentices within the HEI workforce.

The North West Heads of Human Resources Group will also explore the potential for developing bids for the Department for Work and Pensions' **Future Jobs Fund**. NWUA promoted the potential opportunity of the fund following a special meeting of the RSEB Regional Employability Group meeting. **The University of Cumbria** has expressed an interest in the fund and is now working with the Cumbria Vision and local authorities to develop a collaborative sub-regional bid.

The **Manchester City South Partnership**, comprising Manchester City Council, **The University of Manchester**, **Manchester Metropolitan University** and the Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, is also focusing on improving employment prospects for local people. The Partnership, which was established to maximise the advantages gained through partners' investments in the Oxford Road area of Manchester, has signed a Local Employment Plan with the Department of Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus. The plan will enable the partners to target some of central Manchester's unemployment hotspots and assist local job seekers into work.



F. Summary remarks

The North West's universities have recognised the need to develop new initiatives in response to the economic downturn. They are doing this both individually and collectively in consortia of varying sizes, including several projects engaging all 15 HEIs in the region. Similarly, projects are being developed in response to local need and also in response to regional and national initiatives. The result is a complex picture of support including activities to:

- Maximise graduate employment
- Maintain and enhance the HE contribution to economic development both in the current economic climate and in preparation for the economic recovery
- Respond to the higher level skills needs of those in work or seeking employment
- As major employers, purchasers and investors in the region, take steps to mitigate the effects of the down turn.

⁶ The North West Heads of HR Group is comprised of the Head of HR for each of the region's 15 universities.

The picture across the region is equally complex with multiple stakeholders developing multiple initiatives in response to the economic downturn. Through the Joint Economic Commission and the Regional Skills and Employment Board the North West has committed to developing a highly integrated regional response to the economic downturn. The challenge for the HE sector is to ensure that their activities are effectively aligned with this.

HEIs individually, and collectively through the NWUA, are building upon well established relationships with regional partners to ensure that these links are made. NWUA is currently working closely with regional agencies including Jobcentre Plus, Business Link North West, NWDA, the LSC, unionlearn, the TUC, Chambers of Commerce, the CBI and the Sector Skills Councils to ensure that new initiatives developed by the North West's universities are well aligned. These strong partnerships, which already existed in the region, have been a major factor in facilitating a rapid response by the HE sector thereby maximising its response to the economic downturn.

**Name of Higher Education Regional Association:
Higher Education South East (HESE)**

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

1. Examples of new/re-purposed schemes to address potentially or newly redundant people/communities or skill/workforce development needs

In many sectors, for example the financial services sector, the workforce is decreasing and key employees are made redundant by financial institutions that find it difficult to justify the existence of entire departments within their organisations let alone justify training budgets. Indeed, many businesses are focusing on mandatory training only. In the current climate, the University of Surrey's School of Management's new MSc in International Financial Management has already enrolled 50 students for September. This figure is well above the expected recruitment for the first intake. With low staff turnover and a freeze on staff recruitment, the following case studies highlight a range of support for unemployed graduates and skills development for the unemployed:

- The University of Brighton in partnership with the agency "Employer Engagement" will deliver a support programme for unemployed graduates and executives from June until 25th September.

- Southampton Solent University under the "Solent Skills Development Zone" (SSDZ) initiative (to address local skills deficits) has two strands of activity focussed on the newly unemployed and long-term workless. The intention is to ease pathways into work and/or education through partnership between major public sector employers, the City Council, the PCT, Job Centre Plus, the LSC and city-based voluntary organisations (such as the Wheatsheaf Trust)

- The University of Winchester in partnership with Community Action Hampshire is pioneering a work placement scheme to help support the management of the not for profit sector organisations during the economic downturn. This project is funded under the HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF). It will enable these organisations to benefit from the skills of new graduates.

