

International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF)

Early Career Fellowships in Research and Innovation 2024/25

Guidelines for applicants for UK Universities and Research Institutions

Call opens on 2 August 2024 Call closes on 25 September 2024, 12:00 p.m. (UK time)

International Science Partnerships Fund Applicant Guidelines Version 2.0 Overview of change(s) from previous version

Change	Page in v 1.0	Page in version 2.0
Timeline deadlines have been updated	11 & 12	11 & 12



Table of Contents

1. Background	4
2. About the Opportunity	4
3. Objectives	5
4. Funding Available/Size of Grants	5
5. Allowable Costs	6
6. Eligibility Criteria	6
6a. Focus of Proposals	7
6b. Eligible Countries/Territories (See Appendix A)	
6c. Eligibility and Selection of Fellows	
6d. UK Institutions Participation Criteria	9
7. Safeguarding	
8. How Will the Programme be Managed?	11
9. Fellowship Branding	12
10. Timeline	12
11. Selection Criteria for Assessing Applications of UK Institutions	13
12. Call Deadline and How to Apply	13
13. Data Protection	14
14. Contact details	
15. Annexes & Links	15
Appendix A: Eligible Cohorts for Fellowship programme	16
Appendix B: Brazil	20
Appendix C: Malaysia	21



1. Background

The International Science Partnerships Fund (<u>ISPF</u>) is designed to enable potential and foster prosperity. It puts research and innovation at the heart of our international relationships, supporting UK researchers and innovators to work with peers around the world on the **four major themes** of our time: planet, health, technologies, and talent:

- Healthy People, Animals and Plants Researching and innovating for secure and healthy populations.
- **Resilient Planet** Leading the green industrial revolution to protect the planet.
- **Tomorrow's Talent** Nurturing talent to drive inclusion, research, and innovation.
- **Transformative Technologies** Developing responsible technologies to secure our place in tomorrow's world.

2. About the Opportunity

- The British Council through the ISPF fellowships programme will provide funding to selected UK Universities and Research Institutions under this fellowship scheme. The scheme will fund at least three Early Career Fellowships covering all academic and living expenses and research in any of the four major themes outlined above.
- Grants under this programme allow fellows to **collaborate internationally, and gain access to new research environments**, facilities, knowledge, and expertise, to enhance the **quality of their research environments** and enable them to **translate research and innovation into economic and societal benefit.**
- We anticipate that the grant will support medium to long term partnerships between the hosting and sending institutions, contributing to research capacity strengthening at both individual and institutional levels, alongside support for the individual researcher. Successful proposals will demonstrate the short-medium term mutual benefit as well as plans for institutional collaboration past the fellowship term.
- Early Career Fellowships are specifically designed to **widen participation** and to support the careers of researchers from a variety of backgrounds, including those whose backgrounds are underrepresented in their research field.
- One of the key objectives of this fellowship scheme is to nurture talent to drive inclusion in Research & Innovation (R&I). Inclusion in research and innovation is defined as supporting those from underrepresented groups to have equal access to research opportunities and equal opportunities to do well (Evans & Zhu, 2022), and encourages better understanding of marginalized groups.
- This opportunity is available to early career researchers who have **not yet held a permanent research-related post or academic post with a research specific element,** who wish to
- Have research experience at a UK university or research institution. This could include



converting their doctoral work into publications or other academic outputs and establishing new research relationships.

3. Objectives

Grants under the British Council ISPF fellowships programme allows fellows to collaborate internationally, and gain access to new research environments, facilities, knowledge, and expertise, to enhance the quality of their research environments and enable them to translate research and innovation into economic and societal benefit. The Early Career Fellowship Programme focuses on the Tomorrow's Talent ISPF theme and has the following objectives:

- Provide the selected early career researchers with a **foundation to launch their** careers in research and innovation.
- To **widen participation** by increasing the number of opportunities for researchers including those whose backgrounds are underrepresented in their research field, and who have not yet held a permanent research-related post or academic post with a research specific element.
- The scheme has a **focus on inclusivity**: to provide up and coming researchers with a foundation to launch their careers, creating lasting benefits to the fellow and both the UK and the international partner country research communities through sustainable collaboration.
- Establish collaboration between hosting and sending institutions on one of the ISPF themes.

