

ADVANCING BY

design

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ADVANCING BY
design

WITH THE UNIVERSITIES OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF A STEERING GROUP CHAIRED BY
CLIVE RICHARDS

COMMISSIONED BY
WEST MIDLANDS HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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ADVANCING BY
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FOREWORD



Over the past 10 years, through The Lord Stafford Awards, I have been privileged to have seen at first hand the benefits that collaborative relationships between businesses and universities can bring to both parties. I am therefore delighted to have been asked to write this foreword.

This report by Professor Clive Richards, his Steering Group and research consultants, highlights just how important the benefits of design are to both the business and the university sectors in obtaining competitive advantage. The research is appropriately region wide, engages all interested parties and probes enterprise delivery across a wide range of design programmes.

The university sector has so much to offer our business community and I hope that with its twelve point action plan this report will be a public declaration of the value and importance of university/business collaborations, both to those directly involved and in terms of increased competitiveness and the growth of the knowledge base.

I congratulate Professor Richards and his team for producing a report which I hope will advance the proposed improvements to the business support infrastructure in order to deliver greater regional prosperity.

THE LORD STAFFORD DL FRAGS
Swynnerton Hall, February 2009

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Left to right:
The Lord Stafford,
Sir George Cox and
Professor Clive Richards
at the launch event of
Advancing by Design

Much of the investigation reported here was conducted before the onset of the current ‘credit crunch’, therefore the findings need to be considered in light of the subsequent economic downturn. Now, more than ever, the importance of design should not be overlooked nor underestimated, as has been reinforced by the Design Council (2008a) research which concluded that “*design is an important tool that can help businesses survive a recession*”.

This report is therefore timely, being a review of the rôle universities in the West Midlands have played in promoting design amongst businesses and containing a set of recommendations on how such partnership work could be developed in the future. Such work also includes partnerships between the world of commercial design practice and that of design education and research. In addition to supporting businesses in general through the provision of design expertise and facilities, universities have a duty to work with and support, as well as being supported by, those whose business is design – this should be a symbiotic relationship.

The plan set out in the concluding part of this report has the key aim of maximising the positive impact that universities can have on the economy of the region through delivering design related activities for businesses and the public sector. In meeting this aim it is important that there is clarity concerning the respective rôles and interrelationships between other publicly funded agencies, the commercial world, including design providers, and universities. This is needed especially in the current unpropitious economic climate where there can be scope for misunderstandings and tensions. Within the twelve recommendations of the plan for design are proposals for arrangements aimed at achieving such clarity.

Whilst overall the plan has as its focus the West Midlands, it is my view that there may well be aspects of it which have validity for other regions of the UK – the issue of the public/private sector relationships is just one such aspect.

Inevitably an enterprise such as the one reported here requires input from many people and I would like to take the

opportunity to thank all those associated with the project.

My special thanks go to Lord Stafford for hosting the project launch in November 2007 at his Innovation Festival in the National Exhibition Centre, and to Sir George Cox for his inspiring *Advancing by Design* launching speech at that event. The team from ECOTEC, our independent project consultants, Jag Pabla and Sarah Jenkins, have carried out the bulk of the information gathering and most of the analysis for the research. They have been exceptionally responsive to the directions given by my Steering Group and the demands placed upon them by me. I gratefully acknowledge the thorough professionalism with which they addressed the brief. I offer my particular thanks to all the members of my Steering Group for providing their expert guidance and for their solid support throughout the project. I also thank the very many participants in the research from both the public and private sectors, including users and non-users of university design support services, as well as participants from the universities themselves. They helped the work through their engagement in the interview programmes or provided statements and documentary evidence.

I must also acknowledge my staff at Coventry University. Sinead Ouillon was immensely helpful to me in the early stages of structuring the programme of work and in organising the launch event and other meetings, along with Gita Devi – thanks to them both. Matthew Reading's diligence in administering the later stages of the work must not go without my thanks – nor must I forget my PA, Nanette Brock, who always ensured I was in the right place at the right time for the very many meetings and interviews this work necessitated.

Finally I must thank the West Midlands Higher Education Association for offering me the opportunity to lead this fascinating project and the Higher Education Funding Council England for providing the wherewithal to carry it out.

The information contained in this report, and the full research findings available on the web, should provide a rich source of data for interested parties. I do hope this work will pay dividend and that the recommendations set out in section 11, the key outcomes, will provide a useful basis for *Advancing by Design* in the West Midlands, and perhaps beyond.

What is needed now is for champions to take forward the plan.

CLIVE RICHARDS

Coventry School of Art and Design, March 2009

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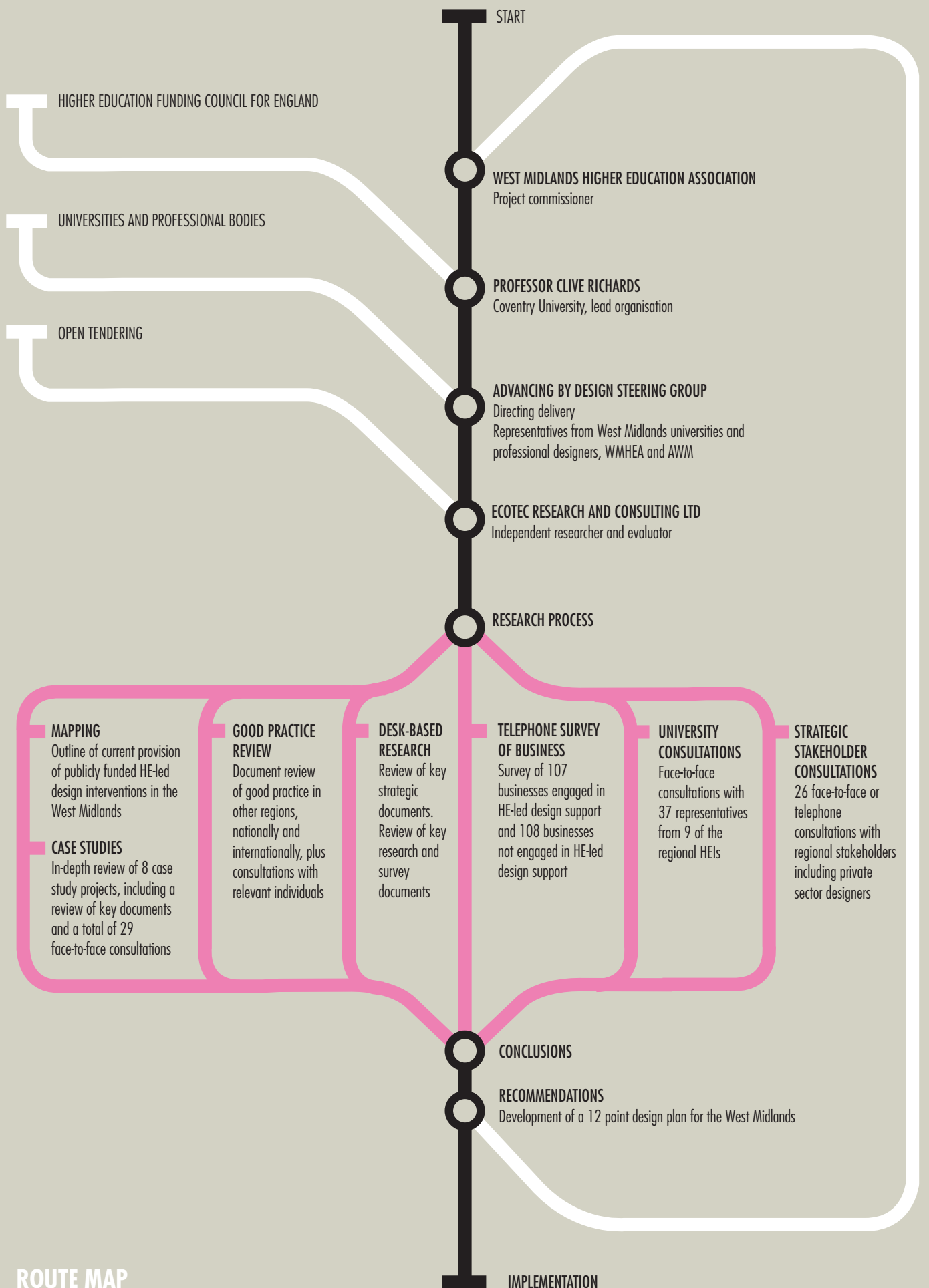
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Chief Executive, Chartered Society of Designers and The Design Association

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Principal Lecturer in Creative Arts, Newman University College

Meetings of the Steering Group also benefitted from input by representatives of the Higher Education Funding Council and the West Midlands Higher Education Association.



ROUTE MAP

THE STUDY

In 2007, the West Midlands Higher Education Association (WMHEA)¹ invited Professor Clive Richards² to lead the *Advancing by Design* research project which has resulted in this report. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of higher education (HE) led design interventions that have been set up in the West Midlands to support the transfer and exchange of knowledge between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the private and public sectors. The *Advancing by Design* project sought to compile a body of evidence about the ability of the regional HE sector's knowledge base and facilities to improve competitiveness, productivity, innovation and enterprise for business and the wider community. In addition, it aimed to review good practice in other regions, nationally and internationally. The research was also expected to generate recommendations for a future infrastructure for design initiatives in the region.

This *Report and Recommendations* publication sets out the key findings emerging from the research. It, and the full research source document, *Advancing by Design: Research and Findings* are available to download at www.designsintobusiness.co.uk

ADVANCING BY DESIGN STEERING GROUP

A Steering Group was set up to guide the work. All West Midlands universities were invited to participate in this group plus key representatives from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the West Midlands Higher Education Association (WMHEA), Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency, the Chartered Society of Designers (CSD) and the Institution of Engineering Designers (IED). The Steering Group met on five occasions and provided valuable guidance to the project.

¹
The WMHEA includes all the universities in the West Midlands.

²
Professor Clive Richards is Associate Dean of the Coventry School of Art and Design and President of the Chartered Society of Designers.

ECOTEC RESEARCH AND CONSULTING

In order to maintain the impartiality of the main investigation with design-led support programmes in the region independent consultants were commissioned to complete the task of information gathering which would inform the project outcomes. After a process of open tendering, the unanimous view of the selection panel³, endorsed by the Steering Group, was that ECOTEC Research and Consulting should be commissioned to carry out the work.

³
The panel consisted of representatives from Coventry University, West Midlands Higher Education Association and the Institution of Engineering Designers.

STUDY DRIVERS

There were a number of motivations for undertaking an investigation into the effectiveness of HE-led design support. At a national level it was clear that the contribution of the HE sector to the economy was under-exploited and a succession of strategic reviews of government policies emphasised that more could be done to support new sectors, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and services through better engagement with higher education. The study also aligned to the HEFCE *Strategic Plan* (2008), which aims to “*increase the impact of the HE knowledge base to enhance economic development and the strength and vitality of society*”.

Regionally, *Advancing by Design* was launched in the context of a new *Regional Economic Strategy* (AWM, 2007) for the West Midlands and the redesign of business support services spurred by Business Link West Midlands and the national Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP).

Advancing by Design also builds on *Design Advantage* (Staffordshire University, 2005), which was the first attempt in the region to develop a strategic picture of design support projects and people. The study concluded that there was a high level of activity, but that this was not necessarily co-ordinated, nor directly targeting business needs in all areas.

THE RESEARCH

This study was officially launched by Sir George Cox on the 15th November 2007 at the Lord Stafford's Festival of Innovation in the National Exhibition Centre. This inaugurated an 18 month long investigation, engaging a wide constituency of stakeholders

and an active community of design practitioners across the region. The work elements also included a thorough desk-based analysis of key documents and policies and a mapping exercise of West Midlands HE-led design projects, including a series of case studies. There was also a review of good practice from outside the region. These elements were analysed before developing conclusions and recommendations. It is the list of twelve recommendations which is the principal outcome of the research and constitutes the design plan for university-led initiatives in the West Midlands. These recommendations are set out in full in section 11 of this report.



‘Creativity’ is the generation of new ideas – either new ways of looking at existing problems, or of seeing new opportunities, perhaps by exploiting emerging technologies or changes in markets.

‘Innovation’ is the successful exploitation of new ideas. It is the process that carries them through to new products, new services, new ways of running the business or even new ways of doing business.

‘Design’ is what links creativity and innovation. It shapes ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users or customers. Design may be described as creativity deployed to a specific end.



CONTEXT

A review of current evidence and previous studies, alongside a series of consultations, explored the characteristics of design and the design sector, and the rôle of design in business.

DEFINING DESIGN

Any study needs to start by attempting to define its subject. At first thought, this might appear relatively simple for design, however it has actually proved to be challenging. No one definition has universal acceptability and our discovery of a multiplicity of definitions for design reinforces the difficulties of reaching a standard interpretation. Nevertheless, *The Cox Review* (Cox, 2005) perspective, which links design to creativity and innovation, has become an increasingly accepted way of looking at design. The research reported here is based on this perspective.

A RELATIVELY SMALL DESIGN INDUSTRY IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The UK design industry is dominated by small firms, with only 2% of design businesses employing 20 people or more. The sector is also largely South-East/London centric, with 40% of individuals working in the design sector based there (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2008). Proxy indicators, supported by findings from the consultations, show that the design industry in the West Midlands is relatively small. According to the British Design Innovation (BDI), for instance, the West Midlands has 5% of the UK share of design firms. Similarly, membership of the Chartered Society of Designers suggests that the West Midlands accounts for an estimated 250 of the 3000 individual members from academia, business and public sectors.

