GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR SCOPING COMMERCIAL RESEARCH PARTNERS

An adaptable guide for Australian and Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) to establish research partnerships with industry and commercial partners.

A. IF YOU HAVE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH THE PARTNER UNIVERSITY

STEP 1: COORDINATE INTERNALLY

Before approaching commercial partners:

- Discuss with colleagues involved in the MoU (faculty heads, research leads).
- Learn about the industry you want to engage with:
  - Maturity and size
  - Current or long-term challenges
  - Growth potential and specific areas of value-add
  - Any existing solutions in market.

STEP 2: MAP JOINT CAPABILITIES

Create a combined capability profile mapping:

- Shared research infrastructure and R&D strengths.
- Complementary disciplines, people-to-people links and department synergies.
- Joint PhD or student mobility programs.
- Capacity for co-supervision of projects or implementation of testbeds.
- Involve your university's Research, Innovation, or R&D Commercialisation Offices/Technology Transfer Offices early.
- Seek their advice on:
  - IP ownership/management
  - Background IP disclosures
  - Contracting pathways for tripartite agreements
  - Requirement for amendments to the existing MoU.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY RELEVANT INDUSTRIES AND COMPANIES

1. India

- Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to identify industrial and commercial priorities of select Indian regions/states, local R&D strengths, and regional industry associations and key contacts.

- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) for industry sector insights, technology commercialisation initiatives, innovation programs, and networks linking universities with industry. FICCI also convenes major knowledge-industry events such as the FICCI Bharat R&D Summit which showcases emerging research priorities, industry needs, and opportunities for university-industry collaboration.

- National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) Market and Industry for insights on India's SME Landscape, Global Capability Centers, Engineering R&D and BPM Industry.

- Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) for information on industry-driven research initiatives, funding opportunities and dashboard of India's R&D and innovation ecosystem.

- Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India for information on India's government-industry collaboration schemes, including Science and Technology (S&T) Clusters, International Technology Engagement Strategy (ITES), Manthan platform and Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

- Indian Centres of Excellence for research specialisations.

- State of Industry R&D in India Dashboard for information on sector-level industry data on R&D intensity, PhD employees, patents and publications.

2. Australia

- The Department of Industry Science and Resources for up-to-date information on Australian projects across priority sectors such as manufacturing, science, technology and innovation, and trade.

- The Australian Trade and Investment Commission for information on programs, services and grants such as the Australia-India Business Exchange and Landing Pads and Dealroom for tech exporters.

- State government industry directories for sector, capability and industry profiles to identify regional R&D strengths and potential industry partners.

- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) industry domain pages for national research capabilities, priority sectors, infrastructure, and pathways for industry–research collaboration through CSIRO programs and missions.

- Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) for information on long-term, industry-focused research consortia that reveal active R&D themes and potential partners across priority technology and industry domains.

STEP 4: CREATE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL INCLUDING:

- ☐ **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact.

- ☐ **Introduction to the Organisation(s):** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program.

- ☐ **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed.

- ☐ **Program Methods, Design, Activities, and Deliverables:** The "goals" describe what the program is intended to achieve. The "objectives" refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable. Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.

- ☐ **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.

- ☐ **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?

- ☐ **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organisations.

- ☐ **Future Funding:** Continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

- ☐ **Monitoring & Evaluation Plan:** Proposals must include a draft Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). The M&E PMP should show how applicants intend to measure and demonstrate progress towards the project's objectives and goals.

STEP 5: APPROACH INDUSTRY JOINTLY

When contacting industry, highlight:

- ☐ Access to two markets, two regulatory environments, and two research ecosystems.

- ☐ Opportunity for joint testbeds, pilots, and innovation pathways.

Tip: Leverage informal people-to-people links and Indian diaspora expert networks for introductions.

Send prospective industry partners:

- ☐ Joint capability one-pager.

- ☐ Short introductory communication.

- ☐ Invitation for a scoping discussion.

STEP 6: DEVELOP A TRIPARTITE COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

Once interest is confirmed:

- ☐ Draft a tripartite Statement of Intent or annex under the existing MoU.

- ☐ Involve both universities' TTOs early.

- ☐ Align contracting models in Australia and India (IP, data privacy, compliance).

- ☐ Define the industry partner's contribution (cash, equipment, data access, pilot sites).

B. IF YOU DON'T HAVE AN MOU WITH THE PARTNER UNIVERSITY

STEP 1: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ACADEMIC COLLABORATORS (ALSO SEE ABOVE ADVICE ON RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS FOR ECRS)

Start by mapping complementary expertise:

- Review university research centres, Centres of Excellence, labs.

- Identify Indian/Australian institutions aligned with your domain expertise:

  - Leverage people-to-people links and departmental connections

  - Access platforms such as ARCH-India, Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and Universities Australia's biennial MoU database to identify key institutions and contacts in relevant research fields.

- Reach out to faculty leads or international research offices and propose a preliminary virtual meeting.

- Establish research agreement.

STEP 2: CONSULT INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS EARLY

Before engaging externally:

- Speak with your Research & Commercialisation Office/Technology Transfer Offices (TTO).

- Notify International Engagement or Global Partnerships offices.

- Find out how they can help with:

  - Drafting an MoU

  - Validating partnership risks

  - Recommending appropriate models for tripartite collaborations.

STEP 3: USE INDUSTRY-MAPPING TOOLS TO FIND POTENTIAL PARTNERS (SEE P.55)

This is particularly useful if you are starting without an MoU – use it to identify industry clusters relevant to your research theme.

STEP 4: DEVELOP PARALLEL CONVERSATIONS WITH HEI AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Institutional partnerships can sometimes be driven by industry buy-in as they signal strong potential for translation and commercial outcomes.

- Commence partnership discussions with potential partner university.

- Simultaneously engage industry to gauge interest.

- Share:

  - Capability statements

  - Use cases

  - Possible pilot project concepts.

STEP 5: FORMALISE TRIPARTITE COLLABORATION

Once interest aligns:

☐ Draft a three-way collaboration agreement, covering:

  ☐ Scope for collaborative R&D

  ☐ Sharing facilities

  ☐ Student mobility/embedded researchers

  ☐ Principles for IP and data sharing.

☐ Use university TTOs to align:

  ☐ IP ownership or cross-licensing

  ☐ Commercialisation pathways

  ☐ Export controls and ethical clearance

  ☐ Funding contributions

  ☐ Set up a joint governance unit for managing technology transfer process.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- For negotiating multi-stakeholder interests in technology commercialisation:
  » The Marketing to Industry Toolkit Checklist
  » Understanding and Balancing Stakeholder Interests in Commercialising Academic Technologies

- For setting up research commercialisation partnership agreements:
  » AUTM Model Inter-Institutional Agreement (Model IIA)
  » Higher Education Research Commercialisation Intellectual Property Framework

- For information on opportunity sectors for bilateral R&D: India Australia Economic Cooperation report, CII
- For models and case studies of successful research translation:
  » The Translational Research Playbook, FAST India
  » FICCI Compendium of Research Work/Technologies for Commercialisation
  » Outline of the Technology Transfer Process, FAST India (p. 44)