



ALECS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Terms and Conditions



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History of Changes			
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1 INTRODUCTION – THE ALECS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Advanced Learning in Evolving Critical Systems (ALECS) is an innovative fellowship programme coordinated by [Lero, the Irish Software Research Centre](#). The initiative is co-funded by the European Commission under the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie](#) programme (grant agreement no. 754489) and by [Science Foundation Ireland](#), through Lero.

The ALECS fellowships will be subject to the terms and conditions stipulated in the grant agreement (no. 754489) in respect of the fellowships scheme signed by the Research Executive Agency (REA), under the power delegated by the European Commission, and by the University of Limerick.

The aim of the programme is to provide training and career development to the next generation of skilled computer science and software engineering researchers through providing international mobility and intersectoral exposure. Applications are welcome from researchers of any nationality who comply with the programme's eligibility criteria.

The programme will fund 26 fellowships for experienced researchers who have either a PhD degree or who have at least four years full-time equivalent research experience, in academia or industry.

All fellowships will be based in Ireland where fellows will be hosted by their academic supervisor's university. The two-year fellowship will include an individual research project and a mandatory 3-6 month industry secondment.

Fellows will be recruited over calls for proposals which will be internationally advertised over the programme's lifetime (2017-2022). It is currently planned to recruit fellows over two calls for proposals. If there are unfilled fellowships, future calls for proposals will be published.

There are four broad research themes under the ALECS programme:

- Methods and standards for high integrity systems
- Autonomous and adaptive systems
- Software performance
- Security and privacy

Detailed information on the ALECS programme can be found at the ALECS website (<http://alecs.lero.ie/>). For further, contact alecs@lero.ie or call 00 353 61 233 637.

2 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicants must be 'Experienced Researchers' as per the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions definition: at the time of the call deadline, **31st January 2020**, applicants must be in possession of a doctoral degree or have at least 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience. The full-time equivalent research experience is measured from the date when the researcher obtained a degree which would have entitled him/her to embark on a doctorate, even if a doctorate was never started or envisaged.
- Applicants may be of any nationality.
- Applicants must have working proficiency of English or must be fluent in English. Applicants whose first language is not English may be required to provide evidence of their proficiency.



- Applicants must comply with the programme's transnational mobility requirements¹:
 - For general applications: applicants may not have resided or carried out their main activity such as work and studies in Ireland for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the call deadline, **31st January 2020**.
 - For career restart and reintegration applications²: applicants may not have resided or carried out their main activity in Ireland for more than 3 years in the 5 years immediately prior to the call deadline, **31st January 2020**.

3 APPLYING FOR A FELLOWSHIP

- Applications must be submitted via the ALECS online application system. See alecs.lero.ie for details.
- Researchers who are at risk or who are displaced by conflict and who might require alternative submission arrangements, are encouraged to discuss the support that may be available to them with ALECS (alecs@lero.ie). In certain circumstances, applications submitted in hard copy may be accepted but please note that any alternative arrangement must be agreed with ALECS in advance of the call deadline.
- Applications must be submitted by **31st January 2020 23:59 (GMT)**.
- Applications submitted after the call deadline will not be considered.
- Confirmation of receipt of your application will be sent to the e-mail address you entered when registering. Please contact alecs@lero.ie if you do not receive acknowledgement within 2 hours of submitting your application, but please check the junk/spam folder in your email first.
- Prior to submitting an application, applicants must contact their prospective academic supervisor to discuss their research proposal and to gain support for their application. Only applications which received support from an eligible ALECS supervisor will be considered.
- When submitting an application candidates:
 - will be required to confirm that their application is supported by an ALECS academic supervisor and will be required to identify the academic supervisor. The list of eligible academic supervisors is available at <http://alecs.lero.ie/academic-supervisors/>;
 - will be asked if they agree with the programme's terms and conditions;
 - will be asked if they consent that ALECS stores and processes their data.
- Only one application may be submitted for a given call for proposals.
- Only complete applications submitted by eligible applicants and supported by eligible academic supervisors will be assessed.
- All sections of the application must be completed and all required application documentation must be submitted before the call deadline.
- The application and its documentation must be in English.

¹ When calculating the time for residency in Ireland, compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays should not be taken into account. For applicants who applied for or who are applying for refugee status in Ireland, the time spent in that process will not count as time resident in Ireland.

