



Entrepreneurship in Education

UNLOCKING

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN

EDUCATION

University Heads of Enterprise Report 2020:
an annual survey of enterprise in higher education

ncee.org.uk



Foreword

Enterprise and entrepreneurship has never been so important. In our day-to-day working lives we have seen the importance of creativity, innovation and resilience. Being able to manage change and thrive in an uncertain world has been necessary for all those working in higher education. Similarly for our students facing uncertainty, they will need to be enterprising and entrepreneurial, create their own opportunities and identify new ways of working. In higher education we have to ensure that all our students are equipped for their future world of work, where they will invariably face constant change, have portfolio careers, periods of self-employment and need to be innovative and resilient. Our students prepared for this future will thrive.

This survey is so important in providing a snapshot of enterprise and entrepreneurship activity in higher education. It allows us to see how this activity has changed over the last eight years, what we should celebrate, and what we need to address.

Through our survey, completed before the pandemic, we can see that there is much to be proud of – higher education institutions are increasing their investment in enterprise and entrepreneurship, staff report increasing levels of entrepreneurship activity, almost all institutions (98%) provide extra-curricular support and nine out of 10 have embedded entrepreneurship in their degree programmes.

However, there is still a way to go before enterprise and entrepreneurship is an integral part of what we do and the student experience. We find that there is less engagement with our local communities and schools than eight years ago. We also need to do more to target our programmes, to ensure students from widening participation or minority ethnic backgrounds share the benefits of enterprise and entrepreneurship activity. We cannot assume that if the provision is there the students will come; some students view enterprise and entrepreneurship as not for them and we must make it as accessible as possible.

At NCEE, we recently launched our benchmarking assessment tool, supporting institutions to assess their performance in enterprise and entrepreneurship. The assessment is based on over 60 measures enabling a deep and wide view of activity. Understanding best practice, identifying the gaps and continuing to innovate is vital if we are going to support our students for the future world of work.



Ian Dunn
Chair, NCEE
Provost, Coventry University

Executive summary

This report, *Unlocking Entrepreneurship In Education*, provides a snapshot of enterprise activity in UK higher education institutions at the time the COVID-19 pandemic struck. It reveals the data on how this activity has changed over the past eight years, and presents a summary of a landscape which is now undergoing unprecedented change. Taking stock of this landscape is essential as we plot a course towards a more inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic society – one in which the enterprise activity of universities, students and staff should play a key role.

Key findings include:

- 89 percent of respondents report that entrepreneurship activity provided by their university has increased over the past three years, up from three quarters in 2018.
- Social enterprise activity has also increased slightly or significantly for 65 percent of respondents.
- Before the global pandemic struck, there were widespread plans to increase enterprise activity within universities: 90 percent had planned to increase activity in the next 12 months.
- Nine out of ten universities embed entrepreneurship within some degree programmes; three quarters offer additional or elective modules in enterprise; and the vast majority (98%) provide extra-curricular support for enterprise and entrepreneurship.
- Over 80 percent of Heads of Enterprise think student interest in entrepreneurship activity on arriving at university is increasing.
- Support for enterprise in local schools has fallen from 32 to 22 percent since 2018 – and down from 57 percent in 2012. Support for enterprise in local communities remains similar to 2018 at 46 percent, but below the high of 73 percent in 2012.
- Workshops or events aimed at widening participation students have fallen from 34 percent in 2018 to 22 percent in 2020, whereas workshops for female students have risen from 29 percent to 40 percent; around a fifth of universities offer events aimed at students from a minority ethnic background, broadly similar to 2018.
- Provision of support for staff in enterprise has fallen since 2012, but support for students continues to be a strong area, and support for venture creation is higher than in both 2018 and 2012.
- Resourcing for staff is the biggest challenge facing over a third of Heads of Enterprise. 18 percent identify conflicting priorities, and 15 percent identify demands on time. Over 40 percent of respondents identify individuals within departments as the biggest enabler in helping to deliver enterprise activity, and over a third picked the senior leadership team.
- Government and EU funding is critical for supporting enterprise activity. EU funding is used by over 40 percent of respondents, and Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) supports enterprise activity at 78 percent of the English institutions surveyed.
- Just under a third of respondents think Brexit will impede entrepreneurial activity in the UK, down from 39 percent in 2018. Three quarters of Heads of Enterprise want the government to do more to support entrepreneurial activity post-Brexit.
- The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is broadly welcomed by Heads of Enterprise, but the impact of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is uncertain, and more respondents feel that the publication of Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data will hinder rather than help their work.

Recommendations

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the world, and universities have a responsibility and opportunity to help shape the future. Enterprise and entrepreneurship in all its forms – from social enterprise to student start-ups – should be at the centre of these efforts. But there is a risk that budgetary pressures and crisis management overshadow enterprise activity, and that support for staff and student entrepreneurship is quietly dropped.

The government has consistently stressed that universities should deliver the skills the country needs, focus on areas of economic and societal importance, and be firmly embedded in the economic fabric of their local area.¹ Integrating enterprise in university courses and supporting staff and students to be entrepreneurial can help meet all three of these objectives.

