‘AN MBA PROVIDES YOU WITH POWERFUL TOOLS’

Now in its third year, Henley Business School’s MBA for Music and Creative Industries has received a lot of positive feedback from the sector. Here, programme director Helen Gammons explains how it was launched, what it entails and what the plans are for the future.

**EDUCATION**

By Murray Stassen

Henley Business School was invited into the music industry in 2011 after it was approached by Helen Gammons, now the MBA for Music and Creative Industries programme director, and a group of other senior executives from across the sector. The MBA was then launched in 2012 and in the last three years has attracted significant interest from the sector. It also has a strong advisory board of industry executives including Jo Dipble, CEO of UK Music; Vick Bain, CEO of BASCA (and a Henley alumnus); Simon Napier Bell and Nigel Elderton, President of Peermusic Europe, amongst others.

“The industry had gone through a significant amount of change and disruption over a number of years and we felt that there was a need for the sector to offer education at a more senior level,” says Gammons. “The sector had [mostly] been focused on undergraduates and apprenticeships, [and we felt] middle to senior executives needed a home as well. Somewhere that could be a trusted partner to develop programmes and content, and engage with the industry on an on-going basis.

“Without the forward-thinking and innovative Professor John Board, the Dean of Henley Business School, this programme would never have got off the ground,” adds Gammons. “It has helped that he has a great love of music and has also been generous enough to mentor me in my role. He has been incredibly supportive throughout. I really don’t think other business schools would have done it.”

The MBA is designed for middle to senior execs across small, medium and large organisations with at least three to five years’ business experience. A degree is not required for entry, but applicants do need to demonstrate their experience. The programme is described as an ‘MBA plus’ because students take the core MBA alongside all other business sectors at Henley, with the Music and Creative Industries intake then attending bespoke workshop days and talks by specialist industry speakers. The programme’s third intake will be welcomed to Henley this March and applications are still open for anyone looking to participate.

“We only offer the MBA in one format, which is the flexible executive MBA,” says Gammons. “It is designed for people that are working full time and who are in fairly high pressure jobs, so that they are able to manage the work. The programme runs over 30 months. It sounds long, but when you’re working, that time goes quickly. You come on site for three days a quarter. So that’s all manageable. You do reading and distance learning in between and then you come on site for the quarterly modules.”

Gammons has worked in the music industry for over 30 years and brings a wealth of experience to Henley and the MBA programme. “The amount of time I’ve put into the work at Henley just reflects my passion for the music industry,” she says. “I’ve held some exciting jobs, covering radio plugging, label management, music publishing as creative director, writer/producer management, studio owner, production company director, as well as working with start-ups all the way through to corporate floatations. The music industry has been the only sector I’ve worked in consistently since I was 17.”

She remains a music publisher today and is the author of The Art Of Music Publishing - An Entrepreneurs Guide, as well as the owner of Rotolight.com, a multiple award-winning LED
SMALL GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU ARE AN SME OWNER

There are individuals and companies that are keen to up-skill but can’t necessarily afford to undertake an MBA. Henley makes its courses more accessible through financial support in the form of loans, scholarships and grants for SME owners as well as a limited number of bursaries.

“Henley has been tremendously supportive. They have a very good scholarship and bursary offering across the portfolio,” says programme director Helen Gammons (pictured).

“They are very good in that regard. With the Music and Creative Industries MBA they have worked with me to offer as many bursaries as possible. People have to apply and be approved for the programme first, so there is a stage-by-stage process to this. Once they’re approved they can apply for the funding that is available.

“Henley has secured facility with Santander for the MBA programme to provide executive loans at a low interest rate and participants can spread payments over a longer period of time. That took a while to get in place because of the recession, but we now have that funding option. There are also small grants available for the MBA if you are an SME owner - SMEs are the powerhouse of the UK economy and the creative industries are 80% SMEs.

“There is also a tremendous role to be played here in the sector by bringing brand partners and organisations into a scholarship collaboration. This year in the UK we launched the Ticketmaster scholarship, with tremendous success, and in Johannesburg, where we launched the MBA programme for the first time in 2014, we supported two scholarships. One with Johnny Clegg, one of South Africa’s most revered artists, and another with Indaba and Ravi Naidoo.

“The Johnny Clegg scholarship will be awarded to a deserving applicant to study towards an MBA in Music and Creative Industries with programme members from radio, TV, touring, labels and rights organisations. Commenting on the scholarship, Clegg said: “I’m excited to be part of empowering artists through this scholarship, and working with Henley to share this opportunity with the right candidate.”

lighting company based at Pinewood film studios.

“As a business owner I greatly value skills and knowledge,” says Gammons. “I own a micro SME and the workforce is highly skilled. I know the challenges we’ve met and have overcome together have been down to our knowledge and capabilities. "Our [company’s] sustained growth throughout the recession has been down to having a clear vision and a clear strategy that is agile and flexible enough to manage opportunities that fit with our vision and available resources. A key cornerstone of this [strategy] is management and supporting our creative developments, but at the same time providing some discipline so that we can keep the company on target without compromising great creative outcomes.”

Gammons tells Music Week that when she first started working in the music industry in the late 70s, you could only “learn by doing” and learning on the job often meant that you would have to rely on being mentored. “I was so lucky I had some great mentors and it’s a role I take on myself now. Giving back is really important,” she says.

“But we have to be honest - the industry is completely different [to what it used to be]. There are fewer major players, a completely different set of income streams, many new business models and an extraordinary level of influence from companies outside the traditional sector. Yet there are still great opportunities. The skills and capabilities of the workforce have never been more important. I know first hand what a powerful set of tools an MBA provides you with.”

In addition to offering the MBA for Music and Creative Industries, Henley has played host to over 400 executives from across the sector with their ‘Creative Dynamics’ programmes - a series of one-day events targeting important industry topics that are often delivered by key industry partners.

The programmes to have taken place include: Music And Brand Partnerships; Tuning In: Leadership And Strategy In The Digital Economy; Building Business Performance Through Managing Creativity; Marketing With Bytes, Analytics With Attitude and Opportunities In Branded Content. Henley’s latest event is called Managing For Disruptive Innovation, which takes place on February 24.

Henley expanded its MBA for Music and Creative Industries from its University of Reading site to Johannesburg, South Africa in 2014. “Henley has had an established business school there for around 15 years with a large number of MBA participants. The first intake was such an exciting group of people,” says Gammons.

“Radio plays a significant role in South Africa and we found ourselves with the top DJs from the top stations, because they’re also involved in running the businesses. We had some big stars in the room from radio and TV. We also have the CEO of SAMRO, the South African rights organisation.

“We have theatre group managing directors in the programme, we also have brands, design companies and labels. It’s very mixed.”

Jon Foster Pedley, Dean of Henley South Africa, says: “Whether in music, the fine arts, dance or design, South Africa has distinguished itself as a creative hub worldwide. The MBA for Music and Creative Industries is about harnessing this creativity and maximising its business potential.”

Gammons believes that running the programme in other territories will help to establish closer ties between the creative sectors in those countries and the UK. “We can provide our MBA students with mentoring and support to help new artists and creative projects move from one territory to another. We can do a lot of MBA consultancy style work on how to approach entering new markets.”

Henley also plans further expansion and is looking to Asia for its next venture, with America also being tipped as one of the next territories where the course will arrive. “China is very much on the cards,” says Gammons. “We’ve been looking at the market very carefully and we do have offices in Hong Kong, but we are looking at the whole territory of China. I would say that, probably within the next two years, we expect to have a business offering out there as well.”

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“This MBA HAS GENERATED SUBSTANTIAL ROI FOR ME”

Henley Business School’s MBA for Music and Creative Industries has attracted executives from every corner of the business to both participate on the programme and act as its advisory board.

Here, a few execs who have been involved with the programme as either students or board members tell Music Week what the advantages of studying towards the MBA are for those looking to improve their skills and take their career to the next level.

Johann Gouws, head of marketing, Fabel Music

“Traditional MBA Courses didn’t appeal to me. They seemed too general. After 10 years in the music industry, I wanted to be certain that an MBA would take my skills to director level, where I would be making strategic decisions.”

Julia Baranchuk, creative director, head of DOVI, Disney Music Group, Radio Disney, Russia and CIS

“I chose the MBA for the Music and Creative Industries because I always dreamed of staying on campus with a group of people from relatively different backgrounds that have the same passion for music and creativity [as me]. It also wanted] to gain experience from the mind blowing professors who would sweep you off your feet with knowledge, analysis and lecture delivery.”

Bradley Williams, senior label manager at Sony Music Entertainment Africa

“The Henley MBA for the music and creative industries has provided me with new insights from across the sector and has led to exciting new ways of approaching business. I have grown into a more confident person becoming an aware and conscious leader in all areas of my career. This MBA has already generated substantial ROI for me both personally and in my career, in tangible and intangible value. Henley Business School has the most inspiring and serene location along the Thames.”

Nigel Elderton, European president Peermusic

“As chair of a broadcast licensing organisation (ERA) and chief executive of a representative body for musicians (the ISM), never has it been more important for those wishing to pursue a career in the music and creative industries to equip themselves with a range of business orientated skills. The Henley MBA for Music and Creative Industries does just that.”

Paul Crick, senior managing consultant, digital transformation, media and entertainment IBM

“The Henley MBA gives you a truly global and practical perspective on the dynamics and influences shaping the music business today, a thorough grounding in a wider set of relevant management disciplines, that helps you deepen and broaden your management skills and experience, and an amazing number of colleagues and friends that, through this, you can draw on for support for the remainder of your career.”

Professor Alexis Grower, Magrath LLP

“The Henley MBA can course tailored for the music industry has started to put that structure in place as we are already seeing by the success of the course and the large number of people who wish to become involved with it. As far as I am concerned, I am thoroughly behind the course.”