2. Examples of new/re-purposed schemes to address business needs

Where businesses are continuing to invest in training they are looking to meet very specific business needs. Schemes that include bite sized learning which is bespoke to the needs of the business and learning to support the growth and/or diversification of the business. For example:

i. ProfitNet and the Collaborative Training Centre at the University of Brighton is offering a suite of ProfitNet workshops ("Supporting your thinking in tough times") available to both ProfitNet members and the wider SME community across Sussex with the aim of helping businesses up skill to combat the economic downturn. Running from May until November topics covered include – "Essential Skills for maintenance and growth in a challenging environment" – 2 day workshop; "How to survive the recession without going bust" – 1 day workshop; "Why are your competitors getting in the paper"; "Steering your

brand in difficult times” – interactive workshop; Competitor Intelligence – structured course; and “Identifying and winning new business “ – workshop. The full programme is available to download from the ProfitNet website: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/profitnet/>

ii. Southampton Solent University has developed a new range of Six Sigma Quality Management programmes and Lean Manufacturing/Lean Management Training courses for companies to update their residual skills base. Also, in collaboration with the SEEDA funded Marine South East Sector Consortia the University has expanded its range of CAD and CAD/CAM short courses targeting smaller marine companies

iii. Other workshops and breakfast seminars include:

- a. University of Kent “Leadership for Growth and Performance 10/06/2009
- b. University of Sussex “Start up and survive in an economic downturn 25/06/2009
- c. University of Portsmouth Business School – Sales Management Breakfast Seminar
- d. University of Greenwich Business School – Growth for Troubled Times.
- e. Royal Holloway Business Breakfast ‘Survival in Challenging Times’ – March 2009. 38 attendees
- f. Royal Holloway one to one sessions on ‘Success in Challenging Times’ – Feb 09 – 5 attendees

(Total approx number launched/re-purposed since last report, if known:)

3. Number of new/re-purposed internship schemes or other post-graduation support

- The University of Brighton’s Careers Centre and Alumni department working in partnership to provide expanded careers service for unemployed and underemployed graduates from University of Brighton. In addition, 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. The University’s of Brighton’s Bee Purple service provides free Intensive Business Start Up courses for final year students and graduates.

- Royal Holloway, University of London’s Careers Service provides a subsidised aftercare service called GradClub. Including support for graduates for two years after they finish; access to the numerous employers who are targeting RHUL graduates.

GradClub information is available at <http://www.gradclub.co.uk/>

- Southampton Solent University is offering over 25 internships in a variety of departments and roles. Each of the interns will be supported in studying for a postgraduate or professional qualification on a fee-waiver basis.

- Graduate Jobs Southampton an online recruitment website has expanded its membership to include the University of Winchester. It is funded via the Southampton Partnership from SEEDA

B. Increased demand for existing activity

4. Evidence of increased demand for schemes addressing newly or potentially redundant, re-skilling needs or workforce development and graduate internships

i. University of Surrey states that application rates continue to be strong (up to 13.5%) suggesting individuals who are able, are using the economic downturn to gain skills/up-skills or re-skill.

ii. Royal Holloway reports that graduates have been making good use of its post-finals service and there is not yet any significant evidence of job market difficulty.

5. Evidence of increased demand for schemes addressing business needs in the economic downturn

- Wired Wessex run by the University of Winchester has registered a large increase in attendees at its networking events which have been focused on topics related to the recession and how to survive it.

- The Consortium of Business Link providers in the South East have found that the take up of businesses of simple, added value services available from SE universities is generally positive. In the last 4 months, a pilot scheme in SE has enabled 520 SMEs to obtain a free website review from students. The placement of Southampton- based PhD students in entrepreneurial businesses is progressing smoothly.

- Anecdotally, the Business Link Consortium found that more formal offerings such as KTPs has seen a significant drop in interest. This is backed by evidence that shows that SMEs have been facing falling demand and high input costs over the past year. This has had a significant impact on cashflow in the South East. The shorter KTP has been less obviously affected. Finally, some HEI graduate recruitment programmes are advising of quiet times and are diversifying into other areas to gain business.

- SEEDA is helping companies to access the expertise of the knowledge base through the promotion of the innovation voucher scheme via the Harwell Science and Innovation campus.

- The University of Surrey has seen a particular interest in the University's EPSRC Knowledge Transfer Account (which aims to increase collaboration with business).

