

Rock Accelerator Application & Guidelines

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Overview

The Rock Accelerator is a semester-long program offered to EC students in the Fall and Spring (Fall teams will have the option to continue in the spring but funding will be limited) It supports student founders in preparing their startup for launch at the completion of their degree. It is a program for students who are serious about pursuing their business idea and are committed to a structured and rigorous program in order to support the goal of building a company. As a program, the Accelerator offers:

- Community of HBS Founders - A select number of startup teams with at least (1) HBS student will be selected for this highly rigorous and rewarding program. Non-HBS co-founders are welcome to join all programming, but funding is only available to the HBS founder. Teams accepted into the Startup Operations Class will automatically be included as part of the Rock Accelerator program.
- Validate, Build, and Test - The RA program offers structured opportunities to students that allow them to make significant progress on their startup while in school. Accepted teams must have completed rigorous customer discovery, have developed solutions to test and have assumptions about their Go-To- Market strategy and business model.
- Pitch Practice - The RA program offers extensive pitch practice. There are opportunities to pitch to investors and gain valuable feedback on your idea, business model, go-to-market strategy, and your overall presentation delivery.
- Funding - Accepted teams may receive funding for their venture. Participants will have the opportunity to pitch for feedback and funding to validate their business model assumptions. Those who have already raised significant capital may not be eligible for the funding aspect of the program.
- Coaches and Champions - Teams work within a coaching group that is led by Rock Accelerator Coaches. Coaches are serial entrepreneurs, investors, and subject matter experts who can advise on moving your venture forward.
- Exposure - Teams demonstrating early traction will be selected to pitch at Demo Day.
- NVC Fast Track - Rock Accelerator teams are fast tracked to the New Venture Competition's Super Saturday in the Student Business Track of the competition. This is second round of the NVC.

Eligibility

The founder, or at least one co-founder, must be a current MBA or joint degree student who is in the process of completing the second year of the HBS MBA program. The student must be in good standing

at Harvard Business School. The venture must demonstrate extensive customer discovery work in their application, which as an example, may have been accomplished during the summer break as a Rock Summer Fellow. Priority is given to ventures that are currently or are about to begin building and testing MVP(s) and acquiring beta customers.

Note: Venture team members are always welcome to attend a coaching group check-in.

Application Instructions

The Rock Accelerator program applications for the Fall cohort open on July 23rd, at 12 pm ET and close on August 2nd, 2021, at 9 am ET.

Please [click here \(PDF\)](#) to view the rubric used for reviewing the applications. HBS credentials are required to access the rubric.

An applicant must read ReviewR's [Terms and conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) before registering to submit their application with ReviewR, a third-party website. When using this platform, a participant is agreeing to ReviewR's Terms.

Please attend our Info Session on **July 20th at noon ET** to learn more about the program and to join the Q&A session. A link to the recording of this session will be posted 3-4 days after the session is completed.

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY!](#)

Application Deadline: August 2, 2021 at 9 am ET

NOTE: Teams from which the reviewers need more information will receive an invitation to the Question & Answers sessions during the week of August 9th-13th. Applicants should be prepared to commit to an appointment time with short notice.

Key Program Dates

Please note down the key program dates for RA 2021-22. If your team is selected in the program, then you are mandatorily required to attend these events.

Event	Day	Date	Time (EST)
RA Info Session	Tuesday	7/20/2021	12:00 PM
Applications Open	Friday	7/23/2021	9:00 AM
Applications Close	Monday	8/2/2021	9:00 AM
RVP team selection begins	Monday	8/2/2021	12:00 PM

