



Welcome to Cambridge University Entrepreneurs! If you have an idea for a new venture, we can help you make it a reality.

Our mission is to promote and nurture the entrepreneurial mindset of Cambridge students by organising a successful student-run business competition and a series of skills development training events.

Over the last 15 years, we have had over 1000 entries and awarded £500,000 in prize money to many students and staff. The companies they set up during the course of the CUE Business Creation Competition have raised more than £100m of further funding.

This year CUE will provide new prizes to compete for and new training events so you will be even better prepared to turn your ideas into reality. You can enter any or all of the three sub competitions of the Business Creation Competition, bringing you tangible benefits including:

- The chance to win cash prizes at each stage
- Free training in essential business skills
- Mentoring by experienced professionals
- Feedback on your business idea from world-class entrepreneurs
- Media exposure for your business idea
- Introduction to a network of entrepreneurs, investors and potential partners
- Introduction to the private equity world in and around Cambridge.

We would like to thank our sponsors and supporters for making all this possible. You will hear more about them as the year progresses.

The handbook is your guide to the competition process. If you have any questions, please get in touch with the president at president@cue.org.uk.

The CUE Business Creation Competition

You can enter *any or all* of the three sub competitions. All teams will be allocated into one of the three streams: Technology, Software and Social Enterprise.

Summary of Competition Structure

The Business Creation Competition for 2014-2015 is structured into three sub-competitions across three streams. The table below summarises the streams, prizes and basic entry requirements for each phase of the competition and is followed by more detailed information on each phase.

Competition Streams and Requirements

| Sub-competition | Prizes* | Technology | Software | Social Enterprise |
|---|-------------|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | 20 x £100 | 100 words | | |
| 2 | 10 x £1,000 | 1,500 word executive summary | | |
| 3 | 5 x £5,000 | 3,500 word business plan | 3000 word business plan + prototype/functional demo | 3,500 word business plan |
| <p>Maximum of three winning entries in any one category, with remaining prizes awarded depending on quality of entries. *Number of prizes may vary, up to and including the number stated</p> | | | | |

Sub Competition 1: £100 for 100 words

Opens: **16^h October 2014**

Closes: **26th October 2014 11:59pm**

Winners Announced: **20th November 2014**

It's simple: just pitch your business idea to us in less than 100 words. The challenge here is to condense what you want to say and get all the major points across in just a paragraph. There is no need to give away any private information – a public summary is enough to win the competition. Then, submit your summary online at www.cue.org.uk. A well written entry is a great way to get your business idea noticed by the judges.

You may submit more than one entry. There is no limit on the number of prizes you can win out of the **20 cash prizes of £100**, so why not submit more than one entry.

Sub Competition 2: The £1k Challenge – What's the market?

Opens: **20^h November 2014**

Closes: **19th January 2015 11:59pm**

Winners Announced at the **£1k Award Ceremony: 12th February 2014**

Our second sub competition is for you to develop your business opportunity and write an executive summary of no more than 1500 words. The £1k prizes are awarded to well-presented propositions that show clear market potential and competitive advantages. **You will need to clearly identify and quantify your market niche.** To help you do this we have the £1K training event, organized in November, which is free to attend for all members. There, you can learn about the judging criteria and have opportunities to ask specific questions in one-to-one surgery sessions with business mentors. You may also request for a professional mentor to be attached to your team and guide you as you develop your idea.

Up to **10 cash prizes of £1k** each will be awarded.

Sub Competition 3: The £5k Challenge – Making it happen.

