CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY
The Masood Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) has, for over 20 years, provided entrepreneurship education and applied practice through its unique model of both on-curricular and co-curricular programmes offered in all Schools and Faculties across the University of Manchester.

We are delighted to showcase in this brochure, examples of the innovative and impactful start-ups founded by our graduates. As a University, we are proud to see so many of our graduates go on to start their own businesses. These entrepreneurs have taken their education and experiences gained at our institution and turned them into successful ventures that are making a difference in the world.

We hope that their stories will demonstrate the incredible potential that can be unlocked through entrepreneurship. The alumni have taken the initiative to create innovative solutions that solve real-world problems.

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This is just a small selection of our student and graduate start-ups and you will get a glimpse of the diverse range of start-ups that are driving innovation and creating positive change. We will appreciate the creativity, hard work, and dedication that went into building these companies from the ground up.

We are proud to present their stories and achievements and we wish them continued success and look forward to seeing what the future holds for them and for all of our graduates who aspire to make a difference in the world through entrepreneurship.

LYNN SHEPPARD
Director, Masood Entrepreneurship Centre

WELCOME TO THE MEC ALUMNI ENTREPRENEURS SHOWCASE
MEC’s mission is to develop entrepreneurial skills in University student’s, staff and alumni. We promote a dynamic, enterprising culture that empowers the next generation of entrepreneurs to take control of their futures through our three core pillars.

**LEARN**
Our taught programmes are growing in numbers; we are adding new units based on growing demand across the campus.

**DEVELOP**
Our extracurricular programmes actively encourage people to move beyond curiosity and to pursue their business ideas.

**LAUNCH**
MEC is a vibrant hive of commercial and social enterprise where students, graduates and staff can take their ideas into the world.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER’S STRATEGIC PLAN >>**

**AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO**

**Entrepreneurship for All**

**STRENGTHS OF THE MASOOD ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTRE**

- **54%**
  of all MEC start-ups were created in the last 5 years

- **34**
  Taught enterprise units offered across the campus at all levels

- **£28m**
  MEC start-ups received £28m+ of external investment over the last 3 years

- **£50m**
  We have over 280+ start-ups surviving their first three years of business, employing over 1,000 people and generating over £50m in turnover

- **35**
  Student/graduate/staff start-ups created each year

- **80%**
  Survival rate of MEC start-ups

- **Fully integrated within the institution - working closely with internal groups**

- **Wide range of co-curricular activities**

- **Supported at senior level in the University**

- **Closely linked with student groups, the Students’ Union, and key regional and national groups**

- **Highly experienced team of staff**

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At AEH Innovative Hydrogel Ltd, our mission is to empower growers with sustainable and effective solutions for their farming needs. We’re committed to providing lightweight and natural material-based growing substrates that promote healthy plant growth. As a reliable partner to our customers, we establish long-term relationships built on trust and mutual success. We’re passionate about contributing to the growth and development of the agricultural industry through our environmentally friendly products, and we’re dedicated to promoting sustainable practices that benefit both growers and the planet.

I initially engaged with MEC to receive assistance with my application for the Venture Further Awards in 2019. As a result, I was successful in winning the Technology category, securing £10k. Following my award, MEC continued to provide me with unwavering support. The mentorship I received during my business’s first year proved invaluable, as it kept me motivated and focused on achieving my objectives.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Secured £3.5m in investment
- Working with growers across the world
- Product has launched on a small scale
- 15 employees
- Secured £1m+ Innovate UK grant

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aehinnovativehydrogel.com
AssetCool provides innovative and sustainable solutions that meet the increasing demand for reliable and affordable energy infrastructure. We are committed to revolutionising the transmission and distribution industry by significantly reducing the cost of adding 1MW of capacity to overhead transmission and distribution lines. Using highly engineered, cutting-edge coating technologies that can withstand harsh environmental conditions, we significantly improve the performance of transmission and distribution lines, lowering the cost of increasing transmission capacity by 80% or more.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

5yrs

- Successfully collected over five years of field trial data validating performance and durability
- Publishing international research on performance and durability of AssetCool’s product
- Granted numerous patents
- Secured seven-figure investment and grant funding
- Developed a novel continuous manufacturing process for coated conductors
- Become a truly global business, securing international partnerships for commercialisation and distribution

£1m+

- Secured pre-seed investment of £118k
- Pilots completed with cultivated meat producers
- Granted numerous patents
- Built bespoke customer platform
- Secured £2.56m in seed round investment
- Secured £118k in seed round investment
- Secured £2.56m in pre-seed investment

