

# START-UP

*Field Guide*



SUPPORTING AUT STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS

# You've Got Options



Some of us are happy to complete our education and find a job that funds our lifestyle, however not everyone fits that mould. You might prefer to forge your own path, being your own boss and creating opportunities that benefit themselves, your whānau, and wider community.

AUT Ventures is excited to support AUT's aspiring entrepreneurs and have put together this Field Guide to help you figure out your next steps, from idea through to validation to launching a start-up.





**Deanna Yang, Founder, Moustache Cookies**  
Bachelor of Communication Studies in Journalism  
Graduated AUT 2011

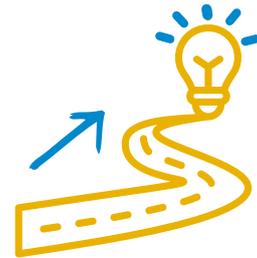


**Saba Samiei, Founder, MACSO**  
Master of Computer and Information Sciences,  
majoring in AI and AI Ethics | Graduated AUT 2019



# Blazing Your Own Trail

Being the master of your own destiny isn't easy, but if you decide to keep going, you'll be in great company:



"You don't have to have a big idea, you just have to have a better idea... It's about doing the mahi, getting the work done."  
**Rod Drury, Founder of Xero**

"If I had listened to everyone who told me it was impossible, I would never have started."

**Sir Peter Beck, Founder of Rocket Lab**

"The biggest risk is doing nothing."

**Sam Morgan, Founder of Trade Me**

"The entrepreneur is someone who jumps off a cliff and builds a plane on the way down."

**Reid Hoffman, Co-founder of LinkedIn**



# The Art of Starting



If being a Founder was easy, everyone would be doing it. By sharing your idea with us and going through this Field Guide, it shows you have initiative and the confidence to take the next step.

Share your idea and decide on the right path forward. It's important to choose the right collaborator to match what stage you're at and where you want to end up.

*TOP TIP: JOIN THE AUT START-UP CLUB. IT'S FOR PEOPLE JUST LIKE YOU!*

Upskill yourself in preparation for the journey ahead. Sign up for online courses like StartupNZ or Campus Plus, or you could start attending in person events, because connections count.

*TOP TIP: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FREE TRAINING AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE.*

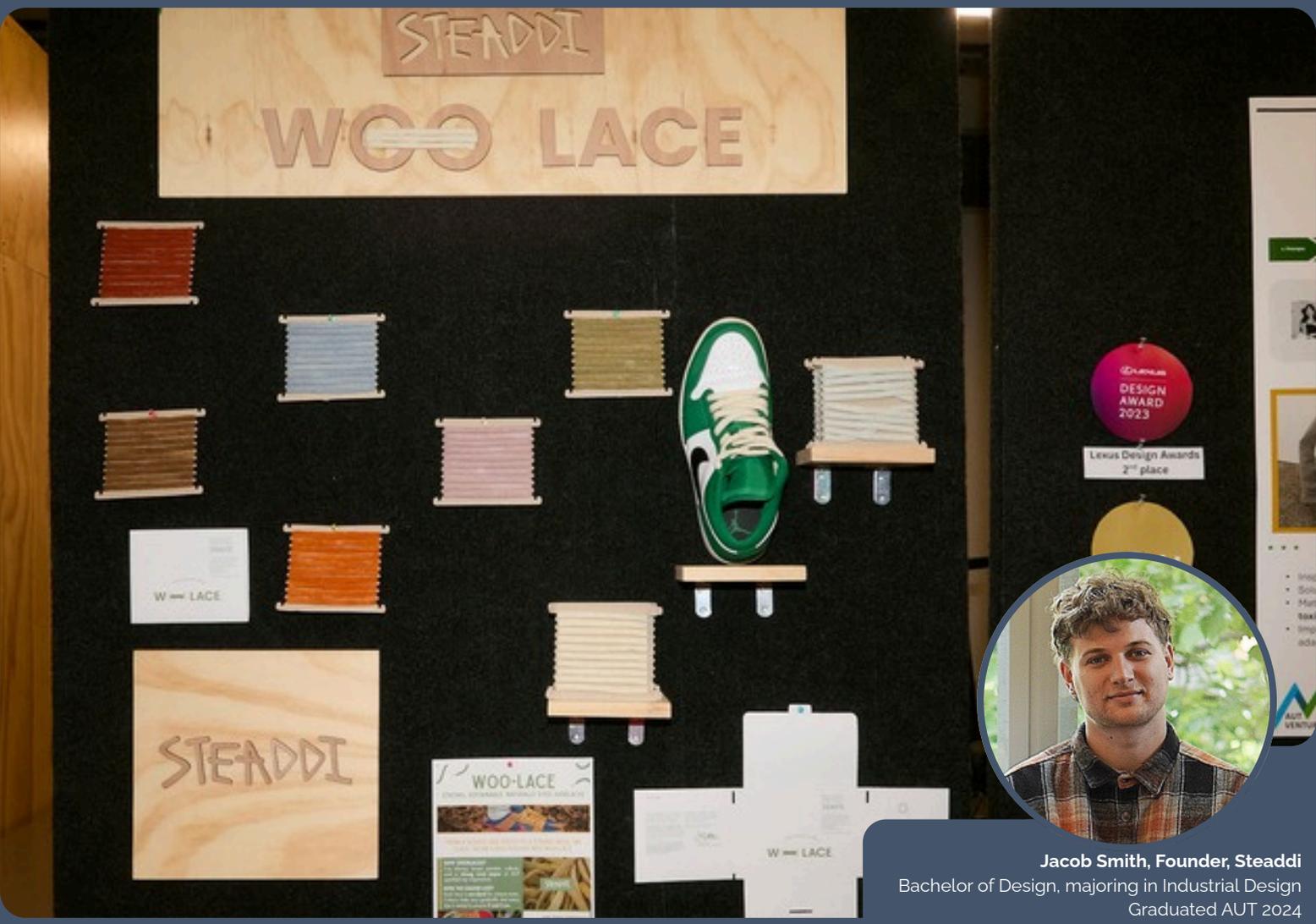
Follow through and follow up. Advice often comes from people who've been where you are, so take advantage of the feedback and connections you're given.