Opens: **13th February 2015**

Closes: **10th April 2015 11.59pm**

Finalists announced at the **Grand Finale: 13th May 2015**

At this stage, you will need to build a team and be ready to make your idea a reality. In this sub competition you will benefit from a professional mentor, write a detailed business plan and pitch for investment. Winners at this stage need to show **practicality, financial viability, strong teams and business creation potential.** The £5k prizes are awarded to teams who have **created a viable business.** There are up to five prizes of £5k each, which are distributed across the streams and the prize money is tied to the creation of the business (See **Sections 8.5-6**).

| Streams | Technology Enterprise Awards | Social Enterprise Award | Software Enterprise Award |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Submission information | You will expand your executive summary. Teams to write a full business plan and submit by the deadline for the chance to win the £5k prize. | You will expand your executive summary. Teams to write a full business plan and submit by the deadline for the chance to win the £5k prize. | You will need to expand the executive summary. Teams to write a full business plan and submit by the deadline for the chance to win the £5k prize. Finalists are required to present a prototype or slides demonstrating the functionality and feasibility of their idea to the judges. |
| Winning qualities | Winners will be high-growth technological propositions that show a strong likelihood of receiving venture capital or business angel investment. Within this category, judges may also consider a Biotechnology Award where the winner will provide knowledge-based products or services that are in the biotechnology realm. | The winner of this award will create an enterprise that brings substantial social benefit in a sustainable way and may or may not be for profit. | The emphasis is on product development and working towards a prototype or a functional demo. Winners will be high-growth propositions that show a strong likelihood of generating revenues. |

Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Opens: **16^h October 2014**

Closes: **16th April 2015 11.59pm**

The Young Entrepreneur of the Year track is aimed at identifying the individuals who demonstrate the ambition, determination and vision to pursue the life long journey of becoming an entrepreneur. The winners may or may not have the best current business idea or be able to craft a “textbook” business plan, but will demonstrate the key fundamentals in the judges' eyes.

The winners will make the time to participate in all stages of the CUE 2014-2015 business plan competition as well as attend the three workshops outlined below to be run by CEO of Horizon Discovery Group plc CEO and parallel entrepreneur Dr. Darrin M. Disley

Workshop 1:

- Mind-sets and motivations (lecture)
- Entrepreneurship, nature or nurture (round-table)

- Pitching of 100 word ideas

Workshop 2:

- Marketing and selling your ideas (lecture)
- Dos and don'ts of a business plan, outline structure of 5k plans

Workshop 3:

- The perfect elevator pitch (lecture)
- Elevator pitches for cash

Interviews:

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview panel of serial entrepreneurs to be held at Horizon Discovery Group plc, on a date to be determined.

Based on this process, two winners will be named the Young Entrepreneurs of the Year and join previous winners in winning £2,500 in cash, thus helping them along their paths in raising funds and running businesses that continue to grow and trade today.

Calendar of Events

Please see <http://www.cue.org.uk/> for the most up-to-date information.

Competition Rules

1. Eligibility

- 1.1 All staff and students at all levels of education from any department, registered with the University of Cambridge for the year 2014/2015, are eligible to enter. This includes visiting and exchange students.
- 1.2 Alumni of the University of Cambridge are eligible to enter the competition given that they graduated from the University no more than 12 months prior to October of the previous academic year. These participants will have to provide their degree certificate to demonstrate their eligibility upon submission of their entries.
- 1.3 Those who do not meet either requirement 1.1 or 1.2 may join or form teams provided that at least one principal team member meets either of those requirements. For the £5k stage, it is understood that any winning team must have at least one member meeting requirement 1.1 or 1.2 as a director.
- 1.3 The President of Cambridge University Entrepreneurs may not enter the competition during their tenure as President. There are no restrictions for any other CUE committee members or organisers other than as stated in rules 1.1 and 1.2, as they will not have access to co

nfidential information regarding the competition. This rule supersedes rules 1.1 and 1.2.

- 1.4 Competition entrants are encouraged to seek the involvement of faculty members, past winners, postdoctoral researchers and other staff. Multidisciplinary teams tend to do better. There are no restrictions on the size or composition of your team.
- 1.5 Entries to the £1k and £5k competition stages must include summaries of each team member's past experience and future plans. These will be used to judge the team's commitment to turn the business idea into an actual business.
- 1.6 Teams that have already secured arrangements for capital from any source must disclose the amounts and sources clearly in their entries. Example sources of capital include cash generated from sales revenues or contracts, research grants and personal or family funds.
- 1.7 Entries should describe an entirely new business. Projects within existing businesses or of existing companies have to declare this and state the duration that the company has been operating. CUE reserves the right to deny existing companies entry into the competition.

