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# Here be Enterprising Graduates in the Humanities Dragons?

Karina Croucher, John Canning and Jane Gawthrop  
With Rebecca Allan, Sarah Croucher and Catherine Ross

“ Here  
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in the  
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## Here be Dragons?

### Enterprising Graduates in the Humanities

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# FOREWORD

Napoleon's description of the British as "a nation of shopkeepers" was not intended as a compliment. However, his comment has become congruent with the idea of Britain's prosperity being built upon a foundation of entrepreneurial individuals running their own businesses. Later in the nineteenth century Samuel Smiles' book *Self Help* documented the success of individuals whose enterprising spirit had a major positive impact on the world. *Self Help* was to give its name to an entire genre of literature.

With the exception of business and management disciplines, the role of higher education in nurturing this spirit has received little attention. Perhaps the idea that entrepreneurs are born rather than made has led to the idea education in enterprise is at best unnecessary, at worst a waste of time. However, universities are now called upon to play a key role in nurturing entrepreneurial skills in all graduates as well as ensuring that those who wish to start their own business are equipped to do so.

*Here be Dragons? - Enterprising Graduates in the Humanities* is based upon interviews with graduates from a range of humanities subjects who are currently running their own businesses. This report is not intended to be a guide to teaching business skills to humanities students, but aims to demonstrate to lecturers, tutors, careers advisors and others that humanities degree students acquire a huge range of skills and attributes which will equip them to run successful businesses when they graduate. It will also be of interest to students themselves as they consider their options after university. For potential students thinking about what to study in HE, *Here be Dragons?* illustrates the variety of avenues open to the humanities graduate. The graduates interviewed are at different stages in growing their businesses; they are involved in a huge range of different business activities, and they have very different experiences, ambitions and aspirations. This report explores how these individuals believe that their university education helped (or failed to help) them in starting and running their business.

I know from personal experience that owning and running a business is an exciting and endeavour. My own story of founding COMTEC a company providing technical translation services to the engineering and manufacturing industries is a case in point.

Entrepreneurs do not fit into generic moulds and the series of events that led me to start and grow my own business show that I am no exception! My master's thesis was on 17/18<sup>th</sup> century church pulpits in Central Europe, and after spending a number of years in Central and Eastern Europe, working for Western companies, I saw an opportunity in the growing market there to capitalise on my Eastern European language skills. So it was my knowledge of languages that shaped my career, more than my first degree and it was through languages that I became the first female president of the British Chambers of Commerce. Having therefore founded and grown my own business I know very well that an individual's decision to start a business is very often coupled with taking considerable risks and is conditioned by a multitude of factors. This includes first and foremost the ability to be creative and recognise opportunity, which brings me back to my language skills and the transferable skills I acquired through language learning: flexibility, mental agility, a 'can do' attitude, communication skills and an ability to relate to people from different backgrounds and cultures. These are all necessary characteristics of an entrepreneur.

So I hope that this report will be valuable to university lecturers, careers advisors, enterprise units and others with a view to encouraging humanities graduates to take this path.

**Isabella Moore CBE**  
Chief Executive

CILT, the National Centre for Languages

# Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Graduates from humanities disciplines are often perceived as having more ambiguous (or at least less-defined) career paths compared with those graduating from vocational subjects, such as law or medicine. Having a more open avenue offers a range of career opportunities, including branching out and setting up a business, or becoming self-employed, either through choice, necessity, or fortune. Those disciplines collaborating in this project (Archaeology, Classics, Languages, Linguistics, English, Ancient History and Art History) were thought to be especially exposed to such situations. We therefore decided to conduct a small-scale study of enterprising humanities graduates, determining the circumstances and motivations leading to them embarking on careers. Significantly, we wanted to investigate graduates' perceptions of the skills they had gained through their university degrees, asking them to reflect on their experiences and to identify any areas where they believed they would have benefited from additional support during their degree programmes.

Public perception of enterprise and entrepreneurship is shaped by television programmes such as *Dragon's Den*, which keep the topic in the public eye. Entrepreneurs like Richard Branson highlight the successes to be made from a committed, fair, and informed approach to business. Whilst such media figures themselves may not have attended university, their stories demonstrate that certain traits can pay off in the entrepreneurial world: hard work, integrity, research, creativeness, resourcefulness, adaptability, confidence, commitment, and motivation. These traits are developed through experiences and so can be encouraged within universities. Through creating opportunities for students to demonstrate and develop such attributes, their future chances of success, whatever their career paths, should be significantly enhanced. This applies to those working for others, as well as those established on their own, demonstrating that an enterprising career need not be characterised by risk, but one enhanced through a range of skills, taking advantage of, and creating opportunities, in a competitive job market.

This report offers an insight into the enterprising and entrepreneurial behaviour of a group of humanities graduates, as well as an analysis of the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in supporting and developing entrepreneurial skills. It is not the intention of this report to promote enterprise, but to offer an introduction to the subject for those involved in Higher Education, including lecturers, course designers, careers advisors, educational developers, and students.

The study aims to explore the skills, attributes, circumstances and attitudes of entrepreneurs in the humanities. It is our hope that it will inspire practitioners to engage with entrepreneurship in the curriculum. There is no presumption on the part of the authors that the subjects are successful entrepreneurs; in fact the whole notion of success is one we wanted to explore. Some of those interviewed are running businesses from their home; others have set up businesses that employ people. The amount of capital they required to set up their businesses is highly variable too, as are their personal circumstances.

This report commences with a literature review and discussion of our methodology, followed by an outline of the demographics of participating graduates, before discussing 'motivations, circumstances and perceptions' and 'skills, attributes and the role of university education'. Finally, our conclusions and recommendations are offered. Short biographies of the respondents are available in the appendix.

# Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Definitions and scope of entrepreneurship and enterprise

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an entrepreneur as “*One who undertakes an enterprise; one who owns and manages a business; a person who takes the risk of profit or loss*”. Despite this broad definition, the concept of entrepreneurship has come to embody meanings about innovation, and the risk aspect is often presumed to mean a high risk. However, a new business does not necessarily entail high levels of risk, it does not necessarily have to be innovative and the level of capital required depends on the type of business an individual wishes to start (see Jones 1998). Moreover, it is possible to buy a franchise or an existing business as a going concern. All possibilities involve a degree of risk, yet, as noted by Bennett and Dunn (2000) not all business owners aspire to see their businesses grow, or even to make large profits. Kwiatkowski perceives entrepreneurship as “...many things at once, but above all it is the ability to perceive opportunities and to tap the resources necessary for exploiting them” (2004 p. 218). Kwiatkowski uses case studies of individuals who have not been innovative, but were able to exploit opportunities. One case study is of an unemployed woman with a disabled son who set up a successful cleaning business; her business required no substantial capital investment, but she was able to use social networks to develop her business. Another case study is of the owners of a struggling small drug store in a small town in South Dakota. The town was located on a major route and thousands of people drove by everyday. However, when a sign was put up on the main route offering free iced water, people stopped in the town and subsequently bought other goods from the store. Neither of these individuals invented anything or spent a lot of money, but they were able to exploit an opportunity that made them very successful business owners.

In popular culture the word ‘entrepreneur’ conjures up an image of the multimillionaire who has acquired extensive wealth through his or her own efforts. Individuals such as Alan Sugar, Richard Branson and Bill Gates come to mind. Aspiring entrepreneurs appear on TV shows such as the BBC’s *Dragon’s Den* to convince a panel of such self-made individuals to invest money in their idea. Unlike other wealthy individuals, entrepreneurs are widely admired for their success, built not upon inheritance, luck, celebrity or some obvious natural talent, but upon their own efforts. According to Southon and West (2002, pp. xvi-xix) entrepreneurs are confident, charismatic, energetic, work-obsessed, ambitious and always in a hurry. However they can also be arrogant, manipulative, unable to finish things, impatient, lack focus and are obsessed with the competition.

In this study we found that few respondents were comfortable with describing themselves as an ‘entrepreneur’. The graduates we interviewed might therefore better be described as ‘enterprising’. In modern times the term ‘enterprising’ has exclusively positive connotations in terms of being innovative and risk-taking, but early uses were largely negative: an enterprising person was foolhardy, ambitious and scheming (Oxford English Dictionary). We have used the adjective ‘enterprising’ to describe the behaviour of our respondents. We consider them enterprising primarily on the grounds that they have set up their own businesses, rather than using the term to say that they all share a particular set of attributes.

Nomenclature therefore represents a problem from the outset. There is no doubt the term ‘entrepreneur’ (and its derivatives) has a certain degree of ideological capital embedded within. In general use it has overtones of innovation and risk. It is sometimes, though not exclusively used as a synonym

for self-employment or running one's own business. Is an entrepreneur a person who runs their own business? Not according to Schumpeter (1939 cited by Kwiatkowski 2004) who conceived entrepreneurship to be concerned with carrying out 'new combinations'— therefore one ceases to be an entrepreneur when one begins to run a business just like anyone else (Kwiatkowski, 2004 p. 205).

The notion of entrepreneurship is also problematic. Bennett and Dunn (2000) place definitions into two main categories. The first of type of definitions derive from the field of Economics. Essentially entrepreneurship is a decision which results from the expectation that returns from entrepreneurship (following a cost-risk evaluation) exceed those from potential waged labour. A second set of definitions are psychological with more emphasis on the attitudes and values of an entrepreneur.

Bennett and Dunn challenge conventional definitions from a feminist perspective, "... if entrepreneurship is defined in terms of monetary gains, innovation and growth, the many female small business owners who start ventures with little or no specific intention of growth will be eliminated from consideration" (Bennett and Dunn 2000, p. 76).

