Imperial White City Incubator
Annual Report 2017-2018
Based in the Translation & Innovation Hub at Imperial College London’s White City Campus, the Imperial White City Incubator (IWCI) is a space dedicated to small, early-stage technology businesses.

The Incubator provides tenants with state-of-the-art facilities, training, support, and access to professional networks in order to help them grow and become established businesses.
Table of Contents

2 The White City Incubator: the first 18 months
3 The Incubator in numbers
4 Entrepreneurial programmes review
5 Community Engagement
6 White City Innovators’ Programme
8 Learning & Networking
9 Shared labs at the Incubator
10 RebelBio
12 MiNA Therapeutics
14 Our companies
16 Launching the Experts in Residence Programme
The White City Incubator
The first 18 months

Since opening its doors in October 2016, The Imperial White City Incubator has been working hard to cultivate an entrepreneurial community that embraces innovation and community at its heart.

As the new Imperial campus grows, the first companies have moved in and made it their home. Currently at 94% occupancy, the Incubator has looked to increase its interactions with the Imperial entrepreneurial community, local entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders of the innovation ecosystem through its entrepreneurial programmes, such as the Innovation Academy and partnerships with independent programmes like RebelBio and Techcelerate.

It has been encouraging to note the progress of companies within the Incubator. We aim for the companies to stay with us over a three-year period before graduating to bigger space around White City but we have already seen one graduation from the Incubator and two companies graduating from the shared lab into their own spaces within the Incubator.

A vibrant entrepreneurial environment has become an increasingly strong competitive driver for attracting staff and students to universities. The Imperial White City Incubator plays a key role in this innovation ecosystem, with its support of vibrant early-stage companies in need of state-of-the-art facilities.

The Incubator’s creation of an innovative shared lab has further reduced barriers to entry, enabling start-ups from Imperial and elsewhere to conduct their first years of growth at significantly lower cost. It has been exciting to see two companies graduate from the shared lab to their own spaces within the Incubator already, in addition to MiNA Therapeutics graduating to new facilities elsewhere in the Translation & Innovation Hub, operated by Imperial College Thinkspace. Further ‘grow on’ space is planned for the White City campus as the community grows and matures.

Our virtual membership offering, in conjunction with the shared lab, is vital in giving young technology companies access to infrastructure and support that sets a foundation to their future success.
In Numbers

18 PHYSICALLY INCUBATED COMPANIES

100+ JOBS CREATED

OCCUPANCY RATE OF 94%

9 COMPANIES IN SHARED LABS
OF WHICH 2 MOVED INTO THEIR OWN SPACES

£85M+ RAISED BY INCUBATOR COMPANIES

AND OUR FIRST GRADUATION
Entrepreneurial programmes review

The past 18 months have seen a number of high profile and successful entrepreneurial programmes taking place at the Imperial White City Incubator. These programmes have significantly raised the Incubator’s profile within the Imperial entrepreneurial community, as well as among deep science start-ups and White City residents.

Our entrepreneurial programmes are designed to be relevant to different parts of an entrepreneur’s journey in business. Firstly, the Innovation Academy series aims to inspire and encourage inventors to commercialise their ideas and findings by setting up new companies. These sessions also equip attendees with practical knowledge in areas such as company formation, business, and IP management. This is complemented by our Learning & Networking Programme, which further helps founders through skills development and investor showcase events. Lastly, our flagship White City Innovators’ Programme helps local entrepreneurs and Imperial alumni grow their businesses and connect to Imperial’s dynamic innovation environment.

Our entrepreneurial programmes have been extremely well received and help to establish the Incubator and the Translation & Innovation Hub as central to cementing Imperial as a global leader in innovation. We look to maintain this high standard in the coming years, further developing our offering to respond to the community’s changing needs.
Community Engagement

As part of development plans for the White City Campus, Imperial College London has committed itself to actively engage with White City residents, local businesses, and organisations, working with them to create opportunities and ensure that the new campus has a positive impact on the local community. As a part of the White City Campus, the Incubator shares this responsibility.

We partnered with local charity Petit Miracles, which provides training and work experience in traditional craft, restoration, basic DIY, painting & decorating, interior design trades, retail, entrepreneurship, and business skills. This enables beneficiaries to create their own employment opportunities. In the Petit Miracles Hub, the charity has created a space for local business owners to showcase and sell their products, with shared meetings spaces and further business support to help ventures grow.

In late May 2018, the Incubator co-hosted two sessions with Petit Miracles. Marketing and Social Media for Business focused on how to use social media to attract and retain customers, while Face-to-Face Selling in a Digital World demonstrated the ability to plan sales goals and objectives, understand the target audience, and identify customer behaviour. Both sessions were free for residents of Hammersmith and Fulham council.

In addition, we set up the White City Innovators’ Programme, a business pre-accelerator aimed at technology businesses founded by White City residents and Imperial alumni. You can find more information on the Innovators’ Programme on pages 8 and 9 of this report.

We look forward to working with local charities and entrepreneurs in future, as the White City Campus grows and develops more meaningful ways to engage with those in the surrounding area.

You can learn more about Petit Miracles by visiting the charity’s site: www.petitmiracles.org.uk
The White City Innovators’ Programme, run in partnership with NatWest, is the Incubator’s flagship pre-accelerator programme. It aims to support the development of technology focussed early-stage companies by providing funding, space, access to the Imperial College London ecosystem, and training in key skills for entrepreneurs. Over four weeks, a cohort of around 10 start-up founders is coached in areas such as fundraising, team building, IP, marketing, and pitch practice. The Programme culminates in a final pitch event where participants compete for a cash prize and further support from the Incubator.

The White City Innovators’ Programme was started as a response to a gap in support available to Imperial alumni and local entrepreneurs. Since the Programme started, 25 young start-ups have gained valuable commercial experience through interacting with industry mentors, engaging with potential customers, and testing their business plans in real life conditions.

The White City Innovators’ Programme helped us build the foundations of Spyras. Despite the programme lasting only four weeks, we have kept in contact with the Incubator team, who continue to support us. Being able to access the incubator’s vast network has connected us with not just potential investors, but also experienced mentors who guide us with their invaluable advice. The incubator holds a special place in the history of Spyras and I look forward to continuing working together.

George Winfield, co-founder of Spyras, winner of the White City Innovators’ Programme May 2018
The space and support provided by the Incubator was crucial for Phytoform at the very start. It allowed us to have a great working environment where we could focus on the company. This enabled us to come up with a solid value proposition and led to us obtaining initial company funds. We will always be grateful for the support Phytoform Labs received at the very beginning from Imperial Incubator, without it we wouldn’t be where we are now.

Nicolas Kral, co-founder of Phytoform, winner of the White City Innovators’ Programme October 2017

Innovators’ Programme highlight:
SP Tracked Safety Jackets
SP Tracked Safety Jackets was founded by White City resident Sasha Pinnock as a response to news of children going missing during a school trip. They were safely found, but Pinnock believed that the episode could be avoided.

She began developing a GPS-trackable High-vis jackets and vests that allow parents, guardians, and carers of small children or vulnerable adults to keep track of their loved ones. Pinnock joined the Innovators’ Programme to develop her business skills.

“The Programme gave me invaluable insight into marketing and made me think differently about how best to reach my target market”, says Pinnock, “I was lucky enough to work with some really smart and honest mentors who helped me develop my product in a variety of innovative ways.”

During the Programme, Pinnock engaged with suppliers and began plans with schools for trials using her jackets.

With an emphasis on ensuring hardware reliability and making the garments attractive for wearers, the final pitch for SP Tracked Safety Jackets in the May 2018 edition saw her win third place and with it a six-month virtual membership at the Incubator.
Learning & Networking

An Incubator is more than just space. Although modern facilities play an important role in technology-focused enterprises, success is also heavily dependent on good business practices.

