

UPES paving the way for budding entrepreneurs through its innovative teaching pedagogy and incubation program

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in today's ever-changing educational landscape and is often considered as the foundation of innovation and advancement. Educational institutes have now started to realise that their role is no longer restricted to imparting knowledge but is also about nurturing a mindset of innovation and entrepreneurship. With universities redefining their traditional learning approaches to instil the spirit of entrepreneurship, they have now become breeding grounds for innovation and next-generation entrepreneurs. One such university leading this educational transformation is UPES, a multidisciplinary university in Dehradun.

Rahul Nainwal, Director and Head, Runway Incubator talked in length about how UPES is committed towards preparing students for the dynamic and ever-evolving business landscape, particularly with regard to entrepreneurship through its holistic teaching pedagogy and diverse initiatives.

1. Elaborate on the teaching pedagogy adopted to encourage entrepreneurship among students.

At UPES, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation is essential to prepare students for an ever-changing future. We emphasise the use of innovative teaching methods, adopting emerging technologies and backing student ventures to cultivate a learning environment that nurtures problem-solving skills and critical thinking. We ensure that students not only grasp the foundational understanding of entrepreneurship but also build upon it with the assistance of on-campus expertise and guidance. To enhance their practical skills, we incorporate live projects into our classroom teaching, allowing students to work on real business problems and apply their classroom knowledge to solve real-world problems. Our teaching pedagogy also includes 'case-based teaching,' involving in-depth analysis of entrepreneurial success stories and failures, enabling students to learn from real-world examples.

We recognise the evolving needs of students and the job market and place a greater emphasis on hands-on learning and new-age skills. We

aim to empower students to not only understand theory but also to apply it effectively in real scenarios. By doing so, we prepare our students to be adaptable, innovative, and well-equipped to thrive in various professional settings.

2. What are the initiatives UPES has taken to promote an entrepreneurial mindset among students?

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurship and inspiring students to create viable ventures. Indian universities are embracing innovation culture to encourage students to pursue their ideas and transform them into realities. UPES aims to create a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem that steers student ideas, shapes entrepreneurial journeys, and provides education on licenses, consulting, and spin-offs, inspiring students to launch their ventures.

We have undertaken various initiatives to support emerging entrepreneurs in the initial phases of launching a startup. These initiatives provide financial support, legal guidance, workspace allocation and much more.

UPES runs an incubation program called Runway to collaborate with startups both within and outside the university, nurturing their ideas and assisting them in evolving into robust, scalable, and prosperous enterprises. Runway is designed to guide young entrepreneurs and innovators through the initial phases of establishing a startup and reaching a stage where their product or service becomes compelling for fundraising. The incubation program offers a blend of mentorship, grants, investments, networking opportunities, legal and incorporation assistance, and workspace allocation. The Runway team comprises entrepreneurs, investors, mentors and subject matter experts who work closely with these young aspiring leaders in refining their ideas and business models, developing prototypes, and identifying key customers and investors. So far, Runway Incubator has awarded grants to 37 pioneering startups and has nurtured over 200 unique startups spanning diverse sectors, including Ed-tech, Social Impact, Healthcare, Biotech, D2C, Fintech, AI/ML, Fashion and Life-

style, and Sustainability.

3. Elaborate on the partnership of UPES Runway Incubator with IIT Ropar's iHUB - AWaDH (Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub). How will it benefit budding entrepreneurs?

We are thrilled to join hands with iHUB - AWaDH (Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub), IIT Ropar to foster cutting-edge research and entrepreneurship. Both UPES and IIT Ropar share a mutual vision of advancing knowledge, driving innovation, and enhancing the startup ecosystem. Through this partnership, we aim to cultivate a culture of collaborative research, propel technological innovation, and create a supportive environment for students and startups.

In addition to guiding budding entrepreneurs and exploring new possibilities, this partnership will help shape emerging ideas and play a significant role in extending financial support through grants and investments, as well as offering customized guidance, skill enhancement, and networking opportunities.

Furthermore, it will enable the establishment of an advanced Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS) lab at UPES, supported by AWaDH. The lab will serve as a hub for fostering CPS skills among UPES students, driving research and innovation. This is a step forward towards inspiring young minds to innovate and come up with solutions which will shape a brighter future.



RAHUL NAINWAL

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