

List of student internships offered by newcleo

-academic year-

2025–2026

September 4, 2025

Preface

This document contains the internship offers supported by *newcleo*. Each offer contains the specifications and modalities for the application and execution of the internship work.

Please submit your CV and motivation letter to the contact person indicated in the internship offer.

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About *newcleo*

Privately funded and headquartered in London, *newcleo* was launched in 2021 – and since raised a total of EUR 400m – to be an innovator in the field of nuclear energy. Its mission is to generate safe, clean, economic and practically inexhaustible energy for the world, through a radically innovative combination of existing, accessible technologies.

With visionary co-founders, *newcleo* capitalises on thirty years of R&D activity in metal-cooled fast reactors and liquid-lead cooling systems, and its senior management and advisory team can boast hundreds of years in cumulative hands-on experience.

Counting on around 800 highly skilled employees across Europe, *newcleo* has business, scientific, operations and industrial manufacturing capabilities in a vertically integrated model designed to deliver its ambitious timeline for its plan-to-market.

newcleo's technology, mostly comprising a novel approach to already qualified solutions, addresses equally well the three challenges affecting the nuclear industry to date:

- **Waste:** fast reactors are capable of efficient “burning” (i.e., fission) of depleted uranium, plutonium and minor actinides. When operated with mixed-oxide (MOX) fuel generated from reprocessed nuclear waste, *newcleo*'s reactors not only ensure sustainability by closing the fuel cycle, but can also boost energy independence;
- **Safety:** lead-cooled reactors operate at atmospheric pressure. The properties of lead (thermal capacity and conductivity, boiling point, chemically inert, low neutron activation, shielding properties) together with *newcleo*'s passive safety systems ensure very high levels of safety;
- **Cost:** *newcleo*'s reactor design has been optimised over the last 20 years leading to the concept of an ultra-compact and transportable 200MWe module with improvements in energy density compared to other technologies. Costs are kept low by means of simplicity, compactness, modularity, atmospheric pressure operation and elevated output temperature.

newcleo is also working to significantly invest in MOX fuel manufacturing in developed countries, extracting energy from the current nuclear industry by-products.

newcleo is ready to develop a new, sustainable, and completely safe way of generating nuclear energy that will help humanity reach zero emissions and mitigate global warming.

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Upgrade of the Python package lbh15 with properties of irradiated heavy liquid metals used in nuclear fast reactors

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July 14, 2025

– Internship proposal –
(ID No. 1001776)

Keywords — LMFR, irradiated liquid-metal properties, Python

Topics — Radioactive nuclides volatility, confinement and interaction with liquid metals

Location newcleo S.p.A., Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date First or second quarter of 2024

Duration 4–5 months

Context

Chemical control of the primary coolant in liquid-metal nuclear reactors is of crucial importance during plant operation, preventing alteration or degradation of materials such as steel and other structural alloys by corrosion. In addition, the control system considers the purification of the coolant from hazardous radioactive nuclides, originated by nuclear reactions, to prevent excessive dose release in case of leaks. Therefore, newcleo's activities on lead chemical control are the objects of intensive studies, both in terms of experiments and theoretical modeling. In order to support both types of activities, the Python package lbh15 is under active development within the Codes and Methods team to offer an unique and standardized entry point for the use of empirical correlations of physical properties.

Description

lbh15 (**L**e**a**d **B**ismuth **H**andbook **2015**) is a Python package developed by newcleo based on the reference handbook edited by OECD-NEA [1], as contribution to the expert group on heavy liquid metal technologies. The metal properties are implemented as analytical functions from

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empirical correlations. The package is also equipped with services for function characterization that use the standard Python packages for scientific computation, namely NumPy and SciPy. The release of the second version of lbh15 is scheduled by the end of 2023: it will implement both thermophysical and thermochemical properties of molten lead (Pb), of bismuth (Bi) and of their eutectic alloy (LBE). The package repository and the related documentation can be found at

<https://newcleo-dev-team.github.io/lbh15/index.html> and

<https://github.com/newcleo-dev-team/lbh15>, respectively.

During the internship, the student will develop new features in lbh15 by implementing the topics covered in chapter 5 of the above-mentioned handbook. Specifically, the student will work on the integration of the following subjects:

- a) volatilisation of hazardous nuclides (Polonium, Caesium, Iodine, etc.) from liquid metals;
- b) estimation of equilibrium vapour pressure;
- c) gas phase purification.

For check and illustration purposes, the student will be involved in the development of one or more simple Python applications/tests focused on the exploitation of the properties just implemented.

lbh15 adopts high quality standards for code development. Hence, the student will develop/consolidate skills about the following aspects of the Python-based software engineering ([2], [3]):

- Object-Oriented programming based on SOLID principles;
- Python Dynamic programming;
- Design patterns (template and factory patterns in particular);
- CI/CD pipelines (including regression tests);
- Well-documented code writing for scientific applications.

The student will be followed by the Codes and Methods group members of *newcleo* that are developing lbh15.

Work plan

- 1) Handbook [1] review and identification of the main correlations to implement
- 2) Code architecture design
- 3) Code implementation
- 4) Test application definition and implementation
- 5) Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Master student in Industrial Engineering, Chemistry, Applied Physics or Computer Science.
Skills and background:

- Fundamentals in thermodynamics and chemistry
- Basic knowledge of software programming (previous experience in Python appreciated, but not fundamental)
- Basic knowledge of Linux operative system

Nice to have: experience using git, basic knowledge on liquid metal-cooled fast reactors.

References

- [1] C. Fazio et Al. Handbook on Lead-bismuth Eutectic Alloy and Lead Properties, Materials Compatibility, Thermal-hydraulics and Technologies. Technical Report No. 7268, OECD/Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), Paris, France, 2015.
- [2] Giridhar Chetan. *Learning Python Design Patterns*. Packt Publishing, Birmingham - Mumbai, 2 edition, 2016.
- [3] Lutz Mark. *Learning Python: Powerful Object-Oriented Programming*. O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, USA, 5 edition, 2013.

Comparison of numerical acceleration methods for nonlinear iterations used in the computer code TRANSURANUS

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July 14, 2025

– *Internship proposal* –
(ID No. 1003986)

Keywords — TRANSURANUS, numerical acceleration, non-linear iterations

Topics — fuel performance, numerical mathematics, computational modelling

Location newcleo S.p.A., Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date To be defined

Duration 4–6 months

Context

newcleo is currently in the process of developing advanced Lead-cooled Fast Reactor (LFR) units tailored for small and modular reactors. These units incorporate innovative features aimed at addressing the unique challenges associated with LFR technology. Simultaneously, the company is committed to meeting sustainability, economic, and safety objectives, aligning with the criteria set for the fourth generation of nuclear reactors.

In the context of fuel performance analysis, newcleo relies on the TRANSURANUS (TU) thermo-mechanical computer code, which is distributed by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission in Karlsruhe, Germany, under a collaboration research agreement [1, 2]. Newcleo has initiated a meticulous examination of the code to ensure its suitability and adaptability for applications involving LFR technology. The goal is to employ precise physical models that guarantee reliable results in numerical simulations. This ongoing effort also includes improving the code to broaden its scope and enhancing its performances.

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Description

The thermal analysis of an integral fuel rod can be treated by superposing one-dimensional radial and axial solutions. Given the multitude of non-linearities inherent in these processes, only numerical solution techniques prove feasible. These techniques are of critical importance as they determine numerical stability and, to a considerable extent, the overall computational cost.

TU solves heat transfer by the Fourier equation in the radial coordinate of the fuel rod, whose discretized form brings to a tridiagonal system. The nonlinearity of the coefficients in the second order differential equation is handled by successive substitutions. The resulting non-linear iterations are accelerated by minimizing the residuals through a numerical scheme based on Regula Falsi, initially implemented by Lassmann [3].

This procedure was adopted because calculating the temperature of a fuel rod, which is schematically shown in Fig. 1, is a computationally intensive task. Therefore, it is important to focus on obtaining convergence and minimizing the total numerical effort required.

In the current internship the student will perform a complete literature review of the existing models to solve heat conduction equation and technique to accelerate the convergence of such numerical method. Some of this technique will be implemented and their performance will be compared.

The student will be introduced to the use of TU and will join the team of TU developers at newcleo, learning the best practices for collaborative work and quality-assured code development. The production of a technical report is expected at the end of the internship to describe the work done by the student and to compile the analysis of the results.

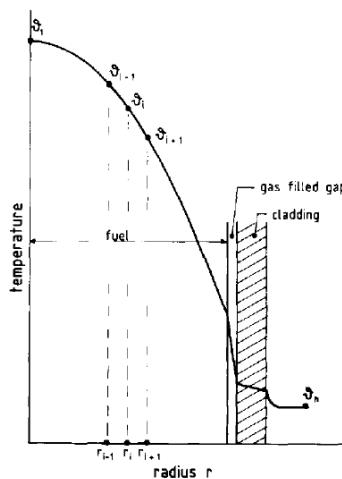


Figure 1: Schematic representation of the stationary radial temperature profile in a slice of the fuel rod

Work plan

- Litterature review and retrieval of the existing work
- Discussion of the problem
- Implementation and verification of the numerical solution

- d) Analysis of the numerical results
- e) Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Master or PhD student in Nuclear, industrial or Software Engineering; Applied Physics; Mathematics.

Required computer skills: Basic knowledge of Linux operative system and software programming (previous experience in FORTRAN is appreciated, but not fundamental).

Knowledge of L^AT_EX editing is appreciated, but not required.

References

- [1] K Lassmann. Transuranus: a fuel rod analysis code ready for use. *Journal of Nuclear Materials*, 188:295–302, 1992.
- [2] K Lassmann and H Blank. Modelling of fuel rod behaviour and recent advances of the transuranus code. *Nuclear Engineering and design*, 106(3):291–313, 1988.
- [3] K. Lassmann. A fast and simple iteration scheme for the temperature calculation in a fuel rod. *Nuclear Engineering and Design*, 103(2):211–214, 1987.

Analysis and verification of the burnup model implemented in the computer code TRANSURANUS

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July 14, 2025

– *Internship proposal* –
(ID No. 1003987)

Keywords — TRANSURANUS, Burnup model, LFR

Topics — nuclear fuel design, fuel performance and thermomechanics, computational modeling

Location newcleo S.p.A., Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date To be defined

Duration 5–6 months

Context

Currently, newcleo is designing advanced Lead-cooled nuclear Fast Reactors (LFR). These units incorporate innovative features aimed to address the unique challenges associated with the decarbonization of the energy market and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. Concurrently, the company is dedicated to fulfilling sustainability, economic, and safety goals, in line with the criteria established for the fourth generation of nuclear reactors.

In the domain of fuel performance analysis, newcleo relies on the TRANSURANUS (TU) thermo-mechanical computer code, which is provided by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission in Karlsruhe, Germany, under a collaboration agreement [1, 2]. newcleo is performing a thorough examination of the code to check that it can reliably reproduce the physical behavior of LFR fuel rods.

This ongoing endeavour also includes improving the code to broaden its range of applications, with a specific focus on providing trustworthy predictions for modeling LFR fuel rods. The final goal of this initiative is to develop an improved version of the code.

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Description

The performance of a fuel rod is greatly influenced by several physical phenomena. The exposure of the fuel rod to neutron irradiation determines the time evolution of the isotopic concentrations, and of the power density distribution within the fuel. The power density is the main driving force of the local temperature profile. The temperature heavily affects material properties and many physical phenomena, such as fuel restructuring, actinide redistribution, fission gas release, creep of fuel and cladding [1, 2]. A thorough description of the time evolution of the isotopic concentration of heavy metals in the fuel is thus crucial. Accordingly, one of the first stages in describing fuel rod behaviour is to compute at each radial position in the fuel: the local burnup, the build-up of heavy metal nuclides and the formation of fission products. The equations used to describe these phenomena constitute the so-called burnup models.

A model called TUBRNP, developed by Lassmann in 1994 [3], is implemented in TU. This model predicts the radial power density distribution based on burnup together with the radial profiles of actinide concentrations.

During the internship, the student will study and verify the implementation of the simplified burnup model. In particular, it will be requested to revise the implementation of the calculation of the radial neutron flux distribution in the fuel slices that is currently preventing the use of user-input distributions.

In addition, to assess the physical consistency of the isotopic composition evolution in case of anomalous behavior, a parallel inventory analysis of LFR fuel rods will be performed using the depletion module of the OpenMC Monte Carlo code.

The student will be introduced to the use of TU for the calculation of fuel rods used in nuclear reactors. He/she will join the team of TU developers at *newcleo* where he will learn effective collaborative practices and methods for developing code with ensured quality. At the conclusion of the internship, the student is expected to produce a technical report detailing his/her contributions and experiences during the internship period.

Work plan

- a) Literature review and retrieval of the existing work relating to TUBRNP
- b) Code implementation
- c) Analysis of the results
- d) Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Master or PhD student in Nuclear, Industrial or Software Engineering; Applied Physics
Computer skills: FORTRAN, Linux.

Knowledge of \LaTeX editing is appreciated, but not required.

References

- [1] K Lassmann. Transuranus: a fuel rod analysis code ready for use. *Journal of Nuclear Materials*, 188:295–302, 1992.

- [2] K Lassmann and H Blank. Modelling of fuel rod behaviour and recent advances of the transuranus code. *Nuclear Engineering and design*, 106(3):291–313, 1988.
- [3] K. Lassmann, C. O’Carroll, J. van de Laar, and C.T. Walker. The radial distribution of plutonium in high burnup uo₂ fuels. *Journal of Nuclear Materials*, 208(3):223–231, 1994.

Cross section preparation for LFR by Monte Carlo computer codes

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July 14, 2025

– *Internship proposal* –
(ID No. 1008549)

Keywords — LFR, OpenMC, cross section preparation

Topics — Physical modelling, neutron transport, reactor physics

Location newcleo S.p.A., Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date To be defined

Duration 5 months

Context

newcleo is designing small lead fast reactors (LFR) operating in a pool that contains all the primary system components. Cooling is done by molten lead which shields photon radiation and has low neutron absorption.

The core can show high heterogeneity to meet the criteria of compactness, target neutron leakage and power shape, breeding or burning features. The core is made of a main active zone, possibly surrounded by a shielding or breeding blanket.

Although computer simulation by Monte Carlo codes like OpenMC [1] allows today to carefully represent many details of the reactor, simplified calculation schemes relying on homogenization theory and equivalence theory must still be adopted to perform faster core calculations [2, 3], thus easing the whole design process. During this internship, the student will prepare homogenized cross sections by OpenMC and use them after to perform calculations with the deterministic full-core codes VARIANT [4] and DONJON [5].

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Description

Deterministic computer codes allows fast neutron calculations and are largely employed in reactor physics and analysis. They rely on assumptions and approximations that must be carefully verified and validated. For instance, using lattice calculations of fuel elements in fundamental mode neglects the environment effects and the local core conditions, introducing sometimes an inconvenient limitation in the calculation scheme. Provided that the material inventory of all fuel elements is known, the Monte Carlo simulation can be used to overcome this limitation, yet paying a higher computational cost.

A new feature in the code OpenMC to prepare homogenized cross sections on hexagonal grids is currently under development and it will be tested during this internship, together with a reduced nuclide chain suitable to lead fast reactors. After, a suitable interface will be developed to load the set of homogenized data into VARIANT and DONJON, which use different solution methods to obtain the neutron flux distribution over the full core. These codes use low-order transport methods, with a lower computational effort. Besides, the core configurations calculated by OpenMC and used for detailed cross section preparation will allow to assess the performance of low-order transport solutions. The setup of the calculation input files and the interfaces will be performed on git version control. Finally, the candidate will produce a technical report at the end of the internship to compile the results, by quantifying the gain in runtime obtained while using the deterministic codes and by assessing the performance in physical accuracy and numerical precision.

Work plan

- a) Literature review and study of homogenization and equivalence theory.
- b) Training and practice with the computer codes.
- c) Setup of the core model by OpenMC.
- d) Preparation of the cross section model.
- e) Setup of the core calculations.
- f) Analysis of results and preparation of the final report.

Applicant profile

Master student in Nuclear Engineering or student in Applied Mathematics and Physics.

Background: fundamentals in applied mathematics and the physics of nuclear reactors.

Required computer skills: Linux, Python (intermediate), L^AT_EX scientific editing (optional).

References

- [1] P. K. Romano, N. E. Horelik, B. R. Herman, A. G. Nelson, B. Forget, and K. Smith. Openmc: A state-of-the-art monte carlo code for research and development. *Annals of Nuclear Energy*, 82:90–97, 2015.
- [2] George I Bell and Samuel Glasstone. *Nuclear reactor theory*. US Atomic Energy Commission, Washington, DC (United States), 1970.
- [3] J. R. Lamarsh and A. J. Baratta. *Introduction to Nuclear Engineering. 2nd Edition*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, 1983.
- [4] Gérald Rimpault, Danièle Plisson, Jean Tommasi, Robert Jacqmin, Jean-Marie Rieunier, Denis Verrier, and Didier Biron. The ERANOS code and data system for fast reactor neutronic analyses. In *PHYSOR 2002-International Conference on the New Frontiers of Nuclear Technology: Reactor Physics, Safety and High-Performance Computing*, 2002.
- [5] A Hébert. DRAGON and DONJON: a legacy open-source reactor physics project at Polytechnique Montréal. In *Proceedings of the IAEA Technical Meeting on the Development and Application of Open-Source Modelling and Simulation Tools for Nuclear Reactors, Milano, Italy, June*, 2022.

Review about the utilization of Beryllium in reactor design

Alex Aimetta¹ and Daniele Tomatis ^{*1}

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July 14, 2025

– Internship proposal –
(ID No. 1008987)

Keywords — FBR, nuclear fuel management, fuel design, core cycle, neutron activation

Topics — Reactor physics and analysis, radiation transport, core design.

Location newcleo S.p.A. - C.so Stati Uniti 38, Torino (TO), Italy

Starting date To be defined

Duration 3 months

Context

newcleo is developing innovative small modular reactors based on lead-cooled fast reactor (LFR) technology. The use of alternative materials is considered to achieve target performance for long-term operation without refueling. This internship focuses on performing a complete literature review about the utilization of Beryllium in nuclear reactors, providing the engineering teams with essential data to improve the design of future reactor units.

Description

The results provided by this internship will support the design of a small modular LFR, where the employment of beryllium could be particularly beneficial in reducing the size of the systems.

The internship focuses on a bibliographic review about the possibility of employing beryllium as a reflector in LFRs, with specific interest on applications to small modular reactors in the fast neutron regime. In the literature, there are studies which show the impact in terms of reactivity of the (n,2n) reactions of beryllium, leading to systems with smaller critical dimensions [1]. The above mentioned feature is of particular interest for small modular reactors [2]. However, other studies show that beryllium is affected by severe issues in terms of neutron activation and gas production, making the disposal of systems employing beryllium an even more delicate task [3].

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Additionally, beryllium is characterized by quite high values of (γ ,n) cross sections at energies characteristic of fission product's γ radiation: it has been shown that the impact of photonuclear neutrons can be neglected for stationary states, but it has non-negligible effects on the kinetics of the reactor [4, 5]. The presence of lead, which has a strong shielding effect against photons, could possibly alleviate the magnitude of these phenomena.

The student will have to find several references in the literature in order to understand if the advantages of using beryllium in fast fission reactors are supported by physical and engineering considerations, taking into account all the pros and the cons of employing such a nuclide and analysing its behaviour in the presence of lead.

During the internship, the student will have to collect as many data as possible, with the aim of providing valuable information about the possible use of beryllium in the design of a small modular LFR, supporting the design of this nuclear system. At the end of the internship, the student will write a technical report summarizing all the main findings of the bibliographic review. The student will be followed by the Codes and Methods group members of newcleo.

Work plan

During the internship, the student will need to perform a detailed bibliographic review in order to conclude if the use of beryllium can be beneficial in small modular LFRs, considering both aspects related to change in reactivity due to (n,2n) and (γ ,n) reactions, and to safety and radiological issues related to the presence of beryllium.

The student will examine significant topics concerning reactor physics of fast reactors. These include mainly theoretical and engineering aspects underlying the behaviour of neutrons and photons in the presence of beryllium and lead.

The expected working plan is detailed in the following:

- a) Literature review on beryllium behaviour in fast systems
- b) Literature review on fission systems employing beryllium
- c) Discussion of current core configurations
- d) Analysis of bibliographic references
- e) Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Bachelor student in Nuclear Engineering, Applied Mathematics and Physics.

Background: fundamentals in reactor physics.

Required computer skills: Knowledge of L^AT_EX editing is appreciated.

References

- [1] P.K. Job and M. Srinivasan. Evaluation of reactivity bonus due to (n, 2n) multiplication in Be/BeO-reflected 233u uranyl nitrate solution systems. *Annals of Nuclear Energy*, 9(4):209–213, 1982.
- [2] A. Tomberlin T. *Beryllium-a unique material in nuclear applications*. Citeseer, 2004.

- [3] G. R. Longhurst, K. Tsuchiya, C. H. Dorn, S. L. Folkman, T. H. Fronk, M. Ishihara, H. Kawamura, T. N. Tranter, R. Rohe, M. Uchida, and E. Vidal and. Managing beryllium in nuclear facility applications. *Nuclear Technology*, 176(3):430–441, 2011.
- [4] Tsuyoshi Misawa, Seiji Shiroya, and Keiji Kanda and. Study on reactivity worth of beryllium by ($n,2n$) and (γ,n) reactions. *Nuclear Technology*, 116(1):9–18, 1996.
- [5] G. Hordósy, Andras Keresztúri, Cs. Hegedűs, and P. Vértes. Influence of the photoneutrons on the kinetics of beryllium reflected core of the budapest research reactor. 1998.