In addition to bespoke support to individual clients, the Incubator hosts training sessions to help entrepreneurs acquire the necessary skills to run a business. We also organise networking events for clients to interact with and learn from each other, as well as meet potential mentors, investors, and business connections.

It is this community element that makes the Imperial White City Incubator an attractive place for young businesses.

The Learning & Networking programme consists of:

- skills workshops - GDPR, European and local grants, funding & finance, R&D tax credits
- Investor Showcase events
- community events to introduce start-ups to one another and build a strong and supportive entrepreneurial community
- ecosystem events to engage with other stakeholders of the innovation ecosystem in order to expand the support and guidance provided to companies
- micro-courses, video courses, and bite-size guides for those short on time
Shared labs at the Incubator

The past 12 months saw the launch of our new shared laboratory project in the Incubator. This was in response to a number of requests for smaller lab spaces to support younger up and coming start-ups emerging from Imperial College London—as well as from other institutions—looking for a home away from traditional departmental laboratories.

We have provided lab bench space and shared equipment to the companies to help prepare them for growth and full entry into the Incubator.

- 9 companies have taken advantage of the space
- 2 companies have graduated to full Incubator space
- 10 global teams have used the labs as part of the RebelBio Accelerator in January 2018

"Building a deep tech start-up requires tremendous effort and more than a shed. The Incubator’s shared labs provided essential access to high grade, excellently located labs at a crucial time in our development. We’re proud to be part of the community here, and have deep gratitude for the time we’ve spent in the shared lab"

Henrik Hagemann
CEO & Co-founder
CustoMem
In January 2018, the Imperial White City Incubator began its partnership with RebelBio, the world’s first dedicated life sciences accelerator. The Incubator hosted RebelBio’s fifth cohort—its first in the UK—in a shared laboratory space.

RebelBio is a start-up accelerator which focuses on entrepreneurs building technologies in or around the field of life sciences. The programme offers seed funding, lab space, world-class mentoring, inspiring peers, and a community of successful and diverse founders from all sectors.

The new programme saw ten innovative biotech companies based at the Incubator for three months. These start-ups aim to tackle issues such as environmental sustainability in textiles, AI-driven personalised medicine, new treatments for cataracts, and neurology-derived tools to alleviate stress.

This collaboration proved to be a success: three start-ups have decided to continue their operations at the Incubator, and a new cohort is set to begin in August 2018.

AlgiKnit is a biomaterials company integrating science and design into textile production. Addressing the overabundance of everlasting plastics, AlgiKnit is creating durable yet rapidly degradable yarns.

Industry leading brands in fashion, the second most polluting industry on the planet, have pledged to enact sustainable practices in the coming decades. More than any factor, fabric determines the environmental impact of a garment, from production all the way to disposal.

AlgiKnit envisions the next generation of sustainable, wearable and ethical materials, produced within a closed-loop life cycle with materials that significantly lower environmental footprint than conventional textiles.
Our partnership with Imperial Innovations at the Imperial White City Incubator has been an incredible asset to RebelBio. Both our start-ups & our accelerator programme have access to great workshops & opportunities to engage with other companies at the Translation & Innovation Hub in addition to the superb marketing & networking. Our programme has since ramped up operations in London as a result and we are delighted to continue the partnership to grow more start-ups here.

Steven O’Connell
Associate Director & Programme Manager,
RebelBio
MiNA Therapeutics is the first company to graduate from the Imperial White City Incubator. We are proud to have supported MiNA in its infancy and look forward to celebrating its future successes as it continues to progress its novel treatments to clinical trials.

MiNA Therapeutics is a biotech company pioneering a new class of drugs called small activating RNA (saRNA). Acting through a cell’s own mechanism of gene activation, saRNA medicines are able to restore to healthy levels a cell’s production of specific proteins. This approach allows MiNA to treat diseases in entirely new ways by targeting proteins that are undruggable by conventional medicines.

