



## **THOMAS J. ALEXANDER FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME**

### **Introduction**

The OECD Directorate of Education is launching a fellowship programme in memory of former director Thomas J. Alexander. The fellowship programme aims to strengthen the evidence base on education, particularly in emerging economies, build research capacity in education, and reinforce the links between research, policy, and practice in education. As such, the fellowships will be open to exceptional individuals who have the quantitative research skills to make use of the OECD's comprehensive data on the subject, who have shown the potential for transformational impact in their domain, and who share a commitment to providing more people with better educational opportunities. The programme is funded by the Open Society Foundations.

### **The fellowship programme**

This programme seeks to develop and support quality and equity in education, particularly in emerging economies, by helping to develop or reinforce capacity for quantitative research and analysis in response to the growing need for evidence-based analysis related to education policy and practice; strengthening the use of such evidence in policy making; and supporting education leaders in altering their practice to improve student learning.

Recipients of a Thomas J. Alexander Fellowship will have an opportunity to join one of the world's leading teams in this field at OECD headquarters in Paris to conduct research and analysis of OECD data, including but not limited to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Just as the Fellows will be learning from their time at the OECD, and from one another, Fellows will also be able to participate in and influence the work of OECD colleagues. The Fellowship will not only sharpen the skills of individual participants, it will also allow them to share their experiences and knowledge from their home country or region with the OECD and a broader community of education researchers, practitioners and leaders. In this way, the links between research, policy, and practice will be strengthened.

Fellowships will provide funding for research and networking for one year, typically six months of which will be spent at OECD headquarters. The exact duration of the award and timing of the assignment at the OECD will depend on the work proposed. Fellowships will be timed so that there will be an overlap between an outgoing Fellow and an incoming one, with the aim of building networks among the Fellows themselves.

There are no nationality restrictions, but individuals from emerging and developing economies are encouraged to apply.

Calls for proposals will be issued semi-annually and published through OECD networks and press centres. All applicants will apply online and the process for judging merit and suitability will be transparent. Applicants will be required to provide references to support their application, and will also be subject to an initial probationary period, during which their suitability for the Fellowship will be assessed. Fellows will be expected to produce a paper, publication or report of publishable quality.



## The candidates

The Thomas J. Alexander Fellowship Programme will support individuals who have a strong policy orientation, experience with quantitative research methods, and who seek to build on rigorous scientific research and insights from practice to inform policy makers, students, parents, teachers and other education stakeholders. A successful proposal will explain the policy areas of interest, spell out the policy questions to be addressed, and indicate the research methods to be employed. It will also explain why OECD data (e.g. from PISA, TALIS, PIAAC, etc.) are particularly well-suited to address those questions. As *impact* is one of the keywords of the programme, a successful application will contain a proposal for how the Fellow's work will benefit the broader community, particularly quality and equity in his or her country's education system.

The Fellowships are intended for individuals working at research institutions, governmental agencies (e.g. research centres, ministries) or professional organisations. Candidates with a Ph.D., experience with quantitative research methods and the use of large-scale surveys, and whose work has been published in scientific journals are strongly encouraged to apply. A commitment to engage with diverse audiences, including policy makers, teachers and educators, is also sought. Applicants from a variety of disciplines, including education, sociology, economics, political science, psychology, demography, statistics, and psychometrics are welcome.

Proposals will be judged based on their originality and promise, their relevance to policy, and their scientific rigour, regardless of the field of study or specific technical approach.

## What does the OECD offer fellows?

The mission of the OECD is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. To this end, the OECD provides a forum in which countries work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. Its analyses and recommendations are independent and evidence-based. The OECD encourages debate and a shared understanding of critical global issues. It dares to challenge conventional wisdom, identifies and addresses emerging and long-term priorities for building a fairer, cleaner world, and demonstrates the great potential of research to underpin change. Its credibility is built on trust, integrity and transparency. Findings and policy recommendations can be found in the hundreds of publications issued each year by the OECD; these include books, reports, statistics, working papers and other reference materials.

The goal of the OECD's Directorate for Education is to help create education and training systems that contribute to social mobility and economic strength, and that provide all individuals with the opportunities to make the most of their talents at every stage of life. The impact of the Directorate's work, most notably PISA, is felt across countries, and is making a significant contribution to long-lasting policy change. This contribution takes a number of forms, including providing support for changes in policy priorities, and providing an evidence base, and/or the means to build one, that will guide the development and implementation of policy reforms and changes.

The Directorate for Education is composed of some 120 individuals from nearly 30 countries who have a wide range of expertise and academic and professional experience. Its research and analysis work covers pre-school and school, higher education and adult learning, the nexus of education, the economy and society, and research and knowledge management.



### **Thomas J. Alexander**

Mr. Alexander was the Director of the OECD's Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Directorate from 1989 to 2000. His inspirational leadership helped to place the OECD at the forefront of international work on education and social affairs. Among his many accomplishments, he steered the launch of PISA, which he conceived as a tool for governments to build relevant skills for all children and to turn those skills into better social and economic outcomes.

Just as Mr. Alexander was a pioneer in integrating the various views and perspectives of different sectors of government and fields of expertise into a coherent vision for policy, the Thomas J. Alexander Fellowships seek to support those individuals in emerging economies who are poised to help shape the research, policy, and practice of education in their countries, with the goal of improving the economic and social well-being of all citizens.