Rapid Evaluation: Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowships

CLOUD CHAMBER

Contents

Executive Summary

The British Academy commissioned Cloud Chamber to undertake a rapid evaluation of the Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowship programmes. Both schemes completed their final application rounds in 2019.

The Newton Mobility Grant scheme and the Newton Advanced Fellowship scheme supported international researchers in establishing and developing collaborations with UK researchers around a specific jointly defined research project. Both schemes were supported by Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funding and selected overseas research funders. They required researchers to align objectives with the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.1 Approach

The research utilised an approach encompassing document reviews, two online surveys of PIs and Co-Is on both schemes, analysis of British Academy scheme data, interviews with researchers across both schemes and interviews with UK-based research managers. While response rates were not as high as hoped (around 20% survey response), a wide range of UK and overseas-based academics responded, giving a good breadth of examples and reflections.

The objectives of this rapid evaluation of the Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowships schemes were to assess:

(i) how well the schemes met their objectives,

(ii) the British Academy's application and funding processes (where applicable),

From the perspective of:

a. award-holders

b. University research offices

(iii) the funded studies' outcomes, impact, and impacts-in-progress.

1.2 Findings

The research findings draw primarily on survey and interview data and have been combined across the schemes because of their similarities in delivery and evaluation findings. Where there are any significant differences between the schemes, these are highlighted.

Headline findings from the survey include:

- 52% of Advanced Fellowship holders had an existing relationship with their PI or Co-I prior to the application.
- Similarly, 53% of Newton Mobility Grant holders had an existing relationship with their PI or Co-I prior to the application.

- 19% of Advanced Fellowship holders had previous funding from the British Academy.
- 20% of Newton Mobility Grant holders had previous funding from the British Academy.

The application process was viewed positively by researchers with clear guidance and was straightforward compared to similar funds and schemes. The British Academy was considered helpful and responded quickly to questions from applicants. Those with existing relationships with their collaborator found this helpful when applying, smoothing the process.

The impact of Advanced Fellowships and Mobility Grants is diverse and ranges from academic and research network level impacts to social and economic impacts, which align with the scheme's ODA requirements. Interestingly, some impacts were more common depending on the career stage across both schemes. For Advanced Fellowships, the more experienced researchers achieved greater research funding outcomes, while those earlier in their careers secured more academic publications resulting from their Fellowship.

For those with Newton Mobility Grants, it is interesting that securing additional research funding and greater job security was more likely to impact those earlier in their careers. In contrast, those later in their careers achieved greater impact through academic publications. International research collaboration growth was similar across career stages on both schemes.

Both schemes highlighted the enduring strength of relationships developed through both schemes, with academics continuing to work together and develop new research.

Social and economic outcomes were mixed and less prominent across both schemes. Still, it was felt that foundations had been laid for future impact, building on academic development and many local research projects.

1.3 Recommendations

Both Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowships were seen as successful programmes. Recommendations for the future include:

- If programmes continue to have an ODA focus, more written guidance, training or information seminars and examples of impact would help.
- While creating new partnerships is good, recognising that existing research relationships are positive will further enhance scheme impacts.
- Expectations regarding impact should be clarified, given the size and scope of these types of grants.
- Funding levels should increase to reflect inflationary pressures.
- Consideration should be given to upfront payments for overseas universities that often find it more difficult to spend on research upfront.
- Reviewing the language of calls to ensure it is equitable.

2 Introduction

The British Academy commissioned Cloud Chamber to undertake a rapid evaluation of the Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowship programmes. Both schemes completed their final application rounds in 2019, with delivery completed in the early stages of the Covid pandemic. The evaluation took place between January and March 2024.

The Newton Mobility Grant scheme and the Newton Advanced Fellowship scheme supported international researchers in establishing and developing collaborations with UK researchers around a specific jointly defined research project. The schemes were aimed at researchers in all disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences (H&SS). Applicants for both schemes had to articulate in their applications how their research would respond to at least one of the Sustainable Development Goals. The schemes were supported by Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funding and select overseas research funders.

Specifically, both the Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowships aimed to:

- Link the best H&SS researchers in the UK with the best researchers in partner countries,
- Strengthen the research capacity of the partner countries - by facilitating training, reciprocal visits, and skill transfer from the UK to partner countries,
- Establish long-term research links between the UK and partner countries - to foster sustainable improvements in the research capacity of both partners,
- Foster collaboration to advance a partner country's economic development and social welfare.

This report outlines the findings from analysis of grant monitoring data, a survey of grant holders and interviews with grant holders and university research managers.

2.1 Aims and Objectives

The objectives of this rapid evaluation of the Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowships schemes were to assess:

(i) how well the schemes met their objectives,

(ii) the British Academy's application and funding processes (where applicable),

From the perspective of:

a. award-holders

b. University research offices

(iii) the outcomes, impact, and impacts-in-progress of the funded studies.

The following questions underpinned the approach to grant holder surveys and follow-up interviews.

