**January 2023 Call for Letters-of-Intent (deadline February 27, 2023)**

**The Western Academy for Advanced Research**

**Please review the information below carefully before completing the Letter of Intent, which follows on p. 4-6.**

## 1. Mission, Mandate and Aspiration

(a) *Name:* The Western Academy for Advanced Research (short name: *The Western Academy*; acronym: WAFAR)

(b) *Mission:* To seek solutions to major issues facing humanity through a period of focused enquiry that combines the full spectrum of scholarship and experience at Western with that from around the world.

(c) *Mandate:* To organize and facilitate the selection of *themes* and participants (*Western Fellows, Visiting Western Fellows*, *Western Academy* *Postdoctoral Scholars*) from applications received, to provide and maintain a venue for the collective work of *participants* in a *theme*, to encourage a seminar series of both scholarly and public interest supporting each *theme*, and to facilitate public communication of each *theme’s* work.

(d) *Aspiration:* To elevate the international reputation and global impact of Western University through sustained contribution of new ideas that influence societal directions and contribute in substantive ways to the well-being of humanity.

(e) *Scope:* This is a pan-university initiative. Proposals (*themes*) from individuals from Faculties, Departments, Institutes and Centres at Western, combined with suggested partners from elsewhere in the world, are adjudicated in semi-annual competitions.

(f) *Primary function:* To seek and select *themes* for investigation, and to provide organizational structure through the *Western Academy Secretariat* for delivery of *themes*.

*Themes* selected by *The Western Academy* are intended to be of broad public significance and involve topics that can benefit from ideas drawn from across the spectrum of scholarship. **Participants will devote the majority of their working time** to the *theme* whilst a *Western Fellow, Visiting Western Fellow* or *Western Academy* *Postdoctoral Scholar*.

*Themes* are chosen for their relevance to current major issues affecting Canada and the world, and for the prospects of making a significant step forward in thinking that could inform and influence the directions of society, governments, and the broader public and private sectors. There is a strong emphasis on public dissemination of outcomes arising from a *theme.* Given the emphasis on public awareness, *theme* outputs should employ accessible language and formats that can both inform and engage the public-at-large.

For a proposed *theme*, it is the Principal Applicant’s (normally the *Theme Leader*) responsibility:

* to define the national and(or) global significance of the issues to be addressed,
* to explain the specific topics to be examined and how solutions will be sought from across the spectrum of scholarship,
* to suggest how the wider community (within and beyond the university) will become engaged in the work and suggest possible participants,
* to indicate how the new ideas/approaches developed will be reported and disseminated,
* to provide a timetable for conducting the work and its dissemination, and
* to indicate how national and global impact arising from the work will be achieved and should be assessed.

*The Western Academy* focuses on six *themes* at a time, at various stages of development: 2 *themes* active in any particular year, planning underway for the two *themes* to be offered in the next year, and the selection process for the two *themes* to be offered in the following year.

Sustained *in-person* participation in the work is expected of a *theme’s* core team members. Under special circumstances, *The Western Academy* will consider virtual delivery of some aspects of its *themes*, depending on the circumstances of *Visiting Western Fellows* and other core theme participants.

The overarching principles for the selection of *themes* and participants are: (i) relevance of the proposal to *The Western Academy’s* **Mission**, (ii) excellence and relevance to the *theme* of the proposed participants, (iii) active participation of the *theme’s* core team from Western and beyond, and (iv) potential to achieve the Western Academy’s **Aspiration.**

Previous selected *themes* include:

• The mathematics of neural networks: new theoretical models for biological and artificial brains. September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023

* Climate-resilient infrastructure and buildings. January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023.
* TBA (approved but not yet announced). September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024

## 2. Membership

The scholarship conducted under the umbrella of each *theme* is undertaken by a team of faculty members, visiting experts, postdoctoral scholars, and senior graduate students. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are a hallmark of *themes* accepted by *The Western Academy*.

Core teams for any *theme* include:

* *Western Fellows, who are selected and seconded from their units based on excellence and fit to the theme.* One of the *Western Fellows* is designated as *Theme Leader*. They are responsible for organizing the work of the team, including workshops, seminars, conferences, public outreach and dissemination of results. *Western Fellows* normally receive release from teaching and service duties – excepting graduate student supervision – for the duration of a *theme* in which they are a full-time participant. The workload changes are negotiated through the units involved. Units are compensated for the loss of these services via *The Western Academy’s* budget. Participation in a *them*e will not affect sabbatical leave eligibility.
* *Visiting Western Fellows, who are internationally established or emerging scholars, thinkers, and/or leaders from across the university, government, and private sectors, selected for excellence and fit to the theme. Visiting Western Fellows* normally require salary support from their home institution – as might be the case, for example, for individuals from universities on sabbatical leave or individuals seconded from the public or private sectors. It is anticipated that – with base support from their home institution – *Visiting Western Fellows* reside at *Western University* for much of the duration of the thematic program (typically 10-12 months). In acknowledgement of their commitment to the *theme*, *Visiting Western Fellows* will be provided a living allowance from *The Western Academy*, and assistance with local housing.
* *Western Academy Postdoctoral Scholars (2-3 per theme), who are appointed to work with Western Fellows and Visiting Western Fellows during the duration of a theme.* Funding to support *the Western Academy Postdoctoral Scholars* is provided through *The Western Academy*.

Successful *theme* applications demonstrate how the proposed mix and match of *Western Fellows* and *Visiting Fellows* brings a full spectrum of expertise and viewpoints to the proposed *theme*. The total number of *Visiting Western Fellows* and *Western Fellows* is normally 5, with a 2:3 ratio of *Visiting Western Fellows* to *Western Fellows*.

All *Western Fellows, Visiting Western Fellows and Western Academy Postdoctoral Scholars* will receive a certificate of their participation in a *theme* upon its completion. Their names will be recorded in a registry maintained by *The* *Western Academy*, and their contributions will be broadly publicized and celebrated.

Other faculty members are welcomed to participate in the work of a *theme* but direct funding for their activities is not provided*.* Graduate students working with *Western Fellows* and *Visiting Western Fellows* are also welcomed as participants in a *theme’s* work, but *The* *Western Academy* is unable to support them financially.

## 3. Funding

Note: *The Western Academy* **provides and administers fixed amounts of funding** on behalf of a successful *theme*. Applicants do not make a budget request. Pleaser review the details below carefully.

Accepted *themes* are funding according to the following schedule (information as of January 12, 2023):

* *Visiting Western Fellow*: each, maximum **$60,000** living allowance (twelve month, prorated for shorter time periods)
* *Western Fellows*: each, maximum **$25,000** (twelve month, prorated for shorter time periods) provided to units from which a *Western Fellow* is seconded, if that requires release from teaching and service duties
* *Western Academy* *Postdoctoral Scholars*: each, stipend including benefits **$50,000** (twelve month, prorated for shorter time periods)
* Total support (per active *theme*) for seminars, workshops, conferences; per year: **$13,000**
* Total support (per active *theme*) for receptions, dissemination; per year: **$3,300**
* In rare cases, further subsidy (per *Visiting Fellow* per active *theme*) for living expenses of *Visiting Western Fellows*; per year: **$4,000**

## 4. Academic Director, Academic Steering Committee and Secretariat

(i) The *Academic Director* has responsibility for the thematic programming of *The Western Academy*. The *Academic Director* reports directly to the Vice-President (Research) or designate.

(ii) The *Academic Steering Committee* comprises a minimum of six members drawn from different faculties and schools at *Western University*, in addition to the *Academic Director*, plus *ex officio* members as required to support its work. The *Academic Steering Committee* is engaged in the adjudication of applications for *The Western Academy’s* t*hemes*.

(iii) *The* *Western Academy* is supported by a *Secretariat* (*Administrative Officer, Special Projects Coordinator*). They ensure a robust logistical and operational framework into which new *themes* are nested.

## 5. Space

*The Western Academy* has dedicated physical space in the International and Graduate Affairs Building (IGAB) at Western University in which *Visiting Western Fellows, Western Fellows*, *Western Academy* *Postdoctoral Scholars,* and other theme members work. This space is intended to foster team cohesion and idea exchange. The facility contains offices, common space for in-person discussions and small special events, a kitchen and dining area, and hybrid video conferencing facilities. Access to larger meeting/event rooms is also available in the IGAB. The *Western Academy* does not provide laboratory space.

Assistance with procuring reasonable, long-term housing (up to 12 months) is provided for *Visiting Western Fellows* and *Western Academy* *Postdoctoral Scholars*. The *Western Academy* has also acquired dedicated space for short-term stays of eligible *Western Academy* visitors, which is provided at reasonable cost.

**The Western Academy for Advanced Research**

**Letter-of-Intent**

# Letters of Intent (LOI) should be submitted by noon February 27, 2023 to [wafar@uwo.ca](mailto:wafar@uwo.ca)

# An LOI is required to be eligible to submit a full proposal. Feedback on LOIs will be provided by mid-March 2023, and successful LOIs will be invited to submit full proposal at that time. The submission deadline for full proposals is noon, June 12, 2023 for themes to start on September 1, 2024 or January 1, 2025. In exceptional cases, a start date of January 1, 2024 may be considered, depending on the availability of funding.

# For more information concerning the Western Academy for Advanced Research, see

<https://www.uwo.ca/academy/>

**You may also address questions to** [wafar@uwo.ca](mailto:wafar@uwo.ca)

### **Overview**

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| **Proposed *Theme* Title** |
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| **Description** – in lay language – of the proposed *theme* and its fit to *The Western Academy* guidelines (see Appendix A) *(maximum 1500 characters with spaces)* |
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| **Name and Contact Information for the Proposed *Theme Leader*** (email, telephone, Department / School / Faculty, URL): |
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| **Proposed *Theme* Duration** *(normally 10-12 months; indicate the rationale for a duration shorter than 10 months)*: |
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***Theme* Description**

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| Describe the significance of the issue(s) to be addressed and why urgent consideration is warranted. Provide evidence that the proposed *theme* activities address important challenges that are pertinent at the Canadian and/or international levels. Is the *theme* intended: (i) to ignite a new interdisciplinary, collaborative effort to address the issue(s) raised that will extend beyond the formal duration of the *theme*, or (ii) to consolidate and finalize such efforts already in progress, or (iii) somewhere in between along this spectrum of inquiry? Please explain how the proposed *theme* may ignite new interdisciplinary, collaborative efforts to addressing the issue(s) raised and how these collaborations will extend beyond the formal duration of the theme. *(maximum 1000 characters with spaces)* |
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| Why is an interdisciplinary approach needed to make significant advances? *(maximum 1000 characters with spaces)* |
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| Describe the *theme’s* work plan. How will activities be organized during the *theme’s* formal duration? How will core team members discuss and share ideas? What will be the role, style and frequency of team meetings, workshops, seminars and other activities for sharing and ‘sparking’ of ideas within and beyond the core team? *(maximum 1000 characters with spaces)* |
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| Indicate how the wider community (the academy and beyond) will be engaged in the work. Explain how the proposed investigations will bridge sectors and disciplines, derive new understanding from that interaction, and inform the public in ways that have impact. *(maximum 1000 characters with spaces)* |
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**Core Team**

Note: Core *team* membership, i.e., those funded by *The Western Academy*, normally includes **3** *Western Fellows* and **2** *Visiting Western Fellows*. The number of *Western Academy Postdoctoral Scholars* is normally **2**.

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| Describe the local core and international team members needed for the *theme’s* work. What are the anticipated roles of each core team member? How will the best practices of equity, diversity and inclusion be invoked in development of the team?  Should your t*heme* be accepted, there will be a separate call for participation in its work. At the present time, who would you suggest for possible core team membership? *(maximum 1000 characters with spaces)* |
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| Explain how a local and international mix of core team members could facilitate significant advances that otherwise would not be likely. *(maximum 500 characters with spaces)* |
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**Why at Western?**

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| Describe the broader local expertise at Western beyond the core team that makes *The Western Academy* a suitable venue for the proposed *theme*. For example, are there other individuals not already suggested as *Western Fellows* who have connections to the proposed *theme*? How might they be engaged in its work? *(maximum 1000 characters with spaces)* |
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