

AHRC CreaTech ICURE Discover – October 2026

[30th September – 2nd December 2026]

KEY DATES AND EXPECTATIONS**

Applications open 14 th July 2026	14 th July 2026	
Applications close	Wednesday 9 th September 2026	
Notification of results sent to applicants	Week commencing Monday 14 th September	
Programme Outline		
Welcome Call / Session 1:	30/09/2026	13:00-16:00
Session 2:	07/10/2026	13:00-16:00
Session 3:	14/10/2026	13:00-16:00
Session 4:	21/10/2026	13:00-16:00
Session 5:	28/10/2026	13:00-16:00
Half Term	04/11/2026	No Session
Session 6:	11/11/2026	13:00-16:00
Session 7:	18/11/2026	13:00-16:00
Session 8:	25/11/2026	13:00-16:00
Presentation Day:	02/12/2026	09:00-17:00 tbc
The research student/technician will be expected to attend all sessions scheduled above and should hold these dates in their diary when applying.		
Technology Transfer Representatives are also welcome to attend all sessions, but it is not obligatory.		

** Timetable subject to change.

Please note that this opportunity forms part of a pilot programme with UKRI Research Councils to create more joined up UKRI commercialisation opportunities and gauge interest, of which AHRC is involved in. Beyond this pilot, a range of ICURE programmes operate throughout the year, offering additional routes for participation and there is no guarantee that AHRC will be directly involved in future programme iterations.



Innovate
UK



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

UKRI Pathway

Through 2026/27, Innovate UK ICURE is working more closely with UKRI councils to bring the programme directly into the research communities they support. The UKRI council pathways initiative is delivered via the same ICURE Engage, Discover, Explore and Exploit stages, but the cohorts, examples, networks and onward routes are shaped around the research priorities of the partner council. The aim is that researchers attached to a UKRI-funded environment experience ICURE as part of their own sector, with the programme shaped around the work they are already doing.

The practical implication is that ICURE is being actively built into the research environment around you, as a researcher or technician. There are low-commitment entry points you can take without stepping away from your current work. ICURE Discover is a part-time market discovery programme offering up to £2,500 to support market discovery and assumption testing and a clear onward pathway to ICURE Explore. It is open to all university staff members working in research groups including ECRs, Post-docs, PhD students and research master's students looking to explore the potential of their early-stage projects. The programme uses the lean startup methodology, applying the scientific method of hypothesis, test and learn to early-stage commercialisation

AHRC's pilot for CreaTech

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent research in subjects from philosophy and creative industries to art conservation and product design. Its research funding addresses some of society's biggest challenges, such as tackling modern slavery, exploring the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, and understanding what it is to be human. AHRC is the UK's largest provider of applicant-led and strategic funding, advanced-skills training and career development across the whole range of arts and humanities.

AHRC also plays a leading role in supporting innovation at the intersection of creativity and technology (CreaTech). Through programs such as the Creative Industries Clusters, CoSTAR, BRAID and CResCa, alongside Impact Acceleration Accounts and Proof of Concept projects, AHRC helps innovators develop new technologies, products, services and experiences across key areas. These include screen, games, music, immersive technologies, design, heritage and the wider creative industries. This pilot aims to accelerate innovation, create economic and social impact, and strengthen the UK's global leadership in CreaTech.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the AHRC CreaTech ICURE Discover?

AHRC CreaTech ICURE Discover is a part-time online market exploration programme for researchers and technicians, with up to £2,500 support for market discovery activities. It is a pre-requisite to attend ICURE Discover if you wish to apply for ICURE Explore or Exploit.

How does it work?

Our 9-week, part-time online market discovery program is developed using the lean startup methodology, which applies the scientific method (hypothesise, test, evaluate) to business ideas. Participants will learn how to use this approach to gauge their potential customers' opinions about their idea, product service or experience. This programme is suitable for participants looking to explore the potential of their early-stage projects or those who require a part-time commitment for market exploration.

What does it include?

- Support to carry out market and customer discovery on a part-time basis over a 9-week period.
- Half-day workshops, following a pre-course briefing with our team of experts.
- Flexible online delivery
- Hearing from guest speakers related to CreaTech, who will share their learning and experiences from their ICURE journeys.
- Introduction to Strategyzer Business Model Canvas (BMC)
- Trainer, mentor, and peer feedback with next steps guidance following your ICURE Discover journey.
- Up to £2,500 support for market discovery activities

Why Attend?

ICURE Discover is now a compulsory route into the ICURE Explore Programme. Past participants say that having dedicated time to understand what the 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?

Please note that this programme is open to those who have previously been awarded AHRC funding, co-funding or participated in an AHRC programme, including but not exclusive to: BRAID, CoSTAR, CResCa, or one of the Creative Clusters. If you have been involved in another AHRC project not listed here, you will have the opportunity on the application form to state which one.

To join this programme, you must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- you are the original project lead of the AHRC-funded research the application builds upon
- you are a member of the original AHRC-funded research team, and it is more appropriate for you to lead the proposed activity
- you are working at an eligible research organisation and wish to exploit a piece of research in the absence of the original project lead

Where the original project lead or team is not leading the application, you must seek their permission. Please consider appropriate involvement for them in the new project and how best to reflect this in the narrative of the application. Your organisation must address any continuity issues including Intellectual Property or copyright, and you must detail this in the relevant section within your application.

Applicants do not need to provide anything in writing from the original project lead. Our expectation is that the research organisation will have addressed any necessary approvals, permissions and IP considerations before the application reaches us. Where relevant, we would expect to see in the application how any IP, copyright, continuity issues will be managed, but we are not asking for evidence of permission from the original project lead.

This programme is intended for participants with a CreaTech project. CreaTech refers to the intersection of creativity and technology, bringing together creative skills and emerging technologies to create new ways of engaging audiences, drive business growth and investment, and develop innovations across areas such as screen, games, music, immersive experiences, design, heritage and other technology enabled creative sectors.

The AHRC CreaTech ICURE Discover programme is open to early career researchers at all levels of seniority, technicians and students from all disciplines undertaking master's degrees, PhDs, and Post-Docs, based at universities and independent research organisations (IROs) across the UK and who are interested in entrepreneurship.

Your course of study, your idea and/or your research **MUST** be directly related to AHRC activities and meet the eligibility criteria above.

We also welcome applications from individuals in:

- Universities who have not 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.
- We are committed to supporting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and welcome applications from anyone who is eligible.

How do I apply?

- The online application form found at the [ICURe Programme website](#) will ask a series of questions about you and your research project.
- There is a limited number of spaces on each Cohort, but we try to support as many applications as possible.
- The application form may be accessed from the links on this website.
- **You will need to have engaged with your research organisation's Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and the Project Lead of the AHRC-funded research prior to applying. Please contact us if your university does not have a TTO or IP Manager and we will endeavor to help.**

If you have any further questions, please direct them to icure@setsquared.co.uk