- Did the schemes attract, identify and invest in outstanding academic researchers?
- What have award holders valued through these programmes, and are there any lessons that the Academy might consider in the future/in similar programmes?
- What are the relative strengths of the programme as designed and delivered?
- What are the outcomes and impacts of the Newton schemes?
- Have the Newton schemes contributed to the development of research capacity, skills, and expertise of participating researchers, and if so, in what ways?
- Have the Newton Advanced Fellowships contributed to the establishment of enduring international collaborations beyond the fellowship duration, and if so, how?
- In what ways have the Newton schemes impacted the host institutions in both the UK and partner countries?
- What value did the partnerships with organisations based in Newton Fund countries bring to the schemes?
- Have there been other benefits conferred by the schemes to date, e.g. in terms of any tangible changes on the ground or the career development of project partners?

2.1.1 Newton Mobility Grants

The Newton Mobility Grant (NMG) Scheme's main purpose was to support international researchers based in a Newton Fund country to establish and develop collaboration with UK researchers on a jointly defined project. The scheme covered travel and maintenance costs, and applications that included early career researchers and a training element were looked at favourably in assessment.

The Mobility Grants lasted one year and had a maximum funding of £10,000. Five funding rounds were awarded from 2017 to 2019, and grants were awarded to 172 researchers.

2.1.2 Newton Advanced Fellowships

In addition to the objectives of the Newton Mobility Grants, the Newton Advanced Fellowship (NAF) scheme focused on supporting the training development and skill transfer between mid-career researchers in the UK and partnered countries.

The Advanced Fellowships lasted two years, with a maximum funding of £37,000 per year and £74,000 overall. Five funding rounds were awarded from 2014 to 2019, and grants were awarded to 112 researchers.

2.2 Evaluation Approach

This rapid evaluation was delivered through an interlinking three-phase approach, including project documentation reviews, online surveys of both schemes' grant holders, and interviews with grant holders and university research managers. Following an

inception meeting, we reviewed the schemes' application, award data, and programme documentation. This review helped shape the development of the surveys and interview topic guides. Both surveys and topic guides were shared with and agreed upon with the British Academy. Each phase is outlined in more detail below:

- Documentation and data reviews enabled us to understand the academic profile of those who had received the grants, including their career stages. The data helped us select the universities to invite to participate in the evaluations by ensuring a spread between university types, grants awarded, and geographical locations.
- Surveys were developed for each scheme. The surveys were split into the following sections:
  - Grant details, including research objectives.
  - The application process.
  - Reflections on the project and the scheme, including impact.

  Smart Survey, an online survey system, was used to administer the survey. Up to three automatic reminders were sent to grant holders, and PIs and Co-Is were invited to participate. The response rate by scheme was as follows:
  - Newton Mobility Grant – 45 responses from a possible total of 240 – 19% response rate.
  - Newton Advanced Fellowship – 43 responses from a possible total of 198 – 22% response rate.

Response rates on both schemes were lower than hoped. We believe this was partly due to the short timescale for the evaluation and the fact that the grant took place over five years ago for many of the grant holders.

- Interview templates were developed, shared, and agreed upon with the British Academy. Templates were developed for both grant schemes and university research managers.

This report reflects the findings of all the evaluation stages. As the findings were similar for both programmes, the report presents the findings as a summary across both programmes. Still, where there are significant differences between the schemes, these are highlighted and explained.

2.3 Evaluation Limitations

There are a number of limitations to the evaluation approach, which we feel may have influenced the results. These should be considered when reading the report. These limitations include:

- The short timescale to deliver the evaluation made it difficult to engage with the number of academics we had hoped. Arranging interviews within academia takes time, and we only had a short window to undertake them (around a month).

- Universities found it very difficult to engage in the evaluation, with a number turning down the opportunity to be involved. Both the time elapsed since the schemes were in operation and the fact they were not always seen as a high priority influenced their decision.
- Like many evaluations, particularly when a significant time has elapsed since the grants were awarded, it is more likely that those with a positive experience or story to tell will participate.

Despite these limitations, the research findings provide interesting perspectives on both schemes and some important suggestions for how schemes like these could be delivered in the future.

3 Data and survey analysis

This section outlines key data from both schemes and the grant holder surveys. This includes total grants awarded, breakdowns of award holders' geographical locations and the award holders' career stages.

3.1 Scheme-wide data

3.1.1 Overview

Across the two schemes, 219 grants were awarded. 55% were Newton Mobility grants, and 45% were Advanced Fellowships. Mobility grants saw an increase in awards as the scheme progressed, while the bulk (almost 50%) of Fellowship awards took place between 2016 and 2018.

Figure 1: Awards by academic year

Year	Newton Mobility Grants		Advanced Fellowships	
	# of grants	% of total	# of grants	% of total
2014-15	12	10%	18	18%
2015-16	18	15%	15	15%
2016-17	28	23%	25	25%
2017-18	31	26%	24	24%
2018-19	31	26%	17	17%
All years	120	100%	99	100%

Source: British Academy Monitoring data

3.1.2 PI location/nationality

Full data on the PI location or nationality was not available in the monitoring data, so only a partial picture can be represented.

Only 19 out of 120 grants for Newton Mobility grants had data on nationality. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Number of Newton Mobility grants by nationality of principal investigators

Nationality	Grants
Brazilian	3
Brazilian, Italian	1
Brazilian, Spanish	1
Canadian	1
Italian	1
Malaysian	3
Mexican	2

South African	2
Spanish	1
Thai	1
Turkish	1
Vietnamese	2
All nationalities	**19**

Source: British Academy Monitoring data

More data was available for Advanced Fellowships (62 out of 99 grants). The most common nationalities were South African (19%), Brazilian (18%), Mexican (18%) and Turkish (16%). The full breakdown is in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Nationality of Advanced Fellowships PIs

Nationality	Grants
South African	12
Brazilian	11
Mexican	11
Turkish	10
Thai	4
Malaysian	4
Italian	2
Chinese	2
British	1
Zimbabwean	1
Turkish, Cypriot	1
Canadian	1
Argentinian	1
Egyptian	1
All nationalities	**62**

Source: British Academy Monitoring data

3.1.3 Career stage

Using PhD award date data, we assessed the career stages of those awarded grants across either scheme. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- Advanced Fellowships saw a marginally earlier stage academic be successful than Newton Mobility Grant holders on the basis of mean average years since PhD award.
- However, the distribution in the chart below demonstrates that a small number of outliers drives this in the data. Most Newton Mobility Grant holders were earlier in their careers than those with Advanced Fellowships, except for a number who

successfully applied more than 16 years after their PhD. Given the nature of the grants, this is what was expected.

- The UK Co-I's supporting Advanced Fellowships tended to be more experienced than Newton Mobility Grant Co-I's. (See Figure 4 below).

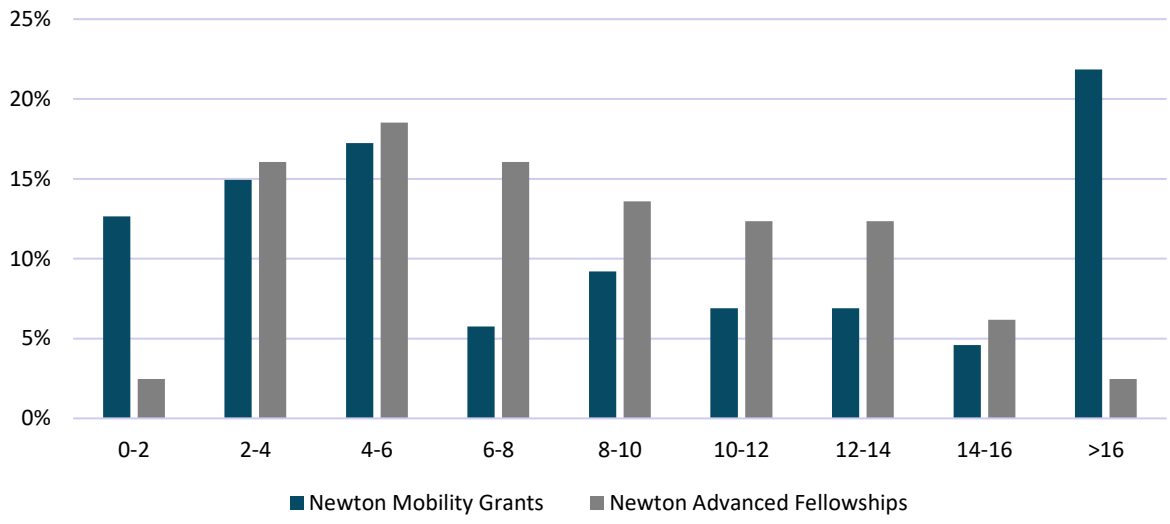
These results were not unsurprising, given the nature of the schemes. We expected UK-based Co-I's to be more experienced than their overseas academic project leads as the grants were designed to be learning grants between more experienced UK academics and their overseas counterparts. If the outlier Newton Mobility grant PIs were removed, the average PI career stage would be reduced to earlier than Advanced Fellowships. It is not clear why such significant numbers of senior researchers have applied for the Newton Mobility Grants programme.

Figure 4: Years since PhD

	Newton Mobility Grants	Advanced Fellowships
Mean average years since PhD: PI (n)	9.6 (n=87)	8.0 (n=90)
Mean average years since PhD: Co-I	10.6 (n=81)	14.0 (n=66)

Source: Calculated by CCL using applicant PhD date and award date from monitoring data

Figure 5: Years since PhD, distribution by grant scheme



Source: Calculated by CCL using applicant PhD date and award date from British Academy monitoring data

