InterAct Network
Early Career Researcher
Fellowship guidance
April 2022

INTERACT EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER FELLOWSHIPS
FUNDING CALL 1

ABOUT INTERACT

The overall aim of **Made Smarter Innovation (MSI)** is to help UK manufacturing become more productive and competitive through the innovation and diffusion of digital technology. MSI also needs to support manufacturing to achieve Net Zero by 2050. Whilst technology is important, there are many social and economic factors that will be hugely influential in achieving these aims. This led to the funding for the **InterAct** Network.

InterAct is led by the co-directors Prof. Jan Godsell (Loughborough University) and Prof. Jill MacBryde (Strathclyde Business School). The core research team is comprised of researchers from Loughborough, Strathclyde, and Sheffield Universities. InterAct is a £4.4 million, Made Smarter Innovation funded, Economic and Social Research Council-led network that aims to bring together economic and social scientists, UK manufacturers, and digital technology providers to address the human issues resulting from the diffusion of new technologies in industry. The directorship and programme will act as a conduit to curate, amplify and augment insights from the economic and social science (ESS) to support the **MSI** objectives to:

- **Increase UK manufacturing sector investment in industrial digitalisation R&D and increase the innovation and diffusion of Industrial Digital Technologies (IDT).** Insights from the economic and social sciences will help manufacturing firms to assess the risk, make the business case, and provide insights on the management practices that will enable successful adoption.
- **Increase cross-sector collaboration between UK manufacturing sectors to drive the creation of common digital solutions** by working with manufacturing firms to identify the underlying mechanisms and management practices within a specific solution and providing a forum for sharing those mechanisms with other sectors, to enable the sharing of leading practices.
- **Increase the number of digital technology companies providing solutions for manufacturing industries** by improving the visibility of technology providers to manufacturing companies and facilitating the relationships to understand the barriers and drivers to successful technology adoption.
- **Increase the number of collaborations between SMEs and larger, more established companies up the value chain** by facilitating the connection between SMES and larger customers and using economic and social scientists to provide insights to mediate the relationships.
- **Increase the potential for export of UK manufacturing and digital manufacturing solutions** by understanding the economic landscape and the policy drivers that would support this ambition, in addition to the capabilities firms require to support exports.

Economic and social scientists will benefit from the creation of an inclusive community, that finds innovative ways to embed their expertise more effectively within interdisciplinary research. Successful integration of ESS with science and

engineering disciplines is vital to enable successful adoption of future digital technologies.

EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER FELLOWSHIPS

FUNDING CALL 1

InterAct are keen to involve Early Career Researchers (ECRs) within the network. We are particularly keen to see ECRs from the economic and social sciences engaging with work that can support UK manufacturing become more productive, sustainable, and competitive through the innovation and diffusion of digital technology.

But we recognise that it can be harder for ECRs who do not yet hold grants to get involved in communities like ours, and to kick-start interdisciplinary research collaborations. InterAct are offering up to 20 ESRC InterAct Fellowships, to help address this challenge. The Fellowships are each £5000, funded at 100% FEC (no financial contribution is required from the applicant's employer). Please note as a result, the funding cannot be used to cover staff costs or any research activities.

- Call 1 – Launch date – 12th April 2022 – 6 Fellowships
- Call 2 – Launch date – November 2022 – 7 Fellowships
- Call 3 – Launch date - August 2023 - 7 Fellowships

Fellows will have discretion as to how they use this money, so long as it supports the InterAct and Made Smarter agenda. Awards will be for one year and the funding for the award will be paid in one initial payment.

The remainder of this document contains all the key information pertaining to ECR Fellowships available from InterAct, including the eligibility criteria, the types of activity that can be funded, how applicants can apply, and expectations of the funders.

Eligibility

Early Career Researchers are normally broadly defined as within 8 years of PhD submission or having held an academic position for less than 4 years (full-time equivalent). We are also open to applications from PhD candidates in the later stages of their studies (with written permission from their PhD supervisor). ECR applicants must have a contractual arrangement with a UK university or research organisation (either as an employee or as a student), who will hold the grant on behalf of the fellow.

InterAct want to be as inclusive as possible and welcome diversity in all that we do. In recognition of the increasing diversity of career trajectories we will not narrowly follow a timebound definition of 'early career researcher', but rather use this as a guide. We recognise that some researchers will embark on an active research career directly following their PhD but others will not and, as such, could

still be considered as being an early career researcher for a longer period of time. If this applied to you then just tell us why we should consider you as an early career researcher (in a max of 300 words). This justification will be considered as part of the peer review process.

For example:

• Those who have spent periods of time outside of academia i.e., due to illness, parental leave, unemployment, or employment outside of academia in non-research roles.

• Applicants who may have been employed in academia but in posts with limited or no scope for their own research such as teaching-only contracts.

• Applicants may have had prior experience in one discipline but are aiming to re-skill in a new area of research.

Given the limited funding available, we would not normally expect someone who is already in receipt of funding through an Early Career Research scheme aimed at supporting their transition to becoming an independent researcher to apply.

Types of activity that can be funded

Whilst ultimately the Fellow will have discretion on the day-to-day use of the Fellowship money, applications should outline initial plans, the ultimate use and expected outcomes. Below we have made some suggestions as to potential uses of the funding, but these are by no means exhaustive:

- Travel, accommodation, and subsistence to attend InterAct events.
- Organising gatherings of researchers to discuss future research plans related to the Made Smarter and InterAct objectives.
- Attending events that bring together early career researchers that may result in future research related to the Made Smarter and InterAct objectives.
- Running special tracks at conferences related to the Made Smarter and InterAct objectives.
- Purchasing support such as transcription services and data sets to support research related to the Made Smarter and InterAct objectives.
- Impact activities related to the Made Smarter and InterAct objectives eg, podcasts, storytelling, and events.
- The funding cannot be used to cover staff costs or any research activities.

