



Graduates for Growth Forum

Reflections on Student Careers and Enterprise Development
Activity at North East Universities

The Graduates for Growth (G4G) Forum was set up about fifteen years ago as an informal partnership between the five universities in the North East (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside). The G4G forum provides an opportunity for university staff in the careers and enterprise development fields to share good practice, collaborate regionally and work with other stakeholders in the student placement, graduate recruitment and enterprise development fields in the region. This note captures some of the activities undertaken across the region in relation to these activities. It is not a comprehensive report – it aims to capture some of the headline messages extracted from the notes taken at G4G meetings, and is intended to provide a brief overview of careers and enterprise development in the region's universities over the last number of years.

1. Careers Advice and Guidance

Each of the universities has their own careers services which are on hand to provide day-to-day careers advice.

- There are a number of programmes which aim to give students and graduates careers advice. Newcastle and Northumbria have a joint Graduate Service which provides careers support to students and alumni of both universities. The Newcastle-based universities work actively together to share delivery platforms so as to avoid duplication of activity and competition.
- The 'Services to Graduates' unit at Sunderland University provides free careers information and job interview advice. This service is provided both locally and nationally to the university's students and graduates.
- Northumbria has a couple of workshops that aim to help students with their careers; the Art of Building Windmills is a series of exercises to help people take control of their careers and develop Career Tactics for the 21st Century.
- Durham's Discovery Event is the main organised event for careers advice, where practitioners attend to give students the benefit of their experience and knowledge.

2. Careers Fairs

Durham and Newcastle Universities are the main universities that host regular careers fairs.

- Newcastle holds yearly careers fairs; Jobfest, Legal Careers Day, Media Careers Fair and the Work Experience Fair. These fairs tend to be open to any students wishing to attend, which allow students to have the opportunity to go to careers fairs at universities other than their own in the region. The Jobfest has approximately 80 plus employers attending every year, advertising graduate vacancies and work experience placements.
- The Media Careers Day was promoted by the BBC and Skillset and was open to both students and sixth formers. Other universities are allowed to have stalls at

Newcastle's fairs, e.g. the Graduate Service of Northumbria had a stall at the Newcastle Graduate Fair.

- Northumbria University also have a Career Law Day where around 440 students attended with 23 exhibitors.
- Durham has a Careers Fair, Entrepreneurship Fair and also a Local Event for Law. An Event for Law is also held regionally in association with Service Network Ltd, and gives students a chance to informally network with graduate recruiters, senior staff and recent graduates.
- Finally, Teesside also holds a Careers Information Fair where approximately 34 graduate employers attend.

3. Student work placements

There are a number of programmes available to all students regarding student placements.

- The Shell/DTI STEP programme is co-ordinated in the North East region by ENTRUST. It provides placements for students from the region's universities over the summer vacation period. This programme is delivered in partnership with Durham, Newcastle and Teesside universities. Flexi-STEP, a derivative of the traditional STEP programme places students on short term time placements.
- The GRANE project co-ordinated by Durham University as a partnership between the region's five universities, the Open University, ENTRUST and the Universities for the North East aimed to provide students and graduates in the region with access to work experience and work placements. This service, funded by ONE also provided regional SME employers with the opportunity to recruit on a skills matching basis.
- For students at Durham University there is a Job Shop, funded by the university whereby students are able to view work experience and jobs offered by companies in the region online. If students are looking to stay in or return to the North East, there is also Vacancies North East which is a vacancy bulletin specific to the North East. Lastly, the university holds a Work Experience Event where organisations which offer a wide variety of work experience opportunities can meet students.
- Sunderland University also provides an opportunity to gain some work experience with their Work Experience Project. This is supported by the Business Bridge project which provides students with the opportunity to gain around two days a week of work experience. Sunderland also offers short term work experience projects with the not-for-profit sector with their Community Bridge scheme.
- Teesside University offers a number of placement opportunities with their Bridges & Routes scheme. The Bridges & Routes programme is ESF funded and is a 15 week paid placement for around fourteen students. The 'mini' version is linked with Graduates for Business and offers twenty five placements for graduates. Teesside also offers a Ready to Work opportunity which helps undergraduates gain six weeks of paid placements.
- Newcastle University also has an International Work Experience scheme to help international students gain some unpaid work experience with regional employers.

4. Careers skills development

In terms of Skills Development there are a number of programmes to help students in the region's universities. These courses offer practical skills development for students and cover aspects related to Life Skills, Personal Skills and Practical Skills. Many training sessions offered by the careers offices are employer-led, interactive and open to all students of any degree discipline.

- The New Technology Institute based at Northumbria University is a large consortium of FE, HE, employers and business support organisations working together to establish the NTI in Tyne & Wear and Teesside. It aims to increase the supply of people with technician and higher level skills in ICT and improve the quality and relevance of the curriculum to ensure it better reflects the needs of modern businesses.
- Another scheme which focused on improving ICT skills at Durham University was the Graduate Associate Programme (GAP-IT).
- Teesside University has set up a National Mentoring Consortium Mentor Scheme which is specifically for ethnic minority undergraduates. It offers a half module career management skills session over the summer.

5. Student enterprise

Over the past five years the five universities have worked together to ensure the integration of enterprise and entrepreneurship activities within their respective universities. Activities have ranged from enterprise awareness raising and skills development to start-up support to students and recent graduates. Each university has achieved its own approach to the expansion of enterprise, but the sharing of experience and good practice across the five universities has seen an evolving set of activities common to all the universities. These add up to a varied and complementary pattern of support that fits the region's educational and economic development needs. The collaboration between the five North East Centres of University Enterprise (NECUEs) contributes to the regional economy in a number of ways. Many of the graduate entrepreneurs coming through these university-based programmes start businesses in the North East, employ people in the region and contribute to the regional economy. They are reshaping the regional economy by operating in new knowledge intensive industries and adding to the competitiveness of the region by operating in markets outside the North East. Beyond graduate new business ventures, students and graduates from the region's universities also contribute through value-adding KTP or CIP placements or other forms of technology transfer between the universities and businesses in the region.

Regional Summary – extract from OECD Report

How it Operated	<p>Activity is varied but includes a mix of elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business 'hatchery' space where individuals can carry out pre trading tasks e.g. market research, business planning, ideas development and test trading. • Managed workspace with shared office and other facilities, business support services, networking opportunities and other specialist facilities e.g. access to labs/technical facilities or digital & media facilities. • Structured education training programmes within and out with the curriculum. • Legal and professional advice on e.g. IPR and Licensing. • Access to business development funds e.g. Digital Fellowships at Teesside. <p>Note: These activities are additional to other enterprise activities e.g. mainstream enterprise education programmes and projects targeting university staff to commercialise research and development findings (usually defined as spinouts).</p> <p>Key role of NECUEs is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enterprise awareness and education for students/graduates; • making student/graduate businesses 'investor ready'; • mediating access for students/graduates to the business support network.
Results/ Impacts	<p>Universities of Sunderland, Northumbria, Newcastle April 2003 to March 2005:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 new businesses created • 60 jobs created • 920 learning opportunities over 30 hours

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 379 learning opportunities under 30 hours <p>University of Teesside since 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70 graduate start up businesses • 199 individuals & companies supported • 150 new jobs created <p>University of Durham since 2001:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 114 graduate business start-ups (since 1998) • 159 new jobs created • 138 student teams engaged in business plan competition • 650 learning opportunities under 30 hours • 265 students engaged on postgraduate enterprise modules • 201 students engaged on undergraduate enterprise modules
Additional Information	<p>There are a range of unique features and/or developments in each university:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham has the leading regional graduate start-up programme (GLEAM), and its enterprise exchange provides masterclasses and one-to-one mentoring to students from all faculties. • Newcastle Enterprise Centre has the only student led networking group – ‘Enterprise Soup’ and is the only university centre to have a ‘Centre of Excellence Award’ from the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative. • Northumbria has a strong track record in supporting design students to a position where they are actually trading. • Sunderland has a number of hatcheries which provide physical incubator space to a range of students at different locations across the campus. • Teesside have a whole range of programmes to support the creation of digital media businesses, including very successful business incubator facilities.

6. Other schemes

- The region’s universities run the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) scheme which is sponsored by the DTI and the Research Council. It is a collaborative effort by the five universities and is promoted via regional seminars, associate events and training programmes.
- There is also the Year in Industry which is funded by the One NorthEast’s Skills Development Fund to maintain the training programme in the North. This is an opportunity for pre-university students or undergraduates who wish to take a year long placement during their degree to gain a placement within a number of different types of companies. The subject mix is mainly technical, but with also a few economics and business students.

Graduates for Growth Member Organisations

University of Teesside; University of Sunderland; University of Newcastle; Durham University; Northumbria University; ENTRUST; Q Graduate Solutions; One NorthEast; A Year in Industry; Codeworks Connect; Sector Skills Development Agency; Durham Business School, Northern Cultural Skills Partnership, Universities for the North East, TEDCO, EMTA, Knowledge House (KTP)

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