



STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARDS

**BUILDING LONDON'S STARTUP COMMUNITY:
INTERVIEW WITH VASILY ALEKSEENKO**

**MARKETING AND BRANDING TIPS FOR
YOUR STARTUP**

SCRATCH

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WELCOME



Welcome to the sixth edition of the Student Startups SCRATCH magazine! Published annually, SCRATCH gives us opportunity to shine a light on some of the amazing entrepreneurial activity across our student and graduate community.

We are living in a world where it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the scale of challenges facing us. At the University of Exeter, we believe that entrepreneurial education and experiences will empower you to harness your skills and knowledge to address these challenges in creative and innovative ways; to take action, create positive change and make impact. That might be through starting-up your own venture, or by innovating within an existing organisation.

The Student Startups team are here to help you explore and develop your entrepreneurial ideas and start new ventures. Last year, we accepted 224 applicants into our extra-curricular startup programmes. We scheduled 98 pitches and awarded 54 Grant Awards, totalling almost £40,000. We have seen some remarkable success stories from our graduates who are running successful companies and making a positive impact economically, environmentally and socially. In 2023, UK-based Exeter Graduate startups collectively raised over £22million in investment and had a combined annual turnover of almost £42million.

There are lots of ways to gain entrepreneurial skills and experience at Exeter - through curricular modules, extra-curricular programmes and student-led societies. We have multiple maker spaces across our campus' in which you can build and test your ideas – from spaces that encourage creative play to technical workshops that enable high-fidelity prototyping. We have a community of academics and practitioners across all Faculties and Departments who work collaboratively to strengthen our entrepreneurial ecosystem. And we can connect you into the wider business community across the southwest region, enabling you to access additional opportunities and build your professional network.

Thank you to our colleagues who support and champion our work and the opportunities available to you all. And thank you to all the entrepreneurs we work with, who continue to amaze us with their ambition, enthusiasm and innovative ideas.

Happy reading!

THE STUDENT STARTUPS TEAM

MEET OUR TEAM



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STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARDS



The University of Exeter has celebrated another successful year of student startups and innovation at the Student Entrepreneurship Awards.



The event celebrated student entrepreneurship activities delivered across the university, including the Student Startups programmes, the With Proficiency in Entrepreneurship degree pathway, and the Engineering and Entrepreneurship degree programme.

The Student Startups programme, an extra-curricular offering at the University open to any student who wishes to develop a business idea, has seen 224 core participants this year and has awarded 54 grants to student and graduate-led businesses totalling almost £40,000.

Emily Davies, Head of Student Entrepreneurship said: "It was so special to celebrate the incredible achievements of our student entrepreneurs. And to recognise the deep value and impact that programmes like this can have. In building confidence and resilience; encouraging enquiry and exploration; developing empathy and creativity; fostering self-reflection and self-awareness."

Attendees also heard from student Mattia Vancini, who won an award at last year's event and gave a keynote speech sharing his journey exploring entrepreneurship.

The event also celebrated the achievements of students who have graduated from the With Proficiency in Entrepreneurship pathway run by the Business School. This year 154 students completed four entrepreneurship modules over the duration of their course to graduate this year with a "With Proficiency in Entrepreneurship" title added to their degree certificate.

Raphael Dennett, Director of the WPIE Pathway said: "We have more students from across different disciplines and backgrounds than ever and all eager and ready to create meaningful impact in their industries. It is incredible to see the next generation of solution-givers and challengers to the status quo, launching forward with their ideas!"



Six exceptional individuals were recognised for their achievements on the Student Startups programmes this year:



Business and Management student Tomiwa Adeoye won the **Social Impact Award** for his venture AfroExeExperience which is bringing Afrobeat and Ampiano live music nights to Exeter for the first time.



Iman Alibeigi (PGR Engineering) won the **Environmental Impact Award** for his venture InfraFund, which is a blockchain-based crowdfunding platform for renewable energy projects.



Engineering and Entrepreneurship student Eleanor Griffin won the **Tech Innovation Award** to recognise Opas Guides, which uses technology to design and manufacture patient-specific instrumentation for orthopaedic hip surgery.



The **Rising Star Award** was awarded to Lorenzo Satta Chiris for his efforts working on multiple projects this year including the Exeter Entrepreneurs Society.



The **People's Choice Award** went to Giselle Hegstad to recognise her positive contribution to the programmes and her willingness to help others.



The **Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award** went to Business and Environment student Ruairi Duignan to recognise the passion and hard work he put into his venture Turbo Zone.

RARE FOUNDERS

LONDON'S MOST EXCITING NEW STARTUP COMMUNITY

With Founder Vasily Alekseenko



Words by Emily Davies

Rare Founders is one of the fastest-growing communities of startup founders and investors in London. We sat down with its founder Vasily Alekseenko to find out more.

Rare Founders began life as 'The London Startup Scene'. The first event took place in a pub in central London in February 2023. At the time, Vasily was looking to raise investment for a tech startup in the Corporate Wellness space. He didn't have an investor network and was frustrated with the lack of results he was getting from networking events he was attending in London. At one event, Vasily arrived to find a pub packed with people, but the organiser hadn't shown up and he heard many of the attendees complain about how badly organised it was.

He went to the same pub the next day and persuaded the Manager to hire the space to him for free. Four weeks later Vasily ran his first event - attracting 500 sign-ups, with 250 attendees on the



day. Vasily also started being very active on LinkedIn – sharing photos, videos and engaging testimonials from the events and within a couple of months, he was being approached by the likes of Innovate UK and HSBC who wanted to discuss partnerships with him.

Fast forward to April 2024 and Rare Founder hosted their first conference, billed as London's largest demo day. It attracted 800 attendees, including 200 investors, with an additional 200 people on the waitlist. The event featured networking and speakers as well as pitches from 100 pre-selected pre-seed to Series A stage founders.

"All you can do is bring people together...you can't guarantee that things will work out in terms of actual investment."

But it did happen: one of the ventures secured EUR 500,000 investment within a week of the Demo

Day.

I ask Vasily what he thinks has led to such a rapid growth of this community. He thinks it's a combination of a few different factors. Post-covid, there was a lack of well-curated events and so people were glad of an opportunity to meet-up in-person to make new connections and build new networks. The events combine speakers, networking and open mic pitching and Vasily is determined to ensure the events are lively and fun. For example, founders are selected from the crowd and offered 1 minute to pitch and if they start to over-run, the audience are encouraged to fire water pistols at them!

