MRC CENTRE FOR GLOBAL INFECTIOUS DISEASE ANALYSIS (GIDA) RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

GUIDANCE FOR 2018 APPLICANTS

MRC GIDA Fellowships are personal 3-year capacity building training awards for talented early and mid-career researchers to support key transition points in their careers, providing effective career development opportunities to transition to independence.

Following a successful 10-year term, MRC GIDA (formerly the MRC Centre for Outbreak Analysis and Modelling) is establishing a Fellowship scheme, to build upon its existing strengths and to develop world-leading translational research programmes, developing and applying priority skills to public and global health research. The Centre’s mission is to be an international resource and centre of excellence for research and capacity building for the epidemiological analysis and modelling of infectious diseases, and to undertake applied collaborative work with national and international agencies to support policy planning and response operations against infectious disease threats.

Further information is provided at: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/mrc-outbreaks/

Job reference: MED00821

Applications to be submitted using the Imperial College careers website:
http://www.imperial.ac.uk/jobs/description/MED00821/mrc-centre-gida-research-fellow-x-2

For general enquiries contact: mrc.gida@imperial.ac.uk

CONTEXT AND VISION

- MRC GIDA fellowships offer unique and prestigious research and career development opportunities in the context of a world leading centre of excellence.
- The scheme aims to build national research capacity in the MRC GIDA priority research and disease areas:
  - Research areas:
    - Outbreak Analysis and Modelling; Global Health Analytics; Vaccines Research; Antimicrobial Resistance; Methods and Tools
  - Disease areas:
    - Zoonoses and Animal Diseases; HIV, STIs and Hepatitis; Malaria; Tuberculosis; Influenza; Arboviruses; Neglected Tropical Diseases; Enteric Infections; Bacterial Pathogens; Fungal Pathogens
- Applications must be relevant to one of the Centre’s core priority areas.
- Applications will not be restricted but are particularly welcome in the areas of Vaccines Research, Antimicrobial Resistance and Outbreak Analysis and Modelling, as well as in the disciplinary areas of Genetics, Evolutionary Research, Statistics and Health Economics.
- The primary focus and research home of fellows must be within MRC GIDA, but projects and supervision can encompass other departments within Imperial College London.
- The scheme will provide fellows with the inter- and multi-disciplinary skills required in modern biomedical research, drawing upon MRC GIDA’s track record in applied quantitative research on infectious diseases. It will enable individuals from core quantitative disciplines to transition
into biomedical research, specifically with public health applications, or individuals with biomedical backgrounds to develop their quantitative skills.

- All projects must involve substantial engagement with external academic collaborators and/or public health partners.
- MRC GIDA is hosted by the Department for Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) in the School of Public Health (SPH) at Imperial College London (Imperial College). However, research proposals spanning multiple departments at Imperial College or external partners are encouraged.
- There are two Fellowship positions available in 2018.

PROJECT COLLABORATION

A key focus of MRC GIDA is to increase external collaboration and capacity building (especially with low and middle-income countries [LMICs]) and increase the Centre’s flexibility and capability to address the needs of global health partners.

- Fellows must work and spend substantial time (>6 weeks) with external scientific collaborators (often with different disciplinary backgrounds) i.e. other research institutions, public or global health bodies or industry partners.
- A letter of support should be provided by all proposed collaborators.
- Fellows will benefit from departmental links within Imperial College; and the Centre’s many external scientific collaborations and partnerships with academic centres of excellence, key public/global health organisations (including WHO and PHE), health funding organisations involved in infectious diseases control, industry and also with academic centres of excellence and governments in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). Centre staff also sit on many national and international policy advisory committees.
- Fellows may spend up to 12 months in total visiting other research institutions and/or in industry including overseas; the maximum time spent at any one institution being 6 months. Where this is requested, letters of support must be provided to confirm the partner’s willingness to host the fellow.

MRC GIDA’S OFFER TO FELLOWSHIP HOLDERS

The MRC GIDA fellowship programme will provide:

- Cutting-edge biomedical and methodological skills development in priority areas with applications to topics of immediate public health policy-relevance, providing unique opportunities to interact with national and international research leaders and major public/global health partners;
- Unique, coherent career-development support delivered in association with Imperial College’s prize-winning postdoc and fellows development centre (PFDC);
- The opportunity for cross-department interaction across the College, with fellows being included in bespoke training and development events offered to the cross-faculty Imperial College Research Fellows cohort.
- Experience of undertaking research with translational impact, on topics of direct relevance to policy or industry with opportunities to gain experience working with partners in public/global health organisations or industrial/product-development partners.
To maximise capacity-building in priority skills areas and opportunities for career development, emphasis will be based on:

- **Tailoring training to individuals**: training plans must be dynamic, evolving with individual needs from initial contact and application, through to project completion and beyond, and combining specific technical skills with broader cross-cutting skills development. Training components: (a) selecting appropriate supervisors for the areas of scientific and methodological interest; (b) research-driven topic-specific methodological training provided by MRC GIDA and other modelling and informatics groups; (c) access to College-wide MSc modules and other post-graduate/doctoral training courses; (d) technical and cross-cutting research and management skills training by Imperial College’s Learning and Development Centre (LDC) and the Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PFDC); (e) spending time working with world-leading collaborators in the UK and overseas.

- **Interactive working to identify scientifically interesting, high impact, yet achievable projects**. Key to success is developing self-contained but not entirely isolated projects, identifying questions fellows can take ownership of, but which contribute to wider disease or topic-specific research programmes. This maximises interaction between fellows and other Centre researchers, allowing fellows to lead on their own projects but contribute to a range of others.

- **Maximising external collaboration and engagement opportunities**. Key to developing projects is to maximise their research and societal impact and the training and career development potential offered. Projects best achieving these goals offer the opportunity to work collaboratively with external research groups, combining methodological and applied research. Applications must involve projects spending substantial time (>6 weeks) with external collaborators and/or public health bodies/industry partners, and the training objectives of this time spent away must be detailed in the fellow’s training plan.

- **Equipping fellows for the transition to independence**. In addition to the career-development support (e.g. writing grant applications, mock interviews, supervising/managing a group) provided MRC GIDA and the PDC, research projects should also give greater flexibility and responsibility to fellows as they progress.

- **Effective feedback mechanisms and programme evaluation**: to be responsive to needs, and to further refine and improve the training and support provided.

### RESEARCH HOME, SELECTION OF SUPERVISORS AND PROJECTS

- MRC GIDA must be the primary focus and research home.
- Each application must be supported by a primary supervisor who is a senior, permanent member of staff within the Academic and Research Family in MRC GIDA.
- Primary supervisors are limited to support a single fellowship application in each competition.
- Supervisors are not obliged to accept a request for support. If they choose not to support a potential applicant, it is at the sponsor’s discretion if they choose to give feedback.
- Where an interdisciplinary project is proposed, it is possible to include a co-supervisor but there is a requirement for a primary supervisor.
- Applicants are required to move from their existing supervisor to a new supervisor, to increase both their independence and their breadth of experience.
- Applicants are encouraged to seek input and feedback from their supervisors on their application prior to submission.
- Supervisors will be required to commit to and fulfil the following obligations with the support of their host Department:
Recognise that the fellowship is to promote the growth and independence of the applicant. This includes mentorship activities and contributions to career development as well as appropriate assignment of authorship.

Ensure that, before any research funded by the fellowship commences and during the full award period, all the necessary legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and all the necessary licences and approvals have been obtained.

SCOPE

- MRC GIDA Fellowships are fixed term for 3-years only.
- MRC GIDA Fellowships are to support outstanding early and mid-career researchers to consolidate and further develop their skills in a priority area in which they are already active or in which they are seeking training, or to support researchers at all career stages who wish to transform their career by developing new skills in a priority area.
- Successful applicants will have demonstrated their ability via an excellent track record of peer reviewed publications and have the potential to establish research independence.
- Applications are invited from both internal and external applicants.
- Applications are welcomed applications from candidates with a strong research idea but no current MRC GIDA collaborator.
- Fellowships must be based within MRC GIDA, at the St Mary’s Campus at Imperial College London.
- Fellows are encouraged to apply for additional sources of funding to allow them to build further their research programme.
- It is expected that the fellow will spend the majority of their time during the fellowship period working on the broad aims of the research proposal described in the fellowship application.
- To allow fellows to focus on establishing their research, there are no obligatory teaching or administrative duties associated with these fellowships. However, if desired, such duties can be negotiated with the host department.
- Fellows are not permitted to be sole supervisor for PhD students. However, if there is a desire to, fellows may assist with the supervision of PhD students or post docs where the project aligns with the broad research aims of the fellow. A fellow will be the supervisor for any post docs supported by grants or contracts awarded to them as Principal Investigator.
- It is usual that the Fellow’s line manager would be the supervisor who will take responsibility for day-to-day supervision and will be involved in any reviews.
- Where appropriate, necessary licences and regulatory approval should be obtained prior to the start of the fellowship.

