

CfAA Fellowships

Work with the assuring autonomy community to advance the safe adoption, deployment and lifelong operation of autonomous systems.

Introduction

The Centre for Assuring Autonomy (CfAA), established in January 2024, builds on the pioneering work of the Assuring Autonomy International Programme (AAIP) to develop frameworks for the assurance of AI and autonomous systems. The Centre is a £10m partnership between Lloyd's Register Foundation and the University of York. Our focus is on research and innovation focusing on the through-life safety of autonomy and AI/ML, human-AI teaming, and the governance of such systems. We are influential in the areas of regulation, software engineering, safety engineering, and software safety, supporting industry and regulators involved in the adoption and use of our assurance frameworks and getting feedback to improve those frameworks.

We work across disciplines, technologies, and sectors to develop expert guidance, deliver bespoke training, and take on real-world challenges with industry partners that can be used to give all stakeholders confidence in the safety of autonomous systems.

Our expert, peer-reviewed guidance on assuring the safety of autonomous systems is publicly available, non-commercial, and not bound to any notified body or certification agency although it influences the work of some of these organisations. This means that we are impartial and trustworthy partners for all our collaborators, including regulators and policy-makers.

Fellowships

Through our Fellowship scheme, we are inviting individuals to spend time collaborating with our world-leading researchers at the Centre for Assuring Autonomy in York: learning about the challenging task of applying safety engineering principles to autonomous systems, getting up to speed on the latest thinking in safe autonomy and safe AI, gaining insights from our research and industry-agnostic projects, and learning about the ethical and legal challenges of assuring safety. In return, Fellows will contribute their own knowledge and insights from policy, regulation and industry, helping us to make a difference to the safe adoption, deployment and lifelong operation of these systems.

We need help to ensure that our research concepts and industry guidance reach the right audiences, that they are fit for purpose, that we really understand and address the issues which need urgent attention and that we communicate effectively to achieve this. We want to stimulate new opportunities to work with Fellows for the long term.

Each Fellowship will be different, and previous Fellows have often used them as a catalyst to achieve meaningful change in their organisations. We hope that Fellows will contribute in one or more of the following areas:

- Reviewing existing regulations and standards
- Matching policy questions with research knowledge
- Co-authoring a briefing paper
- Liaising with policy advisors
- Assembling workshops, meetings or events
- Co-creating a research or project proposal
- Tailoring a bespoke CPD programme
- Creating and collating resources to be used by their employers
- Drafting guidance and information
- Creating resources to help manufacturers and others to meet their regulatory requirements for autonomous systems

Eligibility & support available

We invite applications from individuals involved in policy, regulation, certification, approval, development or deployment of autonomous systems and AI/ML in safety-critical sectors (e.g. health, transport including aerospace, automotive and maritime). Candidates should be employed by non-academic organisations, and may be based anywhere in the world.

4 Fellowships per annum may be awarded. A maximum of £10,000 per Fellowship is available to cover expenses, although it is not compulsory to claim any financial support if this would cause a potential conflict of interest. Funds can be used to pay for: reasonable travel costs, accommodation and subsistence expenses for Fellows to take up a residency of up to 4 weeks at the University of York, either as a single period or a series of shorter visits where this is more practical and economical. The maximum time for claiming expenses is 3 years from the start date of the Fellowship. You may also choose a hybrid arrangement.

Funds may not be used to pay for salary or overhead costs and should normally be claimed by the Fellow, not their employer or any other party. Reasonable expenses to host, present at or attend a conference or collaborative event may be included if appropriate, and with appropriate acknowledgement.

Fellows are expected to start their residency at the University of York within three months of acceptance of the Fellowship and must have agreement on dates from their employer and from the CfAA before arranging any travel. Fellows will be supported to arrange travel and accommodation and will obtain reimbursement by submitting expense claims to the University of York.

Applications

We ask all prospective applicants to contact a member of the Centre's team to discuss their interest in applying, before submitting an application. We can also help by recommending the most appropriate collaborator(s) at York if the applicant does not already know who would be best-placed, and we can assist in refining the scope of the Fellowship.

The applicant should submit a single pdf file, maximum length of four A4 sides of single-spaced 11pt Arial text. The PDF file must contain the following sections:

- Applicant details: name, position, organisation, address, email address and telephone number
- Two page CV of the applicant
- Case for support covering: the aims of the Fellowship and the benefits to the applicant and to the Centre for Assuring Autonomy
- Total budget requested and justification of costs (e.g. £xx for economy flights, additional travel, visas, accommodation, subsistence (calculated on a per diem basis – the Centre Administrator can provide guidance on accommodation costs in York if required))
- Proposed dates

Assessment criteria

- Applications are assessed by the Centre's Executive Group, who meet regularly. Outcomes will normally be communicated to applicants within one month. Proposals are assessed against the following criteria:
 - Applicant profile
 - Proposed contribution to the Centre
 - Impact of the proposed activities

Submission

Applications may be submitted at any time as a single PDF file of no more than four pages (see above). This should be emailed to (assuring-autonomy@york.ac.uk).