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City Unrulyversity

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Collaborations between universities and business are typically labelled as vital for the success of our economy, but academically rigorous partnerships can also be fun, says Professor Paul Curran.

London is home to some of the best universities in the world, a rapidly growing media and

technology hub called Tech City and a recent 'pop-up' phenomenon that ranges from cinemas to shops and restaurants. These unlikely bedfellows have come together with the launch of [City Unrulyversity](#), Tech City's free pop-up University. It is a collaborative venture between City University London and Unruly, the award-winning platform for social video advertising, based just off Brick Lane in the heart of Tech City. City Unrulyversity's mission is to inform, inspire and empower the next generation of Tech City entrepreneurs.

City Unrulyversity 'pops up' for two hours every Wednesday evening and offers five types of session. The core two are 'stuff you need to know', covering basic business and technical topics such as marketing and data visualisation, and relevant 'masterclasses', linked to areas of research strength at City (such as marketing, human-computer interface design and cyber security).

The other three session types are even more interactive, ranging from 'theory meets practice' forums, where a leading academic and practitioner demonstrate the applicability of theory, to head-to-head' debates, where two experts argue opposing views on a topic.

The sessions are academically challenging, fun, fast, extremely informal and highly relevant to the needs of Tech City companies. Some of those involved are well-known names in digital media but the vast majority are start-ups led by exceptionally talented and enthusiastic entrepreneurs, fresh from the world of education. As an added incentive, those who attend five sessions are eligible to submit an application to the £10million [Cass Entrepreneurship Fund](#), aimed at entrepreneurs with a link to City's Cass Business School.

The driving forces behind City Unrulyversity are Dr Caroline Wiertz, Reader in Marketing at Cass Business School and Sarah Wood, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer at [Unruly](#). Both are passionate about this novel and 'unruly' link between academia and small fast-growing businesses.

"These start-ups are the future, they will grow into tomorrow's big global companies," says Dr Wiertz.

"My students can be too focused on working in large investment banks and consulting firms, but we think the future is on the innovation side".

"The links we've made with academia have helped us to grow as fast as we have," says Sarah Wood.

"It is easier for academic staff to forge relationships with small organisations which are often keen to speak to students and need interns".

The benefits to entrepreneurs of being able to meet, learn and have the space and time to be creative are clear. The benefits to [City University London](#) are perhaps less obvious but our location in Islington, the breadth and relevance of our academic strengths, particularly in informatics, business and journalism and the links we have with the financial services sector of the City of London make us a natural partner with Tech City.

Our partnerships so far have been guided by the benefits of employment, impact and reputation. The development of skills, opportunities and jobs for both our students and our neighbours in Tech City enhances job prospect, whilst the application of our academic research to the management and products of Tech City businesses ably demonstrates impact. Our contribution to what aspires to be 'one of the world's greatest technology clusters' also helps to strengthen our reputation.

To achieve these benefits we have led and worked with others on a host of activities over the past two years. They have included Tech City events for schools; partnership with [Techcityinsider.net](#) and sponsorship of the second Digital Shoreditch Festival and the exceptionally successful Hackney House that showcased Tech City during the Olympics. City Unrulyversity is the latest but certainly not the last of these vital joint ventures and shows that links between academia and entrepreneurial business are evolving beyond traditional boundaries.

Professor Paul Curran is Vice-Chancellor of City University London.

If you'd like to keep up-to-date with our higher education events calendar, why not sign-up for email alerts? Further details can be found on the [e-bulletins page](#).

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