*TOP TIP: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS TOUGH, TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH*





**Joe Patuki, Founder, Poi+**  
Bachelors in Sport and Rec, majoring in Sport Management  
Graduated AUT 2025



STEADDI

WOO LACE

Lexus  
DESIGN  
AWARD  
2023

Lexus Design Awards  
2<sup>nd</sup> place

WOO LACE

STEADDI

WOO-LACE  
CRAFTED WITH CONSCIOUSNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

WOO LACE



**Jacob Smith, Founder, Steaddi**  
Bachelor of Design, majoring in Industrial Design  
Graduated AUT 2024



# Stages of a Start-up

**Ideation:** A fancy word for **brainstorming**. It's the process of coming up with ideas to solve a specific problem. *Think of it like: Sketching a house on a napkin before you even talk to an architect; it's messy, creative, and where everything begins*

**Validation:** This is the **sanity check**. Before you spend any money, go out and talk to real people to see if they actually care about your idea. *Think of it like: Asking your mates if they'd actually eat a Vegemite flavoured cake before you bake a whole batch - it's better to receive the "yuck" before you waste ingredients.*

**Prototype:** This is the **rough draft**. It's the simplest, cheapest version of your product that you can build just to show how it works. *Think of it like: A screenplay. It's not the full movie yet, there are no actors or special effects, but it does tell the story and proves if the plot makes sense.*

**Launch:** This is the **opening doors**. It's the moment you release your product or service to the world and tell everyone you're "open for business". *Think of it like: Taking the training wheels of your bike. You're riding for real and now you have to pedal hard to keep the momentum going.*



# The Start-up Pathway



**Ideation**

- AUT Startup Club
- AUT-V Book a Session
- Auckland Startup Week
- Campus Plus
- Founder Launch (Startup Aotearoa)
- StartupNZ Entrepreneur's Programme



**Validating & Prototyping**

- AUT Ara Tipu Start-up Programme
- AUT Startup Club
- Creative HQ
- HTK Startup Momentum