3.1.4 Subject area

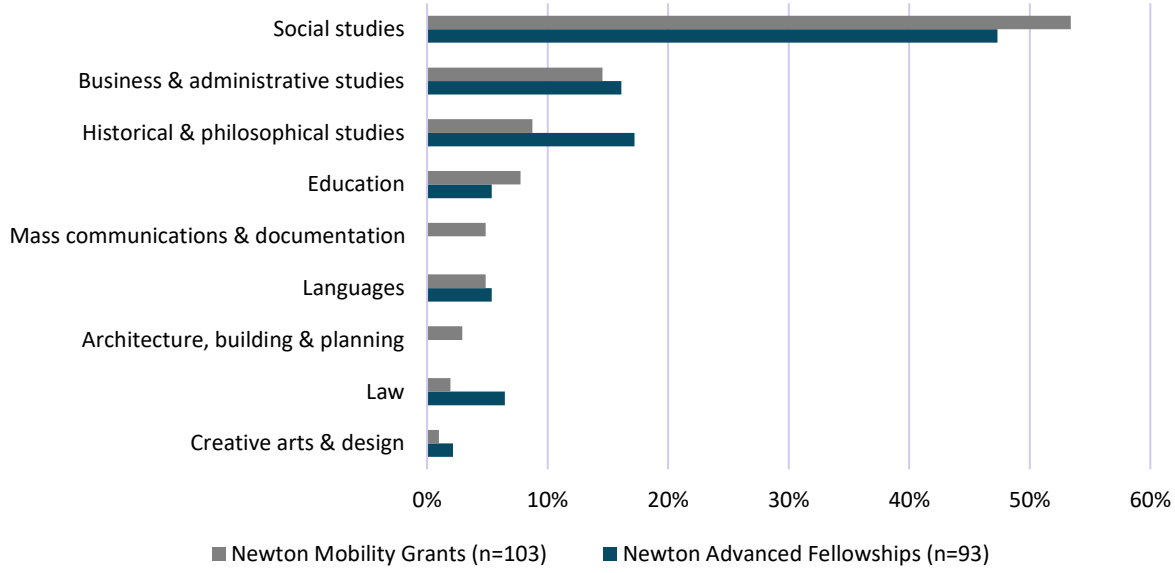
Using grant data and coding subject areas by broad subject area, we found the following:

- Newton Mobility Grants most commonly fund studies and collaborations in social studies.

- Advanced Fellowships had better reach in Law, Historical, philosophical, and business & administrative studies.

It was interesting to note that during interviews, some academics were surprised that subjects like Historical and Philosophical studies were funded when ODA outcomes would potentially be harder to achieve in those disciplines.

Figure 6: Grants by broad subject area



Source: Coded by CCL using subject data and JACS codes

3.2 Survey analysis

Overall, there were 88 respondents to the survey, with the responses between the two schemes being almost equal. Principal Investigators were more likely to respond with similar proportions across both schemes.

Figure 7: Respondents by role on the grant

Respondent role	Newton Mobility Grants	Advanced Fellowships
Principal Investigator (based overseas)	33	34
Co-Investigator (based in the UK)	12	8
Not specified	2	1
Total respondents	45	43

Source: Cloud Chamber, note manual checking reassigned roles for some respondents

Eight collaborating countries feature in the survey data (through PI and Co-I responses). Turkey appears most in the data, with 8 and 11 respondents connected with the country. South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico are also prominent. Brazil had more Advanced Fellowships than Newton Mobility Grants.

Figure 8: Collaborating country by scheme type

Country	Newton Mobility Grants	Advanced Fellowships
Turkey	8	11
South Africa	5	7
Vietnam	5	-
Brazil	4	11
Mexico	4	6
Thailand	4	4
China	1	2
Malaysia	1	1
All countries	**32**	**42**

Source: Cloud Chamber

4 Scheme research findings

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the survey findings and analyses the interview data for both schemes. As outlined in the introduction, we have combined the findings because of the similarities between the schemes and the evaluation findings. Where there are any significant differences between the schemes, these are highlighted.

In addition to the 88 survey responses, 20 interviews were conducted with academics. As noted above, the split across the schemes was almost 50/50, and most respondents were Principal Investigators (around 67%).

Headline findings from the survey include:

- 52% of Advanced Fellowship holders had an existing relationship with their PI or Co-I prior to the application.
- Similarly, 53% of Newton Mobility Grant holders had an existing relationship with their PI or Co-I prior to the application.
- 19% of Advanced Fellowship holders had previous funding from the British Academy.
- 20% of Newton Mobility Grant holders had previous funding from the British Academy.

Figure 9: Scheme awareness by grant type

	How did you hear about the scheme?	
	Newton Mobility Grants (%)	Advanced Fellowships (%)
University Research Office	21	22
British Academy	21	24
PI/Co-I	45	51
Applied previously	0	4
A colleague	12	15
Other	7	13

Note: Some respondents gave multiple answers. Source: Cloud Chamber Survey.

A significant number of researchers, across both schemes, found out about the scheme from their Co-I or PI. Smaller, but still significant numbers, heard about the scheme from their university research office or The British Academy directly. Where people heard about it through other routes, the most common was the British Council for overseas based researchers.

4.2 Application process

Over 80% of Advanced Fellowship holders and 90% of Newton Mobility Grant holders found the application process straightforward or very easy. Researchers felt that the schemes compared well with other schemes in the PI's home countries and research schemes across Europe, the UK, and North America.

Both schemes were considered straightforward from an application perspective with clear guidance, even for those whose first language was not English.

Their university research office supported the majority of academics across both schemes, with just over 20% of Advanced Fellowship holders and 26% of Mobility Grant holders requesting support from the British Academy. Those who requested British Academy support found it helpful. Reflections from grant holders include:

"The staff at BA have consistently exhibited exceptional generosity in providing support and assistance."

