

# Evaluation of the British Academy/ Wolfson Fellowship Awards



Dr Marit Boot, Sarah Frost, Sophie Taylor  
March 2024

 Powellite Impact Ltd

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Research approach</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Interviews with Wolfson Fellowship award holders and applicants	6
3.2 Other stakeholders	6
3.3 Desk research into the funding landscape for early-career researchers	6
<b>4. Results</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Application process	7
4.2 Buy out from teaching and administrative duties	8
4.3 Impact on research	10
4.4 Impact on public engagement	12
4.5 Impact on policy development	13
4.6 Impact on funding	13
4.7 Impact on career	13
4.8 Counterfactual: what would have happened without the Wolfson Fellowship award?	15
4.9 Early Career Researchers (ECR) network	16
4.10 Mentoring	16
4.11 Improvements and options for future delivery	17
<b>5. Position of the Wolfson Fellowship in the wider funding landscape</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6. Discussion and conclusion</b>	<b>22</b>
Appendix A - Influencing public debate: Ewan Gibbs' Wolfson Fellowship Journey	25
Appendix B - Exploring Internationalism in Young Womanhood: Impact of the Wolfson Fellowship	26
Appendix C - Transformational career impact: The journey of a curator in the British Museum	27

*Photo on front page Stuttgart Library by Niklas Ohlrogge, Unsplash*

## 1. Executive summary

In 2019, the British Academy launched the Wolfson Fellowships scheme (WF) to support early-career researchers in the humanities and social sciences to develop into the next generation of research and engagement leaders. The British Academy is currently supporting 25 WF award holders. The purpose of this evaluation was to review the effectiveness of the scheme. Interviews with award holders, unsuccessful applicants, mentors and staff at university research offices were conducted to assess the impact of the WF on careers, research and public engagement.

### **What is the impact of WF on research time and support for next generation of researchers?**

The Wolfson Fellowship granted early-career researchers, in a permanent post, the invaluable gift of time by providing funding for buy out from teaching and administrative tasks. To inform this evaluation, 14 out of 25 award holders were interviewed. All 14 described the teaching buy out as instrumental to the success of the scheme. Ten discussed how they used the funding for two-year full-time teaching buy out. Award holders, mentors and a line manager acknowledged that the full-time teaching buy out was highly effective. Institutions employed a staff member to take over teaching responsibilities thereby completely freeing up award holders to conduct extensive research. Four award holders opted for part-time teaching buy out for three years. One found that this enabled them to keep rewarding teaching tasks *and* conduct research, however, three highlighted several issues relating to institutions' responses to part-time teaching buy out. They expressed concerns of not being able to dedicate the agreed amount of time to research. The overall impact on research time was significant, award holders reporting on average just under 20% of their time to conduct research in the year before the WF, and in the first year of the WF this had increased to 86% of time for research (as estimated by 13 award holders). The impact of teaching buy out resulted in a ripple effect on PhD and masters students supervised by the award holders, as they were able to spend more time on supervision and improve the quality of support they provided to the next generation of academic researchers.

### **What is the impact of WF on research outputs?**

Award holders hailed the teaching buy out and dedicated research time as life changing. The uninterrupted focus allowed them to conduct extensive archival research and in-depth interviews both in the UK and abroad, complete their monograph, a book, scientific publications and special issues. The Fellowship broadened award holders' territorial and research scope, resulting in numerous new collaborations across international academic institutions, museums and archives. The impact of the award holders' work extended far beyond academia, enabling the delivery of exhibitions and workshops, development of learning materials, artworks and podcasts. One award holder reached a significant audience of 14,000 people through developing an online course. Award holders' commitment to influencing public debate and policy development was evident from their roles on committees and advisory bodies.

### **Is the WF scheme enabling the UK to retain the best researchers?**

Reflections shared by 14 award holders evidenced that the WF scheme had supported talented early-career researchers to stay in academia. Without the award some of these researchers would have left academia due to burnout or stress relating to teaching workload, lack of research funding or the absence of a monograph. Catalysed by the dedicated research and dissemination time, 79% (11 out of 14) of interviewed award holders attributed career progression to the WF: three had been promoted, two secured a new position at a prestigious institution, two had completed their five-year probation period and four had recently applied for or are planning in the next year to apply for a promotion.

### **Is the scheme accessible for researchers at museums and independent research organisations?**

The WF scheme is open to applicants from universities and independent research organisations, galleries, libraries, archives and museums. Only 1 of the current 25 award holders is employed outside academia.



In 2023 more than 99% (132 out of 133) of applicants were affiliated with a university. Award holders and a staff member at a university research office suggested possible reasons for the limited engagement with potential applicants outside academia: the application process was described as time consuming and daunting. Applicants relied on extensive support from senior academics and the research office staff to develop a strong and structured application with a budget which would meet the requirements of the British Academy. The specific proposal expertise required to apply for the WF scheme might not be widely available outside universities.

### **Do the eligibility criteria for the WF scheme need to change?**

Award holders, unsuccessful applicants, line managers and mentors of award holders explained that it was difficult to describe early-career researchers by the length of time since completion of their PhD, but the majority suggested five to seven years post PhD was reasonable and the WF eligibility criteria should be reverted from nine to seven years. All interviewees agreed the eligibility criteria should state clearly that researchers with a full professorship are ineligible for the Wolfson Fellowship award.

### **What is the position of the WF scheme in the wider funding landscape?**

The WF scheme was compared to seven other Fellowships/grants for early-career researchers, with the Early Career Leverhulme Fellowship mentioned as the most similar. However, the combination of funding for full-time teaching buy out and the emphasis on public engagement for early-career researchers with a permanent position in humanities and social sciences was a unique combination provided by the WF. Considering different options for the future of the WF scheme, interviewees emphasised a minimum of two years full-time teaching buy out was key to the success of the scheme and should not be changed. The Wolfson Fellowship impacted positively on researchers' ability and confidence to apply for further funding. One award holder attributed their success in securing a European Research Council grant to the WF award and several others had leveraged further small amounts of research funding.

### **Does the WF scheme help to develop the next generation of research leaders?**

Early-career researchers and senior academics recognised the transformational impact of the prestigious Wolfson Fellowship award and how it opened doors to new collaborations and career advancements, allowing them to successfully complete the journey from early- to mid-career researcher. The award had a significant impact on award holders' reputation and track record, they felt the highly competitive nature of the award provided additional credibility and recognition of the importance of their research. The teaching buy out is highly effective at increasing research outputs and public engagement activities. The WF scheme contributes to the maintenance of capacity across the Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for people and the Economy (SHAPE) disciplines and plays a pivotal role in developing research leaders for the future.

### **The evaluation developed the following recommendations:**

1. Provide mentoring support to potential applicants from independent research organisations, galleries, libraries, archives and museums to increase accessibility to researchers outside academia.
2. Inform unsuccessful applicants if their proposal met the quality threshold for shortlisting.
3. WF eligibility criteria to revert to define early-career researchers as within seven years of PhD at the time of application, with extra provision for career breaks. Researchers with a full professorship should be ineligible.
4. WF award holders would benefit from further networking opportunities with other WF award holders, senior researchers, museums, independent research organisations and NGOs.

