

## Self employment, enterprise and entrepreneurship

More and more graduates are considering starting their own businesses both after graduation and whilst still at university, demonstrating their ability to take the initiative and make things happen. They may also see it as a more flexible way to live and earn than pursuing the traditional graduate recruitment route into work.

### Being enterprising

One of the keys to success is having an enterprising streak that enables you to think creatively, use your initiative and make the most of opportunities to learn and develop new skills. Even if you don't want to start your own business, employers want to recruit enterprising graduates who can help them move their business forward. Graduates are often asked to demonstrate their enterprising and entrepreneurial skills during the application and assessment process.

According to the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NCGE) an 'Enterprising person possesses a set of personal skills, attributes, behavioural and motivational capacities which can be used in any context (social, work, leisure etc.) These include:

- Intuitive decision making
- The capacity to make things happen
- Networking
- Initiative taking
- Opportunity identification
- Creative problem solving
- Strategic thinking

Employees who are enterprising will have the ability to drive a company forward, seek out new business, develop new ideas and explore new areas. They will have the energy, motivation and drive to create new products and services, see how savings can be made and how processes can be improved.

While you are at university you can build on your skills and find opportunities to become enterprising. Having a part time job or going on a placement year will give you the chance to see firsthand how businesses operate. Joining student societies such as Aston Entrepreneurs [www.astonentrepreneurs.com](http://www.astonentrepreneurs.com) and SIFE Aston (Students in Free Enterprise) [www.sifeaston.org](http://www.sifeaston.org) will help you spot opportunities, become more enterprising and encourage the development of entrepreneurial and business skills. Taking on an executive role in a student club or society,

becoming a student representative (talk to staff running your course) or volunteering in some capacity will all enhance your enterprise skills. Volunteering activities at Aston are advertised via Outreach [www.aston.ac.uk/outreach](http://www.aston.ac.uk/outreach) They run community engagement, mentoring and student ambassador schemes. For other volunteering opportunities see [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

## **Self employment**

Self employment or setting up your own business is becoming an increasingly popular option. Recent BBC programmes such as Dragons Den and The Apprentice have provided insight into the world of self employment, enterprise and entrepreneurship showing the pressures involved in impressing potential backers and working effectively as a team in order to achieve your dream. To be successful you need to be determined, optimistic, have lots of energy and be able to live with the risk and uncertainty that working for yourself can bring. You will need to be committed to learning as you go along, working out what needs to be done, how to do it and most importantly, knowing who to ask for advice when necessary.

It is important to think about:

- Why you want to run a business
- How your skills and qualities match up to those required
- What product or service you would offer
- How you would fund your business
- Your business planning, experience, the advice available and how you could use it

## **Who can help?**

There is a lot of help available both whilst you are still at university and once you graduate, including:

- Aston University Careers and Employability Centre website has a range of resources designed to help you through the process of starting your own business [www.aston.ac.uk/careers](http://www.aston.ac.uk/careers)
- SPEED WM (Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education) offers undergraduates the opportunity to start and get support for their businesses. The Careers and Employability Centre can give you more information on this initiative.
- BSEEN (Birmingham Skills for Enterprise and Employability Network) offers recent graduates and students a range of support and training culminating in new business start up. [www.bseen.org.uk](http://www.bseen.org.uk)

## **Useful websites**

National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurs – promotes enterprise and entrepreneurship among graduates [www.ncge.com](http://www.ncge.com)

Flying Start – dedicated to getting students and graduates started in business [www.flyingstartonline.com](http://www.flyingstartonline.com)

Shell Live Wire – helps 16-30yr olds start and develop their own business [www.shell-livewire.com](http://www.shell-livewire.com)

The Prince's Trust – helps young people access training, mentoring and financial support to realise their potential [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

Business Link [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

British Chamber of Commerce [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

Enterprise UK [www.enterpriseuk.org](http://www.enterpriseuk.org)

Social Enterprise Coalition [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk)

UnLtd [www.unltd.org.uk](http://www.unltd.org.uk)

Best for Business [www.bestforbusiness.com](http://www.bestforbusiness.com)

Startups [www.startups.co.uk](http://www.startups.co.uk)

Department for Business Innovation and Skills [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)