

Queen Mary budding entrepreneur scoops £1,500 to develop music application

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As fans of the television programme *Dragon's Den* will know, pitching a business idea to professionals is not always an easy task. Becky Stewart, a PhD student from Queen Mary, University of London, recently won the College's *Pitch Your Idea* business ideas competition, after impressing the panel with his innovative solution to the challenge of browsing to increasingly large music collections. Becky, a PhD student in the Centre for Digital Music, was awarded the first prize of £1,500 for her 'AudioBlitz' idea.



From right to left: Martin Morrell, Melissa George and Becky Stewart.

Becky was one of nine PhD and postdoctoral researchers who pitched their ideas to an expert judging panel including business professionals and academics with commercial experience. Each finalist had five minutes to convince the judges of the merits of their idea and that they had the motivation and vision to turn their idea into a reality. The pitch was then followed by a ten minute question session which enabled the judges to probe further into the budding entrepreneurs' ideas.

Over twenty early career researchers participated in this year's competition where they received training and instruction in business skills, guidance on how to write a business plan, and advice from experienced business professionals on how to bring their ideas to market. Melissa George and Martin Morrell, both runners up in the competition, each won £500. Melissa, a PhD student from the Department of Physics, developed 'ExcelAbroad', an innovative Summer School concept for overseas students wishing to further their studies in the UK. Martin, a PhD student from the Department of Electronic Engineering, created 'Interactive Mix System', a creative new tool for audio production.

Pitch Your Idea is a joint initiative between Queen Mary's Educational and Staff Development Office, the Science and Engineering Graduate School, and Enter-Rise, a specialist enterprise training company. Ricardo da Câmara e Sousa, director of Enter-Rise Ltd, summed up the spirit of the competition.

"Some people came into this competition with little knowledge of business and through the courses I have watched them really develop in both understanding and confidence. This is what we have been aiming to do: to enrich peoples' confidence in sharing their ideas, in meeting and communicating with the business community and in developing a range of professional skills and acumen which will be beneficial in their future careers. I have been impressed by the creativity of many of the ideas which the participants have come up with and by their enthusiasm for, and commitment to the competition."