

Transcript

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Dr Joan Norton:

Hello, and welcome to an overview of Swinburne Innovation Studios Entrepreneurship and Research Commercialisation Programs for 2025. I'm Joan Norton, head of Programs and Operations at the Innovation Studio.

The Innovation Studio at Swinburne are charged with building the entrepreneurship life cycle at the university for students, staff, and alumni. We want to foster an innovation and entrepreneurial mindset and help solve the problems that are being faced by society today. We will serve as a platform to develop and scale your startup or spinout journey from ideation all the way through venture capital funding and scaling. We have programs for every step of the way. We also serve as the commercial innovation engine for Swinburne University.

We have research, commercialisation expertise in health and Medtech, space and aerospace and Innovative planet that go into the research community, work with our researchers to identify intellectual property that can be commercialised and taken to market.

We have a fantastic team with experience across all the areas of intellectual property, research commercialisation, and innovation and entrepreneurship and startups. We sit within the Innovation and Enterprise portfolio, alongside the design factory Melbourne, who helped with some of our early stage programs, the Industry Engagement Team, which helped connect our startup companies to our researchers, as well as Swinburne Edge, who are working on the future of work and how that plays into the startup culture.

With all of those departments, as well as the rest of the research community at Swinburne, we feel that we have a full stack innovation ecosystem from creating innovation talent through the business school and our research communities, the research collaboration that can work with our start ups and scale up companies, as well as the innovation services and commercial development programs that we have in order to ensure that the startup companies and spinout companies that are created at Swinburne can succeed.

In the Innovation Studio itself, we run a series of programs and events throughout the year in order to help people develop their ideas and take them to the next level. We hold master classes online every month from January through to November. These are topics that are applicable to anyone working in the start up or scale up space, as well as some topics around research commercialisation. These are held on Zoom, and they are open to everyone, whether you are Swinburne, student staff

alumni or not. They are 100% online, and the recordings are available for those who register. So please keep your eye out for the upcoming events.

For the core programs, our earliest stage program is called the Initiate Program. This is for early stage ideation or aspiring entrepreneurs. It is a short program consisting of about four seminars that are about an hour and a half to 2 hours long once a week, designed for those who are just starting to get an idea in their mind or maybe are just curious about the entrepreneurship space, where they can access some leading entrepreneurs and academics and really start to get an idea of what it is to build a startup company and what they need to do next. We will be hosting this session three times in 2025. Twice will be held in person, on campus at our Hawthorn campus, and one of the sessions in the middle of the year will be available virtually online. The programs that are held in person are open to Swinburne students, staff or alumni, and the virtual program that's being held in June and July will be available to anyone, even those outside of the Swinburne ecosystem.

Our second stage program is a pre-accelerator program called Luminate. This is a six week program that's a mixture of workshops, one on one mentoring and accountability sessions. These are designed for startups who are in the customer discovery or prototyping phase. We'll learn different methodologies to engage with your customer, find out what it is that they really want, and learn how to develop a prototype or build your minimum viable product and test iterate on that. We have pitch coaching sessions, one on one mentoring, we'll have some founder panel discussions, and again, access to our network of mentors and entrepreneurs. This culminates in a small pitch competition in front of mentors and peers where we give out some great prizes. This runs once a year and is held on campus in our Swinburne Hawthorn campus, and is open to students, staff and alumni.

Our latest stage program, which is our accelerator, is the Elevate program. This is a really intensive 12 week program, again, a mix of workshops, mentoring, and accountability. This is designed for early to mid stage startups that are looking to get to that next inflexion point and really start to scale. We recruit companies that are in line with the Swinburne Ventures limited investment objectives, as we have the ability to invest in these companies once we get to the end of the program. These companies receive \$20,000 of non-dilutive funding and again, receive access to our mentor network and the entrepreneurs that we work with. This program culminates in Venture Cup, which is a pitch competition in front of mentors, investors, and peers. This is held once a year towards the end of the year, and we look to accept companies that are founded by Swinburne Student Staff alumni or companies that are in the Swinburne Venture Limited pipeline.

In addition to participating in our programs, founders get access to our Innovation Studio Slack channel. We have over 150 current members. Each program has their own dedicated Slack channel, and then all of the founders are in one community where they can learn from people who are at different parts of the journey and just connect with other like minded founders.

