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*Entrepreneurship Education and
the Strategic Perspective:
Setting a research agenda for
university-wide roles and
responsibilities*

Robert James Crammond

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About the author(s)

Robert James Crammond is a researcher at the Transformative Enterprise Research Group (TERG) in Paisley, Scotland.

Route correspondence to email: robert.crammond@uws.ac.uk

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King.omeihe@uws.ac.uk

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Executive Summary

With emerging examples and offerings dating back to the mid-20th century, Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is now an omnipresent feature within universities today. Whether represented within a dedicated programme, offered within thematic business-facing workshops, or as a systematic route towards enhanced and consistent business and community engagement, EE can be regarded as a key element within Higher Education Institution (HEI) operations and feature of an institution's identity.

However, along with the many approaches and applications of EE within the classroom environment encouraging skills or new venture development, it is of course subject to pedagogical, resource, and infrastructural changes as the HE sector moves with surrounding market trends and needs of industry. Recent developments within the United Kingdom (UK), directly or indirectly affecting the HE sector, including post-Brexit and post-pandemic challenges, student population shortfalls, and the advent of AI have all disrupted both the capacity and capability for universities to operate effectively and efficiently. This, arguably, necessitates the continued offering and developing of EE as a form of education cognisant of the wider regional community need. Additionally, EE presents the opportunity for business, sectors, and stakeholders, sharing objectives and visions with that of the university, to engage and achieve towards the national interest.

In light of recent crises, and ongoing volatility within the sector in the UK, this working paper discusses the increasing intersection of EE and institutional strategy, and the mobilising of EE approaches and activities which subsequently define the 21st century university. Following from this, an inductive multistakeholder approach is presented, forming a research agenda which confronts and compares the current strategies and suggestions from UK HEIs. This concerns a series of factors, including: *institutional infrastructure and responsibilities; alignment to relevant EE-related policy; pedagogical approaches; engagement activities; and the building of entrepreneurial legacies which impact regional and national landscapes.*

This working paper outlines a prescribed, phased methodology, which shall be of benefit to a range of stakeholders, chiefly within the HE sector and amongst EE educators and researchers. Furthermore, it shall establish present day resource challenges, sector complexities, and reflect on a number of perspectives from students to practitioners.

TERG Background Statement

Situated within the second research track theme of the **Transformative Enterprise Research Group (TERG)**, *Enterprise and Policy*, this research advances from existing publications and conceptualisations. These prior examples theoretically overlap with this study, as these focus on the intersection of entrepreneurship-related activity, formalised Entrepreneurship Education (EE), and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (see Crammond, 2020; 2023a; 2023b).

In the book *Advancing Entrepreneurship Education in Universities Concepts and Practices for Teaching and Support* cultural considerations for EE and its future within universities (Crammond, 2020: 174). Comprising of capacity, capability, mobility, and durability elements, the book's novel model reflects on the importance of existing skills and experience, the opportunity and resources available for EE, the level of accessibility, both physically and digitally, of EE for all, and to what extent the university is prepared for sector and surrounding change and volatility.

Within the follow up, titled *Entrepreneurship and Universities: Pedagogical Perspectives and Philosophies* a 'University Model for Entrepreneurship' (UM⁴E) was presented. Centred on the educator perspective, towards course and/or wider programmatic offerings, the model highlights the critical EE factors of *method* (tools and techniques), *motive* (purpose and vision), *message* (asserting the agenda), and finally *medium* (channels of communication).

This working paper is inspired by such conceptualised models of institutionalised EE considerations towards a contextualised study, of the present-day circumstances and landscapes across UK universities adopting EE within their institutional strategies and operations.

Entrepreneurship Education & Strategy

From within subject-specific courses, to internationally reaching programmes, or in developing new products and services, entrepreneurship influences the structure (Nelles and Vorley, 2010a; 2011) and strategy of organisations (Miller *et al.*, 2014; Aparicio *et al.*, 2023). Within any institution, business, or sector, the emergence of ideas, potential solutions to problems, and the application of key technology, skills (Bacigalupo *et al.*, 2016), and processes is in essence entrepreneurialism in action (Fetters *et al.*, 2010). This organised approach to creativity and innovation, termed as intrapreneurship within businesses, is now increasingly promoted amongst democratic, flexible, and networked organisations (Battilana *et al.*, 2009).