**Launching & Scaling**

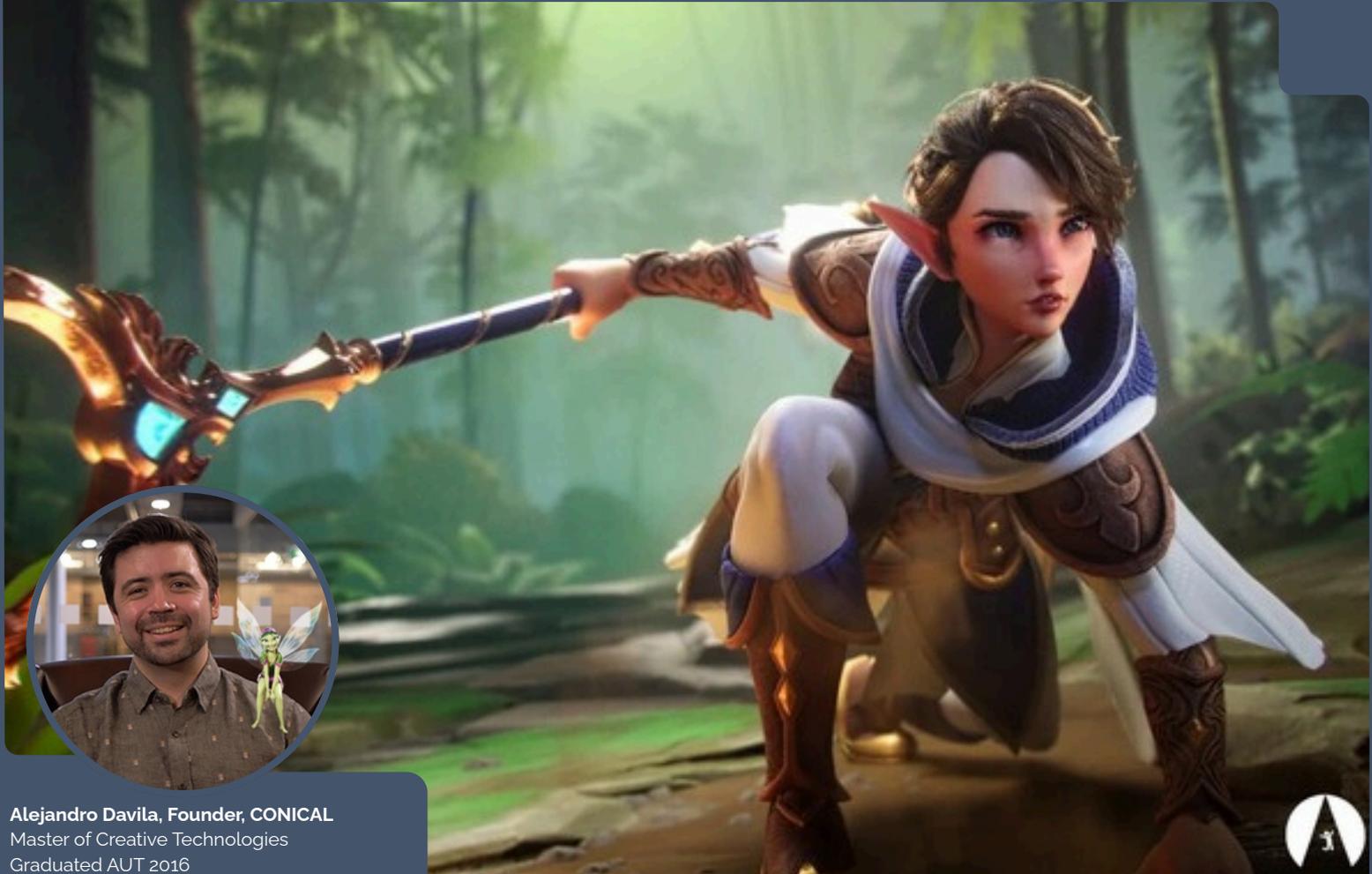
- Auckland Startup Week
- Creative HQ
- Founder Catalyst (MoA)
- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment
- Soda Inc.



**KEY:**

-  HQ Location
-  In-person events
-  Online events





**Alejandro Davila, Founder, CONICAL**  
Master of Creative Technologies  
Graduated AUT 2016





**Shane Liu, Founder, Sumthin Dumplin**  
Bachelor of Business Administration  
Graduated AUT early 2010's



# AUT Start-up Club

COMMUNITY AND INSPIRATION FOR AUT STUDENTS

**What is it?** Part of AUTSA, this club is led by students for students and is an inclusive and collaborative space for aspiring entrepreneurs.

**How does it work?** They host regular social and inspirational networking events showcasing AUT alum turned Founders. For the last few years, they've run competitions for their members to turn their visions into ventures, with prizes for the winning pitch.

**Who is it for?** AUT students interested in innovation and entrepreneurship. You don't even need to have a business idea! Every startup needs a Founding Team, which often includes creatives, finance gurus, and tech whizzes.



