

Case Study

<u>Institution</u>	University of Sheffield
<u>Title</u>	Making Ideas Happen
<u>Type</u>	<i>Undergraduate</i>
<u>Text</u>	<p>Making Ideas Happen (MIH) is a 20-credit multi-level, multidisciplinary module, introducing the fields of enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation, whilst emphasising the generation and development of ideas with a distinctly social flavour.</p> <p>MIH's principal delivery mode is distance learning via the University's VLE. There is limited timetabled contact time; face-to-face input comprises an introductory ideas-generation session, business planning workshop, and small group meetings facilitated by postgraduate student 'mentors'. USE also negotiates site visits and Q&A sessions with external partners where available. Sessions are timetabled to minimise clashes and ensure flexibility in relation to students' schedules, given the variety of subject disciplines represented.</p> <p>The module focuses strongly on social innovation and external engagement. For the pilot, University of Sheffield Enterprise (USE) partnered with Sheffield City Council's Department of Environment and Leisure, tasking interdisciplinary project groups with developing social enterprise solutions to several environmental and community cohesion issues.</p> <p>For 2001-12, USE is working with organisations in Shiregreen, a housing estate in Sheffield, to develop sustainable business ideas to increase the social capital of this area, and with Energy 2B to develop energy-related social innovations.</p> <p>Assessment breaks down into 50% weighting each for group and individual components. Group assessments comprise a business poster presentation and a full business plan. The individual coursework portfolio comprises a reflective report, weekly reflective blog and a summary skills statement.</p> <p>MIH has no prerequisites. It is promoted both to students who already have some business/enterprise experience and to those for whom enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation are relatively uncharted waters.</p> <p>MIH piloted successfully at Level 2/3 during the Spring semester 2010-11 to 37 students, representing 10 academic departments across six of the University's seven Faculties, including four Computer Science students from the University's International Faculty in Thessaloniki, Greece. The module is now being rolled out more widely across the University.</p>
<u>Impacts</u>	<p>Academic assessment attainment levels were comparatively high across the pilot cohort, and the impact on the students studying the module during the pilot phase was clearly evidenced in their reflective reports and blog posts.</p> <p>Students undoubtedly valued the opportunity to work with peers from outside their own subject discipline, on activities that often fall outside their comfort zone.</p> <p>Many students studying on the pilot asserted that they had developed skills and knowledge they would otherwise not have gained. One respondent to an</p>

	<p>end-of-module feedback questionnaire reported that MIH gave them “a unique approach to learning”; another felt that they had “learned skills that will benefit my career”.</p> <p>Students reported that working on the Good Neighbours project had increased their awareness of issues associated with areas in which they themselves lived. Despite the fact that external engagement took the form of interaction with specific organisations, several project groups took the initiative and independently approached members of the community, schools and other local organisations when carrying out market research and feasibility studies for their business plans.</p> <p>It is anticipated that, for future instances of the module, even greater levels of community engagement will be achieved, raising and improving the profile of the University and its students within the city and surrounding region, and increasing its levels of positive impact on the local community.</p>
<u>What worked well</u>	<p>The interdisciplinary nature of the project groups was highly successful element of the course, and was highly valued by the students. Whilst the students themselves had some misgivings about working in multi-level groups (including both second and final year students), this approach was much praised by the external examiner and seen to be worth pursuing. External engagement was also a very valuable key contributor to the module’s success.</p> <p>The majority of students enjoyed the format of the online learning materials, and students also praised the enthusiasm and approachability of the USE team delivering the module. Reflective writing was a very effective means of tangibly measuring students’ learning and their development of skills, expertise and understanding.</p>
<u>What could be changed/improved</u>	<p>One challenge for the teaching team has been how to get across the issue of long-term financial sustainability, and encourage students to incorporate this consideration into their business plans rather than perceiving the assignments as working towards development of a time-bound, short-term project. The outcomes of the pilot phase also suggested that better management might have been needed of the expectations of students, staff, mentors and external partners involved in the module, given its apparently unfamiliar mode of delivery.</p> <p>USE has addressed these issues through improved course guidance, greater clarity around assessment marking criteria, and enhanced training for academic mentors.</p> <p>Negotiating future increases in student numbers on the course has led to changes in some assessment methods. We have, for example, moved from an ‘elevator pitch’-style presentation format – used in the pilot – to a poster event, allowing panel judges and assessors of the presentations to engage with greater numbers of student groups at one time.</p> <p>The development and piloting of the module has provided a steep learning curve for a USE, team outside the institution’s academic Faculty structure – standard procedures are now being devised and implemented as a direct result of action research/learning during the initial phases of the project.</p>

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous: Sheffield City Council • Current: Energy 2 B; Shiregreen Neighbourhood Challenge (comprising: Shiregreen Community Homes Ltd, a subsidiary of Sanctuary Housing Association; Shiregreen Neighbourhood Centre Committee; Sheffield Wednesday FC Community Programme; Get Hooked on Life; Firth Park Community Arts College; Beck Primary School; Hartley Brook and Hatfield Federated Schools)
Funders	Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF)
Website link	www.sheffield.ac.uk/enterprise