Ascension EIS

Tax-Advantaged Investments

EIS Review

JUNE 2020

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Allenbridge

Contents

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Overview

Ascension Ventures Limited (“Ascension” or “the Manager”) seeks to raise funds for the Ascension EIS (“the Fund”), previously the Centaur EIS, a discretionary investment service in a portfolio of technology-focused EIS-qualifying companies for the tax year 2020/21. The portfolio was originally launched in July 2017, operating with annual tranched closures, before changing to the current evergreen structure in February 2018. Since July 2017, Ascension and has deployed £2.01 million invested into 25 companies.

Investment Details:

Score:	84
Offer Type	Discretionary Non-Approved
EIS Strategy	Technology focused
EIS AUM (Pre-Offer)	£2.82 million
Manager AUM	£30.3 million
EIS Risk Level	Medium-High

Investment:

Minimum subscription	£25,000
Maximum qualifying subscription per tax year	£1,000,000
Early bird discount	None

Closing Date:

Evergreen

This document verifies that *Ascension EIS* has successfully completed our independent due diligence process, having passed through all stages of the governance process in the run-up to the report’s publication on the date listed below. It has therefore been awarded the MJ Hudson Cornerstone Trustmark.

Risk Warning for EIS Schemes

Individuals should always read and bear in mind the risk warning notices that are included within providers' investment offer literature / documentation, including prospectuses, information memorandums, securities notes, brochures and other related marketing literature. Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, some of the main risks to be aware of include:

- Investments are in small, unquoted companies and should be considered as high risk;
- Investments are illiquid and need to be held for at least three years in order to retain the initial income tax relief;
- An EIS/Seed EIS investment should be viewed as a long-term investment;
- Legislation, along with the nature and level of tax reliefs is subject to change. There can be no certainty that investments will be eligible or remain eligible for EIS/Seed EIS Relief;
- Historic investment performance cannot be used as a guide to future performance, and the value of any given investment may rise or fall;
- Many EIS/Seed EIS Schemes involve investment in a single company or sector and therefore should only be considered as a small part of an overall portfolio;
- Investors may not have independent representation on the Boards of investee companies which can mean their interests are not adequately considered relative to the executive team;
- EIS/Seed EIS investments should only be considered by sophisticated investors who understand, and have given careful consideration to, the underlying investment strategy and associated risks. For help in determining potential investment suitability, professional advice should be sought;
- Often there will be no regulatory oversight and investors will usually not be eligible for compensation if things go wrong.

Executive Summary

MANAGER

Ascension Ventures ("the Manager") was founded in 2011, launching its first SEIS in 2013 and subsequently, its first EIS offering in 2017. The company is led by Jean de Fougerolles and Kieran Hill, who are both experienced operators in the technology space, having been involved in a number of start-ups prior to Ascension. Aside from the Ascension EIS under review here, the Manager runs a number of other SEIS services, and also manages two impact funds, Fair by Design and the Good Food Fund. The Manager is ultimately owned by the management team, alongside an impressive list of 16 "Venture Partners", which provide assistance through access to their existing networks and potential deal-flow. The Manager currently has just over £30 million assets under management.

PRODUCT

The Ascension EIS, which was recently renamed from Centaur EIS, was originally launched in 2017 as an annual close fund, moving to a quarterly close structure from February 2018 under an evergreen structure, while retaining the same investment thesis and target returns. The EIS focuses on early stage technology companies over four defined sub-sectors; Online Video & Content, Applied AI & Deep-Tech, Ecommerce & Platforms, and Fintech. The Manager believes that these subsectors present excellent opportunities for value creation and commercial growth, and if held for between five and seven years, are expected to have the potential to generate a target return of 3x at the portfolio level. The Fund will take a minority position in target companies, with ticket sizes currently averaging around £77k; and, at the time of writing, the service had invested £2.01 million into 25 companies, and is therefore still a relatively small Fund in relation to other services on offer.

SUMMARY OPINION:

Following a relatively slow start, the Manager has been able to slowly expand AUM over the last five years, with current levels around £30 million, encompassing its EIS/SEIS and institutional fund offerings. We note that while the Manager's revenue has been increasing year on year; progress on the bottom line has been less impressive with the company making a loss in two of the past five financial periods. However, we understand that losses in 2018 and 2019 were driven to a large extent by one off costs including, FCA authorisation fees (which has reduced the Manager's running costs), as well as the legal costs associated with the restructuring of the Group, which helped to shore up the balance sheet. While the Manager is confident that these changes will result in profitability going forward, we note that its financial position is less stable than some of the larger peers in the market. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to note that despite its size, Ascension has recently become FCA authorised; however at this stage there is dedicated in-house compliance function and the firms two principals must oversee compliance related functions on top of their regular roles at the business. However, this is not unusual for a firm of its size, and the Manager does employ the services of a specialist third party compliance consultant to assist in this regard.

The strategy focuses on early-stage tech start-ups, with investee companies expected to be operating in four key sub-sectors, namely Online Video & Content, Applied AI & Deep-tech, Ecommerce & Platforms and Fintech. Target investee companies are expected to have the potential to generate returns sufficient to provide investors with a 3x return at the portfolio level, and Ascension is seeking to fill the funding gap between Seed and Series A, and therefore ahead of the larger venture capital firms which may invest at later stages. The investment team, although experienced in their own right, will benefit from an impressive list of Venture Partners, all of which are shareholders in the business. Further, through these Venture Partners, investee companies have the potential to gain access to a broader network of expertise, and potentially an entry route into the US. Ascension has also noted that it has co-invested with top-tier Venture Capital firms, including the likes of Index Ventures, Forward Partners and Episode 1, among others, further demonstrating its growing brand and presence within the VC ecosystem. That being said, the team is relatively small, and there is an element of key person risk around Jean de Fougerolles and Kieran Hill, both of whom are instrumental in the execution of the investment strategy. Investors should note, unlike many other managers operating within this space, Ascension will make relatively small allocations into an underlying business, with the current average ticket size at £77k. As a result, Ascension will have limited influence over investee companies although it does allow for a surprisingly high number of investments given the Fund size. Since its launch in July 2017, the Fund has deployed £2.01 million into 25 companies, and has already seen some promising uplifts in valuations, as well as two exits (one of these partial), albeit within the mandatory three-year holding period required to qualify for EIS tax reliefs. Ascension expects to allocate investors across 8 investee companies, with a target deployment rate of 12 months.

The Ascension EIS would appeal to investors who are looking to fund earlier stage technology start-ups, and the investment strategy will be implemented by an experienced investment team, albeit small, with access to an impressive list of Venture Partners. However, investors should note that this is a relatively new product, with a limited EIS track record for examination (3 years) (although we acknowledge that the Manager has a more substantial record within the SEIS market, where it has been operating for seven years). This, along with the inherent risk of investing in early-stage technology companies, means that investors must take comfort in the individual prior experience of the investment team, and more cautious investors may prefer to wait until such time that the Fund has a more demonstrable track record.

Positives

AT THE MANAGER LEVEL:

- Ascension has seen a steady increase in AUM and fundraising over the last five years. The AUM of £30.3 million as at June 2020 is over eleven times that at April 2016, albeit from a very low base;
- Ascension Ventures is entirely owned by the management team and venture partners, and as no significant concentration, with the largest holding owned by Jean de Fougerolles at 40%;
- The two principals for the firm, Jean de Fougerolles and Kieran Hill, both have experience of both operating and investing in technology start-ups, bringing a depth of expertise to the business, and have established a wide network of impressive venture partners for additional support;
- By virtue of its shareholding in the business, Telefonica (via Wayra, its global Accelerator programme) has provided Ascension with office space at Wayra's Piccadilly location free of charge for the past four years; not only does this provide Ascension with access to a unique level of deal flow, but it has also helped it to establish its brand, evidenced through co-investment with a number of well recognised venture capital firms;
- Unlike many other managers of its size, Ascension is directly authorised by the FCA which suggests it is looking towards the long-term.