The disparate understandings of the term entrepreneurship cause problems for the lecturer. In a list of 'dos and don'ts' Inge Struder (2006, p. 28) advises teachers in Higher Education not to use the word 'entrepreneurship' at all—instead one should say 'enterprise for self-employment and/or small business'.

The study reported here employs broad understandings of entrepreneurship and enterprise that may not be shared by all readers. The individuals whose perspectives appear in this study are either self-employed or engaging in a 'portfolio career' combining self-employment with paid employment. Social-entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, although useful concepts, are not specifically addressed in this study. Many of the skills and attributes displayed by entrepreneurs are also evident in those not actually pursuing their own businesses, but nonetheless demonstrating creativeness and innovativeness in their work. These examples are equally relevant to Higher Education, since they demonstrate how enterprise skills enhance the employability of all graduates, not just those intent on starting their own businesses.

## 2.2 Self-Employment

The Labour Force Survey in the UK classifies people as self-employed those who are paid a salary or wage by an agency, are a sole director of a limited company, are running a business or professional practice, are a partner in a business or professional practice, 'working on own account', subcontracting or freelancing (Lindsay and Macauley 2004, p. 401). In short, a wide variety of people are labelled as 'self-employed', reflecting a huge variety of skill, income and lifestyle attributes.

There are important gender differences in self-employment, which are particularly significant in the context of this study, considering that a majority of graduates in the humanities subjects are female. In 2002 56% of self-employed women were educated to A Level or above compared to only 46% of female employees. In contrast the education gap between self-employed and employed males is just 2% (58% and 60%). This may be due to the low numbers of women working in construction (which accounts for 22% of all self-employment), the sector that accounts for a high proportion of self-employed men who tend to have more vocational qualifications rather than 'traditional' academic qualifications. It is also possible that highly educated women believe that they can earn more self-employed than as employees or that self employment is a means to regain entry to employment after a period of absence (see Weir 2003, p. 443). Moreland (2006, p. 6) writing for the Higher Education Academy's *Learning and Employability* series quotes from Weir that, on average, self-employed people earned £121 per week more than employees in 2002. However, Moreland neglects to report Weir's analysis that the income of the self-employed is skewed in favour of just 17% of the wealthiest self-employed people. The median earnings for employees was £293 as opposed to just £236 for the self-employed—"The popular stereotype that the self-employed are high earning, entrepreneurial professionals is not true for the majority" (Weir 2003, p.449).

## 2.3 Entrepreneurship Education: a brief overview

Entrepreneurship as a field of study has expanded rapidly in the past two decades. Most sources cite the first entrepreneurship course in a university as Harvard Business School's 'Management of New Enterprises' MBA in 1947. By 2005, there were more than 2200 courses in entrepreneurship at over 1600 institutions (Kuratko 2005). Volkman examines the rapid expansion of entrepreneurship programmes in Europe. The first German chair in entrepreneurship was awarded as recently as 1998, yet by 2004 there were 51 chairs (Volkman 2004, p. 178).

Volkman identifies two key questions about entrepreneurship education. The first is the question of who is actually capable of teaching entrepreneurship. The second question is that of the legitimacy of teaching entrepreneurship in the first place (2004, p. 177).

These two questions are best addressed together. In the UK government reports and policy documents have identified the need for entrepreneurship skills to be taught in schools and universities (e.g. Davies 2002, Small Business Service 2004). However, this is problematic for a variety of reasons. The first difficulty is the question of *where* entrepreneurship should be taught. Is entrepreneurship to be embedded into the curriculum to become the responsibility of all teaching staff? Or is it better taught by academics in the business school or by a dedicated non-academic unit?



Leaving aside issues concerning the overloading of the curriculum, most successful entrepreneurs do not teach as practitioners in higher education. Moreover, many individuals who are widely considered to exemplify successful entrepreneurship are non-graduates such as Richard Branson, Alan Sugar and Bill Gates (Gates dropped out of Harvard). Business schools in both the UK and US have always been subject to similar academic conventions as other academic departments. In the UK, they have had to engage in scholarly research and peer review (for the Research Assessment Exercise for example), which according to Binks *et al* (2006) has discouraged business academics from engaging outside academia. In the US context, Kuratko (2005) identifies a shortage of individuals with PhD's in entrepreneurship, which in turn leads to a shortage of teaching staff. This difficulty is reinforced by the marginalisation of entrepreneurship in business schools, encouraging potential researchers and teachers of entrepreneurship to pursue other avenues to develop their career.

Whether entrepreneurship is to be embedded in the curriculum or offered by the business school as a course unit open to all students, it is imperative that those teaching entrepreneurship are 'approved' (in terms of timetabling, agreeing that students can take such a course, etc.) by those teaching in other fields (see Vester 1999, cited by Kuratko 2005).

Measuring the impact of entrepreneurship education is another problem area. Most graduates from UK universities are in their early twenties when they graduate. Although there are exceptions, there are important social and intellectual dimensions to entrepreneurship, such as establishing networks and friendships which take a period of many years (Kwiatkowski 2004). Whilst self-employment in the USA has been generally decreasing there has been a rise of 23% in people over 50 starting their own businesses (Hopkins 2005). In the UK there has been a gradual increase in self-employment since 2001, mainly in the banking, finance and insurance sector and the construction industry. Lindsay and Macauley (2004) attribute a rise in the former sector to people made redundant in the City, who have become self-employed (hence there is a compensating decrease in the number of people employed in the City). However, the increasing level of self-employment in the construction sector has coincided with an expansion in the number of people employed in the whole sector. Both sectors represent areas of self-employment where previous experience as an employee is generally a prerequisite for success. "Self-employment is generally entered into most frequently after the age of 30. This is consistent with the idea that sufficient human and financial capital needs to be acquired first" (Weir 2003, p.450). Moreland concluded that the proportion of graduates who set up their businesses is very low (Moreland 2006). Fewer than 4% of economically active 21-25 year olds were self-employed in 2002 (Weir 2003, p. 443).

Additionally, most UK universities now have enterprise units which help academic staff commercialise their research expertise

and assist in the creation of university spin-off companies. The commercialisation of research was once regarded "at best irrelevant and in most cases vulgar" (Pirnay *et al* 2003, p. 360), but universities are becoming increasingly commercial for a variety of reasons including social pressure to participate in their region's economic development, to collaborate with industry and to bring about alternative sources of finance. There is also the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NGCE) established in 2004 "...with the aim of raising the profile of entrepreneurship and the option of starting your own business as a career choice amongst students and graduates." (NCGE website: [www.ncge.org.uk](http://www.ncge.org.uk))

## 2.4 Summary

Whilst entrepreneurship as a field of study has rapidly expanded recently it has a much longer history than many may realise. Although entrepreneurship and enterprise are highly problematic concepts both in academia and popular culture, self-employment is an attractive option for people of all ages. The UK government is highly committed, ideologically at least, to encouraging younger people to set up their own businesses (HM Treasury 2004). There are considerable resources to support enterprise, including government agencies, voluntary organisations, business organisations and 'self help' literature. Whilst entrepreneurship education is a growth area, few humanities graduates have any experience of it, and it is important that existing knowledge in business schools, enterprise units and other university expertise is drawn upon in informing the debate about humanities entrepreneurship.

# Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS

## 3.1 Interview Methodology

Like its companion volume on longer-term employability in the humanities (Allan 2006), this study is based on telephone interviews with humanities graduates, but focuses on those who have set up their own businesses rather than working for others.

Telephone interviews have the strong advantage of being time efficient and economical. Whilst the telephone interview method makes the analysis of body language impossible, and the interviewer and respondent are less likely to establish a rapport (see Wishart 2003), the method benefits from a high response rate (May 1997, p.91). Telephone interviews also allow for more detailed acquisition of information than would be collected through a written survey, with respondents speaking freely rather than personally writing down their thoughts – the latter is both time consuming and prohibitive of obtaining more personal or true opinions.

This study used four different interviewers (Allan, Canning, S Croucher, and Ross) and was written up by three authors (K Croucher, Canning and Gawthrope). The intention in using multiple authors and interviewers has been to ensure discipline-specific knowledge in both the interviews, and in the correlating of material.

Respondents were found through personal networks, Subject Centre e-bulletins and other available mailing lists. Potential respondents were sent an email outlining the nature of the project, and a telephone interview was arranged.

Each interviewer had a set of questions (Appendix 1) to assist in exploring the respondents' motivations, skills and opinions. The questions were not intended to be asked in strict order, but served as an *aide memoire* to interviewers. The interviews were recorded with the respondents' consent. All the names used in this report are pseudonyms: a brief profile of respondents is given in Appendix 2.

Although none of the interviewers were experts in the field of entrepreneurship, they were subject specialists. Respondents were presumed to be experts in light of their experience of running their own business. The unstructured interview enables the respondent "to challenge the preconceptions of the researcher, as well as enable the interviewee to answer questions within their own frame of reference" (May 1997, p. 112).

It is always essential to keep the purpose of the study in perspective. This study does not intend to uncritically promote the concept of entrepreneurship or self-employment. It is concerned with examining the experiences of real individuals, some of whom have paid a great price in personal relationships. "If you are in a relationship, it may not survive the competition," warn Southon and West (2002 p. xxiii-xxiv). And often in family businesses "the Dynasty becomes a Dallas", warns Lank (2000). However, it is not only the financial rewards of self-employment that can be considerable. Irrespective of their financial situation, interviewees find the experience motivational, fulfilling and one which provides them with a strong sense of purpose for their lives.

## 3.2 Respondents

We interviewed a total of 29 graduates, (12 female, 17 male), aged between their mid- 20s and late-60s. Most of the graduates had completed undergraduate study, with a handful continuing into postgraduate study

– their experiences of postgraduate study are included, where relevant, in this report. Some of the graduates had completed university as recently as 2006, whilst others had completed their university education some time ago – the earliest in 1972.