With this in mind, a reflection of business realities (Crammond, 2023b) from universities centralise approaches and initiatives which promote entrepreneurship and EE (Urbano *et al.*, 2024). Typically, this involves an occasional series of activity and services:

- *Taught enterprise and EE, across various undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels*
- *A fixed stream of 'enterprise' modules or courses within programmes of study*
- *Research groups focussing on enterprise, entrepreneurship and business management*
- *Business engagement services for students and staff*
- *Incubator and accelerator support*
- *Funding mechanisms and budgets for entrepreneurialism*
- *Enterprise engagement opportunities involving speakers, entrepreneurs, investors, and government partners*

(Adapted from Armbruster, 2008; Hjorth, 2014; McAdam *et al.*, 2016; Crammond, 2020; 2023a)

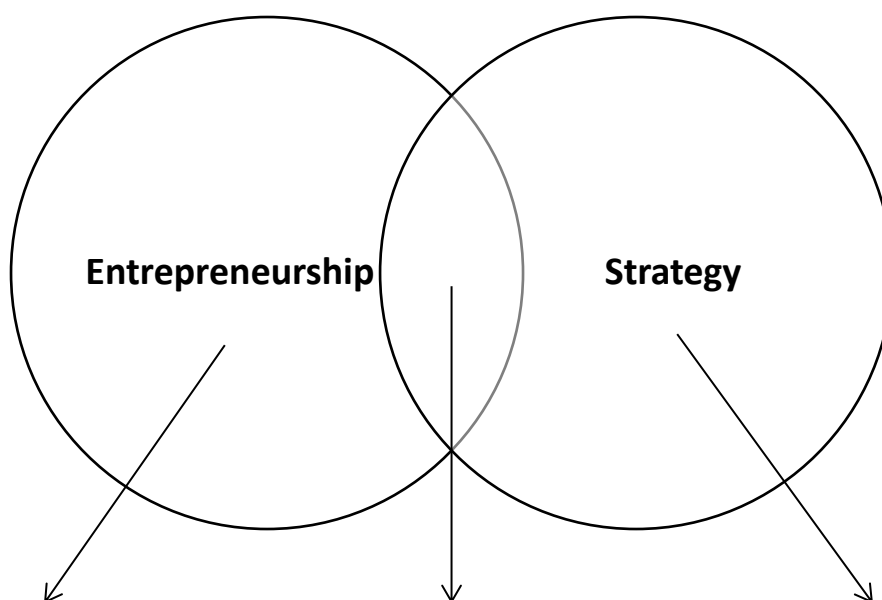
As a result of increasing research concerning entrepreneurship within universities, several institutional perspectives of EE have been addressed within entrepreneurship, education, and organisational strategy (Table 1).

Table 1: Institutional Perspectives of EE

Perspective	Context	Source(s)
1. Modular or Course-specific	<i>6-, 10-, or 12-weeks courses, involving learning and teaching events concerning specific entrepreneurship topic(s)</i>	(Jones, 2011; 2013; Crammond, 2020; 2023a)
2. Programmatic	<i>A 3-to-4-year degree, predominantly involving the entrepreneurial process, resulting in New Venture Creation (NVC), or research-to-spinout activity.</i>	(Crammond, 2023a; Crammond and Hyams-Ssekasi, 2024)
3. Institutional Resource (personnel, structure, strategy)	<i>Confronting requisite skills within the university context, for EE. Reflecting societal conditions, and industry needs through the mix of academic, pracademic, scholarly, research active, and incubator or research centre management colleagues.</i>	(Blenker <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Gibb and Haskins, 2014; Gimmon, 2014; Urban <i>et al.</i> , 2019)
4. Co-curricular, or extra-curricular, exposure to enterprise	<i>The contributory blend of EE activities, opportunities, support, and events which align with or add to student learning experiences. These chiefly take the form of enterprising skills developmental workshops, incubator sessions, accelerator-scale up programmes, competitions, and regional or national collaborations, partnerships, or events.</i>	(Crammond <i>et al.</i> , 2022; <i>et al.</i> , 2023; Epure <i>et al.</i> , 2023; Etkowitz <i>et al.</i> , 2023)

Entrepreneurship, in practice, involves a series of decisions, fact finding (Anderson and Starnawska, 2008), relationships (Gimmon, 2014), skill sets (Murray and Crammond, 2020), and personalities (Anderson and Jack, 2008; Crammond, 2023c), circumstances, and to some extent, chance (Acs *et al.*, 2018). These characteristics are also shared, somewhat, with organisations navigating the various challenges within respective industries. This includes product development (Armbruster, 2008), service delivery and efficiency, engagement with business networks and ecosystems (Fetters *et al.*, 2010) including customers, and responding to emerging or present competition (Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, both conceptual and contextual overlap exist concerning entrepreneurship and strategy, in theory and practice.