² In order to be considered within the 'career restart' category, the applicant must have undertaken a career break in research (i.e. he/she must not have been active in research) for at least 12 months immediately prior to the call deadline. In order to be considered within the 'reintegration' category, the applicant must be a national or long-term resident of an EU Member State or Associated Country. Whilst a relaxed mobility requirement will apply for 'career restart' and 'reintegration applications', there will only be one selection process for a given call for proposals (i.e. separate selection panels will not exist for 'career restart' and/or 'reintegration' applications).



- Applicants may select their research proposal topic. However, it must fall within the broad research themes of the ALECS programme and it must be aligned with the prospective academic supervisor's research interests.
- The proposal must describe a research project which can be conducted at the ALECS academic supervisor's university and which can be feasibly undertaken within the two-year fellowship duration.
- The research project proposal must adhere to the ethical standards applicable to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and to the ALECS programme.
- The research project proposal must contain details of a secondment, either planned or fully agreed, to the non-academic sector. The secondment must be relevant to the fellow's research project and to his/her career development and must have between three to six month duration. The secondment may be undertaken in a single period or split into shorter periods. Whilst the fellows' main research must be carried out in Ireland, the secondment may be undertaken abroad. It is not mandatory to specify the exact secondment host/supervisor at the application stage. However, applicants who do not have the secondment agreed must indicate a plan for the secondment with its general details such as type of organisation, proposed secondment duration, timing and technical objective.
- By submitting an application, the applicant declares that the information supplied is correct. Should any of the information provided in the application is found to be false or misleading, ALECS reserves the right to withdraw any fellowship awarded. In cases where, employment has commenced, the host institution reserves the right to terminate such employment.



4 THE SELECTION PROCESS

- The ALECS programme selection process will follow open, transparent and merit-based procedures in order to ensure that the applications are evaluated in a competent and impartial manner.
- The selection process will also adhere to the recommendations in the European Charter for Researchers: The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter and Code)³; and will include an international peer review stage and an interview stage. Details on the selection process stages are available at <http://alecs.lero.ie/selection-process-stages/>.
- A standard evaluation criteria and scoring system (detailed at <http://alecs.lero.ie/evaluation-criteria-and-scoring-system/>) will be employed during the selection process.
- Individuals involved in the selection process (e.g. reviewers, members of the interview panels) will be required to agree to the programme's Code of Conduct prior to getting access to the application documentation (i.e. to the research project proposal and CV). By agreeing to the Code of Conduct, such individuals commit themselves to be independent, impartial and objective.
- The Code of Conduct includes a Confidentiality clause, which requires all reviewers and members of all other selection committees to keep strict confidentiality with respect to the evaluation process, applicants and proposals. Under no circumstance may any member of any selection committee attempt to contact an applicant on his/her own accord, either during the evaluation or afterwards. Confidentiality rules must be adhered to at all times before, during and after the evaluation.
- For a given application under evaluation, members of the selection committees must confirm that no Conflict of Interest exists. In cases where a conflict of interest arises, the individual must inform the ALECS management team immediately, actions to be taken may include removal of the expert from the proposal in question and/or from the entire evaluation process.
- Each eligible application will be evaluated by three independent reviewers.
- Applicants proceeding to the interview stage must be available to attend the interview on the date requested. The interview may be carried out face-to-face or via video/web conferencing. No advantage will be conferred to those attending the interview in person. It is the candidate's responsibility to organise the necessary web/video conferencing facilities at his/her end. Should you wish to attend the interview in person, please note that travel and accommodation expenses will not be provided, however documentation support to enable the applicant to travel may be offered.
- Feedback will be provided to all candidates following each stage of the selection process as applicable.
- Candidates who feel that their application has been unjustly evaluated may submit a request for redress. However, please note that redress requests can only be made with regard to procedural issues or perceived incorrect application of the eligibility criteria. Applicants wishing to start the redress procedure should contact the ALECS programme management team (alecs@lero.ie) within 30 days of receiving feedback. Following an eligible redress request, a redress committee will be convened which will either accept the request or reject it. If accepted, a new evaluation will be conducted for that application. Please note that redress requests relating to the scientific judgments of reviewers and/or members of the interview panel cannot be made and that the Redress Committee decisions are final.

