



Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships

Science, Philosophy and Theology in Latin America
Ian Ramsey Centre (IRC) for Science and Religion
University of Oxford

Call for applications

Aim and summary

The Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships is a scholarship scheme which aims to support promising graduate students and early career scholars from Latin America, who wish to spend time as visiting scholars at leading universities in the United States or Europe, for up to six months duration. The scheme, developed by the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford, and funded by the John Templeton Foundation, is intended to help foster the education of Latin American early career researchers in interdisciplinary academic work, by offering grants of U\$S14,780.

Up to ten successful applicants will be expected to spend no more than six months in their proposed host University in the United States or Europe, with active participation in seminars, research group discussions, and conferences where appropriate. The second round will award four scholarships. It is expected that Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholars will become involved with existing research or academic groups in the host institutions for the duration of their scholarships. Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholars will also be expected to offer at least one presentation at their host institution, one at their home institution, and to attend the final conference of the IRC project in 2017. Finally, Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholars will be expected to submit a final report stating the research and activities carried out during the scholarship, and future plans arising from their activities.

The first round of applications awarded six Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships. You can see the successful Scholars in our website (<http://www.cyril.org/en/scholarships/scholars>). The second round of applications, offering four Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships, has as deadline for submission of all documents 15 April 2016.

Applicants' profile

The IRC expects to receive applications from Latin American graduate students, post-docs and early career scholars, based in Latin American institutions at the time of application and for the duration of the scholarship. Applicants will be expected to work on research topics at the intersection of science, philosophy and/or theology, although the specific focus of their research could be drawn from a wide range of fields, including for example, but without being limited to, biology, cosmology, epistemology, mathematics, neuroscience, philosophy, physics, psychology, religious studies, sociology, and theology.

Applicants must secure their conditional place at their proposed host institution in the United States or Europe before their application to this scholarship scheme. Applicants should contact the professors or research group leaders in the host institutions for a statement of support that also describes briefly how the applicant will spend their time.

The IRC expects the proposed host research groups to be at universities in the United States or Europe that provide the opportunity to interact with leading scholars in the research field of the candidate and, ideally, the potential for a longer-term research relationship.

Topics

Applicants are free to select research topics for their scholarships across a broad range of possibilities, and the IRC encourages creative applications. Nevertheless, it is expected that the themes will fall within the broad scope of the project as a whole and also involve interdisciplinary component. So for example, applicants may want to work on topics surrounding the origin of life, issues concerning neuroscience and its implications to the notion of the person, or cosmological developments which might relate to theological themes of creation. For a list of example questions being considered under the project, see the project's website, www.cyril.org. Favourable consideration will be given to clear, focused research topics and questions, with the potential for broader implications.

Some possible, though by no means exclusive, research questions are:

- The Origin and Concept of Life: What is natural, human, and divine life, how do we recognize life, and what do we know or could we know of the origins of life?
 - What are the merits and demerits of the most influential paradigms (e.g. thermodynamics) for answering Schrödinger's question, "What is life?"
 - Might mathematical 'life' be possible, implemented on some suitable hardware, or interchangeable between different hardware platforms?
 - Can a 'nature' be distinguished adequately from a 'machine'? Is some form of teleology required to distinguish a nature adequately from a machine?
 - Does matter have a propensity for life? Is matter necessary for any being that could be described as alive, in the broadest sense of the term?
 - Is there more than one 'tree of life' on earth and how might we test this? Are there philosophical and theological implications for more than one tree of life?
- The Brain, the Mind, and the Human Person: Are persons their brains and, if not, how can contemporary science, philosophy and theology promote a more adequate understanding?
 - What am 'I'? Am I to be identified with part of my physical being and, if so, which part? What are my boundaries, for example, can artefacts become extensions of 'me' in some limited sense?
 - Are advances in neuroscience helping to clarify the relation between the brain and the mind, and are there also growing sources of confusion regarding this relation?
 - Is the concept of free will redundant in the light of Libet-like experiments and other contemporary work in neuroscience?
 - Is there or might there be a 'theology' as well as a 'philosophy' of the brain?
 - Does the cognitive science of religion have implications for the rationality of theism, atheism, or more specific religious commitments?
- The Place of the Person in the Cosmos: Are 'persons' irreducible in the cosmos, and are persons irreducibly important?
 - Among the possible meanings of the term 'creation' by a personal God, which, if any, are most appropriate for understanding the origin of the cosmos today?
 - Does the philosophy of the person, especially in relational or second-personal terms, have relevance to understanding physical theories, e.g. quantum mechanics?
 - "You are not a beautiful or unique snowflake. You're the same decaying organic matter as everything else" (cf. film *Fight Club*: 1999). Can this claim be validated or invalidated, and, if so, how in the light of what is known today?
 - How might the investigation of the cosmos promote personal happiness, considering such fulfilment from a theological, materialistic or other perspective?
 - Can a personal theistic perspective be detrimental or beneficial for the study and motivation to study the cosmos, and ultimate questions regarding the cosmos?

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to visit the project's website for a more detailed list of possible research questions. Favourable consideration will be given to clear, focused research topics and questions, with the potential for broader implications.

Scholarship benefit

The monetary amount of each scholarship has been set at **U\$S14,780**. Scholarship funds may be used to cover the following kind of expenses: accommodation; books and supplies; personal expenses; health insurance; tuition; travel to and from the home country and host institution; visa; and travel to and from the final IRC project conference.

The IRC has up to \$5,000 additional funds to cover up to four scholars with special needs, such as additional family commitments. A request for additional funds should be explicitly mentioned in the application.

Application instructions

Scholars will be chosen from applicants in an open competition across Latin America administered by the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford.

Letters of Inquiry (a simple letter stating an applicant's intent to apply) are welcome and encouraged to be sent no later than **15 February 2016**.

All final application materials, including letters of recommendation, and letters of support from home and host institutions, must be received no later than **15 April 2016**. Applicants are required to submit, in English, Spanish or Portuguese, the following documents:

- A complete application form, including a summary of no more than 300 words and a statement of no more than 1000 words specifying their chosen host institution, describing the proposed research (including either a hypotheses if it is a science project, or a summary of the main idea or argument if the project is more philosophical or theological in nature), activities to be carried out during the scholarship duration and plans for publication, and stating how the scholarship will enhance their future academic career plans (if your application is either in Spanish or Portuguese, the 300 word summary should be submitted in English)
- A complete curriculum vitae
- One relevant published or unpublished paper, of no more than 8,000 words
- One letter from their home institutions stating support for the application
- One letter from their host institution stating the applicant has a place in it as long as funding is available to cover expenses, and that he/she will be joining a research group or be working with a professor for the duration of the scholarship
- Two reference letters

Applicants should request two referees to send their references not later than the deadline. Referees should include in their recommendation letters comments on the applicant's academic achievements so far, their prospective academic career, and the importance of the scholarship to the applicant's work.

For the first round of application, all materials should be submitted via email to Dr Ignacio Silva at latin.america@theology.ox.ac.uk stating in the subject line: "Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships - Application".

The IRC will announce the results of the applications by **15 May 2016**.

Should you require further information about the application process, please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions below. If your question is not answered, please contact Dr Silva.

Selection criteria

Applications will be judged by IRC members at Oxford, assisted by two external assessors, from Europe and the United States, according to the following criteria:

- applicant's academic achievement and promise;
- quality and opportunities provided by the host institution;
- potential of the proposed research for engagement with contemporary scientific developments, linked to philosophical and theological perspectives;
- quality of planning of the proposed research and study;
- prospects for dialogue across disciplines, institutions, and confessions;
- prospects for effective academic outputs and outcomes.

The assessment will also look favourably on applicants that have demonstrable potential for longer-term success that will maximise the benefit of investment. This potential will be assessed principally by the integration of the scholarships within longer-term plans for the personal development of applicants, and broader prospects for their home institutions.

Applicants should explain how they meet these criteria in their applications.

Scholars' obligations

The Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholars will be required to:

- prepare a brief autobiographical statement in English and Spanish/Portuguese for the project website;
- offer at least one presentation at their host institution to the relevant research group;
- offer at least one presentation at their home institutions to their research group and the broader academic university community;
- attend the 2017 final conference of the IRC's project;
- submit a half-term report by the third month of the scholarship;
- submit a final report by the second month after the completion of the scholarship;
- Doctoral students, post-docs and early career scholars are expected to complete a draft of a paper to be submitted for publication soon after the grant.

