Call for applications for Turing Fellows and Turing sponsored project proposals

The Alan Turing Institute seeks to grow its research community and activities, building on the successful initial research outcomes involving its founder members and in recognition of the growth from its new university partners. To this end, we invite the submission of applications for Turing Fellowships and Turing sponsored projects (supported by Institute core funds) in support of the Institute’s scientific aims and objectives. The aim of this process is to allocate the Institute’s limited resources to Fellows and research projects that will have substantial impact in the areas of data science and artificial intelligence. The expectation is that successful Fellows’ projects will provide excellent scientific results in their initial duration and pave the way for even greater success (e.g., in continuation projects with external support).

1. Turing Fellowships

Turing Fellows

Turing Fellows are scholars with proven research excellence in data science, artificial intelligence, or a related field, whose research would be significantly enhanced through active involvement with the Turing network of universities and partners. They will be invited to contribute to the activities and training at the core of the Institute’s mission through their research and involvement. They are expected to bring to the Turing ideas or proposals for new collaborative projects with the potential to secure external funding, or research expertise which aligns with an existing Turing research project.

The normal tenure of a Turing Fellow is one to two years; individuals may apply for renewal.

The Alan Turing Institute invites the submission of expressions of interests for Turing Fellowships from academic staff and senior researchers at one of its eleven partner universities. Turing Fellows are selected on the basis of their ability to contribute outstanding research which supports the Institute’s current challenge areas (or, exceptionally, proposes new ones); and to establish ongoing, sustainable research activities.

Fellowships supported through this mechanism provide access to the Institute, its facilities and resources, and support for travel and subsistence costs to spend time at the Institute. If desired and appropriate, the fellowship would support a 5% ‘buy-out’ of Fellows’ time to support spending 5% or more of the Fellow’s time in residence at the Turing Institute conducting research and participating in Turing activities.

Among the benefits researchers may draw upon at the Turing are:

- the opportunity to collaborate with researchers they would not typically encounter and work outside their domain, including Turing Interest Groups;
- the opportunity to engage with industry partners, Government and the third sector, benefitting from the Turing’s position as a national institute;
- a team of Software Engineers/Data Scientists;
- access to computer resources including cloud credits, GPU cluster, high performance computing and local IT services;
- access to seed-funding and workshop funding;
- support from the Institute’s research facilitation team with bids for externally funded Turing collaborative projects;
Applicants who request more support for their time or other resources should add a project proposal to their application, as described in Section 2 below.

Fellowship Application Process

- Fellowship proposals are limited to 2 pages and should include:
  - Research plan for the applicant’s work and its relevance to the Institute’s research foci in data science and artificial intelligence (see [https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/](https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/)).
  - Explanation of how involvement with the Institute will benefit the proposed research, and description of how the applicant plans to engage with the Institute during the fellowship period;
  - Intentions for collaboration through the Institute, such as with other Turing researchers, industry partners, government etc..
- Applicants must also include a short current CV of the applicant (of not more than two pages).
- Applicants who receive a Turing Fellowship will need to obtain approval from the Head of Department, though this need not be part of the Expression of interest.
- Applications will be made through the applicant’s home institution.
- Additional details of application process will be made available through the relevant institutions.

All applications should be submitted through the Turing University Lead (TUL) in their own university.

2. Turing sponsored projects

Projects will be developed in collaboration with the Turing Institute in a culture of consultation and testing ideas. The Turing research facilitation team, along with Programme Directors and University Liaison Directors and University Liaison Leads, will work with researchers to identify additional opportunities for collaboration with other academic and non-academic partners through the Institute.

In project ideas we value

- cross-university collaboration,
- cross-disciplinary research,
- research objectives which address a societal problem or Turing challenge area,
- scholarly excellence which will make a significant, original contribution to relevant field(s),
- a level of ambition and scale befitting a national institute, and
- the potential to ensure continuity of the work through external support.

Project Application Process

Proposals for sponsored Turing projects are limited to 4 pages and should include the following:

- a physical collaborative space in central London with no disciplinary boundaries; and
- limited funded support (likely to be to those who become PIs on Turing projects).
scientific background and motivation, and fit to Turing’s research challenge areas for research in data science and artificial intelligence;
- anticipated outputs and impact of this work as they relate to the university, the Turing, and the wider data science and AI research landscape;
- evidence of core expertise required to support the programme;
- intentions for collaborating with others outside of the university; for example, Turing researchers, industry partners, government, etc.;
- prospects for continuation of the project beyond initial funded period; and
- details and justification of resources requested; for example, ‘bought-out time,’ (typically one or two days per week); desk space for a postdoc (salary covered externally); 5% co-I time for three collaborators; two enrichment year studentships; etc..

Additional details of the application process and all applications will be made through the proposed project PI’s home institution.

3. Application Evaluation process
- Home institutions will perform an initial prioritization process to assist with demand management.
- The Turing Institute will convene a review panel to evaluate proposals.
- Awards to be determined on scientific merit and will ensure a balance across partner universities.

Evaluation criteria
The following criteria will be considered in reviewing applications:

- Scholarly importance and originality of proposed research
- Compatibility with the Institute’s strategy and ability to help the Turing Institute fulfil its mission.
- Past research record of the applicant(s) and promise of future scholarly contribution.
- Likelihood of impact of the work and continuation beyond the initial project period via external support.
- Interdisciplinarity; and the possibilities of collaboration across partner universities.

4. Timelines
- Deadline 30 April for project and fellowship proposals.
- 11 May for university prioritization/triage.
- 22 May for Turing panel.
- Week commencing 28 May for release of Fellowship decisions.

It is anticipated that additional calls for Turing Fellows will be issued up to twice a year going forwards, in line with the current Institute priority areas.

The Institute anticipates maintaining a level of support for projects in subsequent years and so currently expects to issue similar calls for projects on an annual basis.
Annex: Exemplar Project Structures

The example project structures that follow below are provided to indicate the anticipated scope of projects that could be supported through this call. They are by no means exhaustive, and the Institute is open to considering projects of very different structure. Resource constraints mean that projects substantially larger than these examples are unlikely to be supported.

(a) Funded Fellowship Project (similar to current Turing Fellows model) to support, for example:
   • 20% of PI’s time to pursue research in topic X, and collaborate with specific named individuals at the Institute for 12 months;
   • £10K to pay for the collection of a dataset needed by the research project;
   • Travel support to bring a separately funded PhD student to the Institute to participate in project meetings.

(b) Collaborative Research Project to support, for example:
   • 25% of PI’s time to lead the research in topic Y and develop new algorithms over 18 months;
   • 10% of named external collaborator time to participate in the project;
   • 6 months of Research Software engineer time to produce robust implementations of the developed algorithms;
   • £10K of cloud-compute credits to perform large-scale evaluations of the developed software.

(c) Flagship Turing Project to support, for example:
   • 40% of PI time over 2 years to lead substantial research effort in topic Z in collaboration with stakeholders in industry;
   • 20% coinvestigator time;
   • 2 postdoctoral researchers for a 2-year commitment to drive research forward, based at Turing full-time;
   • 15K to host kick-off and capstone workshops bringing together project team, stakeholders and related researchers to gather requirements and disseminate results.

(d) Scoping projects to support development of applications for substantial external funding.