We have some really great co-working spaces on campus that we can have open to the founders in our program on level two of the fire station, there are some hot desks. And just last year, we opened a new facility on Wakefield Street on our Hawthorn campus called the Switch, which we can give access to students and staff as well as startup founders who are in our later stage programs.

We also have a partnership with the Startup network where you can receive access and a membership to the Startup network if you're part of one of our programs. You get access to all of their virtual events, a discount to their in person events, and again, access to that really large community of founders across Australia.

Our flagship event at the end of the year is the Venture Cup Pitch night. This is the end of our Accelerate program. It's a time for the entire community to come together and celebrate all of the work that we've done across the year. This year will be held on 28 October. We're still working on a venue, so keep your eye out on our newsletter or our LinkedIn page to find out more information as we get closer.

Now, all of the programs that I mentioned before are general startup programs open to any type of startup company, regardless of whether you're working with research IP or just your own idea or regardless of the technology that you're trying to use. We also have some programs that are dedicated just for research commercialisation for those researchers and research students that are in our community. One of those is the ExperiTECH workshops. This is an early stage program that we run in conjunction with the design factory Melbourne where we help researchers take their research concept and start to translate it into layman's terms or commercial terms and start to really think about how you could build a commercialisation plan around the research that you're doing. So many more of the grants that we're seeing coming out have focus on how products or how ideas will be commercialised, and we want to provide programs that support researchers on this early stage of that journey.

We also have access to the Campus Plus webinars, which is a series of webinars that are specific for research commercialisation. They are held online weekly on Fridays. And if you join the platform plus platform, you can access all the live and recorded webinars and also create a researcher profile to help guide you on your journey. So the Campus plus webinars are open to anyone who has a Swinburne email address. So whether you're a researcher or an undergrad or a PhD student, you can access these great content.

The other programs that are on offer for researchers are CSIROs on program. So these are programs, again, that are designed to help researchers with every stage of their commercialisation journey from that kind of early stage translation of research into commercial ideas, a pre-accelerator, as well as an accelerator program, and all Swinburne research academics and research students are able to apply and participate in these programs. And if you have any questions, feel free to just reach out to one of the team.

So that's just a really high level overview of all the work that we do across the Innovation Studio, the programs that we have. There are so many more things that we can do to help you kind of commercialise your idea, whether you're a student, a staff or alumni. I'd encourage you to follow us on LinkedIn to find out any more updates on the upcoming programs and events. And if you have any questions or want to have a chat with one of us, please feel free to email us at innovationstudio@swin.edu.au and we can point you in the right direction.

This year, we're going to be offering Initiate three times in February and March in person on our Hawthorn campus, in June and July, a virtual program open to the broader public and again in

November, December on campus in Hawthorn. An overview of the Initiate program. This is our early stage program designed for aspiring founders in the early stages of startup development. So this could either be that you have an idea that you've kind of been working on and you're not sure what to do next, or maybe you don't have an idea at all, and you're just really curious about what it is happening in this innovation and entrepreneurship space. This is the program for you.

We want to give you the entrepreneurial mindset that you need to succeed and the foundations of knowledge so you know what next steps that you need to take. The benefits of these programs include in person or virtual workshops, depending on which of the programs you participate in. You can connect with experts in our mentoring portfolio, as well as some of our academics and established founders. You'll have ongoing support as part of our Slack community, as well as the other events and programs that the Innovation Studio hosts. And again, networking activities in order to meet with other like-minded founders or people who are at the same stage of the journey as you are.

Topics that we'll be covering in this program include entrepreneurial mindset. So really getting into the head of what it means to be an entrepreneur and how you need to think differently about the problems that you're trying to solve and how you approach them. We'll talk about problem statement development where we really focus on the problem that you're trying to solve, as opposed to the solution that you'll develop down the track. Problem and customer validation. So how do you really test the market to make sure that the problem you're trying to solve is one that other people have or that the customers you think that you're targeting are actually the customers who are going to want to purchase the solution that you're going to build. And then we'll also cover a very high level overview of how you fund to start up. Mostly to let people know that funding isn't something you should be worrying about in the very early stages. You should be focusing more on really falling in love with the problem that you're trying to solve and getting to know the customers that you're going to service as best you can.

All of the sessions in these programs across all three offerings are going to be held on Tuesday afternoons between 3:00 and 4:30 PM In addition to being part of the cohort, we'll have access to the Innovation Studio Slack Channel.

