

FOUNDERS

At the University of Cambridge

2025 EDITION

WELCOME

Founders at the University of Cambridge - where innovation meets action

This strategic initiative by the University is designed to turn world-class ideas and research into real-world ventures. Through seed capital, structured growth programmes and access to a global expert network including many Cambridge alumni - we support bold minds as they bring their work to market.

Cambridge has never lacked innovation. Think IVF, AI, DNA, microchips and jet engines. What's often missing is a programmatic path from ambition to execution. Since launching 18 months ago, we've introduced three programmes: SYNC, a co-founder matching and company hatching programme; SPARK, created with King's College E-Lab; and START, a pre-seed accelerator - all showing strong early traction and record application numbers.

Like raising a child, building great companies takes a village. Our growing 270+ experts - exited founders, investors and senior corporate leaders - form the backbone of our growing community. And with support from AstraZeneca, Hitachi, HSBC Innovation Banking, KPMG, Cambridge Enterprise Ventures and Parkwalk Advisors, and many of you, our founders gain access to what they need to grow. Thank you.

If we want to build a truly world-class innovation economy in the UK, infrastructure like this is essential. What started as a pilot is proving to be just that - essential. Founders at the University of Cambridge doesn't just support individual startups - it accelerates breakthroughs, fuels talent, engages alumni and investors and drives long-term value creation.

We continue to evolve with a product-market fit mindset - and we're ready to scale. With more partners, more experts and more investors.

The future is being built here. Join us in shaping what comes next.



GERARD GRECH CBE

Managing Director,
Founders at the University of Cambridge



To become a global leader in creating science-based businesses and maximising our impact, we must unlock Cambridge's full innovation potential. Founders at the University of Cambridge accelerates the brilliance of our innovators for the benefit of society worldwide.



DR DIARMUID O'BRIEN

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Innovation,
University of Cambridge

Image credit: StillVision



The START 2.0 cohort is a shining example of Cambridge's world-changing research and innovation that address global challenges faced by people every day. Accelerating these impactful academic journeys is crucial for the world.



DR JIM GLASHEEN

Chief Executive, Cambridge Enterprise

CAMBRIDGE ECOSYSTEM

At the heart of one of the world's most successful innovation and technology clusters is the University of Cambridge.

Cambridge is home to over 5,000 knowledge-intensive firms, employing over 73,000 people and generating £24 billion turnover. Driven by world-class research, cutting-edge startups and a collaborative community, this dynamic ecosystem propels technological advancements, economic growth and global social impact.

“Cambridge is a mature innovation ecosystem spanning many high-growth sectors, including AI, technology and life sciences. By working with the government and other partners, we can accelerate our impact even further, unlock the amazing potential of University research and innovation and help drive UK growth.”



PROFESSOR DEBORAH PRENTICE

Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge

“In an increasingly fragmented global landscape, Cambridge's collaborative tech ecosystem demonstrates the openness and ambition essential for UK prosperity. This innovation hub exemplifies Britain's potential on the world stage.”

DR GILLIAN TETT OBE

Financial Times, Columnist and Chair of the Editorial Board, and Provost, Kings College, University of Cambridge



“Cambridge's tech ecosystem stands among global innovation hubs, fostering world-class startups for decades. We must continue to ensure our entrepreneurs have the resources, such as Founders at the University of Cambridge to start up, scale and transform industries internationally.”

DR HERMANN HAUSER KBE FRS

Founder of Arm and Amadeus Capital



“Cambridge's vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem thrives on collaboration and a shared vision for transformative impact. The recent launch of SPARK by King's Entrepreneurship Lab in partnership with Founders at the University of Cambridge, exemplifies this spirit — turning bold ideas into ventures that drive real-world change.”



DR KAMIAR MOHADDES

Associate Professor in Economics, Judge Business School, and Co-Director of Kings E-Lab

“We fundamentally believed that Founders at the University of Cambridge was so required in Cambridge, as a unifying force to work across the University and bring together all the different stakeholders.”

TOMMY STADLEN

General Partner, Giant Ventures



“Cambridge’s innovation ecosystem stands out globally, fuelling economic growth across the UK. Focused on progress, Innovate Cambridge empowers the city’s companies, institutions and organisations to accelerate breakthroughs, ensuring that success benefits both the wider community and the nation.”