Around half of the graduates were working in fields related to their disciplines of study – these were predominantly English and Archaeology graduates. The others were working in different fields than those they studied, although two of them were thinking of returning to their disciplines, if only in their spare time.

The graduates came from a variety of backgrounds, split roughly equally between being the first members of their families to attend university, or with their parents also having attended university. One third had parents who had also owned their businesses. Of these, most had not attended university, although they had encouraged their children to obtain a university education. Exposure to entrepreneurial behaviour then may have some influence in the decision to establish an alternative career, although clearly this is not the universal case.

Our interviewees ranged in age, social background, parental influence and geography (they attended universities throughout the UK), offering a broad, diverse sample on which to base this insight into entrepreneurial and enterprising behaviours, experiences and motivations.

# Chapter 4: ENTERPRISING HUMANITIES GRADUATES: MOTIVATIONS, CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERCEPTIONS

## 4.1 Introduction

This section of the report explores the reasons (other than those directly related to education and skills) why the graduates in the study are where they are and doing what they are doing. What have been the motivational factors behind their decisions? What circumstantial factors have helped or hindered them? How have they perceived risk and measured their success?

Such questions relate to a common thread in the literature of entrepreneurship: are entrepreneurs born or made? Do our entrepreneurial graduates possess a set of traits that differentiate them from others, or have they encountered particular circumstances that have pushed them towards an entrepreneurial or enterprising lifestyle? Can Higher Education, and our disciplines in particular, foster a more enterprising outlook in all students, or should we concentrate on those who demonstrate the appropriate personality traits?

The popular stereotype of the entrepreneur is of a bold, profit-driven individualist who perseveres through adversity to finally 'make it'. Jennings (1994, p.141) however points out that the lack of basic agreement on who is an 'entrepreneur' (a founder of a small business, a founder of a successful business, an innovative business, an intrapreneur, an individual demonstrating enterprising behaviour.....) means that trying to identify a set of entrepreneurial traits is fraught with problems. Low and Macmillan (1988) in a review of the literature involving psychological theories about the entrepreneur conclude:

*Being innovators and idiosyncratic, entrepreneurs tend to defy aggregation. They tend to reside at the tails of population distributions, and though they may be expected to differ from the mean, the nature of these differences are not predictable. It seems that any attempt to profile the typical entrepreneur is inherently futile. (Low and Macmillan 1988, p. 148)*

However, others reviewing the literature (Bull, 1995) identify the following characteristics as common among entrepreneurs:

- Desire for independence
- Dedication, though not necessarily to economic gain and possibly to the values embodied in some core task
- A high internal locus of control i.e. a desire to and belief that they can determine their own fate
- A willingness to accept moderate risk, not as a function of chance but of skill

This section examines the extent to which the enterprising humanities graduates in our study evidence these (and other) characteristics and the extent to which circumstances have shaped their decisions.

## 4.2 Motivations

How far do our interviewees conform to the stereotyped profit-driven individual? Hardly at all – only one mentions money as a primary motivator. Four others mention it as a sort of 'icing on the cake': something that enables them to enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle, pursue more creative but financially unrewarding projects or combine profit with pleasure. In contrast, ten individuals state that they are definitely not motivated by money, and seem anxious to dispel any assumption that they are.

### 4.2.1 Enjoyment and Dedication

So if not money, what do the graduates cite as their motivators? The most common reasons are to do with the inherent enjoyment of what they are doing and a sense of its value:

*I feel that I'm doing something worthwhile. Because of the nature of my business [training consultancy] I feel that the training we provide makes people better leaders or managers. If I ran a company that sold double glazing I would find it harder to motivate myself.*

Motivation is sometimes also expressed as intellectual enjoyment, a love of learning or interest in a subject:

*I was looking for something else outside my everyday job. I had expected to go into an academic career and so wanted some more academic input. That is why I both continued to write and start my own business.*

Some respondents in fact mention trading financial reward against undertaking projects they feel passionate about or offer more creative opportunities. One respondent describes starting a journal because what he regarded as a culturally important area was being neglected; another wanted to take knitwear to a wider public. Others are motivated by the non-financial aspects of growing a business, such as providing employment for others. 'Helping others' features in other ways such as the respondent who is 'helping to turn young people into positive members of society', as does a desire to share enjoyment of a subject such as archaeology with a wider audience. When reading the interview transcripts one is often struck by a sense of passionate commitment to, and enjoyment of, the work itself. This motivator features little in the literature on the characteristics of entrepreneurs, where the focus tends to be on drive, risk-taking, and the desire for independence and control. However it does correspond to the entrepreneurial characteristic identified above as:

- Dedication, though not necessarily to economic gain and possibly to the values embodied in some core task

Another aspect of dedication emerged when the graduates were asked what qualities had helped them to succeed. Words and phrases such as 'tenacious', 'strong-willed', 'determination', 'don't give up', 'stick at things' occur frequently and one might conclude that it is the combination of passion about the work in hand with a tenacity to see things through that is significant in the lives of the interviewees.

### 4.2.2 Independence

The desire for independence also features amongst the motivations of the interviewees. Ten mention this explicitly when asked what motivates them: it is put in terms such as 'not wanting to work for anyone else' and 'I love being my own boss'. Having flexibility in how you organise your time is evidently valued: two women say how this has enabled them to care for children whilst continuing to work. Others refer to the possibility

of taking long weekends or breaks if they wish to, or simply the ability to choose their own working hours and environment. Three interviewees mention dissatisfaction with overwork or poor conditions in a previous career as driving them towards independence. Several interviewees however mention the 'downside' of independence and flexibility: namely the dangers of isolation and reliance on self-motivation and self-discipline when you work alone.

### 4.2.3 Attitudes to Risk

As mentioned above, the stereotype of the entrepreneur is one of a high-stakes gambler; prepared to risk all in the battle to succeed. Indeed several high profile entrepreneurs are known for their capacity to 'bounce back' after business and/or personal failure. Examples include Jeffrey Archer, the author and politician who has survived financial disaster and a criminal conviction; and George Davies, creator of the brands *George at Asda* and *Per Una*, a veteran of the near collapse and a boardroom coup of 'Next', the retail chain he founded in the 1980s. It should be noted however that even prominent entrepreneurs are not gamblers when it comes to risk; Richard Branson advises "never [to] gamble on something that you have no influence over" (Branson 2007, p. 25).

So did the graduates in this study see themselves as risk-takers? Answers varied from those who saw setting themselves up in business as a *risk-avoidance* measure to those who perceived their choice as bearing some risk, but it is fair to say that none presented themselves as risk-seekers or motivated by the thrill of winning against the odds.

Amongst those who saw their career choice as a way of minimising risk was an archaeologist who said:

*...the risk would have been staying within archaeology and getting channelled into a job such as digging. I like the idea that there is uncertainty in the future and not being limited or put in a box.*

A freelance teacher and editor saw himself as reducing risk by being able to mix the type of work he did and not "put all my eggs in one basket". Other graduates have deliberately minimised risk by continuing paid employment whilst developing a business. Another graduate who runs a training consultancy did recognise the risk inherent in running his own business, but was optimistic about his ability to manage risk. He perceived risk as ubiquitous in all walks of life, but felt that his chosen path had given him greater control over his destiny.

Some interviewees separated financial from other types of risk, referring to risk in terms of giving up known lifestyles, successful paid careers, or subjects to which they felt an emotional attachment. Whilst several interviewees recognised the risk inherent in giving up the security of paid employment, most took steps to minimise their risk exposure by starting their businesses in a small way, borrowing as little money as was viable or borrowing from sources other than commercial lenders. Some

borrowed from sources such as family members or personal credit cards.

Only two respondents indicated that they in some way enjoyed risk-taking. One worked as a freelance writer and said that he wanted to see how long he could survive without having to earn a steady living; another who had set up two businesses based on her language skills spoke of the need to encourage students to be greater risk takers and work outside their comfort zones.

Generally however the graduates would be characterised as risk averse, and anxious to keep risk within manageable limits where it did occur.

#### 4.2.4 Support Issues

An individual's perception of risk is often influenced by how well they feel supported. As mentioned above, several interviewees discussed feeling a strong sense of isolation and self-reliance in their chosen lifestyle. These interviewees made deliberate attempts to reduce their isolation, either by making an effort to attend conferences or meetings or to build networks. These networks were most commonly based on contacts developed during working life rather than at university. Even in archaeology, where graduates were more likely to be following a career linked to their discipline, contacts mostly dated from after they had graduated. However, one photographer mentioned using her Oxford University connections in order to gain access to subjects that would be unavailable to others.

As well as social networks, many interviewees benefited from the support of family and partners. Several mentioned receiving financial help from parents and relatives, or help in the form of business advice, or simply providing a stable home environment. Ten respondents had close family members who were running or had run their own businesses, and this must have added to the pool of experience they could draw on, as well as fostering a culture supportive of individual enterprise. The family was cited as a source of support more often than outside agencies. When asked *'Did you have support from any agencies or funding bodies?'* most respondents said 'no'. Some however did mention advice and grants from such organisations as Business Link, NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts), the Prince's Trust, the Arts Council and the Chamber of Commerce, but usually only after the business was up and running. It is evident that awareness of the practical help and advice with business start-up available through such organisations as Business Link was patchy amongst our graduates. One respondent said for example:

*I was never aware of the safety nets that are in place to negotiate business risks i.e. being able to set up a public limited company, and I think that this may have held me back when starting out on my own.*

This lack of awareness of the support available is especially worrying given how often legal, financial, and accounting problems were cited as an obstacle by the interviewees. There

is certainly an issue about how services such as Business Link can be made more accessible to those who have not had any formal business education. One might also ask how universities might do more to make those in non-business subjects more aware of the services available to help them.

