Working for Yourself
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Note: - Art and Design students should use our guide: Freelancing, Exhibiting and Community Arts
You are probably reading this because...

- You want to work for yourself as a freelancer or establish your own company
- Working for yourself is the main way to follow your chosen occupation. This is especially the case for graduates who wish to work as artists, designers and makers or in the Performing Arts, the Media, Fitness and Alternative Therapies, or Business and IT Consultancy.
- You want to create something that does not already exist
- You have a passion that you would like to be the focus of your working life too

Every year, around 200 of Manchester Met’s students report being self-employed within 6 months of graduating. A fair proportion of these will have begun accepting commissions or trading whilst they were students. Yet more of Manchester Met’s graduates see working for themselves as a long-term careers objective and use their first years in employment to gain more experience, develop business networks and generate finance to start up.

You may be very clear about what you want to do and already be taking steps to secure financial backing, market your product or service, and protect your idea(s) from the competition. Alternatively, you may be just setting out - wanting to be your own boss but not sure what is involved or even what it is you want to do.

Whichever stage you are at, you will need to consider whether working for yourself is the best option for you and if ‘yes’, how to plan ahead.

An often heard phrase is ‘If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.’ One in three small firms does not survive the first year – and the most common reason is a failure to get the appropriate advice and plan thoroughly. Considerations will include:

- Your business model – options include freelancing, contracting, consultancy, sole proprietor, partnership, limited company, co-operative, franchise, social enterprise or community interest company (CIC)
- The potential market – and the competition
- Your finances and anticipated cash flow
- Where you will work
- Who you will work with
- How best to promote and sell your work
- Desired life-work balance

This handout lists organisations and professional networks that provide start up advice and information. It particularly highlights those in the Manchester region that work with recent graduates and students, a number of which are based in Manchester Met.

Getting Started – Support at Manchester Met

‘Working for Yourself - Getting Started’ workshop mmu.ac.uk/careers/events

Run by the Careers & Employability Service every term, this 90-minute interactive workshop explores the motivation, skills and networks you are likely to need in order to be successful. It is designed to give you: -

- time to reflect on whether working for yourself is a sound option for you now
- or later in your career
• tips on putting together your business plan
• the opportunity to meet and learn about the team at Innospace and Market Place Studios, Manchester Met’s graduate start up incubators, together with the range of services and support that they provide.

The Careers and Employability consultants will always be pleased to discuss your initial ideas and point you in the direction of further help and advice within Manchester Met, the North West or beyond.

Initial research
Useful reference books are available to browse in the Employability Hub:
• *The Art of the Start* - Guy Kawasaki
• *Financial Times Guide to Business Start Up* – Sara Williams
• *The Small Business Start-up Workbook* – Cheryl D. Rickman
• *The Essential Guide to Business for Artists and Designers* – Alison Branagan

You can assess how ready you are to start working for yourself by working through:
• **Creative Boom’s essentials freelancer skills** [www.creativeboom.com/tips/dont-even-think-about-becoming-a-freelancer-unless-you-have-these-20-essential-skills-locked-down](http://www.creativeboom.com/tips/dont-even-think-about-becoming-a-freelancer-unless-you-have-these-20-essential-skills-locked-down)
• **University of Durham’s General Enterprising Tendency (GET) measure** at [get2test.net/](http://get2test.net/)
• **Enterprise Nation’s self-assessment toolkit** at [enterprisenation.com/skills](http://enterprisenation.com/skills).

**Innospace innospace.co.uk**
Manchester Met’s graduate business start-up incubator located on the All Saints North campus. It offers office space together with a range of business services, start up support and mentoring. Freelancers and social entrepreneurs are very welcome. Innospace also operates at Cheshire and has a strong focus on social enterprise. Innospace start up offices from £110 a month including VAT.

As a student, you can join Innospace as an associate enabling you to discuss your initial business ideas informally with successful local entrepreneurs and receive mentoring support.

**Market Place Studios**
[art.mmu.ac.uk/marketplace](http://art.mmu.ac.uk/marketplace)
Two floors of incubation studio space for Manchester School of Art graduates.