"There are some issues that were unclear in the process. I sent an email, and I received a detailed explanation from them."

"I had to call and check the financial criteria to the BA staff in the UK via Skype and the support was very helpful."

There were only a small number of criticisms about the application and subsequent contracting processes, which are described below:

- Although the online system was seen as user-friendly, some felt that the word limits could be a constraint when answering some questions.
- Some felt that paying UK institutions and not the overseas institutions caused problems for the international partners as payments were often delayed or they felt that bureaucratic barriers would be put in place.

4.3 Application and partnership development

Establishing and expanding international research partnerships was key to both programmes. Just over half of the academic partnerships already had an established relationship before their funding application. In almost half of all cases, their academic partner alerted them to the scheme and encouraged a joint application.

Even in cases where the academic partner introduced them to the scheme, the proposed research project was usually new, often building on existing research or mutual interests. Researchers felt that one clear advantage of having a pre-existing relationship was that project development was quicker, and any bureaucratic hurdles could be overcome more smoothly. The pre-existing nature of the relationships may have helped with impact planning, but researchers recognised that it wasn't easy to quantify this.

Although not explicitly stated, it was possible that if relationships already existed, then there may have been less scope to grow research and impact networks as they may already have been in place. Academic partnerships that pre-existed and operated during

Covid seemed to continue to run effectively, probably due to a high level of trust between the academics and institutions.

Almost all who responded to the survey confirmed that the relationship with their academic partner had continued since the end of the Fellowship. Where this had not been maintained, it was due to reasons outside of their control, including unemployment or the death of their Co-I or PI.

As outlined above, the application process was considered straightforward, especially compared to other schemes, whether from overseas-based funders, UKRI, or European funders. Some of these differences were recognised as being a result of the size of grants, whereby the bigger the grants, the more complex the application processes are. When academics required support from their home institution or the British Academy, it was provided and seen as comprehensive and helpful.

4.4 Impact

The impact of Fellowships and Mobility Grants is diverse and ranges from academic and research network level impacts to social and economic impacts, which align with the scheme's ODA requirements. It was interesting to note that some impacts were more common depending on the career stage across both schemes. The tables below highlight some of the similarities and differences by years post-PhD.

Figure 10: Academic impacts by career stage for Newton Mobility Grants.

	Secured research funding	Job promotions or security	Increased international research collaborators	Academic publications
Fewer than 5 years (n=12)	42%	42%	83%	50%
5 to 10 years (n=9)	22%	11%	89%	67%
Over 10 years (n=10)	40%	20%	90%	70%

Source: Cloud Chamber survey and British Academy monitoring data.

For those with Newton Mobility Grants, it is interesting that securing additional research funding and greater job security were more likely to impact those earlier in their career. In contrast, those later in their career achieved greater impact through academic publications. International research collaboration growth was similar across career stages.

Figure 11: Academic impacts by career stage for Advanced Fellowships.

	Secured research funding	Job promotions or security	Increased international research collaborators	Academic publications
Fewer than 5 years (n=9)	44%	56%	78%	100%
5 - 10 years (n=10)	60%	70%	100%	90%
10 years or more (n=11)	73%	64%	91%	82%

Source: Cloud Chamber survey and British Academy monitoring data.

For Advanced Fellows, the results were somewhat different from those of Newton Mobility Grants. Those more experienced researchers secured more funding but felt they had fewer academic publication impacts, although this was still 82% of survey respondents. Job security, promotions and international research collaborations all had mixed results with no discernible pattern.

4.4.1 Academic research career impacts

Generally, academics agreed that the impact on academic careers had been more profound for overseas-based academics. Impacts have included:

- Growth in academic research networks including the opportunity to set up new research networks.
- Promotions and/or greater job security.
- Increase in research funding. Often this was secured with their Newton collaborator or through the new or expanded research networks.
- Journals and other academic publications. Some grants produced significant publications, with one producing at least 15 academic papers.

As demonstrated in Figure 12 below, grant and fellowship holders saw multiple benefits to their academic careers. However, there were some differences between the two schemes, similar to the differences by career stage, as shown in the figures above.

Figure 12: Positive academic impacts.

What positive impacts did the grant have on your academic career?		
	Newton Mobility Grants (%)	Advanced Fellowships (%)
Secured additional research funding	41	57
Job promotions or security	30	55
Increased international research collaborations	89	86
Academic publications	73	91
None	5	2
Other	5	7

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option. Source: Cloud Chamber Survey

Advanced Fellowship holders generally had higher levels of impact including additional research funding, job promotion or security and academic publications. Given the longer-term nature of the scheme, these were anticipated differences.

Unsurprisingly, given the focus of both programmes, exchange visits between the participating countries were rated highly as positive outcomes. These visits enabled growth in international research networks as well as learning, both formal and informal, between partners and institutions. In addition to these exchanges, academics highlighted

that colleagues, junior researchers, PhD and Masters students often had access to these networks and opportunities, so the impact also supported wider academic communities and their institutions. Two examples of this are highlighted below.