OF BUSINESS EXPENDITURE ON INNOVATION 6% IS SPENT ON DESIGN FUNCTIONS

There is a tangible link between design investment and the nurturing of innovation and the development of new and improved products and processes. This is evident from the results of the latest *Community Innovation Survey (CIS4)* (Business, Enterprise and Regulation Reforms, BERR, 2007). The survey suggests that 64% of firms are 'innovation active' in the West Midlands, similar to the UK average, and 6% of business expenditure on innovation is spent on design functions. There is little difference in design intensity across manufacturing and service sectors as a whole but there is a tendency for design to be regarded as more important the larger the firm.

THE 'DESIGN DICHOTOMY' AMONG BUSINESSES IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

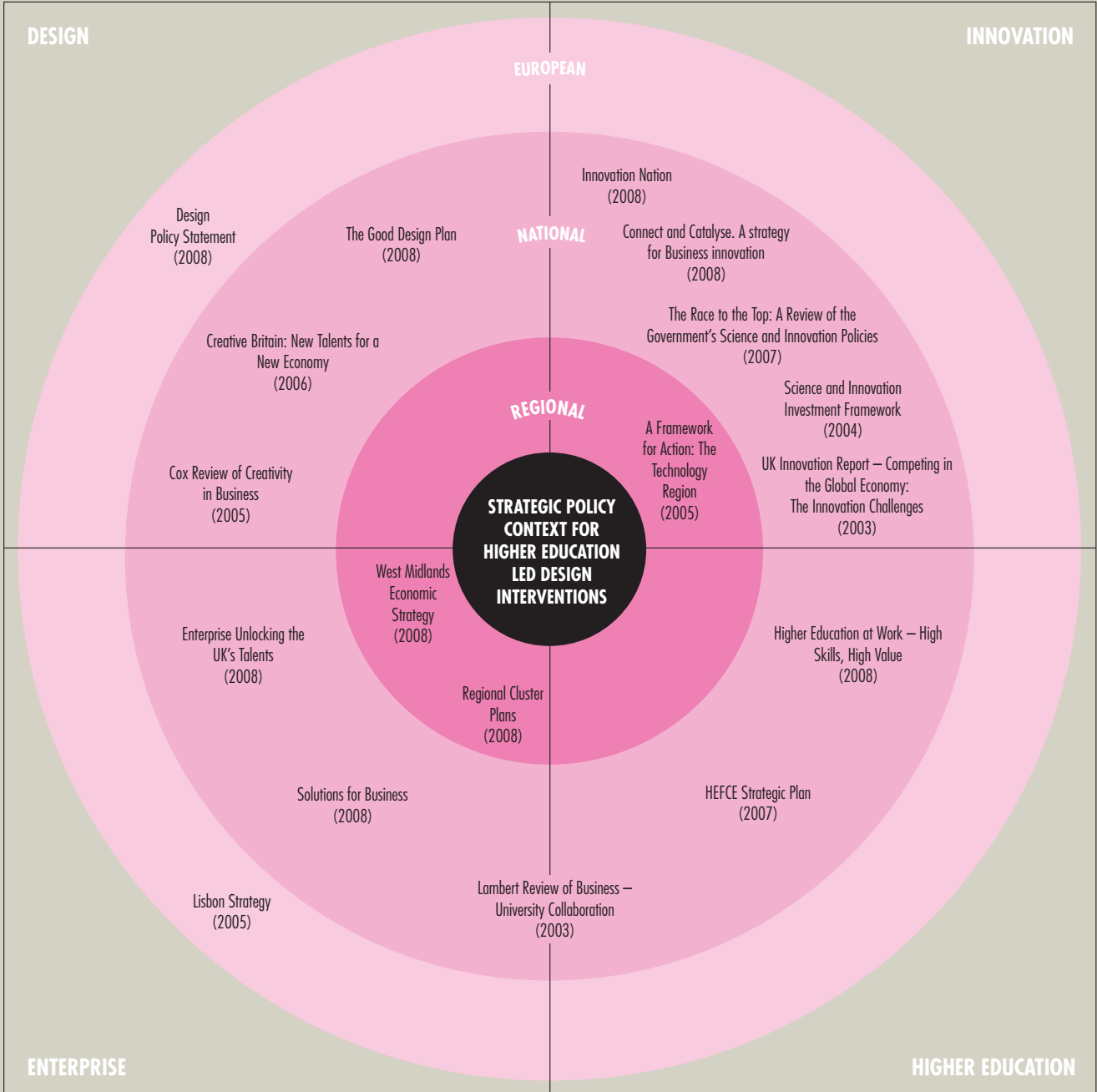
In the West Midlands, there is evidence of a 'design dichotomy'. *The Design Council Survey (2005)* reveals that whilst 30% of businesses in the West Midlands believe design has an integral or significant role, and nearly 20% use external design expertise, 57% of regional businesses say that they do not have any design activity at all. The take-up of design in the West Midlands is most prevalent for communications design, followed by digital and multimedia and then product and industrial design. Service design and interior and exhibition design take-up is below the national average.

THE LINK BETWEEN DESIGN AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

A growing body of evidence has sought to prove the link between design and business performance, however measuring the direct benefits of good design is not an exact science and is fraught with difficulties; although a few studies commissioned by the Design Council has evidenced its correlation with business performance. One of these revealed that in 'design alert' firms, for every £1.00 spent on design, business turnover increased by £2.25 and, on average, market share increased by 6.3% (Design Council, 2005).

BUSINESSES NOT RECOGNISING DESIGN-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

Successful project interventions require an understanding of the barriers to business innovation. Indeed, a central component of the *Cox Review* (Cox, 2005) was to explore some of the barriers to the use of design and creativity. It concluded that many businesses simply do not recognise design-related opportunities or how to pursue them. There was also a lack of confidence in investing in design and a lack of knowledge of how to go about it. Supporting this, the CIS4 (op. cit.) data highlights that over half of all non-innovators did not perceive a market need to change their products or processes, while a third were inhibited to innovate by specific constraining factors, most notably cost-related ones.



EDUCATION LED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

This section explores the strategic policy context for higher education-led design interventions. It outlines the prevailing European, national and regional policy drivers for university related enterprise support generally and design support schemes in particular.

EUROPEAN POLICY DRIVERS

Currently, there is an absence of a definitive policy on design at a European level⁴ but there is an emerging appreciation of its rôle in linking creativity to innovation. Moreover, design's contribution to the competitiveness aims of the *Lisbon Strategy* (Committee of the Regions, 2005) has been strongly advocated by the design industry and this is now reinforced by the designation of 2009 as the European Year for Creativity and Innovation. A policy statement and consultation on design is also planned by the European Commission (EC) indicating the first tentative steps towards a European discussion on design and its economic and competitiveness effects on member economies.

⁴ Design policies are evident in some emerging competitor nations such as India and Korea.

NATIONAL POLICY DRIVERS

The ubiquitous nature of design and its rôle across key aspects of our economic and social life means it spans more than one Government department. The most recent statement of national policy in this regard was the publication by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)⁵ of *Innovation Nation* (DIUS, 2008a), which provides a clear framework for promoting innovation within the UK. This White Paper remains the latest in a sustained and focused effort to enhance innovation performance, which commenced with *The UK Innovation Report* (Department for Trade and Industry, DTI, 2003), and was then

⁵ The creation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in June 2007 emphasised the link between innovation policy and universities. It has a remit to "bring together the nation's strengths in science, research, universities and colleges to build a dynamic, knowledge-based economy."

followed by the longer term *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–2014* (BERR, 2004). The formation of regional Science and Industry Councils became intrinsically linked to this agenda. In 2007, Lord Sainsbury's review of the UK science and innovation system, titled *The Race to the Top* (Sainsbury, 2007), set out a strategy to enable the UK to compete against low-wage, 'emerging' economies such as China and India and to tackle the issue that industry is faced with a bewildering array of organisations and schemes.

It was not until the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, asked Sir George Cox, the then chairman of the Design Council, to investigate the rôle of creativity and design in the UK economy, that design *per se* was raised onto the national platform. The *Cox Review on Creativity in Business: Building on the UK's Strengths* (Cox, 2005) presented a compelling case for design to be an integral part of the innovation and productivity agenda. Its recommendations were grouped under five key actions: raising awareness and changing behaviour (Designing Demand Programme); providing government support and incentive; preparing future generations of creative specialists and business leaders; using the power of public procurement to encourage more imaginative solutions from suppliers; and creating greater visibility for the UK's creative capabilities.

In 2008, the Government reinforced the importance attached to design in innovation by launching the UK's first national enterprise strategy called *Enterprise: Unlocking the UK's Talent* (BERR, 2008). This strategy underlines the importance of enterprise and innovation as a productivity driver, but also proposes actions to foster connections between business to research and design.

This policy chimes well with instruments such as the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and the recommendations of the *Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration* (Lambert, 2003), which included an enhanced rôle for the RDAs in facilitating business-university links. This also accords with aspirations identified in the *Higher Education at Work Strategy* (DIUS, 2008b) to enhance the higher-level skills that contribute to innovation in business. A national policy push recognising the importance of the creative industries, which embrace design, also emerged from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) *The Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy*

(DCMS, 2007). This highlighted 26 commitments to secure Britain's leading place as a creative economy.

The strategies of two Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) are also relevant for design. *The Good Design Plan* (Design Council, 2008b) is the national design strategy and its delivery plan 2008–2011 articulates the ambitions of the Design Council as the lead strategic agency for design advocacy in the country. It sets out five objectives to achieve its mission “to inspire and enable the best use of design to make the UK a more competitive, creative and sustainable nation”. Of most relevance to universities, it aims to support the effective use of design, boost high-level skills in design, and champion the value of good design.

The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) has recently widened its remit to manage and co-ordinate a number of Government innovation and technology programmes. *Connect and Catalyse: A Strategy for Business Innovation 2008–2011* (TSB, 2007), sets out its investment intentions and plans which include enhanced investment in ten Innovation Platforms (IP) and development of strategies in a number of identified technology and application areas. The TSB will also increase the number of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), take charge of the roll out of a more flexible KTP as well as continue its support of 24 Knowledge Transfer Networks (KTNs), including the formation of a new network for creative industries.

REGIONAL POLICY DRIVERS

The prevailing policy driver for design interventions in the West Midlands is the *West Midlands Economic Strategy* (WMES), *Connecting to Success* (AWM, 2007). A cursory analysis of the WMES suggests that design is not strongly positioned in the region and the specific rôle of universities in addressing the design challenge facing local business is not explicit either. Notwithstanding this, there are core elements of the WMES which, firstly, have implications for design-led activity and secondly, which have particular links, relevance and potential for our universities.

The West Midlands Regional Innovation Policy (AWM, 2006) confirms the importance attached to the Innovation and Technology Council (ITC), formed by AWM as a forum for the

6
 Healthcare Technology;
 Digital Media; Advanced
 Materials; Transportation
 Technology; and Energy.

exchange of ideas between the region’s academic and business communities. There is an absence of any reference to design within innovation policy, however the forum actively promotes innovation through a strategy – *Framework for Action* (ITC, 2005), which seeks to maximise the academic and applied research base, supporting alongside it, sectors of greatest regional advantage⁶.

The ITC priorities are evident in the strategies emanating in the region’s priority clusters. The regional cluster focus for the next three years is on securing prosperity by ensuring that businesses are able to exploit specific markets where the region can generate significant wealth over the long term. An analysis of the composite business plan does not articulate the rôle of design in delivering the overall objectives for each cluster. However, there is an implicit intention to promote design as a value generating component within cluster plans and to explore the potential for the introduction of cluster specific HEI-led design interventions. So, whilst design may be assumed as a component in most, if not all, of the cluster activities, with the exception of reference to ‘design’ in the Interiors and Lifestyles cluster, ‘design’ as a focus does not feature as an objective in cluster plans.

WEST MIDLANDS TARGET CLUSTERS	Aerospace Automotive Building Technologies Business and Professional Services Environmental Technologies Food and Drink	ICT Interiors and Lifestyles Medical Technologies Rail Screen Image and Sound Tourism and Leisure
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The delivery of publicly funded design interventions is further affected by the region-wide changes in Business Link, leading to the creation of Business Link West Midlands (BLWM). Business Link as the first port of call for all business support is an enabling and non-delivery organisation and, in 2009, it is due to launch Designing Demand with the aim of providing a targeted design service to SMEs. There are also prospects for a forthcoming dedicated design service.

The national movement to create a simplified portfolio of publicly funded business support products and simultaneously remove customer confusion through the Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) has inevitable implications for HEI-led design support. A streamlined package of support

called ‘Solutions for Business’ was to be launched in March 2009; which includes 30 national support products, with a common look and feel, only to be accessible via Business Link. By 2010 all government products will either have migrated to the portfolio or will have closed.

‘SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS’ PRODUCTS

Accessing International Markets	Innovation Advice and Guidance
Automotive Assistance Programme	Improving your Resource Efficiency
Business Collaboration Networks	Intensive Start-up Support
Business Growth Specialist Facilities and Environments	Innovation Vouchers
Business Premises	Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
Coaching for High Growth	Low Carbon Energy Demonstration
Collaborative R&D	Manufacturing Advisory Service
Designing Demand	Maximising Foreign Direct Investment
Developing your International Trade Potential	Networking for Innovation
Enterprise Coaching	Rural Development Programme for England Business Support
Enterprise Finance Guarantee	Small Loans for Business
Export Credit Insurance	Starting a Business
Finance for Business	Starting a High Growth Business
Grant for Business Investment	Train to Gain
Grant for Research and Development	Understanding Finance for Business

Source: BERR



BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS START (BCBS)



THE CREATIVE VILLAGE

Design 4 Advantage



Design 4 Entrepreneurs

Different by Design



Digital Arts Centre



EU SME DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES



The Medici Programme

MIDLANDS BY DESIGN



SERVICE by DESIGN



THE DIGITAL LAB come with us into tomorrow...



