

**Title:**

**Creative Entrepreneurship: *harnessing creative intellect to enhance employability***

**Summary:**

The case study outlines the outcomes and impact of a newly designed, innovative entrepreneurship module. The module provides a blueprint for harnessing creative intellect to enhance employability. It is underpinned with pedagogy and maps to the Five and Fifty Plan. The module connects design to tangible commercial outcomes and provides students with the opportunity to test these concurrently in the real-world, in real-time. It further provides interactive learning methodologies to enable students to develop and deliver entrepreneurial approaches to enterprise across the creative industries. It has been running for two years and has demonstrated significant impact and student success nationally each year.

Wider benefits include raising students' aspirations to develop and test their work in a commercial context; enhancing employability, connecting students with placement opportunities, forging closer links with industry and carving a pathway to success beyond graduation.

**What was done:**

A suite of interactive learning activities was designed to develop students' skills in product design and entrepreneurial enterprise concurrently. The module utilised novel teaching and assessment strategies to suit the learning styles of design students. The use of 'student-friendly mediums' such as live polling on mobile phones improved student engagement, and novel assessment methods provided more interesting opportunities to credit students work, without the need for lengthy text-based submissions. The intervention created opportunities for undergraduates to develop employability skills and raised students' aspirations, irrespective of whether they chose to develop business start-ups. Bespoke activities to develop communication skills with elevator pitches, peer assessment, video pitches and presentation to industrial clients raised student confidence and proved invaluable for those presenting at national competitions. National success over the past two years has enabled students to attract considerable funding to develop their work commercially beyond the life of the module. The novel teaching strategies employed, created diverse learning and assessment opportunities in a motivating, engaging and commercially relevant way. These comprised:

- 'Quick-fire 60-second Elevator Pitches' recorded on mobile phones encouraged students out of their comfort zones, developed communication skills, and provided them with non-text-based opportunities for assessment.
- 'Pair Share' activities developed collaborative thinking skills and increased creative contributions.
- Role play activities with props, encouraged teamwork and strategic decision making.
- Ideation Workshops with creative professionals brought new insights beyond academic perspectives.
- Peer assessed presentations stimulated active learning and collaborative problem solving.
- Quiz activities on mobile phones reinforced understanding and tested student knowledge in a safe environment.
- Industrial Liaison Event included past graduates and prospective employers which enabled current students to envisage how their own work may be contextualised from a commercial perspective.
- Video masterclasses enabled students to create animated submissions as an alternative to text-based submission.
- Masterclasses with real-time feedback from industry professionals at the interim stages of the module ensured timely validation of entrepreneurial activity in a real-world context.
- Prototyping alongside business development reinforced commercial viability

**Underpinning Academic and Professional Knowledge**

This module was underpinned by experiential learning methodologies (Barrett 2007; Carey and Matlay 2010; Nompula 2012; Kolb and Kolb 2012). Edward De Bono's Six Hats Parallel Thinking (De Bono 2016): Design Thinking (Brown 2010; Gunes 2012), and the NESTA Business Model Canvas methodologies were used to develop experiential learning activities.

**Successes and lessons learnt:****What worked**

- Students were receptive to new styles of teaching and enjoyed the interactivity of the module. Pair share activities and team work encouraged reserved students to participate.
- Students enjoyed the opportunity to submit a video instead of a piece of written coursework. (Text-based submissions were accepted).
- Having different 4 styles of oral presentation pitches spaced throughout the module, ensured that students developed confident presentation skills.

**Challenges**

- Some students found the oral presentations stressful. To mitigate against this, presentations were staged to build confidence incrementally.
- Some students found it challenging to organise practical design work alongside the business canvas model which meant frequent re-caps were necessary.
- There was no budget to off-set necessary workshop resources.

**Evaluation and understanding the impact and effectiveness of the practice described**

- Students taking this module have won the University Santander competition, national semi-finals and made it through to the live final in Westminster University London, in consecutive years.
- Students have been able to use the success to leverage further funding from Innovation Ulster and Invest NI.
- One student used the project outcomes to enter and win the INVENT Award in Agri-Science in November 2018, pitching against established businesses.
- The Agri-Science student project is now a start-up business, manufacturing has commenced and financially backed by Innovation Ulster Ltd. The student is continuing to develop a suite of innovations for her final undergraduate degree project.
- Successful students had the opportunity to pitch to investors in Philadelphia and won funding to pursue a patent in the US (Pending).
- Successful students have secured patents.

**Advice to colleagues**

- It is challenging to organise this type of delivery and meticulous preparation is essential.
- There is a cost implication to resource this module for the interactive workshops.
- There is a need to design flexibility in delivery into the module, which can be challenging for staff and students.
- Rooms need to be set up in a way to facilitate group work and these are not always available
- Staff need to be prepared to work in creative ambiguous spaces.
- This module places students outside of their comfort zone, which brings challenges. Colleagues need to plan for this.
- This style of teaching is intensive, but it works, and pays dividends for students.

**Transferability:**

The methodologies are highly transferrable and were adapted for use in a number of other contexts, for example the Doctoral College teaching programme and for delivery to industry professionals as part of Derry Enterprise Week.

**Further information:****Quotes:**

*"I wouldn't have done all these things the past year without your business module. It has been an amazing journey, and all started from your course and your help and support".*

*"It has truly changed me and improved me as a person and given me new goals to aim for in the future  
Thank you"*

*"I'd like to let you know that I thought today's workshop was fantastic, very inspirational and beneficial, and I am looking forward to its second part next week!"*

**Website coverage demonstrating module success****SyncniNI**

This article directly cites and credits the module design and lecturer for providing the opportunities to test on a real world

Crafted Equestrian: taking a winning product design out of the classroom and into the real world

<https://syncni.com/interview/1130/crafted-equestrian-taking-a-winning-product-design-out-of-the-classroom-and-into-the-real-world>

Memorable night for Ulster University students, staff and alumni at Invent 2018

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/news/2018/october/memorable-night-for-ulster-university-students,-staff-and-alumni-at-invent-2018>

**Irish Times:**

NI students saddle up with US support for equestrian products

[https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag\\_company=Maguire+Hegarty](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_company=Maguire+Hegarty)

**Farming Life:**

Equine Entrepreneur trots home with agri-science award

<https://www.farminglife.com/equestrian/equine-entrepreneur-trots-home-with-agri-science-award-1-8680141>

Horse welfare can be improved by this young entrepreneur's innovations

<http://connect.catalyst-inc.org/techwatch/crafted>

**Silicon Republic**

New saddle invention ensures horses have their day at the races

<https://www.siliconrepublic.com/start-ups/crafted-equestrian-jenny-gregg>

Ulster student reaches the finals of the Santander Universities Entrepreneurship Awards

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/alumniandsupporters/updates/awards/ulster-student-reaches-the-finals-of-the-santander-universities-entrepreneurship-awards>