Can edtech start-ups solve the biggest challenges faced by UK universities?

Sue Attewell & Shinaz Navas
We spoke to 50+ senior leaders across the HE sector
Our interviewees represented vast diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Size</strong></th>
<th><strong>Income base</strong></th>
<th><strong>Specialism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Channel</strong></th>
<th><strong>Campus type</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;100,000 students</td>
<td>35% research income</td>
<td>Many various disciplines</td>
<td>Majority on-campus</td>
<td>City-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;10,000 students</td>
<td>0.3% research income</td>
<td>Few chosen disciplines</td>
<td>Fully online</td>
<td>Campus-based</td>
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We found resounding alignment in the overarching key priorities for university senior leaders

1. **Delivering the best, most equitable student experience**
   - Learning analytics and personalisation
   - Alternative forms of assessment
   - Seamless digital learning environment

2. **Enhancing student employability and career outcomes**
   - Employer mentoring at scale
   - Curriculum co-design with employers
   - Developing student entrepreneurship

3. **Expanding reach across more (and more diverse) students**
   - Scaling online learning and digital credentials
   - Enhancing university reputation and rankings
   - Boosting direct engagement with prospective students

4. **Transforming digital and physical infrastructure**
   - Establishing seamless systems integration
   - Adopting enterprise wide cloud technology
   - Optimising use of space

5. **Recruiting, retaining and developing world class staff**
   - Continuous and on-demand training
   - Embedding a collaborative culture and agile ways of working
   - Clear signposting for academics and staff
### Why is this priority important?

- **Record levels** of domestic and global **competition**
- **Persistent gaps** in **continuation** and **attainment**
- **Rising prevalence** of **mental health** issues

### How can this priority be achieved?

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<tr>
<th>Learning analytics and personalisation</th>
<th>Alternative forms of assessment</th>
<th>Seamless digital learning environment</th>
<th>Improved student navigation</th>
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### What are the barriers that need to be overcome?

- Multiple disparate systems leading to inaccurate data
- Limited diversity in the university workforce and leadership teams
- Disengagement from students, particularly those who spend less time on campus
The prevalence of mental health issues have risen rapidly in recent years

Source: 2020 Parliament briefing paper - Support for students with mental health issues in higher education in England
Start-ups have risen to the challenge in supporting universities to improve their student experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transforming student feedback at Swansea University</th>
<th>Embedding social learning at Coventry University</th>
<th>Going paper-less at the University of Roehampton</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swansea University</td>
<td>Coventry University</td>
<td>University of Roehampton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prifysgol Abertawe</td>
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<td>London</td>
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Enhancing student employability and career outcomes was the second most commonly cited priority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is this priority important?</th>
<th>Average student debt levels of c. £50,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employer skills shortages costing £4.4bn per year</td>
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<td>Rising government pressure to focus on skills</td>
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<th>How can this priority be achieved?</th>
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<td>Course co-creation with employers</td>
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<td>Consistent career support across full student lifecycle</td>
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<td>Increased student entrepreneurship opportunities</td>
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<th>What are the barriers that need to be overcome?</th>
<th>Organisational silos between career services and academic faculties</th>
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<td>Lack of career readiness at university entry</td>
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<td>Social stigma towards vocational education in the UK</td>
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Student debt has grown exponentially in recent years, leading to greater demand for value for money.

*2019 parliament briefing: student loan statistics*
Start-ups around the world have already started to have a significant impact on student career outcomes.

- Establishing virtual internships at Aston University

- Enabling seamless access to career opportunities at Stanford University

- Scaling project-based learning at the University of Toronto
Questions and answers
Thank you

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