



Polybox founders Rojin Yarahmadi (left) and Nick Benopoulos (right)

# START UP Founderships Pre-Accelerator

This document explains what START UP Founderships is and how it can help you and your business. It includes eligibility and selection criteria, FAQs and T&Cs.



START UP

[www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/startup](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/startup)



Newcastle  
University

Careers  
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## What is START UP Founderships?

START UP Founderships is an intensive, six-month business pre-accelerator designed to give big ideas a big developmental push, advancing the next wave of growth-orientated company founders with innovation-driven opportunities.

Through bespoke one-to-one **coaching**, group **workshops**, access to **influential partnerships**, a **living stipend of £7,500**, and **funding up to £10,000** to drive business development, START UP Founderships will guide you and your high-potential proposal through proof of concept to market entry, first investment, and/or successful application to leading UK business accelerators.

Our Founderships alumni have progressed onto highly competitive business accelerators including those from [Ignite](#), [NatWest](#) and [Bethnal Green Ventures](#) amongst others. One also appeared on the TV show [Dragon's Den](#).

Visit our website [www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/startup/founderships](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/startup/founderships) for information on the most recent funding call.

Business pre-accelerators and accelerators are intensive packages of support. They are unique to those running them but usually involve coaching and mentorship, skills development and financial support.

A business pre-accelerator is a programme for early-stage start-ups i.e. business opportunities that are in development or have just launched. They are designed to help you establish your business.

A business accelerator is a programme for seed-stage start-ups i.e. established businesses. They are designed to help you raise investment and scale-up your business venture.

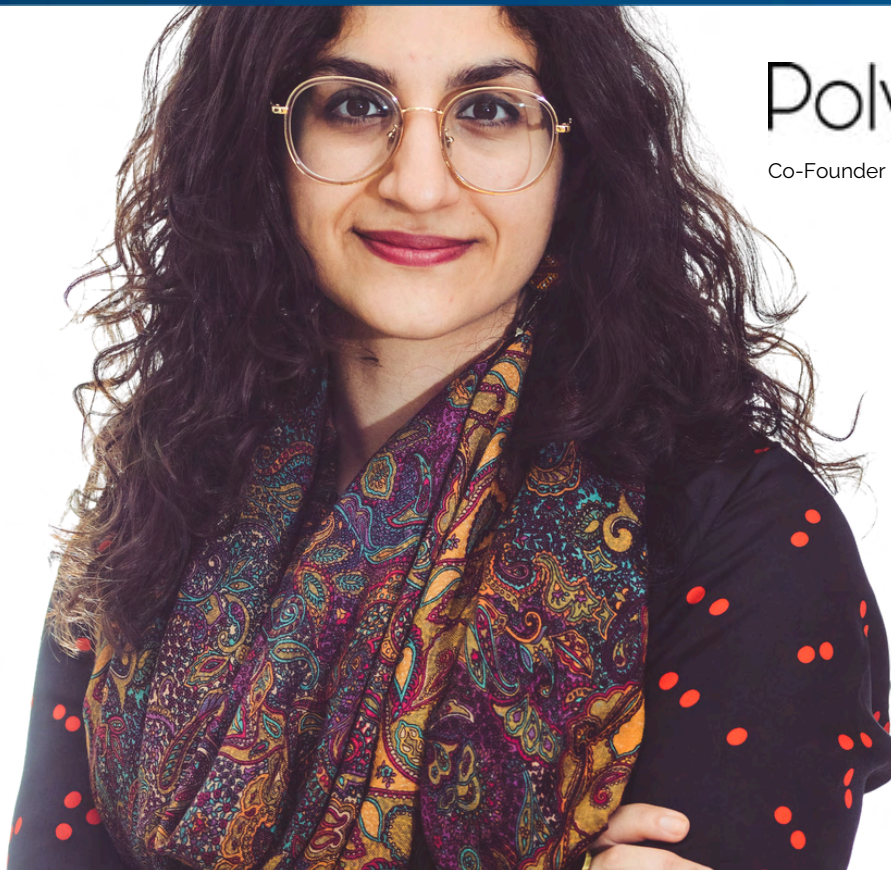
# START UP FOUNDERSHIPS EXPLAINED

The **START UP Founderships 2023** cohort.  
*From left to right:* John Harrison, Founder of Solidarity Farm. Lewis Herdman and Connor Tipping, Co-Founders of Appre. Jack O'Donnell, Co-founder of Guestlist.



Dr. Johnson Fernandes, Co-Founder and CEO of Equiwatt.





PolyBox

Co-Founder Rojin Yarahmadi

## How can START UP Founderships help you?

### Advance you and your business idea

If you're a future-thinking individual with a realistic, scalable business idea that's new and different, Founderships will give you the space and support to pursue it. The programme is adapted to your needs, with core elements supporting you to:

- test your assumptions
- refine your business solution
- develop a Minimum Viable Product (MVP)
- experiment, trial and measure
- define your value proposition
- convince others (customers, investors, accelerators)

### Coach you to become a resilient leader

Founderships will help you to develop the necessary practical skills you'll need to thrive within the business world, coaching you to:

- pitch: develop and refine a successful business pitch
- lead: recognise your personal style and learn to guide others
- build connections: find and manage positive relationships
- have confidence: master how to make an 'ask' with courage and faith in yourself
- be resilient: view challenges positively and bounce back from rejection

## Introduce you to our experienced and trusted connections

Among our Founderships mentors and facilitators are entrepreneurs and founders of growth companies that have secured significant investment and traded on a global scale.

**START UP Business Coaches** provide you with specialist, confidential coaching and guidance via regular meetings. They offer you continued support with insight, direction and introductions to our national network of industry experts, influencers and investors.

**START UP Mentors** are previous Newcastle University founders, friends or patrons. They offer you their expert advice on a relatable level, sharing their experience to help you navigate the highs and lows of your journey.

**The START UP Founderships Board** includes senior leadership in entrepreneurship and START UP, and the friends and patrons of Newcastle University responsible for selection and funding decisions. You'll be accountable to the board at key points throughout the programme so you can demonstrate your progress and ask for help.

**START UP Guest Speakers/Training Providers** are experts in their field. They offer broad, multi-disciplinary experience and expertise to help you excel as an executive leader and progress your venture.

## Businesses supported by START UP Founderships, include:

PolyBox

equiwatt

HARD 4 YARDS

appre



C A S T O R E

bossbabe  
b.

oneutilitybill.co

# START UP FOUNDERSHIPS EXPLAINED



Phil Beahon, BA Law 2014, Co-Founder of Castore (right) with his Co-Founder and brother Tom Beahon (left)

## Do you think Founderships is right for you?

**Step 1** - View our resources at [www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/startup/founderships](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/startup/founderships) and **book an appointment** with a member of the START UP team to discuss your idea. If Founderships may be right for you, you will be asked to fill out our initial expression of interest form. If Founderships isn't the right stage for you yet, you can still access our START UP support to help you with your next steps.

**Step 2** - Once your expression of interest form has been reviewed, if Founderships is right for you, you will begin the application process which will include an interview, followed by a selection panel where you will pitch your business to the Founderships Board. Due to the high-value nature of this programme, it will be a competitive opportunity and application process.

**Step 3** - If successful, you will begin your Foundership journey straight away.

## Eligibility Criteria

If you can see yourself leading an innovative, impactful business or social enterprise that makes a difference to the world, Founderships is for you. **Your potential is what is most important to us.** We know you'll still have a way to go and that's what we want to help you with.

### To apply, you:

- are at the point of graduating or have graduated from Newcastle University within the past 2 years (from any course). You can make an application to Founderships as a final year student approaching graduation, but we can only award a Foundership to graduates on a pass list
- are ready to start your Foundership journey straight away and are prepared to be selected on the strength of the opportunity you've identified, as well as your personal commitment to achieve scale and significance
- are eligible to start a business in the UK - if you are an international graduate, you must provide evidence of your Right to Work, including your eligibility to be self-employed
- are willing to stay in, or relocate to, the North East of England for the duration of your Foundership
- own the intellectual property related to your business idea/business or have written authorisation from the owners to use it to establish a business in the UK
- are committed to, and can make time for, the full Founderships programme

### You may be ineligible, if:

- you have already raised significant finance or generated significant sales (your business may be too advanced)
- you're an independent freelancer - this programme is about business and social enterprise creation; unlike all other opportunities from START UP, it's not designed for independent professionals

### Please note:

- your business should be in the later stages of development or early stages of trading
- you can make an application to Founderships as a final year student approaching graduation, but we can only award a Foundership to graduates on a pass list
- previous Foundership applicants are eligible to submit a new application but previous Founderships recipients are not eligible to apply, even with a new business idea



'Serial entrepreneur' Natalie Ellis, BA Business Management 2014, Co-Founder and CEO of Boss Babe. Natalie received a Foundership for her first business, Oh My Glow.





