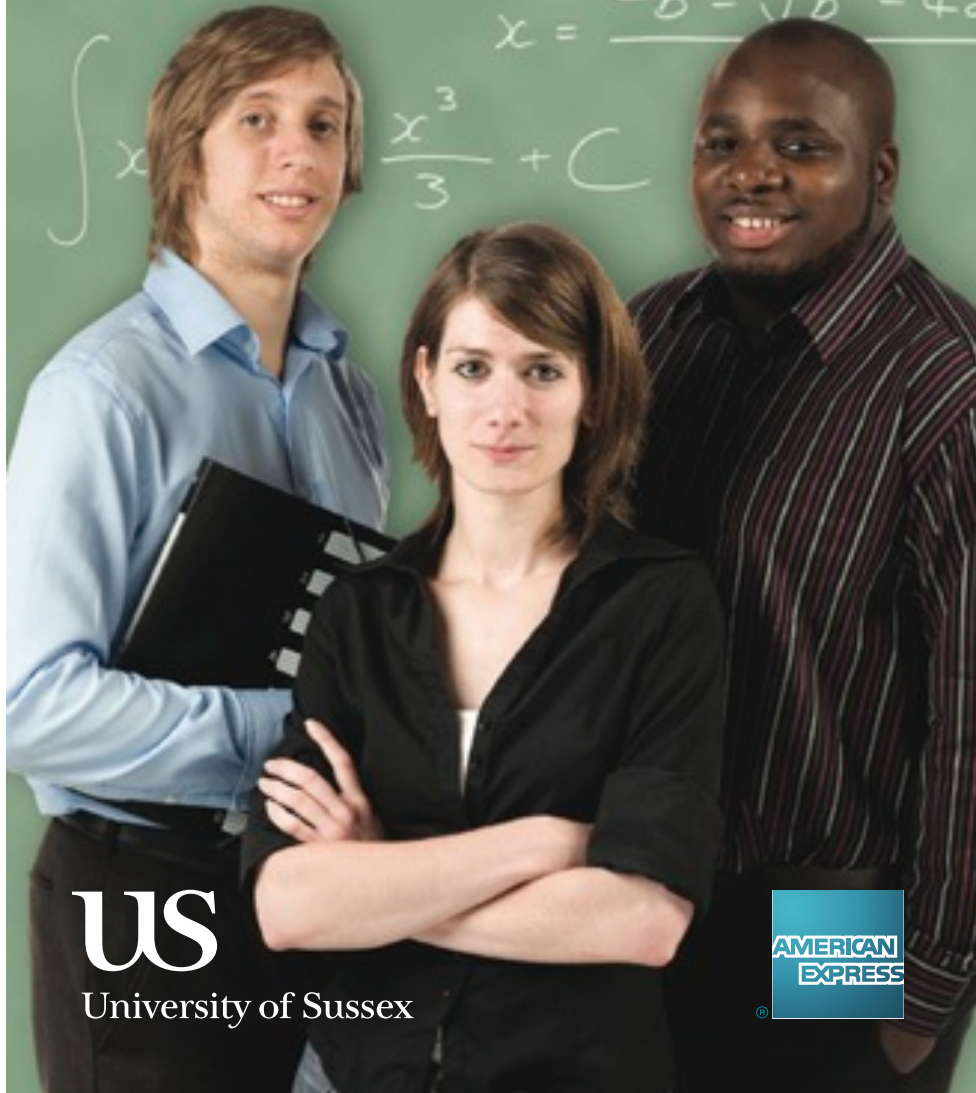


University of Sussex

# Create a talent pipeline for your business



Through the Sussex Talent Pipeline service, the University of Sussex will align a two-year, part-time Masters programme to your business which will allow you to intensively train, test and ultimately recruit the brightest and best graduates who fit straight into your workforce.

The model is unique, flexible to your needs and it works.



American Express Masters graduate Lizzie Brown



Sussex has a long history of world-leading research, and the exchange of that knowledge between the University and the business community is at the heart of the institution.

In partnership with our Talent Pipeline service, each year for the last six years American Express has supported 30 graduates through an IT Masters programme. During that time the graduates work part-time for the company, gaining valuable hands-on experience alongside their academic studies. The students are eligible to apply to the company for permanent positions after graduation.

**The Sussex Talent Pipeline can offer your company:**

- Highly skilled new graduates who bring entrepreneurialism and passion into the business.
- New graduates who understand your company completely – no need for lengthy induction periods.
- Integrated work placements that allow you to assess employability from the outset – you can be sure whoever you select is the perfect recruit.
- Flexible course content tied into the changing needs of your business – your new staff will keep you one step ahead of the competition.
- A single point of contact between you and the University to provide easy access to world-leading teacher/researchers.

**Sharon Phillips**  
**Head of Business and Enterprise**  
**University of Sussex**



**A leading research university:**  
**Sussex is in the top 5 per cent of universities in the world**  
**Top 8 in the UK**  
**Top 16 in Europe**  
**Top 79 in the world**  
 Times Higher Education Supplement – World University Rankings 2010



**Creating the programme**

American Express was looking to strengthen its recruitment in the technology sector and assure a pipeline of talented new employees.

**Why American Express chose Sussex:**

- The University offered the ideal combination of expertise in IT and a richly diverse student population.
- Existing MSc courses were a good fit for the specification of learning content which American Express had drawn up.
- The University also features a flourishing Innovation Centre which afforded the company and students various benefits including regular interaction with creative, entrepreneurial SMEs.

**What are the goals for the employer?**

American Express gains a pool of creative and talented individuals, the ability to assess the suitability of potential employees over an extended period, and a recruitment pipeline.

**Results**

- 128 graduates have been recruited onto the programme since 2003.
- An average of 15 new graduates are recruited into the programme each year.
- 60-70 per cent of the graduates who have completed the programme have been placed into permanent positions with American Express; 85-90 per cent of those are still with the organisation.
- Around 10 graduates have relocated within the company to other regions (e.g. New York and Sydney).
- More of these graduates progress quickly into more senior roles at American Express. These positions often require people leadership skills, budget management, and project/programme management skills.

**On-site learning**

In addition to their studies, graduates are also assigned to a project team within the Technologies department of American Express. Role types include project management, business analysis, technical development and programming. During that time the graduates rotate into different technology teams to experience working across the diverse range of American Express businesses.



‘The programmes have been more valuable to the company than any of us could have anticipated’.

Nigel Greenwood,  
Vice President - International Consumer  
Services Technologies

## **Nigel Greenwood, Vice President - International Consumer Services Technologies**

### **What was the problem?**

We have very high staff retention at American Express, a 20-30 year tenure is not uncommon but, as great as that is, it's also important for us to have new ideas and keep up to date with new technologies through new recruits. What we needed was an effective talent pipeline for the future.

That's why we've engaged with the University of Sussex, because getting that talent pipeline together and working was fundamentally important for our future. What we've achieved with Sussex is no ordinary graduate recruitment system: the flexibility and specificity we've been able to incorporate into the programmes has made the impact far broader and more valuable to the company than any of us could have anticipated.

### **What is the value of the relationship to American Express?**

We are creating a pipeline for new talent, attracting graduates from numerous universities across the UK and via Sussex who provide the teaching of the MSc programmes. We have access to research and innovation facilities, which our graduates and other employees can utilise and bring to the workplace. This complements the American Express innovation culture and brings together academia and industry, a partnership that is not always considered viable. American Express and Sussex have been very successful in making this work.

