

Centrality of hospitality and tourism education

The case of Strathclyde Business School

Hospitality and tourism management education thrives at the University of Strathclyde. As **Susan Hart, Kevin O’Gorman** and **Matthew Alexander** explain, following the recent reorganisation, integrating the degree into the Strathclyde Business School has strengthened the university’s presentation of the subject’s distinctiveness. This is how future leaders of the industry will be developed.

IN EARLY 2008, as part of a major strategic review aimed at re-focussing the university, Strathclyde Business School’s provision in hospitality and tourism management education came under scrutiny, with the major driver being to ascertain the developments necessary to turn the area into one of real excellence. The University of Strathclyde’s legacy in hospitality and tourism education stems from 1944 with the setting up of the Scottish Hotel School. As an entity it has evolved considerably, joining the university in 1963 and latterly becoming the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, offering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Refocus the vision

The University of Strathclyde’s vision is to become a leading international technological university. At the heart of this vision is the university’s world-leading research across all faculties and particularly in its areas of strategic importance—business, engineering, science, and social sciences. As a research-led university, the strategy is focused on enhancing further its high-quality research profile, ensuring that research informs the education programmes and fuels a range of industry engagements, as part of its knowledge exchange. Developing the highest levels of knowledge exchange with industry and policy mak-

ers is critical to the university achieving a competitive edge. The strategy is also concerned with embedding internationalisation across the university: seeking to develop higher quality programmes which deliver in the international arena, and build relationships and partnerships working with leading, internationally focused organisations and institutions.

Strathclyde Business School has its roots in the Glasgow Commercial College founded in 1845. In 2008 the School was rated top in Scotland and in the UK’s top 10, in the latest comprehensive rating of universities’ research—the Research Assessment Exercise. It is one of only 40 business schools worldwide, and the only business school in Scotland, to have achieved triple accreditation from the European Foundation for Management Education, the Association of MBAs and the American Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business. In November 2008 and 2009 the *Financial Times* European Business

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The University of Strathclyde’s strategic review panel met on various occasions with the depart-

mental management team; undergraduate and postgraduate students; academic, teaching and research staff; administrative and technical support staff, and doctoral research students. Specifically, the review was to address the following:

□ Education

To review the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching within the department to ascertain the quality and suitability of activity, specifically in relation to low undergraduate retention rates, the perceived overly vocational nature of programmes, low entry qualification standards in relation to the rest of the business school, and the potential of further development of postgraduate instructional courses. Additionally the review was asked to consider the viability and effectiveness of overseas partners and internationally based teaching activities and whether they also demonstrate the sought levels of excellence.

□ Research

To review research activity within the department, taking into consideration the current research ethos both of the department and the university, and explore whether it was possible to create a



□ Knowledge exchange

To review the portfolio of knowledge exchange activity to ascertain how knowledge from industry, policy and business was utilised within the department and, in turn, the impact of the department on external stakeholders.

On the positive side, the review panel found that students were generally satisfied with the quality and

content of the teaching, and the close interaction with academic staff. Research students were enthusiastic about the research they were doing and the support that they received from their supervisors.

However the vision and direction of the department had become hazy with a rather vague concept of where the department would wish to be in five to ten years time, or what the discipline would look like. The department lacked critical mass in research capital that might be harnessed to encourage the production of high quality research outputs. There was little sense of how the different activities being

undertaken supported the attainment of a broader strategic vision or developed research capacity.

This was compounded by a myriad of teaching activity within the department and little connectivity with the business school and other areas of the university. Most disappointingly there was no planned approach to stakeholder engagement, and no clear definition of who the key external stakeholders were or how they interacted with the department at a strategic and sustainable level. This lack of stakeholder engagement was surprising as one in ten jobs in Scotland are in the hospitality and tourism sector and the global industry is worth in the region of US\$2.5 trillion.

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vision for the development of sustainable research activity within the department, including consideration of interdisciplinary activity and collaborative research where relevant and possible; and

Planning for the future

Hospitality and tourism is a critically important sector for the global economy and there were evident synergistic relationships that could be exploited between research areas both within the department and with other departments within the business school. The review also highlighted the need for partnerships with the global hospitality and tourism industry to provide more strategic and development opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes in a commercial setting. There were clear opportunities for staff to be involved in policy research and development within the Scottish context that were not currently being exploited.

After the review, the university management team and the dean of the Strathclyde Business School agreed to reinforce and reinvigorate their commitment to hospitality and tourism management education within the university. Pockets of expertise existed within the department and it was recognized that this could make a strong and distinctive contribution to education, research and knowledge exchange within the business school. However, marshalling that expertise to the best effect clearly required a realignment of the department with cognate areas of strength across the business school. It was also recognized that there was the clear need to seek greater collaboration with industry in the development of student experience and in informing the refreshment of both postgraduate and undergraduate degrees.