DR KATHRYN CHAPMAN

Executive Director, Innovate Cambridge

“Cambridge has consistently been on the forefront of pioneering AI for decades - from Autonomy in the 1990s through to more recent companies like Darktrace, Healx and Wayve. All of these started life in Cambridge and are fundamentally changing how we live and work worldwide in areas as diverse as drug discovery, autonomous vehicles and cyber security.”

SURANGA CHANDRATILLAKE OBE

General Partner at Balderton Capital



“Cambridge provides unparalleled foundations for deep tech ventures with its unique international networks and expertise. We must maintain focus on our ultimate mission: transforming breakthrough science into scalable solutions that tackle universal challenges.”



PROFESSOR DAME CLARE GREY FRS

Co-Founder and Chief Scientist, Nyobolt; Royal Society Professor of Chemistry at University of Cambridge

“We’re delighted to support Founders at the University of Cambridge, empowering their scientists and students to build global ventures.”

GLEN WATERS

Head of Early Stage, HSBC Innovation Banking



“With its deep tech legacy and problem solving mindset, Cambridge has always bred exceptional founders — and with Founders at the University of Cambridge, there’s now a dedicated path turning world-class ideas and research into world-changing companies.”



SAUL KLEIN OBE

Founder and Managing partner of LocalGlobe, part of Phoenix Court

“We’re proud to support Founders at the University of Cambridge, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship that drive meaningful impact across industries.”



JUSTINE ANDREW

Partner and Head of University Partnerships Office, KPMG

“Innovation brings the power of science into the reality of business, which Cambridge excels at. As technologies, including quantum and materials science, reshape our world, Cambridge’s ambitious founders are accelerating the success of Britain’s economy.”

TOM ADEYOOLA

Executive Chair of Innovate UK



“At AstraZeneca, we’re proud to be part of the success of this region. With billions spent on R&D by our UK teams, 130+ partnerships with the University of Cambridge alone, and thousands of jobs supported, our contributions to this ecosystem are making a real impact.”



SHAUN GRADY

Chair, AstraZeneca UK

CAMBRIDGE IN NUMBERS

1st

in global rankings of no. of university alum founders who raised >£10M per inhabitant*

3rd

in global science cluster rankings*

26

unicorn businesses born in Cambridge**

>£3.3BN

investment in University of Cambridge companies**

* Dealroom, 2023

** Cambridge Enterprise, 2025

KEY DATA FROM DEALROOM

Global tech hubs are often measured by their concentration of investors, corporate headquarters and infrastructure. Yet Cambridge isn't like other global tech hubs and the result is that it delivers exceptional innovative bang for buck.

Over the past 25 years, the city has leveraged its world-class research, collaborative ecosystem and scientific heritage, giving us companies like Arm, Improbable, Wayve and Quantinuum. The innovation level continues to be high, with the University of Cambridge third in Europe for deep tech spinout value, behind Oxford and ETH Zurich.

But in other areas, Cambridge performs even better than the world's leading ecosystems. An impressive 41% of Cambridge companies successfully transition from seed to Series A funding, better than the Bay Area's 40%. Even more remarkably, 1.5% of funded startups in Cambridge achieve unicorn status, second to the Bay Area's 2.5% and outperforming London's 0.9%.

Cambridge's unique ecosystem model brings efficiencies and impact like nowhere else. Cambridge startups have produced over \$15 in value for every dollar of VC investment. This is nearly three times more than both London and the UK average, demonstrating that Cambridge startups provide better returns on investment.

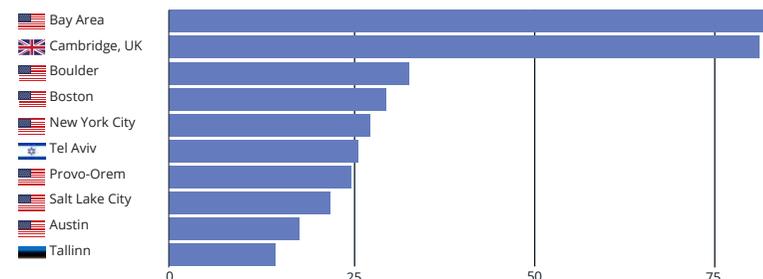
The city remains a driving force at the heart of New Palo Alto. Cambridge, in fact, sits in the centre of the world's most dense cluster of tech ecosystems, including London, Paris, Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Oxford and Leuven, among others. All within a 4-hour rail trip.

Its alumni network has created more startups with greater VC funding and larger valuations than any other European university. All of these ingredients combine to make the Cambridge ecosystem stand out in Europe as the hub with the most potential on the global stage.