## 2. Background

The British Academy is the UK's national academy for the humanities and social sciences. In 2019, the British Academy launched the Wolfson Fellowships scheme (WF) to support early-career researchers in the humanities and social sciences to develop into the next generation of research and engagement leaders.

The WF awards provide early-career researchers with three years of support by releasing them from administration and teaching duties to pursue their research, along with funding for public engagement and travel. The Academy and the Wolfson Foundation also emphasise the importance of award-holders communicating their research plans and results to a broad audience.

The funding for each Fellowship has been up to the maximum value of £130,000 across three years. At least £90,000 to be used for time buy out, and up to £40,000 for research and travel expenses and dissemination of findings. Applicants must have a full-time or part-time permanent or fixed term post that covers the length of the award (three years) at a UK university or other research institute, such as a museum or gallery, which can provide a suitable environment and support for applicants.

Annually, six WF were awarded in 2019, 2021 and 2022 and seven in 2023. The British Academy is currently supporting 25 award holders, of which 24 are based at universities across the UK and one at the British Museum. The competition is extremely popular and attracts a high volume of applications resulting in a success rate of 5% (7 awards out of 133 applications) in 2023.

Powellite Impact was commissioned to identify and assess the impacts of the WF, review processes and capture recommendations for improvements and future options of the Wolfson Fellowship scheme.

### 3. Research approach

The evaluation of the WF scheme was undertaken between October 2023 - February 2024. The evaluation activities and discussion guides used for the data gathering were informed by seven scoping interviews (Task 1, Table 1).

**Table 1.** Research and evaluation activities completed by Powellite

Evaluation activities and tasks	Numbers	Completed
1. Scoping phase involving the Deputy Head and the Head of Research Funding, Wolfson Foundation representative, Chair of the Research and Higher Education Policy Committee and three members of the Wolfson Fellowship final awards panel	7 interviews	January 2024
2. Desk research into early-career Fellowship programmes	7 programmes	January 2024
3. Interviews unsuccessful applicants	5 interviews	December 2023
4. Interviews WF award holders from cohort 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023	14 interviews	January 2024
5. Interviews with mentors, a line manager and head of a research office	4 interviews	February 2024

#### 3.1 Interviews with Wolfson Fellowship award holders and applicants

The evaluation findings have been informed by 14 interviews with WF award holders. The award holders had received their WF as part of different cohorts: 2019 (4), 2021 (5), 2022 (2), 2023 (3) and were employed by 11 different universities and one museum.

Thematic analysis and coding of the qualitative interview data was completed to identify themes, patterns and record impact. The views expressed by the WF award holders were summarised and validated against the transcripts of the interviews and quotes selected as illustrative examples of the feedback provided by award holders. The quotes in this report are verbatim and taken directly from the interviews. All data is reported anonymously, except the individual case studies and photos for which permission was obtained.

#### 3.2 Other stakeholders

We interviewed five applicants who were unsuccessful in securing a WF to ask for feedback on the application process and discuss if they had applied for other Fellowship programmes and how these compared to the WF.

In addition, we conducted four interviews with line managers, mentors and staff in research support offices to gain insights into the perceived value and reputation of the WF scheme. These interviewees were approached through snowball recruiting via award holders. The quotes from the other stakeholders are identified 'line manager', 'mentor', 'research office' in this report.

#### 3.3 Desk research into the funding landscape for early-career researchers

The Wolfson Fellowship scheme was compared to seven other Fellowship/grant schemes for early-career researchers in humanities and social sciences. The other Fellowship/grant schemes were identified through stakeholder and unsuccessful applicant interviews.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Application process

To inform the evaluation of the application process, 14 award holders and 5 unsuccessful applicants were asked to describe their experience of applying for a Wolfson Fellowship and to suggest any improvements. Feedback demonstrated that awareness of the scheme was high among social science and humanities early-career researchers. The opportunity had been shared through emails from institutions' research offices, line managers and other researchers. Award holders reported visiting the British Academy website for information and a few had seen the opportunity on social media.

The main reasons for applying to the programme were described as: the opportunity to focus on research; the buy out from teaching and administrative tasks; time and funding ringfenced for travel; the focus on public engagement.

One of the main reasons for applying for a Wolfson Fellowship included the **public engagement focus**:

*'Lots of grants want some public engagement, but they often don't want it in quite the way or quite the scale that this WF did. Public engagement is quite a dominant part of my work and I've always been passionate about it.'*

Most unsuccessful applicants and award holders found the application process straightforward; some said it was light touch compared to other grants from the research councils. Others described the process as daunting, due to their lack of experience. All applicants described the process of completing the application as time consuming but reasonable in relation to the size of the grant, most award holders spent 2-3 weeks on the application.

None of the interviewees described any issues with finding a mentor or referee for their application and all award holders described receiving support from their line manager at the application stage. One unsuccessful applicant, based in a post-1992 university described encountering some scepticism from others in their institution about the efforts required to apply as they questioned the likelihood of receiving a prestigious British Academy grant. One award holder suggested that most researchers in a regional museum would not be in a position to apply due to being overworked or having a sense that doing a research fellowship is not realistic for them.

Most award holders and applicants said the 10-12 weeks application window was fine, but one award holder said this was only achievable if it falls during the summer holiday or another break, due to term time teaching commitments. One award holder highlighted the excellent turnaround time of the WF and valued having a response within three months of applying 'this never happens in academic research'.

Feedback from the five unsuccessful applicants suggested that each of them had assumed that the quality of their research project was too low to be considered for an award and they had not considered a second application. Interestingly, two of the current award holders described being unsuccessful in a previous round but decided to re-apply after another year of experience with a stronger proposal.

Unsuccessful applicants understood that individual feedback was not available, however they suggested that it would be very helpful to be notified if they had been shortlisted and met the quality threshold as this would inform their decision about whether to apply again the following year. Both unsuccessful applicants and award holders recognised the value in writing the application and described reusing the project plan and thinking for other applications.

The **application process provides an opportunity** to plan an ambitious project:

*'Even when you're unsuccessful in applying for it, the university likes that you've written an ambitious application, and it definitely helps to formulate a project.'*

#### 4.2 Buy out from teaching and administrative duties

Award holders and unsuccessful applicants described the funding to buy out time from teaching and administrative duties as instrumental to the development of their research. Ten of the 14 award holders discussed using the budget for two-year full-time teaching buy out and some had agreed part-time teaching buy out in the third year. Four had agreed a part-time teaching buy out for three years with their institutions.

All award holders recognised the **buy out from teaching** as an instrumental part of the WF:

*'I went straight from PhD to a lectureship, but it meant that I had no postdoc, no time to write a book. I just was desperately needing some time. Time is the most important commodity.'*

Several award holders discussed how the WF provided dedicated time to write a book or monograph. One award holder described the time to write a book as the main reason they could stay in academia as a researcher.