Milestones of the application process

1. Applicant must secure a conditional place at a the proposed host institution in the United States or Europe
2. Applicant must prepare and request documents for application
3. Applicant must submit documents before deadline: 15 April 2016
4. IRC-Oxford assesses applications
5. IRC-Oxford announces successful applications: 15 May 2016
6. Applicant holds the Scholarship for up to six months, anytime between July 2016 and March 2017

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can apply?

Latin American graduate students, post-docs and early career scholars, based in Latin American institutions at the time of application and for the duration of the Scholarship.

2. Can I apply if I am a Latin American not based in Latin America?

The Scheme is intended to foster and promote collaboration between Latin American scholars based in Latin America and institutions outside of this region. Hence, only those based in Latin America can apply to this scheme.

3. What is a 'host institution'?

A 'host institution' is the University that will receive you as an Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholar, i.e. any university in the United States or Europe which is willing to offer a place as a visiting scholar for the duration of the scholarship.

4. Which institutions could receive me as an Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholar?

The IRC expects that applicants will contact and apply to leading, world renowned universities in the United States or Europe. Some examples of these could be, but are not limited to, Notre Dame University, Princeton University, Harvard, Stanford, Yale University, Duke University, Cambridge University, University of Oxford, London School of Economics, University College London, Universidad de Navarra, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Universidad de Salamanca, Università Gregoriana, KU Leuven, VU University Amsterdam, among many others.

5. Can my host institution be elsewhere than in the United States and Europe?

Applications with host institutions not in the United States or in Europe will be considered on an individual basis. The main criterion is that the host institution should not be in Latin America.

6. Can I apply to the Ian Ramsey Centre to be my host institution?

The Ian Ramsey Centre, University of Oxford, could act as host institution, and we expect that some applications will be considered for this. However, it is expected that the majority of Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholars will be based in other institutions.

7. Can I have a 'visiting student' status at my host institution?

Yes. The official status at the host institutions can be 'visiting scholar', 'visiting student' or some other title, according to the academic stage of the applicant, and the policies of the particular host. The kind of work envisaged, however, must be suitable for advanced students or early career researchers and involve engagement with current research issues.

8. Can I be an Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholar for longer than six months?

The Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships are for up to six months only. You may wish to extend your stay at your host institution at your own expense, but you will no longer be an Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholar for the additional period.

9. What is a 'home institution'?

A 'home institution' is the University where the Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholar comes from, i.e. the institution where the applicant is normally based as a graduate student or early-career scholar.

10. When is the deadline?

*The deadline for this second round of applications is **15 April 2016**.*

11. Who can write my reference letters?

Reference letters should be requested from former professors, or anyone who has had an academic relation to the applicant. Letters from relatives, friends, or professional, non-academic referees will not be accepted.

12. Can I submit two applications in the same round?

Each applicant can submit one application only per round to the scheme.

13. Can I apply in the second round to continue my Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholarship?

Since the scheme is intended to foster and promote as many Latin American scholars as possible, successful applicants in the first round will not be eligible for the second round.

14. If I am not successful in the first round, can I submit a new application in the second round?

Yes. First-round, unsuccessful applicants are welcome to re-apply in the second round.

15. Can I apply if I have participated in other activities of the IRC project?

Yes. There are no restrictions for participation in as many activities of the IRC project.

16. Which topics are acceptable?

Oxford Templeton Latin American Scholars are expected to work on topics related to the IRC project's themes, involving interdisciplinary engagement between the sciences, philosophy and theology. So for example, you may want to work on topics surrounding the origin of life, issues concerning neuroscience and its implications to the notion of the person, or cosmological developments which might relate to theological themes of creation. These are broad, guiding, topics, and you should prepare a much more concise research plan. Projects focusing on fine-tuning, theistic evolution and the like are welcome, although the IRC will not consider projects on creationism and/or intelligent design.

17. When do I get paid?

Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships will be disbursed in two stages, at the beginning of the duration of the visit and half-way to the end, upon reception of a short report of research and activities.

18. Can I hold this Scholarship with other scholarship scheme?

Yes, you may hold the Oxford Templeton Latin America Scholarships with another scholarship scheme as long as you can demonstrate the necessity for doing so.

19. Where can I download the application form?

*The scholarship application form can be found at the project's website:
<http://www.cyral.org/en/scholarships/>.*