"I gained experience working with foreign researchers and got to know more researchers from study visits to various places. I have developed research assistants for this project from my Master's students who have had the opportunity to do challenging research and study visits abroad." (NAF)

"Both institutions have benefited from the exchange visits, through research seminars and short-courses or Master's class for postgraduate students." (NMG)

Overseas-based academics saw a particular value in these grants. Many felt that it supported them in growing both their teams and the reputation of their institutions, which are often not well-known in the Global research landscape.

It was encouraging to note that fewer than eight respondents across both schemes felt that the grant didn't impact their academic careers. These people didn't feel that there were negative impacts; they simply felt no positive impacts.

There are several other examples of academic impacts across the programmes, which are included below. Some could make interesting case studies in the future, highlighting the strengths of programmes.

- Additional Research Funding:

"This project led to training visits in both locations, a Leicester Institute for Advanced Studies Fellowship for the Professor, and most recently a successful Wellcome Trust Discovery Award (£5M)." (NMG)

"I managed to receive an EU Marie Curie Global Fellowship (2018-2022)." (NAF)

- Job promotions or security:

"Two PhD students and I developed our research and project writing skills. I am now a full professor; one of the PhD students became an assistant professor in Türkiye, and the other senior lecturer is in the UK. (NAF)"

"With this project, I was promoted to be the assistant professor and also the Head of the Academic Affairs of the Thai Clinical Psychologist Association. (NMG)"

- International research collaborations:

"The achievement of international collaboration aligns with our anticipated outcomes from the research. The strong collaboration forged between the (two universities) is a significant milestone. Looking ahead, we plan to engage in discussion and submit another research proposal in the near future." (NMG)

"The Fellowship has significantly strengthened research ties between (the two universities), and this is leading to a continuous loop of collaboration…on future research projects, publications, supervising of graduate students, and so on." (NAF)

- Academic publications:

"I published a co-edited book in English with my Co-I, a single-authored article in a prestigious academic journal, and a co-edited book in Spanish with a collaborator." (NAF)

"Two publications in International Journal of Finance and Economics & Singapore Economic Review." (NMG)

Nearly every respondent to the survey highlighted academic publications, books, journal articles, conference presentations, and contributions to policy documents at institutional or local levels as impact outcomes although it could be difficult translating these into ODA outcomes as described below.

4.4.2 Institutional and research infrastructure

One of the encouraging aspects of the two schemes was enabling researchers to engage with PhD students, junior researchers, and others in support of both the research and the teaching, training, and exchange visits. This was particularly the case for Advanced Fellowships, where numerous examples were given, including:

"(Impact was) Higher than planned: 2 instead of 1 MA students' degrees funded; the PI was promoted to full Professor." (NAF)

"Co-supervision of 3 MSc students and 1 PhD student. Co-supervision of 1 PhD student the (UK) University working on indigenous knowledge." (NAF)

During the visits a number of seminars and workshops were done and attended by researchers and postgraduate students from (the university) … (in addition) various postgraduate students decided to do their MSc dissertations on education and labour economics topics." (NMG)

4.4.3 Social and economic ODA impacts

While ODA impacts were fundamental to the schemes, academics didn't generally perceive growing and developing researchers as an ODA impact, despite it being the case. Generally they saw ODA impacts as being economic and social benefits. Many found it more challenging to articulate social and economic ODA impacts compared to

academic career or research impacts. This was not surprising given the long-term nature of the impacts, especially social and economic ODA impacts.

Where impact was articulated, it tended to be foundational work in that it helped to build a platform for future impact through research that is disseminated or contributes to policy discussions. Over a longer period, further investigations, perhaps through case studies, would be needed to see what impacts might have been secured.

Other points raised by academics included:

- Less than five academics felt their research didn't lend itself to immediate or significant social, economic or policy impact. This was a surprising admission, given the focus of the two schemes.
- The timelines for the research, particularly the Newton Mobility Grants, meant that opportunities for social and economic ODA impact were limited. Endeavours were made to lay the foundations for impact, but these were difficult to track forward.
- The grants have improved academic development and research networks and impacts, which, as outlined in the People Pillar of the Newton Schemes, is hoped will provide the foundations for wider ODA impacts.
- Some of the impacts are small but significant. Some projects were very local, and engaging local communities in research had important impacts that shouldn't be underestimated.

Further examples of the social and economic impacts achieved across the two programmes are outlined on the next page.

"By transferring the knowledge gained in the UK to Antalya destination, the awareness of the economic impact of scuba diving was increased." (NMG)

"Local SMEs working in the packaging recycling sector were qualified to improve the recovery of used Tetra Pak packaging in Brazil." (NMG)

"Our awarded project has stimulated national researchers to understand and be aware of children with mathematical difficulties. The research outputs from Thai researchers on this issue has been increasing and our developed tools have now been widely investigated and used in Thai clinical settings." (NMG)

"The main impact of the project was on school education, especially literacy acquisition." (NMG)

"By developing a new pedagogic method for civic and democratic education based upon philosophical activities, this project has contributed to pedagogic activities, social welfare, and the improvement of teaching & learning and democratic development." (NAF)

"The digital analysis we executed and an app that we designed for mutual flow of information on archaeological heritage improved social knowledge on heritage." (NAF)

"Our research on entrepreneurship as a tool for integration and wellbeing are important for ODA countries, where there are limited funds to address socio-economic needs of refugees. The projects created an awareness and a background for future studies and academic networks." (NAF)

"Public awareness of climate change issues has been increased resulting in climate-based initiatives to address flooding in a more sustainable future." (NAF)

4.5 Scheme Reflections

It was clear from the survey and interview data that academics felt that the schemes met their expectations and were of value to them, their careers and their research networks. Specifically, for overseas-based researchers, having the British Academy fund their work was seen as invaluable in supporting their research careers as it provided a level of independent validation to their research. Further findings included:

- 96% of Newton Mobility Grant holders said the scheme met their expectations. 95% of Advanced Fellowship holders felt the same.

