



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

INQUBATE
SUPPORTING STUDENT
INNOVATION
AND ENTERPRISE

**INQUBATE
MENTORING
BANK**

**#InQUBate
#loveQUB**





WELCOME

Queen's University Belfast is committed to supporting and strengthening our student and graduate enterprise activity. Renowned for its strengths in enterprise and innovation and ranked 1st in the UK as the most entrepreneurial university in 2019 and 2020 (Octopus Ventures Impact Rankings). Queen's is a leading university in translating research innovation into commercial application.

InQUBate, a dynamic and collaborative network that is reshaping the landscape of enterprise, entrepreneurship, and innovation across Queen's University Belfast.

InQUBate is not just an initiative – it's a collective effort that brings together a broad network of key stakeholders across the university. From faculty and staff to alumni, business leaders, and students, InQUBate harnesses the vast resources and expertise available within Queen's to foster an entrepreneurial spirit and to support the development of innovative startups.

As part of our ambitions, we are keen to engage with alumni and friends of Queen's University Belfast who generously share their time and talents with emerging student and graduate entrepreneurs.

We will develop a strong community and ecosystem of support, recognising the talents and expertise of our alumni and friends as well as the appetite for supporting growth in this area and using skills to help the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Sharing your time, talent and experience can make a huge difference to Queen's entrepreneurs starting out on their journey.

OUR ASK

We want to build a bank of alumni and business mentors who would be willing to volunteer their time and experience to support our student and graduate entrepreneurs in one of the following ways:

- Provide 1-1 advice through mentorship to entrepreneurs, to create, launch and grow their business.
- Take part in our innovation programmes by delivering one-off topical workshops within the areas of your expertise.
- Attend InQUBate networking and social events to meet with entrepreneurs to help develop their networking skills and provide adhoc support.
- Take part in review or judging panels.
- Contribute to blogs or other communications to share expertise and promote Queen's University Belfast as an important and relevant part of the start-up ecosystem.

Programme Aims

This mentoring programme is designed to cultivate entrepreneurial talent by fostering meaningful mentor-mentee relationships. Our aim is to

- Inspire entrepreneurial mindsets by igniting creativity, resilience, and problem-solving skills.
- Engage participants through valuable connections, mentorship, and real-world business experiences that bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- Accelerate business creation and growth by equipping mentees with the knowledge, resources, and guidance needed to develop, test, and scale their ventures while empowering mentors to drive entrepreneurial success.

1 – 1 MENTORSHIP SUPPORT

We are seeking mentors who have experience within the following areas:

- Fundraising & Investment - identifying and applying or rethinking options of financing
- Commercialisation
- Strategy
- Business Development
- Product Development
- Pitching & Selling
- Marketing
- People Management / Building a team
- Founder Advice
- Exports/ International Markets
- Customer Discovery



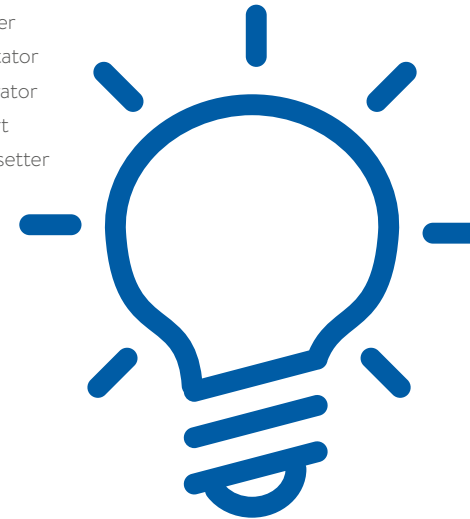


WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool. It should be driven primarily by the mentee, with the mentor supporting and enabling the mentee to take responsibility for their own development. In this the mentor acts as a guide, supporter, and sounding board and as a role model.

