



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

WE Innovate Programme FAQs

About the Programme

What is WE Innovate?

WE Innovate is Queen's University Belfast's pre-accelerator programme for women entrepreneurs. It provides participants with masterclasses, mentoring, and opportunities to develop fledgling business ideas into successful ventures.

WE Innovate is a 5-month programme running from January to June. The programme supports the development of up to 25 teams through masterclasses, business coaching, one-to-one expert support, peer mentoring, and much more.

There are three phases during which 25 teams become a final five, who then compete for a chance to secure a share of the £30,000 funding.

Who runs the programme at Queen's University Belfast?



Hosted by the Innovation Programmes team, WE Innovate is managed by Kat Maguire, Programme Manager at Queen's University Belfast. You can contact Kat for more information at k.maguire@qub.ac.uk.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for WE Innovate?

The programme is open to women students (undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD) and recent alumnae of Queen's University Belfast. There are also a limited amount of places available to those not linked to Queen's University Belfast. Applicants must be leading or co-leading the idea or project.

What are the entry requirements for WE Innovate?

To be eligible for the programme, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- **Team Lead Identification:** The team lead must identify as a woman (your team can include individuals who identify as other genders or none) or non-binary. We use an inclusive definition of 'woman' and 'women,' welcoming, but not limited to, trans women.
- **Affiliation with Queen's University Belfast:** The team lead must be a current undergraduate, postgraduate student, or Early Career Researcher at Queen's University Belfast, or have graduated from Queen's University Belfast. There are also a limited amount of spaces available to those with business ideas, not linked to Queens' University Belfast.

Can I apply as part of a team?

Yes, you can apply as part of a team, but at least one team member (preferably the lead) must meet the eligibility criteria and identify as a woman.

What kind of ideas or projects can I submit?



You can submit ideas or projects across any sector or field. The programme focuses on supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialisation, so projects with a clear impact and viability are encouraged.

Do I need to have prior experience in entrepreneurship to join?

No prior experience in entrepreneurship is required. The programme is designed to support entrepreneurs at any stage of their journey.

Do I need to have a fully developed idea to apply?

No, you don't need a fully developed business plan. However, you must demonstrate that you've done preliminary research and have a clear vision for your project's impact and scalability.

Can I apply if I'm already running a business?

Yes, applicants who already have a registered business or start-up are welcome to apply, provided they meet the eligibility criteria, and their business aligns with the programme goals.

Can I submit several projects?

Yes! As long as you've done the required research on all of them (see our Entry Requirements above) you can submit several ideas.

Programme Structure and Phases

How is the programme structured?

The programme is divided into three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Foundational masterclasses, coaching, and workshops to develop entrepreneurial skills.
- **Phase 2:** Advanced support, including a founder retreat and investor pitching opportunities.



- **Phase 3:** Intensive pitch preparation and the Grand Final event where teams compete for funding and recognition.

How do I move between programme phases?

Progression between phases is determined based on your application and performance during the programme. Phase 2 and Phase 3 teams are selected by the programme panel.

What is the Phase 2 Founder Retreat?

The retreat is a two-night, in-person event where Phase 2 participants immerse themselves in focused workshops, peer networking, and strategic business planning. The cost of the retreat is covered by Queen's University.

What if I don't progress to the next phase?

If you do not move to Phase 2 or 3, you will still receive valuable feedback and coaching through exit sessions and be part of the wider WE Innovate community.

What happens at the Grand Final?

At the Grand Final, finalists pitch their ventures to a panel of judges, competing for funding and other support to further their entrepreneurial journey.

Support and Benefits

What kind of support does WE Innovate provide?

Participants will receive:

- Access to in-person masterclasses, covering essential entrepreneurial skills.
- Guidance from experienced mentors.
- Opportunities to network with like-minded individuals and industry professionals.
- A chance to pitch for funding to develop their ideas.

What support is offered to participants?



Support includes:

- Access to workshops and masterclasses tailored for entrepreneurs.
- 1:1 coaching and mentoring.
- Peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities.
- A retreat for Phase 2 participants.
- Pitch preparation and investor panels.

Are there opportunities for alumni engagement?

Yes, alumni mentors and peer mentors play an active role in the programme. Participants also gain lifelong access to the programme's network for further opportunities.

Logistics and Key Information

Do I need to attend all sessions?

While some sessions are optional, key events (such as masterclasses, coaching sessions, and pitch practices) are integral to the programme and require your attendance.

Attendance at the Grand Final is mandatory for Phase 3 teams.

Is there a fee to participate in the programme?

No, the programme is free to eligible participants, including the two-night retreat.

Timeline and Application

What are the key dates I should know?

- **Applications close:** Wednesday, 11 December 2024, at 23:59.
- **Programme launch:** Thursday, 30 January 2025.
- **Grand Final:** Thursday, 5 June 2025.

For a full schedule of events and workshops, refer to the detailed timeline provided.

What are the prizes available in WE Innovate?



All prizes will be chosen by our judging panel at the WE Innovate Final. Prizes include a share of the £30,000 prize fund.

How can I apply?

Applications are currently open and close on 11 December 2024.

For any questions, contact k.maguire@qub.ac.uk.

