GFIL Technology Accelerator Fund (TAF)
FAQs

What is distinctive about the GFIL Technology Accelerator Fund programme at Cranfield?

Cranfield University is actively seeking applicants requiring support in the technical development and/or validation of an innovative technology or product that directly addresses the challenges raised by the climate emergency[1] and/or reduces human impacts on the natural environment.

The TAF is a grant funding programme that supports innovators to address the technical challenges associated with the development of their solutions. It is delivered by the academic and technical staff at Cranfield University on behalf of GFI Ltd. Cranfield is particularly well placed to support innovation transitions between research and deployment, being able to provide laboratory / analytical services, test facilities at near-industrial or industrial scale, digital and modelling competencies, and product design support. Our industry facing academics are leading experimentalists and solution developers with expertise in solving technology scale-up and deployment challenges.

Optional training in essential business/entrepreneurial skills is available and the support will include provision of market intelligence of relevance to individual innovations. The accelerator programme aims to addresses specific barriers to technology development including:

- Challenges with technical design
- Independent testing of an innovation
- Reducing product development costs ('get it right first time')
- Lack of market knowledge and contacts
- Need to build the capacity of the innovation team (e.g., market understanding and business skills).

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[1] For example, technologies that are explicitly focused on reducing GHG emissions or addressing the impacts of global warming.

Who can apply?

The competition is open to SMEs, start-ups and early-stage businesses, sole traders, and individual entrepreneurs, including staff and students from research institutions. Our definition of SMEs is taken from the [UK Government's SME action plan](#): any organisation that has fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50 million or a balance sheet total less than €43 million.

What types of projects are likely to be funded?

The GFIL TAF programme targets innovations that directly address the challenges raised by the climate emergency and/or reduce human impacts on the natural environment in areas of relevance to Cranfield's sector facing Themes (Transport, Water, Energy, Environment, Agrifood, Aerospace, Manufacturing, Defence and Security), including cross-cutting themes such as AI, digital and circular economy. Additional support where needed is available from specialist units such as the Research and Innovation Office, Centre for Design Engineering, and the Bettany Centre for Entrepreneurship.

We wish to support novel technologies which are currently at TRLs 4-5, and which have the potential to mitigate, or help society adapt to the consequences of, climate change.

How will candidate technologies and associated development teams be selected?

Candidates and their technologies will be selected via a simple application form, with short listed applicants being invited to interview. Successful applicants will be expected to demonstrate that:

- The technology can make a meaningful contribution to society's response to the climate emergency and/or reduce human impacts on the natural environment.
- The technology is innovative, original, and shows scale-up potential.
- The development team can describe the market or end user potential for the innovation.
- The development team understands and can articulate the challenges facing them at this point in the evolution of their innovation and has a credible project plan to address them.
- The development team has the potential and commitment to exploit the project outputs.
- The technology and team have a good fit with Cranfield University and there is clear added value from the relationship.

In addition, we will take a portfolio approach, in order to ensure a breadth of solutions are supported.

Applications will be evaluated by a panel of academic experts and commercialisation professionals. Representatives from Green Future Investments Ltd may also participate in the evaluation process.

How do I know if my project is a good fit with Cranfield University?

We encourage you to look at the links below to get an understanding of the scope of our expertise and facilities before applying. You are not expected to identify specific academic teams or experts to work with, this will be undertaken for you if shortlisted. You will then work together with the identified academic(s) to produce a final, mutually agreed project plan and outputs. If, after looking at the links, you are unsure about your fit with Cranfield, please submit a query via the helpline (GFIfunds@cranfield.ac.uk).

- [GFI webpage](#)

- [Sustainability at Cranfield](#) provides an introduction to our work (and related academics)
- [Our facilities](#)

Do you take programme fees from teams?

No, all agreed project costs during your time with the accelerator are provided by Green Future Investments Ltd via the University. Applicants are not expected to make a financial contribution but are welcome to contribute additional funding to the project to enhance the benefits.

Do you take a stake in my technology?

No, the University is not seeking an equity stake.

Who will own the IP arising from the project?

All IP generated during the project will belong to the applicant. However, prior to receiving funding, you must inform us if your technology requires access to any third party IP.

How can I be sure that my ideas will remain confidential?

Projects can be covered by a standard Confidentiality Agreement, which is available on our [application platform](#). This can be signed prior to interview, if required. Cranfield University works with a very wide range of industrial clients and all staff are accustomed to dealing with confidential information.

Do I have to pay back the award?

No.

What is the value of the award in any single project and what does it cover?

Upon confirmation of your place on the programme a bespoke schedule of work and support will be agreed, targeted at the development needs of your technology and your potential business. Funding in the region of £50,000 can be allocated to a single project with a duration of up to 16 weeks. The budget is held and disbursed by the university in order to deliver the project and will primarily be used to cover costs associated with academic and technician time, and test and experimental consumables. Funding is not directly transferred to successful applicants. Applications for shorter projects are welcome. In addition to this, there is a range of training and mentoring opportunities available at Cranfield including, for example, business skills development, sector knowledge, IP management and grant funding. The award will also include an allowance of up to £1000 (inclusive of VAT) for travel and subsistence associated with the applicant visiting Cranfield during the project. Individual budgets will be agreed in advance with selected applicants.

What short courses are available?

Successful applicants will be eligible to attend any short courses running at the time of the accelerator programme at a discount of 20% on normal course fees. Courses you may wish to attend can be discussed at the scoping meeting.

How long does the accelerator programme last?

The accelerator programme will last five months between March and July and individual projects of up to 16 weeks will run between March and the end of June. A showcase event will be held in mid-July, and a final project report will be required by the end of July.

Does the team have to be permanently located at Cranfield during the accelerator period?

No. However, you will be working closely with our academic and technical staff and will struggle to make the most of the opportunities offered through the programme without regular attendance on campus. An allowance of up to £1000 (inclusive of VAT) will be made to support costs associated with travel and subsistence. These costs will need to be paid in advance by the participant and claimed back at the end of the project in July.

Are there any reporting requirements?

Yes. We ask that a short progress report is provided at the end of each month of the project (max one page) as well as a brief final report that should detail what has been achieved through the programme, your plans for post-accelerator development of the technology and business, and suggested improvements to the programme itself (max four pages). The final report will be due within one month of project completion. Simple templates will be provided. As part of our alumni community, we would also like to contact you annually over the following five years to with a brief questionnaire about the continued development of the technology.

What else is expected from participants?

We ask for a time commitment from your team members as appropriate to the needs of the individual project, and availability during key planning periods (such as initial scope definition). The amount of time needed will vary, but it is anticipated that this is unlikely to exceed one day per week.

Will I gain any form of accreditation or certification for my technology through the accelerator programme?

No. Cranfield University is not an accredited standard, or performance testing or awarding body. However, there will be an opportunity to demonstrate your technology to relevant third parties and stakeholders during the final showcase event in mid-July.

Are places on the accelerator programme only open to UK residents and companies?

No. However, at least one member of the development team must be based in the UK during the delivery of the project.

What will happen if I am invited for interview?

You will be expected to attend the interview in person on either the 6th or 7th of February to provide a 20-minute presentation on your innovation, potential impact, and proposed project, followed by a Q&A session. We will provide further guidance on the precise timing and content of the presentation when you are notified whether you have been successfully shortlisted (expected by 30th Jan). It is suggested that you 'save the dates' in your calendar.