



Fellows Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Fellows Broadsheet is a thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The Fellows Broadsheet is published exclusively for members.

Building Successful Learning Communities between Industry and Academe

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Mark is a Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality where he also serves as a national supervisory board member and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Authority.

In this Fellows' Broadsheet Mark explores the topic of **'Building successful learning communities between Industry and Academe'** and introduces some of the approaches he has adopted on the modules he leads at Surrey.





Building Successful Partnerships with Longevity Between Education and Industry

For as long as I can remember there has been a tension between the curriculum that is delivered in Higher Education institutions and its relevance to Industry. This debate persists in recent working groups and webinars framed around 'rebuilding trust' and 'bridging the divide' between the two.

In the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management [1] at the University of Surrey we have designed our curriculum [2] to cultivate leaders and changemakers who will develop the future of the hospitality, tourism, transport, and events' industries through working collaboratively with students, businesses, governments, and communities to shape the world for a better future.

We aim to provide students with experiential learning by integrating and balancing research-led and practice-based education across all programmes to ultimately build a capacity for lifelong learning.

In my teaching and module leadership, I endeavour to balance academic rigour with real-life purpose by encouraging the students to develop their own professional identity. Underpinning this aim is my professional experience, and a range of embedded technologies and curated resources: Twitter Feeds, Reading Lists, Guest Speakers, Expert Panels, and Simulated Experiences, all designed to nurture deep learning from which students can address the subject from their personal perspective.

Much of my teaching engages students in authentic professional tasks allowing students to apply their learning within the real world of hospitality and improve employability, so authenticity drives the challenge and heightens aspiration. I ensure that the student's environment is a learning community based on collaboration set in this authentic professional framework.

In the following case study, I provide an example of how the aims of our curriculum are borne out in a module I lead with industry-based Visiting Professor, Chris Cowls, and how the perceived tensions alluded to above between academia and industry can be overcome.





A Case Study – Innovation and Development in Restaurant Operations

This final year module provides students with the opportunity to look in depth at the development of the restaurant industry drawing on current and historical operations and track their development from a single unit to an international chain [3].

In the module, we aim to solidify a sustainable learning community [4] for the module that includes staff, students, industry professionals and analysts (summarised in Figure 1).

We team teach with at least two staff members delivering each session of which the first portion is theoretical with the second team member tasked with interjecting with contemporary applied examples. Guest speakers present in the middle section of the session and the final third is a facilitated Q&A contextualising the session's content and explicitly linking theory to practice. This session's diversity allows a range of voices and perspectives to be heard. Each collaborator is thoroughly briefed and debriefed, and their perspectives are recorded.

Each guest speaker provides students with an opportunity to research them via LinkedIn and other sources, and network – we facilitate and encourage this process and make overt links to employability skills/networking. The guest speaker series also provides up-to-the-minute input for students on contemporary practice from analysts and business leaders operating restaurant groups at various stages of the Service Firm Lifecycle and how business research methods are used for non-academic purposes.

Guest speakers themselves value the opportunity to interact with, and crucially learn from, other industry leaders through the module's speaker series, along with recognising the opportunity for students and for the speakers to gauge young people's opinions of their product.

There is further evidence of collaboration between speakers outside the confines of the module resulting from its emphasis on networking and mentoring. The teaching team and observing colleagues have also recognised how this collaborative approach has influenced their teaching and learning approaches to other modules.

Whilst COVID-19 had a devastating effect on the restaurant sector with many operations rapidly innovating and pivoting their business models, it has provided rich exemplars and case studies for the guest speakers to bring into the classroom and for us to use in our teaching and research. At the same time, this allowed for a step change in our teaching delivery, moving online using a hybrid approach based on the Community of Learning Framework [4]. This has allowed guest speakers to join multiple sessions and listen/question/learn from the other speakers in the series which afforded further levels of learning for the students and an even greater sense of community.

When I took over this module from Professor Andrew Lockwood some years ago, I saw many benefits and good practices in the way he had set it up. Under my leadership, the module has a second lease of life-enhancing its value to students' learning/satisfaction/employability; colleagues' practice; the benefit to/networking developed between guest speakers (and them modelling lifelong learning); and on my own practice/research [5,6,7,8] is immense.