AT THE PRODUCT LEVEL:

- The investment process is laid out well and is well structured. Responsibilities are split between team members and there are several formal check points for deals to be approved for the next stage of the process;
- The Fund invests largely in companies operating in a B2B or B2B2C context and avoids investment into B2C companies, which means that it will be less exposed to typical risks associated with changes in consumer sentiment, and any potential macroeconomic headwinds;
- When constructing individual portfolio's, Ascension will take sector exposure into account, ensuring that no investor will have more than four investee companies within a single sector, and so the level of stock-specific risk is somewhat lower than many similar sized funds;

- The fee structure is transparent, easy to understand and is relatively in line with peers in terms of the overall cost of the service to both investors and investee companies. The base performance fee hurdle has recently been increased to 1.3x from 1.05x, which is an improvement given that the service targets a 3x return;
- Although small, the investment team has worked together for over five years and has relevant experience in the technology and media sectors, particularly as operators in start-ups;
- As part of their remuneration, the investment team will receive a portion of the carry on exits, vested for five years; not only does this serve to improve alignment, but will also assist with staff retention;
- Ascension makes use of sixteen Venture Partners, who are primarily ex-entrepreneurs in technology businesses. These individuals assist with deal flow and can provide their expertise when needed, and potential access to US markets through connections there;
- Investors have the option to pay an upfront fee rather than an annual management charge which might be of interest to some and would encourage the Manager to achieve exits in a timely fashion.

Issues to consider

AT THE MANAGER LEVEL:

- While Ascensions Ventures Limited has seen increasing revenues over the past five years, profit levels have been less impressive, with the company generating losses in two of the past five years; however, we acknowledge that the balance sheet position has improved and these losses were driven by a number of one-off costs including restructuring in order to be become FCA authorised;
- There is currently no dedicated in-house compliance function, with the two partners undertaking this role on top of their other roles within the business; however, we acknowledge that this is not unusual for a firm of this size, and the Manager does make use of a third party compliance specialist ensuring relevant structures and processes are adhered to;
- Given their role in the ongoing management of the business, and involvement in the execution of the investment strategy, there is an element of key person risk in Jean de Fougerolles and Kieran Hill.

AT THE PRODUCT LEVEL:

- The Fund will generally take minority stakes in underlying companies, with the average ticket size currently £77k; and as such Ascension will have limited influence over investee companies (as evidenced by the two exits which lost EIS reliefs), and will not take Board seats;
- There is potential for investors to be charged a 30% performance fee, which is higher than many peers; however, the target return (2x return at the portfolio level, net of all fees, and excluding any tax benefits) before this is charged is quite high;
- Although experienced, the investment team is relatively small, and aside from the aforementioned key person risk, we would welcome additional members to the team as the portfolio grow in size;
- Although the Fund has achieved one full exit and one partial exit, both were within the minimum three year holding period required to qualify for EIS tax relief, and as such there is no meaningful EIS track record for examination beyond the Managers SEIS and institutional fund performance and investment teams experience at previous roles;
- Given the small average ticket size, it remains to be seen if significant exits can be achieved in 5-7 years;

Manager Quality

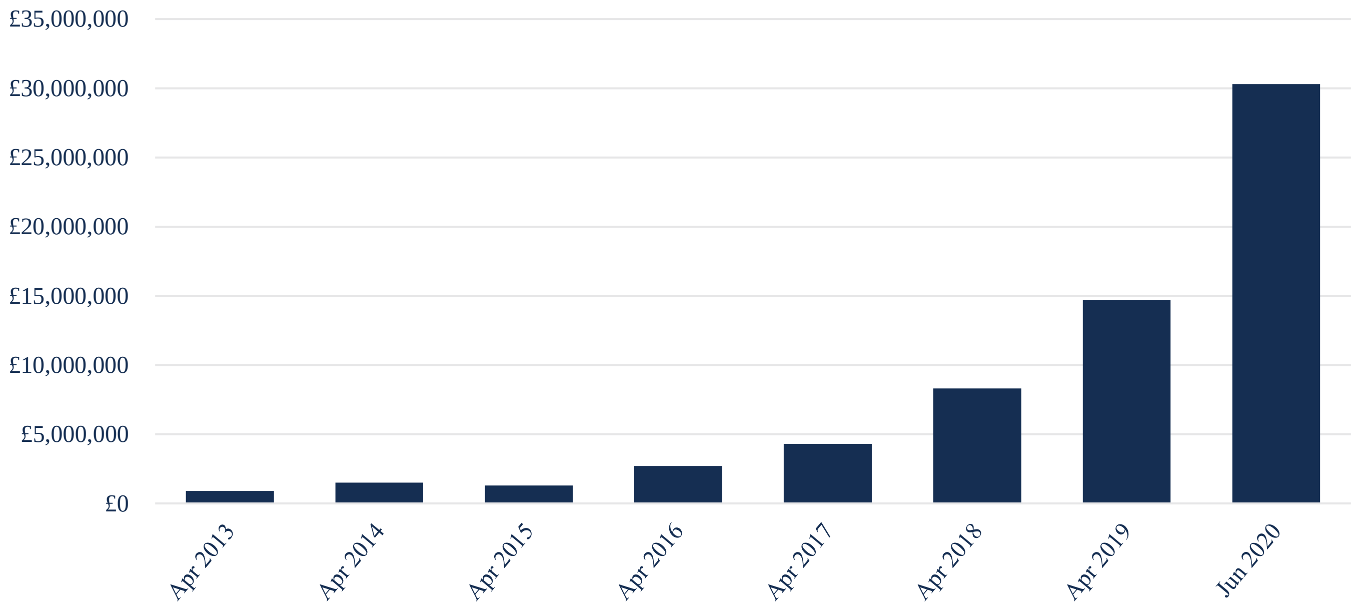
Manager Profile

Ascension Ventures Ltd was founded in September 2011 and launched its first SEIS in 2013. Ascension is led by Jean de Fougerolles and Kieran Hill, who have both operated their own technology start-ups prior to joining Ascension. Jean is Ascension's Managing Partner and has previously had senior roles MTV and Two Way Media. Kieran Hill is a partner at Ascension and is responsible for running its operations, and has first-hand experience working in tech start-ups. The management team is made up of three other members, Emma Blackburn, Remy Minute, and Kip Meek (Non-Executive Director and Chairman), all of which have experience and expertise in technology and media start-ups. We note that one of its shareholders, Telefonica (via Wayra, its global Accelerator programme), has provided it with office space at Wayra's Piccadilly Circus office, free of charge. This has afforded Ascension full access to its meeting and event spaces. This in turn has further helped Ascension to build its brand within the venture capital ecosystem, having co-invested with the likes of Index Ventures, Forward Partners and Episode 1, among others.

Ascension Ventures Ltd is 100% owned by Ascension Ventures (Holding) ltd, which in turn is owned by the management team and the 16 Venture Partners. These Venture Partners were introduced in 2018 through the management team's networks' and hold a wide range of operational experience to assist Ascension in finding and scaling UK tech businesses. Ascension have one office in London, and a total headcount of 11 employees across the group, although Remy Minute only currently works for Ascension part time. We are told that when the EIS fund scales up, Remy will begin working on a full-time basis.

As can be seen from the chart below, the Managers AUM has increased steadily since 2015, with an AUM of over £30 million in June 2020, consistent with what might be expected of a firm expanding its operations in the tax-advantaged space.

CHART 1: ASCENSION'S AUM AS AT JANUARY 2020



Source: Ascension: AdvantageIQ

The SEISs, and EISs, account for just under half of the Manager's current AUM. The Manager runs these funds alongside two institutional funds, Fair By Design, that was launched in October 2017, and another smaller fund the Good Food fund; although this is unlikely to change the AUM dynamic considerably.

