

## **Press Release**

**29 February 2016**

### **London to host one of UK's biggest competitions for young entrepreneurs**

- **Over 500 pupils apply for Big Idea Challenge**
- **Big brands including NatWest, Unilever and Microsoft to mentor students**
- **Chance for students to establish their own start-ups with expert support**
- **Aimed at getting students from under-represented backgrounds interested in entrepreneurship**

Over 500 pupils from schools and colleges across London have been given the chance to put their entrepreneurial ideas to the test thanks to a brand new business competition.

The Big Idea Challenge invited hundreds of students to come up with enterprising ideas and pitch them to some of the capital's biggest brands - with a chance of setting up their own business up for grabs.

Teams from 10 schools have now been shortlisted to take part in a 'boot camp' day at NatWest's Bishopsgate offices this week, on Friday 4 March, where they will receive expert help to develop their business ideas and compete for the top prize.

The competition is being run London Metropolitan University's business incubator Accelerator, and is aimed at engaging young people with an interest in entrepreneurship.

NatWest, Unilever and Microsoft are all on board for the competition, which is one of the biggest entrepreneurship completions for college students in the UK.

They will be providing expert mentors to help the teams to develop their ideas and turn them into viable businesses.

Toby Kress, Head of Accelerator at London Met, said: "London Met is committed to giving young people the opportunity to change their lives for the better. And one of the most powerful ways to do this is to give them the tools to start their own business one day and take their destiny into their own hands.

"For those that dream of being entrepreneurs, this competition is an inspiration and the first step on the journey. Participants will work with experienced mentors to develop their ideas and a pitching coach to learn how to communicate and get people excited.

“There will also be a public vote for the winner so all of the finalist teams will have pitch videos made for them that will go on the Big Idea Challenge website, giving them a platform to be noticed and a way to demonstrate what they’ve accomplished when applying to universities or jobs.

“The students are so enthusiastic and passionate. I can’t wait to see where they take their ideas.”

Mirce-Francisco Viera, a Level 3 Business Studies student at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, said: “The Big Idea Challenge is a great opportunity to collaborate in a team and organise ideas. It has really inspired me to be more optimistic about going into business.”

Julia Bollam, a teacher at Newham College, said her pupils have gained confidence from participating in the competition.

“Newham College is delighted to be taking part in the Big Idea Challenge,” she said. “Our students have been inspired to unleash their potential and come up with some great business ideas.”

Many of the students taking part are from low income and diverse backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the start-up world. This is an opportunity for them to be inspired, learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

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## **Notes**

Mentors working with the teams at Friday’s boot camp include;

- Darren Jefford, Chief Technology Officer of Enterprise Services at Microsoft
- Simon Boreham, Director of Financial Services for Microsoft EMEA
- Darren Chidlaw, Senior Global Brand Development Manager, Unilever
- Turker Bilgin, Global Brand Manager, Unilever
- Chris Kettle, Entrepreneur Development Manager, NatWest
- Nick Howe, Regional Enterprise Manager, NatWest
- Elliott Engers, Co-founder & Products Director, Infinity Health (startup)
- Carl Partridge, CEO and Lead Technologist, Urban Things (startup)

The colleges involved in the final boot camp are; Hackney Community College; Waltham Forest College; Tower Hamlets College; Newham College; NewVic Sixth Form College; The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London; BSix Brooke House Sixth Form College; Redbridge College; Leyton Sixth Form College and Norlington School for Boys Sixth Form.

**Journalists are welcome to attend the boot camp at NatWest on 4 March. Filming can be accommodated.**

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### **About London Metropolitan University**

London Met has been providing education to people from all backgrounds since 1848, with the creation of the Metropolitan Evening Classes for Working Men.

Four faculties teach cutting-edge, relevant courses across the arts, sciences, business, law and humanities. Accelerator – London Met’s specialist business incubator – helps graduates get their enterprises up and running and was named among the Top Five ‘Most Active’ accelerators in Europe in 2015, highlighting its contribution to London’s booming start-up industry.

London Met is home to world-leading academics who regularly give expert comment to the media. The University scored well in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, being ranked 4th in the country for Area Studies and performing strongly in Education and Social Studies.

The University is strongly focused on employability. In 2015, London Met recorded its highest ever graduate employment score, with 91.1% of all 2013/14 graduates in work or further study six months after graduation.

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