

Position Description

1. General Information

Name of the position	Strategic Decision-Making approaches for Sustainable Technology and Innovation Management (Research Assistant / PhD student)
Foreseen enrolment date	October 2025
Position is funded by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKRI • IfM Engage and Centre for Technology Management
Research Host	Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge
PhD awarding institution	University of Cambridge
Location	Cambridge, United Kingdom
Salary	£32,300k (est. 38,900 EUR) annual gross , ~ £2,690 (est.3,240 EUR) monthly gross
Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letizia Mortara, Associate Professor, University of Cambridge • Rob Phaal, Director of Research, University of Cambridge • Industry Partner: IfM Engage (Diana Khripko. Senior Solution Development Specialist)
Group of discipline	Technology and Innovation Management

2. Research topics (only one of these projects will be funded)

Project 1: Integrating digital technologies in the boardroom: options and potential of emerging digital tools to augment socio-cognitive decision-making processes

This research investigates the integration of emerging digital technologies—such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Simulation, or Digital Twins—into corporate boardrooms to enhance socio-cognitive decision-making and support sustainable strategic transitions. Climate uncertainty and ecosystem degradation are forcing firms to reconsider their strategic approaches and adopt innovative, regenerative practices. However, socio-cognitive challenges, such as entrenched mindsets and resistance to change, could limit the effectiveness of existing tools like roadmapping and scenario planning. Emerging technologies offer transformative potential to augment current tools and frameworks. AI can analyze complex datasets to identify trends, predict outcomes, and provide actionable insights, allowing managers to make data-driven decisions. VR and immersive simulation can facilitate experiential learning, enabling leaders to visualize the impacts of strategic choices on environmental and social systems. Digital Twins can create real-time, virtual replicas of organizational processes and external systems, offering a sandbox for testing strategies before implementation. However, as the digital technologies are emerging, we do not have yet guidelines about how to integrate them and our [DM-ET Group](#) has started to work in this direction. This new project aims to build an understanding of the principles for integrating these technologies with established decision-support tools. Collaborating with [IfM Engage](#), this research will involve participating and supporting companies in their journey towards the



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development of sustainable transitions experiments with organizations to explore the options and evaluate the potential of one of these tools. This project seeks to enable firms to make transformative, future-proof decisions and establish leadership in sustainability transitions but exploring the obstacles faced by industry today, developing guidance on how digital technologies could be integrated in analogical processes and potentially provide prototypes of their integration for testing.

Supervisors:

Academic supervisors: Letizia Mortara (UCAM), Rob Phaal (UCAM),

Industrial supervisor: Diana Khripko (IfM Engage)

Research Fields: Technology and Innovation Management

Project 2: Bridging across elements under tension in companies' sustainable transitions: balancing short- and long-term visions, profit- and value-driven logics

This research project aims to address the critical challenge of aligning short-term corporate actions with long-term sustainability objectives. As businesses face increasing pressure to adapt to climate uncertainties and resource constraints, the ability to balance immediate operational needs with transformative, forward-looking strategies becomes essential. However, many organizations struggle to achieve this balance, as short-term decision-making often takes precedence due to financial, market, and stakeholder pressures. In collaboration with [IfM Engage](#), the project will explore methodologies and tools that enable firms to bridge the gap between decision tensions such as short-term imperatives and long-term sustainable transitions, economic or social value-driven logics. It will investigate the role of integrated decision-making frameworks such as scenario planning, roadmapping, or other approaches in aligning organizational visions across different time horizons, and for transitioning from incremental to transformational innovation. This project might also/alternatively involve an analysis of the models and systems (i.e. the outcome of the decision-making processes) that balance desirability, profitability, and sustainability in innovation or/and of the process that helps bridging these socio-cognitive and organizational barriers via using combinations of approaches. In collaboration with [IfM Engage](#), building on past work at our [DM-ET Group](#), the project will ground research in the real world in real-world corporate environments, ensuring practical relevance and impact. Outcomes of this research might deliver a framework for fostering coherence between short-term actions and long-term strategies, tools for visualizing the implications of decisions across time horizons, and actionable guidelines for embedding sustainability into the corporate agenda. By bridging these perspectives, this project seeks to empower organizations to achieve resilience, competitiveness, and sustainability in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

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Project 3: The role of collaboration in sustainable decisions: how is open innovation implemented to support sustainable transitions?

