

Call for Proposals for Cooperation Groups of the OX|BUA Centre for Advanced Studies 2021

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| Call opens: | 17 May 2021 |
| Call closes: | 3 August 2021 |
| Max. funding period: | Maximum 24 months |
| Eligibility: | Salaried faculty members or equivalent post-doctoral level staff |
| Type of funding: | Project funding |
| Start of funding: | 01 Oct 2021 |
| Max. grant amount per project: | € 333.000 |

In founding the Berlin University Alliance (BUA), Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin have set the ambitious aim of jointly turning Berlin into an integrated research environment. The collaboration of the four partners focuses especially on grand challenges, academic career development, research quality, and joint efforts in the areas of research infrastructure, teaching, diversity, equality, and internationalization.

Linked to the BUA's Grand Challenges the partners of the BUA and the University of Oxford have established the OX|BUA Centre for Advanced Studies (OX|BUA CAS), with a joint budget in excess of 1.1M euros over the period 2020-23, to support a small number of thematic, inter- and transdisciplinary initiatives. The partners intend to create an academic environment that minimises bureaucratic hurdles to international and interdisciplinary research. It is intended to specifically promote longer-term research projects between researchers within the BUA and the University of Oxford in designated Cooperation Groups.

After a successful pilot call of the OX|BUA CAS with a focus on Social Cohesion, the University of Oxford and the Berlin University Alliance are pleased to announce a second call for proposals. This second call seeks to build on this success by introducing additional support for the development of two cooperation groups working in the field of “**Global Health**” with the aim to help cooperation groups to establish longer-term research collaborations and to prepare third party funding applications.

Objective

Following the main call of the BUA's Grand Challenge initiative on Global Health, the Centre for Advanced Studies is seeking to facilitate the strengthening of an international approach to Global Health issues. Three areas in particular present an opportunity to foster greater global collaboration, to bring in a range of international partners, and to promote new and innovative approaches leading to urgently-needed practical solutions:

- i. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Tackling antimicrobial resistance requires a truly committed interdisciplinary approach and a global vision. This topic is a high priority for German and British researchers and institutions. International cooperation and collaboration need to be matched by detailed understanding of local health, environmental, socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors, as well as new medical technologies and data management systems.

- ii. Pandemic lessons and future pandemic prevention. The Covid-19 crisis has exposed a range of weaknesses and strengths across countries, social and political systems, health systems, and people. In order to optimise responses to potential future pandemics, it is essential to learn the lessons of the current pandemic, and build effective pandemic response frameworks, structures, and functions at both local, national and global levels.
- iii. Digital Health and AI: Digital technologies and AI have been proliferating globally across numerous areas of human activity. To fully realise their potential, digital health innovations need to be responsive to local knowledge, yet also be based on improved global oversight and cooperation. Both Berlin and Oxford have strong research capacities in the field of digital health and AI, and great potential for strengthening collaboration with Global South partners. The holistic and international approach such collaborations would allow could facilitate digital health innovations that promote wellbeing and improved access to quality healthcare globally.

We are expecting that the cooperation groups will go on to develop longer-term research projects with funding from other sources.

General Eligibility Criteria

The Call for Proposals is open to salaried faculty members or equivalent post-doctoral level staff from any of the five partner institutions, working within any discipline. It is likely that groups of researchers will have established links with each other already, to be in a position to take advantage of the funding, given the deadline for applications. Applications from highly interdisciplinary teams, based on diverse specialisms, are especially encouraged.

Applications should be made jointly between one or more BUA principal investigators and one or more from Oxford. Participation by researchers from more than one of the BUA institutions is preferred. Members of non-university research institutions or other universities that are not affiliated to the Berlin University Alliance may participate as Cooperation Group partners but must provide their own funding. The inclusion of visiting researchers from institutions in the Global South will be particularly well-regarded within the application process. We anticipate that each project would have between 3 and 5 principal investigators and a total core group of around a dozen people. However, there is no limitation on the participation of others in individual project events.

Where appropriate applicants are encouraged to seek gender and diversity dimension balance and to include early- and mid-career researchers within their proposals.

