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APPLICATION GUIDELINES

International Research Fellowship

For more information visit:
www.issinstitute.org.au

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Introduction

Skills SA, in partnership with the International Specialised Skills Institute are offering six Elevate International Research Fellowships in 2026, valued at \$15,000 each.

The Fellowships provide South Australian VET educators with the opportunity to undertake international applied research to address skill gaps, strengthen training delivery and drive innovation across the sector.

The Fellowships are part of the South Australian and Australian Government's \$10 million Strengthening the VET Workforce investment. For more information, visit educatorhub.skills.sa.gov.au.

About this Fellowship

Fellowships must be applied, practical and relevant to South Australian skills priorities industries. Fellowship proposals should demonstrate relevance to current priorities across the vocational education and training system. Applicants are encouraged to consider how their proposal aligns with:

- Department of State Development's Areas of Focus: <https://statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/department/areas-of-focus>
- National Skills Agreement priorities: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-skills-agreement>

Applicants should clearly articulate the potential impact, practical application, scalability and transferability of their proposed project, and how it contributes to improved outcomes for learners, educators, industry and/or the broader VET system. Topics may include:

- Comparative studies of international VET teaching or assessment models
- Innovative approaches to industry engagement, workforce alignment or learner support
- Trials of new teaching, assessment or capability building approaches
- Development of practical tools, frameworks, case studies or resources for re-use across the South Australian sector.

Skills SA

Skills SA, within the South Australian Government's Department of State Development, leads investment in quality training to build the skilled workforce our industries need. Skills SA connects training investment to employment outcomes, supports training providers and strengthens the vocational education and training (VET) sector in South Australia. The Skills SA Elevate International Research Fellowship is supported by the Government of South Australia's Strengthening the VET Workforce Initiative. Learn more at educatorhub.skills.sa.gov.au

International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The ISS Institute was founded 30 years ago, by a small group of innovative leaders who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the up skilling of the Australian workforce. Investing in the development of talented, passionate and innovative Australians to travel abroad to develop new skills and knowledge and return to Australia to disseminate their learnings has, and continues to create a 'better skilled Australia.' Our Fellows represent a broad cross-section of industries and our Fellowship program creates impact in many ways including economic benefits, skills preservation, the personal and professional advancement of our Fellows, new thinking, practice and increased innovation in the workforce. www.issinstitute.org.au

What is International Applied Research?

Applied Research is an approach used to solve practical problems. This type of study and research is often used in education, training and across industries with the intention of generating actionable knowledge, to find solutions or develop innovative practice that has direct application to the world. ISS Institute's Fellowship program invests in Australians to undertake applied research outside of Australia and apply their learnings in an Australian context on their return. No prior research experience is required or expected. Fellows will receive comprehensive support throughout the program to build their research knowledge, skills and confidence.

How to Apply for this Fellowship

To apply for this Fellowship, you are required to:

- Complete the application form
- Provide a current curriculum vitae (resume)
- Provide one Letter of Support which indicates that your Fellowship field is relevant and will benefit the industry (e.g. peak industry bodies, government agencies, professional associations)
- Provide an Employer Endorsement Letter indicating that you will be supported to meet the obligations associated with this Fellowship (this letter should be from your current CEO, director or manager).

Apply through the application form on our website. For any questions, email: comms@issinstitute.org.au

Who can apply? Applicants must:

- Reside in South Australia
- Be over 18 years of age
- Be an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- Be employed within the VET sector, including:
 - Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), including TAFE SA and private providers
 - Adult Community Education (ACE) providers
 - Be delivering training, or supporting the delivery of training, to South Australian students and learners.

Applications may be completed by individuals or pairs. Where a pair applies, at least one applicant must be an educator currently delivering training to South Australian students. Each applicant is required to submit a separate application form. If successful, a Fellowship will be awarded to each individual applicant, including those applying as part of a pair.

Applicants must also demonstrate:

- Employer support to undertake the Fellowship
- Capacity to participate fully in the program, including travel, reporting and dissemination requirements.