Refactoring and optimization of DASSH subchannel code

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July 14, 2025

– *Internship proposal* –

(ID No. 1009187)

Keywords — LMFR, Subchannel code, Python

Topics — Code development, heat transfer, thermal-hydraulics, numerical simulation

Location newcleo S.p.A., Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date As soon as possible

Duration 6 months

Context

The accurate and fast prediction of thermal-hydraulic behavior of nuclear reactor cores is essential to support and speed up the design activities of Lead-cooled Fast Reactors (LFR). Subchannel codes play a key role in modeling coolant flow, pressure drop, and heat transfer phenomena both in single assemblies and at the core level. Among the others, DASSH ([1], [2], [3]) is a Python-based code originally developed at the Argonne National Laboratory (IL, USA). Currently, newcleo is actively developing it to expand its range of application to include the conditions in which its reactors operate. As the models used in DASSH become more complex, improving its computational performance together with its reliability, maintainability and readability has become a priority. The refactoring of the code is then under evaluation, including the possible use of faster compiled languages like Fortran 2018 or C++ to rewrite some critical sections of the code.

Description

DASSH is a Python-based subchannel code originally used for the steady-state thermal-hydraulic analysis of reactor cores, particularly in liquid metal-cooled fast reactors. The original version of

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the code, developed at the Argonne National Laboratory, is open-source and can be downloaded from <https://github.com/dassh-dev/dassh.git>. *newcleo* has forked the original repository (https://github.com/newcleo-dev-team/dassh_nc) to introduce new advanced features, to improve the code accuracy and to extend its application domain. Although Python ([4], [5]) ensures rapid development and code readability, it could introduce performance limitations when applied to large, computationally demanding problems.

The aim of this internship is to refactor from scratch DASSH code with the aim of improving its readability, maintainability and computational performance. After gathering a deep insight of the current architecture, the candidate will identify the portions of the code that significantly impact the code runtime. Following this diagnostic phase, optimization strategies will be considered and implemented. These may include:

- integration with modules written in C++ or Fortran 2018, that will substitute the computationally most expensive portions of the code;
- adoption of parallelization techniques whenever useful;
- refactoring of some of the already existing Python classes.

During the implementation phase, it will be necessary to ensure that any optimization does not affect the accuracy of the original code, thus updating and/or integrating the test suite accordingly. The refactoring activity will include also the setup of the automatic documentation framework, with the aim of limiting as much as possible any inconsistency between the base code and its manual.

The activity will be carried out under the supervision of the Codes and Methods team at *newcleo*.

Work plan

- a) Analysis of the original code architecture and identification of the most critical sections.
- b) Definition of a more suitable code architecture.
- c) Code implementation.
- d) Update and integration of the test suite, possibly exploiting CI/CD pipelines.
- e) Setup of the automatic documentation framework.
- f) Preparation of a technical report.

Applicant profile

Master student in Industrial Engineering, Computer Engineering or Computer Science.

Skills and background:

- Basic knowledge of object-oriented software programming (Python, Fortran 2018, C/C++);
- Basic knowledge of Linux OS;
- Fundamentals in thermo-fluid dynamics and numerical simulations (appreciated, but not fundamental).

Nice to have: experience using Git and L^AT_EX. Basic knowledge of liquid metal-cooled fast reactors.

References

- [1] Milos Atz, Micheal Smith, and Florent Heidet. Dassh software for ducted assembly thermal hydraulics calculations - overview and benchmark. 2020.
- [2] Milos Atz, Micheal A. Smith, and Florent Heidet. *Ducted Assembly Steady State Heat Transfer Software (DASSH) - Theory Manual*. ANL/NSE-21/33, Argonne National Laboratory, 2021.
- [3] Milos Atz, Micheal A. Smith, and Florent Heidet. *Ducted Assembly Steady State Heat Transfer Software (DASSH) - User Guide*. ANL/NSE-21/34, Argonne National Laboratory, 2021.
- [4] Lutz Mark. *Learning Python: Powerful Object-Oriented Programming*. O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, USA, 5 edition, 2013.
- [5] Giridhar Chetan. *Learning Python Design Patterns*. Packt Publishing, Birmingham - Mumbai, 2 edition, 2016.

Development of a Serpent 2 Monte Carlo model of the TAPIRO reactor and assessment of the sensitivity analysis capabilities of the code in the framework of shielding design

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July 14, 2025

– *Internship proposal* –

(ID No. 1009324)

Keywords — Shielding, Monte Carlo, sensitivity analysis

Topics — Numerical modelling, neutronic systems.

Location newcleo S.p.A. – Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy; University of La Sapienza
- Piazzale Aldo Moro 5, 00185 Rome, Italy.

Starting date July, 2025.

Duration 6 months. The period in each location will be defined.

Context

newcleo is designing new Lead-cooled Fast Reactor (LFR) units for small and modular reactors using MOx fuel. In this type of compact fast reactors, shielding components (e.g. the steam generator) from high neutron fluxes coming from the core is of primary importance in order to avoid phenomena related to neutron activation and material degradation. Shielding optimization and development is therefore one of the main challenges associated with this type of innovative systems.

The fast spectrum reactor TAPIRO, located in ENEA – Casaccia, is an irradiation facility that can be used to perform tests on possible shielding configurations. As the experimental activity is by its own nature limited, computational methods to assist in the development of optimized shielding configurations represent a powerful tool in the design phase.

Within this context, the goal of the internship is to develop a Monte Carlo model of the TAPIRO reactor using Serpent 2 with two main objectives:

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- Explore, assess and apply to the problem of optimized shield design the sensitivity analysis capabilities based on the General Perturbation Theory (GPT) recently implemented in Serpent 2;
- Perform comparisons in some specific cases with the OpenMC TAPIRO model internally developed in newcleo.