The company is progressing a range of drug programmes. Its lead candidate, MTL-CEBPA, is currently in a multi-centre Phase I/II clinical trials for the treatment of advanced liver cancer.

www.minatx.com
2008
MiNA Therapeutics founded by Professors Nagy Habib, John J Rossi, Pål Sætrom

2013
Founders publish preclinical Proof-of-Concept study on saRNA as a therapeutic agent in liver cancer

2014
MiNA consolidates saRNA patent landscape through exclusive agreements with UCSF, UT Southwestern and NTNU Trondheim

2016
Lead candidate MTL-CEBPA enters Phase I clinical trial

2017
- Sosei Group Corporation invests £35m in MiNA
- Innovate UK awards £400,000 grant to MiNA and LGC LINK collaboration
- MiNA enters into collaboration and licensing agreement with Boehringer Ingelheim with a potential value of €307 million and up to double digit royalties

2018
MiNA presents preliminary results from MTL-CEBPA Phase I clinical trial including saRNA proof of mechanism and anti-tumour activity

MiNA Therapeutics joins the Imperial White City Incubator
MiNA Therapeutics graduates from the Imperial White City Incubator
Our companies

**Affinity Biomarker Labs**
Advancing diagnostics and therapeutics through biomarker discovery

**Autolus Ltd**
Developing novel immunotherapies for oncology.

**Axitan**
Microalgae-based biologics or the animal health industry.

**CustoMem**
New targeted filtering technology for micropollutants.

**FreshCheck**
Quick confirmation of bacterial contamination with clear colour change.

**GammaDelta Therapeutics**
Harnessing gamma delta T cells for improved immunotherapies for cancer and other serious diseases.

**HackScience**
Accelerating hardware start-up scientific research with novel and configurable lab automation.

**MediSieve**
Developing magnetic blood filtration to transform the treatment of blood borne diseases.
MiNA Diagnostics
Adapting clinical medicine, biochemistry, data science, engineering and entrepreneurship for digital point-of-care diagnostics.

MiNA Therapeutics
Pioneering small activating RNA medicines for a new approach to medicine.

Polymateria
Establish rigorous standards in biodegradable polymers.

Pulmocide
Treating acute and chronic respiratory tract infections.

RebelBio
The world’s first life sciences accelerator, supporting young biotech companies around the world.

SIME Diagnostics
Adapting clinical medicine, biochemistry, data science, engineering and entrepreneurship for digital point-of-care diagnostics.

SMAP Energy
Using smart energy meter data to accelerate the adoption of “Energy AI”.

Smart Respiratory Products LTD
Novel peak flow meter devices for comprehensive mobile health solutions for home asthma management.

Therapeutics Frontiers
Expertise for translational research in respiratory disease and treatment.

ThinAir
Bringing water to water scarce communities across the globe.

SweetGen
Creating energy from waste water with innovative catalyst technology.
Launching the Experts in Residence Programme

We are delighted to announce a new initiative for our Incubator Community. Over time we encounter experts who run companies within our Incubator Alumni and community that are examples of success and who also have the desire to give back and help our younger companies with support, advice, introductions and mentoring. Our new Expert in residence initiative will hopefully see these founders, CEOs and managers extend their relationships with the Incubator long after their companies have graduated out of the space.

“The Incubator has a dynamic and stimulating ecosystem. I welcome the opportunity to mentor budding Imperial entrepreneurs and give back in a way that matters.”

Omer Casher

Omer Casher has a PhD in Chemistry, and 20+ years of healthcare experience. He joined SIME Dx in 2015 as COO/CTO, responsible for the H2020-funded commercialisation of a novel laboratory-developed diagnostic test for use at the point-of-care. Prior to the start of his entrepreneurial journey 6 years ago, he headed up Medical Imaging Informatics at the GSK Clinical Imaging Centre.

Robert Habib holds expertise in:

- Drug Discovery
- Drug Development
- Chemistry, Manufacturing and Controls
- Pharmaceutical Licensing
- Intellectual Property
- Corporate Finance

16
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