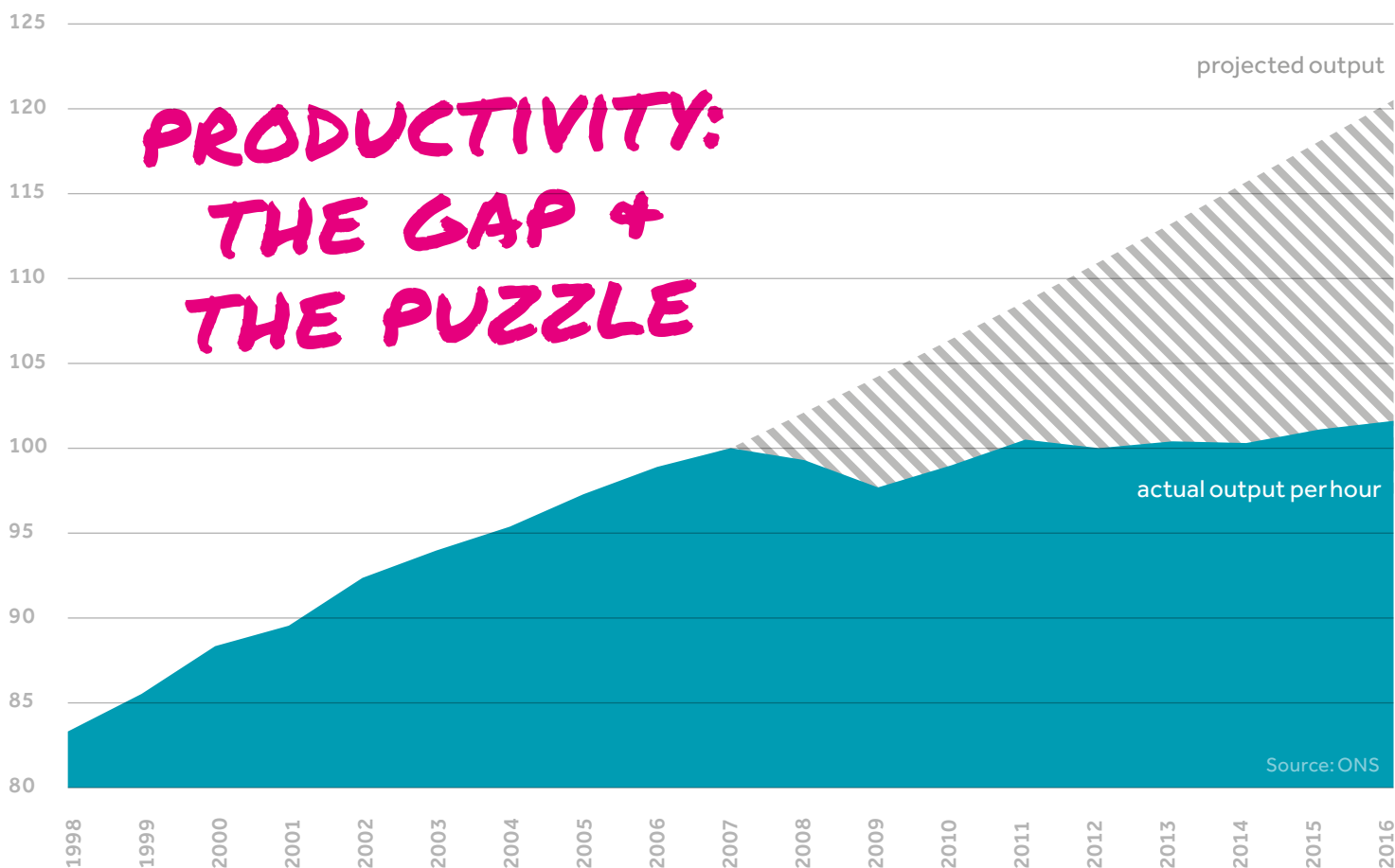


MANCHESTER  
1824

The University of Manchester  
Alliance Manchester Business School

# Alliance Manchester Business School Magazine

## PRODUCTIVITY: THE GAP & THE PUZZLE



### Issue 08

Andy Haldane interview

COVID-19 recovery

Future of accounting

**Healthier decisions**

Assessing disease risks

**Food retailing**

Tackling gender bias

**Supply chains**

Facing disruption

**Social responsibility**

Global award for Manchester

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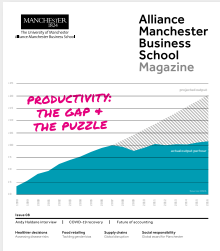
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The Productivity Institute.  
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# Making a difference



## Guest welcome: Jennifer Halliday

As we emerge from COVID-19 the challenges around rebuilding the economy are undoubtedly huge. Yet here in the North West I certainly detect growing optimism about the region’s future.

Why? Because there is a real acknowledgement of the productivity challenge, a genuine desire to focus on education, skills and wellbeing, a real imperative to level up, and an emerging debate about digitalisation and the move to net zero.

So there could be a very exciting decade ahead of us. But if we are to be successful what will this region and the rest of the UK really look and feel like in ten years’ time?

### Future vision

As Chair of the North West Productivity Forum at The Productivity Institute, based here at Alliance MBS, I have come to understand how much activity is taking place in the region about preparing for the future.

The Institute is focused on what topics to research to provide solid, tangible outputs which can inform government policy and support business transformation, because at its core productivity is all about how to increase the output derived from hours worked so that it translates into higher living standards and better wellbeing.

There is no shortage of ideas about how to achieve this, but the question is what can really make a difference. In order to judge this I believe we need to imagine the North West in a decade’s time in order to focus on what really needs to change now.

### Wish list

So what would be on my wish list? Reform of education is certainly one area. For instance I would like to see children in our

schools not just focused on the output of an exam to come, but being continuous learners who are creative, engaged, happy and dreaming big about their futures. I would also like to see most 18-year-olds keen to stay in this region because there are plenty of opportunities available to them and they have the qualifications that businesses need.

Likewise an adult workforce which is healthy, energetic and engaged with work, and which also receives appropriate care when needed, would be high up my list.

We also need leaders of our small and medium sized companies to be focused on empowerment and growth, not on micro management. And we need companies to be taking advantage of new flexible working arrangements to attract the best talent from across the globe.

Businesses also need to be highly automated and have eliminated basic manual processes completely. They also need to be hiring more highly paid and skilled employees from all backgrounds, while also undertaking large scale initiatives which help them reduce their carbon footprint.

It would also be wonderful to be able to say that a large number of FTSE 100 and 250 companies have their headquarters in this region because of the availability of skilled workers. Indeed entrepreneurs are already attracted to the region because of readily available capital and a creative workforce, while we also have good transport links with London and the South East.

### Health and wellbeing

There is much more that we can still do in other areas. For instance one is around improving health and wellbeing which, by definition, will lead to a higher level of engagement with work. Strong wellbeing in children also leads to wellbeing in adults and a direct link to productivity.

But perhaps the most important theme of all is around building skills, engagement, creativity and a can-do attitude which will shape the culture of the region to come. Indeed the skills needed are not just the hard skills, but more importantly the soft skills - namely how to present, influence and work with people and teams to generate output.

### Initiatives

So many great initiatives are already in play. For instance #BeeWell aims to trigger a national step change in education, starting in Greater Manchester, which rebalances the focus on educational outcomes and underscores the complementarity of wellbeing and academic attainment.

It is already engaging with more than 250 secondary schools and inspiring a coalition of some 50 organisations to make a positive difference to the wellbeing of young people across the city region.

We must continue to join the dots like this around productivity and to support the initiatives already in play. We all need to continue working hard to making our vision of the future a reality. ●

\*Jennifer Halliday is UK Finance Director at CF Fertilisers and a member of the Advisory Board at Alliance MBS.

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# Levelling with us

Former Bank of England Chief Economist Andy Haldane, who has joined Alliance MBS as an Honorary Professor, discusses how productivity, skills and devolution are key to the levelling up agenda.

Having built up long-established links over many years with both The University of Manchester and Alliance MBS, Andy Haldane says taking up the offer of an Honorary Professorship at Alliance MBS was in many ways a very logical move.

As he says: "Both the reputation of Manchester and my friendship with colleagues here made this a very obvious decision. My whole career has been rooted in public policy and while at the Bank I always tried to ensure that public policy ideas were rigorously rooted in the very best of academic thinking. The very best in practical public policy tends to play off the very best in academic thinking."

## Productivity

One specific area of public policy that has much vexed Haldane and most economists is the UK's poor productivity problem, a problem that has accelerated since the global financial crisis of 2008. Indeed the recently launched Alliance MBS-based Productivity Institute, which is precisely looking at these issues, was another major reason for him accepting the Professorship.

"The Institute is a fantastic initiative because it is seeking answers to one of the most pressing public policy issues of the day. If we are to tackle this productivity crisis then we absolutely need to take the brightest and best from academia to first understand the problem and its causes, engage with business, and then craft policy solutions which unlock the barriers.

"It is actually a great example of what I describe as the 'north star' of my career, namely working at the interface of public policy, business, and civil society to tackle signature societal issues. Magic happens when all three of these players work effectively in partnership, and that is exactly what the Institute is seeking to achieve."

## Long-term challenge

But given that in-depth research inevitably takes time, can we afford to really wait around for such findings on a pressing policy issue?

Haldane accepts that this is an issue. "Yes the productivity challenge is a pressing one. But equally there is no point rushing or come up with policies that don't last. The key word here is 'Institute' which means this is an institution which is here for the long term. Productivity issues are also here for the long term and deep-seated so a durable institute is exactly what is needed, and its true value will come from its longevity and long-lasting research. That all said, I am hopeful that the Institute will have some immediate things to say which are of value to the ongoing policy debates."

Indeed the productivity crisis has certainly risen to national prominence, inextricably linked as it is with debates over the 'levelling up' of the UK economy. As he adds: "Productivity has, and always will be, the well-spring of rising living standards and growth.

"But what is different now, and why it has risen to such prominence, is what has happened over last 10 to 15 years and the fact that productivity has flat-lined which is very unusual. That has turned what was an important issue into a critical issue. Where productivity leads, pay tends to follow, and we have seen a decade of stagnant wages too. Productivity is not some ethereal concept. This crisis ultimately shows up in people's pay packets."

## Causes

So what does he think are the main reasons for the productivity problem? "It's a knotty problem with lots of potential causes. For instance, one challenge is about developing the right sort of ecosystem for innovation and business to work in harmony, an aspect of the problem which I have focused on in previous work. The UK has fantastic research capacity, and you only have to walk around The University of Manchester to see how our universities are pushing technological frontiers.

"Often that research translates into successful businesses, but too often it doesn't and too little of the fruits of innovation trickle down to a wider range of companies. We are brilliant at innovation

and less good at diffusing that innovation. In short we have a broken diffusion engine and we need to repair it and develop a new one. The truth is that UK plc does very well at the 'R' in R&D, but still very poorly at the 'D'."

He adds that universities have a fundamental role to play in helping fix productivity by engaging with local and global businesses through both business engagement and knowledge transfer.

"The very presence of a university does a lot to boost income both in that region, and to surrounding regions. As I've said where productivity leads, pay and incomes then follow, and universities are no different. It's why it makes perfect sense for universities to be centre stage both in terms of our national and local industrial strategies."

## Role for business

There is a big role for businesses to play in this context too. "Knowledge transfer doesn't just happen through universities but through businesses, so successful companies need to be buddying up with other, perhaps less successful, businesses to help them make the technological transition they need. It is not because of the technology itself that innovation doesn't trickle down, it is because of people and cultures."

Haldane says embracing the digital revolution is an obvious area of focus. "Although it has of course been a devastating event, the pandemic has actually helped many businesses become more productive as they further digitalise. The hope now has to be that they continue to build out and build up their digital estate in a way that transforms their business models.

"But the important thing here is that you don't have to necessarily do this by embracing Artificial Intelligence or machine learning. It could just be about implementing a decent e-commerce platform or CRM system."

“If we are to tackle this productivity crisis then we absolutely need to take the brightest and best from academia to first understand the problem and its causes, engage with business, and then craft policy solutions which unlock the barriers.”



### Skills

In this broader debate Haldane says we mustn't lose sight of the skills issue, and particularly the need to revitalise the further education sector.

"That too needs re-energising, not as a substitute for higher education but very much as a complement. If we are to tackle the UK's productivity problem we need all of our education engines to be firing."

However he says that right now the UK skills deficit appears to be getting worse. "It is estimated that a third of the workforce across the UK don't have skills that are well matched to their jobs. Some people are over-skilled, but most are under-skilled. Some of the most acute shortages are digital skills, but there are also deficiencies on the leadership and management side, and on the interpersonal 'soft' skills side too. And then there are also glaring deficiencies on core numeracy and literacy skills as well. Without intervention and a reorientation of skills policies, all these deficits will only grow further."

As with the productivity challenge, he says that no government can tackle this challenge in one parliament. "It is precisely why deep-rooted policies and institutions are so important."

### Levelling up

Haldane says the third element of this wider debate, alongside productivity and skills, is geographical, and this is where the levelling up agenda comes in.

"The spatial problem among regions is all part of the same problem. If you look at the long tail of low productivity companies, they tend to employ workers with lower skills who tend to live in the most economically deprived areas. So these problems are all closely interconnected. You cannot tackle levelling up in isolation from skills and productivity."

However he believes bringing the three elements together is much easier to do locally than nationally. "What you need to be doing is joining up policies around education, health, transport and business support at the local level."

So more devolution is the answer then? "Absolutely. Success in levelling up comes down to delegating powers, people and finances. Unless you have all three then devolution cannot and will not be a success, and that is the strong international lesson of devolution too. You need to craft local plans that speak to local problems and devolution is an essential pre-requisite for making progress on levelling up. As all politics is local, so is economics too. Because all these inter-related problems are so localised so you need local knowledge to solve them."

He adds that while Greater Manchester is much further down the devolution path than any other city or region of the UK, even here the 'powers' it holds are limited. "Right now by no means all powers are devolved across Manchester. Yes, it is at the front of the pack relative to elsewhere across the UK and has probably made the most progress, but it is still well short of the powers it needs."

### Pandemic

All these challenges have been only further heightened by the pandemic. But however devastating it has been, Haldane believes it has thrown up opportunities.

For instance one positive benefit has been on the way we work. "Pre-pandemic so many of us ploughed onto busy trains or motorways and spent the most unproductive time possible commuting to an office. So a more flexible, hybrid model of working is surely a good thing for our productivity and our wellbeing.

"At the same time this has been a unique opportunity to rethink business. Companies have changed their business models at a speed and scale never seen before, including digitally. I hope this capacity to change at speed is now firmly in their bloodstream and that has to be good for productivity too."

He adds that the move to more remote ways of working and doing business could help the levelling up agenda too. "If what we are seeing is a more lasting shift out of city centres then that can only help sub-regions and satellite towns as more workers and companies will be based there instead."

Meanwhile for Haldane the pressures brought by COVID-19 only add to the importance of his new role at The University of Manchester and Alliance MBS. "Both have an outstanding global reputation for their contribution to building skills and knowledge and driving innovation and research. These are essential ingredients if we are to build back better, fairer, greener and kinder - and I am looking forward to helping them play this crucial role." ●

During his 30 years at the Bank of England Andy Haldane became one of Britain's most influential economists. He stepped down from his role as Chief Economist in June 2021 and will join the Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) as its Chief Executive in September.

Haldane also led the government's Industrial Strategy Council. In 2009 he co-founded Pro Bono Economics, a charity dedicated to using economics to empower the social sector, while also leading on the Bank of England's Citizens' Panel initiative which aims to help the Bank better understand everyday financial and economic concerns, and which in the North-West is chaired by Professor Fiona Devine, who leads Alliance MBS.

He has also worked closely with Dame Nancy Rothwell, President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester, on the Industrial Strategy Council.



# Crisis of capitalism?

Is capitalism in crisis? Diane Coyle, theme lead for knowledge capital at The Productivity Institute, gave her view at this year's Grigor McClelland lecture.

As Diane Coyle told guests at this year's Grigor McClelland virtual lecture, there is a lot of talk right now about a crisis of capitalism. But what makes things different in 2021, she said, is that this is not a purely anti-establishment phenomenon. "What we are experiencing now is a continuation of a sense of malaise in our market economies that has continued ever since the financial crisis of 2008 and post-crisis recession."

She said part of this malaise was due to a decline in share of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) going to labour. "Capitalism isn't making people better off the way it used to. Since the financial crisis there has been a huge drop in real average earnings and there has been about 10 years of decline, much steeper than in previous slowdowns. The last decade has been an assault on people's living standards and there is a broader sense that it has become impossible for most people to get on, to make the kinds of gains that we have come to expect. The contract between generations in that parents expect their children to be better off than them seems to have broken down."

## Productivity

She said the explosion in top pay was one of the reasons for talk of a crisis. "The average CEO pay is £900 an hour, a good hundred times median earnings. There has been an upward arms race, a ratcheting up in top pay, and there is persuasive evidence that this has driven a short term focus. These kinds of ratios to what ordinary people can earn would have been outside any acceptable social norms up until the mid-1970s when capitalism was delivering broad based increases in living standards."

But she stressed that the underlying problem was productivity and the UK's poor productivity performance. "Productivity is what fundamentally drives real earnings. Although it can be seen as worker effort it is actually much more to do with business. The amount that gets invested by businesses, the way they organise production, the way they sell

things, the way they use knowledge and pick up innovative ideas."

In terms of particularly why the UK had such a poor performance, she said issues around skills, investment in infrastructure, and access to finance, all played their part.

## Market concentration

Professor Coyle said an underlying sense of unease about the market economy was also driving debates about capitalism, in particular the fact that markets were getting more concentrated and competition was decreasing across many markets, such as in the digital field.

"While this concentration may deliver great value and products for consumers, there is a cost over time in terms of the lack of incentive for companies to innovate if they have a strong place in the market. And it is innovation that really drives long term gains in living standards."

She said there was now need for an urgent debate about how to best deliver increased prosperity, in particular given the pressures of climate change, and that it was time for businesses to take ESG (Environmental, Social and corporate Governance) issues more seriously.

However she added: "To be honest I'm a little concerned about the ESG frenzy at the moment. No doubt many people in business are somewhat confused about exactly what it is they should be measuring and doing. In my view what businesses need to be doing is thinking about assets such as human capital, knowledge capital, physical capital, and their natural capital, as part of their whole balance sheet. ESG metrics need to fit within this framework."

## Shape of markets

She added that the wider debate about the future shape of markets was crucial, such as the extent to which nation state interests should override corporate interests.

"In an era of globalisation there is a mismatch between these boundaries. State aid has been very stringent in terms of telling

governments not to subsidise national businesses and national champions. On the other hand we've had a period where a lot of business has been offshored, and post pandemic we have started to worry about supply chain resilience.

"There are some really big questions about the legitimacy of the market system, the way it interacts with the public sector, and who is taking decisions about what is going to happen in the future. But at the same time there are encouraging signs that the need to change is being taken seriously. We cannot think about the private and public as separate spheres. We need to shape a market economy in which businesses and governments work together and work out better ways of making decisions that deliver long term sustainability." ●



\*Diane Coyle is Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge. The Grigor McClelland lecture is held annually in memory of the first director of Alliance Manchester Business School.



