A guide to how business schools can develop academic staff to engage with SMEs

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A guide to how business schools can develop academic staff to engage with SMEs

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1. Executive Summary

The impetus for business schools to work with small firms is growing. At over 98% of the UK business population, it is essential that our education and research are relevant and useful to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and support their growth, sustainability, and resilience. The profound disruption of the global Covid-19 pandemic has consolidated this push to help bolster our small business population, as well as having profound impacts on the number of new small firms, their business models, products, and their digital transformation.

Yet the take up of business school programmes among SMEs is historically low compared with larger companies. Leadership skills gaps in small firms persist, despite UK and devolved governments' funding and focus.

The Chartered Association of Business Schools (Chartered ABS) therefore invited academics from business schools around the UK to explore how schools can develop their staff to engage with SMEs. The working group's focus was on identifying interventions to increase the amount of business school engagement with SMEs, while examining the barriers and how some schools have overcome them. It also explored enablers of engagement and based its recommendations around practice in Small Business Charter (SBC) awarded schools, and insights gained from relevant literature and policy documents. This working group has developed this report before and during the global pandemic, which has also hugely affected universities and business schools themselves.

This document is designed primarily to be a practical aid to decision making for business school leaders, although it may be of interest to a wider stakeholder group, for example business engagement leads in universities, and the Small Business Charter Board.

Following secondary research and case study development, and in acknowledgement of changing landscapes for both small firms and universities, recommendations have been proposed, which, for the most part, map onto the identified barriers and challenges. These recommendations are not Covid-specific, but have been evaluated in the light of the seismic changes to both small firms and business schools during this period, and are designed to support resilience and deeper collaborative relationships for recovery and growth.

> This document is designed primarily to be a practical aid to decision making for business school leaders

The significant list of recommendations is not proposed to be undertaken in its entirety; it is anticipated that readers will use this document as a resource and may well find some sections more relevant and useful than others. It is also likely that there are other staff development approaches which have proved successful to universities which are not captured here – the working group welcomes contributions which add to the recommendations made at the end of this report.

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We are very grateful to the members of the working group for producing this report.

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2. Introduction

Increasingly, universities have an appetite to work with businesses to test concepts, develop research partnerships and provide vehicles for training staff. These partnerships, many built up over many years, provide credibility and attractiveness to the institutions and their staff. Developing and maintaining mutually beneficial external relationships brings new opportunities and business alliances.

Today over 98% of the UK business population consists of micro (fewer than 10 members of staff) and SME (fewer than 250 members of staff) businesses. Many academics focus their attention on working with their local business community, supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), in England, and with similar local organisations in the devolved nations. Closer inspection of the extant SME literature supports this approach and finds many contributions exploring the relationships between SMEs and business schools, and provides examples of how, through good working practices, together they have formed sound and profitable commercial practices. This activity was encouraged further, with the forming of the Small Business Charter (SBC) in 2011 by Lord Young, the Chartered ABS and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (now BEIS). The SBC was established as a means of improving business growth through localised business support by awarding business schools with the SBC if they can evidence established and effective practices supporting SMEs, student enterprise and their local economies.

Periodically, the Small Business Charter Management Board establishes working groups to investigate areas of interest to SBC holding schools and to schools which may be exploring applying for the SBC award. It was agreed at the SBC Board meeting, held on March 1st, 2018 that a number of working groups be set up to support the achievement of SBC objectives. One of the groups was tasked with exploring the question: 'How can business schools develop staff to increase effective engagement with SMEs?'

This is not to suggest that staff are currently working ineffectively; rather it aims to identify interventions which will increase the amount of engagement business schools have with SMEs. This involves a wide range of possible interventions, from inviting in an SME owner as a guest lecturer, to the delivery of education and training programmes, sometimes credit-bearing, specifically aimed at the SME audience.

Following the initial meeting of the working group, the working assumptions for the group's investigation were agreed as follows:

- That SBC holding schools are committed to Lord Young's and BEIS' vision that universities engage more significantly with SMEs i.e. increasing both breadth and depth of engagement.
- As recipients of the SBC Award, that SBC schools evidence good practice.
- A wide range of types of 'engagement' exist that all have value.
- It is likely that the Knowledge Exchange Framework will play a part in driving future activity.
- Business school staff and management WANT to be engaged with SMEs however:
  - SME engagement is not appropriate for ALL business school academics.
  - Incentives and rewards are important factors in driving behaviour as are HR processes such as workload planning, recruitment norms, organisation and job design.

The aim of this working group was thus to make available to all UK business schools guidelines, case studies and recommendations as to how staff can be developed so that they are able to engage with SMEs, whatever their level of experience to date.

Today over 98% of the UK business population consists of micro and SME businesses.

In order to achieve this, the group explored the following initial questions:

1. What does the typical range of engagement look like?
2. What does 'good practice' mean in business schools which already hold the Small Business Charter?
3. What other indicators of 'best practice' might there be?
4. What are the findings of existing SBC reports indicating how business schools already work with SMEs?
5. What are the barriers and enablers of engagement?
6. What are the core issues SMEs face which business schools address already, or might look to address?
7. What are the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to address these core issues?

The group brought to the discussions their experience of their own business school, experience of visiting and assessing other business schools and academic and industry literature.

This document is the result of those discussions and provides recommendations which aim to address some very practical challenges experienced in business schools.

2.1 Why is SME engagement important?

The problem:

Closer inspection of Government data and the business press shows that since 2006, UK growth has fallen steadily behind many EU countries. Although, since the pandemic underlying productivity trends have been difficult to discern, in 2016 the UK ranked fifth out of the G7 countries, with Germany top and Japan bottom. UK productivity was 16% below the average of the rest of the G7 countries, the largest since at least 1995 (when the ONS data series began). New approaches to the calculation of the productivity gap are being evaluated with international comparisons expected to resume in 2021 (Harari, 2021).

Given the UK labour productivity rate, new and alternative business strategies are needed to make UK PLC more productive. The UK Government's Business Productivity Review published in November 2019 highlights "the importance of locally available business support for businesses to navigate the market, which must be complemented by national coordination of learning and identification of best practice" – a structure which the Small Business Charter network is ideally placed to deliver. Following the Productivity Review in 2020 the Small Business Leadership Programme funded by BEIS was developed and delivered by SBC business schools, training 2,800 small business leaders in England over a 9-month period.

In November 2017, the UK Government published its latest version of 'The Industrial Strategy'. The specific purpose of this document is to drive innovation and it calls for greater collaboration between public and private sector businesses. This collaboration aims to develop new technologies and business practices in order to boost business productivity.

Universities and the wider higher education sector (HE) sector is undergoing many, well documented changes including the policy-led expansion of the sector to close to 50% of young people entering university (Rogers, 2019). Universities have become more business focused, and are subject to complexities and fluctuations in the external environment – *"Never ….has the higher education sector felt more like a marketplace"* (ibid).

Meeting these various demands in order to ensure organisational effectiveness and sustainability requires that universities be responsive to market pressures, to students' increasingly refined demands and expectations, to the pace of external

change, particularly around technology, and to government expectation that business schools be more engaged with SMEs (Young, 2013).

Business and management schools, acting as a bridge between theory and practice should be well placed to lead the way in the range and scale of SME engagement. Yet, within business schools as well as the wider university, there remains the challenge of moving 'communities of scholars' towards 'communities of practice' (Todorovic et al, 2005)

Of course, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 has caused profound disruption to universities and SMEs alike. Its full impact is yet to be understood.

2.2 Target audience

The target audience for this report includes a range of key stakeholders in SME business engagement. Firstly, leaders and managers in business schools (academic and professional services) seeking to increase the range of staff engaged with SMEs.

Secondly, with respect to external stakeholders, this report can be beneficial for policy makers too, at a local or national level, as it identifies the challenges across the UK for business schools' engagement with SMEs; this engagement is key for SMEs to scale up and improve processes, and as an outcome, to stimulate economic growth.

Finally, this report may be of interest to incubators, science and innovation parks that reside in proximity to universities who seek to improve their engagement with academic staff (Youtie and Shapira, 2008). These entities tend to involve life sciences, computing and engineering schools, rather than business schools. The literature suggests that 'absorbing knowledge' entities such as incubators need not only technological knowledge but also financial and market knowledge, in their early R&D processes. (Rubin et al., 2015). Thus, we believe that science parks and Incubator managers could also benefit from this report further developing the link with business schools.

2.3 Report approach

The working group comprised business and management education experts, with both academic and professional service perspectives and with considerable experience in university and SME engagement. Their areas of expertise included business engagement, enterprise education and support, business school leadership and management, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), research expertise in entrepreneurship, regional economics and impact, leadership, strategy and international business and education provision specifically designed for SMEs. All participants were from SBC holding schools.

The group met for five full day workshops during 2018 and 2019. Workshop themes included an initial scoping exercise, evaluation of secondary data collected and a final workshop to establish key recommendations. The report was updated in May 2021 to acknowledge the changes in the external and internal contexts for HE and SMEs brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the initial scoping exercise, secondary research was undertaken exploring the SME and Higher Education (HE) landscape focusing on SME challenges, university and SME collaborations and SME funded initiatives. The Enterprise or Project Generation Funnel (as seen in Figure 1) was used as a useful conceptual framework to underpin the group's research, analysis and final recommendations.

In addition, working group members evaluated their own institution's SME interventions including best practice as well as challenges in engaging staff in working with SMEs. A series of cases were then written to assist business schools in developing further initiatives aimed at increasing staff engagement with SMEs.

A starting point for the report is to explore the range of activities which constitute 'engagement'.

> The target audience for this report includes a range of key stakeholders in SME business engagement.

3. Range of SME engagement

In order to examine how we might develop staff to work effectively with SMEs, it is useful to explore what we mean by 'SME Engagement'. Of course, this can take many forms, with different skills needed depending on the nature of the engagement. In addition, there is an amount of work required 'up front' before an engagement can start, from something as seemingly simple as inviting an SME owner to deliver a guest lecture, to participation in a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), or other complex consultancy intervention.

Figure 1 illustrates the stages that are typically needed in order to successfully agree an engagement project. The stages are shown as a funnel to illustrate the point that many business development approaches, awareness raising campaigns, and relationship building activities need to be conducted in order to secure a relatively small number of appropriate 'projects'. 'Strategic Planning' is shown as a necessary initial step so that the organisational commitment to engagement is shown through, for example, organisational structure and HR processes such as recruitment and workload planning.

Figure 1 The Project Generation Funnel Overview (Rees)

Figures 2 and 3 show detailed activities for each stage of the funnel.

Figure 2 The Project Generation Funnel – Indicative Initial Stages (Rees). Specific activities are needed at each stage, with a necessary skills base, shown below.

Strategic Planning	Business Development Awareness Raising	Relationship Building: Needs Analysis

• Definition of strategic priorities
• Market definition
• What business are we in?
• Targets setting
• Product development
• Creation of Research Centres
• Market segmentation
• Identification of target partners
• Identification of target organisations
• CRM & PR strategies

• Professional and trade body membership
• Sponsorships
• Events calendar of :
  • Research conferences
  • Networks
  • Masterclasses with industry
  • Sector specific updates
  • Joint events
• External network attendance
• Externally facing Centres of Excellence
• Media engagement
• Leverage existing relationships

• Contribution to external networks/conferences
• Developing relationships
• Customer needs analysis
• Cross-selling, up-selling
• Solution design

• Needs analysis
• Bid management
• Negotiation
• Networking
• Relationship building
• Commercial awareness
• Portfolio knowledge
• Creativity
• Professionalism

• Networking
• Media presence
• Market handling skills
• University knowledge
• Portfolio knowledge

INDICATIVE SKILLS

• Strategic planning
• Marketing strategy
• Market knowledge
• Portfolio definition
• Management information systems

Figure 3 The Project Generation Funnel – Indicative Latter Stages (Rees).

Proposal Submission and Negotiating	Contract Negotiation	Contracts won/ delivery

- Proposal writing
- Bid management
- Negotiation of terms
- Risk analysis
- Presentations
- Business case development

- Closing sale/agreement
- Bid management
- Contract writing
- Resource planning

- Consultancy
- Collaborative and contract research
- Bespoke/blended/on-site courses
- Internships/work placements/live briefs
- CPD/short courses
- Funded business development
- (M)KTPs
- Industry Boards
- Funded (e.g. ESF) projects
- Incubator & Accelerator
- Spinouts/Commercialisation/IP

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OR OTHER OUTPUTS

- Commercial writing
- Bid management
- Negotiation
- Risk analysis
- Presentation skills
- Business case development

- Commercial awareness
- Sales
- Team formation
- Resource management
- Project management

- Product development
- Teaching/training
- Consultancy
- Research
- Project management
- Business development
- Customer service
- Relationship development
- Knowledge transfer/PR

INDICATIVE SKILLS

4. Challenges posed by the SME landscape

In order to develop staff so that they can confidently engage with SMEs, it is important to understand more about the current state of the SME landscape. This knowledge would, potentially, form an important part of any development intervention and skills uplift for staff. There may well be a difference of approach depending on the sector and size of SMEs thus what follows is indicative only.

