



# Studio Zào

Let's make it happen.

Supported by:



**GREATER  
LONDON  
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In partnership with:



## Next Steps Studio: Information Pack

AI & Entrepreneurship  
Incubator



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The programme

# What is Next Steps Studio?

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*A free, three-week AI × Entrepreneurship incubator where you build a real venture, work with real employers, and leave with something to show for it.*

**1**

## **It's real, not theoretical**

You'll pitch a business idea to a real company at the end of three weeks. Not to a lecturer. Not to a panel of judges. To the people who actually commissioned the brief.

**2**

## **You'll use AI to build things**

Not a module about AI. Not a demo. You'll use it to research, prototype, and build, and leave knowing how to apply it to anything.

**3**

## **It's free, opens doors**

No fees, no prior experience, no business background required. In three weeks you'll have built something real alongside people from Peabody, Unilever, and EY Foundation — organisations that can open doors for you afterwards.

# The details

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## WHEN

**22 June – 10 July 2026 (3 weeks)**

- 4 days per week in-person (Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri)
- Every Wednesday: off-site day, teams work together independently
- Every Friday: playback and mini-showcase

## WHERE

**Clapham Junction**

(a community based professional workspace)

## COMMITMENT

**Full-time for three weeks**

- This is intensive by design
- It mirrors what a real startup sprint looks like.
- Exceptions can be discussed

## WHO

**Recent graduates  
& Final Year University students**

**(based in South London)**

# Who you'll work with

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Each team is assigned one of three real challenge briefs from our partner organisations. The brief is an actual problem the organisation wants to solve. Your job over three weeks is to research it, test ideas with real people, and pitch a viable solution.

## ***Peabody***

Housing & Community

One of London's largest housing associations.

## ***Unilever***

Consumer & Sustainability

Global consumer goods company based nearby in Kingston.

## ***EY Foundation***

Skills & Employment

The social enterprise arm of EY, focused on helping young people who face barriers to employment.

# What the three weeks will look like

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**01**

## **Frame Your Idea**

*22–26 June*

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Form your team. Pick up a real brief. Talk to potential customers. Have a prototype by Friday.



**02**

## **Test It in the Real World**

*29 June – 3 July*

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Take your idea to market. Get feedback. Iterate. Build your business model and back-office materials.



**03**

## **Pitch It Live**

*6–9 July*

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Pitching masterclass, mentor rehearsals, then a live Demo Day on 9 July in front of real employers and partners.

# What the three weeks look like: Timeline

## 01 Problem Discovery

**22–26 June**

*Target: defined problem, real customer insight, early solution sketch.*

- Mon** Meet your team and brief intro. Map what you know and what you need to find out.
- Tue** Problem framing deep dive. Customer research methods.
- Wed** Off-site day. Real customer interviews and discovery.
- Thu** Synthesise findings. Generate solution ideas.
- Fri** Mini showcase: problem statement, customer insight, early solution sketch. Lunch & Learn with speaker.

## 02 Build & Test

**29 June – 3 July**

*Target: tested prototype, customer feedback, initial business model.*

- Mon** Lean canvas, prototyping tools, storytelling, commercial thinking, marketing basics.
- Tue** Team check-ins with facilitators. Further customer interviews.
- Wed** Off-site day. Build, prototype, or conduct further customer validation.
- Thu** Synthesise findings. Internal peer demos and feedback.
- Fri** Mini showcase: updated problem & prototype walkthrough. Lunch & Learn with speaker.

## 03 Pitch

**6–10 July**

*Target: live pitch to real investors and employer partners on Thursday.*

- Mon** Pitching masterclass and venture roadmap.
- Tue** Pitch rehearsals, one-to-one feedback.
- Wed** Remote day. Final pitch prep and deck refinement, independently.
- Thu** Pitch Day. 10–15 mins per team, live panel: employers, partners, mentors.
- Fri** Personal planning and action planning. Skills review, next-steps.

# What you'll develop and what you'll leave with

## Skills you'll practise

### Customer research and problem framing

→ Conducting real interviews, analysing what you find, and turning insight into a clearly defined problem worth solving.

### Rapid prototyping with AI tools

→ Building demos, landing pages, and mockups quickly using current AI tools. No coding background required.

### Commercial thinking and business modelling

→ Understanding how a business model works, what makes an idea viable, and how to map a lean canvas.

### Storytelling and pitching

→ Structuring a compelling narrative, presenting under pressure, and handling questions from real investors.

### Working in a team under real conditions

→ Working productively, dividing work intelligently, and building something together in a compressed timeline.

## What you take away

### A pitch deck

→ Built by you and your team, from scratch, for a real brief. A genuine portfolio piece.

### A tested prototype

→ A working demo or proof of concept, built and validated with real users during the programme.

### A lean business canvas

→ A complete commercial model: customers, value proposition, revenue streams, and cost structure.

### A digital badge

→ SLP-endorsed, shareable on LinkedIn via Navigatr — formal recognition of what you built and how.

### Partner connections

→ Direct professional relationships with Peabody, Unilever, and EY Foundation, built through live work.

### A personal action plan

→ Created on the final day — what you're doing next, grounded in your own Day 1 baseline reflection.

# Is this for you?



## *You're probably a good fit if...*

- **Final year student** — any course
- **Curious about entrepreneurship** but no business background needed
- **Can commit full-time** 22 June – 10 July, 5 days a week
- **Want to work on real problems** with real organisations
- **Not sure what's next** and want to find out



## *This probably isn't right if...*

- **Can't do all three weeks** in person — it's intensive by design
- **Looking for a lecture course** or a certification to sit through
- **Want to be taught** rather than learn by building

**You do not need a business idea. You do not need to know anything about AI. Curiosity and commitment are the entry criteria.**

# How to apply and what happens next

## How to apply

Complete the online application form. It has three short questions: your motivation for applying, what you'd bring to a team, and any personal context you want to share. It takes around 10 minutes.

**Preliminary application deadline: 8 June 2026**

**Apply now - Application form:**  
<https://forms.gle/ohLrSaJsZhDLDbdw9>



**Visit our landing page:**  
<https://nss.studiozao.com/>



## Questions before applying?

Book a 15-minute call with the team, or ask any questions:  
[keona@studiozao.com](mailto:keona@studiozao.com)

## What happens after you apply

- 1 Applications close** *Rolling*  
All applications reviewed. We reserve the right to close applications early if a high volume of submissions is received. Early application is highly encouraged.
- 2 Screening Process** *w/c 8 June*  
Screening will be done and a 10 min call will be arranged. A waitlist will be maintained if the programme is oversubscribed.
- 3 Confirmation & Onboarding** *w/c 15 June*  
Confirmed participants receive a confirmation email with a onboarding and any pre-programme reading.
- 4 Programme starts** *22 June*  
Day 1 at the Peabody workspace near Clapham Junction. Meet your team and get introduced to your brief.

# FAQ

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→ **Do I need a business idea to apply?**

No. The idea comes from the brief. We're looking for curiosity and commitment, not a finished concept.

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→ **Do I need to know how to use AI tools?**

No prior experience needed at all. You'll learn by using them to build something real from day one.

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→ **Is it actually free?**

Yes, completely. No fees, no catch. We're exploring whether travel support is available.

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→ **What happens after the programme?**

You keep everything you built. Potential pathways to internships and continued support via partners.

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→ **How competitive is selection?**

We have 20 places. Selection based on application form.