

Aberystwyth University Impact Report September 2024 – August 2025

Introduction

At Aberystwyth University we are committed to empowering all our students to foster an enterprising mindset throughout their career development journey and student experience. Our Employability Plan 2024 -2029 includes a focus on enterprise with our Priority 1, Aims and Actions to 'Embed employability, enterprise, and skills development across all curricula'. We aim as part of Priority 1 to enhance existing support for enterprise and entrepreneurial development across the university and mapping and supporting further integration of enterprise skills across curriculum. The financial support received from the Welsh Government has enabled us to offer and develop a variety of enterprise activities to support our students.

Our team

The enterprise provision is embedded as part of Aberystwyth University's Careers and Employability Service team and aims to provide opportunities for students and graduates to develop their enterprise skills at all stages of the student experience, offering support for business start-up, social enterprise creation and those who wish to develop a career as a freelancer. As part of the Careers and Employability Service's restructure two new posts have been created, Careers and Enterprise Manager (Joanne Hiatt) who has responsibility for overseeing the enterprise provision line managing the Enterprise Officer and the post of Curriculum Development Consultant for Enterprise (Dr Alex Hubbard). Tony Orme, Careers Consultant with responsibility for enterprise retired from post in December 2024.

The Team

Joanne Hiatt, Careers and Enterprise Manager

Dr Alex Hubbard, Curriculum Development Consultant, Enterprise

Louise Somerfield, Enterprise Officer

Our offer for students and graduates:

- Advice and guidance through our 1:1 appointments
- Specialist mentoring
- Skill development workshops and events
- Annual student business competition
- Embedded enterprise content within the curriculum

For staff

- Support for staff to develop enterprise related assessments and activities with the curriculum
- Role models/guest speakers for sessions within the curriculum

Review of the year

Start-Up Support

Our central enterprise provision has offered 26 extracurricular enterprise events. During this period 650 students have been involved with engage, empower and equip activities with 88 students receiving 1-1 enterprise support. Students have been referred to Big Ideas Wales/Business Wales for 1:1 specialist mentoring both in person and online. We also refer students to Antur Cymru where appropriate. Work continued collaborating with the Arfor 2 Officer to support the enterprise provision and referring students to the provision.

Start Up Competition

The InvEnterPrize Competition final was held in September 2024, Twenty-two business ideas were entered this year with thirty-three students and graduates representing eleven academic departments across the University.

Seven made it through to the final round, and the opportunity to present their ideas to a panel of judges made up of Aberystwyth University alumni.

Following an intense day of presentations and probing by the judges, two proposals - Pearly Bites and PropAPlant - were judged winners and shared the top prize of £10,000 which is funded by Aberystwyth alumni.

Following feedback and discussion with students and academics it was decided to redesign the competition to encourage a wider range of students from different academic disciplines to apply especially students from the arts and humanities. InvEnterPrize Competition was renamed the Student Start Up Competition with a re-structured prize fund representing 5 new categories each awarding £4000 funded by the AberFund (DARO) and the Rural Wales Innovation Fund (RWIF). The new categories being:

- Sustainable/Eco Business
- Social Enterprise
- Creative Arts
- Science/Tech Business
- Local Business

In addition to the prize fund Free Associate membership' for one year at Aberystwyth Innovation & Enterprise Campus and 'Engineers in Business' for Physics/Comp Sci/Maths Students Cash prize was awarded. The rebranded competition officially launch on May 7th, 2025, with the Vice Chancellor, Professor Jon Timmis in attendance.

Business Start Up

In June 2025 the annual Business Start Up event took place with 13 workshops delivered across three days:

- Introduction & Big Ideas Wales
- Inspirational Role Model (BIW)
- Market Research – BIW Role model
- Digital Marketing – BIW Role model
- Intellectual Property – Intellectual Property Office
- Tax – BIW Role model
- Finance & Bookkeeping - BIW Role model
- Social Enterprise – Cwmpas
- Student Start Up Competition
- Business & the law – BIW Role model
- Social media for business – BIW Role model
- Next Steps and support available BIW/Antur Cymru, Careers and Employability Service



The Student Start Up competition was also promoted as part of Business Start Up workshop series to participants with previous winners telling explaining their personal experiences of the competition; this gave participants opportunities to ask questions about the benefits of the competition and how the prize fund had help them to develop

their business ideas.

Student Feedback

Here are some examples of feedback received from students during the year:

'The Enterprise competition was a fantastic experience that really boosted my confidence and helped shape the direction of Eleni's Tea Company. It opened up new opportunities, connected me with supportive mentors, and gave me the encouragement to keep pushing my ideas forward.'

'The competition application process was easy to understand and provided a good breadth of questions to showcase our business idea. Support during the process was sound as well, and there weren't any unnecessary pains during the process too. It's great to have these opportunities, especially for very-early-stage startups as it's hard to know where to start, so we're very grateful!'

'I wanted to say what an excellent program was presented during Student StartUp Week. It was a great balance between delivering business introductions on all the aspects to consider, other people who have started their own businesses and networking to gain support and advice. I really appreciated everything that was provided'.

Curriculum Development Consultant for Enterprise

The new post Curriculum Development Consultant in Enterprise, plays a pivotal role in integrating sustainable and tailored employability and work-related learning. The focus is on developing, informing, supporting, and shaping the provision and delivery of high-quality enterprise, entrepreneurship, and innovation activities across faculties, with a particular emphasis on curriculum development. Dr Alex Hubbard was appointed to the post in July 2024 and has started to review curriculum development and as the project lead for developments undertaken by the Careers & Employability Service in supporting student and graduate enterprise, including to facilitate the university-wide student ideas competition. The role has already supported academics to see how they can embed enterprise related assessments into the curriculum and support academic develop new enterprise related content for new modules. To raise awareness of enterprise across all academic departments, enterprise has been added to the Departmental Employability Action plans to drive student engagement in enterprise related activities and embed enterprise in the curriculum.

Academic Champions of Enterprise and staff training

14 Academic Champions of Enterprise are actively working to promote and champion enterprise as an integral part of the student journey and provide students the opportunity to:

- Develop Enterprise Skills and Competencies and to develop an Enterprising Mind-set, which will benefit them either working for themselves (Entrepreneurially) or working for an organisation (Intra-preneurially).
- Consider self-employment/freelancing as a possible career option, full or part-time, upon graduation or in later life, either by way of a Business or a Social Enterprise.
- Develop their entrepreneurial skills and experience through experiential opportunities either in-curricular or extra-curricular for students to develop business ideas.
- Become informed, through advice, 1:1 mentoring, networking opportunities and access to start-up space (Old college/AIEC etc) and funding opportunities from BIW/Business Wales grants & loans, and through an annual Alumni funded Student Ideas Competition, delivered by the Careers and Employability Service within the university.

- Build a better understanding of the common entrepreneurship barriers faced by our students (including focus groups and working closely with our Students Union) with the aim of actively remove barriers to students pursuing entrepreneurial activities by co -creating diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Enterprise Hub – Old College

The Careers and Employability Service is closely involved in the early planning for the Enterprise Hub at Old College. Scheduled to open in 2027, this new space will provide a practical and inspiring environment designed to support innovation, collaboration, and enterprise.

The Hub will include up to twelve creative technology units, giving students, alumni, and local entrepreneurs the chance to develop ideas and grow their businesses. These units will not just be offices; they will be places where creativity and problem-solving can flourish. By being part of the planning process, the Careers and Employability Service are ensuring that the Hub offers more than just facilities. It will be a space that also provides mentoring, guidance, and structured support to help people turn their ideas into successful ventures. Participants will have access to workshops, one-to-one advice, and training programmes that build both business skills and career readiness. Whether it is learning how to pitch ideas, understanding the basics of finance, or developing leadership and teamwork, the Hub will provide practical help tailored to individual needs.

