



SFC Saltire Emerging Researcher Scheme (SERS): MASTS European Exchanges

Application deadline: 1200 Friday 8th April 2022

This third Call for Proposals is open to the following institutions: Heriot Watt University, University of Dundee, and Robert Gordon University.

Introduction

The Scottish Funding Council has awarded the administration of the SFC Saltire scheme for collaborative European exchanges in Aquatic Habitat Research to MASTS.

In a post EU era in the UK, it is increasingly important for the MASTS research community to maintain visibility and continue to demonstrate a commitment to aquatic research collaborations with European partners. This will help ensure that we maintain international scientific excellence.

The MASTS-SERS Programme will provide an important opportunity to both reinvigorate existing research collaborations, as well as to facilitate the creation of new inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations between Scottish and European institutions at a critical time when evidence-based environmental stewardship, policy and management is essential.

The scientific scope of the programme will encompass all aspects of aquatic habitats from river catchments to coasts, to the open ocean and deep sea and all aspects of related research, from molecules to man.

MASTS is inviting applications for European research exchanges for doctoral research students (PGRs) and early career researchers (ECRs) under this scheme (see eligibility criteria below).

The Scheme will run in the Academic Year (AY) 2021-22 and will be open to both outgoing and incoming exchanges.

The scheme will provide up to £10,000/award to support PGR and ECR exchanges for up to 6 months between January 2022 and the end of August 2022. Awards will cover the full cost of the exchange, including travel, accommodation, subsistence,



and reasonable additional costs arising from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations.

Each of MASTS 12 HEI members¹ will be eligible to receive one exchange grant (subject to meeting quality criteria) which may be used to support exchanges of PGRs or ECRs to or from an eligible European institution(s).

Objectives of the MASTS SERS Scheme

1. To provide opportunities for both PGRs and ECRs to engage in substantive collaboration between at least one named MASTS member institution and at least one named University in an EU Member State (EUMS, Annex 2), European Economic Area (EA) or European Free Trade Association country (EFTA).
2. To facilitate defined activities that will demonstrably establish or strengthen collaborative links at individual-researcher and institutional level and the wider MASTS community through relevant MASTS research Themes and Fora and produce recognisable impact.
3. To provide resource to support preliminary research and training, with the aim of promoting future collaborative funding bids.
4. To promote and share research and innovation with colleagues and networks working in related disciplines and promote capacity building activities (e.g. proof of concept research) designed to underpin future grant applications (e.g. to Horizon Europe and UKRI).

Proposed European partners and countries

The scheme represents an important and exciting opportunity for PGRs and ECRs to engage in substantive collaboration with colleagues from Europe (EA, EEA and EFTA countries; see Annex 2).

The MASTS community collaborates across a broad range of European institutions and does not wish to constrain the MASTS-SERS scheme to specific partners or countries.

¹ University members of MASTS: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow, Heriot Watt, Robert Gordon, St Andrews, Stirling, Strathclyde, West of Scotland & University of the Highlands & Islands



MASTS is a member of the European Marine Board (EMB) and the EMB University Consortium Panel (UCP) which links MASTS to all major Universities and research consortia in Europe with a focus on aquatic ecosystem research. The EMB has agreed to collaborate with MASTS to disseminate information related to the MASTS-SERS initiative. MASTS is also a member of the European Marine Biological Resource Centre (EMBRC) and has agreed with the EMBRC to promote the MASTS-SERS initiative and where possible, to link exchanges to EMBRC resources and relevant funding opportunities. In addition, staff in partner Institutes have numerous links with relevant European stakeholders (e.g. European Pond Conservation Network).

Partnerships and exchanges will also be encouraged through engagement with EU Growth projects, such as SUMMER and Mission Atlantic, and other H2020 projects that MASTS is involved with (e.g. [EU ATLAS project](#) led by the University of Edinburgh). These exchanges could underpin applications to a large number of Horizon Europe 2021-2027² calls which are now emerging.

The MASTS-SERS initiative represents an important and timely opportunity for establishing relationships that will allow access to EU project consortia and strengthen applications to UKRI.

Please contact us at masts@st-andrews.ac.uk if you need help linking to any of these wider networks for your application.

Scope of scheme and eligibility

The scientific scope of the programme will encompass all aspects of aquatic habitats from river catchments to coasts, to the open ocean and deep sea and all aspects of related research, from molecules to man.

The Scottish Government has committed to the development of a Blue Economy Action Plan to launch a programme of collaborative projects across the public sector, Scotland's science base, marine industries and the marine environment. The MASTS-SERS initiative will support exchanges that could inform and contribute to fulfilment of the Action Plan as it emerges. In addition, 2021 is the start of the [UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development](#), [Ecosystem Restoration](#), and under the UK G7 Presidency, the Future of the Seas and Oceans Initiative which

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-9-food-bioeconomy-natural-resources-agriculture-and-environment_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf



notes three key spotlight topics on Ocean Indicators, Digital Twin Ocean, and Net Zero Oceanographic Capability. Where possible we will support exchanges and placements that will allow the MASTS community to engage with UN Decade initiatives (such as the [“Challenger150” project](#) with SAMS and University of Glasgow) and align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which include a number of freshwater pollution relevant goals as well as marine focussed goals. The MASTS-SERS programme will also embrace initiatives such as the [river basin management plan for the Scotland River basin district 2015-2027](#).

