flame winner
In 2009 Michael won the top prize in the University’s flame competition, with his online-based business Grandparties.

As a regular visitor to clubs and bars in London during his student days, Michael spotted an opportunity to partner up with clubs to ensure venues filled their space.

‘Venues would always try to get you into their doors rather than their competitors, so I thought they must value us going into their venue and subsequently be willing to give up some of their door entry price to me, to drive customers through their doors.’

Michael got his big break when he partnered up with his first nightclub and the business went from strength to strength. Grandparties has since been renamed London Nightclubs and now operates as an informal review website so that Michael can focus all of his energy on his web design business, Smart Cookie Design.

Education and enterprise
While studying at Hertfordshire, Michael made the most of his time by taking a one-year placement as a Marketing and Communications Assistant.

‘I found that I really benefitted from the other activities that the University put on. I made sure that I attended Enterprise workshops, and took the opportunity to network with others who were starting their own businesses. I was also given the opportunity to gain advice and expertise from academics, including Nigel Culkin, the Professor of Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Development.’

Taking part in the flame competition gave Michael and his team the chance to really push their name out and the money they won was used to boost their marketing activities.

Future plans
With an office in London, Michael spends all of his time building on his design business. Now in their fifth year, Michael and the Smart Cookie Design team have worked with clients across the globe, both big and small.

‘I’m hoping to grow Smart Cookie Design both in terms of revenue we take, as well as the size and quality of our clients. Other than that I’ll just see where things take me.’

As for lessons learnt in his previous business? ‘I learnt how important and valuable a website can be and what things need to be considered to make a website work.’