THE MAP

A key component of this study was to map the provision of higher education (HE) led design support available to businesses in the West Midlands. The researchers undertook an extensive process of information gathering, including web-based research and consultations, to understand the current picture of HE-led design projects⁷ that have received external grants; defined here as public sector funding, which is additional to university regular funding. The work has endeavoured to capture a comprehensive picture of the projects being delivered across the region, as of 2008⁸, however, given the cross-cutting nature and broad definition of design, there may be further projects that have not been captured. A full list of projects is included in Annex A.

⁷ Projects often include a series of individual activities/interventions.

⁸ The mapping exercise also includes two very design-specific projects that ended in 2006 and 2007.

A CONFUSING PICTURE OF REGIONAL DESIGN SUPPORT

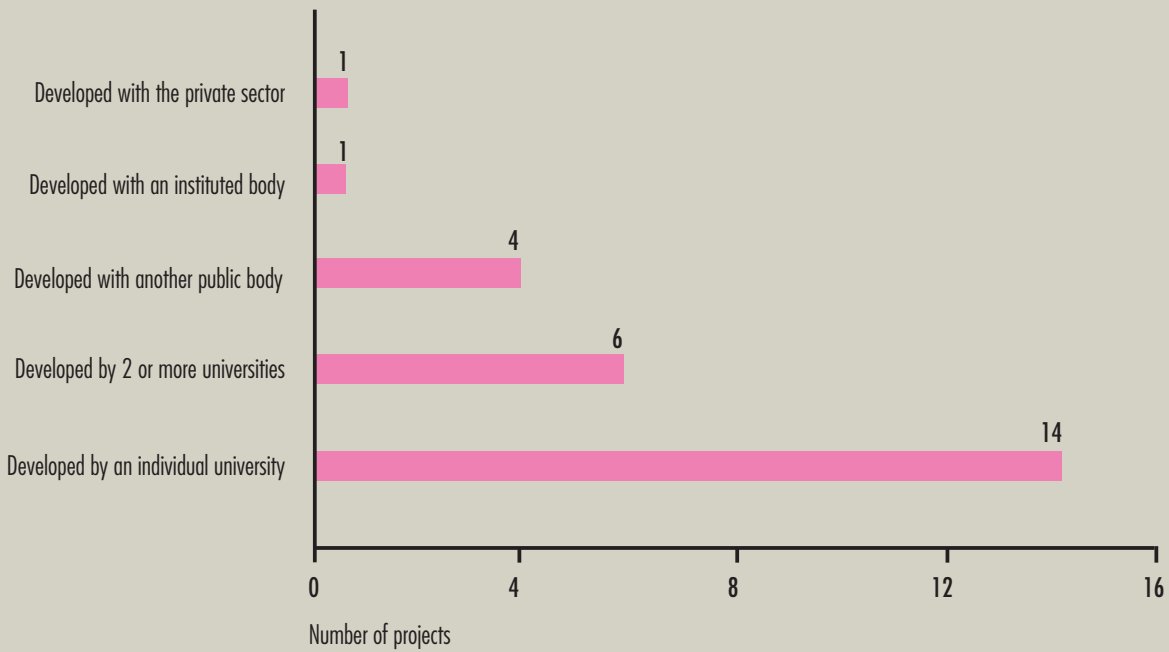
The mapping exercise revealed that 28 HE-led design projects were being delivered by eight universities. This suggests that there is a significant amount of design support available to businesses, but also demonstrates a fairly confusing picture of regional design support.

LIMITED COLLABORATION

Most commonly, HE-led design projects were developed in response to a market failure or as a response to Government papers, suggesting that projects are seeking to address a need or a gap in provision. However, further research would be required to test these rationales. The majority of projects were developed and delivered by individual universities, rather than as collaborations. Only one project was developed in partnership with the private sector; through AWM's Cluster Opportunities Group.

TWO MAIN SOURCES OF FUNDING

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT



⁹
Based on information gathered from 22 projects.

A total of £88.6m of external funding has been secured by these projects⁹. The majority of projects tended to receive around £2m of funding over an average of three to four years, which was most commonly revenue (74% of projects). Although far less common, there are also a handful of much larger projects being delivered across the region, many of which incorporate a significant capital element. For projects that are largely reliant on capital funding, there needs to be due consideration for also securing revenue funding in order to support project delivery. HE-led design projects have largely been reliant on two main sources of funding: Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). As a result, the primary focus of the majority of projects has been to deliver tangible outputs, in relatively short timescales that directly contribute to regional economic development. Whilst knowledge transfer is a key component of the projects, it is rarely explicit.

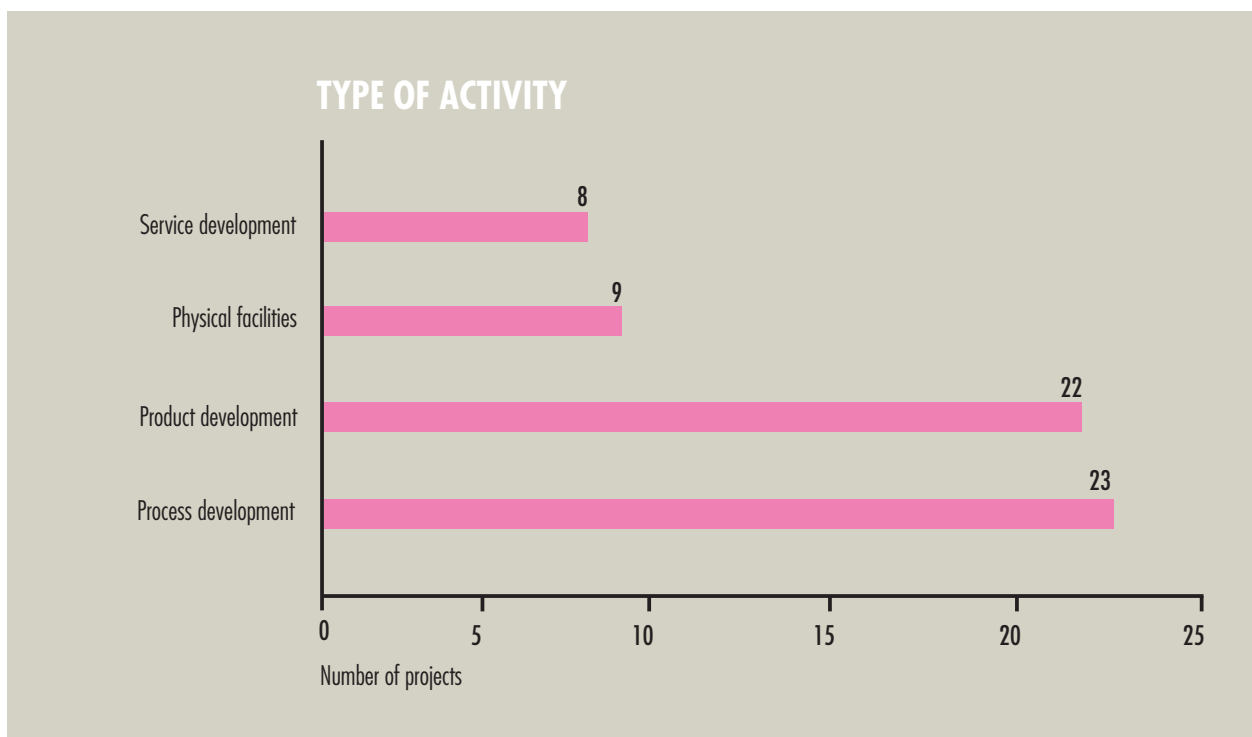
THE RÔLE IS OVERALL MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY

For 92% of the projects, the university's rôle lay in both management and delivery. Universities rarely adopt a brokerage rôle, which is supported by the fact that only a third of projects reported using private sector designers. Most projects have chosen to employ staff specifically to fill these rôles, rather

than using academics or researchers already based within the university. This raises questions around the effectiveness and extent of the knowledge transfer.

A RANGE OF SUPPORT OFFERED

Many HE-led design projects provide a broad range of support, and this may indicate some duplication across the region. Only a quarter of the staff working on these projects are described as 'designers', perhaps emphasising the broad definition of design adopted but also suggesting that these projects provide a wider scope of business support that extends beyond design. 45% of projects are also not sector specific. However, further exploration of the expertise tied up in these projects does reveal specific skills and facilities/equipment. Only 15% of projects limit their support to just one type of activity; most commonly, activity focuses on product and process development.



MOST COMMONLY ONE-TO-ONE CONSULTANCY

Overall, there is a preference for mentoring /one-to-one/ consultancy interventions. This approach ensures that the needs of the individual business are met but only facilitates effective knowledge transfer if academics or students are involved in the process.

INTERVENTION TYPE



WORKING WITH BUSINESSES WITH THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

The vast majority of projects consider their maximum geographical reach to be the West Midlands region and over half of the projects engage with businesses that are classified as SMEs¹⁰. Micro-businesses are most commonly engaged in HE-led design projects whereas pre-starts and large businesses are rarely engaged. Projects do appear to be working with businesses that can offer the greatest potential for impact, for example those that are sector specific align with AWM's priority clusters well.

¹⁰ SMEs include new starts and micro-businesses.

HIGH NUMBER OF BUSINESS ASSISTS

HE-led design projects have completed a high number of business assists, ranging from 20 to 1403 per project. As at 2008, 23 of the projects had delivered a total of 8,039 business assists through existing funding since 2002. Based on a fairly crude calculation, this equates to around 2,784 businesses per annum. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that due to some multiple assists, the actual number of businesses reached is somewhat fewer. Further research would need to be conducted to capture this more accurately.

LIMITED PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

Consideration for sustaining projects, post funding, appears to be limited. Despite anecdotal evidence suggesting that in many cases, it was felt that there was a need for projects to continue, the majority of projects finished by the end of 2008¹¹. Only five projects, primarily those that received capital funding, have sought to sustain their activities through other means, such as support from the university or by introducing a charging policy for businesses. The West Midlands Technology Network (WMTN), plus a number of its delivery partners are still endeavouring to continue their work by securing further funding.

¹¹
Four projects had funding that continued beyond 2008.

TITLE	OBJECTIVE	LEAD UNIVERSITY	RATIONALE FOR SELECTION
Design Institute	Support SMEs in product design and marketing	Coventry University	Autonomous structure from the main University
Design Hub	Support design-led companies and entrepreneurs to grow	Coventry University	Provision of workspace
Difference by Design	Develop 50 design-led innovation products to take to market through a programme of guidance and targeted advice to local companies and individuals	Staffordshire University	Strong links with private sector design advisors
Innovation Direct	Use concurrent engineering, teamwork, tools and techniques to provide practical help with the design and innovation activities of businesses	University of Warwick	Focus on engineering and the use of concurrent processes
Jewellery Industry Innovation Centre (JIC)	Assist the jewellery and silver-smithing industries and allied trades with new product development, design, technology application and close-to-market research	Birmingham City University	Focus on the higher value added sector
Midlands by Design	Support SMEs to prepare for new markets	Birmingham City University	Use of post-graduate students in delivery
Service by Design	Raise awareness of the role of service design in improving organisations offer to clients and build BCU's capacity to develop strategic relationships with organisations	Birmingham City University	Building capacity among academics
West Midlands Technology Network (WMTN)	Product design and manufacturing advice services to SMEs	University of Wolverhampton	University collaboration

LEARNING POINTS

In reviewing a selection of case study projects, researchers were able to explore interventions and actual delivery in more depth and thus draw out key learning points. The case study projects were selected from the 28 projects that were identified through the mapping exercise. All have received external funding, defined as public sector funding which is additional to regular university income. Utilising some basic selection criteria, a broadly representative set of case study projects was sought. Each case study was informed by a review of key documents, plus face-to-face consultations with project managers and other relevant team members.

THE CASE STUDIES

The **Design Institute** supports SMEs in product design and marketing, emphasising the need to generate a clear demarcation between public and private sector design support. The Design Institute operates largely as an autonomous structure from the main university, which is considered to improve efficiency but limits knowledge transfer into the university. It relies heavily on word-of-mouth and referrals for engaging businesses emphasising the importance of reputation management within the region.

The **Design Hub** provides flexible accommodation and a complementary range of support for SMEs where design is an integral part of their business strategy. The Design Hub has adopted a strong focus on supporting start-up companies, potentially demonstrating a rôle that more universities could adopt. The Design Hub received a capital-only grant and highlights how, particularly during the first few years of a project, revenue funding is also important. The project also emphasises how offering businesses fully-funded support does not always secure sufficient commitment.

Different by Design provided financial assistance and facilitated the linkage of businesses to a network of high quality and leading edge design consultants able to assist in the process and development of initial ideas to prototype. Having genuine design champions on the core team and focusing on localised delivery and marketing were instrumental in engaging SMEs. Knowledge transfer was not a stated or intended remit of the project, which resulted in Different by Design having a significant amount of autonomy from the university.

Innovation Direct used concurrent engineering, teamwork, tools and techniques to provide practical help with the design and innovation activities of businesses. In the main, it encouraged businesses to adopt a holistic approach to new product development. Innovation Direct, which ended in 2008, emphasised how projects that rely on short-term funding can lose valuable knowledge, skills and momentum.

The **Jewellery Industry Innovation Centre (JIIC)** is based within Birmingham's jewellery quarter and supports businesses in the jewellery and silver-smithing industries. It demonstrates how projects focusing on a tight 'community of interest' can offer holistic support that complements and builds capacity in the private sector. Up-to-date knowledge and a true understanding of the industry are, however, critical factors of success. The JIIC also emphasises the need for projects to have a close relationship with the university and to avoid a complete reliance on external funding sources.

Midlands by Design supported SMEs to prepare for new markets. It was delivered by Birmingham City University's Technology Innovation Centre (TIC), which has a track record in delivering similar projects, therefore generating synergy and enabling the project to get off the ground quickly. Its delivery approach focused on longer-term engagement with businesses. It also placed post-graduate students at the heart of the support process, delivering a range of benefits but also certain trade-offs.

Service by Design supported SMEs through innovation to improve customer experience. In the main, the support was delivered by multi-disciplinary teams of Innovation Mentors who were academics recruited from the university. The project highlighted the challenges of involving academics in business support but also the rewards. Service by Design successfully

incorporated a longitudinal evaluation into its project, which helped to shape service delivery. It also developed a model that encouraged businesses to contribute financially.

The **West Midlands Technology Network (WMTN)** established a network of partners that could provide complementary technical expertise to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region. It demonstrates an important rôle for university project staff to manage the diagnostic services and the relationship between a business and an academic. It also highlights key lessons around collaboration, such as leadership, buy-in, trust and marketing, plus the challenges associated with a lack of funding assurance.

ADDRESSING GENUINE MARKET FAILURES

One of the key strengths of the case study projects is that they have been structured in a way that allows the businesses to be very much involved in the design process, thus raising their awareness and understanding of design. However, it is important to ensure that externally funded projects are addressing a genuine market failure in order to avoid wastage of resources. Projects have attempted to differentiate themselves from private sector design support by focusing on the front-end of design, for example up to the proof-of-concept or prototype stage. In some instances, project staff also believe that their support is addressing gaps in the provision of private sector design support.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH PRIVATE SECTOR DESIGNERS

Although there is some evidence of university-led design projects working with the private sector design community, it does appear to be somewhat limited. Instead, most projects have employed designers specifically to work on these projects. There is scope for HE-led design projects to stimulate greater partnership working with the private sector design industry, to utilise their expertise and stimulate the take-up of it.

MAXIMISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

It is important to note that for the majority of the case study projects, their core objectives did not centre on effective knowledge transfer between businesses and the university.

Instead, targets focused solely on delivering economic benefits to businesses and the region. For university-led design projects to retain a place in regional business support, they need to maximise the opportunities for knowledge transfer. Moreover, they need to ensure that this transfer of knowledge is a two-way process, not only delivering benefits to the businesses but also to the university. The lack of recognition for these opportunities in a project's core objectives or targets means that many projects, in a bid to meet output targets, have been unable to develop greater links with the university.

ACADEMIC AND/OR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

A project's intellectual base is critical to its success, however consultations generated divided opinions on the most appropriate individuals to deliver university-led design support – academic staff, students (typically post-graduates), project staff (with no academic commitment) or private sector designers. The differentiating factors largely lie around expertise and quality of outputs; cost; extent of knowledge transfer; and the duration of support. Strengths and weaknesses of all approaches were identified. However the core rationale for involving universities in design support to businesses is knowledge transfer. With this in mind, involvement of academics and/or students in the delivery of design support is fundamental. However, in light of the challenges associated with engaging academics, there is scope for project staff to adopt a management rôle in terms of the diagnostic services and the relationship between a business and an academic.

EMBEDDING PROJECTS WITHIN ACADEMIC FACULTIES

The extent to which projects are embedded within university structures varies. Whilst projects that are largely autonomous from the main university allow greater scope for creativity, the project and the university also need to work much harder to maximise the benefits of knowledge transfer. Overall, there is general recognition that embedding projects within academic faculties can support stronger, more beneficial knowledge transfer.

ENGAGING BUSINESSES BY REFERRAL AND WORD-OF-MOUTH

When the case study projects were initially established, one of the main challenges was to raise awareness among businesses of the support available. Referrals and word-of-mouth appear to have been particularly successful means of engaging businesses. In light of this, it will be important that HE-led design projects maintain a presence in the West Midlands in order to ensure that businesses have access to the most appropriate expertise.

LONGER TERM HOLISTIC SUPPORT

There is a general agreement that five day business assists are too short to sufficiently support and deliver benefits to businesses. In light of this, the KTP model was widely regarded as a successful approach, whether via a full KTP or a mini-KTP. Projects that can offer businesses an holistic package of support also appear to have been particularly beneficial.

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL BUY-IN

Significant benefits can be derived from university-led collaborative projects. Perhaps most notable is their ability to tap into a wide range of knowledge and expertise based in the region's universities. However, there needs to be careful consideration for their branding and marketing, ensuring that the collaborative offer improves access to business support, rather than perpetuates customer confusion. Strong leadership and buy-in at both a strategic and operational level are critical, as is time to build trust among partners.

LOCALISED TARGETING

Most of the projects deliver design support to eligible businesses from across the region, therefore ensuring that the expertise is widely available. However, those projects that incorporate localised targeting, whether in the form of a 'community of interest' or a spatial area, appear to have been particularly successful. This targeting may allow the project to adopt a greater influencing and leadership rôle, facilitate business engagement, or assist greater collaboration with key partners and/or the private sector design community.

CAPTURING IMPACT

Projects are increasingly recognising the need to capture both their direct impacts and wider, more intangible benefits. However, the outcomes of business support, and particularly design-related support, are rarely immediate. The funding to support these projects typically does not allow for an impact assessment to be conducted once the project has ended. As a result, the real impact of these projects is failing to be captured effectively.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

A common trait across the case study projects is that there is insufficient consideration for sustainability post-funding. In a number of cases, projects have been unsuccessful in obtaining further or alternative funding, and given that many employ staff specifically to work on these projects, valuable skills and knowledge are being lost. The most appropriate model for succession for many of these projects would be to introduce a charging policy. Inevitably, there is currently a concern that businesses would not be prepared to pay for the design support. This is grounded in the view held by many projects that their target market is typically businesses that do not sufficiently engage in the design process, whether through cost or a lack of awareness.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

West Midlands' universities have developed a range of innovative approaches to support businesses in relation to design. Moreover, with the right level of information sharing, many are scalable and/or portable. A number of projects have conducted evaluations and are endeavouring to share key findings and good practice. However, there needs to be a greater commitment to sharing information within the region in order to ensure that universities deliver the most effective design support to businesses in a way that generates real benefits, offers value for money and contributes added value. This should avoid 're-inventing the wheel' in the future.

"The facilities are fantastic"

"Universities have up-to-date awareness and knowledge"

"Getting input from the younger generation"

"As well as helping us with the design, they also taught us about the process for design"

"They are open to more ideas and respond quicker"

"The sheer receptivity and creativity. I had meetings with some of the students — I got a buzz from it — they had enthusiasm and excitement for new products and design"

"The best people are in the universities"

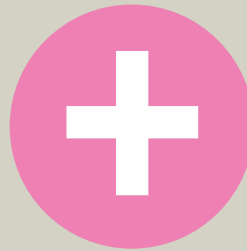
"They listened to what I wanted"

"Allows you to get an idea off the ground very quickly"

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS?

"New ideas and ways of doing things"

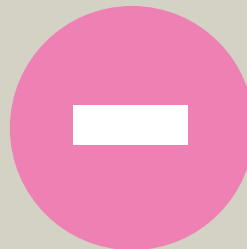
"This was like my wish list! Everything I wanted to do was found here"



"They have the people who can interpret what we are looking for"

UNIVERSITY-LED DESIGN SUPPORT

"It comes down to individuals, if they don't see what you're seeing as a vision, it is difficult to move forward"



"Once we completed the project, there was no ongoing support for what we had created"

WHAT ARE THE WEAKNESSES?

"We found that once the project was over it was difficult to get long term support"

"They live in an ivory tower"

"The student might only have certain skills and may not be able to do everything the design requires"

"They might look outside of the scope of the objectives for the project... they see more into it and over complicate it... too enthusiastic in some sense"

"Time frame — it takes too long in the university compared to the private sector"

CAPTURING VIEWS

In order to generate a complete picture of university-led design support to businesses, it was imperative that demand-side views were captured. Researchers conducted a telephone survey of 215 businesses; 107 businesses had benefitted from university-led design support (beneficiaries) and 108 businesses had not engaged with universities for design support (non-beneficiaries).

ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES DOMINATED THE SURVEY

The majority of the businesses sampled were in ‘manufacturing’ (61%) and three quarters of the businesses employed less than 25 staff (75%). Over half of the businesses had been established for more than ten years (58%), with only 6% of the survey sample having been established for less than a year.

SCOPE TO INCREASE THE RÔLE OF DESIGN IN MANY BUSINESSES

Encouragingly, the vast majority (87%) of businesses, and all those that sold over a quarter of their products or services outside the UK, agreed that design was important to the success of their business. However, there is still scope to increase the rôle of design in many businesses. For example design does not currently have a rôle in 27% of businesses – despite some of these recognising design as important to success – and for the minority of businesses that use external design consultants (13%), a quarter had not done so in the last 12 months. For businesses that do have a rôle for design, they most commonly employ designers internally but they are more frequently based within more generic business departments (24% of all businesses) rather than a dedicated design department (21% of all businesses).

DESIGN TENDS TO FOCUS ON PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT OR IMPROVEMENT

Where design has a rôle in the business, most apply it to new product development (66%), with 15% applying it to either service or process development. In line with this, businesses most commonly sought university support for new product design (68%) or improvement of existing products (21%). For many businesses design work covers a large number of production stages from concept development through to marketing.

DESIGN RELATED SKILLS GAPS ALIGN WELL WITH UNIVERSITY-LED SUPPORT

For businesses that recognise a rôle for design, 40% do not consider themselves to face any design-related skills gaps. For those that did, they were most commonly around Computer Aided Design (CAD) and rapid prototyping, which appear to align fairly well with university-led design support, as many offer these skills and facilities.

NON-BENEFICIARY BUSINESSES ARE LESS PUBLIC SECTOR SUPPORT SAVVY

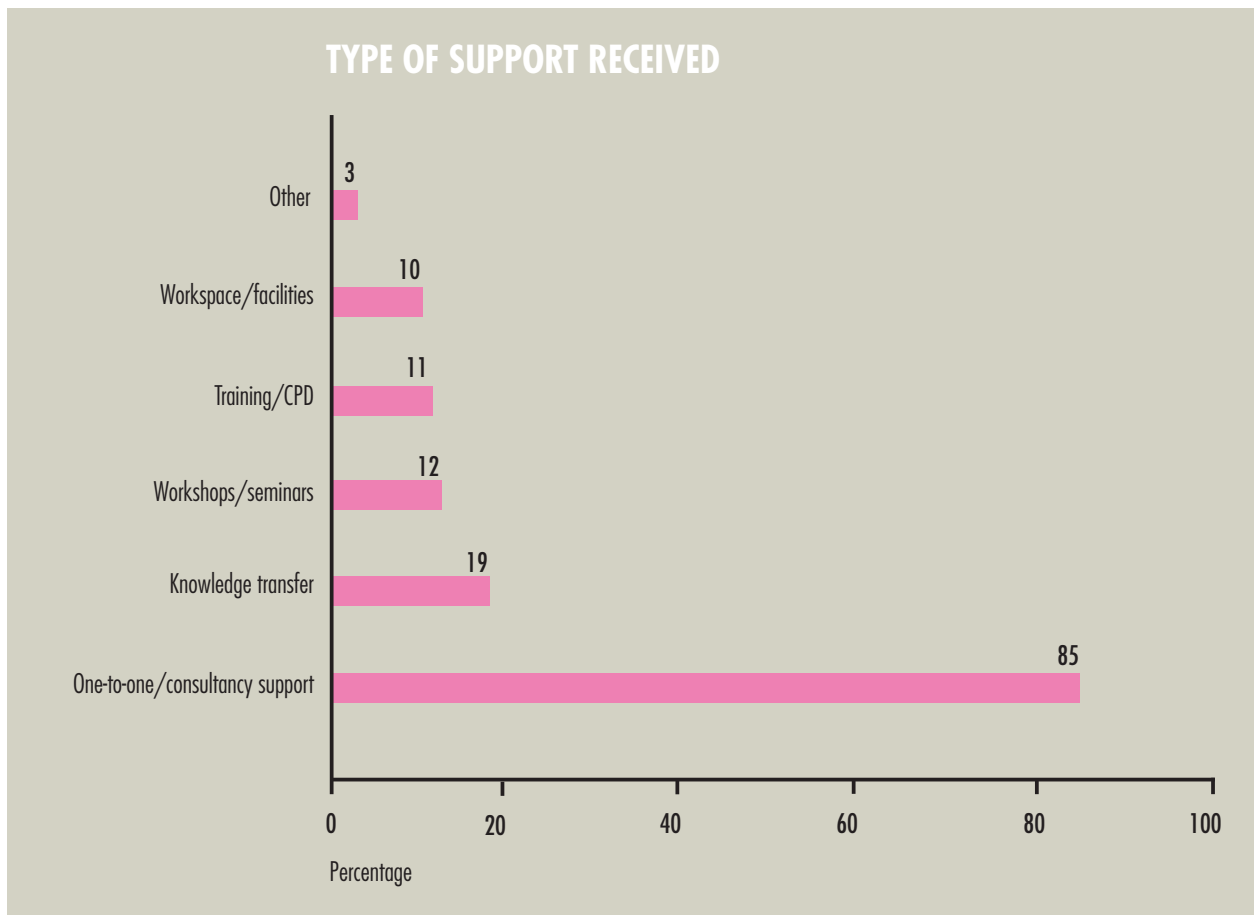
Businesses that have been involved with university-led design support, as compared with those which have not, appear to be more heavily engaged with other publicly funded business support organisations. This suggests that whilst referrals from other organisations are an effective means of engaging some businesses (26%¹² of beneficiary businesses were referred from other organisations and 40% found out about the support by word-of-mouth), it prevents universities from reaching a potentially significant pool of businesses that require support. In light of the fact that businesses working with university-led design projects have frequently engaged with other publicly funded business support structures, there is a need to ensure that design support is not unnecessarily duplicated across the region.