TABLE 1: ASCENSION PRODUCT BREAKDOWN AS AT APRIL 2020

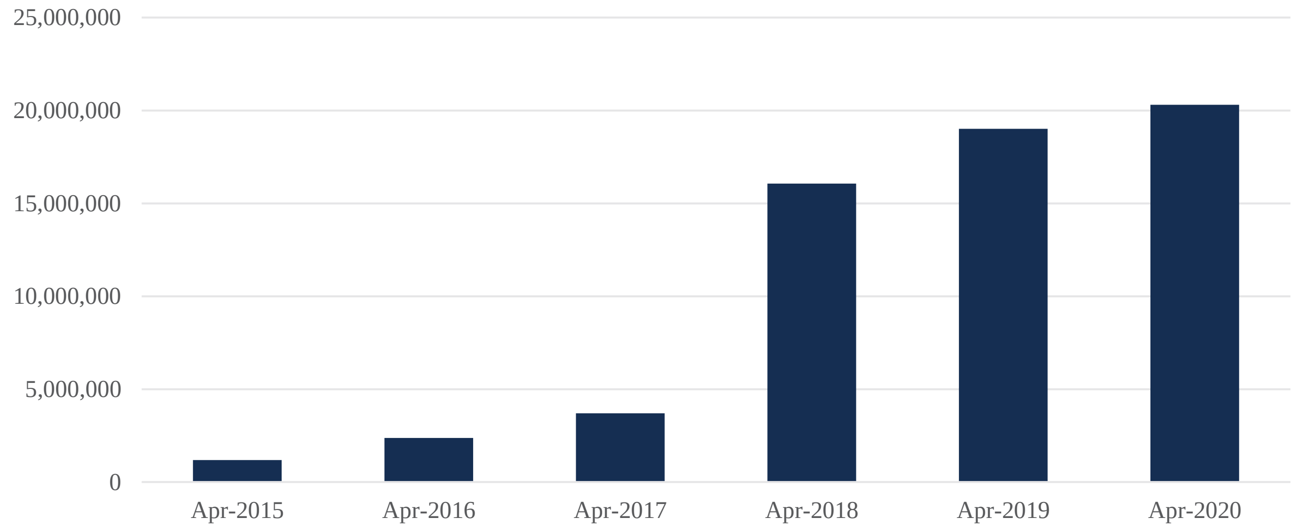
(£'000)	AUM	TVPI[1]
Ascend SEIS I (2013/2014)	£332,617	0.21
Ascend SEIS II (2015/2016)	£3.7 million	3.11
Ascend SEIS III (2016/2017)	£3.6 million	3.01
Ascend SEIS IV (2017/2018)	£1.1 million	1.28
Ascend SEIS 2018 (“V”)	£1.4 million	1.27
Ascend SEIS 2019 (Reyker & Mainspring)	£907,988	1.00
Follow-on investment (deal-by-deal from LPs)	£1.7 million	1.37
Ascension EIS Fund 2017/18 (Annual Close)	£978,767	2.12
Ascension EIS Evergreen 2018 onwards (Quarterly close)	£1.9 million	1.17
Kuber EIS Fund	£129,044	1.35
Fair By Design	£12.8 million	1.27
Good Food Fund	£1.8 million	1.00
Total	£30.3 million	

Source: Ascension; Advantage IQ; Note: The Manager changed its investment strategy in 2015 after a restructure of the business

[1] Total value to paid in capital, the ratio between the funds cumulative distributions and residual value, and total capital paid in

As seen in the chart below, Ascension’s fundraising has increased steadily in the last five years, increasing more than 16 times from April 2015 to April 2019. Fundraising saw a significant ramp up in the 2017/18 financial year, following the launch of the first iteration of the Ascension EIS. We also note that Ascension will be engaging the services of RAM Capital from July 2020 to support fundraising efforts from IFAs and wealth managers, which could lead to even more significant growth in fundraising over the coming years.

CHART 2: FUNDRAISING TRACK RECORD AS AT APRIL 2020



Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

Kieran and Nico Albanese, amongst their other duties, are responsible for the investor relations of Ascension Ventures. This includes providing semi-annual reports to investors and shareholder valuations via the custodian and Nominee, Mainspring Fund services, in addition to providing regular newsletters and around eight investor events per year. We are also told that Ascension recently entered into a commercial agreement with Mainspring Fund Services to assist with client servicing. This is a refreshing development as the manager’s AUM grows, as it is our opinion that it would not be sustainable to have no dedicated client service function. Finally, we note that Ascension has not received any complaints in the last twelve months.

Financial & Business Stability

Ascension Ventures Limited receives revenues from the investment management of its EIS/SEIS and institutional product offerings. Ascension will receive investee company income purely from its 5% investment fee to investee businesses. There are also annual deferred management fees and performance fees paid by the investor, which are only payable through an investor's realisations (100% of an investor's subscription qualifies for EIS tax relief). As an alternative, the Ascension EIS offering allows investors to choose a 50% discounted up front management fee, in lieu of its deferred fee.

As has been noted, the Manager is wholly owned by its holding company, Ascension Ventures Holding Limited, which also holds Ascension's Impact Funds, Fair By Design and Good Food Fund, also run by the Manager. Ascension Ventures and Fair by Design Limited account for approximately 55% and 45% of the holding company, respectively. The two companies have their own investment teams, and all investment individuals are dedicated to their respective companies, with exception of Jean de Fougerolles, who spends 75% of his time on Ascension, and 25% on Fair by Design. Further, there is the Shared Infrastructure team, responsible for the operations of both companies. One of these members is a shareholder of the holding company, while the other is paid by Fair By Design Ltd. Any other individuals who are brought in via this team may be paid by the due diligence costs of whichever fund they are assisting with.

The financial accounts of Ascension Ventures Limited can be seen below; and, while the revenues have been increasing steadily the cost base has similarly increased, albeit at a different pace, resulting in some volatility in profit margins. The financial year ending March 2020 saw the company generate an unaudited profit of £23,379, while in the year prior it made a loss almost double that, at £46,317. Net assets have similarly been volatile, however, the financial year ending March 2020 saw the largest net assets within the last five years.

The Manager has informed us that 2018 and 2019 saw a number of one-off costs which increased its cost base. These costs included a restructuring of the business, which we understand resulted in the more robust balance sheet position in 2020. Further, the Manager highlights that the one-off FCA authorisation fee included in these costs will help to reduce the overall running costs of the business going forward.

TABLE 2: KEY FINANCIAL METRICS SUMMARY OF ASCENSION VENTURES LIMITED FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

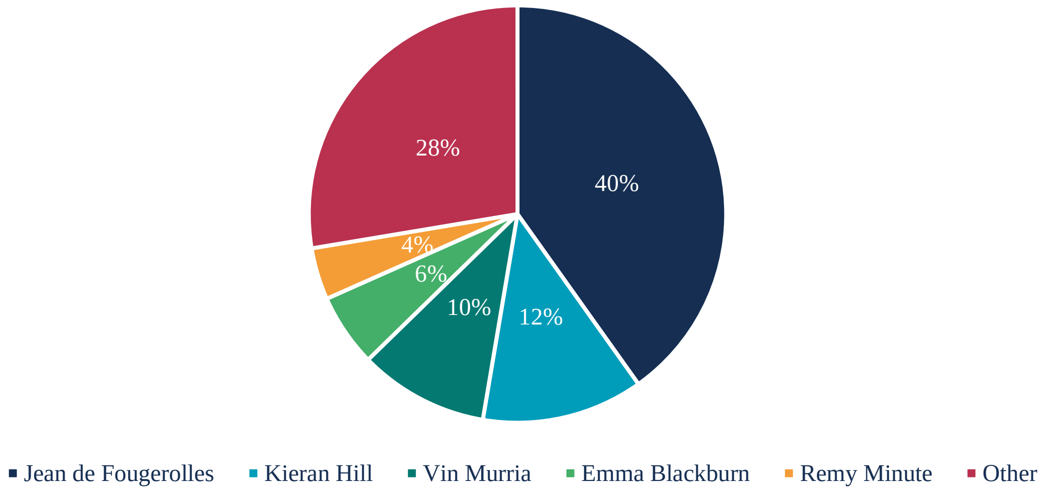
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	5YR CAGR
Revenues	£166,974	£253,647	£488,322	£512,913	£555,952	27%
Costs	£85,333	£484,538	£457,927	£559,230	£532,573	44%
Cost to Income ratio	0.51	1.91	0.94	1.09	0.96	
Net Profit	£81,641	-£230,891	£30,395	-£46,317	£23,379	-22%
Net Profit Margin (%)	0.49	-0.91	0.06	-0.09	0.04	
Net Assets	-£9,908	£33,626	£64,021	£17,704	£73,834	249%

Source: Ascension

*2020 accounts shown are unaudited.

