

# The Impact of Northumbria University's Business Clinic on Graduate Employability

Nigel Coates - Associate Professor / Director of the Business Clinic

Nicola Burnip - Business Clinic Manager



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# Business Clinic – Experiential Learning

- The Business Clinic (BC) is a crucial part of the Business School's philosophy that every student will have a “real experience” – placement, study abroad or BC
- The BC provides UG and PG students the opportunity to combine the rigour and research-based enquiry associated with the traditional dissertation. It places the students in a situation in which they co-construct knowledge with each other, academics and their clients.



# Business Clinic – Experiential Learning

- BC modules (UG 40/120; Masters 60/180 credits) are based on research-rich learning, enhancing individual effectiveness and employability skills by locating the learning in an organisational context.
- Students work in groups of four as partners in a ‘consultancy firm’. They complete a supervised pro-bono strategic consultancy brief that requires them to produce a client report and make a formal presentation.



# The Business Clinic Aims

- Research-rich learning
- Graduate employability
- Student engagement and satisfaction for a large and diverse body of students
- Civic responsibility/real connections which support the regional economy and wider community



# Business Clinic Growth 2013-2021

Year	Number of UG Students	Number of PG Students	Number of Client Projects
2013/14	17	-	5
2014/15	110		28
2015/16	172	28	45
2016/17	200	44	61
2017/18	243	56	75
2018/19	267	84	89
2019/20	280	155	101
2020/21	297	262	TBC – estimated 126

- 2013-2020 1,600 students supported by Business Clinic staff have advised 400 diverse organisations on a wide range of business problems. **This year, 2020/21, estimated to support some 560 students working on 130 client projects.**
- Between 2013 and 2020, the total value of the students' free / pro bono consultancy advice and reports has been estimated by the businesses to exceed £2.2m.



# BC Purpose Built Premises

- The University has invested over £800,000 in the BC's own dedicated premises in the heart of Newcastle.
- The building has meeting rooms, a board room and an excellent space for networking and SME events.



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A group of business students participate in a 'consultancy firm' to provide advice.

Offered to clients by our final year UG and PG students.

Feasibility Studies  
HR  
Accountancy  
Logistics  
Strategic Management  
Branding  
Digital Marketing and Social Media

SMEs  
Multi-nationals  
Social Enterprises  
Charities  
Education  
Public Sector



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# External Recognition for Teaching Excellence in The Business Clinic



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# The Digitally Enabled Business Clinic – to enable other Universities to adopt similar approach

The UK government via Innovate UK Business Basics programme, funded (£44,229) a proof of concept project focused on a Digitally Enabled Business Clinic (DEBC) which would allow a lower cost adoption of the BC approach at other UK universities.

The full report and How to Guide can be [accessed here.](#)



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# Careers Survey into the impact of BC on Employability and Skills Development (November 2020)

- To ascertain the impact that the Business Clinic experience has had on employability and skills development, and opportunities, for UG students 6 months after module completion.
- 280 UG students were sent the survey and 61 responses were recorded, reflecting a 22% response rate. We cannot discern through our checks that there is any non-response bias.
- Questions elicited quantitative and qualitative data which shows that employability, skills/attributes and opportunities are positively impacted as a result of the BC experience.

# Benefits of the BC Consultancy Experience



- 74% Developed their business or commercial acumen
- 72% Talking point in interviews
- 61% Insights into working in particular sector / particular company
- 41% Built a useful network of contacts

*“The Business Consultancy Project has definitely helped me to understand the problems facing some businesses and to become more business savvy.”*

# Collaboration and Taking Responsibility



- 49% Developed their collaborative and teamworking skills
- 35% Helped Take Responsibility

*“Collaborative relationships between both the team and our client were pivotal to ensure everybody was on the same wavelength. Synchronisation of ideas and delegation were so important especially during COVID. Taking responsibility was something I’m usually terrible at. Having a client that was relevant to my career gave me a more passion for the project (and therefore motivation to take responsibility) but also the real life application made it feel less like a university module and more like a job.”*

# Project Management, Objective Setting and Communication



- 23% Project management
- 31% Objective setting and managing performance skills
- 53% Communication skills

*“Project management and objective setting are the keys to ensuring the project operates efficiently and meets deadlines. Managing innovation is also important to produce original ideas for the client, as they approached the Business Clinic for new and fresh ideas. Communication skills were important for us as a group and even more so now as we are in a pandemic and could not speak face to face, so communication is essential to ensure things get done.”*

# Decision Making and Curiosity

- 27% Managing others
- 33% Problem-solving and critical analysis
- 35% Decision making skills
- 33% Curiosity and willingness to learn



*“You had to make decisions in a group and yourself as you didn’t always have a teacher to guide you, it was our own interpretation which I really enjoyed and loved the freedom of it.”*

*“Ability to work with different cultures - because we all didn’t know each other, it was at first hard to bond. But we soon found out (from spending so much time together) how to navigate around everyone.”*

# Resilience, Self Reliance, Agility & Flexibility, Entrepreneurial Mindset

- 31% Resilience, grit and determination
- 23% Self-reliance and independence
- 28% Agility and flexibility
- 18% Entrepreneurial mindset



*“Flexibility - transitioning to online, having to pick up more work when others didn’t participate or when they had to take some time off. Entrepreneurial mindset - we found lots of different new recommendations that the client hadn’t already heard of.”*

# Organisational, Time Management and Attention to Detail

- 32% Planning, coordination, organising
- 23% Work under pressure
- 20% Attention to detail
- 20% Time management skills



*“All tasks had set dates to be completed by with a clear plan (GANNT chart) to ensure nothing was missed and all aspects were covered.”*

*“You had to manage time effectively throughout the whole project especially as we had other modules that needed completely and therefore you had to be organised. It has certainly developed my skills ready for the commercial world.”*

## How the BC helped my next step....

*“The company we completed our consultancy project for, asked me to interview for a Marketing Executive role and I was offered the job”*

*“This module I have taken the most from, into my professional employment bar none.”*

*“I am currently completing a digital marketing internship... unlikely I would be accepted...as I had no digital marketing experience. However, my UGC project evolved around marketing strategy. I ...explained my work in the interview which led to them offering me a position.”*

*“I’ve found that in job interviews since doing the consultancy project, many employers are interested and want to know more about it. The consultancy project has also made me widen my horizons as I now look for consultancy graduate roles, as I found the project so interesting.”*

*“The business consultancy project allows for you to put into practice every skill and technique you have learnt in previous years. This is a unique experience to prepare you for your time after university”*

# Sourcing Clients and Project Briefs

- Strategic Partners and networking:
  - North East Local Enterprise Partnership
  - North East England Chamber of Commerce
  - Santander Bank
  - Asian Business Connexions
  - UnLtd (Social Entrepreneur Support)
- Recommendations / word of mouth referrals
- Online digital outreach
- Developing the project brief



# Client Examples



For further information please visit the  
**Business Clinic website**

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/business-services/engage-with-us/talent-and-insight/the-business-clinic/>



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# Thank you for listening!

We look forward to seeing you in the  
breakout room at 11.45

- Q&A
- Recent BC graduate will say a few words
- Delegate experience of running similar modules at own institution
- Seeing some reports of past projects



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