



# 24/25

## Student Enterprise Annual Report

August 2024 - July 2025



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# The team

**Our team, comprised of six dedicated members working at a collective capacity of 4.5 full-time equivalents (FTE), is committed to providing expanded opportunities to develop enterprise skills and entrepreneurship amongst our students and graduates. Our mission is to deliver an inclusive entrepreneurship strategy where students feel supported to confidently pursue their business or freelancing aspirations.**

We support students who want to start their own business or who are interested in enhancing their employability by practicing entrepreneurial skills through our three streams:

1. Start-Up, Incubation and Networking
2. Entrepreneurial Skills and Mindset
3. Inspire Programme

The Enterprise team operates within the larger team of Student Futures, and as part of the broader initiative we have 6 Graduate attributes which were designed in partnership with employers. The importance of entrepreneurial skills is recognised within these attributes, with the following attribute:

<p>Innovative, enterprising and commercially aware</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate original ideas and apply creative, imaginative and innovative thinking in response to identified needs and problems</li> <li>• Take the initiative to act on own ideas and the ideas of others, balancing risk and returns and making things happen</li> <li>• Be confident in pursuing entrepreneurship as a viable and rewarding career path</li> <li>• Understand organisations, their stakeholders and their impact on the economy</li> </ul>
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We support all Cardiff University students as well as graduates of up to 3 years.

Our work includes:

- Online pathways of resources
- 1-1 mentoring
- Networking and panel events
- Extra-curricular workshops
- In-curriculum workshops
- Bootcamps
- The Start-up and Freelance Awards
- 100 Big Ideas
- Science Innovation Challenge
- The Inspire Programme
- Provision of free hot-desking space in spark|sbarc
- Bremen and Cardiff Sustainability and Entrepreneurship Programme

# Our impact

We're responsible for delivering the Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy within Cardiff University. It is our duty to raise awareness and aspirations around entrepreneurship, provide opportunities for skills development, and support students and graduates with business start-up.

## Engage

Engaging young people in awareness of entrepreneurship in awareness raising activity through lecture shout-outs, careers fairs and drop-ins

➔ **10,719**

## Empower

Empowering young people to explore entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and aspirations through workshops and skill sessions both curricular and extra-curricular activities

➔ **812**

## Equip

Equipping students to take clear action to working towards their business idea through online pathways and 121 guidance and support

➔ **Nurture 121**

➔ **Start-up 55**

## Enable

Enabling others in the university and in the private sector to support and deliver entrepreneurial activity

➔ **63**

“ The ways I could get involved and learn about the terms and ways business was run by professionals, yet still maintain my independence as a learner and as a creator of ideas. I liked how there wasn't pressure to commit to starting anything and the process could go at my pace.



# Start-up, Incubation and Networking

**This is the team's core business, supporting students who want to develop a business idea.**

Our support is centered around our online pathways that provide resources for students to work through in their own time. Through these online pathways, students can also unlock the opportunity to access 1-1 mentoring meetings from one of our 2 part-time business mentors.

We have provided 3 pathways for students, and the students must complete the first pathway in order to unlock one of the additional pathways to access the additional resources:

- The Start-Up and Freelance Pathway
- Becoming a Freelancer
- Building your start-up business

These pathways take them all the way from idea right through to what they need to do to launch their business. They are able to follow the journeys of 4 Cardiff alumni in the first pathway so that they are not alone at any point, and they can use the mentoring support at any stage they wish.



**I really enjoyed the pathway and thought there were some great steps to help you get the business up and running.**

## Pathway instances

➔ **226**

## 1-1 meetings

➔ **28**

On top of this, students have the opportunity to access hot-desking space in the fantastic facility of sbarc|spark where they can work alongside a range of successful start-ups for up to 12 months for free.

Also under this stream we have our two biggest competitions of the year:

- 100 Big Ideas
- Start-Up and Freelance Awards



# 100 Big Ideas

Originally launched at Southampton University, this exciting initiative has now made its way to Wales, with Cardiff University proudly participating. This competition offers an incredible opportunity for creative and ambitious students, with 100 cash prizes of £100 each and one exceptional idea earning a grand prize of £500.

