

UQ Ventures Empower Program Overview and Terms and Conditions



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Introduction

This document contains a description of the UQ Ventures Empower 2026 program including:

- an overview of the program including scheduling, structure, program benefit, program content and eligibility; and
- key selection criteria and guidance.

It should be read and understood by all applicants to the program.

UQ Ventures Empower Program Overview

Topic	Description
Program short description	<p>The University of Queensland's Ventures Empower program (Program) is designed to support early-stage entrepreneurs to lay strong foundations for their startups. The Program provides support to participants through educational workshops, mentoring, and a supportive community environment.</p> <p>Empower is a free experiential learning program; it does not include funding for participating startups.</p>
Program pathways	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UQ Startups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Solo founders or teams with a University of Queensland (UQ) connection (at least one founder is a UQ student, staff, or alumnus). 2. External Startups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Solo founders or teams without a UQ connection but willing to collaborate with a UQ Aspiring Entrepreneur during the 10-week program. 3. UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UQ students dedicated to teaming up with a startup for the duration of the Program to develop entrepreneurial skills and contribute to the startup's growth.
Scheduling, duration, and structure	<p>The Program will run for 10 weeks from 19 August – 24 October 2026 at The University of Queensland campus.</p> <p>Contact hours for the program are on Wednesday evenings, with two Saturday intensives.</p> <p>Program dates and times (Subject to change):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 August, 5pm – 8pm • 22 August, 9am – 4pm • 2 September, 5pm – 8pm • 9 September, 5pm – 8pm • 16 September, 5pm – 8pm • 23 September, 5pm – 8pm • 30 September, 5pm – 8pm • 7 October, 5pm – 8pm • 14 October, 5pm – 8pm • 17 October, 9am – 4pm <p>Contact days are scheduled with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content sessions and workshops delivered by an Entrepreneur in Residence (EiR), experienced UQ Ventures facilitators, and guest speakers - Founder stories - Mentoring

Topic	Description
	<p>Participation at the Empower Demo Day event on Wednesday 21 October 2026, 5.30pm – 8pm (Date TBC).</p>
Participant Commitment	<p>Teams must commit to progressing their startup in the Program and dedicating significant time to their startup outside of the Program contact hours.</p> <p>Participants are expected to attend at least 90% of the provided workshops and accountability sessions.</p>
Program benefits and services	<p>Key benefits of the Program include:</p> <p>Experiential learning</p> <p>The major philosophy of the Program is learning through action with the selected startups focussed on developing a viable startup by the end of the Program. Along the way, the founders are challenged by the Program and by obstacles to their startups, and through this, they develop a range of entrepreneurial skills of resilience, execution, communication, risk taking, decision making and leadership.</p> <p>Accountability and agility</p> <p>The major learning in the Program is through startup execution and mentor directed action. This is coupled with weekly sessions with the EiR and UQ Ventures Empower Manager.</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Further mentoring is provided by regular visits from UQ Ventures Empower external mentors and UQ specialists to provide different insights and feedback to the founders from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Networks and introductions</p> <p>Startups also enjoy access to the extensive networks of UQ Ventures, the EiR, and the engaged mentors as applicable to their stage, technology and industry. Such introductions may fast track progress by early introduction to the right customers, lessons other founders may have learned, and potential investment opportunities.</p> <p>Educational startup workshops</p> <p>This experience is underpinned by a range of educational workshop sessions as outlined below. The exact selection of topics and their timing will be adjusted in response to the needs of the cohort and sometimes the availability of guest presenters described in the next section below.</p>
UQ Ventures Empower workshop topics	<p>The above experience is underpinned by a range of educational sessions. Delivery of all the educational sessions detailed below cannot be guaranteed because the exact selection of topics and their timing will be adjusted in response to the needs of the cohort and sometimes the availability of guest presenters.</p> <p>Founder stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For relevant and inspirational startup stories and founder journeys including lessons learned along the way, UQ Ventures Empower hosts key entrepreneurs to tell their stories to the Program's cohort. <p>Product and Customer</p>

Topic	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem/Solution Fit • Customer validation • Minimum Viable Product (MVP) development • Business Models • How to price your products <p>Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business plan • Business structure • Competitor analysis <p>Marketing and Sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding • Marketing tactics • Sales strategies • Customer acquisition, retention and traction approaches and measurement <p>Finances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cashflow, profit and loss, and balance sheets for startups • Funding options <p>Pitching and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investor and elevator pitch content, development, and delivery

Expected skills and experience upon completion

Founders actively participating in the Program can grow their own personal skills, including:

- Personal confidence
- Pitching
- Creating a business plan
- Operating as a startup
- Engaging customers
- Using basic startups tools and business processes
- Developing a validated business model
- Networking and engaging mentors
- Understanding their market and its stakeholders
- High functioning teamwork
- Resilience to set-backs and stresses
- Time management, priority setting, and focus