**Manchester Met’s Digital Innovation Centre**
This is located alongside Innospace. This enables collaboration between Innospace tenants and those developing new applications of digital technology.
MMU Entrepreneurs  
facebook.com/groups/1017601268316774  
Founded by students, the group provides a platform for all students interested in working for themselves to collaborate and share ideas, skills and knowledge. The regular meetups are a combination of inspirational guest speakers, business start-up workshops and networking events in addition opportunities to sell your own product or service. The Facebook page lists events, competitions, business simulations and funding streams for students and graduates interested in starting their own businesses.

The Society links with Innospace, Manchester Entrepreneurs (for student entrepreneurs based in Manchester) manchesterentrepreneurs.org.uk/ and the National Consortium of University Entrepreneurs (NACUE) nacue.com

Through Manchester Entrepreneurs, students can access Accelerateme accelerateme.co/#/ an intensive 5 month programme that fits around academic studies and provides participants with workshops, resources and funding to develop and grow their businesses successfully.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs  
erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu  
A cross-border exchange programme that gives new or aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in other participating countries.

Getting Started – Support in the City of Manchester

Manchester City Council  
manchester.gov.uk/info/200013/starting_a_business  
Practical information covers trading standards, tax returns, health and safety, food hygiene regulations, street trading and franchising, as well as links to the City’s business and intellectual property centre and SME Club.

Starting a Business in Manchester  
startups.co.uk/starting-a-business-in-manchester  
A very detailed guide to support in the City including accelerators, business angels and venture capital investors. Mentoring support, such as that provided free through Innospace, will be extremely useful in guiding you through this very complex landscape.

Manchester Business Growth Hub - Growth Start-Up Support Programme  
businessgrowthhub.com/business-from-start-up-to-expansion/starting-a-business  
The Hub’s free Start-Up programme helps you plan, launch and develop your business. The advisors can provide feedback on your business plans and ideas and introduce you to additional services and ways of accessing finance.

The Blue Orchid  
theblueorchid.co.uk  
Provides free start-up support via awareness sessions, one to one advice, workshops in the North West and signposting to other agencies providing support.
Getting Started - Government Support

StartUp Britain
startupbritain.org
Government initiative to encourage more business start-ups. Advice and support is offered for both start up and further expansion of existing businesses.

Business Support Helpline
gov.uk/business-support-helpline
Helpline 0300 456 3565
Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm

This site provides a wealth of resources to underpin the government’s strategy. It offers a useful format for writing your business plan gov.uk/write-business-plan

Great Business
greatbusiness.gov.uk

Information Online

Business Start-up
A number of these sites host business start-up tool kits and e-learning modules. A charge may be levied for accessing these.

Prospects.ac.uk
prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/self-employment
A detailed guide specifically for university students and graduates.

Vitae
vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/guides-briefings-and-information/the-enterprising-researcher
Support specifically for postgraduate students

The Start Up Donut
startupdonut.co.uk
Resources on marketing, legal issues and IT for new businesses.

Smarta
smarta.com
An off-shoot from Dragons’ Den

The Design Trust
thedesigentrust.co.uk
The essential ‘online business school for designers and makers’ offering factsheets, webinars with successful practitioners, online master classes, business start-up training programmes and events plus updates on funding streams, scholarships, competitions, exhibitions, commissions and residences. The Design Trust’s Business Club offers enhanced services for a subscription.

The Design Trust also suggests a list of highly recommended business books at thedesigntrust.co.uk/the-design-trust-5-favourite-books-on-business-planning-for-design-crafts-businesses
Creative Boom
creativeboom.com/tips
Practical tips on every aspect of working as a creative freelancer. In particular, see:
creativeboom.com/resources/110-essential-resources-for-creative-freelancers-and-small-business-owners

Make Your Passion A Success
makeyourpassionasuccess.com
Succinct downloadable e-book aimed at students and graduates.

Small Business UK
smallbusiness.co.uk
Advice on starting, running and growing a small business.

Start-ups
startups.co.uk
Useful Q&A business clinic.

The MOO Start-up Toolkit
moo.com/uk/startup-business-toolkit

Entrepreneur Handbook
entrepreneurhandbook.co.uk

The Big Society
thebigsociety.co.uk

Blueprint
facebook.com/blueprint
Features fifty e-learning business modules.

NESTA
nesta.org.uk
The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts is an independent body with a mission to make the UK more innovative. NESTA invests in early-stage companies, informs and shapes policy, and delivers practical programmes that inspire others to solve the big challenges of the future. However, NESTA does not currently fund individuals.