2. Entry Fees

- 2.1 As of 2014, there is no entry fee associated with any of our competitions.

3. Content

- 3.1 All entries must be the original work of the entrants.

- 3.2 All entries must be factual.
- 3.3 Entries should be made with full understanding of University regulations on Intellectual Property Rights. It is the responsibility of the entrant to ensure that no third party, such as a research sponsor or another member of the University who participated in your research, has any rights on the contents which may prevent its exploitation. Proprietary information about the idea should not be disclosed in the public summary, or presentations, as this information will be published (see rules 4.3, 5.5 & 6.7).
- 3.4 Software stream entries should make clear what parts of the software product have been created by the team. It is the responsibility of software stream entrants to ensure they have acquired all necessary rights to the parts of the software product that are not the sole property of the entrants.

4. Sub-Competition 1: £100 Challenge

- 4.1 Entries should be submitted online at www.cue.org.uk/100words before the deadlines.
- 4.2 Entries may be no more than 100 words in length. Entries longer than 100 words will be disqualified.
- 4.3 Entries may be circulated via press releases and CUE publications for promotional purposes.

5. Sub-Competition 2: £1k Challenge

- 5.1 Entries should be submitted electronically on the website www.cue.org.uk/1k before the deadline and include the entry form and the executive summary.
- 5.2 As of 2014 the submission process is entirely electronic and there are no more hard copy submissions.
- 5.3 No entries will be accepted after the deadline and no corrections will be accepted after the deadline.
- 5.4 Executive summaries should be a maximum of 1500 words including text in tables. The number of diagrams is not limited. The document should be sized to print out on A4 paper. Keep in mind that the judges appreciate brevity and clarity.
- 5.5 A public summary of no more than 100 words will be required as part of the submission. It may be circulated via press releases and CUE competition publications for promotional purposes.
- 5.6 Entries exceeding the 1500-word limit for the executive summary will be disqualified.
- 5.7 Incomplete submissions with missing documents, incomplete fields or missing signatures will be rejected.
- 5.8 All competition entrants are encouraged to join the CUE Mentoring Scheme. We have a pool of experienced serial entrepreneurs coming from different backgrounds and they will provide free advice and support for your team. Please note that it is up to the competition entrants to disclose your entries to our mentors. Although we have a group of trustworthy mentors, CUE is not responsible for the protection of your IP at this stage. If sensitive information needs to be discussed, we recommend the competition entrants sign an NDA with their mentors.

6. Sub-Competition 3: £5k Challenge

- 6.1 Entries should be submitted electronically in PDF on the website www.cue.org.uk/5k before the deadline and include the entry form and the executive summary.
- 6.2 As of 2014 the submission process is entirely electronic and there are no more hard copy submissions.
- 6.3 Entrants in the Social Enterprise stream need to clearly demonstrate the social purpose of their venture in addition to the traditional business plan headings. **All social enterprise entries need to write a short (~100 word) statement about why they think their idea is a social enterprise. This is to be filled in on the cover page.**
- 6.4 For entrants into the **Technology Enterprise stream**, executive summaries, complete with market research and competitor analyses, should be a maximum of 3500 words including all text, graphics and appendices. The number of diagrams is not limited. The document should be sized to print out on A4 paper. Keep in mind that the judges appreciate brevity and clarity.
- 6.5 For entrants into the **Social Enterprise stream**, executive summaries, complete with market research and competitor analyses, should be a maximum of 3500 words including all text, graphics and appendices. The number of diagrams is not limited. The document should be sized to print out on A4 paper. Keep in mind that the judges appreciate brevity and clarity. **Please make sure you include a 100-word summary describing:**
 - a) **The social impact or benefit of your idea**
 - b) **Why is your business an enterprise rather than a charity**
- 6.6 For entrants into the **Software Enterprise stream**, teams must submit an extended executive summary not exceeding 3000 words including all text, graphics and appendices. The document should be sized to print out on A4 paper. In addition, finalists must showcase a prototype or series of slides demonstrating the functionality and feasibility of their business idea during the judge meeting. The quality of the prototype/functional demo will be part of the scoring criteria.
- 6.7 A public summary of no more than 100 words will be required as part of the submission. It will be circulated via press releases and CUE competition publications for promotional purposes.
- 6.8 No entries will be accepted after the deadline.
- 6.9 Entries exceeding the word limit for the business plan will be disqualified.
- 6.10 Incomplete submissions with missing documents, incomplete fields or missing signatures will be rejected.
- 6.11 All competition entrants are encouraged to join the CUE Mentoring Scheme. We have a pool of experienced serial entrepreneurs coming from different backgrounds and they will provide free advice and support for your team. Please note that it is up to the competition entrants to disclose your entries to our mentors. Although we have a group of trustworthy mentors, CUE is not responsible for the protection of your IP at