³ European Charter for Researchers: EC Communication C(2005)576, 03.11.2005



- Prior to the start of the fellowship, applicants may be required to provide evidence of the qualifications listed on their application, proof of identity and any other relevant documentation such as evidence of compliance with eligibility and mobility requirements. Where information provided by the applicant is found to be incorrect or where information cannot be verified if requested, the ALECS programme reserves the right to eliminate the candidate from the selection process or withdraw the award.

5 FELLOWSHIP OFFERS AND EMPLOYMENT AS AN ALECS FELLOW

- The offers to successful applicants will consist of two parts:
 - Award of the fellowship by the ALECS programme;
 - An offer of employment by the host university (i.e. the ALECS academic supervisor's university).
- The applicant will be required to accept each part of the offer, the award and the employment offer, in writing, within 7 days of receiving each respective notification. Accepting the award at the first stage does not commit the applicant to accepting the employment offer from the host university.
- The fellow will be employed by his/her host university under the same employment conditions as other externally-funded researchers employed at that university. Applicants wishing to know the terms and conditions associated with the employment contracts, should contact the relevant university. The employment contracts will be in line with Irish Law and the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001.
- Personal data in addition to that already supplied during the application may be required by the host institution to complete the offer of employment.
- The total gross salaries awarded to ALECS fellows will be €40,000 per annum (without family allowance) and €45,400 per annum (with family allowance). The salaries received will be liable for taxes and/or other deductions which may vary from host university to university. Information on Irish taxation can be found at the Office of Revenue Commissioners website (<https://www.revenue.ie/en/Home.aspx>). Compliance with Irish law and national regulations on taxation will be a matter for resolution between the fellow, the host university and the Irish Revenue Commissioners.
- The programme will apply the family definition as in the MSCA Work Programme 2016-2017: Family is defined as persons linked to the fellow by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country where this relationship was formalised; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the fellow. Qualification for this allowance will be determined using the time of recruitment as the reference date.
- Contributions towards the cost of conducting the research (e.g. towards consumables, travel) and towards the management and training/development activities will be provided by the ALECS programme.
- It is expected that successful applicants will commence the fellowship at the earliest convenience, considering any periods required for the University of Limerick to agree and sign Inter-Institutional agreements with the relevant host universities and for the prospective fellows to gain permission to work in Ireland. A start date will be negotiated with the prospective fellow and it will be stated in the offer of employment.



- In the unlikely event that the host university is not able to support the fellowship, and the ALECS management team cannot find an alternative eligible host, the award of the fellowship may be withdrawn. Similarly, the host universities reserve the right to withdraw an offer if the programme is withdrawn for any reason, or if an error has been made by the host institution.

6 RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- At the start of the fellowship, a skills audit will be carried out by the fellow with the support of the academic supervisor. The audit will take into account the fellow's existing research skills and the skills required for the successful completion of the research project and their own career development. Each fellow together with his/her supervisory team will then be required to design a personal research development plan for the duration of the fellowship. The plan will aim to support the fellow in his/her current role and to prepare the fellow for his/her future career and it will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary.
- The use of such plan is mandatory for all fellows and it will be reviewed on a quarterly basis, or as necessary, to reflect changes and/or additions to the research project and career development objectives.
- The fellows, with the support of their academic supervisor, will be required to produce an annual progress report outlining their progress in the implementation of the research development plan. The academic supervisor will also support the fellow in all aspects of their research project, monitoring the progress/milestones of research, and access to appropriate facilities, infrastructure, and research and complementary skills training.

7 ETHICS

- The ALECS programme will be carried out in compliance with ethical principles, including the highest standards of research integrity, and applicable international, EU and Irish law. ALECS will comply fully with the H2020 ethics policy, including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights and its supplementary protocols. The programme will not fund:
 - Research activities aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes;
 - Research activity intended to modify the genetics of human beings that could make such changes heritable;
 - Research activities intended to create human embryos for the purpose of research or for stem cell procurement.
- All applicants must complete an Ethical Issues Table which is included in "Part A – Administrative Information" document to be submitted at the application stage. Where ethical issues are indicated, the applicant will be obliged to provide additional information by submitting a completed "Part D – Ethics Self-Assessment" document as part of the application submission. The ALECS programme ethics committee will review such applications to confirm, or otherwise, their eligibility.
- Formal ethical approval from the relevant host university's ethics committee must be obtained by all applicants prior to the start of the research project. All host universities have strict procedures for ethical approval which are in line with national ethical regulations and procedures and the fellows must adhere to their host institution's research ethics policy.