### 4.3 Choice versus Circumstance

Most studies of the psychological traits of entrepreneurs conclude that they have a strong belief in their ability to control their own fate, known as a 'high internal locus of control'. When we asked graduates *'How have you ended up doing what you're doing? By choice, chance or circumstance?'* the answers were varied and no clear pattern emerges. Some clearly saw their current situation as based upon personal choice:

*By choice. I didn't want to work for anyone. I had been fiddling with business since I was young. I started 'Company Name' while I was at university.*

*By choice. Myself and my wife were tutoring part-time and thought we could do something to expand the archaeological knowledge of the public in the area. We saw the archaeological resources of the area as under-utilised.*

At the other extreme, some graduates talk about 'falling into' their current role without making a conscious decision at all. Between these two extremes, most graduates refer to a combination of choice and circumstance, and it is here that we see evidence of entrepreneurial behaviour where graduates have seized the opportunities that circumstances have created for them. Sometimes circumstances have created a push: overwork in an existing job, the need to be at home to care for children, the need to live in a particular geographic area. In other cases, circumstances have enabled graduates to identify a business opportunity which they have exploited. For example, a graduate who had experienced mental health problems herself started a business offering teaching and training about mental health issues. An English graduate who began life selling advertising on an architecture magazine is now working freelance as a writer and researcher in architecture, having gradually built up substantial expertise in this area. A Polish-speaking art history graduate jumped from being an interpreter for an American company in Warsaw to being a site manager when the existing post-holder was fired.

#### 4.3.1 Obstacles

Of course, circumstances can create obstacles as well as opportunities. As previously mentioned, when interviewees were asked *'What barriers/obstacles did you face, and how did you overcome them?'* the most common answers related to problems with the financial, legal and 'red tape' issues. Other graduates referred to a variety of personal problems, often linked to confidence. Some archaeology graduates mentioned the need to overcome stereotyped attitudes towards their discipline and one respondent with a postgraduate degree felt pigeon-holed as a

'boffin'. Interviewees often mentioned the challenge of keeping motivated when they have only themselves to rely on. Nearly all encountered obstacles of one sort or another which had to be overcome through dedication and work. Their stories suggest that most individuals can acquire entrepreneurial abilities, and that these abilities can be learnt and developed from experience and investment in education and training.

### 4.3.2 Career Patterns

Amongst those citing both choice and circumstance, there is therefore a spectrum of experiences including both circumstantial push, the sudden opening of a window of opportunity and those who gradually move from one role to another building up skills and finding out what suits them. Very few of the graduates have single-mindedly pursued a business idea. Most have taken a series of small steps, with dead-ends and diversions along the way. This fits with the pattern described by Kets de Vries (1980) who argued that prior to commencing in business, entrepreneurs often follow a transitory path during which they test their abilities and develop skills. At this time they lack a clear focus and move from job to job looking for a niche.

Several graduates are involved in 'portfolio' careers, earning money from a variety of activities or combining paid employment with running a business 'on the side'. Although not raised explicitly by interviewees, it is striking how communications technology has enabled this sort of career. Several of the graduates started off, or are still, running 'kitchen table' businesses buying and selling online or developing websites. The simple fact of availability of a computer and the internet has created the circumstances enabling many graduates to become self-employed, and this is something that perhaps needs promoting to current students. Being an entrepreneur doesn't necessarily mean running a big business in an office environment: it can be a matter of working from home in an environment and with a lifestyle that suits you.

## 4.4 Self-Perceptions

This section has examined the psychological traits and environmental factors which have shaped the careers of the graduates in this study. But how do they regard and define themselves now, when they are in a position to reflect on their careers? By understanding the self-perception of these graduates we might be better able to nurture enterprising behaviour (however defined) in current students. Although not central to this study, one is struck on reading the interview transcripts by how the graduates create narrative structures to provide chronology and perspective for their accounts. The reality of their entrepreneurship is expressed in terms of storylines, positive and negative emotions and plots. (See Downing, 2005 for a discussion of narrative and dramatic processes in the social construction of entrepreneurship.)

### 4.4.1 Entrepreneurial?

The graduates were asked 'Do you consider yourself to be an entrepreneur?'. The answers varied widely, with some saying a definite 'yes' and others a definite 'no' and several points between. Of course the graduates were involved in business activity of different scales and types and so this variation might be expected, but some who had successful businesses didn't see themselves as entrepreneurs whilst others who didn't have as much success did see themselves as entrepreneurial in some sense. The lack of a widely agreed definition of 'entrepreneur' is obviously a difficulty here, but there is a clear sense in the interviews that many graduates did not see themselves as stereotypical entrepreneurs:

*I know people who are enterprising and entrepreneurial and they are a lot more driven than I am.....They really throw themselves into it all the time. I enjoy the work I do, like it and am pleased to do it but I wouldn't say I am permanently over the moon about it. It is interesting – I wouldn't do it if it wasn't interesting. Entrepreneurs just go for it, whereas I do this because I enjoy it and it gives me a nice life.*

### 4.4.2 Enterprising?

But when asked the same question about being 'enterprising' the graduates were much more likely to agree in the sense that they saw themselves as taking advantage of opportunities, finding solutions to problems and coming up with new ideas. There was a sense that they as individuals were uniquely placed to generate the solutions and ideas, either through their specialist knowledge or personal skills. Some individuals commented that it was only on recent reflection that they saw themselves as 'enterprising' and wouldn't have done so at an earlier stage in their careers. This suggests that if even enterprising graduates don't recognise themselves as enterprising in the early stages of their careers, seeking to inspire recent graduates with models of those who have 'done it' may be futile.

### 4.4.3 Successful?

Whether or not the graduates defined themselves as entrepreneurs or enterprising is of course only one dimension of self-perception. They were also asked simply 'How do you measure success?' and this question revealed a range of interesting answers.

Money was mentioned by a high number of respondents, but this was not in terms of high earnings, rather in terms of "having enough to get by" and "having a good and comfortable lifestyle, stability". Money was valued as an enabling factor whereby graduates could provide for themselves, do the things they enjoyed and also support others. One archaeology graduate related how his personal measure of success had changed over time:

*When I was at university I thought it was academic glory, things like how much you publish. Then when I left academia it became financial, how much you earned. But now that I've reached a comfortable financial level – not rich but plenty to cover my needs – it's changed again. I've returned to more intellectual realms, writing and publishing again.*

Happiness as a measure of success ranked highly for the graduates and this was articulated variously as enjoyment of work, enjoyment of life as a whole and the ability to help and support others. One English graduate commented that although she was not successful financially she was personally very happy and added, "It's about the journey not the goal". Another archaeology graduate said that success was "how good you feel when you get up in the morning" whilst a classics graduate cited being able to "go to sleep at night knowing that I've made a difference".

Attitudes of peers were also a measure of success for many graduates. For some it is the respect of friends and wider social networks that are important; for others it is the views of family. One graduate spoke of exceeding her family's expectations that she would just grow up and get married; another of feeling the need to compete with his father's success. Others spoke of the views of employees and customers as their measure, and another linked his success to the public profile of his work area as a whole.

## 4.5 Conclusion

In exploring the responses to questions about motivation, circumstances and self-perceptions this section has shown that the graduates in this study largely do not conform to the popular stereotype of the entrepreneur. They are not driven by financial gain, and do not thrive on risk-taking. However, they do evidence several of Bull's (1995) entrepreneurial characteristics in that they place a high value on their independence and intrinsic enjoyment of the work they undertake. One might conjecture that this would be expected of humanities graduates, who are accustomed to independent study rather than group work, and who usually choose their degree subject because they enjoy it rather than with any career goal in mind (see British Academy 2004). They do accept moderate risks, although generally try to minimise these. On the 'high internal locus of control' issue it is more difficult to draw a conclusion since answers to the question about 'choice, chance or circumstance' varied so widely.



# Chapter 5: SKILLS, ATTRIBUTES AND THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

## 5.1 Introduction

One of the main focuses of this project has been to reflect on the role that universities do and can play in developing and enhancing entrepreneurial skills and behaviours. Our graduates ranged in both their perceptions of the usefulness of their degrees in this area, and on the actual responsibilities of the university. This section will begin with some overviews of the perceptions of the skills gained through university education and the role this has played in subsequent careers, followed by a discussion of areas where graduates would have valued greater support and development.

## 5.2 Skills Gained

Most of the graduates cited the general academic skills gained as improving their careers, especially in terms of developing independent thought and critical thinking, as well as interpretative abilities. These skills not only influenced the graduates' judgement and decision making, but also helped in negotiation, a skill fundamental to business success.

As Allan (2006, pp. 19-20) found in her report on long-term employability, analytical and numerical skills were also seen as important to many graduates, with the ability to analyse and process data seen as key: *"both the numerical and analytical skills, and the communication skills have been important in my career"*. The need for meticulous and methodological attention to details was also cited, especially by language graduates (including those studying ancient languages), and archaeology graduates (the latter citing recording during excavation and the use of computers as developing these skills during their degrees). In addition to data processing, another graduate saw that archaeology had given her the ability to work with incomplete data sets, something that made her stand out from colleagues who had difficulty facing problems with incomplete data. The ability to approach situations laterally, developed through her Art History and Language degrees, was also seen as having a direct impact on establishing one graduate's business.

Problem solving skills were also seen as key, again enhanced through all disciplines studied. One archaeology graduate felt that solving problems had been important in their degree, and essential in business life beyond this. The ability to think creatively is also beneficial, again developed for many graduates through their degrees; *"there are a lot of subjects that kill creativity, but not archaeology"*. A Creative Arts graduate stated that his degree opened him up to *"different ways of presenting things and different ways of thinking about things"*, enabling him to find solutions to problems.

General literacy skills were repeatedly referred to by the graduates interviewed. Numerous benefits of literacy skills were mentioned, including enabling one graduate to write their own press releases. Others expressed self-confidence in proposal writing, proofreading, and general communication. For one English graduate who now has their own publishing business, her English degree taught her *"a new way of looking at English grammar, looking at the way English is constructed, which I can now apply to my work to explain to authors why changes are made"*. Research skills were also essential, especially when establishing a company, as market research can be fundamental.

Project management skills, including organisation and time management also stood out as key factors in success, given that respondents were responsible for their own time. Reliability and the ability to deliver were crucial, as were enabling employees and colleagues to do the same.

### 5.3 Communication

The above skills were all seen as contributing to the ability to communicate, essential to all of our graduates. For some, their degrees had enabled them to deliver under pressure to large audiences; for others the ability to develop an articulate argument had been fundamental to their success. Networking skills had also played a vital role for many, developed for some through conference attendance whilst at university, though cited more frequently by postgraduates. The ability to negotiate and empathise was also important, as well as an ability to communicate with a range of people in different environments and situations, and a general ability to get on with people. 'Getting on with people' was described by archaeologists and linguists as a key skill developed through fieldwork/ residence abroad and described by other graduates as resulting from team work, and generally 'getting by' at university. The 'novelty factor' of both Classics and Archaeology degrees was also cited as indirectly useful as a means of starting conversations and ice-breaking, thereby having a positive impact on communication and negotiations. Some believed that this aspect gave them a real edge over others, having a hugely positive effect in situations they later realised had been key turning points in their career paths.

### 5.4 Personal Attributes

Confidence and independence were also seen as necessary entrepreneurial attitudes, again gained by many graduates through their degrees. For some these were enhanced through other activities whilst at university, such as running conferences, involvement in journals, productions, student groups and sports. For many it had been confidence which had ultimately enabled them to contemplate starting out on their own and, importantly, to continue when things got tough. Confidence also encouraged independence, with one graduate stating that:

*...a lot of the work I do now is very independent. Art history encourages that. I did class presentations. These were excellent, standing up in front of people and presenting an argument.*

The responsibility needed to manage your work at university was also seen as important in that it embeds the notion of being responsible for yourself and encourages independence. Independent thinking was perceived as vital for developing entrepreneurial behaviour:

### 5.5 Discipline specific skills

Archaeology in particular was cited as a very interdisciplinary degree by several graduates, encouraging interpretation and the exchange and communication of ideas, with one graduate commenting that:

*You learn that only by talking to others and doing solid research that you come up with valid hypotheses. This approach is valid in any subject, and in business. You need to research, and to plan for possible problems.*

The problem of being pigeon-holed by others' perceptions of the degree was highlighted by several graduates, one commenting on the naive expectations held by others of their degrees, abilities and limitations. One graduate commented that when she left university she was "simply offered a choice between doing a secretarial course or a teaching course - these were the same choices my mother had been given in the 1950s". She is now running her own company. The ability to market yourself was seen as fundamental to avoiding stereotyping, something extending into many areas of business life; "it is really important in setting up your own business - you have to be able to market your product, and to have a very strong sense of self-belief".

For those following archaeological careers the vocational skills gained were very valuable, although many felt that these could have been further developed, especially with regard to providing insights into legislation, guidelines, professional bodies, and networking. For many, fieldwork was especially important, developing a range of transferable skills:

*Fieldwork was crucial and became the most enjoyable side of archaeology. It allowed me to observe, question and analyse things. I think it provides people with a rounded understanding of the environment.*

However, like the entrepreneurs examined by Samuel Smiles in his classic *Self Help* (1986 [1859]) many individuals make their impact outside their discipline of study. Two graduates who have made a big impact in the field of modern languages had studied other subjects at university.

### 5.6 Attitudes

As well as skills, particular attitudes were repeatedly cited as important, often enhanced through degree study. For one graduate their Classics degree "raised general consciousness and aspiration". For many it was commitment and determination, especially when learning languages; one graduate cited that learning Ancient Greek had developed his ability to "stick at something and to keep working". Adaptability and resourcefulness had also been essential; one English student felt that "I learnt to start with a bit of blank paper and construct something out of nothing". These were all cited as entrepreneurial qualities realised through their degrees, becoming influential in later career choices.

Other more general benefits were also discussed. An archaeology graduate described how their degree had inspired an interest in people, in "how people behave, how they make sense of their world and how they inhabit it". The fact that "English is about people, and training is about people, and it's the people aspect that I am really interested in" was influential to a graduate who went on to establish their own training company. A Classicist discussed how her degree had "widened her eyes to a different and wider world", directly influencing her later work as a freelance photographer. One graduate felt that through doing an unusual degree:

*I frequently had to justify my choice of degree to people who would say 'what's the point?' and 'what can you do with that?'. This meant that I got used to justifying things and answering questions.*

Some, whilst not directly citing specific attributes, stated that their degrees had still helped them get to where they are today. A minority, who didn't feel that their degree had directly influenced their career, were still positive about their degree experience; *"I never saw the degree as directly related to my work. I did it more for the interest, and got everything I wanted and more, from the degree"*

## 5.7 Skills Underdeveloped in Higher Education

There were a number of areas which the graduates identified, with hindsight, as potentially useful for students thinking about their own businesses after graduation.

### 5.7.1 Careers Guidance

One of the simplest and most easily addressed areas was careers advice. It was felt that careers advice should not only focus on traditional career routes, but also demonstrate the range of alternative careers available to graduates. It was also suggested by many of the graduates that this should take place earlier rather than later during the degree, encouraging students to think about, and plan for, life after university at an earlier stage. One graduate commented that people get *"deviated from planning for life after the HE experience"* with not enough thought given to *"what you are going to university for, and what you are going to get out of it"*. In order to get the most out of university and its opportunities, he would encourage students to be aware earlier on that there will be a life after university. A further graduate commented that *"it is the task of HE to focus students' attention on the fact that they are going to fall out the end of the degree mill at some point. This is more important the younger the student is"*.

In order to gain the most from careers events, one graduate suggested encouraging students to organise events themselves (with support), thus gaining additional experiences:

*If something is student run, then they will have to do all the planning and get all the contacts. This will expose them to different ways of organising things, and teach them how things are done. This would be especially useful in business; even if they didn't learn enough to set up by themselves, they would learn where to go for help and advice.*

Those students who felt they had received good careers advice attested to the benefits gained. One graduate had attended a careers day at their institution stating that this had been especially beneficial as it had included speakers who had followed alternative career paths. Another had received direct advice on setting up a business when someone from a local company spoke at university. This was seen as not only useful in itself, but also as aspiration-raising.

### 5.7.2 Professional Knowledge

Another area repeatedly identified for further development was that of commercial advice, including the need for universities to offer an insight into the 'real world'. Within archaeology some graduates would have liked more exposure to the vocational commercial world, including professional bodies, legislation, guidelines, and contract work, and closer links between academic and professional archaeology were called for: *"there's so much contract and commercial archaeology about, but no way to prepare for it"*. Others had received what they perceived to be poor advice at university:

*My lecturers were removed from the commercial world. We were continually told that there were no jobs in archaeology, but in fact I've never found it hard to get a job. I think it would have been better if there had been closer links between my university study and the commercial side of archaeology.*

Networking skills were mentioned alongside professional advice. Knowledge of professional network groups can be helpful, especially in the creative industries. Advice on the supporting bodies and funding agencies would also be beneficial, including Business Link, The Princes Trust, NESTA, the Arts Council and the Chamber of Commerce.

Commercial knowledge was not just an issue for archaeology: *"humanities students have to be more commercially focussed because the world is just that way now"*, with a further graduate commenting on their *"poor understanding of industry after leaving university"*. The same graduate commented of university that *"as an academic provider they were fantastic, but there is a question mark over whether people should be leaving higher education so uninformed"*.

### 5.7.3 Business skills

General business skills were viewed as an area for development by the graduates we interviewed. The development of team skills was something many graduates felt they were lacking, along with human resource management skills. For a couple of graduates project management skills were seen as inadequate, and the lack of a longer research project at undergraduate level was noted. Additionally, IT skills and word processing were also missed by some. However, these skills and opinions varied widely according to individuals and institutions attended.

Learning about the realities of tax and the Inland Revenue were repeatedly requested, followed by general economic knowledge, basic accountancy and book keeping, networking, and advice on how to actually set up and run a business. Advice on funding would have been beneficial with hindsight, including funding sources, especially in the early days of working for yourself; *"now there are loads of European grants for instance, and there's no reason why just anyone shouldn't apply for these."*

Many graduates suggested that the option of taking business units would have been useful. One archaeologist suggested that this could work seated within the archaeology department

responding to the increased number of small businesses in archaeology. Others thought that an option for students to take business modules would be sufficient. A further archaeology graduate suggested that a third year module on 'enterprise in archaeology' would work well, as would a Masters degree combining business and archaeology.

*My institution was very arts based, it would have been better if they offered some more general training, such as business skills - teaching you how to work and survive in the real world before you are thrown into it, and teaching entrepreneurial skills. When students leave university, they are likely to end up doing something they know nothing about. It would be better to learn about business skills at university.*

A couple of graduates suggested taking the lead from secondary schools, some of which now run mini-enterprise schemes, developing and setting up a small scale business:

*It's not major, but it teaches them the skills they need. It would be good to do something similar at university (cross departmentally). If the students get involved and set up a small company then they can understand everything behind it, and because they are directly involved they want to make it work, and so get behind all the things involved.*

These, it was suggested, should be supported by occasional seminars, as well as business people being invited in to talk about how they set up a company; *"this would allow students to see how someone who is similar to them has done it, and that it's really possible for them to set up their own business too"*.

