

Flying Start Global is a joint programme run by the NCGE and the Kauffman Foundation (US), for the UK's best graduate entrepreneurs in science, technology, engineering and maths. Graduates spend six months in the UK and six months in the US

INTERVIEWS BY JUSTINE EAST

'I'll get invaluable training'

Franziska Conrad, 29 is on the most recent cohort of Flying Start Global Entrepreneurs. She hopes to set up a business in sustainable product design after the programme has finished

"I'm currently self-employed as a product designer, but my plan is to set up a design consultancy that brings together people who are really interested in sustainable product design - not just from a design perspective, but also chemists and biologists," says Conrad.

Last year, when Conrad did a talk to the Flying Start Global Entrepreneurs as a self-employed designer, she came away buzzing about the programme. "I thought it was really cool, but you can only be put forward if you're a student and I wasn't studying."

This year, however, she is studying, and Bournemouth University - where she did her undergraduate degree in product design and where she is currently doing her Masters of Science in sustainable product design - put her forward and she was accepted.

"Networking is so important and this will enable me to meet loads of



people I'd never get the chance to meet if I went over to the States on an exploration trip of my own. Also, when I go there in January for six months, I'll get to go to the important universities and get invaluable training - training which there's no way I could afford on my own."

Conrad says one of her biggest stumbling blocks is that when she tells people she's starting a business in sustainability, people respond with, "Oh right, a do-gooding company." "But actually, we'll all benefit from it. I need to convince people that this is a real business venture, not just a case of trying to make money out of tree-hugging. If I come back able to do that, I'll be very happy."

'It was fantastic to see how a large company operates'

Chris Mitchell, 28, was on the first cohort of Flying Start Global Entrepreneurs. He has since set up his company, Audio Analytic



"I was doing a PhD at the time in sound recognition and wanted to take it forward," says Mitchell.

For the first six months of the programme, Mitchell was sent on residential training and networking events, but it was the second six months that stood out for him.

"We flew out to Kansas City, where the Kauffman Foundation is based, and we had two months when academic thought leaders

in entrepreneurship were brought in from all over America."

The students visited Stanford and Harvard Universities and then came work placement. "I was based at Cisco Systems in California and it was fantastic to see how a large company operates."

Back in the UK, Mitchell has set up his business Audio Analytic, which automatically labels audio and audio files - for example to annotate video files so they can be searched.

'I want to learn how to communicate to customers'

Jonathan Lloyd, 22, is on the most recent cohort of Flying Start Global Entrepreneurs. He runs his own business, Falling Pixel



Although Lloyd was selected for the programme this summer, he's been running his business with fellow Portsmouth University graduate Nathan Hornby for two years. "We got a grant from the university," he says.

He's particularly excited about the six months he'll be spending in America. "Our only competitors

are in America and we can learn from them, especially around marketing. The bottom line is that what our business does is quite difficult to explain and I want to learn how to communicate it to customers."

Lloyd is also looking forward to learning more about business and enterprise and getting together with some of the other scholars to come up with new business ideas.

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