

Elevate Guidelines

SICSA Elevate is an applied research accelerator program, supporting early career and early stage researchers from across SICSA to accelerate promising research ideas into sound business start-ups, transfer or licensing over a 12-week period.

Modelled on similar short-term accelerator programs available globally, we aim to exploit existing supports within the SICSA partner Universities, and employ funds to directly support early career researchers with an investment of up to £15,000 (£3,000 per researcher, up to groups of 4 and £750 project costs per participant). We expect a range of sized teams per year to be supported with workspace, hands-on mentoring and weekly group meetings with industry and start-up mentors.

Due to the nature of Elevate, we aim to be flexible in the formation of teams, which make business sense. Teams can therefore include a mixture of PhDs, Postdocs and MSc students, from a range of disciplines. However, to be eligible for funding, the majority of the team must be from within Informatics and Computer Science departments of SICSA institutions.

Programme Details

Teams will be provided with office space within the host institution for the duration of the programme, and will benefit from being based amongst other start-ups.

Teams will also be provided with business mentors to guide them through essential topics over the 12 week period including:

- Entrepreneurial thinking, aspirations and role models
- The business planning process
- Idea generation / development / evaluation
- Market identification including exposure to market players
- Researching the resources required including equipment, people, funding
- Segmentation / positioning & differentiation / targeting
- Developing the marketing Mix (7 Ps)
- Financial planning, production of financial statements with realistic assumptions
- Growth aspirations of entrepreneurs

Teams will also receive advisory support throughout and after the Elevate programme which will include:

- Provision of high quality business advice to teams at the pre-start, start-up and post-start stages of their businesses development, assisting the participants to form, sustain and grow commercially viable businesses.
- Signposting participants to specialist sources of assistance.
- Generating awareness of appropriate business grants, loans and services.
- Supporting the participants with business plans to go forward for additional funding or continued support.
- Actively building business and referral networks.

Eligible Costs

- Teams will receive £3,000 per team member (up to 4 members) which will be reimbursed to their home institution by SICSA if their stipend continues during the programme. If the student suspends their study, or does not currently receive a stipend, the £3,000 will be awarded as a scholarship.

The participants' University will be expected to pay the scholarship initially and SICSA will then reimburse the institution on completion of the programme. Applicants should make their home institution aware of this arrangement prior to applying.

- Project costs of up to £3,000 will be reimbursed on completion of the programme and can be used for anything relevant to the business needs. Costs can include:
 - travel
 - equipment
 - software/hardware
 - online services & data storage
 - marketing & advertising etc.

Expenses claims must be submitted to the participants' home institution (following local procedures). SICSA will then reimburse the institution on completion of the programme for all project costs. Again, applicants should make their home institution aware of this arrangement prior to applying.

Conditions of Funding

- Teams must be available to either reside in or travel to the host institution for compulsory weekly sessions during the 12 weeks of the programme.
- Applicants must be an MSc student, PhD student or Postdoctoral Researcher, with the majority of the team from an Informatics or Computing Science department within a SICSA member institution.
- Applicants must provide a letter of support from their Head of School on application and agreement to the financial processes outlined above. If a team comprises individuals from multiple institutions we require a letter of support from each School.
- Applications must demonstrate a definable business idea from the beginning of the process.

Application Process

- Please complete the application form provided and return to admin@sicsa.ac.uk during the annual funding call held on 30 April.
- After submission, the proposal will be considered by the ES-ECR Board and SICSA Directorate and you will be notified of the outcome within four weeks.

If you have any questions about Elevate, please contact admin@sicsa.ac.uk.