



From Idea to Commercialization: Start-up School

Winter Semester: October 2025 – February 2026

Chair of [Innovation and Creativity](#)

Prof. Dr. Shashi Matta

Ms. Anna Reith

Mr. Fabian Foelsch

Contact: Anna.Reith@ku.de

Class Timings:

Wednesday 12:15-16:00

Classroom: NB-301

Required Course Materials

The reading material for this course includes articles and cases from Harvard Business Publishing, and theoretical frameworks from book chapters and other sources. Students will be provided a list of assigned readings during the course. All class slides and supplemental material will be uploaded on ILIAS. Class slides will be uploaded on ILIAS after each respective class session.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course is designed as a Start-up School and aims to provide a clear blueprint for students aspiring to join innovation teams in large or medium sized companies and those aspiring to start their own ventures. Students will gain practical experience by working on an original idea in the New Venture Challenge, and by learning and receiving feedback from successful entrepreneurs and innovators. The course objectives include –

1. Understanding and learning the start-to-end process of idea to commercialization by working on an original idea for a new venture.
2. Understanding and applying the concepts of Idea Generation, Idea Evaluation, Experimentation, Concept Testing, Prototyping, and Business Model Canvas for a new product / service / venture.
3. Identifying funding mechanisms and options and comprehending branding and legal know-how for a new venture.
4. Learning Go-To-Market Strategies for a new product / service / venture.
5. Learning how to pitch a new venture to investors and partners.

Evaluation: Graded Components, Grading Scale

Grade Structure

1. Team Project Presentation	50%
2. Written Report	50%
Total (Portfolio)	100%

Grading Scale

1.0	93-100	Exemplary Performance
1.3	88-92	Strong Performance
1.7	83-87	Good Performance
2.0	78-82	Good Performance, with some deficiencies
2.3	73-77	Good Performance, with clear deficiencies
2.7	68-72	Adequate Performance
3.0	63-67	Adequate Performance, with some deficiencies
3.3	58-62	Weak Performance
3.7	53-57	Weak Performance, with clear deficiencies
4.0	50-53	Poor Performance, with pervasive deficiencies

Guidelines for Graded Components

Portfolio (100%)

Students will be assigned to teams by the instructor for the Team Project and submit a portfolio, which includes a Presentation and a Written Report. Each component constitutes 50% of the final portfolio grade.

Team Project Presentation (50%)

Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 12:15-16:00

Students will be assigned to teams (5-6 students each) by the instructor for the Team Project (a New venture Challenge), which includes the Team Presentation and the Written Report. Each team is required to work as a team of startup co-founders on an original idea of their own. Student teams will pitch their final New Venture Challenge presentations to a panel of seasoned entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and the course instructors on Wednesday, February 4, 2026. Presentation guidelines will be provided in class.

Submission of the Written Report (50%)

Thursday, February 26, 2026, by 23:55 on ILIAS

Each team will deliver a Written Report with a detailed reflection on their projects, and answers to questions provided by the instructors. This written report will have an individual student contribution component and individual grade (i.e., each student will be evaluated for their individual contribution to the report). Further instructions will be provided in class. The written report should be uploaded (only Microsoft Word uploads will be considered) on ILIAS by 23:55 on Thursday, February 26, 2026. Please adhere to the following formatting instructions for your document –

- Margins of 2.5 cm on all four sides of the document
- All written content (except for tables, figures, images if any) should be typed in Times New Roman font, size 12 point, single spaced.
- The maximum page limit (including title, tables, references and images) is 12 pages.

WEEK # 1

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture: **FITC: Start-up School: Introduction and Course Expectations**
Prof. Dr. Shashi Matta, Ms. Anna Reith

Required Reading: Why Start-ups Fail (2021). Tom Eisenmann. Harvard Business Review.

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial: **Team Formation and Idea Generation: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 2

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Tutorial: **Idea Generation: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

Required Reading: Better Brainstorming (2018). Hal Gregersen. Harvard Business Review.

14:00 – 16:00

Lecture: **The Journey from Idea to Commercialization: A Case Study**
Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT

WEEK # 3

Wednesday, October 29, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture: **How to Develop a Chosen Idea: What Comes Next?**
Ms. Anna Reith

Required Reading: The Three Stages of Disruptive Innovation: Idea Generation, Incubation and Scaling (2019). Charles O'Reilly and Andrew J. M. Binns. California Management Review.

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial: **Idea Development Exercises: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 4

Wednesday, November 5, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture: **Research and Experimentation: How Much is Too Much?**
Ms. Anna Reith

Required Reading: The Discipline of Business Experimentation (2014). Stefan Thomke and Jim Manzi. Harvard Business Review.