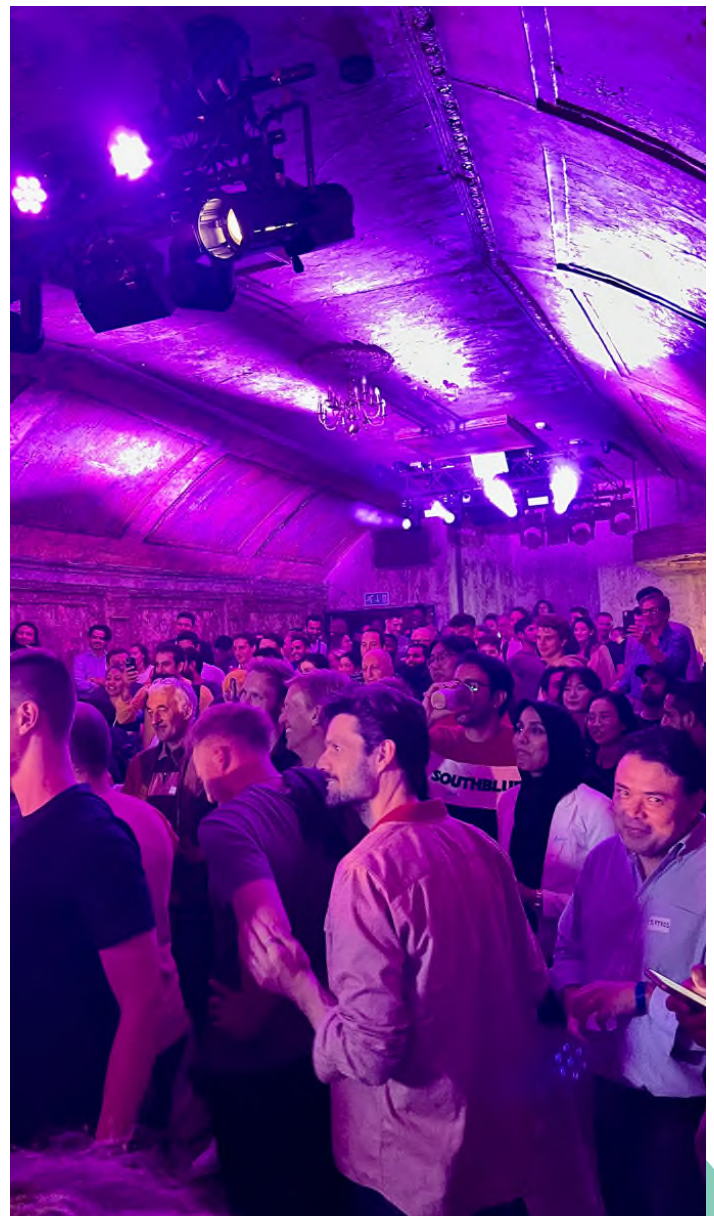
In terms of attracting investors, Vasily believes that the key was to tap into that sense of fear of missing out.

"I signed up the first company as an investor partner and then the second company signed up because the first one signed up. Within a week we

had about 40 big names signed up who helped us to rate the applications."

I asked Vasily whether he has always been entrepreneurial. He told me that he believes the entrepreneurial spark has been there a long time, but he lacked confidence to execute his ideas. He

also tended to get stuck in research and identifying all the challenges and reasons his ideas might fail. He realised that the most successful entrepreneurs that he knows are 'do-ers'; they take action, fail fast, learn and try again. What felt different with this venture was that it was the first time that Vasily really trusted



his own instincts. It hasn't been easy.

"The further you get, the bigger the imposter syndrome gets".

But Vasily's instincts certainly seem to be paying off; as the network continues to grow, a co-founder has come on-board and they have very exciting plans in the pipeline.

I ask Vasily about the best piece of advice he's been given, and he tells me a story about a conversation he had some time ago. The investor said "Why do you need money? You need to find ways to do this without money because having money without knowing how it's going to help you solve the problem is not going to help you."

Vasily felt frustrated by these words but with time, he believes it was some of the best advice he's ever been given.

"Now, I have managed to do so many things without money."

"And once you realise you can do things without money, it changes your mindset and mentality, and that is super powerful."

I tell Vasily that I am struck by how quickly this venture has gained momentum and ask how he feels about having paused work on his other start-up to focus his full attention on Rare Founders.

"Back in August, when I started to work on this full-time, I realised I like doing this and I can help other people to fulfill their dreams. And this has much bigger value than just doing things for myself. And if one day I could be remembered for being part of somebody's journey, then that would be a great thing for me."

Vasily studied for an MSc in Finance and Economics, graduating in 2009.

To find out more, visit <https://www.rarefounders.com/>



FILM-MAKING IN CORNWALL

MEET GALATEA HOYLE



Sharing the campus with Falmouth university, a leading arts school with amazing photography courses, creates a fantastic opportunity for collaboration. All student societies are open to both universities and thanks to this I am part of an amazing society called Nature Watch. We make short wildlife documentaries with a focus on Cornish wildlife. I have been involved in the research and production of several shorts, and it's been a privilege to collaborate with such talented early career filmmakers at Falmouth.

In addition to my degree, I take part in many extra or "super" curriculums. I am Vice President of the Penryn Press society, a student lead publishing house, which has been an amazing creative outlet and a great place to make friends. We've published a magazine every year, and this year, wrote a grant proposal that won us enough money to purchase 10 ISBN numbers! This will allow us to publish a book every year for the next decade of the society, starting with our 10 year anniversary edition of "Into the Roots" this summer.

I took part in the Student Startup programme throughout my second year, and had an amazing time, even successfully pitching for £300 of funding at the end of the course.

The skills I learnt through Student Startups came in handy in my third year, when I pitched

for £4,000 through the Woodland Trust's Igniting Innovation Challenge, for a podcast I'm starting with my friends, called Generation Nature.

The podcast is still in its infancy, but a previous documentary project we worked on, through Young Voices for Nature now has over 8.5k views on YouTube. Our Beautiful Wild is a film that aims to inspire other young people to engage with nature. I got to work on this project in the summer before my final year, alongside data collection for my dissertation! It was wonderful to be engaging in practical behavioural research, and a massive science communication project, all in one (slightly chaotic) summer in Cornwall.

The skills and knowledge I have developed throughout my degree have been invaluable, and I'm excited to apply them throughout my future career. I'm hoping to move to Bristol to work as a researcher in the documentary film industry. (After a few more years in sunny Cornwall!) Whilst I'm excited to graduate, I'm going to look back on my time at Exeter-Penryn Campus with the fondest memories."





INTRODUCING SHOTS



Words by Julia Mackay

“Can you send me pictures from last night?”

This was a message that Computer Science student Adam O'Neill was tired of sending to friends after a meet-up, event or night out. Using his skills in coding, Adam created SHOTS, a photo-based mobile app striving to bring people together through memories.