4. Funding Available/Size of Grants

- Each **cohort has a value of £180,000** which the British Council through the ISPF programme will pay as a grant to the universities or research institutions selected for that cohort. This £180,000 grant to UK institutions of £180,000 is to support three early career fellows.
- We welcome proposals from universities and research institutions with **innovative ways** to support fellows, travelling with dependents, to ensure they derive the most benefit from their research period in the UK.
- For each cohort, the universities and research institutions will select applicants to be recipients of full fellowship (with an average value of **£60,000 per fellow**).
- Should additional funding become available during the application process, the British Council may increase the total funding allocated to some of the cohorts, and subsequently increase the number of expected fellowships allocated.



- The Grant is **not transferable**, and any underspend will need to be returned to the British Council. Universities and research institutions may apply to any of the Fellow cohorts below. When applying each institution must indicate their order of preference for each cohort applied for in the application form.
- The distribution of these cohorts will depend on **geographic priorities and quality of applications**. Country cohorts that are eligible for funding are outlined in Section 6b. Requirements for specific countries are outlined in **Appendix A, B and C.**

5. Allowable Costs

The costs for **each** fellow should include at a minimum:

- Minimum £29,619 per annum bursary (postdoctoral intern, spine point 24 as of August 2023) plus relevant London weighting if applicable. This would be pro rata for fellowships shorter than 12 months. Where applicable, accompanying child allowance for fellows consistent with UK visa requirements.¹ These rates are decided by the Home Office and the updated rates when released should be applied.
- £10,000 per 12 months (pro rata for shorter fellowships) for research-related expenses. This can contribute to consumables, small equipment, travel and subsistence within the UK, publication costs, or other expenses related directly to the research project.
- Other allowable costs within the grant include:
 - IELTS exam fee if applicable (for fellows with a valid Test of English).
 - Return economy-class travel from home country to the UK (this will not reimburse costs fares for dependents)
 - Visa and insurance / National Health (NHS) surcharge costs)
 - Ad hoc costs (heavy baggage, etc.,)
 - Childcare and dependent support costs
 - o Accessibility support
 - o Subsidised accommodation support
- No administrative fees or deposits can be charged to applicants or recovered from the grant.

6. Eligibility Criteria

Please read the eligibility criteria carefully prior to developing your proposal, and especially in relation to: (a) focus of proposals, (b) countries that are eligible to participate in supporting ISPF early career fellow opportunities; (c) the eligibility of fellows, and (d) the eligibility of UK institutions.

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6a. Focus of Proposals

- Proposed Fellowships should address shared research priority areas which are specific to the country/territory to where the cohort is from.
- The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. To fully align our science portfolio to this mission, we are unable to support research or research-related projects with military or security partners, or with military, security or dual-use impacts or outcomes. All applications will be reviewed to ensure alignment with this policy at the eligibility stage.
- UK Universities and Research Institutions will be asked to outline the holistic support to be offered to applicants and the Institution's evidence of alignment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) values and Safeguarding requirements.
- UK Universities and Research Institutions will be asked to consider the following questions about the fellowships and their research area selected for consideration:
 - How will you ensure gender equality and fairness in selecting and proposing hosting supervisors?
 - How will you ensure fair selection processes for early career fellows of different genders?

Programmes that could have a negative impact on gender equality will not be funded.

• Proposed fellowships should consider how all efforts are being made to ensure that those with disabilities have equal access to this scheme and equal opportunities to succeed.

6b. Eligible Countries/Territories (See Appendix A)

This opportunity is open to early career researchers who are based in the countries/territories listed below:

ODA	Non-ODA
Brazil Egypt Indonesia Jordan Malaysia Philippines Thailand Vietnam	South Korea Taiwan

• When submitting a proposal for a cohort in a country/territory which is eligible for <u>Official</u> <u>Development Assistance</u> (ODA) spend, UK Universities and Research Institutions should ensure that the early career fellowships comply with UK legislation concerning the use of ODA funds, including the research focus of the proposed fellowship. The British Council retains the right to review each application for ODA compliance.



