Opportunity to join the Turing University Network

May 2023
Turing University Network – Call Document
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Summary

The Alan Turing Institute, the UK’s national institute for data science and artificial intelligence, is pleased to invite applications from UK universities to join the Turing University Network from 1 October 2023.

In line with the principles of the new Institute Strategy, the Turing is committed to building a structured and inclusive university network representative of the wider data science and AI community in the UK. The network will support the delivery of the Institute’s three overarching goals, to advance world-class research and apply it to national and global challenges, to build skills for the future, and to drive an informed public conversation.

The value of a national institute, particularly in disciplines as rapidly evolving as data science and AI, that has cross-disciplinary research excellence at its core, with a trusted status and convening power, is that we can identify opportunities and bottlenecks, and design activities with agility that reduces the complexity of the ecosystem. Working closely with UK universities, the Institute acts as a force multiplier, bringing together the full breadth of the UK’s research excellence to bear on society’s hardest challenges, delivering impactful solutions to real-world problems, and helping to ensure the UK is recognised as a world leader in data science and AI.

The creation of the Turing University Network ushers in a simple and inclusive approach to engagement with universities, that allows the Institute to represent and engage more widely across the UK. The network launched as a pilot in April 2023 and we are pleased to now launch an open call for new members.

The Turing University Network operates on an engagement-based model. At its core, the network is open to all UK universities, does not include a membership fee¹ to join and has a flat structure. The Institute will coordinate core activities (outlined in this Call Document) and it will be for individual universities to decide how and to what extent they collaborate and engage based on all opportunities that arise. The Institute believes both the Turing and the wider ecosystem will benefit most if collaboration and partnership is driven by mutual interests and ambition.

The Institute expects to run further calls for members on an annual basis.

Key dates

- Call opens for applications from universities across the UK on 24th May 2023.
- Application period remains open until 25th July 2023 at 17:00 BST.
- Final outcome emails to universities will be sent by mid-August.
- Network membership for successful applicants begins on 1st October 2023.

Purpose of the Turing University Network

The purpose of the Turing University Network is to facilitate better connections across the data science/AI landscape. Universities who join will be part of a national data science and AI network that does not exist elsewhere in the UK, and through this network will benefit

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¹ We acknowledge there are operational costs and overheads to consider when applying so membership of the network is not completely ‘free’.
from access to both Turing and the wider community which should ultimately accelerate their research and routes to impact.

The network will be open, with minimal barriers to both entry and bureaucracy, and will provide enablers such as mechanisms to connect across the ecosystem, interesting problems and routes to impact.

The network will also provide a springboard for further collaboration. When opportunities for true collaboration and/or partnership present themselves, for example, initiatives such as a Turing Research and Innovation Cluster, driving missions or challenges, or potential connectivity with UKRI AI hubs\(^2\), they can be formed quickly, by drawing from across the network, and recognized appropriately. Fundamental to success will be sharing these opportunities with the community in an open, fair and transparent way.

Structure of the network and expectations

After much consultation, it is clear that universities want to work with the Institute for different reasons and in different ways. The Turing University Network approach includes two elements:

1. Universities working with core Turing teams and functions

Universities in the network will have the opportunity to engage with various Turing departments and teams including (but not limited to) Turing Research Programmes, Skills, Partnerships, and Academic Engagement initiatives through bespoke updates, discussions, workshops and opportunities to input.

Universities will have the chance to receive high-level updates and influence Institute schemes, initiatives and direction via i.) a Turing University Network Annual Meeting\(^3\), ii.) the Turing University Network group\(^4\) and iii.) ad hoc Turing liaison meetings.

2. Universities collaborating via the network

The network also provides a structure for universities to facilitate better connections and collaboration with one another and showcase their data science/AI activity. To strengthen this, the Institute will support network engagement activity which may include\(^5\):

- A researcher conference
- Showcasing and networking events around the Grand Challenges or with a Turing Research and Innovation Cluster
- Funding for engagement activity
- Connecting the network of university data science/AI Institutes and Centres (Turing hosted away day, best practice sharing, areas of overlap, etc)
- Coordinating the pooling of resources (e.g. teaching or compute)

\(^2\) It is anticipated that the Institute will provide leadership, coordination, support and facilitation to the AI hubs, although the Institute’s exact role will not be confirmed until after the outcome of the AI hubs call has been announced.

