Pre-Conversation Preparation (Facilitator)

Founder Alignment Conversation User Guide

Complete before the first meeting. An assumption here is that these conversations are not the first interactions with the academic and as a facilitator you have had previous informal discussion and possibly access to background materials. The goal is to organize a facilitation approach based on any available background on the academic and their technology.

A. What You Know Going In

Academic's name and department	
Technology area and TRL (if known)	
Prior commercialization or discovery activity (if any)	
Known constraints and obligations	
Referrals or other external feedback	

B. Conversation Prep

Based on what you know going in, the following three questions can help shape the plan for the discussion. These are intended to shape your thinking and not to be asked of the academic. The goal is to walk in calibrated, not fully scripted.

1. Which arcs are likely to need the most depth?

Based on the academic's background, career stage, or technology type, flag one or two arcs where the conversation will need extra attention. This focuses your energy rather than spreading it evenly across all five.

E.g., Tenure decision within next year meaning Arc 1 (Identity) will likely need more time than usual. Technology is early stage, so Arc 5 (Technology in Context) may be addressed briefly.

Your notes:

2. What are your instincts telling you going into the conversation?

Describe your assumption so you can hold them lightly. Note your going-in read on the likely pathway. By naming it explicitly, rather than leaving it as background noise, it can help you stay alert to signals that cut against it and keeps the conversation genuinely exploratory rather than confirmatory.

E.g., Referral context suggests spinout so it may suggest that Arc 3 and Arc 4 get additional focus and engagement rather than serving as means for confirmation.

Your notes:

3. What does a productive conversation look like for this specific person?

Think about process, not outcome. For a first-time academic entrepreneur, normalizing uncertainty early may matter more than covering all five arcs. For someone with prior startup experience, you can move faster and go deeper.

E.g., No prior commercialization experience so there is probably benefit in spending a few minutes at the opening to frame what the conversation is and isn't before moving into the arcs. Context-setting early tends to produce more candid responses throughout.

Your notes: