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**Blended entrepreneurial education for high growth
in Life Sciences and Health (GROWTH)**

Result WP1

Result Title: Best Practices

Lead partner: UMC Utrecht

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Objectives

Innovative teaching methods are recognized as an important aspect for entrepreneurial performance in the knowledge economy. In order to successfully implement entrepreneurial learning it is necessary to choose the right methods of teaching and to adjust them to the objectives and competences that individuals should achieve.

1.2 Summary of the content

In the GROWTH project, interactive and action-oriented learning is the key concern for the development of a new, innovative educational programme. The blended learning programme will be based on four education building blocks:

- 1) Online Modules: Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs);
- 2) Entrepreneurial Labs;
- 3) Simulation Games;
- 4) Mix & Match Events.

Together, these educational building blocks represent a blended, action-based, engaging learning methodology.

The GROWTH core partners who are in the lead to develop these building blocks were selected on their expertise in education development and organizing entrepreneur-targeted (educational) events in the field of life science & health.

The best practices of our expert partners were collected during the kick off and progress meetings, and in separate knowledge exchange sessions between partners. Best practices driving the development of the GROWTH entrepreneurial education programme also included insights from the Master of Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the masterclass programme for LSH entrepreneurs that is jointly offered by VIB/FlanderBio/UMC Utrecht/Utrecht University and that will serve as cohort to pilot implementation of all courses and events developed within GROWTH.

All input on best practices was collected, shared with the consortium and published as a report on the project website.

Insights included:

- Program sessions would benefit from a modular structure (consistency in format, time, content build)
- Training days should allow for more/scheduled time for interaction with peer entrepreneurs, reflection on own business, preparation for coaching
- Blended learning: balance between time investment (scheduled training days vs online in own time) and meeting people

2. Contributors

Contributors of the documents and brief introduction of their role as part of this document are the following:

WP lead	Contributor	Role
UMC Utrecht	Madelon Bracke Merel-Marlijn Sondervan Harold van Rijen	WP1 lead, coordinating collection of best practices; providing input on blended learning, MBI expertise
Contributing consortium partners		
Karolinska Institute	Ulrika Schuldt-Haard Hanna Jansson Cecilie Hilmer	Best practices on Simulations; on academic education for Master BioEntrepreneurship
Elevate Health	Sarah de Vries, Eva van Ingen	Best practices on online course development, including SPOCs, MOOCs, educational design and student engagement in a virtual learning environment
Flanders.bio	Henk Joos Stefan Vanderhauwaert	Best practices on organizing course and events for the life science & health ecosystem, including large networking events such as the annual Knowledge for Growth Event
UCL	Phil Beales Lorraine Daly	Best practices on developing an organizing academic courses and workshops on entrepreneurial education
All partners		Sharing experience and best practices and review report

3. Main body of the report

3.1 Approach

All leader of the work packages dealing with development of the building blocks (online courses; simulation games; entrepreneurial labs; networking events) shared their knowledge, experience and best practices on these topics. All insights were collected during the kick off and progress meetings, and in additional knowledge exchange sessions between partners.

As the GROWTH project was intended to build on experience with the Master of Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship, also learnings and insights from this executive masterclass programme were collected. The face-to-face MBI programme is jointly developed and since 2014 offered by GROWTH consortium partners VIB, FlanderBio, UMC Utrecht and Utrecht University and provides a useful source for best practices from an entrepreneurial user perspective:

- Online learning will contribute to a deeper understanding on the entrepreneurial business functions, process and challenges. The modules would provide entrepreneurs with state-of-the-art knowledge in specific areas.
- Entrepreneurial labs are inspirational and show participants how to use entrepreneurial skills and knowledge and apply this to their own venture. A coaching and mentor system from a diverse network of LSH experts, serial entrepreneurs and passionate peers in program share industry, venture knowledge and leadership experiences that enable them to learn-on-the-job in a free and open way. It will help venture leaders to grow on a fast track from technically trained managers to company leaders in new emerging health industries.
- Simulation Games provide an engaging support to model performance, test assumptions and practice strategic skills in complex setting to learn how to make strategic choices and how to be decisive in different situations.
- Mix & Match events will provide a platform to stimulate entrepreneurial success while creating a collaborative global ecosystem to build positive change in the LSH industry. The events offer the participants the opportunity to develop and work their global network either to provide them with opportunities for mirroring their case, to find strategic partners, investors, a window to the market, inspiring mentors, refreshing ideas or inspiration on their venture journey.