So currently, we have over 150 founders that are part of this community. Each of the programs will have their own dedicated Slack channel, so you can connect with those who are in your program outside of the hours that we're meeting, but also be part of a broader community of founders that are at different stages of the journey so that you can learn from people who have already come before you. We also have access to co working space on campus. So level two of the fire station, as well as 16W, which is the new co working space opened just last year called the Switch. We can provide access to the Switch to students staff and alumni or anyone who has a Swinburne ID card.

And if you are a later stage startup company in one of our other programs, we are able to offer you access to the Switch. We also have a partnership with the Startup network, which is one of the largest startup networks, founder networks in Australia. I think there are over 70,000 people within their email and Slack community. You can have access to their Slack community, access to all of their virtual programs, discount to their in person programs, and again, just access to that broader network. So who's eligible to apply for the Initiate Program? So again, this is our early stage

program. It's meant for early stage startup founders who are still in the ideation or problem validation phase of their journey. We also would love to encourage people who are future founders who don't yet have an idea, but are just curious about the startup space to join this program. And again, for the on campus sessions, we are open to Swinburne, students, staff, and alumni, and that staff includes both professional staff as well as academic staff. For the offering in June and July, these are online virtual sessions, and we will open this to the general members of the public. We have space on campus sessions for about 40 founders to join us. And again, in the online sessions, they're held on Zoom, so we can open that to as many people as want to join.

So how do you register?

Well you head to the Innovation Studio website and find the Initiate Program, and there's an apply now button. The registration form is really quite simple, just a little bit of background about yourself and a background about your idea. If you have one, if not, that's quite right. And again, we'll be accepting applications ahead of each of the programs, the dates for the application dates when they open and close, will be listed online for each of the different programs throughout the year. It is quite simple. You should get a confirmation email after you've filled out the application. If you don't or you haven't found it or you have any questions about the application at all, please email us at innovationstudio@swin.edu.au

We can schedule a really quick call or just respond via email to answer any of your questions. I did want to go through some of the FAQs, and most of these are also listed on the website if you have another read. But some of the questions that we get asked a lot about these programs.

So how many are going to be accepted into each of the programs?

We have the physical space on campus for about 40 participants in those in person sessions. And then, again, the online session because it's run on Zoom, we can take as many people as want to register. Do you have to participate in all of the sessions? So, yes, we do ask that you confirm that you are available for all four sessions to ensure that you get the most out of the program, and particularly for those in person sessions, to make sure that we are giving access to those founders who are really going to be committed for the entirety of the program.

Are the program workshops available online?

So for the in person sessions, they will not be recorded, so you do need to show up in person in order to get that content. For the online session, however, the seminar recordings will be shared with everyone who's registered at the end of the program. We always have questions about whether or not you need to have a team in order to join the program or you can join by yourself. And for this program, you can absolutely join as a solo founder or as someone who's just curious about the space. But you also can come as a team, and we rudely encourage teams to come and participate in the program together. We do ask that if you're a team that each person register individually, so that we just know how many people are going to be showing up to the in person sessions on the day. And then, again, as I said, a few times, if you don't have an idea, you absolutely can still apply. We'll give you the skills so that when you do come up with that great idea, you're ready to take action. There are no prerequisites for this program, just an open mindset, some

curiosity, you know, and kind of a bit of a sense of adventure to get into this space. If you have a startup that already has revenue or a startup that has already taken investment, it's very likely that you are too far progressed for this program. So if you already have Beta users or customers or revenue or you've done a fundraising round, we have other programs that would be more suited to, say, our pre-accelerator or accelerator program. So please drop us an email and we can let you know which program we think is right for you.

Does the Initiate Program provide funding from our startup?

No, it does not. So the Initiate Program does not provide any funding to participants. We may provide some afternoon tea at one of the sessions, but there is no funding. We do have dedicated co working space that we can offer on level two of the fire station, as well as Switch, which is at 16W on Wakefield Street. Both of those are on our Hawthorn campus, and those are available on kind of a first come first serve basis. And only students or staff with valid Swinburne University ID cards can gain access to the Switch. We always also get questions of whether or not we provide complimentary services like legal, financial or product development. And for the initiate program, we do not. We don't provide any kind of services. If you need legal services or financial advice or you need help with your product development, you'll have to source those yourselves, but we're absolutely happy to have a conversation and point you in the right direction and make the right introductions to those in our network who can help you.

So I hope that covers a little bit of an overview of what the Initiate Program is, how we're going to be running it - the three times that we're offering it this year.

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