Non-GCRF International Development Research Funds

The new Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) requires strong international partnerships in low to middle income countries (LMICs). The following schemes provide funding to build up these vital networks and explore ways in which to translate fundamental research into overseas development. All of these opportunities will run in parallel to the larger multidisciplinary GCRF calls.

The Newton Fund

Before the arrival of the GCRF, The Newton Fund was responsible for much of the research funding into international development, and continues to fund numerous calls for ODA eligible research. It is partnered with 16 countries – China; India; Brazil; South Africa; Mexico; Colombia; Chile; Turkey; Malaysia; Thailand; Vietnam; Indonesia; The Philippines; Egypt; Kazakhstan and, most recently, Kenya, all of which are currently on the DAC list. Any activity funded under the Newton Fund must be developed in partnership between the UK and at least one of these countries, each of which has identified different priority areas for research funding. Each individual call specifies particular countries from this list with which partnership is eligible under that call.

Launched in 2014, the Newton Fund received a financial commitment from the government of £75 million per year, doubling to £150 million per year by 2021. It is managed by the UK’s Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and distributed through its 15 delivery partners, which develop and run calls from the allocation of the money they receive.

For a list of all current opportunities supported by the Newton Fund, see here: [http://www.newtonfund.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/](http://www.newtonfund.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/)

Newton Fund Delivery Partners:

British Council

The British Council works in over 100 countries: promoting a wider knowledge of the UK and the English language; encouraging cultural, scientific, technological and educational co-

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2 The DAC list constitutes all LMICs which are eligible for ODA. See here for the full list: [http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20PDF%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20Final.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20PDF%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20Final.pdf)
operation with the UK; and improving international access to UK education, skills, qualifications, culture and society. Part of this involves funding calls for international research collaborations which mutually benefit both the UK and partner countries.

Individual calls for researcher/institutional links with specified partner countries (or groups of them) are released sporadically every two to three months, the deadlines typically being two months after release. The British Council releases the most calls of any Newton Fund delivery partner, managing 6 of the 18 current calls.

Note that, as with most of their delivery partners, some of the research funding offered by the British Council is distinct from that of the Newton Fund, and funds collaborative research activities with non-DAC list countries, such as Russia and the USA.

Types of call:

**Researcher Links**

Researcher Links fund international workshops and travel grants, both with a focus on early career researchers. Travel grants fund up to three months in a partner country, whilst workshop grants fully fund international workshops in either the UK or partner countries.

In 2015 this funded a total of 101 workshops and 57 travel grants. There is set amount of funding offered for either travel grants or workshop grants.

**Sheffield Case Study 1**

**Prof. Kypros Pilakutas**

*Newton Researcher Link Workshop Grant*

**Coordinators/Partner Institutions:** Dr Maurizio Guadagnini/University of Sheffield; Dr Jose M. Jara-Guerrero/Universidad Michoacana

**Workshop Title:** “Seismic Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies for Existing Buildings and Structures”

**Summary:** A large portion of the population and infrastructure in Mexico is exposed to high seismic hazard. While seismic design codes were revised after the devastating 1985 Michoacán earthquake, existing buildings and bridges (pre-1985) were designed to standards that included limited seismic provisions and recommended inadequate design loads. Many of these structures were also built using substandard materials and poor construction practices. Recent earthquakes (Guerrero 2012, Chiapas 2014) have highlighted the poor seismic performance of existing buildings and structures in Mexico and illustrated the urgent need to assess their vulnerability and develop reliable and sustainable strengthening solutions. The workshop will bring together world-leading researchers and relevant stakeholders to discuss advanced seismic risk assessment methodologies, design provisions, optimal strengthening strategies and technologies, funding opportunities and establish research priorities and future requirements.
Institutional Links

Institutional Links provide grants for the development of research and innovation collaborations between the UK and partner countries, to promote the exchange of expertise and research knowledge and establish local hubs for UK-partner country activities.