One award holder described how the WF made it possible for them to **stay on the prestigious research track** in their university:

*'I could have very easily gone from being on a highly prestigious research track to being seen by my colleagues as someone who's just a teacher. Because there is a time limit by which you should get your book out and by which you should get promoted. I've seen it happen to other people that suddenly their job is reallocated onto the teaching track.'*

Another award holder described the significant impact of time buy out from teaching on their life.

When going through burnout and thoughts of giving up on an academic career, this award holder described the **Fellowship as life changing**:

*'I went to my manager's office and said "no matter what happens I must be on leave [from teaching]. Next year, I will have a breakdown." Then the Fellowship came up, I applied for it and got it. I would have quit by Christmas. It's been life changing.'*

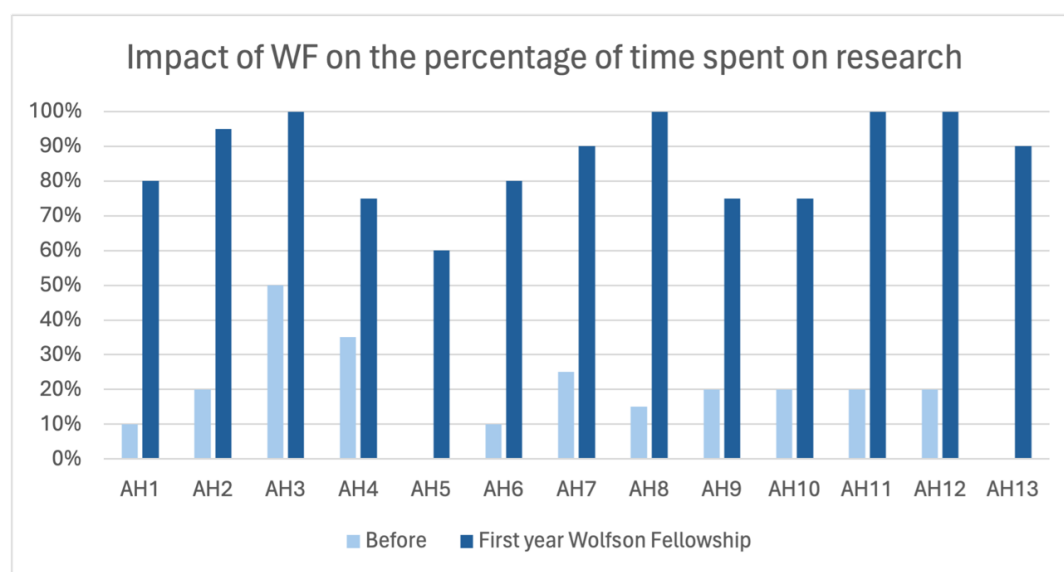
When award holders were asked to estimate the percentage of time they spent on research before they received the WF, several award holders explained that their contracted research hours were



different from the actual hours they were able to spend on research. For example, one award holder held a research contract at the university specifying 60% research, 20% teaching and 20% admin, but in reality they were unable to do any research during term time because of their heavy teaching load. The only actual time they could dedicate to research was during the summer break, which would directly impact on the time they could be off on leave with their family.

When discussing the time before their WF, 13 of the 14 award holders provided an estimate for the actual time spent on research the year before receiving the Fellowship award (light blue columns, Figure 1). For most award holders this was between 0-20% (average 19%). One award holder was spending about half of their time on research as they were holding a research grant which was coming to an end.

**Figure 1.** Reported changes to time spent on research (before and first year of the Fellowship)



The time award holders were able to spend on research during the first year of the WF increased to 60-100% (average 86%) for the 13 award holders who provided an estimate. One WF award holder, not included in the graph, was three months into their Fellowship and responded that they had not spent any time on research. They reflected 'I would have preferred full teaching buy out for a shorter period of time'.

The majority of award holders discussed how they had chosen to keep their PhD and masters student supervision tasks, which took between a few hours and a day a week. They reflected that the support they provided to their students had improved as a result of the time buy out provided by the WF.

#### **Improved supervision** of students as a result of the WF:

*'Continuing with my PhD/master's students, I've actually been able to supervise them much better than I normally do because I have more time.'*

Responses showed that most award holders had all their administrative tasks covered by colleagues. Four award holders mentioned keeping administrative tasks, for two of these that was

by choice as their role and responsibilities required this, for two others this was due to pressure from their institution.

Award holders described different arrangements with their institution relating to the level and timing of buy out from teaching. Ten award holders described full buy out from teaching for two years and two of these award holders had to split the teaching buy out years to deliver teaching in between due to their institution's requirements. One award holder chose to keep their big modular teaching and field trip as they enjoy teaching, their institution was very supportive and respected their Fellowship buy out and therefore the mix of teaching and research worked well for them.

Others described how part-time buy out from teaching was impossible and said their buy out was only respected during the years of a full-time buy out. Two award holders from one institution and one award holder from another institution described significant challenges in getting their teaching buy out recognised and expressed concerns about not being able to dedicate the amount of time to research that they had agreed with British Academy.

**Part-time buy out of teaching** creates challenges in most institutions:

*'I was a director of a few committees and they reallocated that to other people. I took a 100% buy out. If you take a 50% buy out in my department that will never be respected.'*

*'75-80% of my time on research is what I'd promised to the British Academy, but I had to really fight for that within my department and I think this is something that the funders should be more cognisant of.'*

*'My workload would officially state that I was given research time as per the grant but in practice, my teaching meant that all of my contracted hours were spent on teaching and admin. I'm sure my institution would argue that my workload allows [for research], but in practice it does not.'*

Having a period of two years of full-time teaching buy out also provided benefits to the wider organisation and made filling the post more effective, this was recognised by award holders, line managers and mentors.

**Advantages of full buy out** described by institutions:

*'Having the full buy out for two years makes it much easier to organise a replacement for the post, we had no issues with allocating the funding.'* – Line manager

*'The funding from the Fellowship programme has allowed us to widen the curriculum by having others come in to take over the teaching who have different interests and focus on areas different from that of the award holder. It really has allowed us to gain as a teaching institution on all fronts.'*  
- Mentor

#### 4.3 Impact on research

The 14 WF award holders interviewed for this evaluation are employed by 12 different institutions. Their projects covered a wide range of different subjects including human and political geography, history and economy. All award holders described a significant impact on their research and

reflected how valuable the time for visiting archives, researching documents, attending conferences and building national and international networks had been. Award holders forecast this positive impact on their research is likely to continue for years after the end of the Fellowship.