Some key, general aspects of the current landscape are articulated below, as well as a commentary on how business schools engage with SMEs; some of these points could be included in a potential staff development programme.

4.1 SME landscape – what do we need to know?

In a broad sense, the literature suggests that small, new companies are lacking managerial experience and the ability to raise capital at an early stage (Allen and Rahman, 1985; Smilor and Gill, 1986). Thus, linking SMEs with business schools could have a positive impact on their growth and productivity, in particular in the context of the changing landscape of the business sector. Academic staff will need to be aware of the context in which SMEs operate both generically, and specifically, in terms of sector. Some of the current external challenges for SMEs are discussed below.

Current change drivers include an ageing workforce; inter-connected communities; and the impact of technology on education and research. Today, we already witness rapidly changing business and economic models and innovation types where, institutions as they are known today, may evolve to include individuals or households. Universities will need to adapt to the way they engage with these new entities. Likewise, models are developing where innovative people, including the self-employed, come together for a project, each person providing a unique skill, and who, when the project is over, will each move to a new project. Thus there is no formal company; rather the enterprise is an ad hoc Research and Development (R&D) process (OECD Frascati, 2018).

Markets are going through a decentralisation process with respect to new peer-to-peer, or data driven customisation of new products and services. For example: the rise of self-employment; new financial services such as lending, donation; and freelance services platforms such as Uber, Airbnb, etc., already create annual revenues in hundreds of millions of pounds.

Alongside the 'democratisation' of the business sector (such as the use of blockchain transactions), we witness broader scales of collaborations between large organisations building on big data and advanced technological tools, working together towards bigger global challenges. Universities will strengthen their role in those consortia.

Such changes will necessitate that universities re-design and expand their engagement activities, either through education and training, or through other types of knowledge flow.

There is a need for a growing appreciation of the use of technology for UK SMEs to remain competitive. This is evident from the 2017 Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report "From Ostrich to Magpie" that claims improving UK companies' adoption of existing technologies offers a unique opportunity to raise SMEs' business productivity. The report highlights improving management best practice, innovation and diffusion, acknowledging the need for businesses to learn and apply new knowledge. Therefore, it is clear that greater collaboration between business schools and SMEs can provide a better platform for developing new technology transfers that can boost business productivity.

> Such changes will necessitate that universities re-design and expand their engagement activities.

4.2 How do business schools engage with SMEs?

SMEs are not a homogeneous group however, whilst business schools tend to differentiate large businesses from SMEs, with respect to engagement practices, variances within SMEs are often not addressed. In the context of staff development, this is important because a 'one size fits all' approach to SME engagement will not always be appropriate. The diversity of SMEs is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 Business Schools' engagement with different types of SMEs (Anderson and Rubin).
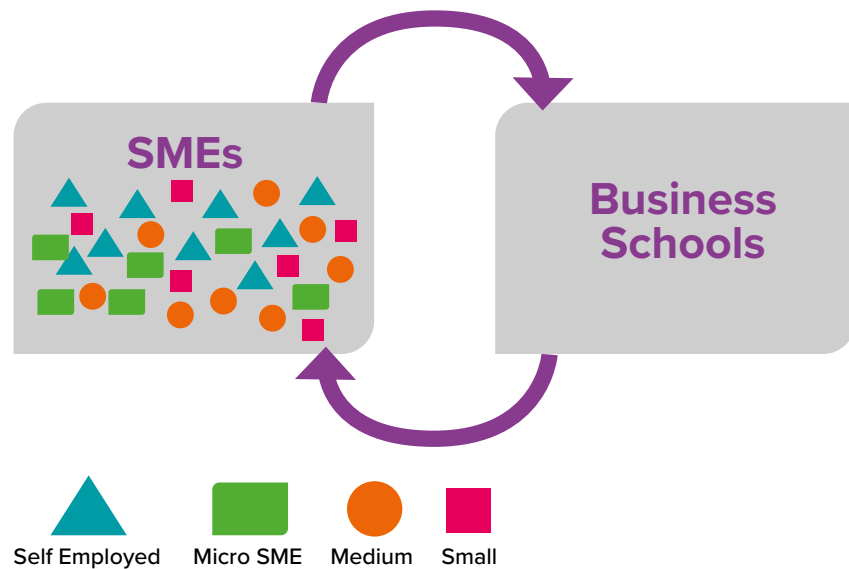
In addition, not only are SMEs not homogeneous as a group, the internal composition of the group changes over time. We are already witnessing this change, moving towards a growing number of self-employed and micro businesses, and, in particular, a growing ad-hoc services jobs market.

Covid-19 has accelerated trends in digital transformation. What was expected to happen in 5 to 10 years' time has happened during 2020-21. The transformation of industries and the business model innovation landscape includes changes in supply chain, workforce employability, changing workplaces, data ownership and technology. Online collaboration platforms have, and will continue to disrupt business markets, as we know them today and, as a consequence, will have a direct effect on higher education with respect to teaching, leadership on innovation, and the 'matchmaking' of knowledge between universities and industry. The fast-moving nature of innovation in the private sector will enable academics to benefit from growing data sources, artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities and collaborative platforms, feeding back into further development of teaching and research. Academic staff will need to be knowledgeable as to the key factors relevant at the time of engagement.

Some current key changes are illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 below:

Figure 5 SME Market Changes, Part A (Anderson and Rubin).

COMPETITOR CHALLENGES	**GLOBAL MARKET CHALLENGES**	**WORKFORCES CHALLENGES**	**CUSTOMER CHALLENGES**
Platformisation reduces entry barriers	Trade Agreements change of focus (following Brexit)	Significant decline in the size of the workforce	Rapid product/ service lifestyles
Digital transformation that makes market places more efficient	Smart Contracts based on changing technologies (DLT, Platformisation)	Developing an augmented workforce	Artificial Intelligence
	Social and environmental responsibility	Increased self-employment	Changing customer interface for B2B and B2C
	Growing competition of global entrepreneurial ecosystems	Recruitment and selection	Social responsibility/ increased transparency
		Hybrid/remote working	

Figure 6 SME Market Changes, Part B (Anderson and Rubin)

BUSINESS MODEL CHALLENGES	INNOVATION CHALLENGES	SUPPLY CHAIN POSITION	SECTOR SPECIFIC CHALLENGES E.G.
Ability to rapidly change business models	Maintaining an entrepreneurial culture - learning organisation/ absorptive capacity	Lead times to larger MNEs	Fintech
Alternative raising finance/ investment models	Place of disruptive innovation	Digital Transformation across the supply chain	Healthcare/ Wellbeing
Growth by aquisition/being acquired	Positioning with entrepreneurial ecosystem	'Power' of customers through knowledge symmetry	Hospitality
Shared workspace with external stakeholders		Improvement through optimisation of data points	Manufacturing
			Merge of industries

5. The challenges posed by the HE landscape

The business education landscape is undergoing significant change as new educational technologies, a new generation of students, innovative competitors and the withdrawal of public funding create "academic capitalism". Funding for schools is a major challenge with financial performance a key consideration for academic management. Universities increasingly view business schools as generators of revenue raised through management training initiatives, new programmes, and ever-increasing levels of fees. Demands from industry, increasing costs, and competition in the education "marketplace" (accreditations, online training, and the introduction of non-academic sources of knowledge) are leading to the emergence of practice-based learning. Financial pressures on business schools lead to less investment in the 'Business Development: Awareness Raising' activities shown in Figure 2 above, necessary for successful SME engagement.

There are three predicted domains for change: Teaching, Research and Engagement. All three have a strong overlap (futureuniversities.com, 2018). The core university activities of teaching and research therefore have many benefits to gain from engagement.

Teaching and Engagement overlap

Creates effective outreach activities linked to student recruitment (widening participation to non-traditional cohorts including mature students and worker-learners) and augmenting the student experience (internship, work-based learning, community work, volunteering).

Teaching and Research overlap

Enables enhancements to both, with teaching becoming more meaningful and linked to 'real world' issues, while research benefits from the results of applied and relevant coursework.

Research and Engagement overlap

Results in non-academic, socio-economic impacts, as researchers work collaboratively with non-academic partners to find solutions to specific needs and challenges in the wider world. This in turn helps inform further research by raising new questions and providing insights that would not be revealed from academic research alone. The push for greater transparency and deemed "return on investment from public funding" will extend into the field of research.

5.1 Global forces changing universities' landscape:

As seen above, universities and business schools need to adapt to global forces that are currently changing the world's economy (McKinsey, 2015), such as emerging markets, urbanisation; 'big' data, greater global connections and accelerating technological change.

Emerging markets and urbanisation - Emerging market cities will deliver half of the global GDP growth. Demand from developing economies for higher education will continue to increase.

What can universities do?

There are opportunities for universities from industrialised countries to acquire income from tuition (education as an export) and brainpower for excellent research through international students. In particular, the US, UK, and Australia 'cherry-pick' the best and most motivated students. Urbanisation will increase hence urban universities will benefit more from this trend. Increases in income will afford universities greater opportunity to invest in engagement enablers.

Trade, people, finance, and data: Greater global connections - More universities will be connected because of increasing interconnectivity across the globe and the breaking down of geographical barriers to collaboration. Innovation networks including business, educational institutions, and open innovation networks, as well as movement of students, will create a more polarised higher education sector.

What can universities do?

This polarisation will enable the resource-rich and sought-after elite universities to increasingly collaborate with major international companies across the globe supplying them with leading-edge research and talent to solve innovation challenges. At the same time, 'the rest' of universities will be forced to diversify away, specialise, unite, or innovate radically to survive while coping with mass-produced MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and radical new players in the higher education sector such as Coursera, edX and LinkedIn. The successful diversification strategies pursued by the surviving universities will include focusing on (1) emerging needs (e.g. dual-study programmes, lifelong learning); (2) specific emerging technical capabilities (e.g. advanced manufacturing, ICT, artificial intelligence); and (3) specific programme topics (e.g. eco-energy, mobility, security and terrorism, big data management, social entrepreneurship). The 'rest' will also shift their education emphasis away from deep technical knowledge and towards developing more 'T-shaped' students[1] with 'future-proof' competencies including problem-solving, self-management and entrepreneurship capabilities, as well as soft skills and emotional intelligence.

Accelerating technological change – This effect will be two-fold. Firstly, as technology such as robotics and AI increasingly replace jobs relying on high-speed accuracy and repetition in both the blue- and white-collar fields, the demand for knowledge-intensive jobs requiring cognitive, critical, and creative thinking skills of humans will increase as will the need to have higher education degrees. Secondly, the use of technology is already reducing the amount of routine academic and administrative positions in universities and this trend will continue especially as information through the internet and MOOCs becomes more accessible. Moreover, combined with AI technology, the early years of the bachelor's degree will be better and more individually supported by technology, reducing the quantity of lecturers required and changing the nature of student engagement.

What can universities do?

There will be a need for more personalised mentoring as well as synthesizing group work and student interaction across disciplines and borders. This too will be partly supported by AI, which will monitor students' pulse-rate, pupils, and facial clues as well as by providing live translations. These developments will also be aided by technology, as screens morph into international portals featuring avatars and realistic holograms of participants as well as new mobility devices, all of which enable better collaboration. This will also put the urbanisation and emerging market trends into a different perspective. In line with Thomas L. Friedman's thinking (2007), as expressed in Lingenfelter, (2006), the world becomes truly flat through the application of virtual, augmented, or mixed reality in higher education.

As discussed above, there are many challenges inherent in the landscape for higher education. In the sections below, we focus on 3 key frameworks, designed

More universities will be connected because of increasing interconnectivity across the globe and the breaking down of geographical barriers to collaboration.

[1] Currently higher education is producing I-shaped graduates, or students with deep disciplinary knowledge. The defining characteristic of the "T-shaped professional" is the horizontal stroke, which represents their ability to collaborate across a variety of different disciplines.

to examine, measure and promote not only research and teaching, but, as of 2019, knowledge exchange. These frameworks provide national scrutiny and competition for entire universities. Each of them provide opportunities for universities to apply increased focus on external engagement. Here we consider their challenges for business schools, and particularly for staff working with SMEs.

5.2 The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and Concordat (KEC)

5.2.1 KEF overview

The purpose of the Knowledge Exchange Framework is to provide universities with useful and actionable intelligence and data on their KE activities to increase the performance and productivity of working with external stakeholders. In addition, the KEF has been designed to aid external partners with access to effective and pertinent information to inform business decision making and increase collaborations with universities in various forms of KE activity.