Follow them on Instagram:



# Book a Session

A CASUAL CHAT WITH THE AUT VENTURES TEAM



**What is it?** An open invitation to work through your business idea without expectations or commitment, and confidentiality is guaranteed.

**How does it work?** Sessions are available every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the academic year, You can choose to meet online or in person.

**Who is it for?** AUT students (and staff) who want an unbiased opinion and advice on what your next steps could be.

**Book today!**





# Auckland Start-up Week

EVENTS THAT SHOWCASE INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**What is it?** A week-long festival dedicated to celebrating and connecting the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem. It serves as a giant spotlight on innovation, showcasing the founders, investors, and big ideas that are driving Auckland forward.

**How does it work?** It's a massive schedule of independent events, workshops, panels, and parties held at different venues all across Auckland. Local tech companies and community leaders host sessions on everything from fundraising to product design, creating a high-energy environment where you can soak up knowledge from peers..

**Who is it for?** It's open to anyone with an interest in the startup world, whether you are a seasoned founder, an investor, or just someone with a side hustle idea who wants to see what the fuss is about. The "open door" environment, makes it perfect for people looking to break into the scene and make their first real connections.



# Campus Plus

ONLINE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM



**What is it?** An online professional development tool for “commercially curious” researchers. It's an extensive library of ‘Fast Foundation’ videos, podcasts, and in-depth webinars.

**How does it work?** Sign up through AUT Ventures and explore their library at your leisure. Their experts break down topics with the goal of helping you identify, protect, and commercialise academic research and intellectual property.

**Who is it for?** AUT researchers and academics interested in how their research could be transformed into real-world impact.

Sign up here:



Campus+  
NEW ZEALAND





# Founder Launch

AN INCUBATION PROGRAMME RUN BY STARTUP AOTEAROA

**What is it?** This programme has been designed to take you from a "back of the napkin" scribble to a validated business model. Instead of guessing what customers want, this programme focuses heavily on proving that your idea solves a real problem before you spend too much time or money building it.

**How does it work?** By using a structured, coach-led approach, it forces you to "get out of the building." You'll be paired with experienced startup coaches who guide you through customer discovery, market validation, and rapid testing. It's less about sitting in a classroom and more about doing the hard work of interviewing customers and iterating on your business model in real-time.

**Who is it for?** Perfect for early-stage founders who have the seed of an idea but need a roadmap to make it real. It's generally open to founders from anywhere in Aotearoa, provided you can commit to the coaching sessions.



# Startup NZ



## A GREAT FIRST STEP FOR ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS

**What is it?** A practical online programme designed to teach you the nuts and bolts of starting a small business. It focuses on removing the confusion of the "start" phase by providing a clear, step-by-step roadmap.

**How does it work?** They provide a structured course that covers all the essentials, from market research and compliance to finance and marketing. It combines online learning modules with practical tools and templates, and the programme can include access to business advisors who give you feedback to ensure your plan is realistic and robust.

**Who is it for?** It's available to anyone in New Zealand who wants to start a business, regardless of the industry. The first three sessions are FREE and AUT Ventures can sponsor you to complete the programme.

### Start the sessions:





**Julia Bower, Co-Founder, The Fractional Directory**  
Bachelor of Computer & Information Sciences, majoring in  
Software Development | Graduated AUT 2013



**Amber Taylor, Founder, Ara Journeys**  
Bachelor of Business, Marketing and Information Systems  
Graduated AUT 2017



# Ara Tipu Start-up Programme

UPSKILL AND CONNECT WITH A GLOBAL NETWORK OF YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

**What is it?** A 10-week programme run in partnership between AUT and the **King's Trust Aotearoa New Zealand**. There's a Semester 1 and Semester 2 cohort, as well as a Summer School option.

**How does it work?** You'll test your concept, build your business skills, and give you access to resources and guidance to turn your vision into reality. You'll be given an opportunity to pitch for a share of \$60,000 in He Kākano funding, with grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

**Who is it for?** AUT students aged between 18 and 30 years. You need a business idea or side hustle to work on throughout the programme.



Apply today:



# Creative HQ

## ONLINE STARTUP PROGRAMME AND SECTOR-SPECIFIC ACCELERATORS

**What is it?** Creative HQ divide their offerings into sector-specific programmes, including Startups and Corporates. Their key programmes include **The Lightning Lab Series** (accelerators), **Early-Stage Support**, and **School of Innovation** (training and capability).

