



Norwich University of the Arts has developed a pioneering approach to promoting arts, design and media to the business community, resulting in an employability strategy closely tailored to the sorts of creative careers that its students want.

The vehicle to achieve this known as ideasfactory@NUA, a bespoke commercial agency within the university that undertakes commissions across all disciplines for genuine clients. In the academic year 2012-2013, these included: a design strategy for the Norfolk Museums Service; animations used at the Latitude Festival; brand identity development for digital imaging company FXHOME; and a sculpture for housing developers Persimmon.

For each project, a team of students is set up under the agency's business director, drawing on creative input from academic experts. Commercial partners are thus assured of professional on-cost, on-budget results, with student teams overseen by highly experienced mentors.

The success of ideasfactory@NUA has helped to attract a £1.5 million grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and £200,000 from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. The money will be used to construct an incubation centre and hub that will further the agency's work, stimulate the regional economy and contribute an estimate 200 high-value jobs in 2020.

Even more significant is the impact of ideasfactory@NUA on students, many of whom have launched prestigious design careers on the back of the agency's projects. Boosting the university's employability rate to 92%.

"Norwich University of the Arts has developed an innovative and professional programme for engaging with the business community", said Shearer West, head of the Humanities Division at the University of Oxford and one of our judges, "with positive outcomes for all those involved."