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Global Early-Career Short Research Fellowship: AI in Science and Open Hardware for Lab Automation

Guidance and programme information

Funding to support short term high-impact visits to Imperial for early career researchers based in Low and Middle Income Countries, with a topical focus on AI in Science or Open Hardware for Lab Automation.

These length of the visit should be a minimum of 4 weeks, and a maximum of 8 weeks. To take place in Spring 2026.

The fund will provide:

- Subsistence grant: £950 per week to cover food, accommodation and other necessary expenses.
- Return economy class flights
- Payment for standard visitor visa
- Contribution towards costs for travel/medical insurance

The 2025-26 cycle will support up to 5 researchers.

Eligibility

Participants must:

- Be within 8 years of PhD or 6 years of first academic appointment, excluding career breaks.
- Be a passport holder and be a permanent resident of a Least Developed (LDC) or Lower Middle Income Country (LMIC), as specified by the OECD ODA Recipients List. Please note, this does **not** include Upper Middle Income Countries. *
- Be currently based at an institution in an LDC or LMIC country.
- Have a Letter of Support from an academic host supervisor at Imperial. The supervisor should ensure that the Letter of Support is signed by the Head of Department.
- Have a Letter of Recommendation from their own institution.

You are **not** eligible for this opportunity if you:

- Hold dual British citizenship
- Are a permanent resident of a country that is not considered a Least Developed or Lower Middle Income Country
- Are currently based at a non LDC/LMIC institution
- Are a current doctoral (PhD) student

*If you have any queries relating to eligibility, please get in contact.

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Research Topic

The research focus of the visit must fit within the scope outlined below:

1. AI in Science – for definitions of this see eligibility conditions below – this visit would be devoted to disrupting normal scientific practice by using AI tools.
2. Open Hardware for Lab Automation - Lab automation will be understood broadly to include physical automation of experimental workflows; open-source (open-science) laboratory hardware; computational infrastructure that directly supports automation; automation of low-throughput experiment as well as self-driving labs (closed-loop autonomous experimentation).

A short report will be required at completion.

If you have any questions about the research remit, please get in touch: f.skillicorn@imperial.ac.uk

Application Process

Applicants must be hosted by an Imperial academic for the duration of their stay.

Applicants are responsible for identifying their own host academic using the university directory and other resources. A list of all faculties and departments can be found here.

It is at the discretion of the Imperial academic as to whether they would like to host you. We encourage preexisting collaborators to explore opportunities for visiting researchers.

All eligible applications will be reviewed by a selection committee at Imperial and notified via email.

Applicants must complete the online application form and send the following supporting documentation to international.relations@imperial.ac.uk before the closing date (5th December).

- 2-page academic CV
- Host support letter (bench-fee waiver, workspace/lab access, induction/supervision plan)
- Home institution support letter (status, support of the visit)

Additional information

Eligible costs: Subsistence (to cover accommodation, food, subsistence), consumables (cap **≤10%**), small equipment, visa/ETA and health/ travel insurance.

Ineligible costs: salary, bench fees, overheads.

Host departments are expected to **waive bench fees** and confirm desk/lab access in their support letter.

Researchers may require an ATAS certificate for the visit. Please check with your host supervisor whether this is a requirement.

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