WORLD MARITIME UNIVERSITY

PhD Fellowship Opportunity

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2026

AFRICAN SEAFARERS & THE BLUE ECONOMY



African Seafarers and the Blue Economy

Understanding and Realizing Africa's Seafaring Potential



The World Maritime University (WMU) invites applications for a PhD fellowship supported by Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF) within the WMU–LRF Africa Programme. The research will examine how countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can develop seafaring as a source of skilled employment and economic opportunity within the Blue Economy. It will investigate the educational, institutional and labour market conditions that shape access to seafaring careers and identify how these conditions can be improved. Applicants may focus on the preparation of seafarers through education and training, their access to employment, or the relationship between the two.

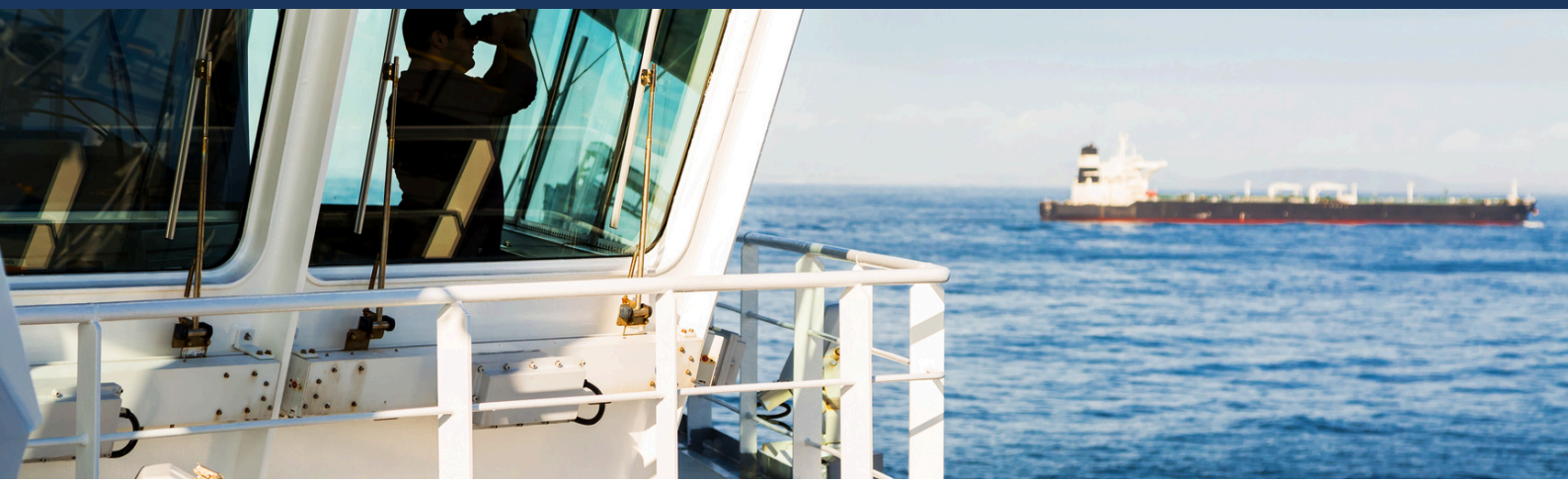
About the WMU-LRF Africa Programme

WMU and Lloyd's Register Foundation have established a strategic partnership to advance maritime safety, strengthen the use of evidence in decision-making, and support maritime capability development. The Africa Programme is a pillar of this partnership, supporting cooperation among maritime education and training (MET) institutions, maritime administrations and industry partners across Africa.

The Programme addresses practical obstacles to developing Africa's seafaring workforce, including the relevance of curricula to industry needs, the capabilities of teaching staff, access to training facilities and sea-time placements, and the recognition of qualifications. It seeks to help MET institutions, maritime administrations and employers identify these obstacles together and develop workable responses through joint initiatives and exchanges of expertise.