Expectations

To align with the expectations of InterAct, successful applicants shall:

- Provide updates on progress (if requested) and comply with mid and end project requests for reporting (both during the project and post-completion). Reporting requirements will be provided to successful teams. These shall align with UKRI templates and ResearchFish (see ResearchFish website) and include commentary on whether aims have been achieved, methods used, data produced, publications or other outputs, other outcomes, impact achieved and planned, problems encountered, and forward plans.

- Attend InterAct events, as required. This shall include presentations to the InterAct Board and Annual Conference in September 2022 (date TBC).

- Promote and amplify InterAct through their own networks. The InterAct Communications Officer will maintain contact with successful teams and those subscribed to receive updates to ensure that important information and announcements are disseminated widely.

- In collaboration with InterAct's Impact Manager and other members of the InterAct team, develop an impact plan and agree metrics to monitor the success of the project such as (but not limited to) the number of and type of people engaged in new networks, number of events and attendees, the number publications and their reach, new connections made by type, and new research partnerships formed by type.

- Permit research outcomes and updates to be shared with the wider InterAct Network via marketing channels and communications.

- UKRI has commissioned SQW, an independent research consultancy (www.sqw.co.uk), in collaboration with the survey company IFF, Frazer Nash and the Institute for Manufacturing (University of Cambridge), to evaluate the programme. The evaluation will continue to 2025.

  SQW will conduct a range of research activity for the evaluation including a survey of companies receiving funding from the programme, interviews with stakeholders and programme participants and analysis of secondary and monitoring data. **By submitting an application for this InterAct ECR fellowship, which is part of the Made Smarter Innovation programme, you agree UKRI may share your contact details with SQW**. SQW may subsequently contact you to discuss your involvement with Interact.

  Any information you provide SQW will be treated in confidence and held securely. No information you provide will be attributed to you or your organisation. Aggregated and analysed responses will be used to prepare reports to UKRI. You can find SQW's privacy notice here.

Timetable:

Call opens – launch date	Tuesday 12th April 2022
Q&A webinar	Monday 25th April 2022, 14:00 – 15:00.
Closing time and date for applications	Thursday 12th May, 12:00 (midday) 2022
Funding decision	Wednesday 25th May 2022

We would like to see all ECRs with Fellowships engaging with the community and attending the InterAct Annual Conference, London September 2022 – date to be confirmed

Scope

The outputs from this project should contribute to the aims and objectives of InterAct which in turn contribute to one of the long-term objectives of Made Smarter Innovation (delivery 2030-2035) which is to increase cross sector collaboration between: types of academic disciplines; businesses and academics, different businesses, within the UK manufacturing sectors

Q&A webinar

Applicants are strongly encouraged to register for the webinar scheduled for Monday 25th April 2022, 14:00 – 15:00.

This will form an important opportunity to ask any questions you may have and understand more about the call and what is expected.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In line with the UKRI's policies on equality, diversity and inclusion, InterAct expects that equality, diversity, and inclusion are embedded at all levels and in all aspects of applicants' research proposals.

We are committed to supporting the research community in the diverse ways a research career can be built. This includes career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working, and alternative working patterns. With this in mind, we welcome applications from researchers who job share, have a part-time contract, need flexible working arrangements or those currently committed to other longer, large existing grants.

Selection Process

Important note: InterAct reserves the right to reject proposals that are incomplete and that do not meet the requirements highlighted on the checklist before sending them to reviewers. The checklist can be found in the Application Form.

Scoring

There are four Primary Criteria against which all proposals shall be assessed. Each contains three key points, as shown below. All applications shall be assessed against the same criteria, regardless of the size of request. Reviewers shall assess the size of the request solely in the *Value for Money* criterion. Proposals shall be scored against each of the four criteria on a scale of 0-3, as follows:

> 0 = sub-criteria not met
> 1 = sub-criteria partially met
> 3 = sub-criteria fully met

Scoring Criteria:

Need	• *Explaining the need for the funding*
Bridging the gap between social science and technology	• *We are looking for proposals that have the potential to bridge the gap between academic disciplines (and/or possibly practice).* • *We particularly encourage ideas that bring new perspectives from the economic and social sciences (including business and management, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and anthropology)* • *That address the aims of the made smarter challenge (essentially speeding up the diffusion of digital technology in UK manufacturing and helping achieve net zero).* • *Bringing together people from different disciplines is important (eg. through meetings, discussions, events, conferences, or research).*
Value for money	• *Provide a clear justification for all resources requested* • *Explain why your request is appropriate, given your review scope, ambition etc.* • *State how you will contribute to InterAct, making reference to your long-term plans for follow-on funding and collaboration*
Impact	• *Describe the long-term effect that you expect your activities to have on the InterAct agenda, and how you would expect this impact to be measured or recognised.* • *Set out your pathway/s to impact, including your target audience/s and beneficiaries, how you will reach them, and what change you expect to see* • *Potential to increase cross sector collaboration between types of academic disciplines; businesses and academics, different businesses, within the UK manufacturing sectors*

Submissions

- To download an application pack, [visit our website](#).

- The deadline for submissions is Thursday 12th May, 12:00 (midday) 2022

- Submissions should be sent to this email address: info@interact-hub.org

Enquiries

A [Q&A webinar](#) session will be held on Monday 25th April 2022, 14:00 – 15:00.

An FAQ video is also available on our [YouTube channel](#).

Contact

For all enquiries about the call, please email info@interact-hub.org