Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Annual Impact Review 2025/26

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

1. At a glance

UWTSD delivered a sustained programme of enterprise, entrepreneurship and start-up support, helping students and graduates develop enterprise skills, explore self-employment and turn promising ideas into businesses. Welsh Government funding has supported a connected offer of enterprise education, practical training, individual advice, competitions, start-up grants, industry engagement and alumni inspiration.

The programme combines early awareness-raising with practical, tailored support. Students encounter entrepreneurship through their studies, explore it through workshops and events, receive one-to-one guidance and access support as they take steps towards trading. This creates multiple routes into entrepreneurship, whether a student wants to launch a business, work freelance, develop a social enterprise or apply an entrepreneurial mindset within employment.

Measure	12-month position	Target	Progress
Students introduced to entrepreneurship and innovation	2,454	2,500	98%
Students developing entrepreneurial capability	432	250	173%
Unique students/graduates receiving pre-start support	534	400	134%
Student/graduate businesses started	40	50	80%
Staff entrepreneurship champions	12	18	67%
Alumni actively engaged	7	6	117%
Private-sector businesses engaged	4	3	133%

Across the 12-month reporting period, UWTSD introduced 2,454 students to entrepreneurship and innovation, supported 432 to develop entrepreneurial capability, provided pre-start support to 534 unique students and graduates, and helped 40 student and graduate businesses start. Four of the seven headline measures exceeded their targets, student awareness reached 98% of target, and business creation reached 80% of target. The staff champion network remains an important area for further development.

2. The value of Welsh Government investment

Welsh Government funding has enabled UWTSD to provide dedicated capacity and practical support that helps students and graduates move from interest and ambition to informed action. Its value is not limited to the number of businesses created. It also helps people develop the confidence, knowledge, networks and transferable skills needed to recognise opportunities and respond to economic and social challenges.

- Earlier engagement: introducing thousands of students to entrepreneurship and innovation, helping them recognise that enterprise is relevant across subjects and career paths.
- Practical capability: giving students opportunities to develop creativity, problem-solving, communication, commercial awareness, resilience and confidence.
- A route into self-employment: providing accessible training, individual advice and start-up support to help students and graduates test ideas and take their first steps.
- Reducing early barriers: providing start-up grants of up to £500 to help eligible students and recent graduates meet initial costs associated with launching or developing a venture.

- Stronger connections: linking students and alumni with employers, entrepreneurs, alumni role models, business support organisations and wider Welsh enterprise networks.
- Institutional capacity: building staff engagement, developing resources and creating a stronger basis for embedding enterprise within teaching and the student experience.

The investment therefore supports both immediate outcomes and longer-term benefits: more enterprising graduates, new business activity, stronger links between the University and the business community, and greater capacity within the institution to sustain enterprise activity.

3. Establishing the foundations

The first six months of the reporting period established important foundations for the University's wider enterprise programme. Activity focused on strengthening academic engagement, raising awareness of entrepreneurship across the student body, connecting students with alumni and employers, and providing practical support to people considering self-employment or business start-up.

Embedding enterprise across the University

UWTSD worked more closely with academic colleagues to develop a more consistent approach to enterprise delivery. The Enterprise Team contributed to the University-wide curriculum review, working with academic leads to map enterprise and employability skills and identify opportunities for entrepreneurial learning within existing programmes. Online resources were also being developed to help Academic Champions of Enterprise introduce enterprise themes within teaching.

The University's commitment to developing enterprise education was reinforced when Rebecca Jones received an Enterprise Educators UK Fellowship. The Fellowship recognises her contribution to enterprise education and her work supporting students and colleagues to develop entrepreneurial skills and opportunities. During the period, Ffion Cumberpatch also became an Academic Champion of Enterprise, adding to the network of staff advocates.

Raising awareness and developing entrepreneurial capability

The programme introduced 2,454 students to entrepreneurship and innovation during the year. This included enterprise and innovation learning within academic modules, welcome and careers events, alumni-led career conversations and activity during Global Entrepreneurship Week. A start-up advice surgery at the Innovation Matrix, delivered with Amanda Bordesa of Big Ideas Wales on 20 November 2025, gave students an opportunity to discuss business ambitions and explore practical next steps.

