



# Entrepreneurial University Award

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## Guidance Notes

Over the past two decades NCEE has worked with entrepreneurial universities who make an impact on their communities and society. We wish to publicly recognise innovative, creative universities through the Entrepreneurial University Award.

### What is an entrepreneurial university?

There is no one definition of an entrepreneurial university. The work of Alan Gibb on entrepreneurial leadership and capacity-building in universities has informed our work over the past few decades.<sup>1</sup> Since then, interest has grown and Elvira Cerver Romero and colleagues have identified six 'faces' of the entrepreneurial university.<sup>2</sup> Our understanding of an entrepreneurial university is one which Burton Clark describes as a higher education institution which 'actively seeks to innovate in how it goes about its business, to work out a substantial shift in organisational character so as to arrive at a more promising posture for the future'.<sup>3</sup>

There are two key points to draw from this definition. First, how are you **innovating**? How are you doing things differently, and why? If we took away your name, your logo, and your marketing materials, is your university still distinctively **you**? Second, your future will be different to that of every other university. How does your activity reflect your **unique history, context, opportunities, weaknesses, and your place**?

For us, an entrepreneurial university is both **transformational** in its impact, and **entrepreneurially-led**. Given the importance of the role of entrepreneurial universities in society, we also place emphasis on **developing and supporting entrepreneurial people**. This includes a focus on enterprise education and support – not necessarily with the expectation that all students will start their own business, but because it engenders the skills, experience and knowledge to make a positive contribution to society. We take a broad conceptualisation of enterprise (including social enterprise), and acknowledge that this will take different forms in different contexts – these contexts should be outlined in your application where relevant.

<sup>1</sup> Atherton, Andrew (2020). Remembering Allan Gibb: A pioneer in the field of small business and entrepreneurship. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*; 798-804.

<sup>2</sup> Cerver Romero, Elvira, João JM Ferreira, and Cristina I. Fernandes (2021). The multiple faces of the entrepreneurial university: A review of the prevailing theoretical approaches. *The Journal of Technology Transfer* (46, 4); 1173-1195.

<sup>3</sup> Clark, Burton R. (1998). Creating entrepreneurial universities: organizational pathways of transformation. *Issues in Higher Education*. Elsevier Science, New York.



## *What we are looking for*

We want to understand how you are an entrepreneurial university. We are looking for:

- Entrepreneurial, transformational and innovative work at your institution, aligned to your mission and context.
- How you foster entrepreneurial skills and societal contributions among students and staff.

A strong response explains and describes what you have done or are doing, and why, taking into account your strengths and the needs of your students, staff and wider stakeholders.

Strong responses demonstrate linkages between different areas (for example how decisions around leadership and culture are reflected in support for staff and students), and the local, national and international (as applicable) positioning of your institution. Strong responses also give examples that are contextualised and represent broad, embedded activity rather than isolated actions.

## *Further guidance*

Your response within the form should **backed up by evidence** where possible. If there is no evidence of impact (for example if it is too soon to assess success), this should be explained and expected outcomes should be outlined and justified.

Setting out vulnerabilities or how you are learning from mistakes or setbacks will not disadvantage your application. An application which sets out your ambitions and how you will achieve them and which is framed within a self-reflective, honest and critical appraisal of your positioning and activity may score higher than polished marketing copy taken from your website or student prospectus.

There are three main sections:

- The **culture and leadership** section captures overall institutional direction.
- The **developing and supporting entrepreneurial people** section captures the opportunity students and staff have to make a significant impact.
- The **context and place** section captures engagement, and whether institutional activity effectively links with society.

Each section is weighted 30%. There will be complementarity between these sections, and the final section (10% of the score) assesses coherence and linkages across the sections. This is especially important in stronger applications seeking a five-year award. You can also mention any other relevant activity or initiatives in this section.

To receive an award, you need to meet a threshold in each of the three main sections, and a minimum overall score. If you do not meet these criteria, you will be given 'aspiring' status and will have the opportunity to resubmit your application within a specified timeframe.

There are prompts within each section. You do not need to necessarily cover them all, although a strong response will consider how the university is responding to the theme.

There is a word limit in each section. Please do not refer to external materials (reports, webpages, videos etc.) except as evidence of activities described in your answers. Your application will be considered in the whole: feel free to refer to previous answers.



## *In summary*

1. Highlight entrepreneurial, transformational and innovative work at your institution, and how this aligns with your mission and context.
2. Demonstrate how you foster entrepreneurial skills and societal contributions among students and staff, and how you are entrepreneurially-led.
3. Show any linkages between different activities and initiatives.
4. Support your submission with evidence, and include how you address limitations or setbacks.
5. Ensure responses are concise yet respond fully to the section theme (referring to previous answers if needed), and only refer to external materials as evidence for described activities.
6. Assume reviewers have no prior knowledge of your university or context.