- Anecdotal evidence from JCP SE suggests that requests for higher level short courses or workshops from SE universities are increasing. In recent months people from higher skilled occupations have accounted for a growing proportion for new JSA claimants in the South East, reflecting that fact that all sectors of the economy are affected by this recession. Next Steps advisers are reporting increased interest in HE but the advisers are limited to only 2 half sessions with clients so are restricted to the amount of in-depth support they can provide to each client.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

6. Please summarise any schemes which are experiencing rapidly falling demand and/or gaps in activity that have been identified by stakeholders (e.g. HEIs themselves or partners)

Short commentary:

The economic downturn has had some impact on the Surrey Research Park, for example, the Surrey Technology Centre has seen 5 companies impacted by the current economic climate over the past 5 months. Two of those left the centre but three have been given additional support by the University, helping them to temporarily downsize and move into the University's SETsquared Grow on Incubator. However, the University is now beginning to see new companies approaching it and the SETsquared facility in particular is doing well. The SETsquared business incubation unit has seen an increased membership over the past 5 months, investment is also still available, and with the interest rate being so low and the property market reducing Angels and Investors are investing their money into businesses.

Selective Sector Skills Councils report recognition from their sectors of the importance of skills needs, but the current economic uncertainty is preventing any commitment from the employer. Additionally the employer needs to manage the potentially raised expectation of the employee (Rob Knowles SEMTA)

D. Partnerships and networking

7. Please summarise any increased working between HEIs and JobCentre Plus and/or with companies on graduate internships, graduate recruitment etc?

Royal Holloway as part of its post-finals programme have organised:

- On-campus event with 11 employers for international students
- On campus event with recruitment consultancies offering temporary work opportunities for graduates
- 20 Employer representatives are attending its annual networking lunch

Actively targeting a wider range of employers for a major autumn careers fair to seeking to increase the representation of science and technical jobs.

The Creative Graduate database provides access to all relevant information and contacts for SE graduates and creative businesses alike. It promotes opportunities for recent graduates and creative businesses to find mutually beneficial routes to employment. It is funded by the South East Media Network and supported by most HESE members.

Creative Graduate and Intern R&D database <http://www.stimulatingcreativegraduates.co.uk/index.html>

8. Please summarise any increased working between HEIs, RDA Skills, JobCentre Plus and other skills partners on schemes for the newly or potentially redundant people/communities and to meet skills/workforce development needs in the downturn?

SEEDA regional careers road shows focused on STEM subject areas. In particular, focuses on graduates who have been made redundant or who are currently in a role that does not use their STEM degree subject specialism. The road shows will look to promote opportunities from regional STEM companies to final year students in universities in the region via their Careers Services.

SE Universities participating:

University of Brighton – 3/06/2009:

University of Sussex; University of Brighton; University of Chichester

University of Southampton – 16th June 2009

University of Southampton; Southampton Solent University; University of Portsmouth; University of Winchester

University of Reading- 17th June 2009

University of Reading; TVU; Oxford Brookes; Oxford University; Bucks New University; Kingston University; University of Surrey

Open University; Royal Holloway; The University of Greenwich

With SEEDA and First Moves publications the University of Brighton's Careers Centre has produced a directory of employers, including large and SME, in the south east who are willing to be included as a graduate employer. All directories will be made available to graduates seeking work. This was financed by a consortium of universities with support from SEEDA.

SEEDA is currently working with Winchester University to develop a 'HE Action Plan' for Basingstoke.

9. Please summarise any increased working between HEIs and RDAs/Business Links and other business support and innovation partners on schemes for businesses in the economic downturn? Please also mention any work with the self-employed or supporting self-employment.

In order to prepare for the eventual upturn, SEEDA is increasingly refocusing its projects and programmes around the core theme of productivity gain.

Changes to business support include the SEEDA funded South East Business Growth and Innovation Network. Innovation and Growth Teams (IGTs) will provide support to high technology growth companies. The new programme is designed to help start-ups, early stage and businesses with high growth potential to succeed, and it is expected that these businesses will be among those that that will help drive the economy out of the recession.