# Recovery strategies

COVID-19 has impacted every part of society across the world. A major research project is now helping us prepare for future emergencies.

In January this year academics from across Alliance MBS and the University of Manchester began work on a major study which will develop a new framework to design and implement recovery strategies that prepare for future global emergencies. It will also develop ambitious renewal initiatives that facilitate local resilience.

The research is co-funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council and brings together a significant multi-disciplinary team that will help develop the framework. Here we detail a selection of just some of the individual research topics that form part of this wider study.

**Before, During, and After COVID-19:  
A Longitudinal Study of Recovery  
and Renewal**

This study develops a recovery and renewal framework using longitudinal data from across a range of countries. It aims to trial a recovery and renewal framework with groups in local and national organisations in five countries to identify how the framework may help them to think about, and coordinate, their approach to recovery and renewal from COVID-19.

**Identifying priority research needs for  
the effective regulation and oversight of  
emergency planning across organisations**

This will find out how regulatory and oversight bodies support coordinated resilience and emergency preparedness across different organisations and stakeholders. There will be a particular focus on supporting the contribution of health and social care organisations in England.

**COVID-19: coping  
mechanisms of ethnic  
minorities and refugees**

This will provide new insights into the experiences of minorities and refugees during COVID-19. Its main purpose is to identify what actions organisations are taking (or not) to sustain the recovery of refugees, and what more organisations could be doing to build recovery and resilience among such communities during disasters.

**A Strategic Recovery, Renewal,  
Resilience Framework: Insights from  
Theory and Practice**

This study develops a framework for strategic recovery, renewal, and resilience. In the first phase a ‘discovery-oriented’ approach will use ethnographic observations, focus groups and interviews with senior managers, together with findings from a literature review of previous research, to develop a framework. A second phase will conduct a large scale survey to test the framework.

**Recovering and Renewing community  
resilience: lessons from the 2010  
Chile earthquake and COVID-19**

This study explores how community resilience in previous disasters can be transferred to future disaster events, by identifying lessons from the 2010 Chile earthquake in Talcahuano City.

**Towards more resilient  
and sustainable tourist cities  
post COVID-19**

This will focus on the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and how the pandemic is shaping the strategic thinking of tourist cities. Tourism is one of the global industries most impacted by the crisis and it will experience significant disruption into the future.

**House of Lords Committee**

The work of Alliance MBS and the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute around building local community resilience has been referenced by the House of Lords.

Duncan Shaw, Professor of Operational Research and Critical Systems at Alliance MBS, recently gave evidence to its Risk Assessment and Risk Planning Select Committee which is looking at how the government can better mobilise the public as a resource to support national resilience, a concept which has become much more discussed in the wake of the pandemic.

Professor Shaw talked to committee members about his and colleagues’ work around operationalising community resilience as a set of local resilience capabilities.

As he explained: “This brings together the capabilities of individuals, organisations in the communities, community groups, and associations and networks that are made up of all of these three groups. How can we reduce the likelihood of impacts and then enhance communities as they respond through cohesive coordinated action? We can do this by helping communities become aware of the risks, by helping them to help us to understand the vulnerabilities, and then help them develop resilient behaviours.”

\*To find out more about any of these projects, or the wider research programme, contact [RecoveryProject@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:RecoveryProject@manchester.ac.uk)

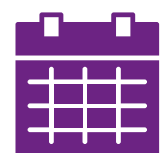
The project team is designing strategies for recovery and renewal that will build resilience.



1  
new ISO 22393 for  
recovery from COVID-19



55+  
webinars and  
workshops organised



1,200+  
hours of meeting with government  
response, recovery and renewal groups



17  
academics from a wide  
range of disciplines



Expert insights  
from governments, the UN, WHO,  
WEF, The World Bank and more



120+  
interviews with a global  
community of experts



15  
local resilience partners



**CITIES  
NETWORK**



The team also produces The Manchester Briefing which brings together global lessons on recovery and renewal from the pandemic.



Database  
of lessons on recovery  
and renewal



39  
issues each including  
4 briefings



480+  
international lessons on  
recovery and renewal from...



42  
case studies



95+  
countries worldwide



40  
impactful 'think pieces'



4,000+  
cities



20+  
global distribution partners



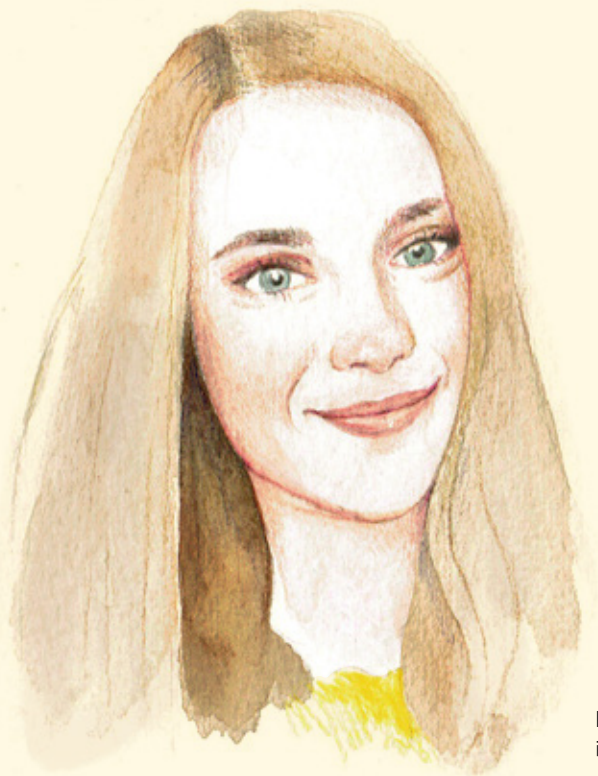
54,000+  
global audience from  
local governments

for more information visit [ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery](https://ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery)





# Making healthier decisions



**Dr Marzena Nieroda,**  
is a Lecturer in Marketing

## Emerging technologies have a key role to play in assessing our future disease risks, says Marzena Nieroda.

As an academic I have always been very interested in initiatives that promote wellbeing across all ages. In this regard a huge trend that is sweeping the healthcare industry, and one I have been specifically researching in recent years, is the proliferation of e-health and consumer-facing technology which allows us to manage, track and monitor our own health data.

Through this research I have begun working with the iHelp project, a Europe wide initiative which uses state of the art e-health platforms to define best practice for providing online healthcare support. This work is in collaboration with Professor Kenneth Muir and Dr Artitaya Lophatananon from the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health at The University of Manchester who have been looking at how positive changes to our lifestyles (e.g. healthy diet, exercise) can improve our epigenetic profiles, namely how our cells read our genes, and thus reduce our risk of future diseases.

The challenge we face is how to use these emerging technologies to communicate our own future disease risk and help people make healthier decisions and mitigate their risk.

### Marketing view

You might ask why an academic from a business school has been involved with such work? Well, the answer is that I have been studying this work through the lens of a marketer, namely someone who can advise on how to personalise such disease-based communications, how you can make individuals understand the messages they are receiving about their

own disease risks, and how they can be more proactive in their lifestyle choices.

The iHelp project also has particular appeal to me because my main body of research, working with my Alliance MBS colleague Professor Nikolay Mehandjiev, has specifically evolved around the personalisation of technology.

### Adding value

In this context there are two streams of research where Alliance MBS expertise can add value to similar cross-disciplinary projects.

Firstly, it is our ability to translate innovative wellbeing interventions into lay person language, personalise the advice, and then enable the public to make a well-informed choice about their wellbeing.

Secondly, and most importantly when it comes to encouraging healthy behaviours, it is about using various personalisation approaches that can 'hook' people onto healthy behaviours and help them create healthy habits.

### Huge potential

Looking ahead I think there is huge potential in this work for scholars at Alliance MBS given our ability to integrate personalisation, technology and the most recent developments in AI to support community engagement with cutting-edge interventions developed by researchers from other schools and faculties.

With regards to iHelp, I am specifically leading the work package that aims to evaluate the impact of its solutions on physical, human and societal factors. In the case of the Manchester pilot, the

intervention will involve providing individuals with information about their biological age based on their epigenetic profile. The higher the biological age compared to actual age, the higher the risk of developing future diseases, and the more we can use this information to motivate behaviour change such as healthy diet and exercise.

### Measuring success

The success of this work will be measured by assessing changes in individual attitudes towards intervention and wellbeing, as well as changes in behaviours, changes in biological age (we can biologically 'get younger' by making healthy choices), and happiness with one's health and wellbeing.

On a broader societal level, we will also look at changes in the risks of developing chronic diseases, changes in mortality rates, and the economic costs of managing chronic diseases and other lifestyle-related diseases.

Such analysis is of course particularly relevant too as we continue to deal with the impact of the pandemic. Indeed the most recent research points to the fact that lifestyles have an impact on the duration and severity of COVID-19 symptoms.

Because positive changes to our lifestyle are seen as a way to increase lifespan and mitigate risks of chronic diseases, it is likely that such changes could strengthen our immunity in general. So in terms of future research it would be very interesting to look at how our biological age, based on our epigenetic profile, relates to health risks associated with COVID-19. ●

# Exploring the unknown

Paolo Quattrone, the new Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Investment Risk, discusses the big issues facing accounting.

"We are at the beginning of a substantial change in the way in which not only investments, but the entire structure of capitalism works in our society."

These are powerful words from Professor Paolo Quattrone, who believes that not only the accounting and finance professions but society as a whole is on the cusp of a monumental shift.

In his new role as Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Investment Risk (CAIR) at Alliance MBS, his mission is to "put CAIR on the map even more than it is already" and ensure researchers have the platform to influence key issues facing policymakers such as global development, environmental sustainability, and the impact of technology.

## Unknowns

Tying together his research interests, his views on the future of the profession, his vision for CAIR, and his role as a lecturer, is his conviction that mystery and the unknown sit at the heart of accounting.

"Accounting is all about decision-making and how we use numbers and governance to explore and deal with what we do not know." He argues the real innovation and cutting-edge thinking needed to drive forward the

profession, and society, sits in the unfamiliar. "Dealing with principally the unknowable and unexpected, accounting actually encourages you to draw on imagination rather than representation or measurement."

The post-pandemic world has made this even clearer he believes, spurring a need to focus on imagination, scrutiny and ambiguity to deal with unprecedented scenarios. We cannot rely on our existing models and best practice that simply are no longer adequate.

## Manchester

Professor Quattrone's affection for The University of Manchester and the city itself dates back to his early career. The first position he secured on leaving Italy was as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie post-doctoral fellow at the School of Accounting and Finance (at that time, part of the Victoria University of Manchester).

After successful spells at Saïd Business School, IE Business School (Madrid) and most recently The University of Edinburgh, he says the allure of Alliance MBS as a prestigious and leading centre for management education across Europe and internationally was just one of the reasons he has been drawn back to the city.

Another is the historic reputation, combined with the modern "international diversity, strength and size" of the Accounting and Finance division at Alliance MBS.

As he adds: "I was excited to work with renowned academics across the School who have forged a strong tradition of research in one of my key areas of interest, project and programme management."

## Pandemic

Paolo emphasises that discussion surrounding investments have become even more important in the wake of the global pandemic, ushering in Recovery Funds, new 'New Deals', and large infrastructure investments in the UK. "We want to be at the forefront of studying these new trends."

Building on this, Professor Quattrone and other colleagues at the School have been collaborating with the UK Cabinet's Infrastructure and Project Authority. He is also keen for CAIR to develop a "serious collaboration" with the government, crucially making a link between policy and the delivery of major infrastructure and investment programmes.

In the wake of the UK's long overdue audit reforms, he believes the recent announcements are a step in the



“The big thing in my view is not just thinking of the reform of auditing but the much larger reform of financial and corporate reporting.”

right direction but asserts that broader fundamental changes need to happen to complement the reforms. “The big thing in my view is not just thinking of the reform of auditing but the much larger reform of financial and corporate reporting.”

His passion for history informs his theory for the solution to accounting’s problems, looking into the past and moving away from its current framework.

“Accounting is a platform for scrutiny, mediation and interrogation. The disclosure of numbers and the process should trigger the asking of even more questions. Drawing on the history of the profession, we need to go back to the idea of accounting as an instrument of judgment, negotiation and compromise.

“The profession will only remain central if it uses figures to open up and facilitate this debate, and questions the purposes of corporations. It cannot continue its obsession with being focused on measurement, being a single point of truth and objectivity.”

CAIR vision

CAIR produces research on wide-ranging aspects of financial investment decision-making. Importantly, the notion of

investment itself has broadened and focus is turning from solely financial investments to investments in physical, digital and social infrastructures.

In this context, he wants to refine CAIR’s expertise primarily into three key research areas - investment decisions, ESG (Environmental, Social, and corporate Governance), and auditing, assurance and corporate reporting. He sees vital contributions that can be made by CAIR in putting his profession back at the heart of defining value and decision-making.

He explains: “There is a clear need now for a different set of tools, techniques and practices that orient how we make decisions and how we think about the world and society in which we live. It’s a really exciting time to be part of this.”

Impacting policy

Influencing policy is a crucial goal for CAIR. “I want our exceptional researchers to be public intellectuals, generating wider impact and having a voice beyond academic circles. But the greatest impact we have is when we teach and profess to thousands of students. This is where we have real potential to influence the way in which people think and make decisions.”



Paolo Quattrone is Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Investment Risk



Financial Reporting Council (FRC)

Professor Quattrone is taking up the role of Principal Investigator on a new FRC Scenarios Analysis research project, working with co-investigators Dr Robert Charnock and Dr Yasmine Chahed, and his PhD students Kefei Wu and Jonathan O’Rourke.

The project will explore how companies set up processes for scenario planning to benefit strategically from their approach to climate-related governance and reporting. At the moment little is known about how business models and operations will be impacted by the transition to a net zero future.

Says Professor Quattrone: “The project concerns a core aspect of my research, about how to make sense of the unknown and having to deal with it. In this case, the future and the impacts of climate change on business strategy, operations and values.”

He believes this research has great potential impact to see the UK play a leading role in spearheading policy in terms of the governance of the process of scanning the risks in relation to climate change.

Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)

Alliance MBS has won a grant for a new CIMA project titled: Calculating sustainability: on making accounting numbers central again. Professor Quattrone and a team from Bocconi University in Milan will be investigating how organisations embed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their strategic business decisions.

In particular the project aims to provide a management and reporting framework to align the SDGs to accounting measures. “These non-financial measures and financial measures are currently disjointed, but we are creating a connection between the two and our solution could potentially become policy,” says Professor Quattrone.

The rising importance of SDGs is causing a profound structural shift in the way capitalism is conceived, driving the need to change existing models of reporting that no longer reflect this.

Corporate Reporting Development Panel

Professor Quattrone has been selected to Chair the CRDP (Corporate Reporting Development Panel). He says the panel presents “an opportunity to rethink the entire way in which we go about financial reporting.”

The panel will encourage interaction with international bodies and policymakers. “It is exciting to have a voice in shaping the future of corporate reporting. The panel is a small piece in that big puzzle, but it’s great to be part of the puzzle,” he said.

Further information about The Centre for the Analysis of Investment Risk >>

# Gender and food retailing

Gender segregation is embedded in food retail roles. Abbie Winton looks at how this can change.



Supermarket shopping of old has, perhaps, changed forever with demand for online food retailing soaring during the pandemic, growing 25.5% in 2020 compared to the 8.5% previously anticipated.

For most food retailers, trading online has long lacked appeal due to the low margins which it offers. However, the pandemic restrictions prompted retailers to expand their dotcom offering almost overnight to both meet demand and stay competitive during a time when customers were restricted in their ability to do their shopping in-store.

To meet the excess demand all of the major retailers took on additional workers, and today new roles are being created in large numbers in distribution and logistics against a backdrop of slowly dwindling numbers of workers serving on the shop floor.

However, also characterising these changes are the historical patterns of gender segregation that persist within the sector, despite men moving into retail roles in recent years. Therefore, we need to be asking not just what the food retail sector is likely to look like post-pandemic, but who is likely to remain working in it.

## Segregation of food retail work

The move online and growing use of self-checkouts in-store have in part helped facilitate a reduction in the need for checkout staff. These jobs have long been

disproportionately filled by women who needed the 'flexibility' to manage work alongside caring responsibilities.

In contrast, there has already been an expansion of new roles in warehousing, logistics and fulfilment which have traditionally been filled by men and demand hours less likely to suit the needs of the household. For example, an analysis of recent ONS (2021) data shows that 67% of employees working on supermarket shop floors are women, a large proportion of whom are over the age of 45. This figure increases to 70% if you look at checkout and cashier roles specifically.

Female employees from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (as defined by the ONS) are five times more likely than white male employees to be working in checkout roles. In contrast to this, the gendering of employees working in the wholesale of food production (including the supply of these goods to supermarkets) is vastly male-dominated (men continue to hold 78% of these roles). These figures show the embeddedness of gender, and racial segregation in these roles.

## Considerations for the future

Although there have been some improvements in the occupational segmentation of retail roles in recent years, changing demands mean the future of work

in food retail is likely to reflect the pre-existing patterns of segregation within the sector.

To avoid exacerbating these inequalities, measures are needed to ensure women and minority groups are equipped to enter into new roles in logistics and distribution.

Research has also shown that women are more likely to rely on public transport to get to work and thus tend to take jobs that are closer to home and schools. However, distribution centres tend to be located in harder-to-reach areas, making these jobs less accessible to women. Therefore, provisions would have to be made to improve transportation routes to these areas both in terms of accessibility and safety.

Secondly, the 'pick rates' which dictate dotcom work can often be challenging for disabled and older workers to sustain. Reasonable adjustments will be required where necessary to accommodate these groups. Thirdly, employee-led flexible working arrangements and parental leave could allow for an easier transition into this type of work.

Therefore, policymakers and businesses should ensure that the jobs which remain do not reinforce the existing inequalities which are endemic to service work and which have been further exacerbated by the current crisis. ●

**Abbie Winton** is a final year PhD Researcher.



# Leaders at the wheel



Alliance MBS and Audi UK have received international recognition for an executive education programme that is helping to futureproof the Audi UK dealership network.

The Audi LEAD Programme, which has seen Audi UK partner with Alliance MBS to design and deliver an innovative leadership excellence and development course, has won one of the most coveted categories at this year's EFMD Excellence in Practice Awards, having been awarded Gold for Professional Development. The awards recognise outstanding and impactful learning and development partnerships.

With annual sales in excess of 100,000 vehicles and a market share of 6.9%, Audi UK is one of the leading premium car brands in the UK. However maintaining this market position presents an ongoing challenge.

In common with other automotive providers, the company operates in an increasingly complex and volatile market, characterised by increasing competition from non-traditional new entrants, shifts in political and consumer attitudes towards climate change and the environment, increased urbanisation, rapid digital disruption, and changing customer buying behaviour.

Audi recognised that these dynamics provided both a threat and opportunity in maintaining the relevance and sustainable profitability of the brand and Audi Centre network in the future. As such, to maintain its market position against this backdrop of change, it saw the need to develop the leadership capabilities of its frontline leaders, specifically its dealership Heads of Business and Aspiring Leaders, and invited a number of leading European business schools to put forward proposals for an innovative 'Leadership Excellence and Development' programme.

## Best in class

Alliance MBS and Audi went on to develop a highly customised and blended learning programme, incorporating some of the latest thinking in leadership development and management science. Delivered between October 2018 and June 2020, the programme was structured around three residential workshops and incorporated a range of practical web and work based applied learning methodologies.

The programme involved more than 100 leaders in total from across the Audi UK dealer network, and aimed to equip these managers with 'best in class' leadership capabilities while improving the capability of the business to adapt to change and supporting the long-term sustainable growth of the dealership network.

## Positive impact

Qualitative and quantitative indicators revealed that the programme delivered a positive impact on individual leadership capability, and produced tangible business impact and improvement. This business impact included direct sales revenue gains of over £2m in the first year from applied business projects that were designed and implemented on the programme.

It performed in line with or above standard industry quality benchmarks, was extremely well received by delegates and exceeded the expectations of both partner institutions. In line with the programme objectives, indicators suggest that the programme had a significant impact on individual delegate leadership capability (demonstrated by improvements in

leadership competency and effectiveness), on organisational leadership processes and practice (demonstrated by improved cross functional working), and on the broader Audi Centre level business change and business improvement objectives.

## Working relationship

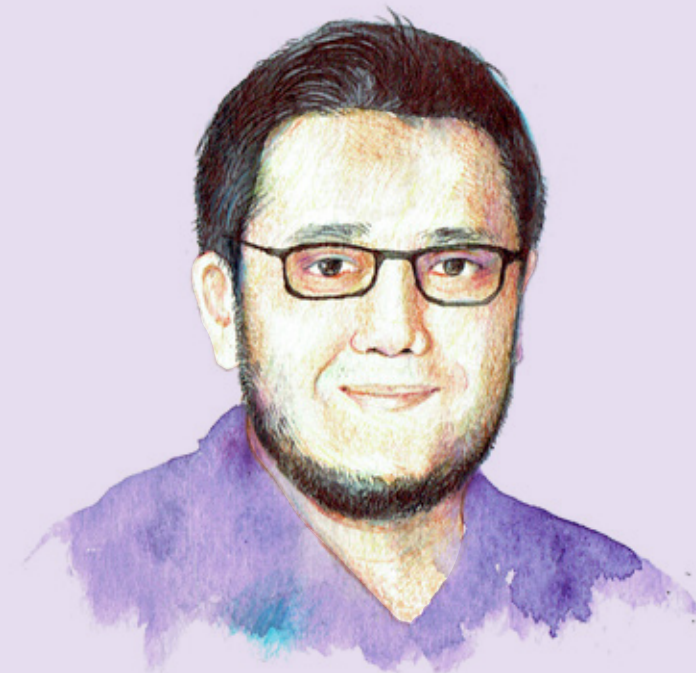
Karen Boulton, Network People Business Partner at Audi UK, said: "The success of this development programme has been built on the foundations of a fantastic working relationship with Alliance MBS, which not only understood our brand strategy and values, but the importance of developing our leaders in our retail network. It's wonderful to see how our people have grown since taking part in the programme and the value they are delivering to their businesses and our brand."

Dr Lee Douglas, Client Director at Alliance MBS and Audi LEAD Operations Programme Director, added: "At Alliance MBS we pride ourselves on designing development programmes that deliver real business benefit, as well as positive individual outcomes. The programme has proved to be genuinely impactful at both the individual, group and business level, representing a best practice benchmark in leadership development in the automotive industry and beyond.

"It's fantastic to receive independent recognition from such an esteemed organisation as the EFMD. We have developed and delivered this programme in a true partnership which represents best practice in corporate education globally, and is something we are collectively extremely proud of." ●

# Supply chain disturbance

The risk of disturbances to global supply chains has never been so under the spotlight, says Fahian Huq.



Fahian Huq is a Senior Lecturer in Operations and Supply Chain Management

Driven by globalisation, rapidly changing markets and emerging technologies, supply chains have become increasingly complex in recent decades. At the same time, the continued dominance of the offshore outsourcing business model has only increased firms' vulnerability to a range of supply chain disturbances such as natural weather disasters, or political and economic instability.

Even before the pandemic struck there were growing concerns around the structure and interconnectedness of global supply chains, with managers increasingly weighing up the relative costs and benefits of remote outsourcing compared to near-shoring or reshoring strategies.

## Disruption

In a paper\* I co-wrote just before the pandemic we looked at these very issues, discussing how geopolitical disturbances such as natural disasters or societal disruptions could impact all members of a regional supply chain at once. Little did we know at the time we were writing our paper, what an understatement this would be given recent events.

Our study was built around an in-depth case study of a high-value manufacturing firm in the aerospace industry, a sector that has since been massively impacted by the pandemic. One of our underlying objectives was to investigate how internally facing product managers perceive firm, network and location related supply chain disturbances compared with externally facing supply chain managers.

The logic is that if the managerial perceptions of risk within the same supply chain significantly differ, then risk mitigation becomes more difficult. Whereas if internally and externally facing managers have similar perceptions of supply chain disturbances, then it will be easier to implement effective mitigation strategies.

## Findings

Based on in-depth interviews with both sets of managers – those dealing with the overall supply chain and those dealing with

specific products – our findings showed that managers' perceptions of supply chain disturbances can be prejudiced by their day-to-day exposure to the workings of the supply chain.

For instance, our results showed that internally facing managers perceive supply chain disturbances to be less than externally facing managers when the strategy is built around offshore outsourcing. This is probably because externally facing managers have a more realistic view of the disturbances associated with more dispersed and complex supply chains.

By contrast internally facing managers seem more prone to the illusion that they are in control, and this inherent optimism can cause them to sometimes ignore or downplay the possibility of disturbances.

## Preferences

What was revealing was that both product and supply chain managers actually preferred insource/near-shore strategies as they perceived that the disturbances while outsourcing/offshoring are significantly greater and offset the benefits of low-cost production.

One of the primary reasons for this is that the near-shore strategy can have multi-faceted benefits for a firm's production system. For example, shorter delivery lead times make supply chains simpler and more resilient by reducing the amount of inventory management needed, by mitigating the uncertainties around delivery times, and by avoiding the creation of redundant systems and capacity.

Interestingly, even though the study was carried out pre COVID-19, geopolitical issues were ranked second by product managers and fourth by supply chain managers when the company strategy is built around offshoring from Asia, indicating that this was already quite high on their agenda.

## Mitigation strategies

Our study then looked at mitigation strategies that can be employed. For instance, one strategy was building clusters

in emerging markets to support a firm's regional hub by partnering with its existing suppliers from developed countries.

Migrating an existing supplier to a low-cost location is considered a low-risk remote outsourcing option. By working with existing suppliers, which already possess technical expertise, a company can reduce time to produce, especially during new product introduction. These clusters can also minimise operational costs and maximise the benefits linked to better coordination and improved communication with suppliers.

Another strategy was reshoring which could generate opportunities for the UK's high-value manufacturing sector by developing the domestic supply chain further, especially its innovation capabilities.

## Future trends

The events of the past 12 months have shown us the importance of these supply chain disturbance mitigation strategies and has accelerated the re-configuration of global supply networks.

For instance, post-pandemic there will be attempts by some multinationals to decouple from China and develop independent suppliers in the Far East. However, moving out of China will be challenging as it will be difficult to replace an established supplier base.

As such I think we will see a more balanced approach – perhaps not extensive reshoring but more near-shoring with locations nearer to major markets (e.g. Japan, Mexico, Taiwan and Eastern European countries) benefitting. As our research suggests, firms could do this incrementally by building clusters in emerging markets to support their regional hub and partnering with existing suppliers from developed countries. ●

\*Disturbances to the supply chains of high-value manufacturing firms: comparison of the perceptions of product managers and supply chain managers (Huq, Pawar, Subramanian)



# Knowledge gain

The work of our Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) are gaining national recognition.

## Developing agile leaders

Alliance MBS has begun one of its first ever Management Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (MKTP) with business consultancy firm Cirrus.

Unlike a more general Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) where business and academia usually join forces to develop a specific product or service, a MKTP is built around identifying strategic management-based initiatives to increase business effectiveness and improve management practices.

Cirrus works with major organisations on leadership development and employee engagement, and the MKTP will help it embed and transfer knowledge of agile leadership and team agility to support new ways of working.

The partnership will also look at how to develop and adapt training materials to address challenges brought by the pandemic. In particular, because of the unprecedented disruption caused by COVID-19, organisations now need to be much more agile and need to work and lead people virtually.

### Virtual working

David Holman, Professor of Organisational Psychology at Alliance MBS, said the crisis had accelerated the need for agile and virtual ways of working. "This includes the need to deliver consultancy services virtually. Indeed, the corporate training and development market has switched almost completely to virtual delivery."

He said the MKTP had arisen out of previous research into team agility, and that it had significant impact potential. "Because Cirrus is a consultancy it can then apply the knowledge not only within its own organisation but cascade this information through to clients too. That is potentially very exciting.

"From the academic point of view it offers a unique opportunity for us to develop and apply new theoretical and practical insights on agile leadership and team working, areas which have largely been unexplored with academic rigour."

### Agile research

Simon Hayward, CEO at Cirrus, said the company's vision was to be a trusted transformation partner for clients and in order to meet that vision - and adapt to the changes brought about by the pandemic - it was imperative that the company embedded agile working across the organisation.

"The MKTP provides an exciting opportunity for us to enhance our management structures and practices to adopt robust, scalable, agile management systems to respond to the new challenges and opportunities of virtual delivery in a growing market. The partnership will support this change by driving leading-edge agile research and turning it into practical solutions. Together we will establish robust, innovative services to deliver that agility to clients.

"We are looking forward to testing these services internally and embedding them in our leadership, talent management and employee engagement programmes. So this partnership will give us robust insight into how to make appropriate changes to create agile, scalable brilliance."

Professor Holman added that the project would also enable synergies to be created with the recently launched Productivity Institute at Alliance MBS.

"The MKTP will not only be able to contribute to the agenda of the Productivity Institute, as it will provide new insights on organisational productivity, but it will also enable the MKTP team to

influence and work with associated policy makers and businesses, thereby increasing the impact of the MKTP."

Other academics from Alliance MBS involved in the partnership include Robin Martin, Professor of Organisational Psychology, and Dr Kara Ng, Presidential Fellow in Organisational Psychology.

### The project has three specific key aims:

Develop new and systematic knowledge about how effective leadership practices foster team agility, and feed these unique insights into the design of a new agile leadership programme.

Show how contemporary understandings of leadership can be used to help manage the challenges of leading agile teams.

Develop a process evaluation tool kit, suitable for use by a range of organisations including SMEs, that will help them assess the impact of agile leadership and team development programmes.

## Legal collaboration

Alliance MBS has completed a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with global legal business DWF which has led to the launch of an insurance intelligence tool. The tool, named Ivy, draws on historic data to approximate the recommended value of an insurance claim and tailor an approach for how best to achieve an optimal outcome for clients.

Dr Nadia Papamichail, Senior Lecturer in Information and Decision Systems at Alliance MBS, said the tool augmented fee earners' ability to make quicker and more accurate decisions by integrating current and historical data to optimise settlement cases both in terms of value and time.

As she explained: "The project contributed to DWF's operational performance internally by improving claims handling efficiency and effectiveness, while enhancing the company's value proposition to clients externally. Most importantly, the benefits of utilising good quality data and shifting DWF towards a data-empowered culture are expected to be long-lasting."

### Seizing opportunities

DWF is one of the first legal businesses to partner with a university on such a KTP scheme, which is part-funded by Innvocate UK. Professor Ian Miles from Alliance MBS, who was also an academic lead on the project, said it showed how professional services firms in general are now seeking to seize emerging opportunities around artificial intelligence (AI), big data and data analytics.

He added: "This project simultaneously explored the technical and organisational elements of establishing new types of support for a particular set of activities within a legal services

firm. The results are now of relevance to other activities of the firm, and also to professional services more generally, as emerging AI applications and evolving demands from clients continue to foster digital and cultural change. In fact I see this as just the beginning of a tide of activity in this area."

### Collaboration

Dr Mayowa Ayodele, Data Process & Application Scientist, was the KTP Associate on the project. She added: "This project demonstrated the value of collaboration between domain experts and data science professionals. We therefore worked very closely with domain experts for data understanding, and with IT professionals to achieve seamless integration with the existing infrastructure."

Professor Miles said the project was as much about "augmenting" as "automating". "If you talk about automation then you are talking about machines making decisions. But augmentation is about gaining insights from what data is saying has happened in the past. With this particular project DWF was keen to access data from a number of different platforms and then synthesise that data."

But he stressed that the KTP was not just about developing a system. "It was also very much about shifting the culture of the firm too. It is all very well developing a system but you have to persuade people to use it. So we got line managers involved from an early stage and identified people within the firm who could really champion the project too."

### Partnership

David Robinson, Operations Director for Insurance at DWF, added: "We all hear

references to big data and the insights it can give us and this is a real example of partnership between our people and the data science expertise. Our partnership allowed us to shape a tool that will drive the best settlements for our clients and also return even further value so our clients can then go on to further shape their own strategies. It's been a hugely exciting project for DWF, and it has now come full circle in getting great outcomes for our clients."

The project also linked to Dr Papamichail's work on AI explainability at the Alan Turing Institute, the leading national Institute of data science and Artificial Intelligence, where she is a Turing Fellow.

As she added: "Developing decision algorithms and decision aiding tools with interpretable and understandable outputs and recommendations is crucial. With Ivy, we adopted a human-centric design and placed users and their needs at the centre of the system development process."

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme provides a grant contribution of up to two thirds of eligible costs to support academic and industrial collaborations.

If you are interested in exploring a KTP with Alliance MBS or would like more information please contact  
**joanne.summers**  
**@manchester.ac.uk**

## British Salt project wins

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between Alliance MBS and British Salt has won the Business Collaboration and Partnerships Award at the recent Educate North Awards.

In 2019, British Salt (a subsidiary of Indian-owned Tata Chemicals) called on academics at Alliance MBS to help launch a salt product, fortified with iodine in the UK. Recent Alliance MBS Masters in Marketing graduate Elle Perschke, who works as Brand Development Manager at Tata Chemicals Europe, led the KTP from the industry side. Elle worked closely with a team of academics at Alliance MBS, led by Professor Hongwei He.

The KTP, completed in April 2020, has successfully laid the groundwork for British Salt's ambitions to transition into the B2C market in the country. The Alliance MBS team carried out market research including focus groups, to understand consumer attitudes and identify the opportunities and challenges associated with bringing the product to market.

The Business Collaboration and Partnerships Award for the University Sector recognises an 'exceptional institution or academic team engaging with one or more businesses for commercial success'.

Professor He said: "It is really gratifying to receive more accolades for this KTP project after it was rated outstanding and awarded Finalist at the KTP Best of the Best Awards last year. It was an exciting and rewarding project which saw Alliance MBS offer a total package of knowledge on marketing and strategy to British Salt, including new product development, branding, marketing segmentation, pricing, marketing communications, distribution channels and social media." ●



Elle Perschke



# Winds of change

Studying for the Global MBA has brought huge personal and professional benefits for Gareth Dooley.



## Tell us about your background?

I studied the Global Part-time MBA at Alliance MBS, graduating in 2019, and now work for Orsted, a renewable energy company based in Denmark whose main goal is to create a world run entirely on green energy. I work in offshore wind, part of the operations department on the commercial side, and negotiate big contracts - sometimes worth up to \$2bn - with countries across the world from the US to Japan.

## What attracted you to the renewable sector?

Working in the renewable energy sector came after pivoting from oil and gas where I was in a niche technical role. I knew when I made this transition that there were two things I was looking for. Firstly, I wanted something that sat aligned with my personal values and this is where renewables came in, especially working for a company like Orsted which is the largest offshore wind developer. Secondly, I also wanted to push the scope of what I could do and challenge myself. I wanted a job that was interchangeable, so I could work in any area of the company and add value.

## What specifically attracted you to the Manchester Global MBA?

At the time I studied my MBA I was living in Japan so I took the course at The University of Manchester Hong Kong centre. I needed an MBA that could accommodate a change in location to a variety of places around the world but also

wanted to study a UK-based MBA as it was an education system I knew. So knowing about Manchester and its brand made Alliance MBS seem a really good option.

The University of Manchester is a major brand in Asia that is heard of and well respected given that it has a number of centres in different countries, so it ticked all the boxes for me. The idea that I had the opportunity to study workshops at a lot of centres across the world was very appealing, and the Business School's global ranking also helped to secure my decision.

## How has the MBA helped you?

I believe the MBA was a major tool I used to help make this pivot from a technical to business role, and it helped me to understand how business is actually done. I had always experienced it but the MBA made me see why and understand the rationale for why decisions are made.

The cohort was so varied and it was amazing to see that a lot of issues in companies were the same, whether it was working for Apple, Chanel, or renewable energy. All companies seemed to have the same internal issues, making me realise that I could go and work anywhere as I had the skills and insights that were transferable.

The MBA gave me a confidence in myself and from discussions I had with my cohort it made me realise I could stand my own ground with anyone. To have all these skills in your back pocket when going for an interview was priceless, as it is when I am today negotiating deals too. These skills are worth their weight in gold.

## What particular skills has it helped you with?

I am using the techniques and skills I learnt on the MBA daily. Corporate finance was something I learnt a lot about on the MBA, as was business strategy, and looking at the bigger picture has helped me when I am now working across different markets. In fact there is not a subject I studied that I don't use. Everything I learnt has helped me to better interact with colleagues and external stakeholders.

## What advice do you have to anyone considering an MBA?

Be aware that you need to put time aside and completely commit to studying the programme. I would recommend using the knowledge you're learning at workshops straight away. Applying things practically is the major benefit of the Manchester Method, so look at how you can apply your learnings internally in your company from the very start. I found by doing this I gained a lot of value from the MBA very quickly, even from day one.

Overall the best part of the Global MBA experience was the workshops. I took these in Hong Kong and made some amazing friends and created both a personal and business network from my time on the programme. The MBA gives you a chance to have some amazing and interesting conversations with people from all different backgrounds, adding value to your network. ●

# Research in action

The DBA gives business professionals the opportunity to gain a doctoral degree while they continue working. Here we profile four professionals from very different backgrounds who have found the DBA a truly enriching experience.



## The civil engineer

Canadian civil engineer Alexander White began his part-time DBA five years ago while then working as Chief of Planning and Development for the Toronto Terminals Railway (TTR) company. His proposed area of study was the use of Public Private Partnership (PPP) business models in public infrastructure delivery, and at the time he had been looking for ways to research the rapidly growing industry further.

Having looked at programmes all over the world he chose Manchester because of the strength of its academic research in this field, and also because the course was part-time which would enable to split his time between industry and academia.

Alexander has since changed jobs to work for Plenary Americas, a leading specialised developer of long-term PPP projects, and says the decision was in part driven by the progression of his DBA studies. "Plenary is a real specialist in the PPP field and that was a major attraction for me as I continued through my studies at the same time," he says.

## Perfect bridge

As a Director of Project Delivery at Plenary, Alexander has specific responsibilities for a portfolio of hospitals across the province of Ontario, and as such was able to base his empirically-based DBA thesis on the actual operational performance and delivery structure of various hospital facilities.

Alexander says the new job helped feed into his DBA studies in innumerable

ways, and likewise the skills and disciplines he learnt from his DBA fed back into his day to day working role.

"Studying for the DBA has proved invaluable and is the perfect bridge between industry and academia. At a basic level it has significantly improved my data analysis and report writing skills, but what I also found was that clients were very interested and impressed by my interest in critically analysing the business models and being immersed in the subject matter. This is exactly what attracted me to the DBA in the first place, the ability to carry out in-depth research while also making it as applicable as possible to the industry I was working in."

## COVID-19 impact

Meanwhile Alexander says the hospitals he manages have been able to cope very well with the COVID-19 crisis. He says one of the key reasons is that they were all built in the aftermath of the 2003 SARS outbreak in Toronto. "This heavily influenced their design and ensured their layouts could handle a pandemic event. The hospitals were also designed to ensure that there was 100% fresh air circulation throughout buildings which is also critical."

The pandemic meant that Alexander was only able to graduate 'virtually' last summer, so he is looking forward to returning to Manchester sometime soon to catch up with his supervisors, Professors Anne Stafford and Pam Stapleton.



## The Chief Information Officer

As Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the UK and Ireland at global real estate firm JLL Joanne Ormandy is seeing first-hand the huge impact that technology is today having on the sector.

The whole field of 'proptech' – property and technology – is a fast and dynamic one that is rapidly impacting the real estate industry as innovative technology solutions transform traditional practices such as viewings, valuations and building management. The drive has been only accelerated by the pandemic with property companies realising they need to quickly embrace new technologies to remain competitive and efficient.

Proptech is the precise subject of Joanne's DBA where she is currently in her third year. However her interest in how technologies are transforming the global world of business is deep-rooted.

Her first degree was in biotechnology, specialising in bioinformatics, and she has since worked across the world in marketing, finance, and strategy roles for various Fortune 500 firms. She also completed a MBA from Alliance MBS in 2017 at our Hong Kong centre while working there.

In her present role she manages a team of more than 60 people supporting more than 4,000 daily users, while her job also involves defining and implementing the technology strategy for the business. "My job is essentially to make sure that all our tech services are running smoothly while the company also has a vision that it can deliver."



If you are interested in taking a DBA please contact our DBA Marketing and Recruitment Team at [dba.office@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:dba.office@manchester.ac.uk)

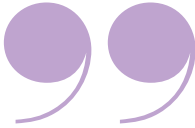
Joanne says juggling such a high-profile job with her studies is inevitably challenging, but is worth it for the rewards. "A DBA is a journey, so it's important that you are passionate about the topic you plan to study. You also need to be persistent and focused as at times it can be difficult balancing work, family, and research responsibilities at the same time. It is also something that you have to work on every single day, so you need to be very disciplined and have a very understanding family and support network around you. "But it is also an extremely rewarding experience. I love doing my DBA and being supported by world class experts who challenge me. Also, if you are clear on why you are doing it and how it will support your career aspirations, I would highly recommend it."

Benefits

She says another key benefit of a DBA is that because it is specifically designed for business professionals you can combine your own market experience with the academic literature and make a distinct industry contribution. "A DBA sets you apart in the marketplace and gives you the opportunity to spend time focusing on a topic you're passionate about. I enjoy researching so I am spending time doing something I love, while at the same time I'm developing my research skills and critical thinking. There is then a reciprocal benefit as I can apply what I learn to my



**A DBA sets you apart in the marketplace and gives you the opportunity to spend time focusing on a topic you're passionate about.**



job, and apply what I learn in my job to my studies." Importantly, she adds, it gives her the opportunity to think differently and more critically. "I am meeting people outside of my corporate job and industry who have a different point of view, with different backgrounds and experiences. I have a challenging day role, which I enjoy, but at times it can be very intense. Being submersed in the academic world allows me to take a different perspective on problem solving, and analyse situations at a deeper level."



The marketeer

Having spent most of her career in the marketing and business data industry Dawn Holmes, who is nearing completion of her DBA, now splits her time between studying, teaching and consulting. She says this mix proves invaluable as each element naturally feeds off each other. "I love the mix of challenges I face in my working day. Typically, in the morning I could be a student myself, in the afternoon I could be teaching on a programme where I have become a specialist, and in the evening I could be doing consultancy work for a client. "The wider point is that my own studies are keeping me up to date with recent trends and ideas, my consulting work is keeping me in touch with business issues and the real world, and my students are keeping everything in perspective and very real for me. At the end of the day, if you cannot explain something to an 18-year-old that gets them energised about learning, then you don't understand it yourself."

Business systems

Dawn has long-established links with Alliance MBS having graduated with a MBA in 1992. At the time she had just begun her career in marketing and was keen to supplement her knowledge with a more formal business education. A few years later she joined Manchester-based electronics company Brother where she worked for many years on a number of marketing campaigns, and also in the emerging field of business

information systems and data-driven decision making. After leaving Brother she set up her own marketing consultancy and, in order to open up more opportunities with larger clients, she embarked on a DBA investigating the use of data to improve B2B customer experiences. As she explains: "The key questions I wanted to ask revolved around what, how and why. What are companies doing, how are they doing it, and why are they doing it? As part of this I've been exploring what is getting in the way and what are the main challenges, and how academic theories and knowledge might help with overcoming them. The end goal is to build a framework, or conceptual model, that will be useful to practitioners. It is not quite a 'how to' guide, more a 'here are some things to think about' guide."

Sector study

As part of her research Dawn has been comparing three very different types of companies in very different sectors - IT, engineering and marketing - to see how much of an impact the sector context has. "One of the biggest challenges for me has been in defining the research, especially in relation to specific terms around data and customer experience. Both areas have a multitude of definitions, so honing that down to something that is relevant and meaningful to management practitioners has been tricky but interesting."



The oil industry specialist

Asked about his job in the oil industry and Scott Wagstaff jokes that he is an "expensive plumber". But his skills in creating oil wells and providing hardware for oil extraction have taken him all over the world over the past 20 years. Today he lives and works in the Middle East where he is a senior completions engineer for a national oil company, and during his career he has split his time equally between working for service companies which produce oil industry equipment, and the big operators which run oilfields. In recent years the links between the two have grown, especially as manufacturers across the sector have been looking to build more revenue streams from specific services. This so-called 'servitization' of manufacturing isn't unique to the oil industry, and is a trend that has been seen across many sectors.

Having worked for both service companies and operators, in recent years Scott has developed a growing interest in the relationship between the two, especially as he has risen to more senior management roles within the industry. So he decided to apply for a DBA to look in more depth at the servitization model across the oil industry and says one of the main reasons that he chose Alliance MBS was the School's triple accreditation, as well as its world-renowned research strengths in fields such as servitization.

Academic paper

A paper that he co-authored with his Alliance MBS supervisors recently appeared in the Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing and explores the relationship between service

companies and operators, and specifically the tensions that emerge between them during the servitization process. He says the study shows that servitization is not a quick fix and that management support in such a scenario is essential. "Although the top tier of management can often be very positive about servitization, this message gets watered down as you go further down each tier of management. In the end human factors over-ride the business benefit. Another important point is that this can happen even when there are strong environmental benefits to servitization such as through the development of new techniques and technologies."

Academic role

Scott has so enjoyed the whole experience of the DBA that in the future he would like to move into more of an academic role. As he adds: "In terms of the demands on your time, and particularly managing the study on top of your day job, there is no doubt that you - and your family too - have to be fully committed to the DBA. For me it has been really worth it because it has changed my whole way of thinking. Critical thinking is now something that comes naturally to me and I find myself asking questions that I would never have previously asked. "What I have done is also quite unusual in the oil industry as managers are far more likely to do a technical masters rather than one built around business thinking, so again this added perspective puts me at an advantage."



# Bigger picture



Our Data Visualisation Observatory is helping develop new data models for a range of organisations and businesses.

## Helping the retail industry

While many online fashion retailers have experienced huge growth during the pandemic, they are also having to contend with the ever increasing problem of high returns.

Before the pandemic, scientists at the Observatory had already begun helping the industry to better understand and map the problem. Specifically, they partnered with Rebound Returns, a company which looks after online returns for a number of leading online fashion retailers, on a project which clustered customers according to their spending behaviour and profitability for retailers. It then mapped that information with specific data around their returns behaviour and also overlaid demographics such as the customer's gender to build up a detailed dataset.

### Creating solutions

Professor Nikolay Mehandjiev from the Observatory explains the background to the project. "We began working on this project before lockdowns were first introduced last year, lockdowns which have only further driven the growth of returns in online fashion. Rebound Returns was keen for us to analyse the problem in greater depth in order to help create solutions, as the habit of returning goods ultimately costs retailers a lot of money. Retailers were also interested in exploring how they could also stop people from returning goods in the first place."

Sam Sahana, Chief Technical Officer and Board Director at Rebound Returns, who is also an Executive MBA alumnus of Alliance MBS, said the project had proved invaluable in terms of mapping the problem and designing possible solutions to tackling it.

"As we expected our study showed that young women in particular are particularly prone to returning goods, while it also showed how expensive items are not returned that much. We could also identify 'renters' who return the majority of their purchases after wearing them a couple of times, and the effect of lockdowns and sales on return rates.

"Now that we have built up this dataset we can begin to look at whether we can start to introduce specific return conditions for certain customers, and also at whether we can introduce different penalty terms for those who persistently return goods."

### Research datasets

The resulting 3D images show how the Observatory allows users to easily generate a variety of 3D views of their research datasets. Specifically, the user works with the Observatory portal to define how the results of analysing their dataset should be presented in a 3D space, without having to programme at any point of the process.

After sending their data to the Observatory portal the user is issued a QR

code by the system and this is their 'ticket' which can be scanned upon arriving in the Observatory. This automatically retrieves the data and visualises the analytic results in a set of interlinked 3D charts.

Added Professor Mehandjiev: "This platform is of use for anyone who wants to visualise a complex data set, so we expect it to be of particular interest across many different sectors. The idea is very much that we take all the hassle away from the user and after loading the data we can do the rest. What is also shown is that some data only truly make sense when you see it represented in 3D."

