University of Glasgow
Critical Technology Innovation Fund (CTIF) 2026-27

CTIF – Pathway 1 Briefing

The Critical Technology Innovation Fund (CTIF) supports the development of early-stage innovations with commercial and industrial potential in the priority sectors of Quantum Technologies, Photonics, Semiconductors, and Biomedical Engineering. These sectors represent areas of internationally recognised research excellence at the University of Glasgow and are of increasing strategic importance to the UK and regional economies.

CTIF offers two funding pathways, reflecting different stages of innovation development:

- **Pathway 1: Market Discovery and Customer Validation** – for early-stage projects seeking to understand market needs, potential applications and commercial opportunities.
- **Pathway 2: Derisk and Demonstration** – for projects with early evidence of market interest that require further technology development, validation or demonstration activity.

About Pathway 1

This briefing document relates to **Pathway 1: Market Discovery and Customer Validation**.

Pathway 1 provides up to **£10,000** to support activities that explore, test and validate the potential applications, users and impact of your research. Funding can be used to engage with potential customers, industry partners and end users, attend relevant industry events, and develop a stronger understanding of the market opportunity for your innovation.

Pathway 1 is designed for early-stage projects looking to assess the commercial potential of emerging technologies, test assumptions, and identify the evidence required to progress an innovation towards further development, investment or commercialisation. Through these activities, applicants will gain a clearer understanding of market needs, potential routes to impact, and the key challenges that must be addressed as their innovation develops.

Applications are now open and must be submitted by **12.00pm on Monday 30th November 2026**. Early submission is encouraged to support the review and assessment process.

Successful projects will be expected to complete all funded activities by 5th July 2027.
Please refer to the timetable below for further guidance.

Eligibility

CTIF Pathway 1 is open to all University of Glasgow academic and research staff, postdoctoral researchers, and PhD students who have salary or stipend support in place until **31 July 2027**.

Associate and honorary staff are not eligible to act as budget holders. In these cases, an eligible University staff member (for example, a Co-Investigator or collaborator) must be named as the budget holder and Principal Investigator.

Early career researchers and research staff from the JWNC are encouraged to come forward for this call.

PhD students are eligible to apply provided an eligible staff member acts as Principal Investigator and budget holder, offering appropriate project oversight and support. To be eligible for CTIF, PhD students must also familiarise themselves with any relevant terms and conditions relating to the ownership and assignment of intellectual property arising from their project, ensuring there is clear agreement on IP rights before participation.

Where a PhD student's fees or stipend are funded by a third party, approval must be obtained from that organisation before participation in the programme. Evidence of this approval must be submitted with the application.

We may also require additional confirmation from the Head of School or from the relevant college that participation on the programme will not conflict with PHD activities.

Engagement with the University IPC Team & College Impact Team

Applicants intending to apply must engage with the University of Glasgow IP & Commercialisation (IPC) team before applying. This engagement will ensure appropriate discussions have taken place regarding the project, its commercial potential, and any requirements relating to the identification, protection, management and assignment of intellectual property.

Applicants should contact the IPC team as early as possible and no later than **one week before the application deadline**. If you don't have an IPC contact, please email innovationandenterprise@glasgow.ac.uk and an introduction can be facilitated.

As part of the application process, you will be asked to confirm that you have engaged with your College Innovation and Impact Team. They can provide valuable support in developing both your project idea and application, and early engagement is strongly encouraged.

Key Dates

This round of funding is now open, with key dates as follows:

Applications open	2nd November 2026
Application deadline	30th November 2026 at 12 noon
Applicants notified of outcome	Mid December 2026
Expected project spend/delivery period	1st February 2027 – 5th July 2027
Project spend and activities deadline	5th July 2027
End of project report deadline	30th July 2027

All project activity and expenditure must be completed by **5th July 2027**. Extensions beyond this date will not be permitted, and any costs incurred after 5th July 2027 will be ineligible for reimbursement. Applicants should ensure that project plans and spending profiles are designed to enable all funded activities to be completed within this timeframe.

What are the eligibility criteria for a CTIF Pathway 1 application?

CTIF Pathway 1 is designed for eligible staff and PhD students with an early-stage innovation project who are seeking to explore its commercial, industrial or societal potential.

To be eligible, applicants must demonstrate that:

- The project is at an early concept or development stage. Pathway 1 is intended for innovations that have not yet undergone significant user, customer or market validation.
- There is interest and ambition to explore an innovation journey, including understanding whether there is market, commercial or industrial demand for their technology, product or concept.
- Support is required to engage and validate interest among potential customers, users, stakeholders or industry partners, and can complete these activities by 5 July 2027.
- There is potential for the creation, protection or exploitation of intellectual property (IP), such as unpublished data, know-how or patentable inventions, and they have discussed the opportunity with the University of Glasgow Intellectual Property and Commercialisation (IPC) team.
- There is some evidence that an innovation or commercial opportunity exists, even though it is an early project.
- Their project aligns with at least one of the CTIF priority sectors: Quantum Technologies; Photonics; Semiconductors; or Biomedical Engineering.

Please note: If your innovation has already been tested with prospective users, customers or industry partners, Pathway 2: Derisk and Demonstration may be more appropriate. Applicants are encouraged to contact innovationandenterprise@glasgow.ac.uk to discuss the most suitable pathway.

How will an application be assessed?

Eligible applications will be assessed by a small expert panel comprising commercialisation and economic development expertise from the University of Glasgow and its partners. The panel will assess and prioritise applications with respect to:

- Clarity of the idea and the problem or opportunity it could address
- Overall alignment with the purpose of the Fund and its priority sectors.

- The stage of concept/protype development and intellectual property status.
- The market and impact opportunity, including your understanding of potential customers and the competitive landscape.

- The quality of your project plan: who will you engage with, what you aim to achieve, and how the funding will be used.

What funding and support are available?

Applicants can apply for **up to £10,000** of support. Applicants are requested to consider what funding they **need** to complete eligible activities by 5th July 2027.

It is anticipated that projects applying to this pathway will undertake at least 10 meaningful engagements to validate an idea, and feedback data will be gathered in the form of a report as a deliverable from funded activities.

Eligible costs

Pathway 1 funding supports market discovery activities. Eligible costs include:

- Attending relevant commercial conferences/trade shows to engage target customers, industry, or potential customers
- Attending meetings with potential end-users/customers
- Travel costs and relevant subsistence costs
- Materials to support customer engagement activities
- Professional services costs e.g. consultancy, market reports, etc.
- Staff costs - up to five months of staff costs for project activities are eligible for inclusion, where it can be demonstrated that appropriate staff can be recruited in the timescale and/or that contractual arrangements for current staff on temporary contracts can be reasonably altered.

Ineligible costs

Pathway 1 fund will not support the following costs:

- R&D activities
- Shortfalls from research funded by other grants
- PhD fees
- Publisher costs associated with Open Access
- Costs associated with academic conference attendance
- Any other costs that do not relate to market discovery and customer validation.

How to apply?

- The deadline for applications for all calls is **12pm (noon) Monday 30th November 2026.**
- **Late applications will not be considered. Applicants are encouraged to submit an application as soon as it is ready, rather than wait for the deadline.**
- All completed and signed Application Forms (in Microsoft Word format), and if applicable CTIF Pathway 1 - UofG Staff Costing Template 2026-27 template (in Excel format), must be submitted electronically to innovationandenterprise@glasgow.ac.uk.

Application writing guidance

- **Talk to the IP & Commercialisation team before you apply.** A conversation with the IPC team is an eligibility requirement.
- Check your project fits one of the four sectors.
- Lead with the problem, not the technology.
- Project should be immediately understandable
- Explain your product or service clearly and how it could fix a problem or offer a solution
- Be specific about what the funding will achieve
- Use evidence to support claims about demand, market need and potential
- Highlight any partnerships or collaborations, existing or potential.

Expected outcomes

By the end of a Pathway 1 project, we'd expect you to have:

- A clearer picture of whether there's a real market need for your idea, based on direct engagement rather than assumption.
- Meaningful engagements with potential customers, end users or industry partners, with their feedback captured.
- You will be closer to understanding defined customer requirements and/ or target customers and applications. You should know who would use your technology, in what context, and what matters to them.
- A better understanding of the gaps between where your idea is now and where it needs to be to become a commercial opportunity.
- A short final report summarising what you learned from your discovery activities.
- Clear next steps, whether that's moving towards prototype development through Pathway 2, seeking further funding, adjusting your direction, or deciding the idea isn't ready yet.