The Knowledge Exchange Concordat is a commitment process, driven by Universities UK and GuildHE at Vice-Chancellor level, to write into a strategic document HOW a university undertakes knowledge exchange.

5.2.2 KEF and KEC - Key challenges for business schools

1. Knowledge exchange, and specifically work with SMEs, is not definable in one particular area, and roles are often hybrid and sometimes informal, which while requiring certain skills, are not always acknowledged as such, and so it may be difficult to quantify in such a high level statement.

2. Equally, knowledge exchange is far reaching, innovative and sometimes disruptive by nature. For example, a university may not have clear policies on all the types of knowledge exchange that it undertakes, but this does not mean that knowledge exchange is not supported. The KEF is narrow in recognising and valuing the contribution that multiple, diverse KE mechanisms can perform between universities and external partners.

3. The KEC Engagement principle is where those working with SMEs can bring their experience, but as far as we know at this stage, this does not include any external contributions, which is where the SME voice would be useful. This focus on usefulness for those outside our institutions is missing from the principles at this stage, but note that at the time of writing, the KEF is not yet finalised.

4. Universities are examined as a whole, without differentiation between the specific capabilities and experience in different schools/ faculties. This institutional level analysis may not be useful to some businesses, who do not tend to work with the entire university, but instead with a specific school, such as a business school.

5. For many universities, business engagement with intellectual property, spin outs and research commercialisation form their knowledge exchange focus and there is a chance that business schools are not brought to the fore.

6. Measuring knowledge exchange is difficult, particularly when business school SME engagements do not involve financial transactions.

7. The clustering is not currently useful for a business in a locality who wishes to compare universities on one of the seven perspectives if universities are in different peer groups.

5.3 The Research Excellence Framework (REF)

5.3.1 REF overview

As the chief research quality exercise in the UK, the REF cannot be underestimated as a driver for change and development across universities. The REF 2021 contains significant changes from earlier iterations (specifically REF 2014), importantly, in the context of this report, the increase of weight for Impact Case Studies to 25% of a total score for each Unit of Assessment is significant. This increased emphasis on impactful research may potentially be extended again for REF2028.

5.3.2 Consideration of types of impact

Before considering the requirements of REF case studies, it is worth revisiting the ten different types of impact which are often used to define the impact of academic research on the world outside the university. These are shown below in Table 1.

Type of impact	Definition
Attitudinal	People understand an issue better than they did before
Economic	A change in attitudes, typically a group of people who share similar views
Environmental	Benefits from research to genetic diversity species or habitat conservation
Health and well-being	Research that leads to better outcomes for the health of individuals, social groups or public health
Policy	The contribution that research makes a new or amended laws regulations or other policy
Other forms of decision-making and behaviour changes	Research can inform a wide range of individual, group and organisational behaviours and decisions leading to impacts that go beyond the economy, environment, health and well-being or policy
Cultural	Changes in the prevailing values, attitudes and beliefs
Other social	Benefits to specific social groups or society not covered by other types of impact
Capacity and preparedness	Research that leads to new or enhanced capacity that is likely to lead to future benefits

Table 1: Types of impact (Reed, 2018, p. 20 & 21)

Based on the working group's first-hand experience, KTPs have provided an excellent vehicle for developing impact case studies. KTPs provide a means of allowing an SME to innovate through developing a partnership with a suitable university. Government define a KTP as developing innovation if the project can demonstrate: (1) economic growth through developing a new product or increase productivity; (2) an increase in sales for the business; and (3) a product that will create more jobs within the company. Innovate UK have now extended the KTP portfolio to include three types of KTP programmes, namely (1) traditional KTP; (2) Management KTP; and (3) African Agri-food KTP, acknowledging a broad range of products to help product and service sector firms. Consequently, it seems sensible to suggest that any academic located in a business school will lean towards displaying 'economic', 'decision-making' and 'capacity and preparedness' types of impact.

5.3.3 REF key challenges for business schools

The REF certainly presents challenges for developing staff to engage with SMEs, including:

1. An emphasis on research of 4* quality, which may mean, or be perceived to mean, that a less practical and business-focused approach is denigrated.

2. Academic staff may be focused on developing outputs for publication, in the run up to a REF period, and unable to allocate time for SME engagement.

3. Impact Case Studies are focused on the Reach and Significance of a piece of research in its impact. Work with SMEs may initially not yield results with a large enough reach to be considered, although the Significance per firm may be very high.

4. If academic staff feel that they need to include SMEs to strengthen future REF Impact Case Study submissions e.g. (REF 2028) then many academics may have limited connections or skills for developing potential partnerships.

5.4 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

5.4.1 TEF key challenges

The TEF provides a tool for aiding student choice of institution, but the number of institutions being assessed is falling.

It is designed to provide industry with a greater insight into how each institution equips students ready for graduate employment. Nevertheless, it does not go into specific detail how each institution works with the broader business community and does not encourage specific detail about SMEs.

It fails to provide a catalyst for academics and professional support staff to engage more with SMEs and practice, and much of the narrative and evidence contained within each submission places an emphasis on employment skills rather than industry links.

5.5 Accreditations

5.5.1 Overview

A key element of a business school's external environment is its accreditation portfolio, particularly in a competitive international market for students and research prestige. The "Triple Crown" of accreditations are awarded to less than 1% of business schools worldwide, and is a mark of quality that helps schools to differentiate in a crowded marketplace. AACSB (The Association to Advance

Collegiate Schools of Business), EQUIS (EFMD Quality Improvement System) and AMBA (The Association of MBAs) are all focused on principles not only of teaching and research excellence, but engagement and impact across their portfolios. They offer an opportunity to foreground SME engagement work as impactful, particularly when this engagement leads to opportunities for students and researchers to bring in practice.

The Small Business Charter is, of course, a key accreditation for business schools, which demonstrates a business school's excellence in SME engagement to these global accreditation bodies.

5.5.2 Accreditations: Key challenges for business schools

1. With a strong focus on teaching and research, SME engagement may be overlooked in understanding the nature of a business school.

2. The global accreditations can be focused on international development work rather than local SME engagement.

3. Accreditations take a significant amount of time and research to develop and may take attention away from engagement activities.

6. Challenges found inside universities

This section discusses the some of the challenges within universities in the context of developing staff to engage with SMEs. It explores university strategy, HR processes and specific skills development.

6.1 Leadership and management within the institution

As noted above in Figures 1 and 2, driving a step change in the level of staff engagement with SMEs needs strategic intervention and support. In his seminal work, "Creating Entrepreneurial Universities", Clark (1998) calls this the "strengthened steering core" needed to develop a "stimulated academic heartland". He advises:

"For change to take hold, one department and faculty after another needs itself to become an entrepreneurial unit, reaching more strongly to the outside with new programs and relationships and promoting third stream income."

Senior leaders and managers need to provide direction as to the nature of this engagement, what products and services staff can design, develop and offer to SMEs, which funding it is appropriate to bid for, and to articulate how engagement supports the overall purpose and mission of the business school and, indeed, the wider university.

Reconciling academic freedom with corporate direction, as well as designing organisational and career structures that encourage external engagement (PA Knowledge Limited, 2018) are ongoing challenges. Indeed, the report comments that "time spent on external business engagement and projects has been viewed as positively career limiting." The creation of intermediary professional units which manage a range of externally focused activities can have the effect of minimising the efforts of academic departments, already stretched by teaching and research workload (Gibb et al, 2012). Indeed, they go on to suggest that there are "career uncertainties" for those who actively engage. Developing the "integrated entrepreneurial culture" advocated by Clark (1998) needs an holistic approach. Burns (2005) discusses developing an entrepreneurial architecture made up of strategies, leadership, culture, systems and structure. All of these are necessary in

order to establish the processes and behavioural norms which facilitate external engagement, however some universities are still not actively encouraging and facilitating engagement (Abreu and Grinevich, 2013).

As seen, in Figures 2 and 3 above, there are a number of development activities staff would typically undertake in order engage with SMEs in order to secure a mutually beneficial outcome: from building networks and relationships, exploring opportunities, negotiating and securing commitment to the delivery and evaluation of the intervention itself.

These activities require specific skills and knowledge as noted in red in the figures above and discussed in Section 5. Strategic leadership is essential in order to provide the vision and investment needed to encourage, develop and motivate staff to engage externally.

Many universities cite objectives such as:

> "[Develop] specific market development via work-based learning in areas of distinctiveness."

> "Increase …income from training and consultancy, work based learning, bids for external funding and from KTPs."

> "Increase employer engagement (…. from employability through to business development)."

Whilst espousal of values, missions, visions and more detailed objectives featuring external engagement is common, a focus on staff being skilled and available to fulfil these objectives is less evident.

This is especially true of the HR processes which are so important in determining whether staff are able to engage externally: for example, staff recruitment, job/role design, appraisal systems, workload planning and these are considered below.

6.2 HR processes

The HR processes which encompass academic life can act to constrain or to encourage enterprising behaviour such as engagement with SMEs. They form an important framework which has a profound impact on what is considered important and thus how people behave.

6.2.1 Job/role design

The job descriptions for Reader, Lecturer and Principal Lecturer were reviewed from a number of universities, looking for indications that external engagement is part of the required responsibilities. There was evidence of a requirement to engage externally, however none of the documents reviewed explicitly mention industry or business. Rather, the following, more general, requirements are common:

- Lead research and collaborative partnerships with other external bodies.

- Lead bids for research, consultancy and other additional funds.

- Make presentations at national and international conferences and similar events.

- Be routinely involved in complex and important negotiations internally and with external bodies.

- Lead and develop internal and external networks to foster collaboration.

- Lead the development of new and creative approaches in responding to research and commercial challenges.

Strategic leadership is essential in order to provide the vision and investment needed to encourage, develop and motivate staff to engage externally.

- Initiate new and original solutions to problems.

- Supervise student projects, and/or e.g. field trips and, where appropriate, placements.

- Apply knowledge acquired from scholarship to teaching, research and appropriate external activities.

- Participate in developing ideas for generating income.

- Promote and market the work of the department in the subject area both nationally and internationally.

- Lead bids for consultancy and other additional funds

- Be routinely involved in complex and important negotiations internally and with external bodies.

- Collaborate with others on the development of the research and consultancy activities of the school including the development and delivery of short courses and other income generation activities as required.

6.2.2 Staff appraisal

Where external engagement responsibilities are articulated in a job description and form part of a staff appraisal process, development and performance management discussions can be prioritised in support of the organisation's strategic direction and objectives. The staff appraisal process thus has enormous potential to be an organisational as well an individual development tool. The shared experiences of the working group, however, revealed a range of practice from processes with virtually no guidance at all, written by the appraisee and not overtly linked to institutional and school priorities, to other systems which cascaded priorities and KPIs from the institutional level through school, department to individual, resulting in metrics relevant to that individual.

6.2.3 Staff recruitment

The working group members reported that it is increasingly common for a doctorate to be mandated for applicants for academic posts. The impact of this is that candidates with industry/applied experience and often with extensive external networks are typically excluded. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some universities with an espoused strategic commitment to business engagement also actively recruit academic staff members who have worked outside of HE.

6.2.4 Workload planning

In order for staff to be able to engage with SMEs in the range of activities seen above and as required in the SBC dimensions, staff need to have time allocated and thus, workload planning is of the utmost importance. The working group members reported that, in general, it is difficult for academic staff to engage externally if they have full teaching timetables which typically means that a person will have no time available, in a typical term-time week, for external events and relationship building, of the kind necessary to facilitate guest lectures, student projects, work placements and funded projects. Also, typically, an academic may not be able to respond quickly to consultancy requests from industry where a quick timescale is often needed or be able to deliver to part-time learners where evening or block delivery over weekends are the preferred options. How academic workload is managed is thus critical in determining the extent to which academics are enabled to engage externally. Where projects are funded and planned many months in advance such as KTPs, releasing staff is not normally an

issue. Development activities, delivering to part-time learners and being able to respond quickly to requests are particularly where the challenges lie.

Whilst all universities are bound by the National Framework Agreement, negotiated at UK level, some business schools operate local schemes such as allowing a number of days for consultancy; others have 'pots' set aside for development activities which are bid for internally. This necessitates a commitment to funding these activities and developing a culture where activities which are not directly teaching or research oriented, are valued and encouraged.

Related to the above, is the restricting impact of the structure of the typical academic year. Where staff are committed to so much teaching that there is no time for anything else in a typical week, it is often very difficult for staff to be able to engage externally. Outside of term-time, when academics are free, is often in periods when those in industry may not be free such as during school holidays.