South East Universities form an integral part of IGTs. The first 4 IGTs cover the areas below:

West Surrey and North East Hampshire

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

Berkshire and Basingstoke

South and Mid Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Phase 2 will cover

Oxfordshire,

Kent and Medway,

East Surrey and West Sussex,

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

SEEDA has invested in infrastructure with a strong economic growth dimension to it for example the Canterbury Innovation Centre based at the University of Kent which is due to open in October 2009.

10. Any other significant regional events, activities or promotions focused on economic downturn?

Closer working with local government partners reflecting the new regional architecture in the South East region.

University of Surrey: A report, funded by the Guildford Borough Council and the University's Research Park on the economic and social impact on the Guildford Borough geographical area is due to be released shortly. The report will assist the Borough and the University in:

- Developing appropriate guiding principles and take stock of the local economy
- Reviewing the Borough's economic development opportunities and constraints
- Identifying economic development objectives
- Identifying action plans that could be activated to enhance economic prospects
- Preparing a Tourism Development Plan
- Preparing the Economic Development Strategy for the Borough

SEEDA, through the Sussex Area Team, is working closely with the University of Chichester, LSC, West Sussex County Council and other partners across the West Sussex Coastal area to redevelop the University of Chichester's campus. This redevelopment will support the wider regeneration opportunities for Coastal West Sussex as well as enabling the University to overhaul its curriculum and be much more responsive to the needs of business and resident communities.

E. Other

Many SE universities continue to provide policy advice regarding the post-recession recovery:

1. University of Surrey Press release: "Recession must make us question relentless pursuit of growth and sustainable development.
2. University of Kent press release: "Backing Kent campaign" supporting a collective approach with Business Link, SEEDA, the local Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses to the economic downturn
3. University of Brighton press release: "Surviving the recession"
4. University of Reading, Henley Business School: Series of papers on the economic downturn by academics.

**Name of regional association:
Yorkshire Universities**

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

Universities in the region are rapidly responding to the needs of businesses and individuals during the economic recession primarily through the development and expansion of their business expertise, short course provision and professional development opportunities. The HE sector is working in partnership with the regional development agency Yorkshire Forward (YF), Business Link Yorkshire (BLY), Job Centre Plus and the LSC to ensure that the HE offer is aligned with, and adds value to other recession response services.

These developments are in addition to the university-led Economic Challenge Investment (ECIF) Programmes which have been match funded by the region's development agency Yorkshire Forward to maximise the programmes' reach and impact.

Marketing and delivery of the higher education offer by universities is frequently being framed within the context of the recession and the need to strengthen business resilience and enhance individuals' employability skills. By way of example, **Sheffield Hallam University's** recent open evening for part-time education was marketed as an opportunity for individuals to improve their skills and qualifications to "beat the credit crunch" and "as one way for people to keep up with the competition".

York St. John University Business School has adopted the theme 'Surviving and Thriving in a Changing World' in its 'Learning Through Business Leaders' seminars aimed at managers of small businesses in the York area and wider region; and also its 'Top Team Workshops' series funded by the European Social Fund and the Learning and Skills Council. Both courses have adopted this theme to explore how well positioned a business is in times of economic uncertainty both nationally and globally. The courses have benefited each of their participants, many of whom have been able to recognise and develop a new direction which will successfully aid their businesses in the future.

Higher education institutions delivering teacher training are promoting their provision to unemployed professionals seeking opportunities to retrain in a new career. Leeds Trinity & All Saints recently hosted a special city centre drop-in session to explain ways of gaining the requisite qualifications to teach secondary maths. The session was open to all interested people but was also marketed as a re-training opportunity for financial industry workers concerned about their job security in the current economic climate.

B. Increased demand for existing activity

Feedback from the Yorkshire Forward funded Regional Yorkshire Graduate Scheme reported in the previous HE Barometer (April 2009) indicates that there is strong demand from businesses and graduates for the development of new internship opportunities in the region. Both large and SME employers are interested in the internship programme for differing reasons. Large employers are viewing the internship

programme offer as an excellent opportunity to access graduate talent without having to increase their company headcount which is often a common business preoccupation during a recession. For SMEs, the support framework for the internship programme along with the kudos gained from participating in a regional graduate scheme is proving particularly attractive.