We ran this for a second consecutive year in the Autumn term and saw an increase of applications from the previous year:

2023: **110**

2024: **167**

The competition culminated in a celebration evening where the 100 winning ideas were announced, including the grand prize winner of £500: Arnav Jain from the school of Computer Science, with his idea of the E-Tap:

“ Winning this competition was an incredible experience, and it all started with a simple idea to make everyday life more sustainable. E-Tap, my project, integrates smart technology to help consumers save water effortlessly while enhancing convenience. This competition is your chance to think big, get creative, and showcase your innovation—go for it! Whether your idea is big or small, it could make a real impact, and this platform is a great opportunity to bring it to life.

We look forward to running this award for a third year and seeing even more amazing student ideas come through in Autumn 2025.





# Start-up and Freelance Awards

This is our biggest competition and biggest event of the year. This competition provides students and recent graduates to win funding of up to £5,000 towards their business idea.

For the Spring 2025 awards we have 4 award categories:

- Inspired Engineer – top prize of £1,500 (sponsored by EIBF)
- Inspiring Idea – top prize of £1,000 (sponsored by Santander Universities)
- Innovative Developer – top prize of £3,000 (sponsored by Santander Universities)
- Outstanding Founder – top prize of £5,000 (sponsored by Santander Universities)

There were three stages to the application process:

- Online application – accessed through the Start-up and freelance pathway
- Video application – if shortlisted from the online application
- Pitch to a panel of judges – the final 6 per category were invited to pitch in front of a panel of [external judges](#)

The winners are announced at our annual awards ceremony which took place in sbarc|spark on 10 April 2025. As part of the awards night, the audience watched videos of the finalist from the three Santander sponsored categories and voted for their favourites live, and the audience winners in each category received £500.

The 2025 winners were:

## Inspired Engineer

**Winner:** Alexander Mabon with EzCool

**Second place:** Oscar Mabon and Joel Cartwright with RocketLabs

**Third place:** Aaron Sondh with VisiShave

## Inspiring Idea

**Winner:** Elizabeth Adetoye with Sustainable Smiles

**Runner-up:** Bethany Francis and Paige Bicker-Caarten with Baby Bean

**Audience winner:** Elizabeth Adetoye with Sustainable Smiles

## Innovative Development

**Winner:** Yusif Algurair and Thomas Orford-Morgan with Light Works

**Runner-up:** Faith Martin Abongo with VivaNova

**Audience winner:** Yusif Algurair and Thomas Orford-Morgan with Light Works

## Outstanding Founder

**Winner:** Christopher Dixon, Declan Richardson and Tomas Richards with CNIC

**Runner-up:** Lewis Bowen, Evan Jenkins, Adam Shannon, Tobiah Nott with Pontiro

**Audience winner:** Archie Wilkins, Abdul Miah and George Lindh with Fit-In App



# Entrepreneur of the month

Each month during the academic year, we celebrate an entrepreneur, or entrepreneurs of the month. This gives students and recent graduates who are developing a business idea a chance to showcase their businesses and share their stories.

Our 24-25 Entrepreneurs of the month were:

October 2024: **Elliot Allen**

November 2024: **Jennifer Goodge**

December 2024: **Hajira Irfan and Harry Parkinson**

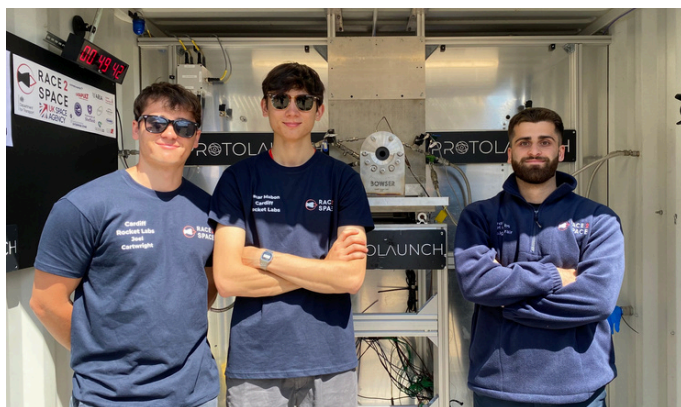
January 2025: **Kai Challicombe**

February 2025: **Oscar Mabon and Yusif Al-Gurair**

March 2025: **Jaideep Pande**

April 2025: **Calvin Bang**

May 2025: **Tomas Richards, Declan Richardson and Christopher Dixon**





# Entrepreneurial Skills and Mindset

**Our entrepreneurial skills and mindset stream include delivery workshops in the curriculum as well as extra-curricular activities.**