6.2.5 Rewards and incentives schemes

Many universities offer incentive schemes for academics to encourage external engagement in general and with SMEs in particular. Typically, these schemes will ring-fence an amount of funding won for use by the academic for purposes such as conference attendance or further research. Whilst the desired outcomes may be achieved in terms of project success, these schemes do however perpetuate a culture which doesn't value the benefits of external engagements to teaching and research. Indeed, the very notion that staff have to be incentivised to undertake such activity would seem to indicate that motivation would not otherwise be present.

6.2.6 Staff development

Universities usually offer staff a wide variety of development opportunities; mentoring, skills development workshops, formal qualifications, some funded, some not. The development of skills and gaining of knowledge necessary for successful engagement with SMEs are often seen very much as discretionary and not a core requirement.

6.3 Staff knowledge, skills and behaviours

The knowledge, skills and behaviours of both the SMEs and business school staff provide challenges in creating effective collaborations. This includes how each party perceives the value they can bring to each other's organisations. Some of these challenges are reflected upon below.

6.3.1 Commercial practices in HE

As already outlined, working with SMEs brings clear benefits to business schools and indeed, the UK Government actively encourages collaboration via a number of well-established funding schemes (see Appendix 2). Nevertheless, there remain a number of barriers with regard to commercial practices that need conscious effort if they are to be overcome. These include:

- Some universities (or departments) do not have a tradition of working with SMEs and have limited networks. This takes time and effort to establish.

- Some networks are with specific staff and, should they leave the university, the business relationship is no more or is taken elsewhere.

- There is a disconnect in skills between university staff and SMEs creating a problem in fulfilling the knowledge transfer.

Many universities offer incentive schemes for academics to encourage external engagement in general and with SMEs in particular.

- In terms of KTPs, many SMEs might struggle to fund a 24 month project which will currently cost between £50-60k.
- Academic staff might need to take unorthodox approaches to engaging with SMEs as many SMEs do not know where to go on the university estate to access help and support.
- Universities talk in a different 'academic' language to SMEs and this can be intimidating to SMEs and their staff.
- SMEs do not hold university staff in high regard and think processes can be slow and cumbersome.

6.3.2 SME perceptions of university collaborations

Having acknowledged there are different levels of engagement by different types of SME in section 4.2 above, the smaller firm is less likely to be involved in university collaborations (Johnston and Huggins, 2018) (Hewitt-Dundas, 2019) (Johnston and Prokop, 2019). Exploring why this might be the case unearths a number of challenges.

Firstly, the smaller firm may allocate resources to innovation based on the potential value innovation will bring to the company and its stakeholders. In this sense, innovation is more incremental to the smaller firm (Hewitt-Dundas, 2019). Knowledge creation to the university is a fundamental strategic objective. This leads to the notion of Hall's (2003) 'two world paradox' and the challenge therein lies for university staff in bridging these two diverse contexts (Hewitt-Dundas, 2019).

Secondly, universities are large and complex organisations with, typically, inflexible structures and therefore tend to be difficult for the smaller firm to establish who in the university to engage with (Hewitt-Dundas, 2019). University staff are therefore required to find ways to demystify the processes, to find ways to shield SMEs from the bureaucracy (Darabi and Clark, 2012) and show the mutual benefits of collaboration i.e. developing innovative business processes, continuous improvement practices, joint problem solving (Pecas and Henriques, 2006) as well as new product to market innovations (Hewitt-Dundas, 2019).

6.3.3 Initiating collaboration

Once the smaller firm has established it can work with universities the relationship begins to cement and form the foundation for future collaboration (Hewitt-Dundas, 2019). The challenge remains as to how university staff can initiate collaboration with the smaller firm and build trust through developing individual contacts within the SMEs (Darabi and Clark, 2012).

The nature of university and industry collaboration is multi-dimensional and takes place at different levels within the supply chain (Wilson, 2012). The university offer to the SME is varied from free consultancy projects embedded in the curriculum, graduate placements, leadership and management training to KTPs. To initiate collaboration, university staff must communicate the different types of engagement to the SME and must evaluate the most appropriate initiative for the proposed collaboration. A starting point could be the creation of an 'Entrepreneurs in Residence' network and/or participation on industry boards.

6.3.4 Limited networking behaviours

Developing a networking orientation within an organisation enables entrepreneurial activity (Dimitratos and Plakoyiannaki, 2003) (Anderson, 2018). It could be argued few academics directly network within the SME community, potentially a consequence of the challenges outlined above. In a business context, SMEs will be active in networks that can potentially yield opportunity, new sales leads, and new resources including new employees. At this stage in their growth, they are focussed on developing relationships and networks that bring value to their organisation (Anderson, 2018). Conversely some academic staff can be internally focussed, and where external engagement occurs this can be in a narrow context aligned to their own research interests (Anderson and Johnston, 2016).

6.3.5 Staff perceptions of their own expertise and a resulting 'gap'

The perception of the academic as lacking in real world applied knowledge and experience is not just elucidated by the SME but also by academics themselves. A challenge therein lies in enabling and empowering academics to communicate their expertise, whether through applied and commercial experience or informed by their own research. Described as "the natural divide that separates the two worlds of academic research and management practice" (Das, 2003), some of the differences between these 'worlds' are as follows:

- Differing ways of thinking - The SME does not go straight to a literature review but is rather focused more on recommendations and applied outcomes.

- Time dimensions - A business wants results now, whereas academics often need time to design, conduct and analyse research.

- Communication practices - Need to translate academia into reality – different vocabularies often create barriers which need to be broken down.

- Rigour and relevance - Each interferes with the other – the rigour of research is essential but does not always produce results relevant to the SME.

- Interests and incentives - Publishing vs. growing – academics are measured, typically, by publications output not by how well they helped SMEs to grow.

7. Enablers and good practice in developing staff

Following on from the various challenges articulated above, this section aims to present some strategies, practices, processes and research approaches which have been found to be helpful in developing staff to work effectively with SMEs. It also provides a number of case studies from SBC awarded schools.

7.1 What works well – creating impact?

Types of impact

Developing the ten different types of impact discussed in Section 5.3.2 above, Reed (2018) identifies five evidenced based principles that underpin successful knowledge exchange and impact. These are shown in Table 2.

Principle 1: Design	Know what you want to achieve with your knowledge exchange and design knowledge exchange into environmental management research from the outset
	Set goals for knowledge exchange from the outset
	Devise a knowledge exchange and communications strategy
	Build in flexibility to knowledge exchange plans so they can respond to changing user needs and priorities
	Allocate skilled staff and financial resources to knowledge exchange
Principle 2: Represent	Systematically represent research user knowledge needs and priorities
	Systematically identify likely users of your research and other relevant stakeholders
	Embed key stakeholders in your research
	Consider the ethical implications of engaging with different stakeholders
Principle 3. Engage	Build long-term, trusting relationships based on two-way dialogue between researchers and stakeholders and co-generate new knowledge about environmental management together
	Engage in two-way dialogue as equals with the likely users of your research
	Build long-term relationships with the users of your research
	Work with knowledge brokers
	Employ a professional facilitator for workshops with research users
	Understand what will motivate research users to get involved in your research
	Create opportunities for informal interaction and learning between researchers and stakeholders
	Work with stakeholders to interpret the implications of your work for policy and practice, and co-design communication products

Principle 4. Impact	Focus on delivering tangible results as soon as possible that will be valued by as many of your stakeholders as possible
	Identify quick wins where tangible impacts can be delivered as early as possible in the research process, to reward and keep likely users of research engaged with the research process
	Get your timing right
Principle 5. Reflect and Sustain	Monitor and reflect on your knowledge exchange, so you can learn and refine your practice, and consider how to sustain a legacy of knowledge exchange beyond project funding
	Regularly reflect with your research team and key stakeholders on how effective your knowledge exchange is
	Learn from your peers and share good practice
	Identify what knowledge exchange needs to continue after research funding has ceased and consider how to sustain this in the longer-term

Table 2: Five core principles to underpin knowledge exchange and impact (Reed, 2018)

Principles 1, 2 and 3 ensure that many business academics have to work with a range of businesses and external stakeholders, including SMEs in order to develop their research. Some of the main points and consideration for business academics are shown below:

- Design: getting buy in from SMEs understanding what everyone wants; design and define the knowledge exchange processes and proposed output; be open and transparent.

- Represent: target the correct SMEs with the right level of experience; develop and build business relationships; develop trust; be transparent how your research contributes towards business and a sector(s).

- Engage: develop further working relationships across industries and sectors; develop a reputation amongst industry SME contacts and government department (such as BEIS); maintain enthusiasm; be honest and deliver.

These principles further support the approach shown in Figures 1-3 above.

7.1 What works well?

Contract research: Since the launch of the 'Industrial Strategy' in 2017, BEIS have provided a number of funding vehicles that allow staff, businesses (including SMEs) the opportunity to receive state funding to conduct research. Much of this research is exploring how to boost business productivity and draws upon a trial methodology.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs): A KTP serves to meet a core strategic need and to identify innovative solutions to help that business grow. KTPs often deliver significant increased profitability for business partners as a direct result of the partnership through improved quality and operations, increased sales and access to new markets. KTPs are a fundamental part of Business Schools' KE agenda. In fact, KTPs can provide an excellent vehicle for developing impact case studies. KTPs provide a means of allowing an SME to innovate through developing a partnership with a suitable university.

Student and graduate enterprise: Many business schools have developed student and graduate enterprise services which provide free enterprise skills training and start up support across the University's community of students and graduates. Services include, (1) start up hatchery, (2) enterprise workshops, (3) enterprise education, and (4) enterprise placements.

Leadership and management training: there are very successful leadership and management training programmes for SMEs run by business schools and focussing on growth, job creation and increasing productivity. Collaborative programmes, in which a network of business schools jointly develop a programme and each deliver it to SMEs in their local area, provide a model that is particularly suited to the Small Business Charter because of the potential for national coverage and impact. Examples include the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses regional programme, the Be the Business Productivity through People programme, and the Small Business Charter Growth Vouchers programme. In 2020 the Small Business Charter became a significant delivery partner for Government business support with the creation of the Small Business Leadership Programme (SBLP) developed and delivered by 20 SBC business schools in England. The successor to this programme, Help to Grow: Management (HTGM), is being developed by the SBC at the time of writing this report and is planned as an intensive 12-week leadership and management programme that will train 30,000 SME business leaders in the UK over 3 years.

These Government funded programmes have created a significant new opportunity for SBC accredited business schools to engage with SMEs and to develop their working practices. In addition to having small business leaders participating in programmes on a scale they had not previously experienced, the business schools benefit from the continuing engagement of this network of SMEs after the programme, many of whom may seek further support from the business school. The participating business school staff also contribute to the co-creation of the programme materials and the sharing of good practice between schools, thus benefiting from development opportunities through their involvement.

Business clinics: Since 2013 there has been a growing trend for business schools to establish business clinics that provide free consultancy advice to SMEs, multi-nationals and not for profit organisations who are looking to grow by taking their business in a new direction, explore new challenges or require fresh eyes to help them succeed. With support and guidance from academic staff, these services typically host undergraduate and postgraduate students. The students work in groups, acting as consultancy firms to provide research, advice and recommendations for clients to consider.

Secondments: At some business schools, academic staff have the opportunity to apply for a secondment and work for a large or SME for up to 12 months. Here, the academic staff forge deeper relationships with industry and the broader business community as well as generating enterprise income as their salary is paid by the business.

Representative bodies: These organisations provide guidance and new insights into the business environment and highlight challenges facing SMEs. Academic staff are encouraged to meet and work alongside core representative bodies including, LEPs, Business Wales, SBC and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

Courses-to-resources: Events aimed at SMEs encourage them to tap into the resources and skills contained within universities, such as contract research and KTPs. Rather than simply providing structured courses or traditional classroom style learning, the focus moves to solving a business problem.

Accelerator programmes: The Northern Accelerator, for example, is funded by £4.9m from Research England's Connecting Capabilities Fund and builds upon a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme to embed entrepreneurial business leaders into university start-ups at the earliest stage. Set to surpass its targets, this programme has doubled spin-out creation and increased academics' interest in commercialisation. 'Executives into business' continues as a core element of the Northern Accelerator, de-risking executives' engagement and enhancing spin-out companies' access to networks, business experience and investment routes.

Alongside this, an 'ideas and impact hub' encourages academics to embrace opportunities for enterprise, providing training to help recognise and exploit intellectual property. Pre-incorporation funding is available to take high quality research projects closer to commercialisation and 'Innovation assessment', a detailed business-readiness diagnostic provides robust external due-diligence. An investment pot of seed funding helps spin-outs validate their business model and demonstrate value to post-seed investors.

Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EiR) Networks: Many business schools have set up a mechanism for entrepreneur engagement with the school, commonly known as an 'entrepreneurs-in-residence' network. This formalises a relationship between the school and the SME, and facilitates the participation of the entrepreneur in a range of activities from giving a guest lecture through to the delivery of credit bearing modules and formal mentoring of students.

7.2 What does good practice look like in Small Business Charter schools?

The following table includes some examples of good practice identified in Small Business Charter holding schools. More detailed case studies can be found in Appendix 1.

School	SME Engagement	Nature of Staff Engagement	Proposed Outcomes
Aston Business School	Centre for Growth – suite of programmes from student and graduate start-up support to productivity programmes for established SMEs, including Productivity through People, Mentoring for Growth, Aston Programme for Small Business Growth, SBLP and Help to Grow Management KTPs are developed by Research and Knowledge Exchange The Advanced Services Group supports business model innovation in SMEs Other projects include Innovation Vouchers and Low Carbon SMEs	Dedicated team managing programmes who work with staff across all academic departments to identify faculty who can work effectively with SMEs and provide them with suitable opportunities Working alongside the national Enterprise Research Centre and CREME (Centre for Research into Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship) ensures that programmes are underpinned by research and provide evidence for policy makers	Developing leadership and management skills in business leaders in the region and at scale, leading to the adoption of better management practices, firm level growth and increases in productivity which in turn result in inclusive growth and economic impact for the region

Cardiff School of Management	CSM Business Club showcasing school expertise Productivity webinars	Showcase staff expertise Network with attendees Learn new skills Engage with business leaders	Build relationships which move to mutually beneficial activities e.g. work placements, mKTPs
	SME Growth Programme: Twenty20 Leading Business Growth, Help to Grow Management Executive MBA Next Generation Tourism Project	External faculty External and internal faculty Dedicated project team	Build reputation for SME expertise Tangible contribution to local economy Career development for working managers Design of skills toolkit for SMEs in tourism
	SME Research Focus	48% of all business school staff focus on SMEs in their research.	Publications Build reputation for SME expertise Annual research conference
Loughborough University School of Business and Economics	Targeting SMEs through regional events Intelligence gathered through our Enterprise Committee ensures that SME contacts are kept informed of new initiatives	Face to Face work Collaboration Projects with undergraduates and MBA students SME employees and leaders take Loughborough's Executive Education accredited courses Support Services have delivered short training sessions for specific SME clients who have requested specialist training	Build on the school's network for several engagement types Improve the schools understanding of the regional SMEs knowledge gaps. i.e., how can the school's niche topics be attractive for SMEs? Feed- back SME inputs into collaborative projects (research and non-research-based collaborations)
Manchester Metropolitan University Business School	A variety of funded programmes for entrepreneurs and SMEs at all levels, from pre-start to high growth The business school has developed a partnership with Science and Engineering to support SMEs in new disruptive sectors such as hydrogen fuel – providing both technical support and new business model design.	Face to face work SME peer network development is key Engaging academic research in development of programmes, and in working with small firms	Develop knowledge of the SME landscape Develop relevant research to the SME arena Understand small firms across their life cycle

Newcastle Business School	Innovation Northumbria: a pre-accelerator for aspiring entrepreneurs.	The incubator is directly linked to UG and PG modules and EiR. 41% of academic staff have, or are currently, undertaking SME research and start-up business research.	Greater synergy between the latest academic thinking and industry practice by having greater access to SMEs on campus
Sheffield Business School	Small Business Leadership Programme, Business Basics 2: Driving Productivity in Micro-Businesses. Sheffield City Region (SCR) Scale Up Scale Up 360 Sheffield Innovation Programme (SIP), Highly Skilled Employability (HSE), Apprenticeships.	Business school lead workshops and 1to1 support via Entrepreneurs in Residence and subject experts. Workshops, research and innovation-based consultancy targeting SMEs and high growth organisations. Applied student consultancy projects supervised by academics.	Greater engagement with companies seeking to scale up activities, implement change, develop leadership teams as well as seeking to develop new innovations. Support business growth across the region. Develop employability skills of graduates.
Coventry Business School	Enterprise and Innovation development is a key function across CBS, with interaction between schools and with the Groups E & I lead.	Staff engage in workshops, knowledge exchange with SMEs through guest lectures; masterclasses; student projects; start-up support and research (impact case studies for example).	Greater understanding of the needs of the SME; exposure of SMEs to knowledge updates; access to CPD for upskilling; potential for student placements; access to a new talent pool for the SME.

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8. Recommendations: For universities and business schools

This final section provides recommendations which are mapped to specific challenges discussed in the sections above.

8.1 The HE landscape – KEF/REF/TEF/Accreditations

Responding to the challenges outlined in Section 5 above, we recommend the following:

8.1.1 The Knowledge Exchange Framework

- Ensure that small firm activity is included in the KEF narratives for Local Growth & Regeneration and Public & Community Engagement (if applicable)

- Recognise SME engagement roles with generic job specifications for Business Schools to use

- Capitalise on the opportunity of the Knowledge Exchange Framework and Concordat to make clear policies on working with small firms, and to promote this work to senior leadership in universities

- Ensure that the Engage Principle in the Knowledge Exchange Concordat emphasises work with SMEs and includes the voice of business

- Ensure that SMEs form part of all principles in the Concordat for their university

- Encourage quantitative recording of impact on SMEs to understand the benefits

- Set up an 'Entrepreneurs-in-Residence' network or similar

8.1.2 The Research Excellence Framework

- The REF provides an opportunity for academics to expand their networks. We recommend that Schools actively work with their SME partners to gather metrics on their impact and group these together to achieve high reach and significance

- An emphasis on research of 4* quality – we suggest that schools internally promote articles deemed to be of 3 or 4* quality in REF 2014/21 (when results are available), which include practical work with small firms, in order to address this perception.

- Academic staff will be engaged with producing outputs in the run up to the REF period, but some time after this may be set aside for specific external engagement work in the workload model, to take account of the peaks and troughs of publishing pressures. We do not suggest that academics do not engage in this important process, but that the academic year may provide some flex in terms of time that may be used for SME engagement.

- Impact Case Studies are focused on reach and significance of a piece of research in its impact. While reach may not be found in work with a specific SME or group of SMEs, the work may be significant, and may be part of a larger programme of work, that can creatively be developed as an Impact Case Study.

8.1.3 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The TEF encourages institutions that work with SMEs and rewards them for forming more positive links with the broader business community.

- To include significant SME engagement and inclusion into the teaching curriculum.

- To ask institutions to provide time to define a dedicated vision to how they intend to work with SMEs to improve the student experience.

- To encourage institutions to incorporate and consult with SMEs and the broader

business community when designing and validating new degree programmes.

- To encourage participation and involvement in formal associations such as Chartered ABS and more specifically the SBC and to evidence this relationship in their submission documentation.

- During the review of the TEF to consult with the SBC on how it can improve and reward institutions who work with SMEs and share evidence of best practice.

8.1.4 Accreditations

- Ensure that the connections between SME engagement and research and teaching are clear in order to foreground excellent SME work in the overall accreditations portfolio

- Ensure that SMEs know and understand the role of university accreditations and the impact they bring to the SME business community as well as a university

- Form partnerships with similar schools overseas in terms of reviewing each other's SME engagement portfolio, to bring an international dimension and to gain useful peer feedback in a global context

8.2 Challenges found inside universities

In order to address the challenges outlined in Section 6 above, for most universities some amount of organisational change will be needed. Indeed, it could be argued, that engaging with SMEs will necessitate that academic staff become more entrepreneurial and more enterprising. The definitions posited by the QAA (2018) are useful in this context – academics who can generate and apply ideas, creating value for both university and SME are to be both valued and developed, most effectively in service of a supportive, and clearly articulated, strategy and vision. There is a large body of literature concerned with the concept of the 'entrepreneurial university', an important aspect of which is not just what universities do but also how they do it and the characteristics of the staff undertaking these activities (Gibb et al, 2012).

A number of frameworks have been published to assist universities in this transition (Gibb, 2012), (Gibb and Haskins, 2013), (OECD, 2012). The OECD 'Guiding Framework for Entrepreneurial Universities' includes a dimension focusing on 'Organisational Capacity, People and Incentives'. It is with this focus that it is useful to emphasise the role of the Small Business Charter (Young, 2015) in driving improvements in organisational capacity and culture which, in turn, can build the organisation's ability to enable staff to engage more significantly with SMEs.

8.2.1 Leadership within the institution

Universities and business schools that prioritise SME engagement also tend to prioritise developments in curricula and pedagogy which are relevant to entrepreneurs and to the development of (student) entrepreneurs. To enable entrepreneurship and enterprise education, business schools need to exhibit entrepreneurial attributes – for example, bringing SMEs into the teaching environment and taking students out into the external environment. Ideally, university and business school leadership will see the value in developing in staff, as appropriate, some of the skills and behaviours articulated in the QAA guidelines (2018).

A commitment to the active pursuit of inter-disciplinarity (Gibb and Hannon, 2006) is also seen as important in developing multi-disciplinary centres and programmes needed to be relevant to a multi-disciplinary external environment.

Strategic plans can incorporate measures such as Key Performance Indicators which mandate inter-disciplinary working in the university.

Embedding entrepreneurialism and enterprise across the curriculum, not just in specialist programmes, modules or departments will also encourage staff to look externally for ways to bring these competencies and approaches into their teaching.

A commitment to the above is often exemplified, structurally, by the appointment of a Pro Vice-Chancellor or Business Engagement/Enterprise/Innovation and academic roles within schools such as Associate Deans supported by enterprise and entrepreneurship champions within departments (Gibb and Hannon, 2006).

8.2.2 HR processes

(1) Job/role design

An academic is more likely to engage externally in general, and with SMEs in particular, if the employment contract framed by the Job Description (JD) explicitly states this as a requirement. JDs have been seen which explicitly state that the academic devotes 550 hours to 'Research and Enterprise'. How this is implemented will be determined by the interests and capabilities of the staff member and the precise areas of strategic priority.

(2) Staff appraisals

An academic is more likely to be active externally if the university has an appraisal system which requires explicit objectives which are reported against. These individual objectives can be in line with school and university objectives in overall service to the university's performance indicators. Relevant objectives could include secondments, external work shadowing and engagement with a professional body or trade network. Many, if not all, academic disciplines found in business and management schools have associated professional bodies – engaging externally in this way is a relatively easy 'win' in this context.

To enable entrepreneurship and enterprise education, business schools need to exhibit entrepreneurial attributes.

(3) Staff recruitment

Staff who have experience of working outside of the HE sector are more likely to continue to engage externally once coming into HE. These staff can act as role models and mentors to other staff who have not worked outside of HE. Recruiting a blend of academic and applied expertise is therefore likely to lead to an overall increase in engagement. In general terms, recruiting staff from as wide a range of relevant backgrounds, including international faculty will encourage new ways of working.

(4) Workload planning

External engagement needs time. Most academic staff time is allocated via a workload allocation planning tool. The maximum amount of time which can be allocated is determined by the National Framework Agreement however, within prescribed parameters, how this time is used is determined by the specifics of a JD and the priorities of the university/school. Thus, if an institution sees external engagement as a priority and an important feature of the institution's culture, there is a resource implication which, of course, has financial implications also. Enabling staff to engage more must therefore form part of the institution's overall strategy and the cost/benefit of this investment clearly articulated. This remains an under-explored area in terms of literature; if there were more evidence of the benefits, university leaders and managers might be more likely to invest (Rhoades and Stensaker, 2017).

(5) Rewards and incentives schemes

There are many varieties of rewards and incentives schemes such as a percentage of income brought in allocated to the staff member for personal use and the allocation of a number of consultancy days where the staff member is encouraged to spend time generating income which they can then keep. These aspects form part of a framework for developing the 'entrepreneurial university' as envisaged by Gibb et al, (2012).

More broadly, there needs to be recognition for activities broader than publications and internal teaching (Gibb and Hannon, 2006). The reward system should recognise innovation, knowledge exchange and relevance to a wider community.

Increasingly, there are professorial routes which recognise achievement broader than research output; these 'enterprise' professors can be mentors and role models to academic staff. Whilst rewards structures are developing to encourage academic engagement with business, there is still much scope for the prioritisation of more enabling strategies, processes and tactics.

(6) Staff development

Staff need to be equipped with appropriate skills to engage successfully with SMEs. Relevant opportunities for training and experience need to be part of the organisation development focus. Figures 1-3 indicate the nature of some of the skills necessary to be able to engage with SMEs along the journey to a successful negotiation of a desired, shared outcome.

New funding opportunities such as the Management KTP (mKTP) funding from Innovate UK and the BEIS Leadership and Management funding for SME development can act as incentives for institutions to invest in developing staff to be ready to engage when the opportunities arise.