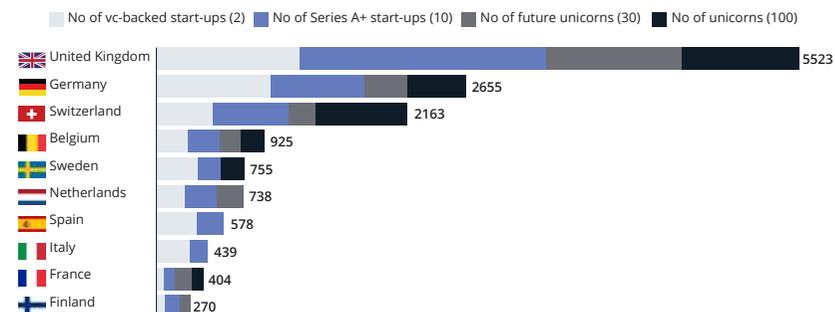


YORAM WIJNGAARDE
Founder, Dealroom.co

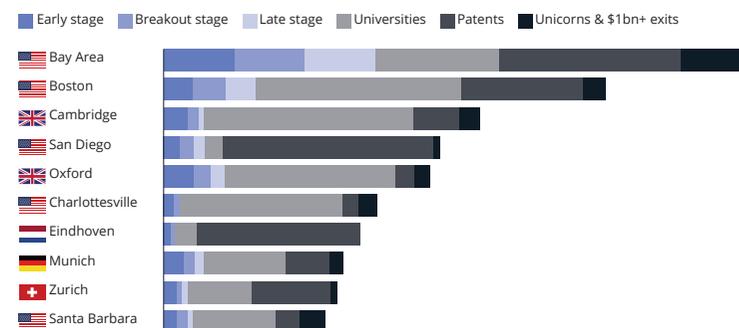
TOP 10 CITIES' UNICORNS PER CAPITA



TOP 10 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST SPIN-OUT VALUE



TOP 10 SCIENCE HUBS



PROGRAMMES OVERVIEW

At Founders at the University of Cambridge, we believe the most ambitious ideas deserve the strongest foundations.

Our mission is to close the gap between academic excellence and venture creation. By embedding entrepreneurial thinking within the university, we help founders navigate early decisions with confidence — from customer discovery to team formation, and from idea validation to product positioning. Our goal is to unlock the university's full potential to power innovation through practical guidance, peer support and real-world experience.

Recognising that no two founder journeys are the same, we've created three distinct pathways to meet founders where they are. SYNC supports individuals at the very beginning — helping them explore ideas, find co-founders and form early teams. SPARK, a four-week intensive incubator developed with King's College E-Lab, focuses on validating ideas quickly through hands-on experimentation. START, our 14-week pre-seed accelerator, supports founding teams ready to refine their product, build traction and prepare for investment.

Each programme targets a specific moment in the journey from idea to impact. Together, they form a blueprint to support Cambridge founders at every stage. This is where innovation meets action.



MARK LAZAR

Programme Director,
Founders at the
University of Cambridge

NEW FOUNDERS / SYNC

At the University of Cambridge

SYNC is a talent accelerator that matches the best people together at the right time to hatch groundbreaking AI and software startups. A pathway for entrepreneurial students, PhDs, researchers and recent alumni to meet, match and form co-founding teams. Participants navigate team formation, idea creation, prototyping and developing viable business concepts. In 2025 this resulted in 32 participants forming 12 teams from scratch.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP LAB

KING'S COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

FOUNDERS

At the University of Cambridge

NEW SPARK 1.0

INCUBATOR PROGRAMME

Created by Kings E-Lab in partnership with Founders at the University of Cambridge, SPARK is a residential incubator programme designed to validate ideas and world changing ventures. Bringing together participants with ideas, early-stage products and social ventures from various technology sectors, they engage in market validation, product development and business modelling, emerging with a complete business plan, market strategy, roadmap to production and investment opportunities. Our first cohort begins in August 2025.

FOUNDERS / START

At the University of Cambridge

START is our pre-seed accelerator programme, accelerating a cohort of existing startups connected to the University of Cambridge. Powering growth through science, we support entrepreneurs whose university research and technology have the potential to change the world. Over 14 intensive weeks, teams undergo mentorship and specialist business support, preparing for the annual Investor Day in London, where they pitch to over 200 leading investors. Participants receive £40k in non-dilutive seed funding and free hosting at ideaSpace West. Now on our second cohort, we have accelerated 19 companies to date.