### 5.7.4 Independence

Self-responsibility and independence were seen as vital when working for yourself, with the abilities to think for yourself and to question needed. A few graduates were certain that students should be given greater responsibility over their own degrees, with less 'spoon-feeding' by universities.

For others, independence drove their motivation for working for themselves, and there was a feeling that they were unable to work for employers; *"if you have that kind of personality then it's better to run your own company"*. One person believed that people are less stressed when not reporting to others, that they are happier when they are in control of their own destiny; for this reason they would advise students at university to consider being their own boss. A further stated he would *"advise students not to just act like robots and follow company protocol at a big firm for 40 years". There was a general sense that students should "follow their hearts and do what excites them"*.

*I feel that entrepreneurial skills are individual skills, that most entrepreneurial ventures involve only a single person to start-up. The education you receive at university has an individualised nature to it - you're studying on your own, and have to rely only on yourself to do your work, to go to lectures etc. So in this way the process of doing a degree can teach you to work independently.*

One graduate saw the ability to think through and implement an idea to the end as being a real entrepreneurial quality – he drew real comparisons between this and his PhD, where he had to see the project through to the end, beginning with an intellectual idea and persuading people (i.e. funding bodies) to invest money in the idea. For undergraduate degrees he thinks that getting students involved in a more practically-focused dissertation would help develop their entrepreneurial skills, with their dissertation teaching them basic project management skills. Again responsibility for a project is fundamental:

*When you are running your own business you are in charge of the whole enterprise and if you stopped working one day the whole thing would come to a halt. When you start a business it only exists in your head and you are entirely responsible for its creation.*

### 5.7.5 Transferability of Skills

A key component to success cited by one graduate was the realisation that the skills gained were transferable:

*Perhaps higher degrees are in a bubble which is entirely focussed upon the research that is taking place, rather than the fantastic suite of skills that are actually gained through undertaking a PhD.*

He suggested that at undergraduate level there is a need to draw out the transferability of the skills that students are already developing, perhaps even structuring projects around particular transferable skills, especially if it was a mini-enterprise project. Once students have realised the skills they have, it is important to know how to market them; *"I would have liked to develop a way of marketing myself and my skills whilst I was studying"*.

## 5.8 Enterprise at University

The ability to identify opportunities and make things happen can be difficult to acquire, and differs greatly in people. A balanced attitude to risk is needed; *"it's a question of balancing risk with potential returns"*. Whilst many cited risk-taking as important, other graduates perceived setting up on their own as less risky than staying with their original employment. A great deal depended on individual circumstance and necessity. Learning to identify opportunities, think independently, and make balanced judgements can be encouraged at university, especially through enterprise modules, where students can gain an insight into the kinds of decisions (and risks) that are taken in the outside world.

There were some pessimistic outlooks with regard to enterprise at university:

*I would tell students not to hope to find enterprise at university, that university isn't good at promoting entrepreneurial skills in the outside world. I don't think that university is the right place for this, because the mindset you find there is 150 years out of date. They simply teach students to feed back what they've learnt... I think it would be lovely if university was 'leading out',*

*but instead it simply reinforces ideas; fills up the empty vessels that are the students.*

One graduate believed that you can't teach enterprise since it is about attitude to risk and confidence, although business techniques can be learnt. However, if attitudes and confidence are developed through experience, then it is logical that these can be enhanced through the degree process, through exposing students to opportunities to develop them.

Some of the graduates believed that academic and subject based departments should concentrate on their subject primarily, and that the business side could be offered additionally. However, as projects such as the *Contexts* project at Leeds University have demonstrated ([www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/casestudies/](http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/casestudies/)), it is possible to develop these skills whilst still retaining subject specificity. For example, a geography project on hydrology combines subject-specific content with challenging, relevant case studies. Some language departments have simulated interpretation situations for students to gain experience, and some archaeology departments have experimented with role-playing, encouraging problem-solving and analytic skills, with students required to think alternatively about issues facing contractors, developers, and the public for example. Whilst developing enterprising skills, subject-specific knowledge is also learnt and implemented. Enhancing entrepreneurial skills clearly does not necessarily need to stand apart from academic study. Conversely it can enhance and reinforce subject specific knowledge and skills. However, there may be cases when an interdisciplinary approach is favourable, especially in exposing students to a broad range of experiences. Such an approach is taken during UKGrad workshops ([www.grad.ac.uk](http://www.grad.ac.uk)), establishing scenarios which require challenging and innovative solutions, including real problems discussed by prominent companies and businesses.

Further general advice given by the graduates included studying a language whilst at university, even if not studying for a language degree. Not only are there opportunities opened up through having a second or third language, but additionally the lessons learnt in communication are invaluable.

Many of the graduates interviewed stressed the importance of gaining work experience before setting up on their own, although further examples are apparent where students set up successful businesses whilst studying, with little experience at all. Advice given included:

*Whatever you want to develop in a commercial form, it is essential to know what you're doing. Be patient, learn craft and expertise. Don't run before you can walk. Then, when you are ready to start, look for opportunities and be prepared to take risks. Nothing is handed to you on a plate, and there will be thin years upon starting up.*

*If you decide to strike out on your own then there are two roads that you can face - flamboyant success or flamboyant disaster. But there's no one to help you, if you are self-employed then you*

*are on your own. People should be prepared to take risks, and their destiny is in their own hands. It is possible to have great success and failure - most people have both.*

## 5.9 Conclusion

The graduates interviewed were satisfied with the academic skills they had gained through their degrees, including analytical skills, research skills, problem-solving and critical thinking, all of which were perceived to have been extremely relevant and influential in their career paths. However, they felt less well equipped in areas such as an understanding of finance and Inland Revenue, professional bodies, funding bodies and supporting institutions; and on reflection felt that they were therefore at a distinct disadvantage when setting out.

# Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The graduates in this study are evidence that humanities graduates have the potential to succeed as entrepreneurs, a fact that is not usually reflected in the way university enterprise units are often oriented towards business and technology departments. Our graduates challenge the stereotype of the entrepreneur as a money-motivated business graduate determined to make their first million before they reach 25, prepared to gamble all and sacrifice friends, family and lifestyle in order to achieve their goal. The graduates we interviewed are characterised by creativity, know-how and a determination to succeed, but not at all costs.

The common understanding that entrepreneurs are motivated by money was proved misleading, with exactly the opposite approach overwhelmingly witnessed. Our interviewees were motivated by interest, creativity, independence, flexible lifestyle and enjoyment, rather than financial gain. Enthusiasm for their subject was also a common driver, allowing the interviewees to follow areas they are passionate about. Consequently, self-employment may be an excellent career route for humanities graduates who are passionate about their subject. This can be enhanced by a flexibility of lifestyle, allowing independent control of working hours, locations, and projects. For those seeking a flexible lifestyle, working for yourself can be ideal.

Those interviewed expressed a range of skills, attributes and experiences gained at university that have contributed to their chosen career paths. Overwhelmingly, they thought that university had been a positive experience, one which ranged in significance from 'enjoyable and informative' at the least, to being fundamental to life and career options. However, there were some suggestions as to how more might be done by universities for future graduates. These ranged from institutional wide support, to measures which could be implemented on a departmental and even individual level.

As expected when discussing enterprise and entrepreneurship, the role of business schools repeatedly arose. Graduates felt that more opportunities could have been created for them to study business modules during their degrees. Currently there is often tension between business schools and humanities departments which often derives from differences in cultures and values. Additionally there are the usual administrative problems inherent in offering modules across different departments or faculties. Thus for humanities students business modules are often marginalised in the curriculum and timetable, and there is a common lack of communication between business schools and departments, ultimately resulting in students finding it difficult to include business modules within their studies. Greater exposure to the options offered by business studies was repeatedly stated as a positive way forward, enabling those students who are interested to have broader available options. Ways of integrating enterprising skills within a subject-specific curriculum were also discussed, detailed further below.

General careers advice was also felt lacking by many graduates, especially in terms of discipline-specific routes – it was perceived that lecturers were removed from the disciplines in industry, and thus gave incorrect or misguided advice. Greater partnerships between industry and academia were cited as a route for improvement, giving students realistic advice and guidance as to the opportunities available to them. Such networks would also address the dearth of knowledge in the areas of legislation, guidelines, professional bodies and funding bodies – repeatedly stated as inadequately covered at degree level.

Whilst not being primarily motivated by money, financial savvy was still regarded as essential. Our interviewees used imaginative ways of raising money rather than going to banks or traditional lenders, bypassing expected routes of setting up businesses. However, many stated this was because they had been unaware of the financial support available to them. They were not high-stakes risk takers. However, they were very committed, often working many more hours per week than traditionally employed counterparts (although this was compensated by greater flexibility). One graduate advised of delegation: delegating work in order to free up time and offload some of the responsibility.

The role of experience was repeatedly cited by the interviewees as forming and shaping their skills, attributes, and outlook to life. Overcoming challenges and learning how to deal with real-life situations were instrumental in learning new skills, enhancing creativeness, and changing attitudes. Whilst many of these were obtained outside of the university environment, giving students opportunities to face challenges during their degrees better equips them for situations beyond university, and opens greater possibilities for students to begin learning the skills needed for successful careers either working independently or as employees.

Independence and responsibility were cited as key enterprising skills. Enabling students to take greater responsibility for their own study would support them in learning these skills. This might be enhanced by activities such as requiring students to organise their own events – whether subject related or perhaps careers events – enabling experiences where students can learn about responsibility, independent thought, reliability and commitment.