We worked with 11 different schools at the university throughout the year. We delivered a variety of sessions as part of their curriculum including:

- Idea generation with Lego Serious Play and How to identify your ideal customer
- Freelancing
- Networking and pitching for freelancers
- Business model canvas
- Entrepreneurial edge
- Creating a killer pitch

We also delivered workshops as part of the central Student Futures extra-curricular offering. We delivered 26 workshops and events across the year including:

- Networking and how to sell yourself
- Bringing your ideas to life with Lego Serious Play
- How to start a side-hustle
- Talking business panel event
- Mix-up and pitch

As well as some workshops that we did in collaboration with other teams including:

- Steps to network – with Career Confident
- Workplace success – with Advice and Guidance

In the summer we also worked with two different teams supporting young people by delivering workshops within their programmes:

- the Work Experience team with the Willows Project, working with students from a local secondary school who came into the university for the day.
- the Widening Participation team with their Step-Up Summer School 3-day programme.

# Student attendance

In-curriculum: **286**

Extra-curricular activities with schools: **30**

Extra-curricular activities delivered centrally: **142**



I am leaving feeling more positive about my abilities and empowered to chase the things I want.



The real stories from successful entrepreneurs really inspired me to go forward with my studies and career with confidence.

## Inspire Programme

Our third stream of activity is our Inspire programmes which introduces students to the principles of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship by challenging them to tackle complex, real-world issues, often referred to as "wicked problems." Through engaging, optional activities such as group hackathons and short programmes, students collaborate to develop innovative solutions.



# Bremen and Cardiff Sustainability and Entrepreneurship Programme

We started the academic year with the fourth edition of our two-week sustainability and entrepreneurship programme, delivered in partnership with the Global Opportunities team and the University of Bremen in Germany. For the first time, Cardiff hosted the in-person second week, following an online first week. Students from both universities collaborated in mixed teams to address challenges faced in their university cities through workshops, local business visits, and final pitches to a judging panel.

**12** Student from the University of Bremen

**17** Students from Cardiff University

**5** new ideas



**A brilliant two weeks to network and learn about sustainable entrepreneurship.**

Student Business ideas:

- **SUP Box** – helping international students settle in without hassle - This was a welcome box providing essential kitchen items to international students which the company will then buy back the box at the end of the year (at a reduced price) to reduce waste and enable the students to receive money back as an incentive not to bin it.
- **Green Shift** – Education for Tomorrow – practical education and encouraging behavioural change through workshops and courses as well as having incentives to encourage students to improve their sustainability practices.
- **LOOP App** – student deals, sustainable feels – a local student marketplace for buying and selling used items where they can do local drop-offs at the university (rather than posting across the country)
- **Neuro Zone** – unlock your optimal mind – a sensory study room designed to support students with mental health issues, and the offer of workshops to help students tackle problems.
- **Website dashboard** for universities to improve and monitor sustainability in their buildings.

**100% of participants said they would attend a similar event next year or recommend to others that they should.**

# Inspire

In the Autumn term we ran our 5-week Inspire programme on the topic of the cost-of-living crisis, as voted for by students at the Spring careers fair. The programme began with a one-day hackathon and was followed by a series of workshops before the students pitched their ideas for feedback at the end of the 5 weeks.

**20** Students

**6** teams

Student Business ideas:

- Bloom Budgets
- BOOSTability
- Skillsbridge
- Cokit
- Sparkhouse
- UniNest

**100% of the autumn 2024 cohort said they would recommend this programme to a friend!**



I really enjoyed the support from the staff and the resources provided during the workshops. I also enjoyed working in interdisciplinary groups and learning from new people.



# Science Innovation Challenge

This was a new initiative for us that we were able to run because of the Engineers in Business Fellowship (EIBF) funding being extended to support students in Science. This was a one-day hackathon event open to students from the following disciplines:

- Bioscience
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Earth and Environmental Sciences

We posed the challenge of: How can we make science education more inclusive and equitable across the UK? The students were put into interdisciplinary teams, and we guided them through mini workshops to help them develop their idea before pitching for a share of £3,000 at the end of the day.

