

Edinburgh academics take on the entrepreneurs

✘ A quartet of students and academics from Edinburgh will battle it out with entrepreneurs from other Scottish universities in a bid to become winners of the Converge Challenge – a competition open to students and staff of any Scottish university, giving them a chance to develop the commercial potential of their inventions.

Universities in Edinburgh are well represented, with four of the Converge Challenge top six finalists coming from The University of Edinburgh and Heriot Watt University.

Through to the Converge Challenge final from the capital are – University of Edinburgh trio Kanika Bansal, an RSE Enterprise Fellow from the Department of Biomechanical Engineering, third year PhD student Liita Lyaloo Naukushu from the School of Political Science, working with Helen Fisher a Santander Entern from LAUNCH.ed. Also in the final are Dr Colin Simpson, a reader in Population Health Sciences and Heriot Watt University's Dawn Maskell, a Post-Doctoral Research Associate.

They are all looking to impress the judging panel with their inventions in a bid to land the £60k cash and in-kind support first prize.

Each of the five has created their own start-up business with a strong emphasis this year on providing solutions across the medical device and healthcare sectors.

✘ Kanika has developed IV Prev, a non-invasive, disposable device which offers a 99.4% reduction on skin bacteria to prevent infection from IV needle punctures. Likewise, Liita's and Helen's business – Beckdales Ltd is a company developing a range of home and industrial cleaning products to dramatically reduce the spread of infections. Colin Simpson's business is TriScribe is described as a 'BigData' spin-out from Edinburgh BioQuarter. It analyses data relating to drug by linking prescription information to clinical outcomes. Meanwhile, Dawn Maskell's business, Horizon Proteins, is developing a sustainable source of proteins for food industries, whereby co-products from Scotch whisky, as an example, might be converted to a high-quality protein feed for the Scottish aquaculture industry.

Olga Kozlova, creator of Converge Challenge, commented:-“The Converge Challenge is about equipping people with the right skills and support they need to turn their academic research into a successful commercial venture. New businesses like these set the tone for Scotland's continuance as a centre of excellence for aspiration and innovation.

Kanika, Liita, Helen, Colin and Dawn, together with the other two finalists from Dundee and Aberdeen, have demonstrated impressive commercial acumen and business planning throughout the entire process leading to this stage.”

The final of the Converge Challenge takes place in Edinburgh on Tuesday 24 September at the Edinburgh Conference Centre, Heriot-Watt University, where the keynote speaker will be John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and

Sustainable Growth in the Scottish Government.