



Encouraging innovation

Universities are implementing impactful entrepreneurship education

- There is a need for an inventive and innovative entrepreneurial culture to build new businesses.
- Entrepreneurial minds need actionable resources to hone their skill sets.
- Universities cultivate new learning techniques but can often fail when it comes to transforming thought into practice.
- Dr Robert James Crammond, senior lecturer in enterprise at the University of the West of Scotland, is dedicated to the successful implementation of entrepreneurship education (EE) at university level to support an entrepreneurial business culture.
- EE aligns a university's ambitions with regional, national, and international policies to promote economic growth.

Bridging business and higher education

Universities have built curriculums and a culture that supports academic education. Many now aspire to encourage enterprise and build new business ventures. To do this, they need to integrate with the business community. Crammond shows how this is best done.

He recognises that the key bridges between students and businesses are tutors active in local small business networks and connected with external enterprise support agencies.

The research enforces the argument that entrepreneurial opportunities arise from deep industry collaborations and wide entrepreneurial support networks.

Entrepreneurship education (EE) needs a clear model to employ these networks. The goal is to successfully embed new course structures, teaching methods, and external partners from both state and private sectors. To these ends, Crammond and colleagues have surveyed the impact of a novel 'academic team' approach to EE delivery.

The researchers' practical activities all increased students' entrepreneurial ambition. Their survey identifies coursework, tuition approaches, and digital learning methods that support successful entrepreneurship curriculums. The study also highlights the key contribution of a

teacher's personality, practical business knowledge, and familiarity with digital marketing. This combination of team qualities and qualitative coursework creates an EE programme that successfully unites business and education.

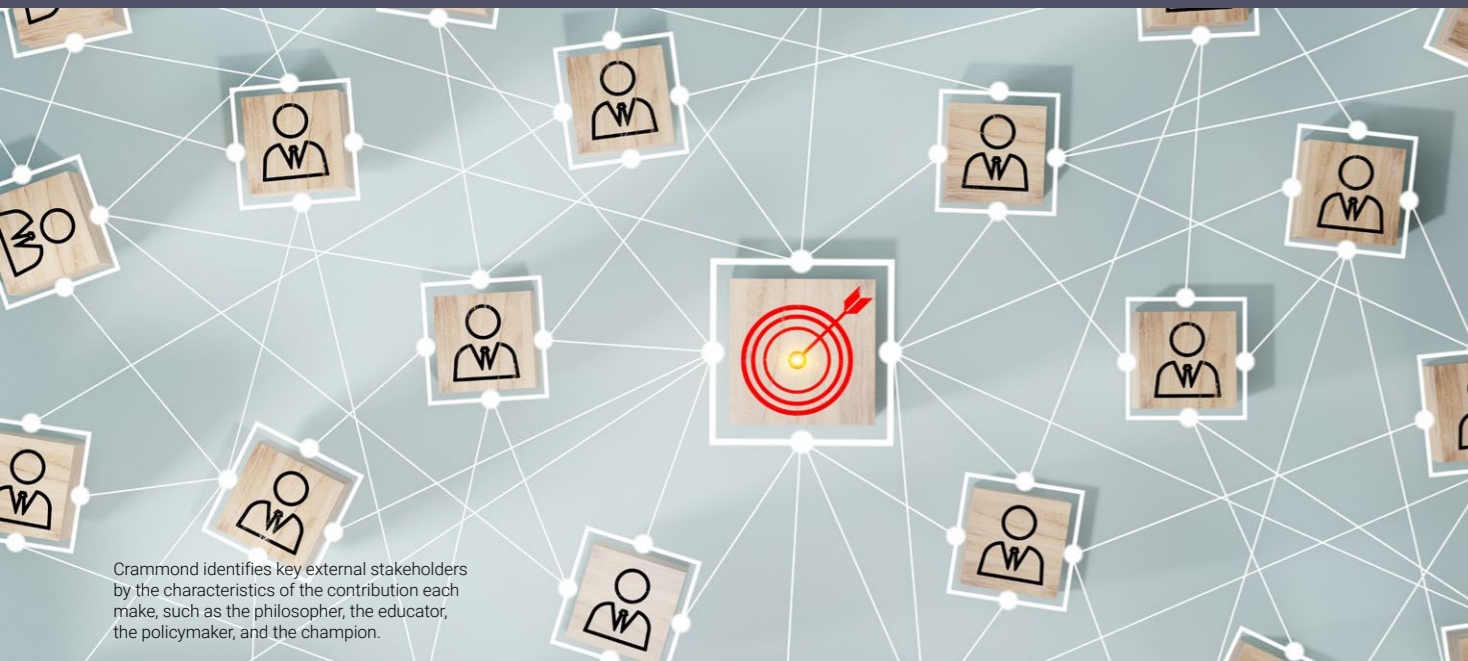
This academic team approach produces just the sort of entrepreneurial vision that leading policymakers and educational support organisations are encouraging universities to pursue.

