



Dr Ed Cottam, Director of the Business Clinic

May 27, 2025 15:14 BST

International roll-out of Northumbria-pioneered learning

A trailblazing education programme that has its origins in North East England is being rolled out in universities across the country and overseas.

Northumbria University's award-winning [Business Clinic](#) launched its experiential learning programme in 2013 to create opportunities for students to work on live projects which help organisations address real-world challenges. It has proved to be a resounding success, delivering 870 consultancy projects involving circa 3,500 students in the last decade.

Now the Business Clinic is helping other universities to roll out the concept in other areas of the UK and overseas. It has provided information and advice to more than a dozen universities including York St John, Huddersfield, Leeds and Aston in the UK, as well as Deakin University in Victoria, Australia.

Launched by experienced academic and industry specialist Nigel Coates in 2013, the Business Clinic offers pro-bono consultancy support to SMEs, multi-national organisations, charitable organisations, educational trusts and social enterprises that operate across a wide range of sectors, both in the North East of England as well as further afield in the UK and overseas.

Students work at the Business Clinic within their final year of study, offering clients a full consultancy experience that takes in projects as diverse as feasibility studies including finance, investment and growth; HR including recruitment, retention and diversity; marketing including branding and digital; business analytics; logistics and supply chain management. The aim of each project is to undertake detailed research and make practical recommendations that will benefit organisations in the short and long term.

Ed Cottam, Director of the Business Clinic, said: “We are thrilled to be helping other universities trial a concept that has worked so well in the North East. Not only has our experiential learning programme enabled students to apply their knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial talent to find solutions to real-world problems, it has also helped hundreds of organisations to become more robust, competitive and efficient.

“Our aim is to give students the best chance of gaining meaningful employment, particularly those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, and to help organisations solve day-to-day challenges. The benefits of our programme are numerous so it makes sense to support other academic institutions that want to implement similar programmes in other parts of the UK and overseas. This will add value to dozens of other organisations, act as a catalyst for economic growth and create further opportunities for students to get invaluable experience that will help them progress in their chosen careers.”

Sarah Czarnecki, Director of The Business Clinic at York St John University Business School, said: “Universities are increasingly looking to The Business Clinic at Northumbria University as a leading model of experiential learning and vehicle for regional and national impact working with businesses. As

universities come under increasing pressure to demonstrate good value, institutions are turning to the clinic as an exemplar of meaningful and impact higher education. The Experiential Learning Clinic worked with me, as Director in another UK University Business School, offering advice and mentorship in order that we follow their model in our work with students and local businesses providing consultancy project support. This underlines the impact The Experiential Learning Clinic is having in modern business school strategy. Theirs is a formative model to which we aspire whilst we have been developing our own clinical education.”

Keeley Hutton, Clinic and Stakeholder Engagement Officer at the University of Huddersfield, said: “The team at Northumbria Business Clinic have gone above and beyond to help us in our journey to exploring business clinic opportunities. They have welcomed us onto campus, provided us with an opportunity to speak to clinic students and been truly honest about the journey they have experienced through their own trials, successes and tribulations. Their advice and encouragement have provided Huddersfield with the ideas and options on how to drive our very own clinic forward. So much so, we are trailing a small pilot in 2026! Watch this space. Thanks must go to this amazing team.”

Northumbria University has been ranked top in the North East for graduate business start-ups based on estimated turnover, according to the latest Higher Education Business and Communities Interaction (HEBCIS) survey. Ranked fourth in the UK for the academic year 2023/24, Northumbria has now been in the top 10 nationally for graduate enterprises in each of the past 16 years under this metric. The university was also the highest placed in the region and seventh in the UK measured by the estimated current employment rate of active graduate firms.

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

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levelling up in the North East of England.

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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