SEN301 Social Enterprise
Level 300 elective for Health Science students (run by Design faculty)

What is Social Enterprise?

Social Enterprise is an exciting theoretical and practically-based subject that is driven by the desire to address the compelling issues that we confront in the modern world. Our objective is to inspire positive change through entrepreneurial solutions that are ethical, sustainable and commercially viable. Students work individually upon the topic of their choice; creating, developing and realising their own enterprise; from initial research and ideas-generation through to business planning, branding and a final presentation to potential partners, stakeholders and investors. In the course of these activities, they learn and apply the benefits of various design thinking and problem-solving processes in formulating a pragmatic, viable and positive contribution to the common good.

The project evolves over the course of the trimester, with three key milestones that shape the process and enable the full benefits of the rich and relevant learning resources that accompany the subject. From an initial proposal, students deliver a work in progress update before the presentation of their final client proposal. This evolution is informed through close collaboration with the learning facilitator who advises, guides and challenges throughout, often in adopting the role of potential partner, investor or recipient. This enables the creation of a realistic scenario in which students progressively shape and critically evaluate their idea, refining the detail until they can be confident that the proposition will bear close critical examination. In doing so, they implement continual strategic analysis that ensures that their social enterprise will be robust, feasible and sustainable.

The subject comprises a number of key topics that are intended to align directly with the progress of the project. From initial inspiration and ideas generation, students are introduced to a number of research and analytical thinking strategies that enable them to establish a solid foundation upon which to construct a viable social enterprise. They are also introduced to the benefits and occasional pitfalls of collaborating with partners; the challenges associated with attracting investment and the importance of cultural sensitivity when working with those that they seek to help. We also look at the benefits of prototyping and testing proposals, the analysis of their strengths and weaknesses and the preparation of a compelling and credible business proposal.

Social Enterprise is challenging but immensely rewarding. In confronting the fundamental real-world issues, students appreciate the power of creativity in problem-solving, and the immense potential that they have in making a difference and precipitating change.