 **equiwatt**

**Dr. Johnson Fernandes, PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering 2014, Co-Founder and CEO of Equiwatt**

## Selection Criteria

START UP Founderships is a competitive opportunity. To be selected you must show potential in line with: **Innovation, Viability, Growth Potential** and **Entrepreneurial Effectiveness**. When applying to Founderships, please evidence how you (and your team, if applicable), are:

### Striving to be new and different | Innovation

- how is your opportunity a new or significantly changed process, product, service, model or method that will add value and impact to its industry, whether B2B or B2C?
- how is your business solution adding value and impact to what already exists in its market, with potential to outrun the competition?

### Pursuing what is practical and possible | Viability

- do you know the size of your opportunity and the credible routes to market?
- what progress have you made already e.g., through research and customer development, prototyping, assessing the competition, developing a network
- what is the level of funding you require to demonstrate product-market fit?

### Thinking big | Growth Potential

- what potential avenues have you identified to achieve large-scale adoption, create new jobs, and grow into national and international markets?
- what advantage do you have that could enable you to outrun your competition?

### Committed with the right attitude | Entrepreneurial Effectiveness

- what necessary skills, knowledge, experience, and market awareness are you actively developing to fully capitalise on your business opportunity?
- why do you want this opportunity and why is it right for you and your business?
- what personal drive and motivation do you have to make the most of this opportunity?
- do you have the capacity to take on this ambitious programme and can you accept being constructively challenged?
- are you committed to attending all training sessions, adviser, mentor, and board meetings that form part of this programme?

# START UP Founderships FAQs

## How many Founderships are available?

We have funding to award up to five START UP Founderships during any given Founderships call. Once a call has closed, there will be a time gap until the next call. Due to the high-value nature of this programme, it will be a competitive opportunity and application process.

## What can I expect from the programme experience?

Founderships is a semi-structured programme of support designed around your individual business needs. The experience also intends to prepare you for the realities of being in business, providing good training ground for your future. Structured touchpoints include:

- Weekly to fortnightly business development sessions with a Business Coach that will include an assessment of progress. You must demonstrate satisfactory progress against an agreed action plan and set of milestones. If satisfactory progress is not made, the University reserves the right to withdraw a Foundership at any point.
- Meetings with the Founderships board at the start, mid-way point and towards the end of the programme. The board is there to support you and your business and also intended to give you experience of presenting to a board. We want to help you to master the art of 'making the ask' and being accountable to others.
- Public showcase(s) to different audiences to give you a platform to grow your network and profile. You will be expected to put yourself 'out there' in the real world, to talk to customers, test your assumptions, to listen and act on feedback and this is partly how we help you to do this.

## How advanced does my business idea need to be, for me to apply?

Your business should be in the later stages of development or early stages of trading. We can't accept brand new ideas or solutions looking for problems. To be considered for Founderships, your application must demonstrate how you meet our eligibility and selection criteria. Please book an appointment with us via [MyCareer](#) to talk things through.

## Can teams apply?

Yes. We will consider both individuals and teams, but the team must be led by a Newcastle University graduate and once a business is formed, the Newcastle University graduate must own a majority share and be responsible for the direction and leadership of the business.

## **Is it a full-time commitment?**

Yes. For the duration of your Foundership we expect you to spend most of your time working on the business, the generous stipend is intended to support you to do this.

## **What financial support is included? Does the University take equity?**

Each award includes a £7,500 stipend to support your living costs over six months and £10,000 equity-free funding to cover business development costs, which will be requested and released as your business takes shape. All requests to access grant funding are made to either the Principal Coach and/or the Founderships board and subject to approval. The monthly stipend and any grant funding is paid to the individual(s) not the businesses. The support is fixed at £7,500 for the stipend and up to £10,000 grant funding per business irrespective of how many co-founders there are.

## **How is START UP Founderships funded?**

Founderships is supported through philanthropic donations to the University. Thanks to the kind generosity of our supporters we can further you as a founder, free of charge. We don't take equity in any of the businesses we assist because we're in this to help you create your own company, completely owned by you.

## **What if something changes and the business doesn't happen as planned?**

We recognise that some businesses could 'fail' and that's ok - often the need to pivot a business is a part of the process. We are investing our support in you and your future and will help you get back on track should you need to. The most important thing is to learn from the experience of having tried. Whilst you may not see out the full term of your Foundership, the opportunity will still equip you with new skills to support your professional development.

## **Can you participate in Founderships from anywhere in the world?**

No. You can apply from anywhere in the world but if an offer of a Foundership is made you are required to base yourself in the North East of England for the full six-month duration of your Foundership.

## **Can international final-year students and graduates apply?**

Yes, but you must provide evidence of your eligibility to start a business in the UK before a Foundership can be awarded. Speak to the Visa Team for advice on your post-study visa options. International finalists and graduates need to be mindful of how far you can engage in business activity whilst on a Student Visa or Graduate Route Visa. For further information on your visa options, visit: [www.ncl.ac.uk/student-progress/visa](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/student-progress/visa)

## START UP Founderships T&Cs

START UP Founderships is a competitive process that is subject to availability. Places on are awarded at the sole discretion of Newcastle University and the selection panel. The decision of the Founderships Board is final and there is no right of appeal.

### Intellectual Property

It is the responsibility of each applicant to confirm that you have the right to exploit any Intellectual Property (IP). You are wholly responsible for the protection of your own IP and should acknowledge that it is advisable to not disclose information that you regard as being particularly commercially valuable. The UK Intellectual Property Office website is a good source of information on IP and confidentiality. For more information, visit:

[gov.uk/intellectual-property-an-overview](https://www.gov.uk/intellectual-property-an-overview).

### Criminal Activity

Recipients must not be involved in any form of illegal activity or activity which in the sole opinion of Newcastle University may bring the University into disrepute. Newcastle University reserves the right to decline requests where this is deemed to be the case.

### Media and PR

START UP reserves the right to publish information relating to your award. If you are awarded a Foundership you agree to participate in any associated media activities and consent and authorise to the use of photography and quotations within marketing materials

As part of Newcastle University's widening participation agenda to support under-represented groups, we may ask those who meet one or more of the widening participation eligibility criteria if we may refer to this in marketing and promotion following START UP Founderships. However, we will always respect the decision of the individual. You can let us know if you identify as being part of an under-represented group and would like to share this as part of your story or not during the application process.

## Privacy Notice

Newcastle University Careers Service must collect your personal data in order to process your START UP Founderships application, record the outcome and make you aware of other legitimate opportunities from the Careers Service and its trusted partners.

Your data is processed to deliver a contract between the University and you as one of its registered students or alumni. Your data may be held locally by Careers Service staff for up to a year following the conclusion of this process before it will be deleted to leave only a record of participation on your central student or alumni record.

We won't share your data with anyone outside of the University without your additional consent, unless we're required by law, and it will be stored securely within the EEA. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact us at [rec-man@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:rec-man@ncl.ac.uk).

If you would like more information about how we manage personal data, including your rights under law and the contact details of the University's Data Protection Officer, please visit: [ncl.ac.uk/data.protection](https://ncl.ac.uk/data.protection)

## Further Information

Newcastle University reserves the right to amend all details of this opportunity at any time and change the Terms and Conditions without notice. Information and dates may be subject to change. A further document of Terms and Conditions will be provided to successful applicants before the awards are made.

If you have any questions about START UP Founderships, please email us at:

[careers@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:careers@ncl.ac.uk)



“

The Foundership was genuinely integral in helping Castore get off the ground. It taught us a number of valuable lessons and also helped introduce us to our first investor.

Phil Beahon, Castore

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“

START UP has always been supportive and enthusiastic, allowing me to get excited about my ideas whilst providing the resources I need to move forward including funding and mentorship.

Natalie Ellis, Boss Babe

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