 ISPF activities funded using ODA budget need to demonstrate that they are aiming to contribute to a reduction in poverty and aim to further sustainable development (development that is likely to generate lasting benefits for the population of the country/territory to which it is provided) or improve the welfare of vulnerable and low-income populations).

6c. Eligibility and Selection of Fellows

The following guidelines will be considered for the selection of fellows. Fellows must:

- Be a **permanent resident of the eligible country/territor**y- listed under section 6b Eligible Countries/Territories (See also Appendix A).
- Be an Early Career Researcher² and have a letter of acceptance from the hosting lab or department.
- Not currently in receipt of financial support or funding towards any other programme in the UK from any other sources.
- Meet the **English language requirement** of the UK HEI (Higher Education Institutions) if applicable.
- Have a background or a proven interest in the proposed research area. Indicate their preference for research areas and institutions in the case of applying to multiple institutions. Be willing to demonstrate future contribution to capacity-building and socio-economic advancement through the benefits achieved after completing the fellowship programme.
- Agree to **maintain contact** with the British Council for purposes of monitoring and evaluation during and after their fellowship.
- Demonstrate a plan and a passion to engage other early career researchers from their home country.
- Employees of the British Council, the UK government or Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish governments are not eligible to apply for this programme.

2 Early Career Researchers (ECRs) have completed or are close to completion of their PhD, potentially waiting for their final viva voce examination, which must be passed prior to taking up the award. ECRs will not have held a permanent academic post or a permanent post with a research-related element, or one which allowed them to supervise PhD students or submit research grants as a principal investigator. Time spent in teaching-only roles or academic related roles does not affect ECR status, provided no research element was part of the role. If a researcher does not hold a PhD but has research experience equivalent to a PhD holder and works in a field where a PhD is not a prerequisite for established research activity, they can still be considered eligible. Participants from for-profit organisations cannot be funded. As we move toward greater inclusivity for ECRs from a wide range of backgrounds, we are no longer counting years spent in a specific career stage. Career breaks and alternative trajectories to an early academic career are all considered outside the definition of career stage



6d. UK Institutions Participation Criteria

- All participating institutions must be UK Higher Education Institutions or other UK institutions eligible to receive UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding.
- UK institutions should propose 6- to 12-month research fellowship programmes within each eligible subject area.
- If a fellowship lasts longer than one year, funding will be capped for the first year only. The costs of any subsequent years must be guaranteed and covered in full by the UK institution and to the same level as in year 1 with reasonable allowances for cost-of-living increases.
- **UK hosting bodies will need to be able to sponsor short term visas,** ideally under the Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) scheme, for temporary work (https://www.gov.uk/government-authorised-exchange).
- UK institutions should demonstrate how they will connect applicants with industry partners where relevant and provide opportunities for internships, placements, or networking for the fellows.
- UK institutions should demonstrate how they can add value through their **collaborative links between their institution and cohort country.**
- UK institutions should demonstrate how they will support **welfare and career development** of applicants.
- UK institutions must ensure that their **shortlisting and assessment panels are diverse in terms of gender, and any other protected equality characteristics**. Panel members must take **unconscious bias training.** The British Council will carry out spot checks to ensure these requirements have been put in place
- Provide added value to the overall research and welfare experience, including but not limited to:
- Supporting Transitions into the UK
 - Communications prior to arrival including support for visa application, arrival to the UK etc.
 - General information about adapting to living in the UK.
 - Arranging accommodation or housing for the fellows.
 - A nominated point of contact for any issues or concerns.
 - Guidance about university support services including specialist services (disability support).
 - \circ $\;$ Guidance about specific research support available at the university.
- Support at the UK Institution for the international fellowship experience
 - Dedicated workspace and equipment
- Induction into research groups and relevant social networks www.britishcouncil.org



- Support including academic and personal mentoring.
- Provide holistic welfare support including, but not limited to, accommodation, mental health services, and support for fellows who are parents/carers.
- A nominated safeguarding focal point for any issues or concerns.
- To be fully integrated into the relevant research team, including participating in regular team meetings.
- Opportunities for skills and career development including links with industry and networking.
- Opportunities to participate in research events (conferences, seminars, presentations).
- Opportunities to participate in collaborative research outputs (e.g., academic papers).
- Opportunities to meet with other early career fellows
- Collaborative opportunities with partners

• Supporting Transitions beyond the fellowship

- Supporting the early career fellow to build continued partnerships with hosting institution
- Establishing collaborative longer-term research activities between the hosting UK provider and sending institution that will benefit early career researchers in sending and hosting countries.
- Develop work with sending country on inclusive research cultures and sharing of good practice in this area.