These conclusions presented an excellent opportunity to raise performance in the hospitality and tourism

management area to the standard appropriate to one of the world's top business schools. The school believes that education in this area should focus on providing next generation leadership for the global hospitality industry. The place for developing practical hospitality skills is seen as being in the further education sector therefore kitchen based training should be concentrated there with greater efforts made to articulate

students into Strathclyde courses. Discussions are under way with further education colleges and the Greater Glasgow Articulation Partnership to explore potential collaborations. Finally, greater industry involvement in course design, placements, research and policy development and influence was necessary.

Since the summer of 2009, new degrees in hospitality and tourism management have been designed with these programme giving students improved access to research-led teaching in key business disci-

plines including accounting and finance, management, marketing, and human resource management alongside sector-specific learning. These degree programmes have been warmly received by external stakeholders including the Lord Forte Foundation, who have already provided merit scholarships, the

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Hospitality Industry Trust Scotland with whom exciting discussions are also taking place, and The Savoy Educational Trust who have supported hospitality education at Strathclyde for many years.



The business school continues to draw on the expertise of a growing industry advisory group as the fast-moving hospitality tourism sector continues to evolve. The school is committed to working with colleagues in industry to develop tomorrow's leaders and the new degree programmes have been developed in response to the business community's demand for highly skilled professionals for this rapidly changing industry.

Moving forward

From the academic session 2009, hospitality and tourism has become an integral part of the BA degree in the business school, allowing all undergraduate students the opportunity to choose this option. At the same time, the entrance requirements were raised from BBCC at Higher/CCD at A level to ABBB at Higher/ABB at A level making it one of the most competitive courses in the country. The intake increased

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from 47 (in 2008) to 177 (in 2009). The higher entry grades are seen as a reflection of the quality of the degree which has always been a leader in the field. The hospitality and tourism management degree is now firmly embedded within the Strathclyde Business School, providing graduates with the quality of education that will benefit the industry and provide exciting and stimulating careers worldwide. Hospitality and tourism, like all other subjects, is underpinned by the school's 'management development programme' where students are introduced to core business and management skills such as leadership, negotiation, decision-making and information technology.

Despite significantly increased entrance standards, increasing student numbers and performance, and considerably greater industry involvement, the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME) considers the greater integration of hospitality into business schools as a threat. This is in contrast

with the hospitality industry professionals who recognize the need for greater cooperation with business schools. CHME lists a concern that there is likely to be a reduction in the quantity and quality of research in hospitality management issues, with academics encouraged to write for more mainstream business journals as the movement of hospitality departments into business schools continues. We consider this a somewhat myopic view. It is just as likely when academics from across business schools and beyond engage with hospitality and tourism as a context for research (an approach that is developing within the niche area of critical hospitality and tourism studies) that the quality and depth of research will increase.

Finally CHME observe that hospitality and tourism academics are an ageing population and there is a need for universities to develop a clear succession strategy for hospitality academics to ensure that younger academics are coached and mentored for the senior roles in the future. These younger academics

already exist across all the top business schools and need to be encouraged to engage in research and teaching both in the cognate areas that underpin hospitality and tourism and the sector at large. Strathclyde's strategy reflects its recognition that research into the

hospitality and tourism industry has the potential to inform the wider spectrum of business literature, thus reversing the accepted status quo that this is a fringe discipline. As one of the most dynamic industries on the planet, hospitality and tourism as a context for research should be embraced by the wider academic community.

At Strathclyde, our students have already been working with Emirates Airlines and the first of many revitalized industry partnerships is developing with Rocco Forte Hotels. These organizations and the global hospitality and tourism industry at large recognize that to be a world-class manager requires graduates to gain generic leadership skills and a sound educational foundation in finance, international business, marketing, strategic and operations management. The best place for these skills to be learned is within world-class business schools and that is where the hospitality managers of the future should be educated.



Professor SUSAN HART is the dean of the Strathclyde Business School and professor marketing. Her research areas of interest include innovation and product-service development, marketing and competitive success and marketing performance measurement. She has been awarded research grants by The Leverhulme Trust, Economic and Social Research Council, Science and Engineering Research Council, Design Council Scotland, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and Scottish Enterprise. Professor Hart has written well over 100 articles and papers, and is a member of the executive committee of the Academy of Marketing and the senate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, as well as a fellow of the Marketing Society and The Royal Society of Edinburgh. She has recently become a fellow of the Leadership Trust Foundation and is a director of The Royal Scottish National Orchestra.



Dr KEVIN O'GORMAN is director of undergraduate hospitality and tourism programmes in the Department of Management, Strathclyde Business School. His doctorate is in the history and philosophy of hospitality in the Greco-Roman world of classical antiquity. He has published extensively on topics relating to the history, practice and philosophy of hospitality management. He is publishing his first book entitled *The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism* and is currently editing a special edition of the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* on the theme of 'The History of the Commercial Hospitality Industry from Classical Antiquity to the 19th Century'.



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