



From l-r: Mark Bailey, of Northumbria University; Anush Begloian, Armenian MP; Arevik Saribekyan, British Council Armenia Director; Dr Nick Spencer, of Northumbria University; and Arman Arakelyan, of the American University of Armenia.

Dec 12, 2019 11:09 GMT

Designing the future of Armenian education

Design and business experts from Northumbria University are playing a key role in exploring the development of higher education and entrepreneurialism in Armenia.

Higher education, and particularly enterprise education, is expected to play a key role in Armenia's future development, with the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan holding a major consultation on the issue later this month.

Ahead of this, a team from Northumbria University were asked by the British Council to design and lead an Enterprise Education Policy Dialogue workshop, bringing together more than 40 key players from business, education and government across Armenia.

[Mark Bailey](#) and [Dr Nick Spencer](#), from the Northumbria School of Design, and [Dr Michele Rusk](#), from Northumbria's Newcastle Business School, worked with delegates to help them think creatively about future opportunities for encouraging entrepreneurialism through education in Armenia.

Working in partnership with colleagues from the [American University of Armenia](#) (AUA), the Northumbria team used a Design Thinking approach they have developed over a number of years to encourage people to think creatively, understand the current situation, consider different perspectives and envisage new possible futures, allowing for more productive discussions and useful outcomes.

Prior to running the workshop they worked closely with a number of young Armenian entrepreneurs and students in order to effectively represent their aspirations.

The Design Thinking method has been used successfully in the UK for a number of years but it is thought this is the first time the technique has been applied to a policy context in Armenia.

The ideas generated during the workshop will be used by the Northumbria team and AUA to inform policy recommendations which will be presented to the Office of the Armenian Prime Minister this month and help to shape higher education in the country for years to come.

The project has been led by Mark Bailey, Director of International Development and a Teaching Fellow within the Northumbria School of Design.

He said: "We have been able to take our particular Design Thinking inspired approach, developed over a number of years and across sectors, and deploy it within a context where there is a real appetite for change and the potential to deliver significant impact in supporting a developing economy."

The partnership between Northumbria University and Armenia began two years ago through the British Council's [Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme](#).

This five-year initiative is designed to develop enterprise skills and support the creative economy across seven countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan), South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and Ukraine.

Northumbria was first awarded funding through the scheme in 2018 for a project working with the American University of Armenia, with further funding approved this year following a successful start.

Having been impressed with the design-led approach adopted by the Northumbria team, the British Council invited them to lead the conversations around higher education policy ahead of the national consultation.

During the workshop, Anush Beghloyan, MP and Director of Commission of International Relations, said: "It is our priority to foster entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial leadership in our country.

"To this end, we are developing approaches towards understanding our constituents in order to better meet their needs.

"These types of events are helpful in gaining multiple perspectives from many different stakeholder groups to inform policy making and for development of legislative acts."

Country Director at British Council Armenia Arevik Saribekyan added: "The development of the cultural and creative economy in Armenia is one of the priority directions adopted by the Government.

"In the scope of this programme higher education institutions and creative entrepreneurs can study the UK best experience in enterprise education and establish joint hubs with their Armenian peers to transfer skills and knowledge."

Led by Dr Nick Spencer, the Northumbria team are now bidding for further funding to enable them to continue to develop and extend their design-led

policy work in Armenia.

Find out more about the [Northumbria School of Design](#) and [Newcastle Business School](#).

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk or call 0191 227 4604.

Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk