

PRESIDENT'S EXCELLENCE FUND FOR FRONTIER RESEARCH GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

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1. Purpose

The College's [Strategy 2020-25](#) encourages us to act courageously and innovatively when pursuing new partnerships and opportunities and sets out our intention to invest funds and pursue the new and the risky. The Excellence Fund for Frontier Research has been established to support research ideas which could be breakthrough programs that have the potential to put us in a leadership position, even if the ideas have not yet received outside funding. Frontier research is intrinsically risky, often characterised by the absence of, or ability to expand, disciplinary boundaries, resulting in a new understanding of basic research.

Awards will be made across two competitions, an open call to which any member of academic staff may apply and an early career competition open to groups led by an early career researcher (an individual who is a lecturer at the time of application).

2. Funding

Funding will be available to support TWO grants, one in each category, up to £250K each, for a duration of three years. There are no limits on costs in any individual spend category. Funds can be used to support salary, consumables, professional services fees, travel and subsistence and equipment fees in any research area in or closely aligned to science, engineering, medicine or business.

Funding is not intended to cover the full economic costs of the research; estates and indirect costs should not be included in the application.

Whilst collaborative activities may be supported, all funds requested must be spent at Imperial College London. Where funds are used to fund students or staff, this scheme will not be responsible for continued support past the three years or when the funds are fully spent, whichever comes first. In addition, any costs around the ending of employment that result (directly or indirectly) in consequence of the scheme's limited fixed funding will need to be borne by the employing department/division.

3. How to apply

Applications must be co-ordinated, shortlisted and submitted by Academic Departments or Global Challenge Institutes. There is no restriction on the number of proposals that a Department can be involved in, but **each Department may submit no more than one application to each competition**, i.e. one unrestricted application and one early career application.

The unrestricted proposals can be led by any permanent member of academic staff. The early career competition must be led by an individual who is a lecturer on the closing date for the call. Co-Investigators can be included on proposals for both competitions and there are no restrictions on their career stage. Early career proposals must clearly demonstrate:

- how the research agenda is predominantly the vision of the early career researcher(s) and,
- the leadership of the early career researcher acting as the Principal Investigator.

Current award holders are not eligible to apply.

Applications should be following the guidelines in the application form. Applications submitted to the Research Office should contain the following documents.

- Completed application form;

- Application attachments: Intended Use and Impact (2 sides of A4); Importance of the Work (1 side of A4); Justification of Resources Requested (1 side of A4); Justification of Lead Applicant (1 side of A4);

4. Deadlines

Applications should be submitted by the Head of Department/Director of Global Institute or their delegate by **1700 Wednesday 20 March 2024** to researchoffice.fundingstrategy@imperial.ac.uk.

Please note that only applications submitted to the researchoffice.fundingstrategy@imperial.ac.uk email address applications sent to other emails, e.g. the named contact, will **NOT** be considered.

5. Review and Selection of Applications

The Cross-College Research Proposals Review Group will judge proposals according to the extent that they:

1. Are forward looking
2. Demonstrate an opportunity for:
 - i. growth of an otherwise underdeveloped research area, or
 - ii. diversification into a new research area, or
 - iii. new insight into a well-established research question.
3. Show the potential for future impact on the discipline, showing strong potential to be a breakthrough
4. Impact on Imperial's ability to be identified as a leader in this area
5. Justify why this funding scheme is appropriate, rather than a research council route

The research achievement of applicants over the past few years (up to five years) will also be considered in order to establish whether the applicants have the skills and experience to deliver the proposed project.

The following criteria will **NOT** be used to assess proposals:

- a) The level of research funding received in previous years
- b) The potential for future external research funding in the proposed research area.

Applicants of shortlisted proposals will be invited to attend an interview comprised of both internal and external panel members. Interviews are planned to take place in June 2024.

Outcomes will be communicated to the applicants and the Department by 31st July 2024.

6. Accessing Funds

Information on how to access funds will be provided to successful applicants with their award letter.

Successful applicants cannot re-apply to this scheme while they have an ongoing Frontier project. They must also ensure that, before any research funded by the award commences and during the full award period, all the necessary legal, ethical and regulatory requirements to conduct the research are met, and all necessary licences and approvals have been obtained. Where this is relevant, please state that this is the case in your application.

7. Reporting

Successful applicants are required to provide an annual report on the use of the funding and its impact to the President and the Vice-Provost (Research & Enterprise). Staff receiving grants are expected to engage actively with a broad range of communication channels in order to share their findings.