Using the free app, which has more than 500 downloads, users can join an event, and are prompted with regular reminders to take a “shot” – a photo to capture the moment. At the end of the event all the shots captured are released for participants to see.

Adam coded the app from scratch over the summer after

completing his A-Levels and before starting his first year at the University of Exeter.

Adam said: “I wanted a coding project over the summer to develop my skillset for industry. I started to make the app in August while on holiday with my parents after spending my summer constantly asking for photos from everyone that I went out with.”

“I learnt how to make the app from an empty text file all the way to the full-stack application in 4 months. Once I finished it I began telling people and realised there may be commercial value to the project.”

Adam enrolled in and completed the Spring

Student Startups Pre-Incubator programme run at the University to grow his idea, and successfully pitched for a £500 market validation grant, made possible by philanthropic partner Santander Universities UK.

Jasmine Hammond, Student Startups Manager said: “It’s fantastic to see Adam apply both his life experience and learned skills to design a concept that can be brought to life and that can be enjoyed by students and events companies. We look forward to supporting him on the next steps of his journey.”

Over the summer, Adam also pitched his idea to an audience of students and local businesspeople at

Demo Night, held at the Exeter Innovation Hub.

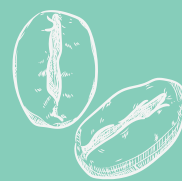
Since the soft-launch, Adam has continued to develop the app, introducing new features, and has also built a website.

Talking about the future, Adam said: “The dream is to take on larger festivals like Reading or Glastonbury to facilitate large groups coming together to create memories – there’s still some way to go!”

“I am currently a solo-founder and am looking to grow the team. I’m always open to new connections.”

To find out more, or to download SHOTS, visit:

www.download.shots.camera



VELO PROJECT

Economics and Politics graduate Jeremy Daubeny is on a mission to make a difference supporting vulnerable people, one coffee at a time!

Jeremy's new coffee bike venture Velo Project has teamed up with the YMCA in Exeter, who do amazing work getting people back on their feet and getting them into supported accommodation around the city. 100% of Velo Project's profits will go to the YMCA.

Jeremy is incredibly passionate about cycling and fundraising, having previously completed two impressive cycling challenges – a tour of the UK and a cycle to Greece – to raise money for the MNDA and Brain Tumour charity.

Jeremy said: "As students we have a limited time living in Exeter and I discovered I could make a bigger impact by connecting with local organisations to tackle local issues. Velo Project aims to encourage conversations around the issue of homelessness and what the YMCA is doing, as well as fundraising to support their vital work."

Keep an eye out for his bike coming to Exeter soon and [follow the project on Instagram!](#)





INTRODUCING PURITI

In conversation with Peter Kabaaga



Tell me about yourself and your business.

I am a first-generation Ugandan, born in London. Currently, I am pursuing a BSc in Business Studies with Proficiency in Entrepreneurship at the University of Exeter. My professional experience is predominantly in sales, but entrepreneurship has always been my passion.

This year I have been establishing my business venture, Puriti, which seeks to help SMEs in the construction to monitor their carbon footprint. I have recently completed the Incubator programme and successfully pitched for funding.

What was the inspiration behind Puriti?

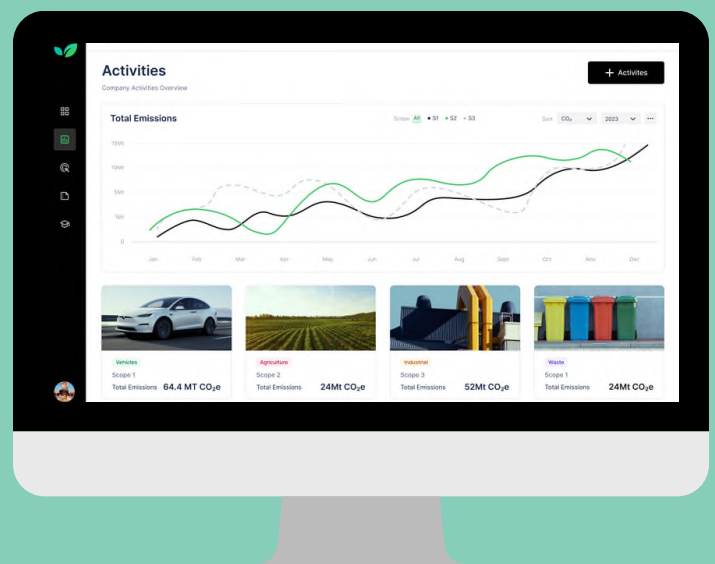
I continuously sought significant problems to solve. While in Uganda, one night of reflection on global challenges, especially climate change, inspired the idea of creating an app for individuals to measure their carbon footprint.

Further research revealed a crucial issue: 25% of the UK's emissions come from the construction industry, highlighting a dire need for decarbonisation. I found that 76% of SMEs had not implemented any decarbonisation strategies, and 1 in 9 small businesses lacked awareness of concepts like Net Zero. Unlike large businesses, these smaller entities are not mandated to report their emissions.

With the global shift towards sustainability, I foresaw that SMEs would soon face similar regulatory pressures to help the UK meet its Net Zero target. This insight led to the idea of a carbon management solution tailored for SMEs in the construction industry.

What is your vision for Puriti going forward?

I aim for Puriti to help decarbonise the construction industry in the UK. Puriti will become the go-to solution for SMEs, offering a simple, cost-effective, intuitive, and less data-intensive platform. It will enable any business, regardless of prior knowledge, to measure, manage, track, report, and reduce their emissions efficiently. After product-market fit has been met, Puriti will expand to other markets.



Puriti web prototype



INSIGHTS FROM MY JOURNEY



1. Fall in Love with the Problem, Not the Solution

45% of businesses fail due to no market need. Achieving problem-solution fit is crucial for any founder and requires a deep understanding of your customer and their pain points. Don't hesitate to be proactive—interview local businesses, distribute surveys, and seek feedback. The worst they can do is say no.

2. Ideas Evolve Through Work

No idea comes out fully formed; it becomes clearer as you develop it. Utilise university resources, such as the Student Startups programmes, to grow your idea. They support entrepreneurial-minded students in achieving business success.

3. Build a Founding Team

If you lack certain skills, bring in others to fill those gaps. For example, I created a low-fidelity prototype using Figma, but to develop an MVP (Minimum Viable Product), I needed someone with technical expertise. Additionally, I needed support with operations as I focus on sales, marketing and case studies. Team members can be found anywhere if you look.

4. Gain Traction Early

Start by building as much traction as possible. Collect sign-ups, waitlists, interview insights, letters of intent, pre-sales, feedback, partnerships, and funding. Even a simple wireframe can demonstrate that there is a market for your solution and that people are willing to buy it.