We recommend that:

1. **University leaders** protect and prioritise their existing support for enterprise, which is needed now more than ever. Social enterprise, a vital but fragile stream of activity, is especially vulnerable and should be protected with dedicated funding and staff time.
2. **University leaders** embed enterprise in course curricula and external engagement activity. Given that social distancing will have minimised face-to-face contact with local schools and communities, and that threats to budgets will likely limit the extent of new partnerships, university leaders should ensure vital enterprise outreach activity with schools and communities is not neglected.
3. **Heads of enterprise** promote targeted programmes to increase participation in university enterprise activity by under-represented groups, and promote the work of diverse local entrepreneurs.
4. **Government** ensures that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – and other potential programmes to replace European Structural and Investment Funds – supports enterprise activity in UK higher education institutions.
5. **Government** continues to support the Higher Education Innovation Fund, a modestly sized programme that supports enterprise activity at 78 percent of the English institutions surveyed, and equivalent support programmes in the devolved nations.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902608/HERR_announcement_July_2020.pdf

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Methodology

We surveyed 63 Heads of Enterprise (or the equivalent position) from UK universities through an online questionnaire from November 2019 to January 2020. This report builds on the 2018 NCEE Enterprise and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education survey, and previous biennial surveys that NCEE ran until 2012. We have kept questions about the provision of enterprise and entrepreneurship support within universities from these earlier surveys, allowing us to track how enterprise and entrepreneurship activity has changed and responded over the past eight years.²

50 Heads of Enterprise responded from English institutions, 8 from Scotland, and 5 from Wales. All nine English regions are represented.³ In terms of mission groups, over half of Russell Group members responded (13 institutions), two members of University Alliance, and seven from MillionPlus. However, 41 respondents, or 65 percent, of survey respondents are not members of a mission group. Mission group categorisation is based on membership in April 2020.

² The 2018 survey received 62 responses, and the 2012 survey received 89 responses. The balance of responses across UK nations has remained broadly similar in 2018 and 2020. The balance of mission group representation has shifted since 2018 with a larger proportion of Russell Group and members of no mission group in 2020, and fewer University Alliance respondents. However, the membership of mission groups has also changed in this time period. The 2018 report can be accessed here: <https://ncee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NCEE-Inspiring-Entrepreneurship-in-Education-2018.pdf>.

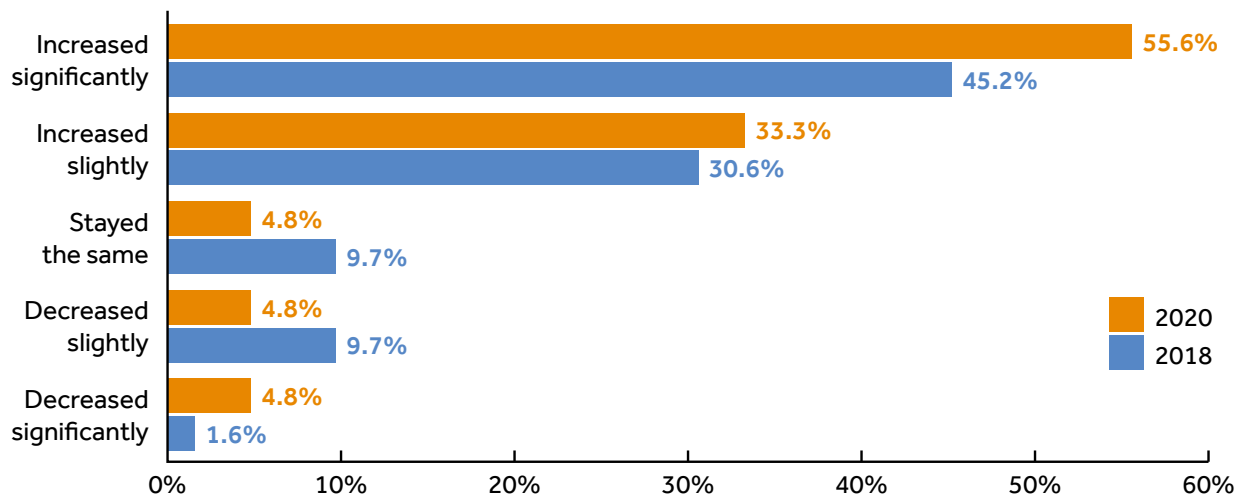
³ London: 10, North West: 7, West Midlands: 7, South East: 7, East of England: 6, South West: 5, East Midlands: 4, North East: 3, Yorkshire & Humber: 1.

A: Growth in enterprise activity

Entrepreneurship activity provided by universities has increased over the past three years

Figure 1

Do you think enterprise/entrepreneurship activity provided by your university has increased or decreased over the last three years? 2020 and 2018 responses.

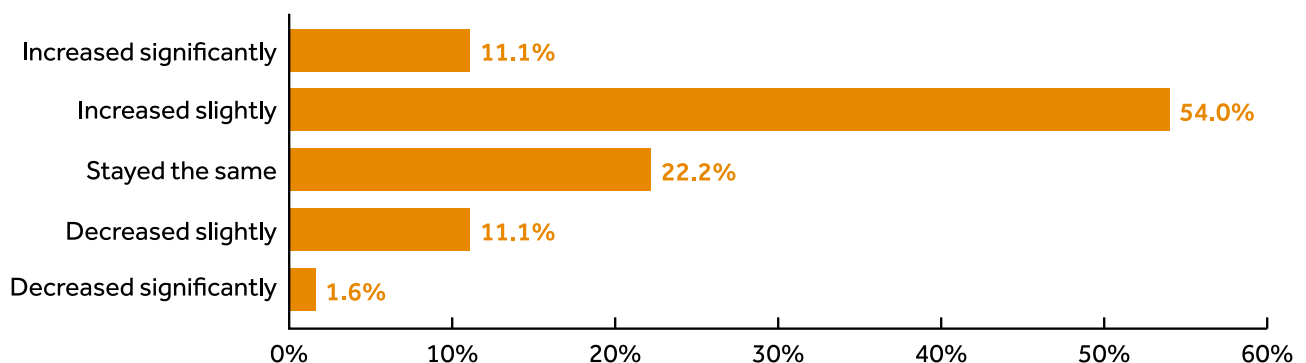


89 percent of respondents think that entrepreneurship activity provided by their university has increased over the past three years, up from three quarters in 2018 (figure 1). The proportion of respondents who feel activity has significantly decreased has fallen from 4.8 percent to 1.6 percent (one respondent).

Social enterprise activity has also grown

Figure 2

Do you think social enterprise activity provided by your university has increased or decreased over the last three years?

