


T H E B I G I D E A



Freelance. Ideate. Accelerate.

Competition Handbook

2024

westminster.ac.uk/BigIdea

In partnership with:



Santander
Universities

The Westminster Big Idea Competition is WeNetwork's business idea competition for students and graduates. The competition is delivered in partnership with Santander Universities UK to develop entrepreneurial skills and test business ideas.

Categories

You can participate in the competition by submitting your entry in one of three categories:



Freelance.
Showcase Your
Portfolio



Ideate.
Generate a
viable
business idea



Accelerate.
Scale up your
existing business



What will I get out of the Experience?

	Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
L e a r n	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop your ability to present your work to clients, collaborators and advisors • Learn how to generate more revenue as a paid professional freelancer • Grow your network and build your personal brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to build a viable business model for new business ideas • Develop a strategy to test your concept and communicate it • Refine your presentation skills to engage potential supporters and attract initial interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow your existing business or MVP (Minimum Viable Product) • Deliver a compelling pitch to attract funding • Plan to make your business financially sustainable
F u n d i n g	<p>Semi-Final A share of a £8,500 pot</p> <p>Final A share of a £5,000 pot</p>	<p>Semi-Final A share of a £8,500 pot</p> <p>Final A share of a £6,000 pot</p>	<p>Semi-Final A share of a £11,000 pot</p> <p>Final A share of a £11,000 pot</p>

Total funding available: £50,000

Eligibility Criteria

The competition is open to all current students and recent graduates of the University of Westminster for business ideas operating in the UK.

International students on a Student Visa are not eligible for the Freelance and Accelerate categories due to legal restrictions on visa holders undertaking any form of self-employment or business activity work in the UK whilst under that visa. Visa holders are eligible to enter the Ideate category with a focus on presenting their business plan.

To enter the competition, each applicant is required to submit a 1-minute video for your business or freelance pitch, and you must also fill out the Big Idea application form.

Guidance on producing your video

The video should be a maximum of 1 minute in length and can be produced however you like. Get creative ! Feel free to use images, text, and filters. Your video, your choice!

You must ensure you have permission to use the content in your video. Avoid using music you do not own the copyright to, as platforms like YouTube might delete it because of copyright infringements.

Please read all the detailed guidance notes on page 7 - What to Include in Your Application?

Key Dates and Competition Timeline

Date	Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
Now	<p>WeNetwork Programmes – Increase Your Odds of Success: Book and attend Start-Up 101, Freelance Essentials or Skills Lab to gain skills and insights into freelancing, starting or growing a business. These events will be advantageous for applicants’ progression and increase the likelihood of success. You can access the courses both live or on-demand.</p>		
23 January 2024	<p>Applications Open: Visit the competition website: www.westminster.ac.uk/bigidea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and review the competition guidelines and instructions. • Produce a 1-minute pitch video and publish it on Youtube, GoogleDrive, One Drive or similar. • Ensure the video is accessible with the link to an external viewer. It can be published as “Unlisted” if on Youtube. • Copy and paste the video URL into the application form. • Ideate and Accelerate applicants should also fill out an application form on the SantanderX platform. <p>Student Visa applicants: International students on a Student Visa are prohibited by UK Government Law from starting or registering a business and undertaking any form or freelance work in the UK whilst on this visa. <u>Visa holders are eligible to enter the Ideate category</u>, with a focus on presenting their business plan.</p>		
January to March	<p>Attend a Big Idea Information Session for guidance on the competition and the application process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 January at 5 pm – Book here or join directly here • 8 February at 12 pm – Book here or join directly here • 22 February at 1 pm – Book here or join directly here • 4 March at 5.00 pm – Book here or join directly here • 20 March at 11 am – Book here or join directly here • 26 March at 6.00 pm – Book here or join directly here <p>Access the complete calendar here: bit.ly/wenetworkcalendar</p>		

Key Dates and Competition Timeline

Date	Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
28 March at 5pm	<p>DEADLINE: Application Form Closes</p> <p>Application form to be submitted by 5pm on 28 March 2024. Late entries will not be considered or accepted. We recommend that you aim to submit your application at least a few hours before the deadline to avoid last-minute tech issues that may delay your submission.</p>		
15-16 April	<div data-bbox="479 549 669 708" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>All applicants are required to attend expert-led BootCamp sessions for their entry category</p> <p>All applicants are required to attend expert-led BootCamp sessions for their entry category. Complete schedule on page 10.</p>		
	<p>Freelance</p> <p>Workshops to develop your freelancing strategy, presentation skills and mindset to secure paid work opportunities.</p>	<p>Ideate</p> <p>Workshops to develop your business concept, revenue model and improve your presentation skills.</p>	<p>Accelerate</p> <p>Workshops to develop how you validate your business concept, generate traction and improve your presentation skills.</p>
April to May	<p>1:1 Sessions with an expert</p> <p>All BootCamp participants will be able to book a 1:1 with a freelance or business expert to finalise your pitch deck presentations.</p>		
21 May at 5pm	<p>DEADLINE: Submit your Pitch Deck Presentations</p> <p>We recommend that you aim to submit your application at least a few hours before the deadline to ensure there are no last-minute tech issues that may delay your submission.</p>		

Key Dates and Competition Timeline

Date	Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
30 May	Announcement of Semi-Finalists Industry experts/judges will select the semi-finalists.		
6 June	Semi-Final Shortlisted applicants will present their pitch at the Semi-Final. Each participant will have 3 minutes to present, followed by a 5-minute Q&A with a panel of judges. A panel of experts/judges will select the 9 finalists who will pitch again at the Grand Final.		
June to Sept	Mentoring Finalists will access 1:1 mentoring and coaching during the summer to help prepare for the Grand Final. This mentoring is aimed at providing guidance so the founders can progress their business throughout the summer before delivering their updated pitch at the Grand Final.		
25 Sept. at 5 pm	DEADLINE: Submit the final iteration of their 3-minute pitch deck		
9 October	Grand Final All finalists will present their finalised pitch deck to an audience and panel of judges who will select winners for each category. Each participant will have 3 minutes to pitch, followed by a 7 minute Q&A. The public will vote and choose an additional winner (the Public Choice award).		

What to include in your application for your category?

Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Form • 1 minute video presenting your freelance portfolio and service with the following elements covered: <p>+ Introduce yourself and what you do as well as any elements which make you stand out as a freelancer</p> <p>+ Showcase your work: Illustrate your work(s) (e.g. something you did at University, for a client, or as a hobby)</p> <p>+ Demonstrate your passion and commitment: Why do you want to work for yourself? What drives you? What have you achieved to date? What are your goals?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Form • Santander X Form • 1 minute video presenting your business idea with the following elements covered: <p>+ Introduce yourself and your idea/product/service</p> <p>+ Your Problem/Solution concept: what unique features or benefits does the product or service solves? How will you test the demand for it?</p> <p>+ Uniqueness: How is your product or service different from the existing competitors? Why would your target customers choose your product or service over other solutions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Form • Santander X Form • 1 minute video presenting your freelance portfolio and service with the following elements covered: <p>+ Introduce yourself and your product/service business</p> <p>+ Share your milestones: How have you validated your concept, what is the current traction, how are you developing a customer base?</p> <p>+ Business model: Showcase how you are planning to grow your business concept into a larger business</p>

Scoring Criteria

The following criteria will be used by the selection panels to assess the entries submitted and to inform the entire selection process:

Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of work, experience and skills: The freelancer effectively showcases their skills and experience (either professional or academic), and their strengths.• Potential for impact: The clear potential for the freelancer to make a positive impact on their industry or community is evident.• Viability and feasibility: Commercial viability and commitment was demonstrated making it likely to be successful.• Commitment and vision: The freelancer is committed to establishing and growing a successful freelance activity.• Impact of winning funding: Winning funding would have a significant impact on the applicant's freelance career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation and feasibility: The business idea is feasible, innovative and has the potential to disrupt and add value to a market or sector with clear differences from competitors.• Viability: The business idea is appealing and desirable to potential customers or users, to be tested with an MVP.• Product: There is a clear plan to develop the business idea into a working prototype.• Commercial awareness: The founder understands the commercial aspects of their industry.• Impact of winning funding: Winning funding would have a significant impact on the business or team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact and Innovation: The business involves clear innovation with the potential to impact a specific industry, market, or community.• Traction and viability: The business has already gained some initial traction and show potential for commercial success.• Scalability: The business can be expanded and grown to reach a larger market or audience.• Competitive advantage: The business has a unique advantage over competitors in the market.• Team structure: The business has a strong and capable team behind it, with the skills and experience necessary to bring it to fruition.



**THE
BIG
IDEA**
Bootcamp

15 APRIL	Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
Morning	Check-In & Welcome		
	Idea Validation Workshop		
	Networking Lunch		
Afternoon	Building a Successful Freelance Business	Building a Viable Business Idea	Growing and Scaling Your Business
16 APRIL	Freelance	Ideate	Accelerate
Morning	Check-In & Welcome		
	Presenting Your Work to Clients	Pitching Workshop	Pitching Workshop
Afternoon	Networking Lunch		
	Meet the experts: Roundtable format		
	Guest speaker		
	Closing & Next Steps		

Important FAQs and Guidelines

Can I replicate and submit a solution, business idea or business that is not originated by me or my team?

Entries submitted for any of the competition categories must be your own (or your team's) unique and original ideas, work or businesses and entirely researched, developed and originated by the applicant team or individual. Entries will be disqualified if the judges find them to replicate or acquire an already existing idea, solution or business not developed by the individual or team submitting the entry. If participating in the Accelerate category, you may be asked to provide evidence of business ownership and Intellectual Property rights.

Can I enter the competition with any ideas?

No. The competition is open to all specialisms, products and services operating in or targeting any sector. No offensive, unethical, unviable and/or illegal activity is permitted throughout the competition. If evidence is found, the application will be disqualified at WeNetwork's discretion.

Can I apply as a team?

Yes, for all entry categories, you may apply as a team or individually. The lead applicant should be a current student or recent graduate from the University of Westminster. Any payment of prizes will be paid to the lead applicant and the funding will be managed by the lead applicant. The lead applicant will remain in contact with the WeNetwork team.

If we apply as a team, will each member of the team win their own prize?

No, any prizes are awarded to the team and not to individual team members. Each team should have a lead applicant who is a current student or recent graduate from the University of Westminster. Any payment of prizes will be paid to the lead applicant and the funding will be managed by the lead applicant.

Important FAQs and Guidelines

Can I participate in more than one entry category?

No. You can't submit more than one application or idea. Please choose the one category that best suits your business idea or freelance career and submit your application accordingly.

What video format and length is acceptable?

Your video submission must not exceed 1 minute in length and should be recorded with the camera focusing on you. You may include slides, animations, or images in your video, but should not infringe any copyright, therefore we recommend no background music. Your video should be recorded in English and have sound enabled. The use of subtitles is encouraged but not mandatory.

Will the quality of my video influence whether my application is shortlisted?

We encourage applicants not to spend a large amount of time producing their video. However, the video images must be legible and the audio sound must be clear. We will assess the quality of the video's information and content, not the production quality or format. We have shared some tips and advice on video entries on page 8.

How do I upload my video?

First, record and upload your video on Youtube, GoogleDrive, OneDrive, Dropbox or other. Copy the URL onto the competition form for your chosen entry category. Make sure the video is accessible for anyone with the link to access it, however it can be privately listed.

When is the application deadline?

The application deadline is 28 March 2024, 5.00pm (UK Time). Any applications received after the date and time will not be considered.

Important FAQs and Guidelines

Do I have to use the online form to apply?

Yes, all applications and entries should be submitted through the online application form published on the Big Idea webpage. Applications sent or received through other channels or formats will not be considered. If you have any problems accessing the form or submitting your entry, please contact the WeNetwork team at wenetwork@westminster.ac.uk as soon as possible in advance of the application deadline.

Can I apply if I am not a University of Westminster student or graduate?

No, only students and graduates who are currently enrolled or have completed their studies on any undergraduate, postgraduate or research course at the University of Westminster within the past three years can apply. The WeNetwork team will verify your eligibility as part of the application process. If you are not linked to the University of Westminster, you can be part of a team led by a University of Westminster student or graduate. However, they will be the lead applicant and will manage any funds awarded in this competition.

Can International students on a Student Visa apply?

If you are the holder of a Student Visa, you will only be able to participate in the Ideate category, as this allows you to enter a business idea without starting a business. International students on a Student Visa are prohibited by UK government law from starting or registering a business and undertaking any form of freelance work in the UK whilst under that visa. For more visa-related information, you can visit the StudentHub webpage www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students

I want to use the funding to start a business outside the UK. Can I apply?

The Big Idea competition currently only supports ideas and business activities operating in the UK.

Can I receive the funding in an international bank account?

No, the funding will be sent to UK bank accounts only.

Important FAQs and Guidelines

Can graduates apply?

Yes, graduates can apply, but only if they have completed their studies no earlier than the academic year 2019/20.

Is this competition more suitable for students or graduates from a particular course?

No, the competition is open and suitable for students and graduates from any course.

If I am selected as a finalist, runner-up or winner, when will I receive my prize?

Prizes will be awarded at the Semi-Final and Grand Final, and only if you participate fully and complete each stage of the competition. The payments will be made shortly after these events.

Do I have to attend the mandatory workshops, the Semi-Final and the Grand Final?

Yes, all applicants and teams must attend the mandatory workshops. Finalists are required to attend the Semi-final and the Grand Final as well as meetings with their mentors. Failure to attend these events may result in disqualification at WeNetwork's discretion

Are there any other participation requirements I should be aware of?

WeNetwork delivers a number of enterprise activities for students and graduates and all activities are subject to participants respecting the WeNetwork Statement of Service which is accessible on WeNetwork's webpage www.westminster.ac.uk/wenetwork

What do I do if I need further information or help with my application?

Contact the WeNetwork team at: wenetwork@westminster.ac.uk

Previous participants



Elijah McDonnell

Freelance Category

EMP is a production company with an ethos of creating real social impact through the medium of filmmaking, aiming to be a disruptor.

[Link to pitch video](#)



Grace Tayo

Ideate Category

TAYO KNIT is an easy way to shop sustainably online with high-quality deadstock yarn and provides educational knitting content.

[Link to pitch video](#)



Marc & Wren Fegarsky

Freelance Category

Schparkly Creative is a marketing and design studio that helps sustainable start ups and scale ups find their voice in the marketplace.

[Link to pitch video](#)



Aram Tufan

Accelerate Category

Happy Student is an app that makes students' transition into university life easier and less stressful so they can focus on learning and making the most of the college experience.

[Link to pitch video](#)



THE BIG IDEA



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