Under the Newton Fund, Institutional Links grants facilitate research which tackles local development needs and challenges, such as extreme weather conditions, access to affordable health care, food and energy security. It specifies that relevant arts and humanities and social science research is eligible. Grants are worth £30,000-£300,000 over a maximum of two years.

Sheffield Case Study 2

Prof. Kypros Pilakoutas

Newton Institutional Link

Partner Institutions: University of Sheffield, Gebze Technical University; partner institutions Institute-C3RI of Sheffield Hallam University, and Istanbul Technical University

Project Title: "Post-earthquake Disaster and Risk Management through a Rapid Response Framework for Industrial Zones in Turkey"

Summary: Catastrophic damage to industrial facilities during the 1999 Kocaeli earthquake caused extensive fires and environmental pollution, impacting negatively on social and economic welfare. However, reliable vulnerability assessments, appropriate deployment of seismic risk management strategies, and rapid post-disaster response could significantly reduce seismic losses. This collaboration addresses Turkey's societal needs by amalgamating complementary expertise of leading institutions (University of Sheffield-USFD and Gebze Technical University-GTU) and partner institutions (Institute-C3RI of Sheffield Hallam University-SHU and Istanbul Technical University-ITU).

The overall aim is to develop, for the first time, a rapid seismic risk assessment and management framework for industrial facilities using a systems approach, thus significantly mitigating economic/societal losses and environmental pollution. This will accelerate economic development and enhance the welfare of the Turkish society.

PhD Placements

These calls fund PhD scholarships/placements for students from specified partner countries to come and study at a UK institution for either a full PhD or a visit of up to one year, or vice versa.

Note that the British Council also runs more specialised calls, such as funding for attendance at specific workshops, but most of its calls fall into one of the former three categories.
Royal Academy of Engineering

The Royal Academy of Engineering brings together engineers from across industry and academia to promote education, innovation and international collaboration in engineering. It has several programs to promote partnerships within and between researchers and industry.

Types of call:

**Newton Research Collaboration Programme**

This scheme supports the development of collaborations between universities within the UK and Brazil, Malaysia, Mexico, Turkey, South Africa and Vietnam through 3-12 month exchanges between them. It provides flat rate funding of £2,000 per month, regardless of the direction of travel or whether the exchange is one- or two-way. The collaborations must aim to enhance the social welfare, economic development and research capacity in the partner country, and to continue beyond the period of the programme. There is currently one round of this call per year, the deadline being 14 September for 2016.

**Industry-academia partnership calls**

These calls each support engagement between UK industry and academics with the universities within a specified partner country, in order to improve their engineering education and research output. There seem to be two rounds of calls of this per year, with some deadlines in January and others in August. Note that the lead applicants to this call must be universities within the partner country, rather than UK based academics.

**British Academy, Royal Society and Academy of Medical Science**

The British Academy champions humanities and social sciences, the Royal Society natural sciences and the Academy of Medical Science, unsurprisingly, medical science. These three institutions collectively offer a similar range of Newton funded fellowships.

**Newton International Fellowships**

This scheme is for non-UK, early career researchers who wish to conduct research in the UK, with the aim of improving international collaboration with the UK and building the skills and knowledge of researchers from abroad. They provide approximately 40 grants of £24,000 per year for subsistence, £8,000 for research expenses and a £2,000 one-off relocation cost. The application is made jointly between the researcher and the UK sponsor. There is one call per year, and it is currently closed, but it will reopen in January 2017. Note that there is no restriction on the applicants being from partner countries, except for in the field of medical science, where for the last call they had to have been from either China or India.

**Newton Advanced Fellowships**
Advanced fellowships are for more established early-to-mid career researchers with a strong track record from specified partner countries to build links, collaborate with and visit the UK, with the aim of transferring knowledge and research capabilities. These fellowships have a stronger onus on developing links which will ultimately deliver research to improve the economic and social welfare of the partner country they come from. Again, applications must be made by both the researcher and UK host institution. The amount funded, and which partner countries are eligible, vary depending on whether the applicants specialise in humanities/social sciences, natural science or medical science. However, the deadline for calls is 14 September across the board.