**Impact on research** reported by award holders of the Wolfson Fellowship:

*'I have done a lot of new research. Much more inspiration to consider other projects. I've made massive progress on my monograph. You really need that headspace and time to think and reflect.'*

*'It enabled me to go to conferences I would never have gone to. It has broadened my research a lot.'*

*'Being able to conduct the research and being able to talk about it both within my field but also just generally within academia.'*

*'It's been completely life changing, if I hadn't had this grant, I don't think I would have been able to branch out into a completely new field like this and even switch disciplines.'*

*'The Fellowship project is letting me territorially, significantly diversify my work. I was focused on Scotland and now I am a historian of England, Wales and Northern Ireland as well. I've come into contact with new scholarly approaches and new networks.'*

*'It's been really transformative. It's given me the space to write, it's given me the time to go abroad and do research. This burst of research will give me another three years after it [the Fellowship] of writing and publications.'*

A range of outputs were reported as a direct result of the WF including books, monographs, special issues, other academic publications, media coverage, podcasts and presentations.

The award holders reported increased **numbers and quality of research outputs**:

*'I got peer reviews back from my monograph and they were really positive, and publishers were excited to publish it. But there's no way that I would have been ready to submit that [without the WF].'*

*'I'm about to submit a final manuscript of a book, which without this time, you know would be a much worse publication.'*

*'I've got probably about two weeks work left on the manuscript of the book, that could not have happened without those two years buy out, that book exists because of that buy out.'*

*'I wrote an article for a special issue that I'm editing for the British Journal for the History of Science.'*

*'I gave the Royal Geographical Society Lecture to about 200 people in the audience and there was a live broadcast.'*

Half of the award holders stated that their papers will be included in their department's REF (Research Excellence Framework) submission, one award holder said they were signed up to be a REF case study and others said they had not been asked or it was not relevant for their institution.

#### 4.4 Impact on public engagement

Award holders described public engagement as a key part of their work. One award holder emphasised that the British Academy's understanding of impact is much broader than other funders and appreciated that the Academy recognises that informing public debate and discussion is a form of impact in itself. Award holders shared examples of methods used to engage with the public including exhibitions and workshops, and the development of online learning materials, GCSE curriculum materials, artworks and podcasts.

**Public engagement** was delivered through a range of approaches:

*'We have this really public facing aspect of our work which is about lots of interaction with the public and exhibitions.'*

*'We developed this online course, 14,000 people have signed up to that. I would never have done it without this Fellowship. I also disseminated my research through a short podcast which I wrote and recorded. I have been working with a charity and they run a Care Experienced History Month, that's been a really fantastic and rewarding experience.'*

*'I use Instagram and run school workshops.'*

*'I am organising a conference and I am also pursuing collaboration to produce a participatory artwork.'*

Award holders planning public engagement activities for the third year of their Fellowship described how their thinking about public engagement activities had evolved during their research. For example, one award holder was planning to deliver films, but realised short social media stories would be more suited to reach the intended audience. Many award holders described how both their research and public engagement plans had changed and appreciated the flexibility provided by the British Academy.

**Changes in public engagement plans:**

*'To see what the best method for dissemination is, is not always clear until you start working on it. I'm now working with two institutions in India, to see if we can work with undergraduates to train them to develop public outreach materials with some of the archival objects that they've got. That would on the one hand, provide training for the students and on the other hand, it would create public outreach materials. I'm now hoping to produce short social media stories, a very substantial audience would be young women who are students globally.'*

Award holders described a wide range of audiences for their engagement activities including the general public, schools, colleges, students, policymakers, courts, tribunal service, police, trade unions, environmental campaigners and charities.

#### 4.5 Impact on policy development

Several award holders discussed joining committees and advisory bodies as a direct result of their Fellowship. Through these roles award holders were able to inform and influence policy making as well as expand their networks and raise the profile of their work.

Award holders have provided evidence to **influence policy discussions**:

*'The commission, a government advisory body, has asked me to lead emergency research on the closure of [the] oil refinery. This may influence parliamentary discussion on the closure.'*

*'I have influenced the office for statistics regulation and the output on their review of official poverty statistics. I have influenced the thinking of people within the Department of Work and Pensions.'*

*'I submitted evidence to a Science and Technology committee inquiry on astronomy in the UK and a piece of evidence on how the history of science and technology can directly inform government policy around science and technology.'*

#### 4.6 Impact on funding

Four award holders discussed how the award had helped to leverage further funding. Most of the funding secured was small amounts for further public engagement events, exhibitions and podcasts. However, one award holder secured a large European Research Council grant and attributed their success in securing this to the prestigious nature of the WF.

One award holder emphasised the impact of the Fellowship on their confidence and how this enabled them to complete a complex and lengthy application to apply for a large collaborative grant.

Impact on **skills and confidence** to leverage further funding:

*'This award is the first big multi-year one that I've had, it demystified the application process for me, now I know how to do it. I recently submitted an application to one of the Horizon Grants which is a two million, five-year program. The only reason why I had the confidence to do that and even the time was that I had this Wolfson Fellowship.'*

#### 4.7 Impact on career

All 14 award holders described themselves as early-career researchers at the time of application, but some were at the cusp of mid-career when they started their Fellowship. The range of job titles reflected the variation of career tracks in different institutions. Award holders were awarded the WF during their first permanent position at a university and had held titles including 'assistant professor', 'associate professor' or 'lecturer'.

Award holders expressed different opinions on how many years after PhD completion should be regarded as 'early career'. Responses ranged from five to nine years with the majority stating five to seven years was reasonable, with extra time for maternity/paternity/adoption leave or other career breaks taken. The initial eligibility criteria for WF described early-career as seven years after



PhD, this was extended to nine years after the pandemic. Reverting the eligibility criteria to seven years was a good option according to most award holders. All award holders agreed a full professor is not an early-career researcher, even if this role was obtained within seven years of PhD completion. They felt it important to include in the eligibility criteria that someone who has a full professor post or is about to be promoted to full professor is not eligible for this early-career award.

All 14 award holders described a significant impact of the WF on their career, this included award holders who started their Fellowship in the last six months. Award holders discussed how the WF had helped them gain experience and promotions in their institutions. Award holders from the 2019 cohort now considered themselves to be mid-career researchers.

The WF was recognised as a prestigious award by universities and museums and opened doors to new collaborations and career opportunities. The Fellowship had a positive impact on award holders' reputation and track record, they felt the highly competitive nature of the award provided additional credibility and recognition of the importance of their research.

Award holders and mentors of award holders described how the **prestigious WF opened doors**:

*'My organisation was really thrilled that I got this Fellowship because they were able to evidence we can get a British Academy Fellowship like a university. It was seen as a feather in the cap of the museum.'*

*'The Fellowship certainly opens the doors, and it is then up to the researcher to prove whether they can take it. The Fellowship has been highly beneficial in supplying [the award holder] resources and money to make a positive and logical development in their research and career. It has been really transformational.'* - Mentor

*'To be able to have secured quite prestigious funding at an early stage, having this under my belt is quite exciting when thinking about possibilities and opportunities in the future.'*

The Fellowship was recognised as a unique opportunity for early career researchers to do what they love doing and help them to develop their career in academia. The majority, 79% (11 out of 14 award holders interviewed), attributed career progression to the WF: three had been promoted, two secured a new position at a prestigious institution, two had completed their five-year probation period and four had recently applied or were planning to apply for a promotion (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Impact on career as reported by 14 WF award holders

Reported career impact attributed to WF	Number of award holders
Has recently / is about to apply for promotion	4
Promoted to next level in their career track	3
Secured new position at prestigious institution	2
Successful completion of probation (Assistant / Associate Professor)	2
Development of new area expertise / move disciplines	2
Enabled them to stay in academia and not leave due to burnout	2

Award holders described how the WF provided them with evidence of their research abilities so they could successfully apply for a promotion. The four award holders who have recently/ are about to apply for promotion had discussed this with their line manager, who recognised they were ready for a promotion due to their achievements as part of the WF research.

