

INNOVATION COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

User Guide



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What is the Innovation

Competency Framework?

The Innovation Competency Framework sets out and defines the skills, knowledge and behaviours that researchers need to pursue an innovation career path.

Innovation involves the utilisation, adoption, and commercialisation of new ideas, technologies and research to benefit society and the economy.

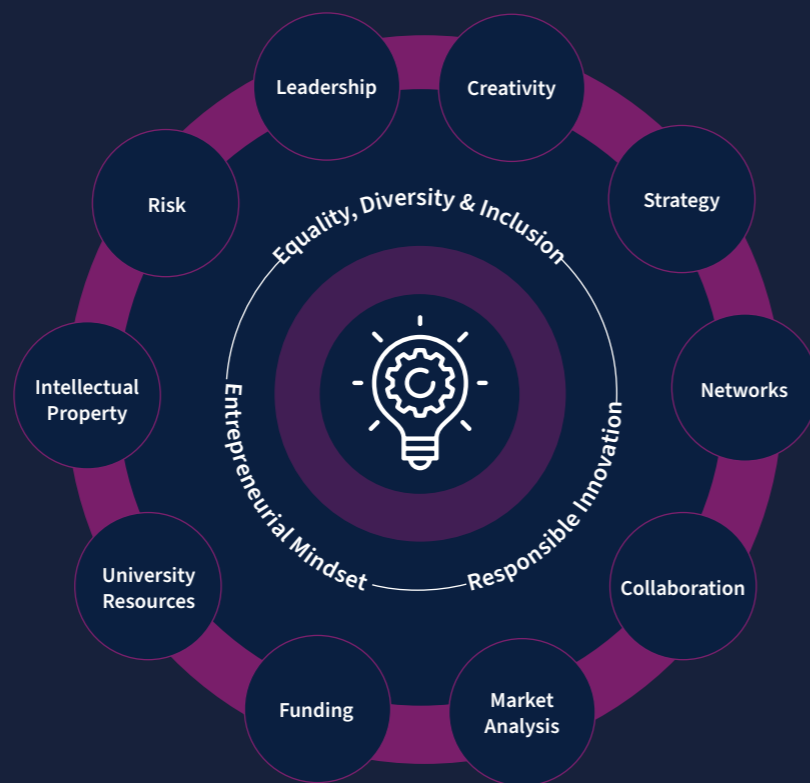
Who is it for?

The Innovation Competency Framework is designed for:

- **Researchers** – as an introduction to the competencies necessary for a career with a strong innovation focus and as a tool for those who are already innovation-active to evaluate and plan their learning and development
- **Managers and mentors** – as a resource to help you in your role supporting the career development of innovation-active researchers
- **Innovation support staff** – as a resource to help you in your planning and provision of learning and development opportunities for innovation-active researchers

The Framework

The Framework comprises ten competencies and spans the range of innovation capability levels. It is underpinned by three core principles: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Responsible Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Mindset.



Innovation Capability Levels

As the academic career levels do not align directly with the innovation capability levels, we have created the following definitions for reference.

Career Level	Profile
Potential Innovator	Generates innovative ideas but has yet to test or validate them. Aware of innovation funding and the concept of intellectual property.
Aspiring Innovator	Secures innovation funding to test ideas and concepts collaboratively with non-academic partners, stakeholders, and end-users.
New Innovator	Develops and validates products/services/processes. Builds and grows innovation profile, securing backing and buy-in for vision.
Experienced Innovator	Manages a large-scale/diverse portfolio of innovation projects and funding. Exploits intellectual property and delivers extensive impact.
Innovation Leader	Advocates for innovation internally and externally, shaping and influencing innovation strategy. Fosters a culture of innovation.

How to use the Innovation

Competency Framework

Self-assessment:

- Review the innovation capability levels and associated profiles. Which one best describes your current skills and experience in innovation?
- For each competency, read the associated skills, knowledge and behaviours and make an assessment of where you are.
- In which areas do you excel? Where do you need to develop your competence?

Planning your learning and development:

- Reflect on your innovation goals. What are your short-term and long-term aspirations?
- Identify the competencies you need to develop to achieve your innovation goals and seek out relevant learning and development opportunities – get started by visiting the **Innovation Careers Hub**.
- Use the framework to guide career development conversations with your line manager, and to engage peers and mentors for valuable insights and feedback.

Competencies

For each competency we describe the skills, knowledge, and behaviours they encompass. They are designed to be distinct and cumulative, with each capability level building on the ones before. You may not exhibit all the competencies at each stage initially, but they can be developed and strengthened over time as you progress in your innovation career.

