

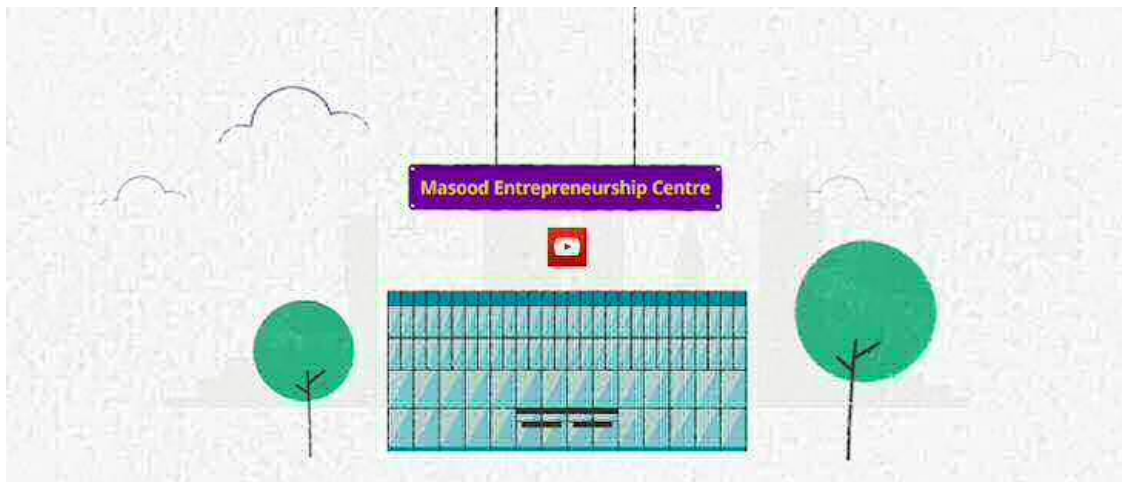
[View email in browser](#) | [Forward to a Friend](#)



Masood  
Entrepreneurship  
Centre

MEC Update

Issue 1 | January 2021



Welcome to the latest [Masood Entrepreneurship Centre](#) newsletter...

The newsletter will feature success stories, new developments, and allow you to be the first to discover a whole range of different events and opportunities that you can get involved with during your time here at the University.

### MiMA Awards

Two recent University of Manchester graduate start-up founders, Vlad Mukhachev (WrapIt Ltd.) and Mohammad Afridi (Delikart) have been shortlisted in the Entrepreneur of the Year category, and in addition, for the Lockdown Hero award of the pro-Manchester Made in Manchester Awards (MiMA) 2021.



[Read more](#)

### A major boost to the promotion of entrepreneurship at the University

A landmark memorandum of understanding has been signed between The University of Manchester Students' Union (UMSU) and the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) to take forward a proactive and positive agenda for promoting entrepreneurship education, co-curricular activities, mentorship and the support needed to launch a start-up business, especially for increasing start-ups among international and female students.



[Read more](#)

[Keep up-to-date with the latest MEC news here](#)

## Spotlight on



## Fixing 'food miles': how graphene-enhanced farming can cut costs and emissions...

**A student venture success supported by MEC, AEH Innovative Hydrogel Ltd., winner in the Venture Further and Eli Harari competitions, has recently begun work on a project funded by Innovate UK to develop a unique, virtually maintenance-free 'vertical farming' system ('GelPonic'), based on a graphene-enhanced growth material that could revolutionise food production in the UK and overseas, reducing transportation and contributing to sustainability in farming worldwide.**

AEH Innovative Hydrogel Ltd., led by Dr. Beenish Siddique (right), secured £1m of Government funding through Innovate UK in July and began work on the project in the University's Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre on 1 September 2020.



GelPonic relies on a growth substrate for indoor fruit-and-veg that improves performance in numerous ways. The hydrogel growth medium conserves water and filters out pathogens to protect plants from disease, while a graphene sensor allows remote monitoring, reducing labour costs. Moreover, the production of the growth medium outputs significantly less CO<sub>2</sub> compared to traditional solutions and can also be used in areas with drought conditions and infertile soil.

[Read more](#)



## Involvement in social enterprise gives students untold benefits...'

**MEC's Dr. Rob Phillips, Senior Lecturer in Enterprise, argues that 'Covid has magnified a lot of pre-existing social issues and many social entrepreneurs have stepped up to help - especially students who are seeing these problems for themselves. For social enterprises, Covid has brought opportunities - students have identified opportunities such as Delikart who allow small local companies to deliver same day to customers, and CoronaUnity which matches student volunteers to local small businesses needing help'.**

Keep-On-Keep-Up, Clintouch, Give Me Tap, 4Lunch, The Ash Company, Invisible Manchester and Bundlee. These are just some of the social enterprise businesses that the University of Manchester and Alliance MBS have been supporting in recent years.

We are not alone. Indeed today social enterprises contribute more than £50bn a year to the UK economy, often filling gaps where problems are not solved by governments or councils. But whilst social enterprises are run in many ways as a normal business, with a financially sustainable model and with the founder hoping to make a living from their activity, the business also has very clear social aims driven by the passion of the founder. Aims can be wide ranging from environmental issues such as reducing food waste or plastic, to helping vulnerable or underrepresented groups such as women, BAME, refugees or prisoners. For instance Manchester-based Keep-OnKeep-Up, a system for helping prevent accidents in the elderly in their homes by keeping them active, has proved invaluable during the pandemic. Social enterprises also often employ disadvantaged people, furthering their social impact. In fact, in contrast to 'regular' businesses, research has indicated that about 40% are led by women and 35% by BAME.

[Read more](#)

## The lockdown of Manchester city centre turned into an opportunity for student Mohammad Afridi to trial his business idea...

While studying for his BSc. Accounting degree at Alliance MBS, student Mohammad Afridi also began researching and planning his own peer to peer delivery platform [DeliKart](#) which aims to deliver any item direct to a customer's door.

The idea first came to him when he once ran out of TV remote batteries on a cold, wintry evening in his flat and wondered why there wasn't a home delivery service in Manchester city centre for goods other than groceries and takeout food.

When the pandemic struck in March he quickly realised it was an opportunity to trial his business idea, strictly on a not-for-profit basis, by working with charities across the city to help deliver groceries to the elderly and those self-isolating so that they didn't have to venture outside.



As he explains: "I had been researching the idea for a couple of years and had already built the website and a prototype of the basic app, so had the infrastructure I needed to see if it could work. I approached charities across the city including Human Relief Foundation, We Feel Good Club and FareShare which agreed to spread the word about our website and app and then let their volunteers act as couriers who could go out and buy the groceries and deliver them. I also enrolled student friends to help with making deliveries too."

Mohammad, who was recently named among the top 50 BAME UK tech entrepreneurs of 2020, stresses that during those difficult early days of lockdown it was never about making money. "Instead we simply used our model to help the people of Manchester during such a difficult time. But it proved a testing ground for me to see if the model worked."

In total during the first lockdown [DeliKart](#) made 1,700 deliveries across the city centre, and having tested its potential the business then made a further 2,400 deliveries over the summer after hiring its own set of delivery drivers.

Having recently secured a visa to stay in Britain, Mohammad is now looking to roll out the business further and secure external seed investment to scale up the business. As part of the plan he is also looking to build a platform to support small stores.

As he explains: "The second lockdown only further showed the importance for any physical store of having an online offering, and we can come in and support smaller businesses which currently have no online presence. The effects of this crisis will last for many years and ultimately people will go out less for shopping and use apps and online services far more."

Mohammad stresses that the support he received from the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) and at Alliance MBS he will take throughout his career.

“Alliance MBS and MEC told me so much about social entrepreneurship and I will be forever grateful. The social mission of DeliKart will always remain paramount to me, it is in my DNA.”

## Competitions, awards and events

### Venture Further business start-up competition

Your annual student business start-up competition is now open!

This is your unique opportunity to turn your ideas into reality and win significant early-stage funding to start your own business. The Venture Further competition will introduce you to a world of support programmes, workshops, mentors and networks to grow your ideas. If you have a viable business proposal then get involved. Register your interest today and get involved with the support sessions that will help shape your business proposals ahead of the deadline.

Deadline for entries: **Thursday, 25 February.**



[Read more](#)

## TiE Entrepreneur Series – Thought Economics by Vikas Shah MBE



MEC are one of the sponsors of the entrepreneur network TiE UK North. A forthcoming event in the TiE Entrepreneur Series features the collection of interviews by TiE UK North President Vikas Shah:

*Conversations with the remarkable people shaping our century with praise being given by David Baddiel saying, 'A must-read collection of interviews with incredible people and also me'. 'An incredible collection of interviews with the people that have shaped our world.' Heston Blumenthal.'*

**Thursday, 4 February 2021, 5:00-5:45 pm.**

[Read more](#)

## Social science enterprise and commercialisation: Sharing and developing best practice gained through the ASPECT network



This EEUK Enterprise Exchange online event, delivered in partnership with the partners of ASPECT network, including MEC, will share best practice at the frontier of Social Science enterprise, innovation and commercialisation.

The event will focus on lessons learnt and insights, as well as on what is planned for developing the ASPECT network and continuing the ARC accelerator programme. Delivery style will be varied, with plenty of opportunity for active participation and discussion.

**Thursday, 11 February 2021, 10:00 am.-1:00 pm.**

[Read more](#)



Masood Entrepreneurship Centre

entrepreneurship@manchester.ac.uk

To opt-out of future communications [click here](#)