

evolve

Accelerator Programme 2022-23



University of Essex

ESSEX
STARTUPS

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What is evolve?

Are you an Essex entrepreneur looking to turn your side-hustle into a career? Started a business but need help getting things off the ground? Apply for evolve!

evolve is an exciting nine-month accelerator programme run by the Essex Startups team. We're looking for the 15 most ambitious and innovative ventures from Essex staff, students, and alumni to work with. The bolder, the better!

If you're a business in the MVP stage, or have just launched to your first customers, apply for evolve and get access a range of support worth £20,000!

How it works

Starting a new business is hard; in fact, many won't even make it past their first year. That's because it takes more than a good idea to make your business work.

Our Accelerator Programme will help you build a strong foundation and develop the tools you need to kick-start your business and make it a long-term success.

The intensive period

During a three-month intensive period, you'll participate in weekly expert forums and workshops. It's a valuable opportunity to develop essential skills and build your network.

Pitch event

Take everything you've learned so far and pitch for up to £3,000 of funding at our Pitch Event.

Development stage

Next, you'll undertake a six-month period of self-working, with additional coaching and support provided by our mentors. You'll also have access to our co-working space, Studio X.

Key dates

Applications open

18 November 2022

Applications close

29 January 2023

Programme starts

6 February 2023

What's included?

Each week, you'll attend engaging workshops and talks hosted by a guest speaker in Studio X. You'll hear from business founders, industry professionals, and subject experts. This is an opportunity to get inspired, to ask questions, and start introducing new approaches into your business planning.

Worth up to £15k!

Topics include:

Company structures



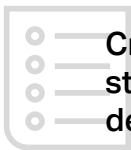
Explore what type of company you will be, the people you will need, and what organisational hierarchy you should follow.

Design thinking



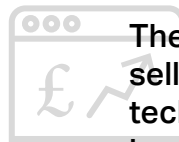
Use the design thinking process to improve your product and find innovative solutions to creative problems.

Marketing and branding



Create a memorable brand that stands out from the crowd and develop the right strategy to reach your target audience.

Sales



There's more than one way to sell. Explore a range of tools and techniques to attract and retain a loyal customer base.

Finance



Investment is important but knowing how to effectively manage your finances is essential for long-term business success.

Leadership



Learn how to negotiate, delegate, and make emotionally intelligent decisions from established business leaders.

IP and contracts



Understanding the legal aspects of running a business will put you on a sure footing and could prevent issues down the line.

Raising investment



Discover where and how to connect with investors and receive expert guidance to help you perfect your pitch.

You'll also get...

Access to Studio X

(Worth over £5,000)

As a member of evolve, you and your team will be given desk space in Studio X. You'll become part of our thriving start-up ecosystem and make important connections with other early-stage businesses. After the Accelerator Programme has ended, you'll retain access to the space for a further two years.



Coaching and mentorship

(Worth up to £2,000)

In addition to our intensive workshops, you'll receive coaching from the Essex Startups team. You'll also be assigned your own personal mentor until December 2023. They will offer 1:1 support and help you work through ideas and challenges beyond the Accelerator Programme.

Funding opportunities

Every business that completes the Accelerator Programme will pitch for funding Dragons' Den style. Last year, six businesses each received £3,000, and three went on to share £40,000 between them. Selected businesses can even be added to the Angels@Essex platform, where they'll be seen by over 100+ investors!



Eligibility and involvement

The Accelerator Programme is open to current students and members of staff at the University of Essex, and alumni who have graduated in the past three years. A member of your founding team must adhere to one of these criteria at the time of application.

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We will consider businesses who are:

- At prototype or MVP stage
- Have already launched to customers
- Have started generating revenue

We will not be accepting businesses in the ideas stage, unless considerable preparatory work has already been undertaken.

One member of each venture must attend every session to be eligible for the final pitch event. Failure to attend more than one session may result in suspension from the Accelerator Programme. We will consider this based on individual circumstances/lecture attendance.