Figure 1: Intersection of Entrepreneurship & Strategy



Organisational Entrepreneurship (Intrapreneurship)	↔	Organisational Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging newness • Facilitating development • Preparing resources & infrastructure • Proposing & Positioning 	<p><i>Creativity by nature</i></p> <p><i>Innovation as necessity</i></p> <p><i>Enterprise through process</i></p> <p><i>Marketisation to demand</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking a competitive advantage • Efficient & timely process(es) • Delegating & • Realistic & beneficial engagement

(Adapted from Beresford and Beresford, 2010; Bjørnskov and Foss, 2016; Acs *et al.*, 2018)

Institutionalised EE has resulted in entrepreneurial activity (Nelles and Vorley, 2010b; Murray and Crammond, 2020) developing across teaching and non-teaching offerings. This has led to distinguishable roles being established, which promote and support enterprising skills development and NVC. Crammond (2023a: 52) lists some examples of these types of roles or personalities which are conducive to development enterprise and contributes to stages of the NVC process:

- *The Philosopher*
- *The Educator*
- *The Policy Maker*
- *The Implementer*
- *The Interdisciplinary*
- *The Champion*
- *The Ecosystem Enabler*
- *The Wider or Undiscovered Stakeholder*

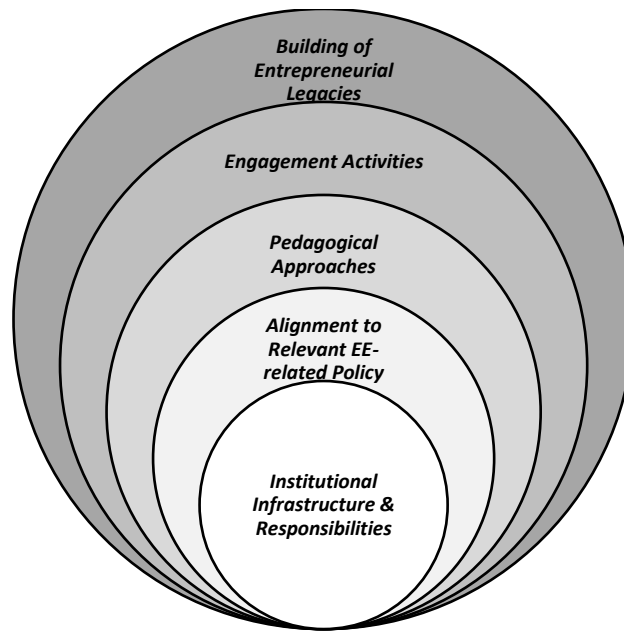
The above list represents an abstract overview of EE activities across this teaching, research, and industry engagement spectrum, overlapping industries and across enterprise and digital ecosystems (Nelles and Vorley, 2010a; Urbano *et al.*, 2024).

Setting a Research Agenda

This working paper asserts five, successive themes (Figure 2) which frame this study's empirical investigation of EE strategies within UK universities.

- *Institutional Infrastructure & Responsibilities* (Miller *et al.*, 2014; McAdam *et al.*, 2016; Urbano *et al.*, 2019; Aparicio *et al.*, 2023; Epure *et al.*, 2023)
- *Alignment to Relevant EE-related Policy* (Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Crammond, 2023a)
- *Pedagogical Approaches* (Anderson and Starnawska, 2008; Jones, 2011; 2013; Gibb and Haskins, 2014; Crammond, 2020)
- *Engagement Activities* (Crammond *et al.*, 2023)
- *Building of Entrepreneurial Legacies* (Nelles and Vorley, 2010b; Crammond and Hyams-Ssekasi, 2024)

Figure 2: Exploratory Layers of EE Strategy Methodology



Institutional Infrastructure & Responsibilities

Theme A addresses the concept and practice of entrepreneurship, whether it be through educational offerings or towards NVC activities. Departments, teams, and individuals have the opportunity to reflect on current changes within their institutions concerning EE and entrepreneurial activity, as well as discuss institutional goals, visions, and partnerships outwith the formal learning environment.

Alignment to Relevant EE-related Policy

Theme B focusses on relevant policy, and the role of universities to be integral stakeholders and features of an entrepreneurial region and nation. The university's credentials are discussed, along with their adherence to, or alignment with, existing EE-relevant policy guidance or frameworks. Examples of research, policy involvement, and collaborations are also reflected on here.

Pedagogical Approaches

Theme C concerns the educational environment and the role of entrepreneurship educators. Central topics, including EE curriculum, assessment approaches, and the inclusion of influential enterprising stakeholders are discussed here. Also, the importance of work-ready skills and preparing students for enterprise, industry, and employment post-certification, are highlighted.