A central initiative is the development of an African Maritime Education and Training Forum to support this cooperation. WMU's role is to facilitate dialogue, provide research and technical expertise, and support initiatives led by African partners. Research within the Programme will help establish which measures improve training and employment outcomes, for whom, and under what conditions.

The PhD Fellowship

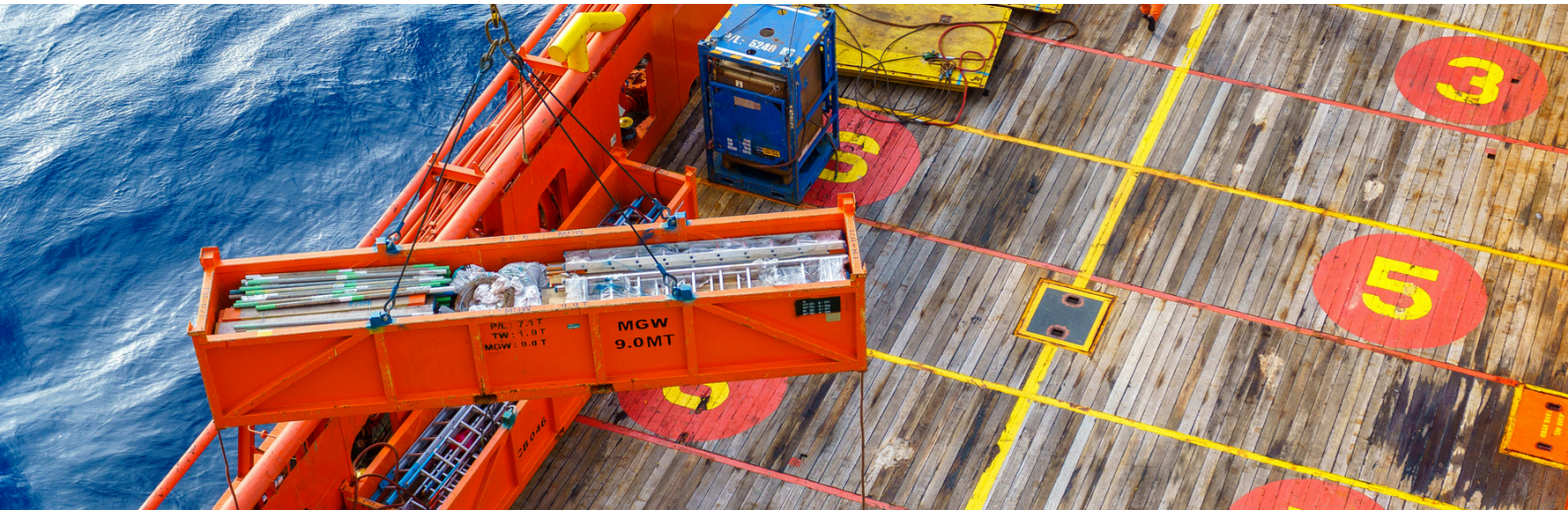


The fellowship will support an original doctoral project that explains how selected barriers to the development and employment of African seafarers arise and assesses ways to address them. The project should produce findings that can inform decisions by MET institutions, maritime administrations or employers.

Applicants may approach this subject primarily through MET or through the broader labour market for African seafarers. Proposals connecting these perspectives are also welcome, provided that they define a coherent and feasible doctoral project.

The research should examine the conditions that enable or constrain seafaring careers in Africa and identify how relevant institutions, policies and industry practices can improve opportunities. It should consider how increased participation can translate into decent employment, professional development and economic benefits for African countries and communities.

Applicants are expected to formulate original research questions, demonstrate their academic significance, and propose appropriate methods. A project may focus on selected countries, institutions, groups of seafarers or labour market relationships. Candidates are not expected to cover the entire African continent or all the research directions outlined below. The focus of this work is Sub-Saharan Africa.