A four-week online Freelance and Business Start-Up course in February and March 2026 attracted 95 students and alumni. It covered developing a customer proposition, products and services, pricing, revenue, marketing, costs, legal structures, tax, business administration and sustainable growth. The programme helped participants understand the practical demands of self-employment and business ownership.

Alumni, employers and the wider Welsh enterprise ecosystem

Alumni engagement helped students see the range of career paths available beyond graduation. Illustrator and author Karl James Mountford returned to speak with illustration students about his professional practice and freelance career. Freelance performers Glain Rhys and Levi Johnson shared insights with Cardiff students, while illustrator Rebecca Cowley (Beccotti) discussed building a creative business and developing collaborations with brands, companies and publishers.

A student internship with Bubbles, Bounce & Sensory Play, a business established by UWTSD alumna Sandra Richards-Davies, gave a student practical experience in digital marketing and content creation. The placement

supported the business's marketing and community engagement while helping the student build a portfolio, work with a real client and explore freelance work as a possible career.

UWTSD also co-hosted (Dylan Williams-Evans) and sponsored the Swansea Start-Up Expo at Swansea Arena on 12 March 2026, contributing financial support, staff expertise, promotion and event resources. The University's involvement helped connect start-ups, aspiring entrepreneurs and support organisations and reinforced its role in the regional business ecosystem. Discussions with Big Ideas Wales and Business Wales during March explored closer collaboration, referral pathways and joint delivery.



The University took part in a Pan-Wales Hackathon on 4 March 2026, linked to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Students worked in teams on real-world challenges, supported by mentors from the University, alumni and regional partners. The activity developed collaboration, creativity, problem-solving and the ability to turn ideas into practical responses.

Students also gained valuable opportunities to apply their learning through live event delivery. Six Tourism and Events students helped organise ITT Future You Wales 2026, working with UWTSD, industry partners, alumni and sponsors. By the time of the report, more than 60 trade stands and over 500 registered delegates had been secured, demonstrating the value of applied learning and student-led enterprise activity.

4. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset

A central aim of the programme is to make entrepreneurship visible and relevant to students from all disciplines. Entrepreneurship is presented not simply as starting a company, but as the ability to identify opportunities, generate ideas, solve problems, create value and take initiative. These capabilities can support self-employment and business creation, but are also valuable in existing organisations and across the wider labour market.

Changemakers: Creativity & Value Creation

During the 2025/26 academic year, 369 students took part in the Changemakers module. The module encourages students to identify challenges, develop creative solutions and consider how their ideas can create positive social impact. It develops creativity, innovation, enterprise, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and professional confidence.



The Changemakers Innovation Competition, held in September 2026, celebrated the work of 50 computing students. Students presented projects designed to address real needs through technology, with industry partners contributing as judges, mentors and sponsors.

- Tonio George won the Networking & Cybersecurity Innovation category and a £750 prize for CyberGuard Pro, a network security and analysis tool. The project also received the Shipmax Professional Innovation Award.
- Edward Lloyd won the Changemakers Innovation Award and £750 for an NHS Future Workforce Simulator designed to support longer-term workforce planning.
- Olivia Collins received the Development Innovation Award and £500 for Wear the Weather / WearWise AI.
- Daniel Leone received the Social Impact Innovation Award and £250 for The Human Firewall, a gamified cybersecurity awareness project.
- Molly Thomas received the Changemakers Innovation Award and £500 for an AI-powered IT service desk knowledge-base solution.
- Tia Willock received £250 and third place for Trackogram, a mobile health and wellbeing application.

The competition was supported by the Engineers and Scientists in Business Fellowship and Shipmax, alongside professionals from Hoowla, Fujitsu and UWTSD. Their contribution gave students access to external expertise, constructive feedback and insight into the commercial and professional potential of their work.

