



IET On Campus: Hackathons

The IET On Campus student group at Bristol University, also known as Bristol University Electrical and Electronic Engineering Society (BEEES), arranges annual Hackathons designed to challenge the students.

How did the event idea come about?

The first Hackathon at Bristol University was run by a different society. After facing some issues during its second year, the IET On Campus student group at Bristol University (BEEES) took over the organisation of this event, turning it into a successful regular feature on the society's calendar.

How did they approach this event?

With the development of the event unexpectedly landing in their lap, the first year didn't go as smoothly as the community would have liked and the group only managed to get three teams to take part. However, by learning from their mistakes and generally improving the organisation process, the following year was a massive success.

At the core of the challenge is the idea of providing students with a set of materials and challenging them to come up with the most interesting invention in a set amount of time. At the end of the challenge they are then judged on their creations. Teams are allowed to bring pre-prepared material, but are penalised for anything created outside of the allotted time.

How did they develop and promote the event?

The IET On Campus group use similar promotional methods across all their events, and so the Hackathons were promoted via posters displayed across the university, a regularly updated Facebook event page and even a booth manned by committee members during lunch breaks. Word of mouth also helped spread news of the events.

What learnings did they take from the event?

Those involved in organising the event gained a lot of experience in event management, as explains past BEEES secretary Joe Brown highlights.

"We learnt a huge amount about event management - things like venue booking, arranging food and looking at safety were all big issues we faced."

What skills have they gained from this activity that they could add to their CV?

This focus on event management skills was a great addition to the soft skills section of the community members' CVs.

What feedback did they get from students who participated?



Students love taking part in the Hackathon challenges, but had asked for clarification on the judging process as they wanted to make sure that it was taken into account that some teams would have worked on their ideas ahead of time. Joe explains how they resolved this.

“As we allow people to bring materials with them we had to ensure that the playing field was level. [We did this by] deducting credit from the teams that spent a significant amount of money on materials.”

How has this activity helped their On Campus group?

Now an annual staple of the On Campus community, the society gained a lot publicity thanks to the popularity of the event, boosting IET On Campus and BEEES' recognition both in and outside the university and helping the group to secure sponsorship for future events as well as inspire new students.

Will they run the event again next year?

The event is now an annual staple of the society, well known by the local students.

“Now students know the set up they come back year on year with new teams and ideas to see if they can win. It is a really great backbone event for the society as, to a large extent, the format can be ‘copied and pasted’ from one year to the next,” Joe explains.

We'd love to hear what your group is up to – share your photos and videos to:

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#IETOnCampus

To find out more about IET On Campus including event cases studies:

E: oncampus@theiet.org

www.theiet.org/oncampus

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