£2.56m

- £2.56m in seed round investment
- £1m+ investment
- 10-24 employees
- 4 employees

MOHAMMAD EL HAJJ

MSc Biotechnology and Enterprise
Alumni Class of 2012
PhD Biotechnology and Enterprise
Alumni Class of 2018

Bright Biotech specialises in molecular farming. We genetically modify plants to produce high quality and affordable proteins that will enable sustainable industries such as cultivated meat production.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

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MSc Biotechnology and Enterprise
Alumni Class of 2012
PhD Biotechnology and Enterprise
Alumni Class of 2018

During my postgraduate studies, I participated in several enterprise taught units at the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre. MEC also endorsed me for both the Graduate Entrepreneur visa and the Start-up visa, allowing me to stay in the UK to develop my business. I also participated in Venture Further in 2021 and won first prize of £10k in the Technology category. Winning the competition gave me the confidence and credibility I needed to take my business to the next level. MEC’s support was instrumental in attracting the biggest and most active investors in AgriFood Tech.
EVE KEKEH
BSc Hons International Management with American Business Studies
Alumni Class of 2015
Master of Enterprise
Alumni Class of 2017

I took many MEC taught units in enterprise and entrepreneurship education as part of my MEnt course run by MEC. I also took part in Venture Out and subsequently Venture Further in 2018, in which Bundlee won first prize of £10k in the Social category.

Bundlee is the UK’s first rental subscription service for childrenswear. Giving families a more sustainable, convenient, and affordable way to dress little ones as they grow.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:
- Formed partnerships with some of the best in the business including Stella McCartney Kids and Patagonia
- Received Innovate UK grant funding to build our proprietary inventory management software
- Over 1,000 subscribers
- 6 employees
- Raised over £1m in investment
- Over £1m in investment
- 60,000 clothing rentals completed through our scalable system
- Investors include co-founders of Monzo and Sweaty Betty
We will build a multi-billion-dollar company by 2030, setting up 20 highly profitable joint ventures in over 20 of the largest economies across the world. Based on our innovative, proprietary and highly sustainable graphene-based technologies, including GIM Concrete (a breakthrough material eliminating cement and water), GIM Hydrogen (a leak-resistant storage tank) and GIM Smart Clothing (personal protective equipment with active cooling properties), our recently signed agreement in the UAE is the first of the billion-dollar deals.

Inventya (founded in 2010) is a company committed to empowering innovators and businesses by offering comprehensive commercialisation support and research funding expertise. Our mission is to accelerate the growth of innovative companies, foster collaboration, and propel economic development by providing bespoke solutions and resources that assist in transforming visionary ideas into flourishing businesses.

Numeral $1b

I won a competitive scholarship from The University of Manchester, which led me to complete a Masters in Entrepreneurship in Advanced Composites (MEnt) in 2003 at the Alliance Manchester Business School.

Numeral $1m

I won first prize of £50k in the Eli & Britt Harari Graphene Enterprise Awards in 2021 with Space Habitat and, on the back of this, raised nearly $1m from North America for Graphene Innovations Manchester (GIM)

Numeral $1m

I have a competitive scholarship from The University of Manchester, which led me to complete a Masters in Entrepreneurship in Advanced Composites (MEnt) in 2003 at the Alliance Manchester Business School.

Numeral £6m

Raised £192m+ in finance for our clients

Numeral £192m+

Founded the Innovate UK Scaleup programme to help high potential businesses scale

Numeral £6m

Delivered 4 global collaborations in the USA, Australia and Europe

Numeral $1b

Recently signed $1b joint venture agreement with Quazar Investment Company (UAE) for a large graphene application commercialisation factory

Numeral $1m

$1m investment from North America

91 employees from 11 different nationalities

2 fully owned subsidiaries of Inventya in Ireland and India

One of the FT’s top 100 fastest-growing businesses in 2023

£192m+

£6m in turnover

£6m

£1m investment from North America

15 employees

Made commercial robot sales

Developed prototypes and filed multiple patents (UK and Globally)
Positioned in the growing cybersecurity market, Praeferre is strengthening privacy management with our state-of-the-art, innovative, cyber security solution, helping global corporations to address data privacy challenges.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

£150k+

Secured £150k+ grant funding for prototyping and MVP securities through Innovate UK, ERDF etc