Sheffield Case Study 3

Prof. Craig Watkins and Berna Keskin (Town and Regional Planning)

BA Newton Advanced Fellowship

Sponsoring Dr Elif Alkay, Istanbul Technical University.

Project Title: ‘Construction, economic development and planning policies.’

Summary: The construction sector has been increasing its importance in Turkey’s economy since 2004. The contribution of construction to Turkey’s Gross National Product (GNP) was 4.9% in 2000, 14.1% in 2004 and 18.3% in 2010. To date these increases are explained as simply being a result of economic growth. However, in order to evaluate the role and function of construction in economic growth, it is important to explore the relationship between construction and the economy.

This project aims to understand the interplay between construction and the economy within Turkey by employing a range of methods that will provide key insights to policy makers regarding the potential for construction to support sustained growth. The researchers will also investigate the role of planning and consider the impact that planning policies and practices have on the construction sector. The project builds on our established links with colleagues at Istanbul Technical University.

Newton Mobility Grants

These grants are currently only offered by the British Academy and Royal Society, and provide support for researchers from specified partner countries to establish and develop collaboration with UK researchers around a specific, jointly defined research project. Again, the value of grants available and specified countries for this scheme differs between the two delivery partners, but they are generally worth £6,000-£12,000 per year to cover travel and maintenance costs and encourage skill and knowledge transfer.
The MET office organises Newton Funded calls which aim to develop collaborations between UK and partner countries research institutions in the field of climate science, through its Weather and Climate Science for Services Partnership (WCSSP) programme. These aim to build the ability of partner countries to respond to and remain resilient in the face of weather and climate variability. There have been no calls released by the MET office so far this year, but last year there were calls for collaborative partnerships with institutions in China, South Africa and Brazil.

**Research Councils UK (RCUK) (Soon to be UK Research and Innovation (UKRI))**

RCUK represents the strategic partnership between the UK’s seven individual research councils (EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, AHRC, BBSRC, NERC and STFC). After the British Council, most Newton funded calls are released through either the RCUK itself or one of its individual councils. There is no standard format for these calls, which cover a range of topics and research activities, but RCUK sporadically releases them approximately every two or three months, each covering a range of international development challenges in collaboration with researchers from one or more specified partner countries. Calls released through individual councils are more focused on research in particular topics with particular partner countries, and seem to be less frequent.

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**Sheffield Case Study 4**

**Prof. Julie E Gray** (Molecular Biology and Biotechnology)

BBSRC/Newton Fund Rice Research Initiative with partners in Philippines, China and Thailand.

Project Title: ‘Climate ready rice: Optimising transpiration to protect rice yields under abiotic stresses’

Summary: We have shown with the model plant Arabidopsis thaliana that reducing the number of stomata can improve plant drought resistance by reducing water loss through transpiration, and help to conserve the amount of water in soils. Conversely, increasing the number of stomata enhances evaporative cooling and would be expected to increase tolerance to heat stress. We would like to apply this strategy to rice so that we can test whether reducing stomatal numbers could improve crop drought and heat stress tolerances, both increasingly major limitations to yield in many parts of the world.

This project will build and strengthen links between the plant science research group at the University of Sheffield and rice geneticist and crop scientists at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines, the Rice Science Centre at Kasetsart University in Thailand, and the Biotechnology Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS).
Research Opportunities in Partner Countries:

Some of the delivery partners listed above organise their delivery of the Newton Fund in conjunction with parallel organisations in partner countries, and some of these offer fellowships/travel grants for UK researchers to visit for periods, in conjunction with the Newton Fund.

**China – Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)**

CAS offers funding streams for UK scientists/postdoctoral researchers/PhD students to visit and conduct short lecture tours, or stay for 1-12 months to develop collaborative research. These calls run yearly, and the deadline is the 1st of September each year.

