

Food Systems Research Network for Africa (FSNet–Africa)

Call for Fellowship Applications

The Food Systems Research Network for Africa (FSNet–Africa) is pleased to announce a call for applications to the FSNet–Africa Fellowship Programme. These two–year research fellowships (July 2021 to June 2023) for early career researchers will support impact focused interdisciplinary research and establish long term research networks related to African food systems.

This Call for Applications is extended to early career researchers with a PhD (obtained less than ten years ago) working in any food system related field at a FSNet–Africa partner institution (see Section 2 for list of partners).

APPLICATIONS OPEN:	1 February 2021
APPLICATIONS CLOSE:	1 March 2021 midnight South African Standard Time
NOTIFICATION OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES:	31 May 2021

There are three formal components to the fellowships: science, mentorship and leadership development. Together these will ensure that the fellows are positioned in the necessary enabling environment and provided with the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to implement impact focused interdisciplinary research and significantly advance their academic careers.

In addition to research project funding, the fellowship programme offers fellows the opportunity to participate in a series of structured activities. As a strategy to embed capacity in African institutions while building strong partnerships, fellows will remain in their universities but spend time at University of Pretoria (UP) and University of Leeds for these structured components of the fellowship.

During the fellowship, each fellow will be assigned at least two mentors – one each from an African university and the UK. These research–triads will be carefully matched to ensure that the triad is an interdisciplinary team, enabling the fellows to receive the support they need to develop and implement quality interdisciplinary research projects. The mentorship component will create opportunities for fellows and mentors to build meaningful relationships with researchers outside of their own organisation and from diverse geographic areas that can lead to longer term collaborations. Fellows will also be linked to researchers at UP to help strengthen their research networks.

More details about the goals of the fellowship, fellowship activities and structure, as well as the research focus can be found in Sections 3 and 4. The application process does not require a research proposal to be developed as this will take place during the fellowship. However, applicants submit their applications with the understanding that their research in the fellowship will focus on a systems approach to



understanding African food systems (rather than a discipline-specific approach). Applicants must have an interest in using multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approaches in their research.

Information on eligibility and how to apply can be found in Sections 5 and 6. Applications will be endorsed by institutions, assessed by a peer-review process and reviewed by a selection panel, after which shortlisted candidates will be interviewed. We especially encourage female applicants to apply for the fellowship. We aim to recruit a minimum of 60% female researchers in this Call for Applications.

A summary of the selection process and timelines can be found in Section 7 and Appendix A.

1. About FSNet–Africa

FSNet–Africa is a collaborative initiative between UP, the University of Leeds (UK), and the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). It is a research excellence project funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund through the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) – United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) partnership.

The overarching goal of FSNet–Africa is to strengthen food systems research and the translation of evidence into interventions using systems analytical research designed and implemented in partnership with a diverse set of food systems stakeholders. FSNet–Africa has six key objectives:

1. Collaboratively create context-relevant, solution-focused, high-quality, interdisciplinary research related to African food systems focusing on countries aligned to the partners' current GCRF and ARUA projects in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa (SA), Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia (the six focus countries).
2. Create structured opportunities for up to 30 Early Career Research Fellows (ECRF) who obtained their PhD within the last 10 years (majority female) in the focus countries to conduct impact-focused interdisciplinary research, build lasting research networks and develop their skills to design and implement gender sensitive research with non-academic stakeholders.
3. Set up carefully matched, formal mentorship relationships between ECRF and established scientists in the UK and Africa to form interdisciplinary research-triads to create long-term collaborations and networks.
4. Leverage the existing networks of the lead partners to fully engage diverse food system stakeholders in the research process – as a mechanism to ensure context-relevance, facilitate impact and enhance scalability.
5. Establish a network for long-term collaborations between the three lead partners that functions beyond the grant period by realising new opportunities for research, training and policy advocacy collaborations.
6. Contribute to the strengthening of institutional networks, research capacity and policy impact at ARUA universities and less-research intensive universities in the six focus countries.

Our approach to achieving these objectives is primarily through creating two-year long structured research fellowships for ECRF in the six focus countries.



A more detailed description of FSNet–Africa can be found [here](#).

2. Our academic partner institutions

Fellows will be selected from six countries – Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia.

The participating institutions in these six focus countries are University of Ghana* and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) (Ghana), University of Zambia (Zambia), University of Dar es Salaam* and Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) (Malawi), University of Nairobi* (Kenya), University of Pretoria* and University of the Western Cape (South Africa). The partner institutions include 4 ARUA (indicated by *) and six non-ARUA (less research-intensive) institutions.

Fellows must be EITHER a permanent employee of a participating institution OR must have an employment contract at a participating institution in place until AT LEAST December 2023.

3. About our fellowships

The FSNet–Africa fellowship is a structured two–year programme, **starting in July 2021 and ending in June 2023**. Two ECRF will be selected from each partner institution through a competitive call process.

Each fellow will be carefully matched with two mentors – one from the UK and one from an African institution. These collaborations will be called research triads. Through the matching of fellows and mentors, interdisciplinary research teams who will work together on a research project related to the African food system will be created. Fellows will also be linked to researchers at UP to help strengthen their research networks.

The research triads will be supported by FSNet–Africa over the two–year fellowship to design, implement and communicate their research. Working with [FANRPAN's in-country nodes](#), where relevant, triads will be linked to stakeholders in the food system who can support the design and implementation of their research.

Fellows will remain in their home institutions for the fellowship, but spend time with mentors and food systems stakeholders at fellowship events. The fellowship covers the costs of participation in all fellowship events for the fellows and their mentors. This includes accommodation at all fellowship events, meals and/or meal stipends at all fellowship events, and economy class flight tickets to participate in all fellowship events. The fellowship does not cover salary costs.

Fellows will be expected to participate in all the fellowship events noted below.

- **July 2021: An Orientation Workshop** for 10–days at the University of Pretoria's Future Africa campus is planned. After the orientation, fellows spend time at their home institutions developing their research proposals.



- **December 2021/January 2022:** Fellows will participate in the **four-week Summer School at UP**. Fellows will be in residence at UP Future Africa for the four-week Summer School. They will receive training on, *inter alia*, proposal writing, data management, monitoring and evaluation and research ethics for interdisciplinary projects. Once their proposals are completed, and ethical clearance has been obtained, fellows begin the implementation of their research.
- **June 2022/July 2022:** Fellows will spend **four weeks at the University of Leeds Summer School**, where they will participate in training on aspects such as interdisciplinary research, policy advocacy, and academic leadership.
- **December 2022: A seven-day Research Leadership and Communication for Impact Workshop** hosted at the UP Future Africa Campus will focus on research leadership and science-to-impact communication. Communication for impact will include training on science-policy communication and writing for non-scientific or popular scientific audiences.
- **June/July 2023:** After completing their research, fellows will be expected to share their work with a wide stakeholder audience at the **Stakeholder Engagement Dialogue**, which will be a high-level event including participants from across sectors in the six focus countries.
- **June/July 2023: A five-day Write-Shop** hosted at UP Future Africa Campus where, through the support of academic writing and science communication professionals, fellows will translate their research into publishable products.

Fellows will be expected to develop their research project proposals and implement their research in the two-year fellowship period, building on the support received at the fellowship events and in collaboration with their mentors. Research projects will focus on African food systems. Funding to implement research projects will be provided by FSNet-Africa to the fellows' home institution up to the value of £20 000. Actual funding for the research project will be contingent on a full-cost project budget.

Along with their proposals, fellows will be expected to obtain ethical clearance for their research projects, develop a project data management plan, as well as a project monitoring and evaluation plan. Funding for projects will only be dispersed to the fellow's home institution upon approval of the proposal, along with the aforementioned. Fellows are expected to spend their research funds in line with project budgets. Deviations from the project budget must be agreed with FSNet-Africa.

Fellows will be expected to produce at minimum the following outputs before December 2023:

- one peer-reviewed publication,
- one policy brief,
- one science communication publication.