\(^3\) The first meeting is anticipated to take place in 2024.

\(^4\) The structure of this group is TBC whilst the Institute’s governance structures are reviewed. It’s high-level aim is to provide universities in the network an avenue to input and feedback to Turing’s Executive leadership and represent the interests of UK universities as the Institute evolves. It may, for example, include 15-20 members representing the Turing University Network community, rotating on a 2-year basis.

\(^5\) All activity is TBC and subject to the needs of the network and budgetary approval.
Coordinating academic exchange or mentorship programme

The Institute will support the network via effective online platforms for collaboration and a webpage dedicated to highlighting and showcasing activity from across the Turing University Network.

The Institute is supporting the network and its activities using core funds and so joining the network carries with it certain expectations to ensure it remains meaningful and healthy. A list of what the Institute will contribute and how it will support the network, alongside expectations on universities that join, can be found in Schedule 1 of the Operational Alliance Memorandum (see ‘Terms and Conditions’ below for further information).

A list of the perceived benefits to universities that join the network are listed in Annex 1.

Turing liaison roles

Each university in the Turing University Network is required to nominate a Turing liaison as the primary contact person at the university. An overview of this role can be found in Annex 2 and further detail is provided in the accompanying FAQs document.

Each university is invited to nominate one Turing liaison (academic) as the primary research link between the Institute and the university. An overview of this role can be found in Annex 3.

All Turing University Network communication will flow to the Turing liaison and they will coordinate the annual reporting process. The Institute will provide an array of support resources to the Turing liaison and will support the induction of new Turing liaisons.

Turing liaison is not a formal Turing title at the Institute, however a university may wish to create one as an internal identifier. The Institute requires the name and contact details of the Turing liaison as part of the application. The university can decide what level of resource to put behind the role(s), where they are situated within the university, what title (if any) to give this person internally, and the level of responsibility given to the individual. Options and examples are provided in Annex 2 and 3.

Eligibility criteria and requirements

The call is open to all UK universities with an interest in data science and AI.

To join the Turing University Network, applicant universities must:

- Submit a completed application (available on the call page of the website) which demonstrates alignment with the goals of the Institute Strategy.

- Commit to being active members of the network.  

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6 This includes, but is not limited to, taking part in the network activity listed below, distributing Turing opportunities across the university, attending events and meetings, and hosting Turing activity from time to time.
✓ Nominate a Turing liaison based in university professional services.7

✓ Sign an Operational Alliance Memorandum with the Institute (see ‘Terms and Conditions’ below).

✓ Complete a light-touch annual report demonstrating engagement with the network. This will be coordinated by the Turing liaison.

Only one application can be submitted per university and incomplete applications cannot be considered.

Application process

To apply, please complete and submit an application by Tuesday 25th July 2023 at 17:00 BST within the Turing’s Flexi-Grant portal, this can be accessed via the call page of the website.

As part of the application, a letter confirming institutional support from the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) or equivalent, a data science or AI institute/centre lead, or a suitable senior university representative, will be required.

If you have not already done so, all applicants must first register on the Flexi-Grant system and provide basic details to create a user profile.

Completed applications will be reviewed by the Academic Engagement team against the eligibility criteria above. The Institute’s executive leadership will have final say on whether an application meets these criteria.

Terms and conditions

Each university joining the network will sign the same Operational Alliance Memorandum (the Turing’s version of a Memorandum of Understanding) with the Institute. A full draft version of the Operational Alliance Memorandum can be found here.

Universities are required to complete a light touch annual report and demonstrate engagement with the network for membership to continue.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Institute’s mission is to make great leaps in data science and AI to change the world for the better, and we recognise that to make such great advancements and help solve the world’s problems and challenges, we need to accurately reflect the world’s diverse composition and build an inclusive community. The Institute takes very seriously questions of diversity, equality and inclusion as impact and important to success and excellence in our field, community and mission. The Institute is committed to actively working to embed and ensure the Institute’s functions and research schemes are accessible, inclusive and diverse. Further information on the Institute’s EDI work is available here.

7 Universities are invited to also nominate a Turing liaison (Academic). Further details are included in the Annex below.
Reasonable adjustments

The Institute recognises there may be individual circumstances that colleagues at the Institute need to be aware of. The Institute aims to accommodate specific needs and personal circumstances but are reliant on applicants sharing this information with the Institute at academic-engagement@turing.ac.uk or on +44 (0)20 3862 3500. If there is information relevant to your application that the Institute may need to consider when facilitating the review of your application, please contact us using the details above to discuss. This should be done early in the process, or updated when circumstances change. We will treat any information you disclose to the Institute as sensitive and will handle it in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. You can find out more information about how the Institute handles your personal data in our privacy notice. Information will only be used to arrange reasonable adjustments and will not be used to assess your application.

Turing liaison will have the opportunity to share any information regarding their individual circumstances and reasonable adjustments via an onboarding survey in October 2023. The Academic Engagement team is happy to discuss personal circumstances with Turing liaison in advance via academic-engagement@turing.ac.uk.

Contact details

If you have any questions, please first consult the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document. If your question remains unanswered, please contact academic-engagement@turing.ac.uk.
Annex 1 – Benefits to joining the Turing University Network

The Turing University Network aims to facilitate better connections across the data science/AI landscape.

Joining the network will connect the university across the data science/AI ecosystem, provide access to bespoke network activity and mean the university is better positioned to collaborate on meaningful partnership as opportunities arise.

The perceived benefits to universities in the network include:

- Opportunity to shape the Institute’s schemes, initiatives and direction via invitation to the Turing University Network Annual Meeting.
- Influence the Institute’s strategic direction via invitation to the Turing University Network Group\(^8\).
- Opportunity to influence the national agenda by inputting into government consultations (as available).
- Invitations to unique and bespoke network engagement activity (listed above) including conferences and workshops, network funding schemes, and coordinating the pooling of resources and shared knowledge across the network.
- Bespoke mechanisms to showcase and promote the university’s data science and AI activity, events and research across the network via the Turing’s website and comms channels.
- Opportunity to shape the Turing University Network’s purpose, aims, identity and values.
- Tailored communication channels across the network, providing the latest information on all Turing opportunities including collaboration and partnerships.
- Part of a national research mapping exercise laying out the UK data science/AI landscape.
- Benefit from and participate in the Turing’s unique programme of events and expanded virtual engagement programme. Network members can receive reduced rates and complimentary tickets for certain events.
- Unique chance for university researchers to apply to set up and lead themed and multidisciplinary Turing Interest Groups.
- Turing liaison invited to quarterly Turing Townhall meetings to receive key updates on the Institute and broader data science/AI landscape.
- Turing liaison invited to a weekly drop-in/networking session.
- Increased awareness of opportunities for researchers to participate in Turing schemes and activities: e.g. Turing Fellowships, Interest Groups, Theory and Method Challenge Fortnights, Data Study Groups, Turing Research Programme calls, meet ups and workshops.
- Increased awareness of opportunities for students and early career researchers to participate in Turing schemes: e.g. PhD enrichment, post-doctoral enrichment, Turing Internship Network.

