

University of Strathclyde

Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway

Stage in the typical student journey

The Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway Programme provides students (undergraduate/PGTs) and researchers (PGRs/ECRs) with the opportunity to develop & enhance their transferable skills and learn business basics from real life entrepreneurs. The programme is intended to nurture the talent of any student or researcher looking to develop themselves and their understanding of enterprise and influence how they perceive enterprise & entrepreneurialism within the wider context of their subject of study/career.

Context

As the winner of the Times Higher Education Award for Entrepreneurial University of the Year 2013/14, the University of Strathclyde continuously strives to introduce innovative ways to enhance the programmes delivered to both students and researchers. Developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and collaboration between the Enterprise Team and the Researcher Development Team at the University of Strathclyde, the embedded programme offers Strathclyde students and researchers an invaluable opportunity to develop and test career enhancing skills alongside entrepreneurs.

The initial pilot ran as two separate programmes; Enterprise Academy for researchers (shortlisted in 2012 for a Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers) and the Enterprise Challenge for students. Enterprise Challenge for students contained elements of learning across two academic semesters whilst Enterprise Academy for researchers was delivered as an intensive three day programme followed by additional support workshops. Building on the successes of both pilots, in 2013 the programmes were restructured and merged to form the Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway for both cohorts. The newly formed programme then launched in October 2013 as part of Celebration of Enterprise Day at Strathclyde.

Description

Delivered over two academic semesters, Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway aims to develop, enhance and test transferable skills and business basics of students and researchers from all discipline areas through a three stage process. This includes:

Enterprise Footsteps (stage one) –

- 6 interactive workshops led by industry experts and experienced entrepreneurs
- Bronze level certificate endorsed by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise to participants in attendance of 5 or more sessions
- Aimed at developing transferable skills to prepare participants for the rest of their journey in the programme

Enterprise Academy (stage two) –

- 2 day intensive training weekend on business skills development, team building, idea generation and preparation for the third & final stage of the pathway
- Silver level certificate endorsed by the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship upon completion of weekend
- Professional accreditation and academic accreditation available for researchers

Enterprise Challenge (stage three) –

- Putting theory into practice, participants go through a series of shortlisting stages including apprentice style interviews, 60 second video pitching and a final business presentation
- All shortlisting done by a number of entrepreneurs (this has previously included the likes of Shaf Rasul, Jim McColl and Afzehl Khushi)

- Gold level certificate endorsed by Sir Tom Hunter
- Finalists receive an experienced entrepreneur to help prepare them for a final business presentation
- A student and researcher category winner is selected based on the final business presentation, delivered to an audience of experienced entrepreneurs and industry experts who choose the winner via electronic vote
- Winners receive HD Kindle Fire, £1000 towards their business idea and lunch with Sir Tom Hunter

Summary of impact

Through the efforts of the Enterprise Team & Researcher Development Team, the programme has managed to reach in excess of 500 students and researchers on campus. All three stages are intended to be used as building blocks, with stages one & two instilling confidence in entrepreneurial understanding and practice and stage three creating a competitive element to the programme as well as a sense of exclusivity and achievement to those who continue.

The programme is able to make a significant difference to the learning and skills enhancement experience for many participating students & researchers. This has been captured by survey and personal testimonies during and after each stage.

"The experience gave us an opportunity to work closely with hugely experienced alumni entrepreneurs known as Enterprise Partners; a brilliantly unique opportunity for young, enterprising students." **Final Year Architecture Student**

The Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway also creates substantial successes in learning outcomes, particularly for students/researchers who come from non-business related backgrounds.

"Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway is a fun and creative way of introducing us to a business environment which enabled both our team and our competitors to play to our strengths and to build on our weaknesses; a highly recommended experience." **Postgraduate Bioengineering Researcher**

Through a variety of stages, the programme provides an inclusive and intensive experience to capture the enterprising imaginations of its participants as well as providing unique access to the Strathclyde Entrepreneurial Network of alumni, commercialisation experts, entrepreneurs and academics.

Additionally, the programme achieves tangible outcomes such as the successful establishment of a new social enterprise. Studio 2080 Ltd, one of the finalist business ideas that focused on establishing sustainable energy solutions in rural Africa, successfully launched their business following the programme in 2012/13. The 2013/14 participants have also indicated interest in continuing their idea and have been supported in applications for a variety of business competitions such as the Converge Challenge.

Strengths

Upon completion of each stage of the programme, participants are eligible to receive certificates endorsed by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE), the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship and Sir Tom Hunter to validate their commitment and enhance their CVs. These strategically enhanced partnerships provide external validation for the programme and a sense of achievement for participants after each stage is completed. There is also a credit bearing element for researcher participants, as well as the opportunity to receive an Institute of Leadership & Management Level 2 certificate in Understanding Enterprise. Stage two (Enterprise Academy) is the only enterprise- focused training in the UK specifically for research students and staff which is professionally accredited by ILM.

For participants who wish to continue their idea following the Enterprise Pathway Programme, the University's Enterprise Team also offer mentoring, business advice, the opportunity for free

incubation office space and opportunities to tap into a larger entrepreneurial network.

By instilling key entrepreneurial behaviors and values in students and researchers through a “learner–centered” approach, the Enterprise Pathway develops a culture of opportunism, creativity and risk taking, and provides students and researchers with a distinctive skillset for future employment.

Improvements

The Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway was built on a foundation of continual improvement. Each stage of the programme includes various feedback mechanisms that allow real time adjustments to improve student participant experience and best utilise external support. Based on feedback from students who participated in the pilot, the programme was restructured in 2013/14 to decrease the number of evening workshops to alleviate schedule pressure. By focusing strictly on transferable skills in the initial stage and moving all business specific skills to stage two (Enterprise Academy) the programme was able to better meet participant needs in 2013/14. The team that delivers the programme aim to use feedback mechanisms from 2013/14 to further enhance the programme for 2014/15.

Partners

The Enterprise Pathway Programme is the result of successful collaboration between the University of Strathclyde’ s Enterprise Team and Researcher Development Team (both of whom are part of Strathclyde Entrepreneurial Network). Furthermore, to break the mould of traditional learning and skills development programmes, this programme brings together key entrepreneurial alumni and industry experts from across the UK to deliver various activities across the programme in a bid to bridge the gap between education and industry.

Funding

The programme is co-funded by the Enterprise Team and the Researcher Development team utilizing University and external funding.

Website link

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/enterprisepathway/>



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