### VR environment

Meanwhile, leading retailers are being given the opportunity to use the Observatory to analyse consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour in a virtual reality (VR) environment.

The Observatory has set up an immersive virtual reality simulation of a supermarket which can track how consumers interact within a specific retail environment in real-time.

The big benefit of the system for users is the ability to conduct research in a controlled environment which they define themselves. They can also conduct repeat experiments using different store layouts and monitor consumer behaviours, while the platform can also facilitate further data analysis options using AI and data mining algorithms. ●





## Tracking COVID-19 levels

The Observatory recently launched a platform that enables users to track COVID-19 levels across Greater Manchester.

The Greater Manchester Digital Twin model is an immersive 320 degree 3D virtual reality simulation of the city that can superimpose a variety of datasets depending on exactly what information the viewer wants to see.

Data scientists at Alliance MBS have created a programme using geographic heat maps and 3D bar charts which enables decision-makers and the public to see how levels of COVID-19 infections have changed across different parts of the city over time and possible contagion paths.

They believe the platform could have significant benefits for a number of health organisations and government bodies, especially as it links a number of diverse datasets such as multiple deprivation indices, air pollution, and local amenities such as schools and hospitals. Mixing such data could, for instance, help city health chiefs gain a better understanding of why specific areas of the city might be more prone to higher levels of infections than others.

Such is the potential of the software that a collaboration between the School of Health Sciences at The University of Manchester and Alliance MBS has now been launched to explore the opportunities for impact and research arising out of the platform for current epidemiological research.

Dr Qudamah Quboa, Research Associate at the Observatory, said: "The

beauty of the platform is that you can bring together a number of different metrics, whether that's COVID-19 infections, traffic and pollution levels, deprivation indicators, house prices, or crime statistics.

"In terms of COVID-19 we think the platform could potentially be very useful for anyone tracking infection levels across the city region from one week to the next. A heat map enables you to see where the infections are highest, and you can also drill down to see how different factors might be leading to the spread of infections, such as maybe the presence of a large secondary school in a specific area."

### Potential

Dr Quboa added that the Observatory also had the potential to recreate such a city simulation for virtually any location. "In theory we can create these maps for virtually every city in the world."

The platform can also be used for a vast range of other applications. As he added: "For instance, one could also superimpose on the map NO<sub>2</sub> emission data from publicly available sensors so that you can see levels of air pollution across the city. Traffic flows across the city using real traffic datasets could also be added to help transport chiefs monitor traffic levels at peak times, and link flows with real-time air quality." The map can also be superimposed with indices such as house prices and land value datasets, and can also be of use to anyone looking to construct a new building.

### BBC film

The Observatory was also recently featured in a BBC film to support a unique experiment on immunity in the fight against COVID-19.

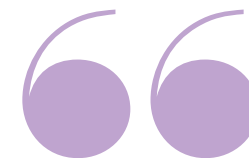
*In The Truth about Boosting your Immune System* Professor Sheena Cruickshank, The University of Manchester's academic lead for Public Engagement with Research and an immunologist, appeared alongside presenter Dr Ronx Ikharia, an emergency medicine doctor.

In the programme, a segment of which was filmed at Alliance MBS, they recruited a group of volunteers with busy lifestyles and gave them an 'immune makeover' by changing their diet, exercise and sleep habits for six weeks in order to test the impact on their immune health.

It's an example of how the Observatory allows users to visualise raw high-quality images using an immersive environment. For instance the visualisation package is also of particular use to cultural institutions wishing to digitise collections, and facilitates the viewing of any high-quality image by curving the image according to the 320 degree arc of the Observatory. ●

# Socially responsible

The pandemic has strengthened student commitment to Sustainable Development Goals.



One of the main aims of our social responsibility strategy is to develop socially responsible graduates.



The world has faced growing global inequalities over the past year, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and our student community has been quick to respond.

This was particularly reflected in The University of Manchester's recent recognition as the world's number one university in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2021. This accolade measures the considerable impact the University has had in forwarding the aims of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Professor Hongwei He, Director for Social Responsibility at Alliance MBS, said the pandemic had strengthened students' commitment to SDGs. As he said: "Many masters' students chose SDGs topics that are COVID-19 related for their dissertations, while we have also seen our existing doctoral students quickly modifying their research topics to cover social issues linked to COVID-19."

#### Projects

Specific examples abound. For instance a team of eight undergraduate students

are supporting professionals at the North West Tax Clinic to provide guidance for those living in the region on low incomes who are facing tax problems. Full-time MBA students have also successfully completed not-for-profit consultancy projects with charitable organisations, The Pankhurst Trust and The National Museum of Computing, to help them overcome challenges posed by the pandemic.

And a team of second-year undergraduate students from Alliance MBS placed in the top 10 teams globally at the annual Business Analytics Competition at Manhattan College which explored the links between socioeconomic data and COVID-19 data in New York.

#### Scholarships

Alliance MBS was the first UK business school, as part of The University of Manchester, to make social responsibility a core strategic goal, and another way in which we demonstrate this is through our Social Responsibility Scholarship programme.

Successful scholars are academically accomplished, achieving AAA at A-Level

(or equivalent) and complete a written application demonstrating a significant contribution and dedication to social responsibility. Before joining, they also set out their plans and ambitions for personal development during their time at university, so they can make a difference to the world when they leave Alliance MBS.

As Professor He adds: "One of the main aims of our social responsibility strategy is to develop socially responsible graduates. The scholarships support outstanding undergraduate students who have made positive contributions to society, the environment, and their local communities, typically through volunteering, fundraising or community-based projects."

The awards are worth £2,000 per year across three years of undergraduate study, but students benefit from more than just the financial support the scholarship offers. For instance scholars are also assigned a mentor to support initiatives and personal development for the duration of their studies.



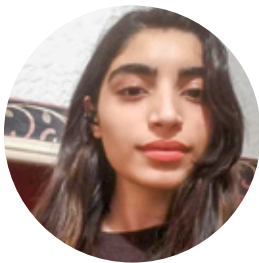
# Class of 2020

As we wait for the class of 2021 Scholars to join Alliance MBS, we caught up with the SR scholars who joined the School in October 2020. They told us which social responsibility issues they are most passionate about, and how their scholarship has further motivated and enabled them to take action to make a positive impact.



**Xin Ni (China)**  
*BSc (Hons) Management  
(Accounting and Finance)*

"Being a SR scholar gives me the platform and resources to make a bigger impact. I have joined a SR NGO and I hope to utilise the resources to make a greater contribution to SR issues in the future."



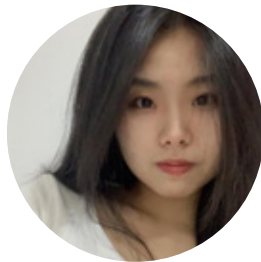
**Zobia Aamir (UK)**  
*BSc (Hons) Management (Marketing)*

"Being a SR scholar has allowed me to find more ways to become more socially responsible and get involved in more charitable projects. I am passionate about helping the community, animals and people, and am currently involved in litter picking in my area, feeding stray cats, and the NHS youth scheme."



**Eryn Burch (UK)**  
*BSc (Hons) Management  
(International Business Economics)  
with Industrial/Professional Experience*

"The main benefits of being a scholar are the financial freedom and time it gives me to pursue projects I am interested in, mainly concerning both physical and mental health and wellbeing. Due to COVID-19 and the UK lockdown, mental health issues have become more significant, and as a result, this is something I want to focus on more in the future."



**Shiying Ma (China)**  
*BSc (Hons) Accounting*

"Due to the pandemic I'm currently studying in China. Fortunately I am still able to work with ReachOut, a charity that partners with schools in disadvantaged communities to support young people. Working with teenagers from Stretford High School online, I have learned that inequality has a significant impact on young people's development. The impact of COVID-19, has resulted in even more obstacles to the education and wellbeing of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds."



**Sarina Ramchandani (Spain)**  
*BSc (Hons) in Information Technology Management  
for Business with Industrial Experience*

"I have a strong interest in volunteering for community-based projects and charitable societies. As a SR scholar, I not only gained recognition from my university for something I enjoy doing, but it provides me with the opportunity to work collaboratively on future projects with my fellow scholars."



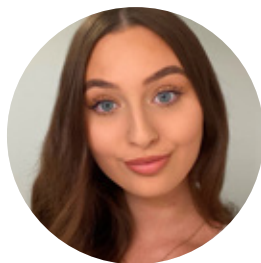
**Rathan Rishi Mohanasundaram (India)**  
*BSc (Hons) International Business, Finance and Economics with Industrial/Professional Experience*

"The scholarship motivates me to pursue my interests in social responsibility activities. I am interested in climate change and social issues such as promoting safety for women. This year I have written two blogs about climate change, one focusing on the impact of the US presidential election on the climate agenda."



**Melanie Preen (UK)**  
*BSc (Hons) in Information Technology Management  
for Business with Industrial Experience*

"I am dedicated to tackling environmental issues and inequality. I have recently been selected for a prestigious European entrepreneurial programme and hope to start-up environmentally conscience companies in future. As part of my degree, I have learned about technological solutions such as Tableau and software development which I can use to deliver solutions to social issues."



**Grace Mckeown (UK)**  
*BSc (Hons) International Business, Finance and Economics with Industrial/Professional Experience*

"There are massive benefits to being an SR scholar. This scholarship provides a platform for me to collaborate with like-minded people and access the resources needed in order to achieve our SR goals. The financial component of the scholarship also enables me to work fewer hours and consequently focus more of my time on SR initiatives and volunteer schemes."

A large teal circle containing the text 'ORIGINAL THINKING APPLIED' in white, bold, uppercase letters.

# **ORIGINAL THINKING APPLIED**