Applications must include:

- A completed online application addressing key selection questions
- A current curriculum vitae
- An employer support letter confirming organisational support
- An industry or advisory body support letter demonstrating sector relevance and endorsement.

Who are the Fellowships designed for?

This program is targeted towards VET educators and practitioners who:

- Reside in South Australia
- Are currently delivering training, or supporting delivery of training, to South Australian students and learners.

Fellowships are awarded to individuals and Fellows must demonstrate engagement with relevant local stakeholders, including:

- Colleagues and peers
- Learners
- Employers and industry



What does a Fellowship involve?

Fellows are expected to:

- Use their Fellowship funding to travel overseas to undertake applied research, including the purchase of appropriate travel insurance.
- Undertake international applied research to acquire skills and knowledge not available in Australia.
- Actively participate in monthly online community of practice meetings, which are a core program requirement.
- Complete their Fellowship within one year of induction, including travel, research, reporting and dissemination.
- Develop and submit a comprehensive Fellowship report within this time frame
- Deliver a minimum of three (3) dissemination activities including a presentation at the annual Skills SA Elevate Educator Symposium
- Fellows must develop local connections within the South Australian skills sector to ensure knowledge gained from the Fellowship is shared and applied locally.

Throughout the Fellowship, Fellows are to be provided with:

- Regular community of practice meetings to share insights, maintain momentum and build peer networks
- Access to one-on-one coaching and support from the Program Manager at any time during the Fellowship
- Support with pre-travel planning and documentation, including impact mapping, itinerary development, risk assessment and travel safety requirements.
- Ongoing guidance during international research and learning activities
- Post-travel debriefs to reflect on learnings and plan dissemination

The ISS Institute provides significant support in the development of the Fellowship report, including

- Guidance on structure, content and writing
- Access to templates, tools and shared platforms (including collaborative tools such as Padlet)
- Editorial support throughout the drafting process
- Professional design and typesetting of the final report by a graphic designer

Application and Selection Process

Applicants are required to submit a structured online application by the specified closing date. Only applications with the required documentation will be accepted.

Online interviews are prioritised to reduce travel burden and ensure equitable access, particularly for regional and remote participants, and those with diverse needs.

Selection Process:

- Each submission will be assessed by the Skills SA and ISS Institute team members, who may draw upon specialist experts when evaluating applications.
- Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by a selection panel, made up of Skills SA representatives and ISS Institute team members.
- Interviews conducted face to face, or by video conference.
- Each applicant will be advised of the outcome of their application.

Conditions of Entry:

1. A Fellowship application, including the attachments (curriculum vitae, one (1) letter of support, one (1) employer endorsement letter) must be received by the ISS Institute by the closing date.
2. The duration of the overseas applied research component varies depending on the aims of the Fellowship (but generally Fellows spend between two (2) – four (4) weeks overseas).
3. Successful applicants will enter into a contractual agreement with ISS Institute to ensure that all Fellowship requirements are met.
4. Fellows must prepare both a brief and a detailed Fellowship report outlining their international research, findings and recommendations.
5. The Fellowship, including publication of the final Fellowship report, must be completed within 12 months.
6. Fellows agree to disseminate their Fellowship learnings, findings and recommendations to peers, industry leaders and other relevant bodies and report back to the ISS Institute about these. This includes presenting Fellowship findings at the annual Skills SA Elevate Educator Symposium, held each October.
7. Our Fellows agree to be ambassadors of ISS Institute throughout their Fellowship and into the future.
8. Fellows agree to be featured on the Skills SA Educator Hub, with a profile that includes a photograph, professional biography, an overview of their Fellowship project and a link to their Fellowship report once published.
9. Our Fellows agree to take part in periodic evaluation, generally via surveys, so we can capture the impact that a Fellowship has had at a personal, professional or industry level over time.
10. While Fellowship applicants can be undertaking tertiary studies, the Fellowship cannot be used to gain a tertiary qualification.
11. The selection panel's decision is final and binding.
12. Unsuccessful Fellowship applicants are welcome to reapply for a Fellowship in the future.

Preparing your Fellowship Application:

Before you complete your application form, you may want to consider these tips and ideas:



Assessment Criteria

Applications are assessed against clear and transparent criteria, aligned with the program objectives and Skills SA priorities. These include:

1. Merit of the proposed Fellowship

- Clarity, quality and feasibility of the project
- Alignment with identified skills gaps and industry need
- Relevance to South Australian VET priorities

2. Need for international research

- Demonstrated gap in skills or knowledge within South Australia
- Clear rationale for undertaking international research

3. Potential Impact

- Likely outcomes at individual, organisational and sector levels
- Potential to drive innovation, improved practice and knowledge transfer

4. Capacity to deliver and implement

- Applicant's ability to complete the Fellowship within the required timeframe
- Commitment to program requirements, including reporting and dissemination
- Ability to translate into practical outcomes

5. Capacity to disseminate and influence

- Willingness and ability to share learnings broadly
- Strength of networks and capacity to influence practice
- Alignment with the Fellowship model of knowledge sharing and sector impact

When submitting your Fellowship application form through the ISS Institute website, please save your files as your surname and year (e.g. Jones_2023).

Supporting Documents

What is a letter of support?

Letters of support indicate that your Fellowship field is relevant and will benefit your industry or sector. Letters of support can come from a peak industry body, industry/sector partner, government agencies, professional association or key partner. The best letters of support describe how they may support your Fellowship, convey enthusiasm and lends credibility to the need for your Fellowship topic and the outcomes of your research.

Before approaching individuals who could provide you with a letter of support, it is recommended to make a list of potential supporters. Contact them, preferably over the phone or via email, and ask if they would be willing to provide you with a Letter of Support. It is a good idea to have a brief summary of your proposed Fellowship and explain how it will benefit your industry/sector/community when asking for a letter of support.

Ensure your letter of support has an appropriate letterhead and is signed and dated.

What is an employer endorsement letter?

An employer endorsement letter shows that you have discussed your Fellowship application with your employer (e.g. CEO, director or senior manager), as it is important that your employer is aware that you are applying for a Fellowship involving significant travel. This ensures that your employer understands you will need to take leave from work to travel overseas, complete a Fellowship report, and seek opportunities within and beyond your workplace to disseminate your Fellowship learnings.

Your employer may also want to assist you while you are developing your Fellowship application and the priority areas you want to investigate.

If you are self employed, you will still need to provide an endorsement, outlining your current work status and highlighting your current roles.

Notes on the Fellowship application questions

- Please avoid industry/sector jargon in your application and write in plain English
- Make sure your answers are clear and succinct - there are word limits per question
- Consider having a friend or colleague who is not in the sector read your application form for clarity.

Application question guidance

You will be required to provide a short response (min. 200 words - max. 300 words) against each of the key selection criteria below:

Before answering the following questions in your application, please provide a title for your Fellowship. Please provide answers to the following questions in third person.

1. Please succinctly describe your Fellowship proposal. (150 words)

Please introduce your Fellowship proposal succinctly in a clear and thoughtful way. This should outline the focus of your proposed international applied research, the skills, knowledge or practices you intend to investigate, and how the Fellowship may benefit vocational education and training (VET) in South Australia.

Example:

Molly intends to enhance her practice in wind energy through exposure to innovative renewable energy technologies and industry practices in Denmark. Molly aims to address knowledge gaps in Australia's wind energy sector by investigating advanced wind turbine technology, installation and maintenance practices, and strategies for improving the efficiency and reliability of wind energy systems. Through gaining an understanding of international approaches to wind energy, Molly can apply and share new knowledge and skills within South Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector. The Fellowship will support the development of industry-relevant training and encourage innovation in renewable energy education, helping prepare students and workers for emerging opportunities in Australia's growing clean energy sector. Molly also aims to explore how international best practice can be adapted to South Australian conditions, supporting the transition towards a skilled workforce capable of contributing to the state's renewable energy future.