Description

Neutron activation is one of the main sources of concern in the development of a lead cooled reactor. This is mainly due to the behaviour of lead, which is a very effective material at diffusing neutrons rather than absorbing them. This aspect, combined with the small size of the reactor, creates difficult conditions for radiation shielding, as the limited space requires innovative solutions to decrease the neutron flux impacting on supporting structures. Lowering the neutron flux limits irradiation damage to the structures and limits activation, which is beneficial in terms of both maintenance activities and future decommissioning.

The TAPIRO reactor is a fast spectrum research facility located in ENEA – Casaccia. It is considered a valuable asset, as it is one of the few research reactors with a fast spectrum that could, under certain circumstances, mimic the irradiation conditions of the newcleo LFR. For this reason, it could be used to test shielding components and assess their effectiveness in attenuating the neutron flux. Figure 1 provides a view of the TAPIRO reactor in ENEA - Casaccia.

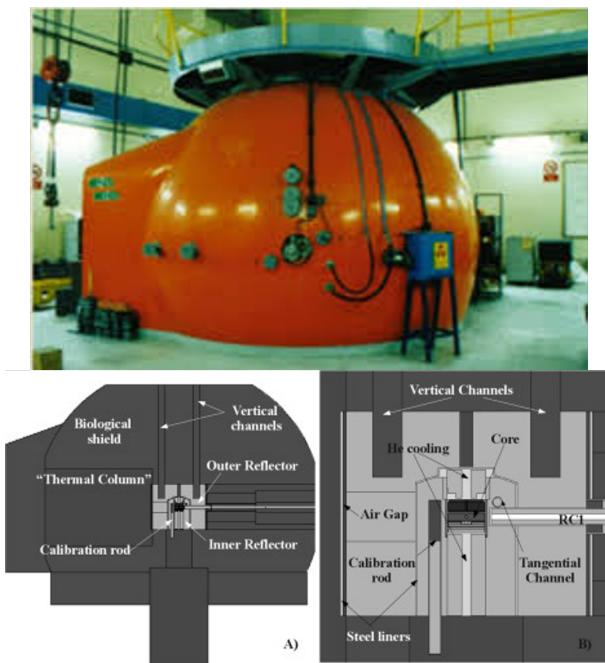


Figure 1: The TAPIRO reactor.

The first phase of this activity envisions the study of the Monte Carlo code Serpent 2 [1]. In the second phase, the student should familiarize with the General Perturbation Theory (GPT) [2] and its implementation in the code [3, 4].

The GPT is a general methodology that applied to a problem allows to assess the effect of small perturbations on input parameters. In the context of neutron shielding design it could be used as an optimization tool, assessing the effect of small modifications on inputs such as the material density or the shield thickness. For these reasons, special attention should be dedicated to the evaluation of sensitivity coefficients to assess the effect of these latter parameters and, more in general, reaction rates (e.g. capture, tritium production).

In the third phase of the internship, the student should develop a Serpent 2 model of the TAPIRO [5, 6] reactor. Some comparison with the OpenMC model developed internally in newcleo will be performed to ensure that the model works as expected.

Finally, the student should test the sensitivity analysis capabilities of Serpent 2 in the model developed, and perform some preliminary tests on proposed shielding configurations.

Work plan

The proposed workplan for the internship is the following:

- a) Familiarization with the Serpent 2 Monte Carlo code;
- b) Review of the GPT theory and its implementation inside Serpent 2;
- c) Assessment of the sensitivity analysis capabilities of Serpent 2 in the framework of shield design;
- d) Development of a Serpent 2 model of the TAPIRO reactor;
- e) Comparison of some results to the ones of the OpenMC model of TAPIRO internally developed in newcleo;
- f) Application of the sensitivity analysis capabilities of Serpent 2 in the developed model to some proposed shielding configurations;
- g) Analysis and interpretation of the results;
- h) Preparation of a technical report.

Applicant profile

Master or PhD student in Nuclear, Mechanical or Aeronautical Engineering; Applied Mathematics and Physics.

Background: Knowledge in nuclear reactor physics and scientific computing.

Required computer skills: Python programming, linux OS; \LaTeX scientific editing (optional).

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Post-test CFD simulations of the NACIE-LHT test section for cross-flow of liquid lead over a tube bundle

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August 4, 2025

– *Internship proposal –*
(ID No. 1009427)

Keywords — LFR, cross-flow heat exchanger, experiment, NACIE, CFD

Topics — Post-test CFD analyses, single phase liquid metal thermal-hydraulics

Location newcleo SpA, Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date To be defined

Duration 5–6 months

Context

newcleo is currently in the process of developing advanced modular Lead-cooled Fast Reactor (LFR) units.

One of the innovative design features of newcleo's LFR is represented by the Spiral Tube Steam Generator (STSG). The STSG is a cross-flow heat exchanger designed to efficiently transfer heat from the primary coolant (molten lead) to the secondary coolant (water), maximising compactness and efficiency. It is made of many layers, each containing a single spiral-shaped tube, arranged in a staggered lattice along the axial direction.

To support the design and safety analysis of the STSG, the principal thermal-hydraulic phenomena must be characterized through dedicated experiments, which are part of the extensive R&D programme being implemented by newcleo. Specifically, this work focuses on the primary side heat transfer, which has been addressed through a dedicated Lead Heat Transfer (LHT) test section installed in the revamped NACIE facility at ENEA Brasimone Research Centre. The resulting NACIE-LHT facility has been operated in early 2025, according to a pre-defined test matrix, so that experimental data are available.