this stage. If sensitive information needs to be discussed, we recommend the competition entrants sign an NDA with their mentors.

6.12 Feedback from mentors (if applicable) will be submitted to judges and may be considered during the scoring process.

6.13 Finalists' Judging Presentations

6.13.1 All entries will be judged and finalists for each stream will be chosen by judges and will need to be able to attend the judging meeting, where they will be presenting their business plan to all judges.

6.13.2 For entrants into the **Technology and Social Enterprise** streams, each finalist team will have 10 minutes to present to and answer questions from the judging panel. The main purpose of this session is to clarify issues that arise from the full business plan and presentation. It is also a good opportunity for teams to convince the judges that they will be able to meet their business goals and surpass any challenges. **No AV equipment may be used for these presentations.**

6.13.3 For entrants into the **Software** stream, each finalist team will be asked to present to the judging panel for no more than 10 minutes, followed by a 5-minute question-and-answer session. Time will also be allocated to permit a demonstration of the software. The main purpose of this session is to clarify issues that arise from the extended summary while allowing the judges to interact with the software itself or view a functionality demo. It is also a good opportunity for teams to convince the judges that they will be able to meet their business goals and surpass any challenges. **Teams must be able to present a prototype or functional demo of the software that showcases its functionality.** It does not need to be the final product but should showcase the software's potential and show that a fully functional product will be achievable by the team.

7. Judging

7.1 The judging panels of all of the competition stages are coordinated by the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (CfEL) in collaboration with the CUE President. The panels include experienced entrepreneurs and investors. They are highly experienced and respected members of the entrepreneurial community and are under the supervision of the CfEL Judging Coordinator to ensure the impartiality of judging.

7.2 The judging panel reserves the right to disqualify any entry that, in its opinion, violates the letter or the spirit of the competition.

7.3 Teams can choose up to 2 streams that they feel their business idea may fall under and their preferences will be considered. However, the CUE President reserves the right to reallocate the streams of entries if deemed necessary.

7.4 Judging feedback will be provided for each entry.

7.5 Judging criteria are available in this booklet. All judging criteria will be available online at www.cue.org.uk.

7.6 All prizes are awarded at the discretion of the judging panel and all judging decisions are final and not subject to appeal.

7.7 Mentors as judges or vice versa is not allowed.

8. Prizes

8.1 The prize money awarded to the winning teams must be claimed in instalments linked to agreed milestones in creating the business.

8.2 The winners will have the opportunity to pitch at the Grand Finale on stage to a panel of business angels and early stage investors for cash from the CUE Angel Prize Fund.

8.3 Sponsored services, such as free patent filings, may also be awarded to £1k and £5k Competition winners.

8.4 Judges reserve the right not to award a prize if no prize worthy entries are available.

8.5 The prize may only be claimed within 12 months of the date of the prize announcement (Grand Finale). Sufficient documents must be provided in order to claim the prize. We will not consider prize claim after the 12-month period.