RVP team selection ends	Wednesday	8/11/2021	12:00 PM
Review results and select teams to invite to pitch	Thursday	8/12/2021	6:00-8:00 pm
Teams notified and asked to pick a pitch time	Friday	8/13/2021	12:00 PM
Individual Team pitches (5 min pitch and 5 min Q&A)	Monday	8/16/2021	5:00-7:00 pm
Individual Team pitches (5 min pitch and 5 min Q&A)	Tuesday	8/17/2021	5:00-7:00 pm
Final team pitches and decision time	Wednesday	8/18/2021	5:00-8:00 pm
Decisions Announced	Monday	8/23/2021	12:00 pm
Fall Kickoff (2-minute pitch/ Social)	Thursday	9/9/2020	5:00 pm
RA Coach Individual Team Meetings- Pitch to coach with Q&A and Feedback		Week of 9/13	TBD
Why You! Why Now! What is the Magic Sauce!	Wed/Thurs	9/22 or 9/23	5:00-6:30 pm
Pod Check in- Coaches and teams	Wed/Thurs	9/29 or 9/30	5:00-7:00 pm
Acquiring your 1 st Customers! (aka – Sales for Founders)	Mon/Wed	10/4 or 10/6	5:00-7:00 pm
RA Coach individual meetings		Week of 10/10	
Digital Marketing Worskhop	Mon/Thur	10/18 or 10/21	5:00-7:00 pm
Pod Check in- Coaches and teams	Wed/Thurs	Week of 10/25	5:00-7:00 pm
Pitch Practice and Pizza- 5 minute pitches		11/1 or 11/4	5:00-8:00 pm
RA Coach individual meetings		Week of 11/8	
Pod Check-in		11/17 or 11/18	5:00-7:00 pm
Holiday Social		2-Dec	5:00-7:00 pm
Spring Semester			
Request for More funding and new applications open (Fall team confirmation of extending into Spring Term)	Friday	12/13/2021	9:00 AM
Applications Close	Monday	1/4/2022	9:00 AM
RVP team selection begins	Monday	1/4/2022	12:00 PM
RVP teams selection ends	Wednesday	1/12/2022	12:00 PM

Review results and select teams to invite to pitch	Thursday	1/13/2022	6:00-8:00 pm
Teams notified and asked to pick a pitch time	Friday	1/14/2022	12:00 PM
Individual Team pitches (5 min pitch and 5 min Q&A)	Monday	1/18/2022	5:00-7:00 pm
Individual Team pitches (5 min pitch and 5 min Q&A)	Tuesday	1/19/2022	5:00-7:00 pm
Final team pitches and decision time	Wednesday	1/20/2022	5:00-8:00 pm
Decisions Announced	Monday	1/21/2022	12:00 pm
Spring Kickoff	Thursday	1/27/2022	5:00 pm
RA Coach Individual Team Meetings- Pitch to coach with Q&A and Feedback		week of 1/31	TBD
Workshop TBD	Wed/Thurs	2/7, 2/8 or 2/10	5:00-6:30 pm
Pod Check in- Coaches and teams	Wed/Thurs	week of 2/14	5:00-7:00 pm
Raising your first round- Who, how and how much?	Mon/Wed	2/22,2/23, or2/24	5:00-7:00 pm
RA Coach individual meetings		week of 2/28	
Pitch Practice	Mon/Thur	3/7, 3/9 or 3/10	5:00-7:00 pm
Pod Check in- Coaches and teams	Wed/Thurs	week of 3/20	5:00-7:00 pm
Optional RA Coach Individual Meetings		3/21-4/1	5:00-8:00 pm
Demo Day prep pitch		week of 4/4	
Virtual Demo Day		4/13 or 4/14	6:00-8:00 pm
EOY Social		2-Dec	5:00-7:00 pm

Funding Exclusions

If a venture has received more than USD\$100,000 in external funding within the preceding 12 months of the Accelerator application deadline, a venture may still apply for the Rock Accelerator and is fully entitled to all non-funding benefits, coaching, and support if accepted into the program.

Attendance Requirements

The Rock Center and Harvard Business School take no equity nor any other level of ownership over any venture in the Rock Accelerator. As such, we expect the program to be a priority for participants who accept an invitation to the program, and in line with this, we have very strict attendance requirements.

The only permissible reasons for missing a check-in is an academic conflict(s) or unforeseeable extenuating circumstance. Academic commitments do take priority, and semester-long academic conflicts only require notification at the beginning of the semester. For all other conflicts, students in the Rock Accelerator must notify the Rock managing team of their conflict at the beginning of the semester or 24 hours in advance. Aside from an unforeseen extenuating circumstance, same-day notifications are treated as not having received notification.

All (co)founders are to attend each scheduled check-in. To the best of our ability, the Rock Center Team will not change any dates. However, in special circumstances, at the discretion of the RA team's coach, check-in dates may be rescheduled.

In the event that a venture team fails to fully commit to the Accelerator and misses any check-ins, any funding awarded to a student and/or venture participating in the Rock Accelerator program may be required to be returned in part or in-full at the discretion of the Associate Director, Student Programs or Director, Arthur Rock Center for Entrepreneurship. In the event of funding withdrawal due to attendance, the venture and associated students will be removed from the program.

HBS Honor Code

The mission of Harvard Business School is to educate leaders who make a difference in the world. Achieving this mission requires an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning.

Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when they join the HBS community. In doing so, they agree to abide by the following Community Values:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others.
- Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community.
- Accountability for personal behavior.

HBS can and should be a living model of these values. Community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these values into every aspect of their experience at HBS. Personal commitment to these values creates an environment in which all can achieve their full potential.

Professional Expectations & Values

HBS Rock Center for Entrepreneurship companies must hold themselves to the highest standards as part of the HBS network. We recognize that each of us is an ambassador for HBS and the greater community. As such, we expect the following from you:

1. We behave in a professional manner. We participate in both offline and online forums with respect.
2. We help others whenever possible and give back to our community. We proactively work to give back to the ecosystem with no specific expectations of return.
3. We appreciate the help of others. We express our appreciation for the help of our customers, mentors, and others that make our success possible. We are respectful of each other's time and are clear and focused in our requests.
4. We are honest and transparent. If we say something either publicly or privately, then we believe that it is true. We do not intentionally omit important and relevant factual information in an effort to deceive others. We strive to be clear and transparent in our communications. We are honest and will do right by our investors, partners, and customers.
5. We protect confidential and sensitive information and keep it private. When we are entrusted with sensitive, confidential or personal information we will use reasonable care to protect the security of the confidential information of the disclosing party. We will not use such confidential information except as expected of us by the disclosing party or necessary for analysis or performance of our duties as a member of the Rock Accelerator community.
6. We create a respectful workplace and encourage diversity. We commit that employees, partners, customers, and visitors feel accepted and free to express their opinions, concerns, and needs with an expectation that they will be heard and respected. We commit to seeking diverse perspectives and building inclusive work environments.
7. We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any form. We will remove participants, mentors, investors, employees, contractors and others who discriminate or harass others.
8. We stand up for others. We appropriately intervene in situations when we witness violations of this Code and report violations.
9. We keep our word and respect our agreements. If we commit to do something, we do our best to do it and do not attempt to circumvent our intentions. Therefore, if we RSVP to an event, we show up or provide adequate notice (preferably 48 hours) of cancellation. No shows will not be tolerated.
10. Attendance. As a Rock Center program participant, you are expected to attend all required sessions as part of your agreed participation in the program. These sessions require the time of our esteemed faculty, advisors, guest lecturers, and the Rock Center team. Your attendance is expected for the ongoing success of this program. If you foresee issues in attending any the sessions, please notify the Rock Center at the start of the program.

11. Coaching Group Participation. As a member of a coaching group you respect the privacy of the other founders and do not share private information outside of the forum group. You also agree to prepare any required deliverables and discussion materials, as these are critical activities for venture and coaching feedback from the group, other participants, and Rock Venture Partners.

Please email rock@hbs.edu, if you have any questions.