Based on shared insights, expertise and previous experiences of the partners, it was decided to develop both online courses as well as face-to-face (onsite) activities following a similar structure including three learning phases:

- 1) foundation – to provide theory, principles and context;
- 2) implementation – assignments to apply learnings onto an existing (written) or the participant's own business case;
- 3) reflection – to review own business in context of the learnings and convert these learnings into a practical action list.

In addition, simulation games would serve as an exercise to actively transferring theoretical learnings through insightful examples into practical call-to-action for own business cases. Mix & Match events would provide entrepreneurs with the opportunity to expand their networks strategically: through insights from the implementation and reflection learning phases participants will become more aware of the expertise they lack/need and engage with useful contacts more efficiently.



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3.2 Lessons learned and

Together, the educational building blocks represent an innovative interactive, action-oriented blended learning methodology. However, to build a strong, effective, blended learning methodology, it is crucial to provide coherence and synergy between program topics. To achieve this, it is essential to strive for good integration of the various components throughout the whole learning experience. Therefore, integration must be pursued from the very first design step, as it is much more difficult to connect individual components properly at a later stage. This not only applies to coordination of the educational content, but also to the deployment of experts, involvement of partners, logistics considerations, recognizability and uniformity of the programme, and costs. Consistency will be further enhanced by use and development of tools to enable the participants to implement learnings into their ventures and to monitor progress over time.

The GROWTH project was originally described in alignment with the Master of Business Innovation & Entrepreneurship program. We assumed, - based on research, growth figures, customer and expert views, and best practices from all WP leads - that there is a need for education for entrepreneurs in start-up to scale-up phase. Assumptions on customer requirements and preferences were based on the input of well characterized participants in the MBI program. However, during the course of the GROWTH project it became clear that for a modular, blended educational program with events/courses that participants can follow as individual, stand-alone activities (instead of a cohort following all activities as one program), customer behaviour is different. In GROWTH we noticed that few entrepreneurs express interest in online education. A better analysis of the target audience (specifically for online education) is needed.

3.3 Impact on project implementation & enhanced implementation advice

Delivering an appealing and effective programme for entrepreneurs requires a strong understanding of the target group and their drivers and blockers. As already identified in the proposal existing available programs do not appeal to the target population of scale-up entrepreneurs, being either too theoretical or intended at earlier stage businesses. Scale-up entrepreneurs are extremely busy and time investment should be valuable, as is applicability of the learnings. For this audience usefulness is almost always considered more valuable than academic accreditation. With the intention to build an innovative blended educational programme for the scale-up entrepreneurs, we realised during the course of the project a disbalance in how the consortium was built. With mainly academic partners to provide theoretical background information, and only FlandersBio (after BioCat leaving the project) with direct connections to the target population, extra effort was needed to gain good understanding of our targeted audience. SME partners could provide the consortium with input from a user perspective, however it was noticed that their companies were quickly evolving and project goals were not always aligned with their core activities.

Based on best practices at the start of the project and complemented with new insights as result of this project, several suggestions for enhanced implementation were offered during the Final Closure meeting on 13 February 2020:

- Always evaluate activities (both online and onsite) individually
 - educational deliverables (are learning objectives met?)
 - customer experience (expectations met? Follow-up possibilities? Will they come back?)
 - logistics (venue, timing, duration)
 - communication plan (uniformity of messages; reached and registered participants)
- Keep what works, standardize if possible, and customize or improve where needed and possible.



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- Consider cultural effects when organizing face-to-face activities:
 - adjust timing to local customs (e.g. breakfast session or overnight meetings)
 - Travel the program, not the participants – use standardized topics and set-up, but make use of local speakers and always add an investors meeting. It will relate to the local market
- Connect with local incubators, this is the main entrance to our target population. Do not compete with incubators, but collaborate. Involve them in co-creating a soft-landing spot for scale-ups: the GROWTH activities (both online and onsite) can be expansion of their offering as they mostly focus on start-ups;
- Add investors meeting to the program, for them it is interesting to find business, for scale-ups it is important to find investments;
- Follow-up during program, direct personal contact is needed when participation falls behind/participants tend to drop-out; Scale-ups are also in very different development stages handling almost individual issues specific to their growth. Individual mentoring could help out. One-on-one guidance is highly appreciated in a running FlandersBio program; This can be applied both in onsite as well as in online activities.