

Empowering Researchers to Innovate

An entrepreneurship course
with a difference

BACKGROUND

This course has been developed by the PostdocstoInnovators (p2i) Network in response to the statistics that due to the rise of the number of postdoctoral researchers (postdocs) at Higher Education Institutions, academic tenure positions are becoming increasingly competitive and some 80% of postdocs will move into roles in industry, the public and third sectors or set up their own venture.

Developing an innovator mindset and capabilities enables postdocs to spot opportunities and have the capacity to act on these with confidence, whether that's in relation to gaining independence and pursue an academic career, a commercial opportunity, policy intervention or other means of bringing their research out into the wider world to have an impact.

A partnership between five European Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and three global enterprises was created to develop and strengthen the innovation mindset and capabilities and encourage entrepreneurial activities both in and outside academia.



Take charge of your own career

Innovation is relevant to academia and every industry.

These days, individuals with innovator (also called entrepreneurial) mindsets and skills are sought after in any walk of life.

However, many researchers equate the words entrepreneurial and entrepreneurship with starting a business and rule out participating in entrepreneurship education or entrepreneurial activities because they are not interested in setting up a company.

As a postdoctoral researcher, you are an innovator in training and you already share behaviours with entrepreneurs. By recognising the mindset and learning the skills associated with entrepreneurship, you can apply these in your future career - whether it is in academia, work as an employee outside academia or start your own company.

p2iOnline: Empowering Researchers to Innovate

Developed by the p2i partnership, p2i Online is a course on entrepreneurship with a difference.

It provides a powerful combination of mindset, knowledge, know-how and skill development to enable you to embark on an innovation journey in your future career.

The course includes inspiration and journeys from postdoctoral researchers just like you, who have become founders of companies, successful academics or employees outside academia.

Why should you participate in the course?

If you are interested in exploring different career paths and want to learn how an entrepreneurial mindset and capabilities can help you to achieve your personal goals and further your career development in and outside academia, including starting a venture.

If you want to learn what's involved in starting a venture through relatable examples from researchers who have started ventures.

If you want to familiarise yourself with language, concepts, tools and processes used in the entrepreneurial and business world to build your confidence to engage and discuss your idea with stakeholders from your local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

If you want to build your academic and professional networks by joining fellow postdocs from p2i partner organisations from across Europe in an engaging and hands-on experiential learning opportunity.

“Through providing inspiration and the required tools, this course has given me the confidence to consider an entrepreneurial career outside academia”

“The course is good for academics that don't have knowledge about entrepreneurship - it is all in one place and structured, it takes you through step by step”

“The talking head videos provide context-real researchers that have made the step to entrepreneurship - this provides relatable inspiration”

“My mindset has changed – I have noticed opportunities that were around but that I wasn't open to before participating in the course”

TESTIMONIALS

What will you learn?

How to present your research or idea and its impact in various professional and social contexts.

How you as researchers already share some of the behaviours which are normally attributed to entrepreneurial individuals and how to further develop these behaviours to succeed personally and professionally.

If you aspire to continue as an academic innovator, learn about new approaches to forming non-academic collaborations, to use tools adapted from the entrepreneurial world for writing compelling funding applications and identifying and creating new opportunities in academia for furthering your research interests.

If you are looking to pursue a career in industry, government or public sector, learn about the key entrepreneurial characteristics employers are looking for when recruiting researchers, and key points to consider when engaging with non-academic organisations.

If you are interested in exploring entrepreneurship or are ready to venture out as an entrepreneur, learn how to identify ideas and opportunities, and how to articulate them. Then use the framework and tools and start the process of developing the idea into a viable business opportunity and learn how to pitch this to stakeholders. Learn how to mobilise resources and support to establish a new venture.

Create an action plan to take your career to the next stage.

How much time will you need to complete the course?

The self-learning, flexible course is developed to fit around the work of postdoctoral researchers. The required minimum time commitment is around 36 hrs - averaging around 6 hours/unit.

The course units contain exercises/tasks to support your learning. We recommend that you take the outputs from your tasks and discuss with stakeholders in your entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Learning is further augmented through a series of online quizzes at the unit level.