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Description

This internship focuses on post-test Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations of selected experimental runs conducted in the NACIE-LHT facility. The simulations will be performed using ANSYS CFX, leveraging pre-existing models developed during the design phase of the LHT section.

The aim is to compare numerical predictions with experimental measurements-including local temperatures, heat transfer rates, and pressure drops-using consistent boundary conditions. The outcome will be used to refine the CFD setup, including turbulence models, meshing strategies, and near-wall treatment, leading to the identification or confirmation of CFD best practices for lead cross-flow over staggered tube bundles.

Following the post-test phase, a series of interpretive CFD simulations will be conducted to derive a Nusselt number correlation as a function of the Peclet number.

Work plan

1. Literature review and retrieval of existing CFD work
2. Problem definition and discussion based on experimental data
3. CFD model setup, building on the pre-test simulations
4. Post-test analysis using NACIE-LHT measurements
5. Feedback on CFD best practices for cross-flow of lead over a staggered tube bundle
6. Derivation of a Nu(Pe) correlation from interpretive simulations
7. Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Master student in Nuclear, Mechanical or Aeronautical Engineering.

Background: fundamentals in thermal-hydraulics and heat transfer, introductory courses on CFD.

Required computer skills: Python programming, \LaTeX scientific editing (optional).

References

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Implementation of Helium Contribution to the Fission Gas Swelling and Release Model in the Computer Code TRANSURANUS

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August 4, 2025

– *Internship proposal –*
(ID No. 1009581)

Keywords — Helium, Fission Gas Release, Swelling, TRANSURANUS

Topics — nuclear fuel design, fuel performance and thermomechanics, computational modelling

Location newcleo SpA, Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date October 2025

Duration 6 months

Context

newcleo is designing an advanced small modular Lead-cooled Fast Reactor (LFR). To perform the fuel performance analysis, newcleo relies on the TRANSURANUS (TU) thermo-mechanical computer code, which is provided by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in Karlsruhe, Germany, under a collaboration agreement [1, 2]. newcleo is currently carrying out a verification and validation of the code to check that it can reliably reproduce the physical behaviour of Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel rods for LFR usage. This ongoing endeavour also includes improving the code to broaden its range of applications, with a specific focus on providing trustworthy predictions for modelling LFR fuel rods. The final goal of this initiative is to develop an improved version of the code.

Description

Among the many phenomena that occur in a fuel pin under irradiation, Fission Gas Release (FGR) and Fission Gas Swelling (FGS) are fundamental to be correctly modelled in a fuel performance code. They are the result of a continuous production of Fission Gas (FG) atoms,

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such as Xenon (Xe) and Krypton (Kr), and other gases like Helium (He), that accumulate in the fuel matrix. This causes volume increase (swelling) and, under certain conditions, such gases can be released into pin's free volume [3] leading to degradation of the thermal conductivity of the fuel rod filling gas (usually He) and increase of the internal fuel rod pressure. These effects reduce the safety margins for the mechanical resistance of the cladding. TU implements a physics-based model to deal with FGR and FGS [4, 5, 6], which, however, does not consider the contribution of He to the gas release and swelling. Commonly employed oxide fuels, especially MOX, produce He through α decay of heavy nuclides and ternary fissions, contributing to the increased internal rod pressure at high burnup levels [7]. In view of its importance for MOX fuels, the inclusion of He in the physics-based model is of great interest.

In this internship, the student will perform a complete literature review of the existing models for FG behaviour, focusing on He and then, he/she will implement in TU all the necessary code changes to include the contribution of He to the swelling and release. Finally, the code will be tested against available experimental data. The student will be introduced to using TU for fuel performance analysis and will become part of the TU development team at newcleo, where they will learn best practices for collaborative development and producing high-quality, reliable code. At the end of the internship, the student is expected to produce a technical report detailing their work and presenting an analysis of the results.

Work plan

- a) Literature review on FG behaviour in oxide and MOX fuels
- b) Code implementation, verification and test
- c) Analysis of the results
- d) Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Master student in Nuclear, Mechanical or Energy Engineering; Applied Physics.

Computer skills: FORTRAN, Linux, Python.

Knowledge of LATEX editing is appreciated, but not required.

References

- [1] K. Lassmann. Transuranus: a fuel rod analysis code ready for use. *Journal of Nuclear Materials*, 188:295–302, 1992.
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High-performance calculation of heterogeneous material interfaces in LFR by DRAGON5

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August 4, 2025

– *Internship proposal –*
(ID No. 1009653)

Keywords — LFR, lattice calculation, cross-section preparation, DRAGON

Topics — Physical modelling, neutron transport

Location newcleo SpA, Via Galliano 27, 10129 Torino, Italy

Starting date September 2025

Duration 6 months

Context

newcleo is designing new Lead Fast Reactor (LFR) units for small modular reactors. These reactors have a fast neutron spectrum allowing for fission of heavier actinides, such as plutonium that is a by-product of light water reactors. Cooling is done by molten lead which shields photon radiation and has low neutron absorption.

Designing reactor units requires accurate calculations of neutron transport. These calculations are usually performed by deterministic neutron transport codes that require special treatment of resonance self-shielding and material interfaces promoting neutron transport anisotropy. In this internship, the candidate will setup calculations with different patterns of fuel assemblies by DRAGON5 featuring heterogeneous configurations where transport effects are pronounced. A special attention will be devoted to the optimization of the calculation scheme to improve the computational performance and to achieve a high numerical accuracy in the results, which will be validated against Monte Carlo calculations. The candidate will study different elements of the core like fuel, reflector, burnable absorbers and shield assemblies arranged in hexagonal grids.