2. Please describe the skills enhancement area(s), innovative practice(s), or VET priority area(s) that your Fellowship will focus on. Include any links you may have to industry, sector, education, training or ACE providers, where relevant. (200 words)

In this question we are looking to understand your current role and how it relates to your Fellowship proposal, including how your proposed research aligns with South Australian skills priorities.

3. Research and Evidence: Please discuss the evidence which indicates the need for international applied research and/or capacity building in your proposed area of focus. (200 words)

In this question we want to understand the skills, knowledge or practice gaps you have identified, why international research is required, and how addressing these gaps could benefit South Australia's skills sector now and into the future. You may find that the evidence is a mix of formal research, action research or anecdotal evidence.

4. Outcome for education and training sector: In what ways do you anticipate that your international investigations and findings will positively benefit and have impact on VET and/or ACE in South Australia? (200 words)

The Fellowships are intended to examine innovative approaches that demonstrate potential benefits for, and application in skills training in South Australia. A desired outcome of each Fellowship is the development of effective approaches or student engagement and participation, quality teaching and learning and employment and industry productivity.

While you may not have the answers now, you will have no doubt thought about the ways in which your Fellowship may have a positive influence in South Australia and this question is a chance to discuss that. In addition, this question provides you with a chance to discuss leading practice occurring overseas but which may not be evident or occurring in South Australia (or Australia).

5. Local partnerships: How do you intend to share your Fellowship findings and recommendations with the relevant education, training, industry and/or government stakeholders upon completion of your Fellowship? Please identify any existing networks, partnerships or connections that may assist this process. (150 words)

A core component of any Fellowship is disseminating learnings and ideas with colleagues, peers and influential organisations/individuals. In this question we are interested in learning about who you believe would benefit from the outcomes of your Fellowship and the ways you might share that information.

6. International partnerships/connections: Which international institutions, organisations or centers of excellence will you be visiting and in order to develop connections during your proposed Fellowship and why have you selected these? Please provide details of the innovative work practices that the organisation/s have implemented which aren't currently evident in South Australia or Australia. (200 words)

To answer this question we don't expect you to have organised a detailed itinerary or travel plan as yet. However, there is an expectation that you will have identified leading practice and skill enhancement opportunities, including where these are located, who you may wish to meet and/or the type of connections (e.g. shadowing, meetings, immersion, conferences).

7. Implementation and impact: List a minimum of three (3) strategies you could potentially implement upon returning from your proposed Fellowship that will create change and impact in the South Australian skills sector. (200 words)

The response to this question should include actions that you envision you could implement on returning from your Fellowship travels based on your Fellowship learnings. Be bold.

8. Professional capacity development: How will the proposed Fellowship benefit you in your professional capacity and development in the South Australian skills Sector? How will it enhance your position as an expert in your field? How will you support peers' professional capacity? What is your plan in relation to influencing and leading innovation in your sector beyond your Fellowship? (200 words)

In this question, we are interested in learning about how this Fellowship might assist you in achieving career goals now and into the future. In addition, we are keen to learn about ways you might be able to assist and contribute to the professional development of colleagues and peers, and the broader sector.

9. Have you ever undertaken another Fellowship, awarded by another organisation, that was related to this Fellowship topic? If yes, please describe. (150 words)

While you may have undertaken a Fellowship provided by another organisation in the past, we prefer that it does not closely resemble this one. However, if this Fellowship application builds upon your previous Fellowship experience, please explain how it differs, what new knowledge or opportunities it will provide, and how it will contribute additional value to the South Australian skills sector.

Disclaimer

The International Research Fellowship is supported by the Government of South Australia's Strengthening the VET Workforce Initiative. Learn more at educatorhub.skills.sa.gov.au.

Enquiries

ISS Institute welcomes applications from any individual who meets the conditions of entry. Whether you are familiar with preparing submissions or have never done so in the past, do feel free to contact us prior to or during the preparation of your Fellowship application.

If you have any questions please contact the ISS Institute team:

Phone: 03 9347 4583

Email: comms@issinstitute.org.au

Website: www.issinstitute.org.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ISSInstitute