Practical ways that enterprising skills can be embedded in the curriculum include modules designed for students to take over and run problem-based situations, requiring analytical and critical thinking, and prompting innovative and resourceful solutions. Such projects do not have to be at the expense of subject specific knowledge; indeed they can even enhance subject knowledge and understanding through addressing subject-specific challenges and areas of expertise, requiring subject-specific research and understanding. Such an approach not only provides experiences where skills and attributes can be developed, but also enhances subject specific understanding, and traditional research skills.

Enterprising skills are often necessary attributes for academics, yet this is often overlooked, especially by academics nervous of engaging with enterprise! The risk-taking, creativeness, independence, persistence and innovativeness required for submitting funding proposals, writing papers and undertaking projects involve comparable experiences to those in their own businesses, simply in alternative contexts. Intellectual risks are taken, persistence is often required, and self-motivation is essential for success.

Ultimately, enterprising qualities such as the ability to think creatively, resourcefulness, judgement and analytic skills, independence, and perseverance are of value to all graduates. They can be just as instrumental for those working for others,

enabling challenging, rewarding careers, both within discipline-related areas of industry, and for the broader career paths chosen by humanities graduates.

It is intended that this report be useful for lecturers and departments in demonstrating routes into enterprise and entrepreneurship in Higher Education. Students will find the case studies demonstrative of the variety of opportunities open to them beyond their degrees, as well as showing some of the ways they can begin to prepare for their careers during their studies. Potential students considering their university options may also find this report informative, demonstrating the range of careers open to humanities graduates; consequently, careers services and enterprise units may also find this report useful in informing the advice they provide for humanities students.

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Name	
Date of interview	
Are you happy for us to use your details (name, possibly photo) in presentations/ publications? Would you like this interview to be anonymous?	
Age	
Institution/ Subject of degree/ Type of degree (BA/ MA/PhD)	
Specialisation/majors	
Year of graduation (of both UG and PG if relevant)	
Current employment situation/job title	
How have you ended up doing what you're doing? By choice? Chance? Circumstance?	
How did your * degree influence this?	
When did you realise you could set up your own company or become self-employed/freelance, or leave your chosen field and in what context (i.e. where were you personally in your career path and in what year was this roughly)?	
How did you start off? Kitchen table business?	
What social networks were/are in place? Was it just an independent move? Did any networks (or business partners) originate at university?	
Was there a large element of risk involved in your decision to set up your own company/leave * / become freelance/self-employed etc?	
Did you have any support from agencies or funding bodies (i.e. student enterprise programmes, Princes Trust, other agencies, advice units, banks, stakeholders)?	
What approaches/ attitudes/ abilities/ skills did you gain through studying * which helped you in this process?	
What approaches/ attitudes/ abilities/ skills would you have liked to have developed during your degree?	
To what extent were these attitudes, skills etc. developed through the course, and to what extent through extra-curricular activities?	
What do you consider to be Entrepreneurial skills within degree programmes?	

Do you consider yourself to be an entrepreneur?	
Do you consider yourself to be enterprising?	
What motivates or drives you?	
What qualities have helped you succeed (this might include creativeness, innovativeness, risk taking, communicative skills, business sense)?	
What barriers/ obstacles did you face, and how did you overcome them?	
What had been your intended career path?	
How satisfied are you now in your chosen career (and quality of life)?	
How do you measure success?	
Do you have any plans for further career development?	
How would you promote the idea of enterprise to current students?	
Family background - did your parents set up their own businesses, do something different/enterprising? Did they go to university?	

## Appendix 2: PROFILES OF INTERVIEWEES

*All names have been changed.*

**Beatrice Kennedy**, aged 28, graduated from the University of Nottingham in 1999 with a BA, and from UCL's Institute of Archaeology with an MA in 2003, both in **archaeology**. Both her parents attended university, with one becoming a health visitor and the other a teacher. Beatrice works as a full-time project officer for her local County Council on a project aimed at accessing the region's past. She additionally works as a company secretary for a company she helped establish, working with historical interpretations. This business originally began when a company she was working for decided not to bid for contract renewal. Beatrice and a number of colleagues decided to collaborate and submit a bid of their own. This was actually unsuccessful, but nonetheless gave them the motivation to continue trying. She has aims to eventually enlarge their company, as well as returning to academia on a part-time basis, perhaps to complete a PhD.

**Ben Peters**, aged 24, graduated from Bournemouth University with a BSc in **Archaeology** in 2005. Neither of Ben's parents went to university, although his father did make extra money through buying and selling, which Ben cites as having been an inspiration to him. After completing his degree, Ben worked behind a bar before deciding to relocate to the West Midlands, where he initially worked for an e-commerce firm before starting his current full-time position as a university IT project officer. He now also runs an online sales business via EBay with his partner. He aims to leave his job in the future, dedicating his time to a full-time business venture, possibly through a commercial property he is contemplating turning into a restaurant. His online store was established simply as a means to generate further income. Ben didn't have an intended career path, which he reflects on as having been a problem, leading him to drift into and out of courses at university, beginning with drama and then graphic design before settling on archaeology.

**Eddie Atkinson**, aged 21, graduated in 2006 from Queen's University Belfast with a BA in **Ancient History and Archaeology**. Eddie is self-employed, running his own online music shop, which he started whilst still at university after buying stock from a shop which was about to close down. He has also just launched a business aimed at students moving house within the UK. He has wanted to run his own business since secondary school, and intends to continue in this vein, with eventual plans to employ others.

**Dr. Frederick Giles**, aged 35, studied for his BA in **Archaeology and Classics** at the University of Wales, Lampeter in 1992, his MA in **Classical Civilisation** at Birkbeck College, London, in 1996 and his PhD in **Archaeology** at Leicester University, completed in 2001. Neither of Frederick's parents went to university; they have recently set up their own business constructing and hiring out a canal boat, but this has only taken place during the last five years. In addition to his full-time work at a local university as an assistant registrar/planning statistician, he handles the financial side of an umbrella company that sells antiques (specialising in 1930s ceramics) and knitting kits. He had originally anticipated an academic career, and still continues with academic writing now.

**Dr. Heather Gomez**, aged 29, completed a BA in **Archaeology** at UCL in 1998, an MA in Post-excavation studies at Leicester University in 1999, followed by a PhD, also at Leicester, in 2003. Heather works full time as a research scientist whilst designing and selling knitwear patterns on a part-time basis. She began doing this by putting together packs for friends, before

moving on to selling on eBay, Heather had originally intended an academic career, but is satisfied with her current career path, and has plans to build up the knitting business. Neither of Heather's parents attended university or had their own businesses.

**Dr. Harry Ike**, aged 49, has recently had to suspend his business running archaeological tours and is currently a part-time tutor in adult education. He studied for a BA in **Archaeology** at the University of Southampton in 1999, an MSc in **Integrative Psychotherapy** at the University of Central England in 1995, and gained his PhD in **Archaeology** in 2003 from Manchester University. Harry didn't really have an intended career path, and currently aims to continue teaching. He is contemplating giving the business another try again in the future, having learnt a lot of valuable lessons. Neither of Harry's parents attended university or ran their own businesses.

**Henry Davies**, aged 47, gained a BA in **Archaeology** from Durham University in 1981. He is managing director of his own archaeological practice. Running his own business was always something he had thought about, especially as his father worked for himself. His mother had attended university and worked within his father's company. He had always intended a career in archaeology and at university had contemplated opportunities for an archaeological co-operative. His plans involve continuing to develop the business, keeping abreast of changes in the archaeological climate.

**Peter Daniels**, aged 44, currently runs his own software company which he established after working on a self-employed basis for various firms after completing a BSc in **Computer Systems Engineering** at Warwick University in 1984, and an **archaeology and computing** BSc in 2005 at Surrey University. He is currently also studying for an MSc in **Archaeology and Landscape** at Southampton University. He had always intended a career in computing, but is now considering a career change to something more archaeological in nature. Whilst both of Peter's parents went to university, neither ran their own businesses.

**Simon White**, aged 50, completed a BA in **Archaeology** in 1977 at Southampton University. He currently lectures at an FE college, as well as running weekly slots on national and local radio. He had always wanted to be an archaeologist and from his teens decided he wanted to combine this with broadcasting. He would like to study for a PhD, as well as developing the broadcasting work he does, and is interested in archaeological journalism. Both parents were teachers, his father having graduated from Oxford.

**Will Simmons**, aged 40, studied **Ancient History** and **Classical Archaeology** at Warwick University, graduating in 2000. He currently works as an IT director for a web services company (although he is currently thinking about setting up his own business dedicated to archaeology), and additionally runs an archaeology website. During his BA, and through work at a national museum, it became apparent to Will that archaeology generally was not exploiting available web technology. Consequently Will established his website and has been working

on his own software (discussions are under way with national bodies on how best to further this). Will's parents did not attend university, although his mother had run a kennel and cattery for a number of years and now runs a successful pet shop, and his brother owns a garden design company.

**Dr. Felicity Forbes**, aged 50, graduated with a BA in **History of Art** in 1994, and a PhD in 2003, both through Birkbeck College, University of London. She is director of her own consultancy company. Felicity's career had focused on print production, so when she was made redundant, she and three other colleagues established their own company. She is currently studying copy writing to expand the range of services offered by the company. Neither parent went to university or ran their own businesses.

**Frank Terry**, aged 54, studied **Art History** at Exeter University, graduating in 1974. He is now the publisher and managing director of a publishing company. The company was established after retirement (having worked in banking until 1999). Neither parent went to university or ran their own businesses.

**Mary Innes** is half British and half Polish. She studied **Art History** at the University of Warsaw, where she became fluent in Polish. She then worked for Massey Ferguson in Warsaw before establishing her own business in the UK specialising in East European language translation services for commerce, engineering and software industries. She sold the company four years ago to a US firm.