7. Safeguarding

The British Council condemns all forms of harm and abuse, including bullying and harassment. We take a zero-tolerance approach to harm and abuse to any individual employed through or associated with our programmes in all contexts, whether in humanitarian or fragile and conflict-affected settings, in other field contexts, or within the international or UK research and development community which we fund. We expect organisations to promote the highest standards in organisational culture and have in place the systems and procedures required to prevent and tackle all incidents of harm and abuse. Applications should detail how they will identify and manage safeguarding risks within their projects.

<u>UK institutions</u> will be expected to have in place the following robust policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Whistleblowing Policy
- Incident reporting procedure, which includes safe reporting.
- Code of Conduct on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for staff, volunteers, and project participants.



- Safer recruitment policies and processes, which includes conducting relevant disclosure and/or criminal records checks for individuals directly working with children and/or vulnerable adults.
- We require clients, customers, partners, and suppliers to operate within the British Council's Safeguarding Policy:

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/safeguarding_policy_2.0.pdf

Partners, Suppliers & Contractors:

• The terms 'partners, suppliers and contractors' relate to all those who we have a contract or agreement to provide goods, services, or collaboration. It includes implementing partners who carry out work on our behalf and other stakeholders with whom the British Council may establish a working relationship, such as Ministries, and Donors and Funders.

8. How Will the Programme be Managed?

The British Council through the ISPF will pay £180,000 to selected UK institutions in February-March 2025 which will then be administered as a bursary to the selected fellows by the UK institution in the academic year 2025/26.

- The selected UK Institutions will advertise the opportunities and encourage applications to their selected programmes.
- The British Council will support with the wide promotion of the Fellowship programme in the eligible countries/territories.
- The UK institutions will manage the application process, submitting to the British Council a shortlist with the pre-selection of the fellows.
- UK institutions will be required to share all applicant data with the British Council not only shortlisted applicants.
- The British Council will review and confirm to universities the final list of fellows.
- Once successful applicants have been confirmed by the British Council, the UK Institutions will administer the fellowship to each recipient in their cohort, covering all academic and living expenses.

The British Council may be able to increase the number of fellows available in each of the cohorts. This would take the form of additional grants of £60,000. **Universities interested in hosting additional fellows should indicate this in their application form.**

The UK Institutions selected to receive fellows will go through an eligibility check and shall then sign a Grant Agreement with the British Council. This Grant Agreement will detail all items to be funded, payment methods, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting requirements. A template Grant Agreement can be found in the Annexes of this Call.



9. Fellowship Branding

The fellowships will be branded as "Early Career Fellowships". Branding guidelines will be included in the grant agreement.

10. Timeline

Please consider the following indicative timeline for the implementation of this programme:

Date	Action
2 August 2024	Call opens for UK Higher Education Institutions
25 September 2024	Deadline for submission of proposal by HEIs (Higher Education Institutions).
October 2024	Panel assessments of proposals.
November 2024	The British Council notifies institutions of results.
November- December 2024	Grant agreements are signed between the British Council and participating institutions and grants are disbursed.
January 2025	Institutions to share promotional content to be used in overall marketing campaign for approval.
By 15 February 2025	Launch of the Fellowship marketing campaigns in all eligible countries/territories listed in this call.
By 15 February 2025	Application to apply for the scheme is open for fellows. Universities to advertise scheme on their portals and share link with British Council.
15 May 2025	Deadline for fellows to apply to the programme. The deadline is to be strictly followed by all successful Higher Education Institutions.
By 15 June 2025	Institutions submit shortlisted candidates to the British Council.
By 15 July 2025	British Council to confirm shortlisted candidates to HEIs. British Council to share Terms and Conditions document to be signed by selected fellows.
By 30 July 2025	Higher Education Institutions to make offer to selected fellows agreed with the British Council.
By 15 August 2025	HEIs to confirm receipt of signed copy of British Council Terms and Conditions from successful fellows.
30 August 2025	HEIs will submit a progress report (template issued by the British Council) to provide an update status on confirmed fellows, their details, and their expected arrival dates to the British Council.
August-September- October 2025	HEIs provide support to fellows for their arrival into the UK.

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September / October / November 2025	Programmes start in the UK
30 November 2025	Deadline for HEIs to report proof of enrolment in the Fellowship programme.
April 2026	HEIs will submit an Interim report to the British Council and flag any issues with fellows at this time.
October 2026	HEIs will submit a final report to the British Council.

11. Selection Criteria for Assessing Applications of UK Institutions

The following selection criteria will be used:

Criteria	%
Holistic support offered to applicants a nd university's evidence of alignment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) values and Safeguarding requirements	40%
Professional/Industry and career development opportunities for the Fellows linked to programmes	25%
Added value to collaborative links between the UK institution and cohort country	15%
Track Record in successfully administering similar schemes and fit within institutional expertise for research	10%
Evidence of a detailed plan to publicise the fellowship and disseminate the opportunity	10%
ODA/SDG Relevance (where applicable)	Pass/fail
Gender Equality Compliance	Pass/fail

The British Council reserves the right to award the grant with consideration to the geographical spread of institutions across the UK and thematic priorities.

12. Call Deadline and How to Apply

To participate in this call, UK institutions are requested to complete the online Application Form and the Budget Template Annex 1 by 25 September 2024 at 12.00 pm (UK time).

Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered for funding.

The deadline applies to all parts of your application, including upload of fully completed supporting documentation. Any applications not submitted by the deadline with all the required supporting

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documents will be considered ineligible. Appeals against this decision will not be accepted.

Applicants for all calls must submit a completed online application form at the following **link:** <u>https://grants.britishcouncil.org/</u>

You must register on the website before you can start your application form. The application form will be linked to this log in and password.

If you are unable to use the on-line application for reasons of accessibility, please contact us at <u>ispf-fellowships@britishcouncil.org</u>

13. Data Protection

The British Council will use the information that you provide for the purposes of processing your application, making any awards, monitoring, and review of any grants.

We will need to share necessary data with application reviewers and panel members contracted by the British Council, the funder UK Department of Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) and contracted external evaluators (as required).

The British Council comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 (EU) GDPR). We process and handle personal information according to these regulations. The personal information you provide on this form will only be used for processing your application. The information will be viewed by British Council, and those who are part of the decision-making process. Your information will not be used/shared beyond the partners listed above for any other purpose without your specific consent. British Council reserve the right to publish and share anonymised aggregated information with stakeholders.

Organisation details, where collected, are used for monitoring and evaluation and statistical purposes. Gender information and country of origin, where collected, is used solely for statistical purposes. If we need to contact you, we will do so using the contact details you have provided.

Under UK Data Protection law, you have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you want more information about this, please contact your local British Council office or see our website: http://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection



14. Contact details

All queries or comments about this call should be addressed to the ISPF email address: *ispf-fellowships@britishcouncil.org*

15. Annexes & Links

Links to the draft grant agreement and other important and relevant British Council global policy statements:

- Annex 1 Budget Template
- Draft Grant Agreement
- Sanctions, countering terrorist financing and anti-money laundering
- Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion
- <u>Safeguarding Global Policy Statement</u>
- Information security and privacy global policy statement
- Anti-fraud and corruption global policy statement
- Environmental Global Policy Statement