At an individual institutional level, universities in the region are also responding to the increased demand for graduate internship opportunities through the development of work placements with university alumni for new and recent graduates.

University careers services are experiencing a huge increase in demand from students and graduates for careers advice, information and guidance, support for application and job seeking. **The University of Leeds** has experienced 21% increase in students and graduates seeking careers support in addition to a huge increase in demand from the previous year. To respond to this demand, they have reconfigured their careers service resources to provide a front-end diagnostic interview for all students and graduates accessing the careers service ensuring that there is a fast and streamlined response to need and early signposting to relevant resources and support.

The University of Huddersfield is setting up summer workshop sessions providing students with coaching on networking skills, CV and application letter writing and interview technique. The aim of the workshops is to boost the employment chances of former students who are yet to secure graduate-level employment. The workshops will be aimed at this year's graduates – on the grounds that they are the ones who are bearing the full brunt of the recession. But the longer-term aim is to extend the concept to students who have graduated over the past three years.

The annual Yorkshire Careers Fair hosted this year at the University of Leeds provided an extra advice zone this year, staffed by careers advisers from the Universities of Leeds, Bradford, Leeds Metropolitan, Huddersfield, Sheffield and Leeds Trinity. Attendees were able to drop by and find out how they could get the most from the event itself, and took part in role play activities to help maximise their chances of making a good impression when they talked to prospective employers.

The number of employers exhibiting at the event was 96, a slight decrease on the previous year's employer exhibit number of 108.

Careers Services across the region are also anticipating the effects of a 'deferral bubble' being created for 2010 in which demand for careers support will continue to grow and the number of graduate employment opportunities available on the 'open market' will continue to decrease. A huge number of students graduating this year are opting to defer their job seeking and to continue onto one-year master programmes. Many professional firms recruiting graduates are also choosing to delay the start dates for these graduate schemes until next autumn which will mean that there is likely to be fewer places available on these schemes for next year's cohort of graduates.

C. Fall in demand/gaps in existing activity

As reported in the previous section, there is strong demand for graduate internship opportunities from employers and students and recent graduates in the region. The regional development agency Yorkshire Forward have committed an initial first funding phase for the Yorkshire Graduate Scheme to support the

implementation of the infrastructure elements of the project. A second phase of funding from Yorkshire Forward is anticipated for August to support the scheme to be scaled up quickly and effectively. The scheme has the potential to offer practical solutions that provide help in the current difficult economic climate and that will also offer long-term legacy benefits to graduates, employers and the economy.

D. Partnerships and networking

Responding to the recession:

Yorkshire Universities is connecting with organisations and other intermediaries leading on, and involved in delivering services responding to the recession. Our main aim is to ensure that the higher education (HE) offer is understood and fully integrated within the various referral points in the job seeker customer journey. Yorkshire Universities has met with the regional external relations manager for Job Centre Plus (JCP) to explore opportunities to integrate the contribution from the HE sector in helping businesses and individuals facing redundancy. Some early pragmatic steps have been identified to raise awareness amongst JCP District Managers of the HE response, funded by ECIF, and to support local relationships with individual higher education institutions (HEIs). We have discussed some further segmentation of claimant data to identify the impact of the recession on advanced professionals to support better integration of the HE offer as part of the referral route for graduates and job seekers seeking professional and graduate level vacancies.

We have also sought to raise the level of understanding of the HE response to the recession at various regional information and consultation events and have made linkages with other collaborative activity being taken forward by Yorkshire Forward, Next Step Yorkshire and Humber provision and the redundancy rapid response activity commissioned by the LSC.

Working with business:

Plans are in development with the CBI to bring together university academics involved in research, knowledge transfer and consultancy with employer members of the CBI to explore ways in which the higher education offer can be better understood and marketed to business. Findings from this forum could potentially be fed into ECIF programme delivery and the development of an ECIF Programmes Directory to be used by intermediaries for referral and sign posting purposes.