5. Build a Support Network

The entrepreneurial journey can sometimes feel isolating. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals by joining entrepreneur societies, attending meetups with other founders and business owners, and participating in networking events.

6. Invest in Your Future

Focus on personal development. Improve your public speaking skills, technical knowledge, and volunteer to gain experience.

Find out more about Puriti:
<http://puriti.io>

7 STARTUP LESSONS

By Mattia Vancini



MY JOURNEY BEGINS!

My entrepreneurial journey began in boarding school, where I first saw an opportunity to sell snacks to my peers. This seemingly small venture taught me invaluable lessons about spotting and exploiting market gaps. It showed me that every gap, no matter how small, holds potential for growth.

1

FIND AND EXPLOIT MARKET GAPS

At boarding school, my first venture was selling snacks. It was a small market, but I learned that even tiny opportunities can catapult you into bigger ones. This initial success gave me the confidence to reinvest my earnings into online courses about e-commerce, eager to learn more and expand my horizons.

2

HAVE THE RIGHT WHY

With newfound knowledge from e-commerce courses, I launched multiple online stores. However, none of them were truly successful. I realized my focus was solely on making money, rather than creating value. This period taught me the importance of having the right “why” – a purpose beyond profit. Shifting my focus to creating real value for others changed everything. It transformed my ventures from mere businesses into impactful solutions.

3

THE VALUE OF BREAKS AND REFOCUSING

After the disappointment of my early e-commerce ventures, I felt burnt out. I took a break and returned to university to refocus. This break allowed me to reassess my goals and gain a fresh perspective. Sometimes, you need to step back, pause, and look at the bigger picture. These breaks allowed me to come back with renewed energy and a clearer direction.



4

IF YOU CAN'T DO IT, FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN

Back at university, I co-founded BarrelBros, a new venture that required diverse skills. I quickly realized that trying to do everything myself was exhausting and inefficient. I learned to focus on my strengths and bring in others to complement my skills. This collaboration led to innovative solutions and a more enjoyable working environment.

5

SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES

Working on BarrelBros, I began attending various programs, watching educational videos online, and going to networking events. Each experience, even if it didn't seem immediately useful, brought new insights and connections. The worst-case scenario? I didn't like it. The best case? I found new ideas and met amazing people. This openness to seizing opportunities led to raising funding for BarrelBros and expanding our reach.

6

LEARN TO PRIORITIZE & ADAPT

Balancing university and BarrelBros required me to learn the art of prioritising and adapting. There were times I had to focus on things I didn't enjoy or felt were hindering my dreams. However, learning to prioritise and adapt to changing circumstances has positioned me much better in the long run. Flexibility is a powerful tool in navigating the entrepreneurial landscape.



7

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STOPPING AND QUITTING

One of the most profound lessons I've learned is the difference between stopping and quitting. Over the years, I've jumped from one project to another. To some, it might have looked like quitting, but I see it as strategic stopping. Knowing when to pause, analyze, and pivot is crucial. It's not about being stubborn; it's about being smart with your time and energy.



GRAND CHALLENGES

Let's make a real difference

At Grand Challenges, we believe in empowering you to inspire change.

Grand Challenges takes place annually over the course of a week in June, after exams and before the end of term. This programme inspires undergraduate students to think about solutions to real world issues, whether they are passionate about the environment, social inequality, the future of food, global security or mental health. Students choose a challenge and then work in groups to come up with potential solutions, creating an output that is presented at a showcase on the Friday of Grand Challenges Week. This year, there has been a huge variety of outputs, from posters and videos to apps and websites.

We believe in empowering you to inspire change, so we ensure that you own the rights to any work that you create throughout the week!



External speakers and field trips

Grand Challenges Week hosts expert speakers from organisations such as Young Devon and the Met Office, as well as panels of prominent youth activists who share their insights and ideas. Students were both engaged and inspired by the speakers.

'The speakers brought a wealth of knowledge and diverse perspectives, which helped me see problems from different angles and consider new, unconventional solutions. Their passion and commitment to making a positive impact in their respective areas were truly admirable.'

The field trips to Shillingford Organics and St Sidwell's Community Kitchen also inspire students' projects.

'The field trip was a highlight for me as I think hands-on learning is essential.'

'Having the opportunity to apply what we had researched to real life situations, provided new insights and enabled a deeper understanding of the project.'

Previous projects

In 2023, a student safety kit was created by one of our Social Inequality Challenge groups.

'By providing a product in which a range of safety products are readily available, we aim for students to feel safer walking the streets and going on a night out if they so choose to. We want students to know that the university will always be behind them in wanting them to feel safe.' (Unight, SI challenge 2023)

The Exeter Student Sustainability Board was also formed through Grand Challenges, a student organisation that provides a platform to address sustainability issues and promote positive initiatives.

Emma de Saram, climate activist and our former Guild President completed Grand Challenges in 2020 and has a message for anyone who is thinking about taking part.

'When we're facing the climate crisis and global conflict, it's easy to feel very disempowered. Grand Challenges is the perfect example of something where you can take those initial steps into discovering your power and developing your skills.'

Participant experiences

We spoke to one of our 2024 Climate and Environment Emergency Challenge groups to discuss their project and plans to take it beyond Grand Challenges Week. They aim to create food labels for the Forum Marketplace which show students the carbon footprint of each item.

'It was so much fun working in this group... I think being part of the climate topic made me learn that that's something I'm really passionate about!'
(Lilia Dobson)

Grand Challenges 2025 will take place from 2nd to 6th June.

Email us at grandchallenges@exeter.ac.uk and follow [our Instagram](#) for the latest updates.

Words by Christiana Bingley

TOP 5 MARKETING TIPS FOR STARTUPS

By Abbi Hall

Founding a start-up requires you to wear several different hats and knowing where to get started in each area can be tricky, be it legalities, finances or operations. Here are 5 top tips to get you started when it comes to marketing your business, service or product.

1

GET TO KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Understanding customer problems, needs, and wants will be essential to success. Defining your target audience will enable you to tailor marketing efforts and product development to their requirements.

In the early stages, you likely have limited time and resources, meaning focused marketing efforts will be essential. Identifying a specific target audience ensures marketing resources are used efficiently.

2

SEGMENT YOUR AUDIENCE AND RESEARCH THEM

Once you have an overall understanding of your target market, dividing them into smaller groups will help you delve deeper into their pain points, needs and behaviours.

Segmenting your audience can be achieved by considering criteria such as demographics, psychographics, behaviour and geography. Determining these factors will help you choose the best marketing channels, messaging and strategies to target your audience.

