



# Innovation Competition

Handbook



Welcome to the **Innovation Competition 2024**, organised by [Mercator Launch](#). Mercator Launch stimulates entrepreneurship and supports the translation of an idea into a value-adding product or service. The aim of this competition is to encourage and raise awareness about entrepreneurship and innovation among PhD candidates and postdocs at Radboud University.

This handbook is intended to define the terms of the competition and answer general questions you may have. If you have any further queries, please email [IC@mercatorlaunch.nl](mailto:IC@mercatorlaunch.nl).

## 1. COMPETITION AIMS

The Innovation Competition is an initiative organised by Mercator Launch and supported by Radboud Innovation and Valorisation Radboudumc - the knowledge and technology transfer offices (KTOs) of the Radboud University and the Radboud University Medical Center. The KTOs are set up to:

- help students and staff commercialise their ideas;
- aid the transfer of knowledge into the wider community;
- seek protection for their inventions and ideas;
- license their technologies;
- identify funding for their start-ups and spinouts

They offer support to all academic partners, from the fields of science, technology, engineering, maths, and medicine, to the arts, humanities and social sciences.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1. The project presented must be led by a PhD candidate or postdoc at Radboud University or Radboud University Medical Center. A PhD candidate or postdoc is considered 'current' if:

- ✓ They become PhD candidate or postdoc before the First-Round application deadline (see table of dates in Section [3.1.](#)) OR
- ✓ They are a PhD candidate or postdoc at the time the Competition call is launched (see table of dates in Section [3.1.](#)).

2.2. PhD candidates or postdocs can make submissions that relate to the work of their group leader but must have the project leader's support and clearance to further develop the intellectual property (IP). Submissions that require such permission but fail to provide it, will be immediately disqualified.

2.3. Projects which, by the First Round of application deadline (see section [3.1.](#)), have received over € 50.000 in funding or prizes are not eligible to participate. This is because the competition is aimed to attract entrants where the projects are at the beginning of their commercialisation journey, not established enterprises. Academic grant funding does not count towards this. If you are unsure as to whether this might apply to you, please contact the competition organisers for clarification.

2.4. A PhD candidate or postdoc who participated in a previous edition of the Innovation Competition can apply once more with the same project, is allowed.



### 3. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

3.1. The competition consists of three rounds:

- First round:
  - ✓ Deadline: **4 December 2023 23:59u**
  - ✓ Applications must be made according to section [4.5](#).
  - ✓ Selection of up to fifteen semi-finalists
  - ✓ Semi-finalists announced: **12 December 2023**
- Semi-final:
  - ✓ Bootcamp: A four-day training programme for semi-finalists in order to substantiate the economic, technical and organisation feasibility of their idea.
  - ✓ Semi-finalist work towards a Business Case Teaser, appendix B.
  - ✓ Coaching: a coach of Mercator Launch will be assigned to each semi-finalist to help them improve their Business Case Teaser.
  - ✓ Semi-finalist hand in a Business Case Teaser before **4 February 2024 23:59h**. Templates must be made according to section [4.5](#) in this document.
  - ✓ Jury selects 5 finalists.
  - ✓ Finalists announced: **12 February 2024**
- Final: 27 February 2024
  - ✓ Finalists attend a pitch training on **7 February 2024** to develop and improve their final pitch and slides.
  - ✓ Content of the pitch must be according to section [4.5](#) in this document. The slides must be submitted by **20 February 2024 12:00**.
  - ✓ Finalists pitch their innovation idea during to a jury.
  - ✓ Based on the pitch and the slides, the jury selects the winner and runner up. The audience will vote for the Audience Award.
  - ✓ Awards consist of out-of-pocket money to further develop promising innovations
    - First prize = € 10.000
    - Second prize = € 5.000
    - Audience Award = € 5.000
  - ✓ In addition to money, the winners will receive
    - Access to the [IMPROVE programme](#) of Mercator Launch
    - 12 months support by a mentor (i.e. academic entrepreneur)
    - 12 months [working space](#) at Mercator Launch

A summary of the competition structure is presented in the following table:

Date	Description
01 November 2023	Open call for submissions
4 December 2023 23:59	Deadline for first Round application
12 December 2023	Semi-finalists announced
10 January 2024	Boot camp day 1
17 January 2024	Boot camp day 2



24 January 2024	Boot camp day 3
4 February 2024 23:59	Deadline Business Case Teaser
7 February 2024	Pitch training
12 February 2024	Finalists announced
20 February 2024 12:00	Deadline slides
28 February 2024	Grand Finale: Pitch for a jury (3 min presentation + 10 min Q&A) Winners announced