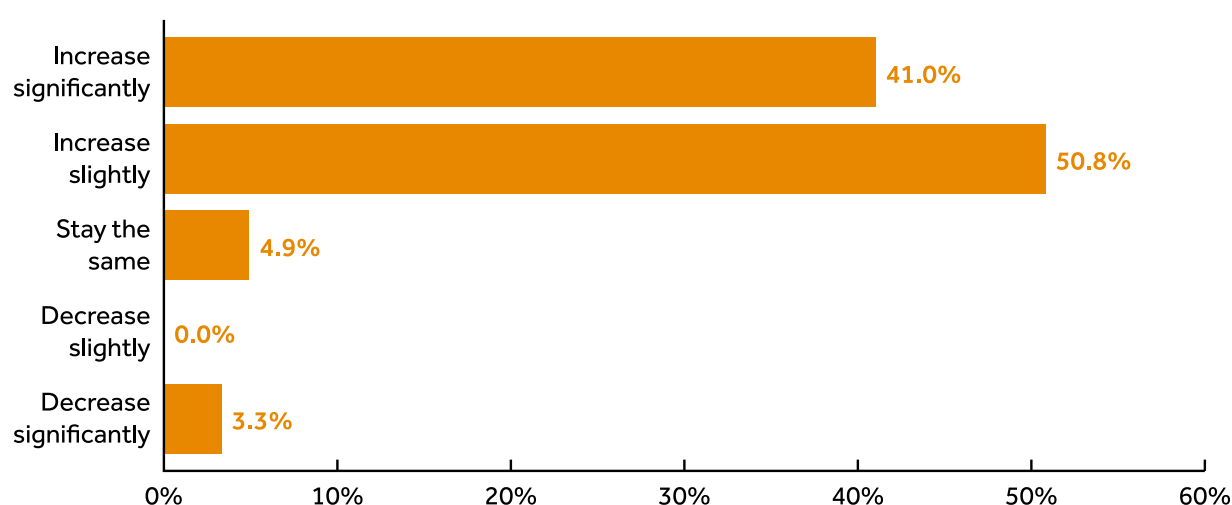


Social enterprise activity has increased slightly or significantly for 65 percent of respondents (figure 2). In common with trends for overall enterprise activity (figure 1), very few respondents report a significant decrease in activity. However, given the inevitable disruption to university finances in the aftermath of the pandemic, it is important that this vital but fragile stream of activity is protected with dedicated funding and staff time.

Before the global pandemic struck, there were widespread plans to increase enterprise activity within universities

Figure 3

Do you plan to increase your enterprise/entrepreneurship activity within the next year?



In a strong sign of commitment to enterprise provision, over 90 percent of respondents had planned to increase their entrepreneurship activity in the next 12 months (figure 3). However, the ongoing disruption caused by COVID-19 is likely to threaten these plans.

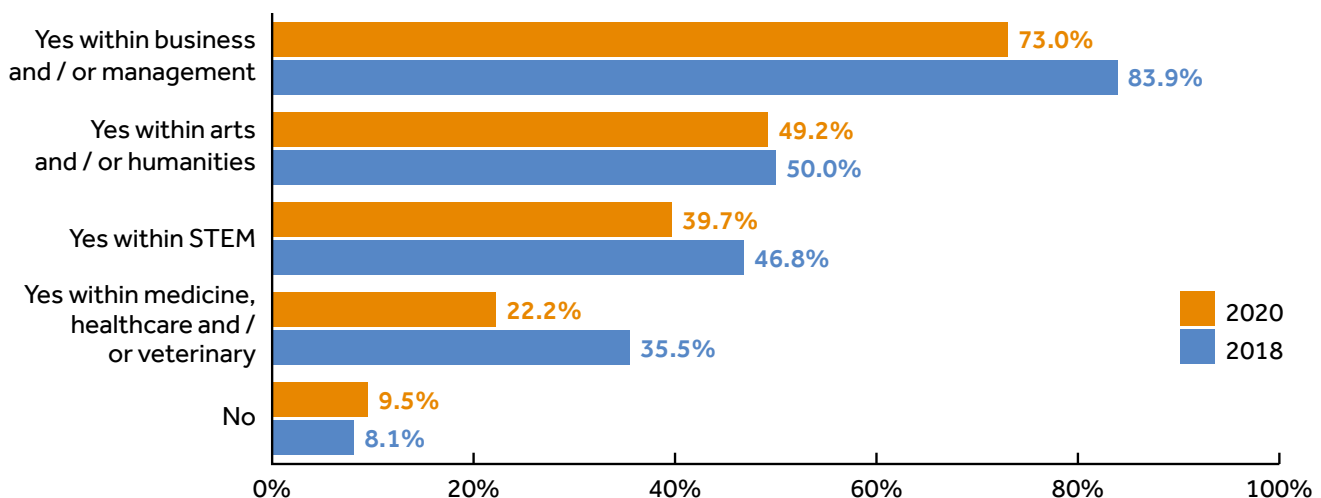
“ It is important to protect social enterprise activity with dedicated funding and staff time ”

B. Delivery of enterprise activity

Nine out of ten universities embed entrepreneurship within some degree programmes

Figure 4

Does your institution embed entrepreneurship and enterprise within your degree programmes? 2020 and 2018 responses.



90.5 percent of institutions have credit-bearing entrepreneurship and enterprise courses within at least some degree programmes (figure 4). This figure is similar to previous surveys: 91.9 percent in 2018, and 92.9 percent in 2012. However, the extent of embedding varies in subject areas, with several responses noting the inconsistent approach to embedding entrepreneurship courses across degree programmes in their university.

Table 1

Does your institution offer additional or elective modules in enterprise or entrepreneurship?

Yes – elective modules	35.5%
Yes – additional modules	17.7%
Both elective and additional modules	22.6%
No	24.2%

Three quarters of respondents offer additional and/or elective modules in enterprise or entrepreneurship (table 1). The wording changed slightly from 2018 to reflect the distinction between elective and additional modules, but the overall proportion of universities offering some form of module remains broadly similar.