The course will have multiple start dates per year. The recommended time to finish the course is 3 months. However, you have the option of going through the course faster or slower, fitting in with your needs and priorities.

Each instance of the course will be open for 6 months.

Upon course completion, participants will receive a certificate, subject to satisfying minimum participation requirements. The certificate demonstrates to future employers or colleagues that you have a fundamental understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the mindset and competencies required to innovate.

Note: You can of course spend more time beyond the minimum commitment by accessing the additional reading and resources provided. These resources provide additional background to the topics, further examples and practical advice.

Course content and activities

	UNIT	ACTIVITY TOPIC
Mindset	1. Postdocs are innovators in training	1.0 - Course Introduction
		1.1 - Innovation and Entrepreneurship
		1.2 - Traits and Characteristics of Innovators and Entrepreneurs
		1.3 - Perspectives on importance of entrepreneurial mindset and innovation
		Quiz
		1.4 - An early introduction to taking action
		Role-model interview submission
		Webinar exercise Pitch yourself - 30 second pitch
		Additional reading resources
		2. Behaviours of innovators and entrepreneurs
	2.2 - Choosing Entrepreneurship	
	2.3 - Opportunity alertness and intention	
	2.41 - The importance of teams	
	2.42 - Key team characteristics	
	2.5 – Networking	
	Quiz	
	Identifying ideas that appeal or why not - gut feel	
	Observe pitches by Entrepreneurs	
	Additional reading resources	
	How to go from idea to starting a venture	3. Become entrepreneurs
3.1 - Origin of Opportunity		
3.2 – Tapping into your creativity		
Quiz		
3.3 - How to describe an idea in commercial/value terms		
3.41 - Validating your opportunity		
3.42 - Assessing current stage of development of the technology/idea		
3.5 - Is your technology/product/service better than competition?		
Quiz		
Defining target market and competitors		
Additional reading resources		
3a. From opportunity to action		3.6 - Validating Commercial potential
		3.7 - Mapping your customers, accessing them
		3.8 - Understanding value chains in different sectors
		3.9 - Revenue streams and business models
		3.10 - Developing a pitch and pitching
		Quiz
		Pitch review
		Market spaces and value chains related to your solution
		Additional reading resources

	UNIT	ACTIVITY TOPIC	
How to go from idea to starting a venture	3b. Entrepreneurship in practice	3.13 - Setting up a business, Shareholding, Articles	
		3.14 - Building your organisation and identifying the necessary skills and capabilities	
		3.15 - Structure your development and release plans	
		3.16 - Resourcing	
		3.17 – Knowing and presenting your numbers- basics in finance and accounting	
		Quiz	
		Create summary business plan	
	3c. Make it happen	3.19 - Awareness of Intellectual property (IP)	
		3.20 - Planning for IP management	
		3.21 - Fundraising	
		3.22 - Engaging with your local entrepreneurial ecosystem	
		Quiz	
		Assess your local entrepreneurial ecosystem and create an action plan	
		Develop a 3 minute pitch	
Apply entrepreneurial mindset and skills to realise different career ambitions	4. Pursue a career beyond academia	4.1 - What are industry, gov and public sector looking for in post-docs	
		4.2 – Innovation in industry	
		4.3 – How to connect with Industry	
		4.4 - Transferable skills	
		4.5 - Career services	
		Quiz	
		Explore the support for a career outside academia and prepare an Action Plan specific to your career in industry objectives	
		Additional reading resources	
		5. Continue as academic innovators	5.1 - Enterprising in academia
			5.2 – Impact from non-academic collaborations
	5.3 - Tools for writing compelling funding applications		
	5.4 - Creating opportunities in academia		
	5.5 - Networking and connecting to Industry		
	5.6 - Researcher development programmes		
	Quiz		
	Explore available support for an academic career and prepare an Action Plan specific to your academic career objectives		
	Additional reading resources		

Key

-  Video
-  Task
-  Additional Reading
-  Quiz

Time commitment

Average of 6 hours per unit comprising: up to

30 minutes of course videos

1.5–2 hours of background reading material

3-4 hours to complete each unit's tasks

Units 1,2 4 & 5 require shorter time commitment

Units 3,3a,3b,3c require longer time commitment