As reported in the previous HE Barometer (April 2009), Yorkshire Universities regularly meets with Yorkshire Forward and with Business Link Yorkshire (BLY) colleagues to further the strategic partnership and to maximise opportunities to align and connect effectively with the HE offer to business. HEIs in the region are building on their employer links and partnerships to encourage business take-up of the innovation vouchers scheme.

The University of Leeds recently held an event to bring researchers, business executives and business consultants together to encourage businesses to come forward and make links with the university's academic expertise. The aim of the event was to discuss how the Business Link voucher scheme could be put to best use and to promote links between the University of Leeds and industry to make the institution's research more accessible and beneficial for local businesses. A team of business consultants were on hand at the event to provide information on how to win research and development funding and to discuss any specific employer queries.

Supporting enterprise:

Yorkshire Universities will be developing some joint activities around awareness raising amongst BLY advisors to promote HE entrepreneurship and enterprise initiatives, specifically to ensure that student and graduate entrepreneurs can access the range of advice and services available from BLY.

E. Other

There is a need to increase the level of understanding of the breadth and scope of the HE offer for supporting businesses and individuals through the recession with stakeholders and other intermediaries delivering careers advice, IAG, personal development and training; and job seeking support. A key challenge for the HERA has been ensuring that the HE contribution is fully integrated within the overall support and referral framework for responding to the recession so that it is aligned with, and adds value to other provision. The speed with which policy initiatives have been developed to respond to the needs of the recession has meant that the 'joining up' of the HE contribution with other services and support has often been initiated at a later stage.

Another continuing challenge for the HE sector is to fully explore ways in which academic expertise and knowledge can be made more accessible to businesses and in particular to SMEs. The HERA's strategic partnership with Yorkshire Forward and BLY's innovation vouchers and specialists will support HE business collaboration but more needs to be done by the sector to improve promotion and understanding of its offer among employers in the region.

Universities play important economic, social and cultural roles within their local and regional communities and cities. Two examples of how universities in the region are engaging with their communities during the recession are provided by Sheffield Hallam and the University of Bradford.

Sheffield Hallam University in partnership with The Moor, one of Sheffield's most popular retail areas has initiated a project which will bring forward an exciting creative exhibition to shopping units left vacant due to the effects of the recession. Over the coming months, students from creative courses at Sheffield Hallam - graphics, fine art and photography - will make the most of vacant units on The Moor, using branded window space for displays and exhibitions to create a lively and creative street scene. The project is an excellent opportunity for students to showcase their work and to counter the negative effect the empty retail units have on the public's perception of business security and safety.

The University of Bradford has invested £200,000 in a range of scholarships for students starting in September 2009, which aims to help their finances in the current economic climate. The University of Bradford will be offering several different types of scholarships that students will benefit from including the 'University of Bradford Investing in Community and Excellence Scholarships', which will award £1,500 a year to students who have made outstanding achievements in sport, the arts, volunteering, enterprise and the environment. These scholarships will reward students for achievements that provide a broader contribution to the community.

F. Summary remarks

- The rapid roll-out of national interventions in response to the recession (e.g. the national internship scheme) must be aligned with regional and local responses to ensure simplification at point of access.
- HE sector engagement with business representative bodies must be strengthened to tackle the low level of understanding of the sector and its contribution to supporting the economy and providing support for individuals and small businesses affected by the economic downturn. More specifically, the sector must focus on clarifying its offer to the market to help businesses access academic expertise, knowledge and other opportunities for professional development and building business resilience.
- The impact of graduates becoming 'under-employed' in the recession and the associated impact of displacing others from the labour market must be considered in terms of how we develop strategies and interventions which improve graduate utility and retention and tackle issues relating to unemployment and worklessness in the region.
- A flexible and responsive part-time fee structure will be central to supporting workforce development and to keeping people in employment.
- It is important that we do not lose sight of the widening participation agenda at a time when funding restrictions and a cap on additional student numbers is proving hugely challenging for the HE sector and its response to meeting the increase in demand for higher education.