HEInnovate now offers a range of tools to evaluate how entrepreneurial and innovative a university is and how to develop staff skills and competences relevant to an increase in external engagement.

In addition, the European Union has produced the EntreComp framework which offers a comprehensive guide to developing the competences needed to be able to operate in an 'entrepreneurial' manner (EntreComp, 2016). These include a range of competences relevant to engagement with SMEs as seen below.

8.3 Commercial practices in higher education

Here, we provide recommendations on how universities can best establish sound commercial practise with SMEs.

- Design, test and implement less bureaucratic processes for universities to work with SMEs, which allow for flexibility and pragmatic working.

- Make a conscious effort to reduce the gap between universities and SMEs. This can be done by promoting good news stories and successful working relationships between universities and SMEs. Testimonials sell trust and create better commercial practices.

- Train staff on how to engage and work with SMEs. Developing relationships is key to successful commercial practices as many projects will take longer and require more work than first anticipated.

- Universities need to establish and place more resource into pre and post award KE teams that help academic staff, e.g. cost, outline and develop collaboration agreements timely between universities and SMEs. Many of these tasks the SME will not have the resource to develop.

8.4 Staff knowledge, skills and behaviours

In order to tackle the challenges in SME engagement, business school staff require a variety of skills, knowledge and behaviour. Building on identified enablers and learning from established 'good' practice, a number of recommendations have emerged which, if actioned, have the ability to effect change. The following are important and will need to be built into development programmes and need to include multi-touch relationship building:

8.4.1 Changing mindsets: SMEs as partners

- Changing mindset; the SME should not be viewed merely as a participant or part of a research sample. University staff should seek to develop more mutually beneficial relationships where SMEs can see the value of engagement.

- Start with low-risk initiatives thus building trust with SME partners to develop future collaborations (Vangen and Huxham, 2003), (Darabi and Clark, 2012). The role of the entrepreneurial educator is to enable and 'build collaborative relationships with students, educators and other stakeholders' (SFEDI, 2016). Through this type of engagement university staff can demystify the processes involved in SME and university collaboration.

8.4.2 Creating a networking orientation

- Encourage staff to be proactive in participating in SME, sector and business support agency networks, e.g. delivering sessions at master classes across their region.

- Networks provide access to new entrepreneurial opportunity, the business school staff should seek to position themselves within these networks e.g. mentors, advisors in start-up, business growth networks or board members of industry bodies.

In order to tackle the challenges in SME engagement, business school staff require a variety of skills, knowledge and behaviour.

- A business schools' network and staff engagement can demonstrate credibility to the SME (Johnston and Huggins 2018).

- Network governance is however required to ensure business school staff do not become over embedded in certain networks restricting their ability to work with a range of SMEs (Gordon, 2016).

- Trust, through individual contacts enables partnership development with SMEs (Darabi and Clark, 2012); this is facilitated through building network ties as mentioned above and viewing SME contacts as key partners.

- Other practical Ideas to support staff to network with SMEs include: (Thorpe et al, 2013).

  1. Design practice into courses - integrate practice into teaching.
  2. Bring more practitioner experience into the faculty; promote both practical engagement with business among the academically trained and academic participation among the practically experienced.
  3. Develop and manage company relationships institutionally; move away from individually funded projects towards multi-touch relationships that might cover placement opportunities, research links and the involvement of company staff in teaching or supporting programmes. It is essential that the schools have dedicated, professional staff, organised to manage all this activity, and supported by time commitment from academic staff.
  4. Improve measurement and assessment of research impact, re-orienting senior staff, encouraging engagement in the short term.
  5. Promote research in larger teams and centres with multi-dimensional roles – this promotes multidisciplinary collaboration, which businesses value; it provides scale that mobilises resources for wider dissemination of research to businesses and it gives businesses clear signposting to navigate to business-school resources.
  6. Move to more distinctly defined roles for different institutions - some may connect to the local economy, others internationally; some will commit to particular industry sectors; some will aim to catalyse commercialisation of university-generated technology etc.

8.4.3 Know their SME community

- The local and regional community the business school supports will be diverse and therefore business school staff need to understand which SME segments they wish to support such as relevant organisations in the business support infrastructure locally and local growth priorities.

8.4.4 Experts in their field

- Depending on their profile and stage of development, the SME will be experts in their sector. To encourage SMEs to engage with business schools, business school staff should also promote themselves as 'experts in their field', e.g. in leadership, international business development, social enterprise.

- Ensure staff are engaged in practice based CPD within their respective fields.

8.4.5 Developing an autonomous culture to support cross disciplinary working

- Business schools should support staff to create cross disciplinary teams to work with SMEs, e.g. finance, engineering, arts and business faculty conducting business idea generation workshops with SMEs.

- Afford such teams autonomy to develop SME initiatives around key themes they identify following collaboration.

8.4.6 Seamless delivery and effective CRM

- Speedy and effective communication should be enabled at the point of contact and throughout the SME relationship.

- Contact with SMEs can be streamlined and supported by an effective CRM system.

8.4.7 Intellectual contributions and a learning orientation

- Reports/cases emanating from SME engagement can be used in staff development initiatives. The aim is to encourage further engagement by staff across the business school and wider university community.

- Set up mechanisms for the sharing of best practice to create a learning orientation across the University.

8.4.8 An applied outlook

- Develop staff development programmes to support those staff who are not from a practitioner background. This may involve consultancy skills and project management workshops.

- Develop an applied academic career pathway. This may involve an applied continuum with the supervising of student led consultancy projects at one end to more in depth commissioned consultancy at the other.

8.4.9 Collaborations with business development/engagement teams

- Provide regular and continuous updates on business engagement initiatives to all staff including overviews of the local, regional, national and international partners involved.

- Provide summaries provided on the objectives as well as expected outcomes of initiatives to encourage staff engagement.

- Encourage and facilitate access to SME networks and contacts; a reciprocal networking relationship between directorates, academics and professional services staff.

9. Recommendations: for the Small Business Charter Board

The following is a list of suggestions of ways in which the SBC submission documents for assessment and re-assessment could be changed in order give focus to staff engagement with SMEs.

• Include a dimension on engagement with KEF when this becomes appropriate and timely.

• Measure specifically how many, and in what ways, academic staff are engaged with SMEs – this is to assess the breadth and depth of engagement with SMEs, as opposed to a small number of enthusiasts. How mainstream is engagement with SMEs?

• Either in the Dean's introduction or in a dimension, ask for evidence of how any strategic focus on external engagement (and SMEs specifically, hopefully) are operationalised at school level. This ties in with the point above which will provide an opportunity to present evidence of the range of engagement activities and the numbers of staff involved.

• Include an opportunity for commentary on how staff are developed to be able to fulfil the demands of the dimensions. This also ties into the operationalisation of strategic intent.

Other recommendations for the SBC

• Design and schedule a workshop for SBC holding schools and others who may be interested to hear about the findings of this working group and to add their ideas and viewpoints.

• Design and schedule a number of workshops individually or as part of a larger programme which will provide business schools with a 'go to' development programme addressing how to enable staff to continue to drive forward with the SBC dimensions and with SME engagement in particular.

• Investigate how published development frameworks such as those proposed by HEInnovate, OECD and EntreComp can be explored in more detail to enhance the approaches proposed in this document.

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11. Appendix 1: Case Study Best Practice Examples

11.1 Cardiff Metropolitan University - Cardiff School of Management (CSM)

School's Approach to SME Engagement

The School recognises the importance of SME engagement and was the first business school in Wales to be awarded the Small Business Charter.

The School has an extensive work placement programme; nearly all students have to undertake a work placement. Many of these placements are with SMEs which mirrors the make-up of the local business community.

CSM has an extensive programme of part-time provision which is aimed at those in work, often in SMEs. The Cardiff Met Executive MBA runs at the weekends, in block mode, in order to facilitate the participation of part-time learners. Students have the option of undertaking work-based assessments; the School was awarded an exemplar for work-based learning in 2017.

Extensive engagement with SMEs is also achieved via the MBA Advanced Entry route – this 'top-up' programme is perfectly suited to those who are in work and already have achieved an approved Level 7 qualification. Students often either work for a SME or focus their dissertation on aspects of entrepreneurship.

More than 1000 SMEs have been through CSM's Twenty20 programmes, designed specifically for growth SMEs.

The school prioritises professional development courses such as PRINCE2 and Agile and is working to develop this portfolio in areas of interest to SMEs.

In addition, SMEs to contribute to industry boards and into the curriculum via site visits and guest lectures.

What is the School's Approach to developing staff to engage with SMEs?

Type of Engagement

- Staff are encouraged to network externally with various business and sector specific networks. In addition, CSM has a number of its own externally facing networks which staff take part in as part of showcasing the school and its various areas of expertise.

- Work placements often involve SMEs. Staff involved with these placements will gain first-hand experience of engaging with industry.

- Many of CSM's staff are actively involved in research which either is about SMEs or is a collaborative project with an SME. The school has a generous 'Time for Research' scheme which supports research activity.

- Many staff teach on the Executive MBA and MBA Advanced Entry programmes and gain experience of working with SMEs in this way. This option is open to all staff and is done on an overtime basis in order to facilitate maximum flexibility.

In our experience, the mechanisms that work positively with SMEs include:

- Partnering with SME networks such as Chambers Wales to reach SMEs works very well. Joint events such as a series focused on productivity and Management KTPs have been successful in increasing engagement with the school.

- It is important that provision offered takes into account the needs of SMEs. This will often involve considerations such as location, timing, and level of support available. In our experience, convenience is important as well as access to coaching and mentoring.

- SMEs are often cash poor therefore pricing at an affordable level is important as well as developing flexible payment options

- Programmes are delivered by a combination of industry and academic experts. It is important to have the right blend of theory and practice. In particular, experience of SMEs is especially important. SMEs contribute to programme development and employability requirements via industry boards.

- The school is very keen to benefit from the recent focus of funding on Management KTPs. Development workshops have been held to help staff understand how mKTPs work and what support is available internally.

The challenges of working with SMEs include:

- The provision must be of direct relevance to SMEs who tend to be time-pressed. The challenge is to be fully appraised as to what the market needs and wants and to offer it in the most convenient manner.

- SMEs do not often see universities as places where they will find relevant education and training. The challenge is to bridge the gap between SME perception of what universities offer and what universities are actually capable of offering. Making the university offering visible to SMEs is a challenge.

- Business schools must offer a variety of input which is not necessarily tied to a qualification. A 'Just-in-Time' approach works well for SMEs but this is often a challenge for universities which, typically, take a long time to develop provision.

- Universities often struggle to recruit staff with the direct industry experience that SMEs want to see.

More than 1000 SMEs have been through CSM's Twenty20 programmes, designed specifically for growth SMEs.

11.2 Loughborough University School of Business and Economics

School's Approach to SME Engagement

The School of Business and Economics at Loughborough University does not target specific SME types (e.g. micro, sole traders or medium sized businesses). Marketing the school's support and training offerings is mostly ad-hoc and depends on the type of support the school offers.

SMEs benefit from multiple support activities on offer from the business school (student projects, internships, masterclasses, and access to consultancy). Intelligence gathered through our Enterprise Committee ensures that SME contacts are kept informed of new initiatives.

Recently the school started to take a more proactive approach to targeting SMEs through events such as Leicester Business Week and other networking events held in the region. In a belief that to increase the capacity of targeted businesses in specific industries, universities should promote themselves through business support organisations such as the LEPs, The Chambers of Commerce, The Federation of Small Businesses, and specific sector organisations such as Medilink (Biomedical).

What is the school's approach to developing staff to engage with SMEs?

Type of engagement

- Face to Face – Generally, staff involved in enterprise education and development, engage with these companies in the first instance. Some entrepreneurs are introduced to academics with specific expertise (consultancy). Duration and contact time can vary depending on the work carried out.

- Collaboration projects with undergraduates and MBA students - we assist many SMEs through collaborative projects which are mutually beneficial. MBA students work with real-life business problems and produce a consultancy report/business plan for the industry partner. Several partner SMEs return to access other forms of support e.g. consultancy, access to focus groups etc. Again, duration and contact time varies e.g. SMEs are engaged for ~12 hours on our MBA Managing Innovation module.

- SME employees and leaders take Loughborough's Executive Education accredited courses (Certificate, Diploma and Masters). An increasing number of SME employees are enrolling on our programmes probably because of the new Level 7 apprenticeship subsidised funding. Duration and contact time depend on the level of qualification being taken. Face to face contact time can be up to 24 hours per module.

- Staff in the school's enterprise team (Support Services) have delivered short training sessions for specific SME clients who have requested specialist training. Understanding the business environment and strategic planning are popular topics. Project management and digital marketing are also popular topics. The duration of these short courses is, on average, 2-3 hours.