ELIGIBILITY

- There are no restrictions on nationality; however, applicants will be required to provide evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK before commencing any fellowship offered.
- Applicants must have submitted their PhD before an application is made and the PhD must be awarded before the proposed start date of the fellowship.
- Start dates must be prior to 1st June 2019.
FUNDING

- Salary is provided for 3-years within the Imperial College Academic and Research pay scale of Level B spine point 29 £37,904 to Level C spine point 33 £42,065 per annum on the 2018/19 pay scales, depending on experience. Incremental progression through the salary scale will be determined in accordance with procedures governing the Research Staff group.
- The available salary scale reflects the fact that these are early career training fellowships. Candidates who are already at the top end of the scale in terms of research experience and salary requirements should give this careful consideration before applying.
- A contribution toward research and travel costs of up to £30,000 for the 3-year duration may typically be requested; this should cover all associated costs including training, computer equipment, software, skills development and travel etc. It should also cover costs associated with working with collaborators, including spending time at other research institutions.
- All financial requests must be fully justified by the nature of the research and should be calculated based on costs associated with the project and training programme requirements.
- Budgets must be discussed with your supervisor and reviewed by MRC GIDA mrc.gida@imperial.ac.uk prior to submission.
- Budgets are subject to amendment on award.

HOW TO APPLY

Identifying supervisors

- Applicants can identify appropriate primary supervisors and narrow their research interests in an informed manner using the supervisor pool found at https://www.imperial.ac.uk/mrc-outbreaks/
- Applicants should contact potential supervisors directly as early as possible before the application deadline to allow sufficient time for a response and to develop research and training proposals with your agreed supervisor.
- Applicants must have the agreement of their proposed supervisors prior to submitting an application, and applications should include letters of support from each supervisor.

Application

- Applicants should complete and submit an online application via the Imperial College careers website http://www.imperial.ac.uk/jobs:description/MED00821/mrc-centre-gida-research-fellow-x-2
- Job reference: MED00821
- Applicants should upload the following documents using the ‘Supporting Statement/CV’ option:
  - CV using the MRC Fellowship CV template (maximum 2 pages) www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/doc/fellowship-cv-template
- Applicants should upload the following documents using the ‘other attachment’ option:
  - MRC GIDA Fellowship application form
  - Letters of support from supervisor(s). If there is more than one supervisor, each supervisor is required to submit a letter of support.
  - Letters of support from each partner or collaborating organisation.
• Applicants should submit a confidential letter of support / reference to mrc.gida@imperial.ac.uk
• Further guidance on completing the MRC GIDA Fellowship application form can be found in the application form template.
• All required documents described must be included and all sections of the application form must be completed. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
• Please provide answers in English within the text boxes, keep within the dedicated margins, and do not exceed the word limit and page restrictions as indicated on the form.
• Please complete the CV and form using Arial 11 pt.
• Please refer to monetary values in £ pounds sterling.
• Applications without the required signatures will not be accepted. Signatures must be either original or electronic. Signatures that are a typed named only are not sufficient.

Letters of support
• Each application must be accompanied by a confidential letter of support / reference, usually from the applicant’s current institution. Where the current institution is Imperial, the letter of support must be provided by someone other than the proposed sponsor or host Head of Department. As this is a confidential letter, it must be submitted directly from the referee to mrc.gida@imperial.ac.uk 11:59pm (GMT) 5th December 2018.
• Each application must also be accompanied by letters of support from the following. These are not confidential letters and should be submitted by the applicant with the application form as an ‘other attachment’:
  o Supervisor(s); if there is more than one supervisor, each supervisor is required to submit a letter of support
  o Research collaborators, confirming their involvement in the proposal, and if relevant their willingness to host the fellow.

Timeline/Important dates
• Closing date for full applications: 11:59pm (GMT) 5th December 2018.
• Start date for fellowships: before 1st June 2019.
• It is not possible to defer offers of fellowships for future years.

Interviews
• Due to the volume of applications, Imperial College is unable to provide feedback for the applications that are not selected for interview.
• Candidates will be expected to attend the interview in person and give a 5-minute presentation.
• Feedback will be provided to all applicants who reach the interview stage of the process.