XJTLU Entrepreneur College (Taicang) Student Project Funding and Support Guideline

1. Purpose

This policy aims to categorise student projects based on their nature, scope, and alignment with institutional goals. It defines funding scope, eligibility criteria, and expected outcomes for projects supported by Innovation Factory, ensuring transparency, accountability, and strategic resource allocation.

2. Project Category

Category	Budget Owner	Scope
Innovation & Technical Projects	Innovation Factory	Prototyping, technical development up to Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) 1-4 or Manufacturing Readiness Levels (MRLs) 1-4, pre-commercialisation stage development such as TRLs 4-7, MRLs 4-7 and patent innovation, requiring labs, equipment, training, industrial mentorship, competition/showcasing, and/or academic mentorship

3. Funding, Criteria, and Responsibilities by Budget Owner

3.1 Innovation Factory Funded Projects

3.1.1 Project types

1) Technical Prototyping: Hardware/software and product development up to TRLs 1-4, MRLs 1-4 (align with stage 1 development defined by Innovation Factory). Development should be closely tied to applied and traditional engineering and technology-related disciplines such as IoT, robotics, AI/ML models, manufacturing, CHIPS, computer science, electronics/electrical/mechatronics, Industry 4.0, and so on, or interdisciplinary. It also includes projects tied to modules, curriculum and their learning outcomes.
2) Pre-Commercialisation: Higher TRLs and MRLs levels prototypes (typically TRLs 4-7, MRLs 4-7), patents, typically align with Innovation Factory definition of stage 2 development.
3) Cross-disciplinary Labs: Projects requiring specialised equipment (e.g., 3D printers, VR labs, test beds for real-world test scenarios and simulation environments).
4) Projects on the path to demonstration through showcasing & demonstration at a competitive level through participation in national/international competitions, and/or projects that require training (tools/equipment/software/hardware), industrial mentors support to bring to a demonstrable maturity level. **Note:** this may be in conjunction with

the other categories of projects, that may require funding and support for these additional activities.

Note: refer to *the Innovation Factory* website for details on stages of development and technical areas we support.

3.1.2 Funding

1) Tier 1 (Proof of Concept) Solo only: Up to ¥5,000 (e.g., research and MVP development, low cost laboratory scale basic prototypes through non-industry grade components/materials). **Duration:** up to 6 months (stage 1 development)
2) Tier 2 (Proof of Concept): Up to ¥15,000 (e.g., MVP development, laboratory scale demonstrable prototypes through non-industry grade components/materials). **Duration:** up to 6 months (stage 1 development).
3) Tier 3 (Scalable Solutions): Up to ¥50,000 (e.g., advanced prototyping, prototypes demonstrating route to commercialisation, IP filing, combined prototype building and national/international competition participation – to justify cases where maximum limit is proposed). **Duration:** up to 6 months post stage 1 (stage 2 development) and require formal funding application assessment by the project funding assessment panel. As stated, it is inclusive of demonstrable prototypes/products/solutions at the regional/national level through demonstration, showcasing, and competitions.
4) Tier 4 (Commercialisation): Up to ¥100,000 (e.g., seed funding for startups) – **Duration:** vary depending on the stage of development and route to commercialisation time. It will require a formal funding application to be assessed by the project's funding assessment panel. Inclusive of demonstrable products/solutions at national/international competitions.

Note: In the case of Tier 1 and 2 projects, funding **cannot be** used towards the purchase of software or subscriptions, IT equipment/hardware, purchase of small size or long-term asset/capital equipment, infrastructure items. Only consumables, materials and components related to the prototype development will be considered. Requests will be dealt on case-by-case basis.

3.1.3 Criteria (score-based criteria for Tier 2 and Tier 3)

1) Technical feasibility and innovation level.
2) Clear deliverables (e.g. lab scale prototypes, advanced prototypes, publication potential, potential to participate in internal and external competitions at the regional, national, and international level, demonstration via showcasing events and exhibitions, potential to be patented, impact potential and score).
3) In the case of curriculum and module related projects, clear and evidence based relevant deliverables must be produced to align with the modules learning outcomes.
4) Market potential or scalability.
5) Alignment with Taicang's industrial priorities (e.g., AI, robotics, manufacturing, smart and intelligent solutions).
6) Team commitment (e.g., full-time summer projects).

7) Completion time and strict adherence to the stage of development (e.g. as per Innovation Factory's defined stages of technology/product/solution development. For more information refer to: *Innovation Factory: How to engage* webpage.

3.1.4 Expected outcomes

1) Basic and Functional prototypes relevant to stages 1 and 2 of development.
2) Patent applications or commercialisation plans.
3) Participation in competitions (e.g., a nationally recognised robotics competition such as RoboMaster).
4) Participation in showcasing, demonstration, dissemination events, exhibitions and local competitions.
5) Potential IPs, spinouts and startups related to the technology and product innovation and development. Note that Innovation Factory, XEC campus and the University do not accept any responsibility for the lack of due credit to individual contributors. Such arrangement must be made between the involved project team members, inclusive of students, academic staff and industry mentors.
6) Innovation Factory also expects to be acknowledged by project owners during their project campaigns and upon completions.