\(^8\) The structure of this group is TBC whilst the Institute’s governance structures are reviewed. It’s high-level aim is to provide universities in the network an avenue to input and feedback to Turing’s Executive leadership and represent the interests of UK universities as the Institute evolves. It may, for example, include 15-20 members representing the Turing University Network community and rotating on a 2-year basis.
Annex 2 – Turing liaison: overview and requirements

Overview
Each university in the Turing University Network is required to nominate a Turing liaison as the primary contact person at the university. The individual is expected to:

• serve as the administrative/professional services link between The Alan Turing Institute and the university
• promote Turing opportunities, programmes, and schemes within the university to maximise engagement with the Institute
• ensure key Institute updates are circulated to senior university decision makers
• coordinate an annual Turing survey/report
• join regular Turing liaison meetings to receive updates and input to the development of new schemes/initiatives
• attend an annual Turing liaison in-person 1-2 day meeting
• coordinate and support university input to network engagement activity
• uphold, support, and champion the Turing Values and Institute policies
• (where possible) support contracting and invoicing between the Institute and university.
• Coordinate collaborative activity with the Turing liaison (academic) if nominated.

Turing liaison is not a formal Turing title at the Institute, however a university may wish to create one as an internal identifier.

From experience, this role is best placed at a university’s data science/AI Institute (where applicable) or in a team/centre/role that works across all university departments, schools, and faculties to support an interdisciplinary way of working.

Whilst the responsibilities listed above are deemed the minimum needed to support the university’s contribution to the Turing University Network, universities may also wish to further drive the relationship by resourcing the role to deliver additional activity, examples of which are included in the template role profile below.

Terms and conditions
The Turing liaison will remain a representative and employee of the university and will not have a formal Turing title (inc. they will not receive a Turing IT account or buy-out of a secondment for the role). The individual will remain an employee of the university. This arrangement does not intend any employment relationship either now or at any time in the future and will not render them an employee or representative of the Institute.

Turing liaison can:
• Access the Institute’s Turing University Network Slack channel
• Access the Institute’s Turing liaison SharePoint workspace.
Turing liaison - optional template role profile

**NOTE:** This is not a prescriptive list or a requirement of the Turing. Universities may wish to use the following profile as a template.

**Core responsibilities [Recommended commitment of 0.2 FTE]**
- Act as the primary administrative link between the Institute and the university.
- Promote opportunities to engage with the Institute to university researchers and students to maximise the benefits of their involvement.
- Set up and develop clear systems and distinct channels of communication within the university to enable the effective circulation and dissemination of Turing opportunities and information, including but not limited to:
  - Funding/grant opportunities
  - Promotion of schemes (for students, early career research and mid-senior level academics)
  - Events taking place across the Turing network
  - Call for input into government consultations
- Act as a point of contact for individuals based at the university and respond to enquiries as required.
- Translate Turing communications into university context and processes.
- Support with Turing-related contracts and invoicing when there are delays or issues, or when stuck in the university system, and when all other avenues are exhausted.
- Coordinate responses and complete an annual Turing survey on behalf of the university.
- Join a weekly Turing meeting to receive updates as required.
- Attend a Turing liaison all day in-person meeting, held 1-2 times per year.

**Optional/additional responsibilities [Recommended commitment of 0.5 FTE]**
- Support the university to maximise its affiliation with the Institute.
- Promote the university and its activity across the Turing’s network using specific mechanisms and channels.
- Act as a point of contact for Turing-affiliated researchers at the university (e.g. Turing Fellows, PhD Enrichment students).
- Community building: Organise meetings/events for Turing-affiliated researchers at the university to encourage interdisciplinary networking across departments/faculties.
- Identify specific individuals for all Turing opportunities to maximise the university’s engagement with the Institute.
- Support Turing-related, university-based events and activities.
- Maintain up to date records of who from the university is engaged and involved in Institute activity.
- Provide support for university steering groups or other bodies established to support the relationship between the Institute and the university.
- Support applicants applying for Turing opportunities.
- Report to university decision makers on Turing activity as required.
- Facilitate the smooth running of Turing-related calls for funding, awards, studentships, fellowships or other opportunities, for example:
  - Assist with student recruitment for the PhD Enrichment scheme
  - Support Turing Fellow calls (as well as other calls as they arise).
  - Ensure the Turing finance and contracts processes are understood by relevant colleagues at the university, and that Turing and university processes align. Troubleshoot as required.
- Identify and provide case studies to the Turing and university comms teams to amplify the impact of Turing’s research.
- Support with Turing activity when hosted at the university (DSGs, Enrichment, etc).
Annex 3 – Turing liaison (academic): overview and requirements

Overview
Each university in the Turing University Network is invited to nominate a Turing liaison (academic) as the primary research link between the Institute and the university.

