Four year fully funded GTF PhD Studentship - Intellectual Property (IP), Entrepreneurship and Innovation in SMEs

Company:
University of Liverpool, Management School

Location:
United Kingdom / Liverpool

Discipline:
Management, Intellectual Property, Entrepreneurship, Innovation

Employment Type:
4-year PhD scholarship

Posted:
23/10/2025

Contact Person:
If you wish to apply for this position, please specify that you saw it on AKADEUS.

Four year fully funded GTF PhD studentship - Intellectual property (IP), entrepreneurship and innovation in SMEs

Become part of an impactful research project that looks at the intersection between intellectual property, entrepreneurship and innovation in SMEs, with full funding from our four year PhD studentship.

About this opportunity

The Management School is welcoming applications for a **fully funded Graduate Teaching Fellowship (GTF)** based within the Brett Centre for Entrepreneurship, to support your PhD journey with:

- Full coverage of PhD programme fees
- £20,780 annual tax-free maintenance grant
- Higher education teacher training and practice
- A £700 per year research allowance available from Year 2

This PhD studentship will give you the opportunity to undertake timely and high-impact research on how startups and SMEs navigate the increasingly complex landscape of IP, innovation and value capture.

As well as providing you with the funds to launch your academic career, with our GTF you'll gain experience as a university lecturer to become a rounded scholar. This means that as well as pursuing your PhD research, you'll also be involved in a fixed number of teaching hours during your time with us.

You can apply for two different projects under the overarching theme of 'Rethinking IP and Entrepreneurship', which brings together core questions around entrepreneurship, knowledge protection and business model innovation, with relevance across a range of sectors.

Alongside these two main projects, we also welcome other research proposals related to this theme, particularly those with a strong econometric orientation.

For example, proposals which examine SME innovation outcomes through analyses of inventor teams using patent datasets, or those exploring the strategic use and impact of IP on the internationalisation of SMEs and on how startups secure and manage venture capital funding.

The projects will be jointly supervised by Professor Nikolaos Papageorgiadis, Professor Wolfgang Sofka and Professor Robert Blackburn, combining expertise in IP, international business, innovation strategy and entrepreneurship.

If you are successful in your application, you'll work together to co-develop the precise focus and methodological approach for the project.

You'll also become part of the School's Strategy, International Business and Entrepreneurship Group, where you'll enjoy plenty of interaction with other students and leading researchers.

Project 1 – Strategic IP management and business model innovation in SMEs

The aim of this project is to study how entrepreneurial firms engage with IP strategy in the context of dynamic technological disruption and their ecosystems.

A potential area for exploration is how innovative startups and SMEs, make strategic decisions around knowledge protection – including patents, trade secrets and informal mechanisms -, interact with others in their ecosystem (eg other businesses, IP advisors and legal service providers) and adapt their business strategies and models as a result.

Another area of interest is the development of IP-related capabilities in startups and how new types of services – shaped by technological change (eg AI) – are influencing conventional IP advisory models.

The project could also examine the emergence of new ecosystems of knowledge protection and their impact on entrepreneurial decision-making and innovation

strategies, including how these dynamics vary across different industries, as well as institutional and legal environments.

Project 2 – Entrepreneurship and IP strategy in the creative industries: navigating value capture for SMEs in the age of AI

The aim of this project is to explore entrepreneurial innovation in the cultural and creative industries.

Startups and SMEs in sectors, such as music, arts and media, face growing challenges in protecting and monetising their creative output, particularly as digitalisation and emerging technologies, such as AI, reshape established value capture models.

A potential area for examination is how entrepreneurs understand and use IP (eg copyright, trademarks) and make decisions about what to protect, as well as how their business models evolve in response to an increasingly complex and shifting technological and legal environment domestically and across international markets.

Another relevant area for investigation is how entrepreneurs assess risks and manage uncertainty around the future of content ownership and value generation, often without formal legal expertise or appropriate IP frameworks.

The project may involve interviews with key informants in the creative industries as well as business owners and managers in creative ventures, to explore their thinking around IP, creativity and commercialisation.

For example, looking into how their approaches differ when they operate in countries with stronger or weaker IP enforcement regimes.

Who is this for?

This opportunity is available for full-time PhD students from all over the world.

To apply, you'll need a UK master's degree – or international equivalent – in a business and management discipline, preferably at distinction or merit.

If you have any questions about requirements for this funding opportunity, please contact the Management School's Postgraduate Research Team.

How to apply

If you'd like to apply for this PhD studentship, please visit the University of Liverpool website and complete your online application before **Monday 17 November 2025 at 1pm UK time**, following these steps:

- Select the **'Management Studies – Doctor in Philosophy (PhD)'** option as your programme of study

- In the **‘Finance’** section, select funding source ‘Sponsor’ and insert **‘PHD-BRETT-ULMS-2025’** in the box below
- Also include ‘PHD-BRETT-ULMS-2025’ as the first line of your personal statement.

As well as other relevant documentation, you need to submit a **two-page research interest statement** (instead of a research proposal) which:

- Engages with one (or both) of the proposed project areas or sets out a related project within the overarching theme
- Identifies relevant themes and research questions for up to three potential studies
- Synthesises key academic literature **with references to at least five papers** leading journals, such as: Strategic Management Journal, Research Policy, Journal of Management, Organization Studies, Academy of Management Journal, Journal of International Business Studies, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Journal of Business Venturing, Journal of World Business.
- Briefly outlines possible methodological approaches you may consider.

Once we have reviewed your application, we’ll get in touch to let you know whether you have the potential to receive the PhD studentship.

If so, we’ll invite you for an interview in the first week of December and let you know whether you have been successful in your application by the end of the month.

Apply now

Contact Person:
If you wish to apply for this position, please specify that you saw it on AKADEUS.