

Innovation Fellowships Scheme 2025-26

Route B: Policy-led (Sustainable Futures)

Frequently Asked Questions

In this document you will find the answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) relating to the Innovation Fellowships Scheme 2025-26 – Route B: Policy-led (Sustainable Futures). Please read this document, the Scheme Guidance Notes and Application Guidance Notes carefully.

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Applicant

Where would the Innovation Fellow be based?

The Innovation Fellow will be expected to spend their allocated time of between 0.4 and 0.8 FTE working with their UK-based partner. Depending on the partner's requirements, the Innovation Fellow may be based in the partner's office, or another mutually agreed site of the partner, or the Fellow may be based primarily at their UK-based institution (e.g. a Higher Education Institution or Independent Research Organisation). Please refer to the scope of individual Fellowships in the Scheme Guidance Notes for any additional partner specific guidance.

I have just completed my PhD. Can I apply for a Fellowship?

The Academy welcomes applications from recent postdoctoral scholars. You must be resident in the United Kingdom with a current long-term appointment that will continue for at least as long as the period of the award at a UK-based institution (e.g. a Higher Education Institution or Independent Research Organisation). Please note that applications from independent researchers cannot be accepted in this scheme.

I am an early-career/mid-career researcher in an established post at a UK institution, but I do not have a doctorate. Am I eligible to apply for an Innovation Fellowship?

If you are able to make a case that your career experience is equivalent to that of PhD level and you are in an established position at a UK-based institution (e.g. a Higher Education Institution or Independent Research Organisation), then you will be eligible to apply. However, we recommend that you make reference to this under the 'Personal Statement' part of application form so that the assessors are fully informed.

I do not currently have a PhD but I am working towards one via research or publication, am I eligible to apply for an Innovation Fellowship?

Unfortunately, if the potential award of a PhD by research or publication involves some kind of formal recognition as being a 'registered PhD student' then, regardless of a researcher's other experience which would otherwise qualify them for eligibility, they are not eligible because PhD students are ineligible for any of our schemes.

Is it acceptable for an applicant to have an appointment that continues beyond the end of the Fellowship end date, but not necessarily 'long term'?

Yes, this is acceptable as the contract is pre-existing and covers the duration of award, i.e. the contract is not dependant on this award. The purpose of the scheme is to allow successful applicants to obtain time freed from their normal teaching and administrative commitments. If the member of staff's current contract ends during the proposed Fellowship period, or before it starts, but there is a commitment from the University or other organisation to renew the contract, then the applicant would also be eligible.

I am an independent researcher, am I eligible to apply for an Innovation Fellowship?

Regrettably, we are unable to accept independent scholars as Lead Applicants for this scheme. Lead Applicants are required to have a current long-term position (that lasts for at least the duration of award) at a UK-based Higher Education Institution or Independent Research Organisation.

I am employed at my university on a part-time contract – am I eligible to apply for an Innovation Fellowship or are only full-time researchers eligible?

Applications are accepted from researchers currently employed on both full and part-time contracts (i.e. anything less than 1.0 FTE). An applicant who works part-time would need to be supported by their employing institution to be able to devote sufficient time (a minimum of 0.4 FTE) to enable the purposes of the award to be fulfilled.

I am on a full-time contract but only wish to dedicate part of my time to the Fellowship. Can the overall cost of the award be shared with funding from another body on a part-time basis?

Yes, providing there is no duplication of costs. We are only expecting to pay for the time of the award holder between 0.4 and 0.8 FTE, and therefore for the remainder of the time the applicant is able to carry on other duties. It is not expected that funding from another body will be required to add to the British Academy's contribution.

Please can you provide further clarification on what you mean by 'employed' within your eligibility criteria for Innovation Fellowships?

The purpose of the scheme is to provide an opportunity for those with a salaried position at a UK-based HEI or IRO to devote time to the Fellowship. Most of the funding sought by Lead Applicants will be to support the costs associated with their time (through direct salary contribution), and their salary must not depend on the Innovation Fellowship itself.