Indicative Research Directions



1 MET and pathways into employment

Research in this area could examine how African MET systems prepare seafarers for employment and how education and training can better support the realization of Africa's seafaring potential.

Possible directions include:

- The relationship between MET provision, employer requirements and graduates' employment outcomes.
- Institutional capabilities, faculty development and educational practices that influence the quality and relevance of MET.
- Access to practical training, sea-time placements and the transition from education to professional certification and employment.
- The role of qualification recognition, certification systems and confidence in training standards in facilitating international employment.
- Cooperation among MET institutions, maritime administrations and industry, including the effectiveness of partnerships and shared resources.
- The implications of decarbonization and digitalization for training needs, educational opportunities and the competitiveness of African seafarers.
- Barriers to participation and progression in MET and seafaring careers, including those experienced by women and underrepresented groups.

2 Labour markets and opportunities for African seafarers

Research in this area could examine the factors shaping the participation of African seafarers in regional and international labour markets and the measures that could expand sustainable employment opportunities.

Possible directions include:

- The current participation of African seafarers in maritime labour markets and the evidence needed to assess future opportunities.
- Employer demand, recruitment practices and the factors influencing the selection and employment of African seafarers.
- Institutional, regulatory and economic barriers to labour market access, including recognition of qualifications and access to recruitment networks.
- The role of maritime administrations, employers, crewing agencies, professional organizations and international partnerships in facilitating employment of African seafarers.
- Career progression, retention, working conditions and the distribution of opportunities among different groups of African seafarers.
- The contribution of seafaring employment to livelihoods, skills development and economic activity in African countries.
- Policy measures and cooperative arrangements that can strengthen Africa's participation in maritime labour markets and its contribution to the Blue Economy.

These directions are indicative. Applicants are encouraged to propose their own research questions within the fellowship's overall focus.

Research Methods and Expected Outputs

Qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods proposals are welcome. Methods should be appropriate to the research question and may include comparative case studies, interviews, surveys, institutional and policy analysis, labour market analysis, or the evaluation of educational and partnership initiatives.

The principal academic outputs will be a doctoral thesis and peer-reviewed publications. Depending on the project, the research may also generate policy recommendations, analytical reports, datasets or practical guidance relevant to African MET institutions, maritime administrations and industry.

The successful candidate will be expected to communicate findings to both academic and practitioner audiences and contribute evidence that can inform the WMU–LRF Africa Programme.

Research Setting and Programme Participation

The Fellow will conduct their research within the WMU–LRF Africa Programme and contribute to relevant programme activities. One opportunity for empirical research is provided by the Future-Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa Project, implemented by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and funded by the European Union. Its educational component supports maritime education and training for green and digital shipping in Sub-Saharan Africa.

WMU's participation in this project provides opportunities to engage with partner institutions, collect data and learn from practical experience in areas such as training needs assessment, curriculum development, faculty development, digital learning and industry cooperation. The Fellow will provide research-related support to relevant activities, which may include background research, data collection and analysis, engagement with partner institutions, and the preparation and documentation of workshops or pilot activities. These contributions will be agreed in conjunction with the doctoral research plan and organized to support satisfactory academic progress.

The doctoral project may draw on FRS activities alongside other data sources, partnerships and initiatives relevant to its research question.

Fellowship Conditions and Supervision

The successful applicant will be based at WMU in Malmö, Sweden, and is required to reside in Malmö and work on site for the duration of the programme, with travel for approved research and programme activities as appropriate. **The fellowship cannot be held remotely**. The fellowship:

- Covers tuition fees.
- Provides a monthly stipend of approximately SEK 22,000 to cover living and related expenses. At each progression seminar, the stipend will be reviewed for an upward adjustment in light of the Fellow's progress and performance and the Programme's funding position.
- Is awarded for a maximum period of four years from the date of registration, subject to satisfactory annual progress.
- May provide support for research-related travel, conference attendance, open-access publication fees and research software, subject to approval.

