

Lecturer advice: Starting a business in college

ThinkBusiness spoke to Roisin Lyons, lecturer in entrepreneurship and innovation at DCU Business School, about college students going into business and the many different options available.

What are the top career options for business students at present?

A business degree is very versatile and can be useful in many contexts and industries. Students commonly enter fields of marketing, finance, recruitment, strategy, and sometimes teaching or training. Individuals can also travel to other countries to work as a business degree is applicable internationally, and in fact, many business degrees are taught in conjunction with a language to encourage this.

In DCU, graduates continue to be highly sought after by employers. Our most recent graduate destinations survey indicates that 94% of DCU graduates are in employment or further study six to nine months after graduation. Our graduates work anywhere from large multinationals, SMEs, to household names, family businesses and start-ups across many sectors. In a recent report, we noticed a trend whereby students tend to prefer to work in large businesses immediately after finishing third level. However, many of these students intend to move to smaller companies, family businesses or start-ups after gaining industry experience as shown below.

If a student had an idea for a business, what tips would you give them?

A successful entrepreneur recognises opportunities, uses resources well and networks with as many contacts as possible. A student thinking about a start-up should mirror this and see what contacts and resources he/she can avail of within college. So my advice is... firstly, come talk to us! Staff and faculty can help in many ways for potential start-ups. Personally I am constantly in meetings with students who have an idea in mind or a start-up in progress, and I can help to refer students or student teams to contacts they may need thereafter.

Second, the large majority of colleges and universities in Ireland have embraced entrepreneurship and have student competitions, accelerators and specialised programmes to help. Entering competitions and participating in courses such as the Ustart programme we have in DCU are hugely beneficial in providing students with the knowledge and confidence they need to persevere with their start-up idea.

Third, student union entrepreneurship clubs are also a good idea to join and build up a network of peers and potential start-up partners. It also makes it more enjoyable to attend conferences or events when there are some friendly faces to go with.

By the way, I would like to stress that entrepreneurship is not just for business students, so whatever degree a student chooses, these options are available to them. Having knowledge in other disciplines which can be applied to a start-up is actually a huge advantage to have.

If you were to recommend one book to entrepreneurial students, what would it be?

Tough question, as honestly it would depend on the student. Some have a great idea but lack knowledge on how to develop this into a feasible proposition or evaluate their true target market size, others have a huge passion for entrepreneurship but are still searching for the elusive, game-changing idea.

One of the pitfalls that I have noticed in early stage student start-ups is a lack of awareness of the entrepreneurial climate in Ireland. This is an issue as student entrepreneurs in particular should be authentically interested in entrepreneurship, as well as on their own success. In that sense I would recommend reading some of the national reports about entrepreneurship available. I think this type of reading will give students a sense of the scale of entrepreneurship in Ireland and internationally, and help them visualise the community they may be about to join.

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[What you need to do before starting your business.](#)