FOUNDERS / START 2.0

At the University of Cambridge



Bringing Cambridge innovations out of the lab, this year's cohort is tackling global challenges head-on. With frontier technologies across Life Sciences, Hardware and AI, these remarkable founders have honed their ventures through 14 weeks of intensive mentoring and expert guidance, emerging investment-ready and poised for impact.



WINNY SANCHITA

Senior Associate,
Founders at the
University of Cambridge

COHORT IN NUMBERS

£7.8M

raised in non-dilutive
funding for their
companies so far

81%

of cohort have PhD's

69 YEARS

of collective research years
amongst the founders

PROGRAMME IN NUMBERS

50+

intensive mentorship hours
with your handpicked
Entrepreneur-in-Residence
(EIR)

30+

hours one-on-one specialist
business support from
Operators-In-Residence
(OIR)



CAMBRIDGE ADAPTIVE TESTING



Cambridge Adaptive Testing delivers rapid, precise mental health assessments in under 60 seconds.

Our Class LA medical device platform uses adaptive testing to personalise measurement—making it efficient, engaging and ideal for repeated use.

Built for organisations, it identifies who needs support and instantly connects them to resources, tracking change over time to evaluate the impact of interventions. With seamless delivery at scale, the powerful analytics dashboard provides real-time insights. An organisational heatmap enables leaders to tailor approaches to employee wellbeing and measure ROI.

Scalable, evidence-based and designed for today's organisations—we're redefining how mental health is measured and managed.

alison.howie@cambridgeadaptivetesting.com



Professor Peter Jones
CMO

Peter is Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus at the University of Cambridge and an honorary consultant psychiatrist with the NHS. An epidemiologist, he is a Clarivate Analytics highly-cited researcher with experience of board-level management in the university, health and charity sectors.

CO-FOUNDERS



Alison Howie
CEO

Alison has 30 years' experience in MedTech, holding leadership roles in commercial and R&D functions for a major multi-national business and C-suite roles in early stage companies. As a consultant, she has recently supported several healthcare innovators to optimise product and market strategies and implement commercialisation plans.



Dr Jan Stochl
CTO

Jan is a psychometrician and statistician with expertise in latent variable modelling, graph networks, and computerised adaptive testing. He is Senior Research Associate, University of Cambridge and honorary professor of psychometrics at Charles University, Prague. Jan applies novel psychometric methods in neuropsychiatry to improve assessment and patient reported outcomes.



Electra Bio is building bioelectronic lab-grown organs, making drug discovery smarter and faster.

Complex, three-dimensional tissue cultures have been identified as a solution to the inefficiency crisis at the heart of drug discovery; with organ-on-chip models shown to be capable of screening out ineffective drug assets before they incur significant costs. However, extracting the data needed to realise this potential has proven intractable. Until we solved it.

We have built a system which blends biology and sensor to create living electronics, accelerating the journey from concept to cure, opening the way for data rich experimentation and the data-driven future of drug discovery.

Douglas.vanNiekerk@electra.bio



Dr Douglas C. Van Niekerk
CEO

Douglas hold a PhD in Bioelectronics and a Masters in Sensors from the University of Cambridge, as well as undergraduate degrees in electronics and biomedical engineering from the University of the Witwatersrand. Having developed our core technology, he is a passionate interdisciplinarian and loves to learn and invent.

ELECTRA BIO

CO-FOUNDERS



Dr Reece McCoy
CTO

Reece completed his PhD thesis in Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology and Masters in the Physics department at Cambridge. Continuing as a researcher on bioelectronic tissue models, he brings valuable experience in health-tech consulting and advanced materials policy to advance next-gen platforms for diagnostics, drug discovery and disease modelling.



Professor Róisín M Owen
CSO

Roisin is a Professor of Bioelectronics at the University of Cambridge and studies the integration of electronic devices with biological systems. She currently serves as the Deputy Head of the School of Technology and has over 130 publications and 11,000 citations. Roisin has also been the recipient of several prestigious awards, including the 2024 Biochemical Society AstraZeneca Award.

GASTROBODY THERAPEUTICS

Gastrobody Therapeutics

Gastrobody Therapeutics is developing ultra-stable antibody mimetics capable of withstanding the harsh acidic and protease-rich conditions of the GI tract.

We aim to use our patented gastrobody platform to develop orally-administered biologics to transform the way we treat GI tract diseases such as Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis.

