



Is that on the SCQF...? The Circle Academy Award in Social Entrepreneurship by Alice Watts, Digital Learning Producer, The Circle, Dundee

The Circle Academy is a 12-week intensive, practical and educational training programme for individuals interested in running 'more than profit' businesses. The programme provides the tools and building blocks to launch and grow a More Than Profit organisation, alongside one-to-one support and guidance with industry experts as proposals are formulated and refined.

Through the Academy programme, The Circle is focused on developing individuals' skills and knowledge in the following key areas: mindset, business planning, finance, legal structures, governance, people, social impact, and sustainability through multiple income streams.

The programme is aimed at individuals who would like to set up or develop an organisation or project with a social impact. This includes sole traders, founders, Chief Executives and Directors of organisations, project leads and employees of existing third sector organisations.

The Circle Academy offers dedicated time and space, as well as critical guidance and support that allows individuals to work 'on' their business rather than 'in' it. Allowing space to expand knowledge, explore possibilities, and emerge with an informed and viable plan for the future of their organisation.

On completion of the programme, successful participants will be awarded with 'The Circle Academy Award In Social Entrepreneurship' at SCQF level 7 with 21 credit points, having built a detailed and an actionable business plan, cash flow, and marketing plan, as well as gaining skills, knowledge, networks and ongoing support.

An SCQF credit rated qualification will give participants of The Academy programme an internationally recognised symbol of the quality of education and significance of their achievements and the ability to run a successful More Than Profit business. It is evidence of their dedication to the success of their organisation and will, in the eyes of funders and investors, make them highly investable individuals. We hope the qualification will give participants a strong sense of confidence in their abilities, a competitive edge in the field, and empower them to seek out further opportunities for themselves and their organisations.

Eddie Baines was a participant on cohort 1 of The Academy programme; he runs an expanding network of community larders. His time on the programme and successes thereafter, are a testament to the power of equipping passionate social leaders with the business knowledge and acumen to succeed:

"I had the passion and the drive to push the idea forward but no business acumen. I now realise that this is vital for a charity and is the exact reason that many charities and community groups are failing. Getting the basics right can be the difference between success and failure. I now see that having the passion is great but failure will happen through the lack of correct procedures, poor governance and no systems. This is how I was beginning to burn out. Through my rushed decisions, I now see I am in a relationship with the Larder that will be tricky to navigate in future but I have learned through The Academy how not to fall into this trap in future.

The Academy is more than a classroom, or sessions. The cohort have sat privately, sorted issues in each other's business ventures, without sugar coating the reality. It is genuinely support, not just a pat on the back."

Emma Charlton, a participant of cohort 2 is planning to open an upcycled homewares store, which employs individuals with additional support needs. She has attributed her ability to produce a thorough and viable business plan to the Academy's intensive course structure and constructive, yet supportive, environment:

"The Academy gave me space to focus my thoughts on my pending venture and time to consolidate my learning without distractions."

Visit the website at <https://thecircledundee.org.uk/the-circle-academy/> or contact Alice for more information on how to apply for the next cohort of The Circle Academy - alice@thecircledundee.org.uk