

ICURE Explore EXSEP26

Tuesday 1st September to Thursday 10th December 2026

KEY DATES, EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDANCE**

Applications Open	Monday 18 th May	
Online Briefing Session	Thurs 21 st May @ 12-1pm	
Applications Close	Thursday 18 th June 23:59	
If your application is shortlisted both the EL and PSA will each be invited to an interview. PLEASE DIARISE THESE DATES.	29 th , 30 th June and 1 st July	
Meetings with TTOs on application.	1 st and 2 nd July	
Results sent to applicants	By closing on Friday 3 rd July	
Welcome Conference Call	Tues 21 st July, 09:30 to 13.00 - ELs must attend, optional for team members	
Week 1 – Preparation Week	Online Sessions between 10am and 4pm	
2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th and 7 th Sept	ELs are employed full-time on Explore (from 1 st Sept). On each day there will be online preparation and consolidation sessions – agenda shared at the Welcome Call.	ELs required each day. TTOs <u>new to ICURE</u> are required all day on 2 nd Sept. TTOs (experienced), PSAs & BAs optional.
Week 2	Bootcamp Part 1 – Face to Face in Southampton	
Tues 8 th Sept	Bootcamp Day 0	ELs arrive during the evening.
Wed 9 th Sept	Bootcamp Day 1	ELs only.
Thurs 10 th Sept	Bootcamp Day 2	ELs required all day PSA, TTO, BAs should attend registration at 3.30pm for Introduction Sessions at 4pm, followed by evening dinner & overnight stay.
Fri 11 th Sept	Bootcamp Day 3	All Team members attend until 3pm
Week 3	Bootcamp Part 2 - Online	
Tues 15 th Sept	Bootcamp Day 4	Entrepreneurial Lead (EL) and Technology Transfer representatives (TTO) must attend all day. Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) and Business Adviser (BA) must attend until 2pm for 'Time to complete BMC and Action Plans' (these documents form the basis of the Letter of Award).
Wed 16 th Sept	Bootcamp Day 5	Entrepreneurial Lead (EL) and Technology Transfer representatives (TTO) must attend all day. Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) and Business Adviser (BA) - optional to receive submission feedback.
Week 4		
Mon 21 st Sept 13:00 - 15:00	Catch Up Call - Online	ELs & TTOs required PSA & BA optional
Week 5		
Mon 28 th Sept 13:00 - 15:00	Catch Up Call - Online	ELs & TTOs required PSA & BA optional
Week 6		
Mon 5 th Oct 13:00 - 15:00	Catch Up Call - Online	ELs required TTO, PSA & BA optional
Week 7 - Gate 1 Progress Review Online		
Mon 12 th Oct 09:00 – 13.30	Gate 1 Review - Online	ELs required TTO required, 1hr, 20 mins AM, & 1hr PM. PSA/BA optional.
Week 8		

Mon 19 th Oct 13:00-15:00	Catch Up Call - Online	ELs required TTO, PSA & BA optional
Week 9 (Half term week)		
Mon 26 th Oct 13:00-15:00	Catch Up Call - Online	
Week 10		
Mon 2 nd Nov 09:00- 3:30	Catch Up Call - Online	All team members required for mentor group presentation. Approx. 1hr, 20 mins.
Week 11		
Mon 9 th Nov 09.00-16.00	Gate 2 - Online Progress Review	
Week 12		
Mon 16 th Nov 09:30-15:30	Business Models Bootcamp	ELs and BAs required TTOs and PSAs optional
Wed 18 th Nov 09.30-12.30	Investment workshop	
Week 13		
Tues 24 th & Wed 25 th Nov	Options Roundabout Pitch Training Options Roundabout Pitch Training Day – Face to Face (venue tbc)	ELs & BA required PSA and TTO recommended to attend
Thurs 26 th Nov to Fri 4 th Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 to 1s with mentors • Options Roundabout presentation and Panel questions rehearsal (1 hour) 	All team members recommended to attend
Week 14		
Tues 8 th & Wed 9 th Dec	Options Roundabout Panel Options Roundabout Panel – Face to Face @ London	All team members are required to attend. See notes below.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend all team members attend in person but there is a hybrid option for those who cannot. • At least the EL and one other team member MUST attend in person. • Each team will be allocated a 1-hour slot on one of the 2 days. This will be confirmed after the Mid-point review on Monday 16th February. • The EL with their team members present will deliver their 'ICURE Journey' presentation at the Options Roundabout • The Options Roundabout panel will provide feedback to the team on the commercialisation route they feel is most appropriate for the project/team at that stage. 		