8.6 The following criteria only apply to the £5k Competition. To claim the £5k prizes, the following criteria must be fulfilled:

a) Registering a company with Companies House (it may also be registered abroad). Proof needs to be provided.

b) Creating a business bank account in your company's registered name. The money will not be paid into the personal account of any individual, team member or stakeholder.

c) Producing an Operational Plan describing the activities that are to be undertaken in the next six months (including expenditures) and a statement for the activities that have been undertaken (including any expenditure already incurred). The Operational Plan should be approximately 2 pages long.

9. Entry Confidentiality

9.1 All judges with access to the entries will sign a non-disclosure agreement. A copy of the agreement is available upon request at president@cue.org.uk.

9.2 A qualified mentor may be provided to £1k and £5k entrants upon request. With consent, entries may be shared with prospective mentors who will formally agree to a non-disclosure agreement as described in 10.2 below.

9.3 With consent, £5k Competition winners' entries may also be shared with prospective investors, including the panel of business angels and early-stage investors for the Grand Finale, who will formally agree to a non-disclosure agreement as described in 10.2 below.

10. Intellectual Property Protection

- 10.1 Cambridge University Entrepreneurs, its sponsors and the organisers of the business ideas and creation competitions have taken reasonable measures to ensure the confidentiality of your entries.
- 10.2 The sponsors of CUE and the judges of the competitions include organisations and individuals that work with entrepreneurs and invest in their ideas. Sponsors, judges and mentors will agree to a confidentiality agreement which extends for 12 months after the public announcement of the competition winners. Copies of these confidentiality agreements are available from the CfEL Judging Coordinator.
- 10.3 Cambridge University Entrepreneurs cannot, and will not, take further responsibility to protect the intellectual property or other rights of the entrants.
- 10.4 The protection of intellectual property or other rights of the entrants is the ultimate responsibility of each entrant. Entrants are urged to mark as “confidential” any portion of their entries that they consider to be confidential. Entrants should take care about disclosing any patentable concepts in the entries.
- 10.5 Entrants looking to incorporate are strongly advised to seek professional advice on the issues surrounding Intellectual Property Rights. A list of organisations known to CfEL and CUE is available on request.
- 10.6 Please also refer to the Intellectual Property Guide on the following pages.

Judging Criteria

£100 for 100 Words Judging Criteria

Each entry will be judged independently by a minimum of 3 judges. They will be graded between 1 and 10 (1 = extremely weak, 10 = extremely strong) for **potential** of the idea.

£1K Competition Judging Criteria

Entries for the £1K competition will be judged according to the following criteria. **Half scores (ie. 1.5 and 2.5) are possible and the weights of each criteria are indicated below.** The highest possible score for an entry is 18.

| | Weak = 1 | Moderate = 2 | Strong = 3 |
|--|---|--|---|
| Clarity of market (Weight = 2) | Vague and unsubstantiated assertions about market size and growth rate. | Adequate description of market size and growth rate with limited factual support. | Thorough, fact-based description of market size and growth rate based on direct experience |
| Competitive Position (Weight = 1.5) | Poor description of existing competitors. No obvious reason for continued growth. No defensible/sustainable position. | Adequate coverage of existing competitors, some description of competitive edge and some demonstration of a defensible/sustainable position. | Existing competitors clearly described. Clear description of the competitive edge over existing competitors. Sustainable/defensible position in market. |
| Product or service reality (Weight = 1.5) | Unclear how the product/service will work and how it will benefit the customer. | Convincing story of how the product/service will work but limited scope for future expansion. | Convincing story of how the product/service will work and the capability for diversification into new areas. |
| Presentation (Weight = 1) | Rambling structure, missing information, typographical errors, excessive use of superlatives. | Clear and does not contain much irrelevant detail. | Well-organized. Free from irrelevant sections and careless errors. All superlatives supported with evidence. |

£5K Competition Judging Criteria

All entries to the £5K competition are judged according to these criteria.