Engagement Activities

Theme D addresses the importance of engagement with the immediate business community, national organisations, and society, in emboldening enterprising forms of education and university-led support. Discussed are notable features of an entrepreneurial university, such as: entrepreneurs in residence, incubators, accelerators, and in-house services supporting and reinforcing entrepreneurial behaviours.

Building of Entrepreneurial Legacies

Confronted in the final theme, Theme E, is that of how universities build productive and meaningful legacies through entrepreneurialism. Questions concerning pathways and programmes of entrepreneurial activity are posed, along with reflection of current successes through social enterprise, commercial, or collaborative partnerships.

Table 2 summarises the operational, methodological design adopted for this study.

Table 2: Methodological Profile

Methodological Aspect	Detail
Approach	<i>Inductive</i>
Philosophy	<i>Constructivism</i>
Strategy	<i>Qualitative, Multimethod</i>
Method	<i>Interview & Case Study</i>
Sample	<i>Cross-institutional; Criteria</i>
Analysis	<i>Multistage Coded Analysis</i>

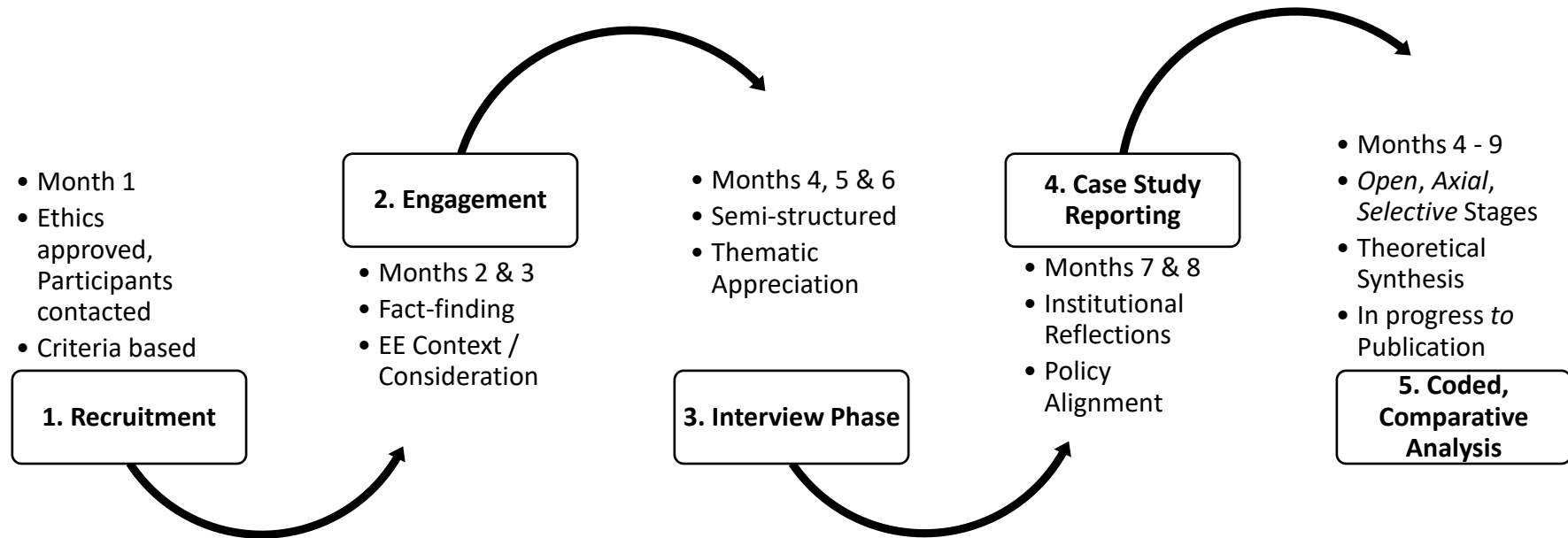
(Adapted from Saunders *et al.*, 2024)

Subsequent reporting for EE-relevant organisations, including research institutes and business school publications will be distributed.

Timeline

This study, spanning 9 months of empirical research investigation and reporting, comprises of five distinct phases (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Research Timeline



1. Recruitment

Within the first phase, ethical approval is confirmed, and participants are approached. These participants are those who fit the criteria to this study. The criterion for inclusion includes those who:

- *Design and deliver EE within a UK university*
- *Manage an entrepreneurship programme*
- *Lead a team of entrepreneurship educators and/or researchers*
- *Are, of have been, involved in regional or national policy in the UK concerning entrepreneurship and innovation, with the university being a key stakeholder*
- Engage with, or collaborate with, (small) businesses concerning their intrapreneurial development and innovative capabilities

Participant information and consent forms shall be issued, and further detail of those recruited onto the study shall be confirmed.