This research project examines how collaborative frameworks, particularly through Open Innovation (OI), can be implemented to drive sustainable transitions within organizations. Amidst growing climatic uncertainties, businesses face immense pressure to adopt regenerative and transformative strategies. Collaboration is essential in addressing these challenges, as no single entity possesses all the resources or expertise required to navigate the complexities of sustainability. Open Innovation, which promotes the sharing of ideas,



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knowledge, and resources across organizational boundaries, offers significant potential to enable this transition. How are companies using Open innovation mechanisms to push the building of ecosystems? With ecosystems we mean the “evolving set of actors, activities, and artifacts, and the institutions and relations, including complementary and substitute relations” (Grandstrand and Holgersson (2020, p3), particularly those (sustainable ecosystems) which consider improving the environment as their main goal (Pham and Vu, 2022). What are the socio-cognitive and organizational barriers which hinder the adoption of collaborative strategies or limit their effectiveness and how are they alleviated? Building on past research in OI at our [DM-ET Group](#), this research will explore the dynamics of collaboration in sustainable decision-making, focusing on how OI principles can overcome barriers and lead to meaningful outcomes. In collaboration with [IfM Engage](#), this research will investigate how firms co-create innovative solutions with stakeholders, such as suppliers, customers, and even competitors, to address sustainability challenges. Case studies of successful OI implementations will be analyzed to identify best practices and lessons learned which can be translated in decision-making support tools and practices.

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3. Employment Benefits and Conditions

The University of Cambridge offers a 48-months full-time work contract. There is a probation period of 6 months and the total working hours per week is 37 hours.

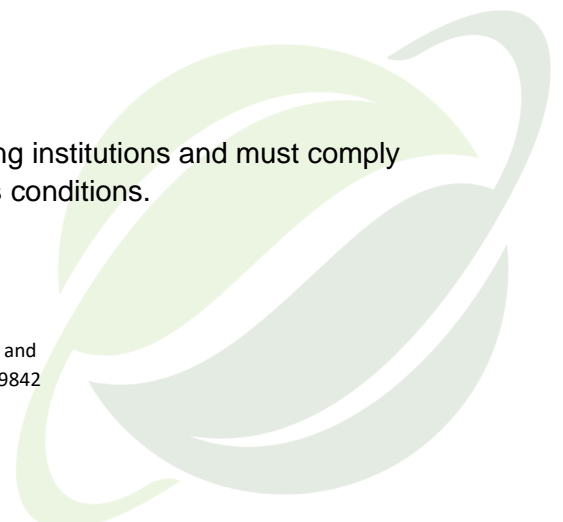
The remuneration, in line with the European Commission rules for Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant holders, will consist of a **gross annual salary of £32,300k (est. 38,900 EUR)**, which is of monthly ~£2,690 (est.3,240 EUR) gross, subjected to the UK [tax regimen](#).

Benefits include:

- Access to all the necessary facilities at UCAM and RMIT University
- Tuition fees at PhD awarding institutions
- Travel allowance to cover flights and accommodation for participating in DREAM+PLAN events
- Up to 12 months in Australia
- 41 days paid holiday leave (including Bank Holidays)
- Social security coverage
- Pension contributions
- Sick leave
- Parental leave

4. PhD enrolment

Successful candidates for this position will be enrolled by the following institutions and must comply with their specific entry requirements, in addition to DREAM+PLAN's conditions.



University of Cambridge

To enrol in a Doctorate program, you must meet the general conditions, namely:

- Minimum a 2:1 Honours Degree
- English Language requirement IELTS (Academic) score at least 7.0 in all categories except for reading which must be at least 6.5

More information: <https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/directory/egegpdpeg>

RMIT University

Visit the website: <https://www.rmit.edu.au/research/research-degrees/how-to-apply>



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info@dreamplusplan.eu / www.dreamplusplan.eu