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This may in part be as a result of the WMTN.

EXPERTISE IS THE MAIN REASON FOR WORKING WITH A UNIVERSITY

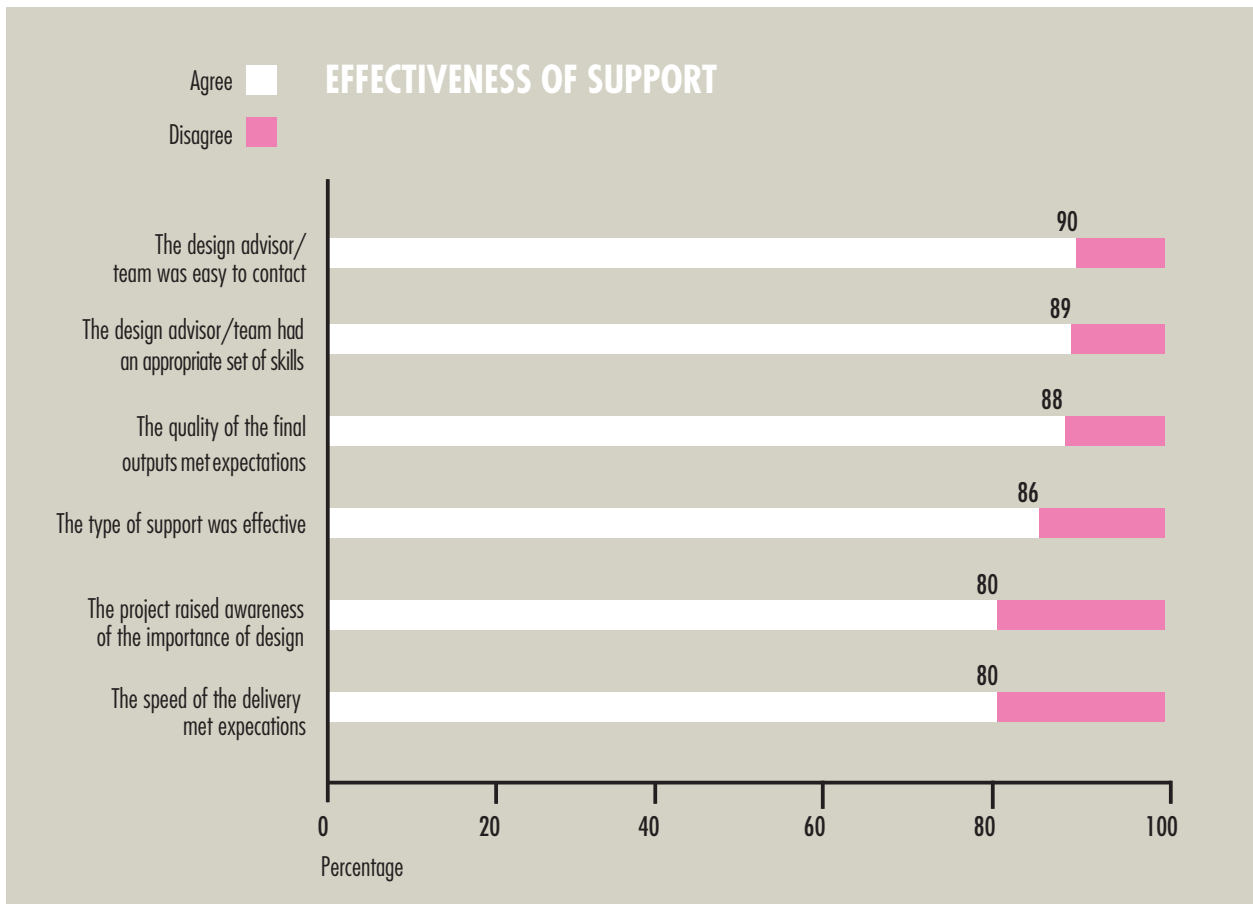
The main reason businesses chose to work with a university was the level of expertise available (36%). This was followed by the low costs, realised through the availability of funding which enables the support to be offered to businesses subsidised or free-of-charge (14%) and the access to new technology (12%). However, businesses tended to choose universities over the private sector for design support on the basis of costs. Despite this, a significant majority of beneficiaries (87%) would be prepared to pay for university-led design support.



ONE-TO-ONE CONSULTANCY IS AN OVER-WHELMING FEATURE AND SATISFACTION IS HIGH

Overall, 84% of university assisted beneficiaries said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the support they had received. The survey revealed that most businesses received one-to-one consultancy support (85%), which unfortunately limits the scope to compare the success of alternative interventions but was perceived by a significant number to be an effective approach. 40% of businesses did not cite any weaknesses, however for those

that did the most common aspects were speed of response (14%) and the level of red tape/paperwork (7%). Qualitative responses also revealed that ongoing support was sought after by many businesses.

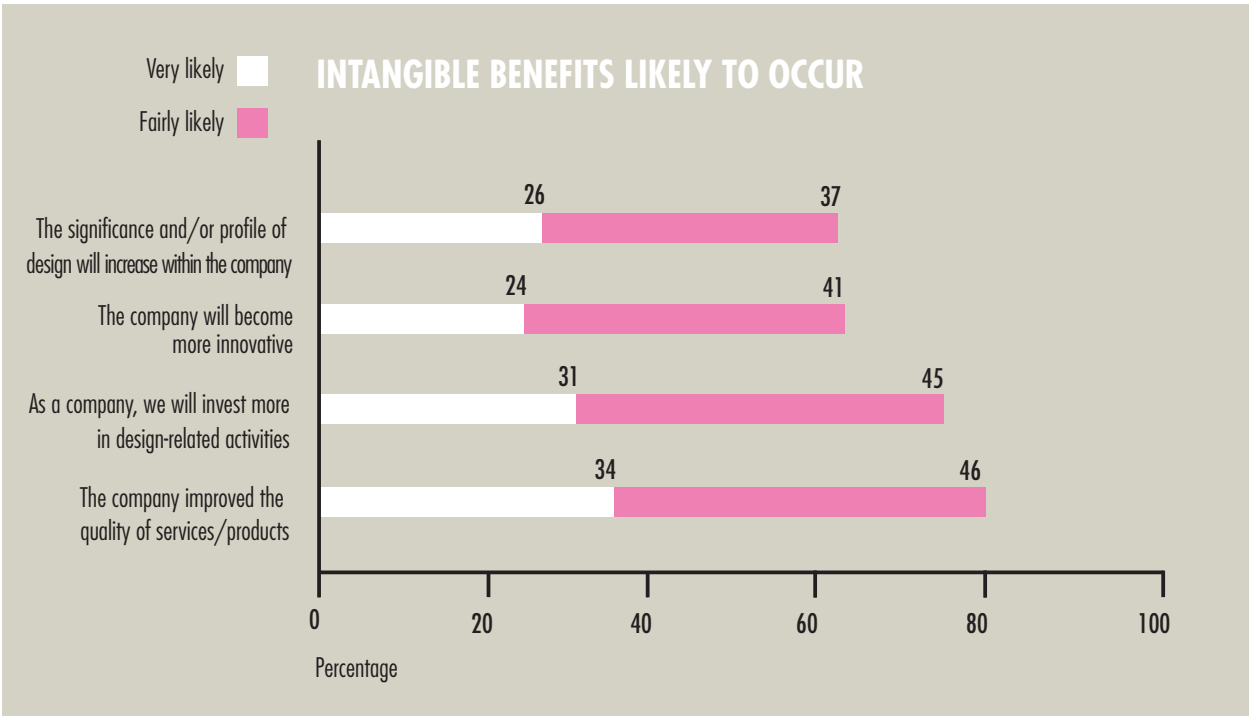
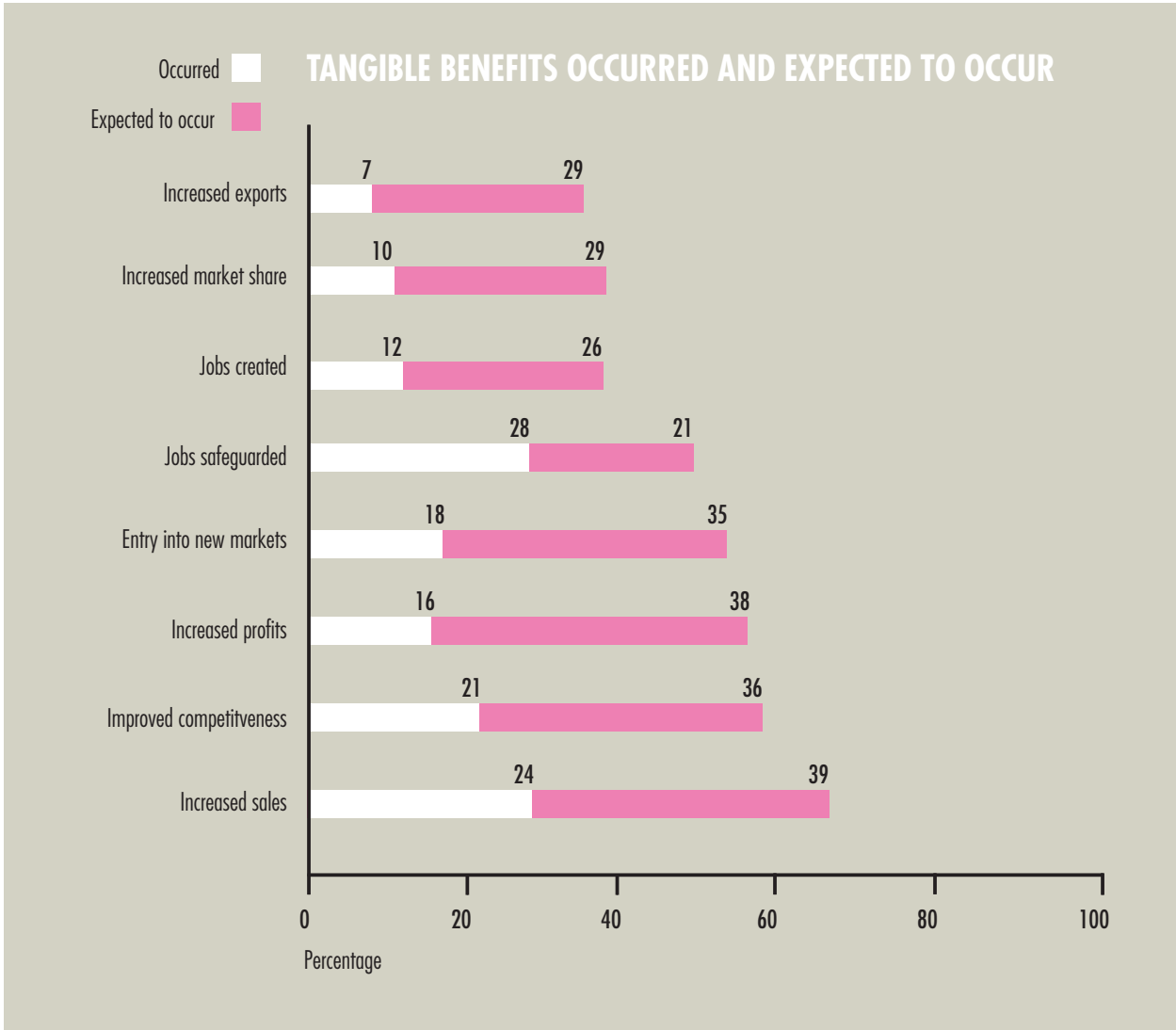


EVIDENCE OF A GOOD LEVEL OF TANGIBLE OUTCOMES ACROSS A RANGE OF PERFORMANCE METRICS

Without the support of the university-led projects, a third of businesses believed that the design work would not have taken place at all. In addition, there is evidence of direct, tangible benefits being realised by businesses, particularly in relation to sales and competitiveness. However, it is important to consider the time lag between the support provided and the impacts being realised.

PROJECTS EFFECTIVELY RAISE DESIGN AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Intangible benefits were particularly evident among businesses engaged. For example 80% of businesses agreed that university-led design projects had effectively raised their awareness and understanding of the importance of design.



BENEFICIARY BUSINESSES AND PRIVATE SECTOR DESIGN SUPPORT

Of the beneficiary businesses, 84% stated that as a result of their involvement with one of the case study projects the likelihood of them working with a university again in the future had increased and for just over a third (36%) the probability of using a private sector designer had increased. Of the non-beneficiary businesses, 25% stated that they were likely to use the private sector for design support and 18% were likely to use a West Midlands university. However, almost two thirds (64%) of non-beneficiary businesses would be interested in becoming more aware of the design support available within universities.

LACK OF AWARENESS OF UNIVERSITY DESIGN SUPPORT

The biggest barrier to university engagement was a lack of knowledge among non-beneficiary businesses as to what universities offer. Although almost half (48%) of non-beneficiary businesses agreed that their business faced design-related issues, over two-thirds (67%) were unaware local universities offered design support services. In addition, it may be noted that a low proportion (2%) of beneficiaries engaged with universities via their website. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries agreed that email was the most effective way for universities to engage with businesses (46%).

