

## **Glasgow students help shape future of industry with support from innovation centres**

A new initiative has launched in Glasgow to enable final year university students to tackle some of the major challenges facing the economy and society.

The programme comes as innovation centres across Scotland call for a more innovative and smarter approach to utilising technology to harness the power of data available within industry.

It is believed that embracing data will play a key role in growing the economy and supporting various sectors for the foreseeable future. Recognising this, the 'Smart Project' sees three of Scotland's innovation centres working alongside the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) to tap into the knowledge and expertise of students as they undertake their final year research.

Selected students will base their dissertations on designing concepts and solutions to strategic challenges, as outlined by innovation centres CENSIS, The Data Lab and the Digital Health & Care Institute (DHI). SIE will work alongside academics and students to provide ongoing startup supervision to assist them in developing concepts throughout their final year.

The programme hopes that by bringing together talented students with the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem which exists in Scotland, that innovation centres will be able to maximise the impact of research undertaken within higher education institutes, ensuring it has impactful on real issues facing society and has a purpose outside of academia.

Additionally, through creating stronger links between innovation centres and the cohort of students, the programme aims to create a pipeline of entrepreneurial talent from universities; experienced and ready to work within the sectors of the innovation centres.

The first project in Glasgow took 'Innovation and the Home' as its main theme. Challenges explored themes around smart care in the home, living well, community wellbeing, the use of data capture and dissemination, and sustainability and construction. More than 40 handpicked students from universities across Glasgow took part in the exercise. Following the event, students will be given guidance on the next steps on how to carry out further research on their chosen topics by experts at SIE and the innovation centres.

Commenting, Fiona Godsman, Chief Executive of programme organisers, Scottish Institute for Enterprise, said:

"Students tend to focus on their final year purely to attain a qualification before going out into the world to find a job, without ever actually considering the commercial implications of their work. The majority of dissertations, although thoroughly researched and considered, end up forgotten about.

"We want to harness that hard work and research, and encourage students to take an innovative approach to solving some of society's biggest problems as part of their final year. By working with Scotland's innovation centres, students from across the country can glean industry expertise and support throughout their final year and potentially create something which could significantly impact wider society."

The Scottish Innovation Centre for Sensor and Imaging Systems (CENSIS) is one of the three innovation centres involved in the new initiative. CENSIS assists companies or organisations of any size to address industry, product and market challenges by bringing

together experts from across universities with in-house engineering and project management teams.

Stephen Milne, Business Development Manager at CENSIS, added:

“Students provide the backbone of our future economy and have the ability to create amazing concepts for practical application. The new Smart project allows us to engage with students at an early stage, giving them the experience and support to recognise their concepts as viable businesses.

“Advising them on the most important future innovation trends can help to ensure their research is aligning with industry themes. In doing this, and with the support of SIE, they’re equipping themselves with the skills and mindset necessary to launch and manage a product or company.”

Smart Project workshops will also take place in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen over the course of 2017, and interested participants and higher education institutions are encouraged to get in touch to take part.

## **ENDS**

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**About SIE:** The Scottish Institute for Enterprise is the national organisation for the promotion and support of enterprise and entrepreneurship in Scotland’s students. SIE works with Universities and Colleges to champion enterprise education and help their students start new innovative businesses. Since 2000, SIE has provided free one-to-one advice, enterprise workshops and business competitions supported by a national team of student interns and business advisors. SIE’s services are open to all students and graduates in Scotland, up to two years after graduation. SIE is supported by the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Enterprise and is part of the Scotland CAN DO framework. For more information about SIE, go to: [www.sie.ac.uk](http://www.sie.ac.uk)

### **Aims of the smart project:**

- Through a series of joint initiatives, SMART project aims to provide Innovation Centre (IC) challenge led inspiration and motivation for students to work with real challenges as part of their curriculum project and/or dissertation.
- To help students appreciate the innovative potential in their projects or dissertations and the opportunity to recognise and pursue an alternative career on graduation.
- To provide a series of opportunities that will increase a student’s likelihood of taking steps to realise the commercial potential in their work.
- To develop an ongoing resource bank of potential ideas that students can feed back into the main project for the next round of students to take forward.
- To develop academic and student awareness of the work of the Innovation Centres and the challenges they are tackling, and to develop and strengthen the links and potential for knowledge transfer between the HEIs and the ICs.
- To contribute to curriculum development for 21<sup>st</sup> century graduates and to help develop the capacity of Scotland’s students to be innovative.

