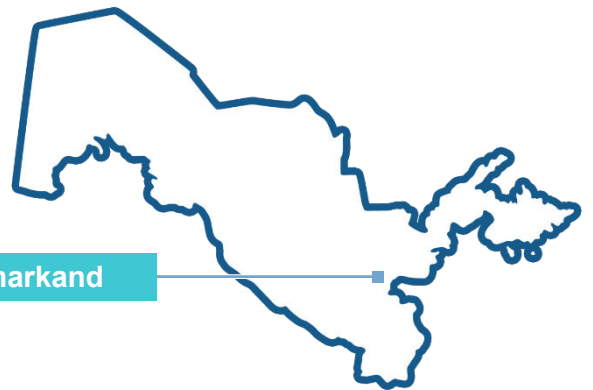


How a creative partnership is improving entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan's creative, cultural and tourism sector

Over the last three years, an innovative partnership between tourism industry TVET experts from the UK and a local tourism university in Uzbekistan has transformed the outlook for enterprise skills in Uzbekistan's creative, cultural and tourism sector.



Samarkand, regarded as one of the most iconic tourism destinations in Uzbekistan, attracts visitors from neighbouring countries and international markets due to its UNESCO World Heritage Site status, the historical buildings and places of worship plus its local cuisine. With tourism in Uzbekistan seen as a major accelerator of the economy and a powerful tool for sustainable development, it offers a huge potential for the local population to carve successful careers and develop profitable businesses.

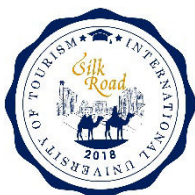


Over the past few years, People 1st International has collaborated with Queen Margaret University in the UK and the "Silk Road" International University of Tourism in Uzbekistan to develop the enterprise skills of future talent in Samarkand, helping to cultivate student's passion for a career in Uzbekistan's tourism sector and strengthen the tourism product.

The Silk Road University, positioned as it is in Samarkand, presents an opportunity for major impact. It embraces new methods of delivery and is keen to explore ways to commercialise research and to act as a hub for innovation. With a high concentration of family run businesses in Samarkand, there is a clear need for graduates to focus research on small business but also on developing value-added creative products and services for the tourism sector.



**Queen Margaret
University**
EDINBURGH



Supported by the British Council as part of the Creative Spark initiative, which aims to build partnerships between universities and creative institutions, the partnership offered a unique 'industry-led' approach via People 1st International that would ensure the skills developed meet industry needs.

Working with Queen Margaret University, renowned as experts in building pathways from higher education into industry with a dynamic approach to career opportunities, and with a strong reputation for its research capabilities and intelligence on family business and entrepreneurship, the partnership were perfectly positioned to support the "Silk Road" International University of Tourism in preparing young graduates for business opportunities and developing a stronger research base.

Through an exchange of international best practice, the partnership has achieved some transformational results:

- A new professional development programme in entrepreneurship in the context of small to medium sized businesses has been developed and lecturers at the “Silk Road” International University of Tourism have been trained in how to deliver and assess these modules. In the coming year the first cohort of students are set to graduate with the entrepreneurship skills required by industry to set up and run their own businesses or support the running of family businesses.
- Lecturers have learnt from international best practice, helping them to impart knowledge and offer support and guidance to undergraduates to inform and encourage their future development.
- Research capacity at the “Silk Road” International Tourism University has improved, enabling better commercialization and solution development. The partnership has delivered a series of coaching interventions on research approaches that identify new models of running family businesses, entrepreneurship and better research to underpin the tourism product in Samarkand, as well as finding the opportunities for publication. This paves the way for quality research projects led by the University that focus on key priorities for growth in creative tourism.
- Engagement with industry has identified the skills gaps and skills demands. Having surveyed employers to gain an understanding of the future skills needs, the programme content they need to be offering to meet industry needs can be identified, improving the link between the sector employers, university and graduates.
- “Silk Road” International Tourism University has gained recognition in the Entrepreneurial University Awards with a commendation in the industry engagement category, shining a light on the achievement of the University in developing enterprise skills.



The combination of these achievements demonstrate the journey that the partnership has set in place towards national improvements in line with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s vision for education set out on June 16 2021.



With the tourism sector now preparing for the recovery beyond Covid-19, the priority for Uzbekistan is rebuilding an innovative tourism offer that exceeds customer expectations. To achieve this the recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce is more critical than ever. Investment to build support this moving forward will need to be placed on the following areas:



Piloting quality standards developed for higher education: A Quality Standards Framework for entrepreneurial education in Universities was developed in the first phase of work but requires implementation. This can be piloted by the “Silk Road” International Tourism University before roll out to the wider higher education network building a community of practice.



Development of training programmes to meet industry needs: Using the intelligence gained from industry into the skills needs, fit for purpose programmes need to be developed in partnership with “Silk Road” International Tourism University. This will help build the sustainability of industry engagement, ensuring the content provides students with skills needed by local employers, as well as an understanding of international tourism and customer profiling. Short modular programmes based on business readiness must also be included to support the rebuild beyond Covid-19.



Upskilling lecturers in developing future training modules and assessment processes: To ensure sustainability, lecturers from “Silk Road” International Tourism University need continual professional development and international networking to support transformational change. This will underpin levels of learning and design of a national qualifications framework in Uzbekistan.

Samarkand has fantastic potential as a tourist destination and with highly enthusiastic graduates progressing from the Silk Road” International Tourism University it has the potential to benefit from top talent. The journey to give these students the relevant enterprise skills necessary to flourish and take Samarkand to the next level as a tourist destination has begun. This provides a promising outlook for the future.

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