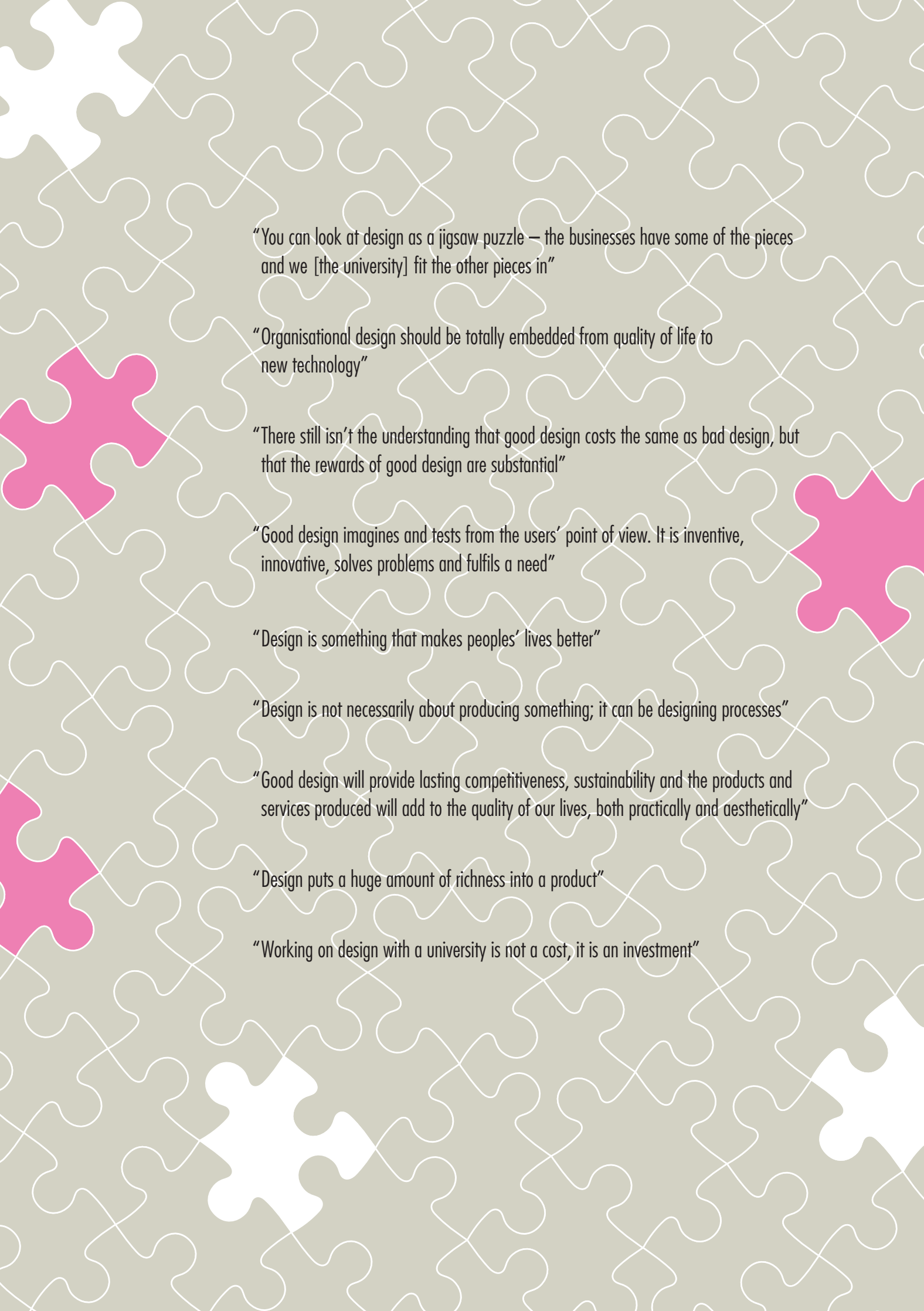
RECOGNITION THAT DESIGN PROVIDES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES IN THE FUTURE

Across all businesses surveyed, 58% see design as providing their business with competitive advantages over the next 12 months. However, there continues to be a need to encourage the remaining businesses to recognise the value of design.

BUSINESS LINK OR UNIVERSITIES ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE USED FOR FUTURE BUSINESS SUPPORT

Businesses are most likely to use Business Link (29%) in the future for business support, followed by universities (23%). This is a positive finding, particularly in light of the Business Support Simplification Programme, which will require all business support to go through Business Link. Moreover, as universities appear to rely heavily on word-of-mouth for referrals, there is a

need to effectively manage reputation and ensure that they are well positioned within the regional business support structure. A good third of businesses, however, anticipated not seeking any business support whatsoever (29% of beneficiaries and 38% of non-beneficiaries), a trend particularly predominant among larger businesses.



“You can look at design as a jigsaw puzzle — the businesses have some of the pieces and we [the university] fit the other pieces in”

“Organisational design should be totally embedded from quality of life to new technology”

“There still isn’t the understanding that good design costs the same as bad design, but that the rewards of good design are substantial”

“Good design imagines and tests from the users’ point of view. It is inventive, innovative, solves problems and fulfils a need”

“Design is something that makes peoples’ lives better”

“Design is not necessarily about producing something; it can be designing processes”

“Good design will provide lasting competitiveness, sustainability and the products and services produced will add to the quality of our lives, both practically and aesthetically”

“Design puts a huge amount of richness into a product”

“Working on design with a university is not a cost, it is an investment”

CONTEXT

The context for this section is set by findings from the latest *Higher Education Business and Community Interaction* (HE-BCI) Survey (HEFCE, 2007), which found that West Midlands HEIs have a stronger focus on enterprise support than the national average and have developed a mature infrastructure for third stream and SME support. It also highlighted that HEIs are important actors in ‘regional networks’ and a strategic priority on developing ‘new services to industry’ illustrates the entrepreneurial and progressive nature of the West Midlands HEI sector.

Views on HE-led design support to businesses from the perspective of the West Midlands universities themselves have been sought. Face-to-face consultations were held with a total of 37 departmental and business development representatives from nine of the regional universities¹³. The remaining universities opted not to participate in this stage of the work, in part due to university representatives identifying a limited involvement in design support to businesses.

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These findings are based solely on the views of those consulted, and are not necessarily the views of their respective institutions.

“We have a lot of design experience but it is spread all over the place and we don’t know what is where”

DESIGN CUTS ACROSS MANY UNIVERSITY FACULTIES

Design cuts across many university faculties and as a result, it appears to be very difficult for universities, themselves, to fully grasp the extent of their design-related activity. This is accentuated by the fact that academics, or even universities, do not always recognise how their design knowledge and expertise can be applied to businesses. As a result, this raises issues around potential duplication and/or missed opportunities within universities.

DESIGN IS IMPLICIT WITHIN MOST HEI STRATEGIES

There is a tendency for corporate university strategies to have an implicit focus on design, with the exception of Coventry University which has a much more explicit emphasis. However, there is evidence to suggest that some university faculties are endeavouring to develop a strategic focus on design, but there are mixed views around the extent to which initiatives to raise the strategic profile of design within universities are working.

JOINED-UP DESIGN-RELATED WORKING WITHIN UNIVERSITIES CAN BE STRENGTHENED

There is some evidence of intra-university working around design across the West Midlands universities. Business Development Managers, although not specific to design, plus externally funded projects appear to be important drivers for stimulating joined-up working. However, many individuals rely on informal networks. Despite the cross-cutting nature of design and the increasing demand for multi-disciplinary design support, consultees emphasised that there needs to be far greater joined-up design-related working within the universities.

THE CAPACITY TO DELIVER DESIGN SUPPORT IS A BIG CHALLENGE FOR UNIVERSITIES

One of the biggest challenges facing universities seeking to deliver design support to businesses is capacity. In particular, effectively distributing time between teaching, research and business support remains a continuing challenge. Universities need to ensure that there is appropriate flexibility, plus scope to accommodate design support to businesses in a way that complements rather than hinders other university activities.

STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN STUDENT AND ACADEMIC STAFF INVOLVEMENT

West Midlands' universities have adopted a range of different approaches to delivering design support to businesses. Academic staff deliver consultancy design support to businesses, most commonly alongside their teaching commitments or on a part-time basis, but there are some instances whereby university staff focus entirely on the provision of design support to businesses.

Student placements/internships are also an integral part of many design-related courses and in addition, many universities incorporate ‘live projects’ into their courses to provide students with real business experiences. There is also a large number of design-related KTPs taking place in the West Midlands HEIs. One of the critical issues is the need to strike an appropriate balance between student and academic staff involvement in design support to businesses. Importantly, the approach adopted needs to ensure effective knowledge transfer.

“Universities need to be agile enough and quick enough to respond to business needs”

ADDRESSING GAPS IN THE MARKET AND BUILDING LONGER TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUSINESSES

University representatives recognised that in order to successfully work with businesses in the field of design, they need to identify a gap in the market. Building longer-term relationships with businesses was also cited as a key success factor. Other factors included an understanding of business requirements, the ability to respond to business deadlines, and the skills of the individuals offering design support. A number of key challenges were also cited. These included striking an appropriate balance between teaching and business support; recognising, both within and outside of the university, the value that HEIs can add to businesses; HEIs ability to meet commercial deadlines; and issues around intellectual property rights.

WORKING WITH MORE LARGER BUSINESSES

The type of businesses that universities have reported working with varies considerably, but common to all, is a tendency to work on design with SMEs. However, there is an increasing view within the universities that they would like to work with a greater number of larger businesses.

THE STRENGTHS OF INFORMAL LINKS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED

In many cases, university representatives stated that there were formal structures in place to engage businesses in design support, most commonly in the form of university-wide business units. However, with reference to design support, consultees highlighted mixed views around the effectiveness of formal

business engagement structures. Given the cross-cutting and complex nature of design, if universities are to develop this area of work, appropriate mechanisms need to be in place. Universities recognise a need to have a 'one-stop-shop' model to make their design offer more accessible to businesses but it will be critical that business development individuals have a good understanding of academics' expertise and how it can be applied to support businesses. Alongside these formal structures, it is important not to underestimate the strengths of informal links, for example through networking and events.

"It is about putting gates into the fence for both businesses and university staff"

SCOPE TO FURTHER EMBED PARTNERSHIP WORKING ACROSS WEST MIDLANDS UNIVERSITIES

On the whole, universities appear to be playing to their strengths in terms of design support to businesses. However, there is scope to further develop these opportunities. A fundamental issue is the ongoing challenge of understanding the expertise available within the universities. However, consultees feel that the design expertise across universities within the region is, on the whole, complementary. As a result, although there is already good evidence of university collaboration, consultees recognise that greater joined-up working across the West Midlands would be beneficial. In order to collaborate effectively with one another and to fit within the wider business support structure, it is important that universities continue to build on their expertise and avoid drifting into more generic design support. There are also a series of key challenges that need to be overcome, most notably time, resources and inter-university competition.

RATIONALE FOR UNIVERSITY-LED DESIGN SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES

Universities recognise that engaging with businesses can deliver significant benefits to their education and research offer. Consultees appreciate that knowledge transfer can be further enhanced and highlighted that universities can offer businesses a significant pool of resources and expertise to help generate new ideas and embed the design process. Given the nature of design, in respect of the uncertainty of outcomes, universities believe they can also they can also play an important rôle in helping businesses reduce risk.

AMBIGUITY AMONG UNIVERSITIES ABOUT THEIR RÔLE IN THE WIDER DESIGN SUPPORT PICTURE

Consultees commonly recognised that there is some ambiguity with regard to the rôle that universities play in the wider design support picture, particularly in relation to private sector provision. Some consultees believe that as long as universities are competing on a ‘level playing field’, there is no reason why they cannot operate in the same market as the private sector. Others believe that by operating in niche markets or generating a better understanding of the design process among businesses, universities are not directly competing with the private sector.

“Universities are currently reactive [to regional and local challenges] but they need to become the drivers”

MORE STRATEGIC APPROACHES NEEDED

Across all universities, a focus on increasing business engagement is evident. There also appears to be growing recognition within universities for the rôle of design. Looking forward, universities recognise a need to build upon their strengths and offer businesses unique expertise and knowledge. However, universities need to adopt a more strategic approach to identifying how they can most effectively contribute to regional design needs.

"DESIGN IS NOT THE POT OF GOLD AT THE END OF A RAINBOW BUT AN ENABLER"

"DESIGN = M.A.G.I.C. (MANAGING AND GENERATING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY)"

"ANYTHING A MAN HAS TOUCHED IS DESIGNED; IT MAY NOT BE GOOD DESIGN, BUT IT IS DESIGN"

"DESIGN IS A STYLE OF COMMUNICATION AND A MEANS OF DELIVERING A FUNCTION"

"DESIGN CAN TAKE OUT COST AND ADD VALUE"

"DESIGN IS THAT ADDITIONAL VALUE ADDED ELEMENT, WHICH IMBUES THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE WITH SOMETHING SPECIAL, OR APPEALING"

"DESIGN IS A TOOL TO APPLY CREATIVITY – IT IS PART OF THE INNOVATION PROCESS"

"LARGE FIRMS USE DESIGN TO DEFINE THE PROBLEM, NOT ADDRESS THE PROBLEM"

"DESIGN IS ONE COMPONENT OF A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS OPERATION"

"OFTEN DESIGN IS SEEN AS A SPECIALIST AREA BUT INCREASINGLY SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES SEE DESIGN AS STRATEGIC AND LONG TERM"

CAPTURING VIEWS

This section presents the key points and findings from strategic consultations involving senior representatives across a broad range of organisations. The consultations involved national bodies such as the Chartered Society of Designers and the Design Council; regional bodies such as AWM, Business Link West Midlands and the West Midlands Manufacturing Advisory Service and members of the Advancing by Design Steering Group, plus others. In total, 26 individuals were interviewed either by telephone or face-to-face interviews.