For a more detailed view of how we understand the entrepreneurial university, see our 2021 publication, *A Field Guide to the Literature for Entrepreneurial Leaders: A Review of the Latest Thinking on Entrepreneurial Universities and Leadership*.<sup>4</sup>

If you have any questions about the application form or the process, please contact Dr James Ransom: [james.ransom@ncee.org.uk](mailto:james.ransom@ncee.org.uk).

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<sup>4</sup> Available here: [https://ncee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/A\\_field\\_guide\\_for-Entrepreneurial\\_Leaders.pdf](https://ncee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/A_field_guide_for-Entrepreneurial_Leaders.pdf)



## Appendix: Application form

For reference, we have reproduced the application form here. Please complete your application using the separate application form (this is a Microsoft Word document – please **contact us** if you require the form in a different format).

### Section A: Culture and leadership

*This section captures your overall institutional direction. We are interested in how you are entrepreneurially-led, and your entrepreneurial culture. Please consider:*

- How is enterprise and entrepreneurship part of your institution's strategy, and how do you implement this?
- Is increasing employability and professional skills part of your institution's strategy?
- Does your institution have a commitment to business development and partnerships? Do you have local or regional commitments? How do you implement these?
- Outline the policies or strategies you have to increase engagement by under-represented groups within your country or community (for example minority ethnic, female, or students from other under-represented groups) in enterprise activity. Can you demonstrate how these have been implemented?
- Does a member of your institution's senior leadership team have formal responsibility for enterprise activity? What about for other relevant areas: e.g. business partnerships or civic engagement?

Your answer: *(maximum 750 words)*

**(Please complete using the separate Application Form)**



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### Section B: Developing and supporting entrepreneurial people

*This section captures the opportunity students and staff have to make a significant impact. We are interested in how you encourage and support the development of skills, experience and knowledge to make a positive contribution to society. Please consider:*

- Do you have staff to support enterprise and entrepreneurship? If so, can you describe what types of role they have, and an estimate of a full-time equivalent number of staff supporting enterprise and entrepreneurship?
- How do you embed enterprise or entrepreneurship skills training in degree programmes? Do you offer enterprise or entrepreneurship skills training programmes for students as additional modules or electives?
- Can you describe any other skills training to reflect current or anticipated workplace needs in your degree programmes?
- Do you provide extra-curricular support for enterprise or entrepreneurship that is not part of any academic qualification?
- Do you offer training or support for starting a small business or social enterprise, or becoming self-employed or an entrepreneur? As part of this, do you provide information and guidance on sources of finance (for example loans or grants or incubator facilities) for enterprise and starting a business?
- Do you provide events, workshops, competitions or other activity to encourage student enterprise or entrepreneurship?
- Do you provide any other support for enterprise and entrepreneurship, such as mentorship or coaching programmes?
- Do you have student-led enterprise activity – for example an entrepreneurship society, or enterprise events organised by students?
- Can you describe any networking events, workshops or other activity you provide or support for students to connect with employers? You may wish to include information on placements or internships for students within businesses and other organisations.
- Describe the professional development or training you provide for staff (this may include senior leadership) in enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Your answer: *(maximum 1,000 words)*

**(Please complete using the separate Application Form)**



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### Section C: Context and place

*This section captures engagement, and whether institutional activity is connected with societal needs. We are interested in the positive impact you have on those outside of your institution. Please consider:*

- Describe the partnerships you have with business associations, chambers of commerce or similar organisations. Does your institution support or work with social enterprises? How about local government, city hall, or similar?
- How does your institution work with local communities?
- How do you support entrepreneurs, alumni, start-ups and/or small businesses? Do you engage with these groups in teaching and research?
- Do businesses, industry or other professional bodies support the design of degree programmes and curricula? Are businesses, industry or other professional bodies involved in the delivery/teaching of degrees?
- How do you reflect labour market needs in your education and training? How do you keep track of student career paths after graduation, and how do you use this information?
- Do you provide training outside of degree programmes to help meet labour market needs, for example for reskilling employees in particular industries?

Your answer: *(maximum 1,000 words)*

**(Please complete using the separate Application Form)**

### Section D: Overall approach to being an entrepreneurial university and any other comments

*Can you describe how you link the activity you have described so far throughout your institution? This includes links between leadership and culture, support for staff and students, and engagement with society. You can refer to your earlier answers.*

*Are there any other activities or initiatives you would like to mention, or any comments you would like to make?*

Your answer: *(maximum 500 words)*

**(Please complete using the separate Application Form)**