Project format, funding allocations, duration of awards

The Cooperation Group formats offer flexibility in terms of supported activity. They could include:

- intensive cooperation of two to three PIs for several weeks
- cooperation of a larger group of fellows (of about 12) for several months or up to 24 months
- residential stays for individual researchers or groups of visiting researchers

- employment of Berlin-based research assistants or other support from e.g. postgraduate research students
- commissioning field work (“Werkvertrag”/service contract)
- a stated number of workshops contributing to the main research activity

Funding Pool and Number of Awards

The total pool of funding available is **€ 709 k** which would include the allocation for a joint summer school and joint final conference. Hence the maximum possible funding award on the basis of two groups would be 333 k per group and on the basis of three groups would be 222 k per group. Where other contributions are being made by faculties/units/external partners, this will be counted as additional to the OX|BUA award and has to be displayed as such in the budget distribution. It is envisaged that a large part of the funding will be used to bring Oxford and Global South researchers to Berlin to work with BUA colleagues (e.g. via workshops and short sabbaticals of up to three months in any one calendar year) or for hiring research assistants at BUA institutions to support the project. As this call is funded purely from BUA sources, the allocated funding is not available to be spent on workshops or laboratory costs or overheads in Oxford.

For the entire call the following additional allocations will be made:

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| Joint Summer school for the cooperation groups | € 15,000 (once, jointly organized by funded groups) |
| Joint final conference (amount granted based on number of participants / max. sum for a conference up to 400 participants based on DFG rate) | € 28,000 (once, jointly organized by funded groups) |

While the budget may be flexible, no individual cooperation group should be funded with less than 150,000 euros (to exclude the joint costs noted above for the summer school and final conference).

Funding Duration

The funding will be available for a period of max. 24 months from the beginning of October 2021 and must be expended according to the awarded budget and within the proposed timeframe (by 30th September 2023), unless a variation to this award is approved by both the University of Oxford and participating partner institutions of the Berlin University Alliance. It may be possible, upon request, to transfer up to 20% of the funding allocation in any one year to the subsequent year.

Proposals must detail how awarded funding will be allocated for the duration of the collaboration and include a project timeline. In addition, the proposal must detail for which third party funding source(s) the collaboration wants to prepare for and must also describe a plan how this third party funding application is planned to be prepared (including a timeline).

The call is made on the assumption that some degree of travel and residential visits between the UK and Germany will be possible from 1st October 2021. However, additional elements of virtual interaction are anticipated.

Eligible Costs

Although the Cooperation Group concept primarily aims to mobilize researchers and graduate students travelling to Berlin from Oxford and the Global South, funding for the partners for other areas of expenditure will be possible (e.g. employment of student assistants and administrative staff located at Berlin institutions, equipment or rental costs, activities aimed at networking or public understanding of the research outputs). It is anticipated that a part of any award will be used for accommodation and subsistence costs for researchers. However, compensation of personnel costs resulting from a sabbatical spent in Berlin cannot be covered.

Eligible claims:

Consumables

- Travel to Berlin and accommodation costs in Berlin
- Travel to Oxford for Berlin participants and their accommodation costs there
- Workshop and other meeting costs (incurred in Berlin)
- Establishing, testing and applying digital activities (e.g. developing apps)
- Material costs of the collaborative research (including laboratory or field costs as “Werkverträge”/service contracts)
- Costs associated with the preparation of joint grant proposals to respective national and international funding agencies, philanthropic sponsors or foundations (e.g. contracts to other parties for proposal writing (as “Werkverträge”/service contracts))
- Costs of communication strategies, publication of reports, and other activities to promote the public understanding of the research.

Personnel cost

- Employment of student assistants and additional administrative staff working on the cooperation in Berlin (according to personnel processes of the individual BUA institution).

Selection Criteria and Evaluation Process

1. Proposal quality
2. Wider impact and application
3. Interdisciplinary of the proposal
4. Calibre and match of the involved PIs
5. Innovation on international level
6. Added value of collaboration: How does the collaboration combine mutual areas of interest and strength and builds research capacity in Berlin and Oxford?
7. Capacity for future collaboration: What is the potential for this project to foster long lasting collaborations between the involved partners?
8. Feasibility of the funding application plan
9. Capacity for future third party funding: What is the potential for this project to lead to successful joint grant application(s)?

10. Reflection of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) priorities in the composition of the research team, including gender balance of named investigators and the involvement of graduate-, early- and mid- career researchers

The final funding decision will be based on a rigorous peer review process, including external reviewers.

Contact

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