Typical mentoring roles:

- Sounding board
- Critical friend
- Challenger
- Adviser
- Facilitator
- Motivator
- Expert
- Goal setter



HOW IT WILL WORK

- Those who would like to volunteer to offer 1-1 mentorship will be asked to complete a mentor application form. This will provide all information required to help us understand the mentors background and expertise so we can match you to a suitable student/graduate entrepreneur.
- Students and graduates who have successfully been accepted onto an innovation programme can ask to be matched to a mentor from the mentoring bank.
- The matching process will consider the information provided by the mentee and match to the information provided by the mentor. This will be overseen by the InQUBate Senior Engagement Manager.
- An email introduction will be made and following the initial meeting with students/recent graduate entrepreneurs there may be merit in continuing your engagement on a more regular basis as a mentor. This is something that would be agreed with buy-in from both parties.
- It is recommended that each mentoring pair participate in up to three to five mentoring sessions, fostering a productive and supportive mentorship relationship.
- Both parties reserve the right to withdraw from this agreement at any time.

THE MENTEE - MENTOR RELATIONSHIP

- A dynamic partnership built on mutual respect, trust and the sharing of ideas and experiences.
- A relationship supports learning and performance through sharing knowledge and expertise, facilitated problem solving and clear guidance.
- A process of assessing individual strengths and growth opportunities.
- A relationship in which a mentee takes ownership of the learning experience and content.
- Supporting someone in overall development, working toward potential that they may not see.
- Not always 'easy'

BENEFITS OF MENTORING

FOR THE MENTEE

- Increased confidence and performance
- The opportunity to learn from a role model
- A broader perspective
- Explore possible solutions
- Help in clarifying and setting development goals
- Expanded network
- A safe environment to test out ideas and suggestion

FOR THE MENTOR

- Personal and professional development
- Opportunity to inspire and motivate
- Enhance your communication and facilitation skills
- An opportunity to share experience and expertise
- Feel challenged

ROLE OF THE MENTEE

- Commit to their development
- Assume responsibility for acquiring or improving skills and knowledge
- Liaise and arrange meetings with their mentor
- Be open and honest around goals, expectations, challenges and concerns
- Respect the confidential and trusting environment
- Seek advice, opinion, feedback and direction from their mentor
- Be open and request constructive criticism/feedback and ask for it
- Come to meetings prepared with a clear idea of what topics or issues they want to address
- Respect the mentor's time and resources
- Give feedback to your mentor on what is working or not working in the mentoring relationship

ROLE OF THE MENTOR

- To listen
- Question your mentee
- Give your mentees time to formulate answers to your questions
- Encourage mentees to keep a reflective journal of what they have learned through experiences at work
- Build flexibility into the organisation and structure of meetings
- Make use of the language of your profession
- Create a friendly atmosphere
- Be honest and patient
- Provide closure for each session – a suggestion or direction for further training, study, a summary, or a prediction of the next session
- Challenge your mentee to continually develop personally and professionally
- Refer your mentees to others for help outside your area of expertise
- Ensure the mentee is clear about the nature and parameters of the relationship



CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Be clear about the boundaries of the mentoring relationship, keep a professional distance, and remember mentoring does not deal with:

- Counselling
- Mental health
- Personal trauma
- Dependency etc

In these situations, recognise the boundaries and contact the Senior Engagement Manager for further advice and support.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How is a mentoring match made?

Information from the application form is gathered, with InQUBate staff making suggestions based on the information provided.

2. How much of my time will this take?

This very much depends on each pairing. It is entirely both parties choice as to how frequently you meet and for how often. We recommended that this is discussed and some guidelines are set out at the first meeting.

3. What if I have met with an entrepreneur and feel like I'm out of my depth?

Being a supporter is not about solving problems for other people, but to act as listener and offer insights based on your own experience or to challenge them to think about issues in a different way. If you are in a position where you feel that you are not equipped to deal with the topics the entrepreneur is raising, please contact us and we can assist.

If you feel any concern about the wellbeing of the student/graduate you are engaging with please let us know.

4. Will there be an opportunity to give feedback?

Yes, we will be in touch to ask for your feedback as we are trying new things as we expand our activities and scope and really value your opinion as a supporter.

