



L-r: Tomas Homola (student), Zuzana Zoubkova (student project lead), Jason Simms (EY), Michael Kelly (EY), Harry Hawes (EY), Thomas Houmark (student), Paulina Sudomir (student)

Oct 29, 2025 09:07 GMT

Students gain invaluable work experience with EY Newcastle, helping to drive apprentice recruitment

Students from Northumbria University [Business Clinic](#) have gained invaluable work experience with a leading global professional services firm, helping them to attract a new cohort of young, local apprentices in Newcastle.

EY welcomed the students as part of a long-standing collaboration, giving them the opportunity to build experience of working in a professional

working environment. The students were challenged to come up with ideas around how to boost the number of young, local applicants from the North East to EY's degree apprenticeship programmes in Newcastle.

EY's consulting division delivers projects for clients in the financial services sector across various areas including anti-money laundering, conduct risk, transformation and cybersecurity, and currently offers two degree apprenticeship programmes in business leadership and management practice, and digital and technology solutions.

The students were also challenged to devise strategies to help increase the volume of female applicants to the digital degree programme.

Zuzana Zoubkova led the student project team, which also included Tomas Homola, Paulina Sudomir and Thomas Houmark.

Zuzana, who is studying for a master's degree in business analytics at Northumbria University, said: "We started by conducting a thorough internal and external review of EY, its competitors and the financial services landscape. We looked at the company's strengths and challenges and examined North East-based competitors that offered similar training programmes. From there, we carried out primary research by talking to individuals about how they explore career opportunities and what keeps them engaged in the application process. These insights shaped our final recommendations."

The recommendations included updates to the EY website to inform and educate prospective degree apprenticeship applicants and an incentivised EY employee referral scheme where staff could share their insights and experiences of the company with their network of contacts.

Another idea tabled was a virtual job simulation – a 2-3-hour, self-paced online programme designed to provide candidates with a realistic preview of the digital and technology solutions degree apprenticeship. As part of this, participants would be supported by guidance from current apprentices and managers to engage in practical tasks to increase their confidence, hone their problem-solving skills and boost their understanding of EY's work environment and culture.

The students encouraged EY to promote the apprenticeships more extensively on social media channels and via advertisements at Metro stations and other key city centre sites. To support EY's social mobility agenda, they also suggested targeting potential applicants by developing relationships with schools from deprived areas and a non-governmental organisation that supports local disadvantaged youths.

Another idea was an insight day that would allow successful individuals to experience the EY workplace environment, and participate in employability workshops to enhance their skills and gain a deeper understanding of the degree apprenticeships and career progression options.

Zuzana said: "Our recommended strategy aimed to help EY attract more young, local talent in North East England, with a particular focus on raising awareness of the apprenticeship programmes and highlighting them as an alternative to the traditional university pathway or full-time employment. We also engaged with students from challenging socio-economic backgrounds to encourage them to apply and help support social mobility in the region."

Harry Hawes, Director, EY, said: "This project gave students from Northumbria University the chance to gain real-world work experience with EY and deepen their understanding of our business and the sectors within which we operate. At the same time, it also provided us with a fresh perspective on one of our recruitment goals from people who were at a similar age and stage of their career journeys to those we're looking to attract. The students came up with a number of thought-provoking ideas and theories, some of which we have already started to implement.

"I would recommend the Business Clinic to other organisations. They provide a different perspective when exploring business challenges, as well as using these alternate views to inform a more robust and effective solution. We look forward to hopefully collaborating with and supporting the Business Clinic again in the future."

Students work at the Business Clinic in their final year of study, offering clients a full consultancy experience that encompasses activities 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 research and make recommendations that will

benefit organisations in the short and long term.

Rebecca Dutson, acting director at the Business Clinic, said: “The students applied themselves impressively on this project with one of the region’s major employers. Their innovation, dedication and problem-solving skills were highlighted in abundance and feedback from the EY team was extremely positive. The project showcased what we’re all about here at the Business Clinic; we give students the chance to drive forward live projects that give them valuable experience and provide tangible benefits to the organisations they work with.”

The Business Clinic has delivered 870 consultancy projects involving more than 3,500 students across all business subjects since it was founded in 2013. It 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.

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Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

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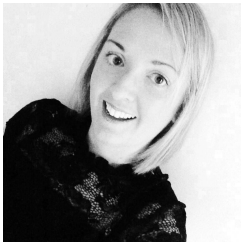
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