Creating detailed buyer personas is a powerful way to bring your segments to life. Research will enable you to create a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer and identify common characteristics. This process really helps to draw out a customer's goals, challenges, buying behaviour and where best to target them.

3

OBTAIN SOCIAL PROOF

Social proof includes customer testimonials, online reviews and ratings, case studies and endorsements (as well as many other methods!). This is essential for increasing trust, providing validation for your product or service. Positive endorsements from others creates credibility, reducing perceived risk and is essential for new organisations trying to establish themselves.

Sharing such feedback through story telling is a great way to demonstrate positive experiences of your customers. Highlighting real-life examples and success stories can make your social proof more relatable and impactful.

4

ACT UPON CUSTOMER AND CLIENT FEEDBACK

Seeking feedback and acting upon it is essential to remaining agile and improving your product-market fit. This comes back to knowing your target audience and creating something that fulfils their needs. There is no better way to obtain this information, than to ask your customers or clients directly! This also demonstrates customer input is valued, which can lead to positive reviews.

5

SET YOURSELF APART WITH A STRONG BRAND IDENTITY

Branding is essential to set yourself apart from competitors and strong branding increases recognition and brand recall. Cutting through the noise and remaining top of mind is essential, demonstrated effectively by iconic brands such as Nike, Apple and Disney. Strategically created branding enhances trust and credibility, reassuring customers you will deliver your product and service. Branding should be developed ensuring it resonates with your mission, values and target audience.

Here are some great tips for developing your brand:

- Consistency across all touch points is key! Customers come to expect a certain look or feel across all online and offline points of contact. Differences can be jarring and cause a reduction in trust.
- When creating a visual identity, less is more in terms of colour palettes and typographies. Somewhere between 3 to 5 colours and 2 to 3 font types.
- Keeping things simple makes things easy to remember, helping recall and brand recognition. Think about most iconic brands, they often use simply designed icons.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to marketing. Finding the correct approach will vary based upon industry, business goals, and target audience.



Meet Abbi Hall

I work with purpose-driven businesses to transform ideas into compelling stories. By crafting visually striking brand identities and developing and implementing effective marketing strategies and content, I help these organisations make a meaningful impact. After completing my BSc in Marketing Management last year, I have continued working with businesses providing brand packages and marketing strategy, setting them apart! I also work for a University of Exeter spin-out, Our Rainwater, as their marketing consultant.



DIVERSE TEAMS = STRONG STARTUPS

Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp

Words by Amber Strong

The University of Exeter hosted its annual, international Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp (TEB) from 17 June to 21 June, 2024.

This intensive, interdisciplinary program, led by UC Berkeley faculty's Gigi Wang, and run by University of Exeter Department of Engineering's Amber Strong-Yates and Dr Peter Melville-Shreeve, brought together innovative students from around the globe.

The 2024 cohort included participants from renowned institutions such as DTU - Technical University of Denmark, King Danylo University

in Ukraine, and Universitas Ciputra Surabaya, Indonesia.

We welcomed Law undergraduate student, Karyna Didukh, from King Danylo University in Ukraine.

Karyna made an outstanding contribution to her team, LingoTrainers, dedicated to making learning languages online, fun, accessible and affordable for teens everywhere.

In its second year running, the Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp is currently made possible by the philanthropic support of Exeter Engineering alumni Adam Boyden.

The Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp at the University of Exeter effectively balances academic learning with practical application, ensuring a transformative journey into technology entrepreneurship for all participants.

The Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp at the University of Exeter offers a rich, immersive learning experience that effectively balances academic rigor with practical application.



Participants gain critical skills for launching and sustaining successful ventures, while the program's interactive and interdisciplinary approach ensures a unique and enriching entrepreneurial journey. The diverse, hands-on, and intensive nature of the bootcamp prepares participants to navigate and thrive in the dynamic landscape of technology entrepreneurship.

The Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp at the University of Exeter offers a rich learning experience, balancing theoretical foundations with practical applications. The structured yet dynamic program ensures participants are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of launching and growing technology-based startups.



What did you like most about the bootcamp?

Amanda: "Gigi's methodology, and the other lecturers as well, resonated with me. I felt like I learnt skills not only for my professional life, but my personal life as well. I met incredible people that I truly hope I get to keep in contact for years to come."



What was your key takeaway?

Gelsica: "The constant learning, the constant exchange of ideas, the several times we had the opportunity to talk directly with investors was great. We were really pushed by them to refine our ideas and that was a very good learning opportunity for me"

Meet the **CHANGEMAKER AMBASSADORS**



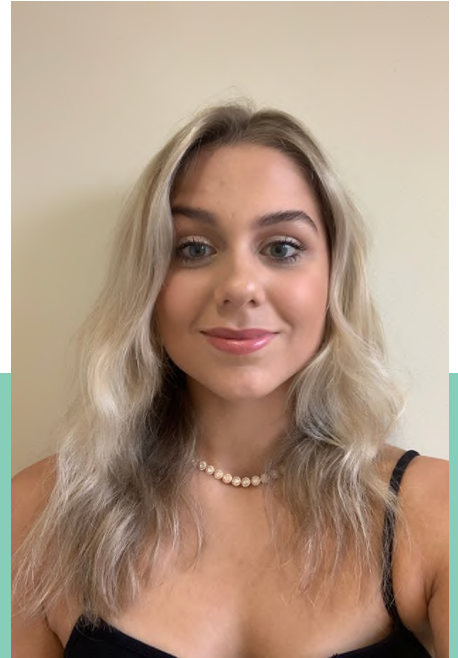
**SAARA
OSMAN**

**Medical
Imaging**



**LORENZO
SATTA CHRIS**

**Engineering &
Entrepreneurship**



**LEAH
JONES**

**History with
French**

Words by Saara Osman

The Changemaker ambassadors are three students, Lorenzo, Saara and Leah, that have joined the Student Startups team to promote entrepreneurial spirit and activities across the University. These activities include Inspiration Talks, the Pre-incubator and Incubator programmes and Demo nights.

Let's get to meeting them!

What were your motivations to become a Entrepreneurial Changemaker Ambassador?

Saara: I feel the Student Startups team has an exemplary approach to democratising entrepreneurship by destigmatising it from a practical standpoint. The ECM role was a great way to directly contribute to a great group, improve reach for people with nonbusiness-associated backgrounds, and give back for all the learning opportunities I've had.

Leah: I first became introduced to the world of entrepreneurship in 2019, where I competed in the National Enterprise Challenge and experienced the process of developing and launching a business idea. Ever since this memorable experience, I have been fascinated by the success of start-up businesses and the role that entrepreneurship will play in my own future.

Why is entrepreneurship important to you?

Leah: I believe entrepreneurship is an integral part of society, serving as the core competence behind all innovative and imaginative ideas shaping our future. It means to me an endless stream of new and creative designs, products, services, etc. that, even if they do not make it to the final market, can serve as an inspiration to others.

Tell us about your past ventures and how they put you on an entrepreneurial path?

Lorenzo: My journey started with gaming communities that led me to discover the world of coding. This led to a successful blog and newsletter demystifying programming, and the latter allowed me to participate in or launch several startup-like projects across multiple fields.

What skills do you want to develop as an entrepreneur?

Saara: I want to strengthen my problem-solving capabilities. It is a goal of mine to also push myself towards fear or discomfort to grow and fully benefit from learning opportunities. I feel my degree scope is great for developing interpersonal skills, adapting my approach and exercising patience and empathy. These are qualities that also serve at the forefront of being an entrepreneur.

What was your experience with the Pre-incubator Programme, and what are your goals moving forward?

Lorenzo: I enjoyed the opportunity to meet like-minded people and the practicality of exercising different concepts in an active and engaging format. Moving forward, I am going to direct ExCode, a bootcamp where I will be teaching programming, and I will begin my role as President of the Entrepreneurship Society.

What's the worst and best advice you've been given, and do you wish you'd received any different?

Leah: Some of the best advice I have received comes from the student start-ups team, who have reiterated the importance of having a range of people with all different skills and backgrounds in the world of entrepreneurship. The irrelevancy of the humanities towards many different employment sectors is a misguided conception, and I wish the importance of subjects that fall into this category was more strongly iterated, especially to budding entrepreneurs such as myself.

SUMMER STARTUP BOOTCAMP



Words by Jasmine Hammond

This year's Summer Startup Bootcamp took place at the end of May boasting a strong turn out, and plenty of excitement from staff, students and guests.

Day one kicked off with a dynamic session on entrepreneurial mindset with guest speaker James Court from NatWest, with focus on growth mindset and visioning. Aspiring entrepreneurs had the opportunity to speak to James in smaller groups, gaining deeper insights into the entrepreneurial mindset which set the stage for collaborative activities in the afternoon.

On the second day, we welcomed Alumni Hugo Tilmouth from ChargedUp, who shared his insights on market validation. Hugo captivated the audience with his personal story of how he tested his business idea with the help of the University of Exeter. He emphasised the critical importance of testing market validation and using the results to refine your business model and go-to-market strategy. Hugo also shared insights into his entrepreneurial journey, and how a last minute pivot at the forefront of the Covid pandemic, led to new opportunities.

“

The biggest thing I have learned is that anything and everything is possible!

Giselle Hegstad

“

I have loved getting to know other like-minded people. I would really recommend the experience.

Tazmin Barnes

The afternoon of day two was dedicated to hands-on market validation activities. Participants learned how to gather and analyse feedback, adjust their strategies, and make informed decisions about their next steps. Market validation is a crucial step in the entrepreneurial process because it ensures that there is a demand for your product or service before you launch. Without this step, you risk investing time, money, and resources into a product that no one wants. By testing your ideas early and gathering feedback from potential customers, you can save yourself from the costly mistake of launching a product that fails to meet market needs.

As the bootcamp progressed, participants were not only developing their business ideas but also forming valuable connections with their peers and mentors. The collaborative environment fostered a sense of community and support, which is vital for budding entrepreneurs.

On the final day, the focus shifted to refining business pitches and preparing for the final presentations. Alumnus Leo Carr delivered an inspiring pitch showcasing his successful education platform, Study Dog, which he launched alongside his degree, and his participation in the Student Startups programmes. Following Leo's pitch, Emily Davies, Head of Student Entrepreneurship, led a comprehensive pitching session, guiding the participants through the criteria for the afternoon's pitches, providing essential tips and strategies for delivering a compelling pitch.

After a lunchtime pizza social, students presented their business ideas to a panel of judges with expertise in music, PR and finance. We thank Cameron Mills, Arianne Smart and Kim Kreutle for participating and providing constructive feedback and insights for each pitch. As students put their newfound knowledge and skills to the test, it was fantastic to hear the array of ideas.

Participants left the Bootcamp with a clearer vision of their entrepreneurial journey, armed with practical tools and a network of supportive peers and mentors. The bootcamp provided a platform to develop business ideas and instilled confidence and determination to pursue entrepreneurial dreams.

The next Startup Bootcamp will run in Summer 2025.



TAKE COMMUNITY ACTION WITH ENACTUS EXETER

Words by Saara Osman

Enactus is the University's social enterprise society. It is a branch of a wider network of students globally that use entrepreneurship to improve the quality of life in different communities. Each project acts as a bridge between a business and charity, using entrepreneurial action to bring solutions to the forefront, tackling a variety of issues with a sustainable and innovative spin.

There are six different projects currently running at Enactus Exeter. Each tackles larger global issues that affect different societies and cultures; these include homelessness, sanitation, gender inequality, poverty, and many others. All our society members work hard to catalyse positive change, with each project running independently and developmentally evolving.

We had the pleasure of speaking to Lauren, the project lead of Oyana and Sarra and Tom, the co-leads of The Urban Mushroom Co.

Oyana's main driving force is its objective to empower a group of women in Kwa Murugi to achieve financial independence, reduce inferiority, and deconstruct the prevalent issue of gender inequality, which largely affects this subsection of Kenya. Oyana enables these women to form their own soap businesses; this provides them with work stability, a stable income, and independence. In the UK, the team provides the funding to go ahead and provide the training equipment and transport

these women require. The team handmakes their unique soap and sells it at pop-ups and on their website. This is made possible via marketing efforts, operating and developing websites, making grant and funding applications (including pitching competitions), and diversifying our product range while taking care of their finances.

By joining Oyana, there is opportunity for development and contribution in all of these areas, as well as direct involvement in seeing the impact from their beneficiaries in joining training sessions and update meetings.

The Urban Mushroom Co is an initiative that reduces coffee waste. The team frequents Exeter coffee shops, collects the used coffee grounds, and takes them to an urban indoor farm, adding mycelium agents, where organic oyster mushrooms are produced and ready to sell. This reduces the environmental waste produced by used coffee grounds, supports local communities and businesses, and provides an opportunity for like-minded individuals to foster relationships by producing change in the form of social impact, providing widespread education, and promoting sustainability.

Moving forward, the Urban Mushroom Co. plans to collaborate with the Christmas market and smaller campus shops, increase production to 200 kg per term (given a consistent successful production rate), and reinvest profits to improve production further, marketing, and charitable organisations. This has been a large learning curve for all team members, where they've perfected communication, leadership skills, and their overall adaptability in a team.