#### 4. CONTENT

- 4.1 All submitted projects must be original work of those who submit them.
- 4.2 Entries should be made with full understanding of the [Radboud University and Radboud University Medical Center's regulations on Intellectual Property Rights](#). Project submitters are responsible to guarantee no third parties have any rights upon the research that may prevent its further development. Proprietary information about the idea should not be disclosed in the executive summary and presentations.
- 4.3 Submissions must include summaries of each team member's past experience and future plans. These will be used to judge the team's commitment to turn the idea into an actual business or product/service/process.
- 4.4 Submissions that have secured any source(s) of capital must explicitly disclose such the source(s) and amount(s) received or to be received.
- 4.5 Content required for each of the rounds includes and is limited to:
- ✓ **First round:** the application form (Appendix A)
  - ✓ **Semi-final:** the Business Case Teaser (Appendix B). This Teaser will be send to the jury to select the finalists.
  - ✓ **Final:** For the final round, participants must prepare a max 10-slide presentation for a 3-minute pitch including the following sections:
    - Deal
    - Product
    - Market & Customer
    - Value Proposition
    - Business model
    - Impact
    - Competitive advantage
    - Team
    - Action plan, milestones and funding

#### 5. JUDGING

- 5.1 The panel of judges is chosen and coordinated by the Mercator Launch team.
- 5.2 The panel of judges reserves the right to disqualify any entry that, in its opinion, violates the spirit of the competition.
- 5.3 Judging feedback will be provided for the semi-final and final.



- 5.4 Decisions made by the panel of judges are final and not subject to appeal.
- 5.5 The panel of judges has the responsibility to select the semi-finalists and finalists as well as the winning project/team
- 5.6 All entries will be judged and all finalists will need to be able to attend the Grand Finale, which includes the 3-minute pitch.
- 5.7 The judging criteria are:

**First round:**

- ✓ Idea/Project/Product or service: good description, stage of development and possibility to diversify
- ✓ Market & Customers: customer' problem/need as well as target users clearly defined
- ✓ Business/revenue model and commercialisation plan. This includes the path from research to commercialisation to be included and, where applicable, route to market.
- ✓ Team: composition and contact details
- ✓ Feasibility of the plan

**Semi-final and final:**

- ✓ Market & Customers: customer' problem/need, target users, market and market size clearly defined
- ✓ Product or service: good description, stage of development and possibility to diversify
- ✓ Competitive advantage: good and defendable
- ✓ Business/revenue model and commercialisation plan. Path from research to commercialisation to be included and, where applicable, route to market.
- ✓ Activity & milestone planning
- ✓ Team: complete skill set and plan to fill the gaps in skills
- ✓ Feasibility of the plan
- ✓ Pitch: organisation of the presentation, clarity, concision

**6. PRIZES**

6.1 There are three monetary prizes awarded for the competition:

- First prize: a € 10,000 cash prize sponsored by [Mercator Launch](#).
- Second prize: a € 5,000 cash prize sponsored by [Mercator Launch](#).
- Additional Boost Award a cash prize to be determined by [Mercator Launch](#)

6.2 The winner of the € 10,000 prize will be introduced to angel investors and/or the Startup Fund Gelderland.

6.3 For the prizes, the money may not be awarded in one lump sum; instead, payments could be made in instalments based on meeting agreed milestones.

6.4 Judges reserve the right not to award a prize if they deem none of the entries to be prize-worthy.

6.5 The prize may only be claimed before 31 December 2024. Award-winning submissions who fail to claim prizes by that date automatically renounce their right to the prize.

6.6 Prize-winners compromise to spend the prize towards expenses related to the development of the business. These can include but may not be limited to: consultancy, subcontracted



work, conference costs or travel expenses. Note that costs of investments/equipment larger than € 5,000 are not possible.

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION**

- 7.1 All judges and coaches with access to the submitted projects will sign a non-disclosure agreement.
- 7.2 Mercator Launch reserves the right to disclose the name and department of applicants, together with the title and public summary of entries, for publicity purposes; please bear this in mind when naming your entry.
- 7.3 Mercator Launch has taken reasonable measures to ensure the confidentiality of the submitted projects.
- 7.4 Judges and coaches will agree to a confidentiality agreement.
- 7.5 Besides terms explicitly mentioned in this Handout, participants acknowledge they are responsible for any intellectual property and/or any other rights to be derived from their own project.
- 7.6 By submitting a project, participants, individually or as part of a team, acknowledge the implications of disclosing any patentable concepts.
- 7.7 All information included in projects is considered non-confidential and certain information (e.g. names & department of applicants, title/summary of submissions) may be used for promotional purposes.
- 7.8 Applicants are responsible to explicitly indicate all confidential information in their submissions.
- 7.9 Mercator Launch cannot, and will not, take further responsibility to protect the intellectual property or other rights of the applicants.  
Applicants looking to incorporate are strongly advised to seek professional advice on the issues surrounding Intellectual Property Rights. Support can be provided by [Radboud Research & Impact](#) or [Valorization Radboudumc](#), respectively.