Freelancing

The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (IPSE)
ipse.co.uk
The largest association of independent professionals in the EU, representing over 67,000 freelancers, contractors and consultants from every sector of the economy. Their guide to freelancing is free to download here.

Freelance UK
freelanceuk.com/become/index.shtml
Useful guides on setting out as a freelancer in design, photography, journalism, copy writing, marketing and public relations.
A growing number of sites advertise short-term commissions - the so-called ‘Gig Economy’. These can be useful for testing out whether freelance work really is for you as well as helping you earn some cash if you still need to add to your professional portfolio. They also offer guidance on costing your work and making your pitch. Sites include:

- Upwork upwork.com
- Freelancer freelancer.com
- Guru guru.com
- Authentic Jobs authenticjobs.com
- iFreelance ifreelance.com
- People Per Hour peopleperhour.com
- 99Designs 99designs.co.uk
- Talent Cupboard talentcupboard.com
- Student Gems studentgems.com
- Enternships enternships.com

Contracting

Professional Contractors Group
https://www.contractorcalculator.co.uk/
Represents the interests of contractors and offers a toolkit, business guides, tax and legal support, insurance advice, networking and events.

Contractor UK
contractoruk.com/first_timers/graduate_guide_contracting.html
Offers a set of guides, contract job rate calculators and a contractors’ forum

Social Enterprise & Community Interest Companies

- UnLtd UnLtd.org.uk
- Social Enterprise North West senw.org.uk
- The Social Enterprise Coalition socialenterprise.org.uk
- The Social Investment Business sibgroup.org.uk
- Community Companies communitycompanies.co.uk/community-interest-companies

Cooperatives

Co-operatives UK uk.coop/resources/simply-start

Franchising

British Franchise Association thebfa.org
StartUps startups.co.uk/introduction-to-franchising
Tutoring

The Tutor Pages thetutorpages.com/free-tutoring-ebook
Free downloadable guide that explains the private tuition industry in the UK covering tax and insurance advice, safety and self-promotion as well as effective teaching.

Funding Your Start-up

Staff at Innospace can advise you on the range of funding streams available and those likely to be the most accessible for graduate business start-ups.

Schemes targeted on young graduates:

Shell Livewire shell-livewire.org/awards
The Smarter Future Programme awards a start-up grant of £5,000 each month to one 16-30 year old entrepreneur with an idea that addresses sustainable living challenges through smart innovation.

Princes Trust Business Programme
princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/the_business_programme.aspx
princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/grants.aspx
Currently targets young people aged 16-25 who are not in education, training or employment

Schemes open to all graduates:

Accelerateme
accelerateme.co/#/
A pre-seed micro accelerator available exclusively to Manchester Entrepreneurs members. Accelerateme is an intensive 5 month programme that fits around academic studies and provides participants with workshops, resources and funding to develop and grow their businesses successfully. No equity is taken.

The Start-up Loans Company
startuploans.co.uk
A government-backed initiative, the Start Up Loans Company allows you to borrow up to £25,000 to start a business for a low fixed interest rate of 6% per annum.

Virgin StartUp
virginstartup.org
Distribute government-backed Start Up Loans ranging from £500 - £25,000 to entrepreneurs launching or growing a business that has been trading for less than two years in England or Scotland. Every entrepreneur who receives a Virgin Start Up Loan is matched to their own mentor.

Creative Industry Finance
creativeindustryfinance.org.uk
An Arts Council England initiative offering business development support and access to finance for creative industry enterprises.
Crowdfunder
crowdfunder.co.uk
Crowdfunding entails funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, often through internet-mediated registries, but also through methods such as benefit events and mail-order subscriptions.

Directory of government-backed support and finance for business
gov.uk/business-finance-support-finder

Idox j4b
j4b.co.uk
Comprehensive database of business grants in the UK offering quick and simple searches. Details of over 2000 grant and loan schemes for small businesses.

Great Business
greatbusiness.gov.uk/financing-a-business.
Includes a business finance guide:
thefinanceguide.co.uk/

Funding in the North West for start-ups:
The Business Growth Hub
businessgrowthhub.com/partners/business-finance-solutions
Coordinates Access to Funding Scheme (A2F) for business start-ups and SMEs in the North West.
Greater Manchester Investment Fund
manchester.gov.uk/info/350/invest_or_locate_in_manchester/5521/
greater_manchester_investment_fund

Business Finance Solutions businessfinancesolutions.org.uk

Competitions and Awards
Selected carefully, these can secure additional funding together with good publicity for your business. There are a number to choose from - see entrepreneurhandbook.co.uk/competitions-award or https://mec.portals.mbs.ac.uk/Enterpriseactivities/Competitions/Othercompetitions.aspx

Particularly relevant examples include:

• IPSE (The Association of Independent Professionals and The Self-Employed)
  Freelance Awards https://www.ipse.co.uk/news

Venture capital firms and angel investor networks
These can offer external investment to start or grow your business. For details of key investors in the UK finance landscape see startups.co.uk/investor-directory/
**Funding for Social Enterprise**

**Funding Central**
fundingcentral.org.uk
Online funding directory covering the voluntary and community sector, including social enterprise

**Unltd**
unltd.org.uk/path
Range of competitive awards, some of which are specifically targeted towards students and recent graduates

**Manchester Community Central (MACC)**
manchestercommunitycentral.org/funding

**Tax and Legal Issues**

**Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs**
hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed
Critical information about starting a new business/going freelance with a focus upon the financial and business registration aspects. HMRC also offer support by video www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-webinars-email-alerts-and-videos

**FreeAgent**
freeagent.com
Offers a free field guide to finances for freelancers www.freeagent.com/fieldguide together with online accounting software designed specifically for freelancers and small business owners.

**UK Intellectual Property Office**
gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office
Information on the four main types of Intellectual Property (IP) – **Patents** for inventions, **Trade marks** for brand identity, **Designs** for product appearance and **Copyright** for literary and artistic material.

**Institute of Patentees and Inventors**
invent.org.uk

**Companies House**
companieshouse.gov.uk
The Government database of existing companies so you can check if your proposed trading name is already being used.

**Manchester Central Library Business and IP Centre**
manchester.gov.uk/info/500138/central_library/6316/what_you_can_do_at_central_library/5

**Legal Advice**
lawsociety.org.uk/for-the-public/common-legal-issues/setting-up-business
Summary of the legal services provided by solicitors to small and medium-sized businesses.
Start Up Spaces in Manchester

Innospace at Manchester Met
innospace.co.uk
Provides an affordable starter (or incubation) space for new graduates.

MadLab
madlab.org.uk/
Offers incubation space for digital start-ups

FabLab
traffordfablab.com/fab-lab-manchester
Offers incubation space for product designers

The Spark Studio
thesparkstudio.co.uk

The Sharp Project
thesharpproject.co.uk/

Entrepreneurial Spark
entrepreneurial-spark.com/

Ziferblat
ziferblat.co.uk/edgestmanchester.html
Located in the Northern Quarter, ‘a pay as you go’ coffee house offering work space and events.

A useful overview of other spaces in the City centre aimed at freelancers and small business start-ups can be found at manchestereveningnews.co.uk/business/city-region-middle-space-race-10806710

Regus regus.co.uk-office-space/united-kingdom/manchester and
Bruntwood bruntwood.co.uk/our-locations/greater-manchester/
specialise in managed office space for small businesses in Manchester and across the UK.

Graduates looking for studios and galleries should refer to our guide ‘Useful Resources For MSoA Students’ in the creative section of our careers guides page

Business Exhibitions and Trade Shows

- marketingdonut.co.uk/marketing/exhibitions-and-events
- tradeshow.tradekey.com/united-kingdom-c77.htm
- britishinventionshow.com

If you wish to consider setting up an online shop, pop up or market stall see our guide ‘Freelancing, Exhibiting & Community Arts’ on our careers guides page
Business Networking Groups in Manchester

Setting up in business on your own can be a very lonely experience. Research repeatedly shows that new business start-ups perform better when they access regular advice and mentoring support from experienced entrepreneurs. Whilst online networks such as those which are featured in the last section of this guide can be supportive, many self-employed people prefer to be members of small business clubs and ‘face to face’ networking groups.

When first starting out, groups such as those run through the local Chamber of Commerce britishchambers.org.uk can appear very formal and high-powered. As a result, entrepreneurs and business owners have created their own more informal groups. The Start Up Digest startupdigest.com/digests/manchester provides a free fortnightly update of events taking place in the City.

Joining such groups is usually free or low cost and they can be very helpful in terms of enabling you to:

- Meet like-minded people.
- Make contacts with people who can be inspirational in the development of your business.
- Get advice on what you can do to get your work noticed – for example, participating in activities such as competitions, exhibitions and trade shows.
- Find out who the key players and customers are in your sector.
- Meet potential customers and clients.
- Learn about forthcoming contracts and freelance commissions before they are advertised.
- Meet people who may have the very skills that you need to buy in as you set up.

Several MeetUp groups business-support.meetup.com/cities/gb/18/manchester/ have been formed with a focus on freelancing and business start-up including:

- Creative Industries Network Group – CING
- Startup2sme
- GoalGettersUKManchester Lean Start Ups
- Manchester Entrepreneurial Meet
- Manchester Net Squared (Focuses on using the web effectively in business)
- Manchester Inventors Group

Other Manchester-based groups include:

- Northern Soho northernsoho.co.uk
  Offers a mentoring programme MentorMatch bestpracticehub.com/northern-soho-mentormatch/ for members who have recently set up digitally based businesses in the Manchester area.

- MDDA works closely with Manchester Digital manchesterdigital.com/events
  The independent trade association for the ICT and new media industries in the North West.

- Junior Chamber International Manchester jcimanchester.org.uk/about-us/
  A voluntary personal development organisation for young professionals, students and entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 40.
• **TiE tiuknorth.org/**
  Offers mentoring, networking events, seminars and workshops to those starting in business plus the **Founders Dock** accelerator in Manchester

**Online Networks**

• **Startacus startacus.net**  
  An online community for students and recent graduates who are interested in working for themselves.

• **NACUE (National Association of College and University Entrepreneurs) nacue.com**  
  Key membership organisation for engaging students in enterprise. Set up by students for students to support student-led enterprise societies, run events and advocate practical learning.

• **SME Club smeclubmanchester.com**  
  Free weekly mailing of top tips from pro.manchester, the region’s largest business advice agency.

• **Manchester Start Ups facebook.com/groups/193730410734286**

• **The Federation of Small Businesses fsb.org.uk**  
  With 200,000 members and 194 branches, UK’s largest pressure group promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms.

• **The National Federation of Enterprise Agencies nfea.com**  
  Members are not-for-profit organisations providing independent and impartial advice, training and mentoring to new and emerging businesses. As well as enterprise agencies, members also include Chambers of Commerce, local authorities, further and higher education providers and other specialist enterprise support providers.

• **Enterprise Nation Business Club enterprisenation.com**

• **Disabled Entrepreneurs Network disabled-entrepreneurs.net**  
  Provides a number of employment related fact sheets including job hunting, self-employment and teaching. It also provides networking opportunities, enabling self-employed disabled people to share information and issues.

**Female Entrepreneur Association femaleentrepreneurassociation.com**  
Publish a regular magazine ‘**This Girl Means Business**’

**The Business Launch Pad businesslaunchpad.org.uk**  
For information on the London area.

**The Guardian Small Business Network theguardian.com/small-business-network**
Careers & Employability Support

The Careers & Employability Service offers a range of support to Manchester Met students and graduates:

- **Detailed careers guides**: Our full range of careers guides, including information on finding and applying for opportunities are available on our website. [mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides](mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides)

- **Ask a Careers Question Online**: Get online advice through My Career Hub, ask your question at any time and receive support via email. [mmu.ac.uk/careersquestion](mmu.ac.uk/careersquestion)

- **Careers Consultant Appointments**: Book a 30 minute appointment with a Careers & Employability Consultant by calling 0161 247 3483.

- **Careers Events**: Meet employers and enhance your employability by attending our workshops, employer events and careers fairs. [mmu.ac.uk/careers/events](mmu.ac.uk/careers/events)

- **MMyou**: The online careers centre you can access 24/7 to view lots of career resources, advice and tips, career quizzes and helpful articles wherever you are! Including articles and information tailored to your sector! Login to [MMyou Careers Centre](mmu.ac.uk/careers/events) to find out more!