Table 2

Does your institution provide any extra-curricular support for enterprise and entrepreneurship that is not part of any academic qualification?

	2020	2018	2012
Yes	98.3%	95.2%	98.9%
No	1.7%	4.8%	1.1%

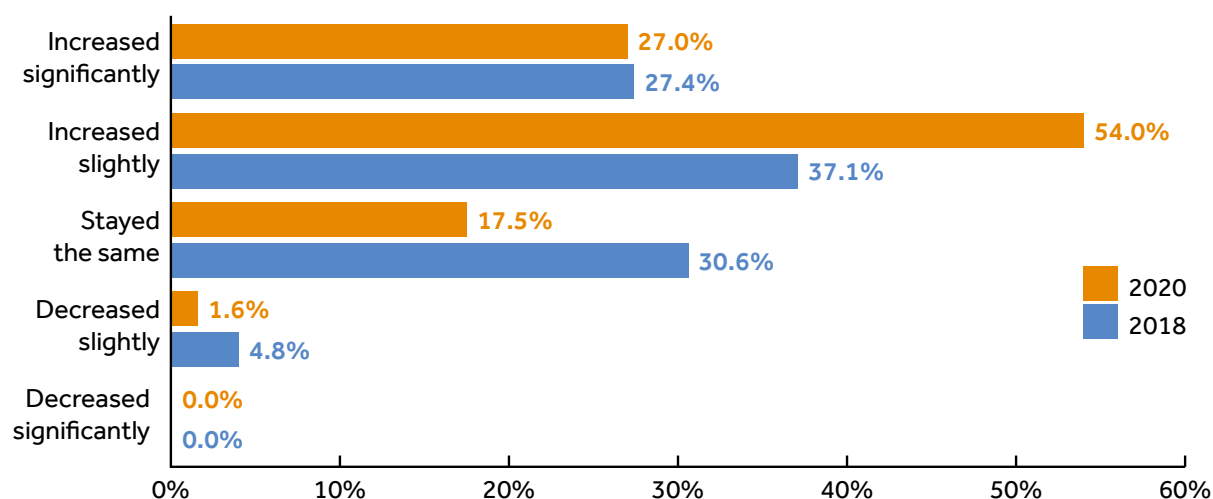
In common with previous years, the vast majority of surveyed institutions provide extra-curricular support for enterprise and entrepreneurship (table 2).

C. Student interest in enterprise

Heads of Enterprise think student interest in entrepreneurship activity on arriving at university has increased

Figure 5

Do you think students' interest in enterprise/entrepreneurship activity on arriving at university has increased or decreased over the last three years? 2020 and 2018 responses.



The perceived interest in enterprise activity of students arriving at university has increased over the last three years, with over 80 percent of respondents – up from 65 percent in 2018 – reporting a slight or significant increase (figure 5). No respondents report a significant decline; one respondent reports a slight decrease and just under a fifth say interest remains around the same.

“The vast majority of institutions provide extra-curricular support for enterprise and entrepreneurship”

D: Enterprise provision over time

We have tracked more than 40 measures of enterprise provision over time, including policies, activities and facilities (table 3). This year we have asked new questions about social enterprise, and find that 8 percent of universities have a centre for social enterprise. Many of the figures for 2020 are broadly consistent with 2018, and often show marked changes from 2012 (the arrows indicate the difference between 2012 and 2020 results).

However, support for enterprise in local schools has fallen further from 32 to 22 percent of respondents since 2018 – and down from 57 percent in 2012. Support for enterprise in local communities remains similar to 2018 at 46 percent, but below the high of 73 percent in 2012. Given that social distancing will have minimised face-to-face contact with local schools and communities, and that threats to budgets will likely limit the extent of new partnerships, university leaders should ensure vital enterprise outreach activity with schools and communities is not neglected.

Workshops or events aimed at widening participation students have fallen from 34 percent in 2018 to 22 percent in 2020, whereas workshops for female students have risen from 29 percent to 40 percent; around a fifth of universities offer events aimed at students from a minority ethnic background, broadly similar to 2018. More targeted programmes are needed to ensure participation in university enterprise activity by under-represented groups. We recommend that staff with responsibility for enterprise activity look to promote the work of diverse and local entrepreneurs; the need for representative role models is greater than ever.

In many areas, particularly around support for staff, provision has fallen since 2012. This is striking given that 90 percent of respondents report that entrepreneurship activity provided by their university has increased over the past three years (figure 1). The contrast is perhaps due to distributed governance and decentralisation of some enterprise activity to faculties and departments (figure 7). This can result in more personalised and tailored activity within some subject areas – and hence for some staff and some students – but patchy and inconsistent activity across an institution as a whole.

Finally, support for students continues to be a strong area, and support for venture creation is uniformly higher than in both 2018 and 2012.

Table 3

Which of these policies, activities and facilities are provided at your university?
(Arrow shows direction of trend from 2012 to 2020)

Institutional policy	2020	2018	2012	
An explicit institutional enterprise or entrepreneurship policy	54%	44%	49%	➡
A PVC responsible for enterprise / entrepreneurship	46%	45%	61%	⬇
Tracking of individuals after graduation	62%	68%	78%	⬇
Support for enterprise in local schools	22%	32%	57%	⬇
Support for enterprise in local communities	46%	44%	73%	⬇
A central office for technology transfer	65%	66%	84%	⬇
A centre for social enterprise	8%			

Support for staff in enterprise				
Staff training in enterprise	52%	39%	60%	⬇
Staff funds for CPD	49%	40%	79%	⬇
Staff curricula development funds	22%	26%	51%	⬇
Institutional awards for excellence or good practice	32%	42%	59%	⬇
Development sabbaticals for staff	10%	15%	40%	⬇
Staff support for commercialisation of IP	67%	55%	88%	⬇
Incentives to attract / encourage educators to entrepreneurship	22%	21%	35%	⬇

Ideas and Planning for students				
Business plan competitions	68%	68%	81%	↓
Ideas competitions	84%	77%	79%	→
Enterprise / Entrepreneurship summer schools	54%	47%	47%	↑
Entrepreneur-led events	79%	81%	86%	↓
General enterprise / entrepreneurship workshops	95%	85%	96%	→
Venture Creation				
Student incubator facilities	73%	60%	53%	↑
Student hot-desk / drop in facilities	75%	66%	64%	↑
Start-up funds for students / graduates	71%	65%	65%	↑
Student enterprise interns / fellowships	59%	53%	53%	↑
Start up support programmes				
Enterprise awareness events / festivals	83%	85%	80%	→
Student enterprise conferences	32%	39%	33%	→
Summer schools	40%	39%		
Access to funding workshops	68%	61%	54%	↑
Investor events	48%	45%	35%	↑
Mentoring for start-up	83%	82%	86%	→
Technical, professional, funding and specialist advice	75%	76%	78%	→
Enterprise Skills Development				
Enterprise / entrepreneurship skills training programmes	87%	77%	80%	↑
Careers service events / workshops	81%	79%	88%	↓
Student enterprise placement workshops	40%	44%	51%	↓
Placement or internships with entrepreneurs and small businesses	65%	68%	77%	↓
Personal skills coaching	59%	48%	60%	→
Enterprise champions	32%	47%	75%	↓
Networking Events				
Network introduction events	71%	66%	84%	↓
Student enterprise club or society	63%	66%	81%	↓
Workshops / Events specifically targeting:				
Social enterprise / entrepreneurship	75%	77%	77%	→
Minority ethnic students	19%	18%	12%	↑
Widening participation students	22%	34%		
Female students	40%	29%	23%	↑

“ More targeted programmes are needed to ensure participation in university enterprise activity by under-represented groups ”

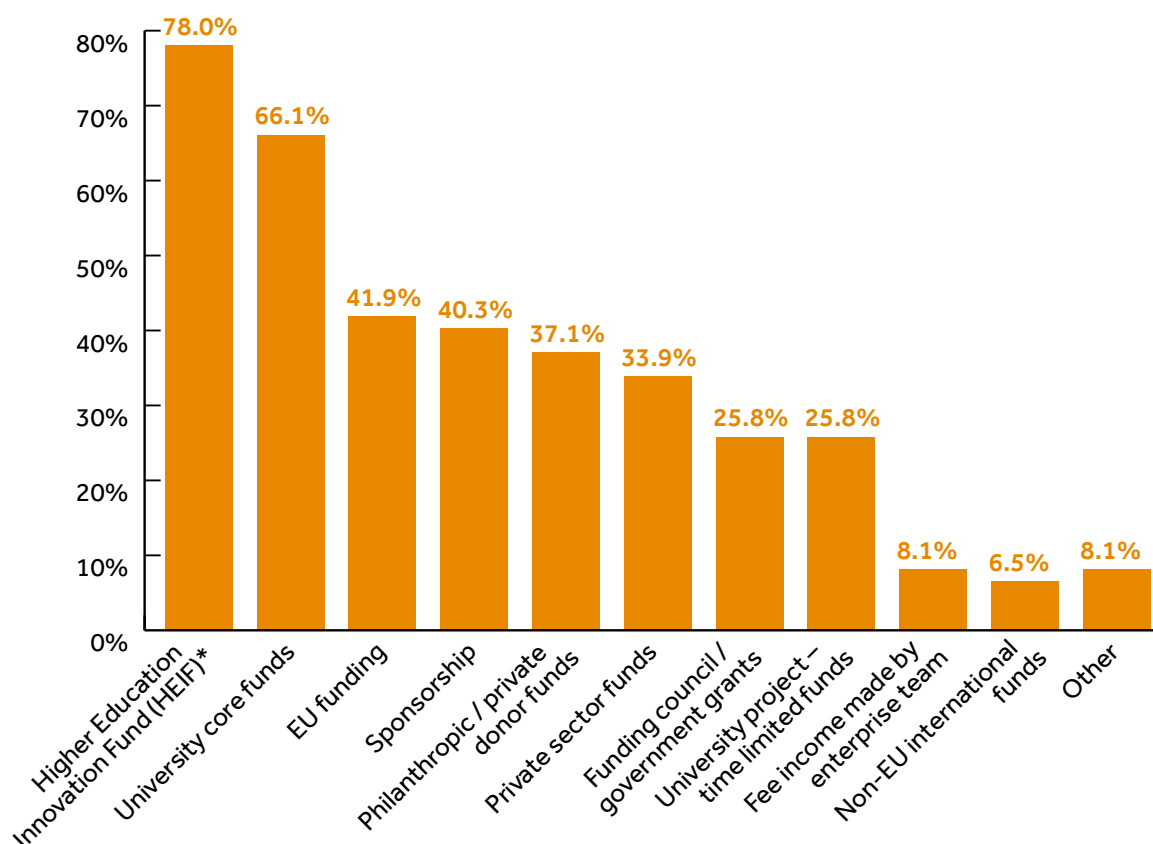
E: Funding and staffing

Government and EU funding is critical for underpinning enterprise and entrepreneurship activity within universities

Figure 6

How do you fund enterprise and entrepreneurship activity within the university?

* Note HEIF is England only, and this bar has been scaled to only include responses from English institutions.



Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) supports enterprise activity at 78 percent of the English institutions surveyed, underscoring the importance of this modestly sized fund, and equivalent support programmes in the devolved nations (figure 6).

EU funding is used by over 40 percent of respondents; this is a slight rise from 2018 and a fall from 51 percent in 2012. It is essential that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – and other potential programmes to replace the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund – supports enterprise activity in UK higher education institutions.