The individual may:

• Support the promotion of Turing activity at the university
• Promote and champion their university and its activity across the Turing’s network
• Ensure the right individuals from the university are engaged with the Institute
• Act as a source of information for Turing Research Programmes and members of the Business team in scoping new activity
• Coordinate and support university input to network engagement activity in collaboration with the Turing liaison (professional services).

Turing liaison (academic) is not a formal Turing title at the Institute, however a university may wish to create one as an internal identifier.

From experience, this role is best placed at a university’s data science/AI Institute (where applicable) or in a role that works across all university departments, schools, and faculties to support an interdisciplinary way of working.

It is advised that individuals taking on the Turing liaison (academic) role be established scholars with proven research excellence in data science, artificial intelligence, or a related field. They will require excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate and negotiate successfully within the Institute and the university, and the ability to create and promote a collegiate and collaborative approach to research partnership activities. They will need to uphold, support and champion the Turing Values and Institute policies.

Whilst the responsibilities listed above will support the university’s contribution to the Turing University Network, universities may also wish to further drive the relationship by resourcing the role to deliver additional activity, examples of which are included in the template role profile below.

Terms and conditions
The Turing liaison (Academic) will remain a representative and employee of the university and will not have a formal Turing title (inc. they will not receive a Turing IT account or buy-out of a secondment for the role). The individual will remain an employee of the university. This arrangement does not intend any employment relationship either now or at any time in the future and will not render them an employee or representative of the Institute.

Turing liaison (Academic) can:

• Access the Institute’s Turing University Network Slack channel
• Access the Institute’s Turing liaison SharePoint workspace.
Turing liaison (academic) - optional template role profile

NOTE: This is not a prescriptive list or a requirement of the Turing. Universities may wish to use the following profile as a template.

Suggested core responsibilities [Recommended commitment of 0.2 FTE]

- Act as the principal liaison (academic) in relation to research matters between the Institute and the university.
- Coordinate collaborative activity with the Turing liaison (professional services)
- Promote opportunities to engage with the Institute to university researchers and students to maximise the benefits of their involvement.
- Promote the university and its activity across the Turing’s network.
- Map expertise and strengths in Turing priority areas and ‘talent scout’ for researchers at their universities to include in existing or prospective Turing projects.
- Share ideas and opinions from the university and ensure these are communicated to the relevant Turing stakeholders.
- Actively participate on Turing steering groups and committees as available and appropriate.
- Identify opportunities for research collaboration between the university and the Institute, including collaborations with university researchers who are not formally affiliated to the Turing.
- Serve as a positive and pro-active advocate of Turing’s mission and goals.

Optional/additional responsibilities [Recommended commitment of 0.3-0.4 FTE]

- Develop a strategy for engaging Turing-affiliated researchers at the university.
- Develop a strategy for engaging non-affiliated researchers at the university.
- Support Fellows and Turing-affiliated researchers at the university to maximise the impact and benefits of the Turing affiliation.
- Work closely with senior university staff (e.g. Pro-Vice Chancellors) to insure a smooth and mutually beneficial relationship between the university, the Institute and other collaborators.
- Initiate or expand collaborations between researchers in relation to Turing programmes.
- Identify gaps and overlaps in research with Turing priority areas and national strategic priorities in data science/AI with a view to building capacity and targeting opportunities for future collaboration.
- Assist with appointment process for Turing Fellows, acting as an initial point of contact for prospective applicants.
- Organise events, exhibitions or symposia to highlight the university’s work in relevant areas.
- Embed Turing core values within the network more generally: for example ensure that the research base is as diverse and inclusive as possible.
- Meet and collaborate with other Turing liaison.
- Identify possible industry, government and third sector collaborators with a view to developing opportunities for knowledge exchange and contract research.