Being an entrepreneurial university

An entrepreneurial university provides every opportunity for students and researchers to start businesses based on their academic research. This requires a dynamic institution that adapts to the changing needs of society.

These observations provide the basis for Crammond's debut book published in 2020, *Advancing entrepreneurship education in universities: concepts and practices for teaching and support*. He wrote this book to assist academics in course design and to inform policymakers of advancements in the field.

The book combines historical context, best practices, and case studies to present a comprehensive overview of the importance of entrepreneurship education, its role in industry and society, and the future of course delivery methods. This analysis reveals the kind of entrepreneurial culture that a university needs to cultivate and identifies, according to Crammond, 'the capacity, capability, digital mobility, and durability' required to move in step with ongoing cultural changes across business and wider society.



Crammond identifies key external stakeholders by the characteristics of the contribution each make, such as the philosopher, the educator, the policymaker, and the champion.

With a strong emphasis on familiarising students with the world of business, the book provides a suite of practical activities. It also contributes ideas for university and government policies that strengthen ties between education, industry, and society. The book emphasises that entrepreneurial opportunities arise from deep industry collaborations and wide entrepreneurial support networks.

Methods, motivation, and mediums

University tuition and support for business incubators require a clear vision. Released in 2023, Crammond's second book, *Entrepreneurship and universities: pedagogical perspectives and philosophies* examines how to achieve this. It reveals the attitudes and ambitions that need to inform an entrepreneurial university's engagement with business and society.

The book describes how various educational theories, including pragmatism (student-centric) and social reconstructionism (socially responsive), are reflected in classroom tuition. This develops into an evaluation of the contributions of external stakeholders to higher education and conversely, the contribution of higher education to industry and society. Crammond identifies key external stakeholders by the characteristics of the contribution each make, such as the philosopher, the educator, the policymaker, and the champion. Crammond's work is supported by numerous case studies to inform the strategies that underpin a successful entrepreneurial university.

Crammond investigates ways in which a higher education institution can measure EE course success in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and behaviour.

This focus on an entrepreneurial process and the ways in which university education can inspire creative business thinking moves us beyond the old 'nature or nurture' debate around being an entrepreneur. It locates entrepreneurship firmly in a learning environment and offers ways in which higher education can directly promote global economic development. Crammond firmly believes that 'a university's relationship with entrepreneurship is vital in education, towards nurturing creativity, and supporting society.'

Digital entrepreneurship

In *Advancing entrepreneurship education in universities*, Crammond shows how to use established teaching methods to deliver EE, from lectures and tutorials, through workshops to more innovative approaches such as student-led case studies and scenario analysis with external partners. He also emphasises the key supporting role of digital technology.

Crammond identifies and sheds light on the advances in digital technology that contribute to EE learning methods and course assessment. His work champions the use of virtual learning environments, online spaces that promote conversation and networking. It also explores the use of social media to support start-up business activity, highlighting the combination of physical and digital activity needed to promote a new enterprise.

His research also examines how digital technologies can improve EE in universities. Networked classrooms, pre-recorded lectures, and live online tutorials are all assessed for

effectiveness. Student survey data clearly indicates that traditional educational models need to be replaced with more personalised, collaborative learning methods.

The university and beyond

The goal of EE is two-fold: to foster an enterprising mentality that equips students with the practical skills to innovate and establish their own businesses, and to then nurture new ventures and connect them to the wider world.

The first stage is to cultivate enterprising students and staff within the university. In collaborative research with Dr Alan Murray, Crammond investigates ways in which a higher education institution can measure success in fostering entrepreneurial behaviour. The study develops a novel survey method called the entrepreneurial scorecard that evaluates students' entrepreneurial understanding and desire at both the start and end of enterprise courses.

The second stage of EE moves beyond the classroom and out into the business world and wider society. As an academic himself, Crammond contributes to various programmes that realise this vision. He is also part of the professional team at the UWS Student Innovation Hub, which runs a business incubation programme called The Hive. The Hive includes various practical workshops, mentoring schemes, and motivating competitions. The Hub works closely with key external organisations, such as Elevator UK and Business Gateway.

Crammond teaches us how and why it is essential to integrate theory with practice, to break down the walls around universities so the ideas and aspirations cultivated within can venture out to benefit society as innovative and successful new businesses.

Personal response

Do you find entrepreneurs responsive to the notion of EE? If so, are there any industry sectors in particular that have entrepreneurs who are most keen to assist you?

Overall, I have found that across several sectors, entrepreneurs are excited by the continued embedding of EE within universities. Entrepreneurs want to get involved and assist students and staff on entrepreneurial journeys. The conversations surrounding enterprise and entrepreneurship now increasingly highlight regional and national regeneration, sustainability goals, and social mobility for individuals and groups. Therefore, EE means much more than just venture creation and profitability. EE is simply not just a business school offering. It is applicable across the institution. In promoting this culture of invention and innovation, and in responding to societal challenges, there is a huge part to play from certain sectors in the fast-paced competitive and digital age. These sectors include engineering, renewables, health care, the physical sciences, and information technology. Impactful EE can lead to meaningful connections with these sectors and make a positive difference for all.

We typically think of applied science when 'business incubation' is mentioned. Is this a fair view or do university arts students and staff also come up with potential business ventures related to their courses?

The pragmatic and energetic nature of EE is that it aims to apply skills, knowledge, and experience towards achieving something of value for all. So, yes, it is fair to some extent to say that business incubation lends itself to the applied sciences, in practice. However, in my experience, and that of my colleagues, there is an abundance of innovative ideas and ventures that have progressed across all course subjects and specialisms.

Business incubators involve the transfer of knowledge by experts and entrepreneurs, the seeking of opportunities within relevant networks, and the following of an entrepreneurial process which is practical and productive. In the case of arts and media students and staff, business incubation activity can assist in many ways. For example, incubators can boost creativity through idea generation and lateral thinking. Also, the level of guidance and support within incubators can address important start-up needs such as establishing a small business, attaining funding, or receiving advice concerning freelancing and intellectual property.

When looking for external support for new ventures, are local organisations generally the first point of contact or are there any national or supranational organisations that help from the ground up? Is an organisation with a wider reach perhaps more useful in the long run?

Any organisation that is willing to assist business incubation activity within a university should be invited, regardless of size or location. Each business has a story to tell, and their reflections benefit university students and staff at a particular stage of a start-up or flourishing (new) venture. When we consider the recently required upskilling within the education sector, concerning digital communication and video calling for lectures and tutorials during the pandemic, wider and far-reaching networking is arguably easier and more commonplace across sectors. However, within specific EE courses and assessment strategies including mentoring and business case presentations, it is wise to encourage regular engagement with external support that is local. This continuous contact drives entrepreneurial action within immediate communities, allows students to consider the next steps after graduation, and responds to a nation's call for an enterprising and innovative society.

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Bio

Dr Robert James Crammond is a senior lecturer in enterprise at the University of the West of Scotland, specialising in entrepreneurship education and small business development. An internationally published researcher, author, and speaker, Crammond is also an editor for numerous business, enterprise, and management journals. Crammond is a senior fellow of Advance HE and Certified Management and Business Educator (CMBE).

Further reading

- Crammond, RJ, Omeihe, I, Murray, A, (2023) *Re-evaluating Entrepreneurship Education through a team-based approach: activities and archetypes within a Scottish university*. In: Block, JH, Halberstadt, J, Högsdal, N, et al, (eds), *Progress in Entrepreneurship Education and Training*. FGF Studies in Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Springer, Cham, 73–85.
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- Crammond, RJ, et al, (2022) *Reframing university-level Entrepreneurship Education through digitisation and transformational technologies: an institutional case study*. In: Hyams-Ssekasi, D, Agboma, F, (eds), *Entrepreneurship and Change*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
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- Murray, A, Crammond, RJ, (2020) *Witnessing entrepreneurial perceptions and proclivity in university students: Developing a process model*. *Education + Training*, 62(4), 459–481.
- Crammond, RJ, et al, (2018) *Managing knowledge through social media: Modelling an entrepreneurial approach for Scottish SMEs and beyond*. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 13(3), 303–328.