1<sup>st</sup> place: **STEMpower**

2<sup>nd</sup> place: **Watt's Up Science**

3<sup>rd</sup> place: **Curiosity Camps**

**29** Students

**7** teams

**28** of the students said they had either improved or significantly improved in their confidence to develop a good business idea and become an entrepreneur



...it was the best experience I did in my second year!



...it was a really well-rounded experience that developed so many interpersonal skills.

# Other

## Enactus

Cardiff Enactus became the first team from Wales to win the Enactus UK and Ireland national competition and qualify to compete at the Enactus World Cup in Bangkok in September 2025. The team consists of 4 students from Physics and Engineering. Their project, Spiruflow, is an algae-based direct air carbon capture (DACC) system that uses a chemical solution to capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and feeds it directly to algae. The team initially won the Inspired Engineer award at Cardiff University in May 2023 and three of the team along with a staff member from the enterprise team will travel to Bangkok for the final in September.

You can find out more [here](#).



# Get involved

If you're a student – search '[start a business](#)' on the intranet to find out about this years opportunities.

If you're a graduate (within the last few years) sign up for a [graduate Student Futures account](#) and join our online pathway.

If you're an alumni, take a look at our [offering](#) and contact the alumni team: [alumni@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@cardiff.ac.uk) if you want to support students through judging panels and talks.

If you're an academic, reach out to [find out](#) how we can make your modules more entrepreneurial.

Cyhoeddwyd yr enillwyr yn ein seremoni wobrwyo flynyddol a gynhaliwyd yn sbarc|spark ar 10 Ebrill 2025. Yn rhan o'r noson wobrwyo, gwylodd y gynulleidfa fideos o rownd derfynol y tri chategori a noddir gan Santander a phleidleision nhw dros eu ffefrynnau yn fyw, ac enillodd enillwyr y gynulleidfa ym mhob categori £500.

Enillwyr 2025 oedd:

## Peiriannydd Ysbrydoledig

**Yr enillydd:** Alexander Mabon - EzCool

**Yn ail:** Oscar Mabon a Joel Cartwright - RocketLabs

**Yn drydydd:** Aaron Sondh - VisiShave

## Datblygiad Arloesol

**Yr enillydd:** Yusif Algurair a Thomas Orford-Morgan - Light Works

**Yn ail:** Faith Martin Abongo - VivaNova

**Enillydd y gynulleidfa:** Yusif Algurair a Thomas Orford-Morgan - Light Works

## Syniad Ysbrydoledig

**Yr enillydd:** Elizabeth Adetoye - Sustainable Smiles

**Yn ail:** Bethany Francis a Paige Bicker-Caarten - Baby Bean

**Enillydd y gynulleidfa:** Elizabeth Adetoye - Sustainable Smiles

## Sylfaenydd Rhagorol

**Yr enillydd:** Christopher Dixon, Declan Richardson a Tomas Richards - CNIC

**Yn ail:** Lewis Bowen, Evan Jenkins, Adam Shannon, Tobiah Nott - Pontiro

**Enillydd y gynulleidfa:** Archie Wilkins, Abdul Miah a George Lindh - Fit-In App



# Entrepreneur y mis

Bob mis yn ystod y flwyddyn academaidd, rydym yn dathlu entrepreneur neu entrepreneuriaid y mis. Mae hyn yn rhoi'r cyfle i fyfyrwyr a graddedigion diweddar sy'n datblygu syniad busnes ddangos y gorau o'u busnesau a rhannu eu straeon.

Entrepreneuriaid y mis yn 24-25 oedd:

Hydref 2024: **Elliot Allen**

Tachwedd 2024: **Jennifer Goodge**

Rhagfyr 2024: **Hajira Irfan a Harry Parkinson**

Ionawr 2025: **Kai Challicombe**

Chwefror 2025: **Oscar Mabon a Yusif Al-Gurair**

Mawrth 2025: **Jaideep Pande**

Ebrill 2025: **Calvin Bang**

Mai 2025: **Tomas Richards, Declan Richardson a Christopher Dixon**