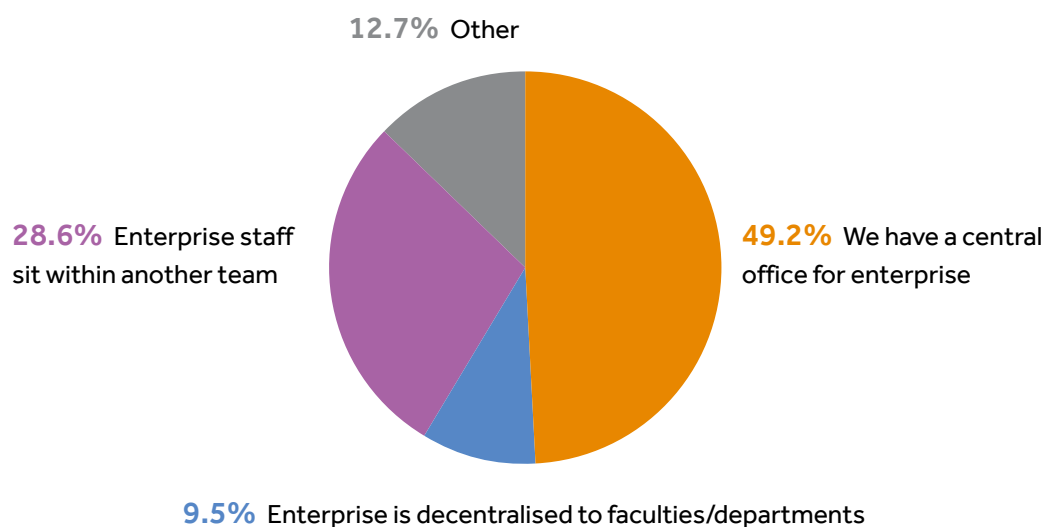
Private sector initiatives such as those by Santander Universities support activity at many institutions. For most, activity is sustained through core funds (and, in England, HEIF) and supplemented with competitive grants. A few universities have funded the majority of activity using generous grants from wealthy donors, and a few others generate income from rent and other activities to fund enterprise support.

Six universities rely on just one stream of funding: for four of these this is university core funds, and the other two rely on philanthropic funds or HEIF.

Half of responding universities have a central office for enterprise

Figure 7

How is staffing for enterprise structured in your institution?



Around half of responding institutions have a central office for enterprise (figure 7). Enterprise staff sit within another team (often careers and employability) in just over a quarter of universities, and enterprise is decentralised to faculties or departments for roughly 10 percent. For the 12.7 percent who indicated 'other', this usually means some functions sit in a core team, and others are decentralised or in another team.

Where institutions have a central office, the average number of FTE staff is 14.2, although this masks some wide variations (up to 120). Where staff sit within another team, the average size is 8.5.

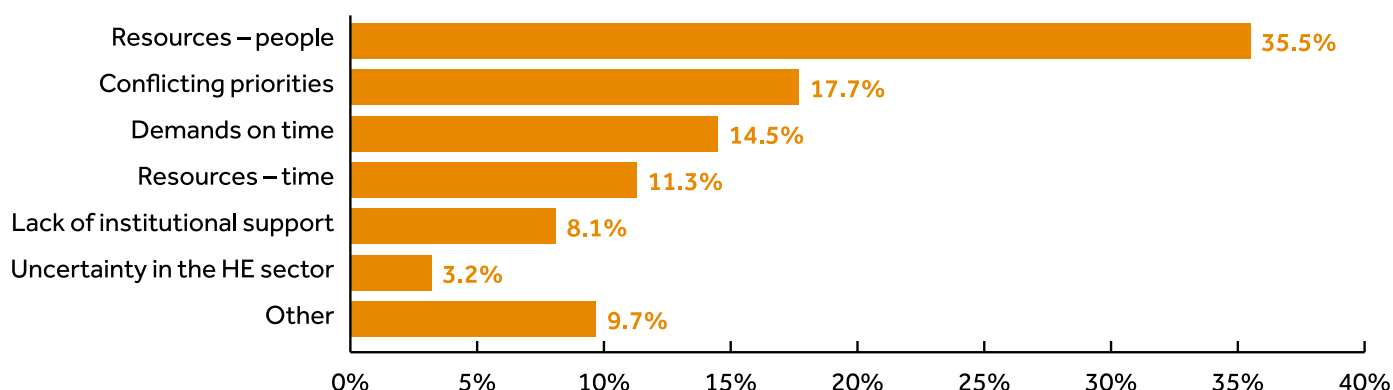
“Enterprise is decentralised to faculties or departments for 10 percent of universities”

F: Challenges and enablers

Resourcing for staff is the biggest challenge facing over a third of Heads of Enterprise

Figure 8

What is the biggest challenge you currently face in providing enterprise/entrepreneurship activity?

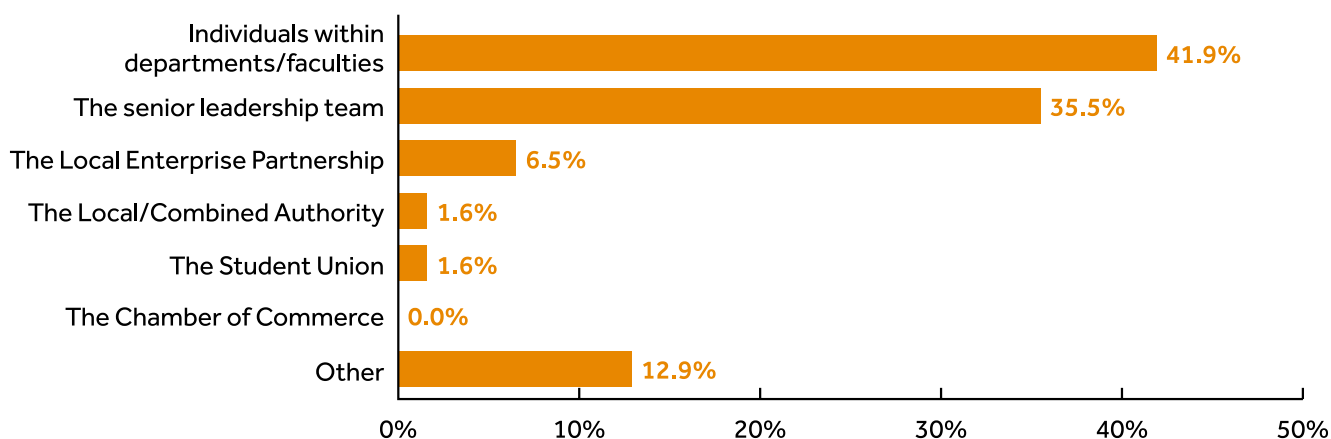


Over a third of respondents identify a shortage of staff as the biggest challenge in providing enterprise activity (figure 8). 17.7 percent identify conflicting priorities, and 14.5 percent identify demands on time. Respondents also identified a lack of money, and misconceptions about entrepreneurship putting off student engagement.