5. Helping students and graduates take the next step

Business & Freelance Launchpad

During the year we held three Business & Freelance Courses they helped participants assess whether self-employment or business ownership is right for them and develop the practical knowledge needed to reach their first customers.

Sessions covered developing a customer proposition, products and services, pricing, revenue streams, marketing, costs, legal structures, tax, business administration and sustainable growth. A further course was scheduled for November 2026, extending access to this practical support.



One-to-one Guidance and Enterprise Drop-in Sessions

Individual support remains a key part of the offer, recognising that each business idea and each student journey is different. Across the year, the Enterprise Team held 176 individual one-to-one meetings with students and alumni. A further 31 people attended enterprise drop-in sessions across the period.

These conversations helped participants explore and validate ideas, identify next steps, understand available funding and support, and consider referrals to relevant organisations and networks.



UWTSD Entrepreneurship Start-Up Grant

The University's Start-Up Grant provides eligible students and recent graduates with up to £500 of financial support to help overcome initial costs associated with self-employment, freelancing or starting a business. The grant is most effective when combined with advice and business planning: it can help turn an idea into a testable product or service, support early trading activity and give an aspiring entrepreneur the confidence to take a first practical step.

20 Students/Alumni received a grant in 2025-2026. The programme is designed to complement, rather than replace, business guidance and wider support, helping recipients make informed use of the funding and build towards sustainable activity.

6. Celebrating student and alumni enterprise

All Wales Business Idea Competition

The 2026 All Wales Business Idea Competition attracted 21 entries from students across a range of disciplines. Entrants submitted a business idea poster and Business Model Canvas, giving them a structured way to explain their value proposition, target market and commercial potential. Finalists were celebrated at an awards ceremony on 29 April.

The competition recognised both current students and alumni, celebrating a diverse range of ideas with commercial, creative and social value.



Category	Award	Name	Business idea
Alumni	1st	Tomos Hopkins	Aurum by Florence – personalised jewellery and collectible 22ct gold coins.
Alumni	2nd	Sandra Richards-Davies	Bubbles, Bounce & Sensory Play – inclusive sensory play for children.
Alumni	3rd	James Peaple	NeuroVision Wales CIC – support for neurodivergent people and more inclusive organisations.
Student	1st	Stuart Edwards	Coach Wellbeing Initiative – wellbeing education and support for rugby union coaches.
Student	2nd	Louise Hunt	Altara – AI-powered health intelligence designed for women.
Student	3rd	Lyndsey Smith	ChildLink Cymru – a secure digital platform capturing children's voices and experiences.

The competition has helped participants gain feedback, visibility and confidence. Four of the prize winners have since started businesses, while two are exploring hot-desking opportunities at the Innovation Matrix. The competition demonstrates how a relatively accessible activity can create a pathway from an early-stage idea to further support and business development.

