

Abbey Kelsey, Schools and Colleges Project Officer for Venture Matrix explains how the programme benefits students from the University, as well as from local schools.

'Venture Matrix was a response to the need, recognised a few years ago, that students would value more practical yet relevant work-related learning experiences within their course. Students can no longer expect a degree to get them those competitive jobs that they want. It started very small and has evolved over time. Although it began primarily for our students, and still has that at its heart – giving students employability skills and everything needed to become work ready – it has developed into a community hub. It gives back to the local community through our students' expertise, knowledge and an enthusiasm to be part of this city region. They may come to this university from other parts of the country but they want to be part of Sheffield. We hope Venture Matrix improves our students' employability, but also gives something back to schools, colleges, charities, social enterprises and businesses in the local area. It's mutually beneficial.'

'My role is to engage with schools and colleges and other educational institutions across the city, to help place our students on a short-term project, which they can complete as part of an assignment. It's not just doing assessed work in a different setting but about our students giving something back - working with and inspiring young people across the city. That's why it works so nicely in schools and colleges. Young people get to find out about what university students are doing and learning about their journey to where they are now.'

'We do work with a lot of primary schools as well. The youngest group we've worked with were about 4-5 years old. I think it's important to offer project-based learning opportunities with schools from an early age to give pupils not only a different learning experience but to engage with university students and have the chance to ask them questions about their route into university.'

Sheffield Hallam University



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‘Venture Matrix fits in the Sheffield Enterprise Pipeline so well because it’s part of a module on a course. It’s not a piece of voluntary work. What students really value is that it gives them much more experience and depth to the work they are studying on the module. They choose to do it because it gives them that real life experience, testing what they really know about their subject as they impart the knowledge they have learned. It may be a challenge for them, but it teaches our students a lot about who they are.’

‘The majority of students who sign up to do a school project are not from degree routes that would not normally engage with young people. Many students are from the Sheffield Business School or the faculty of Arts, Computing, Engineering and Science. So, when they sign up, they come to me a little bit anxious about going back into a school setting with young people. It can be very daunting. I have to give many of them a bit of encouragement and motivation. We don’t hide the fact that it’s a challenge, but they are transformed over the journey. They learn so much about themselves and what they can achieve, which they may not have had the opportunity to do so without participating in Venture Matrix.’

‘Particularly with the BiG Challenge, we find our students from the less business-oriented degree routes, such as the Social Sciences and Humanities, really do feel the pressure because it has a business and enterprise focus. But, by creating a sense of community among the students, they support one another, allowing them to give a quality service to the schools with which they’re working. English students, for example, can help the Marketing students guide children about the report they have to write as part of the challenge.’