Award holders used evidence from the **Wolfson Fellowship to secure promotions:**

*'I could leverage the British Academy Wolfson Fellowship having that sort of name attached to me, it's probably given me a much bigger reputation. I don't think I would have been promoted without the Fellowship, it was the key point of my promotion application. So it's actually made a huge impact in terms of my personal circumstances.'*

*'I only went through my five-year probation in my institution a few months ago. The Fellowship really helped for that. I would apply for a full professorship maybe five years down the line. I think this [Fellowship] would definitely play a big role in that.'*

*'I'm working on a promotion application. The research I've been able to complete on this project and demonstrating that I'm forging new connections. The Fellowship will set me up with enough publications and gravitas that I can put in a bid to be promoted to professor within the next three years.'*

*'The Fellowship is the largest grant I secured, it's hugely validating of the originality and the potential impact of my scholarship.'*

*'I think the scheme contributes to the maintenance of capacity across the SHAPE disciplines, because the British Academy is one of very few organisations still funding humanities research.'*

All 14 award holders had recommended the WF to others. Several award holders had reviewed applications of others in their institution to help them improve their application.

Three case studies showcasing the career impact of the WF are available as Appendix A, B and C.

#### 4.8 Counterfactual: what would have happened without the Wolfson Fellowship award?

The interviews with the 14 award holders included counterfactual questions to gain insight into what might have happened if they had not been awarded the Wolfson Fellowship. They described how they would have tried to continue their research by applying for small pots of funding but expected that they would have proceeded at a much slower pace. Others said they were running out of options to fund their research and might have had to leave academia.

Award holders responded to the **counterfactual** questions as follows:

*'I don't think I'd been able to write a monograph. I'd have two fewer articles published, I'd probably done half or less than half of the work I've done on this project.'*

*'I would still be feeling psychologically overwhelmed with my workload. I would be unsatisfied still with this sense that I'm being divided in so many directions and not sufficiently realising ever either the teaching or the admin or the research.'*

*'I don't think I would have been promoted. I think my research would still be really narrow. I think I'd be chipping away at papers but really struggling to get a foot in the door.'*

One award holder responded to the counterfactual question by emphasising they would have applied again and again until they secured the Fellowship.

The five unsuccessful applicants described how they continued to apply for other Fellowship funding but had not been successful so far, they related this to the highly competitive nature of Fellowships. One unsuccessful applicant responded when asked about their research progress, 'I continue my research at a glacial pace'.

#### 4.9 Early Career Researchers (ECR) network

Award holders discussed the range of helpful events organised by the British Academy. They specifically mentioned very useful events for networking with senior academics, a book prize event, a media training workshop, presentation about publishing, Horizon grant session and the induction event. Several award holders were not able to attend British Academy events due to their location or family commitments.

When asked specifically about the ECR network, the award holders responded that they saw the network as being for postdocs and other junior researchers immediately after PhD to help them secure a permanent position or learn about networking. Therefore, the events were deemed less relevant for WF award holders with a permanent position. One award holder suggested events about strategy and leadership would be more relevant.

#### 4.10 Mentoring

Award holders and their mentors were asked about WF mentoring arrangements and the use of additional funding recently offered by the Academy for mentoring support.

Discussing the mentoring included in the WF scheme application, both award holders and mentors said that they were not clear what the expectation of the British Academy was on mentoring arrangements. All award holders said they had agreed a mentor at the time of application and said they were in touch with their mentor if they needed advice. Most award holders already had a mentor in their institution before the application and that arrangement had continued when they started the WF. Award holders' experience was that these informal arrangements worked well. None of the award holders reported needing any other support.

The additional funding for mentoring offered in an email from the British Academy in 2023 had resulted in some confusion among award holders. They questioned if this money was for people who did not have a mentor in place, if it was for them to go back to their informal mentor and offer them payment or if they should use the money to approach another mentor.

Three award holders said they had gone back to the British Academy to ask what they could use the money for and two of them secured money to pay for travelling or subsistence costs relating to mentoring and engaging experts in their field.

Both award holders and mentors said it would be helpful if the British Academy could share a description of what they expected from the mentoring arrangement and for them to clarify if there was any need for recording the mentoring support provided.

#### 4.11 Improvements and options for future delivery

In addition to generic questions for each award holder, award holders were asked specific questions about issues, barriers, changes and achievements described in their progress reports.

Challenges identified included: Covid restrictions, maternity and paternity leave, a disability diagnosis and illness impacting on timing of travel and research activities. Award holders discussed creative solutions which had helped them to successfully overcome these barriers, such as maintaining the research focus but switching the geographic location of their research activities. Some award holders needed to spread the WF award over a longer period of time due to (maternity/paternity) leave. Award holders learned about the challenges of delivering exhibitions and workshops.

Two award holders identified challenges with moving their award from one institution to another.

One award holder who experienced challenges with their part-time teaching buy out suggested the British Academy might be able to issue a statement to universities making it clear they need to honour the agreements made in the grant relating to part-time teaching buy out.

Several award holders provided feedback to say how much they enjoyed the evaluation interview as they appreciated reflecting on the challenges and achievements they had reported.

Opportunity for conversation about **progress report** was suggested as an improvement:

*'I'd appreciate a few more chats like this [interview] over the year. Last year I submitted a pretty extensive report of what I'd done and I never had a chat about it with anybody.'*

The WF is highly competitive and only six or seven awards are made each year. During the interviews, a number of options were explored with the aim to increase the number of WF awards made each year:

1. **Reduce overall budget** - to provide partial buy out for three years. All interviewees agreed this was not a viable option as it would severely impact on the award holders' ability to conduct research and would increase the risk that the buy out would not be respected by institutions.
2. **Reduce length of Fellowship to two years full-time teaching buy out** - Six award holders (out of 14) and all five unsuccessful applicants said a two-year full-time buy out from teaching would still provide a highly valuable award and would make the WF conditions very clear in negotiations with their institution.
3. **Remove travel costs and research expenses** - A few award holders suggested as a third option to remove travel costs/research expenses as these can be applied for through other funds. However, others emphasised the importance of this travel and research budget to allow them to complete international research.

4. **Only allow one or two applications per institution** - A few award holders and the research office staff suggested institutions could screen the projects and only submit one or two of the most suitable applications to help reduce the cost and time spent by the British Academy on reviewing applications.

Although six award holders recognised the two-year full-time teaching buy out option as the best alternative, all 14 award holders emphasised the value of a three-year Fellowship. They said developing their research direction took time and there was real value in time for reflection and recommended the WF should stay as it is.

Most award holders recommended keeping the Wolfson Fellowship exactly as it is, one award holder summarised the Fellowship as follows:

*'I'm thankful for the time to read these articles. I'm thankful for the moments of interaction, meeting people and doing so many exciting things: this is the dream!'*



## 5. Position of the Wolfson Fellowship in the wider funding landscape

The WF scope and eligibility criteria were compared to other Fellowships open to early-career researchers (ECR) in Humanities and Social Sciences. Unsuccessful applicants mentioned during interview that they had also applied or reviewed one or more of the following Fellowships:

- BA Innovation Fellowship Scheme Route B
- Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship
- Philip Leverhulme Prizes
- Wellcome Early Career Awards
- Future Leaders Fellowship UKRI
- AHRC and ESRC Early Career Research, Development and Engagement Fellowship

The British Academy asked for the BA Newton International Fellowship also to be included in the review. The AHRC and ESRC Research, Development and Engagement Fellowship is no longer available, it was therefore excluded from the review.

This review suggests there are currently only seven Fellowships/prizes which support ECR in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The WF Fellowship specifically supports Humanities and Social Sciences researchers, whereas other awards support a wider range of subject areas, for example the Wellcome Trust Early Career Awards are for ‘all disciplines’ and the Leverhulme Fellows for ‘all subject areas’ except for medical research.

The WF is unique as it supports ECR (up to 7/9 years since PhD) in a permanent post with funding to buy out teaching and administrative duties for up to 3 years as well as recognising the need for funding for public engagement.

When comparing eligibility criteria of Fellowships and Awards, it is evident that there is no agreed definition of ‘early career’, as all seven Fellowships/Awards aim to support ECR but use different definitions of the length of time since PhD and with just over half of the programmes supporting researchers on a permanent contract (Table 3).

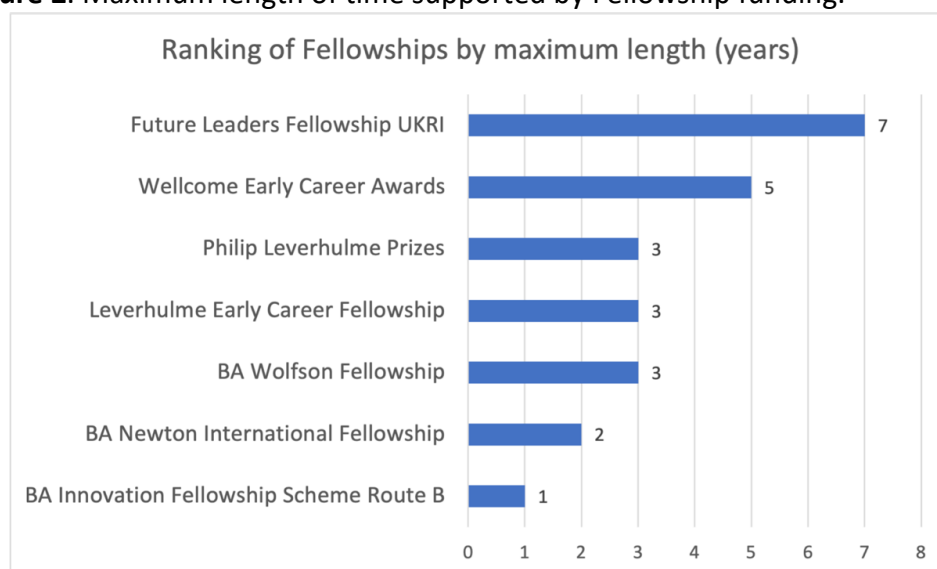
**Table 3.** Eligibility criteria relating to contract and time since PhD at time of application.

Programme	Time since PhD (in years)	Eligible with permanent post in UK	Disciplines
<b>BA Wolfson Fellowship</b>	7 (9 after Covid)	Yes	Humanities and social sciences
<b>BA Innovation Fellowship Scheme Route B</b>	Early/mid-career	Yes	Humanities and social sciences
<b>Philip Leverhulme Prizes</b>	10	Yes	Classics, Earth Sciences, Physics, Politics and International Relations, Psychology, Visual and Performing Arts
<b>Future Leaders Fellowship UKRI</b>	Early career	Yes	All areas backed by UKRI

<b>BA Newton International Fellowship</b>	7	No	Natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities
<b>Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship</b>	4	No	All subject areas
<b>Wellcome Early Career Awards</b>	Early career	No	Any discipline

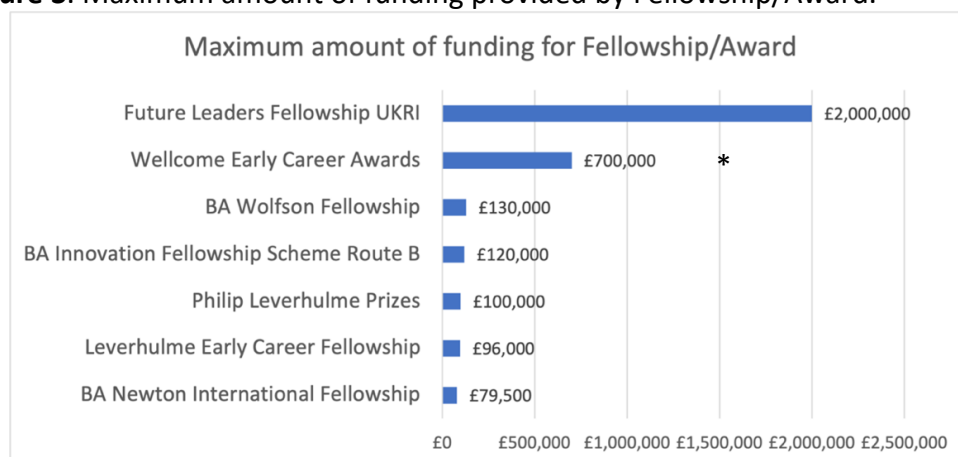
Most applicants and award holders compared the WF to the Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship and Leverhulme Prizes due to the three-year length of the Fellowship award. A review of all relevant Fellowships and awards showed these programmes ranged from one to seven years (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Maximum length of time supported by Fellowship funding.



The Fellowships and awards offer different amounts of funding (Figure 3). The Leverhulme Fellowship scheme is based on a pattern of joint support whereby the Leverhulme Trust will contribute 50% of the Fellow's total salary costs and the Wellcome Early Career Award paying full salary costs.

**Figure 3.** Maximum amount of funding provided by Fellowship/Award.



*\*The amount presented here is for comparison only, this estimate is based on a £60,000 salary, which is the salary for an early-career Assistant Professor with around 3-4 years of experience since their PhD at a*

*Russell Group University. The actual amount is: 'The total cost of your salary for the entire period of the grant and up to £400,000 for research expenses.'*

Interestingly, when award holders and unsuccessful applicants were asked about the differences between the WF and Leverhulme Fellowship they described differences in the amount of funding and the importance of the public engagement element. A staff member of one of the Research Offices described the British Academy and Leverhulme as very different funders. They would advise researchers which one to apply for based on the project description and encouraged them to use a different writing style for the different funders.

