

ARUA EARLY CAREER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS 2026

Deadline for Application:

15th January 2026

Option 1: Fellowship period from March to August 2026

15th July 2026

Option 2: Fellowship period from September 2026 to February 2027

Application Link:

<https://arua.org/early-career-research-fellowships-2026/>



For more information visit the ARUA Website: **www.arua.org**

For inquiries Email: **ecr.info@arua.org**

1. About the Fellowship

The African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), with support from the Mastercard Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, is launching this Early-Career Research Fellowship program. The initiative will fund up to **forty-two (42) early-career researchers** to conduct globally competitive research at the host and affiliated institutions of ARUA's thirteen (13) [Centres of Excellence \(CoEs\)](#) and the twenty-two (22) [Clusters of Research Excellence \(CoREs\)](#).

Each fellowship will have a duration of six months, to be undertaken between March 2026 and February 2027. ***There will be only two commencement dates for the awards: March 2026 and September 2026.*** Candidates may select their preferred fellowship period:

- The fellowship period for **option 1** runs from **March to August 2026**. The **deadline** for application for option 1 is **22nd January 2026**.
- The fellowship period for **option 2** is **September 2026 to February 2027**. The **deadline** for application for option 2 is **15th July 2026**.

At least 70% of the fellowships are reserved for female candidates, and applicants must be no older than 35 years at the time of application.

The program aims to enhance the capacity of early-career researchers at African universities by providing them with time away from teaching duties at their home institutions to collaborate

with highly experienced and distinguished researchers at ARUA CoEs or the Africa-Europe CoREs. Each CoE or CoRE is expected to host research fellows from countries other than its own.

1.1 About ARUA

The African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) is a network of leading universities from different African countries with different historical backgrounds but with a common vision. This vision is to make African researchers and institutions globally competitive while contributing significantly to the generation of knowledge for the socio-economic transformation of the continent. The network, right from inception, was intended to be different from any other regional university network in Africa. The difference was to come largely from the approach to be employed, namely bringing together a number of peer African institutions that were willing to work together by pooling their limited resources to generate a critical mass that could more effectively support their limited but growing numbers of researchers. Underlying the approach was the conviction that they could leverage their resources effectively for additional resources from outside. ARUA is currently pursuing this vision through its CoEs and CoREs that vary across various science and non-science disciplines.

1.2 About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation is a registered Canadian charity and one of the largest foundations in the world. It works with visionary organizations to advance education and financial inclusion to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous youth in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. Established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company, the Foundation is an independent organization separate from the company, with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa. Its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by the Foundation's Board of Directors and leadership. For more information on the Foundation, please visit www.mastercardfdn.org.

1.3 About the Carnegie Corporation of New York

The Carnegie Corporation of New York is one of the United States of America's oldest grant-making foundations, established by Andrew Carnegie to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. In keeping with this mandate, the Corporation's work focuses on the issues that Andrew Carnegie considered of paramount importance: international peace, the advancement of education and knowledge, and the strength of democracy. The Corporation supports four key program areas, including education, democracy, international peace and security, and higher education and research in Africa.

2. Background

ARUA has established thirteen (13) Centres of Excellence (CoEs) across various disciplines to support its vision. These CoEs reflect the current priority areas of ARUA, and they are expected to significantly enhance research and graduate training.

Currently, the 13 CoEs are organized into two broad categories as shown below:

Natural Sciences	
1. Water	
2. Energy	
3. Non-Communicable Diseases	
4. Materials, Energy and Nanotechnology	
5. Climate and Development	
6. Sustainable Food Systems	
Humanities	
7. Post-Conflict Societies	
8. Good Governance	
9. Inequality Research (ACEIR)	
10. Migration and Mobility	
11. Notions of Identity in Africa	
12. Unemployment and Skills Development	
13. Urbanization and Habitable Cities	

Together with The Guild of European Research Universities, ARUA has also established twenty-two (22) to align with priority themes of the AU-EU Innovation Agenda.

Currently, the 22 CoREs are organized into four thematic areas as shown below:

Public Health	
1. Advanced Infectious Diseases Research and Training	
2. Multimorbidity	
3. Food Environment Actions for the Promotion of Health	
4. Non-Communicable Diseases and Multimorbidity	
5. Genomics for Health in Africa	
6. Preparedness and Response to Pandemics and Shocks	
7. Health, Gender, and Sexualities	
8. Translational Research in Infection, Immunity, and Inflammation	
9. Migration and Health	
Green Transition	
10. Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation	
11. Sustainable Water and Land Resource Management for Human Well-Being	
12. Renewable Energy	
13. Water Resources Management for a Sustainable and Just Future	
14. Integrative Conservation Biology Research and Training	
Innovation and Technology	
15. Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Theoretical and Computational Thinking	
16. Sustainable Food Systems	
17. Creative Economies: Cultures, Innovation and Sustainability	
18. Engineering for the Future	
19. Mathematics	
Capacities for Sciences	
20. Building Capacities for Interdisciplinary Peace Research: Exploring Conflict, Environment, Technology, Inequality, and Identity in Africa	
21. Promoting Impactful Research and Education on Inequalities, Poverty, and Deprivation Across Africa	
22. The Politics of Sustainable Development	

To support the activities of the centres as well as the clusters, ARUA is announcing a residential Early Career Research Fellowship that is expected to last for **6 months**. During this period, prospective research fellows are expected to stay at the host or affiliated ARUA university of the respective CoE or CoREs and conduct research related to their existing projects. Successful candidates are also expected to explore new lines of research with the approval of the Centre's Director or CoRE co-leads. Prospective candidates are encouraged to visit the ARUA website as well as those of the CoEs and CoREs to familiarize themselves with their ongoing research projects.