Is the salary element of the Innovation Fellowship funding intended for the award-holder or for teaching replacement?

The basis of the Innovation Fellowship is that the Fellowship is offered on the Full Economic Costing model, under which costs are calculated on the basis of the salary of the Innovation Fellows themselves. The Innovation Fellow must commit between 0.4 and 0.8 FTE time to the Fellowship, providing justification for the time percentage as part of the application, especially if the time commitment is below 0.5 FTE. In agreeing to support the award, the institution is agreeing to enable the Innovation Fellow to have the time to concentrate on the programme of knowledge exchange or communication set out in the original application. How the employing institution uses the money awarded for the Fellowship is up to the institution. The Academy is not paying specifically for a replacement, so we cannot insist on a full-time teaching replacement being appointed, but it would be good if an opportunity (albeit a short-term one) was opened up for an early-career appointment as a result. All the Academy needs to be assured about at the end of the Fellowship is that the programme of knowledge exchange and activity has been carried out as planned, and that teaching and other commitments did not impact the Fellowship.

Am I eligible to submit applications to more than one Academy scheme at the same time?

Applying for and taking up another British Academy award is acceptable. However, there must be no duplication of funding for the same purpose. Applicants may not hold more than one British Academy award of a comparable nature at any one time. For example, it would not be possible to hold two British Academy Fellowship awards at the same time; but it may be possible to hold a British Academy Fellowship and a British Academy grant (i.e. Talent Development Award or BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant) at the same time.

Please note that an application cannot be accepted if there is a report outstanding on any previous research grant awarded by the Academy to the Lead Applicant or Co-applicant named in the current proposal. Failure to follow this guidance will result in your application being withdrawn from this round of competition. Duplicate applications for the same purpose to more than one Academy scheme will not be accepted.

I have a background in STEM but my work is applicable to the Humanities and Social Sciences. Am I eligible to apply?

Applicants for this scheme should have relevant experience to the scope of the Fellowship and the interests of the partner organizations. Applicants should also bear in mind that these partnerships have been established by the British Academy as the National Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences and as such their experience should also be relevant to the Humanities and Social Sciences. While the British Academy and our partners do not have preconceived ideas about the disciplinary background of Fellows, applicants will need to demonstrate a solid understanding of the relevant policy areas.

Partner

Can I contact the partner about my application prior to or post submission?

Prior to application submission, applicants must **not** contact the partner regarding the application. Questions may be directed to grants@thebritishacademy.ac.uk.

What happens after my application is submitted with regards to security checks by the government partner organisation?

For security reasons, and in line with the partner's policy, successful applicants will have to be security cleared before the final arrangements for a Fellowship can be confirmed.

Once the offer has been made to the successful candidate, and the offer accepted by the candidate and their employing organisation, the security clearance will need to be processed. Award-holders are expected to provide information in a timely manner. Additionally, award-holders and their employing organisations, will be required to sign an agreement with the relevant partner.

The formal confirmation will be contingent on the candidate obtaining the required level of security clearance.

Head of Department

I am the Head of Department at my UK institution (Higher Education Institutions or Independent Research Organisations), what do I do?

If you are the Lead Applicant and also Head of Department at your Higher Education Institutions or Independent Research Organisations, another suitable individual is required to provide the statement of support, e.g. Deputy Head or Head of School.

Fellowship Proposal

The application form asks for an explanation of my expertise and suitability for the Fellowship, but does not ask for a research proposal. Is a proposal required?

The application form does not ask for a research proposal because successful applicants will finalise the outline of a work programme with their chosen partner after being awarded the Fellowship. The application requires the applicant to demonstrate how their skills and experience would make them a good fit with the topics and research areas specified in the relevant scope.

Can I include a bibliography/reference list and, if so, where should I place this?

It is not a mandatory requirement that you include a reference list. If you choose to include this as part of your application, then it should be placed as part of the main text in your Fellowship proposal – you cannot upload this as an additional document.

I am unable to obtain ethical approval for this project until funding for this award is guaranteed, is this an issue?

No, this not an issue. The Academy will be in touch with you in due course to follow-up. Appropriate ethical approval will need be obtained before the award can proceed.

Do you have any template applications for new applicants to view?

No, we do not have template applications available, but we encourage applicants to read the Scheme Guidance Notes, Application Guidance Notes and FAQs, which list full information about the scheme and the questions asked in the application form.

Can you please advise if there are any scheme specific Terms and Conditions available?

The Terms and Conditions of Award will be provided when an award is offered and before it is accepted.

Use of Funding

The application form does not require a research proposal – how should I approach creating a budget for a work programme I have not planned?

As applicants are not asked to submit a research proposal, the British Academy acknowledges that applicants cannot provide a full breakdown of their Directly Incurred Research Expenses. Applicants must provide an overall figure for the heading and a breakdown accounting for their anticipated travel and subsistence costs, with a further explanation of the broad types of activities that the remaining funds may be required for. Applicants **must** however specify their Directly Incurred Salary Costs and Indirect Costs.

What type of travel and project costs would be acceptable in accordance with the Scheme Guidance Notes?

Innovation Fellowships promote partner-based working and collaboration. Costs included in your budget should therefore represent a direct benefit to the proposed collaboration between the application and their chosen partner. This includes travel costs to and from the Innovation Fellowship partner. You may wish to refer to the list of proposed activities and outputs for further guidance on relevant project costs.

When I apply for funding through any of the schemes offered by the British Academy, can I include in the application the cost of APCs (Article Processing Charges) to enable any articles that may arise from the research to be published in learned journals that offer a 'Gold' open access option?

No. Currently the Academy's position is that costs of publication are not eligible costs.

Does the Academy require the outputs of the research it funds to be made available in any open access format?

No, this is not currently a stipulation of any Academy award.

Can I cost time for any research assistance?

For the Innovation Fellowships (Route B: Policy-led), it will not be possible to have Research Assistance as part of your project as it is not an eligible cost.

Is Apprenticeship Levy an eligible cost?

No, this is currently not an eligible cost and cannot be funded under an Innovation Fellowship.

Please could you confirm if inflation can be included in our costings for the proposal?

Yes, the university can include their own standard rates of indexation and inflation, a final statement of expenditure. If costs are not fully expended, any unspent funds must be returned to the British Academy.

Flexi-Grant

My Head of Department has not received their invitation, what should I do?

Please make sure that your Head of Department is logging into the email address to which you have sent the invitation. The email may have gone into their spam folder. If these steps do not work, please log back in and send another reminder to your Head of Department. We advise that all contributors and supporting participants submit their contributions at least five days before of the application deadline.

I am unable to see the submit button on the application form, what should I do?

You will not be able to submit your application until you have completed each section in full. All of your contributors will need to complete and submit their sections. You will be able to see whether they have submitted their sections by looking at the “Contributors” tab; if they have submitted their sections, it will say “Complete” next to their name. Once all sections have been completed, a “Submit for Organisation Approval” button will appear on your application form.

Another issue can be that the research support is not completed and can be revoked in order to submit the application as research support is not necessary for this application form.

You should submit your application for approval by your employing institution **at least five working days before the closing date** to allow for your employing institution administrative procedures. You should also check whether your institution has its own internal deadlines.

We strongly advise that you contact your Referee/Head of Department as early as possible to avoid any last-minute issues before the submission deadline.

Who can offer institutional authorisation for my application?

Institutional authorisation must be given by the registered approver in the British Academy Flexi-Grant® Grant Management System (GMS). This is variable at each institution and will often be the Research Grants or Contracts Office or equivalent. You should seek advice at your employing institution.