The Gastrobody platform combines the exquisite specificity of antibodies with the stability of certain soybean proteins to generate a novel class of biologics which can be delivered directly to the GI tract rather than the systemic administration by injection which is used for existing antibody-based therapies.

yasunori@gastrobodytx.com



Dr Ana Rossi
CSO

Ana completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge and currently works at the Department of Pharmacology where she applies her expertise in protein engineering to advance the Gastrobody platform. She has held numerous prestigious fellowships and grants and is currently a Fellow at Queen's College, Cambridge.

CO-FOUNDERS



Dr Yasunori Watanabe
CEO

Yasunori holds a DPhil in Biochemistry from the University of Oxford. He is passionate about developing novel therapeutic platforms and translating scientific concepts into real world applications. He has previously worked at AstraZeneca and Sanofi working on projects spanning from early-stage candidates to clinical-phase drugs.



Professor Mark Howarth
ADVISOR

Mark is the Sheild Chair in University of Cambridge Department of Pharmacology. He co-founded the company SpyBiotech and has been awarded the Royal Society of Chemistry Norman Heatley Award. His group focusses on innovating protein technologies including bacterial superglues, NeissLock and Gastrobodies.

PINEPEAK

Pinepeak

Pinepeak predicts wildfire risk and behaviour across any terrain, anywhere in the world.

Born out of jet engine research at the University of Cambridge and built by a world-class team in combustion science, AI and geospatial intelligence, Pinepeak delivers ultra-granular, physics-driven wildfire forecasts at the asset level – empowering re/insurers to price risk more accurately, emergency responders to act faster, and communities to better protect lives and the environment.

savvas.gkantonas@pinepeak.co.uk

CO-FOUNDERS



Dr Savvas Gkantonas
CEO

Savvas is a technologist and fire modelling expert with a background in thermofluids research and applied engineering across energy, transport, health and the environment. He has built tools for Rolls-Royce and Siemens, created the airborne. cam app (120K+ users) and became an entrepreneur after a devastating wildfire in his home country.



Dr Daniel Fredrich
COO

Daniel is a climate tech enthusiast with 10 years of research experience in computational fluid dynamics and multi-physics modelling at Imperial College London and the University of Cambridge. Before co-founding Pinepeak, he held roles at Daimler, Rolls-Royce and Siemens, advancing engineering innovation across the automotive, aerospace and energy industries.

PRODROMIC

Prodromic

Prodromic provides “brain forecast” technology for precise stratification and early prediction in brain disease to accelerate the search for new treatments and optimise patient care.

Our SaaS solutions accurately predict brain disease trajectories, starting with a validated use case in dementia. Our products de-risk the development of diagnostic biomarkers, make clinical trials of new therapeutics more efficient and effective, and improve treatment decision-making for patients and health systems.

Validated on 20,000+ patients from around the world, our multimodal AI engines separate “clinically indistinguishable” individuals to predict disease trajectories over 5 years. In partnership with a Top 10 Pharmaceutical company, we demonstrated that Prodromic’s stratification technology rescues a large “failed” clinical trial.

andrew@welchman.org

CO-FOUNDERS



Dr Andrew Welchman
CEO

Andrew is a neuroscientist, strategist and entrepreneur with a background in academia (Professor of Neural Intelligence at Cambridge), research investment (led Neuroscience and Mental health at Wellcome) and scalable, AI-driven healthtech (Executive at ieso Digital Health).



Professor Zoe Kourtzi
CSO

Zoe is a Royal Society Industry Fellow, Cambridge Lead at the Alan Turing Institute and Co-Director of Cambridge’s Centre for Data Driven Discovery. Her work sits at the interface between AI, brain imaging and cognition, developing predictive models of brain and mental health for early diagnosis and personalised interventions.

SQWISH

sowish

Sqwish is the smart performance platform for AI. We supercharge quality, speed, cost-efficiency and reliability across any model or app - no heavy lifting needed.

Sqwish, founded by Dr Ushnish Sengupta and Federica Freddi, is building a smart performance layer that sits between AI applications and model + compute providers - dynamically optimising performance, speed, cost, and reliability at scale: without the headache.