"It was generous and offered me an alternative to support my professional development with dedicated support at an early career stage. The scheme was very complete in terms of offering research support, capacity building, and international connections. I must say that being awarded a Newton Advanced Fellowship made a significant positive change in my career." (NAF)

"The grant enabled the research to take place, and the two applicants have greatly benefitted from this. It is unclear whether such research would have been undertaken without the funding." (NMG)

- The academics appreciated both the flexibility offered by the British Academy and the support they received if challenges arose during the project.

"I would like to highlight the kindness and support of the staff at (my) university and the British Academy. Every time I needed to ask something or need some help, no matter how small, I was very well attended to." (NAF)

- Impacts on academic careers could be quite significant, particularly for those earlier in their careers and PIs based overseas.
- Several academics and universities raised financial management issues in the research. These issues were two-fold: the complexity of grant payments to overseas universities and the resources needed within UK universities to manage relatively small grants. Some felt this wasn't an issue at all, though.
- Some academics felt that the British Academy could be more proactive in celebrating the success of grants. Some had contacted the Academy with good news stories post-grant but felt these were not acknowledged positively. This was considered a missed opportunity.
- Flexibility of funds was seen as a positive, although there were mixed views regarding the scheme's flexibility in delivery and monitoring requirements.

"A strength is the flexibility allowed to grantees to adjust planned project activities as circumstances dictate. This is linked to the scheme's approach in not micromanaging project leaders but trusting them to implement the project and report back." (NAF)

"I understand that there should be a balance between evaluating, controlling, and monitoring the activities of a researcher who receives any research funding. However, my understanding is that a relevant amount of time is spent on the administrative aspects of these projects. I believe that ideally, any measures that help researchers focus more on their core activities, reducing bureaucracy, could improve these funding schemes." (NAF)

- A number of researchers, particularly from the Global South, felt that The British Academy should recognise that learning in programmes like these is two-way and not simply a flow of knowledge from the Global North to the Global South. This may have been a result of contracting difficulties in that PIs were from the

Global South while contracting was with UK-based Co-I institutions. Some felt that this was inequitable. In addition, some academics found the language to be colonial in nature although it was difficult to draw out specific examples.

5 University Perspectives

As outlined previously, engaging universities proved to be difficult in this evaluation. Some felt that too much time had passed since the programmes ran for them to contribute to the evaluation, while others failed to respond to the invitations to take part. Only two of eleven universities agreed to participate. A summary of these conversations and points raised is included below. These findings need to be viewed within the context of the low response rate.

The universities that responded viewed the schemes positively and recognised the benefits they could have for academics and universities, especially with regard to helping build international networks. Both universities would try to 'match-make' partnerships if they did not exist already. They felt that speculative enquiries didn't generally make good applications.

In line with academic experiences, the universities saw the process as fairly straightforward. Where there were complications, these related to co-funding or administrative issues at overseas partner institutions. Administration of the grants was considered to be complex given the total funds were small and the administration burden was high with payments to overseas partners.

"Any scheme, by definition, where the prospective academic is not already based at the university brings a level of complexity. But that is compounded when they're based internationally."

Securing statements of support from overseas institutions can be challenging, particularly if they don't have an existing relationship. But this was not considered to be unique to these grants.

5.1 Impact

University perspectives on impact are very similar to those of academics. The academic impacts, including stronger collaborations, publications, the potential to draw in further research funding, and sustained international partnerships, were all positive.

"For people on schemes like this…I certainly would say that the perception in departments is that there are really effective mechanisms for supporting worthwhile research, enriching the broader departmental research culture, and fostering collaborations with international organisations. And certainly, the people that applied to them are very convinced of their value."

ODA impacts remain a challenge. The universities felt this was from two perspectives. Firstly, the grants' size and duration made achieving ODA impacts challenging. In addition, they thought that academics often did not understand fully what ODA impacts are and how they should position research to achieve them. The universities worked closely with academics to achieve this, but it remains a problem of understanding, which

is probably sector-wide. They remained hopeful that longer-term ODA impacts could be achieved.

5.2 Strengths and improvements

The strengths of the programmes are in line with the academic views outlined earlier. The grants are strong enablers of network growth and can be ideal grants at any stage of an academic career. There was an expectation that the best researchers within an institution would be selected for these grants. While some universities targeted those who they thought would be good fits or get the best out of the programmes, it was difficult to say that only the 'best' academic researchers were funded. Decisions about whether to apply for funding depend very much on:

- Career stage and how strongly an academic views their research career.
- Whether they have existing relationships with academics in partner countries.
- Whether growing international relationships is considered a priority for the academic at their career stage or within the context of their research.