The Managers holding company is entirely owned by Ascensions management and Venture Partners. The largest proportion of 40.16% is held by Jean de Fougerolles, followed by Kieran Hill with 12.50% and Venture Partner Vin Murria with 10.04%. One of the original founders, Sanjay Wadhwani, left the business in 2015, which is when the Manager became a subsidiary of Ascension Ventures (Holdings) Limited. The holding company was partly held by Finance Birmingham Limited until 2018, when the 16 Venture Partners bought out the stake.

CHART 3: ASCENSION VENTURES LIMITED (HOLDINGS) LTD OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE



Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

Overall, the Manager's increasing revenues are a positive sign, however, we would prefer to see a more consistent, and higher profit margin. Turning to the balance sheet, while there is no long-term debt, net asset levels are small in comparison to the revenues, and indeed in comparison to other more established managers operating in this space.

Quality of Governance and Management Team

The Board of Directors at Ascension is the ultimate decision-making entity for the Manager and is made up of the four largest shareholders of the holding company, excluding Kieran Hill. These members also make up the remuneration committee. Though Kieran Hill is not a member of these committees, he still has operational responsibility and authority in that he is a Partner and the Chief Investment Officer. Kip Meek is Chairman and the Non-Executive Director on the Board.

Currently, Ascension appoint Mainspring Nominees Limited to act as custodian and nominee for the Ascension EIS Evergreen Fund. It has previously used Reyker Nominees Ltd which entered into special administration in 2019. We are told that fortunately, Ascension had already been discussing commercial terms with Mainspring, and so were able to transition fairly seamlessly. However, Ascension has made us aware that there is still some cash held up with Reyker, amounting to £265,000 for the Ascension EIS Evergreen Fund, and £655,000 for their SEIS Fund '19.

TABLE 3: OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE	DETAILS
Board of Directors	**Mandate**: The board of directors of the Manager has a stewardship responsibility to: 1. supervise and to oversee the conduct of the business of the company; 2. set policies appropriate for the business of the company; 3. approve corporate strategies and goals. **Members**: Kip Meek, Remy Minute, Emma Blackburn, and Jean de Fougerolles **Frequency**: every 2 months
Remuneration Committee	**Mandate:** The remuneration committee of the Manager is to ensure the long-term alignment of interests of the company, its employees and shareholders. **Members:** Ascension Directors **Frequency:** Ad-hoc

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

Currently, Jean de Fougerolles is listed as the SMF16 Compliance Oversight function, and Kieran Hill is the SMF17 Money Laundering Reporting Officer. Despite this, there is currently no dedicated compliance officer, and the two aforementioned individuals must oversee these functions, alongside their daily responsibilities at the firm and across the group. Although this is not unusual for a firm of this size, it is encouraging to note that the firm makes use of a specialist third party consultant, (Enterprise IC) to promote robust oversight.

Ascension has provided us with a number of policies and procedures to review and have been very forthcoming with governance documentation. We have reviewed the conflicts of interest policy, co-investment policy, code of ethics, investment allocation policy, business continuity plan, personal investment policy and the code of professional conduct, and find that these documents go into great detail and are fit for purpose.

Overall, Ascension has been very transparent in presenting its governance documentation.

Product Quality Assessment

Investment Team

The Ascension EIS investment team constitutes six individuals, and is split into two functions, with Kieran Hill, Jean de Fougerolles, and Remy Minute making up the Decision-Making team, and are therefore responsible for signing off new investments. Kieran, along with Rakesh Murria and Nico Albanese then make up the Deal-Flow team, with Chris Wheatcroft also offering support in terms of deal flow, although we understand that Chris spends most of his time management the angel network for co-investment, named the Ascension Syndicate Club. The remainder of the team also work on Ascension's SEIS Fund, while Jean also works across the Fair by Design Fund and other products.

The core team has worked together for over five years with limited team member movement and has been working on this EIS strategy since June 2017 and followed a similar strategy prior to this through its SEIS Funds. Jean has over 20 years' experience working in media and technology businesses and prior to forming Ascension, Jean worked as head of distribution for MTV and CEO at Two Way Media (sold to Virgin Media and private equity), and was also an active angel investor. Remy was the founder and CEO of CSC Media Group (sold to Sony Pictures) and has worked in broadcast and interactive media for nearly 20 years as an active angel investor. Kieran also has previous experience in a tech start up, which is where he was introduced to Jean in 2011. Ascension states that having a team of "ex-operators" is attractive to potential investee companies, this being the fact that the Ascension team have previously been tech entrepreneurs or senior management of tech start-ups themselves. Ascension believes that this presents a unique selling point in terms of deal flow and support that can be provided to companies.

The Deal-Flow team is responsible for sourcing deal flow and carrying out initial analysis, before recommending potential investments to Kieran and Jean, i.e. the Decision-Making team. These two individuals will then get involved through in-depth interviews with potential investee companies, before deciding which companies to undertake more thorough due diligence, a process which the entire team will be involved in carrying out. In terms of portfolio monitoring, members of the Ascension team do not currently take any board seats, due to the minority stakes in which it takes. However, it will take observer rights and carry out post investment monitoring, which will mainly be the responsibility of Kieran and Jean.

Ascension has an extensive network of sixteen Venture Partners and mentors. These individuals are primarily ex-entrepreneurs with operational experience in scaling and exiting technology businesses, and also offer extensive industry networks themselves, aiding deal flow. These partners all own shares in Ascension Ventures, and many are invested into underlying investee companies, in which case may involve sitting on boards and providing hands-on support. Some examples given by Ascension include Mark Wood, who is the ex-Chairman of ITN and ex-CEO of future publishing. We are told he is an active advisor for Ascension and is the chairman of one of the portfolio companies, and has also assisted with origination, having historically put forward one or two deals a month for Ascension to review. Vin Murria is one of Ascensions largest shareholders and was recently named UK Business Angel of the Year. She has also sourced a number of opportunities for the Ascension team over the last six months. Lastly, Erik Blachford is founder of Expedia, as well as working with many other companies which have gone on to become billion-dollar companies. He is key to providing investment opportunities to Ascension due to his access to US VCs and corporates.

In terms of alignment between the investment team and investors, the investment team will receive part of the carry from an exit as part of their remuneration, which is vested for 5 years. We are told that this forms a significant form of overall remuneration and will assist with retention. Further, Jean and Kieran have both invested into the EIS on the same terms as investors; further Kieran and Remy, have also invested directly into some of the investee companies held by the EIS. The team is therefore well aligned with the investor's interests. However, the investments made outside of the EIS do present a potential conflict of interest which will need to be managed carefully.

In conclusion, although relatively small, senior members of the team have a good depth of experience in the technology and media space. The team has been working together for over five years with no significant departures and are well aligned with investor interests. Further, the team can call upon an impressive list of venture partners, including Erik Blachford, who will expand Ascension's network into the US. However, as mentioned previously, Remy only works for Ascension part time, and while five full time staff are sufficient for the current size of the portfolio, if this were to increase significantly, they would need to expand the team, specifically with regard to post investment monitoring. Further, Kieran and Jean appear to take significant responsibility in not only the investment team, but also Ascension Management, and therefore present some key man risk.

Investment Strategy & Philosophy

The Ascension EIS invests in early stage technology companies that have scalable IP and technology development. Ascension has stated that the Fund is placed to bridge the gap between seed investment rounds and traditional VC/PE Series A funding rounds for promising technology start-ups. There are three key areas of focus when considering a company for investment: the quality of the team, the robustness of the technology, particularly in comparison to competitors, and the market size/potential of the product. We are told that the quality of the management team is the most important of these three criteria, as Ascension wants to ensure that the members are committed and have a good understanding of the problem that their product is trying to solve. Once this is established, Ascension will move its attention to the distribution of the product, as it feels that this is key for product-market-fit. This is where Ascension feels that it can most add value, utilising its networks and those of its venture partners, mentors and corporate contacts to help a portfolio company get access to revenue opportunities.