3.1.5 Responsibilities of Innovation Factory for Funded Project Teams

1) Technical mentorship: Provide engineers, lab technicians/managers, academic mentors and/or industry experts to guide project teams.
2) Lab access: Grant access to specialised equipment or labs (e.g., 3D printers, robotics labs, AI/ML workstations or relevant labs) at the XEC/SIP campus.
3) Project progress review: one audit & review per project per stage to assess the project's progress and assessment of its alignment with the committed project timeframe.
4) Risk management: Assist and guide teams in mitigating technical risks through iterative testing and validation, and appropriate use of materials/components to align with the stage of development.
5) Procurement support: Appropriate support and information sharing are in place to guide the project procurement process and criteria, material/components ordering process, and reimbursement process.
6) Post-project scaling: Identify pathways for successful projects (e.g., X3CV, potential of development as Tier 2 and 3 projects, seed funding and technical support during commercialisation stages).
7) Patents: In the case of any new patents and their potential emergence, Innovation Factory may support the process through their Patent Innovation Initiative (PII) or refer the cases to Research Engagement and Innovation Office (REIO), whichever applicable.

3.1.6 University Rights

1) Intellectual property (IP): The university retains ownership of all intellectual property developed using university resources, funding, or facilities. Individual students, students'

teams and staff must disclose IP outcomes to the university and comply with institutional IP policies, including policies related to IP filing and ownership. Individual arrangements may be discussed on case-by-case basis and may only apply in special cases based on the outcome of the discussions with the university.

2) Spinouts and startups: Any spinouts and startups as a result of the technology or product development will be owned on the basis of equal share between the university and the project owners. Individual arrangements may be discussed on case-by-case basis and may only apply after university's agreement to the respective arrangement.
3) Publication and dissemination: The university reserves the right to use project outcomes and deliverables (e.g., research, prototypes, case studies) for academic, promotional, competitions, or accreditation purposes, with appropriate acknowledgement of contributors.
4) Ethical compliance: Projects must adhere to university ethical standards and policies. The university may suspend funding or reclaim resources if ethical violations occur.
5) Outcome integration: The university may integrate project outputs into curricula, research repositories, or institutional frameworks without additional compensation.

3.2 Other Responsibilities – Innovation Factory

1) Application support: Provide templates for students to apply.
2) Compliance and accountability: Monitor academic integrity, ethical standards, and financial expenditures.
3) Clear guidelines: Provide clear guidelines, information and support for materials/components procurement, eligibility and reimbursement process.
4) Cross-unit collaboration:
    a. Jointly organise innovative challenges (e.g., hackathons, demo days).
    b. Co-host workshops on interdisciplinary topics (e.g., AI tools).
5) Student development and experience gaining & sharing opportunities.

4. Application and Approval Process

4.1. Proposal submission

1) Innovation Factory funded projects: Submit a project brief outlining the project stage of development, scope and focus, individual/team members, budget, timeline, expected outcomes, plan for dissemination and participation in competitions (relevant to the project stage), a clear plan for development, commercialisation plan for projects with maturity levels beyond TRL level 4 (stage 2) and TRL level 7 (e.g., plan for a route to commercialisation, securing/attracting funding/investment).

4.2 Review panel

1) Innovation Factory funded projects: The tier 1 & 2 (stage 1) project budget will be approved by the IF Director. In the case of tier 3 (stage 2) and 4 projects, the applications will be evaluated by the Innovation Factory Director, X3-Co-venture Director, EEH Associate Dean, and Joint Head of Operations (optional).

4.3 Funding release

1) Innovation Factory funded projects: Funding will be owned and released by Innovation Factory.

4.4 Review and evaluation

1) Submit final deliverables and financial report.
2) Present outcomes at XEC, university academic or promotional events, and regional/national/international competitions.
3) The funding unit is responsible for daily coordination with project teams.
4) Progress reporting/presentations (e.g. Innovation Factory project review meeting).

5. Scope of Use of Funding

1) Registration fees for participating in municipal, provisional, national and international level student competitions.
2) Consumables/materials for prototype only such as related hardware, software, and other relevant materials (excludes IT related hardware/software, or long-term assets). Please see the note in section 3.1.2 for further information.
3) Business trips; cost towards travel, hotel, subsistence, local travel.
4) Dissemination events, impact case study preparation (e.g., video shooting), focused information sharing workshops for project outputs, attracting investors/partners for commercialisation.

6. Compliance & Accountability

1) Audit: Random audits to ensure funds are used as approved.
2) Penalties: Misuse of funds may lead to repayment obligations or immediate suspension of current and/or future funding.
3) Recognition: Top projects receive awards, media coverage, and incubation opportunities.

7. Review and Updates

1) An annual review of policy effectiveness will be conducted by the end of AY25/26.
2) Adjust funding limits and criteria based on project success rates and stakeholders' feedback.

Version	**Approval date**
Version 1	April 10th, 2025