Internal university staff are the biggest enabler in delivering enterprise activity

Figure 9

Who is the biggest enabler in helping you deliver enterprise/entrepreneurship activity?



Over 40 percent of respondents identify individuals within departments or faculties as the biggest enabler in helping to deliver enterprise activity, and over a third picked the senior leadership team (figure 9). Several Welsh institutions recognised the important work of the Welsh Government in supporting activity.

G: Policies and politics

Uncertainty has grown about the impact of Brexit on entrepreneurial activity

Figure 10

Do you think Brexit will encourage or impede entrepreneurial activity in the UK, or make no difference? 2020 responses.

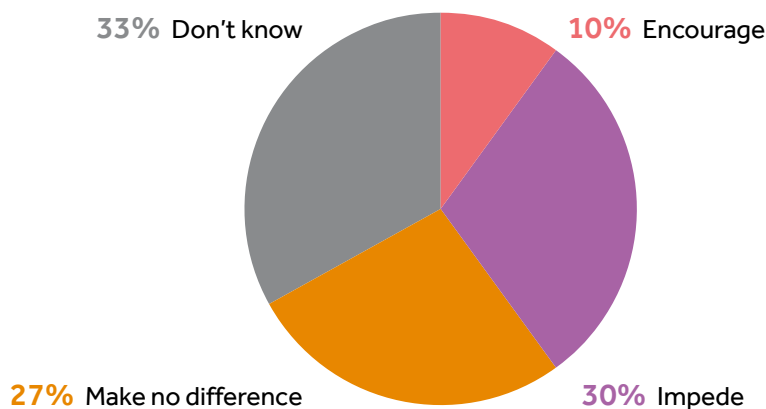
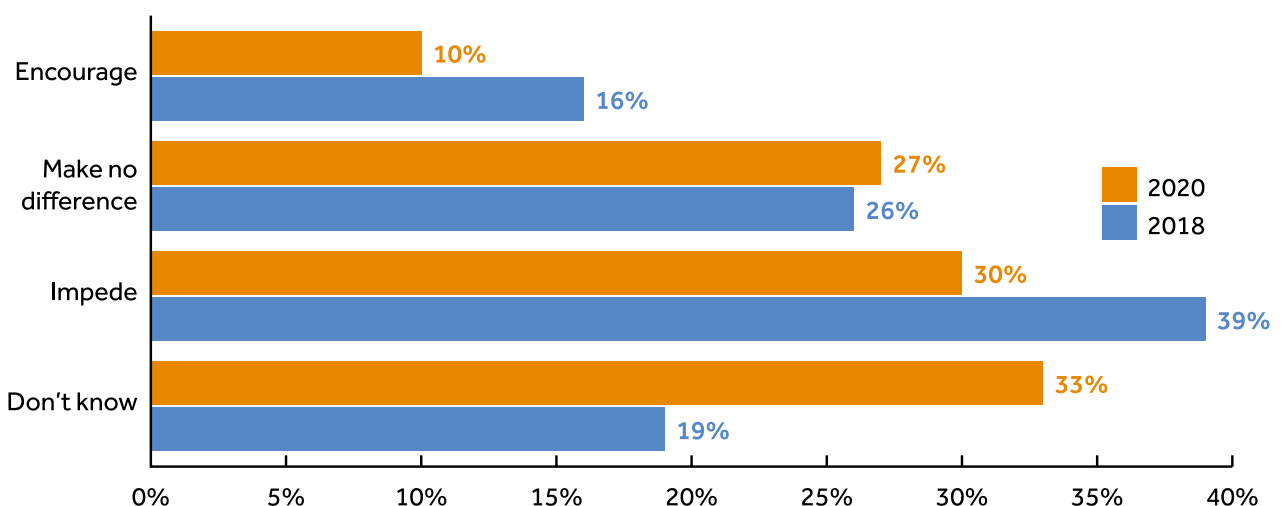


Figure 11

Do you think Brexit will encourage or impede entrepreneurial activity in the UK, or make no difference? 2018 and 2020 responses.



Just under a third of respondents think Brexit will impede entrepreneurial activity in the UK, down from 39 percent in 2018 (figures 10 and 11). Those who feel Brexit will encourage activity have also fallen (by six percentage points), but a growing number are uncertain – a third in 2020 compared to 19 percent in 2018. Brexit has since been overshadowed by the Coronavirus pandemic, which will likely have a significant immediate and long term impact on entrepreneurial activity in the UK.

Three quarters of Heads of Enterprise want the government to do more to support entrepreneurial activity post-Brexit

Figure 12

Do you think the government needs to do more to support entrepreneurial activity within higher education institutions post-Brexit? 2020 responses.