In a future where AI agents compete with each other, only the smartest, fastest, and most efficient will win. Sqwish’s first product is a real-time input optimization API that improves AI accuracy while also reducing costs and improving response times. For long inputs, it can lower costs by up to 10x, deliver responses twice as fast and boost output accuracy by 14%.

federica@sqwish.ai

CO-FOUNDERS



Federica Freddi
CO-FOUNDER

Federica is Founder and CTO of Sqwish. She holds an MEng from the University of Cambridge and has built deep expertise in developing ultra-efficient AI models. Previously at MediaTek Research, she co-authored a novel learning algorithm for AI spotlighted at a major conference. She has also held software roles at ARM and Bending Spoons, balancing deeptech with practical engineering.



Dr Ushnish Sengupta
CO-FOUNDER

Ushnish is Founder and CEO of Sqwish. He holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge, applying AI to engineering problems like rocket engine instabilities. Previously at MediaTek Research, he improved generative AI algorithms for image generation and foundation models for wireless communication. He has published extensively in NeurIPS and leading AI venues.



TRISMIK

trismik

Trismik is a pioneering company dedicated to revolutionising the field of Large Language Model (LLM) testing.

Our mission is to establish the gold standard in LLM evaluation by providing an adversarial testing platform that ensures model accuracy, safety and alignment with societal values.

Through efficient and cost-effective testing, we aim to empower AI professionals to build trustworthy applications, enabling faster deployments and mitigating risks such as hallucinations and misalignment. Our vision is to create a future where AI contributes positively to human well-being.

rebekka@trismik.com

CO-FOUNDERS



Rebekka Mikkola
CEO

Rebekka is the CEO and Co-Founder of Trismik. An experienced entrepreneur and enterprise software sales expert, she worked at Salesforce and earned the Achievers Club Award for top performance. Her previous startup was featured on Sky News, The Guardian, GQ Magazine and TEDx.



Professor Nigel Collier
CHIEF SCIENTIST

Nigel is the Chief Scientist and Co-Founder of Trismik. A Professor of Natural Language Processing at the University of Cambridge, he has over 30 years' experience in AI. He was awarded Fellowships from the Alan Turing Institute, EPSRC, JST, as well as other accolades.

FOUNDERS / START 1.0

At the University of Cambridge

START 1.0 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2024, Founders at the University of Cambridge launched its inaugural pre-seed accelerator programme, START 1.0.

Eleven startups, each with a unique vision, came together to tackle global challenges, from health and air quality to semiconductors.

Designed to smooth the path to success, the programme provided teams with intensive mentorship, specialist business support, and £40k in non-dilutive seed funding from the University of Cambridge and Parkwalk Advisors. Over 12 weeks, the cohort refined their strategies and perfected their pitches. Culminating in Investor Day, they presented their deep tech solutions to over 200 leading Angels, VCs, and corporate investors.

Accelerated by START, these companies have progressed rapidly, achieving significant milestones within six months, such as securing investments, winning awards, and forming key partnerships. Their growing innovations range from next-generation therapeutics and early detection of Alzheimer's to sustainable lithium-sulfur batteries.



MOLYON

Producing next-generation energy storage: lithium-sulfur (Li-S) batteries

Molyon, a cleantech startup and START 1.0 alum, became the first Founders at the University of Cambridge company to raise external funding, securing \$4.6 million from IQ Capital and Plural, following investments from Cambridge Enterprise Ventures and Parkwalk Advisors in 2024.

Founded by Dr Ismail Sami, Dr Zhuangnan Li, Dr Sai Shivareddy and Professor Manish Chhowalla, Molyon emerged from the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy. Molyon's Li-S batteries, with superior chemistry, deliver twice the energy density of current Li-ion batteries using abundant materials like sulfur. With new funding, Molyon will expand its team and pilot manufacturing in Cambridge, targeting drones and robots. This breakthrough could double the range for transportation applications, tapping into an \$85 billion global market.

\$4.6M
raised from IQ
Capital and Plural

\$85BN
global market



Founders at the University of Cambridge gave Molyon the boost to get started. The programme supported us through mentorship, upskilling and access to a high-calibre network. This provided Molyon with the ideal environment to start bringing our breakthrough battery technology one step closer to commercialisation.



DR ISMAIL SAMI

Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Molyon

BIOTRYP THERAPEUTICS



By inhibiting biofilms, BioTryp's technology has the potential to revolutionise how we treat infection, providing a much-needed alternative to traditional antibiotic treatment.

Bacteria form biofilms as a protective shield against the immune system and antibiotics. Within biofilms, bacteria thrive, meaning that infections worsen and treatments fail. With an initial focus on addressing the widespread issue of urinary tract infections (UTIs), BioTryp are developing novel small-molecule antibiofilms for bacterial infections. UTIs affect 400 million people annually and biofilms in UTIs contribute to treatment failure and severe complications, making this a crucial challenge to solve.

