

Online course in ‘Innovation and entrepreneurship’

About the course

This course will target PhD students and early-stage researchers at the University of Edinburgh. The course covers the basics of intellectual property law, set within the broad context of routes to commercialisation via licensing, spin-out and start-up options. The course will give students better insight into what their intellectual property is or could be, and how to protect and exploit it. Students will be able to evaluate the commercialisation options available, and understand how to make best use of University support mechanisms.

Current status

We have completed a first round of content development, based on contributions from two researchers, one based in Law and the other in Management.

By this point in time, the course should be ready for release. However, we did not feel that the first round of content development had quite achieved the right pitch and level of content - which we feel are critical to the success of the course. Having met several times to discuss the course structure and content as it was being developed, we decided to incorporate an extra round of detailed evaluation by three PhD students at UoE. We have consequently fallen behind on our schedule for moving into the pre-launch evaluation and testing, and we apologise for this delay.

Next steps

The immediate next step for us is to bring in a practitioner colleague to carry out a detailed editorial review, based on a brief from the academic team as well as feedback from the PhD student evaluations. The purpose of the review is two-fold: one, to improve the structure and flow across all sections of the course; and two, to add insights and experience from the ‘real world’ of commercialising innovative ideas.

The schedule for this work will be agreed next week, but we anticipate that we can start user testing and course promotion during June, and that the course promotion and pilot launch could follow on from that in fairly quick succession.

University policy on IP ownership

We must emphasise the potential impact on the new course of current University deliberations around student ownership of their intellectual property. If the proposal to transfer the ownership of all student intellectual property to the University goes ahead, this will significantly change the way that the course must be designed. Instead of presenting a series of options to students, the course would have to become more prescriptive and fixed in its approach, to reflect the way that commercialisation and innovative ideas would be handled within the University.

We are aware that a high-level meeting on the question of IP ownership is scheduled for Thursday 8 May. Following this meeting, we would appreciate some direction on whether we continue to develop the course according to the current situation – where postgraduate students own their intellectual property unless agreed differently under the terms of a research contract; or according to a new context of the University owning students’ intellectual property.

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