



Reuben College Entrepreneurship Forum 2026 for graduate students

(sponsored by Reuben Foundation – platinum sponsors)

The fourth Reuben College Entrepreneurship Forum will take place at Reuben College on Friday 4th September 2026. The keynote lectures will be delivered by **Dr Vishal Gulati MD, FMedSci (Founder and Managing Partner of Recode Ventures)** and **David Mott (CEO, Oxford Capital Partners)**. Vishal co-founded Recode Ventures in 2022 after nearly three decades as a physician-scientist and venture capitalist. He is also a very good friend of Reuben College, both as a member of its Advisory Board and a regular contributor to the college's Entrepreneurship Forum. David is a venture capitalist and an international modern pentathlon competitor. He is the founder and CEO of Oxford Capital Partners, who have been investing in early-stage UK-based technology startups, from Pre-seed to Series A, since 1999.

Between 80 and 100 graduate students from across the whole University are expected to attend the Forum, including 6 invited teams for a pitching competition after the keynote lecture, with a first prize of £25k and a second prize of £10k. These teams will have been pre-selected from the Oxford Saïd Entrepreneurship Centre and EnSpire programme, Oxford Venture Builder, as well as from Oxford University Innovation (OUI) and the Oxford Edge student entrepreneur programme, StEP Ignite.

The Forum will start with opening talks from Cath Spence from OUI and a Reuben Fellow, and Venetia Jennings, Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Oxford Science Enterprises (OSE), who will explain how they help to support student entrepreneurship. We will then hear from founders who are or were Oxford students and gradually go further afield, before the keynote lecture and pitching competition.

The provisional programme is as follows:

Session 1

1. 9.30: Lionel Tarassenko (President, Reuben College) – Welcome
2. 9.40: Catherine Spence (OUI and Official Fellow, Reuben College)
3. 10.05: Venetia Jennings (Entrepreneur in Residence, OSE)

10.30: Coffee break

Session 2

1. 11.00: Autotone, winners of last year's pitching competition
2. 11.25: Odhran O'Donoghue, Co-founder and CTO of Magentic
3. 11.50: Keynote 1: Vishal Gulati (Founder and Managing Partner of Recode Ventures)
"The Role of Venture Capital in Translational Innovation": How did venture capital come to play an outsized role in bringing transformative ideas from the lab to the world?

Would it have been possible to build the modern world without this critical mechanism for translating early-stage scientific breakthroughs into real-world applications? Dr Vishal Gulati will explore the surprising history of venture capital and how, from backing captains of ships, it became the staple for leaders of high-risk, high-reward companies.

12.15 Lunch in Hall

Session 3

1. 13.15: Mark Younger (Founder, Acclimate Ventures)
2. 13.40: Keynote 2: David Mott (CEO, Oxford Capital Partners) **“Fuel for Founders: A venture capitalist view of long-term high performance”**. What does it really take to keep ambition alive long after the first spark of an idea? David Mott moves between the worlds of venture capital and Olympic sport to explore the hidden fuel behind sustained performance to explore stories of founders, athletes, pressure, curiosity and the choices that help people keep showing up when it matters.

14.30: Tea break

Session 4 (Pitching competition)

The final session will start at 15:00 and will feature the pitching competition, with each team of pre-selected students pitching their start-up ideas to the judging panel for 10 minutes. They will then have 10 minutes of questions from a Panel chaired by Cath Spence. Other members of the Panel will be David Mott, Venetia Jennings, and Vishal Gulati.

17:00: Drinks and canapes

Session 5

Announcement at 17:30 of the winners of the pitching competition, who will receive a prize of £25k (with the runners-up awarded a prize of £10k).

Professor Lord (Lionel) Tarassenko and Catherine Spence
Reuben College