Conclusion

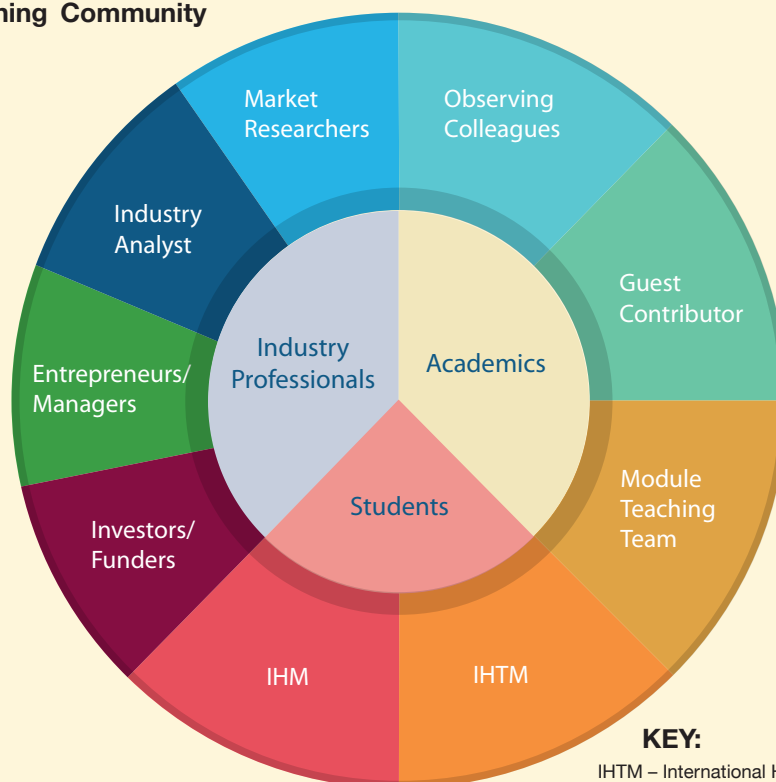
In my opinion, there is no need for any tension between Higher Education and Industry. Indeed, there are many examples of great partnerships between the two which bring me inspiration when regularly reported on LinkedIn and beyond [9]. At a time when both sectors are battling with a perfect storm of challenges [10], there is no better time to get more involved in what goes on in academe.

Why not reach out to your local University and offer your time and enthusiasm towards developing the next generation of leaders in our great sector? Table 1 offers some ideas to help stimulate collaboration.

Table 1: The opportunities and a call to action

- Offer guest lectures
- Deliver industry workshops or masterclasses
- Offer Professional Training Years or internships
- Become a mentor [11]
- Provide live brief projects
- Become a dragon in a Dragons Den scenario
- Become an executive in residence for a semester
- Host a field trip
- Provide access to your business as a case study or become a research participant
- Become an advisory board member to a University Department
- Write up a contemporary industry trend in a weekly Industry Digest Blog [8]

Figure 1: The Learning Community for the Module





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About the author

Mark is an award-winning educator and educational leader at the University of Surrey where he currently holds the post of Interim Associate Dean (Education) for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Mark was recognised as the Teacher of the Year for the University at the Vice-Chancellors' Awards for Excellence in 2022 and the national CHME Annual Excellence in Learning and Teaching award for 2023. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality where he also serves as a national supervisory board member and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Authority.

Mark's research interests focus on hospitality operations management and specifically the impacts of innovation and technology on sustainability, service design and management. Mark has published his work in leading journals and at international conferences. A recent journal publication won the Outstanding Paper for the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (3* ABS Journal) Emerald Literati Award Winners for 2021.

Before academe, Mark enjoyed a career in four and five red star hotels initially as Food and Beverage Manager at the Five Red Star Athenaeum Hotel and Apartments on Piccadilly in London. Mark later moved to Tylney Hall, a luxury Country House hotel in Hampshire, as Deputy General Manager, and became General Manager three years later. Mark's most recent General Manager's role was at the design-led, Aviator - a hotel by Tag, in Farnborough, where he and his team secured red star status for the hotel in less than twelve months and won a string of other awards.



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