The evolve Programme is about community and collaboration. We ask that all participants not only focus on furthering their own endeavours, but also to contribute to the development of others.

Throughout the evolve Programme, you should actively engage with the Essex Startups Team and your cohort. Bring an open mind, a curiosity to learn, and a respectful attitude toward staff, peers, and external guests.



Success stories

Our team have worked with diverse range of businesses from the Essex community, each with something unique and innovative to offer. Through the evolve Programme, we've supported some of the most promising businesses through their start-up journey and helped take their ideas to the next level.

Here are just some of their stories:

Abel Akale, Founder of ONEOFFNATURE



Class of 2018 Computer Science graduate Abel Akale's business was inspired by his dissertation project. Combining his programming talents with a passion for sustainable fashion, he created an online platform to promote upcycled clothing and showcase aspiring designers. When the COVID pandemic hit, he decided it was time to turn his passion into a fully-fledged business.

Abel reached out to the Essex Startups team, where he received 1:1 mentoring, took part in online workshops and events, and successfully pitched for funding. Now, the platform is live and Abel is working on the business full-time.

"The support I received from Essex Startups was so important in my progression as an entrepreneur. The team helped me to develop the vital business skills needed to launch a start-up and instilled in me the confidence and belief that I can make a difference and have a positive impact on the world."



Cami and Seba, EdTech entrepreneurs

Class of 2020 MA Applied Linguistics graduate Cami and her husband Seba are launching their own EdTech business. Their English language learning platform mixes linguistics with soft skills, helping learners use and understand English in everyday situations. By taking part in our Summer Bootcamp and evolve Programme, they not only benefitted from our training workshops and expert coaching. They also became part of a thriving network of founders.

They were awarded £3,000 following their pitch at Demo Day, and a further £15,000 from the Knowledge Gateway.



“Essex Startups has not only given us business support but also emotional support. We have felt a real connection with the team, which has been valuable for us being from overseas without family in the UK. We initially felt lonely when we arrived here, but the Essex Startups team have become our friends.”

Daisy Doardo, personal branding pioneer



LLB Law student, Daisy Doardo, founded her personal branding business while completing her degree. It was while working part-time as a Marketing Manager at a start-up law firm that Daisy noticed a gap in the market. She saw how effective personal branding could help legal professionals generate leads, and yet many weren't taking advantage of it.

Daisy gained a wealth of knowledge from the evolve workshops and weekly expert forums. She also relished the opportunity to learn from other founders and gain insights into their successes and challenges.

“I regularly work in Studio X. It's helpful to have a base where I can work alongside other founders and maintain contact with the Essex Startups team. Using this space has allowed me to feel fully integrated into the start-up community at Essex, as we discuss ideas and share skills with one another.”

The legal bit...

We're making a significant commitment to the businesses we support through the evolve Programme. As such, we think it's important that founders and business owners recognise the value of this with a commitment-in-kind.

In exchange for undertaking the accelerator, each venture will sign a convertible loan note. This stipulates that the University of Essex will retain 2.5% equity in your venture, which will convert if you meet certain requirements in the next five years, effective from the evolve Programme start date. These are:

- a) Raising investment equal to or greater than £500,000, or;
- b) Generating an annual revenue of £500,000 or more.

If your business does not achieve these outcomes, you will retain 100% ownership. If you are not sure what this means, we recommend searching for convertible loan notes online and making sure you are happy with these terms.

By participating, you agree to the terms laid out in the Convertible Loan Note you will sign when submitting your application for the Accelerator Programme.

All participants selected to participate in evolve will receive a copy of the Terms and Conditions prior to joining the Accelerator Programme. In order to participate, you must sign and agree to these before joining the first session.



Ready to take part?

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[Click here to apply!](#)

The logo for Essex Startups, featuring the words "ESSEX" and "STARTUPS" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, stacked vertically and enclosed within a white rectangular border. The background of the logo is a solid teal color.

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