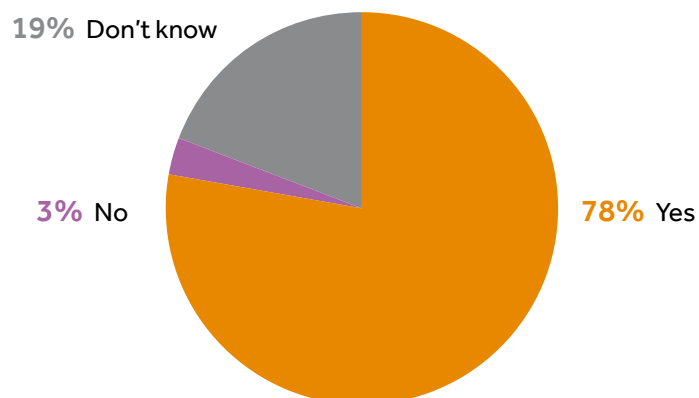
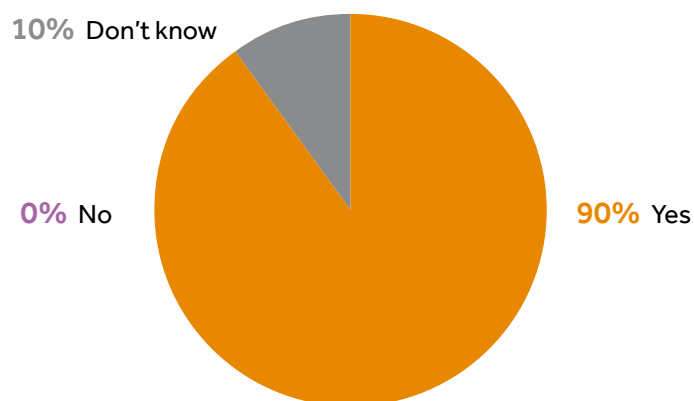


Figure 13

Do you think the government needs to do more to support entrepreneurial activity within higher education institutions post-Brexit? 2018 responses.

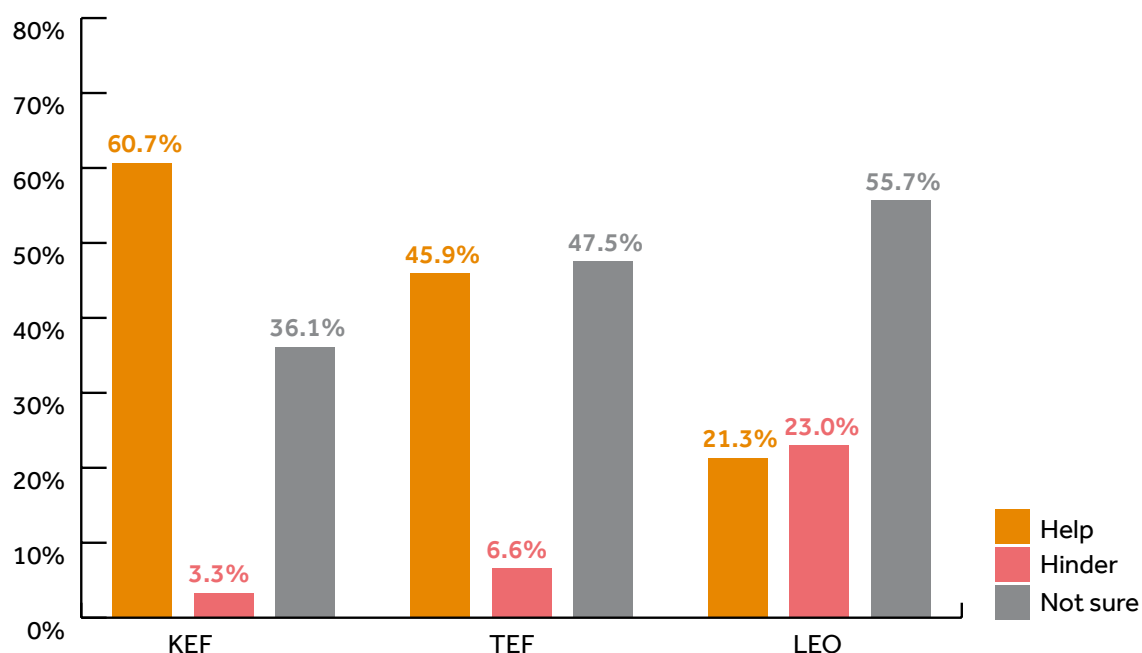


Strong beliefs in 2018 that the government needs to do more to support entrepreneurial activity in universities have since softened – 90 percent of respondents felt more was needed in 2018, compared to 78 percent today (figures 12 and 13). Potential actions for government proposed by respondents include replacing European funding streams, strengthening incentives for enterprise activity through policies and funding, supporting enterprise champions or business support staff, and embedding enterprise at earlier stages of the education system.

The KEF is broadly welcomed by Heads of Enterprise, but the impact of the TEF and LEO data is uncertain

Figure 14

Do you think the KEF, TEF and LEO, as they currently stand, will help or hinder your enterprise work?



Approximately 61 percent of respondents feel the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) will help their enterprise work, compared to 46 percent for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and 21 percent for the publication of Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data on graduate earnings (figure 14). More respondents feel that LEO data will hinder rather than help their work; for all three measures uncertainty is high suggesting greater clarity is needed over the direction of policies and how universities should respond.

About NCEE

The National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education (NCEE) supports further and higher education to build its entrepreneurial future. NCEE believe innovative and inspiring activities led by enterprising staff create graduates equipped for an ever changing world.

Established by the UK government in 2004, NCEE supports organisations to develop their entrepreneurial capacity to ensure higher education remains at the forefront of enterprise and entrepreneurship. Its network spans the globe.

NCEE provides a range of services to universities and their senior leadership and practitioners. Services include:

- Entrepreneurial Leadership training programmes. These support leaders in further and higher education to manage change and adapt to new challenges and opportunities.
- Benchmarking and assessment. A strategic assessment of enterprise activity and entrepreneurial activity in universities, comparing performance against more than 60 measures, and providing unique insight along with practical recommendations, including identification of best practice.
- Embedding enterprise in curriculum. The Enterprising Teaching programme is designed for those in teaching and curriculum development roles who wish to develop their students through incorporating enterprise and entrepreneurial development into their teaching practice.

To speak to us about how NCEE can help your institution contact Ceri Nursaw (ceri.nursaw@ncee.org.uk).

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