| | Weak = 1 | Moderate = 2 | Strong = 3 |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Competitive Position | Poor description of existing competitors. No obvious reason for continued growth. No defensible/sustainable position. | Adequate coverage of existing competitors, some description of competitive edge and some demonstration of a defensible/sustainable position. | Existing competitors clearly described. Clear description of the competitive edge over existing competitors. Sustainable/defensible position in market. |
| Product or Service Reality | Unclear how the product/service will work and how it will benefit the customer. | Convincing story of how the product/service will work but limited scope for future expansion. | Convincing story of how the product/service will work and the capability for diversification into new areas. |
| Presentation | Rambling structure, missing information, typographical errors, excessive use of superlatives. | Clear and does not contain much irrelevant detail. | Well-organized. Free from irrelevant sections and careless errors. All superlatives supported with evidence. |
| Team Skills | Inadequate skills and teamwork to take the business forward. | Evidence of shared vision and values. Recognition of key gaps in team. | Complete skill set in well composed team. Gaps in team recognised and plans laid out to fill these gaps. |
| Business Creation Potential | No evidence of desire to take the business idea forward beyond the competition. | Moderate level of commitment to the business. Will bring it forward but may not be top priority. | Highly passionate about the business and actively seeking out opportunities to start up and sustain the business. |

Entries wishing to be considered for the **Technology Awards** will be *additionally* judged on:

| | Weak = 1 | Moderate = 2 | Strong = 3 |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Size of Market Opportunity | £5m sales would be 50% market share. | £5-50m sales in 3-6 years representing 25% of market share. | More than £50m sales in 5 years+ is still less than 10% market share. |
| Realism of Market Opportunity | Vague, unsubstantiated assertions about market size and growth rate. | Adequate description of market, size and growth rate with limited factual support. | Thorough fact-based description of market, size and growth rate based on direct experience. |

Entries wishing to be considered for the **Social Enterprise Awards** will be *additionally* judged on:

| | Weak = 1 | Moderate = 2 | Strong = 3 |
|--|--|--|--|
| Sustainability, Impact | Poor consideration of people and profit. Small potential impact. | Reasonable consideration of people and profit. Moderate potential impact. | Excellent consideration of people and profit. Significant potential impact. |
| Social Benefit | Vague, unsubstantiated assertions about social benefits and how they will be achieved. | Adequate description of social purpose, limited description of how this will be achieved. | Clear and compelling description of social purpose and comprehensive plan on achieving these aims. |
| * Entrants do not need to show a perfect balance between all three elements, but they must show consideration for all three. | | | |
| Market | Poor analysis of the market opportunity and unsubstantiated market data. | Reasonable analysis of the market opportunity. Some third party support for market size assumptions. | Excellent analysis of the market opportunity. Market data corroborated by third parties. |

Entries wishing to be considered for the **Software Award** will be *additionally* judged on:

| | Weak = 1 | Moderate = 2 | Strong = 3 |
|---|--|--|---|
| Size of Addressable Market | £5m sales would be 50% market share. | £5-50m sales in 3-6 years representing 25% of market share. | More than £50m sales in 5 years+ is still less than 10% market share. |
| Realism of Market Opportunity | Vague, unsubstantiated assertions about market size and growth rate. | Adequate description of market, size and growth rate with limited factual support. | Thorough fact-based description of market, size and growth rate based on direct experience. |
| Prototype Quality (Functionality demo) | No functionality, only graphical screenshots. No development plan. | Illustrating basic functions, but only limited reflection on current development stage and future steps. | Strong demo with clear path to finished product. Convincing case with an understanding of major obstacles. |
| Evidence of Interaction and User/Customer Trials | Product developed in an 'ivory tower' without any feedback from potential users. | Feedback from potential users or customers on the idea, but no trials with a demo of the software. | Clear evidence of user testing and product iteration. Incorporation of feedback in development process. |
| Revenue Model | Lack of clear revenue | Clear plan of how to | Sales revenue already |

| | | | |
|--|---------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | stream. | generate sales, but no customers acquired yet. | generated and/or orders received. |
|--|---------|--|-----------------------------------|

Background on Social Enterprise

Introduction

Cambridge students and recent alumni interested in the CUE Business Creation Competition might have questions about the definition of “social enterprise.” As a general resource, [Social Enterprise UK](#) (a national body for social enterprises) and [Social Enterprise Mark](#) (a certification authority for social enterprises), provide materials that may inform competition entrants, including the criteria or operational principles of a social enterprise, FAQs, guidance documents, directories and [case studies](#).

