

Sharing the sky

Skills development using a global robotic telescope network for uplifting the East African astronomical research community (Apply by 28 Mar 2025)

Be part of a skills development programme coming with the opportunity to carry out observations with the Las Cumbres Observatory (LCO) global robotic telescope network, open to advanced undergraduate students in astronomy/astrophysics or a related discipline, postgraduate students, early-career researchers, as well as senior astronomers, who are based in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, or Rwanda. You will be guided through a two-year experience that involves a series of four face-to-face training workshops, each of them hosted in one of the participating countries in turn. Travel expenses for attending these workshops, as well as accommodation and meal costs will be fully covered.

The LCO global telescope network is the world-leading facility for observing astronomical transient events, combining the features of fast response, uninterrupted long-term monitoring, and full-sky coverage. We will be getting astronomy research communities in East Africa ready for the unprecedented flood of alerts on transients of up to 10,000,000 per night from the LSST survey, expected from early 2026. Types of transients that are currently rare will become plentiful, and types of rarer transients that so far have not been found at all are likely to emerge.

Pairing facility access with training workshops and community building, our programme aims at providing pathways towards African leadership in larger international projects, success in internationally competitive facility proposals, and building inter-African collaborations.

The design of the workshops supports the gradual build-up of relevant skills, as well as community building and cross-fertilisation of ideas. Our goal is your success. These workshops will cover working with robotic telescopes, observational and statistical techniques, campaign design and management, as well as wider skills like academic writing, presentation skills, and preparing successful competitive research facility proposals and grant applications.

The skills gained can be directly applied in practice through research projects with the LCO global telescope network. We are particularly keen to support small projects that explore new paths and help further developing skills, while also providing the opportunity for larger projects likely to deliver results that will significantly raise the profile of the researcher, or ultimately build substantial leadership roles.

The first training workshop will be held in Nairobi (Kenya) on 27/28 May 2025, and we aim to hold the subsequent ones in December 2025, May/June 2026, and December 2026. You would be expected to participate in all of these workshops and apply your skills with a research project over the full duration of two years.

The “Sharing the Sky” programme is funded by the UK’s Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and managed by the University of St Andrews (Scotland, UK) in collaboration with national coordinators for Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, or Rwanda.

For taking part, please complete the application form and send it to the respective national coordinator:

Kenya: Prof Paul Baki (Technical University of Kenya), paulbaki@tukenya.ac.ke

Uganda: Dr Edward Jurua (Mbarara University of Science and Technology), ejurua@must.ac.ug

Tanzania: Dr Noorali Jiwaji (Open University of Tanzania), ntjiwaji@yahoo.com

Rwanda: Prof Pheneas Nkundabakura (University of Rwanda), p.nkundabakura@ur.ac.rw

For general questions, please contact

Dr Martin Dominik (University of St Andrews), md35@st-andrews.ac.uk

Application form:



<https://bit.ly/3D4XFAk>



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