2. Engagement

Months two and three shall involve a series of fact-finding exercises, where each institutional context and operations will be appreciated. These fact-finding exercises include a review of existing programmes, student support activities, enterprise engagement with external bodies, and evidence of policy alignment through EE.

3. Interview Phase

At the midway point of this study, primary data shall be collected through semi-structured interviews. Questions are posed against the themes listed in the appendix (*see Appendix A*). Answers received, and evolving conversation aims to lead towards a saturation of key themes, perspectives, and discussion points.

4. Case Study Reporting

The latter third of this study shall introduce the case study and reflective write-up phase. Data collected, along with contextual evidence within and surrounding the university shall result in comparative

5. Coded, Comparative Analysis

From the interview phase of the study, towards completion, multiple stages of coded analysis shall be undertaken. This shall aid in the synthesis of data across primary, secondary, and policy information available. The three stages of coding adopted as the analytical technique in this study are:

- *Open Coding* – highlighting of key terms, expressions, and discussion points
- *Axial Coding* – identification of comparative, or contrasting, narrative across responses and themes.
- *Selective Coding* – the emergence of recurring themes and discussion points, leading towards or contributing to new conceptualisations and understandings from the context studied

Conclusions

Universities embedding EE have appreciated and evidenced the development of students, staff, and new venture outcomes. However, constant change, regional challenges, and national events all result in the HE sector and its universities require to adapt and evolve. This includes making necessary changes to its enterprise offering.

This working paper highlights a fresh, inductive study, ascertain the current landscape concerning EE within universities, including teaching, support, infrastructure, and engagement.

The phased approach allows for contextual, empirical, and reflective elements of the data collection to be achieved. Additionally, this informs educators and researchers of the existing concerns and issues facing entrepreneurial institutions. Furthermore, this study seeks to align with policy concerning national-level entrepreneurship and innovation amongst universities and industry.

Recommendations

It is recommended that this study is performed across the United Kingdom, and progressed to include further ecosystem study. This may involve a mix of quantitative and qualitative research designs, and embark on longer term, longitudinal studies in the fields of entrepreneurship activity, EE, institutional resources and stakeholders, and the evolving nature of universities.

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Appendix

A) Research Questions

Theme A: Institutional Infrastructure & Responsibilities

- A1) *What are the current operations and activities conducive to advancing EE, within your institution?*
- A2) *Which departments or teams are responsible for these?*
- A3) *Please provide some detail on the entrepreneurship programmes available within your institution?*
- A4) *What changes were made, post-pandemic? Why was this the case?*
- A5) *To what extent does entrepreneurship feature heavily within your institutional set of values or objectives?*

Theme B: Alignment to EE Policy

- B1) *Is your business school triple accredited?*
- B2) *Has your entrepreneurship programmes reflected on educational guidance and frameworks, such as Advance HE, EEUK, or QAA for example? If so, to what extent?*
- B3) *Does your institution reflect and respond to ongoing local and national government publications concerning creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship within businesses? In what way(s)?*
- B4) *What research has been conducted, from within your institution, that has contribute to or may influence related policy?*
- B5) *Are there any notable collaborations, for entrepreneurial activity, active across academic schools/faculties?*

Theme C: Pedagogical Approaches

- C1) *Do you have evidence of cross-school/faculty approaches to teaching and learning entrepreneurship?*
- C2) *What are the range of assessment strategies?*
- C3) *To what extent is there industry intervention, or wider stakeholder engagement, within courses and programmes?*
- C4) *How does the enterprise offering, within courses or programmes, align with the university's graduate skill sets or work-ready attributes?*
- C5) *How can students get practical experience, related to enterprise and entrepreneurship?*

Theme D: Engagement Activities

- D1) *Who are the enterprise-relevant organisations that you engage with?*
 - D2) *Are there clear links between entrepreneurship learning from students, and opportunities to develop business or societally beneficial ideas further?*
 - D3) *Do you have an entrepreneur in residence?*
 - D4) *Does your in-house incubator services, if present, collaborate with national bodies?*
 - D5) *How can you evidence cross-school or cross-faculty engagement activities for enterprise?*
-

Theme E: Building of Entrepreneurial Legacies

- E1) Does your institution have a longstanding pathway of courses within a programme(s)?*
 - E2) Can your institution evidence a periodic series of enterprise activity?*
 - E3) What successes from start-up, or academic spin-out, can you reflect upon?*
 - E4) What is the university's capacity to support, and fund, future enterprising efforts?*
 - E5) Do you believe that the university has a true, productive, and supportive entrepreneurial culture?*
-