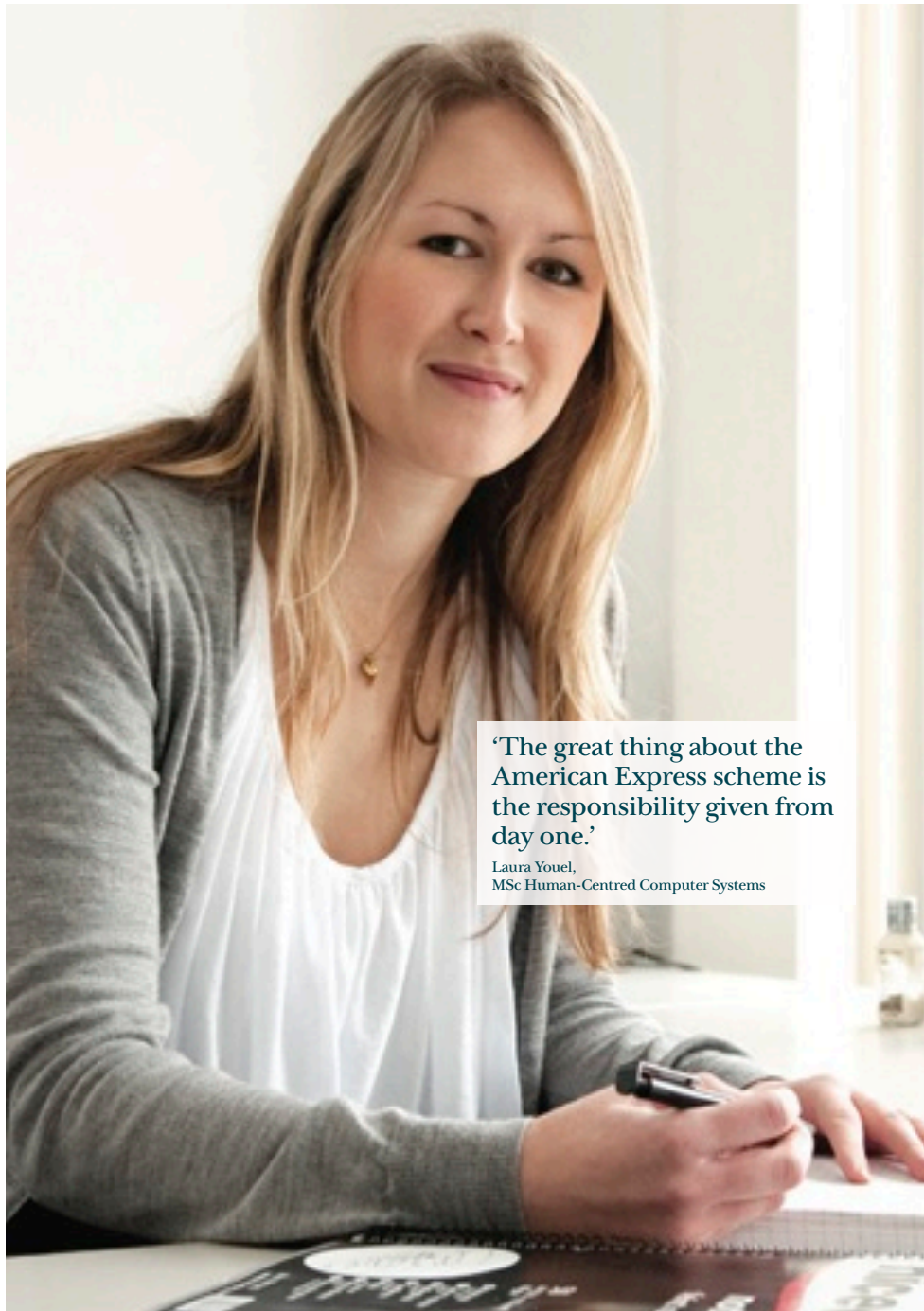
### **How does it work?**

We have worked very closely with Sussex from the start, planning the course content so that we can tailor it to the needs of the business. Sussex staff have always been receptive to incorporating our suggestions and changes. Both American Express graduates and the direct entrant students on these courses have benefited from these changes. We recently complemented our existing MSc courses with two new relevant additions.

Many other organisations are interested in what we've managed to achieve with our partnership with Sussex, and I see no reason why other organisations can't do something very similar.

### **What does this mean for your company?**

- **Keep up to date with new technologies**
- **Access to research and innovation facilities**
- **New recruits from all over the world**
- **Courses tailored to your needs**



**‘The great thing about the American Express scheme is the responsibility given from day one.’**

Laura Youel,  
MSc Human-Centred Computer Systems

#### Tell us about yourself

#### Why did you choose the American Express sponsored Masters programme?

#### What happens now?

#### **Laura Youel, MSc Human-Centred Computer Systems**

I'm 25, originally from London and came to the University of Sussex in October 2005 as an undergraduate to study Artificial Intelligence. I gained my Bachelor's degree with first class honours in July 2008.

I wanted to do further study on Human Computer Interaction. I was originally looking at universities in London but then spotted the American Express graduate scheme and was very interested in getting sponsorship to complete a Masters degree (MSc Human-Centred Computer Systems) whilst gaining experience in a corporate environment.

I was worried about completing a Masters only to be told I was 'over-qualified but under-experienced' – the American Express Master's scheme negates that risk and having it paid for was a huge benefit!

I started my Masters in September 2008 and had lots of opportunities to apply the knowledge gained on the Masters course while I'm working at American Express and vice-versa.

The great thing about the scheme is the responsibility we are given from day one. Each graduate is placed in a project team in the Technologies department and given the same level of work and responsibility that would be expected from any other employee. During my time on the course I presented to senior leadership on multiple occasions, and had significant input on the strategic direction of several multi-million pound projects.

I've now gained a permanent position at American Express as a Business Analyst, working on Mobile Technology for the Strategy and Innovation group.

#### What does this mean for your company?

- **Top-flight graduates**
- **Dedicated learners**
- **Staff able to take on responsibility from day one**
- **Flexible, knowledgeable and enthusiastic employees**



### Turning your staff into entrepreneurs

Each year a selection of the graduates on the course take part in the Enterprisers programme. Established by the Cambridge-MIT Institute in 2002, the Enterprisers programme is run by the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning at Cambridge University. It is an educational experience that builds self-confidence, unlocks creativity and creates meaningful relationships between individuals who are, through their choosing, our future leaders.

The American Express relationship with Sussex has unlocked the opportunity for participation in the programme. Sussex has established a long-standing relationship with Enterprisers, and the University's Business and Enterprise team act as facilitators.

Since 2006, American Express has sponsored 25 places on the programme for their Masters students studying at Sussex. Many of these have continued to develop their coaching skills by returning to facilitate on 12 subsequent programmes.

Each programme involves at least 80 people, a range of organisations, one week anywhere in the world and lots of energy! With more than 1,000 students participating so far, a large international alumni network has emerged and over 45 entrepreneurial ventures are being pursued.



### Strategic Developments

The University is constantly aware of the need to understand the drivers in our clients' worlds and has become practised at developing ways to adapt to and meet the demands of their ever-changing economic and business needs.

“ We are always open to amendments to our approach. During the academic year 2009/10 we have offered a broader portfolio of masters degrees, to incorporate the innovation agenda as well as the technology agenda. This also assists in widening the talent pipeline into American Express in the longer term.

We are currently exploring how the Masters dissertation can combine academic rigour coupled with the satisfaction of business need and business solutions.

**Sharon Philips,  
University of Sussex**



### We're an integral part of the economic development of Sussex and the Southeast

Through our Business and Enterprise office, we offer:

- consultancy for leading-edge research – practical expertise and access to a range of technology, scientific and engineering facilities
- people development – including opportunities for continued professional development
- training needs analysis and business brokerage
- entrepreneurship training
- short- and long-term project work opportunities for current students and graduates.

Our Sussex Innovation Centre provides excellent facilities for more than 70 high-growth companies working within the IT, biotech, media and engineering sectors.

Conference Services offer a suite of eight conference rooms all year round in the Conference Centre, accommodating from 10 to 220 people.

### Thinking of creating your own talent pipeline?

Get in touch with our dedicated Enterprise team, who will introduce you to our wide range of business services, and help you recruit the talent of tomorrow.

Call 01273 877800 or email [business@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:business@sussex.ac.uk) to find out more.

**US**  
University of Sussex