Investments are likely to be in B2B or B2B2C businesses, and the Fund avoids B2C companies due to their capital-intensive nature, and cost of customer acquisition. Ascension has identified certain sub sectors and investment themes within the UK technology industry which it feels present excellent opportunities for value creation and commercial growth:

- Online Video & Content
- Applied AI & Deep-tech
- Ecommerce and platforms
- Fintech

Investee companies are expected to be revenue generating, at around £30,000 a month of recurring revenues, and to have a minimum of 12 months cash runway, assuming no revenue for a year, post investment. The expected ticket size is between £50,000 and £250,000, currently averaging at around £70,000 for companies valued at between £3 million and £8 million. As a result, the Ascension EIS will usually be taking minority stakes in these companies, and therefore emphasise a focus on co-investment. Ascension will collaborate with the angel community and other seed stage VCs, who will usually lead the deal. Ascension also state that this co-investment philosophy provides deal flow opportunities from these co-investors; and ensures that companies are well capitalised on their journey to Series A funding. Some examples of co-investors that Ascension had provided include Balderton Capital, QED, Entrepreneur First, Seedcamp, Mangrove Capital, The Guardian Media Group, Founders Factory, Village Global, and Stride VC, among others. In the longer term, Ascension hopes that as the EIS builds a track record, it can begin investing larger stakes into companies, and therefore lead more deals, with the ability to take Board seats.

An investor will be allocated across a target portfolio of eight equally weighted technology companies, with deployment expected to take place over a period of 12 months. The target holding period for these companies between five and seven years, though we are told this may be broadened to between three and ten years, and that the team will consider an early exit if they believe it is the right move for the company, even though investors see their EIS tax relief clawback from HMRC. By way of illustration, Ascension EIS has already had two exits (one partial) after 11 months and two years respectively, which generated a return of £151,000 on £90,000 invested. On the other hand, we are told that the team will regularly turn down early exit offers if it is not suitable and have declined three in the last year. Portfolio companies are expected to have the potential for a 10x return, although at the investor portfolio level, the Fund will target a net return of 3x before tax reliefs.

Ascension states that it will avoid tranched investments into one company, noting that it prefers to make a single larger investment, with a preference to avoid follow-on investment. Nonetheless, investors will be given pre-emption rights for any follow-on investment in existing portfolio companies. It should also be noted, that the EIS does invest in portfolio companies within the Ascension SEIS portfolios. Ascension state that in order to avoid the conflict of interest which this gives rise to, it will ensure that it does not lead the EIS investment round for current Ascension portfolio businesses, and will take the valuation in which the lead investor has invested at. Currently eleven of the 25 companies in the portfolio were previous SEIS investments.

TABLE 4: INVESTOR PORTFOLIO CHARACTERISTICS

METRIC	TARGET
Number of investee companies	8
Target rate of deployment	12 months
Expected holding period[1]	5 – 7 years
Level of tax relief after fees	100%
Target investor portfolio return per £1 invested (net of fees, excluding tax reliefs)	£3.00
Target Stage of investee company development	Post Seed- pre-Series A
Expected ticket size	£75,000-£250,000

Source: Ascension; Advantage IQ

Ascension has stated that the USP of the Ascension EIS service comes from the proven investment team and its Venture Partner/Mentor network, and established brand and infrastructure. Ascension states that while there are many other EIS funds bridging the gap between seed financing and Series A, it feels that the pool of technology focused EISs is much smaller. As such, it believes that the Ascension EIS is positioned well relative to the market, as the team are ex-operators in the technology space, and continue to work in technology on a day to say basis, providing the infrastructure for valuable strategic & strategic development, as well as follow-on funding expertise.

Overall, the strategy is well defined and. Investors can expect a certain level or risk associated with high-return technology start-ups, however 8 companies give for a reasonably well diversified portfolio, and the level of risk is commensurate with a 3x target return.

Pipeline/Prospects and Current Portfolio

Since the current, evergreen service launched in February 2018, the Ascension EIS has invested £1.74 million into 17 companies, and has had one exit, albeit within the required three-year holding period required to qualify for EIS tax relief. The 25 companies in the current portfolio have a total current value of £2.48 million.

TABLE 5: FUND PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

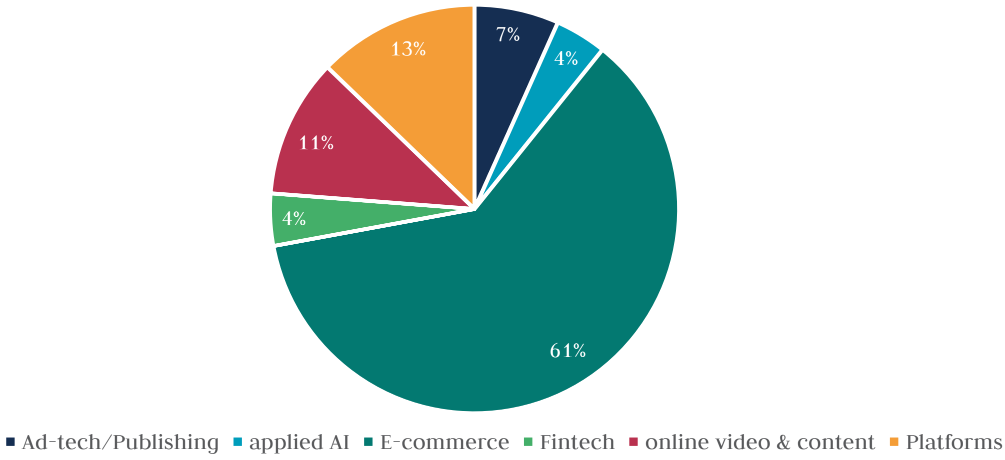
METRIC	DATA
Date of Fund launch	July 2017
Amount deployed	£2.01 million
Number of individual company investments	25
Current portfolio size in £M	£2.48 million
Number of companies in current portfolio	25
Number of exits	2*

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

*one full exit and one partial exit.

As presented in the chart below, the EIS is exposed to five sub sectors, as defined by Ascension, within the technology sector, with a concentration of over 60% into ecommerce businesses. However, ecommerce companies, by nature, can vary greatly in their target consumers and underlying product market, and as an example current companies provide platforms to generate sales leads, a payment solutions provider, and an online custom motorcycle sales store, among others.

CHART 4: ASCENSION EIS EVERGREEN FUND SECTOR SPLIT AS AT MARCH 2020



Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

Note: Sectors as defined by Ascension

The table below presents the existing companies in the portfolio. The largest investment constitutes 12.49% of the value of the overall portfolio, mainly due to an uplift in valuation of over 6x. There have also been two value increases of over 3x and another over 2x, while the remaining 13 companies are held at cost, leading to a total unrealised gain of 1.46x

TABLE 6: CURRENT PORTFOLIO AS AT MARCH 2020

COMPANY NAME	SECTOR	DATE OF INITIAL INVESTMENT	TOTAL INVESTMENT	CURRENT VALUE	UNREALISED VALUE	PROPORTION OF PORTFOLIO
ZigZag Global Ltd	E-commerce	19/07/2017	£50,000	£158,907	3.18 x	6.41%
Localistico Ltd	E-commerce	02/10/2017	£50,001	£101,066	2.02 x	4.08%
Visionable Ltd	Platforms	11/10/2017	£49,990	£309,600	6.19 x	12.49%
Wonky Star Ltd ("Night Zookeeper")	E-commerce	24/10/2017	£50,000	£78,358	1.57 x	3.16%
Avuxi Ltd	E-commerce	09/01/2018	£65,000	£65,000	1.00 x	2.62%
Format Zone Ltd	online video & content	09/02/2018	£24,996	£24,996	1.00 x	1.01%
Concured	online video & content	14/02/2018	£74,734	£84,484	1.13 x	3.41%
The Voucher Market Ltd ("WeGift")	E-commerce	19/02/2018	£99,999	£133,371	1.33 x	5.38%
Driftrock Ltd	E-commerce	19/02/2018	£75,000	£75,000	1.00 x	3.03%
Mutt Motorcycles Ltd	E-commerce	27/02/2018	£76,000	£148,336	1.95 x	5.98%
Agent Cash Ltd ("Floe")	E-commerce	07/03/2018	£149,996	£242,688	1.62 x	9.79%