The schemes are valuable within a Humanities and Social Sciences context as there are limited similar options for researchers in these disciplines. Still, the schemes remain niche and can have some administrative challenges, as outlined below.

Regarding weaknesses and areas of challenge, administrative and institutional challenges were highlighted, particularly concerning how grant monies are managed. Some overseas academics felt it was difficult to get prompt payments from the universities in the UK. This is reflected, in reverse, by UK institutions who feel that some overseas universities having less advanced management infrastructure made payments and managing relationships more difficult. The challenges of overseas partners and employing staff are highlighted below:

"A general observation that anything that funders can do to streamline the bureaucratic associations with these grants and with any application which entails employing someone or bringing someone to employment at the university would be really, really well received."

Bureaucracy issues were further highlighted by universities who felt that due to the nature of the grants (exchange visits, travel, etc.), more resources could be provided to university finance and HR along with departmental administrators to reduce this burden.

Some suggested improvements were:

- Under research and translation pillars, follow-up funding schemes should be introduced to support further capacity strengthening.
- Increasing budgets for schemes in recognition of significant inflationary pressures and rising costs across the sector.

- An increase in match funding from co-funders overseas. Clear in-country agreements should be in place before new schemes are introduced to ensure they are streamlined as much as possible.

6 Findings and recommendations

In this section, we revisit the research questions outlined at the start of the report and provide recommendations regarding similar future research programmes. Despite some limitations, particularly regarding the time available to undertake the evaluation, the research has demonstrated how both schemes were seen as attractive to academics in the UK and overseas with tangible academic research impacts. ODA impacts were not as strong, and universities felt that academics still didn't fully understand ODA requirements and how they could be met.

Specifically, in addition to understanding the broad strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, we sought to answer the following questions through this rapid evaluation:

- Did the schemes attract, identify and invest in outstanding academic researchers?
  - It was difficult to assess this comprehensively. Universities stated that they try to target academics they thought were well suited to the programmes, including considering their academic and research status. Academics themselves often applied as it met their needs and requirements and enabled them to grow international research networks.
- What have award holders valued through these programmes?
  - The support of a funder like the British Academy was highly regarded and was seen as something that could assist them in their career development. Developing strong overseas collaborations was crucial to the programme's strengths and success.
- What are the outcomes and impacts of the Newton schemes?
  - These are outlined in detail earlier in the evaluation, but academic and research impacts and outcomes were significant, with social and economic ODA impacts being more limited or likely to occur over a longer period.
- Have the Newton schemes contributed to the development of research capacity, skills and expertise in participating researchers, and if so, in what ways?
  - The schemes have achieved this mainly through exchange visits and learning across international research collaborations. Research capacity has increased, particularly overseas, where junior researchers and PhD students have often been involved in the research.
- Have the Newton Advanced Fellowships contributed to the establishment of enduring international collaborations beyond the fellowship duration, and if so, how?
  - International collaborations have endured in almost all cases across both grant schemes. This is partly a result of pre-existing relationships that the grant schemes have built upon, while in other cases, it is a result of positive experiences, exchange visits, and subsequent academic outputs.
- In what ways have the Newton schemes impacted the host institutions in both the UK and partner countries?

    - It felt that these impacts were more ad hoc and less well-structured from a scheme perspective. Some academics felt that their grants enabled them to make a case to create new research centres and secure resources within their institution. It was difficult to ascertain whether institutional infrastructure had improved due to the schemes.
- What value did the partnerships with organisations based in Newton Fund countries bring to the schemes?
    - This was difficult to ascertain. Academics were grateful that co-funding organisations in overseas countries participated and helped enable the schemes, but they were largely unaware of any further impact.
- Have there been other benefits conferred by the schemes to date, e.g. in terms of any tangible changes on the ground or the career development of project partners?
    - The scheme's impacts aligned with expectations for schemes of this nature. We didn't identify any unexpected benefits to the schemes.

6.1 Recommendations

Both Newton Mobility Grants and Advanced Fellowships were seen as successful programmes that met the expectations of academics and universities and had positive academic and research benefits. Although ODA impacts might not have been as substantial as the British Academy and academics hoped, there were demonstrable ODA benefits from the schemes. Below are some recommendations that could support enhanced mobility style programmes in the future.

- If programmes continue to have an ODA focus, more written guidance, training or information seminars and examples of impact would help universities and academics create more realistic impact plans.
- While creating new partnerships is good, recognising that existing research relationships are positive and should be encouraged, may increase opportunities for impact, specifically ODA impact.
- Expectations regarding impact should be clarified, given the size and scope of these types of grants.
- Funding levels should increase to reflect inflationary pressures and ongoing financial pressures in the sector.
- Consideration should be given to upfront payments for overseas universities that often find it more difficult to spend on research upfront. This could lead to streamlining delivery and more effective project management.
- Reviewing the language of calls to ensure it is equitable and not assuming that learning only goes from the Global North to the Global South.