Assessment criteria for applicants

Applicants must originate from a MASTS member institution or be an external researcher that will be accepted by a host MASTS member institution. Applicants should submit their applications to the MASTS Directorate by the agreed submission date and time.

Proposals will be scored through a process of double-blind review by at least two independent reviewers. Terms and conditions are provided (Annex 1). Applications will be scored on how well the proposed exchange will:

1. Facilitate defined activities that will demonstrably establish or strengthen existing collaborative links at individual and institutional level.
2. Identify preliminary research and training which may form the basis for future collaboration.
3. Promote research and innovation with colleagues and networks in related disciplines.
4. Undertake networking and capacity building activities to underpin future grant applications.
5. Identify risks, mitigations and contingencies with respect to the successful delivery of the stated aims, objectives and outputs of the proposed exchange, including COVID restrictions.
6. Identify how the exchange will contribute to the emerging Blue Economy Action Plan and or the aspirations of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.
7. Identify how the exchange will benefit the wider MASTS community (e.g. non-HEI members) and how it will link through to the work and objectives of relevant MASTS Themes and Fora.
8. Identify specific deliverables related to the following targets:
 - a. At least one substantive grant proposal in development or submitted in connection with an exchange



- b. Target of two multi-author papers submitted in connection with each exchange
 - c. At least five concrete plans for future collaboration defined as a result of each exchange
9. Exploit social media and other sources for dissemination of research activity and findings, and other outreach opportunities.

Submit your application

Submit your applications on the MASTS SERS application form to masts@st-andrews.ac.uk before **12.00 on Friday 8th April 2022**.

Enquiries should be directed to masts@st-andrews.ac.uk

This third Call for Proposals is open to the following institutions: Heriot Watt University, University of Dundee, and Robert Gordon University.

ANNEX 1

Terms and Conditions

1. Post Graduate Researchers are defined as any student registered for a PhD at a named MASTS Member University or an equivalent University in an EU Member State, EEA and EFTA country.
2. Early Career Researchers are defined as Post-Doctoral researchers with no more than 5 years post PhD graduation on 1st August 2021.
3. All applicants must provide a letter of support from their proposed host institution(s) with their application for funding.
4. All host institutions must agree to waive bench fees for the recipient of the grant.
5. All proposals will be subject to independent peer review. Scores will be allocated and proposals ranked on the criteria defined under Assessment Criteria. Subject to review by a Moderating Panel appointed by the MASTS Executive Committee (EC), the top ranked proposal from each MASTS institution, provided it is considered worthy of funding by the Moderating Panel will, subject to ratification by the EC, be funded.
6. All grant recipients will be required to provide at least one MASTS Webinar presentation related to their research during the course of their funded research. PGR recipients will be required to undertake a Q&A feedback session with the MASTS and SUPER Graduate Schools.
7. A brief report (template) must be completed within four weeks of the end of the funded research by the recipient of the award and the organization hosting the recipient of the award. The report will be used to help assesses the success of the award and a summary may be published on the MASTS website.



8. All successful applicants will be expected to represent, promote and formally acknowledge the sponsors (MASTS, SFC & Scottish Government) during the course of their project and in any subsequent related outputs. All research outputs and any material used publicly must carry the funders' logos.
9. The following acknowledgement should be used in all publications resulting from this funding. ["This work received funding from the MASTS pooling initiative (The Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland) and their support is gratefully acknowledged. MASTS is funded by the Scottish Funding Council (grant reference HR09011) and contributing institutions"]
10. The total amount of the agreed award will be allocated to the recipient's institution in advance of the start of the exchange. All transactions against the award must be dealt with by the recipient's institution and reported to the MASTS Directorate within four weeks of completion of the period of the award.
11. The grant allocated may be subject to audit for up to three years after the end of the award and recipients should ensure that a record of all relevant transactions is retained.
12. The grant must be spent within the specified period of the award. Any underspend will be recovered. The recipient will be contacted during the period of the award to provide updates on the status of award expenditure and if it is likely that the award will not be fully committed within the allocated time MASTS will seek to recover and reallocate these funds.
13. Any deviation in the use of the funds in excess of 10% of the agreed budget must be notified in advance to the MASTS Directorate.
14. All exchange participants in the SFC Saltire Emerging Researcher Scheme will be expected to take part in a cohort-wide event and associated activities, to be coordinated by Research Innovation Scotland (RIS).
15. MASTS will contact the awardees and/or their supervisors to gather additional post-exchange impact information within one year of completion of the exchange. This information must be provided on request.

It is the responsibility of the recipient of the award and the institution(s) hosting them to ensure that all necessary permissions, visas and related right to work documentation is in place before the start of the exchange/placement.

ANNEX 2

EU Member State (EUMS) – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain & Sweden

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) States – Iceland, Liechtenstein & Norway