BioTryp has already gained traction with multiple awards (Santander X, Trinity Bradfield, #21toWatch and Impact 55), grants (Innovate UK and BBSRC) and a £300k pre-seed investment.

ash@biotryp.com

CO-FOUNDERS



Dr Ashraf Zarkan
CEO

Technology co-inventor Ashraf holds a PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Cambridge, contributing over a decade of expertise in infectious disease research. As a Research Fellow at Cambridge's Department of Genetics, his background spans microbiology, bacterial genetics, antimicrobial resistance and small molecule drug discovery.



Dr Jehangir Cama
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

Biophysicist Jehangir specialises in microfluidics, bacterial signalling, assay development and translational science. Currently a Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge and a Research Associate at the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy, he has worked on the socio-economic aspects of antimicrobial resistance and on developing industry partnerships.

WILLIAM OAK DIAGNOSTICS



William Oak Diagnostics is developing a digitally integrated, point-of-care test for micronutrient deficiencies and anaemia, designed for use in pharmacies and at home.

They have a strong and passionate team with over 70 years of medical device commercialisation expertise and have already secured commercial traction and revenue, working with one of the largest European pathology lab providers.

Their innovation has significant impact, improving healthcare access and enabling early intervention. By shifting deficiency screening from primary care to the community—via pharmacies and at-home testing—the solution addresses widespread issues such as iron deficiency anaemia and other serious nutrient deficiencies, helping reduce the burden on GPs and the need for costly hospital-based diagnostics.

William Oak's innovative approach simplifies blood collection and delivers clear, quantifiable results through a user-friendly mobile app. The technology has the potential to personalise nutritional health monitoring, empowering individuals to take control of their wellbeing.

alex@williamoakdiagnostics.com

CO-FOUNDERS



Dr Alexander Patto
CEO

Alex is CEO and co-founder of William Oak Diagnostics. He holds a PhD in Genetics from the University of Cambridge and is a Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Fellow, as well as a Borysiewicz Biomedical Fellow. Previously Alex was CEO of social enterprise WaterScope, a University of Cambridge spinout.



Dr Tim Dwyer
CTO

A biochemist with over 25 years' experience in designing, developing and commercialising novel medical device platform technologies, Tim has held significant scientific and leadership roles including at Oxford Immunotec, Vivacta, Novartis, AgPlus Diagnostics and as CTO of Mologic (now GADx). A Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology, Tim also holds an MBA.

FOUNDERS / SYNC

At the University of Cambridge



Our team and I spent last summer meeting Cambridge researchers who we believed could become great founders. It felt crazy to rely on these people meeting via serendipity. We could be missing out on some of our greatest startups set to change the world. To fix this, we built SYNC, the University of Cambridge's first co-founder matching programme. Fast forward to November, we welcomed 32 Masters, PhDs and Postdocs into our cohort, later forming 12 new founding teams.



CONNOR FARRELL

Senior Associate,
Founders at the University of Cambridge

PROGRAMME IN NUMBERS

10+
weeks of matching &
ideation

14+
weeks of building

17
masterclasses

COHORT IN NUMBERS

32
participants

12
early stage teams

100+
hours of engagement
between themselves as well
as with EIRs and mentors

"I enjoyed the intensity, connecting with inspiring individuals and learning new entrepreneurial insights. Now, I feel more equipped to build a startup."



ANITA VERÓ
PhD, Computer Science



"The continuous feedback from supportive cohort members and dedicated programme leads helped us refine our pitch and win the Cambridge Climate Challenge."



DEEPANSHU SINGH
Business Development
Manager, Aviation
Impact Accelerator



FRIEDERIKE NINTZEL
Marie Curie PhD,
SynBio

"The programme provided invaluable founding insights and surrounded me with brilliant scientists, engineers and communicators."



CHRISTOS MARGADJI
PhD, AI for
Manufacturing



"With tools, resources and a support network, the programme laid out the best path to create a startup."



TIMOTHY LAMB DEN
PhD, Nanotechnology



EMILE FERREIRA
MPhil, Advanced
Computer Science



COMMUNITY

The Founders at the University Community is a world class global network driven to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurial talent.