**How does it work?** The Lightning Lab Series are intensive, mentor-driven programmes (usually around three or four months) designed to rapidly scale high-growth startups. e.g., Lightning Lab General, Aurora ClimateLab, and sector-specific labs like tourism or energy (depending on funding partners).

Early-Stage Support is for founders who aren't quite ready for a full accelerator. Creative HQ offers incubation and validation tools that could include office space ad-hoc coaching and industry connections.

Their School of Innovation teaches people how to think like an entrepreneur. through short courses and workshops tackling topics like Design Thinking, Agile methodologies, and how to create a culture of innovation.



CREATIVE  
HQ





# HTK Startup

AN ACCELERATOR FOR EARLY-STAGE UNDERSERVED STARTUPS AND FOUNDERS

**What is it?** A Māori-led organisation dedicated to building the indigenous startup ecosystem. Think of them as a bridge that connects traditional Māori values with the fast-paced world of technology and entrepreneurship..

**How does it work?** They run culturally grounded accelerators and programmes that wrap around the founder. Their approach is unique because it integrates Tikanga Māori (cultural protocols) directly into business strategy. They provide mentorship, funding connections, and digital skills training, ensuring that you don't have to leave your culture at the door to build a scalable company.

**Who is it for?** While their primary focus is on supporting Māori and Pasifika founders, but their doors are open to anyone who aligns with their values-driven approach. Whether you are a rangatahi (young person) with a tech idea, or a whānau-based business looking to grow, they offer a supportive environment designed to lift the economic prosperity of indigenous communities.

**HTK  
STARTUP**



# Momentum

ADVICE, CONNECTIONS AND ACCESS TO POTENTIAL FUNDING



**What is it?** A student-led investment committee that bridges the gap between university research and the commercial world. They're often the first "yes" for students and researchers looking for investment.

**How does it work?** By bringing together investment committees made up of students and industry experts to review new ideas. They provide advice, feedback, and crucially, access to early-stage funding to help validate concepts. They don't just write cheques; they help applicants refine their pitch and commercial strategy to get them ready for bigger investors later on.

**Who is it for?** Specifically designed for students and staff at universities and research institutes across New Zealand. If you're working on a piece of technology or intellectual property within a tertiary institution and want to turn it into a startup, you can access their support.

**MOMENTUM**  
CULTIVATING FUTURES





**Vaughan Fergusson, Founder, Lightspeed (formerly Vend)**  
Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Computer and Information  
Sciences, majoring in Business Computing | Graduated AUT 1995



**Helen Steemson, Co-Founder, Words for Breakfast**  
Bachelor of Communications, majoring in Creative Advertising  
Graduated AUT 2005



# Founder Catalyst

A HIGH IMPACT INCUBATOR PROGRAMME RUN BY MINISTRY OF AWESOME

**What is it?** Designed to act as an "ignition switch" for startups that have moved past the idea stage and are ready to get serious about growth. It bridges the gap between having a validated concept and being ready for major investment or global scale.

**How does it work?** The programme offers expert coaching, mentorship from seasoned entrepreneurs, and critical introductions to the investment community. It focuses on the nuts and bolts of building a scalable business: refining the business model, financial planning, and perfecting the "pitch" to secure funding.

**Who is it for?** This programme is aimed at ambitious founders who already have a proof of concept or a prototype and are hungry for growth. It is particularly strong for those based in or connected to the Canterbury innovation ecosystem, though it attracts talent from across New Zealand who want to leverage the MoA's strong network.

**MOA** Ministry of Awesome



# Ministry of Business, Innovation + Employment



## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR START-UPS SCALING UP

**What is it?** The R&D grants and start-up support programmes previously offered by Callaghan Innovation have transitioned to Innovation Services within MBIE. These grants are the engine room for Kiwi companies developing world-class technology.

**How does it work?** Their R&D grants and funding help share the financial risk of developing new products. Beyond just money, they open doors to a network of scientists, engineers, and innovation experts, both within their own labs and across the country, to help you solve tough technical problems.

**Who is it for?** New Zealand businesses undertaking R&D. Whether you are a high-tech startup or a large established manufacturer, if you are developing new technology, science, or engineering solutions, you can access their help.

### Five Step Guide:





# Soda Inc.

A SUPER-CONNECTOR FOR START-UPS AND ESTABLISHED SME'S

**What is it?** A business incubator dedicated to helping Kiwi entrepreneurs build global companies from right here in New Zealand. They champion the entrepreneur first, providing the structure and confidence needed to turn a startup into a scalable start-up.

