

Developing and Embedding Enterprise Competencies: A Pedagogical Framework for Creative Entrepreneurship Education

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Introduction

Enterprise education is critical for developing entrepreneurial capabilities within the economically vital but increasingly precarious creative industries (Hill et al., 2024; Nesta, 2020; Williamson, Beadle and Charalambous, 2013). Frameworks such as EntreComp (Mccallum et al., 2018) provide valuable guidance but do not fully address the distinctive needs of creative entrepreneurs, including the prevalence of portfolio careers, high levels of neurodiversity, and the importance of identity and reflexive practice (Gross and Musgrave, 2020; Khlystova et al., 2022; McRobbie, 2016). There remains limited evidence on how academic enterprise education should be delivered in creative contexts or which competencies most effectively support creative students and curriculum development by educators.

This study investigates how enterprise education can be effectively designed and delivered for creative contexts through the development of a pedagogical competency framework, the LCF Enterprise Competencies. Using a multi-stage practice-led approach, the research mapped London College of Fashion (LCF)'s 2020/21 in-curriculum enterprise offer, benchmarked national and international best practice, identified core enterprise competencies relevant to creative disciplines, and developed and evaluated a framework embedded across curriculum delivery.

The framework compares, collates and builds on established models such as EntreComp, Advance HE (2019), and the University of the Arts London (UAL) Creative Attributes Framework (CAF) (UAL, 2016), while introducing competencies that capture the iterative, interdisciplinary, and practice-led nature of creative entrepreneurship. By combining curriculum mapping, benchmarking, co-creation, and iterative evaluation, the project contributes a novel pedagogical model that strengthens student learning and educator practice. This supports creative enterprise pedagogy that is adaptable, evidence-informed, and impactful.

Methodology

The research adopted a multi-stage, collaborative design to ensure the LCF Enterprise Competencies were evidence-based, contextually relevant, and responsive to diverse learner trajectories.

Stage 1: Benchmarking best practice

A comparative review of national and international enterprise-education frameworks and programmes identified 27 examples of strong practice. Sources included EntreComp, Advance HE, and the UAL CAF, alongside key theoretical models such as Effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001) and Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2006). Inductive analysis of models, course documentation, and academic literature generated a vocabulary of 69 'enterprise trigger words' which formed the foundation for later mapping.

Stage 2: Mapping internal provision

A systematic content analysis of 313 LCF unit handbooks captured how enterprise competencies were embedded across curricula. Each unit was mapped against the trigger words and external frameworks, identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities for alignment. This established a baseline from which a coherent, contextually relevant pedagogical framework could be developed.

Stage 3: Co-creation and framework development

Trigger words and emerging themes were grouped into 26 clusters and refined through reflective discussions, workshop testing, and stakeholder feedback. This iterative process produced 52 competencies organised across eight categories (Table 1). The competencies were visualised in a star-shaped model (Fig. 1) representing the non-linear, modular nature of creative enterprise learning and enabling a 'pick-and-choose' approach suitable for learner trajectories and broad teaching contexts.

Enterprise Strategy and Practice
Personal and Professional Effectiveness and Development
Leadership and Management
Creativity and Innovation
Concept Development
Finance and Legal Insights
Marketing and Branding Communications
Implementation Strategies

Table 1: The eight categories organising the 52 LCF Enterprise Competencies



Figure 1: The LCF Enterprise Competency Star

Stage 4: Implementation and evaluation

Since Autumn 2020, the competencies have been embedded across LCF's Creative Fashion Enterprise teaching. Evaluation used mixed methods, including student and educator feedback, attendance and grade data, and frequency analysis of competency combinations. Continuous experimentation ensured the framework remained adaptive, transferable, and aligned with real-world teaching and learning challenges.

Stage 5: Ongoing development

After five years, the framework's use continues to evolve. Documentation of competency selection, framework design, and evaluation processes ensures transparency, rigour, and

replicability. Current work focuses on impact analysis, dissemination, adaptation for other creative disciplines, and translation into scholarly outputs.

Findings and Next Steps

The development and implementation of the LCF Enterprise Competencies framework over five years has yielded important insights for creative enterprise pedagogy.

Flexible and non-linear structure

Benchmarking and internal mapping against national and international best practice highlighted both alignment and gaps in supporting the iterative, interdisciplinary, and practice-led nature of creative enterprise. It also revealed the diversity of enterprise curricula: some units prioritise deep subject-specific knowledge, others breadth and exposure to multiple approaches. Certain competencies, such as collaboration, financial literacy, decision-making, and creative problem-solving, were frequently embedded, while others, such as, self-awareness, supply chain management, pitching, and consumer experience design, were emphasised in different contexts. Sequencing also varied, with some programmes developing individual reflection and awareness before strategy, and others beginning with theoretical frameworks followed by practice-based learning.

These findings reinforced the need for a structured yet flexible framework. Early feedback raised concerns that 52 competencies might be excessive. However, extensive mapping, benchmarking, and evaluation that this breadth is necessary to capture the real-life complexity and diversity of entrepreneurial learning. Presenting the competencies in a star-shaped model captures the non-linear, modular nature of creative enterprise learning, allowing for a 'pick-and-choose' approach responsive to diverse learner trajectories and course objectives. Feedback indicates the framework supports students by providing clarity and focus on enterprise skills, and supports educators by scaffolding curriculum design and teaching practice.

Core competencies

Quantitative analysis of competency frequency and clustering revealed eight 'core' competencies taught most frequently at LCF.. These were prioritised for additional teaching resources across different skill levels. Interestingly, reflective practice emerged as the most commonly occurring competency. Although the value of reflective practice in enterprise is widely recognised (Clarke, Ferry and Cornes, 2020; Jack and Anderson, 1999), this finding highlights the integration of theory and practice in creative enterprise pedagogy. Patterns in competency uptake also suggest potential sequences for scaffolded learning, providing practical guidance for curriculum design. For example, pairing Design Thinking with Growth Mindset to support experimentation and failure as part of the learning process.

Adaptability

The framework is highly adaptable and the CFE team continues to experiment with many different uses. These include: mapping competencies to units and courses to identify gaps; structuring teaching content; visually signposting learning goals; aligning reflection questions to

competencies; supporting creative reflection exercises; mapping personal enterprise journeys; and aligning learning with assessments. This adaptability ensures applicability across diverse student cohorts, units, and contexts.

Measuring impact

Guided by current thinking on impact evaluation shared by EEUK and the University of Exeter (Davies, 2025), the team trialled an evaluation framework aligned with the New World Kirkpatrick Model (2016) to measure student experience and development against LCF Enterprise Competencies. This approach seeks to capture the impact of enterprise education beyond traditional metrics, to demonstrate tangible and intangible impact including confidence, capability, and reflective practice.

Summary of findings

This work contributes to a research-based pedagogical model for creative enterprise education. Planned outputs include producing a guidebook for other educators, ongoing framework refinement, and exploring adaptation for other creative disciplines and institutional contexts. Parallel plans include translating practice-led insights into formal scholarly outputs, including a peer-reviewed journal article and conference presentations.

Conclusion

This project provides an empirically grounded framework for embedding enterprise competencies in creative higher education. There is potential for this practice-led research to develop into formal scholarly outputs, enhance sector-wide innovation, and contribute to the development of creative enterprise pedagogy nationally and internationally.

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