5. When does the programme start and end?

We have various innovation programmes that start and end throughout the year, meaning you could be contacted at any stage by the Senior Engagement Manager.

6. How confidential is all this?

What you discuss with your mentor/mentee is strictly confidential between the two of you, and you must maintain this confidentiality even after your relationship has ended. You will never be asked for details of what you discuss at your meetings.

7. What if I want to withdraw from the network?

This is a voluntary network, so this is not a problem. All we ask is that you let us know why you want to withdraw.





MENTORING AGREEMENT

Your participation in the Queen's University of Belfast ('the University') InQUBate Mentoring programme as a mentee or mentor indicates that you agree to the aims/objectives of the programme set out below.

- Inspire Entrepreneurial Mindsets – Ignite creativity, resilience, and problem-solving skills in mentees while equipping mentors to motivate and guide aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Engage Through Meaningful Connections – Build a supportive ecosystem by fostering mentorship, networking, and real-world business experiences that bridge the gap between learning and practice.
- Accelerate Business Creation & Growth – Provide mentees with the knowledge, resources, and mentorship to develop, test, and scale their ventures while empowering mentors to drive entrepreneurial success.

This agreement is made between the Mentor and the Mentee to establish a mentoring relationship aimed at Inspiring, Engaging and Accelerating growth and development. Both parties agree to the terms outlined below to ensure a productive and respectful collaboration and to assist you in establishing an honest, trusting, and rewarding relationship.

Meetings

- It is recommended that each mentoring pair participate in up to three to five mentoring sessions, fostering a productive and supportive mentorship relationship. If either party is unable to attend the scheduled meeting, they agree to notify the other in advance.

Advice

- The Mentee acknowledges that the purpose of providing mentoring is to assist mentees with their decision-making process and not to provide advice on decisions the Mentee may take. The provision of mentoring services does not constitute financial, management or consultancy advice.

Respect

- Each party agrees to respect each other's time and commitment to the programme
- Each party will respect the other's viewpoint

Communication

- Each party agrees to remain professional in their conduct and behaviour and to approach situations with sensitivity and honesty



Conflict of interest

- It is the responsibility of each party to highlight any conflicts of interest that may arise during the mentoring relationship at the earliest opportunity to the InQUBate Senior Engagement Manager.
- Each party agrees to disclose any conflict openly to the InQUBate Engagement Manager and agrees to withdraw from the relationship if a conflict arises which cannot be managed effectively.

Personal Limitations

- Each party agrees that they will not work beyond the bounds of their capability and experience
- When appropriate, Mentors agree to seek advice, make a referral to another point of contact or seek support from the InQUBate team.





Confidentiality

- Mentoring is a confidential activity. Discussions which take place within the mentoring relationship are strictly confidential
- Both parties agree to maintain this confidentiality even after the mentoring relationship has ended
- Each party agrees not to use any ideas, products, or materials that the other party has discussed to further individual business or financial interests
- Each party agrees to maintain the confidentiality of all ideas, products, or materials that have been discussed or shared within the mentoring relationship
- As an InQUBate Supporter, Mentors will be exposed to new businesses that are in the process of formalising intellectual property (IP) rights, legal structure, etc. Mentors may be consulted by Mentees on these elements and be asked to provide confidential insight into these businesses. Mentors agree to treat all conversations as confidential and recognise the sensitive nature of all interactions within the mentoring relationship.

Data Protection

- As an InQUBate Supporter, Mentors will be working on behalf of the University and agree to never use the personal data received from businesses for other purposes.
- Mentors will keep, store and dispose of appropriate and accurate records of their work with Mentees, including electronic files and communications, in a manner that ensures confidentiality, security and privacy, and complies with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Data is held securely by the University and will be treated confidentially. The University Privacy policy is available at <https://daro.qub.ac.uk/dataprotection>. The Alumni Engagement and Philanthropy Office can provide a paper copy of this policy on request (Tel: +44 (0)28 9097 3114).

Termination

- Both parties reserve the right to withdraw from this agreement at any time. Please notify the InQUBate Senior Engagement Manager





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