**Turkey - TUBITAK**

TUBITAK currently offers two strands of travelling fellowships to non-Turkish citizens to conduct research/teach in Turkey, one targeted at early-career researchers and one at more established scientists. The former stream has two deadlines per year, whilst the latter runs on a rolling basis.

**Mexico**

The Mexican government funds short term scholarships for visiting professors, lecturers, PhD students and specialists, as well as for hosting large scale conferences. The deadline for submissions for all of its streams is September 15th.

Note that earlier this year the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) of Mexico invited candidates to submit applications for research exchange within the framework of the "Newton International Collaboration Programme", to undertake visits in 2016 in the form of CONACYT Advanced Fellowships. However, the deadline for this scheme was in late February, and it only seems to run once per year.

**South Africa – Department for Science and Technology (DST) – National Research Foundation (NRF)**

Earlier this year, DST- NRF, in conjunction with the Newton Fund, offered early career fellowships for UK researchers to visit South African research institutions for 3-6 months in 2017. The deadline for this fund was June 30th, but it will possibly be renewed next year.

**Brazil – CONFAB**

Last year, CONFAB offered UK researchers fellowships, research mobility grants and young investigator awards, in conjunction with the Newton Fund. This scheme wasn't renewed this year, but it might be next year.

**The Wellcome Trust**

The Wellcome Trust is a charitable foundation which funds biomedical science, population health and health-related humanities and social science research. Researchers from both the
UK and LMICs are eligible to apply to most of the various Wellcome Trust’s funding streams, and those calls listed below specifically aim to address healthcare challenges in LMICs.

**Types of call:**

**Europe and Global Challenges**

This funding initiative encourages European and international researchers to work together on important global issues. This call’s focus is health and environmental challenges, with a social science approach. It requires collaboration with researchers in Europe and at least one other region, and the majority of their participants to be working outside European Union countries. It funds projects up to 900,000 Euros over four years, and the deadline for pre-proposals for the current round is 1st September.

**Joint Global Health Trials scheme**

In partnership with DFID, the MRC and NIHR, this scheme funds late-stage trials of interventions that will provide evidence to help improve health in low- and middle-income countries. They particularly encourage work on chronic non-communicable diseases, including mental health and reproductive, maternal and new-born health. There are two proposal types: global health trial research grants and trial development grants. Development grants are worth up to £150,000 each for up to two years, and there is no upper limit on research grants, which last for three to four years. The deadlines for this year are on September 15th.

**Joint Health Systems Research Initiative**

This scheme is supported by DFID, ESRC, and MRC, and supports research based in low- and middle-income countries to improve their health systems. Again, there are two types of grants – research, which last up to three years and are worth around £400,000-£800,000, and development grants, which last for 12-18 months and are worth £100,000 each. This call runs once a year and is currently closed, but will probably reopen in late 2016.

**Fellowships in Public Health and Tropical Medicine**

This range of 2-5 year fellowships are offered from junior to senior, established level researchers from LMICs, and aim to support research that will improve public health and tropical medicine at a local, national and global level. Each type of fellowship competition has different deadlines, and some run once per year whilst others run twice.

**Daniel Turnberg Travel Fellowships**

This scheme offers short-term funding for biomedical researchers to travel between the UK and Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon or the Palestinian Territories to learn new techniques and develop academic collaborations, in conjunction with the Academy for Medical Sciences and
several other funders. It offers £3500 for four week visits and £9000 for three month visits. The deadline for this fund is in January every year.

**Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises Programme**

This programme, in partnership with DFID, provides support for research institutes and NGOs that work in partnership to improve health outcomes in humanitarian crises. There is a budget of around £2 million per call, and two types of grants – core grants and rapid response grants for when crises are in acute stages. The deadline for this year was July 2016, with the expectation that a new call will be released next year.