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Description

The candidate will use the lattice transport computer code DRAGON, developed at Polytechnique de Montréal, Québec, Canada, which solves the Boltzmann transport equation deterministically¹. DRAGON has extended self-shielding capabilities employing different methods. The student will work closely with his/her tutors on the validation of DRAGON5 calculations of LFR, analyzing the results produced with the different calculation options and comparing them against the results obtained with the Monte Carlo computer code OpenMC.² This comparison will require the calculation of key quantities such as the neutron reactivity and leakage, and multi-group reaction rates by the two codes. The goal is for DRAGON to give accurate results for all unit cells found in the core of newcleo's LFR design. The validation will require the candidate to choose appropriate computational methods for cross-section self-shielding, nuclear data libraries and calculation meshing. The internship includes advanced use of the NJOY computer code to prepare fine multigroup data library used later with the DRAGON5 deterministic code.

The candidate will carry out validation of calculations representing patterns of unit cells arranged in hexagonal grids, that is forming a fuel assembly and up to sets of neighboring assemblies showing control elements, spectrum softeners, burnable poisons and peripheral reflector zones. For instance, the candidate will consider the presence of zirconium to shift the neutron spectrum to lower energies, thus reducing leakage of fast neutrons out of the reactor core. The development of fast, efficient and accurate calculation schemes for deterministic neutron transport will also be investigated by parallel programming and high performance computing [1].

Validation will only concern two-dimensional calculations performed by DRAGON. The construction of detailed heterogeneous geometries will be handled in this work by GLOW, a new graphical user interface that is currently under development to create unstructured geometries for DRAGON5 calculations. Finally, the candidate will produce a technical report at the end of the internship to compile the results.

Work plan

- a) Literature review and study of the main physical phenomena.
- b) Training and practice with parallel computing programming.
- c) Definition of the test cases and setup of the calculations.
- d) Analysis of results and performance gain.
- e) Preparation of the final report.

Applicant profile

Master student in Nuclear Engineering or student in Applied Mathematics and Physics.

Background: fundamentals in reactor physics, neutronics and applied mathematics.

Required computer skills: Linux, computer programming in a standard language (intermediate), \LaTeX scientific editing (optional).

¹<https://www.polymtl.ca/phys/en/dragon-download>

²<https://openmc.org/>

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Neutronic characterisation of the small test device (S-TD) positions in newcleo LFR-AS-30

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September 3, 2025

– *Internship proposal* –
(ID No. 1010198)

Keywords — Lead Fast Reactors, material irradiation, ERANOS

Topics — Reactor physics and analysis, deterministic neutronics analysis, core design

Location Turin, Italy

Starting date To be defined

Duration 6 months

Context

newcleo is developing new Lead-cooled Fast Reactor (LFR) units for small and modular reactors exploiting the physical peculiarities associated to a fast spectrum nuclear system [3]. The LFR-AS-30 is currently being considered as an irradiation machine for both non-fissile and fuel materials. The feasibility of exposing such elements has to be proven via a parametric study on the quantity and the location of different kind of pins to be inserted in Small-Test Devices (S-TDs) inside the core. These devices are fuel assemblies in which a central region has been left hollow and to be eventually filled with irradiation pins. This internship focuses on the simulations of different LFR-AS-30 core configurations, in which the presence of such pins is analysed from a neutronics point of view. In particular, criteria on the feasibility of a core configuration are fixed by assessing the criticality level and the respect for different safety margins. The candidate will learn to use the deterministic code ERANOS to set the required input files and to analyze the physics behind the computed results [2].

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Description

During the internship, the candidate will first conduct a literature review on the procedure adopted in the Engineering Core Design (ECD) neutronics team to perform full core simulations. As most of the deterministic study applied to neutronics, this procedure can be summarised into two steps:

- cross sections preparation for fissile, non-fissile and absorbing media,
- full core neutron flux calculation.

The choice of a deterministic code is suited for fast simulations, required to analyse several core configurations, exploring different types of irradiation. In particular, each of these configurations will be defined by both the number and the material of the pins to be irradiated, as well as the location and the number of the S-TDs containing such pins. Given a specific configuration, a pin placed in the center of the core would, in principle, experience a larger irradiation (neutron flux value) with respect to a different pin placed towards the periphery of the core. These computations will be run with the deterministic code ERANOS. The intern is asked to characterise each system by computing the criticality level, power and flux distributions and neutron spectra [1]. Moreover, a proper check on the safety requirements is demanded by assessing the control rods worth, as well as the non-insertion requirement in case of a spurious control rod extraction. Results coming from the simulation of a generic core configuration can be compared to those obtained from a reference core configuration in order to assess the influence of the irradiated pins in the system. Finally, this internship aims at training the candidate to develop a critical thinking approach towards the challenging physics characterizing LFR systems. At the end of the internship period, the candidate will prepare a technical report describing the work performed and the results obtained.

Work plan

- a) Literature review about cross sections preparation and flux computation with ERANOS
- b) Retrieval of the existing work for deterministic full core simulations
- c) Problem discussion and definition
- d) Preparation of the input files and of the numerical model
- e) Calculations and physical interpretation of the numerical results
- f) Preparation of a technical report

Applicant profile

Master or PhD student in Nuclear Engineering; Applied Mathematics and Physics.

Background: fundamentals in reactor physics and deterministic methods.

Required computer skills: a good knowledge of Python and Linux operating systems (or willingness to learn).

References

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