	POTENTIAL INNOVATOR	ASPIRING INNOVATOR	NEW INNOVATOR	EXPERIENCED INNOVATOR	INNOVATION LEADER
CREATIVITY	Generates innovative ideas	Tests initial ideas	Refines and develops ideas	Co-creates and sustains diverse innovation portfolio	Sparks creativity in others
STRATEGY	Creates an effective proof of concept	Creates a compelling vision of the desired future state Plans pathways to impact	Secures backing and buy-in for vision Executes integrated strategy for achieving impact	Expands vision into new sectors & markets Plans and delivers diverse/ extensive impact through innovation portfolio	Articulates and embodies institutional innovation vision Influences and shapes sector/national innovation strategy and policy
NETWORKS	Engages and participates in local networks Establishes profile within and across networks	Engages and participates in regional networks	Engages and participates in national networks Builds profile within and across networks	Shapes and informs networks	Engages and participates in international networks Creates new networks
COLLABORATION	Identifies and engages non-academic partners Engages local decision makers within companies	Builds trusted/diverse collaborations with non-academic partners, stakeholders and end-users	Builds fruitful relationships with group/general managers	Leverages collaborations to sustain and grow innovation portfolio	Forges strategic partnerships with industry Leverages relationships with C-Suite executives
MARKET ANALYSIS	Understands and recognises market needs and gaps		Validates market potential of innovation(s)	Monitors and adapts to changing markets	Creates new markets
FUNDING	Aware of funders and types of innovation funding	Obtains small funding to test concepts/build collaborations Early career Innovation Fellowships	Secures translational funding to develop and validate products/services/processes	Large-scale/diverse portfolio of innovation/industry funding Senior Innovation Fellowships	Maximises benefits of regional/ national innovation investments to the University
UNIVERSITY RESOURCES	Seeks and participates in training and development opportunities	Proactively engages with business development colleagues	Proactively engages with specialist teams and services	Negotiates access to College-level resources	Unlocks access to University-level resources
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	Understands the concept of IP and the importance of protecting it	Writes and submits high-quality disclosures	Develops and executes strategies to protect IP	Exploits IP through standard channels, builds track record	Forges novel pathways to exploit IP, leverages track record to achieve growth and drive innovation
RISK	Understands the risks and rewards of innovation	Develops risk management plans and strategies	Embraces setbacks and failures as opportunities for learning and growth	Integrates risk management principles across innovation portfolio, funding and team	Fosters a culture of experimentation, risk-taking, and learning from failure
LEADERSHIP	Identifies and engages appropriate mentors	Proactively identifies and pursues opportunities to develop innovation leadership appropriate to experience		Teaches/mentors early-stage innovators Nurtures and inspires others to pursue innovation careers, using storytelling to make innovation accessible and tangible	Teaches/mentors/coaches early-stage and experienced innovators
UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Responsible Innovation Entrepreneurial Mindset					



Underpinning Principles

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:

all researchers should have equal access to pursuing an innovation career path, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances. In practice this means proactively addressing barriers that may hinder full participation, such as bias in recruitment and promotion processes, disparities in funding and resources, and unequal access to professional development, mentoring and coaching.

Responsible innovation:

is defined by UKRI as “a process that takes the wider impacts of research and innovation into account. It aims to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided, that barriers to dissemination, adoption and diffusion of research and innovation are reduced, and that the positive societal and economic benefits of research and innovation are fully realised”.

Entrepreneurial mindset:

is a way of thinking that enables individuals to seek out and recognise new and emerging opportunities. As well as being curious they take the initiative in turning ideas into actions, and push beyond obstacles to do things better, embrace change and deliver innovative solutions. It requires an open mind and passion for action matched with high levels of resilience and adaptability.



Advice & Support

Edinburgh Innovations, the University’s commercialisation service, supports innovation-active researchers at all career levels to achieve their innovation goals by providing tailored advice, training and support with:

- Recognising translational opportunities and guiding how to develop these
- Accessing inventions, assessing novelty, and advising and supporting the protection of Intellectual Property (IP)
- Identifying translational, industrial and investment funding opportunities, from early-stage translational grants to large-scale innovation investments
- Brokering partnerships with non-academic collaborators, especially with industry
- Developing and supporting a commercialisation plan for your research including negotiating licence agreements
- Forming a company and securing investment
- Connecting with early career researcher translational communities to network with like-minded peers

Visit the Innovation Careers Hub to see the full range of training and resources: eil.ac/InnovationCareersHub.

Here you will also find information on training and events, including Engage, a new online learning programme designed to equip you with the tools and confidence to seize commercial opportunities and support the translation of your research: eil.ac/staffevents.

For further information, inspiration or to arrange an initial discussion visit the EI website: eil.ac/StaffEdinburghInnovations.

Sign up to the Unlocking Innovation newsletter to stay up to date with the latest news, events, and developments in innovation across the University: eil.ac/innovationnews.

How was the Framework developed?

The Innovation Competency Framework was developed during interviews and workshops with senior innovation professionals and innovation leaders. It reflects input from innovation-active staff, experts in impact and innovation, Human Resources, and funders.

Get in touch

This Framework was created by Dr Kirsty Collinge, University of Edinburgh, and Edinburgh Innovations in summer 2024.

For queries relating to the development, use, and implementation of the Framework, please contact:

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