**Pathfinder Awards**

These fund pilot projects that address an unmet medical need or offer a new solution to a problem, with a particular focus on projects which benefit people with orphan or neglected diseases. The standard limit for grants is £100,000, but it can fund up to £350,000 in exceptional circumstances. The deadline for this year closed in June, but it is likely that a new deadline will be posted for next year around the same time.

**International Engagement Awards**

International Engagement Awards provide funding for innovative public or community engagement projects that explore health research in LMICs within Africa and Asia. The award encourages the involvement of non-academic bodies and individuals, though a biomedical researcher must lead or work on the project. The funding is for up to £30,000 over three years.

The Wellcome Trust have currently paused their Engaging Science schemes, so there is no deadline for this scheme for this year, but they plan to release details of their new funding framework for public engagement schemes in November 2016.

**Department for International Development (DFID)**

DFID sporadically releases its own, highly specific research funding calls, which focus on 25 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Many of these calls are tenders, but there are some occasionally released which might be of interest to academic researchers: Note that DFID and ESRC have a long running history of releasing joint calls on international development research, but these calls tend to be advertised on the ESRC website.

**World University Network (WUN)**

WUN is made up of 18 universities from 11 countries, including Sheffield and 3 from countries on the DAC list (Ghana, South Africa and China), and it supports research collaboration
between these institutions. Once per year, they accept applications for a research
development fund, which fosters interdisciplinary research into global challenges. These
grants are worth up to £12,000, and in 2016 fund research partnerships on the following
themes: Responding to Climate Change; Public Health (non-communicable disease); Global
Higher Education and Research and Understanding Cultures. Programs must engage at least
3 WUN member universities and should span at least 2 countries. Note that since WUN
partner universities can only submit a maximum of three proposals as PI, Sheffield runs an
internal competition for applications to this scheme. The deadline for initial proposals is 1\textsuperscript{st}
September.

In addition, through the Research Mobility Programme, the University offers grants worth up
to £2,500 for researchers to visit WUN partner universities to develop collaborative links.
The deadline for applications to this programme is on the 7\textsuperscript{th} of November.

**The World Bank Strategic Research Program**

The World Bank has an annual call for research projects which aim to improve economic
development within low income countries. There are two different types of grants available:
Individual grants, worth up to $200k, over one year, and program grants, worth up to $1
million over a maximum of 3 years. The deadline for such calls is usually early in the year,
around February. The website also provides access to all of the application forms for
projects which attained funding, which can be useful examples for those wishing to provide
for international development research funding in general. Note that the projects which have
applied successfully to the scheme have been headed up by non-academics, so it might be
best to work in close conjunction with NGOs when applying.

**The Ross Fund**

This fund is not yet open, but is a planned £1 billion programme which will run between 2016-
2021, which will develop, test and produce new products to help combat serious diseases in
developing countries. In total over this period, over £350 million will be used for research,
managed by the Department of Health (DH) with the support of the Department for
International Development (DFID). The fund will focus on anti-microbial resistance, infectious
diseases with epidemic potential and neglected tropical diseases.

**Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and
Reform (SPHEIR)**

Through a new £45 million fund from DFID, SPHEIR aims to develop large-scale partnerships
with higher education institutions in specific countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the
Middle East and a range of UK collaborators, including universities and higher education
sector specialists. The next round of funding will support approximately 12 partnerships,
each funded to a maximum of £5 million, and will be released in October 2016.
Although SPHEIR doesn’t directly fund research, developing a partnership through this fund could be an excellent means of building a network with an LMIC, to provide a source of partners for international development research.

**Other funding sources**

Other than these research funding sources specified, there are a wide range of funds available to help pilot and implement development ideas overseas, some of which are open to universities. There are also many more general research travel grants available which can be used to fund visits to LMICs to develop partnerships. For updates on all funding opportunities for travel, please look at the specific faculty funding opportunities emails that are circulated weekly, or get in touch with your faculty Research Development Officer.

Dr. Peter Caven

Interdisciplinary Research Development Officer (August 2016)