## Faculty Strategic Research Funding - Guidance and Application Form (2024/2025)

The Faculty of Natural Sciences wishes to support industrial collaborations to stimulate new research directions and to enhance our research impact, noting the requirement for REF impact cases. From February 2020 the FoNS Strategy Research Fund has allocated its limited resources to foster new initiatives to engage more effectively with external SME partners. The Faculty is particularly keen to use the FSRF to support earlier career staff. This scheme welcomes multi-disciplinary projects, but the Faculty will allocate its FSRF to support FoNS researchers only.

The Faculty Strategic Research Fund (FSRF) provides two schemes:

**SME Engagement Scheme -**This initiative aims to encourage and support collaborative short term research projects with SMEs with a view to generating impact and to seeding longer term, fully funded collaborations. These projects should last no longer than 12 months and would be supported by up to £10,000 from FoNS to match a cash contribution from the SME’s.  To particularly encourage Early Career Researchers to engage with SMEs, FoNS will provide 3:1 matching funds, up to a limit of £15,000 from the Faculty for such projects.

**Travel grants to visit potential industrial partners -**The aim of this scheme is to encourage members of staff (in particular Early Career Researchers) to engage effectively with industry by providing a small travel allowance for them and/or members of their research group to visit new potential funders. Travel grants must not exceed £500 and the travel should occur before 31st July 2025.

**How to apply:**

* Applicants should complete the relevant application form without exceeding more than two pages: Appendix 1 for SME Engagement Scheme, Appendix 2 for the Travel Grants Scheme to visit potential industrial partners;
* Applicants should send the Worktribe costing and letters of support with the application form;
* Completed forms should be submitted to fonsfundinghighlights@imperial.ac.uk cc-ing Ester Buchaca-Domingo (e.buchaca-domingo@imperial.ac.uk)
* There is no deadline for submissions. All applications will be reviewed by the Faculty Research Committee (FRC).

**The SME Engagement Scheme Proposals will be evaluated using the criteria below:**

* Eligibility:
	+ **The lead applicant must be a permanent member of staff in the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Fellowship-holders are also eligible to apply for FSRF funding as long as the end date of the project falls within the fellowship appointment;**
	+ **Funding requested is up to a maximum of £10,000 matching funds (except Early Career Researchers who can bid for up to £15,000);**
* **Proposals must have the support from the Head of Department;**
* **It must be a new collaboration or initiative with an SME;**
* Research quality: added value of industrial partner/academic collaboration, innovation, feasibility and potential impact of the proposed research;
* **If the funding requested is cost effective;**
* Strategic value to the Faculty/College:
* **Potential for REF impact**
* **Fit to the Department/College strategy**;
* **Potential for these activities to secure longer term funding;**

**Travel grant scheme to visit potential industrial partners will be evaluated using the criteria below:**

* Eligibility:
	+ **The lead applicant must be a permanent member of staff in the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Fellowship-holders are also eligible to apply for FSRF funding as long as the end date of the project falls within the fellowship appointment**
	+ **Funding requested is up to a maximum of £500 for travel grants;**
* **Proposals must have the support from the Head of Department;**
* **The funding requested is cost effective;**
* Strategic value to the Faculty/College:
* **Potential for REF impact**
* **Fit to the Department/College strategy;**
* Potential to build engagement with stakeholders;
* **Potential for these activities to secure longer term funding;**

Please note the FRC can decline to fund any or all of the proposals it receives. For the funded project with external partners, the College should retain all IP generated by its staff and the project would require a formal collaboration agreement to be approved by Gary Wheeler (Senior Contracts Manager). The FSRF is intended to provide flexible short-term support (this is usually 12 months) to explore new opportunities on relatively rapid timescales. All FSRF grants must start within 3 months of being awarded or the funding will be forfeit. With the possibility to extend it for a maximum of 3 months. Note the lead applicant will need to submit a report at the end of the project.

**Review Process**

* Proposals will be reviewed by the Faculty of Natural Sciences Research Committee (FRC)
* This internal funding is open on a rolling basis. Applicants are welcome to submit an application any time.
* If Faculty support is awarded through this process, the lead PI must keep Ester Buchaca- Domingo (e.buchaca-domingo@imperial.ac.uk) informed of any follow-on funding applications resulting from the Faculty Strategic Research Funding scheme.
* At the end of the grant, a final report will be required to submit to fonsfundinghighlights@imperial.ac.uk

Appendix 1: **Faculty Strategic Research Funding Application Form – SME Engagement Scheme**

**(Please include Worktribe costing and the industrial letter(s) of support with the application)**

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| **Proposal Title** |
| **Project dates – Projects MUST start within 3 months of the award date** |

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| **Lead PI Details** |
| Name |  | Department |  |
| **Team Details**  |
| Names of Team Members  |  |
| **Industry Sponsor Details** |
| Company Name |  | Main Contact |

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| **Details of research proposal** |
| **Funding requested** |  |
| **Industry funding contribution** |  |
| **100-word project abstract** (outlining aims and general methodology) |
| **Description of the activities to be funded and expected breakdown of costs.**  |
| **Quality of research** (Please explain what is innovative about this project and what would be the likely scientific and societal impact if successful.) |
| **Feasibility** (Please explain how your track record means that this project is likely to succeed) |
| **Industrial engagement** (Please indicate how this project could enhance engagement with industry, detailing the financial and in-kind contributions from industry. The LoS should confirm any contribution described here) |
| **REF Impact** (Please indicate the potential for this project to lead to a REF Impact CASE or to enhance an existing REF Impact CASE) |
| **Remit and follow-on funding** (Please explain why this funding scheme is appropriate and how this project would lead to significant follow-on funding) |
| **Explanation of how the proposed activities are aligned with strategic priorities of your Departments, Faculty and the College.**  |
| **Support from Head of Department**Signature of PI Head of Department: Date: |

Appendix 2: **Faculty Strategic Research Funding Application Form –Travel grants scheme to visit potential industrial partners**

**(Please include the industrial letter(s) of support with the application)**

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| **Application for Travel Funds** |
| **Date of Travel – Travel MUST occur within 3 months of the award date** |

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| **Lead PI Details** |
| Name |  | Department |  |
| **Team Details (if applicable)** |
| Names of Team Members  |  |
| **Industry Sponsor Details** |
| Company Name |  | Main Contact |

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| **Detail for the planned visit** |
| **Funding requested** |  |
| **100-word abstract (**outlining aims of travel) |
| **Description of the activity to be funded and expected breakdown of costs.** Please provide a brief explanation of why this scheme is the best possible route for funding the proposed activity.  |
| **Explanation of how the proposed travel will generate added value to the College.** Please provide details of expected impact of the outlined activities (including potential REF impact), plans for securing further funding and alignment with Department/College strategy.  |
| **Support from Head of Department**Signature of PI Head of Department: Date: |