4. Research focus

The research conducted under the fellowship will focus on African food systems. The transformation of Africa's food systems plays several direct roles in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – achieving food security and alleviating malnutrition (SDG2), contributing to public health (SDG3) and providing opportunities to eliminate poverty (SDG1). The challenge is complicated by the interrelationship between agriculture and SDGs that relate to environmental sustainability (SDG13 – Climate Change, SDG



15 – Life on Land). As agriculture both contributes to, and is affected by, climate change, there is a pressing need for innovation in climate-smart agriculture that considers the environment an integral component within food systems.

However, access to nutritious, safe food and improved livelihoods does not solely depend on boosting agricultural productivity. The concerted and coordinated actions of the food industry (agriculture, production and processing, retail, food service sector and waste disposal) and consumers are crucial to promote sustainable consumption and production (SDG12) which focuses on reducing all forms of food losses throughout the entire supply chain (a critical outcome to achieve food security). The transformation of food systems also contributes to the achievement of gender equality (SDG5). Women comprise a large proportion of the agricultural labour force, and 80% of food eaten in Africa passes through the hands of women. Yet their contribution to food security is not fully realised and the ways they benefit from food systems activities remains unequal and under-researched. This connected circularity requires transformative food systems solutions.

Food systems encompass the activities and actors involved in all aspects of production, distribution, consumption and disposal of food. A food systems research approach recognises the importance of interactions and relationships between activities/actors and thus the importance of interdisciplinary approaches for achieving transformative change.

There are significant challenges in implementing large-scale research on complex food systems in Africa that have hindered its prevalence. A critical challenge is the limited contextual and comprehensive conceptualisation of the African food system and how it compares to other systems globally. African food systems, while comprising many similar activities/actors to other models, also have activities, actors and conditions that are context specific. FSNet-Africa has taken initial steps to develop a regionally-focused conceptualisation of food systems (see comparative illustration below) to begin identifying pertinent/pressing research gaps and potential leverage points for transformative change, particularly in relation to the crucial current food system failures prevalent across Africa – efficiency, safety, reliability/resilience, inclusiveness, affordability and nutrition.

Figure 1 : Food Systems Map (Source: Nourish Initiative)

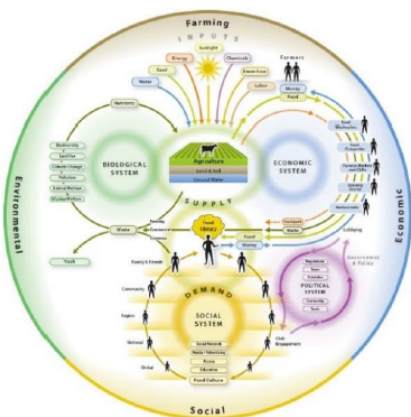
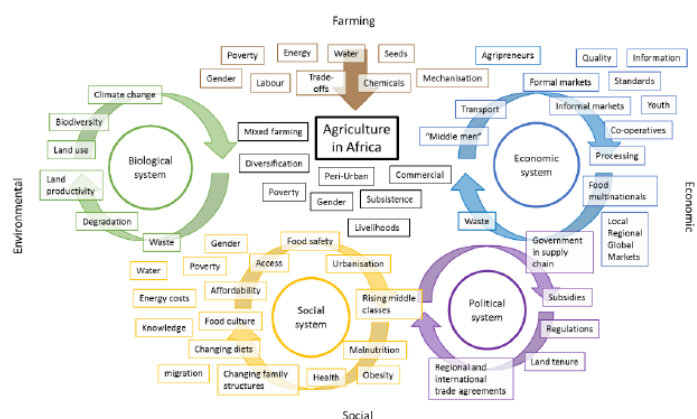


Figure 2 : African Food Systems





The conceptualisation recognises that gender and poverty are cross-cutting issues, influencing not only labour, inputs and the types of farming systems (supply side), but also diets and food cultures (demand side). It recognises formal and informal supply chains through which food moves from farm to consumer and the different actors and regulations that govern those chains (and the interactions between them). It recognises key emerging actors within the food systems, such as “agripreneurs” setting up businesses in the agri-sector, and critical drivers of change (e.g. urbanisation and the growing African middle class).

Understanding African food systems and developing evidence-based interventions to address gaps and systems failures is fundamental to achieving four critical food systems outcomes – nutritious food (safe and high-quality); equitable inclusive systems (social aspects e.g. gender); sustainable environmental approaches and efficient systems (economic considerations e.g. poverty reduction).

Applicants with a research interest related to any aspect of the food system who meet the eligibility criteria below are invited to apply for the FSNet-Africa fellowship. The application process does not require a research proposal to be developed, as this will take place during the fellowship. However, applicants submit their applications with the understanding that their research in the fellowship will focus on a systems approach (rather than a discipline-specific approach). Applicants must have an interest in multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary research approaches.

5. Eligibility criteria

Applicants must meet the following criteria to apply for the fellowship:

1. PhD obtained no earlier than 2011. Applicants who obtained a PhD in 2011 will be considered.
2. Research focus and/or research interests aligned broadly to one or more aspect of African food systems.
3. Must be EITHER a permanent employee of a participating institution OR must have an employment contract at a participating institution in place until AT LEAST December 2023.
4. Applicants must be endorsed by their line managers (either Director, Head of Department or Dean level).

6. How to apply

STEP 1: Prepare your application form

Complete the application form provided in Appendix B. [Click here](#) for a Word version. You will also need to provide a copy of your PhD (or full academic transcript), an updated CV (maximum 6 pages) and have an example of a recent publication (either a peer-reviewed journal or a technical report).

Please note that female applicants may request support on submitting their applications through the FSNet-Africa Network and Research Manager, Dr Elizabeth Mkandawire (fsnetafrika@up.ac.za).



STEP 2: Get endorsement from your line manager

You need to get endorsement from your line manager to submit your application. The endorsement should come from a person in your reporting line at the Director, Head of Department or Dean level. They need to complete the endorsement form in Appendix C. [Click here](#) for a Word version.

STEP 3: Submit your application ONLINE by no later than midnight (South African Standard Time) on 1 March 2021

Once you have completed your application form, and have all the relevant attachments ready, you can put your application online for submission.

In addition to your application form, you will need the following attachments:

- Copy of PhD or full academic transcript
- Endorsement from your line head
- Full, updated CV
- Example of publication

Applications can be submitted online using the following link

<https://universityofpretoria.glasscubes.com/form/6e98acd0-6d0f-4502-b135-2eb1a202ee70>

In your application form you will be given the opportunity to nominate up to three mentors from your institution that you would be interested in working with in the FSNet-Africa fellowship. The final matching of fellows and mentors is done by FSNet-Africa. It is thus not guaranteed that you will be matched with one of these mentors.

STEP 4: Notify any mentors you identified in your application that they should submit an expression of interest by no later than 1 March 2021

If you nominate mentors in your application form, they will need to submit an expression of interest. Notify your nominated mentors early so that they have time to prepare the relevant documentation.

Forward the Mentor Call for Expression of Interest ([available for download here](#)) to your mentor. All relevant details about the Expression of Interest process are detailed in this document.

7. Selection process

Online applications are submitted directly to FSNet-Africa, who will do an initial screening to ensure eligibility based on level of qualification, time since PhD obtained, and endorsement letter.

All applications received from an institution will be sent to the designated institutional champion who will work with the FSNet-Africa Academic Leadership Team to engage all Deans, Centres and Faculties to shortlist applications from the institution.

Participating institutions may endorse a total of SIX applications for shortlisting, of which at least THREE must be female applicants. If fewer than six applications are endorsed, at least 50% of the applicants should be female.



Shortlisted applications will undergo external peer-review. Recommendations from the peer-review process will be sent to the FSNet–Africa Selection Panel.

The Selection Panel will consider the application forms, as well as the reviewer feedback and identify a maximum of THREE candidates per institution to participate in the interview phase.

Interviews will take place between **10 and 21 May 2021** and will be conducted online by the Selection Panel.

After the interviews, selected fellows will be matched to mentors. The final selection of research triads will be announced by 31 May 2021.

A visual summary of the selection process and timeline is available in Appendix A.

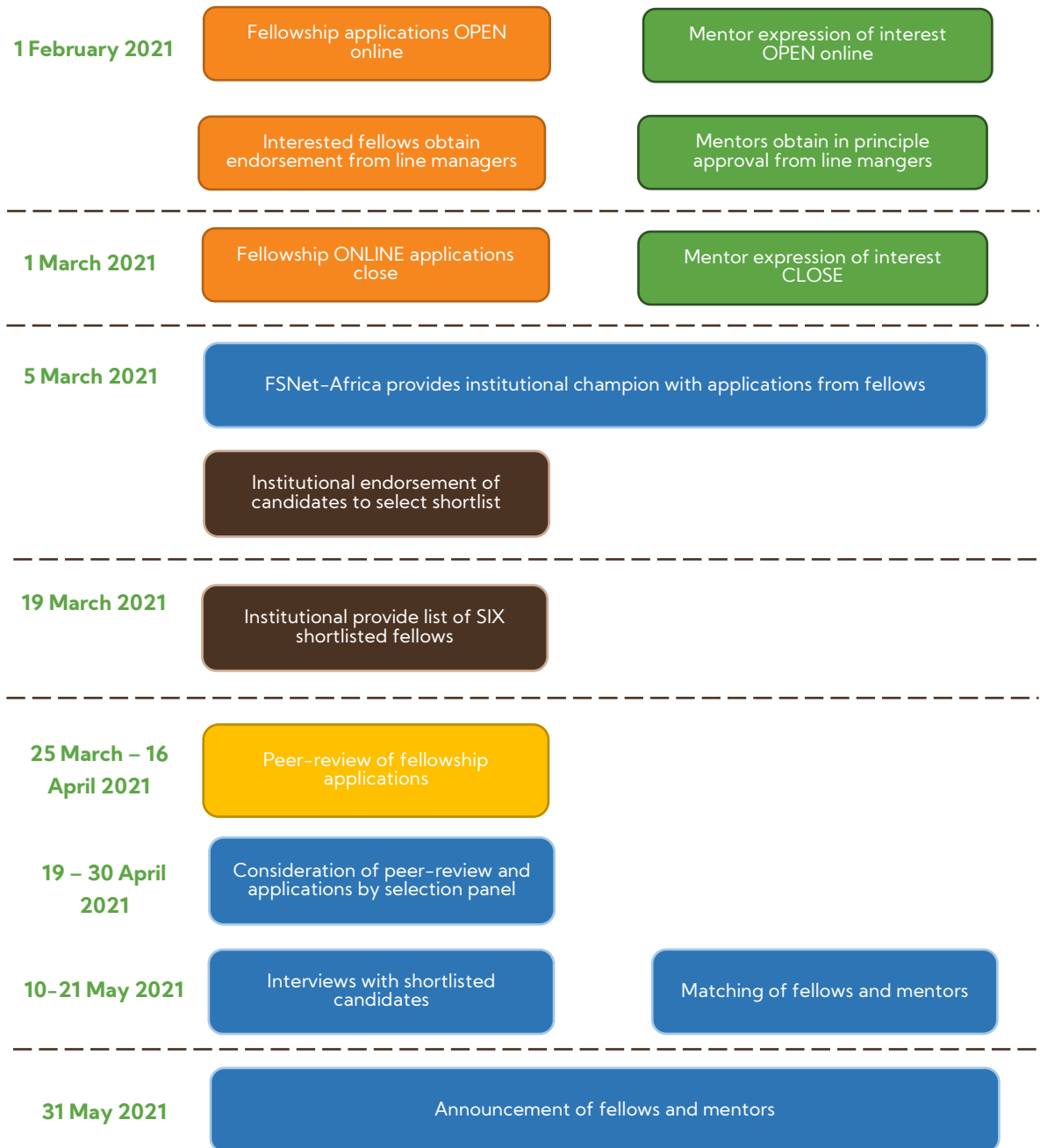
8. Contact information

For more information on the Call for Applications, please contact the FSNet–Africa Network and Research Manager, Dr Elizabeth Mkandawire (fsnetafrika@up.ac.za).