ARUA views this Early Career Research Fellowship as critical to consolidating the progress made by the CoEs, which aligns with the main visions of the network as well as the institutions supporting the fellowship. ARUA, therefore, seeks to use this opportunity to enhance the relevance of postgraduate training for early-career researchers.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of the Research Fellow

The key roles and responsibilities of the research fellow are as follows:

- a) Work with other researchers to undertake various relevant studies at the CoE or CoRE under the guidance of an assigned mentor.
- b) Write and publish a minimum of one (1) academic paper¹ (*a jointly authored paper where the fellow is the first/lead author can be acceptable*) in a high-impact journal (*at least, indexed in Scopus or Web of Science*), with an accompanying policy brief or blog post on the appropriate platforms of the respective host institution.
- c) Deliver at least two (2) presentations and participate in technical workshops with fellow researchers and other stakeholders.
- d) Assist in creating and bolstering new partnerships between the respective CoE or CoRE and other relevant bodies.
- e) Assist in disseminating research findings of the CoE or CoRE.

4. Selection Criteria

- a) Applicants must be African nationals who have a PhD in a discipline/sub-discipline related to the thematic area of the Centre of Excellence or Cluster of Research Excellence.
- b) Applicants must be within 5 years of completing their PhD
- c) Applicants should be young faculty (or research) members at an ARUA university. Eligible candidates from non-ARUA Universities can apply.
- d) Female postdoctoral fellows will be considered in limited cases.
- e) The applicant should not be more than 35 years old at the time of applying.
- f) Applicants should have a highly competitive track record relevant to the opportunity and be willing to develop a strong international standing and research reputation.
- g) Applicants must be available to spend 6 months away from their home university and be able to return to their home institution.
- h) Applicant must be working on an ongoing project related to the CoE or CoRE and have readily available data to accomplish the main roles and responsibilities (see section 3)
- i) Eligible women are strongly encouraged to apply. ***At least 70% of the fellowships will be awarded to female candidates.***

¹ In limited cases, a full draft manuscript may be accepted. But this must be subjected to some review process by the ARUA Centre of Excellence and considered publishable.

5. Contract and Remuneration

Successful candidates will be contracted by ARUA for 6 months. The research fellowship shall provide a monthly stipend of US\$2,000, a modest payment for accommodation, and travel support (return ticket to host institution). *Please note that there are no relocation expenses.* Additional financial support is available for eligible women who may require adjustment assistance (e.g., for childcare). The host CoE will provide the research fellow with office space.

6. Application Process

To apply for this research fellowship, please submit the following documents:

- a) **Cover letter outlining your reasons for applying for the position and details of how you will achieve the roles and responsibilities of the position (*see section 3*). This should include an overview of your experience in the relevant field and how you meet the eligibility criteria. The candidate must specify the particular ARUA CoE or Africa-Europe CoRE to which they are applying. If an applicant has previously spent time at the proposed CoE or CoRE (e.g., as a student, postdoc, etc.), the cover letter should include a motivation for how this visit will build on the pre-existing relationship. *Applicants may also suggest potential supervisors whom they may have already contacted.* Applicants should also outline if they require a visa to visit the host or an affiliated institution of the CoE or CoRE and, if so, what is required and the estimated processing time.**
- b) **Full CV, including applicant details (e.g., date of birth, passport number, country of origin, citizenship, etc.), particulars of doctoral degree, qualifications obtained, research output, a description of the applicant's contribution in jointly authored publications, and details of two referees. In the case of shortlisted applicants, applicants will be required to ask the referees to submit a brief report assessing the applicant's suitability for the fellowship. Referees should not be based at the proposed host CoE or CoRE.**
- c) **A Letter of Support from the applicant's permanent/home institution, including an indication of suitability for the position and that the candidate will return to the home institution.**
- d) **Evidence of the Award of PhD.**
- e) **A Brief Concept Note (max. 1,500 words, including references) outlining your proposed research project/plan. Please note that the proposed research project/plan should be feasible within the fellowship period (6 months) and well aligned to the objectives of the host CoE and CoRE. Candidates who can demonstrate that they possess the necessary data or research materials to support their proposed research will have a significant advantage.**
- f) **Two (2) academic writing such as peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, policy brief etc. This should not be a chapter from your doctoral thesis. In the case of a jointly authored piece, you should describe your contribution.**

g) The biodata page of a valid passport

7. Selection Process

- The selection of successful candidates will be conducted by the Director or Co-lead of the relevant CoE or CoRE to which the candidate applies, in consultation with the host institution's Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- Applications should be submitted via the online submission portal (<https://arua.org/early-career-research-fellowships/>).
- Fellowship selection is highly competitive and based, in the first instance, on excellence in the context of the applicant's academic standing, research experience, productivity, and output and, secondly, on the relevance and fit of research experience and proposed focus to the host CoE/CoRE research focus and objectives.