**How does it work?** By creating bespoke support programmes tailored to the specific needs of the founder, rather than using a "one size fits all" classroom approach. They pair you with a high-profile business mentor and industry expert who work alongside you to tackle your unique challenges. It's a highly personalised model designed to accelerate your growth through direct guidance.

**Who is it for?** They support a wide range of entrepreneurs, from early-stage startups needing to validate their idea, to established small businesses looking to scale up and enter international markets.

S O D A







# AUT Courses / Undergrad

- ARDN502 | Introduction to Creative Business
- ARDN702 | Business Development Project
- BUSS507 | Financial Decision Making & Information Systems
- ENTR501 | Introduction to Entrepreneurship & Innovation
- ENTR601 | Māori Indigenous Entrepreneurship & Social Innovation
- ENTR680 | Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- ENTR701 | Social Entrepreneurship: Inspiring Innovation & Impact
- FINA703 | Entrepreneurial and Small Business Finance
- INTB708 | Innovation & Technology Strategy
- INTB709 | Strategic Design
- MGMT602 | Small & Medium Enterprise Management
- SPOR633 | Sport Entrepreneurship and Events
- SPOR702 | Sport Events & Entrepreneurship
- TOUR711 | Innovation & Entrepreneurship in Tourism, Hospitality & Events
- 475110 | The Environment of Business



# AUT Courses | Postgrad



- ARCH805 | Architectural Practice IV: Business & Entrepreneurship
- ENGE803 | Innovation Management
- ENTR804 | Entrepreneurship
- ENTR842 | The Entrepreneurial Edge
- ENTR844 | Social Enterprise & Innovation for Change
- INTB862 | International Entrepreneurship in the Digital Era
- MGMT838 | Co-ignition: Intelligence, Ideas & Innovation
- MKTG868 | Creative Ideation & Innovation
- ONCTE804 | Creative Ventures
- SPMG802 | Advanced Sport Leadership & Management
- TOUR801 | Entrepreneurship & Innovation in Tourism, Hospitality & Events

Search AUT courses:





# Who is AUT Ventures?



We're here to help students and staff transform innovative ideas into real-world businesses.

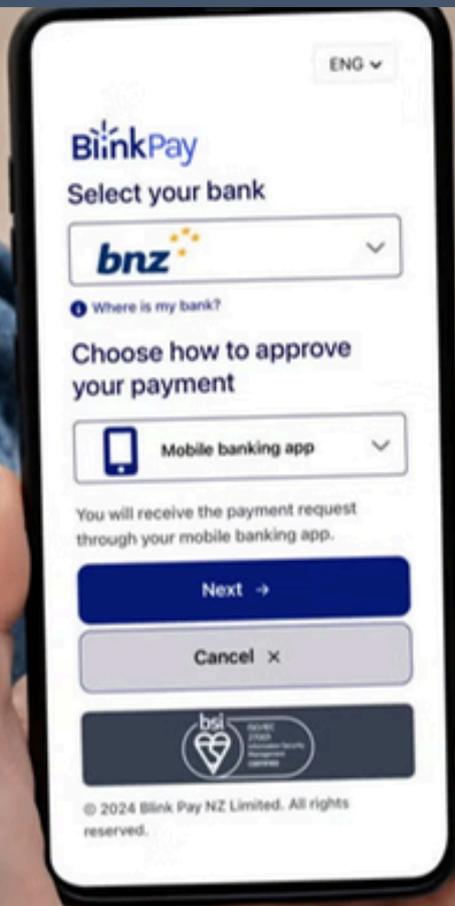
We take the raw potential of your ideas and provide the fuel (education, connection, and commercial expertise) to get it off the ground.

It's time to take what you've been exploring as a side hustle or a business idea that you just can't stop thinking about and turn it into something real.





**Alex Bartley Catt, Founder, SpaceTime**  
Bachelor of Business, Design Thinking and Advertising (Double Major) | Graduated AUT 2015



**Tam Roberts, Founder, BlinkPay**  
Master of Business Administration (MBA)  
Graduated AUT 2017



Start your journey with  
**AUT Ventures**





*Kia kaha*

Be brave

*Kia maia*

Be bold

*Kia manawanui*

Be true



There's a lot to consider, but don't let the options overwhelm you because there's no wrong answer!

Whether you connect with one partner or several, the goal is simply to get the support you need. Whichever path you choose, we're happy to stay in touch and remain in your corner as you grow.





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