In our experience, the mechanisms that work positively with SMEs include:

- Niche topics are attractive for SMEs (bespoke problem solving, how to manage HR issues). General training on topics such as access to finance are generally available, free of charge, through business support organisations such as the LEP/ Federation of Small Business etc. Specific topics on offer from our school are aligned to our research expertise – Decision Sciences, Retail and Marketing, Export, Sports Management, HR management etc.

- Place of delivery is important – Loughborough is not located in a city centre which can be a disadvantage. Individual SMEs requiring bespoke training often request that the course is held at their premises. We have often noted that more SMEs sign up for a training course if held at an off-campus location (County Council building, business incubator etc.).

- Training delivered by expert facilitators/teachers (with experience in the SME sector) and supported by specialist research academics.

The challenges of working with SMEs include:

- Online courses for SME, unless bite sized, are not particularly effective. Assessing impact can also be problematic. SMEs seem to prefer face to face support.

- SME requiring training are very time poor – short training courses are preferable to a full programme unless there is a training subsidy and a qualification attached (e.g. L7 degree apprenticeship). This is aligned with the future role of universities as a place for a life-long source of training. (Davey et al., 2018). This is also aligned with the growing trend of self-employment and innovation outputs that requires ad-hoc training and specialisation, (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018),

- Generalist courses for larger SMEs – they can access free support from business support organisations.

Intelligence gathered through our Enterprise Committee ensures that SME contacts are kept informed of new initiatives.

11.3 Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University

School's approach to SME Engagement

Sheffield Business School (SBS) engages with SMEs on a variety of targeted initiatives as well as part of a broader business support and development offer. The Higher Skilled Higher Growth (HSHG) initiative supports SMEs, start-ups and microbusinesses in locating the relevant support they require including leadership development, work placements, internships, apprenticeships, accessing Hallam Freelancers (a pool of freelance students and graduates offering bespoke services) as well as student research and consultancy. All students across the University are required to be engaged in applied projects through the Highly Skilled Employability (HSE) initiative thus creating a pool of resource to support organisations across every aspect of their business activities.

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) is a Civic University and SBS contributes to the delivery of SHU's strategy for city and community regeneration of regional business, especially SME's. SBS works in collaboration with a range of stakeholders to support SMEs including local and regional business support organisations such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Chambers of Commerce.

A dedicated SME Hub Operations Group, comprising both professional services and academic staff, leads on the development and delivery of the SME Engagement Strategy.

School's approach to develop staff to engage with SMEs

- Staff are invited to deliver themed masterclasses and workshops on their area of expertise often aligned to practice as well as research activity.

- Across the three Departments of Management, Financial Accounting and Business Systems and Service Sector Management staff are assigned to supervise student projects working with SMEs.

- Teaching case development – incentives to encourage staff engagement include the opportunity to create teaching cases based on their supervision of student projects or through their delivery on specific SME initiatives.

- Corporate sabbaticals – aligned to the traditional research sabbaticals successful applicants have been supported in taking sabbaticals that are particularly focused on developing relationships with business. Research outputs are required from this activity including teaching cases, academically or professionally reviewed articles. One sabbatical involved a member of staff working on a local Y Accelerator start-up project and was required to deliver research outputs on the success and challenges of this project.

Type of Engagement

- **Small Business Leadership Programme (SBLP**) - a BEIS funded leadership development programme supporting SME senior leaders to enhance resilience and develop potential for future growth in response to Covid-19. SBS supported over 100 leaders as part of the SBLP. The programme team at SBS were also commissioned to design the module on leadership and employee engagement.

- **Degree Apprenticeships** - SBS delivers a range of degree apprenticeships including Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA), Food Technology, Facilities Management, Retail HDA, Supply Chain HDA, MBA and MA Leadership in Practice. SBS was the first UK business school to launch the CMDA and the business school has over 400 apprentices. SBS has worked with employers to create courses that meet the needs of businesses, to increase productivity and performance by attracting and developing the very best talent.

- **Higher Skills Higher Growth (HSHG)** - Sheffield Hallam lead this programme working in collaboration with the Sheffield College and the RNN Group, to provide SMEs, start-ups and microbusinesses with a tailored business package to support innovation and develop new opportunities. Small business experts provide a diagnostic service to organisations and connect them with a university-wide network of academic and sector specialists, training opportunities, work-ready students and world class facilities.

- **ScaleUp 360** - a three-year European funded high growth accelerator project providing tailored support to entrepreneurs and start-ups with the ambition and potential to scale up their business. Lead by SHU working with business experts from Doncaster and East Midlands Chambers of Commerce and Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre (BBIC) under the leadership of Sheffield Hallam University.

- **Leading to Grow (Business Basics)** - a BEIS funded Chartered ABS/Small Business Charter initiative to support micro business adoption of digital and new technology. Repurposed to focus on broader support following Covid-19. The SBS Department of Management (DoM) employer engagement lead was part of a working group with peers from other SBS accredited Schools - Leeds Beckett, University of Sheffield and Staffordshire University to design the workshop content. Workshops were co-delivered with an Entrepreneur in Residence. Participants were then provided with four hours of 1 to 1 support by an Entrepreneur in Residence and digital experts.

- **SCR Scale Up Programme (Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Hub funded)** - a SME Scale-Up pilot programme targeting high growth SMEs in the region. Participants took part in workshops across a range of themes including leadership and change management, mindset agility and innovative thinking.

- **Highly Skilled Employment (HSE) Initiative** - This encompasses all aspects of student research and consultancy, work placements and internships. Staff are engaged with SMEs through these projects in supervising students. Although typically engagement is via the students and purposively so to develop their

> SBS has worked with employers to create courses that meet the needs of businesses, to increase productivity and performance by attracting and developing the very best talent.

employability skills, this involves staff developing a relationship with the SME. This includes working with students to evaluate the SME business need and responding to the specific project brief.

- **Sheffield Innovation Programme (SIP)** - An EDRF funded regional initiative providing consultancy from academics to stimulate business growth and promote the development of long-term relationships with SMEs. SIP is a joint initiative between Hallam University and the University of Sheffield. The Business School delivered a range of masterclasses and workshops on leadership to support Leaders during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **AWRC Wellbeing Accelerator** - The University Enterprise Zone Accelerator offers a rolling programme running from April 2020–March 2021 to support start-ups, academics and businesses working in wellbeing with mentoring, sector expertise and specialist facilities.

- **The RISE Programme** - a collaboration between Sheffield Hallam University, University of Sheffield and SCR Growth Hub and local authorities, this equips SMEs to grow through the employment of graduate talent and increases graduate employment in SMEs. SMEs new to graduate recruitment receive free recruitment activity including national advertising, screening, assessment centre and aftercare support. Bursaries are available after a graduate stays for 3 months with the SME.

- **Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)** - SBS works across the University to support companies to develop their particular innovation whether product, process or service related. As part of the KTP, Business School staff are part of the three-way partnership with the SME and a recent graduate.

- **Management KTPs** - focussed on supporting SMEs on significant change programmes with their organisation. Similar approach to KTP.

- **Digital Innovation for Growth** - A three-year ERDF funded programme led by Sheffield Hallam University and Barnsley Council provides free support for businesses in the Sheffield City Region to increase their competitiveness through digital innovations.

According to our experience, these are the mechanisms that work positively with SMEs:

- Developing a partnership approach with the SME and ensuring all parties are aware of the role each plays.

- Developing and supporting peer to peer learning opportunities.

- Designing programmes to match the often time resource strained challenges SMEs face in releasing staff onto specific programmes of support.

- Promoting SBS and SHU as a local provider of support and expertise.

The challenges working with SMEs:

- Awareness of opportunities to work with SBS or any other University. Local research shows SMEs do not tend to reach out to SBS as they feel university is about 'educating' students.

- SMEs perceive university collaborations are more for 'big business'.

- Building staff resource to deliver on a range of SME activity.

11.4 The Manchester Metropolitan University Business School

School's approach to SME Engagement

The school has developed a strategic focus on small firm development in both research and practice. We are a leading provider of SME support. The Business School's Business and Public Engagement Team (BPE) deliver three business growth programmes, five innovation programmes, and four leadership development programmes. These short, practical programmes are designed for business owners at every stage in their business journeys, with 1,153 North West leaders and managers enrolling since 2016 (to January 2021). Collaborations with the Faculty of Science and Engineering allow SMEs to develop business strategies and leadership skills, then access technical support to develop prototypes, and launch. We are a leading UK provider of Degree Apprenticeships for SMEs, for which we hold Exemplar status from the Small Business Charter. We are also internationally renowned for our work on Place Management and supporting small retail businesses and local high streets – the Institute of Place Management leads the government-funded £8.6M High Street Task Force, helping local authorities across England revitalise their high streets. This has now pivoted to provide a critical Recovery Framework to tackle the effects of the pandemic. Our strategic aim has been and continues to be to enhance the number, breadth and depth our business relationships, in order to increase the impact of our knowledge generation by getting that knowledge out into more businesses and organisations. We aim to transform their business growth, innovation and productivity, increase the contextualised knowledge of our academic community through engagement with more businesses and organisations – transforming their teaching and research, and increase the number of students, from broader backgrounds, who can learn and work with our connections – transforming their lives.

School's approach to develop staff to ENGAGE with SMEs

We support staff to work with SMEs through a range of different mechanisms:

- A dedicated Business & Public Engagement Team, drawing expertise from across the school and university in delivery to SMEs

> Our ERDF-funded SME programmes allow staff to work with small firms to deliver in their area of expertise

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- Degree Apprenticeships provide the opportunity for staff to work directly with small firms both inside the university, and through projects undertaken at the firm
- Business Start-Up and Enterprise Programmes, which engage with regional small firms
- Our ERDF and other-funded SME programmes allow academic staff to work with small firms to deliver in their area of expertise and keep their sector and business knowledge up to date
- BPE team staff also deliver on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, sharing business knowledge with students, and academic knowledge with business.
- We deliver a significant number of KTPs with small firms – these enable staff to develop their research profile with supervision of the associate in the business

Type of engagement

In to our experience, the mechanisms that work positively with SMEs include:

- ERDF and other funded Growth and Innovation programmes:
  - A peer to peer network is facilitated by staff, which continue to support participants after programme end
  - Masterclass delivery
  - Action Learning
  - Delivered at various locations, including the School
  - Innospace Incubator
- Working on Degree Apprenticeships
- Developing research with base-line impact for KTPs

11.5 Aston Business School, Aston University

School's approach to SME Engagement

Aston University's strategy focusses on outcomes for students, businesses and the region and the university has long been known for its support for entrepreneurship and small business growth. Aston Business School has channelled its research and engagement expertise in enterprise and entrepreneurship into key centres of excellence – the Centre for Growth, the national Enterprise Research Centre (jointly hosted with the University of Warwick), and CREME (the Centre for Research into Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship). Alongside these centres are other key projects and activities supporting SMEs such as the Advanced Services Group, Innovation Vouchers and Low Carbon SMEs.

The Centre for Growth works intensively with high potential SMEs strengthening their leadership and management skills, inspiring business model innovation, and accelerating digital adoption. Its strategy is to deliver growth programmes and specialist support at scale in order to transform the regional economy, providing a major boost to productivity, driving increased GVA per head for the region, better skilled business leaders producing high value sustainable job creation, and engagement across the diverse economic geography delivering genuine inclusive growth.

The Centre for Growth creates impact for SMEs through a range of targeted specialist programmes which are practical in delivery and underpinned by leading research. In its first five years the Centre supported over 1,000 entrepreneurs and impact evaluation has shown that businesses on its intensive growth programmes achieved a 28% boost to productivity and created 650 jobs in the West Midlands and £120m of additional revenues for the region (based on the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses UK impact evaluation of 2018). The Centre works extensively with other Business Schools, funders and national partners, often working in collaboration on programmes such as the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses UK programme, Productivity through People and Mentoring for Growth with Be the Business, EY, Rolls-Royce and Lloyds Banking Group, and the Small Business Charter Leading to Grow Business Basics 2 programme. The Centre for Growth ran six cohorts of the Small Business Leadership Programme and was heavily involved in the development of the programme nationally.

Aston Business School has channelled its research and engagement expertise in enterprise and entrepreneurship into key centres of excellence

For student and graduate start-up and pre-start-up Aston Business School provides activities around ideation such as hackathons, the PIPE Club (Product, Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship), Apollo, a mini accelerator, which bridges the gap between ideation and incubation, and our student and graduate start-up, BSEEN (Birmingham Skills for Enterprise and Employability Network). For early stage businesses the Aston Programme for Small Business Growth (APSBG) and the GBS LEP Growth Hub scale-up clinics are designed specifically for businesses which have been making revenues for 12 months or more. Minerva Birmingham Pitch Up (formerly Pitchfest West Midlands) also provides access to finance for this stage, and we can provide funding and support through Innovation Vouchers and Aston's angel investor network Minerva Birmingham in partnership with the University of Birmingham and Minerva Business Angels.

