

Aspect

University of Glasgow Mini-
Projects:

Summary Report

Prepared by

Paige McCaleb

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1 INTRODUCTION

The University of Glasgow (UoG) split its funding from Aspect to support three smaller initiatives: (1) Opportunity/ Innovation Audit, (2) Entrepreneurship/ Challenge-led placements, and (3) Zinc and investor relationship building.

This report outlines the aims, activities, and outcomes from each 'mini-project'.

2 INNOVATION AUDIT

2.1 What We Set Out to Do

The Innovation Audit set out to uncover and develop existing research for innovation activity. The University IP & Innovation team run these 'audits' in the STEM colleges regularly and have begun to look at how to adjust the model to work for SHAPE disciplines. We decided to run two audits, leveraging both our Aspect and IAA Cross funding, the first more closely resembled the formula run in STEM subjects – bringing in a consultant to convene panels, researchers presented to the panel and received written feedback. This resulted in each researchers coming away with a list of basic recommendations, however both the researchers and professional support staff felt we could maximize the time and development opportunity for cycle two by building the program in house rather than hiring consultants.

2.2 What We Did

To make cycle two work for social science researchers in a more bespoke way we hand-picked a panel of experts, all of whom had an academic background and had founded their own start up, come into a startup at early stage, and/or had background in investment. The participating academics were invited to take part in a two-day innovation Explore-A-Thon. Day one, each researcher (or team) had a 90 min panel session that took the format of a short presentation followed by an ideation session with the panel. Day two, the whole cohort of 10 participants came together for a workshop half-day made up of business canvas ideation, case studies with Q&As told by academic founders, and support sessions with relevant professional services staff at UoG (such as Commercialisation Managers, Impact Managers and IP Advisors)

2.3 What We Learned

Due to the early stage of many SHAPE innovation projects, we found that running the programme from the angle of an exploration of innovative ideas rather than a more rigid 'commercialisation' lens was of benefit. To do this we found that hand picking a group of supportive panellists was a better fit than a consultant led approach. The workshop 'day two' were key to cement some of the learnings and add to the individual academic's development of their project. Having a mix of internal professional support professionals, and external experts was key to providing both inspiring examples, brainstorming opportunities, and tangible ongoing support.

2.4 Outputs & Outcomes

Each academic came away with a written recap of their panel ideation session, we also compiled a report on the learnings from the panel and workshop. Crucially, the participating academics self-identified the desire to form a supportive cohort to continue sharing ideas and aid in project progression accountability that will be facilitated/supported by the College Private Sector KE Lead.

3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP/ CHALLENGE LED PLACEMENTS

3.1 What We Set Out to Do

We aimed to empower SHAPE researchers to deploy entrepreneurial skills to short-term placements around specific challenges for business partners to develop depth of private sector relationships with strategic partners alongside building innovation confidence in keen researchers. We offered funding for short-term placements with private sector partners to develop solutions to a specific problem. We targeted researchers who are actively engaged with the College's Interdisciplinary Research Themes and have expressed interest in innovation as part of their long-term impact planning.

3.2 What We Did

Three researchers were placed with organizations (four projects were accepted, one was unable to be accomplished in the time frame) challenges ranged from development of engagement with 5G network solutions in rural regions, to maritime training solutions, to a multi-party project around communicating traditional methodologies for sustainability.

Two of the projects went on to develop further into Innovation Fellowships (Aspect and IAA Cross funded) to continue partnership and enter into early stages of digital games-based innovation projects.

3.3 What We Learned

These short placements accelerated early-stage partnerships to spark ideas for longer term engagement with the private and third sector partners, they provided a platform for nurturing depth of relationship with the strategic partner as well as growing researchers confidence in their innovation skill set. The placements sparked creative ideas for further projects that we were able to support via leveraged funding through Aspect and IAA Cross, as well as core IAA funding.

3.4 Outputs & Outcomes

Outcomes included follow on projects with placement companies, including a series of fireside chats around the games industry in Scotland.

Attendee numbers from Innovation Fellows workshops following on from Games Placement:

Innovators Assemble: Game Prototype Ideation Workshop 1	14
Innovators Assemble: Game Prototype Workshop 2	12
Innovators Assemble fireside chat 1	30
Innovators Assemble fireside chat 2	15
"SEVEN: Seven Voices, One Future" game soft launch	54
Innovators Assemble All-stars Fireside Chat 3	20
Innovators Assemble Fireside Chat 4	12

* Recording links to follow

4 ZINC & INVESTOR RELATIONS

4.1 What We Set Out to Do

Across SHAPE disciplines we recognise the need to grow a base of investors who understand the nuances of early-stage investment and how that differs from our STEM counterparts (i.e., often earlier stage and potentially lower growth but high societal good, different business models etc), whilst helping shape suitable business models that excite investors. We also want to provide a verity of options to catalyse innovative growth from research through opportunities like ARC and Zinc offerings. We dedicated a small amount of funds to help support these streams.

4.2 What We Did

We enabled travel for both academics and professional support staff to attend Zinc events in London. We also hosted Zinc team members in Glasgow to participate as a panellist and workshop mentor for our Innovation Audit/exploration.

4.3 What We Learned

Providing soft touch opportunities for our researchers to engage with companies in the Zinc portfolio, as well as event has helped to spark curiosity in innovation and commercialisation and help build confidence by translating academic skills into business applicable expertise. Having a Zinc team member as part of our panel for the second round of the innovation audit proved critical to sparking ideas, help shape up draft business models, and create connection between Zinc and professional services staff at UoG.

4.4 Outputs

No Specific outputs.

About Aspect

Aspect (A SHAPE Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research. Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination, and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time. Find out more at www.aspect.ac.uk.



Aspect is funded by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund