



Building your startup with AI tools

Presented by ACU Co-Lab

Workshops and dates

Most programs teach you about startups. This one helps you build one. 'Building your startup with AI tools 2026' is an eight-week, hands-on incubator where AI is your co-pilot from day one. Leave with a validated prototype, positioning, pitch and a 90-day roadmap. **Pitch to win \$5,000 non-dilutive funding.**

Attend the full program to be in the best position to develop a winning pitch for the 'Building your startup with AI tools award 2026', or choose specific workshops directly relevant to your project.

Structure

20-minute teach | 60-minute build | 20-minute peer review | 20-minute commit

Tools used

Claude (AI research and writing), Lovable (rapid prototyping). No AI experience needed – we build that in from week one

Cost

The program is fully subsidised for ACU students, staff and alumni. Community participants attend the first workshop free, then continue at early-bird (\$50), standard (\$75) or bundle pricing (\$320 for the remaining seven sessions). Delivered nationally via interactive livestream.

In partnership with

DISRUPTORS
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WEEK 1: AI READINESS

Set up your tools, frame your venture idea and write your first structured AI prompt. You'll leave with your venture concept in one sentence and a habit that compounds every week.

Wednesday 19 August
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 2: PROBLEM WORTH SOLVING

Not every frustration is a business. We pressure-test your problem statement against three criteria and use AI to sharpen it until it's specific enough to act on.

Wednesday 26 August
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 3: VALIDATION AND DISCOVERY

Evidence beats assumptions. You'll design a validation plan, run discovery conversations and use AI to synthesise what you hear into insights you can build from.

Wednesday 2 September
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 4: AI AS YOUR UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

Map the highest-leverage uses of AI in your venture. Build a personal prompt library you'll use for the rest of the program and well beyond it.

Wednesday 9 September
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 5: BUILDING YOUR PRD

From validated insight to working product. You'll write a product requirements document with AI, then build your first clickable prototype using Lovable – in a single session.

Wednesday 16 September
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 6: BUILD SPRINT ONE: DEMO AND ITERATE

Your first prototype was a hypothesis. Now you have feedback. You'll update your requirements, rebuild and produce a version you'd actually show a customer.

Wednesday 23 September
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 7: GOING TO MARKET

A great product no-one knows about doesn't grow. You'll write your positioning statement, structure your offer and draft your first outreach to a real target customer.

Wednesday 7 October
4 – 6pm AEST, Online

WEEK 8: SHOWCASE AND NEXT STEPS

Present your venture to the cohort and invited guests. Live demo. Pitch. 90-day roadmap. And a clear path into the ACU Co-lab ecosystem if you want to keep going.

Wednesday 14 October
4 – 6pm AEDT, Online



Register now

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acu.edu.au/locations/co-lab/our-programs/building-your-startup-with-ai-tools

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COMPETITION DETAILS		
ITEM	ISSUE	REQUIREMENT
1	Promoter	Australian Catholic University Limited ABN 15 050 192 660 (ACU) of 8 Napier Street, North Sydney NSW 2060
2	Competition	Building your startup with AI tools award 2026
3	Competition Period (times in AEDT)	Competition Commencement Date: 9am AEST on Friday 4 September 2026 Competition End Date: 11:59pm AEDT on Sunday 1 November 2026
4	Eligible Entrants	This Competition is only open to any person who, during the Competition Period: - is over 18 years of age; and - resides in Australia; and - has attended at least 3 of the Business Incubator Series Workshops via zoom, as a participant; and - submits an Eligible Entry. The following persons are ineligible to enter the Competition: - anyone that resides outside Australia during the Competition Period for a period of more than 7 days.
5	Eligible Entry	To enter the Competition, Eligible Entrants must during the Competition Period: - submit an entry via the online application form; and - submit a video pitch at the same time as lodging an entry, where the video length must be no more than 3 mins.
6	Maximum Eligible Entries	Not applicable. Eligible Entrants may submit as many unique Eligible Entries as they like.
7	Prize	The Prize is 'Building your startup with AI tools award 2026'. The Prize will be a \$5,000 cash prize, available to all Eligible Entrants. The Prize will be paid via direct bank deposit.
8	Total Prize Pool	\$5,000
9	Criteria	The Eligible Entry will be judged by a panel of judges appointed at the sole discretion of ACU and the selection of the winning entry will be based on the highest scoring Eligible Entry based on the following judging criteria, as determined by the judges: Presentation skills – 20 points (Story telling and passion of delivery / Professional manner) Pitch content – 70 points (Clarity by which you have outlined the problem and your solution / The innovative nature of your solution / The addressable market size / Your strategy for taking the idea to market / Identification of competition / How robust your proposed business and revenue models are / Demonstrable skills required to build and execute a solution, and noticeable passion for delivering the outcome. Audio/video quality – 10 points (Quality of the audio and video presentation)
10	Judging Date	The winner will be selected by 5pm AEDT on Thursday 12 November 2026.
11	Winner Notification	The winner will be notified by email within 3 business days after the Judging Date, using the contact details provided in his or her Eligible Entry.
12	Claim Period	To claim the Prize, the winner must provide the following details in writing by 5pm AEDT on Thursday 10 December 2026: - if an ACU Student, their Student number; and - Bank details including payee name, BSB, and account number.
13	Special Conditions (if any)	Entries can be lodged by individuals or groups. Group applications need to be lodged by the team lead on behalf of the group (rather than multiple entries of the same pitch). In the event a group entry wins, the Prize shall be provided to the nominated team lead. Entries that have previously been funded through ACU Co-Lab's incubator series awards will be considered ineligible and disqualified from the Competition. Multiple but different entries by an individual or group are permitted. Should an entrant's contact details change, it is the Eligible Entrant's responsibility to notify ACU immediately. The judges reserve the right at their discretion not to award a Prize.
14	Competition Contact Details	Mr Anthony Bayss Email: Anthony.bayss@acu.edu.au, Phone: 02 9701 4756