



Innovate
UK



Natural
Environment
Research Council

NERC ICURE Discover – January 2027

(13th January – 17th March 2027)

KEY DATES AND EXPECTATIONS

Thursday 15 th October 2026	Applications open	
Thursday 16 th October 2026 @ 12:00	Programme Webinar: Register on Eventbrite	
Thursday 12 th November 2026	Applications close	
Week commencing 7 th December 2026	Notification of results sent to applicants	
Programme Outline		
Welcome Call / Session 1:	13/01/2027	13:00-16:00
Session 2:	20/01/2027	13:00-16:00
Session 3:	27/01/2027	13:00-16:00
Session 4:	03/02/2027	13:00-16:00
Session 5:	10/02/2027	13:00-16:00
Half Term	17/02/2027	No Session
Session 6:	24/02/2027	13:00-16:00
Session 7:	03/03/2027	13:00-16:00
Session 8:	10/03/2027	13:00-16:00
Presentation Day:	17/03/2027	All day
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 select UK Research Councils to gauge interest and test the market, NERC has been approached to be involved. Beyond this pilot, a range of ICURE programmes operate throughout the year, offering additional routes for participation and there is no guarantee that NERC will be directly involved in future programme iterations.

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.

NERC is a thought leader for UK environmental science, driving new research and innovation to advance the frontiers of science and benefit society. NERC invests in building a community of environmental scientists who work across disciplines in research and industry. The knowledge and data generated is used for the benefit of citizens across the UK, enhancing their prosperity, safety and quality of life. NERC funding supports the UK as an international leader in evidence-driven environmental policy.

What is NERC ICURE Discover?

NERC 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 Explore if you wish to apply for ICURE Explore or Exploit.

How does it work?

Our 9-week, part-time online market discovery programme 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, or service. 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 an 8-week period.
- Half-day workshops, following a pre-course briefing with our team of experts.
- Flexible online delivery
- Hearing from guest speakers related to NERC, 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

Delivered by

Why Attend?

ICURE Discover is now a compulsory route into the ICURE Explore Programme. Past participants say that having dedicated time to spend understanding 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 received NERC funding directly as an individual or been affiliated with NERC-funded programmes, e.g., studentships, fellowships, research grants etc. The NERC 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 the commercialisation of NERC-funded research to solve climate adaptation challenges by bringing new or improved technologies, processes, products and services to market to enhance UK's climate resilience. This ensures physical and social systems are resilient and well adapted to a changing climate. This includes, but is not limited to food security, water supply, transport, urban design, large infrastructure resilience community preparedness and response, and physical risks for the finance sector.

"Climate adaptation, environment and resilience" is one of UKRI's new priority programmes and UKRI will invest in improving the UK's climate resilience, including in support of the National Adaptation Programme as published in its new strategy and delivery plan (<https://www.ukri.org/publications/uk-research-and-innovation-strategy-2026-to-2031/ukri-strategy-2026-to-2031/> and <https://www.ukri.org/publications/uk-research-and-innovation-delivery-plan-2026-to-2027/ukri-delivery-plan-2026-to-2027/>)

Click on the links for further information on:

- The [Climate Adaptation Research and Innovation Framework – April 2025](#) provides a non-exhaustive collation of adaptation R&I needs across sectors and 'systems', key to strengthening the UK's climate resilience
- Climate Adaptation Research and Innovation Programme Inventory provides an overview of the main Government-funded R&I programmes that support climate adaptation, where adaptation is a core or significant component. It may not capture all relevant activity – some Government programmes include adaptation-related research as part of broader portfolios that may not be substantial enough to be included here. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-adaptation-research-and-innovation-programme-inventory/climate-adaptation-research-and-innovation-programme-inventory>)

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.
- Approved public sector research enterprises (PSREs).

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 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 provide 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 University Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and your Principal Investigator prior to applying. Please contact us if your university does not have a TTO or IP Manager and we will endeavour to help.**

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