

AN ITEAMS EXPERIENCE EXPLAINED.

The final pitching event is a culmination of a journey of design thinking and a celebration of the work and deliberations of the last eight weeks. The Innovation Centre Knowledge Gateway plays host to the event, with invited guests from academia, students, businesses and fellow entrepreneurs. It is hosted by Essex Startups and facilitated by The Weave; the finale will bring together these people who share a passion for innovation and our region, creating an opportunity to network and witness the pitches of the six teams selected to present their proposed solutions to a varied selection of challenges.

The teams on this journey comprised students from across the University of Essex, regardless of faculties or graduate level. Together they have traversed uncharted waters on an eight-week journey of discovery. With the guidance of mentors, three entrepreneurs who see the value in sharing their experience and knowledge, the students have come together in teams where they explored their personality types and uncovered shared values through team exercises. Then, after gaining an understanding and insights into the business, the challenge and the industry, they crafted a 'problem statement' that they all became invested in. This then directed their research and enlivened their creative problem-solving skills. The Weave educated them on multiple tools, theories and approaches that benefitted in developing their business savviness. We opened up the world of visual thinking and provided insights into using and engaging with the Business Model Canvas and Value Proposition Canvas. We prompted them to think through the challenges of change, the benefits of innovation and falling in love with the problem. They conducted a deep dive into the business, customer and value creation. Students gained further from hearing from experienced external speakers on communication strategies and public speaking. The teams then devised their pitches, learning about Pitching Best Practices.

The final event was a showcase moment where the teams take to the stage with a newfound confidence gained through applied learning and overcoming their challenge. The pitches explained their approach and strategies with clarity and eloquence, it illustrated their ability to think through problems practically and to transition from theory into practice. While no guarantees are given for the value of the outcome, each team has the potential for success. The pitch to a panel of businesses and experts was followed by deep deliberation and the eventual choice of a victorious team.

In this traditional educational ecosystem, anything is possible. Who knows what new opportunities may arise? Who knows what incredible ideas may blossom?

The winners are announced, and the celebrations can begin.

The value of the iTeams programme in enhancing students' skills, elevating the student experience and bringing unconnected micro-businesses into the university sphere is huge. Watching the disconnected become a powerful consulting team is the defining joy of the delivery and a major proud moment for The Weave.