Appendix A: Eligible Cohorts for Fellowship programme

ODA Cohorts	Main Requirements	Additional Requirements
Brazil	Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant. Please refer to Appendix B for further	Please refer to Appendix B for further requirements.
	requirements.	
Egypt	Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant.	Candidates must be selected from public universities and research center's. Applicants needs to show in their
	 The priority research areas are: Resilient Planet: Clean Energy, Extreme weather and climate, Agri-Tech, Environmental resilience Transformative Technologies: Artificial 	application benefits to Egypt in reference to 20/30 vision.
	 Intelligence, Quantum, Engineering biology, Semi-conductors, Future telecommunications Healthy People, Animals and Plants: 	
	Biosecurity and Pathogen detection, Global Health and Pandemics, Genomics and digital health, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Social determinants of health	
Indonesia	Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant.	
	 The priority research areas are: Transformative Technologies: Semi- conductors, Future telecommunications, Artificial Intelligence, Early Warning System in Disaster Management Healthy People, Animals and Plants: 	
	Biosecurity and Pathogen detection, Global Health and Pandemics, Genomics and digital health, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Social determinants of health	
	 Resilient Planet: Maritime, Aquaculture, Natural risk hazard, Clean Energy, Extreme weather and climate, Agri- Tech, Environmental resilience 	



Jordan	 Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant. The priority research areas are: Healthy People, Animals and Plants: Biosecurity and Pathogen detection, Global Health and Pandemics, Genomics and digital health, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Social determinants of health Transformative Technologies: Artificial Intelligence, Quantum, Engineering biology, Semiconductors, Future telecommunications 	
Malaysia		Please refer to Appendix C for further requirements.
Philippines	 Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant. The priority research areas are: Resilient Planet: Clean energy, risk reduction from extreme weather and climate, Agri-Tech and health (food systems and supply chain), and environmental resilience 	



Thailand	 Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant. The priority research areas are: Resilient Planet: Electric Vehicles Transformative Technologies: Artificial Intelligence, Engineering biology Healthy People, Animals and Plants: Genomics research, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 	The recruitment of fellows from different universities or various regions of Thailand within the same cohort is encouraged.
Vietnam	 Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research areas must be ODA compliant. The priority research areas are: Resilient Planet: Clean Energy; Biotechnology in Agriculture and Environment. Transformative Technologies: Artificial Intelligence; Cyber Security Future telecommunications Healthy People, Animals and Plants: Vaccine Manufacturing; Genomics and digital health; Precision Medicine 	

Non – ODA Cohorts		
South Korea	 The cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country/territory. The priority research areas are: Transformative Technologies: Artificial Intelligence, Quantum, Engineering biology, Semi- 	
	conductors, Future telecommunications	



Taiwan	The cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country/territory.Applications will be prioritised under the theme of supporting Women in STEM
	 The priority research areas are: Resilient Planet: Clean Energy, Extreme weather and climate, Agri-Tech, Environmental resilience Transformative Technologies: Artificial Intelligence, Quantum, Engineering biology, Semi-conductors, Future telecommunications Healthy People, Animals and Plants: Biosecurity and Pathogen detection, Global Health and Pandemics, Genomics and digital health, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Social determinants of health



Appendix B: Brazil

Partner: The Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies (CONFAP), Amazonia+10 Initiative



The proposed fellowship must come from the following thematic areas:

- **Biodiversity**: Biodiversity and climate change; Biodiversity as a source of livelihoods and its bioeconomic potential; Mapping and documenting biodiversity; New technologies to expand and store knowledge of bioeconomy.
- **Conservation**: Conservation and restoration of natural capital; Studying sustainable uses of natural resources, institutional arrangements for their conservation.
- Traditional Communities: Studies of the tangible and intangible heritage of the ancestral, Indigenous, and traditional peoples of the Amazon and their associated knowledge systems; Documenting and conserving Indigenous languages of the Amazon and associated knowledge systems;
- **Bioeconomy:** Bioeconomy as a new model for sustainable development; Value chains of Non-Timber Forest Products.
- **Health Public:** Health Systems in the Amazon; Epidemiology and Tropical Diseases; Indigenous Medicine; One Health Approaches

Additional Requirements:

To support the goals set by the Amazonia+10 Initiative, candidates must be selected from the Legal Amazon/ Amazônia Legal universities & research centres. 'Legal Amazon 'is the term used in Brazil to include all states with Amazonian land and the Amazon State.



Appendix C: Malaysia

Partner: Academy of Sciences, Malaysia



The proposed fellowship must come from the following thematic areas:

- **Resilient Planet:** Clean Energy, Extreme weather and climate, Agri-Tech, Environmental resilience
- Transformative Technologies: Artificial Intelligence, Semi-conductors