Understanding legal corporate structures

For legal corporate structures, many social enterprise choose to incorporate as Community Interest Companies (CIC). With regard to CICs in particular, the CIC Regulator has published a number of [case studies CIC “success stories.”](#)

We further encourage you to consult the official source for possible legal entities in social enterprise, via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-social-enterprise>.

Intellectual Property Guide

Introduction

Intellectual property covers a range of topics including patents, copyright (for example in software), trade secrets, database rights and design rights. Some rights are protectable through registration, such as patents and design rights, and some are automatic, such as copyright. Patent protection is often very important to technology-based companies and this sheet looks at some of the basic issues involved in obtaining patent protection, and ownership of intellectual property within the University.

Should I Think About Patents?

The following is a basic rule-of-thumb guide as to whether or not your idea should be investigated further for patent protection. Answer yes or no to the following questions.

- Is it novel? If it has been made public in any way (e.g. through a conference paper, poster, publication, abstract or public talk, including on the internet) then it is no longer novel but some countries do benefit from a “grace period” allowing 6 or 12 months for filing a patent application after a disclosure by the inventor(s).
- Is it inventive? If your idea is obvious to someone knowledgeable in the field then it may not be inventive.
- Does your idea have industrial utility? You cannot patent something that does not have an identifiable use.

If you have answered “yes” to all of the above questions then it is worthwhile asking the advice of a patent expert. You should also check the University policy on IP to ensure that you are entitled to exploit your idea.

Exceptions

There are a few classes of invention that cannot be patented:

- Discoveries
- Scientific theories
- Mathematical formulae
- Surgical procedures
- Plant or animal varieties
- Business scheme

It may be possible to protect these classes of invention in other ways. In addition to the usual scientific abstract databases there are websites that allow you to search published patent applications: ep.espacenet.com is one of them. Please be aware that patent applications are only published 18 months after they are initially filed and that the claims in an application may change considerably prior to the grant of the patent.

Information on the University's policy on intellectual property ownership can be found at:

<http://www.enterprise.cam.ac.uk/ipandlicensing.php?subsub=21>. If you are a member of staff, its provisions do affect the ownership of intellectual property which you create and you cannot assume that you can use it freely.

The ownership of IP created by students is a complex issue and depends on a number of factors. Staff and students should ask themselves these questions:

- Might the idea be covered in any way by contractual obligations undertaken by the University e.g. through research grants, collaboration, studentships or material transfer agreements?
- Might the idea be "pulling" on intellectual property of others in the department, or make significant use of departmental facilities?
- If you are a graduate student, are there relevant terms in your studentship or research contract? If you have answered "yes" to any of the above questions then it is worthwhile asking the advice of Cambridge Enterprise.

Co-Inventors

Consider carefully whether anyone else has been involved in the invention. Is there anyone else who could legitimately say that they have made an intellectual input to the invention? This means that they have been more than "a pair of hands" doing what was instructed, but actually contributed intellectually, making an "inventive contribution". If so, then again you should consult Cambridge Enterprise. You need to establish whether a co-inventor who is not part of your team could have rights which would affect your ability to exploit your idea

Advice on Intellectual Property

Cambridge Enterprise, the University of Cambridge commercialisation office, is always pleased to help and offer advice. Please contact one of their specialists listed at www.enterprise.cam.ac.uk/people.php or email them at enquiries@enterprise.cam.ac.uk.

Patent Surgeries

Cambridge Enterprise, holds regular “Specialist Surgeries” on Wednesday afternoons during the Michaelmas and Lent terms. Patent lawyers and other professionals freely give their time and offer their expertise in 40 minute confidential meetings.

For further information please visit:

<http://www.enterprise.cam.ac.uk/lookingforinvestment.php?sub=11&subsub=18>.

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