Join Enactus Exeter and get involved in Oyana, Urban Mushroom Company, or another of their active and impactful projects. Find out more on their [Exeter Guild webpage](#) or by coming to an Enactus event on campus.

ELEVATE 2024

The Elevate Engineers in Business Fellowship Competition is a unique opportunity at the university for student engineers to access funding for early-stage venture creation, to explore innovation beyond their academic studies and to gain valuable pitching and presentation experience.

Pitching across two days, 11 dynamic teams shortlisted from 20 applications showcased their groundbreaking business ideas at Exeter's competition this year.

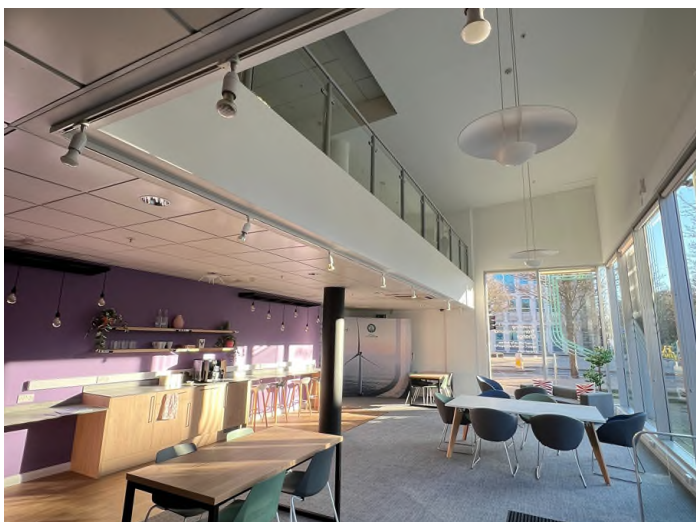
We were joined by an esteemed panel of judges: Emily Davies, Head of Student Entrepreneurship at University of Exeter, Peter Henry, serial entrepreneur and Angel/VC investor, Patrick O'Connell, Managing Director at Helliers Ltd and Royal Society of Engineering Entrepreneur in Residence, and Ceri Howells, Lecturer in Engineering and Entrepreneurship, who advised our pitchers and selected our winners.

Winners are all invited to pitch again at the National competition in London, where they'll compete for further funding and the Champion of Champions title.

WINNERS

- 1 Eleanor Griffin - Opas Guides**
3D Printed jig models for knee surgery.
- 2 Ella Dodson & Jack Burbridge - MediTeddy's**
Anxiety reduction aiding products including a weighted teddy bear.
- 3 Jack McGwyne - BOOMFA**
Impact monitoring mouth guard for young rugby players.
- 4 Adam Brookes - Stocki**
Revolutionising in-person shopping with instant access to stock date, price comparisons and reviews.
- 5 Deepak Jha - Optex Solutions**
Quality and safety checking with AI in Aeronautic manufacturing.
- 6 Lorenzo Satta Chiris - HealthXplain**
Translating raw data from smart devices into actionable insights for athletes to enhance training.





WELCOME TO THE INNOVATION HUB

Words by Molly Coleman

The Innovation Hub, which opened in January 2024, is located in Exeter City Centre, on the edge of Southernhay and Princesshay. Part of Exeter Innovation at the University of Exeter, and half funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund, it provides a space for local businesses and entrepreneurs that are interested in developing new and innovative products or services, to access support from the University and become part of the business community in the city. Run by Harry Neill and Molly Coleman, the hub acts as the business front door to the university.

One of the main activities at the hub is running business support programmes, such as Entrepreneurs Workout and Innovation Discovery Studio, as well as facilitating CPD modules to be taught, and Innoplay sessions run. All are aimed at enabling businesses to think outside of the box, take a step back from their businesses in order to work through new ideas and ways of thinking, and guide them through the beginning stages of business proposals and development. Another aspect of the hub is the connection and access it provides to its support partners, such as Exeter Chamber of Commerce and Creative Arc. Sitting in the hub 1 to 2 days a week, partners provide their knowledge, expertise and connections to visitors of the hub, widening the support offered across specialised areas.

As well as partners, various teams from Exeter Innovation are regularly present at the hub, offering their expertise to businesses, as well as making key connections between the university and the city. Currently, the following teams sit at the hub:

- Degree Apprenticeships
- Regional Engagement
- Partnership and Development: Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
- Employer Engagement and Student Employment
- Student Startups

A key focus of the hub is encouraging students to stay in the city after graduation, either through starting their own businesses or working in roles within Exeter-based organisations. Keeping talent in Exeter is key to its growth and development, so the team works closely with the Student Startups team to build relationships with students, introduce them to networks and opportunities and support student businesses where possible.

A founder's breakfast club happens every month at the hub, open to students with their own start-ups, where they can talk with other founders, bounce ideas off each other and feel a sense of community. Let's hear some of their stories.

Charlie Batty
Founder,
studenta2z



"I'm a second-year business student and I am founder of studenta2z, a student TripAdvisor that aims to give essential information to university students.

I've really enjoyed the Student Startups programme. I've completed the Pre-Incubator and the Incubator which gave me a really good basic level understanding of how a business works, including finances and how to sell yourself and your idea to others.

In the future, the hope is to keep helping students out – we've got about 6000 users each week so I want to keep this up! I also hope to bridge the gap between local businesses and students."

"I graduated 2 years ago with a Bachelors in Computer Science with a year in industry, and I'm currently working on a music app for helping and boosting your emotions. Procrastinating work by spending hours finding music to play to blast my studies, I worked on the idea for 5 years on and off, doing work with other startups in the meantime. This fed my hunger to build my own, and create the work culture I always wanted.

After a layoff, I reached out to the Student Startups team and decided to make my dream a reality. It's been an exhilarating journey and I absolutely do not regret it. I am grateful for the connections the team made for me, and recommend others take their leap!"

Jordan Peters
Founder, Emotion



The hub calendar is always full of various events; demo nights, networking evenings, coffee mornings, programme launches and more! Although it isn't an event space so to speak, it is available for partner organisations and teams to use where collaboration can take place! To keep up to date with what's going on, [follow their LinkedIn page](#).

FAREWELL AND THANK YOU

TO JOE PEARCE



Words by Emily Davies

Joe Pearce, Head of Business Support, has always been a champion for the value of entrepreneurship education and venture creation activity. He has continued to seek out opportunities to start up and lead new programmes and initiatives that engage with not only our student community but also the wider business community; ensuring entrepreneurship education and business support is available to all.

Joe has made the decision to leave the University after 20 years, to embark on a new chapter. Before he left, we sat down to have a chat, to reflect on his time at the University of Exeter and to find out what's next.

Can you tell us briefly how you first became involved with Entrepreneurship at the University of Exeter?

The first time I got involved in supporting student entrepreneurship was in 2008 when I was working as a Business Support Manager at the newly launched Innovation Centre. We were approached by 3 students – Luke Jones, Sam Fell and Tom Millington – who wanted to develop their idea for a Facebook App called Social Tiger.

I discovered that there was budget line of £50K which was nominally to support student entrepreneurship but there were no detailed plans for how that would be used. I persuaded

the budget holder to let me have it and by the end of the year, had some great examples of how it had supported students. And away we went.

How has it evolved over the past decade and how has your role evolved and changed?

Since the early days the support has changed and improved immeasurably and reflects the University's ambition to support the development of an entrepreneurial mindset and culture across the whole institution. My role has changed over that time as well and I have been able to grow a team and establish a pathway of support for entrepreneurs at Exeter. The whole journey is designed to be underpinned by a consistent ethos and approach of encouraging creativity, exploration and practical actions which give startups the best opportunity to succeed in achieving the Founders' ambitions, whatever they may be. I think it is something that we do really well at Exeter and that we should be proud of.

Is there a project that you have led over the past few years that you are especially proud of or that stands out for you? Can you tell us a bit about it? And why?

Particular students jump out such as Tom Carrington Smith, Katy Dash and Matt Morley. It was amazing to work with them and to see them go on to be successful in their careers. I've also been lucky to work for a long time

with some great colleagues, now friends, here at Exeter but also in the other SETsquared Partnership Universities. When I look at what now exists to support students, researchers and businesses across the whole region I'm immensely proud to have made some small contribution to that and the impact it has on people, businesses and the wider South West.

What excites you most about entrepreneurship education? Or what value do you believe people can gain from engaging in entrepreneurial activity?

I often describe entrepreneurial skills or approaches as a lens through which you can look at problems. If you develop that way of looking at things, the skills and mindset that enable you to see where there are problems which your particular knowledge or ability can address, then you can apply that anywhere and create value. It is the transferability of the skills you develop in being an entrepreneurial problem solver that I find most exciting about entrepreneurship – and the most rewarding thing is when someone realises that developing and practising those skills opens up entirely new pathways for them in their life. I think it is critical that people develop these skills as they are increasingly what will underpin the jobs of future.



Is there any advice you have for either somebody embarking on their entrepreneurial journey?

I think entrepreneurship is a contact sport, so get out there and talk to people. The best and most successful founders I've worked are those that take the time and effort to really understand the problem they are solving before they start to develop the solution – and that in depth knowledge comes from really getting to grips with it.

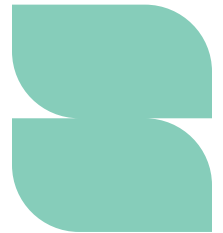
What's next for you?

I honestly don't know. I've been at the Uni for some 20 years so I am looking forward to finding out what it is that I can do that is valuable for other people or businesses. I will probably have to take a bit of my own medicine and figure out what the problems I'd like to try and solve are and what I can do about them.

Mainly it is really exciting – its also a little bit terrifying – but I'm looking forward to seeing what comes next.



What is **NEXTGEN?**



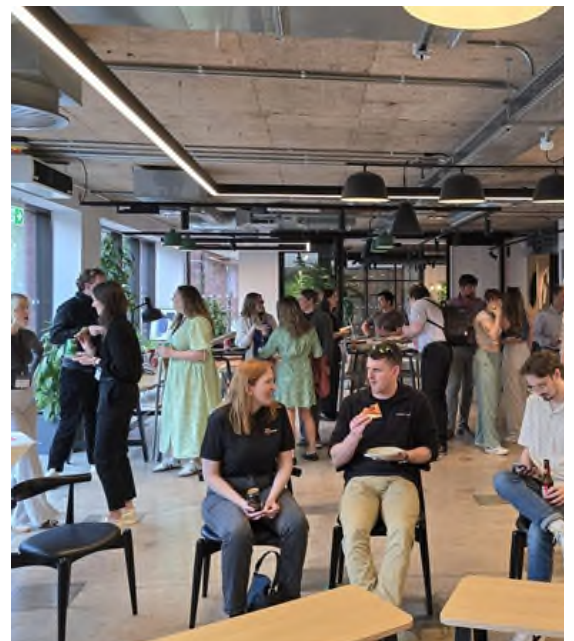
Words by Molly Coleman

Most of you will have heard of Exeter Chamber, and probably even attended an event of theirs! Well, NextGen is their new initiative. Aimed at and delivered by people aged 18 to 35, the focus is on developing the next wave of leaders who will help shape the future of the city. The steering group comprises young professionals from all sectors and areas, as well as some students.

The initiative was officially kick started with a sell-out launch event in May. Held at Clockwise offices in Southernhay, young professionals from all areas gathered for some food, drink and networking. A handful of members from the NextGen team spoke about their reasons for joining, and what they hope can be achieved by bringing like-minded people together.

The big focus being to help provide opportunities for peers to develop their skills, build their networks and increase the presence of the younger generation in the city. Along with networking and social events, sessions will be run on topics asked for by members. Such as CV writing, building your own brand, digital skills, leadership training and more. There were also suggestions for a run club and choir; sing-along 10k anyone?

With a successful first event under their belt, planning is in progress for the next one. Keep a look out on the [Exeter Chamber LinkedIn page](#) and [website](#) for more details.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium aubergines
- 1/2 cup of miso paste
- 1/2 cup of Butter Bike smoked chilli peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons water
- a sprinkle of sesame seeds

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4.
2. Cut the aubergines in half lengthways and score flesh in a criss cross pattern.
3. In a medium sized bowl combine all other ingredients and stir to combine.
4. Spread the aubergines liberally with the miso mix ensuring all exposed flesh is coated liberally.
5. Place on a baking tray, drizzle with any remaining miso and sprinkle with sesame seeds.
6. Roast for 25-30 mins until tender and golden brown. Serve with rice, salads, noodles or bao.

TIP: This sauce doubles as a tasty marinade for tofu or chicken, try barbecuing or grilling.



SMOKY PEANUT MISO AUBERGINES

Recipe by Butter Bike Co.

 2 servings

A simple yet utterly delicious veggie supper all on their own, prepare your tastebuds for a mega umami hit. A delicious addition to soba noodles or steamed bao.

Exeter alumna Jeni Reeve launched her business Butter Bike, in 2017. The company produce small-batch palm-oil free peanut butters. Jeni's quality peanut butters have earned her recognition in the Food & Drink business community, securing multiple awards.

Find out more: butterbike.co.uk



exeter.ac.uk/studentstartups

