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Creative Enterprise in Higher Education

The Creative Enterprise Initiative: developing an infrastructure for creative entrepreneurship

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'Creativity, properly employed, carefully evaluated, skillfully managed and soundly implemented, is a key to future business success – and to national prosperity.'

*Cox Review of Creativity in Business:
Building on the UK's Strengths
(2005, HM Treasury), p. 3.*

A clear link exists between creativity and entrepreneurship. Creative students are taught to think laterally. Indeed, 42% of creative graduates will undertake some form of self employment within five years of graduating (Blackwell and Harvey, 1999), with a high number working in small and micro companies where flexibility and change are common to business development.

The Creative Enterprise Initiative (CEI) at the University College for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester was developed in 2002 to implement an infrastructure for entrepreneurship relating specifically to business start-up and sustainability for creative businesses. Creative businesses include: advertising, the arts, crafts, design, fashion, digital media, film and video, games design, graphic communication, music and performing arts. The CEI has helped over 600 creative entrepreneurs in the South East gain knowledge through specialist workshop events, networking, mentoring, short courses, one-to-one advice and competitions. It has also contributed to publications, developed sector research and undertaken a specialist sector conference. The CEI has received funding through the Higher Education Innovation Fund, the European Social Fund, the Arts Council of England South East and Surrey County Council.

Throughout the development of the CEI, national and regional agendas have increasingly reported the importance of the creative industries to economic growth in the UK. The Regional Economic Strategy states that 90–100,000 self-employed people work in the [creative] sector in the [South East] region' (SEEDA, 2002). The Cox review argues that a 'limited understanding of how

greater creativity could be used to business advantage', 'a lack of confidence that the investment' will 'give [financial] a return' and 'a lack of knowledge [about] where to turn for help' are obstacles to utilising creativity in business in the UK (2005, p.15).

The basis of the CEI is built upon findings of research into graduate destinations undertaken at the University College through the Destinations and Reflections survey (1999) and other key research into the development of creative enterprises by Linda Ball (1999), Mike Press (1997) and Martin Bouette (2002). There is consensus within these texts that in order to promote and underpin the development and sustainability of creative companies a need exists for specialist advice and support which is empathetic with the notion of creative driven companies. These are companies where the creative work is often a greater incentive than maximum profit.

The CEI offers support and advice to creative people across the South East region through a portfolio of specialist projects. Projects fit into two major categories; those which are inward facing (i.e. focused towards students and graduates of the University College) and those which are externally facing (i.e. creative individuals who live and work in the South East region). Projects that are aimed specifically towards students and graduates of the University College include the Creative Entrepreneurs Club, specialist college based creative entrepreneurship workshops and business support, The Creative Business Resource Centre and the Creative Innovation Award.

The Creative Entrepreneurs Club was established to give University College graduates who have, or are in the process of starting, a creative business the opportunity to be part of a specialist network. The network meets twice a year and receive a quarterly newsletter.

Specialist 'College' based creative entrepreneurship workshops and business support is developed and implemented through Network Brokers whose specific entrepreneurial role includes raising awareness of business start-up support and promoting methods of developing creative businesses through specialist workshops. In order to encourage and support those students who are keen to develop their own business, a resource centre at the University has been developed.

The Creative Business Resource Centre helps students and graduates who are in the process of starting a creative business by making a resource room and meeting room available to them. The resource room has computers and a specialist resource library, whilst the meeting room allows young companies to meet potential clients in a dedicated professional environment and is also used for undertaking one-to-one advice sessions in collaboration with regional support agencies.

Final year students are given the opportunity to enter the annual Creative Innovation Award. The competition engages regional specialists and support to help successful applicants develop innovative ideas into businesses, products, licence agreements or services. The project allows ten individuals to receive

dedicated specialist mentoring, five to present to an expert panel and three winners who receive a cash prize and the support needed to commercialise the winning ideas, services or products.

Support for individuals who live and work in the South East and are not necessarily graduates of the University College is offered through a programme of workshop events, networking events, specialist advice sessions, specialist support for creative people with disability and mentoring schemes.

Specialist workshop and networking events are targeted locations which are situated in coastal or rural areas and areas with high ethnic minority groups in the South East region. These have included Margate, Hastings, the Isle of Wight and Slough, with future activity also including Wokingham, Rochester and Canterbury. The strategy with these events has been to help to develop a series of workshops and to help develop infrastructure for supporting networking opportunities. The intention is that these activities will continue after the initial funding support.

Specialist one-to-one advice is offered to individuals developing a creative business through the CEI team and through collaborating specialist support agencies. This advice takes place through the Creative Business Resource Centre at Farnham. Three Mentoring programmes have been undertaken where young creative businesses have been paired up with experienced specialist mentors in order to explore the mentees' current work and business. Through this process of advice and critique the mentee is able to reflect on their work and the future development of their business.

The CEI has also supported specialist workshops targeting deaf and disabled artists with the intention of raising the confidence of deaf and disabled artists through a programme which helps underpin creative practice with sound specific business advice and raising the profile of their work across the South East region.

As well as direct support the CEI has also commissioned research into creative incubation spaces in the South East region undertaken by Ancer Spa in 2005, has published 0505 a book of five case studies of creative businesses supported by the CEI (Bouette (ed.), 2005) and has hosted a National conference on creative support 'Raising the Odds - Fostering Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries'(June 15th 2005).

References

- Ball, L. (ed.), 'A Report on the Proceedings of the Symposium: 'Rethinking Business Start Up - a new model for success in art and design,' (Crafts Council /DfEE, Brighton, 1999).
- Blackwell A. and Harvey, L., *Destinations and Reflections* (Centre for Quality in Research, 1999)
- Bouette M. 'An Investigation into Art and Design Graduate Careers: Towards the development of a career progression tool' (Unpublished Ph. D., The Robert Gordon University, 2002)
- Bouette M.(ed.), 0505 (Surrey Institute of Art and Design, 2005)
- Cox G. *Cox Review of Creativity in Business: Building on the UK's Strengths*, (HM Treasury, 2005)
- Press M., *A New Vision in the Making: exploring the value of craft education in the information age* (Sheffield Hallam University, 1997)
- Regional Economic Strategy for South East England' 2002 – 2012*, (SEEDA, 2002)

The CEI relies on working closely with Enterprise agencies, regional Councils, SEEDA, Business Links, Enterprise Hubs, other Universities and specialist support organisations (including Dada – South, Empowering The Artist, The Creative Industries Business Advisory Service and The Palmer Hamilton Partnership) in the delivery of specialist creative programmes. In the delivery of events for creative practitioners the CEI emphasises the array of support which is available to creative businesses both locally and regionally.

Through its outputs the CEI reflects the priorities of the Regional Development Agency through 'embedding a process in which entrepreneurs are supported and encouraged during all the development stages of their business idea'. This is achieved through supporting the development of 'an enterprise culture' at the University College and helping to 'increase start-up, survival and growth rates' of creative businesses (SEEDA, 2002).

The CEI is currently developing an e-learning programme with residential components for individuals in the process of starting a business to support their business development which is scheduled to run from the end of 2006.

Further Information
www.cei.ucreative.ac.uk
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