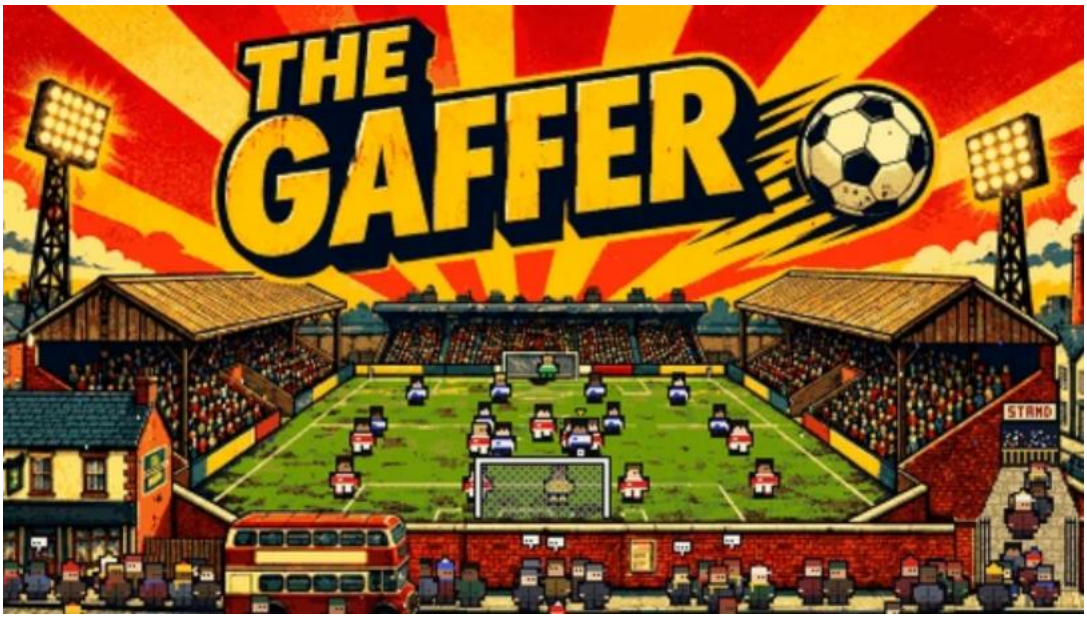
A graduate venture: Sophie Drew Designs



Swansea College of Art graduate Sophie Drew has achieved national recognition for her textile and surface pattern design work. Her collection, Glowgrove: The Understory, received a Laura Ashley Loves award at New Designers and led to her selection as one of 25 finalists for the TEX+ 26 industry-led career accelerator and exhibition at Chelsea College of Arts. Sophie is now developing her freelance business, Sophie Drew Designs, with ambitions to create collections for interiors, fashion and homeware and pursue licensing opportunities.

Sophie's journey illustrates how creative education, encouragement and access to professional networks can help a graduate build the confidence and credentials to pursue self-employment.

A student venture: The Gaffer



Computing student Sanwar Ahmed developed The Gaffer, a retro-inspired football management game, from a personal interest into a commercial venture. With support from UWTSD lecturers and the Enterprise Team, he developed the concept and established Pitchwork Studios. The game was scheduled for release on Steam on 30 October 2026.

Sanwar's story demonstrates the value of combining academic learning, technical skills, encouragement and practical enterprise advice. It also shows that entrepreneurial opportunities can emerge from a student's own interests and experiences.

Alumni as role models and business partners

Alumni continued to contribute to the student experience through talks, mentoring and practical opportunities. Illustrator and author Karl James Mountford returned to speak with illustration students about his career and freelance practice. Illustrator Rebecca Cowley (Beccotti) shared how she developed a creative business and built collaborations with brands, companies and publishers. Freelance performers Glain Rhys and Levi Johnson also contributed to career conversations with students.



An internship with Bubbles, Bounce & Sensory Play, a business established by UWTSD alumna Sandra Richards-Davies, gave a student practical experience in digital marketing and content creation. The placement connected student talent with a graduate-led business, benefiting both the student and the business while allowing the student to test skills in a real commercial setting.

7. Connecting the University with business and the wider ecosystem

Business Hwb and Street Talk

Business Hwb provides a platform for business leaders, alumni, students and academic staff to exchange practical knowledge. Its short, focused talks and open discussion format help participants explore current business challenges, build networks and share actionable insight. A session in May featured the Royal Academy of Engineering's Enterprise Hub, highlighting opportunities for businesses to access funding, accelerator programmes and research fellowships.

Street Talk: Research, Ideas & Innovation launched at the Innovation Matrix on 29 April. Three speakers explored collaboration in the screen sector, circular materials and advanced technologies, and the implications of emerging AI-enabled digital experiences. Eight students attended, alongside staff, industry and members of the wider community. The informal format creates opportunities to connect research, industry challenges and new ideas.

Industry engagement and learning beyond the classroom

50 computing students were recognised through an educational visit to Google's London headquarters following their project achievements. Students heard from a Google Cloud Architect and UWTSD alumnus Dafydd Moore, CIO at Superdry, about technology, artificial intelligence, career development and the importance of communication, collaboration, adaptability and continuous learning.



The University also continued to engage businesses and alumni in supporting entrepreneurship. By the end of September, four private-sector businesses and seven alumni had been engaged, these relationships contribute expertise, mentoring, sponsorship, networks and opportunities for students.

