



Access to the Central Laser Facility – High Power Lasers Beam time applications for the period September 2026 – April 2027

Dear Colleagues,

We invite proposals for access to Gemini TA3 target areas for the period September 2025 – April 2026. The Vulcan laser facility is undergoing a major upgrade of its capabilities as part of the Vulcan 20-20 project and there will be no access offered to Vulcan.

The deadline for submissions is Friday, 13th February 2026 at 12pm (noon).

However, we would like to advise you that the level of operation that the CLF will be able to undertake in late 2026 and early 2027 is unclear at present due to potential funding constraints. This may result in a reduced operating schedule in the second half of next year, and the potential cancellation of the next proposal call in mid/late 2026.

We are doing all we can to maximise operations in the 26/27 year. We will continue to update the community with information on the next 12 months of CLF operations as this becomes clearer.

Please contact the User Office (clf@stfc.ac.uk) or the Panel Co-ordinator, David Carroll (david.carroll@stfc.ac.uk), if you have any difficulty during the submission process.

Further Details and Contacts

Please find attached the specification of the target area. Experimental slots of 5 weeks duration are available in Gemini TA3, although both shorter and longer experiments can be accepted.

1 slot for Gemini TA3 in this round is available for EU access and is funded through Laserlab-Europe. All other access in this round is funded by STFC, and these non-Laserlab-Europe proposals must have at least one co-investigator who is a permanent member of staff at a UK academic institution.

Further technical specifications for the facility can be found at:

<https://www.clf.stfc.ac.uk/Pages/The-Astra-Gemini-Facility.aspx>

In order to facilitate more efficient and cost-effective experiments in the CLF, we are closely managing the number of personnel present during experiments. We would also recommend that experimenters are present for a minimum of at least two weeks to become familiar with operations and experiments. If your proposal is scheduled, CLF link scientists will contact you well in advance to facilitate the efficient organisation and planning of your campaign and the booking of all travel and accommodation. We thank you for your co-operation.

Please be aware that a publication history from your previous experiments at the CLF will be available for the facility access panel. Once you submit a proposal, the CLF user office will contact you for those publications that are not on our records, which arise from your previous experiments here as a PI or Co-I.

We encourage you to contact an appropriate staff member to discuss your requirements (laser configuration/target area requests etc.) prior to submission. In particular, any non-standard configurations or technical requirements should be discussed with the appropriate facility staff (see below) and all target requirements should be discussed with target fabrication prior to submission. To enable us to provide a technical feedback to the access panel, please make sure that you provide as many experimental details as possible in the proposals.

Contacts:

Gemini Target Areas: dan.symes@stfc.ac.uk 01235 778341

Gemini Laser: steve.hawkes@stfc.ac.uk 01235 446810

Target Fabrication: christopher.spindloe@stfc.ac.uk 01235 446357

Instructions for submitting proposals

All proposals should be submitted electronically at the following website;

<http://proposal.isis.rl.ac.uk/home/>

If you have not used the CLF online proposal system before then you will need to register by clicking on the New Facility User button and then use your e-mail address as the Login Identifier. It is important that you provide full and accurate address details to facilitate future communications with yourself and your co-investigators. If you have already registered then please check and update your information as necessary. On the home page enter the relevant facility and then create your new proposal following the on-line instructions and finally upload your **science case of up to 3 pages**.

Guidance on using the proposal submission system can be found at the following website:

<https://www.clf.stfc.ac.uk/Pages/Proposal-System.aspx>

For access to the Gemini facility of the CLF we require the completion of the attached technical document, to provide the facility with sufficient detail to assess the implementation of the experiment if scheduled. This document does not get passed to the facility access panel, and will form the first stage layouts and details to expedite the experimental planning processes should your experiment be scheduled. This should be submitted to the website alongside your science case.

Instructions for submitting EU Proposals

To submit a proposal follow **all** of these steps in order:

1. Use the CLF online proposal system (<http://proposal.isis.rl.ac.uk/home/>) as above. At step #2 select “YES” to the question on if you are applying for access through Lasers4EU. Applications require a science case of up to 3 pages.
2. Download a PDF copy of your application.
3. Use the Laserlab Europe online proposal system (<https://apply.laserlab-europe.eu/>) to submit your application. At the last step, attach the PDF copy of your proposal produced by the CLF proposal system.

Eligibility Criteria

For all general access proposals to Gemini there must be at least one co-investigator who is a permanent member of staff at a UK academic institution. Post-doctoral researchers may also submit proposals as the Principal Investigator; however, they must have the full support of their research group, with a permanent member of UK-based academic staff as a co-investigator. Unfortunately, we cannot accept proposals from PhD students. Laserlab Europe proposals do not require a co-investigator from a UK academic institution.

Review criteria

Applications for time on Gemini are reviewed and prioritised by the Facility Access Panel.

Your proposal will be assessed with the following criteria:

- Absolute pre-requisite, without which an application will not be recommended for funding:
 - Scientific excellence: specific objectives of the project.
 - International competitiveness.
 - Strategic value within the Vulcan and Gemini programme.
- Supporting evidence which increases the confidence in a successful outcome:
 - Productivity of investigators.
 - Quality of leadership and management.
 - Suitability of institution and group.
- Additional criteria including: strategic alignment to RCUK areas (e.g. grant supported), potential for economic impact, training, facility development and impact plan.

Dr. David Carroll
High Power Lasers Access Panel Coordinator
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