Team First App Ltd ("Percent")	E-commerce	04/04/2018	£47,229	£99,916	2.12 x	4.03%
Noto Technologies Ltd ("Mobilus Labs")	Social Impact	04/04/2018	£56,700	£56,698	1.00 x	2.29%
A Million Ads Ltd	Ad-tech/Publishing	30/05/2018	£41,528	£41,528	1.00 x	1.68%
Globechain Ltd	E-commerce	31/07/2018	£50,000	£50,000	1.00 x	2.02%
iDefigo Group Ltd	online video & content	18/10/2018	£80,000	£80,000	1.00 x	3.23%
Karamu Ltd ("Feast-it")	E-commerce	21/11/2018	£75,000	£133,515	1.78 x	5.39%
Secret Spa (London) Ltd	E-commerce	22/01/2019	£93,998	£109,665	1.17 x	4.42%
Blokur Ltd	Ad-tech/Publishing	06/03/2019	£120,386	£120,386	1.00 x	4.86%
Monolith	Fintech	05/04/2019	£100,001	£100,001	1.00 x	4.03%
Incuto	applied AI	05/04/2019	£98,893	£98,893	1.00 x	3.99%
Supply Compass	E-commerce	25/06/2019	£50,014	£50,014	1.00 x	2.02%
Bulbshare Ltd	Online video & content	12/03/2020	£40,320	£40,320	1.00 x	1.63%
Holome Technologies Ltd	Online video & content	03/04/2020	£36,493	£36,493	1.00 x	1.47%
Incall Ltd (Smartcom)	E-commerce	03/04/2020	£40,022	£40,022	1.00 x	1.61%
Total			**£1,696,301**	**£2,479,257**	**1.46 x**	**100.00%**

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

As discussed previously, the EIS Fund generally sources deal-flow from Venture Partners, existing networks, including, but not limited to, its previous co-investors and portfolio companies. Further to this, Ascension holds its own events, as well as regularly attending others. The EIS Fund also makes use of accelerators and incubators, direct approaches and the Ascension SEIS Fund, from which eleven of the 25 companies in the EIS portfolio have been sourced. As can be seen above, ticket sizes are relatively small, with the largest single investment amounting to just over £120,000, which is well below many other managers operating within this space.

The Fund aims to fully deploy investor capital within 12 months, by investing in, on average, two companies per quarter. As can be seen by the chart below the number of investments per quartile varies. Nonetheless, the rate of deployment is, so far, on target, as there were twelve investments in 2018, and already five investments halfway through 2019. Further, as the Fund gains traction, existing investee companies will create a natural source of deal flow, and the Fund is becoming less reliant on deal flow through the SEIS as time goes on, with most of the recent eight investments being companies new to the manager. Further, as the service builds traction, the total investments have been increasing in size, which Ascension expressed as an ongoing target to begin taking larger stakes in companies. As previously noted, the Manager was affected by Reyker administration which impacted its ability to fundraise and deploy late in 2019.

TABLE 7: DEPLOYMENT TRACK RECORD

QUARTER	TOTAL AMOUNT DEPLOYED	NUMBER OF INVESTEE COMPANIES	NEW INVESTMENTS	SEIS FOLLOW-ON
Q3 2017	£50,000	1	1	0
Q4 2017	£149,991	3	1	2
Q1 2018	£619,247	8	5	3
Q2 2018	£145,457	3	0	3
Q3 2018	£50,000	1	1	0

Q4 2018	£155,000	2	2	0
Q1 2019	£214,384	2	1	1
Q2 2019	£248,908	3	3	0
Q3 2019	£0	0	0	0
Q4 2019	£0	0	0	0
Q1 2020	£116,835	3	1	2

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

The current pipeline is presented in the table below. These five companies are expected to receive capital through Q2 2020. However, given the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19, Ascension has stated that the pipeline below represents only companies which the Manager has already had a high level of engagement with. Nonetheless, the pipeline below is sufficient for the service to continue, if not exceed its current level of deployment, and the companies appear to be in line with the strategy.

TABLE 8: CURRENT PIPELINE OF INVESTMENT

COMPANY	SECTOR	POTENTIAL INVESTMENT DATE	CAPACITY
Company 1	Software / Legaltech	30/06/2020	£250,000
Company 2	Software / Neural Networks	TBC	£250,000
Company 3	Software / Digital Media	30/06/2020	£250,000
Company 4	Software / Fintech	TBC	£250,000
Company 5	Software / Impact Investment	30/05/2020	£250,000
Total			**£1,250,000**

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

In conclusion, the portfolio and pipeline are in line with the investment strategy, and there is a good level of diversification over sub-sectors, given that the service is entirely technology focused. Further, deployment has, for the most part, been on or above the target of two companies per quarter, which means that investors have been on target to be invested within 12 months.

Investment Process

The Manager has described its investment process as follows in AdvantageIQ:

TABLE 9: INVESTMENT PROCESS

INVESTMENT PROCESS	DETAILS
Deal sourcing/ origination	Ascension has a comprehensive and proven network for sourcing deals, which provides it with an advantage over other UK-based tech investors when it comes to gaining a 'first look' at innovative businesses looking for funding at the Seed+ stage (where its ASCENSION EIS Fund operates). Over the past seven years, Ascension has built a strong brand as a leading early-stage UK tech investor and sees over 2,000 investment opportunities a year (it informs us that it has been compared to Seedcamp at the pre-Seed & Seed level): • Ascension's senior team's network • A large infrastructure of Venture Partners and Mentors • Ascensions own high quality events, and attending others' events • The Ascension SEIS Fund • Co-investors (such as Balderton Capital, QED, Seedcamp, Mangrove Capital, Northzone, The Guardian Media Group, Village Global, Stride VC and more) • Accelerators/Incubators

- Existing portfolio companies
- Direct website typeform

Deal filtering and selection	Ascension operates a rigorous deal filtering and selection process, which has multiple layers through to making an investment decision. On Monday morning, the whole Ascension team spends an hour updating each other on general marketing and business activities, including deal-flow events they will be attending in the coming week (Demo Days, VC events, etc...). Additionally, this is a chance for all different fund teams to discuss deals they are working on. On a Monday afternoon, the Ascension EIS deal-flow team (Rakesh, Nico & Kieran) discuss inbound deal opportunities from the previous week The team will then filter through the pipeline and organise based on core criteria being hit (i.e. stage of business, location, EIS qualifying, sector, etc.) and then arrange an initial screening phone call/video call with the founding team within a few days. Businesses with a lead investor and closing a round will take priority. The team will then reconvene on Thursday morning to discuss the qualified deal-flow from the previous two days. This 2-hour meeting is also attended by the decision-making team: Jean, Remy & Kieran. After a lengthy discussion on the propositions, the deal team will organise a first face-to-face meeting with the best prospects, to meet Jean, Remy & Kieran for a 1-2 hour session. If the decision-making team likes the proposition after this meeting, they will enter into due diligence - both tech and customer - before arranging a follow-up meeting with the whole founding team (usually at the offices of the business), to go through any additional questions which may have arisen from Due Diligence. This meeting may also include one of Ascension's sector expert Mentors or Venture Partners. The decision-making team will then vote on whether a Term Sheet should be issued to the company. Once a Term Sheet is signed, the Team begins detailed Legal and Financial Due Diligence, including customer interviews and founder/team references. This process is repeated on a weekly basis but does sometimes deviate if deal opportunities that need a quick decision, or a delay if further due diligence is needed. All deal-flow is tracked using the Affinity CRM system, which allows each investment manager to upload investment decks and financial plans, take notes/observations/suggest follow-on routes of inquiry. The next Ascension investment manager can then build on this information (and not start from ground zero) and continue to add the required details/data around each investment opportunity.
Due diligence process	In order to streamline Ascension's due diligence process and the preparation of Investment Committee Papers, the investment team undertakes video calls with the founders of the companies under investment consideration, once a Term Sheet has been agreed. The video recording will be done using Zoom and will be split into two parts: **A. Detailed due diligence questions - 1 hour** On the call, Ascension will go through the following questions in order. Additional information can be added to this list at the founder's request or specific to each investment case. • Background • Market • Product • Technology

- Intellectual Property
- Team
- Competition
- Business Model
- Route to market
- Risk Factors
- Customer Traction & Financials
- Fundraising
- Other

B. Headline/Key questions - 5 minutes (to be answered as a separate segment of the video call):

- Product - Key products, business model
- Route to market and traction
- Team
- Fundraise

Ascension also undertakes Founder references with current investors and speaks with key commercial partners from the prospective investee business to ensure it is building products that are gaining product/market fit.

Deal approval	There are 3 decision-makers (Jean, Remy, Kieran) who must all be in favour of investing in order for a deal to proceed.

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

The Manager reviews around 2,000 deals a year. Those considered suitable for the Ascension EIS will be reviewed by the deal flow team every Monday afternoon, where they will decide which ones to arrange phone or video calls with in the coming days. Those that meet the EIS's initial criteria will be discussed by the deal flow and decision-making teams on a Thursday morning. The most promising companies will then have a face to face meeting with the decision-making team, and if successful, the team will begin carrying out due diligence on the potential investment.

The wider aim of the due diligence process is to understand how, and in what time frame, this company can achieve £100,000 monthly recurring revenues, in order to unlock Series A funding. Ascension states that in order to receive investment, a company is required to have a founding team of at least one sales founder and one technical founder, both of which will receive reference checks. The product or service must be live, and the team will assess the scalability of the product or service, as well as testing it against competitors. The team will carry out customer calls, and analyse the route to market of the product or service, particularly to assess what value add can be brought to the business through Ascension's own network, or those of the Venture Partners and mentors. It is important to note, however, that Ascension does not carry out any third-party due diligence.

The decision-making team must come to a unanimous decision to sign off an investment, which we find good practice. On the other hand, it would be preferable to have an independent member on the Investment Committee. Advance assurance is a pre-requisite of investment, and Ascension states that many companies have received prior to Ascensions interest. As mentioned previously, Ascension acknowledges that making follow-on investments into SEIS investments creates a conflict of interest, and therefore Ascension will not lead the investment round or set the valuation.

In terms of documentation of the investment process, Ascension has provided us with a flow diagram to represent the decision-making process for the Ascension EIS fund, therefore ensuring that the proper decision-making route is followed. Ascension has provided evidence and visibility on the IC process, and along with access to formal minutes, example IC documentation.

Overall, the investment process appears well thought-out and well structured. Responsibilities are split well between members of the team, and the level of work required is commensurate with the size of the team.

Risk Management

Risks relating to the default of the investee companies are partly mitigated during the investment process through the analysis and due diligence undertaken before an investment decision is made. As has been noted, Ascension will evaluate potential investments based on a set of criteria, which includes looking at financial forecasts, management teams, and the scalability of the product or service. Though internal due diligence appears detailed, risk could be further mitigated by seeking third party due diligence and/or independent decision makers, including the use of Ascension Mentors and Venture Partners for sector specific due diligence and opinion.

Portfolios will be allocated into equal weightings across the eight companies in the portfolio. Other than this, there are no formal portfolio construction parameters for the EIS. However, we are told that there is an informal rule of a minimum of 4 companies previously invested into by Ascension in any one investor portfolio. Further, the team takes diversification of sector into account at the time of investment. For example, if there are two equally good investment opportunities, but one operates in the same sub-sector as an existing portfolio company, the other option will be put forward.

As post seed investment is relatively early in a business's life span, these investments are considerably riskier than later stage investments. Therefore, Ascension has stated it is a crucial time for companies to receive sufficient support relating to strategy, business development, HR, and follow-on funding opportunities. Each investee company will receive an onboarding pack which gives them access to a suite of technology services. The investment team will then meet with companies at least once every two months, to offer their support and put them in touch with the relevant venture partners and mentors, either for tailored support or to pursue commercial opportunities. Appendix 2 outlines examples of support that was given to some of the EIS portfolio companies.

Kieran and Jean take most of the responsibility regarding post-investment monitoring. Investors will receive a one pager of each of their investee companies once a quarter, and as mentioned previously, Ascension take minority holdings and therefore usually are unable to take board seats. However, Ascension will take observer rights, and require companies to provide at least quarterly, if not monthly, standardised reports which include the following:

- Cash runway - updates on how much cash is left in the bank and whether the pre-agreed cost-base is being met.
- Revenue- update on new client wins, partnerships and monthly revenue (MRR and/or gross revenue).
- Team and advisor hires- reports on new hires (salaries and option pool allocations).

The team avoids making follow-on investments into the EIS, and so will not be monitoring companies for the purpose of potential further investment. Instead, companies are monitored to provide ongoing support. The following occurrences would trigger a review of an investment:

- Any evidence of fraudulent activity.
- Failure to meet reporting requirements.
- Sudden key individual departures.
- Any failure to seek investor consent when they were required.
- Company financial runway becomes less than 6 months.

Ascensions valuation policy is to value companies based on fair value; calculated by the most recent share price based on the valuation of the most recent funding round. For follow-on investments from the SEIS, Ascension will never lead the deal, and will therefore invest at the same valuation as the lead investor. This is to mitigate any conflicts of interest presented by the follow-on investment. Further, companies must complete an EIS advance assurance application and have it agreed as a pre-requisite for investment.

Overall, Ascension's thorough post-investment monitoring and support, as well as due diligence pre-investment will help to reduce the risk of company default, which is otherwise relatively high given the early stage nature of the companies targeted by the service. On the other hand, given the minority stakes which Ascension takes in each business, it means that it will have less influence over the company, taking a more passive approach with limited ability to instigate change where necessary.

Key Features

Investors are charged a 2% annual management fee on the initial subscription amount, and this will be deferred until realisation is made, and payable up to a maximum of 5 years from the relevant closing date. If no realisation is made, no fee is due from the investor. Alternatively, investors could be charged a 5% fee upfront, instead of an ongoing deferred management fee. We are told that the deferred management fee is the default position, but an investor can elect to pay a one-off 5% upfront management fee instead, which could result in a 50% saving in fees overall, assuming an exit is achieved

Investors will also be charged a 20% performance fee based on the fund achieving above a 1.3x, and then an enhanced 30% performance fee on anything above 2.3x. Previously, the EIS charged a 20% performance fee on a 1.05% hurdle. The increase in the hurdle is a positive change, nonetheless, the performance hurdle is below the 3x return target.

Investee companies are charged a 5% arrangement fee on initial investment, with no ongoing fees.

TABLE 10: FEES PAID BY INVESTOR AND INVESTEE COMPANY

FEE (excluding VAT)	CHARGED TO:	
	INVESTOR	INVESTEE COMPANY
Initial Fee	-	-
Custodian Fee	-	-
Arrangement Fee	-	5.0%
Annual Management Fee[1]	2.0%	-
Annual Admin/Service Fee	-	-
Dealing Fee	-	-
Director's or other Company Fees	-	-
Exit Performance Fee	20% or 30% on enhanced hurdle	-
Exit Performance Hurdle	1.3x or enhanced hurdle of 2.3x	-
Available discounts	n/a	
Other Fees (please explain)		
Adviser/Intermediary charges	3.0%	
Execution Only Fees		
Direct Application Fees		

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

[1] Charged on the Initial Subscription Amount and is deferred and capped after five years. This annual management charge is the default position. Alternatively, investors can be charged a 5% fee upfront.

[2] performance fees based on a hurdle of 130% at fund level. There is an enhanced performance fee of 30% on anything above 230% (i.e. 2x return, net of all fees but before any tax considerations).

Performance

As the EIS has only been running for 3 years, it has not yet made any qualifying exits, which makes it difficult to assess performance. The two EIS exits (one of these partial) in addition to 3 SEIS exits over past 18 months which Ascension has achieved, generated a return of 1.45x return after 11 months. In addition, there has been a partial exit of Mutt Motorcycles Ltd, leading to a 1.98x gain on 50% of the invested capital, although similarly before the required three-year holding period. Further, four of the companies in the current portfolio have received uplifts in valuations, therefore leading to an unrealised gain of 1.14x. Further, HQ Mobile Ltd was also held by Ascension's SEIS Fund '15 (portfolio current value is 3.11x original value), which made a 5.6x return upon exit and the recent Mutt exit from the same fund came in at 9.5x exit. Ascension has also seen an exit of a company called Chilli Connect from its SEIS 2018 which made a return of 2.27x after 9 months.

