

ENG-652

PhD to CEO - Launching Technology Ventures

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
EDOC General and external courses		Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	2
Session	
Exam	Written & Oral
Workload	60h
Hours	26
Courses	13
Exercises	5
Project	8
Number of positions	31

Frequency

Every year

Summary

The course focuses on launching technology ventures and academic spin-offs, covering foundational concepts of venture strategy and technology commercialization. Students gain real-life experience through hands-on startup projects based on own or other students' inventions and discoveries.

Content

The course is designed for PhD students and scientists who are actively considering entrepreneurial opportunities during or after their studies, and translating research work into high-potential business ventures.

Participants will gain a full-cycle overview of the entrepreneurial journey in high technology domains, mastering foundational concepts in venture strategy and technology commercialization. We will cover areas of opportunity validation, business and revenue models, financing, market entry, and exit strategy. We will also address questions of personal and professional development, with particular attention on helping early-career scientists navigate entrepreneurial pursuits.

By the end of the course, participants will develop a compelling venture concept and implementation plan based on their own research or that of their peers. These deliverables can serve as the foundation for pre-seed investment applications and participation in follow-on innovation programs, such as EPFL Blaze, Startup Launchpad Boosters and Innogrants, or SNF Bridge.

The course serves as a natural progression from "Creating & Capturing Value from Innovative Tech" (ENG-642, Fall semester) and other market opportunity discovery programs. While prior exposure to these courses is beneficial, the course welcomes all participants, including postdoctoral researchers and scientists interested in commercializing their lab research.

Please note that this course will include 30 hours of independent work.

Note

Course sessions are scheduled every Tuesday from 16:00 to 18:00:

- Session 1: February 24th 2026
- Session 2: March 3rd 2026
- Session 3: March 10th 2026
- Session 4: March 17th 2026
- Session 5: March 24th 2026

- Session 6: March 31st 2026
- Session 7: April 14th 2026
- Session 8: April 21st 2026
- Session 9: April 28th 2026
- Session 10: May 5th 2026
- Session 11: May 12th 2026
- Session 12: May 19th 2026
- Session 13: May 26th 2026

Keywords

entrepreneurship
technology commercialization
academic spin-offs
venture strategy

Learning Prerequisites

Recommended courses

ENG-642 Creating and capturing value from innovative tech

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Recognize the idiosyncrasies of ventures operating in high tech domains (regulation, IP, long-R&D & adoption cycles, capital intensity, tech uncertainty)
- Develop management strategies to successfully navigate and de-risk the path to market
- Construct an investor-grade business case & commercialization roadmap (incl. go-to-market, industrialization, regulatory plan, team & human resources, financing)
- Discuss effectively with prospective customers, investors, and key stakeholders
- Create and leverage professional networks with VCs and other early-stage investors
- Perform due diligence confidently on real-life, technology venture projects

Resources

Bibliography

Recommended readings and materials will be communicated in class and listed on Moodle.

Moodle Link

- <https://go.epfl.ch/ENG-652>