IMPOSSIBLE FOUNDERS

Call for Impossible Courses

Activating Talent for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Venture Creation

Impossible Founders (https://www.impossible-founders.com/) is a cross-regional platform dedicated to advancing **deep-tech innovation and technology-driven ventures emerging from universities and research institutions**. It supports talents, teams, and startups along the **entire entrepreneurial journey** – from awareness and ideation through pre-incubation and incubation to acceleration and scaling. Impossible Founders connects education, research, industry, investors, and technology transfer actors, creating a collaborative innovation ecosystem in Northern Germany.

Purpose and Context of the Call

With this call, Impossible Founders invites **educators and researchers** at universities and research institutions to **develop new innovative learning and development formats** or to **significantly further develop existing courses** in the fields of innovation, entrepreneurship, startups, and new venture creation.

The focus is not on traditional entrepreneurship management or business planning courses, but on learning formats that aim to:

- engage students and researchers **early in innovation valorization or venture creation processes**,

- motivate talents to **form complementary teams and initiate innovation projects**,

- and advance technology- and science-based ideas toward **market application and societal or economic impact**.

Courses may serve both to raise awareness among talents and to provide practice-oriented, in-depth knowledge, as well as to support the development of ideas and projects.

The overarching goal of this call is to support educators and researchers in **increasing the effectiveness** of their teaching and development offerings: **More talents** should enter an entrepreneurial process and **continue developing** their ideas with a higher likelihood in subsequent support programs (e.g., pre-incubation programs).

Eligibility and Target Groups

Eligible applicants are members of universities and research institutions who are able to **anchor courses or course-like offerings within their organizations**. This includes individuals in teaching, research, or administration who are responsible for learning formats in degree programs, graduate schools, or other structured programs.

Applications may be submitted jointly with cooperation partners (e.g. student initiatives, research centers, incubators, or technology clusters). External instructors or experts may be involved; however, the application must be submitted by an **eligible institutional member**.

Implementation is possible at all levels – within bachelor's and master's programs as well as doctoral and graduate programs. Formats may be embedded in the curriculum (mandatory or elective) or offered as voluntary add-ons. **Curricularly embedded formats are preferred**.

Generally, funded formats should involve **at least 20 students or 15 researchers** as participants.

The call targets institutions in the **extended Hamburg metropolitan region and Northern Germany**, including universities and research institutions in Schleswig-Holstein, Northern Lower Saxony (including Lüneburg, Bremen, and Hannover), and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Eligible Course Formats and Approaches

The call is intentionally **open**. A wide range of teaching and learning formats may be funded – key evaluation criteria are **innovative character, reach, and impact**.

Eligible approaches include, but are not limited to:

- **Project-based formats** in which participants work on research results, knowledge-based developments, technology-based ideas, and business models, either challenge-based or open-ended.

- **Advanced courses** addressing core innovation and venture topics (e.g., IP strategies, financing, international market entry, regulatory and legal aspects).

- **Technology- or industry-specific courses**, particularly in areas such as green technologies, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, or medical technology.

- **Formats for doctoral candidates and postdocs** with a strong research and technology focus, embedded in graduate schools or doctoral programs.

- **Structured dialogue and exchange formats**, provided they go beyond purely event- or networking-oriented activities.

Combinations of these approaches are explicitly welcome.

Funding Criteria and Thematic Priorities

Course concepts are considered particularly eligible for funding if they clearly address **at least two** of the following aspects:

- a strong innovation or experimentation character,

- the use of new technologies or digital tools,

- the engagement of previously underrepresented target groups,

- a high degree of interdisciplinarity or openness beyond individual institutes, faculties, or universities,

- the integration of external actors from industry, startups, or the investment community,

- a strong project-, application-, or implementation-oriented approach.

Not all criteria must be met. The list is intentionally **non-exhaustive**; other innovative elements or approaches may also be eligible for funding.

Type and Scope of Funding

This call does **not provide lump-sum funding**. Support is granted on a **needs-based basis**, derived from the course concept and a cost estimate.

Eligible costs include, among others:

- budgets for the development or further development of course formats,

- funding for materials, components, or software licenses to support prototyping,

- the development, use, or licensing of digital tools,

- the involvement of external experts and intensive team coaching,

- the training of tutors and coaches,

- excursions, field trips, or visits to application environments.

Paid teaching assignments may also be funded, particularly when recognized experts with a strong teaching and research background are involved who clearly fill a **content-related gap** in the existing course portfolio and promise a **high leverage and strong impact**.

In justified cases, personnel costs for (research) staff may be funded if innovative and impactful formats could otherwise not be implemented. Personnel funding is typically limited in duration (**1–2 person-months**).

Funding is generally expected to remain **below EUR 5,000**. For more extensive new developments or formats with exceptional leverage, higher funding may be granted.

Application and Required Documents

Applications consist of:

- an online application form with basic information, and

- a **course concept of no more than four pages**.

The course concept should clearly outline:

- target groups and academic embedding (Bachelor, Master, PhD),

- course format, core method, innovative elements and tools, coaching and supervision,

- planned implementation (timeframe, semester, block format or semester-long),

- expected impact (qualitative and quantitative),

- specific non-monetary support needs and funding requirements including a rough cost estimate.

The **level of innovation, expected impact, and feasibility** of the course should be at the core of the proposal.

Timeline and Selection Process

Application deadline: March 9, 2026, 11:59 p.m.

Evaluation: rolling

Latest notification: March 16, 2026

Start of funding phase: April 2026

Course formats planned for the **Winter Semester 2026/27** may already be submitted under this call. In case of a positive evaluation, early funding approval is possible. A further call for the winter semester is planned for **May 2026**.

Support, Exchange, and Visibility

Funded formats should generally be **publicly presentable**, allowing other educators to learn from them. Impossible Founders provides selective support and facilitates exchange among funded projects in an **appropriate and unbureaucratic manner**.

Legal Notice

This Call for Courses is a voluntary funding initiative of **Impossible Founders**. There is no legal entitlement to funding. Impossible Founders reserves the right to amend or terminate the call. All applications will be treated confidentially.

Contact

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