The British Academy and Leverhulme were described as very different funders by a staff member in one of the universities research offices:

*'The British Academy requires projects to be very rigorous and safe. I usually recommend applicants to include writing a monograph or book as one of their deliverables. Quirky, innovative and cross-disciplinary projects are more suited to Leverhulme. The British Academy trusts ECR to deliver public engagement activities, whereas other funders need to see evidence of partnerships in the application.'*

The WF is the only Fellowship which emphasises the requirement for Public Engagement activities and includes a budget for this. Applicants to the WF programme emphasised the value of this public engagement element of the Fellowship and the importance of public engagement activities in Humanities and Social Science.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this evaluation was to review the effectiveness and impact of the WF scheme. The WF scheme invites applicants from universities and independent research organisations, galleries, libraries, archives and museums. However, in 2023 only one applicant (out of 133 applicants) was employed by an organisation which was not a university. Out of the 25 WF award holders, 24 had a permanent post at a university and one had a curator post at the British Museum. The British Museum operates in a very similar manner to an academic institution, which made it possible for the curator to apply. It was discussed that it would be unlikely that someone from a regional museum would have time, expertise and confidence to apply for a WF.

Several award holders and unsuccessful applicants said the application process was daunting as they had no previous skills in writing large research proposals and developing budgets. They described getting extensive support from their research office and senior academics before they were ready to submit their proposal. Staff from the university's research office described how they monitored successful WF applicants and reviewed their research focus to inform future applications from their institution. This specific proposal expertise might not be widely available outside universities.

**Recommendation 1:** To increase accessibility of the WF scheme to applicants from independent research organisation, galleries, libraries, archives and museums, the British Academy could consider providing mentoring opportunities or training sessions on proposal writing and budget planning to prospective applicants from organisations outside academia.

Award holders and unsuccessful applicants said it would be very helpful to know if their application met the quality threshold and if they could apply again the next year.

**Recommendation 2:** Inform unsuccessful applicants if their proposal met the quality threshold and was shortlisted for the panel review.

Feedback received during this evaluation showed a high level of awareness of the WF scheme among researchers in humanities and social sciences, mentors and research offices. The WF scheme has been very successful at engaging outstanding early-career researchers, all award holders described significant advancements in their research outputs and careers. The Wolfson Fellowship is considered as a very prestigious award, this was illustrated by the responses from award holders at the universities and the British Museum. The award panel members who assessed previous applications, highlighted the high quality of the applications and said it had been possible to shortlist around 20 applications each year which each met the quality threshold.

Award holders, unsuccessful applicants, line managers and mentors of award holders reported that it was difficult to describe early-career researchers by the length of time since completion of their PhD or their job title, but the majority suggested five to seven years would be reasonable for use in the WF eligibility criteria and that researchers with a full professorship should be ineligible for the WF award for Early Career Researchers.

**Recommendation 3:** WF eligibility criteria to revert to describe early-career researchers as within seven years of PhD at the time of application, with extra provision for career breaks. Researchers with a full professorship should be ineligible.

The teaching buy out was considered the instrumental part of the WF. Full-time teaching buy out was reported to be highly effective to increase research capacity. Three award holders described difficulties relating to part-time teaching buy out, as their teaching load did not allow them to conduct the amount of research agreed with the British Academy. Additional communication with award holders on part-time teaching buy out arrangements might be helpful to address these potential issues at an early stage. Going forward the British Academy might want to consider encouraging awardees to plan a two-year full-time teaching buy out instead of a three-year part-time teaching buy out.

When considering alterations to the scheme, the two-year full-time teaching buy out was highlighted as the essential part to enable early-career researchers to advance their career and research outputs, with additional value created by the third year which allowed for reflection, completing of publications and delivering public engagement activities.

Award holders praised the current support from the British Academy and appreciated the flexibility which allowed them to change plans when needed to make the best use of their research time and public engagement activities. Award holders did not identify any further needs for training or mentoring, but highlighted they would have appreciated additional support when they were moving the WF from one institution to another. Award holders and mentors were unclear about the expectations of the British Academy on mentoring arrangements, but suggested the current informal arrangements were working well.

Award holders described the Early Career Researchers network as helpful for more junior researchers, but less suitable for their needs. The majority responded that they did not actively engage with the network. They emphasised other activities organised by the British Academy, such as networking opportunities with senior academics and information sessions about media, publishing and research grants had been very helpful. Award holders would welcome wider opportunities for networking.

**Recommendation 4:** WF award holders would benefit from further networking opportunities with other WF award holders, senior researchers, museums, independent research organisations and NGOs.

The teaching and administrative buy out as part of the WF scheme resulted on average in a 66% increase in dedicated research time from the year before the Fellowship to the first year of the Fellowship. The increase in dedicated research time had a significant impact on research outputs with award holders able to complete their monograph, a book, scientific publications and special issues. Furthermore, award holders discussed the delivery of exhibitions and workshops, and the development of online learning materials, GCSE curriculum materials, artworks and podcasts as methods for engaging with the public. One award holder reached a significant audience of 14,000 people with their online course. Several award holders were able to use their research findings to inform and influence policy making by joining committees and advisory bodies.



Feedback from award holders demonstrated that the WF scheme had supported talented early-career researchers to stay in academia, without the WF they might have left academia due to burnout, stress relating to teaching workload or lack of research funding. The majority (11 out of 14) of interviewed award holders attributed career progression to the WF: three had been promoted, two secured a new position at a prestigious institution, two had completed their five-year probation period and four had recently applied or are planning to apply for a promotion.

The WF scheme was compared to seven other Fellowships/grants for early-career researchers, with the Early Career Leverhulme Fellowship mentioned as the most similar. However, the combination of full-time teaching buy out and the emphasis on public engagement for early-career researchers with a permanent position in humanities and social sciences was a unique combination in the WF.

The WF was described by award holders as 'life changing', 'transformative' and 'hugely validating'. Award holders discussed how the teaching buy out provided 'time and headspace' to 'broaden research', 'diversify into new areas', 'switch disciplines', 'develop networks' and 'make massive progress'.

The WF is a prestigious award recognised by universities and other organisations, supporting early-career researchers to significantly advance their careers and strengthen their academic reputation. The full-time buy out from teaching is highly effective at increasing research outputs and public engagement activities. The British Academy WF scheme contributes to the maintenance of capacity across the SHAPE disciplines and plays a key role in developing research leaders in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

## Appendix A - Influencing public debate: Ewan Gibbs' Wolfson Fellowship Journey



Dr Ewan Gibbs, a lecturer in economic and social history at the University of Glasgow, embarked on a ground-breaking research journey two years ago when he received the prestigious Wolfson Fellowship from the British Academy. Titled 'Decarbonising the Economy and Society: Policy, Labour and Community in Energy Transitions,' Ewan's project delves into the intricate dynamics of energy transitions, particularly social, economic and environmental changes associated with the development of electricity generation and the oil and gas, nuclear and renewables sectors.

