
Call for applications: ALC Knowledge Exchange Programme support 2027

The African Laser Centre (ALC) initiative is an **open, non-exclusive partnership** to stimulate innovation, research and technology development **in lasers and their applications** across Africa. Recognised as an **AU-NEPAD flagship programme**, the ALC **seeks local, continental and global partnerships** to support this objective. To enable this, the centre has an active ALC Research Collaboration Support Programme and an ALC Training Programme that focuses on training and conference support, specifically for the organisation of conferences, workshops and topical short-course events. Additionally, the ALC initiative offers a scholarship programme for African students to pursue postgraduate degrees at South African tertiary institutions in a laser- and laser-applications-related research field.

The ALC Knowledge Exchange Programme (KEP) supports the development of centres of expertise in photonics-related disciplines across Africa. The programme aims to support the mobility of Doctoral and Master's degree students through short-term exchange visits between South African research institutions and research institutions in the rest of Africa. Under the ALC KEP, researchers and students will be offered financial support to visit a collaborator's laboratory to share or gain knowledge, capabilities and know-how that will support the development of new capabilities and competencies in research groups across Africa.

The ALC KEP is **NOT** a research collaboration support programme. Broad research collaboration is funded under the ALC Research Collaboration Programme. The ALC KEP specifically focuses on targeted knowledge transfer or knowledge exchange. Applications that are of a general research collaboration nature will not be supported.

The ALC KEP specifically targets South African and African students at Doctoral or Master's level to visit a collaborator's laboratory to gain experience or access specialised equipment, **with the objective of applying this knowledge and experience within their home research group**. This programme, therefore, *focuses on support for knowledge and technology transfer between South African and African research groups*.

The CSIR Photonics Centre manages the ALC programme funding allocation from the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation in support of the objectives of the ALC.

The CSIR hereby invites applications from researchers in South Africa and across Africa with active collaborations in the field of laser and laser-related applications to apply for financial support for knowledge exchange visits for their students in the 2027 academic year.

Eligibility criteria:

- Any researcher from a research institution in South Africa or the rest of Africa with a Doctoral degree and an established track record is eligible to apply for support under the programme. The programme is focused on Doctoral and Master's degree candidates for a visiting grant to a host institution for a period of three to a maximum of six months;
- The application should be completed and signed by the applicant researcher and the host researcher. If the applicant is a student, the application must be signed by the student's supervisor;
- One of the institutions applying must be a South African-based higher education institution or a South African science council;
- The student nominated for the exchange must be a registered student at the applicant researcher's institution;
- The student nominated for the exchange should have a solid academic record. **A certified copy of the student's full tertiary academic record is required.** Failure to submit this will disqualify the application;
- A strong motivation is required from the applicant for the knowledge exchange, as well as for the abilities of the nominated student;
- The motivation should also cover the financial co-investment, as well as the in-kind investment that the applicant's institution will make to support the project;
- A letter of invitation and support for the application from the host institution is compulsory. Co-investment, either financial and/or in kind, from the host institution needs to be emphasised;
- **Applications without institutional co-funding will not be considered;** and
- **Applications that are general and focus more on research collaboration will not be supported.** Applications should focus on a specific nominated student, and the nature of the knowledge transfer needs to be clearly articulated and substantiated as opposed to being merely a research collaboration between two groups.

What is funded:

- The grant will be limited to a maximum of R 60 000;
- It may cover one return flight ticket, accommodation support and/or subsistence for the period of the grant:
 - Accommodation support is limited to R 8 000 per month;
 - S and T (S&T) support is limited to R 300 per day; and
- Consumables to support experimental work up to the value of R 10 000.

Proposals will be disqualified if:

- The applicant's research institution does not contribute financially to the project. There should be a clear indication of the applicant institution's financial contribution to the programme. No allocation will be made if the application requests full funding support for travel, accommodation and S&T. It is expected that each applicant institution will cover at least one of these expense categories from its own or other funds; and
- The proposal describes a general research collaboration between the two institutions without providing a detailed programme of knowledge transfer for a specific nominated student.

Expected outputs and outcomes of the programme:

- Outputs:
 - An exchange visit report, to be submitted within six months after the end of the visit;
 - One joint publication arising from the work conducted; and
 - A tutorial lecture on the knowledge and experience gained, to be presented by the visiting student at his or her home institution following the knowledge exchange visit.
- Outcomes:
 - An ALC Research Collaboration project in the future;
 - A wider or improved set of capabilities available at the applicants' institutions; and
 - The establishment of a closer collaboration network between researchers in Africa.

Support for all ALC activities is subject to the availability of funding.

Call launch date: **Monday, 7 September 2026**

Closing date for applications: **Friday, 16 October 2026**

ALC KEP application forms and templates for final reports are available from the CSIR Photonics Centre.

For enquiries, contact 012 841 3511 or send an email to NLCRentalPool@csir.co.za and tiduplooy@csir.co.za.