8. Building the University's long-term capacity

The funding supports not only direct student activity but also the development of a stronger institutional approach to enterprise. UWTSD is working to build staff confidence, identify existing expertise and create ways for academic departments to take a more active role in entrepreneurial learning.

An Academic Enterprise Survey was designed during the period, with launch planned for October 2026. It will identify current enterprise activity, staff confidence and expertise, barriers to delivery, student needs and the resources that would help academic teams. The findings will inform targeted staff development, discipline-relevant resources and the development of an academic/staff entrepreneurship champion network.

By the end of September, 12 staff were identified as championing entrepreneurship within their academic school or department. Growing this network remains a priority, alongside embedding enterprise within teaching, curriculum development and the wider student experience.

The University also continued to strengthen links with Business Wales and Big Ideas Wales, with discussions focused on collaboration, referral pathways and joint delivery. Maintaining clear routes into specialist external support is important to ensure students and graduates can continue to access advice and services beyond the period of institutional grant funding. Big Ideas Wales Role Models were utilised to deliver enlightening sessions to our learners.

9. Conclusion

2025/26 demonstrates the value of sustained investment in student and graduate entrepreneurship. UWTSD has introduced 2,454 students to entrepreneurship and innovation, supported 432 to develop entrepreneurial capability, provided pre-start support to 534 individuals and helped 40 student and graduate businesses start.

Behind these figures are people taking meaningful steps, students developing solutions to real-world challenges, graduates building creative and community-focused ventures, and aspiring freelancers gaining the knowledge and confidence to pursue independent careers. Competitions, grants, training, individual advice, alumni engagement and employer partnerships combine to make those steps more achievable.

Welsh Government funding has been instrumental in enabling this joined-up support. It has helped UWTSD create opportunities, reduce barriers, connect talent with expertise and strengthen the foundations for a more enterprising university community.

The next phase will build on this progress, with a continued focus on business creation, staff capacity and sustainable partnerships that support entrepreneurship in Wales.

UWTSD remains committed to supporting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning as important contributors to student employability, graduate opportunity and regional economic development. The Welsh Government programme has played a valuable role in strengthening enterprise engagement, developing institutional expertise and providing opportunities for students and graduates to explore entrepreneurial thinking, self-employment and business creation.

Building on this, the University will seek to sustain the benefits of the programme through its existing enterprise support provision, alongside closer collaboration between academic faculties, Student Services/Employability and Engagement, Research and Innovation Services (ERIS).

UWTSD retains a dedicated Enterprise and Start Up Manager, providing targeted guidance and support for students and graduates considering self-employment, freelancing and new business ventures. The University intends to maintain this core offer, including appropriate signposting to external partners, whilst adapting the scale and delivery of activities to reflect available resources.

The University will also seek to strengthen links with its Alumni Office to ensure graduates remain aware of and able to access relevant enterprise support beyond their studies. Existing communication channels, including graduation information, alumni newsletters and other graduate engagement activities, provide opportunities to promote enterprise resources, specialist guidance and external support networks.

The University's revised Research Wales Innovation Fund strategy also recognises enterprise and entrepreneurship as important elements of its wider knowledge exchange, innovation and graduate development ambitions. Subject to institutional priorities and resource availability, this provides a strategic framework for developing more connected pathways between entrepreneurial learning, practical start-up support and wider innovation opportunities.

The conclusion of Welsh Government funding, alongside wider financial pressures across the higher education sector, will inevitably affect the scale and breadth of activities that can be delivered. However, the University remains committed to retaining enterprise as an important element of the student and graduate experience, prioritising targeted support and making greater use of existing institutional resources, partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.

UWTSD is therefore reviewing its existing enterprise provision, institutional responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration to determine how best to sustain the momentum generated through the programme. Our intention is to build upon its legacy by strengthening connections between existing provision, improving access to relevant resources and specialist guidance, and supporting the integration of entrepreneurial learning and enterprise opportunities more coherently within the wider student and graduate experience.