“Neglecting design is a recipe for failure but there still is a temptation not to focus on it”

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Businesses that reach the desired behavioural state of ‘designerliness’ recognise design as a strategic tool and adopt it as a key component of their business.

IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN STRONGLY ADVOCATED AND ARTICULATED

As champions of design in their respective organisations, stakeholders strongly advocated and articulated its imperatives and importance. But stakeholders were also realistic on the scale of the challenge to influence SMEs thinking towards realising the desired behavioural state of ‘designerliness’¹⁵.

ABSENCE OF A DESIGN STRATEGY FOR THE REGION

The absence of a design strategy for the region was noted and there was a general acceptance that there should be a long term plan. Furthermore, securing a robust regional response, to international (and regional) competitive threats, by articulating a coherent, inclusive design strategy for the West Midlands, strikes a chord with many stakeholders.

PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS FOR HEIs OF CHANGES TO THE REGIONAL BUSINESS SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The effects of changes to the regional business support structures will have profound implications for HEIs and there remains much scope for understanding the implications of this. Business Link West Midlands (BLWM) affords a number of opportunities for HEIs which need to be explored.

DESIGNING DEMAND WILL BE A DOMINANT BRAND IN THE DESIGN SUPPORT LANDSCAPE

Managed by Business Link, it is evident that Designing Demand will be a dominant brand in the design support landscape across the region and generally stakeholders believe it is a service which HEIs will need to complement.

ENSURING DESIGN IS DELIVERED TO A HIGH STANDARD

Raising the bar and ensuring design is delivered to high quality has become an essential ingredient of the business support offer to firms. This is likely to have implications for HEIs with the potential to work towards a structured design advisory competency framework.

“The pepper-potting of initiatives means that support in the region was sporadic and fragmented”

REGIONAL DESIGN SUPPORT LANDSCAPE IS CROWDED

Some observations were noted about the regional design support landscape, suggesting it to be a crowded market space with much scope for improvement. The absence of a business continuum was also suggested implying that the linkages and referral mechanisms for support are not as well ‘oiled’, as they should be, although collaborative work with the Manufacturing Advisory Services for the West Midlands (MAS-WM) points to success.

“HEIs need to be recognised as credible solution providers for all businesses, but too few businesses seek knowledge based solutions”

“There is a call to address these tensions with a healthy bias towards achieving a mutual understanding, acknowledgement and engagement across strategic and operational spheres – in essence a tripartite alliance between regional design providers, HEIs and users”

‘PARTICIPATION DEFICIT’ AMONG SMEs

The market understanding of design has improved, however many stakeholders cite the ‘participation deficit’ among SMEs, especially in relation to HEIs. It is noted that information and co-ordination market failures are being addressed with numerous schemes. However, although the market failures for design-led business support are well rehearsed, the jury is out as to whether the HEI sector should help correct them all.

PERCEIVED TERRITORIAL TENSIONS BETWEEN HEIs AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Perceived territorial tensions between HEIs and the private sector have been identified. There was a view held that HEIs are presenting themselves as professional consultancies and crowding out the small private sector practice, although this view is not ubiquitous. There appears to be a lack of consensus among stakeholders, with a clear difference of views as to the rôle of the HEI in enterprise orientated design support. For some stakeholders, the key contribution of universities is primarily related to the quality of teaching and research and the focus of business engagement should be to increase the quality of design graduates. Defining the HEI rôle appears to be a key task.

ISSUES CONFRONTING HEIs IN THEIR QUEST TO DELIVER GOOD DESIGN TO BUSINESS

The ‘usual suspects’ reveal themselves when stakeholders identify issues confronting HEIs in their quest to deliver good design to business. These include the challenge of performing to the client’s agenda; the challenge of communicating a credible offer; the challenge of organisational flexibility; the challenge of delivering projects and the challenge of possessing strategic intent.



THE REVIEW

This section provides an insight of both HEI and non HEI-led design interventions outside the West Midlands. A desk-based review of previous research¹⁴ into good practice in the delivery of HEI driven design-led interventions targeted at businesses and a series of telephone and face-to-face consultations were conducted, revealing a rich tapestry of design support services to provide lessons and points for consideration.

14
Design Wales, through consultations and the SEE Design Bulletin and Library of Good Design Support Practice, played a key rôle in informing this section.

HE-LED DESIGN SUPPORT TO ENTERPRISE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS APPEARS UNRIVALLED

This work has highlighted a lack of evidence of specific HEI-led design projects over and above the normal pattern of HEI activity. This suggests, from an initial observation at least, that the level, range and intensity of HE-led design support to enterprise in the West Midlands is unrivalled in the UK.

DESIGN SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IS STRENGTHENING IN COMPETITOR NATIONS

A growing number of countries, including those previously competing on cost alone, have shifted their emphasis towards design and incorporate design explicitly into their industrial and innovation policies. Design is seen by these nations as a critical factor for securing competitive advantage and competition will only intensify over the years.

EMPHASIS ON DESIGN IN THE UK REGIONS IS VARIABLE

There is a common agenda among the English Regional Development Agencies to progress the Designing Demand service in their respective regions. However there is patchy and

somewhat limited reference to design in many regional strategies and little explicit reference to the contribution and rôle of HEIs in this respect.

TEN CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The good practice review and consultations with practitioners points towards the emergence of ten critical success factors – factors that are important for design support services and which the HEI sector and other support organisations should take cognisance of, both in the design and also in the delivery of good quality design support to SMEs. The critical success factors are namely:

1

Using credible advisers – design expertise is critical and there should always be industry-based working experience.

2

Being flexible to market need – the focus should be on ensuring that the needs of the SME are addressed and not driven by the needs of the project. A multidisciplinary mind-set is key.

3

Balancing expectations with results – SMEs should be provided with a clear picture of resources and inputs and what is feasible in terms of outputs and outcomes.

4

Meeting the immediate demands of the company – understanding that client ‘wants’ need to be catered for as well as clear identification and satisfaction of client needs.

5

Providing sector specific programmes – these are generally more cost-effective and provide a better balance between value and volume.

6

Acknowledging that design support should be local – nationally prescribed programmes need to be flexible to local context and conditions.

7

Demonstrating and showcasing design support – this should include demonstration and showcasing for clients, since they learn from it, but also demonstration for other companies.

8

Networking with the wider business support and design infrastructure – referrals can be more important than promotion.

9

Delivering within the context of a design policy – design interventions should work on market failure and have a strategy that provides clarity of vision, goals and rôle.

10

An appropriate balance between **Design Promotion + Design Support + Design Education and Research** should be achieved.

S	T	R	E	N	G	T	H	S	S	I	O	N	N
T	S	T	A	W	A	R	E	N	E	S	S	O	P
R	N	E	P	R	I	V	A	T	I	H	I	C	J
A	F	G	N	S	E	C	T	E	R	T	R	L	A
T	E	N	S	I	O	N	S	B	A	O	E	U	N
E	R	C	N	E	L	B	N	R	W	P	G	D	E
G	O	R	E	G	E	R	O	D	O	S	E	Y	S
Y	L	O	T	D	S	B	E	N	E	F	I	T	S
N	E	W	O	E	A	D	K	N	I	L	D	I	A
R	S	S	T	L	P	R	E	N	G	I	O	E	D
R	T	P	L	W	E	S	E	O	R	I	T	E	T
W	I	O	R	O	T	S	E	C	T	O	S	T	R
S	C	A	W	N	N	L	A	N	O	I	G	E	R
A	W	G	N	K	T	R	O	L	I	C	R	O	D

SYNTHESIS

The findings across all elements of the research have been synthesised in order to compile the key conclusions emerging from this study.

MANY INTERPRETATIONS OF DESIGN ARE EVIDENT

The design formulation proposed in the *Cox Review* (Cox, 2005) provides a useful working framework, but this present study has highlighted that many alternative interpretations exist. As a result, there is evidence to suggest that there may be difficulties recognising design-related opportunities within some universities and businesses.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN AS A TOOL FOR PROVIDING BUSINESSES WITH COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES IS OFTEN RECOGNISED BUT THERE IS STILL SOME WAY TO GO IN ORDER FOR SMEs IN THE WEST MIDLANDS TO REACH THE DESIRED BEHAVIOURAL STATE OF 'DESIGNERLINESS'

Strategic stakeholders, and to varying degrees the West Midlands universities, recognise the importance of design in business. Businesses in the West Midlands also appear to recognise that design is important to their success. However the business survey, supported by data gathered by the Design Council, found that a sizeable proportion identified that design does not have a rôle in their business. Sector Skills Council data also suggests that the West Midlands has a relatively small supply base for the design sector.

THERE IS EXTENSIVE, AND IN SOME CASES INNOVATIVE, UNIVERSITY-LED DESIGN SUPPORT ACTIVITY IN THE WEST MIDLANDS BUT IT IS, ARGUABLY, GENERATING A CROWDED AND SOMEWHAT CONFUSING PICTURE

There is a range of business facing design work taking place within the West Midlands universities, which includes a plethora of externally funded initiatives. However, the mapping exercise, supported by views from strategic stakeholders and businesses, suggests that a fairly confusing picture of design support exists in the West Midlands.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR DESIGN AT A REGIONAL LEVEL IS LACKING. UNIVERSITIES ALSO NEED TO ADOPT A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING HOW THEY CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL DESIGN NEEDS

The West Midlands does not have a regional design strategy in place. Although there is evidence of a strategic focus on design at faculty level within some universities, on the whole design is implicit within institution-wide strategies. Both the region and the universities need to adopt more strategic approaches in order to develop long term plans that can effectively contribute to regional design needs. For universities this could include more consideration for the sustainability of projects, greater application of specialist knowledge and expertise, more effective business engagement models, alignment with the West Midlands' clusters, and development of longer-term relationships with businesses.

THERE ARE PERCEIVED TERRITORIAL TENSIONS BETWEEN UNIVERSITY-LED AND PRIVATE SECTOR-LED DESIGN SUPPORT PROVISION. ON THE WHOLE, THERE IS RECOGNITION THAT THERE IS SCOPE FOR UNIVERSITIES TO BE INVOLVED IN DESIGN SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES BUT THEIR RÔLE NEEDS TO BE MORE CAREFULLY DETERMINED AND ARTICULATED

There is evidence to suggest that universities sometimes adopt a consultancy approach to supporting businesses. In part, this may be a reflection of externally funded projects that are heavily driven by economic output targets. However it is this approach, in particular, that often blurs the boundaries between university

and private sector-led design support. Whilst universities believe they have a fundamental rôle to play in supporting businesses, there are mixed views amongst strategic stakeholders. Many stakeholders do believe, however, that there is a rôle for universities to conduct work that industry does not have the time or inclination to do. In addition to this, university representatives feel that HEIs can encourage a greater appreciation and understanding of the design process within businesses, which is substantiated by findings from the business survey.

THERE IS SCOPE FOR MUCH GREATER PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL AND UNIVERSITY-LED DESIGN SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Strategic stakeholders believe that there is a rôle for private sector design champions to orchestrate a higher profile for design in the region. Moreover, increasing the level of partnership working between universities and private sector design agencies can help address the competitive tensions that exist within the region. There are a number of instances whereby universities are stimulating relationships with private sector design agencies. However, the business survey found that following university design support, businesses were more likely to return to universities for design support, as opposed to the private sector.

UNIVERSITIES NEED TO BUILD ON THEIR STRENGTHS AND ENABLE MORE EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

One of the key strengths of universities is their pool of knowledge. This is also acknowledged by businesses that have worked with universities. However, to date, partly as a result of capacity and funding constraints, the extent to which effective knowledge transfer has been taking place remains questionable, for example some externally funded projects appear to operate as autonomous structures from the main university and many employ project staff that do not have academic responsibilities. This can lead to weaker and less frequent cases of knowledge spillovers from design support to business activities into university educational and applied research work. Universities do recognise that there is scope to enhance knowledge transfer further and one of the key mechanisms is to embed business facing activities within academic faculties.

RAISING AWARENESS AND ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF UNIVERSITY-LED DESIGN SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY AMONG BUSINESSES, IS ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES

Among universities there is often a lack of knowledge as to the full extent of the design expertise available within their institution. This is in part considered to be due to the cross-cutting nature of design. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that the biggest barrier to businesses engaging with universities is a lack of awareness of the support offered. Once businesses have received design support from a university, their overall level of satisfaction is extremely high.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS BENEFITS OF UNIVERSITY-LED DESIGN SUPPORT BUT THEY ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY CAPTURED

The business survey has highlighted numerous benefits of university-led design support but perhaps more significant are those that are less tangible. For the universities, there are benefits to the curriculum. For businesses, one of the key strengths of university-led design support is that they are very much involved in the design process, thus stimulating a culture of change. It is clear, however, that there is a significant time lag between a business receiving the support and the benefits being acknowledged and unfortunately, these are not being effectively captured.

THERE IS GOOD EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT COLLABORATION AMONG UNIVERSITIES OF THE WEST MIDLANDS IS TAKING PLACE BUT THERE IS AN APPETITE TO FURTHER ENHANCE PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Universities of the West Midlands have already invested in a number of collaborative initiatives, however, notwithstanding challenges, such as competition, information gaps and resource constraints, university representatives highlighted potential to improve design-related collaboration. Echoing this view, strategic stakeholders also highlighted concern about the lack of a joined up approach among university-led projects and the absence of a business continuum in the West Midlands, which is particularly important given that a quarter of businesses benefiting from university-led projects were referred from other organisations. Key success factors for effective joined-up working are strong

leadership, a clear focus and mission, sufficient resources, and transparent working structures.

CHANGES TO REGIONAL BUSINESS SUPPORT STRUCTURES WILL HAVE PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES BUT THERE NEEDS TO BE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THEM AND EXPLORATION OF THE RÔLE FOR UNIVERSITIES WITHIN THEM

University-led business engagement around design appears to be increasing but there is some ambiguity among universities as to how, going forward, they can fit into the wider design support structures. Looking ahead, universities will need to stimulate an active dialogue with Business Link, particularly in respect of their rôle within the 'Solutions for Business' products, and how they can complement and add value to Designing Demand.

TWELVE POINT PLAN FOR ADVANCING BY DESIGN

- 1** West Midlands HEIs should play a key rôle in formulating and driving forward a dedicated and inclusive policy and strategy for design in the region
- 2** HEIs should contribute to the creation and development of a Business Design Forum for the West Midlands (BDF-WM)
- 3** HEIs should establish a University Design Network for the West Midlands (UDN-WM)
- 4** HEIs should promote design as a multi-disciplinary concept at both strategic and operational levels
- 5** HEIs should explore the creation of a multi-disciplinary centre(s)
- 6** HEIs should define their design for enterprise rôle and establish a design concordat with the private sector
- 7** HEIs should meet the design challenge inherent across the 13 Priority Clusters
- 8** HEIs should ensure that their design support services are consistent with the Solutions for Business brand and encourage design as a default input in approved schemes
- 9** HEIs should establish a dialogue with Business Link West Midlands
- 10** HEIs should actively engage with the Design Council, its initiatives and in particular complement inputs into Designing Demand
- 11** HEIs should ensure all third mission activities support education and research
- 12** HEIs should raise their design profile and strengthen their capacity to showcase design talent

FUTURE DESIGN SUPPORT

A twelve point design plan, outlining recommendations for future university-led design initiatives in the region, has been developed for *Advancing by Design*.

1 WEST MIDLANDS HEIs SHOULD PLAY A KEY RÔLE IN FORMULATING AND DRIVING FORWARD A DEDICATED AND INCLUSIVE POLICY AND STRATEGY FOR DESIGN IN THE REGION

West Midlands Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should collaborate with the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM), and other relevant bodies to address the strategic vacuum evident by the absence of a policy for design in the region. A long term plan of action is essential to enhance the economic contribution of design in the West Midlands. Any design policy formulation should take account of the HEIs design curricula, research and enterprise remit as well as the regional demand for design and supply side imperatives. It should articulate agreed and ambitious goals for the region identifying the contribution of all relevant agencies. The HE sector needs to be a strong advocate and actively involved in this process.

In order to drive forward this recommendation, and others set out here, the establishment of two new regional groups is also recommended – a business design forum and a university design network.

2 HEIs SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A BUSINESS DESIGN FORUM FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS (BDF-WM)

A private sector led forum should be created to act as the custodian of the regional design strategy. Galvanising credible, inspiring and motivated business champions and other key stakeholders in an ambitious design agenda will be a critical

success factor in spearheading a force for change within the region. A dynamic group of public and private sector champions across the region should help develop a 'campaign for design', lead an inclusive debate on design as well as build strategic intent and momentum embracing all interested parties.

3

HEIs SHOULD ESTABLISH A UNIVERSITY DESIGN NETWORK FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS (UDN-WM)

Collectively HEIs should be drivers for design advocacy through the establishment of the UDN-WM. This network should provide new impetus and focus to the work of the HE sector in design. Members should seek opportunities for links and the network should act as a vehicle for stimulating university to university design collaboration and joint working, including cross referrals, alongside the exploration of funding opportunities and identifying initiatives to support the regional design agenda. The network should also bring together the work of universities to regulate their design support programmes to avoid unhealthy competition and waste, to address the exacting standards set by business and to deliver services through high quality appropriately experienced and skilled staff. The *Advancing by Design* report shows that there is a range of innovative HEI-led design activities taking place within the region and the network could facilitate good practice knowledge exchange. EU initiatives encouraging the spreading of good practice should also be explored as a means of supporting such activity. The network could consider the merits of a wholly collaborative access point and depository harnessing knowledge about HEI-led design services. The UDN-WM should be in the vanguard of the West Midlands design strategy and act as a key driver for design advocacy through active engagement with the BDF-WM.

4

HEIs SHOULD PROMOTE DESIGN AS A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CONCEPT AT BOTH STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL LEVELS

To realise the full benefits and value to address real world problems, design needs to permeate the culture of HEIs as a multi-disciplinary activity. In most cases design is implicit within HEI corporate strategies but there is scope to raise the

profile of design, as a ‘cross cutting’ theme, at a corporate level within the HEIs. A strategic recognition will draw together the unique strengths and expertise of an HEI and stimulate greater cross-working and knowledge sharing within the institutions. It will also address the market demands for multi-disciplinary design support and every effort should be made within HEIs to commit to delivering these types of projects. Where appropriate, greater knowledge sharing and regular communication between technology transfer and business development offices and the art and design faculties may be required. Embedding business development managers within faculties or ensuring they are regularly engaged in faculty meetings can also go some way to addressing this. Key examples of multi-disciplinary design activities are the recently developed Health Design and Technology Institute at Coventry University and Service by Design at Birmingham City University.

5 HEIs SHOULD EXPLORE THE CREATION OF A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CENTRE(S)

West Midlands HEIs should consider the feasibility of creating multi-disciplinary centre(s) of excellence, where business, technology, design and science combine to provide a place where future regional business leaders can develop their creativity and gain the skills and methods to manage innovation. A task group should be convened involving AWM, the University Design Network and the Design Council to oversee the concept, explore its form and options and prepare the way forward for innovative and high profile West Midlands centre(s).

6 HEIs SHOULD DEFINE THEIR DESIGN FOR ENTERPRISE RÔLE AND ESTABLISH A DESIGN CONCORDAT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

A publicly funded focus on design should include HEIs engaging in design strategy and design management as well as promoting and enabling access to private sector support. Beyond education and research, HEIs should exploit their knowledge base, local, national and international contacts and leading edge thinking on design. They should catalyse design among enterprises and should ensure a strong case is made for the provision

by universities, of specialist design consultancy services not accessible or available through the private sector. This means ensuring HEIs maintain a high degree of specialism, differential advantage and adaptation to market forces in order to add value to industry. Their unique and special assets, competencies and talents should both complement private sector activity, and stimulate the take-up of it. A concordat between West Midlands HEIs and design bodies such as the Chartered Society of Designers, should set out principles of working together, as well as setting out the strategic design support parameters of HEIs which outline the links and relationships with the design profession.

7

HEIs SHOULD MEET THE DESIGN CHALLENGE INHERENT ACROSS THE 13 PRIORITY CLUSTERS

There is evidence across the region to suggest that some HEIs are already engaging with the Priority Clusters. Notwithstanding this, there should be a continuing commitment to identifying opportunities to apply design principles within the market and product growth plans inherent within the AWM clusters. A dialogue between the Head of Innovation and Clusters at AWM and each cluster manager and relevant HEI representatives should provide an opportunity to explore how universities can add value to each cluster *per se*, and more importantly, champion design in order to add value to the performance of firms operating within all clusters. The rôle of HEIs within all the cluster opportunity groups should also be explored.

8

HEIs SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEIR DESIGN SUPPORT SERVICES ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS BRAND AND ENCOURAGE DESIGN AS A DEFAULT INPUT IN APPROVED SCHEMES

The promise of significant change to the landscape of publicly funded business support has now been realised as the Business Support Simplification Programme is now going public under the Solutions for Business brand. This has led to the adoption of greater clarity and simplicity in the way business support is developed and made available to businesses. All publicly funded business support products, including those delivered through HEIs, must be consistent with the Solutions for Business product

portfolio. This means that future HEI-led design projects must fit into at least one of the 30 core products. There are a number of products in the new portfolio in which HEIs should have a rôle by providing support – KTPs, Networking for Innovation, Innovation Vouchers, Designing Demand and Innovation Advice and Guidance, all of which can address the use of design. Consequently, West Midlands HEIs should strengthen their involvement in these areas with a strong policy push and tackle design issues through these schemes. The sponsorship of dedicated design KTPs should also be a feature of the support provided by HEIs. West Midlands HEIs should maximise the design leverage from these generic business support services and develop their capacity to deliver through this increasingly important referral source. Finally, West Midlands HEIs should work with AWM to identify how future value-added design support interventions can be supported within the new portfolio.

9

HEIs SHOULD ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE WITH BUSINESS LINK WEST MIDLANDS

The market failure case for public intervention in business support has been substantiated however the rôle of HEIs in addressing this must not conflict, but also remain consistent with business support services delivered by other publicly funded bodies. The West Midlands HEIs should establish a dialogue with Business Link West Midlands (BLWM) and explore opportunities for the following:

- Awareness raising and knowledge sharing with BLWM business advisers
- Executing business diagnostics on behalf of BLWM
- Contributing towards encouraging businesses to take up available support services
- Registering on the supplier database as a BLWM solution provider
- Register all design support services on the BLWM knowledge bank

Additionally, HEIs should seek to liaise with KTP Advisers, managed by the Technology Strategy Board.

10

HEIs SHOULD ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH THE DESIGN COUNCIL, ITS INITIATIVES AND IN PARTICULAR COMPLEMENT INPUTS INTO DESIGNING DEMAND

HEIs should harness their relationship with the Design Council, to be a key partner in the region's quest to promote the benefits of design. They should strive to explore and test with the Design Council HEI-led design support innovations, and explore a strong case for complementary initiatives to the nationally prescribed. Designing Demand programme. West Midlands HEIs should liaise with BLWM to explore their rôle in the raising of design awareness and design alertness among businesses in the West Midlands as well as explore a delivery rôle in aspects of the Designing Demand service, including both the 'Immerse' and 'Innovate' elements.

11

HEIs SHOULD ENSURE ALL THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES SUPPORT EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

West Midlands HEIs should ensure that third mission activities complement their education and research activities. If this is achieved, the sustainable benefits derived from externally funded HEI-led design support projects will have much greater longevity; KTPs are a good model. There should be a demonstrable loop back – ensuring knowledge spillovers from design support to enterprises into design education and applied design research activities. The benefits of HEI design support services to enterprise should be effectively captured and add value to achieve more market focused graduates and applied research. Where stand alone business design support units exist, often through being very project-focused, every effort needs to be made to ensure that they effectively link to design schools or academic faculties. In all cases, the merits of embedding design support projects within academic faculties as a means of ensuring strong academic links and stimulating effective knowledge transfer should be considered.

12

HEIs SHOULD RAISE THEIR DESIGN PROFILE AND STRENGTHEN THEIR CAPACITY TO SHOWCASE DESIGN TALENT

There is evidence of HEIs showcasing their design expertise and this should continue and be strengthened. Showcasing provides a valuable way of raising awareness, of other HEIs, regional stakeholders and businesses, to the design expertise available within HEIs. Playing to their strengths, HEIs can take a key rôle in showcasing the process of design, from problem to solution, and building relationships with key regional partners can help to achieve this through either physical or virtual means. West Midlands HEIs should adopt a more strategic approach to considering their rôle at regional and national events. They should also explore the potential for developing their own events for showcasing HEI design work similar to, for example, the Festival of Innovation. The importance of local showcasing should also not be overlooked and would be particularly successful in areas such as the Jewellery Quarter where industry clusters exist.

LEAD UNIVERSITY**PROJECT**

Various

Contact KE

Aston University

Index Vouchers

University of
Birmingham

Medici

Birmingham City University

Design Knowledge Network (DKN)
EnviroINNOVATE II
Jewellery Industry Innovation Centre (JIIC)
Midlands by Design
Net Infinity
Service by Design

Coventry University

Design4Advantage
Design4Entrepreneurs
Design Hub
Design Institute
Health Technology Design Institute (HDTI)Staffordshire
UniversityThe Creative Village
Different by DesignUniversity of
WarwickDigital Lab
European Union (EU) Small and Medium Sized (SME) Development Programmes
Healthtech
Innovation Direct
National B2B, including the West Midlands Mobile and Wireless Project
Polymer Clusters
West Midlands Collaborative Commerce MarketplaceUniversity of
WolverhamptonBlack Country Business Start (BCBS)
Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education (SPEED)
West Midlands Technology Network (WMTN)

University of Worcester

Digital Arts Centre
Motion Analysis Rehabilitation and Research Centre (MARRC)

ANNEX A: UNIVERSITY DESIGN PROJECTS

The full list of projects captured in the mapping exercise (conducted in 2008) is set out in the table on the left. These projects either focus entirely on offering design support to businesses or include a significant element of design support. They are all grant-aided, defined here as external public sector funded, which is additional to regular HEFCE funding for teaching and research.

S	T	R	E	N	G	T	H	S	S	I	O	N	N
T	S	T	A	W	A	R	E	N	E	S	S	O	P
R	N	E	P	R	I	V	A	T	I	H	I	C	J
A	F	G	N	S	E	C	T	E	R	T	R	L	A
T	E	N	S	I	O	N	S	B	A	O	E	U	N
E	R	C	N	E	L	B	N	R	W	P	G	D	E
G	O	R	E	G	E	R	O	D	O	S	E	Y	S
Y	L	O	T	D	S	B	E	N	E	F	I	T	S
N	E	W	O	E	A	D	K	N	I	L	D	I	A
R	S	S	T	L	P	R	E	N	G	I	O	E	D
R	T	P	L	W	E	S	E	O	R	I	T	E	T
W	I	O	R	O	T	S	E	C	T	O	S	T	R
S	C	A	W	N	N	L	A	N	O	I	G	E	R
A	W	G	N	K	T	R	O	L	I	C	R	O	D

SOLUTIONS

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