The Community has grown to over 270 experts (70% of which are Cambridge University Alumni) and spans 16 countries, bringing a diverse mix of experience from current founders, exited founders, investors and industry executives. From a sector perspective the community is a wealth of deep tech, life sciences, biotech, healthtech, sustainability and physical sciences expertise.

Through this community we ensure the Founders on our Programmes get to learn from those that have walked the path before them through mentoring and Founder Stories, have doors opened to potential customers and are supported in fundraising through early Investor Mentoring. Community experts gain opportunities to be the first to see the cutting edge technology coming out of Cambridge, get early access to new pre-seed investment opportunities and meet one another for lively discussion and debate at curated dinners and events.

Should you be a University of Cambridge Alumn who would love to be part of this, feel free to get in touch through our website.

"It was brilliant to share the insights from my book, Atomic Human, with the Founders at the University of Cambridge Community and hear a number of the START cohort companies pitch. It was an evening full of energy, discussion and debate with an interesting mix of people."



NEIL LAWRENCE
DeepMind Professor of Machine Learning at the University of Cambridge and author of Atomic Human



"Scaling Featurespace taught me the value of vision under constraint—excited to support Founders at the University of Cambridge, building businesses that truly matter."



MARTINA KING
CEO, Featurespace (exited to Visa, reportedly for \$1Bn)

"Great to attend a curated dinner with a nice range of more experienced and newer founders, as well as other ecosystem participants."



AMAR SHAH
Co-Founder, Wayve (raised \$1Bn in Europe's largest ever AI funding round)



COMMUNITY IN NUMBERS

Global reach across
16
countries

270+
Community Experts

68%
University of Cambridge Alumni

Almost
100
companies founded

Over
50
funds represented and growing

WORDS FROM OUR EXPERTS

"As an EIR, the rapid development of trust in the cohort stands out. I've seen founders openly discuss financial challenges, product setbacks and personal doubts with honesty and humility, fostering collective resilience that elevates everyone's potential beyond what they could achieve independently."



STEPHEN JULL
Venture Partner,
Emerge VC

"I wanted to get involved in START 2.0 because I thought it would be a fantastic opportunity to work with purpose-driven founders solving meaningful problems in one of the UK's key hubs of innovation - Cambridge, and more specifically the University."



KATY TURNER
Founder, Turns Out

"It was exciting to meet such high calibre teams who are bringing cutting-edge technologies to market from a range of disciplines, spanning AI optimisation tools through to novel therapeutics."



AMELIA ARMOUR
Partner, Amadeus Capital Partners



LUIZ MIGUEL CAMARGO
CEO, 17-09 LLC

"As a Cambridge alumni, I wanted to help Cambridge science achieve its full impact through new ventures."



"What's unique about the programme is how it brings together a community of passionate, like-minded people eager to solve big challenges, have honest, thoughtful conversations and open up their networks. I have already met people I think could be friends for life."



ED LEON KLINGER
Founder & CEO, Flock

"The high quality of the startups at Founders is particularly unique. They are well-vetted, passionate, organised and coachable – key qualities that improve the probability of success in a business where the rate of failure is incredibly high."



MIKE THOMAS
Managing Partner, Bold Brain Capital

"Passionate about helping scientists turn disruptive research into startups with real potential, being a mentor on the Founders programme was an easy yes. The programme's real, tailored support and focus on the messy, iterative building process is rare. I've loved seeing diverse deep tech solutions!"



ISABEL ZHANG
Deep Tech Investor, HCVC

"I have really enjoyed seeing the diversity of startups in the START 2.0 cohort and the similarities they face whilst scaling. Many businesses born out of academia start by illuminating the nature of a problem. To achieve commercial viability, founders often have to go on the hard journey of coming up with solutions too."



YAN ZHANG
Previously COO, PolyAI

THANK YOU

to our expert community of over 270 people, in 16 countries, who collectively have founded 100 companies and backed hundreds of ventures worth £15bn so far. Their experience is invaluable.

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Chris Porthouse Chief Product Officer Aegiq
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And special thanks to the whole Cambridge Enterprise team for their expertise and support.

* We try our best to keep names and roles as up to date as possible.

Feel free to reach out should your need updating.

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Our success is deeply intertwined with the support and expertise of our esteemed partners, who share our commitment to nurturing innovation and empowering visionary founders.

We hugely thank them for their support throughout.

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“Innovation literally means a novel change, something new being introduced. But of course, it’s not just about the what - it’s about the how and the who.”

PROFESSOR DAME ATHENE DONALD, FRS

Renowned physicist, Master of Churchill College,
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