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial: **Research and Validation: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 5

Wednesday, November 12, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture: **Prototyping and Traditional Concept Testing**
Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT

Required Reading: Prototyping: A Quick Introduction (2012). Arar Han and Haim Mendelson. Stanford Graduate School of Business

When Prototyping is Not Enough, Use Theatrical Ticks to Sell Your Idea (2017). Andy Boynton. HBR Digital Article.

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial: **Prototyping and Traditional Concept Testing: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 6

Wednesday, November 19, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture: **Business Model and Business Plan: The Business Model Canvas**
Ms. Anna Reith

Required Reading: What is a Business Model? (2015). Andrea Ovans. Harvard Business Review.

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial: **Business Model Canvas: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 7

Wednesday, November 26, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture: **Funding Mechanisms and Options**
Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT

Required Reading: Building a Startup in a Tough Funding Environment (2024). Catalina Daniels and James Sherman. Harvard Business Review.

14:00 – 16:00

Tutorial: **A Local Hero Case Study and Introduction of GHOB**
THI Startup Center

WEEK # 8

Wednesday, December 3, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Tutorial: **Branding and Legal Entity: New Venture Challenge**
Ms. Anna Reith

Required Reading: Legal Hazards of Product Launches (2014). Lena Goldberg and Annelena Lobb. Harvard Business School Publishing.

14:00 – 16:00

Lecture: **Legal Entity for Your New Venture and Legal Know-How**

WEEK # 9

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 16:00

Hands-on Workshop

Prototyping Workshop

WEEK # 10

Wednesday, December 17, 2025 in NB-301

12:15 – 16:00

Consultation:

New Venture Challenge

Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 11

Wednesday, January 7, 2026 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture:

Go-To-Market Strategy: Part 1 (Product and Pricing Strategy)

Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT

Required Reading: The New-Market Conundrum: In Emerging Industries the Usual Rules of Strategy Don't Apply (2020). Rory McDonald and Kathleen Eisenhardt. Harvard Business Review.

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial:

Product and Pricing Strategy: New Venture Challenge

Anna Reith

WEEK # 12

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture:

Go-To-Market Strategy: Part 2 (Communication and Channels)

Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial:

Communication and Channel Strategy: New Venture Challenge

Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 13

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 in NB-301

12:15 – 13:45

Lecture:

The Art of the Pitch: The Deck and the Presentation

Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT

14:15 – 16:00

Tutorial:

Pitch Presentation Practice: New Venture Challenge

Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 14

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 in NB-301

12:15 – 16:00

Consultation:

Final Consultation: New Venture Challenge

Ms. Anna Reith

WEEK # 15

Wednesday, February 4, 2026 on Zoom

12:15 – 16:00

Presentation:

New Venture Challenge Team Presentations to Expert Panel

Ms. Anna Reith

Mr. Fabian Foelsch, CEO and Co-Founder, BRAINEFFECT, and
Expert Panel of Entrepreneurs and Venture Capitalists

FINAL WRITTEN REPORT

Deadline: Thursday, February 26, 2026

23:55

Submission:

Submit your Final Written Reports on ILIAS

Assigned Course Readings

Required Course Readings (Articles)*

*All articles are accessible from our online library

1. Boynton, Andy. 2017. *When Prototyping Is Not Enough, Use Theatrical Tricks to Sell Your Idea*. Harvard Business Review Digital Article.
2. Daniels, Catalina, and James Sherman. 2024. *Building a Startup in a Tough Funding Environment*. Harvard Business Review Digital Article.
3. Eisenmann, Tom. 2021. *Why Start-Ups Fail*. Harvard Business Review.
4. Goldberg, Lena, and Annelena Lobb. 2014. *Legal Hazards of Product Launches*. Harvard Business School Publishing.
5. Gregersen, Hal. 2018. *Better Brainstorming*. Harvard Business Review.
6. Han, Arar, and Haim Mendelson. 2012. *Prototyping: A Quick Introduction*. Stanford Graduate School of Business.
7. McDonald, Rory, and Kathleen Eisenhardt. 2020. *The New-Market Conundrum: In Emerging Industries the Usual Rules of Strategy Don't Apply*. Harvard Business Review.
8. O'Reilly, Charles, and Andrew J. M. Binns. 2019. *The Three Stages of Disruptive Innovation: Idea Generation, Incubation, and Scaling*. California Management Review.
9. Ovans, Andrea. 2015. *What Is a Business Model?* Harvard Business Review.
10. Thomke, Stefan, and Jim Manzi. 2014. *The Discipline of Business Experimentation*. Harvard Business Review.