

# Edinburgh Business School Incubator, Report January 2021-August 2022

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## Executive summary

The Edinburgh Business School Incubator supports diverse communities of new start firms, helping them take their business ideas to the next stage. Since inception, we have incubated 60 firms, contributing to the generation of around 100 jobs, all in our Edinburgh Campus.

We are excited to announce that from September 2022, we will also offer incubation in our Dubai campus, to operate alongside the Edinburgh cohort, affording greater reach and opportunities for international engagement.

The report that follows summarises the outcomes in the EBS Incubator in Edinburgh during the period January 2021-August 2022.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic we had several firms in the incubator. At the first lockdown in 2020 we made the offer that any firm that wanted to stay in the incubator could stay in the incubator, with extensions that recurred as the pandemic persisted into 2022. These extended firms became known as the 'Covid' cohort.

Alongside these 'Covid' firms, in January and July 2021 we recruited further new start-ups. The summary results below refer to the 14 participants who had decided, despite the circumstances, to start a firm during a global pandemic. The cumulative outcomes illustrate the quality of start-ups that we assisted and our commitment to ongoing support.

<b>Incubator participants 2021-2022:</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Number still active or trading by August 2022</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Jobs created:</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Private investment:</b>	<b>£10,000</b>
<b>Grants and prizes</b>	<b>£434,850</b>
<b>Awards (won or finalist):</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Patents:</b>	<b>8 applications</b>

These results illustrate that all but 3 of our new start-ups have prevailed, supported by bespoke counselling provided by Sam Trett, our management partner from the enterprise support firm *Unpreneur*, and a high-quality programme of seminars and training on all things start-up. Delivered by specialists within Edinburgh Business School and the wider business community, each has made invaluable contribution, for which we are sincerely grateful.

## Background

On July 6<sup>th</sup> 2018 the EBS Incubator was opened at Heriot-Watt's Edinburgh campus. The EBS Incubator is a flexible provision for firms at a variety of stages of start-up, from proof of concept through to early trading. In the incubator, firms experience a free and safe harbour in which they can develop, initially for 12 months, though there is an option to apply for limited extensions of time.

The philosophy of the incubator is research-informed and follows the general 'melting pot' principle: that diversity is useful and important for learning. As such, an inclusive approach encourages firms of all types to apply. Consequently, we have an incubator community where there is no one 'type' of start-up or starter, instead there is a wide range of businesses, and amongst participants, a wide range of ages and backgrounds and knowledge so that peer to peer learning is informed by diversity of experiences and approaches to business.

## An extraordinary year

Physical incubator facilities were not available for much of the period 2021-22 as the University closed its buildings in line with lockdown rules. During physical restrictions we became a virtual incubator, whereupon the incubator activities, including seminars, counselling and mentorship, moved online. In direct response to Covid circumstances, we also offered additional sessions on pivoting start-up propositions (to respond to the crisis), and on resilience for firms and for entrepreneurs.

A further response to the pandemic was the decision to support our Heriot-Watt graduates. To that end, we created a unique intake for January 2021 exclusively for graduates of the University and another more general intake in July 2021. Together with a couple of firms that chose to stay in the incubator to weather the pandemic, 14 start-ups formed the 2021-22 community.

While three of the 14 have ceased their business activities, each was in response to an alternative opportunity. More commonly, some start-ups faced significant challenges because of the pandemic, and there were cases where pivoting of proposal, means of production and means of getting to market had to be rethought. We are pleased to report that no start-up failed because of the pandemic.

## The participants

Following our 'melting pot' philosophy of inclusivity and diversity from which everyone can learn, the 14 firms represent a wide variety of sectors. Our incubees come from Scotland, r.UK, and, with support from Heriot-Watt's visa office, from overseas. Incubees may or may not have gone to Heriot-Watt and a range of ages and backgrounds is represented. The talent has always been impressive, and the community of 2021-2022 are no exception.

## **Incubees January 2021 – August 2022**

<b>Tecive</b>	<b>Communications platforms for Education sector</b>
<b>Retroblind</b>	<b>Consumer Goods - Blinds and Tap Mixers</b>
<b>CereSol Solar</b>	<b>Thermal Controllers</b>
<b>Three Robins</b>	<b>Oat Milk manufacture</b>
<b>Bungalow</b>	<b>Virtual Interior Design App</b>
<b>Liga Bite</b>	<b>Planner for Craft sector</b>
<b>Lounge</b>	<b>Working cafe lounges</b>
<b>Walkie Talkie Brewing Co</b>	<b>Craft Beer manufacture</b>
<b>Well Beans</b>	<b>Coffee and mental well being supply</b>
<b>Laidir</b>	<b>Circular clean energy</b>
<b>Copper &amp; Carbon</b>	<b>Wind turbine efficiency technology</b>
<b>RTech</b>	<b>Educational App for Children</b>
<b>IntelliDigest</b>	<b>Biotech waste repurposing technology</b>
<b>Lounge N Beans</b>	<b>lounge café in Edinburgh</b>

## **Incubation**

Incubated firms are able to access all the support and enterprise development activities in EBS and Heriot-Watt, throughout the Scottish Universities network and the broader support community. They also receive access to role models, training and workshops, and have the opportunity to work with a mentor.

### **EBS Incubator provision**

- Free work station, internet access, telephone, photocopying, printing, etc
- Seminar series
- Breakout spaces, including meeting rooms of various sizes
- Access to a community of Heriot-Watt based entrepreneurs and extended networks
- Links to EBS entrepreneurship and personal development training and events
- Links to Heriot-Watt enterprise events and support
- Links to external competitions and support
- Tailored support and training as appropriate
- Mentoring
- Support for visas if required

## **The seminar series**

Training seminars occur fortnightly. Some are pre-scheduled, but there is flexibility built in so that they can be responsive to incubee demand and needs.

Broadly, training seminars include access to business specialists in EBS and relevant specialists in specific areas from the commercial world, including business services specialists and established entrepreneurs. The 2021-22 speakers are listed below.

<b>Edinburgh Business School Seminars 2021-2022</b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Induction	Kallum Russell, Laura Galloway
Entrepreneurial Mindset	Kallum Russell
Building Social Capital	Professor Heather McGregor
Marketing Reborn!	Kallum Russell
Negotiations Skills	Robert Hartnett
Leadership	Professor Laura Galloway
Knowing Your Numbers	Colin Garvie
Managing Cash Flow & Valuing your Company	Dr Abdulkader Mostafa
Learning to Grow	Professor Umit Bititci
Entrepreneurial wellbeing	Laura Jackman
Pivoting your business in a crisis	Laura Galloway, Kallum Russell
Resilience and response to crisis	Laura Galloway, Kallum Russell

<b>External Speaker Seminars 2021-2022</b>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Legal Issues in the Startup Context	Alistair Lang	Thornton's Law
Negotiation and goal setting	Sam Trett	Loca Beverages
Time Management and Productivity	Brian Macauley	PIN Training
Finding Your Energy	Stuart Rogan	Future Positive Consulting
My Story So Far...	Allison Harrison	Hot Yoga Edinburgh
Your Brand Definition	Charlotte Halliday	Noble Ox
Tender, Bid Writing & Grant Application Success	Andrew Morrison	AM BID
An Honest Conversation with...	Andy Robinson	Deliveroo Edinburgh
Storytelling Pitching & Presentation	Bob Keiller	Wood Group

## Outcomes

### Success

A central pillar of the EBS Incubator philosophy is that success is defined by participants. While there is aspiration to support firms that align with Heriot-Watt's research strengths in STEM and design, there is equal aspiration to support firms that have other foci. To that end, definitions of success amongst incubees vary widely, with some interested in developing lifestyle microenterprises, through to founders who are seeking ultimately to develop disruptive and potentially high-value business entities. Our experience is, again,

that this diversity informs and educates participants about the realities of the business landscape and opportunities available throughout sectors.

### Jobs

While six of our 11 surviving start-ups are employing only themselves, a further six currently employ one other person, and two of the technology firms between them employ 17 including the founders. The total number of jobs created by the incubated firms during 2021-2022 is therefore 35.

### Patents

Amongst our technology-based firms, 8 patents have been filed during 2021-2022, reflecting our commitment to supporting technology innovation.

### Competitions and Awards

With regard to competitions and awards, there have been good outcomes for both technology and non-technology firms. These successes are reflected in good representation in the local and wider support and awards ecosystem.

<b>Achievements: awards and finalists</b>
Unlocking Ambition Award (Scottish Enterprise)
Kickstarter
Food Entrepreneur of the Year
Scottish Women's Awards
UN Women in Tech Awards
Santander University Entrepreneurship Awards
Scottish Edge
Heriot-Watt Innovation Challenge Competition

### Investment and grants

In total, just under £0.5Million has been invested in the firms in the incubator during 2021-2022. The small amount of private investment (at £10,000) is likely to represent a reticence during the pandemic amongst investors. It also signals a priority for the incubator teams going forward to engage more explicitly and more often with the private investment community. The largest amount of external funding came from grants and other awards, totalling £434,850. Of these, sources range widely, illustrating the reach and diversity of the incubated firms and the wider network of the EBS Incubator. Examples include The Royal Academy of Engineering, Royal Society of Edinburgh.

### Sales

Three of the 11 surviving firms have been trading during their time in the incubator. Collated turnover from sales during the incubation period is £27,000.

## Press

Many of our incubees we have been positively and extensively profiled in press and media, locally in Edinburgh, nationally in Scotland and the UK, and internationally. These include magazine, newspaper, radio and TV coverage.