

Imperial College London – CNRS PhD joint programme – Call for projects: Transformational Science and Technology

Imperial and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) recognise that collaborative international activities enable cross-border pooling of research capabilities and sharing of expertise and facilities, the opportunity to appreciate different perspectives, outputs that are typically more highly cited, as well as access to new environments for impact and exploitation of research outcomes.

CNRS and Imperial are launching a fifth joint call for collaborative PhD proposals between the two institutions. The theme for this year's call is Transformational Science and Technology. The call is intended to be open to all areas of science, technology, engineering and medicine. The aim is to develop collaborative PhD projects that can train and network the next generation of researchers and innovators, offering them expertise not available at just one institution, and to also seed Imperial-CNRS collaborations that can lead to Horizon Europe and other funding opportunities.

Imperial and CNRS now have 41 PhD students registered with the collaborative PhD programme working on high-impact UK-France projects.

This call invites Principal Investigators at CNRS and Imperial to jointly put forward a research project to be underpinned by x1 PhD at CNRS and x1 PhD at Imperial, which includes joint supervision plans and a built-in mobility programme. Support for CNRS-Imperial cohort-building activities and relevant training will also be provided each year.

Strategic rationale

Imperial College London and CNRS researchers have co-authored 2,753 publications in the past 5.5 years (2018-2023) and worked together on 43 joint Horizon 2020 research consortia, with 15 additional projects started under Horizon Europe.

The CNRS-Imperial International Research Centre (IRC) for Transformational Science and Technology launched in April 2022, aims to deepen and expand connections between our two institutions to address UN Sustainable Development Goals. CNRS and Imperial have an additional three formal collaborations in place under the larger IRC: CNRS and Imperial have a joint International Research Laboratory (IRL) in Mathematics – the IRL *Abraham De Moivre*; Imperial is the UK lead for the CNRS International Research Network in Quantum Fields and Strings; and Imperial and CNRS have an International Research Project in Integrative Metabolism in collaboration with the University of Lille.

The €95.5 billion Horizon Europe budget, which runs from 2021-2027, provides continued impetus for joint scientific discovery and innovation.

The UK agreed a deal to associate to Horizon Europe on 7 September 2023. UK researchers can now apply for Horizon Europe funding, certain that all successful UK applicants will be covered through the UK's association (or through the UKRI guarantee) for the remainder of the programme.

All calls in Work Programme 2024 will be covered by association, and the UK guarantee scheme will be extended to cover all calls under Work Programme 2023.

Call guidelines

Eligibility

- Scientists from Imperial who can supervise PhD students;
- Scientists working in a research lab affiliated to CNRS holding an accreditation to supervise PhD students (HDR)
- A PI cannot submit more than one application in the framework of this call.

There must be one PI from Imperial and one PI from a CNRS laboratory. Those who do not already have a collaborator may consult Imperial's website or the CNRS website to find information on the research groups and projects being carried out in either institution.

Funding

The model is for each collaborative project to have two PhD students and two supervisors, one of each at both Imperial and CNRS.

At CNRS the funding will be for a three-year studentship. Funds will include mobility costs for visits to London for the project over three years.

At Imperial, at least 75% of the funding for the three-year studentship must be allocated by the Imperial PI's department or other funder (eg CDTs, DTPs, or other research groups, external funding). The central College will contribute 25% of the studentship plus mobility (approx. £24,000 total) per three-year project. These funds can be used to pay for 25% of the tuition and stipend, or as a studentship top-up for other uses, e.g for mobility, consumables, or other related costs to support the project. Given that co-investment is required to apply, Imperial applicants must submit confirmation (an email is sufficient) of funding for at least 75% of a studentship from the person who is responsible for the funding source of the studentship e.g if using a department studentship allocation then submit a note from the HoD or similar, if using a CDT studentship then submit a note from the Imperial CDT lead, etc.

Number of awards

Up to five projects are expected to be funded jointly by Imperial & CNRS.

Support period

3 years

Deadline and start dates

Open date: 2 October 2023

Closing date: 1 December 2023

Notification date: February 2024

Beginning of the projects: October 2024

Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated and ranked by an Imperial-CNRS committee according to the following criteria:

- Scientific quality & originality of the project
- Scientific merit of the teams
- Synergy between the teams, added value of international cooperation
- Convincing plan for engaging PhD students in the research and for managing joint supervision
- Projects are likely to be sustainable beyond the grant period
- Benefit to researcher based on her/his career stage

The proposals should also include an outlined plan for raising external competitive funding.

How to apply

Imperial applicants should submit in electronic format (Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF) to globalseedfunds@imperial.ac.uk;

CNRS applicants should submit the same file via the dedicated platform: <https://noa.cnrs.fr/#/accueil> (as several PhD Joint Programs are currently open for proposals, please make sure you select the correct call).

The joint proposal must consist of the following parts, in one single file (up to 5 pages, not including references – parts I, J and K):

Administrative and technical support

Imperial College London: Mrs Heather S. Kerst, h.kerst@imperial.ac.uk

CNRS: Mr Carl Ialamov, carl.ialamov@cnrs.fr