** Timetable subject to change.

Please note:

- The EL and PSA roles may only be undertaken by one person per role (i.e., you cannot have one staff member covering both roles).
- As part of the 14-week programme the EL will spend approximately 10 weeks contacting and holding online and face-to-face meetings with target companies and organisations to investigate the market for their research. Contacts/travel will be both national and international, although from Monday 9th November (Gate 2) travel will be limited to day travel only.
- The EL must be employed full-time by the applying university / PSRE and dedicate 100% of their time to the programme for its duration – Tuesday 1st September to Thursday 10th December 2026.

What is Explore?

Innovate UK ICURE Explore is a 14-week full-time market exploration programme designed to train, fund and supports research teams to determine whether there is a market for products or services that utilise their ideas, research, science, and technologies. Up to £35,000* of funding is available to 'get out of the lab' and validate commercially promising ideas in the marketplace.

How does it work?

ICURE takes the scientific method (hypothesize, test, evaluate) and applies it to commercialisation. You will learn how to use this approach to test what your potential customers think about your idea, product, or service. In addition, you will receive training and interview practice, carrying out over 100 interviews and acquiring transferable business and social skills. Past participants say that having ICURE support, training, and funding to spend on market discovery has dramatically changed their perspective on their innovation.

What does it include?

- Funding support up to £35,000*. This comprises the EL salary for the duration of the programme, participation costs and a market research budget.
- Support covering approximately 14 weeks of EL salary to have fully committed time for customer discovery activities whilst participating in the programme.
- Access to SETsquared experts in bringing research to market, as well as proactive connections to our network of entrepreneurs, investors, and funders.
- Dependent upon the outcome of the Options Roundabout some teams may have the opportunity to access further training and some specialist sector support and access investors as part of the ICURE Exploit / Investor Readiness Programme.
- Face-to-Face and online bootcamps – this will be an intensive bootcamp where you will learn how to talk about your technology to customers, develop a hypothetical business model and identify your customers' pain points. You will also create a detailed action plan for your market discovery journey.
- Approximately 10 weeks of market validation against the customer discovery plan for your research using online software platforms, video conferencing and marketing tools and face-to-face engagement. This will involve targeting direct engagements with over 100 business leaders. You will join weekly conference calls with our team of experts who will provide guidance in taking research ideas to the market.
- Face-to-face pitch training to teach you how to pitch your research to potential customers and investors.
- Options Roundabout Panel - the opportunity to make a pitch to an experienced panel of funders, stakeholders and mentors to help accelerate the impact of your research and give feedback on commercialisation pathways.

*if the EL is a senior member of staff, this amount may be adjusted upon request.

NB!

- (i) This funding is not a grant, and there is no money paid upfront. Expenditure will go through the appropriate finance office at your university and may then be reclaimed after the programme finishes, based on actual and evidenced expenditure.
- (ii) InnovateUK will not cover any travel Visa costs.

Why Attend?

Past participants say that having dedicated time to understand what commercialisation of research means has dramatically changed their perspective on their research, ideas, and innovations. The programme introduces ICURE and provides the space and opportunity to think differently about impact, commercialisation, and entrepreneurship.

Who is eligible?

ICURE Explore is open to research teams in the UK excluding those from incorporated and/or trading companies. This includes, but is not limited to, UK researchers in a public or academic lab, a research

institute, an incubator, or a national facility.

ICURE teams are composed of four individuals:

1. **Entrepreneurial Lead / researchers and technicians who have completed research** – MUST be employed by the university and able to commit Full-Time for the duration of the programme starting Tuesday 1st September to Thursday 10th December 2026.
2. **Principal Scientific Adviser** – MUST be able to attend required bootcamp sessions as well as the Options Roundabout and be willing to support the programme throughout its duration – please see schedule of dates above.
3. **Technology Transfer Officer (TTO)** – MUST be able to attend required bootcamp sessions as well as the Options Roundabout. In addition, provide support for the EL and team during the ICURE programme and continued support for further commercialisation activity following the ICURE programme. Please see schedule above.
4. **Business Adviser** – motivated to offer expert guidance and support. Teams are strongly encouraged to name an adviser in their application. If you are unable to find an appropriate person, the ICURE team will help you identify one. Teams are responsible for any agreements or financial arrangements that may be needed with their Business Advisers.

NB! There is provision for £2000 charge plus VAT within the budget, however this may only be recovered via the finance department at the participating University who may then claim from ICURE as part of the overall spend at the end of the programme.

We particularly welcome applications from individuals in:

- Universities who have not previously participated in the ICURE programme.
- Universities who do not receive HEIF funding.
- Under-represented groups including women, people of colour, those living with disabilities, and those from the LGBTQI+ communities.
- Approved public sector research establishments (PSREs) conducting research within the specified domains.