Please note that female applicants may request support on submitting their applications through the FSNet–Africa Network and Research Manager, Dr Elizabeth Mkandawire (fsnetafrika@up.ac.za).



Appendix A: Summary of process and timelines





Appendix B

Note: the form below provides details of what is contained in the FSNet-Africa fellowship form. You can access the application form [here](#).

Once you have a complete application, including all attachments, you must submit your application online at <https://universityofpretoria.glasscubes.com/form/6e98acd0-6d0f-4502-b135-2eb1a202ee70>

About you

1. **Your full name and surname**
2. **Your email address**
3. **Your institution**
4. **In which year did you graduate with your PhD?** (You will be asked to upload your PhD certificate or a full academic transcript).
5. **Indicate your gender.**
 - Male
 - Female
6. **Select the option most applicable to you.**
 - I am permanently employed at my institution
 - I am employed on contract until at least December 2023

About your research interests and experience

7. **In 250 words or less, describe your current research or research interests.**
8. **Have you previously worked on an inter-, trans- or multidisciplinary research project?**
 - Yes
 - No
9. **If you have worked in this modality before, give a brief description (maximum 250 words) of the project and how inter, trans-, or multidisciplinary elements were integrated. If you have not worked in this modality before, tell us about why you are interested in doing so.**
10. **Although you are not required to submit a proposal to apply for this fellowship, provide a 250-word summary of a food systems research topic or theme you would be interested in working on should your application be successful.**



11. In 500 words or less, describe why you are interested in the FSNet-Africa fellowship. In your description include the key areas where you would like to grow as researcher during the fellowship.
12. When you submit your application online, you will be asked to upload an example of one of your publications. A peer-reviewed journal article is preferred, however a technical report will also be accepted. Please ensure that you have this documentation ready before starting to submit your application online.
13. When you submit your application online, you will be asked to upload your CV (a maximum of 6 pages). Please ensure that you have this documentation ready before starting to submit your application online.

Mentor nomination

14. If you would like to nominate a colleague in your institution to work with you as a mentor, provide their details below. Include their full name and a contact email address. You can list up to three potential mentors.

Institutional support and references

15. When you submit your application online, you will be asked to upload a letter of support from your line manager. Please ensure that you have this documentation ready before starting to submit your application online.
16. Please provide details of three contactable references below. Include their full names, position and institution, and email address.
17. Before you submit your application, kindly confirm below that you agree to the conditions of the fellowship as stated in the call document and that you agree to commit to and participate fully in the fellowship events.

I agree

I do not agree



Appendix C

FELLOW ENDORSEMENT FORM

1. Applicant details

Applicant's family name	
Applicant's first name	

2. To be completed by the applicant's line manager (either Director, HoD or Dean level)

In receiving this form, it is assumed that you have been in discussion with the applicant (named above) and have agreed to the applicant submitting an application for the fellowship. Your submission of this endorsement form is required for the candidate's application to be considered complete.

The purpose of this form is for you to provide written confirmation that you agree that if the applicant is successful in their application, that they will be (i) released from institutional obligations to participate in fellowship events, and (ii) supported as relevant by your Faculty/Department/Centre to complete the fellowship and their research project.

Please complete this form and send it to the applicant. They will be required to submit this form during their application process.

3. Motivation for supporting the application

Please provide a short summary of why you support the applicant. Include your assessment of their key strengths, as well as key areas for development during the fellowship.

--

4. Declaration of Endorsement

By endorsing the applicant's proposal I confirm that I, or my delegated staff, have seen and approved the applicant's application and that, if the candidate's application is successful:

- The fellow will be released from institutional responsibilities to attend fellowship events;
- The fellow will be supported institutionally to complete the fellowship and their research project;
- The institution will provide (where available) the facilities for the fellow's use in carrying out their research.

I confirm that the candidate is (select the most relevant)

- A permanent employee at the institution
- Has a full-time contract in place at the institution until at least December 2023.



Signature	
Full name of signatory	
Title	
Telephone number	
Email address	
Date of signature	