**Annette James**, aged 28, studied for a BA at Lampeter (1999) and MA at Durham (2004), both in **Classics**. Whilst working full time as a sales manager for a publishing company, she also runs her own business as a travel photographer, which she established shortly after finishing her MA at Durham. She had planned originally to be a classics lecturer. She hasn't any current long-term aims, but prefers to live for the here and now. Annette was the first in her family to attend university, and her uncle employed her father in his own business.

**Christine Hall**, aged 45, graduated from Liverpool University with a BA in **Classics** in 1982. She is self-employed, working as a designer. She intends to keep her business small and home-based. Before she had thought about working in a museum or library, but changed her mind when her personal circumstances changed. She is contemplating taking courses related to her business (soft furnishings or interiors) and intends to take a computer course in the near future. Both of Christine's parents went to university, and her father was a university lecturer.

**Mary Byrd**, aged 26, studied for her **Classics** BA at Warwick (2002) and MA at Durham (2004), and is currently working full time as a course administrator and library facilities assistant, whilst writing a film script, which she hopes will take her career in a different direction. She was the first in her family to attend university, although her mother was the first at the business she worked at to gain a male-only college place by submitting a portfolio under her initials. She argued her case and right to the place and went.

**Pauline Chatterton**, aged 58, studied with the Open University for BA **Linguistics in Latin, Ancient Greek and Astrophysics**, graduating in 2005. She is currently a self-employed trader. She started off very small-scale, allowing her to look after four young children. She had originally intended a career as a specialist tourist advisor, but this came to an end when she had children. She currently intends to continue with her company, whilst finding time to also write and sell book reviews. Her father went to Oxford; neither parent ran their own business.

**William Amery**, aged 56, attended Oxford University to study for an MA in **Moderns and Greats (Classics)**, graduating in 1972. He is currently the owner and chairman of a media company. He began his own business after leaving the small company where he was MD when it was sold to a large multinational. He began small-scale, simply with a typewriter at home, and built up from there. William had originally intended a career with the civil service until he worked for the publishing company, where he would have stayed had it not been for the company's sale. His father was an Oxford graduate who went into the Indian civil service until Indian independence, after which he became an apple farmer.

**Pauline Ackroyd** graduated in 1972 from the University of Sussex with a **history** degree. After graduation Pauline started working as a programme officer for the British Council for 2 years, before training to teach English as a foreign language. She had always been interested in languages, but had not previously studied them. She eventually became head of a university languages centre but now works as a consultant, undertaking evaluation/social audits, as well as teaching quality and staff development work. She decided to set up on her own as the workload for academics in management was too much.

**Sally Cooper** is currently at the end of an MA in **creative writing**, after starting a BA in **politics** in 1991. She works on a freelance, self-employed basis, facilitating workshops on mental health (self-harm in particular), and has recently set up a training partnership to deliver the training. She is also a creative writer, with her first book of poetry published this year, and runs workshops on this theme, as well as presenting readings. Currently Sally spends roughly 85% spent of her time on training and 15% on writing, a balance she would like to change. She plans to do this after the book is published as she then intends to put more time and effort into writing and marketing herself.

**Kevin Inglefoot** studied **English** at the University of Nottingham, graduating in 2003. During his time at university he worked in student radio, where he gained expertise and had use of resources. A friend had asked him to help produce a student soap opera, so he became head writer; contributing to scripts, editing, presenting the broadcast, contributing to the story line and undertaking big chunks of production. They won best student radio entertainment show from Radio 1. After graduating Kevin was offered work script writing for the BBC Asian network, which he has been doing ever since, although work is

not constant. He has also written two plays for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and is about to take another one there. He has undertaken production work for several radio stations, all on an ad hoc basis. Kevin had always wanted to be a writer. He is now branching out, working on some web design, as well as now promoting the use of disused industrial land for film and music video locations. Whilst not directly creative, they are in the same industry and contribute to others' creative projects, as well as building up finances to support Kevin's own more creative work.

**Hilary Jones** graduated from the North Western Polytechnic in 1966 with a general degree in **English, French and philosophy**. Although she had thought of writing from an early age, she had intended to be a teacher, studying for a primary PGCE at Leeds University. She then taught for 18 months, specialising in English, art and drama. After this she left to travel in Afghanistan; this is when she decided that she definitely wanted to write for a career. She got a break with the Sunday Times as a trainee property writer after offering to work for free for a two week trial. She has now written two paperbacks related to the property market. She left the Times after two years to work freelance, beginning with editing antiques newsletters and writing a book on antiques. She then opened an art gallery in a provincial town which she ran for four years until the rent was doubled. Following this she became pregnant, and returned to the antiques newsletter where she ran the publishing and subscriptions, enabling her to buy a cottage. After spending a few years concentrating on bringing up her child, Hilary was approached about selling corporate gifts on a commission basis. By 1996 she was running her own business in this field, involving buying a further property. When she closed the business she had property to sell on, which she used to invest in further property. Hilary then began a counselling course, and from this went into home tutoring, which she is still doing. She is currently studying for an MA in **poetry** at Manchester Metropolitan University, and wants to move away from teaching to running writing workshops for adults, and working in poetry.

**David Kennedy** was 25 when he started his degree as he had been in low paid/status employment whilst writing. He had been writing short stories and plays since about the age of 16, and had written several novels, and had had a short story published, when he saw the advert for the degree. By then had felt he was confident enough to go to university. He studied for a **Creative Arts** degree, graduating in 1981, followed by an MA in 20th Century **English literature**, which he completed in 1983. He then worked teaching American literature, film and drama for six years until 1989 when he became an advertising copy-writer in recruitment advertising. He then chose to do a Masters in organisational psychology which he finished in 1994 and began working on a freelance basis. He and his partner now have a limited company.

**Leonard Kray** studied **English literature** at Cardiff University, graduating in 1998. For six months after graduating he sold advertising for an architecture magazine, who then offered him

a job as a reporter. He worked here for three years, eventually becoming the deputy editor before going to work on another architecture magazine. During this time he was invited to teach design on a postgraduate diploma course. For two years he did this whilst working for the magazine, then left to become freelance, also working for a building design magazine as a critic. A friend then suggested starting a new architecture design magazine. At the time he had just finished two books and was still teaching. He went to Berlin to research another book and was still working freelance, returned to a salaried job for a while, and is now about to go freelance again. He would still like to set up the magazine at some point. He also has an interest in returning to academia, and working for national newspapers. He keeps getting offered the chance to do a PhD, but has so far resisted for financial reasons.

**John Soames** played rugby in France for year before attending university. He then studied **English** and **French** at Leeds University, graduating in 2004. He now runs a company which has two main areas of business: student bookings for parties/ events, and sports tours for amateur sports clubs. It usually involves organising 4 day/3 night trips, and is run from home.

**Sue Sterling** graduated from Exeter University with a BA in **English Studies**, and continued into an MA, which she completed in 2003. She gained employment with a regional press agency as a deputy picture editor. During this time Sue had already started thinking that she would like to start a new publication for students and graduates which showcased their work and put them back in touch with one another once they'd graduated. She was feeling unchallenged at work and so decided to save money to do this, and moved back home. On discovering there were few job opportunities at home, the Job Centre suggested a scheme for people going into self-employment, which meant that she could get a business plan together. The scheme taught fundamentals such as registering with the Inland Revenue, and suggested the Princes' Trust, where she received a loan for £2000, allowing her to purchase a computer and develop an online publication which has now been running for a year. She has now been on the NESTA (national endowment for science, technology and the arts) Creative Pioneer Programme, where she has obtained investment to launch another publication which will publicise public events at universities nation-wide. She also now carries out commissioned research, has been added to the post-graduate trainer's network for universities, and carries out careers workshops. She considers that she is currently building a portfolio. Ultimately she would like financial stability and her own home.

**Henry Simons** graduated from Oxford in 1984 with a degree in **English literature**. He then completed an **MBA** in Manchester directly after his degree. He didn't enjoy the MBA in the same way as he'd enjoyed his undergraduate degree, but felt it was something that he had to do as the English degree didn't offer him any form of vocational training. Because he didn't enjoy it that much he felt it was very difficult to motivate himself. After

graduating from the MBA Henry went on into marketing and then went on to be a consultant. In 1993, he then set up his own business with a partner, financed on credit cards. It wasn't until 2000 that they received a venture capital loan from a bank to develop the e-learning aspect of the business. The company offers consultancy, e-learning and face-to-face training to large clients including companies such as Fijitsu, Dyson, DfWP, providing training in management and leadership. Henry's father also ran his own business, in engineering. This was a huge influence on Simon motivating him to do better. He had always been aware as a child that the business had direct impact on the biscuit tin, something he is crucially aware of himself now.

**Mark Salter** graduated in **English** from the University of Ulster, aged 30, in 1997. Prior to this he had been self-employed as a carpenter and builder, but was feeling burnt out. He thought it would be great to spend 3-4 years studying and then go back to building; he didn't expect to find a different kind of job at the end of studying. In 1998 Simon was teaching English as a foreign language. He then began a PhD in 2000, with a mixture of linguistics and literature, teaching English alongside this. He started getting short term contracts in Switzerland and was switching between the two places but has now settled permanently in Switzerland. He now has a couple of permanent teaching contracts, and an editing contract with a Swiss university, working on an economics journal. Mark has self-employed status so also does some translating and editing. He doesn't have any concrete plans at present; he considers that 43 might be too late to start a career in academia, although this is still a possibility as he is qualified to teach. Perhaps something part-time would work, although he would need to deliver conference papers and publish. Ultimately however he feels that a full-time post would be too static.







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