TABLE 11: ASCENSION EIS EXITS

INVESTEE COMPANY	DESCRIPTION	DATE OF INITIAL INVESTMENT	HOLDING PERIOD	TOTAL AMOUNT INVESTED	TOTAL AMOUNT REALISED	EXIT MUTIPLE
HQ Mobile Ltd ("Albert")	Fintech – Acquired by Santander	13/3/2018	9 months	£53,522	£77,917	1.456x
Mutt Motorcycles Ltd	E-commerce – Partial exit of 50%	27/02/2018	2 years, 3 months	£38,000*	£75,240	1.98x

Source: Ascension Ventures

*This is a partial exit – 50% of the initial investment was realised at 1.98x. The other 50% remains in the portfolio.

Appendix 1: Key Personnel

Key Investment Professionals

NAME	JOB TITLE	DATE STARTED	BIOGRAPHY
Jean de Fougerolles	CEO	Feb-2012	Jean founded Ascension in 2012 and has over 20 years' experience working in media and technology businesses. He is the Managing Partner at Ascension and has led the firm's investments in over 75 EIS eligible tech businesses over the past 5 years. Jean is very involved in the deal sourcing, selecting, and diligencing. Post-investment, he takes an active role in portfolio management. After obtaining his MBA from INSEAD in 1997, Jean became Head of Distribution for MTV Europe in London. In 2003, he became CEO at Two Way Media, a pioneer in cross-platform digital technology, games and content. In 2008, Jean led the sale of Two Way Media to Virgin Media and a leading private equity group. He was also an early angel investor in Atom Films, later sold to Viacom as part of Atom Entertainment for US$200m.
Kieran Hill	Partner	Sep-2013	Kieran has over 10 years' experience as both an entrepreneur and investor and joined Ascension in 2013 as its first employee. He manages the investment process from origination through to completion and works with Ascension's portfolio companies on a weekly basis. Kieran and Jean have invested together (through running the Ascension Funds) in over 75 EIS eligible tech businesses over the past 5 years. Prior to Ascension, Kieran and Jean met while working at a tech start-up in 2011. Kieran graduated from Westminster University with a first-class honours degree in Journalism.
Remy Minute	Partner	Apr-2016	Remy was the founder and CEO of CSC Media Group Ltd, which he sold to Sony Pictures Television for £107m in 2014. Remy has worked in broadcast and interactive media for nearly 20 years and is an active angel investor to start-ups. Remy has been a Partner at Ascension since 2018 responsible for leading its EIS investments and has been a member of the Ascension Investment Committee for its (S)EIS Funds since 2016.

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

Appendix 2: Investment Support

COMPANY NAME	SUPPORT PROVIDED
A Million Ads Ltd	Ascension Ventures Partner introduced the company to GAME Digital plc. Jean introduced the company to BBH, Fairfax and Virgin. Introduced an angel investor into the company's bridge round, who invested the majority of allocation. Introduced to Force Over Mass who invested in Series A. Continued business development and strategic support from Jean and Kieran, including introduction to Ascension Ventures Partner Pharus Advisor, who is helping with US/NYC launch (and finding US based NxD). Jean advising on video strategy and introducing to Pluto TV in the US. Ascension non-executive director and Chairman Kip Meek is also Chair of A Million Ads.
Agent Cash Ltd ("Floe")	Ascension has helped with some business development introductions, including ASOS and Arsenal FC. Ascension made introductions to VC's for its Series A round (Agent Cash ended up raising its Series A from a strategic investor, Accor Group)
Blokur	Ascension brought additional investors into the round alongside the fund. Ascension put Remy Minute (Partner and Venture Partner) as a mentor for the business who has advised them on strategy and fundraising. Kieran acted as a point of DD for investors looking to participate in later rounds. AV introduced the business to a multitude of later-stage VCs. AV introduced Blokur to potential commercial clients (The Guardian Media Group). AV hosted portfolio events that Phil Barry (Blokur's CEO) has attended and pitched at.
Concured	Accessed $30,000 of AWS Credits for being an Ascension portfolio company. Jean introduced Concured to ASOS and Kieran to the Financial Times. Fundraising strategy help, including intros to VCs - although Concured raised through a non-Ascension intro (Hambro Perks), we spent time helping with the DD process. General counselling to founder on strategic and more emotional side of being a founder.
FormatZone	Jean has worked closely with Mark Rowland (Founder of Formatzone) on fundraising strategy (including intro to co-investor Midven), commercial introductions and restructuring the cap table when Ben Robinson (original co-founder of Formatzone) left the business. This included paying for legal fees as business was short of cash.
Incuto Limited	Ascension restructured Incuto's investment strategy and board composition pushing out a predatory investor director. The team led their seed round and took a board seat remaining active in influencing their sales, product and operational strategy. Introductions which lead to current fundraising and routes to market opportunities include Experian Innovation team, the HM Treasury innovation team, intro to John Bird via the Fair By Design Campaign team. Ascension also introduced the founder to Emma Blackburn our current CFO who took an interim position at the time of investment as well as investing as an angel herself. Further routes to market were introduced during the Fair By Design Roadshow, specifically designed to create route to market opportunities for the portfolio. This enabled the CEO to showcase a live case study of Incuto's work as part of a panel to an audience of Credit Unions. Ascension recently placed its Mentor, the former Strategy Director at BSkyB, on the business to advise on business commercial and pricing strategy.
Mutt Motorcycles Ltd	Ascension Ventures Partner, Sam Miller, was a key part of the formation of Mutt (suggested the two co-founders come together to create the business). Ascension then placed its then Chairman, Arthur Sherry, into the company as an angel investor and Chairman. Jean helped Will

	Rigg (co-founder / CEO) negotiate a licensing deal with a Canadian distributor and Kieran has helped the company raise debt financing from Finance Birmingham. Intro to PR guru Robin Morgan (ex-Editor The Sun) to advise on press strategy.
Team First App Ltd ("Percent")	Jean was a mentor for Percent for 6 months before Ascension led its pre-seed round and helped them get into Wayra 02 Accelerator program. It then placed Ascension Mentor, Mark Wood, into the business. Mark has gone on to become Percent's Chairman and has made introductions to Visa, Mastercard, ITV and many more large organisations that have gone on to sign deals with Percent. Both Jean and Kieran have also made a number of business development introductions over the past few years (number of charities, Cafe Nero, Quo Vadis restaurant group, Hache restaurant group, Pharus Advisors in NYC, and John Rigos (Five Guys NYC), Rothchilds). Ascension also helped the company raise its last two rounds of funding, including reviewing fundraising materials, valuation, amount being raised etc. and introductions to angel investors. Ascension made the crucial introduction to Nationwide Ventures that invested £1m in the last round and has signed a commercial contract valued at £250k+. Worked with management on business strategy and company pivot (twice).
The Voucher Market Ltd ("WeGift")	Introductions to a variety of potential customers including ASOS and Arcadia Group. Helped with follow-on funding for Seed+ round from both Ascension EIS Fund and angel network. Although not on the board, Aron calls Kieran and Jean for advice on a number of strategic decisions due to strong relationship formed. Support around hiring has also been provided.
Wonky Star Ltd ("Night Zookeeper")	Ascension has been supporting NZK on business development (intros to multiple businesses, including Amazon, Singapore Zoo, JK Rowling team, Nickelodeon, The Guardian Australia, Fairfax Media (Australia), Turner Broadcasting, Impact Awards nomination, Birmingham City Council, Children's Media Conference in Sheffield, numerous publishers (Quarto Group, Scholastic (US), Nelson (Can), Ravensburger (Ger), Random House) and strategy since its original investment. We brought our mentor, Howard Litton (ex MD Nickelodeon UK), into the business, who has been instrumental in helping the company get a commission deal with Sky Kids, along with other key commercial deals. Along with this, we have been the link to bringing other investors (angels, VCs) into the company (including supporting management at pitch events with London Business Angels and Angels Den) and a constant sounding board for the founding team. Jean hosted NZK team at its house for 1/2 day to meet a group of 5-9 years to product test the 1st version of NZK and take marketing photos (still on NZK website).

Source: Ascension; AdvantageIQ

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