Selected by UKRI for UK-JAPAN and UK-South Korea 5G and smart city projects

Winner of the TIE Silicon Valley most innovative solution award 2022

5 employees

Raising pre-seed investment and secured lead investors

Crowned by DCMS as one of the most innovative cyber security SMEs in the UK

Finalist TechUK Cyber Den, SC Award Europe, British Business Awards, Manchester Young Talent Award

£150k+

The Masood Entrepreneurship Centre has been pivotal for our journey, starting from ideation, incubation, industry alignment and a lot more. We are grateful for the ongoing support we are getting from the university. Praeferre won the Venture Further Awards 2022, securing first place of £10k in the Technology category.
QV BIOELECTRONICS LTD

CHRIS BULLOCK
PhD Regenerative Medicine awarded as part of EPSRC-MRC CDT in Regenerative Medicine
Alumni Class of 2019

During the third year of my PhD I received training from MEC as part of my CDT taught courses. I think the course was called ‘Entrepreneurship for researchers’ or something similar and I was mentored by Lynn during the course. Then in 2018, I won the Eli & Britt Harari Graphene Enterprise Award of £50k, alongside Richard Fu. The resultant funding was the spark that enabled us to start QV Bioelectronics.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

£1.5m
Secured £1.5m in grant funding

World-leading performance of our advanced material electrodes

State of the art cancer models demonstrate preclinical efficacy equivalent to a blockbuster cancer drug

£3.2m
Raised £3.2m in investment

Shown the compatibility of our system with MRI imaging

Working towards human clinical trials

Shown the safety of our prototype system with implantation into sheep

QV Bioelectronics is developing a first-of-its-kind implantable medical device for the treatment of malignant brain tumours using electrical fields.

christopher-bullock
qvbio.co.uk

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Working towards human clinical trials

Shown the safety of our prototype system with implantation into sheep
 Specscart is one of the fastest growing eyewear start-ups with a mission to "change the way people perceive eyeglasses". We believe glasses should be a fun, fashionable accessory that are ethically produced and a joy to wear. Our innovative approach has made us one of the fastest-growing eyewear companies in the UK, with a strong online presence and three retail stores in Manchester, we’re changing the game.

MEC has played a key role in making Specscart a reality, first supporting me through the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur visa scheme, which allowed me to launch Specscart. In 2018, we won first prize of £10k in the Venture Further Awards Business category, allowing Specscart to buy our first set of eye test equipment to become a fully functional NHS contractor for conducting eye testing services.

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- £2m Turnover of £2m in 2022
- £10k £10k in the Venture Further Awards 2018 Business category
- £4m Expected turnover of £4m in 2023
- Specscart IT - India Office Expansion
- Multinational business with 50+ employees
- Won Albert Gubay Award and opened first retail space in 2017
- Secured £17.5K in grant funding
- Launched e-commerce website in 2018
- 3 stores across Greater Manchester including Glazing Production Lab
**URBANCHAIN LTD**

**SOMAYEH TAHERI**

PhD Urban Planning at University of Manchester Alumni Class of 2016

UrbanChain runs a safe, transparent and unique energy market for renewables, enabling consumers to place an order for electricity and for generators to meet that order.

**OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:**

1st
Developed first product, eChain, in April 2020

2nd
Launched second product, v-powerChain, in April 2022

Commercialised in April 2021 and scaled up in July 2022

Three new products currently under development

£22m
Expecting £22m turnover in the next 12 month

£2.1m
Raised £2.1m in investment

I came across MEC through my CCO, Mo Hajhashem. I got involved in many MEC programmes throughout the course of my PhD, and secured £5k in cash and £5k in-kind support. I also took part in Venture Further in 2018, where UrbanChain won first prize of £10k in the Research category. Finally, I secured a place on the ICURe programme, designed to help explore the commercial application and potential of UK research and received a £50k Innovate UK grant.

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somayehtaheri
urbanchain.co.uk

Raised £2.1m in investment

£22m
Expecting £22m turnover in the next 12 month

£2.1m
Raised £2.1m in investment

10 employees
OURS KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

£1.5m
Raised approximately £1.5m from a combination of investors and grant funding

First UK company to extract graphite, nickel, manganese, cobalt and lithium carbonate from spent lithium-ion batteries

1st
8 full-time employees and 2 part-time employees

First company to produce lithium carbonate from a UK brine
Masood Entrepreneurship Centre

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Manchester
M15 6PB

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#MECITHAPPEN

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