Selection Process and Criteria

Topic	Description
<p>Selection process overview</p>	<p>Step 1</p> <p>Applications will be open from 9:00AM AEST on Friday 29 May 2026 and close at 12:00PM AEST on Monday 20 July 2026 (Application Period). Applications received outside of the Application Period will not be accepted.</p> <p>To enter, applicants must, during the Application Period visit the UQ Ventures Empower web page and fully complete and submit the online application form which consists of written responses.</p> <p>Once submitted, all applications become the property of UQ.</p> <p>Step 2</p> <p>Online applications are assessed by the Program Manager and EiR for shortlisting. Shortlisting is based on the key selection criteria below.</p> <p>Step 3</p> <p>Shortlisted teams and UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs may be asked to attend an interview as the final stage of the selection process.</p> <p>Step 4</p> <p>External Startups and UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs will be matched by UQ, but participation in a matched team is subject to mutual agreement of the parties.</p> <p>Step 5</p> <p>A final cohort of 15 - 20 startup teams will be recommended by a selection committee, comprising qualified mentors and UQ staff.</p> <p>The final selection of participating startups is made by UQ's Ventures staff following consideration of how applicants meet the key selection criteria below, due diligence on the founders, commitment levels of the founders and balancing the student to non-student ratio to meet UQ's student entrepreneurship objectives.</p> <p>UQ Ventures' decision in relation to any aspect of the application process is final and UQ Ventures will not enter into any correspondence regarding the result of applications.</p>
<p>Eligibility</p>	<p>UQ Startups:</p> <p>To be eligible to apply, UQ startup teams or individual founders must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consist of active and committed founders who are over the age of 18 years; • have a strong connection with UQ as evidenced by one of the founders meeting one of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ be an undergraduate or postgraduate student of UQ in 2026, including PhD candidates. ○ be an alumna / alumnus of UQ; or ○ be a current UQ staff (research / academic / professional) member.

- The balance of the founders who do not meet the above criteria need not have any relationship with UQ.

UQ may decline to accept any application from a team which, in its reasonable opinion, does not meet the above eligibility criteria.

External Startups:

To be eligible to apply, external startup teams or individual founders must:

- not satisfy the connection criteria with UQ as set out in the third eligibility criteria for UQ Startups above;
- consist of active and committed founders who are over the age of 18 years;
- be willing to be matched with an Aspiring Entrepreneur for the duration of the Program.

UQ may decline to accept any application from a team which, in its reasonable opinion, does not meet the above eligibility criteria.

UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs:

To be eligible to apply, UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs must:

- be an undergraduate or postgraduate student of UQ in 2026, including PhD candidates;
- be 18 years or over at the time of application;
- be willing to be matched with a startup team for the duration of the Program.

UQ may decline to accept any application which, in its reasonable opinion, does not meet the above eligibility criteria.

Key Selection Criteria Guidance

The following criteria will be used to shortlist the applicants for the Program:

UQ & External Startups:

- 1.) Product/solution fit and market validation
- 2.) Founder skills and team collaboration
- 3.) Program fit

The following describes the key selection criteria in further detail.

1. Product/solution fit and market validation

Some questions and issues the UQ Ventures' Empower selection committee will consider are:

- How do you know you are solving a real problem for real customers?
- How much validation has been done to demonstrate that the product or service is needed, including customer interviews, surveys, users, revenue, etc?

- Strong indicators that your proposition is valid in the real world with real customers. Applicants should demonstrate significant evidence of customer discovery and validation of the problem being real. This goes beyond market research and involves interactions with potential customers and users.
- Proof that you have validated this market with real customers. As an example, how many customer / user interviews have you done? Levels of validation may differ market to market.
- How large is the target market and what is the potential to scale?

2. Founder skills and team collaboration

The selection committee will consider whether the founders have:

- Relevant skills and/or domain expertise;
- a close affinity to the problem they are trying to solve;
- demonstrated the right skill sets (technical and business) to develop and grow the startup;
- already dedicated significant time and effort into validating the idea and understanding the problem and solution prior to applying to the program; and
- the ability to commit to active involvement in the program for the duration of the program as described in the program overview.

A well balanced, collaborative, diverse and resilient team is an important element of successful startups.

Some questions the UQ Ventures' Empower selection committee will be interested in are:

- Why are you the right founder(s) to be working on this problem?
- Why is solving this problem important to you?
- What is your personal attachment and familiarity with the problem?

While startups founded by strong teams will naturally progress faster and gain more benefit from the Program, single founder startups can also be successful. If you are applying as a single founder, then you will need to describe how you will be able to successfully execute on the multiple dimensions of customer, product/technology, and business development during the Program.

3. Program fit

The selection committee will consider whether your venture would benefit from the Program in terms of its growth stage, including whether it is too early or too late. The Program is aimed for early-stage startups and may not be suitable to more mature startups.

UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs:

1. Passion for Startups & Entrepreneurship

- Demonstrated interest in startups, innovation, or entrepreneurial ventures.
- Clear motivation to develop entrepreneurial skills and mindset.

2. Willingness to Collaborate

- Commitment to teaming up with a startup for the duration of the Program.
- Openness to working in a fast-paced and dynamic environment.

3. Communication & Teamwork Skills

- Strong ability to communicate ideas effectively.
- Experience working collaboratively in teams, demonstrating adaptability and problem-solving skills.

4. **Relevant Skills & Experience**
 - Possession of skills that add value to a startup (e.g., marketing, finance, product development, technical expertise).
 - Ability to apply existing knowledge in a practical, real-world startup setting.
5. **Commitment to Learning & Growth**
 - Willingness to take on challenges and seek feedback.
 - Enthusiasm for developing new entrepreneurial knowledge and capabilities.
6. **Program Fit**
 - Alignment with the objectives and structure of the Program.
 - Ability to actively participate and contribute throughout the 10-week Program.

Other Key Terms and Conditions

Topic	Description
Intellectual Property (IP) & Confidentiality	<p>By submitting an application, you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm and guarantee that your application does not infringe the intellectual property rights of any third party (as can reasonably be identified at the time). 2. All intellectual property rights in any existing IP remain vested in the participant that owns those intellectual property rights. All new IP created by the participants during the Program remains the property of those participants who created it. 3. UQ does not claim any ownership over participant IP and does not take responsibility for the protection of any IP rights. <p style="text-align: center;">Participants are responsible for the protection of their IP and any confidential information disclosed during the Program, including ensuring that they have appropriate legal agreements in place and seeking their own legal advice, where required.</p>
Relationship Between Participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UQ assists in the matching of External Startups and UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs into teams for the Program, subject to mutual agreement of the parties. UQ also facilitates networking and collaboration opportunities but does not take responsibility for any business relationships, agreements, or disputes arising between Startups and UQ Aspiring Entrepreneurs. 2. Any formal business arrangement between participants (such as equity agreements, IP ownership, or employment arrangements) must be independently negotiated between the relevant parties without involvement from UQ. <p>UQ is not liable for any loss, damage, or disputes arising from any collaborations formed by the participants through the Program.</p>
Program Participation & Responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All participating teams must engage in at least 90% of Program activities, including workshops, mentorship sessions, and the Empower Demo Day event.

2. Upon the successful completion of the Program, teams are encouraged to enter and participate in the Empower Demo Day event. Terms and conditions of this event will be provided to the teams in the Program Slack Channel ahead of the event. Participants are expected to uphold professional conduct, demonstrate respect for mentors, peers, and UQ staff, and act in good faith throughout the Program.

UQ reserves the right to remove participants from the Program at its sole discretion in cases of misconduct, non-participation, or any breach of these Terms & Conditions.

Media & Publicity

1. Participants acknowledge and consent to UQ Ventures using their name, image, and business details for promotional purposes related to the Program.

If a participant does not wish to be featured in Program-related media, they must inform UQ Ventures in writing before the Program commences.

Withdrawal of application

You may withdraw your application at any time before notification of the successful start-up cohort is made by notifying UQ Ventures by email to ventures@uq.edu.au. If you withdraw your application:

1. UQ Ventures will remove your application.
2. UQ Ventures will not use your details or application for media or promotional purposes; and
3. you will no longer be eligible to be selected for the Program.

Amendments & Termination

Participants in the Program should be aware that events or circumstances may arise which require UQ to change the content of the Program and/or end the Program upon reasonable notice to participants.

Miscellaneous

Applications which, in the opinion of UQ Ventures, are incomplete, incorrect, or incomprehensible, contain defamatory or offensive content or infringe intellectual property rights are not eligible for selection and may be removed from the application process and the relevant applicant will be disqualified.

UQ Ventures may request information from applicants relevant to entry or participation in the Program, such as proof of residency or age.

To the extent permitted by law, UQ Ventures is not liable for any loss, damage, or injury whatsoever (including, but not limited to, indirect or consequential loss) resulting from the UQ Ventures application process or participation in the Program.

If for any reason, the Program is not capable of running as planned, including war, terrorism, state of emergency or disaster, infection by computer virus, bugs, tampering, unauthorised intervention, fraud, technical failures, or any other causes beyond the control of UQ Ventures which corrupt or affect the administration, security, fairness, integrity, or proper conduct of the Program, UQ Ventures reserves the right in its sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify or suspend the Program.

All costs associated with submitting an application are the responsibility of applicants.

Applicants understand and agree that UQ Ventures may collect personal information from them when they make an application, and use it for the purpose of running the Program (which may include disclosure to third parties for the purpose of processing and conducting the Program), for promotional purposes surrounding the Program, reporting purposes, as well as other purposes, as set out in [UQ's Privacy Policy](#). For further information on how UQ Ventures deals with applicants' personal information, please refer to UQ's Privacy Policy.



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