The Fellow will undertake their work within the WMU–LRF Africa Programme and report to the Africa Programme Officer (Strategic Initiatives) regarding programme activities and their contribution to the Programme. Academic supervision will be led by WMU's Vice-President (Strategic Initiatives) and Professor, in collaboration with appropriate WMU faculty members and in accordance with WMU's PhD regulations.

Eligibility and Qualification



Preference will be given to applicants originating from Sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting the regional focus of the FRS project and the associated opportunities for empirical research. Applicants' current country of residence does not determine eligibility.

Applicants should have completed a Master's degree with a dissertation in:

- Maritime education and training;
- Political or social sciences;
- Maritime affairs; or
- Another discipline relevant to the proposed research.

Applicants should demonstrate:

- The ability to develop and undertake an original doctoral research project.
- Strong academic writing and analytical skills.
- Knowledge of research methods appropriate to their proposed study.
- An interest in the development of Africa's maritime sector and the contribution of seafarers to the Blue Economy.
- The ability to work with stakeholders from different institutional and cultural settings.

Experience in the maritime industry or MET will be an advantage.
WMU seeks to increase the participation of women at all levels. Qualified female applicants are particularly encouraged to apply.

English Language Requirements
Proficiency in English is required. Applicants must provide evidence of competence in English in accordance with WMU's doctoral admission requirements. As set out in the fellowship application framework, accepted evidence includes:

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): 96 or above in the internet-based test, or 590 or above in the paper-based test.
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS): overall band 7.0 or above.
- Cambridge Proficiency Examination: grade A or B.
- GCE O-level or equivalent: a good pass grade.

Further Information
Questions regarding the fellowship and its research focus may be directed to Ms Dofilia Kaloia, Africa Programme Officer (Strategic Initiatives) at dok@wmu.se. Applicants are welcome to make informal contact before applying.

How to apply



Applicants must apply through WMU's online application portal, accessible from the PhD in Maritime Affairs programme page (https://www.wmu.se/programmes/phd-in-maritime-affairs).

The following documents must be submitted:

- Completed WMU PhD Application Form.
- Completed WMU PhD Research Proposal.
- A one-page motivational letter identifying the application as "WMU–LRF Africa Programme PhD Fellowship 2026".
- An updated curriculum vitae.
- Certified copies of degree certificates and academic transcripts.
- Evidence of English language proficiency.
- A copy of the passport data page for internal administrative records.

Applicants must also arrange for two academic referees to send reference letters directly to the Doctoral Office at phd@wmu.se, using the subject line: **WMU–LRF Africa Programme PhD Fellowship 2026**

The research proposal should identify original research questions and explain how they relate to African seafarers and the Blue Economy, with a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. It should indicate whether the main emphasis is on MET, labour market issues, or a clearly defined combination of these perspectives.

The proposal should set out the project's academic contribution, proposed methods, geographical or institutional scope, potential data sources and feasibility within the fellowship period. Where relevant, applicants may indicate how activities within the Africa Programme, including FRS, could provide an empirical setting for their research. The quality of the research proposal is a central consideration in the selection process and will inform the identification of appropriate additional supervisors.

Application Review and Selection
The call will remain open until a suitable candidate has been selected. The first review of applications will take place four weeks after publication of this call. Applications received thereafter will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the fellowship is filled. Applicants are encouraged to submit their complete applications within the initial four-week period.

Applications will be considered by WMU's Doctoral Admissions Board, with input from the WMU–LRF Africa Programme and LRF. Selection will take account of the research proposal, academic qualifications, relevant experience and alignment with the fellowship's objectives.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for the next stage, which may include an online interview.

Desired start date: No later than 1 April 2027

WMU WORLD MARITIME UNIVERSITY

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The World Maritime University was established in 1983 within the framework of the International Maritime Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations.

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION