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University launches first academic centre for Women's Enterprise and Leadership (CWEL)

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The University of Birmingham's Business School and the Women's Business Development Agency have formed a partnership to create the UK's first academic centre devoted to women's enterprise and leadership.

The new **Centre for Women's Enterprise and Leadership (CWEL)** will fuse excellent academic research with practical training programmes focusing on maximising economic opportunities for women and girls across Europe and in the world's developing economies. One of the Centre's key projects is the development of an international advisory service for governments and other institutions on successful enterprise and leadership support for women.

CWEL will also have a strong community focus, offering mentoring, business support and leadership programmes to girls and women in the West Midlands.

Among the exciting projects the new Centre will run are:

- The first national specialist support service for women graduates in life sciences to start and grow businesses in the sector.
- Development of a scholarship and exchange programme for future women leaders in the developing economies, enabling them to participate in University of Birmingham Leadership and **MBA programmes (/schools/business/mba/index.aspx)**
- Delivery of business support programmes and networking activity for Asian women-owned businesses in the West Midlands.
- Development and delivery of enterprise awareness and aspirational programmes for women facing particular challenges at a time when female unemployment is the highest for twenty five years. These include older women facing redundancy from the public sector and refugee women with permanent leave to remain in the UK.
- The creation and facilitation of a Women's Leadership Forum for the West Midlands

Susan Marlow, Professor of Entrepreneurship at Birmingham Business School comments: "We are excited to be launching a Centre that brings together academic research with practical programs for women. From the academic perspective there is a need to understand more about the role gender plays in entrepreneurship. Our new Centre will also look beyond the UK to examine how ideas of female entrepreneurship can be applied in developing countries."

Sally Arkley Director of the Women's Business Development Agency comments: "Female unemployment in the UK at its highest level for 25 years, which demonstrates the urgent need for services that can empower and assist women to succeed in business. The new Centre will be underpinned by excellent academic research but will also focus on offering practical and successful programmes.

We intend to work with groups who have traditionally not received support in business and entrepreneurship to raise both their aspiration to succeed in business and the skills to achieve that success."

Professor David Dickinson (/staff/profiles/business/dickinson-david.aspx) Director of Birmingham Business School adds: "Birmingham Business School has a long history of using our academic expertise to assist business in our region. This new centre is designed to further enhance those links, offering help for a wide range of groups from raising awareness of business ownership amongst school aged children to bespoke support for entrepreneurs wanting to develop an already successful idea."

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