The Fellowship granted Ewan the invaluable gift of time, 'One of the things the award did was buy me out completely from teaching and admin for two years, so I can work full-time on research'. This uninterrupted focus has allowed him to conduct extensive archival research and oral history interviews, illuminating the experiences of workplaces and communities amidst energy shifts.

Ewan completed more than 50 interviews in his first year, 'I visited a range of places from the Bogside in Derry to farmsteads in North Wales and oil and gas industry in Shetland, engaging with diverse perspectives', he shares, depicting the immersive nature of his research process.

The Fellowship broadened both Ewan's territorial and research scope. Ewan says, 'My research was previously focused on Scotland, but now I am a historian of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland as well'. His research expanded to include the wider evolution of Britain's energy system, embracing complexities beyond coal mining to encompass the development of electricity and onshore oil and gas activities.

The impact of Ewan's work extends far beyond academia. Through public engagement initiatives, he reaches diverse stakeholder groups – from trade unions and environmentalist campaigners to policymakers and the interested public. His contributions to public debates include participation in expert panels and publications in the *Herald* and *Political Quarterly*. Ewan recently secured further public engagement funding, from the Glasgow Knowledge Exchange Fund, to record a podcast series about the history of oil and gas and the current transition to renewables. His commitment to public engagement as a central part of his Wolfson Fellowship research resonates with the British Academy's ethos, which recognises the value of social science and humanities research in shaping public debate and policy development.

Ewan highlights how his research directly informs policymakers in Scotland, 'The Just Transition Commission, a Scottish Government advisory body, have asked me to lead emergency research which is a response to the announced closure of Grangemouth oil refinery which is a very large employer and important part of the infrastructure of Scotland's energy economy.'

Reflecting on his journey, Ewan acknowledges the counterfactual, 'If I hadn't received the Fellowship, I wouldn't have managed to do this extensive research and it would have taken me a lot longer to advance in the field.' Ewan concludes 'The Wolfson Fellowship has allowed me to become a more senior researcher and a research leader in my field.'

## Appendix B - Exploring Internationalism in Young Womanhood: Impact of the Wolfson Fellowship



In 2022, Dr Sneha Krishnan, Associate Professor in Human Geography at the University of Oxford, embarked on an academic journey supported by the British Academy Wolfson Fellowship. Her project, titled 'Errant Girls: Intimate Internationalisms in Twentieth Century South Asia,' sought to traverse borders, both physical and intellectual, delving into archives in India and the US to unravel narratives of young women in the mid-20th century dreaming of an internationalist future.

Sneha describes herself, before the award, as an early-career researcher in the five-year probation period of her Associate Professor role, with only 10% of time dedicated to research and the rest spent on teaching and administrative duties. 'I applied as I was hoping to get funding for a teaching buy out, focus on my research and travel to visit archives in India and the US', Sneha reflects, underscoring the pivotal role the Wolfson Fellowship played in facilitating her cross-cultural exploration.

The impact of the award on Sneha's research trajectory is profound. With dedicated time for research, reflection and exploration, Sneha made significant strides, culminating in the completion of a special issue of the Journal of Historical Geography, publication of papers, and substantial progress on her monograph. The prestigious nature of the Wolfson Fellowship is recognised across academia, resulting in numerous invitations for talks abroad and a keynote lecture in the UK.

Flexibility and resilience emerged as cornerstones of Sneha's Fellowship experience. The British Academy's adaptable approach acknowledged the evolving nature of research projects and the needs of her disability to travel for shorter, more intense periods of time.

The Fellowship allowed Sneha to foster collaborations with institutions in Delhi and Chennai, and she envisions developing public outreach materials in partnership with undergraduate students in India. This endeavour reflects Sneha's commitment to nurturing the next generation of scholars while amplifying marginalised voices in historical narratives.

Sneha's vision extends beyond academia, aiming to resonate with young women globally, inviting them to see themselves as agents of change in the international arena. Through social media stories and historical vignettes, Sneha seeks to illuminate the aspirations of ordinary young people towards a more inclusive world.

As Sneha's journey attests, the Wolfson Fellowship embodies a commitment to sustaining humanities research, nurturing scholarly inquiry, and empowering emerging voices in academia. In a landscape where such opportunities are increasingly scarce, the Wolfson Fellowship stands as a beacon of support, enriching the academic opportunities for early-career researchers in Humanities and Social Sciences.

## Appendix C - Transformational career impact: The journey of a curator in the British Museum



Dr Lloyd de Beer, curator at the British Museum, started his British Academy Wolfson Fellowship in 2021. His scholarly pursuit titled 'The Age of Copper, Ivory and Gold: England and West Africa in the Middle Ages' delves into the provenance of copper jugs, with an initial focus on archival research and photographic history.

When reflecting on his motivations for applying, Lloyd describes the distinctive appeal of the Fellowship, which supports a dedicated period of international research and public engagement activities. The Fellowship fits perfectly within museum settings, where interaction with diverse audiences and exhibition curation play pivotal roles in disseminating scholarly insights.

Lloyd describes the Fellowship as a prestigious award for the museum, 'they were really thrilled that I got this Fellowship because they were able to evidence we can get a British Academy Fellowship like a university. It was seen as a feather in the cap of the museum.' The award also provided personal recognition affirming Lloyd's scholarly capabilities, 'It felt prestigious for me personally, I didn't come from an academic background and I wasn't brilliant at school, so I went to university and became interested in research a bit later. I feel like the Fellowship award proves to me that I can do it.'

The research extends beyond geographic boundaries, fostering collaborations with experts across Europe, the United States, and West Africa. Lloyd's research stimulates a global dialogue on the historical significance of copper artifacts, which he disseminated through a public lecture course and workshops at the British Museum.

Lloyd emphasises the pivotal role played by the Fellowship in shaping his career trajectory. 'I designed the Fellowship project as a cross disciplinary, cross museum project and that really changed the way I thought both about my research and about working in the institution. I enjoyed working across departments and started to see myself as someone who was able to do this much bigger, broader research.'

Catalysed by the interdisciplinary nature of his research, Lloyd attributes his work promotion to the Fellowship, 'My new job is on the British Museum's Master Plan project, to help think about what the new galleries of the museum are going to look like for the next 20-30 years.' 'Dedicated time for research is the main value of the Fellowship,' Lloyd reflects, acknowledging its transformative influence on his research career and personal growth.

Lloyd describes the British Academy as an incredibly humane institution, 'They fund at the personal level. They really think about what you need as an early-career researcher to be successful. They're open communicators and I think that's all you really want from a funder.'

The Academy's proactive engagement and personalised support exemplify commitment to scholarly excellence, facilitating Lloyd's academic journey within the British Museum.