Individual businesses at all stages are supported with access to talent through placement and internship opportunities and through Aston Business School's Law Clinic and Business Clinic where supervised student teams work on business projects or problems. Where a business is ready for an in-depth project in relation to research and innovation the School works with colleagues in Aston's Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) to develop a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) or consultancy project.

What is the School's approach to developing staff to engage with SMEs?

- External engagement is included in promotion criteria
- Each academic department has an Enterprise Convenor to support staff in the department to develop business engagement activity
- Staff are able to engage with small business leaders, entrepreneurs and workplace learning through Centre for Growth programmes, degree apprenticeships, MBAs and enterprise development programmes
- Initiatives such as the annual SME Practical Insights workshops series enable staff to gain experience of working with business leaders through shadowing opportunities with more experienced delivery staff
- Impact Champions in Aston Business School and Research and Knowledge Exchange support academic staff in developing business engagement for REF Impact Case Studies
- The Centre for Growth has a team of experienced business engagement professionals who support academic staff with materials and management of business engagement activities

In our experience, the mechanisms that work positively with SMEs include:

- Peer-to-peer learning facilitated between business leaders in mixed sector cohorts
- Invisible theory and practical application of learning
- Interactive teaching with a lot of time allowed for participation and group discussion
- SME case studies and examples

The challenges of working with SMEs include:

- Intensive programmes delivered to a high quality have a significant impact on businesses but take a high level of resourcing. Raising sufficient external funds to run programmes of this nature can be difficult.
- Academic staff need to develop the skills to work with SMEs but even if they are motivated to do so, the demands on their time to do with teaching and research often take priority over business engagement.

11.6 Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University

By way of background – Newcastle Business School (NBS) is a leading post 92 business school and was awarded 'Best Business School' by the T.H.E in 2015. NBS has a strong and significant reputation in the market. NBS is the only business school in Europe that has Association of Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Business and Accounting dual accreditation, placing it within an elite group of less than 1% of Business Schools worldwide. Thence, NBS places a strong emphasis on knowledge exchange activity and blends academic theory with leading industry practice.

Indicators of best practice – Newcastle Business School (NBS), part of Northumbria University

- **Contract research:** involves a partnership between academic staff at NBS and a business. E.g. BEIS Business Basics) NBS staff have been successful in securing funds from e.g. the business basics programme and generating enterprise income. This provided academic staff the opportunity to work with n47 SME over a six month period. NBS is also involved in contract research with 15 other SBC charted Business Schools as part of a collaborative research project.

- **Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs):** A Knowledge Transfer Partnership serves to meet a core strategic need and to identify innovative solutions to help that business grow. As part of Business Schools KE agenda, the school has to secure four KTPs per academic year. In order to achieve this, Dr Matt Sutherland took the role of Director for KTPs in NBS. The specific purpose of this role was to secure leads and generate awareness for KTP activity.

- **Student and Graduate Enterprise:** academic staff in NBS have continued to be involved the 'Student and Graduate enterprise'. Student and Graduate Enterprise is a unique service providing free enterprise skills training and start up support across the University's community of students and graduates. Services include, (1) start up hatchery (2) enterprise workshops (3) enterprise education and (4) enterprise placements. Much of the support by academic staff to date has been involved in enterprise placements and supporting students setting up their own businesses. In fact, Northumbria University is ranked

number one in the country for enterprise and Northumbria has now been
ranked the top university in the UK for graduate start-ups for five out of the past
six years.

- **Women in Leadership:** a five-day programme that attracted 17 attendees and
  provides CPD on women in leadership, including coaching and mentoring.
  The fifth day included a conference that was open to delegates from across
  the North East and attracted 71 attendees. The aim of this programme was to
  establish greater awareness for women in leadership role across the region
  and highlight the resources on offer here in the business school.

- **Business Clinic:** The Business Clinic provides free consultancy advice to
  SMEs, multi-nationals and not for profit organisations who are looking to grow
  by taking their business in a new direction, explore new challenges or require
  fresh eyes to help them succeed. With support and guidance from our team
  of experts at NBS, the service is provided by our final year undergraduate and
  postgraduate business students. This support has resulted in the Business
  Clinic winning awards for Teaching Excellence from 'The Academy of Marketing'
  and 'British Academy of Management' (BAM).

- **Secondment**: similar to staff at Sheffield Hallam, academic staff have the
  opportunity to apply for a secondment and work for a large or SME for up to 12
  months. Here the academic staff forge deeper relationships with industry and
  the broader business community as well as generating enterprise income as
  their salary is paid by the business.

- **Representative bodies:** provide guidance and new insights into the business
  environment and highlight challenges facing SMEs. Academic staff are
  encouraged to meet and work alongside core representative bodies including,
  NE LEP; SBC; FSB; CIM; AACSB.

- **Courses-to-resources:** events aimed at SMEs that encourage them to tap
  into the resources and skills contained within universities, such as: contract
  research: KTPs instead of simply providing structured courses or traditional
  classroom style learning on solving a business problem.

- **Innovation Northumbria:** Incubator will open in October 2019 as a pre-
  accelerator for aspiring entrepreneurs. Located next to the University's main
  campus, the state-of-the-art facility has already received financial support from
  Santander Universities UK, Sir James Knott Trust, North East Times Magazine,
  Space Group and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. A sponsorship
  agreement for a series and profile and fund-raising events has also been
  secured with Newcastle-based creative agency Gardiner Richardson.

- **New £100k entrepreneurship fund at Northumbria University:** new
  entrepreneurs at Northumbria University have access to a new £100k fund
  designed to get their business start-ups ready for investors. Over five
  years, starting in 2019, the fund will support the development of student
  businesses through the Entrepreneurial Business Management (EBM)
  Business Awards initiative. In order to secure investment to develop their
  companies, undergraduates studying on Northumbria University's pioneering
  EBM programme must make a competitive pitch to an independent panel.
  Awards ranging from £500 to £5,000 will be presented to businesses
  which demonstrate the greatest potential to become 'investment ready' by
  graduation.

- **Northern Accelerator Story:** The project is accelerating the translation of world-
  class research into commercial opportunities, forming sustainable businesses
  and creating more and better jobs. The North East has the lowest business

density in England (749 per 10,000 population compared to the UK average of 1,059) and comparatively low levels of private sector R&D investment. The North East Universities' research accounts for a significantly higher proportion of R&D spend (38%) compared with the national average (24%). It is therefore critical the North East Universities respond to the challenge in commercialising their research to support local and national economic growth.

- **Civic Universities Commission:** a new fund should be announced that allows universities to bid for resources that will allow them to implement their strategies. The fund should be worth around £500m over a 5 year period, with universities bidding on a competitive basis for multi-year projects (meaning a typical award may be in the region of £20m-£30m. The fund should be administered jointly by DfE and BEIS recognising the dual industrial strategy and educative focuses of the fund and building on the existing joint departmental responsibilities of the Universities Minister and it should have a preference towards supporting places that are both economically and socially vulnerable, as with the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund approach.

11.7 Coventry Business School – Coventry University

The Faculty of Business and Law, (FBL) is comprised of Coventry Business School (CBS), Coventry Law School (CLS) and the International Centre for Transformational Entrepreneurship (ICTE). CBS and the wider faculty, sets its priorities, operational principles and future aspirations in line with the vision, mission and corporate plan of Coventry University. 'The Coventry Way' is an approach which underpins teaching, research, enterprise activity and global engagement policy, process and practice. It encapsulates the University's industrial and creative origins as well as its current position as a global operator. Innovation and entrepreneurship are key pillars of the Coventry Way and this is reflected in its engagement with businesses, large and small. Below is a sample of the range of activities CBS currently engages in.

The school's approach to SME Engagement

- Research Enriched Learning (REL) is an approached pioneered in CBS that brings staff research into the classroom. A library of teaching case studies / resources have been developed, many with an SME focus, to help students to connect theory with practice in a more effective way. The case studies, which may originate from REF impact case studies, are based on real firms and explore a wide range of contexts. REL takes many forms, but has one primary goal and that is to bring theory and practice closer together.

- Group work based projects – this is an options module currently on undergraduate programmes that brings students and businesses together to solve a problem or a challenge faced by the firm. The module aims to build student's professional and managerial skills in a team based context, whilst at the same time helping a company to address the challenge identified. As an optional module circa 60 students engaged with business in 2019/20. However,

CBS has been an active partner in the Small Business Leadership Programmes in collaboration with the Small Business Charter.

from the currently academic year (2021/2) the modules is mandatory for 450 students.

- Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) underpins our teaching and assessment practice. One of its aims is to ensure that we promote links between industry and relevant courses to ensure that students are aware of currently work practices and professional standards in the sector. This involves building links between courses and accreditation bodies and bringing in speakers and members from those bodies to talk about best practice.

- Apprenticeships – CBS is involved in a wide range of degree apprenticeship programmes. Four new apprenticeship programmes were developed in 2019/20 in subjects such as Leadership, Project Management and HR. These programmes provide staff with a wide range of opportunities to engage with businesses of all sizes, which further serves to enhance both teaching and learning across a wide range of sectors.

- Alumni networks are a vital tool in showing students how graduates of their courses have gone on to develop successful businesses of their own. Not only does this present students with an authentic experience, but it also demonstrates to them the value of SMEs to economies, both home and abroad. These businesses are also an opportunity for internships and placement for current students.

- Staff deliver training and masterclass to local businesses and social enterprises. Business growth and management can be a major challenge for many small businesses and these workshops aim to help business owners to consider alternative strategies for growth.

- CBS has been an active partner in the Small Business Leadership Programmes in collaboration with the Small Business Charter. The initiative chimes perfectly with the CBS's approach to SME engagement to help SMEs develop their potential for future growth and productivity.

- All staff are encouraged to engage in enterprise and innovation (E & I) activities and this may be in lieu of pure research. Academic progression can be linked to E & I engagement and this supports staff willingness to explore these opportunities.

The challenges of working with SMEs

- Building a rapport with any business prior to active engagement is more productive than a cold call. It is important to understand the needs of the business and to be honest about what is on offer. This can be time consuming and requires a degree of commitment on both parts. Small business do not have luxury of engaging in too many one sided or unproductive activities.

- Don't over complicate things. If the SME perceives that the effort outweighs the reward, they will probably decline.

- Respect the contribution that they can make and evidence how the collaboration can add value to the SME.

12. Appendix 2: The role of Government in Enabling University/SME Engagement

Based on the SBC model and in order to act as a catalyst, the UK Government and those of the devolved nations, provides universities and SMEs with a number of opportunities to collaborate in order to best fulfil business problems. These are often part of fully funded. Some of the products on offer include:

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)

First established over 40 years ago, a KTP serves to meet a core strategic need and to identify innovative solutions to help that business grow. KTP often delivers significant increased profitability for business partners as a direct result of the partnership through improved quality and operations, increased sales and access to new markets. They involve universities partnering with an SME to establish a tangible knowledge transfer, innovate and receiving funding from InnovateUK and BEIS.

Skills Development Programmes

Since the launch of the 'Industrial Strategy' in November 2017, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) have provided a number of funding vehicles that allow staff, businesses (including SMEs) the opportunity to receive state funding to conduct research and to develop skills. Much of this activity has been focused on exploring how to boost business productivity and developing leadership and management capabilities. Examples include the Business Basics programme, the SBLP and HTGM.

SMART Grants

The Smart Grants funding covers collaborative R&D projects (working with business) focussed on the best game-changing or disruptive ideas with a view to commercialisation.

Applications can come from any area of technology (including arts, design, media or creative industries), science or engineering and be applied to any part of the economy.

The funding is not for pure research, but rather research applied to challenges facing businesses which will enable them to generate new products, services or efficiencies and create more jobs.

- This is funding for collaborative R&D, where the business leads and the university is a partner (university partners on a project can claim up to 30% of the total eligible project cost).
- The project team must include an SME.
- Project durations between 6 and 18 months must have total eligible project costs between £25,000 and £500,000.
- Project durations between 19 months and 3 years must have total eligible project costs between £25,000 and £2 million. They must be collaborative projects.

Business Wales

Business Wales provides information, advice and guidance for businesses looking to start, sustain and grow.

A highly experienced team of advisers supports business in a range of areas;

- Business reviews
- HR Issues
- Financial management and cashflow
- Business planning
- New markets, diversification and digital capability
- Marketing and branding
- Laws, regulations and insurance
- Employment policies

SMALL BUSINESS CHARTER

CABS

CHARTERED ASSOCIATION
OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS